Chapter-III

SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND
HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

The tribes inhabiting the hills of Manipur are little known to the outsiders as records of their history were scanty, rather nil until the early part of the twentieth century. But the fact remains that the tribes in Manipur are generally classified into two groups wherever reference is made by any writer in the past and present - The Naga group and the Chin-Kuki groups. Both the groups belong to Mongoloid race but are of Tibeto-Burman ethnic stock. The classification of them into two is based on their cultural difference. There are a number of traditions about their origins and their progenitors differing from tribe to tribe. But one thing is certain about them that whoever might be their progenitor, he had lived somewhere in central China, which is revealed by all their traditions handed down from generation to generation.

It is imperative to understand the present state of affairs with the tribals in the tiny state of Manipur and the queries like who are the Nagas and who are the Chin-Kukis in Manipur?

There are at present twentynine recognised Scheduled tribes in Manipur, classification of them into two major groups - the Nagas and the Chin-Kuki-Mizos plus the intermediate groups as prepared by the Directorate for Development of Tribals and Backward classes, Government of Manipur¹ is as follows:

¹Tribes in Manipur at a Glance (1981), Published by the Directorate for Development of Tribals and Backward Classes, Govt. of Manipur.
I. Under the term 'Naga''
   1) Kabui (Rongmei and Puimei),
   2) Kacha Naga (Liangmei and Zemei collectively known as Zeliangrong)
   3) Hao
   4) Maram
   5) Tangkhu and
   6) Maring

II. Under the term 'Chin-Kuki-Mizo''
   1) Gangte
   2) Hmar
   3) Lushai (Mizo)
   4) Paite
   5) Simte
   6) Thado (Kuki)
   7) Vaiphei and
   8) Zo

III. The intermediate group
   1) Aimol
   2) Chiru
   3) Koireng
   4) Kom (collectively called Komrem)
   5) Anal
6) Chothe
7) Lankang
8) Koira/Thangal
9) Purum
10) Monsang and
11) Hoyon

The third group or intermediate group listed above is found abridging between the Nagas and the Chin-Kuki-Mizos, therefore they were also known as old Kukis in anthropological literature.

Linguistic difference is greater among the Nagas than among the Chin-Kuki-Mizos. Of course, all the tribes in Manipur are patrilineal in descent, but their customs of inheritance\(^2\) vary among them in two ways: the prime heirship falls on the eldest son in case of some tribes whereas it falls on the youngest son in the case of some tribes. Among the Naga tribes too, the Tangkhuls practise the custom of inheritance on the eldest son line but the Maoas, the Kabuis, the Marings follow the youngest son rule. Among the Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups also, the Gangte, the Paites, the Sinte, the Waiphei, the Thado and the Zo practise the custom of inheritance

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\(^2\) Panoramic View of the Tribes of Manipur: Published by the Directorate for Development of Tribals and Backward classes, Govt. of Manipur, p.1 (1951)
on the line of the eldest son, but the Hmar and the Mizo follow
the rule of inheritance on the line of the youngest son.

As stated above the tribals of Manipur generally classified
into two groups - Nagas and Kukis (Chin-Kuki - Mizo) have markedly
characteristic differences in many respects - in social system,
social behaviour, custom, outlook, culture, mode of construction
of house, system of administration and their tools and implements.
No doubt, both the groups are tribals, till recent past known as
head-hunters and in religion animists. Both of them have given
up their head-hunting and become heart-hunters for Christ and
Christianity. In Meitei (Manipuri) the term 'Hau' is used to
refer to them and 'Khongjai' is again used to refer to the Chin-
Kuki-Mizo groups, but these two terms have become almost obsolete
to-day. These two terms, 'Hau' and 'Khongjai' sound to the ear
of the tribals as a disgusting term and accordingly in their usage
too they were just very often in a scornful sense.

All the mythologies, traditions, legendary stories, folk-
tales and songs drive all the past writers and scholars alike to
the same conclusion that including the Meiteis all the inhabitants
of this part of the land were coming from the same ancestral home
some where in central China, which was first mentioned by Pemberton
in the following words:
"We may safely conclude them (Meiteis) to be descendants from a Tartar colony from China\textsuperscript{3}.

The belief that Capt. Pemberton held about the origin of the inhabitants of Manipur, the Meiteis, the Nagas and the Chin-Kuki-Mizos is supported by all the traditions, folktales, folksongs etc. of the tribals of Manipur. The Nagas had the story of their coming out of a 'Hole' and similar story had been in current with the Chin-Kuki-Mizos groups about their coming out of 'Khul' meaning cave or Chinlung in Mizo(Lushai) word or Sinlung in Hmar word.

The Maring too had a legendary story about the under world habitat as follows as quoted by R.R. Shimray: The legend goes that a Maring Naga called Zerang-rangmei saw a squirrel carrying a paddy sheaf. He threw a tong at the squirrel and it cropped the paddy sheaf. Zirang-rangmei then picked it up and reported the matter to Mungkarung and Tangkarung who convened a meeting at the Jami village as to what to do with the grain. After much deliberations in consultation with the seers and also after performing the tribal divination, it was decided that Samruitar should keep the grain in a safe basket so that the rats may not eat away the grain. When sowing time approached, seer announced that one honest person should do the sowing and thus the choice fell on

\textsuperscript{3} Pemberton, Capt., R.B.: \textit{Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India} (1835), p.6
Tangsoakhalung. When they saw the paddy growing, the next problem was the monkeys near the paddy. Mungkarung and Tangkarung took the dogs and Tangsoakhalung a dao and they all pursued the monkeys to the end of the world and ultimately reached the overground world.4 This is a legendary story of the origin of the tribals of Manipur current with the Haring Nagas. This legend is further supported by a Tangkhul folksong which runs as below:

"O katata kashangshang,
Na kachi eina Shokli,
O Marilungvali shok
O chili mashokakha
O kazing sirali kanganalo,
Laga unghangserle."5

English translation:

"O thou, travellers, whence thou cometh?
O come I through the deep holes and rocks.
If not cometh from that,
O listen to the stars and sky,
And come thou all to report".

4 Shimray, R.R., Origin & Culture of Nagas, p.17
5 Luikham, T. Wung Naga Okhot Mayonza (Tangkhul), p.24
This folksong approvingly quoted by the Tangkhul writers, T. Luikham and R.R. Shimray in their treatises gives forth a clear indication that the Nagas had come out through a hard and deep gorge of a high mountain; so deep, perhaps, was the gate way they passed through that the ridge of the mountain seemed touching the sky and the stars 6. A number of folksongs about their origin were still current with the elders of Paite, one of them runs as below:

"Eiteng khawh khaw a tuam awlo,
Vannual chiteng khul a piang;
Tunsung khat piang hi ngeingei,
Tunsung khat a piang hi ngeingei,
Sudpih sanggam,
Laizom khat hi ngeingei hang e."

(We, people who are in aggregation are of one stock,
Every one of us under the sun is born of a cave;
And born of the same mother,
We are all born together as siblings;
We are really descendants of the same siblings) 7.

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6 Shimray, R.R. : Origin and Culture of Nagas, p.19

7 Kamkhentang, H., The Paite A transborder tribe of India & Burma (1936), p.6
A similar folksong in Hmar runs as follows:

"Kam siengna Sinlung ram hmingthang,
Ka nuram kapa ram ngai;
Chawngzil ang kokir thei nisien changesien,
Ka nuram kapa ram ngai.

(In English)

"My motherland, famous Sin-lung,
Home of my own ancestors,
Could it be called back like Chawngzil,
Home of my own ancestors." 8

Again another legendary story current with the Thados (Kukis) about their origin as recorded by William Shaw, Author of the Thadou Kukis is as follows:

The Thadous used to live under the earth, or rather inside it. Noimangpa (king of the underground land) was the chief of this subterranean region. One Chongthu, a relative of Noimangpa, went hunting porcupines in the jungle with his dog and discovered a large hole. He perceived that the upper part of the earth was uninhabited and there was a great darkness. That darkness lasting for seven days is known as 'Thimjin' by the Thados.

8 Pudaite, Rochunga, The Edn. of the Hmar people (1963), p.21
Chongthu so rejoined at the discovery of the overground, gave up his hunting and returned home. He conjured up ideas of founding a village of his own on the earth and planned accordingly. By that time, the Noimangpa was performing the Chon (merit) festival which every one in the village had to attend including Chongja, the elder brother of Chongthu. Noimangpa's son Chonkim was also present. During the feast was served, Chongthu started waving his sharp sword about, challenging every one. As the waving of the sword being so vigorous, he happened to injure some of the folks present, at which all became angered with him. This action of Chongthu was premeditated as he thought that by doing so he should be turned out from the underground world and then he could found a village of his own on the overground world. The news of Chongthu's misbehaviour soon spread in the village and reached the ear of Noimangpa. Noimangpa then said, "Chongthu had better live in Heaven", the meaning of which is that he is to be better killed. By hearing the remark of the Noimangpa, Chongthu found himself successful in his pre-plan act and at once prepared to migrate from the underground world to the over ground world through the 'hole'. This is the hole called in Thado 'Khul'. Then Chongja and Chongthu, being brothers killed a number of pigs and chickens and threw feast to the fellow subjects in preparation for their departure.9

9 Shaw, William, : The Thadou Kukia, Cultural Publishing House, (1929), Delhi-110007, pp.24-25
There is another version about their origin among the Thados, which was related by Major McCulloch, who dealt with the tribals at length in his book, 'Valley of Manipur'.

"The Khongjais (Thado Kukis) bring their progenitors from the bowels of the earth and they relate the manner of their reaching the surface of the earth thus. One day their king's brother was hunting hedgedogs, when his dog in pursuit of one entering a cavern remained at the mouth of the cavern waiting for the return of the hedgedog for a pretty long time. After a lapse of a pretty long time, the dog not having returned, the master had become perturbed and determined to go in and see what had become of the matter. He could not trace the dog but found its footsteps and followed the tracks. Then he found himself suddenly on the surface of the earth.

The scene presented to his view both pleased and astonished him, returning to his brother he related his adventure, and counselled him to ascend with his village to the new country. To his proposal the king agreed, and having made arrangements, they started on their journey, they had arrived near the surface, when they found in the way a large Serpent which obstructed their further progress and so that the orifice by which they were to emerge had over it a great stone kept open merely by the support
a bird gave it with its legs. On seeing this the people of the village began to abuse the king's brother, accusing him of having deceived them, and of having brought them from their burrow to deliver them to the Serpent. Stung with their reproaches the king's brother attacked and killed the snake, and he and the greater portion of the village emerged into light. Meanwhile the king, having discovered that a wooden dish or bowl which had the magical property of always being full of meat, and some other articles of similar magical description, were not amongst his effects, return to fetch them. Before he got back, the bird having got tired of supporting the stone had let it loose and drop and unable to raise it, he and his wife had to remain below. Attributing the closing of the orifice to the ambition of her brother-in-law to become king, Nemnik, the king's wife cursed him and those who had gone up with him, to suffer from diseases hitherto unknown to them. The curse, they say, is still upon them, and when disease presses them. Sorely they sacrifice to Nemnik a mithun in mitigation of her wrath. ¹⁰

Even though much can not be known about the settlement of the tribemen of this part of the land in the cave or hole in China, since there is the tradition about it and the tradition

¹⁰ Culloch, Major, Valley of Manipur, Gian Pub. Delhi, pp.55-56
is supported by many writers' observations in the past and present, it can be taken as an acceptable fact that the hill tribes of Manipur originally hailed from China. Not only the hill tribes of Manipur but the whole North Eastern states of India - Meghalaya, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram and the following countries - Malaya, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Vietnam, Korea etc. of the South east Asia have been dubbed ethnically and racially as the Mongoloid belt area. Reference to this is made by Mirmal Nibedon in his treatise on 'North East India - The ethnic explosion' saying, "Those were the days of great migrations too, as the tribesmen from as distant a region as Sarawak, crossed the oceans and mountain ranges in search of new pastures and grazing grounds. But the greatest migrations, perhaps, were those from China many Centuries ago. They happened even before Buddhism was born. The first who were believed to have moved southward into the flatlands and valleys were the Malays, sometime between 2,500 and 1,500 B.C."^{11}

The present Burmese too were believed to have moved around the 12th century enroute to Tibet and then the Thais and the Laos too were believed to have migrated from the kingdom of Nanchao in South China.

And the other ethnic groups, warlike and brave, like the
Vietnames, who settle across the coast of the extreme South-East
Asian corner were also believed to have migrated from the Canton
area of China. Then coming to the people of the North Eastern
states of India like the Ahoms, the Bodos, the Mikirs, the Cachari
tribals of Assam, the Khasis, the Jantias, and the Garos of
Meghalaya, the Mishings, the Konyaks of Arunachal Pradesh, the
Angamis, the Aos, the Chakesangs, the Lothas, the Rengmas, the
Semas etc. of Nagaland, the Hbusis, the Naos, the Lambangs, the
Marams, the Marings, the Annals, the Koms, the Monsangs, the
Noyons, the Tangkhuls and the Hmars, the Kukis (Thados), the
Paites, the Vaipheis, the Sibtes, the Gangtes, the Zoos etc. of
Manipur and the various tribes of Mizoram like the Hzos (Lushais),
the Lakthers, the Pois, the Chakmas, the Paites, the Hmars etc.
are believed to have migrated from Central China at different
periods of time southward before the birth of Christ. The south-
ward migration from China witnesses a dramatic turn westward in
the second quarter of the 13th century, as ethnic Ahom tribesmen
crossed the Pathoi ranges, leaving their Shan cousins to settle
down in north-western Burma.\textsuperscript{12}

The facts noted above are supported by the legends narra-
ted by Lianzamang, chief of Bungmual, who is quite conversant

\textsuperscript{12} Nibedon, Mirnal, : North-East India The Ethnic Explosion, Lancers
about the genealogical history of the hill tribes of the North-Eastern states of India and Upper Burma as revealed in the interview with him by the present scholar as follows.

According to him, there was a Chinaking, quite arrogant, by name Si Huangti. The famous China wall was being constructed during his reign. The ancient people of the various tribes of the North-Eastern region of India were engaged as labourers in the China Wall construction. But after the demise of the king, Si Huangti, the gate of the China Wall was not properly guarded, and as a result of it, most of the labourers heavily engaged in the work of China wall construction escaped steal-thily from the gate.¹³

That the man without formal education like Lianzamang could gather such information through his parents about the origin of the hill people of this part of the land can be taken as proven evidence of the truth. This traditional theory of the origin of the various tribes in the north-eastern India has been current with the Mizos too. Rev. Liangkhaia of Saitual, Mizoram wrote in his book, in 1938, 'Mizo Chanchin' (History of the Mizos) that all the people of the north-eastern India including the

¹³ Lianzamang: Interview records with him by the scholar on the 14th Feb. 1987, at Lamka.
Assamese, Khasis and Meiteis and of Burma are of the same Mongolian race belonging to Tibeto-Burman ethnic group coming out from the same 'Chhinlung' which means a 'cave having a lid'. According to him, another tradition says that there was a Chinese king, named Chin-lung sometime around 750 A.D., he was not in good terms with his father, consequently he migrated out of China with a large section of their subjects and settled in Burma at 'AMK Satlang' thus within a short period of time the population increased like anything. And they started scattering in various places and they are known as to have all originated from 'Chhinlung' dynasty. 14

With all the history of their background, the hill tribes of Manipur may be concluded as the people coming originally from China via Burma, but in different periods. Their immigration into Manipur took place in phase manner, mainly in two waves before and after 1500 A.D. The nagas, the so-called Cacha Nagas, the old Kukis including the Meiteis occupied this part of the land earlier than the Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi groups. The latter groups immigrated phase by phase after 1500 A.D. from Burma via the present Mizoram. Among the Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi groups too, the Kmars entered North-east India earlier, which can be studied

from the monuments, tools and implements discarded in their abandoned villages.

There is another tradition about the origin of the hill tribes of Manipur cited by Mr. Piangzathang in his booklet, 'A Story of the Guite Chiefs', which says that the generation of the Guite chiefs of the period of their settlement in the area of China can be traced as follows:

1) Dialatal,
2) Chinlung,
3) Mangtongthu,
4) Sattawng,
5) Thangpi,
6) Lehing,
7) Singuang,
8) Sito,
9) Guite,
10) Tuahchiang,
11) Lamlei,
12) Lammang,
13) Ngeknguk,
14) Hangpi,
15) Tawnlun, and
16) Tawnmang.\(^{15}\)

The Guite chiefs have been the chiefs of a particular community known as Paite in Manipur. This tradition tells us that the last chief, Tawmsang with all his subjects left China due to the constant feud with the allied other tribes towards south, but once they moved out they had to search for good habitation and thus they moved on and on. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the meaning of Paite, one of the important Chin-Kuki tribes is a people in the process of going or migration. Another Cave theory as the origin of most of the tribals in Manipur is prevalent with the Mayons, which says that the Mayo were the denizens of the under world the leadership of Thompuung and Meeraang. Meeraang was their bravest leader. He attempted to lead his subjects out of the under world towards the upper world. At the mouth of the hole (gate), stood a tiger that devoured any human being that attempted to go out to the upper world. Consequently, all their previous attempts to move out of the under world failed. But ultimately owing to the gallantry of their hero, Meeraang who could cow down the tiger with his spear, they could move out to the upper world. Meeraang then celebrated his feat with a song as below:

E ... I, Khur na ka hang suwh raembo o,
Shamangpa ningngo kee manchungning ahu;
Shamangpa ningngo kee manchungning ahu e,
Meeraang shapa o, Kee manchung shing e.16

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16 Kosha, Donald, unpublished work for his doctoral thesis. p.10
(English version):

As I emerged from the hole,
Said the maneater, "I am superior",
"I am superior", surely said the maneater;
"Oh! I, Meeraang, a son, am now superior".

Mr. Donald Kosha added some people, the elderly especially, were of the opinion that the Khur (cave) was located in a place called 'SIIJUR' in China, where the Myon ancestors settled after emerging from their underground world, as one of their heroes, Thoupuung put it in a song as below:

Hi a ... e, butum changchii, o chu na,
I duung henruw, o na ko e;
Hia ... e, ka paam a SIIJUR mansii o, ning ko e.

(English version):

My youngest son, should he bring a girl?
How I wish to show her the land of SIIJUR!

From the Cave settlement, the next settlement in the Shan state is evident from the folksong of the Hmars, which runs as follows:

Ka pa lam tlak a than dang,
Singlung lam tlak a than dang;
Shan khuo ah thapo in vang,
Tuoichawng in hranlu a tlunna;
Thlomu sieka kemin hril,
zainghawng ah hranlu bah kan sal.17

(English version):

My father's steps were remarkably good;
Sinlung's steps were, indeed, remarkably good;
few are the good men in Shan state
Where Tuoichawng brought the enemy's head;
You talked of tips with eagle's paws,(meaning war)
And we hang the heads high with ropes.

This is a poet of Hmar's ode makes undeniable reference
to their sinlung settlement and their sojourn afterward to the
Shan state of Burma. The Hmars are the bonafide inhabitants of
the western part of the Churachandpur District of Manipur, and
of the contiguous border areas of Manipur and Mizoram, who belong
to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi ethnic groups.

Now coming again to the Haga groups, the interview of the
scholar with a Tangkhul elderly man, Rev. R.S. Simthar of Soudal

17 Pudaite, Rochunga : The Education of the Hmar people, published by I.S.R.,
Sielmat, India (1963), p.25
village reveals that the Tangkhuls too have the Cave-origin traditional theory known as 'Lungkhur' story. All traditions, folktales and songs point the Cave-origin theory as the origin of all the hill tribes of Manipur, but in regards to the time of settling in Manipur, it appears that the Naga groups reached Manipur very much earlier than the Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi groups did. Traditions say that the hill tribes of Manipur were homogeneous tribes during their Shan settlement, but a disastrous famine dispelled them to move out of Shan in search of food. When the first groups reached Tengnoupal hill, the Manipur valley was under water, thus they diverted their ways to the eastern hills.

The story that the valley of Manipur was under water is a complete unison with the reference made by the Manipuri Purans to this fact.¹⁸ The various tribes of the Nagas accepted Makhel as the original place of their dispersal. MAKHEL is a place, only 3 miles away from Tadubi in the Senapati District of Manipur. The following clues help establishing the fact that Makhel is the original place of various Naga tribes' dispersal - the stone monoliths, sacred trees and acceptance of all the well known Naga tribes as their origin. It is from this Makhel the Nagas dispersed themselves to different directions and thus developed their present dialects.

Nothing is known with certainty about the origin of the term 'NAGA', but it is interesting to trace the probable roots of the term 'NAGA'. Mr. R.R. Shimray in his book, 'Origin and Culture of Nagas' came to allude that the term 'Naga' is not a Naga origin but a name given by the outsiders. He pointed out the opinions of many people in regards to the origination of the term Naga as below.

Mr. Tajenjuba (Ao Naga) has opined that the name 'Naga' originated from the Kachari language. According to him, the Nagas were known to the Kacharies as 'NAHMAGRA' meaning Warrior or Fighter. The earnest contraversion of this term in Assamese became NHUGA and from NHUGA the Englishised form became Naga.

Another theory put forth by Dr. H. Horam is that the name 'Naga' originated from Tangkhul Naga language-MAOKHOKA, meaning a very brave child. According to him, in course of time, MAO-KHOKA was known as MAOKHA. When Naokha people came into contact with the Ahoms of Assam, the Ahoms called them HOGA in their own peculiar way and thus the word NAGA came into being.

Again another theory advanced by some writers that the term 'NAGA' has come from the Sanskrit word "NAG" meaning snake is not believed because the Nagas never worshipped snake like the snake Race of the vedic Chronicles. Another opinion about
the derivation of the term 'HAGA' to be from another Sanskrit word 'HOG' meaning a mountain or inaccessible place and thus meaning hill men is there. Further to quote J.P. Mills, "Haga is the corruption of the Assamese "Hanga" pronounced as HOCA, probably meaning mountaineer from Sanskrit Hog, but all this theory too suffers from logical incoherence because all the hill men are not called as Naga's. Again the terms in Hindi, 'HAGA' and in Bengali 'HANGTA' meaning 'NAKED' are also believed to be the probable origin of the term 'HAGA', but all the Naked men are not called Naga's. The most plausible theory as to the origin of the word 'HAGA' according to R.R. Shimray is the Burmese word NAKA meaning pierced ears. The Anglicised word for Haka became 'HAGA'. As this view has a historical logic too, the Britishers first came into contact with the Burmese and later with the Naga's. It is, therefore, obvious that the British explorers heard about the NAKA group of people from the Burmese. Thus it is that the most probable origin of the term NAGA might be the Burmese word NAKA meaning people with holes in the ears. 19

However in this work, the term Naga would refer to only the following tribes: (1) the Anals, the Chothes, the Koms, the Marings, the Moyons, the Monsangs, the Kabui's, the Naos, the Karams, the Lamkangs, the Koirengs, the Tarao's and the Tangkhuls. 19

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19 Shimray, R.R.: Origin and Culture of Naga's, published by Mrs. Pamela, Shimray, (1965), New Delhi, p.14
The Naga tribes mentioned above dispersed themselves into various directions from Hakkel - the Kabuis going towards the west, the Haos to the north, the Tangkhuls to the east, the Hambaams and the Lankangs to the south-east of Hakkel and the rest of the Naga tribes scattered themselves along the Burma Road in the border areas of Burma and the state of Manipur.

Now it would be interesting to trace how the terms, Chin, Kuki, Hizo and Zomi came to evolve, and thereby the allied minor tribes who are known belonging to the terms mentioned above.

Origin of the term 'CHIN'

There are a number of versions as to the origin of the term 'CHIN'. In one version, a Burmese term, 'Khyang' meaning a basket is the root of the term 'CHIN'. In this, the version is that they (the Chin people) were first seen in Burma they were carrying basket, hence they were called by the Burmese as Khyang, later on pronounced as Chin. Another version is that the term 'CHIN' is derived from an old Burmese word, 'Khyan', meaning ally or comrade.20 Again another version is that the term is a Burmese 'Tagzechin' meaning 'dear friend'. According to Gierson, the term 'Chin' or Kuki' is not coined by the Chins.

themselves but by this term, the hill tribes occupying the land stretching from upper Burma to Assam and East Bengal were known by outsiders. Hence the term Chin is not used by them, instead they used the term Zo, Yo and Shao by them for calling themselves. According to Kanhkenthang, there is no single word Chin in the language of the Chin tribes. But a poetical expression for elder sibling is Chin in Paite language. Even if this has some bearing in some way, the people themselves popularly do not use the word Chin to mean a cōngery of their cognates. There is another probable root term of Chin - Jen or Sen, meaning man in Chinese. The term Jen was pronounced by the Burmese - Shans and Mons as Chin and has been used to denote all the hill tribes and equally applied to the Kachins.

Now the term Chin happens to have been in its usage referring only to the kith and kins of the Paites of Manipur and Mizoram, who were left behind in Burma in the process of the hill tribes' onward migration. The term Kuki, too does not have any meaning in the language of those who have been dubbed with this term. This is a clear indication of the fact that the term Kuki is not coined by themselves, but, given by outsiders. A number of versions about the origin of the term 'Kuki' are there,

in one of them, the term 'kuki' is a Bengali word, meaning hill men or highlanders. This version is quite probable to be the origin of the term as it can perfectly synchronise with the tradition of the mass exodus of the hill tribes from Burma to India since the 16th century and in search of good habitat they happened to contact with the Bengalis in the Cachar plains. Thus the Bengalis called the groups of these hill tribes 'Kuki' as in appearance they were rude and wild. Another version of the origin of the term 'Kuki' is that most of these tribes used to keep sword, 'Khukri' in Bengali or Hindi hence they were known as people with sword and this Khukri came to be corrupted as 'Kuki' in pronunciation. One thing is certain, whatever the origin of the term 'Kuki' may be, that the term Kuki was evolved in India, it has been used by many scholars and writers till recent past denoting all the hill tribes of Manipur belonging to the non-Naga groups and at the same time there has been an intention among some politicians and some educated circles to use it as a nomenclature for all the allied non-Naga tribes of Manipur. But in the wake of political upgrowth among the hill tribes after the attainment of Indian independence, most of the allied tribes without exception prefer to being recognised by their respective individual tribe names such as Hmar, Paite, Vaiphei,

23 Reid, A.S. : Chin-Lushai Land, Gyan publications (1980), Delhi, p.5
Gangte, Sinte, Zo, Thado, etc. Though it has been in use to refer to these tribes in many places, it is a rejected term of nomenclature. Hence the meaning of the term has narrowed down in common usage by now as to refer only to the Thado speaking people.

The term Mizo

There can be no two opinions about the meaning of the term Mizo which is built up of two words - Mi meaning man and Zo - hill or highland in the languages of all the Non-Haga tribes of Manipur including Lushais. The term, 'Mizo' came to evolve out of a dormant term 'Zo' referred to as Yo by many writers of the past. It has been popularised in the wake of insurgency in the erstwhile Lushai hills in 1960s as an intended nomenclature for all the Chin-Kuki-Lushai groups. But, because of its wrong usage it has been now referring only to the Lushais. The erstwhile Lushai Vernacular papers in the academic field and the erstwhile Lushai programme of All India Radio have been accordingly changed into Mizo vernacular Paper and Mizo programme of All India Radio. As such the term Mizo has become a rejected nomenclature for the allied tribes like Hmar, Gangte, Paite, Sinte, Thado, Sukte, Vaiphei, Zo, etc. though of course, in meaning the term covers all of them, but in usage, it happens it refers to only the Lushai speaking people, hence the term 'Mizo'
as a nomenclature for all the Chin-Kuki-Lushai groups of tribals becomes unacceptable to some of them

The term Zomi

Zomi is the reverse of Hizo in word formation but the same in meaning. May be, the oldest nomenclature for the Chin-Kuki-Hizo groups who were scattered in Upper Burma, North-eastern states of India and Chitagong Hill tracts of Bangladesh, is Zomi which remains dormant for centuries. The same Zomis are referred to as Chins in Burma, Kukis in Manipur, Nagaland, Assam and Tripura, and Mizos in Mizoram. The tragedy with the people of Zomis is that unanimity among themselves for their nomenclature could not have evolved till today although they are ethnically one and the same people. The term 'Zomi', remaining as a dormant for centuries together, has been now gaining ground with the present generation among the following allied tribes - the Gangte, the Hmar, the Paite, the Siute, the Vaiphei and the Zo of Manipur, who had been dubbed as Kukis during the British period. Following the achievement of independence from the British regime, being awakened to their political rights, most of the tribes of Manipur Hills applied for recognition of their individual tribes and accordingly they got recognitions of their individual tribes by the Government of India as scheduled tribes.
In the meantime, a movement under the banner of Mizo National Front was taking place in the meanwhile Lushai Hills, the intention of which was to include all the Chin-Kuki groups of Manipur, but it can be observed that the tribes mentioned above appeared to find it difficult to assimilate the Mizo nomenclature due to its usage. Thus counting the term 'Mizo' as a misnomer, some groups started a movement to revive a dormant term 'Zomi' for their nomenclature to include all the Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups of tribals under one banner, and thus a political party known as Zomi National Congress came into being on the 21st Jan. 1972 at Daizang, Manipur.24

SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND

In dealing with the socio-cultural background of the whole of tribals in Manipur, in a concise manner like this, it would be a necessity to do gleaning of their common socio-cultural background in general nature. However, their socio-cultural background has to be studied in two periods - (1) Pre-Christianity era and (2) Post-Christianity era, and in two groups - (1) The Nagas and (2) the Chin-Kuki-Mizos. Hence gleaning of the socio-cultural background of the tribals of Manipur would be attempted here under the following sub-headings: (1) The Nagas' socio-cultural background in the pre and post Christianity era and

(ii) the Chin-Kuki-Mizos' socio-cultural background in the pre and Post-Christianity era.

(i) The Nagas' socio-cultural background in the Pre and Post Christianity era

Again, the term 'NAGA' here will refer only to those Nagas found inhabiting the state of Manipur like the Anals, the Chotoes, the Kabuis (Zeliangroungs), the Koirengs, the Koms, the Hoyons, the Mongsangs, the Haos, the Lamsangs, the Tareaos, the Tangkhuls etc. A bit major tribes among the Nagas of Manipur are three in number viz., Tangkhul, Hao and Kabui as these three tribes have had their programme at the Imphal station of All India Radio in their own dialects respectively, which is a clear indication of their being a bigger communities from amongst the Nagas of Manipur.

In the Pre-Christianity era, till the first quarter of the present 20th century, the social life of the Nagas, so to say the tribals, of Manipur was very much primitive; they knew very little about the world and its affairs in the true perspective, thus their village was just like a family as well as a state or epitom of the world for them. Any stranger or outsider, hence, became their enemy, and thus life with them was in constant danger and very much in-secured for every one. Therefore, each
of them was under compulsion to take refuge with a brave leader who could provide them protection and security in any eventuality. Naturally such a brave leader evolved from among themselves and they usually gave complete allegiance and loyalty to their leader. According to the command and dictation of their leader, they moved and maintained life. Their leaders were ultimately known as their chiefs in the civil administrative set-up. Thus chieftainship was not the outcome of a democratic process, but due to the personal feat of the concerned chief. So chieftainship among the tribals was often attained through the concerned person's remarkable valour. A saying of the Paites goes, 'The word of a child and of a chief is never argued', which shows the background how authority is attributed to them.

In order to understand the socio-cultural life of the tribals, one has to know the village administrative set-up of the tribals prevalent in the pre-Christianity era and post-Christianity era. Both among the Naga and the Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups, socio-cultural life veered round their village administration.

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

Naga village was an independent unit and accordingly enjoyed the right of sovereignty. Being a sovereign unit, each of the villages pursued its own policy and had its own social system.
Of course, in each village, because of its security measures, a youth force was organised. The youth force usually attached to the residence of their chief. The safety and security of their village was uppermost in their mind, for that the chief commander was the chief of the village. For the chief, it is customary to make selection of representatives to the council of his village from each clan the ablest ones. Thus they could enforce all the laws or rules they made effectively upon the villagers. Each village owned village land and apportioned a piece of cultivated land to individual families and all the families maintained their cultivated lands efficiently. Practically, there is no individual life apart from community life.

R.R. Shimray also pointed out in his book, 'Origin and Culture of Nagas' that Naga individuals know no other life except that of community life. They work in groups, eat in groups and sleep in groups. There is no individual cultivation nor harvest, no individual house-building, no feast of merit by individuals alone and no wooing of girls individually. All things are done in groups and in the full presence of the entire community. 25

Another Tangkhul writer, Y.L. Roland Shimmi, in his book, 'Comparative History of the Nagas' rightly asserted that democracy in its purest form existed among them (the Nagas) and democracy

25 Ibid., p.121
is a most suitable system to them lasted through centuries
which formed an integral part of their life.26 In regards to
the power and function of the village chief and of the village
council, it is absolute and undeniable, but hardly abused be-
cause in intention and execution the powers and functions were
exercised always in the interest of the majority of the subjects
and for bringing about justice and equity to the social life.
Major J. Shakespear too in his report, 'Census of India', men-
tioned that, "The people (the Manipur tribals) live in villages,
each of which is ruled by a chief, who is entirely independent.
The chief is supreme in his own village, but people are very
democratic, and have a very simple remedy if a chief oppresses
them viz. to move to another village. The chief settles all dis-
putes in the village, arranges where the jhuns are to be and
when the village is to move. Chief's house is a store-house of
the village, and all orphans and others who have no means to
support are received there and get food in return for their
labour".27

The village chief with the assistance of his village coun-
cil members runs the village administration basing on the con-
ventions and customs of the villagers. Until the penetration of

26 Shimmi, Y.L.Roland : Comparative History of the Nagas, published by M.C.
Mittal Inter-India publications, N.Delhi (1982), p.130

modern system of education, there was no record of proceedings of the village council, but the chief could appoint a messenger or runner to announce the important information and the required message to the concerned villagers. Among the Tangkhuls, the unwritten constitution known as Riyan consisting of 5 (five) kinds of laws was popular, which can be taken a typical Naga's laws. They are:

(1) **Shaikan (law of collection of tributes)**
   a) Raishai (War tribute)
   b) Chinaoshai (Brother's tribute)
   c) Wungnaoshai (Chief's tribute)
   d) Lamshai (Land owner's tribute)
   e) Shinkam (Helping share tribute)
   f) Ringshan (village tribute)

(2) **Khayan (the village administrative laws)**
   a) Hangvashim (village court)
   b) Hangva (village councillors)
   c) Zungphun (village unity control)
   d) Raikan (volunteer force)
   e) Mewun (agricultural works and water supply)
   f) ShimaluiKhayor (law on properties)
   g) Seihomphung (law relating to landscape)
h) Shimsak (law relating to house construction & labour)
i) Ransak (laws on feast of merit)
j) Ngavei (laws relating to the village gate and fencing)
k) Veishunsa (law relating to gate duty)
l) Chanrei (law on social work regarding paths to their paddy fields)
m) Kha Khangakkam (laws on village taboo)
n) Kha Khangaleng (law of ex-communication and expulsion)
o) Shungashai (Tribute)
p) Phanit (law of festivals)

(3) Longyan (the entire constitution)
   a) Raiyan (laws of war)
   b) Raikanyan (war zone, peace zone)
   c) Shinyan (intervillage law)
   d) Lahom (Divorce law)

(4) Luiyan (seaward division of power)

(i) a) Kasomkong Luiyan for western area,
    b) Shongva Luiyan for North and East, and
    c) Vara Luiyan for south

(ii) The above areas are again subdivided as below:
    a) Ngaleikhamor - No man's land area,
    b) Dhari - Natural boundaries,
    c) Chongkamakan - Prohibitory law, and
    d) Kachika - Permission or passport.
(5) **Shiyanchikan (Criminal law)**

a) Shimzan - law relating to theft case,
b) Shimkai - law relating to house breaking,
c) Luiyan - law relating to theft in paddy fields,
d) Luikai - law relating to breaking of irrigation channels,
e) Phokapha - law dealing with adultery
f) Latuk - law relating to molestation,
g) Lahim - Law relating to divorce,
h) Lapan - law relating to normal divorce,
i) Niyum - law dealing with murder,
j) Yonkan - law dealing with maltreatment of the weaker ones,
k) Tuihat - law dealing with dishonesty,
l) Preizai - law for beating weaker sex,
m) Shukeiyan - law dealing with crimes on domestic animals,
n) Seiyum - law relating to secret filling of buffalo/cow,
o) Shokhala - law relating to incest,
p) Pangkat - law of criminals and punishment,
q) Nao singkata-law relating to abortion,
r) Pankasang - law of withdrawal,
s) Khangami - law of compromise,
t) Shimyor-Luiyor - law of selling properties,
u) Thingyum - law relating to crimes of theft of trees,
v) Sakuiphit - law relating to the heads of animals given to the chief as tribute/duty.28

The conventions, customs and practices prevalent with the Nagas from the time immemorial, mentioned above, though primitive in character show that they were not that barbarous, rather had well articulated system of administrations in their respective villages. Their social systems were regulated by the customs, conventions and practices as jotted down as above. Hence in the past they lived very simple, peaceful and law-abiding life. Crimes were committed rarely and thus locks and keys were needless, they used to leave their houses with the doors closed when going to their work site in the forest or to their paddy fields without having any botheration about the safety of their household effects.

In the village administration, the duty or function of the chief can be studied in two aspects - secular aspect and religious aspect. In secular aspect, the prime concern of the village chief is to see that his villagers under his jurisdiction feel safe and secured from any possible attacks of enemies. Here comes the original idea of the wisdom of having 'dormitory' in each of the tribal villages. This dormitory or Bachelors' quarter is found to have been in existence with all the Naga tribes.

28 Shimray, R.R.: Origin and Culture of Nagas, published by Mrs. Parleigh
of Manipur. All the tribal chiefs knew fully well the need of keeping the youth forces of their village at one place together so that they can be on their toes and can take the bull by the horns in any situation or any eventuality that can abruptly crop up on emergency. If some one fell ill or died in a far distant place, the body had to be carried home immediately, youth force became highly a necessity. Accidents of many kinds like fire breaking out, attacks of unforeseen enemy, natural calamities - landslides, felling of big trunks of trees across the path etc. had to be attended to quickly by the volunteer force. To meet such unforeseen situations, the youth force was prepared and kept ready. Thus the youth force of the village consisting of all the young men, in some communities, young women used to sleep together in a house known as dormitory called by various names in different dialects.

In the dormitory, popularly known as Morung among the Hageis, instructions about the social norms, customs, traditions, values, laws, taboos and totems are imparted by the seniors to the juniors in turn. The boys of the Morung act as a corporate body and lend their services to the members of the society on any social or religious occasions or ceremony and in times of war or calamities. Thus they are imparted lessons in social obligations and fellow-feeling. It is this Morung around which all the social activities evolve. Membership drive is never required, it has become in a
tradition that the one who could not become a member to this institution, even though being of the age groups, the same is below normal. Being illiterate, registration of any sort was not required or unknown but for a normal young man or young women, to become a member of such institution was considered as compulsory.

The Naga social life is characterised by the principles of equality, freedom, liberty and justice. It can be said as a classless society, there is no distinction among them as high or low, but the fate of every one by nature can not be the same. Some are rich; some are poor, yet the poor are not looked down upon, rather some social measures of helping them are usually taken up by the chief and his elders. In the Naga society no one is too rich nor too poor. There was no limit to acquisition of properties but because of the culture of feast of merit none could be too rich. Indeed, the Naga social life exude a real pattern of socialistic society as there is no social stratification formally in their society on the grounds of caste, creed and economic condition.

**Family**

While discussing the social life of the Nagas, family can not be just skipped over as it is the most basic and oldest
social unit, Since the time immemorial, family had been a well-
knitted social unit among the Magas. Child marriage was unknown,
polygamy and polyandry were not practised and monogamy was the
only known way of forming family to them. But in the recent
past, due to the influence of other people from other communities,
there were some men having more than one wife, of course, in a
very rare case. Divorce was common and rather considered a normal
phenomenon. Hence it is said among the Hao Magas that the first
marriage was rarely successful, instances are not wanting to pro-
ve that the marriage of many people got success only after the
third or the fourth time of their marriage. Among the Hao Magas
the marriage ritual in traditional way of marriage took five
days and within those five days both the boy and the girl were
under close observation by the parents of the boy and other from
their superstitious belief. During those five day period of observ-
ation divorce may take place very easily on the following flimsy
grounds: (1) Provided the bride was not carefully walking while
approaching the groom's house and happened to fall down getting
the articles she brought scattered on the ground, it was taken as
a bad omen and divorce will take place. (2) on the second day if
the bride or the groom was hit with a piece of cow dung by some
one, divorce will take place. (3) Divorce will take place if death
occurred of some one relative to them. And death of even domestic
animal counted here. (4) Extinction of fire on the new hearth
prepared on the second day of their marriage or damage to the hear-
ith or any utensil may also cause divorce.
Hence divorce may be easily caused by some one or the bride or the groom by taking deliberate steps. Instances are found where a bride deliberately tumbled down on the way or broke the cooking pots so that divorce may take place if she does not like the boy. However, this sort of deliberate effort was considered quite unbecoming and not usually attempted. 29

The Nagas are generally exogamous. Of course, in matters relating to social status and enjoyment of social privileges there is no clan distinction. Prof. H. Thaimei says that the social system of the Kabuis is one of the most well organised systems. The main principles of group formation are age and sex.

The Kabui Nagas were strictly exogamous in their marriage custom. Apart from this, some more marriage taboos were still there like a marriage of a girl with her maternal uncle's son, in such a case it was taken as a complete violation of their custom of marriage and forced separation of the two was usually resorted to even by the society but the reverse case - a marriage of a boy with his maternal uncle's daughter was looked at with the most

favoured marital alliance. This alliance is called by the Kabuis "Kanei-pi-kadoimei" 30.

Another peculiar custom existed in the Kabui society is the bone-money which was usually demanded by the relatives of the wife on the event of her death. This is called in Kabui 'Nandoo', the same is prevalent with the Zomi's custom.

Today, a sea change has been brought about by Christianity into the Naga social life in regards to the marriage too. Among the Naga Christians, their customs of marriage were no longer followed strictly; bride price, bone-money etc. were done away with by Christianity among them. Divorce on any ground has become a declining phenomenon among the Nagas, but inter-tribal marriage and inter-clan marriage has been on the increasing trend.

(ii) The Socio-cultural background of the Chin-Kuki-Nizos (Zomis) in the Pre and Post-Christianity era

For our convenience, the socio-cultural background may be studied under two sub-headings - (a) Pre-Christianity period and (b) Post-Christianity period.

(a) The socio-cultural background of the Zomis in the Pre-Christanity period

In the Pre-Christanity period, the Zomis led very primitive life, socially and culturally independent to a very great extent. Every village remained just like an independent country due to the lack of physical, social and cultural communications. Thus in order to know the social and cultural background, we have to study their village administration.

Village administration

The chief of the Zomis, virtually the king came to evolve from the personal seat of the concerned village chief in the beginning. One able and efficient leader led his followers to find a suitable land for their habitation and when they found such land, established a village. They claimed ownership of that land by protecting with their own force. Thus the authority of their leader-chief was not challengeable for his subjects. He was all in all as long as he could/shelter and provide safety to his subjects. Thus the chiefship was hereditary, the chief was succeeded by his son on the event of his death or other reasons of inability to carry on the administration. The chief drew his councillors from his subjects as he liked. There was no definite rule about the size of his council members, it could be expanded or reduced at the will of the chief. The system
of administration was monarchical in nature. The word of the chief was final in everything. If some one was going to establish another village within the land of the concerned chief's jurisdiction, he was approached with a request by killing a quadruped animal like mithun or cow or pig and if the chief agreed to give a portion of his land, the meat-portions which were meant for the purpose especially like the heart, the lungs, liver, etc. were taken by the two parties for the conclusion of their agreement as an oath. Taking together meat in such a way was considered as the highest degree of confirmation of their treaty.

The chiefs of the Zomis had some privileges. They collected tributes annually from common villagers, in terms of rice (paddy). The rate of the tribute was not uniformed in all villages, ranging from five to three tins (baskets) per household. And everything within the land including beasts was considered belonging to the chief so if some was fortunate enough to catch or kill any beast of four-footed like deer, antler, porcupine etc. the front leg portion of the meat was given to the chief. On the event of violation of the conventions mentioned above the chief with his councils could fine the culprit by forcibly killing his domestic animal or as they decided. All the decisions of the chief in council were generally made on the basis of precedences, conventions, customs, and prevailing practices. 

The
selections for their next jhumming were done by the chief in
council well in time every year and distribution of their indi-
vidual jhumming sites were done by setting some rules to be follo-
wed by the villagers. Normally in the long past, all being illi-
terate, the rules were usually announced by the village crier in
council after due decisions for site selection for the whole
village was finished by the chief in his council and after being
briefed about what to announce, the village-crier would announce
the decisions of the chief in his council by crying at certain
point in the nook and corner of the village so that every house-
hold should hear. Usually the rule of first cone first serve was
the decision of the chief. Date for demarcation of jhumming site
was fixed, any one from each family should go to the spot of the
area and should demarcate the site of his selection and if there
was a tussle the case was settled by the chief in his council by
examining who reached the spot first. Further the case was a
complicated one their claims could be decided by lot or by
diving in the river.

Knowing fully well the need of volunteer force for the
village by the chief, his council members and village elders,
a dormitory (bachelors' quarter) was introduced in all the
villages right from the time immemorial. The dormitory in the
village served several purposes like (1) Defence force
(2) errands in emergency (3) centre of training for good discipline, (4) centre for socialisation, (5) centre for cultural training, (6) centre of training for craftsmanship, etc., etc. The dormitory being the centre of youths served as the centre of all social activities. Generally the dormitory house was constructed attached to the residence of the chief of the village. In some villages, there were more than one dormitory houses according to the size of the village population. There is one term mostly common in each of the Zomi dialects known as 'Tawmngaihna' which has no directly equivalent term in English but something like 'Spirit of sacrifice' for others. Tawmngaihna, the spirit of sacrifice to the cause of others had been inculcated in the minds of the youths through the institution of dormitory. The youth force confined to one or two places most of the time was highly convenient for the village administration especially at the times of occurrence of unforeseen eventualities and natural calamities.

Another term quite popular with the Zomis is 'Lawn' which is something like labour contract group, sometimes, organised for the whole village and sometimes sections of more friendly groups organised Lawn in a smaller circles. There were two kinds of 'Lawn' - Lawnpi, a big labour contract consisting of all households of the concerned village organised formally or
officially by the village, generally for one particular hectic working season of the year and Lawambung, small groups of labour contract formed in a friendly circles. Those Lawa groups usually launched a very big function annually known as the day of Lawmzu, a kind of festival after accomplishment of all their joint works of the year. They made normally elaborate preparation for that function, the Zu for the festival had to be brewed a fortnight or one month ahead, for the feast a mithun not less than 5 years old, the same indicated in its horns was essential. Though illiterate they were, they could perform the festival in a very befitting manner. A trunk of tree with some branches of about ten yards long was collected from the wood, the Lawa sial (mithun) would be tied to the trunk of the tree, Lawa pillar, then the youths of the village, by way of showing their bravery and physical power, would entertain the public by jumping over the mithun to and fro and fighting with the mithun before killing it. Then the village priest would kill the mithun. Normally the festival lasted about three days or more according to the provision of the feast they could make. It was a festival really meant for enjoyment and Merriment after the main hectic work of the year was over. 31 Each member household would bring jars of their home made rice beer. Everybody rejoiced and danced singing their folksong.

31 Rijgen, V.: An introduction to Tribal Language and Culture of Manipur (7 tribes) Edited by R.B. Singh, published by the State Kala Akademi, 1976, p.140
and beating their drums, songs, a set of small song, and all other musical instruments.

**Family**

Family in the Zomi society is neither a rigid single family like that of the American society nor a joint family like that of the Indian Hindu society. Of course, in minute detail, in the Zomi groups of tribes too, customs and cultures in general family affairs, marriage systems and relationships varied here and there from tribe to tribe. For instance, amongst the Hinos (Lushais) and the Hmars, the youngest son is the rightful heir to his father, the elder sons can start separate house and hearth as a separate family just after getting married, but this is not the case with other tribes like Thado, Paite, Sinte, Gangte, Tiddim Chin, Vaiphei, Zo etc. Amongst these tribes, the custom of inheritance is that the first or eldest son is the most rightful heir to his father, thus setting up separate family for him in his own name, as long as his father is alive, does not arise, but his younger brothers can seek permission from his father, if still alive, otherwise from his elder brother, by killing a pig or other four-footed domestic animal in honour and recognition of his eldest brother. Then he can start a separate family for him in his own name. These kinds of customs and cultures have very far reaching effect in their social life.
All of the Zomi tribes are patrilineal, here too, the seniority in age among the brothers counts as mentioned above. In the past, all being agriculturists in profession, exhortation, admonition and instructions were given by the father to the children over meal and daily work assignment done by the father to other family members.

**Household council**

One peculiar characteristic with some of the Zomi groups' family administrative structure is the household council. In the Saga social structure, the prevalence of the household council at any stage is not known, but with the Zomi groups, especially with the following tribes - the Paite, the Sukte, the Sintc, the Gangte, the HVaiphei, the Zo, the institution of the household council is a deep-rooted social system and its inception is now beyond trace. Dr. K. Kamkhenthang gives a detailed account about the institution of household council in the Paite community and states that households in Paite society are inter-dependent within the village. Every household is in the shadow of the protection of the other households of the village. Each household has certain number of invisible strings of relationship to different households. Within the Paite social system there is structural relationship of households of agnates, affines, emtes and other selected non-clan members of the village in a corporate manner. This corporate
relationship of several households is designed to meet the partial need of a household of a man. This corporate association of a household of a man with that of his agnates, affines, consorts (relatives on the mother's side) and friends forms an institutional organisation called indongta (household council)\(^32\). The formation of household council is based on the pattern already set in the custom and culture of the concerned tribe. The main questions of consideration in forming the household council of a family are the sanguinary relationship and kinship of the concerned family with the persons to be recruited. Hence, it is the blood relationship that matters most the rank and file of the persons in the recruitment of one's household council. For instance, the portfolio of what is called 'Tanu' in Paite community is necessarily held by the married daughter or sister of the concerned head of the family, in the case of not having such daughter or sister living, the next nearest kin daughter or sister will be assigned the portfolio of Tanu. In the extensive sense, Tanu (daughter) role can be played by all the married women belonging to the clan of the family concerned. So clan is the spine of the structure of household council in the zomi society. From clan to clan in the same community also variations can be there in the mode of recruitment of members of the household council. Now due to the growth of christianity, there are

\(^{32}\) Kaukhenthang, Dr. H.: The Paite A transborder Tribe of India and Burma, Mittal publications, Delhi (1988), p.15.
some tribes among the Zomis too who are of the view that retaining the custom of forming household council is unbecoming for christians as in its formation the main consideration is clan and relations. This is a fact to a very great extent because one can not just form his household council at will according to his personal choice as there is a set rule for formation of household council.

The Zomi society in the pre-christianity era was well-knitted and closely woven by the social fabric of their cultures. They had their own system of village administration headed by their chief. In the court of the chief all the disputes and all cases civil and criminal were settled. Punitive fines were charged against the culprits, the rates of fines ranging from Salan (sasat)* only to sial* leh salam or even more according to the magnitude or seriousness of the crime committed.

In the social milieu of the Zomis, the role of the dormitory around which most of the social activities revolved had been referred to earlier. In that one festival known as 'Sawsu Za' was held annually as pomp and grandeur as possible. The young and old enjoyed it to the brim of their heart, singing.

*Salam or Sasat - a fine charged against the culprit of a crime by forcibly killing his pig.

*Sial - is a mithun or sometimes taken its value - terms of money, Rs. 40.00
their folksongs and dancing in all sorts of their cultural dances not less than three days usually. Usually killing all kinds of their domestic animals like withun, ox, pig, goat, ship and fowl for the feast and every house contributing their own brewed rice beer of at least one jar each were a must for the 'sawm' festival, as narrated by late Hentawn, the grandfather of Mr. Tawnsatun, an inhabitant of the heartland of Quite kual (paite area) of Churuchandpur District, Manipur, to him (Tawnsatun) a centenarian of Paite community. But, as far as his knowledge goes, among the Paite, corresponding to the concerned village population, there were more than one dormitory in many villages, then the 'Sawmzu' festivals were held in 'sawmwise' but on the same day.33

Chon or Tawn

Chon or Tawn is a highly esteemed feast, quite similar with the feast of merit of the Nagas, which had been always the ambition of every able and rich man in life among the Zonis in the past. The highest public honour was accredited to the man who could perform the Chon three times in life. It is a very expensive and extravagant affair to perform the Chon, thus it had been beyond the attempt of an ordinary or common man. In its intrinsic meaning, Chon was actually the proclamation of one's personal

33 Mr. Tawnsatun, N: Interviewed on the issue of Sawmzu in Paite Community by the scholar on 11.6.87.
Feast, especially in the aspect of economic life. Of course, great religious significance was attached to it for the Zonis were of the belief that those who could perform Chon or Tawn or Thanmoh at least once in life would be entitled to kingly treatment after death in the city of the dead.

Tang-aih, Sa-aih, Gal-aih

Similar to the Chon performance, the Zonis held in very high esteem the performance of Sa-aih, Gal-aih, Tang-aih. Sa-aih, Gal-aih and Tang-aih were nothing but the proclamation of the personal feat of the performer in a sense, but according to their belief, they were attached to very great religious significance. Sa-aih could be performed only by the one who killed several beasts in the game, the Gal-aih could be again performed only by the one who could bring home the head or heads of his enemies/enemies and Tangaih was performed only by the one who could harvest a huge amount of paddy from his cultivation. The greatness of the performance of Sa-aih, Gal-aih and Tang-aih lies in the fact that since there was no place for hypocrisy case, only those who were really successful could perform the covetous entertainments.
The Zonis' socio-cultural life in the post-Christianity era

There is a sea change in the socio-cultural life of the Zonis in the post-Christianity era. They have discarded many of their out-dated customs, practices, conventions, cultures etc. They have been now converted into heart-hunters from head-hunters. The value attributed by them to head-hunting, whether religious or social, has completely gone, instead of giving credit, it is condemned as an act of crime. The practices of sa-sih, gal-sih, Tang-sih, Chon, which are considered as unchristian life have been completely abandoned. There cultural dances like Zangta-lam (dance of the masses), si-lam (funeral dances), Phit-lam (dance of celebration of hunted games), etc. are no longer practised, the cultural dances shown in some festivals and functions now-a-days are only the replica.

Festivals of the tribals

The Nagas as well as the Zonis of the state basically belong to the agricultural oriented society. Hence, all their festivals, in their pre-Christianity period, were so arranged following their agricultural seasons and pursuits. Most of the tribals were very rich in their cultural heritage, the evidences of which could be seen through their festivals. For instance, the Kabui Nagas have numerous festivals around the year, keeping
up their own calendar on the basis of lunar movement. At almost
every stage of their cultivation, they had festivals. The Kabui
term for festival is HGAI.

The greatest one of the Kabui festivals came after the
harvest. When the food grains were collected home and everything
of the cultivation was completed, the festival of CHAKAK-GAN-HGAI,
in its short form known as GAN-HGAI, was celebrated, usually
lasting about 5 days which marks the end of the year and rings
in the dawn of the new year according to the Kabui calendar. This
festival falls usually in the ending part of December or early
part of January.

Then comes another festival called RI-HGAI which lasts at
the maximum 3 days. It consists of ritual for the purification
of one's body and soul, thereby making oneself fortunate and
fit for the war, hunting, cultivation etc. in the course of the
ensuing year.

About March, again another festival comes, MANU-HGAI, the
ear-boring festival in which the main theme was good health,
longevity for the new born babies and fertility for young mothers.

Another festival called NAPKAO was performed as an entreaty
for plentiful harvest of the year about the month of April at the
time of sowing seeds. This festival was closely followed by another festival, GIMAI which was meant for propitiation of the ancestors of their respective families for their benevolent influences.

Then comes the GOODUI or MAHLENG festival about the month of May. In this festival, the main features were worship of mother-earth for fertility of the soil and fruitful cultivation, rites to ward off infestation of pests and insects, drinking of ginger-soup for health, tug of war between the males and the females just for merrymaking and enjoyment.

During the rainy season, the festival, TOOM-HGAI was celebrated. In this festival, cleaning of village ponds, repairing of village paths leading to their ponds and fields and constructing new ones in a festive spirit under a ceremonial procedure were the main features.

Another big festival was not far behind when the first crop came about August-September. This festival is known as PUNKHEAT-HGAI in which the first fruits or crops were tested in a solemn and ceremonial manner.34

All those festivals were performed by the youths and girls enjoying to the brim of their hearts, attired in their best, dancing amidst the joyous songs of the thudding drums, forgetting all their wearies and hazards of life.

There are four festivals in a year with the Hao Magas, viz. Chuthuni, harvest festival solemnised in the month of January usually lasting for 6 days, Chujuni, held in the month of June, was solemnised mainly for the abundance of water in their paddy fields, Saleni festival, this was celebrated as a mark of completion of the cultivation of the year and Onuni, this festival was celebrated usually in September for austerity and abundance in harvest.35

The Tangkhuls had the following five important festivals in a year, viz. Luira, Yarra, Hanchhap, Chumphoa and Thisham. Of the five, the first and last were more religious than social or cultural.

LUIRA (the new year festival) literally means beginning of sowing. The main features in this festival were sacrifices and offerings, Games and Sports for the youths and girls, War dances, Virgin dance and many other amusement items.

35 Ashuli, N.: An article on 'The Hao Maga' in the June issue of the Quarterly Journal of the Manipur State Kala Akademi, p.28
YARNA (Youth festival) was the next festival held in April-May. Normally the festival lasted for 3 days. The part of hostess was played by the most beautiful dame or girl selected during the Lura festival. The young folks used to raise contribution from everybody and did all the hectic preparation enthusiastically.

HANGKHAP festival took place just after the completion of sowing and transplantation — sometime in July-August. It literally means the last drink. It was a very hard season because the leftover of the food-grain provision was less yet the festival was performed usually in no less pomp and grandeur, with plenty of drink and meat.

CHUMPHA, the fourth festival was nothing but the opening ceremony of their barns after the new harvest. The housewives took food-grains of one basket each from their barns and contributed to the festival. There were certain taboos which had to be strictly observed by the husbands and wives, especially during the two days of the festival.

The festival 'THISHAM' (sending off the souls of the dead) was celebrated at the end of the year. This festival had very great significance in their religion as they had the belief that
until this Thisham festival was performed the souls of the dead did not leave the earth but remained hovering around their homes. The whole village performed collectively the festival in honour of all the member-villagers who died during the year. The bereaved family members used to provide food and drink for the dead morning and evening throughout the year until the performance of the Thisham festival.  

RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE

The main bulk of the population of Manipur, locally known as Meiteis, had their traditional religion in which they worshipped several deities, more prominent among them were:

1. Lam Lai - God of the country side, controlling the rain, the primal necessity of an agricultural community.

2. Umang Lai - God of the forest.

3. Iung Lai - the household deity.

4. Ancestor of each Tribe and several spirits of the mountain passes, lakes, rivers, vampires etc. were also worshipped.

Shimray, Y.K.: A paper on Tangkhul language and culture in the 'AN INTRODUCTION TO TRIBAL LANGUAGE AND CULTURE OF MANIPUR' (1973), published by Manipur State Kala Akademi, p.26
This was the pre-Hindu period condition of the Meiteis in religion. Nothing definitely can be traced about the date of the first introduction of Vaishnavism in Manipur but during the reign of the Maharajah, Charib Niwas, the Brahmanical Vaishnavism began spreading on a wide scale in Manipur, all due mainly to his royal patronage. Baptised by the Vaishnava missionary, Shantidas Ahikary, the Maharajah declared Vaishnavism as the state religion and advised his subjects to accept it. As a result of the royal patronage of the Hinduism in Manipur, the Hindu religion was fast spreading in the Manipur valley but contrarily the hill areas remained unreached and left with their traditional religion as quite similar to the pre-Hindu condition of the Meiteis until the coming of Christianity in the hill areas.

Religion of the Tribals

All the tribals in the state of Manipur without exception may be said as belonging to Animism in religion. Their pre-Christianity condition in religion was so similar with what was with the Meiteis in their pre-Hindu condition. The term, 'Animism' when looked up from the Webster's New World Dictionary,

37 (a) Bijoy Panchali, pp.65-66
(b) R.K. Sanahal, Manipur Itihas, p.55
(c) A brief Sketch of Manipuri Literature by L. Ibungohal Sinjha, Manipur Public Library Annual No. 1954, pp.50-51
is derived from a Latin word, 'Anima' meaning 'Soul' and, is defined in three ways: (1) Animism is the doctrine that all life is produced by a spiritual force separate from matter, (2) Animism is the belief that all natural phenomena have souls independent of their physical being and (3) a belief in the existence of spirits, demons etc.

Undoubtedly, all the tribals of Manipur belonged to the religion of Animism in the past irrespective of their claims of differences as belonging to various tribes. Their rituals and practices certainly proved the fact of their being animists, to mention a few for instance, in their head hunting their belief was that the soul of the man killed by the head-hunter was a captive for him and would serve him as his slave on the way to the city of the dead and in the city itself and further all the ferocious beasts killed by him had souls independently and all would come to his help in the city of the dead. Thus head-hunting was counted as a sign of amelioration of one's future prospect in the society as well as in the life hereafter.

Their concept of God

The tribals in Manipur too, like in the other parts of the earth had been all along in the past conscious or aware of the existence of a Supreme Power who is the creator of the universe,
the Sun, the Moon, the stars etc. Hence all of them have their own terms for God in their dialect each as follows: In Tangkhul dialect, God is called 'Varivara', in Kabui, 'Raguang', in Hao 'Cramei' and most of the Zomis' term for God is more or less the same, Pathen in Thado, Pathien in Hmar, Vaiphei, Gangte, Pathian in Paite and Nizo (Lushai), Pasian in Teddim-Chin, Site and Zo. Though they were aware of the existence of God, the supreme power and the creator of this universe, they could hardly form a clear conception of God in their mind in the absence of any sacred religious book like the Bible, the Koran, the Vedas, the Mahabharata etc. So they happened to have been constantly fumbling for the existence and the presence of God through signs, omens and other visible evidences and ultimately fell prey to a number of superstitious beliefs. Then their conception of God was formed in two ways - (1) God is benevolent but is beyond human supplication and (2) God is malvolent or avenger who keeps constant vigil on all their acts for vengeance. The second concept of God keeps all the tribals becoming religious. This fact is pointed out aptly by Rev. T. Jamkhothang when he says, "They (the tribals), who for many years sacrificed animal blood to the devil out of fear, could somehow by the power of the Holy spirit understand the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which was out of love. They worshipped God in the past out of fear-complex, not out of love, not of adoration or thanks giving but of appeasement and of seeking favour. As a matter of fact, their conception of
It was vague. They did not have any personal experience of relationship with God, thus for their belief, they were precluded to depend on the evidences of nature which appeared marvelous, miraculous, abnormal or unnatural etc. to them beyond our cognizance. The mountain passes, deep gorges, dingy and cold springs, cliffs, etc. were considered as the abodes of spirits and they offered sacrifices in propitiation to them.

Sir Mythologies of Religion

Most of the tribals in Manipur had a number of mythologies about the origin of their religions traditionally handed down from generation to generation. A few of them may be quoted here for instance.

Kabuis' Mythology of Religion

According to Kabui cosmogony, there is a Supreme Being called TING-GUANG or TINGKAO-RAGUANG, the creator of the sun, the moon, the earth and all other cosmic objects. He is believed to be absolutely benevolent. He is beyond human supplication; as such, the Kabuis have no special sacrifices or offering prescribed for Him. Invocation by His name is the only way of worship, which also is to be resorted to as an ultimate means. Another belief is that a Mother-Goddess named TINGRANGPUI, according to the Kabuis, who gave birth to eight brothers of Supreme
Deities. Of them, the tradition says, the second brother eventually became the RAGHANG who rules over the celestial world as well as the earthly mortals.

According to the traditional belief of the Kabuis, there is another Mother-Goddess called DAMAPUI, literally the Mother-Creator, who created all the living beings. At the behest of the Supreme Being, she took up the task of creating man, but failed. Instead, all that she created turned out to be insects, fishes, birds, beast etc. and not a man. But ultimately, the one she created in the likeness of the Supreme Lord, TINGGWANG turned out to be a man after the Supreme Lord gave the creature soul. There is a God-King according to the Kabui traditional belief. This God-King called RAGHANG is worshipped by sacrificing animals like goat or cock generally for health, wealth, success or protection from evils etc.

Besides, the Kabuis have several other deities and spirits. They worshipped their ancestors called XAIRAO and each Kabui village had its own tutelary deity known as DAMPU or SHOOG. The house of a Kabui was thus full of the abodes of several deities like the Fire-deity called HANGANG, the Wind-deity named PONGWANG, an area command deity called RAMPOU and outside the house they had some more deities like CHAMPUI, the mistress-
deity of the wild beasts, LAORA, the Field-deity; DUIPA, the water-deity, KAPENPUI, the pestilence-deity etc. Those deities were of two kinds, some benevolent and some malevolent. So the modes of worshipping them were of two kinds: the Benevolent deities were entreated for their good influences and the malevolent deities were propitiated as a prophylactic measures. SANGROO and TARANGKAI were the two greatest sacrifices one could do for going to heaven but every pious Kabui could not afford to perform such expensive sacrifice since in these rituals one had to sacrifice mithuns and pigs and made charity-distribution of many valuable articles to the participants.

PRIESTHOOD

The great village priest of a Kabui community was called TAKU or TINGKU and below him there were many other inferior priests in three tier grades: Whoo-Jung, Whoo-ren and Reitu-Whoo. Reitu-Whoo was rather a priest-trainee who was usually engaged in lesser rituals and exorcism. When he became abit more senior and more qualified by associating himself with the greater priest, he was promoted as Whoo-ren (Whoo-priest, Ren-great). For the next stage of promotion, he had to have performed the exorcism called 'Changlammei' and after gaining enough spiritual maturity through time and experience, he would be recognised as a Whoo-Jung, for which a special quality of being capable of falling into
trance or having the power of vision through dreams. 38

The belief in life hereafter and in rebirth

The Kabuis had the belief in the life hereafter and in rebirth. According to this traditional belief, the souls of the dead would go to the land of the dead called TAROIRAN, under the Lord called TAROIWANG, the Lord of the dead. There the dead would live until they are reborn into earthly life once again. This cycle of life took place on the basis of the previous earthly life: the virtuous ones are to be reborn into the life of good fortunes and riches and the wicked ones would be reborn into the life of lower animals or plants known as THUNKANDI and then ultimately vanished incapable of rebirth.

Religious mythology of the Koms

According to the Koms' religious mythology, there were two god brothers, the elder one known as Pathen, the Supreme one and his younger brother called Lungjei. The supreme one was the creator of the universe and all the living beings in consultation with his younger brother. Besides these, Koms had their house hold deity called INROI. They happened to worship

38 Kamson, Keijinlung: The customs and Traditions of the Kabuis, an article in the Qtrly. Jn. of MSKA (75), p.16.
this god as a result of the redeeming help extended to them by
this god when they were in a very critical situation during the
feud. The Kom warriors went to fight their enemy and had to
cross a river which was flooded. There was absolutely no way
out to escape from that situation, by then a Python-god appeared
and transformed himself into a log laying across the river in
order to save them from the deluge as well as from their enemy.
Hence the Koms worshipped the Python-god as their house deity
called IMROI.\footnote{Kilong, Toba: An article on 'The Koms' in the "An Introduction to Tribal
language and Culture of Manipur" edited by K.B.Singh (1976),
p.75}

Just like other tribals in Manipur, the Koms too believed
that the human souls are immortal and the souls would live either
in heaven or hade according to their deeds in their mundane life.

One peculiar practice of the Koms in their rituals was to
remove the skull of the dead after one year and to wash it
after that wrapping it with new cloths and then kept it in a jar
along with the other skulls of the family members in their family
graveyard. All these tasks were customarily assigned to the
Sakamak, the son-in-law of the deceased family.

The Tangkhul Nagas believed in the existence of a creator
and called Him ALLA but could not trace his abode. Hence they
worshipped him by the name, Awho, some of them called him Samahai and others Thuiruikhong. Their concept of God however was negative rather than positive like other tribes do. They believed in plurality of Gods and according to their faith the evil spirits constantly tried to harm them. In order to avert the wrath of the evil spirits or to obtain their favour or help propitiatory sacrifices were made always. According to the religious belief of the Tangkhuls, all their misdeeds in life would be revenged by the dreadful god of the dead, called Kokto and their good deeds would be blessed by the god called Phunghui Kameo. Like other tribals, the Tangkhuls had the conception that God did never communicate anything direct but did things to man through agents, signs and dreams. Hence, for any information or foreknowledge of any happenings they depended on omens, signs and dreams, which are known as superstitions. They had several superstitious beliefs, for instance, when killing fowl, the priest made observation of the movement of the cock or hen killed and would predict the future happenings. While the fowl being killed was about to die as the last stroke of movement its legs, right and left legs, were usually interlocking one upon another and when the fowl died by keeping the right leg upon the left leg, the priest would say the omen to be good. If the omen was taken to be bad then any attempt, be it hunting, be it performing feast of merit, be it engagement of marriage, be it sowing seeds
or reaping, they would postpone the attempt or sometimes totally dropped.\textsuperscript{40}

The Mao Nagas also believed in the existence of God in two forms - the benevolent God and the malevolent God. They called the benevolent God 'Oranei' and the malevolent God 'Ora kashu'. The benevolent God was sometimes referred to by the term, 'Amono Pfupei' meaning 'Our dear mother' and 'Koki Achemu' meaning 'Our ara taker', according to their conception, the benevolent God is all kind, never doing any harm to them, but the malevolent God is all revengeful and harmful to them, thus they feared and sought means to appease him by doing all sorts of sacrifice.\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{The religious mythology of some Zomi(Chin-Kuki-Hizo) tribes}

Like other tribes, the Zomi tribes are also animists, worshipping spirits. Their concept of God is vague. According to T. Gouzanang, the ancestors were not worshipping God but only making appeasement to the evil spirits through some sacrificial rituals in order to avert the evil designs of the spirits against

\textsuperscript{40} Shimray, R.R.: \textit{Origin and Culture of Nagas}, p.226

\textsuperscript{41} Ashuli, N.: \textit{The Mao Nagas}, in the \textit{Qtrly. Journal of NSKA} June issue, 1976, p.28
them as well as to seek favour from the spirits. Their belief was that the cause of all misfortunes and diseases was attributed to the acts of the evil spirits out of wrath against them.

All the tribes of the Zomis had their religious mythology. One of the Zomi tribes, Paite tribe also had their ancestral worship known as Pusa in their dialect. This Pusa worship was the main family worship, known in Manipur as Imung Lai. According to the Paite tribe religious mythology, there was one widow, she had two sons named Liando and Thangho, the legendary progenitors of the Paites. Their mother, out of her desperate economic condition, had a conspiracy for her remarriage without the knowledge of her two sons. She sent her two sons to fetch water from a spring by giving two bamboo tubes with one of the tubes' bottom leaked, thus, the two brothers filled their bamboo water tubes which could never have been filled properly. While trying to fill the leaked tube to the brim, they were delayed in returning home. In the meantime, their mother left home, about which was informed to them by a bird. On reaching home, they found no trace of their mother. After some years passed, their mother appeared to them in spirit, in the form of a serpent but vanished after sometime leaving a word to the two sons that they should
worship her in the porch by sacrificing a hen or a female piglet whenever they felt apprehensive of impending misfortune. 42

The Paite and other allied tribes in Manipur believed in the existence of soul after bodily death. The souls of the dead were believed to be sent to Pialgal which was believed to be guarded by the female spirit called Sahnu. According to the Paite traditional belief, this Sahnu was reigning supreme in the Pialgal and at the main gate of Pialgal, guards were installed, hence the souls of the dead who killed considerable number of animals, especially wild beasts like tiger, boar, leopard etc.* found no difficulty at the entrance. This belief thus encouraged them to become head-hunters. According to their belief, all the souls of the human beings and beasts killed during their lifetime were just like captives to serve the killer in the Pialgal.

Mode of worship

Most of the Zomi tribes, in their ancestral worship, did not have a fixed place of worship like temple, mosque or church. Anything or any place which appeared as unusual phenomena of

creations like high precipices, deformed trees, big rocks, caves, rivers, etc. were all considered as the abodes of the gods (spirits) and thus sacrifices were offered to such creatures. This kind of animism made them highly superstitious. Their life activities were, by and large, constrained and clouded with the thoughts of scare and fear of the future happenings. Hence they would like to know their future through omens and signs. Whenever there was any apprehension that any calamity or illness or problem might come to them they offered sacrifices. All kinds of domestic animals were normally sacrificed to the spirits.

**The rituals of the Zomi tribes**

The Zomi tribes had one common ritual annually performed by every village, which was called 'KHAWBAIL', the sacrifice was meant for the whole village. In this ritual, the whole village was involved, every household had to prepare a clay utensil, for this preparation usually a week's time was given to the villagers. In this sacrificial rite, the authority of the village took initiative and the village priest was officially assigned to conduct the sacrificial ritual. This Khawbail sacrifice had a very complicated procedure. The purpose or aim of this sacrifice in view was that their god might bless the whole village with good health and rich harvest for the year. Therefore, the housewives had to bring sample seeds of various...
of crops for the sacrifice. The sacrifice was performed normally at the main entrance of the village. There was a very strict taboo accompanying this KHAWSAWL sacrifice. Usually the taboo lasted one and a half day. Complete silence was observed, all normal life was made standstill. No visitor from other village was allowed to enter the village. The womenfolk should have prepared the rice provision for the period of the taboo observance. No one was allowed to go outside the village and to do any household work at home except cooking. Any one violating the taboo observance was liable to a heavy fine of one mithun and one pig as violation of the taboo caused nullification of the whole sacrifice.43

Other rituals

Other rituals were personal or individual sacrifices. Whenever any apprehension was there that some misfortune or illness was impending, the following sacrifices were offered as dictated by the concerned priest:

(1) Samsaung kithawihna (Sacrifice to the household deity) : This sacrifice was performed when the concerned family felt the need

of doing some appeasement to their household deity.

(2) *Nuñu Kithavihna* (Sacrifice to the evil spirit): In this sacrifice, the priest of the village was consulted regarding a patient suffering from a prolonged and contracted illness known today as consumption and thus according to the prescription of the concerned priest the sacrifice was performed. Normally the sacrifice was performed by killing a dog and the patient sipped the hot blood just gushing out while cutting the throat of the dog.

(3) *Gangi Kithavihna* (A sacrifice for redeeming the soul arrested by the spirit of the wood): This sacrifice was performed when some one in the family suffered from an illness, which they (the ancient people) considered as was caused by the angry spirit of the forest by arresting the soul of the patient. They had to redeem the soul from the hands of the devil. In this ritual, the procedure was complicate, the sick was left at home, the Priest along with some members of the family and of the household council went to the forest taking a pig and two cocks with them and performed the sacrifice, on their return they had to bring home a tiny insect, spider baby home in a bamboo tube. Then at home they would set the insect free and allowed it to crawl in the house. The priest or some one from the company who went to the forest
inquired, "Does he (she as the case may be) return home?" and those waiting for them at home replied saying, "Yes, he has returned home now", then the priest uttered some words of prayer as the last step of the ritual.

(4) Muallam Kithawihna (A sacrifice offered at the outskirt of the village for calling back the soul of the sick seized by devil) : The sacrifice, Muallam kithawihna, was performed when some one suffered from a very serious illness making meaningless utterance, having very high temperature and sometime shaking or shivering unconsciously, the ancient people considered such illness as the case of seizure of the soul of the sick by a devil. They called for the village priest and planned hurriedly to perform a sacrifice to appease the evil spirit who kept the soul of the sick under arrest and inflicted punishment by burning him or her. In this sacrifice, the priest accompanied by some members of the concerned family and of the household council members went to the outskirt of the village taking a pig and white colour shawl brand new, the priest would dance by wearing the shawl, beating a mithun horn musical instrument and offering prayer uttering the name of the sick at certain intervals.

(5) Uinha-awh Kithawihna (A sacrifice offered for the sickling children) : In this sacrifice, as the name of the sacrifice literally indicated, a dog was killed and the teeth of the dog
were made just like necklace and worn by the weaking children. When the priest was about to perform the sacrifice he would sip a country bear spitting upon the children by uttering the prayer.

(6) *Lotuibaul Kithauihna* (A sacrifice offered for a sick suffering from sudden illness): In this sacrifice also, the cause of sickness was assigned to the wrath of the devil who was dwelling the dingy and salty spring near their jhumming site. Their belief was that the patient happened to encroach the prohibited area and caught red-handed by the spirit(s). It seems that the patient was suffering from malaria as the symptoms of malaria were taken for the symptoms of the scorching of the devil.  

The religious practices discussed in the proceeding pages were of the Zonis (Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes), but in minute details slight variations in their rituals might be there among the Soni tribes.

In the religious conceptions and practices of the tribes in Manipur, two conspicuous differences can be observed between the Nagas and the Zonis, which are:

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44 Khaizalian, D.: *Tangthupha tumna leh tumnung* (Before and After the spread of the Gospel), published by the author (1940) at Churachandpur, p.23.
(a) Most of the Nagas had the belief in the cycle of life in which rebirth of a person took place according to his deeds in his life time for the better life or for the worse into inferior creatures but this is not the belief of the Zomis groups. The traditional belief of the Zomis here is that the soul of the wicked would be just like servants in the city of the souls and the souls of the good ones would be just like kings and queens in the city of the dead.

(b) Most of the Nagas had permanent place of worship on the stone or something like that whereas the Zomis did not have any fixed place of worship.

Religious Structure of the Tribals After the Spread of the Gospel

The whole hill areas of Manipur remaining unreached by any other religion until 1896 have been completely swept by the gospel of Christianity today. Not less than 90% of the hill people have been converted into Christianity and the rest 10% of them too, neither linger to their traditional religion nor adopt the traditional practices. Due all to the objection raised by the then Mahamjah of Manipur, the apostle of the Tangkhul Nagas, William Pettigrew, the Arthington Missionary embarked into land of the Tangkhuls, the same is referred to by Rev. Dovums as "A most fortunate accident perhaps, but an accident nonetheless. Though the first missionaries had sometimes mentioned Manipur
as an area in which Christian work ought to be done, by 1896 they were not even thinking about that area as a potential field. And yet within less than ten years they had annexed it. Stranger still is the fact that the first American Baptist Missionary in Manipur was not an American - he was not even a Baptist when he first entered that state.45

It was on February 6, 1894, Rev. William Pettigrew arrived in Imphal to start "School". Actually all he really did was provide private tuition for the children of Government officials. He immediately wrote a Primer and Grammar as he had learnt something of Manipuri (Meitei) language in Cachar where he met some Haniyuris.

The circumstances that led the missionary, Rev. William Pettigrew to Ukhrul were three-fold viz, the Maharajah of Manipur raised objection to the spread of the Gospel in the valley, the British authorities, not wishing to antagonise the orthodox Hindu Manipuris, did not allow missionary activity in the state and then the 16 Khunlakpas of the Nao area did not allow him to start the missionary activity in their area.

At that time there were two missions working in areas adjoining Manipur - the Welsh Presbyterian Mission at Aizawl, Mizoram now and the American Baptist Mission at Kohima, Nagaland. Though the young English missionary, Rev. William Pettigrew came to India under the sponsorship of a private society, the Arthington Aborigines Mission of England, when he began his missionary work in the Tangkhul area, he became being supported by the American Baptist Mission as the Manipur field was taken over by the American Baptist Mission from the Arthington Mission since the latter was no longer in a position to maintain the Manipur field.

Thus in the Tangkhul area, the first thing done by the Rev. Pettigrew was opening a school for the purpose of spreading the Gospel. But opening school and getting students in those days were quite a different thing, only by the next year, 1897 in the month of February, 20 boys were enrolled in his school.

The early years at Ukhrul were difficult one for the Rev. Pettigrew, but fortunately for him, the then Political agent, Major Maxwell was his personal friend. Thus he could somehow manage continuing his missionary work. In 1908, he had only
7 faithful students, namely, Hollei, Leishisan, H.K. Shimray, T. Luikhan, Kuishon, Machonthei, and A. Porom Singh, the only Meitei member, as belonging to the Tangkhul Church, at Ukhrul. The progress in Christianity was very slow in the initial stage. But this is how Christianity had been introduced in the Hill areas of Manipur among the Nagas.

In the southern Hills of Manipur, among the Zouis Christianity was brought in by Rev. Watkins Roberts, a young man by then known locally at Aizawl as Sap tlangvala. From the Arthington Mission, 13 missionaries were deputed to India by the end of 1890, three of them, viz. William Pettigrew, F.W. Savidge and J.H. Lorrains came to Silcher. But when they came to learn that the situation in Manipur was not normal politically, they decided to stay in Cachar, in the meantime, the young pioneer missionaries, F.W. Savidge and J.H. Lorrains started learning Lushai language from the traders from Lushai Hills and William Pettigrew too started learning Manipuri (Meitei) language. When the situation was abit normal they started for their respective destinations. The reverends, Savidge and Lorrains landed into the hilly station, Aizawl in January, 1894 and there started their missionary strategy.46

GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE HILLS OF MANIPUR

Since the elaborate tracing up of how Christianity had been grounding its roots with the tribals of Manipur would emply highlight the background of the development of modern education in the hill areas of Manipur, it would be highly imperative to be a bit exhaustive here.

The whole hill area of Manipur can be divided into two regions according to the map of the jurisdiction of the early missionaries (a) the American Baptist Mission jurisdiction comprising the present Ukhrul District, the Senapati district, the Tamenglong District, the Chandel District and the Sadar hills district and (b) the North East India General Mission comprising the present Churachandpur District.

(a) The American Baptist Mission

The first missionary for the spread of Christianity in Manipur, Rev. William Pettigrew, was not an American, not even a Baptist when he first entered the state of Manipur. He originally belonged to an Anglican church of England but he got the sponsorship of a private society called Arthington Aborigines Mission when he was to come to India as a Missionary. The Arthington Mission was named after Robert Arthington, a millionaire at Leeds as he was the sole contributor of the Mission. Then
Rev. Pettigrew was about to start the real missionary work, the Arthington Aborigines Mission communicated its inability to continue its sponsorship, hence, accidentally the Rev. Pettigrew had to work under the American Baptist Mission with the Headquarters at Ukhrul, about 70 kms. away from the state capital Imphal since the field of Manipur was taken over as the American Baptist Mission comity area from January, 1896.

Within six months after his arrival at Imphal, the Rev. Pettigrew started a primary school at Singjamei Bazar which bears his name even today. But he was not allowed to propagate Christianity in the valley among the Meitesis. The then Political Agent of the British Government, Major Maxwell being his personal friend, advised him to move to the hills and accordingly he moved to Ukhrul and started the real Missionary work. The first thing he did then was start a school at Ukhrul. Opening a school was a right step for launching a missionary work. He used to visit the surrounding villages with his students, preaching the gospel of Christ. So with the foundation of Christian faith being laid by the Rev. William Pettigrew in this way, the pioneering groups of christians among the tribals in Manipur were the Tangkhuls. Within 5 years of the establishment of the school, 12 students became converts. In 1903, another school of the Mission was opened at Hundung and thus the hand of the Missionary was
gradually strengthened. In the meantime, the Government too
eupowered the missionary with the task of inspecting the schools
in the hills during the first decade of the present century.
Again in the year 1910-11, he was appointed as the Superintendent
for the first census in the hill areas of the state, which facili-
tated a golden opportunity for him to survey the whole hill
areas for his missionary work.47

In 1911, another missionary couple, Rev. U.M. Fox and his
wife, from America joined the missionary work in Manipur. Fox
was a carpenter too, hence, his coming as a missionary was of
tremendous benefit to the hill people as guidance and instruction
that he gave to the people went a long way for the development of
the tribals.

By 1917, the total population of christians within the
jurisdiction of the American Baptist Mission rose to 355, out of
which 200 belonged to the Tangkhuls.48

In 1921, a great spiritual revival swept the Baptist mis-
sion area and within the same year, more than 1000 converts were

47 Lolly, R.R.: The Baptist Church in Manipur, published by Mrs. Lolly (1905); p.33.
48 Vaiphei, S. Prim: Church growth in Manipur, pub. by Mrs. Vaiphei (1931), p.52.
baptised. In 1927, another mass conversion took place in the Baptist Mission area again. Thus the christian population grew from strength to strength.

In 1917, two years after the couple Missionary Mr. & Mrs. U.A. Fox left Manipur for America, Dr. Crosier was transferred from Tura to Manipur at the request of Rev. Pettigrew as the need for medical service was felt by him since long in the field of Manipur. During the Kuki rebellion, 1918-19, Dr. Crosier rendered yeoman's service as a medical officer of the Government as a result of which, permission for purchasing land for a new Mission Centre was given to the American Baptist Mission by the Government. Accordingly land for the new Mission centre was purchased at Kangpokpi on the Imphal-Dimapur road. The construction of the new centre was supervised by a Kuki Christian, Seilut Singson by name. It was in November 1919, the American Baptist Mission Headquarters was shifted from Ukhrul to Kangpokpi. In 1921, on the return of the Rev. Pettigrew from his furlough, the following development took place at their Headquarters, Middle School, Orphanage, Leper Asylum the first of its kind in Manipur and a Dispensary were newly established.49

The second major group of tribals who headed the appeal of the Gospel were the Kukis. Here the term, 'Kuki' was used to refer to all the non-Naga tribals in Manipur, but now in its present usage the term refers only to the Thado speaking tribes. Of course, this second group would be dealt with at length later under the sub-caption of the North East India General Mission (NEIGH).

The third major group of tribals who responded the call of the Gospel were Zelanglongs occupying the western hills of the state. The first convert from among them was K. Nenrijinpau, nicknamed as Haipak.

The second convert among the Zelanglongs was Sachindai baptised by Rev. Fox on the 6th December, 1914. Mr. Nenrijinpau served in the band of the Maharajah of Manipur but resigned his post in order to take up the evangelistic work among his own tribe. A sub-divisional headquarters was opened in 1920 at Tamenglong, by then another convert, Jinlakpau, a personal friend of Nenrijinpau got appointment in a very important post and being entrusted with the duty of census of the Tamenglong area. Taking the opportunity of his census duty he preached in the interior hills the Gospel of love and at his own village, Naihao a church came into being with 20 families as the congregation, yet there was mounting opposition of Christianity after sometime in the village. And the government sided the non-
Christians ordering the christians were not allowed to live in the village plus forfeiting all their belongings and a fine of Rs. 400/-, but at this juncture, Rev. Pettigrew intervened and obtained permission from the government authorities to allow the Christian villagers to settle at a new site, a quarter of a mile away from the Kaikao village. Later, the new village was named Sempang. Thus a new village, known as a Christian village came into being in 1923. The pioneers, in spreading the Gospel in the Zeliangrong area, mention may be made of the Superintending Pastor, Pakho, a Kuki who served from 1924 to 1939, succeeded by Kaphunlung David, son of the first Christian, Manjirirpau. Thus the whole area was swept by the wave of Christianity since then. 50

The fourth group of the tribals in the Manipur hills who received the light of the Gospel were the Nao Hagas. The Nao Hagas lived in the area contiguous to Nagaland, in the northern hills of the state. The Nao are the people who had raised a very strong objection to Rev. William Pettigrew for his pitching the Mission Centre in their area in 1895. However, in 1903, the Rev. Pettigrew succeeded in starting a Lower Primary School at Hao in his capacity as the Inspector of schools of the state.

Of course, real evangelistic activity could not have been begun until 1923 in this area. In the same year there were four students hailing from different villages clustering around the Mao Gate on the Imphal-Dimapur road, who attended Kohima Baptist Mission School, becoming the first converts for their area. They were by name, Nink Kapani, Hoho Likhoo, Kholi Puni and Napuni Kakhiko. Thus in 1927, a church sprouted with them at the village of Punanai. 51

Since then the Christian population increased from strength to strength. By 1950 the Christian population rose to over 1000. In 1937, a Mao Christian Hymn book was compiled by Mr. O. Kahiipiri. Till 1956, the Mao Christians were under the Sadar Baptist Association. Since then they formed their own association as the Manipuri North Nag Baptist Association with Mr. D. L. Dahiho as their first Director.

In the fifth group of tribals of Manipur, the inhabitants of the Sadar Hills, most of them the Vaiphais and the Kukis merged themselves into the Baptist Mission as the Kuki Baptist Association. The chief of Kamuching village was the first convert for this area, in 1920. He served for this area as a Licentiate Pastor, through him many Christians got baptism. Another evangelist for this area was Mangkhawlamwho was converted

on the July 20th, 1941. Because of their active evangelistic work, 10 churches became sprouting out from this area. Some other Vaipheis live in the Churachandpur District have been under the banner of 'Manipur Christian Organisation affiliated with the North East India General Mission.'

The sixth groups of tribals in Manipur were the inhabitants of the south eastern part of the state comprising of the multi-ethnic groups viz. the Analas, the Chothes, the Lamsangs, the Monsangs, the Hoyons and the Taraos. The Koms of this area formed their own association as the Kom Baptist Association and the Marings too formed their own Association as the Maring Baptist Association. The Maring Haga Baptist Association had Nachi as their headquarters. These ethnic minor tribes were all stemming out from the mother church of the Manipur Baptist Convention affiliated with the American Baptist Mission. And most of them were of recently formed associations.

(b) The North East India General Mission

Now resuming the discussion of the second major christian group of tribals inhabiting mostly of the present Churachandpur District of Manipur, our attempt will be on how the backward tribals had broken their traditional beliefs and adopted the new religion, christianity in such a short span of time, within hardly three scores of years.
The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission popularly known as the Welsh Missionaries came to Cheadpur in 1841 for the first time and established their mission centre there for which the credit of pionearship goes to Rev. Thomas Jones. The pioneer missionary, Rev. Jones, within 5 years of his stay there, translated the gospel according to St. Markew in Khali by using Roman script. The Mission wished to extend its evangelistic work to other parts of north-east India. Hence Rev. William Williams, being fired with missionary zeal, entered the Lushai Hills in 1891, but the political situation was too much unfaavourable for his purpose as there was the Chin Lushai expedition extensively conducted by the British Government of India for the expansion of her administration over there with the native forces like the 3rd Bengal Infantry, 2nd - 4th Gurkha Rifles under the command of Brigadier General V.H. Treacle. So the missionary had to leave the Lushai hills without being able to do the evangelistic work.

When the situation of the political turmoil was tided over, on the 11th January 1894, two enthusiastic missionaries of the Arthington Mission, the Rev. William Pattigrew's colleagues, viz. F.N. Savidge and Rev. J. Herbert Lorrain reached Mizaul,
the capital of Mizoram. Though these two missionaries stayed very short, yet their contribution towards the growth of christianity as well as to the development of education of the Lushai people was quite durable and far reaching. They gave the Lushai alphabet in roman scripts - 25 known as A, Au, B, CH up to Z, hymn book and translated the texts of the Gospels - St.Luke, St. John in Lushai language. They also wrote Lushai Grammar and Primer in Lushai known as Du Hmasa. In 1897, a time came for them to leave Lushai Hills. In the same year, Rev. D.E. Jones came to Lushai Hills accompanied by a Lhasi Christian, Rai Bhajur by name, the next year they were joined by another missionary, Rev. Edwin Rollands. Rev. D.E. Jones and Rev. Edwin Rollands were the two missionaries to whom the credit of the fast progress of the evangelistic activity in a massive way is to be given. These two effective missionaries were again joined by a couple, Dr. Peter Fraser and his wife and a young man named Watkins Roberts in 1908.

It was in 1909, Dr. Fraser and Watkins Roberts devoted their time for sending out the text of the Gospel according to St. John in Lushai dialect to all parts of Mizoram and a copy of which reached the Chief of the Senvaun village in Manipur south. 53

On receiving the copy of the text of St. John in Lushai, the chief of Senvawn village, Makhobun Singson felt perturbed in his mind as he could not read and became anxious to know about the literature in detail. Hence, he invited Watkins Roberts to explain it to him personally. In response to the invitation, Rev. Watkins Roberts did not lose time to go to Senvawn, taking two students studying with the missionaries at Aizawl as there was not proper route leading to Senvawn from Aizawl on those days. The two boys were Lungpau and Thangkai by name, the native inhabitants of Manipur.

The date of the advent of Christianity in the Manipur south had been taken to be the 7th May, 1910 by many of the Churches in the south-west of Manipur and this date had been observed by several churches as a Missionary day. But the Independent Church of India comprising a major section of the Imars celebrated its Diamond Jubilee in 1935 and issued a Souvenir in which Laldena, an associate Professor of the Manipur University made a rapid Survey on the advent of Christianity in the North East India and according to his findings, the exact date of the advent of Christianity in the Manipur south as on the 5th February appears to be most authentic.\(^5\)

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account, Rev. Watkin Roberts and his party left Aizawl on the 31st January, 1910 enroute to the village, Senvawn situated at the extreme corner of the south-west of Manipur via the following villages: Khauruhlian, Kepran, Vanbaung, Khaulian and then Parvachaum in Manipur to Senvawn. After taking 6 days from Aizawl reached Senvawn in the evening of the 5th February 1910.

SENVAWN AS THE FIRST HEADQUARTERS OF THE MISSION

At the village of Senvawn, with the native convert christians as the staff, a school was opened in the next year. In 1912, Taisena was sent from Aizawl to head the school and in the same year A. Dala was sent to America for training. The next year he returned home and was serving the headquarters as the Superintendent. A strategy was made by the two white missionaries for the propagation of the Gospel in the southwest of Manipur resulting into the formation of a separate mission set-up known as 'THADO KUKI PIONEER MISSION'. After 10 years of its formation, it was renamed in 1924 as 'THE NORTH EAST INDIA GENERAL MISSION' as it was comprising not only of the Thado Kuki tribe but of many other tribes. In 1926, the mission headquarters was shifted from Senvawn to Tinsuans, a more central part of the area, then again shifted to Phersanal, an
adjacent bigger village, but in 1928, a trouble cropped up in regards to the way of utilisation of the Mission Fund. Rev. Kathin Roberts and Rev. Dohnuma defected from the M.E.I.G. Mission and formed another association known as Independent Church of India with the headquarters at Lakhipur. As a consequence of the trouble, the M.E.I.G. Mission headquarters which was shifted from Phersawl to Lakhipur was again shifted to Churachandpur, later known as Old Churachandpur in 1930.

The North east India General Mission headed by a couple Missionary, Paul Rostad and his Mrs. Ella Rostad since 1928, occupied the old Churachandpur in 1930 and in 1950 Paul Rostad left for America, in the same year Paddock was sent from America to succeed Rostad. But within a short period of time, things stood changed in the political situation resulting to the ousting of white missionaries from the north-east India. 55

In the independence of India, when almost all the various ethnic groups of tribals, in the southernhills of Manipur, become spiritually enlightened and politically awakened. Then disintegration was sprouting in the M.E.I.G. Mission affairs, resulting in the formation of the church organisations on ethnic group basis.

For instance, the Paite tribe formed 'Convention Church' necessarily comprising the Paite speaking people, the Thado Kulis, 'Kuki Christian Association, the Vaiphei, 'Manipur Christian Organisation', the Gangas, 'Synod', the Imama, 'Assembly'. So all the tribes have had their own church organisations on the basis of their ethnic groups.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN MANIPUR

The first Roman Catholic Salvatorians from Germany arrived at Shillong on February 27, 1680 to begin the work of evangelisation in the North East India comprising Assam, Bhutan and Manipur, but had to leave for Germany again because of the First World War in 1915, yet the work of looking after the Assam missions was entrusted with the Jesuits of Bengal till the coming of the Salesians of Don Bosco in 1922.56

The first Catholic missionary, Fr. August Koenigsbauer came to Manipur in 1912. When he met the Maharajah of Manipur requesting permission for opening a centre at Imphal, no objection was raised by the Maharajah; even then no concrete action could not follow due to the limitation of financial resources.

In 1951, the first Bishop for Manipur, O. Arunaso started the initial groundwork for the establishment of Catholic Mission in Manipur. In 1956, the Mission centre was established at Imphal under the supervision of the Catholic missionaries, Fr. A. Ravalico and Fr. P. Bianchi. The Palit Bhavan owned by a Bengali, Palit, a Police officer in the heart of the town was bought and renamed as 'Hirmalabas' the meaning of which is 'the house of immaculate conception'. In the same year two more Catholic Fathers, Felix and Vanturoli joined the Imphal Catholic Centre as priests. In 1958 Fr. Joseph Kachirmattan also joined the Imphal Catholic Centre as the first Diocesan priest.

Today the Catholic Church had been firmly established with around 30,000 communicants, 12 diocesan priests, 14 religious priests and 30 sisters actively working in Manipur. Imphal is an ecclesiastical unit with the Bishop at its head having 5 fullfledged high schools, 33 boarding houses, 4 formation houses, 42 minor seminaries and one Catechists training school. Apart from the three Christian denominations discussed, there are a number of other denominations working in the hilly areas of Manipur as follows:
(1) **Seventh-day adventist**

The seven day adventist church was first introduced by Mr. Ningheie and Mr. Karna of Ukhrul in 1951. This church has not made much headway in evangelisation but produced various sects like Israelites claiming ethnically belonging to Israelite race.

(2) **Salvation army**

The church of Salvation Army too did not make much impact but still survive by running High schools, offering the facility of supporting some students in their schools.

(3) **Church of Christ**

The Church of Christ was brought into Manipur by a Tangkhul named Pachou Keishing and in the south of Manipur too very few churches came up and did not have wide impact.

(4) **United Pentecostal Church**

The UPC was brought into Manipur by some immigrants from Mizoram in 1940s. It has been running one English medium school at Churachandpur. The congregation of this church, too, is still very small.