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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOCIO-CULTURAL INSIGHT: THE PANGAL IN PRE COLONIAL MANIPUR

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<i>Article History:</i> Received 17 th June, 2017 Received in revised form 28 th July, 2017 Accepted 04 th August, 2017 Published online 27 th September, 2017	Manipur, which is located strategically in North Eastern part of India, represents a land of immense variety of climate, land-scape, inhabitants, culture and tradition. Known through various names in the region between South Asia and South-East Asia, history records its existence as a Sovereign Asiatic kingdom since ancient time. Known as Kathe to the Burmese, Meklee to the Ahoms, Mooglei to the Cacharies, Cassey to the Shans, the people of this land have undergone several ordeals in the course of its long drawn civilizational history. It is generally accepted that the history of Manipur begins from
Key words:	33/34AD. The coming of Muslim in Manipur began right from the king Khagemba or prior to Khagemba and the continued up to the reign of king Chandrakirti (1850-1886) AD. The Muslims enter
Pangal, Meitei, Society, Culture, Migration, Settlement, Religion.	into Manipur from Bengal not as conquerors, nor as traders or preachers but as prisoners of war, in the year 1606. In course of time Muslim population was strengthened by Muslim immigrants from different parts of India.

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INTRODUCTION

Historically evolved practices over the centuries exhibit unique civilizational trends in Manipur's social-economic and cultural milieu. Confluence and convergence of various cultural crosscurrents vis-à-vis the interactions with the neighbouring civilizations produced social and economy system which included trade and commerce with neighbouring kingdoms. Manipur its literal meaning is the land of gems. In the traditional age of 'Hayi Chak' it was called 'Tilikokton Ahanba' (N. Khelchandra Singh, 1969:2). 'Mira Pokthoklam' is the name in the age of 'Haya Chak' (N. Khelchandra Singh, 1969:2). It is also known as 'Hana Semba Kona Loiba'(N. Khelchandra Singh, 1969:2) in the age of of 'Khuman Langba Chak' and 'Muwa Polli'(N. Khelchandra Singh, 1969:2) in the 'Konna Chak'. Kangleipak, Poireipak and Meitrabak are her other indigenous names (Gangmumei Kabui, 1991:1). According Sanamhi Laikan(Oinam Bhogeswar to Singh,1973:50) the name Manipur was first officially coined during the reign of Garibaniwaz (1709-48). The ancient kingdom of Manipur is a cradle of human civilization and home of various ethnic groups. The people who had been migrated from the East into Manipur in different periods were called 'Nongpok Haram' (Nongpok = East and Haram = Direction *ie* people coming from the eastern side) (Nongpok Haram, MS).

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These groups of people came from the places like Kabo, Senbi (Shan) and Khagi (China) (N. Debendra Singh, 17). Nongpok Haram indicates that these people came to Manipur during the reign of Meitei kings Naothingkhong (663-763)AD and Moramba (1709-1753)AD and assimilated into the social and cultural fabrics of the indigenous people of Manipur(Oinam Ranjit Singh, 2010:102 and N. Debendra Singh, 17). The people who were coming into Manipur through the various ages of historical periods from Tripura, Shyllet, Cachhar, Assam etc were known as Nongchup Harm (Nongchup=West and Haram = Direction)(Oinam Ranjit Singh, 2010:102 and N. Debendra Singh, 17). Indigenous records informed that the Mayangs (outsiders) entered into Manipur during Thingon Likmaba (891AD), the king of Khuman (Khuman Kangleirol, MS). The Mayangs were defeated by the Khuman king and war captive were allowed to settle in a particular place which was named as Mayang Yumpham and later on known as Mayang Imphal (Oinam Ranjit Singh, 2010:102 and N. Debendra Singh, 17).

Literature Review

No serious research based study on the Socio-cultural insight of the Pangal in pre colonial Manipur has yet been made by any scholar by utilizing all the available sources. In fact, some scholars have been brought to light on the subject matter in their respective works. However, still await thorough investigation and treatment within a wide canvas.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology of the study is historical one which is mainly based on primary and secondary sources. The collected data both primary and secondary have been analyzed both and qualitatively whenever necessary. quantitatively Comparative study is also made whenever it is necessary to bring an accurate picture of the subject. The event that led a few hundreds of Muslims to Manipur is of historical significance in the history of Manipur. From the historical account, it is well known that Muslim living in different places are known by different names. In China, Muslim are known as "Hui", in Thailand they are designated as 'Hao' and in southern side of Burma they are called 'Pansi' (Thangjam Subhas Singh and Oinam Ranjit Singh, 2008:284 and R.K. Sanahal Singh, 1983 :17). In the context of Manipur, the word Pangal refers to the Muslim population. In ancient days, Manipuri had pronounced "Ba" as 'Pa'. So, Bangal was pronounced as Pangal (W. Ibohal Singh, 1986:172). Muslim in Manipur are commonly known as Pangal, generally acknowledged as a corrupt or derivative form of Bangal or Bengal. It is said that Pangal to the modern Manipuri means Muslim. But in medieval Manipuri, it means as East Bengali. East Bengal was known to the Manipuri as Bengal but most people pronounced it as Pangal. Any one living in that place (Bangal) or coming from it was called Pangal irrespective of religious profession. Later on only Muslim from Bengal were called Pangal. Still later, Muslim from any part of the world comes to be known as Pangal by the Manipuri, although he had nothing to do with Bengal (R.K. Jhalajit Singh, 1992:13 and Syed Ahmed, 2007:21).

The earliest reference to the coming of Muslim (Pangal) in Manipur is found in the Puyas (Annals) like Sakok Lamlen Ahanba Kangleilangba Pakhangba and (Kh. Chandrashekhar, 1992:10 and Kokngangsana Rajkumar, 1955:2). Muslim began to settle in Manipur during the reign of Mongyamba (1562-1597) AD with the coming of three Musalmans from Sylhet in the middle of sixteen century (Md. Abdur Rahman, 1995:7 and Kheiruddin Khullakpam, 1997: 7). The king conferred on them the clan name Aribam (Th. Subhas Singh, 2007:22). Cheitharol Kumbaba records that the Muslim started to settle in Manipur during the reign of king Khagemba (1597-1652) AD (N. Khelchandra and L. Ibungohal, 1989:3). Nongsamei Puya, Pangal Thorakpa and other literary texts of Manipur mentioned that during the reign of king Khagemba, Sanongba the brother of Khagemba engaged Cacharis along with Muslim forces that were provided by the king of Taraf in Sylhet to attack on the Manipuri. In the ensuing battle, the Manipuri troops defeated the forces led by Sanongba, following which the Cacharis managed to escape while the Muslim troops including their leader Prasena, numbering about a thousand, were made prisoners. According to the Lost Kingdom (Royal Chronicle of Manipur), "In the year Sak 1527 (English era 1605-6) Sanongba came from Cachar side with large number of troops to invade Manipur but Khagemba defeated them and took 1000 captives including their leaders with 30 elephants and 1000 rifles.

He made those captives to settle in Manipur and appointed them to work as bugler, drummer, dhobi, mahut of elephants, syces for horses and other works according to their respective qualities"(L. Joychandra Singh:6). During the reign of king Khunjaoba (1652-1666), seven persons from Makak, South East of Taraf (Sylhet) had came to Manipur. Out of these, 3 (three) were Musalman. During Paikhomba's reign (1666-1697) thirty seven Muslim and another six Muslim from Gujarat entered into Manipur and settled down (O. Bhogeshor and Janab Khan, 1973 and B. Kullachandra and Badaruddin, 1991). Thus the coming of Muslim in Manipur began right from king Khagemba or prior to Khagemba, which continued up to the reign of king Chandrakirti (1850-1886)AD (N. Debendra Singh, 17). The Muslim enter into Manipur in the year 1606 from Bengal not as conquerors, nor as traders or preachers but as prisoners of war (N. Khelchandra and L. Ibungohal, 1989:1). In course of time Muslim population was strengthened by Muslim immigrants from different parts of India. Owing to the recognition of immigrants Muslim's skills and efficiency in different trade and occupation or profession, they were made to settle in the valley of Manipur by offering local girls in marriage, grant of lands and conferring local surname or sub-clan (Yumnak Sagei). M. McCulloh says that 'The Munniporee Mussalman population arose from Munhiporee men having taken wives Mussalman women. This original population was increased by Mussulmans from the west, who came and settled in Munniporee' (M.McCulloh, 1980:14). According to R. Brown, in 1873, the Muslims population in Manipur was 900 families or 4,500 men, women and children (R. Brown, 1975:15) and this number drastically decreased during the seven years devastation in Manipur (1819-1826). Today, the community is officially referred to as Meitei-Pangal. As per a survey done in March 2004, their population figures 2,02,355 (Syed Ahmed, 2007:21). When the Muslim got permanent residence in Manipur, they had emulated the Meitei way of life and adopted traditional method of earning their livelihood in the agrarian economy as the economy of Manipur was basically agrarian. In the early period of its civilizational ontology the mode of cultivation was primitive and production was for local consumption only. In course of time, with the new technique people could produce more food grain than they required for consumption. The extra product could be collected by the king or chief to meet their military and administrative needs.

The surplus could also be made available in particular places which led to the emergence of markets, town and cities. During the reign of king Khagemba, market centers such as Sana Keithel, Kha Keithel, Moirang Keithel, Khuman Keithel, Phaibung Keithel, Chairen Keithel, Namphao Keithel, Konglang Keithel and Andro Keithel were opened(Gangmumei Kabui, 1991:220). When, the agricultural technology was improved with the introduction of transplantation system, which is known as Lingthokpa in Manipuri, by the Muslim immigrants from Bengal enabling to increase production in Manipur. In the transplantation method, the farmer at first had to grow the paddy in a nursery and then transplanted to the field (Oinam Ranjit Singh and E. Nixon Singh, 2007). This method of cultivation was more productive than Punghul and Pamphal. Agricultural technology was improved with the introduction of transplanting system of paddy and plough drawn by the bullock and buffalo by the Muslim peasants in Manipur. This may be regarded as one of the greatest contributions of the Meitei Pangal towards the economic development and progress of the kingdom of Manipur. The Meitei Pangal possessed great skill in agricultural work. Many of these Muslims were given their own sagei e.g. Hawaiinkhol Mayum by the then king of Manipur acknowledging

their expertise in gardening work. By the order of king, they opened a garden called *Ningthem Inkhol* at *Khumidok Heinou Khongnembi* for the cultivation of varieties of fruit and vegetables (Oinam Ranjit Singh, 2010). With the increase of agricultural production the revenue system was systematized. In pre-colonial Manipur all the land in the state belonged to the king however the nobles had utilized them by employing peasants who actually possessed and cultivate the land and pay rent to the state (Gangmumei Kabui, 1991:220 and R. Brown, 1975:11-13). The agricultural lands were classified as *Taonalou, Ningthoulou, Phamlou, Siphailou, Manalou, Brahmins (Lugun-lou), Maharani, Lairou* etc (AA. Howel:9).

From the ancient times down to the 17th century, there was a slow but steady development of technology in Manipur which testified by archaeological findings and historical evidence. The art of spinning, weaving and dying had already been developed. Panthoibi Khongul speaks about spinning and weaving of varieties of cloths(Panthoibi Khogul,MS).King Naothingkhong had innovated coronation costumes such as Leiruthak, Chareiningkham, Phirel Phurit for the king and Leiren Leichao, Kumsheng Phanek and Kabrang Phanek for the queen³⁶. Handicrafts witnessed immense development during the period of Loiyumba (1074-1122)AD. The task of weaving involving as many as thirty-two different designs of cloths was assigned to thirty families. Dyeing in eight different colors based on the color of flowers was assigned to eight families (Ch. Manihar Singh 1983:42-43 and Oinam Ranjit Singh and E. Nixon Singh, 2007:1). The handloom industry was further developed with the introduction of shuttle locally known as Pangandem, probably the fly shuttle might have been introduced in the kingdom by the Muslim immigrants (K. Ruhini Kumar Sharma, 2002:90). Among the Muslim immigrants, there were many skilled weavers who made great contribution to the development of handloom and handicrafts in Manipur. King Khagemba assigned Phisabam Yumnak (subclan or lineage) to those Muslims who were skillful in the art of weaving.

The Manipuri knew the art of pottery making since very early times. The Chakpas are described as the earliest pottery makers of Manipur. TC. Hodon says, "The household utensils consist of earthen pots manufactured for the most part by the Lois of Chairel and Sugunu Brass, copper and bell-metal cooking pots are in common used but are imported from Cachar" (T.C.Hodson, 1989:39). Manipuri potters possessed great skill and produced cooking and other utensils, using metals. The used of wheels for making clay utensils in Manipur was started by the Muslim settlers during king Khagemba. As early as the reign of king Khagemba, Nuriya Shaikh, a Muslim had presented an exquisite mud-pot to the king. In recognition of the potter's skill his clan had been named Phusam (Salam Irene, 2010:128). Muslims are also credited with introducing a wheel made pot called Pun Kangnanbi which later came to be known as Sanabun (Th. Subhas Singh, 2007:123). The immigrant Muslims introduced improved technology of pottery making by using wheels. The people of Manipur had been associated with carpentry works which played an important role in the traditional economy of the land. Khuyaoi Tompok (154-264)AD introduced drum which was used during wartime, dance, music and other social and religious events(N. Khelchandra and L. Ibungohal, 1989:1). Hijan Hirao refers to the making of boat. Carpentry works including boat making, canoes, kangpots, beds, stools,

spinning wheel, shuttle, hookas, other agricultural implements, making of bridges etc were done by carpenters (Hijan Hirao, MS; T.C.Hodson, 1989:33 and N. Ibobi Singh, 1976:120). The Muslim right from the time of their settlement had been used Phundrei (Wooden lathe) for fine polishing of wood. So, Phundrei clan was entrusted to those Muslim who were manufacturing *hookak* stands and necks, and the top of Canopies-paygimaton (Thougal Masil, MS and Konsam Manikchand, 2007:46). A machine for pressing sugarcane called Topo was introduced by the Muslim (Ningthourol Lambuba, MS). Thus the immigrant Muslim played a big role to the enhancement of carpentry work. There is reference to the use of paper in Manipur before the advent of the Muslim. It is said that some merchants of China brought the paper as merchandise or trading goods to Manipur. The Meitei learnt the technology of the typology of the Chinese handmade paper making tradition (B. Kullachandra Sharma, 1999:14).

When the Chinese were in Manipur they had taught the art of making paper to the Manipuri (T.C.Hodson, 1989:10). The migrants Muslim had the knowledge of paper making technique which they had learnt in Bengal before they entered into Manipur. The king of Manipur conferred Chesam clan to those Muslim who introduce the art of manufacturing paper. In the field of craft, the craft works were greatly impacted with the coming of the Muslims in Manipur. As the Muslim rulers of the medieval period had introduced many new technologies in different fields, the Muslims who came to Manipur brought the knowledge of the technologies which they applied and adopted in this land. It is said that the knowledge of gunmaking technology entered Manipur with the coming of Muslim. Mungyamba (1562-1597), the king of Manipur, in his time three gun-maker Muslims came and were allowed to settle in Manipur (Th. Subhas Singh, 2007:136). Among the Muslim soldier, captured during king Khagemba, same soldiers possessed the gun making technology who continued to work the making of gun which increased the stock of guns in the kingdom and enable to meet the requirement of the army (Th. Subhas Singh, 2007:137). When the Muslim settled in Manipur, they used to share a common ecological niche with the Meiteis and married Meitei ladies which brought a reciprocal exchange of cultural information between the Meitei and Meitei Pangal (Oinam Ranjit Singh, Vol.31, No.2:65.). The kings of Manipur and Meitei extended very generous treatment to the new comers by giving wives, lands etc. They (Meitei Pangal) regarded Manipur as their own country of permanent abode from which they did not turn their eyes away. The Muslim (Meitei Pangal) and Meitei lived as one people, there was no hostility or enmity between them and they live unitedly in peace and war time for Manipur.

The Meitei Pangal are the only community in Manipur who speak Meiteilon (Manipuri) as their own language like the Meiteis and take it as their mother tongue. However, with their coming, many Urdu words entered into the Meitei vocabulary such as Chalak (trick), Karbar (business), Dukan (shop), Hapta (week), Dag (mark), Moza (sock), Hinshap (account), Bhaki (credit), Hak (right), Ain (law), Pharak (odd), Khabar (news), Namuna or nomna (model), Darzi (tailor), Dalil (will) etc.(M.A. Rahman, 1983:7-10). The Meitei Pangal followed the Meitei months and weeks in fixing the date of marriage, important function, journey etc. But for fasting (Roza) and Haji (Pilgrimage) they followed Islamic calendar (A. Rahman, 1998:3). As the Meitei, the Manipuri Muslim also used Manipuri proverbs in different way but it carried same meaning and ideas. As for example the Meitei proverb "Loktak Mayaida Thum Thadaba" which the Meitei Pangal says "Thumbida Thum Thadaba" (It is nothing but a drop of salt in the ocean), "Ngaprum Mameida Khujinna Shikpa" (To do at the eleven hour) of the Meiteis says "Luhong Lamdaida Shadanba" by the Meitei Pangal and so on(M.A. Rahman, 1983:7-10). When they got their settlement in Manipur, they had been conferred local surnames (Yumnaks) in indigenous languages (Meiteilon). W.I. Singh stated that the Muslim community in Manipur was allotted family title or Yumnak sagei according to their occupation (W. Ibohal Singh,1986:608). Besides, sub-clan was assigned on the basis of occupation, post, places of settlement etc.

Like the Meetei, Muslim (Meitei Pangal) wore Fanek (Female dress covered from breast to heel) and Khudei (male dress wearing at the waist). Unmarried Manipuri (Meitei) girls wear Fanek at waist and those who are married at breast. T.C. Hodson says, the Pangan (Pangal) women wear faneks, which they fasten under the right breast, while Meitei women fasten this garment under left breast"(T.C.Hodson, 1989:18). *Innaphi* (a cloth which covered the upper part of the abdomen) is the dress of both male and female of the Meetei. Khwangnam, a piece of cloth tide on the Phanek at waist of the Meiteis women also used by the Meitei Pangal women which is a remarkable influence of the Meiteis custom and tradition on the Muslim of Manipur. The Meitei have their own style of house. Certain rules and regulations are also followed for the construction and selection of site of a house or building. They divided the whole plot of land into nine sub-plots as Vulture (Langja Yumpham), Flag (Phiral Yumpham), Smoke (Meikhu Yumpahm), Elephant (Samu Yumpham), Royal site (Sangai Yumpham), Lion (Nongsa Yumpham), Ass (Lolla Yumpham), Dimond (Tampha Yumpham) and Fox (Lamhui Yumpham)(Naoroibam Indramani,1994:44). The house or building was not erected in the sub plots called Langja Yumphal, Phiral Yumpham and Meikhu Yumpham. Houses were facing to the east direction. McCulloch writes, "The dwelling houses of the Munniporees are all of the same form, All the dwelling houses faced to the eastward, in which direction they have a large open verandah. In this Verandah the family sites during the day The bed of the head of family, is placed in what is called the Luplengka, close to the wall on the South side about the middle The daughters usually sleep on North side"(M.McCulloh, 1980:20-21).

The style of houses was introduced by a mythical king named Khooi Ningomba but during the king Khagemba changes were made(T.C.Hodson, 1989:26). The Manipuri Muslim followed the Meitei custom strictly in the selection of site and construction of the house. It is said that as the result of the influence and impact of the Meitei way of life or culture, the Muslim of Manipur built their houses in the same way or style of the Meitei and applied the method of the Meitei to choose the site of dwelling house (A. Rahman, 1998:3) which testified their assimilation into the indigenous culture and tradition. The extreme south west of the house is called Sanathong, which is regarded as sacred place, the abode of Lainingthou Sanamahi. However, in the house of Manipur Muslim, no such compartment is reserved for worship as they have no such deity(A. Rahman, 1998:3). Like the Meitei, the Pangal houses had one Sangoi either in the east or north, one Kei (Granary), one Sangol (stable) and reserved a place called *Phamen* in the south side of the verandah of the house as the seat of honor for the eldest or head of the family (Md. Latif Shaha, 1998:196 and Naoroibam Indramani, 1994:44). Yek is a social exogamous group within which marriage is not permitted in Manipuri society. Yek and Salai are used almost in the same sense. Hence, Yek-Salai is within the degree of prohibited relation of the Meiteis (Gangmumei Kabui, 1991:87). In Manipuri Muslim society no matrimonial alliance is made within the same Sagei as the Meitei. Heijing Kharai Puba or Heijapot Puba, the last process in the preparation of the Meitei marriage is done under the name of Penuka Puba by the Muslim in Manipur. Penuka Puba is similar to that of the Heijapot Puba of the Meitie (A. Rahman, 1998:6). The marriage of the Manipuri Muslim was more or less similar to that of the Meitei. In later days it becomes the combination of Islamic law and Manipuri custom (Quazi Hamid Ali, 1979:29). Meitei Pangal participated in the already existing life of the Manipuri and added to and enriched its culture in all respects, without changing its content or its structure. It formed a component part and became integrated, if not absorbed into the indigenous culture, which in its turn, formed an ingredient of the great culture - a combination of diverse elements, contributed by the different units, each retaining its own shape and colour. Manipuri Muslim benefited immensely from the civilization and cultural heritage of the Meitei. Human existence is based on the noble principle of give and take. In it lies its strength and glory (A. Rahman, 1998:6).

Economically, socially and politically, the Manipuri Muslim got the same privilege as enjoyed by the Meetei and had security in their new home. In Manipur, the king was the absolute head of the state but ten ministers known as Ningthou Pongba Tara assisted him. These Pongba Tara are mentioned in the Kangla Houba(Kangla Houba, MS and N. Khelchadra Singh, 1964:290). King Khagemba appointed Muhamed Shahani, the Muslim leader as one of the Pongba Tara (N. Basanti Devi, 1988:214). Nongsamei Puya states, Barsena Langjinglen and his ten followers were given Manipuri women to wed and then Pangal Loishang (Department) was established as a separate department for administration exclusively for Muslim (Pangla)(O. Bhogeshor and Janab Khan, 1973). In 1606AD, king Khagemba instituted Pangal Loishang (N. Khelchandra and L. Ibungohal, 1989:1). With the coming of Savid Ambia, Savid Abdullah and Khalka Huissain, the Pangal Loishang was enlarged by sub dividing into three sub departments - (a) Religious department (b) Social department and (c) Judicial department (B. Kullachandra and Badaruddin, 1991:2). T.C. Hodson gives the list of departments which were in charge of the affairs relating to the Meitei Pangal as - Pangal Sanglel, Pangal Ingkhol, Pangal Singa Loisang, Pangal Phundrei Loishang, Pangal Kumar, Pangal Mall and Pangal Likli (T.C.Hodson, 1989). The principal officer here is the Kazi, who seemed to have both judicial and executive power. The Manipuri Mohomedans are governed by the Mahomedans law, except Khainaba, Chakthak and Nupi mamal(Salam Irene, 2010:190).

They were also rendered *Lallup* service to the state as the Meitei did. The person liable to duty under the *Lallup* system were the Meiteis, Brahmins and Pangals (T.C.Hodson, 1989:60). All these indicate that the Pangal –socially, economically and politically seems to have been bracketed with the Meitei. The Pangal, like their Meitei counterparts, believe in the existence of local malevolent spirits e.g. *Helois*,

Bhuts etc (Syed Ahmed, 2007:23). In the early stage of their settlement in Manipur, they were not strict followers of Islam which is evidence from the numbers of written records. Dun writes, "*The Muhammadans of this country are very ignorant of their religion*" (E.W. Dun:1975:16). According to McCulloh," *Whole Mussulman population being very ignorant of the creed they profess, is not attended with the inconvenience which it would be amongst a better informed people*" (M.McCulloh, 1980:14-15). R. Brown says, "*they were liberal and unorthodox, because they had no Masjid, and were, for the most part, very ignorant of the religion they profess*" (R. Brown, 1975:15), and this stage may be called semi Islamic period which lasted from the middle of 17th century to the end of 19th century (MD. Ahmad Shah Ali,1994:86).

Conclusion

To conclude, the seed of Islam was sprouted in the soil Manipur with the settlement of Muslim. However, the Meitei Pangal never adopted the conversion policy in Manipur. They neither converted the native population to Islam nor did ever force them to accept their faith. Indeed, Muslim migration to Manipur made not only a far reaching impact in social and economic life of the people of Manipur but also brought a cultural synthesis. The migration of Muslim in Manipur produced drastic positive changes in this Asiatic Kingdom in every aspects of the Manipuri society.

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