CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

"To understand any living thing, you must, so to say, creep with and feel the beating of its heart". —W. MacNeile Dixon.

This research, which is being submitted as a doctoral thesis under the title "Distribution and Territoriality of Ethnic Dialects, and Patterns of Inter-ethnic Communication in Manipur : A Development Perspective", focuses on the socio-cultural aspects of the various ethnic communities, interpreted in their spatial perspective, that distinctly identifies them as social 'isolates'. The understanding is that these innate traits beget certain teeming as well as insipid corollaries, of which the best outcome appears to be the preservation of communal identity and discrete speech territories, glaringly underlined by a plethora of ethnocentrism. Also, the inherent ethnic traits seem to affect regional development, suggesting their likely relationship. Thus, this study commences by exploring the intricate or ingrained ethnolingual parameters and culminate in relating them with developmental aspects.

I.1. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

a). CONSPECTUS OF INTEREST:

Being a part of such involute ethnic social structure, the researcher has chosen this theme for an in-depth study. The "involute ethnic mosaic" is best illustrated by the hitherto seen multiplicity of dialects (or patois*, in some areas) in every district and division. One distinct social parameter encountered in this multispeech area is the preservation of ethnic identities and speeches almost undiluted for decades. Each ethnolingual group therefore maintains discrete speech territory (exclusively) and ethnic boundary despite the presence of certain undistinguishable innate traits. Regarding the existence of

* Patois (pronounced 'paetwa'), a French term, applied primarily to the spoken language. OED defines it as 'regional dialect of common people; jargon; dialect differing from the standard language of the country. Haugen (1966) stated that "when dialect ceased to be written, they become patois...". 'Patois refers to rural from of speech and speech of a smaller unit than dialect. It is used for the characteristics of village or other small communities (Petyt: 1980).
multiple speeches in a small area, one scholar observed that "each village within the same tribe such as Tangkhul Nagas have its own patois". The intention is mainly to study and explain the significance of ethnolinguistic parameters in regional development, and rectify the misunderstood perceptions about the medley ethnic communities. It also takes serious note of the possible interethnic communication patterns evolving in this multi-speech area. Along with this, how the ethnolinguistic variations among the medley communities effectuate territoriality, social distance and boundary is also dilated upon, based on few stratified villages. Hence, importance is given to parameters of ethnic and linguistic elements which resulted in intense ‘ethnicity’. The understanding is that dialect is the best single trait which differentiates communities while ethnicity immensely determines the social structure and perceptions. These two innate traits are very telling indicators and their in depth understanding is indispensable to grasp the social reality and ethnic mosaic.

Multilingualism appears to be rather a hindrance to socio-economic development in a small area such as Manipur. It is often associated with all the ills (be it socio-cultural, economic, or political aspects) of a society and area. The conspicuous impact it has, experts stress, is in the breakdown of inter-ethnic communications, ethnic relation, creation of social isolates, prejudice or ethnocentrism, illiteracy, and in the long run affects regional development. Scholars like Ferguson (1962), Gumperz (1962), Fishman (1966/1968), Das Gupta (1968), Pool (1969/1972), etc., illustrated (citing evidences from different nations) the inverse relationship between linguistic diversity and development of a region (detail work on this theme given in Chapter II.G). There are also many studies done on the facets of dialect/language in the political, educational,

2. Ethnicity, taking its anthropological usage, is also used here to mean “sense of peoplehood” or “sense of belonging” within related ethnic group.
Fig. no. 1.
etc. spheres of a region. Among the western scholars there is now a tacit agreement on the relationship between linguistic diversity and region’s under development or socio-economic laggardness. The contention is that linguistic homogeneity, rather than multilingualism, in a region is its own index of development and the level of development attained by an area can be measured by the number of dominant languages/dialects spoken. Therefore, taking cues from such assertions it is proposed to examine this possibility in the study of ethnolinguistic parameters in Manipur. The results deduced from this pioneering investigation (for this area) will be of immense help to regional planners, especially to the language planners and educationists. It is also strongly felt that this exploration into the ethnic societal mosaic will exhume their many overshadowed intrinsic characteristics. Hence, this theme has been specially selected for in depth research, with the hope that the study will cogently represent the stated problem.

(b). MAIN BROAD THEMES OF RESEARCH:

Given below are the main themes, sub-themes, and focus of the study which concentrates on the ethnolinguistic parameters in regional development.

i). SOCIO-CULTURAL PARAMETERS:
(a). Peopling of Manipur.
(b). Ethnolinguual Classifications.
(c). Historical Accounts of its populations

ii). DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS:
(a). Decadal population of speech communities.
(b). Distribution of Ethnolinguual groups
(c). Areas of concentration in the state.

iii). LINGUISTIC/DIALECTAL FEATURES:
(a). Measuring Linguistic Diversity/Index of dialectal diversity (State and District levels).
(b). Territoriality of Dialectal features based on selected Lexis/words.
(c). Ethnicity based on lexical exercise undertaken.
(d). Regionalization of linguistic Areas as depicted by Index of diversity.
iv). ON COMMUNICATIONAL ASPECTS:

(a). Interethnic Communication situation-overview and problems.
(b). Patterns of Interethnic Communication in the State (at subdivisional level).
(c). Trends and Computation of 'Communicativity' in the State (Indexes for some dominant Mother-tongues/language); their potential to serve as lingua franca.

v). DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES:

(a). Contrast between linguistically homogeneous and heterogeneous areas based on socio-economic indicators.
(b). Determination of Linguistic diversity and measures of Development (correlating the two variables).

The above five main themes and its sub-themes summarise the research interest and the conspectus of the study. These themes also form separate chapters in which each theme is elaborately dilated upon, with the help of vital statistics and maps.

1.2. OBJECTIVES:

With the research problem and its themes stated, the study sets the following objectives as guidelines to derive the required goals or dialectic analysis of the problem:

i). to illustrate the depth of ethnic differences in a seemingly homogeneous area such as Manipur, describing the dialectal or linguistic diversity and the emerging patterns of inter-ethnic communication;

ii). to identify the patterns of territoriality based on inter-ethnic communication and the ethnolinguual identity of the people at the grass root levels; and

iii). to examine the nature of interrelationship between the process of development and the observed ethnolinguual diversity and the growing process of multilingualism.

1.3. RESEARCH GUESSES/QUESTIONS:

Certain 'research guesses' are advanced in line with the themes and objectives of the study. The given hypotheses facilitated the formation of the research subject matters.
MANIPUR

ADMINISTRATION - 1984 (onwards).

CHANGE IN AREAS

NAGALAND

ASSAM

MANIPUR

TAMENGLONG

IMPHAL

THOUBAL

BISHNUPUR

CHURACHANDPUR

CHANDEL

NAGALAND

MANIPUR

ASSAM

INDIA

MYANMAR (BURMA)

Scale: 1:1,800,000
1 cm = 18 km

Fig. no. 2.
(i). Is tribal area different from other areas or are they homogeneous in their ethnolinguual components and other innate traits;

(ii). Will lexical or other dialectal differences be sufficient to describe speech variations and ethnic distinctions;

(iii). Is it possible for each speech community to possess discrete territories or spatial concentration despite their small population;

(iv). Can territoriality and ethnicity of the people be claimed to depict/illustrate ‘monolithic’ settlement of each group;

(v). Is it possible to delineate ethnolinguial areas in such multi-speech mosaic;

(vi). If the state and its divisions has ‘high’ level of linguistic diversity, how will the medley groups communicate among themselves or with other groups.

(vii). Assuming the state and population to be multilingual, is this diversity in mother-tongue related to regional development—or will socio-cultural elements have impact on region’s levels of economic development;

(viii). In such multispeech area, are there any differences between ‘high’ and ‘low’ linguistic diversity areas in economic parameters?

1.4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY:

The research depended on various kinds of data and made use of certain pertinent methods/techniques, in its effort to derive an empirical and cogent critique of the whole shebang. Depending on the themes examined the date and methodology also vary accordingly, which is discussed elaborately in the succeeding sections. The base year for the analysis of the various themes is within 1987 to 1989 (duration of collecting primary information in the selected villages). But for other descriptions the 1981 census report has been the base. However, for spatio-temporal analysis informations of earlier years are also considered. Effort is made to induct, where ever essential, the latest available informations or work related to such kind of studies on the state, etc.
1.4.A. DATA : Source and Collection:

Mainly, the study derived the required data from two sources and procedures. The first is the secondary source, comprising of census reports, statistical handbooks, research publications, articles, unpublished works, etc. The other source is the primary which necessitates field investigations for informations by means of questionnaires, interviews participant observation, etc. The main sources and procedures of collecting data consist of:

A.1. LIBRARY RESEARCH:

Most of the works involved at the initial stage are framed or outlined with the help of materials available in the various libraries. The library works greatly assisted in the formulation of research frame work, familiarise one with similar studies, indicated research lacuna, informed about the types of materials/articles perforce for the study, etc. Hence, analysis of most of the themes could be done from the library research.

A.2. FIELD INVESTIGATION:

Data collection for more empirical expositions are primary informations, mappings, illustrations, etc., and done by undertaking field investigations from selected villages. The field work was done during 1987-89, mainly for the linguistic themes of the research.

(a). Actual field study is done in 20 selected villages\(^3\), from different districts. Selection of the base villages is done by means of setting certain criteria, as given below:

i). those relatively old and new settlements,

ii). situated close to (or far/from) the urban centres,

iii). intact in terms of speech or mostly monolingual, and those village which are populated by different speech groups,

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3. Besides the 20 selected villages, to illustrate variations in linguistic parameters, some other villages are also included. These additional villages are usually which represents discrete speech groups, not included or covered by earlier selection.
iv). also, to have a comparative knowledge of the intended exercise some additional villages are included, those which may not possess the criteria or inhabited by communities other than those found in the 20 or so villages.

The selected villages are derived by means of stratified sampling, taking into consideration the above criteria. The understanding is that these selected villages will illustrate ‘within and among’ variations in speeches and also its speakers in different areas. Therefore, both old and new, far and close to urban, mono-as well as bi-/multi-speech, etc., are considered in the selection of villages.

(b). Field investigations in the base villages was done by the use of Questionnaire, interviews, discussions, etc. Besides, participant observation is greatly utilised, especially in the analysis and comparison of linguistic features. The questionnaire consists of information relating to:

(i). the village-location, distance from nearest town, infrastructures available (educational, etc.).

(ii). the respondent’s affiliations,

(iii). socio-cultural aspects of the village (dialect spoken, interethnic relationship, religious matters, etc.).

(iv). linguistic features—these consist of translating some 40 given lexis/terms in their own mother-tongue or village speech/patois. This section of the questionnaire includes (i) core vocabularies, and (ii) ‘borrowed’ words. It consists of terms relating to kinship, names, religious, technical words, etc.

From this questionnaire the interethnic as well as areal differences in linguistic features is examined. The distribution (or
territoriality) of ethnic groups and their speech is examined. Also, the nature of communication and interethnic relationships will be more explicitly understood which will also serve as inferences for the other analysis relating to the socio-cultural elements.

(c). Respondents or informants for the field investigations in the selected villages comprised of (a) 'NORMS' (i.e., non-mobile, older, rural males/females)—they constituted about 60-70 percent of the 'target groups' of this survey, (b) college or university students in the village or from particular ethnic community, (c) few randomly selected persons like scholars, respectable personalities, etc., and (d) if there are new settlers in the village, etc. Though, the assumption is that differences in the age group of the respondents will not hamper a dialect. It is sanguined that the target groups will demonstrate the nature and functioning of the ethnolinguistic parameters in the society and village. Dialectal variations in a community is expected to come from the mobile groups who may have frequent contacts with other groups or are settled in areas other than their own for a long period.

I.4.B. METHODOLOGY/TECHNIQUES ADOPTED:

Certain methods and technique have been adopted in the course of the analysis of the problem. Different research tools or techniques are used depending on the theme examined. Most of the methods applied here have been tested or used earlier by scholars studying similar research problems. In such kind of research the role assumed by some sophisticated techniques is tremendous and their application had greatly shaped and ratified certain misconceptions. The methods adopted in this study can be classified as (a) statistical, (b) geographical, and (c) other methods. Statistical techniques are mainly applied in the examination of linguistic features, derivation of sample units, interpretation
of themes, etc. Cartographical techniques efficiently illustrate the medley facts and other informations graphically with fitting precisions. These techniques and tools could greatly summarise varied sets of data and the derived corollaries. As evident from the interpretations, most of the methods are applied in the analysis of linguistic parameters.

B.1. SAMPLING TECHNIQUE:

Sampling is adopted in the attempt to acquire the desired ‘base villages’, from the total 770 villages in the state, on the basis of the criteria set forth. In the above sections (2.(a) & (b). on Field Investigations), methodological issues pertaining to derivation and means of actual selection and investigations have been briefly stated. Besides this, sampling (of villages and lexical features) will enable in understanding of the distribution and territoriality of linguistic parameters (as examined in the Chapter V1).

The sampling technique adopted in the analysis of linguistic parameters and selection of ‘base villages’ is stratified sampling method. Based on the criteria, villages are stratified. When the required sample villages are obtained from sampling frame, the selected words/terms are tested (in each village taking into account the selected ‘target groups’ , as described in section 2(c) above). Finally, with the use of ‘isogloss’ method, areas of variations in linguistic features like ‘phonetic’ or lexical differences are delineated. The sampling method applied for deriving the villages and linguistic maps are shown by Fig. no. 3-B, taking an example from Tipamukh sub-division of South district.

Fig.no. 3-A illustrates how stratified sampling had been done to derive the final dialect/word geographies. Fig.no. 3-B is the final sample map which depicts difference in boundary of the word ‘ram’ and use or loss of the sound/letter ‘r’ in the sample area inhabited by Kuki-Chins.
TIPAIMUKH SUB-DIVISION
[ETHNIC AREAS]

LEGEND

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOUNDARY</th>
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<th>SUB-DIVISION</th>
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U.A. UNINHABITED AREAS

VILLAGES

Fig. No. 3-B.
B.2. STATISTICAL METHODS ADOPTED:

In an attempt to deduce a cogent and representative analysis/illustration of the research certain statistical techniques have been adopted. Application of such methods are indispensable especially on themes relating to the linguistic, communication, and developmental aspects. The methods/techniques applied are given below:

(i) J.H. Greenberg’s (1956) method A, also known as the ‘Monolingual Non-Weighted Method) has been used to measure linguistic diversity in the state, district, and its sub-divisions.

The formula is as given below:

\[ A = 1 - \frac{\sum (i^2)}{N^2} \]

(The nature and explanation of this method is described in detailed in Chapter V).

(ii) Another technique applied is Kuo’s (1979) “index of Communicativity”. This index is designed to measure the potentiality of a particular dialect/language to serve as lingua-franca or means of wider communication in a multi-speech area. Kuo’s index/method measures communicativity with respect to a given language. The formula is as below:

(ii).a). \[ I_{am} = (P_{am})^2 \] (a)

Kuo also modified the above formula to apply to an intergroup communication which is of great sociological significance in multilingual/multilingual society. The extended Index I is as below:

(ii).b). \[ I_{amn} = (P_{am}) (P_{an}) \] (b)

(iii) In the analysis of the distributions and determinations of ‘core’ areas, dominant/insignificant groups, etc., of the various ethnolingual groups a simple ‘proportional’ or percentage computation is done. Hence, from this method the ‘index of concentration’ has been derived.
(iv). Based on the latest available data on the socio-economic aspects, areas of high and low diversity had been compared and contrasted (as described in chapter VII). This exercise illustrates the areal differences based on linguistic parameters.

(v). A simple correlation is also attempted to see whether or not linguistic diversity and certain indicators of development have any significant associations. This is done for 1971 and 1981, at the sub-divisional levels.

(vi). Delineation of linguistic areas is done by using the formula of J.H. Greenberg (measurement of linguistic diversity).

B.3. CARTOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES:

(i). Mapping of the data and the outcome of the various analysis had been done wherever essential. Such mapping of the data greatly summarise the many findings and discreetly illustrate the ideas graphically. Besides, mapping of the study areas, administrative divisions, location, etc. of the state also is done to depict the other side of the intended problem.

Choropleth technique is widely used to illustrate the density, intensity, differences, etc. of the various ethnolingual parameters. Other geographical techniques used, besides the choropleth method, are diagrams, charts, tabulations, etc. They illustrate those facts not highlighted by the maps.

(ii). As briefly indicated in section A.2, field work was done to collect primary informations from the selected 'base' villages. Field investigations was undertaken mainly for dialectal features. This was done with help of questionnaire/schedule consisting of ethnolingual and other informations. Besides the main selected 'target groups' the respondents also included some respected individuals. Hence, the field investigation included interviews, discussions, etc.
The above mentioned methodology and other techniques for the analysis of the collected data are described in each section/chapter, wherever they are applied. Hence in this section they are merely introduced.

1.5 CHAPTER SCHEME:

This research studies of the 'ethnolinguial parameters in regional development' (with reference to Manipur) consists of seven main chapters and two subsidiary parts, as described below:

Chapter I is entitled ‘introduction’ and serves as an index to the entire research. In this section the research problem, objectives, methodological issues, study area, etc. are briefly stated. Besides, it also introduces the state, its peopling, and history. In fact the whole intention of the study is introduced in this chapter.

‘Overview of literature’ is presented in Chapter II. Several pertinent works or studies done on similar themes have been cited and reviewed. The literature (both published and unpublished are reviewed according to the themes of the research. Such classifications enable scanning of the types and nature of earlier studies.

In Chapter III ‘classification of the ethnic communities’ of Manipur is attempted. A wider classification based on racial, ethnolinguistic, cultural, topographical, etc. is attempted taking into account the earlier available works. Here, even inter-group classification is also attempted.

Chapter IV deals with the ‘distributional aspects of the medley ethnic groups’ in the state. The spatial patterning of different ethnic as well as lingual/speech communities are described.

The nature and setting of ‘linguistic diversity’ in the state is examined in Chapter V. Diversity is measured for the districts and sub-divisions by using Greenberg’s formula. Based on this, linguistic areas are delineated.
In Chapter VI 'territoriality and ethnicity of dialectal features' and its speakers are investigated and analysed. Evidences of speech territoriality are collected from field investigations in the few selected villages. Areas of linguistic differences are delineated, based on dialectal/speech parameters, by using 'isogloss/isolex' methods.

Chapter VII focuses on the 'patterns of interethnic communication' in such multi-speech areas. Here, the different communication links emerging or observed are described. Also, 'index of communicativity' is examined — i.e., the potentionality of a particular language to act as means of wider communication in such linguistically heterogeneous areas. Besides, the possible ulse of a dialect by different groups is also computed.

Among the main themes the last one deals with the 'determination of relationship between mother-tongue diversity and development'. This Chapter VIII examines the possible relationship or association between linguistic diversity and indicators of development in the state, at the sub-division level. Besides, areas of high and low linguistic diversity are compared to see if there are any contrasting differences between the two areas with regards to levels of development.

The concluding Chapter IX recapitulates the main findings and highlights the significance of such studies on 'ethnolingual parameters in regional development'.

Alongwith the nine chapters briefly described above, the research also includes (a) Appendices, in the form of tables illustrating some facts and figures relating to the research/study, and (b) Bibliography, comprising of books, articles, unpublished materials, Oificial documents (census reports, handbooks, etc.).

1.6 STUDY AREA:

At the macro-level the study area is the state of Manipur. However, depending on the themes to be examined the study confined itself to certain
selected districts and villages. Therefore, the study area can be segmented into two, (a) the state as a whole, and (b) few selected villages from districts considered to be ethnolingually important.

Reason for having two different study areas is due to the differences in the themes to be analysed. For instance, to illustrate the spatial character of lexical features the entire state can not be taken. Hence, few stratified areas and villages are selected to depict the variations at the micro-level. One salient characteristic possessed by the districts from which these villages are selected is that they are tribal core areas and linguistically very diverse. On the other hand, comparing villages on the basis of socio-economic indicators taking into account linguistic diversity will not yield much or be representative. It therefore necessitates examining at the sub-divisional level. Hence, the reasons for segmenting the study area.

1.7. THE STATE AND ITS POPULATION:

Manipur, known as the 'Land of Jewel', is a tiny State in the eastern-most part of India. The State extends between 23° 50', and 25° 41' N latitudes, and 93° 02' and 94° 47' E Longitudes. The state was a princely state and historic area, amalgamated with the Indian Union on the 15th October, 1949. Under the provisions of North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act 1971, a fullfledged statehood was granted on 21st January, 1972. Manipur has an area of 22,356 sq. km and consists of 5 districts and 25 sub-divisions. Later in 1974 the number of districts increased to 6 with Tengnoupal, a hill sub-division of Central district, becoming an autonomous unit alongwith its 3 hill divisions. The state holds a population of 1,072,753 persons in 1971 which increased to 1,420,953 in 1981. Of this, the tribal segment was 387,977 persons—they constitute 27.30 percent of the population, a decline of 3.88 percent since 1971. It was 31.18 percent in 1981.4 Fig. no. 1 shows the administrative divisions till 1983. In the latter part of 1983, administrative

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boundaries were once again changed as shown in Fig. no. 2. At present there are 8 districts in the state.

Manipur is bounded on the north by Nagaland, on the west by Assam and Mizoram, and greater part of its southern territories and east by Burma. The state capital is Imphal, a class I town with a population of 1,56,622 persons in 1981. The capital is centrally situated and is the nodal point for all kinds of activities on which the lesser developed peripheral areas are dependent greatly. Imphal divisions generally have a very low concentration of tribal population and accommodate medley ethnolinguistic communities. Central district in general and Imphal divisions in particular is the most developed area in the state and is well linked with the rest of the country, except by railways/waterways. In this area most of the speakers of Indo-Aryan and Dravidian tongues, foreign, and other languages are found. But most of them are engaged as traders, merchants, army personnel, labourers, government servants, artisans, etc.

Manipur, although a tiny state, is a unique socio-cultural area. It is a multilingual area and hence ethnically pluralistic where myriad speech communities clustered maintaining a kind of distinct social distance, boundary, and identity. The state comprises of 29 odd pristine communities, but belonging to one racial stock, Mongoloid, and linguistic family, Tibeto-Burman (described in detail in Chapter III). These different groups are collectively known as ‘scheduled tribes’ of Manipur, and constitute about 35 percent of the total population. Broadly, they can be segmented into: (a) Kuki-Chins, and (b) Nagas. The other group who are the most predominant and belong to the same racial stock and linguistic family but not identified as tribals, are the autochthonous inhabitants called Meiteis or Manipuris. Meiteis constitute about 55-60 percent of the population. They are, unlike their counterparts who are mostly Christians, Vaishnavite-Hindu converts. Conversion to Hinduism seem to have occurred in the 18th century (around 1735, during the reign of king Pamheiba or Garib
Otherwise, there appears to be no very distinct differences between the tribes and them.

Other prominent ethnic communities are (i) the ‘Immigrant Mediterraneans’ who speak dialects and languages of Indo-Aryan and Dravidians, and (ii) other Indian communities different from the former groups, and (iii) some Foreign ethnics. Though they are quite prominent, they constitute only about 10-15 percent. Usually they are engaged in the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. Those prominent among them are among Assamese, Bengali, Gorkhali/Nepalese (the largest, even larger than most natives), Bihari, Oriya, Panjabi, Marwari, Tamil, etc. Since they do not have substantial population in the state, their presence did not affect linguistic diversity but contributes to it (see explanations in Chapters IV and V).

The chart below outlines the different populations or ethnolinguistic groups in the state (description in Chapter III):

**MANIPUR : ETHNIC GROUPS**

1. AUTOCHTHONOUS MONGOLOIDS:
   A. Kuki-Chin Groups.
   B. Nagas.
   C. Meiteis (Hindu Converts)
   D. Meiteis (Scheduled Castes.)

2. IMMIGRANT MEDITERRANEANS:
   A. Indo-Aryans.
   B. Dravidians
   C. Speakers of other minor Indian Languages.
   D. Muslim population (Panghals).

III. Others:
   A. Foreign Groups.
   B. Nepalese.
   C. Other “Unspecified” (as entered in the Census).

Chart no.1 A: It shows the different ethnic groups in Manipur. Group-I collectively constitutes more than 90 percent of the total population.

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Among the different groups only the Kuki-Chins and Nagas can be particularised as Hill-dwellers, while the rest are found mostly concentrating in the plain areas or Central district of the state. Hence, they are the main tribal components and their areas are linguistically highly diverse and tend to be less developed than the other areas in the state (vide Chapter V & VIII).

1.8. PROTO (PRE)- HISTORY AND POPLING OF MANIPUR:

The peopling of Manipur as seen today, in which the medley ethnolinguial communities concentrate and cluster in clearly delimitable territories, is the outcome of its geography and history. Manipur appears to be inhabited since time immemorial and different areas occupied at different points of time. Such frequent succession in the occupation of areas (by mightier groups or clans thereby dispelling the vanquished clans) seems to occur with great frequency especially in the hill regions. Even the plain areas was affected by invasions and occasional dislodgement. These historical events of the past with the geographical factors immencely determine and shape the socio-cultural and economic aspects of the ethnic population, as also is evident from the spatial patterning as encountered at present.

Certain important factors that describe the prehistory, peopling of the areas, and past archaeological artefacts are cited and examined below:

i). One conspicuous illustration that describes the nature of the peopling of Manipur is the distinct spatial patterning of the ethnolinguial communities. Generally speaking, the Kuki-Chins settled in the South (clustering in parts of North and South-east). Nagas in the east, north, and west (clustering in south-east), the Meiteis and others mainly in the central areas. Such demarcatable ethnic territories adumbrates the possible ethnic immigration into the state, which may span for a very long time. Though there are many theories and opinions on how and who entered or occupied the areas intiially, prior to mass influx in the later part of the 19th century, there is a tacit agreement among scholars that the Meiteis and allied groups were
the first settlers. They seem to have entered and settled long time ago, coming with their own distinct and undiluted culture, more sophisticated than their other counterparts. The Meiteis were noticed by the Burmese and the Shan Chronicle mentioned their presence even around 777 A.D. Since that time they occupied the fertile Imphal (and probably Kabaw Valley, which is now a part of Burma) valley and established an intrinsic civilization characterised by a distinct culture. This culture was later mutilated or diluted by an alien religion, Vaishnavism. Such changes in the social system could not however affect the other ethnic groups inhabiting the hills. The in-migration of the Meiteis can be regarded as the ‘first wave of migration’ into Manipur.

In the second stage the Nagas and the so-called Old Kukis seem to enter the state, separately using different entry points. Their immigration might have occurred in the 15th century or possibly before that. Among the Nagas, the Mao-Maram group and Tangkhul were one of the earliest settlers, followed by the Roungmei group. It is quite possible that the Tangkhuls and Maos entered through north-western Burma while the Zeliangrongs probably from Chin hills in Burma via Cachar in Assam. Some of the Kuki-Chins, especially the Old Kukis, made their appearance in Manipur as early as the 16th century, as recorded by Meitei monarchs. As one scholar noted “According to Cheitharol Kumbaba, the Royal chronicles of Manipur in 1570 A.D., king Mungyamba tried to conquer Anal Khullen......” 6 the main Anal village or settlement.

Later, in the last-leg of the 19th century the third and more massive influx of immigrants occurred which mainly comprises of the new Kuki-Chins. This group consists of the Thadous and allied clans, Paites, Zous, etc., now concentrating in the south bordering Burma and Mizoram. Their influx was

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noticed and recorded around the mid-nineteenth century (especially the Thadou group) in Cachar by Maj. Steward. He called them the 'new Kukis' in 1855. It is widely opined that they entered the state from Chin Hills in Burma via Mizoram and Cachar. Some scholars believed that these new immigrants were those driven out by the Lushais (around 1810-50). One scholar noted that "About the same time the Thadous of the Chin Hills were conquered by the Soktes and were driven into the southern hills of Manipur."7 It is evident from this incident that inter-ethnic animosity, besides history, contributed to the present peopling of Manipur and continue to strain inter-ethnic relationships.

All the ethnic population in the state were once alien, entering at different points. Hence, even the Meiteis—now the most dominant—were once outsiders. Hooker contended that "the Manipuris are emigrants from the kingdom of that name (Soormah), which lies beyond the British possessions, and border on Assam and Burmah."8 and the present territory to emerge from the erst-while extensive Pong dynasty.

Almost all the speech groups have their prototypes outside the state and country. For instance, the autochthonous speak dialects of Tibeto-Burman languages, an off shoot of Sino-Tibetan linguistic family. Their origin is therefore traced outside the country. Like most of the Indian population (e.g. the Indo-Aryans, Goans etc.) the primeval inhabitants possess certain innate traits similar with the Chinese, Tibetans, Burmese, and other southeast Asians, as reflected in/by their physical appearances or socio-cultural norms, habitation, life-styles, etc. Even the non-Mongoloids or other Indians have their origin outside the state. For example, they came from different parts of India—as far as Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, etc. Differences in racial, linguistic, and origin of the medley ethnic communities constituted

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8. Cited in Dun, E.W. op. cit., p. 16. Notes on the immigration of the Kuki-Chins to Manipur was mentioned by Grierson (1903; 1904) and other anthropologists, etc.
the peopling of Manipur in a very interesting pattern.

Interestingly, there is also ample archaeological evidences on the possible prehistoric cultures that had existed in this area. However, from this findings it can not be affirmed whether Manipur is one of the areas where evolution took place. But it suggests the possibility of their existence and settling in this region.

Some archaeological findings in the Sixties in Manipur, especially in Ukhrul district and Tengnoupal district, suggest the flourishing of prehistoric culture. Artefacts collected from the two districts suggested the existence of certain tool-making communities. This relics consists of hand-axe and a cleaver, points, scrapers, blades, burins, cores and a few bone-points.9 These Stone age tools were excavated at Khangkhul in East district. Besides the tools, some natural caves with bones and breccia along with stone chips are found. Another site from which a chopper of quartzite was uncovered is in Machi (Tengnoupal district) about 40 kms due south-west of Imphal. Hence from such artifacts, archaeologists and anthropologists like J. H. Hutton and A.P. Khatri includes Manipur among the areas of Chopping tool culture with hand-axes as the main tool, and Chopper culture. However, there are some scholars who find it hard to imbibe the presence of such prehistoric cultures in the state. They strongly opine that the state was at that time under water or vacant and isolated, a cul de sac.

Evidences on the habitations of the state at a later period in history were also abundantly exhumed from many sites by archaeologists. In 1929, Mr. O.K. Singh excavated old palace sites at Sangaithem and found remains of pottery. Similar artefacts and few other articles belonging to the 17th century were also unearthed from a site at Kameng. The findings consist of coins, some inscriptions, manuscripts, terracota plates, cups and

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an image/icon of Buddha. In 1967, Phuman hills was explored by Mr. Singh, where potsherds or pottery remains were found. The potsherds consisted of (a) plain wares, (b) stamped wares, (c) incised wares, (d) cord marked wares, (e) wares with circular spots, and (f) applique wares. Incidentally, some of the artifacts have certain affinities with those from Eastern Asia like China, South east Asian countries, etc. Generally the pottery have coarse texture and few of them are mould from clay. The technique and design indicate that they are shaped by a beater and the human hand. Similar type of pottery were used in Eastern Asia during the Neolithic. However, the link with South-east Asia can be fully established or ratified only after intensive investigations. But at least, their resemblances or likely link with the other East-Asian population is quite discerned as seen in the racial components, linguistic affinities, socio-cultural elements, etc.

iv). The peopling of Manipur also poses certain serious thoughts on the possible origin of the ethnic populations. As is evident they are ethnically, socio-culturally, and linguistically quite different from the main Indian population. Such conspicuous ethnolinguual variations made one to state, "the first thing we notice about them is that none of them are Indians in any sense of the word. On the contrary they are all Mongolians in origin. Most of them, at any rate have come down from the north, out of the great void of Central Asia, reaching out the plains of the southern peninsular-India, Burma, Indo-China and have been boxed up, in the mountains by those who reached the plains ahead of them". However, based on some of the available literature and folklores, certain theoretical propositions can be advanced.

Regarding their origin, there are diverse views and opinions among

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scholars and the natives. However, some of the ethnic groups trace a common or similar source, as indicated by their folklores. Even stories are narrated as to how the Meiteis, Nagas, and Kukis were once siblings and got separated. The Kuki-Chins and the nagas, especially the Tangkhuls, claimed emerging from an 'earth bowl' or cave. According to their legends they emerged from a certain cave which none of them could describe definitely. The Kuki group at least suggests the 'earth bowl' to be outside Manipur (but indefinite location), while the Tangkhuls claim the cave to be at Murringphy, somewhere near Imphal plain. Such similar legends regarding origin despite conspicuous ethnolinguistic or cultural variations poses certain important hypothetical questions or possible conclusions:

(a). That prior to their emigration they must have settled together or inhabited at contiguous areas, or were subjects of one great chief/king/ruler. Later they must have got separated due to inter-ethnic animosity ensuing to raids, wars, genocides, etc.

(b). Due to natural calamity (like earthquakes, floods, drought and famine, etc.), political breakdown or change in leadership, or conquest by more hostile and powerful kings.

Such events must have compelled them to disperse to farflung territories, free from turmoil, better arable lands, etc. The above theories are seemingly true as seen from their institutional set-up (types of chieftainship and village administration, etc.), socio-cultural perspectives (like marriages, rituals, bride price, tributes to chiefs or head of the clan, handloom embroidery, dances and songs, concern for genealogy, ceremonies, etc.), speech features (use of language for specific occasions, poetic or ritual speeches, etc.), handicrafts, metal works, etc. It is therefore, highly possible that they once possessed or belong to a great civilization. Despite the present conditions they are undergoing, one scholar had made a very
interesting observation about these medley ethnic groups:

Certainly the tribes of the frontier are industrially backward. The machine age has passed them by, or failed to reach them.....Thus if we compare the hill tribe standard with the most up-to-date standards of living (and dying) in the west, it does appear somewhat backward. On the other hand, if we compare him with real savage, we shall probably have to admit that he is almost as civilized as a Western European-though far less comfortable. Otherwise the terms savage and civilized are meaningless.....They must, however, have sprung from a parent body which had a written language, and have since lost the art. Almost every tribe has a tradition of a 'parchment book', and curious or grotesque legends of how the book came to be destroyed.....Most of these people cannot write, or read either, though they belong to races of high culture. The tribes can work metals-iron and silver-they weave and dye cloth, make fish traps, mills looms, pots, build houses and bridges, cultivate a scope of crops, keep domestic animals and can make a hundred useful things out of bamboo, cane, palm leaves and jungle ropes. Clearly they are highly civilized people (Kingdon-ward, F.:1946, pp. 112-13).

Judging by their unique indigenous traits it can be argued that the ethnic population of Manipur were off-shoots of some highly civilized culture, possibly the Chinese or other South-east Asians. Of late, some enthusiastic native scholars claimed and emphasised the possibility that these pristine communities, especially the Kuki-Chins, are progeny or the loyal subjects of the erstwhile mighty Chou dynasty.13 a chinese empire which ruled large part of (and the present Mongolia) between 1027-249 B.C. Though the authencity of such proposition, despite being vehemently upheld as gospel by its proponents, still remained highly controversial and debatable due to paucity of convincing evidences and researching, it has set a giant step forward into the understanding of the pre (proto)-history of the people and culture. It could be a significant clue to unravel the

13. Those scholars who relate the origin to the Chou dynasty or China, argued that the actual pronunciation and spelling of Chou is Zou, Sha, Yaw, or Jo. They believed that western scholars mispronounced the word and spelled it "Chou". It also claimed that Pong Chronicles recorded the events. They strongly argued that these ethnic groups drifted South towards Burma and to the present North East India. Hence, free from Buddhist influence and identity and cultures.
obscure mystery that shrouded knowledge of their origin or past history.

There are divergent views among the non-native or foreign scholars about the origins of the Meiteis. The Meitei themselves were told (i) by their legends and folktales that they first settled in high clouded mountain parts and later descended to the plains, after the flooded plain dried or receded and was fit for habitation; and (ii) they are of Hindu origin, claiming that the great Mahabharat even recorded the existence of Manipur. Unfortunately, such theories are equally controversial and could muster very few devotees. One British officer opined “The origin of the Manipuris is obscure........Their claim to a Hindu origin has been rejected by Pemberton, who considered them to be the descendants of a Tartar colony which probably emigrated from the north-west border of China.......in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries..... In the records of Manipur, however, their history is traced from the 30th year of the Christian era down to 1714 ........” 14 Hooker also held similar view and stated that “the Manipuris are emigrants from the kingdom of the name (Soormah)”, and not of Hindu origin. These views on the prehistory and origin of the ethnic population and the state indicate the significant part played by history and geographical factors in a region’s socio-cultural formations.

1.9. CONCLUDING STATEMENT:

All the autochthonous communities whether it be the Meiteis, Kukis, or Nagas belong to one racial stock, linguistic family, etc., and are therefore similar and somehow related. But the great second cultural divide between the Meiteis and tribals emerged in the 18th century. By the mid-1730’s Hindu culture (Vaishnavism) had taken root and was accepted by most of the subjects of King Pamheiba (Garib Niwas). This conversion further widened the inter-ethnic communications and sharply distinguished the two groups’ social systems. Later,

the tribals were proselytized to an equally powerful faith—Christianity. Since the late 18th century gradual conversion took place, and by the end of the 20th century all the tribals might well be Christians. This phenomenon of shift towards Christianity is also gradually seen among the Meiteis. At this point it will be pertinent to clarify the pre-conceived ideas on impact of Christianity on their lives. The tribals are mainly Christians due to the handiworks of western missionaries. It must however be noted that the tribals are Christians and not ‘westernized’ as usually assumed, which can be sharply seen in their socio-cultural aspects and psychology, etc. This misconception came from those who failed to understand them deeply. The material culture and life style of the ways are adopted only imitatively and do not affect their basic self-identity. Besides, contrary to the popular opinion held by others, Christianity also could not significantly transform their basic social structure. The situation is slightly different for the Meiteis, who are much more affected by their new religion—Vaishnavism. However, the ethnic populations remain what they are and instead the old traditions are upheld intensely even after their proselytisation, exposure to modern ‘thermo-nuclear jet age’, etc., etc.