

## Muslims In Pre-Modern Manipur: History, Economy And Society

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### Abstract

Manipur is a small State situated in the eastern most corner of India. It's inhabited by several ethnic and religious communities. The valley of Manipur is inhabited by Meiteis/Meeteis, Manipuri Muslims, and several other small communities, while the surrounding hills are the homes of numerous tribes. As per the Census of 2011, the State has a Muslim population of 2.40 lakh, out of the State's total population of 28.6 lakh.<sup>1</sup> Today, Muslims are spread mainly in the six districts of Manipur, namely Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, Kakching, Bishnupur and Jiribam. Muslims of Manipuri origin are also found settled outside Manipur, particularly in Assam, Tripura, Bangladesh and even in Myanmar (erstwhile Burma). They migrated to these places, along with Meeteis, during the Burmese occupation of the valley of Manipur from 1819 to 1826. Cachar District of Assam has the largest concentration of Manipuri Muslims outside Manipur, with an estimated population of around 70-80 thousand.

The history of Muslims in Manipur is traced from around the middle of 16<sup>th</sup> century. They came from the west and settled in the valley by inter-marrying with the Meitei women. They are locally referred to as Pangals or Meitei-Pangals. Pangal is believed to be a corrupt word for Bengal, as majority of the Muslims came from Bengal. This paper makes an attempt to reconstruct the history, economy and society of the Muslims in Manipur in pre-modern times. The paper traces the historical circumstances that led to the settlement of Muslims, and also study their social formation, economic life and contributions, administrative and military engagements during the period under study. The local archaic manuscripts (puyas), mainly the royal chronicle, Cheitharol Kumbaba, Nongsamei Puya, Pangal Thorakpa,

Khagemba Lanpha, Khagemba Langjei, etc., besides British colonial accounts, are used to primary sources.

**Keywords:** Meitei-Pangal, Meitei/Meetei, puya, cheithaba, salai, yumnak-sagei, lallup.

## Introduction

### Early settlement of Muslims in Manipur

The history of Muslim settlement in Manipur is generally traced from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the Cheitharol Kumbaba, the first reference of Pangal is made in the entry of the year 1556, during the reign of Chalamba (1545-1562). It notes that the cheithaba (the man, chosen by the king from his subjects, who gave his name to the year and bore all the misfortunes that might befall the king and his realm for that year) for the year was a man named Thingpaicham Pangan. Eminent historian, who translated the royal chronicle into English, S.N. Parratt, opines that Thingpaicham Pangan was a Muslim who was given a Meetei surname, indicating that the man had been integrated into the Meetei social structure. It's the first time the term Pangal is used in the chronicle. The chronicle further mentions Pangal in the entry of 1557. Here too, the cheithaba of the year was a man named Pangaracha Khara. Parratt believes that Pangaracha is a combination of two words, "Panga" short form of Pangal, "racha" for raja, who was possibly the chief of the Muslim community.<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly, British administrator, T.C. Hodson, makes a passing reference in *The Meitheis* (1908) that the Muslims came to settle in Manipur around the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> Some of the local historians also believe that the earliest settlement of Muslims in Manipur took place around the time. According to a local research scholar, Abdur Rahman, there is an Urdu manuscript, written by Azizur Rahman and Shariatullah Choudhury, entitled *Musalmanan-i-Manipuri*, which notes that during the reign of King Mungyamba (1562-1597) three Muslims (Sheikh Ruba, Gora Khan and Ashiq Shah) skilled in making firearms came to Manipur from Rajbari, in Cachar. The king employed the Muslims in his royal workshop for making firearms. They resided permanently in Manipur by marrying local women. Thereafter, these Muslim families were given the family surname (yumnak), Aribam, meaning the old clan (sagei), by King Khagemba (1597-1652) as they were the earliest Muslims to settle in Manipur.<sup>4</sup>

### **Muslim settlement during Khagemba's reign**

The major settlement of Muslims in Manipur took place in the early years of 17<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Khagemba. It was the largest settlement of Muslims. The events of the settlement of Muslims are recorded in few of the puyas (old manuscripts). Prince Sanongba made an attempt to overthrow his brother, Khagemba, in 1604 with the help of the Cacharis, but it failed. He then prepared for a second attack by raising a force provided by the rulers of Cachar and Taraf, in Sylhet. According to Nongsamei Puya, at the request of the Cachari king, Pratap Narayan (1605-28), the ruler of Taraf, Muhammad Naziri, provided a force of one thousand Muslims led by his brother, Md. Shani. The combined Cachari-Muslim troops entered Manipur in 1606, and encountered the force of Khagemba at Lamangdong (present Bishnupur area) in a battle. The quick initial strikes by the Manipuris on the Cacharis forced the latter to flee in panic leaving behind the Muslims. The Muslims troops stood back to fight against the Manipuris. The Manipuris could not subdue the Muslims easily since they possessed guns. The Manipuris had very limited firearms and they fought mainly with swords, shields, spears, bows and arrows, etc. Eventually, the Manipuris hatched a plan to capture the Muslims by initiating for peace. The Muslims accepted to lay down their firearms for negotiation. Taking the opportunity, the Manipuris physically overpowered the Muslims and held them in captivity. They were brought to the capital at Kangla and the king thereafter ordered them to settle in his realm.<sup>5</sup>

The Cachari-Muslim invasion and the settlement of Muslims in Manipur are chronicled exhaustively in Nongsamei Puya and Pangal Thorakpa, and in brief in Cheitharol Kumbaba, Khagemba Langjei and Khagemba Lanpha.<sup>6</sup> Cheitharol Kumbaba records the event thus, "The year of Heirangkhongcham Monsang, Sakabda 1528 (1606) Yipungo Sanongba and others marched towards the region of Yankoi (in Bishnupur) when it was reported that the Mayangs were approaching (to attack the land). Layingthou Kahkempa was victorious over the Mayangs. They captured thirty elephants, 1000 guns, and a colony of 1000 Pangans, including sword-smiths, brass smiths and other skilled men, makers of trumpets and long drums, those who could make brackets, washer-men, horse grooms, trumpets and long drums, groomers for

elephants, all these were captured. All those Pangans who were captured alive were allowed to establish an institute (Pangal Sanglen). Altogether 1000 people were captured in battle.”<sup>7</sup> The Muslims were, in majority, peasant-artisan warriors who were requisitioned for the campaign by their ruler. Probably, only the commanders (17 in number), were profession military men. Therefore the Muslims were in majority peasants and artisans skilled in several trades and professions. The farsighted and pragmatic king, Khagemba, realized the benefits of settling them in his realm. By settling the Muslims, the monarch tried to enrich the land with a wider pool of skills and talents. Besides the skilled men, the king took in his custody huge number of firearms, elephants and palanquins (dolai), which were extremely valuable acquisitions during the time.<sup>8</sup>

It may be mentioned that by the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Mughal Empire was at the pinnacle of its power, extending control and influence up to eastern most part of Bengal. Under Jahangir (1605-1627), the Mughal Governor in Bengal, Islam Khan subjugated the Afghan chieftains ruling in eastern part of Bengal. Sylhet, which was under the control of several Afghan chiefs, was taken over by the Mughals in 1612 after defeating Khwaja Usman Khan, the strongest Afghan to challenge the Mughal power, who controlled the region of Taraf along with his brothers and sons, after being chased out from his stronghold at Bokainagar in Mymensingh District by the Mughals in 1611. The Mughals carried the expansionist policy further east with the objective of exploiting the rich natural resources and to expand trade and commerce in the region and beyond. The Mughals subdued the ruler of Cachar, Pratap Narayan, in 1612-13 and forced him to pay tribute. The Mughals even made an attempt to extend their political control over Manipur. Cheitharol Kumbaba records that Khagemba waged war with the Mughals in Gwai River (Barak River) in 1615.<sup>9</sup> A detailed account of the event is recorded in Khagemba Langjei, thus, “The Moguls living in the south-west of Manipur hatched plans to capture Khagemba by treachery. The king of the Moguls engaged a hillman to carry presents to the Manipuri king and to request the latter to come to the river Gwai for a meeting with him. The Mogul king planned to capture him there and escape by boat. Khagemba’s brothers advised him not to go to the meeting. Khagemba himself thought that it would be risky to go; but on second thought, he decided to meet the king of the Moguls on grounds of

decorum. The so-called meeting turned out to be a trap, as anticipated. While Khagemba was waiting for the meeting on the river bank, the king of the Moguls brought a boat and attempted to capture him. The Muslims opened fire from the other side of the river. In the ensuing fight, Khagemba not only saved but also captured three Muslim nobles alive. The Moguls fled away in shame but with a Manipuri noble in their boat. The noble had jumped into it in the attempt to save Khagemba. The Manipuri king too returned to his capital with a heavy heart. Three years the Manipuri noble was in the prison of the Moguls. Then they released him."<sup>10</sup>

The rulers of Manipur, like the other independent monarchs and chieftains of the time, were in great awe of the power, prosperity and prestige of the Mughals. They desired the settlement of Mughals/Muslims from Mughal territories in Manipur. This is clearly shown in the opening prayer of Nongsamei Puya and Pangal Thorakpa. In Nongsamei Puya, the author starts the account by invoking the local deity, Chingu Bidhi, to bring the Mughals/Muslims to Manipur. The prayer says: Kanglei sana leibak asida Mogal Mussalman jati leitri. Asigumba Mussalman jatina youdriba leibak amani haina singthafaroi aduna Mussalman Kangluppu younaba (leinaba) thourang toubiyu haina Chingu Bidhi kouba wayenbada haijaiye.<sup>11</sup>

The monarchs of Manipur also adopted the policy of settling immigrants. Frequent wars, pestilence, and other natural calamities hindered the growth of population in Manipur. The rulers were greatly concerned about the small size of the population in the valley. They desired to enhance the population so that they could face the regular external aggressions, particularly by the Burmese, which brought huge loss of lives and properties, and also to increase agricultural and industrial activities. A historian, R.K. Jhalajit, observes that the greatest weakness of the age was the smallness of the population of the kingdom, which made the realm vulnerable to Burmese attacks and hindered expansion of agriculture and industries.<sup>12</sup> So the rulers of Manipur adopted the strategy of settling immigrants as a means to enhance the population and thereby strengthen the military force, and improve the economy and socio-cultural life in the realm. The rulers also followed liberal social policy which allowed the migrant communities to live peacefully and harmoniously.

Besides the Muslims, the Manipuri rulers allowed Brahmans, Cacharis (Mayangs), Khetris, Shans and even

Chinese to reside in Manipur. The maichous even maintained immigration texts, which meticulously record the history of the migration of different communities from various places. Nongpok Haram chronicles the immigration of people from the east, particularly from Yunan, Burma and Shan States, while Nongchup Haram records the immigration of people from the west, mainly from Bengal, Assam, Tripura, etc. Khetrilon furnishes the account of the immigration of Khetris, Bamon Khunthoklon records the advent of Brahmans, while Nongsamei Puya and Pangal Thorakpa chronicle the immigration of Muslims from the west.

### **Settlement and social formation of Muslims**

An analysis of the relevant puyas suggests that Muslims were not treated as captives of war by Khagemba; instead, they were patronized by assisting them in their settlement and social formation. As the Muslims did not come with their wives, the king allowed them to inter-marry with the local women. They were also granted land and some of them with servants. The king allowed them to follow their own religion. It may be mentioned that the rulers as well as the general population of the kingdom were extremely liberal in their outlook and practice. Muslims' beliefs and practices were respected.

Md. Shani, the general of the Muslim troops, was offered two Meetei women as wives, Maitek of Nongthongbam sub-clan and Melei of Chakpram sub-clan, and servants. He was settled along with his brothers at Paka Leikai, near the forest at Mahabali, in Imphal.<sup>13</sup> Further, Nongsamei Puya and Pangal Thorakpa mention several instances of the kings rewarding the Muslims with local women as wives and places to reside after they showcased their skills in various trades and professions. To cite some instances, a potter, who gifted the king a distinctive pot (sanapun) made by using a wheel was offered a local maiden; artisans who constructed a richly decorated palanquin for the king were also offered the hands of local women as partners. On the other hand, a group of milkmen, who presented various delicacies prepared with milk, were also given their consorts.<sup>14</sup>

Khagemba also started organizing the Muslims into clan or lineage groups, quite similar to that of the Meeteis. The surnames were given on the basis of their professions or skills, posts held, or places of their settlement, peculiar natures, habits or physical characteristics, etc. Several surnames were

given after their vocations, such as Phusam was given to the pot (phu)-makers, Phundreimayum to the turners who used phundrei (lathe), Chesam to the paper (che)-makers, Khutheibam to the skilled artisans, Korimayum to those who made copper utensils, Hawai-ingkholmayum to the cultivators of pulses (hawai), Phisabam to the weavers, Hidak Ingkhol to the tobacco (hidak mana) cultivators, Mansam to the acrobats, Sangomsumpham to the milk (sangom) men, among others. Clan system became the basis of their social organization, and a system to preserve and promote their skills in various trades. It also began to regulate their marriage custom. Like the Meeteis, Muslims started practicing clan exogamy. As the members of a clan were treated as brothers and sisters having descended from common forbearers, marriage within the clan was strictly restricted. It's still in practice. Muslim clan organization is egalitarian in nature as all clans have equal social footing.<sup>15</sup>

### **Muslim immigration after 1606**

After 1606, Muslims in small numbers began to migrate from Bengal and mainland India. The rulers gave them permission to reside in Manipur. The events of their migration and settlement are painstakingly recorded in the puyas. In 1608, a group of 37 Muslims and Hindus led by three Syed (Sayyid) brothers, Syed Ambiya, Syed Abdulla and Syed Kalka Hussain, came to Manipur. Nongsamei Puya mentions that Syed Ambiya was the younger brother of Syed Auliya, the religious preceptor of the ruler of Taraf, Md. Naziri. Syed Hussain went back to Taraf and came back with a religious text, referred to as puran leirik achouba, which many believe, was a manuscript of Quran. Khagemba settled them by offering them their partners.<sup>16</sup> In general, Syeds are considered to be descendants of Prophet Muhammad. Considering their lineage and religious disposition, they were generally referred to as Mir, a title of respect used for the descendants of Fatima, Prophet Muhammad's daughter, and hence given the surname Meraimayum. They devoted in giving religious guidance to the Muslims.

Another fascinating account of the immigration of a Muslim family is mentioned in the puyas. During the reign of Khunjaoba (1652-1666), Isa Kalimullah, a resident of Pramita in Sylhet, came to Manipur along with his wife, Bibi Fatima, younger brother, Musa Kalimullah, and four Brahmans. While

crossing the hills, they were attacked by the Kabui tribe. Bibi Fatima and Musa Kalimullah were captured by the Kabuis. Isa Kalimullah managed to reach the valley. There he was introduced to the king by Md. Shani as a military commander in his homeland. He was allowed to reside at Apong Inghkol, and employed in the cavalry. Afterward, Bibi Fatima was sold by the Kabuis to one Leirikyengbam Aton. Aton tasked Bibi Fatima to sell eatables at Moiramba Keithel (today's Moirangkhom). One day, while Isa Kalimullah was doing his duty at the market, he met his wife. By the order of the king, Isa Kalimullah bought back her wife. Musa Kalimulla too was freed and joined his brother.<sup>17</sup>

Curiously, Cheitharol Kumbaba notes that in 1661 that a group of Mughals led by mysterious man, Sangkusung, entered Manipur.<sup>18</sup> They were received by the king. The purpose of the visit and the details of the man are not given. However, the text further records that the king commissioned three Manipuris to the Mughal territories, and they came back after a year and two months. These entries raise certain queries. Was this Sangkusung the brother of Aurangzeb (1658-1707 CE), Shah Shuja, the Governor of Bengal, who many scholars believe had entered Manipur? And did the three Manipuris visit the court of Aurangzeb, or to the Mughal authorities stationed at Bengal to report on the matter? Quite intriguingly, the year of the entry of Sangkusung corresponds to period of Shah Shuja's presence in the eastern frontier given in some of the contemporary accounts. Prominent local historian, W. Yumjao Singh opines that these Mughals were perhaps commissioned by Aurangzeb to find out whether Shah Shuja entered Manipur or not, and the three Manipuris were dispatched to inform the Mughal monarch that the prince did not come to Manipur.<sup>19</sup> However, without reliable sources to corroborate it is difficult to come to a conclusion. It may be mentioned that it was J.P. Wade who wrote that Shah Shuja, the Mughal Governor of Bengal Subah, entered Manipur after being chased by Aurangzeb's General Mir Jumla.<sup>20</sup> Based on this statement, some of our local scholars believe that Shah Shuja must have entered Manipur to hide from the Mughal authorities before entering Arakan.<sup>21</sup> Shah Shuja and his family met their tragic end in Arakan.<sup>22</sup>

In 1679, during the reign of Paikhomba (1666-1697), a group of 37 people led by Sunarphul, a prince of Makak, entered Manipur and presented several valuable gifts, such as elephant, silver, sheep, mirror, pigeon graced with gold



ornaments, and a palanquin decorated with different color to the king. They informed the king that they came to settle down in his realm. They were possibly renegades of a ruling family. Paikhomba allowed them to reside in the valley.<sup>23</sup> It's difficult to determine the location of Makak. The royal chronicle also records that Khagemba opened routes to Makak. It must be an important centre of trade and commerce in eastern part of Bengal.

In 1688, a group of Muslims and Hindus led by Puton Khan and his brother, Salim Khan, came to Manipur from Gujarat. The king settled them in the valley. During the same reign, four Mughal princes came to Manipur with of ten generals. The names, place of their origin and the reason for their migration are not mentioned. The princes and their entourage were received with great honour by the king at an office called Mughal Shang at the Kangla complex. The princes, who were perhaps deserters, were settled in the kingdom by offering them their consorts, land and servants.<sup>24</sup>

Another interesting account is the advent of five Muslim mendicants (fakirs) in 1709 during the reign of Charairongba (1697-1709). The mendicants, Ponuwa, Molang, Wangutaba, Leikhunna and Butu, were originally from Gujarat. They told the king that they came for pilgrimage. They conjured magic tricks and dazzled the king and the courtiers by displaying supernatural acts. Ponuwa produced fire out of thin air, while Molang created water, Wangutaba stayed underneath the earth for 40 days, Leikhunna controlled the wind and Butu called a boat from the opposite side of a riverbank. The awestruck king gave them Meetei women as their partners, agricultural land, cattle and other merchandise. They were settled near Morisoi, in Khongjom area.<sup>25</sup>

In 1846, during the reign of Nara Singh (1844-1850), 12 close families (phunga) of Muslims arrived from Cachar. The king settled them in Manipur.<sup>26</sup> The descendants of these Muslims constitute the Mayang Anouba clan (new Mayangs), while the progeny of the Cachari Muslims who came as sepoy of the Manipur Levy, to drive out the Burmese from the valley in 1825, came to be known as Mayang Ariba (old Mayangs).

During the same reign, in 1850, a Vaishnav saint who did not take food arrived in Manipur along with a Pangal Fakir. They lived at Awang Keithel Kangpokpi.<sup>27</sup> Research scholar, M.A. Janab Khan is of the opinion that this Pangal Fakir is the famous saint, Baba Langar Shah, whose shrine (dargah) is at the banks of Barak River in Cachar. Tradition also holds that the fakir

performed miraculous acts; he climbed the Nongmaiching Hills riding a tiger.<sup>28</sup> Maharaja Chandrakriti Singh (1850-1886) is said to have constructed a masjid at Porompat on his request.

Another significant entry of Muslims was made in 1858. A Muslim prince, who was the son of the Muslim ruler of Sylhet, arrived in Manipur. He came along with his retinue riding an elephant.<sup>29</sup> However, the chronicle does not give the details of his visit, so it is unclear whether he came for a short stay, or he settled permanently in Manipur.

### **Socio-cultural integration**

In due course of time, Muslims adapted themselves to the culture and traditions of the Meeteis, which were observed particularly in language, costume, dietary habits, habitation pattern, social organization, social customs and manners, past-times, etc. The integration of the Muslims to the local socio-cultural fabric was greatly facilitated by their womenfolk. The Meetei women married to the Muslims retained most of their socio-cultural customs and traditions. Muslim males started using Manipuri (Meeteilon) as their mother-tongue instead of Bengali, began to relish the local food leaving aside those food restricted by their religion, adopted the housing and habitation patterns of the Meeteis as their own with minor amendments, women continued to adorn the Meetei attires, particularly the phanek (sharong) and inafi (chadar), started to enjoy the local pastimes, such as local folk song (khullang esei) and indigenous games (mukna, mukna kangjei, sagol kangjei, yubi lakpi, hiyang tanaba, lik-kon sannaba, among others), etc. Clan system, as mentioned, became the basis of their social organization and it began to regulate their social relations and marriage custom. The marriage custom of the Muslims soon became an admixture of the Islamic (nikah) and local traditions. Astonishingly, the small Muslim population made all these socio-cultural adjustments without losing their Islamic identity.

### **Muslims in Administration**

In 1606, after giving the order for the settlement, Khagemba opened an administrative office (loishang) for the Muslims at Kangla, called Pangal Sanglen. It seems that the name of the office was later changed to Mughal Shang (office of the Mughals). However, towards the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century, it

was renamed Pangal Sanglen. The principal head of the Sanglen was designated as Qazi, a Muslim judge, who was authorized to deal with judicial matters, besides looking into the affairs of the Muslims.<sup>30</sup> He was assisted by few subordinates. The Qazi also worked closely with the rulers by giving advice and assistance in various administrative and military matters. Md. Shani was appointed as the first Qazi. He was very close to the rulers and the ruling families, which is borne by the fact that his youngest brother, Shah Kusum, was adopted by the queen of Khagemba, while his own son, Nazra, was raised by Jag Singh, or Nongsamei, one of the most prominent courtiers of the king.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the rulers after consulting Md. Shani, made the decisions and arrangements for the settlement of Muslim emigrants. He passed away in 1699 during the reign of Charairongba (1697-1709).<sup>32</sup> His descendants were given the surname Khullakpam (khullakpa meaning village chief).

The post of Qazi and the office of Pangal Sanglen continued to exist till around the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Qazi was not appointed on the basis of one's knowledge and understanding of Islamic law, but on one's service and loyalty to the ruler. He was helped in his administrative work by several other officers. Describing the office of Qazi and its appointment, British Political Agent, W. McCulloch, writes, "They were under a Kazeer, and have a number of other officers quite disproportioned to their numerical account. The Kazeer is not appointed on account of his knowledge of the laws which ought to govern Mussulmans, but on account of the service he may have done the Raja as a partisan or a menial servant..."<sup>33</sup> The office of the Qazi continued to exist up to the reign of Maharaja Churachand Singh (1891-1941). Abdul Rahman, popularly known as Sanajaoba Qazi from Khetrigao was the last Qazi of Manipur.<sup>34</sup>

As a part of the judicial reform, the British authorities set up Mohammedan Panchayat Court (also referred to as Pangal Panchayat) in 1902 as one of the three Panchayat Courts. The court, with five Muslim members, dealt only with Muslim subjects, and was headed by the Qazi. The members served for three years, and they met twice a week. Each member received one hectare of rent free land during the term of office, and conferred the honorary title of Waen Touba, meaning 'giver of justice.' The office of the court was setup at Lilong.<sup>35</sup>

Further in 1907, Manipur State Durbar was constituted to assist the new monarch, Churachand, on the administration

of the valley. Md. Waliullah, the first Muslim Graduate, became a Durbar Member from 1944 to 1947.

### **Muslims in Lallup**

Lallup (war organization) was an age-old feudal institution in Manipur, which enforced the adult male subjects to render service to the State for all public purposes in war and peace. They contribute their service in military, economic and developmental works. It was introduced as a means to deal with the shortage of manpower in the State for public works. Every adult male between 17 and 60 years were to render service, or attend loishangs (State offices or departments) for 10 days out of every 40 days and engage in the various duties assigned to them. In return, he was entitled to cultivate one pari (two and half acres) of land subject to payment of tax in kind to the king. Those men who were assigned military duties attended the Lalmi Loishang (War Department), which had several divisions including infantry, cavalry, elephant corps, boat, spies, transport, and workshops for making war weapons. The skilled artisans and craftsmen were assigned duties in the Shinnaiba Loishang (Department of Works), which had many sub-departments, such as Ayekpa (painters), Phurungba (potters), Meitei Phundrei and Pangal Phundrei (lathe workers), Konshang (jewellery makers), Nganthak Saba (hookah makers), Khutheiba (produced war weapons), Pe-shaba (umbrella makers), Meitei Phurit Saba and Kubo Phurit Saba (cloth makers), Takhel Pungyeiba (drummers), Phourungba (producers of sweetmeats with rice, and other eatables), Meitei Hisaba and Mayang Hisashang (boat makers), etc.<sup>36</sup> The lallup also engaged in various public works, such as constructing roads, embankments, bridges, canals, granaries, public houses, digging ponds, clearing river beds, etc.<sup>37</sup>

Khagemba drafted the Muslims in the lallup and they began to contribute their service for the State. In general, only Meeteis, Brahmins and Muslims were conscripted under the lallup system. Nagas, Lois (segregated section of the Meitei society) and Keis (slaves) were assigned heavier duty.<sup>38</sup>

Being part of the lallup, Muslims took active part in the military expeditions carried out by the Manipuri monarchs against the hill tribes, Shan principalities of Kabaw valley, Burmese, Tripuris (Takhel to the Manipuris), etc. and also stood up to defend the country against foreign aggressions. The puyas have given several instances of the participation of Muslims in

such military engagements. For the first time, Khagemba engaged the Muslims in his State force which took arms against Maring-Tarou tribes. Nongsamei Puya gives a detailed account of the role played by Md. Shani and the Muslim troops in crushing the recalcitrant Maring tribes. In appreciation of their valor and success, the king rewarded consorts and agricultural land to the Muslims.<sup>39</sup> The puya also mentions of a military encounter between king Paikhomba and the Tripuris in which the former was saved from gun shots by two of his Muslim soldiers, Potan Khan and Salim Khan. They knew the language of the adversary. In recognition of their courage and proficiency in Tripuri, Paikhomba commissioned a diplomatic mission to the court of the Tripuri king led by the two Muslims. Later, recognizing his diplomatic expertise, the king rewarded Syed Suleiman by appointing him as Qazi.<sup>40</sup> Muslims were also involved in numerous wars fought against the Burmese during the reign of Pamheiba (1709-1748) and Bheigyachandra (1759-62/1763-98).

British authorities considered lallup as a form of slavery and an ineffective system. It was abolished in 1892 by Major Maxell. In its place, a house tax of Rs. 2 was levied from every household in the valley, along with the introduction of a system called pothang, which also demanded free labor from village folks for public purposes, such as repairing roads, river embankments, public buildings, etc., besides providing assistance to State officials on tours in villages, by giving them free food, carrying their baggage and providing security, etc. The system was abolished in 1913 after a mass agitation.

### **Departments of Muslim artisans**

According to R.K. Sanahal, in course of time, Muslim society began to be broadly divided into two groups based on their professions: khunja, or the military men, and ingkhol Sangba, or cultivators and artisans.<sup>41</sup> The latter occupied an inferior status and had to give tributes to the king. However, McCulloch writes that the Muslims were divided into four principal divisions, sepoy, gardeners, turners, and potters.<sup>42</sup>

The artisans who had specialized skills in various crafts (khutheiba) were employed in production units which were opened exclusively for the Muslims. Pangal Phundrei was a department where Muslim turners, skilled in the use of phundrei (wood lathe), were engaged in the production of hookah vase and stem, tip of pe (a sort of umbrella used by

kings and nobles), etc. Pangal Phusaba was the department of Muslim potters, which made various types of pots for the State. They introduced a new method of making pots using wheels. Notably, in Manipur, pottery is an age-old profession of the womenfolk of Loi communities, but they did not use wheel.<sup>43</sup> Muslim musicians who played the *singga*, a horn-shaped instrument of copper, were engaged in the department of Pangal Singga. Singga was played for special occasions, such as when the king went for war, attended the Lakpa of the four panas, and in the religious ceremonies, including funeral rites of the royal family. Even Pangal Sanglen, the office which looked after the Muslims, was also entrusted with the task of collecting fodder for the horses and elephants in the royal stable.<sup>44</sup>

### **Muslim cultivators**

Muslim cultivators were also engaged in royal gardens (*ingkhols*) opened by the rulers exclusively for the Muslims. Pangal Inghol at Khumidok Heinou Khongnemi and Pangal Inghol at Keikhong were two such prominent royal gardens. In these gardens, the Muslim gardeners cultivate different types of vegetables and fruits, some of which they brought from Bengal. The products of the gardens went to the royal households. The Pangal Inghol at Keikhong was entrusted with the task of cultivating mustard, garlic, onion, taro, besides giving their seeds, roots and leaves, whereas Pangal Inghol at Khomidok Heinou Khongnemi grew sugar cane, pulses, flowers, coriander, pangkhon, hop, chandruk, kaba (eatable herbs and seeds), *afang* (intoxicated seed), etc.<sup>45</sup>

The rulers settled several Muslims in the hinterland of the valley. They were engaged to reclaim cultivable lands from forests infested with wild animals and swamps. In course of time, majority of the Muslims began to reside on the banks of rivers and in the vicinity of lakes. In general, Muslim peasants devoted themselves in the cultivation of rice and vegetables. Like the rest of the population, Muslims owned rent free *inghol* (home-stead land), besides *lou* or agricultural land for which they had to pay revenue to the State generally at the rate of 12 pots (15 maunds) of rice per *pari* (two and half acre). Muslim peasants introduced new methods in the local agricultural practices, such as transplantation method of rice cultivation (*lou lingthokpa*), plough drawn by bullocks, etc. Nongsamei Puya and Pangal Thorakpa record a fascinating

anecdote of the introduction of rice transplantation method by the Muslims during the reign of Khagemba. The Muslim cultivators, before they commenced the transplantation of rice, went to the market and bought various delicacies, which were to be consumed while working in the field. Then they went to the rice field and pulled out the rice saplings from the nursery, which were then transplanted to the rice field. The local Meeteis who saw all these for the first time thought that the Muslims were planning to run away to their native place. They reported to Khagemba that the Muslims, planning to flee, had uprooted the crops and bought food supplies for the journey to Bengal. Without delay, Khagemba deported the Muslims to Kondong in Kabow side. Md. Shani afterward clarified the misunderstanding to the king, and the Muslims were brought back.<sup>46</sup> Muslim cultivators are also credited for the introduction and popularization of plough drawn by bullocks, instead of buffaloes.<sup>47</sup> Livestock rearing, breeding and dairy production were other important economic activities that the Muslims were well acquainted with. Trade and business were other economic activities that the Muslims also engaged in.

Like their Meetei sisters, Muslim womenfolk took important share in the economic activities. They engaged in various household and agricultural activities. They worked in the ingkhols (homestead vegetable gardens) and involved in rice cultivation, especially in harvesting, winnowing and pounding of rice. Muslim women also engaged in other works, such as collecting fire-woods, fishing, poultry keeping, selling their farm products, etc.

The various departments and industrial units continued to exist till the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Writing in 1908, T.C. Hodson notes the existence of several departments for the Muslims, "The next group of departments is in charge of affairs relating to the Panggans of Muhammadan inhabitants, and consists of Panggan Sanglen, Panggan Inkhols, Panggan Singa Loisang, Panggan Phundrei Loisang, Pangan Kumar, Pangan Mall (apparently the Muhammadan acrobats and performers) and Panggan Likli (possibly a department which manufactured glass). The principal official here is the Kazi."<sup>48</sup> Muslims also worked in other departments. British accounts record that almost all the buglers and drummers attached to the royal army were Muslims.<sup>49</sup> Muslim villages, namely Khetri Bengoon and Mayang Imphal Bengoon, were so

named as these villages were initially inhabited by buglers (bengoon khongba).<sup>50</sup>

### **Muslim weavers**

Muslims who took to weaving were given the surname Phisbam. Tradition holds that they introduced distinctive and colorful fabrics having unique and intricate patterns and designs, such as kangthol phida, dolai phi, ningthou phi, chakcha phida, etc. with the use of pang iyong (throw-shuttle) and pangan dem (fly shuttle). These traditional weaving materials are also believed by many scholars to have been introduced by Muslims. The fabrics are even used today in the socio-cultural ceremonies of the Muslims, and have become, over the centuries, the cultural symbols of the Muslims in Manipur. Muslim women, like their Meetei sisters, also took to weaving cloths for day to day use. They produced various types of fabric which were worn and used by the family members, such as ngoubong phi, phanek, inaphi, khudei, etc.

### **Overall economic condition of Muslims**

Peasants and artisans formed the overwhelming majority of the Muslim population. Like the other communities, the Muslims worked hard to make their living, however, majority of the peasants did not live above the subsistence level. The recurring epidemics, floods, famines and wars made the life of the ordinary people quite difficult and miserable. The State also subjected the peasants and artisans to hard labor through the feudal institutions, such as lallup and pothang system, besides regular exploitations by unscrupulous nobles and officers. Lallup system created conditions for the womenfolk, including Muslim women, to take greater economic responsibilities and hardships within the families. Even though Muslims possessed advanced craftsmanship in various trades, their productions were meant to serve only local demands, mostly the royal families and the nobility class. Economic life in the State began to improve only from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of various factors that included increased monetization, expansion of market, improvement in communications, technology and growth of trade and commerce with the outside world, etc.

However, there was a small section of prosperous Muslims. Interestingly, few references of affluent Muslims are



made in the royal chronicle. In 1797, a Muslim farmer, Tomba of Mangal Mayum, presented huge quantity of various farm products to king Bheigyachandra, which included 5 baskets of yelnam (a kind of edible shrub), 30 pots of molasses, 20 bundles of tobacco, 10 pots of peas, five baskets of sagolhawai (horse beans). The king, who was extremely delighted with the gifts, ordered to record the act in the chronicle, and the Muslim was appointed as a Sanglakpa (an administrative post).<sup>51</sup> Another mention is made of a wealthy Muslim businessman, Sunamiya Choudhury. In 1896, during the reign of Churachand, there was widespread cholera epidemic, accompanied by drought and acute shortage of food. It led to extreme hike in the price of paddy (said to have reached Rs. 4/5 per sangbai). In such a desperate situation, Sunamiya distributed rice and salt – one meruk of rice (nearly a kilo) and one plate of salt per head – to around 400 to 500 poor and destitute in Imphal.<sup>52</sup> According to M.A. Janab Khan, Sunamiya was an elder of the Nongjeimayum clan.<sup>53</sup>

### **Seven Years Devastation and exodus of Manipuris**

Manipur saw major political upheaval after the demise of Maharaja Bheigyachandra in 1798 as his sons got embroiled in an intense struggle for the throne. Four kings had ruled Manipur successively from 1799 to 1819. In 1813, Marjit Singh occupied the throne with the help of the Burmese monarch, Bawdawpaya (1782-1819). The latter began to treat Manipur as his vassal State. However, Marjit Singh tried to assert his independence and did not attend the coronation ceremony of the new Burmese king, Bagyidaw (1819-1837). As a result, the Burmese monarch carried out a massive punitive military offensive to Manipur in 1819 which had catastrophic consequences. The king, Marjit Singh, unable to defend the country against the Burmese attack, fled to Cachar. The marauding Burmese force sacked Imphal and its surrounding areas, and unleashed slaughter of the inhabitants of the valley, which forced majority of people, both Meeteis and Muslims, to flee to the western hills and further to Barak Valley, while several thousands were carried away as captives to Burma. The valley of Manipur was occupied for seven years from 1819 to 1826, a dark period known in the history of Manipur as Chahi Taret Khuntakpa, or Seven Years of Devastation.

The brunt of the Burmese attack on the Muslim population has been observed by McCulloch thus, “The

Mussalman population appears, before the devastation of the country by the Burmese to have attained a very considerable amount, but as was the case with all the other sections of the Manipuri community, the greater portion of it was carried into captivity by these ruthless invaders, and the present Mussalmans are the descendants of the few that then escaped being captured.”<sup>54</sup>

In 1824, Gambhir Singh, with the help of the British Agent to the Governor General of India, David Scott, raised a Levy of 500 soldiers. In 1825, the Levy, led by Gambhir Singh and British military officers, Lt. R.B. Pemberton and Captain F.J. Grant, entered Manipur and successfully chased away the Burmese from the valley. Gambhir Singh occupied the throne and established his rule with a small population.

### **Settlement of Manipuri Muslims outside Manipur**

In 1904, a grand linguistic survey in India was executed under the supervision of eminent linguist, G.A. Grierson. The survey enumerated the speakers of Manipuri in Manipur and outside, which included speakers of the language in Barak Valley, Tripura and Eastern Bengal. The linguistic census shows the number of the speakers of Manipuri thus: Manipur State - 150,000, Cachar Plains - 42,077, Sylhet - 30,000, Hill Tippera - 18,000, Dacca - 250, Mymenshingh - 200, Sibsagar - 110, Total - 240,637.<sup>55</sup>

It may be mentioned that settlement of Manipuris, particularly Meeteis, in Assam, Tripura, Bengal and Burma started much before the Seven Years Devastation. The matrimonial alliance that developed between the rulers of Manipur with their counterparts of Cachar, Tripura, Ahom and Burma resulted in the introduction of Meetei population in these places. The repeated Burmese offensives after the reign of Pamheiba, as acts of revenge, led to the settlement of Manipuri captives in Burma. Regular pilgrimage to Hindu sacred places by devout Meetei Hindus resulted in the growth of small Manipuri colonies in places like Nabadwip in West Bengal, Brindaban and Radhakund in UP, etc.

### **In Assam**

According to the language census of 2011, there are 1.68 lakh speakers of Manipuri in Assam. At present, the Manipuri population in Assam is estimated to have reached around 3

lakh, out of which around 70 thousand are estimated to be Manipuri Muslims. Majority of the Manipuri population is concentrated in Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj districts of Barak Valley. A significant number of Manipuris are also settled in Nagaon, Hojai, Sibsagar, Golaghat and Kamrup (Metro) districts of Assam. But Manipuri Muslim population is found only in Cachar District. The following are the Manipuri Muslim villages: In Lakhimpur – Baskandi Keinou, Ipham, Kazirgram, Lamba Basti (Kontha), Chandrapur, Koraikandi, Kakmara, Chiripar, Palerband, Bagarpar (Paga), Nungphou, Tarapur, Tarapur Ipham, Tarapur Khunjao, Tarapur Nowagram, Tarapur Maibam, Maragang, Leishangkong, Pailapul, Lalang Khunja, Lalang Kontha, Lalangpur (Turel Wangma), Shivpur (Sebakpur), Awang Leikai, Dulugram (Thoubal), Singarband, Tampaknai, Saparmaina, Tolenkhun, Khunou, Lalpani, Cholta, Lamnou, Kheirabad, Langi, Khandi, Molang, and Diglang. In Udarband – Govindpur, Jaipur, Harinagar, Kumasara, Moijing (Balamiyagram), Hingat Chingthak, Hingat Chingkha, Heinoumakhong, Bagehar, Khil, and Jaroitala (Talaibam). In Sonai – Badripar. In Barkhala – Bheibangar (Jainagar Khunou and Khunja), and in Dholai – Bhaga (Bam).<sup>56</sup> There are also small numbers of Muslims in Golaghat, Hojai, Tinsukia and Guwahati. These Muslims migrated from Cachar after 1947.

### **In Tripura**

At present, there are more than 30,000 Manipuris in Tripura. Meeteis are settled in several districts of the State. However, Muslims reside only in Kamalpur District. There are around 7000 Manipuri Muslims in the district. Manipuri Muslim villages in Tripura are Latashara, Methirmia, Halhali, Latiabil, Manik Bhandar, Malaya, Barbari, Kalachara, Bhumihind and Keimachra.

### **In Bangladesh**

Bangladesh's census report of 1991 shows a population of 25,000 Manipuris. Out of which, around 13,000 are in Maulvi Bazar, 7,000 in Sylhet and 4,000 in Habiganj. Most of the Meetei villages are found in Sylhet proper of Sylhet District and in Bhanugach, Longla, Sreemangol, Dhamai and Boroitali in Maulvi Bazar District. There are also few Meetei localities in Habiganj and Sunamganj District.

It's estimated that, at present, there are around 13,000 Manipuri Muslims in Bangladesh. Majority of the Manipuri Muslim villages are found in Kamalganj Sub-Division of Maulvi Bazar, and few small localities in Sadar Moulvi Bazar, Sadar Sylhet and Chatak in Sunamganj. Manipuri Muslim villages in Kamalganj sub-division of Maulvi Bazar are Mokabil, Ratabari (Latataba), Golerhaor (Sripur Khunjao), Kalaraibil (Daluya), Noyagao (Khunou Leikai), Keoyalighat (Keinou Leikai), Jalalpur (Ipham Leikai), Paschim Jalalpur (Changngal), Dakhin Jalalpur (Tampaknai), Purb Jalalpur (Leishangkhong), Konagao (Barmil), Adampur Bazar (Mankhei Makhang), Purb Kandigao (Meinam Leikai), Kandigao (Thoubal Leikai), Paschim Kandigao (Loubuk Tongbam), Dakhin Ghoramara (Aribam Leikai), Ghoramara (Kiyamgei Leikai), Najat Kona (Tuk Leikai), Bandargao (Loubuk Leikai), Puran Bari, Sukurullahgao (Madhabpur), Dakhin Tilakpur (Takhel Taba), Tilakpur (Alinagar), Humerjan (Moijing Leikai), Phultali (Kontha), Jamir Konna, Kumra Kapan, Baligao, Munshi Bazar, Manu (Sultanpur/Kalirkona). In Sadar Moulvi Bazar: Kalengga. In Sadar Sylhet: Khadim Nagar. In Chatak, Sunamganj: Bhastala.<sup>57</sup>

### **In Myanmar**

The Manipuris, who were taken as captives by the Burmese during their military expeditions in Manipur, were settled in various parts of Myanmar. As per an estimate there are around 40,000 Meeteis in Myanmar. Meetei settlements are found in Kachin State, Yangon Division, Sagiang Division, Shan State, Ayeyarwaddy Division, etc. Over the decades, the policy of forced acculturation (Burmanisation) in the country obligated large number of Manipuri families to shed their own culture and identity. The small Manipuri Muslim population settled in Myanmar too has also, over the decades, gradually shed their Manipuri culture and integrated to the larger Burmese society. Manipuri Muslims have, possibly, assimilated themselves to the Burmese Muslim society. Now, it's almost difficult to trace them, except a handful of families in Mandalay Chatra Number and Tamu, a town near Indian border.

In Assam, Tripura and Bangladesh, Manipuri Muslim villages are in close proximity with that of the Meeteis. There has always been a strong sense of brotherhood and camaraderie between the two communities. Living outside their native place brought the two communities much closer. In fact, Manipuri Muslims are closer to their Meetei neighbors

than to their religious brethren, Bengali Muslims. Both the communities still, to a great extent, preserve their socio-cultural roots. Manipuri Muslims use Manipuri as their mother-tongue, the womenfolk wear the traditional Manipuri attire (phanek, inaphi and khwangnam) and preserve their clan based social organization. They hardly inter-marry with Bengali or Assamese. Manipuri culture and traditions associated with Manipuri Muslims could be seen in their elaborate marriage custom even today. Observing the relation between the two expatriate communities, renowned poet of Cachar, Kheiruddin Chowdhury writes, "One of the unique features of the Manipuri pattern of settlements is that in 99.9 per cent cases, a Meitei village is followed by a Meitei Pangal (Manipuri Muslim) village through out the Manipuri settlements outside Manipur. The co-existence of the Manipuri Hindus and Muslims was based on mutual love and respect. The hard rock of unity found among the Meitei and the Pangans could not be diluted by any influence of the riot-torn neighboring societies outside Manipur. This is one of the noble traits of Manipuri social order."<sup>58</sup>

#### **Meetei-Muslim Relations after the arrival of Hinduism**

Hinduism was introduced in Manipur in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century with the practice of the worship of Vishnu, an idol gifted to King Kyamba (1467-1508) by his Pong counterpart. However, it was worshipped by Brahmans who began to arrive and settle in the century. The religion was adopted by the rulers of Manipur under the influence of Hindu preceptors only from the first decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. King Charairongba (1697-1709 CE) became the first monarch to formally accept Vaishnavism, a sect of Hinduism. He was formally initiated in 1704 by Krishnacharya, a Brahmin from Puri in Orissa. His son, Pamheiba, popularly known by the appellation Garib Niwaz, was first initiated to Chaitanya's school of Vaishnavism in 1717 by Gopal Das. Few years later, under the influence of another Hindu preacher, Shanti Das Gosai, a devotee of Rama, from Sylhet, Pamheiba accepted Ramanandi Vaishnavism.

Pamheiba initiated an energetic program of proselytization and sankritisation which had far-reaching impact on the socio-cultural life of the Meeteis. He and his spiritual preceptors used force to make Vaishnavism the State religion. T.C. Hodson notes, "To the royal will of Pamheiba, the monarch in whose reign the fortunes of the State reached their zenith, Hinduism owes its present position as the official religion

of the State. At first the decrees of the king received but little obedience, and the opposition to the change centered mainly around the numerous members of the royal family who were supported, and not unnaturally, by the Maibas, the priests of the older religion. Religious dissent was treated with the same ruthless severity as was meted out to political opponents and wholesale banishment and execution drove the people into acceptance of the tenets of Hinduism."<sup>59</sup> Serious attempts were made to suppress the traditional Meetei religion. Abodes and images of local deities were destroyed; puyas were burned.<sup>60</sup>

As a part of the proselytization program, Lois and hill tribes were lured to accept the new religion. McCulloch writes "...the hill tribes and Lois could profess Hinduism and the sacred thread was given indiscriminately by the king, Brahmins, and male members of the royal family."<sup>61</sup> However, Muslims were not allowed to embrace the new religion. In this regard, an interesting explanation of a Meetei is recorded by Political Agent, James Johnstone. He writes, "Sometimes the habitants of a village were elevated en-masse from the level of outcaste, to that of Hindus of pure caste, but often more single individuals were 'converted.' A man belonging to a hill tribe, for instance, could, if the Raja chose, at anytime receive the sacred thread of the twice born castes, and on payment of a small sum of money be admitted as a Hindu and was henceforth called a Khetree. This privilege was not accorded to Mussulmans. I once asked a Manipuri why they received hillmen and not Mussulmans, both being Mlechas (unclean), according to Hindu theory. He said it was because the hill people had sinned in ignorance, whereas Mussulmans knew the evil of their ways."<sup>62</sup>

Hindu customs and practices, such as caste system (Meeteis were assigned Khetriya caste), cremation of the death, Hindu dietary laws, sati, notion of purity and pollution (mangba-sengba), social segregation, etc. were introduced. Practices such as cow slaughter, eating meat, drinking spirits, rearing of pigs and fowls, worship of local deities, etc. were prohibited and those who defied the restrictions were punished. Meeteis who consumed meat were punished and had to undergo purificatory rite, whereas those involved in killing cow were exiled to Loi villages. Those who kept unclean animals, such as pigs and fowls, in housing areas were sent to rural areas. The social relation between Hinduised Meeteis and other communities too changed. Meetei Hindus were not allowed to mix with a category of people that included lunatic, tribals, Muslims, Lois,

and even foreigners. They all were considered as untouchable people. Therefore, socializing, inter-marriage and inter-dining between Hinduized Meeteis and other communities were proscribed. Much later, to learn English language, wearing modern dress, etc. were also regarded as unclean acts. Thus the close socio-cultural bonding that existed between the Meeteis and Muslims began to be ruptured.

Brahma Sabha, a body of Brahmins formed with king's patronage, took upon the task of closely monitoring and regulating the religious and cultural life of the Hinduized Meeteis. The body punished those who violated the restrictions. The sabha became popular from the reign of Gambhir Singh.

According to S.N. Paratt, a crucial aspect of the Hindu orthodoxy was the strict enforcement of sexual ethics. Those who violated the conventions were chastised by a set of laws. A Meetei who cohabited with opposite sex of other communities such as Muslims, Burmese, and hill tribes was generally banished to the particular community concerned. Those who were involved in adultery were more cruelly punished. A man involved in the crime had to pay a huge fine to the woman's husband; if he failed to pay, his family was sold as slaves. Other punishments included public beating for the man, or his execution, but more often exiled to Loi villages. The adulterous woman was normally exhibited in the market place, a punishment called khongoinaba (shaming in public).<sup>63</sup>

The royal chronicle records instances of acts of polluting Hindu sacred spaces by non-Hindus and performance of purificatory rites, and numerous instances of punishments for violation of Hindu rules and regulations, particularly slaughtering cow and consuming meat, inter-dining and inter-marriage between the Hindus and non-Hindus, sexual offences, etc.:

In 1858, some Muslims, disguising themselves as Meeteis with the family name of Nongthombam, were found living in Meetei village. Their genealogies were verified and the true identities were revealed. Thereafter, they were expelled from the area and sent to a Muslim locality.<sup>64</sup> In another rare reference, in 1868, a Muslim woman entered a mandap and a temple in a Meetei locality. As a result, a purificatory ceremony was performed by Brahmans.<sup>65</sup>

The royal chronicle also records several instances of Meeteis being forced to accept Islam for having courtship, or illicit relations with Muslims. However, these incidents were

recorded, by and large, during the reigns of Chandrakriti and Churachand. Surprisingly, there were no such instances of conversion or polluting sacred places during the reigns of other devout Vaishnavite rulers, particularly Garib Niwaz and Bheigyachandra, which showed that orthodoxy strengthened from the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. T.C. Hodson writes that it was Chandrakriti who consolidated and strengthened Hindu orthodoxy which had lost much of its hold on the subjects during the tumultuous times of Burmese occupation.<sup>66</sup> Sharing the same view, S.N. Parratt writes that the cultic aspects of Vaishnavism were firmly established by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it was reinforced by copious legal rulings and purificatory rites.<sup>67</sup>

The instances of forced conversion of Meeteis to Islam recorded in the Cheitharol Kumbaba during the reign of Chandrakriti are: 1) In 1870, one Meetei, Irungbam Yumjao from Kontha Ahallup was forced to convert to Islam for taking a Muslim girl as his wife.<sup>68</sup> 2) In 1871, a Meetei woman, Moirangthem Chanu, was punished for supporting the wife of a British officer (Sahib), for which she was punished and handed over to a Muslim.<sup>69</sup> 3) Again, the same year, a Meetei man, Yelangba Maiba, had to accept Islam for having affair with a Muslim girl.<sup>70</sup> 4) In 1875, a Meetei, Loitamcha Tanchou, became a Muslim.<sup>71</sup> The reason for changing his faith is not given. 5) In 1880, the daughter of a tailor (furit tuba) of Sogolsem was forced to renounce her faith for having courtship with a Muslim and her parents were punished by relocating them beyond Lilong at Wairokpam Yumpham within the Muslim locality.<sup>72</sup> 6) In 1882, a man of Chongtham sub-clan was forced to adopt Islam for having an affair with a Muslim girl.<sup>73</sup> 7) In 1885, a Meetei of Seram family of Urup professed Islam for taking a Muslim girl as his partner.<sup>74</sup> 8) In 1890, a woman who committed adultery with a coolie was handed to a Muslim.<sup>75</sup>

During the reign of Churachand, the following instances of conversion are recorded in the royal chronicle: 1) In 1903, a Meetei of Akangjam family from Khumidok had to accept Islam for having an affair with a Muslim girl.<sup>76</sup> 2) In 1912, a woman of Shamurailatpam clan, who had illicit relation with a Muslim was jailed instead of forcing her to convert.<sup>77</sup> 3) In 1915, a Meetei, Thongabam Ningol Atolbi, became the wife of a Muslim.<sup>78</sup> 4) In 1926, Wahengbam Madhop of Kontha Ahallup took a Muslim girl from Kairang as his wife for which he was forced to become a Muslim.<sup>79</sup> 5) In 1941, Naorem Ningol



Amurei of Kanglatombi, a widow, became a Muslim after she married Phajiluddin Miya.<sup>80</sup>

In spite of the orthodoxy and forced conversions, in general, Muslims did not suffer from serious religious persecution after the introduction of Hinduism in Manipur. No attempt was made to curb their religious freedom. We do not find any instance of molestation of Muslims in exercise of their religion. Instead, the monarchs continued to respect their Muslim subjects and the faith. According to an account in the royal chronicle, Paru Mia Choudhury, a Muslim business man from Sylhet, was an intimate friend of King Nar Singh (1844-1850). The king had befriended Paru Mia while he was in Sylhet. In 1844, the king rewarded Paru Mia by presenting several costly items, such as gold chain, gold bangle puma, royal silk cloth including dhoti, chadar, khamen chatpa phurit (shirt), coat, turban, two ponies, 20 buffaloes, and one big umbrella as a mark of friendship.<sup>81</sup> James Johnstone notes in his memoir that as an age-old court protocol the Muslims, like the other subjects, had been prostrating before the monarch, but Chandrakriti was informed that this act was against their religion. Respecting their religion, the king exempted his Muslim subjects from doing it. In its place, he asked the Muslims to do salam.<sup>82</sup> He gave permission to a Muslim to perform hajj to Mecca. Barkatullah Haji from Keirao completed the Islamic rite. Before him, Amuraba Haji of Sangomsumphum clan from Thoubal Moijing performed pilgrimage during the reign of Marjit Singh (1813-1819). As told by one of his descendants, the journey, which was on foot, took him three years and six months. He returned to Manipur during the period of devastation and he found that his family had been taken as captives by the Burmese. He then went to Burma in search of his family.

We are again informed by M.K. Binodini, the daughter of Churachand, that his father's closest advisors included the Muslim Qazi. She writes: "Besides these, sovereign father had other close advisers who frequented the palace. They could not have been actual advisors to Maharaja Churachand. We don't know why they were so close. But they seemed like family. They were Sanajaoba the Muslim and Kasturichand Patni. It is said that Sanajaoba was appointed to the post of Kazi...We saw the dark-skinned, red-turbaned Kazi Sanajaoba sitting around the palace for long periods of time. We never knew what he did. Today's well-known Helim Choudhury was married to the daughter of Sanajaoba the Muslim and was his son-in-law...it

was said...Maharaja Churachand, Sanajaoba the Muslim and Kasturichand the Indian were brothers in a previous life..."<sup>83</sup>

However, the ritual of purity-pollution continued to persist in the Manipuri society, at large, for long. Social interaction between Hindus and non-Hindus continued to be restricted. Non-Hindus were forbidden from entering the residences of the Hindus. Inter-dining was prohibited. Reminiscing the Hindu society and the practice of purity-pollution in Manipuri society in the 1940s-1950s, research scholar, Dr. Mohendra Irengbam gives an interesting account. He writes, "There was no institutional caste system among the Meiteis themselves, but they remained aloof from other ethnic communities, such as the Meitei Pangals, Chingmees, Yaithibies (non-Hindu Meiteis) and the Europeans. It was partly because of Meitei's ritual purity and hierarchical practice of Hinduism, and partly because these communities ate meat, especially cow's meat, which was loathsome to them. That was the reason why they called Europeans 'Mlechch,' unclean (Hindi word). This racial and ethnic profiling was dead serious. If anyone from these communities set a profane foot on a Meitei mangol, the house had to be abandoned...Before the war, Chingmees, Pangals and Europeans were not allowed to set foot on a Meitei mangol, let alone enter the house. I was told by my second elder sister, the late Pishak Devi, who was once ill with typhoid fever. The British doctor, Dr. Borer, the Civil Surgeon at the Civil Hospital came to see her at our home at our father's request. She had to be brought out laid in her cot, from inside the yumjao to the front edge of our mangol so that the doctor could examine her, sitting in the shumang on a mora (stool made of bamboo)...Just after the war, many tea shops known as hotels, sprang up in and around Imphal town centre...They were all run by Brahmins so that all Meiteis would eat there. There were groups of Meiteis who would not eat food cooked by other Meiteis, while there was a group of Meiteis known as Duhon, who could universally serve water to drink at a formal utsab chaba (celebration feast). These hotels barred the Pangals, Chingmees and Yaithibis (and Europeans)... Just after the war, there were 2 or 3 Brahmin women selling different kinds of bora (pakora) and other fried items in the evenings, sitting by the side of the central road near the Maharani Thong. When you wanted to buy something she would put it on a bit of banana leaf. You dropped the money on her palm and she would drop your purchase on your two palms cupped together and facing upwards. One Hill boy who

didn't know the custom took it from her hand. She had to throw away everything. But she understandably, didn't ask him to pay for the lot. Gradually liberalism entered the sinews of Meiteis, including the Bamons (Manipuri Brahmins), allowing Chingmees to enjoy these hotels, and later, some Meitei Pangals. In this neo-liberalism, the famous Agya Aribam Pishak from Uripok, had a flagship hotel by the Uripok Road, set at the edge of Khwairamband Bazaar. Tea and other snacks were available at affordable prices. The standard price for a small glassful of tea was 4 paisa. One day, Moirangthem Gojendra, father of Shanti (Rtd IGP), and I brought a Meitei Pangal, Helim Choudhury to this Hotel, after a hockey game at Mapal Kangjeibung. Helim was a very good hockey player. He was one of the Manipur 11 team that played at the Beighton Cup tournament in Calcutta in 1948 and 1949. He was a bit hesitant but Agya Pishak didn't object, partly because Ta-Gojen and I were his local youngsters. Helim was the first Muslim allowed into a Bamon hotel, and Agya Pishak was the first Bamon hotel owner, who served a Muslim in such a hotel. Little did we know then, one day Helim would succeed the same Gojendra as the General Manager of Manipur State Transport. I remember meeting Helim, when both of us were Guests of Honour at the 8th International Polo Tournament in Imphal in 2014."<sup>84</sup>

Hindu orthodoxy and social restrictions gradually waned in Manipur by the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Spread of modern education and the development of Sanamahism, a revivalist movement, aimed to bring back the indigenous religion of the Meeteis, played crucial roles in opening up the Manipuri society. Churachand's son and successor to the throne, Maharaja Bodhachandra (1941-1955), also allowed the gradual revival of traditional Meitei faith and culture. However, in the long run, western education and its ideas and values of liberalism, secularism and democracy slowly rooted out conservatism and orthodoxy from the Manipuri society.

### **Conclusion**

The history of Muslim settlement in Manipur can be traced with certainty from around the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, till the end of 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Muslim population must have consisted of few families. The major increase in the population of Muslims took place during the reign of Khagemba when he settled the one thousand Muslim invaders from Taraf, a region in Sylhet. The Muslim population further

enhanced with the influx of Muslims from time to time, in small number, from Bengal, Assam, and parts of mainland India.

Manipur witnessed a major demographic transformation in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Burmese carried out a massive offensive against Manipur and occupied the valley from 1819 to 1826. This event resulted in the mass exodus and settlement of Meetei and Muslim population in parts of Assam, Tripura and parts of Sylhet, while several thousands were carried away by the Burmese as captives, who were subsequently forced to reside in the country. Gambhir Singh established his rule after driving out the Burmese with a meager population. In due course of time, a section of the migrated Meetei and Muslim population returned after a prolonged sojourn in Barak Valley.

In general, the farsighted rulers of Manipur welcomed immigrants to reside in Manipur in an attempt to enhance the population of the kingdom so that Manipur could face the regular Burmese aggression and to expand agrarian and industrial activities. The sagacious and enterprising ruler, Khagemba, patronized the Muslims, who possessed skills in various trades and professions. They were given the liberty to follow their faith. He facilitated their social formation by allowing them to inter-marry with the local women and organized the community into clans which helped them in regulating their social relations, including marriage practices. It also facilitated them in preserving and promoting their vocations and skills. A separate administrative office, Pangal Sanglen, headed by a Qazi, was instituted, which allowed the Muslims to look after their own affairs, besides giving them the liberty to enforce the laws and customs of their religion.

The Muslims began to maintain close and harmonious socio-cultural relationship with the Meeteis. However, the adoption of Hinduism as a State religion in the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century gradually bought social distance between the Meetei Hindus and other communities, including Muslims, principally by the Hindu's notion of purity and pollution. Several Meeteis, who had courtship or illicit relation with Muslims, were forced to accept Islam. However, there was no attempt to convert the Muslims into Hinduism, and no major instances of discrimination and persecution against the Muslims. The devout Vaishnavite rulers continued to show their respect for the Muslims' faith.

The rulers of medieval Manipur fully exploited the capabilities and potentials of the Muslims to improve the

military strength and economy of the kingdom. Khagemba started enrolling them in the lallup and opened industrial units based on their skills. Muslims soon proved to be productive subjects of the kingdom. The small Muslim population continued to make remarkable contributions in administrative, economic and military assignments. As soldiers, they exhibited bravery in the battle fields, showed wit and diplomacy in administrative and diplomatic engagements. They enriched the economy of the country through their ideas, specialized skills, experiences, innovations and techniques in various trades. Muslim cultivators brought barren lands into cultivable areas, introduced exotic crops and acquainted the native people with more advanced methods and techniques in agriculture and livestock rearing, such as transplantation method in rice cultivation, plough drawn by bullock and improved ways of livestock rearing and diary production. Muslim cultivators exhibited their proficiency in developing and maintaining productive royal gardens. The skilled Muslim artisans and craftsmen contributed in the refinement of the design, method and technique in different trades and professions, such as pottery, utensil-making, fire-arms, metal-ware, palanquin making, weaving, paper making, glass making, etc. Considering the immense economic role of the small Muslim population, two well-known British Political Agents note in their accounts that Muslims were the most diligent and productive section of the Manipuri society. McCulloch observes that the Muslims were the most industrious section of the population of Manipur, while British Political Agent, R. Brown writes that the Muslims had the reputation of being honest and hard-working.<sup>85</sup>

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### End-notes

<sup>1</sup> The religion-wise percentage of population shows: Hindus 41.39%, Christians 41.29%, Muslim 8.40%, Sikh 0.05%, Buddhist 0.25%, Jain 0.06%, other religions 8.19%, and religion not stated by 0.38%.

<sup>2</sup> S.N. Parratt (ed. & trans.), *The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur*, pp. 56-57

<sup>3</sup> T.C. Hodson, *The Meitheis*, p. 53

<sup>4</sup> A. Rahman, 'The Meitei Pangal,' in N. Sanajaoba (ed.), *Manipur Past and Present*, Vol. IV, p. 460

- <sup>5</sup> For the full narrative of the invasion, see O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan (eds.), *Nongsamei Puya*, pp. 1-31
- <sup>6</sup> Notably, similar instances of the settlement of Muslim captives took place in other parts of north-eastern India in pre-colonial times. For instance, the Morias of Assam traced their descent from the 900 Muslim troops who were captured by the Ahom ruler, and subsequently settled in various parts of Assam. These Muslims were part of the army of Turbak, a Muslim General from Bengal, who invaded Assam in 1532. Today, the Marias are mainly concentrated in Kamrup, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur districts.
- <sup>7</sup> S.N. Parratt, *op.cit.*, p. 70
- <sup>8</sup> In Assam too, the Ahom rulers welcomed and patronized numerous skilled craftsmen who had something new to teach to the Ahoms. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Ahom monarchs recruited Muslims in several departments of the state. They were employed in minting of coins, carving inscriptions on copper-plates and other metals, embroidery works, painting, carpentry, gun-making and gun-powder manufacturing, while the learned Muslims were attached to the Ahom court as scribes, who also did the work of deciphering and interpreting Persian documents. Several Muslim religious leaders (dewans) were granted revenue-free lands.
- <sup>9</sup> Nepram Bihari (ed. & trans.), *The Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 52
- <sup>10</sup> R.K. Jhalajit, *A History of Manipuri Literature*, pp. 160-161
- <sup>11</sup> O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan (eds.), *op.cit.*, p. 1
- <sup>12</sup> R.K. Jhalajit, *A Short History of Manipur*, p. 9
- <sup>13</sup> O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 22, 74-75
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 36, 38
- <sup>15</sup> Muhammadan Panchayat, instituted in 1902 by the British as a judicial court for the Muslims, was instructed by Manipur State Durbar, the body that assisted the king in administration, to prepare a report on the Muslim clans. The Panchayat prepared a list of 40 Muslim clans along with brief history of each of the clans, including the forbearers and submitted in 1932, possibly to the then President of the Durbar, Capt. C.W.L. Harvey (1930-1933), by the then Qazi, Sanajao Miya. The manuscript of six pages, written in Manipuri (in Bengali script) was signed by the Qazi and other members of the office, namely Md. Khan, Gulam Ali, Amu and Lusei Miya, dated 30<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1932 and duly stamped with the seal of the Panchayat. The name of the clans and the ancestors given in the report are as follows: 1) Ipham

(Munon Khan), 2) Khulakpam (Md. Shani), 3) Khutheibam (Md. Sheikh Jali), 4) Makakmayum Amuba (Md. Sunarphun Shah, Md. Champhe), 5) Sangomsumpham (Munia Sheikh, Sheikh Musa), 6) Meraimayum (Syed Abdullah, Syed Hussain, Syed Auliya), 7) Imkhaibam (Kundan Khan, Jaman Khan), 8) Korimayum (Saniyatullah), 9) Aribam (Kutuwan Khan Sadique, Para Koireng), 10) Hawaii Ingkhol (Kamar Khan), 11) Sairem (Keisam Miya who married a Meetei women of Sairem clan), 12) Moijing (Muhammadin), 13) Leisangkhong (Akayatullah), 14) Sajoubam (Shah Kusum), 15) Urupmayum (Khanon Khan), 16) Moinam (Kachar Md.), 17) Thoubalmayum (Ibrahim Miya), 18) Moinam (Jan Md.), 19) Chesam (Sheikh Chunamiya), 20) Mayangmayum (Iyasin Miya), 21) Musra (Musa Kalimullah), 22) Phundreimayum (Kundan Khan and Jaman Khan), 23) Nongjaimayum (Atei Shah, Md. Shah), 24) Bogimayum (Purna), 25) Thongkhongmayum (Keisa), 26) Wangmayum (Sheikh Silim), 27) Mayangmayum Anouba (Monaira Khan), 28) Nongsayaibam (Jai), 29) Singgakhongbam (Sheikh Salimullah), 30) Mansam (Amanuddin), 31) Keinoumayum (Ukhan Doulat Khan), 32) Makakmayum Angouba (Md. Sunarphun Shah, Md. Champhe), 33) Kamalmayum (Munor Khan), 34) Baseimayum (Arup), 35) Mayangmayum (Jabai Miya Jamandar), 36) Phusam (Sheikh Jali Miya, Masa Miya), 37) Yangkhubam (Yangkhamba), 38) Pukhrimayum (Md. Sheikh Jalaluddin), 39) Dolaipabam (Nampha), 40) Oinam (Bir, a Meetei convert). For a detailed account, see Pangal Panchayat, MSS. However, the number of Muslim clans has increased over the decades with the increase in population. The editors of Nongsamei Puya (1972) has listed 57 Muslim clans, while B. Kulachandra and Badruddin further traced the origin of 63 Muslim clans in their book, Meetei-Pangal Haorakpham (1991).

<sup>16</sup> O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 75-80

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84-89

<sup>18</sup> Nepram Bihari, *op.cit.*, p. 60

<sup>19</sup> W. Yumjao Singh, *Manipur Itihas*, pp. 30-31

<sup>20</sup> J.P. Wade notes, "The throne of Sajehan Padsah was disputed by his four sons but Aurrungshah proved the successful competitor. He dispatched Miramoola with an army to expel Booza (Sooja) who fled to Munnipoor the capital of the Muggloo Rajah. (sic)" See J.P. Wade, *An Account of Assam*, p. 297

- <sup>21</sup> R.K. Sanahal writes that there is a cliff called Shuja Lok in Heingang, Imphal East, which possibly is a place where Shuja and his men hide for some time, before entering Arakan. See R.K. Sanahal Singh, Pangal Thorakpa, pp. iii-iv; O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan (eds., 2014), *op.cit.*, pp. 134-135.
- <sup>22</sup> Arthur Phayre gives a narrative of the last days of Shah Shuja in Arakan thus: Shah Shuja, along with his wife, two sons, three daughters and dependents entered Arakan from Assam. He set out from Tandah by boats and reached Dacca. His eldest son, Zainuddin had already contacted the king of Arakan, Sanda Thudhamma, requesting for asylum and a safe passage to Mecca from there. They started on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1660 from Dacca on boats; protected by the Arakanese, and reached Arakan by the end of 1660. Shuja and his family were given proper treatment at the royal court. Later, the Arakan king asked for the hands of one of the daughters of Shuja for marriage. The proposal was rejected. The Arakan king showed his anger. Shuja then staged a revolt against the Arakan king taking the help of the native Muslim population. It failed. Shuja and his men were captured. The Mughal prince was put to death along with his sons, while his wife and two daughters committed suicide. The retainers of Shuja resided permanently in the region. Today, their offsprings bore the title Kunanchi. See Arthur P. Phayre, *History of Burma*, pp. 178-179
- <sup>23</sup> O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 92-93
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.127-130
- <sup>26</sup> Neram Bihari, *op.cit.*, p. 207
- <sup>27</sup> L. Ibungohal Singh & N. Khelchandra Singh (eds.), *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 303
- <sup>28</sup> O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan (eds., 2014), *op.cit.*, p. 190
- <sup>29</sup> Nepram Bihari, *op.cit.*, p. 249
- <sup>30</sup> It may be mentioned that Qazi, who administered civil and criminal law, was an important administrative post during the Muslim rule in India. Generally, a Muslim who had adequate knowledge of Islamic law was appointed as a Qazi. After Muslim rule, the Qazis began to handle only civil cases.
- <sup>31</sup> O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan, *op.cit.*, pp. 70, 74
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114
- <sup>33</sup> W. McCulloch, *An Account of the Valley of Munnipore*, p. 14



- <sup>34</sup> For a list of the Qazis from the reign of Khagemba up to Surchandra, see B. Kullachandra Sharma, *Christ 1891gi Mamangda Leiramba Meetei-Pangalgi Fibam*, pp. 82-83
- <sup>35</sup> British administrators in Manipur introduced judicial reforms under the Rules for the Administration of Justice and Police in Manipur State, 1892 by instituting three courts: Panchayat Court, Cheirap Court and Political Agent Court. Panchayat Court was classified into three: Town Panchayat, Rural Panchayat and Mohammedan Panchayat.
- <sup>36</sup> For details, see N. Ibohi Singh, *The Manipur Administration*, pp.106-107, 119-122
- <sup>37</sup> To effectively enforce the lallup, the whole valley was divided into four Panas or administrative units, namely Ahallup, Naharup, Khabam and Laipham. The panas were further subdivided into several villages, controlled by headman. The headman decided the kind of work for every individual engaged in lallup duty. During the reign of Gambhir Singh, regular army was raised, which required the lallups to render only civil services in the different State loishangs.
- <sup>38</sup> For a general account of the lallup system, see T.C. Hodson, *op.cit.*, pp. 59-65
- <sup>39</sup> For the details of the campaign, see O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 55-67
- <sup>40</sup> O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 105-109
- <sup>41</sup> R.K. Sanahal Singh (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. xii
- <sup>42</sup> W. McCulloch, *op.cit.*, p. 14
- <sup>43</sup> Loi communities in Manipur specialized in several crafts, such as pottery, salt-making, silk manufacture, iron smelting, distilling of spirits, etc. Production of earthen pots of different shapes and sizes has been the main economic activity of the womenfolk of Loi villages, such as Andro, Chairel, Sugnu, Nongpok Sekmai, etc., since ancient times.
- <sup>44</sup> For the details of Muslim departments, see K. Chandrasekhar Singh (ed.), *Masil*, pp. 36, 46, 48; also see N. Birachandra Singh, 'Muslim Institutions in Manipur,' pp. 90-91
- <sup>45</sup> O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan (eds.), *op.cit.*, p. 45; N. Birachandra Singh, *op.cit.*, pp. 90-91; also see K. Chandrasekhar Singh (ed.), *Masil*, p. 41
- <sup>46</sup> For details, see O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 46-48; also see R.K. Sanahal (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 22-23
- <sup>47</sup> W. McCulloch, *op.cit.*, p. 29
- <sup>48</sup> T.C. Hodson, *op.cit.*, p. 70

- <sup>49</sup> R. Brown, *Statistical Account of the Native State of Manipur*, p. 15
- <sup>50</sup> O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan (eds., 2014), *op.cit.*, p. 191
- <sup>51</sup> Nepram Bihari, *op.cit.*, p. 148
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381
- <sup>53</sup> O. Bhogeswar Singh & M.A. Janab Khan (eds., 2014), *op.cit.*, p. 194
- <sup>54</sup> W. McCulloch, *op.cit.*, p. 15
- <sup>55</sup> G.A. Grierson (ed.), *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. III, p. 20
- <sup>56</sup> Abul Khair Choudhury, *Cachar Zillagi Meitei Pangalgi Folk Culture Neinaba*, pp. 81-82
- <sup>57</sup> Haji Md. Abdus Salam, *Manipuri Musalmaner Ittibriti*, pp. 192-193
- <sup>58</sup> Kheiruddin Chowdhury, 'Meitei Pangans outside Manipur,' in N. Sanajaoba (ed.), *Manipur Past and Present*, Vol. 4, p. 306
- <sup>59</sup> T.C. Hodson, *op.cit.*, p. 95
- <sup>60</sup> However, in course of time the Hindu religious mediators also made rigorous attempt to synthesize Hinduism with the Meitei traditional religion. The process has been described by some scholars as sanskritization which was observed in the adoption of Hindu gotras to the salais (clan), identification of Hindu festivals with the traditional festivals, giving Hindu names to rulers and even to the country, etc. For a detailed analysis on sanskritization, see Gangmumei Kamei, *History of Manipur*, pp. 255-259
- <sup>61</sup> W. McCulloch, *op.cit.*, pp. 17-18
- <sup>62</sup> James Johnstone, *Manipur and Naga Hills*, p. 88
- <sup>63</sup> S.N. Parratt, *Religion of Manipur*, p. 172
- <sup>64</sup> Nepram Bihari, *op.cit.*, 248
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272
- <sup>66</sup> T.C. Hodson, *op.cit.*, p. 95
- <sup>67</sup> S.N. Parratt, *op.cit.*, pp. 171-172
- <sup>68</sup> Nepram Bihari., *op.cit.*, p. 279
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286
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- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 325
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 332
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- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 352
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- <sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 426  
<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 453  
<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 491  
<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 204  
<sup>82</sup> James Johnstone, *op.cit.*, p. 188  
<sup>83</sup> Binodini, *The Maharaja's Household*, p. 61  
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<sup>85</sup> W. McCulloch, *op.cit.*, p. 15; R. Brown, *op.cit.*, p. 15

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