

ECONOMIC HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL MANIPUR

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Abstract:

This paper highlights the historical perspective of economic system in Manipur during the Medieval period. Manipur is known for its unique mosaic of ethnic diversity and geographical features. It is also stated that the history of mankind, primitive or civilized dealt with their battle for existence. The changing processes and evolution from the barbaric way of dwelling to civilization were the possessions of their consecutive and nonstop efforts and struggles of living. The main theme of the paper revolved around various economic activities like agricultural production and nature of land use; Industry and Manufactures; Pottery; Salt Manufacturing; Yu or Rice beer; Boat Manufacture and Trade and commerce and its associated problems and prospects. This paper concludes by highlighting the economic changes inaugurated by Khagemba (1597-1652) such as the large scale introduction of the wetland, agricultural and trade goods, like tobacco, metal, brick making transformed the economic structure of Manipur. It resulted in improving the resource based and therefore increased the available surplus in bulk and the diversity of crops and goods also brought in craft specialization and social stratification, this period also witnessed the maturation of a grocery store. During the reign of Khagemba a marked shift in the economy took place; from use economy to an exchange economy. It was the broad economic base of Manipur, along with the shift of the economic system that leveraged a shift in the other areas as well.

Key words: Keithel,Puya, Loiyumba Shilyen,Yu, Chaphu.Lallup.Lou.

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Introduction:

Manipur is a state, regionally located in the North – Eastern part of India. The state is surrounded by Burma in the east, Nagaland in the north, Mizoram in the south, and Assam in the west. The present Manipur state lies in 23.50' and 25.30' latitude north and 93.10' and 94.30' longitudes respectively, are the dimensions bounding the state.¹ Manipur has a unique mosaic of ethnic diversity and geographical features. Different ethnic groups include the Meitei, Naga, Meitei Pangal, (Muslim) and Kuki – Chin communities living together in for centuries. Their legendary folklore, myths and dances, indigenous games and martial arts, exotic handloom and handicrafts have a mystique of nature. Manipur lies on a melting pot of culture, rich in aesthetic and traditional and surcharged with nature of pristine glory.²

Etymology of the word Manipur

In the ancient period, her name was known by different names such as Kangleipak, Meitei Leipak, Poireipak and Meitrabak.³ The name 'Manipur' was assumed during the reign of king Garibaniwaz who converted to the Vaishnavism in (1709-48).⁴

Feature of Economic condition in Medieval Manipur

History of mankind, primitive or civilized dealt with their battle for existence. Changing the processes and evolution of the barbaric way from dwelling to the civilization were the possessions of their consecutive and nonstop efforts and struggles for the living. The means of livelihood and the way to get their requirements can be termed as an economic institution.⁵ The Pre-Colonial economic system of Manipur can be classified into three levels. 1) Savagery; whose livelihood and shelter depended on the fauna and flora in their surroundings. 2) The Primitive; whose shelter was moved from caves to permanent huts, food producing activities substituted the food gathering. 3) Civilization; society established on the basis of agrarian structure that is full-fledged or settled agriculture. Metal tools, mainly iron tools, interchanged the stone tools and barter system was progressively replaced by the monetary system. Mercantilism became one of

¹ Singh, Lairenmayum Iboongohal. *Introduction to Manipur*: Imphal Global Publications, 2014.p.1.

² "Manipur – Jewel of India – a Mosaic of Traditions & Cultural Patterns." Accessed November 8, 2017. <http://toursoperatorindia.com/Manipur>.

³ Kabui, Gangmumei. *History of Manipur: Pre-Colonial Period*. New Delhi National Publishing House, 1991.p. 1.

⁴ Sanajaoba, Naorem. *Manipur, Past and Present: History, Polity & Law. Vol.1*. New Delhi Mittal Publications, 1988.p.3.

⁵ Devi, N. Pramodini. *The cultural History of Early Manipur*: Times publishing House Manipur, 2011.p.147.

the significant features of productive force. Small-scale industries accelerated the development of the economic system.⁶

The economic history of early Manipur, the reliable sources on important features are not sufficiently available, however the archaeological and literary findings helpful in tentatively reconstructing the basic characteristics of the economic system.⁷The archaeological discoveries of the Neolithic, bone tools from the pre-historic caves at Kangkhui, Phunal hills, Tharon and Napachik traces stone age culture of Manipur.⁸These findings indicate in this region at some point of time existence of a hunting and food gathering economy. And the further excavation at Napachik site exposes the prevalence of agricultural practices and settled life in the Valley of Manipur. The Manipuri chronicles and other literary text Puyas (ancient text) like Sakok Lamlen, Ningthou Kangbarol, Thirel Layat mentioned the innovation of indigenous varieties of paddy, the invention of agriculture, practice of shifting cultivation, and also the development of bronze and iron technology and the making of daos, axes and hoes for agriculture and related purposes. The ancient Meitei were practicing shifting cultivation before knowing the wet rice cultivation, they took out the shifting cultivation on the hill slopes or dry land forest areas.⁹The northern and eastern parts of Imphal valley, which were thickly forested dry lands, offered the ideal surroundings for the growth of this type of agriculture. The agricultural implements adopted were axes and daos for falling down trees and clearing the jungles and the small iron hoes for digging up the dirt.¹⁰Poireiton khunthokpa the first literary text revealed the paddy cultivation in the valley of Manipur.¹¹In that respect there is no reference to using plough or animal- driven in the pre- Pakhangba literature. During the Pakhangba period mention of the role of iron and domesticated animals like cows and buffaloes. Another chronicles, Naothingkhong Phambal Kaba refer to the method of shifting cultivation being practiced by the Shelloi Langmai tribes of Nongmaiching hill and adoption of wet rice cultivation by the valley inhabitants (Meiteis).¹²The royal edict of King Loiyumba (1074-1122 A.D.) known as Loiyumba Shilyen

⁶ *ibid*,p,149.

⁷ Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan. *State and Economy in Pre-Colonial Manipur*: New Delhi Akansha Publishing House, 2010,p,146.

⁸ Singh, Okram Kumar. *Stone Age Archaeology of Manipuri*:Imphal,1997.p,101,118.

⁹ Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan. *op.cit.*,p,146,147

¹⁰ Singh, Okram Kumar. *Stone Age Archaeology of Manipuri*:Imphal,997.p,4.

¹¹ Singh,M. Chandra (ed), *Poireiton Khunthokpa*: Manipuri Sahitya Parishad,1979. p,3

¹² Singh,N. Khelchandra (Ed.),*Naothingkhong Phambal Kaba*:Imphal,1968,p,38.

(Division of labour),¹³ refers to the division of labour such as clan groups and the rates of revenue imposed on the agricultural fields by the state an enforced on economic activities. It contributed a great drive to the economic system.

Economy is one of the basic aspects contributing towards the development of societies. It is an innate activity of the human society. It is the very livelihood of human beings. Since the beginning of the human society, humankind has established the art of exchange in different methods. Earlier to the innovation of the coin, the people of the early society linked each other with the barter system as a resourceful mean of transactions. As man moved from single level to another, they also raised a new economic transaction. When the coin was introduced, man used it for the medium of trade for goods in return. For survival, humans produce and reproduce a material, which is fundamentally the necessity of the daily life. To bear out this process of production and exchange, humans enter into social relations.¹⁴ Exchange is the principle of economy- full integration that compels the participants to conform to conventions where everyone sells their product for something. Exchange of the products does not necessarily require a regular market-that exists as a place to engage in a transaction of the goods, but a place where buyers and sellers congregate. People derive its livelihood from selling their products at market. The evidence of market in Manipur was established in 1580 during reign of Mungyamba.¹⁵

Agricultural production and nature of land use:

The Meitei supremacy in the Manipur valley began with the establishment of their control over the rich agriculture land. The Meitei settled on the northern plains that were the most fertile area in the valley. Agriculture is widely practiced and regarded basically as the pedestal for survival in the state. People inhabiting the hills practice slash and burn cultivation, but those residing in the valley practice wet rice plantation. Agriculture was the main livelihood and the main contribution to the kingdom economy.

¹³ Singh, Kh Chandrasekhar (ed.) *Loiyumba Shilyen*: Imphal, 1982.

¹⁴ Capaldi, Nicholas, and Gordon Lloyd. *The Two Narratives of Political Economy*: John Wiley & Sons, 2011. p.415.

¹⁵ HODSON, Thomas Callan, and Sir Charles James LYALL. *The Meitheis ... With an Introduction by Sir C. J. Lyall. Illustrated*. David Nutt, 1908. p.23.

Manipur is an agrarian-based economy. The agricultural crop of the country comprises mainly of rice, which constitutes the basic article of food and the fertility of the soil is so abundant that the crops largely show most plentiful. Dr. Brown says that “No fewer than seventeen varieties of rice are grown; these may be divided into early and late crops. The large mass of rice grown in the country is of the late varieties, which comprises thirteen kinds, primarily distinguished by the size of grain and colour. The finest of these are named Phourail, Yentik, and Loening; these are white and large grain-dal”.¹⁶

No less than 10 varieties of rice are produced in the state. These may be allocated in early and late crops. The early crop ripens in three months and is ready for cutting in September. Of late years, an enormous quantity of the early sort has been sown. Of the early, there are four varieties, viz, Sujikhong, Dumai, Kubbo phow, and Phowrel. The late crop ripens in six months and is reaped about November. The large bulk of rice grown in the country is of the late varieties, which comprise 15 kinds, chiefly notable by size of grain and colour and they are Phorail, Yenthik, Moirangphow, Phowkuk Chahow, Chahow Massapalbi, Luining, Phongang, Touthabi Phow, Chahow Puritole, Chahow Minkhang, Kukcheng Phow, Haidup Phow, Sugole Yangba, Chahow Erikole, Chahow Sempak. Rice is generally transplanted, and the land appropriate for it is wet and muddy.¹⁷

Paddies grown in Manipur are categorized separately into Anganphou (early) and Athengphou (late) crop. Saji khong, Tumai, Kabow phow, Phourel- Anganphou are the favourite varieties, Phourel, Luining and Yenthik are very popular. Farmers partially ran for the early variety, as it required less time and labour. The other late varieties were Moirang phou, Phowokok Chahaow, Chahow masa palbi, Phoungang, taothabi, Chahow Poireiton, Chahow Munkhang, Kakcheng Phou, Haitup phou, Sagol yangba, Chahow Erikole and Chahow sempak.¹⁸ Along with rice, the Meitei Pangals grew a modest quantity of jute and opium. In the homestead, they cultivated onion, garlic, ginger, spices like jeera (cumin) and Methi, Tobacco, Mustard plant, Kumchakl, Palak, Hawaii mangal Machin mubi (dal), Sagol hawaii, Morok (chilli), Yaingang (turmeric), Khongdrum (bottle gourd) Mairel (Pumpkin), Pangal Khamen (brinjal), Tejpata,

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.43.

¹⁷ Dun, E. W. *Gazetteer of Manipur*: New Delhi Manas Publications, 1992. p p, 56,57.

¹⁸ Brown, R., (F.R.C.S.E.). *Statistical Account of Manipur*: New Delhi Sanskaran Prakashak, 1975. P,9.

Tomato, Tomatato, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Lady finger, Swu (raw materials of paper), Raddish, Turnip. In Manipuri they also planted fruit trees like mango (Heinou khongnemi and Meitei heinous) Lemon, jack fruit, guava, plum cherry and peach.”¹⁹

During the reign of King khagemba the Muslims who made Manipur their home from 1606 onwards, favoured to establish their settlements by the side of water bodies, like rivers, lakes canals, tanks. The cause for this partiality was their capacity to grow pulses, grains, vegetables, and herbs on this fertile ground.²⁰ Khagemba took attention in providing irrigation facilities to the masses. Rivers and streams were dredged; the canal was dug like Kyang Khong (canal of Kyang), Takhel Khong (canal of Tripura etc.). Bunds was constructed to contain the overflow from the rivers. Agricultural technology was enhanced with the introduction of transplanting system of paddy cultivation introduced by Muslim peasants who were war prisoners. These Muslim peasants introduced the plough drawn by the bullock and buffalo. In the year 1634 A.D. Khagemba introduced a new paddy known as Taothabi (a red- tailed Paddy) which was fast growing species planted in the swamplands.²¹ The improvement of agricultural output; the cultivators were to yield revenue in the form of paddy to the state. The surplus production was made possible by the wet rice cultivation and the surplus from the production could be collected by the state. The revenue department was set under the Lourungpurel Achouba who supervised the work of Pana puren and Lourung macha. They were paid salary in paddy.²²

In the history of Manipur, there is not much information about the land tenure system or the landholding patterns, rates of revenue or rent for different categories of land the extent of cultivation in the valley. Even though the Colonial scholars and officials in the nineteenth century had left behind some useful information on the subjects in the form of official reports, accounts, and memoirs.²³ In the valley of Manipur the land areas can be classified into two i) Inkhol(Homestead land) occupied by the houses and gardens; and all the Ingkhol lands were free from revenue and could be sold at the will of the owner. It was inheritable and transferable.

¹⁹ Irene,Salam,*The Muslim Of Manipur*: New Delhi Kalpaz Publication,2010 .p,120.

²⁰ Ibid.P,113.

²¹ Kabui, Gangmumei. *History of Manipur: Pre-Colonial Period*:New Delhi National Publishing House, 1991.p,219.

²² ibid.p,220.

²³ Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan. *State and Economy in Pre-Colonial Manipur*: New Delhi Akansha Publishing House, 2010.p,149.

ii) Lou (cultivable/Agricultural land).The Lou or Paddy field in the valley were divided into –i) Tauna Lou (land under tenants), ii) Sarkari or Ningthou Lou (Kings own land), iii) Phumlou (These were rice lands held by the officers of the state in lieu of their salary.iv) Siphai lou (land of the State army),v) Manalou (Reward of paddy fields was usually given in recognition of personal contribution to the State or the king and such land were known as Manalou, vi) Brahminlou this category of land grant was popularly known as Lugun lou.Since the 18th and 19th century Manipuri kings were loyal to Vishnavites.vii) Temple lou or Lai lou (this kind of land grant was also known as Lailou). Temples and Umanglai (forest dieties) were granted paddy field for their maintenance and these lands never revert back to the King .viii) Royal family Lou or Sana lou (Members of the royal family were also granted lands and these were probably handed down from father to son.) ix) Pangal lou person of eminent service in war were granted such lands .The Pangalou holders were normally the favorites of the king.²⁴ The nobility owing to its close links with the kings and having enjoyed the agricultural lands at the pleasure of the King, could not emerge as autonomy powerful lords. This indicates the absence of landlordism in the Meitei kingdom.²⁵In kingly Manipur , the state played a significant role in the production methods by acting as the catalytic or assisting agent by the way of forming and controlling the agricultural proactive activities , like construction of bunds and dykes to check inundations, and the clearing of the drainages digging of the rivers and canals.²⁶ In tradition believed that the King Nongda Lairen Phakhangba introduced the well-established division of labour called lallup system, its contribute growth of productive forces.²⁷ Lallup literally means war organization (lal=war, Lup=organization). Lallup cover all the state works- both military and development maintenance of the kingdom. Lallup which was a feudal service extracted by the subjects to the king or the state.²⁸ In the beginning of the twelfth century the king Loiyumba was systematized and labour mobilization through the lallup system in the state service. The succeeding Meitei kings through initiations and revisions and its renovated the whole nature of the economic activity by carrying it under the direct control of the state.

²⁴ Howell,A.A. *A short Account of Land Revenue in Manipur*: Imphal,1907.p9

²⁵ Ibid.,p,8-9

²⁶ Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan.op.cit,p,154.

²⁷ Devi,N. Pramodini.*The cultural History of Early Manipur*:Kakching.Times publishing House Manipur,2011.p158

²⁸ Kabui, Gangmumei. *History of Manipur: Pre-Colonial Period*.New Delhi National Publishing House, 1991.p,126.

Industry and Manufactures:

Apart from agriculture, crafts and industry, weaving, knitting, pottery, liquor processing, so forth were the sources of income.

Handicrafts of Manipur have an exclusive place among the different trades of the country due to owning its own artistic value. Even though the handicraft industry started since time immemorial, as traditional part-time activities in rural regions without any major market demand over the year has switched into a successful industry. Existing trends of handicraft product are not just regulated to aesthetic or artistic value. It combined new design and new ideas that prepared these products marketable and expand the scope of Handicrafts products.²⁹ Still, metal technology was not so advanced in the kingdom of Manipur but in the line of handicrafts, she possesses a unique individual identity. From the time of the earlier period, Meitei used the artistic production of textile in back strap/loin loom. Silk and plain cotton are general in Meitei textile. There was believed queen Laishna wife of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba innovated several designs of cloths based on the pattern of python, the phanek phibal, Samchil, etc., and for the borders of shawls. These designs are called Namthang khulak, Khamen – chatpa, and Ningkham, which were used by the family of the king and nobles.³⁰ Later rulers improvised and produced the new pattern, cloths like Lairen, Huikok Mayek were during the reign of Khuiyo tompok (154-264 A.D) by a person named Khorian Phisaba.³¹ Also the king Taothingmang (264-364) reign khwang Iyang,³² and King Yanglou Keiphaba (969-84) in his reign embroidery on women Phanek Phiban was introduced.³³

Since time immemorial, the Meitei ancestors practiced ginning before spinning. The ginned cotton is then rolled for about a palm's length with the assistants of Lang – gom. This method is known as Mothap Naiba- spinning.³⁴ Tradition suggests that since the 11th century, led off to practice in Manipur Pang Lyon (throw shuttle loom).. At that time, Chinese silk was the most important article imported which contributed to the trade and commerce in Manipur. The Meitei

²⁹Handicraft Industries potential in Manipur. Accessed December 6, 2016. <http://investinmanipur.nic.in/handicraft.htm>.

³⁰ Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan. op.cit. 160.

³¹ Khelchandra, N(ed). *Chada Lahui*: Imphal, 1966. p, 1.

³² Singh, O Bhogeshwar (ed.). *Ningthourol Lambuba*: Imphal, 1967. p, 11, 12.

³³ Kabui, Gangmumei. *History of Manipur: Pre-Colonial Period*. New Delhi National Publishing House, 1991. p, 123.

³⁴ Bahadur, Mutua. *Traditional textiles of Manipur*: Imphal Mutua museum, 1997 p, 13.

women were especially engaged in the productions of silk and textiles. The Meitei women also excelled in the aesthetic production of handloom weaving of textile of exquisite design patterns, and textures. Khwang Lyong (loin looms) is traditional weaving loom in Manipur. Weaving with spinning of cotton yarn and silk was done by the women folk. The Loiyumba Shilyen thus projected the picture of a well organized economy of Manipur in which the wet rice agrarian economy was supplemented by the growing handloom and handicraft industries. The weaving prevalent in Manipur was an indigenous one, and the spinning, weaving and dyeing were fairly developed in the state. Later on, Handloom industry was further developed with the introduction of flying shuttle, known as Pangandem. It believed that the flying shuttle have been introduced during reign of Khagemba by the Muslim immigrants.³⁵

Pottery:

The making of Chaphu (pottery) throughout the ages in Manipur, there was a change in the present shapes and interior ornaments. The pre and proto-historic Chaphu in Manipur are handmade by thrashing with a paddle which is either plain or cord wrapped or carved. The same method is going forward in making both the historic and modern ethnographic pottery. The use of the wheel made technique is evident in some of the historic pottery. The bowl type of pottery from Kanchipur historical site and gourd-shaped pot from Kangla show a clear evidence of wheel made technique in the yesteryear. Pottery making as the blend part of the industry, played a dynamic role in the economic life of early Manipur. In cooperation decorated and plain handmade pots were found in places of Andro, Chairen, Thongjao, Nungbi Tangkhul, Oinam and Nongok Sekmai etc. These were the places practicing production for pottery industry in Manipur.³⁶ In the early historical period, pottery was made by a specific ethnic group in Manipur, namely the Chakpas who were dispersed in different parts of Manipur valley.³⁷ During the reign of the king of khagemba, the Muslim potter introduced the wheel techniques its produced attractive products.³⁸ The pot which is used traditionally for storing clean water in a house is known as Sanabun. Muslims are attributed with introducing the sophistication of pot-

³⁵ Ibid,p,13,14

³⁶ Devi,N. Pramodini.*The cultural History of Early Manipu*:Kakching Times publishing House Manipur,2011.p163.

³⁷ Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan. *State and Economy in Pre-Colonial Manipur*:New Delhi Akansha Publishing House, 2010,p,158.

³⁸ Irene,Salam,*The Muslim Of Manipur*:New Delhi Kalpaz Publication,2010 .p,128.

punkangnanbi, which later came to be named as Sananbun.³⁹ The chief ecstatic pottery manufacture as it was a very useful craft for the society, it played an essential role in the social, economic, cultural and religious life of the Manipuris.

Salt Manufacturing:

The salt has been locally manufactured in Manipur since time immemorial. The Lois and the Chakpas communities specialized or perhaps were forced to be specialized, in the natural process of manufacturing salt from the several salt wells spread over in the valley and the hills of Manipur. Pemberton wrote about the rich of valuable mineral of salt, found on its northeastern side, in the foothills about fourteenth mile away from the capital. The main salt wells are named Waikhong, Ningel, Seekong, and Chandrakhong where salt is manufactured in quantities not only sufficient for the sustenance of the inhabitants of the valley, but also to be made an article of traffic with the surrounding hill tribes, who barter it for their tobacco, ginger, cloths, and cotton.⁴⁰ The Meitei Kings took initiative in the salt industry by constructing roads connecting the villages which manufactured salt. The production of salt manufactured varied from season to season. Salt was manufactured mostly in the winter seasons when the brine water used to be at its strongest. The salt manufacturing was a singular contribution to satisfy the demand of the multitude and to the economy of the state.⁴¹

Yu or Rice beer:

Yu or rice beer country spirit, is fabricated by several Loi villages. The rice beer was an indispensable item to be used in socioeconomic, political and cultural function and spiritual observances. Therefore, in the early period the *Yu* manufacturing industry was highly developed. The sociological study on Sekmai, Andro, Phayeng, Leimaram etc. provides accurate data about the practices in this industry.⁴²

³⁹ *ibid*,p.128.

⁴⁰ Pemberton, Robert Boileau. *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India: With an Appendix and Maps*. order of the Supreme Government of India, 1835.p,28,29.

⁴¹ Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan. *Ibid*,p,90.

⁴² Devi,N. Pramodini.*The cultural History of Early Manipur*:Kakching Times publishing House Manipur,2011.p165.

Boat Manufacture:

. The boat construction was another important industry under the state supervision. This manufacture was also supported by the profound demand of boats for shipping in the waterlogged valley region and the easy accessibility of the forest and free labour of the *Lallup*. The artisans made elegant and imposing boats, both large and small. The officials, called *Hiyangloi Hanjaba* and *Hisaba hanjaba*, supervised the whole operation of construction and maintenance of the boats.⁴³ The people of *Hiroi* –Langang village (a Loi Village) in the south of the valley not far from Sugunu made distinctive boats for the kings.⁴⁴ Extensive use of boats is also shown by the annual boat race competitions, known as Hiyang Tannaba (boat race), which was regularly held in the month of September every year. As per many, seventy rowers occupied one boat in the competition. This festival was the most important held in Manipur, and great provision was made for it.⁴⁵

And the other artisans or workmen like the blacksmiths, goldsmiths and basket makers are found in each village. The subject of the development of the iron industry in Manipur can be drawn from various sources based on myths, historical information, archaeological findings, oral traditions, literary texts, etc. The principal job of the Loi community of Kakching was iron smelting and they produced various iron tools. According to T. C. Hodson the soils in the south east of the valley at Kakching lived by iron smelting.⁴⁶ An enormous quantity of iron tools manufactured in the former stage of causation was used in felling timber, tilling agricultural land, self-defence and aggression. The chronicle records the presence of a class of artisans like blacksmiths, dressmaking and weapon making. Natural resources and forests were under the control of the state. The gold washing in rivers of Manipur including, possibly, the Chindwin and its tributaries was done by the state. It was recorded in 1623 A.D.⁴⁷

The technology of brick manufacture was found out from the Chinese during the reign of Khagemba. The Chinese name for Brick is '*check*' and later included in the Meitei vocabulary.

⁴³ Singh, N. Khelchandra (ed.). *Phamlon*: Imphal, 1987. p.p, 4, 14.

⁴⁴ HODSON, Thomas Callan, and Sir Charles James LYALL. *The Meitheiis ... With an Introduction by Sir C. J. Lyall ... Illustrated*. David Nutt, 1908. p, 33.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p, 52.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p, 9.

⁴⁷ Kabui, Gangmumei. *History of Manipur: Pre-Colonial Period*. New Delhi National Publishing House, 1991. p.p, 220, 221.

The chronicle record shows the structure of the gate of the royal fortress with bricks. Silver crowns were put by the jewels and silver artisans. Statue making either by wood or copper was already done in Manipur.⁴⁸ *Senjeng* is a local word for bell metal. Utensils made of bell-metal is regularly using items of the Meiteis. During the 16th century, the barrels of gun were cast in bell metal. In Cheitharon Kumbaba it mentioned the used of bell metal sheets for roofing during the sovereignty of King Charairongba in the 17th C. Bell metal coins were in circulation beginning from king Nongda Lairen Pakhangba (33-156 A.D) till king Kulachandra(1890-91).⁴⁹

Trade and commerce

Introducing of the new technology Manipur economy had passed over the subsistence economy There was surplus traded to long distances between Manipur and neighbouring countries including upper Burma and China even. During the reign of Khagemba, who established ten markets (*Keithel*) in 1614), *Sana Keithel*, *Kha Keithel*, *Moirang Keithel*, *Khuman Keithel*, *Phaibung Keithel*, *Children Keithel*, *Namphaon Keithel*, *Konglang Keithel* and *Andro Keithel*.⁵⁰ Every Sagei or clan at the *Keithel* has its own expertise of producing rice and rice products, textiles and cotton, ceramics, fresh produce and hence along. The wealth of the clans was managed in the *Keithel*, by the senior daughter in law, who, after a period of experimentation and begin conferred the right and responsibility to represent their families by sitting in the *Keithel*, to deal on their behalf and to partake the economic policies of the country, in their favour. The enormous networks of *Keithel* over the valley, promoted the essential components of this sophisticated commercial infrastructure. Each outlying *Keithel* focused on a particular group of products according to their *sagei- leikai*. As a consequence, the Lamlong Keithel was the base of the rice trade. Precisely, dozens of varieties of rice, perhaps hundreds were brought and traded in that location.⁵¹

Among the several types of handicrafts in Manipur, wood carvings are really notable. This art in Manipur established out of the necessity. Referable to the deficiency of a dependable

⁴⁸ Ibid,221.

⁴⁹ Sharma, Laimayum Bishawnath. *Cultural Heritage Complex:Imphal Mutua Museum*, 2006,p,21.

⁵⁰ Parratt, Saroj N. Arambam. *The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur - Cheitharon Kumpapa: Original Text, Translation and Notes Vol. 1. 33-1763 CE*.London Taylor & Francis, 2005,p,70.

⁵¹Protection Of Indigenous Women's Traditional Markets." Accessed December 29, 2016. http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=leisure.Essays.Protection_Of_Indigenous_Women%27s_Traditional_Markets

communication system, the people of Manipur utilized wood to produce different items of necessities.

We take in many references to women in many productions- associated activities. It can be argued that was heavy –scale contribution of adult females in production activity, as the colonial writers did not drop out. This fact, since they were also concerned with the observation of Manipur society on a superficial level only. Therefore the fact that empty reference to Meitei women is noteworthy as participation production, particularly agriculture and weaving is clearly visible. Meitei women have inherited social responsibilities in different patterns and in a changed position. According to E.W. Dun, they are very hard working; in this respect the opposite of the male, who are lazy and slothful. Most of the work of the state, except heaviest, is performed by them and they are therefore the mainstay of the family . In agricultural occupation except for tilling the land, women do nearly all the works only. In every household, the wife weaves the cotton clothes for her household and husband. The women hold a high and liberated position in Manipur, all the internal trade exchanges of the produce of the country being brought off by them.⁵²

Dun states that women in the open air conduct the marketing of the country. Many of these collections of women are to be found throughout the Imphal or the capital city of Manipur State; but the primary gathering place for women trading there is on an empty bit of land to one side of a brick bridge here, during the former portion of the day, the women assemble with their wares for sale. In this market, which consists of food, such as dry fish, rice, veggies, pan, Supari, clothes, ornaments for the hill men and sweetmeats.⁵³The other major crops are sugar cane, maize, potato, cabbage and tomato. The primarily cropping pattern is mono cropping. The vegetable productions of the country are as follows: potatoes, sweet- potatoes or sukurkunds, Kalindri, Kolee Haoye, Haoye assungbi, brinjal, cucumber, pumpkins, onion, pepper and tobacco of good quality.⁵⁴

⁵² Sanajaoba, Naorem. *Manipur, Past and Present: History, Polity & Law.Vol.1*.New Delhi Mittal Publications, 1988.p,167.

⁵³ Dun, E. W. *Gazetteer of Manipur*:New Delhi Manas Publications, 1992.p,64.

⁵⁴ *ibid*.pp,57,58.

The Manipuri, both male and female, are inveterate chewers of pan and Supari, brought from the neighbouring district of Cachar and forms a considerable deal. The betel nut tree will not grow in Manipuri territory. Tobacco is also utilised by all classes and historic periods and the tobacco is manufactured and smoke as in Bengal.⁵⁵

Manipur as well as preserved and reared goat, cattle, buffaloes, pig, dogs and horses. This yielded a reference that they have developed animal husbandry. Poultry chicken and duck is also preserved. This signifies that Manipur has developed the animal agriculture and poultry husbandry. Apart from the husbandry activities, hunting was another past time which also delivers economic and material value of the autochthonous people of Manipur.⁵⁶

The hills of Manipur are covered with rich forests, but once upon a time the valley also covered with forest swamps and now it is totally stripped. The forests for centuries provided sustenance to the people. The forest provides cultivation fields to the hill cultivator. Forest as well provides a raw fabric for household for the structure of homes and daily way of sustenance. Hunting ground of the animals. There are mixtures of trees, in the varieties lying west of the Manipur valley huge woodland tracts of trees, comprising nagesar, jarul, Indian rubber, tun, oak, ash and bamboo are found. Along with the higher ranges to the north, trees and thorny bamboo are found.⁵⁷

Teak is common plantation to the slope overlooking the Kabow valley. The *Cinchona* (camphor) would most probably grow well on the sides of the hills, especially those lying nearest to the Manipur valley and in the Hirok range. The sole part of the immense forest tract, which are utilized those of the Jiri forest and the hill slants lying nearest to the valley. Most of the wood used in construction is obtained; some of the mixtures are stated to be proof against the depredations of the white –ant.⁵⁸

Manipur geographically and historically connects the neighbouring countries with India. Manipur and her neighbouring states were trading mainly through two gates, eastern i.e. Former

⁵⁵ Brown, R., (F.R.C.S.E.). *Statistical Account of Manipur*:New Delhi Sanskaran Prakashak, 1975.p,20.

⁵⁶ *Economic and Political Weekly*: Sameeksha Trust, 1998.p,170.

⁵⁷ Brown, R (F.R.C.S.E.). *Statistical Account of Manipur*:New Delhi Sanskaran Prakashak, 1975.p,5.

⁵⁸ *ibid*.p,6.

Burma and China (Yunnan Province), and the western i.e. Cachar and Sylhet (now in Bangladesh). Manipur had a limited relationship with trade and commerce towards the eastern frontier.⁵⁹The Burmese and the Chinese were main trading partners in the east. It has transacted through the kabaw valley. In 1861-69 Silk formed an important export item from Manipur to Burma and the manufacturers were migrants from kabaw valley. The main imported item was salt silk, wax and ivory.⁶⁰

The outdoor trade of Manipur was largely through Cachar that was more easily reachable and partly with plain Brahmaputra areas. From the Burma the Manipuris were importing certain goods like tea seeds and buffaloes and exporting them to Cachar. As well as the export item from Manipur was rice, cattle, timber and bamboo. Timber was floated on Barak to reach Silchar, and rice was transported through carts to Dimapur. The hill people coming from the surrounding hills exchanged their products of cotton, chillies and Lac with rice, salt, cloth and several articles on daily market in the valley. Manipur used to import goods, like yarn, salt, dried fish, betel nuts and cotton piece etc.⁶¹

The formal designation of social and economic function of private families by King Loiyumba (1074-1112) was indeed a really significant step in the production of the goods. We may therefore say that silk weaving, metal and exchange were not insignificant, but could go to exchange networks and establishes the capacity of economy to accommodate specialized groups for production including the dynamism of the economic system.

Conclusion:

In the long history of Manipur which can be traced archaeologically from a very early period to the emergence of Kings in the early mediaeval period, we discover a historical continuity. In this historical continuity, the Imphal valley has been at the marrow, in terms of civil order, economic

⁵⁹ Singh, E. Ishwarjit. *Manipur, a Tourist Paradise*: New Delhi B.R. Publishing Corporation, 2005, p.134.

⁶⁰ "A Historical viewpoint of Kabaw Valley." Accessed December 29, 2016. <http://www.thesangaexpress.com/30394-a-historical-viewpoint-of-kabaw-valley/>.

⁶¹ "Pre Colonial Trade of Manipur Part 2 By Budha Kamei." Accessed November 8, 2017. http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=manipur.History_of_Manipur.Pre-colonial_trade_of_Manipur_Part_2_By_Budha_Kamei.

infrastructure and socio- religious and the cultural secretary. Though the border of Kangleipak and its transition to Manipur waxed and waned over the centuries, the Imphal valley was the kernel part.

The economic changes inaugurated by Khagemba (1597-1652) like the large scale introduction of the wetland, agricultural and trade goods, like tobacco, metal, brick making transformed the economic structure of Manipur in two ways, firstly it led to the increase of the resource base and therefore increased the available surplus in bulk. Secondly, the diversity of crops and good also brought in craft specialization and social stratification, this period that also witnessed the maturation of a granary store. During the reign of Khagemba marked a shift in the economy from use economy to an exchange economy took place. It was the broad economic base of Manipur, along with the shift of the economic system that ran to a shift in the other areas.

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