CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION:

19TH CENTURY PRE-COLONIAL ECONOMIC SCENARIO IN MANIPUR

I

Manipur is one of the mountainous sub-Himalayan states of North East India situated between 20° 50'N and 25° 41'N latitudes and 93° 2'E to 94° 47' E longitudes. The state is bounded to the south by Myanmar (Burma); to the south-west by Mizoram; to the west by Assam and to the north by Nagaland. It has a total area of 22,356 sq. km, which is 0.86 per cent of the total geographical area of India.¹

The state is divided into two geographical divisions - (i) the flat alluvial valley and (ii) the hills. The valley, having an area of 700 sq. miles (approximately) and surrounded by the hills is 2,600 feet high above the sea level. It slopes downward to the south. The hill region constitutes 90% of the total geographical area of the state and the numerous hill ranges which are the offshoots of the

Himalayas also slope downwards towards southern part of the state. The important hill ranges of the state are Nungjaibung, Kala-Naga, Chakka-Nungba, Khoupum, Makru on the west; the Khunou spurs, Mayangkhong, Laisom Sirohifar and Japy on the north; Saramati or Chinganganba, Somrah, Kasom, Nupitel or Naphitel Yomadung Heirok on the east, and Hawbi on the south. Some of the notable peaks are Tenipu and Tso in Mao; Khayengbung, Siroi, Koubru, Kachaobung in Ukhrul district and Leikot, Tampada in Tamenglong District.  

The state has many rivers, streams and lakes both in the valley and in the hills. The rivers in the valley are the Imphal, the Iril, the Thoubal, the Nambul and the Nambol, and those in the hills are the Barak, the Irang, the Khuga, the Makru, the Leimatak, etc.  

There are also lakes in the valley such as Ikop, Waithou and Loktak. Of the three, Loktak is the biggest. The lake is 8 miles long and 5 miles broad. In the lake, there are some islets, of which Thanga is the largest. In modern days, the lake is used for

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2. Ibid.
different socio-economic purposes such as fishing, irrigation and generation of hydro-electricity. In the hills, Zeilad lake in Tamenglong district and Zeimang lake in Senapati district are some of the natural lakes of the state.

Geologically, the soil of the valley is a cold, blue clay which does well for rice, but requires an immense deal of manure for any higher production. At the foot of the hills, the soil is better and being lighter and richer, it is suitable for wheat, oats and barley. The soils of the hills are mostly enriched by the debris from the forests but otherwise, the soil is generally poor. As far as mineral resources are concerned, the state is very poor in minerals of economic importance but iron, copper, salt, lime, edible earth, coal, etc. are found in small quantity.5

In vegetation, since the state has different physiographies and climates, there is rich natural flora and fauna and the state had been described by the Britishers as the "Plant hunters Paradise".6 There are as many as 150

5. Ibid., P. 7.
species of herbaceous flowering plants only on the grassy slope of Siroy Kashong situated at the height of 8,500 feet in Ukhrul. The forest is composed of different kinds of trees and bamboos. There is the mixed evergreen forest in the west, while in the east, there is Oak and Pine trees gradually changing into evergreen and bamboo forest which finally merges into the Teak forest of the Kabaw valley.

The people of Manipur are composed of the Meiteis, the Nagas, the Kuki-Chin tribes, the Meitei-Pangals and the Nepalis. Among them the Meiteis are the most populated section of the people inhabiting mostly in the Imphal valley. Many of them are also found settled in Jiribam and Cachar district of Assam. They are mostly Hindus by religion and have rich socio-cultural life. The Nagas and Kuki-Chin tribes inhabit mostly in the hills, and a large section of

7. Some of the important species are the Primula sherrefiae, C. filipos, Lilium Machliniac, iris kumaonensis, I. Milesi and I. Wattii, Eelphinium, Aconitum spp., Onosma, Sedum, Swertia, pedicularis, Kaempferia, Corydalis, Chirita and Cynoglossum.
8. Some of them are like Oaks, Maples, Magnolias, Ilex, Prunus, Pyrus, Ligustrum, Birchea, Ternstroemia, Taxus, Rhododendron Lindleyi, R. Triflorium, Zanthoxyllum, Dentzia, Symplocos, Piptathus neplalensis, Mangleitia insignis and Illicium, etc.
their population are also found settled in Imphal valley. Altogether, there are 29 recognised tribes of which, the Zeliangrongs (Zemei, Liangmei, Rongmei and Puimei), the Tangkhuls, the Maos, the Marams, the Thangals, the Marings, the Moyons, the Lamkangs, the Ainals, the Taraos, the Monsangs, the Chothes, the Koirengs, the Aimols, the Chirus etc. are the Nagas whereas the Thadous, the Vaipheis, the Paites, the Sintes, the Gangtes, the Zous, the Raites, the Hmars, the Haokips etc. are the major groups belonging to the Kuki-Chin family. Culturally, the hill tribes are also rich and in modern days most of them have embraced christianity. The Manipuri Muslims who are also known as Meitei-Pangals and the Nepalese also form a numerically small but politico-culturally important section of the people inhabiting different parts of the state.

This thesis consists of six main chapters. The first chapter gives a brief account of the 19th century pre-colonial economic scenario in Manipur. The second chapter dwells into the changes introduced during the colonial period particularly in the traditional land ownership and revenue systems. Colonial trade forms the third chapter. In this chapter, changes in trade with special reference to
rice crop, cattle, forest products and agricultural goods are dealt with. The fourth chapter examines the efforts made by the colonial rulers to modernise the existing industries such as handloom, silk and salt. The fifth chapter discusses the management of forest resources particularly the Cachar border forest, Burma border teak forest, Ukhrul pine forest and forest overlooking the valley of the state. Finally the sixth chapter highlights the developments that had taken place in the transport and communication sector of the state during the colonial rule.

II

Agriculture:

Manipur is essentially an agricultural state. The 1881 census recorded that out of 2,21,070 persons engaged in different occupations, about 1,03,937 were agriculturists. In a country where agriculture is the main occupation of the people, land is the chief factor of production and the most important source of state's income.

During the 19th century, the valley land belonged to the Raja and it was under his direct management whereas in the hills, either it belonged to the village chiefs as in the case of the Kukis, or it belonged to the community and was under the management of the village council of the Nagas. The land ownership system of the valley was, therefore, different from that of the hill tribes. In this regard, Brown writes, "The whole land system of the valley starts with the assumption that all the land belongs to the Raja and is his, to give away or retain it as he pleases".\textsuperscript{11} This shows that in the traditional economy of Manipur, the land which was the primary source of agricultural production, was owned by the king and his people were at his mercy. The king appointed 'Phunan Selunba' to look after the land measurement, receipt of rent in kind and transactions of all business matters connected with land. Headmen of every pannah were entrusted with the work of collection of tax in kind from the cultivators of their respective villages. The headmen had to work as unpaid agent of the King. They were not remunerated for their services to

\textsuperscript{11} R. Brown, \textit{Statistical Account of the Valley of Manipur and Hill Territory under its Rule} (Sanskaran Prakasak, Delhi, 1873), P. 85.
the King. For administrative convenience, the whole valley land was divided into 4 pannahs during the time of Pakhangba\(^3\) and in 1674 A.D., Loiyamba further divided the valley into 6 (six) Pannahs.\(^4\)

The King being the absolute proprietor of the land granted land to the state officials, brahmins and favourites for a specific period. But at times their descendants continued to cultivate it for years by paying an usual tax for holding the land.\(^5\) Each individual liable for 'lallup' (traditional practice of providing community labour for the state) was given one pari of land to cultivate subject to regular payment of tax in kind. Of the total area of land, the king held one third; the ruling family, brahmins and sepoys held more than a third, and the remainder was left to the headmen and officials.\(^6\)

12. Ibid.
Every family which cultivated the state’s land had to pay tax to the King. The amount of tax varied from 2(two) baskets to 13 (thirteen) baskets of paddy per pari depending on the nature of the tenure. It is stated that two baskets of paddy was the usual rate of tax paid by favourites of the king. But the average rate from others was 12 baskets annually. This rate was imposed on those families cultivating for the King only but those who held land of the officials had to pay as high as 24 baskets per pari.17

The above cultivated land may be classified into six broad categories: i) Ningthem Lou (land personally managed by the king); ii) Lai Lou (land for the maintenance of temples); iii) Lugu Naou (land presented to Brahmins on the occasion of taking sacred thread); iv) Mana Lou (lands given free to the relatives and favourites); v) Siphai Lou (land given to the soldiers for their dedicated and gallantry services) and vi) Land given to civilian who were to pay tax in kind to the king.18

17. Ibid.

The people of Manipur practised three traditional methods of cultivation i.e., a) Punghul (Dry land cultivation): Punghul is a kind of cultivation adopted in dry lands. Scratching up of the dry land is started in the month of February and when rainy season sets in, i.e. around May and June the land is given a successive ploughings and harrowings into a state of liquid mud and on this the seed is cast. The seed is moistened with water and remain floating on the surface of the mud. Till it gets rooted, the seeds are to be carefully watched and protected from ducks and other birds.\(^{19}\) b) Pamphel (cultivation in wet land): This method of cultivation is adopted in wet lands. The wet land has to be tilled so as to make it muddy and then levelling is done. The seeds which were soaked in water and packed into an air tied bag to get it germinated were shown properly in such a manner that seeds might occupy at regular space. Sowing is done in June and July of every year.\(^{20}\) c) Lingthokpa (Transplantation): Lingthokpa or transplantation is most suitable in a land where water can either be


supplied or drained out according to the requirement. The cultivator has to grow the paddy in a nursery and when the season comes, the plants are pulled in a handful out of the ground. The mud attached to the plants are removed by washing and inserted them one by one separately in the mud. Initially, all the plants looked withered up but soon they spring up and afford an excellent crop. Weeding is then carried out. When the rice crop begins to get matured the cultivator has to look after the field against the depredation of birds, deers and wild animals. The rice which is ripened is cut with sickle and is laid in handfuls on the ground and when dry, tied up in sheaves. The sheaves are then gathered in a large reed mat where rice is threshed out. The paddy is then winnowed by means of a fan and take them to the granary. The sun-dried rice can be kept for a long time in husks but the rice cleaned of the husks can be kept only for a short span of time. It is said that much of the supply of rice had come from Thoubal and its vicinity and the people living in other parts of the valley had to depend on it.\textsuperscript{21}

Different kinds of paddy were cultivated in the valley. R.K. Ranjan had pointed out that the farmers of Manipur cultivated at least 19 sub-variety of local rice. These varieties can be grouped into two - early cropping and late cropping. The early cropping gets ripen in 3 months whereas the later takes 6 months. Of all the varieties, 15 varieties belong to late growing type and they are cultivated in level, soft, and muddy ground. Besides these, vegetable crops such as chillies, pumpkins, ginger, millet, sweet potatoes, cucumber, onion, cabbage, cauliflower, beans, pulses, peas etc. were cultivated including cash crops like cotton, sugarcane, tobacco etc.

In the hills, the Nagas and the Kukis practice both Jhum and terrace cultivation. Jhum is also called as "nomadic cultivation", because of its unsettled nature of cultivation. Anthropologists called it as "Slash and burn

cultivation". The tribes of Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippin practise this system.\textsuperscript{25} Jhum cultivation has its own processes. First, an area of cultivable forest which is big enough for a family is selected. The earmarked jungle is then felled. The clearing of the jungle is normally done during November to February and leaves it for about a month. The felled jungle is set to fire sometime in March and reduced it to ashes. The unburnt logs or leaves are later on either burnt or removed and then internal demarcation throughout the length and breadth of the field is done for sowing of variety of paddy, etc. The field is also marked at different places for footpaths. After that, the soil which is thoroughly burnt for an inch or two and scratched up with the little hoes, is mixed with the ashes becomes ready for the reception of seed, which is sown broadcast.\textsuperscript{26} It may be pointed out that the Thadou Kukis do not sow seeds broadcast like the Nagas, but with a small hoes called 'Tutcha' digs and puts in a few seeds and covers them up.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{26} T.C.Hodson, Naga Tribes of Manipur., P. 52.
\textsuperscript{27} William Shaw, The Thadou Kukis, (Cultural Publishing House, Delhi, Reprinted, 1983), P. 87.
Of course, the Nagas too practise this method. The seeds then germinated and the young paddy is grown. The weeds are removed twice or thrice before harvest.

The different varieties of rice crops are harvested in the month of September and October and the late variety in November and December. The stem of the crop is then cut by sickle near the ground and tied them into bundles with their leaves as big as the size of a man’s wrists and lay on their stem. The bundles get dried in a few days, and then carried them to the threshing floor. The grain is separated when threshed upon the ‘mat’ locally made with cane and bamboo pieces specially designed for the purposes. Again, the Kuki system of harvesting is a bit different from the Naga ways of doing it. They cut by sickle just at the stalk of the paddy crop and then put them in the basket carried on their back. This is taken to threshing floor and separated the paddy by trampling upon it with their feet. When almost all the dirt is removed, paddy is then taken to the barn, a temporary godown constructed in the field from where it is finally carried home to be stored in the granary.28

The cycle of such cultivation is normally 10 years. The land which is cultivated is left unused so that jungle may grow again restoring the fertility. The cultivator shifts to other area of land the next year. Some other tribes like Monsang, Kom, Kharam, etc. practise two types of cultivation, the cycle of either one year or three years. It is considered more economical because the amount of labour is reduced. Other than rice, variety of crops like mustard leaf, chilli, linseed, sugar cane, ladies finger, tobacco, ginger, oil-seed, pepper, brinjal cucumber etc. are grown in the jhum fields. In fact, jhum is a mixed cropping cultivation. The traditional implements or tools are axe, dao, sickle, spade, hoe, etc, which were imported either from Imphal valley or Cachar of Assam.

Trade:

While agriculture was the predominant occupation, the people of Manipur had also engaged themselves in a limited form of commercial activities not only within the region

but also with people of other Indian states such as Assam, Cachar, Lushai hills, Tripura, etc. and further with the neighbouring countries like the people of southern China and Burma. However, trade could not flourish in the early days due to self-sufficient economic system, under-developed means of road and transport systems and absence of proper and regular market system etc.

In order to regulate the commercial activities, as early as (558-668 A.D.) King Ura Konthouba introduced a bell metal coins as medium of exchange. Gangmumei considers this introduction as the beginning of monetisation of the barter economy in the state and it was pointed out that during Khagemba's time also, coins were issued and practice of payment of tax in cash (sel) was introduced. The fees for land reclamation was also begun to be paid in term of 'Sel' during Garibniwaj's period. The successive Kings like Chourajit Singh, Marjit and Gambhir Singh issued different coins of their own times but the Sel was mostly

32. R.B. Pemberton, Eastern Frontier of India, (Mittal Publication, Delhi, 1979), P. 3.
34. Ibid.
circulated in Imphal and the surrounding areas only. There was no financial institution to regulate the issue and circulation of the currency. It was controlled by the king himself. There were a number of village markets. But the biggest bazar was the Sana Keithel or Khwairamband Bazar at Imphal. Regarding the later, Brown reported that there was no market-shed, and women were exposed to rain or sun. In the morning, women congregated on a vacant plot of ground near the brick bridge in the capital and in the afternoon, they deserted this place and moved to the side of the road leading to the gate of the residence of the political agents of the state, a short distance from the bridge. The principal items of goods marketed were rice, dry fish, vegetables, pan, supari, clothes, ornaments, sweet meats, etc. Brown further reported that the afternoon bazar used to be very crowded with about 3000 women during which men and foreigners were not allowed to enter the market place. However, about 10 house servants of the kings who were mostly the hill tribes called "Haomacha" used to visit the market everyday and took anything they liked. The women

therefore lodged complain against such oppressive action, which was accordingly abolished by the Political Agent in 1871 but in lieu of it, some amount of tax was levied. The women traders not only being robbed of their goods but also had to pay the new tax.\textsuperscript{36}

In the hills, people traded mostly on buffaloes, cows, mithuns, dogs, fowls, poultry, earthen pots, wooden tobacco pipes, mortars, plates, mugs, cane baskets, mats, rain proofs, etc.\textsuperscript{37} They also came down to the valley with their agricultural produces for exchange of goods like beads, spear, clothes, etc. from the Meiteis of the valley.\textsuperscript{38} The Nagas also traded with the jungle products such as bee-wax, tea seeds, black resin, ores, elephant tusks, etc.\textsuperscript{39} They also travelled to the valley to acquire crude gun powder from the Meitei traders who learnt the art of manufacturing it from the Chinese merchants who visited the state during the time of Khagemba in 1630. In this regard, Hodson

\textsuperscript{38} Tour Diary of the Political Agent of Manipur for the month of February, 1896.
informed us that percussion caps of the gun were obtained from the Bengali traders in the bazar of Imphal. The Zelionglong tribe living in the western range of the state also took with them domestic fowls and surplus agricultural produces of their fields such as cotton, ginger, orange etc. to the Imphal and Cachar bazar for bartering with luxury articles and salt.

Externally, since ancient time Manipur happened to be on the trade routes between South Asia and South East Asia. The state had developed trade relationship with the then neighbouring countries of Assam, Tripura and Lushai Hills (Mizoram). With Assam, the first contact was made during the reign of Kabomba (1523-1542 A.D.) who was one of the successors of king Kyamba. As early as 153 A.D. a trade route was opened to upper Assam and besides exchange of gifts between the kings, even a Manipuri girl named Khongnanbi (who was Tekhao queen) was given in marriage to the Ahom king. They went to Upper Assam by the newly opened

routes. Besides this route, Pemberton also mentions some
other routes to Assam. There was also trade between the
people of Manipur and Cachar. There are 3 (three) routes to
Cachar through which the traders moved their merchandise.
The tribes living along the routes brought down their
agricultural goods to Cachar bazar and bartered them for
salt, dao and spear. The Kukis used to take iron from the
valley of Manipur and bartered it for gun and clothes with
the people of Lushai hills. There was also trade between
Tripura and Manipur specially during Khagemba's time whose
influence was extended over Cachar and northern Mizoram.

As far as trade with Burma is concerned, it may be
stated that the Manipuri traders used to bring buffaloes,
ponies and bricks from across the border etc. through three
land routes. Trade in brick was popular during the reign
of Maharaja Labanyachandra (1798-1801 A.D.).

43. Gangmumei Kabui, "Glimpses into Land and People of
Ancient Manipur", in Manipur: Past and Present, Vol.I
(Ed.) N.Sanajaoba, (Mittal Publication, Delhi,
1988), P.11.
44. R. B. Pemberton, Op cit., P.
45. W. W. Hunter, Statistical Account of Assam (R.B.
ties with Burma was brought closer and further developed during the reign of Marjit Singh who ruled for 6 (six) years peacefully. During this time silk was exported to Burma.\textsuperscript{49} Such a cordial relationship however could not last as a misunderstanding developed between the two Kings. Marjit Singh once allowed his countrymen to cut trees in the Kabaw valley and the act offended the Burmese king Bagyidaw who invited him to attend the ceremony of installation of the king. But Marjit Singh did not attend it on some excuses. Subsequently Bagyidaw despatched army to seize him and with that the trade between the two countries was suspended.\textsuperscript{50}

Regarding Manipur's trade link with China, we are informed that merchants from as far as Yunan Province of China visited Manipur in 1630 bringing with them goods like silk, paper, tea, etc. and carried back home commodities like wax, ivories, clothes, cotton, ponies, etc.\textsuperscript{51} However, the trade between the two countries could not develop due to i) frequent political tensions with Burma as the Manipuri

merchants had to go through Burma and ii) the shift of Chinese interest of trade towards the western countries in the beginning of 19th century. Also, the Japanese, the Russians and the English had started penetrating into China's economy which gradually reduced the volume of China's exports to Manipur.\textsuperscript{52}

Industry:

Agriculture and trade were supplemented by the artisanal and handicrafts production. In the industrial sector, handloom, loinloom, carpentry, basketry, cane and bamboos, pottery, earthen wares, metallurgy and metal works, salt-manufacturing, gur making, spirit preparation etc. were the important traditional industries. The people of Manipur learnt the art of running these industries through sheer hard work in their own house and James Johnstone commented that Manipuris have more stable and industrious qualities than the Burmese and Shans, and "... are capable of learning anything".\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{53} James Johnstone, Manipur and Naga Hills, (Cultural Publishing House, Delhi, 1983) P. 97.
Textile manufacture is one of the oldest industries in India and it is believed that this industry has been an indigenous occupation of the people of Manipur since early time. Handloom or loinloom is an art or craft which needs skill with hands, and the people of Manipur particularly women of both in the valley and hills, do not lack this quality which is an interesting feature of the traditional economy of Manipur.

The women wove different kinds of clothes for different categories of people and different occasions and festivals. The clothes for the royal and luxurious use are such as (a) Khamen chatpa to be worn by male members, (b) Phige-Napu (a special silk skirt) to be worn by female members etc. Clothes for ordinary people and officials are (a) gulap machu dhoti and (b) dhoti according to their respective ranks, and different occasions like religious festivals and worship.


The hill women are equally skillful in the art of making clothes of different kinds. They not only grew cotton in their jhum fields but also plucked and wove different kinds of clothes.\textsuperscript{56} All hill women are expected to know the art of weaving. If they know more about the art, they are more respected in the society. The most valued clothes of the Kukis are Thongnang, Saiphi Khup, Mongvam and Khamtang.\textsuperscript{57} In the fact, the better brides were considered to be those who knew the art of weaving.\textsuperscript{58} The Zeliangrong women are known for their talent and artistic skill. The most valued and most artistically decorative clothes are such as 'Pheingaw' for men and 'Langupeh' for women. There are other clothes like 'Mareipan', 'Langjinpeh', 'Thaempheh', 'Phaengpeh', etc. The clothes are embroidered at the time of weaving. The other Naga tribes also have their different clothes and shawls prepared by their respective women.


\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{58} Kaikhotinthang Kipgen, \textit{The Thadou Kukis} (Motbung, Manipur, 1982), P. 112.
Carpentry work is associated with the people of Manipur from early times. Brown also commented that carpenters of Manipur were capable of producing first rate works. In the valley, the carpenters were entirely monopolised by the King. Some of the important carpentry works are such as beds, stools, spinning wheel, shuttle, chairs, cupboards, hookah and other agricultural implements. Carpentry works including the making of canoes, Kangpots (wheelless cart) and wooden bridges across the streams and rivers were also done by the carpenters. One of the greatest wood works of the Meiteis was the making of drum out of the hollowed log. Hide of cattle after getting it dried on a bamboo pole in the sun covers the hollowed log and fastened it by cane and the sound of a drum was thus produced. This drum was used during war time, dance, music, social and religious events. According to G. Kabui, the drum invented during the time of king Khuyoi Tompok was a symbol of technological development and cultural attainment of the country.

In the hills, the Nagas and the Kuki-Chin tribes also produced impressive carpentry works. With the utilisation of primitive instruments such as dao, axe, iron hoe etc household materials like long planks, stools hewn from a solid log, drinking mugs of buffaloes horn, drinking cups made of wood, wooden plates, long wooden giant beds, pillows made of wood, and many other essential implements of domestic importance such as indigenous charkha, dao’s handle, spear’s handle, etc. were produced. Among the Naga tribes, the carpentry skill of the Zeliangrong tribe is worth mentioned. Of all the works, wooden drinking cup called ‘Gaengbuang’ having 4 legs, 2 or 3 inches in height and a bunch of beautifully plaited cane which is used as a string of the cup is the speciality of the Zeliangrongs. Another great work is locally called ‘paan’ (mortar), a huge and thick husking board made of special type of wood known by the local name ‘nSiang’ and ‘nRiang’ abundantly grown in the forests. The mortar is usually about 10 or 11 feet in length and 2 to 3 feet in breadth. Three or four holes

64. Y. L. Roland Shimmi, Comparative History of the Nagas: From Ancient Period till 1826, (Inter-India Publication, New Delhi, 1988), P. 14.
specially hewn with chisel like iron hoe on the flat top in which rice is husked and any other edible things can be pounded by 'Mi' (pestle) to which is fitted an iron ring designed for it. They make wooden bowls also.\textsuperscript{65} The Kuki-Chin tribes too make simple carpentry work such as bows, arrows, weapons etc.\textsuperscript{66}

The people of Manipur are famous in some of the important bamboo products such as - 'Sangbai' (basket for measuring paddy) of different shapes and sizes, and fish traps like 'Kabo-loo', 'Sora-loo', 'Longup', 'Taijeb' etc. for fishing and other purposes. Some other works are like 'Phaklen', a big mat on which paddy and other grains are threshed out from their plants; 'La' and 'Kharai', on which things are spread out for exposing to the sun; 'Yangkok', a round and flat type of basket for winnowing grains etc. Besides these, 'Shilluk' and 'Phigaruk' used as container of precious goods which are usually given to the bride as gifts in the marriage were manufactured.\textsuperscript{67} Cane and bamboo are

\textsuperscript{66} C.A. Soppitt, \textit{A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes on the North East Frontier}, (Reprinted, 1976 Firma-Kim Pvt. Ltd. Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl) P. 6.
used in building houses. Brown pointed out that a rich family constructs houses with wood, and other poor families construct houses with bamboo. The house walls are usually reeds plastered over with mud and cow dung. 68

The hill tribes also produce different kinds of baskets. Male members are mostly engaged in the basketry works but in the societies of Moyon, Monsang, Tarao, Anal, Lamkang, etc., womenfolk are also skilful in the basketry works. 69 The Zeliangrong people make different kinds of baskets such as 'Kaa', 'Kaluang', 'Khuk', 'Pantangru', 'nGou', etc. Besides these, they also make use of bamboos for spoons, bamboo daba for carrying and storage of water etc. 70

'Thul' is one of the most important basketry works of the Kukis. It has four legs and is 12 inches square at the bottom, widening till the mouth circle with a diameter of about 30 inches; this basket is supplied with a conical lid and is chiefly used to keep valuables in. The outer layer is finely splitted bamboo closely woven, and this is lined with

69. Dr. Gina Shangkham, informant from Komlathabi, Chandel District, Manipur.
broad leaves well tied, which are held in their place by an inner layer of bamboo more loosely woven. These baskets are waterproof.\textsuperscript{71} The Maring tribe is also a great manufacturer of baskets, which are widely used by Meiteis in Manipur, Cachar and Sylhet.\textsuperscript{72}

As far as manufacturing of pots is concerned, it may be noted that the people of Manipur had mastered the art as early as in the Neolithic period as indicated by the excavations at Napachik. The recent excavations at Sekta have pointed out the antiquity of pottery in Manipur to the 5th or 6th Century A.D. The Meiteis manufactured pots, plates, pitchers with metal and clay. Utensils made of metal is for the royal and noble families and earthen wares are for the ordinary people. They make bowls by sandstone. It was properly polished and artificially blackened. Cooking pots are made of brass, copper, etc. These were not different from those of Bengal.\textsuperscript{73} Principal manufacturing centres are Sugnu and Chairel, both located on the banks of Imphal river. Shakespeare reported that the clay obtained

from there was suitable for making pots, the art of which was confined in the Loi community. They brought the pots by boat and sold at Imphal.

The hill tribes were also acquainted with the art of making pots and other earthen wares. The Nagas manufactured utensils at Hundung and Nungbi.\textsuperscript{74} The Kukis make two types of pots - a small circular pot with the mouth having some 6 to 8 inches in diameter, used for cooking, and large jar, about 24 inches high about 15 inches in diameter, tapering to about 9 inches at the mouth, which is used for brewing beer.\textsuperscript{75}

The process of making pots is simple and primitive and there is no difference between the method applied by the people of the valley and of the hills. Clay is first well kneaded and then moulded into different shapes and sizes of the pot. The pots after being polished are exposed to the sun to get them hardened and then finally backed in a

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., P. 63.

\textsuperscript{74} T. C. Hodson, \textit{Op. cit.} P. 32.

furnace specially designed for the purpose. Hodson pointed out, the Meiteis used the wheel whereas the Nagas used thin vessels of bamboo cylinder to work it into a rounded shape by hand.

Brick making was first introduced during the time of King Khagembha during whose reign, brickwalls called 'Haogaibi' were constructed. The art of making this brick was learnt from the Chinese who called it 'Chek'. It was later included in the Meitei vocabulary. The native bricks are long, wide and thin but lasting. It was used for building only royal houses and temples. People know the art of metallurgy and produced metal works for domestic use. Metallurgy was further developed during the time of king Khuyoi Tompok. During his time, bronze was smelted, bell metal was cast, bell metal gong (Senbung) was manufactured.

Principal centre of iron works in the valley is at Kakching. It is believed that once upon a time, the villagers worked under the supervision of a man called Budhiraj, one of the descendants of the person who discovered for the first time the existence of iron in Manipur. Simple instrument like axe, dao, spear and other agricultural implements were produced. The process of manufacturing these implements is simple but required hard labour. To forge iron, a separate shed is constructed in which two hollowed wooden cylinders are installed. The lower ends of the cylinders are buried in the ground side by side, and from them two bamboo tubes converge making just below the charcoal fire is placed in front of this store and when the Pistons fringed with feathers are pushed up and down which produced a very strong drought. Thus, the blacksmith produced different kinds of agricultural implements. We are informed that many of the skilful persons such as goldsmith, blacksmith, silversmiths etc. had been carried away by the Burmese during their invasions, and only a few inferiors were left behind.

Among the hill tribes, the Anals are reported to be skilled iron workers. Every Anal village used to have at least one or two 'Tholpus' or skilled blacksmith who was highly specialized in making and repairing of tools and other agricultural implements. The Zeliangrong people also do repair their agricultural implements such as axe, dao, spear, etc. They have their own system of repairing it. A good quantity of half-dried immature bamboo about 5 to 6 feet long is collected and put them between 4 small wooden pillars. Dao or axe, after having been applied on its sharp edge with lemon juice, is placed in the midst of the bamboos and then the fire is set on it. A big fan is used to blow the flame, and the iron is heated till its melting point after which it is removed from the fire, and dropped it with great care on wooden tough containing water, and followed by giving a mild pressure on it by a wooden stick till it is cooled down. If the iron is found bent or twisted a bit, it can be made good while it is hot by a hammer.

Salt had been indigenously obtained from salt wells situating in a compact area of Ningel, Chandrakhong, Sikhong, Sekmai and Waikhong. Traditionally, all the salt wells belong to the king. Therefore, 30 per cent of the salt manufactured goes to him while the remaining 70 per cent is left aside for distribution among the workmen. The Lois were employed in the industry. It was reported that the salt obtained was quite pure and free from smell and it was sold at Rs. 6/- a mound. \(^8^7\) The traditional method of discovering the existence of salt is done by observing the presence of a thick cloud covering a particular area at an early hour of the morning. Its existence is also ascertained by watching the movements of cattle whose fondness for salt is thus turned into good use. After ascertaining the existence of salt, a shaft is sunk down to the spring about 40 or 60 feet and through the cylinders the salt is drawn out. \(^8^8\)

Salt is found in the form of water lying as deep as 30 or 40 feet underneath the ground. The salt water is drained out through the wooden cylinder by sinking it to the salt

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water level. The water from the wooden basket is drained out by a wicker basket and then store it in the hollowed out trunks of trees placed by the side of the wells. The workers take the water to the boiling shed situated some distance off and get them evaporated in small earthen dishes, shallow and saucer shape. Before the water is poured into them they are lined with plantain leaves, to which the salt adheres, and the contents when the salt has filled the dish are thus removed. In a shed about 100 pans are placed over little holes under which fire is made to burn. Dry wood is used as fuel. The attendants are constantly on the move supplying the pans with water, emptying them and filling them again.\(^{89}\)

The amount of salt manufactured varied from well to well and also from season to season. In cold weather, when the water is at its strongest, it could be manufactured at the most. In 1897-98, Ningel salt well alone produced about 150 mounds of salt. Hodson reported that when he himself participated in the manufacturing at Ningel salt wells, he could obtain 6 drums of pure salt free from smell by

evaporating 36 pounds of filtered water. The salt was sold at Rs. 6 and 4 annas a mound in the bazar. The salt wells were put under the charge of a Dewan. The Dewan lived at Imphal and paid occasional visits to the different wells. Most of the workers engaged in the salt wells were Manipuris particularly the Lois. About 200 labourers were engaged in the Ningel salt well alone, and moreover, coolies were also engaged to transport fuel to the boiling sheds. Hill men were engaged for a short period of time and some quantity of salt was paid to them for their labour. The workers received 70% of the salt manufactured and another 30% goes to the Raja.

Sugarcane is cultivated mainly for preparation of sweets such as gur. The methods of making gur is simple. Juice is first extracted from the sugarcane by squeezing with the help of a wooden machine called 'Kolu'. The juice is then boiled in a big pan to make it thicker so that the syrup can be kept for a longer time. Wine is prepared and taken as essential drinking item in every day life of the people.

90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
Strong spirit called Kalei was taken even by the Kings and nobles. But in later periods, wine preparation has been made as occupation of the Lois. The Lois were expert in making wine. There are two kinds — (i) 'Kalei' (strong spirit) and (ii) 'Puk-yu' (rice beer). 'Kalei' is prepared by distilling the fermented rice. It has a strong intoxicating power.

The hill tribes too prepared a variety of wine. Some of them are 'Joungao' (mild rice beer), 'Pheijou' (strong rice beer), 'Jouju' (strong liquor), 'Joudui' (rice-beer) etc. To prepare Joungao, rice is first soaked in water for 3 or 4 hours, and the water is drained away from the rice. The soaked rice is then pounded to powder, made it first by what is locally called 'nJang' specially designed for the purpose, made of cane and bamboo. The fine powder is then put in 'nBu', a properly hewn big wooden drum which is about 3 feet in height and 2 or 3 feet in diameter. A pot of

95. Memorandum submitted to the Governor of Manipur by the Zelitingrong Custom and Religion Protection Committee, Manipur on 22nd April, 1991
boiling water is poured into the powder and is steered properly till it becomes sticky liquid. When it gets cold, a pot or two of cold water is poured into and again is steered, and finally stored in different pots for 2 or 3 days after which the stuff is ready for drinking. This kind of drink is quite nutritious and almost all the hill people take it. This can be prepared in different tastes.

Besides the above industries, there are some minor household industries such as leathers works, jewellery, etc. It is stated that leather work was started from the reign of Khuyoi Tampok. He made drum out of a hollowed log with cattle's skin which produced sound of a drum.96 Other leather works are such as shoes, sandals, horse-saddles, belts, etc.97 In the hills some other leather works of a kind of bag to put some unwetale articles like match box and cow's or goat's skin for drum etc. are generally made.


97. St. Clair Ethel Grimwood, My Three Years in Manipur (Vivek Publishing House, Delhi, 1972), P. 89.
From the middle of 18th century, a new era was dawned in the history of Manipur. In 1755, Burma invaded Manipur and caused much destruction. This event is known in the history of Manipur as "Khuntak Ahanba" or "Primary Devastation" and again in 1758 A.D., Alunpayya, the king of Burma, personally undertook the conquest of Manipur. It is said that he stayed in the capital for 13 days during which much destruction was caused to the life and property of the people and Kabaw valley was also reannexed to Burma.

The kings of Manipur, finding themselves helpless, sought the help of the Britishers. Raja Jai Singh deputed Haridas Goswami to contact with the English in Chittagong. Henry Vansittart, who was in charge of Chittagong tract, on behalf of the Government of Bengal and Haridas Goswami, on behalf of the Raja of Manipur concluded a treaty of alliance in September, 1762 which marked the beginning of diplomatic relations between the state of Manipur and the British. It was agreed that both the parties would help each other against the common enemy, particularly the Burmese. It was
also agreed that Jai Singh was to grant land to the British for building a factory and fort for the transaction of business. Permission was also given to the English to conduct trade through Manipur his country free from all duties, hindrances or molestation.\textsuperscript{98} The British was interested in signing the treaty in view of an increasing necessity to contain the Burmese expansion in the northeastern part and also to develop relationship with the Chinese through Manipur. But the English could not come to the rescue of the Manipuri King when the country was under Burmese invasion in 1770 and again in 1782 during which there took place mass scale deportation of Manipuri to Burma causing depopulation of the country.\textsuperscript{99} After the death of Jai Singh, the Burmese again launched a series of invasions and the destruction caused was so great that the period between 1814 to 1826 A.D. is called in the history of Manipur as "Chahi Taret Khuntakpa" or "Seven Years' Devastation".\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{98} Lal Dena, \textit{British Policy towards Manipur}, (Imphal, 1984), P. 3.


\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Ibid.}
At that juncture, Gambhir Singh a prince of Manipur with the British help liberated the country in June, 1825. Realising the growing importance of Cachar and Manipur in the face of Burmese expansion towards the British Indian empire, the colonial ruler made Govinda Chandra, the Raja of Cachar and Gambhir Singh, the Raja of Manipur. The Anglo-Burmese war came to an end and Treaty of Yandabo was concluded in 1826 by which Gambhir Singh was formally recognised as the King of Manipur but Kabaw valley was handed over to Burma in return for a compensation of Rs. 500/- to be paid annually to Manipur.101

After the death of Gambhir Singh in 1834 A.D., the history of Manipur was full of internal rivalries among the princes mostly for seizing the throne. In 1887, Borachaoba son of Nar Singh attempted to seize the throne of Surachandra, but failed. In 1890, quarrel broke out between two groups of uterine princes. One group was led by prince Pakasana whereas prince Tikendrajit was the leader of the second group. Maharaj Surchandra was disposed and replaced by his kinsman Kulachandra Singh, the Yubraj in a palace

101. Ibid.
revolution on 21 September, 1891. Surachandra fled to Cachar and requested the help of the Britishers saying that he had not abdicated the throne willingly.\textsuperscript{102} Such situations paved the way for the Britishers to interfere in the internal affairs of the State. In the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891, Manipur was defeated and the former sovereign state was relegated to the status of princely state with 11 guns salute. Along with that the traditional economy was integrated with the bigger colonial economy. Thus, towards the end of 19th century and with the beginning of present century the economic scenario of Manipur started changing.