



Origin of the Appellation ‘Lamkang’ Tribe of Manipur, North-East India

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Abstract:

The Lamkang tribe of Manipur, North East India is one of the oldest inhabitants in the southern part of present Manipur state. Nevertheless, the tribe’s name, origin, people, culture, etc. are yet to explore to the outside world until today. This research will expound the autochthonous nature of the tribe in that region. Manipur History mentioned their existence and contact with them since the first century A.D. and the tribe’s legend, folklores and oral tradition date back to 4004 BCE. They are called ‘*Ksen*’ people by themselves and neighboring kindred tribe even today. However, etymologically the appellation ‘*Lamkang*’ was believed to be entitled by outsiders probably the Meitei people. In the ensuing generations, the tribe is recorded in the Meitei King’s Chronicles and Government documents as ‘*Lamngang*’ and ‘*Lamgang*’. Later the people called themselves, as ‘*Lamkang*’ tribe today may be because of their phonetic inconvenient faced by the people. Thus, etymological analysis of nomenclature from ‘*Ksen*’ tribe to ‘*Lamkang*’ tribe is highly needed to reconnect their origin, people, culture and history today. Thus, connotation and evolution of the name itself will explicitly inform the people and their history to both the insiders and outsiders.

Keywords: Origin, Appellation, etymology, connotation and evolution

Introduction

The *Ksen* (Lamkang) tribe is no doubt one of the oldest tribes inhabited in the present Manipur State. Outsiders who had contacted them probably prior to the first century A.D. because the Manipur History clearly mentioned their existence in that era given the name appellation ‘*Lamngang*’ or ‘*Lamgang*’ or ‘*Lamkang*’. The word ‘*Ksen*’ means ‘Red’ in *Lamkang* tribe’s dialect. They called themselves as ‘*Red people*’ since time immemorial even today. Otherwise, there is no referable connotation or definition found in the tribe’s dialect as far as the meaning of the word ‘*Lamngang*’ or ‘*Lamgang*’ or ‘*Lamkang*’ is concerned. Ancient documents and later Government documents have recorded the tribe as ‘*Lamngang*’ or ‘*Lamgang*’. Nevertheless, the modern people of the tribe used ‘*Lamkang*’ as the name of the tribe instead of ‘*Lamngang*’

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or '*Lamgang*' conveniently. The usage of '*Lamkang*' in the tribe might be because of the phonetic problem of the people. For instance, the *Lamkang* people have difficulty in phonetic accent between G and K alphabet naturally according to their dialect. There are words like '*Ng*', '*Nge*', '*Ngo*', '*Nga*', '*ngu*', etc and '*Kang*', '*Kong*', '*King*' etc but hardly found words like '*Ngang*', '*Gang*', '*Ging*', '*Geng*' '*Gong*', etc. So the people might have been used the phonetic accent with 'K' sound as '*Lamkang*' in lieu of recorded 'G' phonetic sound hypothetically.

It is believed that etymologically the appellation signifies their original tribe's name interpreted by outsiders to understand meaning of the people and tribe during the first time they contacted with them. The word '*Ksen*' means '*Red*' and '*mii*' means '*People*' so conjoin the words together as '*Ksen+Mii*' means '*Red people*' or '*People of Red*' according to the tribe's dialect. However, when outsiders, probably, the Meitei people contacted them for the first time, they might have enquired of them that who are they? What tribe are they? Whose land is this? Etc. Then hypothetically, the *Ksen* people might have responded to them that they are '*Ksenmii*' means '*Red people*' or '*People of Red*' and this is '*Ksen*' (Red) '*paam*' (Land) together '*Ksen+Paam*' means '*Land of Red people*'. Thus, the outsiders (Meitei) called the Land and People together as '*Lam Angangbasingi*' or '*Lam ngangbagi*' for their interpretation and understanding of that communication. Eventually in the later generations, the name of the tribe happened to be understood as either '*Lamngang*' or '*Lamgang*', it may be due to misreported or mispronunciation of the outsiders and insiders. It is believable that usually for any colonial country and people, the land and resources is more important than the people are or tribe as the main purpose of annexation and colonization is the accumulation of Land and Resources historically.

The commendable facts and history reflected on the tribe's name is that in the olden time they live in a large area of lands where full of flora and fauna and abundant natural resources. Mostly their olden inhabitant geographical areas are in the southern part of present Chandel District of Manipur. That is the reasons why many outsiders had raided many a time the people to plunder the resources and land is not an exaggeration. In the later modern generation, maximum of their olden geographical areas, have illegally been intruded and occupied by the outsiders mainly the Khongjai/Kuki people. In addition to above theory there is also another appellation given by the Meitei's King in the later generation as '*Hiroi-Lamgang*' which means '*Boat-makers*' or '*Boat making People*'. This piece of information has expounded the significant meaning and evolution of the *Lamkang* tribe in the past and present society.



Review of Literature

This research work is done with hurdles to find information about the Origin of the appellation ‘*Lamngang*’ or ‘*Lamgang*’ or ‘*Lamkang*’ tribe of Manipur, North East India. It is because due to the shortage of both primary and secondary data available from insiders and outsiders’ sources. In spite of that, there is also a challenging courage to delve into the area of work. It is believed that this field of research work would be more valuable for the tribe and the people around the world who are yet to explore a bit of the small Lamkang tribe’s origin, people, culture and one of the oldest indigenous tribes of Manipur, North East India. Thorough literatures reviewed for the work has imparted new information from the field as well as finding a probable source from that raw area of research work. This piece of work will pave a new research field for the tribe and it will encourage the younger researchers from both inside and outside of the tribe in future. Most of the available primary and secondary data mentioned briefly about the tribe and people existence in Manipur, North East India. However, it is not written about the origin of the tribe name appellation called ‘*Lamkang*’ and etymology of the word called ‘*Lamkang*’ as far as the research finding is concerned. Therefore, efforts are crucial to investigate and to reconnect the available historical books and other primary documents to reinstate the tribe’s original name from ‘*Ksen*’(Red) to present tribe’s name ‘*Lamngang*’/ ‘*Lamgang*’/ ‘*Lamkang*’.

Research Methodology

This research work has used descriptive and analytical methods approach to investigate the urgent need of the tribe and people in this modern society. Both primary and secondary sources are involved to shape the proposed research work. The primary sources such as interview, the questionnaire, survey, observation etc., are also applied to relate relevant data of outsiders and insiders of the past and present writers.

Scope

This research work is purely to study origin of the appellation ‘*Lamkang*’ tribe of Manipur, North East India. It is to explore the original tribe’s name ‘*Ksen*’ to ‘*Lamngang*’ or ‘*Lamgang*’ or ‘*Lamkang*’ in the ensuing generations. This work will incorporate different sources from available books and documents to build the concept of transformation title of the tribe from original nomenclature to present appellation of the outsiders. It is not appropriate to describe scope of the research work in terms of the period areas to be covered as it is focused on the particular origin of tribe’s name ‘*Lamkang*’. Thus, the paper analyzed the



data available in the society to explore hypothetically to reconnect probable historical events and facts of the tribe.

Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study on the origin of appellation ‘*Lamngang*’ or ‘*Lamgang*’ or ‘*Lamkang*’ tribe are as follows:

- To delve into original definition and connotation of the appellation tribe’s name ‘*Ksen*’ to ‘*Lamkang*’ in the modern society
- To find a probable historical etymology of appellation of the tribe name in the olden past
- To analyze a significance of the entitled name in the olden past for the modern people and the society
- To reconnect some probable historical accounts of the tribe to frame awareness in present society
- To explore in this modern society about the entitled rich past heritage and fame of the tribe and people

Limitation

There are numerous difficulties found in this research work in view of insufficient data, irrelevant recorded documents and dearth of knowledge of the past evolution of the tribe history related to origin and etymological study. There is also different hypothetical perspectives made on this matter from some insiders with their own finding of study however hard to bring acceptance on it due to certain inaccuracy of retrospection. In spite of that, it is mandatory and need of the people to study some probable theory of the area so that to create more challenging and interesting in the field for future researchers and the people. The tribe is one of the small groups of oldest indigenous community who are inhabited in Manipur, North East India and having a rich land, culture and history. Thus, their historical evolution of people, tradition, attribution etc may explicit and reconnect different unseen enthralling reputation, nature and way of life during those days in present society.

Conclusion

According to research, one of the reasons the Lamkang people, origin, culture and tribe are not known to the other mainland people of the country is because of no proper written documents on the tribe. It has also been learned that the mainland people do not bother about the small tribe like the Lamkang people’s culture,



language, traditions, origin, history etc., as there is no much interest in the field may be due to different reasons of them.

The way that portrayed in the books, documents and records on the Lamkang tribe are not described sufficiently and correctly. Scholars and writers who mentioned about the Lamkang's people, origin, history, culture etc in their books and articles found to be twisted codification. Whereas bigger tribes have more popularity and advantage in view of their populations, cultures, traditions, origin and so on. Today numbers play a vital position and platform to explore their people in different fields like socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-religious life of the country. In this juncture the tribe, people, history and culture are very much in need of exploration to the outsiders.

In this present country scenario of people, larger group of people have more privilege to tell their own history, people, origin and culture in the country because of their bigger number of population and wider participation in different fields. On the other hand, smaller group of people have less privilege and scope to explore and participate in the country may be political, social, cultural, economic and even religious spheres as they have limited place to participate and limited people to undertake this matter in wider areas. All groups of people or tribes of the country should be given opportunity irrespective of their populations so that they may be able to tell their rich socio-cultural, political, historical, origin and religious life to the world in explicit way.

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