PREFACE

There have been broadly two trends of the emergence of regional political parties in India. One trend is those regional political parties emerged around late 1920s. Those regional political parties started as mass movements against the domination of traditional feudal authorities in their respective presidency/province or princely state. Thus, those movements were revolts launched by majority people against minority rulers in their society or state. Those movements largely expressed a kind of protest that minority groups of the society had appropriated the privileges and interests of the larger masses. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Tamil Nadu), the Shiromani Akali Dal (Punjab) and the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (J & K) are the regional political parties emerged from those movements. On the other hand, there are a group of regional political parties emerged as a result of the so-called “Congress System”. It was due to the degeneration of the Indian National Congress for a long time and the ultimate break-up around the second part of 1960s. As a result many regional political parties emerged in different states. The Telegu Desham (Andhra Pradesh), the Assom Gana Parishad (Assam), the Manipur People’s Party (Manipur), etc. are some of the regional political parties of this second trend.

The study, “The Emergence and Working of the Manipur People’s Party and the Kuki National Assembly: A Comparative Study”, has been taken up with a hope that it may contribute something to the literature of the regional political parties in India in general and that of the North-East India in particular. The reason for selecting the two regional political parties (or state parties) in Manipur, one in the valley and another in the hills, is that the study would bring out something important and valuable both in plains and hill regional political parties regarding the political ideology and principles which guided the two parties. The plain and hill areas have different geographical,
political, socio-cultural and economic settings. Politically, the hill tribes have their own traditional chieftainship, kingship and councils. Culturally, they have different religions, though today Christianity has been the dominating religion among the tribals in Manipur, dresses, way of life and land holding system and most importantly languages. And economically, the majority hill people depend on terrace and Jhum cultivation. Today, the forest produce covers only a small portion of the economy. On the other hand, the plain people have common political and linguistic aspects. With regard to religion, the majority of the plain people adopt hinduism. Besides, there are also Meiteis having their own traditional religion, known as Sanamahi, Christianity, etc. among the plain people. The Meitei Muslims known as Meitei Pangals constitute a good portion of the plain people in Manipur. There are also a good number of tribal people belonging to different ethnic groups in the plain areas.

The Kuki National Assembly represents the regional political party in the hill areas whereas the Manipur People’s Party represents a valley based regional political party, though the MPP today covers almost all parts – both valley and hills, of Manipur. Both the regional political parties have been in existence since their inceptions till today. They had experiences as a member of the ruling group as well as oppositions in the state politics in Manipur. Both the parties suffered from defection and factionalism within the party.

The study is divided into seven chapters, including the conclusions. The introductory chapter under the title of “The Emergence of Regional Political Parties in India” undertakes a survey of four major regional political parties in India namely, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the Shiromani Akali Dal, the National Conference and the Telegu Desham Party. The study of those parties includes origin, ideology and policy and programme and electoral performances. The second chapter entitled “Socio-Political Movements in Manipur During the British Period”, tries to examine
four socio-political movements – two in the hill areas and other two in the valley of Manipur during the British period. The four movements are (i) Women’s Agitation of 1904, (2) Kuki Rebellion, 1917-1919, (3) Jadonang Movement of 1930s, and (4) Second Women’s Agitation of 1939. The first and fourth movements were in the valley whereas the second and third were in the hill areas of Manipur. This chapter also studies the emergence of the first socio-political organisations in Manipur i.e. the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha and the political process for the establishment of a responsible government in Manipur in 1948 and process for the integration of Manipur into the Indian Dominion.

The third chapter entitled “The Emergence of Regional Political Parties in Manipur” tries to highlight the emergence and growth of various regional political parties in the hill and plain areas of Manipur. This chapter covers regional political parties emerged in the first phase, i.e. British period, the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha, originally started as a socio-cultural organisation in Manipur in 1934, transformed into a political organisation in 1938, constitute the first phase. The regional political parties belonging to the second phase include the Manipur State Congress, the Manipur Praja Shanti Sobha, the Manipur Praja Sanmelani, the Manipur Praja Sangha, the Manipur Krishak Sabha and two small parties in the hill areas namely, the Naga People’s League and the Mizo Union. To examine the activities of those parties in the democratic process, the electoral politics of the Manipur Assembly, 1948 is incorporated. The chapter analyses the emergence of the regional political parties before and after the attainment of statehood of Manipur in 1972. The period constitutes the third phase of regional political parties in Manipur. The KNA emerged during the second phase and the MPP had originated in the third phase.
The fourth chapter "The Growth of the Manipur People’s Party and the Kuki National Assembly" focuses on the emergence, growth, social base, ideology, policy and programme and factional politics of the two parties.

The fifth chapter entitled the "Organisation and Working of MPP and KNA" deals with the organisational structures and workings of the Manipur People’s Party and the Kuki National Assembly. It discusses the composition and workings at various levels of organisation, the membership and the leadership of the two political parties.

The sixth chapter is on "The Electoral Performance and Role of the Manipur People’s Party and the Kuki National Assembly in the Legislature". It studies the electoral performances of the two regional political parties particularly in the general elections to the Manipur Legislative Assembly from 1972 to 1995. The chapter also highlights the performances and role of the MPP and the KNA as a partner of the three coalition-ministry in 1972 (KNA was not included), 1974 and 1990. The chapter also studies the role of the two regional political parties as members of the opposition in Manipur Legislative Assembly.

The concluding chapter summarises the previous chapters and findings of the research work.

The study is based on both primary sources, personal interviews and secondary data. The primary data includes party papers, government documents, magazine and journals, newspapers etc. The study also uses tables and diagrams to substantiate the electoral performances, election results and party organisational structure of the MPP and the KNA.

In the course of the research work, relevant materials available at the National Library, Calcutta, J.N.U. Central Library, New Delhi, Manipur Assembly Secretariat Library, Manipur Central Library, Imphal, Manipur
University Library and Library, Government College, Bomdila were consulted. The personal interview included selected important party members of both MPP and KNA.

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