CHAPTER - THREE
Growth of Early Meitei Kingdom
KHUYOITOMPOK

Khuyoitompok ascended the throne after Nongda Laien Pakhangba. He was supported in his coronation by four chiefs of different clans viz., Luwang, Punshiba of Luwang clan, the chief of Angom clan, Khuman chief Tumhaba and Ngangningshing of Moirang. According to some traditions he was a patricide either instigated by Khaba or by a misunderstanding. Just after his accession, Khuyoitompok went around the kingdom and visited many important places. As he had a close relationship with the Angom of Selloi Langmai hill, Khuyoitompok sent his men there to engage Nongmainu Ahongbi of Angom for him. Thus Nongmainu Ahongbi was married to Khuyoitompok by giving many varieties of dowry.

Introduction of drums and other technological developments

His reign was a notable period in the history of Manipur. The king and his nobles thought that for the announcement of any kind of news to the public, they needed

3 Ibid, p. 38.
an instrument like a big drum. For this purpose he went to the north-west towards the Koubru Mountain to collect big trees for making the drum. First of all, they hunted a deer from the north and tried to make it by using the deer skin. It did not give a satisfactory sound. For the second time, they again tried to make use of the tiger skin but it also failed to produce any proper sound. Lastly, the skin of the cattle which was a dowry of Sirakontingnu, the sister of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was used. Only after that the proper sound of the drum came. Thus for the first time Khuyoitempok invented drum in Manipur and he was called as the innovator of the drum.

Not only the invention of the drum, Khuyoitempok also explored some sites where iron, copper and gold were found. The important sites were Kakching, gold at Kongba Meirombi, copper at Sibong.

He explored salt producing sites viz., Sikhong, Ningel and Waikhong. He began to make metal utensils and manufactured gong known as Senbung which

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4 Ningthourol Seireng, p. 185.
5 O. Bhogeshor, Ningthourol Lambuba, p. 18.
6 Ningthobrol Seigeng, p. 186
7 Hijam Bijoy Singh, Meitrabaki wari, 1955, Imphal, p. 43.
8 W. Ibohal Singh, Early History of Manipur, 1985, Imphal.
proved the development of bronze metallurgy during his reign. Here a question arises that how far the people had the knowledge in metal technology or was it a simply borrowed from the outside. But the gong in Manipur was one of the elements of cultural contact with upper Burma and Thailand.  

Besides this metal technology, it is worth mentioning that the weaving, dyeing, printing and embroidery at the border of the clothes were also highly developed during his time. This tradition is still continued as a custom of royal family and the Meitei women. According to tradition and chronicles, queen Laisa innovated several designs with colour based on pattern of python, like phanek phibal (on the border of the Mekhala), on the Samchin (head gear) and on the border of the shawl. These designs from the python were called Namthangkhulak, Khamenchatpa, Ningkham, etc. and these were especially used for the royal family and prize cloths to the ablemen and noblemen. The mulberry silk worms and mulberry trees were discovered and rearing of silk worm was started in Manipur for the first time. The mulberry silk worm is called Leima Tili in Manipur. The place were the people where the people who specialized

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9 Gangmumei Kabui, A History of Manipur from the earliest times to 1826 A.D. unpublished.
in silk worm rearing place is now known Leimram as corruption of Leimalam. 10

Khuyoitompok introduced many posts and offices in the administration and divided their duties according to the names of the posts. He also divided his kingdom into four divisions 11 like, Khurai, Wangkhei, Khuai and Yaisukul. Each division was supervised by a noble.

After a long reign of 110 years according to Cheitharol Kumbaba, Khuyoitompok abdicated the throne. 12

TAOTHINGMANG

Just after the death of Khuyoitompok according to some source of information 13 the two sons of Khuyoitompok did not ascend the Ningthouja throne. They made a joint administration. Due to flood by heavy rainfall or having large part of swampy or marshes area, the irrigation and drainage system of the kingdom was not regular. The two

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11 Ibid.

12 Cheitharol Kumbaba, p.2.


Pakhangba Phambal etc.
brothers decided to ensure a good water flow and regular drainage system. Thus they took up the drainage reclamation works with the help of the people. The purpose of the task was twofold: a) to enable the people to get regular supply of indispensable water during the lean season, b) to control flood. So the task was a double purpose river project.

The two brothers dredged the two rivers, the Imphal and the Iriel. Yoimongba dredged the course of Imphal river and Taotthingmang, the Iriel river. While they were continuing their works Yoimongba, the elder brother reached at Lilong and searched for his brother Taotthingmang. Taotthingmang met Phunal Telhaiba, the chief of Phunal. He forbade him from proceeding through his territory. Taotthingmang neglected it. Hence a fight began between the two sides. Taotthingmang was not well prepared for the fight, so he was defeated and wounded and the place where Taotthingmang was wounded was called as Nganglou (Ngang=Red, lou=place). But soon after that incident Taotthingmang met his brother Yoimongba not far from the spot cited above.

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14 R.K. Hiranya, op.cit.
15 Tutenglon, p.2.
16 Cheitharol Kumbaba, p.2.
The two brothers and their people proceeded towards the south and they found a tribal village of about 100 families who were called Haokha Lokkha who was saved by them from the hands of a great bird Kakyel Mingamba. Kakyel Mingamba, (meaning a giant bird) was regarded as a giant bird whose duty was to kill the men as well as a collection of the things from the graveyard for his earning. The two brothers killed Kakyel Mingamba and the two wings of the bird were cut off and one of the wings was mounted on the Chingnunghut to regularise the water flow and one was kept on the side of Loktak lake. The place was called Ithing. The purpose of the making of this bund of Ithing was to keep the proper water level of Loktak lake for the welfare of the people. The dead body of Kakyel Mingamba was brought by the two brothers and after that the making of Keiren Keijao (the royal coffin) was introduced and they also introduced Chuksha Aoipheng (worship of the deity for sufferings and wounds of the battle). The two brothers married the two sisters, Loitongkhu to Yoimonga and Maonkhu to Taotinthang from the village.


18 C. Keirao Sharma, Meitei Thangi Langon, 1902, Imphal, p.31.
Khui Ningomba was succeeded by his son Pengahiba according to Cheitharol Kumbaba in 379 A.D. The next king was Kaokamba. He ruled 17 years from 394 to 411 A.D. Naokamba, the son of Kaokamba ascended the throne in 411 A.D. According to Cheitharol Kumbaba and Pakhangba Phambal from Nongda Leiren Pakhangba to Naophamba were accounted as the divine kings. As the Ningthouja dynasty was superior to the Chenglei or Sarangleishangthem Naokamba forcibly married the wife of Khongjromba, the chief of Chenglei. Yaoreiba Chanu, the wife of Khongjromba was conceived of five months while Naokamba took her. Naokamba had two sons, Naophang Ahanba and Naophangba and one daughter Yoirum Chenbi.

NAOPHANGBA

After the death of Naokamba in 428 A.D. there was a political clash for the succession of the king. In general, the succession to the throne was from the father to the eldest son but the people objected to Naophang Ahanba’s accession to the throne. It is because of his mother’s conception of five months when she was with Thangi Khongjromba by the time of her marriage to Naophangba.

21 Chengleirol. (MS).
khamba. Naophang Ahanba complained to his mother. And to show the formal claim of the eldest son's right of chiefship a trial was held by an ordeal of diving into the water. Unfortunately, the claim of Naophang Ahal failed. 22

Naophangba thus ascended the throne in 428 A.D. And Naophang Ahanba was declared as a Chenglei and he committed suicide in his own house. Naophangba married two wives, Kaireima, daughter of the brother of the king of Thoubal Yoirangpok Punshiba of Khuman. The another wife was Yaoreibi of Luwang clan. Thus, the king had a matrimonial relation with both the Luwang and the Khuman principalities. Kaireima gave birth to Sameirang, and Yaoreiba gave birth to Thamanglang.

During the reign of Naophangba a Pangal Guru, (a guru from Bengal corrupted into Pangal) came as a missionary in Manipur. He met king Naophangba and tried to influence by reforming the religious beliefs of Manipur. He advised the king to stop the burial of the dead and introduced cremation instead. The meat of animal was declared as a taboo food and banned. Naophangba constructed a seven storeyed Kangla palace. The king consulted the new Guru who did not know the Meitei custom

22 Chengleirol.
and traditions properly. With his advice the foundation or the holes of the pillars were dug but blood gushed out of the holes and he could not stop it. Ashangbam Laiba, who was only 13 years old told the king about the wrong design of the location of the pillars of the building and also said that the body of the Taoroinei, the dragon or serpent form of royal deity Pakhangba was touched. On his advice, the materials like cane, bamboo, thatch, etc. were collected from different hills and area of Manipur to construct the building. It is also said that the blood was stopped by Laiba with the help of a big bear. Thus, the Guru was defeated and the king rejected his new religion. During his time the Sajibu Cheiraoba (New year) was introduced.

Even though there were no much changes to the administrative system he was a good administrator as well as a just dispenser of justice which was shown by his judgement to the princes of Chenglei. Naophangba according to Cheitharol Kumbaba ruled for 90 years on the throne.

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23 Kangla Houba (MS).

24 Cheitharol Kumbaba, p.4.
The next king was Sameirang Yoiremba. He was coronated in 508 A.D. The consolidation of the Ningthouja kingdom began during his reign. Beside the Ningthouja principality, the other clans like, Angom, Luwang, Khuman, Moirang, etc. were the independent principalities. So other principalities were also trying to expand their territories as far as possible. Actually it was a period of the beginning of the struggle for the expansion and supremacy for the power.

Kwakpa Thawanthaba, the chief of Angom extended his territory to the Ningthouja's area. As a result of it a conflict in between the Angom and the Ningthouja was begun and ended with the defeat of Angom and collected tribute from the Angom. King Sameirang Yoiremba defeated Kumba Soiphamba of Angom while the later was fishing.

The period of king Sameirang Yoiremba was important for the Ningthouja clan and family organisation. The 'engkhom family of Ningthouja who descended from Thamang-lang was started during his reign. Thamang-lang took

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lion's share in the administration of his brother. The inscription of Khoibu Maring a village inhabited by Maring Naga of south east Manipur shows their activities, social and religion. The inscriptions mention that the two brother princes were dwelling there and it further records that the preparation of Khek (Hamei-Yeast for fermentation of wine) was taboo. If it was done so, tiger would become furious. 26

Sameirang introduced a grand feast on the eve of a battle to the nobles and warriors. He married a girl from Kampong group, the daughter of the chief of Kampong, Thing. He reigned successfully about 50 years. according to Cheitharol Kumbaba. 27

**URAKONTHOUBA**

Urakonthouba succeeded his father in 568 A.D.

Before he was entitled Urakonthouba his name was Panam Numit Thokpa Chunaba.

Urakonthouba was well served in administration.

He adopted many policies for the expansion of his kingdom

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27 Cheitharol Kumbaba, p.3.
and for peace. So he entered under matrimonial alliance with other clans. He himself got married to Nongjengehu of Khata clan and his daughter Naorem Ton was married with Leiphajeng the prince of Moirang. His son Hongnem Yoi Khunjao popularly known by the regnal name Naathingkhone was taking a matrilocal residence at Seloi Langmai hill i.e. in Angom principality. Two versions were found about his stay at Seloi Langmai. In the first place, Naathingkhone, in the childhood he was very naughty and also interested to roam from one place to another. Thus he went to some other places and began to stay at the Seloi Langmai as a result of his marriage to Langmai Pitana.

Once the Seloi Langmai warriors proceeded to invade the hill villages of Haokap, Chingshang, Khunpham and Mongchung in the foothills of Koubru hill range. They marched towards Khunpitok Ungamfei and reached at Tongjenasoi Khari or Tongcheng Saikha Pei. Mongbal Kadem, a servant of Ningthouja king Ura Konthouje one who belonged to Angom clan was catching fish by the time. On seeing the marching warriors of Seloi Langmai, Kadem pretended to be dead by smearing rotten fish on his body. While the Seloi Langmais thought that the fisherman was dead and they decided to chop off his head on their way back. Then they crossed the stream, Kadem immediately ran towards the
palace and he reported the ill treatment of Seloi Langmais and their military expeditions. When the king heard the news, he thought that the Seloi Langmais should inform him for passing through his principality. He made preparation to teach a lesson on the intruder and was waiting at the source of Naga stream. The Seloi Langmais returned from their successful expedition. The Ningthouja forces ambushed the returning group on all a sudden and killed nearly all of them. Only 10 (ten) Seloi Langmais escaped from the place and reached their village. From that day the place came to be known as Lairou Tara Tangakonching. The king and his men returned with their success.

On the other hand, the ten Seloi Langmais who escaped, reached their village and narrated the incident of their defeat. On hearing the unfortunate news, they did not lose time and decided to attack the Ningthouja prince Yoi Khunjaoba, the son of Ura Konthouba who was living with his wife Pitanga Liklu Louthibli in the village. They demanded from Pitanga the life of her husband as a revenge against his father Ura Konthouba. But Pitanga very skillfully helped her husband to escape from the


29 Ibid.
danger and Naethingkhong escaped narrowly from there. The Langmais followed his flight but could do nothing to him.

With the advice of his wife, Naethingkhong instead of going to his father's place went straight to Khuman principality where Aton Punshiba Yumoiba was ruling. Naethingkhong took asylum in Khuman principality. He remained in the Khuman principality for sometime and married Kherunghangi, the Khuman princess.

Naethingkhong went to Moirang for a grand ceremonial feast for the conservation of the Bamboo plants with his father-in-law, the Khuman king. At Moirang too, king Sana Lakhawa gave the hand of his daughter, Namun Chaobi to Naethingkhong. Thus, Naethingkhong married two wives after he left his first wife, Pitang. He lived for sometime with his two wives in the Khuman principality.

As the days passed by, king Ura Konthouba too became old. Knowing the situation Adon Punshiba Yumoiba planned to instruct his son-in-law in state craft. He advised him to go to the Luwang Makubi hill to learn the art of statecraft from Hongnen, the long-lived Luwang chief. Thus Naethingkhong with his two wives, some followers, cattles and with many things reached at Luwang principality for the purpose and stayed there.

In the meantime, king Ura Konthouba died in 658.
Even though Konthouba had another three sons, they had no personality to be a king.\textsuperscript{30} Naethingkhong was the only son to have the qualities of king out of four sons. But during the time of their father’s death Naethingkhong was in Luwang principality and it was a nice time for the Seloi Langmais or the Angoms to occupy the Kangla as they were ever awaiting a chance to revenge. According to Cheitharol Kumbaba there was a interregnum of five years after the death of Ura Konthouba.\textsuperscript{31} According to R.K. Jhalsejit Singh after the death of the old king the Angoms over ran the Ningthouja kingdom for five years.\textsuperscript{32}

Naethingkhong ascended the throne in 663 A.D. At the very outset he invaded the Leijing hill on the west where the Mangang tribes inhabited. He defeated the Mangang tribes and entitled him Mangangamba (the victor of Mangang). There he defeated Konkhucha Atengba, the chief of Mangang. After this defeat the Mangangs were absorbed into the Ningthouja clan. Naethingkhong and his men now turned their attention towards Thanga Kambong. The fight occurred near the house of


\textsuperscript{31} Cheitharol Kumbaba, p.3.

\textsuperscript{32} A Short history of Manipur, p. 47.
Nongmainu Soraton of Thanga Kambong. W.I. Singh thinks that Nongmainu Soraton belonged to the Langmai tribe. This time too, Naethingkhong defeated all the priests and priestesses, wealthy men and women, brewers of wine, both men and women.

FOREIGN RELATION

Since the reign of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, we could not find any relation with the foreigners. It was the first time for the foreign relation of the Meiteis with Shans, that Samlong, the prince of Pong, brother of Pong king Sukanpha came to Manipur after his conquest of Pasha (Bengal) and stayed at Pong Ingkhol (homestead of Pong). The date and manner of Samlung’s sojourn in Manipur in 1215 A.D. and W. McCulloch thought that it was in 777 A.D. In a text dealing with the Shan entry in Manipur, Sorarel Macha Khunkumba and Cheitharol Kumbaba mentioned that Samlung came out from Pasha in 698 A.D. But another source mentions that Kolofeng, the prince of Nanchoa reached at Manipur in 756 A.D. from the western hill sides. Thus, in the conclusion, the coming of

33 Cheitharol Kumbaba, p.3.

34 P. Gogoi, The Tai and Tai Kingdom, 1968, p.158.
Samlung or Kolofeng gave some indication to the establishment of the relation of Manipur with the Shan states.

King Naethingkhong for the convenience of his administration, established many offices and reconstructed the structures of the old offices. He ordered the old officers to attend the Ahallup and new officers to the Naharup. Thus he constructed three Loishangs (Departments) for the Keirungbas. During his time many new offices were introduced. Thus Naethingkhong made a well administrative system.

Naethingkhong lived with his nine wives and Khayoirol Keirunghanbi was the chief queen. He made many sons. During his old age he spent most of his time to the meditation of God.

KHONCTEKCHA

Khongtekcha Yorenba was the son of Naethingkhong. He ascended the throne in 763 A.D. During his time, the Moirang invaded the Ningthouja kingdom. The chief of the invaders was Gunu Seng Raja who was captured by Khongtekcha. The number of the beheaded warriors of Moirang

35 Cheitharol Kumbaba, p.3.
were 63 warriors according to Cheitherol Kumbaba and 763 soldiers according to Ningthourol Lambuba respectively.\textsuperscript{37}

Thus, the invaders were completely defeated by King Khongtekcha.

He was interested in hunting. He and 64 nobles known as Phandous went hunting at Longja Loupengphai. One incident happened that 63 nobles out of 64 were drowned into the water and only one who was holding a spike survived and his lineage came to be known as Longjam (Long means spike in Meitei vocabulary).

A copper plate of King Khongtekcha was discovered by W. Yumjao Singh in 1932 A.D. The copper plates inscriptions were published in the report on the Archaeological studies in Manipur, Bulletin No.1 in 1935 by W. Yumjao Singh.\textsuperscript{38} These plates were collected from Phayeng village in west Imphal. The plates deal with the religion and religious worship. According to these plates King Khongtekcha was a worshipper of both Shiva and Durga. There were also certain references to God Hari and 363 other gods. A reference has also been made to 89 kings of Manipur and certain prescriptions were also given which

\textsuperscript{37} W.I. Singh, op.cit.; p. 548.

\textsuperscript{38} W. Yumjao Singh, Archaeological Studies in Manipur Bulletin No.1. 1935.
used to be used in worshipping Shiva and Durga. The inscription further assures that any person who worships Shiva and Durga in accordance with the rites prescribed in the plates will be immortalized.

The Phayeng copper plates are regarded as the oldest dated inscription using the archaic Manipuri script. These plates established the antiquity of the Meitei script up to 8th century A.D. According to W. Yumjao Singh, this is Saka Era and thus confirming the use of Saka Era in Manipur at the time of its issue. According to the plates, king Khongtekcha Yoirenba was ruling in Manipur in the year 721 Sak (i.e. 799 A.D.) but according to Cheitharol Kumbaba the regnal year of the king Khongtekcha was 763 A.D. Thus there is a difference of 26 years between the epigraphic date and the date of the chronicle. But here R.K. Jhalajit opines that instead of the use of Sakabda it should be Samvat, Samvat era began in February 27 B.C. So Samvat will mean 764 A.D. roughly.

Regarding the authenticity of the plates there is a controversy. Many scholars doubt the authenticity of these plates. 39 Soon after Yumjao's publication of the text of inscription it was widely studied. Recently,

39 Based on Gangmumei Kabui's, A Note of Phayeng Copper Plates of king Khongtekcha, Cultural flow, Imphal 1972, Vol. II.
there was a proposal to check the authenticity of the plates by chemical analysis. But the plates could not be traced out. But W. Yumjao Singh writes, "The manuscript professes to have been of the time of King Khongtekcha of the 8th century A.D. But from the shape of the letters used as well as its language it cannot in spite of the fact that in it there is a passage to show that the book was buried under the ground by that king to be taken out by some fortunate person afterwards positively, asserted that the plates were much older than the century."

According to Gangmumei Kabui "some Sanskrit words were also used in this inscription like, Rasayana, Dharma, Purana, Puspe Mahamanic. It is doubted if such Sanskrit words were used by the writers of 8th century in Manipur. Mention of Hari implies the worship of Vishnu in 8th century. Vaisnavism did not become a state religion of the king of Manipur who did not embrace Vaisnavism or Hinduism before 18th century. The royal chronicle also does not corroborate the regnal year of King Khongtekcha given by the inscription. Though such misgivings are always associated with excavated inscriptions these plates have given us certain valuable information regarding the social, political and religious history of Manipur."  

40 W. Yumjao Singh, op. cit.  
KEIRENCHA AND YARABA

After an interregnum of 11 years Keirencha ascended the throne in 784 A.D. There has been no change in the political condition of the kingdom and no much remarkable account was found. He married Loichangambi of Arambam lineage of Luwang, daughter of Luwang Hanmoiba. He reigned only 15 years succeeded by Yaraba in 799 A.D. Yaraba proceeded to the Koubru hill ranges. He was a good archer and reigned for 23 years.42

AYANGBA

Ayangba succeeded his father in 821 A.D.43 The former name of Ayangba was Sarichongba and his popular or common name Ayangba was entitled only after his success over the Khuman clan. The conflict between the Khuman and the Ningthouja was recorded for the first time in the history of Manipur.

NINGTHOUJA – KHUMAN CONFLICT

Like his predecessor, Ayangba was also interested in hunting. One day Ayangba with some followers went on

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42 Cheitharol Kumbaba, p. 4.
43 Ibid.
hunting to Thoubal at Moichaching and a deer was hunted by the spear of Sarichongba. The wounded animal escaped into the Khuan territory. The king's party followed the animal. But the Khumans obstructed their hunting and regarded it as a violation to their territory. Thus it became the cause of the Ningthouja Khuman conflict. Ayangba took off the animal and caught many Khuman people.

During the reign of king Ayangba one earth bund was constructed on the eastern side of the capital. The name of the earth bund was called Ayangpalli after his name.

NINGTHOUCHENG AND CHENGLEI IPAN LANTHABA

Ningthoucheng became king after his father Ayangba in 910 A.D. His reign was comparatively uneventful.

Thingbai Ahanba popularly known as Chenglei Ipan Lanthaba succeeded his father in 947 A.D. During his time there was a conflict between the Ningthoujas and the Luwangs. He defeated the Luwangs who came on a boat on the Luwangyi, a small stream in the west of Imphal. Since his defeat the Luwangs were brought under the subjugation of the Ningthouja.

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44 Cheitharol Kumbaba, p.4.
45 Gangmumei Kabui, op.cit.
KEIPHABA

Yanglou Keiphaba son of Ningthoucheang ascended the throne in 959 A.D. 46 According to the royal chronicle Ningthourol Lambuba, the name Yanglou Keiphaba was named after the event of his success in catching of six tigers at Langthan and his earlier name was Khamlang Atonba. A new design of embroidery on the women’s Phanek Phibal (burder of a kind of women’s garment) was introduced. This was called Khoi Mayek (design of bee).

IRENGBA

Irengba, the eldest son of Keiphaba succeeded the father in 984 A.D. 47 He made an expedition towards Moirang at Ithai Punemching. He defeated Kege Moirang Kamba. Haorok Kamba Sendrang Kamba. He brought 10 Moirang warriors as war captives. In the south Irengba raided the Khuman territory at Taknakha. He defeated the Khumans and also brought some prisoners from there. Thus Irengba defeated both the independent principalities, Moirang and Khuman. It shows the Ningthouja’s power over other principalities.

47 Cheitharol Kumbaba, p.4.
Irengba as a king, was very much meticulous about his dress. He wanted new style of garments, ornaments and costumes. He put on Ningkham phi, inner garments worn in the best style, bangles, earings made of gold. He was a high thinking person and he spent his old age in devotion to learning.

Even though Irengba fought with Khuman, he married a Khuman lady called Tamheibi, the daughter of Nongyai Tengolhanba, the chief of Khuman. He reigned for 90 years.