CHAPTER-II

KANGLA IN THE MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF MANIPUR
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Kangla, the historic capital of Manipur was once a hill and known as the Kurumching Khongnem having seven ranges. Seven streams also flowed from this hill of which have religious significance in the lives of the Manipuri till today. Kangla is regarded as the holiest place for the Manipuris. It is a center of shrines as well as pilgrimage for all Manipuris who are residing in Manipur, Assam, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bangladesh and Myanmar etc. It is believed that Lord Pakhangba resides under "Kangla" and ruled the kingdom of Manipur and the Universe. It is also believed that there are 360 important holy/sacred places in Kangla.¹

In the heart of Imphal city between the Nambul and Imphal rivers, located Kangla, the ancient royal seat of Manipur. Admist the crowds of Imphal town, the ruins of Kangla and her mourning fort standing solemnly to narrate the by gone valour and pride of the ancient Manipuri Kings. In pre-Pakhangba period, the ruling clans
named 1) Tangja Leela Pakhangba, 2) Leinung Lonja Pakhangba, 3) Lolang Pakhangba, 4) Sakakpa, 5) Wankakpa, 6) Kaksuba, 7) Tonkakba, 8) Kangba Ningthou, 9) Moriya Phambalcha, 10) Sentreng, 11) Kuptreng, 12) Chakpas, 13) Khaba etc., were almost ruled the Kangla. Kangla is not only the seat of political power but also a holy place for religious worship and ceremonies. There area a number of ancient treaties/manuscripts especially 'Sakoklamlen', 'Chinglon Laihui', 'Nunglon', 'Khunung Leikoirol', 'Kangla Thirel', etc., which lay down the rules for the construction, worship, ceremonies relating to Kangla.

The history of Kangla is intricately related to the evolution of Manipuri culture, religion and cosmogony. Our tradition, both oral and written, said that in the beginning there was empty darkness. The Supreme God, Guru Shidaba, the Immortal Lord of the Sky, created the Universe, the Gods and all the living beings.
MANIPURI VERSION:


Madudagi guru Shidabana pari atonba nangdi eetik arubabu karamna khangbano, nangdi eepa aribane haiduna naming Pakhang yoirenba haina koure. Asigitungda Korou nongkhong koiba chatkhiba gurugi pari ahal Ashiba amasung Atiya guru Shidaba animak
thunglare. Makhoi anina atonbabu nangdi thunglamlaboire asumna hairabada guru Shidabana nanaodi hanna thunglamle leipakki mapudi mahakni haikhi.

FREE TRANSLATION:

Guru Shidaba, the Lord of the Universe, then asked his three sons Ashiba, Atiya Shidaba and Konjin Tingthokpa to go around the universe and said that whoever first completed the journey would be made king of the world. Ashiba soon set out for the journey riding a tiger. Atiya Shidaba also set out to accomplish the task. But the youngest brother Konjin Tingthokpa remained unprepared. Guru Shidaba encouraged him to set out for the journey. Konjin Tingthokpa perceived that there was none more exalted than Guru Shidaba and went around the seat of the Guru, which was the universe itself, seven times with folded hands uttering the name of Guru Shidaba.

The Guru enquired how he knew his exalted power and named him Pakhang Yoirenba (the ideal who knows his father). He is also known as Eepa Ariba (the first forefather). Then one by one the other two brothers arrived after their successful journey around the universe. They were surprised and shocked to find Konjin Tingthokpa their youngest brother had already completed the journey. Guru
Shidaba, the Supreme Lord, then ordained that their youngest brother would be the master of the earth because he arrived first.

The place where the Guru said so was named Loiren. Then they climbed up the Thingkrum Ching. Guru Shidaba told his first and second sons that as their youngest brother Konjin Tingthokpa knew the exalted power of their father. He was named Pakhangba and ordained to let him sit on the royal throne. And he ordained eldest son Ashiba be worshipped by all the human beings in their houses and that Atiya Shidaba should be made to be united with him. Then Guru Shidaba handed our earth to his youngest son and let him sit on the royal throne. The very place where Guru Shidaba handed own the earth to his youngest son Konjin Tingthokpa and ordained to sit on the royal throne by naming him Pakhangba and Apanba was at this very Kangla suggested by many Scholars and Pandits of Manipur.

It was proved that Kangla as regarded as a hill is found in the old manuscripts like Ningthouro Lombuba, Nunglol and Pombi Luwaoba. When the event of traveling around the Universe or Nongkhong Koiba was over, what Guru Shidaba ordained, "My son,
you shall rule alone over the world (worldly life) as the main hinge lying at the Royal hill, the central Thingkruching where seven slopes/ranges join". It is understand that this place what we knew as Kangla, was a hill having seven slopes.

Here are a few quotations from the manuscripts: "What is known as Kanglei Pungmayon is Kangla, also known as Kanglamen."⁴ "Both placenta and amnion of the seven deities who were not born of mother (Pinaidaba) remained buried in the tunnel of Kangla hence the name Kanglamen."⁵

**ARCHAIC VERSION**

Both Taoroinai and Lintaoreng have existed under Langshang and above the surface of water by the name of Nungmu Tumdaba Mangdaba' meaning a black stone which can neither be dissolved nor destroyed. The name is called Taobiroinai. Besides, the above theories, it had may mythological background that Guru Shidaba, Lord of the Universe, existed holding Hee Maru Shidaba (the Gem of Immortality) in the right hand and Yai Maru Shidaba in the left hand while his right foot treading upon Nungbi. Shidaba and his left foot upon Nungnang Nadaba. Leimarel Shidabi existed holding Hee Manik Shidaba in the left hand, while her right foot treading upon Mukta Yai Maru and her left foot upon Mani Hee Maru. Because of the reason that both Leimaren and Guru existed. Thus, the place was named, "Kangla Nongthou Phambilel Meera Pongthoklam Kangleipung Mayol Mayai Sumdongpan Kangla Thon Taret"
Thollangmei Meereimana Tanphangdaba Miren Togmuba ching Langshang Chinglangmei."^7

Kangla is also called Tillikoktong Laimakol Kangla Nongthou Phambirel. Inside the earth beneath Kangla, there were a python, a tortoise, a boar, an ox, an elephant and a Laijao (in the form of a man) bearing a paphal on the head. One above the other from the bottom upwards to the top. Hence Kangla is known as Thon Taret Thollangmei^8. Meera Pongthoklam and Meereimana Tanphangdaba refer that the place of Kangla never found anywhere of the world except it and first place of the evolution of human spices.

ARCHAIC VERSION

FREE TRANSLATION

The place where Ko-Sana Phakhangba, Lord of the world, used to sit on a throne encircles by Ashiba biting its tail taking the form of Taoroinai is called Kangla. Konung (palace) is so called because seven streams flow surrounding it.

Kangla was earlier a vast piece of sprawling land, originally a mound or hill east of the Nambul River. It included the ancestral abode of the ruling clan, their burial places, areas of worship with a host of sacred shrines and thatch roofed houses spread over its territorial complex. There were also megalithic structures of ritual importance.

Geomorphologically, Kangla was the first piece of dry land that emerged after prolonged submersion of the valley under water in probably upper Pleistocene times. The word Kangla emphasizes the fine spread of dry earth at the center of Kangleipung, the area of
freshly emerged dry land. It was indeed a piece of life from the cosmic vastness of the embryonic watery void.

In fact, the Loktak Lake, which lies at the south-western side of the valley near Moirang, had its shores right upto Imphal where the present General post office stands. It is still known as Loktak Maru (source of Loktak).

The Capital Kangla became organically related to the physiogeographic setting of the state in a special manner. It occupied the ritual center in Meitei cosmogonic thought. Pre-Hindu Meitei belief systems provide a biological homology of the physical state functioning like a human organism, where Kangla occupied the navel, the hollow in the belly left by the detachment of the Umbilical cord.

In the bio-physical structure of the state, the Koubru hills in the northwest, the early settlement area in pre-historic times, is regarded as the head; the three rivers-Iril, Imphal and Nambul are regarded as the main arteries of the body, and the Loktak Lake as his pelvic zone.
The drain at the Chindwin beyond the Sugnu Nungthong (stone Door of Sugnu) was regarded as the restum. Kangla therefore, occupied a strategic area in the body structure, which was energy receptacle in the human organism. It was indeed the seed of placenta, the vital connection that gives life blood to the child. It was the reservoir of that organic germ plasm which spread vital and intellectual powers to the entire physical system of the child. An ancient manuscript Leihou-Naophamlon, treating Kangla, its functions and ritual connections gives itself the amazing title of the origination of the earth and of the placenta bracketed in similar symbolic connotations. Kangla, therefore, performs a very vital function in the human organism of the state, transmitting energy and life power to all parts of the system.

Another circle in the belief system was that Kangla, being also the microcosm of the state, the miniscule representative of the macro-organism of the body, had within its geographic confines the macro-representation of the entire body symbolized by specific allocation of ritual areas. The macrocosm was present in the microcosm itself. The Koubru hills or the organic head was represented by the physical,
presence of the Shrines of the first creators, the Ashiba (Sanamahi), and Pakhangba temples along with the Okshang (first interview's house) slightly north west of the coronation seat. The breast of the organism was represented by the Sanathong (Golden Door) and the Kangla Uttra (House of public duties) at the south-east of the coronation site. The main arteries of the body were now represented by the Khongs (rivulets) the Laikhong, Khakhong, Marongkhong, etc., which washed the central areas of the historic site in a semi-subterranean drain system. The coronation seat (Phammoimit or Phallangmei), which was a stone at a cave a surung was regarded as the eye- the all seeing, light emitting center in the human organism.

In the pan-anismistic tradition of the ancient Meiteis, every living things, plants, trees or water were imbued with thriving spirits, to be venerated and honoured. Eve the rivulet Khakhong gave birth to seven living river systems connecting the land with many areas beyond the conscious frontier. Appeasement of any single rivulet would give long life and happiness to the worshipper.
The rivulet Laikhong gave birth to the nine Gods of creation, and sacrifice with human heads near the bank of this rivulet would secure the vital life-soul to the worshipper. And the rivulet Marongkhong took the form of the ancestral serpent deity, with its tail in the mouth, in a form capable of giving ever-renewing cycles of generative power, with blood like colour of the waters, that it connected itself with the waters of the pond Nongjeng, where the ancestor snake Pakhangba dwelt. Pumsaikhong, the mother rivulet of the three steams were associated with eternal acts of creation and of struggles for the first throne, etc\textsuperscript{11}.

Such were the myths woven around the historic site of Kangla. Every area in the waters or in the mounds of the hills, or in the sacred spot at the foot of the tree could be conceived as the coiled state of the ancestor serpent dragon, vitally spread and guarding its domain. The ruling lineage Ningthoujas, conceived various pattern of the coiled deity, manifest in various ritual areas, with exotic, dreamlike motifs, known as paphal, - sometimes the dragon heads shaped like pigs, with horns, move, wings and tails like that of whales. Various designs of
the serpent-dragon were visualized in as many as 364 forms, and most of the major motifs were associated with Kangla.

These ancestor snakes were chthonic in character, manifesting below the earth surface; sometimes in the waters, sometimes in the vaults or caves. They were no double fertility giving powers, the veneration of whom lay at the core of Meitei religious belief, for protection, growth, abundance, grace and power.
Footnotes:


2. Ms: Khunung Leikoirol.


5. Ms: Sakok Lamlan


8. Ms: Sakok Lamlan
