CHAPTER - IV

Historical Factor of Ethnic Conflict: The Genesis

Ethnic groups within Manipur differ from one another not only in terms of culture and ethnic orientations but also in their respective numerical strengths, political orientation, socio-economic affiliations, influences in national orientations and communal solidarity. Manipur has a very complex nature of ethnic relations which is really hard to explain adequately. In a more serious note, the inter-ethnic relations acquire a problem character when they are marked by persisting differences with distrust which ultimately lead to tension, disharmony and conflict. The present chapter will explore the genesis of ethnic conflict in Manipur starting from ethnic dynamics developed during the colonial era. Even the pre-colonial issues of diversity needs to be discussed for extensive understanding of the larger issues of ethnic conflict in the state.

The attempts to define the genesis of ethnic conflict in Manipur will certainly need multidisciplinary approach. And looking from such perspective one finds that many factors are responsible for the existing conflict situation in Manipur. In order to explain these factors satisfactorily, the chapter is being classified into three sub-chapters. The First sub-chapter will be on the Pre-colonial state administration and its way on inter-ethnic relations in the state. Second will be on the adoption of different religious faiths as a cause of conflict. The third will be on the contribution made by colonial policies and administration in bringing the dynamics of conflict in the state.

4.1 Pre-Colonial State Administration and Issues of Ethnic Relationship

As suggested in the previous chapter, the kingdom of Manipur was not ruled by a single political head. The valley was initially ruled by seven clans though they were fused together into Meetei nation state in the later eras. Similarly, the hill areas and their inhabitants were ruled by the different Chiefs and their village council at the village level. Thus, the relationships between the different groups were grown in different contexts and socio-political settings. Let us look at the communities’ relationship between the hill areas and valley.
4.1.1 Political Relation between Hills and Valley

Primarily political civilization of the Meeteis had emerged in the same fashion as that of the civilization of Greek *city state*.¹ Meeteis had completed their unification with the emergence of a constitutional government in 429 A.D, according to a renowned Scholar late Oinam Bhogeswar. King Loiyumba (1074-1122) introduced the *Loiyumba Shinyen*, the first Constitution of Manipur in 1110 AD. This was the first attempt to organize the people at the valley as a single political unit. Unfortunately, this barely attempted to look for some kind of common institution for governing the communities in the hills and the valley together. Thus, the political relation between the hills and valley was mostly developed in terms of some convention rather than any kind of organized political institution. Therefore, even if cordiality has marked the extent of the hill-valley relationship, this cordiality had been off and on disturbed by another characteristic of relationship between the two. That is war and strife between the two. Meeteis being the bigger and politically better organized happened to be at the upper hand and often stood as dominant community.

There are evidences that the king of Manipur interfered frequently in the village administration of tribal in the hill areas. In one such instance, in Chandel District, there was a quarrel amongst the Anal, which was later identified as an old Kuki tribe, for the post of village chief in pre British period. The dispute was settled by justice of king that one was appointed and another removed from the post of *khullakpas* (village chief).² The king gives special power to the *Khullakpa* to rule in certain cases of the village. But cases of serious matter like murder cases, homicides etc. were to be brought to Court of the king.³ The new posts like *Khullakpa, Lup lakpa, Zuphalba* etc were opened among the old Kuki tribes.⁴ These terms are used in the village administration of Manipur even today since it was given by Meetei kings.

¹The boundaries of the seven clans were limited as to be visible practically from the roof of the every house. It also favors limited population.


³ Ibid.

The king of Meetei, however, never ruled directly over the hills people. The hills people were virtually independent in their respective villages except when there was interference from the Meetei which in most of the cases short. Meetei king conquered the tribes when tribal did not accept the decree of king or tribal revolts against the king. In such circumstances the Meetei kings took expeditions to “punish” the particular village and the Chief. Such situation was settled through the exchange of valuable things of movable and immovable or tribute. The Cheitharol Kumbaba, the royal chronicle of Manipur mentions a number of Meetei king invasion over the tribes. However, if there was sudden invasion by any external power or common enemy like Burma on the kingdom, the hatred would never prevent them from coming together for a common defense. They would stand united and fight against the common enemy. We have seen number of tribal participation in the military expeditions of Kings. For example, the Manipur Levy lead by Raja Gumbhir Singh was a military troop of Meetei, Meetei Pangal and tribal.5

However, in the later years, efforts were being made to integrate the hill people politically within the Meetei Kingdom. Thus, a new and separate portfolio (Ministry) in the Council of Minister of the King was established. This was known as Hao Loishag. This was started during the time of King Charairongba (1698-1709). It was the only Ministry for tribal affairs. This Ministry looked after all the issues/cases with related to tribes. It is similar with the ministry of the tribal welfare in the present day. The head of such ministry appointed by king were on behalf of the tribal people.

After the Anglo-Manipur war (1981) which went in favor of the British, the power to administer the hill subjects was transferred to the British. They (British) appointed many Lambus 6 for assisting in the running of hill administration. The Vice President 7 of State Durbar was made to be in charge of the hills administration. Latter on the hill administration of Manipur was directly taken charge by the President of State Durbar on 1 January 1930. However, as the administration of hills was neglected,

6 Lambus are servant assigned by British official the collection of taxes and also dispatch the order of the government to hills area.
7 In the State Durbar the post of the vice president was reserved for British political agent. The king of Manipur was president of the Durbar. It was continues up to British Paramountcy come to an end.
particularly due to lack of development in transports and communications, the tribal
groups were not satisfied and asserted off and on against the British rule. The Lambus
were not faithful, and even occasionally they intervened the hills administration by their
own selfish motives. So revolts often occurred during the colonial period. The first revolt
from the Kuki tribes under the leadership of A. Sanajaoba against the ruler was the
product of this maladministration.8

In the valley, after the war of 1891, a minor was appointed as the King of
Manipur and consequently, the whole responsibility to carried on the administration of
the Kingdom was placed upon the shoulder of the British. They ran the administration
through a political agent. On 17 March 1905, again the administration of the State was
hand over to Maharaja Churchand (1891-1941). It is learnt that there had been good co-
operation between the king and the British in terms of administration and produce peace
for some time. Credits also went to this cooperation for the control of the sudden eruption
of conflict between the Kabui and Kuki due to raids by later over the villages controlled
by the former. Nonetheless, this maladministration by the British Officers had already
become a factor for the emerging ill-feeling and distrust against to traveler officers put a
hold to friendly hospitality so far provided by the locals.

4.1.2 Social Relation between Hills and Valley

Though the sense of animosity sometimes intruded the rapport between the communities
in the hills and the valley, the socio-cultural relationship between the two is rather
marked mostly by “understanding and brotherhood”. A Legendary Folk Song of Meetei
goes “Chingna Koina Panshaba, Chingmina Koina Panngakpa Manipur Sana
Leimayol”. It describes as “surrounded by the ranges of hills and guarded by hill man is
the golden land Manipur”. It signifies the unbreakable kinship and brotherhood between
the two who are otherwise seem to be separated by geographical terrains. Though
geographically separated it is often underlined that both are parts of the larger citizenry of
the kingdom.

8 Lal Dena, “Kuki Rebellions: 1917-1920”, in Lal Dena (eds), History of Modern Manipur (1826-1949),
Orbit Publisher: New Delhi, 1991, pp. 127-128.
Talking about the social relations between the two, Prof. S. Mangi remarks that the phrase ‘Chingburoi Tamburoi’\(^9\) is used with emotion, love and affection. This does not, however, mean that relationship is always cordial. As mentioned earlier that at times political conflict widened the gap so much so that many phrases that sound hatred between the two are used by both the people. Just to take an example, the phrase ‘Haoringjel Nairingjel’ which means hatred, violent, war is often used by the Meeteis. However, this animosity arises mostly when there is political disagreement between the two. At such disagreement situation, the two brother hatred, distrust, and ill-feeling sometimes war is frequently occurred.

However they never separated from each other in their socio cultural relations. The economy of the state is also interdependent each other. The royal chronicle the Cheitharol Kumbaba is sharing history of both plain and hills people. In the list of kings who have ruled over Manipur, many names carrying tribal’s name or word have been recovered. Meidingu Thathingmang (264-368) is a tribal name. P.S Haokip claims “Cheitharol kumbaba records that in the year 186 Sakabda (264 AD), Meidingu Taothingmang, a Kuki, become king.”\(^10\)Kuki are an indigenous people sharing common history in the Cheitharol Kumbaba. Therefore the new comer Kukis were never treated as foreigner by the king of Manipur, because Kabow valley and its surrounding were part of Manipur. So Prof. Lal Dena confirms that the people who are coming from Kabow valley are also indigenous people of Manipur.

Since the first king of Manipur Nongda Lairen Phakhangba, the inter caste marriage had been in practiced. He married four wives from different tribe.\(^12\) King Charairongba appointed the daughter of the king of Maram tribe to Leimarel (queen). Other similar cultural practicing like dormitory system, making a fire place inside the house, set of deities, tribal costume in traditional festival (lai haraoba), Meihum morok (chilli burn) use in emergency massage etc. are also found. It is also compulsory that in

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9 ‘Chingburoi’ mean the people (highlanders) who are responsibility at hill areas as king’s service. Likewise, ‘Tamburoi’ mean the people who are responsibility at valley area on behalf of the king. These two kinds of people are called in onetime as Chingburoi Tamburoi.

the coronation function, the king could be wearing the dress of Naga tribes. There are also many festivals signifying the relationship of hills and valley. They are

1. Mera Houchongba: The festival is celebrated by tribes and Meitei which indicated that both are emerging as same and one.
2. Mera Sandaba: In the month of Mera (November), the participants of *Mera houchongba* eat together by offering Shandang (Mithun) by the king.
3. Laiharaoba: The festival is performed for each khul, sagei, whole village on behalf of Lai (god) which took place inside the village. In the last part of the festival there is a role of *Thangkhul shaba* (Thangkhul character) and how he come into the valley.
4. Cheiraoba: It is the New Year of Meetei. After offering food and fruits and other items with decoration to Gods then people eat food. In the evening people climb nearest hill and devote to Gods, remembering the genesis and relation of cognitive tribes.

### 4.1.3 Relation between Kuki and Naga

In the recent history, the relationship between the Kuki and the Naga has been marked by animosity, war and the issues concerning the culture of head hunting. Therefore, the boundary of their social and political relationship happens to be quite limited. However, it is wrong to assume that the relationship between these communities had always been conflictual. There were times when the relationship was quite brotherly and fraternal. Before being identified as Kuki and Naga, the ethnic tribes within these larger conglomerate tribes were known by their respective ethnic names such as Tangkhul, Maring, Maram, Chiru, khongjai etc. The past history tells us that there were times when the Tangkhul tribe requested some fellow tribes who are now categorized as Kukis for protection from the wild animals like tiger, leopard, elephant and bear etc. in different point of history. In 1892 Saichang and Mongbouring villagers had been protected from the wild animals by effort of both warriors the Nagas and the Kukis.\(^{11}\) They also shared

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(and some of them still continuing to) the territorial boundary and resources of surrounding land.

The practice of *Head hunting* prevailed in the history as a culture of all the tribal evolution in the South East Asia, Africa and Latin America. In Manipur, communities and tribes which are now identified as the Kuki and the Naga practiced head hunting in ancient time. The communities never dreamt of its consequences: the killing and brutality. But kidnapping for slaves was rampant in the society. It is interesting to note that all those practicing this tradition believed that killing for head carries religious merit. Tangkhul Naga believed that it *(Head hunting)* would add to the fertility of the soil of their village. Perhaps Kuki too believed the same, but later on they replaced human head by sacrificing Mithun. The head hunting culture continued till the 2nd half of 19th century. Some Tangkhul leaders opined that it is largely responsible for the diversified of more than 20 dialects among the Tangkhul. No doubt, such practices brought a gap relation between individuals, villages and tribes regardless of whether one belongs to Kuki or Naga.

As mentioned earlier, the relationship was characterized not by animosity only. In just the opposite to this animosity there were threads of fraternity and peaceful co-existence between various groups specially between those who were later identified as Kukis and the Nagas. The policy known as *Kajol policy* can be the best example.\textsuperscript{12} This policy continued as a tradition among various tribal communities for a long time. It is a policy of sustaining peace and co-existence among the individuals, villages and communities. The term ‘*jol*’ signifies the relationship that occurs between the members including the siblings of a family. Thus, it signifies a greater relationship than simply fraternal relationship. It is the value entailed in the love and sharing among members of a family. This sort of relationship was transpired between communities and villages under Kajol policy. In the policy, the families exchanged and shared various goods like paddy, chilies, seeds and free lending of tools and other important materials. People got together regularly by organizing annual feast. The villages and communities extent helps to each other at the time of difficulties (natural calamity) of different village. When the Chiefs

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, p. 24.
exchanged *Jols*, it was believed that the people of the particular villages could maintain and promote cordial relations.

The same tradition of fraternity and relationship between the Kuki and Naga was reflected in the *Nehbom gam policy*.¹³ In this particular tradition two or more villages shared the territory and its resources like forest, water, wild animals etc. It is on the basis of idea collectivity, unity and integrity along with the sense of suffering or victory together that such traditions were invented and practiced. This culture is strongly manifested among the Tangkhul Naga and the Kuki which are demonstrated often in their social milieu.

British promulgated and followed their own policy for mere administrative connivance and imposed them on the tribal communities in the state. However, for a long time, the relation between Kuki and British had been cordial particularly in the beginning. After high level conspiracy involving the murder of the King of Chassad and the Chief of Soya the relationship became sour. It even reaches a stage where the tribal Chiefs sought the help of the Raja of Ava (Burma) against administrators in Manipur. The British policy of disarmament along with various taxes levied including heavy house taxes compelled the Kuki to migrate towards the Sompra tract that lies between Manipur and Burma. It was also reported that Kuki conducted raids on the Tangkhul village Konki in which around 153 Naga individuals were killed. Sometime after the incident, the Nagas also accused the Meitei and Kuki for helping the British to invade Kohima on the 11th February 1832. The State Durbar also had to intervene when a Kuki King named Keson was killed by the Chingsaroi villagers. During the war against the British (Anglo-Kuki, 1917 to 1919), the Kuki punished those Chiefs, villagers, irrespective of caste and creed, who supported the British force. Mention may be made of ‘Chingmai’ a Chiru Naga village, Khongakhul; a Kabui village, Kasom; a Tangkhul Dulen and santing, Joupi and Khongde which were punished by the Kukis. On this matter British again burnt down 120 Kuki villages and wiped out nearly 86 villages.

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¹³ Ibid.
Even the rapid growth of Christianity as a common religion could hardly mitigate the problems of animosity developed particularly after India’s independence. Initially it showed the potential to maintained brotherhood between the warriors Kuki and Naga. However, the formation Church associations along the ethnic lines that began after the Second World War shattered the hope of goodwill between various communities. Division of Church association on ethnic line surely widened the gap among the Christian leaders in particular and member in general.

4.2 Meetei Suzerainty

The population of the state happened to be very small from around the third decade of the 19th century. It is believed that frequent war and particularly ‘seven year devastation (1819-1826)’ of the kingdom in the hands of Burmese army made most of the people ran away and a sizable number taken to Burma. Even many were killed in the brutal tortures of the Burmese army. According to 1881 census, the total population of Kukis was 25,384 and Nagas were 59,904 while the Meeties were 117103. Therefore, sometimes there was necessity to unite or integrate all the people of Manipur as one.

The process of social assimilation between the tribes from the hills and clans from the valley people was started long ago. The Royal Chronicle (Cheitharol Kumpapa) referred that numbers of Meetei heroes or families took asylum in the hill areas and later were converted into hill people. Similarly, the hill people were converted into Meetei. These assimilation and conversion were frequently performed among the people of Kabuies, Tangkhul and other unspecified tribe. The surnames of Meetei community like Khaidem, Konthoujam, Sanasam, Sinam etc. are converted from hills tribes. It is also suggested that villagers of Moirangkhom which is just walking distance from the Kangla Fort were converted mostly from the Maring tribe. Hodson pronounced ‘no one denies that the Naga and Kuki-Chin elements are a part in the evolution of the Meeteis as an ethnic group’, though it is not sure that Meetei or Meetei clans are immediate descent of

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the Hill tribes. That is why Manipur is being describes as a melting pot. Some of the famous sons (often defined as heroes of Manipur in the *Anglo Manipur War*), Thangal General and Charai Thangal were also from the Thangal tribe. The former converted into Meetei afterwards.

The coming of the hill people and their settlement in the fertile valley should in fact be taken a natural and ongoing process in Manipur. Manipur valley (Imphal valley) has been considered as the best place for ethnic community either big or small, particularly those who have migrated from eastern and western directions in the search for fortune and glory. Therefore, when there was a warning from the NSCN (IM) to the Nagas settled at the valley to shift to Nagaland with the assured of providing enough land for resettlement, no one took that decree or warning seriously and thus remained in the valley.

It is true that in the ancient time, there were no definite diplomatic or clearly settle political relations among the clans in the valley who came to be known as Meeteis and tribes mostly residing in the hills. The relationship was basically over the ages developed through tradition of paying tribute (*Loipot* in local term) to the king. To put this theory in perspective, in the valley, kings belonging to different clans were struggling once for power and expansion of their territory. In the course of the struggle, the throne of Kangla (the seat ancient power in the valley) was successively held by many kings from different clans such as Khaba-Nganba, Khuman, Angom, Luwang and others. The rule that “might is power”, which was once rampant in many corners of the globe in the pre-modern era, was prevalent in Manipur too. There were historical evidences of the stronger ruler with his brute might controlled over the weaker ones. In the process some of the weaker groups unable to raise its head again remained assimilated to the stronger group subsequently became natural part of the same group. Along with this traces of dominance there were strong homogenization process undergoing in the valley. Through such activities the seven clans were united under the Ningthoucha clan (latter it is called Meetei) who was the most powerful ones and could flex its muscles over others clan kings. Ningthoucha has been credited for successfully canvassing the unification of

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different clans and bringing them into single clan ‘Meetei’. Such ethnic homogenization was carried out through i) War and ii) Matrimonial alliance. Pakhangba’s struggle for the throne of Kangla against Colonizer Poireiton, Meetei-Angom fight, Iwanthaba’s conflict with Khuman, and then fight with Moirang were the examples that highlighted the ‘temperament of relation’. In the process all other clans were absorbed into the Meetei principality.17

The Ningthouja clan had a very remarkable role in the unification of the Meetei Principalities. It could not only successfully integrate, or in other words took possession of, other Meetei clans either by force or through invasion or by signing a contract, it also undertook various activities to exert its domination over the communities in the hills. Cheitharol kumbaba records the history of the successful invasion projects of the Ningthoujas. The followings are extracts from the Cheitharol Kumbaba about some of the important communities of the hill that were occupied or controlled by the Ningthoujas:


The list can be translated as follows:

Conquer of the Mao (p.390), Conquer of the Lushai (p.395), Saving of the Khongjai/Kabui by the Meeteis (p.398), Naga tribute to king (p.418)
Overpower Southern hills (p.419), Conquer of the Monju (p.449), Arrest of the Chasad king (p.446), Conquer of the Loushrao (p.480), Conquer of the Chigchag (p.11), Control of the Tagkhul (p.17), Victory over Maring(p.15), Arrest Tangkhul (p.19), Victory over Chiru Anal (p.26), Victory over Kabui (p.28), Victory over Moyon (p.29), Arrest of the Maram King (p.30), Conquer of the Monsang (p.31), Victory Over the Purum (p.36), Conquer of the Khongjai (107), Destroy of the Chothe (p.117), Tribute of the Chapungna (p.165), lay down of Samjok King(p.117), Conquer of the Thonlong tribe (p.227), Conquer of the Khagi Tribe (p.224), Conquer of the Khogchai Village (p.230), Conquer of the Khoubum (p.232), Conquer of Mao-Maram of South (p.233), Arrest of the Sakok King (p240), Victory Over the Kohima (Thibomei) (p.243), Conquer of the Shopkao Tribe (p.281), Conquer of the Tarao (p.282), Conquer of the Maram Village (p.18, 285), Victory Over the Lushai Mizo(p.319), Conquer of the Akam Tribe (p.332), Conquer of Khugag (p.349), Conquer of the Mao(p.354), 38. Lushai takhaiba p. 376:

There are many other sources where traces for such dominant and dominated relationships between the valley and hill dwellers are highlighted. Puyas like Ningthourol Lampupa and Kangleilol etc. are examples in hand. Even the genealogies of Clans clearly underlined it. McCulloch, the famous British anthropologist once suggested that there is a close social and cultural relationship between the Meetei clans or tribes who settled at the valley and the adjacent hill tribes. For instance, the Tangkhul had a relationship with the Angoms and Khaba Nganbas, the Khumans were associated with Marings and Anals, Luwang were linked to the Kabuis (Rongmeis), Moirang also had similar relationship with the Kabuis and other tribes like Kom, Chiru and Koieng. These relationships had
got sometimes translated into conversion of the hill tribes into Meetei society. This was done with the assignment of *salai* (clan name of the Meeteis) and *yumnaks* (surnames) to the converted tribes who had to perform all the rituals prescribed.\textsuperscript{18} The practice is still continuing.

There were also many matrimonial alliances between the valley dwellers and the highlanders. The romantic song of *Engelei* (chingda satpi engelei chinadana Khenkhiba ho kalak-e kalak-e-de) which is sung in *Laiharaoba festival* is a symbolic massage of matrimonial alliances. The Meetei King Nathingkong married several wives mostly from the neighboring principality. The same marriage alliance was practiced even between different clan principalities in the valley. Princes of the Ningthouja clan married the princess of Shelloi Langmeis, Khuman and Moirang. This highlighted the close relationship between them not only at the social and cultural level but also at political level. This was a strong contributing factor that led the Ningthoucha’s success in its efforts towards ethnic homogenization in the valley. One of the important significance of this ethnic homogenization was that those kings who were championing the campaigns of homogenization were respected widely and accorded with semi-god status of Heroes or Gods by accepting populace, whereas, remaining tribes who were not assimilated into the Meetei fold called the kings as dictators or exploiters. In recent times, many tribal insurgent groups blamed such kings as responsible for dismembering ethnic tribes from Manipur. This led to the exploitation of smaller tribal communities particularly in the hill areas.

4.3 Evolution of the Meetei Nation and Its Consequences: Tribal Perspective

One may also inquire into the larger contributions of the tribes of Manipur in the evolution of Meetei society. Meetei nation was, in fact, built not only by the Meeteis singlehandedly but by contributions from various communities and clans in the valley as well as in the hills. As hinted earlier, during the making of the Meetei nation, some sections of the hills communities, like other clans of the valley, were also conquered (by the kings of Ningthouja Clan). These conquered hill communities were assimilated within

\textsuperscript{18}W McCullock *An Account of the Valley of Manipur*, Gyan Publication: New Delhi, 1980.
the Meetei society and become a part of the “Meetei Nation”. But many of the communities remained outside the “nation” and faced subjugation in the hands of the Meetei Kings. The Meeteis had fully established suzerainty over Manipur valley and surrounding hill regions especially the Tangkhul and Kabaw valley. However, all these occurrences are interpreted as symbols of oppression by the tribal communities of Manipur, and thus, propagated politically the idea that Meetei had tortured the tribes (the Kuki and the Naga) in ancient time. It is in contrast to what the historians of Manipur claimed that these campaigns are for united Manipur and part of the Nation-building efforts (unification into one community) under Meetei Kings.

One can also throw a line of argument that why such a dominant and powerful Meetei society could not bring all the smaller tribal communities successfully into its fold and make them a part of the so called “nation”. It is suggested that such unification campaign was failed because of the external forces that interfered in the canvass of ethnic unification. It is agree that all the hill people would have been brought within the Meetei social fold, if the external force (like Hindu religion) didn’t saw its seed in the valley of Manipur. Manipur became a Hindu State after the completion of the unification campaign in the valley but before expanding up to the hills. Once became a Hindu state, the Kings was not permitted to launch the campaign in the surrounding hill areas by the religious heads of the Hindu religion. There had been strong resistance from the Hinduism which became strong social and political force in the state around the first quarter of the 17th century. The leaders wanted to keep the hill people as “untouchables” or something like lower caste communities in terms of the Hindu caste system. On the other hand, the hill people of Manipur could not follow the ‘principles of Hindu Vaisnavism’. Therefore, more often than not, they went against the decrees of the king. Coupled with the Hindu leaders’ desire for developing some groups as lower caste communities their challenge of the King’s decree made them “untouchables”. There are many accounts that substantiate the arguments on the plan of these Hindu leaders. Some

21 The caste system of Hindu religion involves practice of untouchable, pure and impure and many restrictions on the food habits etc.
of the tribes like Tangkhul came to the king and requested to be upgraded into the Hindu society.\textsuperscript{22} But king did not accept the request on the basis of violation of Hindu religious principles. Such accounts are being politically exploited by ethnic army of hill communities as a part of their larger gameplan to express their angst against the so called domination by the Meeteis in recent years.

The reactions against the new religion were put forth not only by the communities in the hills but by many sections of the valley population. A good number of Meeteis reacted to such move (of making Hinduism as state religion) by refusing to pay tax and even revolted by claiming that this was against the duty of the king to uphold and sustain the indigenous religion.\textsuperscript{23} Some of the clans and individuals in the valley who did not support and recognized the new religion were branded as “\textit{loi}” and “\textit{Yaithibi}” which are equal to the untouchables in the Hindu caste tradition. They are now mostly settled in Sekmai, Pheiyeng, Andro, Kakching, Kotha, Khurkhul, Tairen pokpi, and Leimram areas of Manipur. Though part of the Meetei community, the people in these areas are now granted constitutional status of schedule caste under the Constitution of India in 1956.\textsuperscript{24}

Even “\textit{Loiyumba shinyen}”, the written law to govern the people of Manipur said nothing about the governance of the people in the hills. This is the first written constitution made on the basis of moral codes and conventions practice during various reigns. The form of government laid down in the constitution was absolutely Monarchy, based on theocracy. Whatever the king’s order was to be followed by his subjects and that was the law of the state. The text was further expanded by later kings vis-a-vis Kiyamba (1469-1508), Khagemba (1597-1652), Garibniwaj (1709-1748), Bhaigachandra (1763-1797), Chourajit (1803-1813).\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22} Interview with Prof. Ragumani, Assam University Silchar (Silchar, 10th June 2011)
\textsuperscript{23} Kuki revolt and Jadonang movement are the revolt for survival the indigenous religion. Such is found in valley too. \textit{Sekmai war} is one of the classic examples (interview with Kh Rakhesh Singh Sekmai, 7 May 2011).
\textsuperscript{24} The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Order Amendment Act, 1956.
In the constitution there was no adequate provision relating to the tribal welfare. The demarcation of ‘Panna’\textsuperscript{26} was clearly limited covering only areas in the valley, and it did not cover the Hills areas at all. Distribution of duties to the people, according to the constitution, was restricted only to the surnames living in the valley area.

4.4 Lack of Development: A Factor of Hills and Valley Divide

Evolution of a tribal society into nation state passed through three stages, viz. tribal polity, chieftainry and the state.\textsuperscript{27} The Meetei society also passed through these stages of social evolution. Since the reign of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba (33-154), Meetei society had been struggling to be free from the bonding of tribal characters. In the process, a number of development projects had been successfully completed by different kings who were known for their skills and enthusiasms in specific areas such as medicinal plants (the five wives of king Poireiton were famous for their lofty expertise in this field), in political arena, Pakhangba had his own name in the history as the founder of Meetei Dynasty, Khuyoitompok (154-264) for his contribution towards the development of technology, Taothingmang (264-364) the dredger, Naophangba (428-518) as a religious preceptor, Naethingkhong (663-763) for his expansionist expeditions, and Loiyumba (1074-1122) as the great law giver.\textsuperscript{28} And then the period from 1508 A.D to 1709 A.D in the history of Manipur is a very important period. Kings during this period engaged themselves in development works in almost all fields- political, economy, social and religious. During this year (1508 to 1709), there were regained eleven kings namely: Koiremba (1508-1509), Lam kyamba (1512-1523), Nong-in-Phaba (1523-1524) Kabomba (1524-1562), Tangjamba (1523-1524), Chalamba (1545-1562), Mungyamba

\textsuperscript{26} There are four Panna (territorial classification) - Laipham Pana, Khabam Pana, Naharup Pana and Ahalup Pana. See Kh Chandrasekhar Singh, “Loiyumba Shinyen (The 12\textsuperscript{th} Century Constitution)”, in N Sanajaoba (eds.) \textit{Manipur Past and Present}, Vol. 1, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 1988 and N Sanajaoba, \textit{Manipur Treaties and Documents (1110-1971)} Vol.1, Mittal Publication: New Delhi, 1993, pp. 302-303.


(1562-1597), Khagemba (1597-1652) Khunjaoba (1652-1666), Paikhomba (1666-1698) and Charairongba (1698-1709). 29

There were many other efforts not only to expand the territory but also to make progress in all aspects of the society. During the reign of King Kabomba (1524-1542), Tripuris (people of Tripura) were defeated and to commemorate it a canal named Takhalkhong was dug the remnant of which is still located within the Imphal Municipal area. It was during his time that the old Cachar road i.e. road to Assam was constructed. He also conquered Kabow valley and other kingdoms of present Myanmar (Burma). Another king next to Kabomba, who want to do something for the welfare of the people, was king Chalamba (1545-1562). During his reign a canal named Lishangkghong was dug in 1551 and the remnants of which are still seen in the southern side of Imphal. He also constructed a modern village called Nongmeibung on 1551, now the village is in Imphal East. Then, a series of brave and illustrious kings came after him – Mungyamba (1562-1597), Khagemba (1597-1652), Khunjaoba (1652-1666), Paikhomba (1666-1697) and Charairongba (1697-1709) were all remembered as great kings of Manipur. There were peace, stability and the kingdom was prosperous during their reigns. 30 However, the same was not witnessed amongst the tribal populace in the hill areas even the Meetei kings activity towards the hill areas were just a part of integrating them into Meetei social system which was resisted by the people in the hills.

Such efforts of the kings in the valley certainly boost up the condition of people not only in the field of politics but also socially and economically. This subsequently helped in enlarging the divide between the Hill and the Valley. On the one hand the Meeteis had developed into a Nation-State, with suitable political and social institutions. On the other hand, the communities in the hilly regions remained not more than tribe (see Chapter 1 p. 2). So the hill people were organized not more than as Village administrative units.

29 Rajendra Moirangthem, Studies in the History of Manipur (1508-1709), Moirangthem Ongbi Ibecha: Imphal, 2000, p.11.
30 Ibid
4.5 Impact of Outsider Connect

The successive foreign invasions from Shan, Burmese, Tripuri, Ahom and the English each left permanent marks on the civilization of the people. Even more was the arrival of the Hinduism in the valley. All these contributed in the evolution of the present Meetei polity and the society. TC Hudson suggests that the valley people have passed finally away from the stage of relatively primitive culture to the comparative civilization but their ultimate homogeneity with Naga and Kuki of the hill is undoubted.31

Expeditions by the kings of Manipur anywhere gave opportunity to achieve certain amount of knowledge and scientific temperament. Capturing War captive particularly Muslims had tremendously changed the system of agriculture production. The war captives, who were considered semi-slaves, were used as laborers and assigned to various works – agriculture, household item manufacture etc. the benefits of such experiences of the outside contact hardly reached to the tribal people. This made the gap in the development between the two (hills and valley) in widened.

4.6 Religion as Cause of Ethnic Conflict

Another perspective to the genesis of ethnic conflict in the state of Manipur is that ethnic conflict especially between the highlanders and the plane dwellers is largely a product of the adoption of different religious faiths. Before the arrival of new religions (Hinduism and Christianity) in Manipur, people in the valley as well as in the hills had followed their traditional faiths. After these new religions disembarked in the kingdom, not only the traditional faiths had been sidelined but also suddenly animosity between various groups started. In the valley Hinduism had been declared as state religion and therefore the religion had been imposed upon the people without their consent. During the reign of various kings, the practice of pollution, purification and chandan marking on the forehead even tax on Chandan sale which was imposed on the people at large particularly aimed at the Hindu population of the state. For instance, the merciless Brahma Sabha

declared 38 persons who professed Meetei religion to be polluted, under Memo No. 61/Brahma Sabah on 31.10.1947.\(^{32}\)

As said in the previous chapter, though, such initiatives was objected by people at large, they could not withstand the decrees of the Kings. However, the kingdom witnessed frequent revolts from the supporters of the traditional religion. This sawed the seed of conflict between the believers of traditional religion and new imposed religion. There were even the cases where the king and his associates imposed illegitimate taxes on the basis of religion. For instance, during the First World War, and also during the Second World War, the British requested the king of Manipur for helps towards the preparation for the war. The king of Manipur accepted the request and become part of British alliance. The king offered promises of financial and men power supports as well. Since the king of Manipur hardly had financial sources enough for any substantial donation, he and his advisor (Atombabu Sharma) initiated many kinds of taxes to be collected on the basis of religion. This was done specially as part of donation campaign for the war. Therefore, many people who are unable to pay taxes became untouchables and low caste.

The religious history of the people in the hills was almost the same. Before colonial influence and the entrance of Christianity, tribal communities of Manipur also had unique religion that had been followed since time immemorial. Even, during colonial period, Rani Gangdinglu launched ‘PuPou Chapriak’ for Kabui tribe in the western side of Manipur particularly in Tamenglong district which come to be known as ‘Tingkao Raguang Chapriak (TRC)’. Now the religion is being practiced mainly in Imphal Valley by the Kabui tribe. The old Kuki tribes of Manipur had a religion similar to that of the Meeteis. In the northeastern side of Manipur Mao-Maram tribes had followed a unique traditional religion. Kuki Chin Mizo groups have a religion based on animistic before intervention by Christianity.\(^{33}\) Now, most of these groups accepted Christianity.


After Meetei adopted Hinduism, the tribes of Manipur started accepting Christianity around the last decade of 19th and beginning of 20th century. A brief history of the arrival of these two religions will help us in understanding the religious dynamics of conflict in the state.

4.6.1 Beginning of Hindu Religion: As Catalyst of Division between Hills and Valley

Till 1709 A.D Manipur remained as a flower untouched by the sophistry of Hinduism. The first Meetei king who converted into Vaishnavism was king Charairongba (1698-1709). Though a staunch Vaisnavite in heart he could not totally break himself from the traditional Meetei religious and social norms. He was baptized in Vaishnavism by one Rai Vanamali in 1704 on Wednesday, the 5th of Sajibu (April). The king did not compel his people to initiate into vaisnavism. The people remained firm in their traditional belief system. The Brahmins coming to Northeast India were mostly political asylum seekers. The prosecution of the Hindus by Emperors Aurangzeb pushed the migration of the Brahmins to this region.

After the sudden dead of Charairongba (after reining for a short period of 11 years), his son Pamheiba (Garibniwaz) ascended the throne of Manipur in August, 1709. During Pamheiba’s rule, “the new preceptor appears to be Shanta Das Mahanta Beiragi from Nara Singh Tilla of Sylhet in Bangal (now in Bangladesh)” came to Manipur. Garibniwaz was sympathetic towards Shanta Das and accepted (supported as well) the spread the Vaishnavism. As a consequence, he declared Vaisnavism as a state religion. For the promotion of the Vaishnavism, the king projected Meetei society into Hindu society.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the king and his guru Shanta Das propagation of Hinduism did not reach the hill areas of Manipur. The religious campaigned was confined only within the valley. The people who were baptized Hinduism or Vaishnavism came to be known as Manipuri. The hills brethren and lois communities were not considered as Manipuris. By doing so, the geographical area of Manipur was minimized to the central

34 A.B Sharma, Pakhangba, Imphal, p. 166. The first Meitei who converts Vaishnavism was Haobam Shelungba and his wife. Haobam Shelungba was a noble in the court of King Charairongba.
valley only and remaining Hill areas seemed to be out of Manipur. Thus, sawed the seed of animosity between the highlander and valley people and even lacked of loyalty to the king. Prof. Lal Dena claims that it (acceptance of Hinduism) is first and foremost responsible of the ethnic conflict in present day Manipur.

There were many objections to the initiatives taken up by the King and Shanta Das. But the king’s order was final and revocable that ‘anybody who violates the rule and regulation declared by king must be punishable and reputed to outcaste’. There were many persons who were pushed to the countryside by the decree of the king’s court. Ipu Lourembam Khongnangthaba and his team, who were fighting for the preservation of the traditional religious practices, were overcome and finally voted out of the Court. His team, known as Maichou Taret (seven scholars), objected strongly to the decision to adopt the new religion. They never show any aggressive by revolt or complain under the ‘Pacha Loishang’.36 They left their homes forever and hid somewhere that no one knows about those leaders’ whereabouts (loss and dead or alive). After that anybody who tried to object the King’s order became outcaste and thus settled at far-foothills or deep corners of the hills. These people become living testimonies to the traditional belief system as they still continue to preserve and practice it.

By the advice of Santa Das, the king turned out to be a Ramanandi fanatic. He even went to the extent of destructing religious places, temples and the statues of traditional Gods and Goddesses including a number of mostly devoted Umang-lai (Village, Clan and lineage presiding deities) and other important deities like Lainingthou, Panthoibi, Sanamahi, Nongsaba and Soraren etc. These deeply devoted deities were replaced by aligned Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Many new traditions and customs were imposed upon the people. For example, some religious mark which is known as chandan was compulsory for the people to apply on their forehead after bath. Anybody who didn’t follow this was treated as outcaste and untouchable. Sanskrit was the only recognized language on the observation of rites and rituals of religion and culture. Brahmins become

36 The Pacha Loishang (Women Court) is one of the oldest institutions in Manipur. Under this court, 12 mother as jury trial all cases relating to women. They also gave judgment over the king if (king) he breaches the social norms. The juries were led by the queen of Manipur. This institution was abolished by British after conquered the state in 1891.
the only authority of any religious function and thus, the way paved for their domination over the traditional priest Maiba and Maibi (Amaiba and Amaibi).

The atrocities and contempt for the local religion continues for a long time. It went to the extent that the king and his mentors tried to chuck out the cherished history of the people by disposing of all its records. There was infamous episode of burning down the Puya (the history and sacred books) which in the history of Manipur known as *Puya Meithaba*. “The Guru (Shanta Das) burnt all the religious books of the Meetei to destroy the Meetei religion. Then he said that just like the burning of the books, the Meitei had to cremate the body.”37 It is learnt that cremation was started practicing in Manipur as an imitation of this Puya Meithaba. On 1725, Pheirel, 20th Sunday, the tombs of the former kings, queens, princes and princess were open and dug out skeletons of dead bodies and cremated again. The ashes were dispersed in the Chindwin River of Burma.38 People of Manipur were very discontented for losing the history, custom, culture and any field of science. It is commonly agreed that if there was not such incident of burning of Puya then limitations of the sources of history of people faced by the generations would not have occurred.

As a part of whole process of Hinduization, for the first time, Hindu Caste system was brought in and applied to the social system of Manipur. Before that Manipur did not have any trace of caste system. Even today, some scholar comments that caste system in its original form is not practiced in Manipur. All the Meeteis including the king were recognized as Kshetriya making the entire Meeteis a single caste. The Brahmins formed a separate caste above the Meetei social hierarchy. The non-Hindus in the valley, Hill tribes and Shan Buddhists were excluded from the Meetei social fold. They were categorized into the untouchable groups or low castes.

In ancient time, instead of caste system, there was class system in Manipur. The early Meetei population may be broadly classified into three categories: the nobles, the

37 A. B Sharma, *Pakhangba*, Imphal, p. 4-5.
commoners and the slave. Nobility was not hereditary for all sections of the population and one could become a noble if one received recognition and favor of the king. The slaves, on the other hand, did not comprise as separate community or group. They were mainly discharging their duties for royal family members and nobles. People from both Meetei and tribal communities were working as slaves. Slavery in Manipur was different from that of other parts of the world. They lived in the same house of their master, ate with them and worked together like member of the family. In the valley, there were a number of people from tribal villages who were working for the royal family as military personnel and semi slave.

After adopting Hindu religion, the salai/clan system was replaced by Hindu Gotra system. According to Sanamahi Laikan, Shanta Das introduced Gotra system to replace the seven salais or clans of the Meeteis. All these seven salai or clans were identified as single Meetei. Tribal and Lois communities of Manipur remained differently out of seven clans as outcaste. Gotra system was not imposed on them. Still they follow their own system. The original Salais of the Meeteis replacing by Gotra are as given below:

Table 3: Salais of Meetei Replacing by Gotra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salai</th>
<th>Gotra</th>
<th>Colour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ningthouja (the king’s dynasty)</td>
<td>Shandilya</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Angom</td>
<td>Gautam</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Chenglei(Sarang leishangthem)</td>
<td>Vashishtha</td>
<td>Grey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Luwang</td>
<td>Kashyap</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Khuman</td>
<td>Madhugalya</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Moirang</td>
<td>Aitereya</td>
<td>Redish-yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Khaba-Nganba</td>
<td>Bhardhwaja</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gangmumei Kamei

Traditional festivals of Meetei were also redesigned into Hindu festival forms. Therefore, there are still issues between the Meetei Hindu and traditional religion Sanamahi followers (revivalist movement).

4.6.2 Sanskritization: Bewilder in Tribal Mind

When the Hindu caste system applied in Manipur, the tribes became low caste, outcaste and even treated as un-touchable groups. They were not allowed inter into Hindu family without baptized and bathing. Such system consequently led to widen the gap between the hill people and the plains people. It finally became a factor of conflict between the two. As this process of sanskritization progresses even the terms used by them for each other became very sensitive. For instance, the word “Hao” has been used by the plain dwellers to identify the people in the hills. Before the caste system was brought by the Hindus, this was taken as a brotherly name called with love and affection. This term had been used by the Meetei in their God and Goddess names. For instance, one of the names of mother of Pakhangba, the first king of Manipur was ‘Inung Haobachanu’; the name of wife of King Taothingmang is Haonukhu; the name of queen of King Kainou Irengba is Haoreima Tamheiba and Haoreima Pidongnu. There is also Meetei female deity call Haoreima Sambubi which is also known as Nongthang Leima. There are numbers of sageis (surname) called Haobam, Haodeijam, Haobijam, Haorongbam, Haoobibam and Haorokcham and so on. Thus, it concludes that the term is not a derogatory term. But in the post hinduisation period it became quite a malicious term used to offend the hill people.

The inter-caste marriage practiced since Pakhangba’s period was restricted during Pamheiba (1666-1697) period. Due to Hindu religious orthodoxy or the king’s order, the marriage of a Shan family with Lairikyengbam family had been stopped. (Later the Shan family exile to Sugnu in 1725). In the same year, king or (king’s court) declared the rule of matching of Bride and Bridegroom e.g. Napet (Barber) could marry with Dawan. A man was exiled for offering his wife to his Brahmin Guru.41

In the Pre Hindu period the plain and hills had similar food habit. After Hindu religion was adopted, inter-community dinning between the hills and plains people was not allowed. It was because meat eating and rearing of pig and keeping of poultry was forbidden amongst the Meeteis. Thus, after the Hinduism was adopted people stopped

41 Ibid, p. 258.
sharing food. Drink was totally prohibited in the Hindu Meetei society. Meat eating is the factor referred frequently to conflict amongst the various communities students in hostels.

4.6.3 Symbol of Cow Slaughter

In the main land India, where one of the factors of Hindu and Muslim conflict is the issue of cow slaughter. The same case prevailed in Manipur between the Meetei Hindu and hills tribes. Before the adoption of Hinduism, the Meetei together with their tribal fellows practice hunting as game and also to protect domestic animals. They eat the wild animal killed in the hunting together with ceremonies. To kill animals and eat have now become social taboos after the adoption of Hinduism. The cows have been given the status similar to Gods. If anybody killed cow, he then will get sin from God or King. This has become a part of the psyche of all the Meeteis, thus, distanced from the cow slaughter. It was opposite to the beliefs of tribal society therefore kept pursuing such activities. Meeteis hated those killers of cows and pigs or any animals on the religion issue.

It is “liberation” of (Moksha) life of Meetei if cow is reared as according Hindu philosophy. The family who have number of cows were considered rich family and of higher caste. Cow rearing is done for two purposes e.g. agricultural activities and milk. However, piggery is not allowed due to its useless in agricultural activities and it cannot provide milk either. Tribals are keener to piggery for meat. So between the Meeteis and the tribals there emerged cultural gap concerning animals slaughter and rearing. Later on, Meetei treated the tribal as savage people.

4.9.4 Christian Missionary: A Spiritual Struggle

The working of Christianity had further widened cultural distance between the hills people and plain people and even among the hills people itself in Manipur. The missionary working was based on the ethnic groups, language and direction of the state instead of united identity of tribes.42 As we know from historians’ suggestion that, a country is conquered gradually, first by the Merchants, then the Missionaries, before it is completely surrendered to the Imperialists. But in Manipur, it is the imperialists who

spread their wings of domination before the Missionaries had started their religious adventure. In such circumstances, the Missionary had an advantage in compared to other countries in setting up Christianity in Manipur. However, the king of Manipur did not allow Christian institutions in the valley. By that time, as I explained earlier, the Meetei society was already dominated by Hinduism. In 15th century, Hinduism had spread its dominance over the Meetei society, and in the 17th century, Hinduism had organized the society corresponding to its religious rituals and the occupations related to it. Therefore, the new religion was an odd and it creates, in the minds of the people in the valley, a way to hell. However the Missionary got suggestion from the imperialist to set up religious institutions in the Hills instead of the Valley of Manipur.43 Besides, backward and adopted animism, totemism and fetishism the tribes of the hills of Manipur welcomed the new message of Christ and along with that the modern education system provided by the Missionary.

The first missionary to reach Manipur after the Anglo-Manipuri war (1891) was led by William Pettigrew as Baptist, and stayed at Chingmeirong, Imphal. They baptized Meeteis ahead of the other tribes. Then, the missionary was criticized by the valley people and in reaction to the activities of the Missionaries some Meitei fanatic Hindu expelled the first Manipuri Baptist Angom Porom Singh of the Phayeng village from the Meetei society. The missionaries, however, never stopped their religious adventure. For instance, Rev William Pettigrew, the pioneer of Missionary in Manipur, learned languages like Meeteilon (Manipuri language) and Tangkhul language for convincing the people of Manipur. Porom Singh too at later period took a leading role in the Missionary’s campaign at Ukhrul. Later, they set up many churches in different parts of North Eastern Manipur. Rev William Pettigrew and his colleague’s adventure in the Northeastern part of Manipur brought only a narrow integrity, unity and nationalism antagonistic to south western Manipur.

43 Ibid, p83.
44 He was born on 5th January 1869 at Edinburg, Scotland. By denomination he was a member of the Church of England for India initiated on 16th December, 1890 under the sponsorship of the Arthington Aborigines Mission Society. Latter he applied for the membership to the American Baptist Missionary Union in Assam.
The entire Manipur hills continued to be the exclusive mission field of the American Baptist Mission. However, the south western Manipur hills had so far not been touched by any white man. Watkins R. Roberts (a member of Welsh Baptist Mission Society) based at Aizwal, Mizo hills come to Senvewn, the biggest Hmar village of the Tipaimukh, in Churchanpur District. His journey was responded to the invitation of the village chief, his former student, Kamkholun. Even his student offered his land for the mission station, than Watkin R. Robert’s mission soon spread and made the work popular.

William Pettigrew was very unhappy with the massage of Watkins R. Robert’s activities in the south west Manipur. A little competition between the Welsh Missionaries and the American Baptist Missionaries started. Though, they met for dissolving the misunderstanding, sympathetic of the missionary’s activities and also agreed to respect and no objection to each other at the Khasi hills on December 1910, William Pettigrew was not satisfied. Pettigrew wrote a letter to Welsh Missionaries on 28 October 1911 that they regarded themselves as in possession of Manipur as a whole and also explained that by the order of political agent of Manipur prohibited the Watkins Roberts’ work on the ground of breaching of the principle of the comity of Protestant Mission societies working in India. In this way Roberts had no chance to live among his workers. H.J. Haggins, the president of the Manipur State Durbar, sent an order to Senvawn that all the Missionaries in the south west Manipur leave except American Baptist. But Cole, the political agent of Manipur, agreed to force upon the Thadou-Kuki pioneer Mission and American Mission because of the zeal and enthusiasm of the native workers.

Watkins R. Roberts was supported by his students particularly from the Thadou-Kuki tribes. His Mission, therefore, was so popularized within a short time because of his students and native worker’s enthusiasm. He changed his Pioneer Mission into the North East India General Mission (NEIGM) in 1919 which covered North Cachar Hills, Assam, Tamu, Burma and Tripura. In personal confrontation between Watkins Roberts and H.H.

47 The principle laid down that “where one mission society already started working, other mission should not undertake any work without prior understanding between them.
Coleman, general secretary of American Council, Roberts was forced to resign and Coleman was made general superintendent of NEIGM. Then, Roberts started another new mission called Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission (IBPM). But by the order of political agent of Manipur on 22\textsuperscript{nd} November, 1930, the new mission of Roberts and his supporters called themselves Independent Church in 1930 was not allowed to operate in Manipur. 48

The followers of Roberts, Thadou-Kuki too, concentrated on the south west made conflict to American groups and their followers concentrated on North East, Naga tribes. Roberts landed on the southwest of Manipur also brought unification of language based nationalism antagonistic to Northeast Naga nationalism.49

The Christian Missionaries were not only encouraged to learn the Meetei language, but also accepted Meetei language (Manipuri language) as the medium of teaching in the Church. Though, the Kukis and the Nagas speak different languages, Meetei language was more appropriate in church services as it was the only common language between the Kukis and the Nagas. Nonetheless, the indigenous people of Manipur have own unique culture of informal education system, the Church and its simple formal education should go hand in hand was the feature of early Christianity was accepted even by the Kings felicity. The formal Church education gave justification to the society by means of scientific outlook over the animistic culture which was dominated for a long time with superstitions. That is why Christianity gained its popularity as a wild fire in tribal areas.

Among the tribes, then there emerged new elites, who gained basic education from the Missionaries. Sometimes, the educationist was encouraged by the Missionaries to engage them in clerical works of British administration. These new elites then realized the weak points of the education system (teaching learning process) in foreign language. They demanded the local language to be used in the Church education. Even, the Missionary also supported the local language to be used in the activities of academic

curriculum. Besides, they also wrote the Grammar of different dialects like Tangkhul language, Thadou-Kuki language and Manipuri language or Meeteilon for the basic course. Learning in mother tongue and written grammar in different languages for the ethnic tribes was the foundation of emerging a new nationalism and sub nationalism or center-periphery concept among the ethnic tribes. The syllabi of education, however, were very low standard compared to the European system.

4.6.5 Transformation of Tribal Society through Christianity

Christianity had a tremendous impact in the socio-cultural life of the tribes in Manipur. With the spread of Christianity, education, culture of civilization moved forward very fast. The traditional beliefs system and worshiping of unseen and unknown deities disappeared. The awareness of health and sanitation spread over the nook and corner through establishing clinic and hospitals. Youths and women were adopting the lifestyle of the west in many ways. It was visible in their clothes, food habits and socio-cultural life. They realized what happening around the world, they have already started wearing like them, eating like them, talking like them and behaving like them.\(^{50}\)

As a result of education and mixed socialization, inter caste marriage had been taking places among the different tribes. This help the family members respect to the culture of the other society or community. Now the people have considered every human being equal in all aspects of life. Through such kind of thinking, most of our people specially the young people came to know each other, learn each other and share each other. Through this interaction they exchanged their socio cultural life with one another and unite and harmony among the different tribes.\(^{51}\)

4.6.6 Impact of Early Christian Education

The cultures of head-hunting, tribal structure, war-like nature, etc. was not totally deleted by western education and remains some images of past rivalry between Kuki and Naga in present day. Education system had created a psyche conflict between the newly emerged

\(^{50}\) Valleyrose Hungyo, “Socio-Cultural Integration of the Tribals”, in Manipur University Tribal Student Union (eds.) *Tribal society of Manipur: An Overview*, MUTSU Publication: Imphal, 2007, p. 3.

\(^{51}\) Ibid.
elite who have Western democratic value and the traditional elite group. Introduction of Western Democratic education during the early colonial period was a result of the acceptance and adoption of ‘welfare’ as a responsibility of the State. It was under the influence of utilitarian philosophy of the colonial government. But it was opposite to Chiefs systems in villages even in present day Chiefs administration has been recognized instead of Panchayati raj or grass root Democracy.

The way of rational thinking, the tribal had been instrumental westernization, differentiation and group identity formation as a result of patent missionary efforts to promote education. Grouping the ethnic tribal and politicizing to the identity of ethnic groups become the source of mess and undeletable issue. However the tribal of the North-Eastern were strongly bonded by a sense of tribal identity and culture.

It is more a manifestation of modernization through the process of cultural osmosis than of evangelical zeal. The Bible translation and the lexicons have been brought out which generated a new social and political awareness in North-East today. In fact, in 1971, a controversy aroused regarding the publication of the Holy Bible in Kuki language which has serious social repercussion and disharmony in Manipur. The Thadou/Kuki-Paite conflict of 1997 is an outcome of the above publication of the Holy Bible. Moreover, in earlier day, for administrative opportunity the British polarized the ethnic group by notifying as, “Any Naga group, any Lushai group and any Kuki group” in their Official Gazette.

Yet many tribal societies are searching for ancestry roots in entire North-East India. It is evidenced by return to Kok-Borok in Tripura, the Sang-Khasi movement in Meghalaya and Zeliangrong movement for Zeliangrong tribes. In Manipur too, Sanamahi among the Meeties, discovery of the Kabui religion among Zeliaongrong tribes etc. are creating on the basis of language spawn mistrust, distance each other latter porn verities of conflicts.

52 B G Verghese, India’s Northeast Resurgence: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development, Komkark Publisher: New Delhi, 1996.
4.7 Administration of State during the British Period

With the development of the Hindu religion, the prince of Manipur formed groups to claim the throne of the Kangla (the post of King). The prince of king Pamheiba grouped into two; one lead by Shyam Shai, son of his first wife and another lead by Ajit shah, son of king’s second wife. The king, however, favored the second wife’s son (Ajit shah), by passing the legitimate claim of first wife’s son for the post of King.54 For the settlement of dispute among the prince, Burmese king was interested to be arbitrator. On the way of returned from Burma, the king and first son were killed by second son’s group. So on during the unstable situation, Burma attacked Manipur as revenge for the past torture and sly manner of the Manipur king. Most of the prince of Manipur fled away to different part of India mostly in Cachar, Syhlet, and Dhaka and different part of India. Though, some princes were engaged in war against Burma, the dispute among the princes was not settled. After the death of Barat Shah, who revolted against Ajit Shah because of his (Ajit) involvement in the murder of his father and brother, the throne was offered to Gour Shah, the eldest son of Sham Shah. Unfortunately, Gour Shah’s leg was broken on his way back from the war against the Burma. Finally the throne was again offered to Bhaigachandra, the younger brother of Gour Shah.55

During Bhaigachandra period, former king, Ajit Shah had been residing at Cachar. It was impossible for him to return to Manipur to get back the throne because of lack of supporters. He, therefore, sought help from the British. Raja of Tripura was the messenger who arranged for negotiation on behalf of the Manipur prince at Calcutta. King Bhaigachandra came to know Ajit’s plan and thus he immediately sent his Vakil, Haridas Gossain to Harry Verelst, the chief of Chittagong Factory. On Gossain’s assurance the East India Company recognized King Bhaigachandra and promised to help him against Burma. For this fulfillment, an agreement was signed for the first time between the British and Manipur known as Anglo-Manipuri Treaty, 1762. This was the first time Manipur entered into formal relationship with international power by signing a treaty on 14 September 1762. The treaty was signed by Haridas Gossain on behalf of

55 Ibid.
Baighachandra (Jai Singh), raja of Manipur and Harry Verelset, Chief of Chittagong Factory, on behalf of the East India Company.\footnote{Ibid.}

`Internal dispute and factional conflicts among the princess of Manipur had not been ceased after reign of king Bhaigachandra. King Marjit owed his elevation on the throne to the support of large number of Burmese army. But he was like a puppet of Burmese king. He thought to be independent ruler over his country without external interferences. He rejected the summoned to pay homage to the new king of Burmese Baghi-daw. Then, Burmese court, decided to dispatch their army to Manipur because of guilty of Marjit’s failure to appear.\footnote{A C Banerjee, \textit{The Eastern Frontier of British India}, A. Mukherjee & Bros: Calcutta, 1934.} Marjit had to run away from the Burmese attack and took asylum at Cachar or Cachari Kingdom.

The Burmese expansion of territories was directly threatened to British India. British also aware the Burmese aim to conquer whole Assam. Hence, British totally changed their policy of non-interference in the ‘Northeast Frontier’ and arranged to be ‘Buffer state’ as protection shield from Burmese interference. Besides, another threat had come from the Europe. The Anglo-French (1756-1763), seven year war was just ended.\footnote{French was loss to the English in the Anglo-French war. However, France was waiting for another war over English at any place either in Europe or colonized country like Asia, Africa or Latin America.} Meanwhile French landed on Shan country, neighboring of Manipur, was also susceptible to British India. British, therefore, had been looking that which princes of the Northeast Frontier would be made alliance and strengthen friendship as a preventive measure from the foreign aggression, especially from Burma.

On the other side, prince Chourajit, Marjit and Gambhir, who had fled, were having discussion in Cachar about how to get aids from the British and freedom of Manipur from Burmese rule be achieved. In 1823 British warmly opened the way of communication with Prince Gumbhir Singh and accepted the prince’s approach for help (arm and manpower) by David Scott, agent of Governor General of India. They resumed Gambhir Singh, the youngest of the three as a bold and aspiring soldier and rightly contended that the course of events might render him a useful ally in Manipur. At the
time, Gambhir Singh had only 500 soldiers which increased up to 2000 in 1825 by the help of British Government. The alliance force (Manipur army and British army) was placed under the command of Captain Grant. It was named as ‘Manipur Levy’ and the necessities like arms, ammunition and even financial expenditure (remuneration and pay) was supplied by British Government.\textsuperscript{59}

On 19 January 1826, the combined forces assaulted the Burmese stations. Though they made spirited sortie to check the mounting attacks of Manipur soldiers at the beginning, they could not faced the power any longer. On 22 January, Manipur completely evacuated the stock of Burmese Army. Even the alliance force marched up to the Ningthi River and occupied the Kabow valley too. So on, the liberation of Manipur from the Burma was accomplished by Gambhir Singh with the help of his young brother Nara Singh and British forces. On 24 February 1826, \textit{The Treaty of Yandabu} concluded between the British and Burma and according to article 2 of the treaty by both parties recognized Gambhir Singh as the independent ruler of Manipur.\textsuperscript{60} This treaty later brought peace and friendship to the Northeast frontier of British India.

King Gambhir Singh with the help of Nara Singh reconstructed the devastated Manipur in general and her political capital at Langthabal, south of Imphal, in particular. But Manipur was incompetent to defend herself from the Burmese empire because of lack in arms and manpower. On this matter Lord William Bantinck suggested that the British troop need to place at Imphal. According to him, “we can hardly doubt that the feeling of security to the inhabitants of Manipur generally would be greatly increased by the permanent residence of (British officials) amongst them of such a body”. Besides, there was a situation of frequent revolts of tribals in the Northeast Frontier, British therefore, pledged for further relation with Manipur. Thus, they signed two treaties with King of Manipur in 1833 and 1834. The treaty of 1835 made free trade between Manipur and Cachar and repaired the road passing through Khoupum Valley. The king was under

\textsuperscript{60} Treaty of Yandaboo, February 24, 1826.
obligation to furnish a quota of Naga assist the construction of the road. The king of Manipur also agreed to help British when war occurred against the Burma.\(^{61}\)

### 4.7.1 Seeding of British Administration

The year 1835 was the most remarkable political development in the history of Anglo-Manipur relation. In the year British opened the office of political agent. However, the power and function of political agent of British or ambassador was under the wishes of Maharaja of Manipur. The office was quite necessary for communication which maintained a clear friendship between the Manipur and British.\(^{62}\) But in latter stages, the office became political center and source of power because of disunity and internecine quarrel amongst the prince of Manipur. So British had opportunity to interfere with domestic administration of the state directly or indirectly.

After the death of King Sir Chandrakriti Singh, Knight Commander Service of India awarded,\(^{63}\) his eldest son Surchandra Singh ascended the throne of Manipur in 1886. Then, a political turmoil emerged again because of the prince struggled for throne. There were two groups; one led by Surchandra and another led by Tikendrajit Singh. The group led by Tikendrajit succeeded over King Surchandra and thus, Kullachandra elder brother of Tikendrajit was declared king and Tikendrajit himself became Jubraj. British had an opportunity to interfere in the administration of state because of Surchandra’s complained for justice to the British Government at Calcutta and he asked for removing Tikendrajit. Consequently, British demanded to king Kullachandra that Tikendrajit would be exiled out of country. This was not accepted by the King. British’s secrete arrangement to arrest Tikendrajit was not succeeded. In an attempt to arrest Tikendrajit, British shoot openly at the Royal place where Ras-Lila was playing and thus many people died and many were wounded.

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61 Agreement Between Rajah Gumbheer Singh and Commissioner F.J. Grant, 1835.
63 Knight Commander Service of India (KCSI) is a title awarded to those who have served extra-ordinarily for British emperor.
After cease fire, Durbar was held for a compromise on the issue. People gathered outside the Durbar hall most of them were relatives of deaths or injured persons in the firing of the place. This crowd suddenly killed five British officers including political Agent. When the massage of British officers’ murder reached at Calcutta, British government ordered to invade Manipur.

Manipur was not prepared for a big war against the British, but she had to fight the war against the British Imperialist. Manipur faced invasion from three directions viz. Kohima Column, Silchar Column and Tamu Column. The last battle of Anglo-Manipur war known as Battle of Khongjom, was on 25 April, 1891 in Tamu Column where Manipur lost to British.

4.7.2 Beginning of British Administration

The colonial administration system started with the occupation of Manipur by British in 1891 and continued up to 1947. British occupation of Manipur marked the end of the old era and the beginning of new one. From 1981 onwards Manipur entered into a new period of her history. It started the era of British domination. Everything needed to be done under the British guidance and the political agent and Superintendent of the state became the real head of administration. In fact until administrative power was transferred to the Raja and his Durbar in 1907, Manipur was under the direct superintendence of the British officers. Thus the period from 1891-1907 was generally termed as period of British because all the business of the state was managed by the British government. This was the first phase of British rule.

The whole administration during the first phase of British was totally disorganized. The land revenue system was under confusion, the problem of coinage also added to these difficulties. As a consequence the administration was dislocated, lawlessness and murder were rampant and this was followed by war which had to be put to an end and for this purpose a system of police was necessarily to set up. The period of British supervision covers a period of sixteen years. They took up many steps for administrative problems which helped in making more and more trouble in the future politics of Manipur.
4.7.3 Inflicting Divide and Rule Policy

Moreover, during the disorganized administration of the British the ethnic relation particularly Kuki and Naga was in worse. Even before British landed, the Kukis and his kindred groups targeted the Naga people and as response to that the Naga also attacked the Kuki groups. For example, on February 1880, the “Chingsao Tangkhul Naga” village was attacked by well armed Kukis from nearby “Chassad Kuki villages”, where 20 men, 7 boys, 25 women were killed and one girl was reported missing. Again in 1892 a band of Kuki raided Chinjaroi Naga village and massacred 286 people. In retaliation of the attacks, Kabui Naga wiped out Kuki settlement in the western part of Manipur in 1881. However both Kuki and Naga objected the British administration. Frequently warrior groups attacked the British subjects. Such reaction from the ethnic groups was so strong that the Kuki war (1917-1919) and Jadonang and Rani Gaidinglung Movement (1934) were hard to be properly controlled.

Colonizer always wanted to remain longer in the colonial state and colonized people revolt for freedom is quite a regular practice in history. They wanted the relation between the Kuki and the Naga always in conflict situation and voluminous. The British already learnt the lesson that the Kukis and the Nagas seem to have water and oil relation, never to be united. Therefore, British founded a genuine policy to control the revolt of tribal known as ‘let frontier troubles-settle-themselves’. As part of the policy, British used the Kuki warriors against the Naga for proscribe of the uprising, at same time Naga warriors also used against the Kuki. The policy was succeeding in the region because of different ethnic group from the very beginning stand against each other. The tension between the warring groups had always been the possibility of sudden erupting into war anytime in the hill area. The hidden agenda of the simulation intervention in inter ethnic relation was not known by the ethnic groups due to owing ignorance.

There was an important achievement of William McCulloch, Political Agent of Manipur that the settlement of Kuki tribes who migrated into Manipur in large numbers. The Kukis and other kindred tribes had already settled in different parts of Northeast India. The view of William McCulloch on the settlement of Kuki tribes was bi-fold i.e.
externally as defender of the boundary from the attacked of Burmese and Cacharies and internally shield the Naga revolt. Finally the political agent, with the consideration from the Maharaja, arranged the tribal settlement in such a way that some Kuki tribes attached to every Naga villages and empowered immigrant tribe to penalize the indigenous tribes when they revolt. As a result, ethnic tribes treated each other as enemy. This arrangement for warrior settlement is, according to Yambem Laba, the first genesis of ethnic conflict between the Kuki and the Naga in the hills areas.

When the boundary of Manipur altered and shifted from Chandrapur to Jiribam, the Kuki was utilized as defender of boundary posted in the Barak River and the Bangai range in the western side and even in the eastern side of Manipur too. Again British divided Manipur for the first time in two divisions - British direct rule and another under the Manipur state Durbar based on the necessity of the administration. They employed a part of well-known policy of divide and rule. The policy played a crucial role in ensuring the stability, indeed, the viability emphasizing inter-tribal, hills and plain disharmonies and superficial differences in terms of religion. Administratively division was one major policy to restore the colonial power in Manipur. To the policy of divide administration, Professor Lal Dena says “It was the ulterior motive of British administration to create a barrier of a wall not only between the hills men and plains men but also even the hills men themselves.”

The hills area of the state was under the British rule and the valley area was ruled under the British appointed king. Surprising was enough that the administration of the whole hill area was entrusted to a single officer who had already overburdened with his usual duties in durbar. The hill territory separated from the general administration of the state on the plea that “the hill tribes are not Manipuri and have entirely different custom and language”.

This was the first shocking of British foul administration in the enter-ethnic relation in Manipur. Nobody competently challenged the decree of the British

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64 Agreement Between Rajah Gumbheer Singh and Commissioner F. J. Grant, 1835. (Article 1 says that the Rajah will, agreeably to instructions received, without delay, remove his Thanna from Chundrapur, and establish it on the eastern bank of the Jeeree.)
administration at that time. Even the King had no rights to challenge the colonial power. The king was minor at the time of appointment and therefore they (British) had given very less administrative power. Even, British limited the security person of the king that the total number was not more than hundreds. The traditional institution of ‘Lallup System’ was also deleted from the Manipuri society. A man who is out of home with sword and spear was also totally not permitted. This result in lack of security and Kings Power, British propagated that the minor king could not be properly looked at the hills warring tribes.

The fundamental significance of the British administration towards hill areas was the recognition of the tribal chiefs. The chiefs enjoyed considerable powers and privilege within their chiefdom. Meetei king’s administration over tribes or clan both in the valley and the hills was considered as exploitation. However, since the history begins, all the villages far away from the valley were autonomous in administration and even this traditional village authority too was recognized by the kings. But this was changed to different structure that British gave limited power to village chiefs. The chiefs also conducted financial or tax collections and even they got extra power to cut percentage as remuneration for the service of the British. This system of administration was totally contrary to earlier tribute system to the king.

4.7.4 Judicial Administration

After dividing Manipur into two as hill and plain, the state had different law adopted and enacted for administrative conveyance. In the British area, almost all the enacted laws in British India were enforced. The political agent tried cases, criminal and civil under rules framed by the government of India under section 4 and 5 of the act No.XXI of 1874. While in the valley customary law and convention were followed under the king.

In earlier time, the state Durbar was a policy making institution rather than a court of law. But on 15th May 1907, state Durbar became a law courts. The state Durbar played very important role in the judicial administration of the state. It was under the king that supervision of all native courts had been entrusted. King not only supervised the working
of all native courts but also inspected them personally from time to time. The courts that existed in Manipur during the direct British rule were as follows.

1. Court of Political Agent
2. Court of Assistance Political Agent
3. Court of Superintendent of state
4. Court of Assistant Superintendent of state
5. Cheirap Court
6. Court of Panchayets.

In the judicial administration, the Durbar was the highest original and appellate criminal and civil courts in the state. The court tried all cases except those of the hill people falling within the British Reserve or jurisdiction. The British, in order to reduce the king’s political power, undertook steps specially abolishing the ‘Lallup System’ in 1892. Assam Government must be the final determiner even if a death sentence was being awarded by the Durbar. At the same time, Kings Acceptance was also necessary when a criminal was to be imprisoned or transferred for more than five year. The power of remitting punishments, pardoning offenders and reviewing the decisions of any criminal and courts shall rest with the Raja (king), subject to the approval of the Political Agents, provided that when an order had been passed or has been approved by Assam Government, their sanction to its modification was required. Even in the valley, king had no right in the British reserve area. Corruption and power competition between the Colonial power and the king’s socio cultural religions power emerged up that the crafts of judicial never reached to the people.

4.7.5 Role of Lambu

British administration toward the hills area was indirectly rule through appointed ‘Lambus’. The Lambus were just representatives and messengers like peon of the government. They were used for the purpose of communication with the hill villages and

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checking taxable houses besides carrying out the duties of polices. Unfortunately British selected Lambus mostly from the Meetei ethnic group confined to the valley area.  

Under the Lambus system, there was no scope for direct contacts between the rulers and the ruled. Britishers very rarely conducted spot enquiry to the hills area because of problems in communication and especially bad transport. Latter, the Lambus became more and more selfish, coward, power monger, and cruel. At the beginning, the Lambus did not get salary but they cleverly extracted their due from the village chiefs and their collection. Robert Reid, governor of Assam commented “Between the hill men and British officers there intervened a most unsatisfactory intermediary in the shape of the petty Manipur officers term Lambus”.

Finally, the Lambus overruled the ruling chiefs and gradually encroached upon the authority of the chiefs. They were actually belligerent for their own selfish toward the tribal people in the hills. The responsibility of house tax collection was conducted on behalf of the colonial government had been store up, without the approval of the government, in their own pocket besides tribal chiefs cut. This was at latter thought by the hills people that Meeteis were colonizer of the tribal area.

The officials themselves admitted this lacuna in their day- to- day dealings with the hills people. Robert Reid was of the view that these Lambus were responsible in no small measure for the Kuki rebellion of 1917- 1920.

4.7.6 Classification of Ethnic Entities

In the beginning of the British rule, the term Kuki and Naga was loosely used. The term Kuki applied to the Naga sub-tribe, at the same time Naga also applied to Kuki sub-tribe or clan. It shows in the 1881 Census that both the Kuki and the Naga were clubbed together into one, but it was called ‘working in the dark and considerable confusion’.

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67 There were no number fixed of Lambus but according to necessity of administration from time to time, the Lambus are sometimes increased and sometimes reduced. Hills people were also appointed as Lambu. During the King Churhand maximum number of Lambus reached around 42 selected.
This was changed particularly with the progress of the British rule in the northeast India. The British administrators, ethnographers, linguists and political agents distinguished the Nagas and the Kukis by using their own criteria. G.A Grierson classified the Nagas and the Kukis under two heads as being distinct from the linguistics point of view. The linguistic studies encountered especially to the official classification of the Naga tribes. We noted that Damant classed Kabui and Maring under the Kuki family but Grierson classed them under the Naga group.

In the case of Maring, Linguistic Survey of India (LSI) classified it under Naga group but they are linguistically closer to the Kuki-Chin group than any other Naga. So controversy erupted even when academician took up subsequent research. Bendict put Maring under Tangkhul-Kuki type, Shafer classed them under Kukish Section, Marrision completely divorced them from Kukis and their group. Matisoff in his classification Maring, Aimol, Anal, Lamgang, Rongmei (Kabui) and Liangmei came under Kuki and Chiru and Kom Rem came under Kuki-Chin-Naga group.

Thus the identification of the Naga and Kuki in linguistic terms was what Hutton has called arbitrary as much as useful. He remarked that ‘Linguistic considerations are notoriously dangerous in application to ethnography.’ The disagreement on linguistic categorization or the rejection of it gave an attribute of Refugees’ Landscape rather than the relics of ‘our ancestors’. The suggestions of linguistic studies were testimony of the runaway population from the valley state system who came in a series of immigration with diverse linguistic and cultural background.

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73 Ibid. p. 473
G.A. Grierson also underscored three distinguish groups on the basis of their ethnicity. Firstly, the Kukis who are closely related to the Chin and Lushais, who are migrating to their village sites every 4 or 5 years and undertakes permanent irrigation and terraced rice cultivation. The Nagas, on the other hand, have almost invariably permanent village sites, permanent irrigation and terrace rice fields and they keep ordinary Indian cattle. Secondly, the Kuki have hereditary Chiefs who are greatly respected by villagers. While the Naga live in domestic communities and headmen, if any have little or no influence in the village. Thirdly, the Kukis have their hair longer and cover the head with a ‘pagri’. The Nagas have their hair short and used no head covering accepting occasionally during festivals or war-period.

R.B. Pemberton was the first to give exhaustive account of the Northeast Frontier. He conceptualized the notion what may be called ‘One Kuki or One Naga’, or, imagined identity of Kuki and Naga. At a time, the idea of Naga and Kuki was concentrated to the low lying hills adjacent the plains of Bengal and Assam respectively. He extensively had drawn the ethnic geography of the Kuki and Naga up to the Burma side. He further described the mountain ranges inhabited by ‘fierce and unconquered tribes’ which no plainsman had scarcely even penetrated beyond the first ranges, but paid them species of black-mail to procure exemption from the their attack.  

Pemberton marked that the small valley of Manipur sandwiched by these ‘unconquered tribes’ and identified into two brought categories as ‘northern tribes’ came to known as ‘Naga’ and ‘southern tribes’ known as ‘Kookie’. The artificial connotation of Pemberton as unconquered tribes becomes center of the ethnic prestige and pride and manufacture of the ethnic nationalism. British officials may not understand the relation between the surrounding hills tribes and valley people. It is generally agreed that the Britishers have no opportunities to read the royal chronicle at that time. Hence, they claimed the valley surrounded by unconquered tribes. Of course, the classification of Pemberton’s into Kuki and Naga was followed by latter administrator such McCullouch,

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78 Ibid. pp.14-19
Lewin, Edger, Cary, Dalton, Butler and Damant. It was unfortunate to the ethnic study or anthropologists in Manipur that such classification brought several doubt.\footnote{West Bangal State Achieves(WBSA), Kolkata, \textit{Judicial Proceeding(JP)}: August 1872, no.220, JW Edgar, Civil Officer with the Cachar Column of the Lushai expeditionary Force, to the Commissioner of Circuit, Dacca Division, 3 April 1870. For the same report see in National Archives of India(NAI), New Delhi, Foreign Department, Political-A, August 1872, No.70}

Though the classification becomes official, latter on the scientific studies dispensed a lot of difficulties to accept it. Scientific redefinition of the ethnic tribe’s identity is continuing on the basis of dominant official classification strictly. The politically projected identity is implementing although they proved their reality. Hence, what profoundly comes out was that such instrument of definition comes as tools of suppressing differences and similarities within the officially projected imaginary category, divorced from its scientific conviction.