CHAPTER VIII

THE ELITE POLITY
The historical and literary works record the influx of various ethnic groups in Manipur valley during the pre-historic period. With the passage of time, as many as seven clans or salais were formed by the process of absorption and amalgamation into a single community. These clans had separate territories administered by their different chiefs. Out of these seven clans (i.e., Mangang, Luwang, Khuman, Kheangana, Chenglei or Sharang, Leishemthang, Moirang and Angom), the Mangang occupied the central portion of the valley, i.e., the Kangla the future capital of the Meitei kingdom.

For the study of the evolution of the Meitei polity, it is necessary to trace back from the pre-state society. The study of the Meitei polity primarily is concentrated on the Mangang polity. Definitely the pattern of the pristine Meitei state and polity was framed on the basis of Mangang socio-political formation. The clan principalities like Angom and Luwang, would supplement the subsequent development of the Meitei state. Father is universally considered as the head of the patriarchal society. No doubt, family which came into existence out of the marriage between the singles is the smallest unit of the patriarchal Mangang society. The expansion of social units led to the formation of another greater social unit, viz. lineage or Jagei. The lineage was led
by the Piba, the social chief of the lineage.

Most presumably, the mode of selection or appointment of Piba was extensively based on seniority. The clan or salai came into existence after the unification of many lineages or ngeis and the absorption and amalgamation of smaller ethnic groups. Following the emergence of clan or salai, the institution of chieftainship emerged. The head of the group who played a vital role to form a stronger clan or principality, was appointed as a chief of the chieftain. Here the manner of appointment of the chief was largely based on his ability.

The emergence of the institution of chieftainship became an immediate stage in the development of the institution of the Meitei kingship. Nongda Lairen Pakhangba inherited a stratified society, Pakhangba was successful in creating a confederated Meitei state by absorbing, amalgamating and subjugating different clans and getting support from them.

The confederacy fostered social relation between the tribes or the clan principalities. Matrimonial relation was prime factor in cementing the social and political relation between the principalities. The process of actual confederation was hastened by another reasons i.e. the superiority of
military power of the Ningthouja (Hangang) principality, the loose territorial boundaries of the clans, perpetual warfare among the clan chiefdoms and the absence of some capable clan chiefs. Such confederation brought about remarkable changes in the socio-political formations. The clan political structure was transformed into a united higher and elaborate form. The purposes of clan confederacy were to strengthen defence and to promote territorial aggrandizement.

Nongda Lairen Fakhangba became the undisputed king of the confederated Meitei state. The advent of King Fakhangba marked the emergence of the institution of the kingship.

Fakhangba's political liberalism encouraged these confederated clansmen to have strong feeling of oneness.

The newly created Meitei state had the following characteristic features:

1. The confederacy was brought under a common authority viz. Nongda Lairen Fakhangba of Ningthouja dynasty. A new name known as Meitei was entitled to all subjects who accepted the confederation which was both social and political.
A monarchical form of government with a minimum despotism but a greater liberalism on the basis of equality was set up. It also granted autonomy in all matters to each and every subjugated clan chief.

A council of ministers consisting of subordinate clan chiefs and 64 Phamous or nobles were also created. They had a great sense of loyalty to the king.

The tributary relationship was created between the king and subordinate clan chiefs. The king enjoyed the multiple position i.e. social, political and religious. The king acted as the social head, political head and chief priest of the state.

However, the succession to the throne was reserved only for a single dynasty viz. the Ningthouja.

The posts of the subordinate clan chiefs and 64 Phamous were for life long. The posts of the subordinate clan chiefs were prescribed as a hereditary post, whereas the post of 64 Phamous was not hereditary.

The confederated clans like Angom and Luwang clans, were not only granted respective autonomy but also given right to preserve their respective territories, though they accepted the suzerainty of the Ningthouja.
The Meitei Confederacy minimized the internecine warfare of different clans and tribes.

The Meitei Kings adopted various titles which were embodied with divine status. King Nongda Lairen Pakhangba assumed the title of 'Meidin' (Lord of the Meiteis).\(^1\) King Neokhamba adopted the new title 'Ningthou' (King).\(^2\) King Khagembha also held the title of Lainingthou (Godly King).\(^3\) King Carabaniewaz for the first time, adopted new hindu title like 'Maharaja' (mighty king).\(^4\) King Ghagyachenbra also assumed the title of Kajarish.

**COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

In the matter of clan administration, the Ningthouja chief was assisted by a group of advisor assistants known as the Ningthou Nongba Tara or ten regional chiefs (i.e. Nongpok, Shingkhei, Khana Chaoba, Wengpuriel, Thangjing, Lampurel, Lyonarakpa, Kaobarela, Kadaurel and Marjing). Even after the formation of the Meitei state, these group of assistants continued to hold important position. They began to act as a sort of council of minister since the reign of Pakhangba. These ten advisor assistants were selected from the 64 Phamdous (i.e. assembly of 64 representative of the people) introduced by Nongda Lairen Pakhangba.\(^5\)
Afterwards during the reign of King Lolyamba the strength of the Ningthou Fonga Tera was reduced from ten to nine. They were known as Khunphangthou Kapan (nine ministers such as Wangkheilakpa (Minister in-charge of law and order of Wangkhei), Sanglen Lakpa (head of the four palans), Thureilakpa (Minister in-charge of Khurai), Yaiskul-lakpa (Supervisor of Yaiskul), Mongthonba (Prime Minister), Chongkhemba Manjaba (in-charge of selecting umbrellas of different kinds), Tukhramba (Minister in-charge of food), Hiyangloii Manjaba (responsible minister of making Hiyang Siren of the king) and Khweilakpa (head of the Khwei subdivision).

According to N. Ibobi, the number of the Council of Ministers or Ningthou Fonga Tera was increased to twelve during the reign of Caribaniwaz. He further states that the priest of the King and the Chief Queen were also included in the Council of Ministers.

The ministers were appointed by the King. The office was not hereditary but for the whole life. They collectively and individually had allegiance to the king. They had a enormous power to curb the arbitrary power of the king. Therefore, they were known as Ningthou Ngamba Angamba (i.e. nobles who control or supervise the king). In all important state
matters king always consulted them. The members of this
council of Ministers were honorary but they were provided
substantial rewards. They were granted revenue free lands,
Khonglois (attendants) and soldiers. They were allowed to
use Keiran Keijao (a kind of cloth which was provided when
a minister died). 2

They enjoyed many privileges granted by the state.
By getting these privileges, they distinguished themselves
from other sections of people. They were allowed to put on
Khamenchatpa (coloured silk dhoti and jacket Khamenchatpa and
Lamthang Khulat). 9 They were authorised to decorate Fajeng
Thiran (a kind of small flag), to ride Doolai, to use Fe-
Khokshang (big Umbrella) and to seat over a separate seat
of velvet cloth at the time of occasion. Their sons and gra-
ndsons were exempted from state bailup service.

CLAN CHIEFS

The chiefs of the confederated clans were reduced
automatically to the nobility status. There were also certain
titular reserved seats which were more respected than those
64 posts of nobility (Chamdoos) to be prescribed only for the
subordinate clan chiefs like Luwang and Angon chiefs. They
were entitled Ningthou (i.e. Luwang Ningthou and Angom Ningthou); but they were included in the nobility group. Pakhangba relegated the clan chiefs to autonomous status of their former clan chiefdom.

DEPARTMENTs:

Nongda Leiren Pakhangba created a number of administrative departments. King Pakhangba was responsible for the introduction of a number of political institutions such as Pacha Loishang (Women’s court dealing with affairs of women presided over by his queen Leisna), Leipham Shanglen a court of justice, Kuchu Shanglen, Khabam Shanglen and Naharup Shanglen.10

A remarkable development in the field of socio-political spheres took place during the reign of king Loiyamba. More or less, the primary Meitei state came to attain its maturity during his reign. He ruled the kingdom smoothly by introducing a number of socio-political institutions. He divided the kingdom into six units (lups) such as Khongchapelup, Nongmailup, Khurailup, Leiphamlup and Khangjenglup.11 Cheitharol Kumbaba, the royal chronicle records that Loiyamba introduced the Lallup system.12 According to the different
Yamnaka (lineage), various suitable occupations were distinctly distributed by the king. Apart from these, the decree further tells the development of various departments (Loi-shang). Along with his military vigour, Mungyamba introduced Amepta Loishang (Department of medicine). King Khagembha consolidated the inherited territories from his father by launching the policy of both offensive and defensive means. He divided the kingdom's administration into both civil and military administration. He introduced Panna (administrative unit) system in military purpose. For better convenience of administration, he divided the capital area into four units such as Yaiskul which was put under the supervision of Yaiskulakpa, Khurai under Khurailakpa, Khwai under Khwairakpa, and Wangkhei under Wangkheilakpa.

King Khagembha set up a number of departments (Loi-shang) like Lamei Yareksang (quarter guard of the army), Sagolsang (royal stable), Lolai Paba Loishang (Department of Palanquin riders or police), Kayang Hizeba Loishang (Department of boat), Teli Loishang (Department of Oil crusher or teli), Fangan Phundrei Loishang (Department of Muslim Turners) and Shinga Khongbi Loishang (Department of musician), Khagembha Loishang (royal court) and Royal Ordinance workshop. Haru Shanglen Loishang (education department), Ura-ngba Loishang (forest department and Shinnalba Loishang
(Department of house and hall building). King Khagendra systemically organized department of law and order to bring peace in state. Therefore, he introduced police department under the name and style of Solai Faba. 16

King Garibangwaz established various departments. Those departments introduced by him were Cheirap (court), Potshangba Shanglanmai, Hidak Phamba Shanglen, Keirup Yarekshang, Ningthousenba Yarekshang (royal guards department), Lansi Yarekshang (army department), Tanyeiba Loishang (time keeping department), Haomacha Loishang (department of hill tribes), Keibi China Loishang, Lolaipaba Loishang, Kunungloi Laheishakpa (singer department) and Panji Loishang (astrologer department). Of course, there were changes in the name of the pannas. Both Khabam and Laipham Pannas were known as Khunja, while Ahallup and Naharup were known as Naija. 17

By establishing the department of Lourungpurel (superintendent of Revenue), the King brought a basic transformation in the field of revenue system. He introduced Loukok Eba (recorder of fields). In order to get greater advantage of the village administration of both the hill and plain, he introduced the office of the Khunbu, Khullakpa and Lupakpa. 18 During his reign, Lallup system was imposed on the hill area.
After the restoration to the throne in 1776, King Bhagyachandra reorganized the kingdom. The revived departments and courts during his period were Langdai Khakhirn Changle, Ngamda Thaba Shangle, Cheirap court, Kuchu Goudya Shinba Shangle (department of religious affairs) and Napan Shangle (department of women's affairs). He introduced some elements of Ahom system of administration i.e. Rajkhiwa and Hazari. He set up Tengkhan Loishang and Hazari Loishang (guard of all departments).

After the death of King Bhagyachandra Singh, once again the kingdom of Manipur was thrown into a state of instability on account of the succession war of the royal princes. But during the short reign of King Chourjit, there were found certain development in administration. He set up Shangsharoi (House builder) and Parasek Shang.

King Gambhir Singh (1825-1834) reorganized the kingdom once again. For the better administration, he revived the administration over the Leikais (locality) located around the capital area which was divided into 4 (four) administrative units like Khwai, Yaiskul, Khurai and Wangkhei. There was certain development in the aspect of judiciary. In order to judge the cases properly, the kingdom was divided into 4 (four)
circles. In each circle, king respectively installed a separate Panchayat court. These village Panchayat courts were authorised to judge only the civil suits and criminal cases not more than 50 rupees. King also introduced a court known as Garod to deal with the matters connecting to the military affairs.

King Chandrakirti introduced a new court known as Topp Guard. Besides this, he introduced the system of judgement applying the order of penal court. With the advice of British Political Agents, James Johnstone in 1879, King introduced a system of criminal punishment in the form of execution. The condition of the jail comparatively improved. 23

BUREAUCRACY

The elements of bureaucracy were prevalent since the pre-Meitei state formation. The Mangang chiefs required their assistants to govern their principalities smoothly. So, they were responsible to create advisor assistants i.e. Ningthou Pongba Tara or ten regional chieftains. Mongda Lairen Pakbangba inherited such advisor assistants from the Mangangs, when he established the first Meitei state. The support of these clans and the Chakpas and the absorption of a number of tribes led
to the expansion of the territorial boundary and the population of the newly created state. The state affairs could not be properly administered with the assistance of the Kingthou Pongba Tara alone. Therefore, Pakhangba introduced the institution of 64 Phamdous which have been described as an assembly of 64 representative of the people. 'These 64 Phamdous were appointed by the king from the 32 divisions of the early Meitei state.'

The political history of the Meiteis up to the reign of King Khumongba (1263-1278 A.D.) was full of internecine warfare between the Meitei Kingdom and other independent clan principalities and hill tribes. However, the internecine warfare was accompanied by the continuous internal socio-political and economic institutional developments. The establishment of the Meitei hegemony over the clan principalities and the surrounding hill tribes was seriously considered as prestigious one. By and large, the matrimonial alliance between the subordinate and independent principalities and other tribes and the Meitei became the prime factor to nurse the primary Meitei state, since its inception.

Nongmoinu (or Nongmainu Abongbi wife of King Khuyai Tompok) introduced the appointment of some posts viz. Strunhanba and Asheiba Hanjaba (singer) for Leiphem panna
(administrative division) and Keitruhanba for Khabam. 25

Yoimongba made the offices like Nakpak Hanjaba, two
nakpaklakpa for Khabam. 26 Tutenclon refers to the dredging
of the two rivers like Imphal (Turel Achouba) and the Irril
rivers by organizing large number of human labour. The organ-
izational ability of the royal brothers both Yoimongba and
King Taotthingmang strengthened the central power. However, the
king started to concentrate his power over his subjects throu-
ugh public work. 27

Haorei Khunkum was appointed the post of Iratlangba
Hanjaba (supervisor of worship) for Khabam Panna. During the
reign of Naophangba, number of the posts came to increase in
different administrative divisions. The posts of Niyangloi
Hanjaba (supervisor of boat), Shanglen Lakpa (superintendent
of department) and Laichou Lakpa were created for Lelpham area.
One Shanglenlakpa and one Chomkhanba for Khabam area were
also appointed. King Ura Konthouba appointed Shagonsenba Tan-
chaba for Khabam Panna. 28

King Naotingkhong appointed Huidouhanba for Khabam
Panna. 29

King Loiyamba appointed 10 state-officials like
Fukhramba, Nongthomba, Khwairakpa, Yaiskullakpa, Hiyangloi, Chungkhaoba Halchapa, Yumangloi Halchapa Phamthakcha and Neikhurekpa. 30

King Loiyamba issued the Loiyamba Shilyen which was regarded as the first Meitei written constitution. The king was highly conscious of the continuing trend of greater decentralization by introducing elaborate division of administrative appointment of a number of officials. The existence of the feudal system during his period was covered with the sharing of administrative responsibility. King was no longer directly responsible to his subjects. Since the emergence of the intermediate feudal nobles, subjects were indirectly responsible to the king. On the other hand, through these feudal agents, the royal sway was sufficiently expanded to the far flung remote areas of the kingdom.

Theichaoba Hanjaba was appointed for Khabam panna by king Khumbomba. King Telheiba introduced the post of Tensu Hanba in Laipham panna. In Khabam panna, there were introduced a certain posts viz. Neikhulakpa and Neiprakhakpa. 31

King Kyamba appointed Lakpas or supervisors for Khe-llup and Naharup. 32 During his period, the kingdom's boundary
was not only expanded beyond the mountain barriers but also
whole of Manipur valley was brought under the rule of the
Meitei king. However, the joint forces of the king Kyamba of
Manipur and King Khelkomba of Pong kingdom conquered Kyang,
a Shan principality in the Kabaw valley. After this, the two
victorious kings concluded a friendship treaty which fixed
the boundary between Manipur and Pong. The major portion of
the Kabaw valley was annexed to Manipur. This was not only
first treaty signed between Manipur and a foreign sovereign
power but also Manipur was internationally recognised by a
power in Upper Burma.33

Lamkaingamba introduced a post called Huiroi Hanjaba
(Supervisor of hunting dog).34

King Khagema, in order to make decentralization of
royal power and to run the smooth administration, introduced
some posts such as Dolei Hanjaba (chief of palanquin riders),
Chabam Shanglen Lakpa (head of the Khabam Panna), Lairikyengbam
Hanjaba (head of the royal scribes), four Shinju Lakpa and
Shetri Hanjaba.35

King Khunjaoba introduced a post of Lamreilakpa for
Khabam Panna. Some officials like Pachabanba, Phamdou, Phamlup
and Luplakpa were appointed by King Paikhomba. King Charafongba
introduced the post of Anamsang Hanjaba.36

As a real believer in Hinduism, for the first time, King Garibaniwaz introduced Hindu system of ministers. He created posts like Jubaraj, Mantri, Senapati, Besides these, he employed for Fama Hazari, Poizhangba Hidak Phanba Hanjaba, Chongam Ningthou, Miruhanba, Hinaohanba and Lambong Hanjaba Hanzaba Hidang.37

King Garibaniwaz prescribed a number of rules and regulations. Those prescribed rules and regulations are the following as :-

(1) Only the Fibas (chief of the lineage) and Fiba Mathang (The second in heir to the Fiba) were authorised to guard the king.

(2) The low-caste people should not ‘present’ cloth (a kind of handmade weaving cloth to wear) to the king to wear.

(3) Without the royal order, no one was allowed to come to the palace and meet the king.

(4) If he entered, he was not given the right to express anything before the king unless ordered or asked.

(5) Only the thirty years old persons were declared as an eligible person for state service.
(6) Inside the capital, king should always stay together with Yoibu Yohei and Haomacha. King and his nobles should assemble in Darbar in every twenty or thirty days.

(7) All the army should not hold state office.

(8) Those people who migrated from west and east were not allowed to enter nearby god Janamahi and Fakhangba.

(9) Dolaipaba was not allowed to enter the royal house.\textsuperscript{38}

After the death of King Caribaniwaz, the political horizon of the kingdom of Manipur was in low-ebb due to conflict amongst the royal princes for the throne and the big blow of the Konbuang kings of Burma (viz. Alungpaya and Nainbysin).

The rule of King Bhagyachandra became a remarkable one. He realised the contemporary international political situation of the British dominance over the world. His period entered a new phase in the history of Manipur because first Anglo-Manipur Treaty was signed in 1762 between Manipur and British East India Company and the establishment of diplomatic relation with the Ahom King Swargadeo Rajeswar Singh to liberate Manipur from the Burmese yoke.\textsuperscript{39}

In order to make his reconstruction programme
successful, he appointed eight Shangoiba Hanjaba Hidung for four Pannas. In addition to these eight, king appointed other four Shengoiba Hanjaba Hidang.40

After the death of King Shagya Chandra, there was no great political development till the coming of King Gambhir Singh in 1625 due to the succession crisis of the royal family and the Great Seven Year Devastation.

By reorganizing the kingdom, King Gambhir Singh brought a great political development. He created a post known as Awam-purel to look after all affairs relating to the Burmese (Minister in-charge of Burmese affairs).41

After the death of King Gambhir Singh, his minor son Chandrakirti ascended to the throne of Manipur. Nara Singh, brother of King Gambhir Singh acted as the Regent. However, the British connection with the Manipur Levy came to a close in 1835 by handing over its charge to Manipur Government. With the object of the continuation of the relation between Manipur and British India, the Government of British India appointed Captain L. Gordon as first Political Agent of India in 1835.42 This, for the first time, an effective office of the Political Agent of British India was set up having gathered manifold objects. After the death of King Chandrakirti. In Manipur
there was no radical transformation in political institutions. It continued till the British occupation of Manipur in 1891.

**MILITARY**

Though there was the absence of military institution during the reign of Nongše Lairen Fakhangba, all the able-bodied male section would be considered as the militia of the newly created Meitei state. The king assumed the virtual head of the army.

Further development of military organization took place during the period of Khuye Tampok. He introduced a new system of alerting the people viz. by beating the war drums. King UraKonthouba started a small riverine navy and cavalry but not on regular basis.

King Loiyamba brought a basic development in the military system by introducing the Lallup system. According to T. C. Hodson, "Lallup system rendered not only the kingdom's military service but also dealt with all the socio-economic works.

With the introduction of this system, king prescribed that all the able-bodied male section between the age of 16 to 60 years were obliged to serve as a soldier of the kingdom during the war time.
There was a great transformation in military organization during the reign of King Khagemba. For the first time, gun manufacture and gun use were known to the Meitei army.\textsuperscript{47} This brought to strengthen the Meitei army.

However, dramatic transformation in the field of military organization was introduced during the reign of Gammhar Singh. He used European military titles in place of the ancient Manipuri titles. The newly introduced titles were Major, Subedar, Jamander, Havildar.\textsuperscript{48}

The organized army was divided into eight regular regiment known as Tulis. The following are the Tulis with companies.

(1) The Tulihal consisted of 12 companies
(2) The Tuliyaima consisted of 11 companies
(3) Tulinaha consisted of 12 companies
(4) Shitna Tuli consisted of 8 companies
(5) Bishnu Naha consisted of 12 companies
(6) Bishnu Sheina Ahal Tuli consisted of 9 companies
(7) Top Tuli consisted of 12 companies and
(8) Awapurel Tuli.\textsuperscript{49}

Apart from these major Tulis, there were less
Important Tulis like Kang Tuli, Kang Hao Tuli, Dinamlong Tuli and Nawa Tuli. A service corps known as Bandiyar was organized. The kingdom also possessed 12,000 irregular army attributed by Lallup service.\(^5\)

Each regular Tuli was commanded by a Menjor and a Poila. one Havildar Menjor and two Kuts were attached to it. In a company, there were one subedar, one jamander, one Aqri holder, one Havildar and one Awandar. King Gambhir Singh renamed the Lepoy as Lalm.\(^5\) Hence, the kingdom acquired efficient military power by organizing standing army which was trained and drilled on European fashion.

King Chandrakirti established Poila Company and Kuki Irregulars posted on the southern range of the hills. It consisted of 1000 to 1200 men.\(^5\)

The kingdom's army consisted of infantry, cavalry, sevey, elephants\(^5\) and labour.

The state employed some officials like, Shagolhanjaba, Shamuhanjaba and Hiroi Hanjaba, to deal the affairs of state army. Shagolhanjaba (in charge of cavalry) took the responsibility to mobilize cavalry forces at the time of war. Shamuhanjaba (in charge of elephant) took the charge of mobilising of elephant wing. Hiroi Hanjaba (in charge of navy) was a responsible officer for mobilising navy wing.
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