

## MANIPUR : CULTURE AND POLITICS

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# MANIPUR

## Culture and Politics

BIMAL J DEV  
&  
DILIP K LAHIRI



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The cultural history of the State of Madhya Pradesh is a vast field of possibilities. The authors have chosen to focus on the cross-currents of the past. Many of the details are reconstructed in its own right.

*Dedicated to  
the  
memory of*

*Senapati Tikendrajit Singh,*

*the Hero who*

*valiantly resisted the British.*

The authors have drawn on a wide range of sources, including the 'Social Research', 'Proceedings of the State Council', and other official records. The authors have also consulted the original sources, including the 'Social Research', 'Proceedings of the State Council', and other official records.

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## Preface

The cultural heritage of the State of Manipur is unique but its potentialities are yet to be explored with imaginative planning and in full understanding of the socio-psychological factors governing the life and activities of the people. The authors have directed their single-minded attention in evaluating the cross-currents of Manipur politics in different periods of time. Many of the ills of Manipur today are in fact rooted in its wounds and this led the authors to analyse the cultural and political components of Manipur for facilitating a dispassionate assessment of the dimension of Manipur politics.

In preparing ten Chapters of this book the authors have relied on original and primary materials which had hitherto remained unexplored. The sentiments of the people have been assessed from various newspapers corroborated by personal interviews. Some of the papers have been earlier published in 'Social Research', 'Proceedings of NEIHA' and 'Shodhok'.

The authors express their gratitude to Rev. Br.M.G. Shannon for his constant encouragement in the preparation of this book. They acknowledge with thanks the help rendered by Mr. Abdul Hye Chowdhury, Keeper of Records, Assam Secretariat, for supplying the relevant data. The authors are indeed grateful to Mrs. Subhra Dev and Mrs. Bhaswati Lahiri for valuable suggestions in the preparation of this book.

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## Manipur : The Jewel in the Union

Manipur, a romantic name whose reverberation is found in the rolling hills and spectacular dales constitutes 0.7 per cent of the total land surface of the Indian Union but occupies a proud place in the galaxy of States with exquisite natural beauty and splendour as well as cultural distinctiveness. In the words of Mrs. St. Clair Grimwood, "it is a pretty place more beautiful than many of the show places of the world." This land of jewels has its tragedy in its land-locked nature and constraint of location. It has 352 Kms. of international border with Upper Burma on the east and Chin hills of Burma on the south east. In addition 502 Kms. long border separates the state from neighbouring states of Nagaland on the north, Assam in the west and the Union Territory of Mizoram on the south and south west. The State's territory of 22,356 sq. kms. of the area contain 1,4,33,691 people, the average density being 64 per sq. kms. Of the six districts of the State, the Central district with headquarters at Imphal alone account for 9.38 lakhs of the entire population so much so that average density here rises to 421. Of the total population the overwhelming majority of 86.8 percent live in 1949 rural villages while 13.2 percent are categorised as urban dwellers of the 7 towns including capital

town of Imphal which was described by the Japanese army *Takane No Hana* (a flower on a lofty mountain).

### **Agriculture Oriented Economy**

(The population structure of Manipur is unique with 33 percent hill people and the Manipuris, otherwise called Meiteis, constitute nearly two thirds of the total population. In addition, there are nearly a lakh of Manipuri Muslims.) It is technically a multilingual state but the dominant language is Manipuri spoken by the Meiteis who are overwhelmingly found in the valley of about 700 sq. miles. The valley is encircled by mountain ranges and contain about 76 per cent of the population of the state. The climate of Manipur is salubrious with rainfall varying between 56 and 160 inches a year. Rice is the staple food of Manipur and today the State is self-sufficient in this respect with the increase of rice production from 1.5 lakh tonnes to 3.85 lakh tonnes in 1985. Today, 82000 hectares of land have been brought under high yielding varieties.<sup>1</sup> The process of acceleration of foodgrains has received a boost with the completion of the Dam in Tamenlong and Imphal Barrage. Loktak holds the key to Manipur's agricultural prosperity as extension of irrigation and introduction of double cropping will greatly help the agricultural strides. 650 villages have been electrified in the sixth plan period. (The economy is basically agriculture oriented) so much so that in 1983 agriculture accounted for 56 crores of the 60 crore contribution to the primary sector to the total net domestic product of about 115 crores per annum. Horticulture presents another dimension of Manipur's progress. From about an area of 800 hectares under fruit cultivation in 1950-51 the area has touched the level of 0.30 lakh hectares by the end of sixth plan. Apart from the development of temperate fruits, considerable emphasis has been given to the development of horticulture in the sub-mountainous and valley areas of the state. The state has started exporting pineapple products to the USSR from the year 1983-84. Social forestry scheme has been run on a war footing and today more than two thirds of the area are under forests compared to 27 percent in 1955.

### **Education and Press**

The progress in the field of education has been moderately impressive. The enrolment percentage in the primary and as well as in the middle level has considerably gone up. Today there are 32 colleges and one University compared to 2 colleges in 1955. The regional medical college at Imphal has a 536 bedded hospital. Besides an agricultural college was set up in 1979 to gear up manpower development in the agricultural arena. The progress in the field of women's education has also been noteworthy and from 75 college students in 1955 the number had risen to 6105 in 1980. At the same time, the women of Manipur participate with pride in different spheres of community life. The progress in the field of education is reflected in the proliferation of newspapers and periodicals and today Manipur tops the list in the States and Union Territories of the North Eastern Region with 33 dailies as compared to 7 in Assam, 1 in Meghalaya, 18 in Mizoram and 13 in Tripura.<sup>2</sup> This process can be further encouraged by governmental help in order to combat the disruptive forces operating in the state. In this connection one can refer to the U.N Declaration on Mass Media (1978) which emphasised the need for free flow and wider and better dissemination of information as an effective force for strengthening the cause of peace, understanding and promotion of human rights. Indeed the climate of insurgency can be moderated effectively through the mechanism of mass media with their orientation towards highlighting economic development and promoting social cohesion. Underdevelopment and non-implementation of welfare measures were rightly taken to be the factors in promoting insurgency in some parts of the North East then economic development ought to be promoted with all force, sense of direction and purpose.<sup>3</sup>

### **Meitei Dances**

As many as four forms of dances were prevalent among the Meiteis : Ras, Maribok-Jagoi, Khubeiseisakpa, and Sanjoiba, the last one being exclusively performed by menfolk. Of these dances, Ras has come to acquire a distinctive style of its own and due to Royal patronage in the two centuries preceding the merger of Manipur this form of classical dance style had given

Manipur a pride of place in the domain of Indian classical dance. The *Raslila* expresses the scintillating and eternal love of Radha and Krishna and the passionate devotion of the *Gopies* for their great lord. The performance of this dance in solo, duet and group form along with the background *kirtan* is appealing to many an Indian heart and it is all the more so due to brilliant costumes and artistic pauses and indications. Today this dance form remains the consolation of the Vaishnavites in Manipur. The other three forms of dance are becoming extinct due to lack of proper encouragement. . . In Maribok-Jagoi, four performers are required and this is otherwise called the dance of the four corners. In Khubeiseisakpa, music and hand clapping go together. In the Sanjoiba the males wear peacock's feathers in a remarkable way and dance with elegant style and balance. Drums constitute a part and parcel of all these dance forms and beating is done with great skill and ingenuity.

### Tribal Dances

The tribal dances are numerous and are a reflection of cultural distinctiveness of various groups. Some of the famous tribal dances are Khoibu war dance, the Mao Naga dance, the Tangkhul hunting dance etc. where elegance, rhythm and agility are combined in superb combination and style. Every dance has its picturesque costumes and is accompanied by a gala feast. The songs that go with the dances constitute a part of the rich oral tradition of the various tribes but with the inroads of modernisation there has been a corresponding decline in their spontaneity.

The Meiteis are exceptionally talented in sports and games. Once *Khong-kangjei* was a popular game in Manipur valley. The famous game of polo is said to have originated in Manipur introduced during the reign of Khagenba (1600 A.D). In 1852 the world's first official Polo game was played at Silchar with participants drawn mainly from Manipur.<sup>4</sup> In Manipur, the Polo stick consists of long shaft of bamboo with a head of hard wood set on at an obtuse angle which is much greater than is usual among European players. This is necessitated by the fact that the most successful of their strokes are played on the near

side, a result of their long practice as children playing hockey.<sup>5</sup> The game was earlier played with extraordinary skill and created a great deal of popular enthusiasm. As early as in 1901 a Polo team from Manipur visited Calcutta and Delhi on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales in India.

It is however a matter of great regret that this inborn knack of the Manipuris has been persistently neglected and in the post-independent India, no worthwhile steps have been taken to encourage this sport in the State among the younger generation. It is an irony of fate that people who originated the game of Polo do not figure today anywhere in national or international arena. The same fate has happened to the game of Javelin throwing. The Meiteis were also adept in martial arts like wrestling.

#### Genesis of Gotra System

The Meiteis are divided into seven *salei* (clans): Ningthouja, Khoomon, Looang, Angom, Moirang, Ngangba and Chengloi. All such *saleis* consisted of a number of sub-groups called *Yumnaks*, the member varying from one hundred and fifteen in the Ningthouja (Royal clan) to seventeen in the Ngangba. The Meiteis are exogamous as regards the clans or *saleis* into which they are divided, but are endogamous as regards members of other tribes. There are subsidiary rules as well, for example, the Looangs are forbidden to take their wives from among the Khoomons and the Moirangs are not permitted to marry the Khabananbas.

According to Vaishnava cult of Hinduism as prevalent in Manipur the seven *saleis* originated from different limbs of the Guru.<sup>6</sup>

1. Ningthouja from the left eye.

2. Angom from the right eye.

3. Chengloi from the right ear.

4. Ngangba from the left ear.

5. Looang from the right nostril.

6. Khoomon from the left nostril.

7. Moirang from the teeth.

The advent of Hinduism had assigned different *gotras* to these clans and in the process the preachers of Vaishnava cult were responsible for usurping for the Meiteis the best lot of the prevalent *gotras* among the Hindus. Thus though Ningthouja was assigned the Brahminic *Shandilya* gotra, others such as Angom, Chengloi Ngangba, Looang, Khoomon and Moirang groups have been assigned Kausika, Bharadwaj, Noimisha, Kashyap, Modkoilya and Atreya gotras respectively. In fact, when Hinduism had received the royal patronage, the Brahmin parasites of the royal palace cleverly gave a fantastic exaggeration of the origin of the Royal family: "The Brahmadev (the creating God of the Universe) had sprung out from the Navel lotus of Narayan (the protecting God of the Universe), Marichi Muni (a Hindu sage) was born from the limbs of Brahmadev. Marichi's son Kashyap Muni (a Hindu saint); Kashyap Muni's son Surya (Sun); Surya's son Shaborna Muni; Shaborna's son Indra Muni; Indra Muni's son Chitra Ketu; Chitra Ketu's son Chitradhaja; Chitradhaja's son Chitrabirja; Chitrabirja's son Chitra Sarba; Chitra Sarba's son Chitra Rath; Chitra Rath's son Chitra Bhanu; Chitra Bhanu had no son, only a daughter named Chitragada; Chitragada's son Babrubahan; Babrubahan's son Suprabahu; Suprabahu's son Pakhangba (jobista). Pakhangba was the first ruling king of Manipur."<sup>7</sup>

### Impact of Hinduism

However it is everybody's knowledge that Hinduism in Manipur is of recent origin and even Gambhir Singh, technically a Hindu, once ordered a Brahmin to eat a pet goose which had died from his neglect at a time when he was entrusted to its care. Colonel Mc Culloch stated in 1858 that as many as three hundred deities of animistic origin "are still propitiated by appropriate sacrifices of things abhorrent to real Hindoos".<sup>8</sup> Among these were *Lam Lai*, nature God in charge of rain, *Imung Lai*, the household deity, *Sena Mehi*, the deity of success, *Noongshaba*, the deity of creation of the rocks and stones and *Laiching*, the hill deity.

Even during the reign of Pamheiba the Brahmins were associated with the worship of the popular deities like: *Panthcibi*, *Taibong*, *Khombi* and *Yumthoi Lai*. The spread and

consolidation of Hinduism could not eliminate the influence of deities and this led Hodson to remark as late as in 1908:

“It is difficult to estimate the precise effect of Hinduism on the civilization of the people, for to the outward observer they seem to have adopted only the festivals, the outward ritual, the caste marks and the exclusiveness of Hinduism, while all unmindful of its spirit and inward essentials.”<sup>9</sup>

This explains why the Meiteis in spite of their decisive transformation from tribe to the fold of caste preferred to preserve their identity, in their system of naming, their Hindu name being prefixed and suffixed by indigenous expressions. Today revivalist thinking is threatening to shake off the bond of Hindu religion and the idea of Meitei identity is so uppermost that there has been a demand to recognise the Manipuris in the list of Scheduled Tribes. Apparently religion has failed to act as a cohesive force in the society and what is more significant is the expression of the desire to move from caste to tribe.

About 31.19 per cent of the population of Manipur are Scheduled Tribes belonging to 29 different Tribes: Aimol, Anal, Angami, Chothe, Chiru, Gangte, Hmar, Kabui, Kacha Naga, Koirao, Koireng, Kom, Lamgang, Ayun Mizo (Lushai), Maram, Maring, Mao, Monsang, Moyon, Paite, Purum, Ralte, Sokte, Sema, Simte, Thangkhol, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Marings**

The Marings numbered 9,825 in 1971 census compared to 7,745 in 1961 and are predominantly found in Tengenoupal district. Traditionally the male members of this tribe could be identified easily due to their hair style so much so that a tuft of frontal hair used to be kept in the form of a knot.<sup>11</sup> The society has remained largely insulated and literacy rate is very low, more so among the females. The social fragmentation among this tribe is apparent from the dissociation of a group now claiming a separate entity as Tarao. A distinctive demographic trend is the decline of female mortality and in 1971 sex ratio was found to have gone up considerably from 800 to 1,088 per

thousand. The clans are segmented into sub-clans and lineages in order of seniority. For example, the clan Charanga is divided into three sub-clans Mumlaia, Cherangtang and Lamthakpa. The social system is based on the principle of clan-exogamy in marriage. In the marital life monogamy is the well established norm. Inheritance is according to the principle of seniority. Further the dormitory system continues to play an important role in regulating the conduct and behaviour among the youth. This tribe has a well developed notion of village government.

### **The Tاراos**

Three endogamous clans constitute the Tاراo tribe and they are named after the leader of the society namely Trimsa, Pachna and Khurpu. These are sub-divided as follows:<sup>12</sup>

Trimsa : Tuilamthang, Tulekshamei, Saloisana.

Pachna/Chana : Thamon-in, Mathangbung, Chana.

Khurpu : Tangsha, Rapdou, Mathangmanei, Khurpu-in.

Khurpu is considered to be the legendary law-giver of the Tاراos and the credit goes to him for introducing village administration and a number of festivities governing the agricultural life patterns. Traditionally, the Tاراos performed a number of festivals connected with harvesting, honouring the dead and hunting operations. Significantly, colourful dance formed an integral part of all such festivities and this tradition continues today. Dance-music is still accompanied by instruments like drum, cymbal and gong.

The Thadaos are settled both in hill and valley of Manipur and numbered 59,955 according to the census of 1971. The members of this tribe are also found in the states of Assam and Nagaland. There are two accounts regarding their geneological origin. According to U. Vumkhohan of Falam, Chin hills, the geneology of Thadao is Zo, Kipmang, Nawphut, Nawsawng, Songthu, Sheengmang, Songkip, Songza, Zakhai, Zahong, Tohin, Seaktak, Thadou. William Shaw gives the following : Chongthu, Sattong, Thangpi, Shingmeng, Titon, Touthin, Nivel, Lhouluh Sehtha, Thadou.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Monsang**

In contrast Monsang is a very small tribe constituting less than 0.5 percent of the total scheduled tribe population of Manipur. In 1971 they numbered 930 compared to 1342 in 1961. This is an agricultural group practising both shifting cultivation and wet cultivation. The concept of village government is highly developed and the village council was traditionally headed by Irungpa. The Mon Naga Students Federation now seeks to unify two kindred tribes viz. the Moyon and Monsang under the new name 'Mon'.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Purums**

The Purum once a distinct tribe was threatened with possible extinction of their ethnic identity when in 1951 census they numbered only 43. Subsequently, they decided to merge with another tribe Chote believed to be having a common origin with Purum. However, they continue to be referred as Purum by other Chotes. The Purums were divided into five exogamous patri-clans.<sup>15</sup> (a) Marrim (b) Makan (c) Kheyang (d) Thao (e) Parpa. All clans have sub-clans with the exception of Parpa. The most important and fascinating Purum marriage rule is that a man cannot take his wife from a group to which his group gives wives. He and other men of his group must take their wives from a third group. Thus there are necessarily three structural groups : Lineal group of the Ego, Ego's wife taking group and Ego's wife giving group. This social organisation based on relationship of marriage alliances of these structural groups is known as tripartite social organisation. "The Purum traditional village organisation is studded mainly on two functional bodies : Hloukal and Loumi each consisting of a number of offices. Structurally, the Purum society is triadic the basic scheme of their social organisation is diadic i.e., it is a system of relationship between the wife-taking and the wife-giving group."

### **The Paites**

The Paites are found in Manipur, Mizoram and Burma. This is one of the major tribes in Manipur. The Paite dialects

in Manipur and Mizoram are very much influenced by Lushai language. The spread of Christianity has brought about a renaissance in their language, literature and culture. The Paites are socially and politically advanced and the Paite National Council was formed as early as in 1948. The Paites regard Zou and Simte as members of the same tribal affiliation, even though they are now maintaining separate ethnic identity.<sup>16</sup>

### The Moyons

The Moyons are a tribe with distinct cultural identity of their own. Some of the important festivals are: *Ekam*, *Jakainthing*, and *Vanginchin*. *Ekam* and *Jakainthing* are performed following the harvesting operations and traditional dance constitutes the most fascinating part of all such festivals. "The dance which is performed during the *Ekam* sacrifice is called *Ekamlam*. In course of the dance the dancers form two circles, one of the menfolk, the other of womenfolk. In the middle of the circle a man and a woman dance. Everybody irrespective of age and status can join the dance. On the second day of the festival both man and woman dance hand in hand in the house continuously. In the case of the other two festivals a man and a woman dance in the middle of a circle of persons. *Kakungla*, *Sarila*, *Latila* and *Kuchamla* are sung on *Ekam* and *Vanthinla* and *Jakal* are sung on the other two festivals."<sup>17</sup> The village headman known as *Erungpa* plays a leading role in village affairs and is assisted by officers with designation as *Mantri*, *Khullakpa*, *Lulakpa* and *Ching-sanglakpa*.

### The Kabuis

The Kabuis now designated as *Ruongmeis* are a major tribe with nearly half a lakh of population. They are also considered to be a major sub-tribe of a larger group known as *Zeliangruong* including *Zemis*, *Langmeis* and *Ruongmeis*.<sup>18</sup> The *Zemis* and the *Liangmeis* were earlier known as *Kacha Nagas*. The four major clans of this tribe are *Kammei*, *Gonmei*, *Gangmei* and *Longmei*. In the *Ruongmei* society *Ting-Gwang* has a special position and was traditionally believed to be the creator of the sun, the moon and the earth.<sup>19</sup> *Jadonang* the great reli-

gious and social reformer made his debut with unique anti-British stance in the late twenties of this century. This group traditionally performed a number of rites known as See-Phao nei, Phak-kong Zai nei and Ngunkhan Soumei.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Koirengs**

The Koirengs are a small but compact tribe concentrated in 11 village settlements mostly in the Sadr hills of Manipur. The Koms possess a close affinity with the Koirengs who are considered to be a part of a bigger Kom community. The term Koireng is believed to be a derivative from Koren meaning the people of the east. The endogamous clans of this tribe are Shuong, Yei, Tieltu, Thamthu, Uirei, Khonglung Miriem and Mikan. As Gangmumei Kabui, a famous historian remarks: "Their hymns and legends refer to a number of countries, hills and villages where the Koirengs had lived before they settled in Manipur. However, there are a number of vital differences between Karens of Burma and Koirengs of Manipur." From the linguistic point, "they definitely belong to the Kuki-Chin family."<sup>21</sup> In Kabui's view, "The Koireng migration appears to have been necessitated by the constant threats and attacks made on the Koirengs by their more militant and powerful neighbours. Secondly, by the economic need for land for habitation and agricultural purposes. The need for military security and economic self sufficiency have led the people to search for new land and finally they got lands in Manipur which were free from constant military threats and which assured them of the peaceful economic pursuits."<sup>22</sup>

### **The Hmars**

The Hmars are said to have originated from the kukis and "when they were driven by the Lushais to the northern region of Lushai hills, they or some clans among them came to be known as the Hmar."<sup>23</sup> In fact, it has been reported that the name 'Hmar' was given by the Lushais. Hmar is a notified scheduled tribe in Assam, Meghalaya and Manipur. Many ethnographers and administrators like Shakespear, Risley, Gait and Hutton have regarded Hmars as one of the constituent clans of the Kukis. But since 1956 they have been

able to maintain a separate ethnic identity and in 1971 Census they numbered 23,312 in Manipur. The Hmars seem to be riding on the wave of modernisation and this is apparent from a high level literacy among this group. According to 1971 census their percentage of literacy was 50.27 per cent in Assam (including Mizoram) whereas in Meghalaya and Manipur it was 62.63 per cent and 43.37 per cent. This is mainly attributed to the pioneering efforts of the Christian missionaries in this region for the educational advancement of the various groups of tribals. As Pudaite remarks: "They are the first tribal group in the world to reduce their language to writing, translate the whole Bible without foreign Missionary help, prepare school text books, compose hymns and organise a thoroughly national Christian denomination of growing significance."<sup>24</sup> As per 1971 Census almost 99 percent of Hmars in Manipur are Christian.

The 21 clans of Hmar group are:<sup>25</sup> Beite, Chawrai, Changsan, Darnagawn, Faihrem, Ngeute, Ngurte, Hrangchal, Hrangkhoh, Hmarlushei, Khawbung, Khawchring, Khelte, Leiri, Lungtau, Pakhuong, Sakechek, Sakum, Thick, Vangsei, and Zote.

The Hmars prefer the system of clan exogamy. Monogamy is the ideal form of marriage. Family among the community is usually nuclear in character with patrilocal residence, patrilineal descent and patriarchal authority. The heritage of Hmar society included the institution of Reng (kingship), Lal (chieftainship), Siehmang (village council) and Sier (dormitory). Chouhmang is said to have been their first known king. The village Council consisted of the hereditary Lal and the Counsellors known as Siehmang-upa. The Chief had a position of eminence and was entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the village in a proper manner. In the post-independent period the Siehmang upas ceased to be appointed by the Lal and instead the system of election by villagers came into practice.

The Hmars are an agricultural group out and out. The total working force of the Hmars in Manipur is 35.03 per cent of which 85.22 per cent are engaged as cultivators.

### **The Tangkuls**

The Tangkuls are predominantly settled in Manipur East District bordering Burma in the East. To the North, they

share Manipur state boundary with Nagaland. A good number of Tangkul Nagas known as Somra Tangkuls are in Burma whose area is contiguous to the North East of Tangkul region. There are Tangkul villages also in Manipur North district. The Tangkuls in Manipur numbered 57,851 in 1971. Nearly 90 per cent of the Tangkuls are Christians with various denominations. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood and an overwhelming majority of the people practise both tarrace and jhum cultivation depending on the location of the area. The Angamis are said to have learnt the technique of tarrace cultivation from the Tangkuls.<sup>26</sup> Tarrace cultivation is practised in *Rayilui* and *Akanglui* fields. In the former, there is constant flow of water from the river or stream and the latter is prepared at the dry and slope land.

In the pre independence period "there was no organised political or cultural council for the whole tribe. A village was unvisited by the villagers of another village. Every village was more or less an independent unit in the days of head hunting."<sup>27</sup>

There were eight divisions for identification of people of particular area scattered over different places :

North	Raphei	North East	Kashung and Somra
South East	Rai Khang	East	Rem
South	Kamo	West	Kharao
South West	Khaorai	North West	Kharao Kaora

Monogamy is universally prevalent among the Tangkuls. The principle of clan exogamy was deeply entrenched among them so much so that any violation led to excommunication from the village. Cross-cousin marriage with mother's brother's daughter is allowed but not vice-versa.<sup>28</sup> The marriage with father's sister's daughter is not allowed. Levirate and sorrorate are not practised as a rule. Significantly, divorce is not allowed under ordinary circumstances and only certain special situations can warrant it. The society is patrilineal and patriarchal. The real bond of a clan lies in common descent and not in common territory.

Each village had earlier a hereditary chief who had both spiritual and temporal power. He was assisted by a council

of elders representing the chief clans in the village which was also a hereditary institution. Among the Christian Tangkuls the elders came to be elected by their respective clans.<sup>29</sup> Traditionally the village council called *Hanga* had played a leading role in regulating the socio-economic activities of the people of the village. The council had played a dual role in promoting welfare and in regulating social behaviour. The Hill Areas Act 1956 provided for a village council of five members in a village with a strength of 20 to 60 tax paying households. Significantly, law and order within the village falls in the jurisdiction of the village authority. The village council plays a leading role in the agriculture-oriented life of the people.

Today many Tangkuls are in the forefront of politics in Manipur. The first tribal Chief Minister of Manipur Mr. Y. Shaiza was a Tangkul Naga. The present Chief Minister of Manipur Mr. Rishang Keishing belongs to this group and is credited to have become a member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) as early as in 1952 with his anchorage in the Socialist ideology of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. Several prominent Tangkuls like Mr. R. Suisa, Mr. Z. Ramyo and Mr. Th. Muiva have played a crowning role in Naga politics.

### The Baites

The Baites are now asserting a distinct identity in Manipur. The members of this tribe are however scattered in the various districts of Manipur. Some of them are to be found in Burma as well. According to J. Baite, "They have close affinity with the Northern Chins of Burma. Linguistically they are grouped with the Kuki-Chin people. They stand now as a sub-tribe of Thadou. *Pusa* cult was the oldest practice of faith. *Pusa* means the 'blessing God' or the Creator. They also believed in life after death. In a Baite society clan exogamy is not strictly followed."<sup>30</sup>

### The Anals

The Anals are a predominantly rural tribe with 6670 members as in 1971. Anals belong racially to the Tibeto-Burman family of Mongolian race. It is popularly believed

that they must have come from Mongolia and they initially migrated to Upper Burma and Kabaw Valley. Racially the Anals are not very different from the Nagas or the Kukis who are all Tibeto-Burman.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Sema Nagas**

The Sema Naga tribe is also a recognised tribe in Manipur. The traditional method of Sema village government was rule by hereditary chiefs assisted by one or more elders (*Chochomi*) selected by the Chief and holding office at his pleasure. The Chief was traditionally very powerful whose authority was limited by customary law and to a varying extent by the advice of the elders. With the spread of education and Christianity and the cessation of the internal warfare in the tribe the Chief's power underwent a corresponding decline.

Manipur today is proud of her culture and heritage marked by close interaction between the Meiteis and the hill tribes in the background of fascinating bounties of nature. Manipur today is as much proud of her present resources as she was when she concluded a Treaty with Governor Verelst in 1762 where we come across names of the following indigenous products such as : silk, iron, *Karpass*, wood, oil, wax, elephants' teeth, agar, sandal wood, camphor, black, red and other varieties of thread, Meklee cloths and Meklee gold coins.<sup>32</sup> Today we come across exquisite and enchanting designs in handicraft and weaving with a rare combination of design, colour and texture. Manipuri women both Meiteis and tribal weave as if with magic fingers. In dance Manipur remains the premier state in India as the captivating dance styles of the Meiteis and hill tribes are unique treasures of mankind.

In agriculture the state is self-sufficient and people in the hills have realised the evil and disastrous consequences of shifting cultivation. The Loktak Multipurpose Project commissioned in June 1983 has opened new vistas for agricultural development. Loktak, the 256 sq. km. lake, has a capacity of producing 105 M.W. of power. With its present, 70 M.W. blow out, it has assured irrigation facilities in 23000 hectares of land on a round the year basis. The completion of Loktak lift, Singda dam, Imphal barrage, Sekmai barrage,

Thoubal dam, Khuga dam and utilization of the water resources of the rivers like Iril, Chakpi, Barak, Jiri, Imphal, Leimak-khong, Maklang, Tuipi, Tisalok, Heibunglok, Ihanglok, Nungshangkong and several other perennial streams could guarantee an era of agricultural prosperity for Manipur.

### **Insurgency**

However, Manipur suffers from the stigma of insurgency and there is consequently an attitude of ad-hocism in all the policies of the government. Industrialisation of Manipur did never receive any priority in any plan document. Despite the success in the experimental plantation of crops such as coffee, tea, rubber and cardamom, no worthwhile steps have been taken so far in this direction. Insurgency has indeed provided a cloak for inactivity by the state political leadership. As a result the problem of unemployment among the educated youth often expresses in various forms of juvenile adventurism and social disorganisation. Mineral wealth too remains entirely unexplored. The plan to draw Manipur in the Railway map even nominally has not made headway. Rural development schemes too have progressed in a half-hearted manner. Sports remain a neglected sphere and indigenous dance styles are being pushed below the carpet. The result is the simmering discontent, a feeling of deprivation and pronounced revivalism. It goes without saying that development alone can heal the wounds of Manipur and make her a respectable partner in the comity of constituent states of the Indian Union.

The general ignorance has been so unbound that in the India Festival in Paris Manipur has been described as a 'mysterious state'. National newspapers make absolutely no reference to Manipur except while reporting acts of killing or atrocities. If it is accepted that insurgency is a social malaise and an expression of anaemic situation in the social framework, it would not be illogical to argue for an assessment of the social dimension of insurgency in order to combat it with understanding and compassion rather than with force. Instead of pursuing politics of expediency it is all the more necessary to rely on economies of development and dynamics of social stability and justice.

The following tables amply depict the Socio-economic profile of Manipur.

TABLE I  
Number of Newspapers and Periodicals-1982

Language	Dailies	Tri/bi weeklies	Weeklies	Fort-nights	Month-lies	Quarter-lies	Annals	Others	Total
English	4	—	1	1	1	1	3	—	11
Bilingual	6	—	3	3	6	4	—	1	22
Multilingual	5	—	—	1	1	—	—	1	8
Others	18	2	2	6	13	4	—	3	48
Total	33	2	6	10	21	9	3	5	89

**Circulation**

Circulation data were made available by 19 newspapers only. Their total circulation worked out to 37,000 copies. Of them dailies had the largest share of 24,000 copies followed by monthlies with 8,000 copies and quarterlies with 3,000 copies.

TABLE II  
*Proportion of Main Workers to Total Population 1981*

State/UTs	Total (T)		Main workers	Cultivators	Agricul- tural labourers	Household industry manufacturing/ servicing and repairing and	Other workers
	Rural (R)	Urban (U)					
Arunachal	T		49.19	35.56	1.21	0.20	1.22
Pradesh	R		49.83	37.81	1.26	0.16	10.60
	U		39.73	2.26	0.46	0.75	36.22
	T		41.68	24.68	3.28	4.54	9.18
Manipur	R		44.67	30.06	3.62	4.37	6.62
	U		33.36	19.73	2.35	5.00	16.28
	T		44.20	28.09	4.38	0.48	11.24
Meghalaya	R		46.90	34.06	5.16	0.47	7.21
	U		31.94	0.98	0.84	0.52	29.60
	T		41.21	29.72	1.05	0.53	0.91
Mizoram	R		44.10	37.47	0.88	0.32	5.43
	U		32.60	6.66	1.57	1.14	23.23

Nagaland	T	45.79	32.28	0.85	0.66	12.00
	R	48.02	37.84	0.88	0.35	8.95
	U	33.68	2.04	0.73	2.35	28.56
Tripura	T	29.61	12.90	7.08	0.48	9.15
	R	29.97	14.39	7.84	0.48	7.26
	U	22.66	0.86	0.87	0.49	24.44

Note : Figures for Assam are not available.

Source : Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region, 1982.

TABLE III  
Female Work Participation Rate according to 1971 Census

All India	11.19	7.81	0.18	7.26
Tamil Nadu	13.56	4.87	0.19	24.41
Andhra Pradesh	13.28	3.28	0.18	7.26
Assam	4.66	4.66	0.18	7.26
Madhya Pradesh	13.62	3.62	0.18	7.26
Mizoram	3.46	3.46	0.18	7.26
Nagaland	6.42	6.42	0.18	7.26
Tripura	4.82	4.82	0.18	7.26

TABLE III

*Female Work Participation Rate in the North Eastern Region according to 1971 census and 1981 census*

States/UTs	Female work participation rate (in Percentage)	
	According to 1971 census	According to 1981 census
Arunachal Pradesh	51.28	40.55
Assam	4.66	NA
Manipur	23.62	34.59
Meghalaya	34.57	33.29
Mizoram	39.46	32.33
Nagaland	45.24	42.45
Tripura	4.83	8.95
All India	12.06	13.99

*Source* : Census of India, 1981 Series-1, Part II, B(i) Primary Census Abstract, General Population.

TABLE IV

State/UTs	Scheduled tribes as percent of total population	
	1971	1981
Arunachal Pradesh	79.02	69.82
Assam	10.99	NA
Manipur	31.18	27.30
Meghalaya	80.48	80.58
Mizoram	—	93.55
Nagaland	88.61	88.99
Tripura	28.95	28.44

*Source* : Basic Statistics of NE Region, 1980.

TABLE V

*Statewise Break up on Density, Decennial Growth and Sex Ratio of Population*

State/UTs	Population- 81 (in million)	Density (persons per KM)	Decennial growth 1971-81 (in %)	Sex-ratio 1981 (number of females per 1000 males)
Arunachal Pradesh	0.63	8	34.04	862
Assam	19.90*	254	36.02	901
Manipur	1.42	64	32.71	971
Meghalaya	1.34	60	32.67	954
Mizoram	0.49	23	48.48	919
Nagaland	0.77	47	48.08	863
Tripura	2.05	196	31.41	946
Total (NE)	26.60	104	35.71	909
India	685.18	216	22.50	934

\* Projected.

Source : Census of India Series I, Part II B (i) Primary Census Abstract, General Population.

TABLE VI

*Basic Data Relating to Agriculture in North-East India (1976-77)*

State/UTs	Average size of operational holding (in hect)	Percentage of irrigated area to gross cropped Area	Consumption of fertilizers per unit of gross cropped area
Assam	1.47	17.27	1.0
Arunachal Pradesh	6.19	18.45	—
Manipur	11.5	36.05	11.0
Meghalaya	1.68	25.54	9.9
Mizoram	—	7.62	—
Nagaland	5.46	34.58	1.8
Tripura	1.01	7.72	2.2
Total N.E. India	1.71	17.83	—
All India	2.30	25.25	25.0

Source : Basic Statistics of N.E. Region 1980.

TABLE VII  
 Distribution of Holdings by Size Classes of Operation in N.E. India

Size class of operational holdings	% holders in different States/Union Territories					
	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Nagaland	Tripura	Assam Pradesh
0.0-0.5	28.42	11.51	14.03	2.67	45.92	12.98
0.5-1.0	17.55	29.37	22.78	6.77	23.56	14.70
1.0-2.0	19.64	42.88	34.57	17.58	18.81	11.96
2.0-3.0	11.32	12.23	18.20	18.30	6.39	15.44
3.0-4.0	6.05	21.76	5.91	9.49	2.50	10.57
4.0-5.0	4.30	0.82	2.77	12.21	4.22	12.48
5.0-10.0	8.41	0.40	1.57	19.39	0.36	23.91
10.0-20.0	3.29	0.02	0.17	10.22	0.20	13.61
20.0-30.0	0.64	0.01	—	2.01	—	0.65
30.0-40.0	0.21	—	—	0.70	0.01	0.18
40.0-50.0	0.08	—	—	0.29	—	0.16
50.0 & above	0.09	—	—	0.37	0.02	—

Source : All India Report on Agricultural Census 1970-71, GOI, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation.

TABLE VIII

*Distribution of Population by Area 1981*

State/Union Territory	Persons	Rural	Urban	Percentage of urban population
Arunachal Pradesh	628050	588588333	39715	6.32
Manipur	1411375	1038160	373215	26.44
Meghalaya	138343	1088842	239501	18.03
Mizoram	487774	365009	122765	25.17
Nagaland	7773281	65653101	120180	15.54
Tripura	2047351	1822470	224881	10.98
All India	658140676	501952169	156188507	23.73

Source : Series I, India Paper 2 of 1981. Registrar General and Census Commissioner for India.

TABLE IX

*Population and Growth Rate in Urban Areas 1981*

State	Name of Urban areas and class	Population		Growth rate 1971-81
		Male/	Female	
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Manipur Central</i>				
	I. Imphal M	78766	76873	55.07
	II. Kakching M	10550	10595	145.56
	IVa. Thoubal	8738	8875	209.98
	IV. Nambol	6502	6586	297.09
	IV. Mairang	6478	6327	54.84
	IV. Lilong	5637	5495	
	V. Samurou	4335	4383	
	V. Mayang Imphal	3678	3643	
	V. Wangoi	3491	3561	
	V. Nongthoukhong	3525	3485	
	V. Lilong (Imphal West)	3416	3455	

1	2	3	4	5
	V. Kumbi	3167	3161	
	V. Bishenpur	2830	2833	33.75
	VI. Oniam	2420	2452	
	VI. Shikhong			
	Sekmai	2378	2376	
	VI. Wangjing	2265	2358	
	VI. Lamshang	2296	2273	
	VI. Yakripok	2292	2216	
	VI. Sugnu	2200	2152	
	VI. Jiribam	2246	2103	
	VI. Sekmai	2003	1988	
	VI. Lamlai	1462	1474	
	VI. Neirok	632	607	
<i>Manipur South</i>				
	III. Chura- chandpur	11318	9652	140.87
	VI. Singhat	1114	1146	
<i>Tengoupal</i>				
	IV. Morch	4075	3601	
<i>Manipur East</i>				
	V. Ukhrul	3068	2700	
<i>Manipur West</i>				
	VI. Temenglong	2298	1983	
<i>Manipur North</i>				
	VI. Mao-Maram	1946	1845	
	VI. Karong- Senapati	2022	1623	
	VI. Kangpokpi	1162	950	

It is clear that Manipur compared to her size and resources is forging ahead of the other States and Union Territories in the North Eastern Region. Given the necessary help and technological know-how there can certainly be a prosperous Manipur which will combat the climate of unemployment and insurgency in a meaningful way. Economic development of Manipur with emphasis on agricultural modernisation and

industrialisation is destined to lessen Government of India's concern for this frontline State.

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