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GRT CLAN AFFILIATION IN MANIPUR: NINGTHOUJA AND ANGOMA HISTORICAL PERCEPTION

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Abstract:-The steady growth of human civilization was allied with the changing practice and progressive forces of cultural activities. The gradual development of human culture was associated with the evolution of state. It was a product of human efforts and activities. The conflicts among the social members for economic control as well as political supremacy was the procedure of human history and this process was hastened by the growth of economic activities coincided with the growth of human thought. Thus a leader, who could carry out laws that imposed the people to obey, was recognized as the ruler. Accordingly, the state formation in general and Meitei state formation in exacting is the process of evolution, growth or establishment of a people or a social group occupying a geographical region into a political society through different stages and phases of social and economic development. The Ningthouja principality with its position at Kangla was proficient to systematize men and material for a long period of time was able to subdue, absorb and amalgamate the various ethnoses inhabiting in Manipur valley into a single political unit known as the Meitei state. The occupation of state power through a variation of the existing balance of social forces in order to establish or perpetuate the dominance of a particular class or association of classes represented politically in the state apparatus is the explicit object of political practice in any social formation.

Keywords:Clan, affiliation, amalgamate, Manipur.

INTRODUCTION

The native state of Manipur lies in the north eastern corner of India on Indo-Burma border. It lies between latitude 23.50° and 25.30° north and longitude 93.10° and 94.30° east. The state of Manipur is bounded on the east by Burma, on the west by Cachar district of Assam, on the north by Nagaland and on the south by Chin Hills of Burma. Manipur literally means the “city or the land of gems”. According to a Manipuri historical work, “Sanamahi Laikan” the name Manipur was first officially introduced in the early 18th century, during the reign of Garibniwaz. Manipur was known by various names to different countries and states in the past such as “Poirei Meitei Leipak” or “Poileipak” or “Kangleipak” to themselves, “kathe” to the Burmese, “Hsiao po-lo-mein” to the Chinese, “Monglie” to the Cacharies, “Monglai” to the Bengalees, “Meklee” to the Assamese and “Cassey” to the Shans. Geographically the land can be divided into two parts viz, the valley and the hill. The hills are inhabited by the different tribes and the valley is surrounded by ranges of hills on all sides and exclusively occupied by the Meiteis. According to Mc Culloch, Manipuris are a conglomeration of several distinct tribes. He further mentioned that Manipur valley was originally occupied by several tribes. The Ethnonym Meitei, whatever the genesis of its derivation, was historically found to have been applied to the Ningthouja clan-dynasty founded by Nongda Lairen Pakhangba and other groups absorbed by this dynasty politically and integrated into the social structure. Manipur in ancient period, there were many ethnic groups inhabiting in the valley of Manipur. Those ethnic groups were – Mangang, Luwang, Khuman, Angom, Khabas, Nganbas, Sarang, Leisangthem, Heirem, Khunjan, Lera Khongang, Thanga Kambong, Urok Ushai, Haokha Lokha, Ningol Laiton, Phantek Khuyon, Chakpa Khem, Haorok Konthou etc. These ethnoses belonging to the Tibeto-Burman Tai and other Mongoloid groups were first brought gradually under the political suzerainty of leading clans with their principalities and group into seven clans. The Manipur valley was carved up into small kingdoms under the rule of

different groups of people particularly the celebrated seven clans; they are Ningthouja, Khaba-Nganba (combination of Khaba and Nganba), Sarang-Leisangthem (combination of Sarang and Leisangthem), Angom, Khuman, Luwang and Moirang. But these seven clans again underwent an age long struggle amongst themselves for protecting their respective territorial boundaries but ultimately Ningthouja subdued all the others. Besides these there existed several other tribes but all these tribes were merged together under the suzerain power of the Ningthouja clan. After their assimilation, the name Meitei became applicable to all the tribes that settled in the valley. The Meiteis as distinct ethnic, linguistic, cultural and social groups was formed in Manipur valley. They had their own culture, language and religion, which have its own myths and legends, God and Goddesses, priest and priestesses, ritual and festivals etc.

The state is a political institution consisting of people with a definite territory having a sovereign government.

Ancient chronicles indicate that the seven major principalities were descended from a supreme being, Taibang Mapu Sidaba, who was formless divinity having myriad manifestation (the Divine ancestor). The recorded history of Manipur begins from the second quarter of the first century of the Christian era when Pakhangba, the first king of the Meiteis ascended the throne of Kangla, the Historic capital of Manipur. T.C. Hodson suggested that "Meitei" was derived from the blending of two words, "Mei" means man or people and "Tei" meaning separate: Meitei = separate people.

In the first century A.D, the Ningthouja clan emerged as a powerful group among the valley based principalities. The foundation of whole Meitei society was laid during the reign of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, he became the recognized head of the Meitei confederacy, but each clan had their own chief. The growth of power of the clan principalities was due to the growth of the power of clan Pibas who were under certain power. The Angoms, one of the powerful groups politically united with the Ningthoujas and formed a new powerful group in Manipur. His greatest achievement was the social consolidation of the different ethnic groups and tribes under the seven clans. T.C. Hodson, regarded that, the seven clans as not only social but also political units which formed the Meitei confederacy. Thus the evolution of Meitei clan system was associated with both the social and political policy of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba.

The seven clans before they settled permanently in the territories now occupied by them were nomadic as evident from Leihou Naophamlon. According to this text, the clans of the Meiteileipak were originally living together in a Yumjao (a traditional dwelling house of the Meiteis) which is partitioned into nine rooms. From there they moved to different places. They settled in different regions of the valley as well as in some other parts of the hills whose boundaries though difficult to ascertain fluctuated at various times depending upon the fortunes of their rulers. But these seven clans were inter-related and inter-dependent.

The seven clans of the Meiteis was originally an ethnic group or tribe speaking a distinct language or dialect occupying a territory having an autonomous principality under a ruler who was both a political chieftain and social head of the clan. Manipur valley in the historical time had a lineage based social system and lineage based political units which ultimately emerged as the principalities. The principalities of the salai or clan lineages had delineated territories. These different principalities were ruled by different chiefs. The chief of the principality was originally the social and political head of the principality. Sometimes they fought with each other, which was quite natural for protecting their respective territorial boundaries. Among these seven clans, Ningthouja became the ruling clan under the leadership of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. But Angom was also one of the powerful groups participated in the reconstruction of the Meitei state.

RELATION BETWEEN NINGTHOUJA AND ANGOM CLAN:

Among the inter-clan relationships, the relation between Ningthouja and Angom was also essential. The Angom clan took a primary role in the formation of Meitei state. In their relationship Puleiromba of the Angom clan helped Pakhangba of the Ningthouja clan in the occupation of the throne of Kangla. From earlier period, the Angoms had traditional allies with Ningthouja, in spite of of this alliance they always maintained their sovereignty. The Angoms took crucial role in the administrative affairs of the state. According to reliable text, Pakhangba Phambal, Puleiromba was one of the three clan chieftains who were responsible for making Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, the ruler of Kangla. The Angom alliance was based more or less on matrimonial relation. There was no restraint in marriage between these two clans. The Angoms were a sort of bride generous supporter of the Meitei kings. Of the Angoms tribes, the Shelloi Langmais who were hill dwelling tribes of Nongmaiching hills were an autonomous tribe who maintained relation with the Ningthoujas. In every sphere, the Angoms served the Meitei state at their best level. Angoms were also given a respectable place in Meitei court. Because of this, even though Angoms were served under Meitei, but they tried to maintained their identity. The Angom Chiefs had their own traditional dresses-

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Shirt and Shawl --- | White in colour |
| 2. Dhoti --- | White in colour with blue bordered |
| 3. Shoe --- | Green in colour |
| 4. Shamjil --- | White in colour |
| 5. Chong and Shekpin --- | White in colour |

When the coronation of the Meitei king, a practice was proficient that before the coronation of Meitei king, the Angom chief was given regard by allowing sit on the throne. During the coronation ceremony of Pakhangba, Puleironba

(the Angom chief) was given a high ritual status as he was coronated as the Angom chief before the coronation of Pakhangba. But the Angom chief acknowledged the tributary status and was given the title Angoupanba by the Ningthouja king. It was believed that these customs were proficient to gratify the Angoms (which was one of the most important clan amongst all), so that they did not cause any interference against the Meitei king.

In the coronation ceremony of the Meitei king, the chiefs of the three major clans, Puleiromba of the Angom clan, Langba Langmaiba of Luwang clan and Apanba of the Mangangs had already established his suzerainty above their clans. In a sense, the preference of Pakhangba as the ruler of the Meitei association and Ningthouja was an occurrence of popular approval for a king. It was also believed that Pakhangba was eulogized by his poets as he was surrounded by Twenty seven Stars. The entire infrastructure of the social order was first provided by three clans. The nobles and ministers who tied with the king obviously enumerated in Pakhangba Phambal. It has been conjectured by the 18th century historians of Manipur that Pakhangba had his council of ministers customarily known as Ningthou Pongba Tara. During his reign the following departments of the state were created.

- 1.Laipham Sanglen
- 2.Kuchu Sanglen
- 3.Naharup Sanglen
- 4.Pacha Loisang

The Angom chief, Puleiromba took a considerable role in making Pakhangba the King. According to tradition, the Angoms were supposed to have migrated from the Northeast, Khangkhui caves near Ukhrol. Angouba and Chingsomba, the two brothers came out of the Khangkhui caves and migrated to Sokpao, Kasemjao, Phu and Chatong and went to Kwathel range, then Mutao, Lukhu and arrived at Shandong Irampham. The elder brother Chingsomba, went to the land of the Thangal tribe in the north and Angouba, younger brother, came to Kangla where the throne was lying empty. When the nobles were in searching of a king and appointed "Angouba" the king. Afterward Chingsomba came to Kangla in look for of his brother. But Angouba refused to recognize him. Subsequently an elephant was sent out to kill Chingsomba, but he tamed the elephant instead and Angouba was proved to be defeated and he was sent out for exiled in Lamlai. After that Pakhangba appointed Chingsomba as Angom chief.

Since the Angoms had already accepted the tributary status, they didn't have an independent history of their own as such. The Angoupanba or Angom chief was an honoured member of the Ningthouja court. The Ningthouja Meitei state was built on the alliance of Ningthouja, Luwang and Angom.

It has been already stated that the Angoms had recognized themselves as allies of Pakhangba and had existed much before he had ascended the throne of kangla. A tradition had developed in which the Ningthous (kings) of both the clan used to enter matrimonial alliances. It has been stated by a number of scholars that the relationship between the two clans remained in terms of marriage alliance even after the two came closer on account of this relationship and had got merged with each other. Subsequently all these facts proved that the vigorous relationship between these two clans resulted in a better administration of the state.

According to some Meitei scholars, it was assumed that there was a close relationship between these two clans (Ningthouja and Angom). Hence, both the clans had performed several common sacred rites. In every year, in the month of sajibu they celebrated the ceremony, "Kongba Leithong Phatpa" (at their own sacred places viz "Ningthem pokpa" and "Angom pokpa" respectively) to glorify the Meitei state. This ceremony revealed the significant role played by these two clans in administrative affairs of the Meitei state.

However, in spite of this association the Angoms and the Meiteis generally entered into hostiles acts of antagonism against each other on definite issues possibly for political supremacy. According to chronicles, the dispute between the Angoms and the Ningthoujas was started during the reign of the Ningthouja king Sameirang. His reign inaugurated a period of consolidation and expansion to the Ningthouja power at the cost of other clan principalities. He invaded the Angoms and killed their chief Kwakpa Thawanthaba. Consequently the Ningthouja prolonged their territories.

The power and independent of the Shelloi Langmais, the kinsmen of the Angoms were also ruined by the Meitei king Urakonhouba. His son Naothingkhong married a Shelloi Langmai girl named Pitanga in defiance of him. Afterward when Naothingkhong became the king, he didn't make Pitanga his chief queen. Thus she died of upset but later on she was worshiped as Yumjao Leima by the order of king Naothingkhong.

During the reign of Ningthouja king Loiyamba, the Angom chiefs were employed in the civil and military service of the Meitei state. Haokhei Lanthaba, the Angom chief was sent to invade Sekta. The Angom and Loiyamba were intimate. But the Shelloi Langmais detained out to hold on their sovereignty as tribal chiefdom in Nongmaiching hills till the reign of Puranthaba (1247-1263 A.D). When the invasion of Moirang by Ningthoukhomba in 1432 A.D, the Angom chief Hitha Langlangamba was participated. Later, within the invasion of Ningthouja kingdom by the Mayang from the west, the Angom chief Loiyamba was sent to check them. On his failure to ensure them, prince Nongthomba was sent by Kiyamba. Loiyamba was rebuked by the arrogant prince but by their joint efforts, the Mayangs were defeated. The chronicle refers to the conflicts between the Meitei king Koiremba and Loiyangamba. Koiremba married Loiyangamba's daughter Luwangbi who was ill-treated by the king. Even Loiyangamba was offended by the king.

But, all the Angoms who supported Loiyangamba were assassinated by the plot of the Meitei king. It may be seen

that the Angoms retaliated by killing Koiremba's maternal uncle's family. But, after the death of Lamkiyamba, Nonginphaba his minor son ascended the throne. The queen dowager Changning Phabi became a mistress of the Angom chief Kiyamba. Kiyamba became so influential that he behaved as if he was the king. The minor king and his mother were in his control. According to Cheitharol Kumbaba, Kiyamba wore egret feathers dyed red. Queen Changning Phabi objected that it was completely reserved for the Ningthouja only. Later on Kiyamba got furious and executed the queen dowager and minor king. According to W. Yumjao Singh, however as the exciting insulation of the Angom king Loijangamba by the young and stubborn prince (Nongthomba) during the campaign against the Mayangs the throne of the Ningthouja was in a very shaky situation. In fact Loijangamba was an official of the Ningthouja kings but he was very powerful, he had his own territory, his services to the Ningthouja clan were quite supportive them. To provide bluster to his arrogance was not easily forgotten. Therefore during the little period of forty years or less there were not less than five kings, each of them was the victim of political assassination and murders. Whoever would deserve the annoyance of Loijangamba was doomed to death, man or women, even his own paramour, the widowed queen, mother of Nongin Phaba was not secure for petty crime of effective him that the egret feather was only to be worn by the Ningthouja kings not by the Angoms.

The significant character of Loijangamba was that if he so wished he could have annexed the territories of the Ningthoujas to his own and assumed their throne, but he never did this, he would reverence the old practice of their intimacy.

During the period of Khagemba (1597-1652), the Angoms were totally flattened in 1607 and their chief Angoupanba Mungchaiba was sent for exiled in Sugnu. In Charairongba's reign also (1698-1798) A.D, he trampled the Angoms and effectively fused them with the Meiteis. The Angoms too had held power from the Meiteis in the 1399A.D for five years. Again in the 16th century the Angoms were crushed by Koiremba. After Charaorongba the Angoms were finally compressed and their "Chong and Shekpin" (ceremonial umbrella) were apprehended and were used by the Meitei king. They adorned the highest office occupied by the chiefs of the different salais in the Meitei court. This shows that the Meiteis accorded lot of respect to the Angoms because of their earliest contacts and tradition.

In support of a tremendous relationship between the two clans. The Meitei king Meidingu Khuyoi Tompok married with Angom girl named Nongbalon Noimainu Ahongbi and she gave birth to two sons (Yoimongba and Taothingmang). According to T.C.Hodson, there seems to be a rule requiring the Meitei Ningthou had matrimonial relation with the Angom Ningthou, and by custom the formal coronation of the later precedes by a few days that of the former. The relationship between the Meitei king and the Angom king, the two heads one was the royal clan and another was one of the most chief clans, in normally it can be state that their relationship as like son-in-law and father-in-law.

Hence the period between 11th to 16th centuries, concerning 525 years there were nineteen Ningthouja kings who were ruled in Manipur. Among them fifteen married with Angom women and made them Meitei queen. Meithingu Ningthoukhomba (1432-1467) was the son of Punshiba, married Angom girl named Lingthoingambi. When king Ningthoukhomba went to invade Akla village, the Tangkhul raiders invaded the capital to capture the paddy which was stored at the big state granary. But, in the absence of the king, Queen Lingthoibi faced the problem very tactically. She didn't use force but treated them as earlier relation. She put the king's costume to meet the Tangkhul raiders. The raiders mislaid sensitivity when they saw the king and reported that they came to help a spectator with the king. The queen makes a plan and entertained them with wine mixed with tobacco leaves and they were all intoxicated. All the drunken raiders hooked by ropes in the neck and tied at the poles of the granary. The chief of Tuiesm Tangkhul named Hen Puringba was captured. She was reported to have raided the Tangkhul villages of Siunaching and Mongba Hiyanglam. She also invaded the Kabui Yangla in the east, Khongyai Kumphei, Leishokpung in the south. She also conquered conquered Kharam in the south and defeated the Luhuppas. But in the eastern side of the Kabaw valley, she subjugated the good agricultural region, i e, Namtongpan and captured a shan warrior, "Chaopha shamjin". These are incredible military exploits of the queen which are referred to in Ningthourol Lambuba. So, Lingthoingambi played a significant role in the administrative affairs of the Meitei state.

Hence, the Angoms served the Meitei state at their best level. Their political affairs and status are supposed to be next to the king. Accordingly the Angoms produced proficient ladies who served and protected the Meitei state like Lingthoingambi. So the Angoms played a considerable role in social and political matters of the Meitei state; they laid a momentous impression in the Meitei society.

CONCLUSION:

The Meitei whose homeland in the valley of Manipur have a form for their rich cultural heritage. This cultural heritage played a very important role in founding the Ningthouja or Meitei kingdom in the valley and its horizontal political expansion over the hill areas of Manipur. This presupposes not only the possession of a physical culture but also an advance political culture. It may not be wrong to say that it is the political culture that helped the Meiteis in realizing their ambition of founding a small kingdom in the valley under the suzerainty of the Ningthouja dynasty of the Meiteis. The stream of migration from the east and west and their assimilation in Manipur society had also far reaching effects. There had been continuous cultural expansion from the east and west. It led to cultural synthesis which ultimately led to the growth of a distinct Meitei culture.

It is a well known fact that the local historical documents record the existence of a number of tribes. Among

these several tribes, Ningthouja, Luwang, Khuman, Moirang, Angom, kha-Nganba and Sarang-Leisangthem became prominent. There were many chiefs ruling over different clans and local tribes along with the Ningthouja clan. Ningthouja clan annexed and subdued all chiefs one after another. Pakhangba became the first coronated historical ruler who founded a new dynasty called Ningthouja.

Consequently among these seven clans, they were inter-dependent and inter-related. So, among these seven clans, the relationship of Ningthouja and Angom was a considerable one. In the formation of Meitei state by Nongda Lairen Pakhangba under Ningthouja, the Angoms took a crucial role and also played a primary function in the administrative affairs of the Meitei state. Hence, it may not be wrong to say that Angoms were the backbone of the Ningthouja clan considering the construction of Meitei state and society.

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