

PART – I

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

Society consists of various sub-groups. These sub-groups may be seen in terms of caste, region, religion, language, habitat, etc. Sub-groups need to be differentiated based on social stratification, and cultural differences. Scheduled tribes fall into both groups. When the society is divided into social sub-groups based on habitat scheduled tribes emerge as a typical group which is unique and characteristic in many ways. In India tribals are recognized by the Government of India under Article 341 of the constitution. These Scheduled Tribes are divided into various groups and sub-groups and are distributed over a vast geographical area from the foothills of Himalayas to the lands of Gujarat to the hills in North-East (Panigrahi 1992:1).

The total population of the Scheduled Tribes in the country stands at 84,326,240 with 8.10 % of the Scheduled Tribes population to the total population of the country (Source: Population Profiles, Census of India 2001, RGI). They are spread all over the states except the states of Punjab and Haryana and all over the Union Territories except Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry. They are also derived from all four racial stocks, the Negrito (the Great Andamanese, the Onges and the Jarawas), the Proto-Austroloid (the Munda, the Oroan and the Gond), the Mongoloid (the tribes of North-East), and the Caucasoid (the Toda, the Rabari, and the Gujjar) (Singh 2001:2-4). Considering their territorial, ethnical and socio-cultural relations, the tribals who are living in various regions are classified into five geographical zones viz:

1. The North-East India comprising Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, and Meghalaya;
2. The Sub-Himalayan region of North and North-West India comprising North and North-West Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh;

3. Central and East India comprising West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh;
4. Western India comprising Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra; and
5. South India comprises Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and various Union Territories including all the islands of the region (Pula Muni-Lakra 2000:1).

Broadly, anthropologists have divided the country into three tribal zones:-

- I. North-Eastern Zone: This zone includes the tribes such as Gurung, Limbu, Lepcha, Aka, Mishmi, Mikir, Rabha, Kachari, Garo, Khasi, Chakma, Nagas, Kukis, Angami, Sema, Pham, Chang, Michar, Goroachakum, Bhohiya, Dalfa, Abhoramiri, etc., inhabiting the regions of East Punjab, East Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Northern Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and Manipur.
- II. Central Zone: This zone includes the tribes such as Gond, Munda, Kandh, Baiga, Bhil, Ho, Bhil, Bhumij, Kharia, Birhor, Bhuiyan, Kanda, Koli, Savara, Oraon, Santhal, Juong, etc., inhabiting the regions of Southern Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- III. Southern Zone: This zone includes the tribe such as Chenchu, Kota, Kurumba, Badoga, Toda, Uralia, Kadar, Malayan, Muthuvan, Soliya, Kadmurenba, Paniyan, Yerava, Koya, Advichencha, Hanashikari, etc., inhabiting the regions of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka (Rao 2005:617).

The size of the tribal communities is also an important factor to be considered. There are communities with very large population of 3 to 7 millions. The tribal people inhabit all climatic zones. The proportion of the Scheduled tribes to the population of the states/union territories is highest in Lakshadweep and Mizoram with (94.50 percent), Nagaland (88.90 percent), Meghalaya (85.90 percent), Arunachal Pradesh

(64.20 per cent), Dadra and Nagar Haveli (62.20 per cent), Tripura (31.10 per cent), etc. The lowest proportions are in Uttar Pradesh (0.10 per cent), Bihar (0.90 percent), Kerala (1.10 per cent), and Tamil Nadu (1.00 per cent) (Census of India 2001).

Since pre-historic times, India has been the homeland of a large number of ethnic groups and cultures. These communities, believed to be the earliest inhabitants of the country, are known by various names, the most extensively known term being Adivasi. Among the other popular names used to designate these communities are the following: Vanyajati (castes of forest), Vanvasi (inhabitants of forest), Paharia (hill dwellers), Adimjati (original communities) and Janjati (folk people). Many of these communities have more or less retained their social identity as far as their customs and regulations are concerned. Since 1891, these communities have been enumerated variously in different Census Reports. Thus we see them enumerated as people having a tribal form of religion (1891), animists (1901), tribal animists or tribal religion (1911), hill and forest (1921), primitive tribe (1931), tribe (1941) and Scheduled Tribe (1951,1961,1971) (Triosi 1979: 23).

These tribal groups live mostly in forest in harmony with nature. They vary widely in their level of socio-economic development, cultural background and heritage, traits, psyche, and so on. And constitute perhaps, the least economically developed segments of the country's population. Though the Scheduled Tribes inhabit different parts of the country and are located far apart from each other; yet, as ethnic minority groups, they live in physical conditions devoid of modern facilities (Panigrahi 1992). In their closed society, they are still maintaining a unique culture and customs which are different from the mainstream society.

But before discussing and analyzing the culture of any group it would be worthwhile to know the genesis of the term. The origin of the word and the different

definitions given by various scholars has been cited below to give a brief knowledge of the term tribe. These definitions would help us to get an idea of the term tribe and understand the people and their society.

The Concept of 'Tribe'

To define the word 'tribe' many scholars have given their own definitions but somewhat limiting to a particular extent. The term tribe is derived from the Latin word '*tribus*' or tri-three, referring to the three divisions among the early people of Rome. Later on it was used to mean the poor or the masses. In English language the word appeared in the sixteenth century and denoting a community of persons claiming descent from a common ancestor. But the popular notion of tribe emerged only with expansion of colonialism in Asia and Africa (Pearsall 1991:1530).

In ancient Indian literature, there seems to be no equivalent word for the English term 'tribe', except for the Sanskrit word '*Janah*', denoting an agglomeration of individuals with a definite territory, kinship, common ancestry, common cultural pattern (Choudhuri 1977). In post independence India the term tribe came to have a legal and administrative connotation. British Census officials and Anthropologists first used the term 'tribe' for the purpose of enumerating social groups in India. From the 1881 to the 1931 Census, the tribals were classified as community like the Hindu and the Muslims. The universalistic definition of tribe is Euro-centric. It has the feudal and colonial background of the 19th century Europe. The Constitution of India has laid down a democratic procedure to identify the tribals. The tribals are officially defined as Scheduled Tribes. The official definition of Scheduled Tribe keeps in its view the country's historical experience and tribe-caste relations. The Government of India Act 1935 used the term 'backward tribe' and the Indian Constitution has retained the terminology but using 'Scheduled' in place of 'backward'. Article 341 and 342 of the Constitution of India

vested the power with the President of India to specify certain groups as 'Scheduled Tribes'. Article 366 (25) of the Constitution of India has defined Scheduled Tribes as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribe for the purpose of this Constitution". By the Scheduled Tribe Order, 1950, issued by the President, in exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (1) of Article 232 of the Constitution of India, 312 tribes have been declared to be Scheduled Tribes. Later, by an Act of Parliament, some other groups were also included in the schedule (Doshi 2002:368-369). Over the years the numbers of Scheduled Tribe groups have more than doubled from 212 in 1950 to 427 in 1971. Now their number has gone up to 6.2% according to the 1981 Census, 7.56% according to 1991 and 8.10% in 2001.

As defined in the Imperial Gazette of India, "A tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name; speaking a common dialect and is usually not endogamous, though originally it might have been so".

A tribe is a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous, with no specialization of function, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, unified in language or dialect, recognizing social distance with other tribes or castes. Without any social obloquy, following tribal traditions, beliefs and customs, illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration (Majumdar 1937).

The qualities which Redfield (1955) considered for the definition of a group as a tribe-which he designates as 'little community'-should be distinctiveness, smallness, homogeneity and all pervading and cultural self-image maintained by the system of symbols and values.

According to George Peter Murdock (1949), tribe is a social group in which there are many clans, nomadic bands, villages or other sub-groups which usually have a definite geographical area, a separate language, a singular distinct culture and either a common political organization or atleast a feeling of common determination against the strangers. According to Bogardus (1950), “the tribal group is based on the need for protection on ties of blood relationships and on the strength of a common religion”.

The tribe is a group of persons having a common definite territory, common dialect, common name, common religion and a common culture. They are united by blood relationship and have a peculiar political organization (Bhusan 2001:27). According to Ahuja also, tribe is a community occupying a common geographical area and having a similar language and culture (2004:18).

Xaxa considered tribe as ethnic groups by emphasizing relationality and boundaries; these boundaries are defined linguistically, culturally and politically by the groups themselves, other groups, the state and the anthropologists (1999a&b).

In the words of Ralph Linton (1936), in its simplest form the tribe is a group of bands occupying a contiguous territory or territories and having a feeling of unity deriving from numerous similarities in culture, frequent contacts, and a certain community of interest.

A peculiar tribal characteristic is persistent by observable among the tribes of Manipur. A tribe is self contained, self-sufficient and marked by the absence of specialization as opposed to conditions prevalent in society today. A family is an economic unit in a village. Each family or household tries to procure what it requires without depending on other. No single person or family specializes in any of the economic activities (Satyanarayan 1990:142-43). Tribal values in modern world may sound incongruous with our subject on social change as the word tribe to most of us is associated

with savage, unclothed and uncivilized people. The tribals are normally considered inferior and at times looked down upon with contempt, especially in India (Horam, M. 1990: 85).

Manipur, one of the seven sisters of the North-Eastern part of India, is a mountainous region, isolated from the neighboring states by a chain of hill ranges (Fig. 1.1). Manipur is located between 23°51'N latitude to 25°41'N latitude and 93°2'E longitude to 94°47'E longitude in the extreme eastern part of the country, bordering Burma for about 352 km in the East and South. In the North and West, are the states of Nagaland, Assam and Mizoram for about 502 km (Laiba 1992: 84).

In the days of Yore, many of the places of the North-East India were incommunicado with its mainland. But Roy Burman (1970:21) writes:

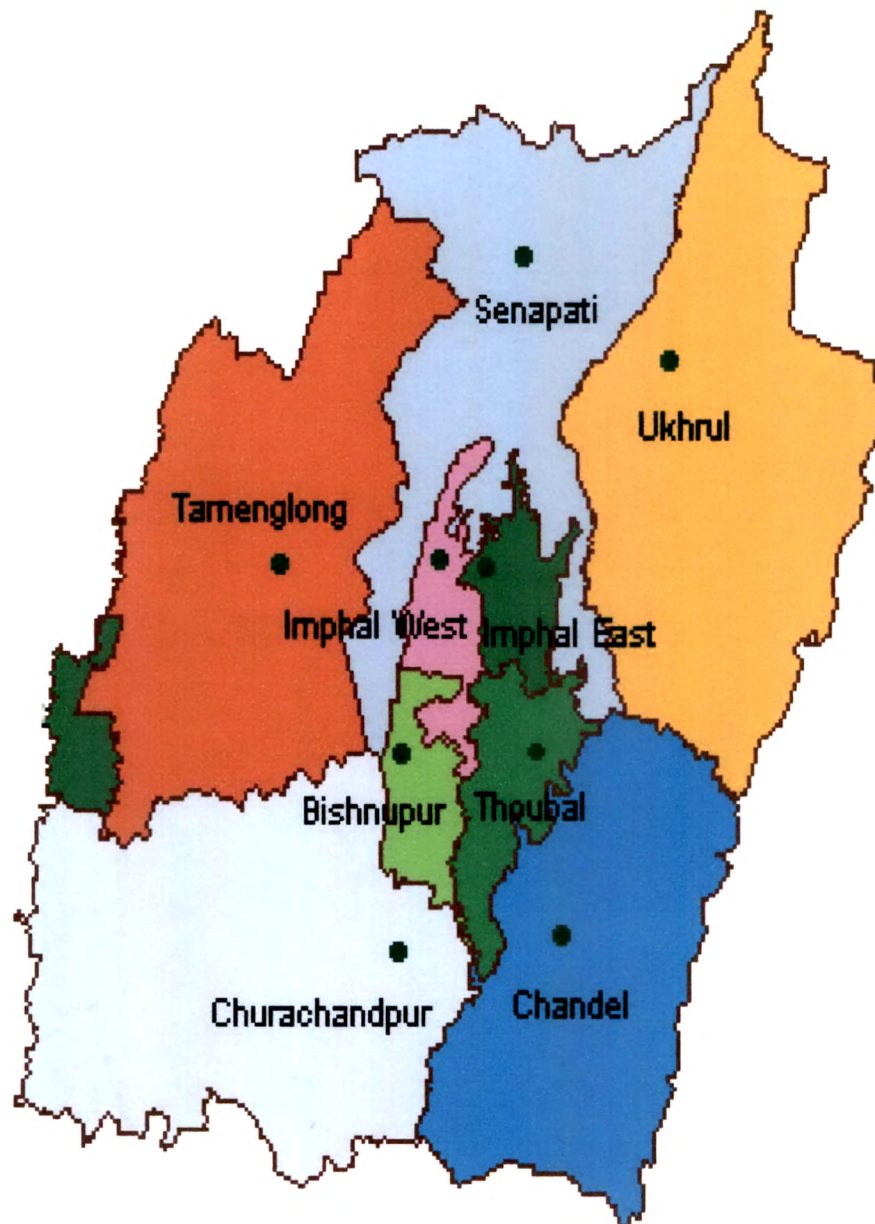
Manipur has a very old history, Arjun, the hero of the Mahabharata, is supposed to have fallen for Manipuri princess, Chitrangada. In 1630, during the reign of Khagemba, Manipur was invaded by the Chinese. In 1714, Garib Niwas, the famous Manipuri king, ascended the throne. He adopted Vaishnavism as State religion. In 1763, the king of Manipur entered into treaty with the British for protection against Burma. But in the last decade of the 19th Century, Manipur came under the rule of the British.

I.1.Introduction to the State Manipur and Its People



Map I.1 Map of India

Manipur had faced several acute political upheavals, even during the British rule. This had been due to multi-ethnic composition of its people. The Kukis are one of the dominating tribal groups in Manipur. There were Kuki uprisings before and during the World War I of which the Kuki war of Independence (1917-19) had far reaching consequences in the history of Manipur. Thus, Manipur was exposed to the outside world politically (Gangte 1993:29). Given below is the map of Manipur (Fig. I.2) showing the nine districts of the state:



Map I.2 Map of Manipur

It is clear that the animistic tribal population and the so called other Hindu groups of people started occupying the valleys. Thus Hinduism slowly but surely penetrated into this region in a diluted form at different degrees. In course of time, the Bhakti cult came to Manipur through Assam and the people of Manipur were slowly drawn towards it. There are evidences to this effect given by Constantine (1981:55). According to him, in 1704, the ruling prince Charai Rongba embraced Vaishnavism

through the influence of one Krishnacharya. This school of Vaishnavism centered around the Radha-Krishna worship. During the reign of Charai Rongaba's son, Pamheiba (Garib Niwaz), the Chaitanya Schools also devoted to Krishna, came to Manipur.....They captured the imagination of Garib Niwaz who along with a number of his palace retinue and nobles, joined the Ramandi School, which the valley Hindus of Manipur order their lives today still looks upon the Krishna and not Rama as Prime deity.

As a result, casteless social conditions prevail in Manipur in which the Meities have a distinctive role to play. The Meities claim as early settlers in the tract. Though the Muslims came from outside, slowly they found their wives from among the local women-folk and settled down there. Actually they were not treated as aliens. Ultimately, in course of time, Meitie religion struck its roots (Constantine 1981:41) on this soil: Even so, the Meitie religion survived in the Sanamahi worship, while the Manipuri language languished yielding place to Sanskrit and Bengali, because the bulk of the Brahmin community was originally Bengali and the source of Vaishnavism is in Nabadwip.

In olden days Manipur was known by the neighboring states by different names which were given to it. In Rennell's Memoir and maps of India it was called 'Mecklay'. In the narratives of Symes and in maps of that period, Manipur was called 'Cassey'. To the Shans it was known as 'Kase' and to the Burmese as 'Kathe', a corruption of the same word; the Ahoms called it 'Makeli' and the Cacharies 'Magli', while the old Assamese name for it was 'Moglan' (Yule and Burnell 1973:2).

There were also a number of explanations showing how the state got the name 'Manipur'. According to some, it came to be known as Manipur because there was much diamond ore in the area in ancient times; 'Mani' meaning diamond and 'pur' place. The legend goes like this: when the country was at one time waterlogged, Lord Shiva and

Uma, who in Manipur were known as Nongpokningthou and Panthoibi respectively descended upon it and performed the Lai Haraoba dance. The entire country was lit up day and night by the snake God Anata who came to see the dance with the magic gem (mani) on his hood. From this, the land was named Manipur, "The city of Gem" (Ahluwalia 1984:1).

The present boundary of Manipur with an area of 22,327 sq. km. was more or less fixed since the controversial transfer of Kabow valley to Burma (now Myanmar) in 1834. Imphal is the capital city with an elevation of 790 meters above mean sea level and is having an area of about 908 sq. km. The hills stretching from north to south in direction rise over 3000 meters above sea level at some places in the northern part the state (Laiba 1992:88). Imphal is in the middle of the valley which is the backbone of the general economy of the state. Geographically, Manipur is a border state in the North-Eastern corner of the country having an international boundary of about 350 km. with Myanmar on the East and South-East. The rest of the boundary is shared by the neighboring Indian states of Nagaland in the North, Cachar district of Assam in the West and Mizoram in the South (Planning Department 1992-1997).

The hill ranges of Manipur are the offshoots of the mighty Himalayas and these are comparatively younger in geological formation (Gangte 1993:28). The surrounding hills facing the valley constitute about 90% of the total areas of Manipur serve a very useful purpose in the economic and political life of the state. The hill ranges are higher in the north and steadily decreased in its height towards the southern slopes until the sea is reached with an irregular serrated ridge (Manipur Fact File 2001:35).

The state was formed and got statehood on twenty-first January 1972. The total population of the state according to the 2001 Census was 23, 88,634 with a density of 107/km². The literacy rate in the state was 77.9% for male and 68.9% for female. The

major religions followed in the state are Hinduism 58%, Christianity 34%, Islam 7% and others 1% (ibid.).

Even though situated in the north-eastern corner of India, Manipur happens to be an area where the people (now over 23 lakhs population) have developed a particular civilization and sensibility. It is a meeting place of different cultures of the east and the west, of the north and the south (1993: ix).

Manipur is a land of the Indo-Mongoloid or what is known as the Kiratas. Manipur, the tiny North-Eastern state of India, having roughly a population of about 23 lakhs admits broadly two sections of people-the valley (who call themselves the Meities or the Manipuris) and the hills consisting as many as 29 scheduled tribes, the recognized tribes in Manipur under the Constitution (S.T.) order No.1950 article 342 (1) of India. The population of Manipur comprises different social groups. They are the Meities, Nagas, Kukis and miscellaneous groups. The valley people are supposed to be the descendants of four old tribes called Khuman, Luwang, Moirang and Maithai. The hill people are broadly divided into Naga and Kuki tribes. The people of Manipur, both in the valley and the hills are having predominantly Mongoloid features. But it is not difficult to distinguish the valley and the hill people.

The socio-cultural identity of the Manipuris is a blend of hill and plain cultures. Further, different religions have also contributed different ways but have comfortably adjusted to each other (Manipur Fact File 2001:39). According to Singh (1993:10) Manipuri culture is not simply a gift, even though a remarkable one from Bengal Vaishnavism from the 18th Century A.D. Again, the valley happens to be a melting pot with waves of people from the east and the west (including the Indian Brahmins and Muslims) migrating to the valley at different historical periods (ibid.: 22).

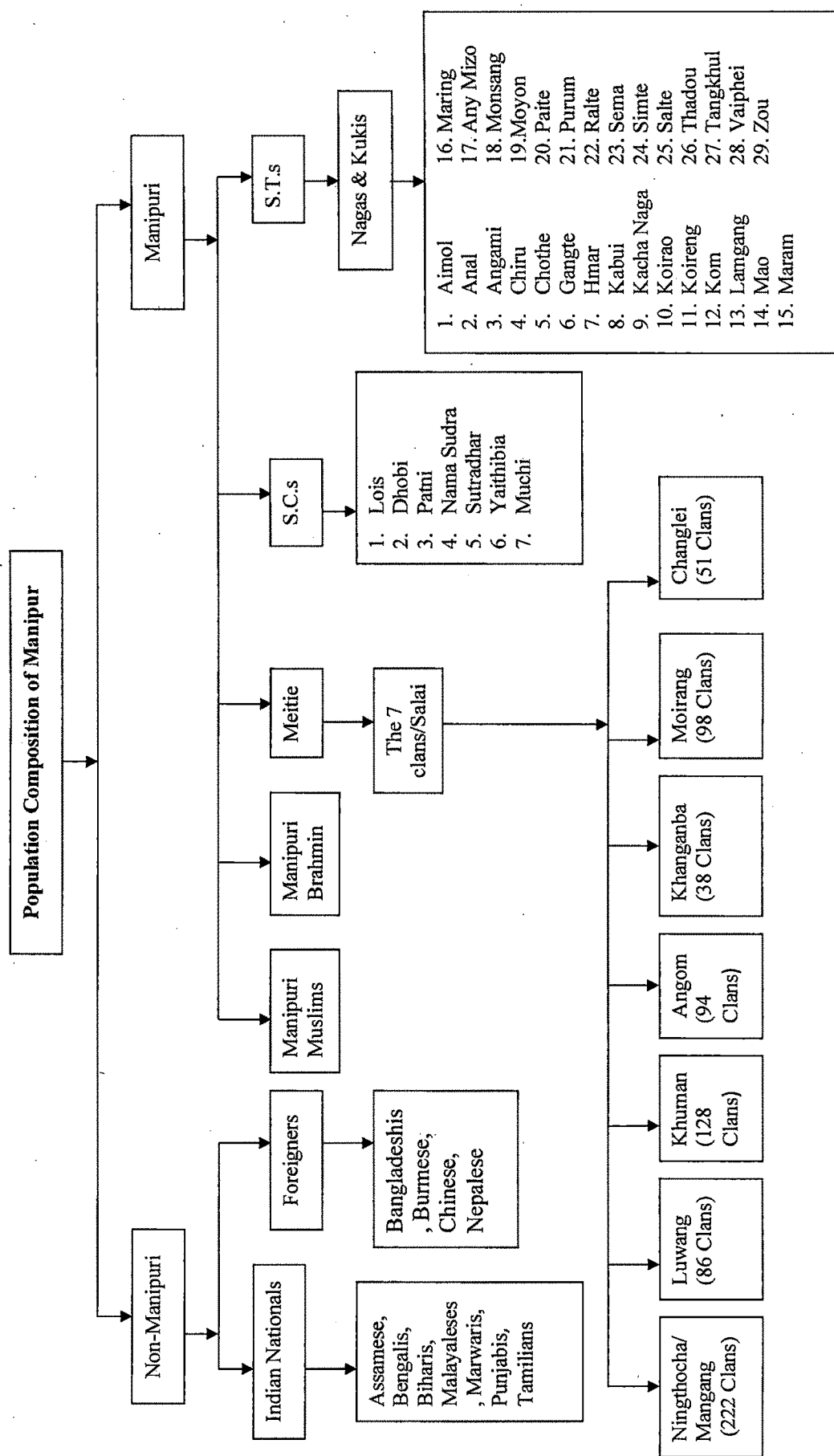
The population of Manipur can be broadly divided into highlanders and lowlanders. The former consist of almost exclusively the scheduled tribe population (very loosely grouped conventionally into two groups, viz, the Naga tribes and the Kuki tribes) of the state whereas the latter consist of mainly the Meities (or Meeties) and other communities such as the Meitie Pangals. The Meities (Hindu and Sanamahi) with a population of 13.62 lakhs constitutes the majority community. The Meitie Pangals (Manipuri Muslims) has a population of 1.67 lakhs. Total tribal population is 7.13 lakhs. Others (Nepalis and Mayangs) have a population of 1.46 lakhs. In the hills, there are as many as 29 tribes with varying population-strength, starting from Thadou, Tangkhul and Mao, to Moyon, Monsang and Thangal, falling within the comparatively new political constructs. These constructs that can be better seen as ethno-political are the Naga, Kuki and Zeliangrong (EPW Vol. XXXVII No. 6: 520-21). Fig. I.1 shows the composition of the population of Manipur.

It should be noted that all the different groups such as the Meities and all the tribals, are of the same ethnic group i.e. Mongoloid, and have very close similarities in their culture and traditional habits. It has been rightly stated in the Manipur Fact File, 2001 that Manipur is a state of pluralistic society. The state is inhabited by different ethnic groups. It is the homeland of the Manipuris, consisting of the Meities, Meitie Pangal (Muslims), twenty-nine Scheduled Tribes, seven Scheduled Castes and a number of unspecified tribes. A small percentage of other communities like Bengalis, Biharis, Sikhs, Jains and Nepalese, etc. who have migrated from time to time are also residing in different pockets of the state in search of livelihood. The concept of unity in diversity was a remarkable characteristic of this state. In the history of Manipur there has not been even a single instance of communal or ethnic dispute. But in recent times, Manipur has been the scene of battle field with bitter ethnic conflicts. The ethnic animosity between the Kukis

and the Nagas stems from xenophobic insecurity. Over 1,000 have been killed, more injured, houses burnt down and thousands rendered homeless, in the conflicts in the past six years (ibid: 22).

The state has a high tribal population concentration even though it is not declared a tribal state among the North-Eastern states of India. The land of Manipur is an ethnic mosaic. All tribes of Manipur can be roughly placed under two sections-the Kukis and the Nagas. Earlier the indigenous tribes of Manipur were not included within the folds of Nagahood. In support of this we can quote Verrier Elwin, "Even as late as 1954, I found the people of Tuenshang rarely speaking of themselves as Nagas but as Konyaks, Changs, Rhoms and so on" (1961: 4). The Naga group consists of Zeliangrong (composed of three related tribes, namely, Rongmei or Kabui, Liangmei and Zemi or Kacha Nagas), Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Maring and Tarao. The Chin-Kuki group consists of Gangte, Hmar, Paite, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou, Aimol, Chiru, Koirang, Kom, Anal, Chothe, Lamgang, Loirao, Thangal, Moyon and Monsang. In recent times several Chin-Kuki communities have identified themselves as Nagas e.g. Anal, Kom, Thangal, etc. depending on socio-economic and geo-political advantages to the tribes. Other groups like Paite, Zou, Gangte and Vaiphei identify themselves as Zomi and have distanced themselves from the name Kuki. Thadous remain the major Kuki population in this Chin-Kuki group while Hmar identify closer to the Mizo or Lushei group¹. The Kukis have been classified into old Kuki and new Kuki. But this classification of the old and new Kuki groups does not have any significance. This denotes only the "time" elements (Sen 1992:80). The name of the group of tribes who are classified as old Kukis and new Kukis has been shown in Tables I.1 and I.2.

Fig. I.1 ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF MANIPUR



In Manipur, we have examples of groups giving up old identities and accepting new ones. “But there is one significant qualitative difference between the past and the present kind of changing orientation observable among the tribesmen. Whereas, in the olden times (i.e. during the time of kings) the movement was essentially “Meiteicentric”, that is to say, small groups redefining their position vis-a-vis the dominant Meitie formation. In the recent (post-independence) times, the tribes realign their identity in what we may term as ‘tribe- centric’ manner (Ranjit 1985:328-29). There is neither the question of a tribe seeking admission into the Meitie fold, nor the Meities have any political machinery like the former royal pressures to integrate tribes within its fold. Since, after the formal enlisting of Manipur tribes in the Schedule in 1956, the change in tribal-level names have become rather difficult. Each tribe has become more or less a distinct unit of official and formal reference (ibid: 241).

Table I.1

Division of Kuki Tribes into Old and New Kukis

Kuki Tribes	
Old Kuki	New Kuki
1.Aimol, 2. Anal, 3. Chiru, 4. Chothe, 5. Gangte, 6. Koirao, 7. Koireng, 8. Kom, 9. Lamkang, 10. Paite, 11. Purum, 12. Simte, 13. Vaiphei, 14. Zou, 15. Hmar	1. Thadou and their othe kin groups, such as, Dongel, Misao, Lumpheng, Ngoilu, Lamhao, Thengeo, Touthang, etc. which are not in the list of recognized tribes.

Table I.2

Division of the Naga Tribes into Old and New Nagas

Naga Tribes	
Old Naga	New Naga
1.Angami, 2. Kabui, 3. Kacha Naga (Zemi and Liangmei, 4. Mao, 5. Maram, 6. Sema, 7. Tangkhul	1. Anal, 2. Lamkang, 3. Maring, 4. Monsang, 5. Moyon

Language

The Meitie language i.e. Meitielon (also known as Manipuri language), which is the official state language, is basically the language of the valley people and other dialects spoken by the tribes in the hills are classified under Tibeto-Burman family. The other communities like the Nepalese, Biharis, South Indians, etc. speak their own languages but they have also learnt and speak the Meitielon.

In the plains the Meitielon or Manipuri is spoken and in the hills various but quite often mutually intelligible Kuki-Chin language/dialects are used. But deep in the interior hills even now Meitielon/Manipuri rarely is spoken or understood. But those who are near the plain understand and speak very well. It may be generally said that Manipuri and English are by far the secondary languages among the tribal people (Thirumalai 1993).

The Kuki tribes, both old and new, speak languages which are understandable to many of them. Among the Nagas also it is the same. In this respect, the Kukis must have got sound reasons for organizing themselves into larger ethnic forum. With regard to mythical origin, majority of the tribes claim their origin from a cave which is translated into 'Khur' or 'Khul'. The Kukis inspite of their uniformities in culture, language and tradition are not fully successful in organizing themselves into a compact ethnic block. An important factor for this is their scattered distribution contributed mainly by their nomadic habit. Establishment of contacts between these groups was not quite easy at least in the past. The Kuki groups of tribe which came early to this state (i.e. the old Kuki), took settlements in the vicinity of the Meitie and the Naga settlements. They were thus exposed to a different cultural milieu quite for a long time. The new Kukis and the Mizos who are late comers to this region perhaps lost contact with their predecessors and found it difficult to organize into a compact ethnic block. Consequently, the Thadous who are synonymous to the 'New Kuki' have retained the

ethnonym 'Kuki' whereas the old Kukis have now identified with the Nagas (Singh 1972: 242).

The earliest article written in English or perhaps in any language specifically about 'Thadou Pao' (Thadou language) is by Steward (1857). Steward, who was a lieutenant in the British (Indian) Army, gave 'a slight notice of the grammar of the Thadou or new Kookie language' in the journal of the Asiatic Society, Bengal and commented that "as there is no written character among the Kookie, the following Roman ones have been adopted by me, which appear to answer very fairly all the requirements of the language'.

The state of Manipur is divided into nine districts. Out of this four are in the valley i.e. Imphal East and Imphal West has an area of 1,228 sq. km. and with the population of 393,780 and 439,532 respectively, the Bishnupur district with 496 sq. km. with 205,907 population, the Thoubal district has an area of 514 sq. km. with 366,341 total population. The other five districts are in the hills. They are the Senapati district which has an area of 3,271 sq. km. and a population of 379,214, Churachandpur district with 4,570 sq. km. of area has total population of 228,707, the Tamenglong district occupies a total area of 4,391 sq. km. and has a population of 111,493, the Chandel district has an area of 3,313 sq. km. with total number of population of 122,714, and the Ukhrul district has an area of 4544 sq. km. with total population of 140,946 according to the 2001 census. The state of Manipur has 32.31 percent of tribal population. The Scheduled Tribes population in the nine districts as percentage of total population is Senapati district-32.38%; Tamenglong district-95.38%; Churachandpur district-92.90%; Chandel district-88.64%; Thoubal district-1.17%; Bishnupur district-2.98%; Imphal East and Imphal West districts-5.49%; Ukhrul district-95.42% as shown in Table I.4 (Census of India 2001).

In these nine districts the Scheduled Tribe population is found more in the districts of Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Churachandpur, Chandel, and Senapati. The three districts which have been selected for the study, keeping in mind the Kuki population in majority, are the Churachandpur district in which the Thadou, Gangte, Zou, Hmar, Paite, form the majority group besides the, Vaiphei, Simte, Ralte representing a minority group. Likewise in both the Senapati and Chandel districts the Thadous represent a majority group. The two other hill districts i.e. Ukhrul and Tamenglong have not been selected for the present study because here, the Naga tribes are the majority group inhabiting in these two districts (Table I.3).

Table I.3

S.T. Population of each District as % of Total Population

Name of District	District Population	S.T. Population	% of S.T. Population
Senapati	379,214	122,791	32.38
Tamenglong	111,493	106,349	95.38
Churachandpur	228,707	212,482	92.90
Chandel	122,714	108,779	88.64
Thoubal	366,341	4274	1.16
Bishnupur	205,907	6143	2.98
Imhal East & West	833,312	45,830	5.49
Ukhrul	140,946	134,493	95.42
Total	2,388,634	741,141	31.02

I.2. The Different Groups of People Inhabiting Manipur

According to a legend among the Hill people of Manipur, the Nagas, the Kuki-Chin groups and the Manipuris are descendants from a common ancestor who had three sons. The Nagas are the descendants from the eldest son; the Kuki-Chin groups are from the second son and the Manipuris from the youngest son (Sen 1992: 44).

Meities

Historically, the origin of the people of Manipur is uncertain, but as tradition goes, they are an amalgamation of several hill tribes, the Koomals of the East; the Moirangs of the South; and the Meitei and Looangs of the North East (Jeyasleen 1993: 11). There are different schools of thought regarding the origin. Some people considered Manipuris as the descendants of Tartar Colony from China. Others considered that the Manipuris were descendants of the surrounding hill tribes i.e. the big race of Nagas which was once in existence in many parts of the world. The Manipuris are also related to the present Naga race of the hills due to many common customs still in existence in both groups. Some believe that Manipuris are a fine stalwart race descended from an Indo-Chinese stock, with some admixture of Aryan blood. Some scholars consider that the Manipuris are Kshatriyas as mentioned in the Epic, 'Mahabharatha'. Another school of thought considered Manipuris the descendants of Kiratas. The distribution of Kiratas in north-eastern region is one of the evidences to support this school of thought. Another school of thought considers Manipuris to be descended from the stock of Dravidians who migrated from South India to Manipur and Naga hills through Burma.

'Meitie', also commonly called Manipuri, is the dominant ethnic group of Manipur, who mostly live in the valley. Although they are genetically mongoloid and speak a Tibeto-Burman language, they differ culturally from the surrounding hill tribes by following Hindu customs (Lolly 1985:5). The group name 'Meitie' has been derived from *mi*=man and *tei*=separate. Brian Houghton expressed the view that in the 'Moitay' of Manipur, we have the combined appellations of the Siamese 'Tai' and the Kachin Chinese 'Moy'. In other words, the Manipurian tribe, called Cossiahs by the Bengalis, belongs to 'Moy' section of the great tribe called 'Tai' by themselves and Shanvel Syan by the Burmese, the sectional name being also foreign and equivalent to the native (Hodson 1981:10).

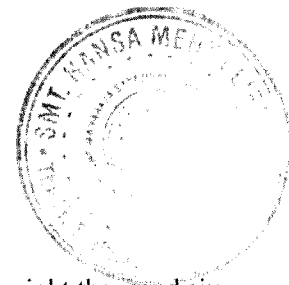


Table I.4

Demographic pattern of Manipuri people

Total population of Manipur is 23, 88,634 (twenty-three hundred eighty eight thousand six hundred thirty four) according to the Census of India, 2001 (Provisional).

Community	Population	Distribution
Meiteis	13,61,521	All the districts of Manipur
Meitei Pangal (Muslim)	1,67,204	Imphal East District : Thoubal District : Bishnupur District : Chandel District : Churachandpur District :
Nagas	3,26,324	
(a) Old Nagas		
Angami	650	
Kabui	62,216	Senapati District : Sadar Hills Imphal East : Jiribam Sub-Division Bishnupur District : Churachandpur District :
Kacha Naga (Zemi and Liangmei)	20,328	Tamenglong District : Tamei, Tharon
Mao	80,568	Senapati District : Mao
Maram	10,510	Senapati District : Maram
Sema	25	
Tangkhul	1,12,944	Ukhrul District :
Total population of Old Nagas	2,87,241	
(b) New Nagas/Old Kukis		
Anal	13,853	Chandel District :
Lamkang	4,524	Chandel District :
Maring	17,361	Chandel District : Machi Ukhrul District : Thoubal District :
Monsang	1,635	Chandel District : Komlathabi and Pallel
Moyon	1,710	Chandel District : Moyon Khullen, Khongjom, Mitong, Komlathabi, Penaching, Heigru Tampak
Total population of New Nagas/Old Kukis	39,083	
Kuki-Chin		
Aimol	2,643	Chandel district : Unapal, Satu, Kumirei, Chingunghut, Aimol Tampak, Khodamphai, Ngairong Aimol, Chandonpokpi, Soibong (Khudengthabi) Churachandpur district : Kha-Aimol, Luichungbum Senapati district : Tuikhong
Chiru	5,487	Senapati District : Tamenglong District : Churachandpur district : Henglep
Chothe	2,676	Chandel District : Bishnupur District : Khangkhong
Gangte	15,100	Tamenglong District : Churachandpur District : Senapati District : Sadar Hills
Hmar	42,690	Churachandpur District : Tipaimukh
Mizo (Lushai)	10,520	Churachandpur District :
Paite	44,861	Churachandpur District : Khuga Valley, Ccpur bazar
Purum	503	Senapati District : Purum Khullen and Purum Likli Chandel District : Lamlang Huipi, Chandanpokpi, Khongkhong Chothe, Loirang Talsi, Salemthar, Zat'lang, New Wangparan

Hralte	110	Churachandpur District :
Simte	7,150	Churachandpur district : Mingjang, Tubuong, Simveng, New Bazar, Thanlon, Leikangpai, Zouthang, Shumtuk, Monjon, Pamjal, Sasinoujang, Tallian, Dumsao, Khungung, Lungthul, Singhat, Moijin, Maokot, Suangdai, Suangpuhmun
Sahlte	311	Churachandpur District :
Thadou	1,15,045	Churachandpur District : Senapati District : Sadar Hills Tamenglong District :
Vaiphei	27,791	Churachandpur district :
Zou	19,112	Churachandpur District : Chandel District :
Total population of Kuki-Chin	293999	
Komrem		
Koirao/Thangal	1,200	Senapati District : Mapao-Thangal, Thangal Surung, Makeng Thangal, Tumnoupokpi, Yaikangpou, Tikhulen, Ningthoubam, Mayangkhang and Gailongde
Koireng	1,056	Senapati District : Imphal District :
Kom	15,467	Churachandpur District : Senapati District :
Total population of Komrem	17,723	
Unspecified tribes	75,768	
Others (including Mayangs and Nepalis)	1,46,096	

KukiTribe

The Kukis are also called Khongjais. The Kuki-Chin tribes who live in Manipur are: Kom, Purum, Gangte, Paite, Simte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Sukte, Hmar, Zou, Ralte and other Mizo (Lushai) tribes (Roy 1973:149). From time immemorial the demographic composition of the tribes of Manipur was heterogeneous. This was further accentuated by the gradual influx from the neighboring areas of "Kuki" and "Lushai" (Singh, K. B. 1976:1). The Kukis were referred as wandering race consisting of several tribes. They were first heard of as Kukis in Manipur between 1830 and 1840. As they began to pour into the hill tracts of Manipur in the year 1845, though it caused anxiety, Lieutenant McCulloch understood the fact that they were looking for land for cultivation and settle down. Therefore he allotted to them lands in different places, where there presence would be useful to expand frontiers (Johnstone 1986:26). They are distributed widely in Manipur, occupying the south-western, south and south-eastern hills which spread in the districts of Churachandpur, Chandel and Senapati. There are different beliefs

about their origin. Some of the Kukis believe their origin is in the north at a place called Maikel. Some trace the Kukis link with Zomi, who migrated from China. The term Zomi is an ancient and historical name of the Zo ethnic groups (Zo means cold region and Mi means men).

With reference to the alpine climate the people living on the hills could be named as Kuki. The Kukis who came to Manipur during 1830 and 1840 were a nomadic race. As they began to pour into the hill tracts of Manipur in the year 1845, though it caused anxiety, Lieutenant McCulloch understood the fact that they were looking for land for cultivation and settle down. Therefore, he allotted them land in different places, where their presence would be useful to expand frontiers (ibid: 26). Some authorities consider them having traces to Malaya Peninsula. There are different groups among Kukis. Those who migrated from Mizoram are called Mizos and are educationally advanced. Another group of those migrated from Burma side in 1830 are called the Paite.

E. W. Dun divided the Kukis into old Kukis and the new Kukis. The best known clans of the new Kukis are the Thadous, Vungson, Changsen, Singson, Mangvung, Khlangam, Chongloi, Changput, Haokip, and Simte. The Kamhao are called Sukte and Guite. The Chassads of whom much has been heard, are an off-shoot of the Haokip. The old Kuki clans are Kom, Anal, Namfau, Chim, Koireng, Chothe, Purum, Mantak (Dun 1975:32-33). J. Shakespear (1983: xiii) wrote:

This term Kuki, like Naga, Chin, Shendu and many others is not recognized by the people to whom it applies. As we understand, they are closely allied clans, with well marked characteristics belonging to the Tibeto-Burman stock. On the Chittagong Hill Tracts; in Cachar it generally means some family of the Thadou or Khawtlang clan, locally distinguished as new and old Kuki. In the Lushai Hills, the term is hardly ever employed having been superseded by Burma border all these clans are called Chins.

According to Gougin, T., the names such as Kuki, Chin and Lushai are foreign words coined by foreigners who did not know the real identity of these people (Zomi). These names are being discarded and replaced. Lushai has been practically replaced by Mizo in Mizoram, the Chins in Burma have accepted Zomi as their nomenclature. The name Mizo is also hard to explain with reference to the alpine climate, Zomi or Mizo or 'People of cold region' by the brethren of the hot valleys. The most suitable explanation seems to be that it is called after the town they built known as Zopui in the big town of Zo. Here the people Zo (the cold region) would be prefixed with Mi (people) and we have Mizo and this name could have appeared only after the town or Zopui was built in the late 18th century. Here one sees a contradiction in that-Zo should be prefixed with Mi (man) as Zo prefixed with Pui (Big). We never say FAZO but ZOFA, so also we never say MITLANG but TLANGMI (Hillmen). We say Zokhua but never say Khuazo (1986:1-4).

The above evidence implies that the Kuki-Chin tribes ethnologically belong to the same stock. Their migration to the present habitat wherever it might be, show the way they have developed themselves in the course of the last few centuries. In Manipur, the Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribes have their maximum concentration in and around Chandel and Churachandpur districts. Nowadays, the terminologies, 'Old Kukis' and 'New Kukis' are not in use. Instead, the tribes termed as such are deeply involved in search of their ethnic origin and identity and it is very difficult to ascertain whether they belong to Kuki-Chin group or to Naga group (Jeyasleen 1993:19).

The Kukis are the people whose past had been of warlords, chieftains, heroic struggles and sacrifice. Territory inhabited by the Kuki tribes extends from the

Naga Hills in the North down into the Sandoway district of Burma in the South; from the Myattha River in the East, almost to the Bay of Bengal in the West².

The Hmar, Paite, Vaiphei and Gangte align themselves with the Kukis. There is no dispute over their identity in as much as these tribes share linguistic-cultural affinities with the Thadou. It is more befitting to recall here Parsons, Hughes and Hughes who laid importance on history and common ancestry in defining ethnicity. Quite in contrast the one time Kuki tribes of Manipur; namely, the Monsang, Anal, Moyon, Lamgang, Chothe, Chiru and the Kom now align themselves with the Nagas. It should be mentioned here that, despite their claims it fails to furnish sufficient cultural or historical evidence in support of their migration from parts of Chin Hills of Burma and cultural and linguistic closeness with the Mizo-Kuki-Chin group bring them in no way towards the Naga axis. Their connection with the Nagas is of recent origin (Singh 1972:242).

The tribes Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Guite, Haokip, Hmar, Kipgen, Kom, Lhungdin, Lhangum, Lhanghal, Milhem, Maring, Mate, Mozo-Moushang, Paite, Sitlhou, Lhouvum and Singsit, Simte, Baite, Tarao, Touthang, Vaiphei, Zou, etc. may loosely be put under one egalitarian ethnic group called Kuki¹. But, even though some of them belong to the same ethnic group, time gap in the waves of migration between different groups contributed greatly to their present wide-range of divergence and multiplicity (Gangte 1993:5). However, nowadays a slow but steady process of Naganization of the indigenous tribes of Manipur is going on. It began with the advent of the British writers (B.C. Allen, A.K. Abbot, B.G. Bower, R. Brown). These writers started using the term 'Naga' to denote certain groups of tribes of Manipur (Manipur Fact File 2001: 25).

On the other hand according to Ray (1990), the term Kuki is a canopy term covering a large number of tribes and sub-tribes other than the Nagas. Hunter has described the term as "those tribes whose home is in the mountainous tract lying between

Burma, Manipur, Cachar and Aracan' (ibid: Vol. xvii). The Kukis are not a single group of people. The term Kuki is a generic word which covers a number of tribes, sub-tribes and clans of common characters. The Manipuris called them as Khongjai. The Lushais called them Dzo or Zho (Sen 1992:79).

The term Kuki was first used by Bengalis and Assamese and later by the British to identify the hill tribes. J.W. Edgar, a civil officer, who accompanied the British forces to Tipaimukh on April 3, 1872, wrote about the Hmars, "Thus the name Kuki has been given to the tribe by the Bengalis and is not recognized by the hill-men themselves and I have never found any trace of a common name for the tribe among them, although they too consider different families as belonging to a single group, which is certainly coextensive with that we call Kookie tribe" (Sharma 1992:14).

Aitchinson (1978: 45) mentioned how the term Kuki came to be applied to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo constellation of tribes. The word Kuki is merely a generic name coined by the plainsmen in remote past to designate all the inhabitants of Chittagong Hill Tracts, other than those belonging to the Chakma, Magh and Tippera tribes. In more recent years, it has signified the independent tribes residing in the hills beyond the North-East frontier of Bengal, now subjugated and forming a part of British India under the name of the Lushai and Chin Hills.

The term 'Kuki' was perhaps applied to a number of tribes which had migrated from the Chin Hills of Burma in the earlier period and entered the territories of Manipur and Assam. On the basis of the period of migration they are referred to as 'Old' and 'New'. The Thadous entered Manipur in the middle of the 19th Century being driven out of Chin-Hills by the powerful Loshai tribes. The Thadous thus represent the 'New Kuki' (Singh 1972:242).

In dealing with the etymology of tribe names, it may be noted that several tribes have two sets of names—a popular name by which the tribe is known by its neighbors and a name which the tribe uses to identify itself. Both types of names generally refer to certain characteristics or qualities of a given tribe. There are also some appellations which are resented by the tribes as uncomplimentary (Sahay 1977:9). The terminology ‘Kuki’ has been used for the purpose of the study to denote the people who claim to belong to the Chin, Kuki, and Mizo groups.

Naga Tribes

Other ethnic groups that live in Manipur are the Naga tribes. The ‘Naga’ is a generic name for the group of tribes inhabiting Nagaland, Northern Manipur and bordering districts of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. History upholds the existence of people known as ‘Naga’. As early as the 13th century the Ahom kings had political and commercial dealings with the Nagas. An even earlier reference to them was made by Ptolemy, the great geographer and historian in the 4th century A. D. (Horam 1990: 21-22). The Naga tribes of Manipur are the Tangkhuls, the Rongmeis (Kabui), the Mao, the Kacha Naga (Liangmei), the Maram, the Maring, the Anal, the Monsang, the Lamgang, the Moyon, the Zemi, the Thangal, the Angami and the Sema. The Zemis, the Liangmeis (Kacha Nagas) and the Rongmeis (the Kabui) are allied tribes. They live in the Tamenglong District. The Maos, the Maram and the Thangals live in the Senapati District and Sadar Hills bordering Nagaland. The Tangkhuls live in Chandel district. Originally the Moyon, the Monsang, the Lamkang and the Anals belonged to the Old Kuki clans. But they have changed their affiliation and are now included in the Naga tribe. These tribes in addition to their Kuki-Chin traits have assimilated some Naga characteristics in their way of life. Indeed, they form a bridge between the Naga and the Kuki- Chin tribes of Manipur (Roy 1973:189).

Lois and Yaithibis

The Scheduled Castes of Manipur are known as Lois and Yaithibis. The Lois are considered the indigenous people of Manipur. Lois means 'slaves or dependent'. They inhabit the valley of Manipur. They are at Sekmai, Andro, Sugnu, and Chairel. All of them speak different dialects but with a considerable mixture of Manipuri words. The Lois groups can be distinguished from the Meithies by their use of yu (rice beer), poultry, piggery, dark skin and snub nose (Kirti 1985:13). The Yaithibis are originally exiled Meities. During the native rule they were considered as 'untouchables'. They mainly inhabit in the Thoubal Khunou area of Thoubal district and in Andro village of Imphal East district (Ranajit Saha 1994:68-76).

Muslims

There were no original population of Manipuris as Muslims. They entered Manipur from Sylhet and Cachar. Some entered along with the royal troops. They settled in Manipur and most of them married the Meitei girls. The Muslims from Cachar were employed as agricultural laborers³.

Sikhs and Punjabis

The Sikhs settled in Manipur are of Punjab origin but most of them have come from Burma where they had gone from Punjab in earlier times. Some of them entered Manipur after the Second World War and some others after the Burmese government disallowed them the citizenship. They have Gurudwaras at Imphal and Moreh. At these two places only they are largely concentrated. All Sikhs keep beard and wear turban. They are strict in keeping the five "Ks", the kesha, kangha, kripa, kara, kachha i.e. to grow hair, keep comb, keep sword, keep armlet and wear shorts. All Sikhs are having businesses in transport, textiles, contracts, etc. There are some non-Sikh Punjabi traders settled at Imphal³.

Nepalese

Nepalese started settling in Manipur after the Second World War. The retired army personnel were settled at Sanakeithel near Sekmai. Most of the Nepalese entered Manipur and settled there as servants and laborers. They went into the interiors of the hills and found a suitable climate for grabbing land. Some started cultivation of the tribal chief's land as tenants with sufficient share of the crops. They were known for cattle rearing. Most of the settlers started dairies along with their agriculture. Nepalese have scattered into small valleys in Mao, Maram, Karong and Kangpokpi areas³.

Biharis

Most of the labor class comprises people of Bihar. They have come here to earn their bread. They are fluent in Meitie as well as in Tribal dialects. They have established themselves throughout the valley on all routes. Mostly they are all Hindus. Some are from upper castes and some from scheduled castes. Some Muhamadans have also migrated from Bihar in search of jobs or to run shops in Manipur. They are very good at business³.

Marwaris

Marwaris are the dominating business community in the north-eastern region. They deal in big business and wholesale trade. Their concentrations are only in the established old towns and business centers like Imphal, Churachandpur and Moreh. They have entered Manipur in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. They migrated from Rajasthan. Majority of them follow Hinduism, some follow Jainism and some Sanatan Dharm. Some have adopted Vaishnavite sect. Their greatest contribution is business mobilization in this isolated state of Manipur. They have created a vital business line between Moreh, Imphal and Dimapur³.

South Indians

Moreh town of Manipur is the real settlement of Tamilians and Keralites. Most of them are refugees from Burma. But some who have been posted on Government services are also there. They are all Hindus and a few Christians are also there. Moreh Tamilians are all Hindus and have established several temples of Kali, Durga and Shiva in the town. They also celebrate their festivals with great pomp and show³.

Bengalis

The Bengalis are the old settlers in Manipur. Due to the geographical closeness with Bengal the land has experienced a lot in terms of socio-cultural and socio-religious interaction between the two societies. The contribution of Bengalis to the Manipuri society is valuable. The food habits resemble those of Meities. Bengalis are rice eaters and fish is the main dish at every evening meal. They take keen interest in celebrations of Hindu festivals. They have maintained their Bengali culture with its finest heritage. They speak Bengali. Bengalis in Manipur are in almost all government offices, business and in teaching profession. Some of them have married Meitie girls. Manipur is having all kinds of people. The society thus gets status of a cosmopolitan society and all groups are in harmonious relations³. The demographic pattern of Manipur is presented in Table I.4.

The distribution of the population of the communities inhabiting in Manipur is presented in Table I.5.

Table I.5

Population Distribution of the Different Communities of Manipur

Name of the community	Population	% of the community population to the total population
Meities	1,301,484	54.49
S.T.s	713,814	29.89
S.C.s	60036	2.51
Muslims	167,204	7
Non-Manipuris (Nepalese, Burmese, Chinese, other Indian nationals, etc.)	146,096	6.11
Total	2,388,634	100

Since the Kuki groups of tribes are present as the majority group in the Churachandpur, Senapati and Chandel districts, these three districts have therefore been selected for the study. These three districts were made the focus of the study mainly for the reason that a detailed observation of all the aspects of Kuki religion and their society besides the upcoming changes in the society could be studied. The cultural and the socio-religious forms and life of the natives in its traditional form too would be studied. The Meities and the non-Manipuris are also present in the same district which would help in studying the acculturation process among the three groups. Acculturation of the tribal and caste Meities and the impact of Christianity in the three districts where the inhabitants of the villages vary will be dealt in great detail. The nature of distribution of the tribes in the districts of Manipur is presented in the Table I.6.

Table I.6**Distribution of tribes in the districts of Manipur**

Sl. No.	Name of district	Name of tribes
1	Senapati	(Major group)- 1. Mao 2. Maram 3.Thadou Kuki; (Minor Group) - 4. Kabui 5. Tangkhul 6. Maring 7. Chiru 8. Kom 9. Koirang 10. Vaiphei 11. Kacha Naga 12. Sema 13. Keirao
2.	Tamenglong	(Major Group)- 1. Kabui; (Minor Group)- 2. Thadou Kuki 3. Gangte
3.	Churachandpur	(Major Group)-1. Hmar 2. Paite 3.Thadou; (Minor Group) - 4. Anal 5. Chothe 6. Kabui 7.Kom 8.Vaiphei 9.Zou 10. Mizo 11.Gangte 12. Simte 13.Ralte 14.Ralte
4.	Chandel	(Major Group)- 1. Anal 2. Maring 3. Thadou Kuki; (Minor Group) - 4. Lamkang 5.Gangte 6. Zou 7. Moyon 8. Monsang 9. Aimol 10. Chothe 11. Purum 12. Mizos 13. Tangkhul 14. Kom
5.	Bishnupur	Representatives of most of the tribes are found in small numbers.
6.	Thoubal	Representatives of most of the tribes are found in small numbers.
7.	Imphal East	Representatives of most of the tribes are found in small numbers.
8.	Imphal West	(Major Group)-1. Kabui 2. Representatives of most of the tribes are found in small numbers.
9.	Ukhrul	(Major Group) 1. Tangkhul; (Minor Group) 2. Thadou

Source: *Sharma, U.P. 1992. The Hmars of Manipur. p.-11*

A brief description of the three selected districts, with the history of the districts, geographical location, sex ratio in the district, and literacy rate has been presented along with the district maps.

CHURACHANDPUR DISTRICT

The district of Churachandpur (Fig.I.3) in the southern corner of Manipur derives its name from the town of Churachandpur after Sir Churachand Singh, K.C.S.I., C.B.E. the Maharaja of Manipur. It has an area of 4570 sq. km. It lies on the south-western part of Manipur between 24.0° N and 24.3° N latitude and 93.15° E and 94.0° E longitude. The district is bounded on the north by Tamenglong district, on the east by the districts of Imphal and Chandel, on the south by Myanmar (Burma) and Mizoram and Assam. The average altitude of the district is 914.0 meters above the mean sea level and the whole of

Churachandpur district is hilly and is covered with rough and uneven terrain (Census 1991:11). Churachandpur district which was previously known as Manipur South district came into existence in the year 1969 along with the reorganization of Manipur. The climate imparts the people with considerable stamina and hardness through the lack of rains during the non-monsoon months and the consequent decline in water flow in the major rivers during that period makes the place a mono-crop economy⁴.



Fig. I.3 Map of Churachandpur District

According to the provisional data of 2001 census the total population of the district is 228,707 (114,740 males and 113,967 females). The tribal population of the district is 212,482 which form a 92.90 percent of the district population (Census of India, 2001) (Table I.7). The literacy rate in the district is quite high, with 74.67% (84.98% for male and 64.40% for female). In the 2001 census, the sex ratio is 993 females per 1000 males⁶. In population it is the fifth largest district in Manipur accounting for 9.57% of the total population of the state.

Table I.7

Churachandpur District population Distribution

Communities	Total Population	% of the total population
Scheduled Tribes	212482	92.90
Non-Tribals	16225	7.1
Total	228,707	100

SENAPATI DISTRICT

According to the scholars dealing with Mao-Naga folklore and antiquity, the name of the district has been derived from a Manipuri courtier named Senapati, who married a Mao-Naga girl during the reign of King Charairongba in 15th Century A.D. During the reign of the said king there was a taboo that a Manipuri Meitie could not marry a tribal girl other than his clan. Hence he had been outcast and allowed to settle in this hillock infested with wild animals. There he then established hegemony and extended his sway up to Mao-Maram (Census of India 1991:4).

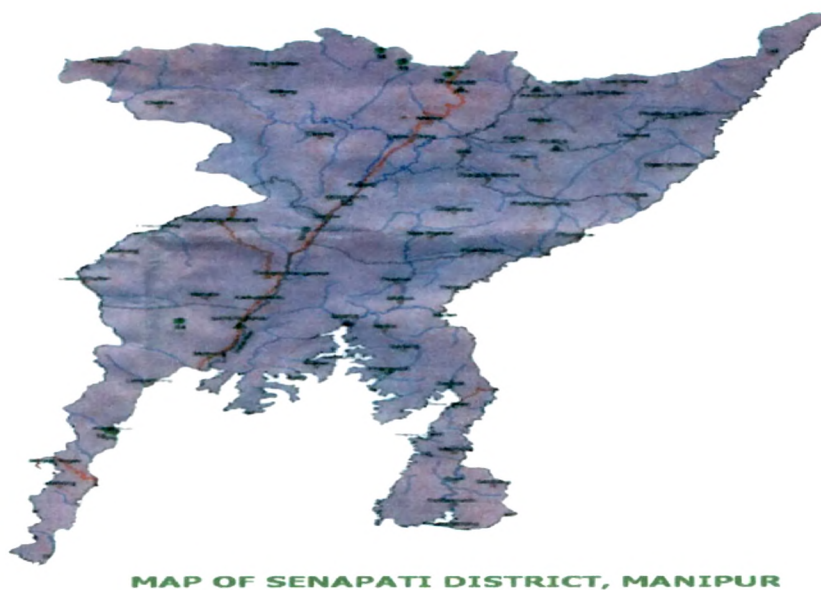


Fig. I.4 Map of Senapati District

The Senapati district (Fig.I.4) lies between 93°30' and 94°30' East longitude and 24°30' and 25°45' North latitude with its head quarter at Senapati is the

northernmost district of Manipur. The district is located at an elevation range between 388 and 2740 meters above mean sea. It is bounded by Imphal district on the south, Nagaland on the Ukhul district on the east and Tamenglong on the west (ibid: 4).

The total population of the district is 379,214 (196,646 males and 182,568 females). In this district, the tribal population is 122,791 which form a 32.38 percent of the district population (Census of India 2001) (Table I.8). The literacy rate of the district is 59.8%.

Table I.8
Senapati District population Distribution

Communities	Total Population	% of the total population
Scheduled Tribes	122,791	32.39
Non-Tribals	256,423	67.61
Total	379,214	100

CHANDEL DISTRICT

The only source to trace the history of the tribe is through the myths, legends and the old songs of the tribes without which one may be dismayed. According to some scholars dealing with the tribal (Anal) folklore, Chandil was the chief of the first settlers at the present Chandel district (Fig.I.5). At that time Chandel belonged to the chief of Charangching. But he sought the permission of Manipur king Khagemba for settling at Chandel. From the Chandil came the name of the present name Chandel (Census of India 1991:3).

Chandel district, formerly known as Tegnoupal district, came into existence on 13th May 1974. The district lies in the south-eastern part of Manipur. It is the border district of the state. Its neighbors are Myanmar (erstwhile Burma) on the south, Ukhrul district in the east, Churachandpur district on the west, and Thoubal district on the north. It is about 65 km away from Imphal and National Highway No.39 passes through the

district. The district is located between 93°45' and 94°30' East longitudes and 23°45' and 24°45' North latitude comprising an area of 3313 sq. km. and is the newest of the state's districts having been carved out as such for ensuring administrative convenience. The Moreh town, the international trade centre of the state lies on the southernmost part of the district. When the Trans-Asian Super Highway comes into existence, Chandel district will be one of the gateways to the Asian countries.

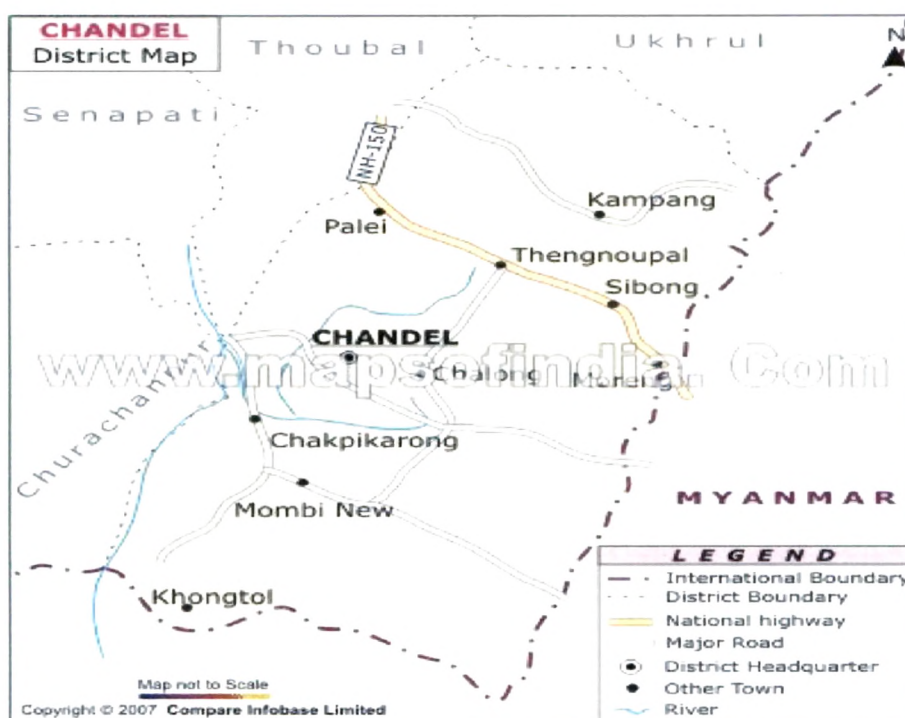


Fig. I.5 Map of Chandel District

According to the 2001 census Chandel has a total population of 122,714 (61,778 males and females 60936) persons. Out of this total population, 108,779 i.e. 88.64 percent of the district population are the scheduled tribes (Census of India 2001) (Table I.9). Chandel itself is the Headquarter of the district. The literacy rate of the district is 56.2%.

Table I.9**Chandel District population Distribution**

Communities	Total Population	% of the total population
Scheduled Tribes	108,779	88.64
Non-Tribals	13935	11.36
Total	379,214	100

The total tribal population of various communities of Manipur according to 1971*, 1981*, #1991 and 2001 census is given below (Table I.10). The growth rates of the various tribal groups are clearly seen over the years.

Table I. 10**The Tribal Communities Inhabiting Manipur and their Population**

Sl. No.	Name of tribe	1971	1981	1991	2001
1.	Aimol	836	1100	2,108	2,643
2.	Anal	6670	8770	10,642	13,853
3.	Angami	70	82	308	650
4.	Chiru	2785	3664	6,032	5,487
5.	Chothe	1905	2507	2,571	2,675
6.	Gangte	6307	8298	12,793	15,100
7.	Hmar	23312	30672	35,767	42,690
8.	Kabui	40257	52966	62,487	62,216
9.	Kacha Naga	13026	17138	33,640	20,328
10.	Koirao	1620	2132	1,716	1,200
11.	Koireng	458	603	873	1,056
12.	Kom	6550	8618	13,004	15,467
13.	Lamkang	2622	3450	4,031	4,524
14.	Mao	33379	43917	76,972	80,568
15.	Maram	4539	5972	9,592	10,510
16.	Maring	9825	12927	15,698	17,361
17.	Any Mizo	7483	9845	8,240	10,520
18.	Mon song	930	1224	1,803	1,635
19.	Moyon	1360	1989	2,081	1,710
20.	Paite	24755	32570	40,792	44,861
21.	Purum	N.A.	N.A.	388	503
22.	Ralte	154	203	250	110
23.	Sema	3	5	111	25
24.	Salte	4177	5476	746	311
25.	Simte	3	5	8,833	7,150
26.	Thadou	59955	78883	1,21,994	1,15,045
27.	Tangkhul	57851	76115	10,7,244	1,12,944
28.	Vaiphei	12347	16245	26,877	27,791
29.	Zou	10060	13235	16,803	19,112
30.	Unspecified tribes	1227	N.A.	7,777	75,768
31.	Total of 29 tribes	330286	488606	632173	713813

*Source: i) Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Statistical Handbook of Manipur, Government of Manipur, Imphal, 1982, pp. 16-19.

^{#ii}U.P. Sharma, *The Hmars of Manipur*, New Delhi, pp. 5-6.
Census of India 2001

Now the population of Manipur based on religion according to 1881 (Dun1886; 14) can be distinctively seen as compared to the estimated community wise population for 2001 given below in Table I.11.

Table I.11
Changes in the percentage of religious groups

Religious Groups	1881	%	2001	%
Hindus	1,30,892	59.21	13,61,521	58
Mohammedans	4,881	2.21	1,67,204	7
Christians	7	0.003	7,13,813	34

I.3. The Origin of the Kuki Tribe

To study and understand a particular group we need to know the historical background of the group which depends on their myths, mythologies and folklore. According to a popular mythology, the race of the Kuki tribe has emerged from 'Khul', the subterranean of the earth. There are two opinions about the location of the place called 'Khul'. One opinion holds that it is situated in the bank of Mekowng River in South-West China. Many of the North Eastern tribes for example, the Tai, Tai Pakhes, the Mizos, and other allied tribes like the Hmars, Paites, Gangtes, Zous, Simtes, Chins, etc. claim to have a history of their Chinese origin (Sarkar 1990). There are various schools of thoughts regarding their origin (Table I.12).

S. Barkataki remarked that the Kukis originally belonged to a place called Sinlung in South-West China. A great famine (according to some a great flood) forced them to leave China and to search for a new land down the Chindwin valley to the Chin Hills of Burma. In support of this legend S. Barkataki quoted an old folksong-

My Chin land of old
My grandfather's land Himali (the Himalaya)

My grandfather's way excels
Chinglung's way excels. (Barkataki 1969:72)

Table I.12
Origin of the Kuki Tribes

Name of the Groups	Earth's crust (Khul)	Cave	Burma	China	Chin Hills	No idea	Manipur	Other Country/ States	Total
Thadou	33	6	7	14	8	7	0	1	76
Zou	9	1	5	1		5	0		21
Vaiphei	6	1	3	1	3	4	0		18
Paite	4		2	2	3	1	0		12
Kom	3	4	2	1	1	1	0		12
Gangte	2	1		8		1	0		12
Hmar	7	1		1		1	0		10
Ralte	2	2				2	0	4	10
Simte	5	1	1		2		0		9
Total	71	17	20	28	17	22	0	5	180

McCulloch also observed this and asserted that: bring their progenitors from the bowels of the earth, and they relate the manner of their reaching its surface thus; one day their king's brother was hunting hedgehogs, when his dog in pursuit of one entered a cavern, and he waiting for its return remained at the mouth. After lapse of sometime, the dog not having returned its master determined to go in and what had become of it. He did not find the dog, but observing its track and following them he found himself suddenly on the surface of the earth. The scene presented to his view both pleased and astonished him. Returning to his brother, he related about his adventure, and counseled him to annex the new country to his territory, which the king did. By way of explanation of their amalgamation with the tribes who speak different languages they relate: the three grandsons of the chief, while one day all playing together in their house, were told by their father to catch a rat. They were busy about it when, being suddenly struck with a confusion of tongue; they were unable to achieve their object. The eldest son spoke the Lamyang, the second spoke the Thado, the third, some say the Vaiphei and some the Manipore language. Thus they broke into distinct tribes (1959:55).

According to the information collected by Shaw (1929:24) his version of the origin of the Kuki is that they used to live under the earth, or rather inside it. Noimangpa is the chief of this subterranean region. One Chongthu, a relative of Noimangpa, went hunting porcupine in the jungle with his dog and discovered a large hole. He perceived that the upper crust of the earth was un-inhabited and there was a great darkness. This darkness which lasted for seven days and seven nights is called 'Thimziu' by the Thadous. Chongthu so rejoiced at this discovery that he gave up his hunt and went back to his house. He conjured up ideas of forming a village of his own on the earth and planned accordingly. Just about then, Noimangpa, the chief of the underground was performing the Chon festival in which everyone had to attend, including Chongja, elder brother of Chongthu. Noimangpa's son Chonkim was also present. During this feast Chongthu started waving his sharp sword so vigorously that he injured some of the folks present, at which all became angry. This action of Chongthu was premeditated as he thought that by doing so he would be turned out from the underworld and thus has an excuse for going out to the upper world and forming a village of his own. The news of Chongthu's behavior became known to Noimangpa who said: Chongthu had better live in heaven, meaning thereby that he better be killed. Chongthu hearing of Noimangpa's wrath at once prepared to migrate out of the hole in the earth which he saw and which is spoken of as "Khul" by the Thadous. So Chongja and Chongthu killed many pigs, fowls, etc. and feasted in preparation for their departure.

The hole in the earth called 'Khul' is said to be at the source of the river 'Guun' river which seems to be identical with the Imphal River in Manipur state. Etymologically, the word 'Guun' in the Thadou means the 'Imphal River'. In all the stories and legends of the Thadous, the river 'Gun' is frequently mentioned and is of great fame (ibid: 24-26).

Gangte (1993:16) has added that in the genealogical tree from Chongthu to Thadou, the persons are mythical and so, when festivities entailing repetition of the genealogical tree of the Thadous became necessary, the Thiempu (priest) starts from Thadou and not from Chongthu. Further, from Chongthu to Thadou there were no different languages, and animals and spirits, as well as the mythical ancestors lived in peaceful co-existence.

Hutton (1929:14) also contended with Shaw's information regarding the story of Thimzin. He said the story is found with a slight variation in Shakespeare's 'Lushai-Kuki clans' Chapter-V; Mills'-The Ao-Nagas, p. 314, The Lhota Nagas, pp. 176&193. Molola, in Man in India, pp.-11,100 had similar story of the Chang Nagas, and versions are found among the Hos and Santals of Bengal, the Shans and among the Ami of Formosa, while similar stories pervade the Indian Archipelago generally in Frazer's Folklore in the Old Testament, I: iv; which said that the Thadou version of Thimzin story is-"he knew of was that the great darkness was preceded by fire an accompanied by flood, and it was this flood which drove the Thado proper to take refuge in the hills, where they found Lenthang whom they forebore to kill as he, and his, knew the gods of the country: accordingly, it was Lenthang who caused a white cock detainer of the sun to come and look, whereby the sun escaped and came out again restoring light to the darkened world". It was generally believed that the Kukis came out of China during the reign of Chinese Emperor Chin-Lung or Chien Lung, around 200 B.C. Many historians stated their opinion. Among them a Mizo historian Zawla (1976:2) said that the Kukis came out of the Great Wall of China in about 225 B.C. during the reign of Shih Hungti whose cruelty was then at its height. But these things remained only as legends since there is no written corroboration of existence of historical evidence to support them (Quoted from Gangte 1993).

However, with ample scientific data to prove that the Mongolian races, who now occupy South-East Asia, and also the North-East India, Enriquez (1932) claimed that they originated from the Western China lying between the sources of the Yangtze and the Hoanz-Ho rivers, and migrated in three waves as follows-

- 1) The Mon Khmer (Talaing, Palung, EnRiang, Ma, Pale, Khais, and Annimite) which included the Khasis; 2) The Tibeto Burman comprising Pyu-Burmese-Kachin, Kuki-Chin and Lolo; 3) The Tai Chinese which included the Shan, Siamese and Karen (Quoted from Gangte 1993:17).

According to different scholars and British administrators the Kukis are described as belonging to the Mongolian stock, but did not specify to which particular group of Mongolia they belonged to. Yule (1855), Col. Phayre (1866) and Mc Cabe concluded that the Kukis belonged to the Indo-Chinese family, while Captain Forbes and Dr. Grierson differed and called them as a part of the Tibeto-Burman group (Quoted from Gangte 1993:19).

Lt. Col. Reid (1893), considering their distinctive characteristics in dress and dialects, opined that there can be little doubt that the Chins, the Kukis, the Lushais, and the various tribes are practically of one and the same race and were included under the term 'Kuki' since the day of Warren Hastings (Quoted from Gangte 1993:19).

Lalthangliana (1975) claimed that the word 'Chin' in Burma was synonymous to the word 'Kuki' and 'Mizo' in India. He inferred that the Burmese called the people living in the North-West Burma and North-East India as 'Chin'. The reason he explained for this was that the Kukis were always found carrying on their backs bamboo baskets called Chin by the Burmese. But this particular Burmese word also meant friendship and by a stress of imagination one could say that once these people lived very closely together. And since were there relation not pertaining strictly to friendliness, he

thought 'Man with the basket' is most reasonable, he explained (Quoted from Gangte 1993:19).

Captain Lewin (1870:130) said that on the Chittagong side the Kukis were described as: ". men who live far in the interior parts of the hills, and have not the use of fire arms, and whose body goes unclothed". Later in 1870, when he became the Deputy Commissioner of Hill Tracts he again described them as: "The Loosei, commonly called the Kookies, are a powerful and independent people, who touch the border of Chittagong Hill Tracts. They extend in numberless hardes in North and North-East, until they reach Cachar on the one hand, and the frontiers of Burma on the other They are known to the Bengalese by the name Kookie, and to the Burmese as the Lankhe".

Soppit (1893:2) who was Assistant Commissioner, Burma and later Sub-Divisional Officer, North Cachar Hills, Assam, remarked in his study of the Lushais-Kukis that the designation of 'Kuki' is never used by the tribes themselves, though many of them answer to it when addressed, from knowing it to be the Bengalese or the plains term for their people.

Even though the term 'Kuki' is not scheduled in Manipur it has used to denote the people who claimed to belong to the 'Chin', 'Kuki' and 'Mizo' groups. According to Lt. Col. Shakespeare (1912:Pt.I, 7) the Kukis, the Lushais, and the Chins are nevertheless of the same race.

Majumdar (1944:127), in dealing with the cultures of India concluded that the Lushais are Kukis and are of Mongoloid stock. He also recorded that the Kukis are known by various clan names. Those of the North Cachar Hills are called Biete Kukis and Khelma Kukis. To the North of the Lushai range in the forest-clad hills dwell the Darlung.

Similarly, Shaw (1929:11) found the Kukis of Manipur as having lived:in a large area of hilly country bounded by the Angami Nagas of Naga Hill Districts in

the North, the Province of Burma in the East, the Chin Hills and the Lushai Hills in the South and the District of Cachar in the West. Mainly it may be said that they occupy the Hills of the State of Manipur on all sides of the Imphal Valley.

No area can be distinctly described as the area of the tribal group since they are spread all over the state. However, from the estimated population of the Scheduled Tribes of Manipur for 2001 and the above presented Tables I.5 and I.7 clearly indicated where majority of the Kuki population can be located. An introduction of the various sub-tribes which come under the nomenclature of Kuki tribes has been briefly given below.

Gangte

The Gangte with a total population of 15,100 can be located inhabiting in all the districts, but concentrated more in the Churachandpur district. According to a legend, they originated in a Khul (a cave or a hole) located somewhere in the North. Their mother-tongue Gangte belong to the Kuki-Chin group of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages and they use Roman script. The Gangte are divided into five clans (Beh), namely Mate, Thangzom, Hilkheing, Neihsiel and Thangzawm, each of which consists of a number of lineages. The Mate clan has lineages like Langsun, Kumlam, Sonkin, Leisong, Sawilai, Chingthat, Holim, Leisawm, Phuthau, Kenzel, Hawimum and Thathil. The Thangzom clan has two lineages-Thangsing and Nunhei; the Hilkheing clan has only one-Tekeal; the Neihsil clan consists of several lineages, namely Naulau, Tungling, Aikhawkh, Engtheng, Dawlbak, Thagen, Liengen, Sibgtawn, Thanhing, Banong, Sumngak and Haunung; and the lineages under the Thangzawm clan are Suktung, Zawmmang, Chawntawn, Helthang; Zathuom, Phakhung, Kaihmang, Suongluni, Sielpho, Munthang, Kiphut, Tuolphaw, Tuohkim, Kimmang, Bailong, etc. (Singh 1979:279-280).

Hmar

The Hmars are one of the hill tribes of North-East India, belonging to the Kuki Chin groups from Tibeto-Burman of the main Tibeto-Chinese race. The origin of the word "Hmar" cannot be dated back correctly as we do not know precisely as to when this generic name has been composed (Gierston 1967:1). The word Hmar literally means the North. In Manipur they have a population of 42,690 and are highly concentrated in the district of Churachandpur particularly in the Tipaimukh and Jiribam sub-division area. But they also live in all the other districts viz. Senapati, Chandel and Imphal. Some of them are scattered in all the other districts except Ukhrul district. Local tradition mentions that there were two brothers, the elder, because of a sore on the nape of his neck, tied his hair in a knot on his forehead and was called Hrum sawm, and the younger tied his hair in a knot at the back of his head and was called Tukbemsawm, a synonymous word for Hmar. The traditions and beliefs of the people point to the Sinlun as their traditional home in the South-West of China (Sharma 1992:13-15).

Kom

Kom has a total population of 15,467. They are mostly concentrated in the Churachandpur and Senapati districts. They are believed to have originated from a hole in the earth and came to Manipur. A tiger from the hole was found waiting for them and killed them. From among them a person called Karongpa wore a tiger colored dress. Since he looked like a tiger, he became friendly with the tiger. Taking advantage of this a man called Salchap killed the tiger and they ate it. Another legend is Pushongthu a leader among them killed a snake and a tiger who were stopping their way, and then they could reach the surface of the earth.

Paite

Paite has a total population of about 44,861 and is highly concentrated in the Churachandpur district. However they are also found in all other districts. Kamkhenthang (1988), states that the meaning of the term is 'people on the move', which refers to their migratory habits. The Paites trace their origin to a cave called 'Khul' situated somewhere in China. According to Goswami and Kamkhenthang (1972), the Paite and the Pawi are of the same origin. Their migration from the North to their present habitat is recalled in their folklore. Paite is their mother-tongue which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family of language, and is written in the Roman script. The Paite are divided into clans which again are sub-divided into lineages. The clans are grouped into two distinct classes; one is of the Chief and the other of the commoners (Singh 1979:959-961).

Simte and Ralte

Simtes with a population of 7,150 are mostly concentrated in Churachandpur district. They are also inhabited in the northern parts of the Aizawl district of Mizoram. But they are thinly populated in Mizoram. Ralte has a population of 311 only and are settled in Churachandpur district. They are thinly populated here. Most of them have been migrated from Mizoram. They are the Kuki-Chin group of people of the Tibeto-Burman sub-family (Sen 1992:61).

Thadou

The Thadous are the only group of tribal which are found in thousands almost in every hill district of Manipur. They are also settled in Imphal in large numbers. Their total population is 115,045. The largest numbers of Thadous are concentrated in Senapati district. They believed to have originated from a cave too. According to their traditional belief, they were the descendents of Puchongthu or Shongthu, who first settled on earth. There are two versions about the place where the cave is. First version is that it is near the Imphal River and second version is that it is in Sinlun near Mekon River in the

east-west of China. From there through Burma and then crossing the Lushai hills Puchongthu came to Manipur. The Thadou in India is known as Thadou Kuki whereas it is known as Thadou-Chin in Burma (Kamkhengthang 1984). The Thadou have some hierarchically arranged exogamous clans (Beh) based upon economy and territory. These clans exercise control over land (Singh 1979:1128-1129).

Vaiphei

The Vaipheis with a total population of 27,791 are also concentrated more in the Churachandpur and Senapati districts. They are also found in every district in the hill and in the valley in very small numbers. They are notified as a Scheduled Tribe, with the nomenclature of Vaiphei, in the state of Manipur. The oral traditions of the Vaiphei suggest that they originally lived in the Tan Valley of the Kanshu province situated in the North before their migration to the present habitats. The Vaiphei have exogamous clans. In addition, they recognized a two tier social stratification with a class of nobles, comprising of the families of chiefs, and a class of laities, comprising of the families of ordinary residents of the village, including traders, blacksmiths, hunters and farmers (Singh 1979:1167).

Zou

They are found inhabiting mostly in the Churachandpur district and also the Chandel areas. The Zous has a total population of 19,112. They trace their origin to a cave or hole located somewhere in the North. Carey and Tuck (1932) also noticed similarities between these two groups. Their language is called Zou, which belongs to the Kuki-Chin group of Tibeto-Burman family of languages and uses the Roman script. The Zous are divided into clans (Beh), which are common to the Zou and the Paite. The hierarchy of beh depends upon descent.

I.4. KUKI RELIGION AND OTHER RELIGIONS

Religion has been considered to be one of the major subsystems of culture. For an individual's social and cultural identity religion is a strong basis. Above this it is also a common yardstick for people to compare themselves with others. The ways in which religious structure enhances the human survival, adaptation and reproduction have been emphasized by V. Reynolds and R.E.S. Tanner (1983). Religion is also an important tool which manipulates superstitious people. In an influential synthesis of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Berger, religion was described as both "World Maintaining" and "World Shaking" capable of legitimating or challenging power and privileges (Billings and Scott 1994:173).

Religion is not and never can be purely intellectual. Only an intellectual can fall into the trap of supposing it to be purely or dominantly intellectual. But in a more sociological perspective, religion is a social phenomenon and is an interactive relationship with the other social units that constitutes a society (Johnstone 1988:1). Religion has been an important factor in society. In the early society religion provides a bond of unity. Though, in modern society the importance of religion has diminished, yet it continues to mould our beliefs and ways of life (Bhusan 2001:132). In this modern competitive world of today people are leading a hectic schedule life. So religion has been helpful and is also used by people in different ways to ooze out their mental stress. This has been done in various ways like meditation, singing bhajans, sat sangh, etc.

I.4. a. General Introduction of Religion

The English word religion has a Latin root. But there is disagreement over whether the Latin root word is 'religare', meaning 'to bind together, (suggesting possibly the concept of a group or fellowship) or 'relegere', meaning 'to rehearse, to execute painstakingly', referring possibly to the repetitious nature of liturgy. Ronald L. Johnstone

has defined religion as a system of beliefs and practices by which a group of people interprets and responds to what they feel is sacred and usually, supernatural as well (1988:13).

The word religion has been interpreted etymologically in two ways both accepted fairly and widely. Cicero derived it from the verb 'religere', to execute painstakingly by means of repeated effort, while the 'Christian' Cicero Lactantius, a teacher of Latin rhetoric in the first half of the fourth century derived it from "religare" to bind together signifying that religion is essentially a 'bond of piety' (Seligman 1962:228-229). Religion would then be that which comes out of our deepest reflection. Religare seems to have the boarder meaning and also to be the more commonly accepted derivation. This derivation is generally used by the later Latin writers (Ferre 1946:5).

E.B.Tylor's (1871) definition of religion "belief in spiritual beings" can be said as the oldest definition of religion.

Durkheim defines religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden" (1912:47). Religion is one of the earliest and most constant one of the deepest and most engrossing forms of human activity and in tendency and outlook it can claim a near kinship with philosophy. Religion is a continuous development and it has not yet reached its dogmatic form. Religion is really a process in which the deity works out his own redemption by gradually returning to the unconscious from the conscious felt ills of the world (Galloway 1914:13).

Religion is the term used to describe man's relation to the supernatural powers and the various organized system of beliefs and worship in which these relations have been expressed. There are no people, however primitive, who are without religion. Religion interacts significantly with other cultural institutions to such an extent that no social phenomenon presents a larger range of expression and implication (Troisi 1979:1).

According to Malinowski (1948:24) religion is a mode of action, as well as a system of belief, and a sociological phenomena as well as a personal experience. A few characteristics of religion which can be mentioned includes what Durkheim identified as the 'sacred'. With what Rudolf Otto termed the 'holy' or 'the wholly other' and essentially what Eliade Mircea refers to as 'sacred space' that is qualitatively different from all other 'homogenous' space in which regular, everyday occurrence and activities take place (1957:20):

Religion is also defined as "those institutionalized system of beliefs, symbols, values and practices that provide groups of men with solution to their questions of ultimate being" (Glock 1985:17). Religion is a group phenomenon for it is a group which gives a religion its specific character and unity. On the other hand religion unifies the groups; it quite literally binds men together (Zietlin 1996:277). According to Levi-Strauss (1963), religion has hitherto accentuated the unity of groups, large or small, within their own organization, and has at the same time accentuated division from those that lay outside. It has been the great joiner and the great divider.

Karl Marx (1963) held that religion is an illusion which eases the pain produced by exploitation and oppression-"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creatures, the sentiment of a heartless world, as soul of a soulless condition. It is the opium of the people" (Haralambos 1980:460).

Religion is one of the most important aspects of culture studied by the anthropologists and other social scientists. Not only is it found in every known human society, it also significantly interacts with other cultural institutions. One of the most important outward manifestations of religion is the performance of festivals and it has been an important feature of group life all over the world (Singh 1982:1).

Religion is also an expression of need felt by fearful individuals searching to return to the safety of the womb says Freud (1938) and adds that it is a universal obsessional neurosis of mankind and wishfulfilment certainly seems to be very ambitious and startling claim apparently in the context of vast historical records of religion quite contrary to it.

Some prefer to see religion in the context of people's communion with the supernatural and religious experience as something outside the ordinary experience, while others see religion as an expression of an instinctual reaction to cosmic forces. Still others see religion as an explicit set of messages from a deity (Johnstone 1988:1).

The experiences that people define as sacred vary considerably and the objects of their awe and reverence are infinitely diverse. Yet every society has its list of such awesome and mysterious things and events. Religion deals with them. Religion provides explanation and answers; religion prescribes methods of placation and expressing appropriate reverence. The sacred, the holy, the supernatural, together with people's relationship to them, thus constitutes the prime subject matter of religion (ibid: 11).

1.4. a. i). *World Religion*

Weber defined world religions as those that have attracted large numbers of believers and decisively affected the course of global history. Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, ancient Judaism and Christianity are some of the world religions which he mentioned (MSOE-003, 2006:109).

People of the world pursue and practice religion in their own way. Religions of the world which people practice "may be grouped into three broad classes- (i) Leading religions like- Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam; (ii) Lesser religions like- Jainism and Sikhism of India, Judaism of Palestine, Shintoism of Japan, Taoism of China and Zoroastrianism originally of Persia, and (iii) Primitive religions count by

thousands (Rao 2006:539). A table (Table I.13) showing the numerical strength of each religion in the world is presented as under:

Table I. 13
The Religions of the World and the Population of Believers

Religions	World Population
Christians	1,974,181,000
<i>Roman Catholics</i>	1,044,236,000
<i>Protestants</i>	337,346,000
<i>Orthodox</i>	213,991,000
<i>Anglicans</i>	78,574,000
Muslims	1,155,109,000
Hindus	799,028,000
Chinese folk religionists	381,632,000
Buddhists	356,270,000
Ethnic religionists	225,421,000
New-Religionists	101,406,000
Sikhs	22,837,000
Jews	14,313,000
Spirits	12,184,000
Bahai's	6,932,000
Confucians	6,253,000
Jains	4,151,000
Shintoists	2,778,000
Zoroastrians	2,486,000
Mandaeans	38,000
Other religionists	762,640,000
Non-religious	762,640,000
Atheists	149,723,000

Source: *The World Almanac, 2001 as quoted in Manorama Year Book 2002 p. 371.*

I. 4. a. ii). Primitive Religion

In the first place, there is the animistic conception of the world, a conception not in itself religious, but forming the basis on which religious ideas are developed. And there is the life-experience of the human individual, which prompts the movement of the whole self towards a divine object conceived as ministering to the needs of the subject (Galloway 1914:90). The salient features of the primitive religions are the following: i) animism, ii) spiriticism, iii) magic, iv) totemism, and v) sacrifice. To understand the concept of animism more clearly, primitive religion of which animism is one of the salient feature, is described here. The primitive religion has neither Holy Scriptures, prophets nor any mystic and is neither a revealed nor founded by any grostic

being as stated by Rama Shankar Srivastava (1974:28-29). According to him it is the religion of the horde. The primitive religion has no special place for worship nor does not have any separate call of priests for the performance of rites. In this religion, the rituals are also associated with magic. He further added that the supernatural powers belong to spirits according to the primitive beliefs. They are believed to exist within object and powers. These spirits inhabits the moon, a grove of trees, violent and dangerous persons, mountains, caves, etc. The ocean, trees, rains, sky, cloud, fire and all moving things are believed to be animated by spirits.

The pre-animistic religious phenomena are sometimes called Manaism. Manaism and animism are interconnected as complementary to each other. The pre-animistic form of religion is no religion at all, but merely a preparation for it. Religion was in the making in the pre-animistic primitive mankind (Srivastava 1974:29). E.B. Tylor believed animism to be the earliest form of religion (1871). Animism is the attribution of life to inanimate objects and natural phenomena (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974:11).

According to Freud (1938:107-110) animism is “a theory of psychic concepts; in the wider spiritual beings in general”. Freud tries to show that animism as a system of thought only gives “an explanation of a single phenomenon, but makes it possible to comprehend the totality of the world from one point, as a continuity”.

According to Majumdar and Madan, religion is the expression of the manner, and type adjustment affected by people with their conception of supernatural (1956:151). It is rites which makes religion a living force opined Majumdar (1958:398).

Animism is a belief in spirits or ghosts, thought to populate the same world as human beings. Such spirits may be seen as either benign or malevolent and may influence human behavior in numerous respects (Giddens 2001: 533).

According to Ansari (1991) the hill people from the distant past up to their conversion and Christianity believed in some spirit or powerful being which have its abode in natural objects.

Spiriticism proceeds on the assumption that a spirit possesses or uses the object as its instrument (Galloway 1914:90). Srivastava added that spiriticism implies development of the idea of the soul and conceives of its free and liberated condition. The tribal religion is a form of spiriticism. Religion remains identified with magic in its earliest form (1974:30, 31&32). Magic is an attempt on man's part to compass his ends by mysterious or occult means (Galloway 1914:95). Totemism is the religion of the primitive hordes which worship a totem animal. It is a form of group religion but it fosters the growth of higher religious ideas (Srivastava 1974:34). Sacrifice literally means action within the sphere of things sacred but it also implies painful or costly self-denial (ibid: 35).

As Shourie (1994:186-87) has remarked that the tribal were declared as non-Hindus, but 'animists'. The word animism was defined by official missionaries and scholars; a belief in spirits which move about freely, exercise power over the affairs of men and have therefore to be propitiated, spirits which often take up residence in some objects which in turn becomes the object of worship; belief in omens have been ascertained to be propitious, etc.

Though differing from one another in form and ritual all tribal religions share a common belief that nature is animated by spirits. This is a world wide tribal belief. It is popularly characterized as animism (Sema 1980:70). The author quotes Risley's description of the cult of animism as: "It conceives of man as passing through life surrounded by a ghostly company of powers, elements, tendencies, mostly impersonal in their character, shapeless phantasma of which no image can be made and no definite idea can be formed. Some of these have departments of influence of their own: one presides

over cholera, another over small pox, another over cattle diseases, some dwells in rocks, others hunt trees, other again are associated with rivers, whirlpools, waterfalls, or strange pools hidden in the depths of the hills. All of them are required to be diligently propitiated by reasons of the ills which proceed from them, and usually the land of the village provides the means for their propitiations”.

Galloway observed, “Man fits the objects for its religious function by endowing it with a soul like his own. But between the deitification of things in native like river and cloud, tree and sun and the conception of them as possessing a soul, there is no hard and fast distinction (1914:391).

Nature made the primitive man to develop a kind of feeling of reverence, due to fear or awe of nature’s activities and objects, which we term religion (Panchali 1987:84). Their belief in spirit of natural things which they imagined to be the cause of any benevolent or evil things happening in their life need to be pleased. So they started to make sacrifices and offerings to please the concerned spirits.

According to Radhakrishnan (1967), “It traces the history of ideas of God from the simple conceptions of our remote ancestors who first formulated the experiences of the great environing mystery down to the living faiths. Every mortal thing seems to have been deified. Powers of nature, sun, stars, fire, water and earth, generative energy were all made into gods. Here worship and human apotheosis added to the number. Our mental picture of God is as varied as we are”.

The tribal religions in India have long been described as animistic. Animism is that exceedingly crude form of religion in which magic is the predominant element (Vidyarthi 1985:237).

Animism is the precursor of religion and it is treated as a belief of the lowest in society. It is found throughout the world with variations and attempts have been made to separate it from religion and give it a separate identity (Vasudevan 1998:62).

Though India has no state religion, yet the state guarantees the freedom of following and practicing all religious faiths (Ahuja 2004:17). Among the major religions are Hinduism (practiced, according to 2001 census, figures by 827,578,868 people including SC/STs or 80.5% of the country's total population), Christianity (practiced by 24,080,016 or 2.3% of the total population), Islam (practised by 131,188,240 or 13.4% of the total population), Buddhism (practiced by 7,955,207 or 0.8% of the total population), and others 6,639,626 or 0.6% (The First Report on Religion Data 2001: xxvii-xxviii).

I.4. b. Kuki Religion

The indigenous religion of the Kukis was belief in the spirits, rituals and making sacrifices to appease the spirits which they thought was the cause of illness, diseases, death, etc. in their lives; and believing in the physical phenomena of nature. In the initial stages the aboriginal tribal society followed the animistic way of religious life. It was true of Manipur society as well. The tribal made religion of all mysteries and started worshipping the unknown spirits (Panchali 1987:84-85). Singh, Nilakanta remarked that it is evident that the core of primitive religion as reflected in the life-style of the people of the hills of Manipur is the belief in magic and ancestor-cum-deities and other spirits pervading the villages (1993:150).

The indigenous Kuki religion with its various facets such as beliefs, spirits, ghosts, sacrifices, appeasing, magic, disease, illness, rituals, worshipping, oracles, myths, rites de passage, etc. will be dealt in detail in Chapters IV and V.

I.4. c. Hinduism

The oldest of all the great religions still prominent in the world today is Hinduism, the core beliefs of which date back some six thousand years. Hinduism is a polytheistic religion and is so internally diverse. Most Hindus accept the doctrine of the cycle of reincarnation-the belief that all living beings are part of an eternal process of birth, death and rebirth. Hinduism does not seek to convert others into 'true believers', unlike Christianity and Islam (Giddens 2001:535).

I.4. d. Judaism

Judaism is an Abrahamic religion-faith which recognizes Abraham as a Patriarch⁶. Judaic practices are the belief that Jewish customs and Jewish faith were compatible with indigenous tribal religion and could in fact replace it. The link of the Kuki-Chin tribe was through a lost Israelite claim associated with millenarian beliefs, which may have been introduced to them through Christianity, alternatively, may have been inherited from their indigenous religious beliefs (Weil 2004: 220).

I.4. e. Christianity

Christianity is a system of religious teachings, principles, and practices that pertain to the works and merits of Jesus Christ. The primary source of Christianity's teachings is the New Testament.

I.4. f. Islam

The word 'Islam' means 'submission' to the will of Allah, or God. Islam was founded by Mohammed (c. A.D. 570-632) (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974:145). The origins of Islam, today the second largest religion in the world overlap with those of Christianity. Islam derives from the teachings of the prophet Muhammad in the seventh

century CE. The single God of Islam, Allah, is believed to hold sway over all human and natural life (Giddens 2001:534).

I.4. g. Buddhism

Buddhism is a religion originated from the teachings of Buddha (Gautama, Siddhartha, or Sakyamuni). Buddhism believes in the doctrine of Karma, the four noble truths, and the eight fold path (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974:29).

I.4. h. Sikhism

Sikhism is one of the most important religions of India. It originated on the soil of Indian society with the teachings of its first saint Guru Nanak Dev ji who was born in Punjab in 1469. It developed into a full fledged religion in the 16th century (Rao 2006:544). The Sikh tradition dating back to the days of Guru Nank Dev in Adi-Granth Nanak Dev has explained the importance of 'nām', 'dān', and 'insān'. Nām refers to 'divine Name' which is Akal Purakh or god. One is to simply associate with nām or God, share one's earnings with others which is 'dān' and strive for pure living which refers to one's making of 'insān' (MSOE-003, 2006: 35-36).

The majority population of the entire state of Manipur is under the religious fold of Hinduism especially in the valley. There is no trace of Buddhism having been established here in any period of history. Islam entered through the Muslim migrants from East Bengal, but Muslim population in the valley is very little. Christianity, introduced by the British as a policy was not embraced by Meities in the valley but attracted almost entire hill tribes.

A detailed account of role of Christianity on the indigenous religion of the Kukis; the role of other religious groups on the Kukis; and the impact of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, etc. on the native religions are discussed in Chapter VII and VIII.

I.5. Aim and Focus of the Study

The main aim of this thesis is to study the indigenous religion and society of the Kuki tribes and see whether their indigenous religion still occupies an important place in their present faith. The study of the Kuki tribes mainly focuses the religion and society on one hand and the upcoming changes in the society as a result of acculturation and assimilation with the people of different communities such as Meities, Christians and other castes inhabited as neighbors on the other hand. The cultural and the socio-religious forms of the natives in its traditional form too would be studied in order to understand the present scenario. Acculturation of the tribal, Meitie Hindu and non-Manipuris and the impact of Christianity on the tribal population will be dealt with, in great detail.

I.6. Hypothesis

The Kukis have retained the principle elements of their ways of life, religion, and customs, though modified to a great extent after converting to Christianity. And since the caste Hindus i.e. the Meities are the majority in Manipur there is an impact of caste Hindu religion on the Kukis as well. And the Kuki religion in turn influenced the caste Hindu religion and their social life. It is so because of the culture contact with one another by living together. As a result they seem to have a greater social integration.

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