INTRODUCTION
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The proposed thesis under its title *Ethnic Fission Among the Kukis of Manipur* is a piece of work on, as the name suggests, the historical process of the formations of several tribal ethnic identities within one *tribus* of the ethnic triad of Manipur (*tribus* is a Latin word meaning 'one-third'). This ethnic one-third of the population of Manipur with which the present study is concerned refers to that people whose name is recorded officially in the British administrative accounts of colonial time as the Kukis, the other two units of the triad being the Meiteis and the Nagas.

The Britishers applied this nomenclature apparently in linguistic consideration; they have common language family. In the face of this linguistic oneness of the people, they have, however, indulged themselves in a contingent continuous process of tribal ethnic proliferations. Currently as many as 24 Scheduled Tribes of Manipur out of the total of 33, as so recognized by the Constitution of India, may be claimed to be of larger Kuki ethnic background; a few more groups of the Kukis have also been on the move for their placement in that status. It may be observed here that this trend of intra-ethnic relations of the Kukis is the reverse of the process of ethnic formation among the Nagas in whose case tribes of mutually unintelligible speeches have coalesced to form a new generic collective ethnic entity, christened as the Nagas, a name that was probably
erstwhile not known to any of their tribes. The case of the Meiteis is different from either of them; the Meiteis formed their nationality several centuries back that has survived the trials and tribulations of a long history. What is more, the Kukis intratribal segmentations are associated with certain forms of conflicts both within and outside their groups. The present study has its central interest in investigating why, how and when the process of the varied ethnic tribal identifications has taken place among this people, and also in highlighting the fallouts of their fragmentations in their ethnic relations within and without their groups. Accordingly, the study starts with the following assumptions:

(1) that, the people have strong inherent in-group differences which are the accumulated consequences of their history, both ancient and immediate, that find their expressions in:

(a) the internal dialectal and cultural differences of customs and manners even during the stage of their history when their ancestors were living in the Chin Hills State of Myanmar where majority of their close ethnic compatriots live till to-day.

(b) their inexorably diversified affiliations to the ever increasing denominations and sub-denominations of Christianity.
(2) and, lastly, that all these differences within the people get fermented under the
democratic administrative and political set-up of independent India, it leading
to ethnic fission of the Kukis in Manipur.

In consonance with its interests and the concomitant assumptions of the
work stated above, the thesis is organized under the following chapters that follow
in sequence with its Introduction at the beginning:

The First Chapter delves into the history of the larger community, a section
of whose collectivity named the Kukis living in Manipur and whose problem of
ethnic segmentations it is the focal point of the present study. By larger
community of the Kukis of Manipur is meant the greater Kuki-Chin community
whose member tribes are dispersed not only in the Chin Hills area and the Arakan
region of Myanmar but also in the Chittagong Hills and Sylhet District of modern
Bangladesh, and in Mizoram State, both southern and northern Cachar of Assam,
hill areas of Tripura, Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya. Knowledge of their
history of dispersal from the Chin Hills, and also arrival of their ancestors from
their earlier successive places of settlement to the Chin Hills is necessary for
understanding the various aspects of the relations between and betwixt the Kukis
of Manipur as these are mostly rooted in the differences of certain aspects of their
culture and historical traditions that their ancestors had while they were settling in
the Chin Hills area, as well as that they had had earlier in their sojourns at various
northerly places. The historical literature of this stock of people prior to their habitation in the Chin Hills is so far scanty. An attempt is, however, made in this chapter to reconstruct their history of diversity of their identities while their ancestors were living in southern China and northern south-east Asia on the basis of material provided in *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia*, edited by Frank M. Lebar and *et al.* (1964); it may be claimed here that these material have not been utilized in any earlier work in reflecting the historical picture of the immediate source of the later ethnic two-fold diversity among the Kuki-Chins.

One thing that deserves special attention is the issue of their collective ethnic nomenclature. So far they have no unanimously accepted collective ethnonym. Rather they are referred to by a variety of appellations. The acceptabilities and non-acceptabilities of these varied names are critically examined in this chapter, too. They are called by different names in different regions. Difference of their nomenclature itself is an expression of ethnic segmentation and fragmentation.

The Second Chapter closely describes the culturally diverse customs and manners of the people in their broader ethnic context. The cumulative results of diverse ethnic identities of the groups of the Kuki-Chin people in their history in the past are obtained in their corresponding diversities of customs and manners, and dialects as well, that one can observe when they were settled in the Chin Hills.
areas of Myanmar where many of their cultural institutions become more or less formalized. The elements of those traditions of diverse customs and manners were transplanted by those offshoots of the people, on their migration from there to eastern India and Bangladesh. In Manipur, these traditions of diverse cultural traits and complexes actively work at the root of the problem of internal tribal fragmentations. Hence this chapter of the work is devoted to describing the diverse customs and manners of the Kuki-Chins of Burma which the British officers could observe during the years of their administration of these peoples.

In the Third Chapter is shown a panoramic view of the palpable functioning of their internal divisiveness as the coefficient of the expansion of Christian creed and faith into proliferating denominations. The spate of tribal ethnic segmentations and fissioning is clearly considerably high among the Kukis of Manipur, and at the same time it is interesting to observe among this people that the inherent divisiveness working at the background of their tribal diversification works equally actively also in their new exposure to the Christian faith; in this sphere of their life, too, they are briskly divided into a really large number of independent Christian churches, in a big way as compared with the case in the Naga community. The Third Chapter attempts to examine the nature of the relationship holding between the two phenomena of the people's internal cleavages.
The real picture of the actual process of ethnic tribal fission of the people under study into a number of tribal ethnolings and their ethno-political relations, within and without of their communities, is presented in relief in the Fourth Chapter. And the thesis is concluded in the Fifth Chapter wherein are arrayed its major findings that the real process of ethnic fission among the people actually takes place along the frame of the basic assumptions postulated at the beginning of the work on the reality of the process in point.

Methodology

Thus, the material on which this work rests are by and large collected from secondary sources; only in the few such cases as of the grand genealogy of the people at large are primary first hand information collected through interviews with the informants. Again, the material used in the work are mostly historical ones; this dependence on the historical data is so necessitated by the nature of the work; it gives its focal thrust on the issue of the phenomenal segmentation and fragmentation of the Kuki-Chins, particularly among the Kukis of Manipur, indeed; but explanation of the problem is effected through a conceptual frame of casual relationship of the same with certain historical antecedents of the people.

The primarily historical frame of the work must have been observed all too apparently by now. It may also, however, be observed that the work has at its undercurrent a structural frame for analyzing the material including the historical
ones. History and structure are not mutually exclusive of each other. Rather they go hand in hand.

The concept of structure employed here is that of its dynamic type. Held as a dynamic concept, social structure is a process of both division and coalition i.e., fission and fusion, which are two aspects of the same structuring principle. Yet, while duly keeping in mind the complementary aspect of fusion in the structural process, the present work exerts its preponderant thrust on the divisive eventualities actually taking place in the on-going socio-political process of the Kukis in Manipur.

Significance of the Work.

It may be hoped that the work throws some light on the ethnic history of the Kuki-Chins while their ancestors were sojourning in the region of south China and northern Southeast Asia. Attempt in the present work to historically trace ethnic connection of the Kuki-Chins with the Miao, Yao and the Lai peoples of the northern Southeast Asia and the southern China is probably the first of its kind in the historical literature of this people. Secondly, the work may also be expected to hold out certain insights into the people’s problem of arriving at a consensus on their own collective ethnic nomenclature, in the light of which they may themselves settle down the issue. More importantly, the work may be treated as a well documented treatise on the internal dynamics of conflicting relations between
and betwixt the several tribal groups among the Kuki-Chins themselves, which, rooted in the diverse historical traditions, find their expressions in their ever-going proliferations of tribal ethnic identities and religious affiliations to several Christian denominations of ever-increasing number; as such, it may be expected to stand as a veritable guide to understanding any issue of divisions among this people, whether segmentations of kingroups or of tribal identities, or segmentation of religious groups, or the like.