

**ANCIENT MEETEI WRITTEN
CONSTITUTION**

‘LOIYUMBA SHINYEN’

From Original Text
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And
English Version
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I. PROLOGUE

Pray you the Almighty, before this edict is proclaimed. By taking a ride on the back of *Nungmu* (a pitch-black rounded substance), *Pakhangba* rose to the universe from beneath the *terra firma* with the shining glow of *Nungganggum* (a fragment of rock).

The divine monarch, Loiyamba has chosen six high dignitaries, after a classification of six loops (groups). Pray bless me in the equitable distribution of *Shintha* (assignment) to each family-surname for the *Maibas* (specialist with the dual function of a doctor and priest) in the charge of nine sylvan deities and destruction of *mashil* (duty) for the invocation of gods add spirits by the *maibis* (priestess). The divine monarch Loiyamba makes the proclamation by sitting on the *Langshang* (office of the Meetei crown). The duties assigned to the family-surnames will be made known. You the *Thingujam* weave the *Mungphi* (clothe known as *Leirum*). You the *Lairellakpam*, weave the *Laiphi* (clothe for the god). You the *Chakpa*, *Thiyam*, weave the *Laakphi Tongkap* (a clothe). You the *Chokpam*, weave the *phirel* (clothe of topmost quality). You the *Kongpa Cham*, weave the *Langdomphi*. You the *Wahengbam*, weave the *Dolaikupphi* (palanquin cover). You the *Haodeijam*, weave the *Heikoi-phi* (specifically designed clothe).

II. INVOCATION OF GOD

You the *Heirom*, pay homage to *Meireima* (a deity). You the *Irom*, do service to *Khanglangba*. You the *Sorelsangbam*, attend to the *Shorarel* (heaven). You the two *Sharang Leishangthem*, bow down to *Lammabee*. You the *Sharotkhaibam*, invoke the goddess *Phouoibi* (goddess for paddy). You the *Potshangbam*, glorify the *Shanglangmei* (Kangla). You the *Moirang Pukhrangbam*, do service to the *Kutchu* (Wayenshang). You the *Shoubam*, look after the *Mawao Leima*. You the *Hieshnam*, offer up prayers to the *Panthoibi* (most adored Meetei goddess). You the *Khoisanam*, worship the *Petangnga*. You the *Taibangjam*, say prayers to *Laikhurembee*. You the *Konthoujam*, pay divine service to *Huimureima*. You the *Ashangbam*, bow down to *Lainaotabi*. You the *Chingkhawam*, invoke the *Nungthelleima*. You the *Arambam*, worship the *Shoubonleima*. You the *Yenkhom Phisabam*, pay divine service to *Awangba* (deity Laiwangba).

You the *Luwangshangbam*, idolize the *Luwaang Ching*. You the *Sinam Laishangbam*, worship the *Lainingthou*. You the *Moirangthem Puthem*, idolize the *Puthiba*. You the *Mangsatabam*, keep watch for the *Pureiromba*. You the *Ngarangyanpam*, attended to the service of *Thongak*. You the *Nakalbam*, take care of *Chingkol-Ningthou*. You the *Khuraijam*, guard the *Chingbal Leima*. You the *Meiyengbam*, take care of the *Yaoreibi*. You the *Leishangthem*, be sentinel to the *Koubarel*. You the *Ningthoujam*, protect the *Numitleima*. You the *Pukkalabam*, preserve the *Koubru*. You the *Chenglei-Laishangbam*, take care of the *Marjing*. You the *Moirangthem*, preserve the *Moirang Phaktom Ariba*. You the *Kangpucham*, sanctify the *Hongnemyoi Khunjao*. You the *Chingkhalbam*, glorify the *Chinga*. You the *Longjam Pheiroijam*, uphold the *Langjing*. You the *Tekcham*, watch the *Langol*. You the *Nongmaithem*, glorify the *Langmaicheeng (Nongmaijing)*. You the *Ningthoujam*, preserve the *Chinga Leima*. You the *Heithou Khongtekcham*, be sentinel to *Langching Hiyangthou Leima*. You the *Thaopicham*, perpetuate the *Yumjao Lairemma*.

III. SURNAME - WISE OBLIGATION OF THE ‘MAIBAS’

Now the duties of the *Maibas* are proclaimed. You the *Asheibam*, attend to the cleansing of the monarch. You the *Arambam*, take care of the bath. You the *Toibicham* play the *Taraochi* (Meitei musical instrument). You the *Arupam (Arubam)*, maintain the cleanliness and purity. You the *Aheibam*, make the *Pukhamnati* (plate with decorated rim). You the *Loukham*, draw the *Meiba* (Meitei device to produce fire). You the *Maibathiuam*, throw the *Shingkhai* (Meitei prognostication device), get into the trance of dream (Meitei way of telling the premonition after a voluntary trance into the dream stage). You the *Meihoubam*, ignite the fire. You the *Meiphuwam*, blow in the fire. You the *Tokpam*, dig in the soil. You the *Tokpuram (Tokpram)*, *Thangsabam*, pile up the earth.

You the *Naoroibam*, take the baby in your custody. You the *Ngathem*, call for the *Ngami* (beckoning the fishes). You the *Shingkhampam*, fetch the dry wood fuels. You the *Haomukpam*, make the *phak* (mattress for sitting). You the *Khoirisungbam*, weave the *Koiriphi* (Meitei clothe). You the *Khoiriyampam*, sever the umbilical cord. You the *Lairencham*, wash the black clothes. You the *Thoupicham*, manage the plantain leaves. You the *Leishaonbam*, make the boats. You the *Yelwam*, take in the hen.

You the *Nganukappam*, look after the *Nganu* (duck). You the *Khuyolthem*, carry back the *hameng* (goats). You the *Okrambam*, take the *Ok* (pig). You the *Waleppam (Wareppam)*, adore the bamboo. You the *Maibam*, invoke the *Chupshaba* (invocation by the priest praying for the cessation of recurrent deaths)

of members of the same family due to a single disease). You the *Ngangom*, throw the *Konyai* (gold and silver device used by the priest along with mantra). You the *Yenkokpam*, descend the *yerum* (egg) to the earth (a device for forecast). You the *Khumukcham*, take the tiger. You the *Khaidem*, supervise the body under cremation.

You the *Amakcham*, take hold of the bow and the arrow. You the *Mangshatabam*, supervise the grave. You the *Wanglenbam*, beat the drum. You the *Kabrambam*, manage the *Leishoupung* (mount of aerated soil). You the *Kontenakathang* priest, prepare the *Chup* for the deity. You the *Shoukrakpam*, make the *chaphuwalong* (pot). You the *Ngaseppam*, slice the fishes. You the *Thingnongchaorong*, priest (the last or third priest), worship the *Lainingthouhanba*.

IV. DUTY OF THE TAMPAK MAIBA (PEOPLES PRIEST)

You venerate the *Mongbahanba*. You the *Khabalangthangchakaba Wamaiba*, idolize the *Naohal Ahalba* (sylvan deity). You the *Jagoiwa* priest, deify the *Koubarel*. You the *Langmei* priest (*Luwang Maiba*), worship the *Chakhaba*. You the *Thongnangkaipiya* priest, deify the *Muwaningthou*. You the *Khayoipariyang* priest, worship the *Marjing*. You the *Loiyamsaggai* priest, glorify the *Koubru*. You the *Asheibam*, chant *Sanalamok* (hymn for deities). You the *Ashem Ngakhakhoi*, chat the *Yakaieshei* (*Yakairol*). You the *Paobam*, listen to the message of god at *Paodahidel*. You the *Laishram*, pay service to the *Santhong*. You the *Lantham*, sing the *Lalpha* song (song regarding the victory in the war). You the *Kharaijam*, look after the *Kharaithong* (gate). You the *Akhongbam*, beat the *Khong* (musical instrument, used in the *Chakpa* sylvan festival). You the *Mutum*, idolize the *Lalhampung* (*Lalambung*). You the *Thingnam*, deify the *Ukrong*. You the *Shingksam*, sing the *Langmairol*. You the *Thongam*, sing the *Ahonglon* (song for the god *Sanamahi*). You the *Shoraisham*, sing the *Khoichulamok lamkok* (song in the sylvan festival). You the *Chandam*, sing the *Khongchinglyon* (for the festival of *Moirang Thangjing*). You the *Thiyam*, adore the boat. You the *Apucham*, pay homage to *Pukshri* (a paddy eating worm in the field). You the *Nongpokpam*, invoke the rain god. You the *Waikhom*, gather the husk. You the *Akoijam*, sing the hymn of *Mikol* (a song that harmonize the soul and spirit). You the *Salam*, idolize the *Langmaiching* (*Nongmaiying* mountain), and act the role of *Tangkhul Sharam Pakhangba* (i.e. *Nongpokningthou*, king of the east). You the *Hidam*, make the *Sanaliphak* (royal mattress).

You the *Khamnam*, offer the *Khamnungcheiyom* (an offering at the royal grave). You the *Amaipi*, offer the *Leiraiyu* (offering to the local deity). You the *Nongton Amaibi*, dip the *Laija Phuhing* (offer of *Khayomlakpa* by the use of unburnt earthen pot). Throw the *Khalei Louka* (the first sowing of seeds in the field), and

act the part of *Tangkhul Nurabee* (on the 1st day of *Meitei* sylvan festival, a *Tangkhul* lady digs in the paddy field with her seven maids; the *Meitei Lambu* sits on judgement. The two *Tangkhul* youths realised that the field belongs to both. The maiden and the youths knew each other). You the *Phura Amaibi*, get in the trance of *Phura Laiyum* and listen to the *Mang* (*Meitei* way of receiving oracle through the *Maibis*, white robed).

V. PANA (TERRITORIAL) CLASSIFICATION

Now the territorial delimitation is proclaimed :

Laipham pana: These eight-*Pukhranba*, *Shanglen Lakpa*, *Imangloi Hanjaba*, *Lamleirakpa*, *Leichon Lakpa*, *Khun-Tonghalba*, *Konsha Halba*, *Hajaba Halba*-are in this *Pana*.

Ahallup Pana: These eight-*Khwairakpa*, *Hiyangloi Hanjaba*, *Phamthakcha*, *Yentren Hanba*, *Okram Halba*, *Iratlangba*, *Sinai Halba*, *Phisa Halba* - are in the *Ahallup Pana*.

Khabam Pana: These eight-*Wangkheirakpam*, *Nongthonba*, *Shanglenlakpa*, *Imingloi Hanjaba*, *Umu Khulakpa*, *Keikran Halba*, *Khut Heiba*, *Hanjaba*, *Thangsa Halba*-are in the *Khabam Pana*.

Naharup Pana: These eight-*Yaiskullakpa*, *Aheiba Hanjaba*, *Huiroi Hanjaba*, *Chongkhalba Hanjaba*, *Naikhurakpa*, *Huitrol Halba*, *Laiphakpa*, *Nakpalakpa*-are in the *Naharup Pana*.

These dignitaries are known as *Poireithou* (belonging to the country), *Khulphangthou* (belonging to the village), *Tayamthou* (not being the crown servant), *Naiphangthou* (being the crown servant).

Know all the people-the thirty-two *Hidangpham* (post) namely, *Pukhran Hidang*, *Nongthol Hidang*, *Khwai Hidang*, *Wangkhei Hidang*, *Yaishkhul Hidang* be known as *Luplakpham*. Know all the people-*Lainingthou Mungyamba* had elevated the post of *Tenshu Halba*, *Thangshu Halba*, *Shilsu Halba* above the *Khullakphams*.

VI. STATE DUTY OF THE CROWN

Listen to the duty and conduct of the crown. The crown shall very seldom render public audience. Very seldom, shall he deliver the address. Address shall be made after a careful thought. The high state dignitaries (64 in all) shall in standing

ovation and with folded hands, receive the address from the crown. Should the address be good and proper, it is acclaimed. Should the address be prejudicial, the high state dignitaries do modestly beseech the king (in due indication of the disapproval). The 'beseech' shall be made taken recourse to very seldom. The king shall make the address only once or twice in a month. Know all the people- the high state dignitaries shall have rare access to the King. Unless summoned by the King. When the King moves out for the play of *Kangjei* (indigenous *Meetei* hockey) or any other purpose in the morrow, the high state dignitaries, the *Ningthemnupi* (the first queen) in the palace shall communicate the information in the office of *Lakton* (room just adjacent to the royal personal room) to the *Pheida Shanggaiselba* (*Pheida* has direct access to the harem, being a neuter in gender; *Pheida* also means executioner). The *Yairekshang* shall make orders to the *Shangpalba* (officer in charge of the respective department) stating that 'your respective services shall not fail'.

Regal Life

The conduct that ought to be honoured while the King, the queen and the issues of the King remain together is proclaimed. At night the King will be in the company of the queen in the residence. In the day, the King will be in the company of his other wives than the queen. When these conducts are dishonoured, the Lakhonghanjabi, the Hirushang hanjab, the Leikhomshanghanjabi, the Yendrelhanbi, the Keikralhanbi, the Hirunghanbi, the Phourunghanbi, the Ngarunghanbi, the Thumjaorungbee- these nine sit on the judgement. If there is any mistake in the conduct, fine is imposed. The King has to comply with the conduct. This regal conduct shall not fail and shall not be violated.

VII. ROYAL DECORUM (FOR THE NOBILITY) DOLLAI SAGOLTONGBA

Now this ordinance is proclaimed. Listen to the royal etiquette for the *Phamthou Ningthou* (Angam Athou). The *Dolaitongba* and the *Sagoltongba* halt at the main gate. The four *Hajaris* halt at Keithel Lanmithong. The *Haopanba Puren* halts at Chingmeirong, Chinga and Langjing, Khomidok at the bank of the river Iiril. The *Chothe Khullakpa* halts at Moirangkhom. The *Moirangningthou* halts at Yaiskul Thong. Know all-nobody should transgress the respective sites for halting the horses and *dolai*.

VIII. RULES REGARDING COSTUMES

Now the etiquette for the shoes. For the *Angoupalba* (Angom Ningthou), his shoe will be green; his mattress, red *Phirangji*. As regards garment, his *dhoti*

(indigenous Meitei male costume) will have a blue outer lining; shirt will be white. His *Innaphi* (a clothe, one wears from shoulder to the waist above the *dhoti*) will be white. His *Shamjil* will be white, embroidered in white (costume used in hunting tigers and *Hiyang tannaba*, the *Meitei* indigenous boat race). The *Chongpe* of the *Tengna* will be in the white. When the *Angoupanba* (Angom Ningthou) steps in to the palace, his personal guard will carry his seat on the head. He will carry *Kwashen* also (for keeping betel nuts), *Khudong* (smoking apparatus). When the *Laakhong* (the first common room for the royal bodyguards) is reached, the seat will be carried in between the arms by storing the *Kwasen* and *Hidakphu* in the *Laaton*. The shoes, the seat and the *Kwasen* will be carried as far as the courtyard of the royal residence.

The costumes of the *Meidingu Apanba* are - white *Shamjil*, white *khaddangchet*, embroidered in the white printed with *Phirangji* and knitted with two *Sanakhongol*; the shoes will be decorated with *Sanakhongpols*. The shirt will be *Konkha*, a velvet half shirt. The *dhoti* will be embroidered at outer lining; the folded *Innaphi* will be hung at the shoulder end. It may be wrapped around the waist too. The nine layered *Shekpin* (Chhatra) will be white. The colour of *Chong* and *Pe* are in red. The seat will be white coarse clothe.

Know all the prince and princess of the King, the high dignitaries of the State must not match in costumes, whatever the King wears, the way the moves, he drinks, laughs, enquires and deliver address, so on the so forth.

IX. RULES FOR REWARDS

Now a pronouncement is made. Should any subject, any village, the strong and the gallant score a success in a crucial battle in the presence of the king after a contest in the battle, the *Meidingu Apanba* (Meetei King) shall offer as reward, the *Ningthouphimayek* (special regal costume). The princess also will be given as reward, if one wins in as many as five battles. The reward will be *Phiral Namma Thakta Namma Thoiba* (a special flag). Should one triumph for the seventh time it will be *Thangballoi* (a special award). For one who triumphs for the ninth time, the reward will be *Meipun*. Know all *Lupa Leikham*, *Sana Leikham* (the highest reward) will be presented in recognition of the abilities in order; they normally should not be awarded.

Trophy for Catching the Tiger

Where ten persons catch the tiger, only three of them will be selected for the trophy: (1) To the first one will be rewarded, one *Pari* of paddy field, *Thum Nama* (equivalent to one hundred plates of common salt): (2) *Phimakhai phi*

(cloth) (*Thum Nama*) will be given to the next: (3) The third one will be given a share in the *Thum Nama* and clothes. Know all.

X. ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Listen now - a promulgation is made. Listen to the *Leirel Meidingu Naophangba* who took the command from *Mangang Guru, Luwang Guru, Khuman Guru* for the administration, administration of justice in the *Poyrei Kanglei Meitei Sanaleibak*. The *Meitei Leima* (queen) of *Kanglei* must not complain of weariness, while taking up the welfare measures for the country, the king, there should not be stringency on the wealth. There should not be occasion, where two rival propositions arise at the same time. The *Meidingu Apanba* (king) will not utter two irreconcilable statements. The outcome of making two conflicting statements is a national problem. Know all conflicting statement are unwarranted.

XI. CONSCIENCE KEEPER OF THE NATION

There is no tranquility in the country, unless the priest, the learned, the high dignitaries bring to the notice of the king, premonition of the good and evil, the apprehensions which are noticed and seen by them. The life of the king and the queen are short in this situation. Regarding the punishments for the stealing of cattle, horse and servants, hack the leg of the thief. Sever the hand in case of *Sagun Toubu* (theft by making hole in the house of the victim). Slash the lips of the liars. When anybody dishonours the sanctity of the harem, remove the eyes. If anybody commits wrong with the womenfolk closely related by blood, do the *Nonglaoba* (shouting the entire story of the wrong to reach the ears of the public). Exile the man who commits wrong to the monarch. Liquidate all those who are involved in the *Ningthoushamba* (dethroning the ruler). Marriage with women of common ancestry and of similar *yek* (clan) is unwarranted.