



Title	The Meitei (Kathe) Crown Service groups in Myanmar from the earliest times to the end of Monarchical Rule
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The Meitei (Kathe^ᵛ) Crown Service groups in Myanmar from the earliest times to the end of Monarchical Rule

Nwe Ni Hlaing*

Abstract

The Meitei (Kathe^ᵛ) had settled along the Yangtze River in China from about the 12nd century BC and then they moved in Sichuan region. Later they migrated from the south eastern Tibet to Hukong Valley, Chindwin region and Kachin region. From that earliest time on words they lived Chindwin valley and scattered into the Manipur plain. Some Meitei (Kathe^ᵛ) groups arrived and stayed in those areas: in Somra tract, along the Ayeyarwady valley, Thaug Thut, Yaw, Monywa, Sagaing. Meitei (Kathe^ᵛ) are Tibet-Myanmar family. Their sub-family members are Chin, Kachin, Myanmar, Naga, Thet and Lo Lo. Therefore, some of their languages are found closely related to Chin, Kachin and Myanmar. During the time of Myanmar King, the Manipur State was under the rule of Myanmar kings and also became as one of their tributary States. Due to the military conquest of Myanmar kings, the Meitei (Kathe^ᵛ) group arrived in Myanmar royal cities including from Meitei royal families to commoners and bondsmen, They had settled so long in Myanmar kingdom. The reason to this long lasting settlement safely and securely, might be attributable, to their services rendered to the Myanmar people and the king, which can be seen in the renowned services of court Brahmims (*Kathe^ᵛ Ponna*) in the palace, *Myin Su* in the famous name of *Kathe^ᵛ cavalry*, *Lamaing Su* (royal cultivators), *Thwei-Thauk Su* (Blood-bond Brotherhood), Boatmen and other crown service groups. They were widely utilized by Myanmar kings. This show that *Kathe^ᵛ* people had served Myanmar kings with might and main, intellectually and physically, without sparing their lives for the interest of the king and the people. They are still living together with Myanmar People particularly around the former royal capitals and throughout Myanmar.

Key words: Tibet-Myanmar, Meitei (*Kathe^ᵛ*), *Myin Su*, *Lamaing*, *Thwe Thauk*

Introduction

According to the studied guess of scholar, Myanmar ethnic races who belonged to the Tibeto-Myanmar family had settled at their native place of the upper reaches of Yellow River and T'aung valley in China since 3,000 years ago¹. When S' hang Dynasty was established in 16th century B.C, Tibeto-Myanmar lived side-by-side with the S'hang Chinese. In 14th century B.C, Tibet Myanmar moved to Kansu and the north-west of Sichuan provinces. The Tibeto-Myanmar races were known by the Chinese as Chi'en. Between 15 and 12 centuries B.C. Chi'en settled in Yangtse valley and Sichuan, the western provinces of China and some lived in the Yunnan province². At the beginning of the christian Era, the people belonged to Tibeto-Myanmar family were attributed to move into present day Myanmar³. They were divided into three groups: namely those who entered into the Eastern Tibet, those who penetrated into Bramaputtra valley and Assam an those who entered into Myanmar. One group after another moved into Myanmar in different time. The earliest groups entered into Myanmar were Bama and ethnic races related with early Bama, Thet, Chin, Kachin and Naga⁴.

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Bama and early Bama arrived Myanmar via Mekhong, Thanlwin and Mekha River routes and some entered Myanmar via Yon-chiang in Yunnan Province⁵. Meanwhile Lo Lo entered Myanmar via Mekha River route. Thet, Chin, Kachin and Naga tribes entered from the north-west region of Myanmar. Actually the advent of Thets was earlier than Chins and Kachins and they spread to upper reaches of Chindwin River and Manipur⁶.

Chin, Kachin and Naga firstly moved to Eastern Tibet via China from thence entered into Myanmar through the Malikha and Chindwin Valleys via north-western passes of Myanmar⁷. They settle in Hukong Vally⁸. During the four century AD, Chins were supposed to enter Hukong valley to settle along with Kachin and Naga⁹. Later, they were enforced to move to the the upper reaches of Chindwin River by Kachins. Some scholars attributed that Meitei (Kathe`) races who belong to the same family of Chins, once they lived with Chin and Kachin in Hukong valley and along the Chindwin valley¹⁰. The myths and oral history of Meitei reveal that they descended from the same ancestors and lived in the same region¹¹. At the beginning, Meitei (Kathe`) lived along side with Chins in Chindwin valley and some Meiteis (Kathe`) who settled in Somara Hill and Ireel Valley of Manipur enabled to establish a dynasty, however some Meiteis (Kathe`) continued to live with Chin races in Myanmar. Between 4th and 15 centuries A.D, Chin races settled in a wide area stretching from Chindwin valley to Manipur valley¹². Later they spread to Sagaing, Mague, Pokokku, Monywa and Ayeyawaddy valley¹³.

Races

Chins belong to the Tibeto-Myanmar speaking family and Sub-family is the Assam-Bama group – one of the major races of Assam- Bama. Chins belong to the same family of Bama, Naga, Kachin, Thet, and Lo Lo¹⁴. Kuki Chin race was sub-divided into 53 Chin tribes and Meitei (Kathe`) was comprised as one of the Kuki Chin Tribes¹⁵. Linguistically, some words of Meitei are closely related with those of Chin, Kachin and Myanmar¹⁶. Therefore they lived in the same place, descended from a same family and shared common culture.

Myanmar called Meitei as Kathe` which was derived from Shan word "Cassay"¹⁷ and the land where Kathe` settled was known as Myinde`¹⁸. It is attributed that the name Myin-te` was called after the name of its inhabitants Meitei.

Meitei (Kathe`) State under Myanmar King's rule.

During pre-colonial period, Manipur had been one of the vassal state of Myanmar kings, Myanmar chronicles mention that Myin-te` khayaing- district is comprised in the territories of Myanmar during first Tagaung Kingdom. Following evidence reads;

As Kathe` also being Chin since the reign of King Kan Yaza Gyi who resided at Kalay Yazagyo and Myin-te` khayaing had been put under his rule, Mawyingyi Bon Za Noe shall rule Kathe`¹⁹.....

Above mentioned statement indicate that Kathe` races were termed as Chin races and the state they inhabited was called Myin-te` Pyi. The territorial boundary of Kathe` state was Po-khaung mountain range and the land located to the west of Po-khaung range was known as Myin-te` khayaing. Jambudipa Oksaung Kyan mention the four boundaries of Kathe` state thus;

In the east there is Chindwin River,
In the south is the land of Thaug-thut and the land on the other side,
In the west is the North Pin-lê (Thein) North village and Tha-kho (Nga) ywa, and
In the north-east Hmaing wei-myei region and the land on the other side²⁰,

The territorial boundaries during Bagan period mention the western boundary of Myanmar is as far west as Padeik Khaya-kala (region) and accordingly indicate that Assam and Manipur had comprised in the territories of Myanmar. During the Hanthawaddy Hsinbyushin of Taungoo period, the north-western boundary of the empire of Myanmar covered the whole state of Kathè. According to the Shwezigon Pagoda Inscription of Shwethahlaung Hill, it is known that Kathè state comprised in Thunaparanta Taing- the north-west region of Myanmar to the west of Ayeyarwaddy River in King Minye Kyawhtin of Inwa. Similarly, Bonsan Tulut Monastery Inscription of Shwebo, dated 1765 A.D, mentions that Manipur was comprised one of the 16 taings-divisions of Myanmar in Konbaung period. These evidence indicate that Meitei (Kathè) had been one of the vassal states of Myanmar throughout monarchical rule. However, in the negotiation of Yandabo Treaty after the first Anglo-Myanmar war (1824-26) the kingdom of Myanmar had to relinquish Taninthayi, Rakhine and Manipur. From that time onwards, Manipur became a state of British-India. In addition, the Article 11 of Yandabo Treaty prescribed that all Assameses and Manipuries under Myanmar king shall be surrendered to the British Government to deport to the Manipur. However Myanmar government did not comply the British demand and informed that the Assameses and Manipuries who became the subjects of Myanmar government voluntarily settled in Myanmar and accordingly it is impossible to surrender them to the British Government²². By this way, Manipuries and Assameses and their descendants settled in Myanmar up to present day.

Relations between Meitei (Kathè) and Myanmar under Monarchical rule

Throughout history Kathè – Myanmar relations took the form of both hostile and friendly relations. The frequent outbreak of war prevailed between Myanmar and Manipur from Taungoo to the first half of Konbaung dynasties. King Bayinnaung (1551-1581) of Taungoo Dynasty, King Thalun (1628-1648), King Minye Kyawhtin (1673-1698), King Tanninganwe (1714-1733), King Maha Dhammar-rajadipati (1733-1752) of Nyaung-yan Dynasty, King Alaung mintaya (1752-60), Myeidu Min (1763-1776), Badon Min (1782-1819) and Sagaing Min (1819-1826) of Konbaung Dynasty waged the war against Manipur. As the Myanmar kings launched expeditions and occupied Manipur, Kathè rajahs occasionally over ran Myanmar territories. It is interesting to note that some weak Manipuri rajahs established friendly relations with the kingdom of Myanmar through the matrimonial alliance, i.e they submitted their daughters to the kings of Myanmar to establish amicable relations. Anyway the Kathè communities had emerged in Myanmar through the conscription of war captives by the successive kings. Kathè people and their descendants were organized into miscellaneous crown service groups and were allotted lands for residence and subsistence.

After the occupation of Manipur by King Alaungmintaya, over 2000 Kathè horsemen were organized into king's cavalry groups. They were offered gold, silver, clothings and other provisions and lands for residence and subsistence²³. During Myeidu Min's reign, Kathè royalties were allowed to settle in the southeast corner of Innwa²⁴. The Kathè people, totalled over 40,000, had continue to arrive in the reign's of King Badon and Sagain Min. They were populated in Sein-don, Hsin-tat, Bye-ta-yaw, Mo-za and Linzin in Sagaing, Nwa-no-daw-su, Leik-hsan-khun, Shwe-kyet-yet, Shwe-khe, Nge-toe, Hsin-daing (East), Hsin-daing (West), Da-da-le, Le-thama-su, Pagyi-su, Ponna-su, Myit-tu, Yei-gyi-pauk, in Amarapura and Ma-de E-kin in Mandalay²⁵. Nowadays, Meitei (Kathè) and their descendants settled in Mo-za-su in Sagaing Township, Ponna-zu, Pa-gyi-zu, Kokko-zu, Ta-da-le, Yei-kyi-pauk, let-tha-ma-su in

! Amarpura Township and Ma-de`Ekin, Thamidaw-zay Quarter, Pe-hlaw-gyaung, Hnin-si-gyan, Ku-gyi-kon and Po-pe-kon Quarters in Mandalay²⁶. (See photo) It is interesting to note that their ancestors not war captives. They voluntarily came to Myanmar to serve the Myanmar kings. It is attributed that some of them entered Myanmar in pursuit of good opportunities for their living. Of the Kathe` who settled in Myanmar as non-war captives, Kathe` Brahmans (Ponnas) were the most outstanding class and they served the king as the court astrologers, advisers and royal prohibita supervisor who arranged the royal coronations²⁷, etc. Any way, it is suggested that Kathe` mingled each other in accordance with their races, culture and social norms.

Crown service Groups in Myanmar

As mentioned above, varieties of Kathe` comprising royalties, Kathe` Ponnas, crown servicemen, commoners and bondsmen settled in Myanmar. The advent of Kathe` royalties was partly created by the diplomatic relations. When king Bayinnaung defeated Manipur in AD 1558, Kathe` Rajah submitted his daughter to the king for peace²⁸. From that time onward, Kathe` royalties settled in Taungoo. During the reign of King Sa-ne in 1732 Maripuri Rajah submitted his daughter Hnin Long Khang. She was allowed to enjoy the taxes from Popa Town as Popa Myoza. She had two sons Maung Phyu and Maung Min. During the reign of Maha Dhammarajadipati in 1749 Kathe` Rajah again submitted his daughter to the king. King Dhammarajadipati conferred her the title of Maha Devi and her son Khura Letpa the title of Minye` Sithu. When Inwa was socked by the Mons, Princess Popa and Maha Devi were deported to Hanthawaddy (Bago) along with the deposed king. Suprisingly, Maha Devi was installed as a queen by the Mon King and was conferred the title of Thirizeya Mingala devi. After the conquest of Hanthawaddy by Alanngmintaya, she was submitted to the King Alaung mintaya²⁹.

During Myeidu Min's reign, Moriang Rajah submitted his daughter Ton-taw wadi as bride. She was allotted Za-Yun Town in Badon reign. Other sons and daughters of Manipuri Raja were also allotted towns as fiefs as follows;

Son	Maung Shwe Pyei	Kalay Town
Daughter	Shin Nan Yit	Za-yun Tow
Younger son	Maung Shwe Ko	Kalay Town
Daughter	Min Shwe Gon	Htan-da-bin Town ³⁰

All of the sons and daughters of Manipuri Rajah settled in Amarpura. In 1807 Kathe` Rajah and his brother submitted their daughter and sister to king Badon respectively³¹. They were allowed to enjoy equal priveleges of other queens and royal siblings and to live in the palace. ven. Shan-ga-lay-kyun Sayadaw and Nun Me Kin were renowned descendant of Kathe` royalty.

In addition to the Kathe` royalties and servicemen, Kathe` Ponna served the successive kings in accord with their qualification. Here it is need to explain the meaning of Ponna. The word Ponna derived from Hindu word "varna" which means a person who observed the noble precept. In other words it means saintly person, or priest. Ponna is a derivative word of Bonna which was used by the Mons in Bagan period and it did not refer to a certain race³². For instance the word Kathe` Ponna means a Kathe` who followed the noble precept. Likewise, Rakhine Ponna, Myanmar Ponna, Bayanathi Ponna, Thai Ponna mention that the races who practised the noble precept.

Ponnas were categorized in accordance with the duties such as Kathe` Shippa Ponnas because each eight Ponnas had to attend the royal ceremonies at the left and right places of

the King. The king allowed this status only to Kathē Bramin. An order of Badon Min, dated 21 January 1818, read thus;

Shitpa Ponna (Eight member Brahmin) shall not do Shit Hko-obeisance, to members of Royalty and Ministry³³

Shitpa Ponna who arranged royal coronation ceremonies were allowed to use insignia of rank such as decorated head dress, golden shoulder sash, etc. Like shippa Ponna, Ko-pa ponna were important for their duties of propitiation of nine planets in Brahmanical concept. The king selected some Shippa and Ko-pa Ponna to appoint royal purohita or scholar. On 17 October 1839 Thiri Thattama Maha Yazaguru was appointed as scholar³⁴. On 5 May 1842 Ponna Scholars were assigned the duty of compiling calendar³⁵. It is attributed that as the clander was essential for any religious, economic and social performances, the duty of Ponna scholar was more important than that of other officials. In some cases the king assigned ponna scholars to other duties on the ground of their physical and mental prowess. When Rakhine frontier problem broke out between Myanmar and British-India, Ponna scholars accompanied Zeya Kyawhtin, official in-charge-of Myanmar delegation, to discuss with the British³⁶. They also served the duty of diplomacy when the Rajah of Vesali submitted his daughter³⁷. During the First Anglo-Myanmar war, some Ponna scholars were attached to the army of Maha Bundula to investigate the position of British forces in Nepan (Saingpa), Pyinsala, Sheindra and Laknow³⁸. When the Second Anglo-Myanmar war broke out, Ponnas were attached to the armies to arrange occult science to uplift the morale of the servicemen³⁹. In addition the king appointed Pyin-nya-shi na-yi-dawhmu ponna scholar who supervised the watch tower to calculate the Myanmar stand and time.

In order to deal with the affairs of Ponnas, the king usually appointed Ponna-wun-official in-charge-of Ponnas and Ponna Sa-Yei-Clerk of Ponnas in addition, the evidence mention the appointment of Ponna Thatha-na-paing .supreme head of Ponna ecclesial order. In 1805 kings Badon appointed Ponna Atitra U Hla as Ponna Thatha-na-paing⁴⁰. During king Mindon's reign Ponna wun and Ponna scholars were offered insignia of rank including golden shoulder sash of twelve strings jewelled ear-plug, head dress, etc-like the Myanmar court officials they were conferred the titles⁴¹.

During king Mindon's reign, Nga Ba Gyi, grandson of Ponna Wun, was despatched as state scholar with 15 other candidates. In 1820 kathe` a-mat Nga Phyu was conferred the title of Zeya Wattana Kyawhtin to administer Manipur at town govermor⁴². Some Kathē` scholars were installed as ywa-za- fief holder of certain village in Sagaing Min's reign. For instance kathe` scholar Zaya Brahma was allotted Nga Le Ngauk Village, Yaza Parohita Brahma was allotted Hladawgyi Five villages and Wuntha Brahma was allotted Kyei Hsin Inn village respectively⁴³. An order, dated 20 July 1787 , mentions the name Kyatpyin Kathē` Myothugyi Nga Shun and it is suggested that Nga Shun was installed to the office of myothugyi – town officer⁴⁴. During King Mindon's reign Maha Thiri Pandita Dhammarajaguru was allotted Son-myo as fief⁴⁵ by this way the king installed kathe` to the rank of Myothugyi, Myowun, Myoza and Ywaza.

The king also provided lands and paddy for their subsistence. Shippa Ponnas and Koe-pa Ponnas were allotted 1201 pes of paddy lands located in Thinpankon below Aungpinle lake by King Mindon⁴⁶. In 1841, a royal order was passed to provide paddy for some Shippa and Koe-pa Ponnas⁴⁷. They were also exempted from paying taxes whenever they sold their houses or lands in Ponna village⁴⁸. In 1861 there were about 850 Ponans serving in the place and total population of Ponnas was about 2,000⁴⁹. All of them were allotted lands and paddy as the monthly provision. In addition they enjoyed the privilege of the insignia of ranks and titles which were not lesser than that of Myanmar court officials. It

is interesting to note that most of the ponnas came to Myanmar to serve the kings and some came for missionary works and a few came to learn astronomy and fortune telling.

Through monarchical period, the crown servicemen played a vital role in the administration and warfare. Some were renowned for their economic performances. The able kings in warfare employed war captives from neighboring countries to extend their influence. The captive servicemen made their utmost efforts in the formation of army and administration.

Meiteis (Kathe`) were also organized into miscellaneous groups. They were mostly seen in the su-gyi- the group important militarys and non-military servicemen such as daing-shield-bearers, lamaings- crown cultivators and win-koyan- palace guards and royal bodyguard. Some were recruited into the group of Hsin-daw-thi elephanters. An order of king Badon, 1784 A.D, mention as follows.

Nga San Hmat, son of Kathe` Rajah altogether nineteen men were organized Nga San Hmat Thwei-thauk groups. The status of this groups shall equal to the Banya Kyandaw Thwei-thauk of Chiangmai⁵⁰.

Above mentioned elephant group led by thwei-thauk Nga San Hmat was recruited by the King Hsinbyushin when he conquered Manipur. Nga San Hmat and his followers were believed to be the Kinsmen of Kathe` Rajah. He and his family members were recorded in the list of golden treasury. In 1164 M.E (1802 AD) Thwei-thauk Ngapi Nganpa, age 39 and Thursday born, was examined and answered thus;

He was brought to Myanmar since King Hsinbyushin's reign and was organized in Hsin-taw-ti Thwei-thauk group by Myin-wun and Myin sayei in 1151 ME (1784 AD)..... Hsin-si Thiri Kaw Pi Nga-pa shall enjoy insignia of ranks comprising crown, head dress etc⁵¹.

In 1808 the Kathe` horsemen were transferred to the group of elephanters. The thwei-thauks of newly recruited horsemen were the natives of Shwe Kyu Pauk and Da-Ze Kon villages⁵². The list submitted by Hsin Sachi clerk of elephanters) Gazan Ye` Thu in 1170 ME (1808 AD) mention the population of elephanters as follows;

List of Elephanters; 1170 ME (1808 AD)

Elephanters	1145 ME (1783 AD)	1167 ME (1805AD)	Location of Groups
Hti-paung-kha	31	12	Royal Capital
Mad `e	73	12	Royal Capital
Taung-Kyi	42	8	Royal Capital
Suka (Yodaya)	128	9	Royal Capital
Shwe Lun Zu Quarter	68	96	Royal Capital
Narakan (groups)	14	3	Royal Capital
Hisngyon (Yayi Group)	32	11	Royal Capital
Hsingyon (Awa)	18	17	Royal Capital
Yayi (Yodaya)	31	18	Royal Capital
Hsin-daing Kathe`	162	100	Royal Capital
Hsin-daing Akkabat	42	24	Royal Capital
Hsin-daing Shan pike(Added)	18	10	Royal Capital
Hsin gon (Added to collet Yodaya elephant fodder)	×		
Total	671	341	
Sagaing	39	1	Sagaing
Purchased Kathe` (Mingun)	-	15	Sagaing
Total	39	16	

Source: Parabaik MS, No.pu-0004, Ludu Library, Mandalay Collection

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All of the above mentioned elephanters, comprising Kathe` servicemen, settled in Inwa and Sagaing. In 1182 M.E (1825 AD), Mani Yaza and thwei-thauks from Shwe Kyu Pauk, Hsin-swe-put village, Mauk-kaing, Hsi-nan, Htan Thon Gwa, Yin-pon, Taungthaman, Tein-pya, Bon-Oe, Hsat-kon, Lin-sin-kon, Hlwa-su and Yadanagu were added to the Manipuri Elephant groups. In 1182 ME (1820 AD), Manipuri Raja and his kinsmen taken from Maknipur were organized into elephant groups. Following list reads;

Family of Kathe` Raja who were organized into Elephant group

Title conferred in 1182 M.E (1820 AD)	Title conferred in 1199 M.E (1837 AD)	male	female	Town	Remark
Yaza Thinkhaya	U-dein Teza Nawrahta	3	3		
Kammathein Sitha	U-dein Zeya Nawrahta	3	4	Bon-Oe	
	Nawarth U-dein Kyaw	2	1		
Nga Han Tha	La Pon Kaw	2	2		Two monk
Saka-tata	Paw la-te	3	1	Bon-Oe	
Kasan Nawta	Nga Lo-paw	1	1	Mi-pa-chei	
Thuye` Kamatha	Thiha U-dein Nawahta	1	2	Bon-Oe,	
Zeya Yawtha	Sandayaw	4	2	Bon-Oe	One Novice
Nga san Hla`s son	Nga la Ba	3	2		
Nga shwe pwint's son	Thuya Udein Nawrahta	1	2	Bon-Oe	
Nga San Taw's son	Tonpa	1	1	Lebo	
Nga Kya's son	Su Rupa	4	2	Bon-Oe	
Maung Tha	Hton Kanaung	3	3	Shwe Kya Pauk/ Sa daw Quarter	
Yaza Thiha's son	Mani Udein Nawrahta	4	3	Bon-Oe	
Nga Han Pon's son	Udein Teza Nawrahta	4	2	Bon-Oe	
Nga shwe Min's son	Nga Kya Yoe	1	2	Shwe Kyu Pauk	

Source: Sayin, 2003 (c), 102-112

Similarly in 1199 ME (1837 AD) Nemyo Mani Yazashein and his family were organized into Mani Yaza Shein thwei-thauk group. Some servicemen of above mentioned elephanters were conferred titles. Wundauk- assistant commandant of elephant group was conferred the title of Nemyo, hsin-sa-chi- clerk of elephant group and hsin-san-thugyi were conferred the title of Nawrahta. Those who obtained the title of Nemyo were offered two red umbrella and one red velvet trouser as insignia of rank⁵³. Those who obtained the title of Nawrahta were offered one red umbrella, one gold sword and one velvet trouser in 1879. They were also allotted lands for subsistence. Following figure reads;

List of cultivated lands Allotted to the 25 Manipure Thwei-thauks in Elephant Group

Village	Pe	Seik
Chan Thamagyi-ywa	85	
Pyipa	15	
Chin-ywa	35	
Non - Nge	10	
Mekkhaya	10	
Sabathein	7	2
Taing Malan	44	
Myinthe	6	2
Ma The`	47	
Pan Sun	5	
Thin Ti (Two Villages)	91	
Thi khaung	31	2

Naung Saing	20	3
Khan Ti	69	2
Ti Taw	27	2
Nga Pyet	38	
Chan Thama-nge	27	
Total	572	3

source: Sayin 2003 (c), 114

In 1837 during King Thiyawaddy's reign, the king allotted 20 pe's each for thwei-thauk gyi, 10 pes for mounted servicemen and 25 pe for servicemen of Manipuri elephanters. In his reign the list of irrigated lands allotted to Kathe` servicemen can be seen as follows;

List of Irrigated lands Allotted to the Kathe` Servicemen

	Additionally Allotted Lands	The Land already allotted	weir
1.	95 pes	83pes	Nwa-det
2.	15 pes	15pes	Nwa-det
3.	6 pes 2 seiks	6 pes 2 seiks	Nwa-det
4.	15 pes	15 pes	Nwa-det
5.	35 pes	35 pes	Pyaung-pya
6.	15 pes	15 pes	Pyaung-pya
Total	181 pes	169 pes 2 seiks	

Source: Sayin 2003 (c), 115

In addition, the lands allotted to other villages were extracted to grant Meitei (kathe`). Following list reads;

List of lands extracted from other villages to grant Kathe` Servicemen

village (Extracted)	Transferred to (Kathe`)	Total	Added	Drop-off
Thinti-ywa	95 pes	95 pes		
Saing ma-lan-ywa	15 pes	18 pes	3	
Myinthe-ywa	6 pes 2 seiks	6 pes 2 seiks	-	
Extracted from mi Hla Taik	10 pes	15 pes	-	
Chin-ywa	35 pes	42 pes	7	
Naung-saing	20 pes 3 seiks	15 pes		5 pes 2 seiks
Total	182pes 1 seiks	191 pes 2 seiks	10	5 pes 2 seiks

Source: Sayin 2003 (c), 114

Elephant played a vital role in the army formation and battle fields. They were used to mount guns and weapons as well as to use as pack animal. As Kathe` elephanters had the privilege to enjoy the land, they became the cultivators during the peace time.

In addition to the elephant groups, Kathe` horsemen played an important role in the army formation of Myanmar and they comprised in su-gyi group. The crown servicemen were divided into sugyi, su-nu, su-gyan and su-thei. Su-gyi groups were comprised of military servicemen such as thwei-tauk, cavalry, muskets, and elephanters. After the conquest of Manipur by king Alaungmintaya, about 2000 households of kathe`s and Akkabat were brought into Myanmar. They were organized into cavalry groups by granting lands for residence and subsistence. Horse figure was tattooed on the abdomen of the Kathe`

cavalryman. During king Thibaw reign, there were 833 kathe`s cavalrymen⁵⁴. Actually, the advent of Kathe` horsemen prevailed since the conquest of Manipur by king Bayinnaung. The classical poems of that period known as ya-du and maw-gun record of achievements of the king written in poetic form reveal that the people during Taungoo period were familiar with "goolie game" or present day polo. It is known that the goolie game was the Manipur origins and is assumed that Kathe` horsemen had served king Bayiunaung in Taungoo period. When Sino-Myanamr war broke out in 1769 in Myeidumin's reign, 500 Kathe` horsemen accompanied with Myanmar armies to fight against the Chinese⁵⁵. During the first- Anglo Myanmar war in 1824, the British defeated in the Rakhine front by the attach Kathe` horsemen⁵⁶. In 1852, the second Anglo Myanmar war, the Kathe` cavalry troops marched to the battle field of Han tha-waddy and Mottamma columns under the chief of Kathe` cavalry. Maha-Thi-ha dhamma Yat⁵⁷. Similarly in the third-Anglo Myanmar war, the Kathe` Akkabut cavalry troops fought against the British in Sagaing front under the leadership of Akkabut Myin-wun Min-gyi maha min Htin Ya-za⁵⁸. The Kathe` cavalry could make considerable achievement in the battle fields. During konbaung period, Kathe` horsemen were populated in Kyaukse district⁵⁹. Leik san khun village in Amarapura township had been a cantonment area of Kathe` cavalry. An order of King Badon, dated 18 October 1808, reads thus

Kathe` who have now been collected together, may or may not tally with the list of Kathe` made in 1805, just register which kathe` belongs to which group and let them all the marching troops⁶⁰.

The order mentions that Kathe` people and their descendants were organized into crown service groups and able men were recruited in the infantry groups. An order, dated 10 October 1808, mentions that,

Kathe` Akkabut Hpwe` Yin Sayin- Original list of Kathe` Akkabut (armed men), shall be orgnized into one Myin Zu- group of Horsemen, and one Lay Zu- group of Archers; send Lu Daw Su- Group of Better Men, here under the charge of leaders chosen from people who hare had the Ayeik Ma Htwet⁶¹.

The able Kathe` and Akkabats who were not comprised in the crown service groups were selected to recruit in cavalry group and archers. Similarly, the order dated 19 October 1808 mentions that

kathe` who are originally in the services of Prince Pyay, Prince Pagan, Prince Makhaya and Prince Mindon shall remain so but any extra men shall be added to any one of the Horse Groups, these horse men under eight leaders shall join the marching 5,000 kathe` men under Nay Myo Gamani Thin Gyan⁶².

The role of Kathe` cavalry in Myanmar armed forces was still important in the battle field. Customarily, the king offered pa-so – neither garments and turbans to the horsemen totaled over 700⁶³. They were headed by myin-gaung-chief of horsemen and myin-zis- mounted cavalry officer. In May 1885, when Nga Lin, officer of Kathe` cavalry regiment passed away, Nga San Ya was appointed as cavalry officer and Nga Shwe Hla of Taug-tha-man cavalry group passed away, his son Nga lela Shein was selected by their followers as the Kathe` chief of Taung-tha-man cavalry group⁶⁴. During king Thibaw's reign, a Kathe` prince was appointed as the Kathe` Myin-wun- Commandant of Kathe` horse and appointed as let-thon-daw-kaing- the trusted officials who had to keep the royal regalias such as sword, lance, musket ect. He was offered the title of Minhla Minhtin Yazashein to take charge the house hold cavalry. This evidence mention that kathe` faithfully served in the royal palace. Minhla

Minhtin Thurein was appointed as Akkabat Myin-wun⁶⁵. The duties of myin-win were to take charge the defense of kingdom, to systemize the conscription of security servicemen, to convey the instructions and order of the king, Hlut-taw and byei-daik to the subordinate cavalry officials. The battles participated by the cavalry groups reveal the important role and valor of horsemen.

Customarily various Kathe` cavalymen were marked with tattoo. On 10 October 1808, horsemen were tattooed the emblem of brahmani duck, archers were marked with diamond shape and servicemen of su-yin- original groups were tattooed with fighting peacock⁶⁶. During king Thiaw's reign, 825 Kathe` horsemen were allotted 13090 kyats as salary⁶⁷. In addition to the granting of salary Kathe` and Akkabat horsemen were allotted cultivated lands. Following table mentions thus;

List of wet-rice and Dry Cultivated Lands Allotted to Kathe` Horsemen

Horsemen	original Pes	flooded Area	Dry cultivated Land	Wet-rice Land	Location
Kathe`	1545 pes	50 pes 2 seiks		1495 pes	Inside and Below
Akkabat	400 pes		200 pes	200 pes	Aungpinle Lake
kathe`s Horsemen (to cultivate kaukyi paddy)	450 pes		330 pes	120 pes	outside Mingala canal

Source : Sayin, 2003b, pp 280,283

The cavalry regiments played an important role in the king's army due to the quick mobilization in the field.

Kathe` servicemen can be seen as the royal boatmen who settled along the Ayeyarwaddy River. Royal boatmen groups were divided into boat or war-canoe groups, barge groups and hlaw-ga –boat with high and ornamented prow and stern. A list of brick kiln servicemen, dated 22 October 1782, reveal that the Kathe` boatmen were employed in the establishment of Amarapura new capital. The list also describe the names of the officers and fleets such as Htwet-taing-ya kathe` fleet and pyaing -daing-ya kathe` fleet under Nga Pi and Nga Naung, Baung-thein kathe` fleet under U-dein Zayathu, Bon-daw-Nainggan kathe` fleet⁶⁸ under she-win sa-chi let-ya Thikha kyaw htin, In-pyauk fleet, Tha-byu fleet and Ye`-lun-kyaw fleet. They were assigned as the brick kiln servicemen. In time of war, they had to alert for the military duty. An order of king Badon, dated 2 Nov 1808, reads.

Boatmen shall serve as fighting men under Let Yway Gyi Hmu- Chief of Big Selected Groups⁶⁹.

In some, cases Kathe` boatmen had to serve under the princes King Badon put Kathe` boatmen under the charge of Crown Prince and Prince Kalay. An order dated 15 may 1810, mentions thus;

Kathe`, belong to Pyine Daing Ya Boat Group, are transferred to San Ywei Boat Group and they shall serve Crown Prince. Kathe`, belonging to Marabin Boat Group are transferred to Prince Kale service⁷⁰.

The royal fleets were assigned not only military duty but transportation and fishery. They were offered lands for their subsistence. Many cultivated lands were allotted to San-Ywei Kathe` boatmen⁷¹. The successive kings paid great attention to the performance of boatmen. They arranged occasional regatta festival to up fifth the qualification of boatmen. The boatmen faith fully served the kings to the best of their ability.

Another important group which was comprised of Kathe` servicemen was lamaing- crown cultivators. Since the reign of King Alaungmintaya in AD 1758, Kathe` were populated in letwe`-taw and let-ya-taw lamaings⁷². They continued to seave as lamaing under king Myedu and Badon. An order, dated 8 Augnst 1787, mentions thus,

Either Manipuri or Burmese Royal Land cultivators shall never be conscripted into the fighting forces; they shall work only in the economic interest of the king⁷³.

Lamaing groups were primarily categoized into Shwe-nan-yo lamaing and Aungpinle lamaing. Kathe` also served in the other small groups such as black smith, carpenter, weaver, tailoring, white-lime washers, escorts, servicemen of western court etc⁷⁴. Some Kathe` were employed in the ruby mines in Mogok District. They were also employed in silver and lead mines⁷⁵. An order was passed for the other chiefs not to molest the Kathe` servicemen because they being the tax-payers of palace⁷⁶. Anyway Kathe` not only had to engage the occupations they acquainted but also follow the king's instructions to serve at the necessary groups. They even served the princes and princesses as the household servants. An order, dated 21 October 1808, reads;

Prince Kale, Prince Ranaung, Princess Zayun and Princess Htan Da Bin have many kathe` who had never been enlisted in any work group⁷⁷.

As the princes and princesses belonged to the Kathe` royalty, the Kathe` household slaves were came together with them as the inheritance from their parents. The other Kathe` household slaves served other princes and princesses.

Conclusion

The advent of Kathe` in Myanamr society prevailed since the Taungoo period. They served Myanmar kings in various capacities. They arrived into Myanmar not only as the captives but some of them moved into Myanmar since the time immemorial. Variety of Kathe` strata including royalty, servicemen, commoners, Kathe` Ponnas, and slaves came to Myanmar through ages. Successive Myanamr kings employed them in accord with their expertise and offered titles and insignia of ranks to the Kathe` servicemen and officials. Ordinary servicemen were granted lands for their subsistence and residence. Over time, Kathe` ywa-zas, myo-zas, Kathe` Ponna-wuns, Kathe` Cavalry commandant, Kathe` scholars and royal advisers prevailed in Myanmar officialdom. Kathe` scholars served the kings with their mental prowess and Kathe` horsemen, elephanteers, boatmen faith fully served the king with their skillfulness in respecitive service groups including su-gyi major armed groups and su-thei- small groups of craftmen. The advent of Kathe` in Myanmar society brought about the changes in Myanmar culture and way of life to some extent.

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List of Photo



Kathè Inscription in Sein kone quarter at Sagaing



Kathè Temple in Mindè Ekin quarter at Mandalay



King Nongpok Nningthou and Ema Panthoibi in Dawnabwa quarter at Mandalay



Kathè Temple in Moza at Sagaing



Meitei Kathè Temple at Letthama Village



Nat Shrine in Yekyi Pauk Village



Kathè House at Datarle Village



Kathè Horseman in 1855(Dr. Tin Maung Kyi Collection)



Kathè Boatmen(Dr. Tin Maung Kyi Collection)