

# Socio-Cultural And Religious Facets Of Manipuri Muslims During The 17<sup>th</sup> And 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries

**Md. Chingiz Khan**

Research Scholar in the Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

chingizkhan786@gmail.com

## **Abstract:**

*The state, Manipur, extending between latitudes 23° 50' and 25° 4' north and longitudes 93° 2' and 94° 47' east and acquiring an area of 22,356sq.km, is sited as the easternmost border of India which has a lucid geographical unit comprising of hills and valleys. It is a land populated and lodged by the hill and valley inhabitants together since eternity. Veritably, one cannot subsist without the other, the hill is nothing without the valley and so is the valley without the hills. It has neighbouring states, namely, Nagaland on the north, Myanmar on the east, Cachar (Assam) on the west and Chin hills of Myanmar and Mizoram on the south. The valley areas of Manipur retain a portion of the state with an area of 1800 sq. kms mainly dwelt by the communities known as Meitei and Muslim. There are other religious communities like Tribes and Mayangs (a term used for non-Manipuris residing in the state) in the valley areas of Manipur. In this context, an attempt is being made to explore as to how the Manipuri Muslim's socio-cultural and religious aspects should be seen as the identity formation of the Muslim community in the state. Actually, many socio-cultural and religious practices drawing from the local majority community called Meitei like marriage system, the clan system (unknown in the*

*Islamic World), dresses (phanek, khudei, khwangnum), belief system, language (meiteilon), food habits (uti, eronba, chamthong/kangsoi, ngari, singju), arts and aesthetics, games and sports, etc. and their implications on the expansion, settlement and formation of the community have been scrutinized here during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. It does not mean that they were through and through integrated into the Meitei society. They maintained a unique distinct identity of their own, though they fished out many concepts, thoughts and ideologies for shaping and reshaping of their own community from the nearby communities. Further, another attempt has been made to canvass the historical sifting of the religion of Muslims in Manipur succinctly.*

**Keywords:** Manipuri Muslims, Socio-Cultural Formations, Religion and Identity

## **Introduction:**

Manipur, extending between latitudes 23° 50' and 25° 4' north and longitudes 93° 2' and 94° 47' east and having an area of 22,356sq.km, is placed at the easternmost

border of India.<sup>1</sup> It has a geographical unit comprising of hills and valleys and both zones are interdependent on each other. It has neighbours, namely, Nagaland on the north, Myanmar on the east, Cachar (Assam) on the west and Chin hills of Myanmar and Mizoram on the south. The valley areas of Manipur possess a portion of the state with an area of 1800 sq.kms markedly dwelt by the communities known as Meitei and Muslim. Some other tribal communities such as Kukis and Nagas inhabit in the valley areas of Manipur.<sup>2</sup> There is also a substantial non-Meitei population often locally referred to by the locals as 'Mayang',<sup>3</sup> who generally referred to people of the plains.

Before proceeding on the socio-cultural and religious aspects of the Muslims in Manipur during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries,

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<sup>1</sup>S. A. Ansari, *Some Aspects of the Geography of Manipur*, B. R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1985, p.1.

<sup>2</sup>Tribal communities mentioned here include Kukis and Nagas whose origins, society, culture etc. are studied in detail in R.R. Shimray's work, *Origin and Culture of Nagas*, Revised Edition, Delhi, 1986, pp.12-42; E.W. Dun's work, *Gazetteer of Manipur*, Manas Publication, Delhi, 1992, pp. 32-33; R. Brown's work, *Statistical Account of Manipur*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 1975, pp.16-17.

<sup>3</sup>The term 'Mayang' indicates all those who come from the western direction and who do not belong to the Mongoloid stock. It was used originally for the people of Cachar and Tripura, who came and settled in Manipur and called themselves 'Bishnupriyas'. Besides this, it was given to those immigrants, who did not adopt Manipuri language as their language and did not intermix culturally with the larger society. To sum up, the term 'Mayang' was applicable to those who came from outside Manipur, for instance, Muslims in that time and nowadays it is used to denote to those outsiders, may be Muslims or Hindus not the Christian people, which means that it is used regardless of religion, studied in great detail in Brara's book *Politics, Society and Cosmology in India's North East*, Delhi, 1986, pp.120-21.

it is important to briefly point out the origins of the coming of Muslims in Manipur. Some scholars such as O. Bhogeshwor Singh and Janab Khan, R.K. Sanahal Singh, Rafayattullah etc. pointed out that they started their settlement since the time of their arrival in Manipur in 1606 A.D. during the reign of king Khagemba (1597-1652).<sup>4</sup> They came to settle in the four districts of present day Manipur namely Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal and Bishenpur. They were familiarized as 'pangals' which is evident from the primary sources like *Nongsamei Puya*<sup>5</sup> (an indigenous source), *Cheitharol Kumpapa*<sup>6</sup> (The Royal Chronicle of Manipur), *Ningthoural Lambuba*<sup>7</sup>,

*Yaad Dasht Kursee-e-Nama*<sup>8</sup> (Persian account). The word 'pangal' seems to have been derived from the word 'Bangal' meaning men of the east Bengal. The word 'Bangal' was corrupted into 'Pangal'

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<sup>4</sup>O. Bhogeshwor Singh and M.A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, pp.34-39; R.K.Sanahal Singh, *Pangal Thorakpa*, Liberty Publication Association, Imphal, 1985, pp.15-20; Rafayattullah, *Yad-Dast Kursee-E-Nama*, Lahore, 1929, tr. by Maulana Muhammad Jalaluddin, Kheiruddin Khullakpam and Maulana Tayeb Ali, Circles, Imphal, 1997, pp.12-13.

<sup>5</sup>O. Bhogeshwor Singh and M. A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973.

<sup>6</sup>Saroj Nalini Parrat, *The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur: The Cheitharol Kumpapa*, Vol.1, Original Text, Translation and Notes, Routledge, London, 2005, p.68.

<sup>7</sup>O. Bhogeshwor Singh, *Ningthoural Lambuba*, 2 Vols. Imphal, 1967.

<sup>8</sup>Rafayattullah, *Yad-Dast Kursee-E-Nama*, Lahore, 1929, tr. by Maulana Muhammad Jalaluddin, Kheiruddin Khullakpam and Maulana Tayeb Ali, Circles, Imphal, 1997, pp.15, 24.

because most Manipuris in the 17<sup>th</sup> century enunciated 'b' as 'p'. In the medieval period, any man from East Bengal, regardless of his religion, was called 'Pangal'. There were Pathans, Sheikhs, Syeds and Mughals among the Manipuri Muslims.<sup>9</sup> Another account was also given in the Persian text *Yaad Dasht Kursee-e-Nama* by Rafayattullah pertaining to the word 'Pangal', where the word was designated by the king Khagemba to the Muslims particularly their commander-in-chief, Muhammad Sani. On account of his fortitude and intrepidity in the battle fought between Manipuri Meiteis and Muslims at Toubul (near Bishnupur District) in 1606 A.D., Muhammad Sani was called by king Khagemba as 'Panganba' and his Muslim troops were referred to as 'Pangal'.<sup>10</sup> Since then, the term 'Pangal' has been used for Muslims by other religious communities. As a matter of fact, the word 'Pangal' has come to mean 'strength' in Manipuri language.

After the settlement of the Muslims in Manipur, they started adopting the language of the indigenous dominant

community called 'Meiteilon' as their own, besides also using Urdu, Persian and Arabic. They started establishing their own judicial institution known as *loishang* (department) which was approved by the then king of Manipur, Khagemba. The *loishang* was supervised by a Qazi whose judgements were based on their Muslims traditions and customs.<sup>11</sup> It played a significant role in settling disputes among the Manipuri Muslims since their arrival in the state which would be further analyzed.

Consequently, a brief historical account of how Muslims came to Manipur is also discussed in this paper. Moreover, an attempt is being made to explore as to how the Manipuri Muslim's socio-cultural and religious aspects should be seen as the identity formation of the Muslim community in the state. Here, identity means distinct and unique socio-cultural and religious identities of the community. It does not mean that they were fully integrated into the Meitei society but they maintained a unique distinct identity of

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<sup>9</sup> R. K. Jhalajit Singh, *A Short History of Manipur*, J.M. Printing Works, Imphal, 1965, p.13.

<sup>10</sup> Rafayattullah, *Yad-Dast Kursee-E-Nama*, Lahore, 1929, tr. by Maulana Muhammad Jalaluddin, Kheiruddin Khullakpam and Maulana Tayeb Ali, Circles, Imphal, 1997, p. 24; Khullakpam Kheiruddin, *Turko-Afghangee Chada Naoda*, Imphal, 1997, p.35.

<sup>11</sup> L. Iboongohal Singh, *Introduction to Manipur*, Imphal, 1987, p. 102; Somorendro Arambam (ed.), *Meitei Pangal Cultural Festival and Exhibition*, Imphal, 1997, p.3; N. Iboi Singh, *The Manipuri Administration (1709-1907)*, Imphal, 2003, p.118; W. Mc Culloch, *An Account of the Valley of Munnipore*, Gian Publication, Delhi, 1980, p.14.

their own, though they borrowed many concepts, thoughts and ideologies for shaping and reshaping of their own community to set them apart from their nearby communities. Another attempt made here is to study the historical development of the religious system of the Manipuri Muslims since the beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century. A comprehensive account with regard to the present given thematic issues and its detailed historical analysis, and understandings are examined here.

### **A Historical Background of the Coming of Muslims in Manipur:**

The historical background of the coming of Muslims in Manipur has been a contested and debated one among the historians and scholars. On the one hand, some scholars opined that Muslims came to Manipur before 1606 A.D. On the other hand, some scholars stated that Muslims came to Manipur in 1606 A.D. Did the Islamization in Manipur take place through the military conquests or proselytizing agents of Sufism or the roles of merchants or migrations or forced conversion like in other parts of the world particularly in the Southeast Asian regions? Keeping such answerable questions in our mind, let us explore these questions briefly through historical explanations and analysis by

applying different theories put forward by Richard Eaton in the context of Manipur. Manipur was an independent and erstwhile kingdom as claimed by Salam Irene. Four conventional theories of Islamization in India have been put forward by Richard Eaton.<sup>12</sup> However, none of them are completely applicable in the case of Manipur as argued by Salam Irene.<sup>13</sup> Eaton's first theory, the Immigration theory, viewing Islamization in terms of the diffusion not of belief but of peoples, cannot be used in the case of Manipur as stated clearly by Salam Irene on the ground that the percentage of Muslims is only 8.32% of the total population of Manipur in 2001. But she could not give the reasons as to why the population of Muslims in Manipur is still low.

Large scale migrations took place from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards till the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the sense that there were further ingresses of Muslims in small batch in 1608 A.D. as mentioned clearly in the *Nongsamei Puya, Pangal Thorakpa* and *Yaad Dasht Kursee-e-Nama*. There were three brothers of Syed Auriya, the guru of the king of Taraf, Muhammad Najiri, namely Syed Ambiya,

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<sup>12</sup>Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760*, OUP, Delhi, Third Impression, 2002, pp.119-134.

<sup>13</sup> Salam Irene, *The Muslims of Manipur*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2010, pp. 23-24.

Syed Abdullah, Syed Kalka Hussain who were made to settle down by king Khagemba, after consulting with Muhammad Sani, by honouring and giving land for settlement and women. Among these three Syeds, Syed Hussain went back to Taraf and reverted with a Qur'an who was the forefather of the clan Meraimayum which was derived from Mir.<sup>14</sup> During the reign of king Khunjaoba (1652-1666A.D.), seven persons from Takhel (Tripura) namely Isakalimullah and his wife Fatima Bibi, his younger brother, Musakalimullah, Kshtridashi, Bamon Sitaram, Gonok Dakhila, Gonok Basudev, came to Manipur who were made settlement at Apong Ingkhol.<sup>15</sup> Further, in the reign of king Paikhomba (1666-1697A.D.), thirty seven Muslim travellers including Sunarphool, the prince of Makak, Miliya Sheikh, traveller and religious man from Lukhiyaphool, Phuleicha Sandulla Sheikh, Leithou, Sheikh Jali etc. arrived in Manipur who were introduced by Muhammad Sani and made them settlement by giving women as wives when they presented elephants, gold and

other precious things to the king of Manipur. There was no official policy of settling the outsiders but when they said simply that they wanted to stay in the state of Manipur, the Maharaj Paikhomba, being pleasure, allowed them to settle by giving land, women and servants.<sup>16</sup> In this period also, four Mughal princes along with ten commanders-in-chief came to Manipur who were settled down by giving servants, land and women. Actually, before entering into the royal Palace and coming with two Mughal princes hand-in-hand, Paikhomba, the king of Manipur, entered into the Mughal-Shang (Pangal Shanglen) and latter named as Mangal Khutsham-Shang.<sup>17</sup> Some scholars such as M.A. Janab Khan<sup>18</sup> connected these Mughals to Shah Shuja, the ephemeral brother of Aurangzeb and his followers though they did not give the reasons behind this. But, it was refuted on the ground that he had already been killed in Arracan by the Maghs according to Sir Jadunath Sarkar. Jadunath Sarkar said that “the king of Arracan heard of the plot and planned the assassination of Shah Shuja. Shah Shuja with a few men fled into the jungle. The

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<sup>14</sup>O. Bhogeshwor Singh and M.A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, pp.76-77; Rafayattullah, *Yad-Dast Kursee-E-Nama*, Lahore, 1929, tr. by Maulana Muhammad Jalaluddin, Kheiruddin Khullakpam and Maulana Tayeb Ali, Circles, Imphal, 1997, p.21; R.K.Sanahal Singh, *Pangal Thorakpa*, Liberty Publication Association, Imphal, 1985, pp. 37-40.

<sup>15</sup>O. Bhogeshwor Singh and M.A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, pp.84-85; R.K.Sanahal Singh, *Pangal Thorakpa*, Liberty Publication Association, Imphal, 1985, pp.40-43.

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<sup>16</sup>O. Bhogeshwor Singh and M.A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, pp.92-93; R.K.Sanahal Singh, *Pangal Thorakpa*, Liberty Publication Association, Imphal, 1985, pp. 43-44.

<sup>17</sup>O. Bhogeshwor Singh and M.A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, p.104.

<sup>18</sup>M. A. Janab Khan, *Manipuri Muslim*, Imphal, 1972, pp. 45-52; W. Yumjao Singh, *Manipuri Itihas*, Imphal, 1950.



Maghs ....pursued the poor prince .....cutting his body into pieces” (Dutch report, February, 1661).<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, Pangals namely Chuki Meihaiba, Huipuba and Singga Khongba working in the *pangal mall* and the Singga Loisang of Manipur visited in Tripura in 1676 A.D. and returned in Manipur in the same year. The arrival of seven Muslim Fakirs (saints) from Cachar in Manipur in April, 1795A.D. was the largest Fakir immigration in which Kashoudin (Kashimuddin) was the leader, Pir Baba of Fakirs, which brought a great impact in the Manipuri Muslim’s Islamic way of life.<sup>20</sup> Further, some immigration took place in Manipur in small number which, slowly and gradually, continued till the reign of Chandrakirti (1850-1886A.D.) say, for instance, Sayyids and Pathans from Gujarat came to Manipur in search of fortune.<sup>21</sup> During the repeated and successive Burmese invasions in Manipur in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, some Muslim immigrations happened in Manipur say, for instance, during the periods of 1755,

1758-9, 1764, 1770, 1782, Maimu, Pukchao and Tonba from the Sylhet District arrived in Manipur in which the king Bhagyachandra allowed Tonba to serve Wakil Haridas Gosai who was deputed by the king to sign the Anglo-Manipuri Alliance 1762 in favor of Manipur.<sup>22</sup>

However, the Muslim population did not register a rapid increase. It was a slow and gradual process. It was a microscopic number in the sense that there was no well documented text to give the exact number of population of Manipur in these two centuries. In this context, some scholars emphasized that this might be due to the repeated successive Burmese invasions like Seven Years Devastation (1819-1826) known as *Chahi Taret Khuntakpa* or search of livelihood in other states which was approximately four-fifth of the total state population.<sup>23</sup> However, it has been pointed out that a greater portion of this community was brought into captivity during the repeated successive Burmese invasions in Manipur.<sup>24</sup> This led to the diffusion of Manipuri Muslims in different

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<sup>19</sup> Sir Jadunath Sarkar, *A Short History of Aurangzeb, 1618-1707*, Calcutta, 1962; Satish Chandra, *Medieval India, From Sultanate to the Mughals, Part Two, Mughal Empire, (1526-1748)*, Har-Anand Publications PVT LTD, Revised Edition, New Delhi, 2009, pp.272-273; John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, The New Cambridge History of India, CUP, Reprinted, New Delhi, 2008, p.162; U.N. Day, *Some Aspects of the Medieval Indian History*, D.K. Publishers Distributors (p) Ltd, Reprinted, New Delhi, 2004, p.218.

<sup>20</sup> A. Hakim Shah, *The Manipur Governance to the Meetei-Pangal (Manipuri Muslim)*, Pearl Publication, Imphal, 2008, pp. 57-58.

<sup>21</sup> Quazi Hamid Ali, *The Manipuri Muslim*, Banskandi, 1979, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> Francis Hamilton, *Account of Assam*, Delhi, 1940, pp. 80-81.

<sup>23</sup> A. Hakim Shah, *The Manipur Governance to the Meetei-Pangal (Manipuri Muslim)*, Pearl Publication, Imphal, 2008, p.68; Khullakpam Kheiruddin, *Turko-Afghangee Chada Naoda*, Imphal, 1997.

<sup>24</sup> R. Brown, *A Statistical Account of Manipur*, K.M. Mittal Publication, Delhi, 1975, p. 15; W. Mc Culloch, *An Account of the Valley of Munnipore*, Gian Publication, Delhi, 1980, p.14.

parts of the neighboring regions like Cachar (Baskandi, Hilghat, Govindpur (Moijing), Tolen Khun, Lalang, Kanokpur), Tripura (Aalali, Latiyabil, Manikbhandar, Moleiya etc.), Assam (Hojaisalbagan, Sadiya and Bokajan), Nagaland (Nichaged, Semile, Charmile, Kapunpur-14 kilometres from the north of Dimapur), Bangladesh (Shripur, Jalalpur, Ghuramura, Mankhei Makhong, Samser Nagar, Maulvi Bazaar etc.), Burma (Mandalay Chhatra Number) and Saudi Arabia (Tayef, Mecca and Jeddah).<sup>25</sup>

Then, secondly, the Religion of the Sword thesis regarded as the oldest theory of Islamization spotlights the role of military force in the diffusion of Islam in India, and elsewhere. In this context, there are conflicting opinions of historians. According to Rafayattullah, the battle fought at Toubul (Bishnupur District) between the joint Cachari and Muslim and Manipuri forces in 1606 A.D. was won by the former. How and why the battle of 1606A.D. took place is also a matter of concern. As a matter of fact, 1606 was the major turning point in the history of Manipur in the sense that a major event was come off over the issue of boat race

(*hiyang tannaba* in Manipuri language) between the two brothers, namely, Sanongba and Chingsomba of the reigning king Khagemba (1597-1652 A.D.). Chingsomba borrowed boat from Sanongba for boat race but unluckily, the boat was broken on account of collision. Sanongba told by forcing to Chingsomba in order to return the original boat not the repaired and broken one. The issue came to be called as “Sanongba Higaiwa” in the history of Manipur. In this context, Khagemba tried to solve the problem through compromise happening in between the two brothers but could not solve the issue on account of demand made by Sanongba for returning the original one thereby leading to the fleeing of Sanongba with his mother Queen Dowager Luwang Changpombi and some followers to Cachar. He requested the Cachari king Dimasha Prataphil to invade Manipur. In this context, the Cachari king Dimasha Prataphil arranged joint invasion of Cachari and Muslim forces under the leadership of Yakharek, Bhimbal<sup>26</sup> and Prasena (a leader of the Muslim mercenaries of a locality known as Taraf somewhere near Habigonj in Eastern Bengal) who had requested the Nawab of Taraf, Muhammad Najira, for extending

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<sup>25</sup> O. Bhogeshwor Singh and M.A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, p.171; Khullakpam Kheiruddin, *Turko-Afghangee Chada Naoda*, Imphal, 1997, pp.13-16.

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<sup>26</sup> N. N. Acharya, *The History of Medieval Assam*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, Reprint, 1984, pp.223-224.

his collaboration and federation in doing war against the king of Manipur, Khagemba. Muhammad Najira accepted the request of Dimasha Prataphil by giving 7000 soldiers including the leaders of Muhammad Sani (the commander-in-chief of the contingent), Shah Kusum, Sheikh Juned, Kourif Sheikh (his younger brothers), Akon, Alup, Shuleiya, Nampha, Phaitong, Tumiya, Khamya, Aman, Khela, Aqya, Khamba, Punom, Kashra etc.<sup>27</sup> The combining Cachari and Muslim forces invaded Manipur in 1606 A.D. In this battle, the Muslim forces won the war though the Meitei forces fought bravely and ultimately, they brought agreement in 1606 A.D. through three conditions signed between the king of Manipur, Khagemba and the Qazi Muhammad Sani. These three conditions were laid down for the settlements and inhabitants of Muslims in Manipur evermore and perpetually in lieu of not giving the demand of tributes including gold.<sup>28</sup> The conditions are organized in the following:

#### **First Condition:**

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<sup>27</sup> O. Bhogeshwor Singh and M.A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, p.11; Rafayattullah. *Yad-Dast Kursee-E-Nama*, Lahore, 1929, tr. by Maulana Muhammad Jalaluddin, Kheiruddin Khullakpam and Maulana Tayeb Ali, Circles, Imphal, 1997, pp.6-8.

<sup>28</sup> Rafayattullah, *Yad-Dast Kursee-E-Nama*, Lahore, 1929, tr. by Maulana Muhammad Jalaluddin, Kheiruddin Khullakpam and Maulana Tayeb Ali, Circles, Imphal, 1997, pp.8-12.

The Islamic religion should never be looked down. Muslims should be kept with respect in every place. Muslims should never be humiliated. And whatever the acts done by the Qazi should never be given restriction. If the conditions were not fulfilled, the Manipuri women, the mother of Muslims, should be given their shares.

#### **Second Condition:**

Muslims, according to the religion of Prophet Muhammad, following the rules and regulations of Shariat, should neither be given restriction nor taken into repugnance. No one should be allowed to torture, blame upon the Muslims and their descendants.

All the Muslims and their descendants should never be expelled from Manipur. If any unavoidable circumstances demanded an expulsion from Manipur, then the shares entitled to the mother of the Muslims should be granted.

#### **Third condition:**

Those Manipuri women who have already performed “Nikah” should be granted their shares i.e. shares in terms of property rights.

One replica enclosing of such licit disquisitions was held back at the Court



and another transcript at the Qazi.<sup>29</sup> However, Muslims were considered as “prisoners of war” but it is a matter of debate and contestation among the historians and scholars which was discussed in great length in my paper.<sup>30</sup>

The third theory commonly advanced to describe the Islamization in India, is the religion of Patronage theory. Salam Irene stated that in Manipur, as the Muslims were never rulers, the question of according non-religious favor never arose. On the other side, right from the advent of Muslims into the kingdom, the kings of Manipur, gave the immigrant Muslims, local ladies to marry, land to settle in, as also yumnaks (clans). In this context, she quoted W. Ibohal’s statement ‘The Muslim community of the Meiteis, were also allotted family title or yumnak *sagei* according to their occupation. The Muslims of Manipur never had an assumed desire for social improvement or prestige’. But, she could not give the well founded and well-grounded reasons as to why the kings of Manipur adopted the liberal policies towards the Muslims. It might be due to the three conditions signed between the king of Manipur Khagemba

and the Qazi Muhammad Sani in 1606 A.D. Moreover, other possible reasons are that there might be a feeling of trepidation of another invasion to the Manipuri king and his officials or the significance of the skills retained among the Muslims or their valuable strength and bravery for the territorial integrity of Manipur in a firm and fixed footing.<sup>31</sup> That is why, the king of Manipur had treated them condescendingly and given the liberal and patronizing policies like land, women, servants for settlement and livelihood to the Muslims coming from Sylhet, present day in Bangladesh. It shows, to some extent, the applicability of Patronage or Advocacy theory of Islamization in India put forward by Richard Eaton in the context of expansion and settlements of Manipuri Muslims.

And the last theory in connection with the Islamization in India is the Religion of the Social Liberation thesis theorizing a Hindu Caste system that is unchanging through time, and rigidly discriminating against its lower order. Salam Irene claimed that when Islam arrived in Manipur, there was no caste system prevalent in the kingdom—the Meiteis had not yet embraced

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p.12.

<sup>30</sup>Md. Chingiz Khan, ‘The Formation of Muslim Community in Manipur During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries’, *Golden Research Thoughts*, International Multidisciplinary Research Journal, Vol.III, Issue X, April 2014, pp. 1-10.

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<sup>31</sup>Rafayattullah, *Yad-Dast Kursee-E-Nama*, Lahore, 1929, tr. by Maulana Muhammad Jalaluddin, Kheiruddin Khullakpam and Maulana Tayeb Ali, Circles, Imphal, 1997, p.9.

Hinduism. Actually, Vaishnavism became instituted as the state religion during the reign of Garibaniwaza (1709-1748 A.D.) as claimed by Gangmumei Kamei<sup>32</sup> though there were some theories with regard to the expansion of Hinduism in Manipur since fifteenth century. After analyzing briefly over the issue of historical background of the coming of Muslims in Manipur, it can be pointed out that among four theories put forward by Richard Eaton, the last one, the Religion of the Social Liberation thesis is the only one which is not applicable to the expansion and inhabitants of Muslims in Manipur at all. The other remaining three theories are somehow applicable to the historical background of the coming of Muslims and their settlements in Manipur.

Moreover, one can ask some questions such as: Why were there no political campaigns or invasions in Manipur before the 17<sup>th</sup> century from its neighbouring regions as far as the spread and extent of Islamization is concerned? Or Was there any good relationship between Manipur and its neighbouring regions in terms of trade in this time period? The exact answers were not mentioned clearly in the primary source books but the possible

answers might have been the geographical location in the sense that Manipur was being surrounded by hills almost 90% of the total state area or lack of resources or other factors. There is no ample historical evidence that Manipur had good relationship with its neighbours in terms of trade perspective but the evidences are quite limited.

So far the historical background of the coming of Muslims in Manipur is concerned, the foregoing analysis shows that 1606 A.D. was the major turning point in the history of Manipur because Muslims came to Manipur. It was an ‘accidental’ process not an offshoot of well-thought out plan because the kind of situation with regard to the spread of Islamization in Manipur was very different as compared to other parts of India in particular and world in general. The roles of Sufism, forced conversion and merchants in the context of expansion and spread of the Islamization in Manipur are a far-fetched concern though these are the main vehicles of Islamization in the Southeast Asian regions as stated clearly by Ira M. Lapidus.<sup>33</sup> Manipuri Muslims were not the “prisoners of war” though many scholars

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<sup>32</sup> Gangmumei Kamei, *History of Manipur*, Vol.1, National Publication House, New Delhi, 1991, p. 252; R. K. Jhalajit Singh, *A Short History of Manipur*, J. M. Printing Works, Imphal, 1992, p. 134.

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<sup>33</sup> Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, CUP, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 467-488.

theorized, conceptualized and interpreted them wrongly.

### **Socio-Cultural and Religious aspects of Manipuri Muslims during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries:**

The settlement of Muslims in Manipur began from 1606 A.D. though there were claims by some scholars and historians of their presence prior to this period.<sup>34</sup> Muslim society was basically a *sagei*-based (clan) social set-up which would be dealt in detail below. According to Kullachandra Sharma and Badaruddin, by 1630, Muslim society had come to have two larger groups namely *khunja* (village folk) and *khutheiba* (skilled) on the basis of their occupations.<sup>35</sup> Both *khunja* and *khutheiba* attended *lallup* (a compulsory service rendered to the state by every man above sixteen years for ten days in forty days). On the one hand, *khunja* functioned as soldiers of the kingdom. On the other hand, *khutheiba* category was engaged in works to generate goods and commodities for the kingdom. Their status was very

high in the society during this period.<sup>36</sup>

Around 1688 A.D., some Muslims came to Manipur who, according to Kullachandra Sharma and Badaruddin, were known as Mughal or Moghal or Mangkan or Mangan in Manipur. There was an institution known as *Mangal Khutsam Shang* or *Mangalshang* for “Mangans”. In this context, *Cheitharol Kumbaba* (The Royal Chronicle of Manipur) states “Mangkanshang” in 1680, 1701 A.D. as well as one “Mangkan” leader in 1614 A.D.<sup>37</sup> Other primary source books like *Pangal Thorakpa, Nongsamei*, noted the establishment (*Mangal Shangtongsana leihanle*) of *Mangal Shangtong* in 1697 A.D.<sup>38</sup> As per these two primary source books, this *Mangal Shang* was christened as *Mangal Khutsam Shang*.<sup>39</sup> This *Mangkan shang* (house/department) took a responsible role in the socio-economic tasks of the kingdom. From this

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p.3.

<sup>37</sup> O. Bhogeshwar Singh, *Khagemba Langjei*, Tamar Publication, Imphal, 2001, p.2; Lairenmayum Iboogohal Singh and N. Khelchandra Singh (ed.), *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, Manipur Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, 1989, p.35; Gangmumei Kamei, *History of Manipur*, Vol.1, National Publication House, New Delhi, 1991, p.215; O. Bhogeshwar Singh and M. A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, p.1.

<sup>38</sup> R. K. Sanahal Singh, *Pangal Thorakpa*, Liberty Publication Association, Imphal, 1985, p.47; O. Bhogeshwar Singh and M. A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, p.100.

<sup>39</sup> O. Bhogeshwar Singh and M. A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, p.104; R. K. Sanahal Singh, *Pangal Thorakpa*, Liberty Publication Association, Imphal, 1985, p.49.

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<sup>34</sup> O. Bhogeshwar Singh and M. A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, p. 169; O. Pahari, ‘Economic Conditions of Muslims in Manipur’, *SKWC Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.1, Issue.1, Jan-Dec, 2010, p.187; Salam Irene, *The Muslims of Manipur*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2010, pp.32-33; A. Hakim Shah, *The Manipur Governance to the Meetei-Pangal (Manipuri Muslim)*, Pearl Publication, Imphal, 2008, pp.27-29.

<sup>35</sup>Kullachandra Sharma and Badaruddin, *Meitei Pangal Hourakpham*, Chingtam Press, Imphal, 1991, p. 3.

*Mangkanshang*, persons who had to provide various services under the *lallup* system were posted as per Kullachandra Sharma and Badaruddin to different wings to discharge their duties.<sup>40</sup> By 1688 CE, due to the rise of their number, Muslims started having not only two but four brackets namely *khunja*, *khunja lanmi*, *khutheiba* and *ingkholsangba*.<sup>41</sup> There were further divisions of *khunja* as *lanmi* (soldiers) and *maulvi* (theological scholar). Besides these, other segments were there like *khutheiba* (skilled) and *ingkholsangba* (those who looked after hacienda). Additionally, *maulvis* were highly regarded, esteemed and lionized in the society of Manipuri Muslims.<sup>42</sup> In this context, some scholars suggested that the term *maulvis* here mean persons who were more intimate, as a result of their individual efforts, with their religion, who come to be placed with respect in the highest category of society.<sup>43</sup> The other was *khunja lanmi* who collaborated *lallup* by exercising military enterprises and by attending not only *Mangan Shang* but also other bureaus namely *loishang*, *keirung*

*yarekshang*.<sup>44</sup> Subsequently, came the *khutheiba* category staffing *lallup* and by attending *Manganshang* and from there, they were sent to *pangal phundreishang*, *pangal phisa shang*. Over and above that, they also partook in *lanmi* (soldiers) during the difficult times. *Ingkholsangba* was positioned in the fourth division who paid tribute once in a year and did not serve *lallup*.<sup>45</sup>

By 1688 CE, there was elaborate and broader social stratification system among the Muslims of Manipur as compared to the one we have described during 1630 CE. Some scholars like Mohd. Shakil Ahmed enquired regarding the basis of such classification. The possible foundation of such classification was basically based on individual (*mee ama oina*) occupation (*sinpham*) that one held and not on blood ties/relations (*eegi mari*) or *yumnak* or *sagei*.<sup>46</sup> He further said that the four fold grading of categories of Pangals was dictated by individual occupation which had nothing to do with *sagei* as a whole or

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<sup>40</sup>Kullachandra Sharma and Badaruddin, *Meitei Pangal Hourakpham*, Chingtam Press, Imphal, 1991, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp.5-6.

<sup>42</sup> Mohd. Shakil Ahmed, *Essays in Sociology: Muslims in Manipur*, published by the Institute of Objective Studies, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, 2011, p.87.

<sup>43</sup>Kullachandra Sharma and Badaruddin, *Meitei Pangal Hourakpham*, Chingtam Press, Imphal, 1991, pp. 4,51,53.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> Mohd. Shakil Ahmed, *Essays in Sociology: Muslims in Manipur*, published by the Institute of Objective Studies, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, 2011, pp.87-88; Kullachandra Sharma and Badaruddin, *Meitei Pangal Hourakpham*, Chingtam Press, Imphal, 1991, p.8.

<sup>46</sup> Mohd. Shakil Ahmed, *Essays in Sociology: Muslims in Manipur*, published by the Institute of Objective Studies, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, 2011, p.88; Kullachandra Sharma and Badaruddin, *Meitei Pangal Hourakpham*, Chingtam Press, Imphal, 1991, p.8.

blood ties. Those individuals from different *sageis* may belong to any one of the four categories. Hence, individuals encompassed in these categories were trawled from different *sageis*.<sup>47</sup> These are the brief panoramic overview of the social set-up and its stratification of the Muslims in Manipur during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Now, so far the socio-cultural practices drawing from the local majority community called Meitei like marriage system, clan system (unknown in the Islamic World), dresses (*phanek, khudei, khwangnum*), belief system, language (*meiteilon*), food habits (*uti, eronba, chamthong/kangsoi, ngari, singju*), arts and aesthetics, recreations, games and sports (*mukna, mukna kangjei-wrestling, yubi lakpi, sagol kangjei-polo*), etc. and their implications on the expansion, settlement and formation of the community during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries are concerned, it is suggested that huge local socio-cultural structure was there in the Muslim's socio-cultural way of life in the fields mentioned above. But one should know that such kind of cross socio-cultural interaction among the Muslims and Meiteis is not a special case.

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<sup>47</sup>Mohd. Shakil Ahmed, *Essays in Sociology: Muslims in Manipur*, published by the Institute of Objective Studies, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, 2011, p.88.

It has been taking place in any places of the world. They started using the local language 'Meiteilon' as their own which was evident from the fact that many books were translated into Manipuri language.<sup>48</sup> They started changing their food habits, dresses and the way they lived based on the Manipuri styles. In all spheres of life, some local elements were brought out in Muslim's life styles which did not mean that they were not following the basic teachings of Islam but they held it along with local community's belief system in their activities. To some extent, it helps in the construction of peace of coexistence in the Manipuri society.

As regards the marriage (*luhongba* in Manipuri language) customs of Manipuri Muslims, it was influenced exceedingly by the local community's marriage system based on exogamy.<sup>49</sup> Despite having some influence by the local community into the marriage system of Muslims, they always stressed on the Qur'anic injunctions and basic teachings of Islam in the sense that they performed "Nikah" after consulting and bringing an agreement of both the parties. Its main object was the procreation and legalizing children. A marriage was

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<sup>48</sup>A. Hakim Shah, *The Manipur Governance to the Meitei-Pangal (Manipuri Muslim)*, Pearl Publication, Imphal, 2008, pp. 163-174.

<sup>49</sup>Salam Irene, *The Muslims of Manipur*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2010, pp. 66-74.

usually preformed in one of the four forms namely, *hainaba* (engagement), *chenba* (elopement)<sup>50</sup>, *chenba phaba* (capture), *loukhatpa* (recognition of elopement). Marriage is a civil contract not a sacrament. There can be no marriage without consent. It can be dissolved or separated based on the will of both the parties or operation of law. Marriage without consent is void and a marriage with consent under compulsion is invalid. Actually, Islamic law was always used in marriage ceremony of Manipuri Muslim though there were some un-Islamic local elements in the way they performed like *sagei kwa yenba*<sup>51</sup>, *kwa khaiba*<sup>52</sup>, *panuka puba*<sup>53</sup>, etc. and they

strictly followed the tradition of paying of Mohr or Dower by the husband at the time of marriage. At the time of marriage, they performed some traditional dances like *thabal chongba*, *maibi jagoi*, *khullang esei* etc. There was no ceiling on the *awonpot* and parents gave the bride with what was deemed essential to start a happily married life. According to Salam Irene, a charmingful and meaningful custom prevalent among the Manipuri Muslims was the presentation of a copy of the Qur'an by the father to the bride on her wedding day which was a symbolic gesture of great appreciation.

Some scholars claimed that not only they used the traditional music but they used

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<sup>50</sup>The term *nupi chenba* means elopement in Manipuri language and this practice, prevalent in Meitei society, was practiced by the Muslim couples anxious to wed. This had led Qazi Hamid Ali to conclude that the marriage system of the Manipuri Muslims is a combination of Islamic and Manipuri customs. In spite of not permitting by the Qur'an, the Muslims were influenced by the Meitei practice of 'Chenba'. The process of elopement was that the man took the woman to a friend's house and spent the night there. In the morning, the father of the intending groom together with his male relatives went to the women's residence and made a proposal for marriage. If it was acceptable, the Nikah was performed on the second night after the elopement either at the residence of the bride or groom. If a negative response was received, the marriage was deferred till an agreement was reached. Essentially, it was relation of love based on the spouse's willingness to have the union and it was supposed to strengthen faith and to further the cause of Islam. It was known as 'Nikah'. For details, see Quazi Hamid Ali's book, *The Manipuri Muslim*, Banskandi, 1979, p.29.

<sup>51</sup>*sagei kwa yenba*, one of the traditional functions before the marriage ceremony of the Manipuri Muslims, is the distribution of green betel-nuts and leaves to each of the *sagei* relatives of the girl staying in that locality which is executed in a certain day by the groom's father. The father of the boy engages a person for this purpose and sends him along with betel-nuts and leaves for distribution of the *sagei* relatives of the girl. The information about the agreement between the girl's and boy's parents towards engagement of the girl is communicated in this medium.

<sup>52</sup>*kwa khaiba* (cutting of betel-nuts into four equal pieces), is also one of the conventional operations before the marriage

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ceremony which is conducted after the *sagei kwa yenba* on a date and agreed to between the parents of the boy and the girl. Some selected friends and relatives of both parties are invited for this function. It is usually done for formal declaration of the agreement between the boy's and girl's parents towards engagement of the girl.

<sup>53</sup>*panuka puba*, a compound word of *pan* and *kwa* (betel leaves and nuts), is performed after *kwa khaiba* on a date and fixed for it, which is compeer of the *heijapot* (*heijing pot*) *puba* of the Meiteis. In this case, friends and relatives of both sides are also invited. The parents of the boy arrange betel-leaves and nuts in pieces (in packet known as *putla*), sweetmeats and fruits of any kind of the season in large amount and bring to the house of the girl, which are scattered to the invited guests. Such function is performed in the afternoon. In this function, a special share of these items is reserved and given to the girl and her friends. Otherwise, the boy's father would have to pay a fair amount of money to the bride. This function is come to an end with a prayer. After this function, the date of marriage is fixed. For details of these three traditional functions, see in A. Rahman, "The Meitei-Pangal" in Naorem Sanajaoba's edited book, *Manipur, Past and Present*, Vol.4, Imphal, 2006, pp.462-463; Khullakpam Kheiruddin, *Turko-Afghangee Chada Naoda*, Imphal, 1997, pp. 200-211; Mohd. Shakil Ahmed, *Essays in Sociology: Muslims in Manipur*, New Delhi, 2011, pp.96-104; M. A. Janab Khan, *Manipuri Muslim*, Imphal, 1972, p. 34-36.



also their own music into the soil of Manipur like *ghazals*, *kasida*, *masnawi* written in Urdu, which were used during the marriage ceremony. But nowadays, such musical practices are no longer performed in the Manipuri Muslim marriage ceremony.

The Muslims started learning the Manipuri language since the days of king Khunjaoba (1652-1666A.D.) and used it as their mother tongue. Such cross-cultural language interactions took place in Manipur in such a way that some Urdu, Arabic, Farsi words were introduced in Manipur like Hokum, Dukan, Khabar, Amil, Wakil, Rumal, Dalali, Darbar, Diwan, Sarkar, Gulab, Sabun, Haq, Sabi, Sanam (in the sense of mistress/sweet heart), Qalam, Dalil, Sahar, Bazaar and many others in present time. It may be said that the use of Persian and Arabic words had enriched and beautified the *Meiteilon* language considerably as per Abdur Rahman.<sup>54</sup> Some Turkish words were also introduced such as *coolie*. Further, some words were a combination of Urdu and Meitei words say for instance, Dadash + Ahal = Dahal (elder brother), Bahin + Ahal = Beihal (elder sister) and Hanum + Hanba = derivation from Hinam and

Hanba- return of bride and groom to bride parents residence after three or five or seven days of marriage. Other words were independently coined like Ithou (grandmother spoken by the Muslims)/Ibok (grandmother spoken by the Meiteis). Besides these, the Muslims used words slightly different from Meiteis like lapkang for leikang (soot), ipunga for ipuwa (younger brother), mayem for mayum (house), kanthra for kantha (quilt).<sup>55</sup> Such type of cross-cultural language interaction enriched the Manipuri language. In this context, T. C. Hodson emphasized that “the title Shahi used by the successors and sons of Gariba Niwaz has been suggested to me as due to a temporary predominance of Muhammadans influence in Manipur”.<sup>56</sup> The title Garib Niwaz was regarded as given by a Muslim as to king Pamheiba.<sup>57</sup> Thereupon, these interactions helped in the way of creating a sound and healthy community in Manipur through exchange and borrowing of ideas and traditions since the early days.

Similarly, the belief system of Manipuri Muslims was also shaped tremendously by

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<sup>54</sup>Naorem Sanajaoba, *Manipur (Past and Present)*, Vol.4, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2005, p. 459.

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<sup>55</sup>Salam Irene, *The Muslims of Manipur*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2010, p.161.

<sup>56</sup>T.C. Hodson, *The Meitheis*, B.R. Publication Corporation, Delhi, 1975, p.58.

<sup>57</sup>M.A. Janab Khan, *Manipuri Muslim*, Imphal, 1972, p.27.

the local dominant community which could be witnessed in *bhut* (ghost), *leiren* (a form of python), *heloi* (fairy), *maiba* (traditional doctor in the ministrations of bodily disability like puncturing of dog, *nazar* or *mihu*). They were changing a lot due to the influence of Meitei community's belief system i.e. it became a traditional social facet of Manipuri Muslims which had been continuing till now since their arrival in Manipur in 1606 A.D. It does not mean that they were not following the basic teachings of Islam. Indeed, they strictly adhered to the basic tenets of Islam. But some scholars claimed that they have no Masjid and are for the most part very ignorant of the religion they profess.<sup>58</sup> Another scholar, B.C. Allen said that there were no masonry mosques in the state and foreign Muslims in Imphal have a separate Maulvi of their own<sup>59</sup> which indicated that some mosques made of woods and bamboo were there in Manipur. Such point was made invigorated by several mosques available before the Seven Years Devastation known as *Chahi Taret Khuntakpa*<sup>60</sup> namely Mukame Musalla Mosque known as Muhammad

Sani Lainingshang, southern side of Moirangkhom Mongba Hanba; Changamdabi Kangla Ukok; Ningthounai Yairipok; Irong Cheshaba Leikai; Mayang Imphal; Kairang Khumidok; Sangai Yumpham; Keirou; Haoreibi Awang Leikai; Lilong Khunou; Haoreibi Makha Leikai and Porompat called as 'Verandah Mosques' or 'Sangoi Laisang'. It means that they were not ignorant of their religion but conscious of their religion. All the ritual practices and rites had been taught initially by the three Sayyids namely Sayyid Ambia, Sayyid Abdullah, Sayyid Kalka Hussain to all the Muslims in Manipur in 1609 A.D.<sup>61</sup> Actually, in Manipur, during this time, Sayyid Kalka Hussain brought the Qur'an to Manipur and prayed to God in the Nongmaijing Hill. All the religious works were handed over to the three Sayyids. It is a surprising fact that all the Muslims in Manipur followed Sunni laws of Jurisprudence.<sup>62</sup> Even a single Shia sect was not available in Manipur because of the fact that Mir Shamsuddin, one of the great Imams of Shi'ism of Iraq who introduced Shi'ism in India, did not reach Manipur. On that account, only the Sunni groups following

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<sup>58</sup> R. Brown, *A Statistical Account of Manipur*, K.M. Mittal Publication, Delhi, 1975, p.15.

<sup>59</sup> B.C Allen, *Gazetteer of Manipur and Naga Hills*, Gian Publication, Delhi, 1980, p.65.

<sup>60</sup> Rafayattullah, *Yad-Dast Kursee-E-Nama*, Lahore, 1929, trs.by Maulana Muhammad Jalaluddin, Kheiruddin Khullakpam and Maulana Tayeb Ali, Circles, Imphal, 1997, p.35.

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<sup>61</sup> Kullachandra Sharma and Badaruddin, *Meitei Pangal Hourakpham*, Chingtam Press, Imphal, 1991, pp.1-2.

<sup>62</sup> Khullakpam Kheiruddin, *Turko-Afghangee Chada Naoda*, Circles, Imphal, 1997, p.216; E.W. Dun, *Gazetteer of Manipur*, Manas Publication, Delhi, 1992, p.16.

the Hanafi School of Jurisprudence were feasible in Manipur.<sup>63</sup> All in all, one can say that it is very clearly seen that despite having injunctions to the basic fundamentals of Islam, they also believed in the local community's belief system because of the influence of Meitei women on the Muslim men. It means that syncretism was very high as far as the belief system of the Manipuri Muslims is concerned. It is more adjustable and applicable of what Irfan Habib talks of the definitions of religion in his edited work, *Religion in Indian History*.<sup>64</sup> In the process of their settlement, they adopted and assimilated much of Manipuri's culture, married Meitei women, adopted Meiteilon as their own mother tongue and lived side by side in harmony with Meiteis. In fact, Salam Irene emphasized that the degree of assimilation and enculturation was extremely high.

In the context of education, their position was very poor in the society because we did not get the evidence of formal religious and secular institutions of education system of Muslims in Manipur during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This might be due to their ignorance in the field of education

and they were not interested in education. On the other hand, some scholars said that having come from Sylhet, they used to teach their children in houses the Persian language. Such practice was continued from the reign of king Khagemba (1597-1652) to king Gaurashyam Maramba (1752-1753). But, the period between 1754 and 1891 with regard to their educational status was really a doomsday scenario.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, they started learning it in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as was evident from the fact that the first Maulana namely Maulana Ibadullah (1840-1921) at Irong Chesaba Mayai Leikai (Thoubal District) appeared and started imparting the theological education. Maulana Kiramat Ali and Maulana Abdul Jalil are reported to the earliest persons who went outside Manipur to study Islamic theology during the reigns of king Chandrakirti (1850-1886) and king Surchandra (1886-1890) after Maulana Ibadullah came back from Sylhet to Manipur in 1871.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, the first Madrasa namely the Madrasa Muhammadiya later on known as Madrasa Mazharul Uloom in the early part of the

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<sup>63</sup> Khullakpam Kheiruddin, *Turko-Afghangee Chada Naoda*, Circles, Imphal, 1997, p.12.

<sup>64</sup> Irfan Habib (ed.), *Religion in Indian History*, Published by Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2012, pp.xi-xii.

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<sup>65</sup> Khullakpam Kheiruddin, *Turko-Afghangee Chada Naoda*, Circles, Imphal, 1997, p.219.

<sup>66</sup> Mohd. Shakil Ahmed, *Essays in Sociology: Muslims in Manipur*, published by the Institute of Objective Studies, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, 2011, p.115; M. Benjamin Shah (ed.), *Pambei*, Muslim Writers Forum, Imphal, 2003, p.30; Khullakpam Kheiruddin, *Turko-Afghangee Chada Naoda*, Circles, Imphal, 1997, p.169.

twentieth century was instituted at Mayang Imphal Bengoon (Imphal West District) whose principal was Maulana Abdul Halim of Wangmayum clan, a student of Maulana Ibadullah. Within this particular context, it is confirmed from the statement of B.C. Allen that Manipuri Muslims “are said to be fairly well acquainted with the doctrines of their religion”.<sup>67</sup> And the first *haji* among the Muslims of Manipur was Amuraba during the rule of king Gambhir Singh (1825-1834).<sup>68</sup>

Besides this, there are shortages of well documented texts about the condition of Manipuri Muslim women during the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. But we assume that as Muslim women were the sisters of Meiteis, they too must have retained their independence in the sense that many Muslim women cannot be traced back their genealogy to the seventeenth century, when the first Muslim settlers were given Meitei ladies to marry by the king Khagemba.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, this is also supported by R. Constantine that “the Muslims in the land came from outside, found wives among the local women folk, and settled down. The Maharajah did not

treat them as aliens.”<sup>70</sup> But, they were swathed by some Islamic rules and regulations. They played a significant role in the economic tasks like cultivation, weaving and other activities. In Manipur, Muslim society was a male-dominated one and a gender bias, even though, under the Shariat, Muslim women enjoyed equal status with men. Moreover, the wife being under the supervision of her husband had to consult him before making any decision as husband was the head of the family.<sup>71</sup> In the social life of the Manipuri Muslim women, they were at great length disadvantage to their counterparts because of the factors of rigid patriarchy, social custom and traditions like restriction on movement, early marriage, misuse of personal laws particularly with reference to ‘talaq’, adoption and guardianship of children, maintenance and inheritance. Such factors retarded the social empowerment of Muslim women in Manipur.<sup>72</sup> But Muslim mother-in-laws were unjust and cruel to their *mous* (daughter-in-laws). However, the Muslim wife was the queen of the house, run it on her husband’s earnings and contributed to the family kitty through her own economic activities according to Riyaj Ahmed Shah

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<sup>67</sup>B. C. Allen, *Gazetteer of Manipur and Naga Hills*, Gian Publication, Delhi, 1980, p.65.

<sup>68</sup>M. Benjamin Shah (ed.), *Pambei*, Muslim Writers Forum, Imphal, 2003, p.30.

<sup>69</sup>Salam Irene, *The Muslims of Manipur*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2010, p.79.

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<sup>70</sup>R. Constantine, *Maid of the Mountains*, Lancer Publishers, New Delhi, 1981, p. 46.

<sup>71</sup>Salam Irene, *The Muslims of Manipur*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2010, p.76.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, p.76.

in his article *Status of Muslim Women in Manipur State*. Apart from these socio-cultural activities of Muslims in Manipur, the system of polygamy was rare among the Muslims in Manipur because of their financial background probably.

Other socio-cultural practices like birth, divorce, death, circumcision (*sunnat touba* in Manipuri language), festivals (*Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Eid-ul-Azha*), *mangam touba* etc. are viable according to the rules and regulations of Islam. First of all, the process of giving birth to a child was earlier attended to, without having nowadays medical facilities, by female specialist called *maibi* in *Meiteilon* (Manipuri language). It was usually done in the family. After the child is born, an immediate attempt of calling *Azaan* (Islamic call for prayer) is being made. The mother and child usually spend at least forty days in her parental house so that she and the newly born child could be fostered hospitably which is cognized as *meining kunba* or *meining hippa* in Manipuri language. In some special cases, the process of *meining kunba* is carried out in her husband's house. While the process of *meining kunba* is going on, the mother usually takes watered-down and flavorless diets like boiled rice, dried fish, boiled vegetables etc. Actually, before the giving

of birth of a child, a process called *tha mapangi chak pichaba* (it is a feast generally organized at the residence of the husband when the pregnancy period irrupts into the ninth month where the female elders and relatives, taking in those of her parental family, of the pregnant woman are invited) is customarily undertaken. But to some extent, it is slightly predisposed by the local dominant community's socio-cultural practices as was evidenced from the above analysis.

Then, another social practice like *sunnat touba* (circumcision) of the Manipuri Muslim is purely done in Islamic way. It is coined from the words *sunnah* ("the trodden path") in Arabic highlighting the practices of the Prophet and *touba* in Manipuri language meaning "to do". Therefore, *sunnat touba* means "doing the *sunnah/sunnat*". Manipuri Muslims performed this practice as a part of the custom inherited from the implementation of the Prophet. Such process was being done in the early period by a person known as *napit* (specialist) in the Muslim boys ranging from seven to ten years.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Mohd. Shakil Ahmed, *Essays in Sociology: Muslims in Manipur*, published by the Institute of Objective Studies, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, 2011, pp.104-106; Salam Irene, *The Muslims of Manipur*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2010, p. 66.

In the case of death, it is pointed out that there are different rituals associated with death like keeping the dead body's head in the north (direction of Ka'aba), cleaning the dead body before burial, a special kind of plant known as *shangbrei* (*pogostemon purpurascens*) used in giving the body the required shower and cleansing which is used not of religious rationale but is regarded to possess medicinal properties for cleansing the body and give out a good fragrance, carrying the dead body in a slightly narrow bed-like wooden structure called *kai*, performing *janajah*, burying the dead body in the grave (*kabar*) after the *janajah*, planting a different plant called *boroi* (*ziziphus mauritiana*) above his *kabar* and watering it, going usually to the grave by the people to offer dua for the departed love ones known as *kabar jiyarat toubha chatpa* (going for *kabar jiyarat*) etc.<sup>74</sup> Whatever the processes exercised by the Muslims in other parts of the world in the case of death were also performed by the Manipuri Muslims. But in this context, Salam Irene argued that at the home of the deceased, no food is cooked and all relatives including the family members, are fed by a group of neighbours, who help them on such occasion. She said that this is

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<sup>74</sup>Mohd. Shakil Ahmed, *Essays in Sociology: Muslims in Manipur*, published by the Institute of Objective Studies, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, 2011, pp.106-107; Salam Irene, *The Muslims of Manipur*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2010, p. 74-75.

similar to the *singlup* tradition of the local dominant community called Meitei where neighbours express sympathy and solidarity with the family of the deceased.<sup>75</sup>

Then, the festivals (*Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Eid-ul-Azha*) were being performed by the Manipuri Muslims like their counterparts staying in other parts of the world by offering namaz, exchanging sweets to their neighbours regardless of religions, castes, creeds, genders etc. thereby shaping and fashioning an important cultural phenomena in the history of Manipur. Finally, *Mangam toubha*, a socio-religious practice of Manipuri Muslims where a meal/ feast is arranged for the love one(s) who has left/have left the world (*dunya*) and squired by invitees including needy, poor, friends and relatives, was being conducted. The meal is served on the *laphu* (*Musa Paradisiacal*) leaves or the banana leaves on the abaxial surface of the leaves.<sup>76</sup> Such a brief analysis and understanding of socio-cultural practices of Manipuri Muslims during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries exhibited some notch of

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<sup>75</sup>Salam Irene, *The Muslims of Manipur*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2010, p. 75.

<sup>76</sup>MM Ahmed and PK Singh, "Traditional Knowledge System of the Muslim Community in Manipur", *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*, Vol. 6(2), April 2007, New Delhi, pp. 385-386; Mohd. Shakil Ahmed, *Essays in Sociology: Muslims in Manipur*, published by the Institute of Objective Studies, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, 2011, pp.108-109.



intermixture and assimilation of local dominant community's socio-cultural practices though they strictly hewed to the basic teachings of Islam.

In the field of games and sports, we find that during the reign of king Khagemba, there were two Muslim wrestlers, Akun Shah and Kanba Shah who attached to the king's palace. The tradition of wrestling was going on by their successors who came to be called as mansham *sagei* (wrestling clan). The existence of institutions like the  *pangal loishang, shinglup, keirup, and leirup*, encouraged and facilitated sport among the Pangals. Two games such as '*likkon shannaba*' and '*kang shannaba*' were played with the Meiteis but Pangal women did not play *kang*. Many Pangals kept a *kang* in their homes for playing. They also played *shagol-kangjei, mukna, mukna-kangjei, khong kangjei, yubi-lakpi* and were split into two groups '*khunthak* and '*khunkha*' and '*ahallup* and '*naharup*'. It would seem that these divisions were on locality because when there was a competition organized between the *panas*, the Pangals were included in the *pana* of the Meiteis, which was adjacent to their settlement.

Special dresses were worn for different sports.<sup>77</sup>

Lastly, the clan system, unknown in the Islamic world and *sagei* in Manipuri language, acted as an indispensable social engineering agent for the formation of Muslim community in Manipur during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. But the main question comes as why was this clan system assigned by the king of Manipur, Khagemba to the Muslims coming from Sylhet? Was there any persuasive and vigorous threat given to the Muslims to adopt such system unknown in the Islamic World? Keeping such answerable questions in our mind, let us explore it analytically. The answers need to be located and structured within the strand of traditions and customs of local dominant community. First of all, this was the family title given by the king Khagemba to the Manipuri Muslims, which was transforming into lineage groups or clans with the rise of population after 1606 A.D. on the basis of their place of origins, occupations, place of settlements, skills etc. The importance of clan in the consolidation of Muslim community was that it was used as a determinant factor of identification of a person and as a social

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<sup>77</sup>Salam Irene, *The Muslims of Manipur*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2010, p. 162.

institution, it had helped them to the social unity in Manipur and became a similarity in norms with the social institution i.e. clans of the Meiteis. Their legitimized clan system given by the king of Manipur has been functionalized since their settlement in Manipur. Actually, clan, the basic social structure of Meitei community, influenced a lot in the social structure of the Muslims in Manipur playing an important social engineering agent for the formation of community in Manipur.

A *sagei* can be closely knit or vice versa. A *sagei* contained many families- 'Yumnak' of the same clan. These were further subdivided into *singlup* or sub-clans. In a *sagei*, there were normally 'phurups', 'singlups', 'kangbu' or 'khut' groups based on lineage, social and customary considerations.<sup>78</sup> There was no hierarchical differentiation within the *sagei*, based upon either economy or occupation.<sup>79</sup> The Muslim clans have been invariably exogamous. What is permissible under Islamic law- endogamy became almost a dead letter.<sup>80</sup> But, one thing is that they did not adopt the prefix

or suffix of the *sagei*'s like the Meiteis to their names i.e. Meitei community usually used the prefix or suffix in their names, say, for instance, Thokchom Chandramani or James Lourembam, however, the point that they used generally the Muslim titles like Shah, Khan, Sayyid, Sheikh etc. without knowing the divisions. The divisions like Sayyids, Sheikhs, Mughals, despite existing in the Islamic world, were not found in Manipuri Muslims. Simply, they used these as the title of the names without having divisions. Now how the formation of clan took place was also important to know. As I had already mentioned in the above, it was based on the occupations, skills, place of origins etc., say, for instance, Muhammad Sani, the commander-in-chief of the Muslim forces, was given two Meitei girls by the king of Manipur Khagemba namely, Nongthombam Maitek and Chakpram Melei as his wives, two servants, 5 paris of good and fertile land (1pari = 2 and half acres) and he found residence in the area of Paka (Paka Leikai), nowadays called Yaishkul Leikai in Moirangkhom and his clan name was Khullakpam (Khullakpa means in Manipuri language, the head or the commander of the community)<sup>81</sup> ;

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 51; Mohd. Shakil Ahmed, *Essays in Sociology: Muslims in Manipur*, published by the Institute of Objective Studies, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, 2011, pp.93-96.

<sup>79</sup> Md. Latif Shah, Pangal, *Manipuri Muslim- People of India, Manipur*, ed. by K. S. Singh, New Delhi, 1998, p.195.

<sup>80</sup> N. Devendra Singh, *Identities of Migrated People in Manipur*, published by the Centre for Manipur Studies, Manipur University, 1994, pp.29-30.

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<sup>81</sup> O. Bhogeshwor Singh and M. A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, p.34; R. K. Sanahal Singh, *Pangal Thorakpa*, Liberty Publication Association, Imphal, 1985, p.16.

Nooriya Sheikh, an expert in pottery making, made a pot by using the technique of pottery wheel and provided it to the king Khagemba and being satisfied, he got one Meitei girl namely Peti from the Maharaj and his clan came to be known as Chaphusabam (Chaphu=pot; Saba=make in Manipuri language)<sup>82</sup>; Sheikh Juned, proficient in paper making and the third younger brother of Muhammad Shani, introduced the art of paper making in Manipur and his clan was called Chesabam Sagei (Che = paper; saba =make in Manipuri language)<sup>83</sup>; Muslims coming from Makak, a place in Sylhet District in Bangladesh, were known as Makakmayum which had a further division into two namely Makakmayum Angouba and Makakmayum Amuba based on fair and dark flush persons. In the similar manner, Mayangmayum group was divided into two Mayangmayum Ariba and Mayang Anouba (new and old, the former migrated in Chandrakirti's reign, the latter in Gambir Singh's reign).<sup>84</sup> Bogimayum clan was originated from the fact that

Purnot captured an Urok (egret-bagla) and gifted it to the king Khagemba in 1630. That is why, it was called by the king Khagemba as Bogimayum Clan.<sup>85</sup> Sajoubam clan was originally come from Shah Kusum who was the younger brother of Muhammad Sani, the leader of the Muslim forces in 1606 and a well-proportioned body. It was called by the king Khagemba as Sajoubam Sagei in 1623. 'Sajouba' means in Manipuri language 'well-proportioned body'.<sup>86</sup>

Further, Kundan Khan, Zamakhan, Sheikh Jali, Muhammad and Niamatullah making a beautiful Palanquin, having sekpin which had seven lotus leaves made of ivory of elephant in its tip, and presenting it to the king, being satisfied, on account of doing an excellent work, Satpam Chanu Tombi was given to Sheikh Jali, Salam Noibi to Muhammad, Thokchom Chaobi to Jamakhan, Thokchom Kiyambi to Kundankhan, Wangkheirakpam Koingambi to Niamatullah along with some piece of land for their sustenance and livelihood<sup>87</sup> and their clan was known as Dolaipabam Sagei (Dolaipabam = Palanquin in Manipuri language). When

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<sup>82</sup>O. Bhogeshwor Singh and M. A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, p.34.

<sup>83</sup>Kullachandra Sharma, *Typology and Technology of Meitei Writing Materials*, Imphal, 1988, p.19.

<sup>84</sup>Thangjam Subhas Singh, *Socio-Economic Condition of the Manipuri Muslims in Pre-colonial Manipur*, Unpublished Thesis, Manipur University, 2007, pp.48-49; Kullachandra Sharma and Badaruddin, *Meitei Pangal Hourakpham*, Chingtam Press, Imphal, 1991, pp. 118-120.

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<sup>85</sup>Kullachandra Sharma and Badaruddin, *Meitei Pangal Hourakpham*, Chingtam Press, Imphal, 1991, pp. 53-59.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.81-84.

<sup>87</sup>O. Bhogeshwor Singh and M. A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, p.36.

the five milkmen named as Gwala Man Singh Umran Sheikh, Kulak Khan, Suniya, Uleiya and Manthi offered some eatable things like ghee made from frozen milk by bringing from their home before king Khagemba, being satisfied, after seeing their gifts, the king gave a wife to each of them.<sup>88</sup> Their clan was known as Sanggom Sumbam clan (Sanggom Sumba means in Manipuri language Milkmen). Moinam clan was originated from a Myna Bird which was caught by Ibrahim Miya, one of the soldiers in the battle of 1606 A.D. under Muhammad Sani and was offered to king Khagemba. His clan was known as Moinam Clan which was given by king Khagemba.<sup>89</sup> Puton Khan and his son, Salim Khan came from Gujarat to Manipur during the reign of king Paikhomba (1666-1697A.D.), who guarded thatch called 'Ee' in Manipuri language in the *ingkhoh* of the king of Manipur and their clan was known as Eepham Clan and so on.

Similarly, different clans like Ayekpam, Korimayum, Patsoimayum, Aribam, Yumkhaibam and others and their various lists were analyzed below briefly thereby showing their categorization of four groups viz. Sheikh, Sayyid, Pathan and Mughal:

1. Phusam (Sheikh): Those Muslims who were doing the work of making utensils
2. Phundreimayum (Pathan): Muslim carpenters
3. Khutheibam (Sheikh): Those who were doing carpentry and decorations on wood
4. Ayekpam (Sheikh): Artist
5. Korimayum (Sheikh): Muslims who did the work of Kori, a copper
6. Hawaii Ingkhoh (Sheikh): Muslims who were the cultivators of varieties of vegetables
7. Patsoimayum: Muslims who were looking after lakes and ponds
8. Makakmayum (Mughal): Those Muslims who were coming from Makak
9. Khullakpam (Sheikh): village headmen
10. Merai: Sayyids
11. Aribam (Sheikh): Oldest Muslims
12. Yumkhaibam (Pathan): Those Muslims splitting out from Phundreimayum clan by dividing house
13. Sarem Sagei (Sheikh): Ancestors of Muslims who were taking Meitei Sairem women
14. Moijing (Sheikh): Muslims inhabiting in the foot hills of Moijing
15. Maibam (Sheikh): Muslims who were doing the work of Maiba (Traditional Doctor)

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p.38.

<sup>89</sup>Kullachandra Sharma and Badaruddin, *Meitei Pangal Hourakpham*, Chingtam Press, Imphal, 1991, pp.95-96.

16. Thoubalmayum (Sheikh): Muslims who were living on the bank of the Thoubal River
17. Thongkhongmayum (Sheikh): Muslims who were constructing a bridge for the king
18. Chesam (Sheikh): Muslims who were doing the work of paper-making
19. Bogimayum (Sheikh): Muslims who were giving a bag to the king
20. Wangmayum (Sheikh): Muslims who were living near a big 'Wang' tree
21. Nongsajaibam (Mughal): This clan was separated from Makak and their ancestors occasionally did sun-bathe in a ceremony which led to the calling of their clan as Nongsajaibam
22. Singgakhongbam (Sheikh): Playing a singga (a musical instrument)
23. Mansam (Sheikh): Muslims who were performing acrobats
24. Keinoumayum (Pathan): Muslims settling in a place to defend from roaming tigers known as Keilinglamba Keinou
25. Pukhrimayum (Sheikh): Muslims who were looking after ponds
26. Dolaipabam (Sheikh): Muslims who were making of palanquins
27. Yangkhubam (Sheikh): It was derived from a Muslim's name, Yanglem Khamba, a Meitei and later on, embraced Islam
28. Yumkham (Pathan): No ancestor could be traced out for this clan but it is believed that an elderly person tried to prevent the split of the house between the two brothers Kundan Khan and Zama Khan belonging to Phundreimayum clan during the reign of king Khagemba (It was derived from the word 'Yum Khamba' which meant that any person tried to prevent over the split of the house)
29. Leishangkhong (Sheikh): Aakiya Tullah, one of the soldiers in the battle of 1606 A.D. under the leadership of Muhammad Sani, was made settled down by king Khagemba at Leishangkhong in Langthabal (Imphal West District) and his clan was called by the king as Leishangkhongmayum
30. Urupmayum (Pathan): Khanon Khan, one of the soldiers in the battle of 1606A.D. under the command of Muhammad Sani, inhabited at Urup (Imphal East District) and therefore, his clan was called by king Khagemba as Urupmayum
31. Phisabam (Sheikh): This clan was emerged from the Sheikh Juned's clan called Chesabam clan and it was called so because his two sons Nazri and Sheikh Salim were doing in cloth making and embroidery (Phisaba means those who make cloth)
32. Kamal Mayum (Pathan): Munor Khan, one of the sepoys in the Muslim forces of the battle of 1606 A.D., was got married

with a Meitei lady named Kamal and his clan was named as Kamal Mayum by king Khagemba

33. Baseimayum (Sheikh): Musakalimullah arrived in Manipur during the reign of king Khunjaoba (1652-1666 A.D.) who gave him the Patshoi Lamhan (Patshoi Lake) to look after and that was why, he came to be known as Patshoi Chaba and later on Pashei Mayum and his clan was ultimately called as Baseimayum
34. Konthamayum (Sheikh): Isakalimullah first of all was made settled down by king Khunjaoba at Kontha for the protection against tigers and from this reason, his clan came to be known as Konthamayum
35. Tampakmayum: Those Muslims who were staying in the valley (Tampak in Manipuri language) during the reign of king Charairongba (1697-1709A.D.)
36. Taothongmayum: Those Muslims who were living at Taothong, south of Lamdeng (an ancient inhabitant of Poireiton) after shifting from Kameng during the reign of king Gariba Niwaz (1709-1748A.D.)
37. Sanggomsumbam (Sheikh):When the five milkmen named as Gwala Man Singh Umran Sheikh, Kulak Khan, Suniya, Uleiya and Manthi offered some eatable things like ghee made from frozen milk by bringing from their home before king Khagemba, being satisfied, after seeing

their gifts, the king gave a wife to each of them. Their clan was known as Sanggom Sumbam clan (Sanggom Sumba means in Manipuri language Milkmen).

38. Moinam (Sheikh): It was originated from a Myna Bird which was caught by Ibrahim Miya, one of the soldiers in the battle of 1606 A.D. under Muhammad Sani and was offered to king Khagemba. As a result, his clan was known as Moinam Clan which was given by king Khagemba.
39. Mushram (Sheikh): This clan was derived from Mushra Kalimullah Urfe (nickname) Uliya from Ihail in Sylhet, one of the soldiers in the battle of 1606 A.D. under Muhammad Sani.
40. Nongjamayum (Sheikh): It was coined from the place called Nungchai (Nungjai) where Muhammad Abdul Karim, one of the soldiers in 1606 with Muhammad Sani, was sent to settle in it by the king Khagemba and his clan came to be known as Nongjaimayum.
41. Labuktongbam (Pathan): This clan was attained from a person Ninkhan who came from Gujarat with his son Salim Khan, the Sardar of Mughal army and Puton Khan, the Sardar of Gujarat army and started staying in a paddy field by constructing a hut. Therefore, his clan was considered as Labuktongbam.



42. Oinam Mayum (Sheikh): extracting from a Meitei namely Oinam Bir Singh who took up Islam in 1886 during the rule of king Chandrakirti Singh and his broods came to be known as Oinam Mayum.

43. Mayang Mayum (Sheikh):It was divided into two Mayang Mayum Ariba (Old) and Mayang Mayum Anouba (New) based on the period of their earlier and later settlements. Such clan's name was given by Maharaj Gambhir Singh to Jamai Khan who was sent by the British from Cachar-Sylhet as a Sepoy in the 500 strong Manipur Levy.

44. Hidak-Ingkhol (Sheikh): It was related to the clan ancestor Sheikh Banan who was the first to introduce the plantation of tobacco for Mangalphu (smoking piper of the Mughals) and for this reason, he started to be considered as Hidak-Ingkhol Mayum. Actually, king Khagemba started using tobacco smoking in 1610 (*hidakmana*) which is *huka (hidakphu)*. Smoking like the Mughals was instigated in Manipur after there were huge expatriate of Muslims in Manipur.

45. Phiringjimayum (Sheikh): These clan ancestors were Telanga Khanba, Maimu, Pukchao and Tonba and they firstly belonged to the Nongshajaibam clan which was dissevered away later on. It was called as Phiringji due to the association of the three Phiringji soldiers with Telanga

Khanba who stayed at Langthabal by making their own houses during the reign of king Chinglen Nongdren Khomba in 1825.

46. Heibok Mayum (Sheikh): Such clan ancestors were Minattullah Sheikh and Umarjan Sheikh who came from Makak in Sylhet during the reign of king Paikhomba and were accorded this clan name to them on account of settling in the area of the Heibok Ching (hill) as claimed by W. Yumjao.

47. Keithel-Ingkhol (Sheikh): Those Muslims who were staying near some well-known markets<sup>90</sup>

Detailed historical analysis of different clans and their descendants are beyond the scope of this present article. Some of the clans were as same as those of Meiteis like

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<sup>90</sup>M. A. Janab Khan, *Manipuri Muslim*, Imphal, 1972, pp.53-72; O. Bhogeshwor Singh and M. A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, pp.169-170; Kheiruddin Khullakpam, *Turko-Afghangee Chada Naoda*, Circles, Imphal, 1997, pp. 65-198; Rafayattullah, *Yad-Dast Kursee-E-Nama*, Lahore, 1929, tr. by Maulana Muhammad Jalaluddin, Kheiruddin Khullakpam and Maulana Tayeb Ali, Circles, Imphal, 1997, pp.16-22;R.K. Sanahal Singh, *Pangal Thorakpa*, Liberty Publication Association, Imphal, 1985, pp.vii-xv.

Yangkhubam, Oinammayum.<sup>91</sup> Consequently, the clan system (unknown in the Islamic World) portrayed a significant task in the formation, inhabitants and expansion of the Muslim community in Manipur by functioning as a symbolic social engineering agent since their arrival in Manipur in 1606 A.D. In other words, it would be projected as the identity formation of the Muslims in Manipur. It can be safely said that many socio-cultural practices of the Manipuri Muslims discussed above drawn from the local dominant community indicated a high level of assimilation and enculturation in their socio-cultural practices thereby keeping a unique place in the history of Manipur.

### Conclusion:

It can be concluded that some historians claimed that Muslims came to Manipur in 1606 A.D. though there were averments prior to this period which were highlighted all the historical analyses and theories based on the different theories of Islamization put forward by Richard Eaton on the above. Generally speaking, the socio-cultural and religious practices

drawing from the local majority community called Meitei such as marriage system, clan system (unknown in the Islamic World), dresses (*phanek, khudei, khwangnum*), belief system, language (*meiteilon*), food habits (*uti, eronba, chamthong/kangsoi, ngari, singju*), arts and aesthetics, recreations, games and sports (*mukna, mukna kangjei-wrestling, yubi lakpi, sagol kangjei-polo*), etc. of the Manipuri Muslim had indicated, to some extent, some sense of identity formation of their community in the state though there were existence of syncretism on a large scale. Such identity formation captures some sense of what Romila Thapar talks of identities as “an accepted historical and cultural origin” in her recently published book, *The Past as Present, Forging Contemporary Identities Through History*.<sup>92</sup> Likewise, in the context of the Formation of Islamic Societies in Southeast Asia, the prolific historian Ira M. Lapidus mentioned that Islam has maintained a distinct identity in the socio-cultural and religious identities and religious practices despite having existence of local customs and traditions. He further opined that “For most Southeast Asian villages, Islam was an element of a more complex social and religious identity

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<sup>91</sup>O. Bhogeshwor Singh and M. A. Janab Khan (ed.), *Nongsamei*, Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, Imphal, 1973, p.170.

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<sup>92</sup>Romila Thapar, *The Past as Present, Forging Contemporary Identities Through History*, Aleph Book Company, New Delhi, 2014, pp. 42-57.

and not the exclusive symbol of personal and collective life.”<sup>93</sup> As a matter of fact, the above analysis shows that such socio-cultural and religious practices drawn from other communities played a crucial responsible assignment in the expansion, settlement and formation of their community during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In other words, it illustrates a different paradigm of what we call “Regional Formulation of Islam” according to Syed Ahmed.<sup>94</sup> It does not mean that they were through and through assimilated and integrated into the Meitei society but they maintained a unique distinct identity of their own, though they fished out many concepts, thoughts and ideologies for shaping and reshaping of their own community from the nearby communities. Hence, summarily, it can be securely said that though the Manipuri Muslims strictly adhered to the basic teachings of Islam, they also borrowed and performed some un-Islamic activities which had been seen on the above by analyzing thoroughly the socio-cultural and religious practices, thereby tarrying a unique idiosyncratic, remarkable and quirky chapter in the history of Manipur.

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<sup>93</sup> Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, CUP, Cambridge, 1988, p.488.

<sup>94</sup> N. Joykumar Singh (ed.), *Globalization and the Changing Scenario of Cultural Interaction, Manipur Experience*, Akansha Publishing House, Delhi, 2007, pp.129-141.

In other words, we can safely say that there was unique identity in their socio-cultural and religious practices despite having the fact that everywhere Islamic socio-culture was marked by strong local syncretisms.

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