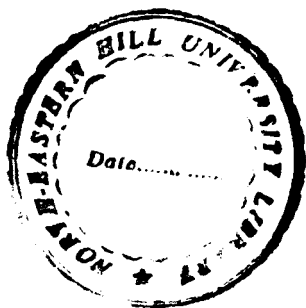


**PROCEEDINGS OF
NORTH EAST INDIA
HISTORY ASSOCIATION**



**TWENTY SIXTH SESSION
KOKRAJHAR CAMPUS, GAUHATI UNIVERSITY
KOKRAJHAR
2005**

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Preface

The Twenty sixth Annual Conference of the NEIHA was hosted by the Kokrajhar Campus, Gauhati University at Kokrajhar from 24th to 26th November, 2005. Sri Emmanuel Mushahary, President of the reception Committee welcomed the guests and delegates in the inaugural function, and Sri Hagrama Mahilary, Chief B.T.C., addressed the gathering as the Chief Guest. The 26th Session was inaugurated by Dr. R.N. Mushahary. The three days of the Conference was very well attended by historians and other social scientists from different parts of the region and also from other parts of the country and the academic sessions, the most important part of the Annual conference of NEIHA, saw the active participation of all NEIHA members present. We would like to record our thanks to the Joint Registrar, Kokrajhar Campus, Gauhati University for having hosted the Twenty Sixth Session of NEIHA and also our very sincere thanks to Dr. Sekhar Brahma, the Local Secretary, and his colleagues and students who worked untiringly to make the session a success.

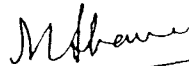
This Volume is a collection of the papers presented in the various academic panels of the XXVIth Session and also the proceedings of the business meetings of the session.

The Association is grateful to the Indian Council of Historical Research for the financial support advanced towards the publication of the Proceedings volume. Here we would again like to remind the esteemed members of NEIHA that they should take care to see that their papers follow the NEIHA style of referencing and also to ensure that the revised papers reach us within the last day announced in the business session. Without this co-operation from the members the work of the Editorial Board gets held up and it also becomes difficult to meet the deadlines of the press. It was mainly for these reasons and also of course for the considered opinion of the Panel Chairpersons, whose comments on every paper were clearly recorded and the deliberations of the Editorial Board, that a number of papers had to be abstracted or listed. The task of editing, proof reading etc. of such a large number of papers within a very limited period is very time consuming and we can do the work to the satisfaction of all NEIHA members only with the co-operation of all the paper presenters.

This volume also includes the papers which were presented in the symposium on "**Methods of Historical Research**" that was held during the XXVIth Session as per the decision in NEHA that the year when there are no Endowment Lectures to be organized a symposium on some topic of historical significance would be organized.

Finally I would like to say a very special word of thanks to the members of the Editorial Board, Prof. J. B. Bhattacharjee, Prof. Mignonette Momin and Prof. D.R.Syiemlieh who made my work much lighter by giving a lot of their time to sit through the Editorial Board meetings to decide on the status of the papers and not only editing the papers but also helping out with a lot of the proof reading of the papers. I would also like to thank Mr. Pradeep Shaha and his staff of Modern Offset for their interest in the work and getting the volume ready in time for release in the 27th session.

Shillong
10th August, 2006



(Manorama Sharma)

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Muslim Revivalism in Manipur

Salam Irene

The Illustrated Oxford Dictionary defines Revivalism as a belief in, or promotion of religious fervour. The New Webster's International Encyclopaedia explains it as "Revivalism in Religion, emphasis on personal experience, and salvation of the soul. This form of worship is often characterised by emotionally charged gospel preaching that is extemporaneous, and requires audience participation. Revivalism began in Europe in the 1700's and spread quickly to North America in a series of "Great Awakenings. Prayer meetings outdoor services often called camp meetings and tent meetings or chautauquas, were, practiced widely in the 1800's and early 1900's much less so today. Itinerant preachers would travel from town to town with their entourages, set up tents, and exhort congregations to receive eternal salvation for their souls. Today, revivalism is practiced primarily by organised, denominational churches". This description may be applied to the movement for Islamic Revivalism in Manipur.

In Manipur, there has been a gradual disenchantment and seclusion of the Muslims from the mainstream, which led to community consciousness and a search for a Muslim or Islamic identity. However this phenomenon is applicable to all Indian Muslims. Syed Shahabuddin wrote, The real threat today is not to Islam but to Islamic identity, the real struggle is to protect it Neither bread nor physical security but religious identity shall finally and fundamentally determine the Muslim view of the Indian State, and the manner of their Association and the degree of the participation.¹

Muslims constitute 6.9% of the total population of Manipur and mainly inhabit the four valley districts. They are generally rural based, although with fragmentation of land holdings and the rise of nuclear families, many rural Muslims have migrated to Imphal in search of a livelihood. These Muslims mainly work in the unorganised sector and their earnings are meagre.

Muslims in Manipur known as Pangals, for a long period emphasised the importance of religious learning, and neglected modern education until

the 1970's. They perceived education as inculcation of knowledge that concerns with their faith only² Even before the disintegration of the Mughal Empire, Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi, known as a mujaddid declared "If the soul goes wrong, the whole body goes wrong". And Shah Waliullah exhorted the community to realize their importance and to set the social-political system in order.³

Prior to the growth of community consciousness and assertion of Muslim identity in Manipur a movement was initiated by the Dar-ul-Uloom at Deoband in 1867, led by Maulana Muhammad Qasim and Maulana Rashid Ahmad. A formal educational establishment came into being equipped with class rooms, a central library, and a regular system of examinations The objective was to train Ulema who could disseminate and facilitate Islamic learning. It produced an annual report, an innovation in itself, and was followed by the establishment of other institutions in UP, Bihar and Bengal. The Wahabi Movement was a politico-religious movement with the objective of ridding India of the British, simultaneously restoring Islam to its pristine purity. Mirza Gulam Ahmad (1839-1908) also established an active missionary body with branches in many parts of the world.⁴

In Manipur, the Muslims known as Pangals are Sunnis, but they have adopted Meiteilon as their mother tongue, and Muslim women wear 'phanek' as Meitei women do. Pangals and Meiteis have many common similarities because of aged-old living together, yet they had a separate identity. 'Muslims are historically distinct as part of the Manipuri kingdom that was ruled by ethnic majority Meitei king's.⁵ A special panchayat court sat at Lilong for trial of cases between Muhammadan Manipuris, and they had separate administrative or government departments. The Muhammands of Manipur are according to Brown, the descendants of immigrants from the Surma Valley who married Manipuri women. Their ranks were further swelled by marriages between the female descendants of these people and Manipuris.⁶

Manipur was in the eastern periphery of the Muslim Sultanates and the Mughal Empire in the medieval period, its peaceful environment attracted Muslims saints and teachers. Meitei kings patronised them for the good of Manipur by opening up Manipur to the outside world mainly through Sylhet. Large groups of ethnic Muslims came from Bengal in 1606. Guns were introduced from the Mughal Empire and Muslims were

patronised for manufacturing guns. And wives were given by the king to enable them to live as a noble community and lands were given in abundance, that further enlarged the Muslim population. Nongsamei puya notes that a large number of Muslims were invited by rebel prince Sanongba in 1605-6, who invaded Manipur. The King persuaded the Muslims to take Meitei women as wives and lands were given for settlement and a new office was instituted for them for their convenience.⁷ Muslim settlements continued till Gambhir Singh's time. Muslims were thus slowly indigenised into Manipuri Society.

So right from the time of their advent into Manipur, the Muslims became integrated into the local population, without abandoning their own culture, they harmoniously blended it with the indigenous culture of Manipur. However Islam in Manipur underwent a considerable Meiteization because of socio-cultural compulsions and the marriage of Muslim men with Meitei women. But some Muslim elements also entered into Meitei society. There was free mingling of the sexes. It was only in the first half of the 20 century that a revival of Islam occurred in Manipur with the advent of the Pangal Maulvis.⁸

In the reign of Garib Niwaza (1714-49) Vaishnavism was introduced, and made the state religion of the Manipur Kingdom. The king and all Meiteis after conversion were declared Kshatriyas by caste. Meitei society was completely dominated by the Bengali Brahmans.⁹ A gulf now began to appear between the converts and the non-converts. From Jai Singh's reign inter-dining and inter-marriage between the Pangals and Meiteis ceased, and continued upto the present time. According to Janab Khan, the Pangals were looked down upon as *mlecha*, considered more impure than the hill people, were barred from entering the houses of Vaishnavite Meiteis, anything touched by them was instantly discarded. A wedge appeared in the previous assimilation of the Pangal with the Meitei community, and the Pangals found themselves reduced to a minority community.

Two schools of thought emerged from among the Muslims in Manipur with their own set of modus operandi to set their house in order and to regain their status. The religiously trained Muslims or Ulema represent one group. They believed that the only way to regain their status was by looking inward, identifying wrongs and dealing with them within the framework of the Quran and Hadith. At this time, learned

Muslims from Cachar mid Sylhet came to Manipur as Imams, and found that the Pangal were not well versed in the Islamic creed, Muslim customs and traditions. Moreover, having adopted Meiteilon as their lingua franca, they were unable to read the Quran, available only in the Arabic script. The Ulema believed that strict adherence to the Quran and Hadith would resolve all moral and worldly issues. They emphasized that religion should be the basis of ordering the socio-economic and collective life of the Muslims. The other school, represented by few educated and well-placed Muslims believed in co-operation with other communities, imbibing modern education and through government's initiative and intervention.¹⁰

In order to realise their idealistic goal, the Ulema, mostly graduated from the Madrassas of Delhi, Meerut, Rampur, Shaharanpur, Cachar etc. through the medium of their apex body, Jamiat-Ul-Ulema, branch of the All India Jamiat-Ul-Ulema-i-Hind. The Jamiat started to rejuvenate the true Islamic tradition in Manipur. The Jamait works for the propagation of Islam and its values.

The Ulema performed the necessary function of instructing the faithful in the fundamentals of the Creed, and imbibing in them, the spirit of Islam. The Ulema were exempted from manual work in the- villages. The actual Muslim revival began with the return of Maulvi Ebadullah of Irong and Maulvi Abdul Jalil of Thoubal, after completion of their theological studies at Dacca and Rampur. Most of the Muslims who went to study outside were from villages except for Maulvi Usraao who resided at Imphal. The focus of education and Islamic revivalism centred around the villages, but the Imams performed social and occupational duties besides their religious works. They taught in their homes or village Madrassa and enjoyed great prestige. In the first Madrassa established by Muhammad Ebadullah, children were provided free board and lodge, and education was free. Some students paid a part fee in kind or a total tuition fee in kind. Some children educated here later became Maulvis as for e.g. Abut Halim (Mayang Imphal) and Abdul Qadir (Mayang Imphal). By the year 1931, there were 9 Madrassas.¹¹ In the Madrassas children were taught Persian and Urdu in addition to religious learning. Some Muslims undertook higher studies in government or missionary schools. The Ulema also introduced Islamic dress code, manners and etiquette, life-style, symbols, arts and aesthetics, which forged a Muslim identity among the Muslims in Manipur. Later, many schools and

colleges managed by Muslims made veils a part of the dress code for girls.¹²

One of the most significant contribution of the Jamiat was the establishment of a chain of Madrassas, Islamic seminaries for higher religious studies under their assistance and guidance. The Jamiat serves as the Board for the Madrassas in Manipur. Every Madrassa in Manipur has to take a letter of consent and authorization from the Jamiat, called 'Rajab'. The institutions were managed by the community's collective efforts.¹³ The need was felt for the establishment of a separate religious seminary - it was established at Mayang Imphal - the Mazharul Uloom in 1926-27 by Maulvi Abdul Halim.¹⁴ As was customary, donations in cash and kind (rice bags) were used for the maintenance of the Madrassa. Its curriculum was similar to that of Madrassas outside Manipur.

Another Madrassa Alia was set up in Lilong in 1944. As was customary, education, board and lodge was provided free to the students. The bonds forged in the Madrassa paved the way for future co-operation between Muslims in both religious and secular activities. Although there was a regular examination system, it was rare for a student to fail, as students were diligent and discipline was stern. There were a few designated holidays only, instruction was in Urdu, and the syllabus was similar to the Darul-Uloom of Deoband (UP), the largest Islamic seminary in the Indian subcontinent. Emphasis was placed on the study of jurisprudence, tarrikh, hadith etc. The Madrassa uniform comprised a kurta and lungi or kurta/pajama with a kerchief tied over the head. The Madrassas were affiliated to the Darul-Uloom of Deoband. Students were in fact sent to Deoband and its branches in U.P. for higher studies. Meanwhile, makhtabs were set up in leikais and villages for teaching the reading of the Quran. The Maulvis began to issue Fatwas to regulate the lives of the Pangals, thus providing a boost to Islamic Revivalism. Although teachers enjoyed high esteem, girls were denied education. In 1980, Darul-Uloom, one of the biggest Madrassas in Manipur was established at Lilong also on the lines of Darul-Uloom, Deoband. At present, the Madrassa has four branches and around 800 boarding and non boarding students. The Madrassa also runs a Yatim Khan, (orphan house) at Atoufchong in Lilong, with around 500 inmates. The Madrassa has constituted a body of Ulemas Dar-al-Hta, to issue registered fatwas.¹⁵

In 1985 the Jamia Azizia was established at Kairang Khumidok to impart education to girls. This enabled Muslim girls and women to acquire

religious knowledge and practically apply it in relation to society and culture.

There was a phenomenal growth of Madrassas in Manipur, managed by public subscription and contributions from affluent Muslims. Every year, the Madrassas organise Jalsa, inviting Muslims from far and wide for a charity feast, thereby expressing community solidarity and consciousness. Over the years, Jalsa has become an important socio-religious gathering of the Muslims.¹⁶

Muslims became God fearing and a practice became current, that the Maulvis would lecture on the spiritual and moral ideals of Islam, enabling the Pangals to distinguish between halal and haram.¹⁷

An offshoot of Islamic Revivalism was the formation of an association by the Maulvis with the nomenclature Jamiatul-Ulema, to prescribe the code of conduct, in the first decade of the 20 century. It proffered advice and adjudicated cases between Muslims. Its importance declined in the 1940's mid other such institutions arose. But it was revived in the 1970's and re-established at Babupara Jama Masjid with Maulvi Sayeed. As its Mufti. It published books in the vernacular and widely disseminated the message and teachings of reformist Islam, to women as well.¹⁸

The Tabaligh movement has been popularised in Manipur in recent times by the Ulema and Talbas associated with Darul-Uloom Madrassa. The Madrassa is the Markaz (headquarter) of Tablighi Jammāt. The movement is aimed at creating a sense of community solidarity and religiosity, by exhorting their followers to imbibe the letter and spirit of the Quran and Hadith, and to follow the standards of an ideal life set by the Prophet and his companions and work for the realisation of an Islamic ideal. The Jamaatis roam from village to village preaching these ideals to their fellow brethren. The book *Talimul Islam* was translated into Manipuri and became the Bible of the Tabaligli activists in Manipur. The movement began in the 1970's when Maulana Hussain Ahinad came to Manipur and began a centre for tabaligli at Madrassa Alia. The Jamaatis held ijtimā or a religious conclave annually, to discuss issues relating to their faith, Jamaal and society. Thousands of Muslims from far and wide gathered in these congregations, including renowned Jamaatis - Bujurk from other part of India. The activities of the Tabliqis have broadened and intensified over the years. The initial duration of preaching for a Muslim began with three days in two months, extending to Gfiteen

day Jamaats, and reaching upto forty days. The Jamatis have also displayed concern on social problem.- facing the community, as for example drug use and abuse. Many educated unemployed youth are also involved in Jamah activities. Local tabalighi activities hold weekly meetings. A conference for all Muslims in the North-Eastern States of India was held in 2001 at Haoribi Mayai Leikai and another in 2002 at Mayang Imphal. As a result, Muslims in Manipur have become meticulous and zealous about their spiritual responsibilities, and have abandoned many previously adopted indigenous customs.¹⁹

Manipur Wakf Board constituted in 1938 manages endowments to Masjidi Madrassas, Idgahs, Kabarstans and other properties designated for religious and pioui purposes. Financial assistance is given to needy Muslims.

Finally the Manipur Haj Committee, of 2003, makes all the necessary arrangements for sending Pangals on pilgrimage to Mecca. ²⁰

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