

CONSTRAINTS IN DEVELOPMENT OF MANIPUR

Editors

C. Joshua Thomas
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Preface

A two-day Seminar on “Constraints in the Development of Manipur” sponsored by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India was organised by the Policy Alternatives for North East and Conflict Elimination Awareness (PANACEA) Shillong, North Eastern Regional Centre of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR-NERC), and the Manipur Association for Science and Society (MASS) Imphal at the State Guest House Conference Hall, Sanjenthong, Imphal, Manipur during October 18–19, 2000.

Professor Gangmumei Kamei, Hon’ble Minister of Forest and Environment and Law, Government of Manipur, inaugurated the Seminar on 18th October 2000 as Chief Guest. Former Director of Education, Government of Manipur who is at present President of MASS, Imphal, Shri Elangbam Yaima Singh presided over the inaugural function. Smt. M.K. Binodini Devi, Padmashree, a renowned writer and women’s activist and Lt. General T.S. Shergill, 3 Corp. Commander graced the function as Guests of Honour. Lt. General Shergill rushed to Imphal from Dimapur to attend the Seminar.

The Seminar had five technical sessions in which 15 research papers were presented and discussed. The papers presented by resource persons who include economists, academicians, journalists, environmentalists and social activists deal in various topics in different fields like insurgency, population explosion, ethnic clash, language, impediments in industrial development, law and order, unemployment and status of women in Manipur which are in one way or another are constraints in the development of Manipur. After the deliberations it adopted six resolutions which are being recommended to the Government of Manipur.

Earlier, inaugurating the Seminar, the Hon’ble Minister of Forests and Environment and Law, Professor Gangmumei Kamei stressed the need for restoration of peace and normalcy to step up the pace

of development in the state. He said, without peace there can not be development. Describing the Seminar as very timely, the Hon'ble Minister expressed the hope that it would help in finding out various constraints the state is facing in its development and work out their possible solutions.

Addressing the function as Guest of Honour, Lt. Gen. T.S. Shergill said the Indian army has launched various civic action programmes meant for the welfare of the civilian population of the state. The General sought the cooperation of the people in restoring peace so that in the developmental activities of Manipur, get necessary filip.

Smt. M.K. Binodini Devi, Padmashree while addressing the function wanted awareness campaign on various problems including environmental degradation to be conducted at the grassroot level in localised form instead of holding workshops and seminars at the state or district level. She also expressed her desire to make low cost films to be used as a medium for these campaigns.

In his presidential address, Shri E. Yaima Singh expressed his keen desire to educate the common masses as to why and how the development of the State of Manipur has been hindered. Wishing the Seminar a success, he hoped it would help to find ways and means to remove those constraints, which have been impeding development.

Dr. C.J. Thomas, Deputy Director, ICSSR-NERC, Shillong, introduced the theme of the Seminar and mentioned briefly the activities of the PANACEA and the ICSSR in the northeast India.

Papers presented in all the five academic sessions of the seminar were liked by all those who participated in the deliberations. Some of the papers presented at the seminar were revised subsequently. The responsibility of the views expressed in these articles are entirely of respective authors. Despite of all our best efforts it is possible that mistakes of omission and commission may have crept in this publication. We crave the indulgence of the reader for the same.

C.J. Thomas
R. Gopalakrishnan
R.K. Ranjan Singh

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18. Dr. Gina Shangkham, President, Naga Women's Union, Imphal.
19. Dr. Ch. Yashawanta Singh, Department of Linguistics, Manipur University, Imphal.
20. Dr. Ranjan Singh, Deputy Registrar, Manipur University, Imphal.
21. Professor R. Gopalakrishnan, Department of Geography, NEHU, Shillong.
22. Dr. C. Joshua Thomas, Deputy Director, ICSSR-NERC, Shillong.

Introduction

Manipur reflects a combination of high degree of social fragmentation, stagnating economy and insurgency-dominated activities. Even after five decades of independence, political administrative reforms and planned economic transition, political uncertainty has shown no sign of abatement. In fact, the Manipur is dominated by high population growth, worsening economic relations, rapidly increasing capital, technology and resource requirements, dwindling economic opportunities, fragile law and order situation and so on. Administrators, protagonists and populace have changed and multiplied. Growth of political flora indicated the intensity of fragmentation and fractionalisation of the polity. Access to political power became increasingly sophisticated.

Political uncertainty in such a scale has emerged abruptly. Documentary evidence clearly indicated why the state adopted policies that froze socio-political responses and consolidated hold on these territories. These documents also accounted for the existing ideological constructs and their functions including the pre-1947 insurgency situation. The pre-1947 state brought these areas under its control to further the imperial commercial interests. These areas remained for more backward than any other comparable regions the state. These became colonial possessions protecting mercantile capital. The inhabitants and local power structure frequently asserted themselves only to be crushed, as elsewhere. They succeeded in freezing most of the insurgent activities through military containment.

It was at this point that the note of dissent was voiced in the Manipur. These were in terms of a separate independent political status as voiced by the Naga confederation of people of the questioning of the merger of Manipur with the Indian union. These were not acceded by the state and developed into full scale insurgency. However, with the re-assertion of the state's control,

these insurgency situations became protracted and began undermining the socio-economic fabric of the state. Subsequent developments saw gradual spread. So that by late 1990's the state became a region in revolt. Today, when economic liberalisation is gradually transforming the national economy and society, the state is unable to attract the instruments that can telescoped development through *massive inflow of capital and technology* and in the process substantially transform the material life conditions of the common man. In addition to this, the increasing scale and intensity of natural calamities and immigration have further complicated the scenario.

Escalation of insurgency in the state, then can be attributed to the dynamics of internal geopolitical situation and to negligence and economic stagnation. Regional government remained concerned with strengthening of their electoral base and maintaining status quo, while being unable to effectively implement socio-economic programmes. These fell much short of aspirations of the people and their expectations of socio-economic progress, which led to social fragmentation and polarisation over issues. This encouraged the populace to look upon the protagonists as PANACEA for the socio-economic problems they faced. Subsequent mobilisation achieved cessation of these state run programmes. However, the limited socio-economic transformations and better accessibility conditions increased the level of materialistic hunger of the regional population. This was in direct proportion to the population's inability to satisfy their minimum requirements. In this regard, one can state that the initial decades after 1947 were wasted away in economic development terms. The consequences of which are probably responsible for the libertine decades of the 1970's and 1980's. These compelled the regional administrations to over extend its fragile infrastructural base. This also compelled the rapidly growing working population to become helpless, bewildered, aggressive, and hyperactive; who firmly believed that both the state and the society at large owes them a wages and a place. Yet these beliefs were mediate territorial horizons.

These also titled the equilibrium in the existing structures and opened up the Pandora box. This was essentially in the form of regional administrations effort of pleasing/satisfying the elite pressure groups on the one hand. And on the other hand, meeting the development requirements of the population of the concerned units. However, the protagonists of insurgency movements, by disrupting

the regional administration, were able to compel the former to re-identify the priorities and re-allocate the resources. It is obvious then, under these circumstances, economic development went awry.

It is not surprising therefore that both the state and the protagonists of insurgency elicited contradictory responses from the population. Instability parameters normally galvanised the state to address itself to the issues that had brought about it. Instead, half-hearted attempts and protagonists' interventions complicated the entire process of development. In a manner of speaking, they followed the principles of Keynesian programmes for re-allocating and re-channelling the priorities and resources to suit the exigencies of the situation. Besides, intervention carries material and moral costs which the population in particular is normally reluctant to bear. This is evident from the situations of status quo, where the population have been manipulated to pay the costs without the possible peace and development in the horizon. Today, all the regional governments and the insurgency groups have countered and check-mated each other. The latter enjoyed definite psychological advantage and were able to compel the population to participate in their programmes aimed at disrupting the state administrative machinery. They were successful in bringing the normal activities of the different political units in the region, to a grinding halt. The moral of the regional administration's personnel reached an all time low. Such instances introduced Domino Effect not only within but also between the administrative units.

Ethnic and political power became the focus of all mobilisation in the state. Economy—its health and the growing need to accelerate its pace, became secondary, although the state of economy was used as a factor in explaining the increasing frequency of conflicts in the state. Various socio-political factors expressed different levels of discriminations and deprivation affected due to their subordinate position in the respective administrative units of the region. This, along with the reluctance of the administration encouraged insurgency to spatially expand the levels of operations. Movements against the state intensified, through alliances between the insurgent outfits in the state. This common front in the 1980's, challenged the existing system and its practitioners. These groups also functioned as parallel governments, generating revenue by means that brought instantaneous compliance. This enabled them to increase their level of military preparedness.

At the same time, the regional administration found itself unable to cope up with situations. It was pre-occupied with maintaining the status quo and re-allocated its priorities and resources. They were also notable to effectively counter the psychological pressure exerted by the insurgency movements. They seemed to lose their political will and purpose. Besides, section of the populace and socio-political for a identified themselves with the conflict parameters. This was reinforced when many of these elements infiltrated into administrations. Resources and development came to be unaccounted while available channels were used to strengthen the continued survival of the elite-pressure groups in the region. The population became a mute spectator. It was such a situation that the Federal State intervened to contain the insurgency movement and revive the staggering economy.

It became obvious that with the disruption of the law and order and the stagnation of the economy, the situation in the state had come down to dangerous levels.

However, with the intervention of the federal state, an entirely new ethos emerged. Efforts were directed to restore the political will and purpose as well as increase the morale among the personnel of the regional administration, which was followed by efforts to revive and accelerate the pace of economic development. The attempt to restore normalcy seemed to be ridden with innumerable obstacles and difficulties, the reason being re-alignment of political forces. Thus, at individual or collective levels, it became difficult to categories the political and socio-economic demands and equate the same with the stability. For the various insurgency movements in the state, the return to status quo meant adoption of different tactics. They continued to take advantage to the aberrations in the regional administration and the respective societies while continuing their confrontation at a low key. For the general population, all these developments had profound impact. The state intervention brought with it a uneasy status quo, with perhaps more contenders competing for its limited resources. But, it meant revival of socio-economic programmes and realisation of short term economic initiatives. As an intermediary to restore peace, it was apparent that in order to introduce normalcy inducing conditions, the populace will have to play a more active role.

It is known fact that insurgency has come to stay in the state. Whatever measures that are adopted, it can only restrict level and

scale of insurgency and can always resurrect. What can be done is to direct efforts to thwart the rise of any conditions that may encourage such instances. Thus, it becomes obvious that what is needed, is to direct an unimpeded access to developing the economy and induce such conditions to emerge which will direct the necessary resources towards development. The policies need to be based on a force capability framework that induces the development effort. These suggests the necessity of broad policy consensus on the north-east, where continuity in policy is maintained. It should also call for a sound socio-economic policy where changes in administration does not disrupt or alter the economic process. It should involve a mass participation framework. There should be a broad consensus on the individual geopolitical framework for the regional administrative units with appropriate and flexible mechanism. It is at this centre that the workshop entitled constraints in development of Manipur was initiated.

There were nearly 20 participants of which 15 had contributed papers. These fifteen papers have been grouped under five heading of an Introduction (Part 1), Ethnicity, Insurgency, Law and Order (Part 2), Youth, Unemployment, Eradication of Drugs, AIDS (Part 3), Environment, Population and Industrial Development (Part 4), Women and Language as Part 5.

In Part 1 R. Gopalakrishnan provides a working scenario on developments in Manipur. In part 2, R.K. Ranjit Singh, Pradip Phanjanbam and L.I. Singh provides aspects of

In Part 3 M.C. Arun, M. Amarjeet Singh, Ng. Brajachand Singh and Lal Dena, discuss in Student Politics, Problem of Unemployment, Drug Abuse and Role of Church in Conflicts in Manipur.

In Part 4 B. Manithar Sharma, N. Mohendro Singh, Ch. Priyoranjan Singh and R.K. Narendra et al., discuss Impact of Environment, Problem of Industrial Development, Impact of Population Growth in Manipur

In Part 5 Ksh. Bimola Devi, L. Umarani Chanu et al., Gina Shangkhram and Ch. Yashawanta Singh deal aspect such as Role of Women in Politics, Manipur Women in Contemporary Situation, Women's Movements in Manipur, Language Development in Manipur.

Conclusion is represented by Recommendation of the Workshop.

Ethnic Movements of the Small Tribes of Manipur: A Preliminary Survey

R.K. Ranjit Singh

This paper aims at explaining the ongoing processes of ethnic movements among the tribes of Manipur. The small tribal groups are invariably involved in some types of ethnic movements in the recent past mainly due to the fact that they are hard-pressed to make social readjustments, undergo socio-cultural transformations and ultimately to adopt various survival strategies.

Multi-ethnic Setting

The geographical location of Manipur has favoured the movements of people from Burma (Myanmar) and India for many centuries. This process, we believe, still continues. Majority of the people of this State belongs to Mongoloid racial stock. Through a process of local miscegenation it has given rise to local populations having distinct physical features. At present the State has 29 Scheduled tribes, 7 Scheduled castes, the Meiteis and the Meitei Pangan (Manipuri Muslim) and representatives of people from different regions of India. A broad picture of the population structure of the State is given in Table 1.

The tibal populations of Manipur are known by the names which are officially recorded in the specific Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Thus the Tangkhul, the Mao, the Hmar, the Purum are some such examples. Officially, Manipur has 29 Scheduled tribes. These tribes range in size from 79 thousand in case of Tangkhul

Table 1. Population of Manipur State in 1991

Category	Male	Female	Total	P.C.
Scheduled Tribe	3,22,720	3,09,453	6,32,173	34.5
Scheduled Caste	18,806	18,299	37,105	2.0
Meiteis and other Categories of People—(combined)	5,96,833	5,71,038	11,67,871	63.5
Total	9,38,358	8,98,790	18,37,149	100

(1981 census) and as few as 24 individuals in case of Sema. All these tribes align themselves with one or the other of the three ethnic categories in a conventional way as the *Naga*, *Kuki* and *Mizo*. The preliminary attempt on my part to give some kind of ethnic alignment remains incomplete at this level of study. It is because of the fact that the constituent tribes have many other reasons to consider other than the common grounds of cultural, social and linguistic bases in determining their ethnic affiliation. Even within a distinct cultural-linguistic group also there is question of identity difference. Quite aptly one author remarks in the following way: "The tribes of Manipur are often unacceptably classified either into (a) Naga and non-Naga, (b) Naga and Kuki or (c) Naga and Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes... The generic terms like Naga, Chin, Kuki were given by outsiders for their own easy reference" (Kamkhenthang 1990, 275). It may be pointed out that the tribe of Kuki group mostly subject themselves to a kind of ethnically fluid situation. Such a confusion is brought about by its multiplicity of terms being used to refer to the group. This group is referred to as *Kuki*, *Chin*, and *Mizo*. The same term Kuki was applied to the tribes found in the present Mizoram and the Chin State of Burma. The term was also applied to some tribes of Manipur. Some authors intend to say that the tribes of Manipur other than the Nagas are generally referred to as Kuki. They may be further classified as New Kuki and Old Kuki on the basis of their appearance in Indian side (for example, see J. Shakespear, 1912). In the Chin Hills side of Burma they are known as Chin. Nowadays, as a matter of convention, the Thadou speakers continue to accept Kuki as their name. The same group of people in Burma is designated as Chin while in India they are known as Kuki. The term *Chin* is also exogenous and it means *people of basket* as *Chin* stands for basket in Burmese language. One Paite scholar named Haugo (1971-72) of Mandalay University expressed

his displeasure on the application of the term *Chin* to refer to his group. He writes, "It is not only foreign but also derogatory, for it becomes more or less synonymous with being uncivilized, uncultured, backward, even foolish and silly" (cited in Kamkhenthang loc. cit. 277). Paite, Vaiphei, Hmar, the Zou etc. have reached a stage of saturation with the outbreak of tension in Churachandpur area during 1997-98. The type of social relation which existed between these tribes has been described by an author. Many tribes who were supposed outwardly to accept Chin or Kuki disown themselves from these terms. In Manipur the Paite, Hmar and other tribes regard the Thadou speakers as Kuki. In this context, one can state that the Paites are more Chin than any other tribes. By Mizo we mean the Lushai. The non-Lushai speakers are not integrated to the Mizo as the non-Paite speakers in Manipur repulse the term Chin. Chin-Kuki-Mizo group (in the context of Manipur) think that they have nothing to do with Chin. The same attitude is applied to the Thadou speakers in relation to Kuki. In the past several years the Thadou speakers accept to be Thadou Kuki expecting that their cognate tribes also would be a Kuki (Kamkhenthang, loc. cit. 283). In the subsequent years that followed we witnessed a new kind of relationship between the one-time Kuki tribes themselves. This new type of relationship is not conducive to forge unity among themselves as deep-rooted fear psychosis appears to persist between them. As such the problem of "ethnic divides" is not between the traditional lines of the Meitei versus Hillmen or Meitei versus Naga or Meitei versus Kukis. Rather the emergent trend is between the one-time Kuki group of tribes, too.

Thadou-Kuki Controversy

All the Thadou speakers cannot be covered by the term Kuki alone. The tribes which speak Thadou language but who are not Thadou by birth are now unwilling to be Thadou. The explanation for this is that, "Thadou was an eponymous ancestor for only limited clans and he is a junior ancestor to whom the descendants of some ancestors senior to Thadou are unwilling to acknowledge loyalty to Thadou. The fact is that seniority pays more. The tension between Thadou on the one hand and Kuki (a faction of Thadou speakers) run high. For sometime till Thadou dialect along with Paite, Hmar, Tangkhul and Mizo was recognised by the Government of Manipur

as medium of instruction in primary stage of education, the speakers of Thadou remain peacefully and blissfully as Thadou or Kuki or Thadou Kuki.” (Kamkhenthang *loc. cit.* 283).

Among the Kukis, language factor has a great role to play particularly in forging unity and establishing perpetual social relationships. The Kuki tribes while using their respective dialects or one of the dialects of the tribe, can communicate among themselves. “Thus, the extreme case of language similarity among the Kukis is that of the Thadous and their cognate groups who speak one and the same language popularly known as the Thadou language. Both the groups accepted the term without demur till the dawn of Independence in India as an expression of solidarity. Now, the situation is changed. Instead of accepting it as a common language and as an expression of solidarity, it has unleashed disunity, enmity, tension, conflict and social disharmony among them” (Gangte 1993: 231).

The justification for such a situation is that “The Thadou groups say that the language has been known as ‘Thadou language’ from time immemorial. It belongs to them, and should therefore, be called ‘Thadou language’ and nothing else.” On the other hand, their cognates claim that the language is not the exclusive possession of the Thadou alone. It is as much theirs, and therefore, should be called ‘Kuki language’. At a time when social tension was at the peak, the Government of Manipur issued an order to the effect that Thadou language be read upto Primary stage in school (Government of Manipur, Secretariat: Education Department, Order No. 17/1/72-SE, dated 22-3-1977 cited in Gangte 1993). This was, however, contrasted by the other groups. Conceding the counterclaim of the other groups, the Government of Manipur issued another order (*ibid*: dated 3-1-81 cited in Gangte 1993) which superseded the earlier orders deleting the term ‘Thadou’ replacing it by “Kuki”. The result of such action of the Government had done more harm than good. A Pandora Box had been opened for all concerned (Gangte 1993: 231-32).

The main contention of the ‘Thadou’ protagonists is that ‘Kuki’ being the nomenclature denoting other ethnic groups of Kuki who do not speak ‘Thadou language’ as well, should not be misused, by calling it as ‘Kuki language’. The scope and coverage of the nomenclature ‘Kuki’ must on no account be made narrow and limited. In the event of the ‘Thadou’ language’ being called ‘Kuki

language', the term 'Kuki' automatically excludes other ethnic groups of erstwhile 'Kuki' and would, therefore, relegate the nomenclature to the level of group appellations which constitute the term 'Kuki'. The term 'Thadou' which is a personal name must not be treated synonymous to the term 'Kuki' which is a political nomenclature having a far larger meaning and wider scope than the term 'Thadou' (Gangte 1993: 232–33). What is emphasized here is that 'Kuki' is the ethnic name encompassing a number of kindred tribes of which Thadou is but one tribe. Therefore, the term 'Thadou' should not be equated with 'Kuki', which is more embracing term.

Social Implication of 'Thadou'

This issue may be explained slightly in a different way—on the basis of socio-cultural considerations. "The ethnic appellations among the Kukis bear personal names. Thus Thadou is the name of the progenitor of the Kipgen, the Haokip, the Singson (Singsit) and the Sitlhou. Thadou is the younger brother of Doungel and the elder brother of Chongloi, Hangshing and Touthang. The descendants of Thadou being preponderant over the others and also being more famous in reputation colloquially, 'Thadou' has been used to denote all the groups mentioned above collectively. But as time changes, the thinking of the people changes. They have become more conscious of everything names meant for the descendants of Thadou alone, other groups have refused to be so identified since recent past for it carries a deeper social values than superficially taken for granted. Such colloquial usage of the term 'Thadou' has quickened the process of disintegration among the Thadous and their cognate groups. It has, indeed, become the main issue of identity among the Kukis, and has, therefore, become the centrifugal force which drives homogeneous people into divergent tribal groups" (Gangte 1993: 232).

Emergence of Formal Organization

The Thadou is a recognised Scheduled tribe of Manipur whereas Kuki is not. However, Kuki is a recognised tribe of the States of Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Nagaland. Kuki is taken as a specific tribe of Nagaland. For the furtherance of the cause of the Kuki consolidation a Kuki Tribe Recognition Demand Committee

was formed by the speakers of Thadou with an objective of restructuring the list of Scheduled tribes of Manipur. This move has been flatly and vehemently opposed by the Thadou National Council on the ground that the present list of Scheduled tribes of Manipur is good enough as it is done to suit the desire of each tribe by modifying the original order of 1950. In the existing list of tribes there are some tribal clans which have been recognised as independent tribes. "The scheme of putting some clans to the status of tribe is going to be harmful for some tribes like the Paite, Zou and Thadou" (ibid). For instance, the Paite feels it bad when the Guite clans are carved out of the tribal group.

Some important generalizations which we may arrive at after this discussion are:

- (i) The speakers of Thadou language but who are not Thadou by themselves cannot accept Thadou or Thadou Kuki to be their tribal names.
- (ii) The term (Kuki) cannot bind the different tribes together. It was already disowned by representatives of the tribes (viz., the Paite, Hmar, Zou, Vaiphei, Gangte etc.) leaving Thadou speakers alone to adopt Kuki.

Among other reasons of dissociation of the Thadou from other kindred tribes, a very important factor happened to be Thadous' dominance which the other people do not like. Therefore, these groups of people are on the look out for a suitable term. The term 'Zoumi' or 'Zomi' appears to be more acceptable as it is endogenous. This term is acceptable to the Zou, Gangte, Hmar, Vaiphei, Paite tribes of Manipur. Literally Zoumi and Mizo have the same meaning. The only difference is that Zoumi is a term used in common parlance and Mizo is a poetic word (Kamkhenthang 1990: 287).

One of the reasons for the emergence of varied opinions among the onetime Kuki groups of tribes is their socio-cultural-ecology in which these tribes are habituated. In the course of their long socio-cultural intercourse with neighbouring tribes, they have imbibed new values and ideas; thus their decision-making processes have been accordingly oriented towards the neighbouring popular groups. Hence we see the emergence of varied opinions which are difficult to be reconciled.

The Thadou and their cognate groups scatter all over Manipur. They also live in pockets of Nagaland and Assam, and they are

being influenced by the examples of their Naga neighbours. These groups of the Kukis are the exponents for continuance of the term 'Kuki' as a common identity. The Hmars and the Paites are the second and the third major groups of Kuki, who are found mostly in the southern part of Manipur. They have constant social intercourse with the Chins of the Chin Hills State of Burma and the Mizos of Mizoram. The influence from the Chin Hills State of Burma and from Mizoram have in no small measure contributed to their variegated opinions on the question of common identity. The smaller tribal groups, such as, the Gangte, the Simte, the Vaiphei, the Zou etc. are sandwiched in between the Thadous and their cognates on the one hand and the Hmars and the Paites on the other. The groups are often influenced by the bigger groups on either side of them, and are, therefore, non-adverse to adopting any of the controversial nomenclatures for a common identity, provided such adoption gives all the ethnic groups of the erstwhile Kukis a sense of solidarity and unity (Gangte 1993: 228).

Basis for Ethnic Movements in Manipur

The type of relationships that exists between different groups of people has something to do with the past history of the nation or the state. The historical evidence demonstrates that Manipur has been always provided a broad socio-political framework for integration and frequent assimilation of tribes into the Meitei social formation. In the same way it could be a reason for hatred as well as bitterness between them. The change of identity or the shift of alliance with other groups is not novel development in the context of 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., in the time of kings) the movement was essentially Meitei-centric, that is to say, small groups redefining their position vis-a-vis the dominant Meitei formation; in the recent (post-independence) times, the tribe realign their identity in what we may term as 'tribe-centric' manner" (Ranjit 1985: 328-29). There is no longer the question of a tribe seeking admission into the Meitei fold nor the Meiteis presently have any political machinery as in the past. It may be mentioned here that, during Kings' time the people who had keen desire of

joining the Meitei social system could be formally permitted by the consent of the Meitei king. Since after the official enlistment of Manipur tribes under the Scheduled Tribe List, the change in tribal-level names have become rather difficult. The tribal names so recorded have become more or less a distinct unit of formal as well as official reference. Thus merger of smaller tribes into larger and powerful socio-cultural formation is not very easy, if not possible. Again, the unification drives among the tribe are never towards the larger groups like the Meitei who have different process of social orientation. For instance, the Zemi, Liangmei and Rongmeis prefer to have a larger group by the name of "Zeliangrong". All such movements have reasons to justify their claims. Hence, in the context of Manipur, for that matter the whole of North-East India, the smaller tribes naturally want to join the larger ethnic groups like, 'Naga', 'Kuki' and 'Mizo'. The Naga, Kuki or Mizo represent the highest level of identity, Zeliangrong, for example, represents the intermediate level of identity. The tribal-level identities are the Monsang, Moyon, Koireng etc. which are mostly the recognised official names of these discrete tribes. A number of small tribal groups which still have not yet determined their ethnic affiliation have a tough time to choose one. After determining their choicest reference group all socio-political movements are set into motion. This is the normal process of ethnic movement characteristics of the small tribes of this State.

The Tribes in New Association

Many of the tribes which were classified under 'Old Kuki' by the earlier scholars have now associated themselves with the Nagas. Among them mention may be made of the Anal, Moyon, Monsang, Chothe, Purum etc. Although these tribes have many things in common with the Kuki tribes, it will be unrealistic to say that they are not Nagas in the present context. They have already joined Naga constellation of tribes even before Independence. The historical, geographical, and even the role of leaders and exposure to the modernization process, the roles of media and communication systems all worked together.

The earlier British ethnographers put under the 'Old Kuki' the tribes such as the Anal, Aimol, Purum, Chothe, Lamgang, Kom Vaiphei, Thikup, Mantak and Ronte, perhaps, on the basis of their

linguistic and cultural similarities. The author like J. Shakespear (1912) who is responsible for such a classification, did not make any mention of the tribal names like Moyon and Monsang although these tribes lived side by side with the Anals. These tribes have close cultural as well as linguistic affinities with the Anal as such there is possibility of these tribes being overshadowed by the Anal. Although this type of classification contradicts the present trend of classifying the tribes by the people themselves, the earlier classifications cannot be regarded as baseless.

Many modern scholars will give a classification of tribes of Manipur in the following style: "The tribes of Manipur who are now grouped under the Naga fold are among the earliest inhabitants of the hills of Manipur. The name Naga was given to them by the British administrators with their policy of identifying or classifying the tribes of Nagaland and Manipur. The Naga tribes of Manipur are known by their tribal names. The tribes like Zeme, Liangmei, Rongmei, Mao, Maram, Thangal and Tangkhul and Maring who have strong tradition of common migration with the Northern Nagas of Nagaland on ethnological, linguistic and cultural grounds had been called Naga. There are some tribes like Anal, Moyon, Monsang, Lamgang, Tarao, Chothe, Chiru, Koireng and Kharam who have linguistic affinity with the Kuki-Chin and cultural identification with the Nagas" (Gangmumei 1995: 29).

About the mythical origin of the Nagas a scholar states: "Though the origin and migration of the Nagas as a whole have not been properly settled by the scholars, they pose as one of the challenging identity problems of Naga history... Like some tribes of Nagaland, Manipur's Naga tribes point to Makhel in Mao area as their place of origin, from where they migrated to the present habitat (T.C. Hodson 1911 cited in Gangmumei 1995). There are also traditions among the Naga tribes of Chandel speaking dialects akin to Kuki-Chin, showing their migration from the Chin hills and Kabaw Valley. There is a Tangkhul tradition of migrating from Thaug dut in the Kabaw Valley. The other Naga tribes like Chiru and Koireng who have strong affinity with the Kom and Kharam point to the migration from the southern hills, probably South Manipur and Chin Hills. The Makhel tradition is quite prominent in the history of Naga migration" (Gangmumei 1995: 30).

An important difference which may be brought into focus here is that the tribal names of the past were given by the outsiders on

the basis of their cultural or linguistic considerations. In those days village was the unit of all activities and their tribal names was not as important as we have now. The case of "Old Kuki" is a clear example. Mainly because of such reasons many tribes want to disown their earlier names and use new ones which are more acceptable to them. The considerations on cultural or linguistic grounds need not be only rallying factors in determining the names of a tribe. Although the tribes like the Anal, Moyon, Monsang, Purum and the Lamgang were classified with the Old Kukis, they have become Nagas since they deliberately join the latter group of tribes. In such a situation, the ascribed term "Old Kuki" is no longer meaningful or rather it becomes a misnomer. The important factors which induce them in joining the Naga constellation might be their geographical proximity coupled with religious activities and associations thereof. These tribes live close to the Tangkhul and Maring territories. Apart from geographical factor, the decisions of the educated leaders was an important deciding factor in fixing their alliance with other tribes and adopting the common appellation. The roles played by Anal leaders in the pre-Independence political activities of Manipur sets an illustrious example for the generations that follow. The Anals are the people who join hands with leaders of the Naga nationalistic movements in its early stage. Similarly the Moyon and Monsang leaders joined hands in the political activities of the subsequent period. The roles played by the leaders in the political process of the pre-Independence days perhaps determine their future course of socio-political orientations. As mentioned above the new political awareness followed by the heels of their conversion to Christianity. Among these people individual-level conversion to Christianity, particularly among the Anal, Moyon, Monsang, Chothe and Kom goes as far back to the turn of 20th century. Conversion to Christianity among the Moyon, Monsang and Anal was started during 1920s. Thus we notice a close interconnectedness of Christianity with the spread of modern education. The new religion created grounds for regular contacts with different groups of people and establishes ties with them. The regular contacts of the people through religious activities laid the foundation for a perpetual bond between different tribal populations of this region. The earliest ever Christian Missionary activity which started operating in Manipur was the American Baptist Missionary which was spearheaded by Mr. William Pettigrew around 1900.

An important local pastor of this Mission who served among the different tribal areas of Manipur since 1925 was Teba Karong (also called Teba Kom, Teba Kilong or Teba Kom Christian) who received formal education under the care of Mr. William Pettigrew. As a Superintending Pastor he worked in Anal-inhabited areas of southeast Manipur (the present Chandel District) between 1928–1942. In 1947 he took a lead in forming an ethno-political forum by the name of the Khul National Union (for short Khul Union) and of which he was the founder President. The change in his career was directly related to the prevailing political scenario on the eve of India's Independence. A very important development on the part of Manipur tribes was putting together of all the tribes of Manipur into larger political forum to vie for any other political force which may come up. This portion of the history of Manipur is best described by Prim S. Vaiphei in the following paragraphs:

“During 1947–50, the Kuki ethnoses [tribes] with the exception of the Thadous organised themselves in one body and named it Khulmi (means people of the cave) Union [a local corruption of the Khul Union, see above]. The Khulmi was a rival organisation of the Kuki. The Khulmi Union was an organisation of the following tribes: Aimol, Moyon, Monsang, Maring, Mate, Chiru, Chothe, Hmar, Anal, Paite, Gangte, Simte, Kom, Koireng, Lamkang, Vaiphei, Zou etc. Late Mr. Teba Kilong [Teba Karong] and Mr. Tiangkham Paite were the President and the Secretary respectively. The executive body was composed of 1. Dr. Kampu Gangte, 2. Thangkhai Paite, 3. Tawna Hmar, 4. Angnal Anal, 5. Toma [Thoma] Moyon, 6. Ngamdir Moyon, 7. Mono Monsang, 8. Damjakhai Vaiphei, 9. Halpao Mate, 10. Lampum Gangte, 11. Khaikam etc.” (Prem S. Vaiphei 1995: 128).

Although the Khul Union emerged as a very popular political organization in the 1948 election of Manipur Legislative Assembly by sending up 7(seven) members viz., Dr. Damjakhai, Dr. Kampu, T.C. Tiangkham, Tuljachin, Teba Kilong (Forest Minister), Mono Monsang, Holkhapau Mate members to the Manipur Assembly, the Khul Union did not survive long because of the lack of proper leader (*ibid*).

The proselytization process to which the small tribal populations of Manipur were subjected is now complete. They have invariably become Christians. Thus they no longer move in an indeterminate way. Despite the fact, many of these tribes are in the process of reorienting themselves socially, culturally and even politically

towards Naga way of life. Thus they have virtually been moving towards becoming a "part culture" and "part society" of the larger Naga world.

The Koireng Tribe: Still in Search of New Company

For many tribes of this region their ethno-political orientations are already established. However, for some tribes a proper consolidation is yet to be achieved. The Koireng tribe is one such example.

The Koirengs represent a small tribal group of Manipur (949 in 1981) who live mostly in the foot-hills bordering Imphal valley. The tribe is referred to as "Kolhen" (Shakespeare 1912), "Quoireng" (Brown 1873, Hodson 1911), "Quoireang" (Mc Culloch 1859) "Kolren" (Grierson 1908), "Kolhan" (Bose 1980-1981). The people themselves believe that the present name of the tribe "Koireng" is the distorted Meitei version of the word "Kolhen", which is probably derived from "Kolren" which means the people of the east (*kol*-east; *hen*-people in Koireng). Viewed from this angle, Grierson's version "Kolren" comes very close to the local usage of the term. As the etymology of the term suggests, the Koirengs are the "people of the east". Due to this fact the people themselves prefer to call themselves "Kolhen" in stead of "Koireng" which according to them is ambiguous. Some sections of the tribe suggest a term "Koren" to mean the title of the divinity of the people of Moirang, a section of the Meitei, used to call "Kolren Lai" which literally means the "God of Koren". The existing official name of the tribe is "Koireng".

A tribe like the Koireng sometimes finds difficulties to survive as an independent socio-cultural entity in the face of steep competitions and struggles which are the order of the day. For their healthy survival as a discrete tribe, they require to articulate themselves with the larger communities to gather political strength or to enlarge their socio-cultural circles. Sometimes the socio-cultural closeness alone may not be the sufficient grounds for forging such an everlasting ethnic partner. The other factors like religion, geographical proximity and the roles of political leaders are important determining factors for their ethnic membership. These are the important strategies which every small tribal group necessarily looks for.

As in the case of the Moyon, Monsang, Anal etc. the Koirengs looked forward for an inter-tribal association. Around 1947 a few

tribes like the Kom, Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, Purum and the Kharam formed a socio-cultural association under the name "the Kom Rem Association", after the words *Kom* for the Kom tribe and *Rem* for hillmen. It had a religious wing which started functioning right from 1952. The main activities of the Kom Rem Baptist Churches Association included evangelism and other works for the promotion of Christianity. In 1961 Mr. L. Songkip, the former member of the Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council, was the President of the Kom Rem Association. During his tenure first Kom Rem students' conference was held and by 1962 all the Kom Rem villages of Manipur had joined the Kom Rem Association. As a part of Kom Rem's activities the Koireng people of Utonglok and Sadu Koireng (Senapati District of Manipur) were proselytized. Between 1987-88 the Association had to pass through a rough weather as differences in opinion between the members of the constituent tribes attained its climax. It resulted to a split which gave birth to two associations—the Kom Union and Kom Rem People's Council (K.R.P.C.). The Koireng tribe supported the latter Association (K.R.P.C.). Even after this also a section of the tribes could not tolerate the domineering stance of the Kom tribal leaders. Hence an Association by the name of "Rem" was constituted by the leaders of Koireng, Chiru and Aimol. One educated Chiru leader was the President whereas a Koireng leader worked as Secretary. The Joint Secretary was an Aimol.

During 1990s the tribes like the Koireng and the Chiru received various calls to join the larger groups of tribes. The Hmar people have shown their willingness of accommodating the Koireng within their tribe on the basis of their cultural-linguistic similarities although the attractive forces from the Naga side is equally strong. The educated youths appear to have associational ties with the Nagas in spite of the fact that majority of the general mass want to maintain a neutral position. A proper determination of an ever-lasting alliance with the larger group like the Naga, Kuki, Mizo etc, depends very much on the roles assumed by the educated leaders—the so-called tribal *elites*. They represent the people who have clear vision of the existing problems, having skills to solve difficult problems rationally. Therefore, the general mass rests on the wit of such people who are going to determine their destiny. In case of the Koirengs such *elites* are yet to emerge.

Again the Meitei-centric Identity Movement among the Tribes

In the Senapati District of Manipur, in the midst of prominent Naga tribes like the Mao, Maram and Kacha Naga (Zeme and Liangmei) there is a small tribal group officially called Koirao (919 in 1981). From the earlier evidences we understand that this tribe has been known by different names, such as Kolya, Tangal [Thangal], Khoirao, Meitheipham, Meeyang-khang and officially today as the Koirao. Such a confusion over the tribal name was quite natural because of the fact that tribal-level consciousness was non-existent during those days (in the days of Kings). The important socio-cultural or even political unit was the compact territorial unit in the form of villages. The names like Meeyangkhang [Mayangkhang] or Meitheipham all refer to village settlements inhabited by the Koirao tribe. Even in the Meitei historical records too they were referred to as Thangal to mean the inhabitants of Thangal Surung village of the Koirao.

The Thangal is one of the Naga tribes. Due to constant contacts with the surrounding populations belonging to Rongmei, Liangmei and Zeme tribes the Thangal tribe has already established regular marital relationships with these tribes. In course of time, due to very regular marital relationships, there has been even the question of changing individual tribal names in favour of these kindred tribes. The people of new generation feel that if this process continues to function any further, the tribe may likely to suffer from many social problems. In apprehension of such a future, the youths of Thangal tribe have joined their hands to counter such attitudes so that the tribal name Thangal be safeguarded.

With the functioning of the Thangal Naga Union (an important formal organisation of the Thangal), the general desire of the people to change their official name "Koirao" in favour of Thangal has been intensified. They claim that Thangal is the original name of the tribe although they are listed as "Koirao" in the Scheduled tribe list of Manipur.

After the close of the British Rule in Manipur, there was a transition of power from the Meitei king to the elected representatives. During this time various tribal groups started forming socio-political groupings, to bring all round development of their society. The Koirao is one of these tribal groups. Such political consciousness appears to have come to the Thangal very late. They became conscious only when the consequence of an age-old practice

of marrying wives from outside the tribe (mostly from the Maram tribe) became conspicuous in their local tradition, dialect and customs. It caused anxiety among the Thangal. In view of this they chalked out a plan to put a check on further degeneration of their culture. The Thangal Education Committee was formed in 1947 under the patronage of Mr. Kd. Thaiba of Mapao Thangal village. Primarily the Committee was constituted to propagate and encourage formal education among the Thangals. Later on it became a body which strives to enforce social reformation among the Thangal; it also served as a common platform for all the Thangal people.

On 25th August 1966 the Thangal Education Committee was renamed as Thangal Naga Union. This Union has all the chiefs of Thangal villages as its executive members. To intensify its activities, a youth's wing was formed under the name of the Thangal Naga Students' Union. Right from its inception, besides taking care of the welfare of the people, the Thangal Union has been striving to reaffirm the origin and death of Thangal General and Charai Thangal, another war hero of the Thangal tribe, in the context of the history of Manipur.

The Thangals have a firm belief that Thangal Major, the legendary hero of Manipur (later on called Thangal General) was a Thangal tribe by birth. According to Thangal source, he was born at Thangal Surung village who later on joined the Meitei society during the reign of Gambhir Singh Maharaj (1825–1834). He was affiliated to Kangabam lineage of the Meitei social system and served the king of Manipur in the capacity of a nobleman. An excerpt from a written document of the Thangal Naga Union published in connection with Thangal Day (the 13th August) Celebration of 1980, provides the following accounts: "Thangal General (1817–1891) was born in 1817 at Thangal Surung of Thangal Naga tribe in Sadar Hills, North District [now Senapati district]. He was the eldest son of Shri Saraingamba Thangal of Thangal Surung village. His original name was Lungthoubu...

In 1830, on Tuesday, the 14th August, when Maharaj Pukhramba Tangkhomba [?] came to catch elephant near Ekou, "Thangal General" [then] (Lungthoubu) was guiding the party and they caught one she elephant with a calf. The bravery and strength of Thangal General was greatly admired by the Maharaja who wanted to take him to Sana palace for the service of the people of Manipur. Accordingly Lungthoubu's service was utilized in Sana palace by

the Maharaja at the age of 14. He served Manipur from the reign of Shri Gambhir Singh upto the reign of Shri Kulachandra Singh" (op. cit. 9). Apart from this account given by the Thangals we get plenty of material furnished by different authors. Each author gives accounts which do not maintain any uniformity. For the purpose of illustration we may take the instance of Sir James Johnstone's account on Thangal General. He writes, "Thangal Major was a remarkable character, and had a chequered history. Thangal Major was one of the props of the throne when Gambhir Singh ascended it. He had been introduced at the court at an early age, and accompanied the Rajah in an expedition against the village of Thangal inhabited by the tribe of Naga. He was given the name Thangal in memory of the event" (Johnstone 1971: 75). No doubt, Thangal Major was a very prominent figure in the history of Manipur. We have sufficient accounts on his activities; however, no clear identity, to conform to those of the Thangals' claim is available so far. A Meitei scholar's view on Thangal's identity is very much in the normal way of identifying a Meitei individual. His view is based on the statement given during the trial in connection with the killing of British officials. The statement was made in the court of the Chief Political Officer, Manipur on the 25th May 1891, a few months before his death by hanging in the public on the 13th August 1891. Thangal General said that he was the son of Khetri Singh Manipuri of village Angom Leikai, aged 85 years. He was a Piba (eldest male issue of the eldest surviving line of a family) of Chingamakha Taba Kangabam family of Ningthouja Salai of the Meiteis. He was a descendant of Meidingu Yaraba who ruled in Manipur (799-821 A.D.) and was the 18th line of descendent from Meidingu Yaraba (Khelchandra 1997: 1-2).

The Thangal Naga Union's objective at the moment is to get the valour and fame earned at the cost of Thangal General's life for the cause of the people of Manipur be perpetuated in the name of the tribe by retaining the tribal name "Thangal". The movement on the part of Thangal tribe is already launched as early as 1980. Whether they get their aspirations fulfilled or not, the tribes have explored a new platform where formal discourse over the relationship of the Thangal tribe with the Meitei may be regularly held. Some day we may be able to solve the riddle through proper empirical studies. The main activities lying in front of the Thangal Naga Union include the protection of their identity and to accelerate developmental process. The other issues other than those are as follows:

- i. To rectify the term 'Koirao' and change it to their original name 'Thangal' in the Scheduled Tribe list of Manipur.
- ii. To introduce the Thangal dialect in the All India Radio tribal programme.
- iii. To construct memorial hall—one for Thangal General at Thangal Surung and another for Charai Thangal at Mayangkhang village (Source: Latif Shah and Ranjit Singh, 1999).

The Manipur situation clearly indicates that the various tribes of this region had already got different experiences in the course of history. In the historical period they happened to be allies, foes, or even the subjects of the Meitei kings. Despite this fact, the post-independence picture is quite different. The strong force emanating from different powerful nations of this region have already waned. Consequently they have been left to choose their own destiny. During this period, the roles of the educated political or religious leaders were quite important. Whatever course they fix for the tribe or community to follow has now emerged as the guiding force to the succeeding generations. Consequently, the Moyon, Monsang as well as the Anals have already got a determined direction for their socio-political orientations and goals. And as such movements are already set into motions. Therefore, almost all the tribal ethnic movements whatever we may come across in the present-day Manipur can be analyzed and understood from these perspectives. As indicated above, the linguistic, cultural or even religious factors alone may not be the right pointers of ethnic movements of the small tribes of this region.

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Insurgency and its Impact on the Development of Manipur

Pradip Phanjanbam

Inhibition of the growth of industries in the northeast as a result of insurgency can be broadly classified under two heads. One is direct, the other indirect. In the first category, investment is shied away by the sense of fear that insurgents may interfere directly through extortion, intimidation or else the industry in which the investment is being made may get caught in unintentional but all the same dangerous crossfire, just as the Japan sponsored sericulture project was. It may be recalled how in the month of June, a Japanese engineers team detailed to do the ground work for this project got themselves into a dangerous situation when members of a particular insurgent group sought shelter in the rented accommodation they were putting up. In an encounter that resulted in the house, six militants were killed. Luckily the Japanese team was out of the house when the encounter took place, saving a lot of diplomatic complications.

The second manner in which industrial growth is inhibited in an insurgency situation is indirect, or should we say less direct. It has to do with counter insurgency. The establishment in its effort to contain insurgency, has not time to think of meaningful investment elsewhere, other than in acquiring counter insurgency implements. Hence the government's preference in these states has been more towards buying guns and ammunition, raising counter insurgency forces, etc. rather than buying tractors, fertilisers and other investments which can augment the availability of bread and butter.

This is the immediate situation. A trap from which it is difficult to escape. Each of the two scenario has its own logic. The insurgents

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