ORIGIN, MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT
CHAPTER TWO

ORIGIN, MIGRATION
AND SETTLEMENT

From the eastern end of the Himalayas the mountain chain of the Patkai runs south towards the Indian Ocean, which it reaches at last in shrunken form as the Arakan Yomas. On either side of the chain, irregular hills branch out to a belt of broken country separating India and Bangladesh from Myanmar. In the northern part of these frontier hills the Brahmaputra valley, a long, narrow salient of low lying plain, runs back deeply into them; to the south of the valley is a massive block of tangled hills. This block is the present home of the Naga tribes.
This region, the southeast Himalayan mountain range has been confluence of various ethnic groups since time immemorial. The region is considered as a great anthropological museum as various racial groups, inhabit it; broadly speaking most of the tribes contains in varying proportions Negrito, Austro-Asiatic, Alpine-Aryan and Mongoloid elements, containing even now some elements, which can be called, of primitive people. But very few systematic studies of these have been made. It is believed that the region received waves after waves of immigrants from Southeast Asia and the Oceanic world, and India, though some elements of the inhabitants were probably indigenous, and that some people were at time sent out from this region. Anything like a chronological treatment of the subject is impossible in view of the fact that no pre-historic human skulls have been found, and only a few anthropometric measurements has been taken. But, the weight of evidence indicates that the area received waves after waves of immigrants besides inhabited by some of the earliest men.

The Marams are one of the various Naga tribes who believe that their origin or place of departure to different parts of the present habitat is from Makhel and Khezakhonoma. Many of the Naga tribes trace their origin to Khezakhonoma and Makhel. But in any scientific investigation or inquiry to trace the origin or indigenity a historian need the help of a Geologist to find out a thing or two. Interestingly the region where the Marams inhabits in particular or the Nagas at large, the soils are of alluvial type that naturally contested the very theory of indigenity of the Nagas or for that matter Marams from the two places mentioned. Thus to know the origin one has to look beyond indigenity. The following lines shall delve into the theories propounded by many writers. However my conclusions shall be on the basis of the theories studied and

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1 Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India*, pp 9-11.
3 Makhel is in Senapati (Tahamzang) District, Manipur, and Khezakhonoma is in Phek District, Nagaland. Hardly 8 miles separates the two places. The two villages are believe to be one of the two earliest among the Nagas villages established.
5 Jyotirmoy Roy, *History of Manipur*, p 3. Hereinafter refered as Roy, *History of Manipur*. He wrote thus "Though the sea receded from that area, the valley portion of Manipur remained under water for a long time. The Manipuri Purans also refer to this fact. There, it is found that in the beginning everything was under water."
own observations based on oral traditions of the Marams during my fieldwork. The present study, therefore, will mainly be restricted to the surviving elements. Thus taking anthropometrics measurement we shall try to look into other aspect of the origin i.e. waves of migration and come to an acceptable conclusion. The Marams with whose history we are particularly concerned have been living in different stages, and in most cases without any written history. Hence the early history and culture has remained a matter of conjecture and inference. However, at present there has been ample awareness and awakening to delve into this past history of this tribe much of which lies shrouded in legends, myths, folklore, historical relics, folksongs and writings in the form of manuscripts. Otherwise ever since the tribe the Maram has been declared by the Government of India in 1981 as one of the 75 Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs), there appeared in print reports concerning governmental schemes and projects, which hardly delve into the Maram’s past. Information on the tribe has been thus sketchy.

ETYMOLOGY OF THE TERM “MARAM” VIS-A VIS “MARAMEI”.

The origin of the etymon ‘Maram’ appears to have been derived from the village ‘Murrum’ or ‘Maram’. Otherwise the people call themselves as ‘Maramei’ i.e. the people of Maram. The assertion of the presence of a large village where from they derived their name appears to corroborate the stories of the establishment of many villages later on. The Marams not only believe but also accept that the etymon ‘Maram’ is derived from the earliest village name ‘Maram’ and thus they are known as ‘Maramei’. This is the most likely theory of the origin of the etymon ‘Maram’ since many of the new villages established bears the name Maram. The Marams are now

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7 Verrier Elwin, The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century, p. 461. Verrier Elwin while describing the big village containing 1000 houses used the epithet “Murrum”. He also used the term quasi-Angami for the tribe or the inhabitants of the village “Murrum”, p. 446. Hereinafter refered as Elwin, The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century.
8 T C Hodson, The Naga Tribes of Manipur, p.3. He mentioned that Maram and Mao Nagas derived their name from two of the most important villages in their area. Hereinafter cited as Hodson, The Naga Tribes of Manipur.
concentrated in some thirty two villages. Sigong, literally king of Maramei Nandi is still as accepted as the titular head of the tribe.

The Thangals, one of the Naga tribes, better known as Koirao in official usage is kindred group of the Marams. The Marams and Thangals culturally have close affinity and have settled not only in the contiguous area but also in same villages except in two villages where it is mostly inhabited by the Thangals. They are one of the Tenyimi groups.

ORIGIN

The Marams did have a history as well as rich cultural heritage of their own. Like many of the Naga tribes, they have their own version of their origin and migration. However it is still a speculative and assumptive reconstruction from the scarce sources. Thus to trace the origin, migration and settlement pattern of the tribe, is not a very simple task to investigate. To work any writer has to depend upon oral and folklore traditions like myths, legends etc. as very less materials are available. In all probability due to these not much work has been done in this area.

Following oral traditions, one forms a rough idea that most of the Naga tribes traced their origin from 'Makhe' and 'Khezakhonoma'. The two places are separated by about 8 miles. The legends of many Naga tribes including the Marams and even Meities claim their origin to Makhel.

There are many theories regarding the origin of the Marams. However, there are no written records to show how they originated. Some of the most popular traditions are the mythical origin. Thus to trace their origin one has to depend heavily on the oral traditions in the form of folksongs, folktales, legends, proverbs etc. There are some elderly persons who have vast knowledge about the origin though still in mythical form.

9 Maram Union (Hoho) Record Book, 2005. There are 32 constituent villages as per the declaration of the Maram Union meeting held on 8th October 2005. There are villages like Maram Centre, Maram Bazar, New Maram, Maram Khenou i.e. new Maram village in Meitei language. The village "Maram" is now popularly known as "Maramei Namdi" otherwise known as Maramei Nandi in Maram meaning big Maram village.

10 Marams and Thangals are found at Kazanga, Mayangkhang, Takaimei, Nkaiemei (Turnoupokpi), Tamulongmei (Turnuyon Khullen) and Tagapuimei (Yaikongpao-Turnuyon Khunou). In many of the villages the Marams and Thangals are living together. The villages Makeng and Thangal Surung have only those clans claiming to be Thangals.

11 There are certain groups of Naga tribes having closer affinity culturally than the others. These groups of tribes are Angami, Chakesang, Mao, Maram, Pouchury, Poumei, Kengma, Koirao (Thangal) and Zeliangrong including Puimei Nagas. They are popularly known as Tinyimi. See also Maram Naga Hoho record book, 2005.

12 Shimray, Origin and Culture of the Nagas, p. 33.

13 Idem.
These are handed down since time immemorial till some writers recorded some of these stories for the first time. Such unrecorded oral transcripts and translations are the only source of history for the Marams with regard to their origin and migration. And only sketchy materials here and there in some of the British administrators and other European anthropologists writings are available till now. All these are relevant to the study. This has been explained in the previous chapter. Nevertheless this oral tradition could help in bringing about a coherent foundation for reconstructing of Maram history. Let us bring some folk tales in our study with regard to the origin, migration and settlement.

‘Makhel’ is the place where the first ancestor of the ‘Maramlui’ i.e literally Maram race parted with his two brothers. He planted his walking stick, which sprout out and became this Makhel tree, and headed towards the southwest and settled at a place on the hilltop where he established his village. The village grew into one of the big fourteen villages of the Nagas in the nineteenth century. All the Maram elders agreed to this version i.e. dispersal from Makhel. However, they do not have any record of the date, when, how, which path they took. There are many historical relics even today such as monoliths and sacred trees planted at Makhel to testify the departure, when they were about to disperse themselves to different directions.

The Maram society is firmly rooted in beliefs, customs and practices that provide an insight to the social reality and thus myths becomes an important component of its history. Mythical knowledge is a part of the Maram social system where it exercises an overcircling influence and the people do not question their myths. On the other hand the Greeks during antiquity questioned everything and tried to arrive at a logical conclusion. However in Maram society myths thus became an important

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15 Interviewed Pou Kang Nguupu an elderly person of Tamuilong village on 13th February 2005. The village is the present Maram Khullen village. The village is known as Maramei Nandu in Maram usage. This village is mentioned by Verrier Elwin in ‘The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century’, p. 461, as a big village with about 1000 household.
16 Shimray, op. cit., p. 45.
17 In this regard Shimray in the Origin and Culture of the Nagas, p. 26 stressed that the Nagas had their own theories on the origin and dispersal of various tribes of the Nagas who trace their origin and migration from Makhel when he says, “As to their origin, dispersal, the various tribes of Nagas now accepted that makhel as the original place from where they dispersed themselves. Further he mentioned, ‘Many from Maram, a direct descendant of settlers from Makhel, are said to have settled along the Koubru slopes facing Manipur valley’, pp. 28-9.
18 Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, pp. 5-6.
component of their ethno-history where the modern researcher tries to unravel the whole mystery in it.

An exploration into the concept of ‘myth’ is necessary at this point. It is said, “Myth narrates sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial time the fabled time of the “beginning”- myth tells how through the deeds of supernatural beings a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the cosmos or only a fragment of reality-an island, a species of plant, a particular land of human behaviour and institution”.

It is also said that, “Originally myth meant the same as ‘word’, ‘message’, ‘news’ or ‘story’- a myth is a story of primeval or cosmic times, that is to say, times preceding the present order; it speaks of deities and other sacred beings; and it treats of ultimate questions of a people’s view of reality, of the meaning of life, of the origins of the universe and humankind, of ancestors, of ancestral heroes and models, of the unknowable future”.

It is interesting to note “Myth is always an account of creation. It relates how something was produced and what happened, which manifested it completely. Myth has often been understood as a fantasy, a fiction in the popular usage. But when myth is employed as a term used by scholars engaged in the fields of anthropology, psychology, history of religion and symbolism, it devotes an element which contains and expresses what is central, essential and efficacious in human existence”.

Myths is thus, story, handed down from olden times, containing the early beliefs of a race, especially explanations of natural events, such as the season. The Marams thus narrates the events of the ancestors, their life history, origin, migration, their deeds and past glorious through such myths. Till now these are being handed down through oral tradition.

This tale deals with the origin of the elements of all existence – Pūmpū Pramha, the Almighty God. Beast, all the living creatures, and Man. This myth posits the birth of three sons from the union involving the first couple in the universe. However in contrast to many Hindu origin myths, the present one does not dwell on the issue of asexual or incestuous reproduction but autochthonous reproduction. Instead, this myth

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20 R. A. George, *Studies on Mythologies*, p. 28.
21 Pou Rang Kareipu, Pou Kang Ngupu, Pou Pungdi Ngouvung, Pou Tu Talong, Pou Pou Keng, Pou Disong, Pou Reichupu and Pou Ngoulongna of Tarriulong village, interviewed on 14th March, 2005 All except the last three are above 80 years old.
concentrates on the creation of all creatures by the Almighty God and how the creation of a man call ‘Madungkasi’ and woman called ‘Tingrangpui’ and how physical peculiarity of the woman having vaginal teeth was outsmarted by the man leading to their sexual union which led to the birth of three sons and one of which became the ancestor of the Marams. The universal quality of this myth springs from its focus on the development of logical categories and how things can be gradually separated after an initial period of unity.

It is significant that the metaphor for cosmic evolution used in this folktale is one about the creation of all creatures and origin of the Marams. This gives the whole set of cosmic developments described an attractive familial form. It is also interesting to note that Mara Roukang the earliest ancestor of the Marams is said to be the eldest of the three brothers and cat is the eldest among all animals and hence is not to be beaten. This reflects a common Marams’ assertion that their forefather was the oldest of the three brothers. The topography that is depicted in the beginning of this myth provides a neat device for explaining certain striking geographical features. Furthermore, Madungkasi outsmarted Tingrangpui, who had sharp vaginal teeth, leading to their sexual union and birth of three brothers, one of which became the ancestor of the great race, the Marams. The Almighty God was quite satisfied after the creation of human in his likeness but cursed them to hard labour throughout their lifetime when the couple disobeyed Him. The mention of forbidden fruit in the middle of the pond is also significant which cast the man to temptation and subsequently hard life to toil. And the three brothers waiting for the dream to part before taking concrete decision provides that dream played an important role in the Marams life. This story describes a rather boisterous and unsavory character.

Here is another very popular myth of the Marams about their origin. It is similar to the Biblical creation of the universe. One fine day Pūmpū Pramha, the Almighty God created the universe—heaven and earth. The size of earth was flat and bigger than heaven. Thus heaven could not cover up. One-day heaven ask earth to fold itself till it was spherical in shape. The earth has shrunk to such a size that heaven could cover it. When the earth wanted to stretch out as before the heaven refused to release her. Instead of loosening the two were joined at the horizon. That is why today the earth consists of steep mountains, cliffs, etc., which were formed while unfolding itself in spherical.
After the creation of the universe, Pümpü Pramha, the Almighty God was not satisfied. He was feeling down and lonely. After contemplating for sometime, Pümpü Pramha thought of creating creature in his likeness. He created creatures after creatures but did not like to live with them. Thus after naming them he let them go. After creating all the creatures he was tired and exhausted, and still unhappy. Walking down he stood nearby a tree by holding it. While standing nearby the tree, madungbang, a kind of tree found plenty in Maram inhabited area-the tree is generally used for making pillar, he spate on his right hand and pull out koktchi-n ’chet, a stem borer insect. Murmuring he threw down the insect to the ground and lo! a man in his likeness stood before him. He named the man “Madungkasi” after the name of the tree. He was quite happy now but was not satisfied. He walked farther and stood nearby a pond. While standing there murmuring he spate on his palm and pull up water from the pond. He felt something in his hand while pulling up the water. It was “siimongpui”, a kind of small aquatic creature- black in color found in paddy fields and ponds, a delicacy to the Nagas. Murmuring he threw down the creature to the ground and there stood before him a beautiful woman in place of the “Sümongpui”. He named her “ Tingrangpui”. He made them live together in a place called “Taikong Rajaimie”. They were the first couple in the universe in the Marams folk tales.

After creating all things and creatures, Pümpü Pramha told that there would be light the next day and the one who knew the dawn first would be rewarded. An owl started hooting when dawn break. Pümpü Pramha after hearing the sound came inquiring about the hooting that broke the silence of the first dawn. Afraid, the owl kept quiet. In the meantime “sarangtakpui”, the hornbill replied, “I cried at the dawn”. Piimpu Pramha rewarded the bird by colouring its body with beautiful paints, sahüdu.

In the early morning, when all the creatures were happily watching the rising of the sun for they had seen light for the first time, one of them in the melee hit the cat. Weeping the cat turned towards the west, the opposite direction and lo! Saw the light first on top of a hill to the west. The cat shouted that he had seen the light and all of them turned towards the cat direction and saw the light. Henceforth all the creatures acknowledge that the cat is the eldest amongst them. And in Maram custom it is observed that cat should not be beaten being the eldest of all creatures.

22 It is a type of bird colourful quite common in Naga Hills.
God had placed the first couple under the care of a servant named ‘Surah Kaching’ (a god of mercy). The servant instructed that they could eat all the fruits in the garden except the one growing in the middle of the pond. They lived for sometimes without breaking the command of the Almighty God.

In course of time Madungkasi wanted to have sexual union with Tingrangpui. One day the man asked the servant about the woman. He was told that she had sharp teeth in the vagina. He used to visit her near a place called Teikong Rüfími. The man conceived of a plan to overcome this so that he could have sexual union with the woman.

To test, the man broke a hollow wooden mortar with his organ. The lady came to know about this through the servant. When she heard this she was angry and came near the man and started cutting the pestles with her sharp vaginal teeth.

One day the man took the woman to the jungle to eat fruits. They came to nearby wild apple tree, called ampakhang. The man climbed up the tree and started dropping unripe fruits for the woman to eat. When she could chew no more, he asks her to chew it with her vaginal teeth. The man dropped fruits only those that were not fully ripened. The sourness and the acidity of the wild apple made her vaginal teeth ineffective. When she could chew no more Madungkasi came down and made love to Tingrangpui nearby Kababang. Out of this union, she gave birth to a son. Altogether they had altogether three sons.

The child soon after birth started crying continuously non-stoppage. As the child kept on crying the parents were worried for they could not stop by trying all sorts of cajoling. The only thing, which they did not try, was that the child was not given the fruit growing in the middle of the pond. They thus engaged a red mouse to pluck the forbidden fruit by floating himself on a leave, called Teikong Razeimu. The fruit plucked by the mouse was said to be ears of corn. After giving the rice by removing the husk the child stopped crying. However, this incurred the wrath of the Almighty God. That fruit was said to be the rice or food of God. The Almighty God cursed them for plucking the rice and condemned them to earn their livelihood by hard labour. Since then men were bound to hard labor.

In the meantime, the couple needed baby sitter at the time of hard work in their fields. When they engaged monkey to look after the baby, the child began to grow weak and pale. It happened that monkey played too much with the baby, and when they
engaged tiger, the child always feel hungry. This was because the tiger eat away whatever edible is left for them.

After sometimes the couple had two more sons. They had now three sons Maram Roukang, Muki Rangba and Kala Sanglung. When the three brothers grew up, they decided to part and look for suitable place to live. The three brothers parted at a place now called Makhel. Before parting the eldest brother, Maram Roukang planted his walking stick. The stick sprouted and grew. Today the Marams are said to be the descendants of the eldest son of Pou Madungkasi and Pei Tingrangpui.

Before departure, the three brothers prepared food package, called takla. Takla, which consist of smoke meat, dried over fire (drying meat) by poking pieces of bamboo and hanging over the fire, called miikai, the fireplace. However to their surprise they found the meat of the eldest brother, Maram Roukang missing. They decided to inquire in their dreams to God. In the dream, the eldest brother was blind and walking with the help of kuktui, walking stick. He was also told that his descendant should not eat pork and neither should rear the same.

This tale says that Marams are the descendants of the eldest son of Pou Madungkasi and Pei Tingrangpui. Even today pigs are not rear in the Maramei Namdi village and the Marams who still practice the old religion, called sırah maning still do not eat pork.

The story is the only example in this collection of underreported Maram Naga folktale, the historical legend. In this particular legend of the Maram Nagas, the juxtaposition of a bawdy and burlesques is still artfully wrapped in oral tradition. Also worthy of note is the fact that for the man importance of dream is placed above all others.

There were a couple by the name Madungkasi and Sumutingdangpui. They migrated from the west. They survived the great flood, which swept the world. Living all alone in the vast world they did not know whether they could properly marry or not. One day they went out to the jungle together. They doubt about their exact genealogy. The same night they dreamt that they could marry -a God came and told the man that they could marry on the condition that henceforth none of their descendants should eat pork.

23 Cf. See Hodson, The Naga Tribes of Manipur, pp. 13-4 for difference in the number of siblings and names of the brothers. He gave the names, thus, Kela Sangmuk and Maram Pungsa. He did not mention the third brother. However the names were slightly different when interviewed some old men. The woman's name is Sumutingdangpui.

24 Interviewed some elders from Maramei Namdi, Sagongbarn and Tamulalong villages in the early part of 2005.
the flesh of a pig. They got married considering that there was divine intervention from God. Out of their union, the couple had three sons.\footnote{25}

The couple had three sons – Marambungsa-the eldest, Makikangba-the middle and Kla Sanglung-the youngest. When they grew up the three brothers parted at Makhel to find their own suitable place of stay. The eldest went southward and settled at the hilltop to establish a village. The village he established came to be known after his name Maram. All his descendants came to be called “Maramei” or the people of Maram. Makikangba still went southward and settled in the valley. He is also known as Makikaranu. He became the ancestor of the people living in the valley. The youngest Kla Sanglung went westward and settled. He became the first ancestor of the people living to the west.

Meanwhile Marambungsa who established a village on the hilltop fathered four sons. The four sons became the head or father of the first four clans of the Maramei Nami- Mageinahmei, Bungnahmei, Lanaknahmei and Kugannahmei. In course of time the village became very prosperous. The populations increased to a large extent. However due to quarrel among the descendants of the four sons of Marambungsa for chieftainship, led to dispersal from the village in large numbers to many directions. This led to various settlements by establishing new villages in many places.

The above myth indicates that the Maram society is firmly rooted in beliefs. This mythical culture is part of the Maram tradition and tradition exercise an ever-arching influence and they do not question their myths. Whereas in ancient times the Greeks question everything and gave beliefs, myths or faith a back seat and tried to come to logical conclusions. However in the case of the Marams it was not so. The beliefs and myths supersede upon everything. And most of the myths center on the origin or the creation of human beings.

The traditional folktales of the Marams about their origin cannot be just brushed aside. Though there are slight differences in their interpretation from village to village about their origin, all trace their migration from Makhel. Though no written documents are available about their origin certain European Anthropologists, administrators etc., writes and mentioned about Marams’ origin in their works.\footnote{26}

\footnote{25} Cf. For some comments on the belief on dreams see Hodson, The Naga Tribes of Manipur, p. 13 From this, Hodson, arrived at the conclusion that to the Maram Nagas dreams plays an important role and divine message revealed in them.

\footnote{26} Hodson, The Naga Tribes of Manipur, p. 13 See also Elwin, ‘The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century, 1969, p. 461 He mentioned about the origin of the Maram Nagas However he gave slight different version
Despite its reputation for the static or indigenous character, the Nagas had undergone lot of shifting till they migrated to the present habitat. The movements of the various Naga tribes at different period of time occupy an important place in the history. Later on the migration of various tribes other than Nagas were responsible for changing the demography. These movements and raids caused lot of problems to the British after the occupation of Assam by the British following the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26. Besides these movements, there were also internal movements among the various tribes. With regard to these movements many British writers have recorded based on linguistic, ethnicity, legends or oral traditions.37

Human history is marked by waves of migration of people, race or tribes from place to place and region to region. There are many reasons for such movements and many routes various ethnic communities took. For the various ethnic groups living in the South-East Himalayan region, there are four possible migration routes. The Nagas are one of the ethnic groups believe to have migrated from South-East Asia. Of the various ethnic groups, migrated, at different waves, of time and route, the Nagas are one of the largest ethnic groups in the region.

The possible routes of migration were four-first, through the north or the mountain passes of Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan; second, through the valley of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra from India and West; third, by sea or the Bay of Bengal, passing through Bengal or Burma (Myanmar) and fourthly the Assam Burma routes-one over the Palkai passes in the north-east, leading from the Lidu- Margherita road to China through the Hukawang valley in Burma (Still Will Road) and other through Manipur-south-east and the last through Cachar-south-west of Assam.

when he said that the Marams descended from the Angamis In a lake three persons sprang out-one of which became the first ancestor of the Mao and Maram Naga clans, another went to the west and became the forefather of the Kach Nagas and the third remained in the country and became Angamis He also used the term 'Quasi-Angami' for the Maram Nagas There are group of Naga tribes who posses linguistic affinity Both Angamis and Maram Nagas have close linguistic affinity See the work of T.C. Hodson, 'The Naga tribes of Manipur, 1969, p. 14 when he said, "It is clear that the obstacle to the union of the ancestors of the founder of the village was doubt in their minds as to their kinship when all their fellows had been swept away by the flood. It is also instructive to observe that the prohibition rests on the physical peculiarity of the ancestress of the village. I was solemnly assured that the bones of the lady, an examination of which would have proved the existence of this remarkable malformation, had been preserved in the village for centuries and were only destroyed when the village was burnt as a punitive measure soon after the occupation of the Manipur State in 1891." G Greirson, 'Linguistic Survey of India, vol. iv, Part ii, p. 462 made comparative study of certain Naga tribes—Angami, Mao, Maram Nagas etc. Due to similarity in language traced their origin to one place However each have own tales of origin. 37 Many British authors had classified the tribes into various groups based on their linguistic, ethnology, history, legends and oral traditions For detailed accounts books marshaled by G Greirson, 'Linguistic Survey of India', Smith in his ‘Ao Naga Tribe of Assam’, Elwin, ‘The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century’, J.H Hutton, 'The Angami Nagas', Hodson, 'The Naga Tribes of Manipur', etc. can be referred.
It is doubtful whether the northern route helped much in the migration, but important trade routes existed through the mountain passes between Assam and Tibet as by the waterway through Brahmaputra. The existence of these two routes is shown by classical sources—Periplus and Ptolemy’s geography. On the basis of these sources, it may suggest that some racial elements like Caucasoid-Alpines and then the Indo-Chinese made their way in small number through these passes in the north. The Nagas are not typical Mongoloid. Mongoloid features soften down and there are presences of remarkable degree of Caucasoid elements in their physical features.

The route through the rivers Ganges and Brahmaputra or for that matter India or west is doubtful since only pre-Aryans and Aryans entered the Assam valley. Since the Nagas are not the typical Aryans—this route can be kept aside. Interestingly some writers assume that some elements of the Nagas migrated from southern India by sea and entered Assam through Burma (Myanmar).²⁸

Another probable route is through southeast of the Naga Hills via Manipur. The earliest evidence of the routes through Burma is found in the accounts of a Chinese author—on the basis of which Pelliot has shown that from 200 B.C. there was a regular route by land to China through Assam, upper Burma and Yunan.²⁹

There were three probable routes from Pataliputra through Assam—Burma to China first through the Patkai to Upper Burma, second through Manipur up to the Chindwin and third through Arakan up to the Irrawaddy, all leading to Kunming in China.³⁰ However most of the migration to Assam took place through the north eastern and southern routes of Assam via Burma (Myanmar). The Nagas are believed to have come from various directions for oceanic elements— the practice of exposure of the dead or tree burial of the dead due to unnatural death among some of the people living nearby ocean in some of the Indonesian islands, Sulewesi and other islands are taken to be survivals of the practices found in oceanic islands in the southeast Asia similar with the Nagas.

Another theory is that the Nagas might have migrated from Phillipines as suggested by the use of buffalo in the Naga Hills, both as a domestic animal and as an emblem curving which is associated with this Austro-Asiatic stock, as also practice of

²⁹ P.C. Choudhury, *The History of the Civilization of the people of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.* pp. 76-7 The Chinese was Changkien
³⁰ P.C Bagchi, 'India and China' in P.C. Choudhury’s *The History of the Civilization of the people of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.* p 76.
terracing the hillsides for wet paddy cultivation, and perhaps of making permanent settlements in villages with shifting, but not migratory cultivation. Further use of seashells as ornaments-bangles, necklaces, etc clearly indicates that the Nagas or for that matter Marams had live somewhere near the sea. Otherwise no such ornaments were available in landlocked Naga Hills. The term Austric is a linguistic rather than ethnic one. On the basis of the language Schmidt has traced the similarity of the language of some tribes in Indonesia, and those of Polynesian and Melanesian to that of Khasis and other Indian tribes. However the similarity between the Austro- Asiatic people living in the islands in Southeast Asia and Nagas is not in language but in other cultural aspects as mentioned.

The above theories indicate that the Nagas might have migrated from different places to the present habitat. However their legends points to different direction and the Marams too had their own mythical version of origin. All these are hypothesis. Thus at best it can be said that the origin of the Nagas and for that matter the Marams is Makhel.Beyond this no folktales narrates about the life and story that depicts their earlier stay in south east Asia or on the shore of sea. Otherwise if they have have migrated from far off distance in the south east Asia or any where else there might have been certain folk tales on their life before they settled in the present place. Thus at best we can conclude that the Maram Nagas originated in an around Makhel. This is indicated the stories mentioned above when the first person who settled at Maramei Namdi started his journey from Makhel.

The Maram Nagas at one point of time was contained within one large village. The village had two chiefs whose seats were hereditary-sügong, literally king and gongpai, literally partner. The two seats were necessarily not greater or lesser seats. And unlike the two counsels of the classical period of the Roman Empire, the sügong looked into the affairs of the village and in his absence the gongpai does the duty.

The earliest trace of the dispersal, exodus and settlement can be traced to the period of Maram Bungsa. His descendants due to misunderstanding led to a fight for chieftainship, called sügongbam kisou. Due to this, the sons of the chief with some followers left the Maram village to find new place of settlements. The exodus led to the founding of many villages in different direction.

32 For the exact number of houses see Elwin’s ‘The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century’, p 461. He gave the figure as 1000 houses.
There is also another theory to this exodus. At one period of time the siégong had two wives and had many children. Like the Afghans, the Mughals or the Burmese rulers during medieval time, the rulers due to the practice of polygamy had many wives and children and, hence the children contested for the throne. The Marams too had the same type of problem. The siégong had only two wives. The younger brother who was the son of the elder wife got hold of ‘siégah’34, a sort of magical item and decided to move out and establish new village. The king however decided to test the two wives as to who should be and worthy of a queen. Thus to test he set forth a task by telling them to look after the paddy spread in front of the house during the day time for exposing in the sun, from chicken to ward off when they come to eat. When the elder wife left the throne to chase away the chicken the younger wife who was waiting nearby just occupied the chair of the queen. Thus it is interpreted that the Almighty God was not in favour of the elder wife and son. Hence the elder wife with her son picked up the ‘siégah’ and left Maram to found new village. The village Willong is believed to be the village.35

There is another tradition to the exodus. Once there lived a very popular king named Pongkapu. He had a cousin brother called Hoibeng. Hoibeng had a son popularly known as Hoibeng Rang otherwise Rang. Rang was handsome, well built, strong and tall. He was quite popular in the village. He had good height of about 8 feet. His height is measured with a stone placed in the front of the siégong’s house, which is about 2 kat or two elderly average arm lengths. One arm length is taken as 4 feet. Thus he was the cynosure of all the ladies in the village.

Rang was the leader of hangshiiki, the dormitory. In the village each südung or clan has their own dormitory where all the boys and girls sleep in their own dormitory. One day he was asking the inmates about their affairs with their girl friends. He thus asked whether any of their girl friend has unusual private part. But none replied in positive. Further he asked whether anyone had come across any lady having horizontal slit of sex organ. When all the boys replied in negative he further asked whether anyone of them had approach such woman in the village.

33 The Marams society had no restriction for polygamy
34 The term ‘siégah’ had no parallel in English word. It is a magical item supposed to bring good luck
35 Paddy was often dried in the sun before husking in the urn
The village *siigong* who had been listening to all these conversations between Rang and the *hangshuki* inmates sitting in the next room partitioned only by thin wall was not very pleased after overhearing all these conversation. The queen had peculiar horizontal sexual organ. From the conversation he came to conclusion that Rang was having secret liaison with his wife. Further this suspicion was strengthened when his wife pretending to throw dirt in front of Rang's compound actually was throwing salt. From then there was no love lost between the two. *Siigong*, the village king was not happy with Rang. Thus he hatched a ploy to eliminate him.

One fine day the king asked Rang to accompany him to the forest. After entering into the thick jungle, Rang was sharpening his sword on stone. When Rang was busy sharpening his sword, the king stealthily came from behind and struck at Rang with his sword. Fortunately for Rang, the king's sword struck at his ivory necklace and he was saved. The king returned home without telling anything about the incident.

Rang henceforth knew that the king was not happy with him. However he did not wish to challenge him. Rather he tried to avoid him as much as possible. Thus, he used to go out looking for a suitable place for village setting up new village. He tried to choose brave men to follow him. One day he set out with two of his potential followers to look for suitable place for cultivation and to found new village. In the meantime he made a statue of man with straw wrapped in stick and held it standing near the tree. When the two friends came, Rang pulled the rope and shouted that the enemies are coming to attack them. On seeing the moving statue the two fled leaving Rang. He called them back as there were none to attack them.

At another time Rang requested the village king to provide him with two servants to help him in his farm of chilly and cotton. The king was not aware of Rang's programme of testing the loyalty of the servants. They set forth to the jungle. While in the jungle Rang shouted that there were enemies to attack them. The two instead of running away tried to protect Rang asking him to walk in between them. But since there was no danger as there were no enemies Rang said, 'There is time to work and time to joke'. Saying this Rang broke into loud laughter. The three then returned home.

One fine day Rang approached the king and proposed for the exchange of his servants with that of the king. The king was quite surprised when Rang proposed to leave two of his servants to that of one of the king's servants. The king readily agreed

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37 Salt was precious and rare edible commodity in those days.
and gave one of his servants retaining two of Rang’s servants. Rang then picked up his servants and called upon his potential followers to follow him and found and found new village at Angkaipang. But before they set out to found new village, a tiger came and ate up the unblemished cow chosen to be sacrificed on the establishment of the new village. Rang went home and reported this to his parents. His father who was not in favour of Rang leaving the village interpreted that it was a bad omen. But Rang overheard the conversation between his parents- his father Hoibeng telling his wife that the incident was a good omen- it meant life and prosperity for the villagers and his descendants. When heard this he was overjoyed and shouted a victory yell as in the case after a head hunting expedition. On the appointed day they all gathered at the king’s compound. With the king’s blessings they set forth to Angkaipang to establish a new village. The village was on the bank of the M-ū river now abandoned.

Within a short span of time the village prospered and expanded rapidly. Rang wanted to display the strength of his village and so the people of Angkaipang gathered near the Maramei Namdi village king’s compound. The king’s courtyard could not accommodate Rang and his followers. As rather an insult Rang said that the king could keep all those who were not accommodated in the courtyard. Since the gathering and display of huge followers of Rang was rather a challenge, the wife of the sūgong was worried. There and then she cursed Rang and his followers, saying that, they were the children of her urine and also that they would not prosper, for they held their ancestors, the villagers of Maramei Namdi in contempt.

Thereafter Rang went back to Angkaipang. The village continued to prosper and there seems to be no effect of the curse as no one was dying. The villagers were afraid that their customs would be forgotten as no one was dying. The villagers therefore started performing obsequies burying wooden caricature of a person. Soon epidemic broke out and people started dying in large numbers. Villagers started moving out and the village wore a deserted look. Rang too moved out of the village to found another village called Tungba. Some went and found Angkailongdi, Tingsong etc.

Here’s another theory for the dispersal of the Marams to different directions. The villages Tungba, Angkailongdi and Tingsong were quite prosperous and had friendly relations with the Meitei king. One day the Meitei king invited the king of Tingsong and his daughter to his Palace. The sūgong along with his daughter came to

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38 The village is now called Khabout Karong. It is also known as ‘Tingvaimei’. It is in Tahanapong (Senapati) district, Manipur. The villagers now claim to be one of the Pournei Naga villages.
the Meitei Maharaja's Palace. It is said that the Meitei king misbehaved with the daughter of Tingsong king inside the palace. The father and daughter went back with deep remorse because of the incident that happened.

The Tingsong king in the meantime built a big hall without any hole or window but with a single door. Large quantity of chilly powder were then prepared and put on the thatch of the house. After all these preparations the Meitei king was invited to inaugurate the hall. When the Meitei king, the Maharaja and his men entered the hall for inauguration, the entrance was closed from behind and bolted from outside and set the hall on fire. Many people including the Maharaja died. When the news reached the Maharaja's Palace, the Meities sent strong army against the Tingsong villagers especially the king's clan. The sigong clan among the Marams is known as Kuinahmei.39 Thus many people fled to different directions. Some went and settled at Somdal, Leisan, Phadang, Sanakeithel, Mapao, Ngaingu, Ukhrul, etc. in the present Ukhrul District of Manipur. They are the Khamrang clans of Tangkhul now.40

Some of the villages in Mayangkhang area are believed to have migrated from Angkaipang.41 The villages are Angkailongdi, Kazanga, Tamuiling, Tagapuimei, Mayangkhang, Ntaning42, Sagongbam (Takaimei) and Nkaimei. The people of this area had been called by different names by earlier British writers.43 Whatever the name or etymon, the people traced their origin to Angkaipang.

There is another tradition regarding about the dispersal from Maramei Nandi. There lived a prophetess named Talulú Nzangulú during the time of Pongkapú. All the events about the dispersal from Maramei Nandi and Angkaipang had been prophesized.44 Some of the events she foretold were the ruins of Angkaipang, huts on

39 It is now known as Krangnahmei in the northern and western villages. It is known as Khamrang in Ukhrul district
40 Interviewed, Sopam Khamrang at Imphal, Fairyland, on 16th March 2005
41 Interview with Pou Drsong, Shang, Rachopu, Fungdi Ngouning on 10th, 12th, and 13th February 2005 respectively at Tamuiling
42 The village Ntaning was abandoned during the Kuki-Naga ethnic conflict in mid 1990s. However the people are slowly resettling in the village again
44 The places Angkaipang and Angkailongdi are different. Angkailongdi is located nearby the Tahanzag District headquarters whereas Angkaipang is on the bank of the M-vo river presently nearby Koide village, in Tahanzag District, Manipur. Koide is a Poumei Naga village.
wheels, roof would take human beings in the sky, etc. She also foretold that people on
the earth would be morally corrupted.

Like any other preliterate tribes, the reconstruction of the Maram history is
not an easy task. Any researcher might face many difficulties. For the whole subject
matter one has to depend entirely on the oral tradition and folklore traditions. In a
subject like history chronological sequence of events are essential. But in oral tradition
there is a problem of synthesis. Moreover the stories are from different areas and
villages. Thus synthesis has become a Herculean task. Moreover the differences in
dialect and aspects of culture led some writers especially the Europeans identified some
of the Maram living in the southern side by different name-Mayongkhong or Mayang
Khong clan.

MARAM CONCEPT OF NAGA

The Nagas are made up of a welter of different tribes, some odd sixty-six45 of
them, each having a different language or dialect. Therefore Nagamese is being used as
their link language or lingua franca.46 Some believe that the Nagas have migrated to the
southeast Himalayan hill range from Southeast Asia over a long period of time. Their
westward movement was finally arrested at the edge of the Brahmaputra river valley by
some strong, well-organized Hindu kingdoms. Most of the Naga people believed in
mythology in a creator God that has an immense, anthropomorphic form. There is a
touch of pathos in these tales about how these creator created all living beings and
universe.

The Marams, one of the various Naga tribes till late does not have an idea
about Naga. The people have the notion that people outside their village are different in
the sense he put communities outside his village into one be it any Naga tribe or other
communities, ethnic groups like Mizo, Khasi, Meiteis, etc. or nationalities e.g. French,
German et. al.

Today the Nagas are one of the various tribal groups inhabiting the southeast
Himalayan region. The ethnic situation in Manipur is in constant flux. There are tribes

46 Nagamese is a language that developed as a link language between the Nagas and the plain people in
course of their economic activities in the pre-British period. It is a mixture of Ahomia or Assamese,
Bengali, Hindi, English and various Naga languages. It is still in evolutionary form.
and ethnic groups who willingly identify themselves with the Nagas or Kukis though traditionally they did not belong to that community. Such change and merger of identity is due to political as well as ethnic considerations. But in the long run it created a very fluid identity situation. There seem to have been digression in the very definitional of the term ‘Naga’ from the earlier definition given by ethno-historian or British writers. Of late there are different opinions of the term and the nomenclature ‘Naga’. Many writers believe that the term has political connotation bringing into its fold many smaller tribes who practically belong to other tribal groups especially the Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribes based on linguistic and physical features affinity. This very act of bringing into its fold indicates that there are certain common traits, may be in culture, ethnicity, and so on among the various sub tribes of the Nagas. However this might also be because of their strong sense of national identity than any of the people of sub-continent, perhaps stronger than most and due to their maturity and sophistication in political leadership. Else the Nagas are those hill people numbering about 4 million inhabiting steeply ridged and wild country which now falls between Assam and other administrative units of Indian union and Sagaing Division of Burma (Myanmar). And ever since the British occupied the Naga country, the term Naga has become the generic nomenclature for the Nagas or the tribal groups living in between Brahmaputra valley in the west to Chindwin river in the east and the Meities and Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribes in the south and Mishmis, Apatanis, etc. tribes in the north. However the social scientist, historians and anthropologists have pronounced different theories of the term and there has been no unanimity among themselves.

We can examine in brief the various theories propounded by various writers. There are various hypothesis, assumptions regarding the origin of the word, ‘Naga’. One of the earliest theories is that the term ‘Naga’ is derived from Hindustani word ‘Nanga’ which means ‘naked’, ‘crude’, or ‘barbarous’. Some scholars tried to link the term to Sanskrit literature when a writer commented that the word ‘Naga’ is derived from the Sanskrit term ‘Nanga’ applied in derision to the people from the

46 Neville Maxwell, India, the Nagas and the North-East, p. 3
47 The term ‘country’ here refers to areas or villages and not necessarily nation states like France, Italy or Russia.
48 William Robinson (1841), An Account of Assam, p 30
paucity of their clothing. Another British officer believe that the term is derived from
the Bengali word ‘Nangta’ meaning naked.\footnote{In G. Grierson, op. cit, Vol. III, Part II, p 204.}

However there seem to be little foundation to this theory as the term has not
been applied to the Khasias or the Garos whom the Britishers were better acquainted
with and came into contact much earlier. Further, the Garos were habitually accustomed
to a greater degree of nudity than any of the Naga tribes.

The second theory is that the term ‘Naga’ is derived from Sanskrit word ‘Nag’
meaning snake, and by implication, snake worshipper. But it may be noted that snake
worship is prevalent in many parts of India but such worshippers are not called Nagas
except in Central India where certain groups of snake worshippers are called Nagas.
And there seems to be little foundation for the etymological derivation, as the Nagas
never worship snakes. Rather snakes are a delicacy.

Thirdly, the theory propounded by another group notably P.E. Peal, a British
explorer and tea cultivator is that the term is derived from “nok” or “nog” meaning
people, man or folk in some of the Tibeto-Burman language. According to him the true
form of the word is “Noga” not “Naga”. This theory seems to be quite popular with
some British writers. Some of them write, “They are so named in the Burangyi or History
of the Kings of Assam” dating from the thirteenth century; they are still always called
Noga by the Assamese, and Naga only by the Bengali Babus.\footnote{Smith, The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam, p. 166.} Many seem to agree to
this theory.\footnote{Edward Gait, A History of Assam, p. 298. He seems to agree when he said, “The people whom we call
‘Nagas’ are known to the Assamese as ‘Noga’ Some Naga scholars seems to agree to this theory when
M Horam, ‘Naga Polity’, p 24-25 says this theory seems to be the most probable. \& Tennybes Ao, ‘British
Occupation of Naga country’, p. (1) agreed that the term “Noga” meaning hill people was correct.}

Another etymon of the term ‘Naga’ can be attributed to another British writer.\footnote{J. H. Hutton, The Angami Nagas, P 5}
He derives the word from ‘Nanga’ meaning ‘mountaineer’, ‘mountainous’ or
‘inaccessible place’ in Indian or Hindustani usage. He thought it was a corruption of
Assamese “Noga” (pronounced Naga) probably meaning ‘a mountaineer’ from Sanskrit
Naga, mountain or inaccessible. This theory continued to be more or less accepted to a
few eminent scholars.\footnote{See Christoph Von Furer Haimendorf, ‘The Naked Nagas,’ points out that the Nagas dwells in the hills}

There is also another theory which suggests that the term is derived from
Kachari word ‘Naga’ (nahngra) meaning, a “young man” and hence a warrior. Some
Naga writers traced the derivation from the Kachari word “nahngra”. This speculation sprang out from the history since the Kachari came under severe attack from the Nagas in the nineteenth century. And thus, the epithet ‘Naga’ came into use.\textsuperscript{56}

There are also theories some Naga writers have given, to the nomenclature. For this a few selected authors and their books on the Nagas and their origin such as M.Horam, ‘Naga Polity’, Gangmumei Kabui, “Genesis of the Ethnores of Nagas and Kuki Chin”, R.R.Shimray, ‘Origin and Culture of Nagas’ and Tajenyuba Ao, ‘British Occupation of the Naga country’ can be look into for studies.\textsuperscript{57} There are some writers who opined that the word is derived from the Assamese word ‘Noga’ (pronounced Naga). Its chief exponents are Tajenyuba and M.Horam. R.R.Shimray is of the opinion that this word is derived from the Burmese (Myanmar) word ‘Naka’ meaning ‘pierced ears’ as the Nagas had the tradition of making holes in the ears for decorations. Moreover the Nagas have migrated to the present habitat through Burma and might have practice and seen by the Burmese while still in Burma.

Thus there seems to be no consensus of the origin and meaning of the term ‘Naga’ and, it is obvious that the term was used first by non-Nagas before the British came into contact with the Nagas. All these theories regarding terminology are mere speculation and subject to derision. Originally the Nagas did not call by the generic term ‘Nagas’ for the whole tribe. Nor was it the nomenclature. But it was other people who gave the name perhaps due to certain similar characteristic. Whatever may be, the Nagas now simply accept this generic term with pride. The Nagas now seems to have graduated from that pride that one belongs to such and such clan, village, tribe or sub-tribes. Unlike some of the neighbouring race or ethnic groups who seems to have problems in the nomenclature with regard to the name the Nagas now accepts with pride that they are Nagas.

With regard to the many theories propounded by different writers given below are some of the words used by certain linguistic communities of which the word Naga is supposed to derive at.

\textsuperscript{56} Gangmumei Kabui, ‘Genesis of the Ethnores of Nagas and Kuki Chin’, p 5
Having arrived at certain conclusions of the derivation of the etymon 'Naga' one can easily come to certain conclusions who are the Nagas and why did they called so. The term 'Naga' is a generic term for certain groups of tribes. The Nagas are racially and ethnically from a distinct Sino-Mongoloid stock different from the Indian subcontinent of Aryan and Dravidian stock. Though grouped as Indo-Mongoloids, the Nagas are not typical Mongols for Caucasian elements are present in a remarkable degree. Even before the Mongols diffusion from Chinese mainland and Tibetan plateau, Caucasian people have migrated and spread to the furthest end of South-East Asia and the outlying islands of the Pacific. This apparently explains the fact that the Nagas does not possess close resemblance to either the typical Mongoloid or Aryo- Dravidian stocks.

Thus one can say that the Nagas are different from other tribal groups. The Nagas have certain unique characteristics easily distinguishable from others. 58

J.P. Mills mentioned "It is generally assumed in a vague sort of way that those tribes which are spoken of as Nagas have something in common with each other which distinguishes them from the many other tribes found in Assam and entitles them to be regarded as a racial unit themselves." 59

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58 Cf. Vide supra p. 14. Thirteen characteristic features have been mentioned.
59 J.P. Mills, The Lotha Nagas, pp. XV-XVI. He mentioned about the characteristic features of the Nagas like W.C. Smith, The Ao Naga Tribe, p. 120 mentioned certain characteristic features of the Nagas
The above study indicates that the reconstruction of the Maram Nagas history is not an easy task. Any researcher might face many difficulties. Further for the whole subject matter one has to depend entirely on the oral tradition due to lack of scripts and literature. Secondly there is a problem of synthesis in oral tradition. As the stories collected from different areas and villages- there's a problem of synthesis of different versions. Synthesis became a Herculean task. Thirdly the differences in the culture and language led some British or European writers identified some of the Marams living in Mayangkhang area by different names- different from Thangals and Marams. Today Marams totals about 25,994 in about 32 villages.

However, it may, thus be said, that the legend and most of the available literature points to the 'Makhel' as the place of departure and Maram as the first village- all the folktales are silent on the place of origin beyond Makhel. Then Angkaipang, Tingsong, Angkaio经过di, Khabung as the subsequent villages where many new villages were established and many settled with some other tribes. Thus all these sources pointed out suggested that the Maram Nagas have common origin with many of the Naga tribes. Though there is no literary evidence there are many other materials to arrive at a conclusion that the Nagas have common origin. However it is found that all the oral traditions collected in different places could not give the place of origin beyond Makhel and Khezakhonoma but dead end.

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60 Vide supra, p. 1.