

AN OVERVIEW ON ELOPEMENT MARRIAGE OF RONGMEI TRIBES

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Abstract

Human marriage is the root for the origin of family and the procreation as well as for the growth of society. Since the ancient time male and female wants to live together in peace. In ancient time before the establishment and regulating the marriage system man and women who live in distant places recognize themselves and fall in love each other and started to live together as husband and wife. Of course hatred among the clan or between the same clan caused unprecedented tensions creates serious problems in the society or in the village. To eradicate this social hazard wise man and thinkers of the pre historic period framed the laws of Rongmei marriage. The unwanted confrontation within the village and the other villages had been somehow controlled and chaos created by elopement gradually reduced because of stringent punishment and regulation. Thus the practice of arranged marriage established in society. The nature and habits of love of human being and needs of early association had transformed to auspicious solemnization. Since the thousand year of civilization the act of indomitable love and human emotion caused the root of elopement within restriction from the pre historic period. The practice of love and elopement marriage continued and that provokes different emotional reaction and creates much violence in the society. In the present generation this abominable habits has been abolished through the negotiation. Many oral narratives and memoirs depicted such social adjustment in the past and present of the Rongmei Society.

Key words: elopement, depicted, abominable, Solemnisation, negotiation.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Rongmei Naga Society male and female fall in love and married themselves by elopement against the adopted laws of traditional Rongmei Marriage. But law has some limits. If the limits of breaking the social sanction of marriage code exceeded, the range of action also rise up to termination and exile from the village or sometimes physically humiliated. If he or she does not cross the limit of Social sanction they were imposed fine and at last consider for the social acceptance. Among the tribes of north eastern India Rongmei prohibition and restrictions are very crucial. Therefore they could save from any form of external and internal adulteration simultaneously preserved the age old sanctity of the Rongmei Naga blood and their identity.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are given below

- The objectives of the present study is specifically on elopement marriage of Rongmei Tribes
- The Second objectives is to Rongmei Polyandry system in Barak Valley (Assam)

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the present study and the main source of collecting the data and information is from the 'primary' sources and field works covering Hirakandi district, Binakandi part ii, Naga Bazar (Tungbung) village, in Barak Valley through interview, interaction and discussion with senior citizens of Rongmei Community. The response of the informants is recorded. Secondary sources cover the available books related to the Rongmei Tribes of the area.

4. CHAREI NAOKAO (MARRIAGE AFTER ELOPEMENT OR LOVE MARRIAGE)

Rongmei elopement marriage in Barak Valley is not legally permitted but very common. If the parents of the girl or boy's alive than the priest perform the marriage at the house of the groom, reciting the hymn (Mailakmei)

and allow to enter the home of the groom. If the one of parents died male or female the bride will be kept at the uncle house for the 5 days. After the 5 days she will be brought to the groom house. If the Father and mother died both the bride and groom is allowed to enter after the function of reciting hymn (Mailakmei).

The bride where to keep for the five days must be non-prohibited married family and have the parents alive. On the day of their elopement both the bride (Alupai) and groom (Alupou) be solemnised immediately reciting the hymn (Mailakmei) rites. The priest who read the mailakmei in the case of elopement is called 'Mai-laksoi-Duimei'. Priest recites rites as follows:

'He, Antheietei. He, Anthei Ku nam-sukhonamsuetei. Nam sulaApouRagwangnaampou Gaanchanneiponnetei Heimeikainoupunaisukatukanaponpanthouallong Jungthochakoupuinajuarik, puinaju, khoipuinaju, khapuinaju, gapuinaju, chekra puinaju, chapnalungbamkanduthoche' (Marurung, 1988, P. 54-55).

Recitation of hymn (Mailakmei) is the last Marriage function in the life of a couple. In this function a silver coin will put on the right side of banana leave, and a piece of iron. On this articles right feet of the groom and left feet of the bride will keep and see the omen of the cock. On the occasion of the elopement there is no system of fix date for the purpose by the priest. The birth day of the groom and bride and new moon and full moon is also avoided. Because the function of simple marriage is done with immediate action. If the month of elopement is June-July or March-April this function of solemnisation is delayed till the end of restricted month. The male person is not allowed to go distant places. He cannot hold arms and even he cannot cross the river. If there is any case of thunder storm, death case in the village or happens any natural phenomena, belief to be short live of the couple. If the sign of the hymn (Mailakmei) indicates bad omen than there is a provision of doing the same function again in Rongmei Society. After finishing the traditional rites the groom catch the hand of the bride and says to enter in to bed room and these are the last rites of the traditional Rongmei's love marriage system.

4.1. LALOUPAO MAI (SENDING THE MESSAGE OF ELOPEMENT TO BRIDE'S HOME)

Sending of message for the elopement is not allowed until completion of hymn (Mailakmei) rite after the accomplishment of the solemnisation brother in law of the groom and some elders male and female about 9 or 10 in number will go to the girl's home to give the information. The messengers are elders of the groom and they will tell the name of groom's that your daughter become the daughter in law of our family. Thus the parents of the girl will be appease with humble request.

4.2. MANTIMAI (SOCIALY RECOGNITION FUNCTION)

In Rongmei language 'Mantimai' means the function of social recognition of eloped bride and groom. After the reconciliation of two family the function of social and religious acceptance of groom and bride is perform. The function 'Mantimai' is divided in to two-forms.

- 'Mantimai' function performs with larger expenditure.
- 'Dui LuiDukLoukemei' which the programme accomplished with little expenditure if any of the bride or groom's family is weak in economic condition or any kind of illness happens this function done in a very simple way or in name only.

According to customary law of Rongmei community before the day of 'Mantimai' the 'Lugan' (brother in law) of the groom goes to bride's parents home for asking what is to be brought by the groom for the function. The parents of the bride demanded to bring a bull buffalo or sometimes demands she buffalo and grooms party also usually tries to give it.

Items of the common demands of Rongmei community are as follows:

- Gailuchi- a Buffalo
- Faingou- a white shawl
- Uttanjuran- a long spear
- Beng - a sword
- Naabkuwak - a Brass dish.

This articles of bridal price is well observed by the 'Lugans' (brother in laws) of bride and bride groom whether there is any defect, etc. All the articles of bridal price will be received by the bride's 'Lugan' and he will keep all the articles under the bed of bride's father.

4.3. GUAK PAIJAONA (OBSERVATION OF PIGS SPLEEN)

On the day of Social acceptance and payment of the bridal price a big pig is to be sacrifice in the name of TingkaoRagwang (Supreme god). For observation, pigs spleen will take out and see by the elders and priest of the function for the future of the couple. This practice is done only by the noble man. In the case of poor family folding legs of the cock is seen and this method is called 'BennaipaoJaona'. Because doing the sacrifice, priest of the elopement function will purify pig by sprinkle with the leaves of holy plant and priest himself also purified. Then priest will pronounce the two bride and groom is now going to couple life and they will procreate offspring, and seek the blessing of their prosperity, long life to the Ragwang (Supreme God). Priest will take out the spleen and wash pouring water on the spleen. Healthy spleen (kapai) will kept on the rice duster having right parts of the plantain leave. Only the healthy unmarried person can perform this duty. Upper portion of the spleen reveals for the bride and bride groom's and family's omen. The lower portion of the spleen shows the omen of the village. If the spleen is found plane and spotless then life of the couple will be healthy prosperity and get the offspring. If there is any spot that reveals bad omens even after the rewashing by water it may show blood spot. Over side of the spleen is not observe generally. Thus, the observation of pigs spleen indicates bad omen, then a cock is to be taken and strangle in the name of 'TingkaoRagwang' (Supreme god) for the blessing of bride and bride groom.

After the function of these religious rites of spleen observation the pork or the flesh of the pig is cooked and eaten by all the family members and invitees. The function 'Mailakmei' (hymn) by the cock is called 'BenaiPaijouna' only the financially weak families performs this practice of seeing the omen by a cock. Priest will purify the cock with 'Haovumnoang' leaves and then priest will recite the rites to cock as usual to pigs. In the name of Ragwang (supreme God) and see the folding legs and read the omens of the married couple. If the cocks leg twisted left and right or distended seems a bad sign, therefore same function have to repeat again with another cock. After seeing the legs of the cock, immediately heart of the cock is cooked and must be eaten by the couple. Because if there happens any natural calamity or death in the village than the couple will be short life.

5. NOUMANGMEI (MARRIAGE BY SERVITUDE)

Groom lives at the house of bride due to certain unavoidable circumstances, if the bride is only the offspring of the parents she is married to a groom who has many brothers, with the mutual understanding of both parents the groom goes to live at the bride house to look after the old parents or properties. In this system of servitude marriage presentation of bridal price is not necessary only the oral payment is done. In such marriage groom will get all types of properties. The clan of the bride will change to grooms clan but remain in her house. Such marriage happens rarely, only in the case of more brothers or single daughter of parent does the practice.

6. MAINAO KASOMEI (POLYANDRY)

There are two types of polyandry in Rongmei Society

i) **LangdaiNouKasomei**: A women adulterated with another person or married to another person in presence of her legal husband is called 'Langdainoukasomei' in Rongmei language. A women married to other person in presence of her husband is a serious crime. Her punishment is very heavy. In such an accident, villager impose the person to present a big pig tying the legs to the chieftain of the village. The reason for presenting the pig is nothing but to appease and subside the villager by the chieftain of the village from any undesirable fighting or quarrel.

After receiving the pig and knowing the reasons village chieftain declares reason and the name of the person who elope other's wife. Thus, Khulakpa (chieftain) announced the events every where in the village. Villager must come to chieftain house to have the feast. All the essential articles for the feast have to provide by the wrong doer. Family and Lugan (brother-in-law) will cook for the grand feast. Before eating the feast chieftain of the village expresses the name of the person and both family will discuss the issue and give proper judgement. The head of the village fined the person for his misconduct. You are fraud because you had adulterated. So, you must bring one more pig. In this way, Rongmei community's practice of giving pig as fine to the chieftain is still prevails. Accordingly another fine also imposed to the person by the first married family because you take away the child's mother and wife of other person.

If the accidentally elopement of married women within the same clan, practice of taking fine is not allowed. That is called “Nou-shou”. If any one of the clan goes to eat the ‘Nou-Shou’ fine by mistake they are completely restricted to attend marriage or a-mix with their family. If the first marriage of the women clan did not take or eat the ‘Nou-shou’ and that family of the clan is allowed to a-mix with the other family and attend the marriage , etc.

ii) **Noukasomei:** A women married with other man after death of her husband. There is a system of nominal fine charge to the man. If a girl married to person and death happened her husband, the family and guardian will decide about her future after the performance of his annual rites. The elder brother or the uncle will ask to take away to her parents home. In that condition family of the death husband request that she has now sons and daughter, she will remain as mother of the children. If the woman fall in love with any other person we have no any objection. Elder brother will say it is a pathetic approach. But must enquire her opinion and what she thinks. Thus, the Rongmei women are given independent scope of expressing her feelings and decision. In this way, on the day of annual death rite, such traditional discussion completes, after this any case of elopement or married to other person does not charge any fine. If this did not discussed the male who married the widow will be fine with three big pigs.

7. NOU KAKHOU MAI (SUCCESSIVE MARRIAGE)

If after the death of his brother when the younger brother get marriages with his widow sister in law is called ‘Nou-Kakhou-mai’ this system of marriage is not common but very rarely happens in present day Rongmei Society. But there is a restriction to marry a younger sister in law by the elder brother. The condition for allowing this successive marriage is to control the woman and the child from defection or change to other clan. This vary practice was regulated since the early period of the history. If the woman is married with arrange system and paid the bridal price by the elder brother then the younger brother does not need to pay but only (pumlaijeng) Money instead of articles is paid and accomplished the function. This system is adopted by Rongmei for the reconciliation of the two family.

8. NOUMUMEI (DIVORCE)

In Rongmei Society ‘Divorce’ or the separation of couple is called ‘Noumumei’. This divorce is two types:

i) GaUgan Mai Rammu (Divorce given by man)

In the customary laws of Rongmei society, if the man likes to divorce his wife he must have to give a sword and wine keeping inside a “Ingka’ a tribal bamboo basket at the house of the chieftain. Some times chieftain of the village try to mitigate with moral advise. If the man disagree on the suggestion he has to bring again the same as before. The brother in law of the man will prepare the wine and will offer to the elders of the village and village elder decides to give proper justice and allowed to divorce the woman.

ii) TumaiRaam mu (Divorce to man by the wife)

In Rongmei Society if a women wants to divorce her husband, she goes to the house of chieftain with 40 Rupees. The chieftain will send it to the husband’s home with a messenger “khangbuyan” (senior elders) requesting for the cause and hand over the money to him. Means woman divorce the husband from the very day. The system of divorce prevailed in the ancient time, now this very legal work is done through the court.

9. NOU NAI KOU NAI (POLYGAMY)

In the Rongmei society there is a provision of polygamy or allowed to marry more than one woman. There is no any role of giving legal justice by the village chieftain, the system of polygamy reveals Rongmei society is man dominated society.

10. MAADI (BRIDAL PRICE)

In Barak Valley payment of Maadi in Rongmei elopement marriage system is common. According to the understanding of the both family payment of bridal price can be done by money instead of articles. This practice is done when the groom family financially weak or poor. But this practice of “Maadi’ is not allowed in the case of arranged marriage.

11. CONCLUSION

In Rongmei Society elopement marriage is also one of the illegal form of marriage but socially permitted system. Within the social and religious restriction many of persons united themselves by elopement since the origin of the Rongmei community. Although, serious action like termination and giving exile, in certain cases social acceptance by paying fine etc also visible. In the other tribal community, with the change of time these restriction has been relaxed but in Rongmei Society this austerity of society of the traditional system of punishment has not yet been changed. Those who had done illegal practices is to be morally and verbally terminated from mixing with the clan and the society is the root of preserving the identity of Rongmei community.

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