CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

Manipur, the easternmost part of India, is situated in the area covered by 92°E to 95°E longitude and 23°N to 25°N latitude. It is bounded on the east and the south by upper Burma, on the west by Cachar district of Assam and on the north by state of Nagaland. The Ancient kingdom of Manipur is a cradle of human civilization and the home of various ethnic groups. It is stated in the Sanamahi Laikan that the name Manipur was first officially coined during the reign of Garibaniwaz (1702-48) in the early part of 18 century.¹ Her indigenous names are Kangleipak, Poireipak and Meitrabark.²

At present Manipur has an area of 22,327 square kilometer. Out of the total area of Manipur nine-tenth i.e., 20,126 square kilometer is hill area and valley area constitutes 2,230 square kilometer. There are nine districts. They are (i) Imphal East district (ii) Imphal West district (iii) Bishenpur district (iv) Thoubal district (v) Ukhrul district (vi) Chandel district (vii) Churachanpur district (viii) Tamenglong district and (ix) Senapati district. Out of the nine districts in Manipur five districts namely Ukhrul district, Chandel district, Tamenglong district and Senapati district are in the hills and the remaining four districts namely Imphal East district, Imphal West district, Bishenpur district and Thoubal district are in valley. Manipur being the land of diversity both in terms interims of demographic variation as well as in topographic feature has indigenous ethnic communities numbering 33 recognized schedule tribes and
some other in the category unspecified lists still demanding constitutional recognition as separate tribes apart from the Meitei and Meitei-Pangal in addition to substantial presence of Mayang *viz.*, Panjabi, Bangali, Marwari, Bihari, Marathi, etc and Nepali population in this land. The total population of Manipur, according to 2001 census is 24,000,00, the population distribution is two sided with about two-third of it inhabited to the valley and the rest of the population is sparse over nearly 20,00 square kilometer of the hill area. The hill population comprises as many as 33 schedule tribes. In the hill district of Chandel fourteen different schedule tribes are inhabited. The major groups in this district are *Anal, Maring* and *Thadou*. The inhabited minor groups are *Lamkang, Zou, Gangte, Mizo, Tangkhul* and *Kom*. In Churachanpur district *Hmar, Paite*, and *Thadou* are the major groups and *Anal, Chothe, Kabui, Kom, Vaiphei, Zou, Mizo, Gangte, Simte*, and *Rarlte* are minor groups. *Zeliangrong* is the majority group and *Thadou* and *Gangte* are the minority group in the district of Tamenglong. *Mao, Maram* and *Thadou* constitute major groups in Senapati district. The minor groups in this district are *Kabui, Tangkhul, Maring, Chiru, Kom, Koireng, Vaiphei, Kachanaga, Sema*, and *Koirou*. The *Tangkhuls* are the major groups and the *Thadous* are minor groups in the district of Ukhrul. During the British rule in Manipur the British categorized the tribal population into two naming the Nagas and Kukies. “Known through several names in the region between south Asia and South East Asia, history records Manipur as a sovereign Asiatic kingdom since ancient times”. Known as Kathe to the Burmese, Meklee to the Ahoms, Mooglie to the Cacharries, Casey to the Shans, the people of this land have undergone several ordeals in
the courses of its long drawn civilizational history. It is generally accepted that the history of Manipur begins from 33AD. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, the royal Chronicle of Manipur informs the ascension of *Nongda Lairen Pakahngba* to the thrown of *Kangla*, the ancient seat of power in Manipur in 33AD.

In the hills state of Manipur, the mountains are divided into western hills which comprises of the *Koubru-Laimaton; Mukui Longdi, Kacha Naga* and Vangai ranges which are southern branches of the great Baraile, the eastern hill comprises the *Sirohi, Mapithel* and *Yamodeng* ranges which are the branches of the Patkai mountain on Indo Myanmar border. The Mount Iso or Tenipu, the Sirohi peak in the east and Koubru peak in the West are the important peaks of Manipur. The Barak is the longest and largest river, started from a point on the northern hills, it flows into the western and southern hills, then to the Cachar and the Surma valleys of Bangladesh. The Irang and Makru of the Tamenglong flow into the great Barak. The Imphal River also flows through the valley of Manipur and traverses into the Chindwin in Myanmar. The rivers namely the Imphal, the Iril, the Thoubal, the Nambol which run across the valley provided the ecological environment for the Meitei civilization. Thus rivers and the fertile banks provided livelihood to the people who live in their watershed area. During the rain, they turn into devastating demons of devouring floods and bring forth the alluvial soil enriching the fertility of the land. The Barak and the Iril rivers are navigable for a pretty long course. The Imphal river has long mileage of navigation.
The Loktak Lake which is the largest natural fresh water lake of North East India is in Manipur. This lake is located between 93°46′ - 93°55′E longitude and 24°25′ - 24°42′ N latitudes. It is oval in shape with maximum length and width of 32km and 13km respectively and the depth of the lake varies from 0.5m to 4.6m with the average depth recorded as 2.7m. There are ten Isles of the Loktak Lake made up of rock which belong to upper Dsang of Disang groups. The ten Isles are Ithing, Thanga, Sendra, Karang, Yaosulakpa-Khoudemching, Hanubiching, Shingdonpok, Pabotching, Mukpa and Manda.

The Principal Rivers in the valley of Manipur are the Imphal, Irl, Thoubal, Nambul, Nambol, and Kongba. The Imphal river is the largest and economically very important river in the valley. It is originated from the spurs of the Koubru and Tambaba ranges and flows southwards taking its course through the Imphal valley in ancient days. These rivers passed through the center of the Yaiskul Pana but its course was changed in its present position during the period of king Khagemba in order to keep the capital side of Kangla intact. In its course of flowing it receives Kongba river at Kiyamgei, Irl river at Lilong, Thoubal river at Chirai Irong village, Sakmai river at Sekmaigin, Khortak river at Arong, Kongba river at Ithai, and Chakpi river at Sugnu, then it leaves the Manipur valley and enters into mysterious course between the lofty ranges of mountain to the south-west and cut a deep gorge throw the hills. That place is called Chingnunghud by the people of this land. Then its water fall into the Chindwin river in Burma which leads to the sea. The Barak river, Irang river, Mukru river, Irl river, Laimatak river, and Lamba river are the
rivers in the hill region of Manipur. Out of these rivers the Barak is the largest one which takes its course from the Barail ranges of the Mao-Maram areas flows into western and southern hill then to Cachar and the Surma village of Bangladesh. The Irang and Makru rivers flow into the great Barak River. Manipur is endowed with a large number of rivers and streams which run her mountains and valleys. Except the Leimatak all the rivers of Manipur flow from North to south. These rivers and rich fertile banks provide livelihood to the people who live in their watershed system. That places are very productive in different kinds of agricultural crops. Not only had that it also had a great importance for the commercial propose as the river courses become very convenient for navigation.

As already stated that Loktak is the biggest lake in Manipur. Beside the Loktak there are numbers of lakes namely Waithou pat, Pumlen Pat, Lambi Pat, Sana Pat, Kharung Pat, Ikop Pat etc. They are also comparatively important. Varieties of fishes and edible vegetables are found in the lakes of Manipur. The mountain ranges of Manipur belong to the eastern Himalaya system. They are divided into western hills which comprise of the Koubru Limton, Makui Longdi, Kala Naga and Vangai ranges which are southern branches of the great Barail, the eastern hills comprised the Shirohi, Mapithel and Yamodoung ranges which are the branches of the Patkai Mountain on Indo Myanmar border. The Mount Iso or Tenipu peak (9824ft) is the highest peak in Manipur. Siroi peak in the east and Koubru peak in the west are the importance peaks in Manipur. In the central plain of Manipur there are small hills like
Nongmaiching, Langathel, Langol, Waithou, Thanga, Karang etc. It is known that the mountain system of Manipur consists of western ranges, northern ranges and eastern ranges. The northern ranges are the Koubru spur including mount Tenipu peak.

The entire forest of Manipur may be classified as (i) Tropical moist semi-evergreen (ii) Tropical moist deciduous (iii) sub-Tropical and (iv) Dry temperate. About the richness of Manipur forest R.B. Pemberton remarks “I know spot in India in which the products of the forests are no varied and magnificent but their utility is entirely local, as the nature of the country precludes the possibility of transporting to foreign markets ……. The valley itself is practically free of forests although every village is surrounded by a grove of forest trees. EW. Dune stated that “The climate at once rainy and temperature cover the hills in the western portion with thick forests and induces the inhabitants to grow rice, cause numerous rivers, streams and marshes, and encourage aquatic and water loving plants. Forest in the east is not thick as in the West. Oak replaces bamboo, firs for Nagesshwar, drier climate produced a lighter and different kind of jungle. The villages in the valley are situated on the banks of the river or edge of the lakes so that every household has some water near it.” The temperature in this land throughout the year is very enjoyable and pleasing. It is neither too hot nor to cool. The fairness of climate is due to its elevation from the sea level. The period from October to February is foggy. The rainy season starts in March or April and continues up to November or December. June, July and August are the wettest month in the
year. During the April and May rains are associated with thundering and lighting and thunder storm occurs more frequently during April to May and September.

In Manipur, traditionally six seasons are there. They are spring season, in Manipur *Yenning Tha*, hot season, in Manipur *Kalen Tha*, Autumn season, in Manipur *Naken Tha*, cold season *Ningtham Tha* and cold and dry season which is known as *Ashit Awan Tha* in Manipur. F. Kingdom Ward informs us that Manipur is part of the monsoon belt of South East Asia and naturally is included in the same eco-system of the forest of the region and the Ancient kingdom of Manipur has been identified with the flora of Assam hills. He writes “some ten thousand years ago the climate of Manipur, as of all eastern India was far more colder than it is today. The vegetation must have been different; and no less so the forest. Another result of the constant wear and tear on the earth’s crust of the heaving and squeezing, uplifting and sagging of the rocks is not only the gradual isolation of areas—mountain tops for example, but also the building of new line of communication between areas long divorced.22 He further stated that for long ages Manipur was almost completely sterile. The problem was simple, it had no flora at all. It has been driven out by the cold. As the climate improved plant refugees began to return to their old homes from the warm south from the deep valleys and plains. These established themselves, multiplied until Manipur become a part of Indo Malaysia flora whence the bulk of its new population was derived. In fact the position of Manipur in the midst of glaciated mountains and astride one of the glaciated escape routes was
peculiarly favourable for receiving contribution of flora from all directions.”

The most distinguished flora is the famous *Siroi* lily (*Lilium Macklenningia* named after the maiden name of the wife of its discoverer Kingdom F. Word). Of the fauna, the India hornbill and rarest of them all, the brow antlered deer known as the *Sangai* are worth mentioning. The world famous brow-antlered deer known as *Sangai* found only in Manipur lives at *Kaibul Lamjao* National park situated on the south of the *Loktak* Lake. The National park which floats on it is the homeland of *Sangai*.

This beautiful land of Manipur, to discuss the origin of its name, literal meaning is the land of gems. One version stated that near *Nungoibi* and between *Taibang* Thong there is a stone on account of which the place is called Manipur. In the traditional age of *Haya Chak* the present Manipur was known as *Tilikokton Ahanba*. In *Haya Chak* it was known as *Mira Pokthoklam*. In the age of *Khunung Langba Chak* it was known as *Hanna Shemba Konna Loiba* and *Muwapolly*. In the *Konna Chak*, she is also known in different names as *Poirei* or *Poirei Pak*, *Wangongam*, *Kangleipak*, *Meitrapak*, *Sanaleipak*, and *Sana Pungmayon*.

The two Ethic groups in Manipur viz., *Chingmi* and *Tami* are predominantly Mongoloid elements. In later time the hill peoples were categorised as Naga, Kuki, and many sections of the small tribes. The valley people are classified into different groups like Meiteis, Pangals, Mayangs, the Lois and the different sections of the people.
It is stated that Homo sapiens did not involve in the land of Manipur. So indigenous ethnos in Manipur came from outside most probably the East and South East Asian region at different periods of time and in successive waves of migration. Other peoples who inhabited in the soil of Manipur were also come into Manipur from different parts of outside Manipur in different historical period and times. Migration is universal phenomenon. It touches every country in the world which became the point of origin, transit or destination for migrant. Migration is a form of geographical or spatial mobility, which involves a change of usual residence of a person between clearly defined geographical unite. People are moving from one place to another since the ancient period. It also contributed to the evolution of separate cultures, to the diffusion of those cultures and their components by interchange and communication and to the frequently complex mix of peoples and cultures found in different area of the world. Different facets of migration often touch many aspects of social and economic relations affecting the areas of out migration, including the migrants themselves. Various ethnic groups came to Manipur from pre-historic times down to the present day. There are two types of migration (i) immigration and (ii) emigration. When people come to a place, it is called immigration and when people go out of a place, it is known as emigration. Migration is found in all places due to one or the other reasons. Manipur is also not an exception to migration.34
Objective

It is the objective of my research to present a systematic, comprehensive and graphic account of The Muslims in Manipur: A study in their History and culture. The Muslims in Manipur are known locally as ‘Pangal’. They are believed to have originated from Sylhet and Cachar as prisoners of war taken by the Meiteis. In the 17th century some Muslim mercenaries from outside the country came to Manipur to fight over the throne of Manipur. In the battle ensued on the southern fringe of the valley of Manipur, Lainingthou Khagemba, the then king of Manipur, inflicted a crushing defeat on them; and they were taken as prisoners. However, the king pardoned those Muslim prisoners and made them settled in the valley. They were given local women as wives and indigenous family titles or ‘Yumnak Sagei’ to each family according to their respective occupation. Then in course of time, these Muslims, as they had a close contact with the Meiteis and adopted Meitei tradition and language, could be more or less identified culturally with the indigenous people, the Meiteis. In fact, in the pre-colonial period, till 1873, they had no ‘Masjid’ (Mosque) and were, for the most part, very ignorant of the religion they professed. It was during the British colonial period (1891-1947) that with the emergence of local Maulvis, Madrasahs and M.E. Schools for the Muslims were established. In the said schools and Muslim villages, Arabic, Urdu and Persians were taught so as to enable them to read Quran and understand Islam and its principles of Namaz, Roza, Haz and Zakat. In the post colonial period with merger of Manipur with Indian Union on 15th October, 1949, the Manipur Muslims introduced purdah system which cannot be readily accepted by the
women as it restricted their movement in the society. They have also introduced ‘Lungi’ a dress current in the days of the Prophet, among the local Muslims. Maṣjids are built for regular congregation of the local Muslims in their five-time prayer a day. They also prefer Muslim names to the earlier local family titles given to them; and thus they try to identify themselves with other Muslims outside the state. Now, almost all the Muslims in Manipur claim that Manipur Muslim community is composed of Sheikh, Sayeed, Pathan and Mughal. This claim of the Manipur Muslims are required to be examined critically on the basis of the places from where they hailed and their traditional occupations in which they were engaged and also on the basis of their social and cultural attitudes.

The population of the Muslims in the post-colonial/post independent period has been multiplied by the immigrants chiefly from Sylhet and Cachar who had entered with the help of their relatives in the state. According to 1981 census report, their population was about 99,327.

Objectives of the study

(i) Historical circumstances of the coming of the Muslims in the pre-colonial period.

(ii) Localised picture of cultural Interaction

(iii) Political and socio-economic life of the Muslims in the pre-colonial and post colonial period.
(iv) Contemporary receding image of the Muslims and their attempts for cultural renaissance in the post-independent period.

The primary objective of the work lies in the study of the history and culture of the Manipur Muslims. This suggests that the proposed study is obviously a historical one. Accordingly, the work will primarily be based on all the literary texts and chronicles locally called *Puyas* and also on the official accounts left by the British administrator. However, a social anthropological approach is also proposed to study it. Accordingly, the work will be based on field investigation for collecting first hand information.

My work is broadly based on the original sources which include archaic manuscripts, chronicles and written sources. It is fact that in almost all the works carried out by scholars and historians dealing with the history of Manipur published so far, the Muslims in Manipur: A Study in their History and culture has not been properly reflected in their respective works. It is also significant to note that some scholars have devoted on the Muslims in Manipur, their life and culture, however, there are certain limitation in their respective works. So, the proper treatment on the subject concerned is very much needed. In this work, every possible attempt has been made to throw light on the Muslims in Manipur in their history and culture by analyzing, investigating and examining on the available sources.

The accounts, reports, gazetteers and monographs written and recorded by colonial officials are also utilized for presenting a proper assessment on the
subject matter. Besides the original sources we also utilized secondary resources of information to present more comprehensive and accurate picture of the subject.

In this research work a systematic, comprehensive and graphic account of the Muslims in Manipur: A Study in their history and culture has been highlighted on the basis of the available sources after a careful investigation and thorough study. The utility of the work is that it will be great use to those scholars and researchers who intend to enrich their knowledge on the subject matter.
End Notes


5. *Ibid*.


7. *Ibid*.


11. *Ibid*.


20. R.B. Pemberton, op.cit., p.27.


24. Ibid.


27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.
33. *Nunglon Achouba MS*