CHAPTER - III

TRADITIONAL SOCIAL LIFE

The application of the term 'Tradition' has been defined by different Sociologists and Psychologists in different ways. Ginsburg has observed the ' Tradition' as the sum of all the ideas, habits and customs that belong to people and are transmitted from generation to generation. Similarly, James Draver describes that (Tradition is a body of law, custom, story and myth transmitted or handed down orally from one generation to another.

In this manner, tradition is development of man's creation in time, it provides past knowledge and on the basis of the past one may think that it is possible to solve new situations more easily. Thus, tradition changes in continuity and the continuity too changes.

Traditions, as a result of transference from one generation to the other get strengthened by the new generations. These strengthened traditions are called 'Customs'. Customs control the behaviour of the individuals. They force them to act according to the prescribed patterns and do not allow the individuals to go astray. Thus, these customs act as important agencies of controlling the behaviour of the individual members of the society and also collective behaviour.

of the society. In this manner, by custom is meant the transmission of a way of doing; by tradition is meant the transmission of a way of thinking or believing and customs are passed along from generation to generation. Tradition, then, is the active process of decoding the message in the world of products by successive generations, when it is their turn in time. That the new generation expected their own world of products is the external manifestation of this decoding process.

Traditional social life of Meiteis of the valley, expected a kinship and lineage based society which ultimately emerged as the principalities. The Meiteis had a strong wave of historicity in the distant past, the ethnic group (Meitei' was formed by the amalgamation of seven clans viz., Ningthoujam, Khuman, Angom, Moirang, Kha-Nganba, Sarang- Leisangthem etc. Besides these, there existed several other tribes, such as, Manding, Chenglei, Haorok-Konthou, Manting-Mara, Lala-Khongnang, Lokkha-Kaokha, Chakpas, Khem, Heirem-Khunjam, Thanga-Kambong, Urok-Usai, Lokkha-Kokku, etc. All of whom were in course of time, merged into one or the other of the seven clans of Meitei confederacy. These ethnoses belonging to the Tibeto-Burman, Tai and other Mongoloid groups were first brought gradually under the political suzerainty of leading clans with their principalities and grouped into seven clans.  

3. M. S. Keiren, in the State Kala Akademi, Imphal, Manipur
These major ethnoses or seven clans had its own independent principality in different regions of the valley as well as in some parts of the hills. But, they always underwent an agelong struggle amongst themselves till the Meitei or Ningthouja dynasty finally established supremacy over the rest and absorbed them one by one in a period that covered several centuries. With their rapid assimilation, the name (Meitei) became the common nomenclature for all of them. The principalities of the clans had delimited territories. Clans among the Meiteis were a social institution and lineage based on societal system is known as 'Salai'. The chief of the clan who was originally a chieftain of a village or groups of village was the protector of the clan and he became the chief of the principality, and was called 'Ningthou'.

The tribal or lineage based on the Meitei society was moving towards stratification though one can not clearly establish the formation of classes; the Meitei society was moving towards the feudal structure.5

Indeed, historically, in the 15th century A.D. the Meitei society laid the foundation of the emerging from primitive tribal state to feudal state, which existed till the end of the nineteenth century.

5. Gangmumei Kabui, op.cit., p.111.
Lallup System:

It was a system to impose compulsory service of the king by the people, without any remuneration of the state between the age of seventeen to sixty of every male. It covered all state works both social development and military. The literal meaning of 'Lallup' is the war organization. This system is the manifestation of emergence of feudalism in the social, administrative and political structure of the Meitei kingdom.

The origin of the 'Lallup' system in Manipur had a very remote antiquity.

Although, historically, according to 'Loiyumba Shin-yen', (A royal edict on the social distribution of economic and administrative functions proclaimed by king Loiyumba of Manipur: 1074 - 1112 A.D.), the 'Lallup' was first introduced during the regime of king Loiyumba. It covered all state works both military and social development maintenance of the country. The people who were essentially peasants, had become artisans and started rendering feudal service of Lallup to the king. The feudal dues to be rendered by different tribes of the hills are also mentioned in the edict of Loiyumba.

The liability of 'Lallup' commenced as soon as a man reached the age of seventeen when he became entitled to cultivate one 'Pari' of land (about one hectare) with the tax in kind exacted by the king. 9

In this manner, a man liable to 'Lallup' has to attend 'Loishang' (Royal Office) ten days and to do work according to his grade as well as the remaining days he did manual work. During the time of war, he did military services and in time of peace, he did work for economic development of the country. In fact, there was hardly any work which was not covered by 'Lallup'.

In the Lallup organisation there was 'Lallup Chingba' or 'Lairel Lakpa', who was in-charge of allotment and care for the duties of the labour. For the convenience of Lallup system, there were two divisions under the name of 'Arong Apao' and 'Khunja Naija'.

The edict (Loiyumba Shinyen) further records that there were six guardian spirits protecting the king: Mangang, Luwang, Khuman, Thangching, Marjing and Thongarel. Ten state officials were assigned with the task of administering the land, viz., Pukhramba Nongthomba, Khwairakpa, Yaiskul Lakpa, Hiyangloi Halchapa, Chongkhallakpa Halchapa, Yumengloi Halchapa, Yumangloi Halchapa, Phamthakcha, Naichumakpa, Khurallakpa, etc. There were also a branch of Lallup called 'Khundin'.

the duty of which was to see that man liable to Lallup performed their work smoothly well according to work assigned of the bye-laws of the organisational orders.

In the 'Lallup' system various employments were assigned which indicated following classes:

1. Ningthou Selba : King's body guards.
2. Leima Selba : Queen's body guards.
4. Pacha : Court of justice for women.
5. Singgei Panaba : Officer of Fire-wood.
6. Thangja Panaba : Officer of Black-smithy.
7. Sagol Sang Panaba : Officer of Royal stable.
8. Samy Sang Panaba : Officer of Elephants.
10. Arangpham : Management Staffs.
12. Dalai Paba : Messengers.
14. Apalba : Army

The Lallup system was in existence in the centuries preceding Loiyumba's rule. The Lallup was better administered through the administrative and social divisions. During the reign of Garibaniwaz (1709-1748 A.D.), there were certain persons who were exempted from the 'Lallup', viz., 'Sana' or R.K. or Rajkumar' and 'Leima' or Rajkumari' (Sana and Leima
have direct and quasi-direct blood relations to the kings) and courtier's sons, even the noble's sons etc. In case of the Sana and Leima instead of Lallup enforcement, they were allotted in the (Apam Thougol' as their duties.

Traditionally, in Meitei society the women are totally ignored in the Lallup system. Besides Lallup, there was another system of work performance amongst the clans, as also amongst the 'Yumnaks' (households) called 'Yumnak Mashin'. In accordance with the system, each Yumnak of each of the seven clans had its own 'Mashin'(work-done), that is, the work done by each Yumnak determines its name.

By codifications of traditional jurisprudence and customs regarded while 'Lallup' as the service rendered to the king by a male adult by attending the royal service, although 'Yumnak-Mashin' was the work done by each 'Yumnak', and the name of the Yumnak' was given according to the work assigned to the 'Yumnak'.

**Family:**

Traditionally, Manipur Society has been subject to changes under which the people have had to adjust themselves in quest of new environment, economic occupation and reorganisation of family. The family comprised the unit of society. The concept of society was dynamic; society, by and large, was a patriarchal one in which the male dominated the family.
in traditional societal life of Manipur. The head of every clan or family called 'Piba' maintained the family from earliest times till nowadays.

As already stated, the Meitei society, in the historical time, was divided into seven clans. And each 'Salai' was divided into number of Yumnaks (surnames).

'Yek-Salai' means a clan which in its extensive implication means a tribe. It has a character of a sib. Indeed, traditionally 'Salai' was an ethnic group or a tribe converted to a Meitei clan within a territory speaking a language and comprising social autonomy. And 'Yek' is a social exogamous group within the Meitei society. The 'Yek-Salai' which was developed out of the family, is a group of families or kindred, who are related to one another through males alone so Yek and Salai are used almost in the same sense of term.

The concept of 'Piba' is a very important social function and institution regarding the societal system of Meitei. The Piba is the head of the Sibs of Meitei societal system, who represents his respective Sibs in both theological and social organisational functions.

T.C. Bas describes, 'the Pibaship is always connected with the clans or sibs and not with the surnames. But this

concept applies both to the sib and the surnames.\footnote{11} The term Piba signifies 'Ningthou' (king) and his important function is to worship, 'Taipangpanba Mapu', the 'Supreme God of Universe' of the Meiteis. He provided the land tenure system, the administration of justice and social organisation, besides throwing sidelights on various aspects of the life of the peoples. The traditional Meitei society had a particular aspect—exogamy with definite rules which prohibit marriage between particular Salais, e.g., Luwang and Khuman cannot intermarry nor Moirang and Khaba-Nganba, etc. The Piba must marry a girl of a higher status and not any one of the inferior status. Only the eldest son of the head of a sib or a sub-sib is allowed to be a Piba.\footnote{12} The descendants of a Piba are exempted from many of the some tire codes that bind the Meiteis.\footnote{13} The sons of the second and fourth sons of a man were employed in 'Leikaisangjaroi' as workers whose duty was to build houses and gather materials. The sons of the third son were recruited in the army.

Indeed, the (Piba) is a social head of his clan and he assumed the role of the 'Ningthou' and associated with Political authority of the principality as well as an instrument of integrating social segments identified not merely by religious and ritual roles but also by economic function.

\footnote{11} Das, T.C., *The Purums*, Gai.Univ., 1945, 00.120–125.
\footnote{12} Hodson, T.C., *op.cit.*, pp. 73–74.
Pana System:

'Pana' (derived from the Shan word) became the most guarded administrative reforms among the traditional social life of Meiteis and not only in administration, but even in military, sports and game also. Then, the administration of revenue circles was known as 'Panas'.

According to R. K. Jhalajit Singh, during the regime of Loiyumba, the administration divisions of the country was made by creating six 'lups' (division). They were Khongchalup, Mongmal-Angoubalup, Leichollakps tolongkhombalup, Khurailup, Laiphambamlup and Khangjenglup.  

The above six 'lups' did not indicate the basis for the development of the 'Pana' system at a later historical period, and any source is not available there to indicate that king Loiyumba introduced the 'Pana system'.

However, there is reference that the 'Pana system' was established earlier during 33 A.D. by king Pakhangba and the country was divided into four Panas of equal sanctity, viz., Ahallup, Maharup, Khabam and Potsangba. Each Pana consisted of a number of families and tribes. The head of each family or tribe would select from his family or tribe, the men who could render service to the king for and of behalf of the Pana to which they belonged. The  

Panas performed 'Lahlup' or service for ten days in rotation, thus bringing every male in the country above sixteen and below sixty years of age on duty, ten days in forty. This service was considered due to the state; none were remunerated for it. Each of the four Panas was divided into two departments viz., 'Shanglen' and 'Shangkhuba', governed by ten officers. These officers in relation to Shanglen were Lakpa, Hanjaba. In this manner, the 'Pana' was the most important unit of traditional Meiteis society. The whole Meitei demographic process was divided into several divisions and every Meitei must belong to one or the other of those divisions called 'Pana'. Those who did not belong to any of these Panas were not recognised as Meiteis. Any man, whether a 'Loi' or a 'tribe' (Naga or Kuki) in order to become a Meitei must be assigned to one of the Panas. This societal process is known as 'Pana-Thokpa' (becoming Meitei). In addition to this, a race of helots called Phunganai, Panakhutmei, Thangkul, Tengal, Kei, etc., has become Meitei. Traditionally, social games and public competitions viz., Sagol Kangjei (Hockey on horseback), Khongkangjei (Hockey cum wrestling), Mukna (Meitei style of wrestling), Yubi-Lakpi (Meitei counterpart of Rugby), Hiyang-Tannaba (Boat Race), etc., were conducted on the basis of those Panas. Thus, the Pana system formed the backbone of the Meitei social structure.
Pakhangba, Naharakpa, Sinsuba Ahal, Sinsuba Maha etc. And, the officers of department of Shangkhuba were Lairen Lakpa, Hodang, Ningol Lakpa, Hiyang Hanjaba etc. The head of the Panas and all the officers required in connection with them were appointed by the king from amongst his favourites, and generally without reference to their origin. 15

There was no fixed allowance attached to any officer or department. The four Panas were again deformed into three functions viz., 'Khunja', 'Naija' and 'Pana' Khutmei'. Khunja, which was governed by the combination of Laipham and Khabam panas; Naija, which was also formed by the union of Ahallup and Naharup; and Pana Khutmei, which was the outcome of combination of Potshangba and Hidakphanba.

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15. Hodson, T.C., op.cit., p.63.
Traditional Village Organisation:

In the historical periods, the traditional village organisation of Manipur acted almost like little republics, which had various social groups lived independent lives of their own in respective villages and everything that they wanted little within themselves. The village organisation was crystallized into distinct tribes on the basis of their common culture and language. It was an institution consisting of two elderly people with 'Hanjaba' and Hidang. The village had the power of deciding dispute in mobs, divorce, maintenance of the child, adultery and religious practices and also the power of fining and excommunicating people in the village.

Its function was similar to the Gram Panchayet. Indeed, the villages came under the influence of a new political change, the attainment of primitive tribal state to feudal state in the fifteenth century A.D., which also marks the change from Meiteism to Hinduism in the sphere of religion. These changes had far-reaching effects in the life of these people. Under such circumstances consideration on village becomes more relevant in the context of a change situation.

17. Dun, E.W., Gazetteer of Manipur, p. 67.
Each village had different groups of family known as 'Leikai' of its own. It consisted different units or sub-units of family. And in every family, the sons of the first, second and fourth sons of a man were employed in 'Leikai-sangjaroi' as workers whose duty was to build houses and gather materials, authenticity of Lalkup system. The sons of the third son were recruited in the 'Ianmee' or 'men of war'. For the administration of the village, there were three organisations viz., 'keirup', 'Leirup' and 'Shinglup'. Keirup was an organisation which took responsibility for the military service and village protection from the man-eaters. The main function of the keirup was war and it tried to restrict the invasion of others. Leirup was also an organisation which took in-charge of developmental functions and religions. It envisaged the cases of adultery construction of roads, bridges, embankments of rivers and water supply. Another village organisation was Singlup which was to maintain the welfare of the society. The literal meaning of Singlup is the institution of wood club, which took the responsibility for the developmental functions such as 'Death cremation', 'Yaongsang' and 'Saraddha'. At the time of sickness and death of a persons, the members of 'Singlup organisation' must be present at his house until the 'death ceremony' is performed. Each member must subscribe some amount
of money known as 'Singyen-Sel' for buying the fire-wood for cremating the dead person. The expenses connected with constructing the pavilion for the death ceremonial were managed by the relatives and members of the Singlup organisation. Thus, the village Singlup organisation strengthened the economic solidarity of people and widened the contact basis. It arranged the overall affairs of village and saw to the enforcement of clearing the debt and fulfilment of contractual obligations. There are instances, where friends of a bride build a room called 'Yaongsang' for the accommodation of the bride and bridegroom after the marriage, according to nature of Singlup.

Lois:

The 'Lois' are Scheduled Caste who constitute the degraded section of the Meitei society. They were inhabitants of a number of villages situated at some distance from Imphal; comprising with the various origin and subject to the Meiteis. There were certain villages, such as the Loi villages, which did not work the ordinary 'Lalup' system, but possessed their own officials, viz., Sekmai, Phayeng, Andro, Kameng, Sugnu, Chakpa, Kakching etc. The villages inhabited by them are named after the name of the caste. They have different occupation and specialised in rice-beer (Yu or Spirit), cock-beer (Atingba) manufacturing, silk making, salt manufacturing and pottery making. Most of them
have taken to cultivation.\(^18\) In this manner, their degra-
dation in the social status is not due to their occupa-
tion but to their mode of eating, living and clothing.
And, their pronunciation is a little different from the
Meiteis.

In the ancient times, persons of bad character who
were condemned by the kings were deported to the diffe-
rent Loi villages.\(^19\) Amongst the Lois were a section chief-
ly engaged as fishermen on the Loktak lake, who did not
perform Lallup, but paid tribute to the king. This branch
of Lois was called 'Sel-Loi'.\(^20\) Potsangba took care of
the king's property and belonged to the 'Tampak Loi' or
valley tributaries. All descendants of people of low caste,
other than Pangan or Musalmans, seemed to be consigned to
the Lois. They were, perhaps, the most hardworking and use-
ful class of people in the valley.\(^21\) Indeed, the Meiteis
belonging to the seven clans, were different from the
community named the Loi or backward class. In Meitei
society, the Lois were subdued by the Meiteis and hence
the named Loi was given to them. In the ancient times,
large numbers of Meiteis who committed offence against

\(^{18}\) Hodson, T.C., op. cit., pp.7-8.
\(^{19}\) Brown, R., Statistical Account of Manipur, Delhi, rpt.,
\(^{20}\) ibid.
the kings were deported to different Loi villages as punishment. Thus, there has thus been a considerable Meitei blood among the Lois. This caste is generally defined as a collection of families and denotes some specific occupation, so it is a closed social structure, in which horizontal mobility of individuals is forbidden. Thus, the Lois have been a part and parcel of the Meitei society.

Hill Villages:

The hill-men who inhabit the mountain tract of Manipur, authenticated by the Meitei kingdoms, which abided under some strict rule and regulations, although they were divided into innumerable clans and sections, each having slight difference in language, customs, creeds, may be at this stage considered generally under the two great races of Naga and Kuki. The hill-men generally are all named 'Haow' by the Manipuris, but they also recognize the distinctions between Nagas and Kukis; would represent the boundary which separates the two divisions, the Nagas lying to the North and the Kukis to the South.

Every hill village had three hereditary officers, viz., Khullakpa, Khunbu and Lambu (the interpreter), any officers besides these were selected by the king of Manipur. The Khullakpa be a man of wealth and who the head of the
village is, would be difficult for a stranger to perceive. The hill village was under the administrative control of the Khullakpa assisted by both the Luplakpa and the Lambu. Earlier, the heads of the hill villages were referred to as 'Ningthou'. The Cheitharol Kumbaba' and 'Ningthourol Lambuba' refer to a number of Khullakpas of the hill villages. The hill village chief (Khullakpa) in place of Ningthou was a very significant transformation of the administrative control and closely related to king of Manipur. In this case, so long as the title used was Ningthou, the hill chiefs were independent or autonomous. According to the Chronicles, the imposition of the Lallup system on the hill villages, who did not favour this system because the hill tribes had close contact with the king personally. The 'Khullakpa' was the administrator of the hill village and the 'Khunbu' was the owner of the hill village. Originally, the Khunbu was of higher status but due to the importance given or acquired due to the contact with the Meitei king, the Khullakpa gained more power and influence. The land belonged to the entire village state, and was handled by the village Council. Each village had a well defined area of land which sometimes demarcated with regular boundary stones and within which the villages possess paramount right of hunting, of fishing, and collection of wood for various

22. Ibid, p.28.
23. Ibid, p.29.
household materials. Land could be divided into two ways: one held by the private individual and the other land was common property of the village people.

In the historical periods, Manipur expected better social contacts in different spheres with the outside world through her mountain passes, the hill villages remained quite isolated from the outside world. Dr Horam observes, they lived in complete isolation not only from the rest of the world but from each other as well. 24

The hill tribes under consideration had this in common, a belief in a deity and in a future state. They recognized one Supreme Being, whose disposition is of a benevolent nature and numerous other inferior deities and evil spirit, inhabiting the lofty peaks and inaccessible heights of the highest mountains. Their worship generally seems to consist of offerings and sacrifices, usually of animals, who are used afterwards for food. 25 In this manner, the tribal village existed more or less like an independent socio-political unit and its contact with the outside world was very limited except in the field of economy.

Slavery:

Slavery system existed in Manipur from very early times, and it may be said to be one of the oldest institutions

of property. The word 'Minai' means a servant kept by a
king. It was closely related to the institution of 'Phungan-
ai' (couple of slave) which is an excellent account of the
slaves of Manipur. The 'Minai Phunga-Panba Shillon' an
ancient Manipuri text which deals with the institution
of slavery, indicates that it was introduced by king Kyamba
(1467-1508 A.D.). The institution of the 'Phunganai' was
divided into two sections viz., 'Hidakphanba' or persons
who attend to the hooka, and 'Potsangba' or persons who act
as watchmen.

Ayokpa:

It consists of Naga and other hill-men, who had it any
time became fugitives and became destitute. They were
settled in the valley by the various kings and supported
by them for a time; they were allowed to cultivate one 'Pari'
of land (about 2 acres), and perform 'Lallup' as the rest
of the population did.

Keis:

They were slaves of the king, and formerly Nagas. They
cultivated land chiefly on account of the king, each family
cultivated two Paris, half of which went to the king, half for
their own support. They also had to do their 'Lallup' besides,
like others; during that time, they were chiefly employed

in making brooms and baskets for use in the king's stables. They were numbered about 200 families.27

Yaithibis:

Of the Lois in the valley, the Yaithibi is considered the lowest caste, who constitutes the degraded section of the society. Even the Yaithibis who were not considered good enough by the Meiteis were to serve them. They were not allowed to enter villages or towns except to do scavenging work.28 The Yaithibi looked after the sweepers who kept the Palace neat and clean, this department, introduced the servile Naga communities such as the sweepers, and mochis (shoe makers). The 'Haojaopam' dealt with cases of persons who had lost caste by reason of being degraded to Lois.

The slavery system was recognised in Manipur which can be traced back in old Manipuri manuscripts. Slavery existed among the kings and the nobles; from the early periods, and it was not a stigma but a status in the social life.

Indeed, the slavery system was in practice in the past. The most important slavery institutions were the 'Phunganai' and the Tangkhul Naga'. The system was recognised in Manipur till the beginning of British Paramountcy. It was stopped by the British through the legislation. Therefore, the traditional

27. ibid, p.
28. ibid, p. 16.
socio-economic foundation of the Manipuri society was ‘Slavery’.

Agriculture:

Traditionally, the people of Manipur were engaged in agriculture. Agricultural land belonged to the king and 'Lou' (Paddy field) may be said to be the oldest institution of property. The king administered his country by following a system called 'Lallup'. In this system, when a man reached the age of seventeen, he also became entitled to cultivate one 'Pari' of land (about one hectare) with tax in kind exacted by the king. The king established a department called 'Lourung Shang' (department of Agriculture), he appointed several posts of 'Lourungbas' to look after the land revenue system. The head of the department was called 'Lourung Purel'. There were some kinds of revenue free estates, such as, 'Ningthem Lou', 'Lugun Lou', 'Shiphai Lou', 'Mana Lou', etc., it belonged to the king and his royal cophers. Every princess was given 25 Paris of Lou (62.5 acres of Paddy field) at the time of her marriage as dowry, and such Paddy-fields came to be known as 'Kharpos' paddy-field in the later period. The area of 'Ningthem Lou' was restricted by law from time to time, because none including the king was allowed to possess or own land in excess. 'Lugum Lou' belonged to the Brahmins; every Brahmin was entitled to one Pari of Lou (2.5 acres of Paddy field) at the time of sacred thread.
ceremony. 'Shiphai Lou' belonged to the 'Lanmi' (military personnel). It was given in different quantities to the personnel on the basis of their ranks. 'Mana Lou' belonged to the awardees, and after his death the Lou went back to the king. If his descendants continued in possession, they had to pay revenue of 12 paddy fots per annum per pari. 'Panggal Dou' was a kind Manalou. This was a gallantry award given to the military personnel. This kind of 'Lou' did not go back to the king, because the descendants of such gallantry awardees were entitled to inherit. 'Lai Lou' belonged to a particular deity. It could be let out. These were cultivated by the 'Kei' who were hereditary slaves, and could be released only by buying a substitute in one's place. In another way, there were some paddy fields paying an annual revenue to the state, viz., 'Pham Lou', 'Touna Lou', etc. 'Pham Lou' belonged to the nobles and a nominal revenue in the form of one paddy pot per year per pari was paid. 'Touna Lou' was of two types, one was the purchased Lou and another was the Lou brought under cultivation for the first time.

The agricultural product of the country consisted principally of rice, which formed of staple article of food crops. Some varieties of rice were grown in this land; these might be divided into 'early' and 'late' crops. Of the

30. ibid.,
early crops there were four varieties viz., 'Sajikhong', 'Tumai', 'Kabow Phow' and 'Phourel Anganba'. In the late crops there were fifteen varieties viz., Phourel, Yenthik, Moirang-Phow, Phouk-Phow, Chahaw-Masapanbi, Luining, Phoungang, Towthabi, Chahaw-Haidup-Phow, Chahaw Poireiton, Chahaw-Munkhang, Kakching-Phaw, Sagol Yangba Phow, Chahaw-Erikol and Chahaw-Sempak.

Rice is mostly transplanted, and the land suitable for it is moist and marshy.\(^{31}\)

The system of terracing and technique of 'slash' or (Jhum* cultivation were introduced in Manipur, especially in the foothills in the peripheral areas. The 'Kanglouhul' (dry-field agriculture) system indicates the form of technique of dry-rice cultivation after burning of weeds, herbs and grasses. The 'Phamphel' (wet-field agriculture) is a system in which rice is sown cast on the seed-beds. The most important agricultural implement of traditional Meiteis was 'Khutsu Mitam' (ploughing implement). The plough is held in one hand and the buffalo, by means of a string passed through his nose, and a vocabulary he seems to understand is guided by the other. Instead of the buffalo, two bullocks are sometimes attached to the plough, one on each side of a centre pole.\(^{32}\) 'Langol' is a Sanskrit word which became in vogue in a much later period. Then, some agricultural implements

\(^{31}\) Raghumani, S., op. cit., p. 339.
\(^{32}\) Hodson, T. C., op. cit., p. 41.
used by the Meiteis are the Kangpot (sledge), Ukai (Smooth harrow), Phao Intok (Paddy spoon), Humai (Fan used for winnowing the Paddy), Ukai Samjet (toothed-harrow), Cheirong (Paddy thrasher), Thangol (Sickle), Yot' Spade), Yeina Phak (Threshing Mat), etc.

The proportion of land cultivated under what may be called the direct system on behalf of the king, was about a third of the whole; rather than a third in the possession of royal cophers, the remainder was in the hands of the headmen, official etc. who held it by favour from the king. In this manner, in the traditional economy of Manipur, agriculture was the mainstay of the people and the land was the primary source of agricultural production and revenue assignments. In the valley, land was owned by the kings, it was kept under his direct control and management although in the hill, the land belonged to the village chiefs. Therefore, the hill tribes acknowledged the suzerainty of the king, historically no accurate record is found in connection with the land of the hill tribes to which the system of the valley was applied.

About the traditional land use system, R. Brown observes, "The whole land system of the valley starts with the assumption that all the land belongs to the king and is his, to give away or retain it as he please." 33

Indeed, the above statement indicates that in the traditional economy of Manipur, the land was the primary source of agricultural production, whereas, the land was owned by the king. Again, every cultivator had to pay tax in kind to the king from two to thirteen baskets (Sangbai) of paddy from each Pari (2.5 acres). So, it was applied only to the land cultivated for the king. Therefore, the realization of tax in terms of labour and in kind under Lallup and other socio-economic institutions which had been in existence during traditional period, was insufficient to meet such an economic drain.

**Traditional Religion:**

The Meitei adopts the faith of ancestor worship from the historical times. The ancestor of the clans are called 'Apokpas' or Salaipokpa'. The Meiteis have evolved an elaborate system of the rituals for this cult. The names of the Apokpas are Pakhangba for the Ningthoujas, Poireiton for the Luwangs, Pureiromba for the Angoms, Khamdingon for the Moirangs and Nungaoyumthaba for the Chengleis.34

In fact, every 'Sib' or 'Sub-Sib' had God or Goddess as its Ancestors. Thus a Laishram a particular Meitei clan may have 'Laishram Lairembi' as its family deity, Sanamahi its house-god and sib-god and Khuman Pokpa as its Salai-God.

Accordingly, the clans which are sub-divided into sub-clans, families, sub-families, etc., under different surnames, are counted together as about 1250s numbers. Ancestor worship is well-established throughout Manipur and this ceremony known as 'Sagei Apokpa Khurumba' or 'Lai Chaklon Katpa', is celebrated. This celebration is generally observed after 'Cheiraoba' or the 'Meiteis New Year Day' authenticated by the strict Meiteis 'Laws of Proginators' of societal system. The Meiteis, the tribals (Kabuis and Rongmeis and non-Christian tribes) and the Brahmins were worshipping the Meitei House-hold deity, 'Lord Sanamahi'. In a narrow place of the south-western corner of the houses, Lord Sanamahi is kept every house for the House-hold God. This process of worshipped continued in the later period of history up till nowadays. Some Gods like Khoriphaba, Khamlangba, Nongsaba, Yumthai-Lai, etc. were also worshipped. But the Meitei restriction of authenticity of the 'Apokpa' is not extended to other tribes by the 'Laws of Proginator' of the Meiteis. The important Goddesses worshipped by the Meiteis were 'Leimarel', 'Nongpok Panthoib', Phaoibi, etc. In every Meiteis house there is a special seat to the north of the 'Hearth' (Phunga-Lairu); the deity of Hearth is worshipped every day but specially on 'Cheiraoba day' and 'Emoinu-Ahongbi Iratpa day'.

35. Ibungohal and khelchandra, op.cit., p.63.
God and Goddess:

Traditionally, the Meiteis worshipped a Supreme God known as 'Taibung Panba Mapu Sidaba' a formless divinity having myriad manifestations. In later religious thought he was associated with a feminise divinity called (Leimarel Sidabi) or Earth Goddess, an important deity of the house. All the 'Yum-Lais' (house-hold deities), 'Lam-Lais' (deities of the country-side), 'Umang-Lais (forest deities) etc. were believed to be under his order. Other two important divinities were also his progenies — God Sanamahi (the Creator) and God Pakhangba (the destroyer). The Meiteis, however, came within the fold of Hinduism extensively since the beginning of the eighteenth century on account of the proselytization.

Hinduism had taken roots in Manipur in a peculiar and superficial way wherein the Meiteis rejected many of its tenets while at the same time, keeping up most of their traditional basic elements which formed the core of the Meitei religion. Other important divinities were 'Nongpok Ningthou' (the god of strength) and central deity of 'Haiharaoba', 'Marjing' (the deity of Polo), 'Wangbarel' (the presiding deity of water), 'Kaubru', 'Thangjing' etc. The Meiteis worshipped the 'Dragon' as a deity, Pakhangba to a high pitch since this deity is the divine ancestors of the ruling dynasty. The Paphans (different diagrams of

Dragons and Pythons) are symbols of the Universe and intricate mechanism of human body. According to 'Paphan Lambuba', "In Manipur there are 364 Paphans, which are available from the royal archives. These Python gods had different names and different coiled figures". Traditionally, the Meiteis worshipped fire and every householder was virtually the priest of Emung Lai such as Sanamahi, Leimarel, and Phunga Lairu. The fire was worshipped by the Meitei as the manifestation of God Sanamahi Himself and nomenclatured Him as 'Phunga Lairu'. Owing to the influx of orthodox-minded people used to offer to fire whatever they had to eat before they eat. According to the belief current in these times the person who had the habit of performing this sacrifice must not lag behind in food, clothing etc. It is mentioned in 'Poireiton Khunthokpa' that introduced the art of using fire in about 33 A.D. But the use of fire in a later period is highly improbable. Before Poireiton, the people of Manipur used fire for making pottery and for some rites. The fire brought under the preservation of Poireiton is still kept to 'Andro', whose primary duty is to add fuel to the fire by a customary law of the country. Indeed Poireiton did not introduce fire in Manipur. "The fire is preserved with the help of rice-husk and bron." This belief had some points in common with the Vedic conception

37. MS. 'Paphan Lambuba.'
38. MS. 'Poireiton Khunthokpa.'
39. Ibid.
of fire as the guardian deity of a dwelling house and the Vedic attribute of fire as the giver of wealth. Apart from the external worship, there are procedural disciplines one should adopt in order to realise the self.

**Education System:**

In the traditional Manipuri society, education system assumed two different skills — literary and non-literary. Literary education covers different specialized actions like, training for moral upliftment, technical skills, historical events, Oriental philosophy, astrology etc. The 'Lallup' institution of male from seventeen to sixty years and female institutions encircling its members by starting from 13 years of age were taught by their respective schools. The teachers were the nobles and they became state duty men appointed by the king. There were three posts of Naharaka, Pakhanglakpa and Nongollakpa of various educational schools of every village. The growth of literary education in formal way in Manipur can be traced back to early historical times. The development of the art of writing was one of the greatest achievements of the Manipuris. In the field of literary education the 'Yoioren Loishang' (scholars office) was the leading department but in the later period

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it was recognised into the style of 'Maichou Loishang' (Pandit Loishang). The officers under the Maichou Loishang were Yoirenhanba or Maichou (Incharge of the Department), Mainou (Junior Officer), etc. Maichou was responsible for the state literary education next to king. The Mainous were the junior officers in the Maichou Loishang. He had the knowledge of literary education, social usage and customs learnt from the Maichous. The Pathibas or Wakmas were experts writers of books in the theme of literature and style of novels.

During the time of Khagemba (1597-1652 A.D.) the 'Lairikyengba Loishang' was established and which was kept under 'Pandit Loishang' or 'State Department of Education and Culture'. The 'Meitei Mayek' or 'Meitei script' was developed during the reign of Khagemba in the 17th century. Cheitharol Kumbaba, the state chronicle, recorded that in 1616 A.D., Meitei king Khagemba made formal royal decree by which he encouraged the Meitei scholars to publish books for spreading literary education in the State. The leading among the literary works were 'Numit Kappa', 'Panthoibi Khonggul', 'Hijan Hirao' and 'Khongjomnumi Nonggaraol'.

While literary education in the traditional Manipuri society was to enable the ruling class to exercise their

43. MS. Laishrapham
educational talent, it expected a limited small section of population; Non-literary education, which covers complicated problems and situations of physical education, Martial art, Singing etc. was encouraged among the entire population of the land. For training in Martial Art and physical education, there were the tribal dormitories of the hill people and the village clubs of the plain dwellers.

Games and Sports:

The Meitei society indicates a trend strong enough to be worthy and developed in games and sports; it includes an important event from the early time till nowadays, as much as did in the Western countries. Traditionally, the outdoor games were Sagol Kangjei (Hockey on horse-back), Hiyang (Boat Race), Mukna Kangjei (with physical strength along-with Hockey), Mukna (to Control a physical strength) etc. And the indoor games were Kang Sanaba, Chess, etc.

Out-door Games:

Sagol Kangjei —- The Meitei word for 'Polo' is Sagol Kangjei, i.e. hockey on horse-back which was expected to the mythology of creation of Universe. This game (Nowadays, the World famous game known as 'Polo' is originated and developed in Manipur and it travelled beyond Manipur to the different parts of the continents. According to one account from 'Kangjeirol Puya', during king Kangba (2060 B.C.)
of Manipur the origin of Polo was introduced. Moreover, another account traces that its origin was introduced during 'Nongda Lairen Pakhangba' (33 A.D.) with the direction given by 'Marjing', the deity of horse in recognition of his queen Laishna. Great kings of Manipur in historical times, viz., Luwang Ningthou Punsiba, Khagembha, Garibaniwaz are said to improve this game from time to time. The game of Polo is played by seven players on each team. A white ball made of the root of the bamboo called 'Kangdrum' and a stick which is made from good cane or a long shaft of bamboo are used and the head of stick is placed at an obtuse angle to the shaft.

Hiyang (Boat Race):

Hiyang or Boat Race was one of the biggest festivals of traditional Meiteis social life. A manuscript called 'Hijan Hirao' (evolution of boat race) indicated that a boat was first prepared by Luwang Ningthou Punsiba on seeing a mouse cutting and letting glaat the dried stem of a particular grass in the Luwangli river. The king expected the emblem of the 'Sangai' (a kind of deer found in Manipur) in one end of the boat. Boat race has usually been conducted in the presence of the kings, the queens and the Lords. At first before the game started the 'Tengmaileppas' (heads of
the sailors) of both teams along with their Hirois (sailors) used to salute the king. After getting the signals of the Umpire, the boat race started with a heavy sound. The 'Hiyang' was a religious festival where God was worshipped through the race. The 'Heigrhitongba' was observed as a ritual festival with boat race was conducted. Thus, the game of 'Hiyang' is the greatest festival among the people of Manipur.

**Mukna Kangjei:**

The Meiteis have a peculiar system of wrestling cum hockey called 'Mukna Kangjei' in which the balance of a man is challenged by means of legs on the legs along with hockey. This game is played by seven players on each team. A white ball made of the root of the bamboo called 'Kangdrum' and a strick of cane root having a length of 120 cm, are allowed to carry the ball in any manner by his strength, while trying to reach the goal line a lot of body contacts in form of wrestling with the hockey to score the ball. This game was generally conducted authenticated by the royal patronage like Polo.

**Mukna:**

Traditionally the Meiteis have another peculiar system of wrestling game called 'Mukna' in which the balance of a man is challenged by means of legs on the legs along with
the helps of hands. It has been one of the state games of the Meiteis from time immemorial. The origin of 'Mukna' in Manipur was brought to light at the time of king Pakhangba, the first king of the Meitei's (33 A.D.). Pakhangba had a rival in Mukna with Poireiton so this game became to play in the Meitei society. This game plays an important part of the 'Lai Haraoba' festival. It is the fond hope of every Meitei youth to become the 'Mukna Jatra' or the best wrestler of a particular village. After checking the two competitors the umpire announced to start the game in the presence of the king, the Lords and the elders as well as the winner throws down the rival in the game with specific time. Then the king awarded a 'Pari' of paddy field to the winner.

**Lamjel (Race):**

'Lamjel' event is one of the most important parts in athletics as well as a favourite game of the Meiteis. The origin and evolution of 'Lamjel' was brought to light during the regime of king Khagemba (1597-1652 A.D.) of Manipur. This game of Lamjel has been divided into two categories such as 'Matek Chenba' (Short distance race) and 'Lamsang Chenba' (Long distance race). The Matek chenba is the distance to be run by them within one and half kilometre, i.e. it is started from the present 'Khongnang Hogaibi' (Sagolband road arena) upto the 'Kangla Sha' (Dragon Statue) now in

30th Assam Rifles contentment arena. The Lamsang chenba has not a specific distance or arena; but in 1874 A.D. one person named Maibya Tamara ran from Silchar to Imphal. In Lamsang chenba, the first runner who touched the horn of dragon at Kangla, first, was declared to be the winner. Thus Lamjel event was one of the most important parts in Athletics in the societal life of the Meiteis.

Indoor Games:

Kang Sanaba -- The 'Kang Sanaba' has been a favourite indoor game of the Meiteis in the historical times. The game was introduced by king Loitongba (1122 A.D.) and it was played in the spring season from the 'Cheiroba' (Meiteis New Year's Day). The game is related with the creation story of Meiteis, about the change of season, and it was played in the smooth space floor of the 'house varandah' or 'Sangoi' or Mandop (village or Royal Community hall authenticated by the Brahmins) etc., in court-yard of rectangular in shape carried about 20 fts. long with elongated seven lines drawn as well as it is joined with straight line to the opposite direction. This game is performed by two teams each of seven either males or females competitors usually mixed up. An oval object called 'Kang' which comes from 'Kangkhil' (a seed of creeper) is used in this game and the seed is covered by hard smooth coat about 1/2 inches in diameter and about 3/4 of the inches in thickness as well as its colour is dark-tan smooth. If a player hit the
target twice with the kang then the 'Lamtha' is conducted
The Lamtha is played by propelling the disk on its flat
side along the surface of the ground by force of the
middle finger of the right hand acting to the finger of
the left. Thus the kang has been played by the Meiteis
from the early time till present time as the State Level
games of Manipur.

Jagoi(Dance) -- The 'Jagoi' has been a favourite item
of Meitei societal life and followed the system of dance
from the early periods till nowadays, authenticated by diffe-
rent head of rites and rituals. The origin and evolution
of dance in mythical version is the creation of earth which
expected the nine 'Laibungthous' and the seven 'Lairemmās'
nine divine and seven Goddesses). The aims and objectives
of Meiteis dance was essentially lyrical and graceful move-
ment of the creation of the Universe by the Almighty. Thus,
the process of dance is a very important function of the
Meiteis society from the Pre-historical times.

Marriage:

The institution of marriage, according to traditional
Meitei customary law, is called 'Luhongba', meaning to
solemnize, which has been governed by certain rules of exo-
gamy and endogamy in order to receive social sanction among
the Meiteis from the Pre-historical periods uptill nowadays.
There were four forms of marriage such as 'Hainaba' (Engagement), 'Chenba' (Elopement based on love and consent), (Chingba' or 'Phaba' (Capture and Rape) and 'Loukhatpa' (Recognition of unsolemnized elopement). The simplest form of marriage was 'Chenba'. However, in any form of marriage Virgin marriage was regarded as 'divine-marriage'. It was ordained that a marriage should not take place within the same 'Yek' and in that sense it was exogamous forms. Apart from it there was another 'Sairuk Tinnaba' (Sairuk exogamy) which related to the prohibition of marriage among persons who are of the same mother but of different fathers.  

Indeed, a marriage in order to receive social sanction had to be endogamous as regards 'Caste', and exogamous as regards the 'Yek-Salai', Ostracism was a serious matter which entails the ex-communication of the society as well as of the family.

According to L. Ibungohal Singh, "Those who married within the prohibited degrees of kindred went into exile in different 'Loi' villages of Manipur."  

Indeed, the Meiteis marriage may be solemnized implying the customary rites and ceremonies of either party thereto. However, those who married within the prohibited degrees of kindred i.e., Sairuk-Tinnaba, Pendinnaba,  

51. Ibid., pp. 81, 83.
Pudinnaba/Eomnaba etc., went into exile in different 'Loi' villages of Manipur. Therefore, the Meiteis marriage is bound to the sacrament in accordance with the family law and it is complex by reason of its association with various details of ceremonies. If the bride has no voice in matrimony in accordance with the customary rites of marriage, she will be guided by the wish of the guardians, on behalf of the brode. With expectation of the conditions of marriage rule in accordance with the Meitei family law, there was no limitation regarding the age of marriage for the boys and girls.

By the conditions of marriage laws, some of the formalities viz., Paothanaba, Waroipot, Heijingpot, etc. are expected as the first stages for the marriage ceremonies. After getting the ideas of performances like 'Ciruk Mansang Hangba' that means to open a basket containing rice and other things, 'Lubakoenbon Kaiba', 'Tin Lai-THaba', and feasting the bridegroom's party may be expected as subsequent to central rites. The other of this performance is strictly enforced by the Meiteis marriage laws. Then by the performances in which the bride has to pass through 'Yathang Thaba' assumes the character of a proposal coming from bridegroom's party. This betrothal performance is called 'Waroipot'. A similar performance in a magnificent idea is vouchsafed in Meiteis society. This function is also known as 'Heijingpot'. After

52. Ibid., pp. 81-83.
getting the auspicious timing fixed by the astrologer, the
marriage ceremony commences with the arrival of the bride-
groom's party at the 'Bandop' or 'Hall' where the 'Eshei
Houba' is performed by the singer party of marriage per-
formances. Then, the bride walks seven times round the
groom and casts flowers upon the groom's turban and the
garlands are mutually placed by them openly. It is during the
last hour of the ceremony, special articles i.e. Kabok
(Mudky), Pan, cigaratte and dakshinna (some moeny) are di-
tributed among the audience, the marriage becomes complete.

After the ceremony is over, the bride with her dowry
is carried in a litter at the head of the party for her new
home. A 'dolai' or palanquin as a feature of marriage
procession is obtainable in Meiteis society. In the night,
the bride and groom especially eat and rest at the same bed
and enjoyed the nature of marriage function, at that moment
the bride is placed as 'Maw' or 'woman' or 'Bhabi' in her
life.

Thus, the institution of marriage was governed by cer-
tain rules of exogamy and endogamy in accordance with the
traditional Meiteis social laws.

Divorce:

'Divorce' or 'Khainaba' is allowed under some condi-
tions like prolonged desertion, ill treatment leading to
pain, mutual consent of the partners and physical incapacity,
But barrenness on the part of the Maw or Woman is not a sufficient inducement to divorce. Traditionally, the procedure for divorce is very simple and in the concept of divorce as found in Meitei society the husband and wife enjoy certain rights. In any case, dispute between the husband and wife over the custody of the infant after divorce the husband will get after three years of age.  

In ancient Meitei society, widow remarriage was not practised and Levirate (a marriage of a man with the childless widow of his deceased brother) was not in vogue in these early periods.  

**Hanjinnaba:**

In the re-cohabitation or 'Hanjinnaba' of both the divorces, divorced wife is to go back to her husband's house. According to the re-cohabitation process, they may be free from any binding rule and regulation and bound their married life having prestige and marital status. Any divorced woman who is staying at 'Mapam' (her parental house) is generally called 'Maw Hallakpi', who is again treated as an unmarried wife. In Meiteis society, the formal marriage is only once in a woman's life. But, a woman without a husband has a social stigma and, so, remarriage of such women becomes permissible.

53. ibid., pp. 87-89.
54. ibid.