

Revolutionary Revelations:
Insurgency in Manipur Valley,
1964-2005

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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Declaration

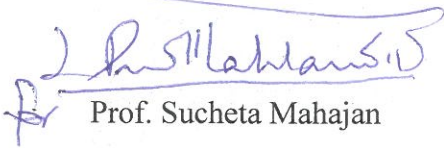
I declare that the dissertation entitled, **Revolutionary Revelations: Insurgency in Manipur Valley, 1964-2005**, submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy from Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.



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Certificate

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Dedicated to

Manipur si eigidi thwaigi leipham ni

Manipur, the home of my heart.

Acknowledgements

There is a famous saying in English. It goes, “It takes an entire village to raise a child”. I don’t know much about children, but I can say that a dissertation is not the work of any one scholar. The scholar merely brings together the hard work and dedication of all the support – infrastructural, mental, emotional – that sustains them. This dissertation has seen the support of so many that if I miss out any of them, it would be a grave failing on my part.

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If I have missed out someone because of an oversight, I apologise. There are so many people who've helped me through this that I accept someone may have slipped my mind in the course of writing this.

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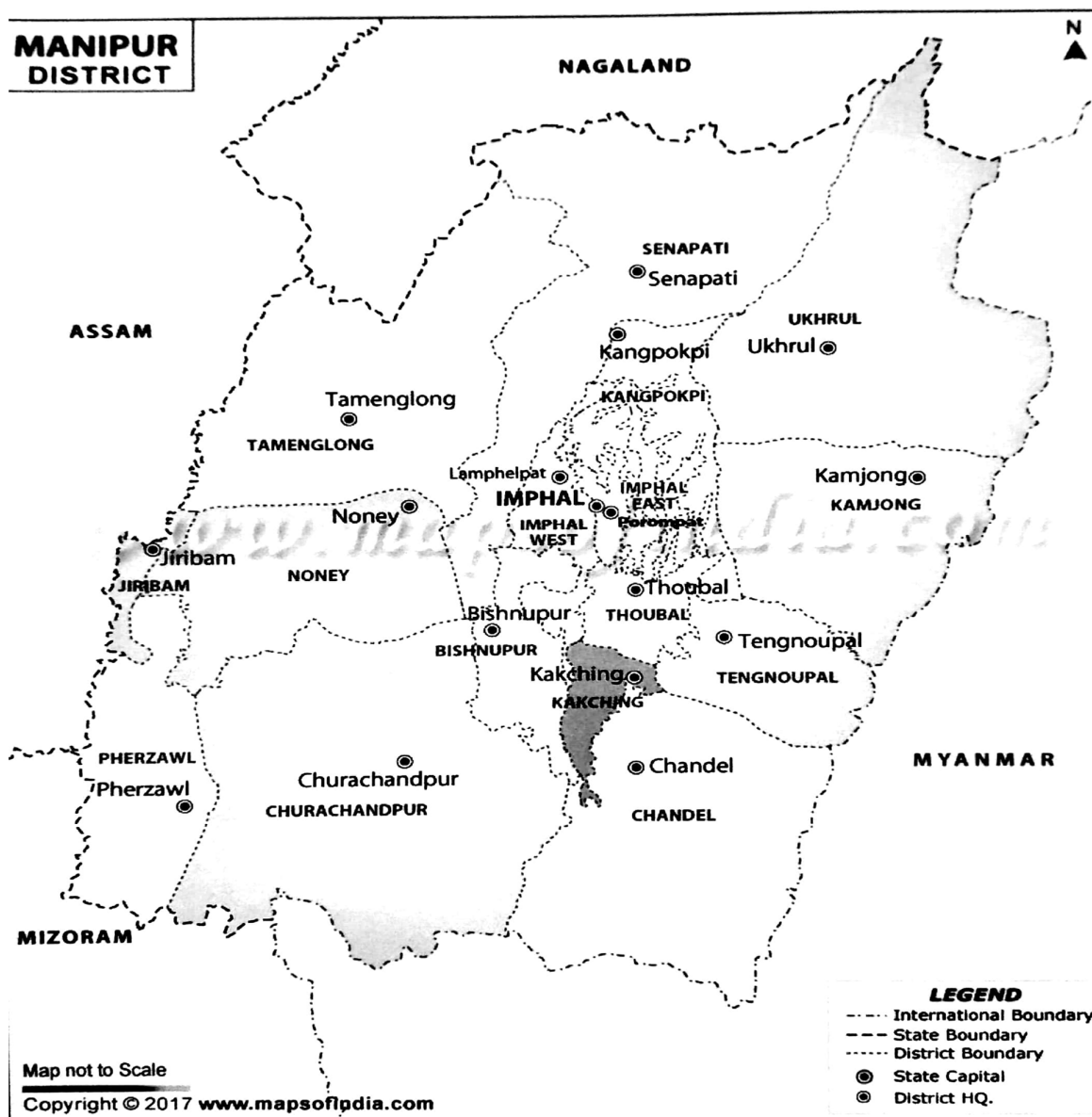
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Manipur District Map



The valley consists of 06 districts namely Imphal East, Imphal West, Bishnupur, Thoubal, Kakching and Jiribam. Kakching was separated from Thoubal and Jiribam from Imphal West in the year 2016.

Road Distance (Kms) from Imphal to Important Places within the State²

Sr. No.	Name of Place	Distance from Imphal (Kms)
1.	Tousem	253
2.	Tamenglong	147
3.	Tadubi	100
4.	Singhat	92
5.	Maram	85
6.	Senapati	61
7.	Kangpokpi	45
8.	Ningthoukhong	37
9.	Motbung	27
10.	MayangImphal	22
11.	Kanglatongbi	25
12.	Moirang	43
13.	New Churachandpur	62
14.	None	66
15.	Chassad	112
16.	Nungba	125
17.	Chingai	159
18.	Thanlon	220
19.	Tipaimukh	323
20.	Jiribam	225

² Public Works Department, Manipur.

21.	Kharasom	169
22.	Mao	109
23.	Phungyar	97
24.	Ukhrul	83
25.	Chandel	64
26.	Pallel	46
27.	Khongjom	33
28.	Wangjing	29
29.	Yaingangpokpi	25
30.	Sagolmang	24
31.	Kakching	44
32.	Lamlang Gate	62
33.	Tengnoupal	70
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Introduction

Insurgency, a deliberately launched socio-economic and politico-military process, may be considered an extra-constitutional, progressive struggle launched against the State by consciously mobilised sections of indigenous masses for the fulfilment of certain goals. If the State is viewed as a body, the insurgency may be viewed as an auto-immune disease, in which the body attacks itself. On both sides of the war, are the same people. One set, represented by the insurgents, fighting for various socio-political demands, the other set, represented by the State's use of force, fighting to preserve what they believe in, the overarching authority of the State, the preservation of the State's territorial integrity. Insurgency usually takes the form of guerrilla warfare, which is a politico-military-quasi-science, part Marxist-Leninist social theory, part tactical innovation, directed against what the insurgents view as imperialism and the economic, political and often, military domination of the weak and poor by the rich and strong. It may be viewed in two ways, broadly:

- i. A potent weapon of national liberation and social justice. This is the view the insurgents take themselves and propagate to the civilian population, they seek to represent.
- ii. A subversive and sinister process, nourished by confusion, social dissent, economic disruption and political chaos. This is the view the State propagates in its war against insurgency.

Insurgency, at its heart, is a form of guerrilla war which engages a civilian population, or a large part of it, against the armed forces of established or usurpative governmental authority. It is ideological with a strong class bias, yet, powerfully nationalistic. It usually starts as a war against poverty, exploitation and the corruption rampant among the ruling classes, and is usually linked to Communist movements, since it is considered to have been the most widely and successfully used by Mao Tse-Tung in China, and later replicated by the Viet Minh against the French in the late 1940s- early 1950s and then, by the Viet Cong, a decade later, against the South Vietnamese and the French.

The will to revolt, which leads to the creation of an insurgency, is not just a reaction to political circumstances or material conditions, but also, the expression of a newly awakened

consciousness, not just of causes, but of potentiality³. Very rarely is the most downtrodden the instigator of the rebellion. Those living the most wretched of existences rarely have in themselves the strength left to question the status quo. Rebellion breaks out more often, at the spectacle of oppression, in which, someone else is the victim. Those with greater privileges sometimes feel the pinch of oppression more than those who've been subjected for long enough to not know a better standard of living. Rebellion is the act of people aware of their rights and aware of the violation of those rights.

As this dissertation will demonstrate, rebellion in Manipur does not begin with the most oppressed sections of society, but in that strata of society which stood to lose the most. The erstwhile ruling family's subsidiary branches lie at the heart of the movement, which is, in essence, a reactionary movement directed at salvaging some amount of fast dissipating power. This is cloaked under the rhetoric of revolution and Communism.

Insurgents are primarily propagandists of, 'revolutionary' ideas, who use the actual physical conflicts as the instruments of agitation. They raise the level of revolutionary anticipation and then, of popular participation. Modern, democratic governments, which must make concessions to popular notions of justice in order to not be replaced in the next electoral cycle, cannot suppress entire populations. They must maintain the appearance of normalcy to avoid embarrassment and the economy must not be allowed to suffer. This implies that the insurgency cannot be openly crushed. The government's reaction plays an important role since a military solution isn't feasible. An insurgency that has the people's support can drag a heavy-handed, insensitive army down by causing it to commit acts that render it unpopular to the civilian population. At the same time, atrocities committed by the insurgency tilt civilian support towards the government and State. The insurgent's final aim is not a military victory, but a political one, therefore, hostilities can be extended for as long as it takes to achieve the latter⁴, yet, every attempt at a revolution, every act of insurgency serves to reinforce the power of the state.

Insurgency, as viewed in the context of Cuba, China, Vietnam and Ireland, carries elements of both, revolution and guerrilla warfare. The Valley based insurgency in Manipur seeks inspiration from all of the above mentioned states, yet, differs from them in terms of its

³ Taber, R., *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare*, Delhi, 2008, pp 2-5.

⁴ Taber, op.cit., pp 6-16.

trajectory. There are various views about the movement. Some, from within Manipur, some, without.

Gautam Das is of the view that insurgency is a big business in the North-East, with many of the smaller groups acting like criminal gangs, indulging in extortion and kidnapping. He argues that police and governance are being held hostage by a circle of corruption and bribery. He points out that since the 1990s, targets of violence are no longer agents of the State, but other ethnicities, civilians, activities aimed at hindering the political process and criminal activity. He argues that in this scenario, deployment of greater number of security personnel may not be the best strategy to deal with the situation, since it leaves the civil population grappling on both ends. It is alienated by the State and does not find succour in the insurgency, either. He argues that the problem of insurgency are rooted in the idea of India and the North-East's alienation from that India. It is these underlying causes that India must treat and not its manifestations.⁵ Das also points to the fact that having considered themselves Brahmins and Rajputs, the Meeteis did not accept SC or ST status. What this essentially meant was that they missed out on the educational and employment benefits the Hill tribes received. He argues that this adds to the Meeteis' resentment of the State, which they see as neglectful of them, while coddling the hill communities. The Meeteis believe that they should have received the benefit of being Hindus in a Hindu majority India.⁶

Sanjib Baruah credits India's colonial legacy of the space between law and custom. He argues that the terminology used for the low intensity armed conflict – 'ethnic insurgencies' – marks the dichotomy between the nation's desire to closely monitor borders and the openness of borders required by a transnational economic space. He points out that while India's Look East Policy aims at the latter, India's security concerns seek to achieve the former, even at the cost of transgressing the rights of its own citizenry. In Manipur, the state does not win or lose, but the people lose daily.⁷ This dichotomy between the AFSPA and the Look East Policy is also referred to by Dulali Nag. She argues that the imposition of the AFSPA only resulted in the PLA intensifying its violent activity, which resulted in greater repression. The circularity of relation was established, as she says. The deployment of the Army would suggest that the nation was at war, but in Manipur, the Army fights its own citizens. This challenges the very role of the Army in civil strife. Can the army go to war

⁵ Das, G., *Insurgencies in North-East India: Moving towards Resolution*, New Delhi, 2013, pp 1-14.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 114-115.

⁷ Baruah, S., ed., *Beyond Counter-Insurgency: Breaking the Impasse in Northeast India*, New Delhi, 2009, pp 1-20.

against its own citizens, is the question raised by Nag. The Look East Policy, on the other hand, should ideally empower the citizens of the state, who would reap the benefits of economic development, which in turn, would wean them away from the insurgency.⁸

N. Joykumar Singh argues that Manipur's frequent rebellions, breaking out since the beginning of the twentieth century impacted various facets of ordinary Manipuri lives significantly, but, did not attack the root cause, the social order in Manipur, which was necessary, in order to reach a comprehensive solution. Manipuri nationalism, he argues, is the refusal of indigenous people of Manipur to be assimilated into India, which he refers to as a 'neo-coloniser'. Joykumar also raises the problem of the Mayangs controlling all businesses in the state, which he says, did not allow the people of Manipur to develop. The Mayangs in administration further alienated the people of Manipur in his contention.⁹ Joykumar's argument is almost a rehashing of the argument of the insurgents and in some ways, despite being not very balanced, an excellent indicator of the feelings in Manipur before the tide began turning in favour of the GoI.

Bimal J. Dev and Dilip K. Lahiri's work centres on the developments in Manipur from the 18th century to the beginning of the insurgency. They argue that the failure of the Communist ideology to take hold in Manipur is rooted in the fact that Irabot used Burmese ties to spread the ideas. While the ideas appealed to the intellectuals in the society, the ordinary wo/man had not forgotten the history of animosity with Burma and could not accept an idea that, to the, seemed to originate there. Additionally, the Indian government's apathy towards the Kabaw Valley, which many Manipuris still consider their own, further aggravated feelings of neglect by the government and apathy towards Communism, which was still held to be a Burmese idea. The Hill-Valley divide, they argue is also an artificial construct by the British, carried forth by the Indian government. The insurgency is rooted in these causes, is their argument.¹⁰ Dev and Lahiri however, seem to ignore Manipur's attempts to look Eastwards and create a greater role for itself in, not just the North-East, but also in South-East Asia. Irabot's ideas may have sought Burmese assistance, but, in subsequent years, the help extended by China and the people's acceptance of it is left unexplained.

⁸Nal, D., *Manipur Between Justice and Law: Capital, Ethnicity and Violence*, New Delhi, 2011, pp 86-101.

⁹ Singh, N.J., *Revolutionary Movements in Manipur*, New Delhi, 2005, pp 26-52.

¹⁰ Dev, B.J. &D.K.Lahiri, *Manipur: Culture and Politics*, Delhi, 1987, pp 133-175.

Ksh. Bimola Devi argues that there are two distinct strains from 'mainland India' visible in Irabot's thought, which, in later years, influenced generations of insurgents. One, is Gandhi's thought and the other, is Subhash Chandra Bose's INA. She argues that in the early years of the insurgency, both strains of thought came together to shape the movement, without being dichotomous to each other.¹¹

B. Pakem argues that in the process of nation building, Manipur, which largely resided in isolated, independent villages, was clustered together. This brought the various ethnic communities closer, but also, threw their differences with the rest of India into sharp relief and also brought out their ethnic consciousness. He argues, that this same process made the Tribals of Manipur aware of their identity as distinct from the others, that is, other tribes, Meeteis and Pangals.¹² Pakem's theory however, ignores the role of the WW-II in forming the Naga identity, as well as the Meetei identity, which was already well articulated at the time of the Merger.

Koushik Roy argues that the insurgency erupted because of expectations raised during the WW-II. He argues that Manipur, and the Nagas in particular provided assistance to the British in hopes of receiving their own homeland when the War ended. When this did not materialise, instead, a Merger with India took place, sentiments were badly hurt. The people of the North-East, Manipur especially, felt cheated out of their fair share.¹³

P.T. Hitson Jusho's argument centres around the origins of each ethnic group in Manipur and the upholding of that identity over the common Manipuri or Indian identity as the cause of strife in the region.¹⁴ Lamabam Satyabati Devi upholds unemployment and resentment towards the Indian State as the chief causes of insurgency in Manipur.¹⁵ Subir Bhaumik lays emphasis of the proximity to the border and the role a frontier plays in the development of insurgency.¹⁶

¹¹ Devi, Ksh. Bimola, 'Manipur and Indian Freedom Struggle' in Ray, B.D., B.J. Deb & S. Sarma ed., *Freedom Struggle in North East India*, New Delhi, 2011, pp 246-255.

¹² Pakem, B., *Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in North-East India*, New Delhi, 1990, pp 233-272.

¹³ Roy, K., *Frontiers, Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies in South-Asia: 1820-2013*, New Delhi, 2015, pp 133-156.

¹⁴ Jusho, P.T.H., *Politics of Ethnicity in North-East India: With Special Reference to Manipur*, New Delhi, 2004, pp 1-17.

¹⁵ Devi, L.S., 'Youths and Insurgency in Manipur' in Ray, A.K., and B.J. Deb ed., *Terrorism and Human Rights in North East India*, New Delhi, 2007, pp 153-162.

¹⁶ Bhaumik, S., 'The External Linkages in Insurgency in India's Northeast' in Pakem, B. ed., *Insurgency in North-East India*, New Delhi, 1997, pp 89-100.

In all of the above mentioned works, there has been one voice that has been consistently ignored. That is the voice of the insurgent him/herself. This dissertation attempts to present the voice of the insurgent himself (since almost all those interviewed were male) and place that voice within a historical framework. The concerns of those who lived the 'revolution', their reasons for joining, their reasons for leaving or breaking apart are recorded here. The daily mundanity of an insurgency emerges from the tales of those who brought the movement where it stands today.

The Manifestation of Discontent: The Origin and Evolution of Insurgency in the Valley: The first chapter looks at the terms, 'state', 'insurgency' and 'revolution'. It traces the relationship between all three and the reason why marginalised and peripheral regions see much more frequent outbursts of rebellious activity. The chapter examines the creation of the North-East frontier by the British, during their time in India and how that legacy still influences the region's relationship with the rest of India. It also looks at the forms of disgruntlement with and resentment towards the State manifest in different ways, depending on the outlets they find.

The chapter looks at insurgencies and guerrilla wars that were successful, including Cuba, China, Viet Minh and Viet Cong, and, Ireland. It then comes to Manipur's case, more specifically, the insurgency in the Valley and how it comes close to and departs from the routes taken by other insurgencies. Since Manipur's insurgency is rooted in its history, the chapter traces the chain of events that lead to the Merger of Manipur with India and the subsequent movement that emerges, at first, ideological, but gradually, moving further and further away from its origins, until it devolves into a gang-war. It also looks at why the Meetei insurgents have been unable to rehabilitate properly into society or keep pace with changing times. The answer lies somewhere in the complexity of the demands of the Meetei insurgent groups and their inability to unite to articulate them.

Development and Insurgency: The Idealism and Fact Dichotomy: This chapter explores the effect development, or the lack of it, and insurgency have had on each other. The frontier effect meant that under colonialism, most development in the state was linked to the needs of the State, specifically, the security forces. As first, a Class 'C' State, then, a UT, and later, a border state, that scenario changed very little. The presence of security forces and sharing ninety-eight percent of the border with the international border compounded the situation.

The chapter demonstrates, through the extensive use of charts and graphs, that while development policies are passed on paper, implemented on paper, reality on the ground differs. The lack of development on the ground intensifies the resentment of the ordinary Manipuri towards the Indian State. The situation is further compounded by the Meetei resentment of all benefit of reservation going to the Hills. The chapter examines indices such as employment, literacy, number of schools, health facility to determine how much the State lacks and how much of it is because the State is stuck in a vicious insurgent-politician-contractor nexus. It also examines how much of the Meetei discontent is rooted in reality and how much of it is perceived slight and injury to the Meetei pride.

The advent of the technological revolution greatly impacted the insurgency and the chapter examines the causes for this, too.

Biographies of the “Revolutionaries”: Memories, Testimonies and Narratives of the “Lamyamba”!: This chapter draws on interviews conducted with erstwhile insurgents, or those who have now come surfaced, either as members of frontal organisations or those imprisoned after due process of law, as well as speeches of leaders of the movement, literature of the region, as well as that published by the movement, itself. It seeks to place those who run the movement at the forefront of their own stories. The movement emerges in vivid colours, with ordinary, everyday concerns of the insurgents and the ties that still bind them to society emerge with startling clarity. What emerges even more clearly, is that in this low intensity war, at least, there are no ‘others’. The ‘other’ and the ‘self’ exist only on paper and in the policies of the State and not for the people of Manipur. The State’s police is as much a part of the ‘self’ as the insurgent.

The Manifestation of Discontent: The Origin and Evolution of Insurgency in the Valley

The State as an entity has been variously defined by scholars over the millennia. However, whatever their differences might have been, they all agree that the state is an organic, living entity that shifts and changes to accommodate its circumstances. Kautilya, Plato and Aristotle all agreed that changes in one part of this living entity cause changes and upheavals in other parts of it. Kautilya, especially, defines seven characteristics of the sovereign state, which, may be considered acceptable for the modern state, with slight modifications. These are:

- i. The sovereign ruler implying unity, uniformity and solidarity of the state.
- ii. A stable and systematic administration.
- iii. Defined territory, able to protect and support its population, as well as the people themselves.
- iv. Planned security system.
- v. The treasury, utilising a just and proportionate taxation system.
- vi. The army, symbol of a strong and powerful State.
- vii. Freedom from alien rule and diplomatic relations with neighbours, near and far.

Kautilya was firm in his belief that a flaw in any one element would affect the functioning of the other elements too, and must be rectified before it derails the entire State. The ruler is bound by certain social traditions, ethical norms which aim to preserve the peace and prosperity of the State. Only the happiness of the population inhabiting the State results in a stable, happy, prosperous State¹. In the context of a modern nation state like India, there are also constitutional safeguards and general media and international scrutiny, which keep the state firmly bound to moral and ethical norms, if not for conscientious reasons, then for political ones.

In modern times, the State is looked upon as a container, in geographical terms, from which, nothing spills out and nothing spills in. The power of the state fuses with the idea of the nation to create the nation-state². The nation is composed of the people, a more abstract

¹Kautilya, *Arthashastra*, vle.du.ac.in/mod/book/print.php?id=12265&chapterid=25119 .

² Taylor, P.J., 'The state as container: territoriality in the modern world system', *Progress in Human Geography*, 18, 2, 1994, pp 151-62.

construct than the state, the territorial, administrative construct. The state does not exist as an abstract, but as sovereignty over a nation, it exercises monopoly over the use of legitimate violence. The state is the hegemonic structure that exists over the nation. It is possible for a state to fail, but equally possible, is the failure of the national imagination. Nations may not materialise into states and states may not be able to accommodate various aspirations of non-state nations. Under normal circumstances, the consciousness of a national identity would predate the process of state formation. This implies that many aboriginal/ethnic communities might exist without national consciousness for millennia, because the status of the economy and its demands determine the timeframe of the evolution of national consciousness. Since the state is essentially a mechanism for controlling and distributing economic surplus, it isn't very easy to come across in aboriginal communities, which usually produce very little surplus³. This idea becomes problematic in case of a country like India, where the 'Indian' identity subsumes within itself various other identities. Regionalism is a strong factor in the creation of the Indian identity, where, historical boundaries of what constituted 'India' has been an idea in flux. What is today known as the Indian subcontinent is essentially an eighteenth century construct, as first, the English East India Company, and a century later, the Crown began to define its boundaries. India as a territorial unit, therefore, has only existed since Independence. It is hardly surprising then, that many indigenous people find it difficult to identify with the idea of the modern Indian state.

It is in this context that the assimilation of India's North East region, largely a product of colonial politics and a product of The Great Game must be examined. The official British policy towards maintenance of the North East region was best exemplified by Lord Curzon, who divided frontiers on two bases:

- i. Natural formed by geological formations, like seas, mountains, rivers, etc.
- ii. Artificial or man-made, of which, 'buffers' form a category, basically, strips of 'no man's land' or complicated, sophisticated arrangements between two rival states, designated as neutral zone.

Buffer zones were zones designated as Spheres of Interest, which turned into Spheres of Influence, which became Protectorates, which preceded complete incorporation. This was the pattern that may be called official British policy in dealing with British expansion into the

³ Engels, F., *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/work/1884/origin-family/> .

North East, which includes their dealings with the non-state actors too. The policy followed was one of, 'frontier of active responsibility', where many tribes were under minimal or no control of the British, yet, lay on the British side of the dividing line, out of the reach of any external power⁴. The North East was designated as a 'frontier' for a very long time, implying that boundaries remained ambiguous for a long time.

The developments of nineteenth century attest to the fact that geography and politics can hardly ever be mutually exclusive. Some geographies, such as river valleys-mountains, contiguous areas are integral to each other and the creation of artificial man-made disruptions, otherwise known as political boundaries, results in political friction. The history of the North East ties up to the larger history of South East Asia and cannot be examined only within the limits of, what is known as, 'Indian' nationalist history. The idea of, 'Zomia', or South East Asia as one, contiguous zone, which includes Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram argues that this region has been the theatre for some of the most violent and enduring ethnic conflicts and internal wars, in which these ethnic communities have been pitted against each other and the State. The region extends over all of South East Asia, including Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand⁵. Many of these countries share similarity of culture and of ethnic conflict or violence demanding statehood. Much of this is a product of new statehood aspirations of previously non-state ethnic populations conflicting with established states, or, other, geographically favoured ethnic groups or, as in the case of India, colonially defined states.

In Manipur's case, it only becomes a part of India as a British protectorate state, with a British Resident at Imphal, after the Treaty of Yandaboo, signed between the English East India Company (henceforth referred to as, EIC) and the King of Ava⁶. This ended the Burmese occupation of Assam, Manipur, Cachar and Jaintia. Even as Manipur remained a protectorate, Assam, Cachar and Jaintia were made part of the province of Bengal. The British signed two more treaties in 1833 and 1834. The 1833 treaty defined boundaries between British territories in Assam, and the Kingdom of Manipur, but also, made Manipur pledge assistance to the British government in the event of any raids in either the Lushai Hills or the Naga Hills. This ultimately led to the subjugation of both regions and the area came to

⁴ Curzon, G., 'Frontiers', *Romanes Lecture*, 1907, <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/ibru/resources/links/curzon.pdf>.

⁵ Van Schendel, W., 'Geographies of knowing, geographies of ignorance: jumping scale in Southeast Asia', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (20), 2002, pp 647-68.

⁶ Saikia, J. compiled, *Documents on North East India*, New Delhi, 2010, pp 1-5.

be known as the, “Eastern Frontier”. The 1834 treaty transferred the Kabaw Valley, won by Manipur at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo, to Burma and the Pemberton Line was drawn up, dividing Burma from Manipur. In 1881, the Boundary Commission was set up to rectify the Pemberton Line, which remained unratified till 1967⁷. However, this caused the British no great suffering, since post the Anglo-Burmese War of 1891, Burma itself became part of the British Empire. However, British interests in the coal, timber, forest produce and oil of the region necessitated the deployment of armed force in the region, largely as protection against the raiding tribes. Since the deployment of the army proved too expensive, in 1835, the Cachar Levy was created as a separate force under a civil government, as a hybrid between the police and the military. In 1838, a Jorhat Militia was raised too. Later, the two were merged to create the Assam Rifles. This is the beginning of the militarisation of the North East⁸. If looked at from the perspective of State administration, the creation of a civil militia is an excellent idea. It is used till date, to deal with situation like insurgency, which are neither outright civil war, nor simple law and order problems. In democratic states, these are referred to as, ‘states of exception’, resulting from extreme and threatening internal dissent, requiring extraordinary measures which fall into the grey areas of constitutional law and ethics.⁹ This is comparable to the creation of the SalwaJudum in Chhattisgarh and in Manipur’s own case, the Village Defence Force, whose, “Special Police Officers” are taken as part of the extended police force, so as to render their actions legal in the courts of law.

The Village Defence Force in Manipur was formed in 2008 after a shooting incident in March and April that year, in which armed insurgents killed civilians in Heirok and LilongChajing. The villagers, angered by this, set up Joint Action Committees and demanded arms from the government, to be able to defend themselves. The VDF became an upgraded, armed version of previously existing Village Volunteer Force, under the command of the District Magistrate. This is a provision made under the Police Act of 1861 and places the Special Police Officers on the same level of authorities as normal officers. Their jurisdiction however, is limited to their villages, and its posts, which are specified by the SP. They are provided roughly a month’s training in PT, drill, musketry and other police subjects and a salary of Rs. 3000 per month and one set of uniform, a .303 rifle and 50 rounds of

⁷ Mackenzie, A., *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1884, pp (check definitely).

⁸Phanjoubam, P., *The Northeast Question: Conflicts and frontiers*, New Delhi, 2016, pp 31-9.

⁹Agamben, G., ‘A Brief History of the State of Exception’, www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/009254.html

ammunition each. The VDF cannot act without the orders of their Commander or display their arms without orders, and in this respect, differ from regular policemen. They are, however, eligible for ex-gratia equivalent to a police officer. Appointments are made for a year's time and renewed as per the State's requirement.

Development in the region, thereafter, became synonymous with the needs of the armed forces and the state. Here, the development of infrastructure was a direct result of the Japanese invasion during the Second World War¹⁰ (hereafter referred to as, WW-II). As a defence mechanism, Manipur received six airstrips, three all-weather. These continue to serve the state till today, Tulihal, as the civil airport, Kakching servicing the security forces full time and Koirengi serving the forces, partially. The three fair-weather airports were gradually lost to the forces of nature. All-weather roads too were a construction of the WW-II. These development activities also paved the way for new avenues of business, which implied the rise of the new elite¹¹. Additionally, the history of the Assam Rifles (hereafter referred to as, AR) runs parallel to the history of the North East. Major hill stations in the region developed around AR Headquarters, which, in turn, were built in close proximity to the largest village in the area, which was most strategically placed¹².

In modern times, tangible indices like unemployment rates, income, education, GDP growth rate, road connectivity, etc. are some factors that lead to the spread of insurgency, however these do not lie at the core of the issue. Intangible factors, such as the hill-valley divide in Manipur are equally important, but sidelined as insignificant. The deep fear and insecurity, strife in riparian valleys, at the thought of losing control of the hills where rivers originate and where mountain passes lie, is a distinctive feature of almost all ethnic conflicts in South East Asia.¹³

E. H Carr taught us that stories and events with bearings on States fall into the category of 'historical facts', while others are ignored¹⁴. This is a phenomena clearly visible in the North East, where history serves the purpose of the State. This implies that each ethnic group aspires for a unique history and therefore, unique nationhood. The major cause of inter-tribal friction today, and since the beginning of the insurgency is that multiple and mutually

¹⁰Rustomji, N., *Enchanted Frontiers: Sikkim, Bhutan and India's Northeastern Borderlands*, New Delhi, 1971, p 116.

¹¹Phanjoubam, op.cit., pp 35-6.

¹²Ibid., pp 43-4.

¹³Ibid., pp 1-19.

¹⁴Carr, E. H., *What is History?*, New Delhi, 1961, pp (check).

exclusive projects of nation building contest for unique historical spaces, many of which, physically overlap. In Manipur, particularly, the arrival of the colonial state created greater complications than just the hill-valley dispute. It turned the hill dwellers into aspirants for statehood, bringing them into conflict with the State they inhabited or the roles they had performed thus far. Since geography is not just about the physical space occupied, but also about controlling the vital arteries that feed and sustain the valleys, the mountains become important when the hill-dwellers rise up to demand their own state¹⁵. In contemporary arguments, it may be observed that any blockade by the hills, renders the valley gasping for essential utilities. This is one of the greatest fears related to the creation of Greater Nagalim. Added to this was the fact that common geographical spaces imply intertwined histories, myths and legends, all important in the construction of nation identities¹⁶. It is here that various ethnic identities come into conflict with the idea of India. The ‘State as container’ narrative renders any alternate narratives as deviant, suspicious and problematic. In a region where ninety-eight percent of the boundary is international, this is an alienating point of view.

If the idea of the State as a living entity is accepted, insurgency may be viewed as an auto-immune disease, in which the body attacks itself. On both sides of the war, are the same people. One set, represented by the insurgents, fighting for various socio-political demands, the other set, represented by the State’s use of force, fighting to preserve what they believe in, the over-arching authority of the State, the preservation of the State’s territorial integrity. Insurgency usually takes the form of guerrilla warfare, which is a politico-military-quasi-science, part Marxist-Leninist social theory, part tactical innovation, directed against what the insurgents view as imperialism and the economic, political and often, military domination of the weak and poor by the rich and strong. It may be viewed in two ways, broadly:

- iii. A potent weapon of national liberation and social justice. This is the view the insurgents take themselves and propagate to the civilian population, they seek to represent.
- iv. A subversive and sinister process, nourished by confusion, social dissent, economic disruption and political chaos. This is the view the State propagates in its war against insurgency.

¹⁵Phanjoubam, op.cit., pp 68-71.

¹⁶Ibid., p 91.

Insurgency, at its heart, is a form of guerrilla war which engages a civilian population, or a large part of it, against the armed forces of established or usurpative governmental authority. It is ideological with a strong class bias, yet, powerfully nationalistic. It usually starts as a war against poverty, exploitation and the corruption rampant among the ruling classes, and is usually linked to Communist movements, since it is considered to have been the most widely and successfully used by Mao Tse-Tung in China, and later replicated by the Viet Minh against the French in the late 1940s- early 1950s and then, by the Viet Cong, a decade later, against the South Vietnamese and the French.

The will to revolt, which leads to the creation of an insurgency, is not just a reaction to political circumstances or material conditions, but also, the expression of a newly awakened consciousness, not just of causes, but of potentiality¹⁷. Very rarely is the most downtrodden the instigator of the rebellion. Those living the most wretched of existences rarely have in themselves the strength left to question the status quo. Rebellion breaks out more often, at the spectacle of oppression, in which, someone else is the victim. Those with greater privilege sometimes feel the pinch of oppression more than those who've been subjected for long enough to not know a better standard of living. Rebellion is the act of people aware of their rights and aware of the violation of those rights. For rebellion to exist, justification of rebellion must exist too. Those rebelling must experience a sense of revulsion at the infringement of their rights. Suffering is borne only so long as it remains within limits, unjust but not so much as to cause acute revulsion and despair in the one suffering. The loss of patience, of the ability to suffer, causes a reaction which covers everything that was borne thus far. At that point, self-respect takes precedence over life. In many ways, insurgency, which is a form of rebellion, implies the greater good subsuming the individual. It implies that insurgents fight for causes they find more important than their own self. Insurgency and by extension, rebellion, is an act that sees suffering as a collective experience¹⁸.

Poverty, in itself, does not engender enough discontent to lead to the rise of an insurgency, but, along with progress, creates a new amalgam. The hope of social change stimulated by even a little education produces the ambitious poor, the rebellious poor, cadre of the insurgency. They have nothing to lose and everything to gain. They recognise that while they have been getting poorer, there is potential around them, in which they might share. Their poverty does not blind them to the industrial progress and affluence that surrounds them.

¹⁷ Taber, R., *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare*, Delhi, 2008, pp 2-5.

¹⁸ Camus, A., *The Rebel*, Middlesex, 1953, pp 7-28.

They understand the promises being made in their name and grow impatient waiting for the fulfilment of those promises. Awareness thus creates a base. Economic progress and popular education stimulate emulation and social ambition. Commerce and industry give rise to social mobility. The formation of an aspiring middle class results in new political formations in which new wealth edges out the old feudal elite to compete for political power¹⁹.

The primary effort of the guerrilla leading an insurgency, is to militarise the civilian population, without whose support, no government can sustain itself. In many ways, the insurgent establishes the existence of the state, by rebelling against it. At the same time, it is a testimony to the fact that the power of the state is dependent on the subordination of the population and thus, the insurgents establish their own power too. The insurgent is thus, subversive of the existing order, as the disseminator of, what s/he believes are, revolutionary ideas. S/he is a product of the popular climate which makes rebellion possible and is as much an expression of the popular will towards change, as a catalyst towards it. S/he is an armed civilian, a political partisan, whose principal weapon is his/her relationship to the community at large and the ideas s/he fights for.

Insurgency that takes the form of guerrilla warfare passes through three stages:

- i. Strategic defence
- ii. Strategic stalemate
- iii. Strategic offence

For an insurgency taking the route of guerrilla warfare, the state and its armed forces present highly vulnerable targets. The insurgents themselves are elusive and insubstantial because their poverty and lack of infrastructure and territory provide them with freedom. This is an advantage the state's forces lack. Insurgents can afford to run when they can't stay and fight, disperse and hide when movement isn't safe or, in extreme cases, sink back into the civilian population, which camouflages them and without whose support, the insurgents would be rendered mere bandits.

Insurgents are primarily propagandists of, 'revolutionary' ideas, who use the actual physical conflicts as the instruments of agitation. They raise the level of revolutionary anticipation and then, of popular participation. Modern, democratic governments, which must make

¹⁹ Taber, op.cit., pp 183-5.

concessions to popular notions of justice in order to not be replaced in the next electoral cycle, cannot suppress entire populations. They must maintain the appearance of normalcy to avoid embarrassment and the economy must not be allowed to suffer. This implies that the insurgency cannot be openly crushed. The government's reaction plays an important role since a military solution isn't feasible. An insurgency that has the people's support can drag a heavy-handed, insensitive army down by causing it to commit acts that render it unpopular to the civilian population. The insurgent's final aim is not a military victory, but a political one, therefore, hostilities can be extended for as long as it takes to achieve the latter²⁰, yet, every attempt at a revolution, every act of insurgency serves to reinforce the power of the state.

The insurgent does not claim his actions to be noble. S/he claims that the end goal is noble and that is what sustains the insurgency. The insurgent sets out to prove that no contract exists between the state and the people, which creates a mutual obligation. It thus becomes necessary to prove that every ruler is a usurper, and that citizens of the state can only be constrained by the laws which are expressions of their own free will. The state becomes the embodiment of eternal crime, while the people, that of eternal truth. History is seen as being governed by only two principles, the state and social revolution, or, alternately, revolution and counter-revolution. Since the state is crime incarnate, the revolution is the incarnation of good²¹. It is for this reason that insurgents always call for a revolution. They trace their origins to a history of struggle originating in certain ideas, which the society has always stood for, and which the state has denied its people. The State exercises authority by the use of threat or force, argue insurgents. The policeman is both, its symbol, as well as agent. His revolver may threaten or kill those resisting. If his authority is illicit, insurgents question whether it is morally wrong to combat force with force.

Insurgencies are dedicated to overthrowing the state and the destruction of the existing political, social or economic system. All manoeuvres, except those necessitated by immediate survival are undertaken for political effect. Each battle serves to discredit the armed forces and the state. Local military success in guerrilla warfare carries no meaning if the morale of the state is not broke and financial resources are not strained. Thus, guerrilla activity has definite objectives like snatching ammunition, overextending lines so as to disrupt communication, inflicting casualties, which along with the aforementioned effects, also has damaging political and psychological effects for the state. Political pressure on the state is

²⁰ Taber, op.cit., pp 6-16.

²¹ Camus, op.cit., pp 73-126.

increased by widespread, mounting apprehension and dissatisfaction with the progress of a war with no end in sight.

Successful insurgency presupposes the existence of valid popular grievances, sharp social divisions, unsound or stagnant economy or an oppressive government. Voicing grievances related to this requires the nucleus of a revolutionary organisation, capable of articulating and exploiting popular dissatisfaction with the status quo. Leaders of insurgencies arise organically from situations like these and include:

- i. The most radical, most frustrated and ambitious elements of the political extremities.
- ii. More idealistic and least successful members of the middle class.
- iii. Those most outraged by the unaccustomed pinch of oppression.

These leaders ensure that insurrections arise either spontaneously, out of almost any social conflict, often in reaction to some act of repression, or, real or fancied injustice on the part of the state. Situations leading to insurgencies may also be deliberately created by the revolutionary nucleus to proclaim its defiance of authority, banking on popular support in an open declaration of war.

In an insurgency, the means are not as important as the leadership, which must stand on firm moral ground and have a purpose greater than the furtherance of personal ambition²². Leadership will first be found in the poorer and more ambitious or idealistic sectors of the middle class, then, in the spreading new class of poor, white-collar workers, scorned by both, the middle class and the elite. Unable to form common cause with them or to aspire to their privileges, they form a radical political opposition, taking the cause of the humble and disadvantaged as their own²³. As Camus argues, the insurgent must identify with the greater cause. The need for a purpose greater than personal ambition implies there must exist a clear ideology or a cause. The insurgency must not be driven by just opportunism. The insurgents must be able to explain the confused and accidental nature of the conflict to the general population. They must be prepared to cash in on opportunities to accelerate the process of social ferment and political disruption. Every disruptive must be related to the cause so that revolutionary violence may be seen as the natural means to a desired end by the civilian masses. The insurgency must be given a progressive character in all its phases so as to arouse

²² Tzu, S., *The Art of War*, <https://web.stanford.edu/class/polisci211z/1.1/Sun%20Tzu.pdf>.

²³ Taber, op.cit., p 185.

great expectations and appear crucial, that no one stands outside of the conflict. The prerequisites for a successful insurgency are:

- i. An unstable political situation with sharp social divisions and usually, a stagnant, floundering economy.
- ii. Political objectives based on firm moral and ideological grounds, understood and accepted by the majority as the overriding cause, worthy of sacrifice.
- iii. An oppressive government, incapable of political compromise. In the Manipuri case, we'll find that this isn't quite true. The Indian government - while being very oppressive in some ways, the implementation of AFSPA, most notably - has constantly tried to conduct peace talks with the insurgents, especially in the case of the Naga insurgents, who received their own interlocutor very early into the insurgency.
- iv. Some form of revolutionary political organisation capable of providing dedicated and consistent leadership towards the accepted goal.
- v. Possibility/probability of success.

The guerrilla insurgent is essentially an improviser. The nature of his/her activity depends on immediate and long-range objectives, terrain, relative strength of their forces as compared to that of the State and material means at their disposal. The basis of all their tactics is successful evasion, implying the ability to avoid confrontation, except at their own choosing, yet, being able to achieve the local superiority to strike effectively. Insurgents representing a popular cause have the advantage of having the entire population serving them as an intelligence unit. It hides them, while, at the same time, revealing the strength and disposition of the state's forces. Ideal terrain for them is one that offers both, natural concealment for the guerrillas and obstructions for the state's forces. However, insurgents, in their quest for such ideal terrain must ensure that they do not get cut off from the rural population, who they need for recruiting into their forces, draw supplies from and act as reliable couriers, trusted to carry messages back and forth between the underground in the towns and cities. In addition to this, possession of populated areas assures the insurgents of insurance, since political considerations will prevent the state from annihilating civilians, indiscriminately. Terrain and local conditions also determine the size of guerrilla bands since larger bands can be unwieldy on a march and difficult to supply for.

In well policed, large cities, a sympathetic population provided protection to the insurgents. Soldiers, especially those belonging to a foreign power, can suppress insurgencies by treating entire cities as being under siege, controlling all movement and ruthlessly killing all resisters. They can be starved and subdued into terror. However, in a civil war like situation, the state cannot employ this strategy since there is no way of telling friend from foe. Urban insurrection of a hit and run nature is created by the revolutionary underground to give the insurgency a wider appeal for maximum propaganda. Insurgencies aim to be focus of national attention, too shocking to be explained away by the government or to be ignored, even by a controlled media²⁴. In Manipur's case, we find that even when the insurgency catches the attention of the press in the North East, the marginalisation of the region from most of 'mainland' India ensures that very little space is actually provided to it in the media and, as in colonial times, security perceptions from New Delhi take precedence over ground realities. The concerns voiced by officers on the ground are often overlooked. In many ways, the North East continues to be a 'frontier' for India, used to push forth India's Look East Policy.

Since very few states will admit that the activities of insurgents pose a serious threat, the amount of force sent to suppress them will always be lesser than the amount required to deal with them. By the time the state is willing to admit its mistake, it might be too late for it. In many ways, the activities of the state, undertaken to suppress insurgency, advertise the existence of insurgency. However, this is applicable to a greater extent for smaller states. In case of a top-heavy, hegemonic state like India, which borrows its administrative structure from the colonial regime, the expansion of insurgency results in a severe crackdown. The role of the AR has not changed much, despite transitioning from a colonial state's armoured police to a democratic state's central paramilitary force. Manipur's population as per Census, 2011 was roughly about 28.56 lakhs²⁵. In comparison, there were about 37,000 policemen from the state itself. This included the Civil Police, the Manipur Rifles or the India Reserve Battalion, the VDF and the Home-Guard. This means there is one civil officer to maintain law and order to every 74 people, approximately.²⁶ Additionally, there are an almost equal number of officers of the security forces, including the CRPF, BSF, Assam Rifles and the Army, posted in the state.²⁷ Essentially, the people : police ratio in Manipur is supposed to be better than many states in India. It is not the most heavily militarise zone in the World, which

²⁴ Taber, op.cit., pp 149-59.

²⁵ www.census2011.co.in/census/state/manipur.html .

²⁶ Calculation, Scholar's own.

²⁷ Bureau of Police Research and Development.

distinction belongs to Kashmir, but it is the most heavily policed state in India, with 1020 policemen per lakh of population.²⁸

Insurgents must have few needs, but their personal qualifications must be great. Physical strength and a cheerful, ascetic temperament, firm moral grounding to differentiate them from political bandits. Their use of terror must be judicious, but never used against those on whose support the insurgents depend. The general population will be quick to detect the difference between dedication and opportunism. To succeed, insurgents must be loved and admired by ordinary civilians for their absolute virtue, which implies that their enemy, the state, becomes the personification of absolute evil. The insurgents must be fair in their dealings, recognising that society works as an intricate and interlocking machinery and to get maximum support from it, class rivalries must be softened, subordinated to a transcendental, 'national' cause. Propaganda must essentially be true in order for it to generate anger among the general populace²⁹. Here, it becomes important to note that the 'truth' has many faces and which one is presented to the aggrieved population largely determines the course of the insurgency.

In many cases, popular movements can be diverted into more or less bourgeois-liberal channels if revolutionary pressures are siphoned off by means of radical reforms³⁰. Alternatively, if insurgents lose their moral high ground, they lose the support of the masses. As insurgencies stagnate, they find themselves corrupting and degrading. Once blood has been spilt, insurgents find that they must go on fighting, because they see no way out. The struggle must be continued for survival. However, a point that must be remembered is that if successful, the insurgent, who at first, denies the state, seeks to replace it, in the end, which implies that it renounces insurgency to become the state, finally³¹. This is a paradox of the insurgency that the case of the Naga insurgency will best exemplify.

Lessons from Cuba

Guerrillas who know their strategy well and have popular support can't be eliminated using the most effective governmental means. However, very few governments can withstand the political, psychological and economic stresses of a guerrilla war, even if they can, militarily. In an insurgency, military might is a strength, but, social, political and economic assets are left greatly vulnerable, both, militarily and psychologically. In a constitutional democracy,

²⁸ *Crime in India – 2013*, National Crime Records Bureau, ncrb.nic.in>CII>CII2013>Chapters .

²⁹ Tzu, op.cit.

³⁰ Taber, op.cit., p 188.

³¹ Camus, op.cit., p 65.

like India, where the stratified class structure and multi-party political system are easy targets of political and social dissension, the government is crippled even further, since any counter-insurgency activity is seen as use of illegal force, which further alienates the state from the civilian population. While the state is thus weakened on many fronts, the guerrilla insurgents' only weakness is military, since they lack the arms and the manpower required to risk decisions. Politically, they aggravate existing social and political dissensions and seek to raise the level of political consciousness and revolutionary will among the people, who then become an inexhaustible source of manpower and intelligence and camouflage for the insurgent. This is compounded by the fact that the insurgency causes an intensification of political repression, which further deepens political opposition to the regime³². The state then begins to owe its survival to the army and police, which are instruments of oppression, reflecting both, the antagonism between the state and the insurgents as the voice of the population at large, and the forced subjugation of this antagonism³³.

Militarily, the insurgents wear away at the morale of the state, since mobility and time side with them. The longer the insurgency draws on, the more the state becomes militarily overextended, politically unpopular and economically, too expensive. The outbreak of an insurgency affects the prestige of the state, its survival over a long duration reflects the ineffectuality of the armed forces. Widening support base of the insurgents imply that petitions, demonstration and strikes occur, followed by acts of sabotage, terror and spreading insurrection. This creation of a "climate of collapse" was followed in Cuba.

Insurgency can only arise and flourish when all other peaceful solutions, such as appeals, legislative and judicial actions, elections, prove futile. The acceptance of organised violence that insurgency brings in its wake, requires a clear lack of alternative, compelling cause and reasonable expectations of success. It requires the active support of an over-ground political organisation, dedicated to the cause. This is the urban arm that provides both, legal and illicit assistance, including stationing bombs and defending the accused. They prevent the isolation of the insurgency, provide diversions and provocations and maintain contacts, all with the intention of keeping the insurgency in the limelight. The underground and the over-ground wings are supplemented by sympathisers who mostly operate within the confines of the law and serve as a respectable front for the insurgency, being composed as they mostly are, of intellectuals, students, tradesmen, clerks, professionals and women, who collect funds,

³² Taber, *op.cit.*, pp 17-19.

³³ Camus, *op.cit.*, pp 194-5.

circulate petitions, organise boycotts, raise popular demonstrations, inform journalists friendly with the insurgents and spread rumours. As we will see, in Manipur's case, this picture is replicated by the frontal organisations of the Insurgent organisations. In essence, they fight a propaganda war aimed at strengthening and brightening the image of the insurgents and discrediting the government. In rural areas, where insurgents have room to manoeuvre and hide, it becomes next to impossible to stamp them out, especially if the rural populace supports them.

The stages of guerrilla warfare in an insurgency, as exemplified by the Cuban example are:

- i. The first stage of attacking only when assured of success by overwhelming superiority of firepower, position and the element of surprise, in pursuit of objectives such as capture of arms, to avoid encirclement or to create a diversion. In this stage, the campaign is used as an educational and propaganda tool by showing the weakness of the state. By depicting the government as the aggressor, the rural population is brought over to the cause of the insurgents.
- ii. The second stage is that of displays of martyrdom, in which essentially theatricalities of large funerals, strikes, protests led by mothers of the slain, popular indignation are involved.³⁴

As Camus puts it, "Rebellion puts on mourning and exhibits itself for public admiration...The human being who is condemned to death is, at least, magnificent, before he disappears, and his magnificence is his justification."³⁵

The state responds to these displays with further crackdowns, beatings, curfews, arrests, which not only further alienate the state from the general population, but also, give the latter new martyrs to celebrate and mourn. Both, at the same time. In the process of this crackdown, hunted members of clandestine organisations flee to join the insurgents and since innocents such as peasants are victimised by the armed forces of the state for their association with the insurgents, they join them too.

- iii. In the third stage, insurgents become capable of acting over a wider area and of setting up bases in areas out of the control of the forces. This leads to the establishment of a rebel government and a guerrilla economy, capable of supporting the fighters without raiding towns or smuggling supplies. Yet later, as this develops further, insurgent bases are expanded and government forces on the perimeters of

³⁴ Guevara, C., *Guerrilla Warfare*, New York, 2000.

³⁵ Camus, op.cit., p 47.

these bases come under tremendous amounts of pressure. They barely hold sway over these areas, except the occasional raids, which grow shorter and infrequent as the forces restrict themselves to the fortified towns. Gradually, the insurgency takes on the proportions of a civil war, where each territorial division of the same nation has its own economy and government.³⁶

Insurgency in the form of guerrilla warfare, is thus, more subversive than abrasive, penetrating the crevices of a rotting structure, to finally bring it down. Insurgents have nothing to lose and everything to gain by continuing to fight. Au contraire, they stand to lose everything by giving up. Once the banner of rebellion has been raised, and blood been shed, it becomes near impossible to give up. The insurgents then begin fighting for survival, for whatever they can, because they must.³⁷ Later, we will see how true this rings when the same principle is applied to the degradation of Manipur's insurgency. The insurgents go on fighting even when their demands are more or less fulfilled, because rehabilitation and assimilation into society is well-nigh impossible.

However, while this was an approach applicable to small states, such as the Latin American ones, where states were relatively smaller and men could be poached from the armed forces, in the case of a country the size of India, it doesn't apply very smoothly. For one, as visible in insurgency hit zones, the state's repressive powers merely become more visibly manifest as insurgency grows. A large, hegemonic state does not lack for time, resources or manpower. It can afford to open two fronts at once. One, the military response, the other, at the level of peace talks.

Mao and Protracted War

Mao's approach to war, as applicable to China, marked a major shift from customarily emphasised tenets of military doctrine. He was heavily influenced by Sun Tzu and paraphrased much of what he said into his own work. War, and guerrilla warfare, in particular, remained an ancient art. The problems of generalship remained constant. Variable factors such as terrain, weather, space, time, population, morale and strategy influenced the outcomes of battle. While industrial nations stressed tangible factors – arms, logistics, manpower, Mao emphasised the intangibles – time, space and will. His strategy was to avoid battle by surrendering territory. He traded space for time, needed to produce will. He was of

³⁶ Guevara, op.cit.

³⁷ Taber, op.cit., pp 17-37.

the firm opinion that nothing could be gained unless time was used to produce revolutionary will or consciousness in the masses. Political mobilisation becomes the first task on the guerrilla seeking to succeed in his aims in a large country. The time required for successful political mobilisation also allows the inherent weaknesses of the system to develop under the stress of war.

Under Mao's plan, the enemy is allowed to expand as it pleases, while the guerrillas only harass, circle and attack the enemy's rear. The state is left to engage in a strategic offensive, which might be referred to as an, "encirclement and suppression campaign". This entails that while the state manages to encircle the guerrillas, they become encircled themselves. They present easier targets, as well as source of arms and ammunition for the guerrilla insurgents by occupying vast swathes of territory. By forcing the state to spread itself thinly, the guerrillas concentrate their strength to annihilate the state's forces.

In areas where they meet little opposition, the guerrillas disperse to carry out political indoctrination, which assists in strengthening the internal economy of the insurgency and in establishing rear bases, which can be expanded or contracted at will. Mao's brainchild was the, 'five minute attack', which consisted of a sudden onslaught, brief and furious interval of fighting, sudden break off and rapid retire, taking as many casualties and arms in the time given, but not overstaying a moment³⁸. This technique is not a new one, and has been used historically by raiders and bandits. In China, its first proponent was Sun Tzu³⁹, whom Mao adapted for his times. Mao's innovation was to link it to political rebellion. Guerrillas rely on speed, superior position and locally superior manpower to benefit them before superior and heavy weapons can take their toll. This is the first phase of Mao's strategy.

The second phase is of stalemate or equilibrium, in which, neither the state nor the insurgents can destroy each other. The insurgents continue to nibble away at the fringes of no man's land surrounding the 'liberated zones', improving the internal economy, to render it self-sufficient, furthering propaganda to agitate the population and sharpening the internal conflicts in the State as the conflict drags on.

The third stage of revolutionary strategic offense begins when both, the State's and the insurgents' forces are numerically equal. At this point, the insurgents give battle, using small

³⁸Tse-Tung, M., *Selected Military Writings*, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/military-writings/index.htm> .

³⁹ Tzu, S., op.cit.

units to pin down the government's main force, while their main force attacks the government forces' support lines, which are most vulnerable. This may result in cutting off the state's lines of communication and isolating segments of the force, which can then be cut off and destroyed. The insurgents begin to hold territory, expanding rural bases until they hold the countryside, rendering it untenable for the state. From here, they begin to seize villages and towns, forcing the state to retreat into its urban strongholds, which, once isolated, can be destroyed. By this time, the insurgents have seized enough of the state's arms to come into possession of large weaponry⁴⁰. If we observe carefully, this is largely the same pattern that Cuba followed. However, Cuba being a smaller country than China, international pressure was faster to mount and it was easier for insurgents to cover ground, than in China, which required a lot more groundwork.

However, one pattern emerges, in both, China and Cuba, the more the state held, the more it had to defend and the broader the target presented was. On the other hand, the more the insurgents win, the more they have with which to fight. Thus, while the State seeks to shorten the duration of the conflict, the insurgents seek to extend it as long as possible, since for them, time makes a vital difference, in terms of resources, manpower and public opinion, both, domestic and international. The phases of guerrilla warfare in an insurgency will overlap, but on a map, colouration will always proceed from the margins of civilisation to the centre, the reverse of conventional military tactics, in which strong centres are hit first, with rural areas being mopped up later. However, for an insurgency using guerrilla tactics, territory that the state can't easily enter without weakening itself, is what counts in the long run.

In China, as opposed to Cuba, the main source of manpower was the state's force. However, in both places, the main source of artillery was the state. This ensured that logistical problems remained to a minimum. And in China, sometimes, the state's supply lines served the insurgents better than they served the state, to the extent that sometimes, state supplies passing through insurgent areas paid tax to the insurgents before heading to the state occupied areas. In a guerrilla war, strategic defence is active defence based on incessant attack⁴¹.

It must be remembered that in Manipur, the NNC is provided arms by Mao, himself and later, when the Meetei UGs take up arms, they are trained in China.

⁴⁰ Taber, op.cit., pp 49-51.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp 51-55.

Colonial Viet Minh Experience(North Vietnam)

In a colonial situation, the political effects of guerrilla war are less important than in a war against the native government. The Chinese and Cuban insurgencies were directed against native governments, however, in Viet Minh, the struggle was against the French, which rendered conditions very different from the previous two examples. This was a fact recognised by Genl. Vo Nguyen Giap, who argued that a tendency among the workers was to not take the role of political work seriously. He argues that it was only in a later stage that attention was paid by political workers to uniting the nation in all social sectors and joining all ethnic groups in a multinational country, against foreign domination. The failure to form a broad popular front, including all religions, against the imperial powers, cost the Viet Minh in South Vietnam seriously, at the beginning of the struggle⁴².

In Manipur, one of the chief driving forces of the insurgency is the desire to create a united North-East, which takes its space in the larger South-East Asian global arena. However, the constant factionalism and the inability to form a united front are also the reasons for the downfall of the movement.

In Vietnam, the French controlled the roads, but the guerrillas passed safely through the jungle and the rice paddies on either side of the road, barely a hundred yards from the French, unseen. The French controlled towns, over which the guerrillas had no designs. They meant to win over people and not territory, since territory without people, was useless to the occupiers. The Viet Minh troops were organised on three levels:

- i.** Chu-luc, regular, permanent guerrilla fighters, employed strategically, wherever needed. They carried out the main campaign when insurgent forces concentrated for a major strike.
- ii.** Regional guerrillas, who fought only in their zones, could return to civilian character as workers or peasants, if needed.
- iii.** Du-kich, village militia, guerrilla by night, peasant by day. They served in limited assignments, such as sabotaging bridges, ambushing patrols, mining roads, carrying messages or funds, only to return to their farms and villages at the first sign of military opposition.

⁴²Ibid., pp 57-60.

The guerrilla strategy in the Viet Minh, was determined by the lack of means to fight an open war. As a political decision was awaited, the guerrillas continued to eat away at the edges of the occupying army. The French were unable to withstand the war, politically and psychologically. French morale sagged as the war dragged on, the pro-French section of the population gradually declined, and political pressure in France itself, mounted. By 1950, the French were reducing troops in the Viet Minh. The war then dragged on for four more years, as Genl. Giap decided to launch into Mao's third stage, the strategic offense, as explained above. This failed, causing the Viet Minh to concentrate efforts on capturing heavy artillery, so they could draw the French into battle, openly. The French lacked on two fronts, by this time. Militarily, they lacked manpower in a situation where every man and woman could be a guerrilla fighter and politically, France was unwilling to offer any further support to the forces still trying to control Vietnam, at least, in the Viet Minh zones. Diplomatic pressure, on the other hand, mounted on the French. After the battle of Dien Bien Phu, where French forces were defeated, the military survey team sent over from France recommended that North Vietnam, at least, be abandoned to its own devices⁴³.

The Viet Cong Experience (South Vietnam)

In South Vietnam, the Saigon government, while an instrument of American policy and a military dictatorship, could not ignore public opinion. This was for two reasons. Firstly, the US was funding the war and needed to feel its actions were not in vain and therefore, the Saigon government could not, by its actions, alienate its bankers. Secondly, the section of population that supported the dictatorship could not be alienated, even it was largely composed of the large, burdensome army and the intrigue ridden officers' corps. For this reason, for a very long time, the threat posed by the Viet Cong guerrillas was not realised. By the time it was, the guerrillas were fully competent to fight the Vietnamese army, even one backed by the American army, aircrafts and advisors.

The Viet Cong had established strong rear base areas, which isolated the Saigon government from the rural population, numerically, eighty-five percent of South Vietnam's total population. The guerrillas remained unchallenged outside the large centres of population, except for small, ineffective airstrikes and those carried out by helicopter borne forces. Government armoured columns could enter Viet Cong dominated areas, but not without threat of ambush and with no hope of remaining or of exercising control over the people.

⁴³ Taber, op.cit., pp 57-73.

Most major arteries and some secondary roads had been cut, leaving some provincial capitals to be accessible only by air and a ring of Viet Cong bases and Saigon created an atmosphere of siege in the capital, especially as some battles occurred barely six to eight miles from the capital. The Viet Cong maintained a viable economy in the areas it held and their tax collectors collected revenues from commerce still continuing between the insurgency ridden zones and the cities. The hold of the Viet Cong can best be attested to by the fact that gasoline used to transport government troops had already been taxed by the Viet Cong, when it passed through their area, before it reached the government⁴⁴. Thus, by the time the government in Saigon woke up to the realities of the insurgency, it was already well into its third phase. Since the troops could go nowhere without spreading themselves too thinly, they became increasingly restricted to garrisons in larger towns and cities, which not only completely cut them off from the people, but also rendered them impotent.

The government ran clear and hold operations, which were doomed to fail because since the government, while strong enough to temporarily clear an area, could not hold too many such areas without spreading itself too thinly. The guerrillas simply withdrew and redoubled their activities elsewhere, since not being interested in holding territory, they were free to choose their targets and accept or reject combat, at will. The early strategy of the movement was aimed at breaking the chain of command from Saigon to the rural areas and isolating the government from approximately seventeen thousand hamlets and eight thousand villages. This was done by subverting, kidnapping or assassinating local officials, especially, village chiefs and members of village councils. With the political liaison between the capital and the village broke, the guerrillas could build their own army⁴⁵.

This is a pattern we will see repeated in another part of what has been defined as, 'Zomia', earlier, in Manipur. In 1973, Autonomous District Councils (hereafter referred to as, ADCs) evolved, parallel to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (hereafter referred to as, PRIs), as part of the Manipur (Hill Areas) Autonomous District Council Act, 1971. In 1989, these were rendered defunct as agitations in the hills disallowed elections, demanding that they be replaced by Autonomous District Councils under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which would give them a measure of legislative and judicial powers as per tribal customary laws⁴⁶. There is, however, one significant difference between the Viet Cong

⁴⁴Ibid., pp 81-4.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp 84-6.

⁴⁶Phanjoubam, P., op.cit., pp 71-2.

experience and the experience in Manipur. In the Viet Cong, the Saigon government's offices were disrupted or destroyed to overthrow its yoke. In Manipur, interestingly enough, the hills demand the removal of one set of State laws, so that they may be replaced by another set of Central Government laws. If there was ever a sign that in some ways, the insurgency in Manipur is still confused about where it stands with regard to the Indian State, this was it. In Manipur too, district officers, who were agents of the Central government and Mayang (outsider) were targeted oftener than state government officers, who happened to be largely of Manipur. Interestingly enough, the insurgency in Manipur's Valley takes off just as the insurgency in the Viet Minh ends. If we look at the larger framework, the insurgency begins just after the Sino-Indian War of 1962. The timing seems rather convenient, especially if it is considered that between Hjamirabot's death in 1951 and the foundation of the UNLF in 1964, thirteen years have lapsed. The question of why the demand for Statehood and Independence remained quiet so long, begs to be raised. Clearly, ideas of revolution and rebellion and nationhood had been circulating in the area for long. Their manifestation was a matter of carefully planned timing.

The indiscriminate use of aircraft among presumed Viet Cong targets alienated the rural population from the Saigon government even more. All contact with the government came in the form of attacks. The guerrilla, on the other hand, was one of the villagers, recruited from amidst them, sharing their perils and hardships⁴⁷. The implementation of the AFSPA alienated the ordinary Manipuri from the Indian State. This implied that the Army and Assam Rifles, which were both, not drawn from among the people, were seen as the 'other'. However, this was not the case with the Manipur Police and the Manipur Rifles, which were of the people. Frequently, they were drawn from the same families as the insurgents. The process of othering did not work here. Simply being on opposite sides of a war did not spoil relations within the community. This is more proof that the insurgency is not a war without the political masters. It also implies that the ideology hasn't percolated down as it should have.

In most of rural, South Vietnam, the Viet Cong administered all markers of effective governance, largely because there was no contact with Saigon except the armed forces ferried in by air. As the army left, the Viet Cong extended its domain through pressurising army

⁴⁷ Taber, op.cit., p 91.

outposts and government installations in the fringe zones⁴⁸. Long before the war ended, the Viet Cong was running a parallel government of its own and the situation had begun to resemble more civil war than insurgency. In 1962, to combat this situation, the Saigon government decided to move the rural population into fortified stockades, which, they believed, would serve to cut off the guerrillas - if they could even be referred to as such, anymore - from their rural base. However, this resulted in the opposite. The high-handedness of the government in removing villagers from their old dwellings, inadequate compensation for losses incurred in transferring possessions and the concentration camp like character of the stockades further alienated the villagers from the Saigon government. Young men and women fled to join the Viet Cong, leaving only the dependants to remain⁴⁹.

In 1968, the Viet Cong suffered major losses, leaving its forces to be replenished by former Viet Minh fighters. From 1971-3, the peace talks held between the Viet Cong and the Saigon government accepted the sovereignty of the Viet Cong over the areas it held. These soon fell apart however, and in 1975, North Vietnam invaded South Vietnam, causing a unification in 1976⁵⁰. The guerrillas had won, overthrowing the French and their American advisors.

The Irish Troubles

Bombs and bullets are the physical weapons of the guerrillas, but their real lever is politics. Their purpose is not to conquer or terrorise, but to create an intolerable situation for the occupying power or its puppet government. Casualties remain low because guerrillas, while fighting campaigns of attrition, shun the battles of attrition that regular armies undertake. Insurgency may be viewed as political murder, but, in some ways, it is more humane by being more selective than other forms of war. In the first year of its war against England, the Irish Republican Army (hereafter referred to as, I.R.A.) had taken no more than twenty-six casualties. England, the occupying power, then, gave up not because of military defeat, but because the rebellion had become an embarrassment for it on the world stage, and because it had become too expensive and no longer prestigious to continue to fight it out.

The rebellion played on the sympathies of the world stage by creating the impression of a courageous people fighting for independence against modern forces of oppression and

⁴⁸Ibid., p 92.

⁴⁹Ibid., p 93.

⁵⁰<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Viet-Cong>

tyranny⁵¹. In Manipur, the NSCN (IM) took to the UN to raise their demand as indigenous people. This gave their cause greater credence on the world stage. This is a tactic that bypassed the Valley insurgents, whether Meetei or Pangal. One reason for this may also be that while the Nagas are ideologically clear, they merely demand a Greater Nagalim⁵², the Valley insurgents are not as clear. The lack of unity among the Meeteis is one reason they haven't received attention either from the Indian government or from international agencies.

All revolutionary activities, guerrilla fighting, terror, sabotage, propaganda was aimed at reducing profits by demoralising labour, impeding production, boycotting imports, inciting insurrection, forbidding payment of rents to foreign owners, wrecking foreign industrial installations and basically, increasing the cost of exploitation of political control, including maintaining the bureaucracy and military and police required to stamp out the rebellion. This implies that the state becomes embroiled in a struggle that tarnishes its reputation before the world and inflicts financial losses that mean political liabilities. The state's efforts only accelerate the process because the more stringent the methods used by the state, the greater the amount of hatred generated among the general population and the harsher the picture presented to the world. Lenin argued that the purpose of terror is to terrify, but rhetoric aside, its greater purpose is to sabotage the orderly administration of the government by forcing it into a defensive position, in which, nothing could be accomplished without the controlling, crippling presence of an armed guard. Counter-insurgency serves the insurgency better than any stratagem of its own. This is visibly manifest in the Irish case.

In Ireland, before the events of the Easter Rebellion, there was very little public sympathy for the rebels. However, the British decision to execute fifteen leaders of the Rebellion, ensured that the movement gained martyrs and any hope of a peaceful settlement was lost. Camus said that rebellion puts on mourning and parades its martyrs. This is precisely what happened in Ireland. The British conscription for the Great War/ First World War (hereafter referred to as, WW-I) united the youth against the British Crown, sending them to the Irish militia, known as National Volunteers, who were to transform into the I.R.A. In 1919, the DailEireann, the legislative assembly of the Sinn Fein party declared independence from

⁵¹ Taber, op.cit., pp 97-9.

⁵² Swu, I.C., 'Speech addressed to UN Conference on Indigenous Peoples', Geneva, 1994; Chara, S., 'Speech addressed to UN Conference on Indigenous Peoples', Geneva, 1994; Chakravarty, D., 'Statement issued on behalf of the Delegation of India to the Working Group on Indigenous Population', Geneva, 1993; Chakravarty, D., 'Statement issued on behalf of the Delegation of India to the Working Group on Indigenous Population', Geneva, 1994.

Britain, declaring the creation of Sin Fein courts and the police. This was meant as a political move, but a full-fledged insurgency was soon to break out.

By the end of 1919, everyone, civilian or military, was partisan to the struggle. Little actually happened, but the suspense could never be suspended. For the British officials, any road might lead to an ambush, and any civilian might suddenly turn out to be armed, only to fire at the British. The Irish terrain proved particularly suitable for guerrilla warfare – green, rugged, the countryside rendered road-less during wet weather, which in Ireland, was almost always – its marshes and bogs provided perfect cover to the I.R.A. men, “on the run”, yet always keeping them close to towns and cities. This made them both, able to conduct lightning raids after dark, and, so well integrated with the larger population, that most held regular civilian employment by day. Most of their activities were only of nuisance value, militarily. But then, the I.R.A. was not fighting a military war. Like all guerrilla wars, this was a political war, its chief effects being psychological. It resulted in ending recruitments to the Royal Irish Constabulary and mounting resignations from it, resulting in sagging morale. Troops lived under constant stress, which many who had served during WW-I, said was greater than in the trenches. Suspicions ran so deep that a military order warned civilians that anyone walking with their hands in their pockets could be suspected of being an I.R.A. gunman. Raids on barracks and convoys affected the economy and the administration of the country, slowing transport, restricting production, and forcing the military to create siege like conditions, which restricted everyday life at tremendous cost to the British government, the British taxpayer, already tired of war, and to everyone with a stake in orderly, productive Ireland. Every incident damaged British prestige, abroad and shook the general public’s morale at home. It gave the opposition ammunition to be used against the ruling Tories.

If the I.R.A.’s actions were fire, the arrival of reinforcements from Britain in early 1920, known as the Black and Tans (hereafter referred to as, ‘the Tans’) for their uniform, added fuel. While the I.R.A.’s actions could be admired abroad, as part of a courageous struggle for liberty, the Tans’ reprisal could only be criticised internationally and alienate the Irish from the Crown even further. Irish propagandists made the most of the opportunity and magnified the scale of oppression. The reputation of the Tans created a scandal in England, which helped along the Irish cause.

The I.R.A. never managed to defeat the British militarily, anywhere at any time, but, like all guerrilla wars, it wasn’t a military war, but a political one. They were more catalyst, than

agent. Their insurgency accomplished two tasks. One, of transforming an apathetic population into a mass resistance, which the British could not economically or politically defeat. Two, they turned Ireland into a British liability, instead of an asset, thus, forcing them to withdraw. The means of armed sabotage and armed aggression were simple and actual damage relatively unimportant, but, its cost and consequences were severe. The Irish case proved that draconian rules are possible only in isolation, in an indifferent world and only when those subjugated have no will to resist. Insurgency therefore, needs to be understood as a historical and social process and not an accident or a plot. Insurgents are not deviants, but belonging to the population. They are a manifestation of the popular will to revolt, the first expression of the stiffening of popular resistance to established authority, towards a new and different order of existence. Insurgencies attract criminals because criminality may be seen as a form of social protest and criminals might turn out to be as good insurgents as idealists⁵³.

The Insurgency in Manipur

Manipur's problem of continuing insurgency in contemporary times may be attributed to the following factors:

- i. Unemployment of educated youth⁵⁴
- ii. Economic backwardness of region
- iii. Historical background of the region as well as the alienation generated by the attitude of the 'mainland'.
- iv. Negligence of the Centre which reaffirms the alienation experienced by the region. The periphery feels marginalised.
- v. Rampant corruption in public life. Not restricted to Manipur, but adds to feeling of alienation as Centre does not take cognisance of economic backwardness compounded by corruption.
- vi. Geographical location of the region, which implies physical connectivity of the region is impacted by weather conditions, infrastructural requirements, and international border constituting ninety-eight percent of the region's neighbourhood

Manipur's history of assimilation into the Indian subcontinent begins with the eighteenth century spread of Vaishnavism in the valley, patronised by the then ruler, GharibNiwaz.

⁵³ Taber, op.cit., pp 97-109.

⁵⁴ See Table 2.8., Table 2.14., Table 2.24., and Table 2.27.

Accounts from the CheitharolKumbaba⁵⁵ do claim descent from Arjun of the Mahabharat, claiming that he married the Meetei/Meitei (hereafter, Meetei will be used as the standard spelling in this work, since the community itself is at odds about which spelling to use) princess, Chitrangada. However, since dating of mythology and folklore is a contentious issue, especially since the original Puyas were apparently burnt when Vaishnavism was declared the State religion and what now remain are fragmentary recreations of them, the advent of Vaishnavism under GharibNiwaz may be taken as definitive proof of the widening circle of Hinduism and the gathering of Manipur into the periphery of the Indian subcontinent.

Manipur's assimilation into British territories in India has been described above, but it becomes important to note that until the Battle of Khongjom in 1891, Manipur had remained a Protectorate of the British Empire. And even though the British might have exercised considerable power in choosing claimants to the throne, it continued as a Protectorate, with a Maharaja at the helm of affairs. Hinduism in the Valley consolidated its hold during the reign of MaharajChandrakirti Singh, but this did not mean that the cult of Sanamahi died out completely. In recent years, as Meetei insurgent organisations raised the banner of Sanamahism in a move to distance themselves from 'Hindu' India, the state government hit back by creating the LainingthouSanamahi Trust parallel to the Sri Govindaji Temple Trust. While the latter maintains the Vaishnav records of the region, which includes the royal chronicles, the latter has been involved in reviving the Puyas and the CheitharolKumbaba. The state government's recognition of Sanamahi festivals as state holidays struck a blow to one of the major planks that the Valley insurgents had been using.

However, to return to the history of the Manipuri agitation, in May, 1934, the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha (hereafter referred to as, NHMM) was formed with MaharajChurachand Singh as President and HijamIrabot as Vice President. The NHMM eventually grew into the first political organisation in Manipur to stand against prevailing malpractices in religion and religious practices. In 1935, Irabot set up the Manipur KrishiSammelan (hereafter referred to as, MKS), which joined his movement against the Brahmasabha imposing fees on the poor in the name of religion. In 1938, the NHMM dropped the 'Hindu' from its name and under Irabot's Presidentship, became the Nikhil Manipur Mahasabha (hereafter referred to as, NMM). It raised the demand for 'full

⁵⁵Nepram, B., *CheitharolKumbaba: The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*, New Delhi, 2012, pp (check definitely).

administrative powers to Manipur' and that the hills and the valley be treated as a single administrative unit. Irabot's argument was based on the rationale that Durbar members, being handpicked by the Maharaj, were not the representatives of the people of Manipur and could not relate to their problems. Owing to the activities of the NMM, the Durbar declared it a political organisation, making it necessary for all employees of the Kingdom's government to resign from it. Irabot, au contraire, resigned from the government to work for the NMM. Ostensibly influenced by Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement, he launched a campaign for Manipur's move towards a fully responsible form of government, that is, democracy. He appealed to the Manipuris to boycott foreign made goods. To gather support, he travelled to Dacca, Burma and Assam, places where people of Manipuri origin can still be found.

In December, 1939, a man-made scarcity of rice, created by traders hoarding to drive up prices caused women to gather in Imphal to demand an immediate ban on export of rice. This was the King's prerogative. The Assam Rifles had to be called to disperse the crowd, causing a bayonet charge. Within the day, the export of rice was banned. This event, actively supported by Irabot and his associates came to be known as Nupi Lal or the Women's War. In 1940, the Manipuri government decided to jail Irabot for insurrectionary speeches and Sylhet was the prison chosen. This turned out to be his training ground in Marxism. Determined to launch a freedom movement in Manipur, he read up extensively on Communism, feeling it to be best suited to Manipur's situation because of pre-existing conditions which included ongoing agitations for achieving farmers' welfare, torture and exploitation, suffering under a colonial power and movements against oppression under the feudal system. The WW-II provided an opportunity to LongnamBijoy, Irabot's associate to prepare for a revolt with the help of the Indian National Army (hereafter referred to as, INA). This, however could not succeed as upon his release, Irabot was denied entry into Manipur and his efforts were diverted into merging the PrajaSammelan with the Praja Mandal to form the Praja Sang, which raised the demand of making the farmer the owner of the paddy field as a political party. As a poem written by Irabot goes,

The fields echoed with

The sweet songs of artless life

The broken, old and stagnant past

With a hope of classless society

Get up farmers, do stand up

And fight the battle

Oh you farmers

Oh you peasants⁵⁶

In 1947, the Constitution of Manipur was formed under the guidance of the British Resident and a Constitution making committee. Irabot argued that the Constitution did not guarantee Manipur's independence and democracy since no article of the Constitution stated these explicitly. However, the Manipur Congress, formed in opposition to Irabot with no links to the Indian National Congress (hereafter referred to as, INC), accepted the Constitution which provided for a fifty-three member legislative assembly with a CM nominated and appointed by the Maharaj. Franchise was limited⁵⁷.

In November, 1947, Irabot convened a meeting to bring together the Valley and the Hills, in which the Tangkhullong participated and a decision was made to reach out to the Naga National Council (hereafter, referred to as NNC). In 1948, the coalition government formed without the Congress launched a movement for Manipur's Merger with India. This was strongly opposed by both, Irabot and the Maharaja.⁵⁸ It is this staunch opposition by the two that the Meetei insurgents use to cite the colonisation of Manipur.

On 15 October 1949 India again forcefully merged Manipur within its fold while India unilaterally abrogating the then Manipur's constitutional and republican government. The annexation of Manipur in 1949 marked the beginning of India's renewed colonization of Manipur. India's annexation of Manipur is a blatant violation of international norms on respecting the sovereignty of States. The uprooting Manipur's sovereign status in 1949 by India has been the fundamental moot point and cause for the armed liberation struggle.⁵⁹

The Maharaj signed the Merger Agreement in Shillong on 21st September, 1949, under controversial circumstances. The decision was kept secret till 15th October, 1949, when the

⁵⁶Chingangbam, R., 'Literature for the Ignored Lives', 13th April, 2009, www.e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=reviews.arts.Literature_for_the_Ignored_Lives.

⁵⁷Phanjoubam, T., op.cit., pp (check definitely).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹Chaoren, I., 'Message to the People on the 39th Raising Day of the People's Liberation Army', www.imphaltimes.com/news/item/6796-rpf-president-irengbam-chaoren-greets-people-on-occasion-the-38th-raising-day-of-its-armed-wing-people-s-liberation-army,25-09-2017.

coalition government was abolished, one fine morning and the first Chief Commissioner to Manipur was appointed by the provisional Government of India. Irabot, angered by these events and fired by Communist ideas, left for Myanmar, where he signed an agreement with the United Front Liberation Government of Burma, in order to form a united left front. This agreement brought him some part of the Kabaw Valley and the Angoching Region, where he set up the Manipur Red Guard. His death in 1951, however, derailed the movement, at least for a while. We cannot assume that the movement died out, only to re-emerge in 1964 with Arambam Samarendra and R.K. Meghen Singh. Undercurrents must have existed, since it is almost impossible to imagine a movement as comprehensive as the UNLF emerging from a vacuum, also because the formation of the UNLF is itself shrouded in mystery. The timing however, must be noted. In the 1950s, inspired by Irabot's movement, the Pan Mongoloid Movement (hereafter, referred to as PMM) was formed to forge unity between the various ethnic sub-groups of Mongoloid origin in the Indian North-East and adjoining areas. The aim was to create a sovereign nation.⁶⁰ This ties into the idea of Zomia⁶¹ and in the words of the insurgents themselves, WESEA⁶². The UNLF was believed to have been the Underground wing of the PMM. However, at some point, the PMM faded off into the background and the Pan Manipuri Youth League (hereafter, referred to as PANMYL) became the organisation's overground wing. The PANMYL may have broken with the idea of the united North-East, choosing to focus on the unity of Manipur, but in later years, as the decline of the insurgency sets in, the movement towards unification of the North-East is again taken up. This time, by the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (hereafter, referred to as KYKL), the founder of which was a follower of both, Irabot and Samarendra.⁶³

Initially, the UNLF sought the support of the civilian population by banning drugs, as Manipur lay close to the Golden Triangle, which smuggled heroin. As the movement picked up arms, both, UNLF and PLA took to punishing smugglers and peddlers of drugs. In January, 1991, the PLA imposed a prohibition on alcohol in the state. This won it the favour of the Meira Paibis who were running their own Nishabandh movement against alcohol.⁶⁴ However, this is the phase when the insurgency begins to degenerate into a money making

⁶⁰Phanjoubam, P., op.cit., pp 57-65.

⁶¹ Van Schendel, W., op.cit.

⁶²'The United National Liberation Front of WESEA (UNLFW) Boycotts Indian Republic Day Celebration', *Imphal Free Press*, 24th January, 2016, www.kanglaonline.com/2016/01/the-united-liberation-front-of-wesea-unlwf-boycotts-indian-republic-day-celebration/.

⁶³ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017. Meetei is a contemporary of the KYKL Chairman, Oken.

⁶⁴Phanjoubam, P., op.cit., p 70.

business and in the name of prohibition, PLA began smuggling in hooch. The UNLF did something very similar. They monopolised synthetic drugs, making money to buy arms on the market.⁶⁵ However, what must be noted is that both, in the Hills and in the Valley, there were large areas out of the control of the Indian State, what may be referred to as ‘the liberated zone’ and here, insurgents handled administration, issuing orders, dispensing justice and winning over the civilians. This is almost an Orwellian situation, where the ‘parallel government’ dictated morality.⁶⁶

In 1962, the Sino-Indian War takes place. We know that Mao himself had initially provided the NNC with arms. From then, contacts between China and insurrectionists had been ongoing. It is hard to believe that Bisheshwar and party simply upped and left for China to seek training and were entertained by the authorities, as the PLA claims.⁶⁷ In 1963, Nagaland is provided Statehood, if looked at from that angle, very fast on the heels of the 1962 defeat.

Insurgencies rise and more importantly, flourish when all or any of the following conditions exist:

1. Primordial, in which ethnic and religious identities are deeply rooted and provide deep social, historic and genetic foundations which lay the psychological bases of survival.
2. Instrumental, where an ethnic group takes recourse to collective action for attaining a particular objective. Conflicts arise when these groups feel that they are being denied advantages that are their due for being different.
3. Structural, in which peripheralisation leads to the accumulation of political discontent.
4. Politico-economic, in which economic benefits are not distributed equally.⁶⁸

Here, it becomes important to note that the origins of the Naga insurgency and the Kuki insurgency are very different from that of the Meeteis’ in the Valley. In terms of rising as a coherent movement for claiming a homeland, the Nagas are the first, with the formation of the NNC under Phizo. The consolidation of the Naga identity occurs during the World Wars, especially WW-I, where, serving in the trenches, people of various tribes from the Hill tracts of present day Manipur and Nagaland came together to identify as one. The term, ‘Naga’ is of

⁶⁵ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

⁶⁶Phanjoubam, P., ‘Manipur: The Search for Solutions’, *Faultlines*, Vol.15, www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume15/Article5.htm .

⁶⁷ Sharma, G.U., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 8th November, 2017.

⁶⁸Laishram, D., Ch. R. Singh & Ng. Jasantakumar, *The Stitch: Ethnicity, Insurgency and Development of Manipur, A Political Economy Perspective*, New Delhi, 2009.

dubious origin, but it is certain that it was a term used by outsiders to refer to a group of loosely linked tribes. It was only the experience of the trenches and the subsequent return to their homes after the War that made these people, these hardened war veterans consider consolidating their identities. The Naga identity demand for a homeland then, is an organic demand. If the process of state formation is considered, the desire of a people to come together, consolidate their identity and then, seek a homeland and State seems most organic. The Nagas are then, very clear in their demands. And religion has been used as the rallying call. “Nagaland for Christ” is the focal point of the demand.⁶⁹ The Kuki demand for Zale’n-gam, on the other hand, is a very recent phenomenon, rising only in the twenty-first century. This is largely a by-product of the large scale displacement caused by the 1993-1997 Naga-Kuki ethnic clashes. While the Nagas wish to form a Christian State, the Kukis wish to return to the old way of life, as it is termed. The demand is a rather straight-forward, though regressive one. They wish to be left alone in their homeland to follow traditional occupations and the clan system.⁷⁰

The Meeteis on the other hand, have a more complicated set of demands. The four different types of reasons mentioned above are all visible in the Valley. The movement begins as a Pan-Mongoloid movement, which then restricts itself to only the unification of the North-East. As it progresses, the movement decided to focus on Manipur’s unity and seeking its independence from India. The movement is then also aimed at maintaining the territorial integrity of the state. In some ways, it is reactionary, defining itself in opposition to another identity. The movement further restricts itself to Meetei pride, at which point, the Pangalstoo become the other. Finally, the movement degenerates into a gang-war, peddling drugs and alienating the very society which it had once sought to help. The movement begins as a Communist movement, dabbles with religion and ethnic revivalism on the way. It is ironically, led by offshoots of the royal family, R.K. Meghen and R.K. Tulachandra being the most prominent examples. The movement gets muddled in its multiplicity of issues. While other issues are equally important, it can’t, but help be observed that this is the same region that has historically, seen uprisings erupt spontaneously at economic injustice. The two NupiLans, the Kuki Rebellion during the WW-I and Irabot’s movement, all aimed at eliminating economic inequalities.

⁶⁹Phanjoubam, P., op.cit.,.

⁷⁰Haokip, P.S., *Zale’n-gam: The Kuki Nation*, New Delhi, 2005, Pvt. Circulation only.

In 1980, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act was applied to the Valley. Here, it becomes important to remember that the Act had been applied to Manipur's Hill Districts on and off all through the 1960s and 1970s due to disturbance in the region. Surprisingly, the silence of the guns in the Hills descends at almost the same time as the guns fire in the Valley.⁷¹ Coordination seems to be the keyword here. The imposition of the AFSPA irks the students and women to object to the Indian State and its deployment of security forces in the region. So far, it seems like a textbook case of guerrilla warfare. In 1981, under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, the following activities were declared illegal:

1. PLA
2. PREPAK and the Red Army
3. KCP and the Red Army

This caused the Valley insurgents to disperse into the rural areas and the Hills for hiding. Combing operations were frequently carried out and almost everyone was placed under suspicion. It became difficult to identify an insurgent from a civilian. The lack of intelligence input, unfamiliarity of the Security forces with the terrain and the language made the condition worse for the State. Any display of tactlessness on the part of the State caused the ranks of the insurgents to swell.⁷² If we go back to the Irish case, conditions in Manipur's Valley in the 1980s were not very different. While the State was being ham-handed in its efforts at tackling the insurgency, this was still the phase where ideology reigned and the insurgents were helping redistribute land and wealth. It is only in the 1990s that the ideological framework begins to shake and ultimately, completely disintegrates.

It is also after 1992 that the State government's policy of absorbing surrendered insurgents into the Security Forces was done away with. This was largely because the State felt that loyalties were suspicious and the men were no longer loyal. Ironically, it is during the 1980s, when the movement was at its peak that surrenderees were seen as being loyal to the State after surrender and absorption. When money becomes a factor, loyalties become shaky.⁷³

The Valley insurgents have also been placed in a bind by the Government accepting cultural demands such as the reintroduction of the Meetei Mayek script and the revival of Sanamahism, which dilutes the appeal of the UGs for the civilians. The loss of appeal is

⁷¹ Manipur State Administration Report, 1960-61 to 1978-79.

⁷² Ibid, 1979-80 to 1989-90.

⁷³ Ibid, 1990-91 to 2000-01.

heightened by the fact that while the Indian State can bring development to Manipur, the UGs have so far, been unsuccessful at any developmental activities, unlike other textbook guerrilla wars.

However, one problem the Indian State faces in bringing attention to the atrocities committed by the insurgents – since the arming of the movement, more civilians have been killed by the insurgents than at the hands of the State or the number of casualties inflicted on the State by the insurgents⁷⁴ -is that as per the UNHRC, human rights violations can only comprise of State committed atrocities. Calling attention to the atrocities committed by the insurgents on a global forum involves recognising their sovereignty. However, here a contradiction presents itself in the policies undertaken by the State. Also according the UN Conventions, a Cease-Fire Agreement can only be signed between two sovereign states. The GoI, however, has signed a cease-fire with the NSCN (IM) and is conducting talks with the Kuki UG organisations through interlocutors. It is this dichotomy that scares the Valley and particularly, the Valley, for whom, the idea of home is not just the immediate area they live in – the Valley, but also, the adjoining Hills, where they can see resolutions being brought.

Insurgency in Manipur's Valley is therefore, at odds with itself. Its ideology was the cause for its connect with the civilian, causing its phenomenal success, but, the degeneration of the ideology has also been, since the 1990s, the cause of the downfall of the movement. The Communist ideology presents glimpses after the end of the 1980s, but by and large, the removal of the ideologue meant that the ideology failed to percolate to the masses, causing a disconnect between the movement which should have been the people's, and the people themselves.

The insurgency in Manipur's Valley can then be divided into three distinct phases:

1. The Irabot period, which was the period of ideation, lasting from the pre-Merger period to immediately post-Merger and continued to simmer throughout the 1950s.
2. The ideological period, beginning from 1964, with the formation of the UNLF to the end of the 1980s, where the Communist movement holds its sway and those joining the movement are ideologically sound and aware of the causes they are fighting for. This is the high point of the insurgency in the Valley. Public support is high and the

⁷⁴ Ibid, 1979-80 to 1990-91.

movement is reminiscent of successful insurgencies and guerrilla wars, the world over.

3. The economic period, which caused political interference and the degeneration of the movement. Ideology takes, first a backseat and then, disappears altogether. The movement fragments into smaller and smaller groups, with ever changing alliances, according to the need of the hour. The disconnect with the ordinary civilian grows, and the movement begins to resemble a gang-war. Ultimately, what is left is a shadow of the movement. This phase began in the 1990s, with the Meetei-Pangal riots and continues to this day.

In 2005, as more and more of their cadres began to surrender, the Valley UGs finally succumbed to signing an MoU with the government. However, due to lack of consensus and consistent fragmentation, only seven Valley groups out of thirty-six signed and only about 400 out of 10,000 insurgents, at a rough estimation, surrendered. These eight groups are:

1. United Revolutionary Front
2. KangleiYawolKannaLup / Manipur Defence Force
3. Kangleipak Communist Party (Lamphel)
4. United People's Party of Kangleipak
5. Kangleipak Communist Party (Nongdrenkhomba)
6. Kangleipak Communist Party (Ngamba/KangleiKhomba)
7. People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (Vice Chairman)⁷⁵

The MoU is extended regularly, even as the GoI turns a blind eye to its violation by the groups. However, surrenders happen regularly now that the UGs know that they have an option. They may not be very happy with the Rs. 3000 they are paid as stipend, but they see it as an opportunity to rehabilitate. Their grouse is that the stipend is too low to manage their expenses and is not paid very regularly, six months' worth of instalments sometimes being held up. Also, the Meeteis contend, the Kuki surrenderees under the Suspension of Operations Agreement receive more stipend than them. The argument generally presented for violating the MoU is that since they are not being stipend

⁷⁵www.manipurassembly.net/archive/7-2004-2005-budget-speech. Also, Singh, S., 'SoO& MoU: Different Treatment for Kuki & Meetei Freedom Fighters', www.ifp.co.in/article/item/2803-soo-mou-different-treatment-for-kuki-meetei-freedom-fighters .

sufficient to cover their expenses, they must step out of their camps to make ends meet. And the only way they know how to do is, is by the barrel of the gun.⁷⁶

Peace in the Valley continues to be elusive and solutions are still being sought. The following two chapters, which present the ‘revolutionaries’ story in their own words, seek to look under the movement at the ordinary lives of the movement.

⁷⁶ In conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps.

Development and Insurgency: The Idealism and Fact Dichotomy

Manipur is a state primarily dependent on agricultural productivity, providing employment to about 63.95% of the population. However, agricultural output in the state is heavily influenced by climatic factors, in which flood and famine play a major role. The Valley is characterised by permanent cultivation and rice forms 95% of all food grains grown, not just in the Valley, but also in the Hills. Paddy cultivation accounts for 80% of total cropped area, even though the Valley comprises only about 10% of the area of the entire state. Maize is the other major crop. Some part of Manipur's economy is also dependent on horticulture. However, that is largely a phenomenon in the hills. Livestock also plays an important role in the economy, with the Valley focusing more on cattle and the Hills on piggery. Forests cover about 78% of the State's area, with an additional 15% being unrecorded. Timber therefore, plays an important role in the state's economy. However, again, this is not the produce of the Valley.

Manipur ranks second in terms of urbanisation in the North-East, yet, 76.12% of the population lives in villages. Since the Merger, the development of the rural area has been the focus of the Government. Yet, at the end of the period under study, 40.03% of the rural and 7.47% of the urban population lived below the poverty line, accounting for 7.19 lakhs, 28.54% of the total population. At the end of the period under study, per-capita income was Rs. 13213, and had demonstrated a trend of marginal increase, but still remained the second lowest in the North-East, only more than Tripura.¹ This really means that developmental policies are passed on paper, but no effective change occurs on the ground. The list of failed developmental policies includes the setting up of industries like the:

1. Manipur Cycle Corporation Limited
2. Manipur Cement Limited
3. Manipur Spinning Mills Corporation Limited
4. Manipur Pulp and Allied Products Limited
5. Manipur Food Industries Corporation Limited.

¹*Economic Survey Manipur 2002-2003*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Manipur, p iv-25 and 220-401.

The following graphs and charts seek to display Manipur's development and measure it against the development of insurgency in the Valley.

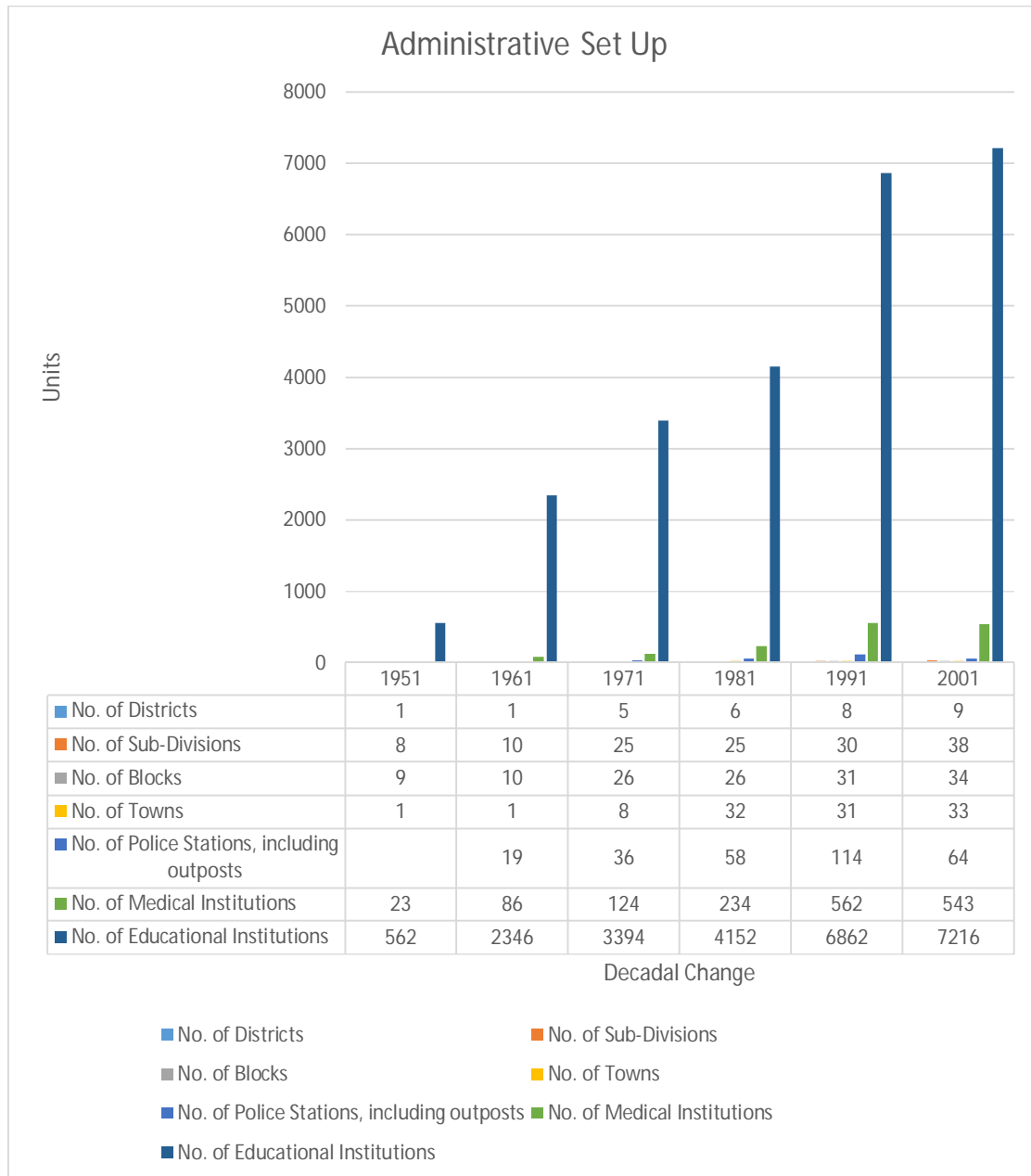


Table 2.1. Administrative Set-Up of Manipur²

The division of the Imphal District, the only in the state, into five towards the end of the 1960s, implied that the Hills came into their own and also, that the Valley itself, could focus on its own requirements as distinct from those of the Hills. To put this into perspective,

² Manipur State Administrative Reports, 1951-52 to 2001-01.

Moirang and Bishnupur only succeed in getting rural water supply in 1968. A concrete bridge was also opened that year, which brought some relief to the region, which suffered frequently from the washing away of temporary wooden bridges owing to a persistent rain and flood problem.³

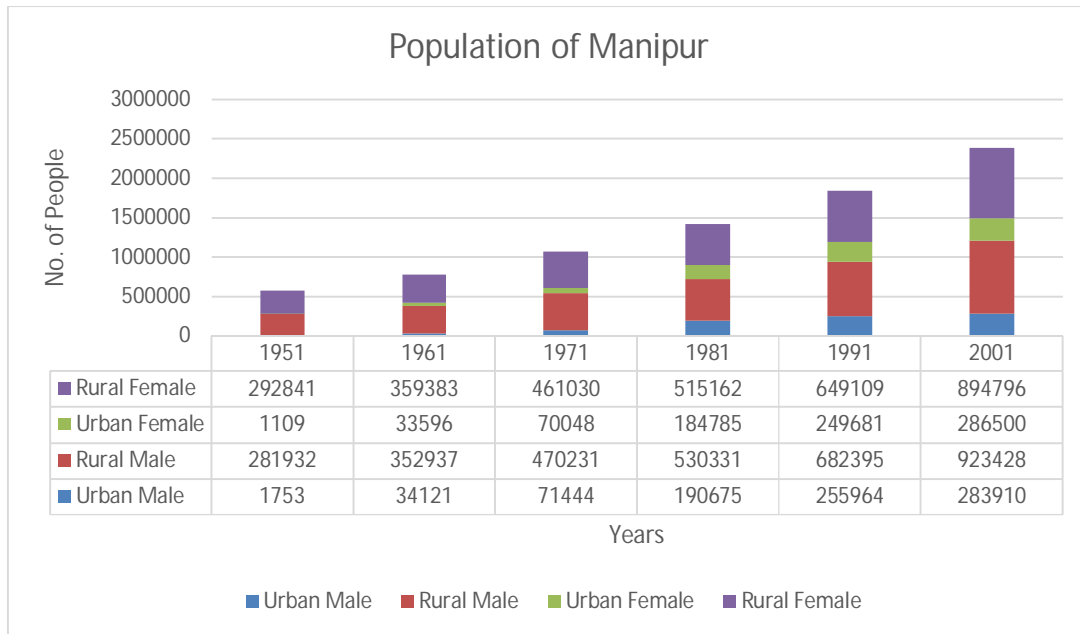


Table 2.2. Population of Manipur⁴

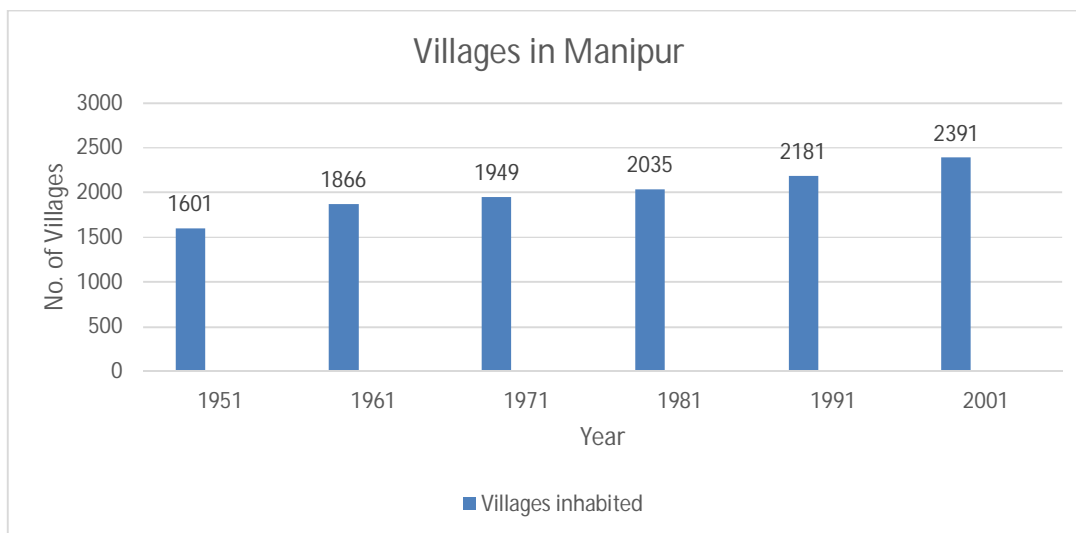


Table 2.3. Villages in Manipur⁵

³ Manipur State Administrative Reports 1968-69.

⁴ *Statistical Handbook of Manipur 2002*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Manipur, p 6-7.

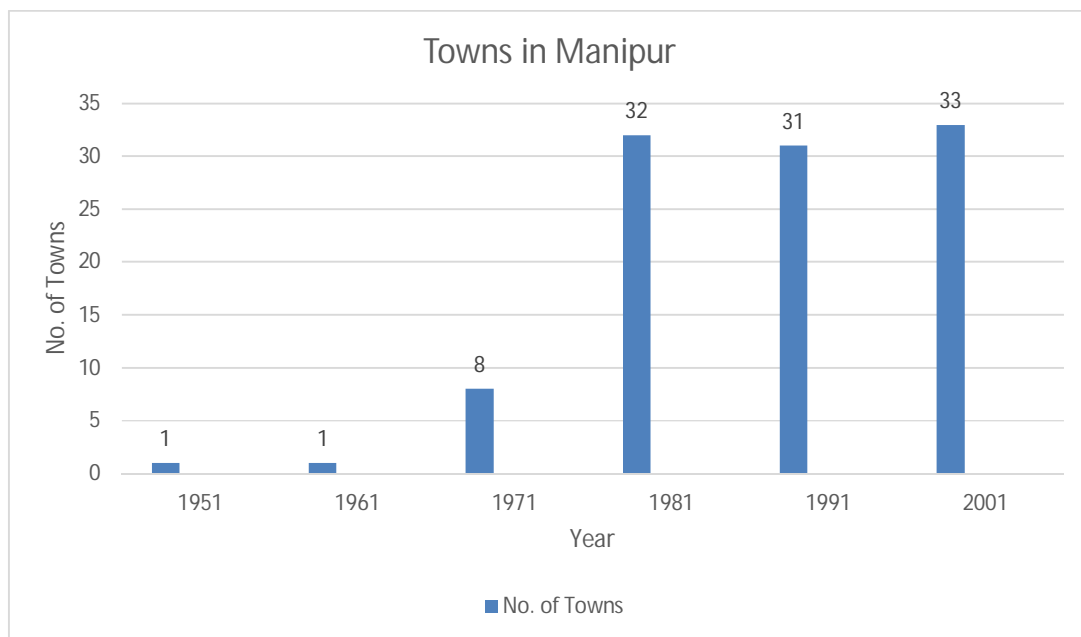


Table 2.4. Towns in Manipur⁶

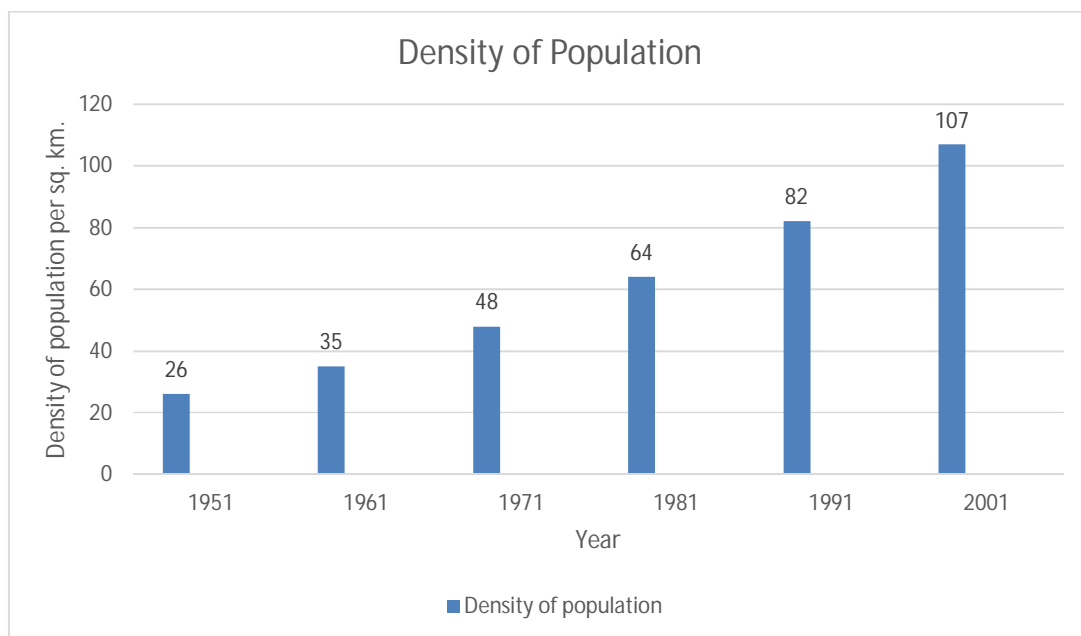


Table 2.5. Density of Population in Manipur⁷

⁵ Ibid, p 10-11.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

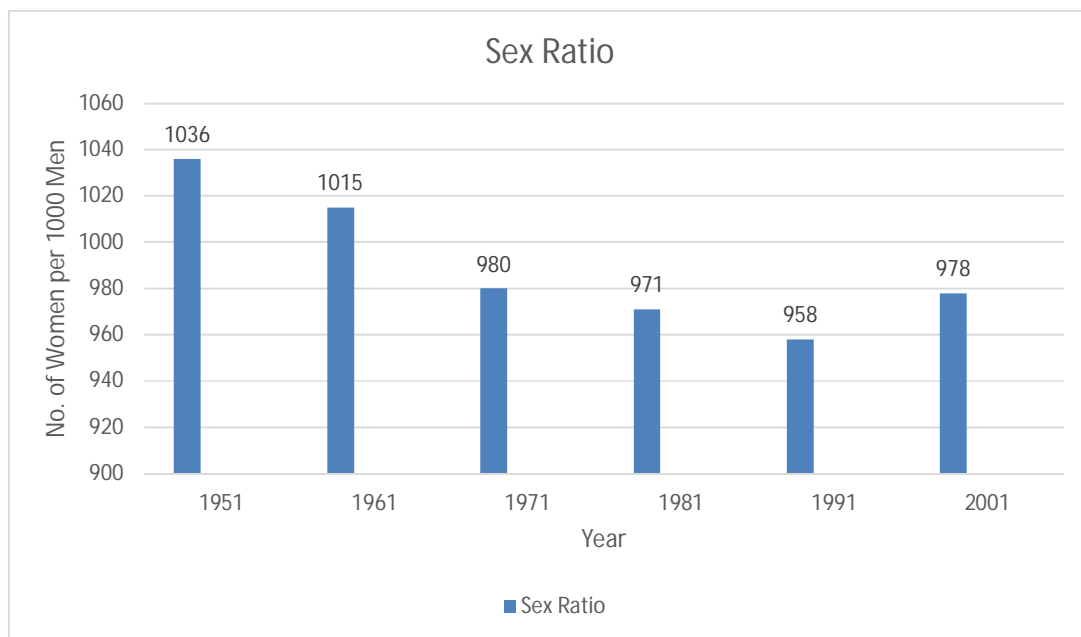


Table 2.6. Sex Ratio in Manipur⁸

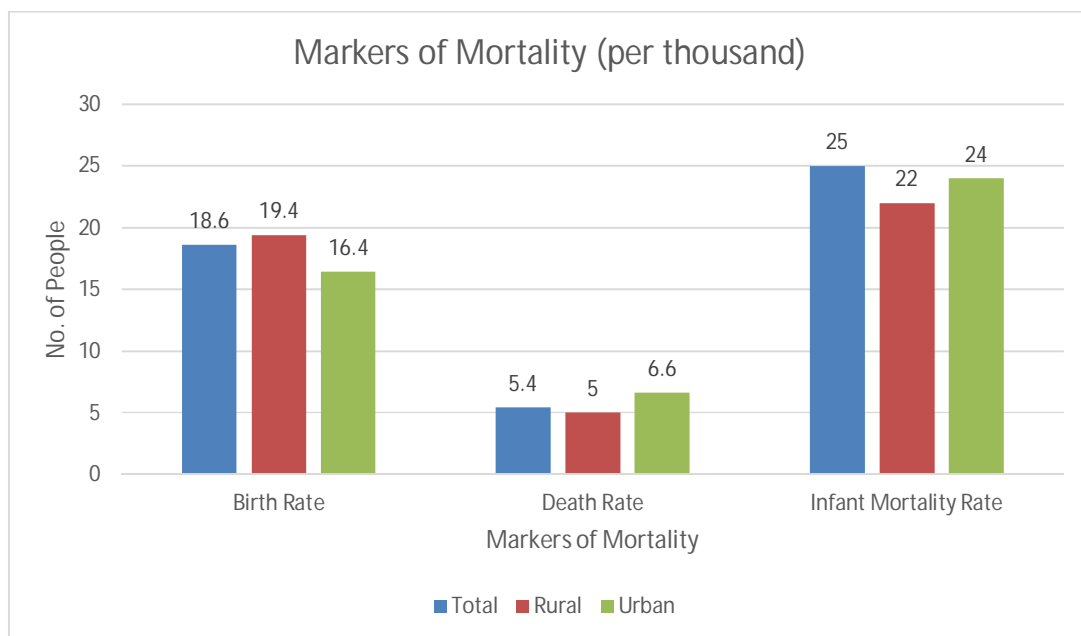


Table 2.7. Markers of Mortality in Manipur⁹

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, pp 396-99.

In 1964, all of Manipur was divided into fourteen blocks along the following lines:

1. Hills – 9, of which 4 were at Stage I of development and 5 at Stage II
2. Valley – 5, of which 3 were at Stage I of development, 1 at Stage II and 1 was Post Stage II.

These were brought under intensive Community Development Activities. These activities included adult literacy, organisation of reading rooms, youth clubs, farmers' unions, Gram Sahayak training camps, Mahila Mandals and Baalwadis. For this, Rs. 17.80 lakhs was allocated, of which, Rs. 15.50 lakhs were used for:

3. Local Development Works
4. Village Housing Project Scheme
5. Animal Husbandry for Welfare of Scheduled Tribes.

The Hills, being out of the purview of this dissertation, Panchayati Raj was brought to the Valley and District Panchayati Raj Training Centres were opened, which provided training to non-official members of the newly set up Panchayats in the Valley. Across 12 Institutional Courses and 32 Peripatetic Courses, training was provided to:

1. 220 Pradhans
2. 215 Up-Pradhans
3. 38 Sarpanchs
4. 35 Sahayak Sarpanchs
5. 763 Members of Panchayats.

20 Panchayat Ghars were constructed in a bid towards empowering the village as a unit in the Valley.¹⁰ This gains importance, if we consider that this is also the year Arambam Samarendra and Meghen set up the UNLF to achieve Manipur's independence from India. Initially, Gram Panchayat elections were conducted under the Uttar Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act. However, in 1975, the state enacted a new law for Panchayati Raj, which provided for a three tier Panchayati Raj system. These Panchayats served an active role in redistributing

¹⁰ Manipur State Administrative Report 1964-65.

land to the landless. This Act however, did not extend to the Hills, which had been provided with their own Manipur (Hill Areas) Autonomous District Council Act in 1971.¹¹

Samarendra and Meghen’s timing may have had something to do with the Chinese aggression of 1962, which led to the drawing up of Civil Defence Plans for Imphal and the imparting of training to the Home Guard, the NCC and Local Volunteers.¹² It is to be noted that many who joined the movement were inspired by the ideology, but the fact that they had been trained in armed defence, must not be overlooked. The UNLF may not have promulgated violence – to the extent that in all State Administrative Reports, till the early 1980s, the Valley is stated to be peaceful and the Naga Hills violent – but, they did draw support from a restless section of society.

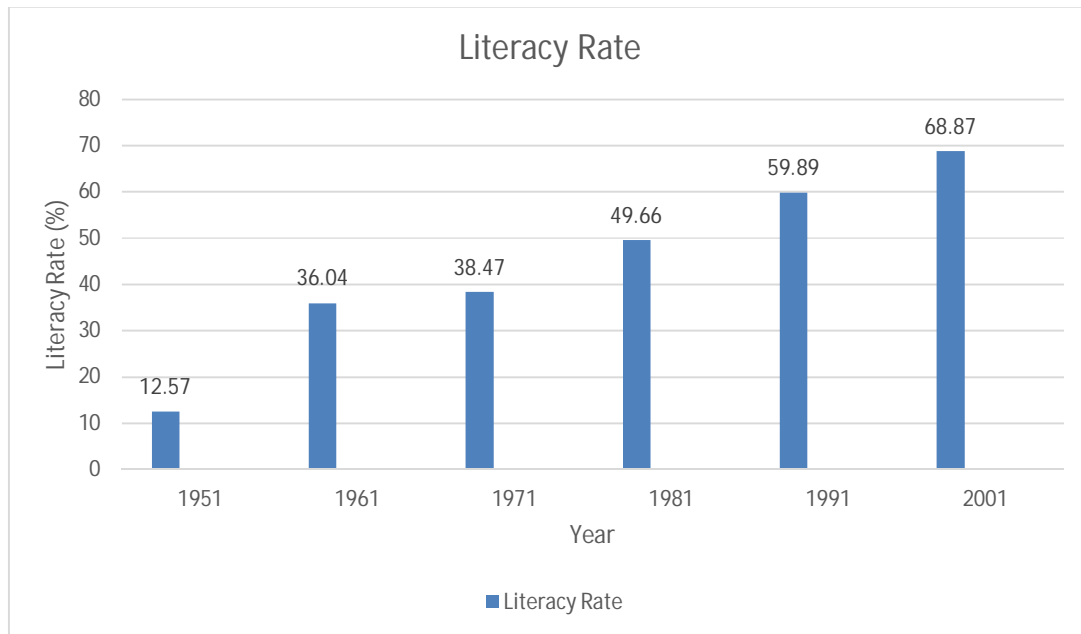


Table 2.8. Literacy Rate in Manipur¹³

¹¹ Manipur State Administrative Report 1975-76.

¹² Manipur State Administrative Report 1968-69.

¹³ *Statistical Handbook of Manipur 2002*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Manipur, p 6-7.

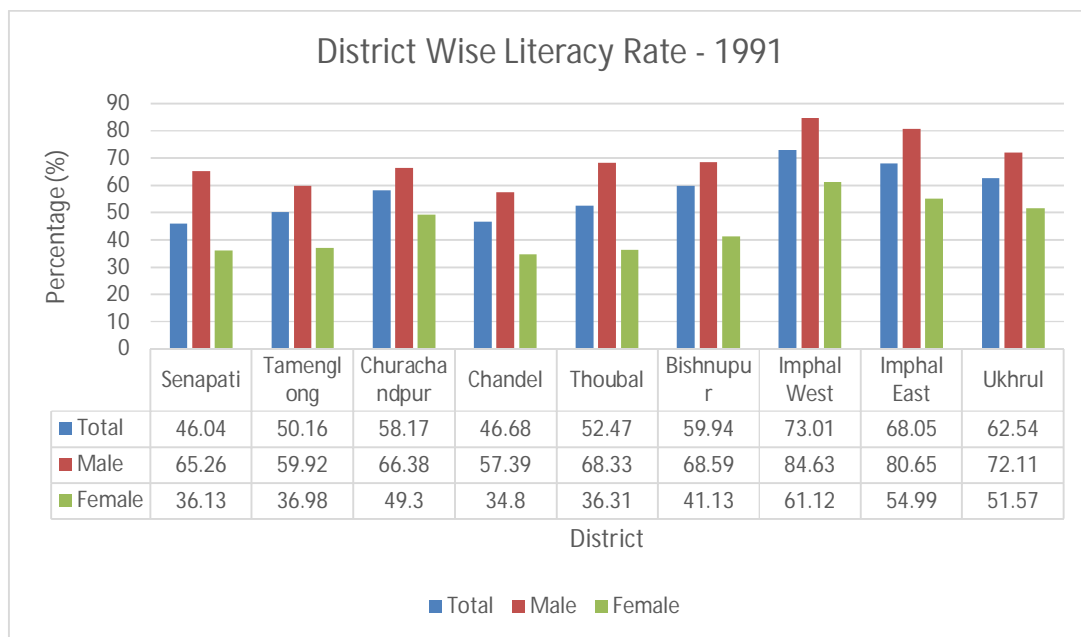


Table 2.9. District Wise Literacy Rate As in 1991¹⁴

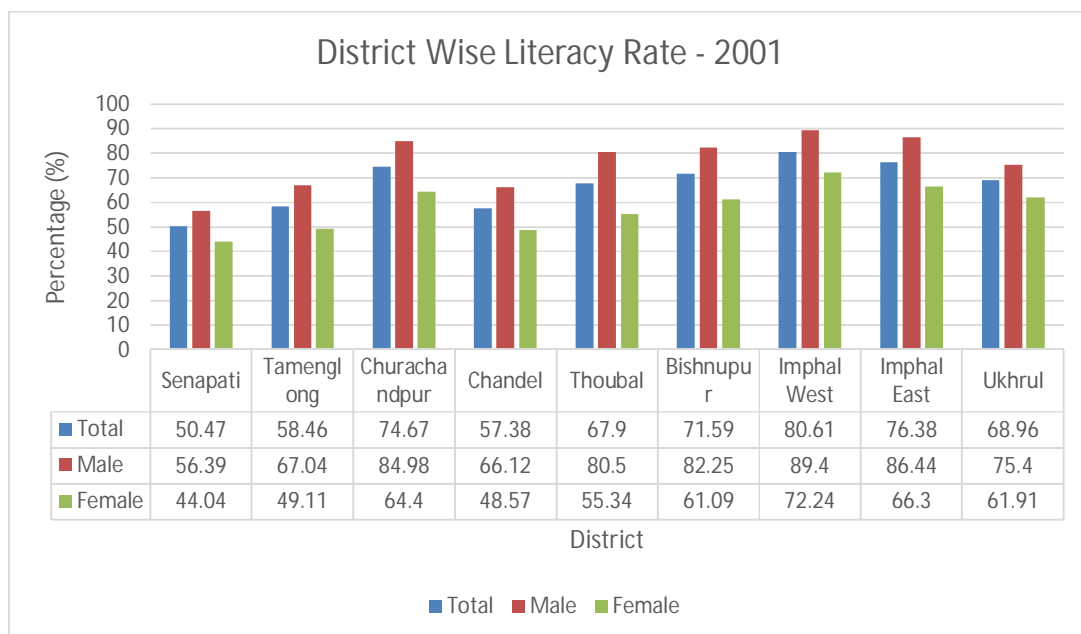


Table 2.10. District Wise Literacy Rate As In 2001¹⁵

As the trend for the last two decades of the period under study reveals, the Valley has benefitted from education more than the Hills. While, in the Hills, especially in the Naga Hills, the effect of the Missionaries in imparting education was profound, the Valley

¹⁴ Socio-Economic Census, 1991.

¹⁵ Socio-Economic Census, 2001.

benefitted from being the centre of attention and all activity. Additionally, the role of the erstwhile Royal Family, which continues to play a prominent public role, even today, cannot be disregarded. Many institutions of learning, particularly in and around Imphal, were set up by, if not direct descendants of the Maharaj, then the offshoots of the Royal Family. Many of the prominent colleges and schools in the Valley, which include the D.M. College, the G.P. College and the R.K. Sanatombi Girls High School, were started by the royal family. Consequently, the Valley has a higher literacy rate than the Hills. This also has to do with the availability of infrastructure or the lack, thereof, as well as the State's ability to monitor the schools in the Valley better than those in the Hills.

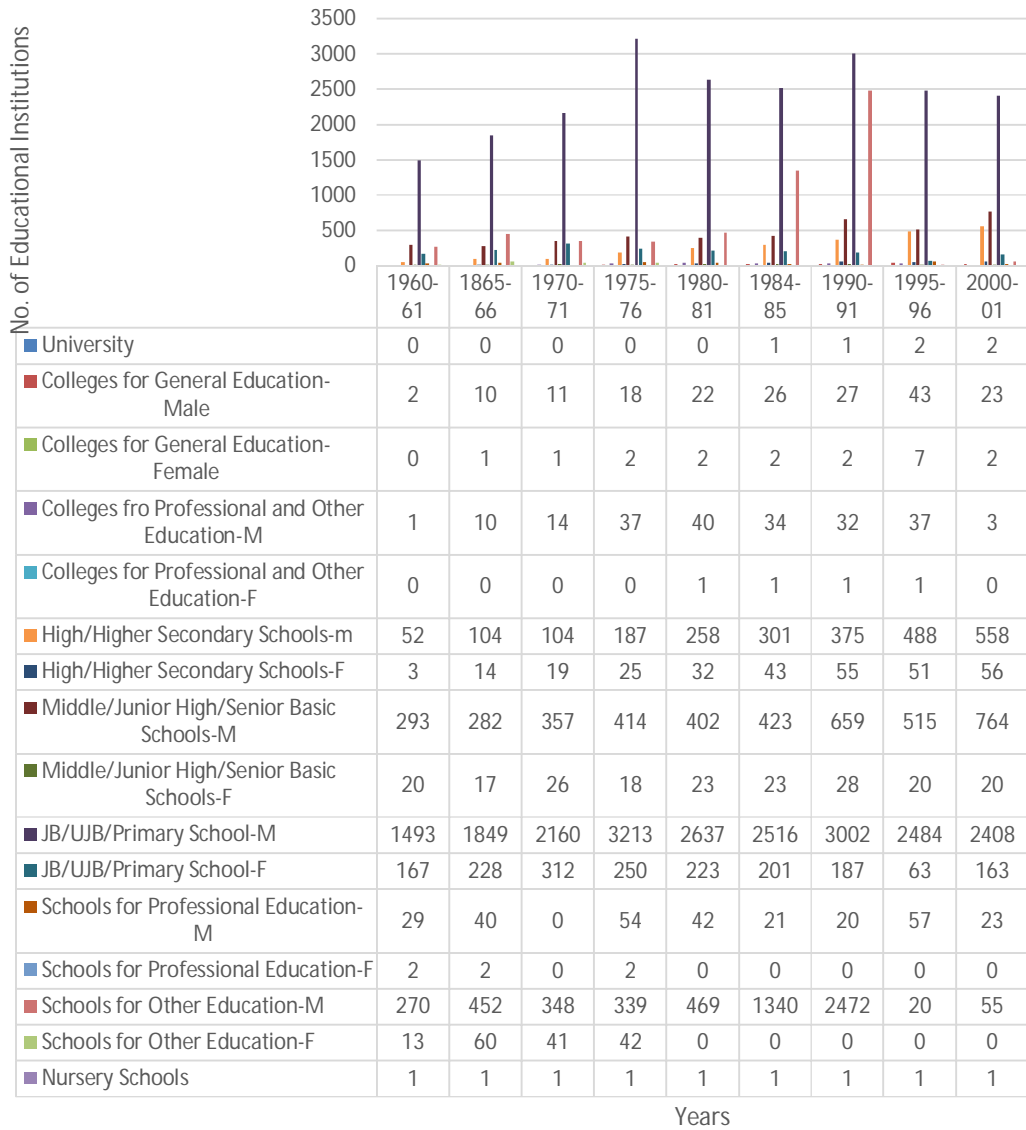
A story very popular in the bureaucratic circles, goes thus. In 1994, somewhere in Ukhrul, under President's rule, the Governor, Genl. V. K. Nayar took it into his head to visit a particular school. He took the young DC, Binod Kispota with him. Somewhere on their way, the cavalcade lost their way. They stopped to ask a middle-aged goatherd who offered them to lead them to the school, if they provided him a seat in their cavalcade. Space was readily made and the man hopped in. He led them to a two room shed, with the name of the school painted on a semi-circular board supported by two posts. He then proceeded to unlock the door with a key out of his pocket. The DC was flummoxed. The Governor, unused to the eccentricities of the state, unlike the DC, was even more taken aback. The name was correct, but this was not the school he had come to inspect. Even more puzzling was that this goatherd possessed the keys to this ramshackle building that passed off as a school. The natural course of action was to ask this man who he was and why did he possess the keys. The man responded with the simple fact that he was the Principal of the school. The school stayed locked all days of the month, except when the twenty-eight teachers, who taught at various private schools, came to collect their salaries. The five children supposedly enrolled in the school, were also enrolled at different private schools.¹⁶

This seemingly humorous tale on the vagaries of everyday administration in the Hills is more than an anecdote. It is also a telling commentary on the vacuum created by the State's governance. The same anecdote is repeated over and over again in district after district, with reference to Primary Health Centres with missing Health Care Professionals, abandoned Police Stations – sometimes because the place was physically inaccessible, sometimes out of the fear of the UGs – discovered only when the SP turned up for a visit or when a young

¹⁶ Dr. Mishra, T.N., I.P.S., Retd., in conversation with Priyamvada Asthana, 8th August, 2017.

probationer arrived for his first rural attachment, only to discover that the place he had been attached to, only existed on paper, missing Post and Telegraph Offices, and so on. The insurgency, whether led by the Naga insurgents or the Meetei insurgents, once they spread into the Hills, only filled the vacuum created by the State. This would explain the difference in the ideology used by both sets of UGs to further their aims. While the Nagas used “Nagaland for Christ” as the rallying cry, the Meeteis used Communism and the idea of Meetei pride. The difference is traceable to the role played by different institutions in imparting education. The Missionaries educated the Hills, to a very great extent. In the Valley, on the other hand, almost all reform began with the royal family, which explains the centrality of the discontent with the Merger, in the Valley.

Educational Institutions in Manipur

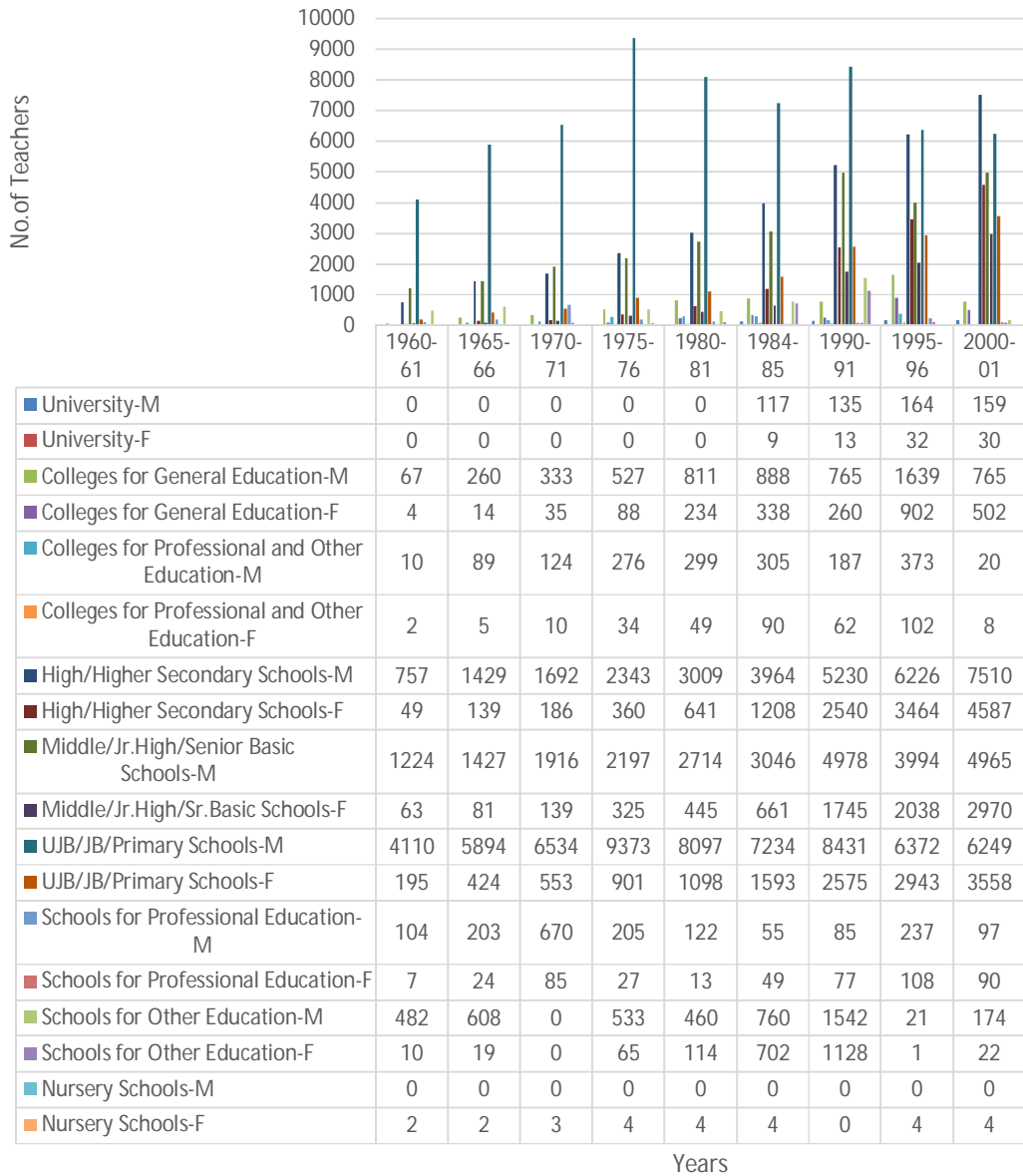


- University
- Colleges for General Education-Female
- Colleges for Professional and Other Education-F
- High/Higher Secondary Schools-F
- Middle/Junior High/Senior Basic Schools-F
- JB/UJB/Primary School-F
- Schools for Professional Education-F
- Schools for Other Education-F
- Colleges for General Education-Male
- Colleges fro Professional and Other Education-M
- High/Higher Secondary Schools-m
- Middle/Junior High/Senior Basic Schools-M
- JB/UJB/Primary School-M
- Schools for Professional Education-M
- Schools for Other Education-M
- Nursery Schools

*Table 2.11. Educational Institutions in Manipur*¹⁷

¹⁷*Statistical Handbook of Manipur 2002*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Manipur, pp 260-63.

Teachers in Different Educational Institutions in Manipur



- University-M
- University-F
- Colleges for General Education-M
- Colleges for General Education-F
- Colleges for Professional and Other Education-M
- Colleges for Professional and Other Education-F
- High/Higher Secondary Schools-M
- High/Higher Secondary Schools-F
- Middle/Jr.High/Senior Basic Schools-M
- Middle/Jr.High/Sr.Basic Schools-F
- UJB/JB/Primary Schools-M
- UJB/JB/Primary Schools-F
- Schools for Professional Education-M
- Schools for Professional Education-F
- Schools for Other Education-M
- Schools for Other Education-F
- Nursery Schools-M
- Nursery Schools-F

*Table 2.12. Teachers in Different Educational Institutions in Manipur*¹⁸

While this may seem like an ideal situation, the above story about where teachers disappear, is not reflected in the official figures. Also, it must be noted that at the height of the Meetei insurgency, many of the insurgents were teachers, who had chosen to go underground or opt as the front of the organisation. This means that many schools were either missing teachers or had teachers whose attention was divided between two causes.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp 268-71.

Expenditure Incurred on Education in Manipur

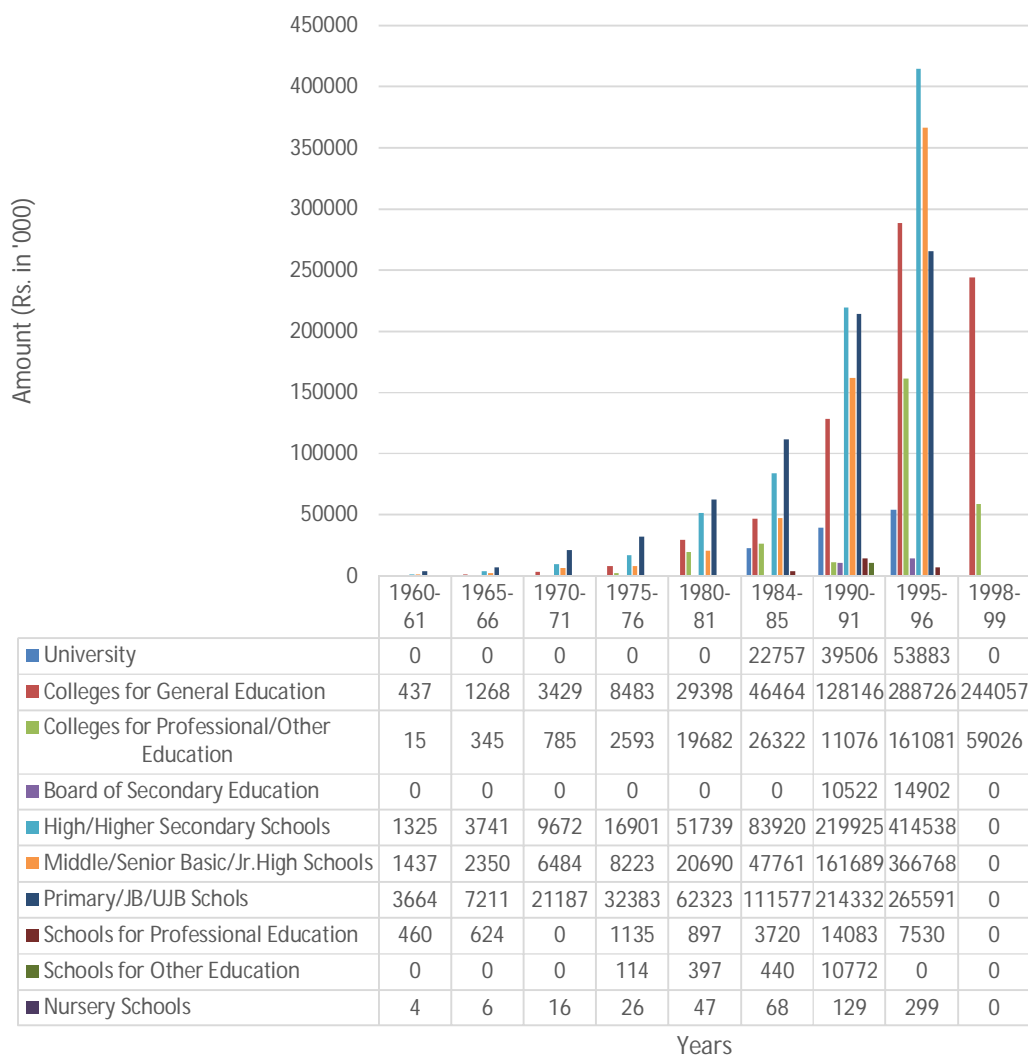


Table 2.13. Expenditure Incurred on Education in Manipur¹⁹

¹⁹ Ibid, pp 272-73.

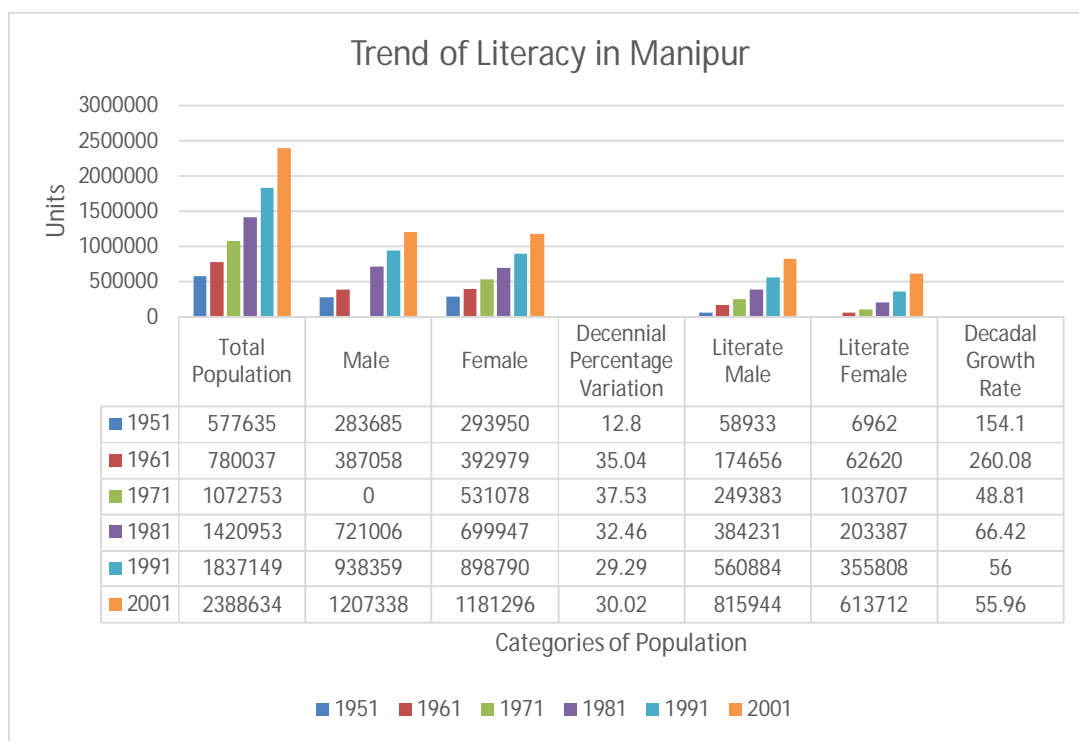


Table 2.14. Trend of Literacy in Manipur²⁰

Surprisingly, the literacy rate peaks in Manipur between the 1970s and the 1980s, while the UNLF is carrying out its programme of bringing in a “Cultural Revolution”. The State’s expenditure on Education, on the other hand, only peaks in the late 1990s, when, after a spurt in literacy, growth rates fall. The fall of the growth rate of literacy can also be linked to the rise of violence in the Valley, which leads in terms of literacy rate. The rise of violence must have acted as a deterrent to education. It must also not be forgotten that a number of schools fell prey to arson, mostly for refusing to pay, ‘donations’ and for being on the side of the “Imperial Government of India”²¹. Maximum growth in literacy rates however, occurs in the decades immediately following the Merger, which may also be seen as slightly fallacious, since before Manipur’s Merger with India, literacy rates were not being comprehensively measured. High literacy rates between 1950 and 1960 may also point to why the Valley was so open to the idea of Communism. As various erstwhile insurgents stated, education and lack of employment opportunities, a feeling that they were being neglected by the Indian

²⁰ Socio-Economic Census of India 1951 to 2001.

²¹ Vijay, T., ‘India’s Forgotten State’, <http://m.rediff.com/news/2005/may/10tarun.htm> 10th May, 2005. Also, not to be forgotten, in Imphal itself, in the late 1980s, Nirmalabas, a convent school was burnt down by Meetei insurgents for “spreading Christianity”, while in the Hills, various state run schools were burnt down for “imposing Indianness” on the children. Also, Singha, K., ‘Conflict and Education in Manipur : A Comparative Analysis’, Working Paper 305, Bangalore, 2013.

State, which had Merged them into the Union forcefully, to begin with caused a nostalgia for the days gone by. Certainly, the Meetei Pride is built on selective amnesia, since the wars that were lost to the Burmese kingdom had certainly been forgotten, as had the years spent seeking assistance from and providing assistance to, the British had been brushed under the carpet. The call to glory of days past certainly is a problematic idea.

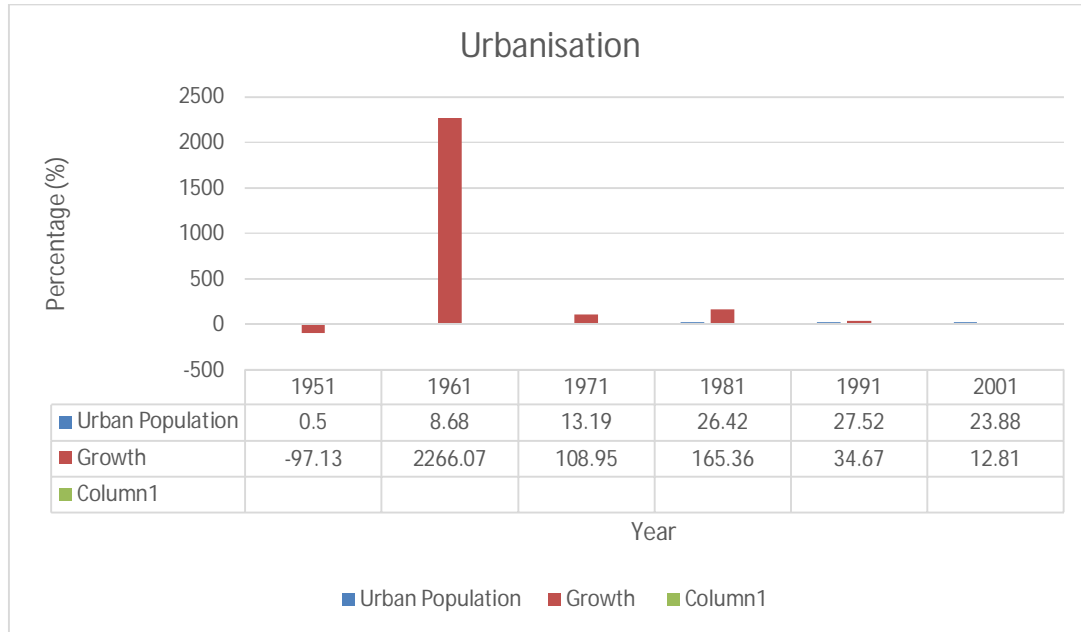


Table 2.15. Urbanisation Trend in Manipur²²

Urbanisation, at least on paper, witnessed a sudden spurt in the 1950s to 1960s. This has less to do with the pace of development, but more with the classification used by the State. On the ground, there is very little that distinguishes the rural areas of Manipur from the urban areas. Roads are in deplorable condition, in the heart of Imphal, roads are frequently washed away by the incessant rains. The condition worsens as one moves away from the heart of Imphal. For many years at the peak of the Meetei insurgency, only an area of 6 kms from the Raj Bhawan and the CM's residence was controlled by the State. The rest lay in the so-called 'liberated zone'. Roads did not exist, to put it succinctly. The further one moved from the heart of the city, the more deplorable conditions became. Infrastructure existed on paper, but not on the ground. The rains were an easy excuse for all infrastructure that did not exist.

²²Statistical Handbook of Manipur 2002, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Manipur, pp 12-13.

Embezzlement is so pervasive that no development can occur. National Highways themselves are in such bad shape that it is a wonder they are classified as such, at all. The question then is, is classification the only criteria to gauge the level of urbanisation in a state? The lines between urban and rural are so blurred that the entire state can be classified as entirely urbanised or entirely rural.

In terms of religious distribution of population, it can be observed that the number of people their religion as, “Other” peaks between 1950 and 1960. After that, there is a decline in the number of people identifying as such. The category of the, “Other” in Manipur includes those who claim Sanamahism as different from Hinduism and other religions in the Hills, which gradually fade out as Christianity strengthens its roots. In the Valley, however, Sanamahism becomes the rallying point for the KYKL later, and in the beginning, is one of the major issues raised by the UNLF along with the Meetei Mayek script being incorporated in schools, in place of the Bengali script. It must also not be ignored that the Jains, Sikhs are largely part of the business community, who are Mayangs (outsiders). There has also been a substantial increase in the Pangal population, which, after 1993, is also viewed as an affront to the Meetei pride, since it is held responsible for the displacement of the Meeteis from traditionally Meetei Leikais. While the Hindu population in Manipur has increased threefold, the Christian population, largely concentrated in the Hills, experienced a tenfold jump and the Pangal population experienced a three and half times increase. Additionally, after the 1993 Meetei-Pangal Communal riots, the Pangal identity became more visible. The easy intermingling of the Meetei and the Pangal, with many of the Pangals carrying typically Hindu names earlier, has given way to a much more concrete Muslim identity and greater identification with Muslims the world over, particularly those in Sylhet. This is perceived as a grave threat by the Meeteis. Whether or not it is a credible threat remains to be examined.

Prof. K. Marammei of the Manipur University believes the spread of the insurgency slowly led to the degeneration of, ‘itao’ (brotherhood) that had existed between the communities in Manipur. He points out that the Hindu idea of purity and pollution did not apply to the other communities. It is only as the insurgency spread and the othering of the ‘enemy’ in rhetoric, began, that the communities began to drift apart.²³

²³ Prof. Marammei, K., Manipur University, Interview with Priyamvada Asthana recorded on 13th November, 2017.

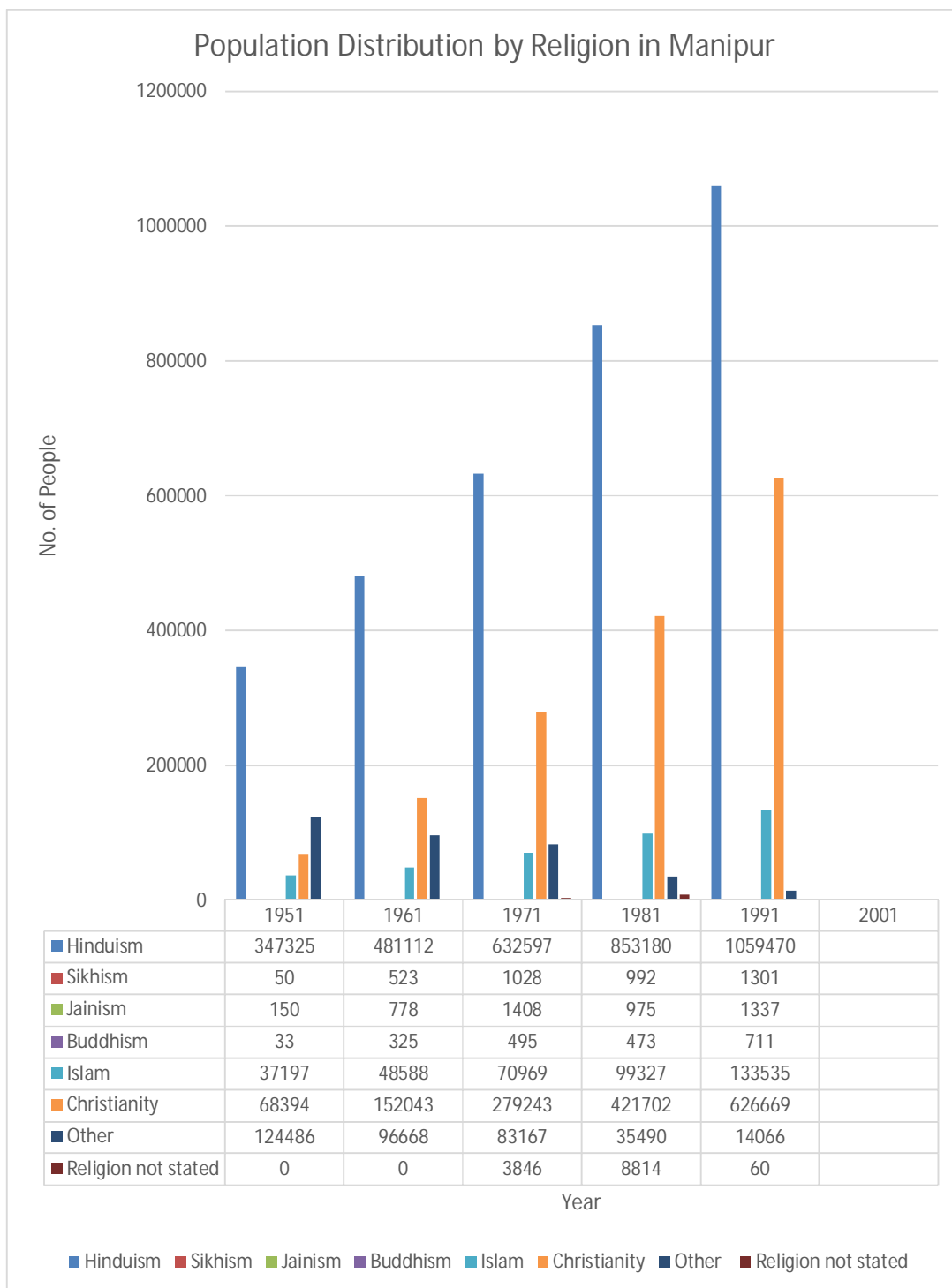


Table 2.16. Religious Distribution of Population in Manipur²⁴

²⁴ Ibid, pp 14-15. Data for 2001 unavailable.

District Wise Distribution of Population by Religion (1991 Census)

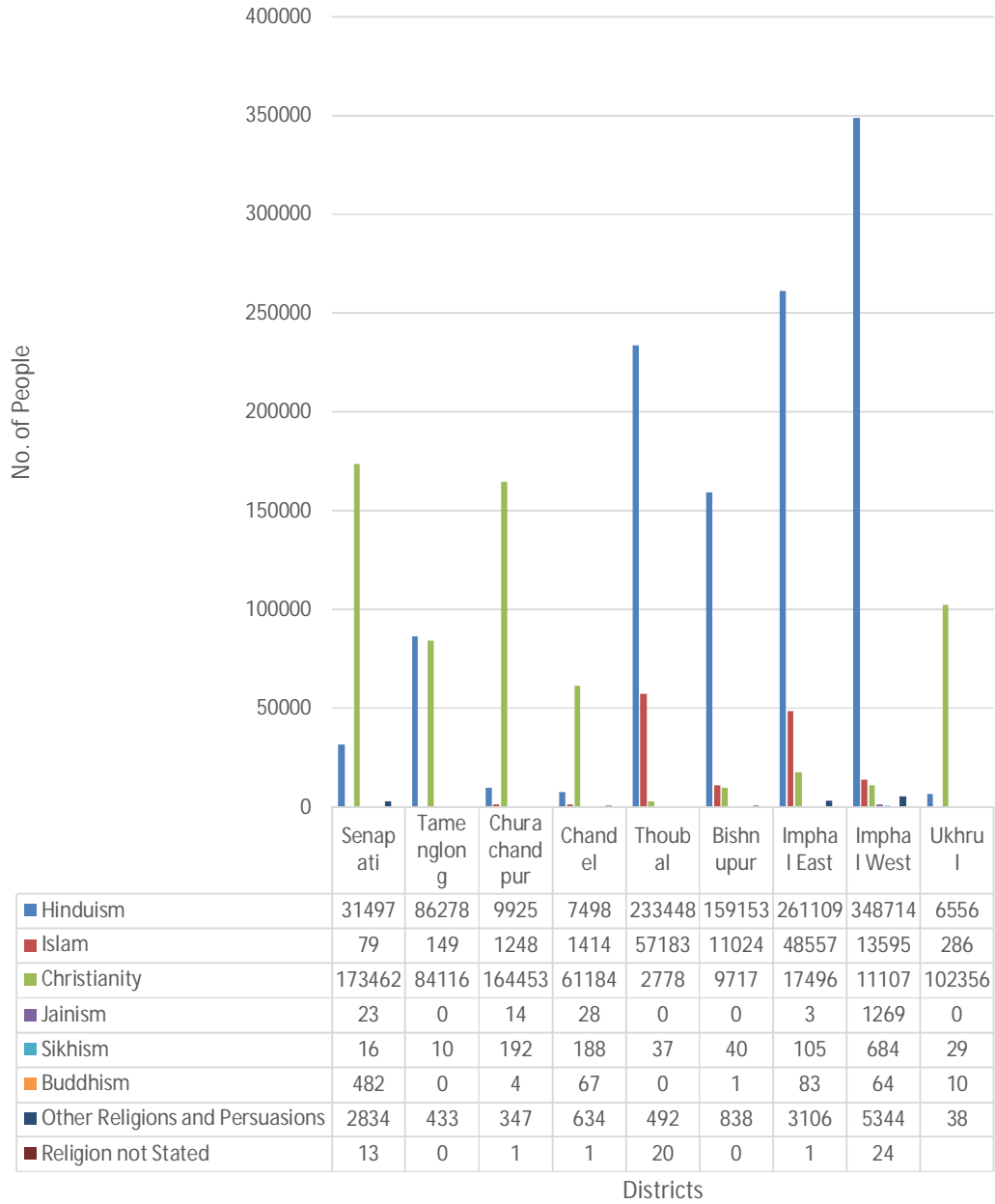


Table 2.17. District Wise Distribution of Population by Religion²⁵

²⁵ Socio-Economic Census, 1991.

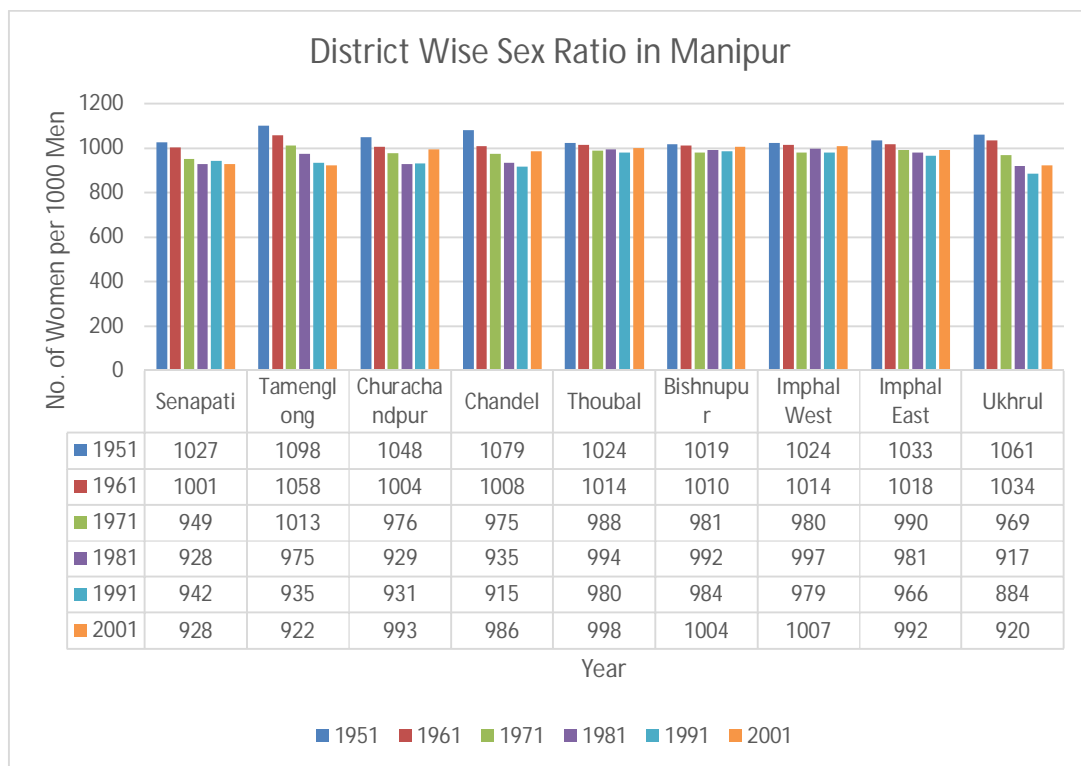


Table 2.18. District Wise Sex Ratio in Manipur²⁶

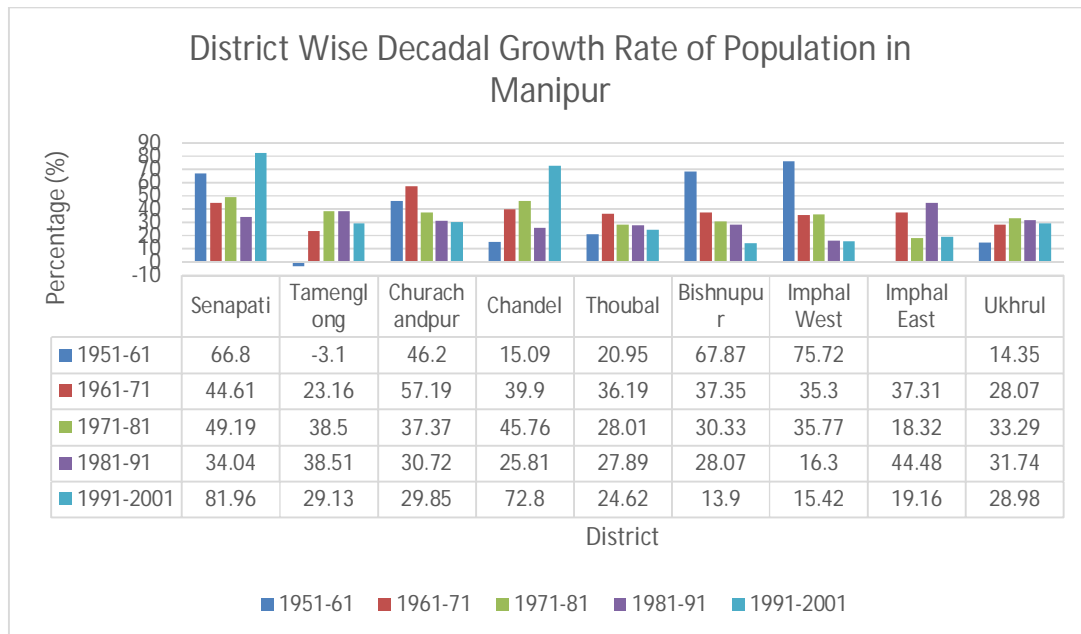


Table 2.19. District Wise Decadal Growth Rate of Population in Manipur²⁷

²⁶ Directorate of Census Operations, Manipur.

²⁷ Socio-Economic Census of India, 1951 to 2001.

If a falling rate of growth of population is seen as an indicator of development, the Valley is developing at a pace faster than the Hills. The fall in growth rate is also fast, which can partly be attributed to the fact that as violence spread, those who could afford to live migrate to other parts of India, did. While, five or six children seemed the norm in most families to which insurgents belonged, that rate is slowly being replaced by smaller families. When one considers that the people from the Hills move to the Valley for better educational opportunities, even as the Valley dwellers themselves move out, the fall in the growth rate is even more surprising.

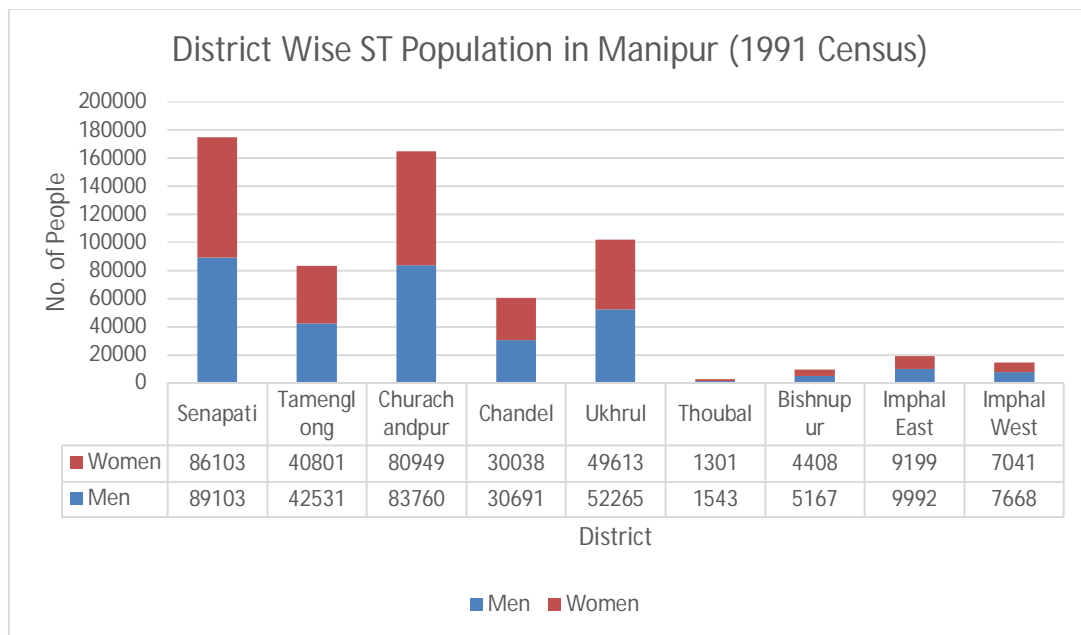


Table 2.22. District Wise Scheduled Tribe Population in Manipur (1991)²⁸

²⁸ Ibid.

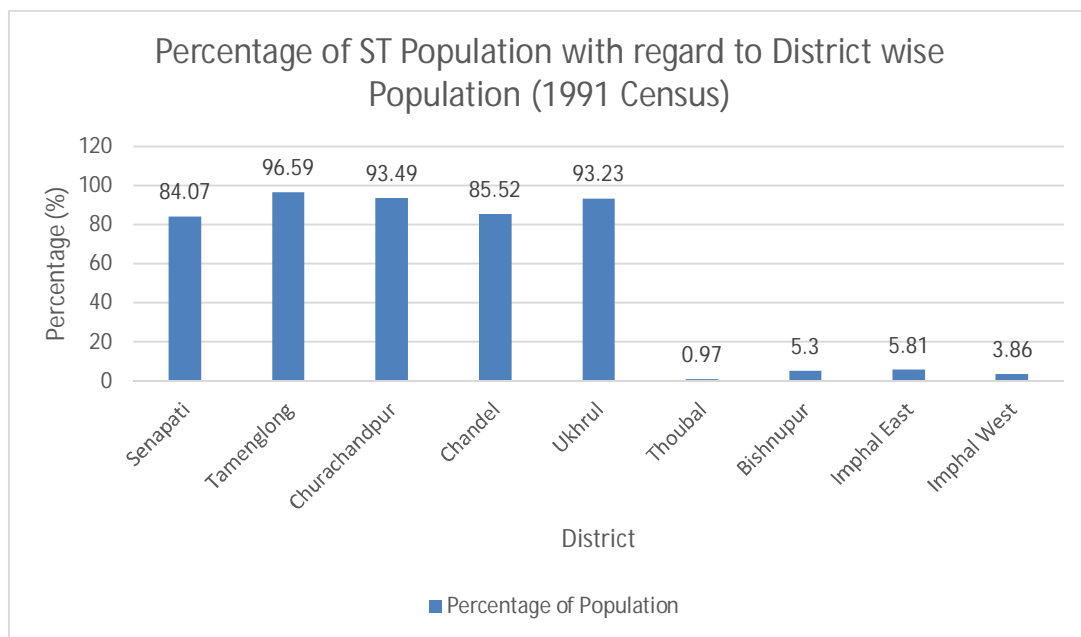


Table 2.23. Percentage of Scheduled Tribe Population w.r.t. District Wise Population (1991)²⁹

The Meetei fear of being overrun in the Valley, which is partly fuelled by the fact that while the Tribals can buy land in the Valley, the Valley dwelling Meeteis cannot buy land in the Hills, and that land in the Valley, once bought by an ST needs the DC's approval before it can be bought by a non-ST³⁰, is largely unfounded, as the above tables show us. However, since this does not account for the waves of migration that followed in the wake of the Naga-Kuki ethnic clash, the figures may have changed by 2005. The insurgency in the Valley was as much fuelled by the fear of the incoming tribals, as by the Mayang. By the mid-1990s, the idea of what constituted the, 'Manipuri' was undergoing transformation and this was a product of the insurgency. The insurgency is thus, in many ways, reactionary.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ H., Shivananda, 'Militancy in Manipur: A Conflicting Dilemma', *CLAWS Journal*, Summer, 2011, pp 166-77.

Occupational Structure of Manipur (1981 Census)

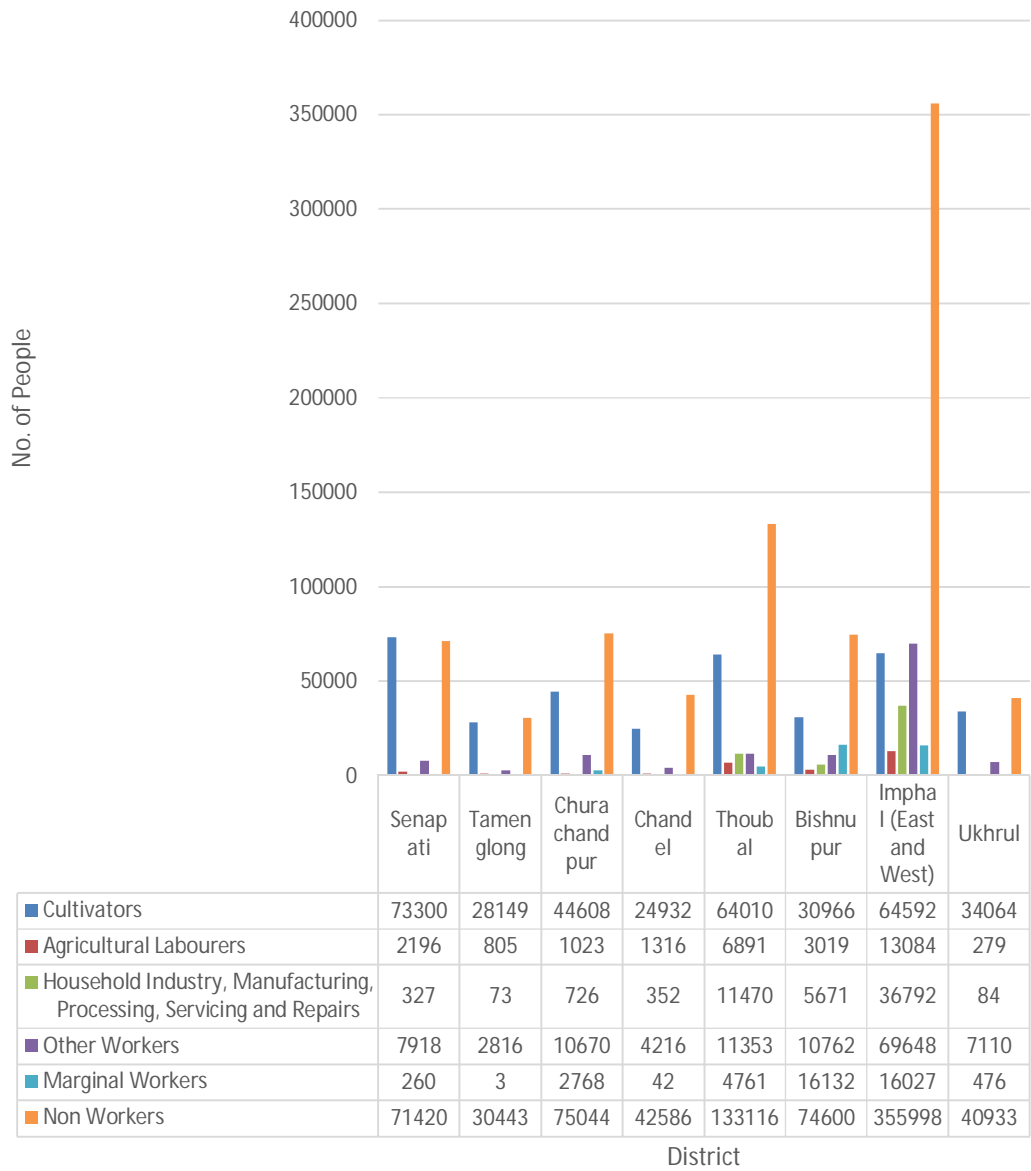


Table 2.24. Occupational Structure of Manipur (1981)³¹

³¹ Socio-Economic Census, 1981.

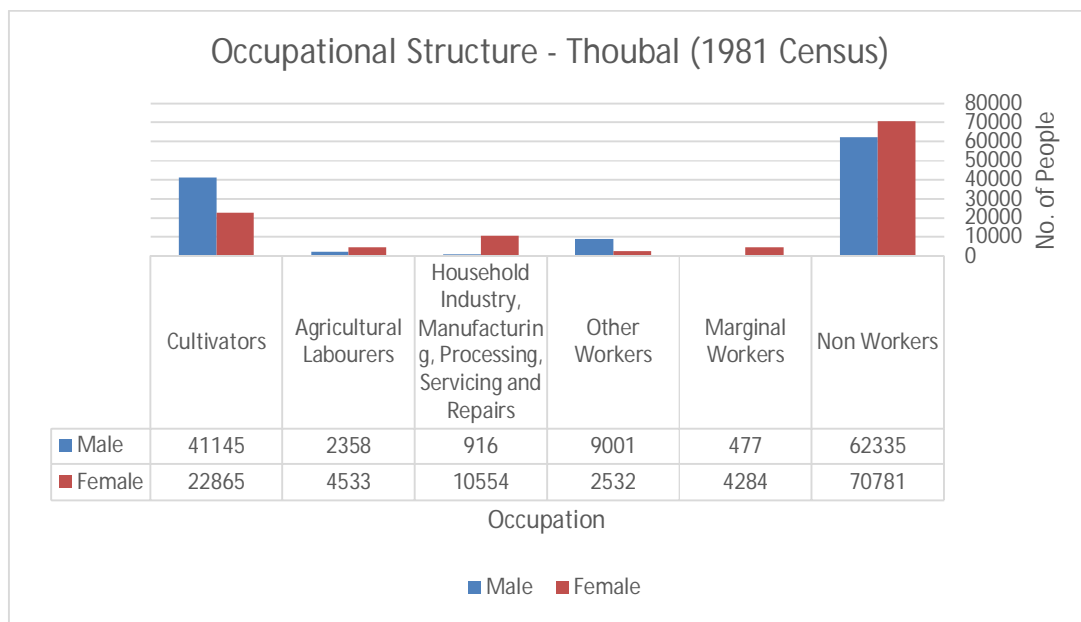


Table 2.25. Occupational Structure of Thoubal (Valley District) (1981)³²

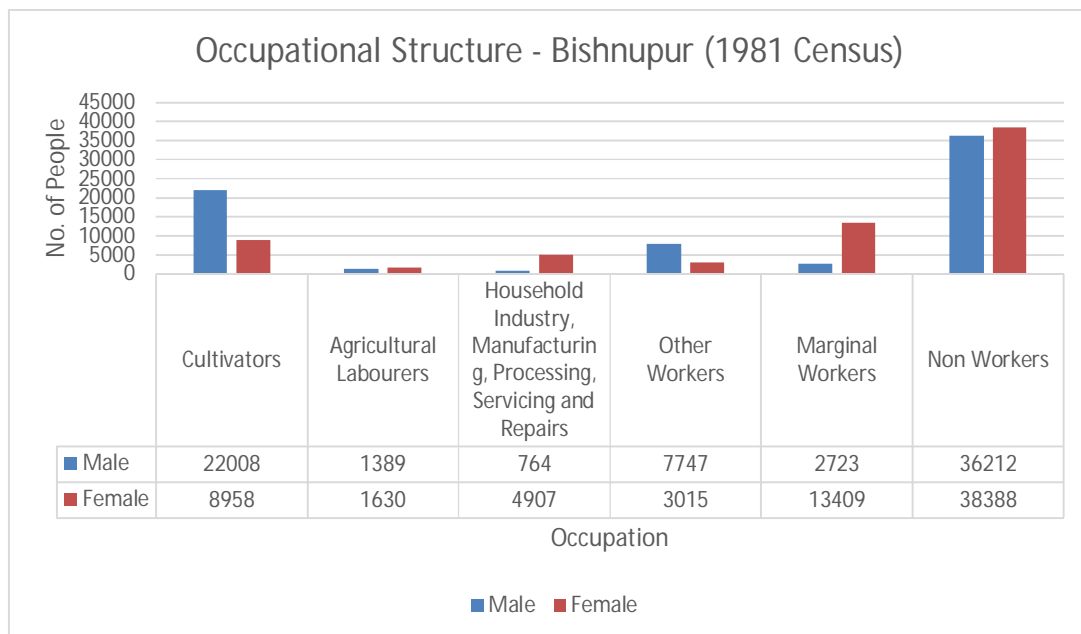


Table 2.26. Occupational Structure of Bishnupur (Valley District) (1981)³³

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

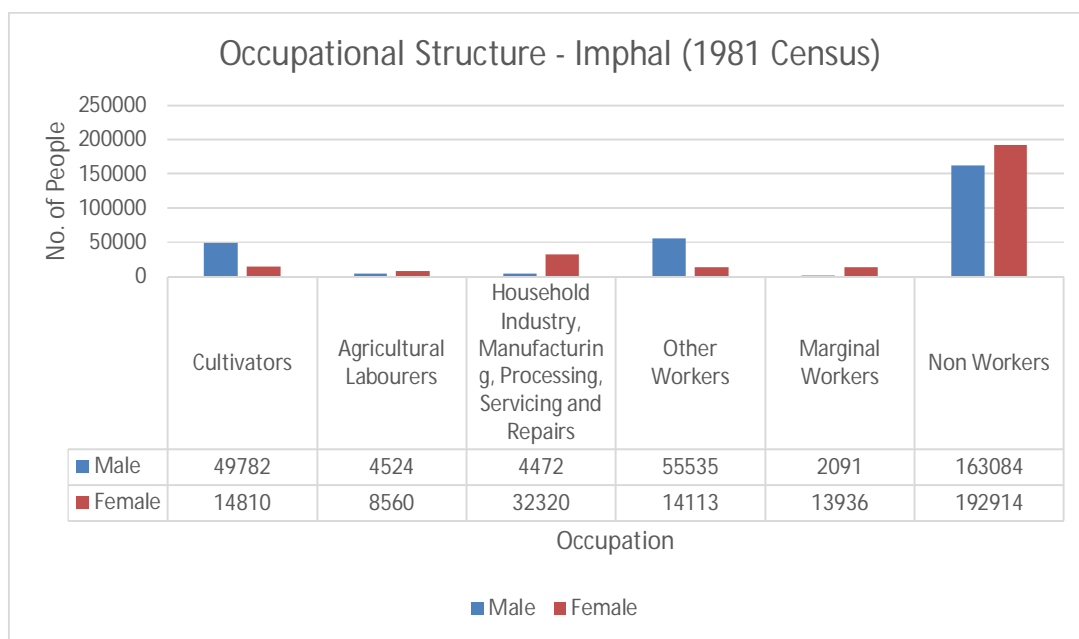


Table 2.27. Occupational Structure of Imphal (Valley District) (1981)³⁴

The occupational structure reveals a startling fact. The number of those unemployed is almost triple the number of those occupied in cultivation. In a primarily agricultural society, this explains how rampant unemployment is. Women can be explained away by the simple fact that housewives are classified as unemployed, regardless of their contribution to society. However, that men are also unemployed in such large numbers and registered with the unemployment exchange is telling. What is even more perplexing is that in the period under study, unemployment remained widespread, despite the Government's best efforts to promote a wide range of occupations and schemes. However, most of these were directed at the Hills, which further served to anger the Meeteis, who felt completely left out.

At the beginning of the 1970s, various activities were popularised under the auspices of the Gram Panchayats. These included Poultry rearing, Pisciculture, Beekeeping, and horticulture³⁵. Rural development was promoted by the construction of ring well, culverts, wooden bridges, all of which provided seasonal employment to the unemployed. Arts, crafts and cottage industries were promoted. These measures as well as the government's vigorous pushing of entrepreneurial activity may leave one wondering about the levels of unemployment. However, it must be remembered that policies on paper and on the ground, were vastly different. Here, literature bridges the gap left by official documents.

³⁴ Ibid.

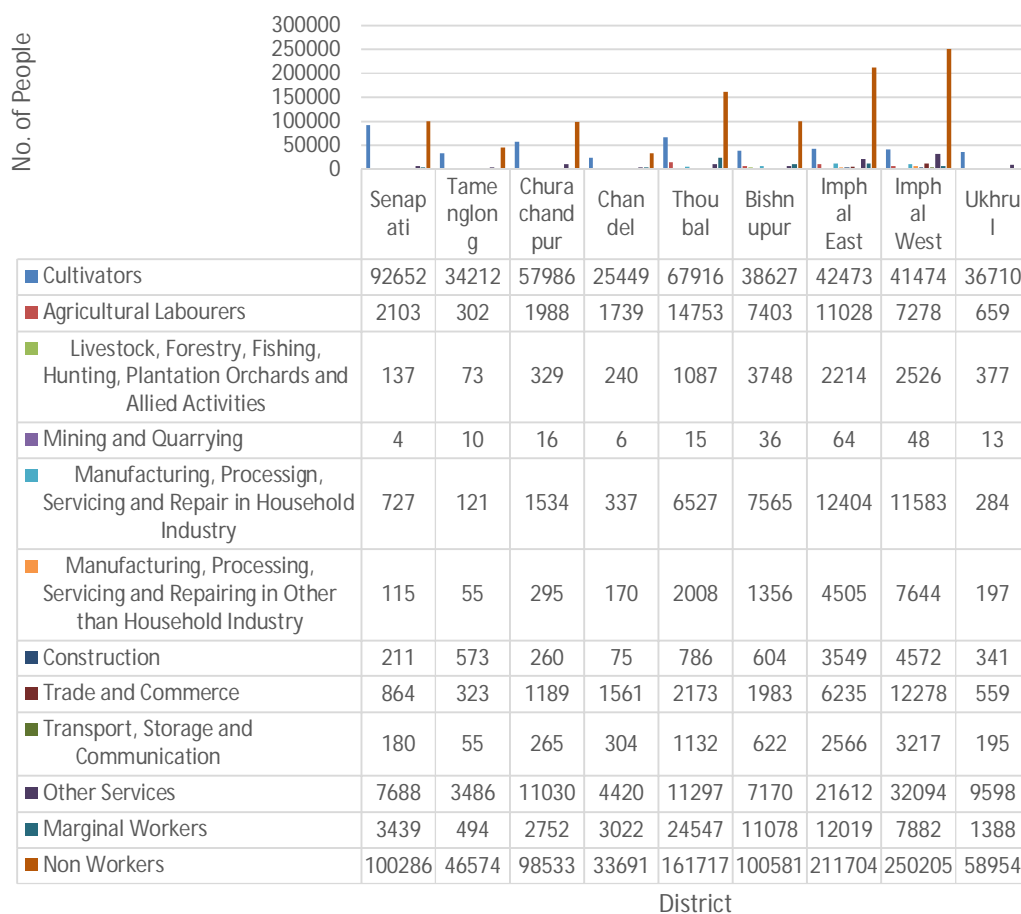
³⁵ Manipur State Administrative Reports 1970-71.

Oinam Nabakishore Singh's short story, 'The Last Chicken' is a telling commentary on how the system worked in reality. The story is a tale of a young officer on inspection to a poultry farm. The farm and the farmer are in deplorable condition, but the officer is still fed by the poor couple on a meal of exquisitely prepared chicken dish. After the completion of the meal, the officer wishes to inspect the farm, only to be told by the poor couple that the last chicken had been killed to feed the officer.³⁶ The tale depicts the corruption of the State and the soul crushing poverty of those who must sacrifice their last possessions to please the powers that be.

Under these circumstances, it can be gauged why so many of the youth turned towards the insurgency in the hope of a better future. It must not be forgotten that this is the same land where two Nupi Lans took place to protest against the unavailability of rice. The same factors were repeating themselves in the Valley. The Imperial Crown had given way to the Democratic Republic of India, but the people's concerns had not changed. Flood and famine were still rampant, alternating every year and the Centre – India's centre of power – seemed farther than it ever had. Under the Maharaja and the British, at least, direct appeals had been possible. India, which had under controversial circumstances had the Merger Agreement signed, did not seem concerned with listening to the woes of the Manipuris, and so, arms, revolution and secession seemed the best way forward.

³⁶ Singh, O.N., 'The Last Chicken', Imphal District's Annual Magazine, 1990. Here, a disclaimer must be made that Mr. Singh himself claims that he did not write the story, but believes it to have been submitted by someone else under his name. At the time of publication of the story, Mr. Singh was DC, Imphal.

Occupational Structure of Manipur (1991 Census)



- Cultivators
- Agricultural Labourers
- Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Plantation Orchards and Allied Activities
- Mining and Quarrying
- Manufacturing, Processign, Servicing and Repair in Household Industry
- Manufacturing, Processing, Servicing and Repairing in Other than Household Industry
- Construction
- Trade and Commerce
- Transport, Storage and Communication
- Other Services
- Marginal Workers
- Non Workers

Table 2.28. Occupational Structure of Manipur (1991)³⁷

³⁷ Socio-Economic Census, 1991.

Area Cultivated in the Valley

		Valley Districts			
		Imphal	Thoubal	Bishnupur	Manipur's Average Area Operated per Holder (Hectares)
1975-76	No. of Holdings	81,632 (erstwhile Central District)			
	Area Operated (Hectares)	86,761 (erstwhile Central District)			
	Average Area Operated per Holder (Hectares)	1.06 (erstwhile Central District)			1.12
1980-81	No. of Holdings	83,048 (erstwhile Central District)			
	Area Operated (Hectares)	97,702 (erstwhile Central District)			
	Average Area Operated per Holder (Hectares)	1.18 (erstwhile Central District)			1.24
1985-86	No. of Holdings	38,770	32,267	13,390	
	Area Operated	46,054	34,260	18,736	

	Average Area Operated per Holder	1.19	1.06	1.40	1.24
1990-91	No. of Holdings	38,904	32,624	13,408	
	Area Operated	46,239	34,392	19,022	
	Average Area Operated per Holder	1.19	1.05	1.42	1.23

Table 2.29. Area Cultivated in the Valley³⁸

Number of Enterprises and Workers – 1980

		Rural		Urban		Total
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
Agricultural Enterprises	Total	1,765	73.02	552	26.98	2,417
	Establishment	78	65.00	42	35.00	120
	Own Account Enterprise	1,687	73.44	510	26.56	2,297
	Persons Usually working in Enterprises Total	3,646	75.35	1,193	24.65	4,839
	Hired Workers	236	65.56	124	34.44	360
Non-Agricultural	Total	17,097	52.89	15,231	47.11	32,328
	Establishment	5,195	57.10	3,903	42.90	9,098

³⁸ Agricultural Census Reports, Department of Agriculture, Manipur.

Enterprises	Own Account Enterprises	11,902	51.24	11,328	48.76	23,230
	Persons Usually Working in Enterprises Total	42,698	42.65	57,422	57.35	1,00,120
	Hired Workers	21,205	38.31	34,150	61.69	55,355

Table 2.30. Area Cultivated in the Valley³⁹

Number of Workers and Enterprises – 1990

		Rural		Urban		Total
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
Agricultural Enterprises	Total	3,787	76.09	1,190	23.91	4,977
	Establishment	201	79.76	51	20.24	252
	Own Account Enterprise	3,586	75.89	1,139	24.11	4,725
	Persons Usually working in Enterprises Total	7,598	78.32	2,103	21.68	9,701
	Hired Workers	439	80.11	109	19.89	548
Non-Agricultural	Total	30,034	53.36	26,253	46.64	56,287
	Establishment	8,452	58.53	5,989	41.47	14,441

³⁹ Economic Census, Manipur, 1980, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Manipur.

Enterprises	Own Account Enterprises	21,582	51.57	20,264	48.43	41,846
	Persons Usually Working in Enterprises Total	69,770	47.25	77,897	52.75	1,47,667
	Hired Workers	33,533	44.14	42,439	55.86	75,972

Table 2.31. Area Cultivated in the Valley⁴⁰

Number of Workers and Enterprises – 1998

		Rural		Urban		Total
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
Agricultural Enterprises	Total	4,235	68.61	1,938	31.39	6,173
	Establishment	356	61.39	223	38.51	579
	Own Account Enterprise	3,879	69.34	1,715	30.66	5,594
	Persons Usually working in Enterprises Total	9,334	72.54	3,533	27.46	12,867
	Hired Workers	703	69.12	314	30.88	1,017
Non-	Total	38,785	52.19	35,531	47.81	74,316

⁴⁰ Economic Census, Manipur, 1990, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Manipur.

Agricultural Enterprises	Establishment	11,036	55.42	8,876	44.58	19,912
	Own Account Enterprises	27,749	51.01	26,655	48.99	54,404
	Persons Usually Working in Enterprises Total	87,539	46.60	1,00,320	53.40	1,87,859
	Hired Workers	45,640	44.35	57,264	55.65	1,02,904

Table 2.32. Area Cultivated in the Valley⁴¹

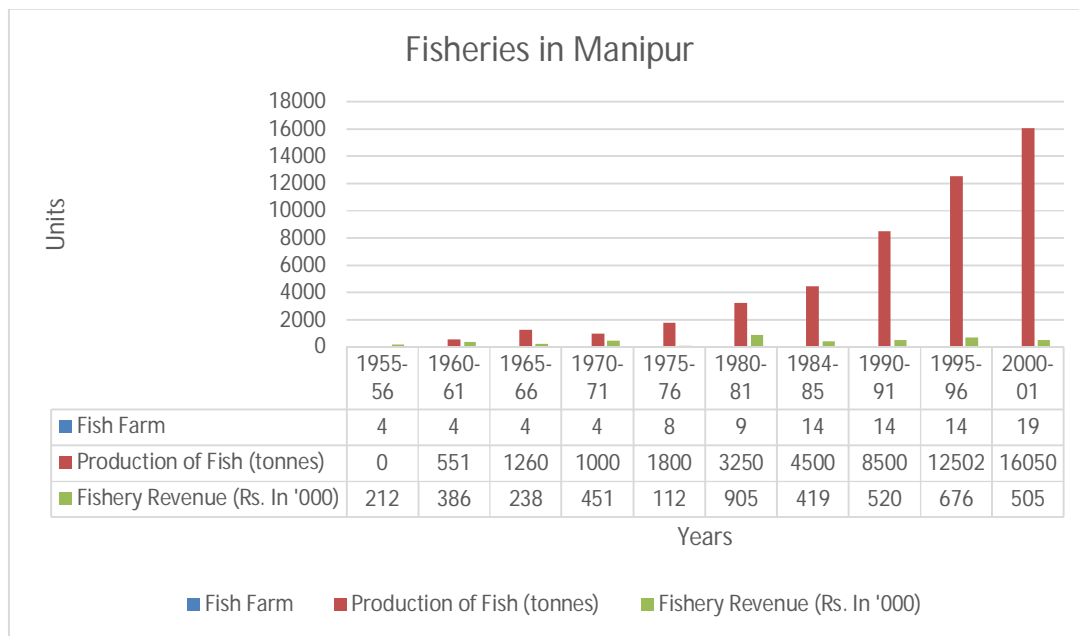


Table 2.33. Fisheries in Manipur⁴²

⁴¹ Economic Census, Manipur, 1990, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Manipur.

⁴² *Statistical Handbook of Manipur 2002*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Manipur, p 338.

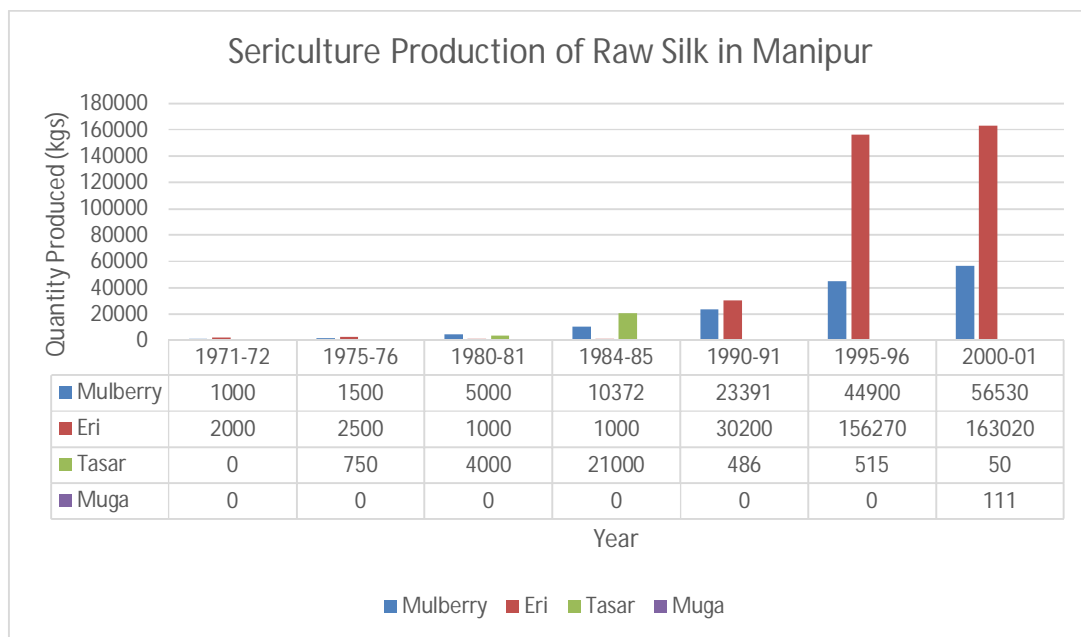


Table 2.34. Sericulture Production of Raw Silk in Manipur⁴³

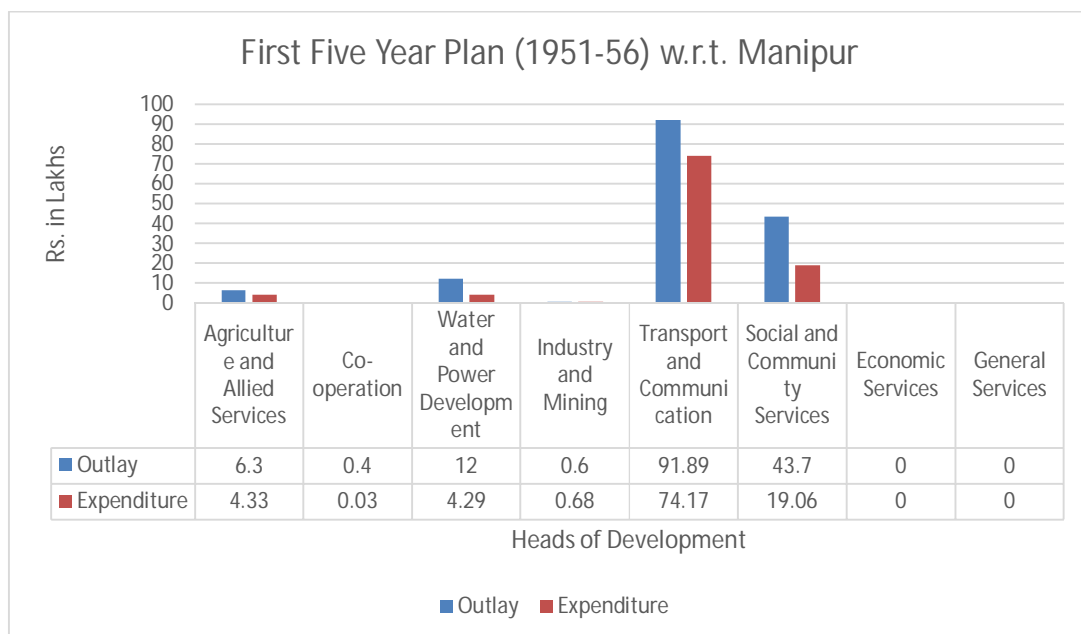


Table 2.35. First Five Year Plan (1961-56) w.r.t. Manipur⁴⁴

⁴³ Ibid, p 339.

⁴⁴ Planning Commission Report 1955-56, Department of Planning, Manipur.

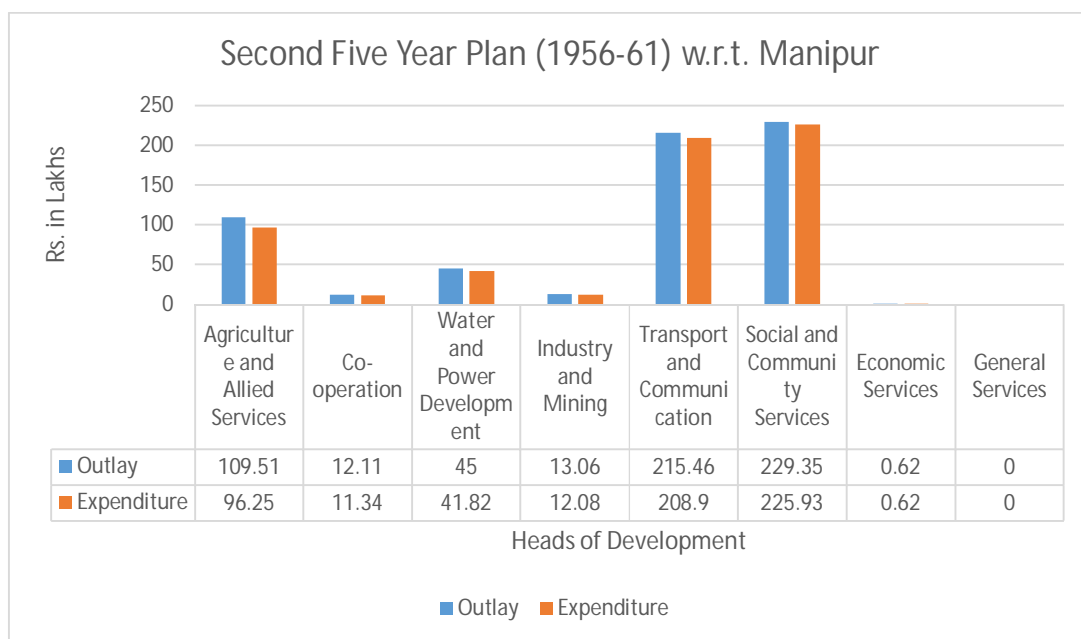


Table 2.36. Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) w.r.t. Manipur⁴⁵

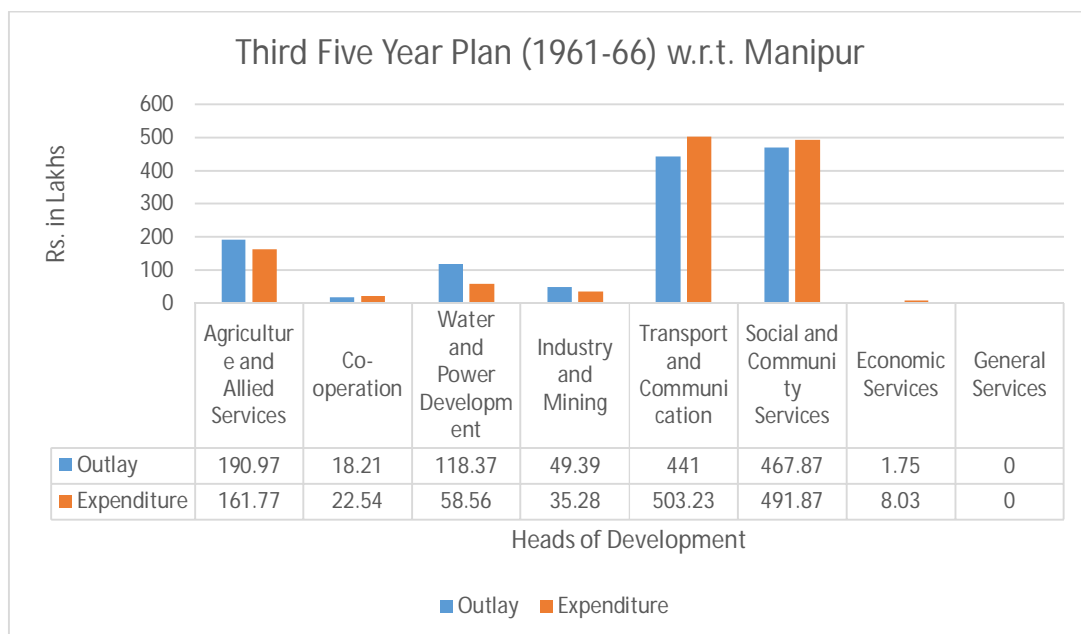


Table 2.37. Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) w.r.t. Manipur⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Planning Commission Report 1960-61, Department of Planning, Manipur.

⁴⁶ Planning Commission Report 1965-66.

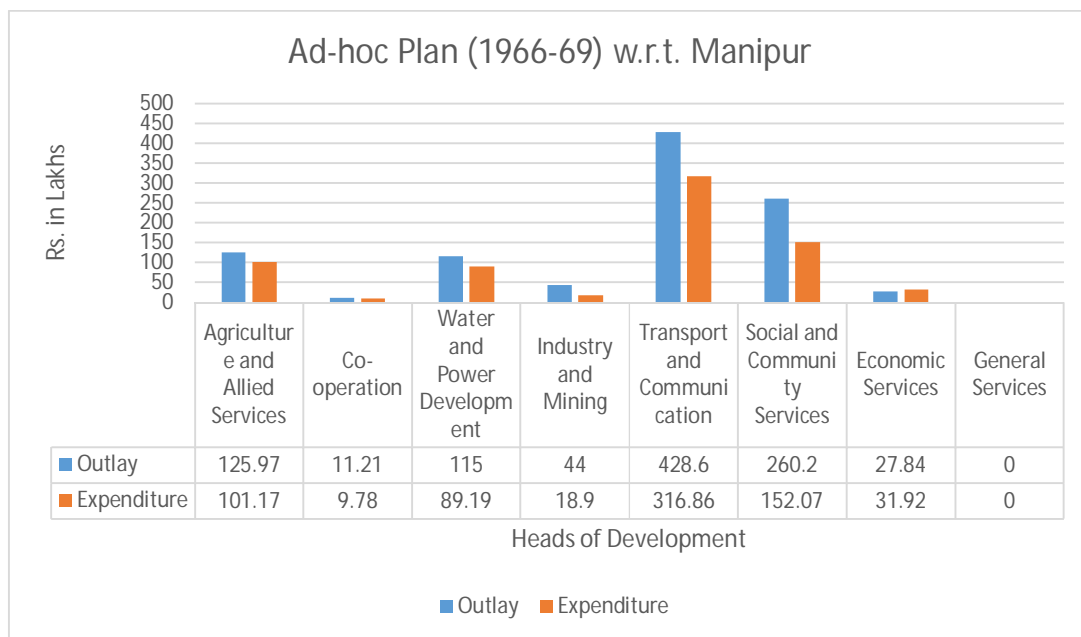


Table 2.38. Ad-hoc Plan (1966-69) w.r.t. Manipur⁴⁷

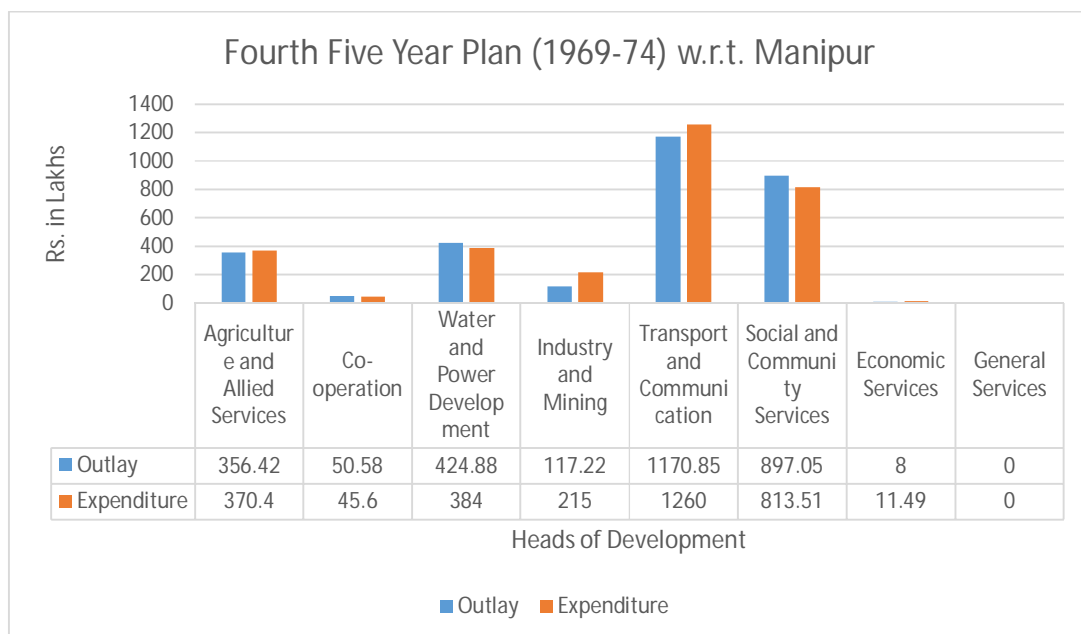


Table 2.39. Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) w.r.t. Manipur⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Planning Commission Report 1968-69.

⁴⁸ Planning Commission Report 1973-74.

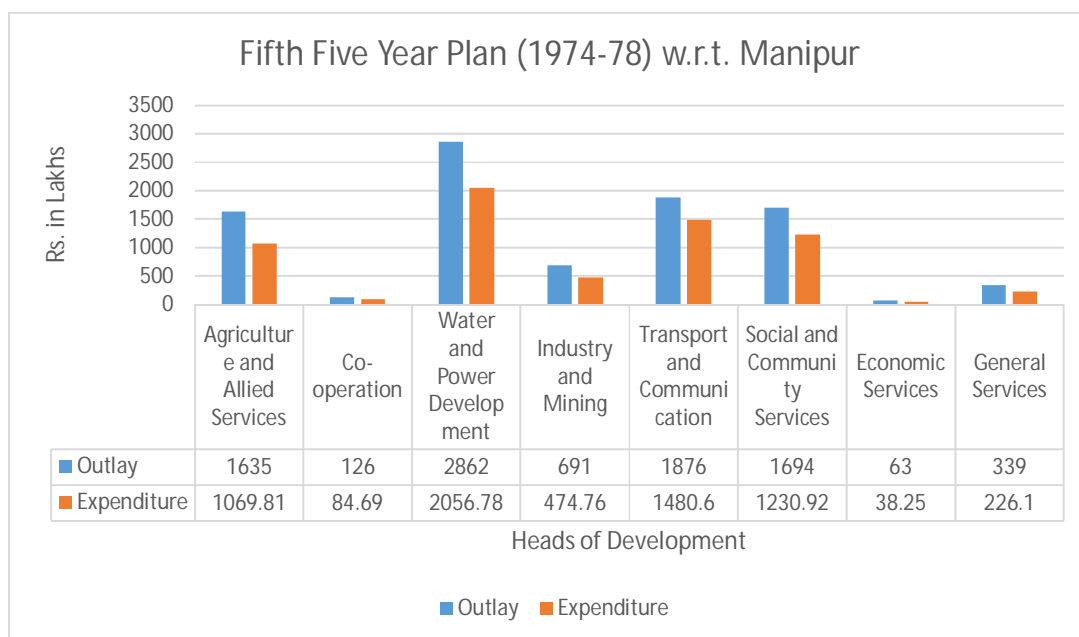


Table 2.40. Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) w.r.t. Manipur⁴⁹

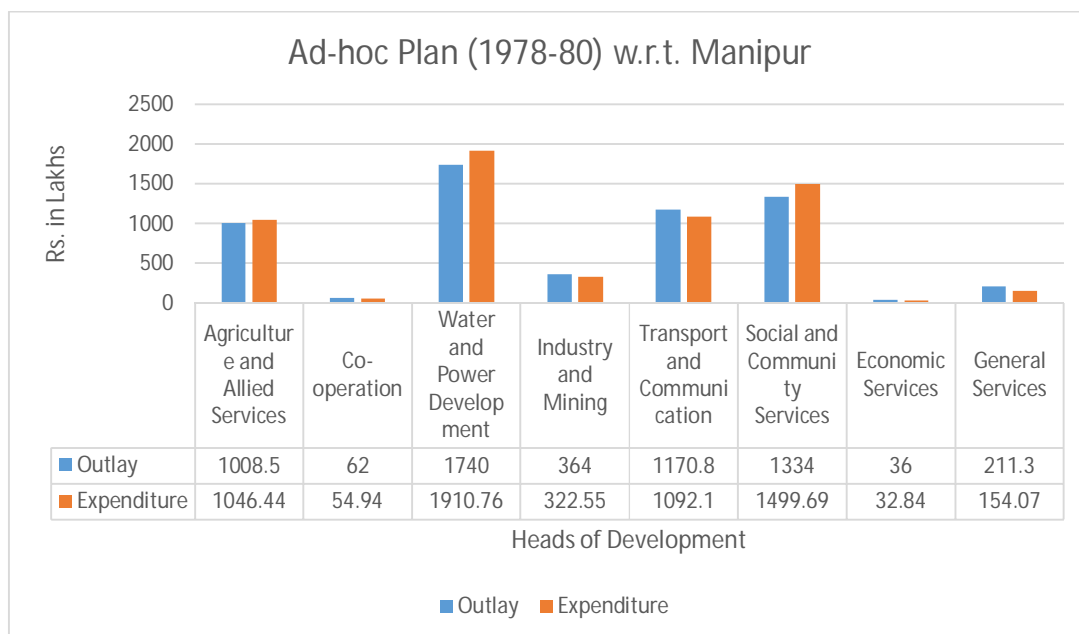


Table 2.41. Ad-hoc Plan (1978-80) w.r.t. Manipur⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Planning Commission Report 1977-78.

⁵⁰ Planning Commission Report 1979-80.

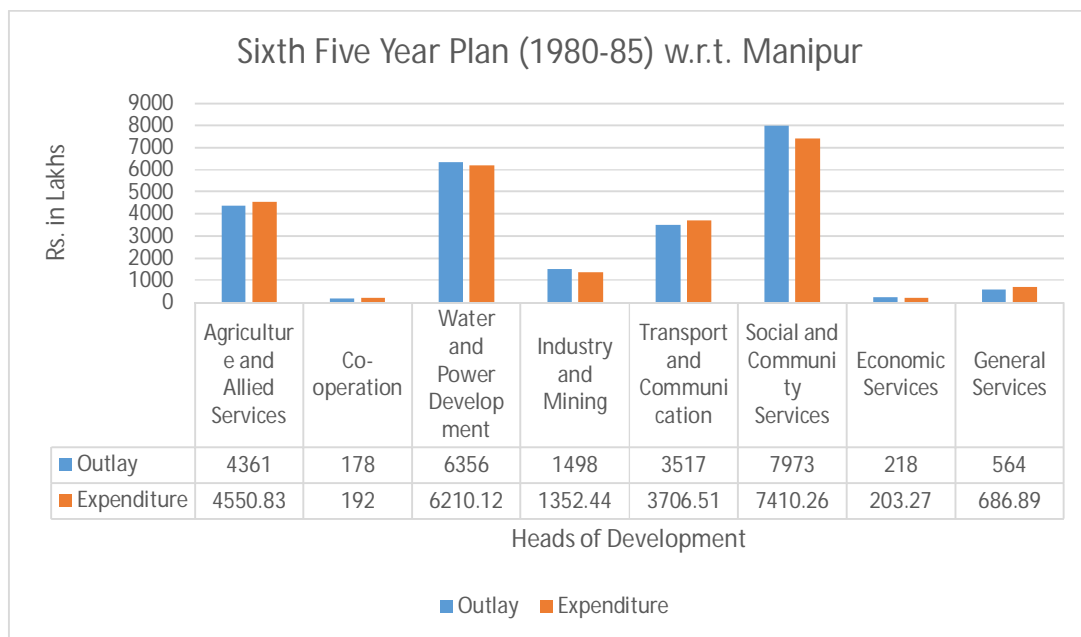


Table 2.42. Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) w.r.t. Manipur⁵¹

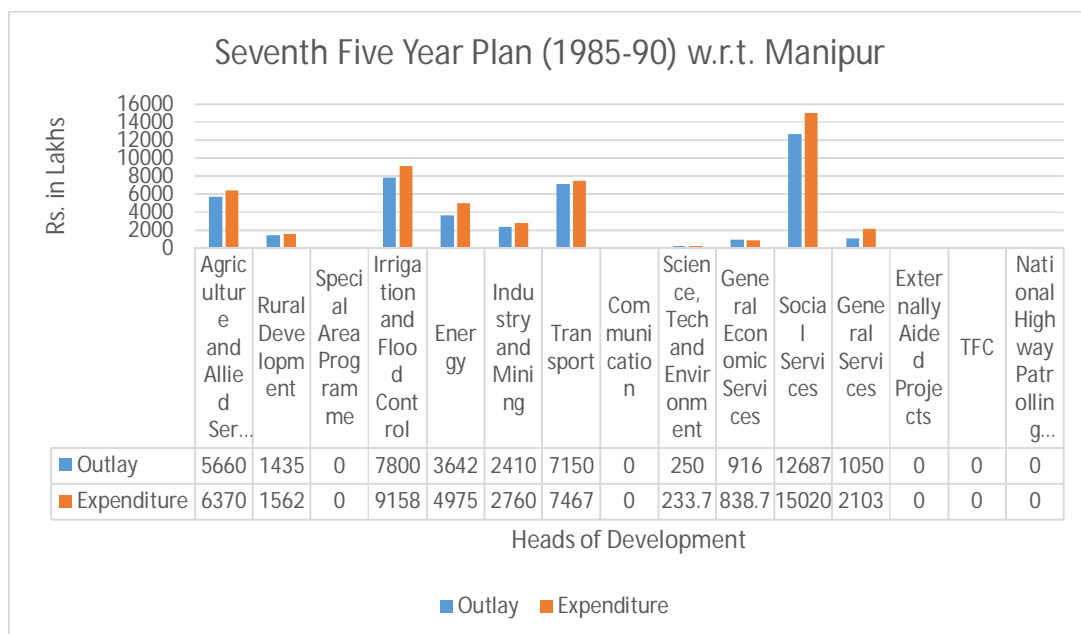


Table 2.43. Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) w.r.t. Manipur⁵²

⁵¹ Planning Commission Report 1984-85.

⁵² Planning Commission Report 1989-90.

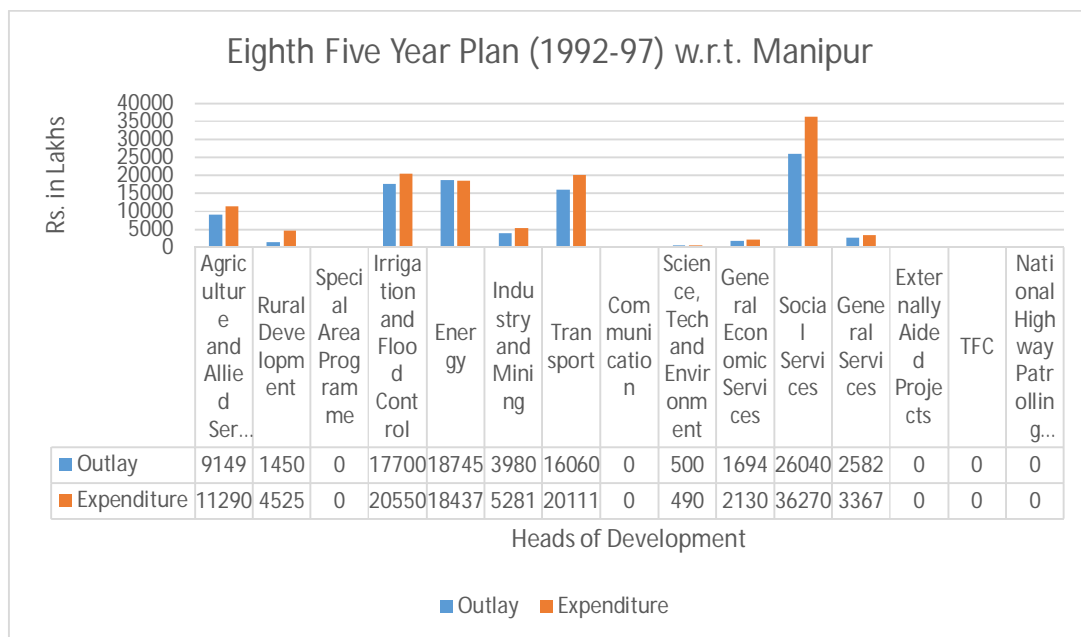


Table 2.44. Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) w.r.t. Manipur⁵³

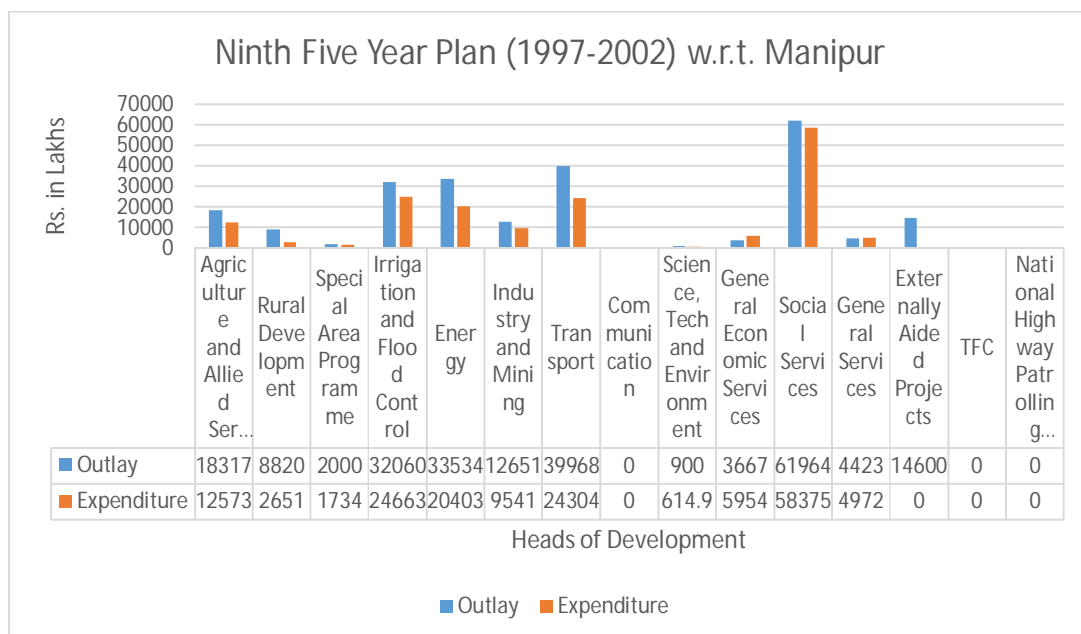


Table 2.45. Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) w.r.t. Manipur⁵⁴

⁵³ Planning Commission Report 1996-97.

⁵⁴ Planning Commission Report 2001-02.

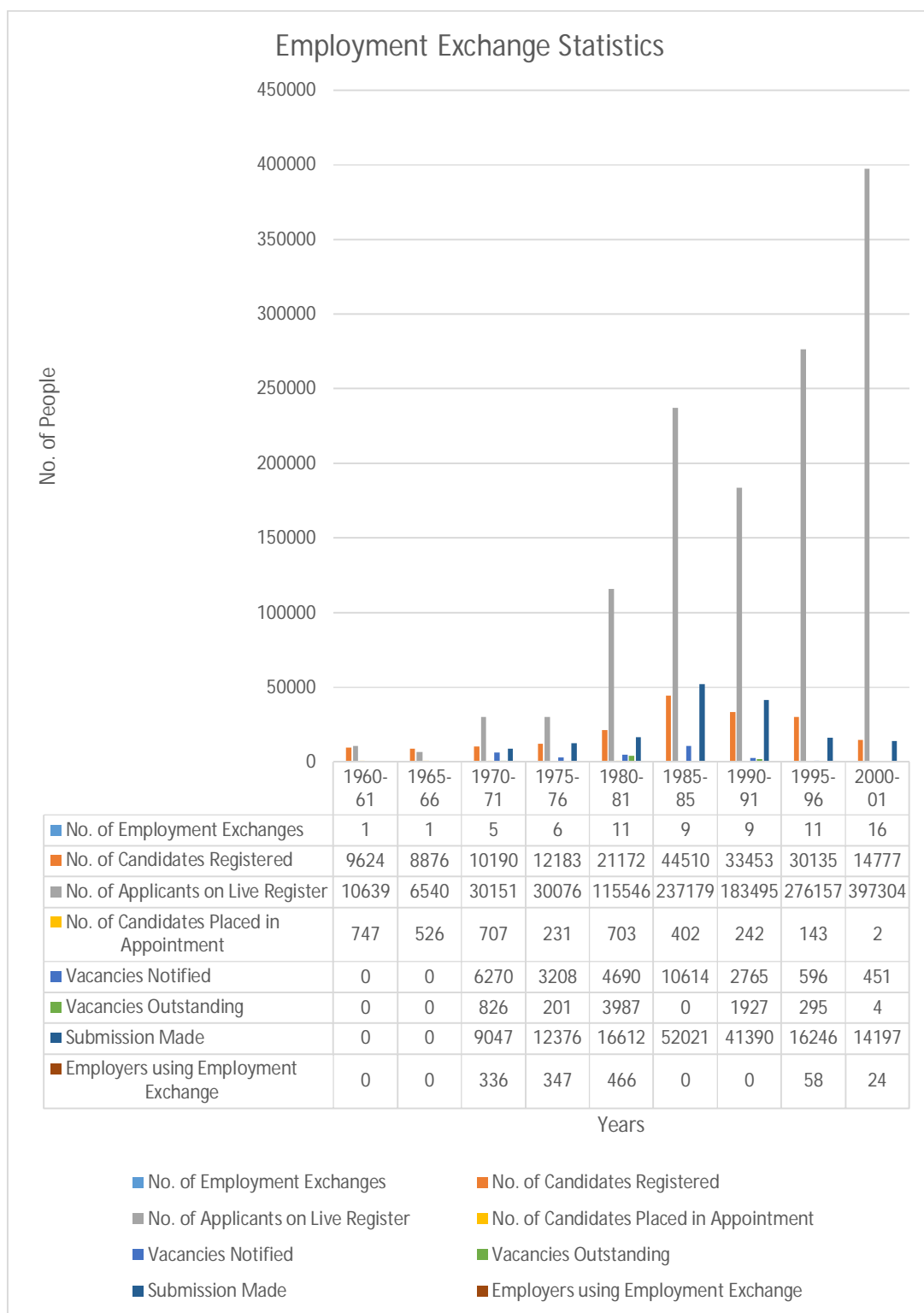


Table 2.46. Employment Exchange Statistics w.r.t. Manipur⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Directorate of Employment Exchange, Manipur. The '0' in many cases implies that figures under that particular head for that year were missing.

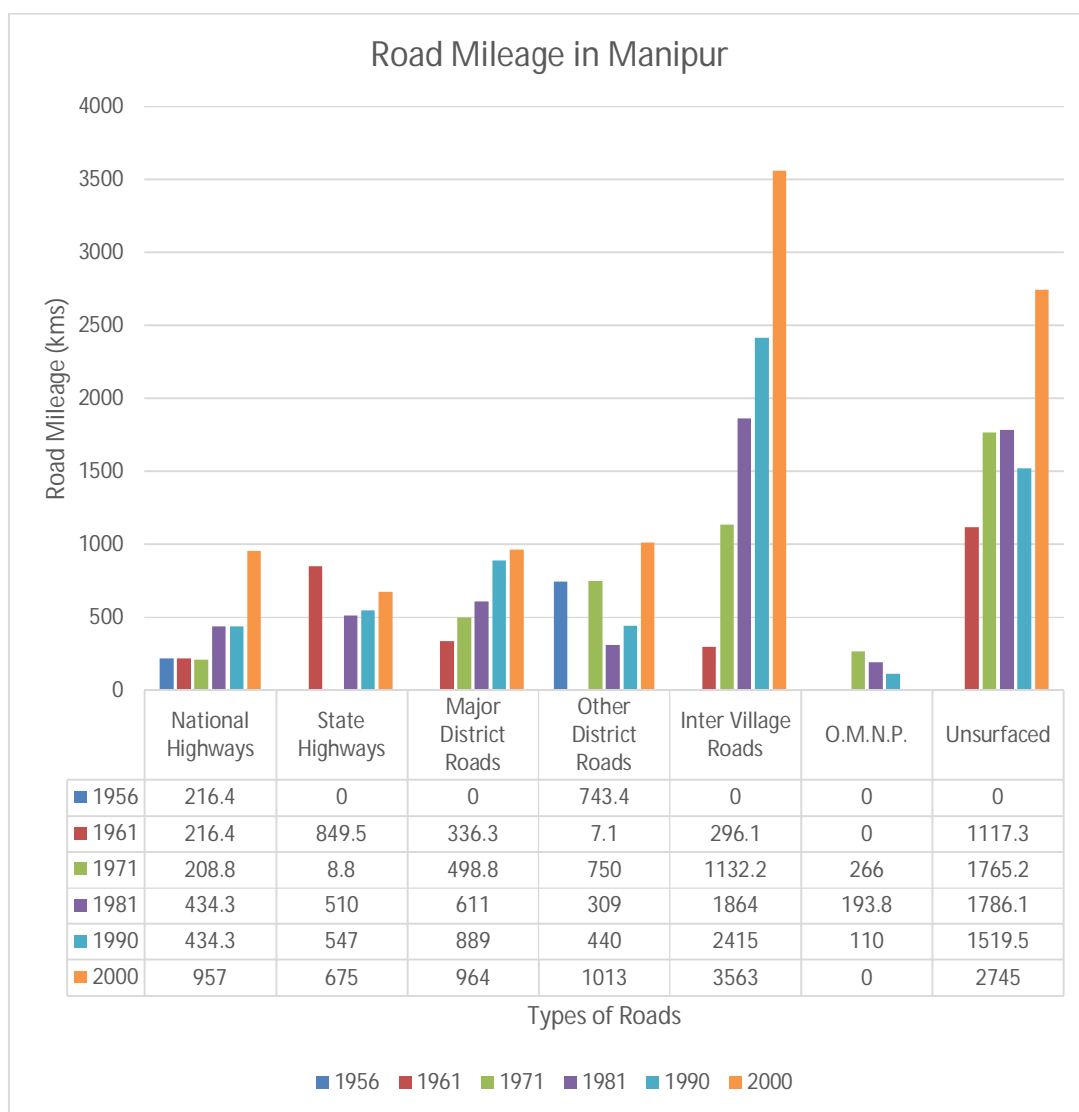


Table 2.47. Road Mileage in Manipur⁵⁶

Road mileage, however, only exists on paper, even though it is taken as one of the major markers of development along with the per-capita utilisation of iron. However, the research scholar can attest to the paucity of roads, even within Imphal, especially as one heads out towards Lamphel. National Highways are not tarred, though, the rain and floods are said to wash them away every year. Even so, if we believe that road mileage, as existing on paper, is constructed every year, before being washed away, it must be noted that by Governmental statistics too, unsurfaced roads outstrip all other forms of roads.

⁵⁶ Public Works Department, Manipur. The years and their gaps differ due to gaps in the Department's statistical information.

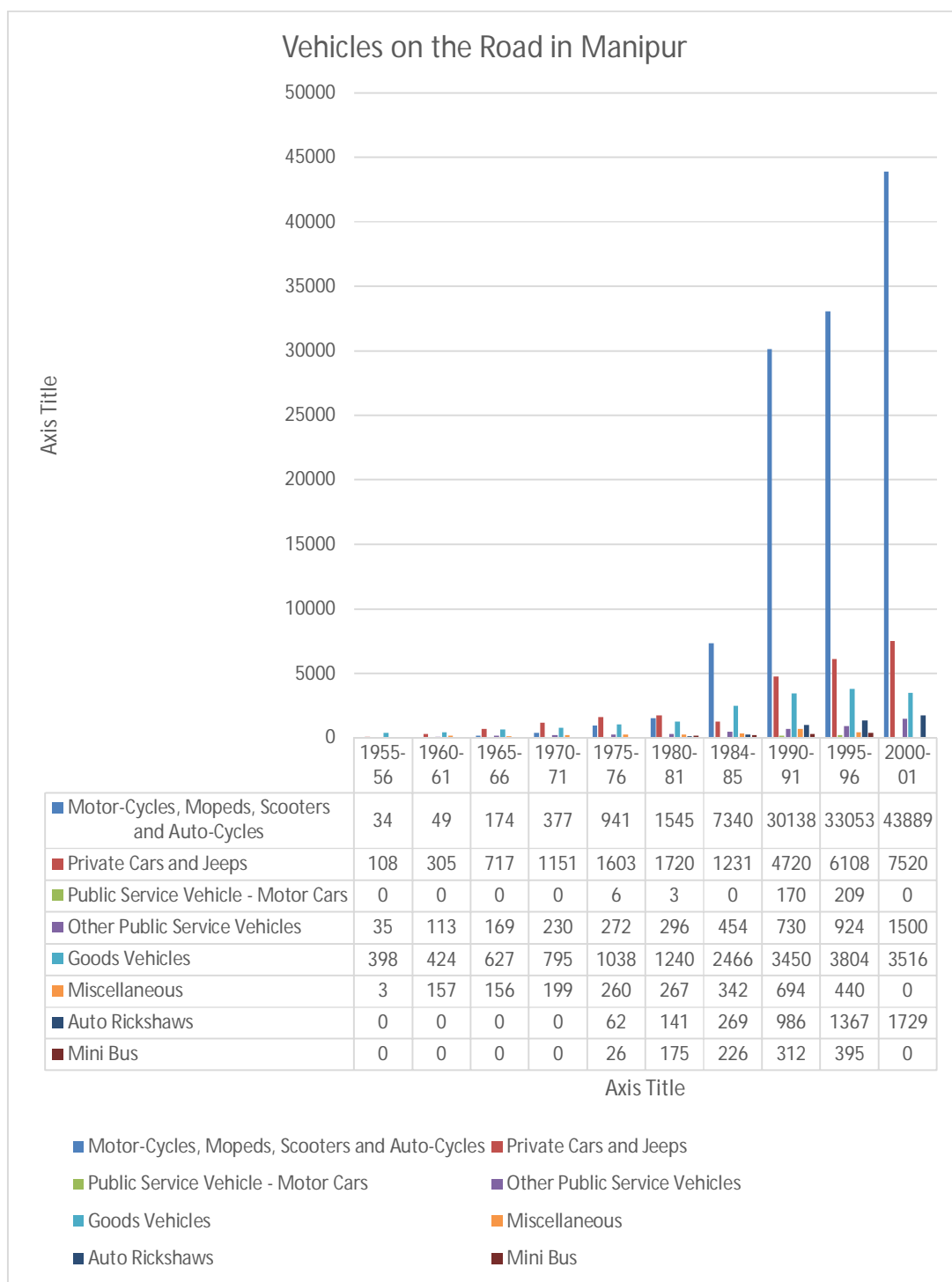


Table 2.48. Vehicles on the Road in Manipur⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Directorate of Transport, Government of Manipur.

Electricity Generated and Consumed

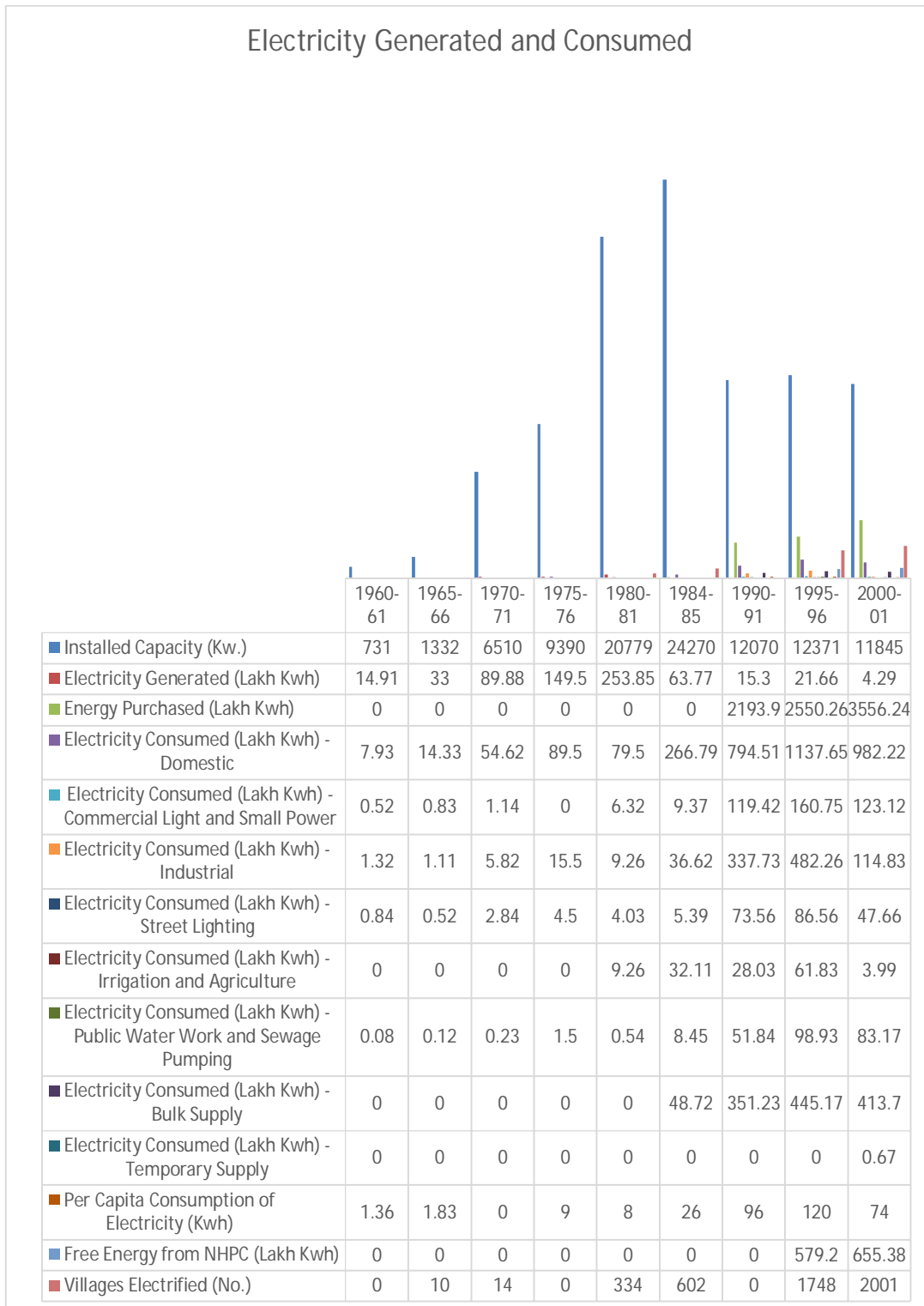
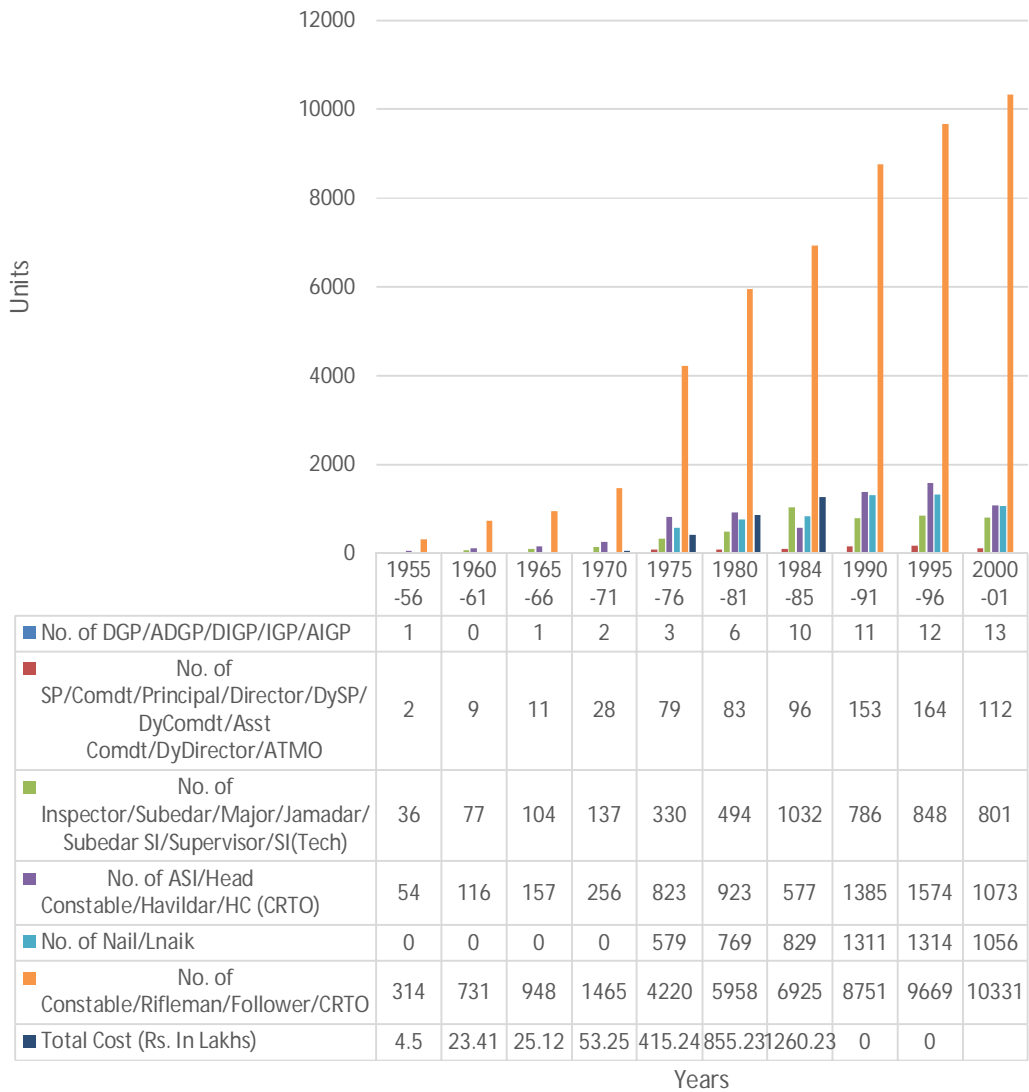


Table 2.49. Electricity Generated and Consumed in Manipur⁵⁸

⁵⁸Statistical Handbook of Manipur 2002, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Manipur, pp 334- 37. Also, Manipur State Administrative Reports, 1965-65 to 1990-91.

Strength and Cost of Police Force in Manipur



- No. of DGP/ADGP/DIGP/IGP/AIGP
- No. of SP/Comdt/Principal/Director/DySP/DyComdt/Asst Comdt/DyDirector/ATMO
- No. of Inspector/Subedar/Major/Jamadar/Subedar SI/Supervisor/SI(Tech)
- No. of ASI/Head Constable/Havildar/HC (CRTO)
- No. of Nail/Lnaik
- No. of Constable/Rifleman/Follower/CRTO
- Total Cost (Rs. In Lakhs)

Table 2.50. Strength and Cost of Police Force in Manipur⁵⁹

⁵⁹Statistical Handbook of Manipur 2002, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Manipur, pp 234-237.

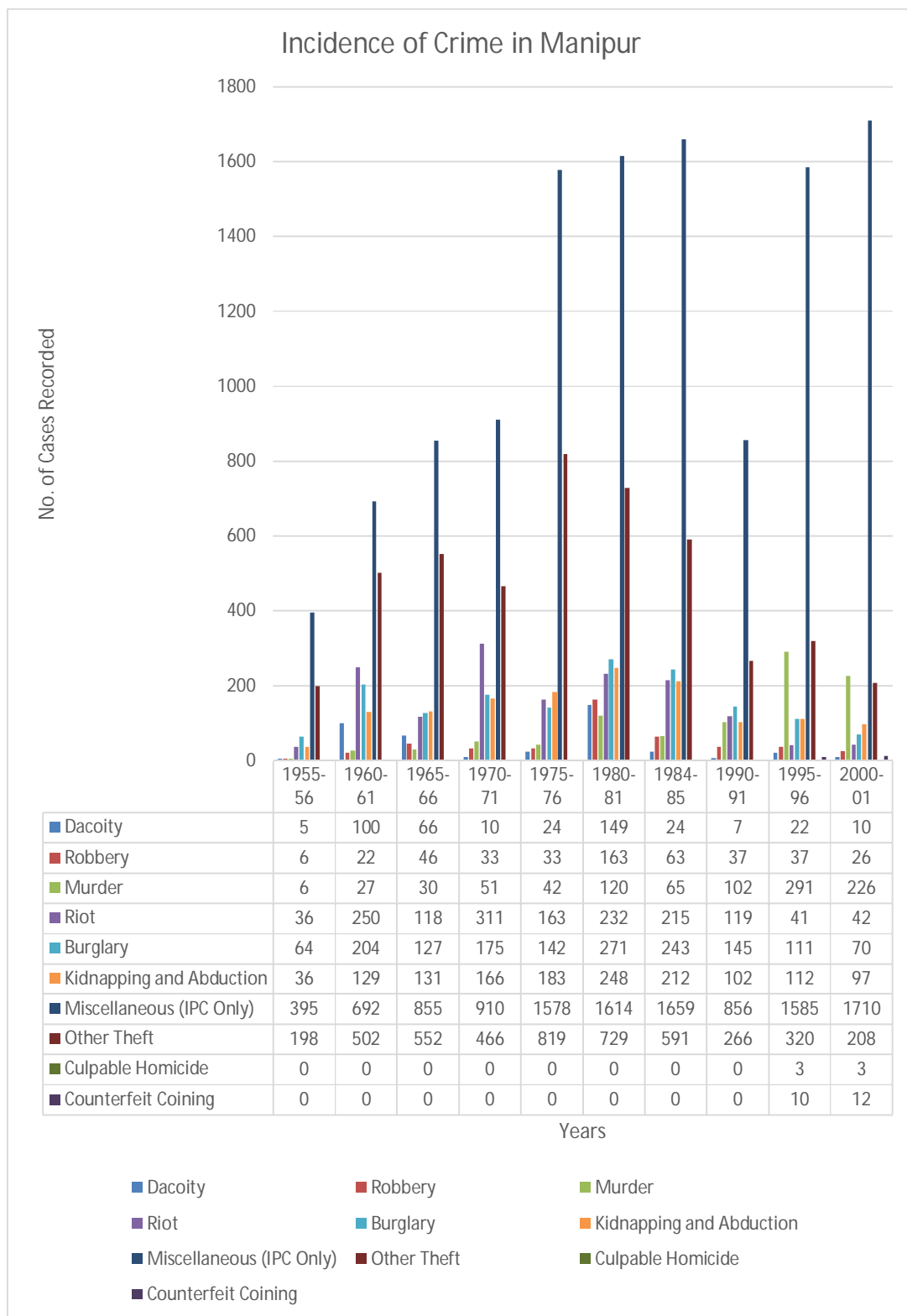


Table 2.51. Incidence of Crime in Manipur⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Ibid, pp 240-41.

The State's Administrative Reports state that the strength of the Police Force had to be gradually increased to curb insurgency and the subsequent surge in the numbers of cases registered is a factor of better Police coverage.⁶¹

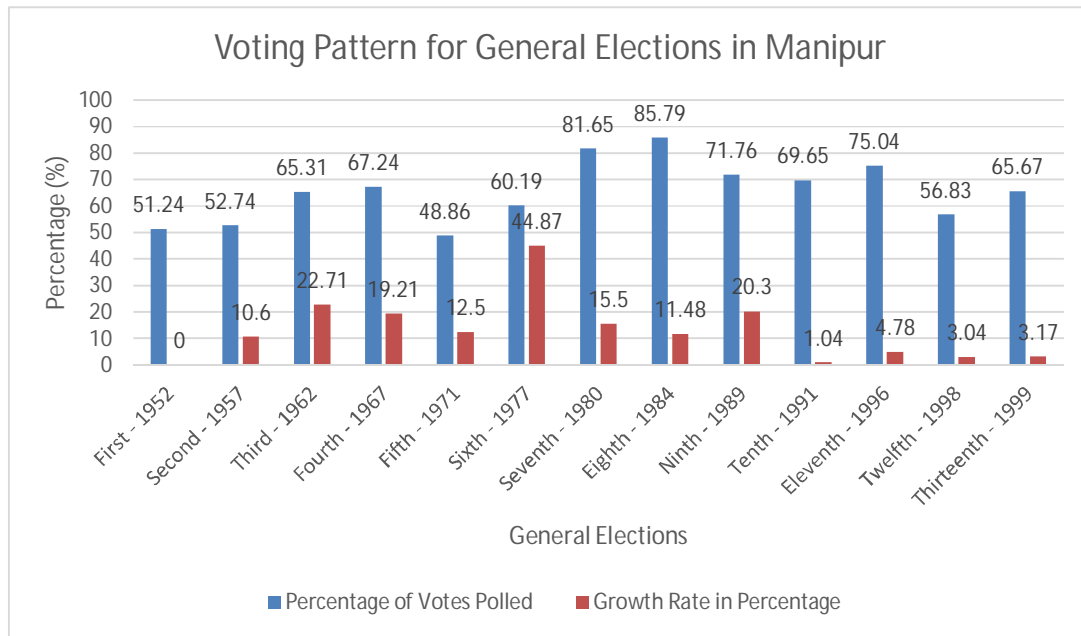


Table 2.52. Voting Pattern for General Elections (Parliamentary) in Manipur⁶²

The surprising trend in General Parliamentary Elections held throughout the period under study is that irrespective of their discontentment with India, voting percentages have been remarkably high throughout. Indeed, voter turnout in Manipur was among the highest in India. It peaks in the heydays of the Meetei insurgency. The constituency wise breakdown is not provided by the State, but as there are only two Parliamentary Constituencies in Manipur, it seems safe to assume that there can be no great variation in the turnout between the two constituencies. Clearly, even as the people who supported the insurgency and advocated secession from India, they did not hold back from making their electoral choices clear. Any means of making their voice heard that could be seized, was seized. Manipur may be “aegi laibak ni” (Manipur is my country), but in the elections, “India su aegi laibak ni” (India is also my country).

The othering of India was never a process fully completed. Many of the insurgents talked of shepherding voters to polling centres and instructing them to vote one way or the other. The

⁶¹ Manipur State Administrative Report 1975-76.

⁶² *Statistical Handbook of Manipur 2002*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Manipur, pp 308-09.

decision of the UGs to throw their support behind any one candidate, made a major difference to the outcome of the election. However, one exception that proved the rule was Bisheshwar's election to the Manipur State Legislative Assembly. This was one candidate the UGs heartily disapproved of, yet, he won. In that sense, Bisheshwar was no ordinary insurgent. He was the manifestation of the dreams of many ordinary Manipuris. The face of the Meetei insurgency, more so than Meghen and Samarendra, who founded the insurgency. Bisheshwar, in that respect, was more of the people than the ordinary foot-soldier of the revolution, who the people interacted with, daily. And in crossing over successfully, to mainstream politics, he was perhaps predicting the outcome of the movement long before the others saw it coming.

Looking at the schemes passed on paper and the situation of non-implementation of those schemes on the ground, one may conclude that the insurgency's origin is entirely economic or that the state is stuck in a vicious circle of development and insurgency. One may wrongly conclude that the lack of development by India, the neglect of Manipur by India caused the insurgency and the insurgency, in its turn, caused the lack of development, causing the state to be stuck in a perpetual loop. And to one extent, this would not be a wrong conclusion. Indeed, the decline of the insurgency begins with the advent of the technological revolution. While the ideologues had always been clear about what they were fighting for, the foot-soldiers of the revolution had missed the memo. Young boys and girls who joined the movement joined before being aware of what they were signing up for. They were provided ideological indoctrination only after they joined the movement. However, as the next chapter will show us, the burgeoning of UG organisations caused more and more organisations to be formed solely for the purpose of extortion or contract killings. While news travelled slowly, the UGs continued to be held as the messiahs of the people. However, the spread of technology slowly changed that perception. As distances became smaller, and the development of the rest of India could be starkly contrasted with Manipur, the youth began to turn away. Those who can, frequently leave to study outside the state, and try to stay away as much as they can. This, despite the fact that the emotional connect with the Laibak is very strong. However, emotions do not keep the stomach full.⁶³

The movement is also fed by other streams. It is, in some ways, a reactionary movement. It begins in 1964 as a movement demanding Independence for Manipur. The feeling was that

⁶³ In conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps and civilians.

Nagaland – which, in the eyes of the Meeteis, had a less historical claim to statehood than Manipur, which had been an independent kingdom till the Merger – could be granted statehood before Manipur, then, there was no hope for Manipur within India. To rise from the ashes of the Merger, Manipur would have to break free. The fear of the Valley being hemmed in by the Hills was very real and in many ways, is one of the reasons the Meetei UGs refuse to lay down arms. Initially, the fear was only of Greater Nagalim. Over time, as more and more ethnicities have begun asserting their claim to a homeland, for example, the Kukis to Zale'n-gam and the Hmars to their own homeland and the Zeliangrong communities to their own, the Meeteis' fears have gotten worse. Additionally, the rise of the Pangals is resented. They were historically seen as being Sylheti and Cacharese migrants, who were given space in the Meetei space. The assertion of the Pangal identity after the 1993 communal riots is also noted and keeps the Meetei UGs going. As Robin Ngangom writes,

I'm the anguish of slashed roots,

the fear of the homeless,

and the desperation of former kisses.

How much land does my enemy need?⁶⁴

Ironically, this internecine fighting within Manipur is what has also granted the Government of India a great deal of acceptability within the communities. The Meeteis are at once, wary of the GoI for talking to the Nagas and the Kukis, and, hopeful that the State will aid them in protecting their homeland. However, if this is examined, the theory of the homeland can also be boiled down to economics. The Naga-Kuki war of 1993-1997 centred around Moreh, the gateway to South-East Asia and all of its incoming business. The city was initially controlled by the NSCN (IM). Now, the Kuki UG organisations claim to control it. However, what must be noted is that in both cases, the Meeteis and the Mayangs have not budged from the city. Businesses are still entirely in the control of these two communities. The Meetei UGs are willing to defend Moreh to death, as they say. However, they are also clear that while their relations with the Nagas are older – of both, animosity and cooperation – if a standoff between the communities were to happen again over Moreh, the Kukis would side with the

⁶⁴ Venkatakrishnan, P., 'Frontispiece – In Search of Freedoms – Contemporary Poets in English from Manipur', *Seven Sisters' Post: The Newspaper of the Northeast*, nelitreview.blogspot.in/2012/02/frontispiece-in-search-of-freedoms.html?m=1 .

Meeteis.⁶⁵The situation is not as simple as it appears. The Nagas and Meeteis accept that they have historic relations. The Meeteis claim that the brotherhood was spoilt by the Nagas demanding parts of Manipur for Greater Nagalim, while the Nagas claim that the Meeteis are denying them their homeland. The Kukis claim historic relations with the Meeteis too, which the Meetei refute, saying that the Kukis are relatively recent settlers in the Hills, brought in by the Maharaj to subdue the raiding Nagas. And the Nagas and Kukis claim historical enmity.⁶⁶The problem is further compounded by the demands by each ethnic community demanding a homeland, which not only overlaps with each other, but also eats up parts of what the Meeteis claim as historically theirs. Despite this, the insurgent groups cooperate with each other over training, sharing businesses, hide-outs, and share of extortion. Clearly, what they preach to the masses, they do not follow themselves.

Manipur's problem, the insurgency, whether in the Valley or in the Hills, keeps circling back to economics, even though the roots of that tussle are historic and rooted in ideology and the idea of a homeland. However, the ideology in the Valley has not managed to trickle down. And the entire problem lies there. The Valley insurgents, unlike those in the Hills, have not been able to keep their ideology or their organisations intact. This has ensured that they are taken seriously by neither the State, nor by the society, anymore. There was a time when loyalty to the Leikai meant that protection was provided to the UGs in hiding. However, as the people have moved forward, wishing to develop, the UGs have not. And this has meant that they are gradually being sidelined in the narrative of Manipur's development. The insurgents are stymied by their 'fidelity to trauma'⁶⁷, as Dominick LaCapra called it, but the society is not. And therein lies the difference.

⁶⁵ Sharma, G.U., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 8th November, 2107. Also, Haokip, P.S., *Zale'n-gam: The Kuki Nation*, which claims older ties with the Meeteis.

⁶⁶ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017. Also, in conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps, and civilians.

⁶⁷ Phanjoubam, P., *The Northeast Question: Conflicts and Frontiers*, New Delhi, 2016, p 208.

Biographies of the “Revolutionaries”: Memories, Testimonies and Narratives of the “Lamyamba”¹ !

Works on the insurgency in the North-East and in Manipur, in particular, have examined a series of factors of the movement, but one aspect that has been left unexplored in most works, is the voice of the insurgents themselves. This chapter is an attempt at placing the ‘revolutionary’ at the centre of the discourse around the movement. It examines their testimonies and reconstructs their experience – the indoctrination into the, ‘revolution’, the experience as a member of the underground and the subsequent action taken – surrender or deeper involvement in the movement. In many ways, the voice of the ‘insurgent’ raises significant questions about the nature of the movement, while answering others. Most insurgent here are from the second generation of the movement. Their entry into the movement is therefore, influenced heavily by the first generation heavyweights like Arambam Samarendra and R.K. Meghen Singh, who in turn, were inspired by the Communist Movement and Hijam Irabot’s ideas. However, these stories that follow here, are not stories of great inspiration or action. They are stories of ordinary men and women who entered the insurgency and the turn their lives took. These stories are their testimonials of living with a revolution.

The testimonies largely point at one thing. Unlike a classic guerrilla war, there is no othering of the enemy. Lines of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ are very blurred. While in classic guerrilla wars, the ‘enemy’ and the ‘other’ are separate entities from the guerrillas and the ordinary civilian who aids the guerrillas, here, the forces of the State and those of the ‘Revolution’ are of the same blood. Sometimes, quite literally. There are many stories of siblings or in-laws being on opposite sides of the battlefield. The Meeteis are Vaishnavs, despite the call to return to Sanamahism. Perhaps, that is why the first verse of the Bhagavad Gita sums up the insurgency in the Valley so well:

“Dhritaraashtra uvaach

Dharmakshetre kurukshetre samavetaa yuyutsavaha

Maamakaaha paandavashchaiva kimakurvata sanjaya”²

¹ Lamyamba, in Meeteilon, directly translates to ‘freedom fighter’.

This translates to: “Dhritaraashtra speaks –on the grounds on righteousness, and the (physical) battlefield of Kurukshetra, with their armies facing off against each other, mine and Pandu’s (sons) are gathered. What are they doing, Sanjay?”³

The verse applies itself to the Manipuri situation excellently. Here, Dhritarashtra is the Indian State. Sanjay is the impartial observer. The State, instead of intervening on its own, in a matter that involves its own citizens, seeks help, whether from an impartial outsider or others in its own system. The two armies facing off are both, of the same blood. Yet, the State makes a distinction when it calls it, mine and the other’s. The State pretends to be blind in asking a third party observer to discover the reasons behind the face off. However, as facts get lost in translation and distorted in their presentation, the distance between the State and its own citizens grows, which makes the disgruntled citizen, the ‘revolutionary’, the other. However, for those on the battlefield, the revolutionary is also one of them, as is the agent of the State – the policeman. The State, being away from the battlefield, can differentiate between its citizens, which, in an ideal situation, it should not be. Those, in the midst of the battle, cannot. Both sides are composed of their own.

The stories contained here, are narratives of fighting a low-intensity war, where both parties are part of the same extended bond. They are not opponents. They have merely been pushed into a position of opposition.

Nameirakpam Bisheshwar, PLA (Years active, 1968-1994)

N. Bisheshwar was born in 1944 in Singjamei, Imphal, the eldest of five siblings. He received his primary education in Imphal, passing his Matriculation in 1965 from Canchipur High School, receiving a third division. In the interim, while in the eighth standard, he lost his father to a suspected poisoning. Financial troubles, as well as the weight of four younger siblings meant that Bisheshwar took up odd labour oriented jobs to support his family till 1967. That year, he went to Solan to receive training in manufacturing thermometers. Upon returning to Manipur in 1968, unable to find a job despite being trained, Bisheshwar entered into a quarrel with the Director of Industries. This pushed him to join the UNLF towards the end of that year. The UNLF had been started in 1964 under the leadership of Arambam Samarendra, a playwright and O. Sudhir Kumar Singh.

²*The Bhagavad Gita*, www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/1/verse/1 .

³ Translation, Research Scholar’s own.

One of the chief factors that attracted or, perhaps to take another perspective, pushed Bisheshwar towards insurgency was that after his father's death, and while he struggled to support his family, Sanatombi, an important UNLF leader, also of Singjamei, maintained the Nameirakpam family. Within 2-3 months, Bisheshwar had given up the organisation. He, along with O. Sudhir Kumar Singh formed another party, which came to be known as the Consolidation Committee of Manipur (hereafter, referred to as CONSOCOM) or the Revolutionary Government of Manipur (hereafter, referred to as RGM). The latter name was to really become popular in public memory.

In the middle of 1969, Bisheshwar and Sudhir Kumar travelled to East Pakistan, later Bangladesh, to meet an associate of Sudhir's since a "dangerous rival(ry)"⁴ had arisen between the Samarendra and Sudhir Kumar factions and Sudhir needed support and protection. Bisheshwar stayed in East Pakistan for about ten days, before returning to Manipur, where he recruited about forty-fifty youths and sent them with a few old hands to East Pakistan. At this point, he officially became a member of the underground, with the Police being hot on his heels. He was arrested soon after. In 1972, when Manipur received Statehood, Bisheshwar, with all other arrested Meetei youths was released under several amnesty schemes.⁵ It is noteworthy that while the state's Administrative reports mention the insurgency in the Naga hills and the influx of Kuki refugees from Burma, no mention of Meetei insurgents or of amnesty being granted to them has been made⁶.

Upon his release, he tried to rehabilitate himself into society by seeking a job, contacting MLAs in the hope of receiving their help. He even went so far as to appeal to the then CM, Md. Alimuddin. In the hope of helping others like himself, he and a member of the royal family conducted talks about rehabilitation. Meanwhile, in 1973, he married, in the hope of leading a normal family life. He made several attempts to take up an occupation, finally moving to Moreh at the end of 1973 with his mother and younger brother, to import rice. Having been diagnosed with Tuberculosis, this, he felt was a viable occupation. During the same time, with the help of the RGM, he began undergoing treatment for his illness. The gentleman who helped him seek treatment, dealt in Agar wood and had been suffering losses. To help him out, Bisheshwar, along with two accomplices, planned to loot the post-office money. He did not actively participate in the robbery, but masterminded it. Ironically, the

⁴ Sharma, G.U., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 8th November, 2017, contemporary of Bisheshwar's.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Manipur State Administrative Report, 1972-72, Manipur State Archives and Library.

RGM condemned a robbery carried out by its own members, making Bisheshwar the scape goat⁷. This may be seen as an attempt by the RGM to deflect suspicion and to distance itself from Bisheshwar, whose career as an insurgent, they may have seen as being at an end.

In 1975, Bisheshwar and his family left Moreh, having managed to save Rs. 500 for his treatment and travelled to Dibrugarh, Assam, to seek treatment. Here, after two months of treatment, in March, he was arrested by the Assam Police along with two accomplices and detained for eight months. He was released in 1976 and returned to Imphal, where he found the RGM was splitting up. While Sudhir Kumar remained the leader of one faction, Bisheshwar was chosen to lead the other faction, *ex absentia*⁸. This statement must be taken with a pinch of salt, because Bisheshwar does not specify the conditions that led to him being chosen leader of the other faction. It is quite likely that having been denounced by Sudhir Kumar in the 1973 robbery case, he found it convenient to take over the other faction, to avenge himself against Sudhir or may have engineered the split himself. The split was caused over the choice of route by which the “revolutionaries” were to go to Bangladesh. Bisheshwar managed to get Rs. 100 for the cause from the then CM, R.K. Dorendro Singh. Bisheshwar and Sudhir Kumar also got into an altercation, when the latter visited the former, threatening him with dire consequences if he did not back down. His carrying a dao to the meeting added weight to his words, was Bisheshwar’s opinion⁹.

Backed by his supporters, in June/July, 1976, Bisheshwar and fifteen of his accomplices left for China, under the belief that they had no other alternative, as they were members of the underground. They arrived at the border on 3rd July, 1976 and were lodged at the Leising Camp in China, where they stayed for two months. In that period, they were visited by various Chinese officials in civil dress who advised them to return to India. When they asked for the Chinese government’s orders in writing, they were taken to Lhasa, where, over a period of almost eight months, they were indoctrinated into Communism. Upon completion of the course, at the end of 1977, Bisheshwar stayed back for an additional month to undergo surgery, while fourteen of his companions returned to India. Ch. Ranjit stayed back to tend to Bisheshwar and their stay was extended by three months on the doctor’s orders. It was Bisheshwar’s belief that the Chinese wished to retain him in Lhasa and open training camps to indoctrinate the youth. Despite this, Bisheshwar itched to return to India.

⁷ Singh., G.U., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 8th November, 2017, contemporary of Bisheshwar’s .

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

In February 1978, Ch. Ranjit returned to India, leaving Bisheshwar alone in Lhasa for about six months. In that time, Bisheshwar picked up their language and found he did not like the Chinese attitude towards him and his associates and their cause. In his words, “They talked themselves as if they got salvation whereas I and my associates as very much far behind them.”¹⁰ Clearly, the Chinese did not hold their fellow ‘revolutionaries’ in very high regard.

Bisheshwar returned to Imphal from China via Gorakhpur in August, 1978, to find that his organisation’s members had taken to violent activities as a defensive measure against Sudhir Kumar’s faction, which was hunting them down. Arms were required for defence. As a classic guerrilla measure, the faction resorted to violence in order to obtain arms. Bisheshwar felt pressured into endorsing activities that had started before he’d been able to take stock of the situation. A difficult decision that he had to take to reassert over his group was to order the murder of Sudhir Kumar, his erstwhile mentor, following whom he’d separated from the UNLF and R.K. Sanajaoba Singh, his brother-in-law. The two had been found guilty of indulging in, “a number of immoral activities”¹¹ and were subsequently shot dead on fourteenth January, 1979 in Singjamei. At this juncture, the name of the organisation was changed to People’s Liberation Army (hereafter, referred to as PLA) on the suggestion of Laishram Indrajit Singh, the assassin of R.K. Sanajaoba.

Bisheshwar, by his own account, was the ideologue and coordinated the literary work of the PLA¹². It was under his leadership that two PLA journals, the Dawn and the Resistance were published and gained such wide popularity that they were ultimately banned by the Government of Manipur. The PLA’s violent activities were planned by leaders like S. Ranjit, Surjaboro, Rajendrachouba and others¹³. While taking note of this account, it must also be remembered that under arrest, Bisheshwar certainly would have attempted to distance himself from the bloodshed carried out by the PLA, regardless of the amount of weight his name and reputation carried in Manipur. It must also be noted that it is around this time that the Meetei undergrounds become a cause of concern for the state government. Thirty nine people had been killed in the year 1979-80 at the hands of the underground, of which twenty-two were

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

civilians¹⁴. The rise of the PLA is where the activities of Meetei insurgents first find mention in the reports of the government, despite the insurgency having begun in 1964.

After a skirmish with the BSF in Thangal Bazaar, the PLA, under Bisheshwar's leadership felt it wiser to set up a base in a secluded base. Singjamei, which had been used as a base thus far, was right in the heart of the city, within six kilometres of the Raj Bhawan and the CM's residence. Initially, a camp was set up in Yangangpokpi. However, this was attacked by the BSF and the PLA was forced to escape towards Burma and a camp was opened on the banks of the Taret River. Here, threat from the Burmese army forced them back towards Moreh. On the way to Moreh, the fugitives were attacked by the Burmese army. Moving back towards the Taret River, a few escaped to Imphal, from where they further escaped to Bangladesh. Bisheshwar and others, however, were again attacked by security forces at Churo, where they lost eight men. Bisheshwar escaped and the organisation regrouped at Lamlai.

In February, 1981, Bisheshwar considered appealing to his cadre to call off their violent activities, but by then, he had encouraged the idea of the Indian State only agreeing to violent demands, too far. In April of that year, he and his associates hid out at Sekta for a month, holding general meetings to announce that the Kangleipak Communist Party (hereafter, referred to as KCP) should not be forcibly collecting money. This was a charge levelled by many anonymous letters from Northern Manipur, addressed to Bisheshwar. The meeting resulted in Rs. 30,000/- being paid to the complainants by the PLA¹⁵. Bisheshwar does not specify how he arranged the amount.

Bisheshwar was arrested on 6th July, 1981, at thirty seven years of age. At the time of his arrest, he stated,

...I did not want to come on terms with the government. But the government have never taken up any action to bring solution in right path. The only thing which was brought to public openly by extremists had been taken and considered by the government but something deeper should have thought what was the source of the violent activities. It was the cause of the extreme that one faction had been supported by government. In order to face with them, we had to carry out violent activities.¹⁶

¹⁴ Manipur State Administrative Report, 1979-80, Manipur State Archives and Library.

¹⁵ Singh, G.U., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 8th November, 2017, contemporary of Bisheshwar's.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Whether or not the government actually supported one faction against the other, is a matter of conjecture, however, what emerges most clearly from Bisheshwar's testimony is a story of reluctant entry into the underground and then, for a very long time, an active attempt to get out of it. Usually, works on the insurgency in Manipur credit with beginning the violent phase of the insurgency and breaking away from the UNLF. However, as we see here, Bisheshwar broke away from the UNLF as early as 1968, following his mentor, Sudhir Kumar. He then breaks away from Sudhir Kumar too, as he says, forced by circumstances. By his own admission, he states that his faction had taken up arms in his absence and he was forced to endorse their actions, remaining an ideologue and never the mastermind of violent activities, even when the organisation became the PLA. Everywhere, Bisheshwar portrays himself as the reluctant revolutionary.

Commentators on the Meetei insurgency have portrayed Bisheshwar as an organiser of discontent youth and his disgruntlement with Nagaland being granted statehood before Manipur as the core reason behind his break with the UNLF and resorting to violence. The belief was that the Nagas resorting to violence while the Meeteis carried out peaceful movements was one of the reasons. The other was that if Manipur had been unable to get even statehood from the Indian government as it's due, before the Nagas, independence for Manipur would have been difficult without armed violence¹⁷. Bisheshwar's own statements however, point to a different truth. The PLA did not come up as an organised movement, initially. There was no question of ideology being brought into play. Communism as guiding light of the revolution is acquired very late in his career. And even after supposed indoctrination, Bisheshwar's fight is not to bring about a revolution. His statement at the time of arrest points to the different causes that led to his taking up arms. Chief among them, he lists the government's apathy in addressing the concerns of those taking up arms. Violence, he says, is a self defence mechanism adopted by the warring factions. Unemployment is high on the list of factors that contribute to his entering the movement. Subsequently, even when he is granted amnesty, he finds himself unable to rehabilitate back into society.

Perhaps, Bisheshwar's attitude towards the revolution may best be exemplified by the fact that he applied for bail in 1984, stating his intentions to run for the 1985 assembly elections

¹⁷ Phanjoubam T., *Insurgency Movement in North-East India*,

and was granted it by the Gauhati High Court¹⁸, and his mass appeal may be gauged by the fact that he won, as an independent. Till date, he remains the only member of the insurgency to have fought and won in an election. His attempt was emulated by one other member of the UGs, but his support base was not strong enough for him to win. Bisheshwar is thus, unique in managing to gulf the bridge between the underground and constitutional democracy. For all that he has been portrayed as the pioneer in the armed militancy in Manipur, Bisheshwar still had some faith in democracy and in his ability to bring change to Manipur through it. Clearly, the idea of Manipur's independence was not integral to his movement. Bisheshwar's attempt may be seen as the real pioneering effort. He attempted to bring about real change, and perhaps, did not want the other revolutionaries in the same position as himself. However, in 1986, he wrote a book, *Battle of Waterloo in Mizoram*, which was a scathing critique of Laldenga's policy of surrendering arms and signing the Mizo accord. As he wrote,

“Mr Landenga is a teacher who negatively teaches the people with a good lesson that shows the path to avoid failures leading to permanent defeat in the course of carrying out a mass movement...success of surrender in spite of climbing up to the Eden of Chief Ministership is nothing but a game of betrayal – a betrayal of his comrades who had laid down their valuable lives for the cause of the Mizo people led by him as a Godfather, a betrayal that kills the morale and spirit of all the progressive people of the North-East and the world as well... this reputation is at the cost of or by selling the great cause for which he and his people had dedicated...In the land of Mizoram, the love of Chief Ministership is much more weightier than the love of Motherland.”¹⁹

Bisheshwar thus, may have contested elections himself, but he was certainly critical of Laldenga taking the constitutional route, more so because Laldenga had, as CM, Mizoram, laid claim to Greater Mizoram, which covered parts of Manipur. Here, Bisheshwar's views are very clear. He is of the firm belief that the Mizos are nomadic tribes who steered in Manipur, and therefore, Manipur is not theirs to claim²⁰. It must be kept in mind that the Kukis in Manipur are part of the Kuki-Chin-Mizo clans and therefore, Bisheshwar was very clearly marking them out as the, 'other' in Manipur, the outsider. As he writes, “Why should

¹⁸ Gupta, S., 'Gauhati High Court orders release on bail of PLA chief Nameirakpam Bisheshwar Singh', *India Today*, 31st January, 1984, www.m.indiatoday.in/story/gauhati-high-court-orders-release-on-bail-of-pla-chief-nameirakpam-bisheshwar-singh/1/360433.html .

¹⁹ Singh, N.B., *Battle of Waterloo in Mizoram*, Imphal, 1987, pp 3-4.

²⁰ Ibid, pp 4-5.

not we raise the slogan of “Go Back Mizos?”²¹. Even as he creates the difference of who is Manipuri and who is not, he asserts that communalisation in the North-East is Laldenga’s creation.

Bisheshwar’s views on Laldenga are scathing and perhaps, a means to assuage his followers that he won’t let them down by succumbing to the Constitution of India like Laldenga. He mentions China by saying that their assistance in the way of arms was ultimately a victory for India and its constitutional set-up. “The so called indoctrination or revolutionary teachings by these foreign powers can be pre-empted by giving statehood...A soldier who cannot be defeated on the battlefield can be defeated easily by sugarcoated bullets...”²². Bisheshwar seems to be sending out the message that he may have taken part in constitutional politics, but he won’t, ‘sell out’ the Manipuris to Delhi as Laldenga did, the Mizos. His observations on the Mizo Accord seem to ring equally true, years later, for the Naga Framework Agreement,

...Delhi did not criticise Mr Laldenga’s claim for the Mizo inhabited areas of Manipur, Assam and Tripura, etc. Also, they did not advise him to withdraw or to exclude such a claim as may lead to the communal clashes followed by a permanent hatred among the blood-brothers of the North-East...(Delhi) merely signed in their Accord with its words “The Govt. cannot make any commitment in this respect” of Greater Mizoram.²³

Oddly enough, in case of the Naga Framework Agreement too, the Government of India has made no commitments, preferring to dilly-dally, which has caused the Meeteis enough annoyance to not lay down their arms. Bisheshwar’s call for the unification of the North-East²⁴ has rung out more than once, from those who have served the longest in the movement and see that resolution will remain out of reach as long as the region does not unite²⁵. Bisheshwar is unflinching in his opinion,

It is time for the leaders in Delhi...play constructive role to bring the people of the entire North-East to the national mainstream...stop the political, economic and social exploitation taking the advantage of our being the bunch of tiny states...on the

²¹ Ibid, p 6.

²² Ibid, p 8-9.

²³ Ibid, pp 12-13.

²⁴ Ibid, p 14.

²⁵ In conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps.

threshold of being outnumbered sooner or later...swallowed by immigrating people from bigger states and by foreigners...erect a tomb on the graveyard of our community, our people and our nation as well.²⁶

Every one of Bisheshwar's words seems prophetic. The insurgents in Manipur, and not just the Meetei insurgents have always recalled the horror of the Tripurese and the Cacharese being outnumbered in their own state, witnessing the slow death of their culture as the culture of the, 'outsiders' takes over. In Manipur, the Mayang – the outsider, the stranger – was an even more palpable threat. Since the World Wars, most businesses in the state have been held by Marwaris, Biharis and Sikhs. Inter-marriage with them was frowned upon and the xenophobia was constantly perpetuated by the argument that Meeteis were going to be displaced in their homeland by not just Greater Nagalim or Zale'n-gam, but also by the Mayangs.

Bisheshwar is even clearer in his belief that revolution cannot be hurried, not least by a leader. It will come in its own time, if the conditions for it turn right at the right time. He argues that all a good leader does is guide the people to a favourable time and place. His success or failure are dependent on his political ideology, his convictions, dedication to the cause and ability to change with changing circumstances. Failure on any one count results in the failure of the entire movement. Because ideology decides leadership, the failure of the ideologue often leaves the movement rudderless.²⁷ This is frequently witnessed in Manipur's insurgency. The death of the ideologue causes the slow descent of the movement into extortion and general chaos.

Bisheshwar's writing is almost laughably ironic in the sense that the leader of a movement which, apparently, took to arms to break away from 'Indian Imperialism and the Indian Union' invokes the collective identity of a people as Indian and therefore those who practice non-violence to dissociate the Indian State from "internal expansionism...and corruption",²⁸. At this point, Bisheshwar's writing mostly devolves into writing paeans to the glory of Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress.²⁹ Despite this, in public speeches, he does not dissociate himself from Irabot and refers to him as "Lenin in thought and action",³⁰, while at the same time,

²⁶ Singh, N.B., *Battle of Waterloo in Mizoram*, Imphal, 1987, pp 15-16.

²⁷ Ibid, pp 18-19.

²⁸ Ibid, p 23.

²⁹ Ibid, pp 19-23.

³⁰ Ibid, p 30.

criticising China. Clearly, Bisheshwar is taking a step away from Maoism, which was not received well by the PLA.

In 1992, he floated the Poramelan Apunba (hereafter, referred to as PA) to fight for the cause of the Meeteis³¹. From here, Bisheshwar's collection of funds for the movement came from extortion. The Mayangs - the Marwaris, Biharis and Bengalis - part of Manipur's thriving business community were attacked. That tactic soon changed, oddly enough after the Babri Masjid's demolition in 1992, and the Meetei-Pangal (Manipuri Muslims) communal riots broke out in the Valley, pushed by the PA³². This was a marked move away from the ideology that Bisheshwar had espoused so far and a complete breakdown of the idea of the Valley being one composite unit. The Pangals were turned into outsiders, where they had always been an integral part of society. The communal riots proved to be the watershed for the Pangals in Manipur. It is after this that they take to arms. The Meetei insurgent groups argue that the riots gave the ISI a foothold into Manipur, via Bangladesh. Before this, they had been providing training to the Meetei insurgent groups in areas close to Karachi, but with the riots, the way for the radicalisation of the Pangals had been opened. Money was pumped in from outside for the opening of Madarsas in the Valley and Lalong, Sora, Mayang Imphal, Hafta – all Pangal areas - began to develop rapidly. This, the PREPAK and breakaway faction assert is Bisheshwar's doing³³.

Perhaps even more ironic was the fact that Bisheshwar's own PSO was Pangal, as were many from his core circle – trusted blindly by him. Unfortunately for him, the PLA saw this as a betrayal of all that they stood for. The ideologue may have changed his belief about revolution, but his followers had not. Bisheshwar was kidnapped in August, 1994, from his residence. Exactly three weeks later, an editorial in the Freedom Daily appeared, severely criticising Bisheshwar for his participation in Indian Constitutional democracy,

...the meteoric rise of Angou alias Bisheshwor on the horizon of the great revolution in Manipur in early 1980s reached the zenith of a legendary figure when he was behind bars. But the curb of his fame and glory started downward trend with his election from the Thongju Assembly Constituency...slowly sucked into the Black-

³¹ 'A Bloody Route to Power', *Communalism Combat*, October, 1993. Reproduced in *Sabrang India*, 21st April, 2016. <https://sabrangindia.in/article/bloody-route-power>.

³² Ibid.

³³ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

Hole of Indian Politics...could not survive the onslaught of the dirty politics...started showing off his true colour in the murky water of Indian Parliamentary Democracy.³⁴

Clearly, his followers had taken to heart his criticism of Laldenga and were examining him under the same lens. Bisheshwar was found dead near village, with a bullet wound in his head.

It is hard to say what Bisheshwar's entry into the Legislative Assembly of Manipur might have accomplished. He was certainly someone with enough appeal to the civilian that he could win elections despite the PLA's staunch opposition. His support base was not restricted to just the sympathisers of PLA. Like a good guerrilla leader, his base amongst the people at large, was strong. There is no telling if he could have been the Meetei equivalent of Laldenga, since the Meetei UG groups have repeatedly failed to work together, but, Bisheshwar certainly spelt hope for those who desperately needed it. Additionally, Bisheshwar belonged to the first generation of insurgents trained by China, and, as reluctant as he may have been in leading the revolution, he emulated all good revolutionary ideologues in formulating his own ideology, writing extensively to reach his audience, using violence to get his voice heard, reaching out to the civilians in villages and joining politics when all seemed lost. He remains the most iconic leader of the insurgency in Manipur.

Ningthoujam Shanti Meetei, PREPAK (Years active, 1987-2012)

N. Shanti Meetei was born in Wahengbam Leikai, Imphal in 1967, and was constantly moved about during his education, part of which took place in Imphal, and part in Roorkee, Uttar Pradesh. In 1984, in his second attempt, he passed the Xth standard with a third division. The following year, in 1985, he was appointed a CRTO (Constable Radio Telephone Operator) in the Manipur Police. He spent two years with them before leaving service to join the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (hereafter, referred to as PREPAK) in December 1987³⁵. Shanti stated he was swept up in the revolutionary atmosphere all around him. He felt his job in the Manipur Police was less prestigious than joining the underground, who were fighting for the cause of Manipur. His family had long had a history of associating with the movement for Manipur's Independence. His grandfather, N. Lairen Singh had been a member of the original Legislative Council of Manipur and his father's elder brother had been a member of Irabot's movement for Manipur's Independence and had remained underground for seven

³⁴ 'The Irony of Fate', *Freedom Daily*, 30th August, 1994, Editorial, Imphal.

³⁵ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

years. The movement then had been ideological and arms had not been involved³⁶. Within nine months however, he was arrested and sent into judicial custody till May, 1990. Upon release, he finished his XIIth standard, passing with a second division in 1992. He joined the D.M. College of Arts and Commerce that year, but in 1991, unbeknownst to anyone, he had gone back to the PREPAK and had travelled to Bangladesh to meet the General Secretary, Leirengbam Sellungba Singh alias Chaoren alias Tombi alias Somo.

A three day journey took him from Manipur to Silchar to Dharma Nagar to Kailaswar, Tripura to Adampur Bazaar, Bangladesh to Rani Bazaar, Bangladesh to Nagor, Bangladesh, which was the PREPAK camp. At the camp, he met Sanasam Phalguni and Khundrakpam Jhaljit Singh with whom he discussed the organisation of the group as well as the fact that the PLA was supplying the PREPAK with arms. In July, 1991, the PLA supplied them with two .38 pistols, one of which was Country made. In November, 1992, Shanti was appointed Self Styled (hereafter, referred to as S/S) Foreign Secretary of the PREPAK. In March, 1993, the PREPAK split into two factions:

1. Led by Uritkhinbam Sharat Singh alias Meiraba, the S/S Chairman cum Secy. – Finance, Publicity, Home and Organisation of the former, united PREPAK.
2. Led by Salam Nabachandra Singh alias Kumar alias Khamba, the S/S Commander-in-Chief of the former, united PREPAK.

The two faction came to be known commonly as the Meiraba Faction and the Khamba Faction³⁷. After the occurrence of the split, Meiraba was. “arrested”³⁸ by Khamba and confined at the camp in Bangladesh. Shanti himself was part of the Meiraba faction.

In November, 1993, the Meiraba faction came together to form the Executive Body against the Khamba faction, in which Shanti was made the S/S Defence Secretary, while the other posts were allocated as such:

1. Ningombam Nabachandra Singh alias Nabamacha alias Kumar alias Yaiphaba alias Nongdrenkhomba – S/S Home Secretary.
2. Bachaspatimayum Ramkumar Sharma alias Kokpi – S/S Publicity and Propaganda Secretary.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

3. Khumujam Hera Singh alias Ratan alias Ibomcha alias Sathi – S/S Valley Commander.
4. Pukhrabam Rajen Singh aka Prasad alias Olen – S/S Commander-in-Chief.

The Central Committee talked it over and decided that Sathi must be sent to Ngor to discover whether or not Meiraba was still alive in captivity. Meanwhile, the party added seven new recruits to their cadre, who were sent off to receive training at the NSCN (K)'s camp in the OKLU jungle, Chandel District. By the time Shanti returned from dropping off the new recruits, the rest of the cadre had moved to Churachandpur to hide out at the training camp of the Kuki Defence Force (hereafter, referred to as KDF)³⁹, then, a newly formed organisation, to guard against the Naga threat. In 1993, the Naga-Kuki ethnic clash had started. Shanti does not specify whether the PREPAK trained the KDF, but one thing that emerges startlingly, is that solidarity between insurgent groups existed across ethnic lines. The Meeteis may have risen up in retaliation to the NNC taking up arms, but they were trained at NSCN (K) camps and hid out at KDF camps. And this, at a time when the Nagas and Kukis were fighting a violent ethnic war. Clearly, lines of what constituted aiding and abetting the, 'enemy' were blurred in practice, notwithstanding what might be preached to the people at large.

The PREPAK shifted camps twice, both times moving within Churachandpur. While at the camp set up in Zozo village, in late January, 1994, they were joined by Meiraba, Sathi and Meitram Loken Singh alias Henary alias Nobin, who had escaped from the Ngor camp. With his arrival, Meiraba was appointed S/S Acting Chairman. This was publicised through the Daily News Paper.

Meiraba arranged three base camps for the group:

1. B-1 – NSCN (K) camp, Chumnu Chumsa, Eastern Nagaland (Myanmar).
2. B-2 – Khemnagar, Tuensang District, Nagaland.
3. B-3 – Bangladesh.⁴⁰

In April, 1994, Shanti was directed by Meiraba to take the new recruits to the NSCN (K) camp at Chumnu Chumsa for training. Four batches of recruits were trained here, totalling one fifty in number, of which, two were girls. Two were trained at Khemnagar.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

In March, 1996, Shanti was directed to attend the re-unification of the PREPAK to be held in Kathmandu in June, 1996. Here, new Central Committee Members were nominated, which were as follows:

1. Maisnam Biren Singh alias Achamba alias Oja Biren alias Chaamba – S/S Chairman.
2. Ningombam Nabachandra Singh – S/S Vice Chairman.
3. Longjam SUBhash Singh alias Loken alias Paliba – S/S General Secretary.
4. N. Shanti Meetei – S/S Defence Seretary.
5. Salam Nabachandra Singh alias Khamba – S/S Secretary Organisation.
6. Bachaspatimayum Ramkumar Sharma – S/S Finance Secretretary.
7. Khumujam Hera Singh – S/S Home Secretary.
8. Uritkhinbam Sarat Singh alias Meiraba – S/S Publicity Secretary, also looked after Finance.⁴¹

Thus, at the time of unification, Meiraba and Khamba both, found themselves part of the Central Committee, but not in the same position of influence as before.

In November, 1997, Shanti was instructed by the S/S Chairman to guide four French Nationals to Burma from Jorhat to meet the S/S Chairman of NSCN (K), Khaplang. In this regard, he met the S/S Minister of Information and Publicity (hereafter, referred to as MIP) of NSCN (K), Mulatan Sema, who welcomed the guets and agreed to make all arrangements for the travel. On 16th December, 1997, Shanti guided the four to Honyak from Jorhat via Anguri, Paper Mill, Mokokchung, Ching Region, Menyaksu and Longlin Town. Thereafter, he returned to Dimapur.

In April, 1998, Shanti was directed to work as Commander of Fighting Mobile in Manipur. He set up base in Chandel, moving around Chandel, Churachandpur, and Valley districts⁴². This meant that his places of shelter and operation in the hills were largely Kuki dominated areas. He remembers the time as well spent. Later, thinking over the time, Shanti argued that insurgency in Manipur was successful at the time because the reach of the State was limited. He recalls the time spent in Chandel as one where he roamed around openly, without arms, dictating prices of essential commodities. He argues this is the approach the State ought to have taken. The gap left by the Indian State was filled by the insurgents. He recalls, when he

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

returned in 2002, the villagers approached him to fix prices again⁴³. Clearly, the ordinary individual in the villages wanted not ideology, but peace and prosperity.

Shanti recounts how in the years before arms could be bought from Burma, the only source of weapons was those snatched from the Police and Security Forces⁴⁴. Often, this resulted in retaliation from the State and arms were more or less recovered⁴⁵. He states that acquisition of arms has become easier since the rise of the National League for Democracy (hereafter, referred to as NLD) in Burma, since the demand by Burmese insurgents has declined. This also boosted the Meetei insurgents as easier access to arms meant their activities received a fillip. The NSCNs received the arms leftover from the NNC days, which had been provided by Mao himself to the Nagas, but the Meeteis have had to work at achieving their arms. He argues that the World War II arms are in great demand, since they are better than most new weapons, which fire barely two to three thousand rounds before giving up. He refers to them as, "...good for only one battle"⁴⁶. The Chinese smugglers, agents of the Chinese government provide Brownings and Brens, largely rifles. He states that these are of inferior quality, while the M21, M22 and M23 rifles supplied by the same source are better. Thailand supplies Heckler and Koch to the Meeteis. However, he argues, the original arms provided by those with access to WWII supplies are unmatched by any new innovations. He scoffed at the Automated Kalashnikovs, saying their manufacturing quality has dipped considerably and the chamber is extremely vulnerable, which makes the weapon dicey and not the easiest to use. Also, they need to be replaced every two to three years. Their parts cannot be replaced. In common parlance, they are, 'use and throw'⁴⁷.

A glance at the history of the region tells us that the M series, sniper rifles, so highly lauded by the Meetei insurgents were originally used in Vietnam by both sides. If Shanti's statements are taken into consideration, the idea of Zomia assumes greater importance. Changes in power dynamics in one part of the region assume significance in other parts. Thus, the Nagas are provided arms by Mao, the Meeteis rise in reaction to them. As long as the Burmese UGs are not brought into the cease-fire, the Meeteis remain weak. Once that area calms down, the Meeteis are openly approached by arms peddlers and the insurgency takes off. It is noteworthy that while the movement for Manipur's independence began with

⁴³ Ibid..

⁴⁴ FIR No. 103 (11) 1999 MRG-PS u/s 447/121/121-A/212 IPC, 25(1-B) A Act & 13 UA(P) Act.

⁴⁵ Manipur State Administrative Reports, 1978-79 – 1990-91.

⁴⁶ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Hijam Irabot, it lay dormant for thirteen years after his death. The Sino-Indian War of 1962 leads to the reawakening of Meetei nationalism, first as a cultural movement under the UNLF and then, as the PREPAK breaks away in 1977, followed by the PLA in 1978, a mushrooming of violent activities is seen. Inspiration is sought from Vietnam and arms from Burma and Thailand. Training is provided in both, China and Burma. The idea of Zomia as one large, contiguous zone is not that hard to believe then⁴⁸.

However, to return to Shanti's story, In June 2000, the PREPAK's Central Committee met in Darjeeling to form a Military Affairs Committee (hereafter, referred to as MAC) consisting of the following:

1. Naba – S/S Chairman.
2. Loken – S/S General Secretary.
3. Shanti – Member⁴⁹.

Two days later, Shanti applied for a year's leave on medical grounds and went to Guwahati for tests. Till June, 2001, he was on leave and toured Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia⁵⁰, all places tied to the Meetei insurgency in integral ways, since the Vietnamese war, from which the Meeteis seek inspiration extended into Cambodia from 1969-1973. While in Thailand, Shanti met the S/S Chairman of the UNLF, R.K. Meghen Singh and accompanied him to Tamu, Myanmar via Bangkok, Yangon, Mandalay and Kaliwa. A temporary UNLF camp had been established at Tamu, where Shanti stayed for ten days before returning to Chandel, Manipur, escorted by the UNLF. In his yearlong absence, the MAC was disbanded. In March, 2001, the UNLF and PREPAK came together to form the Manipur People's Liberation Front (hereafter, referred to as MPLF), where agreements were made by both parties to conduct refresher courses and coordinate activities in the future as a single unit. The MPLF celebrated its first anniversary on 15th October, 2002. The celebration involved 550 people – PREPAK-150, RPF/PLA-200, UNLF-200 – as well as villagers. As part of its celebrations, the Indian Flag and the Merger Agreement was burnt. Notably, Gurumayum Utam Sharma alias Jame of the PLA was Guest of Honour⁵¹.

⁴⁸Van Schendel, W., 'Geographies of knowing, geographies of ignorance: jumping scale in Southeast Asia', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (20), 2002, pp 647-68.

⁴⁹ Meetei N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

In March 2003, the MPLF meeting was held in Sylhet, Bangladesh and attended by members of both, PREPAK and UNLF. At the end of the meeting, Shanti proceeded to Mumbai for treatment at the Hinduja Hospital. Upon completion of treatment, he went to Darjeeling for a vacation, where, in June, 2003, he was informed that the PREPAK had split:

1. PREPAK (GS) – so called because it was led by the S/S General Secretary of the united PREPAK, Paliba.
2. PREPAK (VC) – so called because it was led by the S/S Vice Chairman of the united PREPAK, Nabachandra.

At this point, Shanti decided that matters had to be handled with caution and decided to weed out those dissatisfied with the organisation and discharged eight with Rs. 500 each⁵². Shanti later admitted that all factions of every Meetei organisation have occurred for personal ambition and not for ideological reasons. He argues it is this that has prevented the Centre from looking seriously at the demands of the Meeteis. He points out that the Meetei UG groups were advised by the NSCN, both (K) and (IM), to unite and fight their common enemy. However, rampant power politics amongst the Meetei groups has meant that every time an attempt at unification has been made, more factions have emerged. The race to indoctrinate more number of cadres has meant that the degenerate elements of society, with no connection to the ideology were recruited by all groups, which has caused the degeneration of the Meetei insurgency and a withdrawal of support from the civilian population⁵³.

When the new Central Committee was nominated, Shanti was made the S/S Secretary, Finance and Publicity. Between November, 2003 and January, 2006, he received Rs. 5.3 crores from his subordinates for party funds. It was duly distributed by him, while a portion went into financing businesses on behalf of the party – Rs. 1.5 crores and Rs. 22 lakhs for an ICICI policy - Rs. 8 lakhs was used to pay the party staff⁵⁴. While Shanti does not mention here where the money came from, he later admits that the money was extorted from businesses and professionals. And he calls this the failing of the revolutionary movement. He is categorical in stating that the disaffection with the movement begins for precisely this reason. He cites the example of the Nagas and the Nepal Maoists, both of whom had extensive party cadre in every village, every town which contributed to the party fund when

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

the need arose. He argues that any revolutionary movement needs a strong support base among the people. The Meeteis missed that chance. They run the party on the strength of the armed wing. Those who become too old to serve in the armed wing, find place in the party. This ensures that there is no space for either ideology or mass support for the movement. The Nepal Maoists, he points out raised Rs. 7-8 crores on minimal contributions from all their party members. The Meeteis have no clearly defined party- overground, frontal organisations serve as the face of the movement. These have their own agendas and change allegiance as per their needs. The insurgency in Manipur, to be successful, needs four different wings:

1. The party.
2. The cadre.
3. The army.
4. The frontal organisation.

He points out that the revolutionary army functions as the party and the cadre in the Valley. This limits the reach of the movement. He states that for a few years, when the movement was at its peak, various Meetei organisations competed with each other to attract the maximum number of followers. They took up activities that should have been better left to the State. They filled the void left by the State, which attracted people to them.⁵⁵ This is corroborated by the statement of PLA/RPF's Md. Fajurrahman, who stayed in Bangladesh for seven years at the behest of his organisation, recruiting people and spreading the PLA/RPF's ideology, but largely, drawing people to the cause of the PLA by providing monetary assistance from the party fund⁵⁶. Clearly, the method was not exclusive to any one party. However, the UGs were cash strapped. Whatever developmental activity they undertook, was on the strength of extortion. This had two fallout effects. First, those from whom money was extorted turned away from the movement. Second, the UGs could not keep up the farce of running a parallel government very long, since they were cash strapped. The moment they stopped, people turned back to the State. He argues that ideological indoctrination was left out and a revolution in Manipur cannot be successful because of these reasons, and not because of the lack of money.⁵⁷

As Finance Secretary, Shanti also travelled to Thailand to open transit camps, to Yangon to open, "Myanmar Specialty Company Ltd." which imported and exported goods to raise funds

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Fajurrahman, Md., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 9th November, 2017.

⁵⁷ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

for the party and to China to gain their support in acquisition of arms and ammunition and in providing tactical training. On both counts, the Chinese seemed reluctant to help. In 2005, Shanti hid in Bangkok when the government cracked down on the PREPAK. In 2006, the PREPAK reunited in Hyderabad⁵⁸ - Shanti admits this was at the behest of the Government of India, which found it easier to deal with one organisation than with two different factions, with no difference in their ideology, only under different leaderships, each with their own set of ambitions⁵⁹ - and a new Central Committee was nominated:

1. No S/S Chairman as Oja Biren was in prison.
2. Naba – S/S Vice Chairman.
3. Loken – S/S General Secretary.
4. Shanti – S/S Secretary, External Affairs.
5. Sathi – S/S Secretary, Home⁶⁰.

In March, 2006, the PREPAK and UNLF orchestrated the reunification of the factions of the Kangleipak Communist Party (hereafter, referred to as KCP) in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In March, 2007, however, the PREPAK itself was split into two again, this time with one faction being led by Shanti⁶¹. This is the faction he later renamed United People's Party of Kangleipak (hereafter, referred to as UPPK), in order to avoid bloodshed⁶². In June, 2007, the party opened a camp at Jenal Jungle, Tamu, Myanmar. While new recruits were trained here, the leaders themselves, including Shanti, sought refuge in Nepal. Twenty new recruits were sent to the NSCN (K) camp at Zunheboto District, Nagaland for their basic training. In September, 2007, the UPPK sought the assistance of the Hmar People's Convention (hereafter, referred to as HPC) and they recruited 120 cadres on behalf of the UPPK and sent them on to the UPPK camp at Heikon Jungle, Myanmar. In December, 2007, Shanti went from Kathmandu to Tamu, along the way covering Korkarvita, New Jalpaiguri, Guwahati, Shillong, Silchar, Aizawl, Champhai, Rick-Myanmar Border and Kaleneo. The camp contained 250 cadres.

In January, 2008, the UPPK was instrumental in the formation of the Simlung People's Liberation Organisation (hereafter, referred to as SPLO) and their armed wing, Simlung People's Liberation Army (hereafter, referred to as SPLA), who stayed at the Tamu camp in

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

exchange for providing assistance to the UPPK. On 6th November, 2008, the Kangleipak People's Army (hereafter, referred to as KPA), the armed wing of the UPPK was raised to,

...unite all the like minded revolutionary outfits operating in the region to make a Sovereign Republic of Kangleipak free from the yoke of the Indian Union and its Colonial System of Government once and for all...united endeavour and collective struggle to foster unity, promote revolutionary comradeship and maintain a close relationship among all the revolutionary parties existing in the region with due respect to each other till the common goal is reached.⁶³

Towards the end of 2009, the SPLO and SPLA, which had so far assisted the UPPK with its organisational work, surrendered to the Government of Mizoram. In February, 2010, the UPPK/PREPAK conducted its first Congress, where the following decisions were taken:

1. The establishment of three battalions.
2. Providing family maintenance to the cadre.
3. Showcasing activities to the public to maintain their faith in the organisation.
4. Ending internecine PREPAK-UPPK killings.⁶⁴

In January, 2011, a North-East Insurgent Group Meeting was held in Taka, Myanmar, at the behest of the Khaplang of the NSCN (K) and Paresh Baruah, S/S Acting Chairman of the ULFA. The route taken by Shanti went from Kathmandu to Bangkok to Rangoon to Mandalay to Machina to Tanai to Kalang to the NSCN (K) camp at Taka. The participating groups here, apart from the NSCN (K), ULFA and UPPK were:

1. National Democratic Front of Bodoland (hereafter, referred to as NDFB).
2. PLA
3. UNLF
4. PREPAK (VC)
5. PREPAK (GS)
6. KYKL
7. KCP (N)

The ten groups agreed to provide to provide mutual cooperation and understanding to each other in their fight against the GoI, but to not secede from the Union.⁶⁵ This assumes

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

significance since this agreement undermines the very basis on which these groups rose and gathered following. However, there is another logic behind this. The UGs are of the opinion that in the current global scenario, where economics dictates foreign policy, individual ethnic states may not be feasible. This renders independence, for any of them, out of the question. For insurgency to succeed, there are three conditions that must be fulfilled before the North-East becomes a viable market. The first is the unification of all Meetei UG groups. This, however, has repeatedly failed and more factions have emerged with each attempt at unification. The second is the unification of all ethnic groups in Manipur. This is not as hard as it appears, since the Meeteis serve as a sort of bridge between the Nagas and the Kukis, and despite what they preach to the civilian population, the groups do cooperate with each other across ideological and ethnic lines. The third is the unification of the North-East as one unit.⁶⁶

In July, 2011, the Valley insurgents, on the advice of the NSCN (K)⁶⁷, in order to be taken seriously and to regain the lost faith of the people of the Valley, formed the Coordinating Committee (hereafter, referred to as CORCOM), at Mandalay, Myanmar. The seven involved parties were:

1. PLA
2. PREPAK
3. PREPAK (PRO)
4. UPPK
5. UNLF
6. KYKL
7. KCP

The chief ideas discussed in the CORCOM were the decrease of the Meetei population and means to discourage family planning because it was felt that the Meetei population was falling in comparison to other ethnic identities in Manipur. Also discussed, were means to keep non-Manipuris out of Manipur. The CORCOM liaised with other UG organisations, which were:

1. Manipuri Naga Revolutionary Front (MNRF)

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

2. KNF(P)
3. ULFA
4. NSCN (K)
5. NDFB
6. KLO
7. Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist

In June, 2012, Shanti was arrested on the Indo-Nepal border by the SSB and confessed all to the Manipur Police, subsequently. At the time of his arrest, the UPPK had a cadre strength of 100, of which eight were women. They had 108 arms and ammunition of various types⁶⁸. Shanti was later released and took to a life of spirituality, becoming a follower of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and opening an ashram. He acts as the liaison between the GoI and other insurgents, urging them to surrender and merge with the mainstream. He argues he lost thirty years of his life to a movement without a future. He does not want the same thing to happen to other young boys who get caught up in the rhetoric about Manipur's independence and ruin the formative years of their life to insurgency. His own rehabilitation into mainstream society was relatively easy because his family already had a flourishing furniture business and because of his two brothers-in-law, one was an MP, while the other later became the Chief Secretary of Manipur (Names withheld on request). However, Shanti is not the only in the insurgency to have relatives on the 'other' side. Insurgency in Manipur is so pervasive that most insurgents turn out to have relations – of blood or by marriage – in the government services, at some level. This is not a problem as viewed by the society. The belief is that both sides seek to 'serve' the people of Manipur and both are equally corrupt, sharing money out of funds allotted for the development of the State. The notion of the insurgency as just another employer provides a great deal of legitimacy to those in the movement, provides protection from extortion and ambush to those on the side of the State, and when the UGs opt out of it, the relations on the side of the State prove helpful and accommodating⁶⁹.

He argues that today, partly because there is no mass support for the insurgency and because the State has no proper rehabilitation measures in place, the boys find themselves caught in a vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment and crime. The Nepal Maoists, he points out, at the time of surrender, were given degrees based on the number of years they had spent in the movement, internal refresher courses taken and the skill set they had developed, while in the

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ In conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps with civil society.

movement. He argues that UGs should be treated as holding masters in insurgency, Military Science, Internal security, Political Science. The State must have a mechanism in place. Training received by the UGs should be treated on par with educational degrees. He points out that most insurgents are as good as or better than professional shooters, with aim better than many security forces. These can be areas where the surrenderees may be adjusted⁷⁰. He accepts that the previous state policy, revoked in 1992, of adjusting surrenderees into the Manipur Police – a 5% quota had been created for the surrenderees⁷¹ - had failed because the loyalties of the men rehabilitated were doubtful. However, in the same breath, he contends that revolutionaries in those days were men with rigorous ideological training, who knew what they had been fighting for and why they had gone underground. Recruits these days, he contends, on either side, are merely looking for employment and prestige and will be loyal to whichever side brings them either, or, both.⁷² The subtext in that statement speaks volumes about the nature of the insurgency in Manipur now.

He points out that most people who joined after the 1990s have no idea of ideology and simply joined for the prestige and glamour associated with being a ‘revolutionary’. He cites the example of the KCP, where most members have no idea what they’re fighting for. He argues, it is this that has prevented the Valley from finding peace. The Centre can’t appoint interlocutors to talk peace with the Valley UGs, partly because the Valley insurgents haven’t demanded one so far, but also because the insurgency in the Valley has taken on the shape of a gang-war, where no one is clear what they’re fighting for. A lack of clear ideology and demands implies that the Centre is left grasping at straws. He also feels that ideologues like Meghen, who call themselves natural leaders of the revolution on account of being born into the royal family are hindering the peace process. He argues that now, the rural population can’t be bothered with insurgency anymore. The war dragged on too long and gave them nothing. Those who can afford it, are leaving the state because they’d rather see development than be deluded any longer. He states he devoted his life to the cause of Manipur, but by the time he was arrested, he was having doubts about the means the UGs were employing, himself. He argues that the movement began to gain a better future for Manipur. However, it ended up doing the opposite. For Manipur to improve, it is important for the leaders of the revolution to give up their delusions and change with the times. He firmly believes that those who do not keep pace with change lose out over time. This, he believes, is the chief cause of

⁷⁰ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana recorded on 5th November, 2017.

⁷¹ Manipur State Administrative Report, 1990-91, Manipur State Archives and Library.

⁷² Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana recorded on 5th November, 2017.

the insurgency's downfall in Manipur. He draws parallels between the demand for Manipur's independence and the ISIS' attempts at carving out a Caliphate. He says it is foolish and ruinous to want to go back to the past. The only way available is forwards. It is also his belief that if the State does not wake up to the death of the insurgency now, they will have an even bigger problem on their hands as the Naxal movement makes inroads into the State, filling the void that the insurgency leaves behind. The State, he argues, must work fast and fill all gaps left by the insurgency.

Shanti is vocal in his condemnation of the leadership that brought about the downfall of the movement in Manipur. He points out that even in the 1980s, when he joined the movement, the lifestyle of the insurgents was frugal. It followed the Communist ideology and eschewed the bourgeois life. Shanti recalls how, experiences have changed in the thirty years he's spent in the movement. He recalls how, as young recruits, they refused soap and non-vegetarian food and basic amenities because it would send the wrong message to those supporting the movement. He says that since training began to be provided in Kachin, things underwent a significant change. He says now almost everyone in the movement owns cars of the Pajero, Land Cruiser variety. Palatial houses are being built for the leaders to live in. The notion of sacrifice that existed earlier, has now disappeared. Shanti states that in their bid to lead luxurious lives, the insurgency has taken to peddling drugs on a mass scale. He points out that one of the issues the movement had taken up in its initial years was that of Nishabandh, or prohibition. Today, the insurgency itself is selling things worse than alcohol.⁷³ Ironically, in the name of delivering justice, the insurgents, all parties, also kill those involved in drug-trafficking, but are unaffiliated to any organisation⁷⁴. This has nothing to do with ideology, but, everything to do with money. If those unaffiliated to the insurgency enter the drug cartel, the insurgency makes that much less money. Also, it sends the wrong message across to the people in Manipur, who, then begin to see the cracks in the movement, even better than they already can. Shanti argues that the movement gave the people of Manipur a dream, but failed to deliver. In the initial years, the insurgency also carried out political assassinations⁷⁵, but today, the politicians mostly work as the overground for the UGs. He points to the underground-politician-contractor nexus that bleeds Manipur dry, extorting 50-60% of the funds, which leaves no space for any genuine development to take place. He estimates that

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Fajurrahman, Md., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 9th November, 2017.

⁷⁵ KCP assassinated MLA, K. Binoy Singh in November, 1997. Also, Singh, NSCN's repeated attempts to assassinate then CM, Rishang Keishing with UNLF assistance.

annually, on an average, the insurgency extorts between Rs. 300-400 crores from the development fund.

However, Shanti has not lost all hope, even though he helps insurgents get out of the underground and rehabilitate into society. He argues that if the State does not address the concerns of the North-East and of each community in the region, peace, which is only now coming to the region will be broken again. He argues that the NSCN (IM) is simply waiting for Muivah to die before splitting into four factions, which will plunge the region back into war. The State, he argues must step in before that because the Meeteis are ready to lay down arms now, but if the GoI accedes to the demand for Greater Nagalim or Zale'n-gam, the Meeteis will rise again, this time, with the support of the general population, because Meetei pride and nationalism will bear no injuries to itself. Wars are not fought on the basis of availability of arms, he says. They are fought for the love of motherland. And the Meeteis will not tolerate the breakup of their motherland, he argues.⁷⁶

Gurumayum Utam Sharma, PLA (Years active, 1979- 2017)

G. Utam Sharma alias Jame was born in Nagamapal, Imphal in 1960, the fourth of eight siblings. He studied up to class IVth and thereafter, trained as a carpenter. Ironically, his father was a clerk in the 1st Battalion, Manipur Rifles. In his family, Jame was the least educated of all siblings. He first came to the attention of the police as an eighteen year old member of the PLA. However, Jame's own tale varies from the police's version. He claims that at the time of his first arrest in February, 1981, he just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. He merely happened to be in a house that the Police was searching for arms and was arrested as an accomplice of the owner of the house over a case of recovery of .32 pistols. He claims he did not know where he was on account of being drunk. While the Police did not recover the pistol on that particular day, six months later, the pistol was recovered from under Jame's carpentry shed. It had apparently been buried there without his knowledge. Jame was arrested on a tip-off, but denied any knowledge of, as well as any connection with, any extremist organisation. In subsequent years however, Jame accepted that he had joined the organisation in 1979, recruited by a S/S recruiting agent. Initially,

⁷⁶Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana recorded on 5th November, 2017.

Jame's job in the organisation was to erect the flags and paste posters of the PLA all over Imphal.

In January, 1982, eleven months after his incarceration in Imphal Central Jail, Jame orchestrated a breakout in which sixteen of the PLA's cadre and six of the KCP's and Poirei Liberation Front's cadre escaped. For the next few months, the fugitives hid out in the Thangmeiband, Kodompokpi area. In November that year, under the command of S/S Acting Chairman, Ningthou Singh alias Temba, 86 cadres of the PLA, including ten women left for PLA's 2nd Brigade, situated in Gouribung, Kachin, Myanmar. On the way, they were guided by Nagas to the NSCN's 1st Battalion in Eastern Nagaland, Myanmar, where they stayed for a month. Training at the Gouribung camp began in 1983. Jame's was the second batch to pass out and join the PLA. The two month long course consisted of sixty people trained by eighteen instructors from the Kachin Independent Army (hereafter, referred to as KIA), led by one S/S Captain. The training consisted of:

1. Foot drill
2. Arms drill
3. Political class
4. Tactical class
5. Jungle training
6. Kung Fu
7. Firing – G3 and G4 (two rounds each)
8. Patriotic songs⁷⁷

Jame mentions his batchmates, many of whom rose high in the organisation before seeking "honourable discharge"⁷⁸. A few of these were people who later joined the KIA, leaving the PLA for what they thought were greener pastures. Many of those 'honourably discharged' eventually settled down in Bangladesh. Many of Jame's batch now lead the PLA/RPF, including:

1. M.M. Ngouba – S/S Chief of Army Staff cum Vice President of PLA/RPF.
2. Chaoren Singh – S/S Commander-in-Chief cum President of PLA/RPF.
3. Yaima – S/S External Affairs Chief of PLA/RPF.

⁷⁷ Sharma, G.U., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 8th November, 2017.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

4. Honda – S/S Lieutenant Colonel cum S/S Family and Health Welfare Secretary of PLA/RPF.
5. Ms. Yang – S/S Finance Secretary of PLA/RPF.
6. Ibohal – S/S Bureau Secretary of PLA/RPF⁷⁹.

In July, 1983, the batch passed out, and Jame was inducted as a S/S Lance Corporal. The swearing in ceremony used the flag of the KIA. That same year, twenty-four more were recruited and trained at the KIA Head Quarters at Napho on the Myanmar-China border. Of these, ten were women. The S/S Acting Chairman, Temba, was killed by the Naga National Council (hereafter, referred to as NNC) in 1986 for transporting heroin⁸⁰. The PLA may have been willing to compromise with its beliefs for money, but the NNC, at least at that stage, did not view smuggling of drugs kindly.

Jame was transferred to a fighting unit, where he found most of the cadre suffering from acute malaria. The unit had to return to Gouribung for medical treatment. Jame, being healthy, was transferred to Ongchat village, where he, along with a member of the KIA looked after the rice mill. In June, 1984, the Myanmar Army destroyed 2nd Brigade's camp and the PLA had to flee to Ongchat, where they set up a new camp, 5th Sector. A set of barracks was constructed in Namsheng village, Kachin, Myanmar. However, from 1986 to 1990, PLA's 2nd Brigade stayed at the NSCN (K) Camp in Taka, Myanmar. In 1990, Jame was appointed S/S Military Secretary. At the end of 1990, the First Congress of the PLA/RPF was held, which Jame was unable to attend owing to his posting in Lanu, Eastern Nagaland, Myanmar. However, he still found himself on the Executive Council, which consisted of

1. I. Chaoren – S/S President
2. M.M. Ngouba – S/S President cum S/S Chief of Army Staff
3. Gunen – S/S General Secretary
4. Guni – S/S Secretary, External Affairs
5. Ibohal – S/S Finance Secretary
6. Rajesh – S/S (post not clear)
7. Ms. Memma – S/S Communication and Publicity Secretary
8. Jame – S/S Organisation Secretary cum S/S Captain

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

9. German – S/S Member cum S/S Captain.⁸¹

This council's tenure lasted four years.

In 1991, Jame was summoned to Bangladesh, where he imparted political training to new recruits of the fifth and sixth batch in Sylhet. Owing to his proficiency in this, Chaoren, ordered him to Imphal. Here, staying in Andro Khuman, along with S/S Sergeant Major Anil Singh, Jame recruited sixty people for the party in a year. In March, 1992, he returned to Bangladesh where the revolutionary Joint Committee (hereafter, referred to as RJC) was formed by the PLA/RPF, PREPAK (Tombi) and KCP (Ibohanbi) in Sylhet to unite the Meetei UGs. Jame was declared the S/S Home Secretary of the RJC. However, two years later, the organisation fell apart because of misunderstandings amongst the leaders. Siramangol Meetei Village in Sylhet, Bangladesh was the Council Head Quarter.

In March, 1995, ninety-seven members of the PLA/RPF and sixty-six members of the ULFA, under Jame's leadership collected arms and ammunition from Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh to be delivered to Manipur. These were:

1. AK-56 rifles – 70 numbers
2. LMG – 10 numbers
3. Rocket Launcher – 2 numbers
4. Pistol 9mm – 10 numbers
5. .32 Pistols – 10 numbers
6. AK-56 ammunition – each cadre carried 250 rounds each
7. Sniper (Chinese made) – 2 numbers⁸²

The route taken by the UGs went from Cox's Bazaar to Khakeshori to Mizoram-Myanmar border, Boinu River to Leiket, Chin State, Myanmar to Hengtam, Singhat, Churachandpur to Haobi Ching to Sugnu to Wangoo, Thoubal. At Champhai, on the Mizoram-Myanmar border, the party was attacked by the Myanmar Army in April, 1995. Twenty-five cadres lost their lives in this attack. At the same time and the same place, the Indian Army launched "Operation Golden Bird" on the PLA/RPF cadre.⁸³

In June, 1995, Jame was promoted to S/S Assistant Chief of Army Staff and he divided the armed staff into two:

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

1. Special Force to carry out ambushes/attacks on the Indian Army. Operated in Imphal East and West and in Thoubal.
2. Fighting Force to carry out ambushes on Security Forces. Operated in Bishnupur and Churachandpur.⁸⁴

Under Jame's term, many important and successful ambushes were carried out by the UNLF on the Army, Security Forces and the Police, most notably in 1997⁸⁵. Many officers who sat down to talk peace with Jame, remembered him and more importantly, Jame remembered all the men he'd once ambushed and called it ironic that he had surrendered and talked terms with the same men he'd once shot at. As he said, "it felt odd to be talking to them civilly. I was used to having gunfire around us, not shaking hands with them."⁸⁶

In 1998, Jame married a S/S Lance Corporal in the UNLF and his son is now enrolled at Delhi University⁸⁷. One of Jame's chief motivations in surrendering was his concern for his son and subsequent grand-children⁸⁸.

In February, 2001, Jame travelled from Mandalay, Myanmar to Ruili, China to attend a meeting of the Executive Council. He had managed to procure a permanent Burmese ID. They stayed in Ruili for a year, waiting for missing members of the Council to join them. However, when nothing materialised, the meeting was moved to Rangoon, Myanmar. Beginning January, 2002, the meeting went on for the next two and a half months, in which matters were conducted so professionally as to have fixed timings for the duration of the meeting (0830 hours to 1500 hours) and for lunch (1200 hours to 1300 hours).⁸⁹ Apparently, the UNLF was on a mission to professionalise itself, because the meeting passed the following resolutions:

1. Promotion policy –
 - i. Promotion to S/S Lance Corporal upon completion of three years in the organisation.
 - ii. Promotion to S/S Corporal upon completion of two years as S/S L.Cpl.
 - iii. Promotion to S/S Sergeant upon completion of two year as S/S Cpl.
 - iv. Promotion to S/S Sergeant Major upon completion of two years as S/S Sgt.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

- v. Promotion S/S Major dependent on decision of Satnding Committee.
2. All appointments and assignment orders to be passed on paper, and not by word of mouth.
3. In matters of transfer policy, it was decided that ‘civil postings’ could be allowed upto the rank of Sgt. Maj.
4. For extorting from contractors, 10% of the work bill was decided upon.
5. Age at which marriage of cadre allowed was fixed at 30 years for men and 25 years for women. Those violating the rule would serve three months’ punishment in the Camps.
6. Arms were to be acquired by any means possible.
7. The NSCN’s demand for Greater Nagalim was to be opposed by any means possible.
8. Foreign policy was to be encouraged.
9. A new post of Chief Administrative Officer (hereafter, referred to as CAO) was introduced.⁹⁰

It may seem surprising that an insurgent organisation was functioning like a bureaucracy, deciding matters as trivial as the age at which the cadre could marry, but this gains importance in light of the fact that in recent years, and indeed, even in the 2000s, most surrendering insurgents gave the reason that they wished to marry and lead a normal life, or, that they were married and life underground was hindering them⁹¹.

In June, 2002, Jame sheltered with the Burmese Military Intelligence in Khampat, Chin State, Myanmar. A month later, arranged by them, he was guided back to Khongtal, Chandel, where the General Head Quarters (hereafter, referred to as GHQ) with 120 trained cadre was situated. Here, the aforementioned resolutions were implemented. In November, 2004, the camp was destroyed by the Indian Army and the PLA/RPF’s GHQ had to be shifted to Zou Khunou, Singhat Sub-Division, Churachandpur. However, even as they fled, the PLA managed to snatch an AK-47 and an Insas rifle from the Army. After this incident, Jame was promoted to S/S Lieutenant Colonel. In April/May, 2005, Jame led an ambush on the CRPF battalion posted at Churachandpur. However, in the ensuing firing, the PLA/RPF’s 254th Battalion suffered significant casualties, with seventeen of their men being injured. Following this, the Army attacked the Zou Khunou camp and destroyed it, forcing the PLA/RPF to flee

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ In conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps.

to Chin State, Myanmar. Jame mentions the presence of wireless operators in the PLA/RPF's ranks.⁹²In addition to Wireless Sets, the PLA also possessed:

1. AK Rifles
2. LMGs
3. Insas Rifles
4. M16 Rifles
5. M18 Rifles
6. Anti-Tank Guns
7. Pistols
8. Grenades
9. Lethod Guns
10. US Carbines
11. Carbines
12. Satellite Phones
13. RPHs
14. Sniper Rifles
15. Binoculars
16. Night-Vision Binoculars
17. SLRs⁹³

These are however, developments of a later stage, after buying arms on the black market became easier. Before that, snatching arms from the Security Forces was the most effective means of obtaining them.

In 2006, the PLA/RPF opened a GHQ and Training Centre at Naungket Village, Sagaing Division, Myanmar. In October, 2008, the organisation held its Second Congress, where the following resolutions were undertaken:

1. A renewal of general policy programme every four years.
2. Amendment of the Constitution (PLA's).
3. Election of a fifteen member Executive Council by vote. (They had been nominated, so far. Democratisation of the PLA was forced by circumstances.)⁹⁴

⁹² Sharma, G.U., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 8th November, 2017. .

⁹³Fajurrahman, Md., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 9th November, 2017.

⁹⁴Sharma, G.U., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 8th November, 2017.

In November, 2008, elections for the Executive Council were held in which Jame was elected S/S Education Secretary. Seventy-six cadres cast their vote for electing fifteen out of twenty candidates for various posts. As S/S Education Secretary, Jame wrote textbooks for the children of the cadre in Manipuri language and issued a magazine, “Liberation Time” from Tamu, Myanmar⁹⁵. The magazine, is unavailable now, claims Jame⁹⁶.

Jame corroborates the formation of the CORCOM in July, 2011. In November, 2012, he lost the election to the Executive Council. However, in January, 2013, he was promoted to S/S Brigadier. At this time, Jame proposed the creation of three new posts in the organisation, on the condition that any one of them be reserved for him. These posts were S/S Home Secretary, S/S Bureau Secretary and S/S Assistant Chief of Army Staff. However, this proposal was turned down and Jame was assigned to lead Special Region Force-3 in Mandalay. Jame took this as an affront to his rank, since thus far, the Force had been led by an S/S Captain rank. Following an argument with the S/S President, Jame asked for a discharge and was granted an honourable one⁹⁷. The honourable discharge speaks volumes about Jame’s standing within the organisation, because within surrenderee camps, many spoke at length about how Jame had been embezzling money for many years and the matter had been overlooked because of his abilities as an ‘officer and soldier’. However, the same offence committed by many in junior ranks had resulted in “dishonourable discharges”⁹⁸ and “bad character certificates”⁹⁹ being handed out, which rendered the ‘soldier’ unable to join any other organisation.¹⁰⁰ However, this did not happen in Jame’s case. Upon his discharge from the PLA/RPF, he was made an offer of their Central Committee’s Membership by the PREPAK, which ultimately failed to materialise because of covert threats from the PLA/RPF. He also met KCP (Noyon), which mulled over accepting him. However, it is not as though Jame’s discharge did not carry consequences. The CORCOM eventually decided that Jame could not join any of its constituent groups without causing a split in the group. Furthermore, Tamu was declared out of bounds to him for the next two years. Despite this, in 2015, he drafted the “Army Rules and Regulations for” KCP (Noyon) and his expenditure was borne

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ The research scholar was forced to conclude it was not openly available, since unlike most press releases of insurgent organisations, the magazine was unavailable in the public domain.

⁹⁷ Sharma, G.U., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 8th November, 2017.

⁹⁸ Various interviews.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ In conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps. In 1999, two of KCP’s cadre were dishonourably discharged for “bad conduct” and “bad character”.

by the KYKL, in addition to Rs. 10000 for his pocket money. Further, he received, from the PREPAK and KCP (Noyon), Rs. One lakh, annually, for his family's expenses.¹⁰¹

In 2016, tired of hiding out, with nothing constructive to do and considering his family's future, Jame decided to surrender to 40 Assam Rifles. This was arranged for him by N. Shanti Meetei. He now plans to set up a contractual business supplying government organisations with required goods. He reveals, the CORCOM eventually split because it expelled KCP (Noyon) and KYKL for associating with the NSCN (IM) and sheltering them in Myanmar¹⁰². Personal ambitions, therefore, are not the only factor preventing the Meetei insurgent groups from cooperating with each other. Each group's relationship with other insurgent groups, whether Naga or Kuki, also plays an important role. This is significant since theoretically, the ethnic groups are opposed to each other, with the Meeteis protesting both, Greater Nagalim – which is largely an NSCN (IM) demand, the NSCN (K) having claimed Myanmar side – and Zale'n-gam, which is the KNO's demand for a Kuki homeland.

Kshetrimayum Noyon Singh, KCP (Years active, 1978-1999)

Ksh. Noyon Singh alias Laba alias Hemanta was born in a farming family in 1956 at Sekta Awang Leikai, the eldest of eight siblings. He was educated upto class tenth in and around Sekta, finally dropping out when he failed his tenth standard board examination. In 1978, at twenty-two years of age, Noyon was inducted into the Pan Manipuri Youth League (hereafter, referred to as PANMYL), the overground organisation of the UNLF, by Waikhom Babudhon Singh, whom he had known since childhood. As a PANMYL member, he cultivated fields for the organisation from 1978-80. At the time, the organisation consisted of about thirty members. The fields were about 4 pari (a Manipuri unit of land) and belonged to R. K. Sanayaima Singh alias Meghen, the founding member of the UNLF. The produce of the land was divided into two, with part going to Meghen as the landlord and the rest being used by the PANMYL for the organisation's purposes.

In August, 1979, the PANMYL split into two factions:

1. Led by D. Toijamba Singh, supported by N.Okendra, Y. Baro, Gopen Singh, Gogo, Bhume and others.

¹⁰¹ Sharma, G.U., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 8th November, 2017.

¹⁰² Ibid.

2. Led by N.K. Sanajaoba Singh, of which Noyon became a part¹⁰³.

In late 1980, Noyon was contacted by Meghen who indoctrinated him into UNLF's ideology and Noyon joined the UNLF. In July, 1981, the Noyon, with ten other members of the organisation left for the NSCN camp, via Ukhrul, in batches of twos and threes. In Ukhrul, they halted for a month, after which, they left for Somra, Myanmar on foot, guided by a Burmese guide. This was a ten days' journey. At Somra, they were met by a S/S Major of the NSCN with about thirty volunteers, who took them to Tonu, in November, 1981, where the CHQ of NSCN was located. Here, they were greeted by Th. Muivah and other members of the NSCN, who welcomed them as the first batch of the UNLF to be trained by them¹⁰⁴.

This help went both ways. That same year, NSCN men arrived in Imphal to receive training from the UNLF in urban guerrilla warfare, bringing four M-20 pistols as payment. Meghen made the arrangements for their stay in Imphal. It is notable that while Meghen led the party, the Lamyamba Palace was used as his office. The NSCN trainees received instruction in using a bicycle in urban guerrilla warfare. The importance of city alleys and village lanes was drilled into them for almost three months. At the end of that time, they were presented with a hit-list to test their mettle. The two people foremost on the list were Rishang Keishing, then CM, Manipur and his younger brother. While the NSCN failed to execute Mr. Keishing, they did manage to execute two people on the list, Stenhop Muivah and Mingthing, using the aforementioned M-20s¹⁰⁵.

It is noteworthy that the UNLF was first created in 1964. For seventeen years, they resisted the call of the arms, hoping to bring about a cultural revolution, like Mao. However, the PREPAK's rise in 1977 and the PLA's in 1978 forced their hand into taking up arms. It is only once the UNLF takes to arms that Meghen rises as the Leader of the Revolution. Meghen remains, till date, one of the only leaders of the movement to have a Red Corner Notice issued in his name and the Interpol out on the hunt for him¹⁰⁶. It is also important to note that the Meeteis may have taken up arms initially against the Nagas' demand for statehood being accorded precedence over that of Manipur's, but all Meetei UG organisations are allied with the offshoots of the NNC, the two NSCNs. Alliances change as per the need of the hour, but the organisations do not suspend relations with each other.

¹⁰³ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Dr. Mishra, T.N., I.P.S., Retd., Mails to Priyamvada Asthana detailing his experiences in Manipur as DGP, Manipur.

In 1982, the PLA and UNLF came close to unifying, as S. Tomba Singh came to the NSCN camp at to talk matters over. It was decided that depending on the response in Manipur, the two would unite. Noyon and Ibomcha, accompanied by Tomba, set off for Manipur on foot, escorted by thirty of NSCN's cadre, travelling via Huisu and Poi villages. The journey took them almost three months to complete, reaching Imphal in June, 1982. Noyon never met Tomba again and the talks fell apart. In Manipur, Noyon felt that his rural background was looked down upon by the leaders, who were mostly from urban backgrounds, and had led relatively happier lives in comparison to those from rural backgrounds. Alienated from the UNLF by this feeling, Noyon left the organisation and returned home.

Towards the end of 1983, Noyon was approached by the PREPAK to impart arms training to their cadre. This was meant especially for the M-20 and M-22 rifles in the PREPAK's possession, of which they had no other trainer. Noyon provided the requisite training to U. Madan Singh, the founding leader of PREPAK. Upon being requested to join the organisation, Noyon refused, suggesting instead that the organisation ought to focus on reviving its fortunes.¹⁰⁷ The PREPAK had been virtually liquidated with the arrest of Wanglen and the killing of Sanajaoba and Pratap Singh, by the PREPAK itself, when accused, and found guilty, of rape¹⁰⁸. Whatever may be said about the insurgency in Manipur, in matters of gender justice, at least, the insurgent organisations were quick to take action, even against their own men. Madan's leadership had been the force required for the organisation's re-grouping¹⁰⁹.

Noyon's real sympathies lay with the KCP, founded by Y. Ibohambi Singh and he wished to join them. In mid-1985, he contacted Moirangthem Ibopishak Singh, who was underground, requesting him to lead the KCP, which was almost defunct by this time. Ibopishak acquiesced to Noyon's request and was declared the leader of the KCP. Accordingly, in Spetember, 1985, leaflets proclaiming Ibopishak the leader of the KCP were published on Noyon's orders and distributed in newspapers. In order to avoid a police crackdown, the two then left Manipur for Okhomati village beyond Sonarighat, Assam, where they hid out in a Meetei village, doing odd jobs. While Ibopishak stayed on doing odd jobs, Noyon returned to Manipur within the week. Here, he was contacted by Y. Mahi Singh, a former cadre of the organisation, who expressed his desire to rejoin the party and collect funds for it by

¹⁰⁷ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Manipur State Administrative Report, 1984-85, Manipur State Archives and Library.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

committing robbery at gun point¹¹⁰. During the year 1984-85, the KCP had been virtually defunct, even though some fund collection had been carried out in its name in North East Imphal¹¹¹. However, this had apparently been insufficient for reviving the party. Noyon agreed that this was the best possible way. Mahi then sought the advice of the PREPAK leader, U. Madan Singh¹¹². Clearly, both parties seeking to revive their fortunes were cooperating on matters of finance. The easiest way they found of carrying this out was by looting the houses of ordinary civilians. The gold and ornaments looted were handed over to Noyon for safe-keeping, but the money had gone missing. Meanwhile, Noyon had been sheltering with a friend of his who was a forest guard. The friend had so far been unaware of Noyon's activities, but was now, brought up to date.¹¹³ Lines of what passed as legitimate and illegitimate were very blurred in the 1980s. The ordinary man on the streets was almost fond of the insurgent and hid them in their homes. This trend began to fade as the 1990s crept in.¹¹⁴

The looted jewellery was sold for Rs. 3450 and used to buy small arms. In January, 1986, many of KCP's leaders were arrested, but Noyon was not amongst them. With the disappearance of the leadership, and not enough cadre to keep the organisation functional, Noyon slipped back into civilian life. So much so, that in June, 1986, Noyon took up a contract to repair Sagolmang Junior High School, after contracting an Executive Engineer. He drew the final bill for finished work in July, 1986. However, his distance from the UGs did not last long. At the end of November, that year, Noyon's landlord was searched by the police. This scared Noyon badly enough, that a week later, in December, Noyon fled to Dimapur and from there, on to Okhomati village, Assam, where he tried to contact Ibopishak. Failing to do so, he returned to Imphal, where he came to know where PREPAK members, recently returned from Bangladesh, were hiding. In January, 1987, Noyon contacted the PREPAK through Raikumar Singh, an erstwhile comrade of Mahi Singh. The two discussed the situation in Bangladesh and Noyon was informed that the PREPAK, KCP and UNLF leaders would be meeting to unite the revolutionary cause. The united movement would include the NSCN. Noyon did not join the movement at this point, but fear kept him underground.

¹¹⁰ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

¹¹¹ Manipur State Administrative Report, 1984-85, Manipur State Archives and Library.

¹¹² Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017..

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

In October, 1987, Noyon was contacted by the UNLF to update about the developments in the movement. Noyon records his annoyance at being left out of the movement, especially as the UNLF promised to bring him further news, but did not inform him, until they had begun collecting, “donations”¹¹⁵ in Imphal Valley. As annoyed as Noyon may have been with the UGs, when in January, 1987, he found out that a young member of the UNLF, along with three of his brothers in arms, out for collecting ‘donations’ from wine venders, had been detained by the villagers of Top Moirangkhom, the village where Noyon himself was in hiding, he rushed to save them. The boys were found badly beaten up by the side of the road.¹¹⁶ The ordinary villager may have been indulgent of the ‘revolutionary’, willing to hide and protect them, even, but, extortion in the name of donation was not kindly looked upon or borne with great tolerance. In later years, this extortion would lead to the downfall of the movement¹¹⁷. The ‘revolutionaries’ in Manipur’s Valley had failed to follow the basic tenet of those they sought inspiration from. The villagers would only support so long as their pockets were not pinched¹¹⁸.

In April, 1988, more than a year after lying dormant and leading a more or less ordinary, civilian life, Noyon was approached by the PREPAK, who offered him shelter in Bangladesh. Noyon agreed to think over the matter. However, he did not take it up. Instead, a month later, he met Ibohambi of KCP to talk over the revival of the organisation. Ibohambi provided him with arms – a carbine sten gun and 42 rounds of ammunition – since it was Ibohambi’s view that UGs ought not to be unarmed for their own safety. He also provided financial aid to Noyon for his day-to-day expenses. Noyon lent the gun to a comrade for use, however the man was arrested and the gun was lost. Noyon again went on the run, hiding in buses and hollow trees, taking help from other overground members of the PREPAK, who drove him around on their scooters, before Noyon again took shelter in his village. At the end of October, 1988, he was arrested for the first time, when travelling, a country-made pistol was recovered from his person in a random checking.¹¹⁹ In the absence of any other evidence evidence, Noyon was only booked under the illegal possession of arms act, and released.

From then to 1994, for six years, Noyon stayed home, cultivating his fields, pursuing government contracts, and dabbling in politics. Perhaps he was inspired by Bisheshwar, but

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Examples from Cuba, Ireland, Vietnam, China all bear testimony to this trend.

¹¹⁹ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

Bisheshwar was murdered in 1994 and in 1995, Noyon returned to the KCP.¹²⁰ Noyon is never explicit about whether or not he was inspired by Bisheshwar, but circumstantial evidence seems to speak for itself. 1993 onwards, Ibohambi Singh had been pressurising Noyon into returning, but Noyon had been firm in his refusal for two years. Finally, in April, 1995, he met a few of Ibohambi's subordinates and agreed to re-join the organisation and, under threat from a "Thakaba group"¹²¹, left Manipur for Delhi, for his own safety. Here, he initially stayed at the Manipur Bhawan and then, rented quarters inside the Fire Brigade for Rs. 500. Here, he stayed till December, 1995. Delhi made Noyon antsy and he returned to Imphal in the second week of December, staying at home. Here, he discovered that Ibohambi had been killed by the CRPF in July. Upon further enquiring his party-men, he decided against staying in Manipur and, taking Rs. 3000 from the S/S Finance Secretary, left for Guwahati. Here, he rented accommodations at Ulubari for Rs. 200/month. He had to return to Imphal in April, 1996 due to lack of funds. When he was informed by his party that the security threat had passed, he returned home to Imphal. By now, the KCP had split into two factions:

1. The Nongdamba faction
2. The Pruchiba faction¹²²

Noyon advised the two faction to unite. However, fearing for his life, he did not stay back to see the unification through, instead returning to Guwahati, where he gradually heard of the death of seven of KCP's members at the hands of the security forces. Noyon hastened back to Imphal to enquire into the matter, arriving in September, 1997. He called for a meeting of the surviving party members at Eternal Springs English School, Sekta. The school became a regular meeting place for the party, thereafter. All meetings held by Noyon were held at the school, which fell in his own Leikai, Noyon being a resident of Sekta Awang Leikai. Twelve turned up for that particular meeting. At this time, the organisational structure of KCP was:

1. Khundrakpam Nipamacha Singh alias Laibakmacha – S/S President.
2. Waikhom Shyamjai Singh alias Joy alias Sanjoy – S/S Vice President.
3. Noyon – S/S General Secretary and S/S Foreign Secretary.
4. Pangambam Jadumani Singh alias Maobi – S/S Home Secretary.
5. Ngangam Rajen Singh alias Chand – S/S Finance Secretary.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

6. Laiba Mangang – S/S Publicity Secretary.
7. Ningthemjam Kusha Singh alias Akbar – S/S Political Officer.
8. Lairakpam Bobby Singh – S/S Commander-in-Chief.
9. Yambam _____ Singh alias Chinguremba – S/S Commander.¹²³

The Standing Committee consisted of:

1. Leibakmacha – S/S Chairman
2. Joy – S/S Organiser
3. Noyon – S/S General Secretary
4. Chand – S/S Finance Secretary.¹²⁴

In October, 1997, KCP's S/S Home Secretary, Jadumani was arrested by the police along with his gunman. In November that year, Chand, the S/S Finance Secretary of KCP was shot dead by the PLA, who mistook him for someone else. His guardians were paid compensation from the KCP Party Fund. The two were promptly replaced by:

1. Akbar – S/S Home Secretary
2. Salam Bharat Singh alias Tiken – S/S Finance Secretary.¹²⁵

In June, 1998, while in hiding in Nepal, Noyon learnt that the S/S Vice President, Shyamjai had been shot dead by Bharat, the S/S Finance Secretary and his men. The party was again splintering. In Spetember, 1998, Noyon returned to Manipur, from where, along with Leibakmacha and Ibomcha Singh alias Lamphel, the S/S Home Secretary he proceeded to Chin Hills, Burma. Here, they stayed in a Nepali Basti. Noyon and Lamphel soon returned to Imphal and proceeded to circulate pamphlets pertaining to the staff of KCP in newspapers. In January, 1999, Noyon advised the KCP to relaunch its work and pamphlets regarding this were again circulated in daily newspapers.

KCP developed and maintained relations with the undernoted organisations:

1. PLA, under Meghen
2. PREPAK, under Shanti, later renamed UPPK.
3. UNLF, under Pambei
4. NSCN (K)

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

5. KYKL, under Toijamba

6. ULFA.¹²⁶

While in Nepal, Noyon also tried to reach out to Pakistan and to China through Hong Kong, but neither proved receptive¹²⁷. This would imply that neither country took KCP seriously enough because Shanti tells us that the PREPAK was trained near Karachi¹²⁸ and the PLA was indoctrinated and trained in China¹²⁹. But then, unlike the aforementioned two organisations, KCP had 35 to 40 cadres, at most.¹³⁰

At the end of January, 1999, Noyon was arrested during a combing operation by the Manipur Police and recognised as the General Secretary of the KCP. His subordinates were arrested too. By this time, the organisation had come to be known by the name, KCP (N), the 'N' standing for 'Noyon', who was recognised as the driving force behind the organisation.

In some ways, Noyon's story is not one of indoctrination. He joins the UNLF fired by Meghen's words, but leaves when alienated from the party leadership. He tries very hard to rehabilitate back into society, going back to farming, setting up shop as a contractor, et al. Yet, somehow, Noyon always remained at the centre of all insurgent activity in his heyday. He jumps from the UNLF to the PREPAK to the KCP. Noyon's statement stands testimony to the way the insurgency works as a parallel generator of employment and the way mutual understanding among the organisations works. Trainers are common across party lines and their expertise and specialisation are recognised and lauded by all parties. They are routinely approached to impart specialised training to the cadre.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Sharma, G.U., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 8th November, 2017.

¹³⁰ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

Namoijam Imobi Singh, KYKL (Years active, 1976-

Namoijam. Imobi Singh alias Okendro alias Oken alias Sunil alias Benjamine belonged to the first, idealistic generation that joined the movement. He was born in 1953 in an ordinary farming family, the youngest of six siblings. In 1970, he passed his High School Leaving Examination with a first division and was admitted to the D.M. College for Science for P. U. The following year, he had been admitted to their B. Sc. course. During his time here, Imobi came in contact with Meetei Revivalists, who advocated a return to Sanamahism, the original religion of the Meeteis and a denial of Hinduism, moving away from dependence on the priest.¹³¹

This advocacy of Sanamahism as opposed to Vaishnavism was one of the measures used by the movement for Manipur's independence as a means to distance itself from, 'Hindu' India¹³². One of the arguments forwarded is that the Meeteis' conversion to Hinduism, which rendered the hill-tribes, particularly the Nagas, as the 'other' was a strong contributing factor to the rise of Naga nationalism. The caste system declared the tribals as the 'untouchable',¹³³. The experience of fighting the WWI together cemented the Naga identity, not necessarily in opposition to the Meetei identity, but certainly a spontaneous reaction of the 'periphery' asserting its difference from the 'centre'¹³⁴. The centre, in this case, shifts historically. Under British rule, the Centre, for the hill tribes, remained, to a large extent, Kangla and the royal palace. Post-Independence, the Centre shifts to Delhi. Yet, the assertion of the Naga identity as different from the 'mainstream' identity does not change – be it Meetei or 'mainland' Indian. This complaint, of being 'othered' by the Meeteis is taken up by the Kukis in later years, when they raise the demand for Zale'n-gam¹³⁵. Surprisingly enough, while the Meeteis revolutionary are themselves keen to assert their historical links with the Nagas, they are more reluctant to say the same for the Kukis¹³⁶, who, for a long time, fell under the same large umbrella as the Nagas. Indeed, many of the tribes who go by the larger appellation of 'Kuki' in Manipur, are considered 'Naga' in Nagaland, 'Mizo' in Mizoram and part of the larger 'Chin' tribe in Myanmar. Many of those recognised as 'Kuki' in Manipur are asserting their own identity, e.g., the Hmars, the Vaipheis, the Paites. However, to return to the association between Meetei revivalists and the insurgency, the UNLF initially began as a pan-

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Phanjoubam, P., *The North East Question: Conflicts and Frontiers*, New Delhi, 2016, p 75.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p 196.

¹³⁵ Haokip, P.S., *Zale'n-gam: The Kuki Nation*, KNO, Pvt. Circulation Only, 2008.

¹³⁶ In conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps.

Manipuri movement, before it was hijacked by the Valley extremists. The Valley movement, in any case, traces its roots to Hjam Irabot's movement, which was a movement to restore the lost glory of the kingdom, while bringing in Communism. The two aims are antithetical to each other since the Manipuri kingdom could not have become a communist state. Also, the idea of the Manipuri kingdom does not account for the tribes, which most acknowledged the suzerainty of the Meetei state through the Lalloop system. In recent years, the voices clamouring for distance from 'Hindu' India have been somewhat subdued as the State made Sanamahi festivals state recognised holidays and with the introduction of Meeteilon in schools in the Meetei Mayek script. This left the Meetei revivalists with no cause to fight for. And in recent years, more and more surrenderees have recognised the inability of moving away from Vaishnavism. Both religions have become so deeply intertwined with each other, that a complete, outright rejection of Vaishnavism is no longer possible. Most insurgents – active, dormant or surrendered – married according to Vaishnav customs. This, they said was the touchstone of their belief in the religion. Almost all had Krishna temples and Panthoibi temples existing side by side in their houses.¹³⁷

However, to return to Imobi's story, while in his B. Sc., he planned to apply for the NDA and join the army, however, experiences around him disappointed him in the army and he gave up his plans. Taking an interest in social matters, he joined the All Manipuri Youth Literary Association. The League introduced him to radical ideas and the more he read about them, the more he identified with the Meetei Revivalists. Meanwhile, he came into contact with W. Basanta Singh, a fellow student at the D.C. College of Arts, who introduced him to PANMYL. The more he mingled with the members of the PANMYL and Meetei Revivalists, the more deeply involved he became with the idea of a Social Revolution needed to bring out the true colours of Manipur. As his interest in History and Economics grew, so did his distance from Science. In 1972, he joined a Bachelor's degree at the M. B. College. Simultaneously, he finished his B. Sc. and B. A. in 1975, earning a distinction in the latter. In February, 1976, he was appointed as a teacher of Science and Mathematics, at a salary of Rs. 400/month and accommodations. As teacher, Imobi came into constant contact with the Naga insurgents, one of whose brother was Imobi's student.

Imobi wanted to bring about a reformation in Manipur's society. He did not aim at armed revolution, but just at ending dependence on intoxicants, gambling, illicit relations among the

¹³⁷ Ibid. Also, Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

sexes – all of which he saw as being exploitative of women.¹³⁸ It must be remembered that the Valley in Manipur had seen the rise of the UNLF in the past eleven years, but so far, there had been no talks of armed violence. Imobi's world-view was shaped by the discourse carried out by the UNLF. It was only after his interaction with Naga insurgents that the idea of armed revolution occurred to him. It was at this time, that he met Meghen who introduced him to the UNLF and told him that the party had been set up in 1964 by Arambam Samarendra. In 1976 too, Samarendra was the Chairman, and the party vowed to follow Stalin's principles in North-East India, including the area between the Chindwin River and the Indo-Burma border, to bring about the unification of the region and the formation of a separate country. The UNLF was, at this point, contemplating taking up arms. Imobi was fired by their discourse and joined the organisation in April, 1976. Through Imobi, Meghen got in touch with the Naga UGs, though not the NNC, who had surrendered arms after the Shillong Accord of 1975. It was the idea of the Nagas and Meghen that a joint force should be created by the Nagas, Mizos, Meeteis, Assamese, Tripurese and the residents of Meghalaya and Arunachal to fight against India and break away as a sovereign nation state. The two parties agreed to win over the NNC and NSCN, both to this cause. In November, 1976, at Meghen's urging, Imobi gave up his teaching job to accompany Meghen to Somra, Myanmar, to talk matters over with the Nagas. The police believed the group had fled to China to seek assistance. Links between the UGs in the North-East and China had first developed after the Sino-Indian War of 1962 and had received a filliop after the 1965 Indo-Pak War. Initially, the NNC and the Mizo National Front (hereafter, referred to as MNF) had benefitted from this assistance, however, with the passage of time, the Meeteis had started to look that way. And it must not be forgotten that Irabot, from whom the UNLF sought inspiration, had been initially inspired by Mao in China.¹³⁹

Imobi's story when contrasted with the stories with some of those who entered the movement late is striking for its dedication to the cause and revolutionary fervour. Bisheshwar and Imobi, both, belong to the first generation of insurgents, yet, their stories are strikingly different. While Bisheshwar tries, at various points, to emerge from the movement and resume normal life, Imobi does not. His is not a story of entering insurgency pushed by unemployment, but, he does become one of those who pull people into the movement. The UNLF developed contacts with the All Manipur Students' Union (hereafter, referred to as

¹³⁸ Ibid..

¹³⁹ Ibid.

AMSU) and many students later joined the movement. The PANMYL remained the frontal, overground organisation, which whet people in the name of providing jobs as cultivators. However, so long as Samarendra led the party, the UNLF did not take up arms, even as many within the party became antsy. Samarendra's opinion was the armed violence would not succeed in the Valley and the members would only become increasingly frustrated with the lack of success and eventually, end up becoming reactionaries. He advised the party to widen the circle and bring more students in, so the movement could burn slowly for many years, instead of burning itself out after a brief blaze. Samarendra and Meghen's original plan was that once the PLA and the PREPAK led violent movement had burnt itself out, the UNLF would take charge of it.

However, Imobi disagreed with Samarendra after reading Mao and Lenin's writings. He believed a party was needed to achieve revolutionary goals and decided to set one up himself. In the meantime, in February, 1980, he heard about the break-up of the NSCN, with Issac and Muivah breaking off to form their own party. Imobi decided to seek their help in setting up his own party. He managed to convince five of UNLF's members to accompany him to Arunachal Pradesh. They managed to collect Rs. 15000 for the new party between October, 1980 and April, 1981, in order to finance travel to Somra, Myanmar, also known as Eastern Nagaland. In January, 1981, he attended the North Eastern Regional Students' Union (hereafter, referred to as NERSU) at Tezpur. There, Imobi advised the student delegates that the foreigners' issue ought to be extended for as long as possible and more students should be brought into the movement. Imobi's chief interest in attending the Union was to present the students' ideas to the NSCN (IM).

In March, 1981, Imobi set off for Somra, planning to take the route that went via Arunachal. This took him through Naharkatiya, Namrup, Nariya, before returning to Manipur. However, while Imobi had been unable to cross over into Myanmar, what his travels did teach him was that there was acute discontentment against the Indian State for failing to check the misuse of government money and the failure of various government plans. Determined to contact Muivah, Imobi travelled to Moreh to ascertain that he could travel to East Myanmar through that route. Once again, in May, 1981, Imobi set off for Myanmar through Assam. However, before he could cross over, he was arrested by the Assam Police and handed over to the CRPF. In June, they were brought back to Imphal and handed over to the Manipur Police.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

After his release in June, 1983, Imobi was found a teaching job by MLA, Irabot Singh, which paid him Rs. 993/month. However, this did not satisfy him and he contacted the UNLF again. Some members there informed him that if he still wanted to set up his own organisation, money and arms were available and that they saw Imobi as the man most qualified to take up the opportunity. The police began to search for him again in August, 1984 and Imobi went underground. During this period, he met a few of his former comrades who had also been in prison with him. One of them was very anti-Bisheshwar and wished to seek revenge from PLA.¹⁴¹ Imobi does not specify what Bisheshwar had done to incur the wrath of his former comrades. However, these were the people who now pushed Imobi to form a new organisation and committed robberies and collected 'donations' towards the same end. In July, 1985, Imobi, in a bid to take himself off the police radar, enrolled at the Naogong Law College. Here, he tried to get in touch with the NSCN, only to find out that Meghen himself was at the CHQ of the NSCN with seventy members of the UNLF. In February, 1986, he left Manipur to travel to the NSCN (IM)'s CHQ again, assured by members of the NSCN that he was known at the CHQ. This time, he was accompanied by a few of PREPAK's guerrillas.

The journey was fruitful this time, initially being received by S/S Khapleng and later, in March, 1986, Imobi met Th. Muivah. Imobi had expected to meet Meghen at Somra, but Meghen was away, travelling in Kachin. However, Imobi did meet forty-five PLA members at the camp. Here, the PLA and UNLF talked over a unification led by Meghen. This was unpalatable to the PLA, which was already in disarray after Bisheshwar's arrest. They had managed to gather twenty new members – ten boys and ten girls – and managed to bring them to NSCN's CHQ for training in 1982, but beyond that, were still working out details. To top it off, cadre members who developed illicit relations among the sexes had to be 'relieved'. While this meant that the women were dishonourably discharged, then men were killed for "betraying the revolution"¹⁴². The rest were 'attached' to the battalions of the KIA. The PLA also did not take kindly to marriages¹⁴³, which accounts for a large number of surrenderees¹⁴⁴. Additionally, death from malaria was rampant in the organisation, which reduced not just the cadre strength, but also the morale of the remaining cadre. The PLA cadre decided to remove Tomba from the leadership for his non-cooperation with PLA leaders in Manipur and for his illicit relations with the female cadre. They asked the KIA to

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ In conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps.

intervene in the matter, but the KIA argued that the PLA leaders in Manipur had better sort out their mess, themselves. For this, Manikanta, the leader of the PLA in Manipur was invited to the KIA HQs. He settled the matter and took his cadre with him, back to Manipur in April, 1986.

Muivah, in his meeting with Imobi, stated that he believed the PLA's ideology was too widespread and not concentrated in Manipur, which prevented its unification with other organisations. He also wondered whether the PLA was serious about breaking off from India¹⁴⁵. No doubt, this had something to do with Bisheshwar's contesting the Legislative Assembly Elections, which implied that at least the ideologue of the PLA had succumbed to India's Constitutional Democracy and the organisation's giving up on the cause of Manipur's Independence could not be far behind. Muivah also desired to know why Imobi had had differences with Meghen, to which Imobi opined that Meghen had been the one to urge Imobi to surrender to the GoI in the first place and therefore, Imobi believed him incapable of carrying out secessionist activities¹⁴⁶. Imobi's opinion of Meghen in the 1980s is in direct contravention of Meghen's own decisions in the thirty years following the formation of that opinion. In recent years, many Meetei organisations have blamed their lack of unity on Meghen's obstinacy to agree to unify and talk peace with the GoI. They state Meghen's rhetoric of being a natural leader of the 'revolution' and a torch-bearer has ruined all attempts at the gradual death of the insurgency in Manipur's Valley¹⁴⁷. Muivah, Issac and Khaplang also advised Imobi to aim at achieving the unification of all Meetei Revolutionary groups, if they wished to succeed and be taken seriously as a faction in the North-East¹⁴⁸. Years later, the Meetei UGs were again given the same advice by Khaplang, who told them that to be taken seriously by the GoI as a group worthy of holding talks with, they would have to unite¹⁴⁹.

Following the NSCN's advice, Imobi rejoined Meghen in June, 1986 and developed links with the ULFA for him in 1986, since the Chinese authorities had refused to provide any support. In the absence of any material support from China, the UNLF purchased arms from the MNF and the KIA. Meghen strongly condemned Imobi's looting to gather funds, but took

¹⁴⁵ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ In conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps. Also, Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017. Also, Dr. Mishra, T.N., I.P.S., Retd., Mails to Priyamvada Asthana detailing his experiences in Manipur as DGP, Manipur.

¹⁴⁸ Meetei, N.S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 5th November, 2017.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

him back, all the same, after consulting his faction. Imobi befriended Paresh Barua, the leader of the group which had arrived at the NSCN camp to train there and maintained those links later. He also befriended Anil Shakya or the ULFA and Raju Rajkhowa, S/S Chairman, ULFA. When he returned to Imphal in July, 1986, to shelter, as the Assam police had cracked down on the ULFA and its cadre, he found himself arrested by the Manipur Police again.¹⁵⁰

Imobi was released on bail in January, 1990 and decided he wanted nothing more to do with the UNLF, instead opting for a peaceful life. He married in March, that year, as a symbol of turning away from the revolutionary life as revolutionaries were barred from marrying. In July, 1990, he began teaching at Eternal Spring High School (This is the same school where Noyon held his meetings), receiving a monthly salary of Rs. 800. His wife was a sports teacher in another school, receiving Rs. 2000/month.

In July, 1991, Imobi received a letter from the UNLF informing him of his expulsion from the party, signed by the S/S Home Secretary. This letter led Imobi to believe that the UNLF was planning to hunt him down and in retaliation, he formed the UNLF (Imobi faction), better known as UNLF (Oken), Oken being Imobi's alias. In the ensuing meetings, Imobi became the Chairman of the Executive Council. At this point, he was contacted by Meghen, who advised him to join the KCP. Imobi however, planned to form a joint version of the KCP, PREPAK and the PLA and fled to Bangladesh. He returned to India briefly to appear for his LLB second year exams and M. A. (Economics) final year exams between November, 1991 and January, 1992. While in Bangladesh, he stayed in constant touch with the KCP and PREPAK, both of whom had bases in Bangladesh. In his discussions with PLA, he and the other parties involved mulled over boycotting the UNLF under Meghen.

At the end of January, 1992, a meeting was held at the PREPAK camp, Homerjah village, Bangladesh, where representatives from the KCP, RPF and the PREPAK agreed to the formation of a Revolutionary Joint Committee (hereafter, referred to as RJC). Imobi attended the founding ceremony.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

In May, 1992, Imobi was arrested by the Bangladesh Police for possession of Indian currency and on suspicion of being an illegal immigrant and deported to Tripura in the BSF's custody. From there, he was brought to Imphal.¹⁵²

Upon his release on bail in 1993, Imobi returned to Bangladesh. In March, that year, he agreed to work for the KCP and travelled to Dimapur to meet the NSCN (IM), which had agreed to supply arms to the organisation. Eventually, in December, 1993, Imobi had a falling out with the KCP and the UNLF (O) became an independent faction, again. This same faction metamorphosed into the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (hereafter, referred to as KYKL), in 1994.¹⁵³ At this point, Imobi's testimony becomes too hazy, ravaged by time, but we know that of all major Meetei groups, KYKL is one that features the least in the media. They are considered relatively harmless in comparison to other groups. In November, 1994, along with the NSCN (IM), they spearheaded the formation of the Self Defence United Front of the South-East Himalayan Region¹⁵⁴. Their relations with the National Liberation Front of Tripura (hereafter, referred to as NLFT) remained strong and the NLFT base in the Chittagong Hill Tracts remained a hide-out for the KYKL. They maintained relations with the HPC, the Karbi National Volunteers (hereafter, referred to as KNV) and the NDFB.¹⁵⁵

The KYKL is firm in its belief that the Western Southeast Asia (hereafter, referred to as WESEA) is one contiguous zone, separate from the rest of India and other countries in the region, including Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The group asserts that by merging the Mongoloid sub-zone with the rest of the Aryan and Dravidian part of the subcontinent, the Indian State is carrying out a slow, but bloodless genocide. For the Mongoloid race, in general, and the Meeteis, in particular, it is important to break away to prevent extinction. Imobi argues that India's rule over Kangleipak – the ancient name of Manipur – is hegemonic and repressive and uses Antonio Gramsci's argument to state that Manipur and the North-East accept India's hegemony not because it is forced to, but because a false consciousness has been imposed on the region, using soft weapons,

...include education, newspapers, TV, cinema, internet, social media, plays, dramas, dance, music, films, literature, religions, national songs, flags, map, insignia, law, prison, police, administration, etc...It is these soft weapons which have imprisoned

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

the conscience of our people...strengthened when the notion that Kangleipak cannot survive without depending on India...ingrained in the minds of our people.¹⁵⁶

Imobi further goes on to argue that India has systematically destroyed all of Kangleipak's resources, leaving it entirely dependent on India, even as corruption has sky-rocketed and dependence on luxuries has increased.¹⁵⁷ This statement is not entirely factually correct, since it is hard to determine what resources exactly Manipur was dependent on, before its Merger with India. The recurrent famines and floods and battles with Burma, all essentially to get access to fertile land are well documented. Farming continues to be the dominant profession in the Valley, along with pisciculture. Piggery, horticulture, bee-keeping, handlooms are, by and large, the other sources of income in the state. Most of Manipur's economy is dependent on grants from the Centre, of which, almost ninety percent goes into paying salaries and pensions, leaving very little for the development of the state. What is passed, falls somewhere into the gaping hole that the politician-underground-contractor nexus is.

However, the issue here is the question of India's hegemony. The same call is raised by the United National Liberation Front of WESEA (hereafter, referred to as UNLFW) each year on India's Republic Day. The UNLFW is a conglomeration of the CORCOM, the Garo National Liberation Army (hereafter, referred to as GNLA) and the Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (hereafter, referred to as HNLC) too argues that in keeping with the colonial legacy, the Indian government is pushing to assimilate all distinct cultures, people and territories within the wider ambit that is India. As they say,

“Our land and territories are constantly ravaged; our indigenous people's very existence is being threatened with the ever increasing influx of Indian migrants. Thus, to survive and enable to live with dignity, our people are compelled to take up arms to liberate ourselves from Indian occupation. On the other hand, Indian establishment is using all its military might, both hardware and software in suppressing the struggle for the right to self-determination of our indigenous peoples.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ KYKL Chairman shares thoughts on raising day-I, *The Sangai Express*, 25th April, 2016, www.thesangaiexpress.com/kykl-chairman-shares-thoughts-raising-day/.

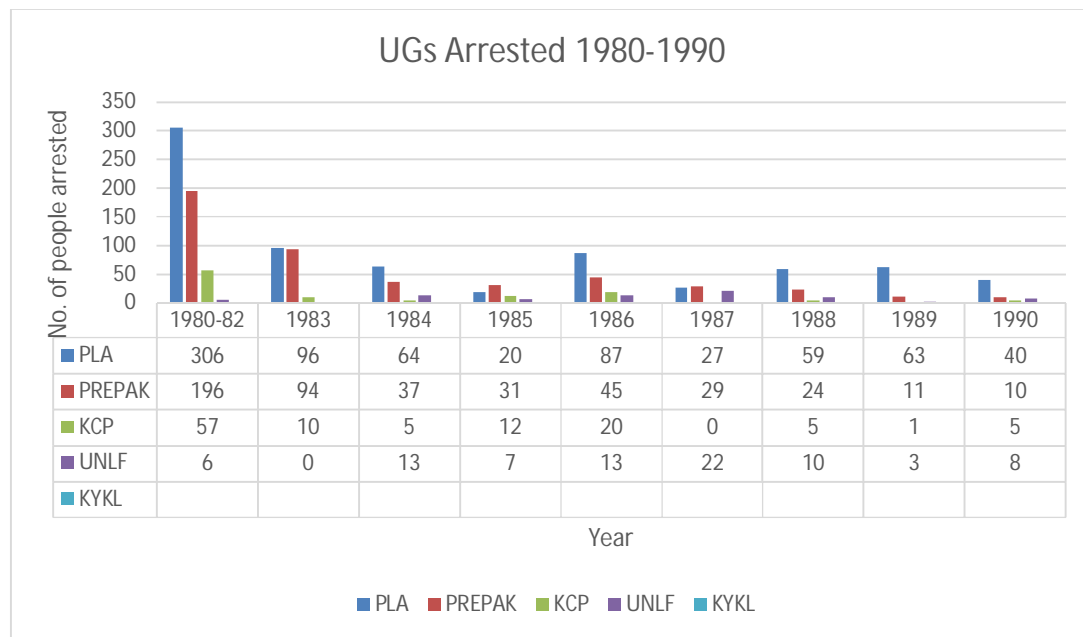
¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ 'The United National Liberation Front of WESEA (UNLFW) Boycotts Indian Republic Day Celebration', *Imphal Free Press*, 24th January, 2016, www.kanglaonline.com/2016/01/the-united-liberation-front-of-wesea-unlfw-boycotts-indian-republic-day-celebration/.

UNLFW argues that WESEA must work towards establishing its own innovative and modern geo-political identity and towards dislodging Indian occupation from the region.¹⁵⁹ While this may seem to be merely a rallying cry, it becomes important to remember that the KYKL discourse of uniting the North-East, originated with Arambam Samarendra. The KYKL also maintains relations with the Meghalaya based Achik National Volunteer Council (hereafter, referred to as ANVC), the Zomi Revolutionary Army (hereafter, referred to as ZRA) and the NSCN (K).¹⁶⁰

The KYKL may not be a very violent organisation, but it certainly maintains relations across the North-East. Imobi took Samarendra’s words about the unity of the North-East much more seriously than the other offshoots did. In some ways, his idea of the unity of the North-East ties up to the idea of Zomia¹⁶¹, only, instead of taking the rest of South East Asia into account, the KYKL and UNLFW focus on a specific region, which is the North-East of India, including those areas that now fall under Bangladeshi or Myanmar territory. There is, therefore, an attempt at forging some sort of historical link.

Other Lives of the ‘Revolution’



¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/manipur/terrorist_outfits/kykl.html

¹⁶¹ Van Schendel, W., ‘Geographies of knowing, geographies of ignorance: jumping scale in Southeast Asia’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (20), 2002, pp 647-68.

Table 3.1 No. of UGs Arrested, 1980-90¹⁶²

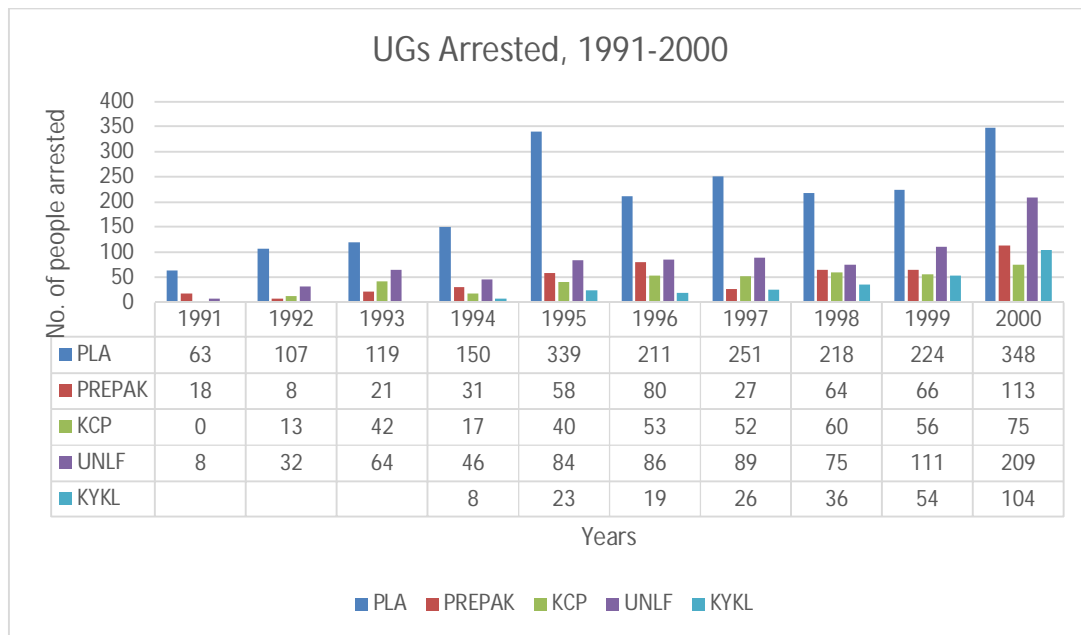


Table 3.2 No. of UGs Arrested, 1991-2000¹⁶³

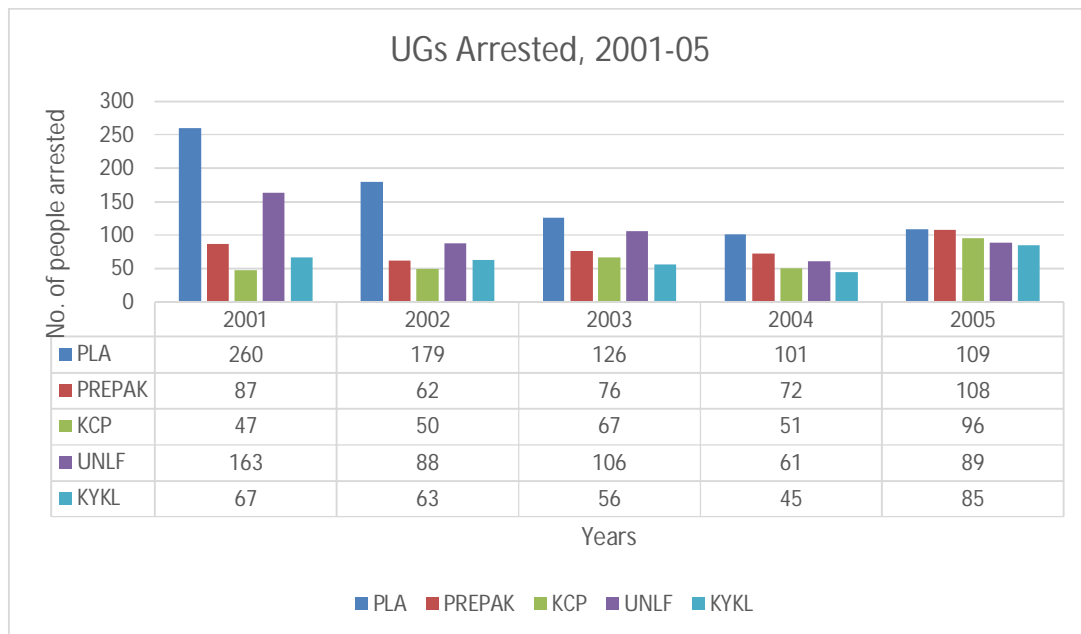


Table 3.2 No. of UGs Arrested, 2001-05¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Manipur State Administrative Reports, 1980-81 to 1989-90, Manipur State Archives and Library.

¹⁶³ Manipur State Administrative Reports, 1990-91 to 1999-2000, Manipur State Archives and Library.

Frontal Organisations of Valley Based UG Organisations¹⁶⁵

1. UNLF –
 - (i) All Manipur Students' Union (AMSU) – Head Office (hereafter, referred to as HO) at D. M. College Campus.
 - (ii) All Manipur Social Reformation and Development Samaj – HO at Palace Compound.
 - (iii) United People's Front (UPF) – HO at Keishampat
 - (iv) National Identity Protection Committee (NIPCO) – HO at Keishampat
 - (v) Apunba Manipur Kanba Ima Lup (AMKIL) – HO at Keishampat
 - (vi) MAPI Council, Manipur – HO at Wangkhei Pujah Lampak
 - (vii) Manipur Chanura Leishem Marup (MACHALEIMA) – HO at Palace Compound
 - (viii) Coalition on Anti Drugs & Alcohol (CADA) – HO at Keishampat
 - (ix) Human Rights Alert (HRA) – HO at Kwakeithel Thiyam Leikai
2. PLA –
 - (i) All Manipur United Clubs Organisation (AMUCO) – HO at Kwakeithel Akham Leikai
 - (ii) Manipuri Students' Federation (MSF) – HO near Dhobi Mairu Leirak
 - (iii) Poirei Leimarol Meira Paibi Apunba Manipur – HO at Khoyathong
 - (iv) All Manipur Women Volunteers' Association (AMAWOVA) – HO at Kongpal Laishram Leikai
3. KYKL –
 - (i) Democratic Students' Alliance Manipur (DESAM) – HO at Sagolband Moirang Leirak
 - (ii) Ethno Heritage Council (HERICOUN) – HO at Nongmeibung
 - (iii) Threatened Indigenous People Society (TIPS) – HO at Old Chekon
 - (iv) Kangleipak Lamching Apunba Meira Lup (KANGLAMEI) – HO at Kwakeithel
 - (v) Women's Association for Civic Action (WACAK) – HO at Kangabam Leikai
 - (vi) Momnu Eerik Khombi Lup (MEEKHOL) – HO at Palace Compound

¹⁶⁴ Manipur State Crime Records Bureau.

¹⁶⁵ In conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps.

- (vii) All Manipur Anti Drug Association (AMADA) – HO at Keishampat
- 4. PREPAK –
 - (i) Kangleipak Students’ Association (KSA) – HO at Sega Road Konjeng Leikai
 - (ii) International Manipuri Mothers’ Association (IMMA) – HO at Bamon Leikai Mange Makhong
 - (iii) Chanura Lamchinglen Kangleipak (CLK) – HO at Sagolband Tera
 - (iv) International Peace and Social Advancement (IPSA) – HO at Keishampat
- 5. PREPAK (PRO) –
 - (i) Students’ Union, Kangleipak (SUK) – HO at New Chekon
- 6. Maoist Communist Party, Manipur (MCPM) –
 - (i) Students’ League, Manipur – HO at RIMS Road
 - (ii) All Manipur Democratic Women’s Front (AMDWF) – HO at RIMS Road.

Observed carefully, a pattern emerges. The frontal organisations largely consist of students’ and women’s organisations. This is in keeping with classic guerrilla tactics. Ironically, for a movement that peddles drugs, anti-drug organisations are also frontal organisations for the movement. These are also the same organisations that political parties approach for votes and as leaders of the Civil Society. The nexus between mainstream politics and the insurgency, then thickens. This is a pattern that reminds us of Cuba.

Complete List of Valley Based UG Groups¹⁶⁶

1. Kangleipak Communist Party-Highway Task Force (KCP-HTF) / KCP-Kokkai – Dormant
2. KCP-Ibungo Ngangom – Dormant – The faction was started by Senjam Nongdrenkhomba alias Khomba alias Wangthoi alias Ibungo Ngangom, a 1999 batch cadre of the UNLF. In 2001, he left the organisation to extort money in the name of arranging government jobs for those who paid him. However, under pressure from the major UG organisations, which did not take kindly to extortion being conducted without their permission, and the families of those who had been promised jobs, he fled to Simla, where he hid for the next two years. In 2003, he was arrested by the Military Intelligence for passing information to foreign intelligence organisations. In jail, he met KCP leaders (whom he does not name) in 2005, who recruited him for the organisation. In 2007, the organisation split and in 2008, Senjam formed his own

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

party. The party demands Manipur's liberation from India, but has no definite professed aims, other than extortion and promoting prejudice. It had a cadre strength of about twenty-two and about ten weapons, operating in and around Imphal, Thoubal and Bishnupur. Its cadre was largely based in Assam, implying a pan North-East connection.¹⁶⁷

3. KCP-Khaba – Dormant
4. KCP-Lanchenba – Dormant
5. KCP-Malemnganba – Dormant
6. KCP-Mangal – Active – Mangal was initially a PLA member, before he became addicted to Heroin. In the course of buying drugs, he became familiar with the KCP and left the PLA to join the KCP. After the split, the group collects money by peddling hard drugs and by serving extortionate letters on behalf of other KCP factions.¹⁶⁸
7. KCP-MC / Lamyanba Khuman – Active
8. KCP-MJC – Active – Conglomerate of KCP (Poirei), KCP (Paikhomba), KCP (Tamnganba) and KCP (Raja Meetei), formed in 2014.¹⁶⁹
9. KCP-MTF Kesho Meetei – Dormant – Indulges in extortionate activities, with a cadre strength of ten. It is led by Naorem Priyokumar Singh alias Kesho Meetei alias Inakhunba. Was initially formed to monitor the functioning of private sector hospitals and banks, which they claimed, were fleecing the poor.
10. KCP-Nando – Active – Cadre strength of about ten, but active in wide area, comprising Imphal, Thoubal, Tamenglong, Myanmar. Has relations with all other factions of the KCP, except KCP (Noyon). Also maintains relations with KYKL, NSCN (IM), KNF (P) and KNF (Z). Mostly involved in extortion.¹⁷⁰
11. KCP-Nongthangi – Dormant
12. KCP-Paikhomba – Active
13. KCP-Poirei – Active – Led by Kholrom Ranjit alias Poirei alias Rocky alias Great Macha, formerly of the KYKL. Was KCP's S/S Finance Secretary for a while, before breaking away to form his own group, which has no agenda except extortion. Has a

¹⁶⁷ Nongdrenkhomba, S., Interview with Priyamvada Asthana, recorded on 22nd October, 2017.

¹⁶⁸ In conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps

¹⁶⁹ Ibid..

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

cadre strength of about twenty-five. Hide-outs located in Nepal and Assam. Possesses about fifteen arms. Operates in Imphal, Thoubal, Bishnupur and Kakching.¹⁷¹

14. KCP-Progressive – Active
15. KCP-Sunil Meetei – Dormant – Split from KCP-MTF Kesho Meetei.¹⁷²
16. KCP-Tamnganba – Dormant – Formed sometime after the execution of KCP's S/S President, Leibakmacha's execution after being court-martialled by a Joint Council of the UNLF, KYKL and PREPAK. It aimed to defend the farmers and maintain the racial identity of Kangleipak. Its activities are limited to a very small area of West Imphal.¹⁷³
17. KCP-Kangleipak Liberation Army (KLA) – Dormant
18. KCP-Noyon – Active
19. KCP-People's War Group (PWG) – Active
20. KYKL – Active
21. MCPM – Active
22. National Revolutionary Front of Manipur (NRFM) – Active
23. People's United Liberation Front (PULF) – Dormant – Formed after the 1993 Meetei-Pangal riots, it seeks to safeguard the interest of the Pangals – Meetei Muslims. It aims to set up an Islamist state in the North-East and ties up with the ISI. It remained dormant till 2006-07, after which, immediately after swinging into action, it split into factions. The other PULFs in the list are breakaway factions of this group. It has acted against substance abuse in the community and issued guidelines about what Pangal women can and cannot wear. The rise of the PULF is seen as the landmark moment of separation of the Meetei and Pangal communities. Initially, they had close links with the NSCN-IM, which also supplied arms to some of the Meetei organisations. Indulges in extortion. Operates in Pangal dominated areas.¹⁷⁴
24. PREPAK – Active
25. PREPAK (PRO) – Active
26. PULF-Azad – Dormant
27. PULF-Chandro (Surrendered) – Dormant
28. PULF-MI (Surrendered) – Dormant
29. PULF-Rafi, now UPRF (Surrendered) – Dormant

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ In conversation with civilians in Hafta and Mayang Imphal.

30. PULF-Taba alias Qazi Umar (Surrendered) – Dormant
31. PULF-Umar Farooqui (Surrendered) – Dormant
32. RPF/PLA – Active
33. United Minorities Army (UMA) – Dormant
34. UNLF – Active
35. United Peoples of Kangleipak (UPK) – Dormant – formed by a group of drug peddlers, vehicle thieves and contract criminals.¹⁷⁵

As the above list tells us, by now, the movement has split so many times, that ideology has taken a backseat. The movement now resembles a gang-war. The dormant groups resurge from time to time, depending on whether or not they view a particular situation as favourable. The surrendered groups never really go out of circulation. Many of those who surrender under one group, go back and join another group or reassemble under a new name.¹⁷⁶ This makes tracking them very difficult. It also demonstrates that the lower one goes in the hierarchy of the insurgency's organisational structure, or the later one joined, the less and less they had to do with ideology. Most people who now join the insurgency, view it as an alternate source of employment, as is evident from the fact that most factions of major UG organisations have no aim other than extortion and peddling drugs.

List of Policemen Martyred at the hands of the Meetei Lamyamba¹⁷⁷

1. M. Manglen Singh, Constable, killed in 1979. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
2. Gulapi Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1979. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
3. Nimaichand Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1979. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
4. Heramani Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1979. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
5. Hemanta Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1979. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
6. Donjapao Singh, Jemadar, killed in 1979. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
7. M. Tomba Singh, Constable, killed in 1979. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
8. T. Amutombi Singh, ASI, killed in 1979. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Annual List of Martyrs published on Police Commemoration Day, Ministry of Home Affairs.

9. N. Chaoba Singh, Constable, killed in 1979. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
10. Md. Alimuddin, Constable, killed in 1979. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
11. T. Narahari Singh, Head Constable, killed in 1979. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
12. Alan Kuki, Rifleman, killed in 1980. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
13. S. Damu Singh, Constable (Driver), killed in 1980. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
14. W. Duhar Singh, SI, killed in 1980. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
15. Bir Bahadur, Head Constable, killed in 1980. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
16. Abir Sarki, Lance Naik, killed in 1980. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
17. Kh. Gauramohan Singh, Naik, killed in 1980. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
18. P. Thambal Kabui, Head Constable, killed in 1980. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
19. Prasad Sharma, Rifleman, killed in 1980. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
20. L. Shyam Kishori Singh, Head Constable, killed in 1981. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
21. S. Chaoti Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1981. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
22. Kim Bahadur, Rifleman, killed in 1981. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
23. Ashel Keireng, Lance Naik, killed in 1981. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
24. Dal Bahadur, Lance Naik, killed in 1981. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
25. Md. Fazur Rahman, Naik, killed in 1982. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
26. Thoiba Singh, Constable, killed by PREPAK on 11th October, 1982 at Konjeng Leikai.
27. Shri Ram, Rifleman, killed in 1983. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
28. Khim Bahadur, Rifleman, killed in 1983. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
29. Ojen Bahadur, Lance Naik, killed in 1984. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
30. Kh. Mangle Singh, Naik, killed in 1984. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.

31. Bal Bahadur, Lance Naik, killed in 1984. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
32. Krishna Singh, JC, killed in 1984. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
33. Dudhi Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1984. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
34. Tenjen Kubui, Lance Naik, killed in 1984. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
35. Naba Kumar Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1984. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
36. Ali Mao, Lance Naik, killed in 1984. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
37. Ibohal Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1984. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
38. N. Rana Singh, Head Constable, killed in 1984. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
39. K. Shyamjai Singh, Rifleman (Constable), killed in 1984. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
40. Bikram Singh, Subedar, killed in 1984. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
41. Cheta Bahadur, Naik, killed in 1985. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
42. Heman Surchandra Singh, SI, killed in 1987. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
43. O. Tombi Singh, Constable, killed in 1987. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
44. Jangthang Haokip, Rifleman, killed in 1987. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
45. Md. Naziruddin, Constable, killed in 1987. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
46. A. Narahari Singh, Constable, killed in 1988. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
47. Daihri Pfokrehil Mao, Constable, killed in 1988. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
48. Kailash Pradhan, SI, killed in 1988. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
49. Md. Ahmad Khan, Constable, killed in 1988. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
50. Leimajam Lalnanda Singh, Sub-Inspector, killed on 16th July, 1988 in Lamlai. Meetei outfit not specified.
51. E. James Tangkhul, Head Constable, killed by PLA on 28th December, 1988 in Takhel village, Ukhrul District.

52. Vandana Malik, IPS, SDPO, killed by RPF/PLA on 8th April, 1989 on the outskirts of Imphal.
53. Md. Jamadmia, SI, killed in 1989. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
54. W. Sanajoba Singh, Inspector, killed in 1989. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
55. H. Anand Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
56. Jainath Sharma, Rifleman, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
57. Ibohanbi Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
58. Lungamang, Lance Naik, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
59. Ashiho, Rifleman, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
60. Athiko Asshoshi, Rifleman, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
61. Gorkarna Prasad Acharya, Lance Naik, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
62. M. Chandro Singh, Constable, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
63. H. Lalitkumar Singh, Constable, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
64. Kh. Khaba Singh, Constable, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
65. Ph. Ratankumar Sharma, SI, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
66. N. Meghachandra Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
67. Nim Bahadur, Rifleman, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
68. Y. Ibochou Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1990. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
69. Devakaran, Lance Naik, killed by PLA on 11th October, 1991 in Thoubal Bazaar.
70. H. Hongba Singh, killed on 30th November, 1991 at Keisamthong Bridge. Meetei outfit not specified.
71. H. Biradhaja Singh, killed on 20th January, 1991 at Maharani Bridge. Meetei outfit not specified.

72. Yarchung Tangkhul, Rifleman, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
73. W. Suraj Singh, Constable, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
74. Th. Mohendro Singh, Constable, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
75. L. Pamjao Singh, ASI, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
76. Md. Nasir Khan, SI, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
77. E. Nailakanta Singh, SI, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
78. Md. Abdul Wahid, Constable, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
79. Th. Binod Kumar Singh, Constable, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
80. Rangama Rongmei, Lance Naik, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
81. P. Somorendro Singh, Asst. SI, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
82. Dal Bahadur, Head Constable, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
83. Kh. Budhachandra Singh, JC, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
84. L. Ginjalal Simte, SI, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
85. K. Ibotombi Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1991. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
86. Paolianmang, Rifleman, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
87. N.G.Paul Maram, Constable, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
88. L. Heartlei Vaiphei, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
89. K. Ibotomba Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
90. Md. Tomba, FI, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
91. Abunath, Rifleman, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
92. Tungzasuan, Rifleman, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
93. Md. Himalshah, Rifleman, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.

94. Md. Ibiddin, FI, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
95. Md. Iboton, FI, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
96. Lokeshor Singh, FI, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
97. Th. Tomba Singh, Asst. SI, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
98. H. Tharongou Singh, SI, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
99. Th. Ahongjao Singh, Constable, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
100. Kh. Devan Singh, Naik, killed in 1992. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
101. N. Paka Singh, Constable, killed on 18th September, 1993 at Sawombung Bridge, Imphal-Ukhrul Road. Meetei outfit not specified
102. N. Ibohal Singh, Inspector, killed on 18th September, 1993 at Sawombung Bridge, Imphal-Ukhrul Road. Meetei outfit not specified.
103. P. Jadumani Singh, Constable, killed on 18th September, 1993 at Sawombung Bridge, Imphal-Ukhrul Road. Meetei outfit not specified.
104. L. Bijen Singh, Constable, killed on 18th September, 1993 at Sawombung Bridge, Imphal-Ukhrul Road. Meetei outfit not specified.
105. Th. Nanda Singh, Constable, killed on 25th January, 1993 in Singjamei. Meetei outfit not specified.
106. L. Jayanta Singh, Constable, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
107. S. Iboyaima Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
108. Jem Ngamsei Kuki, JC, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
109. L. Dinachandra Singh, SI, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
110. Krishna, Lance Naik, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
111. Md. Wahijuddin, Rifleman, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
112. S. Ibosana Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.

113. Andrew Chothe, Rifleman, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
114. Hepuni Mao, Rifleman, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
115. Ishori Prasad Sharma, Rifleman, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
116. K. Shamu Singh, Constable, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not known.
117. N. Angouba Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not known.
118. M. Yaima Singh, Asst. SI, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not known.
119. Md. Nayimuddin, Constable, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not known.
120. Md. Abdul Rashid, Constable, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
121. O. Dhananjoy Singh, Constable, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
122. Kh. Ibomcha Singh, Lance Naik, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
123. Th. Rajen Singh, Constable, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
124. P. Basanta Singh, Constable, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
125. Helim, Lance Naik, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
126. I. Brajamani, Constable, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
127. P. Mohendro Singh, Lance Naik, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
128. P. Lokendro Singh, Constable, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
129. H.B.Mote Anal, Naik, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.

130. Md. Allimuddin, Naik, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not known.
131. Helkhomang Kuki, Head Constable, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
132. N. Premkumar Singh, Asst. SI, killed in 1993. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
133. S. Rajen Singh, Constable, killed on 3rd August, 1994 at Phayeng Hill. Meetei outfit not specified.
134. P. Nimai Singh, SI, killed on 3rd August, 1994 at Phayeng Hill. Meetei outfit not specified.
135. Man Bahadur, Naik, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
136. Ingocha Singh, Lance Naik, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
137. M. Raju Singh, Lance Naik, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
138. H. Mani Singh, Lance Naik, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
139. Md. Ayub Khan, Rifleman, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
140. A. Kunjakishore Singh, Inspector, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
141. Thangkhopao, Rifleman, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
142. R.N.Hopinson, IPS, SDPO, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
143. Paokhanthang, Sub JC, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
144. Th. Naobi Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
145. Md. Rajaque, Rifleman, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
146. Ksh. Lala Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.

147. T. Mayaomi TKL, Rifleman, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
148. S. Kronii, Constable, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
149. A.K. Bryon Singh, SI, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
150. S. Dollendro Singh, SI, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
151. S. Basanta Singh, Constable, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
152. M. Jiten Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
153. Md. Majiruddin, Rifleman, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
154. S. Tombi Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
155. A.K. Brojen Singh, Rifleman (Constable), killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
156. L. Tejad Singh, Jemadar, killed in 1994. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
157. Md. Abdul Jalil, Rifleman, killed on 25th July, 1995 at Kakching Bazaar. Meetei outfit not specified.
158. Khem Singh, Naik, killed on 20th February, 1995 at Keirao, Imphal East. Meetei outfit not specified.
159. L. Premkumar Singh, Constable, killed on 23rd March, 1995 at Nongada, Imphal-Ukhrul Road. Meetei outfit not specified.
160. S. Singhajit Singh, Constable, killed on 13th January, 1995 at Haobam Marak Keisam Leikai. Meetei outfit not specified.
161. N. Mangi Singh, Constable, killed on 13th January, 1995 at Haobam Marak Keisam Leikai. Meetei outfit not specified.
162. M. Chaoba Singh, Asst. Comdt., killed in 1995. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
163. Toalkhanpao, SP, killed in 1995. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.

164. Rikhideva Thakur, Rifleman, killed in 1995. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
165. Ch. Ibohal Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1995. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
166. Katpal Gurung, Rifleman, killed in 1995. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
167. Md. Ayub Khan, Rifleman, killed in 1995. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
168. L. Iboyaima Singh, Constable, killed in 1995. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
169. A. Manihar Singh, Constable, killed in 1995. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
170. Ramananda Nepali, Rifleman, killed in 1995. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
171. Goukhanmang, Constable, killed in 1995. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
172. L. Shyamsunder Singh, Constable, killed in 1995. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
173. Guisenpao, Rifleman, killed in 1996. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
174. Y. Lukhoi Singh, Head Constable, killed in 1996. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
175. Bhabananda Singh, Follower, killed in 1996. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
176. R. Akuipao Kabui, Rifleman, killed in 1996. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
177. Phande Lambu, Rifleman, killed in 1996. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
178. Th. Debananda Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1996. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
179. L. Sanatomba Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1996. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
180. R.L. Dowang Paomei, Rifleman, killed in 1996. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.

181. L. Sanatamba Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
182. Chinzalian, Lance Naik, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
183. S. Ibesana Singh, Comdt., killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
184. T.K. Mang, Constable, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
185. Ginjapau Simte, Constable, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
186. L. Gourachandra Singh, Constable, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
187. L. Kunjabihari Singh, Constable, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
188. Mohan Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
189. Md. Kutubudin, Lance Naik, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
190. W. Nandakishore Singh, Constable, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
191. Jeewan Kumar Chhetry, Rifleman, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
192. Md. Samsurjaman, Constable, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
193. Kh. Bhume Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
194. Md. Ibomcha S., Rifleman, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
195. Md. Najimuddin, Rifleman, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
196. L. Sur Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1997. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
197. Jangkhopao Paite, Rifleman, killed in 1998. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.

198. A.S. Ashao Tkl, Constable, killed in 1998. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
199. Lenkhokam Haokip, Follower, killed in 1998. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
200. Th. Upeshkumar Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1998. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
201. N. Nagesana Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1998. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
202. Kh. Chandrabose, Rifleman, killed in 1998. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
203. W. Suresh Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1998. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
204. Dartho Lamkang, Head Constable, killed in 1998. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
205. Th. Ahang Chothe, Rifleman, killed in 1999. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
206. W. Thanajao Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1999. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
207. A. Nityaibi Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1999. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
208. Md. Rafiuddin, Follower, killed in 1999. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
209. Md. Hider, Rifleman, killed in 1999. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
210. A. Saratchandra Singh, Rifleman, killed in 1999. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
211. Jamkholal Chongthu, Rifleman, killed in 2000. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
212. Th. Hemo Singh, Lance Naik, killed in 2000. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
213. S. Iboyaima Singh, Constable, killed in 2000. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
214. S. Prabhudayal Singh, ASI, killed in 2000. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.

215. Kholi Mao, Rifleman, killed in 2000. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
216. Kh. Borjao Singh, Constable, killed in 2000. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
217. Gaishingam Kabui, Rifleman, killed in 2000. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
218. K. Rupachandra Singh, Inspector, killed in 2000. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
219. L. Manihar Singh, Constable, killed in 2000. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
220. W. Lokendro Singh, Rifleman, killed in 2000. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
221. Ch. Arunkumar, SI, killed in 2001. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
222. Sapam Mangijao, Rifleman, killed in 2001. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
223. Z. Jame, Constable, killed in 2001. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
224. Md. Abdul Gaffar, Follower, killed in 2001. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
225. Bindeshwar Rajak, Follower, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
226. Lungpoklung, Follower, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
227. Kh. Yaima Singh, Rifleman, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
228. Th. Nimai Singh, Rifleman, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
229. N. Robinkumar Singh, Rifleman, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
230. Lamkhogin Guite, Rifleman, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
231. Basantakumar Pradhan, Lance Naik, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.

232. Lianjam, Rifleman, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
233. K. Ashwinikumar Singh, SI, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
234. Chingkhohang Haokip, Rifleman, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
235. S. Pacha Singh, Constable, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
236. Md. Ahamed Ali, Constable, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
237. R.K. Ratan, SI, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
238. L. Sanjit Singh, Constable, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
239. M. Dhamen Singh, Constable, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
240. L. Ibohal Singh, Lance Naik, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
241. H. Ibomcha Meetei, SI, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
242. Kamei Deven, Follower, killed in 2002. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
243. P.S. Peter TKL, ASI, killed in 2003. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
244. P. Ngaranmi TKL, Constable, killed in 2003. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
245. Chinmuanthang, Constable, killed in 2003. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
246. Kishokumar Mohat, Rifleman, killed in 2003. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
247. Md. Ziauddin, Head Constable, killed in 2004. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
248. Md. Ajiruddin, Rifleman, killed in 2004. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.

249. Kh. Megha Singh, Constable, killed in 2004. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
250. E. Hero Singh, Constable, killed in 2004. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
251. Th. Herojit Singh, Constable, killed in 2004. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
252. Ch. Premkukar Singh, Constable, killed in 2004. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.
253. Md. Abdul Helim, Constable, killed in 2004. Exact date and Meetei outfit not mentioned.¹⁷⁸

As the list demonstrates, casualties in the Manipur Police and the Manipur Rifles have been consistently high. Those killed, belong to all communities of Manipur – Meetei, Pangal, Naga, Kuki and Mayang. The same community mourns both, the insurgents and the agents of the State. There are countless examples of family members or neighbours or old friends being on opposite sides of the battlefield.¹⁷⁹

The stories from the insurgency then tell us that the enemy is as much a part of the self, as the insurgent is. They tell us that unlike classical guerrilla wars, the ideology did not percolate down to the masses or even, to the lower ranks within the insurgent organisations. Most people are not even sure of what they're fighting for. This means that organisations split not over ideological differences, but over who gets maximum share out of money extorted, over position and privilege. This is the real flaw in the insurgency, which has rendered it weak in comparison to the insurgency in the Hills, which, at least, has its demands down clear. But perhaps, part of the reason of its origin being reactionary, this was bound to happen.

This places the civilian in the unenviable position of being caught in the crossfire, sometimes turning him/her away from the same forces they had once nurtured. This is depicted in Thangjam Ibopishak Singh's 'I Want to be Killed by an Indian Bullet', portraying the civilian's turning away from the insurgency and turning to the Indian State for succour:

I heard the news long ago that

¹⁷⁸ The list is not a complete one, as some years, there was a doubt over whether the attack had been led by the Meetei UGs or by those in the Hills.

¹⁷⁹ In conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps and civil society. Also, various recorded interviews.

They were looking for me; in
The morning in the afternoon
At night. My children told me;
my wife told me.

One morning they
Entered my drawing room, the
Fice of them. Fire, water, air,
earth, sky – are the names of
these five. They can create
men; also destroy men at
whim.

They do whatever they fancy.
The very avatar of might.

I ask them: “When will
you kill me?”

The leader replied:
“Now. We’ll kill you right now.
Today is very auspicious. Say
your prayers. Have you
bathed? Have you had your
meal?”

“Why will you kill me?
What is my crime? What evil
deed have I done?” I asked
them again.

“Are you a poet who
Pens gobbledygook and drivel?
Or do you consider yourself
a seer with oracular powers?
Or are you a madman?” asked
the leader.

“I know that I’m
Neither of the first two beings.
I cannot tell you about the last
One. How can I myself tell
whether I’m unhinged or not?”

The leader said: “You
can be whatever you would
like to be. We are not
concerned about this or that.

We will kill you now. Our mission is to kill men.”

I ask: “In what manner will you kill me? Will you cut me with a knife? Will you shoot me? Will you club me to death?”

“We will shoot you”

“With which gun will You shoot me then? Made in India, or made in another Country?”

“Foreign made. All of Them made in Germany, made in Russia, or made in China. We don’t use guns made in India. Let alone good guns, India cannot even make plastic flowers. When asked to make

plastic flowers India can only
produce toothbrushes.

I said: “That’s a good
thing. Of what use are plastic
flowers without any
fragrance?”

The leader said: “No
one keep toothbrushes in
vases to do up a room. In life a
little embellishment has its
part.

“Whatever it may be, if
you must shoot me please
shoot me with a gun made in
India. I don’t want to die from
a foreign bullet. You see, I love
India very much.”

“That can never be.
Your wish cannot be granted.
Don’t ever mention Bharat to
us.”

Saying this, they left
Without killing me; as if they
didn’t do anything at all. Being
fastidious about death I
escaped with my life.¹⁸⁰

The poet depicts the ubiquitousness of the Naharon (insurgents) by using the five elements to symbolise them. He also points to the role the insurgents play in Manipuri society when he says, “they can create men; also destroy men at whim.”¹⁸¹ Certainly, politics, businesses, contracts, even professional appointments are made on recommendations of UG organisations. Ibopishak Singh also alludes to the arms network in his poem. Ironically, the poet’s imagination, very grounded in the reality of his state, matches the arms markets mentioned by Shanti Meetei. The insurgents’ disdain for all things Indian is so great, the poet writes, that they can’t kill a man who wants to be killed by an Indian bullet. Ibopishak is making light of the situation that Manipur faces today, but he does paint a very honest picture of the futility of the insurgents’ objectives.

However, destruction here can also be taken as the destruction unleashed by the drug menace, which the UGs control. While on paper, the organisations are very anti-drug, which won them the support of the Meira Paibis, to begin with, in practice, the PLA controls the market

¹⁸⁰ Singh, Th. I., ‘I Want to be Killed by an Indian Bullet’, *Meegee Manam*, Imphal, 2003, www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poem/item/6316/auto/0/0/Thangjam-Ibopishak-Singh/I-WANT-TO-BE-KILLED-BY-AN-INDIAN-BULLET . Originally published in Meetei, translated into English by the poet himself.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

in natural intoxicants, including opium, heroin, marijuana and others, the UNLF, the original ideologue, peddles barbiturates like WY, LSD and others.¹⁸²As Robin Ngangom writes,

My native soil was created
from tiny sparks
that clung to grandmother's
earthen pot
which conjured savoury dishes
I've been looking for
all my life in vain.

My homeland has no
boundaries.

At cockcrow one day it found
itself
inside a country to its west,
(on rainy days it dreams
looking east
when its secessionists fight to
liberate it from truth*.) (the same line says 'liberate it from history' in other versions
of the poem, depending on the publication)

My people have disinterred
their alphabet,

¹⁸² In conversation with surrenderees on leave from surrenderee camps.

burnt down decrepit libraries

in a last gasp* of nationalism, ('last puff of nationalism' in other versions, depending on the publication)

even as a hairstyle of native

women

have been allowed to become

extinct.

My native place has not been

christened yet

my homeland, a travelogue

without end,

a plate that will always be

greedy

(but got rice mixed with

stones)

My home has young people

who found their dreams in a

white substance

and the old that transplanted

their eyes,

it has leaders who have

disappeared
into their caricatures.

My home is a gun
pressed against both temples
a knock on a night that has
not ended
a torch lit long after the theft
a sonnet about body counts
undoubtedly raped
definitely abandoned
in a tryst with destiny.¹⁸³

Ngangom also alludes in his writing to the disappearance of true leaders, whose space has been filled by caricatures of leaders. He refers to the call for a revival of the Meetei Mayek script and the discarding of the Bengali script, a move which left libraries full of rare manuscripts burning, for no fault other than the fact that they housed books in the Bengali script.¹⁸⁴ He also refers to the insurgents' desire to look Eastwards, even as they are being absorbed Westwards, that is, towards India. India's "tryst with destiny" – an allusion to Jawaharlal Nehru's 'Freedom at Midnight' speech – has left Manipur, the poet's homeland stuck between the barrel of two guns. One, wielded by India, the other by the insurgents. The 'torch' the insurgents lit was long after the 'theft' had occurred. Essentially, the poet means that the Lamyamba, the freedom fighters woke up too late. And one is forced to wonder if

¹⁸³ Ngangom, R. S., *My Invented Land (after Mario Melendez)*,
www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poem/item/11775/auto/0/MY-INVENTED-LAND .

¹⁸⁴ 'MEELAL Torches Central Library Office', *The Sangai Express*, Imphal, 14th April, 2005, www.e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=2.14.140405.apr05.

thirteen years after Irabot's attempts had ended might not have been too late for Manipur to dream of Independence for itself.

The question then remains, which aspect does the civilian embrace ultimately? The Indian State, whose agents are also part of the same society, or, the Underground, who has undergone a transformation from Lamyamba – freedom fighter, to Naharon – insurgent, over the years. Indeed, the testimonies of the UGs themselves prove that a serious rethinking is needed. Extortion cannot be the way forward for Manipur.

Map 2. Routes Taken by Insurgents to Myanmar
(Map not to scale)



Legend

- Route 1: Imphal (Manipur)-Mon (Nagaland)-Taka (Myanmar)
- Route 2: Poi/Huishu, Ukhrul (Manipur) – Homeland (Myanmar) – Cross river Chindwin – 02 days walk – Khamti waterfall – 01 day walk to Kachin
- Route 3: Moreh (Manipur) – Tamu (Myanmar) – 03 days walk – Chuminda – small river – cross river Chindwin (03 days by boat) – walk to Kachin
- Route 4: Imphal (Manipur)–Changlang (Arunachal Pradesh) – Haching Longkho (Myanmar) – 02 days walk through forest – cross river Chindwin – 05 days walk to Kachin

Conclusion

As we see, insurgency in Manipur's Valley is multifaceted. Its roots go back into history to the time the colonial state made it the Eastern Frontier of India. The problems that started then, triggered off the series of events that set the insurgency in motion, in not just Manipur, but, all over the North-East.

The understanding of insurgency as being rooted in the lack of development leading to the generation of a feeling of neglect may not be entirely true, but it is valid to a great extent. As demonstrated, in Manipur, policies are passed on paper, implemented on paper, but non-existent on the ground. Many Industries shut down because of poor turnover. Electrification is still ongoing. Even in district headquarters, supply is erratic. Water supply is still dependent on natural sources, in many villages, even in the Valley. This is not an ideal situation. But, it is made worse by the fact that in the Valley, most natural sources of water are pukhris, or ponds. Stagnant water acts as breeding ground for mosquitoes and parasites that cause a host of skin and digestive ailments. Road mileage exists only on paper, even in case of National Highways. Within Imphal, itself, large stretches of road are unsurfaced. Travelling even a distance of 60 kilometres from Imphal is a bone jarring experience that can take as long as five or six hours. Management of basic amenities is so poor that half the time, the Valley combats floods, the other half, famine.

Frequent blockades by the insurgent organisations, particularly the NSCN (IM), leave the Valley gasping for essential commodities. This heightens the fear in the Valley of being completely cut off should the Naga demand for Greater Nagalim be met by the Government of India. Price rise does not correspond to a rise in income. Incomes have stayed largely stagnant, showing marginal improvement over the years. Prices, however, fluctuate with the seasons. Both, floods and famines cause a sky-rocketing in the prices of essential commodities.

In terms of education, private schools have burgeoned in both, the Valley and the Hills, although, the Valley may have an edge over the Hills, in terms of accessibility. This is a far cry from the 1990s, when the underground burnt down the Nirmalabas Convent School, in the middle of Thangal Bazaar. Colleges, including private colleges have opened. Access to education has certainly become easier, but as field visits showed, most schools ran out of two rooms constructed of tin sheds. Hospitals have grown in the Valley, but so has the cost of

medical treatment. The burgeoning hospitals serve a very small part of Manipur's population. For most, their pockets are not deep enough to support treatment at the new, swanky hospitals. The Primary Health Centre and the state run JNIMS and RIMS must suffice.

Distribution of wealth is very unequal in the Valley, a startling revelation, when one considers that the insurgency in the Valley began as a Communist movement, and still pays, at least, lip service to the ideology. Even more surprising, in a far cry from the days the Mayangs were seen as hoarding all wealth, most large businesses in the state are run by Manipuris. The Mayangs continue to run small and middling businesses and shops, but they are no longer viewed as the threat to the economy. This may have something to do with the fact that more and more are marrying within the state. A casual stroll in markets all over the Valley will reveal a large percentage of the shops owned and run by children of mixed marriages. Mayang fathers married to Meetei mothers, who stayed back and whose children assimilated into the society. This phenomenon, which had always existed, but became more visible, with the turn of the century, has caused a softening of the anti-Mayang stance.

The insurgency demanded the recognition of Manipuri or Meeteilon as a scheduled language of India. The state fulfilled this demand in 1992, taking away one of the planks on which the insurgency rested. The demand for the revival of the Meetei Mayek script was taken up by the state and today, children entering school learn to write the Manipuri language in the Meetei Mayek script. Ironically enough, the number of Manipuris speaking and understanding Hindi has increased phenomenally. The chauvinistic attitude earlier employed towards Hindi speakers has faded to the extent that many of the respondents the scholar met in the course of this research, spoke Hindi, even if broken. The penetration of Hindi film music was more complete, despite the UGs having banned it. Almost every respondent hummed Hindi songs, whether old ones, from before the banning of Hindi music or new, Arijit Singh numbers.

As the technological revolution became absolute, in recent years, mobiles providing internet access, the connect with India has increased. As many erstwhile/surrendered insurgents said, they had relatives living and studying and working in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Pune and Kolkata. The newly opened NIT in the state is expected to bring more and more Mayang students to the state. As interaction increases, the insurgents have slowly come to accept their Indian-ness. They are categorical in stating that the only reason the insurgency has kept going is because they are afraid that giving up arms would mean

unemployment in the short term, and in the long term, that the Government of India would concede to the demand for Greater Nagalim and Zale'n-gam. Territorial integrity is still a question of Meetei pride and the idea of what constitutes yum (home) and laibak (country) are still important to them.

The insurgents have also alluded to the Indian government's inability to keep an eye on the Naxal movement gradually creeping in and hijacking the movement in Manipur. They warn that if peace is not brought comprehensively to the state, and brought fast, the state will be swamped by violence again.

As the movement in the Valley becomes slowly dormant, the tourism industry is perched on the verge of a take-off. Manipur has enough in common with the South East Asian countries that if marketed right, it could be the Indian alternative to them. This would also provide a much needed boost to the economy, most of which is still dependent on agriculture. Over the years, however, in a surprising trend, as more and more young Manipuris are beginning to settle down outside the state, average land holding size has increased. This, however, has no meaning without adequate provision of infrastructure. For years, the fisheries department has encouraged pisciculture, especially in paddy farms, where the crops are mutually beneficial. Yet, despite the push, Manipur continues to produce only about 20% of its fish consumption. The rest is supplied from Andhra Pradesh.

It may seem quite surprising, but in a state so riddled with poverty, there are no homeless. However, this does not mean that all homes would be classified as homes. Extensive use is made of corrugated tin sheets, which form everything, from boundary walls, to walls of homes, roofs and even, a couple of floors.

The movement began after Irabot, as a Pan Mongoloid Movement. With the founding of the UNLF, it went underground, skirting with legality. Gradually, the PMM gave way to the PANMYL, which restricted the movement for the unity of the North-East and the adjoining regions, to one aiming at Pan Manipur unity. However, that movement was fragmented because the Nagas were already part of the NNC and clamouring for a greater Nagalim. On the Mizoram side, the Kukis initially supported the call for Greater Mizoram. This essentially meant that even while the Pan Manipuri movement continued, it encompassed just the Meeteis and Pangals. The communal riots in 1993 made the Pangals the 'others' too. The movement was left to just the Meeteis. The KYKL has once again, by raising the issue of

WESEA, made the movement come full circle. This remains to be seen how long the KYKL can sustain the movement.

Meghen's incarceration in Guwahati Central Jail by the NIA has left the movement largely bereft of any leader to match the stature of Meghen or Bisheshwar. Those who still provide some direction, are ready to talk peace with the government, tired as they are, of a war that brought them nothing except empty promises and hardships. Some are eyeing mainstream politics. The appeal of government jobs or private sector jobs outside Manipur is rising. However, if sufficient development is brought to the state, the youth would be more than happy to stay on in their land.

At the height of insurgency, that is, the late 1980s and early 1990s, the administration in Manipur resembled the kingdom of Muhammad Shah Alam, "DillitePalam". Everything out of the 6km radius from Kangla, was considered liberated zone. Today, the same areas, that were once hubs of insurgent activity are hubs of commercial activity. Singjamei, Nagamapal, Thangmeiband, Chingmeirong, Wangkhei, in stark opposition to the Leikais that once hid Communists, malls have come up. Conspicuous consumption is on the rise. The Communist ideology failed when the movement turned into an extortionate gang-war. Unlike the Nagas and the Kukis, the Meetei UGs have not stayed true to their course. They changed tracks sometime in the early 1990s and have never been able to regain that course, which has made them unwelcome to the ordinary Manipuri.

It remains to be seen whether the insurgency in the Hills will die an organic death like the insurgency in the Valley is. It is also likely that the GoI's apathy to the hand extended by the Meeteis or the Meeteis' perceived slight at the Nagas and Kukis receiving more benefits than them will bring fresh blood in.

There are questions that still need answering. Can the reorganisation of the North-East bring peace to the region? Can there be another Bisheshwar, more successful at convincing his comrades to resort to mainstream politics? If the UG groups, Hill and Valley are so cooperative, why haven't they come to an understanding yet? Are history, culture and pride merely being used as cloaks to hide the thriving black market under it? Can electoral politics be the balm that would soothe hurt sentiments? Would sufficient development and a crackdown on corruption be enough to take away years of neglect by the Centre? If not within a democratic republic, where else can these questions be answered? Would removing

the AFSPA from the state, entirely, be enough, since it would prevent citizens from feeling like they were under siege.

It becomes important to ask, the Valley based insurgency groups are ready to lay down their arms and forge ahead. Is the Centre ready to heed Manipur's history and answer their call? Or is the vacuum of the State now going to be gradually filled by the Naxal movement? It won't find fertile ground in the Hills, where the Nagas want Nagalim for Christ and the Kukis wish for a Zale'n-gam to return to the older way of life, but, it may find foothold in the Valley, which not more than thirty years ago, was right on the path to a Communist revolution, reminiscent of many successful guerrilla wars, before being derailed by the weight of its own expectations. The death of the ideologue caused the death of the movement once. However, the Naxal movement is ideologically stronger than the movement in the Valley was. The UG in the Valley may have transformed from the lamyamba to the naharon, but unless sufficient attention is paid, s/he may just revert to the lamyamba, again.

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