

## Distribution of Ethnic Groups in Manipur Hills

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The study of ethnicity goes beyond searching for its definitions and characteristics. Exploring the geographical pattern of ethnic groups is an interesting shift in the study of conventional and contemporary social sciences. This paper aims to analyse the nature of classification and spatial distribution of the ethnic groups in Manipur hill areas between 1991 and 2001, when the hills witnessed two ethnic conflicts between these decadal censuses. As per an official record, three tribal groups –Naga, Intermediate and Kuki-Chin-Mizo are found in the State. Internal dynamics on the discourse of ethnicity has different narratives on the ground reality. In terms of spatial distribution, the Naga group is more clustered than its counterpart Kuki-Chin-Mizo across the hills. The paper also looks into how the change in spatial pattern of distribution and redistribution of ethnic groups has largely contributed to ethnic homogenization in the hill areas of Manipur.

**Keywords:** Ethnic Group, Manipur, Kuki-Chin-Mizo, Naga, Intermediate, Redistribution

### Conceptual Framework

Ethnicity may be precisely defined as an ‘affiliation or identification with an ethnic group’. The terms ethnicity and ethnic group are also often used interchangeably. However, there is a nuance dividing them –ethnic group is a social group based generally on ancestry, culture, or national origin, whereas ethnicity refers mainly to which ethnic group one is affiliated or identified with. So, ethnicity is considerably a matter of identification or a sense of belonging to a particular group. However, ‘none of this prediction materialized because the relevance of ethnicity in modern society has remained, on the contrary, a vital part of contemporary life’ (Yang 2000:40-41).

Ethnicity may also be best understood by studying the three schools of thoughts, viz. (1) Primordialism, (2) Constructionism and (3) Instrumentalism. According to Primordialism, ethnicity is an ‘ascribed identity’ or assigned status that one inherited from his ancestors. It is based on roots and primal blood lines; the boundary is fixed,

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static and unchangeable as one desires. The constructionist theory claims that ethnicity is 'a socially constructed identity', which means, 'something that is created'. The ethnic boundary is flexible, changeable or dynamic. Besides, society itself takes decision as to which ethnic group it would affiliate or identify with (Yang: 43-44). Therefore, according to Constructionism ethnic group or ethnicity is socially constructed, not inherited. The Instrumentalist school views ethnicity as an 'instrument or strategic tool to gain resources'. In this, it is said, people become members of a group as the ethnic membership yields significant returns to them (Yang: 46). So, ethnicity is closely linked with the idea of utility according constructionist ideology.

The study of ethnicity, nevertheless, has to go beyond searching for the definitions, and has to explore the political development alongside its underlying geographical pattern (Eifert, 2010). One of the main interests of studying ethnic group is geographical in character. In a period of time, certain ethnic groups were densely concentrated in an area creating their own ethnic space and territory by dominating the area or region. However, this status quo may gradually reverse if and when the existing majority group turns into a minority due to certain socio-political and economic factors determining this change. In this connection, Weidmann (2009) explains about geographies of ethnic groups and its association with ethnic conflicts that further results in spatial pattern of redistribution of groups. He contends that geographically concentrated groups 'face higher likelihood of conflict' with other neighbouring groups because they have the 'opportunity-driven' advantage.

Population of ethnic groups increase normally as well as abnormally. While some are attributed to natural growth, others may be determined by factors such as migration and forced migration. Migration may take place due to conflict, demands for development or natural disasters etc. which alters the nature of spatial concentration or dispersion of, not all, specific group of population. A group might be of a minority one in its original place of residence but may become a majority in its resettled areas thereby modifying the ethnic composition of the area. Therefore, a once ethnically heterogeneous area may turn into a homogenous one or vice versa.

### **Scope of Study Area**

The study gives emphasis geographically on the five hill districts of Manipur viz. Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel, Churachandpur and Tamenglong, covering the period from 1981 to 2001. The rationale behind this research may be summed up in the following points:

1. Geographically, Manipur is divided into the hill and valley areas. The hill areas comprises of 90 percent of the total geographical areas surrounding the valleys which comprises of only 10 percent. The five hill districts are inhabited by broad groups of Naga and Kuki-Chin-Mizo together consisting of about 29 tribes, and the valley areas by the non-tribal Meitei people.
2. There had been ethnic clashes among the tribal groups in the hills. It has witnessed substantive incidents of internal displacement and further relocation of the conflicting ethnic groups in different geographical areas

particularly in the 1990s. 1990s saw a great deal of displacement and changes in population distribution due to ethnic feuds between the Kuki and the Naga and the Thadou and the Paite as well. As a result, large number of people affected by ethnic clashes moved to villages and towns where there is more security and economic opportunities, leading to marked demographic changes in hill districts of the State.

In view of the above points, it is highly assumed that population of the indigenous groups have been spatially modified, readjusted and redistributed in recent decades, say 1981-2001.

### **Objectives**

The paper has set before itself the following two main objectives:

1. To highlight the classification of the tribal groups in Manipur, and
2. To see the changes in spatial distribution of the ethnic groups in the hill areas of Manipur.

### **Hypothesis**

Spatial redistribution of population has changed the hills of Manipur from an ethnically mixed to homogenized areas.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study of ethnicity, as mentioned, goes beyond the quest for its definition and characteristic alone. Manipur has seen immense scholarly spade works on socio-political and economic issues, yet relatively lacks in mapping the ethnic geographies that significantly play crucial roles in shaping the inter-ethnic relations. The paper intends to fill this research gap while also contributing largely to understanding the grass-root level of the past and present ethnic situation in Manipur. Secondly since there has been no much earlier study on the spatial pattern of distribution of ethnic groups in Manipur, this piece of empirical research will throw lights on the dynamics of groups distribution in ethnically mixed Manipur in particular and North East India in general. It is expected give preliminary insight to the study of ethnicity in the disciplines human geography at large.

### **Database and Methodology**

In order to obtain the said objectives, the number of tribal population in every district of Manipur from the decades 1981, 1991 and 2001 has been collected from the Census of India. Then, quantitative changes – growth or decline in the population for the said periods in all districts have been studied by comparing the changes in the periods 1981-1991 and 1991-2001. Concentration Index and Growth Index have been applied in order to study the nature, proportion and changes in the distribution of ethnic groups' population in Manipur hill areas.

(a) *Concentration Index*: In order to find the concentration index of every group in the selected districts of Manipur, a simple formula is applied:

*Concentration Index (%) = Population of a tribe in a district multiplied by 100 and divided by the total population of the tribe in Manipur*

Based mainly on their degree (percentage) of concentration, the tribes are grouped into the following: (1). *Highly Concentrated or Clustered Group*: tribes or groups with 80 percent & above concentration in any district/area; (2). *Moderately Concentrated Group*: 50-79 percent concentration; (3). *Dispersed or Scattered Group*: below 50 percent concentration.

Here, only the tribes with population of 4000 and above found in a district/area are taken into account and those less than this are excluded. So, the population are not totally exhaustive because tribes with less than 4000 population in a given area/region are excluded.

(a) *Decadal Growth*: In order to find out the decadal growth/change of the ethnic population in the hill districts, the population in the selected two successive decades, from 1981-1991 and 1991-2001 are taken for analysis. Here, tribes with minimum population size of 1000 and above present in the study districts are taken into consideration. The simple formula used for finding the decadal growth rate is given below:

- Change in Population = *Population in current year – Population in base year*
- Percentage Growth =  $\frac{\text{population in current year} - \text{population in base year}}{\text{Population in base year}} \times 100$

Apart from Census of India, various secondary sources like published articles, periodicals, books, etc. have been consulted widely to extract information on socio-political developments of ethnic groups in Manipur.

### **Classification of Ethnic Groups in Manipur Hill Areas**

Broadly speaking, three main ethnic groups are found in the State viz. Meitei, Naga and Kuki-Chin-Mizo or Kuki-Chin or popularly the Kukis in short. The tribal groups (Scheduled Tribes) in Manipur are classified into two- the Naga and Kuki. However, according to the official list of 1981, the tribes in Manipur are classified into three main groups: The Naga, The Kuki-Chin group and the Intermediate group between the two groups (Directorate of Tribal Welfare and Backward Classes, 1981). Intermediate of the two groups of Naga and Kuki-Chin are historically known as the 'Old Kuki' by the British colonial writers and administrators (Shakespeare 1912, Hodson, 1911) (see Table 1). The Meiteis inhabiting the central valley of Manipur belong to the General category of the Constitution of India.

### **Kuki-Chin Group**

The Kuki-Chin-Mizo group in Manipur consists demographically of several major and minor tribes such as Thadou, Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Simte, Gangte, Sukte, Mizo/Lushai, Kom, Zou, etc. Generally, these Kuki-Chin-Mizo people are anthropologically similar, known by different names in different regions. Those living in Chin-Hills (Myanmar) were known by a common name 'Chin' (Khyan in Burmese) while those

in Manipur and Assam are known as 'Kuki' and those in erstwhile Lushei Hills (Mizoram) as 'Lushai' or 'Mizo'. They were clubbed together as Kuki-Chin-Lushai/Mizo. Of late, many scholars collectively refer to this group as 'Zo' people based on broad historical, anthropological and linguistic affinity of the group (Vumson 1986, Khai 1995, SUan 2011, Zou 2010, Go 2008). However, the Thadou language speaking clans still prefer to call themselves by the name Kuki, while debates are going on for the larger identity of the same people (See the works of Haokip 2013, 2016)

### **Naga Group**

The term Naga is not originally coined by the Naga people themselves, but by outsiders, mainly colonial rulers (cited in Tohring, 2012:7). The Nagas originally did not have any cognizance about Naga as their identity and being one or similar people. So, every tribe has its tribal name. It was the outsiders like the Assamese, Bengali and Ahom with whom they had wide contacts, gave the name 'Naga' to the tribes (Kabui, 1995:24). Therefore, the awareness as 'Naga' among them came up recently. The Naga group in Manipur consists of several tribes such as Tangkhul, Kabui, Mao, Maram, Kacha-Naga (Liangmei and Zemei tribes), etc. The Nagas are believed to originate from the south-western parts of China and migrated to Irrawaddy valley in Burma and then to Manipur in India (Kabui 1995). After India's independence in the 1950s, with the rise of pan-Naga identity and sub-nationalism in the north east India, many so called Old Kuki tribes from Manipur, who have similar cultures with the Kuki-Chin-Mizo group, were 'absorbed' in the Naga confederation. The Maring, Mayon, Anal, etc. for example were taken into the ambit of Naga socio-political unit. In view of this, the ethnicity of the Naga group is widely based on the concept of Instrumentalism.

### **Intermediate group**

The Intermediate group of tribes, often in history, who are identified as Old Kukis include Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, Kom, Anal, Chothe, Lamgang, Koirao/Thangal, Purum, Maring, Monsang and Mayon. These Intermediate tribes "undecidedly" have "linkages of identity with both the major groups" (Zehol 1998:37). It should be noted that practically there is no specific ethnic group or identity in the name of 'Intermediate' or 'old Kuki' in Manipur which is placed distinctively like other existing groups such as Kuki-Chin-Mizo, Naga or Meitei. However, the term 'intermediate' has been often used in order to avoid confusion of fluid identity of those tribes who are not fully identified either as Naga or Kuki-Chin-Mizo. They are known as Old-Kuki by British ethnographers like J. Shakespeare and T.C. Hodson, etc. Lucy Zehol (1998) cited in her monograph *Ethnicity in Manipur: Experiences, Issues and Perspective* this group as "Intermediary Groups of Tribes" (Zehol:37). As they are demographically small, socially and politically they affiliate themselves to or merge with the larger Kuki-Chin-Mizo or Naga groups –whichever is dominant in their settlement areas. Therefore, the theories of both primordialism and instrumentalism may aptly apply to the context of the Intermediate group in Manipur.

Table 1: Official Classification of tribes of Manipur

<i>Kuki-Chin tribes</i>	<i>Intermediate tribes</i>	<i>Naga tribes</i>
1. Gangte	1. Aimol	1. Kabui
2. Hmar	2. Chiru	2. Kacha
3. Lushai(Mizo)	3. Koireng	Naga
4. Paite	4. Kom	3. Mao
5. Simte	5. Anal	4. Maram
6. Thadou(Kuki)	6. Chothe	5. Tangkhul
7. Vaiphei	7. Lamgang	6. Maring
8. Zou	8. Koirao/Thangal	
9. Suhte	9. Purum	
10. Ralte	10. Monsang	
11. Moyon		

Source: Directorate of Tribal Welfare and Backward Classes, 1981(c.f Zehol,1998)

### **Concentration of Tribal Groups in Manipur**

Concentration of tribal population particularly in Manipur's hill districts varies in numbers as well as in proportion. While some population are highly dispersed or scattered across the districts, others are highly confined or clustered in a given area or district. So, based on the proportion of concentration, the tribal population may be classified into three main categories:

#### **(a) Highly Concentrated Group**

Some of the highly concentrated or clustered tribes are the Mao, Maram, Anal, Paite, Hmar, Tangkhul, Kacha Naga and Maring communities. Mao and Maram are highly concentrated in the district of Senapati. The Paite and Hmar tribes are highly concentrated in Churachandpur district and their percentage of concentration remains unchanged since 1991 till 2001. Anal and Maring are highly concentrated in Chandel, and only Kacha Naga is highly clustered in Tamenglong district. Concentration of Maring tribe in Chandel district from 1991 to 2001 shows further acceleration as evident from their percentage in the district increasing from 76.5 to 85.3 percent. Concentration of Kacha-Naga tribe in Tamenglong and Tangkhul tribe in Ukhrul district has also significantly increased within the same period (see Table 2).

#### **Moderately Concentrated Groups**

The Kabui, Zou, Any Mizo and Vaiphei tribes are moderately concentrated in two districts viz. Tamenglong and Churachandpur. There is no much change in the distributional pattern of the Kabui tribe in Tamenglong district within 1991-2001. The Zou and Any Mizo tribes have a moderate concentration in the district of Churachandpur from 1991 to 2001. However, the proportion of Vaiphei, although moderately distributed in Churachandpur district, has increased from 53.3 percent in 1991 to 61.7 percent in 2001. Population of the Simte tribe is also found to be moderately distributed in Churachandpur district (see Table 3).

Table 2: Highly Concentrated groups, 1991 and 2001

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Tribes</i>	<i>Concentration in 1991(%)</i>	<i>Concentration in 2001(%)</i>
Churachandpur	Paite(K)	94.8	92.4
	Hmar(K)	89.0	90.2
Chandel	Anal(I)	95.7	98.0
	Lamgang (I)	98.0 **	97.6
	Maring (N)	76.5	85.3
Ukhrul	Tangkhul (N)	84.6	88.5
Senapati	Mao(N)	98.3	*
	Maram (N)	98.1	*
Tamenglong	Kacha Naga(N)	70.0	81.8

Source: Compiled by author from Census of India 1991 & 2001.

*N=Naga, K=Kuki-Chin, I-Intermediate*

*\* Mao-Maram, Paomata and Purul sub-divisions of Senapati District, the main dominated areas of Mao and Maram tribes were excluded in the Census 2001 Report. \*\* In case of Lamgang as there was no data available in 1991 census, the data of 1981 census is used here.*

Table 3: Moderately Concentrated groups, 1991 and 2001

<i>Tribes</i>	<i>Districts</i>	<i>1991 (%)</i>	<i>2001 (%)</i>
Tamenglong	Kabui (N)	69.0	73.9
Churachandpur	Zou (K)	76.8	76.5
	Any Mizo (K)	70.0	68.0
	Vaiphei (K)	53.3	61.7
	Simte (K)	N.A	63.8

Source: Compiled by author from Census of India 1991 & 2001.

*N.A = Not Available. N=Naga, K=Kuki-Chin*

***Dispersed Groups***

The Thadou tribe is scattered and dispersed all over Manipur. However, it has relatively high concentration in the Sadar Hill sub-divisions of Senapati and Churachandpur districts. Although the degrees of concentration of the Thadou population in Chandel district is low (19.2% out of total Thadou), yet it accounts for the single largest (31.8%) population amongst of all the tribes in the district. In general, the degrees of concentration of Thadou in the districts of Senapati and Churachandpur are more or less constant whereas that of the Chandel rose up significantly from 9.8 percent in 1991 to 19.2 percent in 2001. This rise is however corresponding to significant decline in their population in Tamenglong and Ukhrul districts.

Although only 7.7 percent of the Thadou population is concentrated in Ukhrul, yet it is the second largest population in the Ukhrul district, next to that of the Tangkhul.

This signifies of Ukhrul district as a highly homogeneous area ethnically. Kom is also one of the most dispersed tribes in Manipur. The main areas of their concentration include Senapati (28.2%) and Churachandpur (33.2%) districts. The Kom population has seen significant rise in its concentration in the Senapati district from 1991 to 2001(see Table 4).

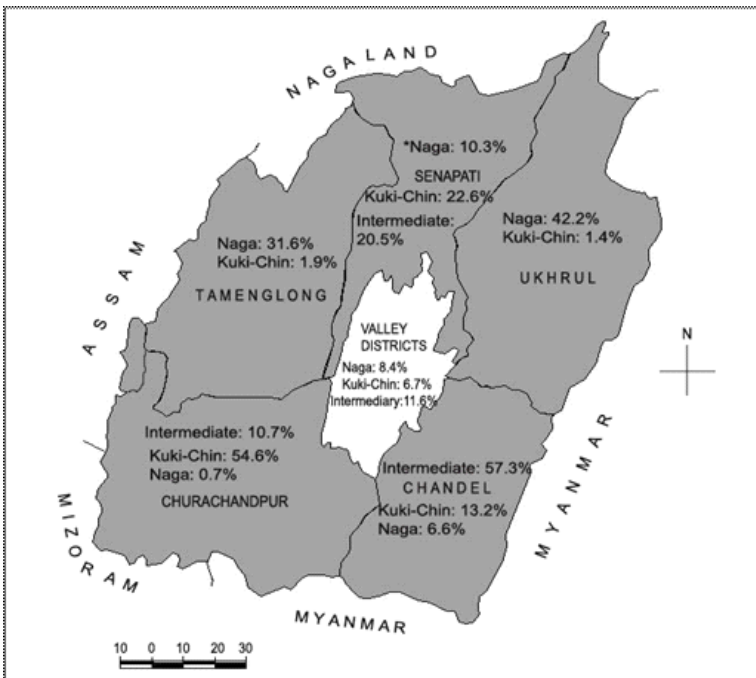
Table 4: Dispersed groups, 1991 and 2001

Districts	Tribes	1991 (%)	2001(%)
Churachandpur	Thadou	26.9	30.0
	Kom	35.0	33.2
Senapati	Thadou	40.4	39.7
	Kom	21.6	28.2
Chandel	Thadou	9.8	19.2
Tamenglong	Thadou	8.2	3.8
Ukhrul	Thadou	7.7	2.9

Source: Compiled by author from Census of India, 1991 & 2001

It can be seen that various tribes belonging to Kuki-Chin-Mizo group are highly scattered and dispersed all over the hills of Manipur, and it is evidently proved by the presence of the Thadou tribe in all the hill districts (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Manipur: Concentration of Ethnic Groups, 2001



Source: Compiled and prepared by author.

\*Excluding three Sub-Divisions: Mao-Maram, Paomata and Purul



**Spatial Distribution**

***Distribution of Naga group***

The Naga group, as a whole, is highly clustered in three hill districts – Ukhrlul, Tamenglong and Senapati. There is an exceptional case of Senapati district as three Naga dominated Sub-divisions –Mao-Maram, Purul and Paomata were not enumerated in the Census of India 2001. Nagas are also significantly found in Chandel and the four valley districts of Manipur (see Table 5 & Figure 2).

5: Manipur: Distribution of Naga Group in All Districts, 2001

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>% distribution</i>
Senapati	11,212	13.6
Ukhrlul	801	1.0
Churachandpur	5,861	7.1
Chandel	56,882	69.2
Tamenglong	1133	1.4
Valley districts	6,348	7.7
Total	82,237	100.0

*Source: Census of India, 2001*

***Distribution of the Kuki-Chin group***

The Kuki-Chin-Mizo group is found in all the districts of Manipur. Except in Churachandpur district where all the tribes of the group are present, they are mostly mixed with the Naga group in other hill districts of Manipur. More than half (53.2%) of the Kuki-Chin-Mizo population is concentrated in Churachandpur district alone whereas significant proportion is found in Senapati (23%) and Chandel (13.2%) districts. A small proportion is distributed in Tamenglong, Ukhrlul and the valley districts of Manipur (see Table 7 & Figure 1).

Table 7: Inter-District Variation in the distribution of Kuki-Chin group, 2001

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>% distribution</i>
Churachandpur	204,212	53.2
Senapati	88,129	23.0
Chandel	50,524	13.2
Tamenglong	9,658	2.5
Ukhrlul	7,012	1.8
Valley districts	24,370	6.3
Total	383,905	100.0

Hence, the Naga group is found to be highly concentrated in the districts of Tamenglong, Ukhrlul and northern part of Senapati whereas Intermediate group in Chandel and Senapati. The Kuki-Chin-Mizo group is densely distributed in the districts of Churachandpur and southern parts of Senapati while massively present in Chandel

district too. In fact, the Kuki-Chin-Mizo group is scattered all across the hill districts of Manipur (see Table 7 & Figure 1).

### **Decadal Growth of Ethnic Groups (1981-2001)**

Manipur's hill districts have experienced significant changes in the distribution of various tribes which are clubbed, as mentioned, into three main ethnic groups. Studying the decadal changes in the tribal population of the State helps one understand the socio-political dynamics and inter-ethnic relation playing out in the intervening periods of 1981-1991 and 1991-2001 which registered high abnormality of demographic changes in certain areas or zones.

### **Decadal Growth in Senapati District**

Senapati district lies in the north of Manipur. Prior to 1991 census operation it was known as 'Manipur North District'. Since the state administrations doubted the nature of growth of population particularly in the three Naga dominated subdivisions - Mao-Maram, Paomata and Purul, the population in the three sub-divisions was not enumerated in the Census of India, 2001 report (Pou 2007).

The major Naga tribes in Senapati district are Mao, Maram, Kabui, Tangkhul, Kacha-Naga and Maring. Overall, the Naga group registered about 48 percent increase in their population during 1981-91 in the district. Hence, the growth of the Naga population in 1991-2001 decade can be estimated to some extent. According to the *Directorate of Economic and Statistics*, Government of Manipur, the total population in the three missing subdivisions- Paomata, Mao-Maram and Purul - is estimated to be 127,107. Out of this, about 363 and 4000 population are constituted respectively by the Kuki and other communities including the Hindi and Nepali speakers, so that, there were around 1,22,744 estimated Naga population from the three sub-divisions (Statistical Abstract Manipur, 2007). When this remaining estimated population is added to the available Naga population in the three subdivisions of Sadar Hill areas (Sadar Hill-East, Sadar hill-West and Saitu-Gamphazol) i.e. 26,424, then it totalled 149,168 which is estimated to be the total Naga population in Senapati district in 2001. Therefore, the Naga population is estimated to have grown by about 37.2 percent in 1991-01 (see Table 8).

Table 8: Senapati district: Decadal growth of the Naga and Kuki-Chin population

<i>Tribes/Groups</i>	<i>Population</i>			<i>% Changes</i>	
	<i>1981</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1981-91</i>	<i>1991-01</i>
<i>Naga</i>	73367	108759	149168*	48.2	37.2
<i>Kuki-Chin</i>	28920	44705	86474	54.6	93.4
Thadou-Kuki	23061	36283	72535	57.3	99.9
Vaiphei	3057	5015	7357	64.0	46.7
Simte	200	485	2452	142.5	405.6
Kom	2602	2922	4130	12.3	41.3

Source: Census of India, 2001. \* Estimated population. Mao-Maram, Purul and Paomata subdivisions dominated by the Nagas not enumerated in 2001 Census.

The Kuki-Chin-Mizo group of tribes settled in the Senapati district include four tribes within its fold, viz. Thadou, Simte, Vaiphei and Kom. The population of the group in the district increased tremendously from 54.6 percent in 1981-1991 to extraordinarily high of 93.4 percent in 1991-2001. This phenomenal increase in its population is determined mainly by the high growth of Thadou tribe in the district, i.e. 99.9 percent in 1991-2001 against 57.3 percent in the preceding 1981-1991. It therefore indicates an abnormal increase contributed by large volume of in-migration of Thadou population within 1991-2001 in the three Sadar Hill subdivisions of Senapati district (see Table 8 & Figure 3). It is worth mentioning that the Naga-Kuki conflagration and large scale Kuki internal displacement occurred within the decade 1991-2001.

### **Decadal Growth in Ukhrul District**

Ukhrul district lies in the north-eastern part of Manipur bordering Nagaland in the north and Myanmar in the east. There are mainly two groups of Scheduled Tribes present in the district viz. Tangkhul and Thadou tribes, both belonging to Naga and Kuki-Chin-Mizo groups respectively. The district has been the traditional seat of the Tangkhul and Thadou- tribes since long time. In regard to the distribution of the tribal population in the district, no tribe has been found to be as densely concentrated as the Tangkhul displaying high degree of ethnic homogeneity in this part of the hill areas.

The Tangkhul (Naga) population grew at a slow pace in 1981-1991; but increased phenomenally in 1991-2001. In sharp contrast, the Thadou (Kuki) population which registered very high increase (77.68%) in its population in 1981-1991 saw massive decline (-42%) in the succeeding decade, 1991-2001. This 'dramatic change' in the population of the two ethnic groups was the result of out-migration particularly of the Thadou tribe from the district in the 1990s due to the Kuki-Naga conflict. Conversely, the ethnic clash also led to in-migration of Tangkhul population to the district from other areas of Manipur. It is interesting to note that almost the same proportion of Thadou (Kuki) population lost during 1991-2001 is replaced by the Tangkhul (Naga) population (see Table 9 & Figures 2&3).

Table 9: Ukhrul District: Decadal Growth of Naga and Kuki Population

<i>Tribes</i>	<i>Population</i>			<i>% change</i>	
	<i>1981</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1981-91</i>	<i>1991-01</i>
Tangkhul (Naga)	68399	87884	127035	28.49	44.55
Thadou (Kuki)	5116	9090	5,268	77.68	-42.05

*Source: Census of India 1981, 1991 & 2001*

Ethnic disparity in demographic changes is clearly established in the Ukhrul district where the Kuki group experiencing negative growth rate in their population size with a corresponding increase in the Naga population which may be termed as an 'exchange in population'.

### **Decadal Growth in Tamenglong District**

Tamenglong district, situated in the western part of Manipur, is predominantly

inhabited by the Kabui and Kacha-Naga (now Liangmei) of the Naga group and the Thadou and Gangte of the Kuki-Chin-Mizo group respectively. There was an abnormal increase (192.40%) of Naga population in 1981-91. This growth is contributed mainly by the abnormal growth of Kabui population. However, although significantly high, the Naga population saw more or less a normal growth rate (54.8%) in 1991-2001 (Table 10 & Figure 2). Like the Naga population, the Kuki-Chin-Mizo population also had an abnormal growth rate (115.31%) in 1981-1991. However, the population declined to negative rate (-30.5%) in the following decade 1991-01 (see Table 10 & Figure 3). It may be noted again that Tamenglong is another district or region where demographic stability had been shaken immensely as a consequence of inter-ethnic conflict in the 1990s.

Table 10: Tamenglong District: Decadal Changes of the tribal population 1981 to 2001

Name of Tribe	Population			% Change	
	1981	1991	2001	1981-91	1991-01
<i>Naga Group:</i>	21046	61541	95261	192.40	54.78
Kabui	11638	43948	60893	277.63	38.63
Kacha-Naga	9408	17593	34368	87.00	95.42
<i>Kuki-Chin:</i>	5584	12027	8361	115.31	-30.50
Gangte	1225	2294	1473	87.32	-35.82
Thadou-Kuki	4359	8349	6888	91.50	-17.52

*Source: Census of India, 1981, 1991 & 2001*

### **Decadal Growth in Chandel District**

Chandel district was known officially as 'Tengnoupal District' till 1981 Census. The district is home to large number of tribes namely Aimol, Anal, Chothe, Kom, Lamgang, Monsang, Mayon, Maring, Tangkhul, Thadou, Vaiphei and Zou. Maring is a single largest tribe in terms of population among the Naga group in Chandel district. The overall growth of the Naga population ranged from only 26.4 percent in 1981-1991 to 61.30 percent in 1991-2001 (see Table 11 & Figure 2). The Anal (80.6%), Mayon (50%) and Maring (56.6%) had high increase in their population within 1991-2001 (see Table 11). The Kuki-Chin-Mizo population increased abnormally in the two decades, i.e., 96.60 percent in 1981-1991 to 138.40 percent in 1991-2001. The abnormal growth of the Thadou and Vaiphei population is the main contributor of the overall growth of the Kuki-Chin-Mizo group (see Table 11 & Figure 3).

### **Decadal Growth in Churachandpur District**

Churachandpur district is predominantly inhabited by the Kuki-Chin-Mizo group of tribes. The population of two tribes, viz. Thadou and Vaiphei saw high growth rate in the decade of 1991-2001. Although the growth rate of the Thadou population during 1981-91 was significantly high (51.7%), its growth in 1991-01 was abnormally high (110.75%). However, other tribes registered normal growth rate, except Gangte which experienced a net decline in its population to the extent of -43.72 percent. The reason

for the high exponential growth of Any Mizo population within 1991-2001 is the shift in identity from Gangte to Any Mizo tribe in 1999 (Thokchom 1999; see Table 12 & Figure 3). The Kabui population, the lone Naga group in the district, had a normal increase in 1981-1991 but it too declined in 1991-01 (see Table 12 & Figure 2).

Table 11: Chandel District: Decadal Changes in Tribal Population

Tribes	Population			% Change	
	1981	1991	2001	1981-91	1991-01
<i>Intermediate Group</i>	26152	33056	53321	26.40	61.30
Anal	8780	11543	20850	31.50	80.60
Chothe	1,429	1591	2333	11.30	46.60
Lamgang	3,412	3940	5754	15.50	46.00
Mayon	1555	1912	2878	23.00	50.50
Monsang	1113	1406	1678	26.30	19.30
<i>Kuki-Chin</i>	10990	21604	51510	96.60	138.40
Aimol	1196	1563	1914	30.70	22.50
Gangte	427	1406	2633	229.30	87.30
Kom	999	1045	1646	4.60	57.50
Thadou	5233	12899	35086	146.50	172.00
Vaiphei	152	1676	4715	1002.60	181.30
Zou	2150	2465	4395	14.70	78.30
Any Mizo	833	550	1121	-34.00	103.80
<i>Naga Group</i>	9863	12664	19828	28.40	56.60
Maring	9863	12664	19828	28.40	56.60

Source: Census of India, 1981, 1991 & 2001

Table 12: Churachandpur District: Decadal growth of the Tribal Population

Tribes	Population			% Change	
	1981	1991	2001	1981-91	1991-01
<i>Kuki-Chin</i>	112845	143945	206110	27.55	43.19
Gangte	5417	7342	4132	35.54	-43.72
Hmar	25650	32166	37998	25.40	18.13
Kom	3310	4716	4858	42.48	3.01
Any Mizo	4608	5922	10322	28.52	74.30
Paite	29156	38814	45549	33.13	17.35
Simte	4527	N.A	7057	21.49	N.A
Sukte	267	N.A	1898	98.50	N.A
Thadou	17196	26064	54929	51.57	110.75
Vaiphei	11026	14736	23629	33.65	60.35
Zou	9707	12194	15738	25.62	29.06
<i>Naga Group</i>	2484	3065	2465	23.39	-19.58
Kabui-Naga	2484	3065	2465	23.39	-19.58

Source: Compiled by author from Census of India 1981 to 2001.

N.A. = Not Available

In overall, the figures 4 and 5 clearly depict the differential growth of the Naga and Kuki-Chin groups all over the hill areas/districts of Manipur. In 1981-1991 the Naga group saw high increase (above 50%) in Tamenglong district alone, however, it shifted to the Chandel and Tamenglong districts in the succeeding 1991-2001 decade. The overall exponential growth of the Kuki-Chin group is relatively high as compared to that of the Naga across the hill districts of Manipur. There was a significant shift in the spatial pattern in the growth of the Kuki-Chin population from Tamenglong and Ukhrul (1981-91) to Chandel and Senapati districts (1991-01).

### **Finding and Conclusion**

The ethnic classification of various tribal groups in Manipur is prepared based on two important sources and logics: Official census record – where three distinctive tribal groups viz. Naga, Kuki and Intermediate groups are found; and the socio-political appellation of the people under which two main groups viz. Naga and Kuki-Chin are practically identified. It may be noted that ethnic affiliation is highly determined by the geographical location of tribes in Manipur context. Concentration pattern in overall shows high disparity between various groups. The Naga group is more geographically concentrated than any other group in the hill areas while the Kuki-Chin group is found to be highly dispersed.

In-depth analysis shows that the dominated areas of the Kuki-Chin, Intermediate and Naga groups can also be geographically delineated based on the pattern of distribution and degree of concentration of the groups' population. The Naga tribes are found to be highly concentrated in Senapati, Ukhrul and Tamenglong districts while Intermediate tribes are largely concentrated in Chandel district alone. The Kuki-Chin group is densely concentrated in Churachandpur, Chandel and Sadar Hill areas of Senapati and sparsely distributed Tamenglong and Ukhrul districts. The distribution of Naga population spatially far wide and extensive compared with that of the Kuki-Chin and Intermediate.

Within 1991-2001 decade, Chandel and Senapati districts experienced the highest growth rate of the Kuki-Chin group, however Tamenglong and Ukhrul districts saw high degree of its depopulation. The Naga population, on the other hand, registered its highest growth rate in Chandel (61.3%) and Ukhrul (44.5%) districts in 1991-2001. An abnormal decadal growth of one group and corresponding decline of another group in an area or district indicates the incidents of in-migration and out-migration (internal displacement) of groups due to the abrupt outbreak of ethnic clash such as Kuki-Naga conflict.

Ukhrul district is found to be the most homogeneous in terms of ethnic as well as tribe-wise concentration because it is dominated solely by the Naga group (only Tangkhul tribe) accounting for more than four-fifth of the population in the district. Thadou (Kuki), accounting for six percent of the population, is the only Kuki-Chin tribe significantly found in the district. Churachandpur district is another homogeneous area largely dominated by the Kuki-Chin group. Kabui is negligibly the only Naga tribe found in the district. In contrast, Chandel district is far more heterogeneous and diverse in its ethnic composition. Various Kuki-Chin, Naga and Intermediate tribes

are found in the Chandel district. Senapati district has a high concentration of Naga tribes, but is ethnically diverse owing to the presence of significantly high proportion of Kuki-Chin tribes in three Sadar Hills subdivisions in the south.

Therefore, it can be marked that the hill areas of Manipur have been the 'homeland' for the tribal groups, i.e. the Nagas, Intermediate and Kuki-Chin in broad term, displaying a distinct unit of socio-cultural and ethnic landscapes encircling the valleys mainly inhabited by the Meiteis - the largest ethnic groups in the State. It is highly evident that there is large degree of ethnic homogenization at micro-level on account of movements of ethnic population from one areas to another particularly within the 1991-2001 decade. The Nagas are far more confined/homogenous in spatial distribution. The Kuki-Chin who were once dispersed across the hills have now been highly concentrated enough in their areas of stronghold. This degree of ethnic-based spatial homogenization is seen quite instrumental in motivating the Kukis to aspire for a more political autonomy or a separate territorial homeland. So, as Weidmann (2009: 526) suggests, it is proven that the root motivation and opportunity for groups to aspire for more territorial or political autonomy, as in the case of Kuki-Naga in Manipur, has been engendered intensely by the geographical distribution and 'redistribution' of the groups population.

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