

Origin, growth and fall of the Moirang principality in South Manipur Valley

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From the very ancient times, there were many tribes settled in Manipur, but during the historical period there were seven clans known as 'Salai'. They were Ningthouja, Angoms, Khuman, Luwang, Moirang, Khaba-Nganba, and Cheglei Sarang Leishanths, and the other principalities like Angom, Khuman, the Luwang and Moirang were situated in different areas of Manipur. These different principalities were in collision from time to time with each other before they were absorbed into the Ningthouja principality. The Moirang principality was one of the most powerful principalities which were engaged in the struggle with the Ningthouja. They ruled and established a firm administration in the southern part of Manipur around the Loktak Lake.

Origin

The origin of Moirang is given in different texts which record that their progenitor Urelhalba or Nganngoi Tanou Hingel was entitled as Divine Thangjing Koirenlai, and his consort was Leinung Yuchakha chanu who was given the epithet of Koirenlai Leima Ngangshabi. According to Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (royal chronicle of Moirang), Thangjing is depicted to be an adventurer who established his abode over the Moirang principality and the adjoining areas. It records that he came down from the northern sky and settled in the Thangjing hill for the first time from there he came down to the plain of the villages like Ngangkha and Khuyol in Moirang region. Thangjing intended to settle in the plain. Accordingly he raised up the valley and plains of Moirang from the lake bed of Loktak. Moirang is an etymological blending of the words "Mongba-Iranyai", Mongba means house,

Iranyai means a home or family. Mongba and Iranyai were blended (Mongba + Iranyai = Moi+Rang = Moirang).

Geographical extent of Moirang.

The traditional extent of the Moirang principality included Ningthoukhong, Loktak lake, Thanga islat, the Manipur river also known as Turel Achouba, Pumlen lake, Leimatak basin. Traditionally proper Moirang had eight sectors (Leikais)- Ngangkha, Khuyon, Nganglou, Khambi, Okchine, Hega, Chenglei and Yaoshu. The capital of Moirang was situated in several places in course of their history. Perhaps originally the capital of Moirang was at Thangjing hill, then it was at Ngangkha where Thangjing was installed as the King. Later the capital was shifted at Moirang kangla proper.

According to the geneology of Moirang there were 50 rulers in Moirang. The Kingship of Moirang was started from the time of Iwang Puriklai Ngangningshing. but the rules were divided into two categories i.e. divine rulers and historical rulers. Upto seventh ruler from Ngangningshing they regarded as divine kings and they appear to be the ancestors of the ruling family of Moirang.

The actual founder of the Moirang principality was Phang-Phang Atengpa, the ninth ruler from Thangjing. His date as suggested by the Moirang scholars in 52 B.C. to 28 A.D. But it is doubtful. He tried to consolidate various ethnic groups by bringing them under his dominion. His successor Narong Lairisupa introduced the administration of justice in Moirang. Moirang Ningnhoural Lambuba mentions that during the time of Sunuchariklel Atengpa Moirang established a good rapport with the Maibang. It further mentions that Maibang were the inhabitants of land to the west of Moirang. He opened a jungle footpath to Maibang and carried on barter trade using elephants.

From early times Moirang had tried to consolidate the principality. One of the important achieve-

ments was the destruction of the Phalteks of the Luwang clan established at Khuroi Haora Lamtang-tong during the time of Ura Kundaba, which made to expand Moirang upto Khuroi Haora Lamlangtong (Present Bishenpor) on the north. Moirang too tried to aggrandise themselves by making matrimonial alliance with other principalities. Princess Namul Kangbi daughter of King Sana Rakuwa was given in marriage to Meitei prince Naothingkhong who became the king of Meitei principality in 663 A. D.

The rulers of Moirang not only dealt with the petty hill villages for the consolidation, they also began to fight with the other principalities like the Khumal, Heiremkhunjan etc. It seems that almost at the areas extending on the right bank of the Manipur river (Tural Achouba) and the Loktak lake from present Bishenpur to the modern Sugunu town was overrun by the Moirang and several hill villages on the southern side of the valley were their tributaries.

At about the 13th century the political condition of Moirang reached its Zenith. It became one of the most powerful rival against the neighbouring principalities like the Khumal principality and the Meitei principality. The ruler Sangton Leinaotaba conquered Tumu in the east. He was killed by the Khumals at battle on Ikop lake. Puriklai Songlen Lanthaba succeeded his father. He always thought about the revenge over the Khumals for the murder of his father. During his time the Khumal ruler Aton Punshiba was trying to celebrate the annual ceremony at Karong which was within the jurisdiction of Moirang. On hearing the news, the Moirang ruler Songlen Lanthaba took action to avenge the death of his father. So the Moirang advanced as far as Karang just near Haoicheng pantoya and defeated the Khumals. A few years later, the Shan of Kabaw valley invaded Manipur during the time of Khumomba (1263-1278 A.D.) of Meitei

and encamped at Ikop the area of the Khumals. Aton Punshiba invited the rulers of the Meitei Khumomba and Songlen Lanthaba of Moirang for their help. The joint army of Khuman, Meitei and Moriang defeated the Shan and drove them out. Songlen Lanthaba won the title of Loichangamba from this battle and erected a Senpi-Pung, in memory of the victory over the Senpi or the Shans.

The next ruler of Songlen Lanthaba was Yiwang Puriklai Chingkhue Telheiba. He was a powerful ruler. It is believed that during his reign the epic of Khamba-Thoibi, dealing the love story of princess Thoibi, the beautiful daughter of Chingkhue Yaima Telheiba, the younger brother of Chingkhue Telheiba and Khumal Khamba, the son of Puremba of the nobles in the court of Moirang.

A turning point in the history of Moirang began after Yiwang Puriklai Chingkhue Telheiba. During the time of Yiwang Puriklai Punshi Khu Chanba the Tripuris invaded Moirang. When he was overturned by the Thongnang Asikha, his last son Khelei Pamba challenged the Tripuri leader in a duel combat within a circumference by giving the condition that the duelist was not allowed to fight beyond the line of the circumference and if so he should surrender to the loser. Thus Khelei Pamba won the title of Leiyi Asikha and saved the people of Moirang.

The next ruler Shanamongba was a contemporary of Meitei King Punshiba (1404-1432). According to Lammitton, (a text of the Meiteis) Sanahongba invited Punshiba to attend a royal bamboo plantation ceremony at Moirang. Punshiba attended the ceremony. But in course of conversation, Punshiba in his unguarded moment, made an observation that Moirang was a tributary of the Meitie Kingdom. Moirang Sanahongba took offence at the undeserving insult and assassinated the Meitei King in 1432 A.D. Punshiba's son Ningthoukhomba invaded Moirang

in the same year. He killed Sanahongba and conquered the Moirang principality.

After Sanahongba, there was a disordered in Moirang. His eldest son Khoncheng Chouba organised his army to avenge the Meitei for the destruction of the Moirang and to restore independence and autonomy of his principality. They attacked the Meitei and were about to succeed in capturing the capital of the Meitei but were defeated by the effort of a courageous Meitei warrior Laitonchampa. Khoncheng Chouba escaped for his life to Cachar. This was the last battle of independence of the Moirangs. Since then, they became the tributary vassals of the Meitei.

The genealogies recorded in different chronicles of Moirang give the following list of rulers in Moirang.

Legendary and mythical

1. Ngangningsing
2. Hamsha
3. Phang Liklai
4. Yoiba
5. Narong
6. Mayamba
7. Sunucha

Historical and Independent Rulers.

1. Fang Fang Ponglenhanba
2. Iwang Telheiba
3. Laiphangcheng
4. Ura Ngangoiba
5. San Rakhwa
6. Laiyu Punshiba
7. Tusemba
8. Thangwai Kongding
9. Thingi Nachaoba

10. Nungnang Tomba
11. Khokkhei Lanthaba
12. Ura Kongyamba
13. Thiyang Michaoba
14. Kokwa Nunghuirang
15. Iwang Charanba
16. Thanga Ifen
17. Shanglot Khuba
18. Laichingkhu
19. Mashenba
20. Koirenba
21. Kaba Purang
22. Ithai Kairemba
23. Shanglel Leinaoba
24. Loicha Ngamba
25. Chingkhu Telheiba
26. Punshiba
27. Khongjomba
28. Yoirenba
29. Punshi Khurelchanba
30. Sanahongba (1381-1432)
Interregnum (1432-1456) 24 years
31. Khonjang Chaiba (1456-1475)
32. Nanba Sharaba (1475-1514)
33. Haocharang Lanthaba (1514-1557)
34. Kharoi Nai Telheiba (1557-1597)
35. Amchi Lanthaba (1597-1617)
36. Chingtareng Leishanba (1617-1649)
37. Malang Taibi Hamba (1649-1682)
38. Khokkhei Lalyamba (1682-1713)
39. Khorl Shangloi Nan (1713-1732)
Interregnum
41. Wayenba (1773-1781)
42. Nameirakpam Medan Singh (1781-1787)
43. Kongkhamcha Kriti (1787-1792)
44. Singjamba (1792-1794)
45. Ramakanta (1794-1802)
46. Amomcha chaiba (1802-1816)
47. Dharmo Singh (1816-1828)
48. Moirangthem Surya (1828-1841)
49. Aheibanba Tomba (1841-1862)
Interregnum (1862-1882)

50. Thongbiya Khagokpa (1882-1888)
51. Sanachangba (1888) six months
Interregnum (1888-1892)
Under the British
52. Moirangthemcha Ramananda (1892-1927).

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