

# **MODERNISATION CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE**

**A STUDY OF  
THE CHAKPA COMMUNITY  
OF MANIPUR**

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**Ningombam Basanta**

Modernisation is an irresistible force with an unending process. It has spread to every corner of the globe and has crossed every community or society. A critical harnessing of the forces make life cozy and meaningful. However, it has the potential of destroying a community if not assimilated to the local situation.

The Andros are a traditional Chakpa community with a sense of preserving the age old customs and traditions. With the decay of autocracy a prop to their tradition has vanished. Different forces of modernization are making a foray on the community. Some of its traditions and practices have disappeared which include 'Lai Tanba', 'Luphu', 'Gangou Yanba', etc. The modern education and the employment in the state and central services has rendered many of them remaining aloof from the rituals and ceremonies. Again major religions like Hinduism and Christianity etc. are at their doorstep waiting their unconscious moment to replace their traditions. Subsequently their sense of preserving things is under a big question mark. The book is a humble attempt to record, documents their customs and traditions so as to help in preserving them.



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# **Modernisation Challenge and Response**

**(A Study of the Chakpa Community of Manipur)**

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NEW DELHI-110002 (INDIA)**

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*Modernisation: Challenge and Response*  
(A Study of the Chakpa Community of Manipur)

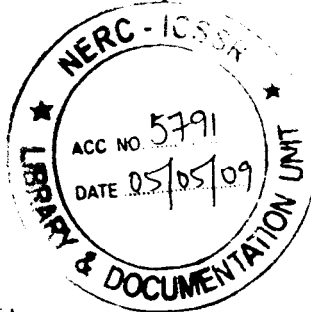
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First Published 2008

ISBN 978-81-8370-152-5

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PRINTED IN INDIA

Published by Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi and Printed at Aryan Enterprises, Delhi.



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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

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The Chakpas are an integral part of the Meitei community, and they are one of the oldest communities of Manipur. The Chakpas are found mentioned in the manuscript 'Kangbalon'- a royal chronicle containing a chronology of Kings ruled before the Christian era. According to this literature the Chakpas first settled during the reign of King *Moriya Phambalcha*. During his reign the name of this Kingdom was "Tillikoktong Leikoyel Hanna Shemba Konna Loiba Pung-O". [*Its other names were "Meera Pongthoklam Lamthak Sharon Pung-O", and "Muwapalli Leimayon-O", etc.*]. They came with only three lineages namely—"Koikoibam" "Keirambam" and 'Koirekpam. Now the Chakpas settle in the peripheral areas of the valley of Manipur. The Chakpa villages are Sekmai, Koutruk, Pheiyeng, Leimaram, Andro, Kwatha and Khurukhul, etc. The Chakpas settled in the village Andro is also known by the name Andro. Since they constitute one of the earliest settlers of Manipur their culture have been integrated with that of the Meiteis to such a degree that one has become a component of the other. However; the Chakpas, specifically the Andros, still retain their distinctive tradition in spite of their integration with the Meiteis for a period spanning more than two thousand years.

Again the Andros are the tradition bearer of some of the age-old traditions of the Meiteis which the Meiteis have



abandoned in due course of time. This peculiar character of preserving the tradition and the very tradition of the Andros have attracted a number of scholars to study this traditional community. In fact the inner strength of the social fabric which handed down their tradition from generation to generation has become a subject which attracts the attention of the scholars. However, a slow transformation that has taken shape in their tradition is also a matter of grave concern. As it happens anywhere in the globe this traditional society also faces the brunt of the mighty force of modernisation. Added to this is also the heavy influence of powerful religions like Hinduism and Christianity. So there arises the need to preserve this age old tradition by all available means before it is too late.

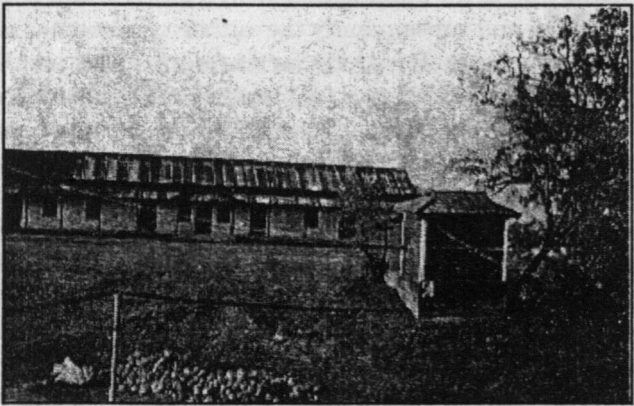
There are oral as well as written accounts of how the Andros came to this village. This village Andro is in the Imphal East District at the eastern foot of Nongmaiching hill which is around 28 km. from Imphal. Their migration history can be traced from manuscripts like 'Sorarel Chakpa Khundarol' and 'Chakpalon Khuntaba' etc. 'Sorarel Chakpa Khundarol' is also known by the name 'Pakhangba Khundoklon.' However, a vivid account of their migration history cannot be produced as there is lack of information both from written and oral accounts.

## **A. MIGRATION HISTORY**

As mentioned earlier in the literature 'Kangbalon' the Chakpas first settled during the reign of king 'Moria Phambalcha'. But a detail account of how the Andros settled in the Nongmaiching hill is available from the literature "Pakhangba Khundoklon". It clearly says that during the reign of King Phambalcha the Chakpas came down from 'Soraren' the Sky. But as this is impossible what is generally accepted is that the Chakpas came from the northerly direction, and they came in two groups - a group of seven known as

“Halleng” and another group of ten known as “Halchok” - whereas the ‘Halleng’ and ‘Halchok’ are the name of their progenitors. Chakpane, Tangpane, Pangkakne, Chikchikpane, Laopalne, Sawangne and Sawang Nongphurel Achibane, etc.; they belong to ‘Halleng’ group. Chakpa, Tangpa; Kashi, Hori, Hora, Nonglol, Nongphu, Melnong Mit, Mellang Mit and Hamengmit belong to “Halchok” group. Further it is mentioned that they arrived at “Mongpa Yoishangkai”. However, this is not the name of a place, but this is the name of an office. This is indicative of the presence of a separate department in the palace dealing with the settlement issues. It also reflects a manner of reporting first to the administration by a group of new settlers in the valley and subsequently the authority concerned allots a tentative area for their settlement. And such an arrangement is reflective of the strategic areas settled by the Chakpas in the periphery of the valley. As for instance the Andros in the eastern frontier of the valley was to face the tribes in the east particularly the ‘Luhoopas’, the Sekmais in the north was to face the Paomai, Mao, Maram, etc., Leimaram, Phayeng, Khurukhul, etc. were to face the Kabuis or any intruder from the west. They were to face any external aggression first before it was relayed to the palace. In addition to this they were also assigned to produce a specific item for use particularly in the palace. For example, the Andros produced pottery items and the Fayeng produced silk clothes. On their departure from the office they cooked food at ‘Nongmeipung’, a place located at a walking distance from ‘Kangla’, the traditional temporal seat of Manipur. Both the groups cooked small fry fish, but of unequal items. ‘Halleng’ group cooked ‘Ngakha’ fish and ‘Halchok’ group cooked ‘Ngaching’ fish (prawn). Again, here, this is also suggestive of accompanying fishing implements in their migration. In no time ‘Halleng’ finished their cook and prepared for their destination. But ‘Halchok’ could not do so and they took much

time. Simple reason was that 'Ngaching' (prawn) becomes red when it is cooked. They considered that the food was not well cooked and was not fit for eating. So they boiled it further till the fish becomes white. *It seems the Chakpas were not familiar with the small fish 'Ngaching'. They were not aware of the nature of the fish.* 'Halleng' group could not wait 'Halchok' group. They suggested to proceed in advance before the sun sets so as to find out their place of settlement. So the 'Halleng' group advised the 'Halchok' group to follow their footprint. So they left 'Nongmeipung' by leaving marks by swords on a tree named 'Lammuk'. Finally they settled at a place named 'Mangshi'.



'Nongmeipung' mound—near this mound 'Halleng' and 'Halchok' cooked their food.

Meanwhile the 'Halchok' group boiled the food till it becomes white. But they failed and they wrongly realised that the food was poisoned and not proper to consume. So they wrapped the cooked food by seven leaves of 'Khangla' tree. 'Khangla' leaf is used in many rites and rituals of the Andros. *They also use to wrap the 'Naopham' (placenta or umbilical cord) by "Khangla" leaves and bury it nearby the*

house as a tradition. A small mound was made nearby the buried food and since then the mound came to be known as "Khangla Pung". This 'KhangJapung' is around six hundred feet to the north of 'Nongmeipung'. At present there is no remain of 'Khanglapung', however, a probable site can be located as the place named 'Soibam Leikai' Khanglapung is derived from the mound 'Khanglapung'.

As for information there is another mound named 'Lamdaipung' just near at the north of 'Nongmeipung'. So 'Lamdaipung' is in between Nongmeipung and 'Khanglapung'. As a result 'Khanglapung' is little farther away from Lamdaipung. The presence of these 'Pungs' and more other Pungs (mounds) in Manipur says that there was mound culture in the region. Mounds might have been prepared to tell something to the posterity about an event of national or historical importance. At present there are many means and devices to relay such tells to posterity. However, in those days the only easy means was to prepare such a mound which would withstood from the wear and tear of wind, rain, water and from foreign invasion. Again in the valley there are not suitable huge stones to erect monoliths, so the only means was to prepare mounds. So there are many Pungs like 'Nongmeipung', 'Lalampung', 'Charoipung', 'Thijitpung', 'Shingjupung', 'Kakwa Lamtaipung', 'Kongba Soudongpung', 'Khuraipung', 'Wangthonbipung', etc. Without any thing to eat 'Halchok' group soon followed the 'Halleng' group with great hunger. But the attempt bore no fruit. They followed the marks left on trees. Unfortunately the tree was 'Lammuk' a tree which the bark becomes dark as soon as it is cut. They concluded that the mark was an old one and it could not be a new route. So they remained confused and could not proceed further. And returned to a suitable place. In traditional parlance the one who departed is known as 'Yangoiba'. And the one who stays is known as 'Teroure', 'Haldro'. In due course of time 'Haldro' was

corrupted into the present 'Andro'. It settled on 'Nongmaiching' hill. The sentence "*Langmaichingta Khul Takhiye*" clearly shows that the Andros first settled on the Nongmaiching hill. Now a days they are settled at the foot of the hill spreading around three km. in length from the southern edge (Khunou Leikai) of the village to the northern edge (Machengpat Leikai) of the village. As found from archaic literatures like 'Pakhangba Khundoklol', etc. 'Khunungmayum' is the lineage of 'Halchok'. Now this is transformed into 'Khunnumayum'. This lineage is found involved in many major rituals of the village. It may be a way of extending due respect to the lineage considering its old age. Now a days there are around sixteen lineages in Andro. Another important lineage is 'Ningthoujam'.

The migration history of the Andros, to be more specific the Chakpas, is still a controversy. At one time, it is widely believed that they settled at Koubru range (a range in the north-western side of the valley. However, according to literature "Leishemlon' the 'Lai' tribe first settled in the 'Koubru' range. It is clearly mentioned in the literature describing the range in the manner ... "*Awang Koubru Ashuppa, Laiyam Khunda Ahanba ...*" etc. which says Awang Koubru the supreme authority, a place first settled by the 'Lais'. It was from this range that they spread to other hills surrounding the valley. In other literatures like 'Poireiton Khunthokpa', 'Ningthourol Lambuba' 'Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba', etc. the Chakpas has been in existence since the early time.

Mindomin Taung (Princess of hill) is found mentioned as Angooching or Chakpa Angooching (Hill of Chakpa Angoo) in the literature 'Ningthourol Lambuba'. This 'Angooching' (Angoo hill) is a range running north to south of the Kabow valley (now in Burma, at one time the territory of Manipur. ceded to Burma first in A.D. 1834 by the British and secondly in A.D. 1953 by India). Chindwin river in this valley is known

to the Meiteis as Ningthee or Chakpa Ningthee. And according to the literature 'Ningthourol Lambuba' Ningthee (Engthee) is a Chakpa (Thet) word. In an article by 'Maw Nwee Than' in the magazine 'Kabow Valley' it is found mentioned that the first known settler of this valley was Tet or thet or sak at about 900 B.C. These Thet peoples (Chakpa) spread from Manipur and settled in this valley. Before their settlement some unknown tribes were there (probably the Lai or Zo tribe). The article continues that due to repeated raid by the original inhabitants the Thet or Tet (Chakpa) shifted to the Irrawady valley and some of them might have shifted back to Manipur.

This view of migration of Chakpas from Kabow Valley to Manipur Valley is corroborated by local beliefs. The belief associates with their principal deity 'Panam'. During 'Panam Haraoba' festival it is believed that the deity appears in the sky in the depth of night beginning from south-eastern direction and vanishes in the community forest of the village in the form of a ball of fire. The direction implies the direction of Kabow Valley.

The controversy over the migration of the Chakpas will exist till on all out effort is made to trace the migration of other groups constituting the Meitei community. However, it is certain that the Andros to be more exact, the Chakpas migrated to Manipur in the beginning of history of Manipur. After their departure from 'Nongmeipung' the Andros first settled on the eastern side of 'Nongmaiching' hill. The sentence '*Langmaichingta Khul Takhiye*' from the literature 'Sorarel Chakpa Khundarol' clearly says that the Andros settled in the Nongmiching hill. It says that they established a village in the 'Nongmaiching'. However, they were not alone in the Nongmaiching hill. The Shelloi-Langmais ruled the 'Nongmaiching' hill. The Shelloi-Langmais later on merged to Angom Salai (clan). Again there were villages like Haokap Chingsang, Ngangching, Khulpham, Thanga

Youkham, etc. Besides there were Tangkhul (tribe) villages in the Nongmaiching hill. 'Huitok' and 'Sharam' are the two Tangkhul villages found mentioned in 'Panthoipi Khongkul'.

It is certain that the Andros once settled in the hills. However, it remains a question that when the Andros came down from the hill to settle on the foothill. The literature 'Chakpalon Khuntaba' says that during the reign of King Naokhamba (A.D. 411-428) there were ten Chakpa villages in 'Nongmaiching' hill. But during the reign of King Punshiba (A.D. 1404-1432) the Andros were well established in the foothill. There are still remains of their settlement in the hills. Artifacts like pots (pieces) or pottery items are found at the site of the settlement. Iron implements in pieces are also found there. According to Yumkhaibam Dharmo Singh, former 'Khullakpa' (Village Chief) of Andro Awang Leikai, at least two places namely 'Salang'; and 'Ayang' with clear evidence of settlement of villages is available at present. It is on near plane slop of the hill. And it is a place which can accommodate a number of houses. Water streams which were once used by the settlers are also available there.

The water streams, the near plane slopes, the remains of pottery items, and tools and implements are the hard reminders of the then settlement. There is a place named 'Changathen' which is now transformed into 'Changaithembi' - a place for pilgrimage. But there is a background on the name of this particular place. 'Uchon' is a village sandwiched by bigger villages namely 'Huikap' and Andro. Near this village 'Uchon' there is an open field. This open field was once the paddy field of 'Ayang' village in the hill which is more than 3 km from the village. There is also another place named 'Nongmairou'. And this was the field for the village 'Sakuba'. In the version of Y. Dharmo Singh even during his lifetime there was a practice of carrying 'Chakyom' (packaged food) in the workplace or on the way to workplace by the female members of the family. As the field or workplace

was far away from home so it was inconvenient for someone to proceed to home for his meal. There was also the factor for time. So in order to save time and as well as to reduce the hardship of hunger it was a practice to wait the man on the field with his 'Chakyom' (packaged food) at the place named 'Changthen'. From this practice of waiting the villagers with 'Chakyoms' who went for work in the paddy field then the place came to be known as 'Changathen'.

But in due course of time it was transformed into 'Chakngaithembi'. But now it is deified and has taken the shape of a deity. And every year on the third day of 'Kalen' (May) the villagers of Andro visit the place as a pilgrim and perform rite at the spot. However, the transformation was such that from 'Chakngaithen' to 'Changathen' and finally to 'Changaithembi'. 'Chakngaithen' literally means a place for waiting one's meal. Chak=rice=meal, Ngai=Ngaiba=to wait, Then=a plane area in the hill. Around this 'Changathembi' there is a stream named 'Thoubom Houbi'. 'Thoubom' is a tall flowering grass. This tall flowering grass 'Thoubom' grows around this stream and hence the name 'Thoubom Houbi'.

After settling on the 'Nongmaiching' hill for a considerable period of time the Andros descended from the hill and settled near the foot of the hill. The way how they descended from the hill and the year when that was effected is still a question which remain unanswered. Naturally shifting villages from hill to valley takes many years as it is dangerous to shift at a time as children cannot tolerate the changed environment. And simply the children dies.

For Andro 'Khuman Leikai' is considered the first place of settlement and treated as the oldest 'Leikai' (local). But today there are as many as 14 Leikais with a population above five thousands. The Leikais (locals) are 1. Khuman Leikai, 2. Makha Leikai, 3. Awang Leikai, 4. Mamang Leikai,



5. Kharam Leikai. *In this Leikai there is a small population of Kharam tribe and hence the name of the 'Leikai' as "Kharam Leikai". The life-style and physical appearance of the 'Kharams' are almost identical with the Andros. Unless someone guides one will consider the Kharams as Andros.*

6. Khunou Leikai, 7. Chinggol Leikai, 8. Machengba Leikai, 9. Loupaochum Leikai, 10. Erao Ching Leikai, 11. Nungyungbi Leikai, 12. Leitianpekpham Leikai, 13. Champra Leikai and 14. Sanapat Leikai. There are fifteen lineages and they are Meitei lineages which are as follows: 1. Yumkhaibam, 2. Heikrujam, 3. Leishungbam, 4. Phanjoubam, 5. Sagolshem, 6. Ningthoujam. 7. Shamchetshabam, 8. Puthem, 9. Thokchom. 10. Chingakham, 11. Hijam, 12. Salam, 13. Asheibam, 14. Sarubam, and 15. Sarungbam. For the Meiteis there are seven Yeks (exogamous clans), however, for the Andros there are only six Yeks. And they are 1. Khuman, 2. Ningthouja, 3. Moirang, 4. Kha-Nganba, 5. Luwang and 6. Angom.

## **B. TOPOGRAPHY**

Almost on all sides of the village there are rice fields. A stream known as 'Ahong Turel' passes in the heart of the village. It runs on the eastern edge of 'Pureiromba' deity (or shrine). The direction of the stream is west to east. Now the stream comes out of the village running near the public crematorium and meets with 'Nongmai Turel', a much bigger stream. The name 'Ahong,' may be derived from a place named 'Ahongkei' - a place with a huge stone at the lower part of the hill (Nongmaiching). It is a sacred place for the Andros. This stream 'Ahong' originates from this side of the hill where there is a huge stone. So the name of the stream as 'Ahong- Turel'. The 'Nongmai Turel' runs north to south at the eastern edge of the paddy field adjoining the eastern range. A bridge on this stream connects 'Sanapat Leikai' with the rest of the village. The river on the southern side of the bridge is known as 'Erang turel' and that of the northern

side is known as 'Nongmai Turel'. In the eastern side of the village there are lakes namely (1) Poirou Pat, (2) Sanapat and (3) Laipat. Some ten years back parts of the lakes were covered with lotuses and lilies. Now this is completely removed and converted into paddy fields.

There are places like 'Leitanpekpham' and 'Champra Chingdong'. They are places for collecting raw materials for pottery. From 'Leitanpekpham' they extract clay. Again the other component 'Leichreng', they extract it from 'Champrachingdong'- a small hillock in the village. Again there is the 'Kekopat'- a small pond where the water is used in cooking in 'Panam Haraoba' festival. There are other places like 'Amamlok', 'Changathen' and 'Waktrong'. They are sacred places.

Again 'Lamphal Shoi' and Uran Lakpa' are the extremities of the village. 'Lamphel Shoi' in the east and Uran Lakpa' in the west. Every year on the day of 'Lam Haiba'- a ritual marking the arrival of dry season, offerings are paid to deities which are considered as sentinels of the village at this two places. On the northern side of the village there is a reserved forest, reserved for the deity 'Panam'. However, for daily offering a secluded place is maintained in the village with 'Panam Laipu' as the person in charge of the deity 'Panam'. Andro society is basically a patriarchal society. However, the Maibis, the priestesses are given due share in their engagements relating to rituals. So there are secluded places in the outskirts of the village: The three places are 'Maibi Phampham' at 'Sanapat'; one at the reserve forest of Panam and the other at 'Santhong'- the place where the ritual 'Kurak Lamtaiba' is observed. But the one which attracts visitors in the village is the temple for 'Androgi Mei'- the Andro fire at the heart of the village. Formerly the fire was housed in a small hut. Now it is transformed into a big temple.

This fire is believed to be handed over by the legendary coloniser—the 'Poireiton' of the first century A.D. Utmost care

is taiken not to occur any break in the fire. And it has established as a socio-cultural institution. However, it is not free from controversy. Because 'Poireiton' himself came across the Andros using fire in cremation. The following para from the archaic literature 'Poireiton Khunthok' is a testimony on how fire was familiar with the Andros for their use in many utility services. And he excerpt runs as follows - *Yiyuwa Chingkhong Poireitonna Yotpi Cheishu Mathoukumna Nongpok Tampu Kenna Shenpi Shidaba Kabow Natapapu Leirikpara Haina khunthirakpapu Chakpa Kaitong Hao Pahangpa Shing Chang Lengta Thongpa Pamel Tangkhai Laopata Paohangkhiye. Chakpa keitong Pakhangpa-O, Meipu Takhongi Pai, Meikhu Nonglol Kapa Ashipu Kari Meino Paohangpapu Hempa Puchet Mei, Chekai Kakup Mei, Charu Tangshoi Mei, Loimom Poktok Mei, Phutit Nonglol Meira Haina Paohang Papu Hoita Yiyuwa Chingkhong Poireiton O Aiyum Hemcheng Fuyikumei, Charu Tangshoi Meishung, Nate ..... Meerou Meine Haina Paokhumkhiye*. A version in modern Manipuri runs thus - *'Eyuwa Chingkhong Poireitonna Yotki Cheishu Tumba Makhei Nongpok Maikeigi Tampak Pumnamakta Kabo Shida Nadaba Karamba Khul Leiramgadabage Haina Thirakpada Chakpa Keitongba Hao Pakhang, Shingchang Marengbanda Thongduna Chatpa. U Tangkhai Khaiba Amada Wa Hangkhi, Keitongba Chakpa Pakhangba-O, Mei Chakpangi Tang-goi Paiduna Meikhu Wangna Kariba Ashibu Karigi Meino ? Haona Pam Thaba Meira, Chapu Ekpa Meira, Charukhok Thaba Meira, Fou Pokpa Meira, Charu Fudit Thabagi Meira Haina Hangbada Chakpa Pakhangna Hairak-e, Hoi Eyuwa Chingkhog Poireiton-O, Eikhoi Chakpangi Chapu Ekpangi Mei, Charukhok Thabagi Meishu Natte. Chakpa Potloi Meine. Leima Falloung Ngambeegi Machanipa Shangphuraipa Koubado Kharadagi Onthaduna Shire. Eikhoi ChakpangiMee Thabagi Mei, Mee Potloibagi Meini Haina Khumkhi*. It says Poireiton, in his

mission to find out a habitable place in the eastern side of the valley with his iron staff, came across a Chakpa youth with an axe on his shoulder. On seeing a blazing fire he enquired the reason for the fire. Is the fire meant for slash and burn, for igniting pot in pottery, for burning straws in the field or for puffing rice? Non of the activities was related with the fire, replied the Chakpa youth. The fire was meant for cremation. A boy named 'Shangphuraipa', the son of 'Leima Phalloungambi' was drowned in the pond. The fire was meant for burning man, for cremation, said the youth (Chakpa).

From the above statement what is revealed is that the Andros were familiar with fire and fire was used for many purposes ranging from pottery to puffing rice. So the belief that the Andro fire was introduced by 'Poireiton' contradicts with the above statement where the Andros had the knowledge to use fire for many utility services.

But here one cannot dilute the belief on finding the facts from literature. The belief might have its socio-economic and cultural background. Because Poireiton is such a person who accompanied with a civilization in his mission to find out a habitable place in the region. The mission was executed with the knowledge of different aspects of life relating to food items including a variety of vegetables, weaving implements, artisans for jewellery, a variety of paddy including the famous "Chahou-Poireiton"- the black rice and blacksmith, etc. In other sense the arrival of 'Poireiton' helped in the development and transformation of life. So it is not an awkward attitude to develop an aura of myth around such a person. It may be treated as a sense of extending due reverence to such a personality who has transformed the life so much. It is not wrong to remember such a person in the form of preserving the fire.

### C. SOCIO-CULTURAL SITUATION

There cannot be an independent economy of Andro and it is an appendage of Manipur economy. Agriculture is still the mainstay of the economy with the right to individual ownership. However, in some specific items communal ownership is also still prevalent. But what is emerging is the small group of employees in the state and central government services.

Formerly 'Loishang' the village administrative body was the supreme authority in civil and judicial matters. With the replacement of monarchy by democracy in Manipur a certain portion of its power has been shared to the State. Now 'Loishang' is reduced to a body looking after the rites and rituals of the village. However, it still exercises its power on disputes of the nature of marriage, thefts etc. But if the case becomes complex the right is given to a person to appeal to a court of the State.

Most of the rituals and festivals are similar with that of the Meiteis. Again there are rituals which are purely for the Andros and not available in Meitei tradition. The ritual 'Lam Haiba' is not found among the Meiteis. Again in the rituals and festivals which are similar in names with that of the Meiteis, there we find a number of differences ranging from procedure, timing, items offered and the deity prayed, etc.

Pottery is an old craft of the Andros and they are the one who supplied earthen wares to the kings of Manipur. As pottery is a major plank of their economy, so due importance is given to it in the form of certain codes in extracting the raw materials. In addition rites are performed every year marking the day of beginning the extraction of raw materials. But still pottery is at the traditional level and introduction of advance technology is necessary. Fishing and weaving implements, though traditional, is still supporting their economy. Certain modernisation is found in wood work,

however bamboo work is still traditional and has its place in Andro Society. Fishing implements and musical tools are also still traditional. However, in agriculture modernisation has arrived as far as ploughing is concerned.

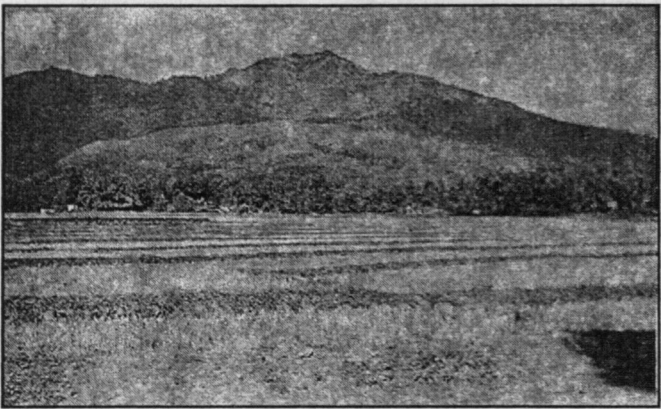
The Andro dialect is still there at least in record with nowhere its place for use except at the time of certain rituals. There are names of seven days and twelve months. Also there are the names of heavenly bodies, birds, cattle, foods and vegetables, etc. And certain sentences can also be produced out of the vocabulary.

Some of the socio-cultural institutions are still flourishing while a few are slowly succumbing to the forces of modernisation. Organisations like 'Pujari Loishang' and 'Arangpham Loishang' are still popular. However, 'Shinnaipham Kaba', the only institution for the girls is gradually disappearing from the village. It survives only at the interior areas of the village. The ritual named 'Maibi Chaklon Katpa' - a ritual performed as a token for the festivals 'Panam Haraoba' and 'Pureiromba Haraoba' when both are failed to perform in the village, is becoming a regular practice since the pass few years. And this will continue to do so, as the village cannot held the 'Haraoba' festivals. This ritual is by far a ritual for the Maibis (priestess) where due liberty is granted to them as regard to their behaviour, actions and responsibilities. However, as regard freedom to women (in a patriarchal society) of Andro it is next to the ceremony 'Epan Thaba' (birth ceremony) where one can witness an all women affair.

#### **D. ACCOUNT OF NONGMAICHING HILL**

The study may be incomplete if an account of 'Nongmaiching hill' is not included in the research. It was once on the hill where the Andros settled for a pretty long time. In this age also they are not far away from the hill but have climbed down at the foot. The hill is the source of their

material culture. It provides water for irrigation and drinking purposes. The forest at the foothill shelters the secluded place of their principal deity 'Panam'. The two varieties of soil, one 'Leichreng' (coarse soil) and the other 'Leitan' (clay), both on the different heights of the hill, is the source of their art of pottery. Woods, bamboos and thatch grown in the hill have influenced in moulding the architecture of their house. In brief the hill directly or indirectly influences in developing their culture and tradition.



A view of 'Nongmaiching' hill from the East

### **Physical Feature**

The 'Nongmaiching' hill is around 5133 ft, above the sea level. The literature 'Panthoibi Khongkul' gives an account of the hill including its physical feature, climate and natural vegetation, etc. The hill is composed of nine (9) ranges with nine (9) faces which says '*Chingsha Mapal Shuna Leiba Ching, Chingmaishu Mapal Shuna Panba Ching*'. It has seven (7) gorges and like the rooms of a house it has three stages which says '*Loktaretna Chenthaba Ching, Yungi Kagumna Fidup Ahum Shuba Ching*'. There are hot places and cold regions in the hill. It is a hill which experiences

scattered snowfall. It also says that it was surrounded by water and further mention that water is a constituent of the hill. It gives us the idea that it produces a lot of water, may be due to its lush forest. Even some thirty (30) years back one could hear the sound of gushing water down the hill during rainy season from a distance of around five (5) kms. which is popularly known as 'Nongmaiching Eraokhol'. Further, it is described as a majestic hill, a hill created at the foremost during the creation of the world - a piece from the Meitei Creation theory which says that - the hills were pulled up by the Almighty from primeval water in the course of creation of the world. As fixed by nails of iron and gold the hill is not shaken by earthquake. It continues that there are iron and gold ores. The hill was made by the sword named 'Shamba'.

The mode of cultivation by that time was slash and burn. And rain was the only source of irrigation. At least double crops were cultivated early crop (Angal Phou) and later crop. Besides rice other vegetables like arum, ginger, cha-en (bajra) etc, were also cultivated. Spade was the dominant agricultural tool which was used in spadework, uprooting the herbs and shrubs and putting the soil upside down, etc. At least two early paddy; 'Cha-el' and 'Thang-e' were cultivated in the hill. Foukak, Haocheng, Kholol and Paomel, etc, were the varieties cultivated during the rainy season.

Nongmaiching hill is closely related with culture of the Meiteis as evidenced by the literature 'Shakok Thiren' and 'Leihou Nonghou Puya'. The literature deals with the background of the name of the hill 'Nongmaiching'. In addition it also furnishes the circumstances leading to the birth of seven days of a week. The story begins with a myth, however, there are elements of migration history, migrating from 'Koubrou' hill to 'Nongmaiching' hill. It also reveals the ecology of the then period. It says, in the past the valley was covered by a sheet of water. "Epuroi Apokpa", the supreme deity contemplated to convert the valley in the model of



heaven. So he advised 'Lainingthou Sorarel' to translate his ambition into reality, 'Epuroi Apokpa' pointed to the mighty hill standing in the east of 'Koubru and ordained him to level the hill to the ground so as to fill the valley with the soil (earth) from the hill. 'Lainingthou Sorarel' was blessed by 'Epuroi Apokpa' to rule both the heaven and earth. Encouraged by the blessing 'Lainingthou Sorarel' in association with 'Laiyams' (deities) constructed a huge boat called 'Heiyang Hirel' from the tree named 'Uyaini' which are available in 'Koubru' hill. 'Koubru' hill is situated on the north-western side of the Imphal valley, and this hill is much taller than 'Nongmaiching' hill. The 'Laiyams' crossed the sheet of water on the boat like a dragon wades in the water.

They arrived at the foot of 'Nongmaiching', and 'Lainingthou Sorarel' was amazed by the majestic height of the hill which was found touching the clouds. The place where they anchored the boat was named as 'Hiyangthang', Considering the height of the hill which touches the 'Nong' (cloud) it was named as 'Nongmaiching'. They scaled the hill led by the king of 'Laiyam' and the day was named as 'Ningthoukaba' where 'Ningthou' is king and 'Kaba' is to climb. After scaling the hill the 'Lais' standing at the top of it labelled the hill by using thunderbolt. And the day was named as 'Leipakpokpa' where 'Leipak' is earth 'or soil and 'Pokpa' is to give birth. And thus a labelled ground was given on the day and hence the name 'Leipakpokpa'. After acquiring a suitable land the 'Lais' erected their house. Such a day was named as 'Yumshakeisha' where 'Yum' is house. The early settlers on the hill were Hao's, a tribe. On seeing the activities of the 'Lais' the 'Haos' attacked the 'Lais'. And a fierce battle was fought on elephant and horseback. The day was marked as 'Shagolshen' where 'Shagol' is horse. As a result of the terrible fight between 'Lais' and 'Haos' the field became red with blood. From such a scene the name 'Erai' was coined. The day when the blood stained weapons

like sword, spear, arrow, etc. of both the sides were washed was known as 'Thangja' where 'Thang' is sword. So when an account is given on 'Nongmaiching' hill it is described as a hill which produces the seven (7) days of a week. The seven days in order are 1. Nongmaiching (Sunday), 2. Ningthoukaba (Monday), 3. Leipakpokpa (Tuesday), 4. Yumshakeisha (Wednesday), 5. Shagolshen (Thursday), 6. Erai (Friday), 7. Thangja (Saturday).

The cultural and historical significance of the hill is described poetically in the following manner:

Nongmaigidi Haitha Ching,  
 Nongpok Khanlong Mapungyai,  
 Panthoibi Emana Konba Lam,  
 Nonggi Mammai Faona Wangba Ching  
 Taibang Chayom Taret Thokna-ching  
 Nongmai Hagabara Hada ching  
 Seroi Mana Nik-Kabara Nikta ching  
 Loibi Chinqmai Mapal Fangba Chingjaoni,.

The 'Nongmaiching' hill is a great geographical barrier for the Andros. The hill keeps them geographically isolated from the mainland Meitei society, particularly from the population of Imphal, the capital of Manipur. The hill also served as a mental barrier which tended to develop a psychology of their own. They still suffer from a complex, and consider themselves as inferior. And they still feel the sense of being exploited by the Meiteis, a legacy of Hindu feudalism which the Manipuris suffered as a whole. However, they still publicly claim that they still retain their culture and tradition. And here arises the big question mark of how long will they be able to retain their culture and tradition. But the reality is that certain amount of their custom and tradition has been eroded which are manifested in their unconscious moments of cultural and traditional activities.

Most of their traditional personal names like Achou, Tompok, Maipak, etc., have been replaced by Surchandra, Dharmo, Palandro, etc. And this prevails in other areas of custom and tradition. The study gives the opportunity to record their custom and tradition side by side to fathom the amount of erosion that had occurred in their tradition and culture.

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*Title: Chin the Khyang Ethnic group.*