CHAPTER II
ETNOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON MANIPUR

THE LAND

Manipur was an ancient kingdom which had enjoyed the fortune and glory and experienced sorrow and vicissitude of her long history. Manipur is a cradle land of human civilisation and creativity which have come under the influence of many cultures of many different ethnic groups who came at various times and contributed to the growth of the civilisation in this hilly state of India's north eastern frontier. Manipur being a gateway of India to South-East Asia, was influenced by her land-lock nature (situation) and ecology in shaping her ethnic groups and their cultural development.

Manipur is one of the routes between South Asia and South-East Asia. Various ethnic groups belonging to southern Mongoloid group, the Tibeto-Burmans, the Indo-Aryans and a sizeable section of Tai (Shans) came to Manipur since pre-historic times down to the present day. The present ethnic groups of Manipur are the descendants of those migrating people. The present day ethnic group comprises of the Meeteis (Meiteis), the Naga tribes, the Non-Naga tribes and other Indian communities including the Muslims. Of them the Meeteis in the valley, the Nagas and Non-Naga groups of the
surrounding hills are the three major ethnic groups of Manipur.

THE PEOPLE

The people are predominantly mongoloid stock with some non-Mongoloid elements who speak Tibeto-Burman languages. Historical reasons greatly influenced the independent growth of this social groups with varying degrees of cultural development and civilization, of whom the Meiteis are the most dominant and advanced nationality.

THE MEITEIS OF MANIPUR

The origin of the Meitei is, shrouded in mystery and the study on the subject is greatly influenced by the religious faiths and the political ideologies of the Meiteis themselves, thus making the problem highly speculative and controversial. The ethnic name, Meitei, B.H. Hodgson in the mid-nineteenth century thought, was a "combined appelate of Siamese 'Tai' and Kochin Chinese 'Moy' (Moy-Tai=Moytai=Moitai=Meitei) and that the Meiteis belong to the Moi section of the great Tai race (Brian Houshton Hodgson, 1853:14-15).

T.C. Hodson suggested that it was derived from the blending of two words mi=man and thei=separate (Hodson 1908/
1989:10). Another explanation made by Gangmumei Kabui is that the Mitei (not Meiteis) is derived from the creation of man by God in His image: Mi=image; Tei=modelled=modelled after God's image=Mitei (Gangmumei, 1991:15).

Of all the theories of the origin of the Meiteis, the Aryan origin was most enthusiastically propounded and vehemently rejected by the protagonists and their opponents respectively. Because this Aryan connection was an outcome of the adoption of the Hinduism by the ruling family and the people of valley in the 18th century.

Hodgson's suggestion of the Moi-Tai origin of the Meiteis was rejected by T.C. Hodson on the basis of the Meitei being a Tibeto-Burman language group and the Tai being the Siamese-Chinese linguistic family, though both of them belong to the Sino-Tibetan linguistic family. "Though not of the Tai origin, it has been conjectured that there was a relationship between the Meitei, Mon-Khmer and Tai, because of historical connection, both conquest and socio-cultural contacts which produced Tai influence on the language and culture of the Meiteis. Recent archaeological findings of the excavations in Tharon Cave, Napachik in Manipur points to the existence of Mon-Khmer speaking Australoid Mongoloid people in Manipur who migrated to this land before the advent of the Tibeto-Burman speakers (O. Bhogeswar, ed. 1972:112). These Mon-Khmer elements
were absorbed by later immigrants." All the archaeological and historical evidences point to the relationship of the ancient Meiteis with the Mon-Khmer and Tai people but not of Mon-Khmer Tai origin of the people (Ibungohal & Khelchandra). However, the absorption of many Tai immigrants into Meitei society since the eight century A.D. and more actively since the fifteenth century has been recorded in the chronicles of Manipur. The clan genealogies also indicate the assignment of clan (Salai) lineage or sub-lineage (Sagei) later on Hindu gotras to these eastern (Shan and Burmese) immigrants who are collectively known as the Nongpok Haram the immigrants of the east (O.Bhogeswar 1972:112).

G.A. Grierson in his monumental Linguistic Survey of India has grouped the Meitei in the Kuki-chin sub-family of the Tibeto-Burman languages. A more appropriate name of this sub-family in the opinion of many linguist, would have been the Meitei-Kuki-Chin. Though the time and the manner of migration cannot be easily established, Grierson is generally right in presuming that the ancestors of the Meiteis were among the Tibeto-Burman tribes like the Nagas and Kukis who are less advanced than them.

Greatly influenced by the linguistic and cultural affinities between the Meitei and the hill tribes of Manipur and their folklore, W. Mc Culloch advanced a theory that the
Major tribe and clans of the Meiteis appeared to have been the
descendants of the Naga and Kuki tribes. Colonel Me Culloch's
remarkable account of the valley was reproduced by T.C. Hodson
in his book the Meitheis (Hodson, 1908: pp. 5-6).

The origin of the pro-Meitei tribes is still obscure
and complicated due to the absence of information with regard
to their migration before they arrived at Manipur valley.

THE NAGAS OF MANIPUR

The Naga is a blanket term which use to describe a
group of tribes. It is not clear, how the name 'Naga' was de­
rivered from what. There have been several attempts to trace out
the etymological origin of this popular ethnonym. It is hard
to accept the theory of 'Naga' originating from the Sanskrit
word Nag meaning snake or serpent. Because, there is no popu­
lar form of serpent worship among the Nagas though there is a
fear and dislike for the pythons. Though no final word has
been said on this derivation, it is certain that this name is
given by outsiders to mean this group of people who are divided
into more than two dozen tribes. Whatever the origin, this is
an old name popularised by the Ahoms and the British. The the­
ory of Naga coming from the Sanskrit or Hindustani Naga cannot
be easily discarded. The British military and political offi­
cers gave the generic name to the present Nagas of Assam, Mani­
pur and Nagaland. In Manipur, the people were known by their
The tribe's name throughout the 19th century. The Naga tribes of Manipur are Puimei, Zemi, Liangmei and Rongmei (the three together known as Zeliangrong). Tangkhuls, Mao, Maram, Maring, Anal, Moyon, Monsang, Lamgang, Chothe, Poumei Chakhesangs, Thangal, Koireng, Chiru, who are all Tibeto-Burman speakers. Their migration into Manipur has been told and retold in their traditions preserved in their folktales/folklores, hymns and songs. There are legends current among the Nagas about their origin and migration - these traditions tell more about their migration and settlement in Manipur and trans-Chindwin region. It is reliably believed that these tribes were in occupation of the habitat in the early centuries of the Christian era or even in the centuries before Christ. The Meitei historical and literary works refer to the Naga tribes as having been in occupation of the hills of Manipur.

**THE KUKI (NON-NAGA) TRIBES OF MANIPUR**

The Kuki tribes of Manipur are a branch of the great Kuki-Chin family of people. They are linguistically related to Meiteis. Kuki is a generic term covering a large number of tribes in the whole of north east India and some parts of Burma. Kuki is probably a Bengali word meaning hillmen. Some Kuki tribes migrated to Manipur hills in the prehistoric times along with or after the Meitei advent in Manipur valley. Greater migration occurred in the 18th century onwards due to the great Kuki
exodus which affected the demographic landscape of the hills of Manipur and adjoining areas. The Kuki-Chin tribes are the Thadou, Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Gangte, Simte, Zou, Beite, Mizos. There attempts are made to cover these tribes under a new name Zomi.

OTHERS

The Manipur Muslims or Meitei Pangans settled in Manipur since the 17th century. They adopted Meetei language as their mother tongue and now form an integral part of the society of Manipur. Many Indian communities who migrated to Manipur at the end of the 19th century were the Bihari oil crushers and the Bengalis. During the colonial period, came the Marawaries, Nepalese and after India's independence the Punjabis both Hindus and Sikhs, Tamils and others. Thus Manipur with her pluralistic social fabric represents a picture of homogeneity and heterogeneity with multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-lingual base of culture and civilization. The history of Manipur is the unending process of evolution of so much culture and society.

POPULATION

The total population figure for all the communities of Manipur according to 1991 provisional census report, is 18,26,714 of whom 931,511 are males and 895,203 are females. The same
reports only total population and literacy percentage along with districtwise population figure and their percentage. They are summarised as below: Imphal (Population 707,184); Bishenpur (Population 179,903); Churachandpur (Population 176,049); Chandel (Population 70,734); Senapati (Population 206,933); Tamenglong (85,572); Thoubal (Population 290,393) and Ukhrul.

No separate population figure for every tribe or community is not yet been compiled and published. So the population figure of each of the scheduled tribes is presented on the available data based on 1981 census report. They are as follows (with tribe names and population figure within the brackets).

The Aimol (1862); the Anal (9343); the Angami (560); the Chiru (3743); the Chothe (1654); the Gangte (7891); the Hmar (29216); the Kabui (26006); the Kachanaga (12,753); Khoirao (919); the Koireng (949); the Kom (9830); the Lamgang (3452); Any Mizo (6126); the Maram (6544); the Maring (11910); the Mao (50,715); the Moyon (1642); the Paite (959); the Purum (447); the Ralte (107); the Sema (24); the Siama (5035); the Salte (283); the Tangkhul (79,029); the Thadou (55,466); the Vaiphei (15,461) and the Zou (15462).

According to 1981 census report the eight revenue districts of Manipur have the following populations (districtwise).

They are Imphal (556,146); Thoubal (231,781); and
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Fig. 6 Manipur, the Districts and location of different Ethnic Groups.
Bishenpur (141,150) which is mostly inhabited by the Meiteis and a few population of other communities. The Senapati (155,421); Churachandpur (134,776), Chandel (56,444), Tamenglong (62,284) and Ukhrul (82,946) in the hill areas are predominated by the Non-Naga (Kuki-Chin-Mizo) tribes.

**DISTRIBUTION**

In the heart of Manipur lies a very fertile valley where nearly two-third of the population are concentrated. The Majority of whom are the Manipuri Hindus, while the rest comprises as many as 29 tribes belonging mostly to Naga and Non Naga groups and is housed at the surrounding hills. The tribals of Manipur are mostly Mongoloid stock of people. In Manipuri word the tribals are embraced by the common term - 'Hao' which simply means 'hill dwellers' irrespective of the fact that there are different clans and communities among the tribals and that there are number of names attached to different tribes and sub-tribes depending upon the affinities of linguistic, culture, social etc.

The tribal people are found in all the districts of Manipur, but the ethnic division of the distribution is very clear and recognised for all practical purposes. While the inhabitants of the district of Tamenglong, Senapati, Ukhrul and Tengnoupal are Nagas; Churachandpur district and southern
Fig. 7 Manipur, the area covered by (my) Field Work.
parts of Senapati district and eastern part of Chandel dis-
trict are Non-Naga areas. Due to historical regions of con-
tinuous migration and British policy of setting, the Non Nagas
are scattered in all Naga areas. The Naga-tribes have the
following tribes: the Anals, the Angami, the Chakhesang, the
Kabui (also known as Rongmei), the Koirengs, the Khoirao(also
known as Thangal), the Lamgang, the Liangmei, the Mao, the
Maram, the Maring, the Monsang, the Moyon, the Poumai, the
Tangkhul, the Sema and the Zemi. Whereas the main communities
of the Non-Naga groups are the Aimol, the Chothe, the Faite,
the Simte, the Gangte, the Ralte, the Hmar, the Zou and any
other Mizo (Lushais).

The Naga groups are found concentrated in the Tameng-
long, Senapati, Ukhrul and Chandel districts of Manipur. Whereas
the Non Nagas are concentrated in the Churachandpur district.
Scattered pockets of non Nagas are also found in the hill dis-
tricts and plains of Manipur. In the words of T.C.Hodson "While
accepting with due reserve the familiar distinction between Na-
gas and Kukis, it may be pointed out that the tribes commonly
classed together as Naga and Kuki occupy definite areas in the
hills. A line drawn across the map following the Kabaw valley
road via Aimol and joined the Cachar road which transverses
the western hills from Bishnupur in Manipur to Jirighat on the
western boundary of the state separates the Naga area without
excluding more than a few small Kabui villages which lie to the south of Nongba. North of the line we find Naga villages and to the north of it Kuki settlements, .... Indeed the Kuki is to be found almost everywhere in the state except in the territory occupied by the Mao confederacy."

The Nagas and Non-Nagas in Manipur are distributed as follows:

The Anal are found concentrated in the Chandel and Chakpikarong and Tengnoupal sub-divisions of Chandel District. Scattered pockets are also found in Churachandpur district of Manipur and Burma. The Anal habited area is bounded on the north by the kindred tribes of Moyon, Monsang and Lamgang, on the south by the Kuki-Mizo tribes like Thadou, Zo, Baite, on the west by the Purums and Meiteis of the valley, on the east by the Thadous and Shans of the Kabaw valley. Hence they occupied mainly on the Tamadung range stretching from north to south between the Manipur valley and the Kabaw valley of Myanmar. Besides the Anal villages are situated both in the eastern and western banks of the Chakpi river which flows through the Anal habited areas.

The Chakhesangs are found locating in the northernmost part of Manipur, which is built on an apex of land between the lanier and the river which rises below Mao, and looks
towards Melome and Lapvome. The Chakhesangs are found scat-
tering in five villages of Ukhrul north sub-division of Ukhrul
district, Manipur. Actually they are the trans-border tribe.
Because, their original homeland is the Phek district of Naga-
land, bordering on the north and north-eastern parts of Ukhrul
district, Manipur. The Chakhesang habited area is bounded on
the north by Rengmas and Lothas tribes of Nagaland, on the west
by the Angami tribe of Nagaland and the Poumai and Mao tribes
of Senapati district, Manipur, on the south by the Tangkhul
tribe of Ukhrul district of Manipur and on the east by Somra
tract of Burma (Myanmar). In Manipur they are found mostly
concentrated in Jessami area (Pundruk in Meitei).

The Kabuis (also known as Rongmeis) are distributed
widely over the west and north-west hills of the valley, the
area of Tamel, Tamenglong north and south of the Nungba in the
hills and vales touching the Assam valley on the other side.
Besides, scattered pockets of Kabuis(Rongmeis) are found in
different districts of Manipur in addition to Tamenglong dis-
trict of the state. They are Bishenpur, Imphal, Senapati and
Thoubal.

Koiirengs are found in the hills bordering the valley.
South of the Barail are mostly Koiireng villages. The Koiirengs
are one of the smallest tribes of India’s north-eastern region
which is the meeting place of various racial and cultural
elements in this part of Asia. The Kolrengs, at present, are found in the following settlements - viz Iril Mapal, Kamu Koireng, Longa Koireng, Sadu Koireng, Utonglok and Tarung in Sadar hills Senapati district, Lamphel Koireng at Imphal, Imphal district, Litan (near Kakching) Chandel district and Ngairong (near Saiton) Churachandpur district. But Ekpan and Awang Longa Koireng are found to be deserted. Thus their main habitational area is found in East and west Sadar hills, Senapati district, Manipur.

The Liangmeis (also known as Kacha Nagas) are found distributed in Tamenglong and Senapati districts of Manipur. But they are found most concentrated in the Tamenglong North and Tamenglong west sub-divisions of Tamenglong district and Mao west sub-division and Sadar hills (west) of Senapati district, Manipur.

The Lamgangs are found concentrated in the Tengnoupal, Chandel and Chakpikarong sub-divisions of Chandel district and Phungyar Phaisat sub-division of Ukhrul district.

The Mao habited area is bounded on the north by the Angami villages (Kiswema, Khojuma Jakhama, Kigwema etc.) of Nagaland, on the south by the Marams, on the east by the Poumais and on the west by the Zeliang tribes. The village of Mao (a Meitei name), or Sopvoma as it is called by the Nagas
themselves, lies on the western spur of Kopamedza, on the NH-39 (National highway No. 39). Close to it and almost contiguous are the villages of Kalinamei, Rabunamei, Punanamei, Pudunamei, Chaonamei, etc. which form a part of the Mao Leaguers. The villages of Sajouba, Kaibi, Makhel, Makhan, Mao Pungdung, etc. are occupying the hills between Tadubi and Maram. The peak Kopamedza, marks the centre of maximum density of the Mao tribe (groups).

The Maras are distributed over the northern part of Senapati district Manipur and fall into several groups differing slightly in appearance and costumes. The main concentration of the Maras are found on the central and southern parts of Mao-Maram East and West sub-divisions of Senapati district.

The Marings are distributed in the Heirok range of hills on the south-east of the valley. They are found scattered in the Tengnoupal and Chandel sub-divisions of Chandel district. They are mostly concentrated in the Tengnoupal sub-division adjoining the valley of Thoubal district on the west and the southern Tangkhul villages of Ukhrul district on the North.

The Monsangs are a very small community comprising only four percent of the tribal population of Manipur. Most
of the Monsangs are the dwellers of the foot hills in the Chandel district.

The Moyons are also one of the smallest tribes of Manipur. They are found mainly in the Chandel district Manipur.

The Poumais are distributed over the northern part of Manipur particularly in Senapati district (north and north eastern parts of Mao Maram sub-division). The Poumai inhabited area lie between the Longitudes of 93°47'E - 94°18'E and Latitudes of 25°10'N and 25°31'N. It is bounded on the north by the Kohima and Phok districts of Nagaland, on the west by the Mao and Maram areas of Senapati district, on the east by the Chakhesangs and Tangkhuls of Ukhrul district and by some Non-Naga groups on the south.

The Tangkhuls, the biggest tribe of Manipur, are found, distributed all over the five sub-divisions of Ukhrul district, Manipur. They occupied a compact area of eastern zone of Manipur extending from Tengnoupal in the South right upto the Somra tract (now in Myanmar) in the north east.

The Thangals (also known as Koirao or Khoirao Thangals) are distributed on the southern parts of Sadar hills, Senapati district, just adjacent to the northern parts of Imphal district.

The Zemis are the dwellers of high hills or mountain
ranges. They are found on the north and north western parts of Senapati district. Scattered pockets are also found in the Tamenglong North sub-division of Tamenglong district.

As stated earlier, the Non-Naga tribes are the Aimol, the Chothe, the Chiru, the Kom, the Purum, the Gangte, the Hmar, the Paite, the Simte, the Thadou, the Vaiphei, the Haite, and any Mizo tribes. These tribes live in the Sadar Hills (Senapati district), Churachandpur district, Jiribam (Imphal district) and the Tengnoupal sub-division of Chandel district, Manipur. The Non-Naga tribes have their maximum concentration in Churachandpur which is fast developing into a modern township. The Hmar, Paite, Simte, Vaiphei, Gangte, and Zou are widely scattered to the south west hills of the valley, the area of Churachandpur district.

The Thadous are located in the northern part of the valley, they occupied mostly southern part of the Sadar hills, Senapati district which is bounded by Tamenglong district on the west, Ukhrul district in the east, Imphal in the South and Mao-Maram sub-division of the Senapati district (same district) on the north.

**ECONOMIC PATTERN**

While discussing the economic conditions of the tribes
of the state, it is worthwhile to highlight the demographic profile of the state. The density of population of Scheduled Tribes (particularly in the hilly region of the state) has been increasing rapidly during the four decades (1951 - 1981). The density of population of scheduled tribes which was only 9 persons/sq.km. in 1951. It increases to 13 persons/sq.km. in 1961; 18 persons/sq.km. in 1971 and 18 persons/sq.km. in 1981 respectively.

The rate of urban growth is an important index of the progress of the economy. In this respect the urban population and its pattern of urbanisation in Manipur are marked in two physically diversified regions i.e. in the valley and the hills. While the Manipur valley is in the process of a rapid urbanisation, the hill regions, as a whole, are lagging far behind, mainly due to transport handicap in the terrain. It means that the entire population of hilly region in Manipur could be considered as rural population. For instance out of the 32 towns in Manipur state, 24 towns are in the valley and 8 towns are in the Hills. There are 9 towns in Imphal district, 8 towns in the Thoubal district and 7 towns in Bishenpur district. Of the five hill districts, Senapati has 3 towns, Churachandpur has 2 and the remaining districts like Ukhrul, Chandel and Tamenglong possess one town each.

The growth of economy is directly related to the
pattern of occupational structure of the people corresponding to the nature of occupation. The capacity of an economy for its development and growth is determined by various factors such as human resources, natural resources and financial resources. Of these, human resources is one of the most important factors to determine the economic level of any society or community. Because manpower is the basic economic resources of an economy. Thus to look into the economic conditions of Tribal people of Manipur, it is worth to analyse their working force to the total population of the state.

According to 1981 census report 189,823 persons were enumerated as workers forming 48.86% of the total population of the scheduled tribes (Male worker 47.57% and female 52.43%). In the economy of the tribal people of Manipur, agricultural sector occupies a dominant role than the non-agricultural sectors. It is not only the main source of livelihood of the majority of the tribal population but also a traditional way of life enjoying the pride of place in their socio-economic life.

Although the utilization of land system forms an important aspect in any programme of economic planning in a predominantly agricultural economy. Unfortunately, land utilization statistics of tribal area are not available as a whole,
as it has not been cadastrally surveyed. Some data are however available in respect of the valley and the survey work of wet-rice cultivable areas in the hill districts was taken up and is still in progress (Government of Manipur Administrative Report 1976-77). In fact in the hill areas of Manipur, right over the land were not exercised by the Government but by the customs of the tribes which again varied from tribe to tribe. Among the Nagas any individual or group of individuals can hold the land within the defined area of the village, but inclination is not permitted the Naga customary laws. The Villagers freely enjoy the rights over the land (like hunting, fishing and agriculture). Under traditional customs the entire land within their village boundary is surveyed by the villagers and divided into large holdings (like open reserve and village reserve) and divided into small plots (like clan lands and individual lands). The holding of land is not recorded in any records but it is recognised by the customary law.

However, among the tribes collectively known as Kukis (Non-Nagas), land holding system is different from Non-Nagas. Among the Non-Nagas land is not owned individually but it is the private property of the chief. Under the rule of chiefs, the individuals of the village utilized land as chief's tenants and rent is paid in kind to the chief which vary from 50 kg. to 100 kg. weight.
Regarding the utilization of land, both Naga and Non-Naga groups practise shifting cultivation on large scale, in addition to permanent wet and terrace field cultivations. Agriculture which is the main livelihood of its population is still supplemented by forestry, animal husbandry and handloom weaving as cottage industry.

Due to their lower socio-economic and educational status it is impossible for the tribals to go in for costly and better methods of cultivation by using improve seeds and modern technology. Moreover, the co-operative movement has also not affected the tribal people of Manipur. It is difficult for them to take advantages of agricultural and industrial finances due to their lack of permanent holdings of land which can be used freely mortgaging their land to the financing institutions.

In the over-all socio-economic development of the state, the tribals also can now be seen in all stages of development. However, it can not be ignored that they still live the average low standard of life as compared to the other tribes. Therefore the Government of India has initiated special plans for the development of tribal areas including the state of Manipur (since the 1st five year plan). But by looking into the target and achievement of the five year plans for the
development of scheduled tribes in Manipur could not be achieved (various plan drafts). Therefore it is highly necessary to investigate into the causes. Otherwise the economic upliftment of the tribals may not be achieved in the near future. That is why the Government has again introduced the tribal-subplan from Fifth Five Year Plan onwards with sufficient trends separately to accelerate the development of socio-economic conditions of the tribal people in the state, the objectives of the Tribal sub-plan was to narrow the gap between the levels of the development of tribal areas and other areas and to improve the quality of life of the tribal communities. In order to achieve these objectives, elimination of all forms of exploitation of tribals, particularly in land, money lending, malpractices in the exchange of agricultural and forest products was given high priority. The tribal sub-plan envisages total physical and financial effort for integrated development of the tribal area.

It can be concluded that the tribal people of Manipur are still living very close to nature. But the implementation of plans and developmental work in the tribal areas followed by democratisation of system of administration, improved system of communications, introduction of higher modern education and rapid economic development have vastly improved the living conditions of the tribals.
SOCIAl SYSTEM(SOCiAL STRUCTURE)

As stated earlier, Manipur is mainly populated by the three major ethnic groups. They are the Meiteis of the valley and the Naga and Non-Naga groups of the surrounding hills. In trying to give a brief note on the social systems of the three major groups, mentioned above, the first work before a researcher is to identify the principal social institutions of that society. Here at least five social institutions can be identified. They are: family, marriage, kinship, political system and systems of beliefs and rituals. In this context, family, marriage and kinships, out of the five listed above, are described below:

FAMILY

Family is the smallest functional and structural unit of the society. In Manipur all the major ethnic groups (described above) have patriarchal family system.

A Meitei family consist generally of a married couple and their unmarried children. The husband is the head of the family. Sometimes it takes the form of Hindu joint family. Extended type of family is also rarely seen. The essential feature of the Meitei family is that the responsibility of looking after the death of a father rest on the eldest son. But the youngest son has the responsibility to look after his
aged parents. The role of woman or that of a mother in running a Meitei family is no less important than that of a man. She is in charge of the major domestic affairs. Not only she looks after her household chore and children, she helps her husband whatever she can.

A Naga family also generally consist of a parent and their unmarried children. The husband is the head of the family. As Naga society is patrilineal and male ascendancy is complete with them. The essential feature of the Naga family is that its members are descended from the eldest male resident of the house. That the family is a true social unit is evident by the fact that the head of the family has to perform certain religious duties in reference to the House Deity and during festivals and other ceremonies. Moreover, the father, being the head of the family, represents his family in the clan meetings and in courts. As soon as a son marries and becomes the head of his family and sets up his own home. Among the Tangkhuls the marriage of a son still further breaks up the original family, because by an interesting custom, on the marriage of a son the parents are required to part with the bulk of their property and leave the house. Among the Marams and Maoas the eldest son gets lion’s share but the house is reserved for the youngest son. Among the Kabuis (also known as Rongmeis) the parents only vacate a room for the married son.
In Naga society the role of a woman in running a Naga family is no less important than that of a man. The Tangkhul woman is an example of hard work and is identified to the outside world as such.

Like that of the Nagas the Non-Naga tribes have a patriarchal family and it is the nucleus of the Non-Naga (Kuki) society. It usually consists, like the Meiteis, of a man and his wife, their unmarried children and in many cases their married sons and his wife and children. The eldest son is given certain advantages and special lineal rights. For instance, the eldest son among the Thaoos customarily succeeds his father as the head of the household and will inherit his property after the death of the father. Even chiefship (Haosa) is supposed to go to the members of the senior class. The elder brother and his descendants have a higher status than the younger brother and his descendants.

A striking feature of the Non-Naga(Kuki) groups' social structure is the encompassing role played by the household council. Indeed, the Paite social system can not be understood without understanding the term Inndongta (household council) and its importance in the social life of the Paites. It is the pivot of the Paite social structure upon which all socio-cultural activities operates and revolves.
MARRIAGE

It is an important social institute in almost every society. It alters the content of relationships and imposes obligations.

The Meiteis are exogamous as regards to the clans, salais into which they are divided, but are endogamous as regards members of other tribes (communities) though there are cases on record of marriages between Brahmins and Meitei girls.

According to T.C. Hodson the Meiteis are polygamous and the king may have three principal wives, with as many as one hundred and eight subsidiary partners. The king's three wives in order of precedence are (1) Maharani, (2) Apambi and (3) Laimakhubi (Hodson, 1908:76).

Further there is a rule of general application that a man may not marry a woman of the clan from which his mother came. The prohibition goes no further than the one generation.

But after independence the rule of monogamy is came into existence with some exceptional polygamy. Traditionally marriages are arranged by elders and usually employed some persons as go-between. Even in the love marriage, such traditional custom is practised.
Like the Meiteis the Nagas are also practising monogamy. Polygamy is also permitted but on rare cases. In Naga society, most marriages are love marriages in that the boys and girls choose their partner. The age of marriage is not fixed but may occur at anytime after puberty. The bride price varies from tribe to tribe. The rules of exogamy prevails in/among almost all the Naga tribes.

Marriage among the Non-Naga tribes is usually arranged by the parents. It is prerogative of the parents to select the bride. Soon after the choice is made, an emissary is sent to the parents of the girl. The emissary called Palai is to negotiate, finalise the bride price and fix the marriage. The bride price is calculated in the terms of mithun, beads, gongs, etc. It varies from clan to clan or tribe to tribe (among the Non-Naga tribes). Marriage is allowed within one's own clan. There is hardly any evidence of polyandry.

The rule of matrilateral cross-cousin (Mo or La) marriage applies, but prohibited from marrying his tunu (Fa or Da). The core of Thadou social system lies in the idea of finding marriage partners who are sons and daughters of a brother and sister.

**KINSHIP**

The clan or kinship is a continuation of the family
unit on the paternal side. Kinship is formed by the union of several families on a particular basis. Any clan or kinship can be traced back to a single family.

Among the Meeteis clans or kinship plays very important role because it is composed of families which is a group of agnatic kin. Normally there is a clan chief and his eldest son will inherit the post of clan chiefship called Sagei Piba. He will perform all the religious functions of the clan like worshiping of annual clan ancestor called Lai Chaklong Katpa representing his clan members.

In Meitei kinship system stress is given on both sides (on matrilineal and patrilineal alliances); but more emphasis is given on the patrilineal side. Thus there are two types of kinships - one through the father and the other through the mother.

In the Naga society, clan very important role. It occupies a definite portion of the village and is strictly exogamous. For instance the clan name serves as a surname in most cases among the Tangkhuls. The relationships of the wider kinship groups are the extensions of consanguinous families. Each clan has its own chief and its inheritance is hereditary.

Like that of the Nagas the other Non-Naga tribes
(Kukis) consider kinship as the locus for the operation of the social system. For instance, it is not easy for the Thadou who have been scattered and segmented to function as a compact and integrated tribe. The compactness and integration of the tribe is brought about by the extension of kinship ties. The kin group is indeed the pivot around which the Thadou social structure revolves. *Neinu* (Mo Br Da) marriage is a kind of kingroup alliance and provides the kinship link between the constituent lineal groups. The Thadou lineages are established on the basis of a wife-giving and wife-taking relationships. Wife-giving lineages are superior to wife-taking lineages in the Thadou social hierarchy. The younger brothers do not stand any chance of equaling the eldest brother's patrimony in the Thadou social structure.

In the Paite social structure, it is the institution of *inndongta* (council of the household) which gives a wide network of kinship fabrication. It brings categories of relatives - enatic, patrilineal, matrilineal and non-clan members into a social platform. The mechanism of *inndongta* brought back the married brothers, and sisters to their paternal home paving the way for the meeting of siblings. Dr. Kamkhenthang is of the opinion that if there were no *inndongta* institutions, married brothers and sisters would have a very loose relationships under the influence of their respective spouses. Thus
Inndongta brings at least two generations of the father and his children into a closer relationship.

To sum up, it can be said that the Meiteis, Nagas and Non-Naga tribal societies of Manipur are strictly patriarchal. Marriage is usually arranged by the parents though there are frequent cases of young people getting married on the basis of love and affection. An elderly person is employed as a go-between. Mother's brothers' daughter (Mo Br Da) marriage is considered as the most preferred one in all tribal societies (both Nagas and Non-Nagas). Polygamy is rarely practiced. There is no dowry system worth its name. Among the tribes bride price is customary though amount differs from tribe to tribe. Bride price is also found among the Meiteis but on rare cases and exceptional. Divorce is permitted and widow can remarry. Kinship, among the Meiteis, Nagas and non-Naga tribes, is counted only in terms of paternal line. In the other words the social organisation is predominantly one of the patrilineal emphasis. The elder brothers ranks above others in a family. But the degree of inheritance differs among the three major groups (Meitei, Naga and Non-Naga tribes). The entire gamut of kinship relationship is formed by the inter-marriage of the members of the exogamous patrilineal clans.