CHAPTER III

MANIPUR—THE LAND
AND ITS PEOPLE
- General Introduction
- Location
- Topography
- Minerals
- Agriculture
- Rivers
- Communication
- Administrative Divisions
- Demography
- People
- History
  1. The History of the Imphal Valley, the land of the Meitei
  2. The History of the Hills, the land of the Tribes.
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Manipur is one of the smallest states in the country, with a total area of 22,327 square kilometers. Prior to the elevation of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh to the status of States, Manipur ranked as the smallest State. Like the other states in the north-east, Manipur too has its international borders, with Myanmar (Burma) in the south and the east. A small tip of southern Manipur adjoins Mizoram. Its other neighbours are Nagaland in the north, the Cachar district of Assam in the west, the North Cachar Hills of Assam in the south-east.

Between the seven sisters of north-east India (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura) in many ways, Manipur stands out distinct as: (1) Manipur is the land of the famous Manipuri classical Ras-lila
dance (2) Manipur is the land of the legendary Rani Gaidinliu (3) Manipur is the land of the famous Manipur handloom products, specially the shawls, bed-covers and Sari (4) In India, during the Second World War, besides Nagaland, Manipur was part of the country which saw the march of Japanese army on its venue of war. The Japanese troops had entered Manipur, to stay there for a fairly long period. Much prior to this, before the British rule in India, Manipur had been twice captured by the Burmese. In other words, Manipur has been the venue of many wars (5) After Independence, Manipur has been the scene of some of the worst forms of Insurgency (6) The population structure of Manipur is unique, this state has two distinct category of "original inhabitant", the tribal section and the non-tribal section of population. What is distinct about this is that it is only in Manipur that there is a rather very sharp and distinct cultural difference between the two sections of population. Compared to this, in Assam and Tripura, both of which also have "mixed populations" like Manipur, there is much of culture-transfer between the tribal and non-tribal section of populations.

I

LOCATION

Manipur is located between 23° 80'N latitude to 25° 68'N latitude and 93° 03' E longitude to 94° 78' E longitude in the extreme eastern parts of India.
TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of Manipur comprises of two geographical regions, the valley and the surrounding hills. The hills of Manipur are the abode of the different tribes inhabiting the State. The hills comprise of nearly 90 percent of the total area of the State, while the tribal population inhabiting it account for nearly 27.30 percent of the total population of the State. In other words, more than 70 percent of the total population of the State is found in 10 percent of the land of the State. The valley in Manipur is known as the Imphal valley. This is the abode of the Meitei who account for the nearly sixty percent of the total population of the State.

In the north-east, besides Tripura, Manipur was a princely state during the colonial rule of India. Like other princely States during British rule in India, Manipur had its own Maharaja, ruler. The ruler of Manipur was a Meitei. His kingdom extended to the neighbouring hills inhabited by tribal communities. After the departure of the British, and the accession of the princely state to India, Manipur became a part of a state. In 1956, with the reorganization of the States, along with Tripura and the creation of Meghalaya, Manipur was made a Union Territory. In 1972 it was raised to a status of a State.

It is interesting to recollect that Manipur, much before the end of British rule, had acquired a prominent identity in the
cultural and social activities of the "main land". This was unlike some other States of the region, such as Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya. These later listed states, in many ways lived a "cultural-social autonomous" life, to themselves. The Vaishnava religion and the Manipur classical dance had bridged a strong cultural-social link between the people inhabiting this border state with those inhabiting the main land.

MINERALS

Manipur has rich mineral resources. Till recently Manipur depended on her own supply of mineral salt. Limestone and iron ore are also found, and geological survey with the intention of prospecting them is being carried.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people inhabiting the Imphal valley. It has rich alluvial soil. The hill areas are rich in forest resources. Shifting cultivation, commonly referred to as jhuming, is the prevalent practise in the hill areas. They have now taken to terrace cultivation also. In some parts of Manipur, indigo and tea grow wild. Weaving is the second common practise which is practised by the inhabitants of the hills as well as the valley.

Manipur is self-sufficient in paddy, the staple ingredient in the food of its people. Manipur has the highest yield rate of
paddy (1448 kg. per hectare), higher than even than that of Assam (1109 kg./hect.). Manipur ranks first between the seven states in the region, on basis of percentage of area under irrigation.

**RIVERS**

In Manipur, there are two principal rivers, the Imphal and the Barak. The Imphal river, with its tributaries. The Iril, Nambul and Kongba, passing through the valley and the hill sides, meets the Chindwin in the Kale valley of Burma. The Barak river which is called the Gwai river by the Meitei flows most of the northern and western hills in the course to Cachar and Surma Valley into the estuary of the Ganges.

**COMMUNICATION**

Manipur has no proper railway network and the only surface communication connecting Manipur with the rest of India is the Imphal-Dimapur Road, which has a road length of about 215 kms. (i.e. 134 miles). It is connected with the rail head at Dimapur and as a matter of fact, this road is her life-line comparatively, road communication in the valley is better than that of the hill areas which is yet to be developed due to difficult terrains.

As we know, 90 percent of the state are hill regions where there are still few facilities for mechanised transport. Out of five hill districts three hill district headquarters viz, Tamenglong, Ukhrul and Chandel are yet to be connected with black
topped road of the standard of State Highways. The sub-
divisional headquarters at Henglep and Tousem are still not
connected by a good roadway. Even the sub-divisional headquarters
at Phungyar, Chassad, Chingmei Khullen, Kasom Khullen, Saikul and
Singhat are connected with only fair weather roads and thus many
roads are not useable throughout the year.

National highway No. 39, Kamagaon Moreh (an important border
town of Manipur near Myanmar (Burma) Border) road passes through
the state and another road of considerable economic importance is
the 224 kms. long New-Cachar Road connecting terrains of the
Manipur west district. Recently, the North-Eastern Frontier
railway is going to extend its route from Silchar (Assam) to
Jiribam (Manipur). A foundation stone was formally laid on 3rd
November 1987 at Jiribam. the Imphal Tiddim Road is also
another important road which touches Bishempur, Moirang and
Churachandpur.

Manipur possess one reputed airport at Tulihal (about 7 Kms
from Imphal town).

**Administrative Division**

The state is divided into eight districts, namely Imphal,
Thoubal and Bishnupur in the valley and Ukhrul, Senapati,
Tamenglong and Churachandpur in the hills. Previously, there
was six districts only. According to 1981 census, there are 28
sub-division. Under the eight districts, during the year 1983-84,
there are six autonomous Hills district councils, 32 towns and 165 Gram Panchayats.

DEMOGRAPHY

The state of Manipur has a population of 18,26,714 persons consisting 9,3,511 males and 8,95,203 females according to the 1991 census (provisional).

The sex ratio of the state is 961 females per 1000 males. Manipur is among the few state of India whose sex ratio in the past censuses was in favour of females. That is, the number of females was more than the number of males. The sex ratio of Manipur was highest in 1931, and since then it has declined gradually. Till 1961, the number of females was more than the number of males, but in 1971, 1981 and 1991 the number of females has declined considerably. In the absence of industries and rail heads which would have otherwise encourage heavy migration or influx of people mostly males from outside, the increase in male population may be attributed to the Drama of births and deaths.

In the eight districts of Manipur, the sex ratios do not show considerable variation. The number of males in each of the eight districts is more than the number of females. Ukhrul District records the lowest sex ratio with 878 per 1000 males (Table 1).

The area of Manipur is predominantly hilly. The total area of the state is 22,327 sq. km. Out of this about 20,720 km
comprise the hilly region. We may now imagine how there has been concentration of the state population in districts regions. The state has been divided into eight districts - Imphal, Thoubal, Bishnupur, Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong, Churachandpur and Chandel. The first three districts comprises the plain valley of Manipur while the last five districts are entirely hilly areas. The bulk of the population is found in the valley districts. The least populous district is Chandel with 70,734 persons (Table 1).

There is a uniform trend of increase in the density of population for both the state and its districts from 1981 to 1991. An important feature is that the average density of population in the valley comprising three districts viz. Imphal, Thoubal and Bishnupur districts is above 16 times the average density in the five hills districts viz. Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel, Churachandpur and Tamenglong. It will be seen that Imphal district having the only city above one lakh population is having the highest density of population with 576 per sq. km. followed by the other two districts namely Thoubal and Bishnupur districts with a density of 565 and 373 per sq. km. Chandel is the most thinly populated district in 1991 census. In the three valley districts the density is above the all India average of 1981 census whereas in the five hills districts they are much below the all India average of 1981 census (Table 1).
The decennial growth rate of population of the state shows a decline during the decades. The growth rate of population in 1981-91 is 28.56 percent as against 32.46 percent in 1971-81. Similar trend prevails in the districts also except in Tamenglong where growth rate increased from 35.31 percent in 1971-81 to 37.38 percent in 1981-91 (Table 2).

At the 1991 census, there is only one city with a population above 100,000 persons and it refers to Imphal Municipality. For the first time at the 1991 census, the concept of Urban agglomeration has been adopted with reference to Imphal city by agglomeration of contiguous Urban areas and their population. The total population of Imphal Urban Agglomeration is 200,615 while that of Imphal Municipality is 196,268 comprising 97.83 per cent of the total population of Imphal Urban Agglomeration. In both the areas the number of males is more than the number of females showing a sex ratio of 949 females per 1000 males.

Out of the total population of 200,615 persons of Imphal Urban agglomeration 143,946 persons 71.75 percent are returned as literates. The literate population does not include persons in the age-group 0-6 years who are treated as illiterates in the 1991 census. In the case of Imphal Municipality the percentage of literacy is 71.82 which is slightly higher than that of Imphal Urban agglomeration.
According to 1981 census report, in Imphal (Municipality area 34.78 sq. kms. in 1972) town areas, the density of population is above 5,300 persons per sq. km. The population of Urban area has shown a marked increased from 8.7 per cent (1961) and 13.3 pr cent (1971) to 26.44 per cent (1981). Imphal Municipality was the only town in 1961. As a matter of fact, Urbanization in the state is a recent programme (Table 3).

It may be worthwhile to examine the growth of literacy in Manipur from 1941 onwards. Because the year 1941 has special significance in that Manipur was under the British then. On Sunday the 10th May, 1942 Manipur was bombarded by the Japanese and became an area of World War II. The devastation of the war lasted till the end of 1944 or the beginning of 1945 had its repercussion upon the growth of literary in Manipur passes through three different phases. Upto 1941 it was a peaceful period of British rule. The second phase from 1941 to 1951 was a period of war, destruction, independence and reconstruction. Period from 1951 to 1991 is the third phase on the post-independence era of self rule.

In 1941, the total population of Manipur was 512,069 persons. The total literate population was 24,905 persons only consisting of 23,242 males and 1,663 females. Thus, the proportion of literates to total population was 4.86 per cent in 1941. The proportion of female literates to total female
population was miserably poor with 0.63% only. After one decade, that is in 1951, the total literate population was 65,895 persons and their proportion to the total population was 11.41%. As in 1941 census, the female proportion is lagging far behind.

In 1961 census we find a different picture. The literacy rate rose to 30.42% with 237,276 person out of the total population of 780,037 being literate. In absolute numbers, the total no. of male literates is 174,556 and the total of female literates is 62,620 compared with the males, the females have not made much headway in the field of literacy in 1961 although there is considerable improvement over that of 1951. The overall picture of literacy from 11.41% in 1951 to 60.96 in 1991 is a good achievement. According to the census 1991 (provisional) the total literacy rate of the state is 60.96 per cent out of which males literacy rate is 72.98 per cent and the female literacy is 48.64 per cent (Table 4,5).

From the population figure of table 6, two features emerge prominent (i) between the different tribes, the Thadou are the most populous, and (ii) between the three major divisions of the tribes, the population of the Naga group of tribes is more than that of the Kuki group of tribes. Yet another prominent features which draws our attention is that the population of the much known tribe, the Purum is not available. One of the explanations is that they have merged their identity with the Chothe.
## TABLE 1

### Distribution of population, Sex-Ratio, Growth Rate and Density of population by District

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>3,48,203</td>
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<td>28.56</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32.46</td>
<td>28.56</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senapati</td>
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<td>1,05,047</td>
<td>1,01,886</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>85,572</td>
<td>44,127</td>
<td>41,445</td>
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<td>35.31</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37.38</td>
<td>35.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td>1,76,043</td>
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<td>85,475</td>
<td>30.89</td>
<td>30.31</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30.89</td>
<td>30.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td>70,734</td>
<td>36,900</td>
<td>33,834</td>
<td>25.32</td>
<td>25.79</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25.32</td>
<td>25.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thoubal</td>
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<td>27.49</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30.46</td>
<td>27.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bishnupur</td>
<td>1,79,903</td>
<td>90,415</td>
<td>89,488</td>
<td>26.91</td>
<td>26.43</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26.91</td>
<td>26.43</td>
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<td>Senapati</td>
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<td>51,389</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<td>32.56</td>
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Source - 1991 Census (Provisional figures).
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td></td>
<td>67-00</td>
<td>65-76</td>
<td>56-60</td>
<td>35-31</td>
<td>37-35</td>
<td>35-31</td>
<td>37-35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
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<td>75-01</td>
<td>51-45</td>
<td>33-93</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>25-32</td>
<td>45-76</td>
<td>39-90</td>
<td>22-21</td>
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<td>Thoubal</td>
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<td>60-02</td>
<td>55-50</td>
<td>45-05</td>
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<td>1991 Census (Provisional Figures)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sl. No.</td>
<td>Name of City/Urban Agglomeration</td>
<td>Provisional Population, 1991</td>
<td>Sex Ratio</td>
<td>Total Literates</td>
<td>Sex Ratio</td>
<td>Total Literates</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Imphal Urban</td>
<td>200,673</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>83,067 97,606</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>80,673 97,950</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Imphal Municipality</td>
<td>196,274</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>83,200 110,574</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>84,200 107,774</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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*Literates exclude children in the age group 0-6 who are treated as illiterates in the 1991 census.*

Source: 1991 Census (Provisional Figures)
### TABLE 4

**Literacy rates 1961-1991 Manipur**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>36.04</td>
<td>53.49</td>
<td>18.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>38.47</td>
<td>53.70</td>
<td>22.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>49.61</td>
<td>64.12</td>
<td>34.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(47.45)</td>
<td>(61.05)</td>
<td>(33.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>60.96</td>
<td>72.98</td>
<td>48.64</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>69,488</td>
<td>53,524</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td>90,315</td>
<td>66,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishnupur</td>
<td>82,874</td>
<td>58,945</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thoubal</td>
<td>87,093</td>
<td>60,703</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td>90,565</td>
<td>64,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>58,905</td>
<td>42,965</td>
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<tr>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td>126,394</td>
<td>84,826</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>120,012</td>
<td>81,071</td>
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<td>Senapati</td>
<td>59,213</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>89,523</td>
<td>59,317</td>
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Source - 1991 Census (Provisional Figures).

Literates exclude children in the age group 0-6 who are treated as illiterates in the 1991 Census.
### TABLE 6

**Population distribution of tribes in Manipur, 1981**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribes</th>
<th>Projected for 1981</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aimol</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anal</td>
<td>8770</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angami</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Chiru</td>
<td>3664</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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<td>Chothe</td>
<td>2507</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gangte</td>
<td>8298</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hmar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kabui</td>
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<td>Kachanaga</td>
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<td>2,132</td>
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<td>Koireng</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom</td>
<td>8618</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wangang</td>
<td>3450</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lushai</td>
<td>9845</td>
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<td>Maram</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mao</td>
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Table 6 (Contd.)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monsang</td>
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<td>Moyon</td>
<td>1989</td>
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<td>Paite</td>
<td>32,570</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purum</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolte</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sema</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simte</td>
<td>5496</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salhte</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangkhul</td>
<td>76,115</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thadou</td>
<td>78,883</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaiphei</td>
<td>16,245</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zou</td>
<td>13,236</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>43,8,632</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
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</table>

II

PEOPLE

Manipur is ethnically heterogenous. The people inhabiting Manipur can be divided into two broad categories - the tribal communities and the non-tribal communities. In terms of distinct ethnic identity the people in Manipur can be broadly classified into four distinct groups:

(i) the Meitei, including the Loi (scheduled castes),
(ii) the Bishnupriya,
(iii) the Pangan (Manipuri Muslims), and
(iv) the hill tribes.

The Meitei are the main inhabitants of the Imphal valley. The Imphal valley and the Meitei are usually taken as synonymous. The Loi scheduled caste, are scattered throughout the valley, interspersed with the Meitei. The Bishnupriya are concentrated in some villages around Bishnupur town. The Manipuri Muslims, locally referred to as the Pangan, are to be found chiefly on the fertile tracts of land between the Imphal river and the Iril river. The tribes inhabiting Manipur are concentrated in the hills, with some very few tribal pockets in the valley.

The tribes inhabiting Manipur can be divided into two broad groups - the tribes belonging to the Naga group, and the tribes belonging to the non-Naga group. This lay classification has
been the source of many attempts to classify the tribes of Manipur.

Officially the tribes of Manipur have been classified into three groups -

(i) The Naga group of tribes,
(ii) The Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of tribes, and
(iii) The intermediary category of tribes, i.e., which strictly speaking, undecidedly trace linkage of identity with both the major groups.

According to official recognition, the total number of tribes and their names in each of the groups is as follows -

(i) **Naga group of tribes**
Kabui, (Rongmei & Puimei), Kacha Naga (Liangmei and Zemei) collectively known as Zeliangrong, Mao, Maram, Tangkhul & Maring (six tribes).

(ii) **Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups of tribes**
Gangte, Hmar, Lushai (Mizo), Paite, Simte, Thadou (Kuki), Vaiphei & Zou (eight tribes).

(iii) **Intermediary group of tribes**
Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, Kom (collectively called Komrem), Anal, Chothe, Lamkang, Koirao/Thangal, Purum, Mongsang & Moyon (eleven tribes).
The present administrative division of Manipur into districts has in a way amounted to each district being the area of concentration of a particular major tribe. The Tangkhul Naga occupy the north-eastern hill areas of Manipur, and thus concentrate in Ukhurl district. The Mao Naga are concentrated in north Manipur, and thus are the main inhabitants of the Senapati district. The Zeliangrong are the main inhabitants of the Tamenglong district, the Kuki of the Churachandpur district and the Maring and Anal of the Chandel district.

A more precise list of the distribution of the tribes and the non-tribes between the different districts is as follows -

1. Senapati
   1. Mao (Major group)
   2. Maram (Major group)
   3. Thadou Kuki (Major group)
   4. Kabui (Minor group)
   5. Tangkhul (Minor group)
   6. Maring (Minor group)
   7. Chiru (Minor group)
   8. Kom (Minor group)
   9. Koireng (Minor group)
  10. Vaiphei (Minor group)
  11. Kacha Naga (Minor group)
  12. Sema (Minor group)
  13. Kairao (Minor group)
2. Tamenglong
   1. Kabui (Major group)
   2. Thadou Kuki (Minor group)
   3. Gangte (Minor group)

3. Churachandpur
   1. Hmar (Major group)
   2. Paite (Major group)
   3. Thadou Kuki (Major group)
   4. Anal (Minor group)
   5. Chothe (Minor group)
   6. Kabui (Minor group)
   7. Kom (Minor group)
   8. Vaiphei (Minor group)
   9. Zou (Minor group)
  10. Mizo (Minor group)
  11. Gangte (Minor group)
  12. Simte (Minor group)
  13. Ralte (Minor group)
  14. Salte (Minor group)

4. Chandel
   1. Anal (Major group)
   2. Maring (Major group)
   3. Thadou Kuki (Major group)
   4. Lamkang (Minor group)
   5. Zou (Minor group)
   6. Gangte (Minor group)
   7. Mayon (Minor group)
8. Monsang (Minor group)
9. Aimol (Minor group)
10. Chothe (Minor group)
11. Purum (Minor group)
12. Mizo (Minor group)
13. Tangkhul (Minor group)
14. Kom (Minor group)

5. Ukhrul
1. Tangkhul (Major group)
2. Kuki (Minor group)

6. Thoubal
1. Meitei (Major group)
2. Kabui (Minor group)
3. Chiru (Minor group)
4. Maring (Minor group)

7. Bishnupur
1. Meitei (Major group)
2. Kabui (Minor group)
3. Kuki (Minor group)

8. Imphal
1. Meitei (Major group)
2. Kabui (Minor group)
3. Tangkhul (Minor group)
4. Kuki (Minor group)
5. Mao (Minor group)
III

HISTORY

The history of Manipur, like the population structure of Manipur, will require reference to two distinct facts of history - the history of the Imphal valley, the land of the Meitei, and the history of the hills, the land of the tribal inhabitants of Manipur.

In the name of history of Manipur by now much is available in print. A little close look at this literature will easily reveal that much of it relates to the history of the people inhabiting the Imphal valley, the Meitei. Compared to this not much is available about the history of the people inhabiting the hills, viz., the tribal section of population of Manipur.

It may not be difficult to find the reason for comparatively fragmentary reference to the history of the people of the hills of Manipur. We may identify two reasons - firstly, the people inhabiting the hills of Manipur, viz., the Naga and Kuki group of tribes, are rather very recent arrivals to the hills, hardly two centuries old. Secondly, the peoples inhabiting the hills have been pre-literate, and one with no organized government/administration which could leave any form of historical evidence.

The inhabitants of Manipur, as we know, are a combination of two distinct category of people, the tribal and the non-tribal
people. The land of Manipur, as we have described earlier, is also divided into two distinct topographical zones, the Imphal valley and the surrounding hills. The tribes who are concentrated in the hills are recent arrivals, nearly two hundred years ago. Compared to this, the Meitei, the inhabitants of the Imphal valley are very old inhabitants there.

A. The history of the Imphal valley, the land of the Meitei

An attempt has been made to present a brief reference to the history of the Meitei. This will help to present the history of the tribes in the proper perspective. The history of any community of people can be put into two broad categories - the 'myth' of origin, and the history of origin, travel, and administration etc. History again can be sub-categorized into ancient history, mediaval history, and recent history. In the present case we can divide the periods of history as the pre-British period, the British period, and the post-British period.

We will make a brief reference of the history of Manipur as presented in the available literature. Necessary care will be taken to clearly bring out the history of the Meitei, distinct from that of the hill people, the tribal section of population of Manipur.

Manipur is an area of composite races formed out of several strains. Mongoloid races from Burma seem to have mixed with the Indo-Aryan strains from India. In fact, Manipur is the place
where different waves of races and cultures met through the ages, which ultimately mingled together. The Meitei are a separate group of people having their own identity. The name Meitei has been derived from the word - "me" - man, and "tei" - separate. The Meitei speak Manipuri language which is of the Kuki-Chin group under Assam-Burma Branch of the Tibeto-Burman family.

Though original inhabitants of Manipur, the Imphal valley, there are colonies of Meitei in Burma, and in the Neighbouring districts of Assam (Cachar), Tripura and even Bangaldesh. These were as results of raids and wars which involved the Meitei, and the subsequent settlements of those who had to flee their homeland, the Imphal valley.

The pre-history of Manipur is shrouded in mysteries and nothing could be said definitely. There are a number of mythos associated with the origin etc. of Manipur and its people. Some of the prominent may be briefly mentioned.

According to one myth, Manipur is the creation of Lord Shiva. It is said that when Manipur was under water, nine Gods and seven Goddesses were throwing hillocks into the water to create land. Lord Shiva with his consort Parvati landed on one of the hills and drained out the water by providing an outlet with his trident.

Associating Shiva and Parvati with the origin of Manipur, but with a different myth, it is said that the first settlement
of Imphal was started by two lovers, Nongpok-Ningthou and Panthoibi. They were considered as the incarnation of Shiva and Parvati.

A myth of a different order, relates the origin of Manipur with Brahminical Puran. It is said that the Meitei are the descendents of Babrubahan, son of Arjun, the third Pandava of Mahabharata. It is said that Manipur was named by Babrubahan taking the meaning from "Jewel" (Mani) when he came into possession from the Land of Raja Nag or Serpent King.

According to one of the early British administrator writers, "Manipur are the descendents of a Tartar colony, which probably emigrated from the north-west border of China during the Sanguinary conflicts for supremacy which took place between the different members of the Chinese and Tartar dynasties" (Pemberton, 1966, 37).

Manipur, the land of "Jewels", was known to its neighbours by different names. So the Shan in neighbouring Burma, it was called as the Khasi, the mainland Burmese refered to it as Katha, for the Ahom it was Maketi, for the Cachari it is Mogli. To the Meitei themselves, Manipur is known as Meitei Leipak and Kang Leipak.

According to the local traditions, the valley was originally occupied by several tribes, the principal of which were the
Koomal, the Loowang, the Moirang, and the Meitei. Between these four, the Koomal are said to have been the most powerful, followed by the Moirang. Ultimately however, the Meitei subdued them all and formed them into a single people with a strong administration. Tradition says that the Moirang came from the south, the country of the Kuki and Chin, the Koomal from the east, where the Tangkhul are now found, and the Meitei and Loowang from the hills to the north-east (Allen, 19, 11-12).

The political history of Manipur can be traced back to the beginning of this century. History prior to that, it is said, is "shrouded in mystery". Pakhamba is known to be the first ruler of Manipur. He reigned from 33 A.D. to 154 A.D., i.e., he ruled for nearly 121 years, so it is said. (cf. Tombi Singh, 1975, 51) with him began the Nimthouja dynasty which ruled through 75 kings till the accession of the princely States to the Indian Union, after independence. Reliable evidence of the early rulers of Manipur is found records in different forms, like the Cheitharol Kumbaba, is the court chronicle, it sets out briefly in a solemn diction the reign of kings from 33 A.D. Besides these written records, stone images, stone tablets, and inscriptions are also available. These form the basis for reconstructing a history of the Meitei, the inhabitants of the valley. Nothing of this sort has been found about the people inhabiting the hills. These early records of the Meitei however do help to some extent in drawing inference relating to the early history of the people
inhabiting the hills. In many ways the people now inhabiting the valley, the Meitei, the ruling community, had interaction with those inhabiting the surrounding hills.

It is generally believed that the "Manipuri civilization" started taking shape on the Koubru Peak, which lies north-west of Imphal valley. This was the time when the entire Manipur valley was a vast expanse of water. In course of time when the water started receding, and fertile land coming up, the people started spreading to settle in the valley. There are some legends which describe how the water of the valley was "drained out" by the Gods.

Scholars attending to recounting the history of Manipur, and specially the people in the valley, seem to have widely differed in their opinion. It is rather interesting to note these. These accounts, though in variance to each other, provide much insight to the history of the people inhabiting the hills.

The Meitei, as mentioned earlier, constitute the main section of the people inhabiting the valley. The Meitei are divided into seven clans (salais) : Ninthouja, Angom, Khuman, Moirang, Luwang, Chemlei, and Khaba-Nganba. Each of these seven clans had their respective territory of concentration in the valley. "Their relation, struggle for supremacy and subsequent fusion in a common race called the Meitei and their extension of arms to the adjoining provinces of Burma, Tripura, Cachar and Naga hills form the history of Manipur".
Manipur was lying on the trade route of the ancient travellers between China and Europe, carrying silk from China to be exchanged into gold from Europe, with Afghanistan as the centre for the exchange. Evidence of such a trade route have been the source of many speculations and explanations relating to the early history of the people inhabiting the valley. Tatar, Aryan, and Mongolian (Chinese) elements are identified. There are a number of explanations which have been offered with no unanimity, except the fact that "the pure Meitei represent a mixture of many races".

Pemberton, writing the Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India (1835) contended that "we may safely conclude them (Meiteis) to the descendants from a Tartar colony from China". According to a Manipuri (Meitei) scholar (Kirti Singh) "anthropologists like Denikar do not give any adequate proof as to the settlement of Tartar group in Manipur. No one can prove any directed or inner connection between the Meitheis and the Tartars" (Kirti Singh, op.cit., 14).

This can be taken as the beginning of the dialogue (controversy) between scholars on the question of the origin and character of the racial history of the people inhabiting the valley and the hills. Nearly two decades after the Report by Pemberton, McCulloch came out with his "Account of the valley of Manipur and the Hills Tribes" (1852) has mentioned that
"tradition brings the Moirang tribe from the south - the
direction of Kukies, the Koomal from the east - the direction of
Murrings, and the Meitei and the Loowang from the north-west -
the direction of the Koupoloes.

Among the Meitei tradition, 'Pakhangba' is considered as the
first king of the seven salais. He is believed to be the tail of
God and the head of mankind. That is why, they called him
"Epouthou" or the first grandfather. Epouthou Pakhangba is still
being worshipped at a sacred place known as "Kangla Alter".
Meitei also believe that this kingdom was in the form of a human
being. (According to Meitei's philosophy a human anatomy is
related with her geography).

After the reign of Epouthou Pakhangba (the first mythological
king of Meitei), a series of Godly kings of seven salais moulded
and ruled this kingdom. Khagemba (1597-1652) was the last king
of the Meitei who preserved the old Meitei culture and used to
defy the expansion of Hindu religion in the Meitei society. In
1729, king Pamheiba and his Hindu Guru Santidas collected all the
sacred puyas of Meitei and burnt it. He also forcibly gave
Hinduism to his subjects and later on, it became a way of life of
Meitei people and started to worship different Hindu Gods and
Goddesses along with their original Gods and Goddesses. Pamheiba
assumed a name, better called as Garib Niwas and also brought
the Aryan Hindu Brahmins as the missionaries of Hinduism from Bengal through Cachar, a Bengali predominant area.

The present state "Royal Chronicles" called as "Cheitharol-kumpaba", recorded some events like war, accession, death of Kings etc. But, these chronicles used to miss many important kings and queens of the Meitei and they (chronicles) used to mix the idea of history with mythology. That is why, the story of Pakhangba (33A) itself is very controversial and it contains full of mystery.

After the death of Pamheiba, the power of Manipur greatly declined between 1755 A.D. to 1826 A.D. with a series of Burmese invasions and internal dissensions. This is commonly known as the "Dark Period" in the history of Manipur.

King Chingthangkhomba (Bhyagachandra alias Jai Singh, 1755) a grandson of Pamheiba (alias Garib Niwas) ascended the throne to reign for five years under an agreement with his elder brother Gourashyam. During Jai Singh reign, the nourishment of Hinduism reached its zenith. He was a great devotee of Lord Krishna and constructed a big temple of Govindaji at Imphal. Jai Singh was attacked by Khillei-Nungnang-Telheiba, King of Moirang and Khellei (elder brother of Jai Singh's mother) was supported by Burmese army. So he fled to Tripura under the mercy of king Rajeshor Rao. This was the first devastation in the history of Manipur and it seems to coincide with the first great invasion of
Manipur by a Burmese (Kabo) army Alompra (took place in 1755) and this was commonly known as primary devastation.

Again, in 1758 Alompra in person attacked Manipur and it led to the first time for external aid and appeared afterwards for the British protection.

Jai Singh sent an agent to Chittagong and a treaty was concluded with Mr. Hentry Verelst, on behalf of British Government in the year 1762. This was the first treaty between Manipur (meitei) and the British. Under the treaty of 1762, British sent troops to Manipur. In 1764, Gourashyam confirmed the treaty with the British and promised to pay the charges for military assistance which were unable to pay during the period of Jai Singh. Jai Singh and Gourashyam with the British assistance succeeded in devastation of Burmese army from Manipur. After a long gap, the Burmese again devasted Manipur popularly known as "severe seven years devastation" for seven years from 1819 to 1825. At the time, Gambheer Singh (1823 to Jan 1834), the youngest son of Jai Singh, obtained British help and expelled the Burmese army even from Kabow valley and the first Burmese war ended with British victory. Thus, the treaty of Yandabo was signed on Feb 24, 1826 and Gambheer Singh was recognised as the Raja of Manipur till he expired on January 1834, leaving a minor son the Raja Kirti Singh, who was finally acknowledged by the
British Government. Thus, the first Political Agent Captain Gordon (1835) was appointed in Manipur. The successors of Gambheer Singh became weaker and disintegrated and finally led to "Anglo-Manipur War" of 1891.

After the glorious "Anglo-Manipuri war of 1891, Manipur was totally under the cover of British rules through the puppet kings of Manipur. Thus, the first appointed king was Sir Churachand Singh, according to the Gazette of India, No. 1700 e, dated August 21, 1891. A number of crisis arose during the reign of Sir Churachand (1891-1941) and Maharajah Bodhachandra (1941-1955) specially the formation of political parties and its demands for political right and freedom. During this period revivalist movement among the Manipuri (Meitei) was also started.

Only in 1939, while the world witnessed the second world war, Manipur witnessed the uprising of its women and all political and religious activities were also stopped for a short period. The uprising of Meitei women is known as "Nupi-Lal".

After world war II, in the year 1947, India achieved independence and Sardar Patel, the Home Minister, tried to merge this state in the category of part C states to be governed by a chief commissioner in view of their strategic position, territorial integrity. It was finally controlled by the Central Government at New Delhi and the merger agreement was signed by the appointed Maharajah Bodhachandra at Shillong in September 21,
1949 and the state was taken over by Government of India on October 15, 1959. Manipur achieved a full fledged Indian state on 21st Jan 1972.

IV

Focusing our attention to the history and origin of the tribes inhabiting the hills of Manipur, it will be helpful to get acquainted with some of the explanations of history and origin. For the sake of clarity and brevity, the different versions of explanations can be listed, each with their respective brief explanations. Some of the available explanations recounting the history of the people inhabiting Manipur are:

1. According to McCulloch: Tradition brings the Moirang tribe from the south - the direction of the Kukies, the Koomal from the east - the direction of the Murrings, and the Meithei and the Loowang from the north-west, the direction of the Koupooes. Serious doubt is expressed about this theory, both on historical as well as anthropological basis (McCullock, 1852).

2. Countering this explanation James Johnstone is of the opinion that "The Manipuris are themselves a fine stalwart race descended from the Indo-Chinese stock with some admixture of Aryan blood, derived from the successive waves of Aryan invaders that have passed through the Valley in Pre-historic times ......" (Johnstone, 1896). According to Kirti Singh, this explanation needs to be taken with due caution as "we can scarcely connect
the people of Manipur with other other known group of Indo-China in the absence of linguistic and ethnic data."

3. According to Pemberton "we can safely conclude them (Meitheis) to be the descendants from a Tartar colony from China". (Pemberton, 1835). Kirti Singh in this connection cities Denikar who does not find adequate proof of Tartar colony in Manipur. According to him no one can prove any direct or inner connection between the Meitheis and the Tartars.

4. Hodson traces "the Meithei to the Tai branch of the Moi tribe". According to him "In the Moitay of Manipur we have the combined appellations of the Siamese Tai and the Kochin-Chinese "Moy". Kirti Singh, in this connection is of the opinion that "the Manipurian tribe called Cassaihas by the Bengalis, belong to the Moi section of the great tribe called Tai by themselves and Shanven Syan by the Burmese, the Sectional name being also foreign and equivalent to the native".

5. on basis of linguistic evidences, there is no evidence to prove the migration of the Moi tribe to Manipur. We need to remind ourselves in this connection that "Manipur had cultural contacts with the Shans or Pongs of the great Tai family of Indo-China, Kabaw Valley was pre-eminently a land of the Pong and Kabaw (Shan tribes). "The Manipuri scholars however would like to trace an Aryan descent, and they would like to prove that "Manipur was settled by the Aryan in the early times". They
claim that Poireiton who came to Manipur in 33 A.D. was an Aryan priest. Kirti Singh notes that "historically it is recognized that the Aryans were penetrating and establishing themselves in Manipur in the 4th or 8th century A.D. Their case as tillers of the soil, propounder of Hindu culture and philosophy from time to time." Some Manipuri scholars-historians like Atombapu Sharma who had written the Rig Veda in Meitei language, were of the view that "the Brahmans had a great hold on the Meitheis, Hindu jurisprudence had its voice in Manipuri society. They discovered genealogies of the Meithei people from Maryana. The existence of patriarchal and primogeniture system among the Meitheis confirmed this view. We also see the Varna system as providing a clear and definite course which the people followed through life's journey."

6. Grierson and Suniti Kumar Chatterji hold the view that "the Meitheis are the Kuki-Chin section of the Tibeto-Burman stock. They appear to have scattered over the hill areas from Lushai hills and Chittagong. They have their kinsmen in Burma. Situated between India and Burma and forming an intermediate Tibeto-Chinese group between the Tibeto-Burman people of Assam and North Bengal on the one hand and the Burma on the other, the people of Manipur were not crossways: but they elected to fall in line with the Hindu people of India". But in recent times this view has been challenged by some scholars who hold that "there is gulf of difference between the Meithei people and the Kuki-Chin
group. The institution of marriage of the Meithei people is very different from the people of the Himalayan region. The similarity of language is not a sufficient test of race".

Concluding these diverse views, Kirti Singh concludes that "The mass of people in Manipur is a composite one to which the Dravidians, the Mongolians, Aryans, Pongs, Chinese, Siamese, etc., were contributory". He quotes Bowers, who observes that "racially, the Manipuri is a deeply mixed ethnic group. West was mixed with East, and North with South. Chinese have blended with Aryans, Mongolians with Dravidians. This mixture creates the "pure" Manipuri, called Meithei, who live in the valley and number 400,000 of the total population of 600,000. The balance constitutes the racially purer but artificially inferior hill tribe who live in the mountains and who are greatly looked down upon by the highly civilized Meitheis (Bowers, 1953).

B. The history of the hills, the land of the tribal inhabitants of Manipur

The way we find some "detailed" account of the history of the Meitei people, not much is found about the hill dwelling tribal communities. The reason is more than obvious. Historical accounts are found when history is written. The hill dwelling people, compared to the valley dwelling Meitei were comparatively less advanced in technology and script. It is till about a
hundred years ago that the language in the hills were without any script, and hence no written record.

As we know, the tribal communities inhabiting Manipur are classified today into three broad categories - (i) the Naga group of tribes; (ii) the Kuki-Chin-Mizo group of tribes; and (iii) the intermediary group of tribes. This is the official classification as at the time of the 1981 census. It will be interesting to note that in a writing of 1976 it is mentioned that "the tribal population of the present Manipur state is broadly divided into two ethnic groups - the Nagas and the Kukis". (Mukherjee, 1966). Elaborating on the distribution of these tribes it is mentioned that "the present day Naga area lies north of the Kobu valley road via. Aimol and where it joins the old Cachar road, to the south of which inhabit the Kukis. (Hudson, 1911). There are about seven recognized Naga tribes of which the Kabuis form a large group and reside in the west of Manipur (Tamenglong). The original name of the Kabui was Mpui, which the British administration distorted as Kabui. There are three divisions among Kabui - the Zemi, the Liangmei and the Rongmei - who have many similarities in their customs, traditions and ethnic characteristics. The Zemi are concentrated in the eastern portion of the North Cachar Hills at Asalu, Laison, Thrungi, Jaaisak, Haajilo, Baladhan and Handrum. The Liangmei are mainly spread over the south-western parts of Nagaland, and the Rongmei form the majority of the Kabui population in the Tamenglong sub-
division of Manipur. In the hill areas there are reports of traditional rivalries and conflicts between the Kuki and Naga from Burma, the Mizo Hills and the Naga hills, specially in the last century. The various tribes have been living in Manipur for generations. The Naga as a whole are more static in habitation whereas the Kuki group were more migratory and their onward movements were checked by the Nagas". (Mukherjee, op.cit.).

The concern in focus at present is to trace/outline the history of the tribes. The available reference have been quoted, more correctly, listed with annotation. This will be followed with a brief discussion on the methodological relevance of these references, specially with reference to the understanding the history of the tribes inhabiting Manipur.

Among the Naga group of tribes, the Kabui form a prominent group, whereas among the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group, the Hmar form a very prominent group. Considerable account of history of these two tribes is available. We will confine to a mention of these two only.

Hmar history: The account presented here is, for the most part based on the accounts given by Pudaite. References from elsewhere will be mentioned accordingly. The ancient home of the Hmar people is called Sinlung. "There are traditional songs, innumerable poems and legends about Singlung civilization handed over from generation to generation". The exact location of
Singlung is a moot question. A Hmar Historian, Hranglient Songate, understands it to be the present Tailing or Silung in southwest China. Speculation has also been made that this Sinlung might have been Sining in Central China. Another possible theory advocates Sinlung to be a derivative of Chin dynasty of 221-207 B.C., when the people lived in a clustered city state community. Advocates equate Sin with Chin and Lung (rock) with dynasty, poetical expression. Whatever the answer might be, the above poem brings out two significant facts. First, they were pushed out by a stronger power or people. Second, that the invading army were "innumerable" and the same were the "innumerable" the people when they jumped out of their place of origin. Dr. Edward Thomas Williams in his book, China Yesterday and Today, mentions the expansion under the Chow dynasty. Following the Chow dynasty came the Chin dynasty. The Chin dynasty "violated all the rules of courteous warfare, triumphed and took over the territory and symbols or rule of the Chow dynasty." The Chin dynasty absorbed many of the tribes that were already in the land. Those who refused to be absorbed were pushed out and "the pressure which forced these tribes to the southwestern coast and drove the Mizo to the mountains came from the northwest. The successive waves of Chinese immigrants drove the earlier colonies to the south. The earlier colonists, such as the Shans, pushed the Mizo and other tribes still further south.
A similar story of tribal movement is told of Cambodia, on the eastern side of the Indo-China Peninsula. Colquhoun mentions six other tribes that are found there, which before the 200 B.C. had been located in the province of Kuongtong and Kunagsi, and were forced out of China in two migrations.

A.W. Graham in his "Handbook of Siam" says, "It is now the very generally accepted theory that, during the last few thousand years, Siam and in fact the whole of further India, has been subjected to periodical flooding of successive waves of humanity, set moving by natural or social upheavals of population for to the north or Central Asia".

According to Grover Clark - "The most recent of these waves began to rise roughly three thousand years ago and these waves moved along the same board channels" from the north south-ward into the Mediterranean Basin, into Indian and into China. One often wonders if "could the Hmar have been moving along with one of these successive wave of humanity from Central Asia ?" Perhaps they were.

Pudaite feels that "whether or not we are able to trace the exact location of Sinlung, it appears historically evident that the Hmar originally came from Central China, following one of these mass migrations, especially those of the late pre-Christian and early Christian centuries. The Hmar left Sinlung because the waves of Chinese immigrants and political pressures drove them
away to the south. The exact time of departure from Sinlung and the original route they followed is not known, however, traces have been found in poems and legends that they came to the Himalayas. The great mountains made it impossible for them to continue their southward journey, so they turned eastward from there. Shortly after they turned eastward they met a tribe who were ahead of them. This tribe, known to them as Mishmi showed friendliness to them, and they settled among them for over a generation."

"After a generation or so with the Mishmi the Hmar moved on eastward in search of territory. They moved along the Irrawaddy river and entered a territory where they met the "Tai" or "Shan". After Sinlung, their place of origin, the next settled place for the Hmar was in the present Shan State. When the Hmar arrived there it was already peopled by the Shan, and according to Pudaite "the Shans must have come along with the tribes 'who refused to be pushed out' of Central Asia and migrated only sometime in the 8th century A.D." The entry of the Hmar into the Shan was met with strong opposition though finally they fought their way into it.

According to one account (Sir George Scott), these Tibeto-Burmans, viz., the Hmar, migrating from the eastern Tibet into Burma came from the Tien Shan, that range of mountains which divides Chinese from Turkestan into northern and southern
sections". These Tribesmen were located in the valley of Irawaddy, from which place they had driven out the Mon Khmer. Subsequently they themselves were forced to follow the Mon Khmer into Burma. As the Shan civilization advanced much farther than Sinlung; and the people showed greater intelligence. They know now to celebrate agricultural prosperity, learned better art of war, and made festival of their victory over the enemy. Furthermore, they learned the use of iron implements and moulding of pipes (out of brass). Many of their great festivals were connected with the Shan State civilization.

The generations of prosperity in Shan State was intercepted by a disastrous famine. The famine was so severe that the tribes started moving toward north and north-west in search of food. The movement was organized according to the clan. Each clan followed a particular route and entered into the hitherto unoccupied area of Indo-Burman frontiers. They built villages and called them by the clan's names. To this day many of the villages are in existence under the same name. Examples of these are Khawbung, Zote, Biete, Khelte, Dawngawn, Leiri, Lungtau and so forth, in both Mizoram as well as in the Chin Hills of Burma.

Travelling closely with them were the Lushai tribe on the south and the Kuki tribe on the north. There exists a close affinity between these tribes both in cultural and social background. At one time the entire tribal group was known as
Kuki tribe. They were constantly at war against each other in their claim for territorial possession.

During the westward movement the Hmar came into contact with the British Indian government. In a communication sent to Warren Hastings in 1777, i.e., nearly two hundred years ago, there was mention of some Kookie revolting against the British. The term Kuki was given by the Bengali to distinguish the barbaric tribesmen from the civilized settlers. Shakespear in his book on "The Lushai Kuki Clans" puts the Hmar under the "Old Kuki" and refers to them as the "Khawtlang" to differentiate them from the Lushai and those currently known as Kuki. According to Shakespear's account, the 'old Kuki' migrated from Burma and went as far as Chittagong Hill Tracts and retraced part of their migratory routes, after they reached the Bay of Bengal. However, in the return journey they left a large segment of their population in Chittagong Hills and Tiperah or Tripura State. Many of these were later known under different names by their neighboring tribes. One of the significant statements by Shakespear is that "all these old Kuki Clans are organized far more democratically than the Lushais and Thados". According to Pudaite, "the chief, though absolute in theory, never exercised that power or made full claim to the land. The British territorial expeditions left the people (the Hmar) without any strong leadership, and thus their land was divided according to the wish of the British Commander, as result of which today those
distinctly known as Hmar are found in Mizoram, in Cachar district of Assam, in Tripura, in Manipur, and in the northwestern part of Burma.

According to the Hmar, one thing that has long remained a mystery is the way in which their land was annexed to the British India Government and how the rulers divided this territory without any negotiation with the British agents. Studies have revealed, in part, how this was done. The annexation of Hmar Territory was based on two factors. First, it was the desire of the British to prevent the Burmese invasions of Assam by strengthening the power of the Manipur Raja that led to the secret annexation of the Hmar territory in the southwest of Manipur and Cachar. Burma was constant threat to Assam. This was around 1832. The second, in 1872, the British had to launch a punitive expedition against the 'marauding Lushai and Hmar tribe' who attacked Cachar district and killed employees of Tea gardens. This was in resentment against the 'nominal submission' of their land. The whole land was brought under control in 1872 and a new administration was set up in the south with Aizawl (then Aijal) as the headquarters. The new administration led to the definition of boundaries which divided the entire Hmar population to six segments. Consequently the Hmar found themselves divided under strange administrative arrangements. The Cachar district was annexed to the sylhet district, the Lushai hills became an excluded area of strict tribal administration, and Manipur became
a native state under British protection. There began an almost complete separation between the Hmars in Chittagong Hill Tract, Tripura, and Burma as the result of the enforcement of the divide-and-rule policy.

A few words about the Burmese attack. While the books on India give an account of Burmese attack as if the Manipur Raja had always to suffer, and to save him the British had to come to his rescue. In books on Burma, the story appears to be prominently different. Donnison in his account on "Burma" the story is something like the following:

"King Thalun's successors were ineffectual and stagnation and later disintegration had set in. In the mid-seventeenth century Chinese raids disturbed Burma. From the early eighteenth century the small mountain state of Manipur on the north-west began raiding Burmese territory and in 1749 the raiders only just failed to take Aca. By 1752, in Burma emerged a great military leader. His short reign offered eight years of incessant fighting. Alaungpaya (1752-60) devastated Manipur and then invaded the Shan States, most of which made their submission. During the cold season of 1758-59 he was in Manipur. He was an expansionist, his forces invaded Manipur and placed his nominee on the throne of Manipur. Towards the end of his reign he invaded Assam, but by now was showing signs of religious mania. By 1837 the map of Burma was virtually identical with
that of the present day, except only that the Chin Hills and the far north-east were not included, although much of Assam was.

By 1795, for the next twenty five years the British continued to experience frontier irritations, which spread from Arakan to Assam where a Burmese invasion drove refugees across the frontier into India, producing a situation similar to that on the boundaries of Arakan and Chittagong. From British territory these refugees plotted subversion and would invade Burmese territory. The Burmese, rightly or wrongly, suspected that the British encouraged these activities. In driving out rebel refugees the Burmese would violate Indian territory. It became more and more certain that war must ultimately come, for the Burmese were aggressive and high-handed, contemptuous of Indians, and had no conception at all of the fundamental strength of the British in India. in 1824 the British operation started and by the Treaty of Yandabo on 24 February 1826, the Burmese were made to cede Assam, Arakan, and Tennasserim and to undertake not to interfere in Manipur, Cachar, and Jaintia.

IV

Kuki and Naga form two of the main tribal groups in Manipur. The foregoing description tried to trace some history of the origin of the tribes now inhabiting Manipur. Between the history about the origin of the Naga and the Kuki groups of tribes, comparatively lesser material is available about the origin of
the Naga tribes and their migration to present abodes in Manipur.

One of the hypothesis is that the Naga must have come from the sea coast or at least seen some islands or the seas is strengthened by the life-style of the Naga and the ornaments being used till today in many Naga villages. It is considered very probable that the Nagas had first followed the southward movement and after reaching the coast or some islands, they turned northwest leaving their brothers somewhere near the coast or perhaps in some islands.

According to one account (Marshall), the Mongoloids distributed themselves from the upper reaches of Yellow river of China in three groups - one westward (Tibetans), the second southward (the early Indo-china tribe) and the third south-east (Chinese). According to this theory, the Naga and other tribals of north-east India followed the southward movements towards Indo-China. It has been seen that the ancestors of the Naga had lived at the east coast in remote past. This has been inferred from various evidences.

This theory is further supported by the fact that the last take-off in their migration was from Thangdut in Burma (previously called Hsawngsup and pronounced as Samsok in Tangkhul). The last migration from Samsok (Thangdut) in Burma to Makhel in Mao, Longpi and Hunphun in Ukhrul district is very clear and most recent and is supported by historical facts and
monuments. The Naga folk songs (Mayon-Monsang Naga) clearly indicates that they followed a big river in their migration. It is said that the river referred to in the folk songs are the Chindwin and Irrawady rivers. Most of the migration wave have followed the river courses, this is established beyond doubt now.

It is probable that having stayed in the Irrawady valley in the neolithic age, they moved up along the Chindwin river finally reaching Samsok (Thangdut) which lies on the west bank of Chindwin river. It is said that having stayed there at Samsok for some period they started again their migration to the hills. According to the stories, one of the reasons for leaving Samsok was that it was too warm to stay permanently and also there was mosquito menace. Next they settled in the Naga hills. Those who settled in Samsok valley transformed themselves into Burmese in their historical process of intermarriages, while those who settled themselves in the hills in course of time were known as the Naga.

It is probable that the first wave of migration, that which went northwestward from Samsok, went to the foot hills to Makhel as there was no habitable place in the valley because it was swampy. About the historic city of Samsok (Thangdut), Alexander Mackenzie writes: "The valley (Kubo valley) is divided into three principalities, viz. Sumjok, Kumbat, and Kule. The first and last are still governed by descendants of the original Shan chieftains, who were dependent upon Mongmaorong, but Kumbat
appears never to have regained its former prosperity, after its destruction by the united forces of Pong and Manipur”.

Those who moved from Samsok, the greater group that proceeded north-westward had settled at Makhel, a historical place in Mao-Maram, North district of Manipur. It is from there that the various Naga tribes are said to have distributed themselves, to the various corners of what is now called Nagaland and Tamenglong area.

As to their origin, and dispersal, the various tribes of the Naga have now accepted that Makhel as the original places from where they dispersed themselves. There are many historical facts such as stone monoliths and sacred trees planted at Makhel when they were about to disperse themselves to different directions.

Makhel is taken as the second known distribution centre, Samsok being the first. At the time of dispersal, the eldest son lived at Makhel and the second son at Makhan village, a few miles away from Makhel. This is why intermarriage between the two villages was forbidden till 1950.

According to the story of the Tamenglong Naga, the Liangmei, the Zemei and the Rongmei, three brothers, went westward from Makhel and after a long journey, settled at Oklong, the first Liangmei village from where the two younger brothers in accordance with Naga tradition went out in search of habitable
lands, Zemei, the second brother went to the west while the youngest, the Rongmei, went to the south. The Zemei Naga pushed on towards the north till they met the Angami Naga.

Some of the legends support that the Angami, the Sema, the Chakesang, the Lotha, the Rengma, and a few other Naga tribes trace their origin from a flat stone in Makhel. Shimray finds difficulty about the Konyaks. They trace their origin to Longhang in upper Konyak and established a village at Longphang (Chinglong) where they discussed whether they should have Angship or not. Those who opposed Ang institution (kingship) went back to Longphang side and Phom areas, and those who supported the system of Angship settled first at Chui village from where they migrated to lower Konyak and Tirap areas. This is why till today we find in Konyak society two institutions - one monarchical and the other republican. It is not quite sure if they had been the descendants of Makhelians as other tribes are or followed different wave of migration from Burma for the Singpho and Kachin are contiguous geographically to the Konyak. But the fact that they all trace their origin to the south at Longphang and their way of life is exactly similar to that of the rest of the Naga tempt us to conclude that they are the descendants of the people who had settled at Makhel. It is believed that even some of the Tangkhul are the descendants of Makhel.

The party that went to the right (north-east) were the Tangkhul and the Somra. The Tangkhul and Somra Naga were very
small in number compared to the other party that went leftward. The Tangkhul are considered one of the oldest among the Naga who came to Manipur. According to Hudson: "From the records of Manipur, we gather some rather important facts regarding the antiquity of the Tangkhul. One of the earliest raids mentioned in the chronicles of Manipur is dated 1435 and is said to have been the work of Tangkhul who as on subsequent occasions, availed themselves of the opportunity afforded to them by the temporary absence of the forces of Manipur, on what the local historians call march or conquest in the direction of Thangdut to make a raid on the valley".

"There can be no doubt that much of what we find in the chronicles is hopelessly exaggerated, but it is quite clear that these tribes, especially the Tangkhul were settled in the areas they now occupy at an early date, when the Meitheis, now their masters, were yet wild and untouched by the finer arts of life".

In regards to the history of the plains and the hills, it may be noted that it is a complex story but some observation has been narrated to throw some light on the whole scene.