PREFACE

Majority of the people among the Simte tribe, many persons living among the Paites and some persons living among the Thadous, Hmars, Zos, Gangtes, etc., mainly in Churachandpur district and also in some parts of Imphal, Manipur belonged to the same ethnological clan. They claimed that they live among different communities and speak different languages, they are recognized as tribes belonging to different tribal groups, i.e. those living among the Simtes are recognized as Simte, those living among the Paites are recognized as Paite and those living among the Thados, Hmars and Zos are recognized as Thado, Hmar and Zo respectively. This is because of the geographical location in which they resided and also the language they speak following the language of the people among whom they lived. But they all claimed to have belonged to the same ethnic clan and are descendents of the same ancestor called “Ngaihte”. There are some villages in Churachandpur District which were established by the Ngaihtes and are still under the Nagihtes’ chieftainship. Ngaihte people are also found in different parts in the Chin Hills of Myanmar and few of them also resided in some villages in Mizoram.

The Ngaihte legends told that they had their own well established Ngaihte history, they had their own customs and traditions, their village chiefs run their village administration efficiently and in accordance with the accepted social norms and cultural life. All these prompted the scholar to do this wide and extensive research work in order to find out the ethno-historical origin, dissension, and migration since their earliest
period of origin from the Chin Hills of Burma till their migration and settlement at
different place in Manipur, and also to find out what were their customs and traditions,
and are their customs and traditions still observed and practiced? If so what significance
and value they have in the present context of modern changing society? Therefore, the
work is entitled “The Ngaihtes: An Ethno Historical Study”. The entire work is divided
into eight chapters.

The first chapter dealt with the general outline of the land and the people of
Manipur. It defines the different communities comprising the general and the tribal
groups. The tribal are divided into the Nagas and the Non Nagas. The Non Nagas are
again divided into different tribes; each tribe in turn being constituted by different clans.
It also stated in short the implications of the terms Chin, Zo, Kuki, Lishai etc.

The second chapter traces the origin, migration and settlement of the
Ngaihtes in the Chin Hills of Burma, followed by their migration into Manipur and
establishment of different Ngaihte villages and their settlement at different places.

The third chapter is about the distinct culture and customs which the
Ngaihtes followed since their early history; their significance and extend of applications
to the present day context.

The fourth chapter explains how villages under the Ngaihtes’ chieftainship
were governed, what were the powers and functions of the village chiefs, the privileges
enjoyed by the chiefs and his Council of Ministers and the way what kinds of different
cases were brought to the chief’s house and how they were settled.
The fifth chapter brought to light the superstitious believe of the early Chin, Kuki and Zomis in general, their early religion, the different kinds of sacrifices and offerings which they made to their deities in order to get freedom from their clutches and also get their blessing. It also explains how Christianity came among the Chin people in Burma and also among the people in Churachandpur district, particularly the entry of Christianity into the villages established by the Ngaihtes.

The sixth chapter deals with the social and cultural life. It discusses the different ornaments, costumes, musical instruments and the different kinds of social gathering and conferences organized by the Ngaihtes.

The seventh chapter narrated the different activities related to their economy. The method of cultivation, the different kinds of seeds and vegetables sown in their fields and how they were harvested, causes of famine and food substitutes during famine, the different kinds of small scale and cottage industries with their products, the different kinds of domestic tools and implements, fishing and hunting activities, the horticulture products, and importance of employment in Government services and other regularly paid engagements are all dealt with.

The eight Chapter is the concluding part. In this chapter is given the over all assessment of what has been written in the foregoing 7(seven) chapters. The problem of identity face by the Ngaihtes, especially after recognition of the tribes in Manipur by the Government in 1956 is also highlighted. The scholar has also given his suggestion as an alternative means for recognition of the tribes.
Absence of authenticated records and documents about the Ngaihtes stands the main hurdle on the way of this research endeavor. Books on the Chin, Kuki, Mizo etc. living in Manipur, Mizoram and the Chin Hills of Burma written by the Britishers’, foreign nationals and Indian authors during the colonial and post colonial period were available. But, the irony is that such books dealing with the Ngaihtes in particular, are very scares, except some booklets, anniversary publications, magazines, personal letters, personal records etc. Therefore, in order to get sufficient information and reliable materials extensive tours to different villages and remote places were made and personal interviews with the village chiefs, village elders, public leaders, church leaders and other persons believed to possess wide experience and knowledge were conducted. In addition, field trips, spot enquiry, study of monuments and monolithic etc. added valuable source for this research work.