

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Abhinoy Halam

# HISTORY AND CULTURE OF THE HALAM TRIBE

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**ABHI- OY HALAM**

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## *PREFACE*

The Civilisation of India is the joint creation of her diverse people, Aryan, Dravidian, Austric, and Mongoloid. The Aryan bases have always received greatest attention which is right. The Mongoloid contribution has not yet been seriously studied as an element in Indian history. The Kuki Chin tribes present an important branch or section of the Assam Indo-Mongoloids. They have their kinsmen in Myanmar, and appear to have settled in fairly ancient times in Tripura, Manipur and Mizoram, as well as in the Chittagang Hill Tracts. The Halams are a section of Kuki Chin tribes who have settled in Tripura from the day of its foundation as a Kingdom. The scholars have categorised the Halams as Old Kuki tribe who have contributed in the protection and preservation of this ancient kingdom in the past. The history of the Halams cannot be separated from the history of Tripura. We tend to glorify the Kings but foreget the sacrifices made by ordinary people in the fight against the adversaries to preserve and protect this Kingdom. The Halam had been such ordinary people who gave their life as soldiers of Tipperah Kingdom. I thought it necessary to write something about the relevant subject of the history of Tipperah kingdom in relation to Halam tribe for understanding the cultural history of the Halam and their contribution to the kingdom.

The Halams today live in different regions in the North-east India and also neighbouring Bangladesh and most neglected ethnic tribe. In democracy number of the population count which the Halam tribe lacks. Apparently, it seems that this tribe has nothing to take pride for, but a deeper study on this tribe lead us to conclude that the culture and tradition of the Halam is no less inferior to other diverse culture of India. Origin of Halam tribe has been traced with maximum possible support to the Tibeto-Burman ethnic root and Khurpuitabum theory. Very few books on Halams has been written which I have read and found incomplete as the writings were based on a few clans of the

Halam. My work may be improvement over the existing publications as the writing have covered almost all aspect of their life. However, I have indulged in writing more on the subject of movement and migration of this tribe, which I think right to do because migration and movement can be regarded as very important part of their social life. My endeavour in this work has been to present a coherent picture of Halam tribal life which include its history, traditional life, culture, practices, varied social norms, customary laws, religious belief, games and amusement, evolution, changes, varied social norms and practices. It has been one of my life's ambitions to put on record about the life of my own people. My work was made easier by the works of few foreign and native writers. The native writers who wrote on the life and culture of certain clans of the Halam helped me much in acquiring profound knowledge and understanding about the culture and life of different clans of Halam tribe. A glimpse of Halam dialects has been given with comparison with the language of other Kuki-Chin-Hmar and Lushei languages for preliminary understanding the Kuki-Chin-Lushei language.

My interest for knowing about Halam tribe has been intense from the time of my study in Union Christian College at Barapani, Shillong, in Meghalaya. As College student, I came across different tribes from different region of North-Eastern India, and found that many of them spoke the languages which were almost similar to my language. Tremendous curiosity arose in my mind to know, particularly, about Kuki-Chin tribe. The facility of library available in the College offered me tremendous scope and opportunity for studying on different tribes of the Northeastern region. Also I learnt a lot in the form of folktales, folklores from my parent, grandfather and grandmather about the story of migration of the Halams, and past habitats etc. During my service as State Government official, I visited many Halam villages which facilitated the opportunity to understand about the way of life and culture of defferent clans of the Halams. However, I never thought of writing a book on my tribe, but to gain knowledge on this tribe only. Mr. Sailiana Sailo, (I.A.S Rtd.) once told me to visit the library of Tribal Research Institute and advised me to take interest in the study of available books on different tribes

so that I should have fair knowledge about the tribes in Tripura and the Northeast which would be useful for understanding the tribal people as a whole. From that time onward, I started collecting materials about the Halam tribe for writing this book. I am fortunate enough to have a contact with many old people who knew about the Halam tribe. I feel sad that many of these old and elderly people who gave me lots of insight and knowledge about the culture, traditions, past history of migration, and habitats etc, of the Halam people are no more now and have expired; but I cannot forget them for their assistance and encouragement. I feel obliged to remember them for helping me. When I was preparing to write this book, proposal came to me from the Tribal Research Institute of the Department of Tribal Welfare of the Government of Tripura and entrusted me the responsibility to write on my Halam tribe. No proper book which covered the story of all sub tribes of the Halam has ever been written till now. I have attempted to write something about all clans of the Halam. I should not claim to have covered every aspect of their culture, tradition, religious belief, social and economic life in this book because writing for all clans of the Halam in a single book will make it voluminous and unpalatable to read. Some of the matters and subjects have been mentioned repeatedly in order to make certain issues more easy to understand. This book should be useful to many research scholars in understanding the composite culture and history of the Halam tribe.

I wish to thank to all those who helped and inspired me in writing this book.

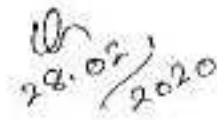
Abhinoy Halam (I.A.S., Retd.)  
Agartala, Tripura





## *Foreward*

I am pleased to note that this book has highlighted the history, culture, custom as tradition of the Halams for the first time. The books published earlier did not bring out the custom, tradition and culture of the Halams as has been done in this book. This book should serve the purpose for those who want to know something more about the culture, custom tradition and way of life of the Halams. In fact, description given on the custom, tradition and religious belief coupled with their migration history has made the attraction of this book. I thank the author for his honest attempt.

A handwritten signature in black ink, followed by the date '28.02.2020' written in a similar style.

(D. Debarma)

*Director,*

Dated, Agartala  
the 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2020

Tribal Research & Cultural Institute,  
Government of Tripura



## CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER-1</b>	<b>1-5</b>	
INTRODUCTION		2
<b>CHAPTER-2</b>	<b>7-23</b>	
ETHNIC IDENTITY OF THE HALAM		
Ancient identity		7
Origin of Kuki identity		9
Origin of Halam identity		12
Kinship of Halam with the Lushei and allied tribes		13
<b>CHAPTER-3</b>	<b>25-41</b>	
ANCESTRAL HOME LAND AND MIGRATION		
Ancient habitat		25
Causes of migration		30
Routes of migration		34
Movement to Chindwin valley		36
Plantation of banyan tree		39
<b>CHAPTER-4</b>	<b>43-62</b>	
SETTLEMENT IN CHIN-LUSHEI HILLS		
Description of Chin Hills		43
<i>Khurpuitabum</i>		46
<i>Arterawttang</i>		47
<i>Rungtlang</i>		47
<i>Lentang range and Rundungphai</i>		47
Description of Lushei Hills		50
<i>Rili champhai</i>		52
<i>Thenzawl</i>		55
<i>Saitual</i>		56
<i>Mawmrangtang</i>		57
Chieftainship of Relsi, Buangkhuip and Luopuia		58
Movement from Lushei hills		61

**CHAPTER-5****63-76**

## SETTLEMENT IN TIPAIMUKH AND BARAK VALLEY

Importance of Tipaimukh and Barak valley	63
Story of Ralngam or Ralunga	66
Settlement in Surma-Kushiyara valley	70
First social intercourse with Tipras	73
Dispersal from Surma-Kushiyara valley	74

**CHAPTER-6****77-81**

## MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT IN MANIPUR

Background	77
Places of settlement	79
<i>Loktak region</i>	79
<i>Mairingpuansen</i>	80
<i>Daniangkhawr</i>	80

**CHAPTER-7****83-89**

## MOVEMENT TO LUSHEI HILLS

Background	83
Important places of settlement	85
<i>Sairang</i>	85
<i>Persensib</i>	85
<i>Zoijamsip</i>	85
<i>Chimalung</i>	86
<i>Kolosib</i>	86
<i>Lungiei Region</i>	86
<i>Bawngthah</i>	86
<i>Thinglian</i>	87
<i>Hachek-Jamoui Rungtang</i>	87

**CHAPTER-8****91-102**

## SETTLEMENT IN CACHAR

General description	91
Hill ranges of undivided Cachar	96
<i>Polodhar or Saraspur range</i>	96

<i>Do Alia or Protapghar range</i>	96
<i>Adom Ail or Patharia range</i>	97
Important places of habitation	98
<i>Porbot Ranglong</i>	98
<i>Dhaleswari river bank</i>	98
<i>Katakhal river bank</i>	99
<i>Kanglai Hadu</i>	99
<i>Hmarkhuolian</i>	101
Movement to North Cachar Hills and Syhlet	101

## **CHAPTER-9**

**103-115**

### SETTLEMENT IN SYHLET

General description	103
Hill system in Syhlet	104
<i>Sarer goj or Longlai range</i>	104
<i>Adompur range</i>	105
<i>Borshijura or Balisirah range</i>	105
<i>Satgaon or Bisgaon range</i>	105
<i>Ragunandan range</i>	105
<i>Bhanugach-Rajkandi range</i>	105
First phase of settlement in Syhlet	105
<i>Panchakhanda</i>	106
<i>Longlai</i>	106
Second phase of settlement in Syhlet	107
Important places of settlement	109
<i>Baniachong</i>	109
<i>Longlai</i>	110
<i>Naldori</i>	110
<i>Samsonnagar</i>	110
<i>Champarai</i>	111
<i>Champabari</i>	111
<i>Bhanugach</i>	111
<i>Srimongol</i>	112

<i>Belkumtang</i>	112
<i>Sagornal</i>	112
Movement from Syhlet	112
<b>CHAPTER-10</b>	<b>(117-136)</b>
SETTLEMENT IN CHITTAGANG HILL TRACTS	
General description	117
Physical feature	118
Phases of settlement of Kuki Chin tribes	120
Important places of settlement	122
<i>Buorputang</i>	122
<i>Maini halung</i>	124
<i>Sajektang or Sejaitang</i>	125
<i>Barnangsip</i>	126
<i>Duapanthor</i>	126
Arsi En khuo Asa	128
Movement from Chittagng Hill Tracts	131
Settlement in plain and Hill Tipperah	132
<b>CHAPTER-11</b>	<b>(137-151)</b>
PERIOD OF MOVEMENT	
Period of movement	137
Copper plates description	139
General causes of movement	147
<b>CHAPTER-12</b>	<b>(153-183)</b>
THE HALAM AND TIPPERAH KINGDOM	
Evolution of Tipperah kingdom and the Halams	155
Conquest of Rangamati and the Halam	164
War and the role of the Halam	166
Role of the Halam in royal priesthood	170
Religious and cultural intercourse	171
War at Thanangsib	173
Oath of allegiance to Royal House	175
The Halams and Tipperah kingdom in eighteenth century	177

Hosom Bhujan and the Halam	182
<b>CHAPTER-13</b>	<b>185-269</b>
<b>SOCIAL FORMATION OF HALAM</b>	
General description	185
Emergence of clans	186
The Halam of Dhalai District	191
<i>Langkai clan</i>	191
<i>Achep clan</i>	193
<i>Saihmar clan</i>	197
<i>Dap or Nabin clan</i>	198
<i>Bowng clan</i>	200
<i>Marchafang clan</i>	204
The Halam of Unakoti and North Tripura District	206
<i>Chorei clan</i>	206
<i>Ranglong clan</i>	210
The Halam of west bank of Dhalai river and beyond	215
<i>Molsom clan</i>	215
<i>Kaipeng clan</i>	221
<i>Bongcher clan</i>	229
<i>Rangkhawl clan</i>	234
<i>Korbong clan</i>	238
Halam clan of mixed ancestry	240
<i>Rupini clan</i>	241
<i>Koloi clan</i>	244
Absorption and assimilation	247
Emergence of clan centric identity	250
Halam living outside Tripura	251
<i>Sakachep or Khelmas</i>	253
<i>Rangkhawl</i>	254
<i>Ranglong</i>	256
<i>Chorei</i>	257
Tribes closed to Halam	258



<i>Darlong</i>	256
<i>Zus or Ruankhurn</i>	263
<i>Biato</i>	264
<i>Aimol</i>	266

**CHAPTER-14**

**(271-298)**

**SOCIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM**

Introduction	271
Description of officials of Halam Darbar	281
<i>Halama-sa or Rai</i>	281
<i>Kamskaw or Kanchan</i>	283
<i>Kalim and Choudhury</i>	283
<i>Kabur</i>	285
<i>Panchitang or Tar or Tarpui</i>	285
<i>Bengpui</i>	285
<i>Chapia-Kalim</i>	285
<i>Chapia-Kabur</i>	285
<i>Jaksung</i>	285
<i>Chapia</i>	286
<i>Khuksung</i>	286
<i>Songja or Sengkarak</i>	286
<i>Hajira or Arok or Ser</i>	286
<i>Karbari</i>	287
<i>Mukhtiar</i>	287
<i>Tangwa or Tangsam or Doloi or Daria</i>	287
<i>Tuila</i>	287
<i>Tang-ulian or Kaithar</i>	287
Convention of sitting arrangement for officials of the Darbar	287
Installation ceremony of Kalim and other officials	288
Existing social administration	289
<i>Molsom Darbar</i>	290
<i>Chorei Darbar</i>	291
<i>Ranglong Darbar</i>	291

<i>Rangkhawl Darbar</i>	291
<i>Kaipeng Darbar</i>	292
<i>Langkai Darbar</i>	292
<i>Thangachep, Marchafang and Dap Darbar</i>	293
<i>Bowng, Sakachep and Saihmar Darbar</i>	293
<i>Bongcher and Korbong Darbar</i>	293
<i>Koloi Darbar</i>	294
<i>Rupini Dardar</i>	294
<i>Khelmas and Biate Darbar</i>	294
Evolution of social administration	294
Difference between social institution of the Halam and other Kuki-Chin tribes	296

**CHAPTER-15**

**299-346**

**SOCIAL CUSTOM AND TRADITIONS**

Concept of marriage	299
Custom and traditions of marriage	300
<i>Courting for marriage</i>	300
<i>Engagement and marriage</i>	301
<i>Marriage by elopment</i>	316
<i>Marriage by Ronglua or Bangpui-Chemjep</i>	316
<i>Ruolbum or Ruolmak</i>	318
<i>Ruolchan</i>	319
<i>Hmaksa or Sahmak</i>	319
<i>Kalthok zu or moithak zu</i>	321
<i>Moingak zu</i>	321
<i>Moitung zu</i>	321
<i>Dong-bing Achum</i>	321
<i>Escorting the bribe and bridegroom</i>	322
<i>Ralochai or Halokchai</i>	324
<i>Ukhel</i>	324
Cheating to lady love	324
Evolution of marriage tradition and custom	324

Elopement of married person	325
Remarriage of divorced wife and husband	326
Marriage of widow and widower	326
Divorce and custody of the children	327
Pre-marriage pregnancy	329
Adultery	329
Birth or delivery	331
Naitual insuak lo ramingphua (naming)	334
Abur rasik	335
Rice feeding of the baby (Parsen-pu)	335
Laibun	336
Derkei inkei or Dhuli inkei	336
R sa-bom or Luong-bom nbom	336
Upkeep and custody of orphan	337
Inheritance	337
Vow and Oath	337
Concept of deadman's abode and soul	338
Tradition and ritual for disposal of dead body	340
Theft and dacoit	343
Friendship by vow	343
Fathership and sonship by vow	344
Alteration and adoption of family clan	344
Concept of Halawk	345

#### **CHAPTER-16**

**347-364**

#### **DANCE AND FESTIVAL OF HAI AM**

Background	347
Jhum related Festivals	348
<i>Loival Lam</i>	348
<i>Hanoi Tung Lam or Anot Tung</i>	348
<i>Changdai</i>	350
<i>Sarkuangkhang or Cham-er and Loibol festival</i>	350
<i>Buthar nek and Sakungafai</i>	350

<i>Vailamkhuang Lam</i>	351
<i>Sapite Lam</i>	352
<i>Mainak Lam or Buchil Lam or Khambar Lam</i>	352
<i>Sakungbum zu or Lom zu nek</i>	353
<i>Sasen thar</i>	354
Social Festivals	354
<i>Telmari</i>	354
<i>Kaither Intheng Lam</i>	358
<i>Sarel Inteng or Kotek Lam</i>	359
<i>Ditna Lam</i>	359
<i>Tuithei Khuang or Tuikhuang Lam</i>	360
<i>Wathingkhok Lam</i>	361
<i>Kelte Lam or Birasi Khung Lam</i>	361
Religious related Festivals	361
<i>Dosera(Einu) Lam</i>	361
<i>Khuoser or Ker Puja</i>	361
<i>Bolong kat-li Lam</i>	362
<i>Dompui Roi Lam</i>	363
Musical instruments	364
Importance of zu in jhum and social festivals	364

## **CHAPTER-17**

**365-390**

### RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND RITUALS

Concept of religion	365
Category of Deities	368
Brief description of deities	369
Ancestral worship	380
Role of the Priest or Ochei	381
Diari Kai	383
Barowa	384
Importance of Omen (Sema)	384
Nature and mode of sacrifice	384
Manoshi or Vow	386

Importance of Zu in sacrifice	387
Synthesis of religious belief	387
<b>CHAPTER-18</b>	<b>391-402</b>
<b>DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS</b>	
General description	391
Processing cotton for weaving	393
Process for dyeing	394
Traditional Cloths and Dresses	395
Importance of weaving skill in society	398
Traditional ornaments	398
Amber necklace and story of Ralngam	401
<b>CHAPTER-19</b>	<b>403-407</b>
<b>GAMES AND SPORTS</b>	
Concept of the games and sports	403
Details of games and sports	403
Present trend	407
<b>CHAPTER-20</b>	<b>409-451</b>
<b>FAMILY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE</b>	
Traditional village	409
Traditional house	410
Traditional family	411
Traditional role of the woman	413
Traditional role of the old and elders	414
Traditional role of the youth	415
Tradition of hospitality	415
Background of economic life	416
Tradition of shifting cultivation or jhuming	420
Tradition of Lomzui	423
Tradition of Roisel or Fungkoi or Manlai	425
Tradition of entertainment and amusement	426
Traditional foods	427
Taboos in food consumption	430

Drinking tradition	431
Importance of family clan	432
Custom of social and family relationship	432
Superstition and taboos	433
Dream	437
Tradition of livestock domestication	438
Borrowing and lending tradition	439
Weaving and dyeing tradition	439
Tradition of cane and bamboo work	441
Fishing tradition	444
Hunting tradition	445
Group hunting	446
Individual hunting	446
Hunting by trapping	447
<i>Fowl trap</i>	447
<i>Bird's trap</i>	447
<i>Animal dead trap</i>	448
<i>Spear trap</i>	448
<i>Bird's Lime</i>	448
<i>Tiger trap</i>	449
<i>Spring pole snare</i>	449
<i>Pitfall trap</i>	450
<i>Dove trap</i>	450
Evolution of family and social-economic life	450

## **CHAPTER-21**

**453-470**

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE HALAM SOCIETY

Arrival of Christian faith	453
In road of Christian faith in Halam society	457
Contribution of Missionaries in education	462
Positive impact of Christian faith	465
Adverse impact of Church activities	468

**CHAPTER-22****(471-518)****LANGUAGE**

Comparison of vocabularies of the Ilalam with allied tribes	473
Calender months and week	506
Days of the week	508
Foreign words	508
Grammer	510
<i>Nouns</i>	511
<i>Pronounce</i>	512
<i>Case</i>	512
<i>Adjective</i>	512
<i>Verb</i>	513
<i>The tense</i>	515
<i>Change of voice</i>	516
<i>Adverb</i>	516
<i>Preposition</i>	518
<i>Conjunction</i>	518
<i>Articles</i>	518

**CHAPTER-23****(519-529)****FOLK SONG AND STORIES**

Story of orphan brother and the woman	519
Story of a brother and sister	522
Story of Sumsormonpa	523
Folk song	525

**BIBLIOGRAPHY****(530-536)****LIST OF INFORMANTS****(537-538)****PHOTOGRAPHY****(539-556)**

# CHAPTER - 1

## INTRODUCTION

Anyone familiar with the history of Tipperah kingdom could be expected to have fair knowledge about the Halam tribe as they were indigenous tribe who were associated with historical events of Tipperah kingdom in the past. But the name of the tribe was almost unknown before nineteenth century as nobody had intimate knowledge about most of the hill tribes of Tipperah Kingdom. The copper plate of Rajah Adhi Dharmapha (Dungurpha or Harirai) of 641 A.D as depicted by Rangunandan Bhattacharjee and the copper plate of 1195 A.D. identified the Halams as *Kuki* tribe. *Rajmala* (volume one), the royal chronicle of Tripurah, written in fifteenth century mentioned the Ranglong, Langkai and Kaipeng clans of the Halam as *Kukis*. The "*Krishnamala*", the chronicle of Rajah Krishna Mnaikya, written in eighteenth century also identified the Sakachep, Thangchep, Saihmar, Ranglong, Chorei, Bowng, Korbong, Langkai, Rangkhawl clans of Halam tribe as *Kuki*. The Brahmin bards and scholars under the patronage of the Rajas who composed these chronicles had little knowledge about the social life of hill tribes of the erstwhile Tipperah kingdom. The fact of the matter was that all the *Kuki-Chin* tribes were known to the Bengalees and Assamese in India as *Kuki*, and to the Burmese as *Chins* (written *Khyin*); and *Kuki-Chin* has been adopted as a composite and inclusive name. Grierson, based on the dialect, had categorised the Halam tribe as one of the branch of *Old Kukis*. About the Old Kukis of Cachar and Tipperah, L.A Waddell observed that "*Tipperah seem to belong to the Langrong sept as the Rangkhawl*". Alexander Mackenzie, while describing Kuki raid in 1849, wrote that "*a village of Halam, a class of Tipperah living within our border, had been cut up and another village plundered*". W.W. Hunter described the Halam "*as undoubtedly of kuki origin and their language is a mere dialect of Kuki and a kuki and a Halam can readily understand each other*". George Abraham Grierson wrote "*as far as can be seen from scanty material at my*



## Introduction

*disposal, Khehna and Sokajab are identical with Halam*". Alexander Mackenzie identified Halam chiefs and subordinate officials such as *Raj. Cabir, Chapih, and Cabir* as the chiefs of Kukis. C. A. Soppitt described the Rangkhawl, Sakachep and Biate clans of the Halam tribe as *Kukis*. Neither the Bengalee Brahmin nor the British scholars had fair idea and knowledge about the Halam tribe. W.W. Hunter mentioned 5577 numbers of Halam population in 1874-75 A.D.as against 2011 numbers of Kuki population in the same period in the Tipperah kingdom. In subsequent census return too, Halam and Kuki population were shown separately. Prince Sumendra Chandra Debbarma, who was Census Officer and Nayab Dewan of the kingdom, categorized the Halam as a branch of Kukis who first acknowledged the authority of the Rajah of Tipperah. About the Kuki, Grierson again observed that "*kuki is an Assamese or Bengali term, applied to various hill tribes, such as Lushai, Rangkhawl, Thadoe etc. It seems to have been known at a comparatively early period*". The Halam subtribes or clans namely Molsom, Rangkhawl, Kaipeng, Chorei, Langkai, Marchafang, Ranglong, Bengcher, Bowng etc. of Tripura or Assam never considered themselves as *Kuki tobe*, and the same was the case with other Kuki-Chin tribes. They regard the designation of "*Kuki*" as derogatory and affront to their tribes and resented to be called by this name. Kuki identity was forced on a section of hill tribes by the plain people, particularly, the Bengalee Brahmins of undivided Tipperah kingdom. In the context of Tripura, Darlong and Lushai (Mizos) were enumerated as "*Darlong-kuki*" and "*Lushai-kuki*" respectively in the census of 1931 A.D. From the first census in Tipperah kingdom in 1871-72, the Rangkhawl, Chorei, Ranglong, Langkai, Sakachep, Thangachep, Molsom, Kaipeng, Bengcher, Korhawang, Saimar, Dap, Marchafang etc. were clubbed together and enumerated as "*Halam*", and those tribes who were thought to be *Kukis* were enumerated separately. The wrong notion about Kuki tribe has been persisting even today. Thus, in the official list of tribes in Assam, even the *Reang* tribe has been listed as *Kuki*, though the Reang called themselves as *Bru*. In any case, the word *Kuki* has never been acceptable even today, except by those who work in the Government. The Lushai and some Kuki-Chin tribes, who now live in Mizoram and adjoining places, rather now call themselves as "*Mizo*" in place of "*Kuki*". Many other Kuki-Chin tribes such as the Hmar, Thado, Vaiphei, Kom, Paite

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

etc. have been able to enlist the name of their respective tribe as separate identity in the presidential order of the Government of India. In Tipperah kingdom, since the time immemorial, the Old Kuki tribes had been familiar to the Tipras as "*Halam*" because this was the name given by them, and the *Kukis* were called *Sikam*. The Tipras had different perception about the people they called *Sikam*. For the Tipras, the *Sikams* were those who committed raids, plunder and killing in other villages in the by-gone days. The Halam were their good neighbour with whom they cultivated social relationship and had lived in harmony since the time immemorial. Thus W.W. Hunter wrote stating that "*the custom of the Hallams are becoming more closely allied with those of the Tipperahs, -for example the Hallams wear dhutis like the Tipperahs, while the Kukis do not. - Again, Hallams and Tipperahs can live in the same village, so can Kukis and Hallams, but not Kukis and Tipperahs.*" On the basis of the report of British political agent stationed at Agartala in 1873 A.D., W.W. Hunter highlighted the existence of the Halam tribe in Tipperah kingdom. In subsequent period, in all census records of Tipperah kingdom, the Halams and the Kukis were enumerated as separate tribes. The fact was that the Halams were native people and their association with Tipras and Tipperah kingdom had been from ancient period. This fact had been recognized by the Prince Somendra Chandra Debbarman in his book "*Census Biborani*". Even today considerable number of the Halam people lives in Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of Assam. In Mizoram, the Halam live in adjoining area of Tripura. In neighbouring Bangladesh, several thousand Halam people live in the district of Syhlet and Habiganj and most of them work in tea gardens. There were three important reasons for such dispersal of the Halams in different neighbouring regions. One important reason was shifting cultivation, which made them semi-nomadic, the other reason was *Khuosak ral*, i.e., raiding of the Kukis, Pawis and the Lusheis etc, which took place from seventeenth century onwards. Lastly, shrinking of geographical boundary of Tipperah Kingdom after the arrival of the East India Company, and many regions where the Halams lived were left out of the Tipperah Kingdom.

In the past, Tipperah kingdom was a significant power in the North-Eastern India and commended authority over neighbouring rulers; and the geographical area of Tipperah kingdom was much larger as

## Introduction

compared to the present one. Its boundary in the north was Barak river, in the north-east was Tipaimukh which has now been incorporated in present Manipur; in the east entire present Mizoram was within Tipperah kingdom. Part of Chittagang, Noakhali, Comilla and southern part of undivided Dhylet districts had been part of Tipperah kingdom at different historical periods. Afghan and Mughal invad in Bengal and their expansion shrank the territory of Tipperah kingdom in subsequent period. The Halams lived in this vast empire-like Tipperah kingdom, and in course of long period, they developed social relationship with their immediate neighbour-the Tipras and also developed commercial relationship with the plain people, the Bengalees. Since the ruling dynasty of the kingdom was connected to Tipras, the Halam society became Tipra-centric. This was the reason that many social customs and tradition of the Halams evolved in the pattern of Tipras. In term of the number of population, the Halam were large enough as compared to Tipras; hearsay abound among the elders that in the past the size of Halam population was almost as large as the Tipras; and one of the reasons for their reduced size of population was continuous conscription as soldiers by the royal house for the battle field. Although the Halams have scattered in different region such as Nagaland, Jaintia hills in Meghalaya, North Cachar Hills (Dima Hasao District) and Karbi Anglong district in Assam, they have been maintaining some age old customs and democratic social institution. Nonetheless, the Halam living in other parts of India and neighbouring Bangladesh were under the threat of assimilation as they were weak and backward in term of socio-economic condition and also due to small size of their population. In Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram the *Rongkhrol* and the *Biate* clans of the Halams have officially been recognized as sub tribes of the Kukis, and strangely, the *Sakzohp* clan has been listed as *Khebra*, and as the sub tribe of the Kukis. More curious matter was that *Cherri* and *Ronglong* clans of the Halam have been living several centuries in the northwestern part of Mizoram and Barak valley, but they have not been officially recognised in Assam, and as a result they have been subjected to official harassment and humiliation on different issues. It was also note worthy that some Halam tribes, particularly, the *Cherri* and the *Ronglong* clans living at certain village in Barak valley even now assume the surname as "*Tipras*" to demonstrate their closeness to Tipperah

### **History and culture of the Halam tribe**

kingdom. This simple fact testified the process of assimilation of some clans of the Halam tribe into the fold of Tipras in past ages. The rulers of Tipperah kingdom encouraged the Halams to develop a distinct social institution which was uncommon in other Kuki-Chin tribes. The Rrangkhawl, Biate, Sakachep (Khelma) or Chorei etc. now living in other States have no reason to regard themselves as separate tribe from the Halam tribe of Tripura. Distinctiveness of the social institution of the Halams from the social institution of other Kuki-Chin-Lushei tribes was noticeable. The social institution of the Halams headed by *Rai, Kalim, Ser kalim, Kabur* or *Chapias* etc. were democratically chosen by the elders of the village as contrast to despotic and hereditary Chief of other Kuki-Chin tribes, which was unique in itself. Sadly, now the trend among defferent clans of the Halam community appeared to be more emphasis on identity based on respective clan, without considering the facts that their very social institutions and social customs were uniquely Halam centric. The Bietes, Hrangkhawl, Khelmas (Sakachep), Chorei or Ranglong of Meghalaya and Assam cannot escape from the fold of Halam community as long as they follow the social institution headed by democratically elected village elders such as *Kalim, Kabur, Chapias* etc. The Molsoms, Rangkhawl, Kaipeng and Ranglongs of Tripura too can not escape from Halam identity as long as they adhere to the social institution headed by *Rai(Halamsa), Kalim, Kabur, Chapias, Sengjas* etc. Moreover, their social customs and traditions were uniquely same as other Halam clans, which bound them together.



## CHAPTER - 2

# ETHNIC IDENTITY OF THE HALAM

**Ancient identity :** G.A. Grierson, in his book titled as *“The Linguistic survey of India”* categorized the Halam, alongwith other Kuki-Chin tribes, as Tibeto-Burman ethnic group of Sino-Tibetan race. According to Taw Sein Kho, a Burmese historian in Cambridge university, *“ethnically these(Kuki-Chin) tribes belonged to that vaguely defined and yet little understood stock, the Turanian,which includes among others the Chinese,Tibetans,Manchus, Japanese, Annamese, Siamese, and the Turks. The evidence of language, so far as it has been studied, leaves little doubt that ages ago China exercised much influence on these Turanian races, whose habitat, it is said, included the whole of at least Northern India before its conquest by the Aryans”*. Morphologically the Kuki-Chin tribes have been categorized as Tibeto-Burman ethnic family of Sino-Tibetan race; and they were aboriginal people of ancient China as those of Tai, Mia-Yao and Mon-Khmer. According to Gordon Luce, the ancestors of Tibeto-Burman were to be found among the *Chi’iang* (K’iang); and they were pastoral people who kept their goats and sheeps in Shanshi and on the Shanshi hills; and they were barbarians, whose movements had been from the region called *Koko Nor* and source of the Wei and Min rivers down into Sichuan. Professor D.G.E.Hall described the *Chi’iang* as mountain dwellers; and they were shepherd and goatherd to the North-West of China in 200 B.C. In his book *“A History of Chinese civilization”* Jacques Gernet mentioned *Chieh, Hsiung-nu* (hun), *Hsien-pei, Ti* and *Ch’iang* tribes as five *“Barbarian”* and they belonged to different people. *Ch’iang* and *Ti* tribes were related to Tibetan and Tangut tribes of later age and were from north western border of China. The other three tribes namely-*Hsiung-nu, Hsiungpei* and *Chieh* were nomadic cattle raisers of the steppe region; and their language belonged to the group which includes *Turkish, Mongolian* and *Tungus*. The social and political organization of *Ch’iang* and *Ti* tribes was tribal system of normal people with military

### Ethnic Identity of the Halam

organization. The mythical belief of the Kuki-Chin tribes was that originally they came out from *Sinlung* cave which was believed to be a place in China. In recent time there has been an attempt to find out the place called *Sinlung* but no such place said to have exist in any part in South-east Asia and China. Most of the clans of the Halam too said to have come out of stone cave but no *Sinlung* tradition exist among the Halam. After all, *Sinlung* was related to legend and legend sometime found to be myth only. However, there was an attempt to rationalise the legend with rational interpretation. According to Dr. Ro-chunga Pudiata, *Chinlung* was said to mean not a cave but was the name of the Chinese prince *Chinlung*. He was the son of *Shi Huang-Ti* of *Ch'ia* dynasty, the first emperor of China who built the Great Wall of China. The prince incurred the displeasure of his father and left his kingdom and settled in Myanmar. The scholars, including C.A Grierson, identified the Kuki-Chin tribes as Tibeto-Burman ethnic group whose ancient homeland was Gobi-Desert and the north-east Tibet in Kansu. The people who belonged to *Ch'iang* tribe had been the ancestors of Tibeto-Burman and ideograph of *Ch'iang* mean simply sheep-raisers and their land was known as "*Taan-ti*" or the "*grass-land*" to the Chinese. While someone worshipping *Ch'iang* claimed to be pastoralists in Chinese history. They were also known as *Tibeto-Tangut*. About the ethnic identity, the Halams has a poem or oral tradition which was like this –

*"Sinlung Chinlung mamashi  
kisa Hien chitak kan-zi"*

The proverb said that "*we are the people of Hien descendent who came out from a cave which was covered by stone lid in Chin mountain*". All the tradition of the Lushais, Kukis, Halams and other Mizo or Chin tribes handed down from generation to generation maintained that they came out of a cave covered with stone lid. Who were Hien people? The Halams used to call "*human being*" as "*Hien*", or "*M'orien*" and in fact most of the time they identified themselves as "*Hien*", apart from the identity of their clan. In Chinese, the word "*Hien*" or "*Yin*" means "*human being*" and "*Hien*" was the corruption of this Chinese word "*Hien* or *Yin*". But due to long association with the Tipras or Tripuris, the Halams also borrowed the word "*Mamashi*", a corruption of the Tripuri word "*Mamashit*", which means "*human being*". On the other hand, the Tipras i.e, Tripuris borrowed the word *Mamashy* from Bengali word *Mamash*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

or *Manushya*, which means *human being*. The word *Munusuh* of the Tipras was the corrupted form of the Bengali word *Manush*. Thus, the word *Manmashi* was the corruption of the word *Munushu*. In other words, the corrupted form of the Bengali word *Manush* or *Manushya* (noun) was *Munushu* word of the Tipras. The word *Chintang* means *Chin Hills*, and this *Chintang* could be *Chin Hill* of Myanmar or otherwise.

**Origin of Kuki identity:** The word “*Kuki*” seemed to have appeared first in the copper plate inscription during the reign of King Dharmadhar of Tipperah kingdom in 1195 A.D. A portion of the copper plate inscription mentioned by the historian Kaliprasannah Sen in his book ‘*Rajmala*’ written in Sanskrit read like this –

*“Prachang Longlai Kuki-sthanong  
Protichang Gopal nodi”*

This means “*in the east is a place of the Kukis known as Longlai and in the west is Gopala river*” (both in Syhlet), now in Bangladesh. The word “*Kuki*” also appeared in the book called *Vedic Sangbadini*” composed by Raghunandan Bhattacharya in sixteenth century. The word “*Kuki*” had also been mentioned in the first Volume of “*Rajmala*”, the royal chronicle of Tipperah kingdom written in 1409 A.D by Pandit Baneswar and Sukreswar, the Brahmin residents of Syhlet. In the first volume of “*Rajmala*” the *Ranglong*, *Kaipeng* and *Langkai* clans of the Halam tribe, was mentioned as “*Kuki*” subject of Tripura. The *Rajmala* also mentioned both the words–*Kuki* and “*Kiratas*”. It was difficult to differentiate between the two words–*Kukis* and *Kiratas*. The fact of the matter was that all the *Kuki tribes* were counted as *Kiratas*, but all the *Kiratas* were not regarded as *Kukis*. Most of the hill and plain tribes of mongolian racial stock in the northeastern region were recorded in ancient Hindu scripture as *Kiratas*. Among the English scholars, Rowling was the first who wrote about the “*Cucis or mountaineers of Tripura*” in *Asiatic Researches* (II, xii) in A.D,1793. About the *Kuki-Chin* tribes of *Chin Hills* of Myanmar, Betram S.Carey and H.N.Tuck stated that “*those of the kuki tribes which we designate as “Chin” do not recognized that name, which is said to be a Burmese*”. They further observed saying that “*without pretending to speak with authority on the subject, we think we may reasonably accept the theory that the kukis of Manipur, the Lushei of Bengal and Assam and the Chin originally lived in what we now know as Tibet and are of one and the same stock, their form of government,*



### **Ethnic Identity of the Halam**

*method of cultivation, manners and customs, belief and tradition all points one origin*". According to G.A. Grierson the "Kulis is an Assamese or Bengali term applied to various hill tribes, such as the Lushei, Kanglewot, and Thais etc. The word is, more specially, used to denote the various tribes which have successively been driven from the Lushei hills and Chin hill into surrounding country to the north and west". The fact was that Bengalees were the plain dwellers with whom the Halam tribe had close contact from early period; but plain people had little knowledge about the ethnic composition and racial identities of the hill tribes, particularly, about the Halams. So the word "Kuli" was coined by the Bengalees and Assamese to identify the Halams, who were their neighbour living in the hills. Grierson was of the view that the Kuli was an identity given by the Bengalees and Assamese to hill tribes. Thus, the word Kuli appeared to have originated from the Bengali word "Kuliri", which means "mischievous deed". Thus, the word 'Kuli' was the corrupted form of the word "Kuliri". The hill tribes in general and the Kuki-Chin-Lushei tribes in particular were warlike people. The Kuki Chin tribes as a whole were feuding and raiding tribes; and most of the time these tribes were not in peace even among themselves, and the Halams were no exception in the past. Living in the mountainous and inaccessible region, they would frequently come down in the plain to commit plunder and raid in the villages in plain areas, and this very act of plunder and raid in plain areas was viewed as mischievous deed by the plain people. The Halams were the advance guard among the Kuki Chin tribes, who were in the north eastern region in the far off time, and the other Kuki Chin Lushei tribes were late comers, who trailed behind the Halams. Possibly, the ancestors of the Halams, like any other Kuki Chin tribes, might have frequently raided, looted and committed atrocities on plain people, which the Halam called *Rai*, and by the Tipras as *Choba*. For such heinous and savage deeds, the Halams people were identified as *Kuli* by the Bengalees; though in subsequent period all other Kuki Chin tribes got the identity as *Kuli*. Even in eighteenth century, pandit Ranganga Sarma, the composer of *Krishnamala* (the chronicle of King Krishna Manikya), identified the Halam tribes, particularly, the Sakachep, Thangachep, Chorei, Ranglong, Sakhmar, Korbong, Bowng and Hirangkhowl as *Kulis*. The identity of Halam came to light outside Tipperah kingdom

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

only after the arrival of Britishers in Bengal. Historian W.W.Hunter and some other English scholars exposed to the outside world the separate identity of the “Halams”. In fact historian Hunter identified the Darlongs and Lusheis only as *Kuki*, not the Halam. W.W. Hunter observed that “*the Kukis of Hill Tipperah are the same race as the Lusheis, who live further to the east and who call themselves as Kachha Kukis. To the Burmese they are known as Lankhe. Most of the Kukis in Hill Tipperah live in northern portion of the hill, and the tribe is there known by the name of Dalang (Darlong)*”. Before the seventeenth century most of the Kuki-Chin tribes namely Darlong, Lushei, Rokhums etc. were unknown in Tipperah kingdom as they had been living in interior part of present Mizoram and possibly, they had no proper contact with the plain people of Bengal. On the other hand, the historical evidence revealed the fact that even before the twelfth century the Halams were the natives of the undivided Tipperah kingdom; to be specific they were in Cachar of Assam, Tuipaimukh region of present Manipur, northern part of present Mizoram, Comilla, Chittagang and undivided Sylhet districts of Bangladesh and also in Hill Tipperah. Therefore, it was beyond doubt that the “*Kukis*” mentioned at copper plate issued by king Dharmadhar of Tipperah kingdom and in the royal chronicle, namely the ‘*Rajmala*’ were none other than the Halams. The Halams and the Tipperahs or Tipras were the hill tribes with whom the Bengalees first came into contact in the kingdom. On the other hand, in the *Rajmala*, the royal chronicle, the Tipras were identified as *Kiratas*. The Aryan Brahmins, who served as priests in the royal house, were cycophents and always attempted to please the kings by conferring new sanskritised titles or designation. Tipperahs were the ruling clan, and it was natural that the Brahmin priests would confer more dignified sanskritised identity such as *Kiratas*, though the actual *Kiratas* live in Nepal. In subsequent period, the influx of the Lusheis, Lais, Lakhers, the Hmars and the Thados etc. tribes in the eastern part of Tipperah kingdom (present Mizoram) changed the concept of *Kuki* tribe. From the first part of the nineteenth century onward the *Halams* identity became more pronounced. The identity of *Kuki* became more specific, and became associated with Lusheis, Darlong, Raltes, Hmar, Zos and other Kuki-Chin tribes, the tribes not included in the Halam identity. After the creation of Mizoram, Mizo identity became more

### Ethnic Identity of the Halam

prominent; and the trend has been to absorb all Kuki Chin tribes in India into the fold of Mizo society. Now Mizo identity has assumed national identity for all Lushai-Kuki-Chin-Hmar-Halam, other allied and connected tribes in India.

**Origin of Halam identity :** The identity of mainstream population of Kuki-Chin tribes in Mizoram in the past was *Lushai*, but now Mizo identity have replaced the Lushai. But the mainstream population of Kuki-Chin tribes in Tripura kingdom was known as the *Halam* from the past. In Manipur, Assam and Meghalaya too, large number Kuki-Chin tribes have been living and they were known by the name of their respective tribes. These Kuki Chin tribes were the Biabe, Khelma, Rangkhawl, Thados, Hmar, Paito, Vaiphei, Chru, Kom, Aimol, Koirang, Anal, Lamgang, and Gangte etc. All these tribes were collectively known as *Kakis*, though most of them have managed to enlist gradually as separate tribes with the Government, of India in subsequent period. The identity of *Halam* was given by the rulers of Tipperah kingdom. The meaning of *Halam* could be traced on proper interpretation and analysis of the words *Halam* since none of the available records provided much help. The very word *Halam* was historically associated with Tipperah kingdom. The *Tipras* would identify themselves as *Tipra-sa*, which means "*Children of River's confluence*"; and they got this identity during their settlement in Surma-Kushiyara rivers' valley. Likewise, the word *Halam* originated from the Tripuri word *Halam-sa*, which means "*Children of Mountain*". In Tipras' dialect or Kokborok language the word "*Halam*" means "*lefty mountain or High hill*", and the word *sa* means "*children*" in Tipra language. When the word "*Halam*" was combined with the word "*sa*" it became "*Halam-sa*", which, if translated into English, it means "*Children of Mountain*" and; which in Bangali language means "*Pahari-Sontar*". Possibly, the rulers of Tipperah Kingdom gave the honorary title of *Halam-sa* to the chiefs of different Halam clans. In subsequent period, this title (*Halam-sa*) evolved into sanskritised title called *Raj*, which further got refined as *Roy*. Even today the Ranglong, Molsom, Kaipeng, Rangkhawl, etc. clans of the Halam called their chief as *Halam-sa*. The Tipras (including the Reang tribe) have the tradition of calling their close neighbours, particularly, the Bengali as *Vra-sa*, the Mohammedan as *Thouk-sa*, the Manipuri as *Mugli-sa*, and the Kuki as *Slam sa* and the Tipras called themselves as *Tipra-sa*. This was also

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

the case about the Dimasa Kachari tribe of North Cachar Hills (now Dima Hasao District). Though the Dimasas ethnically belonged to Bodo tribe, they identified themselves as "*Dimasa*", which means the "*Children of Big water*". A section of the Eastern Bodos lived in part of the Surma Valley and including the range of hills which make up the watershed between the Brahmaputra and Surma valley; and the big water was "*Brahmaputra River*" as observed by the anthropologist, namely, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee. For inhabiting between this watershed region of Brahmaputra and Surma valley, the *Hill Kacharis* called themselves *Dimasa*, which means the "*Children of Big water*". The word *Dima* means *Big water* and the word *Sa* means *Children*. In plain Assam, they called themselves as *Bodo Kachari*. Thus, without going into further detail, it could be said that the word "*Halam*" was the corrupted form of the word "*Halama-sa*". It was noteworthy that the Chief of the Halam tribe was called *Halama-sa*. The Halam first came into contact with the *Tipras* at Surma-Kushiyara rivers' valley, possibly, the Halams were their neighbouring hill people living in surrounding hilly regions. Following the long association with the *Tipras* and subsequent cultural and social intercourse, the societal values, belief and way of life of the Halam in many ways became more akin to the culture and tradition of *Tipras*. Long separation from other *Kuki-Chin* tribes and continuous social and cultural intercourse of the Halams with the *Tipras* for many centuries had resulted in assimilation, absorption and the emergence of Halam society which was different from other *Kuki-Chin* tribes. Many belief, custom and practices of Hindu religion had also been transmitted to Halam society in course of long period of social contact with the plain people. Thus, the Halam society developed distinct social traits which was different from the Kukis.

**Kinship of Halams with the Lusheis and allied tribes :** Zahmuaka was regarded as the real founder of all Lushei clans. The people of old, known as Hnamte or common people, lived separately in clans but no co-ordinating leader was forthcoming because in those ancient days all feared that any new chief would be plundered by the Pawis or Chins tribes of the Chin Hills. But the Hnamte always hoped for a chief and called on one Zahmuaka; but his first reactions was unfavourable, he having dreamed that the stream of water from his penis fell as a fountain spray over the many hills around, an omen he did not consider

### Ethnic Identity of the Halam

propitious, but Zahmuaka's rule prospered. His son Thangura had seven sons namely Rokhum, Thangluah, Palian, Zadeng, Rivung, Sailova and youngest one died at infancy. The Sailos claimed to be descended from Sailova, one of the seven sons of Thangura; and a great grandson of Zahmuaka. Sailova had a son in time named Chungnunga, who ruled over seven thousands houses at a place called *Salesih*. It was Chungnunga's ability which paved the way for the Sailos' greatness. The Sailos had to vanquish in battle their kinsmen who included the Thangluah, the Rivungs, the Zadengs and the Palian, all of whom were still holding in separate villages in some strength in order to gain unchallenged paramountcy in North Lushai Hills. Thus the Sailos subdued the Palian and Zadengs, all their kinsmen, and established their supremacy over the erstwhile North Lushai Hills. Mangpura Sailo, the virile son of the great Lallula Sailo, chief leader of Sailo migration, rooted out the powerful Zadengs and established supremacy over the North Lushai Hills. Shakespear mentioned the traditions of the Paites, Thado and other tribes which said that, Thangura, the father of Sailova and six others, was born from the union of a Burmese with a Paite woman. Further, Shakespear also said that the traditions of Paites tribe held that the Lushais descended from the one namely-Boklua and illegitimate son of the Paite Chief Ngehguka. The tradition of Thado tribe held that some hunters tracking serao noticed the foot marks of a child following these animals, and on surrounding the serao they found its suckling a child who became the great chief Thangura. According to Shakespear, Thangura lived at Thangkhua village, east of Palam in present Myanmar in the early eighteenth century, and ruled over a small area. The descendents of Thangura were called chief's clans of Lushais by the Mizo historians and they were-

Zadeng,  
Palian,  
Thangluah,  
Rivung,  
Rokhum,  
Sailo

Apart from these six chief's clans, there were ten common clans of Lushais with many more subclans or family clans. These clans and subclans or family clans were:

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

- (i) **Pachuaau** : Sub clans of Pachuaau were Lianthung, Lianghawr, Lalbawma thlah, Cher lal, Chhawnthliak, Chuaulak, Darcho, and Varchuaau.
- (ii) **Chhangte** : Sub clans of this clan were Darchhun, Pamte, Vawknghak, Kawlchi, Nghakchi, Lungte, Chawnglun, Lumthang and Tumpaha.
- (iii) **Chawngte** : Tuichhung, Lungte, Pamte and Muchhip chhuak were the family clans of this clan.
- (iv) **Chuaungo** : Vanpuia, Chumthluk, Darkim, Zawngpam, Hmumpel, Thlehnghei, Laller and Auhmun were the sub clans of this clan.
- (v) **Chuahang** : Sub clans of this clan were Lathang, Chungpui, Chawn chhawn, Chawn chirh, Khunglawi and Vai chuau.
- (vi) **Chhakchhuak** : This clan had three sub clans with fifteen cognate family clans. The sub clans were (a) Hualngo, (b) Hualhang
- (vii) **Lumkhua** : Cognate family clans of Hualngo were chalthleng, Bochung, Khupno and Cherpu. Hualhang had seven cognate family clans such as Chalbuk, Baichi, Chumkhal, Taihlung, Chertluang, Khupno and Fangte. Cognate family clans of this Lumkhua clan were Sialchhung, Ngalsi, Ngalchhung and Phungchi.
- (viii) **Hauhnaar** : This clan has four sub clans namely Hauthul, Haubul, Tuithang and Senlai. (8) Hrahsel : Selpui, Sawnthung Sumkhum and Saza were the family clans of this sub clan.
- (ix) **Tochhawng** : This clan had five sub clans such as Topui, Chhakawm, Tobul, Chemhler and Muchhipchhuak.
- (x) **Vanchhawng** : This Lushei clan had five sub clan and these were Vanhung, Sumkhum, Chemhler, Chengrel and Kaithum.

The Sailos, who ruled the erstwhile North Lushai Hills, absorbed almost all the tribes living in neighbouring regions. Thus, N.E. Parry (I.C.S.) observed that *“one of the most striking characteristics of the Lushais is their capacity for absorbing other races. This process began before they came under British rule and has continued ever since. Most of the tribes in the Lushai Hills district have been strongly influence by the Lushais both as to their customs and their language and it may be said that the only villages which have maintained their tribal customs free from Lushai are the Lakher (Maras) and to a lesser degree the Chin villages in Lungleh sub division”*. Thus, the Lusheis were able to absorb other non-Lushei tribes chiefly the Raltes, Fanais, Kiangtes, Khawhrings, Chawngthus, Renthleis, Vanchiau, Chawhtes, Ngentes, Pautus, Rawites, Zawngtes, Vangchhias, Punttes, Paihtes,

### Ethnic Identity of the Halam

Suktes and large number of Hmar tribe. The Kaites and Fanais once had powerful chiefs but they were conquered by the Sailo chiefs and their tribes were absorbed into mainstream Lushai tribe. This prompted Shakespear to include tribes such as Chawte, Chongthi, Hramte, Khawlhing, Khiangte and Ngente tribes within the term of Lushai and the Fanai tribe as under the influence of Lushais. Many Kuki-Chin tribes, particularly, the Hmars, Thados, Jines, Hrangkhawls, Darlongs and some Halam clans saved themselves from complete absorption by migrating to neighbouring kingdoms in Manipur, Assam and Tripura. Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear, who was the first Superintendent of Lushai Hills, stated that *"among the people themselves the Lushais are sometimes spoken of as Duhian, at the derivation of which I will hazard no guess and the general population of the hills is spoken of as 'Mizo'".* According to Mr. Davis' Gazetteer of the North Lushai Hills *"the general term that includes all the inhabitants of the North Lushai Hills, except for 'Pai', is 'Mizo' or 'Mizau', of which the principal sub divisions are as follows:- (a) Duhian or Teshai, (b) Mhar, (c) Ralte and (d) Paita".* According to L.B. Thanga, (I.A.S. retired), the word *MIZO* was a compound of *MI* and *ZO* and was generally translated as *Hillman*. While the translation of the word *MI* as a person was correct, the translation of the word *ZO* was not proper or satisfactory because this word carried with it the concept of health and pleasantness. Very often, the word *Tiang* meaning a hill or mountain was used jointly with the word *ZO*. For example, the word *"Oat Zo tiang"* itself conveyed more about the health and pleasantness of the village or the hill rather than the mere fact of the village being located atop a hill. Further, he maintained that the word *Lushai* was the corruption of the word *Luzai* meaning *Loughhead*, which was the name of one of the many sub tribes constituting the Mizos. According to Prince Somendra Chandra Deb Barman, Nayab Dewan of Tipperah kingdom, *Lushai* was the name given by the Kacharis. The word *Lu* means head and the word *Sai* means to chop off (the head). But Major A.G. MacCall believed that procuring head was not indigenous Lushai custom, but an adaptation of custom under the influence of the Zahacs and Haka Chins of Burma Hills, among whom the custom was widespread. Besides, burying victim with the victorious chiefs in the graves at their death was also adaptation of the custom of other tribes. The fact of the matter was that Kacharis of whom Somendra Chandra Deb Barman spoke about, could be the Halams living

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

in Barak valley. The Bangalees living in Cachar often mistakenly identified the *Halams* with the *Tipras*. There was reason behind such misplaced conception. Many Halams living in the Barak valley used the word *Tripura* as their surname. Thus, Upendra Chandra Guha, in his book titled "*Kacharer Itibriti*" projected the Halam dialect as that of Tripuri language. There were differing views even among the Mizo scholars about the meaning of the word *Lushei*. Some Mizo historians regarded the Halams as earlier settlers of present Mizoram. The old traditions and folksongs point to the fact that the Halams were the one of the earliest known inhabitants of present Mizoram, which was a part of greater Tipperah kingdom.

The Lusheis would call all the Old Kuki tribes, which include the Halams, as *Khuotlang*, meaning "*Westerner*". On the other hand, the Halams would call the Lushei as "*Khousak*", literal meaning of which was "*Easterners*" because the Lushei were living in the east in relation to the places inhabited by the Old Kuki tribes, including the Halams. The Kuki- Chin-Lushei tribes were always at war against each other. The Lusheis were constantly pursued by more powerful tribes from the east, particularly, the Chins i.e. Pawi; and in order to better withstand their onslaught, a number of sub tribes combined together to form into one large village with more than 7000 houses which they built at *Selesih* in around 1740 AD under the chiefship of Chhungnunga, about fifteen kilometers north of Aizawl town. But such a large village could not sustained itself for long as there was not enough drinking water, fire wood, and enough jhum land for cultivation. Therefore, some of the tribes migrated further west in search of new lands. But the north and westward movement of the Lusheis caused the conflict with the Thados, the Darlongs and many other Old Kuki tribes. According to Shakespear "*when the Thangur had firmly established themselves and the capable Sailo chiefs had come to the front, they felt equal to fighting the Thado clans, which were as highly organized as themselves. The Sailo chiefs triumphed, and hence the eruption of the New Kukis, alias Thados and cognate clans, into Silchar in about 1840 AD.*"

The Halams living at Tuipuumukh and northern region of present Mizoram had not been in good term with their immediate neighbour, the Thado Kukis. During his exile, Prince Krishnamoni lived among the Halam subjects; and he came to know how the Halam subjects of Tipperah kingdom were subjected to frequent looting, raid and massacre



### Ethnic Identity of the Halam

by this Thado kukis, which forced him to mobilize fighting men from the Halams subject and sent an expedition against the Thado kukis in the east. The Thadon kukis were known to Halams as *Khuochung*, meaning *Highlanders*; and they were immediate neighbours of the Halam in Luipaimukh region and Northern part of erstwhile Lushai Hills. The Thados were familiar as *New Kukis* to the plain people because they came into contact with the Kacharis and the Bengalees of Cachar region much later period. The Lushais, who lived further east, had been the immediate neighbour of the the Thados. But the Lushais and the Thados were also not in good term. Lallianvunga, the second son of Lallala, defeated the Thado kukis and forced them to take refuge in Cachar in 1847 AD. Lalngura Sailo, the son of Lallianvunga, raided the Thados in Cachar in 1849 AD and took captive. In 1850 A.D, when Colonel Lister launched a surprise attack to the village of Lalngura, he burnt down the village to the ground liberating no less than four hundreds Thado kuki captives. The Lushais were so infuriated by the loss of 400 captives that they set about cool blooded slaughter of no less than twenty Thado kukis who had been disinclined to avail themselves of the opportunity to escape afforded by the Colonel's success. In 1849 AD, the Lushai chief Lallianvunga plundered the Halam and a kuki village in Sylhet district within British territory. On account of frequent depredation by the Lushais, the Halams as well as the Thados migrated to plain Cachar; and when Mr Allen conducted census in 1859 AD, there were 3709 Old Kukis(Halams) and 4,763 Thado kuki emigrants or refugees in British territory; and they were driven from the south i.e. North Lushai Hills by the Lushais. On the other hand, the Lushais were hard pressed by the Pawis i.e. Lais and the Chins from further south. Thus, the Halams living at Lipaimukh and adjoining areas were evicted by their immediate neighbours, the Thados, and also by the Lushais. As a result, the Rangkhawl and Biate clans of the Halam tribe had to migrate in Dima Hasao (N. C. Hills) and Jaintia Hills on account of northward movement of the Thado (New Kukis) and the Lushais.

The Kuki-Chin tribes as a whole were clanish by nature; and in past centuries, inter-clans rivalry and feud over petty issues had been order of the day. They had been living in hilly and inaccessible region for centuries as semi nomadic tribes in search of sale and suitable land, away from civilized society because they refused to be absorbed by the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

advanced civilization. Continuous struggle for survival in adverse geographical situation moulded their character and belief which was animistic, superstitious, but ferocious and unforgiving. About the relationship of Old Kuki clans with the Lusheis, Lt. Colonel J Shakespeare observed saying, *“it appears practically certain that the ancestors of the Old Kukis and Lushais were related and lived very close together somewhere in the center of the hills on the bank of Tyao and Manipur river”*. Lt. Colonel. J. Shakespeare rightly observed when he further stated that *“practically certain that the ancestors of Old kukis and the Lusheis (Mizos) were related and lived very close together”*. The Lusheis today regard themselves as mainstream Mizos, but Lt. Col. J. Shakespear identified them as Lushei-Kuki tribe or the *Lushei*. In the caste census in 1931 in Tipperah kingdom, the Lusheis were enumerated as *Lushai-Kuki*. The term *Mizo* became prominent with the insurgency movement spearheaded by Mizo National Front (MNF) under the leadership of Laldenga. Before the movement of the Mizo National Front, an organization called Mizo Common People’s Union was founded in 1946 A.D, which subsequently became familiar as Mizo Union. The Kuki-Chin tribes, which actively took part in this organization, were the Hmar, Paite, Lakher, Fanai, Lai, and of course, the Lusheis. The insurgency movement took the form of unification movement of all Kuki Chin tribes under the common identity as *Mizo*. Laldenga came to Tripura in the last part of fifties and tried to convince the leaders of Halam-Kuki Union for joining the movement of Mizo unification. The the Halam and Darlong leadership in Tripura insisted for Kuki Union as broad political platform for uniting all kuki Chin tribes, but unification talk failed.

The Halam Kuki Union was the platform where all the leadership of Halam and Darlong tribes joined hand together for demanding autonomous council in the last part of nineteen fifties. The leadership of this organisation were Kanailal Halam (Kanailal para) from Kamalpur as President, Hrenghura Darlong and Hrathuamliaana Darlong from Saikar village of Dhalai District, Bulu Kuki (Ex-Forest Minister) from Hawaibari, Khowai District, and Lalhuala from Unakoti District, ex-General Secretary of TBCU, had been the prominent leaders of the organization. The leaders of Halam Kuki Union refused to join the M.N.F, as they were more inclined to Halam-Kuki identity or refused to sacrifice Halam or Kuki identity. Nonetheless, the MNF movement earned

### Ethnic Identity of the Halam

sympathy and admiration among the common people of Halam and Darlong tribes. The evolution of politic in earstwhile Lushai Hill impacted racial relationship because it brought tremendous nationalism among the speakers of Dulian (Lushai) language, which was the lingua franca in Mizoram and the Lushai and allied tribes in surrounding region.

Lt.Colonel. J. Shakespeare observed that *"there is no doubt that the Kukis, Chins and Lushais are the same race"*. According to William Shaw *"the Kam, Ainole, Khothange Thadous, Lushai, Chins Pois Saktes, Paites, Congkes etc. are undoubtedly all connected. The language alone has many similarities and the syntax is not dissimilar. Again there are their customs which have common principle running through them all"*. A folksong of the Halam revealed the kinship with the Mizos and Chin people. When a Halam Chief used to be coronated by the village elders, the new Chief used to fix community festival with feast at his expense as a matter of tradition and; rice beer and home made country wine or beverage used to be served profusedly for few days and nights. The villagers used to carry the new village Chief by a palanquin on their shoulders along the breadth and length of the village singing the song with drum beat. This folksong was like this-

*Aaxen nih Zo-pu bikhwan ni  
An sang pai-pai no niel nih,  
Aang wadai nagan nih,  
Zo-pu bikhwan ni  
Aaxen ni lo isang pai-pai no niel nih,  
ading wadai no sang nih.  
Aaxen nih hi isangni saipung  
kanin hieno nih,  
Ke kang anak real kan kual nih,  
Ke pai sangjak kan gial nih,  
Chunga thapa ra-ang le,  
Chunga nina ra-ang le,  
Zo-palai khat Kan hman real,  
Di wack loi khua rap hman nih,  
Khong ar pai lang lawat hman nih,  
Zo-pu lai khua kan hman real nih,  
Aaxen ni malto khungang a-sai le  
Zo-pai bikhwan kan hman real.*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

English translation of this folksong was like this:-

*Today here is the Chief of the Zos people,  
Sitting majestically with comfortably folding  
posture of leg,  
Today you stand taller than sky  
Oh Chief of the Zos,  
Today for you is to sit in relaxed posture of leg,  
Even while sitting you look as tall upto sky,  
Today is for enjoyment of rice-bear as our tradition,  
This is the day to relax your self,  
The moon is giving light,  
Moonlight is shining in the sky,  
We are carrying out Zo Chief round the village,  
Before the villagers' piglets roam about,  
Before the cocks crow in the morning,  
We are carrying Zos Chief around (the village),  
Today looks beautiful for coronation (of Zo Chief),  
Now Zos Chief is taken out around the village.*

This folksong was noteworthy in that the Halam Chief was addressed as "Zopu-lal", which means "the Chief of Zo people". The folksong revealed some connection of the Halams with their kinsmen, the Zos or Mizos. A. Grierson maintained that the denomination of Kuki-Chin was a purely conventional one; they're being no proper name comprising all these hill tribes. Leaving aside the Meitei people, amongst all Kuki-Chin tribes living in India, the Lushei were the largest in term of population. About the relationship between the Lushei and Chin, S.A. Reid observed that "while exhibiting distinctive characteristics in dress and dialect, there can be little doubt that the Chin and the Lushai are practically one race, although it is true that the language of the latter is not understood by the people living east of the Koladyne (river)". He further observed saying that "I believe the Lushais call themselves "Zao" and "Chin" is a Burmese term and synonymous with Khyen (Pronounced "Chin)". Mr. Edgar, Civil Officer, in his tour note among the Lusheis in March 1871 AD, observed that "the people who live in the villages of Thado Chief in Cachar or a Poitoo (Pautu) Chief in Syhlet or Tipperah differ in no way from the people who live under a Lushei Chief. Probably there will be a greater proportion of people of the Lushei family under the latter, a greater proportion of Thados or Poitoos under the former,

### Ethnic Identity of the Halam

*but the elements are precisely the same in both cases. Again, people from Lushei villages constantly come and settle within our jurisdiction, while people from our hill villages from time to time join the Lushei Chiefs. More than this, whole villages with their Chiefs occasionally move from one jurisdiction to another, or leave our district for the tract outside. These Chiefs, when not openly on bad terms with Lushei Chiefs, are generally engaged in intrigues with them, which result in raids in our territory, sometimes in attacks made by one clan upon another".* The inter-clan rivalries were the result of the arrogance of the chiefs, not caused by ordinary peace loving people of these tribes. This rivalry had caused bitterness, mistrust, hatred and suspicion among different clans of Kuki Chin Lushei Halam tribe in the past.

On the relationship with the Chin tribe, which was a Burmese word denoting various hill tribes living in the country between Myanmar and the province of Assam and Bengal, the Halams had many folksongs, where the Chin tribe used to be addressed as *Ka Chin Uliaw, Sak kol Rajya*, meaning *My Chin elders, living in far away Myanmar*. The word *Kol* referred to Burma i.e. present Myanmar. Myanmar was familiar to all Kuki Chin Lushei and allied tribes as *Kolnaw* and the word *Rajya* means *land* or *country*, possibly, the word borrowed from Bengali with whom the Halams had contact from past centuries. In this regard, G.A. Grierson maintained that the words *Kukis* and *Chins* were synonymous and both were used for many of the hill tribes in question. The tradition of Halams also revealed the kinship of Halams with Chin tribe. One of the old folksongs of the Halams was about the reunion with their kinsmen, Chin tribe, after long separation. This Halam folksong was like this: -

*Ka-Chin vüen oi, Chin vüüwei oi  
Awen oi ke serüwei oi in tawng  
Awen ke rungwel ei in nrah  
Ywa thiamn thühai ka san ham  
Chuan-dung-pha aman in kajai hoer  
Ka ruak Chin nai azawi ruak ham  
Naisau sikhai wawü üing  
Vawaw tung lam se hi ü.*

The English translation was like this-  
*My elders Chin, my loving son of Chin  
Today we meet at this festival,  
Now we meet physically in person.*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*If I die tomorrow or day after and,  
If my corpse is kept on bamboo floor (of the house)  
Even if my Chin son does not mourn on my corpse  
I will not mind anymore now,  
But I will go to heaven.*

In Myanmar (Burma), *Chin* tribes were very prominent having concentration in Chin Hill and the valley of Chindwin River. The Chins also would call themselves as *Lai* or *Pawi*. The Halams have the tradition to show respect to elders at social gathering by saying or addressing "*Ka-Chin ulien*, which means *My Chin elders*. The word "*Chin*" was used frequently in the poems and folksongs of the Halams; and this very fact traced out the kinship between the *Halam* and the *Chin* tribes. There were many other folksongs where the Halams identified themselves with "*Chin*" tribes. Another folksong which has significance was like this :-

*Hi Ka Chin Owi  
An-khamjei pheiphung rel ban,  
Daw ta rawh sut-na kham lu  
A la bong marit ang-mur  
A hla nei Abui ang-chu.*

The English translation was like this:-

*"Hai; Hai my Chin fellow  
My legs and hands are paralyzed now,  
Place a sitting tool for my sitting,  
Your mouth look like short-beaked bird's mouth  
which make your smile like a bamboo rat"*

As the identity of "*Halam*" was given by their neighbours-*Tipras*, likewise "*Chin*" was the identity given by their neighbours- the *Burmese*.



## CHAPTER - 3

# ANCESTRAL HOMELAND AND MIGRATION

**Ancient habitat :** The Halam-Kuki-Chin-Lushei tribes belong to Tibeto-Burman ethnic group of Sino-Tibetan race; and this has been proved morphologically. In fact most of the Indo-Mongolian tribes in the Northeast India, with an exception of the Ahom, Khasi & jaintias, possibly, some Naga tribes, belonged to Tibeto-Burman ethnic group. The earliest known home of the Tibeto-Burman speaking people was believed to be somewhere between the Gobi Desert and northeast Tibet, possibly, Kansu region in China. C.C.Lewis was of the view that Tibeto-Burman groups had lived in the east of Central Asia highland as distinct ethnic group in ancient time. According to Gordon Hannington Luce, the ancestors of Tibeto-Burmese were to be found among the *Ch'iang*, the pastoral people who kept their goats or sheeps in Shanshi and Shanshi hills above and hunted by the agricultural Chinese for human sacrifice. The earliest Chinese records mentioned the *Ch'iang* as the tribe of shepherds and goatherds in 200 B.C. According to Professor D.G.E. Hall, *Ch'iang* people were mountain dwellers. Professor D.G.E.Hall also maintained that the earliest home of Tibeto Burman speaking peoples was somewhere between the Gobi Desert and northeast Tibet, possibly, Kansu. Regarding Kansu, mention to be made that *Ch'in* State first appeared in 908 B.C. in Kansu with *Fei-Tse* as its first prince. G.A Grierson too identified the Kuki-Chin tribe as Tibeto-Burman ethnic group whose ancient homeland was Gobi-Desert and the north-east Tibet-Kansu. *Ch'iang* tribe had been the ancestor of Tibeto-Burman and ideograph of *Ch'iang* means simply sheep-raisers and their land was known as "*Tsao-ti*" or the "*grass-country*" to the Chinese. In Chinese history *Chi'iang* people were regarded as white stone worshippers and pastoralists. This tribe has their own story of migration, but their legends point to Cental Asia; Tibet and China as their place of origin. According to Jacques Gernet, a French scholar, the *Ch'iang* and *Ti* tribe



### Ancestral Homeland and Migration

were related to the Tibetan and Tangut of later age and they were Barbarian. *Ch'ing* i.e. *Tangut* were warlike people of the Himalayan complex who were used to raiding and make incursion into the land of settled agriculturists. In the course of history, they have overflowed towards the east, into present province of Kansu.

The Halams' accounts of their origin and movements, as well as other aspects of their folklores, proverbs, legends, stories and folksongs contained in their oral traditions which the professional storytellers would recite and sing on different occasions of their social festivals. It had been very old tradition and practice among the Halam elders to tell folklores, proverbs, legends, stories and folksongs to their children and grandchildren at leisure time, in the afternoon or bed time. These folklores, proverbs, legends, stories, and folksongs were the sources of the history of their early migration, belief, and pattern of livelihood. There was a legend concerning a famous country called "*Shan-Shayan*" land which was mentioned in some folklore of the Halams. It was difficult to say where this "*Shan-Shayan*" land was situated. There were many mountains in Tibet and China which bear the name of *Shan*. In Chinese language the word '*Shan*' means *mountain* or *highland*. There was a province which was called Shan Province in eastern Myanmar bordering south-western part of Yunan province of China and north-west of Thailand, and this Shan state was one of the federated provinces of Myanmar. In terms of physical feature, the Shan plateau, in the east rose abruptly from the central basin, often in a single step of 2000 feet. The Shan plateau was drained by Salween River, which entered Myanmar from Yunan province of China and emptied into the Gulf of Martaban, south of Sittang. It was deeply entrenched and crossed the plateau in a series of deep gorges. Many of its tributaries were more than 300 miles long and entered the Salween in cascades. The plateau has intensive folding with north-south longitudinal ranges with heights of 6000 to 8000 feet, rising abruptly from the plateau's surface. Northward, the plateau merged into the northern ranges, and southward it continued into the Tenasserim Yoma, a series of parallel ranges with narrow valleys. However, "*Shan-Shayan*" land mentioned in the folklores of Halam might not be this Shan province of Myanmar. It was unlikely the the ancestors of Halam would live and move from this Shan Province in Myanmar because the location of this Shan Province

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

was down the South eastern border of Kachin Province of Myanmar which bordered the Thailand. Possibly, "*Shani-Shayan*" land mentioned in the folklore of the Halams had been the region where *Tai* people lived as neighbour with the ancestors of the Kuki Chin tribe. But where did they live as neighbour, and who were the *Tai* or *Thai* people; and how they were connected to *Shan* people. Professor M. Terrien de Lacoupeire asserted that the cradle of the *Shan* race was in the Kuilung Mountains located to north of Sechuan and south of Shansi in China proper. The Tibeto-Burmans (which included the ancestors of Kuki-Chin tribes) lived in the same regions in ancient period. Thus, it appeared that the *Tai* and *Tibeto Burmans* were neighbours because they lived in the same region in ancient period. Prof. Terrien de Lacouperie was of the view that the *Tai* migrated from this region being driven by the hardship of the semi desert and came to the south along the course of the Yellow River. According to Max Muller, the original habitat of the *Shan* or the *Tai* was in Central Asia; and from this region the *Tai* people migrated to the south and settled in the river valleys of Mekong, Menam, Irrawaddy and Brahmaputra. The history of migration was a history of struggle for many centuries against the Chinese imperial pressure from the north and also their neighbours. Thus, in course of time under the pressure of the Chinese and invading hordes of the Mongol at later period, they had to move in successive wave toward the south into Myanmar and other regions of the South East Asia, even in Assam. The "*Tai*" were believed to have migrated to Myanmar from sixth century B.C. from the region of south-west China, possibly, before the migration of Kuki Chin tribes. According to C.C. Lowis, the *Tai*'s point of entry into Myanmar was in the Shweli valley, and their course from Shweli valley onwards lay partly to the north of Upper Myanmar and Assam; and partly to the south into Shan province of Myanmar, and finally into the Laos and Thailand. He was of the view that the *Tai* first began to arrive in Myanmar before the commencement of the Christian era, but it was in sixth century, the migration assumed considerable dimension. The *Tai* communities, at that early time, penetrated along the tributaries of Irrawaddy River into the plain of Upper Myanmar as peaceful immigrants in search of safe and fertile land to settle down; but at time, they also came in great strength as raiding hordes from Yunan. Yunan province had great concentration of *Tai* people from continual flow of

### Ancestral Homeland and Migration

population from north and central China due to Chinese pressure. Besides, there were non-Chinese aboriginal tribes such as Miao, Michta, Lolo etc. who were regarded as "southern barbarians" by the Chinese. Many have confusion about the identity of Shan people who were also known as "Tsi" or "Irai" to outside world. The Mon records said to have mentioned that the contingents from the Shan State of mountain country beyond Myanmar proper entering and invading Upper Myanmar, and referred to the invaders simply as "Shan". It was mentioned before that the word "Shan" in Chinese means "mountain" or "highland" and to the Burmese the word "Shan" means merely the "people", who descended upon the plains of upper Burma from Shan State or Hill State of the Southern Highland of Yunnan, a country predominantly of "Tai" population, particularly, the area adjoining the northern Shan State of Myanmar. The Burmese probably referred to these people as "Shan" after Chinese words of "Shan-tse" and "Shan-Yen" meaning "highlander". The Chinese name for "Tai people" of Yunnan province was "Pa-i". The word "Pa" in Chinese means "cultivated highland" and "i" means "Barbarians". Hence the word "Pa-i" means Barbarians or non-Chinese cultivators of Yunnan highland. It was said that the Burmese originally learnt the terracing of hill slopes for cultivation from the Nanchao in Yunnan. The Chinese word "Shan" was Burmanised into "Shyan" and written as "Shan". But the people, referred to as Shan in Myanmar, called themselves as "Tsi". The Burmese gave the appellation "Shyan" to those "Tsi" that entered the plains of Burma in the thirteenth century A.D. This apparently referred to the period of Kublai Khan's invasion of Tai-li in 1253, which caused a mass migration of Tai or Shan people, mostly as refugees, into Upper Myanmar and the Upper Menam valley in Siam (Thailand). The word "Shan-i", which the Halams mentioned in their folk tales and folk songs, possibly, originated from the Chinese word of "Shan-tse" which means "mountain" or "highland". Another word "Shyan", which suffixed the word Shan-i, possibly, was related to the Chinese word "Shan-yen" meaning "highlanders" or the Burmese word of Shyan, which also means the Shan or Tai people. In fact, the words should be "Shan-i-Shyan rans" meaning "High land barbarians" i.e. the Tai people. The word "Shan-i-Shyan" was very familiar poetic language of the Halams. "Shan-i-Shyan" land was associated with the legendary hero, namely Ralngam, who went in far

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

off land to collect amber bead for his unborn daughter, and this story has been mentioned separately. It appeared that both the races i.e., the *Shan* or *Tai* and the *Tibeto-Burman* ethnic groups, migrated from the same region i.e., *Sechuan* and *Shansi* in China proper, and moved towards the south China leading towards Southwest Tibet; and thereafter, their movement ultimately led to Upper Myanmar and Indo-China. Probably, the land called *Shani-Shayon ram* (which means the High land of Barbarian) by the Halams could be Southwest Tibet, bordering Upper Myanmar. Before moving out from the *Shani Shayon ram* i.e. *Shan land*, the ancestors of Halam said to have told the migrating group from *Shani-Shayon land* before their separation, which was like this :-

*Saipui ngoi lamu nanti,*  
*Saloi var lamu nanti,*  
*Arpa-changphir lamu nanti,*  
*Melang lamu ei ti,*  
*Mukhat cho- um lansung eiti,*

English translation of this poem was like this:-

*You will see white elephant again,*  
*You will see white bafeloe again,*  
*You will see double head-combed cock again,*  
*You will see wild hunting dog again,*  
*We will keep water with gourd container*  
*togather again.*

Thus, the *Shani Shayon ram* i.e. *Shan land* often mentioned in the folklore and folksong of the Halam could be in the south Tibet or Upper Myanmar. The ancestors of the Halam might be the neighbour of the *Shan* i.e. *Tai* people, who lived on high land, and were called *Highland Barbarian*, during their gradual movement from southwest Tibet to Upper Myanmar, the adjoining southwestern part of Yunan province in China, where there was great concentration of the *Tai* and other non-Chinese "*barbarians*". According to D. G. E. Hall, the *Tais* i.e., Shan people were living Sino-Myanmar frontier between Irrawaddy and Salween rivers in 1278 A.D. It was the Mongol conquest of Yunnan which had caused them to cluster there; and the Pagan's power and prestige in northern Myanmar had prevented them from making any further move westward. The Mongol victory at Kaungzin in December 1283 A.D., opened the floodgate, and the Shan descended from the hills. The

### Ancestral Homeland and Migration

folksong said about *white elephant* which was available in *Shan Shayan* land, and everyone knew that white elephants lived in the dense forest of Myanmar, apart from Thailand in Southeast Asia. The proverb of the Hlamar tribe (the close cousin of the Halam tribe & belonged to Old Kuki tribes) also has a small poem about the *Shan land*. Their poem said :-

*Shan khuo thlangfa patling hing e,  
I do thlanglu bakin sath,  
Si saonfa thlar ka lamni tha,  
Thul thutan lan ei de ming.*

English translation:-

*Famine broke out in Shan land,  
Many people fled away,  
God created Shanland  
not to be ravaged and desolated.*

This poem mentioned "*Sian Khuo*", which means "*land of the Shans*" or "*Shan land*", and this means that the ancestors of Kuki-Chin tribes were in Shan land; which the Halam called it *Shan Shayan wa*.

**Causes of migration :** In ancient period, the causes of mass migration had been war, repression, famine, natural calamities, rivalry, exploitation etc. In ancient time, when might was right, war and upheaval precipitated the occurrence of mass migration in larger scale, and also the occurrence of critical events in mainland China and the Southeast Asia at different period shaped the movements of different ethnic groups. The Kuki Chin tribes, possibly, were the victim of such situation. From their legend of migration, it was evident that the ancestors of Halam were forced by the prevailing situation in ancient China to migrate toward Southeast Asia for escaping from the hardship and repression. Their legend of migration convincingly connected the period of first Emperor of China who was known to outside world as *Shih-Huang-ti*. In 247 B.C. internal upheaval and change occurred in China due to the raise of prince Cheng of Ch'in dynasty. Prince Cheng occupied the throne and within ten years he conquered the empire of Ch'i (221 B.C), Hans and C'yu Empire (223 B.C), Chao empire (224 B.C) and Wei empire (225 B.C) and unified the China establishing vast Chinese empire for the first time in Chinese history. Prince Cheng assumed the title of *Shih Huang Ti*, which means "*Universal Emperor*". A great part of the population of Ch'in included the ruling classes, was

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

not purely Chinese but contained an admixture of Turks and Tibetans. The Chinese writers even dubbed Ch'in as "*Barbarian State*". Yet the name of China has been derived from Ch'in with which the non-Chinese peoples from Central Asia came into contact and called the country, conquered by Ch'in, *China*, which became *Sinae* in Latin.

The Chinese empire founded by First Emperor *Shih-Huang-ti* pursued the policy of expansion by ruthless means. He abolished feudalism and introduced civil service for running his vast Chinese empire. He made tremendous effort to integrate his vast empire as a whole by introducing common coin and reforming the administration. He constructed imperial highways, many new townships, excavated canals for irrigation. Emperor Shih Huang Ti undertook the construction work of the Great Wall of China to protect his empire against the frequent invasion of Hsiung-Nu, the nomadic cattle raisers of the steppes region. Million of men were dragged to the huge construction jobs of Great Wall of China "many dying on the long journey to their destination and other fleeing". Moreover, the emperor conducted military expedition from Fukien to Vietnam and Kansu to Korea. He also introduced extreme panel system in his empire and destroyed the literary work of scholars. No one was allowed to live in peace during the brief reign of Shih-Huang-ti. All able-bodied men were forced to leave their home to construct roads and bridges throughout the empire and also to build Great Wall of about 2500 miles in length. It was said that every third man in the empire was summoned to work upon the Great Wall of China, which was completed in 5(five) years under the supervision of general Meng Tien. Most of the conscripted labourers perished under rigorous condition of work and those survived fled into wild jangle of Szechuan, Yunan in the South China and Kwei-chow to escape the oppression of Chinese task masters. The military campaign of Shih-Huang-ti under the command of general Wang Chien in central and south China in 224 B.C. also brought tremendous social upheaval. All these measures made the life of his subject intolerable and many fled to different region outside his empire.

There was a legend handed down to succeeding generation among the Halams which maintained that there was a great legendary king of Chin (possibly Ch'in) whose name was *Shahongti*. In ancient time,

### Ancestral Homeland and Migration

*Shahongti* said to have confined the ancestors of Halams inside stone cave. The ancestors of Halams said to have escaped from the confinement by digging tunnel. It was beyond doubt to say that the great legendary king whose name was *Shahongti* could be none other than *Shih-Huang-Ti*, the first Chinese emperor. "*Shahongti*" was the corruption of the name of *Sih-Huang-Ti*, the first Chinese emperor who came to power in 247 B.C. Possibly, the legend and the folksong of the Halams were related to this historical event and the migration of the ancestors of Halams-Kuki-Chin ethnic group from their ancient habitat. The folksong was like this:

*Singlang suak Chintang Mihriem lion lai ei hong tek,*  
*Ziwa ei hong inkhum khuputobama,*  
*Singlang-suak Chintang nihriem kiansai ei hong tek,*  
*Tangsa mol-chai metang-ci moa nang,*  
*Thawai le Tangsa a-kuei bawhai hij moaang,*  
*Sarhual lang na loi e e e e e e.*

*Hatak tangloia Chin Hriem Rang-sa tho laisaw,*  
*Hawo kuhui awanga Chin Tang Khawo,*  
*sai ang an-hang suknyi"*  
*Thui na vinying chu Revaan na le*  
*Kalpuia pulhng asen na,*  
*liiem a dei kungpu sei ang ei suak pui*  
*Siel ang ei suak pui,*  
*Sirawai surnai ahung moa e e e e.*

*Hina moayui loi deu moa*  
*An hong sai taibangbat ri dunga*  
*Solri ahong mangam e e e e.*  
*Sol thambuk ahong kei e e e e.*

*Musi loi thambuk-ata parekhua anngai di,*  
*Lian loa mang awang naib sarsang an at ah.*  
*Farsang an marian parsang an moasiq,*  
*Tian ang hian sowa-ata Taibangbat sangkhua*  
*Ah-in nangkhua Siem rining,*  
*Hriem dokhang-pu Sanghwa tangkhua*  
*Shu chu Tangpu manghwa.*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

English translation is this “when Chin people who came out of stone cave (possibly Ch’in dynasty) attained greatness, there was difficulties in ancient time. They (ancestors of Halams or Kuki-Chin ethnic group) make journey to escape but they were imprisoned inside great stone wall cave. Young men and young women were caught by the King. The young men and young women were caught along with *Chin Tang Khown* (a brave hero) and imprisoned by Chin King. The ancestors escaped from prison-cave jumping like a wild mithun. The name of the young woman was Reivon-nu who used to prepare and serve food in the prison. The priest also fought and came out from the prison jumping like wild mithun. All of them moved western direction. Going through this long hill ranges they arrived at cascading river stream where they took rest. They constructed houses with bamboo and cut the jangle for jhuming. At the big jhum land, they planted paddy and harvested. From that time the village was named “*Tuibangbat village*” by the Shan people. Sumpha was the great priest in the village and the name of Shan village was ‘*Lungpui*’.

All Kuki-Chin tribes including the Halams said that their ancestors came out of stone-cave. Who could be the cruel king that put the ancestors of the Halam in confinement in stone cave prison. It was possible that the ancestors of Halam escaped from the tyranny of Shih-Huang-ti, the first great emperor of unified China. The migration of the Kuki-Chin tribes of Tibeto-Burmese ethnic groups toward the south was believed to be owing to oppressive rule and tyranny of imperial Chinese administration during the reign of first Chinese emperor Shih-Huang-ti. Great masses of population such as *Tai* and other “*barbarians*” fled from their home in neighbouring provinces to escape the oppression of emperor, some taking shelter in the hill and others migrating to distant countries in the south. Even some tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, particularly, the Nishi, Adi, Apatani and the Gola tribes, had a legend which maintained that their great ancestor-namely *Abutani*, who was said to be a lazy man, run away from ancient China to escape from construction work of Great Wall of China. After the death of first emperor of Ch’in dynasty, the empire passed into the hand of Han dynasty and the Han rulers pursued the policy of expansion of the empire. The Ch’iang tribes were exploited by Chinese administration and by ordinary private citizen. When Hsiung-Nu tribe of Shansi



### **Ancestral Homeland and Migration**

province were employed as farm labourer by the rich families, the Ch'iang of Kansu province were subjected to heavy requisitioning for transport. As a result, this tribe sought to shake off the heavy yoke laid on them as early as first century B.C. The Chinese also constantly raided them to obtain victim for human sacrifice. For escaping from this tyranny and raid, many Ch'iang people took refuge in northeast Tibet. In the first millennium B.C. the Chinese rulers of T'sin pursued them and many fled southwards in China, and from that region they moved to South Tibet. Following the course of Salween river, they entered into Upper Myanmar through the region between the N'Mai Hka and the Salween. From ancient time the general pattern of human migration for both Myanmar and the rest of mainland south-east Asia had been fixed; the tribal groups coming from the north over the mountains and then down the great river valley; the stronger group settling in the valley to learn the art of wet-rice cultivation and the weaker tribal groups being pushed into the mountainous parts to learn only the method of "slash and burn" rice growing which was known as jhuming or shifting cultivation. Possibly, the weak ethnic tribes could be the Kuki-Chin tribes, the ancestors of Halams.

**Route of migration:** The pattern of migration into Myanmar was fixed from ancient time. The Anyathians, the Mon-Khmer, P'lao- all came from the north. From the period of stone ages, the general pattern of human migration and settlement for both Myanmar and the rest of mainland Southeast Asia had been fixed- the tribal groups coming from the north over the mountains and then down the great rivers; the earlier or stronger groups settling in the valley to learn wet-rice cultivation and the later or weak groups being pushed into mountainous parts to learn only the method of "slash and burn" (jhuming) rice growing. Some of these migrants, who were weak had to turn toward the west into North-East India. Most of these Tibeto-Burman ethnic groups in Northeast India believed to have migrated through northwestern part of Yunnan in China. On the route of movement of Tibeto-Burman ethnic group, observation of Cecil Champain Lewis, the Superintendent, Ethnographical Survey, Myanmar, was noteworthy. C. C. Lewis stated that *"whatever may have been the point from which they (Tibeto-Burman) started, it is certain that they must have at one period penetrated into the valleys near the headwaters of the Mekong and Salween rivers, and for some*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*distance in the far north their course must have spread over all the country in the neighbourhood of these two rivers. Now, we know that at about 30<sup>th</sup> parallel of latitude, there rises out a maze of unexplored hills to the west of the Salween (river) what Mr. G. Litton (one of the few persons who has so far seen it) describes as a "crescent of mountains" which forms the watershed between the Salween and Brahmaputra, from the southern edge of which spring the sister streams, the N'maikha and the Malikha, which combined to form the Irrawaddy River. We must keep this crescent in mind when we consider the movement of the Tibeto-Burman from the north, for along a considerable portion of its length it is practically an insuperable barrier, and it is clear that as the Tibeto-Burman tribes came down, some of them were brought up by its snow-clad height and were obliged, if they wished to pursue their southerly course, either to come out east and follow the Salween southwards or fetch a circuit towards Assam and the Brahmaputra in the west and so reach hill ridges and fresh valleys along which their way could be pursued. We know this by the present distribution of the Tibeto-Burman and by the test of their language. There are signs of a common ancestry in the not very remote past in the speech of the Burman, the Lisaws, the Kuki or Chin and Kachin." Thus, the movement of Tibeto-Burman tribes from the north to south had been along the direction of Salween river, and after reaching upper watershed region of Irrawaddy river, they turned Southwest towards the source of Chindwin river.*

The Mekong and Salween were lengthy rivers having their sources in the interior part of Tibet and flowing through Yunan and the neighbouring land. Mekong River flows across Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. Salween River, after flowing towards southwest Yunan, enters into Shan province i.e., the northeast Myanmar. The basin of these Mekong and Salween rivers and their tributaries form deep, narrow valleys with the high parallel mountain ranges running north to south; and these watershed regions had been an ideal place for many ethnic minorities. Myanmar was like long giant bridge and highway between India and China from ancient time. High snow peaked, steep and rough Himalaya mountain ranges prevented civilisational contact from ancient time, except for the virtual super highway through Myanmar. Some famous Chinese travelers to India travelled through Myanmar. There were lots of travelers, most of them were the victims of tyranny, famine, displaced war refugees, migrants

### Ancestral Homeland and Migration

in search of better land, and they came down along these rivers' courses to settle in Irawaddy valley in Myanmar or Brahmaputra Valleys and adjoining green tropical forest covered hill ranges in the North East India.

In term of physical position, Myanmar could be divided into five landscape regions- (a) the northern mountains, (b) the western mountains, (c) the eastern (Shan) plateau, (d) the central basin and the coastal strips. The mountain ranges were longitudinal, running from north to south. The northern mountains ranges which extend from the the Tibet through Yunan, consist of a series of ranges forming knot, with peaks of nearly 20,000 feet. This was the region the great rivers such as the Irrawaddy, Mekong, Salween and Yangtze with swirling torrents originated. These great rivers flow through deep gorges within a few miles of each other, separated by peaks rising sheer into the sky. Across this wild and forbidding region the ancestors of Burmese, Kuki Chin tribes, the Kachins, Lalos, etc. travelled from their original homeland in Tibet. More fanciful ideas concerning human migration has been the notion that they streamed directly southward from the Tibetan plateau along the great river valleys in successive waves. But the major rivers' valley of Salween, Mekong and Yangtze etc. were not traversable over many stretches. Cecil Champain Lewis, the Superintendent, Ethnographical Survey, Myanmar, divided the Tibeto-Burman ethnic tribes into two migrant groups- (a) *The Western Tibeto-Burman Group*, which comprised of the Kuki-Chin tribes; (b) and the *Eastern Tibeto-Burman group* of which the Burmans (Burmese) were the most important. C.C. Lewis maintained that the Eastern Tibeto-Burmans, which comprised of the Kuki-Chin ethnic tribes, were probably the first migrants of Tibeto-Burman into Myanmar in far off past; they appeared on Irawaddy-Brahmaputra watershed regions and thence, continued their southerly journey along the western ridge of the Myanmar. Thereafter, they have worked their way to the southernmost limits of the Hills on the sea-board of the Bay of Bengal.

**Movement to Chindwin valley :** Important sites of ancient civilizations were located on the bank of great rivers because conduct of the trade and commerce through big rivers was easy. Not only the trade and business, the fertile valleys of great rivers also facilitated agriculture for settled livelihood in ancient period. The Chindwin River, one of the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

tributaries of Irrawaddy River, originated from Hukawng Valley flowing parallel to Patkoi Mountain, west of Myanmar. Hukawng valley with an area of 14,468 s.q. k.m. was located at the heart of Kachin province in northern Myanmar. Chindwin River could not be a great river like the Irrawaddy or Ganges, but it was certainly a big and important river with fertile valley in western Myanmar. The Chindwin River course played important role in determining the direction of movement of the ancestors of Halams and other Kuki Chin tribes from Hukawng Valley to Chin-Lushei Hills. There had been an ancient trade route between China and India that passed through northern Myanmar and then crossed the Chindwin valley. In A.D.97 and 121, the Roman embassies to China chose this overland route through Myanmar for their journey. Possibly, the same route was followed by the ancestors of Kuki-Chin tribes in their movement toward the southwest of Myanmar. There was no reason to believe that the hill tribes would move in unknown land through jungle avoiding the existing path. The Halams have folksong related to their migration from *Shani-Shayan ram* i.e. Shan land to Chin-Lushei Hills travelling along the course of Chindwin river of Myanmar which was like this:-

*Kalchen jilwa ramchang dazil a noia  
Sunlawn janlawn anthow, lien lai anwantat  
Shani-Shayan ram kisak Hriem chu,  
Kachin ulian ngai ral-va anvadoi-a Safai a zam,  
Ning-siat akei ruibana safai ei zam sona e e e e  
Sikpui anrang dok ke,  
Sinlung suak Chintanga mi Hriem ngai so e,  
Kachin-Chindung an hong luia safai ei zam sona e e e,  
Siel ang an-hang chom,  
Ansul nuk sul ei om sona  
Kachin Ulien sak-kol-raijya (Myanmar)  
Sam ang an-hong insen sona,  
Mi-hong lui Pu Changsuasiak le Changsualian  
Shan raming chu e e e e e.*

This folksong said that “the Hriem (Halam-Kuki-Chin) people, after crawling through deep forest days and nights, they sharpened their weapon under the shade of tree in Shani Shayan land, but being defeated in the war, furious Chin (Halam) ancestors who came from Singlung (means stone cave

### Ancestral Homeland and Migration

*with lid) migrated along the Chindwin (Chinwin river). They escaped running like mithun; and leaving their habitat; my Chin elders who were as numerous as the hair on a goat, they were led by Chang-saw-Siek and Chang-Saw-Lian, (two heroes) with Shan name".* Hriem people who came out from far away stone cave (possibly, Great Wall of China) in Chin land (possibly Chin empire), after being defeated, countless number of them passed through along the course of Chindwin river from Shan land. They escaped running like a wild mithun led by two heroes whose Shan names were *Chang-Saw-Siek* and *Chang-saw-Lian*. This folksong has significance because it reflected the course of their movement and the struggle they underwent in course of their movement from Shan land to present Kachinland leading upto Chin Hill of Myanmar. Possibly, the Old Kuki group did not live long in Hukawng. From Hukawng Valley (now in Kachin province of Myanmar) they moved to western mountain range of Myanmar. C. C. Lewis maintained that the Tibeto Burman coming from the north continued their southerly journey along the western mountain ridge of the Myanmar, and they have worked their way to the southernmost limits of the hills on the sea-board of the Bay of Bengal. The western mountain ridges of Myanmar originated in the northern mountain knot, which continued southward as far as Cape Negrais, the southern tip of the Arakan Peninsula, where they run under the sea, reappearing as the Andaman Islands. Their average height was about 6,000 feet, although the heights of some peaks were 10,000 feet and more. This mountain formed the border between India and Myanmar: they were given different names successively as Patkoi Bum i.e. Patkai range in the north, Naga Hills, Manipur, Lushai-Chin Hills. Southern portion of these mountains lies entirely within Myanmar forming Arakan Yoma, which separate the Arakan coastal strip from the central plain. C.C. Lewis maintained that the Tibeto Burman i.e. the ancestors of Kuki chin tribes, penetrated into this mountain range, and have been in occupation of these western up and and hill ranges, which extend from the Upper Chindwin (where the Chins merged into Naga country) along the edge of Assam uplands and down to the foot-hill on the fringe of the Irrawaddy delta; and a much later date the Kachins appeared from the mountain in the far north; and they had at the parting of the way borne south-westwards along much the same course as that previously taken by the Kuki Chin i.e., bordering the Brahamaputra

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Region, finding the hill immediately to their south already occupied by the Kui-Chins and their cognates. C. Gilhodes, who worked among the Kachin tribe in Myanmar, said that the Kuki-Chin tribes were gradually pushed by another Tibeto-Burmese ethnic group-the Kachin tribe, toward the south from Hukawng valley and surrounding mountainous region.

**Plantation of banyan tree :** While moving toward Chin Hills along the course of Chindwin river, the ancestors of Kuki Chin tribes said to have set up settlement at Kabaw valley (Khampat) in the Southwest Myanmar, across the Southeast Manipur-Myanmar border. Kabaw was highland valley in western Myanmar. The legend of the Hmar tribe maintained that Khomalaiah Luopuia planted banyan tree in Kabaw valley. The Kuki-Chin-Lushei tribes regarded the Kabaw valley as their place of ancient settlement, and this region had been the bone of contention between Manipur kingdom and Burma in medieaval period. B. Lalthangliana, the Mizo historian, who visited the place, also claimed that their ancestors planted a banyan tree at Khampat in Kabaw Valley in Myanmar, which was believed to be oldest Mizo towns. He cited the Mizo tradition which maintained that their ancestors built an earthen rampart around Khampat. The ruler was said to be one of the nine chief vassals of the Burmese king. The Banyan tree had been planted at the site of the palace before they left Khampat. However, the Halam also have tradition which maintained that banyan tree was planted by their ancestors before their dispersal, and promised to meet again. The oral tradition of the Halam maintained that Buangkhuap was the Chief of the northern region and Relsi was the chief of the western region; his son Khomalaiah Luopuia was also known as Wahai Luopui. Khomalaiah Luopuia was a great Chief and good hunter, and also known as Wahai Loupuia. Wahai Loupuia, as a Chief, said to have planted banyan tree, possibly, in Kabaw valley. Ancient story without written record could not be accurate because oral tradition handed down by the predecessors changed with the passage of time. Possibly, Wahai Luopui fought the other tribes before positioning himself as great chief. In fact he was regarded as king by his people for his power, influence and richness. This was the reason in some folksong he was mentioned as *Reng*, which means *King*. It was the belief of the ancestors of the Kuki-Chin-Lushai tribes, which include the Halam people, that when the roots of the banyan

### Ancestral Homeland and Migration

would touch the ground and became indistinguishable between its roots and the trunk, all the descendants of dispersed ancestors would meet again. Pu Vanlalngul Halam (of Chorei clan) of Manikban village under Luarpua R.D. Block of Karimganj district in Assam narrated to this author about his visit of the Banyan tree in 1952 as labourer. He saw the banyan tree at the place between Kale and Tamu in Myanmar, just after crossing over the checkpost at the place called Mure in Manipur. Numerous banyan trees said to have spread over about sixteen acres of land, and it was not possible to distinguish between its roots and the mother trunk. The Halam elders used to say "*Duraiphai phai-anan*", which means that Durnei valley was the ancient habitat of the Halam people. The hearsay prevalent among the elders was that *Durnei phai* i.e. Durnei valley used to be often flooded. But where was the location of *Durnei valley*? There was one proverb which said "*Rih Champhai nakh Durnei shi hanzung*", which means "after the land called *Rih Champhai* there was another land called *Durnei* where big banyan tree stands". The Halams would admire this place in their folksong as the land where *Durnei mai-sai*, creeper of wild bettle leaves would grow abundantly in this region. This proverb substantiated the fact that the land called *Durnei valley* was Kabaw Valley, which was situated toward the north-east of Champhai and Ri-Lake. This *Durnei phai* was the land where the legendary banyan tree said to have been planted by the ancestors of the Halam. The historians of the Mizo and other Kuki-Chin tribes also claimed that the legendary banyan tree was planted by their ancestors in the past. According to hearsay, the ancestor left that land called *Duraiphai* due to recurring flood. It might be needless to say that the banyan tree was popular among the Halam tribe because they believed that spirit of different deities lived on this tree. The fruit of stretched out branches of banyan tree would attract varieties of beautiful wild birds in the hilly villages. The chirping of these birds would bring natural joy and make the simple villagers nostalgic. The Halam would regard the banyan tree as an ideal spot for trapping the wild birds in the season. The attraction of banyan tree was such that in many folksongs of the Halams, banyan tree was compared with sadness of life and immortality. One folksong was like this :-

*Khuo zoi (Zo) hanzung phaihai aicho chanzawh nih*  
*Zaraw subul phaihai manghel chanzawh nih.*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Fhailai mengkel khom Zoramsakel changnawh ni,  
Ha-ang den-in kanei nuthai (wife) chang nawh chini,  
Asun (every day) chaptin azan chaptin ka loi rang ke anije.*

English translation was like this :-

*Banyan tree on hilltop village will never  
turn into lowland grass,  
Wild goat of the hill will never turn into lowland goat,  
Lowland goat will never turn into hill goat,  
Every day and night I am going to cry.*

Every Mizo or Kuki Chin tribes in North-East India claimed that the Banyan tree was planted by their ancestors during the period of their settlement in Kabaw Valley. The Halam elders too said that their ancestors planted a banyan tree before their dispersal and would be united again in the future when the branches of that banyan tree would touch the ground.





## CHAPTER - 4

# SETTLEMENT IN CHIN- LUSHEI HILLS

**Description of the Chin Hills :** Chin-Lushai Hills was a single landmass; and had no political or administrative boundary of the land from ancient period. With the advent of Britishers in India and erstwhile Burma, everything changed. Administrative and political boundary came into existence from the period of British rule. On 29<sup>th</sup> January in 1892, a conference known as Chin-Lushai Conference was held in Calcutta on the recommendation of Mr. McCabe and Maj. Shakespear. As decided in the Conference, Southern Lushai Hills, which was part of Chittagang under Bengal, was amalgamated with North Lushai Hills, which was part of Tipperah Kingdom. In 1898, Lushai Hills (present Mizoram) was brought under Assam. Before that period, there was no political boundary and no administrative authority to prevent migration of hill tribes from Chindwin valley and Arakan to Lushai Hills and Barak Valley or to Chittagang. The Chin Hill State of Myanmar and Mizoram State of India was single landmass comprised of hill ranges which originated in northern Himalayan mountain knot and continued southward. This was the land the ancestors of the Halam and other Kuki Chin tribes, who took shelter and settled in ancient period, as they considered the the hilly region covered with densed forest as safe and secured. In Myanmar, the Kuki-Chin tribes were collectively called *Chin* by the Burmese. According to Luce, the Chins started settlement in Chin Hills between the periods from the 4<sup>th</sup> century to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. However, Lehmann was of the view that the Kuki-Chins came to Chin Hills in 1<sup>st</sup> century. On account of continuous influx and expansion of other ethnic tribes, the population pressure in Chin Hill increased. As a result many ethnic Chins started to move out of the Chin Hill. Wolfgang Mey observed that the expansion of Burmese and the Shan people in Chin Hills brought acute social disparity, and the disparity was based on the relationship of master and slave. The movement of a section of

### Settlement in Chin-Lushai Hills

ethnic Chin such as Mru, Bawn, Khyang and Khumi tribes toward the south and the west of the Chin Hill, and the movement of the Lushais in the north and the west of the Chin Hill was the result of expansion of other Chin tribes. About the period of the arrival of Old Kuki tribes in Chin-Lushai Hills too, the scholars could not be unanimous. But it was agreed by all that the Old Kuki tribes were the first group of immigrants into Chin-Lushai Hills. Even among the Old Kuki tribes, apart from the Meitei of Manipur valley, possibly, the Halams were the most advance guard to move first into Chin-Lushai Hills in ancient period. The Halams have some traditions in which few names of the places or regions were mentioned where the ancestors of the Halams believed to have settled. There was an important traditional festival observed by few Halam villages even today, and this tradition was familiar as *Kaibhar* festival. *Kaibhar* was a ceremony in which a particular adolescent or young man was formally declared as competent to assist the *Village Darbar* (*Village Council*). In this *Kaibhar* ceremony the adolescent youth would dress up in traditional attire, and would be required to carry old clothes and traditional domestic articles in a bamboo basket. The *Siar* i.e. Senior Youth Member of Village Darbar, before offering garland to that adolescent youth, would ask the question saying from which place did he (the youth) come from? The youth was made to answer saying "I have come from the places called *Khairpulichuan*, *Artraungtang* (Mt. Victoria), *Warit Rungtang*, *Peransib* and *Zaizansib*". The first two places *Artraungtang* (Mt. Victoria), *Waritruangtang*, were in Chin Hill's province in Myanmar, and the other two places, namely- *Peransib* and *Zaizansib* were in North Mizoram. *Kaibhar* ceremony was the old tradition observed by the *Langkai*, *Silitchep*, *Thengachep*, *Marchafang*, *Dap*, *Choni*, *Kanglong*, *Saimnar* and *Baong* clans of the Halam tribes even a decade before. There was folklore prevalent among the Halams about their settlement in Chin Hills. Once upon a time an old man went out for fishing in the stream early in the morning and along the stream he moved on down the stream. In the evening, he arrived at distant place where the youths of a nearby village were bathing in the stream after returning from their day work. The villagers, watching the old stranger fishing in the stream in such evening, felt curious and asked him as to where was his country and village. The old man/stranger replied them saying that he came from *Artraungtang* (Mt. Victoria), *Waritruangtang* and

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Daniangkhawr*, which were located in *Chinram* i.e. Chinland. The youths again asked him as to what kind of wild animals lived in his place. The stranger answered them saying that a pair of wild hen & cock, a pair of white horse, a pair of bear, a pair of stag, a pair of guano, a pair of gibbon and a pair of warit (a wild fowl which resemble hen) were available in his land. The youths asked stranger to demonstrate the folk dance of the people living in his place. The stranger danced to demonstrate the folk dance of his people. The youths told him that they now understand that the stranger and the people living in his country belonged to the same community. At that point of time, a big tiger suddenly appeared nearby the strangers and the youths, and out of fear all of them shouted and run away.

In their migration to Chin Hills, the ancestors of the Halams moved along the Chindwin valley and after arriving at Kabaw valley, possibly, they turned westwards to enter into the Chin Hills. Adjacent to South west of the Kabaw Valley was the Chin Hills inside Myanmar, southern border of Manipur and along the eastern border of present Mizoram. Physically, the Chin Hills was broken and contorted mass of mountains intersected by deep valleys and was utterly devoid of plains and table land. In other word, Chin Hills was a big land mass, an extension of Patkoi and Naga Hills from the north. The western portion of the land mass of the Chin Hills was Lushai Hills. After the arrival of the Britishers they gave definite political and administrative boundary, which gave this big land mass two separate identity as Chin Hills in Myanmar and Lushei Hills (Mizoram) in India. Thus, in term of physical feature, Chin Hills and erstwhile Lushai Hills (Mizoram) was inseparable; it was a single landmass comprised of hill ranges which originated in northern Himalayan mountain knot and continue southward as far as Cape Negris, the southern tip of the Arakan Peninsula. In Chin hills, main hill ranges run generally north to south and vary in height from 5,000 to 9,000 feet, among the most important being the *Letha* or *Tang range*, which was the watershed region between Chindwin and Manipur Rivers. The important peaks of the mountain and hill ranges were *Ngulluoum*, *Innbuk*, *Thuamoum (Kennedy peak)*, *Lentlang*, *Kharangtlang*, *Rungtlang*, and *Arterawttlang (Mt. Victoria)*, which was the highest peak with 10,400 feet. Manipur River, which originated from Loktak Lake flows almost due south from Shuganu to Molbem, whence curving to

### Settlement in Chin-Lusei Hills

the east it leaves Falam town on its right bank and debouches into Myanmar at Sihaurng, and a few kilometers further down empties to Myittha River. Tuivai River, which took its source on the west and in the latitude of Funzan in Chin Hills, was the longest tributary of the Barak River in Assam. In Chin Hills, Manipur River was one of the largest rivers, and it flew due southward parallel to the west of Letha range. On the west of Manipur River, Tyan or Tiau River, which originated in a lake north of Tatun and flew south, joined the Boinu, forming part of western border of Chin Hills with Mizoram in India. All the Kuki Chin Lushai tribes, including the Halam, called the Manipur River as "*Kantai nung*". There were four places in the Chin Hills the Halams never forget ever; today, and these places were-*Kharpuitawun*, *Artemottlang*, *Wawit Rungtung* i.e. *Rungtung* and *Lenthong*.

***Kharpuitawun***: All the clans of Halam tribe, particularly, the Ranglung, Chorel, Bawang, Bawangcher, Koibawang, Dap, Sakachep, Thangachep, Marchafang, Langka, Kolo, Rangkhawl, the Khelmas(Sakachep) and the Biata living in North Cachar Hills (Dima Hasak) and Jaintia Hills, the Aimol, now living in Manipur said that their ancestors came from *Kharpuitawun*. Some educated Halam youths have been attempting to connect the place called *Kharpuitawun* with the mythical *Chitlung* case of the Lushai or Hmar tribes, and they have been trying to rationalize by saying that this place was located some where in China. But the place called *Kharpuitawun* was located in Chin Hills, as evident from the small poem of the Bawang clan of the Halams. The poem was like this-

*"Bawang in arow Chin-rana Kharpuitawun"*

In English this means:-

*"Bawang people were born at Kharpuitawun in Chin land"*

Ahorlian Ranglong ( was very old, he expired long back) of Joitang village in Dharmachagar Sub-Division also said that the place *Kharpuitawun* was located in *Chitlung* i.e. Chin Hills. The Dap, Sakachep, Marchafang, Thangachep and Saihmar clans have the same tradition as that of Bawang clan. The land called *Chit-rana* was not in China but Chin Hills in Myanmar. In their folk songs, the Halams never forgot to mention *Chit* tribe because they were together in their long journey from Tibet. "*Kachia ulian sak Kol rajin*", which means *Chin riders from Myanmar*, was the words often said or added in the folk songs of the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Halams. Myanmar was familiar as *Kolram* to the Halam and also to other Kuki Chin Lushei people, and the word *rajya* means the land or country, a word borrowed from the Bengali language. In some folksongs *Chin* tribe has been mentioned as *Chin naituai*, which means *Chin, my tender Son*. The place called *Khurpuitavum* might not be in the map because this place or hill could be insignificant. Nevertheless, there were mountain peaks, the names of which almost resemble the name called *Khurpuitabum*. Likewise, *Ngulluvum*, *Thuamvum*, and *Noakuvum* were the mountains in Chin Hill. Possibly, *Khurpuitavum* was an insignificant hill range in Chin Hills, where the ancestors of Halam lived in ancient period.

**Arterawttang:** According to Dr. Vumson, the Zo historian, *Arterawttang* was Mt. Victoria (10,400ft.), the highest peak in Chin Hills in Myanmar. Mt. Victoria i.e. *Arterawttang*, was the highest peak situated on the southern end of Rongklang range, an extension of Lentang or Imbukklang range. This highest peak was just above the northern end of Arakan Yoma. No doubt that the ancestors of Halam lived in surrounding region of Mt. Victoria in ancient period. This was the reason the name of this mountain used to be remembered in folklore and folksongs.

**Rungtlang :** *Rungtlang* was one of the highest peaks in Chin Hills in Myanmar. Dr. Vumson identified Rungtlang range as the place of habitation of Kuki Chin tribes. The Halam elders even today remember this legendary peak in their folksong as *Warit Rungtang*. This was a peak of hill range in Chin Hills. The Halam elders said that this hill was in *Chinram* i.e. Chinland (Chin Hills).

**Lentang range and Rundungphai:** Lentang was better known to Halam elders as *Lenpur*. This place, which was called *Lentang*, had also been familiar as *Mani Lenpur*, which means *Human world*, and this word was used or mentioned in many folksongs and folklore nostalgically symbolizing the better world. While the word *Len* meant *Lentang*, the word *Pur* was foreign word i.e. Sanskritised word. The word *Pur*, possibly, meant town or habitation like many Indian town or cities such as Kanpur, Nagpur, Jamshedpur, Kamalpur, Udaipur, Amarpur and Badarpur etc. The Halams had been with the plain people for many decades in Barak-Surma valley. Therefore, borrowing such foreign word was not strange because in many other folksongs too, foreign words were used in order to give colour, dignity and flavour to the folksong.

### Settlement in Chin-Lusei Hills

*Lentang* or *Inbakklang* was a hill range west of Manipur River, a long hills range running north-south parallel to Manipur River, and in the south this range was known as *Kongklang* range. *Lentang* or *Inbakklang* was the watershed between the Hiac River in the west, and Manipur River in the east. The ancestors of the Halams lived at *Lentang* where they prospered. Possibly, this region gave them prosperity and peace for a century which found the place in many folksong and folklores. Another place called *Rundangphai* had been in the oral tradition of the Halam. According to Neibuntien Halam of Thalbari of Jantum, Kamalpur, the ancestors of Halams had been living at *Rundangphai* for centuries before their arrival at Champhai. Where could be the location of a place called *Rundangphai*? The Halams called the Manipur River as *Rundang* or *Rundang*. The word *Phai* means plain land or valley. *Rundangphai* meant *Manipur River Valley*. This place was said to be the habitat of the ancestors of Halams. The Halams has very small proverb, which say that their settlement was located on the west bank of *Rundang* i.e. *Manipur River* and this small proverb was like this:

"Suaiana Runtai  
Taitak sarkang"

The English translation was like this-

"In the east was Runtai River (Manipur River).  
At the sunset (west) Rainbow rises"

Thus, this proverb brought out the facts about the direction of their habitations in Chin Hills in ancient period. Manipur River flows east of *Lentang* range i.e. *Inbakklang*. Possibly, the ancestors of the Halams lived along the eastern slope of *Lentang* range, which was west of Manipur River Valley in present Chin Hill in ancient period, before their movement to Champhai in the westward direction. The older generation of Halam people always remembered *Lentang*; and glorified it as "Lampur" in their folksongs as if it was a most beautiful land their ancestors had ever lived in. The folksong of the Halams praised *Lentang* range which was like this-

1. Oh, *Lampur* mealkhna atong veisot chian,  
*Lampur* manthun jairi-rai,  
*Lampur* le Rainton ashani khua,  
*Taitoi* onaroh, sat-loi onaroh a-wei,  
*Lampur* uahy Murnah nah,

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

2. *Oh, Lempur Longvan le Reiwon apiang na;  
Longnai le Reinai avang khua,  
Long-nai le Reiwon-nai chonmui kei di rei.*

3. *Oh, Lempur khomual awh,  
Khochui aralung Lengtei nu nai nei  
Lenlur a ti u Rangvung ati-u,  
Lempur awh khomual awh.*

4. *On Lempur aw Khuisama Sarona ati  
Atiana Khuchui chim ati,  
Tiana khuchui ralung aw  
Lempur awh khuamual awh.*

Translation in English was like this-

1. *Hai; sloping Lempur(Lentang) ranges;  
Oh; Lempur let us lay down,  
Hai; Lempur sweet land,  
Place of origin of Halam history,  
Where testless fruits are tasteful  
and useless fruits are tasteful.*

2. *Hai, Lempur birthplace of Hriem (Halams),  
Where the Hriem's' sons lived,  
Let us make weaving thread  
With spinning wheel*

3. *Hai, Lempur hill ranges  
Where Khachui became afflicted (with disease)  
Lengtei-nu gave birth  
Where Lenlura and Rangvunga lived  
Hai, Lempur hill ranges.*

4. *Hai, Lempur where Khuisama and Sarona lived,  
Where the earliest (Women) Khuchuichim lived  
And earliest Khochuichim was afflicted  
Hai, Lempur hill ranges. (Folksong by Jashua Halam)*



### Settlement in Chin-Lushai Hills

Rev. Sangyela Panai, the erstwhile Field Director of the Baptist Church of Mizoram, narrated on the 25<sup>th</sup> December, 2016, his experience of visiting Lentang. He praised the surrounding natural beauty and serenity of the Lentang plateau. His narration of the beauty and charm of Lentang range vindicated the folksong of the Halam, which they compared with eternal city, which could not be forgotten.

**Description of erstwhile Lushai Hills:** As mentioned before, the Chin-Lushai Hills was a single landmass; and there were twenty-one major hill ranges of various heights which run through the length and breadth of present Mizoram. It was bounded on the north by Cachar valley and Manipur; and on the west by the Chittagang Hill Tracts and Hill Tipperah; on the south by Arakan and Chin Hills and on the east by the Chin Hills. The whole surface was covered by ranges of hills, which run almost due north and south, with an average height of about 3000 feet on the west, rising to about 4000 feet farther east. A stream or river was invariably to be found in the narrow valleys at their foot. The most important of these rivers were the *Thang* or *Dialshawri*, *Sawa*, *Taizai*, and *Tuizal*, which drained the northern portion of the Lushai Hills and eventually fall into Barak. The southern hills were drained by the *Kohahar* on the east, with its tributaries, namely, the *Mai*, *Tuichang*, *Tyia* and *Tyipi*; while river *Krangch*, at the mouth of which stands Chittagang, with its tributaries, namely, the *Tuichong*, *Kao*, *Doh*, *Phairang*, and *Tuikong*, formed the western drainage system. The valleys were malarious and unhealthy; and during the rains the climate was moist. On the higher ridges, it was fairly cool and pleasant even at the hottest season of the year. It enjoyed an abundant rainfall and the rain was well distributed. The ancestors of Halam travelled across this hilly and difficult region before they dispersed to different direction. According to English scholars *"The history of the Lushai Hills as far as known is the history of a backwash or eddy of the great wave of immigration that is generally believed to have started from North West China and spread over Assam and southward toward the Sea. In the Lushai Hill, the movement in the last hundred years has been northward; and at the beginning of the nineteenth century certain tribes, known as the Old Kukies were driven from this country and finding no safety in the plain of Cachar, settled in the hills to the north of the Surma Valley. Fifty years later there was another immigration of the Hillmen, called New Kukies to distinguish them from their predecessors, who were driven from*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*the southern Hills by the Lushais*". Prior to the advent of the British, the inhabitants of the hills was the same race, but were divided into a number of families or clans. These clans were distinguished from one another by differences in sacrificial rituals and in some cases by differences in dialect. The Lusheis had been the one who were chiefs nearly in all villages in the hills; the Pawis were immigrants from the Chin Hills. The Hmar were immigrants from Manipur, the Ralte, Paites, the Thados and the Lakhers (Maras) were the other tribes who formed part of the principal inhabitants of the hills. The Lusheis, Thados, Pawis, Raltes and other Kuki tribes had been accustomed to make periodical descents upon the plains for raiding.

But before the arrival and dominance of the Lushei tribe, the inhabitants of present Mizoram were the Halams, Hmar, and allied tribes familiar as *Khawtlang*. They were the inhabitants of this hilly region, now called Mizoram State. According to Rev. Liangkhaia, before the arrival of the Lusheis, present Mizoram was inhabited by the Meitei (Manipuris), Mirowng (Nagas), Darlong, Kiang, Pangkhuo, Bawmzo, Thanglau, and the Old Kuki tribes-which comprised of the Biate, Rangkhawl, Bawng, Molsom, Kaipeng, Hmar, and the Chorei, and he maintained that these Kuki Chin tribes were in Mizoram during the period from A.D.900 to A.D.1500. While the period of settlement could neither be denied nor be accepted without historical evidence, it was fact that before the arrival of the Lusheis in present Mizoram (erstwhile Lushai Hills), this hilly tropical forest land was inhabited by the ancestors of Halams, who were familiar as *Kuki* in the *Rajmala*, the royal chronicle of Tipperah kingdom, and other historical documents. D. G. E. Hall and Luce were of the view that when the Mongol under Kublai Khan occupied Myanmar in A.D. 1283, many *Tai* ethnic groups living in Yunan and Upper Myanmar, who were familiar as *Shan* people to the Burmese, came down in the south Myanmar and covered both banks of the Irrawaddy; and also drove the Chins out of Chindwin valley into the western hills. This forced the Lusheis, Pawis, Maras and other allied tribes living in erstwhile Lushai Hill at that period to move in interior regions of the western hills, later to be known Chin-Lushai Hills. However, it seemed that the Old Kuki tribes, of which the Halam tribe belonged to, left the Chin Hills much earlier before the invasion of the Mongol and consequent eruption of the Shan people down into south Myanmar. Possibly, the invasion of Myanmar by the Mongol

### Settlement in Chin-Lushai Hills

in 1283 had indirect consequence; the ancestors of the Old kuki tribes i.e., the Halam, Lmar, Kom, Aimol, Chiru, Biata etc, clans living in erstwhile Chin-Lushai Hills were driven out by the Lusheis, Pawis i.e. Lais and other allied tribes.

According to Grierson, "the original Old Kuki tribes seem to have lived in the Lushai Hills, from whence they were driven out by the Thados. The Lmar were apparently left behind or subsequently reimmigrated from Manipur". Possibly, the settlement of the Halams in erstwhile Lushai Hills had taken place in two phases. In the first phase of settlement, the Halams might have gradually migrated from Lentang region in Chin Hills to Champai regions in Lushai Hills, and thereafter, they moved in batches toward Tipaimukh, and they moved farther upto Surma and Kushiara valley. Thereafter, several batches turned to eastward and moved to Manipur, and other batches moved to Hachuk Jampui range and some of the groups entered into Chittagang Hill Tracts. The batches which moved to Manipur came back and gradually moved toward the south-east into Lushai Hills again. In their initial migration from Chin Hills, before moving to Manipur and other parts, the Halams, possibly, settled in Ri Dil-Champai region, which the Halams always remembered in their folksong as "Rili Champai". Further, the places such as *Thaxat, Mamang Hill, Vaitong waterfall*, were in the folksong of the Halams, where their ancestors settled in the past.

*Rili-Champai* : Their movement and settlement at Champai was expressed in this folksong

*Mwai-Leynar (Lentang) awghba ata  
Hwaban sanna,  
Kilchem eichoi sima rannuol lan laoi,  
sorper in ranni ewan manruan.  
Khaolan-in mp-pang,  
Kaning alien chu Sima Relsi.  
Azai sip huag ngam Simi dala Relsi,  
Saxa Sasomlun Vauzi, Asael tonlun  
Relsi di kai, A Uenzo a bon puan songa  
zilun eiman khun,  
Bon puan sap arau sang,  
Thehuag chiu le thesep chiu,  
Simuol khun le valkong chiu,*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Rachan chimu le lam tuoi chimu ke,  
Azuo in zilwa eiman khum,  
Reng sa som rachun ke.*

English translation was like this:-

*From Lentang habitation we looked  
toward the north,  
We walked northward in the vast land,  
and make boundary,  
With sorpar (leaf) they make slanting cover/  
(Roofing) of the house,  
But famous among all was Relsi,  
Sun could not set in the west crossing  
the huge granary of Relsi,  
His daughter was Sasomchun Vangi,  
Beautiful forehead of the daughter of Relsi,  
(she) covered the things with her clothes,  
The hen is inside the clothe,  
The seed of small and big amber,  
the seed of glittering amber neckless,  
and the seed of tender bamboo etc.  
are wrapped with the clothe she carried,  
Ten kings have gathered there.*

After leaving Lentang in Chin Hills, Rili Champhai and the surrounding regions had been the destination of the ancestors of Halams. This was why the Halam elders always would speak about *Rili Champhai*. The word *Rili* means *Ri Dil* in Lushei language. The Halam called water reservoir *Tuirili* the word *Tui* meaning *water* and the word *Rili* means *deep water reservoir*. Although *Ri Lake* was within Chin Hills in Myanmar now, geographical location made it inseparable from *Champhai* region, which was within the geographical boundary of erstwhile Lushai Hills. On the north-eastern corner of Champhai at a distance of two kilometers inside Myanmar from the Indo-Myanmar international border stand a beautiful lake called *Ri Dil* or *Ri lake* by the Mizos who held it in very high esteem on account of its legendary association. The lake was about one kilometer long and 0.70 kilometers wide. The most conspicuous physical feature of the lake was that it has no external in-flow or out-flows of water. The entire water use to

### Settlement in Chin-Lusei Hills

be very muddy once every year generally in the autumn season even though its water was fairly clear and transparent during the major part of the year. The legendary association of the lake centres round the dead man's village of the Lusheis. In the past, the Lushei tribe as a whole believed firmly that the spirit of all deadmen had to take a long sojourn to reach the dead man's village known as "Mithikhua". The dead men had to pass through this lake on their way to Mithikhua i.e. dead person's abode. The Halams also has similar traditions connected to Ri Lake, and consider the Ri Lake as *Vampial Makol* i.e. Gateway to Heaven (Mithikhua). This was the place through which the spirits of all dead person believed to have passed through toward Mithikhua i.e. *dead person's abode*. The Halam elders' would sing a folksong about this Ri Lake as a gate way to deadman's abode. Fascination of the Halams about Ri Lake would seem unending which found expression in two stanza poem:-

*"Tui dil ei tong-ao Rili Champhai  
Khalang aivan diava Champhai"*

In English it was like this-

*"We rest water body at Rili-Champhai  
We used to play games in Champhai"*

When new jhum paddy was harvested, the Molsom and Bongcher families would perform puja i.e. sacrifice to "Sapinu", the goddess of paddy, and the priest would make chanting while sacrificing cock to the goddess saying

*"Rih-Champhai u-to Sapinu  
Thun:coel phai u to Sapinu  
Kasa-te Bui-sapang beet vavah"*

The English translation was like this-

*"Goddess Sapinu come from Rili-Champhai  
Goddess Sapinu come from Thun:coel plain land  
Oh Rice, my tender Son, fill's the granary"*

The Molsom, Bongcher, Kaipeng and the Rangkhawl said that during their settlement at *Rih-Champhai* region they prospered. The Kaipengs have the same tradition as the Molsom and Bongcher clans. When new paddy in the jhum land became ripe, it was customary among the Kaipeng to thresh the ear of the ripe paddy in a big basket by hand on the first day of the new harvest. While threshing the ears of paddy of

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

the first harvest in the big bamboo basket, as a matter of tradition, he or she would chant loudly saying:-

*Bu ho rawh, bu ho rawh,  
Lili- Champhai bu ho rawh,*

English translation was like this:-

*Paddy come here, paddy come here,,  
Come paddy here from Ri Lake & Champhai,*

This region was the passage for moving toward the north. It was certain that the ancestors of Halams were the advance guard of Kuki Chin tribes who came first in present Mizoram; and the surrounding regions of Rili Lake and Champhai seemed to be the first place of their settlement in Mizoram in ancient period. Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear observed saying that the “*Old Kukis including the Biete and Hrangkhawl and other cognate clans who are now known to us as Khawtlang, they claim the hill round Champhai as their place of origin, and the sites are still known by their names*”.

Possibly, the ancestors of Halam did not have settlement at particular area or place together during their settlement in Chumphai region for long period. They might have been divided into several groups on the basis of their family clans, and moved to surrounding regions for the convenience of shifting cultivation. It was certain that each family clan was led by the respective courageous leader called *Haisa or Malal* and set up different habitation in surrounding region of Champhai. But this dispersal also resulted into gradual separation of the tribes into several larger social grouping in subsequent period. Nobody would be able to say about the exact locations of the past habitats of the Halams in present Mizoram. In the past, like any other hill tribes, the Halams were in constant move because their mode of livelihood based on shifting cultivation coupled with inter-clan rivalries made them semi-nomadic. But there were few places which the Halams never forgot to mention in their folksongs and folklores.

***Thenzawl*** : This place was familiar as *Ramthenzawl* in the folklore of the Halams, which was located in the west of Champhai. Vantong Waterfall, which was five kilometers away from present Thenzawl town, was in the folksong of the Halams, and this signified their settlement in this region in the past. This folksong mentions about the killing of python at Vantong Waterfall by the ancestors of the Halams.

### Settlement in Chin-Lusei Hills

There was a legend about the killing of a giant python by the villagers. The villagers gave the velly of the python to two young orphaned brothers namely-*Lianhai* & *Kienngazi*, in whose house Sapite, the goddess of paddy, once took shelter. The orphan brothers were told by the villagers to take it far away in the downstream for desecrating and cleaning the velly of the slain python. The two young orphaned brothers went to the downstream, and while cleaning the velly, the orphaned brothers got a big bronze gong. This legend was known as "Nyente Darhai" among the Halam. This folksong was related to this legendary incident:-

*Amsang Vantong roid vuhiv  
huli u zol di Rangrul ei awa na,  
Sakol vnuoh kashin when ngai in  
suhve plakoi le kuyjeng phudong le  
Rangrul Hihai ei le sa na e.  
Ruheng Hihai a samle  
Rangrul awaga  
Ngenta darthir an manak,  
Veikhat hamin rei sui aring  
Rau vnuoh vuhvuh e e e"*

The English translation was like this:-

*On the high Vantong Waterfall  
and deep in its valley  
Have lived the King of the Snakes(pythons),  
My older Chins from Myanmar  
With long spear, bow, hook,  
Arrow, shield, killed the King of Snakes,  
Inside the belly of Snakes' king(pythons)  
They got golden Gong,  
When once rang, it echoed seven times  
round the hills.*

This popular legend has been prevalent among different clans of the Halam with certain variation, but essence of the legend was the same. *Saitual* : This place was situated in the east of present Aizawl district and North West of Champhai District. After leaving Champhai, the Rangchowl said to have settled in and around of this region. Their oral tradition maintained that *Saitual* sub-clan of the Rangchowl derived its

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

identity during their settlement in this region. In eighteenth century, a Rangkhawl village in Cachar was attacked by the Khuchung (Thado) tribe, where Prince Krishnamoni (1717-1783 A.D) camped during his campaign against the Thado tribes in the year (1748-1756), which means by that period the remaining Rangkhawl clan had already left the present Mizoram in general and Saitual region in particular; and they were moving northward gradually. Possibly, the Rangkhawl migrated to Tipaimukh and Bhuban hills as evident from their oral tradition, and subsequently, they were forced to migrate to the North Cachar Hills (Dima Hasao) i.e. part of Barail Hills.

**Mawmrangtang**: Mizoram has twenty-one hill ranges, and Mawmrang Hill was one of them. Mawmrang range was above 1812 ft. from the sea level, and situated between the places namely Kawlkukh (in the south) and Ngopa (in the north) in the northern part of Champhai District. In their folksong, the Halams would praise this Mawmrang Hills for its beauty. In the past the Halam appeared to have settle in this region which was reflected in this folksong.

*Mawmrang zawlah Tuini nu so  
Ruphai patbor akhuk akain,  
Asuok vantang aeil le  
sima boktam (Pawi) ranglien omna,  
Longvon ralsa nolti alien khom  
Sak kol ramah Kachin ulien ngei-in,  
Simsuok rasei le saili phokei  
Kapzang pholong le ka-Chin ulien ngei-in,  
Choma in som thing andoi kar  
Na-Chin naituoi in chichai kalei ruoi.*

English translation was as follows:-

*Oh, the shining day and moonlit night  
Look at the deep water where Mawmrang Hill's  
water is falling,  
This look like hanging grains of golden cotton,  
the radiance of which was like pole star of the west,  
All my brave Chin elders' from Myanmar  
were carrying long Spears and Bows  
with shield, dao and sharp prickly arrows,  
In the forenoon they uprooted the trees,*



### Settlement in Chin-Lusei Hills

*and in fear I escorted my children away  
from the sight of my Chin elders from Myanmar*

**Chieftainship of Relsi, Buangkhup and Luopuia :** During the period of settlement of the ancestors of Halams in Champhai and surrounding region in Lushai-Chin Hills (in present Mizoram and neighbouring Chin province of Myanmar) region, the ancestors of Halams might have attained certain degree of material prosperity and could live in peace as they were away from strife torned Chindwin valley. At that period, *Relsi* and *Buangkhup* were two great chiefs of the ancestors of Halams. There was a poem about them which was like this:-

*"Sina Relsi mara Buangkhup  
An nionga buethi rangbaig"*

English translation was like this:

*"Relsi of the west, Buangkhup of the north  
Met at the plateau where starfruit trees are there"*

According to the legend of the Halams, *Relsi* was a son of poor widow who became very rich by hard work. His mother married to another husband. *Relsi* survived with his elder sister *Ngyrtlingi* and they were supported by their father's elder brother *Limbhutor*. *Relsi* married to a beautiful girl whose name was *Chongvangi*. They had a daughter called *Phaisangting*. *Phaisangting* had another name as *Sasomchun*. *Chongvangi* had one sister whose name was *Revangi*. *Revangi* was married to *Buangkhup*, the friend of *Relsi*. *Buangkhup* was the chief of the northern region, *Relsi* became the chief of the west. *Buangkhup* and *Rivangi* got a son whose name was *Khamalajah Luopuia*(also known as *Wahai Luopuia*), also called *Darlotheug*. This *Luopuia* (*Darlawthang*) was married to *Sasomchun* (*Phaisangting*), the daughter of *Relsi*. Thus, *Relsi* and *Buangkhup* established Kinship by marriage of their daughter and son. However, *Relsi* and *Buangkhup* were also related because they married daughter of the same parentage; and both were said to be very rich. The Halam had this small proverb about the resourcefulness of *Relsi* and *Buangkhup*-

*"Sina Relsi mara Buangkhup  
Relsi sui bang akhang kamoi  
Sinni dai la sorha d:u-ia  
Abang fukoi"*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

This proverb says that Relsi had such a huge granary that even the sun and moon could not cross over that giant granary. In the past the ancestor of Halam measured their wealth in term of possession of large quantity and numbers of metal coin, mithun, ivory, gong and granary. Another chief, whose name was Wahai Luopuia, said to be the son of chief Buangkhub, but there was difference in opinion. Many said that Loupuia was another chief who ruled the land in-between the Land ruled by Relsi and Buangkhub. Wahai Loupuia as the chief said to have planted banyan tree, some say during the settlement in Kabaw valley. The Lusheis have tradition which was broadly similar to other Kuki-Chin tribes. Lershia of the Lushei, Lersi of the Hmar and Relshi of the Halam seemed to be the same character. The Kukis, particularly, the Thados do not pronounce "R" and they have the habit of pronouncing "R" as "L" and; so Relsi has been pronounced as Lersi. Lt.Colonel J.Shakespear, the first Superintendent of Lushai Hills, gave an account of Lershia (Chongthu) clan, and he stated that *"of all Lushais clans Lershia celebrated the Chong first of all. Lershia's village was on the hill to the south of the Vanlaiphai; which is near to Champhai valley. There he celebrated the Chong. He was the richest of all men. Lershia had a younger brother, Singaia. His village was separate at Betlu. He was very rich in mithun, gongs and necklaces. Once he was moving to another village with all his goods, when a very big snake swallowed him. Even till now Chongthus are always "upa" i.e. Elder to the chief. Because he was so rich in mithun, gongs, and necklaces, he first celebrated the Chong (festival). His name was also first given to the Chong song. Even till now all Sailos and all Lusheis and all Ralte, if they celebrate the Chong according to their customs, sing Lershia's song-they have not a new song of their own. Thus, Chongthu is nickname given to Lershia on account of his having celebrated the Chong. Chongthu's name appears in the Thado pedigree as the first of the race to emerge from the earth, and the great grandfather of Thado. The Chiru and Kollheng also claim descent from him"*.

As mentioned before, the traditional account of the Halams maintained that Wahai Loupuia, who's other name was Darlothang, had been the son of Buangkhub; but Wahai Luopuia had also been a great chief. His father-in-law, Relsi and his father Buangkhub were in good term and made friendship. About the friendship between Relshi and Buangkhub and; about the marriage of their son and daughter, there was a Halam folksong which was like this:-

### Settlement in Chin-Lusei Hills

Rili Chingphai zaxla  
Lisara Buangkhuap iakhuva tir  
Kualbei rangin a khunah-ata  
Siel ang asuaka lian lai avataka,  
Sine Kolkhua ama Nelsi khuminatata  
Siel ang aw suak e e e,  
Sine Relsi le honara Buangkhuap  
ning zu parhnei an sian.  
awltung rual lai an imkhick.  
Sasomchun ish Valai Luopui  
Beripoi an inlong rangin chungsra wa-bithem,  
Liten sikin keng Relsi thi sionso le  
Sasomchun honar rana ah  
ahaw ei-vaan ah wa chungsaroi;  
Rü Chingphai ahaw lian lai ei tak,  
Chungsra sianthaw.

English translation was like this:-

From Rili Chingphai's valley  
Buangkhuap of the north  
came out walking like a million  
from his home for making friendship  
but fell in danger.  
Relsi of the west came from his home  
situated in South Myanmar,  
Relsi of the west and Buangkhuap of the north  
fixed a customary drink and feast,  
They make friendship and vowed  
to tie a knot between Valai Luopui  
and Sasomchun,  
For this reason after the death of Relsi  
Sasomchun arrived at west valley  
of Ri lake-Chingphai region.  
(Sung by Mana Haram)

About the marriage of Luopui to Sasomchun, the daughter of Relsi,  
there was another old poem -

Sine Relsi sara namoi a rnoi lai-in  
A nei tunga chy vonu Reng'

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

The old poem said that “the chiefs Relsi escorted bride (his daughter) whose husband was a king (Luopui)”. When the quarrel broke out between Relsi and the Pawi ie. Lai tribe, Relsi requested his friend Buangkhu, the chief of the north, to get his daughter-Sasomchun married to Luopui, the son of Buangkhu; and accordingly, the marriage took place between Sasomchun and Luopuia hurriedly. According to oral tradition this was done to strengthen the position of Relsi and Buangkhu against the invading Pawi tribe.

Possibly, Chief Luopui inherited the land and people of Relsi, his father-in-law, and also his father the Chief Buangkhu. The Halams regarded Luopuia as their great ancestor who was great Chief, hero, hunter and fighter. The old poem of the Halam say:-

*“Loupui-in wangkhuo adung amansei lai in,  
Loupui-in wangkhuo amanlian lai in  
Hawa ning-om ei ma jowm”*

English translation was like this:-

*“When Loupui expanded his habitation horizontally  
and; when Loupui enlarged his habitation,  
we did follow whatever he did as our tradition”.*

Wahai Luopui was regarded as the great ancestor and whatever work he did was regarded as a custom and tradition by the Halams.

**Movement from Lushai Hills** : In ancient and medieval period, in most cases, the direction of human migration was governed by the topography and physical feature of the land. In absence of all weather road, mechanical transportation system such as car, railway, aeroplane and mechanised ship, human migration was determined by the direction of the river course, mountain pass, hill range and foot tracks etc. Possibly, in the same way the direction of movement of the ancestors of the Halams was determined by the topography of the land. Pemberton described the earstwhile Lushai Hills as “densely wooded and mountainous region”. During expedition to Lushai Hills in 1850 A.D, Colonel Lister reported stating that “from the nature of the country all the ranges of hills running north and south”. He further reported saying “geographically, this tract may be described as consisting of a series of parallel rivers running from south to north, with the watersheds between them”. The situation of hill ranges and rivers of earstwhile Lushai Hills have played an important role in determining the direction of the movement of the

### Settlement in Chin-Lusei Hills

ancestors of Halams in earlier period. Therefore, with little exception, their movement had been from south to north. Thus, the oral tradition of the Halams maintained that their forefather used to take bath at *Taisol*, *Taisai*, *Tuisial*, and *Tuisiang* (Barak) rivers and subsequently migrated, following these rivers' courses to Cachar valley. The forefathers of the Halams must have moved in batches clan-wise toward the north eastern direction along the river courses, which led them to Tipaimukh and from Tipaimukh to Barak Valley in Cachar and some of them moved towards Manipur.

## CHAPTER - 5

# SETTLEMENT IN TIPAIMUKH AND BARAK VALLEY

**Importance of Tipaimukh and Barak valley :** After Champhai, Tipaimukh region was like a transit station on the highway for all Kuki Chin tribes living in different parts in the North Eastern region. From Tipaimukh, traversing dense forest hills and streams, the ancestors of the Halams moved to the eastward into Manipur kingdom, northward into Jayantia Hills, Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong Districts in Assam and in Nagaland (in case of Khelmas i.e. Sakachep), toward the southeast into Sylhet and toward the southwest into Tipperah kingdom in ancient and medieval period. The region of Tipaimukh and Barak valley were part of Tipperah Kingdom in ancient period, and even in medieval period these regions continued to be within Tipperah Kingdom. King Garib Niwaz i.e. Gopal Singh of Manipur kingdom occupied this Tipaimukh region in 1709 A.D. The rulers of Tipperah Kingdom were pre-occupied with the Muhammadan invaders from Bengal in the western and southwestern front, and could not pay attention for the protection of eastern and north-eastern boundary of Tipperah kingdom. The Manipur's rulers took the advantage of this adverse situation confronted by the Tipperah kingdom; and occupied Tipaimukh region without any war. About the limit of Tipperah Kingdom, Capt. R.B. Pemberton, who work in the Department of Surveyor General and had been Joint Commissioner in Manipur, wrote *"from the sources of the Jeeree (Jhiri) River, along the western bank, to its confluence with the Barak (river); thence south on the western bank of the latter (Barak) river, to the mouth of the Chikko nullah, which, as before mentioned, marks the triple boundary of Munepoor, Kachar and Tripurah. On the south, the limits have never been accurately defined-wild and unexplored tracts of territory subject to Tripurah"*. Tipaimukh, where Barak and Tuivai Rivers met together, was an important junction connected to the history of migration of the Old Kuki tribes, particularly, the Halam tribe. It was most likely that the ancestors

### Settlement in Tipaimukh and Barak Valley

of Halams arrived at Tipaimukh and down the Barak valley region from Chin-Lushai Hills, after long journey along the course of Tuivai river and its tributary-Tuirung river as evident from their oral tradition. The fact of the matter was that Barak river was known to the Tipras as *Tuirung*, which means valley or river bank in *Tripuri* language. The Halam seemed to have imitated this Tripuri word *Tuirung* which made them to call the Barak river as *Tuirung*. Tuivai River took its source on the west and in the latitude of Tunzan in Chin Hills in Myanmar, and was the longest tributary of the Barak River. *Tipaimukh* was confluence of two river namely-the *Barak*(*Tuirung*) and *Tuirai* rivers and; this *Tipaimukh* was known to Halam tribe as "*Rung le Vaiva*" meaning *Confluence of Tuirung and Tuirai rivers*. The word "*Kwang*" was the short form of the word "*Tuirung* (*Barak*) river" and "*Vai*" was the short form of the word *Tuirai* River; the words "*Sai*" was the short form of the word *Tuisai*, which in Halam language means "*confluence of river*". Therefore, "*Rung le Vaiva*" means "*mouth or confluence of Tuirung and Tuirai*" river. The Bengali called it Tipaimukh for specific reason. The word "*Tipai*" was the corrupted form or broken word of "*Tuirai*" river and; the word *Mukh* means *mouth* in Bengali. Thus, the actual meaning of the word *Tipaimukh* meaning *mouth of Tuirai river*. Bengali living in Cachar would speak in regional language which was familiar as *Syhetli dialect*, and this *Syhetli* dialect was the spoken language in Cachar and neighbouring *Syhet* region in Bangladesh. These *Syhetli* Bengalees pronounced the word *Tuirai* as *Tivai*, which has no meaning in Bengali language. The River Tuivai joined Barak River at Tipaimukh. All the Old Kuki clans including the Halam regarded Tipaimukh region as one of the important habitats in the past. The *Brangkhawl* and *Kaipeng* in *Tripura* regard Tipaimukh as the place of past habitation and they have this small saying or proverb, which their elders used to remember:-

*"Tuirung Tuirai ei Koi"*.

If translated in English It is means-

*"Tuirung and Tuirai (Rivers) were  
our bathing place"*.

The *Kaipeng* clan too, maintained that the legendary hero *Ratrungsinga* (i.e. *Ralngam*) took shelter at *Tuirung* and *Tuirai* region i.e. *Tipaimukh*, in ancient period. The *Kaipeng* priest would perform *pooja* or sacrifice to the deities of *Tuirung* and *Tuirai* rivers first, which

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

they regarded as their ancestral deities. The priest would chant like this:-

*Tuirung le Tuivai zuor ngei,  
Khurse Bangba ngei,  
Serh tangval serh nungak,  
Nen-pu lam hong enroi,  
Theibuang theisen a ngei,  
Sen Jutruia ngei,  
Khurse bangba ngei,  
Durkun durkun rung rung,  
Loxar nenpupa lam hong enroi,*

*Tuiruang* (Barak) and *Tuivai Rivers* has been worshipped by the Kaipeng as their ancestral deities because they settled on these two rivers' bank in ancient period. It was also the place where one of their ancestors familiar as Liandanga run away with his sister leaving his pregnant wife just to escape from the headhunting hill tribes. The Langkai, Dap, Sakachep, Thangachep, Marchafang, Chorei, Saihmar, Bowng, Ranglong, Rangkhawl, Kaipeng and even the Molsom would warship Barak and Tuivai Rivers as *Tuiruang zuar* and *Tuivai zuor* deities. These two rivers' deities were also called by the Langkai clan of the Halam as *Ruangtui zuor le Vaitui zour*. In fact the Langkai clan of Halam even today regards *Tuiruang zuar* and *Tuivai zuor* as their household deities (*Inkil pathien*), and offered sacrifice of cock once in every year at the corner inside the house. Tipaimukh region was associated with the legend of Ralngam; and it was the belief of the Halams and their kinsmen namely the Hmar that Ralngam lived in this region. There were few folklores among the different Halam clans on Tuipaimukh. The Old kukis of Manipur, particularly, the Chiru, Aimol, Koireng, and Kom had a tradition which maintained that they also migrated from *Ruang le Vaiso* i.e. Tipaimukh region. Even the Hmars, Thadous, Vaiphei, Gangte i.e. Rantes etc. moved to Manipur crossing Tipaimukh region. There was a tradition among the Halams which maintained that *Ruang le Vaisuo* i.e. Tipaimukh leads to *Mithikhua*, the abode of dead persons, apart from Lake *Ri Dil*.

Tipaimuth region was associated with the history of migration of the Halams. As mentioned earlier, the settlement of the Halam at Tipaimukh region was reflected in their religious practice, which



### Settlement in Tipaimukh and Barak Valley

involved offering sacrifice to Barak and Tuivai rivers as *Tuiruong zuor* and *Tuivai zuor pathien* every year. In some cases, Halam families would offer sacrifice to both Rivers together as *Tuiruong Zuor ie Tuivai Zuor pathien*. The Halams have a small proverb about their settlement on the bank of Barak river in Tipaimukh region, which maintained that at the "upstream bank of Barak River a man would look like a trapped cock".

*"Tuiruong(Barak) a rahah  
Lankang thak ar ke nani."*

Barak river was a biggest and strongest river in the south of Barail Hill, and possibly, it restricted the free movement of the ancestors of the Halams which prompted to coin this proverb. During their settlement at Tipaimukh, a section of the Halam started to migrate downstream toward Cachar. At that period, the Halams living in the upstream valley used different means of communication with their people living in the downstream. Whenever, the upstream dwellers faced the danger of dead from the enemy, they used to float carcass on the Barak river toward downstream so that the people living in the downstream might sense the incoming danger of dead and destruction. But when they floated the white cotton toward downstream, it meant that they were alive and free from danger.

**Story of Ralngam or Ralrunga :** Ralngam was a legendary ancestor of the Halams and other Kuki Chin tribes. His father was Siamlek and mother's name was Zawlpaihoi. He was wizard and very expert in the application of black magic against the adverseries. His grandfather was Thirlukuka and father was Zawhranga. His wife's name was Hourili and daughter's name was Swandon, but her another name was Ahuvangi. There was a proverb about Ralngam which was like this-

*"A zuo Ralngam srai nai.  
Achun Houril vonchoi na  
Ahuvangi nu"*

English translation was like this "Ralngam was the son of a hero, and Houril, the wife of Ralngam, conceived a daughter and the name was "Ahuvangi". But Ahuvangi, the daughter of Ralngam, was also familiar as Swandon. The legend maintained that when Houril, the wife of Ralngam, conceived a child, and her husband Ralngam came to know by applying magical power that his wife would give birth to a baby girl, Ralngam decided to present the unborn baby girl precious

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

ornament made of amber beads after her birth. But amber beads were not available at the region and place where they lived but in far distant place called *Shan-i-Shayan* land in the east. One day taking leave from his wife, Ralngam left home and set out toward Shan land for collecting amber beads. He travelled many days, months and years and arrived in the land known as *Shoni Sayan ram* (Shan land) where people were said to be demonic and cannibal. The Chinese work from the fourth century A.D. onwards referred to the wild and savage tribes living south west of Yung Ch'ang among whom there were cannibals. The most dreaded among them were the *P'u* who tattooed their bodies, used bows and arrows and mostly went naked. In the word of Sir George Scott, K.C.I.C, "*in north (Myanmar) there is mass of very hilly country full of undesirable tribes, and to the east head hunting Wa tribe*". Apart from other causes, these tribes said to have rendered the journey from India to China via Yung-Ch'ang by the ancient routes most difficult and hazardous. This fact made it quite obvious that Ralngam, perhaps, confronted these cannibals in ancient Myanmar, whom in this legend termed as demonic people. Ralngam made a friendship with a person whose name was *Rangsai*. Rangsai father was *Maham* and his grandfather was *Swona*. The legend maintained that the ancestors of Rangsai descended from the tiger, not that they were tiger. Possibly, they were living in a land full of tiger and intimately acquainted with the movement of tiger. Ralngam said to have applied black magic in order to make friendship with *Rangsai*. Rangsai protected Ralngam day and night from the cannibals and guided Ralngam in collecting amber beads from the trees. In the meantime, his wife Honril gave birth to a baby girl; and the baby was named as *Ahoivangi*, many say *Swandon*. Swandon grew up as beautiful young lady in absence of her father. After many years of journey, Ralngam returned to his home country and on the way before reaching home he met a beautiful young girl who was busy collecting firewood from nearby jhum land. Ralngam was so attracted by the beauty of that young girl, he fell in love with her at first sight, not knowing that she was her daughter borned during his long years of absence. He came to know that her name was *Swadon*, but she did not know the name of her father as her mother did not disclose to her. Ralngam started singing a song to her like this :-

### Settlement in Tipaimukh and Barak Valley

*Oh Swandon, Oh Swandon,  
Nazuo rining hai ing mooh,  
Nachun rining # u gai uah,  
Nazuo rining hoithet woi mu-ung,  
Nachun rining hoithet woi mu-ung,  
Nachun boini atak mooh,  
Nazuo boini atak mooh,  
Khuonban solan chardach mooh,  
Khuonban uoi chardach mooh.  
(Sung by Neituathang Halam)*

In English it said *"Oh Swandon, Oh Swandon, what is the name of your father? What is the name of your mother? I do not know the name of your father, and I do not know the name of your mother. Is your mother is dead? Is your father is dead? Whether the rear end of your house faces the east? Whether your house has outlet i.e. rear door, facing southward?"* Swandon replied saying

*Kachua rining hoithet woi mu-ung,  
Kachua rining hoithet woi mu-ung,  
Khuonban kao solan chardach,  
Takhon ke uoi chardach kan hai mooh,*

In English the meaning was like this- *"I do not know the name of my mother, I do not know the name of my father, the rear end of our house is eastward and the outlet of our house is westward".* When Ralngam met Swandon on his way to home, he did not know that this beautiful young girl was his daughter for whom he went to *Shan State* land. He made all these questions in the form of song just to ascertain the identity of the young girl. He wanted to know the identity of her parent and whether they were alive or not. He also wanted to know the position of the house location for verifying whether her house was the one he constructed before he left home. If she was from that house he constructed, Swandon might be his daughter borned during his absence. But Ralngam was away from home for over decades from home and a bamboo and thached house could not be expected to last over decades. During his absence, his wife managed to construct another house in different site. After questioning by that song, Ralngam came to a wrong conclusion that Swandon was neither his relative nor his daughter born in his absence. So, he thought no harm to have love affair with this beautiful young girl named Swandon. For helping his lady love,

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Ralngam applied black magic and accommodated huge quantity of firewood into her bamboo basket, which Swandon brought to carry the firewood to home. It was normal practice among the Halam families to unload the basketful firewood inside the kitchen house. But just before reaching the village, Ralngam told Swandon not to unload the firewood inside the kitchen house; but to unload at the premise of her house. Ralngam did not enter the village but sailently stood at the entrance of the village road just to observe and watch the young girl unloading her basketful firewood. So when Swandon reached home, her mother insisted to unload the basketful firewood inside the kitchen house as normally done before, but Swandon did not comply to her mother's advised. She unloaded the basketful firewood at the courtyard of their house and the firewood was so huge in quantity that somehow the courtyard could accommodate the firewood. Her mother became suspicious observing the things and suspected her husband for this things to happen because she knew that only her husband could do this by applying black magic. So, she stood at the corner of courtyard sailently waiting her husband to come inside the village and at their home. Ralngam was hiding outside the village until Swandon reached home and unload the the firewood. After a moment Ralngam entered in the village and came home; and Ralngam felt surprised to meet his wife outside the home at the corner of courtyard in the afternoon; and was more surprised to know that Swandon was his daughter whom he left when her mother conceived her; and for whom he went to distant *Shan land* to get amber beads for making her ornament. Ralngam became ashamed and conspired to murder his daughter before his wife and other came to know their love affair. He prepared big hammock where his young daughter Swandon could sleep inside it. One day Ralngam induced her daughter to sleep inside this cane made hammock by chanting black magic in the form of song and lulled Swandon, who became almost unconscious. She complained to her mother against her father for being unconscious. But one day Ralngam succeeded to lull with the song of black magic and made his daughter unconscious fully and breathless leading to her death. Thus, he succeeded to murder his daughter with that black magic and suppressed his past love affair with his unfortunate daughter, for whom he risked his life in collecting amber beads from distant Shan land.

### Settlement in Tipaimukh and Barak Valley

At Tipaimukh, there was a Barak River bank, the height of which was about two hundred feet, covered by steep stonewall. This steep stonewall was familiar to the Halams as "*Ansang Barongrai*", and it was the superstitious belief of the Halams that Ralngam had beaten his bronze Gong here so that people of all the surrounding villages could hear it, but the beating said to have resulted in the steepness of the stonewall of the river bank. The big bronze gong said to have fallen in the Barak River at the place where the river was deepest with swirling water, and not fordable. Besides, there was a curved out hole on the stone at the same place, which was believed to be the pot for feeding the pigs by Ralngam. Traces of footprints of Ralngam said to exist even today.

**Settlement at Surma-Kushiyara valley:** Surma-Kushiyara valley was an extension of Barak valley; and this region was associated with the migration history of the Halams. This was the region the Halams would frequently talk about as one of the places of earlier settlement, possibly, before their movement towards Manipur and Chittagang Hill Tract in two groups. All the Halam clans seemed to have moved from Tipaimukh region in batches towards downstream of Barak River. Historical evidence revealed that they moved upto the place called *Panchakhanda*, which was situated on northern bank of Kushiyara River and south bank of the Surma River. The location of *Panchakhanda* was about fifteen kilometers southwest of Karimganj town, and now in Bangladesh. Besides, some of them also moved to Longlai region which was situated in the west bank of Kushiyara river. The Halams lived in this region in ancient period. There were two copper plates which provided evidence; the one copper plate was granted by King Dzungurpha and the other was the copper plate granted by king Dharmadhar. King Dzungurpha alias *Mountain King (Parbatadish)* Adhi Dharmapha of Tipperah Kingdom conducted Vedic sacrifice i.e. *yagna* in this region in A.D.641. He brought five Brahmins from the court of Shiladitya Harsha Vardhana in Central India for performing Vedic sacrifice. King Adhi Dharmapha gave land grant to these five Vedic Brahmins namely-*Srinanda, Ananda, Gobinda, Sripati* and *Parasutton* in this region. He gave them five plots of land to five Vedic Brahmins. From that period onward this place became familiar as *Panchakhanda*, which means *Land of Five plots*. Before granting land to the Vedic

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Brahmins, this place was inhabited by *Hangkla Kukis* and *Tengnguri Kukis*. After land grant, these Kukis left the place and migrated to eastward, possibly, toward undivided Cachar region, which was part of Tipperah Kingdom at that period. the *Hangkla Kukis* were the *Hrangkhowl* clan of the Halam, and the *Tenguri Kukis* were, possibly, *Thangur Khoreng*, a family clan of the Biatae tribe. This has been discussed in subsequent Chapter. Both the Rangkhows and Biates were the subject of Tipperah Kingdom from ancient period, and they were regarded as Halam clans. Possibly, the ancestors of the Halams moved to this region. During that period, the ruling house of Tipperah kingdom were at Barak valley; and had not move their capital to Rangamati (present Udaipur). The Halams had extensive cultural contact with the *Tipras* during their settlement in this Barak valley.

King Dharmadhar, the 17<sup>th</sup> king of Tipperah, conducted another Vedic sacrifice in 12<sup>th</sup> century at *Longlai*. Longlai was located northwest of the present Kailashahar town inside Bangladesh. In ancient period, this Longlai region was within Tipperah Kingdom. King of Tipperah, Dharmadar alias King Swadharmapha conducted the Vedic sacrifice at that place in A.D.1194, by engaging a Vedic Brahmin, whose name was Nidhipati. The Tripur King *Sri Sri Yukta Swadharmapha* gave vast tract of land grant to Nidhipati at *Longlai*, which was inhabited by *Longlai Kuki* i.e. *Langkai* clan of Halam. Longlai hill range was situated east of Longlai plain, an extension of Belkum (Unakoti in Tripura) range toward the north. Bulkum range, the southern extension of Longlai range, was connected to the story of Saihmar clan of the Halams. Longlai plain was just about ten kilometers north of Kailasahar town across the Indo-Bangla international border within Bangladesh. *Longlai* was another region in Syhlet where the ancestors of Halam lived in ancient period. But *Longlai* was also a word used by the younger people in Halam community to address the elders as a show of respect and honour. After the advent of the Mahammedan, *Longlai* region passed into the hand of the Muslim. When Lodhi dynasty was in power in Delhi Sultanate, one traveller of Persian descent came to India, and he was welcomed by the ruler of Lodhi dynasty of Delhi sultanate. He got vast tract of land at *Longlai* as grant, and his descendents inherited *Longlai* estate. Moulvi Amjad Ali Khan was one reknowned person descended from that family who owned the jamindary of *Longlai* pargana. But *Longlai* had been the

### Settlement in Tipaimukh and Barak Valley

ancient habitat of the Halam before the advent of the Mohammedan in Bengal. Whether the first Halam immigrants to Surma valley in Sylhet did settle permanently would be difficult to conclude because they were semi-nomadic hill tribe. The Halams were hill tribe and used to sustain their livelihood on shifting cultivation on high land and hills. Surma and Kushiyara valley being the plain and flood-prone region, it was unlikely that the Halam would be living in that region for long period in such adverse environment. It was certain that some of them, particularly, (i) the Langkai, (ii) Chorei, (iii) Dap, (iv) Sakachep / Khelmas, (v) Thangachep, (vi) Marchafong and (vii) Ranglong clans of the Halam went back to hilly region in the east- Tipaimukh (which was part of Tipperah kingdom) and Manipur, and this has been mentioned in preceding Chapter. Some other clans, particularly, the Molsom, Kaipeng, Bongcher, a section of Rangkhawl, Kikai, and Rupir etc, moved gradually toward the south in Chittagang Hill Tracts, traversing Hachek, Jampui, Sakhan, Longmai ranges as evident from their oral traditions.

Their settlement in Kushiyara and Surma valley brought them into contact with plain people. As mentioned earlier, this was the place where Tripur King Dungurpha alias Hairai, who was also known as Mountain King of Tipperah Kingdom (*Prabhakarish*), whose name was Sri Sri Swadharmapha, granted land to five Vedic Brahmins, whom he brought from the court of Shivalitya i.e. Harshabhardana for conducting Vedic sacrifice i.e. *yajna* in 641 A.D. He was named as Adhi Dharmapha by the Vedic Brahmins because he was considered devout Hindu king. He made land grant to the five Vedic Brahmins at *Panchabhanda* which was located in erstwhile undivided Karimganj sub Division, now inside Bangladesh; and historical evidence suggest that the native people of that region i.e. *Panchabhanda*, were the *Kakis*. *Panchabhanda* means *five plots of land*, which was granted to the five Vedic Brahmins; and this place was located on the northern bank of Kushiyara river and southern bank of Surma river, adjacent to present Karimganj town but within Bangladesh. However, Karimganj town came into existence or was established in 1778 A.D. The name of Karimganj was derived from the one whose name was Mohammed Karim Choudhury of that market area. In the year of 1195, A. D, another King of Tipperah, whose name was Dharmihar or Swadharmapha, said to have issued a copper plate

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

of land grant to Niddipati, a Vedic Brahmin, and this historical event took place in Syhlet. The copper plate also mentioned the inhabitants of that region as *Kukis*. This has been discussed in detail in subsequent Chapter. During their settlement at Surma-Kushiyara valley, the ancestors of Halam, possibly, started offering sacrifice to the deity of Surma River, and the deity was familiar as *Loko-Surmabi*. According to Prince Sumendra Chandra Debbarma, the Nayeb Dewan (Prime Minister) of Tipperah Kingdom, offering sacrifice to Surma River was the biggest festival of the Halams which was known as *Barapuja*, and in Halam language it was called as "*Bolpui*", and had been very expensive community sacrifice. Each family would offer sacrifice at least one livestock at the altar. Thus, hundreds of male goats, ducks, pigeons, saws and two or three mithun used to be sacrificed to the deity of Surma River. Lots of rice beer (*Zu*), home made distilled wine used to be served in this community festival. As the festival was expensive, every two or three years after this sacrifice used to be performed. Even today many Halam families living in Janthum village in Dhalai District continued to offer sacrifice to the deity of Surma river, which was called *Loko Surmabi* by killing a white cock in the morning. The word *Loko* means *community*, the word *Surma* represented *Surma River* and the word *Bi* was Tripuri language, which means *Elder sister*. Possibly, Surma river was considered as female and elder to Kushiyara river.

**First social intercourse with Tipras:** Settlement of the Halams in the valley of *Surma & Kushiara*, the two distributory rivers of Barak, could be regarded an important period in the history of Halam. It was certain that, in Surma-Kushiyara valley, the ancestors of Halam came into contact with the *Tipras*. During this period of settlement of the Halam in downstream Barak valley, a section of Bodo Kacharis arrived in this region from Tribeg, which was located at Kapili River bank, a tributary of Brahmaputra River. In subsequent period, this section of Bodo Kacharis got the identity of *Tipras* (meaning confluence of two rivers or watershed area) for living, possibly, at the confluence or watershed region of Surma & Kushiyara-two distributory river branches of Barak River; and in subsequent period the word *Tipras* acquired the sanskritised identity as *Tripuri*. As mentioned above, the Halams moved upto the place, where Barak River was bifurcated into two branches near Karimganj, and the northern branch being the *Surma River* and



### Settlement in Tipaimukh and Barak Valley

southern branch called *Kushiyara River*. This was the reason for giving annual sacrifice to the deity of Surma river by some Halam families even today. In villages, the village priests would dig a small hole at the altar and cover the hole with fine plantain leaf so that water would be retained, and thereafter, the priest would pour little water over the leaf at the altar. The water symbolized the holy water of Surma River. When the *Tipras* arrived in that region; the Halam identified the *Tipras* as *Vai*, which means *Outsider*. On the other hand, a section of Old Kuki tribes got the identity of *Halsom-sa*, which means the *Children of the hills*, which in local Bengali called *Faloria saktar*. The word *Halam* was the corrupted form of the word *Halsom-sa*, which means *Children of the hills*. This has been narrated separately in earlier Chapter. A lot of cultural exchange took place between these two communities during the period of settlement at Barak valley. The Halam adopted many social traditions and code of social conduct called-*Hobua* or *Halok*. Besides, the Halam inherited many deities from *Tipras*, including Hindu deities, which were transmitted through the ruling house of the *Tipras*. During this period, the hybrid clans of the Halam came into existence; and these clans were the *Rupinis*, *Koloi* and the *Jamalia* tribes.

**Dispersal from Surma-Kushiyara valley** : Surma River used to be called by the Halam as *Tuison-nu* i.e. *River of Black Water*. The Halam priest used to offer sacrifice to Surma River which signified that the Halam settled on the bank of Surma-Kushiyara rivers' valley in ancient period, which has been mentioned before. Most probably, here the Halam became divided into several groups and moved to different direction. The Molsom legend maintained that in their migration they crossed over *Tuison-nu* i.e. Surma river. The Kaipeng clan too claimed to have settled on the bank of *Tuison-nu* i.e., Surma river. Most probably, the Molsom, Bongcher, Korbong and the Kaipeng were forerunners in the migration history of the Halam, and they were followed by other clans of the Halam. It seemed that they moved towards Chittaugang Hill Tracts, and this group was comprised of the following clans, namely:-

- (i) Molsom,
- (ii) Bongcher,
- (iii) Korbong,
- (iv) Koloi,
- (v) Rupini,

## History and culture of the Halam tribe

- (vi) Kaipeng,
- (vii) Bawng,
- (viii) and a section of Rangkhawl (now living in Tripura)

Most probably, this group gradually moved in batches in the direction of south-west toward Chittagang Hill Tracts traversing Hachek range, Jampui range, Sakhan and Longtorai-Soldeng range. Particularly, the Kaipeng priest, while performing sacrifice, would recite the name of these hill ranges through which their ancestors said to have moved gradually towards *Doapanthor* in Chittagang Hill Tracts. The oral traditions of the Kaipeng, Molsom, Bongcher, Korbong, Rupini, Kolo and Rangkhawl clans of the Halam maintained that their ancestors once upon a time would live in *Doapanthor* region in Chittagang Hill Tracts. Even some Ranglong elders in Tripura claimed that their ancestors had lived at *Doapanthor*. Thus, it was certain that these clans lived together in Chittagang Hill Tracts, particularly, at the region called *Duapanthor*, which was located across the eastern international border of Tripura, within Chittagang Hill Tracts. The fact was that this place was part of Tipperah Kingdom from ancient period. Many believed that the Molsom clan migrated from Champhai to Chittagang Hill Tracts and finally in Tipperah kingdom in ancient period traversing Borpuitlang etc, which was within Lunglei district in Mizoram; but this could not be the real fact. They moved to Pukzing and other places in present Lunglei district from Hill Tiperrah. It need to be kept in mind that entire present Mizoram was regarded as part of Tipperah kingdom, and the native of this ancient kingdom could move anywhere for shifting cultivation. Further, the Molsoms elders also claimed that the *Barak River* was named by their ancestors. Their ancestors would call the Barak River as *Varakdung* because hundreds of wild ducks would be found on the river searching fish in ancient period. In Molsom language, the word *Varak* means *wild duck*, and the word *Dung* means *River*. *Tuirung* was the name of Barak River which was given by the *Tipras*. The word *Rung* means *plain* in Tripuri language, and the word *Tui* means *water* or *river*. The *Tipras* would call plain land as *Harung*, and the bank of the river as *Tuirung* etc. Barak River was the biggest river south of Borail Hill having vast river valley i.e. plain land on its both bank Therefore, the *Tipras* named the Barak as *Tuirung*. However, among the Molsom Barak river was familiar as *Varakdung*.

### Settlement in Tipaimukh and Barak Valley

The second group of the Halam comprised of-(i) the Langxai, (ii)Chorei, (iii) Dap (Nabin), (iv)Sakachep, (v)Thangachep, (vi)Marchfang, (vii)Aimol, and (viii) the Ranglong clans probably returned by moving upstream of Barak upto Tipaimukh and settled there for sometime. Thereafter, they moved toward the east into the Manipur. Possibly, they crossed Barak River at Tipaimukh, south Manipur and adjacent to Northern Mizoram. Tuipaimukh was strategically important because it was the gateway to Manipur for all Kuki Chin Halam tribes living in Manipur, and the importance could be understood from the poem of the Halams, which was like this-

*"Riang lo Voisua Kalina  
Wikhhat Chin-wei in-bagak rei;  
Nangma hawaw aolai-ye lamia  
Ka aoko va bang hunia  
Chin wei in-bagak rei"*

The English translation was like this-

*"At Tuipaimukh waiting gha (place)  
Son of Chin (Halam) let us wait for each other,  
Even if you go ahead of me and  
If I follow behind you  
Son of Chin let us wait for each other".*

Tipaimukh region was important because all the Kuki Chin tribes now living in Manipur, Tripura, Dima Hasao (North Cachar Hills), Jaintia Hills, Karbi Anglong and Nagaland had to cross this region in their forward migration.

## CHAPTER - 6

# MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT IN MANIPUR

**Background:** Concentration of Kuki Chin tribes was not confined to present Mizoram state alone, possibly, the largest number of this ethnic group in India was concentrated in the neighbouring State of Manipur. In fact the Meitei were the largest branch of Kuki Chin tribes in India. A. G. Grierson categorized the *Meitei* of Manipur as an important branch of Kuki Chin tribes. Suniti Kumar Chattarjee also held the similar view on the ethnicity of the *Meitei* now living in Manipur valley. They have been mentioned in Shan chronicle as early as 777 A.D. The conversion of the Meitei into Vaishnavite sect of the Hindu religion in eighteenth century brought tremendous transformation of the way of life and thinking of the Meitei people. The Hindu Brahmins gave them Hindu identity by connecting their ancestors as the descendent of Arjuna of epic *Mahabharata*, who married to a Manipuri damsel named *Chitrangoda*. However, the fundamental traits of Kuki Chin tribes could still be noticed among these people. But there were many other Kuki Chin tribes in Manipur, who emigrated to this land in later period. In fact S.K. Chattarjee too, was of the view that “*from Lushai Hills and Manipur they (Kuki) came in large numbers to Tripura State, where they form an important section of the people*”. None other Kuki tribe came to Tripura, except the Halams. The Chorei, Dap, Sakachep, Thangachep, Marchafang, Langkai and Ranglong clans of the Halam even now maintained that their ancestors came from Manipur. Somendra Chandra Deb Barma, Nayeb Dewan of independent Tripura, also held the view that the habitat of the Halam was *Khurpuitabum*, which was located in the hill north of the Manipur. However, all these views appeared to be not beyond controversy, and far from the fact. According to Col. J. Shakespear, all the Old Kuki tribes such as the Aimol, Chiru, Purum, Kom, Lamgang, Koireng, and Anal etc. migrated from Lushai Hills to Manipur in sixteenth century, and not from Manipur to Lushai Hill. These Old Kuki

### Migration and Settlement in Manipur

tribes were the close kinsmen and allied tribes of the Halams. In subsequent period some of them came under the influence of the *Tipras* as well as the *Maitoi* in Manipur. Some of these tribes also lived at Tipaimukh i.e. *Kueng le Vaikwa*, and subsequently moved into Manipur as rare guard. The Thado and a section of the Hmar tribe were the last Kuki-Chin ethnic group driven out from the Lushai Hills, and forced to move into Manipur. But there was a dominant view among a section of the Halam clans, particularly, the Chorei, Rang'ong, Sakachep, Thangachep, Dap, Langkai and Marchafang, that their ancestors came from Manipur to Tipperah Kingdom in ancient period. But the matter of the fact was that all the Old Kuki Chin tribes of Manipur traced their migration from Chin-Lushai Hills, and the corridor for moving into Manipur from Chin-Lushai Hills from ancient period had been the Tipaimukh. G.A.Grierson observed that "*the original Old Kuki tribe seems to have lived in Lushai Hills, from whence they were driven out by the Thaks. The Hmar apparently left behind or subsequently re-migrated from Manipur*". Even Mr.J.W. Edger, Civil Officer, who accompanied General Bouchier in Lushai Hills expedition in 1872 A. D. reported the existence of deserted villages of the Kukis which he saw on his way from Tipaimukh to Champhai. All the migration of Kuki Chin tribes to Tipperah, Manipur or Assam had been from the Lushai Hills; and all the movement to Lushai Hills from the Chin Hills had been through the Champhai valley in present Mizoram. However, the destination of movement for certain Kuki Chin tribes, particularly, the Khyang, Bawmzo, Pangkhes, Mru and Khumis had been toward southern Mizoram and Chittagang. For the ancestors of the Halams and other Old Kuki tribes, the movement from Champhai to Cachar plain or Manipur had been through the Tipaimukh region. From Tipaimukh region, a group of the ancestors of Halams moved upto Loktak Lake in Manipur. This group consist of the following clans:-

- (i) the Langkai,
- (ii) Chorei,
- (iii) Dap (Nabin),
- (iv) Sakachep/ Khelmas,
- (v) Thangachep,
- (vi) Marchafang,
- (vii) Ranglung,

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

All these seven clans have uniform tradition of their migration and settlement in Manipur in ancient period. The other group comprised of the Kaipeng, Bongcher, Korbong, Bowng, Rangkhawl, and the Saihmar, inspite of their arrival at Barak valley, most probably, did not migrate to Manipur and thus, have no tradition about the migration in Manipur but this was also fact that they were at Tuipaimukh region, which was a southern part of Manipur. But it was also a fact that at that relevant point of time in medieaval period, Tuipaimukh region was part of Tipperah kingdom. Possibly, the Saihmar and Bowng clans moved in the southwest direction trailing behind the Molsom, Kaipeng and a section of Rangkhawl. However it was difficult to say whether the Bowng and Saimhar clans migrated to Chittagang Hill Tracts.

**Places of settlement** :The hearsay prevalent among the certain clans of Halam maintained that they lived in the surrounding region of Loktak Lake in Manipur. Besides, there was certain tradition about their settlement in Manipur, and based on this oral tradition, the ancestors of the Halams appeared to have settled in few places.

**Loktak region:** The Chorei, Ranglong, Dap, Marchafang, Langkai, Thangachep and Sakachep clans moved into Manipur and settled in the surrounding region of *Loktak Lake*; and this settlement was reflected in their folksongs, which was like this:

*Loktak sikti kungpuia solri anvan ngama  
thambuk anvakei,  
Akoi thambuk changna thambuk  
Anwa bol e e e,  
Loktak sikti solri an-ingamna  
Vangkhuo bungpui an inchun sona,  
Anman ruan khumlan inrap rang,  
Ajawl khuopui a chang le e e e,  
Mania chang Zo pa malal  
ahong chang sona a,  
Araisan rihming le vangkhua Shan  
rihming ei chang sona Maniapur vangkhua.*

English translation of this folksong was like this:-

*They took rest at the down stream of Loktak (lake)  
and erected huts,  
They built wratched, hut with banana leaf,*

### Migration and Settlement in Manipur

*At Loktak where they took rest  
they gathered at the village,  
They helped each other to make  
thatched roof,  
That village was in the valley,  
That was the place where Zo man  
became rich, that was the place  
where people gave Shen name and of joy  
and that village was in Manipur.*

Possibly, they did not cross over Manipur River, but settled in the surrounding region of Loktak Lake. They were prosperous during their settlement in and around the region of Loktak Lake; and at that period prosperity meant sufficient jhum produce to sustain feast with rice beer, home distilled wine and beverage for limitless consumption of drink on different social festivities and occasions, and this fact was reflected in this proverb:-

*Loktak sikti lang nosh nih,  
Changhaug sikti phai nosh nih,  
Takaath chongthi hom her nosh nih,  
Reirong Khunpuar dang nosh nih.*

English translation was like this:-

*The water of Loktak Lake will never dry up;  
likewise the juice of rice beer will never dry up;  
the bamboo pipe (for sucking rice beer pot)  
shall never be crashed.  
Clothes stored at cane made box will never be empty.*

**Mairingpuansen** : The oral tradition of the Halam also maintained that their ancestors once lived at a place called *Mairingpuansen* which was believed to be in Manipur. No one could say about the exact location of this place.

**Dantangkhatay** : According to oral tradition the place called *Dantangkhatay* was another place in Manipur where the ancestors of the Halam lived during their settlement in Manipur. Nobody could say the exact location of this place. But the elders said that this place was in Manipur.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

These places were famous in oral traditions of the Halams, particularly, among the Chorei, Langkai, Dap, Marchafang, Sakachep and Thangachep clans of the Halams till today. The hearsay was that these two places were situated in Manipur. There was a small proverb on this which was like this-

*Eichun ramsak Mairingpuansen,*

*Eizuor ramsak Doinangkhawr,*

The meaning in English was like this-

*Our mother lived at Mairingpuansen,*

*Our father lived at Doinangkhawr,*

These two places could be somewhere in hilly region in the vicinity of Loktak Lake. However, much enquiry would be needed to find out the places, which might not exist now with these names.

The peace and prosperity which they enjoyed during their settlement in Manipur was also reflected in this proverb:-

*"Ring Maniapur,*

*Athum theikhuang an ring-na,*

*Athai cherbel ei chang-na"*

English translation is like this:-

*"Lively Manipur land,*

*Where anything sound melodious,*

*Everything seem testful"*

This folksong revealed the fact that during their settlement in Manipur, they were better off because they had sufficient granaries for making rice beer i.e. *Zu* and other drink. Their settlement in Manipur brought them prosperity in their livelihood. They compared the Manipur land with happier world where everything looked bright and there was no hunger, strife, disharmony, but only optimism. Reading the folksong of the Halams, apparently it seemed that they were in peace and prosperity. But before the advent of the Halams, the Meitei (Mirong), the Nagas were gradually expanding their dominance all over the Manipur plain as well as the Hills. Possibly, the Halam were hard pressed by the Nagas and other hill tribes, which forced them to leave beautiful and fertile Manipur land. The elders of the Ranglong clan of the Halams even today remember about their escape from Manipur kingdom following the enmity with the Mirong tribe.





## CHAPTER - 7

# MOVEMENT TO LUSHEI HILLS

**Background:** A group of the Halams, which comprised of the Langkai, Chorei, Dap (Nabin), Sakachep/ Khelmas, Thangachep, Marchafang, and Ranglong, who migrated from Barak valley-Tipaimukh region to Loktak Lake region in Manipur, did not settle permanently in Manipur. Oral tradition of the Halam maintained that they moved in the southeastern direction toward Champhai region in Lushai Hills again, where from once they came before. In any case, a series of clan movement had taken place. There was a small poem about their movement from Manipur to Lushai Hill

*“Manipur vangkhua ata simlam surmai,  
Kalchem eichoia sima kolkhua alian laia,  
Eivatak-a sima Boktom (Pawi) le Ralte,  
Eivan doia ramri eivan kher,  
Sorper in ramri eivan manrouan  
Khumlan-in rap-pang”*

English translation was like this:-

*From Manipur we looked toward the south,  
We walked south toward the vast land of Burma,  
We reached in the south where Pawis  
and Raltes (tribes) lived  
We fought and make boundary,  
With sorpar (leaf) we made slanting  
roofing of our house.*

Halam clans who migrated to Manipur did not live there for long; and the oral tradition maintained that they moved to southern direction i.e. Lushai Hills and Cachar. Before the advent of the Britisher in Myanmar and Bengal, human movement from Myanmar into Northeastern India, particularly, among the hill tribes, was common phenomena. These hill tribes were raiding and feuding people; and none

### Movement to Lushai Hills

of the ethnic tribes were in peace with each other. Almost all the hill tribes of the Northeast India were engaged in raiding and killing against each other till the arrival of the Britishers. Therefore, most of the hill tribes were on the move in different direction for securing safety. Possibly, after re-emigration in Lushai Hills from Manipur, the ancestors of the Halam found that the land once they occupied in Lushai Hills in their forward movement had already been occupied by new immigrants of Kuki Chin tribes. Oral tradition said that the new immigrants were the *Kalte* and the *Puak* tribe, with whom they came into conflict. Most probably, the ancestors of the Halam moved gradually to North Lushai Hills to escape from frequent raid by the allied tribes living in the south.

When the Halam priest offered sacrifice to *Sayite*, the goddess of paddy, he would chant mantra mentioning the places where different clans of the Halam lived in the past and the chant was like this:

*Tichgathim le Pempuzawai ata,  
Choni inthokna Mairingpuarsen zawl etc.  
Nanthokna Saisathatna Darlong wang etc,  
Pangaham Lianzawl ata,  
Persensip le Injansip  
Sakochep inthokna Thungbrininsong,  
Thangochep in Oolna Ramthenzawl,  
Lap in Nohna Machesizawl,  
Lengkei inthokna Taihanghni,  
Suhma in Nohna Belkantung,  
Bonguer le Injany inthokna Khatapkhengthai,  
Mondungay inthokna Machesizawl,  
Ranglong inthokna Kanglai-hade,  
Khokna inthokna Chemrangzawl  
(Manikbai Halam)*

This poem mentioned the places where different clans of the Halam lived in the past, possibly, in present Mizoram and Manipur. As mentioned before, the place called Mairingpuarsen believed to be in Manipur; but the other places called *Tichgathim*, *Pempuzawai*, *Lianzawl*, *Ramthenzawl*, *Machesizawl*, *Chemrangzawl* were believed to be located in present Mizoram. The place called *Darlongtang* (Darlong peak) was located about fifty two kilometers from Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram, and this was the place where mithun was said to be sacrificed by the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

ancestors of the Halams. Places called *Persensib*, *Joijamsib*, *Thingtinbuisang* and *Tuilangkai* (watershed region of Longai river) were located in north Mizoram. On the other hand, *Belkumtang* was located in North Tripura. Besides, there were other habitations of the ancestors of the Halam which found expression in their oral tradition and hearsay.

**Important places of settlement:** These were a few places of settlement in erstwhile Lushei Hills before the advent of the Lushei and allied tribes.

**Sairang:** This place was situated on the upper watershed region of Dhaleswari (Tlawng) River, arial distance of which was about twenty kilometers northwest of Aizawl city in Mizoram. According to oral tradition of the Rangkhawl clan of Halam, *Sairang* sub-clan of the Rangkhawl lived at this region in the past. There was hearsay that a Rangkhawl damsel from this region was married to the son of a powerful Kuki chief.

**Persensib:** This place had been very familiar name often mentioned in the folksong of the Halams. *Parsensib* was a village south of Vairengte in Kolosib District in the northern part of Mizoram. In fact Persansib was a hill range; and Edgar mentioned about the existence of road through the ridge of Persensip range. This range was also familiar as Nungvai range. This place had been the past habitat of the Halams.

**Zoijamsib:** The place called *Zoijamsib* was also a very familiar name where a section of the Halam tribe settled in medieval period. But no one could say the location of the place called *Zoijamsib*. Oral tradition of the Halam maintained that *Zoijamsip* was located adjacent to Persensip.

There was another folksong of the Halams which gave an insight about the places where the forefathers of the Halams once lived in medieval period in northern part of Mizoram and Cachar, after their return from Manipur. The folksong was like this: -

*Chhimlung khopui omlai in*  
*Hmar khualianpui om lai in*  
*Hmar Khualian mi ngai le*  
*Chhimlung khuapui mi ngai le*  
*Sertual intoung rangin saisial in panna*  
*Tuirung le Tuivai (tipaimukh) ankhang'*  
*Hong rawh sertual intoung rang-in*  
*Punlian (bamboo raft) tan ei ti.*

The English translation was like this-

### **Movement to Lushei Hills**

*Once upon a time I lived at Chhimlung,  
Once I lived at big Linnarhualian village,  
I am longing to see Chhimlung,  
I am longing to see big Linnarhualian village,  
For meeting a virtual festival,  
Across the way of the meeting place  
there are Barak and Lusaai Rivers,  
Lai, Lai, come to festival at the premise  
for the meeting,  
Come by sailing on a bamboo raft.*

This folksong mentioned certain places as the habitats of the Halams in the past, which could be mentioned here for proper insight and knowledge.

**Chhimlung** : The place called *Chhimlung* was situated in the north of Mizoram under Koloship District, and in the north of Perenchip. The Halams still remember Chhimlung in their folksong as the place where their ancestors once lived.

**Kolosip** : This place was familiar name which was located in north Mizoram. The oral tradition of the Halams maintained that their ancestors lived at this region in the past.

**Lunglei region** : Several clans of the Halams, particularly, the Rangzong, Chorei, Langkai, Dap, Marchatang, Thangchep, Dap, along with the Bawng and Salthmar, might have moved to northern region of present Lunglei District from South Cachar North Lushei Hills region after their return from Manipur along the course of Dhaleswari (Hlawng) river because these people have a folksong praising water of Lunglei which they said *Lunglei tawti* meaning the *crystal clear water of Lunglei*; and this signified their settlement in Lunglei district in the past. Possibly, they came back to Cachar region in the same route through which they went to that region due to forward movement of Pawi tribe. In fact, Lunglei region was coterminal with Lawnglai region where the Pawi (Lai) tribe has been living till today. Most of the elder people of these clans said that their ancestors had a conflict with the Pawi (Lai) people in the past which forced them to move out.

**Bawngthah** : This place was situated in south eastern corner of Maimit District near the place called *Bawti* in Mizoram. In other words, Bawngthah was located at upper watershed region of Hlawng

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

(Dhaleshwari) river and *Tut*, a tributary of Tlawng. The Bawng people lived in this watershed region, and they were attacked by the allied tribes during their settlement in this region. Most of the settlers were killed, and this was the reason this place got the name as *Bawngthah*, which means *Killing place of Bawng* people. According to Rev. Liangkhaia, the Bawng clans of the Halam were butchered by their enemy at *Bawngthah*.

**Thinglian :** According to Hrangthiauva, a Mizo historian, the Molsom and the Bawng clans lived together at a place called *Bawngmual* in Thinglian region in Serchhip District. During their settlement in this region, one Molsom youth whose name was Vanzema said to have sacrificed his life in Tuichang River while attempting to catch fish in that river at the insistence of the villagers.

**Hachek-Jampui Rungtang :** Oral tradition of the Halam maintained that they lived at Hachek-Jampui ranges. Hachek range was familiar to the Halam as *Hachek rungtang*; and the extension of this range within Assam was familiar as *Polodohor range*. This range runs north to southeast of Singla River, and its highest peak was familiar as *Satachura*. J. W. Edger, British Civil Officer with Left Column Lushai Expeditionary Force, described the Satachura (1500ft) range as well defined ridge, at least on the Cachar side; but as broken in the farthest south of the range. There was a tradition which maintained that Prince Satra Manikya of Tipperah kingdom took shelter at this region during his exile. The southern part of *Satachura peak* commencing from Mizoram changed its name as *Hachek* range. Singla river, which originated from Mamit district in Mizoram, runs parallel on the west of Satachurra-Hachek range. In the west of *Singla River*, there was a hill called *Do Ailia* range, which runs from the south to northward and terminated with diminishing height in Karimganj plain at Badarpur. In the plain region, west of *Do Ailia* hill range flows the *Longai River*, which now formed the inter-State boundary between the States of Mizoram and Tripura in its upstream; but in its downstream, Longai River entered into the plain of Karimganj District of Assam, and drained in *Hakaluki Haor* region in Bangladesh. *Hachek* range runs north to south east of the River Tlawng (Dhaleshwari river). According to hearsay prevalent among the Halams, many of their ancestors perished in starvation during the period of their settlement on this range in medieval period; and their white teeth

### **Movement to Lushai Hills**

said to have scattered all along the hill range. The oral tradition maintained that people had money, but there was no paddy to purchase. They kept coins inside the pillow and slept with it; but no paddy was available to buy and people perished in starvation; and this was the reason for naming *Saisakura* range by the Halam as *Hachek rangtang*, which means "Hill range of white teeth" in Halam language. The word *ha* means *tooth*, and the word *chek* means *white*. Thus, when these two words were combined together, it became *Hachek*, which means *white tooth*. According to hearsay prevalent among the Halams, even in the last part of eighteenth century, the Bawng, Langkai, Fongcher, Churai, saihmar and Kerbong clans of the Halam would live on the watershed of these rivers. According to hearsay, the Bawng clan started worshipping some Hindu deities during their settlement on this *Hachek* range. Longai River flows in between *Hachek* range and *Jampui* range. In the east of the Longai River was *Hachek rangtang* (which means *Hachek* plateau and now in Mizoram) and in the west of the same river was *Jampuidang* (Jampui hill in Tripura). The Langkai clan of the Halam regarded this Longai River as their deity. According to legend, a person from Langkai clan got a lot of coins after offering sacrifice to the deity of Longai River as told to do in his dream. The man became rich and started to offer sacrifice every year. So they gave lot of honour to Longai River. This tradition has immense significance about the settlement of the Halam in and around the Longai River. From *Hachek range* some clans of the Halams gradually moved towards Chittagang Hill Tracts traversing the Jampui, Sakhan and Longturai ranges.

It was the belief of the Halam that Jampui range was named by the Halams. The word *Jampui* means "Great hill stretch" in Halam language. Jampui hill range was the extended range of Barkal range from Chittagang Hill Tracts. This Jampui range has several important peaks in India and Bangladesh. Vaisam, Mongchuan, Hmumpui, Hakshi, Vangmun, Balthangip, Bangla, Tlangsang, Sabual, Phuldungsei, Konpui and Khanlang were the habitations on Jampui Hill in Tripura, but within Chittagang Hill Tracts the name of Jampui changed as Barkal range and Thangnang, Lungliang, Chipui and Buortang etc. were the few important peaks of Barkal range in the Chittagang Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. The ancestors of a section of the Halam traversed this hill range in their movement to Chittagang Hill Tracts. The Halam priest

### **History and culture of the Halam tribe**

would offer sacrifice a cock in the morning to the deity of *Deo River* for healing the sick person suffering from the cool and cough; and this signified their settlement in Jampui range in the past because this hill range was the watershed region of Deo River. In the south-west of the Jampui range and east of Sakhan range was the watershed region of Deo River. Besides, *Raima* and *Saima* rivers, the two tributaries of Gomti Rivers, were also offered sacrifice by the Halam priest for healing the impotency of the married woman. Longtorai range was the watershed region of *Raima* and *Saima*. The hearsay prevalent among the Halam elders was that they settled on this hill range in course of their movement to Chittagang Tills Tracts. Whether all the Halam clans had entered into Chittagang Hill Tracts no one would be able to say; but if their oral tradition, hearsay and earlier names of the hill ranges was taken as evidence, one might conclude that several clans of the Halam had been in the Hill Tracts for sometime.





## CHAPTER - 8

# SETTLEMENT IN CACHAR

**General description :** Cachar plain was like a large valley which was surrounded by the hills in three sides. The Barail range, which connected the north Manipur hills and Khasi range, formed a continuous wall along the north of Barak valley; the south of the Barak was bounded on the east by the Bhuban Hills, and on the west was bounded by Siddheswar Hills. The plain was further broken up by two long hill ranges-namely Rengti hills and Tilian hills, which were running north and south. Thus, three sides of the plain Cachar was shut in by blue hill ranges. The places called Tipaimukh in south Manipur, Hachek range, Bhuban range, Rengti Hills, and Barail Hills etc. formed the outer periphery of Cachar plain. In the north was Dima Hasao (North Cachar) District, and was a part of Barail Hills. The Barail range, which connected between the North Manipur hills and the Jaintia-Khasia range, formed a continuous wall along the north of the plain Cachar District, varying from two thousand five hundred feet to six thousand feet in height. This range threw out many spurs towards the south west, which diminished in height as their distance from the main range increased. Between the valleys formed by these spurs, Jhiri, Chiri, Madura, Jatinga, Arang, Larong, Gumra and Baleswari rivers flew and emptied themselves into the Barak River. In the word of W.W.Hunter, Cachar was "*the country is surrounded on three sides by high mountains, and there are also ranges of hills within the District itself, which is intersected by a large river, the Barak, from east to west. Two large valleys lay to the south of the river, divided by a range of hills running north and south*". In Hindu epic namely, *Kamakhyatantra*, Tipperah and Cachar has been mentioned, and the Barak River was mentioned as *Barabakra*; and in another Hindu epic, namely, *Bayupurana*, it was said that one could make holy dip in Barak river for obtaining salvation. Captain Fisher, the first Superintendent of the District, who took great pain in ascertaining the early history of

### Settlement in Cachar

the Kacharis, was of the opinion that the tribe gradually acquired an empire over Assam, Sylhet, Maimansingh, and the valleys to the east of the Brahmaputra, their original seat being at Kamrup down to the sea. They built brick cities and it was supposed that the Tipperah Raja was a younger son of the house, the original empire being divided into a northern and southern part. The *Krishnamala*, the chronicle of King Krishna Manikya of Tipperah, mentioned the Barak river as the northern boundary of Tipperah Kingdom in ancient period. Thus, the *Krishnamala* mentioned like this:-

*Barabakra nadi raj uttar kulete,  
Himavata Rajah-ar odhikar rajya kete,  
Tar abakkhine Tripur Rai odhikar.*

English translation was like this:-

*Northern bank of the river King-Barak  
was under the King of Himavata Kingdom,  
South of that river (Barak) was under Tripur King  
(Krishnamala)*

While at Maibong, Dimasa Kachari tribe came under the influence of Hindu Brahmin. Nirbhoy Narayan, the son of Datsung, took the Hindu name under the influence of Brahmin. The Brahmin constructed a legend and linked the genealogy of the ruling Dimasa Kachari royal house to Bhima, who was one of the Pandavas in *Maabharata*. Kacharis were told to be the descendent of *Chatakacha*, the son of Bhima with his wife Heramba, a *Kisota* woman. Heramba was non-Aryan wife of Bhima. They named the Kachari Kingdom as *Heramba Kingdom*. Subsequent, King Bindu-raj Narayan (1644-1682) married to a princess of Tipperah and received as her dowry the upper portion of the Surma Valley. Dimasa Kacharis and their ruling class were forced by their new enemy i.e. the Jaintia king to cross Barail Hills, and to shift their capital from Maibong to plain Cachar at Khaspur between A.D. 1700 and 1750. From their arrival at Khaspur the distinct history of Cachar commenced. From that period onward numerous colonies of Bengalis, who came to the barak valley from the Sylhet, planted their settlements on the northern side of Barak River. It was supposed that the Muslim Bengalees also migrated into Cachar at the same time. At first, the newcomers simply cleared land as stray settlers, paying rent to Cachari Rajah. By degree, as they became stronger, they obtained protection from the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

interference on the part of Cachari tax gatherers and court officials. According to Hunter, *"the only people subject to the their (Kachari king) immediate authority were the uncivilised hill tribes of Parbattias, Cacharis, Kukis, Nagas, etc."* Thus, the hilly portion of Cachar had been the habitat of the hill tribes, particularly, the Kabui Nagas, Dimasa Kacharis, Kukis(which includes the Halam & Khelmas, the Hmar, Biate) etc, and in fact, they were the earliest inhabitants. The Halams were not the reigning tribe of Cachar, but had been the native hill tribe of Cachar long before the arrival of Kacharis, the Lusheis and other Kuki tribes. The identity of the Old Kukis as *Halam* came into existence during their settlement in Cachar. While writing about the hill tribes of Cachar, W. W. Hunter differentiated between *Old Kukis* living in the Cachar from that *New Kukis*; and said that some of these tribes had been driven by more powerful tribes from the southern(i.e.Lushei) hills. He categorised the Halam as *"the Old Kukis who speak a language akin to Tipperah, whom they resemble in physical appearance. The names of their principle clans or sub tribes were the Rangkhoh, Khelmas, and Ranglong"*. Further,he observed that *"the Kukis, who reside beyond the southern boundary of the District, have no hereditary chief. A kind of headman called Galim is elected by the people of each village."* Before the arrival of Dimasa Kacharis in Barak valley, it was the Tipras who ruled the Barak valley upto thirteenth century. The Halams were the hill people; and the hill ranges which surrounded the plain Cachar, were the places the ancestors of Halam lived. The historians were of the view that the Tipras were in the Barak valley upto thirteenth century. The *Halams* were with the *Tipras* in Barak valley in Cachar. The cultural and social intercourse between the Tipras and the Halams took shape during their settlement in Cachar. During the settlement of the Halams in this region, an important historical event took place which brought different kind of relationship between the Halams and Tipperah Kingdom. Tipperah King Bijoy Manikya (1528-1563 A.D.) was one of the great kings of Tipperah Kingdom who had a historical dealing with the Halams. When Maharaj Bijay Mnikya asserted his authority over Syhlet, the king of neighbouring Jayantia kingdom was alarmed. The King of Jaintia conspired and instigated the Halams, particularly, the Sakachep and Thangachep clans, to revolt against the Maharaj Bijoy Manikya of Tipperah. But King Bijoy Manikya of Tipperah got the information of this conspiracy of Jaintia king; he invited all the

### Settlement in Cachar

Halam Chiefs to royal court; and they were honourably welcomed. The King presented them metallic images of elephant and tiger with Sanskrit shlokas inscribed; and made them to swear not to revolt against the royal house of Tipperah Kingdom. During his long period of exile in the middle of 18th century, King Krishna Manikya of Tipperah Kingdom had lots of dealing with the Halams living in Cachar. Aforesaid incidents have been given in subsequent Chapter. A section of the Sakachep clan of the Halam, who were officially recognized as Kōlōwa tribe in other neighbouring States, were the people who went from Barak valley. Thus, W.W. Hunter observed that the Kukis (Khelewas) of Nagaland were from Tipperah kingdom. From Barail range, a section of Sakachep clan of the Halam migrated to Karbi Anglong (Mikir Hills) and Nagaland. The Biate clan and a section of the Rangkhawl clan too migrated to Jaintia and North Cachar (Dima Hasao) Hills along the Barail range. According to B. Pakem, the Biate clan migrated into Jaintia Hills in thirteenth century for the first time; they moved along the Barail range. Hunter wrote about the existence of "*foot paths over many ridges*" on the spurs of Barail range, possibly, this kind of footpaths were followed in course of their migration. The undivided Cachar region had been the habitat of the ancestors of the Halams for many centuries. In the south undivided Cachar region was coterminous with erstwhile Lushai Hills; and the hill and river system of Lushai Hills was connected to the hill ranges and river systems of Cachar, which facilitated the movement of the Halams from the south towards the north. Thus, this region served as gateway for the movement of the ancestors of the Halams toward Jaintia Hills, Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong and Nagaland in the past. There were some important places in Cachar where the ancestors of the Halam lived at certain point of time in the past.

Important hill range to the South of the Barak River was Bhuban Hills, which runs north and south in the east of plain Cachar. This was a hill range projecting from Mizoram (erstwhile Lushai Hills) system into the south of Cachar District, Eastern Bengal and Assam. Bhuban Hills runs north and south on the eastern border of Cachar District, forming the watershed between the Barak and Sonai rivers. The height of the hill varied from 700 feet to 3000 feet, and its slope was very precipitous. In the word of Pemberton "*the Bhuban range, which appears to rest on a limestone base, terminates the plain on the east, from which it rises*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

very abruptly, and stretches along the Barak to the southward for about 49 miles become blended near the hill village of Laloong, with the vast mountainous tracts which terminates only at Cape Negrais; it clothed with dense forest, and the Barak courses at its eastern base, with a velocity which no boat can stem, when the volume of the stream has been swollen even by transient showers. The lofty peaks and ridges of the range attain an elevation of from two to three thousand feet above the plain Cachar, and there are not more than four or five villages upon it, the most northern of which are inhabited by Kookees (Kukis), and the southern, by Changsals, a tribe which has, within the last four years, been forced to desert its original hut." Bhuban range stretches from Lushai Hills in the southeast of Cachar upto the bank of Barak River. There was a place on the hill where cave temple exist, which was familiar as *Bhubaneswari* temple. Inside the stone cave, there were stone curved statues of Lord Bhubaneswar and Goddess Bhubaneswari. The name of this range derived from this cave temple. About this temple, *Krishnamala*, the chronicle of Krishnaya Minikya, mentioned like this-

*"Shilamoyee ek Devi ashe tothai,  
Sthapon korishe purbe Tripur Rajahai"*

English translation was this:

*"There is one Goddess curved out of stone,  
The Kings of Tipperah established this in the past".*

(*Krishnamala*)

In other word, a temple of Bhuban Baba, a local name for Siva, stood on the summit of a hill about fifty kilometers southeast of Silchar town. The chronicle mentioned the name of various clans of the Halam and referred them as the *Kiratas*, who used to offer puja i.e. sacrifice every day in the temple. This hill range was very important for the history of the Halam because they came into contact with the religious practice of the royal house of the *Tipras* more closely, and the Hindu religious belief was transmitted into Halam society. The *Tipras* were at Barak valley upto the period of King Dharmadhar (1160-1225 A.D), and it was King Jujharpha, who conquered Rangamati (present Udaipur) by defeating the Mog, the Arakanese. The next Tripur King was Sengthumpha (1225-1250 A.D) alias *Kirtidhar* who defeated Hiravant Khan, the Afgan warlord of Bengal. The Halams had been serving in the army of Tipperah kingdom, and took part in the conquest of Rangamati i.e. Udaipur. According to *Rajmala* (1<sup>st</sup> Vol.), the Kukis in general and the Langkai

### Settlement in Cachar

clan in particular, said to have participated in the conquest of Rangamati (Ldaipur). Before the arrival in present Tripura, the *Yipras* and the *Hihos* had been together in and around of this Bhuban hills. Some important past habitats of the Halams were in undivided Cachar region. While narrating about the Old kuki tribes, Col. J. Shakespear stated that “*the Biats in Lushai Hills worship the images in the Bhuban axes*”. But not only the Biats, the other Halams clans too started worshipping some Hindu deities, particularly, *Durga, Laxmi, Ganga, Kali* and *Siva* during their settlement in this region and the hearsay prevalent among the Halams maintained this fact. Possibly, in this region too the *Hihos* and the *Yipras* lived as neighbour in surrounding region of this hill range in ancient period, and this fact found its reflection in the surname of many Halam families living in this region. Many Ranglung and Chorei families, living in Cachar have adopted their surname as *Topyaw*, in place of *Chorei* or *Ranglung, Langkai* and *Rupoi*, which make the people confused about the actual identity of these clans in the region, although they would speak in Halam dialect.

**Hill ranges of undivided Cachar** : These hill ranges of undivided Cachar (which included Karimganj and Hailakandi Districts) were important to the Halams as these ranges facilitated the livelihood of the migratory Halam tribe for jhuming in the past.

**Poludhor or Saraspur range** : This range was also known as Sidheswar hill in the past. In undivided Sylhet, this range formed the boundary between eastern part of Karimganj and western part of Cachar, which runs north to south with fifty miles length and thirteen miles breadth. The height varied from six hundred feet to two thousand feet above the sea level, and the slopes of the hills were steep. Satachura (2064 feet) was the highest peak of this range situated in the east. This range extended upto Badarpur with decreased height, and middle portion of the range was familiar as Saraspur (1000'). This hill range was the northern extension of Hachek range from Lushai Hills. This hill range was very familiar among a section of the Halams which they regarded as their habitat in the past, possibly, in medieval period.

**Do-Atia or Pratapghar range** : This hill range runs from north to south having thirty miles length situated within Pratapghar Parganah, now in Karimganj District in Assam. This range was situated eight miles west of Saraspur or Poludhor, but in the east of Adom Ali hill range.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

and as high as 1500 feet. This range was the region the ancestors of the Halam would do shifting cultivation in the past.

*Adom Ail or Patharia range* : This range runs north to south with twenty miles length and eight hundred feet in height. This range could be regarded as northern most spur of Jampui range which passed through Vaisam, Damcherra and after the break at certain places, the range appeared in Karimganj of Assam along the west bank of Longai river. In the east were Pratapgarh, Japhargharh, Rafinagar; and in the west were Patharia and Sahabajpur. Most part of Adom Ail range, particularly, the southern portion, was within Karimganj District in India. However, small area in the northern end of the range was within Syhlet in Bangladesh. This range formed the Indo-Bangladesh border in Karimganj-Syhlet region. However, in undivided Syhlet this hill range was within Syhlet district. Longai River runs in the east parallel to this range and emptied at Halakuki Haor, which was situated in the south bank of Kushiyara river. Do Alia or Pratapgahar hill range runs along the east bank of the Longai River. This region had been part of Tipperah kingdom before handing over to Hiramba (Cachar) kingdom by the King of Tipperah as dowry gift in seventeenth century, and most of the Halam clans lived in this region before the advent of other hill tribes from the south. This region has the past history which was connected to Halam tribe as the *Kuki* subject as far back in thirteenth century. When Chatra Singha, a prince of Magadh, left his kingdom on account of internal disturbance, and settled in the kingdom of his friend, the king of Tipperah in about A.D.1260. Rajah Ratna Manikya gave him this portion of his kingdom-i.e. in the southeast corner of Adom Ail range and Do-Ailia range. This small kingdom was known as *Chatachura kingdom*, and extended over hill area from Karimganj upto a portion of the Lushai Hills. Konok Singha, the son of Chitra Singha, succeeded his father. Subsequently Pratap Singha succeeded his father-Chitra Singha. Pratap Singha established Pratapgarh town on the hill range of Karimganj. Present Patharkandi was known as Pratapgarh in the past. This *Chatachura* kingdom was mostly hilly, and the subject of this kingdom was mostly the Kukis i.e. the Halam tribe. Possibly, they settled on these hill ranges cultivating *jhum*. The connection of the Halam with this region seemed to be from the ancient period. Possibly, they settled in this region before their



### Settlement in Cachar and Sylhet

movement to Manipur. After the return from Manipur, they came down in this region again and settled in surrounding hilly regions. During their settlement on the hill, the Halams started worshiping this hill range as *Adom Raja*. This deity was believed to have been living at Adom Ail hill range; it was the belief that if anybody disrespect or desecrate this hill, it would cause sickness. Many Halam families of animistic belief even now offer sacrifice to *Adom Raja* as the deity of mound or hill.

**Important places of habitation :** According to *Krishnanala*, the chronicle of King Krishna Manikya, the *Sakacip, Thungacip, Chovi, Ranglong, Langhai, Bawang* and *Rupinis* etc. were the people who lived on the hill range in this region and the oral tradition of the Halams too maintained that the Halams were the inhabitants of that region. The existence of Halam villages in that region corroborated this very facts. Thus, even today the presence of habitations of the Halam people could be traced in this region.

**Porbot Ranglong :** The word *Porbot* means 'Hill' in Bengali language, and the meaning of *Ranglong* was Ranglong clan. Thus, *Porbot Ranglong* means Hill of Ranglong people or Ranglong Hill. The place called *Porbot Ranglong* was located in Cholla Salganga in Cachar District, which was just below the Val-enge of Mizoram. It was called as *Porbot Ranglong* because the Ranglong clan of the Halam tribe had been the dominant inhabitants in this region from the ancient period. Even today several Ranglong villages exist in that area and these villages were: (i) Chotto Salganga, (ii) Jannura, (iii) Japhirbon, (iv) and Kaisanari. These Ranglong villages were situated at the foot of hill range.

**Dhaleswar river bank :** In *Krishnanala*, the chronicle of King Krishna Manikya, river Dhaleswari has been named as *Ruphali* River. Now *Ruphali* river has been named as *Ylong* in Mizoram, and as *Dhaleswari River* in plain Cachar. The word *Ruphali* was the corruption of the word *Rupali*, which means *Silver colour*. On the other hand, the word *Dhala* was native Bengali word called *Sylheti* spoken by Bengali living in undivided Sylhet district and its surrounding regions, which means *white or crystal*. In order to convert the word *Dhala* into feminine gender, the word *Swari* need to be added or suffixed. Thus, when the word *Swari* was added or suffixed to the word *Dhala*, it was converted into feminine gender, and became *Dhaleswar*. This river was one of the major

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

tributaries of Barak river. The water of Dhaleswari was crystal clear, and therefore, the river was familiar as *Ruphali* or *Doleswari* river, which means *crystal clear water's* river. In Mizoram its name was *Tlawng*, and this Tlawng River originated in Zopui hills, east of Lunglei, and was the longest river in Mizoram. River *Tut*, *Teirei* and *Ngashih* were the major tributaries of Tlawng river. This river used to be considered as northern boundary of Tipperah kingdom before arbitrary demarcation of north eastern boundary of Tripura by the Britishers in nineteenth century. The rulers of this kingdom urged the British officials to recognize Dhaleswari River as boundary, instead of present Longai river. In the past, the Halams had been the settlers on the surrounding region of Dhaleswari river. Dhaleswari river, which flows from south to northward parallel to Hachek range, used to be worshipped as "*Goddess Dhaleshwari*" by all clans of the Halam in the past including the Molsom, Kaipeng and Rangkhawl, which signified that the ancestors of the Halams once lived on hill ranges on the bank of this river. Even oral tradition of the Halams maintained that their ancestors lived at upper watershed region of this river.

***Katakhal river bank*** : Katakhal river bank was very familiar among the Halam elders of Dhalai District as the past habitation of their ancestors. Katakhal was a new channel formed by Dhaleswari River in its eastern bank, and Dhaleswari River was the tributary of Barak River. This river was said to be excavated by Kachari king for irrigating the land. This river flows parallel to Dhaleswari river about fifteen kilometers in the east.

***Kanglai hadu*** : This place was located north of the Vairengte of Mizoram, and the west of Dholai town in Barak valley, Assam. Rakhi or Rukhini river, which flows from south to northwards in the east of Kanglai peak, merged with Sonai river just adjacent to Narsingpur, about twenty kilometers above Sonaimukh. Rakhi river originated in the north of Mizoram, where the river was familiar as *Serlui River*. Between 1705 and 1715 A.D, Ratnakundali and Arjundas Baisnab, the two Ahom envoys, had travelled from Lakhipur to this Sonaimukh on their way to the capital of Tipperah Kingdom. The Ranglong clan of Halam received and escorted the two Ahom envoys. The envoys sailed from Sonaimukh toward the upstream of the Rakhi River and arrived at the place called *Rangrung*, possibly, *Parbot Ranglong*, which

### Settlement in Cachar

was under Tipperah Kingdom. The Ahom envoys recorded this Senui (Rukhini/Rakhi River) in their account as *Sertheng River*. Also in *Krishnamala*, the chronicle of Rajah Krishna Manikya, this Rakhi river has been recorded as *Chaltheng River*. West of this Kanglai-hadu was Dhaleswari river, which flows south to north, and in Mizoram it was familiar as *Hwang* or *Yabang River*. The watershed region of these two rivers was the areas where the Halam people lived in the past. The hill ranges had been the habitat of the Halams from medieval period. Oral tradition of the Halam maintained that Ranglong and other clans of the Halam lived in this region. "The *Krishnamala*" written in about 1790 A.D, in Bengali ryming verse by Paudit Ramganga, mentioned the eventful and troubled reign of Maharaj Krishna Manikya; and the chronicle "*Krishnamala*" portrayed very vivid picture of the places where the Halams, their kinsmen and other cognate tribes once lived. Thus, the chronicle read like this( translated in English): ;

*Around the Kholongma region There are there,  
All the Kukis (Halams) live along the bank (Barak river)  
A river by the name of Rajbali (Dhaleswari) is in the south,  
the Kukis(Halams) also live around that river bank  
(Dhaleswari).  
There is a mountain peak in the name of Kanglai,  
In the south there is a river known as Chaltheng,  
The Kukis live at that region,  
They are called Easterners (Khasak).  
By the northern bank of Barak river  
There is kingdom under the rule of Hiramba (Cachar) king.  
South of it (Hiramba) is under the rule of Tripura King  
Kukis (Halams) settle in the midst of those mountains.  
All those kukis (Halams) are the subject of Tripura king.  
Short description shall be given about them.  
Sakachep, Thangachep, Charei, Ranglong,  
Rangkhond, Saibou, Saite, Saiboua, Roang,  
Langkoi, Rignoi, Tuoloi, Kam.  
These are important Kuki (Halam) people.  
Like these many other kukis live there,  
and they are called Kintos in Hindu scripture.*

(*Krishnamala*)

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Excepting the Molsom, Kaipeng, and Bongcher, the chronicle mentioned almost all the clans of the Halams such as the Sakachep, Khamchep (Thangchep), Saihmar, Chorei, Bowng, Hrangkhwol, Ranglong, Langkai, Rupini, Kom, and Aimol. These clans of the Halams, prior to the arrival of other Kuki Chin and Lushei tribes in the region, lived and occupied vast region stretching from Tipaimukh to undivided Cachar region of Assam. The Khuchung Kukis (possibly, the Thados) would frequently raid the villages of Halams and this came to the notice of Krishna Manikya during his exile. Rajah Krishna Manikya, during his exile in 1748 A.D, in the east of his kingdom, had to send expedition to suppress the frequent incursion and raid of the Khuochung Kukis on his Halam subject of Cachar.

**Hmarkhualian :** *Hmarkhuolian* was situated on the bank of Barak river which was adjacent to present Lakhipur in Cachar District. This place has now been occupied by the Hmar tribe, the kinsmen of the Halam. Many Halam families now living at Neitungul Halam village in Ambassa Sub-Division in Dhalai district still fondly remember this place as the habitat of their ancestors. Besides, the Barak and its tributary- Tuivai river was fondly remembered by the Halam in their folksong which they would often crossed.

**Movement to North Cachar Hills and Syhlet :** From a very early period, the south Cachar, Hailakandi and Patharkandi regions, being adjacent to Lushei Hills, were subjected to frequent raid from the Hill tribes living in southern region. In 1853 A. D, in his report on Cachar District, Colonel Lister stated that *"the principal tribes then known were Cheeloo (Chiru), Rankul (Rangkhowl), Tangune (Thangur), Changsen, Tadoe (Thados) or Tewtangs and the Poitoo (Pautu) Kukis, and in consequence of the aggressions made by some of them at different times, some of the inhabitants towards the south deserted their villages, left their lands and homes, and settled in some of the more northern pergunnahs of the district, and the lands which they deserted have not in some places up to the present time been resumed, they being now jangle. It would appear that the tribes to the south have been gradually driving one another in a northerly direction"*. Exhaustion of forest land meant for shifting cultivation alone did not cause movement. The Kuki Chin Lushei and allied tribes as a whole were raiding and feuding hill tribes, who would drive one another. Col. Lister further reported stating that *"the Luchye (Lushai) Kookies attacked the village in Cachar; they committed other*

### Settlement in Cachar

*atrocities in Sylhet and in Mampur...The Pautu (Pautu) Kookies who are located towards the south-west used also to be very troublesome, and made many descents in the southern portion of Pergannah Hylakandi, and they too drove the inhabitants away from thence, and caused lands that were under cultivation to run to jungle".* Prince Krishnarani, during his long exile commencing from A.D. 1748, had been among the Halam subject in the northeastern part of Tipperah kingdom as fugitive. He was in Patharkandi, Hailakandi, Longai and Barak Valleys where he saw the tragedy of his Halam subjects caused by frequent raids and looting of Halam villages, which compelled him to send expedition against the Khuchungs, Thados and Lusheis in the south. Possibly, the Halams living in Cachar, Hylakandi, Pathar'sandi, and Karimganj, at that point of time had to migrate to North Cachar Hills and some of them in neighbouring Sylhet in order to save their life and property. Most of the Sakachep and Rangkhawl moved in North Cachar Hills (now called Dima Hasao); and apart from migrating to N.C. Hills, a section of Sakachep moved to Jaintia Hills, Karbi Anglong (Mikir Hills) and in Nagaland. However, most of the Biate clan moved to Jaintia Hills. Before the advent of the Lushei, Thados, and the Pautu tribes (possibly, the Darlongs' Chief) etc, the northern part of Lushei Hills and its adjacent region i.e. the adjoining region of Lushei Hills had been the habitat of the Halams. Thus, observing the present habitats of the Halams, it seemed that most of the Sakachep and Rangkhawl clans of the Halam had moved to the north into present N. C. Hills (Dima Hasao), and neighbouring region in Jaintia Hills and Karbi Anglong i.e. erstwhile Mikir Hills.

## CHAPTER - 9

# SETTLEMENT IN SYHLET

**General description :** In ancient period, undivided Syhlet was divided into three petty kingdoms-Gour or proper Syhlet, Laur and Jaintia; and the country south of the Kushiara was under the control of Tipperah Kingdom. Gour was conquered by the Muhommadans in A.D, 1384. According to Mackenzie, *“from the main cluster of hills lying south of Syhlet, branches and spurs run northward into the Syhlet rivers. Long before the Muhommadan conquest these valleys were under cultivation. They belonged to Tipperah in its palmy days”*. According to Sir Edward Gait *“the tract south of the Kushiara River was often under the King of Tippera”*. Detail has been discussed in subsequent Chapter. Syhlet consists of the lower valley of the Barak or Surma river, a rich alluvial tract about 70 miles wide, bounded north and south by mountains, and opening westwards to the plain of East Bengal. The greater part of the district was a uniform level, broken by clusters of little hillocks or tillas, and intersected by a network of rivers and drainage channels. During the rainy season, from June to October, the torrents that poured down from the surrounding hills would convert the entire western part into a sea of water. The villages were built on the banks of the rivers, were raised by the annual flood deposits to a higher level than that of the surrounding country, and stood out above the waste of water like islands in a lake. The central and eastern portion consist of a broad plain, covered with rich fields, and dotted over with hamlets embowered in groves of fruit trees and bamboos. On the north, the Khasi Hills rised abruptly like a wall from a level of the plain. Barak River was bifurcated into two distributory branches ten kilometers away after crossing Badarpur. One branch was known as *Surma*, which flows along Indo-Bangladesh border for about ten kilometers and then entered into Syhlet in Bangladesh toward northwest direction. Another branch of the Barak known as *Kushiara* river flows through Karimganj District in Assam and left Indo-

### Settlement in Sylhet

Bangladesh border at Lotasil and entered into Sylhet in Bangladesh flowing towards southwest. Both the rivers i.e. Surma and Kushiya met together again at *Bansachang*. The rivers in Sylhet were in real sense tributaries only. The only big river was Barak, and together with its tributaries, huge water flow has been created. Kushiya River in Sylhet received its tributaries mostly from Tripura and Lushai Hills, and these rivers were *Juri* and *Muna* from Tripura. *Langai river*, which rose in the *Jampui Hill* in Tripura, flew north within a few kilometers of Karimganj town, and here it turned to southwest and finally disappeared in the *Halaluki Haor*, and then *Langai river* was united with *Juri River* and thereafter, emptied into Kushiya river. *Muna* and *Dhalai rivers*, after flowing from Tripura met together in Rajnagar Upa Zilla, and thereafter, emptied in Kushiya river at Marumukh in Bangladesh. Kushiya was also known as *Kalai river* after it was joined by a major offshoot (distributary) river, which originated from Surma river. When Surma and Kushiya finally rejoined in Kishoreganj District above Bhairab Bazar, the river changed its name into *Meghna River*. On the other hand, the Surma river, after entering Sylhet was fed by tributaries from Meghalaya Hills to the north, and after joining by the southward flowing *Someswari River*, it changed name as *Baulai river*.

**Hill system in Sylhet:** On the south of Sylhet, Tripura Hills have thrown out spurs into the valley, the height of which was from 150ft. upto 1500 ft. above sea level. When the Halams left eastwhile Lushai Hills, Cachar and Barak valley and migrated to Sylhet, these hill ranges served as the habitats and the source of their livelihood because shifting cultivation i. e. *Jhuming* was possible in highland only. The species of paddy and related *jhum* crops could not be grown in plain land. Moreover, the Halam people would consider plain land cultivation unprofitable, disrespectful and lowly. The hill ranges running into the plains, being spurs thrown out from the higher ranges in the neighbouring Tripura State, were overgrown with dense jungle or brushwood and impenetrable in the past, and the Halams lived in these hill ranges in the past. These were the hill ranges in Sylhet.

**Samer Goj or Longlai range:** This Longlai range was situated in the west of Acom Ail range. It was about twelve kilometers in length, and the shape of the range was like a hump on the shoulder of a bull with 1100

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

ft. height of its highest peak. In the east of this range was Patharia and in the west was Longlai. This range was the extension of Belkum pahar (Unakoti range), which divided the Kailashahar and Dharmanagar in Tripura. This range was very familiar to the Halams.

*Adompur range* : This range was situated about eight kilometers away from Longlai range towards the south-west direction, and runs north to south with five hundred feet height and thirty six kilometers in length. Adompur was situated in the east. Ita and Chouali places were situated in the west.

*Borshijura or Balisirah range* : This range was situated south-western direction of Adompur range, which runs north to south with one hundred fifty to three hundred feet height and thirty-two kilometers in length. This hill range was the eastern spur or branch of Atharomura range inside Syhlet in Bangladesh. Bhanugach and Saisiri were situated in the east, and Balishirah and Chouali were situated in the west of this range. Many tea gardens were located on this range. Many Halam families even now work in these tea gardens.

*Satgaon or Bisgaon range* : This range was about twelve kilometers away from Bilisirah range in the west. It runs north to south with about forty five kilometers in length and the maximum height of six hundred feet. Many tea gardens were located in this range. Satgaon range was the western spur or branch of Atharomura inside Syhlet.

*Raghunandan range* : This range was twenty-seven kilometers away from Bisgaon range towards the west. This range runs north to south with eighteen twenty-eight kilometers in length with maximum height of seven hundred feet.

*Bhanugach-Rajkandi range* : This range was an extended Longtorai range from Hill Tripura and has fallen within undivided Syhlet district in Bangladesh.

**First phase of settlement** : Syhlet had been the region where the ancestors of the Halams would take shelter for safety and security from ancient period. The period of their settlement in Syhlet could be divided into two parts. The first phase of their settlement had been during the reign of Dungur-pha alias Adi Dharmapha (c.635-675 A.D.). Historical evidence provided that in the first phase of movement into Syhlet, the ancestors of the Halam moved upto Surma-Kushiyara valley, and these were region of their settlement.



### Settlement in Syhlet

**Panchakhanda** : The place called *Panchakhanda* was situated on northern bank of Kushiara River and south bank of the Surma River. It was about fifteen kilometers southwest of Karimganj town, and now in Bangladesh. The Halams lived in this region in ancient period. King Lungurpna alias *Mountain King (Pabhatadishi)* Adhi Dharmapha of Tipperah Kingdom conducted Vedic sacrifice i.e. *Yagna* in this region in A.D.641. He brought five Brahmins from the court of Shiladitya Harsha Vardhana in Central India for performing Vedic sacrifice. King Adhi Dharmapha gave land grant to these five Vedic Brahmins namely- *Srinanda, Ananda, Gobinda, Sripati* and *Parashettan* in this region. He gave them five plots of land to five Vedic Brahmins. From that period onward this place became familiar as *Panchakhanda*, which means *Land of five plots*. Before granting land to the Vedic Brahmins, this place was inhabited by *Huagha (Huanghaol) Kukis* and *Tunggeri (Thungra) Kukis*. After land grant, these Kukis left the place and migrated to eastward.

**Longlai** : King Dharmadhar, the 17<sup>th</sup> king of Tipperah, conducted another Vedic sacrifice in 12<sup>th</sup> century at *Longlai*. *Longlai* was located northwest of the present Kailashahar town inside Bangladesh. In ancient period, this region was within Tipperah Kingdom. King of Tipperah, Dharmadar alias King Swadharmapha conducted the Vedic sacrifice at that place in A.D.1194, by engaging a Vedic Brahmin, whose name was Nidhipati. King Sri Sri *Yukti Swadharmapha* gave vast tract of land grant to Nidhipati at *Longlai*, which was inhabited by *Longlai Kuki* i.e. *Langlai* clan of Halams. *Longlai* hill range was situated east of *Longlai* plain, an extension of *Bekum* range (*Unakoti* in Tripura) toward the north. *Bulkum* range, the southern extension of *Longlai* range, was connected to the story of *Sahmar* clan of the Halams. *Longlai* plain was just about ten kilometers north of *Kailashahar* town across the Indo-Bangla international border within Bangladesh. *Longlai* was another region in Syhlet where the ancestors of Halam lived in ancient period. Possibly, here the Halams became dispersed and moved to different direction. Most possibly, during this period the advance group of the Halams comprising the *Molsom, Kaipeng, Bowng, Bongcher*, a section of *Rangkhowl, Koloi*, and *Rupini* etc, moved toward the south, and some of the clans entered *Chitagang Hill Tracts* traversing *Hachek, Jampui, Sakhan, Longtorai* ranges. Another group comprising the *Langkai, Chorei, Dap, Sakachep (Khelmas), Thungahap, Marchafang* and *Ranglong* clans of the Halam

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

went back to hilly region in the east-Tipaimukh and Manipur. This has been mentioned in detail in preceding Chapter. The Bowng, and Saihmar moved to upper watershed region of Dhaleswari river, possibly, in north-western region of Lunglei district, but not in Chittagang Hill Tracts. But in subsequent period they had been driven back to down stream of Dhaleswari river, possibly, by the Pawi. The hearsay maintained that the Bowng, Bongcher and Saihmar clans were subjected to murder and atrocity in the upstream region of Dhaleswari river in eighteenth century, which forced them to move out of upper watershed region of Dhaleswari river, and they emigrated to Cachar region again.

**Second phase of settlement :** In the second phase of their settlement in Syhlet commenced, possibly, from the eighteenth century, following the expansion of the Lushei and allied tribes in the erstwhile Lushei Hills. The Halams living in the watershed regions of Sonai, Serlui, Rukhini, Singla, Katakhal, Dhaleswari and Longai rivers left their habitats. One section comprising the Sakachep (i.e. Khelmas), Rangkhows and Biates migrated toward the north, another group comprising the Chorei, Ranglong, Langkai, Dap, Thangachep, Marchafang, Bowng, Saihmar, and a section of Sakachep clans moved to Syhlet. To say in more details, the Halams, chiefly the Sakachep, Thangachep, Marsafang, Dap(Nabin), Langkai, Chorei and Ranglong clans of the Halam, who migrated to Manipur, had to move out of the Manipur toward the northern region of erstwhile Lushei Hills and its adjoining region i.e. Cachar region. Possibly, they came back to Tipaimukh, the route through which they went to Manipur. After their arrival from Manipur, the Halams fanned out on hill ranges across the watershed regions of Serlui, Sonai, Rukhini, Dhaleswari, Katakhal, Singla, Longai and Deo river. After their return from Manipur, the known places of habitations of the Halams in northern Lushei Hills, Cachar and Barak valley have been mentioned in the preceding Chapter. Thus, Arjun Das Baisnab and Ratnakundali, the two Ahom emissaries, who came thrice to Tipperah between 1705 to 1715 A.D, saw the habitations of the Ranglong, Rupini and other Halam-Kuki clans stretching from the region called Rangrung in Cachar upto the watershed region of Longai and Deo rivers, which fall under northern region of Tipperah kingdom. Throughout the medieval period, the Halams, particularly, the Chorei, Ranglong, Sakachep, Thangachep, Dap,

### Settlement in Syhlet

Marchanting, Langkai, Jowng, Korbong and Saihmar clans lived in the region stretching from Jipaimukh in the east to entire northern Mizoram, including the northern part of Tripura in the west and undivided Cachar regions. Thus, when Prince Krishnarmoni (who subsequently became king by assuming the name as Krishna Manikya) went to exile for twelve years commencing from the years A.D. 1748, lived among his Halam subject in present Patherkandi, Jailakandi, and Karimganj regions and its adjoining area. When the Lushcis under Sailo chiefs made inroad in the north and the northwest Lushai Hills in 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Halams moved out of the region and emigrated toward neighbouring region in Hill Tipperah, Syhlet and some of them moved toward the north in Dima Hasao(N.C.Hill), Karbi Anglong(Mikir Hills) and Jaintia Hills. Even in Hill Tipperah, the Halams were not in peace. Hearsay abound among the Halam elders about the movement of their ancestors to other regions due to conflict with their kin-men, particularly, the Pawis, Lusheis, Thado etc, tribes which they called *Khoek Jerd*. The Halams by far the most tolerant people as compared to other Kuki-Chin tribes due to their long contact with the plain people and other tribe, particularly, the Tipras and the Bengalees. They migrated to neighbouring region where they felt safer to escape from the frequent raids and atrocities. Further, the oppressive taxation by royal officials was another reason which forced them to move out from their habitat to other safer region. Thus, Hunter wrote *"in his annual report for 1872, the Political Agent of Hill Tipperah reported that some of the Kulis who formerly dwelt in the northern part of the State had joined the Lushais; while by far the large portion had, by raids from without the State and oppression from within, been induced to leave their homes and migrate over the border into Syhlet"*. Further, Hunter wrote about Hill Tipperah, saying that *"the advantages of having practically an unlimited amount of land for jhum cultivation somewhat counter balance the effects of oppressive taxation. Most of the available land was however, until recently, exposed to constant raids by the Lushais"*. Syhlet, being the immediate neighbouring region of Hill Tipperah in its northwest border, has a long history of association with the kingdom of Tipperah. Though Syhlet was a neighbouring region, migration of hill tribes from Hill Tipperah to Syhlet was not the best option considering the topographical position of that region, Syhlet was plain region often flooded in rainy season, and there was no reasons for the hill tribes like the Halams to

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

migrate in such flood prone low land, unless their live and property was in danger and oppression was inflicted to them. When survey was conducted, G.A.Grierson projected 8533 Halam population in Syhet as against 18000 Halam populations in Hill Tipperah in the last part of nineteenth century. Further, Grierson has maintained that the Halam people living in the Syhlet had come from Hill Tipperah. Grierson had also projected 533 population only of the Ranglong (one of the clans of the Halam) in Syhlet. Grierson also stated that the Ranglong clan living in Syhlet, were also the emigrants from the Hills, possibly, Hill Tipperah Kingdom. In present context, Tipaimukh, north Mizoram, Hailakandi and PatharKandi regions were outside the territory of Tripura; and apart from the northern region of Tripura, these were the regions where the ancestors of the Halam lived in medieval period. In subsequent period, a group of the Halam living in these regions migrated to Syhlet. So how Grierson could say that the Halams of Syhlet were from Hill Tipperah? The fact of the matter was that Tipaimukh, which is now in south Manipur, had been the eastern boundary of Tipperah kingdom, which was excluded by the Britishers by arbitrary demarcation of eastern boundary in 1871-72 A.D, and made the Longai river as the line of eastern boundary of Tipperah kingdom. However, the Halam had the habit of identifying themselves as the subject of Tipperah kingdom without regard to their place of settlement outside the kingdom.

**Important places of settlement :** There were some important places where the ancestors of the Halam made settlement in Syhlet in the second phase of their movement. This movement took place following the advent of the *Khuosak* and *Khuochung* people- the Lushei, Pawis, Raltes, Thados etc.

**Baniachong :** Buaniachong had a unique history of its establishment. In ancient period, *Baniachong* region was under the Hindu Kingdom, namely-*Laur*, which at one time occupied the north western portion of Syhlet. Originally, Baniachung was a Kingdom established by a Brahmin whose name was Kesab Misra. When Kesab Mitra came by boat to do business; there were few employees with him. The names of his employees were *Banik* or *Bania* and a boatman of *Chong* or Namasudra descent. The name of *Baniachung* said to have originated from these two words *Bania+Chong*. In subsequent period Baniachong was occupied

### Settlement in Syhlet

by *Laur*. Syhlet proper known as *Geat* was conquered by the Muhammadans in A.D.1364, but Laur retained its independence for another two hundred years. In subsequent period, one of the Kings, whose name was Gobinda, was summoned to Delhi and there he was forced to embrace the Mohamumadan faith. His grandson, Abid Reza, abandoned Laur and built the town of Baniachong at the beginning of the eighteenth century at the place where *Kushiyara* and *Sarna rivers* meet together in Bangladesh. When King Amar Manikya (1570-1586) of Tipperah Kingdom excavated Amarsagar pond at Amarpur, Gobinda Khan, the King of Baniachong, sent five hundred labourers to excavate that large pond i.e. the present *Amarsagar* which till now exist at Amarpur town. Greater Baniachong region was a Sub-District under Habiganj District in Bangladesh, and the Baniachong town was situated on the bank of *Kushiyara*. The Halams, possibly, followed the Tipras in their migration to Baniachong. Even today many *Tipras* families live in Baniachong region. The oral tradition prevalent among the elders of Boring and Langkai clans of the Halam maintained that once their ancestors lived at Baniachong with the Ranglong clan of the Halam before their movement toward the present Hill Tipperah. The tradition prevalent among the Halams was that they did not settle there for long period, and left the place due to starvation.

**Longlai** : This region was seven kilometers north of Kailashahar town inside Bangladesh under Maulvi Bazar Upajila. Longlai range in total occupied eighty one hundred and ten sq. kilometers in area. There were tea gardens where many tribal people worked. Longlai hill range was situated east of Longlai plain, an extension of Belkum (Unakot) range toward the north. Longlai was another region in Syhlet where the ancestors of Halam lived from ancient period and even in medieval period, the Halam settled in this region. The folksong of the Halam mentioned Longlai as the place where the bride had to leave her home to follow her husband. About Longlai hills detail has been mentioned in preceding paragraph.

**Naldori** : This place was situated about six kilometers south of Longlai under Maulvi Bazar Upojilla. This was the place the Halam often spoke about and regard as their past habitat.

**Sansonnagar** : This place was about twelve kilometers away from Barugach toward the northwest of Kailashahar town; but five kilometers

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

away north of Kailashahar town of Unakoti District. Samsonagar was inside the Bangladesh but located in the west of Balishira hill range, and located about ten kilometers away in the west of Longlai, and it was the place where the Halam once lived. In fact the Halams of Unjan Saileng and Bhati Saileng under Panisagar Sub-Division traced their past habitation in this region. Now this region is within Moulvi Bazar Upajila in Bangladesh.

**Champarai:** This place was located toward the northeast of Kamalpur town across the Indo-Bangla international border on the foot of Longtorai hills within Bangladesh. This was the place where the Halams of the Dhalai District lived in the past before their movement to Kamalpur in Dhalai district.

**Champabari:** This place was located at Adom Ail hill range within Bangladesh. Adom Ail range formed the eastern international border between Bangladesh in Syhlet and India in Assam State. In the past this range was the boundary between Syhlet and undivided Cachar District. The Halams used to offer puja to the deity of this range which they called *Adom Raja*, and this signified the settlement of the Halams in this hilly region in the past.

**Bhanugach:** This region was situated in Bangladesh in the east of Balishira range, and about twelve kilometers north of Kamalpur town. This region was situated west of Samsonnagar and east of Srimongol. Bhanugach region was under Maulvi Bazar District in Bangladesh, about twelve kilometers away from Kamalpur town across the Indo-Bangladesh border in Dhalai District in Tripura. In the past, this region had been part of Tipperah Kingdom, and was familiar as *Manukul*, which means *Manu River Bank*. *Manukul* region was comprised of six parganahs namely- Saichiri, Indanagar, Baramchal, Bhanugach, Indeshwar and Balisirah, and had been the part of Tipperah Kingdom. This was the place where Nidhipati, a Vedic Brahmin, conducted Vedic sacrifice during the reign of King Dharmadhar of Tipperah in 1195 A.D, for which Nidhipati got land grant in this region and made his settlement. This region asserted independence, but King Dhanya Manikya re-established the authority of Tipperah Kingdom in fifteenth century. The Bowng, Langkai, Thangachep, Sakachep, Dap, Marchafang and Saihmar traced their place of habitation in the region of Bhanugach.

### Settlement in Sylhet

**Srimongol:** This region was situated about seven kilometers in the east of Bhanugach. The Halam elders now living in the eastern bank of Dhalai river, particularly, the Langkai, Thangachep, Sakachep, Bawang, Marchafang, Dap and the Saitmar till now remember Srimongol region as the habitat of their ancestors. This region was adjacent to Bhanugach and famous for tea garden. This was part of independent Tipperah before it was taken away by the East India Company for raising tea garden by evicting Halams and Tipras.

**Belkumlung:** Langkai hill range was the northern extension of Unakoti range from Tripura in India. This range was familiar to the Halam as *Belkumlung*, where the Saitmar lived in the past. The Halam priest while offering puja mentioned the name of this place as the place of origin of the Saitmar clan of the Halam.

**Sugama:** The region was adjacent to Dharmanagar, across the Indo-Bangla International border and within Bangladesh. The Ranglong clan of the Halam had been in this region before their final movement to Baghasa region in Dharmanagar in north Tripura District.

Besides, *Homa, Doizaga, Hatai, Ripason* and *Sobaga* were the places in undivided Sylhet where the ancestors of the Halam lived in the past.

**Movement from Sylhet:** The Halams did not live long in Sylhet and went back to adjoining hilly region of Tipperah. However, the fact of the matter was that the bordering region of Sylhet was part of Hill Tipperah before, which was forcefully annexed by East India Company for tea plantation. Baniachong was the last point that a section of the Halams moved in Sylhet, possibly, along the courses of Surma and Kushiara rivers or along the hill ranges. There was hearsay prevalent among the Halam elders that due to heavy flood the ancestors of the Halam could not do shifting cultivation in Baniachong region in Sylhet, and as a result, the Halam deserted Baniachong region due to famine, possibly, in the first part of nineteenth century. According to the narration of Jalindra Mohon Singha (96 years) (Manipur), who was erstwhile resident of Baligaon in Bangladesh, the Halam would lived in Baniachong region as a neighbour with Tipras; and many Bishupriya Manipuri families adopted poor Halam children from Baniachong region. Halam children said to have been sold by their parents to Manipuri families due to severe famine. Manipuri families used to perform sanctification ceremony with the help of their community

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Brahmin after adoption of the Halam children. Their descendent could be traced even today at Manipuri villages in Baligaon, the adjoining region of Bhanugach in Bangladesh. This author too met a person brought along with by Jatindra Mohan Singha whose ancestors were said to be Halam adopted by the Bisnupriya Manipuris. The Halam elders, particularly, the Ranglong of Dharmanagar and the Bowng clan of Dholai District even today speak about *Baniachong* as the place of their ancestral settlement in Syhlet. Besides, the Ranglongs also regarded the places namely-*Sagarnal, Champabari, Hatai, Horma, Huapa, Rupacherra, Noldori, Khusaipara*, etc, in Syhlet as their habitat, possibly, in nineteenth century. The Ranglong, Chorei and the Sakachep etc. clans moved towards the upstream of Juri and Longai rivers. This is why today most of the settlement of the Ranglong, Chorei and Sakachep clans could be traced along the eastern and western bank of the Longai river within the State of Assam, and on the watershed region of Juri river in North Tripura. However, the Choreis living at Ujan Saileng and Bhati Saileng villages under Panisagar Sub Division of North District, and the Chorei living at Polkhuo village came from Tangpui village which was located on the hill top in the east of the present Poulkuo village in Unakoti District; and traced their earlier habitation at Samsonnagar region in Bangladesh, about fifteen kilometers away from Kailashahar town. On the other hand, a section of the Halams moved from the banks of Longai, Juri and Katakhal rivers towards the south-west leading into present Kamalpur sub Divisions in Hill Tipperah. According to hearsay and oral tradition, the Halams now living in Dhalai District came from Banugach, Champarai, Srimongal and Samsonnagar region in batches. There were two Halam villages on the hill in Bhanugach, an extension of Longtorai range. The names of these two villages were *Thinglamlei*, and *Champarai*. The Bowng, Thangachep, Sakachep, Langkai, Dap, Saihmar and the Marchafang clans moved into Hill Tipperah from Banugach region in Syhlet to *Mithima*, which was in the east of present Kamalpur town, adjacent to present Indo-Bangladesh international boundary, and from that place they moved westwards to Atharomura range. On Atharomura hill range, they set up villages and the name of some villages were *Simmual, Simlung* and *Bemuol*. From these villages, they migrated and set up villages called *Doraikhuo* under the present *Doraicherra* ADC Village, west of Manikbandhar, and at *Panbua Khuo*



### Settlement in Syhlet

under present Panbua ADC Village, which was situated in the west of present Halahali bazar, all in the present Kamalpur Sub Division. From these two villages, the Halam spread out in group and clan wise in different direction in undivided Kamalpur Sub Division of Dholai District. In fact, Marikkhandar was called as *Pirkai* by the Halam. From this region, the Sakachep and the Bowng clans moved to Mahabir where there they set up a village called *Sairant-khuo* under the present Dhanchandra ADC Village. The area was infested with wild elephants and for that reason the village got the name of *Sairant*. Enmity developed between the Sakachep and Bowng clans over leadership. The Sakacheps, taking the advantage of their closeness with the royal house, took leadership role which was disliked by the Bowng people. Also Mahabir was not healthy village for the Halam families. Therefore, all the families from Mahabir village migrated to another place in nearby region and set up big village called *Lailok-khuo* village. This village was situated upwards of Mahabir. At *Lailok-khuo* village, the dispute over leadership between Sakachep and Bowng clan started again and the dispute became acute. Therefore, from this *Lailok-khuo* village, a large group of families moved to *Tulana* village (mostly Bowng clan), another large group of families from the same *Lailok-khuo* village went to nearby area and set up the village called *Kanawong Khuo* i.e. Kamailal Halam para. From *Lailok-khuo* village two groups of families mostly from Bowng clan moved out at different direction-one group set up a village at the hill top of Longtorai range which was called *Tangsib*, which subsequently became familiar as *Malyawon Roong* para; another group of families from the same village set up a village called *Sidungkhao* on lower region of Longtorai range under Kamalpur Sub-Division in Dholai. Later on some families from the *Tangsib* village also migrated to *Sidungkhao* village. In subsequent period, all the families from *Tangsib* village moved to another location and set up new village called *Tangsi khao*. In 1960 A.D. the families of Tangsi village migrated to Kuchicherra village, which was in West Kathacherra A.D.C Village; and the villagers of *Sidungkhao* village emigrated to Janthum village (which is now called Bowng colony). Further, the Halam inhabitants of present *Theibari* village in Janthum ADC Village, *Simbuchak* village under Simbuchak ADC Village, *Kachuchent* and *Jalokheo* villages under Kachucherra A.D.C. Village, *Neitongd* village under Ambassa R.D. Block and the other Halam

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

villages in Dhalai District were also the emigrants from *Dorai khuo* and *Panbua khuo*, both under Panbua A.D.C, village under Kamalpur Sub-Division in Dhalai District. However, before their final movement to present villages, they settled at the villages, namely, *Ngawokdung* (now it is called Latiabil in Avanga Panchayat), *Satelmakai* (in *Debbari Gram Panchayat*), *Dabbari*, *Aitabongbasa*, *Satokra*, *Duigang*, *Tangpui*, all were under undivided Kamalpur Sub Division. However, the name of these villages have disappeared with the settlement of late emigrants in the region. According to oral tradition, the Halams of Dhalai and Unakuti District came from *Langkaidung*, *Katakaldung*, and *Cholridung* and moved to Syhlet. In Syhlet they set up habitations at the places mentioned earlier. Longai river was called *Langkaidung*, Katakhal river was called *Katakaldung* and the Jhuri river was familiar as *Cholridung*. Longai river rises in Jampui hill and flows parallel to the Jampui hill in the west and the Hachek range in the east, and flows toward the north entering into Karimganj District in Assam, and thereafter, into Syhlet in Bangladesh, and after entering into Syhlet, Longai river emptied at *Halakuki Haor*. Juri river also rises in Jampui hill and flow right across the Dharmanagar town and entered to Kulaura Upazilla of Maulvi Bazar District of Bangladesh and later it joined Kushiara river. On the other hand, Katakhal was an eastern tributary of Dhaleshwari river. It was difficult to say as to whether these river courses determined the direction of the movement of the ancestors of the Halams; but it was the fact that they settled on the banks and watershed regions of these rivers. The Halams left the region due to frequent raids and atrocities of more powerful Kuki Chin tribes; and this fact was evident from the incident of plunder committed on Halam villages situated on the bank of Singla river in 1849 A.D., which flows from the south to northwards about fifteen kilometers east of Longai river. After all, undivided Syhlet was regarded as the safe home by the Halams in the past, where they could take shelter to escape from the frequent raids and atrocities of their kinsmen, who would frequently descend from erstwhile Lushei Hills. The Halam from Hill Tipperah and Cachar had to migrate in Syhlet in search of safety and security after the advent of more numerous and powerful Lushei and allied tribes in Lushei Hills.



## CHAPTER - 10

# SETTLEMENT IN CHITTAGANG HILL TRACTS

**General description :** According to the past administrative unit of British India, Chittagang could be divided into two parts, namely-plain Chittagang i.e.Chittagang proper, and the other was hilly region of Chittagang, called Chittagang Hill Tracts. Plain Chittagang lies on the east of the Bay of Bengal, and was separated on the south from Myanmar by Naaf estuary; on the north the Fenny River divided it from Noakhali and plain Tipperah District. Now Chittagang has been bifurcated into five Districts, namely-Khakrachari, Rangamati, Bandarban, Cox Bazar and Chittagang. In term of geographical feature, particularly, Chittagang Hill Tracts was an extension of Patkoi, Manipur and Chin-Lushai hills and a part of Arakan Hills. Thus this region had practically been ungoverned region inhabited by different hill tribes from the time of far off past. In ancient period, Chittagang originally formed part of extensive Hindu Kingdom of Tipperah; but it was conquered by the Buddhist king of Arakan in the 9th century, and from that date onwards the Arakanese appeared to have generally succeeded in retaining possession of Chittagang. Thus, Hunter wrote saying that "*Chittanang originally formed a part of the once extensive independent Hindu Kingdom of Tipperah; but prior to its conquest by the Muhammadan, it had frequently changed master*". However, in thirteenth century Chittagang was temporarily annexed to the Mughal empire, but the King of Tipperah defeated the Muhammadans in A.D, 1512, and reconquered the country. Subsequently, it again fell into the hand of the Mughals, and in A.D,1538, following the dispute between the Mughal and the Portuguese mission from Goa, the Portuguese in revenge burnt the Chittagang town. During the struggle for supremacy between the Mughals and the Afgans, between A.D.1560 and 1570, Chittagang was reconquered by the king of Arakan and annexed to his kingdom as tributary province, but this fact was ignored by the

### Settlement in Chittagang Hill Tracts

Mughal and the revenue was assessed in A.D. 1582 by Iudornal as an integral part of the Mughal Empire. On the other hand, the Chittagang Hill had been part of Tipperah Kingdom from sixteenth century, when King Dhanyaminikya conquered it in A.D.1532, and in the same year he also conquered part of the Arakan Kingdom. About the Chittagang, Mackenzie wrote that "at one time the Kingdom of Tipperah embraced a large part of Chittagang". Successive Kings of Tipperah Kingdom were in constant anxiety for the protection of Chittagang. Thus, Chittagang has intimate historical connection with Tipperah Kingdom. This region had been the favourite destination of all native hill tribes from Tipperah kingdom. Thus, Hunter wrote saying "But all the Tipperahs in Chittagang Hill Tracts have immigrated from Hill Tipperah. Emigration still goes on yearly from the territory of the Rups of Hill Tipperah and in the year 1872-73 upwards of 2,500 Tipperahs Hill Tracts. ... The Reng Tipperah immigrants arrived in the Hill Tracts in a state of destitution. They first subsisted on roots and other wild products of the forest; but the Deputy Commissioner reported in 1873, that the colony was then thriving. The main body of the immigrants settled on the banks of Kussalong river." Further, Historian W.W. Hunter, citing the report of the Deputy Commissioner of the Chittagang Hill Tracts stated that "in 1869, that a yearly emigration took place from Hill Tipperah to the Chittagang Hills; and that the number of Tipperahs within his jurisdiction amounted to some 15000. According to the Census returns there were, however, in 1872, only 8160 Tipperahs in the Chittagang Hill Tracts." About the general history of Chittagang Hill Tracts, Hunter stated that "the history of Chittagang Hill Tracts is nearly the history of the various tribes inhabiting it."

**Physical feature:** Understanding and knowledge of the physical feature of Chittagang Hill Tracts was important for tracing the places of the past settlement of the Halams. As regard to physical feature of the Chittagang Hill Tracts, it consists largely of hills, which are unsuitable for plough cultivation, and the slopes could not be terraced for want of stones for reclamation. General aspect of of the region was a tangle mass of hill, ravine, and cliff, covered by tree, bush and creeper jangle. The mountains were steep, and the highest hill was Keokradung (4034 feet) on the watershed of Rakhing River. In the north of the Chittagang Hill Tracts there were four principal hill ranges, namely :

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

(a) *Furamuin hill range* : This hill range was situated west of Rangamati, and three peaks were Rampahar, Bhangamura and Furamun, the highest (1518ft.) peak.

(b) *Dholagiri range (Soldeng)* : This range was situated east of the Furamun range, and Longtorai peak was the highest (1405 ft.).

(c) *Bhuachari range* : East of the Dholajari range, this Bhuachari range was situated. Changpal was the highest peak (2003 ft.).

(d) *Chipui or Barkal range* : This hill was the eastern most range in Rangamati District. Its peaks were Khantlang, Thangnang, Lungliang, Chipui, Bortlang, and Barkal. About forty miles north from a place called Barkal, the hill range was divided into two sub ranges- one sub range extended towards the east entering into Mizoram State in India; and another sub range extended upto Karnafuli River in the south.

(e) In the south of Karnafuli River, there were seven hill ranges, and these hill ranges were the following-

(i) *Muranja range* : In westwards of Bandarban District this hill range was situated. This hill range originated from Chunti range of Bandarban Hill District, which was three miles east of Harbang Bazar under Cox Bazar District, and extended towards southeast direction.

(ii) *Waitang range* : This range runs parallel to Munarja range and stretches upto the south of Munarja range, and enters into Myanmar. In fact, the largest part of this hill range was within Myanmar.

(iii) *Tambang or Chimbuk range* : This hill range runs parallel to Munarja range along the east of the range. This range starts from the southern end of Sangu River and extends upto Myanmar. In fact largest part of this range was within Myanmar. Some important peaks were Lunliang, Khainkhiang, Kruo, Rungrang, and Tinduo (highest 2944 ft.).

(iv) *Saichal-Maodok range* : This range was southern part of Barkal range. Northern part of this range threw many spurs, and one spur extended southwards and joined the Bilaichari range. Saichal-Maodok range has several peaks, and these were Saichal, Weibung, Rungtang, Maodok (highest 3229 ft.), and Maodoktang.

(v) *Batimoin range* : This range was in the north of Karnafuli River, and its highest peak was Batimoin (1725 ft.). This range joined to Balitai range near Ramitang range.

(vi) *Bilaichari range* : This range joins the Saichal range near Bilaichari peak. It has Bilaichari peak which was 1864 feet in height.

### Settlement in Chittagang Hill Tracts

(vii) *Politai range*: This range was the southern part of Barkal range, and it has five peaks such as Sitapahar, Ghilachari, Ramutang, Politai and Kookradong (highest 4034 ft.)

As regard to drainage system of the Chittagang Hill Tracts, the principal rivers were the Feri, Karnafuli, Sangu and Matamuri. The Karnafuli and Feri rivers flows across the main lines of the hills and have no regular valley. But reverse was the case with the Sangu and Matamuri rivers, which run parallel to the ranges, until they debouch in the plain. The Chengri and Kassalong rivers were the tributaries of Karnafuli, and Kassalong and Chengri flow across the valleys from the north, and in addition to these rivers, there was a network of hill streams. These hill ranges and rivers system had impacted the course of movement of the Halams in the past.

**Phases of settlement of Kuki Chin-tribes**: The elders of the Halams even today speak about the place called *Duapathar*, *Saipathang*, *Myazi Inthang* and *Buopaitang* which were situated across the eastern border of Tripura within Chittagang of Bangladesh. Among the Kaipeng clan, apart from *Duapathar*, *Anloz* was familiar words. Now the other ethnic minorities living in Chittagang Hill Tracts were the Chakma, Mug, Reang, Tripura (Noatia), and Uchoi, Rakhing, Barua and Gurkhas (came during British). Among the Kuki-Chin tribes, Bawn, Ahiyang, Khumi, Pangkhu, (Pang) etc. were the hill tribes; and no Halam tribe would be found now in Chittagang. However, among the Kuki-Chin tribes, the Halams were the earliest inhabitants in Chittagang Hill Tracts. Earlier name of the hill ranges bore the traces of settlement of the Halam tribe before the advent of other Kuki-Chin-Lushei tribes in the Chittagang Hill Tracts. In fact the traces of their past settlement were reflected in the names of the hill ranges. W.W.Hunter mentioned the name of hill ranges in Chittagang Hill Tracts as *Mwangon Tang*, *Basi Tang*, *Larsin Tang*, *Bali Tang*, *Saciel Tang* (*Sachal-Maodok*), *Bilaisari Tang* (*Bilaichari*), *Batimai Tang* (*Batimain*), *Mara Tang* (*Maranja*), *Satipahar Tang* and *Barkal Tang*. No one would be able to say which hill ranges bore these names because the late emigrants who dominated the region had renamed all these hill ranges. But the fact remained that the word "Tang", which means "Hill" in Halam language, itself carried deep significance. In the language of the Mizos, Daitlong, Hmar or other Kuki-Chin tribes, the word "Tang" was pronounced as "Tiang", and among

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

the Chin tribe, the word *Tang* was pronounced as *Klang*. In the language of the Lusheis, Darlongs, Hmars, Raltes or in Mizo language, “L” alphabet used to be placed after the alphabet of “T”, which makes the word “*Tang*” as “*Tlang*”. On the other hand, no Halam clans, including the Molsom, Kaipeng and Rangkhawl clans, would pronounce or use the alphabet “L” after the alphabet “T” in pronouncing the word *Tang*. The old hill ranges in Hill Tracts were called *Tang*, and not *Tlang* or *Klang*, meaning hill range. In course of time the names of the hill ranges have changed due to the inroad of other hill tribes, and the plain people into Hill Tracts of Chittagang. Now many of these hill ranges have acquired very different names given by subsequent migrants and settlers. The hill system of Hill Tipperah could not be separated from the hill system of the Chittagang Hill Tracts. Thus, the Jampui, Sakhan, Longtorai, Atharomura hill ranges were the extension of hill ranges from Chittagang Hill Tracts. Even in the Atlas Map of 1965 and before, all these hill ranges were recorded and shown as *Jumpui Tang* for Jampui range, *Sakhan Tang* for Sakhan range, *Longtorai Tang* for Longtoai range, and *Atharomura Tang* for Atharomura range, and the word *Tang* was used in place of *Tlang* or *Klang*, which distinctly belonged to the word of Halam language; and subsequently the word *Tang* was substituted with the word of *Hill* or *Pahar*. Moreover, these hill ranges had the separate names given by the ancestors of the Halams, which was very different from the names of today. Although Jampui retained its original name given by the Halam, the names of other hills have changed. While the Longtorai hill was known as *Soldeng Tang*, Sakhan range was known as *Sonkhuolawn Tang*, Atharomua was called as *Sajaitang*, and Baramura range was called *Saisom Tang* by the ancestors of the Halams. All hill ranges of Tripura were intimately associated with the legacy of the Halam tribe. These hill ranges served as the corridors for their movement toward Chittagang Hill Tracts as well as the western and Southwestern part of Mizoram in the past. The Lusheis and many Hmars (who were absorbed in Lushei society) emigrated into Jampui Hills within Tripura in about A.D. 1910 and afterward.

According to Nathan Loncheu, a scholar from Bowm tribe in Chittagang Hill Tracts, the Kuki Chin tribes who lived in Chittagang Hill Tracts in the past centuries were the Rangkhawl, Darlong, Hmar,



### Settlement in Chittagang Hill Tracts

Khongsai (Thadon), Paite, Ruankhum, Molsom, Bongcher, and Thanglau. This fact corroborated the prevailing oral tradition and hearsay of the Halams about their past settlement in Chittagang. In fact, the Kaipeng too settled in Chittagang Hill Tracts for a century. Some of these clans now live in Tripura; and these clans were the Molsom, Kaipeng, Ruankhum, Rangkhawl, Darlong and Bongcher. The Ruankhum now live at Hawaibari village in Teliamura R.D Block, Dupali village in Udaipur, Kamalacherra village in Ambassa and Mirrosa ADC village in Sonamura Sub Division. There was hearsay which maintained that centuries before during the settlement in Thangnangsip, the Ruankhum, Kojai and Be Lu tribes were attacked by the Pawl called *Lai* in Mizoram & in Chittagang familiar as *Bowmij* tribe, the new immigrants; but the Ruankhums and Kojais got the shelter and protection of the Molsom, while the Be Lu sub-clan got the shelter and protection of the Kaipeng. The Rangkhawls living in Tripura also appeared to be the emigrants from the Chittagang Hill Tracts because even today some of their elders talked about the place called *Duqanthal*. The Bongcher, Molsom, Rupini, Koloj, Kaipeng, Rangkhawl, Langka, Bowng, Ranglong, Chorei, Marchafang, Dap, and Saichmar living in Tripura have a tradition about their settlement at a place called *Duqanthal*. But it was difficult to say whether all the Halam clans migrated to Chittagang. However, it was certain that the Bongcher, Rupini, Molsom, Kaipeng, Korbong, Rangkhawl and the Koloj clans of the Halam had been the emigrants from the Chittagang Hill Tracts; although this might not be the case for the remaining clans of the Halam. At certain period, they went to Chittagang Hill Tracts in search of better livelihood, and also, possibly, for escaping from the tyranny of royal tax collectors of Tipperah Kingdom. Particularly, the oral tradition of the Molsom and Kaipeng maintained that their ancestors moved upto Arakan Hills; and some places called *Barnangsip*, *Thangnangsip*, *Buerpuitang*, *Sajaitang*, *Duqanthal*, *Arsi en Khucsa*, *Mayni Halang*, *Matai Fakiri* and *Bogskan Law* of Bandarban seemed to be the places in Chittagang where their ancestors migrated from Surra-Kushiyara valley in past centuries, traversing Lachek, Jampui, Sakhan, Longturai etc. ranges.

**Important places of settlement:** Some very familiar places of settlement of the Halams in Chittagang Hill Tracts need to be mentioned here for better insight on their locations.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Buorpuitang**: Laldova, a Mizo historian and scholar from Chittagang Hill Tracts, has given required geographical description of *Buorpuitang* range. Laldova has described *Buorpuitang* where he grew up in the past, and said that *Buorpuitang* has many round and dome-shaped peaks along its ridge, which also looked like big swollen humps. Possibly, this was the reason the hill got its name as *Buorpuitang*. In Halam language, the word *Buor* means *Swollen*, the word *Pui* means *Big* or *Prominent* and the word *Tang* means *Hill*. These three words made the name of the hill as *Buorpuitang*, which means *Large swollen Hill* in Halam language. Both the hill ranges, namely, *Buorpuitang* and *Sajaitang*, were very familiar names to the Molsom people, especially among the old and elders, because these places were said to be the habitats of their ancestors. Many argued that the *Buorpuitang* which was located in the north-west of Lunglei district in Mizoram could be that *Buorpuitang*, which the Molsom clan regarded as one of their past habitats, but this was not the fact. There was another place in the name of *Buorpuitang*, which was situated in the extreme north of Chittagang Hill Tracts and west of Barkal range. This *Buorpuitang* range was in the west of Barkal range; and runs from the north to south parallel to this Barkal range. In between the Barkal range and *Buorpuitang* range, Kassalong river flows southward and empties in the Karnafuli River a little above Subalong Bazar. In its upstream, Kassalong River has several tributary rivers such as Myani, Massalong, Nandoram, Arandi, Marandi and Kakurji etc. In the west of *Buorpuitang* range, Chengri (Chengri) river flows toward the south, and this river was called *Sajai* river by the Halams and other Kuki Chin tribes. Thus, *Buorpuitang* range runs north to south in between Kassalong (in the east) and Chengri or Chengri (in the west) rivers. Chengri river was familiar as *Sajai* river among the Kuki Chin Mizo tribes, and this *Sajai* i.e., Chengri river cuts the southern part of *Buorpuitang* range just before reaching Rangamati town, where Chengri empties into Karnafuli river. In other words, between *Buorpuitang* range (in the east), and Soldeng range (in the west), Chengri River flows up to Rangamati town, where the river, after crossing the *Buorpui* range, met the Karnafuli river. Both Chengri and Kassalong were the tributaries of Karnafuli, apart from Boro Harina, Subalong and Rakhaing rivers. Upstream of *Sajai* river has its source from the border region of Tripura and Chittagang Hill Tracts in Khagrachari District; and flows in between the Soldeng

### Settlement in Chittagang Hill Tracts

range (an upper range of Longtorai range) and Buorputang range. Soldeng range i.e. Longtorai range was in the west bank of Sajai river and Buorputang range was in the eastern bank of the same river; and both hill ranges run parallel to Chengri river. Buorputang range was the extension of hill range from Tripura, possibly, an offshoot of Saichan range. In the north, which was adjacent to Tripura, *Buorputang* range was wider, but as the hill stretched out southward, it became gradually smaller in breadth and lower in height. This *Buorputang* range was, possibly, locally familiar as *Bhawalun* range, the name given by the late emigrants. West of Buorputang was Soldeng range, which was familiar as Dholagiri range, and this range appeared to be an extension of Longtorai range from Tripura State in India. Buorputang was a very popular name among the Mulsam clan of the Halam as a place where their ancestors lived over century. *Chengputang* was an offshoot hill range of Buorputang. Laldova, a Mizo historian from this region, said that the great Lushai Chief from Rivung family clan, whose name was Vanhnuaitanga, established a big village on this hill range in the past. These hill ranges had been very familiar to the Mulsam and Kaizeng clans and undisputed past habitats of these clans.

*Maini Hahng* : Watershed region of Myani river was familiar as *Maini Hahng* among the Tigras, which means *Land of the Purity* in Tripuri or Reang language. According to *Krishnamala*, the chronicle of King Krishna Mamikya, this place was the habitat of the Reang tribe.

*Where the Ganti river originated*

*Dhunde pilgrimage is there.*

*In the east of that place is Myani hills*

*Reang people live at that region.*

(*Krishnamala*)

*Maini Hahng* was also important habitat of the Kapini sub tribe of Halam, which they could not forget. Though Myani river originated from the region which was adjacent to the Indo-Bangladesh international boundary in the east, across the Rashyabari and Bualkhali A.D.C. Villages of Gondacheria Sub Division of Dholai District, its upper watershed region was Buorputang range. The Myani river flows toward the south passing through the length of Khagrachhari District in Chittagang Hill Tracts, and has emptied at Kassalong river. In other word, Myani river was the tributary of Kassalong river. Myani river

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

valley had been the favourite region the hill tribes from Tipperah would migrate in the past. Thus, Hunter stated that the Reang people fled from their own country and took up land on the Myani river in the Chittagang. According to hearsay, this was the place where the Rupini clan was almost annihilated by the King Amar Manikya of Tipperah Kingdom for refusing to pay the oppressive tax. W.W. Hunter stated "*that all Tipperah in Chittagang Hill Tracts have immigrated from Hill Tipperah. Emigration still goes on yearly from the territory of the Raja of Hill Tipperah; and in the year 1872-73 upwards of 2500 Tipperah of Reang clan fled from their own country and took up land on the Myani river in the Chittagang Hill Tracts*". About the migration of hill tribes from the Hill Tipperah Kingdom, Hunter further stated "*according to the Census returns there were, however, in 1872, only 8100 Tipperahs in the Chittagang Hills Tracts. In 1872-73, upwards of 2500 Tipperahs of Reang class fled from their own country, and took up land on the Myani River, in Chittagang Hill Tracts. The Tipperah residing within Hill Tracts consist of four clans, the Puran (i.e. Tipperah), Nawattia (i.e. Noatias), Osuie (i. e. Uchois), and Riang. They all immigrated from the neighbouring state of Hill Tipperah. For the most part they live in the country to the north of the Karnafuli river. The hills bordering on Hill Tipperah are principally inhabited by the Puran (Tipperah) and Nawattia clans.*" The fact of the matter was that Chittagang Hill Tract had been part of Tipperah Kingdom before it was re-occupied by the Arakan Kingdom during the reign of King Amar Manikya of Tipperah. Geographically, *Buopuitang, Duapanthor* and *Maini* watershed areas were contiguous region. Thus, not only the Molsom and Kaipeng, but the Tipras, Reangs, Kolois, Rupini, Rangkhawl, Bongcher, and the Molsom clans lived in these regions as neighbour. The Rupinis and the Kolois tribes, who were the settler in Cachar, migrated in this part of Tipperah kingdom in medieval period. Hilly region of the Myani River bank had been the very familiar destination of many hill tribes of Tipperah kingdom in the past, and was familiar as *Maini Halung*.

***Sajektang or Sajaitang:*** Sajektang range was the extension of Jampui range of Tripura which stretched straight toward the south and ended at Barkal, the District headquarter of Barkal Sub-District (Upozilla). *Sajektang* was the upstream watershed area of Chengri River i.e *Sajai* river. Among the Molsom and Kaipeng, *Sajektang* was familiar as *Sajaitang*. This range was familiar to others as *Barkal range*. Chipui or

### Settlement in Chittagang Hill Tracts

Barkal range was the eastern most hill range in Rangamati District which runs along the western border of Mizoram State of India, and the range was the southern part of Jampui Hills of Tripura. Mizo villages such as Zopai, Thangrang, Lungfian, Chipui etc, were situated on this hill range. About forty miles north from a place called Barkal, the hill range was divided into two separate ranges-one range stretched toward the east entering into Mizoram State in India; and another range extended upto Karnafuli river in the south. The Molsom elders speak about this *Sajekrang* as the habitat of their ancestors. Chengri river i.e. *Sajai* river was formed by combined flow of a number of small streams originating in eastern hilly region of Tripura, particularly, Longtorai range, and flows southwards through Panchari, Khargachari, and Mahalachari, and after crossing Bhuachari range, fell into Kaptai lake. East of the Chengri river was Buarjailang range, and Soldeng (Longtorai) range was in the west. *Sajekrang* or *Sajaitang* said to be the corridor for subsequent movement of the Molsom toward Fokzing and surrounding region in western Mizoram.

**Barnangsi:** This place was located on Soldeng tang i.e. a portion of Longtorai range within Chittagang Hill Tracts, which was familiar as Dhulagiri range in Chittagang Hill Tracts. The Kaipeng would regard *Barnangsi* as the place where their ancestors lived in the past, just after their migration from Surma-Kushiyara valley. According to their oral tradition, they went upto Arakan Yoma; but forced to come back after sometime due to the aggression of new emigrants.

**Dagpantbor:** This region was a famous place familiar with most of the native tribes of Tipperah Kingdom. According to historian Kaiprasanna Sen, the source of Guntli and Khowai rivers was *Ragunandan hills*, easternmost part of Longtorai range, within Chittagang Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. The region, called as *Nana-Gunti Dagpantbor* by the Tipras, was located east of this Ragunandan Hill range. Historian Sen said that this region was the place where the Kings of Tipperah would often travel for hunting. The Koloi regarded this region as the place of their first settlement. The Halam elders would speak among themselves about this place, and praised the place. A small proverb prevalent among the Halam about *Dagpantbor* was like this:-

“*Dagpantbor kaigunai boi nani nani*  
*Jong ampa boi nani Thaw lam kabai nani*”

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

English translation was like this:-

*"In Duapathor no thorn exist,  
No monkey would chatter  
and no dove would coo"*

The proverb said that Duapanthor was the land where no bamboo thorn or dry roots could harm, and where monkey would never chatter in anger and, it was the land where Dove would never coo in melancholic mood. No one would feel sadness in *Duapanthor* because the land has beautiful hills with peaceful environment and abundant green forest suitable for shifting cultivation. The Tipras also felt that Duapanthor was a land of opportunity where anyone could prosper as it had vergin land suitable for shifting cultivation. Thus, the Tipras had this folksong:

*"Duapanthoro de thangnai  
Moso fangsani dingrasa faio  
Mai furasani soi-kuri ser mannai"*

English translation was like this:

*Would you go to Duapanthor  
Where one chilli plant would bear  
one basketful fruits, and  
where small basketful paddy seed gave one  
hundred twenty kilogram paddy"*

The Chittagang Hill Tracts has very close historical connection with Tipperah Kingdom in general and the people in particular. Historian Kaliprasanna Sen maintained that there was a *Devasthan* ( i.e, abode of Gods) in *Nana-Gumti Duopanthor* where human sacrifice used to be offered by the kings of Tipperah Kingdom at the place called *Matai Pukri* (which means God's pond) on Bengali New Year Day in the past. King Danya Manikya of Tipperah restricted the number of human sacrifice in this place to two persons annually. The Mizo historian-Laldova said that "*Matai Pukiri*" pond was situated at the edge of the source of a small stream called *Nunchari*, which was located at the foot of a highland called *Alutila*, which was situated towards twelve miles north of Mohalachari Police Station in Khagrachari District; and the Tipras were the majority in that areas. According to historian Kaliprasanna Sen, there was a royal rest house where the Kings from Tipperah kingdom would take rest, whenever they were at that place. This lake was one of the well known and familiar water bodies in

### Settlement in Chittagang Hill Tracts

Chittagang Hill Tracts. This place was associated with a popular legend concerning white elephant which need not be mentioned here. This place was very familiar to the Hakans and the Liptas as *Duapanthor*, where their ancestors lived on shifting cultivation in the past. There would be few elders from the native tribes in Tripura who were not aware about this place. In fact, *Duapanthor*, *Buorpuhlang*, *Sajatang*, *Miyau Halang*, and *Barnangsb* were the contiguous regions in the northeastern part of Chittagang Hill Tracts. *Duapanthor* was a place, where the Molsoms, Kaipungs, Reangs, Kupinis, Lipras, Noalias and a section of Rangkhawl had intense social intercourse and assimilation. Thus, one could see the existence of *Duanai*, *Singar* and *Langdung* family clans both among the Molsom as well as the Kaipung, *Nokhon* and *Tuison* family clans of the Molsom were said to be from Reang tribe, who were absorbed among the Molsom tribe. The impact of this social intercourse was reflected in extensive use of Kokborok vocabularies (Tripuri language) in the language of the Molsom, Rangkhawl and Kaipung clans. Assimilation between the Molsom and Kaipung sub clans was also obvious.

**Arshi en khua Asa:** According to their oral tradition, in ancient time the Molsom said to have established large settlement i.e. big village which they called it "*Arshi en khua Asa*". There was a traditional account about this legendary ancient village which the Molsom clan of the Halam called it "*Arshi en khua sa*" which means "*Star like beautiful village*". The number of the families of the village said to be numerous; and the houses along the hill range would look like the numerous stars of the sky; and thus, this big settlement looked beautiful. The oral traditional account maintained that if someone travelled from one end of the village with a wet wrapper on his body, it dried up by the time he reached the other end of the village. Thus, it was a big village, possibly, with thousands of families living along the hill range. The oral account maintained that one day a daughter of the village chief disappeared from the house. The village chief ordered his people to find out his daughter in the village. The officials of the chief said to have conducted village census and came to know that members of many households had been disappearing every day in the village. Entire villagers conducted search operation and traced out a big python inside a deep cave which was said to have swallowed one human being everyday from the village. The villagers made a plan to kill the python. They made a big hook and

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

tied at one end of a strong rope. Then a pig was hooked and thrown into the cave, and the villagers laid in wait for the python. Soon the python took the bait. After lots of struggle, the villagers could drag half of its long body which they chopped off with a sharp dao i.e. chopper. The villagers, after killing the gaint python, shared the meat with each household. They also found ornaments and necklaces inside the stomach of slained python. But the villagers gave the head of slained python to a widow as her share. As she did not know the process of dressing the python's head, she kept it inside the cage(called Arribom) of hen which was positioned near the front barandha of her house. At midnight, the widow heard a strange human voice emanating from the cage where the head of python was kept. The human voice was asking her i.e. widow to leave the village before sunrise to escape from the destruction of the village by earthquake. The widow got up from the bed at once at midnight; and went round the village to alert her dear and near ones and others. Before sunrise the villagers left the village. As they left, the village was rocked by the earthquake and entire village went down with terrible sound and big lake was formed at village site. The inhabitants who managed to leave the village before it went down, gathered on the bank of a river which the other Halam tribes called it "Tui-ninu"(river of deep water); and made a rope-way, which was called *Runrui* by the Halams, over that river for crossing. A long rope way stratched from one bank of the river or stream to another bank of the same river or stream for supporting the raft for crossing the stream or river used to be called *Runrui* in Halam language. It is said that villagers used this *Rounrui* for crossing the river with the raft. Many escaped by bamboo raft and moved toward upstream in northward. This oral tradition was prevelant even among the Darlong tribe too, which was narrated by Pu Hnuna Darlong of East Kathalcherra(new) Darlong village.

Where could be the location of this beautiful *Village with Star like houses*; and which river could be *Tuininu* (River of Deep water)? There was a place called *Rulchawm*, about ten kilometers south of *Saitual* town in southern part of Aizawl District in Mizoram. The local Mizo community believed that a gaint python would live at deep cave at that place, and everyday one person used to be kept for its feed. The name of that place said to have derived from that past incident. Many believed that the beautiful village calls *Arshi en Khuo Asa* was lacated at this place.



### Settlement in Chittagang Hill Tracts

On the other hand, there was a legendary lake called *Bagakain Lake* in Bandarban District in Chittagang. *Bagakain Lake*, which was also called *Bago Lake* or *Bogi Lake*, and this lake was located within Ruma Sub-District in the hill District of Bandarban in Chittagang, Bangladesh. It was located at sixteen kilometer from Ruma town to the east on the hill top at an altitude of 1500 to 2000 feet, and covered by forest. This Bagakain lake was 125 ft. deep, and one and half kilometer in circumference which was surrounded by hills on three sides and was open to the eastern side. The wonder of the lake was that sometime the water of the lake would become clean, but sometime the water would turn into turbid. No water plant, hyacinth or fish exist in the lake. There was no outlet or source of water, and the level of water would seldom fluctuate. There was a story prevalent among the hill tribes in Chittagang Hill Tracts, particularly, among the Rawm tribe, about the creation of *Bagakain Lake*. The story was very much similar to the story of the Mobsam about the destruction of beautiful village called *Aeshi or Khaw Asha*. According to legend prevalent among the tribes in Chittagang Hill Tracts, in ancient time there was a big village where the present lake stands now. Number of people living in the village was large and prosperous. But people were unhappy because their domestic animals and children had been disappearing from the village. They began to search the neighbouring hills and jungles, and at last they found out a big cave which was the abode of big serpent. They suspected that this snake must have devoured their missing children and livestock. They made a plan to kill the snake. They made a big hook and tied the end of that big hook with strong rope. They hooked a pig, same say goat, and threw inside the cave. Soon the giant snake took the bait and there was tug of war with the villagers who were waiting for the snake to take the bait. After great struggle, the villagers could drag half of its body out of the cave and killed it. The villagers distributed the meat of the snake among the people, and held feast. They gave the head of the snake to a widow. When she put the head of the snake in the cooking pot for cooking, the head talked to her that its meat would be of strong smell and tasteless; and at last she threw the python head away. At night she was told in her dream that she must leave the village along with her guest before the cock crowed. As soon as she left the place, the village ruckel and went down with a terrible sound and a big lake was formed.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

This story was prevalent among the Bawm, Khumi, and Mru tribes living in Chittagang. Many local people would offer sacrifice and puja in the lake for good harvest. Though the story differs slightly from the Molsom clan, content of the legend was the same. But there was difference in opinion among the scholars. Some scholars from Chittagang said that lake created by the earthquake was *Rainkhyang* lake, not *Bagakain Lake*. In length, *Rainkhyang* lake was about one kilometer, and it has an outlet. From the western direction, two streams have emptied into the lake, and from the eastern corner of the lake one stream exists through which water of that lake drained out. There were lots of fish, and other water creatures lived in *Rainkhyang lake*. It seemed that this legend, which was prevalent among the hill tribes in Chittagang, had been transmitted to the Molsom during their settlement in the past.

**Movement from Chittagang Hill Tracts:** Citing the view of Lehmann, Wolfgang Mey was of the view that following the expedition of the Burmese rulers in Chindwin valley in 17th century to suppress the revolt, there was exodus of population, and the Chin ethnic group comprising the Bawm, Khyang, Khumi, Pangku (Pang) etc. tribes started movement in batches from Chindwin valley; and this movement continued upto 19th century. Earlier, the *Khumis* chiefly inhabited the upper bank of Kaladan river and around its tributaries. The *Khyangs* tribe had been living on the bank of Lemyo river in Arakan, and being driven out by the Chin and Lakher tribes, they moved toward the Chittagang Hill Tracts. The *Bawm* tribe came from Falam-Haka region in northern Chin Hills in 1800 A.D, and the *Bawms* were small break away group who strayed away from larger Chin group; and this break away *Bawm* tribe finally came to Chittagang Hill Tracts. The other tribes such as the *Chakmas* and the *Marmas* i.e, Arakanese (Mogs) started coming in small batches from Myanmar to Chittagang Hill Tracts in 17th century. W.W. Hunter wrote "*the hill tribes living within the country which now forms the Chittagang Hill Tracts had constantly been subjected to raids from the independent tribes living further eastward*". Lt. Gen. Arthur Phayre observed that "*the great art of war among the Arakan hill tribes is, to fall on the enemy by surprise – – they march, four, five, six days' journey, and burst upon the devoted village an hour or two before dawn*". Probably, the frequent raid by the powerful Pawi and allied tribes, particularly, the Bawm, Khyang, Khumi and Pangku from ungoverned territory

### Settlement in Chittagang Hill Tracts

of Chin-Lushai Hills and Arakan forced the Molsora, Kaipeng, Bungcher, Korbong, Koloï, a section of the Rangkhawl and the Rupini clans to move out from the Chittagang Hill Tracts. The hearsay prevalent among the Molsoras and Kaipengs maintained that the Pawis (Lai/Bawm) and allied tribes raided their habitations frequently, and to get rid of this raid and atrocities, they left Chittagang Hill Tracts and again migrated to Hill Tipperah, the kingdom where they came from.

**Settlement in Plain and Hill Tipperah :** Plain Tipperah was part of Tipperah Kingdom in ancient period, though this region passed into the hand of Muslim and subsequently to the British India. This region was administered from its District headquarter-Comilla. Hunter stated that *"the town (i.e. Comilla) contains numerous large and deep tanks, the largest and best being the Dharna Sagar, which was dug by Dharna Narayan Manikya, a Raja of Tipperah who reigned in the first half of the fifteenth century."* In fact there was also a palace constructed by the Rajas of Tipperah Kingdom. The plain Tipperah District with an area of 2,499 square miles was bounded on the north-west by the District of Dacca and Mymensing; on the north east by undivided Sylhet; on the east by the State of Hill Tipperah, on the south by Noakhali; and on the west by the Meghna River, which separated it from Faridpur, Dacca and Mymensingh. Comilla region, which was familiar as Plain Tipperah, formed the part of Tipperah Kingdom commencing from 1240 A.D. Two blocks of Comilla region i.e. Tipperah District, was annexed by the Mughal in 1733 A.D. and became a part of *Chakia Kosarabad*, which subsequently turned into the Estate of Maharaja of Hill Tipperah. Plain Tipperah was a level alluvial plain broken only by the isolated *Lahari hills* about eight kilometers west of Comilla city, which rose to a height of forty to one hundred feet. This hill extended from north to south for a distance of about fifteen kilometers, and about thirty two kilometers in circumference. The average elevation of the range was forty feet above the plain, and ninety feet above the sea. Plain Tipperah was well cultivated and was intersected in all directions by rivers. To the east of the country was undulated, and runs into the series of low forest clad hills which formed the most westerly of the Hill Tipperah ranges. Meghna river sweeps past the western border, and Gumti rises in Hill Tipperah, and flows westwards past the city of Comilla, joining the Meghna river above Daulkandi. Titas was the chief river in the north

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

of the District and passed through Brahmanbaria. Part of this plain Tipperah was within *Chakla Rosanabad*. The region called *Chakla Rosanabad* had four compact blocks; one in undivided Sylhet District, two in Tipperah District, and one in Noakhali district, all were in Bangladesh. It adjoined the Tipperah kingdom throughout on the eastern boundary of that region; and they came under the sway of the British India in A.D. 1761. *Chakla Rosanabad* was bounded on the north by Sylhet district, pargana Daudpur and Sarail in Tipperah district; on the west by pargana Bardakhat, Gangamandol, Homnabad, and Kadba, and Lalmai Hills in plain Tipperah; and Amirabad and Bederabad of pargana Noakhali and on the south by Chittagang District; on the east by Hill Tipperah. These pargans were part of Tipperah kingdom before the annexation by the Mughal; but still held by the kingdom on payment of tribute. The British turned these areas as the zamindari (estate) of the Kings of Tipperah. Certain region of Plain Tipperah and *Chakla Rosanabad* was intimately connected to the history of a section of Halam tribe, particularly, the Molsoms, Bongcher, Kaipeng and the Kolois because they had been in the regions, possibly, for several decades. The settlement of the Molsom, Bongcher in plain Tipperah (Comilla) and *Chakla Rosanabad* was reflected in their short folksong they would sing while weeding the jhum land, which was like this-

*Comilla Bazar serang mawh?*

*Rajai back te silrang mawh?*

*Uh ka nu hai hai, Oh; ka pa hai hai;*

English translation was like this-

*Will you go to Comilla?*

*Or will you use torned quilt?*

*Oh my mother hai hai, oh my daddy hai hai.*

After their movement from Chittagang Hill Tracts, the Molsom, Kaipeng, Rangkhawl, Kolois and the Bongcher gradually moved from southern region of Tipperah Kingdom, which was adjacent to Chittagang Hill Tracts. The Kaipeng and Molsom priest, while offering sacrifice, would utter the name of *Muhuri*, *Feni* rivers and *Laogang*, a tributary of Gumti river in Amarpur Sub-Division. *Muhuri* river flows east to westwards along the Belonia Sub-Division in South Tripura District and emptied at *Feni* river. Offering sacrifice in the name *Muhuri*, *Feni* rivers and *Laogancherra* signified that once upon a time they lived along these

### Settlement in Chittagang Hill Tracts

rivers' bank while moving gradually to Hill Tipperah from Chittagang Hill Tracts. The Kaipeng emigrants from Chittagang Hill Tracts said to have set up big village on the top of Baramura range just ten kilometers south of Langpui Molsom village under Killa-Burma ADC Village under Jampuijala R.D. Block, and the village was known as *Rumukhuo*. This village was the biggest and oldest Kaipeng village. The Kaipeng deserted this village due to spread of epidemic disease-Cholera. The second biggest Kaipeng village was *Airukhuo*, which was also familiar now as *Somukhuo*. Both these villages were located at Killa-Burma ADC Village under Jampuijala R.D. Block, near the boundary of Killa R.D. Block of Gumti District. From this *Savva* village, the Kaipeng emigrated to plain Tipperah. The reason of emigration was the fear of the raid by the Lusheis and Kukis. The Kaipeng came back from plain Tipperah and set up a village called *Raokhuo* adjacent to Polkuo village, now in Ompi R.D. Block. Another very old village was located near the Killa R.D. Block headquarter and the name of that place was *Kaipengbaho*. Here the Kaipeng said to have fought the Molsom clan on certain issue. The Kaipengs numbering about six thousand now live around the foot hill of Baramura, mostly under Ompi R.D. Block. In the last decade, some Kaipeng families emigrated to Khedacherra of Damcherra R.D. Block in North Tripura. Further, the Molsom, Bongcher, and Kaipeng called the Belonia market as *Langhuang Bazar* and Sonamura bazaar as *Barmang bazar*, and they said that in the past they settled in these regions. Geographically, Belonia and Sonamura were coterminous with plain Tipperah toward its western boundary. Movement from Belonia to Lalmai Hill in Comilla i.e. plain Tipperah had never been difficult. Therefore, Lalmai hill in Comilla (Plain Tipperah) had been a safest destination from south and southwest regions of Hill Tipperah for escaping from the recurring raids of the new immigrants of hill tribes. Thus, Hunter stated that "*formerly, when raids were frequently made by Kukis upon Hill Tipperah, large numbers of Tipperah used to leave their homes and take refuge under British rule. Many of these fugitives have settled in the District of Tipperah.*" The Tipperahs, Rajbanshis, Kochs, Mekhilis (means Manipuris) and Paharyas (means Hill tribes) were the hill tribes in Plain Tipperah District. About the Tipperahs of Plain Tipperah, W.W. Hunter stated that "*There were 3904 Tipperahs living in six out of the twelve police circles of the District. These people came from the State of Hill Tipperah. They*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*do not mix with Bengali, but live apart by themselves; a large number of them dwell in the Lalmai Hills, where they are able to carry on their own form of cultivation – Many of the Tipperahs found in the District have taken refuge in British territory, in consequence of raids made by Kukis upon their villages in Hill Tipperah".* About the identity of the Paharia tribe of plain Tipperah, Hunter said that it mean "*simply inhabitants of the Hills*", and "*they took shelter under British rule, in consequence of the raids committed on their villages about twenty years ago, when many of their wives and children were carried off*". These "*Pahariyas*" were the Molsom, Kaipeng, Bongcher, and the Kolois from Hill Tipperah, who took shelter in Plain Tipperah region to escape from the raids and atrocities of the Kukis. Otherwise, Tipperah Kingdom with small population, offered tremendous scope for shifting cultivation, and there was no reason for the hill tribes to migrate from this hilly kingdom to plain Tipperah simply in pursuit of shifting cultivation. Thus, about the condition of Hill Tipperah in A.D,1872, Hunter stated that "*the advantages of having practically an unlimited amount of land for jum cultivation somewhat counterbalance the effects of oppressive taxation. Most of the available land was, however, until recently, exposed to constant raids from the Lushais, and never been used. It is, therefore, manifestly the best policy of the Raja to encourage the hill-men in every way, so that they may occupy the immense tracts of land suitable to their wants, now lie waste.*" After the advent of Lusheis, Pawis and allied tribes in the middle of eighteenth century in Lushei and Chittagang Hill Tracts, the Hill tribes who lived in the Hill Tipperah and neighbouring regions became the victim of frequent raids and atrocities. A section of the Molsoms, Kaipeng, Kolois and other hill tribes living in the southern and south eastern part of Hill Tipperah, possibly, became the victim of raids and plunder, and were forced to emigrate in plain Tipperah. But they did not settle there for long period because as the British took decisive action against the inhabitants of Lushei hills, and introduced effective administrative network by creating Lushei Hill District in the last part of nineteenth century, peace and stability was restored in Lushei Hills and also adjoining regions, particularly, Hill Tipperah, Cachar, Syhlet and Chittagang. The Molsom, Kaipeng, Kolois etc, hill tribes, who emigrated to plain Tipperah, came back to Hill Tipperah. Moreover, small upland of Lalmai hill did not facilitate ample scope for shifting cultivation to hill tribes. They came back in Hill Tipperah in the last

### Settlement in Chittagang Hill tracts

part of nineteenth century along the western border of Belonia and Sonamura. The Muhuri river of Belonia was known to the Molsom and Kaipeng as *Lungthang tapai*. Lungthung was the name of sub clan of the Molsom clan. Did the *Lungthang* sub clan of the Molsom settled at this place? The Sonamura Bazar was familiar as *Burung Bazar* in the past, and these names were given by the Molsom and Kaipeng people in the past. Belonia and Sonamura were adjacent to Comilla i.e. headquarter of plain Tipperah. Some old places where the Molsom settled in their return movement to Hill Tipperah from plain Tipperah were *Manohuk* (Mahonbhug), *Maikhar* (near Mahonbhug), *Dobhaga*, *Taisar* (Toksapara), *Ngara* and *Lidai* (in the Indo-Bangla boundary) in Sonamura Sub Division, *Bouryana* (i.e. Bagma) and *Begsbasi* in Udaipur.

## CHAPTER - 11

# PERIOD OF MOVEMENT

**Period of movement :** The Kuki Chin tribes were regarded as Indo-Mongoloid, and their connection with Northeastern region in general and the Tipperah Kingdom in particular had been from ancient period. The Halams were an important branch of Kuki Chin tribes; and Grierson had categorised the Halam as *Old Kuki* tribe. Apart from the *Meitei* of Manipur valley, the Halams were the forerunners in Northeastern region of India. According to Gordon Luce, the *Chins* tribe (i.e. the Kukis of Myanmar) started occupying Chin Hills in Myanmar within the period from fourth century to eighth century. But Prof. D.G.E. Hall, citing the finding of Gordon Luce, stated that the invasion of Myanmar by the Mongol and their victory at Kuangzin in A.D 1283, opened the floodgate for Shan incursion to Myanmar. The Shans descended from the hills to cover both banks of the Irrawaddy, and also drove the Chins out of the Chindwin valley into the western hills i.e, Chin-Lushai Hills. On the other hand, Lehmann was of the view that the *Chins* (*Kukis* in Myanmar) started their settlement in Chin Hills from first century, and he justified this view based on Burmese manuscript where the word "*Chin*" was mentioned which in Burmese language means "*Friend and Companion*". According to C.C. Lowis, (the Superintendent, Ethnographical Survey, Burma), the *Kukis* or *Chins* belonged to Western Tibeto Burman group who first arrived in Myanmar in far off past, much ahead of other Tibeto-Burman ethnic groups such as the Kachin and Burmese. Lowis was of the view that the Kuki-Chin tribes have been in occupation of western upland of Myanmar stretching from Irrawady-Brahmaputra watershed region to Arakan yoma and on the sea-board of the Bay of Bengal (which include Patkoi Bum, Naga Hills, Manipur Hills, Lushei-Chin Hills, Chittagang Hill Tracts and Arakan Hills). If the settlement and movement pattern of different Kuki-Paite-Lushai-Hmar-Lai-Bowm-Halam etc, tribes were analysed, it would reveal the fact that the Halam



### Period of Movement

were the foremost emigrants to Chin-Lushai land. Possibly, they came to Tipperah kingdom(which include present Mizoram and Cachar valley in ancient period) much earlier before the invasion of Burma by the Mongol in 1283 A.D. Possibly, as a consequence of forward movement of other Chin tribe into Chin-Lushai Hills, the ancestors of the Halam started moving out of Chin hills; and within the period of 7<sup>th</sup> century the ancestors of the Halam appeared to have settled in the regions stretching from the Tipaimukh to Surma-Kushiyara valley. It seemed that the ancestors of the Halam were most advanced groups in their migration, possibly, contemporary to the Meitei (Manipuri) of the Manipur in their movement to the northeast India. The Meiteis, according to Grierson, were an important branch of Kuki-Chin tribes although they have become thoroughly subjected to Hinduism, and Meiteis were mentioned in Shan chronicles as early as 777 A.D. Since they belonged to Kuki-Chin ethnic group, there was considerable connection between the language of the Meitei and the Halam or other Kuki-Chin tribes. Possibly, during the period of migration, the Meitei moved towards Manipur valley and the ancestors of the Halam settled in the hilly region of erstwhile Lushai Hills, Cachar and Surma valley, and all these regions were part of Tipperah Kingdom in ancient period. The oral tradition prevalent among the elders of the Halams was that they came to Tipperah kingdom during the reign of King *Daugupha* alias *Adi Dharmopha*(c.635-675 A.D.) The inscription of two copper plates pertaining to land grant given to the Vedic Brahmins by the King of Tipperah in seventh century and twelfth century respectively substantiated this fact. While writing "*The Background of Assamese Culture*" R.M. Nath, citing a Tibetan book of Lama Taranath, namely, *Pog-ösam-bjon-bjan*, stated that being molested by the Turks in central and northern India, many Buddhists migrated towards the east and found a safe shelter in the land of Kukis. The land of Kukis was comprised of a portion of undivided Cachar and Tipperah, and the region was named as *Niu-gata* which was inhabited by Buddhists and ruled by Sundara-Hachi, a scion of the Buddhist royal family of Chittagang in ancient period. The ruling dynasty of the *Tipras* moved from Surma-Kushiyara valley to Rangamat (now Ldaipur) in Hill Tipperah in thirteenth century only, and before that period the *Tipras* were in Surma-Kushiyara valley, where they met the *Halams*. Historical evidence

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

revealed the facts that the *Tipras* and the *Halams* were together in Surma-Kushiyara valley upto thirteenth century. According to Prof. Amulyacharan Choudhury, the Halams came to Tipperah kingdom during the reign of King Dungurpha alias Adi Dharmapha, which corroborated the oral tradition of the Halams.

**Copper plate inscription :** There were two historical evidences which threw a light on this matter. One of these historical materials was the copper plate inscription of Tipperah King Dungurpha alias Adi Dharmapha. The inscription of the copper plate as depicted by Raghunandan Bhattacharjee in his "*Baidiksombidini*" in 16<sup>th</sup> century in Sanskrit was as follows:

*Tripura porbatadhis Sri Sri Juktadi Dharmapa  
Somagyang dotta pattrancha Maithileshu tapshishu,  
Batso bat-syath Bharatraj krisna-treya porasorah  
Sri Nanda Nando Gobinda Sripati Purushuttoma.  
Pratichamuktarasanchya Bokroga Krushiyanadi.  
Dakhinsancho Purbbosang Hangkala Kuki-ka puri,  
Etodhmodhyang sososyancha Tenguri Kuki korshitan.,  
Prolovyia dottang todbhuming tesu panchotapashishu,  
Kokoronthe roboi suklopokhe pnychadashi-dine.  
Tripura Chandra banab-de prodotta dotta patrika,*

(Rajmala 1<sup>st</sup> volume by Kaliprasanna Sen)

The translation in English was like this "*Tripura Mountain King Sri Sri Swadharmapha allowed to give this land grant to Mithila Brahmins. Those Brahmins' are Sri Nanda, Ananda, Gobinda, Sripati & Purusuttam. In the West and North zig-zag flowing Krushiara (kushiara) river; in the south & east is Hangkala Kukis' habitation. Within these four boundaries is the land cultivated by Tenguri Kukis. On auspicious fullmoon day on 51<sup>st</sup> (641 A.D) Tripura Era land grant is given (to Vadic Bhamin)*". The Tripura Era engraved in the copper plat had been deciphered or determined by Rai Saheb Konoklal Barua and Nalinikanta Bhatashil. Thus, Tripura Era 51<sup>st</sup> corresponds to AD 641, and this fact has been agreed by the scholars. The fact of the matter was that in 638 A.D, the King of Mithila, whose name was Balabhadra or Harshabardhana (Shiladitya), conducted special Vedic sacrifice in order to relinquish Buddhism publicly and invited many kings, including the king Dunghurpha alias Adi Dharmapha of Tipperah kingdom. King Adi Dharmapha relinquished

### Period of Movement

the Buddhism; and the Hindu saints named him *Adhi Dharmapha* for giving up the Buddhist religion. During his reign sever drought and famine occurred in Tipperah Kingdom, and King Adhi Dharmapha wanted to perform Vedic sacrifice i.e. *Yajna* in order to ward off drought in his kingdom. At that time there was no Vedic Brahmin who was well conversant with the ritual of Vedic Sacrifice, either in Tipperah Kingdom or in neighbouring Kamarupa kingdom. Adhi Dharmapha wrote to Balabhadra Singha i.e. Harshabardhana, the emperor in Central India, for sending Vedic Brahmins from his kingdom to Tipperah for conducting Vedic sacrifice. Accordingly, King Harshabardhana sent five Vedic Brahmins, whose names were *Sri Amunia, Sri Nanda, Bhuvahy, Sripathi and Parashurama*. According to historian Kaliprasanna Sen, these five Vedic Brahmanas performed Vedic *Jyotna* (sacrifice) at Mangalpur village of Bhanugach. Bhanugach region was situated in Bangladesh in the east of Balishira range, towards twelve kilometers north of present Kamalpur town in Dhalai District in India. This region was situated west of Samsonnagar and east of Srimongol. Bhanugach region was under Maulvi Bazar District in Bangladesh, twelve kilometers away from Kamalpur town across the Indo-Bangladesh international border in Dhalai District of Tripura. In the past, this region had been part of Tipperah Kingdom, and was familiar as *Mamral*, which means *Maru River Bank*. After the conduct of the Vedic sacrifice, those five Vedic Brahmins wanted to return to their country; but as there was no Vedic Brahmins in Tipperah Kingdom, King Adhi Dharmapha requested them to settle in his kingdom. As they agreed to settle in Tipperah Kingdom, King Adhi Dharmapha granted land to the five Vedic Brahmins at the place which in subsequent period became known as *Panchakhande*, which was situated in erstwhile Karimganj subdivision in undivided Sylhet, now in Bangladesh. The place was called *Panchakhandia*, which means *Five Plots of land*, and these five plots of land was given to five Vedic Brahmins. In the Northwestern part of *Panchakhande* was bounded by Kushiara River; in the Southeast was the habitation of *Trangkie Kulis*. In the middle of this boundary, the land was cultivated by *Tangari Kulis*. According to historian Kaliprasanna Sen, Vedic sacrifice i.e. *Jyotna* was conducted at Mangalpur village under Bhanugach Pargana because the local population still talked about the event as folklore, and traces of the *Thongkut* was still visible. Historian Pandit Achutyacharan

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Choudhury two maintained that, five Vedic Brahmanas from Mithila in central India were made to settle at *Panchakhanda* in erstwhile Karimganj Sub Division. Before the arrival of Vedic Brahmanas, *Tenguri kukis* were the inhabitants of this place; and since *Panchakhanda* was inhabited by the *Tenguri kukis*, the place was familiar among the local inhabitants as *Tengori*. This important historical event was also narrated in another book named *Vaidiki Purabritto*, which was composed by *Jogodananda* in medieval period. The date of this historical event has been corroborated by the fact that another copper plate grant dated 656 A.D. by emperor Baskar Varman of Kamarupa to Nagara Brahmins had also been found at Nidhanpur in Karimganj, in undivided Sylhet, near *Panchakhanda*. Professor K.M. Gupta was of the view that the inscriptions was related to the settlement of a big batch of Brahmins in and around *Panchakhanda* in Sylhet in about 500 A.D. and onwards. In ancient period, the whole of Khasi and Jaintia hills, the present North Sylhet and Sunamganj, and a portion of the present Maulvibazar and Habiganj Districts, were under the rule of Jaintia, and the Jaintia kingdom was still considered to be part of the Kamarupa empire, and was called *Khanda-Kamarupa*. Many Brahmins of Kamarupa came over and settled in this area. But the Mlechha dynasty of Kamarupa dethroned the Varman dynasty in the last part of seven century. The importance of this historical facts has several dimension. The inscription of the copper plate as depicted by Raghunandan Bhattacharjee in his "*Baidiksombidini*" in 16<sup>th</sup> century revealed the fact that the *Kukis* were in occupation of the area where land was given to the five Vedic Brahmins, and which was part of Tipperah Kingdom before the seventh century. The *Kukis* mentioned in the copper plate were none other than the Halams because the Lusheis, Thadous, Pawis, Raltes, and other Kuki-Chin tribes had not been in this region at that point of time. About the actual identity of the *Hangkla Kukis* that inhabited in the east of *Panchakhanda*, it was certain that they were the *Hrangkhowl* clan of the Halam. On the other hand, the inhabitants to the south of *Panchakhanda* were the *Tenguri Kukis*. The *Tenguri kukis* said to have been cultivating jhum land all around the place called *Panchakhanda*. This *Tenguri Kukis* could be the *Thangur Khoreng*, a sub clan of Darnei clan of the *Biate* tribe. They were *Old Kuki* tribes, who came to Tipperah kingdom in ancient period. The region called *Panchakhanda* was situated in between the Surma and Kushiya

### Period of Movement

rivers. The ancestors of the Halams appeared to have been living in seventh century on the bank of Surma and Kushiyara rivers; and both rivers were distributaries of the Barak river, which flow right in the middle of Sylhet region. Further, there was another historical evidence based on the copper plate of A.D.1195, which was related to land grant given to an influential Brahmin whose name was Nidhipati by the King Dharmadhar of Tipperah. Nidhipati descended from one of the five original immigrants from Kaunoj in central India. The land given to Nidhipati as grant was situated at Itta prganna in Sylhet. The copper plate inscription of 1195 A.D in Sanskrit as depicted by Kaliprasanna Sen read like this :-

*Tripura Paribhatullish Sri Sri Jakte Suvadharna-pla,  
Sungwang pataon djo monthihya bupayai na,  
Nidhipati bupaya insya gatra-ya abhinava,  
Prachayang Longlai Kuki-sihantong prachayong Gopala nadi,  
Chaudmasingha Tripuras ja daktinsangparan jakona,  
Krushinuatadyuttarsyang pragatthe sthonaucha bi,  
Atanacharya sosoyasa ja Maudeni proledhani,  
So pi pradotia Indrautid vaidicaya Agnishine,  
Sukto pakkha tritihya yang dare asoyote rotoi,  
Chotacasthi sotob-datu Tripurae dotto purtrina"*

The meaning of this inscription was like this "Mountain King of Tipperah Sri Sri Suvadharna Pla granted land to Nidhipati, a saint from Mittala, within the four corner of the following boundaries. In the east is the land of Longlai Kuki, in the west is Gopala River, in the south is the forest land of Tripura's lower dynasty and in the north is Krushiyara (Kushiyara) river and the donated land. In the middle is paddy land just on the bank of Manu river is granted by copper plate inscription to the Saint in the month of Baisakh (Bengali month) on third days of the fullmoon in 694 Tripuravaha (Tripura Era) (which corresponded to 1194 AD)." According to historian Kaliprasanna Sen, the capital of King Dharmadhar was situated near present Kailashahar town on the bank of Manu river, and the ruin of royal palace was said to be covered by jungle. Since the palace was situated on the bank of Manu river; with the passage of time the course of Manu river has changed and shifted away from the palace site. The south and eastern side of the palace was surrounded by deep water bodies/ i.e,old ponds, which now have turned into artificial water bodies.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

However, these water bodies said to have been silted. Starting from southern end of the ruined of the palace a wide road stretched toward the west which would lead upto the place called *Hakaluki Haor*; and there were two mounds on both side of that road which were familiar among the local inhabitants as "*Kaman Dagar Jan*", which means canon firing mound. During the reign of King Dharmadhar alias Swadharmapha (1160-1225 A.D), the 17<sup>th</sup> king of Tipperah Kingdom, a Vedic Brahmin whose name was Niddipati, exercised lot of influence in the royal court. As desired by the King Dharmadhar alias Swadharmapha, Ndhupati conducted magnificent Vedic sacrifice in Ita pargana in Sylhet, now in Bangladesh. King Dharmadhar was so much enchanted by such magnificent sacrificial performance of the pandit Nidhipati that he gave huge area of land as free grant. King Dhamadhar became very popular among the Brahmins. So they bestowed on him the title as *Swadharmapha*. The inscription of copper plate mentioned *Longlai kukis* as the tribe who lived east of the land given to the Vedic Brahmin-Niddipati by King Swadharmapha or Dharmadhar of Tipperah. *Longlai kuki* were none other than the *Langkai* clan of the Halam tribe. The significance of this copper plate was that it served as the evidence on the continuous settlement of the Halams at Surma-Kushiyara valleys from 641 A.D, i.e. the period of the issue of earlier copper plate, upto the period of the grant of second copper plate i.e. A. D, 1195. About these two copper plates, Sir Edward Gait wrote that "*the inscriptions of two copper plates recorded the grant of land to Brahmanas*". The word *Longlai* was used in the folksong of the Halam to express respect and honour to the elder, who was closed to someone. *Mama Longlai, Kapu Longlai* were the words used for addressing the elders for showing due honour in the folksong. The copper plate inscription mentioned *Longlai* as the land of *Langkai Kukis*. There was a hill range just across the Indo-Bangladesh border northeast of Kailashahar town within Bangladesh, and this hill range was called *Longla or Longlai Hill*. This Longlai range was situated on the west of Adom Ail range. It was about fourteen kilometers in length, and the shape of the range was like a hump on the shoulder of a bull. The highest peak of this hill range was about 1100 ft. In the east of this range was Patharia range and in the west was the region of Longlai plain. This range was an extension of Belkum pahar (Unakoti range), which divided the Kailashahar and

### Period of Movement

Dharmanagar in Tripura. Thus, in term of physical geography, *Langkai* region was intimately connected to Hill Tipperah, the region derived its name from the name of its earliest inhabitants, the *Langkai* clan of the Halam tribe. Further, during the reign of king Dharmadhar, his friend Chitra Singha, a prince of Mogadha, left his kingdom on account of internal disturbance and settled in his kingdom. Rajah Dharmadhar gave him a small area on the border of present Tripura and south Sylhet in the south east corner of Adam Ail and Du Ail hills. The Kukis were the subject of Prince Chitra Singha in his new kingdom founded on the land given by his friend King Dharmadhar of Tipperah. The kingdom extended over the hill area from Karimganj upto a portion of present Mizoram and the capital was Kanakpur. His son Konok Singha succeeded his father; and his son Pratap Singha established a town Pratapgarh on the hills of Karimganj. Konok Singha's daughter Supriya married to the prince of Sylhet. The Kuki subjects of Chitra Singha were none other than the Halams because there was no other Kuki Chin tribe living in that region during that period. The two copper plates threw a light about the period and places of settlement of the ancestors of the Halams. The copper plate issued during the reign of King Dharmadhar and subsequent historical development revealed the settlement of the *Langkai*, one of the clans of the Halam, in Sylhet and Hill Tipperah in twelfth century. Thus, there was historical evidence on the settlement of the ancestors of the Halam commencing from the seventh century to twelfth century in undivided Tipperah Kingdom (which include present Mizoram, a portion of Sylhet, Cachar, Comilla and Chitagang).

It seemed that dispersal of different clans of the Halam started from Surma-Kushiyara region to different direction with the movement of the ruling house of Iipras from Barak Valley to Hill Tipperah. This was the reason that most of the clans of the Halam tribe said that they came to Hill Tipperah alongwith the Kings of Tipperah kingdom. It was mentioned in preceding Chapter that one group comprising the Chorei, Ranglong, Langkai, the Sakachep, Thangachep, Nabin(Dap), and Marchafang clans moved towards the Manipur and the other group consisting of the Kaipeng, Molsom, Bongcher and Saihmar moved towards Chitagang Hill Tract traversing the Marchek, Jampui, Sakhan and Langtorai hill ranges. The Bowng, possibly, trailed behind the Molsom and the Kaipeng. Possibly, this movement by a section of

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Halam tribe to Manipur and another group to Chittagang and undivided Hill Tipperah took place within the period from thirteenth to fifteenth century. The Halam who went to Manipur had to come back in Tipaimukh region, and thereafter, they fanned out to hilly regions of present northern Mizoram, Barak-Surma valley and North Cachar Hills (Dima Hasao), and northern part of Hill Tipperah. This movement, possibly, took place commencing from the fifteenth century to eighteenth century. Thus, the first volume of *Rajmala*, the royal chronicle of Tipperah, written by pandit Baneswar and Sukreswar in A.D 1409, mentioned the *Ranglong* clan of the Halams as inhabitants of Barak Valley. It also mentioned the *Kaipeng* and *Langkai* clans as the subject of Tipperah kingdom who accompanied the Tripur king for the conquest of Rangamati (present Udaipur). Thus, the Halams were indigenous tribe of Tipperah kingdom from ancient period. Prince Sumendra Chandra DebBarman, Nayab Dewan of independent Tipperah Kingdom too, held the same view that the Halams were the indigenous tribe of Tipperah Kingdom. An important historical event occurred during the reign of King Bijay Manikya(1528-1563 A.D.) of Tipperah in sixteenth century. King Bijay Manikya summoned the chiefs of *Sakachep* and *Thangachep* clans of the Halams living in Cachar in the capital, Rangamati, and made them swear not to rebel against the ruling house of Tipperah Kingdom in future. He gave them bronze idol of tiger and elephant with Sanskrit slokas inscribed as symbol of that oath. This event has been mentioned in detail in subsequent Chapter. According to Ahom manuscript, during the travel of two Ahom envoys, namely-Ratna Kandali and Arjun Das Baisnab, were sent by Swargadev Rudra Singha(1696-1714 A.D.) to the capital of Tripura kingdom, Udaipur, which took place during the reign of King Ratna Manikya(1685-1712 A.D.) and Mohendra Manikya(1712-1713), between 1711 and 1714 A.D. The two Ahom envoys saw the Halam Kuki inhabitants on their way in Barak valley. They recorded what they saw on the way to the capital of Tipperah. On the way they passed through Hidomba (Cachar) kingdom and reached the mouth of Rupini river, which formed the common boundary between Hidomba (Cachar) and Tripura kingdoms. After travelling three days from the mouth of Rupini river, they arrived at a place called *Rangrung* (called Porbot Ranglong by the Halams) which fell under Tripura kingdom.



### Period of Movement

According to their description, the *Kukis* lived from the place called Rangrung along the hill ranges situated on both bank of Barak river, and saw the Kukis carrying weapons such as arrow, bow, shield and spear. They saw one Halam chief called *Halam-sa*, and other subordinate officials such as one *Galim* (Kalim), one *Gabar*, one *Chapia* and one *Doloi* and all of them worked under the chief called *Halam-sa*. There was one *Leskar* appointed by the King of Tipperah, who was posted in that place and got transferred from time to time with replacement. The envoys saw that Halam Kukis did not eat the beef. They would present horse, gold, ivory, mithun etc. to the King of Tipperah as tribute. The Kukis had been identified by the Ahom envoys as Rangrungias (Ranglong) and Rupinis-both belonged to the clans of the Halam. The Ahom envoys travelled by raft along the Deo river course upto the confluence of Mamu and Deo rivers at Fatikroy. The envoys saw only the Halam Kukis living in the regions stretching from the Cachar to Fatikroy of present Kamarghat Sub Division. Further, when King Indra Manikya (1744-1745 A.D.) was dethroned by Samsher Gazi, a Mohammedan warlord of Bengal, Prince Krishnamoni (the brother of dethroned King Indra Manikya) went to exile among the Halam subject in Hailakandi, Patharkandi and Cachar in present Assam State. He lived among the Sakachep, Thungachep, Bowng, Chorei, Korbong, Rangkhowl, Saihmar and Ranglong clans of the Halam. Available historical materials provided the evidence that the region stretching from the Tipaimukh of south-west Manipur, present north and southwest part of Mizoram, northeast of Hill Tipperah and Barak-Surma valley had been the habitats of the ancestors of a section of the Halam from the period ancient to the last part of eighteenth century. However, with the arrival of the new emigrants, particularly, the Lusheis and allied tribes in erstwhile Lushei Hill, many Halam clans started moving out from those regions to Sylhet and its adjoining hilly regions of Hill Tipperah, N.C. Hills (Dima Hasao), Jaintia Hills, Karbi Anglong and even in Nagaland; and this exodus took place from the beginning of eighteenth century. The Molsom, Kaipeng, Bongcher, Saihmar, Rupini and Koloi etc. too, left the Chittagang Hill tracts in the last part of eighteenth century with the arrival of new hill tribe emigrants, particularly, the Bownzo (Pawi), Khilyang, Lushei, and Lakher (Mara), etc.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**General causes of movement :** Migration of population has been an important aspect of human civilisation from ancient period. The common causes of migration from ancient period has been for two reasons-(a) due to natural calamities such as famine, starvation, earthquake, and flood etc. and (b) man made calamities such as war and repression etc. However, some tribes had been nomadic and would love to migrate to other places frequently. As regard to Kuki Chin tribes in general and the Halams in particulars the causes of migration might be both. The ancestors of the Kuki Chin tribes said to have come from central China. It would be difficult to speculate on the exact causes of their migration in ancient period. In ancient period, the ancestors of Tibeto-Burmans were said to be highlanders who lived on herding the sheeps, and led semi-nomadic life. In ancient period many tribes and ethnic groups were evicted due to internal turmoil in China, and various ethnic groups such as Tai or Shan, Tibeto-Burman and Austric etc had been migrating toward Southeast Asia, and many of them found safe haven in Myanmar, North-East India and Indo-China region. The Tai or Shans were the last emigrants. The Kuki Chin Lushei tribes were hard pressed from this ethnic group, particularly, after the invasion of Myanmar by the Mongol in thirteenth century. In consequence of this forward movement of the Tai in Myanmar, the Kuki Chin Lushai tribes were driving each other northward, and many small and weak tribes had to migrate in safer region in North-east India. The Kachin had driven out the Chins, in their turn the Chins drove the Lakher (Maras), the Maras in their turn drove the Lusheis from South Lushei Hills, in turn the Lushei evicted the Thado kukis from Lushei Hills and forced them to move into Manipur and Cachar. The Lusheis too, under the Sailo Chieftainship, drove out the Hmar and other Old Kuki tribes such as the Kom, Anal, Chiru, Aimol, Lamgang, Koireng etc, and forced them to migrate from Lushei Hill to Manipur. The Halams were no exception, who were forced to migrate from Tipaimuth region, North Lushei Hills towards the hilly regions in Cachar, Hailakandi, Patharkandi and Karimganj, Syhlet and from Chittagang Hill Tracts to Hill Tipperah. Thus, the Lushei and other new comers appeared to have driven out all Old Kuki Chin tribes from the present Mizoram in eighteenth century onward. But there was also other reason for migration, and in this regard, the view of Shakespear was noteworthy. About the reason of migration of Old Kuki tribes in

### Period of Movement

Manipur, Col. Shakespear stated that *"what the cause of this move was it is impossible to say. Probably quarrels with their neighbours, coupled with a desire for better land, combined to cause exodus, and the movement, once started, had to continue till the clans found a haven of rest in Manipur, for they were small, weak communities, at the mercy of the stronger clans, through whose land they passed"*. The same might be the reason which forced the ancestors of the Halams to leave Chin-Lushai Hills, possibly, not for the dearth of jhum land alone because Lushai Hills was vast region of hill tracts covered by green and dense tropical forest. However, the other reasons of migration could be due to continuous raid and atrocities by other Kuki Chin tribes from eastern region i.e. Chin Hills. Vast Chin-Lushai Hill tracts covered with thick rainforest all around the hill ranges was supposed to facilitate adequate space for shifting cultivation. Therefore, the dearth of jhum land could not be the sole reason for migration of the ancestors of Halam. Further, Shakespear observed saying that the *"Khasiang (Old Kukis) clans have little power of cohesion, and they naturally gave way at once before the well organized Lushais, and fled North and Northwest direction into Cachar and Manipur, passing through the territory of the Thado tribe and suffering considerably at their hand."* The Halams had no despotic Chiefs who could act independently as that of the Lushais, Pawls, Thados and Dailongs etc, who could unite them to withstand the adversaries. Living under subjugation over centuries in Tipperah kingdom, the able persons who were capable of fighting used to be always at disposal of the King in the capital. This situation left the Halam villages weak and defenceless. Thus, one of the important reasons for migration was due to frequent raid, killing and atrocities committed by their kinsmen living in the east. It was common phenomena among the Kuki Chin Lushai tribes to travel a week by the raiding parties to commit raid, murder and atrocities on the far flung villages of weaker tribes. After committing murder and raid, they would carry off men, women and children for slavery. The Kuki Chin tribes as a whole were feuding and raiding tribes. Possibly, the ancestors of the Halam were not in peace in erstwhile Chin-Lushai Hills. Possibly, frequently they were subjected to killing and destruction by eastern tribes, which forced them to migrate. Thus, Lt. Arthur Phayre stated that *"the great art of war among... hill tribes is to fall on the enemy by surprise. If they are discovered before reaching a village of attack, they effect a retreat. An open advance in*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*day-light is utterly inconsistent with their idea of warfare. Before starting on an expedition, they send trusted spies to ascertain the best mode of approach; numerous are the feasts and ceremonies practised to propitiate the spirits of the mountain; then they march, four, five, or six days' journey, and burst upon the devoted village an hour or two before dawn. These attacks are sometime made through revenge, the consequence of feuds existing for many years; but generally the great object is to take prisoners who may be made slaves, women and children, therefore, are captured; the men are slaughtered without mercy; they would be to troublesome to keep. The prisoners are sold from tribe to tribe." Hill tribes as a whole were revengeful, and intolarent toward their opponents. Thus, Phare further wrote stating that "different clans attack each other; there is a feeling of jealousy between the same tribe living upon different streams". If a particular hill tribe was unable to withstand the assult by the opponent, they would rather migrate to distant places. Possibly, the ancestors of Halam faced the same situation. The Kaipengs have the small poem about their migration. It said that they left Rili-Champhai region due to inter tribal rivalry:-*

*"Hnam le hnam in-doi in  
Sakram tieng kin pan ta".*

The English translation was like this-

*"Due to war among different clans  
We moved toward the north"*

The ancestors of the Halam were on the move and did not stay long period any where in hilly and dense tropical forest. Thus, the ancestors of Halams and other allied Old Kuki tribes were moving from one place to another place in this vast, wild and mountainous region of Lushei Hills in search of better land to settle with secure livelihood. Their wandering in wilderness in Chin- Lushei Hills in the past ages was being remembered in Halams' folksong, which was like this :-

*Ka-chin ulien Sak-kol ramah ngai,  
Anvangkhuo kara kam-keiram,  
Puisai lam lien akonga anvazui so e e e,  
Antak muolsang an vanpalso veltung inrinin,  
Eichun sirsam muloi ram-muala  
Eizu sirsam vangkhuo ah,  
Tanga Juk siel le Ngal lengna tang,  
Leite kalchoi tho in,*

### Period of Movement

*Ramrot bala inaci in.*  
*Kachin ulien ngai an insoak so e e e,*  
*Arae-aei so ahvade sernei.*  
*Kapzang thal le saili le phokei*  
*Arae-ro-so tanganga khangler,*  
*Kanket-ran wangkhae ulia*  
*Arae sie ruana targa so e e e,*  
*Arae an ngem so zan som in buha ringin,*  
*Arae rick so roak rick song.*  
*Arae kherso sorpiel ah ramrik.*  
*Kachin ulien sak-hal ruana ngai so e e e.*

English translation of this folksong was like this:-

*My Chin elders from upland Myanmar*  
*knowing landward they came to*  
*jungle land which is full of tigers,*  
*and travelled along the paths where*  
*big elephants roam,*  
*wearing the clothes round the loins*  
*they walked on difficult high land,*  
*They are in the land not seen by their*  
*ancestral mothers, and not walked*  
*by their forefathers.*  
*They walked through rough paths*  
*to unknown places where wild stag,*  
*deer, wilder, roamed about in the hills,*  
*My elder Chins from Myanmar crawl*  
*like squirrel. Leeches were clinging on*  
*their bodies like bracelets,*  
*Firefly became their foot light*  
*for my elder Chins from Myanmar.*  
*Carrying long bow, prickly arrow, shield*  
*by my Chin elders from Myanmar,*  
*They crossed over deep gorges by walking*  
*over the fallen uprooted tree,*  
*they arrived at unknown and unseen new land*  
*where hills were the place for hunting,*  
*robbing and killing.*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Where hill ranges stretched out  
like the branches of bamboos in the hill,  
My Chin elders from Myanmar rested ten days  
eating on cooked rice;  
slept ten days on open air not minding dew,  
See! My Chin elders are marking  
the boundary(in new land they arrived at).*

The ancestors of Halams had been on the move to northward from Chin-Lushei Hills; and this folksong portrayed the hardship confronted by their ancestors in the movement from Chin-Lushai Hills toward Barak Valley. The Thangachep, Sakachep, Ranglong, Dap, Marchafang, Chorei, Ranglong and Langkai clans, have a tradition about *Thenzawl*, *Vantong waterfall*, and *Mamrong Hills*. There was also folksong in which *Lunglei* used to be prized as the source of *Lunglei vartui*, which means *crystal clear water of Lunglei*; and this signified their settlement in and around the place in Lunglei district in the past.



## CHAPTER - 12

# THE HALAM AND TIPPERAH KINGDOM

The Tipras or Tripuris belonged to a branch of larger Bodo and Dimasa-Kachari tribe. They regarded *Subrai* as supreme God which subsequently got the Sanskritised identity as Lord Siva. The identity of *Subrai Raja* could be traced in the mythology of Dimasa Kacharis. According to mythology of Dimasa Kacharis, *Bangla Raja* (earthquake God) had six sons, and *Subrai Raja* was one of the six sons of *Bangla Raja*. The Tipras regarded this *Subrai Raja* as their ancestral God. *Sibrai* of the Dimasa was the *Subrai* of the Tipras. The Tipras in general and the rulers of Tipperah kingdom in particular were the kinsmen of Bodo-Kachari tribe. In the census in 1881, out of nineteen tribes, the Tipras or Tripuri tribes were also enumerated as the branch of Kachari tribe. In ancient period, the Tipras were in Bramaputra valley and Tribeg was their capital situated on the bank of Kapili river, a tributary of Brahmaputra river. Kapili river originated at Jayantia Hills and flows through the Noagang district in Assam. The fact of the matter was that the Kacharis once ruled entire Brahmaputra valley and Dimapur was their capital from 835 A.D. to 1536 A.D. Some of their celebrated kings were Virochana, Vorahi, Bicharpatipha, Vikramaditya-pha, Mohamoni-pha, Mani-pha, Lada-pha, Khora-pha, and Dersong-pha etc. It was noteworthy that the names of Kachari kings were suffixed with the word *Pha*. Tipperah kingdom was also an ancient kingdom; and even in Shan chronicle Tipperah kingdom was mentioned as early as back in A.D. 777. Tipperah was ruled by the kings whose names were suffixed with the word '*Pha*', as those of Kachari kings. Thus, there were similarities of names of the kings of Tipperah kingdom with the names of Kachari kings in that the word "*Pha*" suffixed the name of their kings. Adhi Dharmapha, Sengthumpha, Khichungpha, Dungurpha, Jujarpha, Dangorpha were some celebrated kings of Tipperah kingdom in ancient period whose names were suffixed with the word '*Pha*'. Thus, similarity



### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

in the pattern of the name of the kings of Kachari and the kings of Tipperah kingdom could be observed. This fact brought out the relationship between the *Kacharis* and *Tipras*. William Wilson Hunter wrote that "*the Kacharis were originally a hill tribe, their home being apparently among the hills north of Brahmputra*". Captain Fisher, the first Superintendent of the District of Cachar, who took great pain in ascertaining the early history of the race, was of the opinion that "*this rude tribe gradually acquired an empire over Assam, Sylhet, Maimansingh, and the valleys to the east of the Brahmputra, their original seat being at Kamrup; and that their rule ultimately embraced everything from Kamrup down to the sea. They built brick cities; and it is supposed that the Tipperah Raja was a younger son of the house, the original empire being divided into a northern and southern part*". In a note called "*Tripura Past and Present*", K.D. Menon and Dr. J.C. Banerjee, citing Kailash Chandra Singha, were of the view that in ancient times there was a powerful dynasty of the Shan race in southern Myanmar, and the kingdom was known as *Tung* and the capital was *Maguang*. A clan of this dynasty said to have set up a kingdom in *Kamarupa* (Assam). The rulers of this kingdom used the title "*pha*" after their names. Once the local tribal inhabitants rose against their king in rebellion and made him flee the country. While the eldest son of the deposed king founded a kingdom in the *Naga Hills* (ancient *Hiramba*), the younger son said to have founded another kingdom in *North Cachar*. The notion was that the second kingdom founded by the younger brother came to be known as *Tripura*. Quite possible that initially this kingdom was contiguous with *Hiramba* but gradually extended to the south in the *barak valley* and the east. All the rulers of *Tripura*, prior to King *Ratnapha* i.e. *Rama Manikya*, used the title *pha*. Also they held the view that probably the ruling family of *Tripura* descended from the ancient *Shan* dynasty of northern Myanmar, though the population belong to *Tibeto-Burman* ethnic group. However, the composer of *Rajmala*, the chronicle of the royal house of *Tipperah*, attempted to build linkage of the royal dynasty of *Tipperah* kingdom with king *Judisthira* of *Mahabharata*, the great epic of *India*. The *Halam*s had historical relationship with *Tipperah* kingdom for long period, and had been deeply involved in the establishment, expansion and protection of this kingdom. Hearsay abound about the relationship of the *Halam*s with the rulers of this kingdom.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Evolution of Tipperah kingdom and the Halams :** For understanding the relationship of the Halams with the rulers of Tipperah kingdom, it was essential to know as to what Tipperah kingdom was in term of geographical area in those days; because larger part of the territory of erstwhile Tipperah kingdom has now been integrated to neighbouring States of Assam and Mizoram, and same regions have now become the part of Bangladesh, but the Halams would live exactly in those excluded areas in the past ages. In fact, erstwhile Tipperah kingdom was very different from today's Tripura in term of geographical area and demography. Erstwhile Tipperah kingdom was comparable with an empire in term of its geographical area. According to *Rajmala*, the royal chronicle of Tipperah, the boundaries of the kingdom in ancient period was between the river Brahmaputra in the north and Arakan in the south; Manipur in the Northeast and river Meghna in the south west (now in Bangladesh) near Dhaka. It was not possible to define the limits of the ancient kingdom of Tipperah at any particulars of time. But it was reasonable to suggest that at various times, throughout the course of history the ancient kings of Tipperah Kingdom carried out their armies in possession of territory. However, the geographical area of the Kingdom in subsequent period had been Barak river in the north.

*North of Barak river is  
under Hidamba (Cachar) King,  
South of that (river) is under Tripur's king  
(Krishnamala)*

It was Raja Dakhin who shifted his capital from Tribeg, which was situated on the bank of Kapili River, a tributary of Brahmaputra river, to Kholongma or Kholongsa on Barak Valley, where the Ranglong clan of the Halams were living at that period. Kholongma or Kholongsa was believed to be Rajghat under Islampur Mouja, twenty five miles away from Silchar town located on the bank of Rukini river where old roads, tanks, bricks built plinths constructed by the kings of Tipperah exist. In the words of Upendra Guha, the author of "*Cachar Itibritti*" "*the sight of broken earthen pots, large water tanks, deserted and ruined ancient habitations and different other ancient relics make the people wonder. Every year people from different countries are coming and reclaiming the land after obtaining allotment from the (British) Government*". In fact the geographical limit of Tipperah kingdom could be seen from the survey report of R.B.

### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

Pemberton. About the eastern boundary of Tipperah kingdom R.B. Pemberton's report was noteworthy. All the Lushai country (present Mizoram) east to Manipur was once considered to belong to Tipperah kingdom. In the words of Pemberton *"from the source of the Jaree River along the western bank, to its confluence with the Barak; thence south on the western bank of the later river, to the mouth of Chikoo (or Tuipaimukh) nullah, which mark the triple boundary of Munnepore (Manipur), Cachar, and Tripurah. On the south the limit has never been accurately defined, and we only know, that on this side, the line is formed by northern foot of lofty mountains, inhabited by the potent Kokas, and by wild and unexplored tracts of territory subject to Tripurah."*

In 1536 AD, the Ahom destroyed Dimapur, the capital of Bodo Kacharis. The Kacharis fled and shifted their capital at Maibong and Datsung was installed as king by the Ahom. In seventeenth century the Kachari (Hidamba) king Biradarparanayan (1644-1682 A.D.) contracted friendship with the king of Tipperah by marrying the latter's daughter, by which he obtained as Khas or rent free marriage dowry a portion of the Barak valley including Khaspur near Silchar in the present Cachar district. Thus, a large portion of Tipperah kingdom, where many Halam tribes lived, passed into the hand of Cachar (Hidamba) kingdom. Further, King Tamaradhvajnarayan of Cachar (Hidamba), after ascending the throne, shifted his capital from Maibong to Khaspur in fear of King Rudra Singha of Assam. Khaspur was obtained by his predecessor Biradarparanayan (1644-1682) from Tipperah as dowry. King Tamaradhvajnarayan encouraged immigrants from Shylet and Bengal to encroach and cultivate on Tipperah's territory to the south in Dhaleshwari river valley which was subsequently called Hailakandi, and which was annexed to Kachari (Hidamba) kingdom in 1736 A.D. In fact there was dispute between the Cachar and Tipperah Rajahs as to the possession of a part of Hyakandy, and the Tipperah Rajah set forth claims to the allegiance of all Kukis (Halams) laying south of Cachar. Even during British period, the rulers of Tipperah did not give up the claim over large part of Cachar, and protested arbitrary demarcation of Longai river as northern boundary of the kingdom. This claim was evident from the letter written by the Chief Dewan (Prime Minister) of Tipperah Kingdom on 30th March in 1920, to the Indian British authority stating that *"In 1877 A. D, the year of the Lushai Expedition there was no*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

question raised about the eastern boundary. Between 1781-1835 the kingdom of Ava(Burma) was unquestionably recognised as the Eastern Boundary of the Tipperah State. Between 1781 and 1835, for reasons not known to the Durbur, Tipaimukh (the junction of the Tipai and Barak rivers) came to be recognised by the Government Survey and other Officers, including political officers, as the triple boundary of the States of Manipur and Tipperah State and the British District of Cachar. This point was apparently made the North-Eastern point of Tippera State territory as fully administered; but no papers are available showing that Burma ceased to be the Eastern Boundary of the State even then by any authoritative arrangement between the Imperial Government and the State or by any declaration of the Imperial Government. In fact there was no notification regarding the Eastern Boundary of the State till 1874 when in connection with Lushai Expedition an "Inner Line" of strategical boundary was notified and the State records of the Imperial Government will undoubtedly establish that this notification did not refer to the territorial boundary and that this notification was issued without reference to the Durbur ... . Originally Burma was the Eastern Boundary, next it was moved to Tipaimukh and then to Dhaleswari and now the Lungai is said to be the Eastern Boundary, in spite of the assurances to the contrary of local Political Officers who were certainly the accredited agents of the Imperial Government ... . There can be no doubt that Burma would be the correct boundary, that Tipaimukh would be the boundary admitted by the Government as representing the extent of the Durbar's actual administrative influence as it existed in 1835 and that in later years the Government Officers thought that the actual influence did not reach beyond Dhaleswari. A study of the events connected with the Lushai Expedition will make it clear that the Lushai had no territory of their own, that the so-called Lushai land was not a foreign country conquered by the British Government, but that the Lushais were a turbulent hill people who made raids into the British territory and were punished for it and that "Lushai Land" was always regarded as a part and parcel of Hill Tippera. The Imperial Government merely fought the battle of Hill Tippera-a friendly State."

During the time of king Dharma Manikya the Second(1713-1725 &1729 A.D.), when one Jagat Ray, a descendent of king Chhatra Manikya, rebelled against the throne and with the help of Naib Nazim of Dacca attacked Tipperah. In 1729 A.D. Mir Habib, Naib Nazim of Dacca, appointed by the Mughal in Delhi, occupied the whole plain area of Tipperah kingdom after a series of engagements. King Dharma

### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

Manikya of Tipperah in utter helplessness at this unexpected attack fled to the hills and Jagat Ray was declared king of plain area of Tipperah, which was named as *Chokh Kwanabad*. Tipperah was passing through the difficulties period due to Mohammedan pressure. As the rulers of Tipperah Kingdom were pre-occupied with internal disturbance and Muhammadan aggression in the western border, the eastern frontier i.e. Tipaimukh region became unguarded. Gopal Singha of Manipur Kingdom, who ascended the throne in 1709 A.D. and became familiar as Garib Niwaz, availed himself of this crisis in Trippera's kingdom, crossed the northern frontiers and occupied Tipaimukh region in 1728 A.D. In order to perpetuate this great achievement the king of Manipur took the title of "*Tokhchomô*" meaning "*Victor of Tripura*" and also got a book written titled as "*Tokhchomô*", which means "*The Conquest of Tripura*". Thus, large area of Tipaimukh region, where many Halam tribes lived became the part of Manipur. Again in 1828 A.D. dispute arose between the Tipperah and Manipur regarding the possession of Thanghum, a Thado Kuki village lying in the bend of Barak river and close to Manipur; three days' journey from Baskandi in Cachar. On the representation of Manipur, there was an enquiry by the Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet, who found that Thanghum (Thangbum) village had been even five years before the dispute attached to and held by Tipperah kingdom. This prompted Mackenzie to observe "*this show now for Tripura reached at one time*". All this historical events not only reduced the geographical area of Tipperah kingdom, but also excluded many Halam villages or habitations outside the shrinking areas of Tipperah kingdom, paving the way for future dispersal and disintegration of Halam community. While writing on the migration of Old Kuki tribes to Manipur in 1723 A.D., Lt. Colonel J. Shakspear observed saying "*at that time the eastern boundary of Tipperah was not determined, and the greater part of present Lushai Hills district was supposed to be more or less under the control of the Rajah of the State (Tripura)*". As mentioned earlier, till 1872 A.D., the year of Lushai Expedition, no question arose about the Eastern Boundary of Tipperah kingdom. Between A.D. 1781 and 1835 the kingdom of Ava (Myanmar) was unquestionably recognized as the Eastern Boundary of Tipperah. Between A.D. 1835 and 1872, for reasons not known to the Darbar, Tipaimukh (the junction of the Irai and Barak rivers) came to be recognized by the British Government Survey and

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

other British Officers, including political officers, as the triple boundary of Tipperah and Manipur and the British District of Cachar. No notification regarding Eastern Boundary was made till 1874. In connection with Lushei Expedition an "Inner Line" of strategical boundary was notified in that year A.D.1874. No less than half of the territory as surveyed in 1781 was absorbed in British India (Thornton's Gazetteer). But the Rulers of this kingdom never recognized the demarcation of Eastern Boundary made by the Britishers. The Rajahs of Tipperah claimed sovereignty over entire Mizoram upto the border of Arakan and the best known document which furnished the evidence on the eastern boundary of Tipperah was Major Rennel's map of Bengal, which shows the eastern boundary of Tipperah kingdom as touching the confines of the "Dominion of Ava" and the map was published in 1781 by the Hon'ble Court of Directors. Originally Myanmar (Burma) was the Eastern Boundary, next it was moved to Tipaimukh and then to Dhaleshwai River and at last it was demarcated at Longai river. It need mention that Longai river was fixed as boundary though in 1850 A.D., when Mr.G.Yule was employed to settle the eastern boundary dispute, fixed river Dhaleswari to be eastern boundary of the kingdom. This step of British India left many Halam villages situated in Cachar, Hailakandy and Patharkandi out of Tipperah kingdom. A large number of the Halam clans, particularly, the Chorei, Ranglongs, Sakacheps or Khelmas and Rangkhawl were left out of the shrinking geographical area of Tipperah kingdom rendering them almost Stateless and also paved the way for future disintegration of the community.

As regard to southern and western boundary of Tipperah kingdom, it need mention that during the reign of Rajah Sengthumpha (1225-1250 A.D) in thirteenth century, his wife Tripurasundari led the invasion of Gour (Bengal) and defeated Sultan Tugril Khan, who was the ruler of Bengal; and extended the boundary of Tipperah kingdom upto Meghna River, including Chittagang; though after sometime during the reign of Rajah Pratap Manikya, the kingdom lost those region to the Muslim again. In 1513 A.D, King Dhanya Manikya sent General Raikachag (Reang) who occupied Chittagang after defeating the Gour (Bengal) and set up a permanent camp in Chittagang. He also occupied a portion of Arakan kingdom-which was known as *Rosang-ga*. For conquering *Rosang-ga* (Arakan) the king renamed one of his leading General as

### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

*Besange Narayan*. King Dhanya Manikya excavated a pond at *Dwapanthor* in Chittagang Hill Tracts, which was familiar as *Mataipukri*, and constructed a royal Rest House. However, when King Dhanya Manikya was engaged in war with the Afgan in Bengal for the third time, the Arakanese took advantage of that situation and occupied Chittagang. In subsequent period, King Deb Manikya, the son of Dhanya Manikya, occupied Chittagang again. Apart from the Arakanese, the Afgans also attempted to occupy the Chittagang and; throughout his life time King Bijay Manikya was worried about the protection of Chittagang from the invasion of Arakan kingdom. In 1577 A.D. General Gopi Prasad usurped the throne by killing his father-in-law-King Ananta Manikya and ascended the throne assuming the name as Uday Manikya. Afgan ruler of Gour, whose name was Douf, taking this disturbing internal situation in Tipperah Kingdom occupied the Chittagang. When King Amar Manikya ascending the throne in 1577 A.D. he sent expedition with large army under the command of Prince Rajdhar Narayan accompanied by younger prince namely Amardulay Narayan, General Chandradarpa Narayan, General Chandrasingha Narayan and General Chatrajit Nazir to re-conquer Chittagang and Arakan. But Portuguese soldiers of Tipperah and the local Arakanese subjects of Tipperah kingdom betrayed the Tipperah soldiers; and as a result, Tipperah soldiers suffered and retreated. These events prompted the historian William Wilson Hunter to write that "*Chittagang originally formed a part of extensive independent Hindu kingdom of Tipperah; but prior to its conquest by the Muhammadans, it had frequently changed masters. It lays on the disputed frontier between the Hinduism of Bengal and the Buddhism of Burma, and formed a source of chronic feud between the Hindu kings of Tipperah and the Buddhist kings of Arakan. Its population exhibits traces of alternate subjugation by both. Chittagang was probably first conquered by the Muhammadans during the period of the Afgan supremacy in Bengal, between the thirteenth and the sixteenth century*". Adjacent to Chittagang, there was Noakhali district in present Bangladesh and, this Noakhali district was known as *Bhulua* in ancient and medieval period. Raja Deb Manikya, the son of Dhanya Manikya conquered Bhulua and extended his sway farther to Dhurasa on the sea shore in 1520 A.D. Two coins dated Saka 1450 and 1452 depicted him as the victor of Sovamagram. When Amar Manikya excavated a pond at Amarpur, Laxman Manikya, the vassal king of

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Bhulua, sent one thousand labourers for excavating the pond called *Amarsagar*, which was situated in Amarpur town in Gumti District. About Bhulua, historian Hunter wrote "*until the year 1822 A.D. the mainland of present District Noakhali formed the part of the District of Tipperah (Comilla)*". Further, adjacent to Bhulua, there was Camilla District of Bangladesh which was familiar with as *Plain Tipperah District*.

From the time of Yasudharmanikya (1600-1618 A.D.) downward stage in the history of Tipperah began. As ordered by the Mughal emperor-Jahangir, Fateh Jung Nawab invaded Tipperah and after contested battle on land and water, Tipperah kingdom was finally conquered in 1618 A.D, and Udaipur as made army garrison of the Mughal and placed under the charge of Mirza Nurullah. But due to damp and moist climate the Mughals withdrew from Udaipur, the capital of Tipperah, and shifted the army garrison at Meherkul in the plain. Though the direct sway over the hill territory got slackened, yet vast tract of western plain land over which the kings of Tipperah exercised territorial control were integrated into Mughal empire and placed under the name of Sarkar Udaipur in the rent Roll. Though the next king Kalyan Manikya (1628-60) defied the Mughal Emperor of Delhi and recovered the glory of the Kingdom by reconquering the Plain Tipperah (Comilla) after defeating the Mughal army which was led by Nawab of Murshidabad, during the reign of Dharma Manikya II (1715-16 A.D) the Nawab of Murshidabad again seized on a large portion of the territory in the Plain Tipperah and distributed among the Muslim nobles. In 1729 A. D, during the reign of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, Mir Habib, Naib Nazim of Dacca, occupied the whole area of Plain Tipperah. Thus, the whole of Tipperah kingdom, barring the hill tracts, was annexed by the Mughals. The very name of the region of Plain Tipperah was changed and named as *Chakla Roshanabad*. This newly created Zamindary constituted about three eight of the territory of Tipperah kingdom. However, in subsequent period the plain area of Tipperah passed into the hand of British East India Company in 1765 A.D. Thus, Hunter wrote stating that "*when, in 1765, the District of Tipperah came under the control of the East India Company, more than one-fifth of the present area was under the immediate rule of the Raja of Hill Tipperah who merely paid a tribute of Ivory and elephants. In earlier times, it was certain that the Raja of Hill Tipperah gained conquests and possessions which carried*



### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

*bounds of their kingdom beyond the present limits of Tipperah District".* This part of Tipperah kingdom was connected to the Halam people in the past because Chittagang, had been the habitat of the Molsom, Kaipeng, Bongcher, Saimar, Kolois, Rupini and a section of Rangkhawl in the past. On the other hand, Plain Tipperah was the region where a section of the Halams, particularly, the Molsom, Bongcher, Kolois, Kaipeng, Saimar and a section of Rangkhawl clans migrated in the past for escaping from the raids and plunder of the hill tribes, particularly, the Lawis, Pangkho (Pang) and Bowra etc.

In the north-west, a portion of Sylhet was a part of Tipperah kingdom in the past. In the year 1195 A.D., King Dharmadhar performed Vedic Sacrifice with the help of a Vedic Brahmin whose name was Nidhipati, and King Dharmadhar gave him a land grant of 14 pargana of Sylhet. This event revealed the fact that from ancient period Sylhet was within the kingdom of Tipperah. Thus Alexander Mackenzie observed that *"Long before the Moslem (Muslim) conquest these (Saram & Kushi) rice-cultivators were under cultivation. They belonged to Tipperah in its prime days and even now are stables on ruined palaces and ghats and tanks, attesting the civilization of a former age. But the country had long since lapsed to jungle; and when the British took possession of Sylhet, there interposed between that district and Tipperah a broad belt of deadly forest."* In 1250 A.D. Rajah Ratna Manikya of Tipperah kingdom occupied South Sylhet. General Amar Singha of South Sylhet contracted friendship with a Kuki (Halam) Chief who was guarding the frontier of Tipperah kingdom to the western boundary of South Sylhet, and he caused to make this Kuki Chief to attack on the royal residence of Upauanda at night. The inmates of the palace were thoroughly massacred. Amar Singha occupied the throne of South Sylhet and Govardhana, the king of North Sylhet, immediately recognized him as agreed secretly. But the feudatory ruler of Taraf region under the King of South Sylhet refused to remain under new King of South Sylhet, namely, (General) Amar Singha. In the battle General Amar Singha occupied the throne of South Sylhet with the help of his father-in-law, namely, King Govardhana of North Sylhet. King Ratna Manikya of Tipperah kingdom intervened as his friend namely Epavishnu, the feudatory ruler of Taraf region, who was under the King of South Sylhet, was killed in the battle near Ghungijuri (present Habiganj district in Bangladesh). King Ratna Manikya refused to

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

recognize the usurper of the throne, namely, General Amar Singha, and conquered the whole South Syhlet. Shandul, who was the feudal ruler of Taraf installed by Amar Singha in place of Epavishnu, fled to North Sylhet in fear. Fact of the matter was that though South Syhlet, which was known as *Taraf*, had been occupied by the King Ratna Manikya of Tipperah in thirteenth century, and North Syhlet, which was known as Gour, was conquered by the Muslim during the reign of Shamsuddin in 1384 A.D. Afgan often tried to invade and occupy Tipperah kingdom. In subsequent period, King Bijay Manikya (1528-1563 A.D) of Tipperah, was contemporary of Mughal Emperor Akbar; during whose rule the power of Mughal was on the rise. At that period, the Afgan and the Mughal were in conflict for the supremacy in India. As a result the Afgan power was in the wane in India, particularly, in Bengal and; during this period, Daud, son of Suleiman Karrani, was the ruler of Gour. King Bijay Manikya of Tipperah devastated the Mohammedan ruler of Subanagram and advanced upto Padma river and; from there he went and conquered Syhlet. In subsequent period, when king Amar Manikya (1577-1586) send his son Prince Rajdhar Narayan with large army against Musa Laskar, the Muhammedan vassal ruler of Taraf (South Syhlet), who was under Tipperah, for refusing to send labourers for excavation of pond which was called *Amarsagar*. Prince Rajdhar conquered Syhlet town and stayed there for considerable period and excavated pond which was known as *Adi Rajdhar Sagar*. King Amar Manikya issued coin in memory of the victory over Syhlet in 1581 A.D. This Syhlet was the region where the Halams lived from ancient period, and *Panchakhanda* and *Longlai* were two regions in Syhlet where the Halam lived in ancient period. Karimganj and adjacent regions were part of undivided Syhlet in past ages. Even in 1820 A.D., when Lieutenant Fisher from the Survey Department was deputed to ascertain the boundaries of Syhlet with Tipperah kingdom, he submitted Report alongwith Map through the Megistrate of Syhlet which show south of Kusiyara river as the kingdom of Tipperah and the same was published in British Imperial Gazetteer of India volume XXIII page 191, under the authority of His Majesty's Secretary of State for India in Council. But the East India Company did take away large area of the kingdom without regard to recognize boundary. This made to E.F.Sandys, the Manager of Chakla Roshanabad (plain Tipperah) and a British Officer, to write that "by a

### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

*process of reasoning and action peculiar to the Company's officials and in spite of this well known fact of the Tripura Raj extending North to the Kushiara river, Lieutenant Fisher laid down and the various higher officials calmly lopped off hundred of square miles of most valuable agriculture land, as well as equal or greater area of hill land on which there are now all the Tea Gardens of South Sylhet with their thousand of acre of the finest tea land, both worth crores of rupees, the revenues and rents, of which enjoyed by the Company's successors. The robbery of territory on Tripura-Sylhet border did not stop there, for when the neighbouring district of Cachar came in the Company's possession". Sylhet had been home to many Halam sub tribes, particularly, the Langkai, Bowng, Chorei, Nabin, Sakachep, Thangachep, Marchafang, Salmuar and Ranglung. Most of these clans, who are now living in Tripura, had been the emigrants from the region such as Baniachong, Langlai, Bhanugach, Sansomagar, Nodori, Srimangal and Sagarnal etc. places in undivided Sylhet. A popular legend and folklore of the Halams called *Sakusidang* was related to Bhanugach of Sylhet. This legend and folklore had been prevalent among the Langkai, Chorei, Ranglung, Bowng, Sakachep, Thangachep, Nabin (Dapi), and Marchafang clans of the Halam in Tripura. Even now many Halam families found to be living in Habiganj District in Bangladesh, which had been part of undivided Sylhet, and most of these Halam families worked in tea garden. Thus, though the Halams had lived in Sylhet, Chittagang, Comilla, Surma-Barak valley, Tipaimukh region in southwest Manipur and present Mizoram, they had never been outside the Kingdom of Tipperah in ancient and medieval periods. The historical events of the past, which reduced the geographical boundary of the kingdom, has impacted the Halams adversely making them stateless, and this situation has brought their identity crisis in some neighbouring region, where they live today.*

**Conquest of Ranganati and the Halam:** The first volume of *Rajmala*, the royal chronicle of Tipperah kingdom, written in 1409 A.D. by pandit Sukreswar and Baneshwar, mentioned the contribution made by the Halam Kukis in the establishment of Tipperah Kingdom. In ancient time, before the conquest of present Hill Tipperah, the *Tipras* were in Surma and Kushiara Valley and the Halams were their immediate neighbour. The Hill Tipperah was under the occupation of the Buddhist Moghs, who were familiar as *Khazangthas* to the ethnologists. In first part of thirteenth century, when rulers of the *Tipras* led expedition against the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Buddhist Mogs for the conquest of Udaipur (Rangamati), the Halams were in the forefront of the expedition. Jhujhar Chapter of the first volume of *Rajmala* mentioned the important role of the Kukies, particularly, the Langkai clan of the Halam tribe in the expedition for the conquest of Rangamati (present Udaipur, Gomti District headquarter).

*In auspicious day the King set off for expedition,  
Kuki soldiers ahead and set up bases,  
In the east of the forest land is Lika (Mogh) river,  
All the Mogh people live on the bank of river (Gumti),*  
(Rajmala 1<sup>st</sup> Volume)

The Halams were considered as the mainstream population in the erstwhile Tipperah kingdom. The relationship of the Halams with Tipperah kingdom was more than thousand years. This enduring relationship manifested into observance of several age old traditional royal festivals such as *Hasam Bhujan*, *Ker Puja*, ascendancy of the *Chongtai*, the royal priest and introduction of *Phurai* as a means of communicating royal edict in time of war etc. In fact some of the Halam clans, particularly, the Rupini and the Kolai assimilated in *Tripuri* society. According to Prince Somendra Chandra DebBarman, Nayeab Dewan of Tipperah, the Halams were the original inhabitants of Tipperah kingdom. According to 1<sup>st</sup> volume of *Rajmala*, the royal chronical of Tipperah, it was Raja Dakhin who shifted his capital from Tribeg, which was situated on the bank of Kapili river in Nowagang district, to Kholongma or Kholongsa in Barak Valley, where the Halams were living at that period, even before the arrival of *Tipras* from Bramaputra valley. Thus, the first volume of *Rajmala* mentioned:-

*The King Dakhin made Kholongma as his kingdom,  
On the bank of Kapila river was the habitation of Kacharis.  
Ranglong Kukis who were ancient subject lived  
on the border of the kingdom of Hidamba King.*  
(Rajmala 1<sup>st</sup> Volume)

During the period of settlement at Kholongma or Rajghat the rock cut temple cave known as *Bhubaneswari* temple was constructed at Bhuban Hill, which was situated to the east of Silchar, where the rock cut temple with images of Goddess Durga and Lord Siva constructed by the Rajahs of Tipperah exist even today. Bhuban Hills got the name

### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

for this Bhubaneswari temple, and the Goddess Durga image was known to local people as Bhobari. It seemed the Halams in ancient time used to worship this deity which was established by the royal house of Tipperah kingdom. This was the reason that *Krishnamala*, the chronicle of Rajah Krishna Manikya, mentioned like this:-

*Barobokra (Barak) River is in the North,  
And Duvomba (Kachar) kingdom is there,  
In the south (of Barak) is under Tipperah's Kings,  
The kukies lived in that (Bhubna) Hills,  
Those kukies are the subject of Tripur King,  
Their identities will be told briefly,  
Sakachep, Thangachep, Chorei, Ranglang,  
Rangkhoh, Saitmar, Sait, Sutanwar, Bawang,  
Langkai, Rupini, Twite people,  
These are the major (Halam) Kukies living there,  
Different other (Halam) Kukies also live there,  
They are called Kiratas in Epic's language,  
There is Stone image of Goddess,  
Established by the Kings of Tipperah,  
Goddess with ten hands rides on lion's back,  
In the name of Goddess it is worshipped,  
Everyday Kiratas (Halam) offer Her puja (sacrifice),  
There is no end of her miraculous deeds"*

(*Krishnamala*)

These people called Sakachep, Thangachep, Chorei, Ranglang, Rangkhoh, Saitmar, Bawang, Langkai, and Rupini Kukies? These Sakachep, Thangachep, Chorei, Ranglang, Rangkhoh, Saitmar, Bawang, Langkai, and Rupini were the clans of Halam tribe.

**War and role of the Halams:** In ancient and medieval period, the emperors, Kings and conquerors of the world had relied on abled manpower for warfare, apart from skill, endurance and mobility. The Afgans, Mughal and other foreign invaders had not brought large people as soldiers from their native countries. Babar came from central Asia to invade India with about twelve thousand soldiers, and he succeeded in establishing Mughal empire in India. The Ahoms conquered Assam with a few thousand soldiers. This had been the case for many other conquerors. They expanded their kingdoms and empires by the native

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

manpower in subsequent stages. The British ruled Indian sub continent about two hundred years with native employees and soldiers. Tipperah Kingdom was no exception from such situation. The rulers of Tipperah, coming from Brahmaputra valley to Barak-Surma valley, were in need of manpower for consolidating and expanding their kingdom. The Halams met that requirement of manpower of the rulers of Tipperah Kingdom. Thus, the Halams were important source of conscript for fighting men in the kingdom. Hearsay and stories were told even today by Halam elders about the participation of the Halams in battle front in past ages. In Tipperah kingdom, each clan of the Halams lived under the respective chief in ancient period, and there was no harmony and unity among them but enmity only. The rulers of Tipperah kingdom, who already acquired the skill or craftsmanship in running the kingdom during their settlement in Brahmaputra valley, did not find any difficulty in subduing the divided chiefs of different clans of the Halam. Thus, in subsequent period the Halams became soldier class of the kingdom. Hearsay abound that in the past, each Halam Chief of the village required to render all possible manpower in time of war. Halam villages were located at far flung hill tops, and there was practical difficulty in sending message for help. However, there was a traditional method of sending royal edict by a messenger at Halam villages. "*Phurai*" was a symbol by which royal message or edict used to be conveyed to Halams in time of danger or eminent war. As there was no modern communication equipment in those days, the symbol called *Phurai* was used for conveying royal edict through a messenger at Halam villages in the hills. The symbol was made of iron and was known as *Phurai*. The word "*Phuroh*" was a verb, which means to carry any object on the back. The word *Phurai* was the corrupted form of the word *Phurah* or *Putrawh*; it meant asking some one to "*carry the load*" in Halam language. If the "*Phurai*" was stained with blood, the royal edict was for joining war and; in case of emergency a small bundle of red chillis used to be tied with *Phurai*. The royal messenger carrying *Phurai* would deliver or hand over it to a village chief. *Phurai* could not be kept even for a while in the village, and it was responsibility of the village chief for sending the *Phurai* immediately with another messenger to the neighbouring village; and the process continued till all Halam villages were covered. The village Chief was obligated to deliver the *Phurai* to another neighbouring

### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

village by a messenger, and thus the *Phurai* was passed on to different Halam villages until it was brought back to first village where from it was delivered by royal messenger. As *Phurai* could not be kept even for a while in a village, it had to be in constant move till it covers all villages; haltage at a village would invite heavy or corporal punishment. As soon as the *Phurai* was dispatched to a particular village, all the villagers would gather in a place to comply with the royal edict. The use of *Phurai* was discontinued in 1885 A.D., during the reign of King Birchandra Manikya due to its misuse by royal officials and by order of British High Court. While writing the monograph on Lushai-Kukis Clans, Lt. Colonel I. Shakespeare has mentioned the use of "*Phurai*" even among the Lushais as a symbol for conveying the order of the Lushai Chief. *Phurai* used by the Lushais was a species of wand made out of strips of peeled bamboo, about eight inches long in the shape of cross (1). If the tips of the cross was broken, a demand for blackmail was indicated, a rupee to be levied for each break. But if the end of the cross pieces was chaired, it implied urgency and the people were required to come even by torch light. If a capsicum was fixed on to the "*Phurai*" it signified that disobedience to the order would be met with punishment as severe as the hot capsicum. If the cross piece was of cane, it meant that disobedience would entail corporal punishment. This *Phurai* had been an important means in use for conveying the royal edict in Tipperah kingdom from the time immemorial. This symbol could not be sent by a messenger without order from the royal house and; was used particularly in time of war only. In course of time, the Rajahs of Tipperah appeared to have adopted this symbol called *Phurai* which their Halam subject used. *Phurai* symbol was also prepared by a bamboo piece which was known as "*Wathlong*" among the Tipras.

Even in nineteenth century one could notice the role of the Halam in Tipperah kingdom; and they occupied important position and power in Tipperah kingdom as soldier. This was evident from the description of Alexander Mackenzie about the condition of Tipperah in 1808 A.D. In the word of Mackenzie "*The men among the Kookies are called Ray, Ghalin, Chuppahs, and Gabours...*". Further he observed that "*The power or influence of these Chiefs over the vassals within their respective jurisdictions is of strongest kind. A person who has influence to bring over all these Sindars to his party has actual possession of this country. For the protection of the*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

country there were three or four military or police posts. The fighting men numbered about 1000 Hindoo matchlock men and 3000 Kookies, armed with spears and bows, all under the commend of their Sirdars". The people that Mackenzie mentioned as Kukis were none other than the Halams because of the fact that no other Kuki tribes, be it the Lusheis or Darlongs, had the Chief and officials who held the titles as the Roy (Rai), Ghalim, Chapias and Gaburs. In the social administrative system of the Halams, the Roy (Rai), Ghalim, Sengja, Jaksung, Chapias and Gaburs etc. were important elected officials who commanded authority and dignity in the society in the past. Besides, the Kuki soldiers mentioned here were not from the Darlong and other Kuki tribes; they were recruited from Halam tribe. In the word of K.S.Singh "earlier, they (Halam) were recruited in the army in large numbers" (People of India-Tripura). Hearsay abounds among the Halam elders about the role of the Halams as the soldiers in Tipperah Kingdom. Many Halam elders thought that the dispersal of this tribe was an attempt of the Halam people to escape from the conscription. Further, the Darlongs, Lushais were late emigrants into Hill Tipperah. After all, they were under their respective Chief; and whenever, their service or assistance was required, royal order used to be conveyed to their chief, who was called Lal only. During the time of suppression of Jamatias revolt, which occurred under the leadership of Parikshit during the reign of Maharaj Birchandra Manikya (1862-1896), it was Darlong Chief namely, Ngursailoia, who assisted the royal administration and suppressed the Jamatia revolt. Thus, the Darlong soldiers had never been at the disposal of royal administration. Further, in the Kingdom of Tipperah, the Jamatias were regarded as soldier class, and this might be the reason for their concentration in and around Udaipur, which was the capital of Tipperah kingdom upto 1761 A.D. There was different view as to the actual identity of this tribe. Jamatias were considered as one of the Tripuri tribes, apart from the Pura Tipras, Noatias, Reangs, Uchois, Murasing tribes. But the Jamatias have no sub clan which make it difficult to identify their actual ethnical root. While writing about Jamatia tribe in his book titled as "The Account of Udaipur" Brajendra Chandra Dutta (who served as the Officer-in-Charge of Udaipur Sub Division from the year 1901-1907, 1909, 1915-1917, & 1925-1926) stated that "This Jamatia tribe is also said to have belonged to the Halam community. Royal patronage and honour have come in good stead for them for



### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

*their gradual advancement*". Some Halam elders held the view that the Jamatias were the Kukis, i.e. Halam tribes absorbed gradually in the past centuries through matrimonial relationship with Tripuri women, while they were in the royal army. The physical appearance of the Jamatias and their temperament points to that assumption. This could be determined through morphological and other relevant scientific test only.

**Role of the Halam in royal priesthood:** The Halams made an important contribution in the evolution of royal priesthood in the kingdom. Chaturdas Devatas were the tutelary deities of the Royal House, apart from *Lipura Sundari*. The chief priest in the temple of Chaturdas Devatas was known as *Changtai* and the subordinate priests were known as *Daurai* and *Kalin*. The designation of chief priest "*Changtai*" was the corruption of the Halam word-*Changthai*, which means "*Expert in chanting of Mantras*" for performing sacrifice or puja. Historian Kaliprasanna Sen was of the view that the word "*Changtai*" originated from Halam language. "*Daurai*" was another designation of subordinate priest in the temple of Chaturdas Devatas and; according to "*Rajaboli*" the priest of Kamakhya temple was also known as "*Dauri*" and; the Kamakhya temple was established by the Bodo Kachari in ancient time. The *Kacharis* and the *Thyas* were from the same ethnic and cultural group; therefore, the Rajahs of Tipperah appeared to have inherited this designation from their kinsmen, the Bodo Kacharis. But one could notice *Daurai* as the sub clans of the Molsura and Kaipeng clans of the Halams. The oral tradition or hearsay prevalent among the Mulsam maintained that the *Daurai* clan served as the royal priest in the past and go this title. The *Chalin* or *Kalin* was another subordinate priest at the temple of Chaturdas devatas. In subsequent period, the status of *Kalin* evolved and became familiar as the Chief of Village Darbar of the Halams. However, both the *Daurai* and *Kalin* were subordinate priests who would assist the *Changtai*, the chief priest in the temple of Chaturdas Devatas. In all important religious ceremonies in the royal house, the Halam priest would pray for the welfare of the reigning king, for his subject and the kingdom. The chant recited by the Halam priest was as follows:-

*"Ouma Rong pathien ni-mai doin roush.  
Dadi hoise Rajga hoiseo.*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Dam rong ung Reng dam rese,,*

English translation was like this:-

*“Oh supreme God and the God of my King,*

*Keep us and our country well,*

*keep people well, and let our King lives long”*

The relationship of the Halams with Tipperah kingdom was so deep rooted that they developed tremendous love for the reigning kings and deep attachment to the kingdom. Most of the rulers of Tipperah kingdom did not interfere in the way of life of Halam subject, but acted as patron of the Halam community.

**Religious and cultural intercourse:** This matter was mentioned in short in preceding Chapter. Most important religious impact on the Halams in Tipperah kingdom was *Ker puja*, which was introduced and observed strictly throughout the Tipperah kingdom since the time immemorial. According to oral tradition of the Halam, *Ker puja* was said to have been performed first by Khomaliah Luopuia, an ancestor of the Halams in ancient time. *Ker puja* was familiar as “*Khuoser*”, to the Halams which they performed once in a year in all Halam villages. The word *Khuo* means Village and the word *Sher* means *Religious Taboo* or *religious prohibition* in Halam language. When both the words i.e, *Khuo* and *Sher* were combined together, it became *Khuosher*, meaning *Religious Taboo or Religious prohibition in the Village*. On the day of puja, no one was allowed to go outside of the village or enter from outside into the village. *Kerpuja* was annual community sacrifice of the Halam performed for the welfare of the villagers. No one was allowed to go out of his or her home. No domestic animals or livestock were allowed to roam and kept in confinement. Death or birth disturbed the observance of the occasion, and if delivery was imminent in the village, the pregnant mother used to be shifted outside. If any discordant sign was seen by the priest *Ker puja* was performed again. Historian Sir William Wilson Hunter observed that “*the most important festival observed in Hill Tipperah is Ker Puja, which is celebrated in the month of Ashar, with the view of warding off all dangers. The ceremonies in connection with this festival are even now observed in some Halam villages with the greatest secrecy; all people are obliged to remain in their houses with the door closed from about 10 P. M. on the first day of the festival to 6 A. M. on the third day, and during this interval only twice are allowed to go outside, and then only a few hours. Close to the Raja’s*

### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

residence at Agartala there is a small enclosure staked with bamboos, the upper ends of which are cut so as to give them an ornamental appearance. During the Ker Puja these bamboos are changed, and pigs and goats sacrificed in large number. There is no doubt that in former days human sacrifice were on this occasion offered unto deities, but they are said to have been effectually prohibited about two hundred years ago. During the celebration of Ker Puja, everyone, including even the reigning sovereign, is subjected to numerous restrictions – not being allowed to put on shoes, to make use of umbrella, to fire a gun, to light a fire, etc. All who violate any of these injunctions are declared sacrilegious and in order to expiate the offence before the fourteen tutelary gods, a fine is inflicted on the culprit and appropriated by the priest. The festival lasts two days and half and during that time the Raja and his principal relatives or *thakurs* generally pay large sums of money, in order to expiate offences committed against the deities. The ceremony of Ker Puja commenced in hill villages as soon as reigning sovereign would complete the ceremony in the capital. This puja used to be performed compulsorily in all Halam villages. Besides, the Halams adopted the many other deities of the Tipras in course of their settlement in Tipperah kingdom. The deities such as *Sukundani, Makundani, Kalawi, Kallakhi Pradhan Raja, Trosik-Nyga-Banarali Raja, Mahkansa, Nachengsing, Jomkathor-Jomnarayan, Bolong Raja, Maituki Raja, Chhinga Raja, Sabrai Raja, Sangkrak, Lanpa, Bishong Raja, Lusik-Nyga Banarali Raja, Kari-Rangkachak Pradhan Raja, Sangrengna, Dubora-Fekoni, Dushoni-Pashani, Tadruk Kallakhi, Tuisaar Raja, Lakhdawari Raja, Birkongsing Raja, Alaising Raja, Delaising Raja, Vakri Raja, Boddurao-Brikharon, Lalongsing Raja and Sangring* etc, which the Halams would worship by offering fowls and domestic livestock, were borrowed from the Tipras. More importantly, all the chanting made during sacrifices to these deities were performed in Tripuri language. However, the Halams had contribution in the priesthood in Tipperah kingdom. The royal head priest was familiar as *Chengtai*, which was the corruption of Halam word “*Chongtai*”, which means expert in sacrificial chanting i.e, *Mautras*. Mode and ritual of worship of the Tipras was adopted by the Halams. There was also deep influence of the Tipras on the social behaviour of the Halams in their interaction among themselves. The words *Kurui* or *Bachal* or *Bachoi*, *Saru* or *Saru*, etc, were words borrowed by the Halams from Tipras. The system of village or community administration which was imposed by the rulers of Tipperah

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Kingdom brought humanising impact on the society. Decision on important social issues were left at the disposal of wise elders who formed the village or community Darbar, and these village officials were either elected or nominated by the elders of the community. Thus, the Halam society was democratised where no arbitrariness got the place of importance.

**War at Thanangsib :** During the reign of King Dhanya Manikya (A.D.1490 -1520), the Kukis of Thanangsib revolted, and King Dhanya Manikya sent his famous general Raikachag (Reang) to suppress the revolt. The army garrison of Tipperah kingdom used to be called "*Thana*" and the word "*sib*" means, "*Peak*" of the mountain or hill in Halam language. Thus, when the words of "*Thana*" and "*Sib*" were combined together, it became "*Thanasib*" meaning "*army garrison at hilltop*". The word "*Thanangsi*" or *Thanangsib* was originated from the word "*Thanasib*". During the reign of Rajah Dhanya Manikya, a Kuki Chief of *Thanangsib* said to have revolted. According to *Rajmala*, the royal chronicle of Tipperah Kingdom, the Kuki chief said to have caught a white elephant and Rajah Dhanya Manikya of Tipperah demanded white elephant as payment for tax or tribute. But when the kuki Chief refused to handover the white elephant to King Dhanya Manikya, he dispatched general Raikachag (Reang) to suppress the revolt of Kuki-Chief of *Thanangsib*. General Raikachag seized *Thanangsib* for eight months, but could not enter into the large village. *Thanangsib* was heavily stockaded by the woods which made it like a fortress and had only one entrance on the top of mountain. The entrance or gate of *Thanangsib* fortress was guarded by big stones, which were hung over the uphill so that it could be loosened as and when enemy tried to climb upward to *Thanangsib*. Whenever the enemy tried to enter into the village fortress, the robes of the big stones used to be loosened allowing the giant stones to roll downward so that the enemy soldiers climbing the uphill were crashed beneath the rolling stones. Tipperah Soldiers caught a giant *iguana* and tied a rope around its waist; and thereafter, they let loose the *iguana* allowing it to climb on hilltop at night. The soldiers followed the *iguana* by holding the fastened rope on hill top to *Thanangsib*; and they captured the fortress at night. According to an oral tradition of the Halam, the Koloï tribe was the inhabitants at *Thangangsib* and the Kaipeng were living at *Bernangsib* at that time. The oral tradition of the

### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

Kaipeng maintained that a Kaipeng youth from Sungphum sub clan whose name was *Saimanrai* caught a white elephant at Thangnangsip, where the Koloï tribe lived. According to hearsay, *Saimanrai* was an youth of immense strength. The Chief of Koloï sub tribe living at Thangnangsip said to have claimed the white elephant since it was caught from his area. In the meantime, King Dhanya Manikya of Tipperah kingdom heard about the white elephant and demanded for handing over the white elephant to him as tribute. As loyal subject of Tipperah, *Saimanrai* was willing to handover the white elephant to King Dhanya Manikya; but the Koloï Chief said to have prevented the handover of the white elephant to the royal house, which infuriated the King Dhanya Manikya; and took the matter as revolt against royal authority. He sent his famous general who belonged to Raikachag sub clan from the Reang tribe to suppress the revolt. The Kaipeng oral tradition claimed that their ancestors participated in that expedition against the ruler of *Tungnungsih*. After the war, all adult male members of the tribes were killed, and the children and women were brought as captive. That was the reason when the Halam priest performed sacrifice, he made this incantation in Kokborok i.e. Tripuri language :-

*"Riqub sru prajo sru*

*Thangnungsih tognairang"*

This small proverb in Kokborok language chanted in the puja said that the people (Koloï tribe) living in Thangnungsih did not know their King (of Tipperah), and they also did not know that they themselves were the subject (of Tipperah). As regard to actual location of *Tungnungsih*, the historian Kaliprasanna Sen maintained that Thangnungsih was located in the west of Lushai hills and east of present Tripura. There was a place known as *Thangnungsih* which was situated on Barkal range in Chittagang Hill Tracts. More precisely, *Thangnungsih* was the name of a peak located on the southern part of Jampui hill i.e. east of Khanlang, but inside Chittagang Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. The height of Thangnung peak was 2970 feet above the sea, and situated within northern most corner of Chittagang Hill Tracts, adjacent to Indo-Bangladesh international boundary i.e. where the triple boundaries of Mizoram, Tripura and Chittagang Hill Tracts met together. This Thangnung peak was also adjacent to *Doqmaiker*, where the Kaipengs, the Nohom and other Halam clans lived together with the Tipras in the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

past. Another place called *Barnangsib* was also situated at Longtorai range i.e. Soldeng range, within Chittagng Hill Tracts, toward the west of *Thangnangsib*. The oral tradition of the Kaipeng says that *Thangnangsib* and *Barnangsib* were two places located at the same region; and this oral tradition seemed to agree with the geographical location of these two places (as given in the map at 3<sup>rd</sup> Vol. *Rajmala*, compiled by historian Kiliprasanna Sen).

According to Syamacharan Tripura (Lt. MLA), the Tipperah soldiers brought Goria idol from Thangangsib, the deity of Halam kukis and the Garia puja was introduced in Tipperah from that time onward, which now formed one of the important traditional festivals of Tripuris in the State. S. Tripura also stated that the dance performed by Tripuris of different tribes such as Jamatia, Noatia, Reang and Koloï represented a erotic war dance. Tipperah soldiers, while invading Thangnangsib, had to endure separation from their wives for eight months, and they were longing to have company and intimacy of their wives. This longing for intimacy with their wives prompted them to perform such an erotic song and dance on the way back to the capital, Rangamati (present Udaipur). The Jamatias said to have brought Kuki priest for performing sacrifice to Garia deity with the observance of proper ritual. The people of Thangnangsib were said to be the loyal subjects of Tipperah kingdom at one point of time. In fact, Thangangsib was a region which King Dangorpha(1280-1300 A.D) gave to one of his eighteen sons to reign over there, and when he was expelled by King Ratnapha (Ratna manikya), his youngest son, with the assistance of Muhammadan ruler of Gour (Bangal), he took shelter at Thangnangsib, where he died as fugitive. Therefore, it was certain that the Chief, who revolted by refusing to hand over white elephant to the King Dhanya Manikya, must be the vassel of Tipperah. This event took place in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; and at that point of time the other Kuki-Chin-Lushei tribes were yet to arrive in Lushei Hills. The oral tradition of the Kaipeng people claimed that they, along with other Halam clans took leading role in the war at *Thangnansib*. **Oath of allegiance to Royal House:** King Bijoy Manikya (1528-1563 A.D.) was another great king of Tipperah Kingdom who had a historic dealing with the Halams. When Maharaj Bijay Mnikya asserted his authority over Syhlet kingdom by forcing to pay tribute, the king of neighbouring Jayantia kingdom, whose name was also Bijoymanik, was

### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

alarmed. Being terrified at the increase of authority of the Rajah of Tipperah over Sylhet, he wanted to build good relation with king Bijoy Manikya of Tipperah. So Jaintia Raj brought a gift to the royal court of Tipperah as gesture of goodwill, and for establishing friendly relationship. Maharaj Bijoy Manikya of Tipperah reciprocated this goodwill gesture of Jaintia king by presenting him white elephants. But the king of Jaintia, after return to his capital, spread the rumour in his kingdom that Maharaj Bijoy Manikya of Tripura presented him white elephant as tribute out of fear. One poor Brahmin from Sylhet went to Jaintia hills for begging, and he heard the rumour. The poor Brahmin begger informed this rumour to General Kala Nazir of Tipperah kingdom, who was stationed in Sylhet. General Kala Nazir sent the news to the capital, Rangamati. Maharaj Bijoy Manikya heard this rumour spread by Jaintia Raj and felt insulted and became furious. He made a preparation to send expedition with soldiers consisting of cobblers, gardeners, scavengers and sweepers against Jaintia kingdom for this insult. But the news of war preparation with such low caste soldiers reached to Jaintia king, who became terrified. Jaintia ruler approached to the king of Hiramba (Cachar)-Nirbhaynarayan, who was related to Tripura-raj through matrimony, to mediate for making peace with the Maharaj Bijoy Manikya of Tipperah. At the request of King Nirbhaynarayan, Hiramba Raj (Cachar king), Maharaj Bijoy Manikya of Tipperah relented from attacking Jaintia kingdom. But Jaintia King did not give up his conspiracy against the Tipperah Kingdom. At that time the Sakachep and Thangachep clans of the Halams were dominant and formidable subjects of the Rajah of Tipperah who lived in Cachar along the border of Jaintia and Tipperah kingdom. The Sakachep and Thangachep clans of the Halam served as the soldiers in Tipperah Kingdom from ancient period, and contributed in the expansion and consolidation of Tipperah Kingdom. Bijoymanik, the King of Jaintia, attempted to induce this powerful Halam clans in his favour; and instigated them to revolt against the Maharaj Bijoy Manikya of Tipperah. Thus, the Jaintia King wanted to sow the seed of discord between the Halam tribe and the rulers of Tipperah Kingdom in order to weaken King Bijoy Manikya of Tipperah. As soon as King Bijoy Manikya of Tipperah got the information of this conspiracy of Jaintia king, he invited all the Halam Chiefs from Barak valley and other part of his kingdom

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

to royal court in his capital, Rangamati i.e. present Udaipur; and they were honourably welcomed, and gave them befitting treatment. The King presented them metallic images of elephant and tiger with Sanskrit slokas inscribed. The metallic images have inscription in Sanskrit which read like this: -

*“Purba-pursya Kromad-voovonto Attiya,  
Eda-ning Boiparitya-macharanti,  
Toduparidharma Soya-naso  
Bhobi-sati Pod-chad-gojo Sardulya”.*

The English translation was like this-

*We have kinship from immemorial time,  
If you behave adversely from today  
Your religion, crops and yourself will be  
destroyed by wild elephant and tiger.*

The Halams were animist in their belief and lived in secluded hilly villages surrounded by forest area where they would struggle with tigers, elephants and other wild animals for their survival. Their livelihood depended on shifting cultivation. Their jhum paddy often destroyed by wild animals and their domestic animals often became prey of tiger the day and night. Destruction of jhum crops by wild elephants and preying of their domesticated livestock by tigers would be a terrible situation for the Halams. As the Halams were animists, who believed in nature and spirit, such a vow at the temple could not be broken in fear of divine retribution, and they remained loyal to the Tipperah for centuries. This event was turning point in the relationship between the Halams and the rulers of Tipperah kingdom till the merger with the Union of India on the 15<sup>th</sup> October in 1949. The Halams in many villages used to worship this kind metallic idols of tiger and elephant given by the subsequent kings of Tipperah until recently in remembrance of that vow.

**The Halam and Tipperah kingdom in eighteenth century :** In A.D.1748, when Prince Krishnamani went into exile in the eastern part of Tipperah kingdom and Cachar, he had to live among the Halams. His elder brother King Indra Manikya was dethroned by a Muslim warlord whose name was Samser Ghazi (also familiar as Samser Jong) and; King Indra Manikya left for Murshidabad where he died of self-administered poison and; the royal family and retinue led by prince Krishnamoni, the young



### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

brother of the King, took shelter in the eastern hills and jungles as advised by his elder brother, King Indra Manikya. The kingdom was caught in meshes of intrigues and he was in constant trouble. Krishnamoni was amongst his Halam subject and wandered with his royal retinue and soldiers in those part of Tipperah kingdom stretching from the present north Tripura to Patharkandi, Hai akandi and Cachar. At that time Joy Manikya, a descendent from royal line, who was dethroned by King Indra Manikya, was also in exile and was living amongst the Halam. Joy Manikya instigated the hill tribes to stop paying taxes and tributes. Even hills and jungles were not safe for the royal family, and as a result they moved toward the north-east and took shelter in Hiramba kingdom (Kachar) across Barak River, where they established matrimonial alliance between the two dynasties. Prince Krishnamani, accompanied by the royal retinue, arrived at Khaspur, the capital of Hiramba (Kachar) kingdom. The news spread amongst the Halam people of Cachar region about the arrival of the prince of Tipperah kingdom and; the Halams in group came to prince Krishnamani with tributes and requested him to live among their midst in the east. They implored saying that they had been loyal subject of Tipperah kingdom for generations and they remained his subject and would like to serve him, Prince Krishnamani listened to their entreaty and return from Khaspur, the capital of Hiramba kingdom. Many Halam came to receive the royal family and escorted the prince and royal retinue to Tipperah across Barak River where fugitive Prince and royal family subsequently built a habitation. Prince Krishnamoni constructed a habitation at the place known as Manikban, where the Chorei clan of the Halams even today live. Manikban Halam village was located within Patharkandi in Barak valley of Assam; across the Longai river. In fact the village derived its name from the name of Krishna Manikya. Even today old bricks of broken building and excavated old pond were found at nearby place called Rangamati (com.ac. Bazar). The pond was locally familiar as "Rajar Pukar" which means "King's Pond". The Halams provided royal retinue food staff and others necessities regularly. While the King was supported and honoured by the Sakarhep, Thangachep, Rangkhowl, Chorei, Langkai, Ranglong, Sakarhep and Bowng clans of the Halams, on the other, he had to fight the *Kluchang* (Hados) and the chief Sbuta of the Lushais to protect his Halam subject. The fact of the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

matter was that during his exile in the northeastern part of Tipperah Kingdom, Prince Krishnamoni had terrible encounter with the Thados and the Lushei tribes. These tribes often plundered Halam villages killing innocent people and looting properties. Thus, *Krishnamala*, the chronicle of Raja Krishna Manikya, mentioned the events like this :-

*At that time there was turmoil and disturbance in the east,  
News were received from Bowng village,  
There were the Khuchung and the Lushei kukis,  
They (Lushei & Thodo) were outside the authority of Tripura,  
They often came from the east for looting and plundering,  
They used to take away property by killing people.*

(Krishnamala)

Pemberton identified the Thados as the *Khochung*. To the Halams, the Thados were also familiar as *Khuochung*, which means “upland villagers”. The Halams have a proverb about the *Khuochung* village which was like this:-

*Khuochung lawn  
Wankhai lawn.*

This means “Climbing upland *Khuochung* village is like crawling of the cricket”. It was said that the *Khuochung* Kukies used to live on high mountain and going to *Khuochung* village one needs to climb the high and steep hills by crawling like the cricket. The traditional belief of the Halams was that the Thados (*Khuchung*) were the first migrants from erstwhile Lushei Hills and they were followed by the Lusheis. According to Col. J. Shakespear, the Thados came from the far south of Manipur and their original habitation was said to have been *Kochuk*. About the habitate of the Lusheis, “*Krishnamala*”, the chronical of Raja Krishna Manikya, gave an account like this:-

*“Where the Khouchung kiratas live  
Lushei kukis live toward south of that place”  
“Krishnamala”*

According to the account given in the chronical, the Thado Kukis prevented the Halams from paying taxes to the King of Tipperah; and also used to devastate and commit atrocities in the neighbouring Halam villages. R.B. Pemberton, while ascertaining the boundary of the north-eastern India and Burma in A.D.1835, he came across the hill tribes such as *Kongsai* (Thados) who were also known as *Khuchung* and they lived

### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

on several ranges of hills between the Manipur and Cachar, and also in the region stretching from the southern borders of Manipur valley to the northern limit of the province of Arakan. Krishna Manikya, during his stay at Halam villages in exile in the middle of eighteenth century, mobilized and conscripted the fighting men from the Halam villages as soldiers, particularly, from among the Rangkhawl, Chorei, Rangrong, Sakachep, Thangachep, Bawang, Rupini, and Langkai clans of the Halam. His generals Kanasingha Karkon, Banamali, Joydeb Rai, Jagannath Rai and Bolobaddra led the soldiers in the expedition to subdue the Khachung Kukis. Prince Krishnamoni camped at Rangkhawl village where he confronted unexpected assault at night by the Khochung tribe, and the Prince was seriously injured by poisonous arrow which pierced at his feet and became unconscious for a whole day. About this deadly poison, Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear stated that: *"the deadly poison used by the Kukis is, they say, extracted from a tree which does not grow in these parts but the article is brought to them for sale by tribes inhabiting the border of Manipur. The substance is of a dark blue or black colour and of about the consistency of common mud. To make it serviceable it is grind down with copious seeds and tobacco juice, so as to form a pulp, with which the weapons are covered, cotton soaked in the mixture being also laid to the iron under the barb".* The Khachung kukis were subdued and General Janardhan Cobra was bestowed with the honorary name as *Khachung Dorpoorayan* for subduing the Khochung kukis. This event took place in the middle of eighteenth century during which almost all Thado tribe had been migrating to Manipur. Col. J. Shakespear was of the view that *"Dravid entered Manipur Hills about the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century"*. Therefore, they were not under the rule of Tipperah kingdom. After this event, Prince Krishnamoni also sent expedition to suppress the Lushai Chief Sibuta during his stay in Halams villages in exile in the middle of eighteenth century. During his stay at village of Saitmar clan in Cachar, Prince Krishnamoni heard the atrocities committed by the Lushai Chief Sibuta on Halam subject of Tipperah kingdom. The Lushai Chief Sibuta said to commend large manpower capable of fighting the enemy. About Sibuta detail has been given in the succeeding chapter. Prince Krishnamoni mobilized the Halam people for war against Sibuta; and sent his General Pandab Barua in the south to suppress this Lushai Chief. Sibuta, General Pandab Barua got the honorary name as

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Luchidarpanarayan* for suppressing the Lusheis. He captured the village of Sibuta and forced him to surrender alongwith the payment of tribute to the King of Tipperah.

In the past, the Kings of Tipperah kingdom exercised tremendous control over Halam tribes because they had been the inhabitants of Cachar, Shylet and Mizoram and Tuipaimukh region of Manipur which were once integral part of erstwhile Tripurah kingdom. Before the expansion of Afgan and Mughal empire in Bengal, the Rajahs of Tripurah could concentrate their attention on consolidating their powers upto far flung area of present Mizoram. This was the reason that the Halams had fear as well as high respect to the Rajahs of Tipperah. The hearsay prevalent among the Thangachep clan maintained that their ancestors fought battle as soldier of Tipperah kingdom in Champhai region in the past. It was noteworthy that no referance of Lushei could be traced in "*Rajamala*" the chronicle of Tipperah, written in the first part of fifteenth century. The existence of the Lushei and the Hmar tribes came into light in "*Krishnamala*", the chronicle of King Krishna Manikya, which was written in eighteenth century. This very fact suggested that before seventeenth century the Lusheis were probably in the southern part of the present Mzoram. From the report of Colonel Lister in A.D.1853, it became evident that the tribes to the south of present Mizoram had been gradually driving one another in a northerly direction. The Pawi and Lakhers(Maras) were driving the Lusheis toward the north; the Lusheis were absorbing as well as driving their northern-eastern neighbours- the Thados and the Hmar towards further northeast into Manipur; and also driving their north-western neighbours-the Darlong into Hill Tipperah upto Syhlet in the same period i.e. in eighteenth century. The Rajahs of Tipperah always claimed absolute sovereignty not only over the Halams but also on all the Kuki tribes whoever came and settle in erstwhile Lushei Hills; although they might have exercised little control over this hill tract. Alexander Mackenzie observed that the Rajahs of Tipperah carried on a desultory warfare with the various Kuki tribes living east of the State (Tipperah) and reduced many villages to subjection. This could be the reason that even though Tipperah rulers excised very little authority, the Lusheis and other Kuki tribes had high regard to the Rajahs of Tipperah and fearful of him. So they called the Rajah of Tipperah as "*Rengpui*" which means "*Great King*".

### The Halam and Tipperah Kingdom

**Hosom Bhujan and the Halam:** The Halam Chiefs were the vassals of the rulers of Tipperah Kingdom. The relation, in most cases, was confined to the paying and collection of taxes, and providing manpower for war in time of external aggression. The ancient administrative system of the Halams had at its core the tribal self-governing institution. Thus, each Halam clan and the village was self-governing. However, there was a practice in place by which the ruling house of this kingdom maintained control over different clans of the Halam; and *Hosom Bhujan* was the old traditional practise by which loyalty and obedience of the Halams was ensured. According to historian Kaliprasanna Sen, *Hosom Bhujan* was regarded by many as State Military Dinner hosted by the Royal House of Tipperah kingdom. But among the hills people this was known as *Osho Bhujan*, which mean *Feast of Durga puja*. Goddess Durga symbolized war to the hill tribes in Tipperah kingdom, Goddess Durga was known as *Osho matai*, particularly, among the Tipras, and *Osho padhon* among the Halams. In time of war, the hillmen, particularly, the Halams used to be conscripted as fighting soldiers and just before going to battle field, a feast used to be arranged for the soldiers. Queen Tripura Sundari, the wife of Raja Sengthumpha, before engagement with the Sultan Tugril of Gour (Bengal) in thirteenth century, hosted *Hosom Bhujan* for the soldiers. Similarly, queen Mahadevi of Raja Dhanya Mankya arranged big feast for her soldiers by slaughtering numerous mithun, goats, pigs and other domestic animals and served huge quantities of wine. Whether there was war or not, with the passage of time, "*Hosom Bhujan*" turned into an Annual State Dinner in Tipperah kingdom which used to be observed during Durga puja in the capital. In this annual *Hosom Bhujan* festival in the kingdom, the presence of the tribal leaders, particularly, the Halam Chiefs was compulsory. For the Halam people, *Hosom Bhujan* feast had very different meaning and significance. For the Halam *Hosom Bhujan* symbolised the honour and concern by the rulers of Tipperah kingdom. Prince Somendra Chandra Deb-Barman, Senior Nayab Dewan (Prime Minister) of erstwhile Tipperah kingdom observed that the presence of Halam Chiefs at *Hosom Bhujan* was compulsory because, according to the tradition, the Halams were original inhabitants of this kingdom, and *Hosom Bhujan* used to be hosted in their honour. The royal palace used to be thrown opened for the visiting Halam Chiefs. The Halam Chiefs would bring annual

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

tax for their respective tribes. This prompted historian Hunter to write that the “*headmen of various tribes assemble at Agartala during Durga puja festival to settle with the Raja the amount to be paid for their respective tribes; each tribe is assessed at so much per family, irrespective of the numbers of members that the family may contain. Many families are, however, exempted from assessment, on account of poverty or for other reasons*”. “*Hasom Bhujan*” festival continued as an age old tradition till the time of last king Maharaj Bir Bikram Manikya Bahadur where the Halam Chiefs were continued to be invited. On this occasion the King would appoint one Liaison official for each Chief of the clan of the Halam, and this Liaison Official was called “*Misip*”. This was the time the king conferred honorary titles and costumes, swords, guns, symbolic royal flags etc. to the Halam chiefs. After merger of this Tipperah kingdom the celebration of *Hosom Bhujan* continued by hosting Tribal Dinner on Republic Day funded by Tribal Welfare Department of the State Government in compliance with merger agreement with the Union of India. The dominance of Halam Chiefs in State Dinner or *Hosom Bhujan* was a reality since the time immemorial and the importance of Halam Chiefs was due to their role in providing fighting menpowers. The rulers of this kingdom were very jealous to ensure complete loyalty of the Halams and; among others, attendance or participation in *Hosom Bhujan* festival was considered one important way of demonstrating allegiance to the rulers of the kingdom. According to historian Kaliprasanna Sen Bidhya Binod, the Halam Chiefs used to arrange the feast of *Hosom Bhujan* at night of *Bijoya dasami* and the dignitaries and guests, who were invited in the festival, could either partake the feast or leave the venue of the feast with the permission of Halam Chiefs only. During *Hosom Bhujan*, the Halam chiefs would dominate the programme of the festival, and for this reason many would regard this occasion as royal festival for Halam Chiefs only. About the name of the dinner, there was a tradition among the Halams. Goddess Durga used to be called ‘*Osha*’ by the Tripuris as well as the Halams; and the word ‘*Hosom*’ was the corrupted form of *Osha*. From the word *Osha Bhujan* the word *Hosom Bhujan* seemed to have originated. Thus, *Hosom Bhujan* was nothing but the feast of *Bijoya Dasami* or *Dossera*.



## CHAPTER - 13

# SOCIAL FORMATION OF HALAM

**General description:** From the writing of the English scholars in nineteenth century the existence of Halam tribes came into light. *Krisnamala*, the chronicle of king Krishna Manikya, was the only native historical record which gave a glimpse of different clans of the Halam living in north-eastern part of the kingdom at that period; but many of these clans of the Halam tribe were depicted as Kuki tribes. *Krishnamala* depicted the following clans of the Halam as Kuki tribe, namely- (i) Sakachep (ii) Thangachep (iii) Rangkhawl (iv) Chorei (v) Langkai (vi) Rupini (vii) Rangrung (Ranglong) (viii) Saihmar (ix) Bowng (x) Karbong (xi) Saibem (xii) Aimol (xiii) Rokhum (xiv) Kabjang (xv) Saibowm (xvi) Haising (xvii) Chathe, all belonged to Old Kuki group. The fact of the matter was that out of aforesaid seventeenth Kuki tribes, the following tribes belonged to various clans of the Halam tribe- (i) Sakachep (ii) Thangachep (iii) Rangkhawl (iv) Chorei (v) Langkai (vi) Rupini (vii) Rangrung (Ranglong) (viii) Saihmar (ix) Bowng (x) Karbong (xi) Aimol. Nothing has been mentioned about the Molsom, Bongcher and Kaipeng clans because of the fact that they were living in Chittagang Hill Tracts and Comilla at that point of time. Kailash Chandra Singha, who served in his Majesty's Government, attempted to identify the following clans as Halam:- (1) Molsom, (2) Kaipeng (3) Rangkhawl, (4) Rupini, (5) Khuluwm, (6) Dap, (7) Chorei, (8) Koloi, (9) Marchafang, (10) Bongcher, (11) Langkai, (12) Korbong, (13) Matilung or Moti Ranglong. On the other hand, Professor Amulyacharan Bidyabhusan (1879-1940), a noted ethnologist, appointed by His Majesty's Government to write the history of the Tipperah kingdom, identified the following clans or sub tribes of the Halam tribe:- (1) Rangkhawl, (2) Kaipeng, (3) Molsom, (4) Rupini (5) Koloi (6) Bongcher (7) Korbong (8) Bowng (9) Saihmar (10) Hawa (11) Lushei (12) Betlu (13) Chorei (14) Marchafang (15) Langkai (16) Mutilung (Ranglong) (17) Khuluwm (18) Dap.



### Social formation of Halam

According to census report of 1931, the following clans had been enumerated as Halam sub tribes or clans in Tipperah kingdom:-(1) Nabin (Dap), (2) Bongcher, (3) Molsom, (4) Murchafang, (5) Rangkhawl, (6) Rupini, (7) Langkai, (8) Ranglong, (9) Koloi, (10) Khuluwm, (11) Korbong, (12) Kaipeng, (13) Koireng, (14) Chorei, (15) Saihmar, (16) Dap, (17) Thangachap, (18) Sakachap, (19) Halam (i.e. Bowng).

The caste census of 1931 in Tipperah kingdom did not represent the true picture of Halam community. Dap and Nabin had been projected as separate clans although Nabin and Dap was the same clan. Bowng clan was excluded from the Halam community though the Khuluwm, a sub clan of the Bowng, had been enumerated as separate clan of the Halam community. Neither Kailash Chandra Singha nor the Prof. Anulyacharan Bidhyadhusan could give accurate account of the Halam tribe. Any clan which belonged to one of the Kuki Chin Lushai tribes should not be identified as Halam tribe because the Halam tribe has unique custom and social institution which were very different from the custom and institutions of other Kukis or the Lushai tribes. These custom and social institutions had evolved and developed over centuries under the rule of Tipperah kingdom, which has been mentioned in subsequent Chapter.

**Emergence of clans:** Kuki-Chin ethnic group was composite tribes with different dialects, customs, traditions and social behaviour. Each tribe or sub tribe was comprised of many clans and sub clans, and the Halams were no exception. As any other Kuki Chin Lushai tribes, the Halams were divided into many clans and sub clans. It was needless to say that the Halams had been one of the advance groups who first entered into present Mizoram from Chin Hills, possibly, along with the Maitai of Manipur, leaving their kinsmen behind. Normally, geographical conditions of a particular land or region shape the way of life of the people with respect to their profession, habit and outlook. Living in rough hilly region in isolated villages, which were far away from advanced plain region, it was natural that the attitude of the people would be narrow, behaviour rough and wild, simple social life but primitive. Exactly this was the situation that the ancestors of the Halams confronted. The Chin-Lushai Hills were full of steep hills with narrow valleys and deep streams' bed. As the suitable place for setting up

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

habitation for large population with easy access to water source were scarce, the ancestors of Halam must have splited up into small groups to set up isolated hamlets at location which were far from each other. In course of time, these small hemlets grew up into self-reliant village communities independent from each other. The scattered village communities gradually lost communication among themselves and developed separate identities. On account of isolation and seclusion of each village community, the dialect, custom, ritual and way of life of the village community evolved gradually which was distinctly different from the other village community. Though in the initial period of their migration they had single identity, after long perod of isolation and separation from each other, these village communities might have acquired distinct identities based on the name of river, hills, habit, behaviour or action etc. But their contact with the *Tipras* at Surma-Kushiyara valley brought social intercourse of the Halams with the *Tipras*, and this social intercourse shaped the religious belief, custom and way of life of the Halam.

When the Halam priest performed *Sapite puja* i.e. sacrifice to Goddess of paddy; he would chant the name of places where some clans of the Halams believed to have originated or got different identity of their clan, and also the Halam has some proverb. The chanting and proverb together were like this:-

*Achep inthokna Thingtanbuisang,  
Langkai inthokna Tuilangkai,  
Dap inthokna Machisizawl,  
Marchafang inthokna Morcha-sizawl,  
Khoknu inthokna Chemrangsizawl,  
Chorei inthokna Mairingpuansen,  
Sermai inthokna Belkumtlang,  
Biate inthokna Biate muol.  
Ranglong inthokna Tuiruangkola khuo,  
Kaipeng inthokna Lungsingkherjawl,  
Molsom inthokna Buorpuitanga.  
Bowng inthokna Khupuitabum,  
Rangkhawl inthokna Ramthiemzawl(Thenzawl),*

English translation was like this:

*Achep clan originated from Thingtinbuisang,*

### Social formation of Halam

- Langkai clan originated from Longai river bank,*
- Dap clan originated from Machisizawl.*
- Khawni clan originated from Chemsingzawl.*
- Choni clan originated from Maitingyansan.*
- Sernai (Salmor) clan originated from Bekarntang,*
- Biata clan originated from Biata hill.*
- Ranglung clan borned on the bank*  
*of Luiruang (Barak) river,*
- Khinyng clan borned at Lungsingkharjawl.*
- Malsom clan borned at Buarpuitang range.*
- Bong clan borned at Kharpaitolcan.*
- Ranghroul clan borned at Raathienzawl(i.e,Thenzawl)*

Achep (both Sakachep and Thangachep) clan said to have originated or got identity, possibly, when they settled at hill range called *Thangthudisng*. No one could exactly say the locat on of this place, but it should be reasonable to assume that this place was in and around Tipaimukh region because the the Sakachep and Thangachep clans said to have acquired separate identity during their settlement in this region. The legend maintained that there were two brothers from Achep clan. The elder from the Achep family migrated to upstream of Luirung (Barak) river, and his younger brother went downstream of Luiruang (Barak) river in the belief that his elder brother had migrated in the downstream. Thus, the younger brother became familiar as *Thangachep* for moving downstream, which means *Achep of the downstream*, and the other got the identity as *Sakachep*, which means *Achep of the upstream*, though they never met. The *Langkai* clan once lived on the upper watershed region of Longai river. They got the identity of their clan for taking *Lakai* (loan) during the settlement at Longai river bank. Even today they have tremendous respect to this river. Their legend maintained that the ancestor of Langkai clan was very poor and he somehow sustained livelihood by borrowing or taking loan from his neighbour. But the deity of Longai river said to have advised the ancestor of this clan in his night dream to place an empty pot covered with white cloth on Longai river bank, and also to offer sacrifice of white cock on the bank of the river. The ancestor of the Langkai clan did what he was told to do in his dream. Next morning he got the pot full of coins on the bank of Longai river, and this changed the financial condition of that

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

man. Whenever any Langkai person would cross the river, he or she did pay respect by bowing down the head on the river. As regard to *Dap* clan, they got the identity of their clan for covering salt spring with a flat stone at downstream valley. The word *Dap* means *covering* anything by a flat object. Following this incident, they were called *Dap* clan. *Khoknu* was one of the sub-clans of the Bowng clan now; however, in the past they constituted a separate clan. Oral tradition maintained that the people of this sub-clan were known for their ill temperament. They would quarrel with others on minor issues; and the often attacked others with *Dao*. They were so intemperate that they always would carry *Dao* (chopper), and often they forgot to use even spoon out of anger in time of launch or dinner; and instead would use the *Dao* to dig out the cooked rice from the rice pot. For this reason, this clan was compared with *Chemrangzawl*. The word *Chemrang* means *quick to use Dao*, this was not the name of a place. Even their women would scratch something out of anger. The word *Khok* means *scratching* or *peeling off* something out of anger, and the word *Nu* was feminine gender. The Ranglong said to have acquired their identity as Ranglong during the period of their settlement on Kanglai Hadu situated east of Kathakhal river and north ward of Vairengte of Mizoram whereas the Bowng clan said to have got their identity during their settlement at *Khurpuitabum*. The Saihmar got the identity of their clan during their settlement at *Belkumtang* i.e. Belkum range. There was a hill range in the name of Belkumtang or Belkum hill in-between Kailashahar and Dharmanagar Sub-Divisions, where Unakuti was situated. This Belkumtang was the extension of Sakhan hill range toward the north. Muroicherra and Tuingoi Darlong villages were located at the foothill of this Belkumtang range. During their settlement on this hill range, the Saihmar clan said to have got the identity of their clan. The Chorei clan said to have got their separate identity during their settlement at the place called *Mairingpuansen*, which was said to be in Manipur, possibly, Tipaimuth region. This proverb says that the *Ranglong* once lived on the bank of *Tuiruang* (Barak) River; and there was a place called *Rangrung* in medieval period which the Ahom envoys saw, a flourishing market near Jhirigat in Cachar. This was certain that they got the identity as Ranglong clan during their settlement at a place called *Rangrung*, near Jhirigat. Possibly, the word *Ranglong* was the corruption of the word *Rangrung*. The Rangkhowl

### Social formation of Halam

clan said to have got their separate identity during their settlement at the place called *Kmihienzawl* i.e. Thenzawl, and this place was in Serchhip District, west of Champhai region in Mizoram, and at present this place has been named as *Hanzawl*. The *Malsum* got their present identity of the clan during their settlement at *Buorpuilang*, where they lived at the knot of several hill ranges. The word *Mual* means *Hill*, and the word *Thuan* means *Knot*, and if these two words were combined together, it became *Mualthuan*. The *Mualthuan*s identified themselves as *Malsum*, which means *ten hill ranges or spurs*. But among other Halams and Mizos, they were familiar as *Mualthuan*, which means *hill knot*. The hearsay prevalent among the Halam clans was that once they lived at the place where several hill ranges joint together, possibly, at the place call *Buorpuilang* i.e. *Buorpui Hills*. According to oral tradition of the *Malsum*, *Buorpuilang*, i.e. *Buorpui hill* had been the place they once lived. The *Kaipeng*s' oral tradition maintained that for killing the son of the chief they had to run away fearing reprisal; and they escaped in different route. Movement in different route means *Kaipeng*. The word *Kaipeng* was the corruption of the word *Kaipen*. This has been mentioned in subsequent Chapter.

In other word, the *Kaipeng* went astray on the insistence of their group leaders and moved toward different direction from the main body out of fear. Therefore, they got the identity as *Kaipeng*, meaning *Lead to go astray*. The *Rangkhawl* clan said to have got present surname of their clan during the time of settlement at Thenzawl in Mizoram in the past. The *Mar'haifang* clan got the identity because their women were good looking and beautiful like a red chillies. The *Bawng* clan said to have got their title at the time of settlement at *Khurpuitabum*.

Kailash Chandra Sinha believed that the Halams were mixed race. Possibly, his observation was influenced by the ancestry of the *Ko'oi* and *Rupini* tribes, who belonged to Halam community, but spoke Tripuri language i.e. *Kokborok*. Even without considering these two tribes, the Halams as a whole were mixed race. Not only the Halams were the mixed blood, the *Lushei* too, were mixed blood for different reason. According to Shakespear, foreign blood had been introduced among the *Lusheis* by many captives they had taken from the plains and neighbouring tribes. The Halams have no such past history of taking captives, but the fact was that they were mixed race due to long history

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

of social and political intercourse with their neighbours, particularly, the *Tipras* and the *Bengalees*.

**The Halams of Dhalai District:** A section of the Halam tribe lived in the east of Dhalai river along the foothills of Longtorai range. This section of the Halam consist of several clans and would take pride for Halam identity. These clans were the Langkai, Achep i.e. Sakachep & Thangchep, Saihmar, Dap or Nabin, Chorei, Bowng and Marchafang. These clans, living in this region together, have developed common social bond and custom. They would never identify to outsiders by the name of their clans but as *Halam* only. They lived together in all villages in this region with an identity as Halam community; and has intense social and cultural bond among different clans. One might be curious to know as to who were these Halam clans that have developed very intimate social and customary bond with common identity as *Halam*.

**Langkai clan:** The Langkai belonged to one of the important clans of Halam; and their tradition maintained that their ancient habitat was *Khurpuitabum*. The Langkai has several cognate family clans or sub clans and they were:-

- (a) Thingphun,
- (b) Pubukkha,
- (c) Polreru,
- (d) Tuiralvai,
- (e) Simkha,
- (f) Mualdungkha,
- (g) Biate-kor.

Thingfun clan had been priestly class in the past, but Pubukkhas were regarded as high caste. Polreru and Pubukkhas were the same clan. Tuiralvai clan was absorbed to Langkai clan from Tripuri tribe. Their mother was Halam and father was *Tipra* i.e. Tripuri. A group of Tripuri men came to Halam village to collect tax, but they did not return. They did not find a place to take shelter while collecting tax in distant Langkai village, Thingphun sub clan gave them shelter. They got married to Langkai girls; and were absorbed in Langkai clan. Simkha clan too, came from Tripuri tribes and absorbed in Langkai clan. Some Rangkhawl families also have settled in Langkai village and identified themselves as Langkai clan. Molmualkha was part of Polreru sub-clan. Darbarkha sub clan was said to be quarrelsome; and they had the habit

### Social formation of Halam

to pick up any issue which would create discord. They were not in the habit of living in peace with others. Mualdungkhas were also familiar with us Thingphun sub clan because they were good in decorating sacrificial altar with tree branches and leaves. Although the word

NAME OF HALAM VILLAGES AND POPULATION IN DHALAI DISTRICT

District	Block	ADC Village/ Panchayat	Hamlet/Village	Family number	Population
Dhalai	Shuga Chowmoni	Dhancharera village	Kanalia para	83	351
Dhalai	Shuga Chowmoni	Dhancharera village	Tangal	02	05
Dhalai	Shuga Chowmoni	Dharachordia	Falkhow/Adarfo	61	293
Dhalai	Salleria	Jarthum	Borengbari	84	408
Dhalai	Salleria	Jarthum	Tholbari	117	612
Dhalai	Salleria	South Kachuchera	Doparga	57	230
Dhalai	Salleria	South Kachuchera	Kalam para	41	165
Dhalai	Salleria	South Kachuchera	Kuam para	80	389
Dhalai	Salleria	South Kachuchera	Sabar para	08	92
Dhalai	Salleria	South Kachuchera	Deb Barma para	06	27
Dhalai	Salleria	Simbudhak	Simbudhak	156	622
Dhalai	Ambassa	Barara	Peruchera	60	238
Dhalai	Ambassa	Barara	Nehungul para	133	520
Dhalai	Ambassa	Barara	Banpibul para	78	330
Dhalai	Am balsa	Barara	Gemanjey para	10	073
Dhalai	Am balsa	Barara	Nualcy para	44	178
Dhalai	Am balsa	Barara	Tharabul para	53	218
Dhalai	Am balsa	Lalchian	Kalam para	27	105
Dhalai	Am balsa	Lalchian	Geshia Mog para	05	26
Dhalai	Am balsa	Lalchian	Parari para	02	10
Dhalai	Am balsa	Lalchian	Micey para	02	07
Dhalai	Am balsa	Kamalacherra	Rangkhowl para	02	07
Dhalai	Maru	West Kamalcherra	Kulicherra	65	306

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Thingphun* was a name or title, here it means posting of decorated sacrificial tree on the ground. Their oral tradition also maintained that Kubukkha sub clan was intemperate, but had immense capacity for self restraint; and they would never divulge their thought to other.

The name of Longkai tribe was mentioned in the First Volume of '*Rajmala*' written by pandit Baneswar and Sukreswar in fifteenth century. According to their oral tradition, they came from Khupuitabum; and after long migration, the Langkai settled on the bank of Tuiruang (Barak) and Tuivai rivers. They would regard themselves as the descendant of Tuiruang (Barak) and Tuivai rivers and worship a stone at the time of harvest of new crop which their ancestors said to have brought that stone from Tuirung (Barak) and Tuivai rivers i.e. Tipaimukh region. In ancient period, they moved upto Sylhet along the course of Barak river, and Longlai parganah in Sylhet was the place where they once settled in ancient period. Their concentration as distinct social group could be noticed at the village called *Tholbari* in Janthum ADC Village in Kamalpur Sub Division in Dhalai district. Large numbers of Langkai clan have assimilated in the social formation of Ranglong, Thangachep, Sakachep, Marchafang and Chorei clans. After assimilation in these clans, the Langkai had been identifying themselves by the name of the clans in which they have assimilated such as the Ranglong, Thangachep, Sakachep, Marchafang and Chorei. As a result, identifying Langkai clans in these social groups was difficult. Their oral tradition maintained that during the period of their earlier settlement at Longai river bank, their ancestors had to survive by borrowing money from others frequently; and used to repay the loan with Jhum produce. Borrowing or loan, was known as *Lakai* in Halam or Langkai dialect and; for borrowing money or for taking *Lakai* they acquired the identity as Langkai. Langkai families gave annual sacrificed to Langai river deity. According to legend, a poor man sacrificed a cook to Langkai river, and put one empty earthen pot covered with white cloth on the river bank as told in his dream. The poor man got coin full of that earthen pot. This was the reason the Langkai called the Longai River as *Bamondung*, which means *Brahmin river*. Any person from Langkai clan would bow down to Longai river while crossing it.



### Social formation of Halam

*Achep clan* The Achep clan of the Halam was prominent in the past because they had direct dealing with the Rajahs of Tipperah kingdom. They were the oldest inhabitants of Cachar and Tipaimukh region of south Manipur where from they migrated to different region or parts of Tipperah kingdom, Meghalaya and North Cachar Hill. The oral tradition of the Achep maintained that they came out from 'Kharpaibum' and subsequently settled on the bank of Tuimang (Barak) river. Achep clan was regarded as priest i.e. Ocha class in the past. The hearsay maintained that Achep priest could talk with the spirit of deadman. According to chanting of the priest, the Achep clan said to have got their identity as Achep during the period of their settlement at hill range, the name of which was *Tingfimbisang*. There was no doubt that the place called *Tingfimbisang* was situated in present Mizoram. Achep clan was divided into two sections- (a) the *Sakachep* and, (b) the *Tingachep*. There was an oral tradition about the division of Achep clan, and the oral tradition maintained that two brothers of the same Achep family separated from each other at Tipaimukh-one brother moved upstream of Barak River, who subsequently became familiar as *Sakachep*, which means *Achep of the Upstream*. The young brother went downstream of the Barak River thinking that he was trailing behind the elder brother. So he got the identity as *Tingachep*, which means *Achep of the downstream*. The Acheps regarded Tuimang (Barak) and Tuivai rivers as tutelary deities and would offer sacrifice in every harvest season of the year.

The glory and prestige once they enjoyed in the Tipperah kingdom was a dream now. The source of their power and authority had been owing to their close contact with royal house of Tipperah kingdom. The royal house of Tipperah gave them importance and authority for their loyalty. The Rajahs of Tipperah kingdom exploited this clan for all purpose, particularly, as soldiers and also royal priest i.e. *Chonghai*. According to hearsay, many of them have assimilated with the Tipws. The Achep, as sub clans could be traced among the Molsom, Ranglong, Bowng, Rupini and Chorei social formations. They could also be found living in the villages of the Langkai, Marchafang or Dap clans in Tripura. In the past, the Acheps enjoyed power and position even among the Ranglong clan of Halam and their dominance was visible. Mohamunship Ringkomrai Achep, Dumsolian Achep, Vanchuangthang

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Achep and Suamneilal Achep were some famous *Halama-sa (Rai)* or Chiefs among the Ranglong clan.

(a) *Sakachep*: The Sakachep living in Tripura did not have distinct social identity. They have assimilated in different social groups of the Halams. But in Patharkandi of barak valley, Dima Hasao (North Cachar Hill) and Karbi Anglong districts in Assam, the Sakacheps have distinct identity. The Sakachep clan was comprised of the following cognate family clans or sub clans-

(1) Sumtinkha, (2) Sai-umkhik, (3), Hmar-falep, (4) Neibom, (5) Motsun or Thingphun (6) Vaichei, (7) Plensing, (8) Khotham, (9) Thirsul (familiar as Thirthu in Tripura). (10) Saitual, (11) Khuolum, (12) Telengsing, (13) Langkai (Kelphung), (14) Saithuwai, (15) Zeite. (16) Nisatarai.

The first three cognate family clans were found among the Sakachep in Tripura; but among the Sakachep of Barak valley all aforesaid cognate sub clans could be traced. In Tripura, *Khulum* and *Thirthu* were regarded as sub clans of the Bowng clan. In fact Thirthus were dominant clan even among the Darlong tribe. Langkai was regarded as separate clan in Tripura; but they were one of the sub clans among the Chorei and Ranglong clans. Even among the Rupini, Sakachep constituted as one of the sub clans, and this fact demonstrated the extent of assimilation. Outside present Tripura, the Sakachep lived in Jayantia Hills of Meghalaya under Jowai District, and they were officially recognised as *Khelma* tribe in that State. In Karbi Anglong district (Mikir Hills) and North Cachar Hills (Dima Hasao) in Assam too, the Sakacheps were officially recognized as *Khelma*. In Mizoram too, they were officially recognized as *Khelma*, and in Nagaland their official status was *Kuki*. They were also found in Karimganj, and Hailakandi Districts. Detail has been given in subsequent Chapter. In Tripura, the Sakacheps live at Kanailal para under Durga Chowmani R.D Block area in Kamalpur sub division among the *Bowng clan*, and they constituted mainstream sub clan of the Bowng clan and some of them lived among the Langkai clan. In the past, the Sakachep people occupied pre-eminence in Tripura. Montonglal Halam (Sakachep) and his son Kanailal Halam were great '*Kalims*' who enjoyed fame and prestige in their life time in Tipperah kingdom. The king of Tipperah gave him jamindary right over vast tract of land extending from Changkap area to Mahabir Tea estate under Kamalpur

### Social formation of Halam

Sub Division in Dhalai District. The Sakacheps were historical people who contributed much for the protection of Tipperah kingdom, and the influence of Hindu culture and tradition among the Sakachep was visible from past centuries. They would cremate the dead according to Hindu tradition. Thus, Waddell observed that the Old Kuki tribes of Sakachep burnt their dead. Majority of the Sakachep clan lived outside Tripura and officially familiar as *Kachep*. Some English writers were confused about the real identity of Sakachep clan, and classed the Sakachep as *Tippera*. Thus, C.A.Soppitt thought that from the Rangkhows, the Khelma, Sakachep clan sprung.

(b) *Thangachep*: Among the Tripuris, *Thangacheps* were familiar as *Khannukhe*. In *Krishnamala*, the chronicle of Krishna Manikya, the Thangachep has been described as *Khannukhe*, which means Achep of the downstream dweller in Tripuri language i.e. *Kokborak*. The Thangacheps now live in Dhalai District of Tripura and concentrated at the Halam villages along the foothill of Longtorai range. The Thangachep did not have any habitation or village where exclusively the clan lived. The Thangachep clan had five cognate family sub-clans, namely- (a) *Somche*, (b) *Parua'le*, (c) *Sompei*, (d) *Zote* or *Zaite*, (e) *Tuivol*. *Parua'le* sub-clan regarded themselves as friend of tiger; and *Sompei* sub-clan was excommunicated from the society in the past. Thangachep clan has been so mixed up with Langkai, Marchafang, Dap and Bowng clans that identifying them from other Halam clans was very difficult. Their dialect, custom, manner and other social traits were as like as that of the Langkai, Marchafang, Dap or Saihmar, with whom they lived. Some Thangachep families also could be traced among the Darlong families at Saikar and Darchoi villages; and Mirana Darlong of Saikar Darlong village in Karnalpur Sub-Division; and Ringoma Darlong of Darchowi in Kumarghat Sub-Division actually belonged to Sakachep clan. According to A. C. Soppitt, the Sakacheps (Shekajaibs) were an offshoot of the Rangkhawl, which was not true. However, the Rangkhawl has separate cognate sub-clans with distinct social formation.

During the reign of Maharaj Bijoy Manikya of Tipperah (1532-1563), the king of Jayantia kingdom, whose name was also Bijaymanik, instigated the Sakachep and Thangachep clans of the Halams of Cachar to revolt against the Rajah Bijoy Manikya of Tipperah. Maharaj Bijoy

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Manikyā invited all the Sakachep and Thangachep chiefs in his court and made them swear not to revolt against the kings of Tipperah kingdom. King Bijoy Manikyā of Tipperah kingdom gave idols of the *Tiger* and *Elephant* made of bronze to all Halam chiefs during the time of taking vow in the royal court as symbol and memory of that vow. This has been mentioned in preceding Chapter.

**Saihmar clan** :-This clan does not have distinct social identity today as they have assimilated with other Halam clans. Oral tradition maintained that the Saihmar were famous for their heroism in time of war. They called themselves as *Sermai*, not Saihmar; and other Halams, who were their neighbours, also identified them as *Sermai*. The Saihmar clan were comprised of the following sub clans -

- (a) Teinil,
- (b) Sereng,
- (c) Tuloiwai,
- (d) Khoreng,
- (e) Kei.

*Teinil* sub clan would regard the wild *guano* as their relative because when the ancestor of this sub clan lost his way in deep jungle *guano* rescued him. He caught hold of the tail of *guano* and followed it, and finally able to come in the village. *Kei* sub clan would regard the tiger as their kin because the ancestor of this sub clan said to have crossed the river by holding the tail of tiger. But there was a section of Saihmar who did not have any sub clan due to curse their ancestor got for telling lie to the king of Tipperah. The legend maintained that the ancestors of the Saihmar served as the royal soldiers of Tipperah kingdom. One day the king told the Saihmar soldiers that if they could kill all the goats herded by his herdsmen in the field as fast as possible they would be rewarded. The Saihmar soldiers went to the field and said to have butchered all the goats including the royal herdsmen in the twinkling of an eye. The king went to the field and saw that his herdsmen too had been butchered alongwith the goats. The king became sad and asked his Saihmar soldiers as to who was responsible for the killing of his herdsmen. His Saihmar soldiers denied the killing of royal herdsmen. The king said to have cursed saying that the person who killed his herdsmen must have no identity i.e. clan. This curse said to be the reason for losing the identity by a section of Saihmar clan. Khoreng sub-clan

### Social formation of Halam

could be traced among the Darlong and Biata tribes. Among the Lusheis they were called *Koibring*.

When Prince Krishnamoni was in exile, he lived among the Saihmar clan for a few days. Thus, "Krishnamala", the chronicle of Prince Krishnamoni, mentioned about Saihmar clan like this-

*The Prince went to Kongkhoul village,  
From there he arrived at Saihmar village,  
Learning the arrival of the prince at Saihmar village  
Colonel Rai (General) became very sad.*  
"Krishnamala"

Prince Krishnamoni, during his exile in the east in eighteenth century, had dealing with Saihmar clan of the Halam. Once this clan not only live in the east of Tipperah kingdom, but also in interior hill area of Tipperah kingdom. In Killa R.D, Block of Udaiapur Sub Division under Gumti District, there was a small lively stream named as *Saihmar* *wa*, where the Saihmar once lived alongwith with the Kaipeng clan. The word "Saihmar" derived from the name of *Saihmar* clan and the word "Wa" means "Stream" in Halam dialect. Thus, "Saihmar-wa" means "Saihmar stream" in Halam dialect. Now Saihmar clan could hardly be traced as separate social group and; they have assimilated in the larger social formation of Halams, especially among the Kaipeng, Marchafang, Bowring and Langkai clans. However, their concentration could still be noticed at Pheikhower village under Danchandra ADC Village and some of them at Bowringburi in Jantapur ADC Village in Kamalpur Sub Division of Dhalai District. According to tradition, they got the identity as Saihmar during their settlement at Belkumtang i.e. Unakuti Hills in Kailashahar Sub Division. According to the oral tradition of the Kaipeng, the ancestor of the Saihmar was so strong that he once caught a wild white elephant at Ithanangsip. He became familiar as *Saihmar Rai* for catching such wild elephant. The word *Saihmar* was the corruption of the word *Saihmar*, which meant catching elephant. Here the word *Sai* meant *elephant*, and the word *Mar* meant *catching*. Thus, the descendent of *Saihmar Rai* got the identity as *Saihmar*.

**Dap or Nabin clan** : Now this clan has lost separate social identity due to assimilation with other clans of the Halams. The original name of this clan was *Nabin*, but subsequently they became familiar as *Dap*. There was oral tradition about the origin of *Dap* identity, which was handed

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

down by elders. Once upon a time a man married to a daughter of *Achep* clan. According to traditional custom, he went to the house of his father-in-law for servitude i.e. "*Ghor jamai*" for few years. During Jhum season the couple built traditional hut with rised platform in the jhum land, which the Halam called *Satu-in* for temporary shelter and stayed there during the jhuming season. One day the husband went out to downstream, where he wanted to split bamboo for making basket. Sitting on the rock in the small stream, he made a lots of bamboo split for making a basket. He kept the upper layer of the bamboo splits at his left side, and the soft bamboo splits at his right side on the water of stream. The soft bamboo splits, which he placed in his right side on the water, became redish in colour. Noticing the redish colour of soft bamboo splits, he became curious and started searching to find out if anything had caused his soft bamboo splits redish. He discovered a salt spring at the right side, where he was keeping soft bamboo splits. He collected few flat stones; and tried to covere the salt spring, and also the length and breadth of redish water stream so that others might not see. The very act of *covering* salt spring by a flat stone was called "*Dap*" in Halam language. In short, literal meaning of the word "*Cover flatly*" was '*Dap*' in Halam dialect. The descendent of this man subsequently got the identity as "*Dap*" clan. The *Daps* were comprised of the following family clans namely:-

- (1) Darjing,
- (2) Daruwa,
- (3) Nabin,
- (4) Wai-Nabin,
- (5) Thangachep,
- (6) Dap Chorei,
- (7) Khiangte-vai.

There was a village by the name of Thanabul para, also familiar as *Jabokhuo*, under Balaram ADC Village, where about thirty families of Dab clan now living. The earliest village of Dap clan was called Satelmakhai near Janthum village, and from that place they set up habitation at Khuogoibari, which subsequently became familiar as *Dabbari* and now this village is called Debbari under Salema R.D. Block. The Bengali new settlers have changed the name of the village as *Debbari*. Subsequently, they migrated to Thanabul village, Neitungul para, Kachucherra and

### Social formation of Halam

surrounding areas and has assimilated with the Longkai, Thangachap and Marchafang clans. In Tripura they were about sixty eight families only. About the origin of *Wai-Nelā* sub-clan there was oral tradition which maintained that they were absorbed from *Tipras* i.e. Tripuri tribe; and the *Lap-Choi* sub-clan was absorbed from *Cherei* clan. It was also noteworthy that *Dap* clan constitute as one of the sub-clans of *Cherei* clan. Similarly, the *Thangachep* sub-clan could be traced among the *Dap* clan, and this *Thangachep* sub-clan came from *Thangachep* clan; and subsequently absorbed in the social formation of *Dap* clan. *Khangte-Vai* was a *Lushei* clan absorbed in the *Dap* social formation.

**Bowng clan:** This clan was very prominent in the past ages in Tipperah kingdom. Anulya Charan Baidhyathan, a noted ethnologist, described this tribe as warrior who used to be in the forefront of battle field during the period of Tipperah kingdom. There was a village call *Bowngkhal* situated adjacent to Bawlte village in southern part of Mamit District in Mizoram. According to Mizo historian, Rev. Liangkhaia, Bowng people were butchered at this place called *Bowngkhal*. The place got its name from this horrific incident. The word *Bowng* means *Bowng* clan and the word *Thal* or *Thet* means butcher in Mizo or Halam language. According to Rev. Liangkhaia, there was a big stone familiar as *Bowngkhal hngpui* where a Bowng young girl said to have jumped on that big stone, when her lover tried to molest her. The Bowng clan could be traced among various clans namely-the *Cherei*, *Kuankhums*, *Darlong* (*Thirhu* Bowng), *Rangkhawl* living in Cachar valley, *Fatlei* living in Unakoti District, among the *Sakachep* in Cachar and among the *Ranglong* (the *Kamar*). The Bowng would regard *Kharpuitaban*, which was located in *Chirras*, possibly, *Chin Hills*, as their ancestral land. Thus, the Bowng has this small and very pointed proverb about their ancient habitat:

*"Bowng inzi nah Chirrasa Kharpuitaban"*

This in English translation means like this:-

*Bowng clan borned at Kharpuitaban in Chirrasa.*

The story of migration of Bowng clan was as like as other Halam clans. About the location of Bowng village in eighteenth century, "*Kristannala*", the chronicle of Tripura says-

*"Langgi nadi tse Bowng yarp shlo"*

*Singpa se me jubawj totlu utunlu"*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

English translation was like this –

*“On the bank of Longai River there was Bowng Village  
The Prince came over there with his soldiers”*

This fact corroborated the oral tradition of the Bowng people about their settlement on the bank of Longai River along with other clans of the Halam.

In another chapter of the same chronicle, it was recorded like this-

*Badramani Janardan Prabriti Sohit,  
Pathokrome Bowng parai hoilo upasthit,  
Heno kale upoddrop purbo kule hoilo,  
Bowng para thaki sobe somachar pailo.*

English translation was like this-

*The Prince, alongwith Bradramoni, Janardan  
and others appeared at Bowng village on their way,  
at that time there was disturbance in the east  
and that news was received at Bowng village.*

In another chapter of the same chronicle it was recorded-

*Tarpore jubaraj Bowng para hote  
Prasthan korilo purba kulete jaite*

The English translation was like this-

*From Bowng village the prince thereafter  
departed to proceed eastward.*

In other chapter of “Krishnamala” it was recorded-

*Bowng para hote luke barta dia ani  
Song-ger samogri koto korilo chalani.*

English translation was like this-

*People brought message from Bowng Village  
alongwith them things were dispatched.*

Prominence of this clan could be assessed from these records in the chronicle, and it seemed that they became scattered like that of Sakachep clan because they were militarily exploited by the rulers of this kingdom which forced them to disperse and had to take shelter at the villages of other clans.

The following sub clans belonged to Bowng clan:-

- (a) Thirthu,
- (b) Khowlum,
- (c) Banjang,



### Social formation of Halam

- (d) Sangrel,
- (e) Khokm,
- (f) Sakachep,
- (g) Imunthu,
- (h) Keiha,
- (i) Sunjang.

Though the Bowng clan was small and separate social entity in Tripura, the existence of a Bowng clan in other social formations was noticeable. Thus, this clan could be traced in large number among the Darlong tribe in Tripura. Almost in all Darlong villages the presence of Bowng clan could be traced. Substantial number of the Bowng clan could also be traced among the Chorei, Sakachep and Rangkhawl clans living in Assam. Falei clan was considered as small sub group of Darlong tribe in Tripura. But among this sub group of Darlong too, the Bowng clan could be traced. The mother of S.K Darlong, a retired I.P.S. and Talhmingjiana Darlong, Retired I.A.S, belonged to Thirthu sub clan of the Bowng clan. The Bowng had the institution headed by an elected body of elders called *Kalon, Chapia Kalon, Kalur, Chogio Kalur, Seagio, Ser, Tula and Tangna* etc.

*Thirthu* : Among all other sub clans of the Bowng clan, Thirthu sub clan was the largest in number. Thirthu sub clan was more in number among the Darlong tribe and in fact there were hardly any Darlong villages where Thirthu sub clan would not be found. Thirthu Bowng clan said to be very reliable to Darlong Chiefs; and always preferred as bodyguard for their loyalty. Possibly, large number of Thirthu Bowng sub clan was absorbed by the Darlong chiefs. Thirthu Bowng sub clan has two cognate family sub-clans such as Raha Bowng and Hlangreng Bowng; and these clans were found among the Darlong tribe only, not in the social formation of Bowng clan. Thirthu was also one of the sub-clans of Chorei clan, and their concentration was visible at Chorei villages in Hailakandi District in Assam. Among the Ranglong clan, the Thirthu were familiar as *Kanur* because their profession in the past was said to be making weapon etc. Thirthu sub clan could also be traced amongst the Khelma clan i.e. Sakachep in Assam and Meghalaya.

*Sangrel* : The Sangrel sub clan was known as Pharel among the Hmar tribe in Cachar and Manipur. This clan was a dominant among the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Bowng clan in Tripura. According to oral tradition, this clan has uncompromising attitude on any disputed issue.

**Khoknu** : According to oral tradition, that Khoknu sub clan was ill tempered and violent in attitude. This people were so violent that they would always carry *Dao*. They were also familiar as *Chemrang* people. The word *Chemrang* means *quick to use Dao (chopper)*. Even their women would forget to use spoon in anger; and instead would use the *Dao* as spoon in time of launch. Thus they got the name *Khoknu* for their ill temperament. The word *Khok* means *scratching out or peeling off something by using Dao, out of anger*; and the word *Nu* represented female. Khoknu sub clan had two cognate family clans namely (a) Koijing and (b) Koite. Koijing family clan was also found among the Bongcher clan.

**Kholuwn** : Oral tradition maintained that they were numerous in the past; but now this sub clan said to be almost extinct due to generational curse they inherited from their ancestors. The oral tradition maintained that a chief of opponent clan was captured in a war by a Kholuwn Chief. Realizing his imminent execution, the defeated chief said to have requested for offering food and wine to his departed soul after his execution; and cursed him saying that if the Kholuwn Chief failed to offer food and wine to his departed spirit, Kholuwn clan would be extinct. The Kholuwn Chief promised to offer food and wine, but failed to keep his promise. Instead he threw the death body of the slain chief in a pit hole disgracefully without observing any ritual of offering food and wine to the spirit of executed chief. The curse of the dead chief said to be the reason for gradual extinction of Kholuwn sub clan. Kholuwn were known for their violent temperament for which they were also called "*chemhrang*" like the Khoknu sub clan. They were violent and would create trouble in the village throughout the year. It was said that the villagers would never be in peace where this clan lived. There was a proverb like this :-

*Khulown ek sir nawh rawh,  
Darbar shir rawh,*

In English this mean-

*"Instead of treading over the excrement of Khulowms'  
it is better to appear before the Village Court"*

### Social formation of Halam

A person from this sub-clan would always try to pick up quarrel for any small issue which was not to his liking, and he would often take out his "Doo" (chopper) for attacking the opponent on petty matter.

**Sakachep** : In Tripura Sakachep clan would regard themselves as mainstream Bowng clan, and their number was very small. They had been taking the leadership role of the Bowng clan during the period prior to merger of Tipperah kingdom with the Union of India. The Bowng clan would pay tax to the King of Tipperah through the Chief who belonged to Sakachep clan. This created dispute among the Bowng clan because many did not like the leadership from the Sakachep clan. This led to break up of Bowng villages in the past.

**Banjang** : Banjang sub-clan was very small in term of population. They belonged to priestly class among the Bowng clan. The Banjang was one of the dominant sub-clans of the Hmar tribe. Among the Hmar tribe, Banjang has six cognate family clans such as Lamhoite, Simote, Sarate, Lamchwengte, Chawngmunte and Fatlei. In Tripura, the Bowng clan lived at Dhancherra and Jamthum ADC Village of Salema R.D, Block under Kamalpur sub-division and West Kathalcherra ADC Village of Longtorai Valley Sub-Division in Dhalai District.

**Muntha** : This sub-clan said to belonged Tipra tribe absorbed into Bowng clan in the past. Now few persons could be noticed from this sub-clan.

**Keiba** : This sub-clan said to have been absorbed from the Darlong tribe. This sub-clan could be regarded now as extinct.

**Sanjang** : This sub-clan too already extinct; and no person could be noticed from this family clan among the Bowng clan.

**Marchajang clan**: Marchajang clan was an important constituent of Halam tribe. According to hearsay they were Achep clan before they acquired the status as separate clan. The Marchajang oral tradition maintained that their ancestors' ancient habitat was *Khurpaithum*. According to prevailing hearsay they got the identity of *Marchajang* for the charm and beauty of their women. According to hearsay, at least one charming girl would be born in the family of Marchajang whose colour and complexion used to be as red as riped chillies. Here the word *Marcha* means *Chilli*, and the word *Apang* means *Body*; and when these two words were combined together, it would become *Marcha-apang*, which means *Body as bright as red chilli*. However, many said that they were called Marchajang for worshiping goddess *Badra*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Kali*. They planted stone in the backyard of the village as a symbol of goddess *Kali*, and made a protective fencing around the erected stone. This protected stone of goddess *Bhadra Kali* was called *Marchaber*, which means *Protective fencing*. The word *Sapang* means *backyard hill slop* in Halam dialect. The word *Marchafang* was said to be the corrupted form of the word *Marchaber sapang*. Even today this clan has preserved this tradition in their village, and would offer community sacrifice to a *Stone* which symbolized the goddess *Badra Kali*. Marchanfangs were concentrated at Neitunghul para of Ambassa Sub-Division, and South Kachuchera of Kamalpur Sub-Division in Dhalai District. Dakhinjoy Halam was the first *Kalim* (Chief) of Neitunghul para; and they belonged to Tualruphem sub clan; and they came from Cachar. Dhananjoy Halam had four sons, namely-Karmasiak, Kormothang, Kormaghul and Kormalian. Neitunghul Halam was the son of Karmalian and Neitunghul village was named after his name. Karmathng was a *Kalim* or chief of Neitunghul para. The sub clans of Marchafang were:-

- (a) Hmar Marchafang,
- (b) Bangkheng,
- (c) Raisong-wok,
- (d) Atersa,
- (e) Tualruphem.
- (f) Darbarkha (Vajun jat),

Among all other cognate family sub-clans, Atersa sub clan said to be very selfish, mean minded and stingy. Once upon a time a peson from an Atersa sub clan said to have hunged a *Zu Kola* i.e. a pot of rice beer just below his raised bomboo platform house (Tong ghar). Thereafter, that person pinned down a small pipe into the *Zu Kola* below the bamboo platform of the house, and covered his body with a wrapper and started sucking the rice beer from the pot. No body knew that he was sucking or drinking the rice beer. He was determined not to share the drink with other though such attitude was against the tradition of the community. This was the reason that this sub clan was regarded as stingy and selfish. The Marchafang would regard themselves as mainstream clan of the Halam community. They have the village institution headed by the officials called *Kalim*, *Kabur* and *Chapias* etc. Their oral tradition maintained that in ancient period their ancestors

### Social formation of Halam

came from *Khapwitebum*; and in subsequent period they settled on the bank of Luring (Barak) river. At present Marchafangs have no separate and distinct social formation. No village or habitation exist exclusively inhabited by them; they lived together with Thangachep, Langkai, Bowng, Dap (Nabin) and Saitmar clans.

**Chorei** : There were about ten families of Chorei clan have been living at Kachucherra village together with the Langkai and Thangachep clans. They have assimilated with the clans they have been living with. They have been regarding themselves as part of Marchalang community with whom they have been living with.

**The Halams of Unakoti and North Tripura Districts** : There were two important clans now living in the northeast of Longtorai range under Unakoti and North Tripura Districts; and these clans were the *Chorei* and the *Ranglung* clans. The Choreis mostly live in Damcherra, Panisagar, Kumarghat, and Gour Nagar R.D. Block areas. The Ranglungs live in Panisagar and Dharmanagar Sub Divisions in North Tripura District.

**Chorei clan** : The Chorei was one of the mainstream Halam clans in Tipperah kingdom. Their oral tradition maintained that in ancient period their ancestors lived in *Khapwitebum in Chin Hills* i.e. Chin Hills. Possibly, their identity as Chorei clan came into being during their settlement at a place called *Mairingpuanser*. There was a word which the Halam priest would mention in time of sacrifice or puja (mentioned earlier) which said :-

*"Chorei inciran Mairingpuanser"*,

This means *Chorei clan was borned at Mairingpuanser*"; but they also had tradition which maintained that in ancient period their ancestors came from the places such as *Khapwitebum, Artalawntang, Warilawntang, Kundungphai, Ramthenzawl and Kulu-haiphai* (i.e. Kale in Myanmar). According to Zo historian Dr. Vumson (U.S.A), *Artalawntang* (Mt. Victoria,) and *Warilawntang* were in Chin Hills. The place called *Kulu-haiphai* was Kale in Myanmar. *Ramthenzawl* was *Thenzawl* in Mizoram. The Chorei has many sub clans, and they lived at different hamlets in Unakoti and North Tripura Districts. But they were also found in Assam and Mizoram, across the Assam-Tripura and Tripura-Mizoram inter-State border. In term of the number of population, the Chorei clan was comparable with Ranglung clan. The Choreis were in every way very close to Ranglung, Langkai, Marchafang, Bowng, Dap, Sakachep, and

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Thangachep clans, particularly, in their dress, custom, dialect, folksongs, folklore, belief and way of life. The difference of dialects among these clans was in degree only. According to Rev. Liangkhaia, the *Chorei* and *Khiang* were the same with *Khiangte* clan of Mizoram, and came from the east. He maintained that before the arrival of Lushei tribe, the Chorei would live in Lushai Hills. In Tripura, the Chorei people would regard themselves as mainstream Halam and had deep attachment to this State because they were the native of this land from ancient period. They were sanskritised in this kingdom in term of religion and belief.

Chorei social formation presented the numerous sub clans unmatched by any other clans of the Halams. This clan has absorbed many other clans in its social formation. These were the sub clans of the Chorei:- (1) Tuisen-vai, (2) Muolfaivai, (3) Khiangte Vai, (4) Sakor-Vai, (5) Achep, (6) Daruwa, (7) Aithingrok, (8) Martala, (9) Dap/Nabin, (10) Kazari, (11) Khoknu, (12) Langkai, (13) Lunghoivai, (14) Bowng, (15) Arrabu (Khiangte), (16) Thirthu, (17) Vai, (18) Thingphun, (19) Marchafang, (20) Cholkha, (21) Norsing, (22) Kombol Khiengte, (23) Ardaihriem, (24) Neibom Akeite, (25) Rangkhowl, (26) Hriem Khiengte, (27) Kuaituia-vai, (28) Sakhuorbui, (29) Sakhuoipu, (30) Banmaher, (31) Bongcher, (32) Tansurai, (33) Tokorai, (34) Vangru, (35) Apanai, (36) Renga, (37) Khuchung (Ralmi), (38) Khua-Chorai, (39) Kombol.

Analysis of the sub-clans of the Chorei clan would reveal the extent of absorption and assimilation of other clans and tribes. Achep, Rangkhowl, Bowng, Bongcher, Langkai and Marchafang were separate clans of the Halams. Absorption of large number of Bowng clan, particularly, among the Chorei living in Assam, was northworthy. Kajari sub clan was also found among the Korbong and Rupini clans. Banmaher, Tansurai and Vangru sub clans belonged to sub clan of Ranglong. In fact, Banmaher was regarded as mainstream sub clan among the Ranglong. Vangru was one of the sub clans of the Darlong tribe. Khoknu and Thirsu(also called Thirthu) sub clans could be traced among the Bowng and Sakachep clans. The Cholkha sub clan could be traced as one of the sub clans of the Rangkhowl clan, and the Martala was an important sub clan of Sakachep clan. Vai and Kuaituiavai sub clans were from Tipras absorbed in Chorei clan. Kuituiavai sub clan could be traced among the Rangkhowl clan too; and their duty was to

Social formation of Halam

DETAIL OF CHOREI HAMLET AND POPULATION IN TRIPURA

District	Block	ADC Village	Para/Hamlet	Family number	Population
North District	Danchedima	Kacharichema	Uparjoy Chorai para	08	40
North District	Danchedima	Kacharichema	Nilbasin para	03	16
North District	Danchedima	Kacharichema	Khucoungsal	04	23
North District	Danchedima	Danchedima D.F.	North Bahadur para	01	04
North Tripura	Danchedima	Jam 3-5	Dharmalia	14	63
North Tripura	Danchedima	Danchedima	Gandhila(north)	12	63
North Tripura	Danchedima	Danchedima	Gandhila(south)	27	122
North Tripura	Danchedima	Danchedima	Halam para	66	324
North Tripura	Danchedima	Danchedima	Choral bung	16	108
North Tripura	Danchedima	Danchedima	Jakar Chakry	15	77
North Tripura	Danchedima	Danchedima	Niral Nagar	05	21
North Tripura	Paissagar	Nowrang	Balchedima	01	05
North Tripura	Paissagar	Charada Halam para	Balchedim p	25	214
North Tripura	Paissagar	Charada Halam para	Ujar'soleng	61	216
North Tripura	Paissagar	Charada Halam para	Paschim Jalubari	87	321
North Tripura	Paissagar	Charada Halam para	Purba Dalubari	93	318
North Tripura	Paissagar	Charada Halam para	Rodhul Halam para	04	244
North Tripura	Lalait	South Lalait	Halam para	86	152
Jirakoti	Kumrangha	South Jirakoti	Saneinin	70	360
Jirakoti	Kumrangha	South Jirakoti	Alhramani	45	115
Jirakoti	Gouragar	Jamtalbari	Halam bas I	140	1061
Jirakoti	Gouragar	Jamtalbari	Bancharchedima	27	105
Jirakoti	Gouragar	Jirakoti	Buricherra	20	94
Jirakoti	Gouragar	Jirakoti	Lamichema	11	56
Jirakoti	Gouragar	Jirakoti	Datucherra Colony	80	120
Jirakoti	Gouragar	Jirakoti	Datucherra	612	3713
Shalait	Salema	South Kochchedima	Halait Para	10	46

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

serve betel leave and nut during deliberation of Village Darbar and community festivals.

The Chorei was one of the important clans of Halam tribe in Tipperah kingdom since the time immemorial and; they were emotionally so close to erstwhile Tipperah kingdom that many Chorei people adopted the surname as *Tripura*, instead of *Halam*. About the origin of the Chorei clan, there was a hearsay narrated by Rev. Hriday (Chorei) Halam need to be mentioned. According to Rev. Hriday Halam (Chorei), citing the narration of legend by his grandfather, namely, Lt. Neisonbul Halam of Saipuibuol village of Panisagar R. D. Block, said that in the past a youngman, who happened to be one of the sons of a Halam Chief from Sakachep clan, said to have deep love affair with a very beautiful and charming lady; but she was partially blind young lady from her childhood. Their intense love for each other blossomed and decided to have a baby before marriage because the parent of the youngman, who was Halam chief, might not give consent to their marriage. The beautiful blind young lady conceived a child without marriage. One day the beautiful pregnant lady was brought to appear before the Village Council for deliberation in accordance with customary law, and when asked about the reason of her pre-marriage by the Elders and Members of Village Council, she disclosed everything about her love affairs with the son of village chief. The youngman had to marry the pregnant blind lady according to custom as directed by the Village Darbar. The father of the youngman, who was also the Chief, expelled his son from his house for causing shame to the family. Thus, the new couple left the village and settled at the place which was far away from the village. In Halam language the word "*Cho*" means "*blind*" and "*Rai*" means "*pregnant*", and when these two words were combined together it became *Chorai*. The descendant of this family said to be the ancestor of the "*Chorei*" clan of the Halam. Many people pronounced as *Chorai*, instead of *Chorei*, which also means having *separate* family in Tripuri or kokborok language.

Like any other Halams' clan, the Chorei has democratic form of social institution headed by *Kalim*, *Kabur*, and *Chapia* etc. in each village. The village Darbar headed by *Kalim* settled all disputes as far as practicable. In past the Chorei even occupied high position among the Koloï tribe. According to Dr. P.N. Bhattacharjee, some of the



### Social formation of Halam

influential *Halam-sa* or "Rai" (chief) from Chorei sub-clan of the Koloi tribe could be traced. Baikuntina Koloi, Dolechandra Koloi, Indramani Koloi and Paktnamuni Koloi were some of the *Rai* or *Chief* from Chorei sub-clan in Koloi tribe. Among the Ranglong clan, the Chorei also occupied important social position in the past. Thus, Tangterai Chorei and Bulopchung Chorei became *Halam-sa* i.e. Rai of the Ranglong clan. Many Chorei people living in Damcherra and Assam assumed the surname as *Tupara* whereas most of the Chorei living in Tripura assume the surname as *Halam*. But the Chorei people, living in Assam and Mizoram along the adjoining area of Tripura boundary, had been facing the identity crisis because the *Halam* tribe was not recognized as Schedule tribe officially in those States. As a result, the Chorei people living in Assam has been forced to enlist themselves as one of the sub tribes of the *Kuki* tribe.

**Ranglong clan:** Ranglong oral tradition maintained that in ancient period their ancestors lived at *Kuapaitibam*. Ranglong was one of the several clans of mainstream Halam community; and also known as *Mubheng* in Tipperah kingdom. Some said that the word "Ranglong" was originated from the word "*Hrangai in-iaoy*" which means blister of skin of the knee caused by hot water poured out over the young man from high raised platform of the house by a disturbed mother because the young man often would come down below the platform of her *Tong* house for dating her daughter. The descendent of the young man got the identity of "*Hranglong*" which was said to be corrupted form of "*Hrangph-in-iaoy*". It seemed that they got the identity as *Ranglong* clan during their settlement at a place called *Rangrang*, near Jhirighat. However, it was the belief that the word *Ranglong* was the corruption of the word *Rangrang*.

Their cognate family sub-clans were - (1) Banmaher, (2) Tansurai (3) Tara (4) Marchafang (5) Sak-Rupini, (6) Tang Rupini, (7) Wangra, (8) Khiengle-Chorai, (9) Sanghei-pu, (10) Achep, (11) Langkai, (12) Malfaiyai (13) Tuivol, (14) Khoplapu, (15) Vai, (16) Zangtak, (17) Jhirthu (Kamar), (18) Chuantcia, (19) Kuaitua.

Among all these sub-clans, Banmaher and Tara were regarded as mainstream Ranglong clan, and the remaining sub-clans came from other Halam clans, who have assimilated into Ranglong social group. The uniqueness of Ranglong social formation was that it embraced

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

many clans such as the *Achep*, *Langkai*, *Marchafang*, and the sub clans of *Chorei*, *Rupini*, *Bowng*, and *Khiengte*, who considered themselves as separate social entity. Even many Tripuris were absorbed into Rranglong social formation in the past and; thus, the *Vai* was a *Tipra* tribe. On the other hand, *Wangru* or *Wangroi* sub clan was found among the Darlong tribe, whereas the Thirthu (Kamar) sub clan came from Bowng clan of the Halams. Pujas or sacrifice of the villagers normally held in the house of *Taras* and; *Tansurai* was the one who used to sacrifice the animal at the altar of puja. The sub clans such as *Tansurai* and *Kuaituia* got these surnames from their profession. *Kuaituia* was the one who would serve bettle nut and leaf in any ceremony; who would present flower garland, served water, and burned resin with incense-pot for aromatic vapour. The Banmahar clan has following sub-clans namely (a) *Mama-tan*, (b) *Tabb Bong*, and (c) *Nolbong*. Their oral tradition maintained that Banmahar clan originated from the muscle of his mother; *Tabb-Bong* sub-clan derived its title for making the bamboo post of raised oven platform (called Raph) which the tribal would normally construct just above the oven or furnace for keeping the cooking ingredients. *Nolbong* sub-clan got their title for wearing wooden-made earring. *Mama-tan* sub-clan got the title for murdering his maternal uncle under the influence of liquor at “*Zu bual*” i.e. gathering for drinking rice beer (where people gathered for drinking liquor and rice beer).

In the past, the Ranglong clan had a lot of dealing with the rulers of Tipperah kingdom. According to 1<sup>st</sup> volume of *Rajmala*, the Ranglong lived around the ranges of Bhuban Hills. The manuscript of Ratna Kandali and Arjun Das Baishnab, the two Ahom envoys, who came to royal court of Tipperah kingdom at Udaipur, give us a glimpse of the administrative structure of the Ranglong living in Cachar and their relationship with the royal house of Tipperah kingdom during the years from 1709 to 1715 A.D. The written account of the Ahom envoys gave a vivid picture on the socio-economic condition of the Ranglong clan in eighteen century. The Ranglong said to have been living along the mountain ranges stretching along the bank of Barak river, and physically, they resembled the Dafla tribe. The manuscript mentioned about the Ranglong, who carried bow, arrows, shields and spears. The Kings of Tipperah said to have exercised authority over the Ranglong

### Social formation of Halam

clan by appointing their chief who was known as "Halamna-se". Under the chief "Halamna-se" there were subordinate chiefs one Galin (Kalim), one Kabir, one Chagie and one Dolvi. They dressed and eat like the Nagas, but did not eat beef. The Rajahs of Tipperah posted *Taskar*, a royal official, who used to be transferred often by replacement with another. The Ahom envoys arrived at the place known as Ranglung. The place was trading centre where people sold mithun, ivory, paddy, ginger, watermelon, arecanut, cotton, beetle leaves, pumpkin and spices etc. The traders from Cachar (Hiramba) kingdom used to bring tobacco leaves, rice, dry fish, salt, oil, dried arecanut, goats, duck and chicken etc. and; the traders coming from Manipur kingdom sold gold, bronze made plate, earthen pot and jar, fine clothes and horse. The traders of Tipperah sold bronze, salt, oil, dry arecanut, dry fish etc. The Ranglung would pay annual tribute to the king of Tipperah in kind and the tribute was comprised of gold, ivory, bronze plate, fine clothes, cotton and mithun. They also used to give one mithun to the king of Cachar for trading at that place. Bhuban hill was a place where Ranglung, Sakachap, Thangachap, Langkai, Chorei, Maichalang, and Dap, clans of Halam lived for centuries together in the past. Rock cut temple and cave with stone images of Durga and Siva exist till today; and this was the works of Tipperah kings. Bhuban hill derived its name from this Bhuvaneshwari temple. *Krishnamala*, the chronicle of Prince Krishnamoni, mentioned how Ranglung once came to meet the exiled Prince Krishnamoni and said this:-

*Jenolo Bhuvaneshwari na-ae giribar  
Se uorbolo ani sobilaki purdo par  
Sei Raja anake koroye an-niyai  
Sei betu crud kori sehisi lethai  
Jodi anumoli ana sob tode  
To-ae ani thakibo tumar adikare.*

(*Krishnamala*)

English translation was like this-

*Do you know there is a mountain named as  
Bhuvaneshwari?  
We live in that mountain located in the east,  
That Hiramba king is doing injustice to us and*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*We are angry for this reason and have come to you.  
If you give permission to all of us  
we all want to be under you(rule).*

(Krishnamala)

Bhuban hill was the place where the Ranglong lived in the past, possibly, before their migration to Manipur. But there had been an incessant contest among different Kuki Chin tribes migrating toward the north and the north east for the occupation of Bhuban hill and surrounding regions. About Bhuban hills, R.B. Pemberton wrote "*the Bhuban range which appears to rest on limestone base, terminates the plain on the east from which it rises very abruptly and stretching along the Barak to the southward for about 49 miles, becomes blended near the hill village of Lalong, with vast mountain tract which terminates only at cape Negrals; is clothed with dense forest, and the Barak courses at its eastern base, with a velocity which no boat can steam when the volume of the stream has been swollen even by transient showers. The more lofty peaks and ridges of the range attain on elevation of from two to three thousand feet above the plain of Cachar and there are not more than four or five villages upon it, the most northern of which are inhabited by kookees and the southern, by Chengsels, a tribe which has, within the last four years, been forced to desert its originally haunt, amongst the more Southern ranges, by the aggression of one still more powerful, which now occupies the spot originally held by the changsels*". This mountain range had been mentioned by the Ahom envoys as *Rangrung hills*, which stretches along the bank of Barak river. In Tripura, the Ranglongs have settled in Dharmanagar and Panisagar Sub Divisions in North Tripura District.

Large number of Ranglong population lived in Barak valley; and they have been confronting identity crisis as the Halam community has not been recognized as Scheduled Tribe in Assam. Similarly, there were few Ranglong villages in north Mizoram and one village near Aizawl in Mizoram who faced the similar situation; and gradual assimilation has threatened their existence as distinct social group. The Ranglong of Tripura came from the Syhlet in Bangladesh, but those who settled in Syhlet were immigrants from Barak valley. Hunter identified them as *Old Kuki* tribe living in Cachar. Ranglong has a social institution headed by *Halama-sa*, whose social status was equivalent to *Rai* of other Halam clans. Further, there were subordinate officials such as *Kalim, Kabur,*

Social formation of Halam

NAME OF RAVGLONG VILLAGES AND POPULATION IN TRIPURA

District	Block	ADC Village	Paras/hamlet	Family	Population
North District	Samcheria	Rahuncherra	Valukcheria	54	255
North District	Samcheria	Rahuncherra	Sandhaser	53	15
North District	Rajapur	Machuban	Halambasi	60	318
North District	Rajapur	Baidurg	Bagiraf para	53	12
North District	Rajapur	Baidurg	South Baidurg	13	60
North District	Rajapur	Zozang	Sanchikon	55	18
North District	Rajapur	Zozang	Langfir para	57	415
North District	Rajapur	Zozang	Thokcheria	47	276
North District	Rajapur	Zozang	Thangang	88	419
North District	Kadamtala	Balicherra	Kachucherra	106	579
North District	Kadamtala	Balicherra	Balichami	105	470
North District	Kadamtala	Balicherra	Khaiya para	52	279
North District	Kadamtala	Balicherra	Kalicherra	63	255
North District	Pansagar	Noayang	Lalcheria	52	10
North District	Pansagar	Noayang	Balicherra	15	84
North District	Pansagar	Noayang	Noayang	77	560
North District	Pansagar	Noayang	Sonkhola	44	217
North District	Pansagar	Noayang	Medhya Thangang	63	411
North District	Pansagar	Noayang	Janulura	80	209
North District	Pansagar	Noayang	Sunelaha	13	54
North District	Pansagar	Indurail	Changnaga Bosti	63	252
North District	Pansagar	Indurail	Tingara	78	388
North District	Pansagar	Indurail	Indurail colony	70	253
North District	Pansagar	Chn. Halam para	Paschim Dalubar	22	134
North District	Pansagar	Chn.Halam para	Purba Dalubar	53	12
Total					

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Chapias, Mukhtiar* etc. Most of the Ranglong elders would assume the surname as *Halam*, and felt proud for being a member of Halam society. In the recent past, the Ranglong youths had been slowly drifting away from Halam society, and as a result, they have been giving more importance to the identity of their clan. This has happened because some educated persons from this clan have been encouraging the Ranglong youths for giving more importance to their clan identity; and as a result many of them would take pride as *Ranglong* clan only. They have translated Bible in Ranglong dialect; and to make this venture sustainable, they encouraged the youths for separate identity as *Ranglong*. As a result, *Ranglong Youth Association* has been established in A.D.1994; and this organization, no doubt, was a centrifugal force. Today many Ranglong youths have become clan centric and would like to take more pride as Ranglong tribe. However, with the recognition of Halam language by the State Government for primary education, the youths are taking renewed interest in Halam identity.

**Halams of the west bank of Dhalai river and beyond:** The Molsom, Kaipeng, Bongcher, Korbong and Rangkhawl clans of the Halam live scatterly in the region stretching from west of Dhalai River upto Gomti District. These Halam clans represented very distinct social group due to long separation from other Halam clans. Due to their proximity to mainstream Tripuris, they have been greatly influenced by the Kokborok speaking people in all respect.

**Molsom clan:** According to their legend, the Molsoms were the advance guard who led the migration of *Kukis-Chin* tribes from their ancient land. The legend maintained that the Molsom came out from the hole of stone-cave called "*Lung-seer-kak*", which has affinity with the legend of the Kaipeng clan. The word *Lung* means *Stone*, the word *Seer* means *corner*, and the word *kak* means *crack*. Thus, the literal meaning of the word *Lungseerkak* was *crack of the stone corner*. Was this the crack of Stone Wall or the crack of stone cave through which the ancestors of Molsom emerged? Molsom legend maintained that no other Kuki-Chin tribes could come out of the stone-cave or *Lungsirkak* as the land over which they were to pass through was hunted by a giant bird which they called '*Muatepui*'; possibly, this creature was dinosaur. Any people who came out of the stone cave said to have been eaten up by this giant creature.

### Social formation of Halam

The Molsoms trained themselves and made sufficient weapon such as bow, arrow, shield, spear and sword etc. They also brought well-trained hunting dogs; apart from a big and strong hunting net for trapping the 'Muzepui'. Whenever they tried to come out of that stone-cave, the giant bird would come rushing to attack the Molsom migrants. At last they trapped the giant creature with hunting net and let loose the hunting dogs to attack it. They also pierced the creature with arrows and spears and succeeded to kill it. From that day they regarded the dog as their brother because dog said to have helped to kill the giant creature. Not only the Molsom, but all the Kuki-Chin tribes call the Dog "U". The word "U" means "elder" in Halam's language. The word "U" meaning Elder, said to have originated from the word "U". All other Kuki-Chin tribes said to have followed the Molsom while coming out of the stone-cave during the period of their earliest migration. Thus, they claimed to be advanced guard of all Kuki-Chin tribes.

Their oral tradition also maintained that they left behind the trail of their movement by felling trees so that the rear groups could trace the route of movement of advanced group. But the trunk of the trees, which they felled behind, said to have dried up quickly and covered with mosses, and looked very old. So the rear group of the Kuki-Chin tribes went to other direction as they could not trace the route of movement of advanced group-the Molsom. This could be the legend of all the Kuki-Chin tribes related to their migration from Tibet or China in ancient period. Kachin i.e. Singpho legend maintained that they were separated from the Kuki-Chin tribes who had gone ahead of them and they spent many days to trace the route of movement of the Kuki-Chin tribe. As they could not trace the route through which the Kuki-Chin people went ahead, the Kachin people called the Kuki-Chin people "Khang" which means "foot print" because they were looking for footprint of Kuki-Chin people. About their past settlement in Chin-Lushai Hills, the Molsom still remembered those places in different way. The Molsom priest used to chant these words at the time of sacrificing a cock at the altar of goddess of wealth called "Sapite" during the time of the new harvest saying:-

*Kii-danphai a la Sapite  
Saxaxel phoi ato Sapite  
Kwote bu saung bit maoh.*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

The English translation was like this:-

*Goddess of wealth from Rili-Champhai land*

*Goodness of wealth from Sanzawl land*

*Fill the burn with my dear Paddy.*

Further, when they harvest new jhum paddy and threshed the paddy at the basket, at that time they would shout the same words. The Molsom, like their kinsmen, said to have lived in Rili Champhai region of present Mizoram where they did shifting cultivation at virgin forest land and prospered. The Rili Champhai had been the corridor through which the Molsom, like their kinsmen, came from Lentang range in Chin Hills to present Mizoram. Possibly, before their migration to Champhai region, the Molsom also settled at Sanzawl, which was located at Lentang range running north-south parallel to Manipur river. It was certain that at Lentang hill range, the Molsom lived alongwith other Halam clans; came down to Surma-Kushiyara river valley, and thereafter, moved to Borpuitang in Chittagang Hill Tracts traversing Jampui, Sakhan and Longtorai hill ranges. The Molsom or Mualthuam often talked about the legendary "*Arsi-en khuosa*" village. This legend maintained that once the Molsom settled at a very large village which they named it "*Arsi-en khusa*", meaning "*Beautiful Star like Village*". The village was said to be located over the mountain slope and the numerous houses on the mountain slope resemble the stars in the sky. The village was so big that if anyone walked with a wet wrapper made of raw cotton, which was locally known as *puanpui*, the wet wrapper dried up before completing the walk from one end of the village to the other end of the same village. The Darlong tribe also has similar legend about this large ancient settlement. The story of *Arsi en Khuosa* was about big village where they lived in ancient period, and where giant python swallowed their children each day. The village was destroyed by earthquake forcing the surviving ancestors to migrate. They also talked about the preparation of rope-way which they called "*Runrui*" for crossing the river named "*Tuiwom-nu*" or "*Black Water river*". This legend has been mentioned in preceding Chapter.

According to an oral tradition of the Molsom, the royal line of Tipperah kingdom said to have descended from Molsom clan. A Molsom Chief said to have married to a Tripuri woman who was widow with one son, and apart from this, the Molsom chief had a wife from his tribe



### Social formation of Halam

with whom he got one son. One day the king tested the intelligence of the two princes by asking them to ride an elephant as quickly as possible. The prince, whose mother was Molsom, tried to ride the elephant with a ladder made of bamboo and it took the prince long time to make the bamboo ladder. On the other hand, the second prince, whose mother was Tripuri, ordered the *Mohut* (elephant herder) to make the elephant lay down and the prince quickly managed to ride on the back of elephant. For his intelligence the son of Tripuri widow stood first in the test, and the king considered him eligible to ascend the throne after him. Thus the Tripur dynasty said to have commenced in reigning in the kingdom from that time onwards. This oral tradition has been prevalent among the Molsom seemed to have no basis. Possibly, this story was the creation of royal house to extract the loyalty of the Molsom to the royal house of Tipperah kingdom.

The Molsom had a hero whose name was Zobawmthang (also called *Saglnok*) and; today this ancestor has been given the position of tutelary deity by the Molsoms. Zobawmthang was credited for his heroic acts in fighting the enemies; but also known for his cruelty. He was believed to have supernatural power which enabled him to appear anywhere at any time without the notice of other. But he never treated well to his people, and thus, was hated by his people. He was killed by a widow when he entered into her house. He was blinded by a priest with the power of witchcraft; and was murdered by an axe. Even today the Molsom Chief *Habomac* saka, the *Rai*, keeps the statue of Zobawmthang and worship it as tutelary deity. Zobawmthang was also familiar as *Saglnok*. Many said that Zobawmthang was not a Molsom, but belonged to other Kuki tribe.

The Molsom could not claim purity of blood because some of their sub clans have come from other tribes. Thus, the Molsom were mixed blood. The Molsom clan was comprised of thirteen cognate family sub clans which were as follows:- (1) Mapu (2) Sungphun, (3) Uisa, (4) Lengman, (5) Nokkham, (6) Lourek, (7) Singer, (8) Nompot, (9) Daurai, (10) Lungthang or Lungthung, (11) Achep, (12) Tuisom, (13) Ronte or Kante.

**Mapu** : They claim to be mainstream Molsom sub clan. They were regarded as the people who selected the village site and cleared the jungle and bushes to establish a village in ancient period. Among the Molsom they were largest in number.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Sungphun** : This clan was known as priestly class and mainstream Molsom sub clan. They were accustomed to make trap with sharp bamboo spur on the road to trap wild animals which often caused fatal injury to human being. This was the reason for calling them “Sungphun”, which means “trap with sharp spur.” This clan also known as “raider” because they often said to have committed raid and plunder in their neighborhood villages in the past.

**Lengman** : This sub clan was a dominant among the Molsom clan. They were found in most of the Molsom villages in Tripura.

**Daurai** :- This sub clan derived its title from their profession of priesthood. In Tipperah kingdom the royal priests were called as *Chontai*, *Durai*, and *Galim*. One of the famous royal priests from this clan was Rajendra Daurai (Molsom); and this clan was said to have Aryan bloods. Some Molsom elders claimed that *Daurai* were Aryan and absorbed into Molsom clan. In status *Daurai* had been just below the rank of royal head priest *Chongtai*, the chief-priest of Chaturdas Devta, the tutelary dieties of Tipperah kingdom. This clan too, could be traced among the Kaipeng clan.

**Uisa** : Once upon a time son-in-law of a chief belonging to Lengman clan went out to jhum site for clearing burned out debris of trees, bushes in the jhum field where he saw a charred animal. He lifted the charred animal to his home thinking it to be a charred wild deer and consumed the meat. But his father-in-law was searching his hunting dog which he left behind in the jhum field. Later, they came to know that the charred animal was his missing hunting dog, which was burned at the time of burning the jhum land. For eating the meat of dog of his father-in-law, the son-in-law was called “Uisa”, the meaning of the word “Uisa” was “dog flesh”.

**Nompor** : Literal meaning of this word was ‘untidy’. This sub clan actually belonged to *Achep* clan. The ancestor of this sub clan used to domesticate beautiful wild birds and animals keeping them inside his house and premises; and he never cared for cleanliness. This sub clan was look down upon in Molsom society for their uncleanliness and called *Nompor*, which means *unclean*.

**Nokkham** : This sub clan was absorbed from Reang tribe in the past. On the occasion of coronation of the village chief, a feast was prepared in the Reang village where fire accident occurred, and the house of the

### **Social formation of Halam**

village chief, in whose house the feast was held, caught fire. A person from the invitees run away from the village out of fear and took shelter in Molsom village. But people thought that he was the one who set the house of the village chief on fire. The descendent of that person became familiar as "Nokhsom" with the Molsom, which mean "burning house" in kokborok language.

*Loirek* : This sub clan got this title for their habit to live in jhum hut even after jhum harvest season was over. The literal meaning of the word "Loirek" was "living in the jhum".

*Lungthung* : This sub clan was regarded as mainstream clan of the Molsom. Out of this cognate family sub clan emerges another sub-clan which was known as *Singar Lungthung*. The Lungthung clan was known as *Loigru* in other Kuki Chin tribes. Singar Lungthung was known for their slinginess among the Molsom. Among the Kaipeng clan too, Singar and Lungthung were separate sub clans.

*Achep* : Acheps were separate clan of Halam tribe; but within the Molsom social formation, the Achep was one of the sub clans; and they were found in many Molsom villages. This clan could also be traced among the Ranglong, Chorai and Rupini clans in Tripura.

*Tuisom* : Molsom oral tradition maintained that this sub clan came from Reang tribe. There was a tradition for allowing an outsider to settle in Molsom village. When an outsider wanted to settle at Halam village, the family would not be allowed to settle at the village at once. First, before admitting a family from other village into Molsom village, the family seeking admission to Molsom village would be told to settle at downstream of nearby streamlet or rivulet for a year so that the villagers could keep a watch as to whether the family members were *mitok* or not. The Tuisom clan were subjected to this procedure before their admission into Molsom village. The word *Tai* means stream and the word *Som* means downstream. The nomenclature as *Tuisom* originated from this traditional practice. Tuisom sub clan was further divided as *Tuisom-vom* and *Tuisom-sax*. Tuisom vom sub clan could not use *gamar* (Gamai) tree as firewood because in the past, a young lady from this sub clan was attacked by tiger. The tiger was sleeping at the ashes of gamar firewood under the raised platform house( locally called *Tong Gher*) at night. For self protection, the lady pinned down pointed stick into the eye of the tiger as she unexpectedly saw the tiger sleeping at

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

the place of her firework down the *Tong* house. She was bitten by the tiger. So she took vow not to burn firewood of gamar tree.

**Ronte or Rante :** This sub clan was few in number among the Molsom, and they were also found among Darlong tribe. Col. J. Shakespear identified them as *Rangte* in Manipur. In Manipur they were familiar as *Gangte*. They said that they came from Darlong tribe. Among the Halam community, the Molsoms were significant in number in the State of Tripura; and as a clan they still maintained collective village life. The Molsoms were concentrated in Gumti, Sipahijala, Dhalai and West Districts in Tripura. Some Molsom families have migrated to hilly region in Assam State for the convenience of shifting cultivation. Besides, many young people have migrated to Aizawl and other places in search of better livelihood and the process of migration continues even today.

Educated Molsom youths have been drifting away slowly from Halam society today. The youths were more clan centric in their approach and attitude. Thus, they love to identify themselves as Molsom to outsiders, and use *Molsom* as surname. Some church leaders appeared to have encouraged for clan centric identity. As a result, the tandancy for clan centric identity has been gaining popularity among the Molsom youths. Some missionaries from Mizoram have been working among the Molsom since A.D.1970. As a result the influence of Mizo culture and way of life has also penetrated into Molsom society. In the past, the Molsom clan had been proud member of Halam society, and would claim the first position among the twelve clans of the Halam tribe, but this was not the case anymore.

**Kaipeng clan :** There were two oral traditions about the origin of the name of this clan called *Kaipeng*. The ancestors of Kaipeng said to be engaged by their chief as professional for playing the gong. This was the reason for getting the nomenclature of *Kaipeng*. The word *Kai* means *Hang* and the word *Peng* mean *Gong*. Gong was normally of big size and made of bronze. In time of community festival, dance, war, death of a person etc. it was played or beaten to make the sound echoed to farthest corner. Normally big gong has a hole at its corner where rope could be inserted for tying it at the middle of bamboo stick so that the gong could hang in the middle while two men might carry the gong on their shoulders by a bamboo pole. While the two men would carry the gong by putting both end of the bamboo pole on their shoulders, the

Social formation of Halam

NAME OF MOLSOM VILLAGES WITH POPULATION IN TRIPURA

District	Block	ADC Village	Para/hamlet	Family	Population
DNT	Matabari	Kalabar	Molsombari	75	363
	Killa	Atharabula	Barabari	87	426
	Killa	Adharatale	Biswajera	69	363
	Killa	Atharabula	Rajpur	37	279
	Killa	Kachigang	Laxmar para	89	357
	Killa	Kachigang	Longdi para	49	251
	Killa	Kachigang	Jhara	59	256
	Killa	Rajyabari	Molsom para	113	505
	Killa	Sevabari	Thalbar	134	625
	Killa	Tarpeing	Tingabets parts)	159	1020
	Killa	East Khumpulwng	Tharcachena	89	378
	Killa	East Khumpulwng	Rakhalwng	30	187
	Killa	East Khumpulwng	Monhang	81	383
	Killa	South Baramura	Bar palbari	72	310
	Killa	South Baramura	Sonkholabari	33	154
	Killa	South Baramura	Dakbari	35	104
	Killa	South Baramura	Tamrabei	20	78
	Killa	South Baramura	Pushguli	26	171
	Killa	South Baramura	Kalsibari	37	195
	Killa	South Baramura	Janabari	43	185
Killa	South Baramura	Nakulbari	23	126	
Killa	South Baramura	Sukhmoharbari	56	256	
Killa	South Baramura	Twicharbari	28	57	
Killa	South Baramura	Miyatari	33	256	
Killa	South Baramura	Sevanchara	26	117	

History and culture of the Halam tribe

Killa	South Baramura	Najilalhararbarani	46	184
Killa	South Baramura	Najila Chumborbarani	46	174
Killa	Jolema	Sankarthalbarani	73	337
Killa	North Baramura	Tuibaklai Koloji para	49	233
Killa	North Baramura	Baramura para	38	156
Killa	North Baramura	Agachainarua para	22	102
Killa	North Baramura	Chuto Congrai	67	275
Killa	North Baramura	Tuibaklai	95	431
Killa	North Baramura	Lalkak para	38	201
Killa	North Baramura	Luther para	13	74
Ompi	Batsyranipara	Haluapara	08	27
Ompi	North Tuicu	Kaipeng para	03	14
Ompi	North Tuicu	Bangali para	02	07
Ompi	South Tuidu	Tuikhreng para	02	06
Ompi	Tuidu	Tuidu	36	177
Ompi	Tuidu	Rabindra para	07	25
Ompi	North Songang	Molsom para	22	132
Ompi	South Songang	Maruapara	48	193
Ompi	South Songang	Bangsipara	27	105
Ompi	South Songang	Saipalhari para	49	212
Ompi	Palku	Colony para	07	42
Ompi	Palku	Khekhe para	00	40
Ompi	Palku	Lunglung para	18	98
Ompi	Palku	Panlunga	40	218
Ompi	Palku	Pabaga para	39	205
Ompi	Palku	Palku para	11	35

Social formation of Halam

	Ompoi	Saliku			02	07
	Ompoi	Saliku	Saribang no-1		02	13
	Ompoi	Saliku	Saribang no-2		01	03
	Ompoi	Saliku	Saribang no-3		02	1
	Ompoi	Chechia	PM3 Koldi para		12	48
	Ompoi	Ompinazar	Balayamani para		02	06
	Ompoi	Shanlaka	Lengitok para		01	09
	Ompoi	Sanwicheera	Caraku		148	319
	Ompoi	Manicheera	Jadubeladumpara		17	92
	Ompoi	East Tucholwng	Jadubeladumpara		22	306
	Ompoi	East Tucholwng	Kacam Ch. Para		43	170
	Ompoi	East Tucholwng	Kiranjay para		19	72
	Ompoi	East Tucholwng	Ompicheera		52	253
	Ompoi	East Tucholwng	Khepri para		43	303
	Ompoi	East Tucholwng	Sarai para		08	18
	Ompoi	Sanwicheera	Sankhaty		56	305
Sipahjala	Jampujjala	Jar Ganjarara	Gongarai No.1&2		227	1022
Sipahjala	Jampujjala	Jarpattalla	Bloyarai para		153	584
Sipahjala	Jampujjala	Kila-Bunta	Gongarai para		10	62
Sipahjala	Jampujjala	Kila-Bunta	Tangpui para		54	303
Sipahjala	Jampujjala	Kila-Bunta	Saribang no.1 &2		51	234
Sipahjala	Jampujjala	Sangkhumakari	Halbura Molsom para		15	62
Sipahjala	Jampujjala	Cholpuna	Twichok ro		49	238
Sipahjala	Jampujjala	Cholpuna	Walghad		20	108
Sipahjala	Jampujjala	Cholpuna	Satral		20	137
Sipahjala	Jampujjala	Tweking	Tweking		37	437

History and culture of the Halam tribe

Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Thelakung	Sairai	112	526
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Thelakung	Celory No 2	39	190
Sipahijala	Melegharh	Kaliram	Siigorla para	34	191
Sipahijala	Melegharh	Kaliram	Mayacharan para	36	197
Sipahijala	Melegharh	Kaliram	Chani kr. Para	51	261
Sipahijala	Melegharh	India kupara ADC	Davalsingh para	50	274
Khawai	Munglakami	Nunacherra	Prajabahadur	45	260
Khawai	Munglakami	Nunacherra	Gorrajoy para	12	61
WTripura	Belbari	East Belbari	Bikram Molsem para	40	187
WTripura	Mandalai	Khamting	Khamting	50	257
Chalai	Ambassa	Ghamacherra	Molsem para	128	569
Chalai	Ambassa	Gantacherra	Kulai para	10	27
Chalai	Ambassa	Kaitalacherra	Chancherra	142	648
Chalai	Ambassa	Kaitalacherra	West Kaitalacherra	22	91
Chalai	Ambassa	Kaitalacherra	Taipasa	263	1325
Chalai	Ambassa	Lalchari	Sargma para	08	17
Chalai	Ambassa	West Malicherra	Kariyobhota Molsem bari	38	175
Chalai	Ambassa	West Malicherra	Kariabaka Molsoir	38	175
Chalai	Ambassa	Jelicherra	Nakul D/B para	01	05
Chalai	Dumbouragar	Kalajhari	Tribhagya para	30	
Chalai	Dumbouragar	Laxnipur	Maskumbir	06	24
Chalai	Dumbouragar	Ramragar	Monobhakar Jibakanta molsem para	140	560
Chalai	Manu	Manu	Marak Basi	12	53
Khawai	Telamura	Sarcukarkani	Debthang para	03	17
Khawai	Telamura	Sarcukarkani	Bahumani para	01	03
Khawai	Telamura	Sarcukarkani	Jeychan para	01	04



### Social formation of Halam

other third person used to play or beat the gong. According to other oral tradition, the name of the clan i.e. 'Kaipeng' said to have originated or derived from the word *Kaipem*. The word *Kaipeng* was the corruption of the word *Kaipem*, which means *going astray*. Widely held oral tradition maintained the ancestor of the Kaipeng murdered the son of their chief; and to escape from retribution, a section of their clan run away following the different routes which nobody used as path. Thus, in course of migration, the Kaipeng went astray on the insistence of their group leader and moved toward different direction. Therefore, they got the identity as *Kaipeng*, meaning *Lead to go astray*.

The oral tradition of the Kaipeng maintained that they were the descendent of *Saendun*; who was one of the brothers of *Sura* and *Mising*. Thus, *Sura*, *Saendun* and *Mising* were three brothers of the same parentage. These three brothers said to have been rescued by *Siakwan*, a widow, from a place called *Lungsing Marisani*, which, if translated, means "Land with stone-cover" and brought them in the west. This legend was similar to "Lungsiak" of the Molsom. From *Kolam* (Burma) they migrated to Rili-Champhai region of present north-eastern part of Mizoram; and said to have lived at the basin of *Tuirung* (Barak) and *Tuivai* i.e. *Tipaimukh*. According to an oral tradition of Kaipeng, during the reign of *Dangor-pha*, who was better known as *Adi-Dharmapina* or *Hari Rai* (641A.D), *Liandanga Kaipeng*, one of the ancestors of the Kaipeng, crossed the Barak River (*Tuirung*) alongwith his sister *Sarkhasiani* and came to Hill Tipperah kingdom to escape from the raid of other powerful Kuki-Chin tribes. *Liandanga* left his pregnant wife *Maipunsual* as she was unable to cross the *Tuirung* (Barak) river due to pregnancy. As she was left alone helplessly, she cursed *Liandanga*, her husband, saying that he must suffer throughout his life time for leaving her helplessly at the mercy of the enemy. It need mentioned that the Kaipengs even today remember *Tuirung*, *Tuivai* and *Tuivon Rivers*, the tributaries of *Tuirung* (Barak) river by offering sacrifice to *Tuirung*, and *Tuivai* rivers' deities like other clans of the Halam. Besides, they also offered sacrifice to the deity of *Tuivon* river i.e. *Surma* river. The proverb, legend and sacrifices established the fact that the Kaipeng too, at certain point of time lived in *Surma-Kushiyara* *Surma* valley alongwith other clans of the Halam tribe in ancient period. The Kaipeng moved across the north eastern region of erstwhile

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Tipperah kingdom. During *Khuoser* (Ker) puja, the Kaipeng priest would mention the places such as *Hachek Hill* which stretched in the region of the present Northwest Mizoram, *Jampui range*, *Longtorai hills*, *Raima* and *Saima* (called *Sorma* now) rivers of Gondhacherra, *Lowgang cherra* of Amarpur, *Muhuri* and *Feni Rivers* of Belonia, where they settled in the past in course of their forward and return movement to and from the Chittagang Hill Tracts. When new paddy in the jhum became ripe, it was customary among the Kaipeng clan to thrash the ear of the ripe paddy in a big basket by hand on the first day of new harvest. While thrashing the ears of paddy of the first harvest in the big bamboo basket, he or she would chant loudly saying these words :-

*Bu hong rawh bu hong rawh,  
Khurse bangba bu hong rawh,  
Sajai Sakhan tang bu hong rawh,  
Longtorai Soldeng tang bu hong rawh,  
Sikpui-Jampui tang bu hong rawh,  
Rili- Champhai bu hong rawh,*

English translation was like this:-

*Paddy come here paddy come here,  
Come here paddy from termite hole,  
Come paddy from Sajai Sakhan hills,  
Come paddy from Longtorai Seldong hills,  
Come paddy from Sikpui Jampui (hills),  
Come paddy here from Ridil & Champha,*

This tradition of Kaipeng also gave an insight about the places of earlier settlement. *Ri lake* in Chin Hills, Myanmar, *Champhai* region in north east Mizoram, *Sikpui* (Hachek hill was also familiar as *Sikpui*), *Jampui hill*, *Longtorai* (also called *Seldong*) range, *Sakhan range* and *Sajai range* (*Sajai* region was watershed region of Chengri river in Chittagang Hill Tracts) were the places where their ancestors once lived. This was the region where the Kaipeng, Molsom, Kolo, Rupini etc. clans of the Halam lived together with the Reang and Tripuri tribes. About their return from the Chittagang, the Kaipengs have this proverb:

*Ka-nunga lam in kir keti,  
Sak le thang anradow khom-in  
Ka ui lam riat in nunga se kati  
Ka unao le ratong keti.*

### Social formation of Halam

English translation was like this:

*I will return along the path I came from  
even if there is air between the east and west,  
I will follow the route through which my dog goes  
and be united with my relative.*

The Kaipengs were Old Kuki tribes, and were the most advance guard in their migration. They have been mentioned in the first Volume of *Kapala*, the royal chronicle of Tipperah, which was written in 1409 AD. The Kaipeng priest, while performing the sacrifice in the jhum and, would mention some heroes of the Kaipengs, and the names of these heroes were Lalzingpuia, Lalzinglala, Lalbungpuia and Simulala who led their migration. However, this was nothing but ancestral worship. The Kaipeng has the following nine cognate family clans or sub-clans: (1) Lungthung, (2) Kuarsat, (3) Sagar, (4) Sengtoi, (5) Senghor, (6) Daurai, (7) Surjang, (8) Salmar.

**Lungthung** : Lungthung was an important sub-clan of the Kaipeng, but this sub-clan could also be traced among the Molsom. Among the Hmar tribe, this clan was known as Lunglac. Lungthung were divided into two-(a) Lungthungsen (b) Lungthungwom. This sub-clan was regarded as Chieftain Clan i.e., *Surkship* in Kaipeng clan.

**Daurai** : Daurai was priestly class who assist the *Changrai*, the Chief priest of tutelary deity of the king of Tipperah. However, the Molsom also has Daurai as one of the sub-clans. This title was given for their profession during the period of their settlement in Tipperah kingdom.

**Senghor** : In Tripuri dialect the word "Seng" was "basket or sword", but here it means basket and the word "hor" means "carry". When these two words were combined together it became "Senghor" which mean "Carrying the basket". Senghor sub-clan said to have carried the luggage of their Chief. This sub-clan derived title according to their profession in Tipperah kingdom.

**Sengtoi** : This sub-clan also derived the title for carrying sword of the Kaipeng Chief, the *Halama-rai* i.e. *Rai*. This sub-clan used to take care or carry the sword of the Chief. The word "Seng" means "sword" and the word "toi" means "holding" in Tripuri language. Thus, when these two words were combined together, it became "Sengtoi" meaning "holding or carrying the sword of the chief". Their oral tradition maintained that people of this sub-clan were engaged as guard of the Chief of the Kaipeng clan.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Singar:** *Singar* means *wild cat*, which calmly watched the movement of its prey before hunting. In the same way people from this sub clan were good for spying. Their oral tradition said that the people of this sub clan were engaged for spying for the chief of Kaipeng. This was the reason this sub clan got the title of Singar.

**Sunjang :** Kaipeng oral tradition maintained that this sub clan said to have had the habit of creating problems and; had the habit of scheming and hatching conspiracy against the neighbours.

**Kuarset:** The oral tradition of the Kaipeng maintained that the people of this sub clan had narrow attitude and unfriendly to their neighbour.

**Saihmar :** This sub clan was from Saihmar clan absorbed in Kaipeng social formation. Their number among the Kaipeng was negligible.

The Kaipengs were concentrated in Ompi R.D. Block area, particularly, at the eastern foothill of Baramura range. They were living at Baramuara range and from that hill range they came down to settle in the plain area in the foothill of Baramura for settled cultivation.

Like the Molsom and other Halam clans, the educated Kaipengs were clan centric in their approach and dealing with others. They never introduced themselves to outsiders as Halam tribe. They take the surname as *Kaipeng*, and would identify themselves as *Kaipeng*, not as the Halam tribe. In the recent past, the educated Kaipeng youths have formed organization named as Young Kaipeng Association and Kaipeng Student Union, and giving more importance to Kaipeng identity in place of Halam. Many educated Kaipeng youths have migrated to Mizoram in search of job and economic opportunities, and married to Mizo girls, and this process has opened the avenue for many for the assimilation into larger Mizo society.

**Bongcher clan :** Bongcher was a very small clan of the Halams, and they were almost assimilated with their kinsmen, particularly, with the Molsom and Kaipeng. The Molsoms claimed that Bongchers were offshoot of the Molsom clan, and this was the reason that their custom, dresses, language etc. were similar with the Molsom. The hearsay maintained that the ancestor of the Bongcher clan was excommunicated from Molsom society in the past because his family was suspected to be a witch. In course of time Bongcher society evolved into separate social group with the increase of their population. But Bongcher oral tradition maintained that their

Social formation of Halam

NAME OF KMPENG VILLAGES WITH POPULATION IN TRIPURA

District	Block	ADC Village	Para/hamlet	Family	Population
Gumri	Ompoi	Baishyamoni	Hakrapara	08	11
Gumri	Ompoi	North Tuidu	Kaipat'gpara	42	105
Gumri	Ompoi	North Tuidu	Biranga para	34	262
Gumri	Ompoi	North Tuidu	Mamra karpang	15	62
Gumri	Ompoi	South Tuidu	Banch'gpara	39	188
Gumri	Ompoi	South Tuidu	Tirha para	52	221
Gumri	Ompoi	South Tuidu	Radhakishore para	44	108
Gumri	Ompoi	Tuidu	Tuidu	151	782
Gumri	Ompoi	Tuidu	Apanal para	54	271
Gumri	Ompoi	Tuidu	Chanlekta	55	260
Gumri	Ompoi	South S'ngang	Manu para	01	04
Gumri	Ompoi	Pa kau	Kalari para	03	15
Gumri	Ompoi	Pa kau	Swanikal para	10	49
Gumri	Ompoi	Pa kau	Gasmura	40	103
Gumri	Ompoi	Pa kau	Khekepara	18	81
Gumri	Ompoi	Pa kau	Lur'gthungpara	09	42
Gumri	Ompoi	Pa kau	Panlaga	01	03
Gumri	Ompoi	Pa kau	Rabaga para	10	50
Gumri	Ompoi	Pa kau	Som'ng No-1	41	230
Gumri	Ompoi	Pa kau	Som'ng No-2	07	306
Gumri	Ompoi	Pa kau	Som'ng No-3	73	318

History and culture of the Halam tribe

Gumri	Gumri	Palkau	Samprai Hutukpara	28	135
Gumri	Gumri	Dhanlekha	Lengcheng para	59	230
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Killa-Bama	Lungkam para	47	239
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Killa-Bama	Sarut para No-1	47	235
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Killa-Bama	Sarut para No-2	33	178
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Killa-Bama	Rabura para	22	97
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Killa-Bama	Tuidai para	47	206
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Killa-Bama	Bala para	23	104
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Killa-Bama	Sarut No 1	47	235
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Killa-Bama	Sarut No 2	33	178
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Killa-Vaitra	Rabura	25	97
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Choigaria	Choigaria	52	260
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Choigaria	Lungkam	47	239
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Choigaria	Monthang	36	182
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Choigaria	Waighari	21	107
Sipahijala	Jampujjala	Kolebari	Dwarikai Kaipeng para	20	103
Khewai	Tellamra	Sardukankari	Krishnahaw para	83	358
Khewai	Tellamra	Sardukankari	Phagunlal para	40	192
Khewai	Tellamra	Sardukankari	Babumari para	25	95
Khewai	Tellamra	Sardukankari	Debhang para	47	225
North District	Sanchhera	Monacherra	Khedacherra	10	36

### Social formation of Halam

ancestors were thought to be decimated in the war by their enemy. But many more Bongchers came out to fight which made their enemy to think that those Bongchers cut off into pieces in the the battle field again sprouted and came alive to fight them. Since that time they were known as Bongcher, meaning "sprouting from a piece". The word *Bong* means piece of a broken object and the word *Cher* means sprouting. Their chief was said to have been taken as captive in that war and was killed cruelly. They traced *Khurpaitabam* in Chin Hills and Champhai region of north-eastern part of Mizoram as their earliest places of habitation, where from they migrated alongwith their kinsmen - Molsam and other Halam clans of Tripura. The Bongcher has the following family clans-

- (a) Chorei,
- (b) Rante,
- (c) Koljang,
- (d) Pagla'
- (e) Fakmu,
- (f) Ireng,
- (g) Watok,
- (h) Waplom,
- (i) Wakbur,
- (j) Bongpui,
- (k) Wathu,

The compositions of sub clans of the Bongcher revealed the extent of assimilation of different Halam clans in the social grouping of this clan. Among this clan, Sulhu Chandra Bongcher was a prominent person in Ambassa of Dhalai District, on whose land the present Ambassa town has come up and in whose name there was a school located on Ambassa-Gandachera road.

**Chorei** : Chorei was a sub clan in Bongcher clan, but *Bongcher* clan was also a sub-clan of the Chorei clan. This fact revealed the extent of affinities of the different clans of the Halam.

**Rante** : Rante or Rante was the second biggest sub clan among the Bongcher. But Rante clan could also be traced among the Molsam clan of the Halam tribe and the Darlong as well.

**Waplom** : Waplom clan could also be traced among the Koloi tribe. This revealed the extent of kinship of this sub clan with Koloi sub tribe.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Wakbur** : Wakbur sub clan could also be traced among the Koloï tribe and; the Koloï were a sub-tribe of the Halam tribe. But the Koloï were *Kok-borok* speakers i.e. Tripuri language. This fact revealed the extent of closeness between these two clans.

**Ireng** : First ancestor of Ireng clan was said to be the son of widow. He had two beautiful daughters. His eldest daughter was loved by the son of village Chief. But one day the eldest daughter went to jhum with her lover, who was the son of village chief. As she was suspected to be witch, her lover abandoned her in the jhum land. She was rescued by the tiger near the stream. For rescuing her, she regarded the tiger as her brother. One day she invited the tiger in her marriage ceremony where the tiger got drunk with wine and created noise and disturbance. As a result, the tiger was beaten up by the villagers and chased out of the village. One day the tiger came to its sister's house and informed her that it (tiger) would never come to her and; saying this tiger went into the deep forest. This was the reason that Ireng clan would mourn when they heard the death of tiger.

The villages inhabited by Bongcher clan have been given in the table below. It appears from the data given in the table that this clan was one of the smallest clans of the Halam tribe in Tripura. However, this clan could be considered bigger as compared to Korbong or Bowng clan today.

Intimate study of the cognate family clans of the Bongcher revealed the fact that some Koloï and Chorei clans got assimilated into Bongcher

#### NAME OF BONGCHER VILLAGES AND POPULATION IN TRIPURA

District	Block	ADC Village	Paras/hamlet	Family	Population
Dhalai	Ambassa	Kamalacherra	Dhancherra	02	15
			Sangma para	03	19
	Ambassa	Kathalbari	Bongcher para	07	46
			Satyaram Chodury para	01	04
	Ambassa	Kathalbari	Bongcher & Ginerai para	04	15
Gumti	Ompi	Baishyamoni	Bongshi para	11	48
			Nelshi para	49	198
	Ompi	Tuicholong	Tuicholong (main Donlekha)	03	16
			Koraimura	04	21
	Ompi	Donlekha	Longtheng para	16	50
	Ompi	Poulkau	Rowokwa	18	60
	Ompi	Poulkau	Dowarikami (Watok kung)	03	15
	Ompi	Poulkau	Panruang-wa,	02	10



### Social formation of Halam

social formation and vice versa. Thus, Waplom and Wabur family clans, who belonged to the sub clans of Koloi and Chorei clans, could be traced in Bongther clan of the Halam. Further, Rante sub clan could also be traced among the Molsom clan of the Halam, and also among the Darlong tribe.

**Rangkhowl clan :** The Rangkhowl would regard *Kaipuitabum* as their ancient habitat. Like their kinsmen, the Rangkhowl entered the Northeast India through the corridor of Rili Champhai region of present Mizoram in ancient time, and moved toward North Cachar as evident from their oral tradition and folk tales. Rili Champhai was associated with the origin of different sub clans of the Rangkhowl. According to Rev. Liangkhaia, in ancient period the Rangkhowl lived in Vanlaiphai region in south east Mizoram before the arrival of the Lusheis. Mura, Hrangkhupa and Hrileia were some reknown heroes of the Rangkhowl. A section of the Rangkhowl moved to Doapanthur in Chittagang Hill Tracts, and subsequently came back to Hill Tipperah. Another section of the Rangkhowl along with the Biata, moved to N.C. Hills (Dima Hasak) due to forward movement of the Lusheis and allied tribes. While the Rangkhowl moved to N.C. Hill, the Biata clan moved towards Jaintia Hills. Liangkhaia was also of the view that from Vanlaiphai region the Rangkhowl moved northward and settled at places such as Saitual, Tuaburg, and Phaileng in present Aizawl District. They moved out due to forward migration of the Lusheis. In fact, in the past the Rangkhowl came and settled at Tipaimukh region before migration to other region. They lived in and around the areas, adjacent to confluence of Barak and Tuivai River, which was now familiar as Tipaimukh, which was situated in southwest Manipur. This was the reason the Rangkhowls have small proverb like this-

*"Tuivung Le' Tuivai ei ka ti".*

The English translation was like this:-

*"Tuivung (Barak) and Tuivai rivers  
were our habing gixts(place)".*

The Rangkhowl priest used to offer sacrifice to deity of *Tuivung* (Barak), *Tuivai* rivers, and he also offered sacrifice to *Tuivong* i.e. Surma river, which symbolised the settlement of their ancestors at Tipaimukh and Surma-Barak valley. The religious practice, belief and social custom reflected that they were in close contact with the Tipra tribe in the past.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

About the Rangkhawl clan, Mr. C.A. Soppitt stated that *“about the middle of the sixteenth century, as near as can be ascertained, the Hrangkhawl inhabited the country now occupied by the Lushais, bordering Cachar and their neighbours were Betes (kukis) with whom they were on friendly terms and whose language and their own was practically the same. In other words, the Betes were a co-tribe, though not and the same. The present Jansens (kukis) lived in the hills immediately at the back of the Hrangkhawl and commenced to oppress them, by degrees succeeding in driving them nearer and nearer the plains, and the ultimately out of the country across Cachar into the North Cachar Hills and Manipur, a small body taking refuge in Tipperah territory”*. C.A. Soppitt categorized the *“Hrangkhawl as co-tribe of Beite, sub-tribe of Sakajaib (Sakachep), Longrung”* (Ranglong). Soppitt said that the Rangkhawls were driven out by the Jansens i.e. Thados, and not by the Lushais. G.A. Grierson categorized the Rangkhawl as *Old kuki* ethnic group, but not as Halams. Possibly, during the time of survey, they introduced themselves as Rangkhawl, not as Halam. The Rangkhawls normally categorized themselves into two groups. Those living outside the present Tripura were called *Sak Rangkhawl* and their dialect was akin to their neighbour, particularly, the Biete and the Sakachep. *Thang Rangkhawls* were those who live in Tripura; and their dialect was similar to Molsom, Kaipeng, Bongcher and Korbong dialects. The Rangkhawls living in Tripura has ten sub clans and these were:- (1) Dabder, (2) Reipu, (3) Sairang, (4) Saitual, (5) Dramkha, (6) Malalkhak, (7) Darja, (8) Chonbak, (9) Waplom, (10) Laikei. The Rangkhawls living in Cachar and Dimasa Hasao (North Cachar District) has seven family sub clans which were not found in Tripura; and these sub clans were-(a) Bangkheng (2) Phirpu (Pena) (3) Phuaitung (4) Charkha (5) Dumbar (6) Khual Chorei (7) Bowng.

Bangkheng sub clan could be traced among the Marchafang clan, and Bowng was a separate clan in Tripura. This fact demonstrated the extent of assimilation and kinship among the different clans of the Halam tribe. The hearsay of Rangkhawl elders attributed to each family clan with peculiar character or trait. *Dabder* sub clan was said to be arrogant, care little to others and quarrelsome. *Reipu* sub clan said to have carried axe to clear jungle and trees for establishing new village in ancient time. The oral tradition maintained that while the *Reipu* was cleaning the jungle to build a new village, his people demanded rice;

### Social formation of Halam

but he could not provide them. *Saitual* sub clan came forward and distributed his own rice to the people as regularly as possible. As a result, the people regarded Saitual clan as "Matai" or the Chief. Here the word "Reipu" means "handler of Axe" and the word "Saitual" means "distribution of rice outside". There was a very small town called Saitual in Mizoram which was situated south east of Aizawl city; and that was the place where Rangkhawl lived in the past, possibly, under the Chieftainship of Saitual sub clan. *Devaokhas* sub clan was regarded to be ill tempered and always would pick up quarrel with his family members. *Malakha* sub clan was most quarrelsome; and the village chief was too tired to settle the dispute arising out of the ill temperament of the ancestor of Malakha sub clan. The village chief said to have spited on him out of anger. Here the word "Mabul" means "chief" and the word "khak" means "spit"; and the word "Mabukhak" means "Spiting by the chief". *Waplon* sub clan was related to Kuloi tribe, possibly, this sub clan settled in Rang'chow' village. *Chonbak* sub clan said to have gathered cotton from the jhum; and distributed to villagers for which reason they acquired the title as Chonbak. Here the word *Chon* means cotton and the word *Bak* means distribution in Rangkhawl language. *Kaiki* sub clan used to be regarded as very diplomatic and could form alliance to his advantage by convincing others easily. *Khaol Choni* sub clan came from Chorei clan and the *Boung* sub clan too, came from Boung social formation and; these facts gave us insight on the extent of assimilation of different clans. The Rangkhawl clan has very vibrant social institution even today like any other clans of the Halam. *Halamasa* i.e. *Sai, Kaini, Koini, Kuskua, Khawul* etc, were the jury of elders who would adjudicate all disputes within the clan. Besides, they also has other subordinate officials for assisting the jury of elders. Thus, there was *Darja* or *Daria* who would play drum in time of festival or pujas. This title was found among the Jamatia and Rupini tribes too, in Tripura. *Kongpei* was drum carrier during festive occasion. The word *Kong* means *Drum* and the word *Pei* means *carry*. *Lokkongpa* was announcer of the Village Council; who helped the chief in the management of village affairs.

In "Krishnamata", the chronicle of Rajah Krishna Manikya, the Rangkhawl clan appeared prominently. King Krishna Manikya came into contact with the Rangkhawl clan during his exile period in the eastern part of his kingdom and in Cachar. The Khuchang kukis

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

(Thados) attacked the Rangkhawl village at night where the prince was spending night. His generals were away in order to subdue the Khuchung (Thado), but the Khuchung Kukis got the information head that the Krishna Manikya would be spending overnight at Rangkhawl village without sufficient security; therefore, they attacked the Rangkhawl village. Krishna Manikya was seriously injured by poisonous arrow of the Khuchung kukis. The chronicle threw the light on the loyalty of Rangkhawl subject to the royal family of Tipperah kingdom. Thus, King Krishna Manikya subsequently had a lot of dealing with the Rangkhawl during the period of his exile in the eastern part of Tipperah kingdom. The King offered puja to Goddess Durga at Rangkhawl village.

*Many soldiers accompanied,  
and arrived at Rangkhawl village.  
Goddess (Durga image) was there at that village,  
they together prayed at the altar (of Goddess Durga).*

(Krishnamala)

Another verse of the chronicle spoke about the stay of the Prince at Rangkhawl village, where the Khuchung kukis came to attack the Prince at night:-

*At that time Khuchung got all these information  
and equipped themselves and went for war.  
At that time Prince was at Rangkhawl village  
The Khuchung people went there (to attack)*

(Krishnamala)

The Rangkhawl were royalists from the time immemorial and served the kingdom with loyalty. They ranked the fourth in term of the status they enjoyed in the royal court in Tipperah Kingdom. About the religion of the Rangkhawl of North Cachar Hills, Mr. C.A. Soppitt wrote that "the Ranghols believe in three principal gods- Lambra (Lampra), Golarai, and Dudukal. Lambra is the head god or creator, and, without his consent, nothing can be done by the others. Golarai is the god of death. Dudukal causes sickness occasionally, but more often works for the good of mankind. When this latter god has to cause death, he carries out decree through his wife Fapite (Sapite, the goddess of paddy)". Either Lambra or Dudukal, which the Rangkhawl would offer sacrifice belonged to Tripuris. The Tipras or Tripuris would worship *Lampra* as the god of Sky and Sea. The religious activities of the

### Social formation of Halam

Tipras begin with *Lampra puja*. The Sea and Sky were worshipped as *Akhtra* (sea) and *Bibhtra* (Sky) respectively, and worshipping this supernatural power jointly was called as *Lampm puja*. Dudukal was Zomcugal i.e. the Hindu god of Death called *Jouraj*, which was transmitted to the Rangkhawl through Tipras. *Coirai* and *Kalarai* were the ancestors of the Tipras worshipped as gods. This fact simply demonstrated the extent of cultural and social relationship between the Rangkhawl and the Tipras from ancient period. In fact these gods were worshipped by other clans of the Halam too. In Tripura, the Rangkhawl were concentrated in few villages and these villages were in the table below :-

District	Block	A/D/C Village	Para/hamlet	Family	Population
Sipahijala	Jampujala	Kila-Barna	Tumainang para	67	276
	Jampujala	Kila-Barna	Gongara para	39	76
	Jampujala	Kila-Barna	Killa para	70	92
	Jampujala	Kila-Barna	Nahadeep	15	26
	Jampujala	Kila-Barna	Sunazai para	61	27
Khuwai	Teliamura	Sardukarkari	Joydhan para	91	358
	Teliamura	Sardukarkari	Debhang para	135	416
	Teliamura	Sardukarkari	Bahumani para	263	1154
Dhalai	Ambassa	Kamalacherra	Kamalacherra	135	613
	Ambassa	Diancherra	Komalacherra	03	09
	Mama	Kukilcherra	West Kothalcherra	02	07

Large numbers of Rangkhawls were found outside Tripura, particularly, in North Cachar Hills (Jima Hasao) in Assam, and this has been mentioned in subsequent Chapter. The Rangkhawl elders were unhappy for their official identity as Kuki tribe. On the other hand, the younger generations of the Rangkhawl were more interested in Kuki identity because their kinsmen in Assam State too have officially been listed as Kuki tribe.

**Korbong clan** : Korbong was a smallest clan of Halam tribe. The Molsoms considered the Korbong as their kinsman for different reason. According to hearsay, the ancestor of the Korbongs was a member of Molsom clan, and he was excommunicated from the village for reason of superstitious belief that his entire family members belong to witch. The ear of the ancestor of Korbong was said to be mutilated or sliced off by the villagers. There was a superstitious belief that if a portion of an ear of a

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

witch was mutilated or sliced off that person would lose his or her knowledge of witchcraft. So the villagers said to have sliced off a portion of an ear of the ancestor of the Korbong clan in that superstitious belief and also excommunicated him. The word *Kuarbong* means *mutilated ear*, and the Korbong identity said to have originated from this word *Kuorbong*. In superstitious society, this might have happened and has been happening even today. In fact killing of a woman in tribal villages, who was believed to be a witch, has been a social curse prevalent in tribal society in Tripura since the time immemorial. But some said that they actually belonged to Bengalees who were absorbed in the Bowng clan. About the Korbong clan's habitat in the eighteenth century, *Krishnamala*, the royal chronicle of Rajah Krishna Manikya, gave a vivid picture, and the chronicle recorded like this :-

*"Etha jubaraj gelo Korbong parai  
Poriyan song-nge kari rohila tothai,  
Manu nodi tire shilo Korbong para  
Totha roila juboraj mone nai rung-go"*

(*Krishnamala*)

English translation was this-

*"The Prince went to Korbong village  
Stayed there along with his retinue,  
Korbong village was situated on the  
bank of Manu River  
The Prince stayed there with sadness"*

(*Krishnamala*)

During his exile as a prince, King Krishna Manikya stayed at Korbong village for some time, which was situated on the bank of Manu river, possibly, upstream of Manu river in present Longtorai Valley Sub Division. At present Korbong people lived at Champabari A D C Village under Belbari R.D. Block in Jirania Sub Division, and their population was about one hundred ninety with thirty families. This writer has visited Korbong village at Champabari, near Chompoknagar market. Their traditional costume, the dialect, and way of life were as like as the Molsom clan. Particularly, the dresses of Korbong women were identical with the dress of Molsom women. Korbong young girls were considered as most beautiful and charming; and thus, the Halams have this small proverb :-

### Social formation of Halam

*"Iithang Korbong Zvorn uoi,  
Yithang Korbong mel eam".*

English translation was like this:

*Iai Korbong lady of the down stream,  
beautiful Korbong lady of the down stream".*

There were four cognate family clan of Korbong namely :-

- (a) Sutar,
- (b) Kerjang,
- (c) Phungchao,
- (d) Kajari.

*Kajari* sub clan could also be found among the Chorei and Rupini clans. Many Phungchao and Kerjang sub clans have been absorbed by the Rupinis. The Korbong people were facing existential crisis because they were continuously being absorbed by their neighbour, particularly, the Rupinis and the Molsom, with whom they have inter marriage. Possibly, substantial number of Korbong population has been absorbed into Rupini clan; and now speak in Kokborok language. Some of them have also been absorbed in Molsom clan, and they were found even among the Jamatia tribe in Teliamura sub division. The process of absorption continues even today and their survival as a separate clan has been a big challenge. In the past, the Korbong also had the Chief called "Roi", and the subordinate chiefs by the designation of *Kolon*, *Kobor* and *Changis* etc. like their kinsmen. This revealed the fact that they had larger population in the past for which reason they could have social institution headed by *Roi*, *Kolon*, and *Kabar* etc. But today this traditional institution has almost disappeared as the number of the population dwindled. They still preserved the sword, shield, flag etc. given to the *Rai* (chief) by the royal house of Tipperah kingdom.

**Halam clans of mixed ancestry** : Kailash chandra Singha said that the Halams were of mixed race; and there was reasons behind such observation. Many subclans of different clans of the Halam had blood, particularly, the Tipras, Reangs, and even the plain people. But the Rupini and Koloi present a very distinct identity which was different from other clans of the Halams. In term of language they were Tipras, but as a community they belonged to Halam tribe. Since they speak in Tripuri language, they have developed more attachment and inclination towards Tripuri identity.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Rupini clan** : In spite of being Kokborok speaker, the Rupinis regarded themselves as one of the clans of the Halam tribe. The Rupini has been mentioned in “*Krishnamala*”, the chronicle of King Krishna Manikya, The Rupinis once lived with other clans of the Halam tribe in the south of Barak river (Cachar), which was part of erstwhile Tipperah kingdom; and the chronicle said :-

*Those kukis are the subject of the king of Tripura,  
I will narrate about them in brief,  
Sakachep, Thangachep, Chorai, Ranglong,  
Rangkhawl, Saibem, Saite, Saihmar, Bowng,  
Langkai, Rupini, Tuolte, Khiengte people,  
See these are the most familiar Kukis.*

(*Krishnamala*)

It was noteworthy that the Rupinis have been identified in the ‘*Krisnamala*’ as Kuki tribe along with other Halam clans such as the Sakachep, Thangachep, Ranglong, Saihmar and Chorei etc. While narrating their journey to the royal court of Tipperah, the Ahom envoys- namely Ratna Kandali and Arjun Das Baisnab mentioned the crossing of Rupini river where they did not see any habitation along its bank. But after staying twelve days at Rangrung (Ranglong) Village they came across Rupini village in Cachar district of present Assam. The hearsay was that the Rupinis once lived on the bank of this Rupini river, and got the identity of their clan. Many hill tribes and people acquired their identity from the name of the places where they once lived. In subsequent period, this Rupini River, a tributary of Sonai river, became familiar as Rakhi river. The Kings of Tipperah set up their capital on the bank of Rupini river during the period of their settlement in Barak valley in ancient time. From the narration of Upendra Chandra Guha in his book *Cacha-rer Itibritti*, it revealed that the broken relics were still visible until recently twenty five miles east of Silchar on the bank of Rupini river under Inslampur Mouja. According to him those broken relics belonged to rulers of Tipperah. The Rupinis lived on this river bank before their movement to present Tripura.

Most of the Rupinis were identified as *Julai subject* by the rulers of Tipperah kingdom, and there was legend behind this identity. During the period of their settlement in Mayni river’s watershed region in Chittagang Hill Tracts, the Rupinis said to have revolted alongwith other



### Social formation of Halam

Halam clans by refusing to pay oppressive tax to the rulers of Tipperah Kingdom. When the King with his tax collectors and soldiers arrived at the habitation of the Rupinis, they (Rupinis) attacked the him and the king got injured. The injured king somehow escaped by crawling into the house of a widow. The Rupini widow treated the injuries of the King. After returning in the capital, the King sent his soldiers who butchered entire Rupini population living in Mayni watershed region. At last the soldier caught one young Rupini boy and a girl and took them to capital before the Royal Darbar for sacrificing at the altar of Chaturdas Devta, the tutelary deity of the royal house of Tipperah. The Rupini boy and girl were so beautiful and charming that all the members of royal house were captivated. At the request of the queen, the King pardoned them, and allowed the queen to adopt the Rupini boy and the girl as her son and daughter. The queen gifted beautiful headgear and traditional shirt to the king as ransom. The queen allowed boy and the girl to touch her breast and gave them a pair of her hair as a symbol of her mothership for the captive Rupini boy and girl. From that time onward the Rupinis regarded themselves as the *subject of the Queen* of Tipperah kingdom, and started serving the queens of Tipperah kingdom. They started living in the palace to serve the queens only, and they became familiar as *juloi*. According to historian Kaliprasanna Sen and the Prince Sumendra Chandra Debbarma, the *juloi* was a helpless person who took a shelter in the royal house. He worked and served the royal house and performed all sorts of works, and was almost like a slave. He lived with his family under the care of royal house. They were regarded as lowly in social status. In the royal house, there were many *julais* with different assignment.

The Rupini has sixteen sub clans and the analysis of these clans presented a vivid picture about the geneology of this clan. These were the sub clans of Rupinis:- (1) Kerjang, (2) Sumjang, (3) Parualte (4) parate, (5) Kajari, (6) Tuival or Tuyor, (7) Daria, (8) Satub-risa, (9) Narengsa, (10) Hatan-sa, (11) Muria, (12) Bayung-sa, (13) Chungchao, (14) Paitokra, (15) Chean-muchomsa, (16) Sakachep.

Nothing could be ascertained about the ethnic identity of Rupinis without morphological test. However, intimate study of the family clans of the Rupinis revealed a lot about the ethnic identity of the Rupinis. Thus, one could say that *Kerjang, Sumjang, Parualte, Parate, Tuival*, and

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Sakachep* sub clans of the Rupini clan belonged to Kuki-Chin-Halam ethnic group. *Parualte* was one of the sub clan of Thangachep clan of the Halam and; also sub-clan of the Hmar tribe in Cachar and Manipur. Similarly *Parate* was also a sub clan of the Hmar tribe. '*Phungchao*', '*Sutar*' and '*Kajari*' belonged to the sub clan of the Korbong and Bongcher clans of the Halam. '*Kajari*' sub clan could also be traced as one of the sub clans of the Chorei clan of the Halam tribe. While investigating about the Korbong sub tribe of the Halam, it came to light that most of the Korbong population has been absorbed by the Rupinis and the Tipras through matrimonial relationship. Further '*Tuyor*' sub clan was the corruption of the word of '*Tuivol*', a sub clan of the Ranglong clan absorbed in Rupini clan. '*Kerjang*' sub clan of the Rupini was absorbed from Korbong clan. Among the Rupinis in North Tripura, *Sakachep* sub clan could be traced although they belonged to separate clan of Halam tribe. The other family clan such as '*Daria*' derived its name from the profession of beating or playing the drum. This *Daria* sub clan was also found among the Jamatia tribe in Tripura. *Daria* could also be traced among the Rangkhawl and they were professional drum beater.

According to oral tradition of the Rupinis, *Paitokra* sub clan was regarded as descendent of *Haisa*. In Halam language the meaning of *Haisa* was *Hero* or *captain*, who would lead the fighting men in the battle field. The The Thado Kukis and the Lushei people pronounced it as *Hausa*. *Satubrisa* was the name of another sub clan of the Rupini, and this was the corruption of the word of *Sotro-tuia*, meaning upholder of (royal) umbrella. *Muria* sub clan was the one who would blow the conch in time of puja and other auspicious occasion. It was noteworthy that there was no affinity among the sub clans of the *Tipras* and Rupini except their language. *Duna*, *Daspa*, *Biri* etc. were the major sub clans of puran Tipras i.e. DebBarmas; but none of these sub clans could be traced among the *Rupini*. Above all, in physical appearance, the Rupinis has distinct trait which was uncommon with any other Kok-borok speakers. Their physical appearance and complexion, in most cases, appeared to be very similar with many Kuki-Chin tribes. It seemed that though the Rupinis were Kokborok speakers, but they did not altogether belong to *Tipas* i.e. Tripuri tribe. They appeared to be mixed tribe as evident from the geneology of their cognate sub clans. Possibly, Rupini tribe had undergone prolong social transformation in Tipperah kingdom in course

### Social formation of Halam

of their long association with mainstream Tripuri population which resulted in their adoption of Tripuri language as their mother tongue. Many Rupini families living in North Tripura had adopted the surname either as *Tripura* or *Debbarna*. Thus, the assimilation of Rupini tribe in the large mainstream of Tripuri society has not stopped today. Another noteworthy case was that many Rupini families have assimilated in Ranglong clan of Halam tribe. These families now speak same dialect as those of mainstream Ranglong; and identified themselves by assuming the surname as Halam or Ranglong. Further, many other Rupini families in Cachar and north Tripura have identified themselves by assuming the surname of *Barna* and *Tripura*. Leaving few Rupini families in Ranglong society, most of the Rupinis were emotionally integrated into Tripuri society owing to affinity in terms of their language and cultural. There was little scope to assert themselves as separate linguistic group.

**Koloi clan** :- Although the Kolois were Kukborok speakers, they were counted as sub-tribe of the Halam. The Koloi has proverb which say "*Kol khai non man lagui Koloi kha jago*" which means that "*they are called Koloi because they have been trapped by application of tricks*". The word *Kol khai non noni* means *trapping by tricks*. The Kings of Tipperah kingdom believed to have kept the Koloi tribe under his rule applying all means of tricks. On the other hand, many elders believed that they were the descendent of the Kukis of *Thangachip*. When Kukis of *Thangachip* revolted by refusing to handover white elephant to King Danya Manikya, the king became furious, and sent his famous general Raikachag (Reang) to suppress the revolt. In the battle all the male Kukis were killed by the conquering Tipperah soldiers, and all the orphan children and women said to have been brought captive. The entire orphan children were called *Koloi* meaning *very young or tender* in Tripuri language. From the word *Koloi* the identity of the tribe, namely-*Koloi* said to have derived from or originated. This oral tradition was current among the Kaipeng clan. Some Koloi elders too subscribed to this view. Their oral tradition maintained that their ancestral habitat in ancient period was *Murpaitabun*; and this tradition make the Koloi very close to other Halam clans such as the Ranglong, Chorai, Bowng, Langkai, Marchaphang, Sa Hmar, Sakachep, Thongachep, Bowngcher, Dap or Nabin etc, who regarded '*Murpaitabun*' as their ancestral homeland in

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Myanmar. About their migration to present place of habitations in Tripura, Kolois elders said that they immigrated from *Doapanthor* in Chittagang Hill Tracts, which was located in the eastern part of Tripura State, across the present Indo-Bangladesh international border. The Kolois lived at *Doapanthor* together with the Rupini, Molsom, Bongcher, Kaipeng and a section of Rangkhawl which was situated in Chittagang Hill Tracts before their return to present Hill Tipperah.

The fact was that the movement from one place to another place had been a common feature among the tribal communities who practiced shifting cultivation. Thus the British political Agent of Agartala in A.D, 1872, reported emigration of Tipperahs and Kukis from Hill Tripura to Chittagang in considerable numbers. One of the principal causes of this emigration said to be occurrence of raid by the Lushei dwelling farther east; but another reason was said to be the gross oppression practiced by the hill officials of Tipperah kingdom in taxation. Further, large number of Chakma tribe emigrated from Chittagang Hill tract and settled in the territory of the Tipperah Kingdom especially on the upper water of the Gumti river, and this emigration was said to be due to exhaustion of jhum area in Chittagang, but the real cause said to be fear of raid by the Lusheis. The facts which need to be emphasized here was that emigration of hill tribes from Tripura Kingdom to Chittagang Hill Tracts and from Chittagang Hill Tracts to Hill Tipperah kingdom was a common phenomena at that period. Though Kolois used to regard *Doapanthor* in Chittagang Hill Tracts as their first habitation, it was certain that they were the emigrants from Hill Tipperah. Before their permanent settlement in plain land cultivation few decades before, the Kolois were essentially jhumias who move from one place to another region. Even now Kolois elders recollect the days of their forefathers who lived at hill ranges of Baramura practicing shifting cultivation at that time.

There was reason to believe that the Kolois were the progeny of mixed ancestry. The family clans of the Kolois gave us more insight about the ethnic identity of the Kolois. These were the eight family clans, namely – (1) Wakbur, (2) Rajugoi, (3) Waplom, (4) Kachhu, (5) Bukang, (6) Abel (Betu), (7) Chorei, (8) Molsom. The first four sub clans belong to mainstream Kolois tribe. The remaining three sub-clans were from other Halam-Kuki tribes assimilated in Kolois society. People of 'Wakbur' clan

### Social formation of Halam

was the largest in number among the Koloï; and said to have emigrated to Tipperah kingdom by bamboo raft. The name *Wakbar* was the corrupted form of the word *Wakar*, which meant bamboo Raft. This sub clan was also found among the Bongcher clan of the Halam as their sub clan. *Rujigai* clan believed to have originated from the people who had come from other tribes. The *Chorei* was a separate and important clan of the Halams. However, among the Koloï, the Chorei was mere sub clan, and their number was also small. But inspite of their small number, they seemed to have occupied important position in Koloï society. Dolchandra Koloï, Beikuntia Koloï, Indramuni Koloï and Padmamuni Koloï were the *Rai* (chiefs) of the Koloï tribe, and all of them belonged to *Chorei* clan. Koloï oral tradition also maintained that *Abel* sub clan came from Kuki tribe, i.e. *Beta* or *Betty* clan. The ancestor of this *Beta* clan worked under *Wakbar* clan, and he was called *Abisa* affectionately by his employer, which meant *Child*. The name *Abel* was the corrupted form of the word *Abisa*. On the other hand, the *Waplom* clan was divided into two, namely (i) *Waplom Koson* (ii) and *Waplom Kuphur*. *Waplom Kuphur* meant *White Coloured Waplom*, and they belonged to *Tipras*. The ancestor of *Waplom Kuphur* was a *Bindia* i.e. royal hunter who came to the home of a person who belonged to *Waplom Koson* sub clan. He never returned home and stayed at Koloï village after marrying beautiful girl belonging to *Waplom Koson* sub clan. He was of bright complexion for which reason he was called *Waplom Kuphur*. Whether *Waplom Koson* sub clan belonged to Kuki clan or not that could not be ascertained now. The ancestor of *Rujigai* sub clan was palanquin-bearer who came from plain people; he was married to beautiful Koloï girl and lived among them. The other sub clan having the root to Kuki Chin tribe was *Babrag*. *Abel* (*Beta*) clan were largest in number among the Koloï clan. Though they speak Tripuri language, they were of mixed ancestry. In the past, inter-marriage between the Koloï girl with a Molsom youngman used to be appreciated by both the clans, and was encouraged. Even today some Molsom families live at Koloï villages and identify themselves as Koloï tribe; and their children now speak in kekborok language. However, the process of assimilation with Koloï has almost stopped now. However, large number of the Koloï tribe seemed to have also been absorbed by the Tipras, and most of the absorbed families assumed the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

surname as *DebBarma*. The Tipras at Kalasathi village (near Jirania market) under Jirania Sub Division in West Tripura District, belonged to Koloï tribe absorbed in Tipra community, and such instances could be traced across the State.

**Absorption and assimilation :** Historical evidence demonstrated that Tripura has always provided a broad social framework for integration and assimilation of tribes into different tribal social formation. But there was one significant difference between the past and the present kind of changing orientation observable among the Halam tribesmen; whereas in the past ages, the movement was essentially Halam centric, that was to say, small Kuki-Chin tribal groups redefining their position into dominant Halam community formation. As a result, different clans of the Halam community had the feeling of oneness because the rulers of the kingdom never allowed them to assert their clannish feeling at the expense of Halam identity. The rulers of this kingdom encouraged various Halam clans to live as community by patronizing and enforcing, as far as practicable, uniform social code of conduct. The *Village Darbar* headed by the *Kalim* and *Chodhury* and the *Community Darbars* headed by *Halama-sa* or *Rai* respectively were the guardians of the different social formations, which were based on the identity of the respective clan. The elected chiefs of different clans of the Halam tribe would enforce discipline in their respective social formations. On the other hand, the rulers of the kingdom acted as unifying force around which Halam community revolved and got nurtured. However, after the merger of Tipperah kingdom with Indian Union, the trend has been assertion of identity of the respective clan or sub tribe. There was no longer the question of other Kuki tribe or clan seeking admission into the fold of the '*Halam Community*' formation now. In the past, the State apparatus of the Kingdom encouraged and upheld the unity of different clans of the Halam tribe as a whole. The process of assimilation and absorption has not been new to the Kuki-Chin-Lushei tribe in general and the Halam in particular. One powerful clan would absorb another minor and weak clan or when the village chief was unpopular, many villagers would migrate and settle in another village under different Chief. This process of absorption and assimilation did take place across the diverse Halam clans in Tipperah kingdom. The *Sakachep*, *Thangachep*, *Langkai*, *Marchafang*, *Dap (Nabin)*, *Bowng*, *Bongcher* and *Korbong* clans of

### Social formation of Halam

the Halams were the most affected and marginalized in term of absorption and assimilation. Thus, large number of *Acheq* clan would be found or traceable as one of the sub-clans among the Mo.som, Chorei, Ranglong and Langkai clans; nobody would be able to say as to whether the *Acheq* in these clans were *Sakacheq* or *Thangacheq*. The *Sakacheq* could be traced even among the Bawang and Rupini clans as one of their sub-clans. *Dap* or *Nabin*, *Thangacheq*, *Sakumar* and *Marchafang* clans have turned into a minor clan losing altogether their distinct social identity; and they did not have habitations where these clans lived as separate social group respectively. The *Bawang* clan living in Dhalai district identified themselves by assuming the surname as *Halam*. However, the *Bawang* clan also happened to be one of the sub-clans of the *Chorei* and the *Rangkhawl* clans living in Barak valley in Assam. The *Khapolani* was a sub-clan of the *Bawang*, *Sakacheq* and *Chorei* clans of the Halam tribe. The *Thirithu* or *Thirisa* was regarded as one of the main-stream sub-clans of the *Bawang* clan; but they could be traced as one of the sub-clans among the *Chorei*, *Sakacheq* and the *Rangkhawl* living in Dima Hasao District and Barak valley region in Assam. Among the *Ranglong*, the *Thirithu* were known as *Kauar*, and regarded as one of the sub-clans of the *Ranglong* clan. But the largest number of *Thirithu* *Bawang* sub-clan appeared to have been absorbed in Darlong tribe. Today the *Thirithu* were a dominant sub-clan of Darlong tribe. The presence of *Thirithu* *Bawang* as sub-clan could be noticed in most of the Darlong villages. Lalhringga Darlong, I.A.S. Rd, belonged to this sub-clan. The *Langkai* clan has also been losing the identity as separate social group, and they were in the process of complete assimilation with other Halam clans in Dhalai District; and it should be noticed that the *Langkai* was a mere sub-clan of the *Chorei*, *Sakacheq* and *Ranglong* clans, and they would like to identify by the clan where they have been absorbed; but in the past, the *Langkais* were separate and distinct social group. In Dhalai district the *Langkais* were familiar to outsiders as *Halam* only, and in fact they would find pleasure to identify themselves as *Halam* only. The *Sakacheqs* were few in Tripura and has no separate social identity; most of them now identified themselves by the surname as *Halam*. The *Chorei* clan was large in term of number among the Halams; but many of them has been living among the *Rangkhawls* in Cachar valley and some of them could be found among the *Kokoi* tribe as a mere family sub-clan. The

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Chorei* clan was also counted as one of the sub clans of the *Daps* or *Nabin* clan, and they were familiar as *Dap-Chorei*. *Bongcher* clan was regarded as separate social group; but the *Bongchers* living among the *Chorei* social group were counted as mere sub clan of the *Chorei* clan. *Waplom* clan was a major sub clan of the Koloï tribe, but this sub clan too, constituted as one of the sub clans of the *Bongcher* and *Korbong* clans. Among the *Rupini* and *Korbong* social grouping, *Kajari*, *Kerjang* and *Phungchao* were the common sub clans; but *Kajari* was also a sub clan of the *Chorei* clan. *Tuivol* was one of the sub clans of the *Ranglong* clan; but among the *Rupini* clan this clan was known as *Tuyor*. The *Rupinis* were one of the clans of the Halam tribe, and they spoke in Tripuri language i.e. *Kokborok*. On the other hand, the *Rupinis* could be traced as one of the sub clans of the *Ranglong* clan. *Wakbur* was one of the largest family clans of Koloï tribe; but *Wakbur* was also one of the sub clans of the *Bongcher* clan, who speak in Kuki-Chin language. The *Saihmar* clan did not have separate social identity because they have completely assimilated with the *Bawng* and *Kaipeng* clans. The *Saihmar* families living at Dhalai District have been taking the surname as *Halam*, and today they did not have distinct social identity. The *Thingphun* was one of the sub clans of the *Langkai* clan; but they also belonged to one of the sub clans of the *Chorei* and *Sakachep* clans living in North District in Tripura and Assam. *Darwa* was one of the sub clans of the *Dap* or *Nabin* clan; but *Darwa* sub clan could also be traced as one of the sub clans of the *Chorei* clan. *Tansurai*, *Banmaher*, *Vai* and *Wangru* sub clans could be traced both in the *Chorai* and *Ranglong* clans as their sub clans. *Wangru* (*Wanghroi*) was one of the sub clans of *Darlong* tribe. Among the *Kaipeng* and *Molsom* clans, the *Daurai* was a very familiar sub clan. *Khiangte* was very important Lushei (Mizo) clan, but *Khiangte* sub clan could also be found among the *Langkai* clan in Dhalai District of Tripura; and they have been taking the surname as *Halam*. Among the *Chorei* clan too, the *Khiangtes* could be traced as one of their sub clans. *Biate* tribe was regarded as one of the *Old Kuki* tribes; and now most of them live in North Cachar Hills (Dima Hsao) in Assam and Jaintia Hills in Meghalaya with distinct social identity. Among the *Darlong* tribe; *Biate* constituted as one of their sub clans; and in the same way, among the *Langkai* clan too, the *Biate* was counted as one of their sub clans; and they have been the surnamed as *Halam*. The *Biates* among the *Langkais*



### Social formation of Halam

clan were familiar as *Fakere* or *Biste-lor*. The *Bistes* were also traceable as one of the sub-clans of the *Chorei* clan. The *Ranghewai* was an important clan of the Halam tribe; but among the *Chorei*, the *Ranghewais* were counted as one of their sub-clans. Among the *Sakachep* clan, *Parwalte* was considered as one of their sub-clans; but the *Rupini* clan too, considered the *Parwalte* as one of their sub-clans. Among the *Malsom* clan, the *Rente* was a very small sub-clan; but this *Rente* clan has been very familiar sub-clan of the *Darlong* tribe. In Manipur, the *Rentes* were familiar as *Gongte* tribe. The *Kukis* of Manipur usually pronounced the syllabi *Ras G*. So *Rente* used to be pronounced as *Gongte*. The process of absorption and assimilation across the Halam clans did not occur in haste; rather it did occur slowly and gradually. This process of absorption and assimilation underlined the complexity of the Halam tribe.

**Emergence of clan-centric identity :** Different social grouping and formations were the outcome of evolution over many centuries. Important contributing factor for the emergence of clan-centric identity has been the century-long seclusion of the Halam villages under respective village or tribal Chief. Seclusion of Halam villages helped the process of evolution of the village community into separate social identity. But seclusion of village community also fostered the clannish feeling, sectarian and narrow attitude. Isolation of one Halam village from another village over centuries not only helped the process of evolution of the sub-tribe identity i.e. identity of the clan, but also contributed the development of distinct dialect and customary practices of different Halam sub-tribes or clans. But such differences in dialect and custom did not hinder the social relationship among different clans living in different villages. The Rulers of Tipperah Kingdom contributed a lot in uniting together diverse clans of the Halam because they need them as loyal subject for different purpose. One of the means for keeping the Halam subjects united was annual gathering of the Halam Sirdars (chiefs) such as *Rai*, *Kachau* and *Kabus* during the festival called *Dossor Bhojan*, an annual State Military Dinner held in the royal palace during Durga puja i.e. *Dossers* festival. In this State Military Dinner, all Halam Chiefs were required to participate and pay a nominal community tax as a token of loyalty. Thus, the royal house acted as unifying agent for the Halam tribe. The royal authority of Tipperah kingdom did recognize

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

all the Old Kukis living in the kingdom as *Halam* community only. As a result, different clans of the Halam tribe could not assert clan centric identity. The royal patronage to Halam society prevented any assertion of authority by different clans of the Halam community. After the merger of Tipperah Kingdom with the Union of India, total scenario changed for the Halam tribe. Royal patronage ended, and each clan of the Halam tribe became assertive. Particularly, the *Molsom*, *Kaipeng*, *Bongcher*, *Korbong* and the *Rangkhawl* started asserting the identity of their respective clan. Today if some outsider asked about their identities, they would happily reply saying the he or she was "*Molsom*" or "*Kaipeng*" or "*Bongcher*" or "*Rangkhawl*" or "*Korbong*". Even among the *Ranglong* or *Chorei* clans this trend could be noticed now. Today identity as *Halam* tribe for these clans required for official purpose only. In the recent past the craving for clan centric identity has gained more acceptance among the educated youths of these clans. The *Rangkhawl* drifted away from Halam society as soon as they were listed officially as *Kuki* tribe in the State. On the other hand, the *Rupinis* and the *Kolois* were *Kokborok* speakers and they had more attachment to *Tipras* in all respect. Thus, leaving apart a few clans, most of the clans have practically drifted away from Halam tribe. They have been giving more importance to the identity of their clans; and such trend seemed to be more acute among the youths.

**Halams living outside Tripura :** The Halams were the historical people of Tipperah kingdom and they were spread over not only in Tripura but also in neighbouring States namely Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, and even in Bangladesh. Like any other hill tribes of the North-east India, in the past the Halams were in constant move as semi nomadic people. The search for security and better livelihood compelled them to migrate in the places where they felt better and secured. Moreover, internal oppression by the royal officials within the kingdom or incursion of other powerful Kuki-Chin-Lushei tribes into their habitates forced the Halams to migrate in safer regions. Above all, their livelihood based on shifting cultivation made them semi nomadic. The shifting cultivation could not bring settled economic life because virgin forest land for shifting cultivation would exhaust within a few years which forced the hill tribes such as the Halams to migrate to other regions where suitable forest land was abundantly available. However,

### Social formation of Halam

their migratory habit did not emanate from economic circumstances alone. The past events in Tipperah kingdom too did influence the migration of the ancestors of the Halam. Fact of the matter was that their past history was intertwined with the destiny of erstwhile Tipperah kingdom. With the shrinkage of the geographical area of Tipperah kingdom with the passage of time, many Halam inhabited regions were left outside the shrinking boundary of the Tipperah kingdom. But the social customs and traditional social institution of the Halams had been so deep-rooted in their society that they went on clinging to time tested social customs and institution in spite of geographical separation from each other over many centuries. As a result, some of their social institutions, social customs, and traditions survived, and could be traced among the Halams living outside the State. The Halams were dominant *Old Kuki* ethnic group. About this *Old Kuki* tribe i.e. Halam, living in Barak valley W.W.Hunter observed stating that "*the term 'Old Kuki' is applied to a tribe living in farther side of the Barak river in North Cachar, who appear to have nothing in common with the Kukis proper or Lushais. Their system of village government is democratic, and thus is strong contrast with that of all other tribes to which the name of Kuki is applied. The 'Old Kukis' speak the language akin to that of the Tipperahs, whom also they resemble in physical appearance. The names of their principal clans or sub tribes are the Kanghoi, Khelara (Sakachep) and Kanglong. The Kukis who reside beyond the southern boundary of the District have no hereditary chief. A kind of taxman, called *Calin*, is elected by the people of each village. His duties, however, are principally connected with religion, and all disputes are decided by an assembly of elders of the village, which take for their remuneration one fourth of the fine which they impose upon the losing party*". Thus, the Halam seemed to have developed distinct social identity which was characterised by democratic social institution headed by *Kalin*, *Kabar*, *Chapris* etc. long before. Apart from their social customs, this social institution headed by *Kalin*, *Kabar* and *Chapris* was an important and visible yardstick for identifying the different clans of the Halam living outside of present Tripura. While writing about Tipperah kingdom in Cachar valley, Upendra Chandra Guha had mistakenly identified the Halam tribe living in Cachar valley as *Tipras* or *Tripuris*, and there was reasons for such mistake. The Halams were deeply influenced by the *Tipras* in their belief, culture, and way of life due to their association with the *Tipras* for many centuries. Above

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

all, the Halam had deep attachment to Tipperah kingdom, For demonstrating this attachment, many Halam families of those regions identified themselves by assuming the surname as *Tripura*. U.C. Guha, while writing on history of Cachar, had mistakenly identified the sub clans of the Halams namely-Delpung, Sumtinkha, Mutsung, Saituiwai, Telengsing, Neibum, Dolai as *Tipras*. U.C. Guha had also categorised the different clans of the Halams namely- Ranglong, Khelmas (Sakacheps), Chorei, and the Rangkhows of Cachar valley as *Tipras*. He had also mistakenly depicted vocabularies of the Halams as that of the *Tipras*. The fact was that many Halam families living in valley identified themselves by assuming the surname as *Tripura*, and this situation made difficult for their identification.

**Sakachep or Khelmas:** Sakacheps were very old and familiar tribe in Tipperah kingdom in general and among the Halam tribe in particular. Maharaj Bijay Manikya (1532-63 A.D.), one of the great king of Tipperah, was the one who brought the Sakacheps and the Thangcheps of Cachar to his capital at Rangamati (present Udaipur) and made them swear for absolute loyalty to the royal house of Tipperah kingdom; and he presented them bronze idol of tiger and elephant as token of this vow; and subsequently became most trusted tribe in the Kingdom. The Sakachep were known for their bravery and loyalty as soldiers in the kingdom. C.A.Soppitt was confused about the identity of the Sakachep (Khelmas) in North Cachar and categorised them as the offshoot of Rangkhawl. Outside the Tripura, the Sakachep clan mostly lived in the Districts of Hailakandi, Karimganj in Barak valley, Dima Hasao (North Cachar Hills) and Karbi Anglong in Assam. The Sakachep could also be traced in Jayantia Hills of Meghalaya at the villages, namely- (i) Mongar village and (ii) Saitama villages under Jowai District. In Karbi Anglong District of Assam, they lived at the following villages, namely- (i) Lankarcha, (ii) Khleminglong, (iii) Rumphung, (iv) Sachen, (v) and Umpho; and the population was about three thousand only. Some Sakachep families of Jayantia Hill identified themselves as Pnar (Jayantia) after marrying Pnar ladies. In Hailakandi district of Assam, the Sakachep villages were-(1) Korat and (2) Tangpui (Kalidas Punjee), (3) and Garmura; and in Karimganj district (1) Jailian (Borobhuriband), (2) Ronpur, (3) Kungpui (Bhutucherra), (4) Khuathar, (5) Baruatilla, (6) Zaita and (7) Cheragi. In Dimasa Hasao (N.C. Hill) District, the Khelmas

### Social formation of Halam

or Sakacheps lived at (1) Baigao, (2) Luizente, (3) Christian Lunglut, (4) Hindu Lunglut, (5) Christian Bangphiri, (6) Hindu Bangphiri, (7) Phuinol, (8) Dorbin, (9) Tuisuonthum, (10) Kekrang, (11) New Kekrang, (12) Lungding Khelma, (13) Mundet Khelma. In Naga and the Sakacheps lived at Khelma khuo in Parem District. In Mehalaya, Mizoram, Assam and Nagaland States, the Sakacheps were officially recognised as *Khulus*. The sub-clans of Khelmas i.e. Sakachep were- (a) Vaichei, (b) Sumtinkha, (c) Thirsu (in Tripura they were called Chirhu), (d) Saituvai, (e) Neihom, (f) Kholum, (g) Langkai, (h) Idengsing, (i) Thingphum, (j) Kelphang, (k) Nisatarai, (l) Matsun. The sub-clans mentioned at (b), (c), (f), (g) and (i) above were found among the Halams of Tripura. Their traditional attire and ornaments, especially the women, were like the Halams of Tripura. Traditional attire of a Khelma woman in particular was black as that of Halam woman in Tripura. Their social institution was as that of the Halams in Tripura which was headed by *Kalin*, *Kaba* and *Chapis*. About the social organization of Khelmas, J.P. Mill stated that "*the organization is democratic. The head of each clan is known as Kalin. The Kalin settle matters of importance. The tribe belong to the Old Kala stock. It points to the Lushai Hills to the south as the place of origin. Thence it was driven out by the Lushai expansion of the 15<sup>th</sup> century*". Even today the Sakacheps living in Assam, Meghalaya and Naga and have sustained the social institution headed by the *Kalin*, *Kaba*, and *Chapis* etc., which was as like as the social institution of the Halam tribe in Tripura. The *Sokodays* were more familiar to the local government officials as *Khulmas* because they had officially been enlisted to be like this.

**Rangkhawl:** The Rangkhawl were the ancient inhabitants, and emotionally attached to Tipperah Kingdom. Almost half of the Rangkhawl people lived in Dima Hasao (North Cachar Hill); and some of them live in Barak valley alongwith the Chorei and Ranglong clans. These were the sub-clans of the Rangkhawls now living outside the Tripura State:

- (a) Cholkha,
- (b) Phirpu (Pena),
- (c) Bongkheng,
- (d) Dumkar,
- (e) Khual-Chorei,
- (f) Bowng, etc.,

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

None of these sub clans were found among the Rangkhawl living in Tripura. The Rangkhawl of North Cachar Hills and Barak valley used dialect which was quite different from the Rangkhawl dialect used in Tripura. On the other hand, dialect of the Rangkhawl now living outside the Tripura was almost similar to the dialect of the Chorei, Thangachep or Langkai clans living in Tripura. C.A.Soppitt, Lt. Assistant Commissioner and Sub Divisional Officer of erstwhile North Cachar Hills, believed that the Rangkhawl of North Cachar (now Dima Haosa) emigrated from the erstwhile Lushai Hills, bordering Cachar, possibly, due to constant raid of the Thado Kukis. Some familiar names of the Rangkhawl villages in Dima Hasao (North Cachar Hill) in Assam were:- (1) Zion, (2) Mualpong, (3) Lungkhak, (4) Achikrobi, (5) Paiza, (6) Diyungte, (7) Rekho, (8) Buangkung, (9) Chaptuk, (10) Bualzawl, (11) Tangpui, (12) Dolaichunga, (13) Michikhur, (14) Boro Robi, (15) Khouthang, (16) Chaktuk, (17) Tuikin, (18) Kaliangabong, (19) Biyung, (20) Khoihunoi, (21) Lawer Machikhur, (22) New Machikhur, (23) Zora. At present the Rangkhawl population in Dima Hasao district in Assam would be around seven thousand.

About their religious belief, C.A.Soppitt wrote that *“the Rangkhols believe in three principal gods- Lampra, Golarai and Dudkal. Lampra is the head god or creator, and, without his consent, nothing can be done by others. Golarai is the god of death. Dudkal causes sickness occasionally, but more often work for the good of mankind”*. Their religious belief, the deities, once they worshiped were as those of *Tipras*. *Lampra* was the god of heaven and ocean worshipped by both the *Tipras* and *Reang* tribes in Tripura. This revealed the fact that once the Rangkhawl lived in Tipperah kingdom and they had been deeply influenced by the religious belief of *Tipras*. The traditional social institution of the Rangkhawl living in Assam was identical with the social institution of the Halams in Tripura. The *Rai*, *Kalim*, *Kabur*, *Chapias*, etc. were the designations of the officials of Community Darbar of the Rangkhawls in Tripura. This institution, excepting *Rai*, could be traced among the Rangkhawl tribe living in Dima Hasao District in Assam. Thus, A. C. Soppitt wrote *“the Ranghols and the sects allied to them recognize no Rajas, each village being ruled by a Galim (headman), aided by Gabur (assistant headman, and two subordinate, a Chapia Galim and Chapia Gabur-their titles are not hereditary. On the death of a Galim, the Gabur is raised to his place, and so on; thus a man, before he*

### Social formation of Halam

became a *Calin*, has to work up through all the grades from *Chapta Gabur* – the *Calin* is the president of all village councils, and has, with his subordinates, a great deal of the say in any matter affecting the community. All village disputes, quarrels, fights etc. are brought up to him". According to Soppitt, the Rangkhowl of Dima Hasao (N.C.Hills) were the the inhabitants of present Mizoram in sixteenth century and before, and lived with the Biate clans. The oral tradition of the Rangkhows now living in Tripura also maintained that in the past they lived in Champhai region, which was situated in the east of present Mizoram. Most part of present Mizoram was considered as part of Tipperah kingdom in the past. The Rangkhowl now living in Dima Hasao District (erstwhile North Cachar Hill) and other part of Assam were the emigrants from Tipperah Kingdom. Their oral tradition, custom, and social institution were witness to these facts. Their social institution and religious belief revealed about their association with Tipperah Kingdom.

**Ranglong** : This clan was one of the important social group of Halam tribe, and could be regarded as ancient inhabitants of Tipperah kingdom. They now live in the regions stretching from Baghsai in Dharmanagar Sub Division of North Tripura District upto Barak valley in Assam state. Their separation was the result of arbitrary demarcation of eastern boundary of Tipperah kingdom by the Britishers. Longai river was made the eastern boundary of Tipperah kingdom in 1872 A.D, which make the Ranglongs living east of Longai river as subject of British India. In the first volume of *Rajmala*, the royal chronicle of Tipperah, the Ranglong were identified as *Ranglung Kuki* of Tipperah kingdom. Historian W.W.Hunter described the Ranglong of Barak valley as *Old Kuki* tribe. These were the Ranglong villages in Barak valley in Assam :-

#### RANGLONG VILLAGES OUTSIDE TRIPURA

State	District	Name of village
Assam	Hailakandi	Kaisirani
	Hailakandi	Jamira
	Hailakandi	Udarbon
	Cachar	Choto Salgonga
	Cachar	Paloi Bazar
	Karimganj	Sabri
	Karimganj	Jugicherra
	Karimganj	Nurka

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

	Karimganj	Khumlicherra
	Karimganj	Lamkhang phong
	Karimganj	Jairal
	Karimganj	Saief
	Karimganj	Pipla
	Karimganj	Rangamati
	Karimganj	Makunda
Mizoram	Mamit	Tui-moi
	Mamit	Kanhmun
	Aizawl	Phungchong veng

Ratna Kundali and Arjun Das Baisnab, the two Ahom envoys, who came in the royal court of Tipperah three times in between 1709 to 1715 A.D. described them as Kuki under the Chief called *Halam-sa*. The Ranglongs living in Barak valley of Assam has close kinship with the Ranglongs living in Tripura. As the Halam tribe was not within the official list of Schedule Tribe in Assam, the Ranglong were forced or compelled to enlist as *Kuki* community for official purpose.

**Chorei :** The Chorei clan now living in Tripura has been regarded as mainstream Halam. This was the reason that the *Chorei* people living in Tripura identified themselves by assuming the surname as *Halam*. But many Chorei families now living under Damcherra R.D.Block area of North Tripura District has been using *Tripura* as surname. In the same way, some Chorei families in Barak valley too identified themselves by assuming the surname as *Tripura*. However, most of the *Chorei* families in Barak valley used *Chorei* as their surname. In Assam, the Choreis have been living in plain land; and they were engaged in settled plain land cultivation; but most of the cultivated lands belonged to Assam Government in Forest Department. As a result, in spite of their settlement over century, they could not acquire right and title of the land. In Assam and Mizoram, the Chorei villages have been indicated in the table.

#### CHOREI VILLAGES OUTSIDE TRIPURA

State	District	Village
Assam	Karimganj	Manikbon
	Karimganj	Magura
	Karimganj	Kolicherra
	Karimganj	Beldokdung
	Karimganj	Sibargool



### Social formation of Halam

	Karinganj	Copinathpur
	Karinganj	Rangamati
	Karinganj	Simlung
	Karinganj	Sirampur
	Karinganj	Zailian
	Karinganj	Chinzawl
	Karinganj	Idragool
Mizoram	Mamit	Kanhmun
	Mamit	Laimawi
	Mamit	Thinghlu
	Mamit	Zawhmun(Lakhicherra)

The Chorois living in Tripura and Assam have close kinship, and their separation was the result of arbitrary demarcation of eastern boundary of Tipperah kingdom by the Britisher. Longai river was made the eastern boundary of Tipperah kingdom in 1872 A.D, which make the Chorois living east of Langai river as subject of British India.

**Tribes close to Halam :** Although all the Kuki-Chin tribes belonged to Tibeto-Burmese ethnic stock, each Kuki-Chin tribe has emerged as separate social identity with distinct dialect due to separation over many centuries. But a few Kuki-Chin tribes remained very close to the Halams even today in term of dialect.

**Darlong :** Darlong tribe was very close to Halam tribe and it seemed that in the far off past the ancestors of the Halams and Darlongs lived together somewhere in erstwhile Chin-Lushai Hills. There was small proverb of the Halam about the origin of Darlong clan which was like this:

*"Tuiruang ata darin along inlan ugai Darlong"*

This proverb said that the ancestor of the Darlongs was taken across the other bank of Tuiruang (Barak) river on the shoulder of others as he could not cross the Barak river. Here the word *Dar* means *shoulder* and the word *Along* means *travelling*. If the words *Dar* and *Along* were combined together it became *Daralong*, which means travelling by riding on the shoulder of others. While crossing the Tuiruang (Barak) and Tuivai rivers, the ancestor of the Darlong tribe said to have travelled riding on the shoulder of other as he could not swim the river water. The Darlong tribe lived at twenty villages which were concentrated in Unakol and North D stricts, and one village, namely Saikar in Kamrupur

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Sub Division of Dhalai District. They were very close to the Halams in term of dialect, but their social custom was different in many respect because they had been under the Lushai chiefs. Their custom and social tradition was influenced by the Lushais. But in term of dialect, they belonged to the *Old Kuki* tribe. According to the story narrated by Pu (Lt.) Hnuna Darlong of New Kathalcherra village in Longtorai Valley Sub Division, Dhalai, the Darlongs were the people who came from a legendary village, which the Molsom would call *Arsi en Khuo sha*. The number of the families of the legendary village said to be as numerous as the stars of the sky. Their oral traditional account maintained that if any one travelled from one end of the village with a wet wrapper, it dried up by the time he reached the other end of the village. One day a daughter of the village chief disappeared from the house; and the village chief ordered his people to find out his daughter. The officials of the chief conducted village census and came to know that the family members of many households had been disappearing every day from the village. At last villagers conducted search operation and traced out a big python inside a big and deep hole which was said to have swallowed one human being everyday from the village. The villagers killed the python and shared the meat with each household. They also found ornaments and necklaces inside the stomach of slained python. After killing the python, villagers gave the head of slained python to a widow as her share. As she did not know what to do with the python head, she kept it inside the cage of hen near the entrance of front door which was located at the frontal barandha of the house. In the midnight, the widow heard a strange human voice coming out of the cage, where head of slained python was kept, asking her to leave the village before the sunrise to escape from the destruction of the village from earthquake. The widow got up from her bed at midnight and went around the village to alert her dear and near ones and others. Before the sunrise the villagers could escape from the village. This legend has also been mentioned in earlier Chapter.

The existence of the Darlong tribe was not known to the outside world before nineteenth century. However, Hunter mentioned about the Darlong stating that "*most of the Kukis in Hill Tipperah live in the northern portion of the hills, and the tribe is there known by the name of Dalang (Darlong)*". From the tour note of J.W. Edgar, the Civil Officer with the

### Social formation of Halam

Cachar Column of the Lushai Expedition in 1871-72 A.D. it came to light that there was a Darlong tribe living at hill ranges of Dhaleswari river head (river Flawng now). In 1818 A.D. the Lushai chief Lallula was driven from the south of present Mizoram by the Fawi (now Lai) tribe and Lallula, in his turn, drove the Thado kuki toward the northern Mizoram. Mangpawrha, one of the five sons of Lallula and the father of Sukpuilala, drove out Darlong Chief Laroo i.e. Lalhrima and his people from Chattacherra range, east of Singla reserved forest. Laroo took shelter at Kailashnagar in Tipperah kingdom along the border of Sylhet. Edgar acknowledged that he knew little about the Darlong, except what he had heard incidentally from the Lushai. The Darlong had been under the great Lushai chief Sibuta; and Chief Sibuta was the descendent of Zahmuaka, the ancestor of Sailo clan. Zahmuaka had one son, namely, Thangura. Seven sons were born to Thangura and they were Zadenga, Pallana, Thangluaha, Rivunga, Rokhuma, Sulava and the youngest son died in his infancy. Pallana was the great grandfather of Sibuta. Chief Sibuta was the son of a concubine of powerful chief Purburha, who was the grandson of Lossu, and the son of Pallana. Sibuta was regarded as cruel chief who killed Darlapail, the daughter of real wife of the Pallian chief Purbuhra. Laroo (actual name was Lalhrima) was the father of Lalsukla, the descendent of Sibuta. The Darlong Chief, namely- Lalsukla, was sent in exile by the Britishers for committing atrocities on British subjects, was the son of Laroo or Lalhrima. Laroo was said to have massacred to a party of wood cutters from Sylhet in September, 1826 A.D. Lalsukla, the son of Laroo, was also involved in the massacre at Manpuri colony of Kochucherra under Protapgharh in April in 1844 A.D, which led to his arrest by Captain Blacwood, and his subsequent deportation, possibly, in Andaman. The Darlong elders had great admiration for Lalsukla, their Chief; and they had this folksong in praise of Lalsukla :

*Lalsukla pa dian e e e,  
Hai ha hai ha,  
Meitei khopui okon e e e,  
Hai ha hai ha,...*

This was a long folksong but little has been mentioned here. This folksong was about the Meitei Manipuri big village where Chief Lalsukla used to visit on different occasions, which revealed the fact that the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Darlong Chief had regular contact and dealing with fugitive Meitei Manipuri prince, who lived in Cachar with his followers. Among the Halam, Lalsukla was regarded as cruel and ruthless Darlong chief and; a person from the Ranglong clan, whose name was Chongpuibum Naran, said to have acted as messenger between the king of Tipperah and Lalsukla before his arrest. Chongpuibum Naran could speak both in Bengali and Darlong language. Therefore, Tipperah royal house thought him to be the suitable person to convey the royal edict to Lalsukla. The hearsay maintained that Chongpuibum Naran did not act properly as entrusted, and never conveyed correct message of the Tripur king to Lalsukla.

Ngursailian (also called Ngursailoia or Ngursailova), the son of Lalsukla, was married to Vanhnuaithangi, the daughter of Mangpawhra and the sister of one of the Lushei Chiefs, namely-Sukpuilala. After marriage Ngursailian (familiar as Ngursailova among the Mizos) settled in the Syhlet District and had a large village there partially peopled by Lushei people and other adherents of his wife. In the meantime, Ngursailian had serious quarrel with his wife Vanhnuaithangi as she was barren. She, with her people left Ngursailian, and returned to his brother Sukpuilala. But the hearsay prevalent among the Darlong tribe was that Ngursailian was to marry the sister of Vanhnuaithangi, who was said to be very beautiful; but he was betrayed and forced to marry Vanhnuaithangi. This was the real cause of animosity between the Darlong and Lushei chiefs which led to war and bloodshed at Hmuntha village near Serhmun, which was situated in Darchai ADC village. Ngursailian also committed several raid and atrocities on British subject in Syhlet. All through their history, the Darlong people were under Lushei chiefs; and for this reason they developed intimate cultural relationship with the Lushei. This was the reason that historian W.W. Hunter had to write that "*the Kukis of Hill Tipperah are the same race as the Lushais*". Even in the gazette notification made during the reign of Maharaj Radhakishore Deb Barman Manikya Bahadur in 1313 T.E., which corresponds to 1903 A.D., Lalsukhama- the Darlong chief was mentioned as *Lushai* (Mizo). It was also a matter of interest that nothing has been mentioned about the Darlong language by G.A. Grierson in his book "*The Linguistic Survey of India*". Since they were under the Lushei chief, possibly, the Darlong tribe was thought to be a part of the Lushei tribe. But the fact of the

### Social formation of Halam

matter was that the Darlong tribe was a melting pot in which different family clans and sub clans of other Kuki Chin Iimar Lushai tribes have assimilated. Thus, many family clans of the Iimar and Lushai tribes have assimilated in the social formation of the Darlong tribe. These clans and sub clans were Biate, Laihing, Latui, Darnagawn, Inyang, Hnarte, Haunar, Hojang, Chongkual, Ilangchal, Khohreng, Pachuai, Puloi, Khualtu, Pauta, Kante, Varte, Tualie, Thangur, Thiak, Thungur, Vanghroi, Vangkai, Saivato, Sangate, Hlangasuan, Taksawn, Chante, Chawngthu, Zute, Kuankhuma, Khuahring, Kangbur, Songkhar, Selawn, Belta, Bawlie, Zongte, Tualgen, Thukte, Thangre, Salawre, Langtai, Lawnte, Hmarte, Hmaisak, Darte, Chuangoi, Luakhua, Thirtlu Bawng, Biate, Chuahung, Bungpui etc. Though Biate and Bawng were separate tribes, they could be traced among Darlong tribe too and; in fact the Bawng dominated some Darlong villages particularly, Boitang village. The Fatie clan too different from the Darlong; but today they have assimilated into Darlong social formation. The Biate tribe was larger in number as compared to the Darlong tribe and live in Jaintia hills in Meghalaya and some of them live in Dima Hasao District in Assam. But Biates were counted as one of the sub clan of the Darlong in Tripura. The Khohreng was a major sub clan of the Darlong tribe, but among the Biate too Khohreng constitute a major sub clan. In fact Khohreng was enumerated as separate tribe in Tipperah kingdom in the past century. Thus, in spite of having distinct social identity; the Darlong may be regarded as composite tribe. With respect to language, the dialects of the Darlong and the Halam clans were broadly uniform; and they could communicate to each other. However, the Kokborak speaking Rupini and Koloit tribes were the exception. The similarity of Darlong dialect with the dialects of the Iimar, Lushai, Bawm etc. tribes also noteworthy. In matters of customary practice of the Darlong, it seem that they inherited many customary practices of the Lushai.

The rulers of this kingdom never exercised an absolute authority over the Darlong tribe directly, but through their chiefs (*Loi*) only. Though the rulers of this kingdom never interfered in the internal matters of the Darlong tribe; they used them as a tool to suppress other tribes of Tipperah kingdom. In 1865 A.D., during the reign of Maharaj Birchandra Manikya, the Jamatia tribe, under the leadership of Parikhit, revolted against the tyranny of Wakhirai Hazari, a royal employee. The

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Maharaja sent his troops to suppress the revolt, but they were defeated. At last Maharaja sought the help of two Darlong chiefs Ngursailian (Ngursailoia) and Haupuilala to suppress the Jamatia revolt. The Darlong fighters fought the revolting Jamatias numbering about two hundred only and brought their heads. This prompted the British Magistrate of plain Tipperah district to write that "*the heads of these (Jamatyas) were cut off and are now hanging up in terrorism at Agartala*". However, Maharaj Birchandra Manikya pardoned Parikhit and from that time onward the Jamatias were converted to *Vaishnav* sect of Hindu religion, and started putting the holy thread (*poita*) slung over the shoulder in the fashion of a cross belt like upper caste Hindus. As a reward, from that time onward the title of Raja Bahadur was conferred to Darlong chief; and Ngursailoia became the first Raja Bahadur. In course of time, the Darlong Chiefs proved to be useful to the rulers of Tipperah kingdom in suppressing the internal legitimate revolt against their tyranny. The Darlongs were exempted from payment of any kind of tax on the understanding that they must render military service when required by the king of Tipperah. But some Darlong chiefs were very unpopular among their own tribe for their promiscuity and licentious life style. Whenever their chief would visit Darlong village, the villagers used to hide their daughters because the chief could demand the night company of their young daughters.

After the merger of Tipperah kingdom with the Union of India, the institution of chieftainship was abolished by the movement of Halam-Kuki Union during the fifties, (which was headed by the Kanailal Halam an inhabitant of Bongbari under Kamalpur Sub Division as President of the Union). Late Hrengngura Darlong (from Nalkata village under L. T. Valley Sub Division) was the General Secretary of the Union. They played the leading role in the abolition of Darlong Chieftainship.

**Zos or Ruankhum** : There was another tribe who called themselves as *Zo*; and now they live in several places, particularly, at Hawaibari of Teliamura, Kamalacherra of Ambasa, Duptali of Udaipur Sub Divisions. Within this tribe, there was another group familiar as *Kojai*, and they lived in Sonanura Sub-division; and now the Kojui adopted *Halam* as their surname from the year of 1992 A. D. The *Zos* now claimed to be mainstream Kuki tribe along with the Darlong tribe in Tripura. This tribe was also familiar as *Ruankhum* in *Krishnamala*, the chronicle of King

### Social formation of Halam

Krishna Manikya. Their legend maintained that they came from Chin Hills in Myanmar. This fact was supported by Late Bulu Kuki, who was erstwhile Forest Minister in coalition ministry in Tripura. Important family clans of this tribe were Kuankham, Bello, Banlu, Thirthu Bawng, Kojang, Kojai, Ngirhang, Hanghew, Tumbowk, Fautu, Anroi etc. In term of population, this tribe was very small as compared to Darlong tribe. One could trace the assimilation with other Kuki Chin Lushai tribes from the presence of certain sub clans such as *Thirthu Bawng*, *Pochu*, and *Kozang* etc. The Thirthu Bawng was a sub clan of Bawng clan of the Halam. Poucha sub clan could be traced both among the Lushais and also the Darlongs. Like the Darlong, the *Zis* or the *Raakhaon* were late emigrants to Hill Tipperah kingdom; and they did not have dealing with the royal house of Tipperah kingdom as the Halams had in the past. They were under the protection of the Molsom chiefs, and would pay Family Tax to him only. Their social customs and traditions were very different from that of the Halam tribe; but their dialect was very similar to Halam dialect. As mentioned above, Late Bulu Kuki was very familiar personality even among other communities in the State of Tripura who became the Member of Tripura Legislative Assembly several times; and had been the Forest Minister during the period of the coalition ministry of the State in nineteen seventies. From their physical appearance, it was evident that their ancestors absorbed lots of plain people in earlier days, possibly, through raid (called *hrai* in native kuki language) or through inter marriage.

*Biate* : The Biate were regarded as Old Kuki clan who were the companion of the Halam in their migration. Their old but reputed place of settlement was the place called *Biate*, which was situated in the south-west of Champhai District in Mizoram. The word *Biate* said to have originated from the word *Biate*. The word *Bia* or *die* was the corrupted form of the Lushai-Kuki word "bisk", which means *worship*, and the word *te* used to be suffix denoting plurality. Thus, if these two words were combined together it formed as *Biate*. The *Biate* were said to be snake worshippers and for this reason, many believed, they were called *Biate*, but many scholars thought otherwise. It would sound strange to say that the Biate tribe had been one of the sub tribes of the Halam as revealed from historical evidence. Snake worship was not confined among the Biate only. All the Halam clans also would worshipped snake

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

as *Inkil Pathien*. Even now Halams, who belonged to non-Christian families, have been worshipping the Snake as *Inkil Pathien* in the corner of their house, and would offer sacrifice just before consuming new harvest of paddy. This snake worship was borrowed from the *Tipras*, and the *Tipras* got it from the Bengalees, which they called *Manasha Puja*. The *Tipras* called it *Naksu-matai*. The *Biates* had been with the Halams in Syhlet in ancient and medieval period before they remigrated to Lushai Hills for jhuming. Thus, one could notice *Biate* clan even among the Halam in Dhalai District in Tripura. The *Khasis* and *Pnar* (*Jaintia*) tribes would call them *Hadem*, and the word *Hadem* was the corruption of the word *Halam*. Historical events revealed the facts that the *Khasis* or *Pnar* had a lots of dealing with the rulers of Tipperah kingdom. Therefore, it was natural for the *Khasis* or *Pnar* to have knowledge about the *Halams*. Possibly, during the period of their settlement in Tipperah kingdom of which present Mizoram was an integral part, *Biates* were counted as a sub tribe of Halam tribe. The settlement of *Biates* in Tipperah Kingdom and close cultural contact with *Tipras* was reflected in their religious belief. Thus Shakespear stated that “*the Biate in the Lushai Hills worship the images in the Bhuban caves, but I am told that those in the North Cachar Hills differ in this respect. The three images are called Bolawng Raia, Chhinga Raia and Maituki Raia*”. These deities belonged to the *Tipras* which the *Biates* adopted during their settlement in Tipperah kingdom. Their social organization headed by *Kalim, Kabur, Siar Kalim, planta, Tangwa etc.* was similar to social institution of the Halam tribes. At certain point of time most of the Old Kuki tribes including the *Biates* were under the rule of Tipperah kingdom and the rulers of the kingdom introduced this democratic system of governance among hill subjects, particularly, among the Halam tribe. It was noteworthy that there was considerable number of *Biate* families among *Langkai* clan of Halam and most of them now live in Dhalai District in Tripura identifying themselves by assuming the surname as *Halam*. According to Thangkhupa Darnei, Ex-Executive Member and Ex-MDC, Jaintia Autonomous District Council, Jowai, Meghalaya, the *Biates* originated from *Khurpuitlabum* which was similar with the tradition of other clans of the Halam. Their legend of migration had also been quite similar with the legend of the *Molsom* clan. Thus Shakespear stated that “*the Biate assert that when they lived on the hill of*



### Social formation of Halam

*that none (Biate hill) they were attacked by huge angles, and had to build stone shelters in which to hide their small children. These erections are still to be seen, and consist of three rough slabs of stone with a fourth as a roof, the whole structure being only about two to three feet high".* They also claimed to have settled at Champhai region and from that place they scattered to different region. B. Pakem was of the view that Lalrima, a legendary hero of the Biate clan, led them to their movement to Jaintia Hill and N.C. Hills, possibly in 13th century. But the Biates were influenced by the tradition of their neighbour--*Hetar* tribe, who would regard the Chhinglang as the place of their origin. Like any other Old Kuki tribes, the Biates were the oldest inhabitants of present Mizoram, where they lived for many centuries, and from Mizoram they spread out to different direction. According to I.P.Mills "*they (Biate of N.C.Hills) point to the Lushai Hills to the south as their place of origin. They were undoubtedly pushed north into their present home by the Lushai invasion of the Lushai Hills in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They belong to Old Kuki stock".* Before the occupation of Lushai Hills by the Britishers in 19<sup>th</sup> century following the incursion and frequent raid by the Lushai and others allied tribes, Lushai Hills was an integral part of Tipperah kingdom. "*Jangvai thang shang ei un bi or Saivate: napatul iswat*" was the proverb of the Biate, which means that during their settlement in Jangpui Hills in Tripura, Saivate clan came into existence. According to C.A.Soppitt, Biate were co-tribe of Rangkhwol. The fact of the matter was that all the Old Kuki tribes were more closely related to each other in terms of dialects and culture because they constituted a forward group in their migration who lived in Tipperah kingdom for long period. There were five major clans of the Biate tribe :

- (1) Darnel,
- (2) Ngamlai,
- (3) Nampui,
- (4) Ngirsim or Lalsim,
- (5) Thiaize,

Each sub clan has numerous sub clans and altogether they have forty nine sub clans. Within Darnel sub clan there were three family clans such as Thangur Khoreng, Thangbei and Langoi. Ngamlai has three family clans such as Durpui, Zamate and Sawmlan. Numpui sub clan has four family clans namely Chungngol, Kungla, Thingai and Phunte.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Taizang and Subuma were the two family clans of Thiaite sub clan. Ngaite was the only family clan of Ngirsim or Lalsim sub clan. Besides, there were many other minor sub clans such as Betlu, Bapui, Tamlo, Pazamate, Ranglem, Vangkal, etc.

Khoreng, Puiloi, Fatlei and Betlu were the sub clans which could be traced among the Darlong tribe in Tripura. In fact in 1931 Census the Khoreng clan was enumerated as Halam sub tribe in Tipperah kingdom. At certain point of time, a section of Biate and the Darlong lived quite closely at *Darlong peak* in present Mizoram which make the Biate elders nostalgic, and says "*Darlong tlang ken ngai eh*" meaning "*I am longing for Darlong peak*". But Borail Hills was also a region where a section of Biate lived and called this hill as "*Ngaibang Tlang*". There was affinity between the language of the Halam and Biate, and this underlined the fact that they belonged to the same stock.

Name of articles	Biate	Halams
Woman's wearing clothe	Puanbom	Puanbom
Shirt	Zakua	Zakua
Headgear	Lukom	Lukom
Bead	Rithei	Rithei
Bangle	Banbun	Banbun
Earring	Kuarbet	Kuarbet
Round earring	Toya	Toya
A piece of traditional cloth which hang in the front and back to cover private part of male	Kaipereng	Kaipereng
Hairband made of sliced cane and bamboo	Ritai sam ep	Ritai sam ep
Violin	Seranda	Seranda
Drum	Khuang	Khuang
Large Brass Gong	Jamluang	Jamluang
Mandolin made of hollow wood with a string	Chompereng	Chompereng
Bamboo flute	Theile	Theile

After all, the Biate and the Halams were the same stock who shared common destiny in all walks of life from ancient time, though now they are far apart by geographical location of their habitation.

### Social formation of Halam

*Aimol* : Aimols belonged to Old Kuki tribe who once lived in present Mizoram, which was an integral part of erstwhile Tripura kingdom; and they subsequently migrated to Manipur centuries before. According to G.A. Grierson, the Aimol of Manipur came from the direction of Tipperah and their dialect was closely related to Ranghowl and connected languages. In term of social institution and language they were no difference from the Halam tribe. In fact their language was akin to the dialect of Chorei, Langkai or Sakachep, Ranglong, Dap, Thangachep and Mchafang clans of the Halam tribe. The Aimol people of Manipur said that they came from *Ruong Le Vaiso* i.e. Tipaimukh. When Arjun Das Baisaab and Ratnakuickli, the two Ahom envoys came to Tipperah kingdom in the first part of eighteenth century, they came across Aimol Hill on their way at Rangrung i.e. Rajhat in Cachar. These were the family clans of Aimol tribe: (a) Lanu, (b) Chaithu, (c) Laita, (d) Chongom, (e) Khuichung, (f) Shongthu, (g) Lunglai, (h) Lungdin. Lanu clan has four sub-clans and these sub-clans were Sailing Lanu, Siamthi Lanu, Liante Lanu and Serto Lanu. Chaithu clan has two sub-clans- Sairol, Gate. Laita clan has four sub-clans and they were Bongle, Mangte, Shialon and Rui zom. Chaithu clan has two sub-clan namely Sairualpu, Zeete. The population of Aimol tribe was little more than four thousands and live in Manipur at these villages :- (i) Kumbirei, (ii) Sertu, (iii) Chingnunghut, (iv) khunjai, (v) Aimol Tampak, (vi) Khuadamphai, (vii) Ngairung Aimol, (viii) Charlonpuokpi, (ix) Kholer, (x) Unapal, (xi) Tuitha, (xii) Luichungbum, (xiii) Kha-Aimol, (xiv) Khodengthabi, (xv) Mastak and (xvi) Sutkuang. Most of these villages were located at Chandel district; and Luichungbum was the only Aimol village at Churachandpur district. Oral tradition of Aimol maintained that their ancestors came from "*Khuapitaban*", which was regarded by the Halams as their ancient habitat in Chin Hills. The Aimol said to have emigrated to Manipur crossing the place called "*Ruong-le-Vaiso*", i.e. "*Tipaimukh*" region. Barak river was familiar as Tuiruang to the Halams as well as to the Tipras; and Tuivai river was one of the big tributaries of Barak river. This Tuivai river originated from Chin Hills and formed the interstate boundary between southern Manipur and northern Mizoram in India. Most of the Halam clans said that their forefathers lived around *Tipaimukh* region centuries before. The Aimol also has similar tradition

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

which maintained that they came from *Rung-le Vaiso* i.e. *Tipaimukh* region, in the south of present Manipur, after their movement from Champhai region in present Mizoram in ancient period. About the identity of Aimol tribe, Lt. Colonel. J. Shakespear observed "*the Aimol say that there is no general name for the various families and that Aimol is the name of village site. It is probably 'Ai' is the Lushai name for a berry and also means crab, and appears in Aizawl or Aijal. 'Mual' is the Lushai for a spur of a hill. It is very common, in fact almost universal custom to call a new village site, if it has no registered name, after the site of the old village, and probably the original Aimol would be found in the centre of the Lushai Hill.*" Shakespear maintained that the Aimol left their home in consequence of the forward movement of the Lusheis. It was beyond doubt that at certain point of time the Aimols were included in the Halam community because their earlier social institution was similar to the social institution of the Halams. The head of social institution of the Aimol tribe were *Kamskoi*, *Jaksung*, *Senapati* and *Montri*. Among the Halams too, "*Kamskoi*" was an expert in customary law who explained complicated social and customary laws in time of the deliberation of Community Darbar during social adjudication. In other word, he was exponent of customary law. In Halam society, *Jaksung* was like a police chief who was always ready to carry out the order and decision of the Chief "*Halama-sa*" or "*Rai*" assisted by *Khuksung* and *Sengja*. After their migration to Manipur, the Aimol tribe added the post of *Senapati* and *Mantri* in their social order. Above all, they did not have the Chief called *Lal*, which, all non-Halam tribes namely the Lushei, Hmar, Thado, Darlong, etc tribes had in the past. Moreover, the Aimol has very similar way of maintaining dignified kinship as that of the Halam. The words used for addressing their family elders and relations were similar to the words used by the Halams. Thus, father's elder brother was called or addressed as *Patier*, and his wife was called *Puitier*. Father's elder sister was called *Nee/Ani*; uncle as *Pangak* and the aunt was addressed as *Puingak*. The mother-in-law was called *Terpi* and father-in-law was *Tarpu* etc. The dialect of the Aimols was very similar to Halam dialect.



## CHAPTER - 14

# SOCIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

**Introduction :** The social administrative system of the Halam presented very different kind of social order as compared to social institution of other Kuki-Chin tribes. The system was the outcome of their long association with the kingdom of Tipperah. Nothing was known much about the ancient administrative system of Tipperah kingdom; and the history of administration in Tripura has its mooring in an ancient past. Although various account of administrative control in ancient past was based on myths, oral tradition and scanty chronicles or historical records, these could hardly stand scientific scrutiny. However, the administrative system of the Halam society was the extension of administrative system prevalent in Tipperah kingdom at contemporary period. Some uniformity of administrative system of different hill tribes with the administrative system of the Halam tribe was observable. But for understanding the past administrative system of the Halams, one should know the administration of Tipperah kingdom in relation to different tribes at relevant and contemporary period. Since Tipperah was a kingdom of the hill tribes, in ancient time there might not be powerful monarchy with effective command over the entire tract of the kingdom. Various tribes had migrated to this vast tract of land in successive wave in the past; and they found their abode in different parts of the vast hilly regions. Leaving aside the Tripuris, Jamatias, Noatias and the Reangs, the Halams were considered as the first settlers and thus indigenous of this land. All these hill tribes, particularly, the Tripuris, Reangs, Jamatias, Noatias and the Halams had their own system of administration, which had certain similarities in its pattern and objectives; and that system of administration was village and the community oriented.

Rajah Ratnapha, whose sanskritised name was King Ratna Manikya, the youngest son of Raja Dangur-pha(Harirai), was the one

### Social administrative system

who brought considerable reform in the administrative system in Tipperah kingdom in medieval period. Ratna-pha was sent to the court of the Nawab of Bengal by his father Dangor-pha where the Prince spent several years. The Nawab of Bengal i.e. Gour, helped the prince Ratna-pha to occupy the throne of Tipperah kingdom and bestowed on him with the title of "Manikya" for the first time. Henceforth, the aboriginal title of "Pha" meaning 'father' was shed off by the Rajahs of Tipperah. King Ratna Manikya brought three learned persons with him from Lakshmanabati i.e. Gour; and they were Bara Khandaba Ghose, Pandit Raj and Jaynarayan Sen; and with their help he reformed and set up an administrative system of Tipperah kingdom in Muhammedan (Muslim) pattern, and introduced Bengali and Persian languages in the administration to maintain close relation with Muslim (Atgans) rulers in Bengal. According to historian Kailash Chandra Singha, Bara Khandaba Ghose was the resident of Rangamati in Murshidabad, Bengal, and Jaynarayan Sen was deed writer, who worked under Bara Khandaba Ghose, Pandit Raj was from noble and respected family. They were promised for honourable position in the royal court of Tipperah. King Ratna Manikya reigned from 1279 to 1323 A.D. During his stay in the court of Gour, the prince noticed that the mohammedan administration was much superior and organized, which inspired Rajah Ratna Manikya for introducing such advanced administrative pattern in his kingdom. Therefore, a system of administration tinged with some elements of Muhammedan (Atgan) pattern was introduced around the thirteenth century in Tipperah kingdom. The primitive feudal and tribal system of administration was modified to certain extent by the King Ratna Manikya in thirteenth century. Thus, commencing from the medieval period, three classes of official titles evolved with addition of new titles in the administration of Tipperah kingdom :-

- (a) Officials with indigenous or tribal titles,
- (b) Officials with sanskritised or Hindu titles,
- (c) Officials with Muhammedan or Muslim titles.

(i) *Indigenous titles*: Indigenous titles were Halama-ra, Chongtai, Daurai, Kamskoi, Chapias, Yaksung, Khaksung, Karma, Sengja, Sengkanaha, Bhandia, Kuai-tuia (carrier of bettle nut), Muria, Siuk (hunter), Dityasing (salomquin bearer), Daspuia, Tangwa or Tangsam etc.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

(ii) *Hindu titles*: Hindu titles were Rajah, Rai, Narayan (Major General), Senapati (Captain), Thakur, Choudhury, Chotrodhari (bearer of umbrella), Hazari (commander of 1000 soldiers), Borua (commander of 3000 soldiers), Daria (drum beater) etc.

(iii) *Muhammadan titles*:- Muslim titles were Vazir (minister), Kalim (interlocutor/speaker), Khan Kalim, Ser-Kalim, Khas-Kalim, Kabur/Kabir (Great Person/His Highness), Nazir (head-of-infantry), Subah (Commander-in-Chief/Governor), Chapia, Dewan (Controller of Revenue and Account), Nayab (Great/unique official), Munshi (Secretary/Writer), Laskar (Guard/soldier), Sube-Naran (person who prepared fish during feast), Kurkon, Mukhtiar, Kabra (Major) etc.

The reasons for introducing the Mohammedan pattern of administration were due to the facts that the system served the interest of the rulers of the kingdom in many ways throughout the ancient and medieval periods. Firstly, the Muslim pattern of administration met the increasing complexities of the administration. Secondly, the system increased the control and authority of the Central Administration over the tribal chiefs ruling over different regions by placing the representatives of the ruler in their areas. Thirdly, this also ensured the principle of divide and rule; and eliminated the possibility of challenging the royal throne by the tribal chiefs unitedly. Fourthly, this system decentralised power among the officials of tribal or village Darbar and prevented any tribal Chief from becoming more powerful and despotic and also incapable to challenge the authority of the King. Lastly, this system of administration ensured the check and balance in the system.

The combined set up of Hindu, Muslim and Tribal administration continued to prevail over the central set up of the ruler i.e. royal Darbar throughout the medieval period. There was a difference between the ancient or tribal feudal system and Mohammedan pattern of administration. In ancient feudal system, the regional administration was almost independent of the Central authority and long chain of officials was absent. Thus, the chiefs of the various tribes were almost independent of the Rajah (King), the Central Authority. On the other hand, after the introduction of Mohammedan pattern of administrative system from the time of Rajah Ratna Manikya, there was evidence of appointment of regional Administrators who used to be Army Commanders. During the reign of Dhanya Manikya, the title of *Hajari*



### Social administrative system

or *Hajra*, *Sardar*, '*Khan*' titles were held by royal officials and Commanders. *Narsyan* title was given to the chief of the army: thus, King Dhanya Manikya appointed his father-in-law namely, Daita, as his Commander-in-Chief, and bestowed with him the title '*Narayan*'. When Rajah Bijoy Manikya was minor, Daityanarayan, the Commander-in-Chief, exercised all royal power and conspired to occupy the throne. King Bijay Manikya foiled his attempt and killed him; and thereafter, he began to rule with the advice of his official such as *Vazir*, *Suibah*, *Devar*, *Nazir*, *Kabra*, *Barnah*, *Hazari*, *Hakar*, *Manshi* (secretary), etc. King Bijay Manikya also created the post of '*Wazir*' (Minister) and '*Laskar*' in the pattern of Mohammedan system of administration. *Laskars* were appointed as Administrators of various regions in the kingdom. *Laskar* was held in great esteem and wielded overall authority over the region he was posted. In Arabic, '*Laskar*' means a *Soldier* of the infantry. In the last part of sixteenth century, Maharaj Amar Manikya also introduced the post of '*Tinsadar*', who was provincial ruler. Either *Laskar* or *Tinsadar*, they not only ruled and collected the tax from the subjects, but also served as Liaison Officer between the tribal Chiefs and the Royal House. During the reign of Rajah Krishna Manikya (1760-83 A.D.), new posts were found in the administration of the Tipperah kingdom, and these posts were *Najab* (His Highness), *Wazir* (Deputy Minister), *Karkon* (executants/attender), *Manshi* (Secretary) etc. Even in 19<sup>th</sup> century under the administration of the kingdom there were the four posts namely, *Suibah* (commander in chief), *Wazir* (incharge of revenue), *Nazir* (manages the police) and *Devar* (controller of account), and these nomenclature were purely of mohammedan origin.

During the reign of Rajah Indra Manikya and Rajah Mahendra Manikya, the two Ahom envoys namely- Ratna Kandali and Arjun Das Baisnab (who travelled several time to Ldaipur in between A.D,1711 and 1714) saw the officials of Halam Darbar such as *Halamisa*, *Kalin*, *Kabar*, *Chapias*, *Dalai* and a royal official called *Laskar*. According to their account, the Kukis (Halams) lived under a chief appointed by the Rajah of Tipperah who ruled over the Ranglong clan of the Halam. The '*Laskar*' (guard/soldier) was posted in that place and got transferred from time to time with replacement. According to their description, the Halams used to present horse, gold, ivory, mithun etc. to the King of Tipperah as tribute. Thus, the system of administration which was set up in the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

pattern of Muslim administration introduced in thirteenth century continued to prevail. However, as the complexity in the administration increased, the number of officials too increased; and new posts had been created in the Central Administration. But the system of administration introduced in thirteenth century by Raja Ratna Manikya, which was originally feudal in nature, was not radically changed until Raja Birchandra Manikya ascended the throne in 1875 A.D. The tribal villages enjoyed freedom under this age-old self-administrative system introduced by the King Ratna Manikya in thirteenth century. The king would wield his authority by collecting taxes from the subjects through village chiefs and officials who were member of police force (*Laskar*) posted in different regions. Thus, in Tipperah kingdom each tribal community had its own elementary social and administrative organization starting from the village level going upto the chieftainship of a particular tribe living within the kingdom. The tribal enjoyed their traditional freedom based on the concept of self-administration, and the relation between the King or the ruler and the subjects was maintained through the elected tribal chiefs. The fact of the matter was that this relationship was also limited; and in most cases the relationship was confined to the payment of taxes and providing manpower for war in time of external aggression.

The ancient administrative system had at its core the tribal self-governing institution which differed from tribe to tribe. Thus, each Tripuri village was self-governing; and women had no role or share in the administration and were even forbidden to enter, or to set foot in the Chaudhary Naskar (Council Room) except when they were involved in the case. The designation of chief varied from village to village. Somewhere he was called *Chaudhury*, while in certain village he was called *Sardar* or *Kalim*. While *Karbari* was the secretary of the village chief, *Khandal* was peon-cum-sepoy. In upper stratum of the tribe was comprised of *Rajah*, the *Prince* and the *Thakur*. The *Thakur* enjoyed status and prestige only next to the *Rajah* and lived in and around the capital. In fact from the time of Rajah Kalyan Manikya, the members of royal family were given the title of *Thakur*.

Even the Reang tribe, the second largest tribe in Tipperah, had two tier administrations, one at community and the other at village level. At community level, the officials were the *Rai* (Reang chief), *Chapia khan*

### Social administrative system

(Assistant Rai), *Chapia* (Assistant *Chapia Khan*), *Dar-Kalin* (priest of the Rai), *Doloi* (record keeper), *Bhandari* (Store keeper of Rai), *Kandai* (care taker of the Rai), *Daje Hazari* (drum beater), *Marja* (player of wooden made pipe-like musical instrument i.e. *Sanai*). At village level, they had seven administrative officials who would run the affairs of the village, and they were *Kaskae* or *Kamskoi* or *Kanchan*, the village chief, *Yaksang*, the treasurer, *Hazri* was the Care-taker of *Kaskaw*, *Kaug-sung* was the umbrella holder for *Kamskaw*, *Karna* was the helper of *Yaksang*, *Khor Kaim* was the umbrella holder of *Yaksang*, and *Khordei* was the collector of ingredients for food. There were similarities of the official titles of the Community Darbar of the Reang and Halam tribes as most of these titles were bestowed from time to time by the rulers of Tipperah to the officials of social institution of their native subjects. Like the Reang tribe, several clans of the Halams also had two tier administrative system, the one for the community and the other at the village level. The Ranglong, Chorei, Molsom, Bowng, Rangkhawl, Bongcher, Korhong, Kaipeng, Langkai, Maichafang, Sakachep, Thangoches, Rupini and Koloj etc. have separate administrative unit for their respective clan. However, there were certain variation in the composition of the officials of social and administrative institutions across the different clans of the Halam. The composition of Social Darbar of the Molsom clan seemed to be biggest in size and all such officials could not be noticed in other clans of the Halam tribe. These were the titles of officials of the community Darbar of the Molsom, namely-*Holom-sa* or Rai, *Kaima*, *Kabar*, *Chapia-har*, *Chapia-tum*, *Dolei*, *Korabua*, *Yaksang*, *Khuksung*, *Huzar*, *Karna*, *Dawa*, *Sengkranta*, and *Jam Sadar*; and such large number of officials would not be noticed in any other clan of the Halam tribe. However, the *Halama-sa*, or Rai, *Kamskoi* or *Kanchan*, *jaksang*, *Khuksung*, *Ser Kaim*, *Kalin*, *Kabar*, *Chapia*, *Chapia-Kalin*, *Vangiang-Kalin*, *Chapia-Kabar*, *Nokhisi(Sadar)-Kalin*, *Nokhisi (Sadar)-Kabar*, *Seugia (Sengkrak)*, *Mukhtiar*, *Kimon-pu (Daria)*, *Tangosa/Tangsan(announcement)*, *Sejpa*, *Seuu*, *Tiba*, and *Kaifhar* were the officials. The existence of some of them if not all, could be traced in different Community Darbar of the Halams. However, each clan of the Halam has separate social and judicial administration; and certain variation in respect of the number of officials and their ranking from one clan to another clan could be noticed.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

The fact of the matter was that, from ancient period the system of self-governing social institutions was in place. The the structure of self-governing institutions of different tribes were broadly unifom. However, there was variation in nomenclature, size and composition of this self-governing institution of different tribes residing in the kingdom. Each village community of a particular tribe had chief at the head of that *Village Darbar* (Village council). Above the Village Darbar, there was Community/Tribal Darbar for the whole population of a particular tribe or clan headed by an elected chief. This chief had administrative and appellate jurisdiction in the judicial matters over his tribe. Both the *Community Darbar / Tribal Dabar* as well as *Village Darbar* was broad based and democratic with multiple Members holding different ranks, who were either elected or nominated on the basis of consensus from among the elders of the community. This *Darbar* comprised of elected or nominated Members of different ranks had been rendering advice to the tribal Chief. Both the *Community/Tribal Darbar* and *Village Dardar* had exercised judicial power and performed the administrative function, assisted by elected subordinate officials. *Village Darbar* normally would settle all disputes in the village, and the disputes which could not be settled at *Village Dardar* were referred to the *Community Darbar/Tribal Darbar*. Thus, the Reang tribe had *Rai or Kaskaw* as the Chief; the Jamatia tribe had *Hoda Okra* for entire Jamatia community; and the Halam tribe had *Halama-sa* or *Rai* or *Vantang Kalim* as the head of institution for each clan, particularly, the Kaipeng, Rangkhawl, Chorei, Ranglong, Molsom, Koloi, Rupini, Korbong and Bongcher. However, whether the Sakachep, Thangachep, Dap, Marchafang, Bowng and Saihmar clans of the Halam had such apex social institution in the past nobody could say; but they did have village level institution.

Either the *Rai or Kaskaw* of the Reang tribe, *Hoda Okra* of the Jamatia tribe or the *Halamsa* or *Rai* or *Vantang Kalim* of the Halam tribe, all these tribal chiefs were assisted by elected subordinate officials namely - *Kanchan (Kaskaw), Kalim, Kabur, Chapia-Kalim, Chapia-Kabur, Jaksung, Khuksung, Chapia, Sengja, Tangwa, Mukhtiar, Hajira, Tuila, Panchiphang* or *Tar(elders), Ser/Arok and Kaithar etc.* At the village level, there was *Choudhury* or *Kalim*, who used to be assisted by the elected subordinate officials of *Village Darbar* such as, *Sengja, Khondol, Hajira, Tangwa* etc

### Social administrative system

to adjudicate all disputes of the villagers. The disputes which could not be settled by the *Village Darbar*, which was headed by the Choudhury or the Kalin, used to be referred to the *Community Darbar/ Tribal Darbar*. This system of tribal administration had been in place in the kingdom from the time immemorial. The reform introduced by Raja Ratna Manikya evolved gradually with the passage of time, and brought gradual changes in the structure of the *Community Darbar* (Tribal Council) and also in the structure of the *Village Darbar* (Village Council). This made the tribal communities self-governing and semi-independent in Tipperah kingdom. The tribal chiefs once elected or nominated based on consensus by the Elders, in most cases, continued to hold the post during his lifetime in certain clans or for certain period in some other clans, as the case might be. The chief was normally recognized by the reigning King in the kingdom; and thus, the chief became the bridge between the tribal people and the ruling royal house. This administrative system was prevalent among all clans of the Halams; and they continued to uphold this social institution irrespective of their place of settlement outside the Tipperah Kingdom; and this made Lt. Colonel J Shakspear to state that "*all these Old Kuki clans are organized far more democratically than the Lushais or Thakos*". Lt. Stewart also stated that "*There is no regular system of government among the Old Kukis and they have no hereditary chiefs as among the new ones. A headman called the Chalin (Kalin) is appointed by themselves over each village.*" Based on the administrative report of the Special Commissioner about the situation in Tipperah kingdom in A.D.1808, Alexander Mackenzie stated that, "*the persons composing the Government or possessing the chief management of the country (say the narrative) are Hindoes. Among the Kookie vassals, however, as well as among the Hindoo inhabitants, a distinction of rank prevails. The chief men among the Kookies are call Rajs, Ghalin, Chappiaks, and Gaboors and those of the Hindoes are called Senaputty and Bar mains. The persons holding the rank now mentioned are called Sirdars or petty Chiefs, and they, in all classes, are the intermediate authority and sole connection between the Government and the inferior vassals. The power or influence of these Chiefs over the vassals within their respective jurisdictions is of strongest kind. A person who has influence to bring over all these Sirdars to his party has actual possession of this country*". The "Kukis" mentioned by the Mackenzie were the Halams; and the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Rai* (mentioned as Roy) was the chief of the community Darbar of the Halams and the *Ghalim*(*Kalim*), *Chuppiahs* (*Chapias and Gaboors*(*Kabur*) were the subordinate officials of the *Rai*.

In Tipperah Kingdom, the administrative system evolved from ancient period; and in course of time *Pahari Adalot* (Hill Court of Appeal) came into existence for hearing Final Appeal. The reigning King was the head of *Pahari Adalot* hearing the appeals from the self-administered tribal Council i.e, *Tribal Darbar*. Each tribe had its chief at the head of the whole tribe or for the village. This chief had both administrative functions and appellate jurisdictions in judicial matters over the village or over the particular tribal community. All the disputes which this *Tribal Darbar* could not adjudicate were referred to before the *Pahari Adalot* (Hill Court of Appeal). Since the King was the head of the *Pahari Adalot*, all the dispute referred by different tribal Darbar would have to be adjudicated by the King. No written constitution of this *Pahari Adalot* was found as it worked from unknown past. But there was an order of its abolition issued during the reign of Raja Birchandra Manikya in A.D, 1879, from which one could have an idea of its frame and working.

ORDER OF ABOLITION OF THE HILL COURT  
ISSUED FROM THE OFFICE OF MOHARAJA BIRCHANDRA  
MANIKYA BAHADUR OF INDEPENDENT HILL TRIPURA  
17<sup>TH</sup> ASHAR 1289 TRIPURA ERA. (1879 A. D.)

*It is known that at present a judge is responsible for trying the civil and criminal cases of the tribal subjects of independent State of Hill Tripura. But the annual account of the Court reveals that a very small number of cases are filed in this court and those cases can easily be dealt with by the judges of the recently established civil and criminal courts. It will be sufficient if those judges only keep an eye to the rules which are prescribed for the judgement of the cases of the Hill tribes. Excepting the judicial functions all other administrative functions of the Hills which are uptill now performed under the Hill Court and Sadar Serista by the Seristadar of that Court will henceforth be executed by him under the order of the Prime Minister. Accordingly, it seems proper to abolish the Hill Court and to amalgamate its functions with those of the newly established civil and criminal court.*

### Social administrative system

*Therefore, it is ordered that from the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month the Hill Court be abolished and its functions be amalgamated with those of the newly established Civil and Criminal Court. Copies of this order may be sent to Srijat Dinabanda Nazir, Khas Appeal Adalat, the judge of the Hill Court and to the Judges of the Civil and Criminal Court, and a circular with content of this order be issued to the Sadar Kachari and the Sub Divisional offices.*

Sd/-  
D. S. Deb  
Minister

When the East India Company annexed plain Tipperah (Chakla Rosanabad) in A.D, 1767, and turned it into the Zamindari of the Tipperah Royal House, at that time Ralph Leeke was appointed by the Company as Resident in the Royal Court of Maharaj Krishna Manikya to look after the affairs of Chakla Rosanabad. With his advice judicial system of Chakla Rosanabad was separated from the prevailing judicial system from that of the hills in the kingdom. According to this judicial reform the king would appoint the judges for the hill territory of whom he was the supreme chief. In case of plain Tipperah i.e. Chakla Rosanabad, the highest court was comprised of the King and the Resident of the East India Company. After hundred years the judicial system of the kingdom was changed by the advice of Mr. Power, another British Officer, who was appointed as the first Political Agent in Tipperah in A.D, 1871. As advised by Mr. Power, the first Political Agent, Maharaj Birchandra Manikya (1862-1896 A.D.) established *Khas Appeal Adalat* (Royal Court of Appeal) with two judges in A.D, 1872, for final judgement of the Civil and Criminal cases which was in the form of the Privy Council in England. While the ancient system of tribal administration based on the feudal authority of the Chief ended with the reform introduced by Rajah Ratna Manikya, the medieval period of mixed feudal pattern tinged with Muslim system ended with Maharaj Birchandra Manikya. But this judicial reform did not impacted the Halam tribe as that of the Tipras. The Halam continued the uphold their social institution as it serve the society in preserving the social stability and discipline.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Description of officials of Halam Darbar:** In the history of Tipperah, modern period commenced during the reign of Birchandra Manikya in 1870 AD, who introduced extensive judicial and administrative reform in the kingdom. But such reform did not bring any visible change in administrative set up of Halam society. The old administrative system of the Halam society continued as before, possibly, the new system was not acceptable to the hill tribes which curtailed the power of Community and Village Darbar. The reform was initiated with the insistence of colonial rulers and self governing Halam society did not like the intrusion of alien system of judicial and administrative governance. As a result both the traditional *Village Darbar* and *Community Darbar/Tribal Darbar* continued to exist among the Halam tribe in hill areas, which exercised power and authority with tacit support of royal house of the kingdom. The number of officials, be it the *Central Darbar* or *Village Darbar*, vary across the different clans of the Halam community. Some designations of the officials also got modified or evolved and acquired new name and became very different from the earlier name or title. The power, duties and responsibilities of the same officials, which vary from one clan to another clan of the Halam, also evolved. In the fitness of thing, it should be appropriate to discuss elaborately on the status of some important elected officials for proper understanding of the age old social institution of the Halams.

**Halama-sa or Rai :-** *Halama-sa* was the oldest official of indigenes or aboriginal institution of the Halam tribe, which, in subsequent period evolved as *Rai (Roy)*. Possibly, the nomenclature of '*Halama-sa*' was conferred by the Tripuri rulers during the period of their settlement at Barak valley. The word '*Halama-sa*' means the '*children of the lofty mountain*' like the word of '*Tipra-sa*', which means '*children of river basin*'. The Ahom manuscript mentioned the official titled as '*Halama-sa*', who was the vassal of the King of Tipperah in Barak valley. While describing about the condition of Hill Tipperah of 1808 A.D, Alexander Mackenzie mentioned the existence of "*Roy*" (*Rai*) as Kuki Chief who was the vassal of the Raja of Tipperah. The word "*Rai*" was the corruption of the word "*Rajah*", which means *King*. Evolution of the title "*Halama-sa*" into *Roy* or *Rai* was the result of sanskritisation under the growing influence of Bengali Brahmins in the royal court of the Tipperah kingdom. But fact was that the title "*Halama-sa*" had been very familiar with across the



### Social administrative system

Halam clans; and being used even today. However, the chief called *Halam-sa* could not be traced among all clans of the Halam. The Langkai, Thangachep, Sakachep, Marchaphang, Dap, Saihmar, Chorei, and Bowng did not have *Halam-sa* or *Rai*; these clans did have *Kaitix* as the elected Chief of their respective villages; and their village *Kaitix* were no less powerful than the *Halam-sa* of the other Halam clans. But these Halam Chiefs were under the authority of the King of Tipperah. They were under constant surveillance of the royal house of this Kingdom. As their chiefs could not exert authority like the King, in time of danger and calamities they felt vulnerable. This was the reason which prompted the elders of the Langkai, Marchalang, Dap, Thangachep, Sakachep, Bowng and Chorei people to sing this folksong :

*"Rang adoi Rai pini  
Pangwah unai nchai  
Rajehol loi jibwa plak"*

In English this means:-

*"We have no King no Rai (chief)  
The region is devastated all around  
Roof (shelter) has been blown out"*

This was a long folksong which narrated the helpless situation of these clans in time of urgency because they had no King to protect them. However, it was noteworthy that the post of *Halam-sa* i. e. *Rai* of the Ranglong clan had been occupied by different clans of the Halam in different period. Mohamunship Rengkumrai, Dansonlian, Vanchungthang and Suameilal were the *Halam-sa* of the Ranglong from the Achep clan, Thangliandul and Ringhuiri, were from the Langkai clan; Tanglelai and Balapchunang had been the *Halam-sa* from the Chorei clan. Possibly, these eight clans namely- the Thangachep, Sakachep, Chorei, Saihmar, Marchaphang, Dap, Bowng, and Ranglong clans lived under single *Halam-sa* or *Rai* in Cachar in the past. Their oral tradition, folksong and legends, particularly, the legend of *Sanneidung* was popular and familiar among these clans that it would lead anyone to conclude that even centuries before these clans lived together; under single chief called the *Halam-sa*. The post of "*Halam-sa*" or "*Rai*" used to be held by the elder who was experienced in the administration of the community. The members of the *Community Darbar* or *Village Darbar*, as the case may be, normally would elect the sitting *Kabin* or *Kanshow* to the post of *Halam-sa*.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*sa* or *Rai* based on consensus and the post used to be held for lifetime once elected. In the past, the *Halamsa* or *Rai* commended dignity and authority in the society because he exercised both the judicial and administrative powers in his community, and had the support and patronage of the ruling house in the Kingdom. However, he was not allowed to be arbitrary in the exercise of his power, and could not do anything without the collective decision and consent of the Members of *Community/Tribal Darbar* or *Village Darbar* (Council), which he headed as the chief. In case of deviation from the decision of the *Darbar*, he would come under severe criticism and could, in certain cases, even be fined as punishment. The rulers of Tipperah kingdom patronized the *Halama-sa* or *Rai* by inviting him at "*Hosom Bhujon*" on the day of *Doserra* every year since the time immemorial where he would receive royal gift such as sword, gun, gold/silver goblet, robe, brass pitcher, royal umbrella etc. He would pay community tax i.e. *Kansumari*, as a symbol of loyalty to the reigning King during such occasion.

***Kamskaw or Kanchan*** : "*Kamskoi or Kanchan*" was another important official of the Halams society; and he was also familiar as "*Kanchan*". Many people pronounced it as *Kamskoi*. Among the Reang tribe he was called *Kaskaw*. He was like Chief Justice in Halam society; and his position and status was next to *Halama-sa*. In fact, "*Kamskoi*" was expert in customary law who explained the complicated social and customary laws in time of the deliberation at *Community/Tribal Darbar*. In short, he was an exponent of customary law. He also used to act as *Observer* and *Advisor* to the *Halama-sa*. But the official status, role and function of this official had evolved in different direction with the passage of time.

***Kalim and Choudhury*** : *Kalim* was Assistant priest who used to be the helper of *Chongtai*, the head priest of Chaturdas Devas, the titular deities of the royal house of Tipperah. In course of time, the status of the *Kalim* evolved and became the head of *Village Darbar* among the Halams. Some English scholars have mentioned it as *Galim*. In fact, the *Tipras* and other tribes too, pronounced it as *Galim*. In course of time in some Halam villages, particularly, the Rangkhawl, Kaipeng and Molaom, Bowngcher, Koloï clans and Korbong, the *Kalim* was replaced by the one called *Choudhury*. However, at the apex *Tribal Darbar*, the post of *Kalim* retained its importance, and functioned as the Assistant to the *Halama-sa* or *Rai*. At apex *Tribal Darbar* of different clans of the Halam, the *Kalim* was

### Social administrative system

called as *Saier-Kalim* or *Ser-Kalim* or *Voting-Kalim* or *Khas-Kalim* or *Dor-Kalim* with different role and function. In subsequent period, *Kalim* was replaced by the designation called *Choudhary* who headed each Village Darbar of the Molsom, Kaipeng, Rangkhawl, Koloi, Rupini, Bongcher and Korbung clans of Jalam. Among the Langkai, Chorei, Saicachep, Thangachep, Bowng, Marchang, Saitmar, Ranglong and Dap clans of the Jalam *Kalim* retained its original name designation. The *Kalim* once elected by the elders of the village would continue to hold the post till his death, unless removed from the post in extra ordinary circumstances. However, at present he holds office for certain period. In the past, the *Kalim* enjoyed a position, power and prestige as he was the President or Chairman of the *Village Darbar*, whose power was not defined by any written laws; and he rather enjoyed the patronage of the rulers of kingdom.

The institution of *Kalim* was so deep rooted in Jalam society that its existence could be noticed among different Jalam tribes even after their migration to North Cachar and other regions outside the Tipperah kingdom. The word '*Kalim*' seemed to have originated from the word of '*Kalima*' which was the Mohammedan confession of faith; and this also means *kalenkalor*. King Narantekhla of Arakan (Burma) held his kingdom as the Vassal of Gaur (Bengal) and in token of this, he and his immediate successor, though Buddhist, added Mohammedan title to their Arakanese one and issued medallion bearing the *Kalima* in 1433 A.D., the Mohammedan confession of faith. He was succeeded by his brother Min Khari who was also known by a Muslim name of Ali Khan. In A.D,1499, Md. Bhaktiar-I-Khithji, the general of Md. Gouri, defeated Rajahs Laxman Sen of Bengal and established ascendancy of Afghan in Bengal. From that period onward the Mohammedan started introducing different and superior pattern of administration in Bengal. The Mohammedan rule brought new titles to different administrative functionaries. The titles such as *Daroga* was given to a police officer of police station, *Hakim* to the Magistrate, *Tahsilidar* to village revenue collector, *Vakil* to an Advocate, *Nazir* to an office Store-keeper etc. were the few titles or designations which the rulers of this Kingdom introduced following the introduction of Mohammedan pattern of administration from the time of Raja Ratna Manikya onward. At next part of Indian sub continent was under the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Mohammedan rule, anything of Mohammedan origin was considered superior and dignified. Possibly, "Kalim" designation too, was introduced for the same reason.

**Kabur** : He was the assistant to *Kalim* and act as Convenor of the village Darbar. Among certain clans where there was no *Halamsa* or *Rai*, and the *Kalim* would act as head of the *Village Darbar*. In such situation, the *Kabur* performed an important rule in assisting the *Kalim* in all matters. He would convene the meeting of village Darbar after consulting the *Kalim* and would decide the agenda for discussion in the meeting of the *Village Darbar*. He was responsible for inviting village elders and ensured their attendance in the meeting of the *Village Darbar*. He used to act as Treasurer of the fund of village Darbar; and as the custodian of the movable property. He was such a person without whom the *Kalim* could not function. The word "Kabur" appeared to be distinctly Mohamedan origin and as old as the post of "Kalim". Possibly, during the reign of Raja Ratna Manikya the post was introduced. When the post of *Kalim* would be vacant, the sitting *Kabur* used to be promoted to occupy the post of *Kalim*. The post of *Kabur* used to be occupied by *chapia Kabur*.

**Panchifang or Tar or Tarpui** : He was expert on genealogy or matters related to clans and sub clans. There was restriction and taboos as regard to marriage, divorce, inheritance of property, adoption etc. There was also taboos on marriage between certain clans. Adoption of orphan from certain clan could not be done by a particular clan. All these issues had to be interpreted and resolved before deciding on such matters by the Village or Community Darbar. His position was almost equal to *Kalim*.

**Bengpui** : He was special invitee for assisting the Community or Village Darbar of the Chorei clan during the time of deliberation of the Darbar. He was an elderly man with vast experience.

**Chapia-Kalim** : He was Deputy *Kalim* and when the post of *Kalim* or *Kabur* would be vacant, he would hold the post of *Kalim*. In certain Halam clan, this post did not exist,

**Chapia-Kabur** : He was Deputy *Kabur*, who used to assist the *Kabur* in all matters. But in many Village Darbar of the Halams this post did not exist.

**Jaksung** : Among the Reang tribe he was Treasurer; and among the Molsom too, he was responsible for arranging feast, distribution of tea,

### **Social administrative system**

beatle leaves and nut, drinking water etc. during deliberation of the Community Darbar; and also custodian of the moveable property of the Darbar. But among the Kaipeng clan, *Jaksang* were the security of the *Kai*, *Kain*, and *Kamskaw*. Among the Koloj *Jaksang* was security chief and occupied the third position. In the Darbar of the Chorei clan, *Jaksang* was Observer and Advisor to the Darbar only. This official did not exist among other clans of the Halam in Tripura. Among the Aimol tribe in Manipur too, the post of *Jaksang* exist.

**Chapia** : Chapia was the Assistant of Kabur, and important member of the Village Darbar as well as apex Community Darbar of the Halam. The *Chapia* could be of two categories – *Senior Chapia* and *Junior Chapia*. The *Chapias* played important role in the village Darbar. Usually, subordinate village official used to be elected to the post of *Chapias* by the Members of the Darbar. The *Chapia* had a lot of influence in the process of decision making of the *Village or Tribal Community Darbar*. In some clan *Chapia* acted like a police and messenger.

**Khaksang** : He was like junior police chief, and ranked just below the post of *Jaksang*. *Khaksang* worked as assistant to *Jaksang*. He used to be assisted by the subordinate official such as *Sengja* or *Hajira*. This post was for the Community Darbar only, not in the Village Darbar. This official did not exist among the Sakachep, Thangachep, Bawng, Langkai, Nabin, Marchafang, Chorei, Ranglong and Kaipeng clans of the Halam, but this post existed in the Community Darbar of the Koloj, and Molsom clans only.

**Sengja or Sengkarak** : He was like a policeman who produced the accused in the court of Community or Village Darbar. Among the Molsom clan, he was called *Sengkara*. He was responsible for safe custody of the accused at the time of the meeting of the Village or Community Darbar. He also used to act as body guard of the higher officials of the Darbar. The *Sengja* could be *Senior Sengja* and *Junior Sengja*. This post could be traced in the Village or Community Darbars of all the clans of the Halama.

**Hajira or Arok or Ser** : Among the Molsom clan, *Hajira* was an official who acts as policeman. Among the Ranglong clan, *Arok* was the one who acted like a policeman and custodian of the accused. Among the Halams living in Dhalai District, *Ser* was the official who acted like a policeman. These village officials were authorized to inflict physical

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

punishment to any accused person as and when ordered by the Village or Community Darbar.

**Karbari** : Karbari was Caretaker of the delegates assembling in the house of the 'Rai' during the session of Community Darbar. This post could be found in Molsom Darbar only.

**Mukhtiar** : Mukhtiar was a person who would act like the Prosecutor as well as Advocate in the Darbar, particularly, among the Ranglong clan of the Halam. He also maintained records etc.

**Tangwa or Tangsam or Doloi or Daria** : *Tangwa* was an announcer. He would announce the decision of the Village Darbar or Community Darbar throughout the length and breadth of the village, when ordered by the Darbar. He was also familiar as *Tangsum* among the Rangkhawl, Kaipeng; and either *Tangsam* or *Doloi/ Daria* among the Molsom clan of the Halam. Among the Bowng, Sakachep, Thangachep, Langkai, Marchafang, Saihmar, Chorei, Ranglong and Dap clans of the Halam he was called *Tangwa*.

**Tuila** : He was senior youth member of the Village Darbar. He became eligible to represent the family in any community affairs and could assist the Village Darbar in any voluntary work. He was promoted from the rank of Kaithar through customary ceremony.

**Tang-ulian or Kaither** : *Tang-ulian* or *Kaithar* was one of the youth members of the Village Darbar enlisted on attaining the adulthood. He used to work as volunteer when entrusted by the *Village Darbar*. His position was just below the *Tuila*.

**Convention of sitting arrangement for officials of the Darbar**: In any social get together, the following dignitaries used to get any sitting plank in this order: (1) *Halama-sa* or *Rai* (2) *Kamskaw* (Kanchan), (3) *Kalim*, (4) *Jaksung* (5) *Kabur*, (6) *Khuksung*, . The "Rai" and "Kamskaw (Kanchan) used to get the topmost seats. The *Kalim* and *Jaksung* used to take their seat next. The *Kabur* and the *Khuksung* sit at the bottom. Nobody else was entitled to seat in the allotted place. At the time of social arbitration, if these selected dignitaries take their earmarked seats, they could make room for others. But if they did not, everyone in the gathering had to remain on his feet. The wives of these dignitaries too enjoy the privilege of getting into the entertainment hall in accordance with the status enjoyed by their respective husbands. The Chieftain's wife was entitled to attend and observe the proceeding in social adjudication but she did

### Social administrative system

not interfere with the usual proceedings. However, she might request curtailment of severe punishment in favour of any convict, and in that case, compliance was compulsory. In social adjudication, pecuniary penalty (called *Lei choi*) was mostly ordained. Trifling issues were solved by the local *Kalims* or *Chandharis* of respective villages. However, above convention was almost absent now due to declining power and importance of this traditional administrative institution. In certain clans such as the Sakachep, Ihangachep, Bowng, Nabin or Dap, Marchalang, and Langkai, the village dignitaries who got the sitting plank were the Kalim, Kabur, Chapia Kalim, Chapia Kabur, Chapias, Jaksun/Sardar, Sengja and invited elders.

**Installation ceremony of the Kalim and others officials :** In the past, celebration of the installation ceremony of the "*Roi*" or "*Tolpaaw sa*" or *Kalia* bound to be performed as a matter of custom. Installation ceremony used to be one of joy and festivities. Newly elected chief was bound by the tradition for hosting community feast where lots of "*Za*" (rice-beer) used to be served, and pigs were slaughtered for the community feast. Village elders would gather together, and some of them would present folksong at "*Za-beat*" (festivities of rice-beer) in praise of the new chief. This festival was known as "*Tehaari*". Flag and insignia presented by the King of the Kingdom used to be formally handed over to the newly elected chief. Garland used to be offered to the new chief and subordinate officials ceremonially. Sacrificed used to be offered to several deities called *Sapite* and *Papite*, the deities of paddy and cotton, *Sukundrai* and *Mokundrai*, the two brother deities who lived in the east; and the *Chaturias Devas*. Pig and fowls used to be sacrificed and community feast arranged at the expense of newly elected chief. Each participant in the festival was required to carry rice beer pot and beverage to the venue of the festival as a matter of custom and tradition. In the next morning or evening, before the close of the festival, the villagers used to carry the new chief round the village by the palanquin (*Tolai isinka!*) singing the folksong connected to this festival which was like this :-

*Achie ni Zopi Lakhoto-oi,  
Ning som han ni,  
Bestang phaini na niel ni  
Inding vachai nosen-oi,  
Zu pu iakkam oi*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Avien ni hi tusuwom surpeng  
Kan in hrem ni ke,  
Le kung sakruai kam kual ni  
Kepui samjik kan ziel ni,  
Chung thlapa ra-ang le,  
Chung ninu ra-ang le,  
Zopu lai khan kan hman rual  
Di wok lai khua rual hman ni  
Khong –ar pailung lawn hman-in  
Zopu laikhua kan hman rual hi,  
Aven ni mairo khamjang a sat le  
Zopu lalkhawn kan hman rual ke*

English translation was like this :-

*Zo Chief, this day is at your disposal,  
This day for you is to sit by reclining on your legs  
and for you to pierce the sky by standing tall;  
Zo Chief this day is for us to arrange sweet  
drink (Zu & wine)  
This day for you is to sit with crossed leg and  
To pluck the hair of our leg by twisting  
The moon of the sky is shining and  
The sun of the sky is shining;  
We are taking out the Zo Chief  
before the domestic pig roam about  
and before the cock crow while moaming;  
This is the day we are taking out the Zo Chief (around)  
Today bamboo-made palanquin looks good  
We are carrying the Zo chief around the village.*

This folk song was very popular among the Langkai, Marchafang, Bowng, Chorei, Thangachep, Dap(Nabin), Saihmar, Chorei and the Sakachep clans of the Halam even today.

**Existing social administration :** In spite of judicial reform in Tipperah kingdom, the old order of administration was prevalent among the Halams even after the merger of Tipperah kingdom with the Union of India because the system ensured self-rule to each clan of the Halam tribe. The Halams were independent minded; and the system ensured non-interference by the ruling class into internal affairs of the



### Social administrative system

tribe. Therefore, the old administrative system was very popular among the Halams and survived in independent Hill Tipperah for many centuries and even today. After the merger of Hill Tipperah with the Union of India on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1949, the Halam society continued to be under this system for sometime. The introduction of Panchayati Raj institution, and the Village Committees under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India in the State, has rendered the earlier old order obsolete in the eye of law. Besides, influx of large scale displaced population from neighbouring erstwhile East Pakistan and their rehabilitation in tribal areas has removed the century old isolation of Halam villages, which has impacted the social life of the Halam rendering the operation of the remnant of old social order impossible. But even today the Halam could not discard altogether the age old social institution which had sustained their self rule and preserved customary practices of the society for hundred of years. As a result, even today the system of old order could be traced among the various clans of the Halams. The Halam elders even today feel nostalgic about the old order which sustained their society in the past centuries and refused to discard centuries old institution altogether.

*Molsom Darbar*: Among the Molsom clan, *Lalansa* or *Rai* was the chief of entire clan, and his position was like the president of the community. *Kamskai* was the Deputy Chief, but he was also expert in customary law. He was regarded as the administrator of the community. On the other hand, *Kalin* was the assistant of *Kamskai* and *Kabit* was the assistant of *Kalin*. *Senior Chapia* was the Treasurer-cum-Store Keeper and *Junior Chapia* was the assistant of *Senior Chapia*. The *Juksong* and *Khaksong* were like the Minister in the past, but in subsequent period they acted like the head of the police chiefs whose duty was to ensure attendance of the accused in Community Darbar at the time adjudication; and he was assisted by the *Hazra* or *Hajira*. But it was *Sengkhata* (*Bengia*) who would inflict physical punishment to the accused as ordered by the Darbar. *Daza* or *Dolai* acted as the Messenger-cum-Announcer in all social gathering, *Dorai* was drum beater in all community gathering, something like *Tangsan* or *Tangwa* in other clans of the Halam. *Karna* was the messenger at the disposal of *Chapia* like that of *Dorai*. *Karbtri* was Caretaker for the dignitaries in all social gathering. In the past, there were five posts of *Jam Sardar* and *Panchiphang*. *Panchiphang* was

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

exponent of genealogy of the clan. At the village level, the Choudhury was the head of Village Darbar and assisted by the Khandol, who was security-cum-announcer. However, there was no written assignment of duties and responsibilities.

**Chorei Darbar :** At present the Chorei does not have institution for their entire clan. Instead they have the village institution in each village. The *Kalim* was the Chief of the Village Darbar and he was assisted by *Noktolai Kalim*; the *Kabur* was just below the *Kalim*, his assistant was *Noktolai Kabur*. There was *Chapia-Kalim*, the Deputy Chief of the *Kalim*, and below the *Chapia-Kalim* was the *Chapia -Kabur*, the assistant of the *Chapia(captain)*. The post of *Kamskaw(Kanchan)* was held by the women. *Jaksung* was the Observer and Advisor to the Darbar. On the other hand, *Tarpui(s)* were the representative of village elders. The *Sengja(police)* and *Faija(police)* were the assistants of the *Chapia*. *Bengpui*s were the special invitees from the elders. *Tangwa* was the announcer and *Mukhtier* was the record keeper. In the past, The Chorei also had the entire community chiefs called *Vantang Kalim* and his subordinate called *Vantang Kabur* and other subordinate officials such as *Sadar Mukhtiar* and *Sadar Chapia*, which did not exist now.

**Ranglong Darbar :** One could have a glimpse of the traditional institution of the Ranglong which was prevalent in 1711.A.D from the account given by Ratna Kundali Sharma and Arjundas Baisnab, the two envoys of Ahom King Rudra Singha. As mentioned before, two Ahom envoys saw a *Halam-sa* and his subordinate officials such as *Kalim*, *Kabur*, *Chapias* and *Doloi*. One official of the Tipperah kingdom called *Laskar* was posted among them. The Ranglong even today preserved this centuries old institution in modified form. Now they divided Ranglong inhabited areas into three zones. However, they have one *Halama-sa* who was equivalent to *Rai* for the whole community; and he was assisted by three *Sadar Kalims* and three *Mukhtiers* (prosecutor) for three Zones. At the level of Village Darbar, *Kalim* was the Chief and he was assisted by six subordinate officials namely *Mukhtier* (prosecutor), *Arok* (Executor of order), *Sengja*, *Khuang-pu* (drum beater i.e Daria), *Taitun* (tax/fee/fine collector), *Tangwa* (Announcer).

**Ranghowl Darbar :** Among the Ranghowls, the title *Halam-sa* has been substituted by the title of *Rai*; but the *Halama-sa* was familiar title among the elders. But the basic structure of the institution has

### Social administrative system

not changed much. *Rai/Mahmud, Kalim, Kabir* and *Kamskar* formed the Central Darbar (Council) of the clan. All others subordinate officials were responsible for carrying out the decision of the Central Council. The *Rai, Kalim, Kabir, Kamskar* and *Chapia* constituted the central authority for decision making. The *Chapia* arrange the meeting, received the delegates etc. The officials are now elected by the elders for certain period. At village level, the chief was called *Khuo-lakhong*, which means head of the village or *Chowdhury*. The *Khondols* were the assistants to the village chief i.e. *Chowdhury*; and the number of *Khondol* could be more or less depending on the requirement, in a given village. There could be several *Assistant Khondols* for assisting the *Khondols*.

**Kaipeng Darbar:** The structure of traditional central community Darbar of the Kaipeng clan was no different from the traditional institution of other Halam clans. However, some of the posts such as *Kabir, Chapia, Jaksang, Tangma*, and *Dolai* were absent now. Now the *Hebuma/Rai, Kalim, Jaksang* and *Kamskar* continued to be the official titles of the body of Central Community Darbar. *Jaksang* was the head of security of the *Rai, Kalim* and *Kamskar*, but *Seangis* were the guards of all the above four high officials. There were altogether eight *Seangis*, who were also familiar as *Taps*; and they were the body guards of the dignitaries, namely, the *Rai, Kalim, Kamskar* and *Jaksang*. At village level, *Chowdhury* was the head of Village Darbar, who was assisted by the *Tar/Seangis*, who acted like a police. He could inflict physical punishment as ordered by the *Chowdhury* or higher officials.

**Lwengkai Darbar:** Among the Lwengkai clan, the *Kalim* was the highest official, and the *Kabir* was the next official, both were followed by the *Noktolai-Kalim* and the *Noktolai-Kabir* as their subordinate officials. Further, below these officials were *Chapia-Kalim* and *Chapia-Kabir*. These officials would constitute the Darbar in the village community. Thereafter, there was *Chapia*, who used to act as close confident of the *Kalim*; the *Chapia* was also called *Sardar*. He would assist the Darbar in all matters. The *Seangis* and *Tapis* were the workers of the Darbar, and they would act as the security of the higher officials. The *Seangia* was also called *Seraw/Serwa*, who acted like the police. They occupied these two posts when promoted from the next subordinate posts; namely the *Tyap* and *Kaitbar*. The *Taygia* was an announcer, who

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

would announce the decision of the Darbar in the village. The Langkais do not have Community Darbar.

**Thangachep, Marchafang and Dap Darbar :** Thangachep, Marchafang and Dap people lived together in the east of Dhalai river along the western foot hill of Langtorai range. None of these clans have a village exclusively inhabited by a particular clan. All these clans have uniform traditional institutions. It was noteworthy that these clans did not have Central Authority for respective clan because they have lost separate identity of their respective clan due to gradual assimilation in course of time. At present traditional officials such as the *Kalim*, *Chapia*, *Kabur*, *Chapia-Kalim*, and *Chapia-Kabur* together/collectively constituted the decision making body in Village Darbar in each village. The *Kalim* was the highest official, and the *Kabur* was the next official, both were followed by the *Chapia-Kalim* and the *Chapia-Kabur* as their subordinate officials. The other subordinate officials such as *Sengjas*, who was also called *Sernu/Serpa*, were security personals and acted like the police. They occupied these two posts when promoted from the next subordinate posts namely-the *Tuila* and *Kaithar*. While the *Tuila* was helper to high official, the *Kaithar* was the collector of store for preparing feast etc. The *Tangwa* was an announcer, who would proclaim the decision of the Darbar in the village.

**Bowng, Sakachep and Saihmar Darbar :** The Bowng, Sakachep and Saihmar clans now lived together in Dhalai District. Most of the families from these clans have assimilated and difficult to separate them. At village level, the traditional institution of the Bowng, Sakachep and the Saihmar was headed by the *Kalim*. The Village Darbar was comprised of the *Kalim*, *kabur*, *Chapia-Kalim*, *Chapia-Kabur* and the *Sardar (Kamskoi)*. The *Sengjas/Sengkraks* were senior security personals; and with the assistance of *Serpa* (male police) and *Sernu* (female police), they would execute the order of Village Darbar. In other words, the *Sengja* would work like a police officer and the *Serpa* (male police) or *Sernu* (female police) worked under his direction. The *Tangwa* was Announcer, and *Serpa/Sernu* were like police constables who used to carry out the order of the Village Darbar. *Sardar* was new addition, whose duty was to represent village in maintaining contact to people of other community.

**Bongcher and Korbong Darbar :** Bongchers clan also has separate community Darbar headed by the *Rai*; and his immediate deputy was

### **Social administrative system**

Kanchan/Kamshaw. The other subordinate officials were the *Kalin*. Thus, the *Kai*, *Kalin* and *Kabar* constituted the decision making authority. The *Seangis* were the subordinate officials like the police who would execute the decision of the Darbar. At village level, they have *Choudhry* as the head of Village Darbar who was assisted by the *Kazudals*.

**Koloi Darbar :** The *Kai* or *Halansa*, *Gaim* or *Kalin*, *Kaskari/Kauskai* or *Kanchan* and *Asbur/ Kabar* were the decision making body at the Community Darbar. The *Jaksung*, *Khulsung* and *Seangis* were subordinate officials responsible for execution of the decision. *Taita* and *Maita*, *Barising* and *Kaitiar* were officials responsible for the management of fooding, reception, venue of the meeting etc. for the Koloi Darbar wherever it would convened the meeting.

**Rupini Darbar :** The *Roi*, *Kanchan*, *Kalin*, *Kabar*, *Changis*, *Sarbar* and *Uliers* constituted the Rupini Community Darbar and the *Kharid* and *Seangis* were the workers who implement the decision of the Darbar.

**Khasias and Biate Darbar :** The Sakachep clan living in Jaintia Hills in Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Karbi Anglong, Dirma Hasao (N.E. Hills) and Varak Valley in Assam were officially recognised as *Khasias*. Majority population of the Biate clan now living in Jaintia Hills in Meghalaya, Roha Tribes have the village institution headed by the *Kalin* or *Sir Kalin*, *Kabar*, *Changis*. The Rangkhowl now living in Dirma Hasao also has the same institution.

**Evolution of social administration :** Traditional administrative system headed by *Roi*, *Kauskai*, *Kalin*, *Kabar*, *Jaksung*, *Khulsung*, *Changis* and *Seangis* etc. were the clan centric. The officials of these Village and Community Darbars might be mostly uneducated but they were most respected people within their community in the past. They were respected within the community because they were well acquainted with the age-old customary practices; and they were indispensable in the society to settle all disputes. They enforced social discipline within the community and no one could challenge their authority. In spite of official abolition of *Pohari Adalat (Hills Court)* in A.D.1879, following the administrative and judicial reform during the reign of Maharaj Birchandra Manikya, the adjudication of disputes on property, marriage, divorce, quarrel, theft and robbery etc. continued to be carried out by the *Village Dabbar* or *Community Darbar* of different clans of the Halam tribe. The Halams were community centric people, and would not like

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

interference by any outside authority to settle their dispute. They always valued their customary laws and tradition in the settlement of any social and economic dispute. Moreover, the leadership of the community would jealously guard the authority of Village Darbar, and no member of the Halam family would dare to approach the Court of law for fear of social boycott or social ostracism. As the Halams were deeply community centric, and would not like to take any issue or dispute beyond the reach of their respective clan, it was natural that their Village Darbar would play important role in resolving the dispute of any kind. As a result, the traditional institution of the Halam remained an important instrument for adjudicating the dispute in Halam society even after judicial and administrative reform from the period of Maharaj Birchandra Manikya. Although the Village Darbar or the Community Darbar had no legal standing in the eye of modern law or administration; it had provided stability and discipline in the community over many centuries.

After Tripura Merger Agreement on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1949, Ranjit Kumar Ray took over as the first Chief Commissioner of Tripura. On 15<sup>th</sup> August in 1950 A.D, the Constitution of India came into force, and Tripura was placed under "C" Category State. In the year of 1956 A.D, Tripura attained the status of Union Territory, from A.D, 1957 to 1963 A.D, Tripura was ruled by the Territorial Council; and during this period, the traditional institution of the Halam continued to function without difficulties, and the Government functionaries also gave a lots of importance to this traditional institution. In A.D. 1963, the Government of Union Territory Act came into force from the 1<sup>st</sup> July of that year; and 30 members Legislative Assembly was set up and its first meeting of session was held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1963 A.D. From that period the Territorial Council ceased to exist. Along with this change new Panchayati Raj institution was introduced throughout the State. This switch over to new system made a sever blow to the traditional social institution headed by *Rai, Kalim, Kabur, and Chapias* etc. Further, the extension of modern administrative network and application of modern laws in tribal society in general and the Halam society in particular impacted the traditional social institution of the Halams, and made all the age-old customary practices in-operative and obsolete. However, even today this age-old traditional institution survives, though symbolic, because this institution

### Social administrative system

still bound together the geographically scattered clans of the Halam tribe. After all, an institutions which has been associated with the Halam tribe for many centuries has turned into social legacy that could not be given up by the community so easily. In fact this institution served the tribe in resolving many social disputes.

**Difference between social institution of the Halam and other Kuki-Chin tribes:** In his *"Note on the Thadoes Kukis"* William Shaw gave sketch map showing the regions inhabited by the different clans of Kukis. He projected Tipperah kingdom as the land of Halam, who belonged to the Old Kukis. Shaw also projected the North Cachar Hill's (now Dima Hasao) as the hab'itat of Rangkhawl and Biates, the Lushai Hills (present Mizoram) as the land inhabited by the Lushais, Ralte, Lakhers and Tanai; and the Manipur as the land, where the Thadoes etc live. G.A. Grierson has also categorized the Halams as *Old Kukis* along with Rangkhawl, Biate, Ana', Chiru, Kolien, Kom, Puram and Hmar etc. Though the Halam tribe comprised of different sub tribes or clans and belonged to Old Kuki tribes, they represented a distinct social group in terms of social institution, custom and social tradition. In spite of being Kuki-Chin tribes, the Halam tribe was very distinct by their social institution which was characterised by democratically elected *Community and Village Dabbar* headed by the chief called "*Thiam-ee*", which was subsequently sanskritised as *Raj (Roy)*, and the *Village Dabbar* headed by the "*Kidde*", which subsequently became sanskritised as "*Choudhary*". On the other hand, the *Thadoes, Hmar, Fazi or Lais, Raltes, Maras, Lyalsis, Darlongs* etc. were ruled by their respective hereditary and despotic Chiefs called the *Lal* or *Hansa*. The Chiefs i.e. *Lal* or *Hansa* of these Kuki-Chin Lushai tribes had never been under the authority of Tipperah kingdom; though the Darlong and some Lushai *Lal* or Chiefs started to acknowledge the authority of the King of Tipperah from nineteenth century onward. On the other hand, the Halams' Chiefs and officials were under absolute authority of Tipperah rulers for centuries and the titles such as "*Halama-ee or Raj*", *Kalin, Kohar, Chopia, Jokung, Klukswag, Kavskoi, and Khondol*, etc. were either conferred or recognized by the Rajahs of Tipperah kingdom. Thus, W.W. Hunter observed about the Halam in Cachar valley stating that "*the term Old Kuki is applied to the tribe living on farther side of Barak River in North Cachar, also appear to have nothing in common with the*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Kukis proper or Lushais. Their system of village government is democratic, and thus is strong contrast with that of all other tribes to which the name of Kuki is applied".* In the midst of high sounding modern Panchayat Raj system of village governance, the Halams have been able to preserve a remnant of their social institution till now, though some officials have ceased to exist. The Rangkhawl, Biate, Sakachep (Khelmas) of North Cachar Hills (Dima Hasao District) and the Khelma of Karbi Anglong of Assam, the Chorei, Ranglong and Sakachep (Khelmas) of Barak valley of Assam and Mizoram, the Sakachep i.e. Khelmas of Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya, Aimol of Manipur, who were once considered to be Halam community, have preserved this democratic institution and their distinctive identity depended on this institution. They were the subject of greater Tipperah kngdom in the past; and inherited the democratic social institution, which was nurtured by the rulers of Tipperah kingdom for centuries; and till today these tribes preserved this social institution.

**TABLE SHOWING THE PRESENT OFFICIALS OF THE SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS OF DIFFERENT CLANS OF THE HALAM TRIBE**

S.L.No	Detail of clans	Officials of Community/ Village Darbar of Halam tribe
01.	Ranglong	Halama-sa, Sadar-Kalim, Sadar-Mukhtiar, Kalim, Kabur, Chapia-Kalim, Chapia-Kabur, Mukhtiar, Arok(Ser), sengja, Khuongpu Taitum, Tangwa etc.
02.	Chorei	Kalim, Kabur, Chapia-Kalim, Chapia-Kabur, Chapias, Kamskaw, Tarpui, Bengpui, Mukhtiar, Jaksung, Sengja, Faija, Tangwa etc.
03.	Thangachep/Dap/ Marchafang	*Kalim, Kabur, Chapia-Kalim, Chapia-Kabur, Chapia, Sengja(s), Tuila, Kaithar, Tangwa, etc.
	Langkai	Noktolai Kalim/ Chapia Kalim/Noktolai Kabur/Chapia Kabur /Sengja or Sengkrak/ Chapia (below Sengkrak in rank)
04	Bawng/Saihmar/ Sakachep	*Kalim, Kabur, Chapia-Kalim, Chapia-Kabur, Chapia, Sardar/Kamskaw, Sengja(s), Tuila, Kaithar, Tangwa, etc.



### Social administrative system

05	Marchafang	*Kalim, Kabur, Chapia-Kalim, Chapia-Kabur, Chapia, Sengja(s), Ser (Seru & Serpa), Tangwa, Tuila, and Kaitbar.
06.	Rangkhowl	Halansa/ Rai, Kalim, Kabur, Kamskaw, Chapia, Sengja, Khungak, Chouthary, Khondol, Tangsam, etc.
07. &(Junior)	Molsom	Halansa-ra/Rai, Kamskaw/Kamhan, Kalien, & Kabur, Chapias (Senior Khuksung, Jaksung, Sengja/ benglanba, Planta, Hajra, Karbari, Dolai, Karma, Tangsam/ Khondol, etc.
08.	Kaipeng	Halansa-ra/ Rai, Kalim, Kabur, Jaksung, Khuksung, Sengja/Tor, Tangsam/ Khondol etc.
09.	Korbung & Boncher	Halansa/ Rai, Kalim, Kabur, Jaksung, Sengja, Tangsam etc.
10.	Biate	Ser, Kalim, Kalim, Kabur, Kamskaw.
11.	Koldi	Rai/Halansa, Kanchan, Kalim, Abur/ Gabur, Jaksung, Khuksung, Sengja, Tuila, Barising, Kaitbar, Muila, Mudi, etc.
12.	Rupini	Rai/Halansa, Kamskaw, Kalim, Gabur, Chapias (Senior& Junior), Sengja (Junior & Junior), Sardar, Hograh-Chagrah (Elders), Khondol, Mukhtiar, etc.
13.	Aimel	Kamskaw, Jaksungpa, Planta, Tangwa, etc.
14.	Khelma(Sakochep)	Kalim, Kabur, Chapia etc.

The structure of Village Darbar, excepting the Ranglong, Molsom, Kaipeng, Rangkhowl, Rupini and Koldi, vary from one village to another village. This variation was more visible among the Chorei, Hrangachep, Bowng, Langkai and Marchafang clans of the Halam. No written law or constitution exist on the composition and function of Halam Darbar, and no written law exist on the procedure of election, status, position, power, and function of the officials of Village or Community Darbars of different clans of the Halam. As no written law exist, the structure, power and function etc. of the officials of the Village and Community Darbar vary from one clan to another clan which was the outcome of evolution over many centuries.

## CHAPTER - 15

# SOCIAL CUSTOM AND TRADITIONS

**Concept of marriage:** The concept of marriage deffered from one religion to another. But everyone regarded the marriage as one of the important events in the life time of human being. Although stray cases of polygamy and divorce occured, marriage was considered holy and divine by the Christians and Hindus; and divorce was not permissible in the eyes of these two religions. However, in Muslim faith marriage was regarded as social contract and the faith provided for divorce, polygamy and re-marriage. But in traditional Halam society, marriage was neither considered holy nor a social contract, but part and parcel of human life cycle; and it has nothing to do with religious belief or social contract. However, in the time of marriage, the Halam priest had to perform small ritual sacrifice for the welfare of new couple; but such sacrifice was not related to religious sanction for marriage. Rather marriage was considered as vow of youngman and woman who dicided to unite into matrimony. There were several stages of traditional and customary practices. Besides, there was certain social restriction or taboo on marriage. Marriage with cousins, close relative of father or mother was not allowed in the society. In fact, marriage within the same family clan and sub clan was not allowed and violation of this social taboo considered immoral; and such couple was looked down upon in the society. Within the family, marriage of younger son or daughter could not take place before the marriage of the elder. Violation of all these social taboos normally referred to Village Darbar for judgement. When the date of marriage was finalized, it used to generate lot of excitement among the villagers, where the bride and the groom lived. Week before the marriage ceremony, the village youths would start gathering firewood and banana or plantain leaves, husking or grainding paddy etc. for marriage feast and helped the bride by rendering all required social service. For the youngman or youngwoman, it was the brothers

### **Social custom and traditions**

who arranged the marriage of their sister or brother after the death of their parent. Marriage negotiations were usually conducted after the harvest. The parent of the youth would take the lead in conducting the negotiations by engaging *palai* i.e. a person who used to carry out the negotiation. Today marriage has become costly because most of the parents would like to make the marriage a memorable occasion for their family. Moreover, imitation of neighbouring community has made the marriage expensive. There has been increasing trend to extend all kind of support to the parents of bride and the groom by their close relatives to overcome financial difficulties.

The marriage of the Halam has its distinctive traits. In Hindu society, particularly, among the married Bengalee women usually custom and tradition was to use vermillion, bracelets and bangles etc. In the marriage ceremony of the Halam, no vermillion, bracelets and bangles were used by married Halam women, though there was exception in case of the Koloj and Rupini sub tribes. Further, there were symbolic ornaments or dress of married Bengalee woman which could differentiate her from unmarried woman. The Halam families, who claimed to be adherent of the Hindu religion, continued to observe the marriage custom and ritual in simple way by offering one puja only i.e. to *Sapife* (Bengal: *pathien*), the goddess of paddy and wealth. There were no symbolic ornaments or dress of married Halam woman which could differentiate her from unmarried woman. However, in recent time some married women from Hindu families were being encouraged by certain cultural organisation to use vermillion and bangles etc. On the other hand, the Christian families have been following the Christian marriage in the Church.

**Custom and traditions of marriage :** There were certain customary and traditional practices which must be followed. Important customary and traditional practices of marriage involve the following :

**Courting for marriage :** Marriage was an important social event for the Halams as any other community. The sanctity of marriage was preserved and upheld by the society and enforced with zeal by the Village or Community Darbar. There was variation in customary practice and tradition across the different Halam sub-tribes or clans. But all the Halam sub-tribes or clans considered forced or arranged marriage inhuman and most parents would try to avoid forced or arrange marriage of their sons and daughters, although this practice is changing gradually because

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

the parents want that their children should marry to a person of their choice within the community. The young men and young women have lot of freedom in choosing their life partners. The society allowed the custom of courting in secret to a girl by young man for choosing the partner of his liking. Courting to a girl by young man was an accepted practice across the different clans of the Halam tribe. Earlier days, for courting a girl, young man used to go out at night or evening to the house of the girl for courting which was called "*Kholai-chei*". At night, after dinner at around 8 p.m. the young girl used to engage themselves for spinning of cotton, thread etc. The young man would sit beside her at night for chatting; and also would play *Theilee/ Theikhang* (flute) or *Siranda* (home made violin). In the process, they would try to exchange views and understand each other's mind. Sometime the young man would comb the hair of his lady-love which was called *Lu-inkhui* or *Samkhui*. The young man would buy clothes, ornaments for presenting to his lady love. Sometime he would meet her in the field or market in course of work. This method of courting has changed and now the method of courting has taken different form. However, courting remain important practice of marriage even today. If the young man and girl decided to get married, the young man would communicate his parent or guardian through his close one or relative. The parents or guardians seldom disagee to the choice of their sons or daughters.

**Engagement and marriage :** The parent, in most cases, would accede to the desire of their son for marrying a particular girl of his choice and liking; and would go to the house of the girl with engagement proposal for marriage. As a traditional practice, the parent of the young man would refrain from visiting the house of the girl, but sent some relative or trusted persons called *Palai* i.e. representative or messenger. In this formal proposal for marriage, rice beer or "*Langee*" used to be served at the expense of the boy's family; and this *Langee* (rice beer pot) was called "*Chong rakel zu*" or "*Chong in Thang zu*", which, if translated in english, means "*Beer of Enquiry*". The Rangkhawl called it *Sa-moi jong* (Seeking for bride), and the Molsom, Bongcher and Korbong called it *Samoi-u*, which also means Seeking for bride. A female fowl used to be brought alongwith *Zu Kola* (rice beer pot) in the house of the girl's family with a proposal for marriage. In this stage, the parents of the young man and the girl would decide as to whether the marriage would be based on:-

### Social custom and traditions

(a) Without Servitude or (b) With Servitude: The parent or guardian of the young man used to engage *Paloi* i.e. messenger to settle this issue with the parent of the girl i.e. bride.

In case the marriage was without servitude, the bride price would be paid in presence of the Chief and members of the Village Council; and a fowl brought by the *Paloi* used to be sacrificed at the altar, where riceful pot was placed to goddess *Sapite* (goddess of paddy) for the blessing. *Bik-Zu* (marriage) ceremony used to be arranged on stipulated date. In the ceremony of *Bik-zu* or *Krai-za*, five numbers of cocks would be required for sacrificing to five deities, namely, *Sokudoroi* (*Madudoroi* (two brothers), *Kaikihi porilata Raja*, *Sungrang pathien* and *Kati Rangkuah Porilata Raja*, which were called *Sulanangai* (eastern deities). Besides, sacrificial offering also used to be made to *Sapite* and *Papite*, the goddesses of paddy and cotton for the prosperity of the new couple. The priest used to sprinkle rice, sesamun, cotton, water and red flower on the bride and bridegroom and blessed the new couple. The village priest also used to offer egg to evil spirit, which he would break and throw away. The bridegroom and the bride were required to take bath and dressed with new clothes. Thereafter, the bride and bridegroom used to sit together nearby the altar, where cocks were sacrificed. During the time of this puja of marriage ceremony, stone, Dao (Chopper), cotton, rice, sesamun, and holy water were placed at the altar, and the bride and bridegroom had to swear by touching the stone, Dao, Cotton, Rice and water put at the altar saying that they would be faithful to each other, and would take care in time of sickness, danger and would never leave each other; and this ceremony was called as *Taphing*. After the puja, the bride and the bridegroom would enter the home of the bride together, the bride and bridegroom would bow down and received the blessing by touching the feet of parent, village chiefs and elders, who were seated in order of their social standing. The marriage feast for the community was not compulsory according to traditional custom. However, lots of marriage drink used to be fixed compulsorily; the elders and invitees were offered sufficient drink and simple meal. Among the Halam of Dhalai District, the customary requirement for *Bik-za* (marriage ceremony) was 9 (nine) bottles of wine and (one) *Zukola* i.e. one pitcher of rice beer (*Langee*), in case the marriage took place day time. But if the marriage ceremony was held at

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

night, 12 (twelve) bottles of wine was required. Besides, one pot of rice beer for the elders, one pot of rice beer for the brothers of bride, one pot of rice beer for the sisters of the bride used to be fixed in the ceremony. *Biak-zu* (marriage ceremony) used to be held with adequate drink for the whole day. Just moment before the departure of the bridegroom with his bride, another drink used to be fixed which was called *Kalthok-zu*, and this was regarded as farewell drink. It was the custom that all the expenses of *Biak-zu* must be borne by the family of the bridegroom. Marriage without servitude was a rare case which occurred when the bride's family was very poor and wanted to send their daughter to a rich family.

On the other hand, marriage with servitude (called *Lalui*) was widely practised and had been most popular form of marriage in Halam society in the past ages, and this form of marriage could be noticed upto the period of nineteenth sixties. In fact marriage by servitude was almost compulsory in all clans of the Halam, which was for the period of three to eight years. This was the period for proving the bridegroom that he was capable of doing any kind of hard work and could survive hardship, and worthy of having a family. On the day the bridegroom entered into the house of the bride to undergo servitude for stipulated years, a simple ceremony called *Lut-zu* (Entry Ceremony) used to be held in the house of the bride, and the parent or guardian of the bridegroom used to carry *Zukola* (pot of rice beer) and a fowl to the house of the bride for holding *Lut-zu* ceremony. In the morning of the day of ceremony, the parent of the bride used to sacrifice a fowl to *Sapite*, the goddess of paddy, for blessing. The bridegroom used to be escorted by his friends at night which was familiar as *Samak thak* or *Hmak thak*. The youths of the village would accompany the bridegroom with dance, song, drum beat and also beating bamboo pipe which was familiar as *Tuithai-Khuang*. This servitude for specific years by the bridegroom in the house of the bride's parent was familiar as *maksa* or *Samak*. The day the youngman would enter into the house of the bride, *maksa* period commenced and *Lut-zu* (Entry Ceremony) was held at the expense of the bridegroom.

After completing the period of servitude in the house of bride's parent, it was time for the bridegroom to return home with his wife and children, who were born during the period of servitude in the house of his wife. On the day of his return, a ceremony called *Suok-zu* (Exit Ceremony) used to be held at the expense of the bride's parent or

### Social custom and traditions

guardian, and no *Biak-zu* was necessary. In this ceremony the parent and guardian of the bride was required to arrange the adequate drink and simple meal at their expenses. In the ceremony, six numbers of cocks were sacrificed to six deities, namely, *Sakundarai & Mukundarai* (two brothers), *Kallakhi Pordhan Raja*, *Sangrang pathien* and *Kati Rangkachak Pordhan Raja*, which were called *Sakundarai* (eastern deities); and also to *Sepite*, the goddess of paddy. The priest used to sprinkle rice, sesamun, cotton, water and red flower on the bride and bridegroom and blessed the new couple. The village priest also used to offer egg to evil spirit, which he would break and throw away. Before leaving the house of bridegroom with his wife and children (which the couple might get during the period of servitude), the parent of the bride used to arrange a ceremony by fixing drink and simple meal for the guests who had come to escort the bridegroom and the bride (i.e. couple) back to home and this ceremony was called *Kalihak zu*. Before leaving the home of the father-in-law i.e. parent of the bride, the bridegroom and his wife i.e. the couple would touch the feet of the parent, relatives, elders, and chief and Members of the Village Darlar seeking their blessing and goodwill. On other side, the parent of the bridegroom too used to fix a drink for the guests who had come in his house to receive the incoming bridegroom with children. This ceremony was called *Mohngak-zu*. The chief and Members of Village Council, elders of the village and other invites used to be the guest, and in fact, they would initiate the drinking of rice beer and beverage made with rice before others in the ceremony. As soon as the couple, which consist of the bridegroom, bride, children and the people accompanying the bridegroom arrived, the host i.e. parent or guardian of the bridegroom would celebrate the occasion by fixing a drink and simple meal, and this ceremony used to be held to welcome the incoming new bride. This ceremony was familiar as *Moihaug-zu*. This custom and tradition of marriage was followed by the Sakachep, Thangachep, Langkai, Bowng, Dap, Salmar and Marchafang. The Chorei, and Ranglong clans too followed the same custom in matter of marriage through servitude or without servitude, observance of marriage related ceremonies, sacrificial ritual in the marriage, but certain variation could be noticed in the custom and practise. Among the Chorei clan, the bride was not allowed to leave her parent's home for going to the house of the bridegroom directly. After leaving the home of her

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

parent, the new bride and bridegroom had to move in the house of *Mamapu* (nominated maternal uncle) in the same village before their departure to the village or house of the bridegroom. *Mamapu* used to fix a drink and simple feast in honour of the new couple. So the practice among the Chorei people was to select a very close relative as *Mamapu*. When the *Mamapu* fixed the drink and feast, the bride would sing the song saying:-

*Mamapu nabei Kaman-in  
Lungpui nu nuoia kumsarik,  
Lenglai keichang nabei kimanin  
Nang nani mama Longlai  
Sikti liana kapholeng nang nani,  
Mama Longlai chapmei chung  
Ka pholeng nang nani,  
Sima kain ngamna sim ram rungtang  
mama Longlai,  
Atar kei in ngamna  
mama rungthei, mama Longlai,  
Zailam insen nah zaitang paser  
mama Lenglai,  
Mi pe taro aringle bor,  
Na pe taro adamle bar mama Longlai,  
Ka hongbun rala thung lu,  
Ka hong tho kut-mor a zu.*

English translation of this folksong was like this:-

*Maternal uncle, with your blessing  
as if I am seven years under safe stone cave,  
I have attained youthhood by your blessing,  
Maternal uncle, you are the one who  
in time of river flooding shielded me,  
Maternal uncle, above the burning  
oven you acted like my shield,  
In the west were I used to rest  
there you stood like western Mountain  
Oh maternal uncle,  
Oh maternal uncle, you are the elder  
standing like a mountain where I find shelter,*



### Social custom and traditions

*We will be separated by different path,  
Give me blessing for my life time.  
Maternal uncle, give me life long blessing,  
I have come to bow down my head.  
I am folding my palms and fingers to give you Pranam.*

As the bride sang at the blessing by above song, the maternal uncle would give blessing with this song:-

*Ya suan langitu,  
Naka pe chango apa rual sari,  
Naka pe waia sata rual sari,  
Kabei kinan-in rual sari sapa wai oon taruh,  
Kabei kinan-in wai oon taruh sapa rual sari,  
Kabei kinan-in thitunrang pibiqipik ichang rang,  
Kabei kinan-in tunggan phioel oi chong rang,  
Kabei kano-in turing angia nei ang rang,  
nei noi angia nei hual rang,  
Chonga Thap dan dor nei dan rang,  
Chonga Nam dan dor midan rang,  
Chong-ia rauh sara satta oi oi angga.*

English translation was like this:-

*Oh my dear and loved friend,  
The blessing of my right hand is for having seven sons,  
The blessing of my left hand is for having  
seven daughters.  
I bless you to maintain seven sons,  
I bless you to maintain seven daughters.  
My word must turn tree stump into Plaiptuk tree,  
By my words the mountain must turn into a valley,  
By my word you will be as lively as flowing  
stream and burning charcoal,  
You will live as long as the moon and  
the sun above the sky axis,  
Fertility, victory and goodness be with you.*

[These song were sung by Vanneiman (Churai) Halam]

On the next day, when the new couple entered the home of the parent of the bridegroom i.e. husband, a ceremony used to be held which was

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

known as *Ruoipek*. Here again the couple had to sit together covering their head with new red cloth together and holy water used to be poured out over the covered head of the couple ceremonially which was known as "*Tuibuak*" meaning *Water Pouring*. The elders and Chief of the Village Darbar and its Members would sit in row in order of their social standing; and the new couple would bow down the head and touch their feets seeking their blessing. However, it was the priest who first blessed the couple. The *Ochei* (priest), touching the head of the new couple would chant this blessing: -

*Ka tong nimak, Kahla nimak,  
Narual nachim neikhel rang,  
Sara phaizam ei sip rang,  
Tuisua koilam ei manzik rang,  
Ring-tuan nei sua-rang'  
Damtuan nei-sua-rang.*

English translation was like this -

*This is not my word and not my song,  
You will surpass your colleague and friends  
All land be full of your (decendent),  
Zig zag streams will be straight,  
You will have long life,  
You will have healthy life.*

The Ranglong clan too, has a marriage tradition which was similar to the tradition of other clans of the Halam tribe. Ranglong parent, in most cases, would accede to the desire of their son for marrying a particular girl of his choice, and would go to the house of the girl with engagement proposal for marriage. The parent of the youngman would refrain from visiting the house of the girl, but sent some relative or trusted persons called *Palai* i.e. representative or messenger. In this formal proposal for marriage, rice beer or "*Langee*" used to be served at the expense of the boy's family; and this *Langee* (rice beer pot) was called "*Chong rakel zu*", which in english means "*Beer of Enquiry*". A female fowl used to be brought alongwith *Zu Kola* (rice beer pot) in the house of the girl's family with a proposal for marriage. Like any other clan of the Halam, there was two type of marriage among the Ranglong clan, and the one was *maksa lut* (marriage with servitude), and the other was *Lolui* (marriage without service). *Samak* or *Maksa* involved servitude

### Social custom and traditions

i.e. the youngman needed to go into the house of the young woman i.e. bride, whom he wanted to marry serving in her house for stipulated years. This situation arose mostly when the parent of the girl wanted such servitude from the youth for consenting the marriage of his daughter. However, sometime both the parents and guardians of the youngman and young woman might agree that the youngman would go to the house of the girl for giving service. *Lalai* means marriage without giving service in the house of the bride. In the past, *Sauk* or *Maka* was very common phenomena not only in Ranglong clan, but in the Ha'am society as a whole. In this kind of marriage (*paiksa / sauk*), *Lat-ax* ceremony must be performed as soon as the boy i.e. bridegroom party arrived in the house of the parent of the bride for servitude carrying *Zakola* (rice beer pots). Sacrifice used to be offered to *Sapite*, the goddess of paddy in the morning for blessing in the evening rice beer and home made wine used to be fixed for the chief and Members of the Village Darbar such as *Kalin*, *Kalar*, *Chupas* and *Makhtar*, elders and other invitees. At night the bridegroom used to be escorted towards the house of the bride for *Mak-hat* (for servitude in the house of bride's parent). In *Lalai* (marriage without servitude), no *Lat-ax* i.e. entry ceremony was held. However, *Bik-ax* i.e. marriage ceremony, used to be held at the expense of the bridegroom. The bridal party did not bear any expenses of the ceremony. On the day of marriage, the village priest used to offer sacrifice with six fowls to six deities, namely, *Sikindara*, *Makindara*, *Kaidin parahan Raja*, *Sangrong pethaca* and *Kati Rangkhak Porahan Raja*, which were called *Sidamagwi* (eastern deities); and also to *Sapite*, the goddess of paddy. The priest used to sprinkle rice, sesamun, cotton, water and red flower on the bride and bridegroom and blessed the new couple. The village priest also used to offer egg to evil spirit, which he would break and throw away. In the marriage ceremony, it was the *Kalin* i.e. the village chief who usually would pour the water on *Zakolas* (rice beer pot) and would initiate drinking of the beer. Thereafter, the bridegroom would take the drink from the *Zakola* (rice beer pot) given/ fixed from the bridal side. In the same manner, the bride also would take the drink from the *Zakola* fixed by the side of bridegroom and repeat the same three times. However, before taking drink, the bride and bridegroom would bow down their head by touching the feet of the parents, elders and *Kalin* and other officials of the Village Darbar for

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

blessing. In case of *Maksa* i.e. servitude, as soon as the bridegroom would complete the duration of his servitude in the house of the bride, another ceremony called *Suok-zu* (Exit Ceremony) would take place. The custom and ritual followed by the Ranglong in the observance of *Suak zu* (Exit Ceremony) was the same as the Langkai, Sakachep, Thangachep, Marchafang, Dap, Bowng etc. clans of the Halam.

Among the Molsom clan, the marriage ceremony would take place in the house of the bride like any other clans of the Halam. Normally marriage was done with the consent of the parent, and this arranged marriage was known as *Rawkaipui* or *Samoi-in min-rawkei*. In this arranged marriage, several stages were observed. The first stage was *Rawkai Chongrathang* i.e. formal proposal for marriage from the side of the youth would be made to the parent of the girl carrying *Zukola* (rice beer pot) to the house of the parent of the young woman by a *palai*. This event was also familiar as *Ute Zu* (Rice-beer for request). Thereafter, the parents of the youngman and young woman would consult each other in another day to fix the date of marriage, and reached to an agreement on different issues related to expenditure for marriage feast, servitude and other related issues, and this event was familiar as *Upui Zu* (Rice beer for big request). In all these ceremonies and discussion the chief and some village elders used to be present to help in the settlement of issues. There had been a custom of saying goodbye from the friends and village youths by the bridegroom and bride just before their marriage ceremony. So just before the date of marriage, the boy and girl would separately invite their respective friends for get together and to give company for the last time and to say goodbye, and this occasion was known as *Rolvomni*. Normally, the parent of the youngman select a family in the village of the bride as the guardians of their son, and day before the marriage ceremony, the youngman would stay in that house, as if that was his home. The youngman and his parent, guardians and family members of that house would take part in the marriage ceremony, which was known as *Tuibok-ni*; (which means the day of water pouring). In fact marriage ceremony would take place in the house of the bride. On the day of *Tuibok-ni* (first day of ceremony), the *Ochei* i.e. the priest would sacrifice fowl at the altar in the morning, in the premises of the bride's house; where both girl and boy would be present for receiving blessing from the priest. Stone, Dao (chopper), water, fire, rice and cotton

### Social custom and traditions

were placed at the altar. The priest, after sacrificing fowls, asked the bride and groom to take vow by touching the stone, fire, Dao (chopper), water pot, cotton and rice. The priest blessed them by pour out water on the covered head of bride and groom, and thereafter, threw rice, cotton and red flower on their covered heads. Thereafter, the bridegroom would go back to their respective home. In the evening, the youth would come back in the house of the bride. The bride and groom would sit together on wooden plank covering their head with white cloth together, and thereafter, little quantity of clean water would be poured out or sprinkled over the covered heads of the bridegroom and the bride by their parents, close relatives, elders and village chief. On the second day of the marriage ceremony, all elders, relative and friends would assemble in the house of the bride. The bride and groom would and serve them home made wine by touching their feet as token of respect, and thereafter, they would serve them meal. On the third day of the ceremony, relatives, brothers and sisters, parents, elders, other guests and invitees were served with feast, a chunk of meat/ pork would be parked with plantain leaves which would be gifted to each elders and relative before their return to home. On the fourth day, chunk of pork would be sent to the home of officials of the Community Darbar such as the Rai, Karkari, Kalan, Jalsing, Kobar etc. These third and fourth days were called *Dola-mi*. On the fifth day of marriage, the parent of the groom would be ceremonially sent back to their village or home, while their son would stay back in the house of the bride for giving service for stipulated year, which was called *Sanak lat*, and in local Bengali language it was familiar as *Juni Khata*.

The "Riki Zu" (marriage ceremony) would take place in big way in the house of the bride. In the marriage ceremony, pots of rice beer (zu kola) i.e. Langedes used to be arranged in the following manner :-

Langee (rice beer) with big size pitchers :- 5 nos.

Langee (rice beer) with medium size pitchers :- 20 nos.

Langee (rice beer) with smaller size pitcher :- 10 nos.

Langee (rice beer) with small size pitcher :- 40 nos.

Usually, the parent of the bridegroom would arrange for marriage's meat and the bride's parent would arrange for the marriage feast's vegetables etc. Among the Molsom, marriage by service of the boy in the house of bride's father at least for three years was very usual among

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

the poor families in the past, like any other Halam tribes. Thus, "*Samak lut zu*" or "*Entry rice beer for servitude*" would take place or arranged on the day he went to the house of the bride for service. However, Families having better economic condition avoid "*Samak-lut*". As soon as the term of servitude in the house of bride's father was over, "*Suok zu*" (*Exit Ceremony with rice-beer*)" would take place; and the the bridegroom would come out from his father-in-law's house. In many cases, instead of returning to his parent's house, many bridegroom used to establish themselves as separate family, and in such case the father-in-law used to give all kind of support to his son-in-law from constructing house to giving utensil, clothes, and paddy for one year. As mentioned before in marriage ceremony, the bridegroom would sit together covering their head with white cloth and the priest sacrificed a fowl and the blood was sprinkled at the feet of bride. Among the Molsom tribe, there was no customary practice of giving "*Bride Price*"; instead the parent of bridegroom used to offer a chunk of pork to the parent of bride in lieu of "*Bride Price*".

Among the Kaipeng clan too, marriage was of two categories:-(a) *Lawlui* (without servitude) and *Samak lut* (through servitude). However, in both cases, the preliminary marriage proposal called *Angi* used to be sent by the parent of the youngman through a messenger called *palai*. If the parent of the girl gave consent for marriage, the parent and relative of the youngman would go to the house of the girl for giving formal marriage proposal which was called *Chongridik*. The next stage was payment of bride's price called *Sumnona*. Here the word *sum* means money, and the word *nona* means offering or giving. The bridegroom party would carry *Zukola* (Rice beer pot), home made beverage and a cock to the house of the bride for ceremonial payment of bride's price. In that event, the parent of the bridegroom used to carry traditional clothes and dresses to present the parent of the bride. In this ceremony, the elders, chief and members of Village Council used to remain present as witness to the event. A day before the marriage ceremony, the young man and young woman separately gave a feast to his or her friends and brothers & sisters in the village as a token of gratitude for their company and goodwill he or she had received in different way, and to say goodbye to them. This occasion was familiar as *Rual retaina*. If the marriage was to be without servitude, the marriage ceremony, which was known as *Zuar-pui zu*" or "*Rotow-pui*", used to be held. In Kaipeng marriage

### Social custom and traditions

ceremony, one cock used to be sacrificed by the priest in the morning to *Sapite*, the goddess of paddy. They believed that if the cock crows at the altar just before the sacrifice, it was bad omen. The bridegroom would not be in peace and harmony after their marriage. Besides, the *Oshai* (priest) also had to perform puja to the five deities which collectively called *Arthiang-ngai*, and the five deities were *Sukundrai & Mukundrai*, *Sangrang pethan*, *Kalokh pordhan Raja*, and *Kati Rangkokhak Pordhan Raja*. In the morning, the ceremony would take place at elevated place in the village of the bride, and a shed used to be erected for this marriage ceremony, where the bride and the groom would be seated on wooden plank covering their heads together with new cloths. A chopper (*Dao*), water, rice, cotton, sesamun and a pot of burning incense would be placed in row at the altar. Five cocks used to be sacrificed to aforesaid deities; and as soon as one of the five cocks was sacrificed the priest would sprinkle the water, cotton, rice, over the covered heads (with white new cloth) of the bride and bridegroom and blessed them. This ritual of sprinkling would continue successively till the sacrifice of the five cocks was completed to five deities. The bride and the bridegroom would take the marriage vow by touching the dao, stone, and pot of water, rice, cotton and lime together in front of the priest, parents, elders and the chief and officials of Village Darbar (council). Thereafter, at first the priest would pour out clean water over the head of bridegroom and bless them, and thereafter, the parents of the bride and bridegroom, sisters and brothers, village elders, and village chief would pour the holy water on the head of the bride and bridegroom. The bridegroom and the bride would get up and bow down their head for touching the feet of parents, elders and community chief and other officials of Darbar for their blessing, and this ceremony was called *Zuar-pui zu* or "*Ratos-pui*". The holy water for pouring over the bridegroom used to be collected early in the morning before sunrise, before the birds, animal and human being could use the water. Among the Kaipeng, "*Zuar-pui zu*" or "*Ratos-pui*" was the main marriage ceremony. In the house of the bride being the venue of the marriage, rice beer would be served abundantly and feast would be fixed for the elders and village or community chief and subordinate officials. Rice beer pots used to be fixed at the ceremony according to custom as follows :-

(i) in the name of grandfather three rice beer pots,

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

- (ii) in the name of grandmother four rice beer pots,
- (iii) in the name of brothers three rice beer pots,
- (iv) in the name of sisters three rice beer pots,
- (v) in the name of father and mother two rice beer pots,
- (vi) and in the name of youths and friends three rice beer pots.

The village Choudhury would initiate the drink followed by other subordinate Members of Village Darbar. A week after the marriage feast, another ceremony known as "*Dola*" used to be observed in which all the relatives of the bridegroom, who rendered service in organizing the marriage ceremony in different way, would assemble for having an occasion of sharing food and drink together, and the event used to be as big as the marriage ceremony. In Kaipeng marriage, all rice beer (*zukola*) and feast were arranged by the parents of the bride. Before holding this ceremony, the villagers, especially the village youths, would carry their rice beer pots in the house of the bride in group for "*Dala*". In case of marriage through servitude, the bridegroom needed to serve the bride's parent three years or above as agreed between the parents of the bridegroom and the bride, and this was known as "*Samak lut*". In case of Samak lut, simple ceremony used to be arranged by the parent of the bridegroom in the house of the bride in presence of the elders, chief and officials of the Village Darbar. Regarding service in the house of the bride's parent, as soon as the bridegroom would complete the term of servitude in the house of his father-in-law, "*Suok zu*" or "*Exit Ceremony*" would take place or arranged by fixing rice beer (*Langee*) in the house of the bridegroom (boy); and the relatives, guardians and villagers of the groom would come to receive and escort the bridegroom at night toward the village or house of the bridegroom. The offering of puja etc. would have to be performed as that of marriage ceremony i.e. *Rotow-pui*, at the expense of the boy's parent.

The Rangkhawl clan has slightly different marriage custom. Initial marriage proposal was known as *Chong-rathang-te* (preliminary proposal), which was essentially preliminary discussion between the parents of the young boy and girl was done through *palai*. When both the parents agreed that their son and daughter should marry, the parent of the youngman sent formal proposal called *Chang-rithang-pui*, where relatives of the youngman went to the house of the bride carrying *Zukola* (rice beer pot). This event was followed by the formal engagement called



### Social custom and traditions

*Samai-zong* (which was also familiar as *Zu er-rep*, and this was the time to pay bride's price called *Bakhoi hmoat* and fixed the date of marriage and also for deciding the nature of feast etc, in presence of Village chief and elders as witness. In the past, like the Molsom clan, no bride's price exist among the Rangkhowl clan, and bride's price was new addition to their marriage tradition. Instead they were required to perform marriage ceremony i.e. *Arthot*, which rescinded the bride's price. However, payment of bride's price has its merit. If the bridegroom made payment of bride's price, he could marry the bride without holding marriage ceremony, and demerit of marriage without payment of the bride's price was that the parent or relative of the bridegroom could not claim to be the guardian or custodian of the children in the event of premature demise of the husband or wife or both. During the time of *Samai zong*, the parent of the bridegroom used to carry *Risea* (a peice of cloth for covering the breast), *Pachka* (woman's wearing clothe) and other traditional clothes for presenting to the parent of the bride. They would also carry a cock for sacrificing to goddess *wopte* in the house of the bride. The marriage ceremony, which was familiar as *Arthot* was the next ceremony. Literal meaning of the word "*Arthot*" was "*sacrifice of food*", but here "*Arthot*" means *wedding ceremony*; and this *Arthot* used to take place in the house of the bride. Before holding the marriage ceremony i.e. *Arthot*, the parent of the bride had to select a local guardian in the village of the bridegroom where she was required by the custom to use as shelter in case of quarrel with the husband, and such local guardian too could intervene in such quarrel. The house of the local guardian was called *Tong-bhwan*. Such local guardian used to be maternal uncle or a person with who the parent of the bride had good famaly tie. A day before the *Arthot* (marriage ceremony), the bridegroom and the bride used to hold a feast and drink separately with their friends to say goodbye and for thanking them for their company over the past years, and this ceremony was called *Kwadnthan-ut*. On the day of marriage, the bride used to be taken first in the house of local guardian before entering in the house of her husband. Escorting the bride was called *Samai-rwat*. In the past, the custom followed by the Rangkhowl on the day of the marriage was to perform sacrifice to six deities, namely, *Sid-pudani*, *Mukawdora*, *Kalabhi pordhan Raja*, *Sangrang padon*, *Kati Rangkhobok Pordhan Raja* and *Supte*, the goddess of paddy.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

The priest would offer sacrifice with six fowls to the six deities for the well being of the bride and bridegroom; thereafter, in the house the bridegroom marriage ceremony used to take place. The bridegroom and the bride used to take vow by touching the stone, cotton, Sesamun, fire of the lamp, and chopper (Dao) at the altar, and the priest would sprinkle red flower (China rose), cotton and rice on the head of bridegroom and the bride and blessed them. Thereafter, the priest would pour out water on the bridegroom. This ritual was followed by the throwing of the eggs high above by the parent and relative of the bridegroom and this act was called *Artuilim*. After this the bridegroom would left the venue of ritual sacrifice and entered into the house of the bridegroom, where the village elders, other invitees, village Chief and his subordinate colleague would be seated. The new couple would bow down and touch the feet of their parents, village chief and other elders for showing respect and seeking their blessing. In this marriage ceremony, it was customary for the parent of the bridegroom to arrange feast with pork curry for all the relatives of the bride, village elders and invitees in the house of the bride, the venue of marriage. Besides, one "zu kola" (rice beer pot or Langee) in the name of the attendants and one "zu kola" in the name of the brothers of the bride used to be fixed in the gathering as a matter of customary practice. However, rice beer used to be provided with abundantly by both the parents of the bride and the bridegroom at "Arthat" (marriage ceremony). In the past, marriage by servitude called "samak" was a common practice, which lasted from five to twelve years. *Arthat* used to be combined with *Lut zu* (Entry ceremony with rice beer for servitude). After *Arthat*, the bridegroom had to give service for stipulated period in the house of the bride. About the servitude in the marriage of the Rangkhawl, C.A. Soppitt stated that "a man having taken a fancy to a girl offers a present of liquor to the parents and talks the matter over. Should they be willing to accept him as a son-in-law, he takes up his abode with them for three years, working in the jhums, and practically become a bond servant. At the end of this period he is allowed to marry the girl, but even then was not free, as he has to remain on another two seasons, working in the same manner as he did before. At the completion of the five years he was free to build a separate house and start new family life on his own account."

### **Social custom and traditions**

After the completion of service period, an "Exit Ceremony", which was known as "Srok zu" used to take place in the house of the bride at the expense of her father, and this ceremony was held just before day the bridegroom moved out of the house of his father-in-law along with the bride, children and belonging. Lots of rice beer used to be served during *Srok zu* (Exit ceremony). It was a custom in the past that a few days after the *Arthat* or *Srok zu* ceremony, the household used to feast and drink for the people of the village who helped the parent of the bride in holding the marriage ceremonies, which was called *Deia*.

**Marriage by Elopement:** Elopement of young man and young woman was rare occurrence in the past as compared to present time, and the reason for rare occurrence was the enforcement of strict social discipline. The young man and young woman eloped when they were in deep love and had illicit sexual relationship before marriage or when the young woman became pregnant on account of such illicit sexual relationship. Elopement also occurred when the parent of the bridegroom or the bride refused to give his son or daughter in marriage to a particular young man or young woman. Sometime, the young man and young woman would elope to avoid lengthy custom and tradition of marriage, which their parent would not be in a position to bear the expenses. When elopement occurred, the parent of the young man or young woman usually approached the Village Council seeking its intervention. Normally the Village Darbar would call the young man, young woman and their parents in the meeting and in many cases, physical punishment inflicted on the young man and woman for breaking social discipline. The parents were also fined for breaking social discipline by their son and daughter. Ultimately, the Village Darbar forced the young man to marry and sever in the house of her lady-love. This kind of marriage was familiar as *lut- bnat* and the Molsom people called it *Meinangbat*, or *Kawipui* in *Rawak*. In this marriage the young man had to arrange simple ceremony by fixing drink called *Za-isi-Lak*, for the elders, Chief and members of the Village Darbar. Elopement did not prevent servitude in the house of the father of the young woman, and the *Bride's Price* too, had to be paid as a matter of custom.

**Marriage by *Ronglua* or *Bangnei-chentjep*:** This was a different kind of marriage which would take place for different situation. This kind of marriage used to take place for three reasons: (a) without the consent of

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

the parent or guardian of the girl, or (b) without the consent of the girl or (c) due to poverty. In the first case, it was love marriage without the consent of their parents of the young man and young woman. In such marriage, the friends would forcefully evict the young man and drop him in the house of his lady love without the knowledge of the parents of boy or girl so that the young man would give the service in the house of young woman. In the second case, the young man loved a young girl, but the young girl did not love him at all, but the parent of the girl did like the young man. In such situation, the young man used to enter the house of the parent of that young girl without the consent of the girl for servitude. Sometime the girl would forcefully refuse to accept the boy, which compelled young man to return home. In case of the third, sometime the parent of the young man was poor and thought that he would be unable to bear the expenses of the marriage of his son, but the parent of the young woman liked that young man, though his daughter did not like the poor young man. In such situation, the youth would be escorted by the guardians or friends to the house of his lady-love to give service for stipulated years. In all three cases, the young man would not be allowed to share the bed with the young woman for one year by the Village Darbar. However, among the Kaipeng clan, the boy could not share bed for three years. After giving hard and difficult service for one year in the house of the bride, he would be accepted as son-in-law by the parent of the bride; and after completion of one year, both the young man and young woman were allowed to sleep together as husband and wife. The Molsom, Rangkhawl, Bongcher and Kaipeng called this system of marriage as *Bangpui Chemjep*. The Langkai, Bowng, Sakachep, Thangachep, Saihmar, Ranglong, Chorei, Dap, Marchafang and Saihmar people called it *Ronglua*, which meant *Empty Occupation*.

**Bride's price** : Bride's price has been one of the important components of marriage among the Kuki-Chin tribes. But this custom could be notice among other hill and plain tribes in the north-east India. Among the Halams too, bride price was an intergal part of the marriage. If the parents of the bridegroom and the bride could agree for the marriage of their son and daughter, they had to decide the date for engagement and marriage ceremony, bride price had to be paid to the parent of the bride in coin or rupee in presence of the relatives of the bride, some elders, the Chief and Member of the Village Darbar. The bride price

### Social custom and traditions

usually used to be paid on the day of *Chong rakel* i. e. the day of formal engagement. The bride price was shared by the close relatives of the bride, and in some cases the members of Village Darbar also have the share of bride price. The amount of bride price vary from one clan to another clan of the Halam tribe. Payment of bride price was known as "*Mau-pok*" or "*Iman phal*", the Kaipeng called it "*Santao-as*". If the bridegroom was required to render service in the house of the bride for several years which was called "*Maksa*" or "*Somok*", he was not required to pay the *Bride Price*. However, this was not the case with the Kaipeng clan. Among the Kaipeng clan, the bridegroom had to pay *Bride price* and also required to serve in the house of bride for prescribed year. Among the Molsom clan, the practice of payment of "*Bride Price*" did not exist. Instead the customary practice of the Molsom and Rangkhowl clans was to present a big chunk of pork to the parent of bride in lieu of bride price at the time of the marriage ceremony. However, in case of marriage of other clans, bride price would have to be paid by the parent of the bridegroom. The Rangkhowl clan called the bride's price as *Bokhwa-huon*, which means *price of the breast milk*. In Tripuri language breast was called *Abak*, and the word *Bok* was the corruption of the word *Abak*. The literal meaning of the word *Tui* was water or juice; but here the word *tui* means *milk*. This *Bokhwa huon* used to be given in the second stage of customary formalities, which was known as *Saui jong* (which means seeking for the bride). A fowl used to be sacrificed to deity-called *Sepite*, the goddess of paddy and wealth, for the blessing during the time of payment of bride's price.

***Raolhon or Raolhak*** : A day before the marriage ceremony, the bride as well as the bridegroom would arrange get together with his or her friends separately in their respective places. Rice beer and wine used to be served adequately and feast was arranged for their friends. This was done to bid farewell to his other un-married young friends in the village; and to thank for all the help and co-operation he or she received from them. Among the Halams of Dhalai District, the practice was that the bridegroom had to pay certain amount in cash to the parent of the girl so that she could arrange the occasion for get together with her friends' before entering into married life. Among the Molsom, Rangkhowl and Kaipeng clans too, this event was familiar as *Raolhon* or *Kuzi rehsina*. The other clans such as the Langlai, Sakachep, Thangachep, Dap,

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Marchafang, Bowng, Chorei, Ranglong, and Saihmar called it *Rualvom* or *Rualvum*.

**Rualchan :** In case of a boy or a girl of a particular Halam clan was engaged to the girl or boy of another clan or tribe, he or she had to pay a *fine* or *dandi*, which was called *Rualchan*. This custom was prevalent among the Bowng, Thangachep, Sakachep, Langkai, Saihmar, Chorei, Marchafang, Ranglong, and Dap clans of the Halam in Tripura.

**Hmaks or Sahmak :** When the young man left the family and went to the house of the bride to begin his servitude, this was called *Hmak lut* or *Hmaks lut*, the meaning of which was *Ghar jamai khata* in local Bengali language. The young man used to be escorted by his friends to the house of the bride for servitude, and the ceremony was known as "*Lut Zu*", which means *Rice Beer for Entry Ceremony* because rice beer used to be served to the invitees for the entry of the bridegroom into the house of the bride's father to render service for stipulated years. In local Bengali language it was known as "*Ghor Jamai Khata*". The friends used to escort the bridegroom to the house of the bride in the evening or night time by beating drum and other indigenous music for dropping him in the house of the parent of the bride. As soon as the young man arrived at the house of the bride's parent, a simple reception ceremony with rice beer used to be arranged for the youths escorting the bridegroom. In this reception ceremony, two large size rice beer pots used to be fixed, one in the name of bride and another in the name of bridegroom, and fixing of this beer pots was familiar as *Zu-Lei-lak*. It was custom to offer sacrifice in the morning to *Sapite*, the goddess of paddy and the sacrifice was called *Rengtok Arthet*. In the past, most of the Halam clans in Tripura, including the Kaipeng, Molsom and Rangkhawl, required by the custom to send their son for servitude for the period of three to eight years, depending on the agreement between the parents of the bride and bridegroom, although there was exception. In certain cases, without the consent of parent of the girl or without the consent of both the parents, the young man used to be escorted by his friends to the house of the girl's parent for giving service. In such situation, he was not allowed by the Village Darbar to share bed with the girl at least one year, and in case of Kaipeng three years. This was known as "*Rong lua*" which means "*Empty occupation*". This system was prevalent among all clans of the Halam. The Molsom would call it *Bangpui Chemjep*. Servitude

### Social custom and traditions

of this kind was the most difficult period for the boy because he had to prove his ability to do any kind of hard work and that he could survive any kind of hardship and thus worthy of having a family. As soon as the young man would complete one year service, he was allowed to sleep with the young woman for whom he rendered service, but the servitude would continue till the stipulated period was over. This matter has been mentioned separately earlier. Even decades before this "Makæ" or "Samak" was very common phenomena across the Halam clans as a matter of custom. In Halam society, the period of "makæ" or "Samak" would vary from one clan to another clan. But consensus between the guardians of the bride and bridegroom also very important in deciding the period of servitude by the young man in the house of bride's parent. However, there was exception to this custom when the parent of the bride was very poor. Since the bride's parent would not be able to afford any expenditure for the marriage of his daughter, the parent would agree to send their daughter without servitude.

This servitude of the bridegroom in the house of the bride had been customary practice in the past by indigenous hill tribes in Tipperah kingdom. Makæ, as practice by the Halams, was not confined to or exclusively belonged to the Halam. Even among the Tipras and Reang tribes the practice of servitude was prevalent. The Tipras discarded this practice long back, but its practise could be observed among the Reang tribe in interior and backward region. Thus, on the marriage by servitude of the Tipras, Hunter stated that *"if a match be made with the consent of the parent, the young man has to serve three years in his father-in-law's house before he obtain his wife or if formally married. During the period of probation his sweetheart is, to all intents and purposes, a wife to him"*. Among some other Old Kuki clan too, there had been the practice of servitude. Thus, Col. J. Shakespear stated that *"among the Ainiol, Anai, Chiru, and Puzum, a young man has to serve his future wife's father for three years, during which he works as if he were a son of the house. During this period he has free access to the girl, though among the Chiru he continues to sleep among the bachelors"*. The practice of servitude was not prevalent among the Lushais and Thado tribes, and in this regard Shakespear stated that *"marriage by servitude is not found among either the Lushai or the Thado clans; its appearance among the Old Kukis is therefore curious for on a rule the customs of a clan will be found to resemble those of one or the other*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*of these two main divisions of the Kuki-Lushai race.*" The period of servitude would differ from one clan to another clan. Even within the same clan the period of servitude could be different because the parents of the bridegroom and the bride were the sole authority to decide on the issue of service by the bridegroom.

**Kalthok zu or Moithak zu :** Before final departure of the bride with her husband, the parent of the bride and her cousin sisters, sister-in-laws used to fix drink of rice beer and beverage to say goodbye to their daughter or sister, and also to entertain the people who came to escort the bride and bridegroom. This ceremony was familiar as *Kalthok zu* or *Moithak zu*. This was like farewell ceremony.

**Moingak zu :** The parent of the bridegroom used to fix drink in his house in order to entertain the elders, chief and members of the Village Darbar who came to receive the bride in advance. This event was familiar as *Moingak zu*.

**Moitung zu:** This was the reception ceremony arranged in the house of bridegroom's parent just after the arrival of the bride and bridegroom. The parent of the bridegroom used to perform the puja to the deities namely-*Sukundorai & Mukundorai (two brothers), Kalakhi pordhan Raja, Sangrung pathien, Kati Rangkachak Pordhan Raja and Simbak pathian*. The chief of the Village Council and its Members would initiate the drinking of rice beer followed by the village elders and other invitees. Rice beer pots used to be fixed in the name of bride, bridegroom, brothers and sisters, etc.

**Dong-bing achum :** This event mostly related to *maksa* or *Samak* system of marriage. In the past, the custom was to give all support for separate livelihood to the bridegroom by the parent of the bride after rendering service in his house more than the stipulated period of servitude. Most of the clans required to keep his son-in-law atleast three years or more, and for rendering three years period or stipulated period of service the parent of the bride was not obliged to take responsibility for establishing his son-in-law as separate family. But if the son-in-law gave service five years and above, it was the responsibility of the parent of the bride to establish them as separate family. In such case the son-in-law would not return to the house of his parent. The son-in-law would construct the house in the village of his father-in-law, and he would get half of the product of jhum crops of his father-in-law. Besides, his father-in-



### Social custom and traditions

law used to provide utensils, baskets, livestock and all sort of materials which were necessary for establishing himself as separate family. This practice was known as *Donybing* Akhun, and was common tradition across the Halam clans, though the period of servitude would differ for certain clans. Fact of the matter was that, in the last year of servitude, the bridegroom was allowed to do separate pluming so that they could have sufficient foodgrain and cotton etc. before leaving the home of the parent of the bride.

*Escorting the bride and bridegroom* : As soon as the marriage ceremony or exit ceremony after servitude was over, the bridegroom and the bride used to be escorted to the home of the husband, unless the bridegroom decided to live in the village of his father-in-law. The tradition was that the parent must not accompany the escort party of the bride and bridegroom. The sister, brothers and close relative of the bride usually would accompany the them. Before final leaving of the house of bride's parent, the new couple would touch the feet of elders, the Chief of Village Darbar and the Members who were present as witness to the event. The youths of the village used to erect barricade on the path within the village to obstruct the journey of the bride and bridegroom. One of the friends of the bride who obstruct the path would sing this song to the departing bridegroom : –

*Theng-ai awang kadei ten ddi?*  
*Atu wai awelai mach mawo na honrai?*  
*Atu khunlewah awai teng wai*  
*ai hang pui rang?*  
*Ing-le awai mawoi naha noi?*  
*Narang rangin bong taon thing angin*  
*kan khang jei maw?*  
*Nachun najuo rang bidai sadai*  
*nawo the jei maw?*  
*A re-angin bokanin chubai sui waho jei maw?*  
*Keppi waihar awawo nek jei maw?*  
*Yangkhuo mufar pafar ranglom akhuzin*  
*chubai am hawo naho jei maw?*  
*Keppi waihar awawo nek jei maw?*  
*Rupi luh wadai awtha jei maw?*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

English translation was like this:-

*We keep the place for your sitting together,  
Whose daughter are you escorting as bride?  
In whose house will you enter for shelter?  
How you are escorting the bride?  
I am on your way like a broken stump of tree,  
You are so eager to bid goodbye to your parent?  
And already touched their feet for bidding farewell?  
Did you drink the water of feet-wash of your parent?  
Did you touch the dust of the elders' feet?  
Did you drink the drop of water by which their  
feets were cleansed?  
Have you already said goodbye to your friends?*

But one of the friends of the bridegroom party would sing this song  
in replay to the song sung by the obstructing friend of the bride:-

*Milim sanu mamoi kan wa ruoi,  
Lopui khumlanah watung kanti,  
Hathoi Chin khuong le mamoi kanwah ruoi,  
Nangma rangin dorson na katha,  
Voi tieng kamansung tana rual sari,  
Chang tieng Kaman sung tana rual sari,  
Akhai kua aitang pum ruol,  
Kanthai kanrai ma sifeng ma  
nutar patar aroi masiem ke asa bakin  
kanhongjong jei,  
Kanchun kanjuo ngan rang chubei um tubuk  
kanhong tho jei,  
Kepui tuinar kanhong nek jei  
vangkhuo nutar patar khomin  
chubei um tubuk kan hong tho jei,  
Kepui tuinar kanhong nek jei,  
Kanruol khom sadai kan hong tho jei.*

English translation was like this:-

*We are escorting a beautiful lady as bride,  
We will enter into the house of Lopuia (one ancestor),  
With beating sound of Chin (people) drum  
we are escorting the bride,*

### Social custom and traditions

*In your eye we appear good,  
We place seven bottle of wine in the right side  
and seven bottle of wine in the left side,  
This betel nut (we offer) is as big as Chalka fruit,  
The betel leaf (we offer) is as big as plantain leaf,  
Before we are borne our ancestors made  
this custom which we are following now,  
We have already bowed down on the feet of our parent,  
Like you ever drink the water of feet-wash of our parent!  
We have already touched the feet of village elders,  
We drink the water of feet-wash of elders!  
We have already bided goodbye to our friends.*

The couple would offer money as gift to the party blocking their way; and the barricade used to be removed to make way for the safe journey of the bridegroom and the bride. This tradition was being followed by the Halams even today. In certain cases, if the person blocking the path of bridegroom was defeated by the song sung by the bridegroom's party, the party blocking the path was obliged to remove the obstruction without offering money.

**Ralochai or Halokchai** : Marriage with close cousins and relatives was not allowed in Halam society. Even marriage within the same family clan or cognate clan was not permitted. In exceptional cases, marriage between the close relatives or family clan did take place. In such situation, fine was imposed by the Village Darbar or Tribal (clan) Darbar and such fine was called *Ralochai* or *Halokchai*.

**Ukhal** : In Halam society, the younger sister or brother could not get married overtaking the elder one; but such situation did arise unexpectedly when elopement of young man and young woman took place. In such situation, penalty was imposed on both the persons and this was called *Ukhal*.

**Cheating to lady love** : At a time, a young man might cheat young girl with false promise of marriage. In such case, the girl or her parent would seek a justice from Village Darbar; and the young man could be forced to marry the girl or pay the fine for causing disgrace to the girl.

**Evolution of marriage tradition and custom** : The marriage ceremonies and rituals have undergone radical change in the recent past. The traditional social institutions have now become more or less inactive.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

The onslaught of modern laws and institutions has been visible in the social life of the Halam. The consumption of rice beer and home made wine, which was the mainstay of Halam marriage in the past, has almost been discarded now. Even among the Halams who follow the traditional rituals, custom and did not profess Christian faith, consumption of wine or rice beer has become symbolic only. In Hindu society, particularly, among the married Bengali women usually custom and tradition was to use vermilion, bracelets and bangles etc. This was not the case with the Halam in the past. But the use of vermilion, bracelets and bangles by married Halam women could be noticed now. There were symbolic ornaments or dress of married Bengali woman which could differentiate her from unmarried woman. But there were no symbolic ornaments or dress of married Halam woman which could differentiate her from unmarried woman; but in the present time tendency to follow this Bengali tradition could be noticed in some Halam women. Inter-marriage with other tribes or community has also contributing in disrupting the practice of age old custom and tradition. Besides, people now want less complicated marriage system. However, as compared to traditional marriage, it has become costlier and expensive for many poor families.

**Elopement of married person :** Elopement of un-married man and married woman or married man and un-married woman did happened, though such incident was very rare. If the young man eloped with the wife of other husband, it was termed as *Nupuisut*, and if the young woman eloped with married man, it was termed as *Purasut* by the Kaipeng, Langkai, Bowng, Chorei, Marchafang, Thangachep, Sakachep, Dap, Ranglong and Chorei people. In most cases, both the woman and man used to be fined heavily by the Jury of Village Darbar for causing break-up of the families. The Rangkhowl people called the elopment of any kind and payment of fine as *Retloi Choi*. Elopement with married person would invite sever physical punishment for both the man and woman. Besides, heavy fine used to be imposed, and feast with beverage had to be arranged for the elders, the chief and the members of the Village Darbar by the family of the accused. When the married man and woman eloped with unmarried man and woman, the married person was considered as guilty for adultery, and heavy punishment used to be inflicted on them than the unmarried young man and woman. The Village Darbar used to hold meeting several days and nights continuously and ensured the

### Social custom and traditions

attendance of the witnesses, the accused and their parents in the deliberation. The deliberation of the Darbar used to culminate in the imposition of fine with sever physical punishment; and in certain cases Village Darbar enforced separation of the un-married man and married woman. However, if the man and woman refused to be separated in spite of physical punishment, in such situation they were allowed to marry with payment of fine followed by holding of the community feast at the expense of that man and woman. In most cases elopement used to culminate in the marriage, particularly, if such elopement involved the unmarried man and married woman or unmarried woman and married man. Even elopement of married man with married woman most often would culminate into marriage, and in such case the first wife normally used to seek divorce claiming custody of the children. In rare case, the first wife could agree to accommodate the new woman (particularly, unmarried) her husband brought in the house as second wife. This kind of situation used to be termed as *Sawal-por*. But the fact was that Halams did not recognise polygamy in any form.

**Re-marriage of divorced wife and husband** : In some cases, reconciliation took place between divorced husband and wife after living separate life few years; and would decide to re-marry for living together again. In such situation, they were required by the custom to pay fine to Village Darbar and arrange a small feast for the elders, chief and members of the Village Darbar for solemnizing such reunion.

**Marriage of widow and widower** : Widow was familiar as *Nunai*, or *Meidai*, and the widower was called *Panai*. However, among the Langkai, Dap, Sakachep, Thangachep, and Marchafang, widower was called *Thanghong*. Re-marriage of *nunai* (widow) was very natural occurrence in the Halam community; and in the same way the *panai* (widower) also has a freedom to re-marry. Normally re-marriage was not allowed till the observance of all ritual requirement connected to the death of his wife or her husband at least within one year. In Halam society, if a married woman became widow, she was bound by custom to remove all her normal ornaments such as neckless and ear ring etc. from her body as a symbol of her widowhood and would live as ordinary woman. Removal of earring and ornaments from her body was called *Kardai*. But as soon as she or he would complete performing customary ritual called *Thon por* i.e. *Sowdo* in Bengali language, he or she was

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

required to perform another customary ritual which was known as "*Par-ton zu*" during which garland was offered to the widow or widower and drink of rice beer used to be fixed. After observance of this ritual, widow or widower could put on ornaments again and also re-marry. In the past, this ceremony was observed by most of the clans of the Halam tribe. In certain cases, the old widow or widower would not perform this ritual as they had no intention to re-marry. Re-marriage was normally held between widow and widower. However, there were instances where the widower was married to an elderly unmarried woman and vice versa. The children of a widow would normally be taken care of by a person who was married to her.

**Divorce and custody of the children :** Divorce was very rare in Halam society from the time immemorial. Divorce might take place due to quarrel arising from unhappy conjugal life of the couple; divorce also might take place for not giving customary price of the girls, unfaithfulness, barrenness etc. or when the wife or the husband eloped with a man or woman leaving the husband or the wife helpless. Sometime, misunderstanding on certain domestic issue would cause divorce between husband and wife. If any misunderstanding arose between the husband and the wife, it was the wife who always run away from the home and took shelter in the house of her parent or in the house of her brothers or close relatives. The husband usually would try to bring back his wife from the house of his in-laws not necessarily himself, but by engaging some relative. However, in case the bone of contention between the husband and wife was on the management of domestic affairs, the wife returned to her husband at her own choice. Normally close relatives and well wishers would mount intense pressure on the couple to remain united for preserving the family. The important cause of divorce was unfaithfulness on the part of husband or wife, and this issue, in most cases, would lead to divorce. The guardians, parents or relative in most cases would intervene to bring reconciliation, but sometime, they took negative role which precipitate the divorce. Elopement of the wife or husband with other unmarried man or unmarried woman also one of the important causes of divorce, and in many cases reconciliation between husband and wife on this issue used to be impossible. Elopement was between married man and married woman also did take place, and this case too sometime led to divorce. If

### Social custom and traditions

divorce would become inevitable, the Village Council used to intervene to settle the issue. Either the husband or the wife, who was found guilty for seeking divorce was fined by the *Village Darbar* for prescribed amount, which was known as *Maktha*. Among the Langlai, Chorei, Ranglong, Dap, Marchafang, Bowng, Sakachep, Thangachep, Saimar, and Kaipeng this fine was familiar as *Maktha*. Among the Molaom and the Bongcher it was familiar as *Makdong*. The Rangkhawl of Tripura called it *Phua-Kachoi*. The officials of Village Darbar would impose this fine and shared it among themselves. Among the Thangchep, Sakachep, Bowng, Dap, Marchafang, Langlai and Saimar clans, part of the amount of fine was given to the family who got divorced by the husband or wife. For settling the dispute of divorce cases, Village Darbar used to take considerable time; which might extent to several days and nights. The statement of different persons, including wife and husband, would be heard, witnesses were summoned and the issue deliberated by the Village Darbar (council) to ascertain the fact and to prove the guilt of a person. As regard to custody of the children, the Jury of Village Darbar would settle the guardianship. Normally, either husband or wife responsible for the divorce would not get the custody of the children. In case of certain clans, particularly, the Rangkhawl clan, the husband might not get the custody of the children in the event of divorce if he (husband) got married to his wife without holding marriage ceremony and marriage took place simply by paying the bride's price. In other word, the husband would not get custody of the children by paying the bride's price only, he must conduct marriage ceremony even after payment of bride's price. This situation arose among other clan too, when the marriage was by elopement, where the parent of the bridegroom or the bride refused to perform any marriage ceremony or when the parent or guardian of the bridegroom were unable to perform marriage ceremony for reason of poverty. In normal cases, the father was the guardian of the children; but if the husband divorced his wife, the Village Darbar would not allow the husband to have custody over his children as punishment. There was a situation where after getting the custody of his children, the husband allowed the divorced wife to have guardianship, and in such case, the children lived with their mother; and when they grew up, the children were given free choice to live either with their father or mother.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Pre-marriage pregnancy :** Pregnancy before marriage was considered as most shameful act for the family of the girl. The child born before the marriage of his or her mother was called *Achai-nai*, which the Darlong people called *Son-nai*. Although such case was vary rare and thing of the past now, many parents were always warried about their young daughter for such situation. If any young girl got pregnant, it was reported by the parent to the village chief, who in his turn, would immediately call a meeting of the elders and members of the Village Darbar for deliberation on the issue. The pregnant girl with her parent or guardian were summoned in the meeting of Village Dabar, and she was forced, even by coercion to divulge the name of the man with whom she had illicit relationship and got pregnant. Same was the case for young widow or divorcee. The Village Darbar used to send *palai* i.e. messenger to the house of the accused for his or her presence immediately in the meeting of Village Darbar. If the man refused, force used to be applied for compelling him. The accused, if happened to be a young man, would be forced to marry pregnant girl and also fined him by the Darbar for breaking social discipline. In case, the person was a married man the case was treated as adultery, and the case was deliberated accordingly. The accused, both man or woman had to give feast to the Chief and Members of Village Darbar, including the elders, till the deliberation on the issue was settled.

**Adultery :** Adultery was called *Achai* in Halam language. When a man went to a house of woman's bed at night without infoming her or after mutual consent, it was called *Arim* or *Mirim*. These cases were looked upon by the society as social crime and dealt with firmly by the Village Darbar. However, *Adultery* was very rare, but it did happen sometime. Illicit sexual relationaship between married and un-married person or between married persons, or to have affair with the husband or wife of others, advancement of man to a woman for sex or pregnancy of un-married young girls by a married man was considered as social crime. Even going to the bed of a married couple was considered attempt to commit adultery. In all such cases, aggrieved person could complain to the Jury of village elders headed by *Kalim* or *Choudhury* (village Chief); and the village Chief could take up the issue for legal action based on traditional custom. The village Jury normally sent "*Palai*" (messenger) to the house of an accused for serving the message of the *Village Darbar*



### Social custom and traditions

to appear before the jury of Village Darbar on appointed date for adjudication. In certain cases, force was applied to ensure the presence of the accused and witnesses. Adultery was hated by the Halams; and in most cases physical punishment was meted out to the culprit by the officials of the Village Council. If the young man and young woman had illicit sexual relationship, it was considered adultery, and the young man would be fined which was called *Taugte Jal-Choi*. Besides, the unmarried young man was forced by the Village Darbar to marry the girl. If an un-married man committed adultery with a married woman, the unmarried man was considered responsible for seducing other's wife and the man used to be heavily fined and the fined amount called *Deipha* which was used to be handed over to the relative of the husband of that adulterous married woman as relief. Besides, the unmarried man was required to give a pig for the feast of the Village Darbar for committing such social crime. Again, in case the married man committed adultery with an un-married woman, the married man was held responsible for seducing the un-married woman inspite of having wife, and the married man had to pay heavy fine, which was also called *Deipha*, and the fined amount (*Deipha*) would be handed over to the relative of his wife of that adulterous married man as relief for mental agony they endured. Further, if the married man committed adultery with a married woman, in this case too, the married man was held guilty of committing adultery and had to pay double fine and half the amount of that fine paid to the wife and the relative of his wife as relief for their mental agony and shame they endured. Besides, one pig and one goat had to be given to Village Darbar for community feast. The deliberation by the Village Darbar on such issue would take several days where all the accused had to be brought before the Darbar. In case, the woman or man committing adultery was not fined, she or he would get physical punishment and insult in the midst of village elders, the chief and members of the Village Darbar. Among the Kaipeng, it was customary to pay fine called *Babwa* for any kind of adultery, and the accused also arranged feast for the elders and members of the Village Darbar by killing a pig which was called *Babwa-Wektha*. In addition to this fine, the guilty person was required to pay another fine called *Riidelwa*. The Kaipeng woman too had to pay fine, if the Village Darbar found any married or un-married woman was equally guilty, and the fine paid by

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

such woman was called *Babow-ruk*. A married woman could have illicit sexual relationship with different married and un-married men like a prostitute, and in such case the married woman used to be fined heavily which was called *Jangkung-bur*. Besides, physical punishment also used to be inflicted on such woman for such promiscuity. Among the Molsom clan, adultery was most detested, and dealt with heavy physical punishment to any married man or married woman, which would now be considered as violation of human right. Apart from inflicting physical punishment, they would impose heavy fine which was called *Samtolphir Sumchowi*. Among the Rangkhowl clan too, adultery was most detested human behaviour and adulterous persons were cruelly treated. For illicit sexual relationship between married man and unmarried woman, and between un-married man and married woman, the man was considered as guilty, and for such crime, apart from physical punishment, the guilty persons had to pay double fine along with another fine called *Ludelna*. Among th Rangkhowl, for committing adultery between married man and married woman or between married man and a widow, both the married man or married woman was held guilty, and in such case, the man had to pay, two fines called *Samtol phir Sumchoi* and *Ludelna*. In some cases, the woman was also fined for such unfaithfulness. The accused had to arrange feast every day and night for the jury of Village Council till its deliberation was over. Sever physical punishment used to be inflicted by the jury of Village Darbar on the man and woman for such act of unfaithfulness. Again, a man might have illicit sexual relationship with a widow which was also regarded as adultery, and the Halams called it *Dongchek*. In such situation, if the man was un-married, he was compelled to marry the widow; if married, he used to get physical punishment and also had to pay the heavy fine. In dealing with the case of adultery, in most cases, coercion and force were resorted to extract the confession of the guilty persons.

**Birth or delivery :** In the past, the Halam used to perform puja or sacrifice even before the birth of a child, and also when a child was born so that no evil spirit would harm the baby. The Halam believed that the evil eye of the spirit could harm the baby which was still in the womb of mother or when the baby was born. So the family always wanted to propitiate the evil spirit for the health of pregnant mother and the baby. One of the traditions was the sacrifice of cocks and hens to different

### Social custom and traditions

evil spirits at different stages of pregnancy so that they would not harm the mother and child upto the time of delivery. Normally the priest used to sacrifice two times during pregnancy. One sacrifice was done when the mother was pregnant for a period of five to six month. At that period of pregnancy, sacrifice used to be made to three deities, namely- *Kailakhi Parilian Raja* (river deity), *Tuikiori* (demoness which lived in the water), and *Larpa* (Bura Devta). One white cock and two hen or cock used to be sacrificed at the stream in the dark evening and the name of puja was *Tvi-zampar*. This sacrifice was done to know the gender of the baby which was still in the womb of mother, for good health of mother and the child, and for easy delivery. Another sacrifice used to be made when the mother felt birth pain before the delivery of the child so that the deliver would be easy, harmless to the mother and the child. One fowl used to be sacrificed in the stream or water body to two deities, namely- *Tuikiori* and *Tuikori*, and the puja was familiar as *Tvi Dwar Langbi*. This custom was common among the Langkai, Thangchep, Sakachep, Bawang, Sailmar, Marchafang, Dap, Chorei, and the Ranglung clans. The Malsam people too used to sacrifice a cock in the river during the period of pregnancy for the good health of the pregnant mother and the child of the womb, which they called *Tiar-zarst*. The Kaipeng custom was slightly different from other clans. At six month of the pregnancy period, this clan would perform puja to river deity (goddess) and this sacrifice used to be called *Tvi Ar Khvat*. A cock which could crow was offered at the altar of puja in the stream seeking blessing for good mental and physical health of the child. Thereafter, another sacrifice called *Nupangngai* was offered to seven goddesses in the premise of the house for seeking blessing for the child and pregnant mother, and to prevent danger to their life. Piglet was sacrificed in this puja by the priest. There was another puja the Kaipeng people performed and this puja was called *Tui-arlat* (meaning sacrifice to water deities). This puja was done weeks before delivery by sacrificing a medium size hen seeking blessing for easy delivery, and to know the gender of the child who was still in the mother's womb. The moment before the delivery (at the time of birth pain), they again made sacrifice of seven fowls to seven deities which were called *Nupangngai ngai* (the women deities). The altar used to be encircled with a thread; and the unfinished weaving cloth (if any in the house) used to be unfurled, and further, the pregnant mother would

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

untie her back hair knot. Lids of the boxes of any kind were removed during the time of this sacrifice or puja.

As soon as the mother would feel birth pain, elderly women of the house and the village would attend the mother. The selected place where the delivery was to take place used to be enclosed with a big cloth as soon as the birth pain was felt by the mother so that privacy was maintained. No one was allowed to be near the place of delivery of child except the *Kurma* and *Lokma*, the two adult or nursing women. The pregnant mother was made to sit on a big mat resting her knees on the mat who caught hold of the rope which was tied to a beam. Two of the elderly women, who were familiar as *Kurma* and *Lokma*, would take care of the pregnant mother for her delivery. One of them would steady the mother from behind, while the other elderly woman would help for delivery of the baby. One weaving sword (*Ritiam*) used to be placed at the place just across the legs of the pregnant woman at the time of delivery of the child in order to prevent the evil spirits from coming nearby the spot of delivery. Among the Molsom, Kaipeng, Rangkhowl, Thangchep, Sakachep, Dap, Marchafang, Bowng, Bongcher, Chorei, and Saihmar, *Kurma* (midwife) was employed for such delivery, and she was assisted by the *Lokma* (*assistant to Karma*). When a child was delivered after parturition, umbilical cord was cut by sharp bamboo split by the *Kurma*, aided by *Lokma*. This sharp bamboo split used for cutting the umbilical cord of new born baby was called *Ngeithim* by the Halam. *Kurma* and *Lokma* used to be elderly woman with sufficient experience in the delivery of child. Among the Molsom, the cord of a male baby was placed on a shaft of chopper (dao) used by his father; but if the baby was female, the cord was placed on the weaving sword (called *Ritiam*) used by her mother, before it was thrown to jangle. The placenta was thrown away into the jungles. There was ritual for disposing the placenta and extra naval cord just after delivery. Some Halam clans such as Bowng, Langkai, Thangachep, Sakachep, Marchafang, Chorei, Saihmar, Ranglong and including the Rangkhowl, would keep the placenta etc. in small basket call *Biangkhep* and hung up the same at the branch of a tree or bamboo in the jangle because superstitious belief involved for doing it. The Molsom would keep the placenta inside a jug of jhum guard, and threw it in the jangle. The Kaipeng people, before throwing placenta and umbilical cord, used to keep it on the shaft of

### **Social custom and traditions**

chopper (Dao) used by the father if the child was a male, so that male child would become hardworking. In case the child was a female, placenta and umbilical cord used to be placed on bamboo materials used for weaving by the mother so that she would be good in weaving different kind of cloths. Before throwing, placenta and umbilical cord were wrapped with plantain leave and carried in the deep jungle where it was buried in the soil. Just after the birth, the child had to be given bath with warm water, and made the child laid down on a new cloth. The *Obel* (priest) or elderly woman would bring a piece of broom alongwith raw turmeric and placed it near the head and also both side near the hands of baby on the bed so that evil spirit would not harm the child. It was the belief of the Halam that the evil spirit feared the broom, and turmeric would prevent the evil spirit from touching or harming the baby. The *Kuzna* and *Lakna* used to take care of the mother and the child from the time of parturition to time of naming of the baby, and they were honoured by the family of nursing mother with a gift of traditional clothes.

**Naitual-insuok le ramingphua (naming)** : This was a ceremony performed after a week of the delivery of the baby, when the naval cord of the baby dried up and ready for detaching it. The chief of the Village Darbar, its members, and the elders of the village were invited in this simple ceremony. In the past, the priest would perform puja called *Moite hol* i.e. sacrifice for the well-being of the baby, though this ritual has been discarded now. *Kuzna* and *Lakna* (some called it *Lacac*) would take leading role for naming the baby. Firstly, wrapping the baby in new white cloth, *Kuzna* would carry the tender baby outside the home in the morning so that the baby would see the sun in the east for the first time, and this event was called *naitual suok* (naming of the child). During the ceremony, burning incense-pot and burning fire used to be carried outside the home alongwith the child. The baby was made to do "pranama" to the Sun in the east. Thereafter, the baby would be brought back inside the home. The priest would sanctify the drink by reciting *apaura* before the drink was taken. Most of the families combined this *naitual suok* ceremony with naming ceremony of their child. While giving the name to the baby, the Halams were particular that the ancestral lineage should be preserved. This was the reason that one syllable from the name of grandfather or grandmother was added in

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

the name of the baby. The name was normally chosen by the family members and proposed to the *Kurma*, who announced the name. In some cases, the *Kurma* herself named the child according to her choice and liking. If the *Kurma* was not present, *Lokma* or the elder of the village, who was present in the ceremony, would announce the name. The *Ochei* (village priest) was the one who would take leading role in conducting the ceremony. During this ceremony, the family used to present traditional clothes etc. to the *Kurma* and *Lokma* for rendering all kind of service during the time of delivery.

**Abur rasuk :** *Abur rasuk* or *insuk* was sanctification ceremony of the child and mother, which was conducted after completion of one month from the date of delivery of the child. In fact even the husband needed to sanctify himself by performing puja and making holy bath few days after the purification of his wife. Before conducting this ceremony, the mother could not touch other's clothes, utensils, and could not cook because she was considered unclean. As she was not allowed to touch anything, her cloths, food, water and other things used by her had to be kept separately from the things of other family members. She was not allowed to go outside the house till this ceremony was done. At the time of this ceremony, the child was tonsured (removed all hair from the head by the barbar) and this was called *Samburpei*. Mother too changed or discarded all her clothes used before this ceremony. All the clans of Halam used to perform this sanctification ceremony. But many clans of the Halam has diluted this ceremony with the ceremony of naming of the child. However, now most of the families combined the three ceremonies of outing, naming of the child, and also sanctification of the child along with the mother.

**Rice feeding of the baby (Parsen-pei) :** After the birth, the baby lived on breast feeding for several months. Afterward when the child started to toddle, the baby was given boiled rice ceremonially by the village priest called *Ochei*. This ceremony was familiar as "*parsen-pei*" among the Chorei, Ranglong, Langkai, Thangachep, Sakachep, Bowng, Dap, Marchafang and Saihmar clans of Halam tribe. Among the Rangkhawl, Molsom and Kaipeng clans too, this ceremony was also familiar as "*parsen-pei*". During this ceremony, the baby was given red flower in his or her palm and rice was also given for the first time. A plate full of red flowers, leaves, fruits, and other eateries used to be placed in front of the baby so that he or she

### **Social custom and traditions**

might see the object for picking up by hand. "*Persen-pei*" means "*throwing out of red flower* i.e. hibiscus/China rose flower. Some resourceful families used to host community feast by sacrificing pig and fowls. However, some families performed this ceremony when the baby starts toddling. The *Ochei* (village priest) took leading role in the ceremony. This beautiful tradition has almost disappeared now.

**Laibun** : Some mothers could not have surviving child due to infant mortality. Such mothers or couples used to take vow in the name of certain deity that if their child survived after the birth, they would offer sacrifice to the deity. After such vow, if the couple got child and the child survived after birth, they used to offer sacrifice to the deity for fulfilling their vow. Normally vow used to be made in the name of *Sykwandei* and *Mdyandei* (which was also called *Syobonyge*, meaning Eastern deities), two deities for the well being of the child. Sacrifice was made when the baby started toddling or walking. A sumptuous feast used to be arranged for elders, dear and near ones.

**Derkei inkei or Dhuti inkei** : When a boy would attain the age of adolescent, a formal ceremony was held where the household formally gave the adolescent to wear a clothes. In the past, Halam mothers of all clans used to weave beautiful and decorated piece of cloth with one-foot breadth and about ten feet length which was called "*wefting*". This "*wefting*" was ceremonially wrapped round the waist of the adolescent boy, and a new piece of cloth i.e. *Comst* in Bangali, was placed on his shoulder. Rice beer or "*Zu kol*" used to be fixed and the chief and the officials of Village Darbar, elders and relative used to be invited to share the rice-beer or "*zu*" and home made wine/ liquor. This ceremony among the Molsom, Rangkhawl, Bongcher, and Kaipeng was familiar as "*Dhuti inkei*", but among other Halam clans this ceremony was called "*Derkei inkei*". Many Halam families would celebrate in simple ceremony where the senior youths and adolescents took part only.

**Risa-bom or Loung-bom in bom** : When a girl would attain adolescent, she was ceremonially given two pieces of beautifully woven clothes call *Risa* and a *Pachra* by her mother to cover her body upto breast and down below; and the ceremony was familiar as "*Risa-bom zu-ruai*" or "*Y sanghau bhau*". The ceremony was important for the girl and parents. The relatives of the girl, officials of Village Darbar and village elders would participate in the ceremony. The guests were offered rice beer

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

or "Zu" and sumptuous meal. All Halam clans would observe this ceremony with festive mood in the past. The Rangkhawl clan living in Tripura gave importance spending more than marriage ceremony. However, among other clans of the Halams, the celebration was simple where the senior youths and adolescents took part only.

**Up-keep and custody of orphan :** Widow usually would look after her children when her husband was dead. But when the parent of the children passed away, entire burden of the orphan was borne by the brother of the deceased. But when the deceased's father and brother refused to bear the burden of the orphan, their maternal uncle would take the responsibility and became the guardian of the orphan. In such case, the orphan children relinquished the sub clan of their father with simple ceremony, and would adopt the clan of their mother.

**Inheritance :** The Halams being patriarchal, property was inherited by man rather than woman. The family property usually inherited by the son with whom the parent lived, although the father might leave shares to other sons. If a man has no son, his property was inherited by the next kin of the male. If a man died leaving a widow and minor children, the brother in-law of the widow would take care of the family till the son of the widow grew up. If no such male relative exist, then the widow would act as a trustee of her husband's property until her son was old enough to inherit the property. Now days the widow would inherit the property and take up all responsibility.

**Vow and oath :** Taking a vow or oath was an important ritual and its practice was widespread across the clans in Halams society. The mother or father usually would resort to taking a vow by giving up the choicest food item such as meat or fruit or drink for the success or well being of the son or daughter or for achieving some noble objective. Besides, when a son or daughter or dear ones would suffer from serious sickness, the men or women had the instinct of giving up the choicest food or drink till he or she was cured. The vow or oath was broken by offering sacrifice to gods and goddesses in whose name he or she had taken vow usually after one year. For instances, some mothers would give up eating banana, meat or any of her choiced food item for the success of her son or daughter in examination or for the health of their son or daughter. Taking vow had also been widely used by the community elders in ascertaining the guilt of a person in time of social adjudication. There were different



### Social custom and traditions

methods of taking vow for different situation. In case, the elders of Village Council were unable to find out a culprit or guilty person in certain incident, taking of vow by the suspected person used to be resorted upon. One important way of taking vow by a suspect was to make him or her dive in the water in the name of water god for pleading his or her innocence, and this was called "Taitü iai". However, this was resorted to in extreme situation by the Council of Village Elders i.e. Village Darbar. The village priest would conduct the diving in the water by sacrificing cocks to river deity in the name of complainant and the accused. Thereafter, little dam was made over the stream, if necessary, to accumulate water. In presence of all the officials of Village Council, both the complainant and the accused were made to stand facing each other in that stream's water, and in between of these two persons the priest would stand touching their heads. The priest would press their heads deep into the water together in the same time. The one who failed to remain inside the water longer would come out, and both of them would be asked about their feeling and sensation while they were diving inside the water. The guilty one would be overwhelmed by fear. In some cases, the accused would take vow by touching fire in presence of the elders of the village.

**Concept of deadman's abode and soul:** The Halams believed in the immortality of soul; and after the dead of a person his or her soul would go to *Mitöklaw* i.e. *deubwai abode*. Dead causes the departure of soul from the body. There was a folksong which described about the journey of deadman to *Mitöklaw* i.e. *deubwai abode* and the folksong was like this:-

*Sipe bhangpai daita so a boi satsap un ang-naö,  
Apar vaipal aman ang so jawa sisei un ngam-na so,  
Bhangpai annaia sisei un in-ngam,  
Tüi nai a sam ngai tüi sei un in ngam na,  
Tui le huang sam sek un huk jei,  
Rangkacilik jongraon caphei jongraon ngai  
kheüa un in dai,  
Khaotüa lamtiang ankan jei.*

English translation was like this:-

*Tender leaves of the bayon tree shive on the pleasant hill top,  
And white flowers make it (bayon tree) bright,*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*It was the place where the tired birds would take rest,  
Under that banyan tree tired person would take rest,  
The place where the soul of the dead would take rest,  
The place where the soul of dead would drink stream water,  
The place where the golden as well as black monkeys would play,  
There the soul of the dead would cross the gate of the world.*

The belief of the ordinary Halam folk was that the soul of a dead person needed to cross a river and there was a high mountain on the other side of that river bank. On that mountain peak there was a big banyan tree where big monkey called *Jong-dul* lived. It was the belief of the Halam that a big monkey would sit on the junction of seven roads, one of which led to *Mithikhua*. Thus the proverb said :-

*Lamso sari buangkung anuia,  
Zong-dul te pa choium aleisung.*

It said that the foot of that mountain there was a living water stream where every tired soul would drink water before climbing the mountain on their way to *Mithikhua* i.e. dead man abode. The monkey called *Jong-dul* would disturb the soul in its journey to *Mithikhua*, and to distract or divert the attention of the monkey, the travelling soul had to apply many tricts. Above folksong was about this banyan tree and monkey. There was another folksong related to this banyan tree which was like this:-

*Tuiswa-sari tuivar-lang.  
Lam-suah sari buongnakung,  
Solam tianga rangkachak jong pai-na,  
Buangna lei-bo ei phai lei in  
Rangkachak jong womh,  
Thiliem ei mankual nowk mawh,  
Buang-na lei-bo a sat don lai  
ei phai thei nawk mowh?  
Buang-na lei bo thiem lai phoi rang  
don-lai ei phoi ning-ati.*

The English translation was like this-

*There is crystal water body across the seven rivers.  
There is a banyan tree across the seven roadheads,  
That the place is in the east where golden monkey chatter,  
For plucking the leaf of that banyan tree*

### Social custom and traditions

*did the golden monkey is angry  
and laying there pretending as dead?  
Perhaps, I plucked the dry leaf  
instead of plucking the fresh leaf of that banyan tree.*

The belief in the immortality of soul and the long journey undertaken by the soul of dead person has had bearing on the tradition and ritual in the disposal of deadbody and ancestral worship.

**Tradition and ritual for disposal of dead body:** In spite of worshipping the spirits, the Halams believed in almighty which they call "Patkiaz". There was certain tradition and custom observed in the event of dead of a person. Firstly, the dead body would be bathed with clean water and made to lay straight in the middle room inside the house with the head facing northward. New clothes were used as the bedsheet of the deceased. The dead body would be dressed with new clothes and new headgear in case of elderly male, and flower was placed at the feet and head of the lying corpse. Home-made wine, rice beer, water pot, rice-cake, cooked rice, curries and other delicacies were prepared and placed nearby the foot of the lying corpse so that the soul of the departed person could enjoy the food, water and drink. A fowl used to be killed by beating at the door of the house of the deceased by holding the fowl in left hand, which was cooked for offering to the soul of the deceased. *Za* (rice beer) used to be poured out along with other delicacies by left hand. This custom of offering food to the soul of the dead was familiar as *Aka zafong*. Turmeric, cotton, charcoal, rice and basil leaves were kept in a basket at the barandh of the house. Sesamun was placed at the palm of the dead person so that his soul might spread or throw the sesamun roadside to distract the attention of monkey (named as *ingdu*) on his journey to *Mithikhar* i.e. deadman abode. Basil leaves and pure water used to be kept near the dead body, and whoever came to pay homage, he or she would sprinkle little water with basil leaves on the dead body, and thereafter, would present new cloth or coin by keeping at the chest of the deceased. The relatives, dear and near one were informed so that they might come to pay last respect and homage. It was tradition of the Halams to show last respect by bring new clothes or coins or money for the deceased. The farewell songs sung to the departed soul present a deep emotion and sentiment. One such folksongs sung to the deceased was like this

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Asam tui ne tui li luang,  
Limtui inbuol rek rawh doh,  
Panpui rekrawh sariék bungtang,  
Khui-sam vanei rawh doh,  
Panpui rek rawh tonpar barei kuar tang,  
Panpui rek rawh ruoi omna (feast) bungtang,  
Chin nai vanngak rawh doh,  
Khang bu va-ot rawh doh,  
Lilam invainoroh doh,  
Asam azara panpui rekrawh,  
Liwa von leng rawh doh,  
Athum sakbai vajom rawh doh,*

English translation was like this-

*Let the hair (of deceased) be washed in deep stream,  
Escort him for bathing with juicy perfume,  
Escort him where there is anointment oil  
and comb the hair,  
Escort him to flower garden  
for putting it on his ears,  
Son of Chin wait for others,  
Escort him to the place of feast  
and sit near the plate,  
Do not mistake the road,  
Guide him to market for the betel leaf  
And go round to choose the choicest sweet.*

If a person died in the evening, one night was kept so that dear and near one from far places could come to pay the last homage. If an unmarried man died, a wooden plank, which was called *Khengthing* would be kept by the side of corpse. In case of the dead of an un-married woman, a wooden piece called *Dienrel* was kept with the dead body. Dance used to be performed in honour and praise of the dead person which was familiar as *Darlam*. Two gongs, one small and the other big gong used to be beaten or played carrying on the shoulders by the youths and songs were sung in praise of the dead. A man and a woman wearing traditional and special headgear called *Thi Lukom* would dance with the rhythm of the gong. If the deceased was an official of Village Darbar such as *Rai* or *Kalim* or *Kamskow* or *Kabur* etc., his colleague would dance

### Social custom and traditions

with song as a matter of custom; and this custom was prevalent across the clans of Halam tribe such as Rangkhawl, Molsom, Kaipeng, Bowng, Sakachep, Thangchep, Langkai, Cherei, Ranglong, Dap, Marchafang etc. The dead body used to be laid on the *Tolzi* i.e. stretcher which was made of bamboo, and the corpse used to be covered with new cloth. As soon as corpse was taken out of the house by the bearers of the dead body (with stretcher), they would revolve three times on the premises of the house of bereaved family; and the shadow of the stretcher would be cut by a chopper (*Dao*) three times, just before proceeding to cremation ground, and at the same time some women would break the paddy in the husking pot and throw the husked rice so that the soul could carry the rice for cooking with other souls waiting to accompany to *Mithlhae*. Cotton, sesamum and paddy grains would be thrown along the path of cremation spot during the last journey of the deceased. Besides, while carrying the corpse toward the cremation place, a white cotton thread would be uncoiled along the path. The youths, the sons or son-in-law of the deceased would carry the dead body with *Tolzi* to cremation ground. The elder people would move first and spread cotton, rice grain and sesamum or basil leaves ahead, while the carriers of the corpse followed them. The *Ochei* or village priest used to lead the team and used to perform ritual at cremation ground. If the deceased was a pregnant woman, apart from observance of other rituals, the women folk of the village would start breaking waterful earthen pitchers (*tai koly/Taidho*) on the premises of their houses so that they might not face the same fate when they became pregnant. The cremation party used to carry live firewood alongwith them while carrying the dead body to cremation ground. Before the cremation, the dead body would be positioned facing the head northward at the pyre, and the eldest son would lit the fire on the pyre. In certain cases, the unmarried youths only could lit fire at the pyre because they were considered pure. In some cases, a handful of sesamum seed used to be placed at the palm of deceased so that when his or her soul crossed the crystal water of eternal river attention of the monkey, which was believed to be roaming around the trees of eternal river bank, could be distracted or attention diverted by throwing the handful seed of sesame. As soon as the corpse was cremated, water would be fetched from nearby stream and poured out on the pyre to extinguish the fire. The Halam would never leave the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

cremation without burning the corpse completely. The cremation ground would normally be downstream of the nearby river. Some sub clans of the Halams would not cremate but bury the dead. Different kind of vegetable curry, meat, egg, and rice etc. would be cooked by the relatives and bereaved family on the day, and they would carry these prepared etaries to the cremation or burial ground for offering to the soul of the deceased just after cremation or burial. They would pour out by left hand home made wine and juice of rice beer for the soul of the deceased. It was a belief that soul of dead person could see thing when offered by left hand by living person. If the deceased was the Chief or a Member of the Village Darbar, a white cloth used be hoisted with a bamboo pole just after the cremation or burial. While returning to village, the cremation party used to bath at nearby stream, and thereafter, ceremonially cleansed their body by the green leaves of three varieties of plants in order to sanctify themselves and would leave the leaves behind at certain spot on the way. There was a belief that unless they were cleansed by the leaves of the plants, they might suffer from arthirities, and sickness would not leave them. However, few sub clans of the Bowng clan buried the dead and did not cremate. The cremation party often would take bath in the stream and change their dresses and drink the water of basil leaves to sanctify themselves. However, rituals slightly differed from one clan to other clan but overall rituals were broadly the same for all clans of the Halam.

**Thieft and dacoit:** Thieft and robbery were unheard of in Halam society in the past because the Halams had a compact society. They valued honest community life; and would not do thieft and robbery which harmed and disrupt the community life. The poorest family always would get the support of the village community through voluntary service, which made the economic live of the poor family easy. The community never protected the guilty. The village Council was powerful institution which never allowed anyone to indulge in criminal activity. Village Darbar was always ready to impose heavy fine and inflict physical punishment including expulsion from the community for any crime.

**Friendship by vow:** The custom of making friendship between two persons, particularly, among the adult and married person by taking vow had been very old custom and tradition in Halam society. In the

### **Social custom and traditions**

social life of Halam, friendship has an immense importance and significance. Friendship implied sharing burden as and when situation demand and even to take care of the family of the friend in time of trouble. The word "*Thi le King mal*" had been very familiar among the Halams, which means "*friendship for life & death*"; and the very word was related to this kind of friendship (by vow). This was the reason that the friendship used to be solemnised in Halam society to give it credibility in the eye of the society and also to the almighty. The *Ochei* (priest) would offer puja to deities namely-*Sukundrai* and *Mukundrai*, which was familiar as *Solanargai*. Besides, sacrifice also used to be offered to *Sapite* and *Paipite*, the Goddesses of paddy and cotton to solemnize the friendship. Sometime both the friends had to take vow by touching the fire, cotton, stone and chopper in presence of the *Ochei* (priest). The officials of village Darbar such as the *Kadai*, *Kabre*, and *Chopits*, *Jalsang* etc. used to be present as witness. Community feast used to be hosted jointly and used to take an oath jointly in presence of the elders and chief and members of the Village Council. The Halam gave immense importance to this kind of friendship.

**Fathership and sonship by vow:** It was a common practice in the Halam society to adopt a father when a person was without parent and felt insecure in the society. Sometime it happened that a person even after having family but without parent would carry new clothes, rice beer, and beverage, and approached the resourceful elderly person of a family with request to call him 'Father' or for adoption as his *Son* or *Daughter*. In such case, the adopted father used to celebrate the occasion by hosting feast and performed a sacrifice in which the officials of the Village Council, elders and relatives were invited. Thus, a person would be treated as son or daughter; and the adopted father would assume the responsibility of fatherhood for that adopted person. In time of difficulties, the adopted father would come forward to assist the son and his family. The adopted son too, would be always ready to assist or carry out the advise and instruction of his adopted father. However, adoption did not alter the status of the family clan of the adopted person.

**Alteration and adoption of family clan:** The practice of relinquishing own sub clan or surname and adoption of other sub clan by a person or family members was prevalent in the past and even now in Halam society. Some families who felt neglected and humiliated often by their

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

relatives would discard his or her family clan and adopt the clan of a family whom he or she felt kind and caring to his family. In such case, the elders of the family, a clan wanting to adopt the member of other clan into their fold, would arrange an Adoption Feast in his house, where the elders, Chief and members of the Village Darbar would be invited to feast. In certain cases, if a child was brought up by a family, the child would take the surname of his or her step father.

**Concept of Halawk :** *Helawk* was a set of socially recognized customary rules which governed the social behaviour of an individual in maintaining social relationship within the Halam community. In short, it was a set of the code of social conduct applicable to members of the family, relatives, and others for showing due respect and honour. It was also an avoidance of relationship with family members and close relative observed by the husband and wife and their sons and daughters. Thus, a married woman could not have any relationship with the elder brother of her husband or sit together or avoid talking as far as possible and vice versa. A married woman or man could not utter the name of her husband or wife for showing respect. Halam house wife must not only utter the names of her husband, but also must not utter the name of elder brother-in-laws, parent in-laws or maternal uncle or touch their body or talk to them unnecessarily. She could not sit near her elder brother-in-law or must not sit or enter the room where her father-in-law or elder brother-in-law sleeps. In the same way, the son-in-law must not utter the name of his elder sister-in-law and mother in-law; and must not sit close to them or touch their clothes unnecessarily. In case of man, he must not touch or talk to the elder sister of his wife or wife of his younger brother. Moreover, the junior also must show respect to elders by not uttering their names and must call or address them respectfully. A person must not cast a joke to his or her maternal uncle or aunty. A young man and young woman must not sit in the midst of elders unless asked to come over to them. When a young man and young woman was asked to appear before the elders for any reason he or she must bow down and touch the feet of elders as show of respect to them. Even before partaking drink i.e. wine in social gathering, a youngman must bowdown and touch the feet of elders as show of respect. The Halams used to give lot of importance to "*Helok*" in their social relationship. In the past, fine used to be imposed on individual by *Village*



**Social custom and traditions**

*Darbar* i.e. Village Council of the elders for breaking or violating *Hetok* by anyone. The Halam would always avoid calling any elder by name because it was regarded as disrespect and insult. But this social ethic has been breaking down gradually today for various reasons.

## CHAPTER - 16

# DANCE AND FESTIVALS OF HALAM

**Background:** The Halams were essentially one of the hill tribes in Tripura, and as hill tribe shifting cultivation had been the mainstay of their economic and social life since the time immemorial. Today most of them have embraced settled cultivation; but the impact of shifting cultivations in their social and cultural life has not vanished. For the hill tribes shifting cultivation had been the only best way for sustenance of livelihood on the surface of rough hills and mountains. However, in the midst of green forest of the hills and mountain, the social and cultural life of the Halams for many centuries had been sustained by shifting cultivation. The jhum land, surrounded by ever changing natural beauties of green forest with the change of season, would present unique environment which would cause lasting imprint in the social behaviour of the people. There was an intimate relationship between the method of shifting cultivation and the livelihood of the hill tribes. With the arrival of spring season with its bright sunshine at forenoon or the hot afternoon with wetness in the summer, the changing colour and glamour of jhum land would lead the mind of Jhumias to romantic world. The fragrance of wild flowers and the shining light of bright moon at night bring the joy and hope in the mind of hill man. The harvest of golden paddy of the jhum along with varieties of cucumbers and green vegetables would give joy and deep satisfaction in the mind of jhumias; and this joy and happiness would manifest in songs and dances in their social life. Their animistic belief and ritual would add glamour to their social and cultural life. Besides, their long association with Tipras and the plain people brought cultural pluralism in their society and broadened their cultural outlook. Since shifting cultivation dominated their economic and social life from the time immemorial, their cultural activities and festival would revolve round the cycle of jhuning. Thus, dance and festivals of the Halam were the outcome of their way of life based on animistic religious

### Dance and festivals of Halam

belief, social practice and economic life. These dances and festivals had been the source of joy and happiness in their village and social life for centuries. However, inspite of certain variation of dances and festivals of different clans of the Halam, broad similarities of the cultural practice and dances could be traced across the Halam clans.

**Jhum related festivals:** Observance of jhum related festival was very familiar among the hill tribes in Tripura. Among the Halams too, there were several festivals performed at different stages of shifting cultivation. These festivals were very popular in old days, but almost forgotten now. But the Halam elders fondly remember those festivals which their forefathers would perform on different occasions.

**Loicut Lam :** Earlier days the Halam household used to clear the jangle of selected jhum land starting from the month of January upto February by forming group of ten to fifteen members. From each household one man would be member of the group or working team. The team would clear the jangle of jhum land of each members of the team on rotation. It was natural that the members of the team would become tired. Each member of the team used to host a feast with rice beer and beverage to entertain his group members, and this was the time to sing and dance. This event was called *Loicut Guo Zia*.

**Hauot Ting Lam or Anot Ting:** This was a youth festival related to shifting cultivation. The Halam youths used to make a group for working collectively which was familiar as *Lonjui*. In this mode of collective group work, the *Lonjui* group would go to the jhum land of each member of the group in rotation. This youth *Lonjui* group used to complete the collective jangle cutting of jhum land of the group members one after another in rotation. When clearing or cutting of jangle of selected jhum land of the last group member would be completed collectively (after completing all other group members), from that jhum land the youth group used to carry one fresh bamboo pole of about ten feet length for celebrating festival. This bamboo pole used to be bound by the hard bamboo splits (called *Naxg diai*) through out its length; thereafter, that bamboo pole used to be heated up in the smoke of fire. Thereafter, the bamboo split, which bound the bamboo pole used to be taken out. This made the bamboo pole deep checkered brown in colour. They made many small holes at upper end of that pole, and polished bamboo sticks were fixed in that hole where different articles could be hunged on.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Therafter, the bamboo pole used to be tied to the middle pillar (called *Laichopui*) inside the house. All the youths of the village would prepare or make different kind of article with bamboo splits and would decorate that hanging bamboo articles on the polish sticks which were fixed on the holes at upper end of the bamboo pole. Some people used to decorate the bamboo pole with marigold flower etc, and this decorated bamboo pole was called *Anot Tung* or *Hanot Tung*, and the dance performed on this occasion was called *Anot Tung* or *Hanot Tung lam*, by the Bowng, Saihmar, Langkai, Sakachep, Thangachep, Marchafang, Dap, Chorei, and Ranglong clans of the Halam. The village youths used to hold this festival in joyous mode in the month of January-February. According to custom, the youths would usually select the house of a family as the venue (called *Tunkung*) of this festival, where young lady lived. Among the Bowng clan, this festival was the time to demonstrate skill in handicraft. Thus, all the village youths would make different kind of small and beautiful articles with cane and bamboo splits in their respective jhum land. In the evening just before sunset, they would return from the jhum land to village bringing their respective bamboo articles which they made in their respective jhum land, and would take it in the house of that young lady to hung up their articles at the sticks which were fixed at that checkered brown bamboo pole, which was fixed and tied with middle pillar of the house. If no pillar exist in the middle of the house, the decorated bamboo pole used to be fixed or planted in the middle of the house. In this festival, the youths would start dancing round this *Anot Kung* (bamboo pole) showing different stages of work related to jhum (shifting cultivation). Jhum works relating to cutting of trees & bamboos, clearing of debris of the burned woods of jhum land, seed planting work, weeding of jhum land etc. were shown through dances by the youths. Pig was sacrificed to *Sapite* and *Patpite*, the goddess of paddy and cotton, in the next morning. The Chief and Members of the Village Darbar (Village Council), the elders of the village required to participate in the festival; and rice beer and drink used to be served abundantly. Hosting this occasion was considered as a matter of honour which inspired the host to meet the expenses of the occasion himself. This dance was called *Hoi-Hak Lam* by the Molsom. The sequence of shifting cultivation was replicated in the form of dance by a group of dancers comprising men and women.

### Dance and festivals of Halam

**Changdai** : Each household of the village used to offer special sacrifice in the jhum land which was known as Changdai. This puja was done in the month of April-May just before plating paddy etc. seeds in the jhum land in order to ward off evil eyes so that no harm or sickness would cause during planting of the seeds and consumption of its fruits in future. This festival was done collectively by the villagers or individually.

**Sarkuangkhang or Cham-er and Loibol festival** :This was community religious festival. In the month of July-August, of the year, when the ear of paddy began to form, the Halams would offer sacrifice to *Sapite* and *Patpate* the goddesses of paddy and cotton, for the protection of their jhum paddy from pest and disease. This sacrifice was called *Sarkuangkhang* or *cham-er* or *Loibol*. Villagers used to raise donation in kind, mostly paddy from each household in the village, which would be husked; and beverage and rice beer (*za*) used to be made out of it. Pig used to be sacrificed in this religious festival, and wine and rice beer was consumed as much as they like. *Sapite dance* was performed in this festival by the villagers as a matter of tradition. This community festival was hosted each year by the village household in rotation. The Ranglong clan called this festival *Cham-er*, and used to be celebrated three days. Among the Molson, Bongcher, Kaipeng and Rangkhowl clans, this festival was familiar as *Loibol*.

**Buthar nek and Sakungafni** : In the beginning of harvest season, a festival used to be celebrated in each household which was called *Buthar Nek* by the Rangkhowl, Molson, Bongcher and Korbong. Firstly, in this religious festival, the practice followed by these clans was to offer sacrifice to the *Son* and *Moun* gods (*Sira-Tampa*) at the sunset time by placing handful rice of new paddy harvest over plantain leaves-one in the eastern direction and the other in the western direction at the backyard barandha of the house. Thereafter, un-threshed ear of ripe paddy or uprooted ripe paddy stump with ear used to be placed at the base of a riceful container called *Rangtok*, which the Kaipeng called it *Mangkong*; and male and female fowls were sacrificed to *Sapite*, the goddess of paddy. After offering puja to *Sapite*, a handful of new raw cotton used to be placed just nearby the rice container and puja was offered to *Patpate*, goddess of cotton. The object of this sacrifice was to invoke the deities to bless for abundant rice crops. This festival was also called *Sakungafni* (*favoring sprouting of paddy stump*) by the Bawang.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Sakachep, Thangachep, Chorei, Langkai, Marchafang, Dap, Ranglong, and Saihmar. The ritual they followed was the same in that the household was required to carry with big basket a little quantity of un-threshed ear of ripe paddy or little uprooted ripe paddy stump with ear from jhum land to the jhum hut called *Satu in* or *Inchu* (*Kaireng* by the Molsom, Rangkhowl, Kaipeng, Bongcher and Korbong), where many members of the family would come forward to unload the big basket as if the person carrying the big basket was unable to unload the basket full paddy load. The household used to place a bunch of this un-threshed paddy at the base of rice container (*Rengtok*) where a fowl was sacrificed as offering to *Sapite*, the goddess of paddy. Thereafter, a handful of new raw cotton used to be placed just nearby the rice container and puja was offered to *Patpite* (*goddess of cotton*). After this sacrifice, offering was made to implements and equipments used for work such as axe, spade, dao, sackle and baskets etc. These implements were placed in row; and over each of these implements new rice would be placed as offering. Thereafter, offering was made to ancestral souls before consuming the rice of new harvest. Each family used to make lots of eateries with the rice flour of new harvest. Different kind of cucumbers, maize, rice cake (*pitha*), pork and chicken curry, *Zu* i.e. rice beer, wine were made out of new harvest. These eateries used to be kept together at small wicker-basket shaped open tray which was made of bamboo. *Ochai* (village priest) used to offer these eateries to the souls of ancestors by picking each item of the eateries with his left hand. It was the traditional belief that if a human being offer things by his or her right hand, the Soul of the dead could not see things, but offering by left hand made things visible to the living *Spirit* of ancestors. This festival was observed in the month of September-October of the year, during jhum harvest season. After this festival, the household would harvest his paddy and threshed it. Thereafter, he would carry entire harvested and threshed paddy to store in his barn(called *Chelpang* or *Maijam*) at his native village. Paddy stored in his barn could not be consumed by all before performing another sacrificial festival called *Sapite Lam* or *Dundrai Lam*. However, he could keep a required quantity of new paddy for consumption before performing the sacrifice to Goddess-*Sapite*, if need arose.

***Vailam khuang Lam*** : This dance was performed in the social gathering for entertainment or in *Dosera* (Einu) festival. One person would beat

### Dance and festivals of Halam

the drum and the other adult persons would dance to the rhythm of the drum beat. This was a lively dance very popular till today.

**Sapite Lam :** This festival was related to consuming rice of new harvest stored at the barn. After harvesting and threshing, paddy was carried to barn for storing. But once the paddy was stored at the barn, it could not be consumed without offering sacrifice to *Sapite-nu* i.e. goddess of paddy. Normally big size pig used to be sacrificed in the morning inside the barn or at the place where new paddy was stored. Among the Langkai, Sakachup, Thangachup, Chorei, Marchafang, Dap, Bowng, Chorei, Ranglong and Saimar clans this religious festival was also familiar as *Sabok Yok Thei*. During the time of sacrifice, the priest would initiate the dance which was known as *Sapite Lam*. All men and women would form several pairs immediately. Each pair would comprise of one man and one woman, and they joined hand together and dance with the *Odei*, i.e. priest. The *Odei* and men and women would dance to the rhythm of drum beat. Two persons were required for drum beat. Every household needs to offer sacrifice to this deity either by sacrificing fowl or pig depending upon his means before eating rice of new harvest. However, in certain villages this sacrifice and celebration was performed collectively. But this collective celebration did not deter the household to offer sacrifice individually. This religious festival was normally observed by all Halam clans in the month of September-October, after completing the harvest of jhum paddy. The Molsoms also used to sacrifice pig or fowl at the barn where rice was stored. They would place a big container which was full of rice of new harvest and at the top of this riceful container an egg used to be placed which served as altar; and the priest would perform sacrifice at the altar. The Molsom called this religious festival as *Sa-Ar-Thei*. They would invite villagers and relatives to share the family feast. The Kaipeng clan too, offer sacrifice to *Sapite* i.e. goddess of paddy, at the barn where paddy was stored like other Halam clans, which they called *Pang Ar Thei*.

**Mainak Lam or Bachtal Lam or Khambhar Lam :** Among the Kangkhowl clan, the harvest festival was celebrated by erecting four decorated bamboo poles covered with colourful clothes called *Dai puzi* in the middle of the village. Harvested and threshed out new paddy used to be placed on the raised altar platform and some coins wrapped with cloth would be hanged at the top of altar; and the priest would sacrifice

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

pigs at the altar to *Sapite-nu*, the goddess of paddy. After performing sacrifice, the priest called *Ochai* would carry sword on his shoulder and would initiate the dance where the men and women of the villagers would follow him. In this community festival, the men and women of village danced to the rhythm of drum beat alongwith the priest. This dance was familiar as *Mainak Lam* or *Bu Chil Lam* or *Khambar Lam* i.e. paddy threshing dance. The Attendent of *Ochai* (priest) would carry the pig-head and would participate in the dance with the priest. The men and women in pair would perform this dance alongwith the priest. The other clans of the Halams such as the Ranglong, Thangachep, Sakachep, Marchafang, Dap, Bowng, Chorei and Langkai also used to perform this dance familiar as *Buchil Lam (Paddy threshing Dance)* during on harvest season in the jhum land and rice beer; and county made wine used to be served. The guests were mostly the owners of neighbouring jhum land and the working mates of the host called (*Lomjui*). Pigs and fowls were killed for entertaining the guests. The ritual which the Kaipeng clan followed was slightly different in that two pots (*Zu kola*) of rice beer used to be placed at the frontdoor of the house before sunset in the evening. A woman would drink the rice-beer by a small but two feets long bamboo pipe from that rice beer pot from inside the house; and a man sitting in the opposite of the woman also would drink the rice-beer by another small and long bamboo pipe from another rice beer pot from outside the house (from the barandh) and both the man and woman would sing *Dundurai song* and dance. In the evening, after sunset, a fowl was sacrificed again to *Sapite*, the goddess of paddy. Now the Kaipengs are celebrating these two religious festivals i.e. *Mainak lam* and *Dundrai lam* together.

***Sakungbum Zu or Lom zu nek*** : This harvest festival belonged to the youths only. This was a festival observed by the youths of a village after harvest of paddy. In the month of September-October, after the harvest of jhum paddy, the threshed out paddy used to be carried away by the owners and villagers with bamboo baskets in the village and stored in the barn. The youths would take leading role in this work. After completing the storing of jhum paddy in the respective barn, it was time for the village youths to celebrate. The youths of the village used to raise fund, collect new rice from house to house for this festival. Rice beer or *Zu* used to be prepared and rice beverage would be distilled



### Dance and festivals of Halam

with new paddy for holding this festival. They also would collect fowls and ingredients for cooking food and curry etc and would hold the joyous feast on appointed date. This was a kind of picnic of the Halam youths. Lot of rice beer and beverage used to be consumed by the village youths over night in the festival called *Sakang ham zu* or *Loat zu*. They would sing and dance in group after enjoying rice beer and wine. In this festival youngmen and women only could participate, non others were allowed. The youths would perform dance alongwith enjoyment of feast and drink.

**Sasen-thar :** In the month of November-December of the year, another festival familiar as *Sasen-thar* was celebrated, in honour of the new wine made from rice species called *Sasen ba* and *Konglon rice* or *Kuriana rice*, (*Magni* in kokboruk and *Bira Chol* in Bengali), the fermented product of which was favourite drink of the Halams. Before offering sacrifice to *Sapite*, goddess of paddy, these species of rice, which were mostly used for preparing rice beer and beverage, could not be consumed as a matter of ritual taboo. During the celebration of this festival, these species of new rice were offered to *Sapite*, the goddess of paddy. Goats, fowls, and pigs were killed for entertainment of the guests; and the wine and rice beer made of rice species called *Sasen ba* and *Konglon rice* or *Kuriana rice* used to be consumed; and the people would get drunk for excessive drink.

**Social Festivals:** The Halams have few social festivals which occupied important place in their social life. However, some variation of festival could be observed across the different clans of the Halams. Some important festivals need explanation.

**Telmar :** *Telmar* was an event organized by the new village chief for celebrating his installation at his expense. On the occasion of this festival, two types of dances familiar as "*Vai-Lam Khung*" or *Sapite Lam* and *Kelle Lam* used to be performed compulsorily as a matter of custom among the Langkai, Bowng, Dap, Sakachep, Thangachep, Chorei, Marchafang, Saimar and Ranglong clans. It has been the tradition that when the village chief of the Halam called *Kalin* or the subordinate chief called *Chapis Kalin* or *Kabin* etc. expired; a new Chief or subordinate chief was elected or selected by the village elders based on consensus from the immediate subordinate official. The festival or ceremony for formal inauguration of the *Kalin* was known as *Telmar*.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

In most cases, along with the *Kalim*, the subordinate village officials such as the *Kabur*, the *Chapias* etc, were also inaugurated. The chief or subordinate chief, as the case may be, used to fix drink of rice beer and beverage along with feast for the village community; and they were felicitated with ceremonial garlanding by the members of Village Council and the elders of village or community *Darbar*. Festival would last for several days and night; and lots of home made rice beer and beverage used to be served to the invitees. Folksong, in praise of the new chief, used to be presented while drinking beverage and sipping the rice beer with bamboo pipe (*Chonthee*) from *Zu-kola* i.e. pot of rice beer. As a matter of customary practice, dances called "*Vai-Lam Khuang*, *Sapite Lam* and *Kelte Lam* used to be performed and traditional folksongs were sung in the festival. It was the custom that the *Kalim* would dance first to be followed by the dance of the *Kabur*. Thereafter, the dance of the *Chapias* and other subordinate village officials must follow. The rhythm of the drum beat would change for the dance of each official of the Village *Darbar*. After food, as a matter of common practice, betel nut and leaves were served to the invitees. One popular folksong used to be sung during this occasion, which was like this-

*Aven ni Puphei pandan asat le,  
Dung khoi kua aitang pum rual,  
Dung kher panbua hnathiel pek rual,  
Panda sielmai ka hong song,  
Panda sodai thaw na rangin,  
Changa darsan ka hong thoi hi,  
Wai zur-hat na kathoaw hi.*

English translation was like this-

*Today Silver plate look beautiful,  
Prepared betel nut(inside) is the size  
of Chalta fruit(Dillenia indica).  
Prepared betel leaf is of the size  
of plantain leaf, These I bring  
to serve guests of the festival  
and to entertain the guest,  
Now I get up lifting (plate) on shoulder (for serving),  
And with folded palm I show you respect.*

### Dance and festivals of Halam

After whole day celebration, the chief used to be carried away with open palanquin(called *Tala*) through out the lenth and breadth of the village in the evening or early in the morning before sunrise. The folksingers in the village would sing this traditional folksong which was like this-

*Kunga rader saka Hrien reng,  
Saka Hrien reng a naka sula,  
Zapu lakhom ning aen ni ke,  
Aen ni la ni ubat ni,  
Aen har ni har a harai,  
Aensug paipai na niel ni,  
Aulung asal ni nasa ni,  
Ke kung sek rual kany kaul ni,  
Ke pa samik kua in zial ni,  
Maite dou kua a sai ni,  
Tusam saipang kua in hrien ni,  
Zapu lakhom nai,  
Vanghuan adiang asina,  
Vanghuan akhang aienra hangdi,  
Khung er pailang taen hanan,  
Dank lakhuan rual inonai,  
Zapu a tensong tianga,  
Niam songlo lek ho in,  
Zapu lakhuan a rual jei,  
Chang the pa re rang la,  
Niao niao re rang la,  
Aen ni maie khangiang a sai la,  
Zapu lakhom kan man rual ke.*

English translation was like this-

*Eastern Hrien (kuki) Chief pays tribute  
to King (Tipperah),  
Eastern Hrien chief obeys the King,  
This day is the day of Za Chief,  
Today is the day of joy,  
Today is no auspicious day,  
Today is for you to sit in folded legs  
and to pierce the heaven when you stand,*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*Today is for folding our legs for  
bowing down to you, and to touch  
your feet with hairful head to honour,  
Today even the bamboo stump is bending  
and look beautiful,  
Today we humble ourselves before Zo chief,  
Distance of the village is long,  
and the village's breadth is wide,  
Before the cock goes out round the village,  
and before the pig goes out around the village,  
We are carrying the Zo Chief in the palanquine,  
Carrying the royal flag and insignia  
Zo Chief is going round the village,  
The moon above shines bright  
and even earth below look bright,  
Even bomboo made palanquine  
today look beautiful, See,  
Zo Chief is going round the village.*

Persons who would initiate the song in the festival were known as *Tuila* in case of male singer and *Sarjuor* in respect of female singer. Among the Kaipeng clan, this festival was familiar as *Bolongkatli Lam*. **Ser Lam** : This dance was related to promotion or induction of *Kaithar* to the post *Ser* whose function in the Village Darbar was like a police in present administrative system. *Kaithar* was subordinate to *Ser* in term of seniority of post in the set up of Village Darbar. The function of the *Ser* (also called *Arok*) was to execute any kind of order of the chief of Village Darbar in matter of the arrest and production of an accused or witness or plaintiff or the complainant in the meeting for deliberation on the social disputes. He or she could inflict physical punishment on any accused on the order of the Village Darbar during the time of deliberation on any dispute for his refusal to confess the guilt or for serious social crime. No subordinate village official could hold the post of *Ser* unless he performed the customary festival called *Ser Lam* i.e. Ser Dance. During this festival, the Village Darbar used to bring some persons who have committed social crime such as stealing, theft, adultery, robbery, elopement, and divorce etc. and deliberation was pending against them. The *Kaithar* used to give physical punishment

### Dance and festivals of Halam

on the accused on that day as directed by the Village Darbar just to test the courage of newly inducted Ser. He could be asked by the Village Council to dance on the ashes of burning fire or to carry heavy trunk of a tree on shoulder to test his endurance or capacity to do some difficult jobs; and in that test he or she had to carry out such direction. After completing these jobs, the elders, chief and members of the Village Council were entertained with rice beer and beverage. Besides, the Village Council officials such as the *Ka'om*, *Kabur*, *Chapias* etc. were required to dance one after another as required by the custom. When the elders, the chief and members of the Village Council left the venue of the ceremony at night, the youth would start the celebration with drink and would performed dance called *Ditna Lam*, and *Kak'le Lam* with accompaniment of songs.

***Kaithar bitheng Lam***: This was a community festival organized by the villagers for formal declaration of primary membership of a village youth to *Village Darbar*. In the event of an elevation of the *Kaithar* to higher post or death of the *Kaithar*, a new member was elected from among the village youth by the village elders as primary member of *Village Darbar*. The villagers organized this festival for formal admission of a particular youth as the member of *Village Darbar*. A person familiar as *Tvilo* used to sing the song when garland was ceremonially offered to the newly elected members (youth) of the *Village Darbar* (Village Council). One of the songs was like this :-

*Kairo kairo loloi te ba chavri ho,*  
*Acpi juisi paboi le lo ser,*  
*Lei om lai rakh dung avoi le chen mi,*  
*Chondoi vangvai leisung pui rovin,*  
*Leisung-pui rakh chondoi le chor um,*  
*Najiek sungva le pizerjam,*  
*Leidon-pui rakh chonkui le bli lei,*  
*Leiril pui rakh nuom ning le chong sau,*  
*Akai thien lei boipui rakh,*  
*Leiman laroi rakh kangsai loto,*  
*Alhoi kus aittang pum rual,*  
*Akhor pabur bital na le pak rual,*  
*Lei nei pui rakh luvai ka sak loi,*

English translation was like this :

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

*You go up go up without friends,  
You go astray like motherless chicken,  
Charming lady, guide him to enter inside,  
Let him sit with you at the rare end of the house,  
Let him be with you alongwith waterful gourd,  
Let him sit on the smooth mat made of cane,  
Let him play with home made Gin,  
Tale him about social custom,  
As he smiles now be busy with him,  
Offer him bronze container full of betel nuts & leaves,  
Pilled out arecanut of the size of Chalta fruit,  
Plucked betel leaves are as big as plaintain leaves,  
Eat the etables with him together*

*Kaithar Intheng* or *Kaithar Inthul* festival was the first celebration for shouldering responsibility by the village youth as member of the Village Darbar in the village community of the Halam. In some villages, this event was celebrated with enthusiasm.

***Sarel Intieng Lam* or *Kotek-Lam*** : Among the Lusheis or Mizos this was called "*Chero Dance*". Among the outsiders this dance was familiar as *Bamboo Dance*. The Halam too has the same dance familiar as *Sarel-Intieng Lam* or *Kotek Lam*. Long wooden stick made for pounding paddy in traditional way was called "*Sarel*". The Halams husked their paddy by hand with this wooden-made stick which they called "*Sarel*" or *Farel*" by the Darlong. Instead of bamboo, the Halam would use *Sarel* for this dance. The dancers would move by stepping alternately in and out of the horizontal "*Sarel*" held against the ground by a group of dancers face to face. However, there was some difference in the music played during *Chero dance* of the Lushei and the *Kotek dance* of the Halam. In *Kotek Lam* the rhythem of drum beat played an important role for the movement of dancers. They would tap the *Sarel* open and close in rhythmic beats of drum. The dancers would step in and out to the beat of the *Sarel* with ease and grace. The patterns and stepping of the dance have many variations. In the past, this dance was popular among the Halam but never performed now. This dance has gained the popularity as *Chero Dance* of the Mizos only.

***Ditna Lam*** : *Ditna Lam* was popular traditional "*Love Dance*" of the Halams, especially among the Ranglong, Chorei, Lankai, Sakachep,

### Dance and festivals of Halam

Thangachep, Marchafang, Dap and Bowng clans. *Ditua Lam* was performed to the accompaniment of a song called *Dit-ua Hla*. In this dance, one young boy and a girl would formed a pair; and nine to ten pairs of young boys and girls would dance to the rhythm of drum beat and song. In important social festivals, *Ditua Lam* used to be performed. There was certain custom for performing this dance. This dance used to commence at midnight, when all the elders and other village dignitaries left the venue of a particular festival because the song of this dance contained many words which the singer would feel hesitant to utter. The sequence of the song was such that it praised the beauty of a lady mentioning all parts of her physique. The song of *Ditua Lam* praised the leg, waist, back, hand, eyes, hair, breast, chest, teeth, chin of a lady. A person would beat the drum and sing a song at the same time. A pair of young man and woman would initiate the dance to the rhythm of drum beat and subsequently joined by a group of young men and young women in pair twisting their waist. While dancing, the youngmen and young women would demonstrate the landing of dove by spreading out both hands. At time they dance balancing on their knees. *Dit-ua Lam* was immensely popular folk dance of the Halam. As mentioned, this folk dance could be traced among the Langkal, Marchaphang, Bowng, Sailmar, Thangchep, Dap, Sakachep, Chorei and Ranglong only.

*Taithei Khuang or Taitkhuang Lam*: The word *Taithei* means big bamboo pipe used for carrying and storing water by the Halam household. This pipe or bamboo water container was made of big size bamboo. The bamboo specie used as water container was familiar as *Wanlang*, which grew in hilly region in Tripura. This specie of bamboo used to be big in size and most of the hill tribes in Tripura used it for carrying water from the village well and for storing the water, which they called *Taithei*. In time of festive occasion in the village, the Halams used this empty *Taithei* as musical instrument because it would produce good sound when vertically struck lightly on the ground. In time of get together, the Halams would consume lots of rice beer and beverage made of rice; and would dance joyfully in group beating the empty bamboo pipe i.e. *Taithei* on the ground, along with drum beat and striking of Gong. This *Taithei Khuang Lam* was a folk dance often performed in social gathering of the elders.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Wathingkhok Lam :** The literal meaning of this word was *Woodpecker's dance*. This dance was the imitation of woodpecker, often performed by the folk dancer in the festivals.

**Kelte Lam or Birasi khuang Lam :** Literal meaning of this word was *Dance of Young Goat or kid*. A young man and young woman would dance like the kid or young goat following the rhythm of drum beat. This dance used to be performed in all festive occasion.

**Religious related Festivals :** The Halams would perform different kind of sacrifice. Their religious belief was synthesis of Animism and Hinduism. Many of their beliefs and practices were also deeply influenced by the religious belief and practice of the *Tipras*. Thus, they would worship some Hindu deities in animistic sitting and vice versa; but most of the important religious sacrifice would assume the character of community festival.

**Dosera(Einu) Lam :** Dosera festival was related to Durga puja which was celebrated by the Halams in their own way. While the plain people celebrate the festival erecting idol of goddess Durga, the Halam would celebrate this festival by sacrificing blemless he-goat which was followed by the native dance and folksong. In this festival five different type of dance used to be performed one after another serially. The sequence of the dances was as follows:- (a) *Vailam khuang Lam*, (b) *Tuikhuang Lam*, (c) *Desecholong Lam*, (d) *Sapite Lam*, (e) *Kelte Lam*. The chief and subordinate officials of the Village Darbar such as the *Kalim*, *Chapia Kalim*, *Kabur*, *Chapia Kabur* were required by the tradition to dance to the rhythm of the drum beat. Rhythm of the drum beat would change for each dance.

**Khuoser or Ker puja :** Ker puja was one of the most important festivals of Tripura since the time immemorial. This puja used to be held from royal house to villages in the kingdom in past ages. Every Halam village would conduct this puja during which no one was allowed to go out or enter the village strictly. Every year the villagers would conduct this puja collectively for their welfare. In this religious festival, these deities were offered sacrifice:

- (a) Sukundrai & Mukundrai (Sualama-ngai or Esterners),
- (b) Kalakkhi Prodhana Raja (Brahmaputra River deity),
- (c) Sangrung (deity which lives in the hills and forest),
- (d) Thingpungai (group of deities that live in the forest),
- (e) Zinga-ngai/Sunrolpu (Jomdugal & Zudugal),



### Dance and festivals of Halam

- (f) Tarpa/ Pavengpa (Deity which live in the jangle),
- (g) Chemrat pathien (Golarai & Kalarai),
- (h) Sapite-nu (the goddess of paddy),
- (i) Nupang-gei (female deities),
- (j) Mohadev and Mohadevi (i.e. Har Siva & Uma),
- (k) Tarpa i.e. Tuisik-nogra Banamali (Bomboli) Raja,
- (L) Balalsing & Dalalsing,
- (m) Dhaleswari,
- (n) Longtomi,
- (o) Ninu-Thapa (Surjya & Chandra Rajas),

Deities mentioned at (a) above were offered sacrifice in the middle of the village early in the morning first and the remaining deities got puja or sacrifice outside the periphery of the village in the forenoon. The However, Kaipeng clan, used to give sacrifice to thirty seven deities, which include above deities. The Halams used to sacrifice fowls and goats to each of these deities collectively for the welfare of their village. Lot of za (rice beer) and home distilled wine used to be consumed. In this festival, all the villagers would participate and share the meal together. Among the Molsom clan, a chunk of meat used to be delivered to the Chommunity Chief called *Halomasa* or *Rai* within on the day of sacrifice as a matter of custom.

**Bolong Kat-li Lam** : This was a biggest festival of the Kaipeng clan of the Halam which they observed every year, normally, after the harvest of them paddy for the inauguration of the *Halama-sa*, now called *Rai* and other subordinate chiefs of the clan. In this festival, sacrifice of two he-goats used to be made to these deities namely *Anaika-Pateka Raja*, one pig to *Tui-sik Nogra Banamali Raja*, one pig and two cooks to *Tonta* i.e. female deity in the jangle, three cooks to *Sakthour & Thangthaur* deities, two cooks to *Khumjur-bailang Sak Mokol & Ufeisak* deities for the welfare of the community. The idols of these deities were given by the king of Tripura kingdom. In this festival, all the sub clans of Kaipeng clan had to perform dance compulsorily as tradition in honour of the *Rai*, the chief of the community. The officials below the rank of *Rai* or *Halomasa* and *Katim* would take part in the dance on the spot of puja. The officials of Village and community Dardar such as the *Kabur*, *Chapis*, *Sengja*, *Seaglorba*, etc, used to carry sword on their shoulders and would initiate the dance and; the *Kabur*, *Chapis* and other subordinate officials

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

would join them in the dance. This was a community festival where lots of rice beer and beverage used to be served and all would get drunk for excessive consumption. The name of the festival itself suggest that this was not Kaipeng's original dance or festival, but borrowed from the tradition of the Tripuris. In this festival, the Chief called *Rai* or *Halamasa* used to be carried by a "*Changphan*" (palanquin) around the village as symbolic demonstration of his authority over the community or clan.

***Dompui Roi Lam*** : This festival was most expensive and usually performed when a sick person became patient of chronic disease. In this festival goats, fowls, pigs, ducks, and pegeons were sacrificed to all the deities which were considered good and could heal the patient. The deities which got sacrificial offering were as follows:-

- (a) Mohadev & Mohadevi
- (b) Sukundrai & Mukundrai (Sualama-ngai or Esterners),
- (c) Tuibuk Kalakkhi Prodhana Raja (Brahmaputra River's deity),
- (d) Sangrung pathien (deity which lives in the hills and forest),
- (e) Tuikati Rangchak Prodhana Raja,
- (f) Thingpu-ngei (group of deities that live in the forest),
- (g) Zinga-ngei/Sunrolpu (Jomdugal & Zudugal),
- (h) Tarpa/ Taisik Nokgra Banamali (Bomboli) Raja (Deity which live in the jangle),
- (i) Choturda Devtas.

The *Ochei* (priest) would start offering sacrifice from early morning to noon time because he had to offer sacrifice to one deity after another serially which would take time. All the elders, the chief and Members of the Village Darbar were required to participate in the ceremony. After the ceremony, the sacrificial team would go to the house of the host where rice beer and beverage were placed in the middle of the house in row for drinking by the village dignitaries and invitees. The priest would sanctify the drink first by offering the rice beer and beverage to the deity called *Chanok*. All invitees used to bring a bottle of beverage for enjoyment. Thereafter, the village chief called *Kalim* and his subordinate called *Kabur* would start dancing in the name of each deity. They first would dance in the name of Mohadev & Mohadevi, for Sukundrai &

### Dance and festivals of Halam

Mukundrai, Tubak Kallakini Pordan Raja, and Sangrungma Devi only. The dance was familiar as *Vaibhavyam* Lam. The rhythm of drum beat was different for each dance dedicated to each deity. For the remaining deities, the *Chapias* and his team would dance, and the rhythm of drum beat for each dance dedicated to each deity was different from the other. The invitees were given feast and drink of rice beer and beverage which continued several days and would take the shape of festival.

**Musical instruments:** In the past, the chief musical instruments were *Kachem*, *Cong*, *Theih* or *Theiklong* (flute), *drum*, *Daugda*, *Sirinda* (violin) and hollowed big bamboo pipe called *Tuithei*. *Rachem* was made by hollow ash gourd fitted with a small bamboo pipe at its top for pressurising with the mouth, and below the hollow ash gourd two flute were fixed for playing with fingers. Musical instrument like this was found to be used by the snake charmer in plain region. *Cong* of different size were played in the festival, but it was also played when a person was dead in the village. Young man used to carry the Flute or *Sirinda* at night while going for dating a young girl, and would play it melodiously. *Tuitheikhuang* was played during dance at *Zu hod* (community festival for drink). These musical instruments have almost disappeared now.

**Importance of Zu in jhum and social festivals:** *Zu* was one of the very important items which was used as drink in all kind of social religious and jhum related festivals. Jhum or Social or religious related festivals would be meaningless without *Zu*. *Zu* was the symbol of honour and respect to the village elders, the chief and members of Village Council and other invitees. In fact, *Zu* drink would carry more importance than a feast in all social festivals. In all social festivals, it was the village chief and members who would initiate the drink. A family who could not arrange sufficient drink was criticised. In fact, the tradition was to carry a pot of *Zu* (rice-beer) or a bottle of wine by the woman invited in the festival. Most of the women would not participate in any social festival without carrying *Zu-Kals* (pot of rice-beer) or a bottle of wine.

## CHAPTER - 17

# RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND RITUALS

**Concept of religion:** All the Halams clans would believe in supreme god which they called *Pathien*. *Pathien* was supposed to be the creator of everything. *Pathien* was omnipresent and almighty. *Pathien* was also *Spirit*, which was one and inseparable. *Spirit* was known to the Halam as *Ritha*, which many Kuki Chin Lushai tribes called it *Thlarau*. Halams' concept of *Pathien* was that it was *Spirit*, which was the holy and pure One. But apart from *pathien* the Spirit, they also believed in different spirits which live in certain direction, rivers, trees, bamboos, stone, hills, valleys or streams, deserted houses, joining of the paths or road crossing, in deep forest, in animals, mound etc, and this made the Halams animist in their belief. The Halams were afraid of these spirits because they believed that these spirits always tried to do harm to human being and were the source of all kind of sickness. The spirits were evils and demons by nature and could inflict great harm to the family or people or a person, and every form of sickness used to be attributed to the influence of these evil spirits and demons. All ailments, which were not understood, were considered to be either the work of a spirit or a wizard, and all internal ailment or complications were thought to be due to the presence of a foreign body which has been introduced in some mystic manner, and which most often took the form of balls of hair or string, a chunk of meat etc. The Halams would believe in witchcraft and the power of evil eyes. A single glance of witch was believed to be sufficient to bring harm and afflictions which were the evil gifts of the spirits. Therefore, the Halam families always engaged in the sacrifice of livestock such as fowls, goat, pig etc. for any sickness to propitiate these evil spirits and demons. In fact their belief in evil spirits and demons was so deep rooted that Halam families had to be engaged in sacrifices throughout the weeks, months and years. But inspite of believing in negative role of the Spirits, some of the Spirits were considered good and vevolent.

### Religious belief and rituals

The *Tipras* were the neighbours of the Halams from ancient period in Tipperah kingdom. But the *Tipras* were no less superstitious in their religious belief. They not only believed in spirit like the Halams, but also gave sacrifice to numerous gods and goddesses, and their beliefs were the synthesis of animism and Hinduism. The Halams, in course of their long association with the *Tipras*, adopted almost all the gods and goddesses of the *Tipras*. Thus, the Halams started worshipping many spirits and deities which belonged to *Tipras*. Most of their belief deities were transmitted to the Halams in course of their long association with *Tipras*. The impact of Hindu religion was also could be noticed in Halam society, and this belief in Hindu deities were transmitted through the royal house of *Tipras*. The worship of Siva, Durga, Laxmi, Kali was pervasive among the Halams and these Hindu deities were introduced gradually through the royal house of erstwhile Tipperah kingdom. In fact, from the period of their settlement at Barak valley i. e. Cachar, the Halams came to know about these Hindu gods and goddesses more closely. *Krishnamala*, the chronicle of King Krishna Manikya, mentioned about the worship of goddess Durga by the Halams of Cachar at that point of time i.e. eighteenth century, which was like this(translated) :-

*In the north is the bank of Barak River,  
In the south is Hidimba (Cachar) Kingdom,  
South of that (Hidimba) is Tripura kingdom.  
Kulis live in the hills of this (Tripura).  
This is short description about them (Kulis).  
Sakocher, Thagocher, Churni, Ranglong,  
Rangkhoul, Saibon, Saite, Saonar, Borong,  
Langkat, Kupini, Tuapaikung people  
There are many like these people.  
They are Kiratas in scriptural language.  
At that place rocky statue of goddess exist,  
Which were set up by mistake kings of Tripura.  
Goddess having ten hands riding the lion,  
In the eastern bank goddess is worshipped.  
Kiratas worship it (goddess) everyday,  
who can describe the glory of the goddess.*

(*Krishnamala*)

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

The rocky image of goddess Durga at *Bhuban Cave*, which was located in the east of Silchar town was set up by erstwhile Kings of Tripura kingdom; and the ancestors of Halams appeared to have started worshipping during the period of their settlement in barak valley. Thus, some Halam villages started keeping Durga image given by the kings of Tripura which was worshipped by offering sacrifice. In this regard, *Krishnamala*, the chronicle said like this:-

*Sakachep, Thangachep, Rangkhawl, Chorai,  
In these four villages she (Durga) lives.  
In each village she stays three years,  
After that time the Kukis takes her to next village.*

(*Krishnamala*)

The Sakachep, Thangachep, Rangkhawl and Chorai clans of Halams living in Cachar in that period would worship goddess Durga. They would sacrifice mithun etc. to goddess Durga every year.

*In Durga puja festival the Kukis of that place  
Sacrifice mithun to celebrate the festival.*

(*Krishnamala*)

The Halams would call goddess Durga as *Einu* meaning 'Our Mother'. However, the Halams also called Goddess Durga as *Osa (Durga) Pathien*; the word borrowed from the Tipras because they called the Goddess Durga *Osa (Durga) matai (deity)*. Again, some Halam clan also worshipped goddess Kali and which they named it as *Leisen nu*, meaning goddess with *Red tongue*. Some gods and goddess of the Halams and Tipras came to be identified with the Hindu deities. Thus, we find that *Sapite* i.e. goddess of paddy, has been identified with goddess *Laxmi* of the Hindus; and *Subrai Raja*, which was mountain god of the Tipras, has been identified with *Lord Siva*; Hindu goddess *Ganga* has been identified with the sacrifice to any rivers such as Surma, Dhaleswari, Dhalai, and Manu etc. Snake worship i.e. *Monosa puja* of the Bengalees was adopted by the Biata clan of Halams. Without giving up the animistic belief and ritual, the Halams adopted certain Hindu deities as well as the deities of Tipras; and started worshipping in their own way. However, the impact of animistic belief was so pervasive in their social and family life that the families were always engaged in offering sacrifice to spirits and deities. Thus, the village priest, called *Ochei* i.e. *Oja*, used to be the most busy person in the

### Religious belief and rituals

village because every day he would be seen engaged in performing sacrifice i.e. puja for any of the families in the village. Thus, *Ochei* i.e. priest was indispensable for each Halam village because sacrifice for the well-being and protection of the villagers from sickness, which was believed to have caused by the demons and evil spirits, was his job. However, inspite of adoption of Hindu deities, the ritual for offering puja remained animistic. Thus, in offering puja to Lord Siva, goddesses Durga, Laxmi, Kali or Ganga, animal sacrifice was one of the important components of the worship. On the other hand, in Hindu ritual of sacrifice, animal sacrifice had no place; instead *Pasud*, which was made of mixed fruits, sweet and soaked rice usually offered to deities.

Apart from Hindu deities, the Halams also adopted many gods, goddesses and the chants of the Tipras in course of their long association with them. The Halams not only worshipped the Hindu deities such as *Siva*, *Durga*, *Laxmi*, and *Kali*, they also worshipped the deities which belonged to Tipras such as *Sakundarni-Makundarni*, *Sri Kalalai-Kalarni*, *Kaliakhi-Raja*, *Khairgna*, *Taisik-Nogre* (also called *Banamali Raja*), *Nachensing*, *Adani-Raja*, *Khamtobing*, *Jankaithe & Jankawng* etc. Further, the Halams also have their own deities such as *Sapite-mi* (goddess of paddy), *Putpiti-ne* (goddess of cotton), *Khochon-ne* (also called *Khorim* or *Napangan*), and *Saurok-pa* or *Tapa* or *Pocagpa* (*Thamrawkpa*). Col. J. Shakespear noted that even the Biata tribe of the erstwhile Lushai Hills used to worship three images of deities called *Belong Raja*, *Chingya Raja* and *Maituki Raja*, apart from worshipping the stone images of *Siva* and *Durga* (*Hara-Parvati*) of Bhuban cave in Cachar. C.A.Soppitt, the Asstt. Commissioner of North Cachar Hills, had mentioned about the worship of three principle gods-*Lampna*, *Galarni* and *Dudkal* by the Rangkhawl clan in North Cachar Hills (now Dima Hasao). These deities of the Biates and Rangkhawl belonged to Tipras which they adopted during their settlement in Tipperah Kingdom, prior to their migration to N.C. Hills.

**Category of deities:** The gods and goddesses or deities worshipped by Halams in the past had been the combination of the belief of the Hindu, Tipras and the Halam; and thus, all these deities could be categorized into three:

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Hindu deities** :-Siva, Durga, Ganga, Laxmi, Kali, Surja Raja,Chandra Raja were the Hindu gods and goddesses which the Halams adopted and worshipped, and these deities were transmitted through the *Tipras*.

**Deities of the Tipras** : Sukundarai-Mukundarai, Kalarai, Kallakhi Prodhan Raja,Tuisik Ngra-Banamali Raja, Anaika-Petekha, Muljhuma, Dudkal, Nachengsing, Jomkaithor-Jomnarayan, Bolong Raja, Maituki Raja, Chhinga Raja, Subrai Raja, Sengkrak, Lampra, Biskang Raja, Tuisik-Nogra Banamali Raja, Maa Kalika(Kali) Devi, Kal-Dondo Raja, Kati-Rangkachak Prodhan Raja, Dakarai-Fakarai, Dosharai-Pasharai, Tuibuk Kallakhi, Tuisadar Raja, Lokhshormi Raja, Birbongsing Raja, Alalsing Raja, Adom Raja, Delalsing Raja, Vogni Raja, Pathien Guru-Lungjey Guru, Brikhoram-Brikhuram, Lebangsing Raja and Sangrung, Loko Surmabi etc.

**Halamnised deities of the Tipras** : Nupang-nu or Khochom-nu, Nupangnu-ngai, Bongrai, Asen-ngai, Thingpu-ngai, Barei-ngai, Alomngai, Sunrol-pu, Sibjownu-Damjawnu, Sivjouri-Damjouri, Jilmongmong-Jilthopthop, Bialkairim, In-enrit pathien or Alom-ngai, Shivjuali-Damjuali, Pudum-Asha, Puduol-Asha, Solkhup-Solloi, Soonna Mitak Janna Minoknu etc.

**Deities of the Halam** : Sapite, Patpite, Tarpa, Tui pathien, Sona Mitak Janna Minoknu. etc.

**Brief descriptions of the deities** : Sacrifice to numerous deities and Spirit was the essence of religious practice of the Halams. But the religious belief also revealed the extent of influence of religious practice of Tipras on the Halams. The Halams did not offer sacrifice to particular diety just for the sake of religious belief. Offereing domestic piglet or fowl was a costly matter for the poor household. Therefore, when a household offer sacrifice to particular god or goddess, he held firm belief that a particular diety was responsible for the sickness of someone in his or her family. Of course the village priest played an important role in identifying as to which diety could be responsible for a particular kind of ailment or sickness. However, some sacrifices were offered for the well being of the family and the village community, and not related to sickness.

**Osa pathian or goddess Durga (Einu)** : Among Hindu deities, goddess Durga was worshipped as *Osa-pathian*, which was regarded as supreme deity. *Osa* was the indigenou name of goddess Durga which was also



### Religious belief and rituals

identified as *Lihw* i.e. our mother by the Halams. The word *Osa* symbolized the strength and the spirit of fighting. The word *Sa-bah* means *our* or *owner* in the body of human being and the word *Osa* originated from the word *Sa-bah* in Halam language; thus the word *Osa* appeared to have originated from Halam language. The Halams used to offer sacrifice to goddess Durga collectively and this goddess used to be considered as *Lih-Nu*, meaning *Our Mother*. Some people among the Halam also called the Durga as *lut-tanuu*, which means the "goddess of many hands". In the past, all the Halam chiefs, particularly, the *Rai* or *Hairasa* and the *Kalim* (where there was no *Rai*) used to be invited as the royal guest to participate in annual *Dosera* festival in the royal house called *Hoson Bhojan*.

*Subrai Raja*: The identity of *Subrai Raja* can be traced in the mythology of Dimasa Kacharis. According to mythology of Dimasa Kacharis, *Subrai Raja* was one of the six sons of *Bangla Raja* (god of earthquake) and great divine bird *Aakhiadima*. *Bangla Raja* had six sons, and these six sons of *Bangla Raja* were the ancestral Gods of Dimasa Kacharis. On the other hand, Tipras regard *Subrai Raja* only as their ancestral God. *Subrai* of the Dimasa was the *Subrai* of the Tipras. Now *Subrai Raja* has been identified as creator of the universe by the Tipras; on the other hand the Halam regarded this deity as *Lih-pa*, which means *Our Father*, and considered it as creator. The Molsom clan of Halams do considered *Subrai Raja* as ancestral soul. There was a Halam proverb which was like this:

*"Subrai Raja mas wad am  
Subrai wawra dawan sai kor  
Awan awal sin awan-agi"*

This proverb says that King *Subrai* made the world; but *Subrai* forgot his creation of the world on account of his wife *Parroli*. There was mythology about the creation of the world by King *Subrai* which was not be given here. The Tripuris professing the Christian faith have adopted word *Subrai* as the name of god in Kokborok Bible. The Tipras in general and the rulers of Tipperah kingdom in particular, were the kinsmen of Kachari tribe; so affinity of the mythology of these two tribes should not surprise anyone; and this very *Subrai* was regarded as *Fapa* by the Halam people, which means *Our Father*. The extent of cultural influence of the Tipras on the Halam could be assessed from the adoption

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

of this mythology by the Halam. Among the ordinary Halam folk, *Subrai* was mountain god and regarded as *Lord Siva*.

***Tui-pathian or Tui Reng:*** *Tui-pathian*, meaning water-god; and worship of any river used to be considered sacrifice to *Tui-pathian* i.e Water God. A short bamboo with leaves used to be fixed in the stream or waterbody as altar. Some cotton garland used to be placed around the bamboo-made altar. Little rice on plantain leaf used to be placed at the base of sacrificial altar. For the Halams worship of any river had significance. The significance was that the river or stream, which they used as regular bathing place for certain period of their settlement on that river bank, would be worshipped as Water God. In fact the rivers were venerated more than the small stream. Thus, almost all the Halam clans used to offer sacrifice to the river deities of *Tuiruong (Barak)*, *Tuivai*, *Langai*, *Tuivom*, *Surma*, *Manu*, *Dhalai* and *Dhaleswari (Tlawng)* rivers because at certain period of time the Halams lived near the bank of these rivers. In the past, the Halams would offer sacrifice of hundred of he goats, pigs, mithun, fowls etc. to *Surma* river, which they called *Tuivom nu*. *Loko Surma Devi* was considered as the deity of *Surma* River. This sacrifice was costly and several villagers used to perform this sacrifice collectively. The community leaders and the people would gather together to discuss the problems of the community during this puja. Therefore, this sacrifice was also called or known as *Boro Puja*. Apart from this, the *Kaipeng*, *Molsom*, *Bongcher* and some other clans of the Halam used to offer sacrifice to *Tuivom nu*, (*Surma* river), *Raima & Saima* (*Sharma*) and also *Lawgang* streams, the tributaries of *Gomti* River, as river deity. The Halam living in *Kamalpur*, *Ambassa*, undivided *Kailashahar* Sub Divisions started to offer sacrifice to rivers deities *Manu*, *Dhalai*, *Longai*, *Deo* and *Jhuri (Chalri dung)* etc. at later period. On the other hand, offering sacrifice to *Tuiruang* i.e. *Barak* River by the Halams was from ancient period. The *Ranglong* called it *Neinu dung*, which means *Our Mother River*. All the clans of the Halam would offer sacrifice to *Tuivai zuor* and *Tuiruang zuor*, which were river *Tuivai* and *Barak* river respectively. The Halams believed the presence of water-god in every river, stream and water body. Offering sacrifice to deities of these rivers, other streams and water bodies had subsequently been diluted and these sacrifices got the recognition as the sacrifice to goddess *Ganga*, i.e. water deity of the Hindus. Thus, any sacrifice to rivers and

### Religious belief and rituals

streams was attributed as *Ganga puja*, which was the process of sanskritisation.

*Sapite and Patpite* : *Sapite* and *Patpite* were important female deities worshipped by all clans of the Halams. While *Sapite* was the goddess of paddy, *Patpite* was the goddess of cotton. The Goddess *Sapite* was also familiar as *Khongen-Khongar-na pathien*. Among the Tripuris and Reang, goddess *Sapite* was known as *Maiungma*, and the goddess *Patpite* was called *Khufungma*, and both the goddesses would get animal sacrifice in different altar at the same moment. Sacrifice to these goddesses was done at the time of harvest of jhum paddy in the month of September or October of the year. There was tendency to dilute goddess *Laxmi* with the goddess *Sapite*. In fact, among the Tripuris *Laxmi puja* was given more importance due to influence of the Hindu Brahmins in their society for many centuries. Among the Halams too, the trend was to identify the goddesses *Sapite* and *Patpite* with the goddess *Laxmi*, the Hindu goddess of paddy and wealth. In Halam society, whenever any sort of festival was celebrated throughout the day and night till the next morning, offering sacrifice to goddess *Sapite* in the next morning was mandatory. The altar for offering sacrifice of fowl to goddess *Sapite* used to be the base of rice container, which was familiar as *Reingok Ar Thut*.

*Chemhrat pathian-ngai or Imarlama-ngai(northerners)* : *Kaloni* or *Coloni* and *Kaloni* were the two deities living in the north and they were called *Chemhrat Pathian ngai* or *Thingpu-ngai* i.e. Owner of Forest, by the Halams. These deities appeared to be the ancestors of the Tripuris. It was believed that these two deities always follow a person. These deities, which belonged to Tripuri tribe, was adopted by the Halams as a result of their long association. These two deities used to get sacrifice with he-goats by almost all the clans of the Halams for their welfare.

*Sukundorai and Mukundorai or Suolama-ngai (Easterners)/Rodongai* : These two deities were the two brothers which actually belonged to Tripuris, possibly, their ancestral souls, believed to be living in the east. They were also called as *Suolama-Ngai* (meaning Eastern Dwellers) or *Rodam-ngai* (who live in bamboo forest) by the Halams. One decorated bamboo pole used to be erected on the ground as altar and sacrifice was offered at the base of the bamboo pole. These deities were considered as benevolent givers of riches and wealth; and the Halams

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

families used to offer sacrifice with two cooks to these deities early in the morning, just after harvest of jhum paddy.

***Nupanganu or Khuochomnu*** : This deity was demoness and believed to be responsible for the sickness of woman. If any woman became sick, sacrifice was offered to this demoness at noon time or during sunset with all sorts of cooked food items, including meat. When a child was sick this spirits was offered sacrifice with a piglet at noon time outside the periphery of the village. Sacrificial meat had to be eaten up at the place of the sacrifice as it could not be brought in the village or home.

***Tarpa or Tuisik-nogra Banamali(Bomboli) Raja*** : *Tarpa* was familiar as *Bura Debta* even among the Bengalee villagers in the tribal areas. The Molsom called it *Paveng-pa*; but this deity was also familiar as *Tuisik nogra Banamali Raja* among the priests. There was a legend behind the worship of this deity. Once upon a time one Halam jhumia family left the village and migrated to his jhum land for staying in the jhum hut till the harvest was over. One day his wife became sick while staying at their *Jhuming hut*; and to collect some herbal medicine the husband went out of the jhum hut in the morning. On his way he met his friend who asked him as to why he was going out of his jhum hut. The husband of the sick woman told his friend that his wife was sick and he was going out to collect herbal leaves for medicine. But his friend, whom he met on his path, advised the person to return home and as soon as he reached the jhum hut he must pile out a bamboo pole, which should be decorated; and thereafter, must erect the bamboo pole on the ground. Thereafter, he must sacrifice a cook at the base of that erected bamboo pole. When he return and arrived at his jhum hut he was surprised to see his wife had been cured; and she was cooking food etc. He erected decorated bamboo pole and sacrificed a cook because he realised that his friend was *Tarpa* which was also called *Tuisiknokra Banamali Raja*. In the next morning, the jhumia man went around of his jhum land and saw that weeding had been done on entire jhum land at night. The Jhumia person, after contemplating deeply realized that his friend whom he met on his way a day before, was none other than god. From that time onward people started worshipping *Tarpa* i.e. *Bura Devta*. This Spirit believed to have been living everywhere or omnipresent. For living in the hills he was called *Tang-Tarpa*, which

### Religious belief and rituals

means *Deity of the Hills*; in the river and stream it was worshipped as *Tu-Pupai* i.e. God of the water. This deity believed to be living at crossing point of the roads, in the valley and would roam around at noon time. Sometime a person moving alone early in the morning, or noon time or in the evening at isolated place or deserted house or at bathing stream or well or in the jungle might become its prey.

*Adom Raja or Tung-bung Pathian* : During the period of their settlement at Adom Ail range in Hylakandi on the west bank of Longai River, the Halams started worshipping this hill range as *Deity of the Mound* (Tung bung Pathian). Thus, this deity believed to have been living at elevated mound; and might cause sickness if anybody dis-respect or desecrate the mound. It was believed that this deity could harm a person for desecrating the mound in unworthy manner.

*Bibungsing Raja or Taidung pathian* : It was the belief of the Halams that this god lived in the river or stream and could cast evil eye on any person who came for bathing or walk along the river alone in day time or in the noon or in the evening.

*Mau-Kalika Devi or Bersutga pathian* : This goddess (Rokha Kali) was believed to be living inside the fencing area where vegetables etc. were planted or grown. This goddess might cause sickness whoever enters within the fencing area. When fencing was raised, sacrifice need to be offered to this goddess for good harvest of vegetables etc.

*Kal-Domlo Raja* : This was a deity which could harm to any person and sacrifice used to be offered at the corner of the roof. This deity was also called *Tarpa* i.e. *Roof Deity*.

*Kali-Rangkuchak Pradhian Raja* : This deity believed to be living at bathing place, in the water pond, well, water body and would cause harm to human being. Sometime if a person was alone in the water body or bathing ghat, this deity could endanger the life of the person. This deity belonged to Iipras.

*Kallakui Pradhian Raja* : This deity was Bramaputra River, and was regarded as the giver of children to barren woman. When a couple failed to have children on account of the wife's barrenness, sacrifice was offered to this deity for giving child. The Halams called it *Mai-jangne Pathian*. The Iipras came from the bank of Bramaputra in ancient period. Possibly, they would worship the deity of Bramaputra River for their welfare, which subsequently transmitted to Halams.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

***Maa-Sangrungma*** : This goddess was the giver of money. Among the Tripuris and Reang, this deity was called *Sangrungma*, the goddess of mountain and hills. The role of this goddess was often compared with the role of *Ganesha* of Hindu deity by many.

***Jomkaithor-Jomnarayan*** : When a person would get a sudden shock out of fear or for any other reason and became sick due to such mental shock, sacrifice was given to this deity for cure and healing. I his might be jomraj of the Hindus.

***In-enrit or Alom-ngai(Nupang vonpum pathien)*** : When a woman conceived or got pregnant, sacrifice was offered to the deity for blessing the mother and the un-born child so that the pregnant mother and the baby in the womb would be healthy and well.

***Chanok(Nekman Sakman pathien)*** : This deity was offered sacrifice with a he-goat or boar for the welfare of the household. Besides, before consuming anything new such as wine or rice beer (*zu*) or food, this deity was offered sacrifice or puja by the priest to ward off evil eye.

***Laxmi Devi or Chong-in-bek (inbek) pathien*** : At the time of marriage ceremony, sacrifice used to be offered to Laxmi Devi. Hindu goddess of wealth and paddy.

***Bialkairim (Mi-chop pathien)*** : If a person suffer from continuous or chronic sickness for months or year sacrifice was given to this goddess for healing the sick.

***Gusur-Maur (Pnemonia inkhur) pathien*** : If a person suffers from severe fever, sacrifice was offered to these deities for healing.

***Filip-Falap (A chop pathien)*** : When a person was afflicted by chronic and incurable sickness, sacrifice was offered to this deity.

***Khounsen-Khoung arr-nu (Sabuk pathien)*** : Sacrifice used to be offered to this goddess at the barn or granary. In fact this goddess was *Laxmi Devi*, the goddess of paddy.

***Dakarai-Fakarai or Inloi pathien*** : When a person suddenly fell down on the ground due to slippery soil and got injury, sacrifice was offered to these two deities at the spot where the person fell down. These two deities were ancestors of the Tipras.

***Dosharai-Pasharai or Thingkung achul pathien*** : When a person fell down from a tree and got injury, puja was done to these two deities to appease so that the injured or wounded person would be healed. I here two deities too, possibly, belonged to ancestor of Tipras.

### Religious belief and rituals

**Roldhya Kali or Inholna pathien** : Annual community puja used to be offered to this Hindu goddess for the protection of the village from danger, sickness etc.

**Shivjuali-Damjuali or Von-na pathien** : When a person suffers from sever stomach pain sacrifice used to be offered to these two goddesses for cure.

**Loko Surma-bi or Tuivom nu** : This deity was also familiar as *Tuivom nu* (Surma river), which was offered sacrifice for healing cough. This deity of the Surma River was regarded as female, and this was the reason the word *Bi*, meaning *Sister* was suffixed to the word *Surma*; thus, it was called *Loko Sarmabi*. The word "Lo Ko" means people. The Halams lived on the river bank of Surma River, possibly, during their settlement in the undivided Syhlet (in which Karimganj was a part of the Syhlet) in the past. According to prince Surendra Chandra Deb Barma, Nayeb Dewan (Prime Minister) of Independent Tipperah kingdom, *Surma river's* puja was the biggest community festival of the Halams in which hundreds of pigs, he-goats, mithuns, fowls etc. used to be sacrificed and huge quantity of *Za le*, rice beer and beverage used to be consumed. In this festival, poor and rich families alike would sacrifice livestock. The community chief and officials used to have get together with the villagers to discuss on issues concerning the welfare of their community and resolved the disputes in the next day of the festival.

**Dergang Raja** : This was related to worship to the deity of Deo River for healing cough and cold. Deo river was regarded as male deity. The Halam lived at the upstream and watershed region of Deo river in the past. This was the reason for worshipping this river.

**Bukil or Shobak pathien** : Most of the clans of the Halam tribe have tutelary deity; and every family would keep an altar for this tutelary deity at the corner of his house. This tutelary deity was for the protection of the family. The name of tutelary deities of different clans and sub-clans of the Halam tribe were as follows :

Name of clan	Name of tutelary deity
Sakachep	Ruongtuiden le Vaituiden
Thangachep	Ruongtui le Vaitui
Marchalang	Ruongtuichoi le Vaituichoi
Dap/Nabin	Sumtina Reng-Puan tina Reng
Langkai	Tiruang zuor le Tivai zuor

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Bowng	Ruongtui choi le Vaituichoi
Rangkhowl	Tuiruang leTuivai
Ranglong	Tuiruang zour le Tuivai zour
Chorei	Tuiruang zour le Tivai zour
Kaipeng	Tuiruang ue Tuivai

The tetutary deities were non other than the river deity of Barak and Tuivai rivers. In course of time, in addition to these deities, many clans adopted goddess Rakhya Kali in different name as tetulary deity. For instance, Chongreng Devi and Kalika Devi were the other name of Rakhya Kali given by the *Ochei* of the Halams.

***Tuitukuni Udasing Raja (Inkhur bol pathien)***: Whenever, a person became sick just after bathing, sacrifice used to be offered to this deity for healing of the sick person. This deity belonged to Tipras.

***Pudum-Asha, Puduol Asha, Solkhup-Solloi (Inkhur bol pathien)*** : These three sisters goddesses or deities were believed to be responsible for sickness of a person. Therefore, in case of sickness sacrifice was offered to them. Sacrifice animal should be cooks, pigs, and he-goats.

***Tuibuk Kallakhi, Tuisadar Raja, Kati Rangkachak : (Nai nei-joia Ti pathien)*** :These three brothers lived in water and said to be responsible for the death of new born baby; and to appease them sacrifice used to be given just after the birth of a child for protection. These deities belonged to *Tipras*.

***Tui Sikalsing Raja (Ti khori, Nai nei pathien)*** : This demon spirit lived in water, and some time it caused sickness to a new born child. So just after the birth of a child, a small fowl used to be sacrificed to propitiate this water demon. After sacrificing a fowl, it was thrown away as the same could not be consumed by human being. This deity also belonged to *Tipras*.

***Biskang Raja (Inkhu pathien)*** : This deity was responsible for fever related to influenza, and sacrifice of fowl used to be done to propitiate the deity for the cure from sickness. This deity too, belonged to *Tipras*.

***Shivjownu-Damjawnu, Sivjouri-Damjouri, and Jilmongmong-Jilthopthop*** : These deities were three sisters and puja used to be given for any sickness for cure. Cooks, ducks and pig used to be sacrificed to propitiate these three deities.



### Religious belief and rituals

*Vag-ni Raja, Matai Guru-Atai Guru, 14 Devta matai-ni Guru (ayu enna)* : These deities could predict, after a offering a sacrifice, whether a person would live longer or not. This puja was related to Dompui festival. When a person was sick, sacrifice was offered to these deities to ascertain curability of the sick person.

*Brikhorani-Brikhurani (Thingsur pathien)* : Sometime a person could get sickness after bathing in the stream or river where there was a tree. In such case, it was believed that the sickness was caused by the evil Spirits which lived in that tree. So Oshai i.e. the priest would sacrifice a cock in the afternoon to this deity. Bark of the tree used to be placed at the altar during puja. This deity belonged to Tipras.

*Lebangsing Raja and Sangrang (siam uar pathien)* : These two deities were regarded as the givers of money and wealth. Sacrifice used to be offered during Makar Sangkranti festival or Bengali New Year. A male duck was sacrificed as well as *Prasaad* used to be offered at the altar in the evening. No one was allowed to enter the house except near and dear ones of the household; and barricade would be erected at the door to prevent entry of others inside the house, where such puja was in progress.

*Sunah milak Ja-nah Minokau-Kantu Minokroi (Khor)* : This was demon who lived in a woman. It was believed that such woman would take a human form during day time, but at night such demon-possessed woman roam about in different form of body in search of human prey. Sometime, she would cast her evil eye to any human being which caused sickness. Altar used to be prepared on raised bamboo platform at the junction or meeting point of two village roads. Raw pork, different items of cooked foods used to be prepared. The village priest would keep such prepared food item at open basket which was placed at the altar to appease her.

*Surjya Raja-Chandri Raja (Lu inhai pathien)* : When a person suffered from headache, sacrifice was made to these Sun and Moon gods for healing. The Rangkhawl, Molsom, Bongcher and other Halam clans called it *Ninzu-Thapsu pathien*.

*Baret-ngoi*: Bhadra Kali, Rakha Kali, Joy Kali and Kalika Devi etc. were offered sacrifice together for protection of the village. Circular bamboo fencing used to be erected outside the village, near the stream; and altar used to be prepared inside that, fencing, where sacrifice was offered. These were Hindu deities transmitted through the Tipras.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Thingpu-ngai or Tokserai :** Two deities namely Bukung Singh Sukung Singh (two brothers), were offered sacrifice to heal a child or a person. Piglets and fowls were sacrificed as offering to these deities. Meat of the sacrificed animals or fowls could not be brought at home. Some families offered puja once in a year. These deities belonged to Tipras, possibly, their ancestors.

**Jomdugal & Zudugal or Zinga-ngai or Suonrolpu-ngai :** These deities were two brothers and responsible for guarding others or policing other. They were believed to be reporting to another god namely-*Kalaksi Pradhan Raja* or *Tuibukarasi Pradhan Raja* against a mortal person. These deities belonged to Tipras.

**Sri Kalate :** Sacrifice used to be offered to this deity for sanctifying home just after the cremation or burial of a dead person in the family. When a person was dead, the household would offer sacrifice to this deity for the sanctification of his or her home, and thus remove impurity and evil spirit from the house.

**Lalvorlala and Sakthang-lala :** These were ancestors of the Kaipeng clan, and they were offered sacrifice in time of new harvest.

**Lalziki Kaipen :** She was an ancestor of the Kaipeng, which the Kaipang clan offer sacrifice for their well being.

**Sikrata-Bikrata :** These deities were two brothers, and they were like Hindu gods of Kartika & Gansha. Sacrifice used to be offered by the village community together once in a year in the house of *Halamsa* or *Rai*, the Chief of the Kaipeng clan, alongwith the other two deities-*Onaika*, & *Patika*.

**Onaika-Pataika :** Onaika was male and Patika was female deities. These deities were offered sacrifice by the village community together in the house of *Halamsa* or *Rai*, the Chief of the Kaipeng clan.

**Totte pathian :** Totte pathian was like Jomraj of the Hindu god, who could harm others. Sacrifice was offered for the well-being of the family or person.

**Khangsen le Khangpol :** These two deities were male and female respectively. The Halam call it Tarpa & Tarnu respectively. These two deities belonged to the Kaipeng clan.

**Rairektoka :** This deity was offered sacrifice for curing or healing the wound or injuries of a person.

**Arthieng Ngei :** Three deities were collectively called Arthieng-ngai, which means holy deities and the name of these deities were Sriakhata,

### Religious belief and rituals

Sri bekhata/Tui buka Kallakhi Raja, Sangrungma. In Tripuri language they were called as *Kangkachak Phoida kai nai*, *Ruphai Phoida kainai*, *Kangkachak kolon tui nai*, *Ruphai kolon tai nai*, *Kangkachak jantthai tai nai*, *Ruphai ni jantthai tai nai*. These goddesses belonged to Tripuris and worshipped by Molsom and Kaipeng clans of the Halam.

**Dhaleswari** : This was deity of Dhaleswai (Tlawng) river worship by all clans of the Halam as mother deity by offering white a fowl even today. The Halam would live on the watershed region of this river in the past.

**Sri Kalatia and Sri Belatia (Tree deities)** : They lived in the forest and trees and worshipped by the Molsom clan for the cure of disease.

**Sri Okhia & Sri Dakhia (male deities)** : These two deities were worshipped by the Molsom clan and actually these deities belonged to Tripuris. Among the Molsoms, these two deities were familiar as "Ason ngai".

**Songang Raja** : This stream was located in Amanpari of Gumti District which was worshipped by the Kaipeng and Molsom because their ancestors lived on the watershed region of this river in the past.

**Poidhaadhari** : This deity was worshipped by the Molsom and Kaipeng clans of the Halam by offering three fowls.

**Serpui** : This serpent was the puja of 14<sup>th</sup> deities or *Chafomies Deities*, the tutelary deities of the Royal House of Tipperah. This *Serpui* festival of the Halams used to be held in November. This was an annual community puja performed collectively by the villagers for their welfare and many he-goats and pigs used to be sacrificed. Besides, lots of *Zu* i.e. rice beer and distilled wine used to be served. This puja used to be performed by all the Halam clans in the past.

**Dompui ruai** : This was already discussed in previous Chapter. This was biggest and costliest festival. A Halam family always afflicted by diseases and sickness normally would resort to offering sacrifice to different gods and goddesses for the healing of his family members, but did not get healed, and such afflicted family sometime offers sacrifice, which was called Dompui ruai.

**Ancestral worship** : The Halams were the believers in the immortality of soul, which they call *Kiiba*; it could not be burned and destroyed in any manner by anybody, except by *paithen* i.e. god. *Kiiba* was invisible but sometime could make itself visible when it wanted. *Kiiba* could see

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

human being but man could not see *Ritha*, unless it wanted to be visible to human being. When a person died, his or her soul departed from the body and went to *Mithikhuo* i.e. abode of the soul of dead person. The journey to *mithikhuo* was difficult to reach for the soul. Soul needed to cross big river across of which the monkey familiar as *Jongdul* lived. It would disturb and prevent the entry to *mithikhuo* i.e. abode of the dead person's soul. Sometime the soul came back from *Mithikhuo* to see the places where he or she lived during his or her life time on earth. Sometime when the soul came to the places of its earthly living, it could take the shape or form of bird, particularly, *Dove* or *Egle* or *Swallow*. This was the reason when a dove coos nearby the house of a family or egle and swallow made continuous sound from above the sky, a Halam woman would emotionally break down and weep on the belief that the soul of her love one had come to see them; and would pour out home made wine (*Rakzu*), and drinking water outside the home for quenching the thirst of the soul. Besides, before eating rice of new harvest, the Halam families used to make three different offerings at a time :-

- (a) Offering to *Chem* i.e. *Dao*, an implement used for jhuming,
- (b) Offering to *Sapite-nu*, the goddess of paddy and wealth,
- (c) Offering to the ancestral souls.

For offering to their ancestral souls, the Halam families used to make lots of eateries with new harvest of rice, sliced different kind of cucumbers, cooked maize, and would prepare rice cake (*pitha*) with new rice flour, prepared chicken curry, *Zu* i.e. rice beer and beverage, which was distilled out of new harvest etc. These eateries were kept together inside the bamboo-made small open wicker-basket shaped tray. The priest used to offer to the souls of ancestors by picking each item of the eateries with his left hand. It was the traditional belief of the Halams that if a human being offer things by his right hand the Soul of the dead could not see things, offering by left hand made the things visible for the soul. Sometime any new item of food or fruit of the jhum would be offered by the elderly woman of the family just hanging the new item at the corner of barandha of the house; and while offering, the woman would remember the known and unknown soul of dear and near one and would break down emotionally.

**Role of the Priest or Ochei :** The priest was familiar as *Thiempu* or *Puithiem* among the other Kuki-Chin tribes. But this Thiempu or

### Religious belief and rituals

Puithien was called *Ochai* or *Ochhi* by all the clans of the Halam tribe; and the Tipras too called it *Ochai*. This word was originated from a Bengali word *Ojha*, meaning the *Chamber*. The Halams borrowed the word *Ochai* from Tipras. Most of the deities which the Halam worshipped belonged to Tipras, which were transmitted to the Halams. The Halam priests learnt the chants called *Mantras* for performing sacrifice from the priests of Tipras called *Ochai*. In a society where everyone believed in unaccounted number of spirits, deities, gods and goddesses which dwelt in rivers, streams, hills, mountains, trees, valleys, road sides, cross roads, stones, bamboos, deserted houses, even in animals and birds etc. and where every ailment and sickness was attributed to these spirits, gods and goddesses, the people of such society could not sustain their normal life without offering sacrifice. This was the reason that the presence of priest or *Ochai* in every Halam villages was considered essential. This priest was known in the past as *Chongjai* in Halam dialect, which means *Exponent in Secret Chants or Mantras*. The *Chongjai* was also familiar as *Tang Kor* among the Halam. The word *Tang* means *Hill* and the Bengalees were called *Kor* even today by the Halam. Hence, the words *Tang Kor* means "Bengalee Hill man" or *Hill Bengalee*. Even today *Tang Kor* could be traced at Kanailal Halam para in Danchandra ADC Village under Durgachowmori R. D. Block. *Tang Kors* were the priest in Halam villages in the past; and according to hearsay *Tang Kor* descended from Bengalee Brahmin who in subsequent period assimilated in Halam society. In subsequent period, the Halam priest emerged from the community with the passage of time.

However, the Halams imitated the Tipras by calling the priest as *Ochai* or *Ochhi*, which was the result of their long social intercourse with them. The power and influence of the priest depended on his ability to convince the illiterate and superstitious villagers. The power and influence of the *Ochai* depended on these:-

- (a) His ritualistic knowledge for performing all kind of pujas or sacrifices,
- (b) His knowledge of chants and mantras for occultism,
- (c) His additional knowledge in the use of herbal medicine and its application,
- (d) His apparent power to contact evil spirits i.e. shamanistic activities.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

The mantras or chants were mostly transmitted for generation to a person, to whom the *Ochei* would consider obedient and capable. Some important mantras were written and the others were preserved in symbolic form. The mantras or chants were mostly in Tripuri language because most of the deities worshipped by the Halams belonged to Tipras. However, for performing sacrifice to deities which exclusively belong to Halams, mantras and chants were in Halams language only. The *Ochei* lived very simple and restricted life and avoid consumption of food items which they considered unclean, but they seldom avoid *Zu* i.e. home made rice beer and beverage. In fact in many pujas and sacrifices, *Ochei* was the one who offered wine to Spirits or the would sanctify and initiate the drinking of *Zu* (rice beer) and beverage in the house of the host. The belief in evil Spirits was so pervasive and overwhelming that the Halams were completely under the influence of the priests and would do whatever the priest would say; and in the process they spent money as much as their resource would permit in order to secure their favour. In the sickness of a person, the family would consult the *Ochei*, who would tell them the reasons of sickness of a person and named the gods and goddesses who were believed to be responsible for such sickness; and the nature of sacrifice that might require for propitiating the deities and Spirits. Not only in time of sickness, the Halam families engaged the *Ochei* for selecting the site for jhum cultivation or for consuming new harvest of jhum land and even for selection house site or new village site or for hunting in the jangle. In time of marriage and other social occasion the service of *Ochei* was required.

**Diari Kai :** There were some *Ochei* or *Ochai* (priest) who claimed to have power to talk with the Spirit of dead person or the spirit of deities by offering special sacrifice and chanting of *Mantras*. This sacrifice used to be performed in the forenoon. The priest would do fasting and would not sleep with his wife, touch or eat any objects which he thought impure day before offering sacrifice. Before going to altar for worship, he would take bath, wore white dhuti; and sitting on the altar of sacrifice, which was covered with new clean cloth, the priest would hold special wand or stick which was called *Rankha*. After chanting *Mantras*, the priest started shivering and became almost unconscious for about twenty minutes during which words would come out as answer for which the priest was seeking. This writer has seen the event of this kind of worship

### Religious belief and rituals

during boyhood. This kind of worship was called *Disri lai*. Ordinary village priest could not perform this worship, but great priest only knew the magic of performing this worship. However, today entire event would appear irrational and unbelievable.

**Barowa** : The priest or *Ochei* of the village could not perform sacrifice alone. He required assistance of others for preparing altar for sacrifice and its decoration, carrying sacrificial materials to the venue of sacrifice etc. All these works were done by the persons who was called *Barowa*. The number of *Barowa* could be two or more depending on the size and importance of the sacrifice. In short *Barowa* means attendant of the priest (*Ochei*).

**Importance of Omen (*Sema*)** : The word *Sema* means the sign portending good or evil i.e. *Omen*. When a puja was done to propitiate any deity, *sema* or *omen* must be ascertained by the *Ochei* i.e. priest. Everyone, be it a person or family or villagers who arranged the puja must know the omen. If the deity was pleased with the sacrifice, the omen was expected to be good; and in case of displeasure of the deity, the omen would be bad. The *Ochei* must inform the person or head of the family or the village chief about the positive or negative outcome of the sacrifice. For ascertaining the omen, two leaves of the jackfruit or mango or wood or two short (half feet length) bamboo planks or pieces were used to be thrown on the ground adjacent to the altar. If one leaf or bamboo plank fell flatly and the other leaf or bamboo plank fell flat in upside down or in opposite position, the omen was said to be good or positive. If the fowl was sacrificed at the altar, the priest would also dissect the rectum of the fowl to take out intestine for ascertaining the omen. If the intestine was found smooth and without any defect then the omen was considered good; and in case some defect occurred, the omen was considered bad. In case of bad omen, the priest would ask for sacrificing bigger livestock such as he-goat or pig or both to propitiate the spirit or deity. In the sacrifice of big animal such as buffalo, the neck should be chopped off by a sharp *nawdao* i.e. chopper in a single stroke for considering as good omen. The priest usually ascertained the success or failure of his puja or sacrifice on the basis of omen.

**Nature and mode of sacrifice** : The traditional religious belief of the Halams was associated with animal sacrifice, which was one of the distinctive features of animism. The livestock and animals used for

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

sacrificing at the altar of puja were cock, hen, pigeon, piglet, pig, he-goat and male buffaloes. In the past centuries, the Halams used to domesticate *Siel* i.e. mithun, which they would sacrifice collectively in community festival or by a resourceful family. But sacrifice of buffalo or mithun was a rare case because such sacrifice was expensive. It was the *Ochei* i.e. priest, who would decide as to what kind of animal would be required for sacrifice. Fowl and piglet were widely sacrificed in all sort of puja because these were the livestock that every Halam household would domesticate. In some cases, the *Ochei* was required to observe fasting in the evening for conducting puja of certain deity in the next day. Construction and decoration of altar for puja was difficult work because different type of sacrifice required different style of construction and decoration of altar. So when a family wanted to perform puja or sacrifice, two or more persons having knowledge and experience in the preparation of altar used to be requested well ahead of time to act as *Barwa* i.e. *Attendant* of the priest. Sacrificial altar used to be prepared with bamboo only. All kind of bamboo was not permissible, but only *Muli* bamboo variety was used for erecting or preparing an altar. Hard and green cover of the bamboos were stripped, decorated and erected at the altar. In some cases, garland was made with white cotton or leaves or flowers for decorating the altar. Banana leaves were spread at the altar and in certain puja rice or paddy was placed above the banana with little amount of flower. In certain cases, the big altar was covered with beautiful cloths called *Dali puan*. Size of the altar could be big or small depending on the Spirit or deity intended to be worshipped. Most of the sacrifices were made in day time in the morning before noon. But certain pujas were done in the evening after sunset; and these deities were mostly demons or evil Spirits. Some spirits were offered sacrifice in the river, stream or water pond; and for this purpose altar was erected above the water. The sacrificial fowl or animal used to be washed with water for their purification before dedicating at the altar. In case of sacrificial fowl, the priest or *Ochei* himself would cut the throat of the fowl and sprinkle the blood at the altar. After this, he would dissect the rectum and took out the intestine to ascertain the omen. In case of he-goat, Vermilion was put at the forehead of he-goat and thereafter, dedicated at the altar before sacrifice. But for sacrificing he-goat or buffalo, any man having experience in the sacrifice of animal



### Religious belief and rituals

was entrusted to slaughter the animal at the altar. The man who used to slaughter animal at the altar was familiar as *Yasumi*. The goat or buffalo used to be tied at slaughter post erected at the altar site before sacrificing it. In case of buffalo, its four legs used to be tied with ropes and pulled back by four attendants of the priest so that after chopping its throat with sharp chopper called *Kamisa*, its fallen body would not shiver. But sacrifice of buffalo to deity was a rare occasion, and the Halam would avoid sacrifice of buffalo. However, pig was slaughtered differently. The four legs of the pig used to be tied with rope and held it above the ground with bamboo pole by two or more *Attendants* of the *Odoi*. With sharp chopper, one of the attendant of the priest would slit the throat of the pig. In case of certain sacrifice to deity, which was done outside the periphery of the village, meat of the sacrificial animal or fowls could not be brought inside the village; in such case, the *Bacou*, i.e. the attendants of the priest would prepare and consume the meat at the side of the altar. In most cases, after performing sacrifice at the altar, the *Odoi* and his attendants would come to the house of the host. The host would fix *Za Kala*, i.e. rice beer pot and beverage for the entertainment of the *Odoi* and his attendants, the *Bacou*. The priest would normally sanctify the *Za Kala* i.e. rice beer pot by a chant or *mantra*, before consumption to ward off the evil eye. During the time of having this drink, the *Odoi* would disclose the bad or good omen of sacrifice to the host.

**Manoshi or vow :** *Manoshi* means restraining oneself from the consumption of favorite or choicest food item for specific period i.e. one year or vow for offering sacrifice to specific deity at the end of the year for the well being of his or her son or daughter or love one; and at the same time taking a vow to offer sacrifice to family deity at the time of formal break of such *Manoshi*. The practice was very common in Halam society. When the son or daughter or some love one suffered from disease for long period or the family passed through a critical time, the head of the family or the parent or either father or mother used to take vow in the name of the family's deity; particularly, the mothers used to resort to such practice for the success of their sons and daughters or to achieve an objective. In such practice, the person taking the vow would give up drinking wine or rice beer or eating banana, meat, egg or any fruit his or her would like most e.g.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Importance of Zu in sacrifice :** *Zu* was very important item of drink in Halam society. In Halam society, *Zu* i.e. home made rice beer was one of the important elements of sacrifice. In fact no sacrifice could be performed without home made rice beer and beverage which was distilled at home. In many sacrifices or puja, the *Ochei* i.e. priest, would pour out home made beverage at the altar along with other sacrificial ingredients to propitiate the *Spirits* and *deities*. After finishing sacrifice outside the home, the *Ochei* and his *Attendants* or *Barwas* would come in the house of the host bringing sacrificed fowl or animal for cooking and consuming. It was the custom for the host to entertain the *Ochei* and the *Baruas* by fixing rice beer and beverage in his home. The priest or *Ochei* would remove the cover of the pot of rice beer which was followed by recitation of the chants or *mantras* to sanctify the rice beer or wine and also for its protection from evil eye. For holding annual pujas, the women of Halam families would prepare the rice beer, distilled beverage months ahead of pujas.

**Synthesis of religious belief :** Certain tradition of the Tipras and Hindu has made deep inroad in the social behaviour and religious belief of the Halams. As a result, showing respect to elders by touching their feet with folded hand in the social gathering and other auspicious occasion has been a customary practice in Halam society. Besides, cremation of dead body, performing *Sradha*, tonsuring etc, which were Hindu tradition has been in practice among the Halams over a century. Secondly, without abandoning their ancestral religious belief and practices, the Halams adopted the worship of some Hindu deities or gods and goddesses such as goddess *Durga*, *Laxmi*, *Ganga*, *Kali* and lord *Siva* etc. Worship of *Siva* as the god of mountain and forest; and the worship of *Ganga* as the goddess of river was deep rooted among the Halams. Though the priest of the Halams was known as *Ochei*, to other Kuki Chin Lushei tribes priest was known as either *Thiempu* or *Puithiam*. The word *Ochei* was the corrupted form of the Bengali word *Ojha*. These facts simply demonstrated the extent of sanskritisation and acculturation of Halam community, which was not the case for other Kuki-Chin tribes. The religious faith and practice of the others which they adopted has impacted the philosophy of life of the Halam. Numerous deities and spirits which the Halams adopted and worshipped almost all belonged to Tipras. Belief in these numerous

### Religious belief and rituals

unseen evil spirits, deities of the Tipras, coupled with the adoption of many other Hindu deities, has made the Halam society most superstitious and depressed their thought, leave alone the economic burden they had to sustain. Living under the kingdom of Tipperah did not deter the practice of animism because the ruling class was no less superstitious; but they were the standard-bearers as regard to religious belief and faith in the kingdom. The rulers of Tipperah kingdom, without abandoning animism, worshipped the Goddess Durga, Laxmi, Kali, Chandī, Lord Shiva, Narayana etc; and adopted many Hindu rituals, and these adopted Hindu deities and related rituals were transmitted to their Tripuri and Halam subjects. In fact, instead of Brahmical faith in the royal court of Tipperah appeared to have started from ancient period. It seemed that Hinduism made inroad even before the arrival of five Vedic Brahmins from central India namely *Nanda, Amada, Gobada, Sripai* and *Purehujiao* in the court of king Ad- Dharmpha of Tipperah in seventh century for performing Vedic sacrifice in Sylhet-District of present Bangladesh. However, the rulers of Tipperah kingdom blended Hindu faith with animism which resulted in the adoption of the worship of goddesses Durga, Laxmi, Kali, Chandī Devi and lord Shiva, Bishnu, Ganesha, and renaming them as if they were tribal origin, and such renaming made the Hindu deities acceptable to the Tipras. The deities of the *Kharochi* and *Ker* were the two most important religious festivals which apparently looked like of tribal origin; but the deities of *Karochi puja* were the Shiva, Uma, Hari, Laxmi, Saraswati, Kartika, Ganesha, Brahma, Mother Earth, Sea, Ganga, Fire, Kandarpa and Himalaya, which belonged to Hindu deities. According to historian Kallpasanna Sen, the worship of *Shakti* (energy), *Shiva* and *Baisnavism* have culminated in *Kharochi puja*; and these fourteen deities of *Kharochi* were regarded as tutelary deities of the royal house of Tipperah kingdom. The *Ker puja* too, had been the blending of Hindu and Animistic belief of the Tipras. In *Ker puja*, these deities were offered sacrifice:

- (a) Sukundarai & Mukundarai (Sualama-ngai or Easterners),
- (b) Kallakkhi Prodhhan Raja (Brahmaputra River deity),
- (c) Sangrung (deity which lives in the hills and forest),
- (d) Thingpungai (group of deities that live in the forest),
- (e) Zinga ngai/Sunrolpu (Jumdugai & Zudugai),

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

- (f) Tarpa/ Pavengpa (Deity which lives in the jangle),
- (g) Chemrat pathien (Golarai & Kalarai),
- (h) Sapite-nu (the goddess of paddy),
- (i) Nupang-ngei (female deities)
- (k) Tarpa i.e. Taisik-nogra Banamali (Bomboli) Raja,
- (L) Balalsing & Dalalsing,
- (m) Dhaleswari (River),
- (n) Longtorai (Hills),
- (o) Mahadeb & Mahadevi (Shiva & Durga).

The deities mentioned above mostly belonged to Tipras, some of which they inherited from Hindu religion and renamed it. Subsequently the Halams adopted these deities with modification of their name. The observance of *Kharchi* and *Ker pujas* by the rulers of Tipperah was an attempt to blend the Hindu belief with animistic belief of the Tipras. Further, the mode and nature of sacrifice to these deities too have blended the animism with Hinduism. The Hindu mode of worship was offering of *Prasada* to these deities, and this *Prasada* was consist of soaked rice, fruits and sweets. On the other hand, in Tipperah kingdom, worship of Hindu deities involved offering sacrifice of fowl and domestic animal such as pig, goat, buffalo, or mithun. Offering *Prasada* was a rare event, though such offering took shape in subsequent period. The influence of tribal royal priest chiefly the Chongtai, Kalim, and Daurai prevented the total abolition of animistic mode of worship in royal house; and instead, knowingly or unknowingly, they became the vanguard of reform of animistic belief and ritual, which ultimately blended the Hindu faith with religious tradition of animistic belief and rituals. Thus, in later period, many tribal deities became symonymous to Hindu deities. Lord Siva became the symbol of *Subrai raja* or *Burasa*, the goddess Laxmi was identified with *Mailungma* of the *Tipras*, the goddess of paddy, Ganesha was given the identity of *Sangrung matai*, goddess Ganga became *Tuima*. Further, these royal priests also appeared to have introduced the collective worshipping or puja of Hindu deities alongside the tribal deities in the kingdom. On the other hand, the Halam too, did not lag behind, and the influence of Saivism among the Halam could be traced in their belief of Longtorai as the abode of Siva. Moreover, Lord Siva used to be regarded as supreme God by the Halam, and called the Siva as *Ei-pa*, which means *Our Father*, and the Durga deity was regarded as *Einu*,

### Religious belief and rituals

which means *Our Mother*. The Hindu deity called Kali (Kalika Devi) was renamed as *Bersung pathien*, and Laxmi Devi was renamed as *Sabuk Pathien* or *Khoag Ar Pathien* or *Sapite-au*. The worship of Siva too as old as the royal dynasty in the kingdom. About the religious practice in Tipperah kingdom, Hunter wrote that "*nearly all festivals and ceremonies enjoined by the Hindu scriptures are observed by the Raja and his household, in addition to those peculiar to the Tipperahs*". Further, he wrote "*Tipperah, the last country that yielded to the tide of Musalman invasion, had long been the abode of Sivanism. The fact that the aboriginal religion was supplanted by Hinduism, is indicated by the myths which describe Siva destroying the Asura Tripura, and represent Tipperah as the favorite residence of Siva, the right leg of Sati having fallen there.*" Besides, *Sapite* (the goddess of paddy) of the Halams became synonymous with goddess Laxmi, and *Tai pathien* (water god) of the Halams got the identity of goddess Ganga of the Hindus. The Halams, after adoption deities of the Tipras along with some Hindu deities, they renamed these deities of the Tipras. Thus, *Sukundrai* and *Mukundrai* deities were collectively renamed as *Sutabangai* or *Radongai*; *Sangrung*, *Sukusing* and *Bukusing* deities were renamed as *Thingrangai* or *Takasa*; the deity called *Taisik nogra* *Bonorsali* Raja was renamed as *Tarpi* or *Prengpa*; *Kallakhi* *Pordhan* Raja and *Tuibakarasi* *Pordhan* Raja were called as *Zingpa-nyet* or *Sunretpa ngai*; *Lebangsing* Raja and *Sangrung* were renamed as *Sum Ar Pathien*; *Birbomging* Raja deity was renamed as *Luklang pathien* etc. Thus, the religious belief of the Halams represented synthesis of Hinduism and animism, which they inherited from the Tipras.

## CHAPTER - 18

# DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

**General description:** In the past, dresses of all Kuki-Chin tribes had similarity in term of colour and design. The clothes, the men and women used to wear, were very different from the clothes they wear now. The garments were made of cotton grown locally and woven by women of the household. The cloths used were white, but the women were addicted to fine clothes. About the dress of Lushei (Mizo) women, Lt. Col. J. Shakespear stated that *“all women wear the same costume; a dark-blue cotton cloth, just long enough to go round the wearer’s waist with a slight over-lap, and held up by a girdle of brass wire or string, serves as a petticoat which only reaches to the knee, the only other garments being a short white jacket and a cloth which is worn in the same manner as the men”* Further, he stated that *“the commonest dye is obtained by boiling the leaves of the Assam indigo(Strobilanthes flaccidifolious). Many immersions are required to render the colour permanent”*. On the dresses of Thado, Jansen, Rangkhawl and Biate women, C.A. Soppitt stated that *“the women in all four tribes wear a kilt of blue cloth, extending from waist to just below the knee, and another cloth from breasts to the waist”*. About the of dress of Thadou Kukis, William Shaw wrote *“The men wear a lion cloth worn somewhat like Dhoti and have one or more clothes to wrap around themselves over one shoulder or both. They also wear a cloth as Pagri – it is tied around the head – . The women wear a loin cloth which is wrapped round their waists and reaches a little over halfway down their thighs. Attached to the cloth, sometimes separately, is a string which passed round the waist and so holds it up. In addition, they wear a breast cloth which is wrapped tight round the torso, the outer corner being tucked in at the top at a spot between the left breast and the armpit, – – – The wrappers used by the men and women may be white or dark blue. The white ones usually have one black at the extremities while the blue ones have some embroidery work in place of those bands. The indio dye is obtained from the plant Strobilanthes flaccidifolious grown by them”*. It seemed that most of

### Dresses and ornaments

the women of Kuki Chin tribes had similar pattern of dress in the past. In case of the Halam woman too, she would wear the cloth which reached the knee. The traditional dresses of the women of the Rangcong, Chorei, Langkai, Nabin, Marchafang, Sakachep, Bawng, Sairmar and Thangchep clans of the Halam had been uniform or similar, the colour of their *Pochra* was dark-blue. The Kangkhowl and Kaipeng women too, have the same tradition of using dark-blue cloth for wearing upto the knee. Thus, all women from these clans wear the same costume, a dark-blue cotton cloth, just long enough to go round the wearer's waist with a slight over-lap, and held up by a girdle of brass wire or string, served as a petticoat which only reached to the knee as that of the Lushui and the allied tribes. In subsequent period, the *Pochra* of the women from the Bawng and Sairmar clans changed into white, which wrapped round their waist, and from their waist reached a little over half-way down their thighs. At the extremities of the wrapper has embroidery work. But when a woman from this two clans expired, the dead body of the woman was made to wear dark-blue cloths as a matter of custom. However, the Molsom, Korbong, Bongcher, Kuloi, and Rupiri clans have very different kind of traditional dresses which resembled to the traditional dress of *Tipras*.

Today all the women of Kuki Chin Lushui tribes wear colourful cloths which reached the heel. But many working Halam women in villages continued to wear traditional clothes which reached little below the knee. Halam families mostly used clothes which they weaved at home. The Halam womens would weave cloths of different varieties for different purpose and the name of these clothes were *Puan-don* or *Puanzel* or *Nichai*, *Risa*, *Lukon-juan* or *Puan-luam*, *Ngaileng*, *Hram-jakus* or *Hrem-ganchali*, *Jante Muatri*, *Keipereng* or *Woltang* or *Darkai*, *Puan-rikop* etc. In the past for weaving of cloths for different use, the Halam women chiefly depended on the cotton produced in the jhum land. In the first place jhum paddy was harvested in the month of September-October which was followed by the picking of cotton flower in the month of November-December along with the gathering of sesamum. The Halams would cultivate two kinds of cotton, one was pure white and the other was redish in colour. Both the varieties of cotton were used for manufacturing the cloths. Besides, the Halams also used the cotton of wild tree which was called *Somad* by the Bengalees, scientific name of

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

which was *Bombax ceiba* L, for making pillow. However, quilt was also made with cotton flower of this wild tree.

**Processing cotton for weaving:** The Halam women would weave different types of cloths out of cotton grown in the jhum land. Raw cotton used to be cleaned in a home made gin, consisting of a wooden frame holding two wooden rollers, one end of each being curved for a few inches of its length into a screw, grooved in the opposite way to the other, so that as and when some one turned the handle, the rollers would revolve in opposite directions and the cotton was drawn between the roller. While the seeds were left behind the gin, the refined cotton came out of the roller in the opposite direction. This instrument i.e. gin was made of wood and called "*Mui-ot*". After ginning, the cotton was carded (called *patkap*) by a bow, which was made of a fine bamboo split tapering at one end; and the both end of the bamboo split was tied with rope of local wooden fibre; and this bow was called "*Pat-sai*". Then the refined cotton was worked by hand into rolls of one feet long; and this was done by rubbing the cotton on the wooden plank or sometime on their thigh by the women. When this rolled cotton was spun into the sharp and pointed iron spindle (called *muithal*), which was fitted to the wooden frame of spinning wheel, the cotton was drawn into a thread. this wooden spinning wheel was known as "*Rimui*". The thread having been spun, it was thoroughly soaked and wetted and hung in loops some three or four feet long over a horizontal bar, and stretched by several heavy bars being suspended in these loops in the sunshine to make it dry. Thereafter, the thread was rolled by hand and readied for weaving. The weaving used to be done with a loom which could be rolled and shifted to any convenient place.

The warp used to be mounted lengthwise, and for preparing the warp, the ball(s) of thread used to be rolled round the two parallel bombo poles of requisit length which were tied to the posts; and this preparation of warp was call *Thiamran*. After completing the preparation of warp, it was dismantled and at the one end of the warp leather band i.e. back-strap (called *Kong Vwn*) was fitted to one bamboo pole by the ropes. The weaver would sit behind the pole with which a leather band was fitted, which was breast-rod. However, in some cases, the warp was prepared by passing the thread round two pieces of wood, one of which was fastened to two upright post, while the ends of the other



### Dresses and ornaments

were attached to the ends of a broad leather (of deer) band or back-strap called "Kong-Vaer" and "phroivon" (by the Molsum), which passed behind the back of a lady weaver as she was sitted on the ground and; by leaning back, she would stretch the threads to the requisite degree of tightness. While weaving, the weft was formed by passing to and fro over and below each alternate thread through a round bamboos shuttle (call *Khokong* or *Khoroi*) which wrapped around or wound different coloured threads, which was beaten home with a well polished batten made of the sago palm called "*Rithon*". Cloths weaved by the women were of different kinds with different name and used for different purposes.

**Process for dyeing:** the cotton produced in the jhum was of two colour, the one was white colour and the other was reddish. But the women were fond of dark-blue colour for their traditional pacha clothes, they had to dye it to make their cloths dark blue in colour. For obtaining the common dye they relied on the leaves of indigo, the scientific name of which was *Strobilanthus flaccidifolia*. This plant was the source of dye for all the Kuki Chin tribes; and thus, Col. J. Shakespear observed that this *Strobilanthus flaccidifolia* plant was the source of dye for the Lushai (Mizo) tribes. Similarly, William Shaw mentioned the same plant used by the Thado Kukis of Manipur for dyeing the cloth. The Halams women too, used this *Strobilanthus flaccidifolia* plant as the source of dye for their cloths. Shakespear and William Shaw have mentioned the wearing of costume which was "*dark blue cotton cloth*" by all the Lushai and Thado women. This blue-dark cotton cloth used to be obtained by dyeing with the leaves of the Assam indigo (*Strobilanthus flaccidifolia*) which was planted in the jhum alongwith paddy. Today the Lushai (Mizo) and Kuki women wear very colourful clothes which were very different from the clothes they would wear in the past. But Halam women even now uphold this "*blue-dark cotton cloth*", as their traditional costume. This "*blue-dark cotton cloth*" Pacha was called "*Bon-don*" or *Nikni* or *Puanzel lak* or *Reson son* by different clans of the Halam. This "*blue-dark cotton cloth*" Pacha was very common traditional dress of the Cherei, Sakachep, Thangachep, Dap, Langkai, Marchaphang, Ranglong, Kaipeng and the Rangkhowl. This *Strobilanthus flaccidifolia* plant used to be cultivated in a portion of jhum land; and in the month of October-November, the stump with its leaves used to be gathered and stored in big earthen pot

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

with adequate water so that the leaves were soaked in the water for a night. After twelve hours the leave inside the earthen pot started to decompose which made the water deep blue in colour. The coloured water from the earthen pot used to be poured out on big wooden container called *Langkhieng*. Required quantum of alkaline (called *Chang-al*) was poured out on the same wooden container for mixing with the dye for making the colour dazzling. The white cloths or threads were dipped in the container for three times on different days, and after each soaking the cloth was dried in the sunshine for making the colour permanent and dazzling. However, there was a tree which the Halam called it *Thing-phak*. The bark of this tree used to be boiled with water and the coloured cloth or thread used to be dipped in the solution for making the colour permanent. Again, there was a fruit bearing tree which was known as *Rurum* among the Molsom or Bongcher, Rangkhawl and Kaipeng clans; and familiar as *Rulum* among other clans of the Halam. From the seeds and reddish root of this *Ralum* tree yellow colour was obtained. After peeling out the bark, the root was chipped off and boiled; and the threads or plain cloth was slowly dipped in the boiling pot, where the thread or cloths were boiled sometime. Thereafter, the thread or cloths were taken out and dried into sunshine.

**Traditional clothes and dresses:** Clothes and dresses of the Halams across the clans have certain uniformity in design, colour and name. These were some important clothes and dresses of the Halams.

***Rikop or puan-rikop*** : It was a thick and heavy cloth normally used as bed cover. The thread used for weaving this cloth was thick and the colour was normally white.

***Puan-hak*** : This was a white cloth weaved by women for using by man only as shawl in winter or when there was coolness.

***Hriem-jakua or Hriem-kanchali*** : This cloth was thickly woven white shirt which was used during working time. This thick white shirt was for protection from insects, mosquitos and snake bite etc during the work. Normally shirt was familiar as *Jakuo* or *Kanchilli* (*Kultai* among the Ranglong). The Kaipeng called it *Lawm Kanchili*.

***Mualri or Chon puan*** : This was heavy warm cloth made of thread and cotton. While weaving *mualri*, rolled cotton pieces were passed in between the warp along the breath just like weft thread. This was used as blanket in the winter.

#### Dresses and ornaments

*Chorte Mualri or Lenkhang or Patzon puan* : It was a light cloth made of thread and light cotton which was woven as that of *Mualri*. This was a warm cloth used in the winter as shawl by men and women alike.

*Puan-pha*: It was a light cloth woven by the women to be used as bed-sheet. It was almost like "*Puan-Riemp*" in size but more lighter in thickness.

*Puan-vel* : It was used by the women and it looked like the "*puachia*", but the design was more colourful.

*Weltang* : This was a piece of loin cloth with eight inches breadth and about six feet length beautifully woven by the women for the use of their husbands or sons to wear. Men wear this cloth twisting round the waist and loin. This was also familiar as *Tema* among the Rangkhawl. Its use was like *Kepetang* cloth.

*Puan-Bom or Puanzel* : This garment having deep blue dark coloured *pachra* woven by the women for their own use. It was large piece of cloth tied below the armpit covering the breasts of women which extended upto little below the knees. In some cases, it was tied to the waist which would extend little below the knees. "*Puanbom or Bom-duan*" was also known as "*Niki*" among the Ranglong. The traditional women dresses of the Jalam were being modernized to keep pace with changing time and test without compromising the basic colour and texture. *Pachra* used by *Mulsum*, *Bongcher* and *Korbong* women resembled the *pachra* or *Rigrai* of the *Koloi* and *Tripuri* tribes. On the other hand, the Rangkhawl of *Tripura* used traditional *pachra* called *Rexam-sen*, made of the black, and red thread with yellow colour at horizontal bottom line at both ends which was almost similar to the *pachra* of *Noatias* (new *lipras*). The Rangkhawls also have *pachra* made of naval blue colour which was called *Ching Wom puan*. *Anfutze* was another type of *pachra* of the Rangkhawl which was made of red and white coloured threads.

*Puanbom ngalleng or Zani* : This was garment or *pachra* with white colour having decorated bottom at each end. This *pachra* was widely used by the women of *Bowng* and *Saihtmar* clans. The bigger size of this cloth was also used for laying the dead body on it. When a person was dead, this cloth used to be carried by each household of the village for presenting to the deceased.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Risa or Tangzel:** This was a piece of cloth colourfully woven measuring about eight inches breadth and about forty six inches length for covering breast of women. "Risa" was Tripuri word meaning small cloth. The word "Ri" means cloth and "Sa" means small. "Tangzel" was the appropriate word in Halam language, which means *wrapper of the breast*. The Rangkhawl called it *Risa chunglow*.

**Kom-dum or Kom-ngoï :** This was *Pagri* in local Bengali language. The *Pagri* i.e. headgear was familiar as *Lukom* in Halam language. These headgears were about eight inches breadth and sixty inches length used for covering head by men when they were at work. If the colour was deep blue, it is familiar as *Komdum* and the white colour as *Komngoï*.

**Derkei or Keipereng :** It was a piece of strip cloth with one feet breadth and about five feet length wear by man while at home in leisure time, which was weaved by women. This cloth used to be tied round the waist, hanging both in front and behind of a man. It somehow covered the private parts of a man, and when someone view the man from certain distance the person wearing Keipereng would be like a naked person. This made the English scholars to write that the Kukis were naked and uncivilized. The Kaipeng call it *Therthap or Puadri* and the Reang or Tipras also called it *Poidri*.

**Puannai :** This cloth was about six feet long with one and half feet in breadth used for carrying the baby in the back.

**Khumnang :** This cloth was weaved by redish and white threads out of raw cotton produced in jhum land. This cloth was used for covering dead body.

**Choli :** This was a clourful bag or haversack made of weaved cotton by the woman with the thread of different colours. This bag used to be slung in the shoulder by which a man would carry his essential articles or small belonging.

**Khemchi or Telwom :** This was a traditional coat or shirt of Halam women, particularly, among the Ranglong, Chorei, Sakachep, Thangchep, Marchafang, Dap (Nabin), Langkai, Bowng and Saihmar clans. This coat was made of black linen cloth decorated with strip (*Chumki*). It resembled the dress used in the drama or stage or the dress used by Muslim women in Afgan or Mughal period. Possibly, it was borrowed from the Muslim during their settlement in Syhlet of present Bangladesh. However, the Molsom, Kaipeng , Bongcher, Korbong and

### Dresses and ornaments

Rangkhawl clans in Tripura did not consider this coat as traditional dress of their women.

**Dulipnan** : This cloth was used for covering the sacrificial altar at the time of offering sacrifice or puja to gods or goddesses of the Halam.

**Importance of weaving skill in the society** : Even a few decade before, skill in waeving the clothes was regarded as necessary for a young girl. The woman lacking the skill of weaving of different type of cloths used to get less respect and looked down upon; and regarded as unsuitable for house wife. Weaving skill was regarded as indispensable quality of good women in Halam society. Weaving of colourful cloths for domestic and persona use had been part of traditional way of life. Each woman in a family used to weave as much cloths as she could and store such hand woven cloths in a beautiful big bambuo basket called "Rei" or in the steel trunk. Among other, at the time of marriage cloths were the important things that the bride carried with her to the house of bridegroom. Rolling of the cotton and the spinning was done by the women and young girls at night, weaving was done at day or noon time, particularly, in the winter and autumn season just after the jhum harvest. Unskilled woman was looked down upon in the society. In the past, all the clans of the Halam would observe two festivals- one for young boy and the other for the young girl. In case of a young boy, it was customary to offer a piece of a new cloth to wear ceremonially as recognition of his attainment to adolescent; and the ceremony was called "Welting Lakei" or "Dekhindei" or "Dvti Kei". For the young girl attaining adolescent, it was the custom to offer "Yangzei" or "Risa", a piece of decorated cloth with about one feet breath and five feet length for covering her breast and "Pwat Bon", a new cloth to cover herself and this was known as "Risa Bon" or "Yangzei Bon" or "Risa kai". This has been mentioned in preceding Chapter.

**Traditional ornaments** : Halam women were lovers of ornaments and their ornaments were mostly made of silver. Silver coins were used extensively for making various types of ornaments. But manufacturing of ornaments were done by the plain people. However, certain ornaments were made by the Halams. The Halam woman would wear ornaments in her ears, nose, neck, hand, hair and fingers. Infant girl has her ears pierced; and small wood plugs were inserted. Among adolescent women these wooden plug was replaced by larger ones gradually till

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

the size of the holes became big enough to fit all types of erring ornaments. These were the important ornaments used by the Halam women:

**Rathei or Sumrui** : Necklace was known as "*Rathei*" some of which would reach down upto lower chest or upper belly of the woman. "*Rathei*" was several types and "*Sumrui*" or "*Tangka-Rathei*" was the most popular which was made of silver coin. But in recent time the use of this kind of necklace was seldom found. Now this neckless mostly used during cultural events. "*Sumrui*" or *Rathei* was the necklace which resembled the necklace used by Muslim women of royal origin during mughal period. But the women of Chin and Kachin tribes of Myanmar too, wear "*Sumrui*" which was slightly different variation. However, use of necklace by the women from the Reang tribe and the Nepali women also note worthy which resembled the necklace of the Halam women.

**Mohanmala** : It was also a kind of necklace widely used by women and made of silver.

**Kuardoi-Toya** : It was ring-shape or round ornament worn by the women on the lower part of ear-lob. However, the size of this ring-shape earring differ from one Halam clan to other. The Kaipeng and the Rangkhawl people called it *Benta*. This ornament was also used by Reang and many other hill tribes in the North Eastern States. It seemed that most of the women of Tibeto-Burmese tribes use this ornament widely in the past.

**Kuardoi** : It was a decorative ornament worn at upper ear which would extend to lower ear-lop by a wire made of silver. Many Nepali and Tibetan women also wear this kind of ornament.

**Maduli** : It was a popular necklace with two feet length and made of silver and; each part of this necklace has the shape of fruit bud of banana with one inch length and one inch in diameter. The Kaipeng and the Rangkhawl people called it *Anjli*.

**Jakser**: It was an ornament for the wrist made of silver which could be called wristlet and very popular among the women. This was a spiral brass fore armlet which starts at the wrist and goes up within two or three inches or so of the elbow.

**Banher or Banriel** : It was a ring-shape ornament or a flat round bracelet which coils thrice round the muscle of the hand of women just below the shoulder. This ornament was also made of silver.

#### Dresses and ornaments

**Sain-ep or Samehep or Bak-ep** : It was hair clip which the women of all ages would like to use to clip their long hair. It was made of silver. But now manufactured hair clip sold in the market was used by womenfolk.

**Bala or Kutbala** : It was a thick and round hand ring which could be called as wrist bracelet, which was made of silver, and was very popular in the past.

**Kekol** : It was ring of the legs worn by woman which was made of silver. While the Kaipeng people called it *Klatru*, among the Rangkhawl it was familiar as *Kerokol*. But this ornament rarely used even earlier. Even now this ornament is widely being used by Ruang women living in interior places.

**Katsabi** : It was a finger ring popular among the Halam women. This ring was made of silver or gold and women from poor families would like to have ring made of silver or bronze.

**Kuarbat** : It was ear ring made of silver worn by not only Halam women, but all women of hill tribes of Tripura. From early age, the ear lobe of the girl used to be pierced and a little cork made of broomstick or big woven thread was inserted in it; which was replaced by a bigger one gradually in the hole of ear lobe till the hole was big enough to wear big ear ring. The sizes of ear ring would differ according to the choice of the woman or differed from one Halam clan to the other clan.

**Chompar** : It was an ornament of the ear normally available from the market for sale. Halam women would like this ornament which they bought from the market for erring. The Molsom people called it *Naper*.

**Sankil** : It was a very popular long brass hair-pin used by young girls and the women. It was long and white colour which was like shapely sick made of brass or bone of Deer. Women would decorate their back hair knot with "Sankil". The Kaipeng people called it *Sarang Sankil*.

**Nakful** : This was nose ring made of silver widely used by the grown up Halam women for beautification. The size and texture of this ornament used by the women vary from one clan to another clan.

**Nout** : This was a silver chain which the Halam women used to fix in the nose to beautify it. This chain was bought from the market.

**Bonjui** : It looked something like that of "Sankil"; but it was tied with several silver chains at its upper end for beautification. But the size of "Bonjui" was smaller and made of silver. In some cases, it looked like

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

two connected hairpins, the upper end of which was tied with decorated silver chains.

**Kongkhit** : This was a girdle of brass wire or string, which held up the costume or petticoat of the women. However, many used the black cotton string sold in the market because such brass wire would not be available easily. The Molsom people called it *Khengreng*.

**Amber necklace and the story of Ralngam** : In old days, amber necklace was most valued ornament among the Halams. Amber was known as *Theibuang*, and necklace made of it was regarded as the most precious. Amber necklace was hard transparent yellowish-brown colour and very clear. Necklaces beads made of amber were sometimes about two inches long and about one inch in diameter. There was a beautiful but tragic legend related to collection of amber beads by Ralngam or Ralruna. Ralngam was a legendary hero, who went to distant north to collect the very precious and glittering amber beads which the Halams call "*Theibuang*", for his daughter who was still in the womb of his wife. Before his wife (named Homril) gave birth to a baby girl, her husband whose name was Ralngam went to distant land to collect amber necklace to present his daughter, who was yet to born. But Ralngam went to such a far and dangerous Shan country (*Sani sayon ram*) that it took him many years to return home. While returning home he met a young lady on the way with whom he fell in love without knowing that the young lady was his daughter whose name Swandan, whom he left when she was still in her mother's womb and for whom he had gone to such distant unknown land to collect precious amber necklaces called "*Theibuang*". The story culminated with the tragic death of Swandan, the young daughter of Ralngam, for whom he had gone to distant Shan land in Myanmar. Brief story has been mentioned in preceding Chapter.

Most of the ornaments were made by the plain people, and the women would entrust the makers in market places showing him the sample of ornaments. However, traditional dresses and ornaments of the Halam were on the verge of extinction as these dresses and ornaments were considered to be associated with primitive life style. The influence of modern life style of socially advanced neighbouring community has been considered better and acceptable. Nevertheless, the elder people still tend to preserve old way of life and considered the traditional dresses and ornaments precious.



#### Dresses and ornaments

**Present trend:** Traditional clothes and dresses were associated with raw cotton which was produced in the jhum. As the jhuming has become almost thing of the past, production of the cotton too have ceased. Moreover, the clothes produced in the textile mills were far better in term of quality and cheaper in price. As the sustenance of family has become hard, competitive and difficult, Halam families have no time to think about weaving traditional clothes by the yarns sold in the market. Moreover, younger generation being more educated, loved to wear varieties of dress and costume which were sold in the market and cared less about traditional costumes and ornaments.

## CHAPTER - 19

# GAMES AND SPORTS

**Concept of the games and sports :** The Halams as a whole were lovers of games and sports and they inherited many indigenous games. For the Halam, games and sports was not for winning price but for amusement only. However, some games were played by the youths only to demonstrate strength, valour and tenacity. However, certain games and sports were played by the adolescent only for amusement. In the past, modern games, sports such as cinema, football, hockey etc. were unknown to the hill tribes of Tripura in general and the Halams in particular due to absence of modern schools, education institutions, cinema and television. The indigenous games and sports had been important sources of amusement for the hill tribes and the Halams were no exception. Many indigenous games could be traced among the Reang, Tipras or other hill tribes of Tripura. Most of these indigenous games and sports of hill tribes has certain similarities. But many games of hill tribes were also played in plain areas. When different communities start living in neighbourhood, ideas, practices, habits and way of life get transmitted and adopted. Therefore, which games and sports belonged to a particular tribes or community could not be ascertained accurately. The fact was that most of the tribes of the north eastern region and the tribes of Tripura in particular belonged to Tibeto-Burman ethnic group. There were lots of affinities in dialect, culture, and way of life among these tribes as they belonged to same ethnic family. Therefore, similarities in games and sport too should not be seen as exception.

**Details of games and sports :** These were games and sports the Halams used to perform from the time immemorial. These games had caught the imagination of the youths and adolescent in Halam villages in the past, but no more played now.

**Lung-Deng-In-Siak :** This game was throwing of stone, which was the same as shotput. The young men used to play this game especially at

### Games and sports

moonlight night or in the evening to demonstrate their physical strength and endurance.

**Rafuan-san** : A long bamboo pole was held in their arm bit by two groups of young people face to face at opposing direction consisting of equal members. One group would hold the bamboo pole at one end and the other group with equal number also would hold the same bamboo at another end under their arm bit firmly facing the other group. Each group would try to push the other group beyond the border or demarcated line; and the group which would succeed in pushing away the other was declared as winner. This game could be played even by two young persons.

**Poi-Ritai** : "Poi" was a seed or bean of a large creeper botanical name of which was *entada persea*. The bean or seed was flat and circular shape which would be about six to seven inches in diameter. This circular shape bean was used for the game played by the children within the four corner of the lines drawn on the ground. "Poi" was used for different kind of games and; in most cases the game played by this bean or seed was like the game played by marble-seed shooting. Sometime two seeds were set up on the courtyard as target, which were shot from a distance.

**Sukur-ke-ritai (Still)** : A pair of bamboo pole fitted with small round shape platform at the height of about two feet from the bottom (ground) were used for walking competition. The teenagers would climb on raised platform of the two bamboo poles and walked in competitive mood as fast as possible; and the one who was fastest in walking with two bamboo poles was declared winner.

**Punja Ritai** : This was a very common game seen everywhere. In this game, two men i.e. competitors would sit face to face by placing their right elbows on the table or ground and holding firmly, and placing the left hand at their back. As soon as they got the signal from the referee, each competitor would try to bend down the hand of his opponent on the table or ground. The one who could bend down the right hand of the opponent on the table was declared as winner.

**Chausong-phai (pulling of Don's hand/stick)** : In this game, a youngman would firmly hold two feet long bamboo stick vertically to the ground and the other youngman would try to pull out or snatch the stick from the hand of his opponent. If he succeeded in pulling out the stick, he was declared winner in the game.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Ban-inkhiak (hand folding)** : In this game a youngman challenged another youth to pick up his hand and fold it upto elbow. Two youths would place their right hands on the table or place his right hand straight on the table with force sitting face to face, and would challenge each other to pick up the hand for folding it upto elbow. If the opponent could pick up the hand which was laid straight on the table and fold it upto elbow, he was declared winner.

**Besut-inkei (Ring pulling)** : This game was pulling of the ring. A ring was made by twisting the bamboo split and the ring was tightly covered with clothes properly. The circumference of the ring was about "7 to 10" feet. Two contenders would hold the ring by their hand standing face to face. The contending candidates or players would pull the ring toward his side and if he succeeded he was declared winner.

**Ribik Rwo (Hide & seek)** : This hide and seek game was very popular among the teenagers- boys and girls. A person having covered his or her face tried to find out another person who was standing nearby.

**Rui-rel** : In this game, a rope was tied up with a post at either end or two persons would hold the rope at both ends. The competitors were told to jump over the rope one after another. Rope was raised higher and higher to test the most competent competitor who could jump highest. The person who could jump over the rope at highest point was declared winner.

**Saha rakei** : Gibon was called "Saha" and the word "rakei" means "pulling". Thus, "Saha-rakei" means "Gibon's pulling". In this game, two youngmen sitting face to face on the ground would joined their heel straight against each other as support. One short bamboo was held by both youngmen by their hands horizontally. Thereafter, both youngmen tried to pull up each other by force from respective position. If the one competitor could pull up his opponent, he was declared winner.

**Rumei-choi** : In this game, a person would sit in *padmasana* by folding two knees and another person tried to lift him up as a show of strength. If a person could lift up the person sitting in folded knee, the person who lifted the sitting man was declared winner.

**Tuang-indai** : "Tuang" was called "Latim" in Bengali language. This game was very popular among the boys. "Tuang" or "Latim" was made of hard wood such as guava stamp etc. "Tuang" was twisted by a thin cotton rope and thrown forcefully on the ground with artfull skill and

### Games and sports

the "Tuang" spined around. The opponent would try to struct the Tuang or *Latin* by his own Tuang. Whoever, struct the spinning Tuang of the other as much as could be, he was declared winner.

**Loitak-Rel (Frog jump)** : From a specific point, a youngmen were made to jump and the distance was measured by a rope. A youngman who could run first ahead of his competitors was declared winner.

**Uichok rochon or inchon (Frog leap)** : In this game, short bamboo sticks would be spread over in row; thereafter, a group of youngmen would jump or leap like a frog over the bamboo stick or sticks crossing the hurdle and; whoever could leap ahead of the other competitors was declared winner.

**Sumpak-athuan** : *Sumpak* was mortar for husking paddy into rice which was about two feet long in height and three feet in diameter having carved pit in the middle where paddy was pounded with the pestle. In this game the contestant would lift up the "Sumpak" above by one hand with a sudden snatch grip. The contestant, who succeeded in lifting it to a higher level over the head, was declared as winner.

**Akai-mediang** : In this game, a youngman would stand straight closing his two legs. Another youngman would lie down at the feet of this standing young man and would hold the leg of that standing young man by twisting his own leg. At the same time he would, with his hand, hold the hand of standing youngman. Thereafter, the youngman who was lying on the ground would be asked to push his head between the closed legs of the standing person and lift him up above by upward thrust of his neck and back. Other young contestants would take chance one after another in place of the contestant who laid at the feet of standing person. The person who could lift the first person who remained standing up above was declared as winner.

**lubuan** : *lubuan* was wrestling in which two youngmen tried to pull down the other on the ground. This game was very popular among the Halams. Whenever succeeded in pulling down his opponent was considered as winner.

**Trikum-zong** : One ankle of a boy or girl was tied up to a post. The boy pretended to fly raising upward his body as far as he could lift up himself. This was a game which imitated the flying insect. The spectators would get lot of pleasure seeing this game.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Laipu** : This was a long run competition among the young men and women and very popular especially in winter season.

**Insik** : This was bull fight game, and in these game two boys would take a posture like a bull and fight with their heads pushing each other. When a boy was pushed beyond a borderline, he was declared defeated.

**Arkhong-indai** : This game was an imitation of two fighting cocks and very popular among the boys. Two boys would lift up one leg behind and would fold two hands in the back start fighting by trying to push each other. When a contesting boy would knock down the opponent he was declared as winner.

**Kabadi** : Passibly, this game has been borrowed from other people. Nevertheless, this was a popular game among the boys in Halam villages from the time immemorial.

**Present trend** : Village youths as a whole would indulge in indigenous games and sports for amusement, especially after the harvest season. In fact, these indigenous games and sports were simple but joyful which sustained the spirit of the Halam to struggle and survive even in time of hardship. But with the introduction of modern education, situation have changed dramatically. Modern games and sports have overtaken the place of indigenous games and sports, and the traditional games, which were the source of amusement even decades before, have disappeared.



## CHAPTER - 20

# FAMILY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE

**Traditional village:** In the past the Halams would like to perch their villages on the hill top or at the top of a ridge or spur because hillside being steep, it was difficult to locate ideal site for so many houses. They would construct houses both side of the ridge in row facing the front of the houses each others. There were certain criteria which determined their decision in selecting the site for village. One of the important factors was security for the village. Kuki-Chin-Lushai-Hmar or Halams were in constant animosity even for trifle issues and would attempt to subjugate the other clans. Therefore, among others, security had been prime concern. Thus, they would build a habitation in such place where from they could view the surrounding region of their habitation and easy to stockade. Another factor was the easy access to virgin forest land for shifting cultivation which was the means of their livelihood. However, access to water was also an important factor for choosing village site. For setting up village at suitable location, it was necessary to appease deities. Thus, before setting up new village, it was the tradition to offer sacrifice of fowls to water god i.e *Tui pathien* by the village priest so that the nearby stream, which would be used as bathing place by the people of proposed new village, was sanctified and made secure from the fear of evil spirit. Besides, fowl also used to be sacrificed to ward off the evil spirit from the new village site. The village priest would also offer sacrifice to the deity who own the new village site so that no harm would cause to the new settlers. The method of shifting cultivation which they followed was very wasteful and could not give them settled livelihood for long period because the large village soon would use up all the forest land within the reach and then movement to other suitable place became imperative. The move to new place was often of considerable length and sometime as much as one or two day's journey. Thus, the Halams, like their kinsmen, had been semi-nomadic



### Family and Socio-Economic Life

ever since their ancestors started on their western trek from central Asia. Besides, outbreak of epidemic diseases such as cholera, small poxes etc in the village were common phenomena, and in such bad situation entire families would desert the village in fear and moved to settle in safer place. However, after the merger of Tipperah kingdom with the Union of India situation have changed dramatically; and compactness of village life of the Halam has been disintegrating gradually because ownership of individual land holding has forced the families to live on their respective land over which they have legal right and title. Moreover, the concept of ADC Village has overtaken the position of traditional village institution; and the position of traditional village has now been relegated to hamlet.

**Traditional house:** The traditional house of the Halam was a raised platform upto five feet height and above; and used to consist of three parts. The front barandah, where many families used to place cage called *Arjano* which was attached to fencing for laying eggs and hatching of their hen; and also wooden pot called *Songak* for pounding and husking paddy. This front barandah was approached by an wooden staircase of three to four feet width. The main room was in the middle of the house the length of which could be from thirty to forty feet in case of big family. All the family members used to live and sleep at separate location within this main room. Another barandah was at far end of the house separated from the main room by a partition and connected by a door. This far end barandah was attached with another big open bamboo platform called *Chor*, which had no roofing. This *Chor* was fenced around by bamboo splits of the average height of six feet so that the house was protected. This barandah was like a sitting or drawing room where the family members relaxed themselves, particularly, in hot and summer season or in winter for exposing to sunshine. During daytime i.e. forenoon or afternoon, women of the house used to weave clothes or the elders of the house would do some petty home works at the barandah. *Chor* was used for drying the paddy at noon time for husking in the afternoon by women of the household; and clothes were also exposed to sunshine at the *Chor*. Washing and bathing of children, sick and patients used to be done at this *Chor*. In the Main room of the house there was small fire place called *Tipung*, where tea, water etc. were boiled and men and women of the family warmed up their body by

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

sitting around during the winter. This *Tapliang* used to be attached to the bamboo fence of the main room. Most of the Halam families would construct separate big kitchen house which was attached to the main house. This kitchen house was raised platform as that of main house with equal height. The kitchen house has a oven which was familiar as *Tappui*. This *Tappui* was of the size of about six feet in length and five feet in breadth which was made of soil of six inches in thickness. This *Tappui* was constructed attached to the bamboo fence of the kitchen house and the surface was often plastered with mud polishly. On the four corners of *Tappui*, four bamboo posts were erected to construct a platform of five feet height just above the oven and bamboo platform was called *Rap* or *Rapchar*. Containers of salt, dryfish, dry chillies, and other essential items were kept on this *Rapchar*. For constructing one traditional oven on the surface of the *Tappui*, three peices of hard and polished sandstone of fourteen Inches height were erected on the *Tappui*. But for two number of wovens, five number of hard stones of the same height were erected in row on the surface of *Tappui*. Some family members used to live at certain corner of big kitchen room. However, from nineteen eighties. onward there has been rapid transformation of traditional houses, replaced mostly by mudwall houses. Tadiional bamboo house with raised platform could hardly be found except in hilly and interior Halam villages. Normally Halam families used to have separate granary for storing the jhum paddy and other jhum produce. Many Halam families used to have granary in the corner of their kitchen. The granary was called *Sasier* by the Ranglong, Chorei, or *Sabuk* or *Maizam* by the Sakachep, Dap, Saihmar, Bowng, Langkai, Dap, Thangchep, Molsom, Rangkhowl, Marchafang and Kaipeng etc.

**Traditional family :** The family in Halam society was male dominated which could be summerised as patrilineal and exogamous. But the role of woman was no less than the man in the management of family affairs. Halam elders always encouraged their sons to live as joint family as long as they were alive; and they would not like to see their sons to live sepatately in their life time. In fact joint family was a system favoured and practised by the Halam since the time immemorial. Therefore, Halam family consist of the grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, unmarried and married children with their wives, grandsons and daughters. The sons after marriage did not usually separate themselves

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

from their parents but continued to stay on with them under the same house, working together, eating together, holding the property together, sharing all the burden of the family in time of troubles and difficulties. The father or head of the family normally controlled the property and all earning. The sons with their wife and children stayed with the parents until they were confident enough to establish themselves as separate family. According to the custom and practice, they moved out to establish their own home when their children grew up. In joint family the members of the family must abide by the certain code of conduct called *Halak* or *Halim*, which has been mentioned in separate Chapter below. But many Halim families could not retain a joint family because discord among the married sons and daughter-in-laws on petty issues often occurred after having children; and married sons would prefer to have separate family for avoiding continuous discord. Discord among the married sons or daughter-in-laws on petty issues often forced the parent to allow dissatisfied or aggrieved married son to have separation from his home. When a married son formally left the home of his parent and set up a separate family, it was called *Doughing-in-dhon* or *Doughing-nasun*. The parent used to support the separating son or couple with money and materials for construction of new house and gave the share of paddy, cloths, utensils and all other family requirement. When the couple would enter the new house, they used to offer sacrifice with a fowl to goddess *Sapite* i.e. goddess of paddy at the base of earthen pot called *Rangtal* (rice container) for the prosperity of the family, in which dear and near ones were invited to share meal. In old days, Halim families used to keep son-in-law for few years for rendering service which was called *Hnaktat* or *Sonaktat* i.e. *Cikar Janak-khatr* in local Bengali language. Most of the father-in-laws used to allow their son-in-law to have a small jhum land and to keep livestock during the period of servitude so that his son-in-law or daughter would earn something from the product of the jhum for saving. In many cases, the son-in-law never returned to his parent's home but live separately in the village of his father-in-law where he used to get lot of material and moral support, property and family affection. Though there was an exception, the son who would live with the parent used to inherit the property. According to customary practice, the daughters normally were not entitled to get the share of property in the past, but this was not the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

case from the recent past. Within the family, most of the grand parents played the supportive role by tending the livestocks, looking after the grandchildren and performing petty housewhole works, while the sons and daughters would work in the jhum or outside the home as earning members of the family. Grand parents would intervene in case of dispute within the family and played decisive role in deciding on impor tant issues of the family.

**Traditional role of the women :** The women played two important role, the one was in the society of the Halam and the other was in the family affairs. There was no work in the house which the women did not shoulder with men. From early morning to evening or night the women were most busy and engaged with some kind of works. The women usually got up early in the morning; and after washing and brushing, they would go to fatch water from the well and start sweeping and cleaning the house followed by cooking food for breakfast. Normally breakfast used to be over early in the morning which enabled the husbands and other working men to leave home for jhum work or toward the field for ploughing. If some elders in the family could look after or take care of the children, the wife often would accompany the husband in the jhum or paddy field. After preparing food for launch in the morning, women of some families in the village used to form a group and would go to forest to collect firewood, edible leaves, bamboo shoot, tubers etc. for domestic consumption or sale and return home within noon time. If they did not go for work in the morning, the women would engage themselves in washing clothes, splitting dry bamboo & wood with axe for firewood, cooking, feeding pigs and chicken etc. Weaving was the important area of activity for the women because almost all kind of clothes had to be weaved for domestic use. In fact, women put on *Pachra* which they prepared by own hand at home. Different kind of home made bedsheet, bed cover, male shirt, hand weaven bag, male headgear etc. used to be weaved and prepared by the womenfolk at home; and they would never sale these cloths to others. It was tradition to weave all kind of cloths and store it at wooden box or bamboo made busket called *Rel* for domestic use. In the afternoon, most of the village womenfolk engaged themselves in pounding and husking dried paddy for rice. Manual husking was done by pounding the paddy at wooden pot called *Sumpuk*; and pounding was done by a long wooden

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

stick called *Serai*. Husking paddy was a very hard work which women needed to do every day as a matter of routine work. The normal practice was to keep several rice containers called *Kengtok* all the time riceful. For pounding the paddy for rice during the rainy days, the women would heat up that paddy by exposing it over the raised platform called *Kap* or *Kapchar*, which every household would construct over the kitchen oven called *Kotap*. Before sunset the womenfolk used to feed their pigs, would tend the fowls toward its cages; and herded the goats toward their sheds. Women were so familiar with their livestock that they could easily identify any missing chick, fowl, goat or piglet. Most of the Halam families would complete their dinner within 7.00 p.m., on market days at 8.00 p.m. in the evening. In the past, plantain or leaves of wild banana were used for serving meal in place of the plate. Sometime mother and her one or two young children used to share meal in large banana leaves. Rice and vegetable curry etc. used to be served on the same leave for mother and children. However, most of the Halam families would possess bronze plate, but the use of such bronze plate was rare. After dinner, they would start engaging themselves in spinning thread with a spinning-wheel till they went to bed for sleeping. While the young girls normally engaged in spinning cotton thread at night at that moment some youths would come for a chat and dating with a flute or *Siranda* (local violin) in hand. Another important work of the women was gathering firewood and storing the same in the shed called *Hinghon*. These very household used to maintain stock of firewood for months.

**Traditional role of the old and elders:** Old and elders were respected in the family as well as in the society, but at home they were more valued for their experience and service. The village with considerable elderly men would commend considerable influence over other villages. Since the old and elders were considered wise, the Halams have high regard to the family having the old and elders as family member. In time of deliberation of Village Darbar for resolving any social issue, the old and elders used to be invited and their advice used to be given due importance. At home, the elders look after their grandchildren, engaged in all sort of works such as making of different kind of baskets, herding of cows & buffaloes, petty repair works of dwelling house and saw-shed etc. Sometime they also did cooking, fishing etc. Many elders engaged themselves by ginning raw cotton with hand made wooden

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

ginning machine. During offering to deities by the family, the elders were the one who normally managed the pujas of the family. The son or daughter responsible for running the family always used to consult the old and elder of the family in all important issues of family affairs.

**Traditional role of the youths :** The youths were the strength of the village community in general and the family in particular. The youths were the backbone of the village community because it was the youths who mobilized themselves when the community was in danger. Most of the Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribes had *Zowlbuk* i.e. dormitory of village youths, where they used to spend night. But in case of Halam tribe such institution did not exist; nonetheless, youths were vital part of social institution in Halam society. For critical and heavy works for the community, the Village Council used to mobilize the youths. Even within the family, the youth would get more importance because the parents depended on the son for any hard work. In the past a young man was expected to have the skill of bamboo craft, particularly, basketary works. Otherwise, he was considered unfit to have a family and many parents would refuse giving their daughters in marriage to such unskilled young man. On the other hand, the young woman also was expected to have skill in weaving and designing the clothes for her use and for the family. Young girl normally helped the family in all kind of work such as planting seeds and weeding the jhum land, for gathering firewood, fatching water for family use, herding domesticated livestock, etc. In the past, the family with so many sons and daughters was considered as respectable Halam family.

**Tradition of hospitality :** Hospitality occupied very important place in the social behaviour of the Halam. Having the Guest used to be considered as a matter of honour. Many families would regard themselves as unfortunate for not receiving guest, and felt envious to the neighbours who would have family guest frequently. Most elders in particular would feel proud and honoured for having guest; but they would feel neglected for not having guest inspite of some known person coming in his village. One important means of honouring the guest was to arrange drink of rice beer i.e. *Zu* and home made beverage, which was followed by special meal with chicken or pork curry. Even

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

if some elder came to somebody's home asking for drinking water, the custom was to offer him or her glass of home made beverage instead of water.

**Background of economic life :** In the past, shifting cultivation was the means of livelihood. This shifting cultivation was familiar as *Journing*. This system of cultivation was practised by all hill men of Southeast Asia, many part of Southwest China and North-Eastern part of India. All Tibeto-Burman ethnic groups, which include Kuki Chin tribes, were mountain dwellers and practised some form of shifting cultivation in the past. Thus, the practise of jhurning i.e. shifting cultivation was not confined to the Kuki-Chin tribes only. All the hill tribes of Burma, Bangladesh (of Chitragang Hill Tract) and North-Eastern India had more or less uniform economic pattern based on shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation was also known as *Tungga* in Burma and Arakan, as *Jhure* in Chitragang and Tripura. In the past, before embracing plain land cultivation, the Halams, like any other Kuki Chin tribes, were completely dependant on shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation was their primary source of livelihood which shaped their social and economic life. Since they were accustomed to live on highland, shifting cultivation was natural occupation. Jhum or a slash and burn agriculture, which was also called *Tungga*, could not offer sustainable livelihood. Further, shifting cultivation was associated with semi nomadic way of life, which, in no way helped to develop stable, prosperous and civilized society. But this was the way of life for most of the hill men of Tipperah kingdom, particularly, the Halam. In fact, their economic activities revolved round the cycle of shifting cultivation throughout the year. The rulers of this kingdom never interfered with the jhum cultivation; and instead they generated revenue by imposing tax on the jhumias. There were treatment of migration of hill tribes outside the kingdom, particularly, to Chitragang Hill Tracts, when some of the rulers became oppressive. There was a legend prevalent among the Ranglong sub tribe which maintained that Sana Raya, a Rangong chief, refused to pay tax which led to war. Among the Rupini sub tribe too, there was a legend which maintained that the Halams collectively decided to refuse payment of tax to the king of Tipperah. The Rupinis unwittingly attacked the king who was on tour to Rupini village for collecting tax. This led to massacre of Rupinis by the forces of the king, though a little young man and girl

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

were saved at the intervention of the queen; and *Julai* clan came into being from this ramment. The same was the case with Jamatia tribes who revolted against the oppressive taxation by royal official during the reign of King Birchandra Manikya in nineteenth century and this revolt led to the ruthless suppression and massacre.

However, the last ruler of Tipperah kingdom seemed to have recognized the importance of preserving the land right of native tribal subjects for their livelihood which resulted in the issuance of official notification No.325 by Royal Administration on the 7<sup>th</sup> Arshin in 1353 TE (Tipperah Era or Tripura Abda), which corresponded to 1943 A.D. Out of 4441 sq.k.m. geographical area of Tipperah kingdom, 1950 sq. k.m. was declared "reserved" for cultivation of five native tribal communities by this notification. These identified tribal communities were *Puran Tripuris*, *Noatias*, *Jamatias*, *Reangs* and the *Halams*. Since the size of the population of Tipperah kingdom was small, there was plenty of forest land for shifting cultivation. Though the rulers of this kingdom encouraged plain land cultivation, the Halams were away from settled plain land cultivation. They regarded shifting cultivation far better because such jhum cultivation resulted multiple cropping. They could cultivate variety of cash crops such as raw cotton, chilling, jute, sesame, sprout, cucumber etc. along with the jhum paddy. Above all, it was difficult for them to give up the practice of shifting cultivation which was so embedded in their mind, way of life and cultural from the time immemorial. Nonetheless, among all Kuki-Chin-Lushei tribes, the Halams were foremost in wet rice cultivation. The Halams living in Assam, particularly, the Chorei and Ranglong clans of Halam started wet rice cultivation from pre-independence period; and initially they used elephant for ploughing the land because it was strong enough to extract the roots of big trees from the vargin land. On the other hand, Independent Tipperah kingdom had no specific law as that of Indian Forest Act, 1927, and this enabled the Halams to enjoy unrestricted liberty to pursue age old shifting cultivation in the kingdom. But after the merger of Tipperah kingdom with the Union of India, followed by subsequent promulgation and enforcement of Indian Forest Act, 1927, in Tripura impacted the way of life and livelihood of the Halams with far reaching consequences. Thus, Prior to 1952 AD, the Halams living in Tripura continued for sometime to pursue shifting cultivation for



### Family and Socio-Economic Life

their livelihood without restriction. But in 1952 the Forest Department of the Union Territory Government of Tripura by the Notification No. 13 dated 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1952 AD, declared 2438 sq. miles i.e. 6241.30 sq. kms. Un-classed open forest, not constituted as Reserved Forest and not under the reclamation under the order of Revenue Department as Protected Forest (Pb) under Section 29 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927. After this notification, continuous pressure was mounted on the jhumias i.e. shifting cultivators to abandon shifting cultivation and encouraged them to embrace settled cultivation of plain land. The government officials and some local babus of that period started some sort of tyranny on the jhumias. In 1962, first survey and settlement operation commenced following the enactment of the Tripura Land Revenue & Land Reform Act, 1960. In that period, many Halam families were compelled to abandon their hilly villages and came down to settle in the plain areas and in the valleys of the hills; and land allotments were made in favour of these shifting families according to the provision of newly enforced land act and rules. The State Government tried to extend financial assistance to these families by rehabilitation programme. However, though many Halam jhumias were allotted cultivable land, the quantum of land which they got allotment was too small as compared to jhum land they used to occupy. Moreover, production of multiple crops together was not possible in plain land cultivation as that of shifting cultivation. Above all, the Halams would view the cultivation of plain land with absolute contempt.

The fact of the matter was that in spite of practising the shifting cultivation in the past, most of the Halam families would earn lot of money from the sale of jhum produce. The Halams came into contact with Bengalees many centuries before, and the common place of this contact was market place. Market served as business center where the Halams would sale jhum produce, particularly, raw cotton, sesamum and chillies, which they produced in large quantities, apart from paddy and hill vegetables. According to the report of British Political Agent stationed at Agartala, more than 1985 tons cotton and 461 tons sesamum were exported from Hill Tipperah kingdom in 1872 AD, apart from the export of bamboo, canes, thatching grass. These exported raw materials were mostly produced in the jhum and hilly region. Jhum cultivation at virgin forest land would yield varieties of cash crops, particularly,

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

sesamun, raw cotton, chillies, apart from pumkin, different kinds of aurum (locally known as *Mukhi*), millet, maize, carot, gourd, bittergourd and ashgourd. They used to obtain edible oil by extracting sesamum. In place of lentil (*Dal*), they would preserve lot of matured seed of rice bean (*Belip*) and *Arahar*, which they would cultivate with paddy in the jhum land for household consumption. Besides, hundreds of matured pumkin, ashgourd and hill aurum produced in the jhum land used to be stored at home which met the requirement for domestic consumption. Besides, turmeric, ginger, brinjal, melon and cucumber etc, were also produced for domestic consumption. Domesticated livestock met the requirement of meat consumption and the demand for sacrificial animal for the family. The clothes such as pillow, quilt, bedsheet, shirts and other clothes for use by male and female members of the family used to be weaved at home by the women. In time of sickness, they relied on village priest and herbal medicine. Many Halam families would earn handsome amount from the sale of row cotton, sesamum, chillies and vegetables. On the other hand, their expenditure on the purchase of limited consumer goods was very negligible. As there was no school at Halam villages, Halam families would not bother about their childrens' education; and for that matter one need not to spend hard earned money. Since they neither had the craving for good building nor for high living standard as today, many Halam families were better off in term off financial condition, and would not bother about spending money for pujas. As there was no banking service as this day, they were warried about the safety of their money. The better off families would resort to packing coins in the matel pot and would bury this coinful matel pots inside the ground at a place, particularly, down the raised platform of the house (*Tong Ghar*) without the knowledge of anyone. Burial of coinful metal pots had been the common practice among better off Halam families, and this was the practice even in the last centuries. When the head of the family responsible for burying the coins died, these pots of valuable silver coins would get lost. However, situation changed after nineteenth fifties, from that period the Halam families started embracing settled cultivation of plain land in Tripura. The old habit of shifting cultivation, which shaped the social and economic life from the time immemorial, could not be given up so easily. This was the reason that most of the Halam families, inspite of

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

adoption of settled cultivation on plain land, have not given up shifting cultivation even today.

**Tradition of shifting cultivation or Jhuming :** For the Halama families, the selection of forest land was an important step for shifting cultivation i.e. jhuming because selected forest land should be at short distance from the village. Further, according to the belief of the Halama, the site must be danger free from the evil Spirit. At initial stage of selection of forest land for jhuming, a cross shape bamboo split used to be planted to indicate for others information that the forest land has already been chosen by someone. But apart from selection of jhum land, the household also ascertain the suitability of forest land by performing puja i.e. sacrifice. Early in the morning of an auspicious day a very small area of the selected jhum land used to be cleared and performed puja. The Halama believed that there was one male deity called *Rangpa* and his wife-female deity *Rangpi*, who were regarded as the owners of forest land. For good jhuming, their consent was believed to be necessary. So some food item used to be kept inside a piece of bamboo pot i.e. *changa* and planted at the selected jhum site. The next day planted bamboo pot was taken out and split into two halves and tossed it up to see the omen. If the two bamboo pieces fell in opposite direction, the omen was believed to be positive or good. If the two bamboo splits fell in the same position, the omen was believed to be negative, and the household either would offer sacrifice to propitiate the deities of jungle before cutting the forest land or abandon the selected forest land. Among the Molsom household the custom was to collect a handful of soil from the proposed jhum site and to keep the collected soil under his pillow. The head of the household would put on clean new clothes before going to bed for sleeping with the soil of proposed jhum land below his pillow. If the dream was good, the omen was considered positive and good. But before observance of this ritual, many Molsom priest too performed the ritual of selecting jhum land by dropping the two pieces of split bamboo at the site of proposed jhum land in order to see the omen for ascertaining the suitability for jhum land. This practice was observed by all clans.

The size of the jhum land depended on the ability of the household. However, the average area of jhum land used to be about two hectares for a family. The cycle and practice of shifting cultivation in Hill Tipperah has been best described by W.W. Hunter, who stated that "*all the hill*

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

tribes cultivate the soil in the same way, by the method known as jum cultivation. Each family selects a piece of bamboo jungle; the men cut it down and clear it in the month December, and set fire to it in March. After the first fall of rain the whole family turns out, and all join in sowing the jum, as the clearance is called. Seeds of cotton, paddy, and chillies are mixed together, and dropped into holes made with the point of a dao or hill knife. Pumpkins and vegetables are also grown in the jum. The paddy is reaped first, generally in September; then the cotton is picked in November and December; and finally, the chillies are gathered. A jum is never worked two years in succession; and when no fresh jungle lies at a convenient distance, the village is generally deserted, and a new one built close to the new jums. This generally happens about once every third or fourth year, and as the houses are constructed entirely of bamboo raised platform, the labour of moving is inconsiderable. The hill tribes object to cultivation by the plough, as being contrary to their traditions; and so strong is their prejudice against any change from their own system". He further wrote that "the land cultivated by the hill tribes varies from year to year, a fresh tract of jungle being selected as soon as the soil in one spot has been exhausted by one year's juming"...."by far the large portion of Hill Tipperah is uncultivated jungle, but capable of supporting a large hill population by jum cultivation". Jhuming was not simply cutting, burning or sawing seeds for the Halam families. They needed to observe certain ritual after the burning of dried woods and bushes of the jhum land. Just after the burning the felled woods and bushes, the cultivator would fix up a decorated bamboo post at particular location and would break an egg as offering to jungle deity so that no harm would be done to the household; and this sacrifice was called *Changdai Jem*, and this sacrifice was done just before first day of the weeding to deities namely-

- (a) Jomdugal & Zudugal, which were collectively called *Zinga-ngai* or *Sunrolpu*.
- (b) Bukung Singh and Sukung Singh (two brothers), collectively called *Thingpu-ngai*,
- (c) and Tarpa/Pavengpa.

After sowing seed, three phases weeding of the jhum used to be carried out. The first phase of weeding was called *Loi ram tuan*. They also used to offer sacrifice of fowls to water deity so that no harm would cause to the persons who might take bath in the stream located nearby the jhum land. During the time of first weeding, the woman of the

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

household used to cook mixed vegetables for offering to *Sapite* and *Papite*, the female deities of paddy and cotton, seeking for better crops. After offering these cooked vegetables and cotton etc. to the deities, it was thrown around in the jhum land. Firing of these sacrifices differed from one clan to another clan. Some clan would offer sacrifice to deities just before the sowing of jhum paddy.

Since the jhum land was far from the village and the period of jhum cultivation was almost a year, the Ialam families used to construct a small house which was well raised off the ground where the jhumias used to stay during the time of jhum work and also for storing harvested paddy etc. and this Hut was called *Satuei* or *Kaireng*. Jhuming consist of felling a piece of jungle. When felled trees and bushes would completely dried up, it was burned by setting fire. Thereafter, ground was cleared which was manured by the ashes. Timbers, which were not entirely burnt, used to be dragged to the side of jhum and burned. The surface of the jhum was lightly hoed over, and there was nothing more to do till the rain was about to break. When the rain was about to break, everyone sallied out, each with a small basket of seeds called *Sing* or *Keisang* slung from the waist and the square ended dao in hand. Line would be formed at the lower end of the clearing and the whole family or group of people would proceed slowly upwards dibbling shallow holes with their daos and dropping into each a few seeds. The chief crops was the rice; but the other crops such as the maize, tapioca, millet, Job's tears, bean, tuber, turmeric, ginger, arum, sesamun, chillies, and cotton were also grown along with the rice. In fact, raw cotton, sesamun, and chilli were cash crops, which fetched the cash income for the Ialam families. Different kinds of flowers were also grown in the jhums, and *Thangrei* (marigold), *paerai* (red flower) etc. were some important flowers in the jhum. Tender shrub and bushes used to be weeded out from the jhum land thrice. The first weeding was called *Loum-hum*, the second weeding was familiar as *Ri-ai-ai* and the third weeding used to be done when the paddy would start budding and was known as *Ri-thum*. In fact, jhum land needed weeding till the paddy was ripe. Thus the working men and women of the Ialam family would be always engaged in weeding of jhum land. When harvest season commenced, the rice was cut very high as the straw had no value and the harvested paddy was stored at temporary jhum house called *Satu* or *Kaireng*. Harvested

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

rice straw used to be thrown to the threshing floor which was trodden out by person dancing on them or straw used to be beaten with sticks till the paddy grains had fallen out. Thus, the process of jhuming involved cutting forest trees & bamboos, clearing of luxuriant undergrowth of shrubs and creepers, clearing debris of the burnt out trees and bamboos, planting of seeds of mixed crops, three time weeding, harvesting, threshing of harvested paddy, carrying the paddy from jhum land to village on headload by family members which was very difficult work. Though jhum cultivation over high land was a difficult to do by a few family members, the community spirit of the Halam villages had been a great help. Their community spirit of togetherness was manifested in collective approach to their problems; and this collective approach was called *Lom* or *Lomzui*. There was a pattern which the Halam families followed in the pursuit of their livelihood through shifting cultivation. They have six seasons which were inextricably linked to shifting cultivation. Today most of the Halam families have given up jhum cultivation. Most of the Halam families have embraced plain land cultivation for their livelihood like their neighbours; and the families, not having the plain land for cultivation, have raised horticultural and rubber plantation on their high land. This change of livelihood pattern has impacted their working season, which was very different from the working seasons of shifting cultivation.

**Tradition of Lomzui :** The Halam as a whole sustained their livelihood based on collective effort. Cutting of jangle for shifting cultivation, clearing of debris in the jhum land, sowing of paddy seeds, weeding of jhum, harvesting, threshing of paddy etc .used to be done collectively. Even husking of paddy or rice, gathering of fire wood, construction of the house, etc were done collectively; and this collective effort was familiar as *Lomzui*. Thus, The usual practice of *Lomzui* was that one person from each household would form a group or team for helping each other. In this practice, team members would go to the house of each member every day in rotation on alternate day. Every six to twelve persons or more or less, taking one person from each household, would form a team for rotational work in the house of each member of the team. Thus, in a big village the number of team or grouping could be more. Though there was no hard and fast rule, team/group used to be constituted based on age or gender; and thus the male youths or female

Family and Socio-Economic Life

SEASONS FOR UNDERTAKING JHUM CULTIVATION IN THE YEAR

Name of seasons of the Himal	Period of the season	Bengali calendar month	Nature of works undertaken
শহরী/শীত (Winter)	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of December to 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of February (sowing new year)	শ্রাব্দ & মার্গ	Selection of jhum land and cutting of forest for shifting cultivation commenced.
পাশাল (Spring)	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of February to 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of April	শহজারাদ, চৈত্র	In this season men are engaged in construction, repair work of houses etc and women are engaged themselves in weeding etc. Further cutting of trees for jhum cultivation is completed, and burning of jhum land commenced at the outset of April.
শ্রাব্দ/খর/শ্রাব্দ (Kharkang/Summer)	From 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of April to 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of June	বৈশাখ, জ্যৈষ্ঠ	During this season debris of burnt trees etc. of jhum land is cleared and planting of jhum paddy/crops is started & completed by the household.
সরষ/শ্রাব্দ/শ্রাব্দ (Rainy season)	First part of 3 <sup>rd</sup> week of June to 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of August	আশ্বিন & শ্রাব্দ	During this season weeding of jhum land is carried out twice or thrice.
শ্রাব্দ (Autumn)	From 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of August to 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of October	ভাদ্র & আশ্বিন	Last weeding is done in the first part of this season, and in some cases harvest of jhum paddy commenced in the last part of the season.
শ্রাব্দ/শ্রাব্দ (Season occurring between Autumn & Winter i.e. Hirtanta in Bengali)	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of October to 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of December	কৰ্তিক, মগধ	During this season jhum paddy and other jhum crops are harvested and transported to home in the village by headman.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

youths or male elders used to form separate or different group or team to help each other. If the jhum field was far enough, each member of the team would carry cooked rice; and the household member, in whose field work of the day would be performed, would arrange ingredients for preparing simple vegetable curry such as mustard oil, salt, chillies, fraying or cooking pot etc. All kind of works in the distant jhum land or plain paddy field or any kind of difficult works was done collectively, and this collective service was familiar as *Lomzui*. This was a collective approach of the community to help each other. Halam villages met shortage of work force by this traditional practice of *Lomzui*. This practice made the hard and difficult work possible and full of pleasure. The weaker family too used to get support for his work, which the household alone could not accomplished. *Lomjui* made the community life vibrant and caring; and most importantly, it enabled the household to perform such work which the individual household could not do alone or could not finish the work alone. In the system of *Liomjui* any group member could request to do his or her work first on priority, considering the urgency of his or her pending work. The practice of *Lomjui* has disappeared now as the families as a whole have become more self-centered and individualistic due to outsiders' influence.

**Tradition of Roisel or Funkoi or Manlai :** *Raisel* or *Manlai* or *Fungkoi* was the 'show of compassion' through collective effort of the villagers to help the poor and helpless families; particularly, the widows and the poors. *Roisel* was an obligation on the part of everyone to be helpful, kind and selfless concern for the others. When the poor family or widow would approach the village chief "*Kalim*" or *Rai* for help to construct dwelling house or to cut forest for jhum land or for harvesting the fading jhum paddy or for any other work which the poor could not do alone, the village chief used to mobilize the villagers to help the family in need of urgent help. The announcer or *Tongwa* or *Tlangsam* used to announce the decision of the chief throughout the length and breadth of the village for participation of the working member to helping the needy family on specific date. The household, who have got the assistance of the village community, if he or she had a means, sometime arranged simple feast for those helping members by killing a pig and fixing the drink of rice beverage after the new harvest, but this was not compulsory. Again, if any poor family would



### Family and Socio-Economic Life

confront the starvation, the village chief would intervene by appealing to the richer families within the village for helping the poor family; and in such situation the help used to be extended by offering paddy etc. This customary practice was the foundation of Halam villages because such practice made the village community self reliant and caring to the needy. *Keisel* enabled the poor to clear forest land for jhuming, paddy used to be sown or weeding was done, house used to be constructed; fading paddy was harvested by the village volunteers free of cost. In the past, helping the needy was considered noble deed in Halam society. In short, *Keisel* or *Manlai* or *Fangkai* means assistance to the poor and needy through voluntary community service. This practice was prevalent and visible upto nineteen sixties. However, this voluntary community service for helping the poor and needy started disappearing gradually from the society due to Government intervention through welfare programme. The Bowng, Sokachep and Saimar people called it *Keisel*, among the Thangchep, Dap, Marchalang and Langkai and others it was familiar as *Fangkai*. The Molsom people called it *Manlai*.

**Tradition of entertainment and amusement :** Entertainment and amusement occupied an important place in Halam society. *Za Buol* i.e. gathering for drinking rice beverage was one of the important ingredients for amusement and entertainment. Entertainment to elders, neighbours, friends, guests etc. was very frequent and was regarded as a matter of pride for the family. It was tradition to prepare *Za* i.e. rice beer, through out the year in all Halam families. For preparing rice beer, different variety of rice used to be cultivated. Apart from cooked rice, *Chol Le*, Yeast was an important ingredient. For preparing *Chol*, tender leaves of jackfruit, cane, papaya, banana, and bark and leaves of some creepers and wild plants were pounded together to make it powder; and thereafter, rice flour and the powder of leaves was mixed with little water to make it sticky powder. This sticky mixed power was rounded up in many small sizes powder cake and exposed to hot sunshine to make it dry so that it could be preserved for many days or months. At the time of preparation of *Za* (Rice beer), this dried powder cake was broken into powder and mixed with cooked rice and thereafter, the seasoned rice was kept in the big bamboo basket few days to make it fermented. After two or three days, fermented rice was stored into

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

earthen pots or pitchers covering its mouth with banana leave for preservation. Potful of this rice beer was called *Zu kola*, which means rice beer pot. This rice beer pot was familiar as *Langi* in local Bengali. This pot of rice beer used to be placed or fixed in the corner or middle of the house for drinking during festive occasion. Water used to be poured into the pot and a symbol which looked like (T) shape called *Ber* was placed at the mouth of rice beer pot for measuring the quantum of consumption of juice by a person or invitee. A person known as *Chengbang* used to seat beside the rice beer pot to pour water into the pot as soon as rice beer was sucked upto several inches below the neck of rice beer pot. Small pipe called *Chongthee* was the instrument fixed at the pot by which juice of the rice beer was sucked. *Zu Buol* was very popular form of entertainment at Halam villages. Normally the youth did not participate at *Zu buol* with elders. The youths used to arrange *Zu Buol* separately at convenient house. There was also a tradition of holding picnic by adolescent boys and girls for which they would collect ingredients of food items such as rice, oil, fowls etc. and would prepare food and curry at someone house or at the outskirts of the village. Entertaining elders with home made beverage used to be considered by the women as honourable and virtuous deed. Paying visit to relative who was old and infirm or dear and near one at least once in a year was an age old tradition. Whenever a relative came to see the other family member, tradition was to fix the drink and entertain him or her. This tradition now have almost vanished for different reasons.

**Traditional food :** Rice was the staple food of the Halams. Though the Halams were fond of pork, mutton, chicken or the meat of wild boar, deer, fish and vegetables, they considered such items as a garnish to rice. The Halams love the curry which was cooked with sesame oil. In the past, sesame was produced abundantly in the jhum and oil was extracted manually for domestic consumption. However, now manually extracted sesame production has vanished. The Halams women used to collect many edible roots, tubers and herbs collected from the jungle. The young shoots of the bamboo was considered delicious. Apart from cooking oil, home made alkaline water called *Chang-al Tui*, was used extensively for cooking purpose from the time immemorial. Ashes of burned bamboo used to be taken and placed at a small bamboo basket called *Chang-al-sabur* or *Chang-al-sor*. This small bamboo basket used to

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

be hunged in the corner of the kitchen. Drinking water was poured out from time to time into ash-filled basket called *Changai-sor* or *Chang-ai-sobier* to filter out alkaline. A small container used to be placed just below the basket for collecting alkaline which filtered down drop by drop from the basket. This alkaline (local name was *Kharpeni*) was called *Chang-ai* by the Halams, which was used for cooking any kind of vegetable and sometime for cooking pork, chicken etc. Dried and fermented fish (*sida*) was another favourite ingredient for cooking vegetable curry with few drops of alkaline, garlic, chillies and salt. The Halams loved the curry prepared without oil with little salt, chillies, onion or garlic or little ginger and tamaric. When big size pig or wild boar or deer was killed, the flesh was cut into strips and dried over a slow fire, after which it remained edible for long time. The dried meat used to be kept at earthen pot for preservation and gradual consumption. In case of fattened pork, the fat was fried for extracting oil, and the extracted oil was preserved in the bottle for use as cooking oil. The fat of pork also used to be fried and preserved in the bottle or small container to ferment it. After a week, a tea spoonfull of this fermented fat was used in the traditional vegetable curry while cooking it; and this fermented fat was called *Sa-fak*. Most of the vegetables were jhum products, though some of the vegetables were obtained from the forest and on the bank of hilly stream. As the shifting cultivation gradually deminished, Halam people have been resorting to plantation of vegetables on high land, which were grown in the jhum land before. Though the Halam families started consuming vegetables and pulses produced in the plain land, wild vegetables collected from the jangle and produced on tilla land remained important items. On the other hand, most of the families depended on domesticated animals for their meat requirement, though now the trend has been to purchase from the market. The use of spices was also very rare in the past; but tendency has been to use spices in the cooking, particularly, the meat curry. These were the few traditional curries of the Halams:

***Changai Ann***: This curry was prepared by adding one or two spoonful alkaline (extracted out of bamboo ashes) in the curry. Besides, little salt, green chillie, two or three spoonful rice powder, little fermented dry fish were added in the boiled pot along with the tender bamboo shoots

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

(tuai) or stump of banana (changlong) or any hard vegetables. Fresh or dried meat, particularly, pork, chicken and deer were also cooked with these ingredients, however, without dry fish. Lemon leaves were used for good smell of the curry.

**Chi-al Ann** : For preparing this type of vegetable curry, two or three spoonsful of rice powder, little salt, a few green chillies, little dry fish, little garlic & turmeric and mixed vegetables were required, but without alkaline. All kind of vegetables were not suitable for this vegetable curry. Bean, potatoes, tuber, bamboo shoot of *muli* variety, banana shoot and some leaves were cooked by these ingredients.

**Ngasun** : This fish curry used to be prepared with a little salt, one onion cut into pieces, green or dry turmeric, few green chillies, little oil or without oil mixed up and wrapped with plantain's leave; and thereafter, it was steamed with an earthen or aluminium pot with little water.

**Meh-dong** : Boiled meat used to be prepared in case of domesticated fowl and pork, but not mutton and other wild animals. After dressing and slicing the meat, it was boiled in a pot with adequate water. Pest ginger, little salt, turmeric were mixed up in the pot along with the meat, and thereafter boiled in the woven. However, in certain cases onion, tomato and potatoes were also mixed with the meat; and thereafter, it was boiled.

**Nempok** : This chicken curry used to be prepared with sliced chicken which was fried with oil along with little pested garlic, onion, ginger, a few green chillies, turmeric and soaked fine rice of two or three hundred gram for a one k.g. meat. Adequate water was added while cooking for making the curry thick and gravy.

**Sihriak Ann** : This curry of meat used to be prepared with several spoonsful sesame oil or mustard oil and onion, little ginger, garlic, turmeric and a few green chillies were added. In case of fish curry, garlic was never added in the curry. There was a wild tree having circular shape big leave which was called *Choibong*; the Halams loved to cook pork, venison and meat of wild boar or pork with the *Choibong* leaves as it make the meat curry test sour.

**Anrimung** : This was simple curry prepared by mixed vegetables with little chillies, onion, little fermented dry fish, salt, turmeric and little water. Grinding used to be done just after cooking for making it thick and gravy. This curry could be prepared with fish or meat without adding

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

fermented dry fish. In some cases, green leaves of ginger or turmeric could be added for good flavour.

*Marchuleng* : This food item used to be made simply by mixing boiled potato with raw or burned onion or raw garlic, green chillies, roasted or boiled fish or dry fish and little salt. Thereafter, all these items were grinded together in order to make it thick.

*Ngachar Ann* : This dry fish curry used to be prepared with little edible oil, chillies, salt, turmeric and little vegetable.

*Anjei* : This was fried vegetables which was prepared with oil, onion, turmeric and little salt. This fried vegetable was popular item for all.

However, preparation vary from one item to another item. Many housewife liked to prepare menu in their own way which might be different from traditional menu. Now the younger generation loved the menu of different varieties and flavour as that of their neighbours in the plain areas.

**Taboos in food consumption** : The Halams as a whole were influenced by the Hindu rituals and tradition which was reflected in their food habit. Thus, there was religious and social taboo in the consumption of beef in Halam community since the time immemorial. This social taboo has been transmitted from Hindu tradition and even today this social taboo was observed strictly in most of the Halam villages, particularly, among the Halam professing Hindu faith. Consumption of beef, the meat of dog, vulture, snake, cat, rat, monkey, lizard, frogs (except *Sona beag*), swallow, eagle, crow etc. was considered as unclean and uncultured, though many hill tribes have the habit of consuming all sorts of animals. Some subclans of the Halam even could not consume the meat of tiger, dove or wild cat because these wild animals were mythological linked to certain clans and sub clan of the Halams. In the past, *mi.hun* was considered as most suitable for consuming its meat, but *mi.hun* have vanished from Halam villages many decades before. Now porc has turned out to be the most popular and choiced meat followed by fowl, goat and duck. However, venison, meat of wild boar, and varieties of wild fowls were consumed, but these wild animals and birds too have almost extinct from the hills in Tripura. In the past, meat of python was said to have been consumed by the Halam. Among the vegetables, Cucurbitaceae (called *poroi* by the Halams), Ash gourd (*Melpa* in Halam language), Gourd, Ivy gourd (called *Bera* in Halam

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

language), *Cajanus cajan* (Arahor), Cawpea (*Besei* or *Beloi* in Halam language), Small Cawpea (called *Belip* by the Halam) Dioscoreaceae (called *Bathumpeng* by the Halam), Hyacinth Bean (*Sim* in Bengali and *Bepui* in Halam language), Bittergourd, Curcubitaceous (*Kakrol* in Bengali), Ladies finger, White brinjal, Amaranthaceae (called *Anridul* by the Halam), Hill tuber (called *Loi Baal* by the Halam) and Pumpkin were the very familiar vegetables which the Halams produced in the Jhum land; and has been consuming from the time immemorial. Besides, the Halam families also would collect wild vegetables such as bamboo shoot (*Tuai*), wild brinjal i.e. Solanaceae (*Samchok*), *Salonum xanthocarpum* (*Samchok-lian*), wild banana shoot (*Changvui*), Alpina allurghas (*Kherei/Therai*), *Lasia heterophylla* (*Kantha bal*), *Monocharia* (*Chichiri*), Mushroom (*Patung/ Pachichet/ Parmai*), *Ceatella asiatica* (*Singit*) etc. Adult and grown up women normally would gather vegetables from jungle and jhum land. However, in recent time household started growing vegetables in plain land. Moreover, they have started adopting the food habit of their neighbour.

**Drinking tradition :** As regard to drink, the Halams were fond of *Zu* i.e. rice beer and *Rakzu* i.e. distilled spirit (wine). In the Halam society, drink has immense social value because offering a cup of wine or a pot of rice beer was regarded as honouring the elder or the guest. The elders have the habit of going round the village; and they were offered home made wine by the housewife. It was a tradition to offer wine to thirsty elder whenever he would demand drinking water. At leisure time, particularly, in the evening the elders would gather together for drink. In rainy days no body would go for work and would gather in the house of a family where drink used to be arranged for entertainment. Intoxicating drinks was consumed when they had full leisure to enjoy; and such occasion used to be in company with a group of friends. *Zu* (rice beer) or *Rakzu* (home made beverage) was very important item of drink for entertainment. *Zu* was a partially fermented drink; and the other, called *Rakzu* was distilled with an earthen pot on top of which a socket (made out of gourd) was fixed securely; the joint being made airtight with rags and clay; through the top of the gourd would passed a bamboo pipe which was swathed in rags and kept wet so as to condense the vapour from the pot. *Zu* and *Rakzu* were required for the observing all kind of ceremony. The housewife would never forget to keep reserve

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

stock of beverage and rice beer in her home throughout the year because drink was an important means of hospitality and also for observance of all kind of ceremony. *Rakzu* i.e. home made beverage was two types- light and strong. Normal *Rakzu* was not that strong, but when six or seven bottles of ordinary *Rakzu* was distilled into one bottle, it was called *Brandy*. A Halam woman used to dip her one finger or a piece of cotton into a glass of brandy, and thereafter set the same finger or a piece of cotton in the fire for testing the quality of brandy; and if the brandy was strong enough, the wet finger or the cotton piece would become inflamed by fire. Many Halam elders would not drink ordinary beverage, but brandy only. *Zu* and *Rakzu* was important ingredients in all kind of sacrifices for propitiating the gods and goddesses. The priest would pour out the *Rakzu* at the altar of some type sacrifices in order to propitiate the deities. Thus, rice-beer and beverage i.e. distilled wine, were indispensable in the social gathering, social festivals, marriage related festivals and ceremonies, harvest festivals, pujas and related sacrifices.

**Importance of family clan :** The Halams gave lots of importance to lineage and always tried to help each other in time of trouble. Whenever, there was dispute on any issue, the community as a whole used to be divided on the line of family clan or lineage; and sometime resolving the dispute by the Village or Tribal Darbar would become very difficult. In time of marriage, divorce, dispute on property, etc. lineage of the clan would play important role in assisting and supporting one another. If the children of a family became orphan, they must be under the custody of a family of the same clan. If any married woman wanted to leave her home on account of discord with her husband, she had the liberty to take shelter to the house of any person who belonged to her family clan.

**Custom of social and family relationship :** The concept of Halawak was explained in preceding Chapter. "Halawak" was a set of norms which governed the conduct of the family members and relatives for showing due respect and honour to each other. It was an avoidance of relationship with family members and close relatives, particularly, observed by the husband and wife. Thus, a Halam house wife must not utter the names of her husband, elder brother-in-laws, father-in-laws or maternal uncle or touch their body or talked to them

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

unnecessarily. In case of man, he must not touch or talk to the elder sister of his wife or wife of his younger brother. Moreover, the junior also must show respect to elders by not uttering their names and must call or address them respectfully. Some of the words used in addressing relatives with due honour were pater, puitar, puingak, pangak, Bachei, Kumei, Marang, Nee, Tarpu, Tarpi, Sarw, Beinu, Beipa, Thura, Thuri, Zuarpu etc.

The Halams gave lot of importance to kinship which they called "*Helok*" or *Helaw*. In the past, the custom was to impose fine for breaking "*Helok*" by anyone. The Halam would always avoid calling any elder by name because it was regarded as dis-respect and insult.

**Superstition and Taboos :** The illiterate Halams were superstitious as any other tribes or community and this superstition was manifested in their social behaviour. In order to safeguard oneself from evil influences, the people constantly surrounded themselves with all kind of cautions and taboos. These superstitions and taboos were not recent origin but handed over from generation to generation. However, superstitious belief was in the decrease with the spread of education. Important superstitious beliefs were like this:-

(1) Immediately after the death of a person, his or her soul would go round the places he or she loved most during life time.

(2) When a dove coos near the house or roof of the house, it was believed that the soul of dead person has come and feeling thirsty. The woman of the house used to be emotional and would pour out water and cry.

(3) If a strange cat with black colour entered the house, it was considered bad omen because black cat symbolizes evil. The priest should offer sacrifice to prevent the danger.

(4) A pregnant woman and husband was prohibited to hurt or kill living animals of any kind, lizard, fowl or birds because the child after birth would be deformed or dead behaving like the living being, while it was being killed by the pregnant mother or her husband. Even today this restriction is observed by most of the woman strictly.

(5) Pregnant woman could not consume twin or conjoint banana or fruits or vegetables because she might give birth twin baby, if she eat such twin banana or fruits and vegetables.



WORDS FOR ADDRESSING CLOSE RELATIVES IN OBSERVANCE OF HELOK BY DIFFERENT CLANS OF THE HALAM

Sl. No.	Particular of kin or relatives	Thangchep/ Marchaifang Dap etc.	Chorai	Ranglong	Molsom & Bongcher	Kaipeng	Rangkhawl	Bowng	Langkai
1.	Father's elder brother	Pa ar	Paier	Paier	Paier	Paier	Paier	Paier	Pa ar
2.	Father's younger brother	Pangak	Pangak	Pangak	pangak	pangak	pangak	Pangak	Pangak
3.	Wife of father's elder brother	Puiler	Nee	Puiler	Puiler	Puiler	Puiler	Puiler	Puiler
4.	Wife of father's younger brother	Puipjak	Puipjak	Nee Nee Puipjak	Puipjak	Puipjak	Puipjak	Puipjak	Puipjak
5.	Father's elder sister	Puiler	Nee	Nee Nee Puipjak	Paier	Nee	Nee	Nee	Nee
6.	Father's younger sister	Nee	Nee	Nee Nee Puipjak	Nee	Nee	Nee	Nee	Nee
7.	Husband of father's elder sister	Paier	Marang	Marang	Paer	Pangak	Paier	Marang Marang	Marang
8.	Husband of father's younger sister	Marang	Marang	Marang	Marang	Pangak	Puipjak		Marang
9.	Mother's elder brother	Paier	Marang-Pu	Marang	Paier	Pu	Pu	Marang	Mama
10.	Mother's younger brother	Mama	Mama	Mama	Mama	Pu	Pu	Pu or Mama	Mama
11.	Mother's elder sister	Puiler	Puiler	Puiler	Puiler	Puiler	Puiler	Puiler	Puiler

History and culture of the Halam tribe

12.	Mother's younger sister	Puingak	Ne Ne	Puingak	Puingak	Puingak	Puingak	Ne Ne/ Puingak
13.	Husband of elder sister	Kumei	Kumei	Kumei	Kumei	Kumei	Kumei	Kumei
14.	Husband of younger sister	Beipa	Beipa	Beipa	Beipa	Beipa	Beipa	Beipa
15.	Wife of elder brother	Bachei	Kumoinu	Bachei	Bachei	Bachei	Bachei	Bachei
16.	Wife of younger brother	Beinu	Kumoinu	Beinu	Beinu	Beinu	Beinu	Beinu
17.	Husband of sister-in-law(s)	Sarui	Sarui	Sarui	Sarui	Sarui	Sarui	Sarui
18.	Father-in-law	Terpu	Terpu	Terpu	Terpu	Terpu	Terpu	Terpu
19.	Mother-in-law	Terpi	Terpi	Terpi	Terpi	Terpi	Terpi	Terpi
20.	Father-in-law of the son/daughter	Thurpa	Thurpa	Thurpa	Thurpa	Thurpa	Thurpa	Thurpa
21.	Mother-in-law of the son or daughter	Thumu/ Thuni	Thumu/ Thuni	Thumu/ Thuni	Thumu/ Thuni	Thumu/ Thuni	Thumu/ Thuni	Thumu/ Thuni
22.	Sister's sister	Zuarpu/ Zorpu	Zuarpu/ Zorpu	Zuarpu/ Zorpu	Zuarpu/ Zorpu	Zuarpu/ Zorpu	Zuarpu/ Zorpu	Zuarpu/ Zorpu
23.	Sister's brother	Shapa/ Tapa	Shapa/ Tapa	Shapa/ Tapa	Shapa/ Tapa	Shapa/ Tapa	Shapa/ Tapa	Shapa/ Tapa
24.	Brother's sister	Sarnu	Sarnu	Sarnu	Sarnu	Sarnu	Sarnu	Sarnu

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

(6) Hooting or screeching of the Owl near the home in dark evening or if it entered the house, it was considered bad omen and priest should be requested to offer sacrifice to sanctify the home.

(7) During menstruation woman used to be considered unclean and not allowed to cook or touch valuable and secret things or visit holy places.

(8) A person was prohibited to stand on the front door with a leg on the door frame. Standing in such position might cause bad thing for the family.

(9) The house where one of the family members committed suicide such home would become haunted by the evil spirit or ghost. Priest was required to offer sacrifice to prevent the harm by evil spirit.

(10) A bat flying inside the house was considered a good omen, but it must not be allowed to fly out from the house. It should be killed in a moment for it was believed that the bat took away the luck and wealth of the house.

(11) If cock crowed in the upper village in the sunset or evening, it was believed that the village would grow in size and population, but if it crowed at the end of the village in the evening, the village population would be reduced due to migration of families or death.

(12) Itching of palm was the sign for getting money or it was the belief that he or she might get money or could beat someone.

(13) If an owl entered a house, it was considered to be very bad omen for the family members. Particularly, hooting of an Owl late in the night was said to be the calling of spirit of a dead person to the living person to die and meet the same fate.

(14) If rainbow appeared in the west it was considered as bad sign. It was considered as funeral pyre of dead person.

(15) If a crying eagle hovered above the village, the women would pour out drinking water outside the barandh of the house because it was the belief that the spirit of their dead relative had come which was feeling thirsty.

(16) When Swallows flied touching the soil, it was the belief that the flood was about to occurred.

(17) Hearing the sound of bitter cry or weep deep in the wood while out for hunting was regarded as good omen because the fairies who guarded the wild animals said to have lamented over the dead bodies of their reared animal. But on the contrary to hear the laughter was regarded as sign of complete failure for the hunter.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

(18) An accidental biting of lips or tongue at the time of eating or chewing something in the mouth was a good omen because the person's mouth would be blessed with meat.

(19) Stumbling on the right feet was good sign because the person would meet with success in his endeavour, the stumbling on the left feet meant the reverse.

(20) A rainbow encircling the moon or sun was bad omen because it would cause sudden demise of a reknowned person or chief of a village.

(21) Calling one's name at the top of voice deep in the jangle after dusk was prohibited because such calling of name could be responded by the demon who often misled people.

(22) If a group of vulture or crows hovered about in circles or were sitting in group at some spot such behaviour portend the outbreak of an epidemic which led to mass death of domestic livestock or human being on account of war.

(23) If a cat crossed the road before someone that portend danger for the travellers.

(24) If someone sneezed in the right nostril, it indicated that some people were speaking well of him, but if any one sneezed in the left nostril, it meant that people or his rival speaking ill of him or her. If sick person sneezed it meant that the person would get well soon.

(25) Person having mole in the stomach indicated greed, but dark spot on the lips indicated that the person would be talkative. However, mole in the middle of the palm indicated wealth and fortune.

(26) Sudden shacking of the left eyelid indicated bad omen, such shaking of lower eyelid meant tears and bitter cry.

(27) Hooting of dog in the day or night indicated impending danger or death in the village. Oddful barking of the dog was considered as weeping over corps in advance.

(28) Laughing to much might bring sorrow and tears of the person concerned.

There were many more superstitious belief among the Halam which would restrict movement and action of person with fear. However, this superstitious belief has almost disappear with the spread of modern education.

**Dream :** As any other tribes, the Halam were the belivers in the omen which they would dream in the bed at night. Some dream portent bad,

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

but some dreams were considered as good sign. Thus, dream has lots of consequences in the life of a person, which in some cases restricted their movement and daily activities. Dreaming fire, snake, buffalo, ox or zaw was considered bad omen. Inability to climb the hill or to cross the river in the dream believed to have brought failure. Dreaming big community feast believed to have brought serious misfortune or dead in the family. The belief in the dream has been pervasive in Halam community. So if someone dream some even, or anything which he or she thought extremely bad, elders used to be consulted for interpreting the meaning of dream. The belief in dream has been persisting among the rural folk in Halam society even today.

**Tradition of livestock domestication :** Livestock rearing has been an integral part of the daily life of a Halam family. A Halam family without livestock could hardly be seen at villages even today. Especially poultry and piggery were essential part of socio-economic life of a Halam family. In the past, apart from chicken, the livestock such as the mithun, (which was known as *Siel* to the Halams), buffalo, yak and Tibetan goat used to be the popular domesticated animals. However, in old time most valued animal used to be mithun. In those days, a Halam family having many mithun used to be regarded as resourceful person. Domesticated animals and fowls used to be freed in the morning which would wander all the day in the jungle around the village and towards the dusk returned spontaneously, each animal going to its owner's house. The pigs were like scavengers of the village, but were generously fed on a species of arum and husks boiled together. The fowls were of small breed; pure white, black, brown and check colours. The goats were of black colour with long silky hair and long horn. Pigs and fowls used to be sacrificed often to appease all kind of deities and evil spirits for the cure of a sick person in the family. Mithun or buffalo were sacrificed during the time of important festivals and pujas. Many resourceful families used to offer community feast called *Doughmi* (mela), by killing domesticated pig or mithun or buffalo at the end of the year as a matter of virtuous deed, in which all the villagers used to be invited to share the feast. Selling of pig or pork was regarded as unsocial even a few decades before. So Halam families would rather arrange feast with domesticated pig and shared the pork with the villagers, instead of selling it. Moreover, giving animal sacrifice to different gods and goddesses by a family for any

### **History and culture of the Halam tribe**

kind of sickness was order of the family life. Usually the piglets, male goats, and fowls were the sacrificial animals. Besides, whenever dear and near ones would come from distance place to pay visit to a family, it was a usual practice to entertain them with a sumptuous family feast for which domesticated animal was killed for such feast. Thus, domestication of livestock has immense economic and social value in the Halam society. However, the families started commercialising their livestock now because they have realised the economic importance of livestock.

**Borrowing and lending tradition :** The practice of borrowing and lending was very common in Halam society in the past. Borrowing and lending was associated with money as understood in modern society. But in Halam society borrowing and lending has wider implication as it involved commodities and not confined to money alone. Families sometime run short of any consumption goods such as salt, dried fish, rice, paddy etc. The market places were far from the villages and the market day used to be once or twice in a week. The Halam families had to go to market once only in a week because they would not like to waste two working days in a week for marketing only. Therefore, sometime some family would run short of essential commodities before weekly market day; and such family resorted to borrowing the provision from the neighbouring families. However, these borrowed items were given back or returned in the same commodity to the lender. Lending family would never insist pay back of petty commodities. However, lending and borrowing money also happened in the village community, but interest was never charged for lending money as duration of refunding the borrowed money was very short.

**Weaving and Dyeing tradition :** This has been given in detail in preceding Chapter. However, it was necessary to mention again as this activities occupied considerable working period of the women in Halam family, and formed a part of economic activities of the women. Weaving cloths was a lengthy process, but it made the woman self reliant and productive workforce in the family. In the past, Halam families seldom bought clothes for their family members because required clothes were woven at home by the women. This work was exclusively done by the women in the family because there was social taboo on weaving by man. Weaving was not done by man because it was believed that

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

weaving by man might cause attack by wild bear. Spinning by man was also not allowed because they believed that man could become thief. Though spinning and weaving could not be done by the male members in the family, the old and elder men in the family used to be engaged in working with ginning machine, called *Muoi* by the Halam. *Muoi* was made of two wooden rollers of one feet length which was horizontally inserted into two posts, which (posts) were erected on a short and heavy wooden plank. The two rollers were fitted with a crank at right side; and when the crank was moved, the rollers would be geared in opposite direction; and the dry cotton used to be inserted between the two rollers. The seeds were left out behind the rollers and refined cotton came out in opposite direction of the rollers. After ginning, the women use to step in for doing all other works related to weaving of cloths. They carded the refined cotton with a bow and striker which was called *Pa'sai*. The bow was made of fine bamboo split which tapered off toward the end. In making *pa'sai*, the bamboo split was bent and its both ends were tied with a fibre of a local tree called *Nabbar rai*. The horn of a deer was used as striker. Thereafter, they would roiled the carded cotton into many peices having one feet length each, which were to be spun into the *spindle* (called *Muithal*) of hand made spinning wheel (called *Razur*), and when sharply twisted, the cotton used to be drawn into a thread by its own weight. After this spun, thread was wound up on a bamboo frame for making skeins. These skeins were soaked in hot water of rice for about thirty minutes, which was exposed to sunshine by hanging the skeins in horizontal bar. While hanging the skeins on horizontal bamboo bar for exposing it in the sunshine, it was cleansed by *Pa'kivi* (brush made out of wild cactus fruit). As soon as the skeins were dried, the threads were wound up into balls, which became ready for weaving cloth. For weaving, the warp used to be mounted lengthwise, and for preparing the warp, the ball(s) of thread used to be rolled round the two parallel bamboo poles of requisit length which were tied to the posts; and this preparation of warp was call *Thiaarax*. After completing the preparation of warp, it was dismounted; and at the one end of the warp leather band i.e. back-strap (called *Kangrai*) was fitted to one bamboo pole by the ropes. The weft was formed by passing to and fro over and below each alternate thread through a round bamboo shuttle (call *Krolax* or *Krom*) which

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

wrapped around or wound different coloured threads, which was beaten home with a well polished batten made of the sago palm called "Ritiam". While weaving, a leather band passed behind the back of weaver as she remain seated on the ground while weaving; and by leaning back on the leather band, she would stretch the loom to the requisite degree of tightness for the convenience of weaving. The womam would like to dye their clothes, and the commonest dye was obtained by boiling the leaves of Assam indigo i.e. *Strobilanthes flaccidifolia*, which was grown in the jhum land. Green leaves used to be plugged and put into big earthen pitchers with sufficient water. After few days, the leaves became rotten and the water turned into deep blue in colour. Before dyeing the cloth, required quantity of home made alkaline used to be added in the coloured water to make the colour dazzling. Immersions was required for several time to render the colour permanent. The women needed to weave lot of cloths which they stored for use in near future. Today raw cotton of jhum has become scarce as the people has almost given up shifting cultivation. As a result, women had to depend on thread bought from the market for weaving. Moreover, the young generation has become more inclined to use clothes bought from market for various reasons and; this has resulted in loosing skill of weaving. This weaving and dyeing formed one of the important economic activities of women of a Halam families.

**Tradition of cane and Bamboo work :** Skill in cane and bamboo work was important parameter in assessing the quality of a man in old days because in daily life the use of articles made of cane and bamboo was indispensable for a Halam family. The pattern of baskets were numerous, each being adapted to particular use. Cane was extensively used for covering and tying joints of the baskets. For making quality basket, outer layer of bamboo splits were used. These were different types of articles made out of bamboo and cane:-

(a) **Rel and Bemnath :** It was a round-shaped basket with four feets height having four short legs; and about twelve inches square at the bottom, widening till the mouth was a circle with a diameter of about thirty inches. This basket has a conical lid and chiefly used for keeping clothes, ornaments and valuble articles. This basket was made of polished bamboo splits tied with polished cane rope.



### Family and Socio-Economic Life

(b) *Zapit* : It was a basket with four corners having maximum one and half feet height and thirty inches diameter, and has a lid to cover its open mouth. *Zapit* could be different size and chiefly used for keeping all kinds of stationery articles which were used frequently such as comb, mirror, soap, threads, papers, ornaments etc; and its utility was something like a box. This was made of finely polished bamboo splits and tied with polished cane. The Molsom people called it *Benuak* and the Kaipeng called it *Jape*.

(c) *Bem* or *Lungkhai* : *Bem* or *Lungkhai* was a basket usually carried in the back by the women in the market or when she went out for work or in other village as guest. *Bem* was round shape having two and half feet in height with about twenty six inches in diameter. Of course, there was big size *Bem* used by the man to carry things.

(d) *Chempai* : *Chempai* was a small haversack slung over one's shoulder in which odds and ends, dao, clothes, tobacco etc. were kept and carried by man when he went out to jhum, market or some other places for work.

(e) *Taikok/Sangkong* : *Taikok* or *Sangkong* or *Taiseng* was a porous basket used for carrying water from village well, firewoods from the jungle, vegetable, edible leaves and tubers etc. from the forest by women. It has different size for different ages of women of the village.

(f) *Dingra* : *Dingra* was medium size basket used for carrying ears of paddy from the site of harvest to jhum shelter house or to the village. It was also used for threshing paddy at the site of harvest. Ears of paddy used to be placed inside the *Dingra* and pestled or beatened by heavy wooden stick.

(g) *Sa-kok* : *Sa-kok* was a big basket with cylindrical shape in which paddy seeds or paddy used to be stored. It has circular or round shape with four or five feet height. In big size *Sokok* about forty quintals paddy could be stored. It is also made of stripped bamboo.

(h) *Bougkai* or *Kaisiueug* or *Sineng* : *Kaisiueug* or *Sineng* or *Bougkai* was a small and beautiful basket made of polished small bamboo splits used for carrying paddy seeds during plantation season of jhum. At the time of plantation, *Kaisiueug* or *Bougkai* would slung from the waist and mixed jhum paddy seeds were taken out with left hand munite after munite and planted by a dao called *Chewia* with right hand.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

(i) *Zamkhong* : Flat mat having rectangular shape made of soft bamboo splits for use in drying the paddy etc. in the sunshine was called *Zamkhong*. *Zamkhong* was also used for making lining of the burn, particularly, for exposing wet paddy in the hot sunshine or any other purpose.

(j) *Jampher* : *Jampher* was a flat mat used for sitting or used as coverage of sleeping cot. It was made with hard and polished bamboo splits or out of cane splits for its beauty and durability.

(j) *Serhak or Darhak* : This big but flat and oval shaped bamboo mat, the corner of which was bound by stripped bamboo with two inches height, was called *Serhak* or *Darhak*. Its diameter was from eighteen feet to twenty six feet and chiefly used for exposing paddy, sesame, row cotton, rice etc, to sunshine.

(k) *Ralei or Leidar* : This was circular flat tray with raised rim, which was made of polished bamboo splits. It was about six feet in diameter and its round rim was bound by elevated bamboo split tied by cane string. It was used for winnowing the chaff of the grains etc. The Kaipeng people called it *Leitak* or *Laipuk*.

(l) *Tolai* : This was a cap or head cover used in rainy season in time of work in the jhum or paddy field. This was made of small and polished bamboo split with conical shape.

(m) *Samthi* : This was a beautiful hair comb made of tiny and polished bamboo splits which was tied beautifully with thread or cane rope for combing hair by the women.

(n) *Aribom* : Chicken used to be domesticated by the Halam families almost like a tradition. The hen with its chicks used to be kept in a basket/cage called *Aribom*. This *Aribom* was made of bamboo splits.

(o) *Wathu Dor* : This wild Dove trap was made of bamboo split and it was decoyed cage usually set on tree trunk with a domesticated cage inside it for enticing the wild dove into the cage.

(p) *Chawk* : *Chawk* was a trap made of bamboo split for catching fish and crab etc. The Halams would trap the fish or crab by positioning the *Chawk* at strategic location, particularly, at narrow outlet of water of stream or water body. It was made of bamboo strips woven with cane string, the size of which could differ from one to another.

(q) *Changalsor* : *Changalsor* was a funnel used for producing alkaline fluid out of ashes of bamboo. It was made of bamboo splits having

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

pointed bottom and wide mouth. Ashes of burned bamboo used to be put into it before pouring out water for extracting alkaline for using as one of the ingredients of curry.

There were several other articles made out of bamboo splits which the Halams used for different purpose. Cane was used for binding the bases and borders of bamboo made articles so that such items could become durable and lasting.

**Fishing tradition :** In old days fishing was very popular because the Halams like fish to eat. Fishing includes catching of crabs, prong e.c. Since the Halams used to live in hilly region, they would go down to hilly stream for fishing. There were two types of fishing-(a) Community fishing and (b) Individual fishing. Among all, community fishing was very popular in the past, in which villagers together would go to stream and apply a herbal medicine at the source of the stream. There was a creeper scientific name of which was *Millettia Pissidia*, which the Halams called it *Ra* or *Aru*. The roots of this creeper was extracted and cut into pieces; and thereafter, beaten with heavy wooden sticks or pounded and soaked at upstream of the river or hilly stream. The juice of this creeper, when mixed with water, fish became intoxicated and stupefied which made easy to catch fish even by hand. Apart from this, the bark of *Koroi* tree also used to be pounded and soaked in the water in place of *Aru*. This type of fishing was prevalent even decades before when use of pesticide was unknown and streams were full of fish. In community fishing, the members of the team would share the fish equally which they caught in the river or stream. There was also traditional method of fishing in the stream, and in this method, small stream water was blocked by raising earthen dam at the upstream, and another dam was raised with loose soil over the downstream. Thereafter, stream water was removed by big size plate or fishing basket by a group of men or women. For individual fishing in water bodies or streams, hook, and fishing net were used. There was indigenous method of fishing, and according to this method, porous bamboo net, which was made of bamboo splits, was placed or fixed over the river's breadth to trap the fish. At several points of the bamboo net, where the water current was swift and strong, porous fish cage called *Nga-dink* was fixed for trapping the fish. Every morning or evening, the person who made such fish trap would go down the stream to collect the fish trapped in

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

the *Nga-chok*. *Nga-chok* was a cylindrical shape basket made of bamboo strips the mouth of which was designed in such way that once the fish entered inside the basket it could not escaped. There was also a practice to catch crabs immediately after the occurrence of rain during rainy season because the crab would come out as soon as its hole was filled in by rain water. Further, elder of the family also used to go in the stream to hunt tortoise by spear. Now day the Halams have adopted the technique of plain people in catching and rearing the fish.

**Hunting tradition :** The hill tribes were fond of hunting wild animals and fowls. They regarded hunting as inseparable part of their tradition, and possessing flintlock was very natural thing for the Halam family. Hunting was associated with adventure and pleasure, and above all, it was the source of meat for domestic consumption. The Halam families would never sale the meat of wild animals but shared with the villagers. In fact, skulls of animals, particularly, the deer and stag, would adorn the houses of the Halam families in the past. In the past, the Halams used to regard hunting as their tradition, though this has almost been given up now. There was a time when the Tripura and its surrounding hilly regions such as Mizoram, Barak valley and Chittagang were covered by vergin and dense forest land, where varieties of wild birds and animals lived. Five major hill ranges traversed the Tripura State toward the north-south direction and continued southward into Chittagang Hill Tracts. Narrow valleys separated these hill ranges which were about twenty kilometres wide in average. In old days these hill ranges and valleys were covered by thick green forest, which offered ideal environment for hunting. W.W. Hunter stated that in preceding centuries Tripura was the land of *“wild animals, the elephant and gayal are reported to be most numerous; and the rhinoceros, tigers, bears, samber, and hog-deers, are also very common. Four species of monkey, the wild boar, the kakar, the serds or forest goats, the leopard, the scaly ant-eater, squirrel, badges, land turtles, some of which are stated to be of enormous size. Tiger commit an immense amount of damage in Hill Tipperah, but no fix reward is given for their destruction. Among birds, the Kalaj and polyplectron pheasant, jungle fowl, hill partridges, four or more varieties of green pigeon, the imperial and blue pigeon snipe and quail, are all found in Tipperah. Besides, immense varieties of singing birds of beautiful plumage”*. Thus, Hilly Tipperah kingdom was covered by thick rain forest earlier though such deep vergin forest was

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

found even in nineteenth sixties. Halam villages were located within such hilly forest land; and had to struggle against tigers, wild cats, elephants, wild jackals, bison, wild dogs and bears etc. to protect their domestic fowls, pigs, goat, buffaloes, cows and jhum crops etc. Their jhum paddies were under constant threat from wild elephants, boars and birds. As mentioned, the Halams were also fond of the meat of wild deers, boars, wild goat, stag, fowls and birds. But wild animals could not be hunted as one wished because the Halams believed that the wild beasts were owned by a deity called *Majowin*, who looked after the wild animals all the time in the jungle. In some cases, whenever some hunter went out in the jungle, first he tried to find out the footprints of the particular wild animal, and if he found the footprint, he immediately would bind the footprint by performing certain ritual of the magic and offered sacrifice to the demon so that the animal concerned would not run away or escape from the area, and also no harm would cause to the hunter. After hunting, it was necessary to offer little meat of the slain animal to propitiate the the demon, the owner of the jungle animals. Normally, some good hunters from Halam villages used to perform certain ritual by sacrificing a fowl or egg to deity, who was believed the owner of wild animals. Even if the trap was made for trapping the wild animal, this ritual used to be performed. Otherwise, serious accident might befallen on the hunter. There were few traditional method of hunting which the Halam followed in hunting wild animals and birds. These method of hunting could be broadly categorized into three-

**Group hunting :** In the past hunting constituted an important part of community life in Halam villages. There was a tradition to go for hunting in group in the forest with fire arms i.e. flintlock, and this group hunting used to be done day time. The group hunters would carry several flintlocks and took position at different locations of the route through which the wild animal usually used as its route. Particularly, group hunting used to be done for hunting the wild deer or hog-deer and wild boars. Sometime group hunting was also done for chasing wild elephants, boars and monkeys to protect the jhum crops. In case of successful hunting, the village hunters would share the meat of animal in case of successful hunting.

**Individual hunting :** Individual hunting was done by a person either at night or day time with flintlock. Deers, Stag or Hog-deer were the

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

lovers of fruits called Amlaki (*Emblca officinales*), Bahara (*Terminalia belerica*) and Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*), and they would come at the shed of these trees as soon as the sun would set and darkness commenced in the evening. When *Bahara* tree started bearing fruits, the hunter would prepare a small shed or hut at the branch of this tree where he could sit or rest comfortably for several hours with gun waiting for the deer to come at night. An expert hunter always tried to trace out the route through which a particular wild animal was accustomed to roam or pass through in the jungle. Tracing the foot print of a particular animal, the hunter could identify as to what kind of animal it belonged to. Wild fowls live in group at the branch of a tree; and hunting these fowls was very easy at night. Sometime wild boar or elephant would destroy the jhum paddy and hunting it down would become necessary to protect the jhum crops. The tiger often used to carry away domesticated piglets, goats and calf at night from the village. So tiger used to be hunted not for meat but to protect the domestic animal.

**Hunting by trapping :** Traping wild animals, birds and fowls had been very common practice; and this trapping was done for its meat only. These were the techniques to trap wild animals, birds and fowls:

**Fowl trap :** For trapping wild fowl, enclosure used to be made with a net which was made of fine and polished bamboo splits and string, and each pambao split was fitted with slip-knot or halter. This trapping net used to be kept in the jungle where wild fowls often would roam about. A trained decoy or cook used to be kept inside the boundary of the trap to entice the wild fowls for dual fight. The wild fowl, seeing the strange cook or decoy, used to come for challenging and fighting the hunting cook or decoy; and in the process the wild fowl got stucked at the halter. This kind of trap was known as *Pai*.

**Bird's trap :** Bait snare for birds used to be made with a trapping board made of bamboo splits woven thickly having about three feets width with three and half feet length in rectangular shape. One horizontal bar supported by two posts at both end were posted on the ground just above the tread board. The trapping-board was lifted in slanted position about two feets above the ground by a string which was tied to horizontal bar above in such a way that the end of the string was brought down below where the trigger was fitted down the trapping board. Around

### Family and Socio-Economic Life

the trigger, which was fitted below the trapping board, paddy or grains used to be spread over so that when the bird or fowl would come to eat the grains below the trapping board, it would knock the trigger and heavy trapping board at once would fall to suppress or cover the bird below, which would make the bird unable to escape but to die. This kind of trap was known as *Delrap* or *Bump*.

*Animal dead trap* : The Halam used to hunt medium and small size animals, particularly, deer, hare, wild cat, porcupine etc, by erecting deadly trap; and this trap was called *Mangkong*. For making this *Mangkong*, a pair of horizontal bar, a heavy long log about eight feet length, a pair of vertical post and tread board would be required. The head of long and heavy log used to be placed in slanting position on the upper bar along a path through which animals passed at night, while placing the treading board in slanting position over the lower bar. A wooden or metal peg or pin would connect the bar with the treading board in a subtle balance. The animal, while entering the field, needed to tread the board which disturbed the peg/pin that shot it up at once. The heavy long log or bar immediately would fall on the treading board and would press/struck the animal.

*Spear trap* : This deadly trap was made for hunting deers or hog-deer, wild boar, tiger, wolf, byson etc, and was familiar as *Crng*. A long and hard bamboo pole used to be tied to the upper side of a strong post erected on the ground parallel to the track or route frequented by the deer, boar or tiger etc. Anterior part of the bamboo pole was bent backward which was pulled by a hard string extended along the route of animals. The bent of the bamboo was controlled by this string which was fitted with a peg or pin. A sharp spear made of matured bamboo split used to be tied to the anterior end of the bamboo pole. When an animal passed through the route where hard string of bamboo pole was extended, the animal touched the string disturbing the bamboo pole in which sharp bamboo spear was fitted. The peg/ pin fitted in that string of the bamboo pole was disconnected by this disturbance and at once used to strike the animal with its spear. The size and height of this trap would differ depending on the kind of animal wanted to be hunted by this *Spear trap*.

*Bird's lime* : It was a trap made by adhesive or gum. This gum was prepared by sticky juice of jackfruit, banyan tree, which the Halam called

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

it *Nil*. Gum used to be smeared on the branches of untrimmed dry bamboo without leaves and fixed in the jhum land when paddy was ripe or around the fruit bearing tree. When the jhum paddy or fruits of a particular tree became ripe, the birds such as parrots etc. flocked in the jhum for eating the ripe paddy or tree for eating its fruits. The hunter used to set trap or spread a snare at ideal location in jhum land or around the tree which was bearing ripe fruits. When the birds flocked in the jhum land or fruit bearing trees, the legs of the birds used to get stucked and could not fly though it fluttered to free itself.

**Tiger trap** : A strong enclosure having seven to eight feet length and three feet breath with five feet height used to be erected by matured bamboos. Entire enclosure used to be roofed with bamboo poles and tied with rope adequately. An entry door used to be provided at the front of the cage; but at the opposite end of the enclosure a small room used to be provided by partitioning with the bamboo poles so that a pig or goat could be kept inside that small room to entice the tiger for entering into the enclosure. A small opening was kept at the base of middle partition so that the tiger, after entering the enclosure, could try to catch the pig or goat which was kept in the small partitioned room/compartment by pushing its claw or paw through that small opening. A peg or pin, which lifted and controlled the heavy shutter of the door of enclosure with a hard string or rope, was placed at the small opening of partitioned room where the goat or pig used to be kept. As soon as the tiger, after entering into the enclosure, pushed its claw inside that small opening of partitioned room to catch to pig or goat, the peg/ pin of the shutter fixed at the small opening of that partitioned room got disturbed by the touch of tiger paw and the string of the door's shutter got released. As a result, the shutter fell down closing the door of the enclosure and the tiger was trapped inside. A bell fitted at the shutter of the door would sound when the shutter was disturbed, which alerted the villagers to rush toward that location.

**Spring pole snare** : This was popular trap by which wild birds and small animals were caught. The base of a bamboo pole used to be fixed on the ground which was further supported by a post tied with the pole. The upper end of this bamboo pole was tied by one end of a long hard string or rope and another end of the string or rope was halter. The pole was bent horizontally by this hard string and the halter used to be fixed



### Family and Socio-Economic Life

with trigger at the track or route through which small animals and birds or fowls usually passed. Both side of the track route, where halter was fixed with trigger, used to be fenced around so that the prey might only pass through the open halter. When the bird or small animal passed through that open halter, it disturbed the trigger and the pole would bounce back with its string, gripping the leg or neck of the prey.

**Pitfall trap :** Deep rectangular or circular shape pit fall used to be dugged out and the pit was covered with thinly woven bamboo splits, leaves and twigs to give it natural show to the wild animal, particularly, elephant, tiger or big wild boar, which roam alone. A bait was also placed on the leaves etc to entice the animal to move on the trap. When the animal would come to the bait, it would fall deep inside the pit from which the animals could not escape. Before digging pitfall, targeted animal need to be ascertained first so that the depth and the size of pitfall was commensurate to the size of targeted animal.

**Dove trap :** A de-coyed cage would have to be set on the branch of a tree which was frequented by the dove. The cage contained two chambers, in the inner chamber a domesticated dove used to be kept for enticing the wild dove to enter into outer chamber. Once the wild dove entered into the cage, it could not come out because inside portion of the entrance was obstructed by pointed edge of bamboo splits which hindered the movement of the dove at the entrance.

General practice for trapping animals, birds or wild fowls had been to ascertain the route through which they usually passed through or the place they usually came to hunt their prey or search their food such as path, insect, etc. Trap was erected at the crossing point of their routes or tracks. Collective hunting of wild animals was very popular among the village community, but it also causes fatal accident among the group hunters. In fact the villagers would derive lots of pleasure in such collective hunting. However, women and adolescent people were not allowed to participate in community hunting. Individual hunting too gave a lot of pleasure of adventure to the hunter.

**Evolution of family and socio-economic life :** The family life and tradition of the past have almost disappeared. Most of the traditions, social and economic life of the Halams was governed by their principal economic activity, which was shifting cultivation called *jhum*. This shifting cultivation itself have almost been given up in most of the Halam

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

villages. In the absence of virgin forest land, jhum cultivation could not be productive as expected. On the other hand, without jhuming the raw cotton could not be produced by the Halam in traditional method, which was necessary for domestic handloom works. Besides, traditional *Zu* (rice beer) and *Rakzu* (beverage) had been the principal item required in all social occasion, and these *Zu* and beverage were prepared from different varieties of jhum paddy, and these varieties of paddy have disappeared as most of the families discarded the shifting cultivation for want virgin forest land. In absence of raw cotton which was produced in the jhum, traditional weaving and dyeing activities have ceased to exist. As a result, weaving of different types of traditional clothes and dresses has almost been given up; and in the process the women have forgotten the skill for weaving and dyeing the traditional cloths. Further, as no good variety of jhum paddy was cultivated, the very concept of New wine festival called-*Sasenthur*, by the Halam, which was called *Maimi Kata* or *Mamita festival* by the *Tipras*, have disappeared. The young men and women were more attracted to dress and clothes which were produced in factories or mills for its beauty and quality. Adoption of plough cultivation have changed the pattern of social and economic life abruptly, which impacted the way of life adversely. All these changes should have occurred slowly so that the Halam people could absorb the changes gradually. Modern concept of small family norm and the craving for other culture and life style have impacted the overall traditional social and economic life adversely. The invasion of plain and foreign culture and tradition was partly responsible for vanishing the traditional socio-economic life of the Halams. The spreads of awareness and education has made people less superstitious which resulted in discarding many religious belief and rituals which were associated with sacrifice of domestic animals and involved expenditure. This changes has brought transformation in the socio-economic life of the people.



## CHAPTER - 21

# CHRISTIANITY AND THE HALAM SOCIETY

**Arrival of Christian faith :** The Halams were animist in their religious belief though they worship some Hindu deities, particularly, Siva, Durga, Laxmi, Ganga, Kali, Sun and Moon(Ninu-Thapa), which were transmitted from the *Tipras*. Worship to Hindu deities was restricted to once in a year but offering sacrifice to different tribal deities and spirits was order of the day, which made them animists in belief. Hindu ritual and belief could co-exist with animistic belief as evident from all religious belief of the Halam. But the christianity could not co-exist with animistic belief and ritual. Inroad of christianity in Halam society has brought tremendous challenge to animistic belief of the Halam. Though the beginning of Christianity in Tripura dates back many centuries, the Christian faith penetrated into Halam society much later period, after the merger of Tipperah kingdom into the Union of India. The Catholic Church was first set up at Mariamnagar at Kashipur, adjacent to Old Agartala, but they did not do any missionary work, possibly, they were not allowed by the rulers of Tipperah kingdom. Tracing back the history of the arrival of Missionaries of Baptist denomination, it could be said that the English Baptist Mission at Serampore had an opportunity to begin work in Tripura when Felix Carey, the son of William Carey, was invited by the Maharaja to reside in Agartala to tutor his son. On the other hand, by the quarter of the 19th century the New Zealand Baptist Mission could set up mission center in East Bengal. Their mission centre at Brahmanbaria was used by their missionaries to periodically visit Agartala. It was in October 1898 A.D. that Rev. George Hughes, who had friendly dealings with the tribesmen living in small settlement near Chandpur, met the Prime Minister of Tipperah kingdom and he was received with sympathetic understanding of the motives of the Christian Missionaries. However, the King was unwilling to allow the Missionaries to enter into Tipperah kingdom. Rev. John Takle made a fresh approach

### Christianity and the Halam society

in 1899 A.D. and met the same result. But Rev. John Lake continued to try to gain entry into Tipperah kingdom. Between 1902-1905, Rosella E. M. Bose, the daughter of H.C. Bose, a judge in the service of Tripura State, impressed the ruler of the work she was doing among the women in Agartala. Miss Rosella Bose had some connections with the New Zealand Baptist Mission. Eventually Maharaja Radhakishore Minikya gave permission to the Baptist Mission in 1909 A.D. to set up a mission in his capital. The condition in the permission was that their activities would not extend beyond the town. Thus, in 1909 A.D. some work was permitted under severe limitation. Two Bengali workers were allowed into the kingdom at Agartala, but they were not allowed to preach, and they confined their activities to engage themselves in conversation and preached the Gospel that way. In 1934 A.D. some Christian from Kuki tribe of Hawaiiabari, Teliamura, went to meet the New Zealand Baptist Missionaries stationed at Mission Campus at Brahmanbaria (now in Bangladesh) and requested them to send teachers. Subsequently Rev. H.A. Jones and Mrs. Jones received the Maharaja's permission to visit these people at Hawaiiabari, under Teliamura, but not to remain long amongst them. Further negotiations with the Maharaja resulted in permission being granted for trained worker from Birisiri area namely- Abraham Sangma, to live amongst these Kuki people at Hawaiiabari. At that time the Maharaja was visiting England. Dr. Rushbrooke, Secretary of the World Baptist Alliance, and Dr. Charles North, President of the New Zealand Baptist Mission, who was visiting England, tried to meet the Maharaja to secure his consent for Christian work in his domain but no permission was granted. In April, A.D,1937, Rev. M. J. Eade and his wife, with Bengali workers, made several visits into Tipperah Kingdom because the new converts, the Garos (tribe) were asking for teachers. In this time, Tripura got new Maharaja who was sympathetic because the Maharaja visited New Zealand and knew some idea about its people. Rev. M.J. Eade and his wife B.N. Eade (formerly miss C.A.Gifford), who would often visited Tripura to preach among the Garo tribe, submitted several petitions to the Maharaja seeking appointment to meet him. But his petitions never received by the Maharaja, possibly, due to fault play of Hindu royal officials. Somendra Chandra Debbarma, who got education from Harvard University in the U.S.A. and subsequently became Nayeb Dewan (Prime Minister) of independent Tipperah

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

kingdom, facilitated the meeting of the Maharaja with Rev. M.J.Eade. During the meeting, Rev. M.J. Eade made personal appeal in November, 1938 A.D. Rev. M.J. Eade and his wife B.N.Eade was able to obtain permission along with land grant to allow New Zealand Missionaries to work and stay within the kingdom. This he did gladly, giving permission for land to be acquired for a mission compound assuring that the Missionaries of the New Zealand Baptist Mission Society might work in any part of the kingdom and amongst any people except the *Tipras* (*kokborok* speaking people) and the *Halam* tribes. They tried to reason with the Maharaja saying that the Khasis were mostly Christian in faith and their society had transformed into modern society. So the work of Missionaries would transform the live of people of his kingdom and would become good citizen. But the Maharaja told them that, particularly, the Halams were developing culturally and they must not be disturbed by the Missionaries.

Among all church organisations, the Catholic Church was the oldest in the State and its history went back to sixteenth century, when Maharaj Amar Manikya was the reigning king of Tipperah kingdom. Maharaj Amar Manikya, who reigned from 1577 to 1586 AD, recruited Portuguese mercenaries as soldiers and formed artillery division exclusively with this portugese recruits. The Portuguese were at Sandip Island and engaged in trade, business and sometime in piracy. These portugese were Catholic in their religious faith and they also indulged in conversion of native people. Arakan kingdom had very powerful army because it had efficient artillery division which comprised of the portugese mercenaries. At that time, Tipperah kingdom had constant conflict with Arakan kingdom over the possession of Chittagang. The Pathan or Afgan army division of Tipperah kingdom was not thrustworthy and not efficient in artillery. As the Portuguese were good in artillery, Maharaj Amar Manikya raised artillery division with Portuguese mercenaries. Many of them married to native women and; even during the reign of Maharaj Birchandra Manikya many Portuguese served in the royal army of Tipperah kingdom. Maharaj Amar Manikya allowed them to set up a church at Mariumnagar at Kashipur, Old Agartala, where Portuguese soldiers were stationed. Maharaj also used them in the manufacture of artillery weapon. It was Father Ignatious Gomes, a Jesuit priest, who visited the Portuguese Christians of

### Christianity and the Halam society

Mariamnagar in 1683 A.D. Thereafter, Fr. Barbe, Pastor of Chittagang, visited the Christians of Mariamnagar in 1843 A.D. Several years later, Fr. Louis Augustine Verite and Fr. Benoit Adolphe Mercier visited Agartala in 1856 A.D. who administered sacraments to Christians at Mariamnagar. Fr. Fa.lize, another Holy Cross priest, visited Mariamnagar in 1892 A.D. The East Bengal Catholic Mission had been entrusted to the Holy Cross Congregation and through this Holy Cross Congregation in East Bengal, connection was maintained with Mariamnagar. In 1927 A.D, the diocese of Dacca was divided with the establishment of the Diocese of Chittagang. Later, the American Province of the Congregation in the Dacca Diocese took charge of Mariamnagar mission. In April 1929 A.D, the chapel at Mariamnagar was destroyed in a cyclone. Soon a new chapel-cum-school was erected by its visiting Ceryman, Fr. Peter D'Rosario. From 1930 A.D, the pastor of Tejgaon near Dacca was entrusted the charge of the Catholics living in the various railway colonies at Rairab, Comilla and Chandpur on the Assam Bengal Railway and Agartala in the native state of Tripura. These visits were usually once a month. However, it was not the *Pirngis* or *Portuguese* of Mariamnagar but the Garos who brought the Holy Cross Missionaries to Agartala. Large number of Garos came to Tripura from neighbouring Mymensingh, where the mission's work had already made progressed. At the insistence of a Garo youth who had joined the Church in Bandura, a letter was written to Bishop Crowley in 1936 A. D, asking for a priest for Agartala. In response to this letter the Bishop sent a catechist, Mongla Costa to investigate the situation and this was followed by the posting of Fr. Raymond Massar, at Agartala with instruction to open a new mission. A Holy Cross priest, Fr. Raymond Massart obtained permission to reside at Agartala in 1937 A.D. The first Catholic parish was erected two years later at Mariamnagar. Apart from taking care of the villagers of Mariamnagar and Kashipur, another village of the "Pirngis" of Portuguese descent, the Holy Cross Missionaries served Garo migrants into Tripura and also to the Darlongs in the early years of their missions. A second opening commenced at about the same time as this Garo Mission. Kukis of another Christian denomination had heard of the catholics at Mariamnagar. Father Donald P. MacGregor, Rector of the Dacca cathedral, arranged a meeting at Agartala with a delegation of Kukis (Darlongs). The work among the Garos and Kukis (Darlongs)

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

was so demanding for one priest that Fr. Raymond Massart requested for another worker to assist him. So Fr. Joseph Voorde joined the Marriamnagar Mission. When Massart went on leave in 1939 AD, Fr. Vincent Maculey came to assist Voorde.

**Inroad of Christian faith in Halam society :** Outside the Tipperah kingdom Christianity spread much earlier. Welsh Presbyterian Mission first brought the gospel among the Ranglong clan of the Halam in 1925 A.D. Lalbuaia and Saizinga were appointed by Welsh Presbyterian Mission to work as missionary among the Ranglong clan of the Halam who were living in erstwhile Lushai Hills i.e. present Mizoram. They were appointed on the basis of resolution No.03 taken under the moderatorship of Rev. Frederick Joseph Sandy of Welsh Presbyterian Church stationed at Aizal. But actual evangelical works was started by the New Zealand Baptist Mission from 1943. Susequently American Baptist Mid Mission also involved itself in missionary work among the Ranglong and sent a Bengali Pastor whose name was Mihir Mallick for working among them in Barak valley. Most of the Ranglong clan either in Tripura or outside have embraced Christian faith. Among the Molsom clan, Jambukanta Molsom, Akshay Kumar Daurai and Brajabashi Molsom were the first male convert and Bibhasonti Molsom was the first woman convert. All of them were baptised at Dhancherra in Ambassa sub Division on 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1949 A.D. The Christian faith could not make much inroad into Molsom clan before nineteenth seventies. Among the Rangkhawl clan of Halam, Haia Rangkhawl and Sumchongram Rangkhawl were the first convert. According to hearsay, Sumchongram was persecuted by the leadership of the tribe for his conversion, but he firmly stood for new faith that he had embraced. Haia(Buneihari) Rangkhawl and Dhawna Betu(Kuki) from Hawaibari went to Brahmanbaria (in present Bangladesh) to invite Rev. M. J. Eade to send Missionary worker in Tripura in 1935 AD. which culminated in setting up the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Centre at Agartala in subsequent period as mentioned above. In Tripura, among the Rangkhawl, conversion to Christian faith took place in 1925 A.D. But large section of Rangkhawl people lived in North Cachar Hills who were mostly Christian in faith and their population was bigger than the Rangkhawl population in Tripura. During the time of Maharajas, preaching Christian faith amongst the Kaipeng was not allowed. On



### Christianity and the Halam society

the December, 1955 A.D. Sunchonghari Rangkhowl went to preach Christian faith at Kaipeng villages at Tuidu, Donlekha, Watuk-kung and Tuicholong in present Ompi R.D. Block areas. As no more restriction existed after the merger of Tripura in Indian Union, New Zealand Baptist Mission started working among the Kaipeng. Along with six persons from Koloj tribe, nine persons from Kaipeng tribe were converted into Christian faith in 1962; and they were Datta Kaipeng, Rangkhumhaw Kaipeng, Binanda Kaipeng and his one daughter namely-Baisonsiami Kaipeng, Baisonti Kaipeng, Binansiak Kaipeng, Sebaham Kaipeng, Lalzikliana Kaipeng and Neivardon Kaipeng. Bongcher clan was one of the smallest clans of the Halam, but they lived at different part of Tripura. Birsabhagya Bongcher was the first Christian convert and first church was established at Bongcher village at Ambassa in 1955 AD. The Thangachep, Sailmar, Langkai, Dap (Nabin), Bowng, Marchafang and a few Sakachep clans of Halam lived in several villages along the foothill of Longlorai range in Dhalai District. They collectively identified themselves as Halam. Among these clans Christian faith reached in nineteen sixties only. The first convert was Chandramath Halam in 1964 AD, but he did not adhered to his new faith. However, in church record the first convert were Bikhari Halam S/o Rangkhajoy Halam, Korsongir Halam, s/o Bikhari Halam, Juadarbum Halam, s/o Kuolthoubum Halam, Korsonlian Halam, S/o Lalsotian Halam, which to place in 1967 A. D. It was Hala Rangkhowl and Lalneithang Rangkhowl from Chandracherra Rangkhowl village that used to visit Balaram Halam village for looking after the church. From Karnalacherra village, Rev. Akshoy Kumar Dautai (Molsom) and two other Missionary workers namely- Uperdra Kumar Das and subsequently Lalciamlava Ralte (BCM Missionary) worked amongst the Halams of Balaram village. In 1973 A.D. Baptist Church came up at Bowngbari Halam village under Janthum A.D.C. Village and Kailashahar Baptist Church Association took leading role for establishing this church. T. Urahuamlana Darlong and his wife Malaomliani from New Kathacherra Darlong village of Longlorai Valley Sub-Division and from Darchowi Darlong village Li Lalsungi Darlong made tremendous effort to establish Janthum Baptist church. Kailashahar Baptist Church Association posted one evangelist, namely-Thuamlana Darlong from Barcherra Darlong para of Kumarghat Sub Division to work at Janthum. The Chorei were another

### **History and culture of the Halam tribe**

mainstream Halam clan in Tripura, but they also lived in barak valley in Assam and North-West Mizoram. Christian faith among this clan could not make much in road till today. However, some members of this clan living in eastwhile Lushai Hills, along with Ranglong clan, embraced Christian faith much earlier. First Church amongst this clan came up at Magura village under Patharkandi District in Assam in 1962 A.D. From Manikbon village, the first converts were namely- Ngirbunsiak Halam and Vannunmanik Halam. They had to take baptism at Magura village as they were not allowed to be baptized at their village- Manikban. However, in Tripura, Nirualbum Halam(Chorei) from Damcherra was the first convert during nineteen sixties and his son Vanneibul Halam became local church leader (Decon) after his father. Excepting Rupini and Koloï sub tribes, about forty percent Halam population still follow animism mixed with Hindu religion. It was noteworthy that before 1971 A.D, Catholic Church and New Zealand Baptist Missionaries were the two Christian denominations active in Tripura; and no other Christian denominations or sect exist in the State. However, in 1969 AD, United Penticostal Church(UPC) tried to make in road among the Christian of Darlong tribe under the leadership of Vankhuma Darlong from Darchowi village under Kumarghat Sub Division; though he got few followers among the Darlong, he could to expand his sect among the Halam tribe.

A few Christian Missionaries from New Zealand and one Canadian Catholic Missionary were working upto 1971 AD, in Tripura, but they had to leave the Tripuara State for their countries in that year as the Government of India restricted the entry of foreigners in the North-East India. There was tremendous difficulties in the field of missionary work due to sudden departure of New Zealand Baptist Missionaries in 1971-72 A.D. The leadership of Tripura Baptist Christian Union turned to fraternal Christian Organisations in the North Eastern India. As a result, the Tripura Baptist Christian Union and Zoram Baptist Mission (ZBM, now BCM) came up with an agreement on condition that ZBM would send missionaries for working under TBCU among the Molsom clan. ZBM set up its sub headquarter at Arundhutinagar Baptist Mission Campus and posted Mission Field Director along with few missionary workers. They also established an English Medium High School at Gongrai Molsom village under Jampuijala sub Division of Sepahijala

### Christianity and the Halam society

District. They also set up private run primary schools in many Molsom villages. As a result majority of the Molsom clan of Halam tribe were inspired to embrace Christian faith. Christian faith has taken deep root amongst the Molsom clan and almost sixty percent of their population have embraced Christian faith. Further, in 1975 AD, the leadership of the Tripura Baptist Christian Union (TBCU), invited the Evangelical Free Church of India (EFCI) to work with TBCU. The EFCI was a new church organization set up between 1971-73 by a section of the members of Independent Church of India and this church organization was based at Charachandpur in Manipur (now in Shillong of Meghalaya). But the leadership of TBCU and EFCI could not reach to any suitable agreement. The thrust of EFCI authority appeared to be building the new church organization through expansion of field operation by taking over the weak churches of TBCU. The news was maintained that the EFCI authority have committed to set up educational institutions in certain area where churches of TBCU exist, but before that to happen the church members of TBCU must take affiliation to EFCI organization. In the meantime, some church leaders from Darlong tribe, under the leadership of Hrengura Darlong from Nalkata village (near 82-Miles), L.T Valley Sub Division, and others invited the EFCI leadership and enlisted themselves as Members of EFCI. Possibly, the EFCI leadership also thought it an opportunity to expand its operational field independently. From their initial activities it seemed that they entered into Tripura to expand its working field, particularly, among the Darlongs, Halams and Rangkhawl tribes of Kurmarghat, Kailashahar, Kamalpur, Amarpur (around Oupi R.D. Fock) and Khawai (now Teliamura) Sub Divisions. The activity of EFCI was a severe blow to the organization of TBCU because many Darlong and Halam churches, which were build up and established by the TBCU, got affiliated to the Church of EFCI. They set up a small school at Janthum Downgbari under Salem R.D. Block and also took over the management of Darchowi Christian Junior High School. Instead of concentrating their work among the non Christians and working in collaboration with the TBCU, they encouraged the members of Baptist Church in the State, particularly, the Darlongs and different clans of the Halam, to join their church organization. As a result, a large section of Darlongs, Halams (including the Kaipeng and Rangkhawl) Christian families of Kailashahar, Kamalpur and Teliamura

### **History and culture of the Halam tribe**

Sub Divisions, who were disenchanted with the management of TBCU, shifted their loyalty and got affiliated to Evangelical Free Church of India. This led to misunderstanding between the leaderships of two Church denominations, namely, EFCI and TBCU. In the year of 2007 A.D, EFCI established another Sr.Basic English Medium School at Damcherra of Kanchanpur Sub Division in North Tripura District for consolidating their hold over Chorei clan of the Halam.

Further, the Tripura Baptist Christian Union (TBCU) reached an agreement with Independent Church of India (ICI) in 1982-83 A.D, a church organization based at Churachandpur in Manipur State, for joint missionary work in Tripura; and Lianhnuna was the first worker of Independent Church of India in Tripura. Accordingly, Independent Church of India posted workers in Tripura at two places assigned by the TBCU, and one such place was at Jamtali Halam(Chorei) village in Kailashahar Sub-Division of Unakoti District, where they posted Mr. Thanchina as field missionary worker and the other was Kisong para, a Tripuri village, under Mandai R.D. Block. These two villages had the churches which were affiliated to TBCU. But Independent Church of India (I.C.I.) did not honour the agreement and affiliated the Jamtali Baptist Church and Kisong Baptist Church into ICI denomination with a promise to set up a school, which they did set up. On the other hand, the Presbyterian Church of India entered into Tripura much earlier. In 1912 A.D, a church of this denomination was started at Phuldungsei and worked amongst the Mizos. But their presence became more visible in 1976 A.D, following an agreement with TBCU; and started working amongst the Halams and other tribes. They worked among the Halams and Darlongs of Dharmanagar and Unakoti Districts and also among the Kaipeng clan of the Halam at Tuidu region in Gomti District. Lalchunglura from Mizoram was the first worker of this Church organization posted in Tripura. In A.D, 2003, they gained foothold among the Rangkhawl of Kamalacherra village in Ambassa Sub Division of Dhalai District. Thereafter, they expanded their activities among the Rangkhawl of Sardukarkari ADC Village under Teliamura Sub Division in Khowai District, within last two decade. However, in recent time, they have infiltrated in other tribal areas in the State. In the field of church evangelism, Evangelical Free Church of India, Independent Church of India, and Presbyterian Church has basically weakened the

### Christianity and the Halam society

position of Baptist Churches in Tripura because of the fact that most of the members of these denominations once belonged to Baptist Church of Tripura. The Darlongs of Old Kathalcherra village was the first new Catholic convert among this tribe. But among the Ha'ams, Kukicherra villagers were the first convert in 1975 A.D. But the members of Darlong Baptist Church of New Kathalcherra Darlong village played a pioneering role in bringing gospel to the Halams of Kukicherra under Manu R.D. Block and also amongst the Halams of Kamaranga Halam village under durgachowdhuri R. D. Block and at Janthum Bowng Bari under Salema R.D. Block. It was worth mentioning that during the sixties Tripura Baptist Church set up a primary school at Kukicherra and Sohin Saingma was the teacher of that school. His wife was Halam woman from Ambassa. After few years, the school was closed and teacher was withdrawn. Among the Kaipeng and Mohum clans, members of Catholic denomination were very few till today, and they were mostly convert from the members of the Baptist Church. The Catholic Church also could make inroad among the Ranglong clan of Halams in North District. In fact, most of the Catholic Church members from Rang'ong, Rangkhawl, Kaipeng, and other Ha'am clans had been the members of the Baptist Church prior to their joining to the Catholic Church.

**Contribution of Missionaries in Education:** The Halams had been used as standing soldiers of Tipperah kingdom and it was the policy of the royal house not to educate hill tribes, particularly, the Halam tribe. Though modern era said to have ushered in from the time of Maharaj Birchandra Manikya i.e. 1870 AD, education was beyond the reach of Halams. Not a single school was set up in any of the Halam villages by the royal administration in Tipperah kingdom. The Halams were told that they were the descendents of royal family. Therefore, getting education and serving under royal administration was improper and undignified. However, after the merger of Tipperah kingdom with Indian Union in 1949 AD, school started to come up at Halam villages. However, before this merger with Indian Union, some Christian Missionaries started to set up few schools for supporting their missionary work. The contribution of Missionaries in the field of education came very late as compared to other region in the North East India. Catholic Church was the first to set up Chapel-cum-School at Mariamnagar in Agartala in 1929 AD. The New Zealand Baptist

### **History and culture of the Halam tribe**

Missionaries set up a School at Arundhutinagar Baptist Mission Campus in 1943 AD, which became familiar as St. Paul School. Initially, St. Paul School was a Senior Basic School and Bengali was the medium of instruction; but from 1971 A.D. onward the school was gradually converted into English medium school. These two schools, which was attached with boarding houses, played leading role in imparting residential education to the native Christians in the State. Since most of the Halam tribes were non-christian, they did not come to these schools for education. However, among the Ranglong clan of the Halam, Welsh Presbyterian Church set up first primary school in 1928 AD at Goboicherra village (now in Mizoram and uninhabited).

Tripura Baptist Missionaries played leading role in providing better education to Darlongs, Lushai, and Garos and provided interest free circulation loan for higher studies and other material assistance upto 1971 A.D, till the departure of foreign Missionaries. But this was not the case with the Halams in Tripura, excepting Rupinis of Champaknagar. From 1971 AD onward, with the arrival Zoram Baptist Missionaries from Mizoram, the education scenario changed among the Molsom clan of the Halam. They set up nineteen primary schools in different villages for providing free education; and they also set up one High School attached with Boys and Girls Hostels at Gongarai Molsom village under Jampuijala Sub Division, Sipahijala District. This High School served as referral education centre for outlaying nineteen primary schools. This education project of Zoram Baptist Mission played important role in the advancement of education status of the Molsom clan of Halam. As a result, many Molsom boys and girls could pursue higher education in colleges and universities. In 1977 AD, Presbyterian Church set up Bethlehem English High School at Noagang Ranglong village (Bagbasa), under Dharmanagar sub Division, North District. This School was attached with Boys' and Girls' Hostels. This High School contributed a lot for providing quality education to Ranglong and Chorei clans of Halams. Calvery English High School at Tuidu under Ompi R.D Block was set up in 1976 AD by Gongabahadur Kaipeng, a local Presbyterian Missionary worker; and this private school was brought under the management of the same church in 1999 AD. This High School has now become an education center for Kaipeng and Koloï clans of the Halams tribe. This High School has facilitated for many Kaipeng boys

### Christianity and the Halam society

and girls to pursue higher education in colleges and universities at subsequent stage of their learning. The Evangelical Free Church of India set up Janthum English High School in 1989 AD, at Bongbari under Janthum ADC Village of Salema R.D. Block. This High School, apart from other tribes, has been contributing in the advancement of education among Bowng, Langkai and Saihmar clans of the Halams living in neighbouring areas. Many Halam boys and girls could pursue school education at their doorstep; and were able to pursue higher education in colleges and universities in subsequent stage. The same Church set up another English Medium Junior High School attached with boys and girls Boarding House at Damcherra under Kamchanpur Sub Division in North Tripura District, which facilitated quality education to local boys and girls of Churei clan of the Halam. The Independent Church of India set up an english medium school; which was subsequently upgraded to Senior Basic school at Jantolbari Halam village in 1997 A.D. The Catholic Church has also set up some schools in places where the Halams lived. St. Arnold School at Lalchari under Ambassa Sub Division has benefited the neighbouring Halam villages for quality education. The Holy Cross Schools at Parisagar and Baghasa under North Tripura District were situated adjacent to Halam villages, which are now facilitating quality education for the Halams at their doorstep. St. Arnold English medium school at Kanailal Halam para has facilitated better education to Halam children of that village and the neighbours. The Kathalcherra Holy Cross Higher Secondary School has facilitated quality education, among others, to the Halam children of Kukicherra Halam village. The St. Joseph English School at Manikbond village and Longal Valley School at Nurka village run by the Catholic Church, and Makunda English School in Patharkandi Sub Division in Assam were some important english medium schools which have provided quality education to the Halam children at their doorstep. Some local Church leaders also have taken active role for establishing schools in their respective areas. Thus, Zion Hill Junior Junior High School in English medium was set up in the middle of nineteen seventies at Sardu Karkori Rangkhawl village under Taliamura R.D. Block, which benefited the Rangkhawl, Koloi and Kaipeng children from the surrounding areas. In the same way the local church leaders have set up another primary english medium school at Camakur Mulsam village under Ompi R.D.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Block, which facilitated better education to Molsom Children. Now there are twenty five primary english medium schools in Molsom and Kaipeng christian villages which are imparting quality education to village children. The fact was that Christianity brought modern education in Halam society.

**Positive impact of Christian faith :** The impact of Christianity in the socio-economic and cultural life of the Halam tribes was profound. It has brought enlightenment in the mind of common people because the teaching imparted in the church services quoting Bible verses and its interpretation through sermon gave the reasoning capabilities. In social environment of the Christian community, Church service played important part. In such church service the religious teaching centred round the theme on the love of Jesus Christ, good neighbourliness, tolerance and non violence. Thus, Christian teaching has brought radical change in their thinking and tamed the temperament of Halam people.

Secondly, there was no peace in the mind of common man in the Halam society because the fear of evil spirit, gods and goddesses in their daily life was profound and persistent. Every kind of sickness was ascribed to the influence of supernatural being and evil spirit. Their animistic belief made trees, forest, streams and rivers as the abode of all kind of deities and evil spirits. Christian faith has radically changed this belief; and help to remove the superstition and transformed their perception about the way of life. The Halams always would blame their fate for every difficulties and hardship in their daily living; and this belief in pre-determined by fate made the Halams despondent and pessimist about life. For them man exist for working, eating, drinking and enjoying easy life because life in pre-determined by fate; and well-being of the family and its members solely depended on the pleasure of spirit and supernatural deities. Christian teaching has removed this superstition and pessimistic philosophy about life.

Thirdly, the economic cost of animistic belief was too heavy to sustain for long time, especially, when a person was afflicted by diseases from time to time. For such sickness, blame always would go to the evil spirit and supernatural deities; and even for future well being of the family and the village, these deities needed to be always placated by offering fowls, animal sacrifices and pujas. Therefore, a Halam family would be engaged in offering big or small sacrifice with fowls or piglet at least



### Christianity and the Halam society

once in a week for every kind of sickness and difficulties in order to placate the deities and evil spirits. As a consequence of this sacrifices, the economic cost on account of this loss of livestock, foodgrain, money and manpower had been enormous for the families, who lived on subsistence farming and shifting cultivation. It was a common phenomena that when a member of a family was afflicted by chronic disease, such family would become almost bankrupt due to continuous sacrifice of livestock and for incurring related expenditure. There was a strange incident confronted by Proveen DebBarma, a Field Officer of Tribal Welfare Department of the Government of Tripura, who was working in Amarpur Sub-Division of Coochi District. He saw a man with a spade in hand and the man was from Kaipeng clan of the Halam. The man was digging a hole to uproot the dried roots of a fallen tree nearby the road over which Proveen DebBarma was passing through. Proveen felt curious and asked the man as to why he was so busy to uproot the roots of a tree. The Kaipeng fellow replied that the village priest called *Obel* told him to uproot the roots of the tree because the deity living in the root of that tree was causing disease to his family members. The Halams would believe that even stone, stream, hillock, tree, fallen tree, mountain etc. could cause disease. Therefore, deities living in the stone, stream, hillock, tree, fallen tree, mountain etc, needed to be placated by offering sacrifice of fowl, goat, and pigs etc, as advised by the village priest. The Christian faith has brought civilizing influence in Halam society by eradicating superstition which was connected to animistic belief. This has reduced the economic burden of sacrificing livestock, consumption of rice beverage, and wastage of money and material of the family concerned.

Fourthly, for making a common man to understand Christian faith, he or she must have the skill of reading and writing. The missionaries always have given emphasis on education alongwith the preaching of Christian faith so that a new convert at least be able to read Bible, sing a song from the Christian Hymn Book and could write something. This has helped to spread of literacy among the Halams. The Missionary Organizations working among the backward areas where the Halam people lived have set up many hamlet schools in those places which brought the tremendous upliftment in the field of literacy. Besides, the Missionaries also have set up many schools in backward tribal areas

### **History and culture of the Halam tribe**

with English language as medium of instruction. These schools have played the role of providing quality education not only others but also to the Halam children; and positive outcome could be visible in Halam society.

Fifthly, Christian churches were highly organized into voluntary religious denominational society. The churches employed and managed their workers. Particularly, the protestant Christian organizations were self-supporting because these organized churches financed itself by the voluntary and regular contribution of its members. Each church in a village was an organizational unit managed by elected local church committee and this church unit of a particular area or region was organized into Associations or Presbyteries or Districts, as the case may be, headed by an elected Governing Bodies or Executive Committees. These Associations or Presbyteries or Districts were unified into apex bodies which were called Union Council or Executive Council or Executive Committee of the Assembly etc, as the case may be. These apex bodies would convene annual general meeting in which all affiliated organizations would send their representatives for participation in the decision-making process. Thus, the Protestant Churches would elect their organisational leaderships for conducting the affairs of the Church Organization. The elected leadership of the church would convene meeting at regular interval for setting its annual priorities, budgeting and raising fund to meet its requirement for the future budget etc. This has helped the Halams to learn a lot about modern organizational technique and management.

Sixthly, the Christian Churches had been the shining light in the *Dark Age* of European history. History tells us that many European Missionaries spread modern education, awareness on sanitation, health care and contributed in the advancement of literature amongst many nations and tribes in course of their missionary work. Missionaries working amongst the poors and oppressed were viewed with suspicion by the rulers, powerful and mighty people not only today's world but even in ancient time. Christian faith ushered in silent revolution by transforming peoples' mindset, thought, action and way of life, which often would come into conflict with old order or traditional and existing social order. The same thing applied to in respect of tribal societies of the North East India. One of the pioneering work of the Christian

### Christianity and the Halam society

Missionaries was the development of local or native language so that the Bible and other Christian literature could be translated into native language for making it easier to understand. This has been the case for the Halam people too.

Seventhly, Christian faith has taught to donate liberally for the cause of evangelism and other social works undertaken by the Church Organisation and thus, people have learnt to be charitable. The Church has also taught its members to be tolerant and caring toward their neighbours. This has transformed Halam society as caring and tolerant society.

Lastly, another important area of their achievement was that they expanded the Christian faith without disturbing much the traditional way of life. The custom, tradition and way of life of the Halams too has evolved gradually in the pattern of their kinsmen- Kuki Chin Lushai tribes. The Christian faith seemed to have brought all the Kuki Chin- Lushai-Hmar-Halam etc tribes under the shadow of homogeneous culture, tradition and custom harmoniously, without conflict and enmity.

**Adverse impact of Church activities :** Although Christianity liberated many Halam families from the bondage of superstition, illiteracy, primitive way of life, it also has certain negative impact too. The Halams were very different people from other hill tribes in that they never indulged in raiding or committed atrocities to their neighbours in the past, but had broader outlook and also tolerant to their neighbours. They had been under the rule of the Kings of Tipperah for hundreds of years, and had never been under a despotic tribal chief, which was in contrast with the neighbouring hill tribes. The Halams were in contact with Indian civilization for many centuries and inherited advanced system of social governance and customs which had the sanction of the royal house of Tipperah kingdom. No slavery existed in their society in the past, which was in contrast with other Kuki Chin tribes. Discipline prevailed in their society because customary law reigned supreme, and was enforced by the *Village or Community Darbar*, and this Darbar was formed with the elected Elders of the village. All form of social issues such as marriage, divorce, theft, dispute on property etc. used to be adjudicated by this Village or Community Darbar based on customary practices. There was no scope for arbitrary decision as

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

they had no despotic chief but democratically elected village officials of various ranks. The Christian Church Organization has impacted this old system of social governance and the cultural life of the Halams to certain extent. This was beyond controversy that the authority of *Village* or *Community Darbar* of the Halams has diminished. The church Organization has partially replaced the *Village Darbar* in dealing with certain social issues and problems such as marriage, divorce, in the burial of dead person etc. Besides, different church denominations or sects have brought division within the village community in Halam society. Each sect or denomination of the church has been promoting the denominational interest in religious festivals, marriage, divorce and other social issues; and this division of the community in the line of denomination or sect has weakened the social discipline within the village community. Even within a particular clan of the Halam, the ripple of this division could be felt in all important social or community issues. Though the teaching of the Bible was totally silent about sect or denomination, but the fact of the matter was that the denominational interest has overtaken the interest of the community. In the past, entire Kuki Chin tribes living in Tipperah kingdom had been the bearer of Halam identity; but today this very Halam identity has been challenged by different clans of the Halam, and the activities of denominational churches appeared to have been promoting these divisive forces by translating the New Testament and Holy Bible in the dialect of respective clan, which have actually preventing the development of common literature and emotional intergration of the Halams with other Kuki-Chin-Lushei-Hmar tribes. Thus, one could notice the attempt to translate the Holy Bible in the dialects of the Ranglong, Chorei, Rangkhawl, Molsom, Kaipeng etc, clans of the Halam which has no literature and grammar for its long time survival, and this could not be considered as healthy development at all. Though the new religion preached love and compassion instead of hate, hope instead of doubt, it seemed that the Halam were not deeply influenced by this teaching. Moreover, the preacher of new Christian faith were not interested to preserve the old value and tradition, and discouraged the village folk to discard whatever old tradition and custom as impure and animistic. This attitude in reality could not be considered as healthy approach to building a good society. Culture and tradition were the ornament of the society without which a

### **Christianity and the Halam society**

society could not expect to survive. But this very custom and tradition appeared to be under thread now. The life style of the Halam people was simple, yet their custom and tradition was colourful. In the environment of simple livelihood, they could make merriment. With the introduction of Christian faith, all these custom and tradition appeared to be gradually disappearing. Though as a religion Christian faith preached love and peace, the practice of this Christian faith in the context of Iripura should not be regarded as healthy. The leadership of various Christian denomination and sects at the village level have failed to bring community spirit within the village as they gave priority on sectarian interest over the interest of the village community. Even in matter of marriage, a lady of a particular Christian denomination refused to marry a young man who did not belong to her denomination, instead she would prefer to marry the young man of very different religion. Christmas and Easter were the biggest Christian festivals across the globe which was observed by entire Christian world. Sadly, even this Christmas and Easter festivals could not be celebrated by the village community together. Within the same village, Christmas and Easter celebrations were done separately by each denomination due to sectarian feeling nurtured by the church leadership of the village. The community spirit appeared to have been undermined in the Christian villages. The social solidarity of the body politics of the village was badly affected and community and village bonds were loosened. While the missionaries were engaged in effecting a break with the pagan practices of the Halams, the adverse impact of non-tribal culture and practices has threatened very cultural foundation of the Halams people as a whole.

## CHAPTER - 22

# LANGUAGE

G. A. Grierson categorized all Kuki Chin Lushei tribes as Tibeto-Burman family in term of language they speak. He termed the languages of Kuki-Chin ethnic group as “languages belong to the Burmese branch of the Tibeto-Burman family”. Grierson, in his book *Linguistic Survey of India* gave proper account about the Halams with reference to their language alongwith other Old Kuki tribes. Depending on the dialect they speak, Grierson sub divided Kuki Chin language into two branches :-

- (a) The Meithei language,
- (b) The Kuki Chin language proper.

Grierson observed the connection of the languages of the Bodos, Nagas, Kachin (Singphos) and the Tibetan with the language of Old Chin language. Grierson observed that “the Naga languages are also nearly connected with the Kuki Chin group”. In the same way he found “the close relation existing between the Bodo and the Kuki Chin languages”. Besides, he also found closeness of Meitei and Kachin (Singphos) languages with the Kuki Chin languages. Thus, Grierson maintained that “*all the other dialects in question are evidently derived from one form of speech, which might be styled Old Chin language, its home being probably the Chin and Lushai Hills*”. Further, he observed saying “*Old Kuki, comprising Rangkhoh, Bete (Biate), Hallam, Langrong, Aimol, Chiru, Kolren, Kom, Cha, Hmar, Anal, Hiroi-lamgang, and Purum. All these are mere dialects of one language, which may be called by the customary name of Old Kuki. It is closely related to the Central Chin languages*”. While writing the “*Dictionary of the Lushai Language*” James Herbert Lorrain categorized the language as the “*speech belongs to the Assam-Burma branch of the Tibeto-Burmese family of languages*”. However, G.A.Grierson, on the basis of closeness of their dialects, categorized the Kuki-Chin tribes into following four sub-groups :-

## Language

### 1. Northern Group

Thado  
Sokte  
Siyin  
Ralte  
Paite

### 2. Old Kuki Group

Hrangkhawl  
Biete  
Halam  
Langrong  
Aimol  
Chiru  
Hiroi Langong  
Koiren  
Kom  
Puram  
Hmar  
Cha

### 3. Central Group

Taoshon  
Lai  
Lakher (mare)  
Lush  
Banjogi/Pankhu (pang)

### 4. Southern Group

Chinme  
Welaung  
Chinbok  
Sinslu  
Chinbon  
Khyang or shu  
Kharri

The Halams have been classified as one of the 'Old Kuki Tribes, along with the Hmar, Rangkhawl, Biete, Ranglung, Aimol, Chiru, Koiren, Kom, and Cha. A.C. Grierson observed that these Old Kukis speak "mere dialects of one language". Grierson believed that separate dialect of each Kuki-Chin tribes evolved during their settlement period in Lushai Hills (present Mizoram). About the dialect of Hmar tribe, G.A. Grierson observed that "the original Old Kuki tribe seems to have lived in the Lushai Hills, from whence they were driven out by the Thados. The Hmars were apparently left behind, or have subsequently re-migrated from Manipur, and this dialect has been much influenced by Lushai". Grierson found similarities of dialects of Rangkhawl with the dialects of Halam, the closeness of Ranglung dialect with Halam and Rangkhawl dialects. About the dialect of Aimol, Grierson found it close to "Rangkhawl and connected languages". About the dialect of Chiru, Grierson observed that "their language is most closely related to Halam, Kom, Rangkhawl and Ranglung". About Koireng dialect, he found that "the Koireng dialect in essential points agrees with Halam, Kom, Rangkhawl, Langrong, etc; in some instances most closely with Khongjai." About the Biete dialect, Grierson found it

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

etc. “close connection with Rangkhawl, Hallam, Langrong” The Halam was the name of particular community living in erstwhile greater Tipperah kingdom which included large part of Barak valley, Tuipaimukh region and present Mizoram. As mentioned earlier, the Halam community was comprised of many sub tribes or clans such as the Molsom, Kaipeng, Chorai, Langkai, Marchafang, Dap (Nabin), Sakachep, Thangchep, Bowng, Korbong, Rupini, Koloi, Bongcher, Sakachep, Thangchep, Ranglong and Rangkhawl. However, Grierson has categorized the Rangkhawl and Ranglongs as separate clans of Old Kuki tribes. In fact, the Rangkhawl and Langrong have also been the mainstream Halam and occupy prominent place in Halam society.

The Halams called their language as “*Riemchong* or *Riemtong*” meaning *language of the Riem* people. The Halams loosely identified themselves as *Miriem* which means *People* and; the word *Riem* was the short form of the word *Miriam*. The word *Chong* or *tong* means *Language* and when the two words of *Riem* and *Chong* or *Tong* were combined together, it pronounced as *Riemchong* or *Riemtong*. The word *Riem* or *Hriem* was the corrouption of the Chinese word *Hiem*, which means human being. About Halam language, Grierson observed stating that “*their language is mixed up with Aryan language words to a greater extent*”. The Halam had been in Syhlet and surrounding region in the past, and they had dealing with the plain people for many centurie. Therefore, one should not be surprised for borrowing many bocabularies from the language of the plain people, particularly, the Bangali language. However, their language was more akin to Kuki Chin Lushei-Hmar language.

#### **Comparison of vocabularies of the Halam with allied tribes :**

The comparison of words as indicated next page (Table No.1) present an insight on the language of Kuki-Chin-Lushei tribes.

**Comparison of numerical words :** Nouns of numerical words were (*one*), *Hni*(*two*), *thum*(*three*), *li*(*four*), *ringa*(*five*), *ruk*(*six*), *sari*(*seven*), *riet*(*eight*), *kua*(*nine*) and *som*(*ten*). Other words such as *in*, *pa*, *a* and *ma* prefixing nouns were ornamental words only. There was variation occurring in the pronunciation of dialects of different Old Kuki tribes. But variation in pronunciation could also be noticed across the Halam sub tribes or clans as was evident from the table in next page (Table No.2).



## COMPARISON OF VOCABULARIES OF THE HAIAM WITH ALLIED TRIBES :

Table no-1

Words	Langkai/ Chensi/ Thangchepi/ Sakchepi/ Dap etc.	Chiru	Kom	Aimol	Rangkhawi (in Cachar)	Ranglong (Tipperah)	Koireng	Mizo
One	Inkha	Akha	Inkhal	Ankha	Inkha	Kha-ka	Kha	Takha
Two	Inni	Adi	Inni	Anni	Inni	Inni	Kini	Tahni
Three	Inthur	Athur	Inthur	Anthum	Inthum	Inthum	Kanthum	Patum
Four	Marli	Mili	Mali	Mansi	Mansi	Inli	Mali	Pali
Five	Ranga	Ranga	Ranga	Ranga	Ringa	Ranga	Ranga	Panga
Six	Anuk	ruk	Karuk	Karuk	Ruck	Ruk	Kauuk	Pauuk
Seven	Sari	Sink	Sari	Sari	Sari	Sair	Sari	Pasirih
Eight	Arei	Arei	Karei	Karie	Cariei	Riei	Kiri	Pagiri
Nine	Akuck	Ako	Ku	Kuo	Guo	Kuo	Kuc	Pakuo
Ten	Som	Som	Som	Som	Som	Som	Som	Som
Twenty	Somoni	Somdi	Somni	Somni	Somni	Somoni	Somni	Somni
Fifty	Somanga	Somanga	Somanga	Somanga	Somanga	Somanga	Somanga	Somanga
Hundred	Talhat	Ajhat	Rehat	Rehat	Talhat	Tajaka	Rakhat	Za



Although pronunciations of numerical counting vary from one clan to the other clans, such variation was not wide. The words *Pa, An, In, In* prefixing before the words *Khat, Nih, Thum* etc. were ornamentation of the numerical words only. Nouns were *Khat, Nih, Thum, Nga, Rok, Sari, Riet, Kach* and *Som* and; thus *nam* were the same across the Kuki-Chin-Lushei clans.

**Comparison of vocabularies of Halams and Old Kukies :** Similarities of the words and vocabularies used by different Old Kuki tribes were noticeable. However, the Koloi and Rupini tribes were speakers of *Kohborok* (Tripuri) language. Many kinsmen of the Halams such as *Kom, Aimol, Chiru, Koirang* etc. who emigrated to Manipur from greater Tipperah kingdom centuries before had dialects which were akin to Halam dialect. The Table No.3 gave comparison among different dialects of Old Kuki tribes of Manipur and the Halam in Tripura and Assam.

**Comparison of the name of animal and birds etc :** Most of the Old Kuki tribes now live in Manipur, Dima Hasao(North Cachar Hills), Barak valley, Jayantia Hills of Meghalaya, and Nagaland (the Khelmas). At present the Halams in Tripura and Barak valley, have dealing with the Lushei and Hmar tribes through native Christian Missionaries and church organisations. Linguistically these two tribes were also well connected to the Halam language. Besides, the dialect of the Darlong too closely connected to Halam, Hmar and Lushei dialects. The comparison of dialects of these tribes with the dialect of Halam was necessary for better understanding. Names of the animals, birds and other living being in Halam language in relation to Lushei (Mizo), Hmar and Darlong language has been given in the table next page at Table No.4.

**Comparison of name of human organs:** Comparison of the vocabularies of the Halams relating to organs of human body, with the vocabularies of the Lushei, Hmar and Darlong tribes has been given in the table no. 5.

**Comparison of name of trees and plants etc. :** Comparison of the name of trees, plants, flowers, cereals, and vegetables etc in Halam language in relation to the languages of the Lushei and other Kuki tribe was as given table no. 6 .

**Comparison of vocabulary of time and natural objects :** Comparison of vocabularies related to time, natural occurrence and other natural objects in Halam language with reference to the languages of the Lushei and other Old Kuki tribes was as given table no. 7.

COMPARISON OF VOCABULARIES OF HALAM WITH OLD KLUKI TRIBES  
Table no-3

Words	Halams	Kom	Aimol	Anal	Koireng	Chiru	Purum
I	Kai,Keima	Kai	Kai	Ni	Kai	Kai	Kai
Mine	Kata	Kai si	Kai ka ni	Nika	Kai ta	Kai	Ka ra
We	Keini	Ni ka	Kaini	Ni hing	Kaini	Kaini	Kaini
Our	Kaini,Kaina	Kai ni si	Kai ni	Ni hing	Kai ni ta	Kai ni	Kai ta
Thou,you	Nang,Nangma	Nang	Nang	Nang	Nang	Nang	Nang,Nangi
Your	Nangni,Nanta	Nangri si	Nangni	Ni harg	Nangri ta	Nang ni	Nangai za
He	Ama	Ama	Ama	Ama be	Ama	A ma	Ma lu
His	Ata,Ama za	Ama si	Amata	Ama be	Ama ta	A ma	Ma ta
They	Annirngai	Amahi	Ama ni	Ama ting	Amahi	A ma ni	Mani ctu
Their	Anningai	Amahisi	Amahi	Ama ting	Amahi	Amahi	Mani ctu
Hand	Kut	Ka Ku	Kut	Ka ku	Kut	Khur	Kur
Foot	Ke	Ke	Ke	Ka khu	Ke	Ke	Ke
Nose	Nar	Ka Nher	Nar	Ka hnal	A nar	Nar	Natung
Eye	Mit	Ka hmit	Mit	Kamhi	Ami	Mik	Mit
Mouth	Mur,Abai	Ka hrer	Mur	Kamhngkol	Aner	Anenko	Bao
Tooth	Ha	Ka ha	Ha	Kaha	Aha	Aha	Ha
Ear	Kur	Ka kur	Kour	Kara	A kuywir	Ankor	Kur
Hair	Sam	Ka sam	Sam	Kasam	Asair	Sam	Sair
Head	Lu	Ka lu	Lu	Ko lu ctu	Alu	Lu	Lu
Tongue	Lwi, Molei	Ka malei	Lei	Ka bili	Alei	Malai	Lai
Belly	Von,Bhung	Ka vor	Mer	Ka po	Awor	Won	Won
Back	Rung	Ka thur	Ting	Ka pang	Ating	Kamam	Ting



Coek	Arkhong	Arkhong	Arkhong	Hal	Arkhong	Arkhong	Arkhong	Arkhong	Arkhongpa
Duck	Vatok	Atok	Vatok	Nganu	Azok	Vatok	Vatok	Arak	Arak
Camel	Ma king kang	Ji	Ut	Ji	Ut	Ut	Ut	Ut	Ut
Birc	Va Wa	Wa	Wate	Paha	Wa	Va	Va	Aw	Aw
Go	Sero	Kase	Kache	l che	Kache	Ashe	Ashe	Thang	Thang
Eat	Saro or Ne ro	Kasa	Kacha	Kachamang	Acha ye	Kashak	Kashak	Abak	Abak
Sit	Insung ro	Insung	Anung	Wang wa	A ongye	Asu	Asu	Ong	Ong
Camel	Hangro, Horo	Kahong	Ayong	A wa wa	A wa ye	Ahang	Ahang	Waik	Waik
Beat	Jaura, Hama	Wuk	Ava	Abura	A wel ye	Ajem	Ajem	Wel	Wel
Stand	Inding, Ngir	Ngir	Angir	Wa te wa	A ngimye	Anging	Anging	Ngir	Ngir
Die	Thi	Ka Jiyo	Athi	Thaka	A thi ye	Athi	Athi	Athi	Athi
Cave	Pero Kape	Kape	Apak yni	Kape	A pe	Pano	Pano	Pe	Pe
Run	Incarn, In cim	Kazan	Atar	Chomja	Atar ye	Atar	Atar	Atar	Atar
Jp	Chunga, Asak	Sak	Asak tang	Hulaha	Asak	Alling	Alling	Achung	Achung
Near	Anai	Kahnai	Anai	Katieha	Angai taka	Anai	Anai	Araya	Araya
Dover	Noya, Thoya, Thang	Thai	Thang	Ka---	Thang	Thang	Thang	Athoya	Athoya
Far	Alat	Kaha	Alak	Kadu ha	Alak	Alak	Alak	Ala	Ala
Belong	Malon, Malang	Alma	Kamro or	Kathaha	Amo	Kamai kung	Kamai kung	Ma ma	Ma ma
Behind	Nuka, Anunga	Kahung	Kanuk	Aku j	Anung	Kanuk	Kanuk	Manu wa	Manu wa
Who	Tumo	Tumo	Tumo	Dapa	Klayn ni	Tumo	Tumo	Au	Au
What	Intro	-halto	Intro	Da wa wa di	Arg-e	Intro	Intro	I	I
Why	I rang mot	-hahai- Ye-ro	I rai ni no	Dal calu thi mang	Arg-sik-e-ni	I ranga ro	I ranga ro	Iye aje	Iye aje

COMPARISON OF THE NAME OF ANIMALS AND BIRDS OF THE KALAM WITH THE SITI,  
DARJONG AND HMAR TRIBES

Table-4

English	Lushai tribe (Mizo)	Kalam tribe	Hmar tribe	Darjong tribe
Animal	Ransa	Ransa	Ransa	Ransa
Ant	Fanjmir	Sahgir	Phavang	Sahgir
Bird	Sawa	Vah	Vate	Veh
Beast	Savawit	Vawit	Savon	Vawm
Bird	Vawkipa, Sanghal	Sangal	Sanghal	Sanghal
Bug	Khum-fa	Tasa	Khunfat	Tafar
Bull	Bawngchal	Sirachal	Bawngchal	Sirachal
Burfa ke		Salci	Salci	Sabi
Burcenty	Phangphahlep, Falep	Falep	Falep	Phangshahlep
Bee	Bak	Bak	Bak	Bak
Bee	Khuai	Khuai	Khuai	Khuai
Caribbee	Ke za nei	Ke lam nu	Ini, Kalam nu	Ke lam nu
Chameleon	Lalshir	Lalxin	Lalshir	Lalshir
Cow	Bawngpui	Sehrat	Bawngpui	Sehrat
Crow	Wa-ak	Chok	Vaak	Wal-ak
Cat	Zawhte	Yang	Mangte	Meng
Calf	Sakawitjai	Sakote	Sakote	Sakote
Calf	Ran	Serachai	Ransa	Serachai
Calf	Bawng tuij	Seralte	Bawngte	Seralte
Chick	Khuangchiri	Khuonwai	Khuonchai	Khuongbai
Crab	Chakai	Ai	Ai	Ai

Crocodile	Awle	Ole	Awle	Ole
Cock	Arpa	Ar-khong	Archal	Arkhang
Cockroach	Chukchu	Khanglai	Khaulhang	Teirtelam
Camel	Sanghawngsei	Makikang	Saringsei	Saringsei
Cub	Nala, Sakel nom	Keite	Tesar, Sakel leker	Keite
Dog	Ji	Ui	Ui	Ji
Dove	Vathu	Vathu	Vathu	Vathu
Duck	Varak	Vatok	Varak	Varak
Deer	Sakhi	Sakhi	Sakhi	Sakhi
Donkey	Sabengtung	Sakorpar, Sakorin	Sabengtung	Sabengtung
Elephant	Sai	Sapuis/Saichal	Sai	Sai
Eagle/Hawk	Mupui	Fimu/Muliang	Mupui	Fimu
Earthworm	Changpat	Fichal	Chokchawal	Pachokchawal
Fish	Sahnga	Nga	Nga	Nga
Frog	Ulawk	Jichawk	J, Urok	Jichak
Fly	Thilawk	Thoi	Thoi	Thoi
Firefly	Dumde	Dumde	Dumace	Dumde
Iguana	Laking lier chi	Sarfang	Laking lier chi	Sarfang
Goat	Kel	Kel	Kel	Kel
Grasshopper	Khau	Khai	Khau	Khai
Gibbon	Zawng ban set chi	Sahah	Zawng lien. Saha	Sahah
Grass	Sakawr	Sakor	Sakor	Sakor
Hen	Arpui	Arpui	Arpui	Arpui
Humming	Vapual	Vapual	Vapual	Vapual



Lion	Sakelbaknei	Sirg	Sakelbaknei	Sirg	Sakelbaknei	Sirg
Loobster	Kaikung	Aikuang	Kaikuang	Aikuang	Kaikuang	Aikuang
Leach	Vargvat	Tival, Vargvat	Invot	Tival, Vargvat	Invot	Tival
Lizard	Laliking	Lakihir	Tanghwung	Lakihir	Tanghwung	Lakihir
Louse	Hikrak	Hik	Hik	Hik	Hik	Hik
Monkey	Zawng	Zawng	Zawng	Zawng	Zawng	Zawng
Mongoose	Ch-wajiam chi	Baji, Bezaw	ThienHei	Baji, Bezaw	ThienHei	Beji
Mosquito	Thost	Rangsam, Miel	Mise	Rangsam, Miel	Mise	Miel
Snake	Varung	Varung	Varung	Varung	Varung	Varung
Sparrot	Vaki	Tokorai	Vaki	Tokorai	Vaki	Riki
Swamp	Arawn	Varawer	Arawn dhal	Varawer	Arawn dhal	Sinrai
Scorpion	Sakuh	Sarakul	Saku	Sarakul	Saku	Sankul
Sagelin	Saphu	Saphu	Saphu	Saphu	Saphu	Saphu
Solecat	Sazu	Sazu	Sazu	Sazu	Sazu	Sazu
Sparakee	Vaki w chi, Kraw	Monal	Vaki w chi, Kraw	Monal	Vaki w chi, Kraw	Monei
Ta	Sazu	Maru, Zuh	Mizu	Maru, Zuh	Mizu	Zuh
Swan	Valawik	Ralikang	Varawik	Ralikang	Varawik	Raikanz
Scimitar	Thetlet	Thetlet, Lutherek	ThienHe	Thetlet, Lutherek	ThienHe	ThienHei
Tortoise	Satel	Satel	Satel	Satel	Satel	Satel
Turtle	Thuro, Sural	Satpha	Tulsatal, Kawhner	Satpha	Tulsatal, Kawhner	Satpha
Tail		Tinei, Pir mang	Mai	Tinei, Pir mang	Mai	Tinei
Vulture	Mulakawih	Sakuru	Mutukel	Sakuru	Mutukel	Vyalukol
Wild ass	Senghar	Sanghar	Sanghar	Sanghar	Sanghar	Sanghar
Wild boar	Wawpa	Salingel	Sung hal	Salingel	Sung hal	Sanghal
Wild fowl	Arpa	Ramacha,	Arpa	Ramacha,	Arpa	Ramalia

COMPARISON OF NAMES OF HUMAN ORGANS OF THE HALAM WITH I.C.S.H.F.I, HMAR AND DARLONG TRIBES

Table no-5

English	Halam	Lushai	Hmar	Darlong
Artery	Ratharui	Thazam	Thizam	Hnhanui
Armpit	Zakruoi	Zakruoi	Zakruoi	Zak-hruoi
Ankle	Kharui, Kharli	Kharok,	Keing	Fheiarui
Breast	Tiru, Tang, Chang	Awm	Awm	Tang
Blood	ThiThisen	ThiThisen	Thisen, Thi	ThiThisen
Bone	Ruh	Ruh	Ru	Ruh
Burdock	Pin, Pirbeng, Pirtheng	Mawngam	Mongbieng	Pinbiang
Brain	Lu-rathuak	Thluak	Luthluak	Lurathuak
Beard	Rakhamul	Kha be hmul	Khakhmul	Khaitul
Chest	Rop	Awm	Awm	Tang
Chin	Rikha, Kha	Khaba	Kha	Kha
Cheek	Biang	Biang	Biang	Biang
Ear	KuarKar	Biang	Na	Kuar
Eye	Mit	Mit	Mit	Mit
Elbow	Kih, Ku, Kit	Kiu/ Kiu thiep	Kiu	Kut Kih
Face	Mai	Hmai	Hmai	Hmai
Forehead	Machal, Chalpang	Chal, Chaldar	Chal	Chal
Forefinger	Kurchal	Zungchal	Kutchal	Kutchal

Foot	Kepha, Kemoz	Kepha	Kepha	Kepha	Kepha
Heart	Lung	Lung	Lung	Lung	Lung
Head	Lu	Lu	Lu	Lu	Lu
Hand	Ku	Ku	Ku	Ku	Ku
Heel	Kecil/Kemagil	Ngar, swm, ihle	Kekhong	Kepil	Kepil
Hair	Sam, amul	Sam, Hamul	Sam	Sam, Hamul	Sam, Hamul
Intestine	Ril	Ril	Ril	Ril	Ril
Index finger	Kurchal	Kutzungchal		Kurchal	Kurchal
Jeze	Khebe	Khebe	Khebe	Khebe	Khebe
Knee	Khu/Makink/Takink	Khu	Khu	Khu	Khu
Kidney	Kal, Be	Kal	Kal	Kal	Be
Leg	Ke	Ke	Ke	Ke	Fai'Ke
Liver	Thin/Mathin	TH	Thin	Thin	Thin
Lung	Chuap	Chuap	Chuap	Chuap	Chuap
Lip	Ner	-amul, heh	-mur, Hne'	Ner	Ner
Lower finger	Ku-ih		Zung	Ku-ih	Ku-ih
Mouth	Mur, Bai	Ka, Rawiq	Bau	Mur	Mur
Mouthache	Namul	-mu, amul	-namul	Khamul	Khamul
Middle finger	Kutal	Kuzunglal	Kutal	Kutal	Kutal
Nose	Nar	-nar	-nar	Hnar	Hnar
Nosill	Nar kuo	-nar kua	-nar kuo	Hnar kua	Hnar kua

	Ring	Nghawng, Ring	Ring	Hing
Neck	Ring	Nghawng, Ring	Ring	Hing
Nail	Tin, Malin	Tin	Kutin	Tin
Nipple	Rinpat, Neremor	-rute Imur	Nene hirur	Nene Imur
Navel	Lai	Lai	Lai	Lai
Palm	Kupha, Kutmaza	Kupha	Kupha	Kupha
Ring finger	Kuting	Kutzung		
Rib	Rep ru, Tang ru	Nak ruh	Nak, Maku	Tang ru
Spleen	La	La	La	La
Skin	Vun	Vun	Vun	Vun
Saliva	Chil, Machil	Chil	Chil	Chil
Stomach, Belly	Mer, Phungui, Phung	Pumpui	Phingui	Phungui
Spine	Tingpui, Macinpui	Zang ru	-rvingzangru	Tingpui
Thumb	Kutpui	Kutzungpui	Kutpui	Kutpui
Throat	Rol	Ir	-ruk	Rol
Tongue	Lei	Lei	Lei	Lei
Teeth	-a	Ha	-a	Ha
Toes	Ke par	Ke zungang	Ke par	Ke par
Thigh	Malpui,	Malpui	Malpui	Malpui
Vein	Rithanui	Thiser zam	Thizam	Rithanui
Waist	Kawng, Makong	Kawng	Kawng	Kawng

COMPARISON OF NAME OF TREES AND PLANT OF THE HALAM WITH I.C.S.H.F.I, HMAR AND DARLONG TRIBES

Table no-6

English	Halmai (banihi clans)	Lushai (Mizos)	Hmar tribes	Darlong tribes
Ash (card)	Maipol	Maipaw	Maipol	Maipol
Banyan	Mawt	Bahla	Mawt	Mawt
Banyan tree	Buang kunu, Mawng	Hrawng	Hrawng	Hrawng
Bark (tree)	Akak, Ahok	Thing hawng	Thing hawng	Akak
Bird nit	Kuwa, Kusa	Kuwa	Kuwa	Kuwa
Bird leave	Pambuch	Panhmah	Panuong	Panhmah
Bamboo	Tal	Maw	Ruo	Ruo
Bean	Beh, Bahpui	Be	Be, Bepui	Beh, Bepui
Branch	Thingzai, A-atang	Thingzang	Thingkau	Thingzang
Bitter guard	Changkhia	Changkhia	Changkhia	Changkhia
Blackberry	Tirai	Tirai	Tirai	Tirai
Bottle gourd	Melick	Jiri	Lim	Lim kh
Bottle	Mansa	Soy-khawn	Mansa	Mansa
Cane	Rilai	Hing, Hui-pu	Hing, faling	Hing
Creeper	Chlak rang.	Hui zam chi	Hrii	Hakhza n-chi
Cooked rice	Buh	Char	Bu	Bu
Crill	Marcha	Hiancia	Hiancia	Hiancia
Cricker	Ate	Ate	Ate	Ate
Curry	Ac	Vai-Fawhmal	Hing	Ac
Cucumber	Sakhsia, Fagimx	Fagima	Fagima	Fagima
Collar	Pat	La	Pat	Pat
Cucumber	Markola	Nekhla	Nekhla	Nekhla
Cabbage	Zimur	Zichim	Anirar	Nekhla

Date	Khejur	Tum ra thlum chi	Tum ra thlum chi	Khejur
Fruit	Thei, Theira	Thei	Ta, Theira	Theira
Flower	Par	Pangpar	Par	Par
Food	Buh	Chaw	Bu	Bu
Fibre	Hrui	La zai	Hrui	Hrui
Gum	Anai	Hahni	Hahni	Hahning
Guava	Sabri, Gayam.	Kawitheh	Kawitheh	Hobiri
Gourd	Meltek	Jim	Um	Jmphak
Grass	Chiek, Tiek	Hnim	Hobet	Tiek
Ginger	Thing.	Sawching	Aithing	Aithing
Jackfruit	Lam uang, Lani	Lamkuang	Lamkuang	Lani
Lemon	Sar	Sar	Sar	Sar
Leaf	Bua, Hra	Hnah	Hra	Hra
Lotus flower	Padca par, Phuo	Tui lili	Tuipar	
Lady finger	Sakimata, Ankeliki	Ranala	Bawisai be	Naltek
Hibiscus, Chinacash	Nipui par	Nipui par	Nipui par	Nipui par
Magnolia flower	Nei par, Neu par	Ngasau par	Nei par	Nei par
Marigold	Thandar par	Sar-ken		
Melocara tree	Hirui kung	Lenhmoi		Zerukung
Maize	Vaimim, Mokodar	Vaimim	Vaimim	Mimker
Milk	Salum bu	Bulun	Bulun	
Mushroom	Satung	Pa	Pa	Parung, Pa
Murrercia	Mafamtek, Theihai	Mafamtek	Mafamtek	Mafamtek
Mango	Theihai	Theihai	Theihai	Theihai

Drang	Samaritani, Saurthuri	Sarblham	Sarblham	Sarblham	Sarblham	Sarblham
Olive	Jalpai	Olive fruit	Olive fruit	Olive fruit	Olive fruit	Olive fruit
Onion	Punur	Punur	Punur	Punur	Punur	Punur
Oil	Sarikak	Hiek	Hiek	Hiek	Hiek	Sirikak
Pomegranate	Theibusai	Theibusai	Theibusai	Theibusai	Theibusai	Theibusai
Plum	Boroi	Japar Japas	Japar Japas	Japar Japas	Japar Japas	Boroi
Pumpkin	Yenak, Maithum	Mai	Mai	Mai	Mai	Mai
Purato	Alu, Alu	Alu	Alu	Alu	Alu	Alu
Papaya	Koiphoh					Koiphoh
Pea	Motor	Ba	Ba	Ba	Ba	Motor
Pineapple	Mozai	Lakhuithai	Lakhuithai	Lakhuithai	Lakhuithai	Birung
Paddy	Seng, Buhum	Bub	Bub	Bub	Bub	Buhum
Pine	Sikai	Bufai	Bufai	Bufai	Bufai	Fai
Poot	Rajang	Zung	Zung	Zung	Zung	Tzung
Radish	Mulai	Bul uin, Antam)	Bul uin, Antam)	Bul uin, Antam)	Bul uin, Antam)	Mulai Antam
Rose flower	Quing par	Rose pangpar	Rose pangpar	Rose pangpar	Rose pangpar	Rose pangpar
Swiss potato	Kolkai					Kavibahra
Stem	Kuang, Akuaa	Kuang	Kuang	Kuang	Kuang	Kuang
Sugarcane	Ngaici, Sca	Ngaici	Ngaici	Ngaici	Ngaici	Ngaici
Silk mulberry	Pang kung	Pang ku	Pang ku	Pang ku	Pang ku	Inpang kung
Tuber	Bal	Bul bal	Bul bal	Bul bal	Bul bal	Bal
Thorn	Riling, Raling	Hing	Hing	Hing	Hing	Hing
Tamir	Chen am	Tarlene	Tarlene	Tarlene	Tarlene	Tarlene
Turmeric	Aisai, Aler a	Aisai	Aisai	Aisai	Aisai	Aisai
Vegetable	Anak	Thai	Thai	Thai	Thai	Anak, Saurjuthi

COMPARISON OF VOCABULARIES OF TIME AND NATURAL OBJECTS OF THE HALAM WITH  
 LUSHAI, HMAR AND DARLONG TRIBES  
 Table no-7

English	Halam (all clans)	Lushai (Mizo)	Hmar	Darlong
Air	Thin li, Thirhi	Bruak	Bouck	Thinthl
Afternoon	Chenung	Chawhu	Chawhning	Chawhning
Cloud	Sun, Sumphei,	Chhum	Sum	Sum
Cold	Dai	Mawc	Dei	Dei
Cyclone	Kellaihei, Thitilum	Sinuk la, Thiput vir chi	Sinuk lak	Sinuk lak
Dust	Pilvut	Mavuc	Pilvut	Pilvut
Saw	Khevar	Khevar	Khevar	Khevar
Susk	Varakuang, Varak	Thimhir, Varjam	Thimhir	Intlak
Sew	Ricaw,	Dai	Saidaw	Ricaw
Brought	Khoran	Hura	Khawthral	Khokang
Sank	Zing, thim	Thir	Inhir	Inzing
Darknight	Zanhim	Khawhir	Khawhim	Zanhim
Day	Sun	Mi, Chhur	Mi, Sun	Mi, Sun
Earth	Maniapur, Mania,	Leipur	Leiruoi, pil	Rineng, Pil
Earthquake	Ninu, Ningru, Likhite	Linghing	Chuoi inhring	Linghing
Evening	Khuloi tiang	Tlai	Zinjing	Thai
Fire	Mai,	Mei	Mei	Mei
Fog	Sumphei	Tiauchum	Sumpuawak	Sumphei
Hill	Targ, Mual	Tiang	Tiang	Tiang
Hot	Lum, Alum	Sa, Thak	Lum, Sa	Sa, Lum
Gale	Faibo, Thithiput	Thiput sadiah	Thiput	Faibwah, Thiput
Frenoon	Chohma	Chawma	Chawma tieng	Chohma
Rail	Anel, Tiel	Rial	Rial	Rial
Light	Var, Eng	Eng	Var	Var, Eng



Marigold									
Mountain	Moupiu, Moulsera	Tiangsang	Tiar2	Tiang					
Moon	Tha	Tha	Tha	Tha					Tiang
Mid-day	Sounil	Sunil	Sunil	Sunil					Tha
Midnight	Zanil	Zanil	Zanil	Zanil					Sunil
Morning	Zing	Zing	Zingkar	Zing					Zanil
Morning star	Siruk	Verpa, Aushi							Zing
Night	Zan	Zan	Zan	Zan					Siruk
Oak	Mualak, Tangsip	Tiang chhip	Tiangsip	Tiang					Zan
Plain land	Phachuan, Phuan	Zaw	Phalawel	Zaw					Tiangsip
Rock	Lungliar, Luipui	Lungpui	Lungpui	Lungpui					Phachuan, Phuan
Rain	Totul	Tuch	Tuch	Tuch					Lungpui
River	Tupui	Lupui	Yecung	Lupui					Tuch
Storm	Falbuo	Thilpouti ze	Thilpui	Thilpouti ze					Tupui
Stream	Tunwa la, Tuldurg ze	Lut ze	Yecungze	Lut ze					Falbuo
Star	Aushi	Ausi	Aushi	Ausi					Tuldurg ze
Sun	Nisa, Nil, Niuu	Ni	Nisa	Ni					Ausi
Stone	Lung	Lung	Lung	Lung					Nisa
Sail	Phil	Lal	Phil	Lal					Lung
Storm	Falkas	Thihu	Thilpui	Thihu					Phil, Rawang
Sky	Sazan	Van	Van	Van					Thilpui
Shadow	Thim	-lir	-lir	-lir					Phar
Smoke	Melkhu	Melkhu	Melkhu	Melkhu					R. Mim
Sunshire	Nisaeng, Nisalun	Ni erg	Ni erg	Ni erg					Melkhu
Sunrise	Nisuck	Ni chuh	Ni suck	Ni erg					Ni erg
Sunser.	Nitak	Ni tak	Ni tak	Ni tak					Ni suck

*Comparison of the name of colours* : Comparison of vocabularies of Halam language relating to colour with reference to the languages of the Lushei and other Kuki tribes as given below :

Table no-8

English	Halam tribes	Lushei (Mizo)	Hmar tribe	Darlong tribe
Blue	Adur	Dumpawl	Pawl, Var rorg	Adur
Black	Ahang, Awam	Dum, Hang	Hang, Dum	Awam
Brown	Philrong, Senduk	Jk, Sen uk	Senca, deu	Sakhi rong
Green	Ahing	-hing	Hing	-hing
Grey	Dukpol,	Paw, Thiak	Bourg, Tuck	Sakhi rong
Pink	Sencai, Sakhi rong	Sendang	Sendang	Sendai
Purple	Senduk	Senduk	Senduk	Senduk
Red	Aser	Sen	Sen	Aser
Yellow	Aeng	Eng	Eng	Aeng
Violet	Acuk, Mama rong	Dumpawl	Dum pawl	Acuk, Mama rong
White	Var, Arpai	Var, Ngo	Var, Ngo	Ngci, Var

*Miscellaneous vocabularies:* Comparison of miscellaneous vocabularies of Lalai language with reference to the languages of the Lushai and other Kuki tribes was as given below :

Table no-9

English	Halam tribe:(all dialects)	Lushai (Mizo)	Hmar tribe	Darlong tribe
Abandon	Maknek	Kalsan	Malsan	Mak-khal
Abdication	Inthaina	Balsan	Inthaina	Inthaina
Able	Tho thel	Thoi	Thoi	Thoi
Abduction	Mi-ruk	Mi-ru-nkra	Inukhmang	Mi-inukh
Accelerate	Chang rangjr	Thak	Chokfo	-rangvat
Accomplish	Zoi, Anzoi	Tic	Sukpurling	Inzoi
Accompany	Inzoi, Zui	Zui	Inzoi	Inzoi
Actual	Tak tak	A-jak tak	Tak tak	Tak tak
Acute	Ngel	-luu	Ngel	Ngel, Holm
Abice	Zarr, Zui	Chang	Chang, Jim	Zom
Ability	Tho theina	Theira	Theira	Theira
Abound	Acam, Tam	Tam le lu	Tam	Tarr
Absence	Jimoi, Awerlira	Awer loina	Jinnawra	Jinnaw
Acquire	En-dsang	Ngalsang	Mk, Ngalsang	Ngalsang
Accept	Pawm	Tha n	Ne, Lakhni	Thlang
Acute	Mar,	Mahni	Mal	Mimal
Alter	Theng	Tidang lam	Theng	Theng
Always	Tikal hom	Zahin	Poo, Zing	Tikal hom
Amaze	Incor khop, Enkhop	Mak ti	Mak ti	Mak ti
Alike	Inpo, Irang	In ang	In ang	In ang
Adjacent	Akcia	-hal	Kawia	-hal
Advance	Amatlang insan,	-itasewer	Hmasam	-itaseam
Adict	Fui	Fui	Ching	Fui

Add	Bel	Belh	Bel, Belsa	Bel
Afford	ʔak	Sansa Inur	P#	ʔH
Age	Kum	Kum	Kum	Kum
English	Halair	Lustai	Hmar	Salong
Alive	Sam, Thi loi, Aing	Nung	Hing	Sair
Arger	Takina	Thinuma	Lurgerna	-hing chikra
Appear	Inlang	Lang	Inlang	Inlang
Appelle	Ventair	Tisa chakna	Bu dura	Tam-na
Araisa	Thoi, Ngir, Ding	The wing	Tho	Thoi, Ding
Arrow	Thal	Thal	Thal	Thal
Argue	Inkhal	-Inial	Insel	Inkhal
Ash	ivut, Invu	Thing chi khat, yut	Meivam	Rivuc
Assist	Vasen, San	Tarpui	Thiangpui	Tarpui
Allerd	Inel, Tel	Tel	Kai	In el, Tel
Backlor	Tangval, Rawlhar	Tiangval	Lang lur	Tiangval
Baby	Naisesen	Nausen	Naisesen	Naisesen
Back	Nung	-nung	Rungzang	-nung
Backward	Nungzeng	-nung jaina	Hnungzeng	Hnungzeng
Bad	Tha loi, Sie, Asie	Sual, Dik lo	Tha lo	Tha loi, Sie
Bay	Tu in bual, Tui insil	In bualra loi	Insina	Tui insil
Bed	Zuanpha, Zalmur	Khum	Khum	Khum
Beter	Aja	Tha zawk	Thalem	Tha na, Alha
Below	Nuiah	-nuiah	Hruclah	Hruclah
Behind	Nungga	-nurgah	Hnungah	Hnungah
Before	Arma, -lha	-hmaah	-hmaah	Hmaah
Begin	ʔhu . . .	Tar	Tran	Tan

Bald	Imuna, Khum'pa	Ying'ya	Ying'ya	Ying'ya
Bealce	Asirahi, Aklanga	Kiangah	Sirah	-hri'ngal'
Berter	A'ja	Tha'zawk	Thaliam	Tha'at
Big	Allan	Lian	Lian	Lian
Bless	Baxpek	Malsawmpok	Malsawmpok	Yalsawmna
Bird	Khit	Tawn	Khuop	-chit
Bird	Milaha	Midel	Midel	Mudha
Bloom	Parlai	Parpar	Parpar	Parlal Pang'par
Bow	Sali, Sailer	Thalngul	Thalngul	Sali
Bow	Ngun, Khur	Kun	Kun	Ngun
Bdd	-lai, In'hal	-luisen	-luisen	-luisen
Borne	Pal, Chaw	Chaw, Zown	Phur	Tuor
Born	Inzir,	Yang	Yang	Yang
Borrow	Apuk, Puak	Puk	Puk	Puk
Bottom	Among, Mon	Mawn	Mon	Mon
Brave	-he	-uaiser	Hubi	In'huai, Hini
Breach	Khang	Yang'lar	Lien	Khang
Brick	Breac	Chhang	Bei	Bei
Brick	Kiek, Kiek	Tiek	Sukh'iek	Kek
Bright	Thuck, rithuck	Thaw	Thuck	Thuck
Bride	Moi	Monu	Moi	Moi
Bridge	Sikal	Lei	Lelik	Lelik
Bird	Tawi	Thu'kafawi	Tawi	Tawi
But	BE, Llan, Sip	-in'awr	Roi	Sip
Call	Kia	Ko, Au	Ko	Koi
Cademy	Yancuina	Yancuina	Yancuina	Yancuina

Carry	Input, Chawi, Inba, Inpel	Phur, Chawi	Phur, Chawi	Phu, Chawi, Inba
Catch	Man	Man	Mar	Man
Calm	Khumual dai	Reh	Re	Boibi
Charm	Aizel, Aikei	Aizial	Ai, Aikei	Aikei
Charity	Iniang-ru	Hmangaira	Hmangaira	Hmangaira
Character	Nunchang	Nunchang	Nurchan, Zie	Nunchang, zie
Challenge	Insek	Cho	Cho	Hrial
Chew	Inkhal	Trial	Se, Sai	Inkhal
Chest	Thilok, Theraw kok	Thingiem	Thirantian	Thingiem
Clear	Awai, Fai	Fai	Fai	Fai
Claver	Mar	Fing	Titi Fabo um	Mar
Claw	Kein	Kei Hah	Tiri	Kein
Clay	Pipok, Pipok, Beldok	Hur	Pil pok	Chirpek
Clawc	Sum	Chhur	Sum	Sumphai
Close	Khar	Khar	Khar	Khar
Clash	Puan	Puan	Puar	Puan
Collec	Takram, Inkhon, Lowh	Fawm khawm	Lawr, Lawr khawm	Lawi,
Collide	Iniang, Insuk	Insu	Insuk	Iniang, Insuk
Calour	Zie, Rong	Fawng	Zie, Rong	Zie, Rong
Comb	Samthi	Samkhui	Samthi	Lukhui
Compromise	Inngaina, Anngaina	Inemma	Inemma	Inemma
Charcoal	Meihai, Meihai	Meihaw	Meihol	Meihol
Confuse	Lungbuai	Tibuai	Ngaibuoi	Lungbuai
Crime	Masial	San bawchiatna	Sucira	Sucira
Crimsor	Sendai	sendok	Sendok	Sendai
Crop	Sang, Sakung	Tall-fiak	Bu le bal	

Culprit:	Misalo; Misiat	Misial	Misual	Visual
Culture	Nunzhang	Nunphung	HiofHera	Mundar
Cry	Tap	Tap	Trap	lap
Cure	Dam	Damma	Dam	Dam
Curl	Kir, Inkir	Kir	Kir	Kir
Cut	Al, Tan	Tar	Sai, Al	Al, Tar
Curry	An	Valchawmeh	Hire	An
Curse	Khamak	Anchia	Tongsie	Phuba
Curse	Kaw, Inkuai	Thil kawi, Kusl	Kawi, Inkuai	Kawi, Inkuai
Custody	Mier	Ekawira	Ekabira	Enkel
Custodial	Mien pu	Kawhu	Vergu	Enkolu
Conceal	Thup	Thup	Thup	Thup
Consent	Phal, Musm	Remi	Remi	Shal sa,
Samsel	Nunghak, Dorgaze	Nula	Nunghak	Nunghak
Day	Saur, Ni	Ni, Chhun	Ni, Sur	Ni, Sur
Sark	Zai, Thir	T-im	Inthim	Zin
Date	Tank	Tank	Tank	Tank
Saapher	Samu	Samu	Nau nufame	Nahu
Seed	Thi	Thi	T-	Thi
Seal	Kurset	Be-rgajawng	Na set	Kurset
Decey	Thu, Hinan, Tuwi	Tiarar	Hiran, Thu	Thu
Deceive	Hem	Bum	Hiam	Khal
Declare	Sung, Rissuck	Pu ng	Puong	Puong
Defame	Ramingse, Mirsaiat	Thimnashhia	Sukhingsie	Hiringsie
Delight:	Raisan	Thuan	Suklan	Juklan, Lwan
Delicious	Thi, Hnik	Tul	Tui, Hnik	Tui, Hnik

	Aihuk, Thuk	Thuk	Thuk	Thuk	Thuk
Deep					
Deliver	Hri, Keisruk	Hlan, Pe	Samsuk, Inhar	Samsuk, Inhar	Samsuk, Inhar
Delegation	Palai	Palai	Palai	Palai	Palai
Defeat	Neh, Vaneh	Hneh	Hneh	Hneh	Hneh
Deprive	Charji, Charji	Charir	Lakpek	Charir	Charir
Deposit	Thur, Dar, Sia	Dah	Sia	Sia	Sia
Desire	Nuom-na	It	Nuom, Chakra	Nuom, Chakra	Awira
Devour	Muom	Hmawm	Fa zo, Hmang zo	Fa zo, Hmang zo	Muom
Dilute	Inchir, Inpol	Tidal	Sukcep	Sukcep	Inchir, Inpol
Disease	Hri, Nara	Naina	Naina	Naina	Hri, nara
Dispute	Inngailai	Hnel	Hnel	Hnel	Inhnel
Divice	Insem	Sem	Sem	Sem	Sem
Dust	Pilvut	Vavuc	Pilvut	Pilvut	Pilvut
Early	Masa, Malawm	Hma	Zingkar	Hma	Ahma
Earrr	Loh	Hlowh	Hlow	Hlow	Hlow
East	Suoklam	Khawchhak	Saktiang	Saktiang	Suoklam
Earthquake	Hirru	Linghing	Hnuet inaring	Hnuet inaring	Hrih inling
Earthworm	Richal	Changpat	Chokhawral	Chokhawral	Richal
Eat	Sak, Neh, Bak	Eiteh	Fa, Bak	Fa, Bak	Fa, Neh
Edible	Sak hei, Sak inthai	Ei Jeth	Fak thei	Fak thei	Fa thei
Egg	Tui	Tui	Tui	Tui	Tui
Elevate	Damsang	Chawisang	Damsang	Damsang	Chawisang
Else	A dang	An leh chuan	A dang	A dang	A dang
Elocuence	Cheng theira	Thu sawi thair	Thu hii thienna	Thu hii thienna	Thu hii thienna
Eminent	Hamingthang	Chalanga, Hmingthang	Challang, Hmingthang	Challang, Hmingthang	Hmingthang
Emigrate	Inthang	Sem	Peim, Inpeim	Peim, Inpeim	Inpeim



English	Halant	Lualaba	Hmar	Sarlong
Entire	Thiem	Thiem	Thier	Thier
Enjoy	Palal	Palal	Palal	Palal
Enemy	Ral	Himalma	Himalma	Himalma
Ever	Inrubl	Rucl	Rucl	Rucl
Evict	Inzul, Rajul	Hnaxchhuak	Hnax suck	Hnax suck
Exceed	Khel	Khun, Pal	Khun, Khel	Pal
Exit	Suakna	Kalch-hualna	Suakna	Suakna
Exhaust	Ahek, Anhek	Tikang	Chau	Hek
Fabric	Puah	Puah	Puah	Puah
Face	Tual, Chuai	Chuai	Da, Chui	Tual
False	Sikbi	Sik bi	Khel	Khel
Family	Insungkhur	Chingkhia	Singkhur	Singkhur
Fame	Mingthang	Hingthang	Hingthang	Hingthang
Familiar	Riansel	Thangnel	Tudleng	Hnase
Fate	Ralwar	Charvo	Charvo	Char
Fatigue	Saina	Chajna	Sukchau	Saina
Favour	Ngalsa	Suakna	Ditsakna	Ngalsalno
Female	Nupang	Hnakhia	Nulme	Nupang
Fear	Tina	Hachna	Tina	Tina
Festival	Pothea	Kur	Rudhena	Hud
Fewer	Inkhur, firang	Khawsk	Khawsk	Inkhur
Few	Alekta, Chir, Ka, Tom	Tsm	Tarim	Tsm, Jika
Find	Mu	Chhar	Hmusuok	Hmusuok
Flee	Roh	Tianchia	Tianchiang	Hawbital
Finish	Jai, Anjol, Ahsk	Ta	Zc	Zc, Hek

	Khap	Khap	Khap	Khap, Phal Iai
Forbid				
Food	Bu, sak chi	Chaw	Bu	Bu
Friend	Mal,	Trian	Rucl	Cham
Game	Indai, Nici	Infiamra	Inkheina	Inkheira
Garden	Taluar, Bari	Huan	Huar	Huan
Gende	Nundai	Zaidam	Zaineir	Hrunnem
Generous	Tikhlai		Tikhlai	Tikhlai
English	Halair	Lustai	Hmar	Sadlong
Germ	Hrik	Natha, hrik	Hrik	Hrik
Give	Pak	Pa	Pa	Pa
Glad	Taisan	Lawit	Lawni, Hlit	Lawni, Hlim
Glory		Rapuira	Chawinawira	Rapira
Glutton	Toluak, Imuck	Mixir	Mixir	Tuak
Grace	Um,	Jim	Um	Jim
Good	Afa	Tha	Tha	Tha
Glaur	Nguna	Tim thul ihu	Infiamra	Nguna
Halt	Ngir, Mang,	Chawl, Bai	Chamma	Chamma
Happy	Taisan	Him	Him	Him
Heist	Inuwira	Huanhawira	Infiamra	Infiamra
Hard	Akhir, Anggar	Sak	Chang	Akhir
Harship	Inakna	Tasara	Tucira	Tucira
Heat	Sam	Tidam	Sukdam	Sair
Hear	Ngai, Riet	Hia	Ngai	Ngai
Heat	Lum	Saina	Lum	Sa
Him	Ama, Anni	Ani	Ama	Ara
Hit	Deng	Deng	Deng	Deng

Hog	Vokkang	Vauk	Vokchal	Vaukklang
Hon	Sarki, Ki	Ki	Ki	Ki
Honor	Tum, Titalum	Rapra	Tium	Tum
Hurt	Pop, Na	Tina	Pop, Na	Pop, Na
Hunger	Vancam	Rilama	Phingama	Vantam
Husband	Sasal	Sasal	Sasal	Sasal
Idol	Ramil	Milim	Milim	Milim
Idiot	Miraw	Mia	inve	Milol
Intimate	Insir, Isir	Entawm	Insir	Insir
Intervista	Insangir	Cawpichal	Karawm	Insangir
Intox	Tiam	An	Lir	-lim
Intrigue	Inhuangka, Anim	Thianglam la	Thianglam la	Thianglam la
Ignorant	Tel, Ivi	Sawaka la	Nganlis	Ngasakky
Impale	Sam, Jaw	Saw	Caw	Caw
Impulse	Tiam	Awam	Tiam	Tiam
Insert	Tibur, Pol	Rawh	Sielu	Rawh
Intertw	Dikra	Ki-ra	Famikirna	Dikra, Feina
irk	Lungsol	Tibual	Nghak	Lung buahir
inward	Sungie	Chunglam	Sungiang	Sungiang
Jealous	Inthik, Khanara	Thikchua	Thikchua	Isik
Jerk	Sok, Insok	Thin sawk	Ngei	Serk
Jelir	Inzam	Zawm	Inzam	Inzam
Joy	Faisan	Layana	Hirna	Hirna
Just	Arlik, Adik	Sik	Indik	Adik
Jump	Incham	Zuanc	Incham	Incham
Kick	Inlow	Su, Chui	Sui	Sui

Kidnap	Miruk	Mi hning ruk	Inukli	Mi hruk
Kim	Jrai	Laira	Sungkhal	Jfrai
Kid	Kelte	Kel ro	Kelte	Kelte
Kinney	Akal	Kal	Kal	Be
King	Teng	Lalber	Lalak	Teng
Kird	inming mu	Nginei, Nundam	Zuimein, Nginei	Inniangmu
Lack	insanna	Tiaktham	Taksam	Taksam
Lackler	Dwandarei	Lelawn	Kalawar	Lalak
Lagoon	Tuidil	Tuidil	Dil	Dil
Lady	Vamangipul,	Mipul mei mei	Minarar	Minarar
Lady	Nupang inmoi	-meichitia	Huurei ropul	-nupang inhai
Land	Ram	Lei	Ram	Rair
Landslice	Nirkei, K'osabak kei	-ninkei	Mimkei	-nirkei
Large	Lian	Lian	Lien	Lian
Last	Nung zak	-nuhnungtieng	Nuhung lak	Tawp ra
Leaf	Na, Thingbo	-nah	Hna,	-nah
Lead	Rual	-ruai	-ruai	-ruai
Lean	Ikong	Thle	Cher	Cher
Leak	Inpep, Pep	Pawp	Put	Peph
Leap	Inchawit	Zuang	Inchawin	Inchawin
Learn	indru, Insei	Zir	Inchuk	Zir
Leave	Makrak	Kalsar	Maksar	-mak khal
Legend	Tienlai thephung,	Thawthu	Tienlai thu	Tienlai thephung
Leisure	-lun owl, Inngambur	-lun owl	-lun owl	-lun owl
Level	Incham	En zawina	Inzawl	Incham
Lick	Liak	Liak	Liak	Like

Lid	Sing, Bering	Chhin	Sir	Sing
Lie	Milaku	Sawt sawl	Khalhil	Khalhil
Life	Thangkangkar, Samkongkara	Nurna	Hingha	Nurna
Like	Inang, Ang	Ang	Inang	Inang
Line	Chinel	Chinel	Chinai	Chinel
Link	Inzom	Inzawna	Inzomna	Inzawna
Lock	En	En	En	En
Log	Thingbong, Thingbum	Thingum	Thingum	Thingum, Thinghong
Long	Asok, Sek	Sai	Sai	Sai
Love	Indira	Hirangaha	Hirangana	Hirangaha
Longing	Inngaina	Chakna	Chalina	Inngaina
Low	Nuol	Ariam	Inhruai	Inhram
Low of cow	Sirat Inram	Bu	Inbu	Sirat Inram
Lucas	Annara, Aboi	Thilhol	Inhanga	Abai, Inhang
Lure	Thenna, Inanhi, Injahir	Inhenna	Thetra	Thenna
Lunatic	Ia, Wia	Mia	Inver	Midowh
Lurch	Subu	Chawchhur	Sumbu	Sumbu
Machine	Kol	Kol	Kol	Kol
Mace	Sir	Siam	Siam	Siam
Mace	Nunpak	Nula	Nurphak	Nunphak
Mace	Sasal	Mpa	Pasal	Ipa
Madage	Enkol	Enkol	Enkol	Enkol
Madfest	Inang	Inurphak	Inang	Inang
Madder	Onsak, Omchang	Thidar	Chedian	Owmdar
Maddy	Sam, Alamin	Tamtak	Tamtak	Tamka
Magicle	Tangraipar	Perker	Thangraipar	Thangraipar
Magical	Nolhun	Tisa thil	Polisay	Thil

	Archang, Inchang	pulling	pulling	pulling	pulling
Mallure	Archang, Inchang				
Marress	Puarpha	Awngphah		Puerphasa	Puarpha
Meal	Bu	Chaw		Bu	Bu
Meh	Meh	Sa		Sa	Sa
Meek	Asing	Zawdawh		Zawawthai	Inngalawit
Meef	Indewing, in mu	Tihawm		Tuok	In hitu
MH	In zoi, An jwi	Ti lui		In ui	Injoi
Measure	Inkhir	Tehra		Inkhina	Inkhi
Medicine	Loi	Sandawi		Sandawi	Sandawi
Merely	Mh mui	Chauh		Cho	Mimui
Mery	Raisan	Him		Him	Him
Mery	Lungkhaira	Zahngaira		Zangaina	Khargaira
Mischel	Ousaki, Om hachi	Sualsaina		Thisual	Thisual
Misery	Iniergha, Inak awit	Hrehawira		Rinurna	Hrehawira
Mistake	Dikoi	Hmu suac		Inokiona	Dikoina
Misush	Mangsakoi, Mangsa loi	Hmangsual		Hmangsual	Hmangsual
Move	Achang	Tiche		Sukchang	Inchang
Mbum	Lungra	Lungai		Lurgai	Lungra
Mud	Flpck, Bekkok, Bekpok	Chir		Chirak	Chirpak
Nai	Tin	Tin		Tin	Tin
Naked	Saikong, Tak Korong	Tuak		Sauok	Saching, Thing
Narnow	Inchip, Inep	Zim		Chin, Inchip	Inchip
Native	Arana mi	Piangpui thilarammi		Arammi	Ramami
Need	Arang	Maraawh		Mamaw	Atul
Neglect	Miel loi, Mieltoi	Thlah Ham		Ngalha	Ngalakhi
Nice	Asra, Aitha	Tha		Mawi	Tha
Orch	Korak insam	Chhechham		Inkhanna	Inkhanna

Obedience	Hetaira	Thu awitara	Thuswira	Thuawira
Obey	Nuar, Zwm	Zwm	Aw	Aw
Obstruct	Sang	Sang, Sal	Sang, Sal	Sang
Obtain	Mu, Nw	-mu	Grang, Hmu	-mu, Nw
Observe	En Jir	Thir	Er ran	Thir
Occupy	Luh	Luh	-lus	Hoo
Occure	Achang, Ahong ni	Lo awm	-lung ni	Ai-ang ni
Open	Inhang	Inhang	Inhong	Inhong
Ordy	Zurak indak	Niam chak	Zilruj	Zurak omhwng
Order	Arjang	Sang	Dai g	Sang
Our	Kan la	Kan la	Kan la	Kan la
Our	Santang, Sanah	Pawral	Fuoh	Pudang
Overcome	Neh	Insum zo lo	-ne	Hre
Overflow	Liem	Lush liam	Chin	Liam
Owm	Kib, Kala	Ta	Man 'a	Ka
Saddy	Buhum, Sang	Bu	Bu	Buhum
Saltlake	Shuksam, Inchook	-hu	Inpu	Phuksam
Sam	Ara, Maira	Na	Nara	Nara
Pair	Abop	Kawp khat	Tuok	Abop
Sardon	Khama	Nga cam	Ngidam	Ngidam
Saric	Chahai am, Tins	Thaplanng	Trum	Tus
Saralyse	hwng	Zeng	Zeng	hwng
Sarake	Vandhel	Q arpa al nei	Thing vH	Vatanga, Ir-rik
Saucy	Am, Abol	Thara	Tavara	Thawra
Sadence	Lungsel	Sawhaina	Sardisi	Zaicawhel
Seace	Ir-paj	Serra	Inema	Inema
Sa F. Fwed	Lam, Lam pui	Ka kam p	Lan	Lan
Plate	Mairang, Bukhang	Thing	Thing	Bukhang

	Irang, Mljang	Feihai	Rimsai	Michai
Door	Arhai, Irhai	Awai	Indik	Inhai
Proper	Mipui	Mipui	Mipui	Mipui
Public	Inchum	Chum	Inchum	Chum
Pure	Inhiang	Thianghim	Thianghim	Thianghim
Pursue	Zui	Zui	Zui	Zui
Quality	Ansa	Zia	Zie	Zie
Quantity	Tam	Zat	Tamzie	Tamzie
Quemel	Insuol	Inhau	Inhalna	Inhalna
Quilt	Talshon, Bor	Lachih	Rizai	Bori
Quest	Inkelra	Zawna	Zongpra	Zawra
Quiet	Awameu, Acaizac	Reh	Re	Sahniam
Rat	Pumlar, Chai	Pur	Pum	Pur
Rage	Takale	Thin so	Lurgir	Ningthik
Rain	Tsalui	Tuoh	Ruo	Tuoa
Rainbow	Sumserei	Chimbai	Sumisang	Sumisang
Raise	Chunglam	Tikang	Damkang	Chunglam
Ransack	Inrawk	Suam	Zong	Zong
Rare	Avang	Vang	Vang	Avang
Raw	Asel	Hel	Sel	Hel
Rebuke	Ngo	Hau	Kawk	Hal
Reap	Kham, Inmal	Seng	Sik, At	Inmal, At
Recover	Sannok, Hamok	Chhar leh	Inkhut rawk	Har rawk
Regret	Insi	Inchir	Insi	Insi
Remind	Inna, Innok	Hriat nawnir	Inhietsookti	Inhietnok
Repay	Thour	Rul	Perawk	Tul, Thung
Team	Invak	Vakwei	Invak	Invak
Tow	Avlar	Tiar	Inllar	Inllar



**CALENDER MONTHS AND WEEK:** There was calendar months of the year as well as days of the week which revealed the richness of the Halam language.

**Table no-01**

Calender months of the Halam	Lushai/ Mizo calender	Gregorian months	Bengali calender months
Vatchang	Pawikul Thla	January	Magha
Masai	Ramluk Thla	February	Falguna
Mantun	Vau Thla	March	Chaitra
Dolpa/Tha-doi	Tau Thla	April	Baisakh
Phurpa/Tha-phur	Tomir Thla	May	Jaistha
Murpa/Tha-mur	Nikir Thla	June	Ashara
Azing	Vawkhnielzawn Thla	Ju y	Sravana
Arem	Tritin Thla	August	Arshin
Matang	Minkut Thla	September	Bhadro
Rutlai	Khuangchawi Thla	October	Kartik
Birip	Sahmuphal Thla	November	Agrahayan
Tuibul	Pawitlak Thla	December	Push

Every month has relation with the change of activities undertaken by the Halam in jhum land and the change of surrounding natural environment. Thus, each month would carry its own meaning which might be explained as follows:

(a) *Vatchang (January-February)* : This was the season of *Lai Vat* i.e. cutting of tree and bamboos for jhumming. The word *Vat* means clearing forest for shifting cultivation and the word *Chang* was the short form of the word *Ranchang*, which means *Virgin forest*. Thus, *Vatchang* was related to the period of cutting forest for jhumming.

(b) *Masai (February-March)* : After ginning the raw cotton which was produced in the jhum, it was time for carding the ginned cotton. This was the time women carded the ginned cotton by a bow called *Pasai*. The word *Masai* means *carding of cotton*, which was done by the women before the next work of spinning.

(c) *Mantun (March-April)* : From the word *Mantun*, which means planting of crops' seed, this word originated. The word *Mantun* was poetic word for planting seeds in jhum land. This month corresponded to March, the season for planting crops' seed in jhum land.

(d) *Doipa (April-May)* : This was the time of flowering of trees, the name of which was *Ringmu kung* in Halam language. In Bengali language the tree was called *Zarul* tree, and the botanical name was *Lagerstroemia speciosa*(L) Pers.

(e) *Phurpa (May-June)* : This was the month to pluck and carry jhum produce such as pumpkins, ashgourd, cucumbers, maize etc, from jhum land very diligently without rest even for a day. The word *phur* means to work earnestly and diligently in Halam language.

(f) *Mgurpa (June-July)* : This was the month during which liches, mosquitos, insects etc. were infested in the jhum land and forest, which disturbed the working man. The word *Mur* means *infested*, and in this period, jhum land, forest, stream were infested by poisonous insects, liches, snakes as the period was rainy season.

(g) *Azing (July-August)* : When the paddy of surrounding jhum fields of the villagers started to ripe, hill after hill used to look bright with the glowing of ripe paddy on surrounding region even in day light. The reflection of bright yellowish ripe paddy in surrounding region made hills shine bright in the season. But during the month of *Azing*, every thing became gloomy as the bright ripe jhum paddy disappeared with the completion of harvest of jhum paddy in this month and the household became nostalgic. The word *Azing* means dark and gloomy.

(h) *Aram (August-September)* : Everything in the jhum land started to dry and perished in this month. The word *Aram* means *perish* in Halam language, indeed jhum crops almost ceased to exist in jhum land in this month.

(j) *Martang (September-October)* : The word *Martang* means *fatty and healthy*, and the villagers were fatty and healthy indeed because in this season the work of jhum land drastically reduced. The working men and women were in happy mood spending time in relaxed mood by drinking and eating in get together mood, holding *Zu Bual*, which means *Festival of drink* (new rice-beer and beverage prepared with new jhum rice).

(k) *Rutlai (October-November)* : The word *Rutlai* means "gathering season" of jhum paddy, cotton etc. Indeed, it was a time to harvest jhum crops such as cotton, sesamun etc.; and at the same time gather and carried the crops in the village.

(L) *Birip* (November-December): The word *Birip* means coolness at night, which signified commencing of winter season.

(m) *Toibu* (December-January): In this time roots of the bamboos started to sprout up. The word *Toibu* means bamboo root, and in this month bamboo roots in the old jhum land started to sprout which produce new tender leaves.

**DAYS OF THE WEEK** : Days of the week in Halam language as compared to Umar, Lushai and Bengali language has been mentioned in the table below:

Table-02

Halam	Lushai	Umar	English	Bengali
Ninomi	Pathianni	Pathianni	Sunday	Rabi
Thapami	Thawetanni	Thawetanni	Monday	Som
Nihoini	Thaweleni	Thaweleni	Tuesday	Mongol
Nilaini	Nilaini	Nilaini	Wednesday	Budh
Thienpuini	Nilathawetanni	Ningani	Thursday	Brihaspati
Rangkhami	Zithawepni	Zithawepni	Friday	Sukre
Sianei	Iurinni	Iurinni	Saturday	Soni

**FOREIGN WORD:** The Halams have borrowed many words from other language in course of long association with their neighbours and; the influence of Kokborok (Tripuri) and Bengali language has been more visible among different clans of the Halam. But today English words have also creeping into Halam language as English is being used in offices and public places. Some borrowed words have been mentioned as under:

Vocabularies	Some borrowed words used by the Halam tribes
Afternoon	Vaichai (used by the Molson, Rangkhawl and Kaipeng)
Almanah	Alman (used by all clans of the Halams)
Accident	Accident (used by all clans of the Halams)
Advocate	Uki (Persian word borrowed through Bengali language)
Aluk	Woman's breast (Kokborok word used by the Rangkhawl, Molson and Bengther clans)
Bottle	Botal (English word)
Book	Lekha

Biscuit	Bisucut (English word borrowed through Bengali language)
Sugar	Chini ( Bengali word)
Court word)	Court (English word borrowed through Bengali)
Cinema	Cinema (English word borrowed through Bengali language)
Calculation	Hisap (Bengali word)
Chest	Sinduk (Bengali word)
Container	Kotra (Kokborok word)
Daruga	Darukha(Persian word borrowed through Bengali language)
Door	Duwar (Persian word borrowed through Bengali language used by Molsom and Kaipeng clans)
Doctor	Dactor (English word borrowed through Bengali language)
Dacoit	Dakait (borrowed from Bengali language)
Evening	Sanja (Borrowed from Bengali language)
Gourd	Meilok (Borrowed from Kokborok language)
Government	Sorkar(Borrowed from Bengali language)
Key	Chabi (Borrowed from Bengali language)
Kettle	Ketili (English word borrowed through Bengali language)
Lime	Chun/Chunei (Borrowed from Bengali language)
Marriage	Rikai ( Kokborok word used by Molsom, Rangkhawl, Bongcher and Korbong)
Market	Bazar
Mid-day	Sun-Dibor(used by the Rangkhawl, Molsom, Kaipeng, Bongcher)
Mid-night	Zandibar ( used by the Rangkhawl, Molsom, Kaipeng, Bongcher clan only)
Maternal uncle	Mama (Bengali word borrowed through the Kokborok language)
Police	Police (English word)
Pocket	Poket, Jep (English & Bengali words respectively clans only)
Pen	Kolom (Bengali word only)

Pencil	Pencil( Borrowed from English word)
Plate	Maizang( Borrowed from Kokborok word)
Soap	Saban/Sapan(Bengali word)
Shop	Dukan (Bengali word)
Saw	Koral(Bengali word)
Shirt	Kanchu, Kuttai or Kutai (Kukborok word)
Strength	Phan (By Molsom, Kaipang, Rangkhawl,Bongliher)
Space	Kodal(Bengali word)
Table	Tebi or Tebti (English word borrowed through Bengali language)
Time	Jou (Kokborok word used by Cherei clan of the Halam)
Teacher	Master(English word borrowed through Bengali language)

These words were illustration only. There were many more words borrowed from Bengali and English; and the borrowing seemed to be increasing.

**GRAMMER :** A.C. Grierson's observation that Old Kukis speak mere dialects of one language was very true. None of the constituent of the Kuki Chin Lushei or Hmar tribe would be able to claim their language as too rich and perfect without taking account of the other dialects of their kinsmen. Leaving aside the Maitel (Manipuri) language, among Kuki-Chin language, the Lushei (Mizo) language was the most developed language with proper form of literature. Today Lushei (Dulian) language is regarded as the language of Mizo people as a whole, and the State language in Mizoram. But other Kuki-Chin tribes such as the Hmar, Thado and Paite etc, living outside Mizoram have been making effort to develop their respective dialect into language. Mizo language could be the common language of all Kuki Chin tribes had there been conscious effort to enrich this language through inclusion of vocabularies of other Kuki Chin tribes. But the Lushei and allied tribes of Mizoram have advanced in all respect; and have secured their political, economic, language and cultural interest through the attainment of Statehood after hard struggle. Therefore, such inclusive attitude on their part should not be expected. Thus, all other Kuki Chin tribes have charted out the path for the development of their language.

and this trend could also be noticed among a section of Halam tribe, though many doubt about the success of such attempt.

For understanding the construction of the basic grammatical sentence of the language, one need to base on the observation of A.G. Grierson given in *The Linguistic Survey of India*. The Halams living in different part of Tripura and Assam speak dialects which vary from one region to another; and dialect could form the basis for the development of written Halam language. But without written grammer, the development of language would not take proper shape. However, some light need to be thrown on the probable shape of grammer to form an idea on the language.

**NOUNS** : Like any other language, the Halam language also has noun which include the name of a person, animal, bird, object etc. weather living or non living organism.

**A.Kind of Nouns :**

(a) Proper nouns: Siaka, Lenpui, Siama, Ringa, Agartala, Delhi, Geeta, Bible etc.

(b) Common nouns: Nupang (woman), Pasal (man), Khuo(village), Kancholi(shirt), Tuipui(river).

(c) Collective nouns: Mipui (mob), Rual (team), Sarual (flock), Inkhowm (collection).

(d) Material nouns: Lung (Stone), Rangkachak (gold), Thir (iron), Thing (wood).

**B.Abstract Nouns :**

Raisanna (happiness), Lungsiat (sorrow), Ichai(poor) Inrienmu(erfo),Hi Hen dan(treatment), Nuiza (laughter), Inloi (movement), Awatung(arrival), Iru (theft), Naipanglai (infancy),

**C.Gender :**

The word for sex in grammer is **-gender**.

In Halam language gender is distinguished in the case of animate beings. In case of human bengs different words may be used for the two genders.

(i) Examples of masculine and feminine gender as follows-

Masculine gender	Faminine gender
Pa (father)	Nu (mother)
Parual (brother)	Sarnu(sister)
Ruother (husband)/Pura(husband)	Dongma (wife)/Nupui(wife)
Pasal (man)	Nupang (woman)

(ii) Common genders are the following:-

Naipam (Chief), Ziritir (pupil), Naisora-nai (orphan), Mihriem (person), Vah (bird), Mastor (teacher), Naite (baby). The fact is that some common genders

(iii) Neuter Gender : Lifeless things have no sex, i.e. they are neither males nor females. In other words, they belong to neither sex. That is why they are of neuter gender. In (house), Thal (arrow), Sail or Saipher (bow), Mipui (crowd), Surpui (summer) etc. are neuter gender.

#### D. Number :

According to number, things fall into two chiefly—single or more than one. The word *ngai* is added to make the singular noun into plural number.

**PRONOUNS :** *Pronoun* is a word used in place of a noun to avoid its repetition.

(i) Personal pronoun : Examples of personal are Keima (I or Me), Keiningai (We or Us), Nangma (you), Nanni (yours), Ama pa (He), Amanu (She), Anni ngai (they) etc.

(ii) Demonstrative pronoun: Chief demonstrative pronouns are- Mehi (this), Sowah (that), Fewangai (these), Sowahngai (those) etc.

(iii) Indefinite pronouns: Chief indefinite pronouns are- Khat (one), Arningai (they), Anrengin (all), Shenkhat (some), Mi shenkha in (somebody), Tuhomi (nobody) etc.

(iv) Distributive pronouns: Chief distributive pronouns are- Inkhat (each), Inkhatpei (either), Tupai niloi (neither) etc.

(v) Interrogative pronouns: There are five chief interrogative pronouns- Tumow (who), Ingmow (What), Ingpumow (which), Tutamow (whose), Turangmow (whom).

(vi) Relative pronouns: Relative pronouns are hardly used in Halara language.

(vii) Reflexive pronouns: Amareng (himself or herself), Kannigai (ourselves). In Halara language, there is no masculine and feminine gender in reflexive pronouns.

**CASE :** The case means the relation that a noun or pronoun has with the verb or its action. Examples:

(i) Rain falls-Roh ashur. Here roh (rain) is noun and the subject of the verb- ashur (falls).

(ii) Meng-in maju athat- The cat killed the rat. Here maju(rat) is the noun and it the direct object of the verb-athat(killed).

(iii) Ripe mango fell from the tree. Here mango is the noun and its separation from the tree has been shown.

There are only three cases in English language though there are eight cases in Hindi. In Halam language too, there are hardly three cases as evident from the table below:

**Cases of Pronouns :**

Pronoun	Nominative	objective	Possessive
Keima (i)	Keima (i)	Keima (me)	Kata (mine/my)
Kanni (we)	Kanni (we)	Kantieng (us)	Kanta (ours/our)
(you)	(you)	(you)	( y o u r s / your)
Ama pa (he)	Ama pa(he) (he)	Ani (him)	Anma pa (his)
Ama nu (she)	Amanu (she)	Ama nu ta (her)	Ama nu ta (hers/her)
Hiwa(it)	Hiwa(it)	Hiwa(it)	Hiwa(its)
An ni (they)	An ni (they)	An ni ngai (them)	Anta ngai ( t h e i r s / their)
Tu moh (who)	Tu moh (who)	Tu rang moh (whom)	Tut ah moh (whose)
Hawa pu moh (which)	Hawa pu moh (which)	Hawa pu moh (which)	Howa erfor (whereof)

**ADJECTIVE :** The word-Adjective- means *that adds something*. Thus an adjective is a word that adds to the meaning of a noun. In Halam language, adjectives are placed after the noun they qualify or adjectives follow the noun they qualify. When special stress is laid, the adjectives precede the noun. Suffixes are added to them and not to the qualified noun.

**Degrees of comparison :** Adjectives are used to compare nouns or pronouns in respect of their qualities. This comparison can be made in three different ways. Examples as follows:



Positive	Comparative	Superlative
Ajing (dark)	Ajingdap(darker)	Ajingsabak(darkest)
Awar(bright)	Awardap, Awar ol(brighter)	Awarsabak(brightest)
Ansang(high)	Ansangdap(higher)	Ansangtak(highest)
Asei(long)	Aseidap, Asei ol (longer)	Aseitak(longest)
Few (stown)	Atowndap(fewer)	Atowntak (fewest)
Anai(ncar)	Anaidap, Anai owl(rearer)	Anaitak (rearest)
Adei(cool)	Adeidap, Adei owl(coler)	Adeitak(colest)
Melsa(beautiful)	Melsadap, Melsa oi (more beautiful)	Melsatak (Most beautiful)
Salui (bad/evil)	Saluidap, Salui owl(worse)	Saluitak (worst)

In comparative degree the word *dap* or *ol* suffixes the word and in superlative degree the word *tak* suffixes the words. Further there is no irregular comparison in Halam language.

**VERB** : A verb is a word that denotes an action or predicate (affirms) a fact. Verb is divided into two, namely- Principal verb and Auxiliary verb.

(a) Principal verb are :-

- (i) Peon in ka lekha than ahong-hak (Peon brought me a letter).
- (ii) Mastor in lesson thar miman chu or minansi (The teacher taught us a new lesson).
- (iii) Phaia sinumi sang an-at (The farmer reaped the harvest).
- (iii) Naite ah in (The child is sleeping).
- (iv) Anringai in anurang rung anphun jei (They elected him king).

(b) Auxiliary verb :- An auxiliary is the verb that helps a principal verb to form its tense, mood or voice etc. *Examples*:

- (i) Asabak in hockey ka indai thei (I can play hockey very well).
- (ii) Anai pa rang najem naowh? (Did you beat his brother?)

In English language, auxiliary verb prefixes before the principal verb. But in Halam language, auxiliary verb suffixes the principal verb. In some sentences no auxiliary verb is used.

Three form of verbs:

Present	Past	Past Participle
Intho(rise)	Athoix (rose)	Athoita, Athoixji(risen)
Pek(give)	Apekje (gave)	Anpekjei(given)
Lian (grow)	Alianji, Alianta(grew)	Anlianjei(grown)

Ahong(come)	Ahongjei(came)	Ahongjei,Ahongta(came)
Riet(know)	Arietjei(knew)	Anrietjei(known)
Inchu, Insei(learn)	Inchujei(learnt)	Anchujei(learnt)
In(sleep)	Ainjei(slept)	Ainjei (slept)

In Halam language, in most cases, there is no difference between past and past participle.

**THE TENSE** : The word-tense means *stretched*. In regard to a verb, it indicates the degree to which a verb can be stretched in term of: –

- (a) *Time* of its action
- (b) *Continuance* of its action
- (c) *Completeness* of its action

Thus *tense* of a verb is its form that indicates the *time*, *continuance* and the *degree of completeness* of its action. There are three general divisions of time; and they are *Present Tense*, *Past Tense* and *Future Tense*.

In Halam language too, there are three tenses namely-present, past and future tense. Examples as follows :

**Present Tense** : The Present Tense shows the forms of a verb which indicate that the action is done in the *present time*. Example s:-

- (i) Nene tui ragnin naite **atap**- The baby **cries** for milk (Present Indefinite Tense),
- (ii) Nene tui nek ragnin naite **atapmei**- The baby **is crying** for milk (Present Continuous Tense)
- (iii) Nene tui ragnin naite **atap hah**-The baby **has cried** for milk (Present Perfect Tense)
- (iv) Nene tui ragnin naite **atapmei jei**-The baby **has been crying** for milk (Present Perfect Continuous Tense).

**Past Tense** : The past tense shows the forms of a verb which indicate that the action is done in the *time gone by*. But when the *continuance* and *completeness* of the action are taken into account, there is *Four Forms* of past tense. Examples :-

- (i) Nene tuirangin naite **aleitap**-The baby **cried** for milk(Past Indefinite Tense)
- (ii) Nene tui rangin naite **aleitapmei** -The baby **was crying** for milk(Past Continuous Tense)
- (iii) Nene tui rangin naite **aleitapso jei**- The baby **had cried** for milk (Perfect Future Tense)

(iv) Nene tui rangin naite aiei tapmei ha-The baby **had been crying** for milk(Past Perfect)

**Future Tense** : The future tense shows the forms of a verb to indicate that the forms of a verb that the action is to be done in the time to come. But when the *continuance* and *completeness* of action are taken into account, there is *four forms* of Future Tense tense.

Examples:-

(i) Nene tui rangin naite **tapati**-The baby **will cry** for milk (Future Indefinite Tense)

(ii) Nene tui rangin naite tapmei-**ati**-The baby **will be crying** for milk (Future Continuous Tense)

(iii) Nene tui rangin naite **tapna nei ati**- The baby **will have cried** for milk (Future Perfect Tense)

(iv) Nene tui rangin naite **tapmei rang niati**-The baby **will have been crying** for milk(Future Perfect Continuous Tense)

**CHANGE OF VOICE** : A verb can express an action in two ways i.e. Active Voice and Passive Voice.

(a) **Active Voice**: The form of a verb that lends importance to the subject, i.e. the *doer* of the action, is in *active voice*. Example:-

(i) Mingai ei hai sikin **anpak**-People **admired** his bravery.

(ii) Mi sinmingai in sakhi an that-The labourers **kill** a deer

(b) **Passive Voice**: The form of a verb that lends importance to the action rather than its doer, is in *passive voice*. Example:-

(i) **Ei hai** sikin mi a ngak in a omh jei-I **is** bravery is admired by people.

(ii) Sakhi inkhet sinmi ngai kut **inthat** in a omh jei- A deer is killed by the people.

**ADVERB** : An adverb is a word that modifies a verb, an adjective or another adverb. Example as :-

(i) Berapu in ringtakin ahet- The shepherd shouted loudly.

(ii) Himu he inhoi takin kalchoi-She walks very gracefully.

**Kind of Adverbs** : Adverbs have four kinds namely Simple Adverbs, Interrogative Adverbs, Relative Adverbs and Affirmative or Negative Adverbs.

(a) **Simple Adverb**:- A simple adverb is an adverb that modifies a verb etc. in a *simple* way.

(i) Minu hi inhoitakin kalachoi-She walks gracefully.

(ii) Kelma chu jinga ka thoi-I get up early.

(b) Interrogative Adverb:-An interrogative adverb is an adverb that modifies a verb but at the same time asks a question.

(i) **Ho-ngin** mowh na owmh?-**How** are you?

(ii) **Hotik** mowh porikha nei pass?- **When** did you pass your examination?

(iii) **Hontieng-ata** mowh nei hong?-**Where** do you come from?

(iv) **Irang** mowh amarang na jem ah?-**Why** did you beat him? In.

I Relative Adverb :-A relative adverb is an adverb that modifies a verb and at the same time acts as a connective. In Halam language relative adverb is not used.Example:-

(i) **Irangin** mowh amarang neijem hava asan kariat jei- Now I know **why** you beat him.

(ii) Hivapa **hotik** mowh eihongrang hivanu-in ariet- She knows **when** he will come.

(iii) **Hongin** mowh hiva onko sut thei rang miril ta-Tell me **how** I can solve this sum.

The words *why*, *how* or *when* do not connect though it help to modify the *verb*.

(d) Affirmative or Negative Adverb:- An affirmative adverb is an adverb that affirms a statement or fact. A negative adverb is an adverb that negates a statement or fact.

(i) Nintin nan tan mowh? **Owh**, kan tan.Do you run daily? **Yes**, I do.

(ii) Nungak ha na naipa leh an in lak mawh? **Nima**, inlak mak or innei mak-Did she marry your brother? **No**, she didn't.

(iii) Hiva hin na rai asan mawh? **Ni takin**, Ka ni.-Are you happy here?

**Certainly**, I am. **Formation of Adverbs:**

Adjective	Adverb
Adairem (calm)	Adairem in (calmly)
Anriengkan (whole)	Anriengkan in (wholly)
Hrat (active)	Hrat in (actively)
Inrang (quick)	Inrang in (quickly)
Inhoi (perfect)	Inhoitak in (perfectly)
Lungna, lungsia (sad)	Lungna in, Lungsia in(sadly)
Ngam (bold)	Ngam in (boldly)
Raisan (happy)	Raisan in (happily)

In Halam language adverbs are mostly formed by adding **In** to adjectives.

**PREPOSITION** : A preposition is a word placed before a noun or a pronoun to govern its relation to some preceding noun or pronoun.

Example:

- (i) The pen is *in* the box- Kolom hi baxo *sungu* ah oom.
- (ii) Kanni ngai nangma *chungu* hi kan in ngai-We *depend* on you.
- (iii) Jung thing tang *huu* atuung-Monkey sits *at* the branch of the tree.
- (iv) Dactor *rang* in ka lei ngak-I am waiting *for* the doctor.
- (v) Rakung so tuipang *tieng* apan-The boat is heading *to* the shore.
- (vi) Hmun la *ata* anni ngai an hong 'ee-They came *from* far place
- (vii) Rajes 'i in achemte *le* mool kunga at-Rajesu cut the banana stump *with* his knife.

In Halam language the word *le* is used as preposition *with* or as conjunction word *and* depending on the sentence. The preposition word *tieng* is used as *to* in English; but the word *kuom* is also used as *to*.

**CONJUNCTION** : The word conjunction means joining together. Example:- Ram *le* Shyam-Ram *and* Shyam. Conjunctions are two kinds, namely- Co-ordinate Conjunctions and Sub-ordinate Conjunctions.

(a) Co-ordinate Conjunctions:

- (i) Maja alar la *auabumia* nangvat in alantan thei-Ie is old *yet* he can run fast.
- (ii) Irri *le* inthum in ringa aching-Two *and* three make five.

(b) Sub-ordinate Conjunctions:

- (i) Mrao hi nangma *nekin* avor tha ke/so-She is more intelligent *than* you are.
- (ii) Nang na hi hrat uati *asau* *leu* nasin hrat-You will win *because* you work hard.

**ARTICLES** : In Halam language, there is no articles. However, indefinite article is used widely, while definiteness is expressed by demonstrative pronouns.

## CHAPTER - 23

# FOLK SONG AND STORIES

In modern time people are interested in science, modern literature which hold future prospect for job and career; and they care little about their past tradition. Earlier folk tales or songs have little relevance to such people. Now few are interested in folk songs and tales. But legends, folk tales and songs are the alternative source of history and cultural legacy, particularly, in tribal society. Among the Halams, the practise was that the mothers and grand parents would relate folksongs and folktales to their sons, daughters or grandchildren during bed time or in leisure time. When there was no school for learning anything, the children were more interested to hear tales and stories from the elders, which they remembered and passed on to the next generation. Many folk tales were prevalent among the Halams, and these folk tales had sustained the imagination of the children in Halams society generation after generation. A few popular folk tales deserve mention.

**Story of orphan brothers and the woman :** Once upon a time there was a family where the two boys, namely- *Liandai & Khiangdai*, became orphan. Since there was no adult or guardian in the family, the children passed through a difficult life and lived at the mercy of villagers, who supported them. They would go to work in other jhum field and always got contempt and abuse from the others. Even during festive occasions, the orphan brothers used to be offered left over food, and residue of cooked meat for eating. They used to bring those residue food and the bone of cooked meat curry in their house and preserved it in a basket as a memento of insult they received from others. One day it was announced that *Sapite*, the goddess of paddy, would visit the village. Every family started cleaning and washing their houses and premises. One fine morning, a poor, wretched and dirty woman came to the village visiting houses and begging to give her shelter for a night or more. But observing her dirty clothes and body, none of the families in the village

### Folk song and stories

welcomed her but scolded her with abusive language for entering premises of their cleaned houses in such wretched condition. After going round in the village to each household for shelter, at last she came to the house of the two orphan brothers in the evening. When she requested for shelter, the orphan young boys said "Grand mom, we are very poor and orphan. You may come to this orphan house and stay with us as long as you want but we have nothing." She entered into the house of orphan to stay. "Why worry about food and others? Go to work and I will take care of your home affairs and do not be worried," she said. The orphan brothers went to the field of others for work as labourer. In the evening, before the orphan brother returned to home she would cook the food and kept it ready. She also used to wash clothes, utensils and kept the home clean and tidy. Always she would keep a big container full of rice. The orphan brother used to go for work at others' jhum land daily and the the wretched woman guest used to prepare and kept the food ready for the orphan boys. The orphan brothers became suspicious. One day the younger brother said to his elder "Brother where from this woman is getting rice for cooking everyday? She neither goes to other house for work nor do we have paddy or rice at home. The rice we get from other is very little in quantity. Did she steal rice from others' home?" The two orphan brothers decided to investigate the matter. One night they remained awake to watch the woman as to find out what she did at night. The orphan buthers cut their fingers and pured home made alkaline lime to lime so that they would not feel sleepy or get drowsiness throughout the night. At midnight they noticed that the woman got up and went to kitchen room; and within a moment she shone brightly illuminating the kitchen room. After a while rice started falling from her fingers in the container which made it full to the brim. The orphan brothers watching secretly realized that the woman was *Sapite*, the goddess of paddy, for whom the villagers cleansed their homes and premises so that they could made her guest in their home. When season of falling trees for jhum land ushered in, she asked the orphan brothers to cut the plant of a big creeper which the Halam called "Poi lung", means "Poi plant" in Halam dialect. "Poi" was a seed or bean of a large creeper plant, botanical name of which was *oxalata puracotta*. The boys did what she told them to do. After a week, before burning the dried creeper plant only, she told the orphan boys to warn the villagers for

### **History and culture of the Halam tribe**

protecting their houses and other properties. But the villagers mocked boys saying that they would set on fire to such small creeper plant. How could their home and properties be threatened by small fire? But when the boys set fire on the dried creeper, the fire engulfed many home and livestock; and the jungle of vast area was burned. The boys did not have paddy seeds for plantation. So they asked the woman what they should do for getting paddy seeds for planting in jhum field. As advised by the woman the boys went to the houses of well-to-do families for guarding the paddy which was exposed on a husk outside in hot sunshine for husking and pounding. The orphan boys guarded the paddy on hot sunshine and would drive out the fowls or livestock which came to eat the exposed paddy. While guarding the exposed paddy, the orphan brothers used to roll out many earthen marbles with muddy soil. They used to pick up exposed paddy grain and concealed it inside the soft earthen marbles. The purpose for making earthen marble was to show the owner of the paddy that they were simply making earthen marble for using with a sling or bow for hunting wild birds etc. But their real intention was to collect paddy grains secretly for planting in their jhum land. The orphan brothers carried those earthen marbles in the jhum field and started striking the roots of the dry and burned out bamboos and woods in all parts of the jhum land by those earthen marbles using the sling and bow as advised by the woman. Earthen marbles broke into pieces and the concealed paddy seeds fell on the soil, which germinated all over the jhum land. When weeding season came, the orphan brother requested the villagers to help them. The villagers did help in the weeding, but out of jealousy they damaged the the paddy stumps. But the paddy grew luxuriantly and bore abundant paddy. The orphan brothers harvested the jhum paddy and other jhum crops such as sesame, jute, cotton, chillies etc abundantly; and the orphan brother became very rich. After the harvest, the brothers gave lavish community feast. But at the time of eating sumptuous meal by their invitees, the boys took out the preserved bones of meat curry, which they received instead of food from the villagers and preserved in the basket in those painful days, and distributed the dried bones in the plates of invitees in the feast just to remind them how the two orphan brothers were insulted and maltreated in the past. All the invitees felt ashamed for their past behaviour and many of them begged pardon.



### Folk song and stories

The other day, the woman i.e. *Sapite*, the Goddess of paddy, went to a hillock and disappeared. When she did not return at their home in the evening, the boys cried. She appeared in their dream and told them that she lived in their granary. The orphan brothers decided to offer sacrifice to her i.e. *Sapite*. They offered cock, pigs at the altar inside their granary. From that time onward Malam people said to have started sacrifice or puja at the granary as soon as the harvest was completed.

**Story of a brother and sister :** Once upon a time there was a parent who had very young and playful one son and a daughter. Every day the parent, before going to jhum land in the morning would advise the son and daughter not to take bath in a particular stream nearby the village. One day the young brother and sister asked each other as to why their parent had been telling them every day not to take bath at that particular stream. They used to argue each other saying that their parent should have told them the reason for such restriction. One day the brother and sister decided to defy the instruction of their parent. They went down to that particular stream and took bath just to see what happen to them. After taking bath, their whole body started itching; and for relieving the itching of their whole bodies, they started scratching different part of their respective body by their fingernails. When they scratched the nose and ears, it turned into elephant trunk and ears. When they scratched their legs and hands, it turned into elephant legs. When they scratched their head, it became elephant head. When they scratched their main bodies, it turned into elephant bodies. Thus, the young brother and sister turned into elephant.

The parent returned home in the evening from their jhum field; and for not seeing their son and daughter at home started searching them. At that moment two young elephants came at the premise of their house with tears, unable to speak. As soon as the two young elephants appeared, the parent were horrified and started crying. At last the parent offered the paddy to the young elephants; and the father of the elephant with sorrow and sadness had to asked young elephants to leave the village for jangle. Before their departure, the father blessed them saying that nobody would be able to tame them but the *Makul* only. He told the young boy and girl, who turned elephants, to go and live in the forest. The young elephants went to jangle with tear in their eyes. This was the short story of the genesis of elephant.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

**Story of Sumsormonpa :** Once upon a time a person whose name was Sumsormanpa had been sharpening his *Chem*. i.e, chopper on the stone at the corner of a stream without proper clothing. While he was sharpening with concentrated mind, a big lobster suddenly jump on and pinched his testical. It was so painful that Sumsormonpa became furious and cut off the nearby big slanting bamboo which fell down hitting testical of the squirrel. The squirrel was provoked for getting pain and bite off the cord of a big creeper called *Khaum*, botanical plant called *entada puseoetha*; and the cord of this *Khaum* fell upon the nest of big and poisonous ant, which the Halam called *Thaiwang* or *Faiwang*. Enraged for getting hit at its next, the *Thaiwang* nipped and bite sharply at the stomach of wild bore. The wild bore so enraged by the *Thaiwang*'s bite that it rushed suddenly and uprooted the nearby plaintain tree where a bat had taken shelter. The frightened bat at once flew and entered into the ear-hole of an elephant, which was roaming about at nearby area. The discomforted elephant run amuck and trampled the hut of an old woman. Terrified old woman run away to escape from the elephant and as soon as she reached the stream which was the source of water for the king, the frightened and tired old woman felt suddenly the griping pain of her bowel and left her excrement at that water stream. But she was caught by the people and brought before the royal court of the king for judgement. The king asked her saying "Why you left excrement at the stream water which I used for my home?" The old woman replied saying "The elephant suddenly came and destroyed my house and out of fear I run away and at that moment due to sudden movement of my bowel I lost control and left excrement in the stream". The people also produced the elephant before the king as ordered. The king asked the elephant saying "Why you destroyed the house of the old woman?" The elephant replied "Why the bat enter into my ear without any reason? I was so irritated that I destroyed the house of that old woman as the house was ahead of me" . As ordered by the king the people brought the bat before the king. The king asked the bat saying "Bat, why you entered into the ear of elephant?" The bat replied saying that the wild bore uprooted the banana tree suddenly where it was taking rest; and out of fear it took shelter into the ear of elephant. People brought the banana tree before the king. So the king asked saying "Hai, Banana tree, why you need to fall down at all?" The Banana tree replied

### Folk song and stories

"The wild boar uprooted me, so I fell down". The wild boar was produced before the king who asked the boar saying "Wild boar, why did you uproot the Samara tree?" The wild boar replied saying "Why Thaiwang, i.e. the big ant, nipped my velly?" The people produced the big ant before the royal court. The king asked saying "Thaiwang, the big ant, why you ripped the velly of the wild boar?" Thaiwang replied saying "The creeper plant fell down and hit my nest. So, out of anger I ripped the velly of wild boar". They brought the Creeper plant before the king who asked saying "You (Khaum) the creeper plant, why you fell down and hit the nest of Thaiwang, the big ant?" The creeper plant replied "Can I fell down without provoking me by cutting off my cord? The squirrel had bitten off my cord, so I fell down over the nest of Thaiwang." The squirrel was produced before the king and when asked as to why it had bitten off the cord of Khaum creeper, it replied saying that "A person whose name was Sumsormonpa cut off a bamboo and while the bamboo was falling it hits my testicle. So, out of anger I have bitten off the cord of Khaum creeper". So the Bamboo was produced before the king who asked saying "You bamboo, why did you hit the testicle of the squirrel?" Bamboo replied saying "Why does Sumsormonpa chopped off my slanted stump without any reason?" As ordered by the king, a person named-Sumsormonpa was produced before the king who said to him "You Sumsormonpa, tale me the reason for chopping off the stump of the slanted bamboo which hits the testical of the squirrel?" Sumsormonpa replied saying "Why the Lobstar pinched my testicle and provoked me without any reason?" Thereafter the people caught the lobster and brought before the king. The king asked the Lobstar saying "You Lobstar why did you pinch the testicle of Sumsormonpa?" The lobster said "My impression was that inside the cave I was living. So I pinched all around". As the people could not be satisfied by the reply of Lobstar, they got angry and decided to kill the Lobstar. So they asked the lobster to tale them as to how it wants to be killed and on what condition? The Lobstar said "If you throw me into the fire I will surely become red colour, so I will like to be killed this way. But I am afraid you may throw me in the water with Za i.e. rice beer, because in such situation I will surely die". Angry and foolish people threw the Lobstar into the water and it entered into the cave and escaped. The people started poking the cave with long stick and when

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

they saw bloodstained stick, they left assuming that the Lobstar was dead.

**Folk song :** In past ages the folksong played very important role in the social life of Halam because it was the source of joy and entertainment. The history, social life and ethos of the Halam people found its expression in their folksongs. Folksongs were sung on certain occasion and places. Jhum or shifting cultivation dominated their social life and most of their time used to be spent in the jhum land where folksongs used to be sung, sometime with joy and ecstasy. Jhum cultivation has impacted the culture, tradition and ethos of the Halam from the time immemorial. It was the place where young girls and boys worked together and understood each other's mind and feeling. The feeling of the elders, youngmen and women used to be deeply touched by the changing colour of jhum crops. The surrounding green forest and the sound of insects and chirping birds would cause ecstasy to the mind of men and women of all age working in the jhum land. When the paddy grains of the jhum land became mature and ripe, it would become yellowish in colour which evoked joy and happiness. The men and women working in the jhum land would start praising the paddy and one of such songs was like this :-

*Ne ne kungeng kungvar nu,  
Asai miruol avai nu,  
Adi vok ruol avai nu,  
Akem ar ruol avai nu,  
Abul dai ang kei sat nu,  
Panthang van nei man el ra-rang*

English translation was like this :-

*Mother (paddy), you are yellow and bright,  
Your rice sustain humanity,  
Your husk sustain the pigs,  
Your broken grain sustain the fowls,  
Whose roots I weed,  
Your grain brightens my backyard early.*

When harvest used to be over in the month of September, it was the time for joy and festivities in each house. Amusement and pleasure would overtake all other consideration in the household of Halam. Wine and rice beverage made out of new harvest was the things to enjoy in

### Folk song and stories

each house hold; and village elders used to invite each other to share the drink and joy of the family. This was the time and occasion for singing folksongs. The folksongs were mostly about their belief and life philosophy. Marriage was another important social event and sending the daughter to other and home has always been a painful to the friends and family of the bride. The song sung by the friends of the bride always would evoke the sentiment of sadness of the friends and family of the bride. In the event of dead, the farewell song sung by the dears and near ones always touched the mind of all people present in the funeral journey. One famous folksong sung to a dead person at the time of funeral has been mentioned in earlier chapter. There were some songs sung in praise of beautiful lady. Another folksong which was related to a very beautiful lady, whose name was *Sunneidang*, has been very popular to ordinary Halam people, particularly, among the Sakachep, Thanachep, Ranglong, Chorel, Dap, Bowng, Langkai and Sailmar clans of the Halam. She hailed from a placed called Dhoilai. About the location of Dhoilai, there was confusion. In Tripura, undivided Kamalpur Sub Division has been familiar among the Halam as *Dhoilai* over centuries, and river Dhoilai or Dholai flows northward Bangladesh right through the middle of Ambassa and Kamalpur Sub Division. Prevailing hearsay was that the beautiful young girl called *Sunneidang* was from Kamalpur, and she was sent to exile in Banughach, which was located across the present Kamalpur town. She belonged to Sakachep clan of the Halam. Her father's name was Darsulkjem and mother's name was Marsumlee. Actual name of *Sunneidang* was Lalkhumnei. Her friends called her *Sunneidang* because she was very popular among them. She was so beautiful and charming lady that whoever saw her used to be fascinated. It was a common superstitious belief amongst the Halam tribe that a witch used to be very charming and beautiful; and could attract any man with her charm and beauty. *Sunneidang* was the victim of such superstitious belief. In the past, it was common practice to deport or sent in exile to any person who was suspected to be a witch. *Sunneidang* was also deported to far place, some say in *Bhanughach* but other say in *Baniachung*. During the period of exile, a married Muslim person whose name was *Imander Mia* said to have married to *Sunneidang*. *Lalkhumnei* i.e. *Sunneidang* has been immortalised by different folksongs; one of these folksongs was like this :-

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

1. *Sumneidang asa demna ngan aboi,  
A zuor le lamrui Chep vown le anti,  
A chun le lamrui mi lam pang zuori,  
Sumneidang asa demana nanga boi,*
2. *Azuor le riming Darsukjiem anti,  
Achun le riming Markhumlee anti,  
Azuo le achun ming phuo Lalkhumnei anti,  
Renruol le ming phuo Sumneidang anti,  
Sumneidang asa demna aboi,*
3. *Feiphung ka en rek zola ngan mot tuoi,  
Kowng tak ka en rek khuoimu lair en,  
Chonvown ka en rek guru zai suon,  
Sumneidang asa demna a boi,*
4. *Phoiha ka en rek khuoiva lair op,  
Sanmur ka en rek Zunwa kei thiem,  
Singmit gurbang zu,n rui,  
Sumneidang asa demna a boi,*
5. *Chalbor ka en rek Phaikilon chalbor,  
Tolsam ka enrek muolkhow chom bong,  
Aril le zuoiin purni thawr tha,  
Sumneidang demna aboi,*
6. *Anthok le roh na Doilai duara,  
Daina ngan raw ahoi bolongka bali,  
Anvok nagan viein chonban nangan boi,  
An be ngan an rawh Hawmru le kati,  
An zum le ziein alibar toia,  
Sumneidang demna aboi,*
7. *A koi nakin sakte le changkal,  
Sumneidang asa demna ngan a boi,  
Bhanughat thing lamlian anoia  
chira zolpan eithona,  
Akhup le lei in surgal sati,  
Sumneidang anthokna.*

English translation was like this-

1. *The beauty of Sumneidang is spotless,  
Her father descended from Achep clan,*

### Folk song and stories

- Her mother is from witch family,  
Sumanidang has unblemish beauty.*
2. *Her father's name is Darsaklien,  
Mother's name is Marikuntee,  
Her parent named her Laikhunnei,  
But friends call her Sumanidang,  
Sumanidang's beauty is unblemish.*
3. *Her legs look like tender banana,  
Her slim waist is like the bee's waist,  
Her belly resembles the soft skin of royal priest,  
Sumanidang's beauty is unblemish.*
4. *Her teeth resembles the smooth colour of bee,  
Mouth is like the mouth of singing "Vasan" bird,  
Her eyes are attractive and like shining,  
Sumanidang's beauty is unblemish.*
5. *Her forehead resembles the forehead  
of valley's Bee, and her hair knot look  
like a mountain ridge,  
Her beauty shines like full moon,  
Sumanidang has unblemished beauty.*
6. *She escape through Dholai (river) gateway,  
and plays with sand along her escape route,  
While walking her tender hands move,  
and arrives at bathing ghāt at Hauru (Bamru village),  
She wears smooth and pointed ear's ornaments,  
Sumanidang has unblemish beauty.*
7. *She is walking on zig zag bridge,  
Sumanidang has no defect in her beauty,  
She takes her tiffin under a big tree  
at Bhanughat,  
Unfurred umbrella is above her  
at the place where she arrived.*

Due to rumour about her character, Imamdar Mia, her muslim husband, divorced her after a few months of their marriage. She was sent to Manikpur and lived in a broken house where she lived lonely life with her mother and died in starvation. She was the victim of jealousy and superstition; and her beauty and charm was the burden for her.

### History and culture of the Halam tribe

Living far away from her parent, she was longing to see her father and sisters. She starved to die in such tragic situation. There was another folksong about Sumneidang which is like this :-

*Rualvaikhown di di,  
Anthokna Doilai,  
An be na Humrul,  
Doiboki Somlai,  
Kalou re anten,  
Jagoti nei wa.*

There were several folksongs based on the story of Sumneidang and different clans of the Halam sing in different style. But folksongs were mostly sung at the venue of *Zu-bual* i.e. rice beer by the elders, which would take the shape of competition. Among the youth, *jhum feild* was the place where they would compete the singing of folksongs while harvesting paddy during *Lomzui* ;e. group work. The folksongs always the source of expressing feeling of the young men and women. This story cannot be as regarded folktale or legend, but a real incident.



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# PHOTOGRAPHY



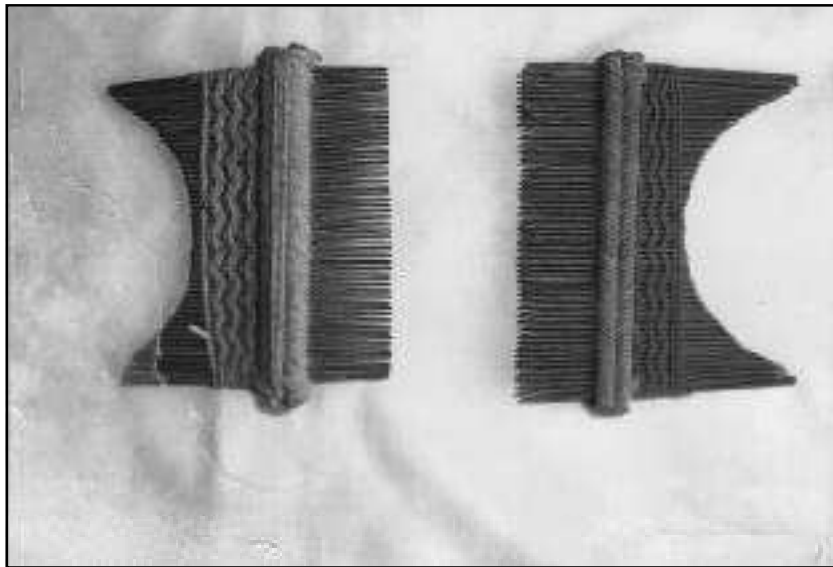
Smoking pipe.



Bem or Longkhai and Tuikok or Sengkong



Traditional dress of woman called Telwom or Kherchi



Traditional Comb



Silver neekless called 'Mohonmala'



A traditional basket called 'Rel'





Youth of Molson clan in traditional dress



Youth of Kaipeng clan in traditional dress.



Youth of Bowng clan of the Halam in traditional dress.



Korbong youth in traditional dress



Youth of Rangkhawl clan in traditional dress.



Comb made of bamboo splits.



Musical instrument called Dandang.

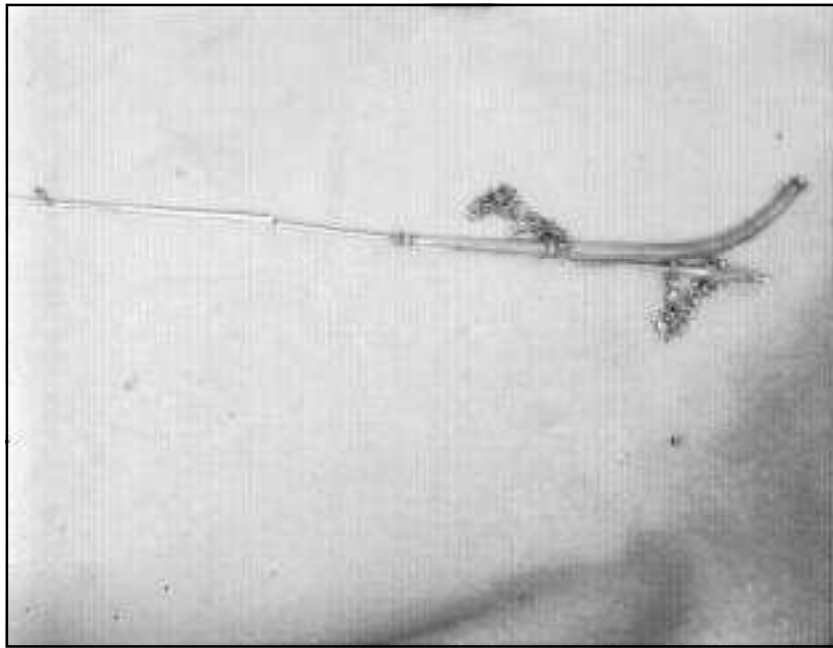


A man playing Siranda





Traditional bangles



Traditional hair clip



Silver necklace called Sumru or Tangkarui



OF THE HAILAM TRIBE

