CHAPTER - II
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE MEITEIS,
SHANS AND TAIS
The strategic South East Asia is mainly divided into two halves such as Mainland and Island South East Asia. It is worth to say that the fate of the South East Asian civilization is largely influenced by successive waves of various ethnic migrations from Yunnan plateau towards the river valleys of south in different historical phases. They mainly migrated through the river courses of the Salwin, Irrawaddy, Mekong and Menam. Their migration was brought under the stress of certain circumstances like defeat in the war for supremacy among the different ethnic groups and search for a new area where are found livelihood materials abundantly. While Tibet is the main source of big rivers, Yunnan is the breeding ground of human beings.

South East Asia has been the cross roads of many races. Present inhabitants of this region are Mongoloid in racial origin. Lee E. William classifies early human inhabitants of South East Asia as Australoids and Veddoid or Negrito perhaps migrant from the Indian subcontinent.¹ The first migrants were the Austronesians (Malayo-Polynesian) known as Proto-Malays and Deutro-Malays. In the olden days they used to concentrate eastern half of mainland South East Asia. Later on they were forced to push towards the south
and the islands by the Austro-Asiatics. At present, peoples of Austronesian origin settle mainly on Malaysia, the Republic of Indonesia and the Republic of the Philippines. The three main Austro-Asiatic races are the Mons, the Khmers and the Viet-Muong.  

The next migrants were possibly the Mons and the Khmers. They were again followed by another major ethnic group like the Burmans who migrated from the Tibetan borderlands by the end of the Ninth century. The final migration was that of the Taes. It is unfortunate that the aboriginal inhabitants lost their racial identity when they were not only conquered by these advanced migrants but also most of them were absorbed to the migrants. Certainly, some sections or many sections were forced to retire to more remote mountainous regions of mainland and islands where they preserve their own racial identity until present day. The modern major migrants in South East Asia within the last two hundred years, are the Chinese and the Indians.

The Taes are the largest and the most widespread population in South East Asia. The extent of the distribution of the Tai race stretches from Brahmaputra valley in the west to Kwang-Tung province in China and from Southern Yunnan in
the north to Kasa in KalaY in South. It lies between the latitude 7°N to 26°N and longitude 94°E to 110°E. The Tai settlement is divided into Western Groups, Southern Groups, Central Mekong River Groups, Central Upland Groups and Eastern Groups. The Tais have their different names according to their various inhabited areas, i.e. in brief, the Tais were known as Laos in Laos and North Thailand, as Shans in North East Burma, Yunnan Tai in South China, Tribal Tai in North Vietnam, Tais in Thailand and Ahom in Brahmaputra Valley in Assam (India).5 The Tai race are considered as valley dwelling wet rice cultivators. They not only set up their state in their home ground the present Shan state of Upper Burma but were also successful to install other two states to their neighbouring countries like Thailand and Assam in India by conquest.

The Meitei speaking Meiteilon are more civilized group among the Kuki-Chin family of South East Asia. Historically, these people appear as valley dwelling wet rice growers. From the very early times to the Seven Year Devastation (1819), the Meitei settlement was confined to the Manipur Valley. After 1819, the Meitei settlement was forced to expand beyond the prison of mountain due to the force of mighty Burmese empire. At present day, the Meiteils are found
in Burma (Myanmar), Bangladesh and three Indian states of Assam, Tripura and Manipur. Different Tibeto-Burman tribes first occupied the valley and some stray groups of Aryans and non Aryans migrated from the Indian subcontinent. The final migrants were another Mongoloid races like the Kow-khmers and the Taes.

**ORIGIN OF THE AHOM**

According to the Ahom mythology, the forefathers of the Ahom descended from the heaven. With the instruction of God Lengwoon, his grandsons Khulung and Khunlei descended from heaven with Seoue, a magic sword and Hengdan, two drums to be used for invoking divine aid and four cocks for telling the omen. They settled on the country of Mungrimingram, where the Taes or Chana dwelt without a king. They set up a town in this same place. However, the elder brother Khulung founded a new kingdom in Hung-Khumunjao. His throne was handed over to his youngest son Khunchu but his other sons were the tributary kings of other countries. His eldest son, who inherited the Seoue, ruled at Hungkang and another son governed Ava. On the other hand, the throne of Mungrimingram was ascended by Khunlei's son Tyeoijeptya. But he died without leaving any heir. Therefore, Tyeokunjam, the line of Khulung and Khunchu, set
one of his sons to fill the vacant throne. After his death, kingdom was divided into two like Mungrimungram and Haulung. After three hundred years, Tyaokhunjam's line came extinct but the throne was left in the hand of Khunchu's descendants. Sukhampha was one of his grandson, quarrelled with one of his brothers. Having stolen the Somdeo, he left his own country and marched towards Assam. Sukhampha, thus, founded the kingdom of Ahom on the upper part of the valley of the Brahmaputra.

Sukapha left his mother country around 1215 A.D. with a small band of his Shan followers. After about 13 years of adventures and wanderings in the Patkai ranges, he and his followers reached at Kamjam in Assam. In Assam these migrants were known as Ahoms. Thus, Sukapha laid the foundation of Ahom kingdom.

ORIGIN OF THE SHAN

According to T. De Lacouperie, "the cradle of the Shan race was in the Kiu-Lung mountains, north of Szechuan and south of Shansi, in proper China". On the other hand, the Burmese Shans are the descendant of the ancient Tai-Yai, the Great Tai.
On the contrary of this theory of the Shan origin, the Chinese scholars propound new theory regarding the history of the Shan origin. Their impressions are so deep and attract many academic circles of the world. According to Prof. Chen Lufan, "the home of the ancient Shan people was not far from the Central Yunnan Plateau and the Shan people originated from the Homo Orientalis.\textsuperscript{10} He further describes that the wide arc-shaped land mass stretching from the west of the Red river to the upper reaches of the Irrawaddy river reaching as far as Manipur in India is the territory of the ancient Shan people.\textsuperscript{11} Professor Fang Guoyu also states that the Shan race settled on the wide arc-shaped region extending from the west of the Red river to the upper reaches of the Irrawaddy river reaching as far as Manipur in India, that is, the region covering what is now Laos, Northern Thailand, the Shan state of Burma, the Assam State of India and also the South-western part of Yunnan. He further says that since the mankind appears in this region, certainly the Shans settled on this region. Of course, their settlement expanded and developed. The careful examination of the discovered cultural relics in Thailand, Xishuangbanna and other places in 1960s proves the truth of his statement.\textsuperscript{12}

Chen Lufan also develops his theory after detailed discussion of the unearthed series of fossils of Homo sapiens
in central part of Yunnan. Those discovered fossils are the
Kaiyuan Ramapithecus (10 million years) – Lufeng Ramapithecus
(8 million years) – Hudic (butterfly) Ramapithecus (4-3 million
years) – Homo Orientalis (2.5 million years) – Yuanmou Man
(1.7 million years) – Xichou man (100,000 years) – Lijiang
Man (30,000 – 20,000 years) Homo Orientalis is considered up
to now as the earliest man ever discovered on this earth. Be-
sides this, Homo Orientalis is the progenitor of the races in
the eastern hemisphere. Then came the Yuanmou Man of 1.7 mi-
llion year ago. In Yuanmou, there are many locations with
artifacts of the Palaeolithic Age at different periods of
time ranging from 6000,000 years as the upper limit to 30,000
years as the lower limit but also about a hundred remains of
the Neolithic Period, scattered over the whole of Yunnan with
distinctive characteristics have been discovered. From the
immemorial time Yunnan has been a region of multi-nationali-
ties, and the multifarious cultures.

The ancient Shan settlement areas projected by both
Professor Fang Guoyu and Professor Chen Lufan cover the main
places of origin of Homo Sapiens. Therefore, they have no any
doubt to say that ever since the first appearance of human
beings in Yunnan region, the ancient Shan race inhabited this
region" and "the Shans originated out of the Homo Sapiens".
ORIGIN OF THE TAI

The debate on the original theory of the Tai people is of great interest amongst the Tai and other scholars of the world, since the publication of "Whence came the Thai Race? - An Inquiry by Chen Lufan of Kunming University, Yunnan. He roughly divides the former Tai original theories into two: "Origin in China Proper Theory" and "the Native Inhabitants Theory".

Terrien de Lacouperie makes a strong plea in his "The Cradle of the Shan Race", which is an introduction to A.R. Colquhoun's "Ethnic History of the Shans" that the Tai-Shan race was the outcome of an intermingling in irregular proportions of Mon, Negritos and Chinese. He also propounds that "the cradle of the Shan race was in the Kuilung mountains north of Ketchuen and south of Shensi in China proper."14

W.C. Lood states that "the Tai people are of Mongolian stock far back as 2200 B.C., long before the Chinese migrated, the Taes settled down in China proper. They were older than the Hebrews and the Chinese. Lood deliberately declares that the original home ground of the Tai race was around the foot of the Altai Mountain in Central Mongolia. From there, they gradually migrated southwards through the
Gobi Desert to China proper. Once again, in 6th century B.C., onward they successively migrated from central China on a mass scale and finally they entered present Indo-China Peninsula. 15

Having got wide and deep investigation of geography and the customs of the most of the people, H.R. Davis observes that "a large numbers of the Shans are found to settle in the Provinces of Kuei-Chou (Guishou), Kuanghai (Guangxi), and Kung-tung (Guangdong)". He concludes that "in the olden days, the Shans probably occupied a great part of China south of the Yangtze". 16

D.W. Credner does not endorse the observations of Terrien de Lacouperie and W.G. Dood. But he develops his own theory which is nearer to Davis' statement, after getting personal observations on the cultural and geographical features of the mountainous Yunnan province. He believes that the Tai people migrated from the tropical regions and the natural birth place of the Tai was in the area of Guangdong and Guangxi provinces. 17

Sud Saengwichian declares that in the banks of the big and small Kuae Rivers in Canchanaburi and in Rachaburi of modern Thailand, the forefather of the Tai people multiplied and thrived. According to Somsak Suwannabun, the original home of
the Tai race was the Indonesian Archipelago. Later, they
gradually migrated to the Mekong basin and then further north
to Yunnan province in China.¹⁸

Chen Lufan invests his whole energy to realise the
original home place of the Tai people. With the help of ar-
chaological excavation of a considerable number of areas
like Sanxing Village in Maxing Township of Guanghan county
of Sichuan Province, Sanxingdui, foot hill of the Altai Mou-
ntain, north-east Thailand, (i.e. Mnnokta of Khon Kaen) Jing-
hong, Mengla and Menglian in southern and south-western Yunnan.
The vicinity of Tomphra cave, Tamanao Village and Ban Kao of
Aranonaburi, neutral interpretation of the finding materials
and the systematic study of the ancient historical documents,
culture, ethnology, culture, etc.¹⁹ However, Chen Lufan boldly
developes a new dimension on the original theory of Tai race
by denouncing all the former theories of the original home
place of Tai race one by one.

His scholarly view is lauded among the academic cir-
cles in Thailand and he even gains lot of support from various
scholars. The Northern Sichuan-Southern Shaaxi theory projected
by T. Le Lacroperic has been shattered and theory became ground-
less. Lacouperic asserts that the Chinese people came from
Babylonia in West Asia to China some twentythree centuries
The arrival of the Chinese people was a possible factor responsible for the Tais to migrate to the south. But his assertion of the Chinese civilization coming from the far west can no longer draw the attention of the scholars and learned people and it has been refuted with the help of large-scale and systematic archaeological excavations, since the foundation of the People's Republic of China. It can be developed from the archaeological point of view that the original home of the Chinese is the present China proper. They actually evolve out of Homo Sapiens.

Locouperie further mentions that there was a Lao Shan i.e. Lao mountains at the intersection of Heman, Hupah and Hae-nhuy provinces. The mountain ran westwards in the Kie-lung range forming the demarcation line between Sichuan and Shen-nxi. Thus, this statement of Locouperie is not acceptable. Chen Lufan declares that there was no Kiu Lung mountain range between the boundary line of Sichuan and Shen-nxi or in the whole area of the two provinces. But in a relevant history book, it is recorded that there is a Jiulung Mountain in Baocham Country of Yunnan. His allegation is proved by the archaeological findings. Not only a group of ancient bronze status greatest in number and largest in stature ever found in China but also a large amount of other precious relics were discovered from
the ancient ruins of Sanxingdui village in Nanxing Township of Guanghan County of Sichuan Province. These discovered cultural relics are the remains of the late Shang and early Zhou Dynasties. On the other hand, those bronze statues of each individual and the bronze busts the same size as that of real people were completely different from that of either the Tai or the Han peoples both in physical feature and dress (attire). The cultural relics discovered at Sanxingdui clearly indicate that the ancient Shu (Sichuan) culture has remarkably distinctive characteristics of its own and it proves the nonsimilarities between the Shu and the Tai race. Thus, Chen Lufan remarkably concludes that the Northern Sichuan and Southern Shaanxi Theory of the origin of the Tai is absolutely baseless and reduced historian himself to a pretended one. 23

According to Chen Lufan, "Altai Mountain Theory is nothing but a supplement and development of the Northern Sichuan and Southern Shaanxi Theory". He flashes that the vicinity of the Altai Mountains was the theatre of activities of grassland peoples which means the home ground of the nomadic clans and tribes. The fact is proved with the help of archaeological discoveries and its natural environment. At the foot of the Altai Mountains a long corridor expanded more than
1000 kilometres in length of ancient rock paintings has been unearthed. Out of 10,000 discovered rock paintings more than 40 rock painting sites have been thoroughly studied. These substantial evidence of rock paintings provide data for the study of the races and their histories inhabiting at the southern foot of the Altai Mountains and adjacent areas. The rock paintings consist of a various kind of both domesticated and wild animals, birds of all kind and carts and chariots. The various kind of rock paintings reflect the daily life of the people and their reality. The main characteristic feature of the people's economy was accurately pastoral in character (i.e. their basic mode of production was hunting and animal husbandary). 24

The southern foot of the Altai Mountain range is not so high in elevation and not so steep in gradient. There is abundance of water supply and lush, verdant grassland. Climate is also moderate. Since the ancient time, this region was a best favourable ground of various grassland people. It is found in historical records that as far back as 2000 B.C. Sarmatians (Saka) inhabited in vicinity of the Altai Mountains. Other people like Huiji of the Warring States period, the Xiongnu, Tiele, Avar, Turk, Ancient Uighur, Khitan, Mongol and others during the two Han Dynasties were living. They were
rearing cattle and sheep in the wide areas at the southern foot of the Altai Mountains but they were nomadic in habit. This long statement is supplemented by another remarks of Chen Lufan himself that "both the Thai and the Dai races used to settle long years before on the river valleys and plains of tropical and subtropical. They were well settled people with farming agriculture as their basic occupation. Thus, the habits, cultures and economic activities of the Thai race completely differ from the grassland cultural people of the Altai foot hill dwellers. Even their environment backgrounds were also completely contrary. That is why, he firmly states that no reasonable grounds to be the vicinity of the Altai Mountains as the original home ground of the Thai race". 25

Chen Lufan clearly points out the exact cradle of the progenitors of the Tai race or their home place where he observes "more than 1800 years ago, the forefather of the Thai and Dai races i.e. the Shans, inhabited in the wide area of the present day northern and south-western Yunnan". 26

Chronicles of the reign of Emperor He Di, Emperor An Di and Emperor Chun Di recorded that the Shan Kingdom beyond the boundaries of Xianan sent their envoys three times in the
years A.D. 97, 120 and 131 to Loyang and paid tribute to the emperors of Eastern Han Dynasty. The boundaries of Yongchang and the boundaries of Rinan are identified. The place Yongchang represents the present Baoshan Prefecture in western Yunnan and the place beyond the boundaries of Yongchang comprises the present Lesheng Prefecture of Yunnan and the Shan states of Burma beyond Baoshan Prefecture. The area Rinan is also found out as southernmost country of Jiaozhou, stands on present Quang Binh Province in the central part of Vietnam. The areas beyond Rinan should be the adjacent areas of the present northern and central part of Vietnam, that means the northern and central part of Laos, the northern and north-eastern part of Thailand and the whole of Xishuangbanna of Yunnan. Thus, two millennium before Christ, the ancestor of the Shans, Tai and Lai races were living in the areas comprising of the present Shan states of Burma, the northern and north-eastern part of Thailand, the central and northern part of Laos and the Lesheng and Xishuangbanna Prefectures of Yunnan. In this region, many big and small of the Shan people used to settle and formed tribal union. 27

Fang Guoyu of Yunnan University also clearly indicates that the wide arc-shaped region extending from the Red River to the upper reaches of the Irrawaddy River reaching as far as Manipur in India was inhabited by the Shans, since the
mankind first started to appear on this region. 28

Once again Chen Lufan states that from the two Han dynasties to the Tang and Song dynasties onward, the Shan-Tai ethnic group not only set up close relation but also fought for supremacy against the neighbouring Yunan and the kingdom of the Mon-Khmer language group, the Annam Grand Superintendent Prefecture of the Vietnamese language group, the Liao kingdom of the Jurchenese language group and the Nanzhao kingdom of the Yi language group. Their struggle continued up to the middle of the 18th century. He alleges that the Thai, Dai, Lao and Shan races of today are the descendants of the ancient Shan race. He concludes that "the original home place of the Tai race is the area in the gorges and plains of the northern part of the Indo-China Peninsula and the southern part of Yunan". 29

Chen Lufan smashes the history of the seven southernly migrations of the Tai people developed by W.C. Good in his book entitled "The Tai Race: Elder Brother of the Chinese". He declares that the seven southernly migrations propounded by W.C. Good were not the migrations of the Tai people but the Ailaos's migration. 30

The historical facts prove the reality. In order to
realise the fact, it is better to consider the causes of the seven southerly migrations made by W.C. Dood categorically. The first migration occurred due to constant feuds, often amounting to real warfare between the Ailao people and the growing power of the Chinese. The second migration was on account of the conquest of a kingdom. His assumption is that since word "Sa" was close in sound to the word "Tai-yi", the Sa people must have been the Tai people. The third migration was due to the defeat of the king Leilo of Ailao people in the hands of the Han nationality. Han's conquest of the Lio people further west along the Jiulong range who must have been the Tai people according to W.C. Dood, caused the fourth migration. The fifth migration was brought by the Han's of the Ailao people in Anhui and Jiangxi in the eight and ninth centuries. The sixth migration took place due to defeat of the Tai people in series of battle culminating in their failure to capture the city of Guangzhou. From then on, "the Ailao people was also earning its new title of Thai meaning free". The overthrow of the Nanzhou kingdom by the Mongols under Kublai Khan caused the seven southerly migration.

Over the question of the ethnic identity of the Ailao people, there are three different versions. One is that the Ailao people were of the Di and Qiang nationalities. The other is that the Ailao were the Fu nationality. The other
version is that the Ailao people belonged to the Shan and Tai people advocated by W.C. Dood. And his opinion was endorsed by Chen Xujing by indicating the Ailao people's settlement area— that is within the boundaries of the present day Yunnan. But W.C. Dood's version is rejected by Chen Lufan by explaining the definite account of the geographical distribution of the Ailao people which was recorded in historical dates. 32

The four counties of Xitang, Sunwei, Ailao and Sonan in the western and eastern Han Dynasties namely the Yongping county, the western part of Yunlong county, the Baoshan, Shidian and Songling counties in Dali and Baoshan Prefectures were main concentration areas of the Ailao people. The Chronicles of the Hua Yong Areas: Records of the Nan-Chong area recorded that the Yongchang Prefecture was the ancient Ailao kingdom. The same chronicle again mentions that many ethnic groups like the Chuanxiong, the Long-ear, the Minpus, the Gelasos, the Fyus, the Yues, the Naked-Fus and the Indian were also, living in the Yongchang Prefecture serving as a communications hub between China and foreign countries since the ancient time.

Chen Lufan concludes that "Though the Ailao tribe inhabited scatterly here and there in Yongchang Prefecture,
the main concentrated inhabited area of the Ailao people was the present western Luli Prefecture and the Baoshan Prefecture with the Baoshan county as its centre in western Yunnan, on the banks of the Lancang River. 33

W.C.ood states that the Ailao race started to migrate from the Changjiang (Yangtze) River, the Henshui River, northwestern Sichuan, Anhui, Jiangxi, Hunan, Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou and others. Then they entered in batches into Jiang states area in Burma and the northern part of the Indo-China Peninsula. The argument is that the settlement of the Ailao people did never start from the Changjiang (Yangtze) River valley and they had no any activities in the Province of China. Once again W.C.ood's idea was proved wrong by the difference between his account and historical records regarding the time and dates of the Ailao race's emergence and presence. Chen Lufan mentions briefly about the perplexing difference of W.C.ood that "if the lineage of the Ailao royal family from Jiulong to Jingo was also eight generation and if a generation also takes twenty years, then, Jiulong must have been a personage towards the end of the 3rd century B.C. but, the first southernly migration of the Ailao race developed by W.C.ood took place in the 6th century B.C. Here is found the time difference between the later and the former is about 200 - 300 years." 34
According to historical records "after the Western Han and Eastern Han dynasties, the records about the Ailao people became fewer and fewer. During the Tang and Song dynasties, the Nanzhao and Dai kingdom founded by the ancestors of the Yi and the Bai nationalities emerged in Yunnan one after another. Hence, there was a long span about the name of the Ailao tribes in history. But, Wood wisely imagines a series of three migrations during this period".  

In the book entitled "The Tai Race: Elder Brother of the Chinese" written by W.C. Wood, there is a part discussing the seven southerly migrations. In this part, the historian himself twice mentions the Chinese ancient historical work Records of the Historian. But, the misfortune is that the Records of the Historian by Sima Qian consisting of 130 volumes did not record anything about the Ailao tribe. Finally, Chen Lufan accuses W.C. Wood that "while W.C. Wood concerned his seven southerly migrations, he used Terrien de Lacouperie four times and therefore, his Chinese historical data most probably peddled from Terrien de Lacouperie's two works such as "The Cradle of the Than Race and The Languages of China before the Chinese".  

ORIGIN OF THE MEITEIS

The origin of the Meiteis is a controversial issue.
Different historians or scholars develop their different version regarding the origin of the Heiteis. They can be categorized into three schools (1) Brahmanical school later on orthodox Manipuri school (2) English school (3) Moderate Manipuri or Modern Manipuri school.

The Brahmanical school later on Orthodox Manipuri school of scholars strongly plead that the Heiteis were the offshoots of the Aryans. It was mainly based on the great epic Mahabharata (Kaii and Ashwamedha Parvas). Arjuna, the third son of Pandu visited Manipur during his self-exile period and married Chitrangada, a princess of Manipur, daughter of Chitravahana. She gave birth Babhruvahana who became the king of Manipur. With the process of Hinduization of the Heiteis, the Brahmin or Hindu scholars with their zealous steps exaggerated the chain of the Aryan origin theory. Their attempts were arduous but futile because their creation failed to convince the entire academic circle of Manipur who have possessed vast knowledge regarding the origin of the Heiteis.

However, their view of Aryan origin of the Heiteis get a setback because of certain fact finding developments. According to Gangmumei Kabui, "There was not found even a single name of Arjuna and Babhruvahana in the pre-Caritani-az chronicles". Their unbelievable version soon developed after
the conversion of the dominant royal family including King himself to Brahmanical Hinduism. R.C. Majumdar also rightly points out that "Manipur where Arjuna used to visit during his self-exile situates on the Orissa sea coast near Mahendra Giri mountains (Western Chat) that is not present Manipur".38

R.B. Pemberton's observation that "the Meiteis were descendents from a Tartar Colony from China" was not accepted by W. McCulloch. W. McCulloch states that "in pristine the Moirang tribes came from the south, the direction of the Kookies, the Koomal from the East, the direction of the Ku-rrings and the Looang from the North west, the direction of the Koupoes. The descendents of these tribes used to settle respectively in different places of the valley in different period. He believes that this present Manipuri language, which was the genesis of the unification of the different tribes under the name of the Meiteis would have very close simila-
rity to the languages spoken by these tribes.

He furtherly emphasises that during the coronation ceremony of the Meitei king, the use of Naga dresses both by Rajah and Rane and the Yim-Choo (big house), the royal re-
sidence of the Meitei King made in Naga fashion were custo-
mney. Similarities of the preservation of some common costumes, their superstition preserved relics and the stories of their
ancestors proved the close relationship between the Meiteis and amongst themselves would have an apparent closeness of the originality between the Meiteis and the Nagas. In a greater extent, W. McCulloch concludes that the Meiteis are the offshoots of the hill tribes. 39 Both R. Brown and T. L. Hodgson were very agreeable to the view of W. McCulloch. According to T. L. Hodgson, Moitay is originated out of the combined appellations of the Siamese ' Tai ' and the Kochin Chinese "Hoy". But Grierson gives the difference of Linguistic background between the two that the Tai belongs to Siamese Chinese linguistic group and the Meitei belongs to Tibeto Burman language. 40

G. A. Grierson accepts that both the hill tribes and plain (Meiteis) people have common original background and affinity in their language. But, the only difference from the other European prejudice is his development of the Kachin connection of the Meitei origin. The close connection between the Meiteis and the Kachins is certainly brought to prove by their linguistic affinity. He explains that though the hill and plain people migrated from a same place, they probably arrived in this present Manipur valley at different successive stage of history. He again states that 'the
original home place of the Tibeto-Burman a sub-family of the Tibeto-Chinese family is the upper courses of the Yang-Tse and the Hoang-Ho river of China. Leaving their ancestral home place by force or by condition, with the passage of time they migrated towards the headwaters of the Irrawaddy and of the Chindwin. Then, the different ethnic groups spread towards particularly both south and south-west. Other groups of members remained to settle on Hukwang valley or upper water of the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin, the present land of the Kachin state. 41

Having got a critical study of the Kuki-Chin language, without doubt, G.A. Grierson proves that the Meitei language is included in the Kuki-Chin sub-family of Tibeto-Burman linguistic group. He also indicates the Meitei affinities with the hill tribes like the Nagas and the Kuki-Chin. He further mentions that the natural birth place of the Kuki-Chin group is "the vast mountainous region from the Jaintia and Naga Hills in the North" (i.e. this mountain merges, in the east, into the spurs which the Himalayas shoot-out from the north of Assam towards the south. From here a great mass of the mountain ridges starts southwards, enclosing the alluvial valley of Manipur and thence spreads out westwards to the south of Cylhet. It then runs almost due north and south, with cross ridges of smaller elevation, through the districts known
as the Chin Hills, the Lushai Hills, Hill Tipperah, and the Chittagong Hill tracts and the Arakan Yoma, until it finally into the sea at cape Negrais). 42

The Moderate Manipuri or Modern Manipuri school also endorses that the Meiteis were the descendents of hill tribes propounded by the W. McCulloch with the help of the study of archaeological findings and historical and cultural relics. From the geological point of view, it is absolutely realised that before the human habitation commenced, the valley of Manipur was under water. It is proved by recent findings (1952 - 1953 A.D.) of one fossil of a sea living creature, cuttlefish, found from Kangpokpi in the northern part of present Manipur. 43

Archaeological excavations clearly proves that during the palaeolithic period, different tribes inhabited to the various parts of the hill area such as the "Songbu cave site" at Chandel district, the "Khangkhui cave site" at Ukhrul district, "the open air site of Machi" a Maring village, the open-air-site at "Nongpok Keithelpanbi" at Senapati District and "The Tharon cave" at Tamenglong district. With the current time, water was dried up by natural process and neolithic
settlement extended to the valley sites like at Phunan, Imphal district, Napachik (Wang) Bishnupur district and also hill area Nongpok Keithelmanbi, Senapati district. In the metal age further settlement spread towards the central valley areas like Mongjam Imphal District, Nongpok Keithelmanbi, Senapati District hill area, Fanjaopallumching, Thoubal district and Moirang, Bishnupur District. Thus usually people for the first time settled on the hill areas and gradually moved towards the central valley, where was serving as a favourable harbour for different ethnic group during the pre-historical and proto-historical time.

T.C. Hodson states that considerably the Shans (Tai) and Mon-Khmer influence on the Meiteis cultural and politically were very active. The evidence is quite proves by the historical records and recent archaeological finding in various place of Manipur, that have shown the existence of Mon-Khmer speaking Austroloic, Mongoloid people in Manipur who migrated to this land before the advent of the Tibeto-Burman speakers. These Mon-Khmer elements were absorbed by later immigrants. Gangmumei explains that it has been recorded in the chronicles of Manipur about the active migration of Tai group since the 15th century to 18th century onward. Thus, culturally and politically, the ancient Meiteis had exchanged
relation with the Mon-Khmer and Tai but not of the Tai origin. He mentions that ethnologically and linguistically the Meiteis are the Tibeto-Burman family of the southern Mongoloid with Austrooid, Aryan admixtures. But the Mongoloid blood is more predominant than the Aryan blood in the formation of the Meiteis.
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