PART II

TRANSPORTATIONAL FEATURES

CHAPTER III EVOLUTION OF TRANSPORT
CHAPTER IV THE DISTRIBUTIONAL PATTERN
CHAPTER V THE NATURE OF ACCESSIBILITY
CHAPTER VI NATURE AND FLOW OF TRAFFIC
CHAPTER VII CHARACTERISTICS OF URBAN TRANSPORT
CHAPTER VIII CHARACTER OF RURAL TRANSPORT
CHAPTER IX TRANSPORT REGIONS
CHAPTER III

EVOLUTION OF TRANSPORT

The hill routes of Manipur were known to the civilised world since the pre-historic periods. These routes provided the main links between India and China through Burma. The traders and merchants from both the countries used to pass through this state those days.

The hill-girted valley of Manipur was well decorated by winding hill routes specially for trade and commerce and frequently traversed by the invaders. These hill routes were among the most ancient and famous hill routes in the world. In his Mahabharata, Jaimini had mentioned that Manipur was full of palatial buildings and was very rich in wheeled vehicles.

In evolution of transport in Manipur three main periods, namely, (1) Ancient period divided into (a) Pre-historic Ancient, and (b) Historic Ancient, (2) Medieval period, and (3) Modern period may be
visualized on the conventional pattern of periodisation of the Indian history and the history of Manipur. Various transportational features, viz, (a) general regional orientation, (b) distributional pattern of arteries, (c) the relative importance of the different forms of transport and means of conveyance, and (d) the nature of traffic have been portrayed with reference to these periods in the present chapter.

**ANCIENT PERIOD**

(900 B.C. - 1074 A.D.)

**Pre-Historic Ancient (900 B.C. - 33 A.D.)**

**General Regional Orientation**: It is very difficult to ascertain the exact age of Manipuri civilisation and settlement by the then population. But there are evidences to prove directly or indirectly that Manipur had been settled and populated since the 6th century B.C. or even 8th century B.C. 'There can be no reasonable doubt that a great Aryan wave of very pure blood passed through Manipur into Burma in pre-historic times.'
From about 2nd century B.C. there was a regular trade route from China via Manipur, Assam and upper India to Afghanistan and Europe. Harvey in his History of Burma writes, 'Upper Burma lay inaccessible, true, it was nearer to China which from the second century B.C. used to trade routes through Burma - two were along the Irrawaddy and Salween River and the third down the Chindwin River through Manipur took caravans as three months journey to Afghanistan where the silks of China were exchanged for the gold of Europe.\(^5\)

By about 900 B.C., Abhiraj, a prince of Sakya dynasty had travelled through Manipur valley and settled at Ava (Burma), Col. Gerini in his Researches on Ptolemy's Geography writes, 'According to Burmese Royal Chronicles (Maharajavamsa), Dhajaraja, a king of Sakya race, settled at Manipur about 550 B.C. In about 548 B.C., a group of Teleng people from Kalinga had also passed through the hill routes of Manipur and settled in Burma.\(^6\) From before the beginning of the Christian era, these routes were used by traders, colonisers and invaders. D.G.E. Hall in his History of South East Asia mentions of a road connecting lower Burma with India via the bank of the Irrawaddy, the bank of Chindwin and Manipur.\(^7\)
There were some routes through the hills of Manipur connecting the Surma valley and the Brahmaputra valley with the Kabaw valley. The following table shows the different routes/hill routes connecting the different countries since the pre-historic times (Map 14).

**TABLE 3.1**

**ANCIENT ROUTES OF MANIPUR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. Group of hill routes</th>
<th>Name of the routes</th>
<th>Important countries and places connected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>1. Heirok Route via Machee</td>
<td>Kabaw, Ava (Burma),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Aimol Route</td>
<td>China and South-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Ngara Chingjen Route (Ngariyan Route)</td>
<td>Eastern countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Maring Route</td>
<td>of Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>1. Tongjei Maril Route (Old Cachar Road)</td>
<td>Cachar, Tripura,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sylhet and other western countries including Assam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Ngaprum Chingjin Route (New Cachar Road)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Khongjai Route</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Acqui Route</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>1. North Eastern Route (Tekhao Route)</td>
<td>Assam, Nagaland and other North western areas including Jorhat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Nandalal Sharma, Meitrabak, Imphal, O.K. Store, 1960.*
MAP 14.
In about 6th century B.C., Indian princes from Kapilavastu settled in Manipur. People from the different parts of India could easily enter the Manipur valley through one of the routes of second order, and they could easily reach the Kabaw valley through one of the routes of the first group. These routes were used by traders, colonisers and invaders before the beginning of the Christian era. In the ancient past, Manipur was one of the gates through which there was cultural flow between India on one hand and Burma and south-east Asia on the other. The hill routes of Manipur were used by Aryan colonisers for going to Burma and the far east. Thus, the early land routes between India and Burma passed through this state (Map 15).

The hill routes converged at Imphal and again diverged in different directions to connect different places in Burma in the east and south, and Cachar and Assam in the west. These routes in general had west-east orientation inspite of the high parallel hill ranges running north to south with deep river valleys in between the ranges. These hill routes, inspite of the difficult terrain, were
used by the people throughout the ancient and medieval periods.

**Means of Transport and Conveyance:** Land transport was the only means of transport for movement of people and goods in Manipur those days. The river transportation with help of small country boats was in use mostly in the valley for movement of goods as well as people. But the boats were not large enough to carry more than 20 maunds (8 quintals).

Most of the hill routes as well as the roads in the valley were unpaved. The rivers were bridged by bamboo and wood. Such bridges were suitable only for laden animals, men and women and not for the carts. In the valley areas, the roads were exactly like those of Assam and Burma and other rice-growing countries. They were raised a few feet above the rice fields, wide enough for one cart, but not sufficiently broad to allow two carts. The hill routes were too narrow and steep, at some places suitable only for foot passengers and laden mules.
Traffic: The main traffic consisted of silk textile and silk goods, bamboo and cane products, gold and horses. These goods were sent to the western countries as well as to Burma and China. Traders, armed forces, pilgrims, especially the Buddhists, were the main source of passenger traffic.

Historic Ancient (33 A.D. –1074 A.D.)

General Distribution Pattern: Though there is lack of historical evidences or records of the hill routes, valley roads and the reign of different kings and social structure in Manipur before the Christian era, it is presumed that the same hill routes and valley roads were utilized by the then rulers since 33 A.D.

Pakhangba, the first Manipuri king, ascended the throne in 33 A.D. He migrated to Manipur Probably from the north-east⁶. At the same time a horde of immigrants led by Poireiton also arrived in or about 33 A.D. They were Indian immigrants who entered Manipur through the hill routes in the western section. They roamed throughout the country and finally entered the Kabaw valley. Pakhangba promu-
lgated thin bell metal coins and developed trade and commercial contacts with neighbouring Hindu kingdoms. Manipur was frequently visited by traders and travellers those days.

The existence of the pre-historic hill routes helped the Indian princes and immigrants to come and settle down in the Manipur valley. Some of them moved further east and entered into Burma and established their kingdoms there. Thus, these hill routes were used throughout the ancient and medieval periods by the then invaders, immigrants and traders.

**Means of Transport and Conveyances:** In the historic ancient period, the hill routes and the valley roads were the main artery of movement. In addition to the existing routes, the succeeding kings had constructed a few more roads in the valley section. King Ayangba (821-910) had constructed a road in the eastern part of Imphal. It served the people of Manipur for many centuries and is still existing. After the reigning king, it was named Ayangpalli. It forms the eastern boundary of Imphal Municipality.
Manipur was divided into seven principalities those days, which used to have perpetual conflict among them for supremacy. Very little progress was there on the construction of road due to fights among the principalities, of course which were connected with each other by roads and water route.

Traffic: The main traffic during the historic ancient period comprised of immigrants and pilgrims. There were little trade and commerce among the principalities of Manipur and each one was independent of others.

MEDIEVAL PERIOD
(1074 A.D.-1835 A.D.)

General Condition of Transport and Trade: With the accession of king Loiyamba (1074-1122) to the throne, there was a marked improvement in the economic condition of Manipur. Even though there were political disturbances and fights and invasions from outside, roads were constructed by the successive rulers. In 1536-37, king Kabomba (1523-42) opened a new route to Assam. It facilitated the cultural contacts be-
tween Manipur and Brahmaputra valley\textsuperscript{11}. During the reign of king Khagemba (1597-1652) in about 1630 the roads were improved for better transportation of goods and other traffic. Forests, infested with wild animals, were a great hindrances to the construction and expansion of communication lines. King Paikhomba (1666-98) improved the road from Chinga to Mongsangei in 1675\textsuperscript{12}. He maintained trade with Burma, Cachar and Tripura.

There were three different routes by which Sylhet and Cachar districts of Assam were connected with Manipur (Map 16):

1) \textbf{The Aquee Route} has been little frequented since the Burmese war. The total distance of this route from Banskandee to Jaenugur (Jainagar) in the Manipur valley was about $86\frac{5}{8}$ miles (139.4 km).

2) \textbf{The Kala Naga Route}: This route connecting Banskandee with Lumlangtong (Bishnupur) via Khoupum was about $82\frac{1}{2}$ miles (132.8 km).

3) \textbf{The Khongjai or Kuki Route} passed through the village of Khongjai or Kuki on the western bend of river Barak entering in
the Manipur valley at its south-western corner. These three routes were the main passes for trade and commerce and movement of people and military personnel between Manipur and British India during the Medieval period.

Other three routes connected Manipur with the Kabaw valley in Burma:

1) **The Muchee (Machi) Route** started from Thoubal in Manipur valley via Hieerok (Heirok) and Muchee to Tummu (Tamu) in Burma. The distance from Thoubal to Tummu via this route was about $46\frac{3}{8}$ miles (74.6 km).

2) **The Imole (Aimole) Route** between the same points of Thoubal and Tummu was about $49\frac{6}{8}$ miles (80 km) long. This route has few steep and precipitous passes to overcome.

3) There was another hill route north of the above two routes, which leaves Manipur at Sekmai (Nongpok Sekmai) passed through the
villages of Tangkhool tribes, entered the valley of Kabaw a few miles west of Sumjok. Over and above mentioned routes, there were several other lines of communication by which the southern extremity of Kabaw valley could be entered directly from the hills. From Tummu eight routes were passed through different directions to reach Ningthi (Chindwin), of which five routes were across the Ungoching hills between Monfoo and Maglang and three between Maglang River and southern extremity of Khumbat division. Of the five routes, the first leads from Sumjok to Monfoo, the second from Khong-dong to Hueelao on the right bank of Ningthi, the third, the fourth and the fifth routes start from Tummoo and terminate on the Ningthi at Hueelao, Okhong and Ungeong near the confluence of Maglung with the Ningthi (Map 17).

Traffic: Traffic in this period mainly passenger traffic contributed by pilgrims, immigrants and troops. There were frequent wars and invasions from Burma and south-eastern states of China, which led to more movement of troops on these hill routes (Map No. 16).
Laden animals and ponies were the main means of conveyance of goods. Dug-out boats were used for movement of men and materials by river transport, mostly in the Imphal and Iril rivers in the Manipur valley. Bigger size boats were used in the Barak and Jiri rivers.

Other traffic included the traders and merchants, who carried silks, various forest products etc.

MODERN PERIOD
(1835-onwards)

From the transportational point of view, this period can be divided into two viz, i) The transitional period and ii) The Era of Transport Revolution.

The Transitional Period: It began with the political supremacy of the Britishers over the kings of Manipur directly since the reign of Maharaja Gambheer Singh (1825-34). The British supremacy over the administration led to the unhappy reorientation of economic and commercial life to some extent. As part of the Treaty
of 1833, the construction of roads were taken up especially in the hill areas for easier movement of laden animals, camels, carts, military troops etc. The construction of Cachar Road was taken up in 1837 and completed in 1844. Though this route became excellent for foot passengers and pack animals, it remained too narrow and too steep for large-scale wheeled traffic. Besides this road, Maharaja Chandra Keerti Singh (1834-86) agreed to the construction of a road in the northern section through Naga hills to link the state with the Brahmaputra valley. In 1881, the Imphal-Dimapur Road was completed and became much more important than the Cachar Road.

The Road System: There were four best approach roads to Manipur from the British India in the west.

1) The Kohima Road (Imphal-Dimapur Road via Mao and Kohima) on the north of Imphal.

2) The Rozepeamah and Kenoma Road. It lie over an exceedingly broken country and crossed over by very steep ranges. It was a village path.

3) The Cachar Road via Khoupum valley and
Bishnupur, and

4) The Acqui Road or the Upper Cachar Road.¹⁹

There were several ancient and medieval hill routes, many of them might have lost sight of due to lack of traffic as well as repairing. Several routes also linked up Manipur with Burma on the east. There were innumerable passes also but the best routes were

(1) The Machee Route, and
(2) The Aimol Route,

Other best routes also included

(1) The road from Manipur to Yangoupokpi via Haitukpokpi led to Kabaw valley.
(2) The road from Manipur to Moreh via Pallel led direct to Kabaw valley.²⁰

These hill routes were generally formed upon a plan. A convenient spur was selected and followed up probably to one of the highest peaks on the range, and down to any convenient spur on the other side.²¹

The roads in the valley were like those of Assam, Burma and other rice-growing countries. They
were earthern banks, raised a few feet above the rice fields wide enough for one cart, about 20 yards in some places. The surfaces were not metalled and not frequently enclosed by walls, hedges or trees. The bridges were fit for laden mules, but not for carts and were frail and bamboo structures.

There were about ten main roads radiating from Imphal:

1) The Naga hills and Assam Road on the north,
2) The Tangkhul country road on the north-east,
3) The eastern road,
4) (5) and (6) three Thoubal and Burma roads on the south-east,
7) and (8) two Langthabal or Central valley roads on the south,
9) The Western Road, and
10) The Kangchupkhul, Acqui or Upper Cachar Road.

These roads were not metalled but wide enough, about 20 yards or more, and fairly levelled with a
number of crosslands connecting the main arteries and well raised above the ground.

Traffic: The main traffic along these roads and hill routes were traders, merchants and military troops. Commodities exported from Manipur were of three categories (1) forest products like ivory and wax, (2) textile products like dyed yarn, handloom cloths, readymade shirts, silk and silk products, and (3) livestock like buffaloes and ponies. Other imported items were betelnut, brass and other metals.24

Traffic along the rivers were grains, earthen pots, vegetables, rice, fishes etc. These were specially brought to Imphal for marketing (Map 18).

Recent Developments: After 1947 (Map 19), the state has visualised a spectacular growth of transport arteries, particularly roads. The length of extra-municipal roads maintained by public authorities was 356.4 km in 1951 - 52,25 which increased to 959.8 km in 1955 - 1956,26 about three-times improvement in the road length.
MANIPUR
ROADS IN 1947

MAP 19.
Table 3.2 shows the development of roads in Manipur since 1951-52.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Road length (km)</th>
<th>Net growth (km)</th>
<th>Percentage growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>356.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>959.8</td>
<td>603.4</td>
<td>169.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-61</td>
<td>1705.4</td>
<td>745.6</td>
<td>77.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>2400.1</td>
<td>694.7</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-72</td>
<td>2833.8</td>
<td>433.7</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>3922.1</td>
<td>1088.3</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-85</td>
<td>4324.4</td>
<td>402.3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


At present, 58.56 per cent of the roads in the state are surfaced and the rest unsurfaced. Most of the urban settlements and important villages are connected by all-weather metalled roads with Imphal and other district headquarters.
Imphal is connected with Delhi, the national capital, and Calcutta, the largest urban agglomeration of the country, by daily air services operated by Indian Airlines. Guwahati and Bagdogra, and Silchar lie on the same air routes and therefore have airmails with Imphal. Dimapur, the nearest railhead on North-east Frontier Railway, is also air linked through a thrice-weekly Vayudoot service.

Manipur will emerge soon on the rail map of India once Jiribam, on the western flanks of the state, is connected by rail with Silchar in Assam. The railway line extension work is in progress at present.
REFERENCES


10. Seven Principalities belonged to Khuman, Luwang, Moirang, Meitei (Ningthouja), Angom, Khaba-Nganba and Chenglei clans of the Manipuris.

12. Ibid., p.111
15. Ibid., pp. 58-59.
20. Ibid., p.292.
21. Dun, Capt., E.W., *op.cit.* Ref.4, p.8
22. Ibid., p.9.
23. Ibid., p.96