CHAPTER - III

Manipur: Socio-Political Profile

The state of Manipur is one of the federal units within the Republic of India located in frontier of the North-East. After a mass struggle for quite a long period the state got full-fledged statehood in 1972 and become the 25th state under the ‘Union of India’. The state is topographically situated at a multi-junction which is bounded with both internal and external states viz. Myanmar (Burma) over a stretch of 352 km on the East, Nagaland on the North, Barak valley of Assam on the West and Mizoram on the South. The population as per the 2011 census is 2,721,756 and the density of population is accounted 115 per sq km. Topographically, the state of Manipur lies in between the Latitude of 23.83° to 25.68° N and Longitude 93.03° to 94.78°E, with a size of 22,327 sq km and altitude varies due to different landforms but lies in between 40 meters at Jiribam to 2,994 meters at Mt. Iso Peak near Mao Songsong above the sea level. Undoubtedly, the state attaches to the range of Great Himalaya in Southern end and endowed with numerous rivers, mountains and valleys that constitute a very rich natural resources, flora and fauna.

Geographically the landscape of Manipur can be divided into two parts: Valley sector and Hills sector. The sector of valley is the mostly alluvial part as compare to that of the hills and it lies at the centre of the state with an approximate size of 2,230 sq. km. i.e., about 10 per cent of the total land areas. It is raised at an elevation of 2,500 feet above the sea level with extreme length of about 36 miles and average breadth of about 18 miles. The valley also slopes down toward the southern end. Rows and rows of the rolling hills wrapped this heartland at the centre and made isolate from the rest of country. On the other side, the hills sector covered an area of 20,126 sq km i.e. 90 percent of total area of the state. These rolling hills play a very defensive barrier walls in between the Barak and Brahmaputra valley in the western side and Kabow valley in the eastern side. The general facet of the hills ranges in Manipur are, unsurprisingly, irregular serrated ridges which occasionally rising into conical peaks and flattened cliffs of bare rocks. They are higher in the Northern side but gradually diminish its height as they reach the southern parts of the state.
Manipur, being the princely state before the integration with the Union of India, has encountered many civilization at different phase and known in different nomenclature by neighbors’ civilization. For instances the then princely state of Manipur is known as Kathe or Ponnas for the Burmese; Hsiao Po-Lo mein for the Chinese; Cassay for the Shans; Moglai for the Cacharis and Bengalis; Mekle for the Assamese and British in the 18th century i.e., during the heyday of colonial rule in India. Besides several cognomen names mentioned above a British official Lord Irwin, who had long fond of the beauty of Manipur, has honored the princely state of Manipur as “Switzerland of India”. Then in the aftermath of India’s independence on 15th August 1947, the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru called Manipur the “Jewel of India”. Similarly the people of the state colloquially named their nation in numerous names such as Poirei Meetei Leibak, Sanaleibak, Meitrabak, Kangleipak and Chingleibak. Thus the present name ‘Manipur’ is coined during the reign of King Pamheiba in the 18th century to describe the princely state as the land of unity in diversity.1

3.1 Diversity and Demographic Settlements

Manipur is a land of multifarious not just in terms of topography, flora and fauna but in terms of ethnic diversity too. The social heterogeneity is a part of this small and beautiful state – Hills and Valley are settled by various ethnic people. The Gazetteer of Manipur recognized the ethnic groups, as par the history of their indigeneity, in the present state of Manipur. They are Meetei, Pangal (Manipuri Muslims), Lois, Yaithibi, and the 39 recognized tribes2 viz. Aimol, Anal, Agami, Any Kuki tribe, Any Mizo Tribe, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Inpui, Kabui, Kacha Naga, Kharam, Koirao, Kom, Koireng, Lamkang, Liangmai Mao, Maram, Maring, Mate, Monsang, Moyon, Paite, Poumai, Purum, Ralte, Rongmei, Sema, Simte, Suhte, Tangkhul, Tarao, Thadou, Thangal, Vaiphei, Zeme and Zou are the indigenous ethnic groups inhabited in Manipur. It is in the year 2011, the Parliament have passed a bill that recognized new more tribes such as Rongmei, Inpui and Kabui from the bigger fold of Kabui Naga; Zeme, Liangmai and Kacha Naga. Above the 39 recognized tribes there are more few smaller tribes/sub-tribes

2 Our Special Correspondence, “ST status for 6 Manipur tribes”, The Telegraph: Guwahati, Tuesday 20 December 2011.
whose populations are very marginal or largely affiliated within the larger group. Though small in size they continue to assert their identity to be recognized as separate tribe.

Meanwhile, the contour of the population of Manipur can also be examined on the basis of the geography of their settlement as also on the ground of the ethnicity. There are in fact three major communities – Meeteis (including Meetei Pangals or Manipuri Muslim), Nagas and Kukis – and of these the first one communities confined their settlement in the valley where as the later two ethnic groups spread across the hills and sparsely in the valley. Undoubtedly all the tribes in Manipur are broadly classified under two folds: the Nagas and the Kukis. In context of the Nagas there are eighteen kindred Naga tribes living in all hill districts except Churchanpur district. They are as follows; Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Choto, Kharam, Kom, Koireng, Lamkang, Mao, Maram, Maring, Monsang, Moyon, Thangal, Tangkhul, Tarao, Poumai, Zeliangrong. ³ Similarly according to Gangte, there are 23 kindred tribes of Kuki living for ages in the state of Manipur. Those kindred groups are as follows: Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Choto, Gangte, Hmar, Kom, Koireng, Koirao, Lamkang, Maring, Lushai, Monsang, Moyon, Paite, Purum, Ralte, Sema, Smit, Sukte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou.⁴ Besides, there are a number of recognized tribes in Manipur who are overlapping in listing as they are both in Kuki list and Naga list. So, there is still a controversy in the listing of recognized tribes in Manipur. Whatsoever the issue of overlapping or not, most of the tribes settled in the 5 hill districts of Manipur, and the population ratio of these ethnic groups is a necessary means to understand the whole realm of the socio-political profile of Manipur. The table depicted below is to indicate geographical profile of the tribes in Manipur.

Table No. 1. Demographic Stratification of Ethnic Groups in Hill Districts, Manipur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of Districts</th>
<th>Name of Ethnic Groups</th>
<th>Dominated Groups</th>
<th>Marginal Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Urkhrul</td>
<td>Tangkhul</td>
<td>Thadou</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>Zeliangrong (Zeme, Liangmai</td>
<td>Kom, Koireng, Koirao &amp;</td>
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On the other hand, the Meeteis, Pangals, Lois and Yaithibi settle at the valley and foot hills of surrounding valley in sizable number. The Meetei are the majority, in terms of population, among all the four community living in the valley and hence often decide the political fate of the whole population in the valley. The Pangal, the Lois and the Yaithibi are also inseparable part of the larger social fabric of the Meetei community. These groups have close biological and cultural relationship with Meeteis. All of them speak Meeteilon (Meetei Language) and live together in the same geographical proximity. In context of Pangal, renowned historian R Brown describes that Mohammadans (referring to Pangals) are the descendent of immigrants from the Surma (Barak) valley who married with Manipuri women. However many historians suggest that king Khagemba (1597-1652) arrested many Muslims as war prisoners who were supporter of Sanongba, the younger brother who revolt against the king. The king Khagemba engaged the arrested Muslims as soldier, cultivator, and in other activities. With the mercy and consent of the Meetei king many of them got married with Meetei women and thus settled down in the neighborhood for generation. As a result the Muslims in Manipur have built closed relationship with Meetei through their maternal line. Now, they are popularly known as Meetei Pangal. As per the 2001 census of Manipur, the Pangals are the second largest community in the valley and largely settled in four district of Imphal valley including Jiribam sub-division.

Mention may also be made of a category of population which, in fact, can not be identified as a distinct ethnic group on the basis of my definition of the term given in the first chapter. The significance of mentioning of them lies in the fact that they were

<table>
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<tr>
<th>&amp;Rongmei</th>
<th>Thadou</th>
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<tr>
<td>3 Senapati</td>
<td>Mao, Paomei &amp; Thadou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Chandel</td>
<td>Maring, Anal, Kom &amp; Monsang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Churachanpur</td>
<td>Mizo, Hmar, Paite &amp; Thadou</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: fieldwork of researcher, 2013.


assimilated groups who can not be in any aspect differentiated from the Meeteis. This is the Lois community of Manipur. They are (Schedule Caste) also one of the important social groups of the Meetei whose inhibition is widely found on the foothills of Imphal valley. In the past they were independent group, but after their subjugation by the Ningthou (King of Meetei) they became subordinate group who offer tributes to the king. Slowly they were assimilated within the Meetei population. They were listed under the category of Scheduled Caste under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Order Amendment Act, 1956. Besides the indigenous population, many mainland Indians like Bihari, Bengali, Marwari, Nepali, Punjabi, Tamil etc. also come and settled at various parts in the state. This, in fact, made the state of Manipur more pluralistic and heterogeneous. So, many scholars described Manipur as ‘Mini India’.

3.2 Major Communities in Manipur: Meetei, Naga and Kuki

The state of Manipur is located at the crossroad of cultural diversity. The population is quite diverse as it is composed of multiple ethnic groups. Despite being distinctive in terms of historical and social values, all the ethnic groups live together for centuries sharing their diverse values in the same geographical proximity. As I said earlier, the ethnic groups of Manipur are often classified into three variants: Meeteis, Nagas and Kukis. These people though claimed different to each other appear to be similar in nature when one looks through a bird eye’s view – racially they are mainly of Mongoloid groups, speaking languages of Tibeto-Burman Family. Interestingly, the mythologies of the Meetei, Nagas and Kukis have many things in common especially on evolutionary history of how the human civilization began through the cave until it spread and developed to the present forms. Many scholars are of the opinion that the origin and roots of all these three ethnic communities of Manipur are invariably one. The Nagas, according to Professor H. Horam, lived at first in stone caves or in the womb of the earth.7 S.P Vaiphei also said about the Kukis that “They (Chin-Kuki- Mizo) came out from a cave or khul or khur or shinlung”8 Meetei mythology also believes that Meetei come from the Koubru (a hill) cave. From this hypothesis, T.C Hodson concluded that

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the Naga, Kuki and Meetei descended from a common ancestor.\(^9\) The T.C Hodson’s view on these ethnic communities being coming out of cave is further supported by the existing practices of rites and ritual practice by these communities. But the origin of the words ‘Meetei’, ‘Naga’ and ‘Kuki’ is wondered by scholars till today. Let us now discuss these communities briefly.

### 3.3 The Origin of the Word ‘Meetei’

A discussion of the Meeteis can be started with a brief analysis on the origin of the term (or nomenclature) itself. There are many historians, scholars and social leaders who give various versions and opinions on the meaning and origin of the word ‘Meeteis’ but so far unable to convince the common public on a single acceptable terminology. Therefore it remained to be a hotspot of debate till today. Some of the lexicons on the derivation of the word given by different people are explicitly given below. According to T.C Hudson, the word ‘Meitei’ denotes an ethnic group derived from the blending of two words ‘Mei’ which means men or people and ‘Tei’ which means separate. Thus the word Meitei means separate people. Subsequently another scholar B.H. Hudson ciphered that Meitei is a combination of kochin Chinese “Moy” and Saimese “tai”. Hence, the word be pronounced as Moytai=Moitai=Meitei. Further B.H. Hudson continues his argument and says that the Meitei community belongs to the greater family of Tai race. However this view is rejected by T.C Hudson on the ground that Meitei speaks the language of Tibeto-Burman family and the Tai belong to the Siamese-Chinese linguistic family.

Another scholar W.A Shimray maintains that the term Meitei is derived from the Tangkhul dialect ‘Meithei’ meaning ‘fire see’ (Mei means Fire, Thei means see). The Tangkhul legend indicates that in ancient time a young man made a planned to trip down to Imphal valley. Before the departure the elder brother asked him to give some form of signal when he reached the valley by lighting up a fire in order to whether he is safe and still existence. Hence the elder brother looks down from the hill and noticed fire in the valley which presumptively takes that his younger brother still survive in the valley. In course of time, the elder brother names the people of his younger brother as ‘Meithei’,

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but unfortunately with the passes of time, the letter H is omitted from the magic word MEIT(H)EI due to phonetically convenience.

According to the mythology and belief of Meetei, Almighty God (Attiya Shidba Mapu) has two sons i.e. Pakhangba (Yaipilel) and Sanamahil (Pipalel). The father ordered his son Sanamahi to create human beings. So in accordance of his father’s ordered, Sanamahi created seven humans copied from the shadow or image (Mee) of his father and thus the word Meetei is derived from the shadow (Mee). Hence the seven human beings have become ‘Salai taret Apokpa’ or seven progenitors known as ‘Mee Mayon Mee Ningthous’. They are namely, Khuman, Mangang, Luwang, Angom Moirang, Chenglei and Khaba-ganba. These Yek (Salai) Apokpas are reverently and affectionately called as Iputhou (grandfather). They form human being and spread far and wide. The Apokpas were also known as Mitam = Mi+Tam (coped from the shadow of Shidaba-Almighty God). Mi becomes Mee and Tam turns to be Tai or Tei and hence Meetei. The ancestors of the Meeteis are thus easily traceable to ‘Tengpanpa Mapu’, the Master of the Universe, who is the Lord of the three Orders, viz. Space, Earth and Beings or Matter. The story of how the Meeteis have evolved on earth is mentioned in Langtailol which further highlights that the Meeteis are the children of God (Laigi Machasha). All the people of seven clans are Meetei. Therefore, both highlanders who have seven clans system settle at the hill and Meeteis who settle at the valley are the sons of one God i.e. almighty God. Therefore, the blood (brotherhood) relationship between the hill people and valley people never forget in the present day.

It is written in the Puya (history as well sacred book) Known as Khagemba yumlep “Kuruki pheibaktagi tamna Atiya Sidaba takholke. Hea Icha Ahanhavo, Taibng panba Mee Semwo hairbda Atiya Sidbana Yong taret sare. Kuruna sarabara hange-nge. Hoi Sare khume. Kuruna yengbada Asidi phatte Hairbda Atiya Ikaire. Yongdi chingd Laohlle. Aduda Hangoi taret sare. Kuruna asisu phatte hairbda Hangoidi tamda Laohalle Kuruki Masak Tamna sara Kuru Mee Konye.” It can be translated as “From the thigh of the Almighty God, the Kuru, gave birth this Infinite sky as his first son and commanded ‘O’ my son, dost thou created the human being’ and as a result of which the Infinite Sky created seven monkish. His Almighty further replied it is not enough, and infinite Sky made Himself shameful. Monkish were sent to inhabit in the hills and then, seven frogs were created. Frogs were sent to inhabit in the plains. The Almighty God replied ‘it’s not enough’. And then command to create imitating his shadow. So, the Infinite Sky created man imitating the shadow of the Almighty God.”


Langtailol is popularly known as Puya (history and sacred book) of Meetei. It is a text written in the ancient time.
3.4 The Nagas:

The origin of the word ‘Naga’ is more complex and contested than the origin of the ‘Meetei’ if compare between the two minutely. Therefore many theories are propounded about the origin of the word Naga. A large section of historians say that the word Naga is originated from the Sanskrit word ‘Naga’ meaning worshiper of snake.  

But this approach is summarily rejected by the Naga community as there is no cult among the Naga that worship the snakes. In due course of time a British linguist and ethnographer Grierson suggests that the word Naga is derived from the Assamese word ‘Noga’ meaning hills tribes. This theory has also possess no cogency or validity as it cannot apply to all the Nagas though the argument has some relevance to some section which had closed connection with the Ahom kingdom. In a sprawling manner, E.W. Dun also speculated that it may be derived from the word ‘Naga’ meaning ‘naked’. Similarly the Naga scholar R.R Shimray in his work ‘Origin and Culture of the Naga’ hypothesize that the nomenclature of ‘Naga’ is derived from the Burmese word ‘Naka’ meaning ‘pierced ears’. But unfortunately all these theories are rejected by the Nagas on the ground that the term is not applied to all the people except for those who are living in the Naga Hills.

In spite of the perplexity of the origin of nomenclature, the Nagas have proceeded with the consolidation of British rule vis-a-vis spread of Christianity, and the term Naga has been popularized and consequently accepted among the Nagas of Nagaland as is evident from the name of their first organization i.e., the Naga Club in 1918. Although the British ethnographers classified the tribes of Manipur as Kuki and Naga much early of 20th century, the word Nagas became popular lately after a phenomenon of the World War II. The self-rule movement launched by Haipou Jadonang is astoundingly called as the Naga-Raj movement by the British Political Agents and Administrative officials but the momentum to use the word Nagas among themselves realized much later. This

13 E.W Dun, Gazetteer of Manipur, Manas Publication: New Delhi, 1992, p. 28.
16 R R Shimray, Origin and Culture of Nagas, Samsok: New Delhi, 1985, p. 278.
circumstance ought not to be overlooked in different direction that the Nagas of Manipur are marvelous to be known by their sub-name rather than by the common name. The factor remained is due to late awakening and consciousness among them on assertion of common identity as compare to that of Nagas of Naga Hills.

3.5 Political Construction of Naga

The Christian missionary had brought not just a new religion to the Nagas but also a dramatic change on their lifestyle and way of thinking. This Missionary works supported by the British administrative officials converted the Nagas into Christianity and followed the cultural values accompanying this religion. In the process the missionary became a direct or indirect agent to bring unity among the Nagas and Kukis. At the beginning the Missionary introduced modern education system among the Nagas, firstly to the Nagas of Naga Hills, until the expansion reached to (the tribes living in) Manipur. The primary objective of the missionary education was to communicate directly and openly between the missionary and local people. At latter it became an important tool in demanding freedom for the Nagas.

As early as the beginning of the First World War in 1914, many Nagas were recruited for serving the colonial masters as Labour Corps in France. After returning from the France, the Nagas who participated in the Labour Corp formed a ‘Naga Club’ in 1918 with the help of British officials, and this day earmarked a milestone for the Nagas because it developed the first social and political platform of the Nagas. Subsequently, other organizations like Lotha Council and Ao Council also emerged in 1923 and 1928 respectively to promote their own interest. But despite the differences of interests the Second World War brought together again the whole Nagas in one platform. The invasion of Japanese Forces in Naga Hills is one factor that helped in consolidation of the kindred Naga groups into a single Naga and supported the British colonial master. With the end of the Second World War, when the Britishers came out as victors they had commitments in return for Nagas support during the war, to help the Nagas’ development construction and modernization. The result is that the Britishers established a Naga Hills

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District Tribal Council in 1945 for the reconstruction work of areas over which the two great wars had pounded merciless devastation. In 1946, the Naga Hills District Tribal Council was renamed as Naga National Council (NNC) and this council became an organization to collectively bring the whole Nagas under one banner and pursued for self-determination movement. Besides that the Nagas also wakened up their socio-political consciousness and slowly accepted the identity of oneness by the various kindred groups in the Naga Hills.

3.6 Political Connection of Manipur Naga into Nagaland

Even after India gained her independence the demand of NNC for self-determination continued. This made the Nagas appeared to be outside the political spectrum of ‘Union of India’. The Nagas continued to claim that their movement is against ‘new colonial ruled’ i.e. the Government of India. The movement is sustained under the leadership of A.Z. Phizo and conducted a plebiscite in 1951 for their future political status which, in fact, is seen 99.9 percentage in favored of self rule. As a result, a year later, the Nagas boycotted the first general election of India in 1952 successfully. However, there was a problem cropped up between the two Naga freedom fighters: Nagaland based leader AZ Phizo and Manipur based leader Rani Gaidinliu. The problem between the two was primarily because of lack of communication but later it come to light that AZ Phizo wanted to impose his groups’ superiority across the Naga fraternity and thus Rani Gaidinliu was forced to surrender her power summarily. One may go little deeper on when and how the two leaders began their political movements. Rani Gaidinliu began her political career around 1929/30s, while AZ Phizo formally joined the NNC after he came back from Burma in 1946. Phizo was given sheltered by the Kabui (Gaidinliu’s community) of Manipur Road (now Dimapur) during his early struggle. In that context it was not upright for Phizo to force his Naga comrade to surrendering the leadership. Therefore, Rani Gaidinliu opposed the instigation of NNC vis-à-vis voice against the demand for Nagas independence under the leadership of Phizo. Even she went to organize underground for a sort period in 1947 against Phizo. Despite all these developments Rani Gaidinliu did not go totally against the idea of Nagas’ freedom rather she had confined the limit of her movement within the Zeliangrong areas then.
On other hand, the NNC movement swing to a new direction by engaging with different section of people. They expanded their movement to the whole Naga inhabited areas of both Burma and India. Unfortunately, when the Indo-Naga ceasefire of 1964 was extended to the state of Manipur, many prominent Naga leaders of Manipur opposed and went to Delhi under the banner of ‘All Tribal Delegation’ in 1970 to demand immediate statehood for Manipur instead of acceding to Nagaland.19 There are political reasons why the Naga leaders of Manipur protest against the extension of ceasefire in Manipur. The logic of it had in fact two dimensions (1) Nagas of Manipur wanted to stay at Manipur (2) an expression of anguish over which the Nagas of Manipur was left behind by the declaration of Nagaland statehood in 1963. However, the participation of Nagas of Manipur on Manipur statehood movement did not symbolize anti-NNC, anti-Naga or anti-Naga movement. Many spurred views on why Nagas of Manipur did not joined the Naga Nationalist Movement whiles other highlights that the unification of Nagas of Manipur into Nagaland was boosted in the late period when Indian National Congress declared ‘the movement is not anti-party, anti-national, unconstitutional activities.’ 20

Whatsoever, the sharp focus of the NSCN and latter by the NSCN-IM on one hand and the civil society group United Naga Council (UNC) on the other have bridge the Nagas of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland and Manipur toward stronger unity in late 1980s.

3.7 Village Administration of Nagas

Traditionally the Nagas, like other ethnic tribes in North-East, was organized into village communes and all these village communes were self-governing units formed of different clans. Each village is administered by a village chief with the members of the village council. The chief of village has dual functions – administered the village administration as well as performed religious ceremonies and other rituals. As head of the village he used to supervise the welfare of the village and protect the interest of the community.21 Without his assent no one can take decision on any matters, be it internal or external issues. In modern context the chief can be assigned as head of village planning,

commander-in-chief on safeguarding village, chief justice on legal matters etc. and with all these powers concentrated on him the chief has to be wise and judicious in nature. All the powers and functions of the Chief are based on conventional norm or so called common sense but has no written laws in the sense it widely prevails in modern days. Therefore many throws a criticism that the Chief of village is a dictator and his judgment are very rigid to be followed.

Meanwhile, the most astounding question is how and who become the village Chief and council member? In most of the cases, the first settler is selected as chief in the village. As per the customary practice in the Naga society, once a Chief appointed the post is remained hereditary except amongst the Ao and Lotha Nagas who are largely present in the state of Nagaland. On the other hand, the members of village councils whose duty is to assist the chief of the village are the representatives of each clan residing in the village. Usually the eldest person in each clan is selected as representative to the council. The size of the Council varies ranging from 1 to 3 members depending upon the size of population of the clans in the village. So the Nagas village administrative system involves a combination of selected members and hereditary system. In other words, it is a replica of modern democratic republic.

Though the chief is a nominal owner of the village land, the land ownership is collective in nature. Every family has the right to possess paddy fields, gardens and woodlands; hitherto the site of jhum cultivation is common property of the village. The chief in consultation with the village council decides the jhumming site and often by rotation. Besides the power and functions of the chief, there are also various privileges enjoyed by him. The villagers in free of cost can construct the Chief’s house. He will get paddy products, leg of a bull in every feast of merit, rice beer and meat before anybody touch in the social function. He has also right to use a man as messenger.

25 Ibid.
3.8 The Kukis

The *Kukis* are another main community of tribes who widely reside in the foothills and hills of Manipur. Like the Naga, the Kukis do not constitute at particular single community (tribe) but composed of many kindred communities such as Guite, Thadow, Hmar, Paite, Gangte etc. It is very perplexed and ambiguous to know the origin of the terminology than to know how many kindred communities included within the word ‘Kuki’. Some of the approaches that delineate about the origin of the word Kuki are briefly highlighted below. Some believe that the word kuki is expounded by the Bengalis to specify the dwellers of interior hills. For the first time the word Kuki came into mention in the history of Tripura in 1777 A.D. And in support of the argument, it reveals the existence of Kukis from the early time.26 Further as Linguist Grierson expounded that the Bengali or Assamese word ‘Kuki’ applied not just to the present Kuki community but to the origin of names of various tribes’ of North-East. According to E.W. Dunn, the term Kuki is derived from a word that applied to a system of cultivation adopted by the Bengalis. While other believes that it is a Baluchistan word ‘Kochi’ meaning wandering people. Another group claims that it is derived from the British word ‘Kooky’ meaning peculiar or unusual people. S. Prim Vaiphei concludes that it is a foreign word which is used in derogatory way to call the people living in Western Burma, North-East India and Bangladesh.27 In spite of divergence versions on the origin of the nomenclature, these people lives with the name till today in the adjoining area of three countries – India, Burma and Bangladesh. There are sections of people within, however, who do not want to identify themselves by the collective nomenclature ‘Kuki’ albeit belonging to same variant of linguistic family.

The Meeteis knew them as *Khongsai* but were called as Kuki by without adding any mesmerizing tone. In Manipur, the Kukis are further classified into two: ‘new Kuki and old Kuki’. The old Kuki are those people who settled in the state since the beginning of State (Manipur) evolution. British ethnographers classified them for administration

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approval as Mizo in the Lushai hills, Chin in the Chin hill of Burma and Kuki in Manipur, Assam and other parts of India. In present day, the Kukis show their displeasure attitude to the past British administrations for such dividing identity and recognition in various States. Even the term ‘CHIKIM’ (Chin-Kuki-Mizo) is a new construction, produced for common identity among the present generation in place of the term Kuki.

3.9 Political Construction of Kuki

The political construction of Kuki is less successful in compare with that of the Nagas despite their relentless effort in mending all their kindred communities. As a generic term ‘Kuki’ is applied to wandering people but sadly it is rejected, after the India’s independence in 1947, by themselves as many of the kindred groups within do not accept it due to the dominating attitude of some larger groups. The drawback of this identity construction, as many thinkers reminisce, is lack of exuberance and solidarity among them because the assertion is not evolved from within but it grew up with the influenced of the colonial master. Even, they showed anti-colonial attitudes to the British administration or Vice-President of Manipur State Durbar during the two great wars. They cannot bring a consensual unity within themselves. A retrospection of Kukis relations with the early British India in the region also indicate a hostile atmosphere and even disdain in paying house tax, force labour (Pothang), force recruitment, sometime raided on the British subject by closing roads, destroying rest houses, telegram lines etc. Such protest against the British administration during the 1917-1919 is popularly known as Kuki Rebellion (Kuki War of Independence). The British then took a punitive measure over the rebelling Kukis. Many of them were in prison and finally made them to surrender before the British officials. Though there was no solidarity amongst the Kukis, the prisoners Kuki Chiefs and surrenders brought a new ties and relationships across the Kuki villages. Following Kuki rebellion the chapter of forming conglomerate Kuki identity was emerged for the first time amongst the Kuki Chiefs.  

29 Ibid, pp.54-57
Around the end of colonial period, the Kukis formed Kuki National Assembly (KNA) in 1946 with aim of working towards development of the Kukis and demand a Kuki Home Land. But there was internal conflict within the Kuki tribes. KNA was dominated by Thadou Kuki therefore, the rest remain unhappy with the kind of hegemonic controlled of the Thadou and reluctant to collectively participate at the movement under the same banner. Subsequently, the misunderstanding within broken up and the rest kindred tribe formed another organization known as Khulmi National Union (KNU) in 1946. This can be considered as a move against the Thadou dominates KNA. To a surprising note the Non-Thadou Kuki questioned and blamed the generic name ‘Kuki’ as just a sub-tribe-centric identity.

However, though the movement for Kuki Home Land was slow, it spread to all kith and kin groups. In earlier, most of the people of this group gave their loyalty to Mizo National Front base in the Lushai Hills. Even the demand of the Kuki homeland was sidelined when Manipur merged into the Indian Union. Nonetheless after a long paralysis of unity among the Kukis, a new wave of understanding has rebuilt and underground organizations such as Kuki National Army (KNA) and Kuki National Front (KNF) emerged in a new fashion in 1988 with various civil and political wings. Recently both the undergrounds and over-grounds of Kukis have a common demand for a secure and protected Kuki Homeland. This is indeed a latest campaign of collective Kuki assertion for their political identity.

3.10 Village Administration of Kukis

The village administrative system of Kuki revolves around the Chieftain and feudal system in nature known as ‘Haosha’. Most of the villages have identical structure and follows similar norms in terms of administration. A ‘Haosha System’ primarily consists of a ‘Chief’ and a subordinate body known as Members of Council (MoC) of village. These two divisions represent the highest political units in a village administration. But all the activities of village – be it political, military, social, religious and others – is directly controlled by the Chief, and thus he become a kind of supreme ruler of the village. The primary function of the chief is to look after the affairs of the village and the
function of the Members of Council (MoC) is executed the work allocated by the chief of the village. At the same time, the chief, being the chairman of village planning is responsible for promoting and protecting the village from insecurity and the external threats. Subsequently he also enjoyed special privileges other than the governing powers of the village. He has a right to annual tribute, free labour, marriage fees, share of hind leg of animal if hunted by the villagers, etc. The house of the chief is also constructed in free of cost by the villagers when necessary and it is used as the Village Court. The whole land practically belongs to him and no individual has right to claim over the any part of the village land. The chief distributes the land to all the villagers for cultivation and in return he is entitled to get a tax in the form of paddy from each household. The chief also appoints village priests, blacksmith and village crier (informer) etc. and these people are exempted from the force labour, payment Buhsun (load of paddy) etc.

In the meantime, on the importance of village Chief one may ask how ‘Village Chief’ and ‘Members of Council’ selected in the discourse of understanding the village administration. The customary laws clearly explain the establishment of new village amongst the Kuki society. The establishment of new village is a joint venture of clans. In the inaugural of new village, a person who performed the rite and rituals becomes the chief of the village. And other clan members participate with chief during the ritual becomes the members of council of the village. The chieftainship of a village is hereditary and the rights of primogeniture is exclusively belong to eldest son in the family, but in matter of members of Council there’s a procedure of nomination from amongst the senior members from each clan. Normally, they are of men who possess high common sense and well verse with the customary laws.

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32 Ibid.
3.11 Transport and Communication:

Unlike other part of the country the state of Manipur lack a total infrastructural development, particularly in areas of transport and communication. There are many factors of this underdevelopment but the sole problem of this backwardness is due to insensitivity of both the center and state governments. The entire valley is traversed by surfaced roads that connect the Imphal – capital city of the state – with almost all towns and districts of the state. All the hills districts of the state are also connected with Imphal via road transportation but the condition of roads in the hills are pathetic. There is no pacca road linking with these areas and the people faced undue trouble to connect with other part of the state. The Government of Manipur, however, is yet to construct road link in these districts and open a gateway to unite with the rest.

In Manipur there are three national highways, namely i) National Highway 2 known as Imphal Dimapur road, ii) National Highway 37 known as Imphal Silchar Road and iii) National Highway 150 known as Tipaimukh Jasami road. The National Highway 2 and 37 is the only lifeline of the state and used for all the transaction as it connects with the other states of the region. Sadly the National Highway 150 is non-functional due to pathetic condition and it remained paralysis for many years now. Along the above two roads the passenger vehicles, particularly the buses ply from the Imphal Bus terminus to other states. There are both state own ISRT (Inter State Road Transport) service and private buses connecting Imphal with Kohima, Dimapur, Itanagar, Guwahati, Shillong and Silchar among other places. The journey through the route of National Highway 2 is the most comfortable despite its long distance. The road condition is high standard and double land system. The buses are speeding easily, for example, 579 kilometer takes around twenty hours.

The state has one airport known as Tulihal Airport Imphal, which is about 6 km south of the capital city, and is connected by Indian Airlines to Calcutta 5 times a week, Silchar 3 time a week, and Delhi 2 times a week. According Natural Energy Processing Company (NEPC) Airlines connection between Imphal and Guwahati daily fly take only 1hr 5min. In recent past, the Government of India under the auspicious of DONER
(Ministry on Development of North Eastern Region) is also working to provide railway connection through the Jiribam Train station and if that is materialize the state of Manipur would soon have better transportation linkages with other part of the Indian states.

The communication connection in Manipur is growing rapidly. The Post Office, Telegraph (now closed down nationwide) and telephone are connected from the urban down to rural level. There are 32 urban post offices and 591 rural post offices working in the state. 2 telegraph offices, 37 post and telegraph offices, 6207 telephone connection and 112 public call offices working for communication. Rapid development of modern cellular phone is making easier in exchange of information. The working of the cellular phone is covering even in deep corner of Manipur. The All India Radio Imphal, DDK Imphal and ISTV channels Imphal are broadcasting news and entertain programs along with numerous print media in multi-languages.

3.12 Linguistic Diversity

Meeteilon (Manipuri language) is the official language of the state. However, there are more than 39 mother tongues spoken among different ethnic groups in the Hills area. Dr. Grierson suggests that all the languages of the state including Meeteilon are part of the Sino-Tibeto/Tibeto-Burman family. It also believed that as many as the recognized tribes listed in the Schedule Tribe list there are equal numbers of mother tongues. If that argument is true there will be more languages in the state than shown in the official record. All the languages of Manipur have different characters. There are many communities even within the ethnic conglomerates people cannot communicate in a single language. For example, the Zeliangrong Naga community of Tamenglong District cannot understand mother tongue of each other due to variations in tone and words. Still some fragmented and complex issue of language exists among the Tangkhul Naga settled at the Ukhrul district. The Tangkhul Naga cannot communicate each other within themselves due to the variation of dialects from village-to-village and place-to-place. For that reason, Ukhrul town language is used as common language of the Tangkhul community. On the other hand, the Kuki-Chin dominated Churchandpur district has same
issue language variations. All the kindred tribe of Kuki-Chin such as Kuki, Lushai, Mizo, Paite, Hmar etc. do not have ‘one’ common language that can be used for communicating between each other. Therefore, the people of the district communicate Meeteilon. In context of Senapati district there are more then one dialect used. The Thadou-Kuki language, Mao and Maram languages are popular at the Mao town. There are many other languages like Maring, Anal, Monsang, Kom language etc are using in Chandel district. This variation of language made not just difficult to communicate each other among the tribes but has become the main factor for the increasing number of dead language in Manipur. There are about 40 languages in Manipur existed in the Census of 1951 and 1961 but could not found in the Census of 1971. The dead languages are Bamgung, Chinpao, Chist, Dhanton, Dheiphal, Gharwi, Guelrim, Hangal, Hangsin, Haokip, Harangkhol, Impuirion, Edoy, Karum Katcha, Kipgen, Kharam, Khogyong, Khongjai, Khul, Kilang, Kuki, Kurmi, Liyengmai, Lamhao, Mapustong Sul, Mate, Mongdung, Monlum, Muyon, Neishal, Gente, Paomata, Pathan, Phutang, rangdaniya, Rem, Renni, Rongmei, Simba, Singsutam, Suflia, Tegong, Gansal, Zemei. Therefore, it is time to wake up both the centre and state government and Linguist Commission of India to look after the condition and for initiating the preservation of the threaten languages of ethnic communities.

In Manipur, among numerous ethnic group languages, five have been recognized by the State Government for its rich and preservation. These languages have been upgraded as the medium of instruction and examination up to V Standard in the education curriculum of Board of Secondary Education Manipur (BSEM). The five recognize languages are Hmar, Tangkhul, Paite, Thadou and Lusai. Prof. Sanajaoba highlights that the Tangkhul and Thadou language to be subordinated language to the state language (Meeteilon) of Manipur for it withstood as the second biggest language in Manipur. Interesting, Meeteilon which is popularly known as Manipur language is not only common language of the valley dwellers but is used as second language among the ethnic

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35 Hill dwellers have communicated through Meetei language as a lingua- Franka. If they do not used Meetei language then they can pick up English as second language. Hill dwellers are less to use their mother tongue in communication is a way of making dead language. (see David Crystal, Language Death, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2000, pp. 69-90)

tribes, to communicate between them. Although Meeteilon is the mother tongue of Meetei, Manipuri Muslim and Lois (Schedule caste) communities, it has spread far and wide across the state as a Lingua-Franca. This language is included in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution of India in 1992. Meeteilon is also used as an international language for communication between people living in India, Burma and Bangladesh.

3.13 Meetei Script

Manipur language has its own script popularly known as Meetei Mayek or Manipuri Mayek. The Linguistic Survey of India noticed it and included a specimen of the script in Volume 3, Part 3. In the 19th century, the Bengali-Assamese script was used side by side with the Meetei (Manipuri) script. After 1891, the former gradually replaced the latter. By the thirties of the 20th century, Manipuri script became almost obsolete.\(^\text{37}\)

The old and medieval Manipur literatures are written in this old script.\(^\text{38}\) The Bengali script has been officially adopted and enacted since the post independence. All the local newspapers are published in the Bengali script except the Huiyen Lanpao (special edition), the Manipuri news daily. All the local newspapers, however, have a small space printed in original script to give an honor and accepted to the Meetei Mayek. At present also, in spite of the renewed interest shown by the new generations in the use of the original script, and its inclusion in the VIII Schedule of the Constitution of India, the Bengali script is popularly being used in Manipur. In recent past, the original script of Manipur has replaced the Bengali script as medium of instruction in school up to class ten formally. This trend is widely seen in many of the valley base schools and indeed it’s a good step towards maintaining one’s own culture. However the some remaining Schedule tribes of Manipur have not accepted the use of Meetei script and so they continue to used Roman script in their academic curriculum.

3.14 Religions and Belief Systems

The Constitution of India clearly says that the country is a Secular state and doesn’t


\(^{38}\) Ibid,
recognize any religion as official religion. In other words, the state respects all the religions without any differentiation or discrimination. As a result the people of Manipur, both from valley and hill areas, profess different religions based on their faith. No one face biasness, maltreatment of one over other, and there are indeed senses of brotherhood among people following different religions in the state. It would be interesting to look some of the religious faiths followed by people in the state. Hinduism is one of the dominant religions among the Meeteis. There is a unique history of how the people in the state were converted into Hindus.\(^{39}\) They had adored their own God and Goddess which divided into groups as I) Ancestral deities ii) Clan deities iii) Household deities. The religious ceremonies and other rituals of Sanamahism are distinct from the practice of Hinduism. But during the reign of King Garib Niwaz (Pamheiba), the Meeteis were converted forcefully into Hindu religion and thus the Hinduism was made state religion. This transition led to some form of ‘religious dilemma’ in this princely state. There were extreme oppositions from the local Saint-Scholar known as Maichou Taret (seven Saint-scholars) and their followers. But the *Maichou Taret* could no longer defend the state from this infiltration. Slowly the new religion got popularized in the state. However it may be argued that the form of Hinduism followed in Manipur is not purely Brahminical Hinduism. Yet there is still contestation between old religion and the Hinduism.\(^{40}\)

On the other side, the Christianity is, second major religion, followed predominately by the people who settled in the Hill areas. In the present day the followers of Christianity are increasing day-by-day both in the Hills and Plains ‘because the religion gives scientific outlook over the animistic religion’. The whole credit goes to William Pettigrew who brought the gospel of Jesus Christ in this part of the world. Pettigrew came as a Baptist missionary to Manipur and the people who followed him adopted the principles of American Baptist Mission. Despite William Pettigrew’s intensive and extensive evangelical itineraries in and around Ukhrul for fourteen years, south Western part of Manipur hill remained beyond the reached of the new gospel till the end of 1909. The pioneer missionaries convinced with education to the tribes, a new


\(^{40}\) Ibid.
faith take deep root in the mind of people. According to them, educational institutions served two double purposes (i) teaching the Christian truth or faith, and (ii) for the recruitment or training of future native workers. The people of this region were turned from darkness to light and become one of the most progressive tribes. It is true for tribes particularly in Manipur and generally in North East India. In spite of the Christianity’s influence among the hill tribes there are some section within some tribe which continues to follows their indigenous faith and belief system. For example, a large number of Kabui (Rongmei), Zeme and Paomei continue to follow their ancient animism.

The Islam religion of Muslim is also another major religion followed by the Manipuri Muslim or Meetei Pangal in Manipur.

3.15 Administrative Units:

Currently there are nine district administrative units in the state of Manipur. They are i) Imphal West District ii) Imphal East District iii) Thoubal District iv) Bishnupur District v) Chandel District vi) Ukhrul District vii) Senapati District viii) Churchandpur District ix) Tamenglong District. The first four Districts are based in the valley and rest five Districts are based in the Hills Areas. A district is headed by a district magistrate or a deputy commissioner, an officer belonging to the Indian Administrative Service. The district magistrate or the deputy commissioner is assisted by a number of officials belonging to different wings of the administrative services of the state. The state is also further divided into sub-units for better administrative functioning below the districts, and has presently 38 sub-divisions in Manipur. A Superintendent of Police, an officer belonging to Indian Police Service is entrusted with a responsibility of maintaining law and order and related issues in a district.

Each Sub-Division is headed by Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO). The current Sub-Divisions in the state are: Mao-Maram, Paomata, Purul, Sader Hills West, Saidu Gamphazol, Sader Hills East, Tamenglong West, Tamenglong North, Tamenglong, Nungba, Tipaimukh, Thanlon, Churchanpur, Singngat, Machi, Chandel, Chakpikarong, Ukhrul North, Ukhrul Centre, Kamjong Chassad, Phungyar Phaisat, Ukhrul South, Jiribam, Sawombung, Porompat, Keirao Bitra, Lamsang, Lamphal, Wangoi, Nambol,
Bishenpur, Moirang, Lilong Thoubal, Kakching. The list of nine districts, population and area and Headquarters base on 2011 Census report of Manipur is given below:

Table 2. Depiction of the state in districts wise as par 2011 census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Districts</th>
<th>Area in sq./km</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>District Headquarters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senapati</td>
<td>3271</td>
<td>354972</td>
<td>Senapati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churachanpur</td>
<td>4570</td>
<td>271274</td>
<td>Churachanpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td>3313</td>
<td>144027</td>
<td>Chandel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td>4544</td>
<td>452661</td>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>4391</td>
<td>140143</td>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishnupur</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>240363</td>
<td>Bishenpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoubal</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>420517</td>
<td>Thoubal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imphal West</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>514683</td>
<td>Lamphelpat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imphal East</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>452661</td>
<td>Porompat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>22,327</td>
<td>2721756</td>
<td>Imphal West</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Manipur, 2013 Published by Director of Census Operations, Manipur

According to the Constitution of India, a constituency is an electoral unit of representative for the proceeding of Parliamentary Democracy. There are 60 representatives from the 60 constituencies working effectively at the floor of State Assembly. Out of this 60 seat, 19 seats are reserved for Scheduled Tribes but the Scheduled Caste has only one reserve sat. The remaining 40 seats are un-reserved. On the basis of the geographical arrangement, 20 seats are based at the hills whereas the constituency of Kangpokpi, located at the hills jurisdiction of Senapati District remained unreserved due to mixed population. There are 40 seats based at the valley while the Lilong constituency is dominated by Mohmadan people and Sekmai, lone constituency of Scheduled Caste, is under the jurisdiction of Imphal west. The Ukhrul District has 4 seats, Chandel District has 2 seats, Tamenglong District has 3 seats and all these three districts are come under the Naga dominated areas. In Senapati District out of five two are come from the Nagas in State Assembly. A total number of Naga dominated
Constituency in Manipur is 10 as par the current division of seats. While the Churchandpur District has six Constituencies and remaining three constituencies from Senapati are under the Kuki Chin group.

In the Union Parliament, Manipur sends three Members out of which two MPs to the Lok Sabha (Lower House) and one MP to Rajya Sabha (Upper House). The Lower House Constituencies are divided as Inner-Manipur and Outer-Manipur constituencies. The Inner-constituency is unreserved and outer-constituency is reserved for the Scheduled Tribes of the state. However, a vast area of Imphal East District, Thoubal District and Jiribam sub-division of East Imphal district are covered by the Outer-Constituency. Meetei and Manipuri-Muslim do not allowed for the contestation in the election from the Outer-Constituency but have right to cast vote. So at the time of election, voter the valley people deciding factor in the out come of Outer-constituency election. Inner Constituency is contested by different candidates of different communities. Lone Member of Parliament (MP) in the Upper House is chosen through indirect election. The voters of such indirect election are only the members of the State Legislative Assembly. So the MP in the Upper House is often happened to be from the ruling party in State government.

The following are the areas that covers in the Inner-Manipur constituency – Khundrakpam, Heingang, Khurai, Khetrigao, Thongju, Keirao, Andro, Lamlai, Thangmeiband, Uripok, Sagolband, Keisamthong, Singjamei, Yaiskul, Wangkhei, Sekmai (SC), Lamsang, Konthoujam, Patsoi, Langthabal, Naoriya, Pakhanglakpa, Wangoi, Mayang Imphal, Nambol, Oinam, Bishenpur, Moirang, Thanga, Kumbi, Lilong, Thoubal, Wangkhal.

Whereas the geographical areas covered in the Outer-Manipur Constituencies are: Heirok, WangingTentha, Khangabok, Wabgai, Kakching, Hiyanglam, Sugnoo, Jiribam, Chandel (ST), Tengnoupal (ST), Phungyar (ST), Ukhrul (ST), Chingai (ST), Saikul (ST), Karong (ST), Mao (ST), Tadubi (ST), Kangpokpi, Saitu (ST), Tamei (ST), Tamenglong (ST), Nungba (ST), Tipaimukh (ST), Thanlon (ST), Henglep (ST), Churachandpur (ST), Saikot (ST), Singhat (ST).
3.16 A Brief Political History of Manipur

Manipur, before merging into the Indian Union, was one of the sovereign states in Asia and it had a reputation of super power in the South-East Asian region during the mediaeval period.\(^{41}\) As an ancient State Manipur not only her territory spread in all directions but her rich culture permeated society to different neighboring kingdoms. Prof Gangmumei Kamei rightly observes that the evolution of Manipur begins since pre-historic period and has a long flourishing history of sharing her values with others. This great historicity made the state of Manipur very popular among the far and near neighbors. Manipur is famous not just of her rich culture and strong standing army but also on the method of maintaining written record since 33 AD in the royal chronicle. This made Manipur an incredible state. To understand the glorious political history of Manipur it is deciphered and outline in phases starting from 33AD.

3.16.1 Phase I: 33 AD to 1110 AD

As it is stated above, the state of Manipur has the written record of its own history dating-back to 33 A.D. which is approximately 2000 years old and it persisted along with contemporary civilizations found in the South-East Asian world. The name Manipur was implemented in 18th century by King Pamheiba through the advice of his guru Santa Das. Before that the land had been known in different indigenous names.

Before the unification of the state into single political unit Manipur was rule by seven independent principalities. Among the clans, Mangang (Meetei) became more powerful and absorbed all the clans through wars. In 15\(^{th}\) century, the last principality which was absorbed into the Meetei community was the Moirang principality. After the entire political principalities are united under the hegemony of Mangang king, it slowly paves the way for the birth of Meetei nation without any repercussion. And remaining principalities had begun to exist as separate clans within the fold of Meetei community.

Some of the historian believes that in the early part of 18\(^{th}\) century along with the proclamation of Hinduism as state religion, the name of Mangang clan was changed into

\(^{41}\) Her status as a sovereign state was well known. A written constitution which is known as Loiyumba Shinyen had been working since 1110 AD, had a definite territory though fluctuated according to the power of kings of the day, and significantly, international treaties entered with different States.
‘Ningthouja’ meaning the royal clan. Subsequently it was farther change to a more debauched form and called as ‘Meetei’. So from this perspective all the clans fusion together in the course of history and later embarked into a Meetei community. The Tangkhul and Haokap, which is presently known as a Naga and Kuki tribe respectively, were mentioned in the fusion of Meetei. Besides, there is also a line of argument given by Meetei puyas that the Meetei changed into tribes and tribes changed into Meetei. Many people argue that the early state of Manipur did not belong to the present Meetei community alone but it was a state of Mongoloid race – a home of all the present Meetei, Naga and Kuki community. Unfortunately the glorious historical value of oneness had gone aggravated during the colonial period as for the British had remorselessly re-christened the bond of the people’s unity into inconceivable way. Some of the major factors among others are: the people of valley are ascribed as Meetei community; the people who were settling in the hills and foothills of Manipur are prognosticated separately as the Naga and the Kuki. During this phase the form of government was absolute Monarchy, and according to a renowned scholar late Oinam Bhogeswar whose worked are found abundantly in Manipuri (Meetei) language, there began to form a Centralized Constitutional Government for better administration in the kingdom as early as 429 A.D.\textsuperscript{42}

3.16.2 Phase II: From 1110 AD to 1718 AD

The second phase of political history of Manipur begins with the coronation of King Loiyumba in 1074 A.D. As a young prince he grew up very diligent, and later become a clever and an intelligent king. During his reign, he introduced a constitution known as ‘Loiyumba Shinyen’ for the first time in the history of Manipur. The Loiyumba Shinyen consists of two words- ‘Loiyumba’ is the name of king himself and ‘Shinyen’ is blended with two words ‘Shin’ meaning shintha or Duties and ‘Yen’ meaning yenthokpa or distribution. So in literal term, ‘Loiyumba Shinyen’ signifies the king Loiyumba rules book for distribution of duties. It was written for better and easier functioning of the King’s administration. The constitution subsequently caught the eyes of succeeding kings

of Manipur. Loiyumba Shinyen remained official rule book of the state from 1110 A.D till the outbreak of the international conflict between the Manipur and the Burma. Even after Manipur regained independence from the Burmese rules (1819-1826), the constitution was reintroduced again with some modification and remained codified as the ancient customary laws of Manipur. It embodied the traditions and customs that were followed by the king who had reigned before Meidingu Loiyumba, the early Meetei polity, the land tenure system, the administration of justice and social organization, besides information on various aspects of life. The Constitution was also embodied both in theological as well as and legal norms. This period followed absolute Monarchy based on theocracy. Whatever the king ordered was to be followed by his subjects, and that was law. Land revenue was a source of royal income. Land records were prepared systematically. King was chief administrator of justice. The principles of criminal laws were very severe. The state had divided into six Pannas. These pannas rendered service to the Kings and assisted him in the administration of the State. Further the King distributed different duties for the ‘Welfare State, among the Sageis (Clans) and as also among the Yumnaks (surname). These works covered all the aspects of life-social, economic, cultural and religious.

3.16.3 Phase III: From 1819 AD to 1826 AD

During the end of 17th century and beginning of the 18th century, the relation between Manipur and Burma became worse. Both the countries always attempted to expand their respective kingdom over the neighboring countries. Manipur invaded to Burma 25 times and similarly the Burmese counter-attacked the kingdom of Manipur on 11 occasions. This preponderance of power has no much gravity on both the sides prior to the beginning of 18th century as there was strong balance of power. However, with the beginning of the 18th century Burma became much stronger than the kingdom of

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Manipur. Thus, Burma conquered Manipur many times. The last Burmese invasion of Manipur is commonly known as ‘Seven Year Devastation’ (1819-1826) and local people called it ‘Chahi Taret Khuntapkpa’ in the history of Manipur. During this period Manipur is governed by a merciless ‘Despotic Military Rule’ government and people experienced the high water-mark of Burmese domination over Manipur. Prof. Sanajaoba describes that during this period the sovereignty of Manipur was suspended and there is political dilemma in the kingdom. During the seven year ruled by the Burmese Military, the people of Manipur fled away to different places such as Cachar, Shylet, Dhaka, Upper Assam, Calcutta, Tripura and other part of India. Sizable people of Manipur were to Burma as war captive. The male population was hugely reduced. Rapes, torture, Robbery, destruction property were common feature. P. R Pemberton said that Manipur was “doomed…. To the devastating visitation of Burmese armies which have nine or ten times swept the country from one extremity to the other with the apparent determination of extirpating a race whom they found it impossible permanently to subdue”. However, although slow but steadily Manipur regained her independence through the guerrilla war by Hirachandra inside the State and externally open war by Ghambhir Singh and Nara Singh. Then on 24 February 1926, the ‘Treaty of Yandaboo’ 1826 was signed between the British India and the Burma. According to article 2 of the treaty, the king of Burma agreed to recognize Gambhir Sing as independent ruler of Manipur. Without a doubt, the intention of the British officials in India was that Manipur should be treated as an independent kingdom. In 1856, the Calcutta High Court decided that Manipur is an Asiatic Sovereign State. After the devastation of Manipur the reconstruction works were undertaken by King Ghambhir Singh assisted by his brother Nara Singh. Construction of new, road repaired of old roads and reclamation of paddy fields covered by grass during the Burmese period (Seven year devastation) were completed. During the time of King Ghambhir Singh (1825-1834) again recognized the Loiyumba Shinyen as the Constitution or supreme law of the land. Besides, the relation with the British government was also improved. The King granted permission to set up the office of the British political Agent (Ambassador) in the year 1835.
3.16.4 Phase IV: From 1826 AD to 1891 AD

In this period the state of Manipur was stable, peaceful and calm. The foreign relations particularly with the British were improved and the British too respected the traditional custom and culture of Manipur. The form of government was the Constitutional Monarchy. In 1835, one of the significant political developments in the history of Manipur was the establishment of the office of Political Agent. It is said that the office was established to fulfill a limited objectives i.e. the preservation of friendly relation between Manipur and British and as a medium of communication.\(^45\)

However, it marked the beginning of the consolidation of British control over the Manipur. Later the office became more powerful and took the centre stage of the polity of the state. The complete sovereignty was exaggerated when British interfered in the internecine quarrel amongst the princes of Manipur. However there was no change in the status quo of Manipur sovereignty. It is mentioned about the political agent that “the political agent is dependent on the wish and pleasure of Maharaja for everything. His every movement is known to the Maharaja. He is in fact British officer under the Manipur surveillance.”\(^46\) After King Chandrakriti, Knight Commander Service India (K.C.S.I) awardee, died in 1886, the princess of Manipur grows enviousness to the throne of kings. The eldest son of the king Chandrakriti, Surchandra Singh ascended the throne of Manipur. Since his accession, Manipur had become divided into two groups, one led by Surchandra and another led Tikendrajit Singh. These two group dissensions, mistrusts, quarrels and rivalry with each other sowed the seed of war amongst the princesses in 1890. As a result the then British officials began interfering on the internal affairs of Manipur. It pronounced a judgment that the prince Sanapati Tikendrajit was the root cause of the crises. The British made secrete arrangement to arrest Tikendrajit but the planned unfortunately ended up with a huge causality on the lives of innocent masses. In a Durbar (Assembly) for the settling the conflict between the British and the king of Manipur, people attacked on the British officials and killed five British officers including political agent Mr. Grimwood. When the news of ‘British officer killed’ reached at


Calcutta, the British government ordered three-pronged invasion into Manipur. Thus, the *Anglo-Manipuri war* was turn out in the last week of April, 1891. Manipur lost to British and she come under administrative control of the British.

**3.16.5 Phase V: From 1891 AD to 1947 AD**

The Anglo-Manipuri war in 1891 was a historical landmark in the history of Manipur. Although Manipur was defeated in the war the British did not proclaimed that Manipur lost her independent status. Prof N Sanajaoba lucidly describes that ‘*there is no order or treaty to explain the status of Manipur Sovereign state to be lost*’. For that matter the sovereign power of Manipur persisted even after the British conquered it. Even advocate Manamohn Ghosh says that “*Manipur is not a part of British India, and not subject to our laws, wills, I apprehended not be question*”. She did not lost her status of the De Jure Sovereignty. In the British parliament there was a long drawn discussion on the issue of political status of Manipur. British M P Mr. Campbal Banmarn said “*No evil occurs in the country until the arrival of Mister Quenton*”. In the parliamentary session of British, they decided that the bilateral relation between the Manipur and British will be ‘*Subordinate and Protected state*’.

The coming of British on the soil of Manipur had brought a sea change in the administration. After Anglo-Manipuri war British appointed a minor *Churchand*, grandson of King Nara Singh, as king of Manipur. This connection with the British had brought development especially in the field of education. Many persons got western education. These educated people became pioneer of socio-political movements by organizing the people to fight against all forms of injustice. In 1930s, the valley witnessed many organizations for political, social, economic and religious and demanded for reforms persistently. The *Nekhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasaba* was an important socio-religious organization formed by Maharaja himself on 31 may 1934. Other important organizations were the *Krishi Sanmelani*, the *Manipur Praja Sanmelani*, the *Krishak*

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49 Ibid, p. 22. (See *The Government of India’s Resolution of Manipur August 21, 1891*)
Sabha, etc. The word Hindu was dropped from the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha in the historical session of Chinga on 29 to 30 December 1938. The main objective of Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabhas was to demand abolition of Feudal taxes, establishment of responsible government, amalgamation of hills and valley administration, universal adult franchise etc. The Krishi Sanmelani was organized to fight the socio-economic exploitation of the poor people. They joined together with the Manipur Praja Sanmeleni to fight against social, economic and religious injustices. In 1946 the Krishak Sanmelani changed its name to Krishak Sabha under the leadership of Hijam Irabot Singh. He was a magnificent leader and presented the following demands to the Maharaja of Manipur. The demands were 1) to constitute an elected legislature 2) to form a council of Ministers responsible to the legislature. 3) to choose the Prime Minister from among the members of the council of minister 4) to reserve seats for Muslim and 5) to introduce universal adult franchise.

It happened in the valley there was also a political development in the hills since the British came to Manipur. Hills and valley simultaneously participated in the political development. Among the tribes, a group of political elites who gained western education emerged and they formed many organizations for the modernization of tribals in Manipur. The Tangkhul Long was formed in 1919 at Ukhrul, and the Kabui Samiti also evolved among the Rongmeis in 1934, which later was changed into Kabui Naga Association and then further changed to Zeliangrong Naga Union. On the other side, the Hmar had formed Hmar Association, in 1936, to protect and promote their identity. Many scholars say that all these organizations are formed with main intention to protest against the hegemony of British in their land but due to lacked of proper development in Transports and communications, their activities confined within the hills and could not reached down to join with the valley politics. As a result the tribes demanded the administration of Manipur should be divided into hills and plain for better efficiency, and the British accepted and latter emphasized only on their interest. But with this division of administration, there arose a feeling of ‘we’ and ‘they’ between the plain and hill people in Manipur, and later it became a core issue of ethno-nationalism rather than joining hands in building a stronger state.
3.16.6 Phase VI: From 1947 AD to 1949 AD

In the early part of the year 1947, while the Indian sub-continent was preparing for their future political status, Manipur too was busy pressurizing the British to grant an independence of Manipur. The British undertook a resolution, on 20th May 1947, on matter regarding unleashing the control of the region to pave way for the people to choose their fate. They also assured the Maharaja of Manipur that the state will be given full independence soon after they leave the region. The king of Manipur Maharaja Budhachandra, therefore, recognized as the nominal head. The Maharaja also assigned some ministers for administrative convenience in the interim council. As par their promise the British handed-over the administration of Manipur to the king of Manipur on 14 August 1947, followed by the hoisting of ‘Pakhangba Flag’ in the Interim Hall and declaration of Maharaja Budhachandra to his people that ‘Manipur is now an independent State’. On 11 June 1947, the state of Manipur for the first time in Asia held Assembly election on the basis of universal adult Francis and formed Popular Sovereign Government on 27th July. The State thus became a Sovereign Democratic Monarchical government.

But two year later, an independent Manipur faced pressure from the local politician to join the ‘Union of India’. On the other side, there was a threat to take-over the state of Manipur and brought under the union of India. Sardar V. Patel, an Iron man of India tried his best to forcefully merge the independent princely state of Manipur with India Union. The king, though hard to give up the newly achieved independent state, slowly proposed the *Instrument of Accession* and the *Stand-Still Agreement (on 11 August 1947)* a one after another before the signed of merger agreement with the representative of Indian Union. Many Political Parties of the state particularly the *Manipur Communist Party* (MCP) strongly reacted to the precedence of Manipur joining with India. In the aftermath of the merger, the MCP went an underground organization under the leadership of Hijam Irabot Singh and this is an underpinning root of present day insurgency movements in the state.
Finally, the Merger Agreement between Government of India represented by Mr. Velody, State Minister of India and king of Manipur Maharaja Bodhachandra signed on 15 October 1949 at Shillong. With this, the rule of Maharaj ended and the Manipur State Council and the Assembly were later dissolved with effect from October 15, 1949. After signing the Merger Agreement Manipur becomes the member of the Union of India.

3.16.7 Phase VII: From 1950 AD to Present Day

The Constitution of India, which came into force on 26 January 1950, has made India a sovereign democratic republic. The new republic is also declared to be a "Union of States" and this republic made a framework that divides the federal units into three categories i.e. Part A, Part B and Part C. in the part C categories, there are 10 states which included former princely states and chief commissioner provinces. The Part C state was rule by chief commissioner appointed by president of Indian Union. The Part C states within the ‘Union of India’ until the reorganization of states base on linguistic lines are Ajmer, Bhopal, Bilaspur, Coorg, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Kutch, Manipur, Tripura, and Vindhya Pradesh. Unfortunately even after the reorganization of the states, Manipur was remained in the same Part along with Tripura and Kutch. These states were not granted to run the legislative Assembly but allowed a political right to function the state only at the level of Advisory Council. This council is a composition of 30 members with the coordination of the Chief Commissioner who is directly responsible to the centre. The council has therefore no direct power to run the state but remained a rubber stamp as the standing power is controlled by the Chief Commissioner. The first Chief Commissioner appointed for Manipur is Major General Rawal Amer Singh, and he was empowered to rule the state without any liability to the people of Manipur.

In a true sense of democracy the voice of the people is an unsinkable strength and the prime duty of the state is to fulfill the aspiration of its citizenry. But in context of Manipur there is no such accommodation and, for which many have mounted criticism that the popular democracy is converted to bureaucratic aristocracy. When one looks through the prism of political condition, there is wide prevalence of chaos and aggravating troubles among the people against the system of governance by the
Government of India in the name of democracy. The people did no longer buy time but quickly formed *Manipur National Union* (MNU) in 1950 to mobilize for the demand of full-fledged Statehood of Manipur. During the process of this movement the idea of territorial secession and political independence also rooted in an unprecedented wave and the political mobilization united the people of both the hills and plains. The Government of India took up many repressive actions to suppress the movement. Many leaders of the movement, who followed the Gandhian principle, were arrested under various black laws. However, the flame of the movement continued to grow stronger and strengthened the intercommunity bonds in the state which makes the Government of India difficult to further repress the rights of the people.

On the other hand, the Government of India realized the geo-strategic importance of Manipur in India’s foreign policy and this realization just not tardily softens the action against the movement but find a way to resolve the aggravated issue in lieu of protecting India’s status quo. When the *State Reorganization Commission* (SRC) was constituted in 1953 under the membership of Fazal Ali, Kavalam Madhava Panikkar and H.N. Kunzru, the SRC suggests Manipur to join with the state of Assam. But with the intervention of the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, being keen to protect the unique culture and identity of the state, the part C category of Manipur is converted into a Union Territory in 1956 by the *Union Territorial Act of 1956*.

When Manipur become a Union Territory, a Territorial Council with 30 member representatives from both the hill areas and plain was constituted. The general election was held for the first time of the Union Territory Manipur in 1957 under the constitution of India. This shift of paradigm has brought little hope among the people because it was an achievement after fighting against all odd. However the aspiration of the people was shortly overshadowed when they learned that the new council is not to that of the Advisory Council in governing the state. Therefore a new wave of movement suddenly occurred demanding a decentralization of political power to the state and not to run state affairs from the centre. The basic argument of the people was that Manipur was independent country before joining India Union and so Manipur be given full fledged Statehood. In fact, the Territorial Council’s administration did not bore close relationship
between the people and Government. For instance, the real power was into the hands of Bureaucrats. An eminent Professor of Manipur University N JoyKumar Singh once highlights that the members of the council were no better than a ‘Peon’ in their own area.

Thus after a gap of two year a fresh movement for the establishment of a responsible government in Manipur was again initiated by Communist and Socialist Party from the beginning of 1960. Subsequently with the formation of the Assembly Demand Co-coordinating Committee (ADCC) on 26 March 1960 by Communist and Socialist Party, the movement is survived and extended until a great upheaval cropped up from different section of society. The Women’s organization, student’s organization and youth organization appeared and participated in the movement of statehood. A Series of democratic political programs such as road blockade, closure of markets, boycott of government office and school, college, disruption of communication channels, strikes etc. were conducted during the movement of statehood. At the heyday of the uprising there was no difference of opinion even among different political parties and they actively pressurized their mother political parties highlighting the issue of Manipur Statehood in the Parliaments. The Government of India, instead of taking cognizance action on the issue, took many actions to suppress the movement viz. imposition 144 of Cr.P.C and curfew for indefinite period, lathicharge, firing and arrest of the agitators. These were routine duties of Arm Forces. The attitude of the Government of India towards the innocent agitators made a feeling of alienation and deprivation, so intensive campaigned was launched by people to demand for the extent of pre-merger status of the Kingdom. Therefore, the security arrangement was beefed up with an order to shoot at sight of any agitator. The ruling elites had under-estimated the unprecedented rise of security threats from the Communist and Socialist party in Manipur, and so the armed forces of India was compelled to act in such stringent action against the legitimate demand of the people.

Meanwhile, the self-determination movement of the Nagas under the heroic leadership of A.Z Phizo was awarded by conferring Nagaland statehood in 1963 by the Government of India. This conferring of the statehood to the Nagas of Naga Hills within the same years of the peoples’ of Manipur movement had popped up a political dilemma among the leaders and question themselves how and why the Manipur has not been not
granted statehood in similar way minted out for the Nagas. In the discussion on matter to take the movement at other level, diverse views cropped up on how to further their movement. To the surprise of many, some section adopted the principle of extremism and the United National Liberation of Manipur (UNLF) was formed in 1964 with a slogan right to self determination. This step has undoubledly begun to catch some attention of the Government of India. But a change of India policy toward Manipur and other movements in North-East was seen offer Chinese policy started to support the insurgency in Northeast India. The security environment in the North East frontier became so complex. To deal with the security challenges in the North-East Region the Government of India introduced a new accommodative policy. The North Eastern Areas Reorganization Bill was passed in 1971, and on the 21st January 1972 Manipur was granted full fledged statehood and became the 21st state in the Union of India.