CHAPTER - 3

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF LAND AND PEOPLE
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3.1 Manipur

India is a unique country, consisting of states with varied geographic landscape to which are included the seven north eastern states popularly known as “Seven sisters of India” (it has now become eight states including Sikkim). It is considered as an anthropological and population genetics laboratory because of its religious, regional, ethnic, language and racial diversities and has always received the global attention as being one of the oldest civilizations having kaleidoscopic variety of very rich cultural heritage (Jain et al., 1995). Hasnain (1983) described India as a “melting pot” of races and tribes. The north eastern part of India which has been inhabited by diverse populations of tribes, castes, religious and migrant populations, is a region which is particularly interesting as it is represented by several populations of tribal having mongoloid origin (Rapson, 1995; Dani, 1960). These Mongoloid populations are believed to have migrated from eastern and south East Asian regions and they finally settled in different areas during several waves of migration. Though they share similar physical features but have different languages and show difference in anthropological, cultural and genetical traits or characters (Roychoudhury, 1992; Bhasin and Walter, 2001).

The topography of North East India constitutes a unique narrow passage that connects the subcontinent of India to East Asia and South East Asia, as it is bounded by Himalayas in the north and by the Bay of Bengal in the south, through a 2000 km eastern border, and shares border with five neighbouring countries of the world. The land is also a cultural corridor existing between India and South-East Asia which is of tremendous strategic importance, which is because of its geography, unique history, demography and culture (Sengupta, 1994). For the initial peopling of East Asia, two major routes have been proposed; one via Central Asia to Northeast Asia, which subsequently expanded towards Southeast Asia and beyond, and the other through India to Southeast Asia and further to different regions of East Asia (Cavalli-Sforza, 1994; Reddy et al., 2007). In this context it is pertinent that the subcontinent of India has been considered as a major corridor for the migration of human populations to East Asia (Jin and Su, 2000; Thangaraj et al., 2005; Macaulay et al., 2005). So considering its unique geographic position, Northeast India is the only region which currently forms a land bridge between the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia,
hence hypothesized as an important passage for the initial peopling of East Asia (Reddy et al., 2007).

The Northeastern part of India is sandwiched by the marked presence of Indian Ocean on its southern side and the young fold Eastern Himalayan mountains on its northern side. Northeast India has been proposed as an important corridor for the initial peopling of East Asia as it is the only region which currently forms a land bridge between the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia (Sharma, 1980; 1984). Reddy et al. (2007) studied the mtDNA and Y-chromosome SNP and STR data of the eight groups of the Austro-Asiatic Khasi from Northeast India and the neighboring Garo and have compared them with that of other relevant Asian populations. The results suggest that the Austro-Asiatic Khasi tribes of Northeast India represent a genetic continuity between the populations of South and Southeast Asia, thereby advocating that northeast India could have been a major corridor for the movement of populations from India to East/Southeast Asia. North-East India, have about 130 major tribal groups which constitutes nearly one-third of the total number of tribes present in India.

Manipur (Figure 3.1.1), one of the states of north eastern India, is a small hilly state, situated at the north eastern extreme corner of India that connects the Subcontinent of India to East Asia and South East Asia as a unique narrow passageway (Cordaux et al., 2004). The literary meaning of Manipur is “A jeweled land”. Viewing its natural beauty makes one feel that the land is an exquisite work of art executed by superb hands of Nature. The state of Manipur has occupied an assured place in the world with its exquisite peculiar natural beauty and splendours, as well as cultural distinctiveness (Hoakip, 2008). The beauty of Manipur inspired Mrs. St. Clair Grimwood who described it as “A pretty place more beautiful than many show places of the world”. Late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the former Prime minister of India, also have described it as “Jewel of India” (Lahiri and Bimal, 1987). According to Roy (1999), it is one of the beautiful spots of the earth and rightly called “The Jewel of India”. Ghosh (1992) described the state of Manipur as the gem of India, her velvety green fields; transparent lakes, zigzag streams and bracing climate induce a visitor to feel as if he or she is in Kashmir. Its rich culture excels in every aspect such as in martial arts, dance, theatre and sculpture. The charm of the place is the greener with the moderate climate making it a tourists' heaven. The rare things found in Manipur includes the Shirui Lily which is a seasonal flower found growing only in
Ukhrul (district), Sangai (Brow antlered deer) and Loktak Lake consisting of many small floating islands. Polo, which is more popularly known as a royal game, also originated from Manipur.

Figure 3.1.1: Map of Manipur (Source: www.ufocasebook.com and farmer.gov.in)

Manipur became a full-fledged state of the Republic of India on 21st January 1972 under the North-Eastern areas (Reorganization) Act, 1971 (81 of 1971). In the first schedule under article 1 and article 4 of the Constitution of India, the territory of
Manipur is defined as 'the territory which immediately before the commencement of this Constitution was being administered as if it were a Chief Commissioner's Province under the name of Manipur'. The British ruled Manipur as its protectorate state on 27th April 1891 up to 14th August 1947. Manipur, got independence on 15th August 1947 with the lapse of the paramountcy. During the British rule, the instrument of accession to the dominion of India was signed on 11 August 1947 by Manipur as a princely state. The Maharajah of Manipur signed the Merger Agreement on 21st September 1949 and it was officially enforced on 15th October 1949. There was the electoral college comprising of 30 members in Manipur elected by the people of the state in 1951. In the history of legislature of Manipur, the first Territorial Council was constituted in 1957 consisting of 34 members. There was the second Territorial Council in 1963, but, the same Territorial Council was enacted as the Manipur legislative assembly. The Manipur State Assembly consisting of 60 members was formed peacefully with the full-fledged State in 1972. Imphal which has been historically the site of central political power is the capital of Manipur.

3.2 Geography and climate

Manipur which literally means the 'Land of Gems' was known by various names such as Makhala or Mekhale by the Assamese, Molei by the Cacharis, Kangleipak, Poireipak and Meirapak by the Meiteis, Cassay by the San, Kathe by Burmese etc. (Brown, 1874; Hodson, 1908). A Manipur historical work 'Sanamahi Laikan', claimed (Kabui, 1991) that the name Manipur was first officially introduced in early eighteenth century during the reign of Hinduised king Garibaniwaz (1709-1748).

This small state (Figure 3.1.1) in the Eastern Frontier of India, which became a full fledged state of Indian Union on January 1972, lies just north of Tropic of Cancer extending between latitude of 23°83' N - 25°68' N and longitude of 93°03' E - 94°78' E. The territory of Manipur has an area of 22,327 sq. km in which the valley has the area of about 1,843 sq. km. comprising 9% of the whole area of the state as found in the 2001 census. Imphal, the capital of Manipur is almost intersected by the 25th parallel North latitude and 90° East longitude. The state has now nine districts viz., Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal, Bishnupur, Churachandpur, Chandel, Ukhrul,
Senapati and Tamenglong. The hilly regions of Manipur occupy a large portion of the state with an area of 20,571 sq. kms. It has an elevation of about 900 m to 3000 m above sea level. Almost 70% of the land is under forest cover. It has a wondrous balance of flora and fauna by the combination of wet and temperate forests. Indigenous to Manipur’s rich natural heritage like the Siroy lily, the orchids, the Sangai, etc adorn the land.

The surface of Manipur characterized by hills came into existence as a result of tertiary folding of the sedimentary strata formed in the shallow Tythys sea, some 40 to 90 million years ago (Singh, 1982). The state is bounded by Nagaland on the north, Myanmar (Burma) on the east, Mizoram and Chin hills of Myanmar (Burma) on the South and Cachar district of Assam on the west. The hill ranges as well as the valley are higher on the north, and gradually diminish as they reach southern part of Manipur. Consequently, the rivers of Manipur flow from north towards the south.

The hills of Manipur consist of a series of parallel ranges extending from the Naga hills in the north to about 24° north parallel latitude in the south, where they meet the Mizo and Chin hills. These ranges fall into two groups - the Manipur Eastern hills and the Manipur Western hills (Singh, 1982). The main hill ranges on the east are, the Nupithel, Chingai, Malain, Ungoching and Yomadung; and some of the important peaks are Khayangbung (2,833 mts), Sirohi (2,568 mts) and Kachoobung (2,498 flits). Among the western ranges some of the important ones are Uningthou, Koubru, Khoupum, Nungba, Kalanag, Nongjaibung and Haobi. The important peaks are the Tenipu (2,994 mts), Koubru (2,652 mts), Iso (2,460 mts), Laikot (2,831 mts) and Tamphaba (2,664 mts).

Many useful rivers flow in the lap of Manipur. The Maku, Irang and Tuvai rivers represent the largest river system of Barak which has a catchment area of 8,700 sq. km. The valley of Manipur, 60 km long and 30 km broad enclosed by the eastern and western hills of Manipur is drained by a number of important rivers such as Imphal, Nambul, Irl, Thoubal, Khuga and Chakpi river which represent Manipur river system. The third river system - Chandwin is represented by Akonglok, Tuyangbi, Lokchao, Leimalok and Tuiyang rivers. Besides rivers, Manipur has a number of important lakes such as Loktak, Waithou, Ikop, Loushi, Kharungpat, Pumlen,
Keinambi and Sanapat etc. All these lakes are of great utility in providing a stable fishing occupation to the communities living nearby the lakes.

Manipur on the whole enjoys a subtropical to temperate climate with local variations. According to Wladimir KORppen's classification (Singh, 1982) of world climates, it belongs to temperate rainy (humid meso-thermal) climate region characterized by dry winter and hot summer. The mean annual temperature in the state records a decreasing trend towards the east. January and July experiences the coldest and hottest months respectively. Rainfall is abundant and widespread in the state (Singh, 1991).

The state has three National Highways, number - 39, connecting from Nagaland to Moreh, the National Highway number- 53 known as New Cachar road, and the National Highway number - 150 popularly called Jessami- Tipaimukh road. There are also several State highways which connect many headquarters and sub-divisions in all districts. Historically, Manipur had a traditional land route to the east through Burma up to China and to the west up to Bengal. The state has one airport at Imphal connecting through air route with Silchar, Guwahati, Kolkata and Delhi.

3.3 The people of Manipur

Manipur has a population of 2,721,756. Of the total, 58.9% live in the valley and the remaining 41.1% in the hilly regions. The state serves as a homeland to bewildering variety of peoples and kindreds, tribes and languages. Hoakip (2008) opines that "in diversity of population, no other part of the world of its size can rival it". The present composition of Manipur is broadly classified under five main groups: (1) The Meiteis (2) The Manipuri Muslims (3) The Kuki-Chin-Mizos (4) The Nagas and (5) The Scheduled caste.

Manipur has been inhabited by the Mongoloid stock commonly by the Meeteis/Meiteis and the Nagas - the Tangkhul, the Kabui, the Maring, the Mao, the Maram, etc. since the olden days. The land came under chiefs of different groups, but was united and ruled by hegemonic power of the Meidingngu at the Kangla. The Meidingngu, of course, belonged to the Meitei/Meitei community. Thus, the King was also known as the 'Meetei Ningthou'. The Meeteis are dominant single group of seven Yek-Salais (the Ningthouja/Mangang, Luwang, Khuman, Angom, Moirang,
Khabanganba and Sharangleishangthem). There are many sources that say that Meidingngu Kangba of Mangang salai ruled the land before 5000 years. Different kings of the salais ascended before 33 A.D. at the Kangla. Different sources of Puyas reveal that about 270 kings ruled the land and these kings belong to different Yek-Salais. Meidingngu Pakhangba (33 A.D. - 154 A.D.) of Ningthouja/Mangang was one of the important kings who united Manipur. In Manipur, the Meeteis/Meiteis were the dominant ruling community. They were considered as warriors. The populations like Kukis, the Manipuri Muslims and the Meitei-Brahmin are believed to have arrived in the state during different centuries. Some of the Hindi speaking people like the Marwari, Gurkha, Nepali, Teli, etc. have also settled in the state. Tibeto-Burman group of languages are mainly spoken both in the central plain and the hill region. The Meiteilon, a Tibeto-Burman language is the official language in the state. It was included in the Eighth Scheduled in serial number 12 under Articles 344 (1) and 351 as Schedule language by the 71st Amendment Act, 1992 of the Constitution of India (Shah; 2008).

3.4 Distribution of major ethnic groups

People of Manipur has been divided into various groups, sub-groups and clans because of the environment, geographical isolation of the hills and valley, varying cultures and linguistic groups, different religions, etc. The hills are mainly inhabited by the Tangkhuls, Mao, Maram, Aimol, Anal, Kabui, Koieng, Monsang, Maring, Komrem, Chiru, Chotohe, Khongsai, Gangte, Kom, Lamgang, Paite, Baite, Purum, Ralte, Simte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Hmar, Koirao, Mizo, Zou, Moyon, etc. The Meeteis are dominant single group of seven Yek-Salais entrenching in the valley. Many persons of the Yek-Salais are also found residing in the hills. Manipuri Muslims and the Meitei-Brahmin have mainly settled in the valley area. Muslims of Manipur now inhabit in 26 constituencies of the Manipur State Assembly. The constituencies are the Khundarkpam, Heingang, Khurai, Kshetrigao, Keirao, Andro, Wangkhei, Jiribam in the Imphal East district; the Sagolband, Naoria Pakhanglakpa, Wangoi, Mayang Imphal, in the Imphal West district; the Bishnupur, Moirang, Kumbi in the Bishnupur district; the Lilong, Thoubal, Wangkhem, Heirok, Khangabok, Wabagai, Kakching, Hiyanglam in the Thoubal district; the Henglep and the Churachandpur in the
Churachandpur district; and the Tengnoupal in the Chandel district (Socio-Economic survey, 2004).

In the 1881 census, population of Manipur was 2,20,000. In 1891, there was a census but the record got destroyed in the Anglo-Manipur War, 1891. Since 1901 census, the populations are as given below follows:

Table 3.4.1: Male and female population of Manipur as per Census of India, 2001.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Year of census</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1,39,632</td>
<td>1,44,833</td>
<td>2,84,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1,70,666</td>
<td>1,75,556</td>
<td>3,46,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1,88,119</td>
<td>1,95,897</td>
<td>3,84,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>2,15,815</td>
<td>2,29,791</td>
<td>4,45,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>2,49,183</td>
<td>2,62,886</td>
<td>5,12,069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>2,83,685</td>
<td>2,93,950</td>
<td>5,77,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>3,87,058</td>
<td>3,92,979</td>
<td>7,80,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>5,41,675</td>
<td>5,31,078</td>
<td>10,72,753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>9,38,359</td>
<td>8,98,790</td>
<td>18,37,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>11,61,952</td>
<td>11,31,944</td>
<td>22,93,896</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census Publications of the Office of the Registrar General, India*

In the above table, it could be observed that state female population got increased from 1901 up to 1961, but, since 1971 the male population has shown marginal increased than the females. The decadal growth rate of the population of Manipur was higher in the decades 1971-1981, 1981-1991 and 1991-2001.

According to the 2001 census, the population of Manipur is 2,388,634, representing only 0.22% of the total population of India, while the tribals constitute 632,173 persons- 1,207,338 males and 1,181,296 females. The tribals represent 34.41% of the total population while their women represent 30.05% of the total female population of the state. Out of the total population, 57.67% of Manipur is Hindus, 34.11% are Christians, 8% are Muslims, 0.07% are Jains, 0.17% Sikhs, 0.04% Buddhists and 0.77% belong to other religion.
As per the Census 2011, "the total Manipur population at 0.00 hours of 1st March 2011 is 2,570,390. The rural population is 1,736,236 and the urban population is 834,154. In absolute numbers, out of the total increase of about 403,602 added in the last decade, the contribution of rural population is 145,416 and urban area is 258,186. The total scheduled caste population returned in Census, 2011 is 97042. Of this, about 47563 are in rural areas and 49479 in urban areas. In terms of proportion, the scheduled caste population constitutes 3.8% of the total population. The proportion during the last Census was 2.8%. There has thus been an increase of 1% during the last decade. The highest proportion of scheduled castes has been recorded in Thoubal district (9.6%) and lowest in Tamenglong district. The total scheduled tribe population returned in Census, 2011 is 902740. Of this, 791,126 are in rural areas and 111,614 in urban areas. In terms of proportion, the scheduled tribe population constitutes 35.1% of the total population. The proportion during the last census was 34.2%. There has thus been an increase of 0.9% during the last decade. The highest proportion of scheduled tribes has been recorded in Tamenglong district (95.7%) and the lowest in Thoubal district (0.4%)."
and Population Density of Manipur according to census, 2011 is given in table 3.4.1 and 3.4.2.

Manipur has a pluralistic society in which many ethnic and religious communities have settled by integration with the natural and the political settings. In the state, the Sanamahi was an indigenous religion of the Meiteis. From the medieval period, Sanamahi got changed into the Sanamahi idol worship (through Sanamahi Kondum). In the eighteenth century, King Garibniwaz (1709-1748) made Hinduism, the state religion. However, the Sanamahi is still professed among the Meiteis. Manipuri Muslims brought Islam as their religion in their migration to Manipur. The census of India has found out the population of Manipur by major religious community as the following (see table 3.43): The populations of Muslims as found in the table 3.4.3 in decennial census are 6.44% in 1951, 6.23% in 1961, 6.62% in 1971, 6.99% in 1981, 7.27% in 1991 and 8.32% in 2001.

Table 3.4.3: Population of Manipur by major religious communities (Census of Manipur, India, 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Sikhs</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Christains</th>
<th>Buddhists</th>
<th>Jains</th>
<th>Other Religions</th>
<th>Religion not stated</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 1951</td>
<td>3,47,325</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37,197</td>
<td>68,394</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,24,486</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>5,77,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 1961</td>
<td>4,81,112</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>48,588</td>
<td>1,52,043</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>96,668</td>
<td>7,80,037</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 1971</td>
<td>6,32,597</td>
<td>1,028</td>
<td>70,969</td>
<td>2,79,243</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>1,408</td>
<td>83,167</td>
<td>3,846</td>
<td>10,72,753</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 1991</td>
<td>10,59,470</td>
<td>1,301</td>
<td>1,33,535</td>
<td>6,26,669</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>1,337</td>
<td>14,066</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18,37,149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 2001</td>
<td>9,96,894</td>
<td>1,653</td>
<td>1,90,939</td>
<td>7,37,578</td>
<td>1,926</td>
<td>1,461</td>
<td>2,35,280</td>
<td>1,057</td>
<td>21,66,788*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Manipur is famous in the world for rich cultural heritage. The women of Manipur are reputed for the arts especially in weaving. It is considered as an honoured occupation which forms fine-tuned with designing of phanek, shawls, sarees, bedspreads, Dolaiphi (thin carpet in the palanquin), Pharangi phida (carpet) etc. Manipur is also famous for dance like classical Ras Leela and Lai Haraoba of the
Meeteis, the Naga dance, Bamboo dance of the Kukis. Since olden days, the state has always paid attention to sports and its indigenous sports like- the polo/the Sagol Kangjei, the Mukna (wrestling), the Mukna-Kangjei (wrestling-hockey), Yubilakpi (a kind of rugby) etc. Being the lalmi or soldiers during the kinship rule, the martial arts by sword and spear i.e. Thang Chainaba (sword fighting), Thang-Taa Chainaba (sword and spear fighting), and Sarit-Sarak (fight without arms) has formed into martial art training cum poetic tradition. Different religious communities in the state celebrate different festivals. Like the Cheiraoba, the Yaoshang, the Rathjatra, the Krishna Janma, the Radha Janma, the Durga Puja, the Bor, the Merahouchongba, the Ningol Chakkouba, the Diwali, etc are celebrated mainly by Meiteis. The Lui-Ngai-Ni, the Chakan-Ngeng-Im Ngai, the Chumphba, etc. are celebrated by the Nagas. The Kukis enthusiastically celebrate the crop festival known as the Chavang Kut. All the Manipuri’s exchanged helps during different festivals with full cheer in participating by providing personal and organizational efforts (Shah, 2008).

In the present study only six populations have been chosen. This includes Muslims with four different castes i.e. Sheikh, Syed, Pathan and Moghul, Meitei following Hindu religion and Naga (tribe). The following paragraphs will give a concise note on the above mentioned populations.

3.5 Ethno history of the people

3.5.1 The Muslims

Muslims (190,939; 2001 census), who account for 8% of the total population of the state, are mostly the migrants who started coming to the state in the middle of the 16th century. They have settled in the areas of Lilong, Mayang Imphal, Yairipok, Khetrigao, Sora and Kwakta. They are commonly known by the word ‘Pangal’. According to Hodson (1908) the word is a corrupt form of Bengal. But some scholars believe that the term “Pangal” is derived from the word “Pang” by adding the suffix “al” as early Pang ethnic (tribal) group was the first to embrace Islam.

Manipuri Muslims settlements are found in different parts of the Manipur valley and nearly 60 Muslims villages have been recorded by Singh and Khan in 1973 (Shah, 1990). All the Muslims of the world belonged to either of the two major sects- the Sunni or the Shia (Israel and Wagle, 1983). In India the Sunni Muslims far
outnumbered the Shia Muslims at an approximate ratio of 9:1 (Rizvi and Roy, 1984). The Muslims of North east India, including those of West Bengal predominately belongs to the Sunni sect. This trend has continued in Manipur too and so far not a single Shia Muslim has been traced from the state (Shah, 1990).

The Muslims of Manipur are the descendents of Turks (Moghul), Mongols, Pathans, Afghans, Bengali Muslims as well as local converts to Islam (Irene, 2010). Though main settlement in Manipur is traced to 1606 CE, but some Muslims arrived in Manipur in early seventh century CE also (Ahmed, 2011). They spoke languages like Urdu, Farsi, Turki, Arabic etc before, but they started adopting Meiteilon (Manipuri) by the time of King Khunjaoba (1652-1666 CE) however they, for long, continued to use many words and phrases of these languages (Irene, 2010). They have enriched Manipuri with these words. These Islamic races coming and settling in Manipur across the centuries were much influenced by the geography and topography of Manipur where they amalgamated in the course of history to form a single homogenous community of Muslims, helped much by the lingua-franca of Manipuri which they had adopted a mother tongue, and had formed a homogenous and egalitarian community of Sunni of Hanafi school of thought (Ahmed, 2011).

Two Moghul princes Shah Shuja (1662) and Mirza Baisanghar (1679) found settlement in Manipur after losing the war of successions. Moghul influence in Manipur was great. In Manipuri annals, Shah Shuja had been referred to as Sunarpul which is a corrupted word of Shunah-i-pil (officer-in-charge of elephants) as he came riding an elephant in 1679 from Makak (Moghul North India). He came with Mirza Baishanghar who was posted in Makokchung as Moghul governor in Naga Hills (then under Ahom) was annexed by the Moghuls under the 1663 Moghul-Ahom treaty (Irene, 2010; Habib and Nizami, 1993; Dutta, 1984; Blochmann, 1872).

Manipuri Muslims have been given different clan names which in Manipuri are called Yumnak or Sagei. The term “Sagei” is a corrupted word of Shaqzi which is an Urdu terminology. It is noted that names of clans were conferred on the immigrant Muslims and other clans which developed in the land of Manipur. About 74 clans are reported in Manipur in the present times.
Muslims in Manipur can be broadly divided into four groups viz. Sheikh, Syed, Pathan and Moghul castes; they belong to Sunni sect only. Irene (2010) gives a list of 45 sagei/yumnak (clans) making such classifications as follows:

1. Aribam (Sheikh)
2. Khullakpaam (Sheikh)
3. Khutheibam (Sheikh)
4. Phundrei Mayum (Pathan)
5. Yumkhaibam (Pathan)
6. Yumkham (Pathan)
7. Sanggomsambam (Sheikh)
8. Kori Mayum (Sheikh)
9. Ayekpam (Sheikh)
10. Hawai- Ingkhol (Sheikh)
11. Phusham (Sheikh)
12. Leishangkhong (Sheikh)
13. Sajabam (Sheikh)
14. Moijing (Sheikh)
15. Urup Mayum (Pathan)
16. Maibam (Sheikh)
17. Thoubal Mayum (Sheikh)
18. Moinam (Sheikh)
19. Chesam (Sheikh)
20. Mushram (Sheikh)
21. Bogi Mayum (Sheikh)
22. Sairem (Sheikh)
23. Thongkhong Mayum (Sheikh)
24. Wang Mayum (Sheikh)
25. Singgakhongbam (Sheikh)
26. Nongjai Mayum (Sheikh)
27. Mansam (Sheikh)
28. Phisabam (Sheikh)
29. Kamal Mayum (Pathan)
30. Pukhri Mayum (Sheikh)
31. Dolai Pabam (Sheikh)
32. Merai Mayum (Syed)
33. Basei Mayum (Sheikh)
34. Kontha Mayum (Sheikh)
35. Ipham (Pathan)
36. Labuktongbam (Pathan)
37. Makak Mayum (Moghul)
38. Nongsayaibam (Moghul)
39. Keinou Mayum (Pathan)
40. Yangkhubam (Sheikh)
41. Oinam (Sheikh)
42. Mayang Ariba (Sheikh)
43. Hidak- Ingkhol (Sheikh)
44. Mayang Anouba (Sheikh)

45. Phiringji Mayum (Sheikh)

46. Heibok Mayum (Sheikh)

Some of them are given below according to Ahmed, 2011; Sharma K and Badaruddin, 1991 and Makhjummayum, 2009.

1. **Aribam (Sheikh):** The Aribam (derived from 'Aribah') traces its biological ancestry to Hamza and Sa'ad ibn abi Waqqas, and the faith of Islam to Sa'ad ibn Abi Waqqas. Waqqas was among the three Sahaba who reportedly left Abyssinia by sea on way to China in 615 CE and reached Manipur via Chittagong port in that year itself. The three Sahaba preached for some time and reached China. It is noted that Saad abi Waqqas reached China from Abyssinia in a few months (Ahmed, 2011). Seventh century CE to 1606 CE Muslims in Manipur are generally regarded as Aribam Muslims. "Lairen Nawphangba (594-624) invited a Pangal Muslim guru (saint) who recently came to Manipur from the west to Kangla to help build the Kangla throne...This Pangal population as found in 930 CE were adept in preparing salt from dug wells since their co-religionists used to collect salt from the Bengal Sea... Royal Chronicle Ningthourel Lambuba described two Pasha villages and one Pangal village that flourished during the reign of King Irengba (984-1074)... (Later) Muslims were divided into four groups viz., Sheikh, Syed, Pathan and Moghul (Irene, 2010).

2. **Khullakpam (Sheikh):** Khullakpam clan ancestor is traced to a Shah Kusum, a brother of Muhammad Sani, who led a thousand strong Pasha troops from Taraf (Sylhet) and Cachar, were invited by rebel prince Sanongba of Manipur. Muhammad Sani, the chief of the Muslims came to Manipur in 1606. He had three brothers; one became a Khullakpa (administrator of a village), his descendants were known as Khullakpam (Irene, 2010). Muhammad Sani was appointed by the then Manipur King as one of his ministers. A source traces Muhammad Sani's ancestry to Mirza Malik Muhammad, a Persian (Turani) adventurer who came to Sylhet in 1384 CE.

3. **Khutheibam (Sheikh):** Khutheibam is a group who have traced their clan name from a skilled labour group that was recognized by the Ahallup (revenue department) in c. 1670 AD. Khutheibam clan ancestor is traced to Millia Shaikh who came with
Makak (Moghul) princes in the year 1679. A Darbar member called Waliullah, during British period, belongs to Khutheibam clan.

4. Phundrei (Pathan): Phundrei clan is traced to the ancestors - Zarnam Khan and Khundan Khan of 1606 who came from Taraf (Sylhet) with Muhammad Sani. Muhammad Alimuddin, the first Chief Minister of Statehood Manipur (1972-75), belonged to Phundrei Mayum.

5. Yumkheibam (Pathan): The clan ancestor is Kundan Khan which split out from Phundre mayum clan due to some dispute with Zaman Khan. Kundan Khan is the elder brother of Zaman Khan representing Phundrei Mayum.

6. Yumkham (Pathan): It is said that an elderly tied to prevent the split of the house between Kundan Khan and Zaman Khan but his efforts failed. Yet his descendants came to be called Yumkham which means "one who tried to prevent the wrangling at the house".

7. Sanggomsumbamb (Sheikh): Umar Sheikh, the ancestor of Sanggomsumbamb, was a soldier and very trained to make sweet dishes from Shagom (Milk) in Manipuri. From the word Shagom, the clan takes its name.

8. Korimayum (Sheikh): This group was an iron smith (metallurgy) clan; Kori refers to a metal copper (kori) and their descendants were called Korimayum. The clan ancestor is called Niyamatullah who was a soldier from Sylhet and came to Manipur with Mohammad Sani. He had the knowledge of how to use copper. He coated Panquin (dolai) to be presented to king with copper and also did all other copper related activities. From this act, King Khagemba of Manipur conferred the title Korimayum.

9. Ayekpam (Sheikh): The clan ancestor was a soldier who accompanied with Muhammad Sani. He knows painting very well. So the clan derives its name from Ayekpa means "one who draws a picture or paint". This clan claims to be an artist or writer since the early seventh century.

10. Hawai Ingkhol (Sheikh): The clan ancestors were Punom Shaikh and Zaffar Muhammad (Sapra Muhammad) who came from Taraf sana leipak in the big immigration of 1606. They were reputed for their proficiency in farming and
agriculture, and vegetables were produced abundantly, for which this particular clan name Hawai Ingkhol Mayum was given. This group also attended and looked after the estate of the king of Manipur in c. 1610.

11. Phusham (Sheikh): The clan ancestor is Shaikh Nooriya. He was a soldier who also accompanied with Muhammad Sani and settled in Manipur in 1606. He made a beautiful pot which Muhammad Sani presented to King Khagembha. From this King Khagembha gave the name Phusham to the clan.

12. Leishangkhong (Sheikh): The clan ancestor is Akraa Tullah. He was a soldier of Pasha musalmaan. He was a strong believer of Islam. Tullah according to the wish of King Khagembha settled at Leishangkhong by King Khagembha, from this the clan got its name.

13. Sajaobam (Sheikh): Sajaobam clan is originally derived from a sha choaba mee (a big and healthy man) named Shah Kulsum.

14. Moijing (Sheikh): Moijing Mayum clan ancestry is traced to Mahamuddin of Sylhet who came in 1606 CE.

15. Urup Mayum (Pathan): The Urup Mayum clan ancestor Khanok Khan came with Muhammad Sani in 1606 from Taraf. He was a renowned and ideal person and served as a sepoy who first lived at Urup, from which place his clan was called Urup Mayum by King Khagembha.

16. Maibam Mayum (Sheikh): The clan ancestor is Kaushar Muhammad who was one of the prominent Sardars of Muhammad Sani in 1606 AD. He belongs to Hawai Ingkhol clan but when he started to treat the ill and sick people and the disabled fraternity like a doctor (Shaman) or traditional doctor, Kaushar Muhammad was soon addressed as Maiba (traditional doctor) and descendants came to known as Maibam Mayum yummak (clan).

17. Thoubal Mayum (Sheikh): Its clan ancestry is traced to Ibrahim Miya who came in 1606 from Sylhet. As they settled on the bank of river thoubal, the sub clan was given Thoubal Mayum. Its ancestor was also noted to be from Taraf in Sylhet.

18. Moinam (Sheikh): The clan ancestor Jan Muhammad, who originally is from Mahur of Sylhet, came with Muhammad Sani when he was the Nawab of Sylhet. He
brought a bird (myna/moina) to Kagemba, following which his clan was called Moinam. According to some historians, meitei of Meinam embraced Islam and from him came this clan name.

19. Chesam (Sheikh): Chesam clan ancestor Shaikh Chunet/Zunaid alias Chunalia was a famous person who started the enterprise of paper making from bamboo in Manipur. From him the clan was conferred by King Khagemba as Chesam (one who makes paper). This group traced to those group of Arabs-Persians of silk route period (7th-8th century) who made papers after learning from the Chinese.

20. Mushram (Sheikh): Mushram clan ancestor is Mushra Kalimullah alias Uliya who came from Ilhail of Sylhet with Muhammad Sani. The clan name Mushram is derived from his name.

21. Bogi Mayum (Sheikh): Bogi Mayum clan ancestor Noor Beg was one of the three Moghul ambassadors, the other two being Dur Beg and Rustam Beg. Noor Beg stayed back in Manipur, while the other two went back in the court of Aurangzeb. They came to Manipur in 1662 to see veracity of flight of Moghul prince, Shah Shuja to Manipur in 1661. As another source notes: “In 1661 there was the coming of the Moghuls as messengers sent by Aurangzeb, the Emperor to plead for King Khagemba whether Aurangzeb’s brother Shah Shuja, the deposed governor of Bengal, took shelter in Manipur."

22. Sairem (Sheikh): The ancestor of the Sairem clan is Keisham Miya who came as a sepoy in Manipur with Muhammad Sani in 1606 CE. He married a beautiful Meitei lady of Sairem yumnak. In appreciation of her looks and charm, the husband chose to call his clan Sairem.

23. Singakhongbam (Sheikh): Singakhongbam clan ancestor is Shaikh Salimullah (Shaikh Sani Mullah) who was a piper (Singakhongba) of the pasha troops of 1606. After settling in Manipur, he joined the Singakhongba Loisang of Manipur army. He was at first called Pere Singa Khongba and subsequently his clan name came to be called Singakhongbam.

24. Nongjai Mayum (Sheikh): In 1627 Muhammad Abdul Qarim was sent to settle at Nungchai (Nungjai) village from which the clan name Nongjai Mayum is said to have started. But another account says that the clan originated from Allahabad when their
ancestor Mahamad Ataisha came and settle in Manpur in 1813. They came from a village called Nongjai of Sylhet. From this they were known as Nongjai Mayum.

25. Merai Mayum (Syed): Merai Mayum clan ancestors are Syed Ambiya, Syed Abdullah and Syed Khulka Hussain- the three brothers who came from Baniyachung of Sylhet, who were also known as Mir Sahebs. They brought a copy of the Holy Quran also.

26. Makak Mayum (Moghul): The Makak ancestor is traced to Mirza Baisanghars (alias Lukhiyarful) and Shah Shuja (alias Sunarpul) who reached Kangla from Makokchung outpost in Nagaland in the year 1679. Baisanghars was called Lkhayerful because he ruled over some period in Chittagong over Lakhayer community. Shah Shuja arrived on an elephant with the title “Shuhna-i-pil” which became his popular named as Sunarpul in Manipur. Abdul Ali, the first doctor of Manipur (1924-1956CE), belonged to Makak Mayum.

27. Nongshayalbam (Moghul): This clan group separated from the Makak when their ancestor Maltuya Shaikh alias Joy happened to have Sunbath in a ceremony, and the occasion prompted him to earn a clan title in those early days.

28. Ipham (Pathan): Ipham clan is traced to Putan Khan and Salim Khan- the Pathans who arrived from Gujarat in 1688. They had a close rapport with Shah Shuja while he was hiding in Heingang cave known as Shujalok. It is believed that some descendants of Shuja might have become Ipham clansmen.

29. Labuktongbam (Pathan): This group has derived its clan name for settling at a high plain (field) called Atongba Labuk.

30. Keinoumayum (Pathan): This group derived its clan name from having settled at a place called ‘Keinou’ that was named during king Khagemba period.

3.5.2 The Meiteis

The Meetei/Meitei represents the major dominant non-tribal population group, with 60% of the total state population (Lalit, 2007). They have settled in the following three valley districts of Manipur i.e. Imphal, Bishnupur and Thoubal Districts (Guite, 1991). The Meiteis got Hinduized during the 18th century but they also have been simultaneously following their traditional religion. They are considered as the
populations as the sole exception in the world’s history following two religions at the same time (Ghosh, 1992). The Meitei culture today is a mixture of their traditional culture brought down from generations and the Hinduised Meitei culture which came with the influence of Radha-Krishna culture. Present Meiteis, as being Vaisnav, followed the Vaisnav rituals and celebrate festivals like holi, Rath yatra with Radha-Krishna, Narayan etc. They also celebrate their traditional festivals like Lai Haraoba etc. and for this they invite the Meiba and Meibei for the rituals. The influence of both cultures can be noticed while analyzing their folk culture. They are Mongoloid in physical features, and belong to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group.

The history of the Meitei is still hazy, but it is a fact that they represent a mixture of many races (Zehol, 1998). Hodson (1975) had given opinion that the group name “Meithei” has been derived from Mi = man and thei = separate. While Hodgson (1853) expressed his view, in a footnote to A contribution to the Asiatic society of Bengal in 1853, that the Moitay of Manipur, is the combined appellations of the Siamese Tai and the Cochin Chinese “May”. However, great Shan opines that it is difficult to group the Meitheis with the Tai races when the structure and vocabulary of the Meithei language alike agree with those of the Tibeto-Burman races (Roy, 1973). Grierson (1903) opined that the Meiteis originated from the upper courses of the Yangtze and Hoyang Ho in China. Hodson (1975) suggested that the Meitei are presumably formed by the admixture of Koomal, Looang, Moirang and Meitei, all of whom came in different periods of time from different directions and now represent the clans of the community (Shah et al., 2013). The modern Meitei race is a composite formed out of several tribes. Sir James Johnstone (1971) writes in his book “Manipur and the Naga hills” ‘the Manipuris (The Meiteis) themselves are fine stalwart race descended from an Indo-Chinese, stock with some admixture of Aryan invaders that have passed through the valley in Prehistoric days’. Roy (1973) also writes “The modern Manipuri race is a composite one formed out of several tribes. The fertile valley of Manipur witnessed the invasions of different tribes from time immemorial. At different periods the Nagas, the Kukis, the Shans and Chinese came and settled in this land and merged themselves into the Manipuri community. Some Aryan and Dravidians features are also found in them”. Dr Brown (1874) describes that “although the general facial characteristics of Munniporie (The Meitei) are of the Mongolian type, there is a great diversity of feature among them, some of them
showing a regularity approaching the Aryan type. Among both men and women the
statures vary. Most of them are very good looking and fair. Girls of Manipur are
mostly fair complexion, straight noses, brownish black hair, brown eyes with rosy
checks. The Munipories man also have good chest and well formed limbs. The
religious faith of the Meiteis/Meeitei is Vaishnavite Hinduism.

**Genesis of gotra system:**

The Meiteis consists of seven *saleis* (clans): Ningthouja, Khoomon, Looang,
Angom, Morirang, Nangba and Chengloai. The seven *saleis* further also consisted of a
number of sub-groups called Yumnaks, where the number varies from 115
(Ningthouja) which is a Royal clan to 17 in the Nangba. The Meiteis are mostly
exogamous regarding the clans or *saleis* into which they are divided, but again are
endogamous regarding members of other tribes. They have been following some
subsidiary rules like, the Looangs have been forbidden to take their wives from among
the Khoomons, and the Morirangs are not permitted to marry the Khabananbas. The
advent of Hinduism in Meitei have resulted in assigning of different gotras to the
clans, and in the process the Vaishnava cult preachers were responsible for seizing for
the Meiteis the best lot of the prevalent gotras among the Hindus. The clan Ningthouja
has been given the Brahminic *Shandiya* gotra, while the Angom, Chengloai Nangba,
Looang, Khoomon and Morirang was assigned gotras like Kausika, Bharadvaj,
Noimisha, Kashyap, Modkoilya and Ateya respectively (Lahiri and Bimal, 1987;
Hoakip, 2008).

**3.5.3 The Nagas**

The Nagas of Manipur includes the Tangkhul, Mao and Maram, Jaliangrong
and the Kabui which mostly occupy the Northern and North-western hills of Manipur.
Naga populations are found in the states of Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh
and Assam and of India and Naga Hills of Upper Myanmar. How the name "Naga"
has been derived is still now not clear. Anthropologists and historians have made
several attempts to trace out the origin of the word. According to some scholars the
word 'Naga' is derived from Sanskrit word “Ng” meaning mountain as the people live
mostly in the high hills. Thus it implies “hill man”. Verrier Elwin opines that, "the
derivation of the word is still obscure." Many Naga dynasties have been referred in the
Puranas and the Epics. The word “Naga” was first recorded for the first time in the Ahom chronicles dating back to the 9th century A.D., when the Ahom-Tais or Shans were living in upper Burma and had not crossed the Brahmaputra valley. Gait, the British explorer and a great historian of Assam during 1906 propounded one theory about the origin of the Naga tribes. He has written that, “The collective designation by which they are known to the Assamese seems to be derived, as suggested by Holcombe and Peal, from “Nok” which means folk in some of the tribal dialect. When strange parties meet, they are said to ask each other term Noke or Nok meaning “what folk are you” and Nokrang meaning “the people of the sky”. But few other Naga scholars have also proposed two new theories. One theory proposed that the word Naga has been derived from the Kachari word Nokka (Nokhhar) meaning warrior fighters as the Kacharis where known to have violent conflict with Nagas of that time. According to second theory, the word Naga has derived from the Burmese word Na Ka meaning pierced ears. The name was believed to have given to mean the Nagas by the outsiders, who are the inhabitants of Brahmaputra and Barak valleys. British colonial authorities also popularized and enforced the name for their smooth and convenient administrator and also for identifying and classifying the tribal populations of Nagaland and Manipur (Kabui, 1995; Haokip, 2008). According to some scholars, the Naga are the indigenous tribal population of Manipur, who belongs to the Naga–Kuki–Chin group of the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family. These populations are believed to have migrated probably 300–400 years ago from Burma to Manipur (Saha and Tay, 1990). The tribal population of Manipur who are under the Naga fold are considered to be among the early inhabitants who have settled in the hills of Manipur.
Plate (A, B): Researcher with Sheikh population.

Plate (C, D): Researcher with Syed population.
Plate (E, F): Researcher with Pathan population.

Plate (G, H): Researcher with Moghul population.
Plate (I, J): Researcher with Meitei population.

Plate (K, L): Researcher with Naga population.