

Abstract of Ph.D Thesis
Hills and Valley: Relationship of people in Pre-Colonial Manipur
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Geographical factors played an important role in the progress of society. Therefore historical events should be analysed in the context of both space and time. In the light of these, the relationship between hills and valley people of Manipur in pre-colonial period were analysed. As the hill people are devoid of written material, oral sources are used extensively along with the written document of the valley dweller.

Tracing their history, it is established that Meitei and Naga are the earliest settlers, though their date of habitation is unknown. Accounts which give account of their origin are not conclusive but give enough indication about their direction of migration from South East Asian region. Archaeologist, ethnographer and Linguist have established close affinity with the South Asian region and trace their origin to that of Tibeto Burman family in China. Account of their migration mentions the existence of numerous groups prior to their migration indicating that migration was a continuous process. People settled both in the hills and valley depending on their choice. With the passage of time, differentiation began as each group began to identify within themselves and with the place of their settlement. Successive wave of migration in the region further accelerated the process of consolidation as different cultural groups. Migration and environmental factor are directly related as more prospective valley is bound to attract more migrants than the unfertile hilly terrain. The two societies who are settled in different eco-setting underwent different social processes. Hill people with their little knowledge of technological advancement were less competent to tame the various environmental hazards, so they adjust with the local niche. On the other hand, valley dwellers with enriched culture tame their environment and used its resources in developing their society into a strong Meitei kingdom in historical period. The political relation between hills and valley was antagonist however hills people were able to enjoy their independent status due to its geographical location, dispersed settlement pattern and socio-political formation. Meitei attention was directed toward Kabaw valley. Their attempts to hold over Kabaw valley however necessitate the Meitei to have stronghold over the hills people settling between the routes.

Despite their political difference, similarities in socio-cultural aspect of the two societies were seen. This could be due to common descent and through prolonged contacts between the two societies brought through economic necessities and their quest of political domination. Settlement of new migrant in the later period brought about socio-economic change due to introduction of new technology. Sanskritisation changes the socio-cultural aspect of Meitei society. The process of Sanskritisation was courted by the king and directed toward Meitei society with a deliberate attempt to distinguish themselves from surrounding tribes and society as superior community. In this way the Meitei were able to maintain their cultural superiority over hills people even after losing their political domination in the later year.