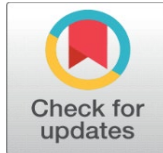


# RONGMEI WOMEN IN MANIPUR: A SOCIO-POLITICAL STUDY

G. Janglung <sup>1</sup>✉

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Political Science Manipur University, India



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## ABSTRACT

The Rongmei women in Manipur are coming up progressively in the socio-Political spheres. The roles of both men and women are compositely important but the traditional custom has not given women the equal rights in the Rongmei society. Women are confined to the household jobs that's impacted the thinking and attitude of man toward women. Women themselves are compromised to the state of affairs. They appear vulnerable and soft in the presence of men. Such situation affects their status to a great extent. They have no direct access to public spheres and they are not encouraged to participate in politics or admirative related activities and in the court of justice in the village Pei or area level. This ancient system of men dominated society concerning the Rongmei Naga tribe is still prevalent without change.

**Keywords:** Customary Laws, Socio-Politics, Indigenous

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Rongmei is a naga tribe with rich cultures heritages and one of the indigenous ethnic groups in the north east India, living in states Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. Tamenglong and Longmai (Noney) districts of Manipur state is the principal home of the Rongmei

According to Namthiubuiyang Pamei, on his book, the trial from Makuilongdi (p-1-3) said that, Rongmei naga are one of the major indigenous hill tribes in the North east India. Originally, they were living in compact areas but when the British took controlled the entire homeland in the 18th century they were placed in the three states in the north East India.

The word "Rongmei" is a combination of two words "RONG/RUANG" meaning "south" and "MEI" Meaning "PEOPLE", respectively. Thus, Rongmei stands for the southerners. The ancestral home of the Rongmei lies in the mountains ranges in the south – western part of the Manipur including churachanpur and Tamenglong District of Manipur and adjacent mountainous areas of Nagaland and Assam.

Rongmei tribe gazette published by the government of India on 12th January 2012 enlisted the "Rongmei" and "kabui" among the other entities such as zeme, Liangmei, Inpui and kacha Naga which have been popularly knowns Zeliangrong since 1947 in the dearly accepted social acknowledgment. The name zeliangrong has been reject tribal nomenclature for the last 78 years with zealous assertion in the pages of history combining the unite of zeme, liangmei, Rongmei Inpui/puimei, the kabui and Rongmei speak same dialect while the zeme liangmei and inpui/ puimei

are not distinct but with little variation in the spoken words. This consanguineous units have now been recognized separately zeme, liangmei, puimei and kacha Naga in India and Manipur, Zeme in Assam and zeliang in Nagaland.

Rongmei tribe have well-coordinated social system since from time immemorial, they have tradition and custom laws, its were mostly adhered by the society affectively. The tradition and custom were based on the myth and belief, the consequences of the disobeying such laws of traditions and custom was met with heavy penalties, even to extend of being ostracized from the village or even death. In the Rongmei society, both man and women play a very important role in every factor, however women were no given equal rights, and women have no direct access to the public sphere.

According to Dr. Benjamin Gangmei, on his book, "The need of holistic approach to Rongmei women issues "Rongmei society is patriarchal and its is not free from common sexist problem. The problem is reflected by the exclusion of women in of different decision-making process of different institution in sharing socio-economics right between son and daughter. In the Rongmei society preference in the past sexism was accepted as the outcome of the natural order. Rongmei women did hardly raise their voice or speak up against sexist practices in the Rongmei society. The study will focus on the socio- economic, cultures and political aspects of women belonging to the Rongmei tribe from the traditional society to the present day.

## 1.2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE STUDY:

- To examine the customary laws of the Rongmei Naga tribe with regard to women.
- To examine the role of women in the socio-cultural life of the Rongmei.
- To examine the political participation of the Rongmei women concerning the Rongmei women.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The present study is intended to be a historical, descriptive, exploratory and analytical venture. Both primary and secondary sources shall be used in the work. The primary sources shall include the myths legends folk tales, oral tradition interview with informed person, like village Headmen, elder's person Gurus & Pandits person of socio- political culture and socio- cultures expertise and individual proficient in customary laws and traditional practices. ETC. A question scheduled shall also be used for the purposes. The secondary work done by other relating to the subject matter of the proposed books articles, journals, seminar paper proceeding of the seminar, conference, workshops writing in newspaper, souvenir etc.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Rongmei society has remain patriarchal from very beginning with women excluded from village council, religion leaders, sports and any political decision-making bodies. this access to justice and formal political power no limited as women are not allowed in to the traditional village administration and tribal council. Women are only to brought in if connected to a dispute as witnesses. The tradition and custom of Rongmei were adhered by the society affectively, both man and women play a very important roles in the society however women are not given equal right, women have no direct access to the public sphere. Rongmei women exert influence indirectly, particularly through their husband and with household lineage affair. Rongmei women spearhead in socio- economics duties managing home gardening, livestock household chorus and income generation effort. yet they often lack educational opportunities face poor nutrition's and carry health burdens. Sometime women face stigma in divorce, widowhood or non-conforming behaviour. A male adulterer may escape social punishment, while women face severs societal ostracizations.

According to Pr. Dimchui, who studies the customary land use pattern of the tribals in Manipur a case study of the Zeliangrong community in Tamenglong District, said that, The Rongmei society is joint family was commom and it's led to harmonious family relationship. As custom women have no right to inherited her father properties. The youngest son inherited his father properties. Shelungliu kamei, in her book, " Customary inheritance practice and women among the kabui Naga of Manipur, said, The Rongmei tribe have well-coordinated social system since time immemorial. the villages are the basic unit of the society and social units were kin groups lineage clans. Mary Pamei, on her book, Political status of Rongmei Naga women, said that, in the social roles of women are valued as economics asset in the domestic's sphere but their voice is muted in their social, political and economic domain since women do not participate in politics. Even

today in our society, women have no political controlled in their society. At present, the emergence of the global women empowerments, women positions have brought changes in socio-politics and become active in social activities as compared to men. Women societies are formed in the villages, Churches and in the area levels District and state levels. Some are actively involved in the national and international levels. The women societies or associations have become vital factors for the people in all matters. The Rongmei women organization called "Rongmei Luphuam (RLP), Assam, Manipur and Nagaland headed by Dr. Pantipuilu Gonmei added in Imphal-Tarung, Langol Foothill, is well known to the states concerned in all social activities like other women tarch bearers" Meirapaibis" in the Imphal Valley" RLP has become famous with many branches in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland.

In view of the above review of the literatures, it is evident that there has been no significant work done by any one dealing with the subject matter of the propose research. As such there is need to carrying out such a research work as it will help in filling up a gap in the existing knowledge about the Rongmei society and their women in the field of socio-political life.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The Rongmei women in Manipur are coming up progressively in the socio-Political spheres. Some among them have contested and won election in Imphal municipal corporation, Bishnupur Municipal Council and elsewhere in the panchayet elections. Some contested in the autonomous District Council (ADC) and in the Manipur Legislative assembly. Many potential women are now showing signs as to participate in the electoral politics in more number than the present trend. The historical, legendary and popular tales of the tribe involving women of in dimmable spirit should provoke the modern Rongmei women elites. The far sighted Rongmei women also drawn inspiration from the great matriarchs like Rani Pamei. Gaidinliu, Veteran Freedom Fighter and other legendary women of the past ages. The younger teenager girl P. Gaidinliu, a daughter of a poor peasant family grew up to be one of the greatest women known to the outside world. Her indomitable spirit lifted her to the stage that fought the mighty British regime.

The present Rongmei women are emerging in the social activities to bring about upliftment. They are also fighting against violation of human rights, women rights, discrimination and suppression. The Rongmei Lu Phum (RPL), Assam, Manipur & Nagaland led by Dr. G. Panti as founding President, Dr. P. Aram, President of Naga womens union, Manipur, Luk, Ranjita kamei, member of Manipur state women commission and a galaxy of many outstanding Rongmei women have contributed greatly in the women movement in Manipur state.

The Rongmei women have been known as important partakers in all fields especially in the socio-Political movements in the state and the northeast India. The Rongmei women cannot be isolated from the world of the sophisticated order. The world has become one global village by the power of fast communication and information today. All the communities and tribes of their state of Manipur should be well equipped to join the global scenario. If the state failed to do the needful the consequences will not be in the interest of all concerned. And that the Rongmei women in Manipur are in the move and emerging for the better.

#### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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