

## THE IRIL RIVER VALLEY, MANIPUR: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

*The article is a humble attempt to examine the history and topography of Iril river valley of Manipur. Iril River originated from Lakhamei, a Poumei village near Makhel, Senapati District; the length of the river from its origin upto Kangla is about 400 kms. From Irong it is known as Manipur River and finally falls in Chindwin River, Myanmar. The Neolithic site of Napachik is located on the right bank of Manipur River at Bishnupur district. It is a small hillock which lies in between the village of Ithai and Wangu. In 1979, a Neolithic Celt was unearthed on the south west slope of the hillock. The excavation of the hillock was carried out in 1981. The data are based on available sources. In 1991, during the course of exploration, a number of sites were located on the two banks of Iril River. One of the sites already known and protected at Sekta was selected for the first ever detailed archaeological investigations in Manipur. It is located at a distance of 16 km north-east of Imphal East District on the left bank of Iril River (tributary of Manipur River). A recent excavation was made at Yaral pat on the Iril River Bank in 2012. The finding from the excavation included different types of pottery including tripod legs and a full skeleton of a horse after digging at a depth of one meter.*

*Manipur which someone would like to call a flower on the lofty height is situated in the North-Eastern corner of India bordering Myanmar on the eastern side. It is the easternmost state of the country and lies between 23.5<sup>0</sup>N – 25.4<sup>0</sup>N and 93.4<sup>0</sup>E – 94.3<sup>0</sup>E. Manipur has a sub-tropical to temperate climate. The state is bounded by Nagaland in the north, by Mizoram and Chin Hills (Myanmar) in the south, the Somra tract and upper Chindwin district of Myanmar on the east, by Cachar district of Assam in the west and by the borders of the country Myanmar in the east as well as in the south. The state has an area about 22,327 sq.km. about 92% of which is covered by hills ranging from 1500-2900 metres above the sea level (masl) and a picturesque valley*

*measuring 1800 sq.km. (800-1000 masl) in the middle. Manipur state has an average rainfall of 200-250 cm. The usual range of temperature is 0-33<sup>0</sup>C.<sup>1</sup> The slope of the Manipur valley is from north to south. There are hill ranges which surrounded nine layers. There are four major rivers basins in Manipur, the Barak river basin (Barak valley) to the west, the Manipur River Basin in Central Manipur, the Yu River Basin in the East and a portion of the Layne River Basin in the north. They run parallel from north to south leaving the valley in the middle. The Western hills are drained by the Barak River and its tributaries and 50% of the state's total catchment area is occupied by the Barak drainage system while the central and eastern hills are drained by rivers and streams that flow into the Chindwin drainage of Myanmar. Because of four river basins, the state soil is fertile and the production of agriculture is good. Important rivers draining the western area include the Maku, Barak, Jiri, Irang and Leimatak. Rivers draining the eastern part of the state, the Yu river Basin, include the Chamu, Khunou and other short streams. Physiographically, it is in two distinct physical regions, the hill area and the plains.<sup>2</sup>*

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The study solely depends on the preliterate society which left only stone and bone artifacts, fossils and rocks dealing with Palaeo-environments, pollen grains, flora and fauna etc. Coming to the prehistoric study of Manipur the area of zone is a part and parcel of the Indo-Myanmar geological unit. A number of routes in the hill ranges of Manipur are connected with Assam on one side and Myanmar and Yunan province on the other side since early period. Most of the flora and fauna of Manipur are also similar to those of the sub-tropical South-East-Asia.<sup>3</sup> South- East Asia is a region of great biological diversity. This diversity is attributed to the meeting of three continental plates (viz, the Indian, Chinese and Burmese plate) in the past, which has three distinct faunae and an additional factor, the recent geological history, especially the Himalayan Orogeny, which played an important role in the speciation and evolution of groups inhabiting mountain streams.<sup>5</sup> The occurrence of marine fossils and rock of early and mid Tertiary Age suggests that Manipur is Mid Tertiary or Late Tertiary age and has formed due to tectonic movements resulting from Himalaya progeny. Tools found from Nongpok Keithelmanbi, Thoubal District age is 6000 to 5000 B.C. tools types are Chopper, pick, scraper, spilt pebbles, flakes, blade etc. During late Pleistocene, most of the valley areas were swampy, marshy and not suitable for habitation.<sup>4</sup>

## **RIVER:**

The four great civilizations of early human history developed in close dependence on river and the fertile, easily worked soils of their floodplains: the Sumerians on the Tigris and Euphrates river in Iraq, the Harrapans on the Indus in Pakistan, the Chinese on the Hawang Ho (Yellow River) and the Yangtze River in Central China and

the Egyptians on the Nile River in Egypt. Rivers and their valleys have continued to play important roles in the course of history; the exploration of much of North America was via river routes, and most of each major settlement is adjacent to rivers.<sup>6</sup>

The fauna & flora of Manipur is of special interest in the fact that it is drained by two important drainages of the world, viz, Barak-Brahmaputra in the western half and Chindwin-Irrawaddy drainage is entirely separated by high mountain ranges from the water sheds of the Barak-Brahmaputra. The state is considered to be the meeting place of the Eastern Himalaya and Burmese region.<sup>8</sup> The Shrinking of the lakes in Manipur valley, the last phase of which happened some time during 7000 B.C. and stripping of hill slopes lead to weakening of South west monsoon and comparatively intensified winter monsoon. After the shrinking of the lakes the drainage pattern that emerged lead to the formation of Imphal, Iril and other rivers system in the valley. All these rivers and their tributaries normally flow from north to south. These rivers are still cutting deep into the sand silt and clay deposits of the valley as could be ascertained from the study of the Iril River near Sekta. As such it was thought desirable to search for archaeological sites of early historical period along the banks of the newly formed rivers. During the course of exploration a number of sites were located on the two banks of Iril River in 1991.<sup>7</sup> As the drying up of lakes in the valley started sometime around 10,000 years back all the stone ages sites are found on the hill top. As during Neolithic times the valley as either occupied by lake water or wherever it has receded the exposed land was unfit for human occupation due to its marshy nature.

Optically stimulated Luminescence (OSL) dating technique is used to determine the age of the Imphal River at Gopibung. Study of the age of this river is of interest and helpful to date the age of the valley of Manipur as the river is flowing to the foot of the important Kaobru Hill, as this hill is believed to be the place for the first ancient human settlement of Manipur as quoted in the history of Manipur “Awang Kaobru Asuppa Laimanai Khunda Ahanba”.<sup>9</sup> Since, Imphal and Iril Rivers are intimately connected with the human settlement of the surrounding villages; the result will be helpful to study the early settlement of Manipur Valley.

**There are many dating methods of archaeological and geological materials such as**

- (a) Dating base on radiation damage-thermoluminescence (TL), optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) and electron spin resonance (ESR) dating.
- (b) Dating with isotopes which includes <sup>14</sup>C dating has been difficult due to limited organic material for radiocarbon and problems with reworking of old carbon in many fluvial sediments and surface exposure dating.

- (c) Other methods-cosmogenic nuclide dating of terrace surface and U-series dating of pedogenic carbonate, dating with uranium-series disequilibrium, alpha recoil dating.

With this idea this work aims to reconstruct the depositional environment, sediment provenance and landscape development in the River by OSL and TL techniques and found as<sup>10</sup>:

- (a) The age of the sample collected from Thoubal River at Leirongthel, Thoubal, Manipur at a depth of 6 ft. is found to be (37,400 +-850) yrs in average indicating the sample belongs to a period of about 35,335 B.C.
- (b) The age of the sample from the terrace at a depth of 8ft. of Thongjaolok River, Bisnupur, Manipur is found to be about (14,800+-380) yrs indicating that the sample was belong to a period of about 12,800 B.C.

The study of the terrace of the river will be helpful in understanding the site formation processes of the sedimentary deposits and to reconstruct the climatic change due to deforestation that was resulted because of the human settlement in the region.<sup>11</sup>

## RIVER:

River is a large, natural stream of water that flows overland within a channel. Most rivers begin in mountains or hills. A river ends where it flows into another river, desert basin, ocean or lake. A river is the main part of a *river system*, which also includes all the smaller streams that supply water to the river. A region of land that is drained by a river system is known as a *drainage basin*<sup>12</sup>. Rivers have played a major role in the growth and sustenance of civilization since times immemorial. All the major civilizations began, progressed and even perished in river basins; in some cases the extinction of the river basin was directly linked to that of the civilization. River has been classified as early as 1911 by Shelford based on physio-chemical characteristics of stream bed. Later classifications were based upon water temperature. The world's longest river is the Nile River in Africa, which flows for 6,695 km. The next longest is the Amazon River in South America, which is about 6,437 km long. The Amazon carries more water than any other river and more water than the Nile, the Mississippi river in the United States and the Yangtze River in china combined. Rivers have a high degree of interfacing with the lithosphere along the banks of rivers and there is a great deal of transfer of chemicals from the lithosphere into river waters through rainwater runoff and erosion of river banks.<sup>13</sup>

The inner valleys of some great alluvial rivers contain the sites of ancestral permanent settlements, including pioneer cities. Sedentary settlement in Hither Asia began about 10,000 BP (year before present) at the

site of Ariha (ancient Jericho). Similar settlement in the Tigris-Euphrates and Nile valleys dates back to at least 6000 BP. The first settlers are thought to have practiced a hunting economy, supplemented by harvesting of wild grain. Civilization in the Indus Valley prominently represented at Mohenjo-Daro dates from about 4500 BP, civilization in the Ganges Valley from about 3000 BP permanent settlement in the valley of the Huang Ho has a history 4,000 years long and the first large irrigation system in the Yangtze catchment dates back to roughly the same time. Greek invaders of the Aral Sea, east of the Caspian, encountered irrigating communities that had developed from about 2300 BP onward. The influence of climatic shifts on these prehistoric communities has yet to be worked out. In wide areas, these shifts included episodic desiccation from 12,000 or 10,000 BP onward; in what are now desert environments, increased dependence on the rivers may have proved as much a matter of necessity as of choice.<sup>15</sup> By original usage, a river is flowing water in a channel with defined banks. Modern usage includes rivers that are multichannelled, intermittent or ephemeral in flow and channels that are practically bankless. The word stream (ultimately from the Indo-European root *srou-*) emphasizes the fact of flow; as a noun it is synonymous with river and is often preferred in technical writing. Arroyo and (dry) wash connote ephemeral streams of their resultant channels. Tiny streams or channels are known as rills or runnels.<sup>14</sup>

The historical record includes marked shifts in the appreciation of rivers, numerous conflicts in use demands and an intensification of use that has rapidly accelerated in the present century. The Amazon remains naturally navigable by ocean ships for 3,700 km, the Yangtze for 1,000 km and the partly artificial St. Lawrence Seaway for 2,100 km. With a history of at least 5000 years, controlled irrigation now affects nearly 7,50,000 years, 19,40,000 sq km of land, three-quarters of it in East and South Asia and two-fifths in mainland China alone. Their rate of sediment delivery is equivalent to an average lowering of the lands by one foot in 9,000 years, a rate that is sufficient to remove all the existing continental relief in 2,50,00,000 years.<sup>17</sup> Certain aspects of the changes in river systems through time are treated in the Pleistocene epoch; Holocene Epoch; climatic change and the general interrelationship of rivers with other parts of the Earth's hydrosphere is covered in Hydrologic cycle. Similar carryover occurs with glaciers and to some extent also with permanent snowfields, water abstracted by the icecaps of high latitudes and by large mountain glaciers can be retained for many years, up to about 2,50,000 years in the central Antarctic cap.

Where riverine cities did arise, they commanded ready means of communication; the two lands of Upper and Lower Egypt, for instance, were unified by the Nile. Salinization is known to have damaged the irrigated lands of Ur, progressively from about 4400 to 4000 BP and may have ruined the Sumerian Empire of the time; but the relative importance of environmental and social deterioration in prehistoric hydraulic civilizations remains a matter of debate.<sup>16</sup> In various intervals of history, rivers have provided the easiest and in many areas the only

means of entry and circulation for explorers, traders, conquerors and settlers. Western European history records the rise of 13 national capitals on sizable rivers, exclusive of seawater inlets; three (Vienna, Budapest and Belgrade) lie on the Danube with two others, Sofia and Bucharest, on feeder streams above stem floodplain level. In modern history, both in North America and northern Asia, natural water-ways directed the lines of exploration, conquest and settlement: in both areas, passage from system to system was facilitated by portage along lines defined by temporary ice-marginal or ice-diverted channels. Many pioneer settlers of the North American interior entered by means of natural waterways, especially in Ohio.

### **SOURCE OF RIVER WATER:**

Almost all river water comes from rain or melted snow. Most of the water reaches rivers indirectly. In some cases, water called surface runoff flows over the land to the river. In other cases, the water soaks into soil and rocks and becomes ground water. The ground water then moves slowly through the soil or underground rocks to the rivers. Other sources of river water include glaciers, springs and overflowing lakes.<sup>18</sup>

### **RIVER SYSTEMS:**

River system are important geomorphic agents in sculpting the Earth's surface and are excellent monitors of environmental change because they integrate signals related to the geology, geomorphology, climate, hydrology, vegetation and tectonics from within their catchments.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, fluvial deposits are commonly associated with archaeological sites. A river system consists of the river itself and all the smaller streams that supply water to the river. A river is highest at its headwaters, where it begins. It is lowest at its mouth, where it ends. Some rivers flow gradually from headwaters to mouth. Other rivers have irregular features, such as waterfalls, rapids and canyons. Many rivers that empty into oceans have deep, broad mouths called estuaries. Channels are passages in which river water flows. A river channels extends from the headwater to the mouth. The channel bottom is the river's bed and the edges of the channel are the banks. Tributaries are runoff collects in tiny, temporary channels called rills. Rills often flow into streams that eventually join to form rivers. Smaller streams that flow into larger ones are called tributaries.<sup>22</sup>

### **USES OF RIVERS:**

For centuries, people have used rivers for transportation and trade. In the world, early explorers, traders and pioneers traveled on rivers. Later, they built towns along major rivers. Several of these towns grew into large cities.<sup>19</sup> On the Mississippi River, for instance, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Memphis and New Orleans became large

cities. Farmers grow crops in the fertile land of river plains and the terraced surface above those plains. Rivers are direct sources of water for domestic, agricultural, industrial, hydropower generation, the cooling water for many fossil and nuclear-fueled power plants.<sup>20</sup> In addition, they serve as transportation routes, as carries and natural treatment plants for human wastes and as the habitats of ecologically, economically and recreationally valuable fish and wildlife.

### **RIVER DELTA:**

Deltas have been important to mankind since prehistoric times. The abundant wildlife and edible plants in deltaic areas attracted early man. Mazes of interconnecting waterways provided natural avenues for communication and trade. Sands, silts and clays deposited by floodwaters were extremely productive and as man's agricultural technology increased, huge civilization flourished in the deltaic plains of the Nile and Tigris-Euphrates. Excavations by archaeologists have revealed the grandeur of those civilizations. Among the ancient rock deltas that has been described in the geologic literature are the Blount in Tennessee, Queen stone and Catskill of New York and Pennsylvania, Old Red Sandstone of Great Britain, Red Bed-ford of Ohio, Pennsylvania coal Bearing Cycles of Kentucky; Rawlins of Wyoming; Mesa Verde of Colorado; the Miocene surface & Tertiary of the Gulf coast.<sup>25</sup> Deltas are low-lying plains composed of stream-borne sediments deposited by a river at its mouth as it enters either in lakes or sea. The term delta (from the Greek letter  $\Delta$ ) was first used in c.450 B.C. by the Greek historian Herodotus in referring to the triangular alluvial deposits at the mouth of the Nile River and the sea was deltoid in shape. The Mississippi River and the Nile River have large deltas. Of the larger deltas in the world, 11 are located in the USSR, 7 are in Southeast Asia, 6 are in South America and 4 each are in Africa and North America. The classic delta formed in this way has a 'bird-foot' pattern of distributaries. Deltas are an important geological location for petroleum.<sup>24</sup>

### **MARINE ARCHAEOLOGY:**

At present, several new dimensions and branches of archaeology have been developed. They are 1. Ethno archaeology 2. Historical archaeology 3. Numismatics 4. Experimental archaeology 5. Archaeometry 6. Aviation archaeology 7. Maritime archaeology 8. Industrial archaeology 9. Politics & archaeology.

Marine archaeology is the branch specifically studies human interaction with the river, lake and sea through the study of associated physical remains, be they vessels, shore side facilities, port-related structures, cargoes, human remains and submerged landscapes. Marine archaeology can be practiced within the historical, industrial or pre-historical periods.<sup>26</sup> Another associated discipline is underwater archaeology. An example from

the pre-historic era would be the examination of remains submerged in ancient wells or indigenous sites now lying under water yet well away from the sea or inland waters. The study of submerged aircraft lost in the river, lake or in the sea is an example from the historical or industrial era. Many specialist sub-disciplines within the broader maritime and underwater archaeological categories have emerged in recent years.

## **LUMINESCENCE:**

Luminescence is the emission of light from crystalline materials following the absorption of energy from an external source. The external source of energy can take a variety of forms, but for dating purpose the source is naturally occurring, ionizing radioactivity (alpha, beta, gamma and cosmic radiation). Release of the absorbed energy requires a stimulus, which again can have varied sources, but for materials used in dating the source is usually either heat, resulting in thermally stimulated luminescence or more commonly thermo-luminescence (TL) or light, resulting in optically stimulated Luminescence (OSL). Quartz and feldspar are two minerals with suitable luminescence properties commonly used in dating. Luminescence dating has now become an established method for providing chronologies for sedimentary deposits containing sand or slit sized mineral grains. It has played and will continue to play, a major role in providing a chronology for human evolution, dispersal and answer to related questions.

The study of fluvial deposits can provide important archives of past changes in climate, base level and tectonics commonly contain archaeological horizons. That is the application of OSL dating to fluvial deposits can provide important contributions to the geomorphologic, sedimentologic, Paleoseismic and archaeological research communities. At a site on the Don River in southern Russia, Ankovich and Holliday presented a series of OSL ages on sediments. These results demonstrate that modern humans were on the central plain of Europe and then reached Australia only 10- 15 thousands year after they left Africa.

Review of the reported TL/OSL ages of marine/river terraces of pioneer workers show our results are in conformity with their results. Reporting the results of many workers like Mozzi and Raposa dated middle terrace deposits of the Tagus River in Alpiarca, Portugal in relation to early human occupation have pointed to a TL/OSL age 1,50,000 to 70,000 yr B.P. to support archaeological evidence.<sup>27</sup> All these facts have shown the increased potentialities of the Luminescence dating of river terrace.



## THE IRIL RIVER:

According to the creation of Manipur, once upon a time, it was full of water. During this time the level was slant north to south. Source of the oral history, the southern part was dugout a hole by the 'Hutanga' and all the water was drained out from Manipur to Myanmar. It was known as 'Chingnunghut'. To the beginning of the settlement, the human being comes down to the *Kangla* (valley) from hills of *Koubru*, *Chingdai*, *Makhel*, etc.<sup>28</sup>

The King *Taothingmang Yoiheiton* (264-364 A.D.) ruled 100 years long in *Meitrabak* (Manipur). As soon he ruled *Meitrabak*, he started to clean the main river along with his elder brother *Yoimongba*. *Taothingmang* cleaned the *Iril River* which was no any stone while *Yoimongba* in the *Turel Achouba* or the *Imphal River*. When *Yoimongba* reached at *Lilong*, King *Telheiba* of *Phunan* who was strong king of *Angom Clan* obstructed to dig and clean of the River in his jurisdiction.<sup>29</sup> So he diverted the *Imphal River* or *Turel Achouba* on the western side. When the younger brother *Taothingmang* who cleaned the *Iril River* reached at *Lilong*, he was surprised to see the *Imphal River* diverted to western instead of southernward. He asked *Telheiba*, where about his brother and when he left the spot. He approached to *Telheiba* that he might his jurisdiction to meet his elder brother. But *Telheiba* refused his approach, then they waged a war each other. King *Phunan Telheiba* who was well skilled in archery succeeded in the war. *Taothingmang* was hurt by the arrow and his naval intestine was spread out to the ground with full of bleeding. This place was known as *Nganglou*, meaning spread out red colour bleeding.<sup>30</sup> Due to restriction of the dig of the *Iril River* southward at *Lilong*, so there was the meeting point the two rivers namely the *Iril River* dug by *Taothingmang* and the *Imphal River* or *Turel Achouba* dug by *Yoimongba*. This meeting point is known as *Irong* or *Arong*.

*Taothingmang* searched his brother to the *Turel Achouba* dug by his brother and met each other. Then they dug *Manipur River* together southernward. When they reached *Lokha Haokha* near *Sugnu*, the people advised to go back home soon because of *Kakyen*, the giant migratory bird from other country. *Kakyen* ate not only birds, animals, but also human beings, so all the people were hiding at home.<sup>31</sup> As human beings could be eaten easily, it was also known as *Kakyen Mingamba*. By the advice of *Leimarel*, the Goddess, the two brothers collected iron from *Wangkhei Oakthiram* near *Kangla* and made the spear, arrow, etc. During the period of *Taothingmang*, wild birds and animals were killing, so there was less in number. Royal Meitei King *Taothingmang* with his Queen Meitei *Leima Haonukhu* ruled 100 years long and gave birth their son *Khui Ningomba*. They killed the *Kakyen Mingamba*. One wing of *Kakyen* was put on *Chingnunghut* and the other wing was put in the *Loktak Lake* for not to dry up the water of the lake. This place was known as *Ething*. After then, the King of the *Lokha Haokha* levied the taxes annually to *Taothingmang*.<sup>32</sup>

**The name of Iril is originated from the followings:**

1. Root of Linwai Yi is called Iril.
2. Taothingmang was hurt by Phunan Telheiba and his naval intestine spread out on the ground and bleeding from the stomach, so it is called Iril River.
3. The hill Makokching of Ichaiwangma which is inhabited by universal creature 'Atingkok Maru Sidaba' and 'Taothingmang' is the origin of Iril River.

The Iril River lies on the near eastern side of the Kangla beyond the Imphal River. It starts from the Lakhmei Hill of Lakhmei Village of Ukhrul District bordering with Senapati District. It is a big river flow, of which that originating from Lakhmei Village with its tributaries forming three channels 400 km towards the east from Kangla through Sekta and Arong (Lilong) is called Iril River.<sup>35</sup> The Iril is one of the biggest and longest rivers of Manipur. It is so called Iril because Taothingmang Yoiheiton cleans the entire line of the river. Lakhs of people settle on either bank of the river with deep devotion and rituals of water Goddess Ereima. According to the book of 'Irai Leima Emagi Ahanba Saruk', edited by Thongam Ibotombi says that the universal or human creature 'Athingkok Maru Sidaba' ruled at Makokching, the origin of the Iril River was the Tributaries flowing to the Iril River which was dug or cleaned by Lainingthou Taothingmang Yoiheiton.<sup>33</sup> This river safeguard so many living beings/things including human beings settling on the line of river banks and looked after by Ereima, the Goddess. Iril River is also known as Ereima Iril Leima because all the villages/civilizations worshiped Ereima Goddess. Akoijam Tomcha' book 'Laija Eshingi Tengtharol', writes on "The Ereima Goddess was the part of the body of the universal creature 'Atingkok Sidaba'.<sup>34</sup> Either Athingkok Maru Sidaba or Lainingthou Taothingmang Yoiheiton has their shrine at Makokching of Ichaiwangma, so all the people worship the Goddess Ereima.

**The Tributaries of the Iril River are as Follows:<sup>39</sup>**

- i. Iril tributary.
- ii. Ihang tributary formed by channels of Tinsong Village, 100 km from Lakhmei Village.
- iii. Ithoi tributary formed by channels of Khamsom hill of Ukhrul District to Iril.
- iv. Ichai tributary formed by tributaries or channels from Koubru Hill to Iril at Saikhul of Senapati District.
- v. Several channels from Thangal cave and Thangal Hills and several channels from Nurathen hills formed Ikou tributary at Ikou.
- vi. Ikop which is formed by channels of Makou Hill of Pourabi Yenmanlok of Senapati Hill flows through Wairi village and joined by water from Natum Ching (hill) and fields as tributaries of Iril at Sekta.

vii. Itam tributary formed by channels of Chingnungkhok, Tellou-Chana, Nongada, Seijang, Leimakhongmapal, Langthabi Ching (hill) of Sekta, Pidonu Ching of Pungdongbam, Lamlai-Chalou, Yourabung join as tributaries of Iril at Sawombung Kabui Khunjao.

The river flows with a terrible force among the stones rooting out a number of big trees and meet with a river so called Ihang. The Iril River flows towards the north from Tora and Champhung and merges with the river. The flowing clear water merges with sandy dirty water and this is called Ihang. The river flows towards the south and merges with the Ithoi River. Thus the merged current of Iril, Ihang and Ithoi merges with Ichai River which is originated from the Koubru Hill and flows through the centre of the Saikul village. Thus the merged current of the Iril river, Ihang, Ithoi and Ichai river flows towards the south and meets at Ikou with currents that come from the Hill of Thangal Surung. Thus the merged streams of five rivers Iril, Ihang, Ithoi, Ichai and Ikou river flows through Pukhao Naharup, Ahallup, Khabam, Laipham and Maraori village meeting the Shrines of Ereima Goddess one after another. As the river flows the south when it reaches Sekta, it is merged with Ikop Pat flows from Wairi, Pourabi Hill, Sanapat hill and Natum Ching in the western side of the Iril River.<sup>38</sup> Thus the Iril river merged with six streams - Iril, Ihang, Ithoi, Ichai, Ikou and Ikop river flows in a body towards the south and when it reaches Yourabung Kabui Khunjao, it merges with Itam river. Thus it becomes the current of seven streams- Iril, Ihang, Ithoi, Ichai, Ikou, Ikop and Itam River.

The river flows towards the south with a slight curve (turn) to the west when it meets with the Lilong River. There is an interesting story why the place was called Lilong. Two rivers dug by the two brothers Yoimongba and Taothingmang marched together to merge. So it was called Iril Lilong.<sup>36</sup> It flows towards the southern part of Manipur and is joined at Irong or Arong (Lilong) by both the Iril and Imphal rivers to form the Manipur River which flows between Chandel and Churachanpur, this river sometimes known as Chingnunghut joins the Chindwin River in Myanmar.<sup>37</sup>

The villages of Pukhao Nahalup, Ahallup, Khabam, Laipham, Maraori, Sagolmang, Lamboikhul, Sekta, etc., watered by the abode of the Meetei deities Ereima and Wangbren Khana Chaoba. This river also served the purpose of trade as goods were conveyed to & fro from the hills and valley. It was one of the important rivers for transporting trade. At Sekta there was a port for exchanging goods from both the sides.

### **THE MANIPUR RIVER OR THE TURAL ACHOUBA:**

There are about 20 rivers in Manipur. Rivers flow from east to west and south ward. Rivers that flow southward are Iril, Imphal, Nambul, Thoubal, Khuga, Chakpi, Sekmai, and Manipur Rivers. Rivers that flow

westward are Barak, Irang, Makru, Tuibai, and Leimatak. Rivers that flow eastward are Lokchao, Tuyungbi, U, Taret and Ethamlok. Excessive water has drained out through the heart of the Manipur valley by Imphal and Iril, the two tributaries of Manipur River to Southward. According to R.B. Pemberton's book 'The Eastern Frontier of India', all the tributaries or channels from hills as well as valley flow to the rivers and drained out.<sup>40</sup> There is still no discovery of some area of Manipur River which is dense forest and deep river banks of high range passing from southern part of Sugunu through Manipur valley. Between the two hills, there is giant stream sound and it is known as Chingnunghut.<sup>41</sup>

The Manipur River is also known as 'Run Va' or 'Run' by the Chin State. The hill ranges between the Manipur River and the Chwindin River are known as Yaon Yaon Kalan Taon.<sup>43</sup> The hill ranges known as Niyenjaya is on the west of the Manipur River. It is the sub-range of Araphan, the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest hill of the state. The name of the Tiddim Road (Imphal to Chin State Road) was coined by the British from the big 'Tiddim Town' lying on the Bank of the Manipur River in the Chin State. Flow the stream between the two high and large hill ranges, very fast with a gigantic sound, so the Manipur River is known as 'Taku Pani' in Myanmar. Its stream from Manipur joined to the Mit Thai River which passes the Chin State at Tonjang, Tiddim, Falam and valley of Magui Division, then again joins to the Chwindin River at Kalewa. This place is Boat port or multi waterways of Chwindin River.<sup>42</sup> Between Tonjang and Chikha there are numbers of huge rock boulders in river banks at the foot of the hills. There is a Bailey Bridge which was constructed by the British during the Second World War.

The Manipur River was a main secret river route for the Japanese Burma Campaign to enter Manipur during the 2<sup>nd</sup> WW. Japanese Army up streamed with their Rubber Boat at night in Manipur River. So, British plane was in search of them but could not find due to dense forest and deep river banks. There is a source of history that Japanese entered Manipur from the Tiddim Road as well as the Manipur River.<sup>44</sup>

### **NAPACHIK:**

The Neolithic site of 'Napachik' is located on the right bank of Manipur River at the southern part of the Manipur valley in the Bishnupur district. It is a small hillock which lies in between the village of Ithai and Wangu. In 1979, a Neolithic Celt was unearthed on the south west slope of the hillock which is 18.5 meter high. The excavation of the hillock was carried out in 1981 under the supervision of O.K. Singh and re-excavated in 1985. The site was dug up through seven layers. The excavations have yielded very interesting finds like potsherds and lethal tools. There are 783 pieces of potsherds, (346 plain and 437 corded) whereas the lithic types include 2 chopper, scupper, three flakes, one edge ground knife, one broken grinding stone, 2 ground and

polished Celts and 18 other unspecified pieces which may be classified as pebble and flake tools. The discovery of fortytwo tripod legs of varied types indicates that the wares had legs.<sup>48</sup>

### **Sekta:**

Sekta Archaeological Living Museum which is known as Sekta Mound or Kei site, within the Sekta Village was excavated under the Directorship of A.K. Sharma, Superintending Archaeologist, ASI Pre-Historic Branch, Nagpur, along with his party in collaboration with the State Archaeology, Department of Arts & Culture, Govt. of Manipur w.e.f. 23<sup>rd</sup> March to 12<sup>th</sup> April, 1991. Some of the burial layers are now exhibited among the four trenches. Some archaeological remains consisting of ancient coins, bronze vessels, rings, beads, earthen pots have been unearthed.<sup>46</sup> Sekta is located at a distance of 18 km North-East of Imphal East on the left bank of Iril River. During the course of exploration a number of sites were located on the two banks of Iril River in 1991. One of the sites already known and protected by the State Archaeology, Department of Arts & Culture, Govt. of Manipur at Sekta was selected for the first ever detailed archaeological investigations in Manipur. Though there are at least six burial mounds and a sprawling habitation site at Sekta, only one mound was located and protected by the State Archaeology.<sup>45</sup>

### **SALIENT FEATURES OF THE EXPOSED BURIAL SITES ARE:<sup>47</sup>**

- a. Human skull with a copper mask and Chinese bowls made of clay.
- b. Six pots of different sizes, five of which are red and black.
- c. A large number of secondary pots.
- d. Varieties of beads, rings, ear rings, bangles, bracelets, tinklets and iron implements.
- e. The biggest Jar contains pieces of human bones (teeth, skull, pieces of long bones).
- f. The black flower vase probably used for water or wine.

### **Yaral Pat:**

A recent discovery was made at Moirangkampu Sajeb, Yaral pat, Imphal East on the Iril River Bank by Prof. L. Kunjeswori Devi in December 2012 excavated a site in the paddy field at Yaral Pat. The finding from the excavation included different types of pottery including tripod legs. One of the most interesting finding is a full skeleton of a horse after digging at a depth of one meter.

## CONCLUSION:

As we are approaching the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have to look for the new archaeological dating. As the human beings settling at the Iril River Valley since from prehistoric time is the evidence from the history, oral history, archaeological findings, folklore, folksong Pena song, literature, etc. Such as the dating of rock art and standing stones and the identification, the bio-turbation of archaeological deposits, rejection of contaminant grains and a reliable method to date individual grains of quartz and feldspar would allow a variety of contentious issues to be addressed. Such a move would bring luminescence dating into line with other numerical dating method, which have already reaped the benefits from using small samples. The direct dating of heated artifacts, the historical foundation of luminescence dating, will continue to play a major role in archaeology. However, while developments of long-range and high-precision luminescence chronologies pose the hardest challenges, they also offer the greatest prospects to open new windows onto our human past. So there are further investigations for future generations.

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