CHAPTER 1: The Land, People, Their Origin and Migration

1.1. Manipur at a glance

Till the year 1891, Manipur had been an independent princely state. It merged into India in 1949 and became a full-fledged state of India in 1972. It is the home of various tribal and non-tribal communities, situated in the north eastern frontier of the Indian Union. It is bounded by Nagaland in the north, Myanmar (Burma) in the east and southeast, Cachar district of Assam in the west and Mizoram in the southeast. It is located between the latitudes 23°50’ N to 25°41’ N and 93°03’ E to 94°47’ E of longitudes. It has an area of 22,327 sq. km. with a total length of 854 kms/534 miles of the state’s boundary lines. The state has 532 km of international border with Myanmar.¹ The landscape of the state is mainly that of hill ranges covering about 92% of the total area. The hill ranges stretched roughly north – south as parallel folds with altitudes varying between 2500ft (762 m) to nearly 10000 ft. (3048 m) above sea level.² According to 2001 Census, Manipur has a total population of 22,93,896 of which 11,61,952 are males and 11,31,944 are females.³ Its total literacy rate per the 2001 census is 68.87% with 77.87% males and 59.70% females.⁴ The tribal population of the state is 7,41,141. Though the state is small in size, this ancient country has a rich cultural heritage. Covered with enchanting evergreen hills and mountain ranges, she enjoys very good climatic conditions and produces abundant natural resources. She is rightly called as “Jewel of India” by late Jawaharlal Nehru and “A real ‘gem’ (a Mani) of India” by Indira

¹ G.K. Gori, Changing Phase of Tribal Area of Manipur, B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1984, P. I.
⁴ http://upgov.nic.in/upinfo/census01/cen01-6.htm.
Gandhi the then Prime Minister of India when she inaugurated the formation of the Manipur State on 21st January 1972.\(^5\)

1.2. Schedule Tribes in Manipur

In accordance with the Schedule Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 2002, there are 33 recognized Schedule Tribes in Manipur. They are the following:

1. Aimol
2. Anal.\(\dagger\)
3. Angami.\(\dagger\)
4. Chiru. \(\dagger\)
5. Chothe. \(\dagger\)
8. Kabui.\(\dagger\)
9. Kacha Naga. \(\dagger\)
10. Koirao (Thangal)\(\dagger\)
11. Koireng.\(\dagger\)
13. Lamkang. \(\dagger\)
14. Lushai.
15. Maring. \(\dagger\)
16. Maram. \(\dagger\)
17. Mao.\(\dagger\)
18. Monsang. \(\dagger\)
19. Moyon. \(\dagger\)
20. Paite.

\(^5\) PM's speech at handing over of the Kangla Fort to the Government of Manipur November 20, 2004 in http://pmindia.nic.in/speech.asp?id=50.
22. Ralte.
23. Sema. *
24. Simte.
25. Sahlte.
26. Tangkhul. *
27. Thadou.
28. Vaiphei.
29. Zou. 
30. Poumai Naga. *
31. Tarao. *
32. Kharam. *
33. Any Kuki Tribes. 

Note: * Naga tribes.


1.3. The Poumai region and its population

The Poumai Naga is one of the major Naga tribes mainly inhabiting in Senapati District of Manipur. Some of the Poumais are in the Chakhesang area of Phek District, Nagaland. The Poumai comprises four sub-communities inhabiting four major areas viz. Paomata, Lepaona, Chilevai and Poumai Chakhesang (in Razeba area, Nagaland). According to Hill House Tax – 2006, the Poumai Nagas in Manipur consists of 60 revenue villages, 20684 houses with 19861 tax paying houses and a total population of 184451. The Poumai region is bordered by Nagaland in the north, Thangal villages of Saikul Sub-Division of Senapati District in the south, Tangkhul villages of Ukhrul District in the east and Mao and Maram Sub-Division of Senapati District in the west.

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6 G.K. Gori., Changing phase of Tribal Areas of Manipur, op. cit., p. 21.
7 The Gazette of India, Extraordinary part-II, Section-I, Published by Authority, New Delhi, January 8, 2003/Pusa 18, 1924
8 Hill House Tax - 2006 (as per the record taken from the Office of the Paomata Sub-Division, Purul Sub-Division and Mao-Maram Sub-Division).
1.3.1. Hill Ranges

The general topography of the Poumai region is totally hilly areas. Some of the important and the highest hill ranges in the region are Houdu or Liila that stretches from Phaibung and connecting Mount Khouchi in Lakhamai area. Khouchi or Pouchi, which is also the longest range in the region, stretches from Liyai in the north to Khamsom in the south. Mt. Ngapu is one of the highest ranges that lies in the northern extend between Tungjoy and Liyai. These peaks and mountain ranges facilitate as the sources of water and vegetation for the people.

1.3.2. Rivers

There are two important rivers originating from the Poumai inhabited area. They are Vourei (Barak) and Phaomai Sorei (Iril) rivers. The Vourei originates from Liyai in Paomata Sub-Division, Senapati District. It flows towards the northwest, meets the Senapati River at Karong, then turns westward flowing down through the land of Maram and ultimately it sheds into Brahmaputra at Kachar, Assam. The Phaomai Sorei (Iril) river takes its source from Sirong in the east of Chilivai area and flows down through Saikul area and eventually confluents with the Imphal River and at last falls into the Loktak Lake. Besides, Ngairei or Laini is another important river. It flows from the southeast towards the north of the region that demarcates as the boundary line between the Chakhesang area of Nagaland and the Poumai area. It eventually courses back to the east and flows down to Myanmar (Burma).

1.3.3. The Scenic of the land

The land of the Poumais is covered with beautiful mountain ranges, thick forest of emerald green and scenic splendors of grassland and meadows.

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10 Ibid., P. 3.
One cannot remain silent without praising the scenic beauty of the land. The idyllic hamlets of the Poumaiis perched on hill tops far and near like the tranquil ships in the middle of the still sea. The joyous rivulets streaming down through gorges and ravines, the rivers sweeping through the green meadows and paddy fields, the small sweep of foot paths that traverse and net around the region give a very elegant look to the place. The views of the green and glowing shoots of spring with hueful starry like flowering hills accompanied with melodious songs of seasonal birds never fail to fascinate the hearts of every passerby. The golden fields during September and October when the crops are ripening in full swing are extremely amazing and graceful. Indeed it is a ‘Paradise on Earth’.

1.3.4. Climatic condition

The temperature of the land varies from a maximum of 33.0° centigrade to a minimum of 4.0° centigrade.\(^1\) The coldest season in the region falls during the months of December and January and heavy wind during spring. Rainy season usually starts from the month of May and continues till September. The heaviest rainfall in the region usually occurs during June and July. The annual rainfall of the District measures from 109.63 cm. to 248.60 cm.\(^2\)

1.3.5. The Flora

The Poumai region is covered with tropical moist deciduous forest and montane wet temperate forest. Out of the total about eighty percent of the land is covered with forest and grassland. About 20% of the total Poumai land is arable. It is the home of various flora and fauna. Hundreds of explored and unexplored commercial and non-commercial trees, medicinal plants, herbs and shrubs grow over there. Among the important commercial trees, Uchan (Plnus Insulares), Tairen (Cedrella toona), Uningthou (Phoebe Sp), Usoi (Schima

\(^{1}\) S. Putukho Batao, Poumai Chronicles, Krishna Printers, New Delhi, 2001, P. 12.
Wallichiana), etc. are abundantly found in the region. Trees that are centuries old grow in the deep jungles. The cane and bamboo forests enhance the scenic beauty of the area. The dense and dark forests of enormous trees and cluster of bamboos that hug the bank of rivulets provide shelter to wild life.

The land of the Poumai is very suitable for natural vegetations. Innumerable varieties of vegetations grow all over the plains, hills, slopes, glens and gorges. Year after year the spring and summer showers regenerate them. The markets in the Poumai region remain flourished with seasonal varieties of eatable and valuable wild green vegetations which have high nutritional values as well as medicinal significance. The land is also blessed with different varieties of herbs, shrubs, grasses and plants of high medicinal values.

Wild fruits are another important natural blessing to the people of the region. Different types of eatable wild fruits with pleasant savours grow in the region. Some of the most common and abundantly found fruits in the area are wild peach, nuts, wild apple, wild pear, fig, gooseberry, raspberry, khasi (a black and cherry like sweet local fruit with hard smooth seed inside), etc.

1.3.6. The Fauna

The Poumai region is the home of a large variety of animals. Various types of small and large animals live there. Decades ago, wild cats, wolfs, tigers and leopards were to be found in abundant. They usually lurked among the bushes and tall grasses growing around the village and often snatched away unwary and stray domestic animals. It was also rather difficult for the people to protect their paddy fields and gardens from wild boars and deers as they often traversed across and destroyed crops in dark night. Large pythons, deadly snakes like viper, cobra, tree climbing green snake known as ‘Vao-nghoundai’, ‘Nghouvu’ (body piercer snake), etc. were also abundant in the region. It is said that Nghouvu ambushes the passerby from the branches of tree and thrust with its head into the body of the victim piercing even the hard skin of a buffalo.
There also live various kinds of birds in the jungle and bushes beneath the villages. Melodious songs of seasonal birds enchant the hearts of every villager. From time to time many seasonal and migratory birds endear the seasons. Among the migratory birds, 'cuckoo' is one of the most important and favourite birds of the Poumais. They consider Cuckoo to be the seasonal counter and one of the most significant birds. It usually migrates into the region in the middle part of March. The first visit of cuckoo is considered to be the right time to start sowing of seeds specially paddy. The people believe that seeds sowing before cuckoo comes do not yield good crops. The bird usually leaves the region in the middle part of July and it is believed that paddy transplanted after the bird left does not yield crops. Another significant bird 'Kengu' in Poula is known as the timekeeper. The bird usually sings four times in a day. In the days of forefathers, when the modern technical watches were not in used, they counted their time by listening the songs of the bird. The first singing in the morning is counted as the time for going to paddy fields, the second singing at around 1 p.m. is the time to have afternoon meal, the third is the time for cows coming back home from grazing fields and the last singing before the Sun set is counted as the time to return home for the paddy field goers. Besides, 'Reipeihou' in Poula is another seasonal bird, which visits the Poumai region earlier than cuckoo. The people usually start sowing millets once the singing of this bird is heard.

1.4. The Poumais

The Poumais are the descendants of the grand old man 'Pou', one of the great leaders of the Nagas who migrated to Khyasii commonly known as Makhel. This Makhel is situated on the southern side of the present Tadubi of Senapati District, Manipur, about 2 (two) km from the NH-39. After they dispersed from Khyasii, they established villages at isolated places secluded by thick forest and terrains of various natures. Their habitats were far away from
the highways and outsiders could neither contact them nor access their region. As such, they were inadvertently clubbed together with the Maos by the Britishers and their identity had been concealed under the nomenclature Mao till they were recognized as a bonafide tribe under the Schedule Tribes Order (Amendment) Act, 2002.

The Poumais are generally simple and jovial by nature. They are soft spoken, loving, caring, hospitable and very kind towards the sick and weak. Whenever any friend or relative felt sick, food and drink (rice beer) are the usual presentations to the sick as a token of love and care. In times of sickness and any difficult situation friends and relatives volunteer to extend their helping hand in carrying out necessary home and field works of the family. Their straightforward and truthful nature always helps them to keep their words. Their love of jokes and humour make them always happy, joyful and lively. Whenever two or more of them gather, jokes and laugh become a part and parcel of their gathering. They are very industrious, heavily scheduled with different kinds of works all the time. They start for work in the fields from early in the morning without even washing their faces and return home after Sun set. Their only leisure or rest time is the silent night and the days of gennas and festivities.

Their love of community life strengthens their community fabric and unity. Community is the backbone and the lifeline of the people. There is neither high nor low among them and everyone is treated equally in all respects. When any one builds a house or cut a new paddy field, relatives, neighbours and friends voluntarily join in carrying out all the works in free of charge. In such a way, working together, eating together, celebrating together, singing together, cracking jokes and laughing together were the parts of their daily ways of life and activities. Bachelors and spinsters spent their lives singing, laughing and exchanging pleasantries together in their respective dormitories. During festivities they generously invite relatives, neighbours and
friends to their houses and celebrate together. Songs and jokes generally dominate such occasions. Women are faithful, devoted, industrious, patient and cool in nature. They always light up the lamp of peace and unity in the family. According to Th. Raoping Tao, the Poumais are simple, cheerful, colourful, humorous, courteous and hospitable. They are people with a sense of humour and generosity at home, at work and at gathering. Laughter is the food of their society and their hospitality is overwhelming. They are honest and truthful, brave and religious. They are very fond of intoxicating drinks like rice beer. The Poumai women are fine, stalwart, cheerful, jovial, frank, hospitable, humorous and devout. They are valiant, courageous and tenacious when it comes to defend their people and country; possess deep sense of respect in religious ethics and justice, believe in socialistic principles, admire bravery and grandeur personalities. They are great friends and lovers of nature.

1.4.1. Race

The first scientific attempt of racial classification of the Indian population was made by Sir Herbert Risely. In 1915 he published his findings in the book 'The Peoples of India'. He classifies the entire Indian population into seven racial groups. Which are: i) Turko – Iranian, ii) Indo-Aryan, iii) Scytho-Dravidian, iv) Aryo-Dravidian v) Mongolo-Dravidian vi) Mongoloid and vii) Dravidian.

Classification of the Indian people was also attempted by Hutton, Guha and Majumdar. The most accepted classification is of Guha (1935) who lists six main races, with nine sub-types.

1. The Negrito,
2. The Proto – Austroloid
3. The Mongoloid
   i) Palaeo – Mongoloids a) long – headed, b) broad - headed

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13 Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 10/02/05.
14 Nadeem Hasnain, Trkibal India, Palaka Prakashan, Delhi, 5th Edition, p. 43.
ii) Tibeto - Mongoloids

4. The Mediterranean
   i) Paleaeo - Mediterranean
   ii) Mediterranean
   iii) Oriental type

5. The Western Brachycephals
   i) Alpinoid
   ii) Dinaric
   iii) Armenoid

6. The Nordic\textsuperscript{15}

Guha concluded that the tribal people of the Himalayan region especially of north Himalaya and most of the tribes of northeastern India come under mongoloid.\textsuperscript{16}

According to Nadeem Hasnain, “… as far as the mongoloid racial stock is concerned, most of the tribes of north east India are included in this racial type and exhibit yellowish skin colour, straight and dark hair, flat nose, prominent cheek bones and almond shaped eyes with epicanthic fold. The Naga, Chakma, Lepcha, etc. are some of the important tribes of this racial group”.\textsuperscript{17}

Verrier Elwin and the British school of Anthropologists also hold that the Nagas belong to the Indo-Mongoloid group of tribes.\textsuperscript{18} It is a general consensus that has been agreed upon by all the scholars that the Nagas are mongoloid by race. The Poumai Nagas are racially not different from the other Nagas. They are known as a group of quasi-Angami Nagas. They are characterized by yellowish to light brown complexion; straight and black hair; often with scanty beard, broad mongoloid face with prominent cheek bones;

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. Pp. 43-44.
\textsuperscript{16} L. P. Vidyathi, and B.K. Rai, The Tribal Culture of India, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1\textsuperscript{st} Published – 1976, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition – 1985, P. 70.
\textsuperscript{17} Nadeem Hasnain, op. cit. P. 44.
\textsuperscript{18} Joseph Athickal, op. cit., P. 19.
short and slanting eye lashes with epicanthic fold; dark brown and almond shape eyes; well built body and medium to tall structure.

1.4.2. The term ‘Poumai’

The term ‘Poumai’ is said to be derived from the grand old and legendary man ‘Pou’, the progenitor of the Poumais. Here, ‘Pou’ refers to the grand old man and ‘mai’ refers to the descendants of Pou or the people of Pou.\textsuperscript{19} However, earlier the Poumais were called by different names by different people. They are called ‘Sopvoma’ by J.H. Hutton and by the Angamis; ‘Sopuma’ by the Chakhesangs; ‘Shokpao’ by the Tangkhuls;\textsuperscript{20} ‘Shipfomai’ by the Maos; ‘Kolyas’ by Vaerrior Elvin;\textsuperscript{21} and ‘Poumai’ by the Poumai themselves. These different terms were derived from the particular word ‘Pou’ or ‘Poumai’.

1.4.3. Recognition of the Poumai as a Naga tribe

Since the identification of tribes in Manipur, the Poumai Nagas were inadvertently clubbed together with the Maos till very recently. They were known by other people as Maos, obscuring their true identity. Realizing their distinctiveness the Poumais started demand for their recognition as a distinct tribe under the Constitution of India. The movement started in the late 1950’s and the demand for recognition was made by the leaders of various organizations viz., Poumai Masou Me (Poumai apex General Body), Poumai Tsiidoumai Me (Poumai apex Students’ Organization), Poumai Naga Baptist Association, Poumai Catholiccmai Me (Poumai Catholic Organization) and Poumai Naotoumai Me (Poumai apex Women’s Organization). It was in the year 1979 that the first official recommendation of the state government was

\textsuperscript{19} R. Ngupani Tao, The Poumai Naga, North East Sun, December, 3-9, 1994, P. 24.
\textsuperscript{21} R. Ngupani Tao, op. cit., P. 24.
issued. But the case could not proceed further as the Parliament was dissolved in the same year. Many follow up steps were taken untiringly by many leaders and subsequently the government gave another recommendation in 1991 for recognition of the tribe. A three member committee under the nomenclature “The Poumai Naga Tribe Recognition Demand Committee” was formed with the specific task to demand for recognition of the Tribe. The Committee was headed by Louno Andrew as Chairman, Tony Daikho as Secretary and Kholu, member. With the untiring efforts of the Committee and other public leaders, the Parliament of India passed a bill on 18 December 2002 bearing Bill No. 62.C of 2002 under the title “The Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes Order (Amendment) Act, 2002” to include the Poumai Naga, Tarao, Kharam and Any Kuki tribe in the list of recognized Schedule Tribes of Manipur. This bill received the assent of the President of India on 7 January 2003. Since then, the Poumai Naga tribe has become a full fledged tribe of India under the Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes Order (Amendment) Act, 2002.

1.5. Linguistic classification of the Poumai

Most of the scholars are of the view that the people of India may be divided into four speech families, viz., the Indo-European (Aryan), the Dravidian, the Austric (Kolar Munda) and the Tibeto-Chinese (Sino-Tibetan) and the tribal people of India are chiefly classified into three families: the Dravidian, the Austic and the Tibeto-Chinese. Coming to that of the Naga tribes of Manipur, they have their own different dialects. They speak a number of dialects which vary from tribe to tribe, region to region and even village to village. Looking at this linguistic map and the languages spoken among the Nagas, different Philologists classified them differently. As mentioned in the

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22 Memorandum Submitted to Shri Jual Oram, Hon’ble Union Minister, Tribal Affairs, on his August visit to Senapati, Manipur on 31/05/02 by the Poumai Naga Union.
23 The Gazette of India, Extraordinary part-II, Section-I, Published by Authority, New Delhi, January 8, 2003/Pusa 18, 1924.
24 Nadeem Hasnain, op. cit., p. 42.
book ‘Nagas at Work’ “the Nagas speak different languages. But a comparative study of the language as done by G. A. Grierson in the linguistic survey of India show that there is no doubt, that in the remote past, they came from a same stock”. J. H. Hutton wrote, “The classification of Sir George Grierson is now generally accepted (vide Census of India, 1911). According to this classification, Angami Naga is of the Tibeto-Chinese family, Tibeto-Burman Sub-family, Assam-Burmese branch, group Naga, Sub-group Western Naga. The Angami, Kezama, Sema and Rengma languages are classified in this Sub-Group, while the Memi language falls under the Naga-Kuki Sub-Group and the Lotha language under the Central Naga Sub-Group”. However, the language of the Memi (the present Mao and Poumai, was also known as Sopvoma) and the Kuki group are totally different. The Mao and the Poumai languages are rather more close to the language of Angami and Kezhama of the Western Naga Sub-Group. Hence, it would be more proper to include the Memi or Sopvoma language under the Western Naga Sub-Group, rather than the Naga-Kuki Sub-Group. G. A. Grierson is also of the view that the language of Sopvoma is close to the language of Western Naga Sub-Group. He said, “The hills of north Manipur lie immediately to the south of the Angami Naga country, and it is natural that here the Naga characteristics are retained most vigorously. It is in this locality that we find ‘Sopvoma’, used by the Nagas of the country round Mao (whence their alternative name of ‘Mao Nagas’) on the Manipur Naga Hills frontier, about twenty miles south of Kohima. It is the language of this sub-group which most nearly approaches the true western Nagas speech, its closest relative being Kezhama.” In the ‘Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.-III, Part-II’ (1967) he further said, “It is questionable whether Sopvoma, which is here classed as belonging to the Naga-Kuki Sub-Group,
should not be put amongst the Western Naga languages. It possesses points of close connexion with Kezhama." As such, nowadays, the Poumai people believe that their language is closer to the Western Naga Sub-Group and not to the Naga-Kuki Sub-Group.

1.6. The Poumai Language

The language Poumais speak is known as ‘Poula’. It is the common and lingua franca of the Poumais in different areas and also their official language. It is a combination of different dialects spoken by different Poumai villages. In spite of having a common language the Poumai villages speak dialects of slight variations in tune, tone and spelling from one another. Besides, there are a few Poumai villages viz., Thiwa, Ngari, Khongdai, Oinam (Onaeme) and its branching villages namely Ngamju, Tingsong, Onaeme Laila and Taphao Onaeme that speak dialects somewhat different from the Poula. The variations of their dialects might be because of their isolation from other groups or due to contact with others' culture. Among the above-mentioned villages, the dialect of the Oinam group seems to be the closest to their common language Poula. About the variation of the Oinam group dialect, legend says, the forefather of Oinam was gifted with the art of making earthen pots and the trade of earthen pots flourished there. The legend further goes that in order to make the pottery trade more profitable by maintaining secrecy and more convenience in bargaining, the people of Oinam propounded more or less different dialect from the dialects of other Poumai villages. The gap of variation between the Poula and Oinam dialect is marginal as they are based on the same root.

1.6.1. The Poumai ancestral script

Folk tales and legends of the Nagas speak about their ancestral script. It

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is told that, the forefathers of the Nagas, the Meiteis and the non-mongoloid Indian races were gifted with different type of scripts each. On the eve of their departure, they were instructed to preserve the scripts for their future use and prosperity. The scripts inscribed on a bark of tree was given to the forefather of the non-mongoloid Indians and the scripts carved on the bamboo scale was gifted to the forefather of the Meiteis were well preserved and put into used. However, according to the tale, the forefather of the Nagas was gifted with scripts engraved on the hide of an animal which was kept hanging on the wall. Later, the engraved hide with scripts was found eaten up by a dog. According to some, the hide was carried away and destroyed by the house rats.\textsuperscript{30} As a result, the Poumains do not have their own script and therefore use English Alphabets.

1.6.2. The use of English Alphabets

It was in the first quarter of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the Poumains started learning the use and application of English alphabets into their language. The first book ‘Angka Araina’ written in Poula with English alphabets was published in 1960, by N. Modoli.\textsuperscript{31} A total of 25 English alphabets are in used by the Poumains. They are: A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P R S T U Ü V W Y Z. (Here the letter Ü is an addition to English alphabet). Out of this, there are 19 consonants and 6 vowels.

a) The Consonants

The Poumains use a total of 19 consonants viz., B C D F G H J K L M N P R S T V W Y and Z. Along with these, like other languages, the Poumains also use a good numbers of double consonants. They are: Bv, bh, ch, dz, dh, gh,


\textsuperscript{31} N. Modoli, Angka Araina, 1960 (The first ever published book in Poula).
th, kh, ng, ph, pf, sh, ts, zh, etc. Moreover, a few numbers of triple consonants such as Ngh, khr, phr, etc. are also used by the Poumais.

b) The Vowels

English has five vowels, whereas, the *Poula* has one more vowel than English. The vowels are: a, e, i, o, u and ü. Besides, good numbers of diphthongs are also used by the Poumais. They are: aa, ae, ai, ao, au, ee, ei, eo, eu, ea, ia, ie, ii, io, iu, oe, oi, oo, ou, ua, ue, ui, uo, etc.

1.7. Origin and migration of the Nagas

The *Origin and migration* of the Poumais can not be dealt separately without dealing with the origin and migration of the Nagas as a whole. Therefore, before immediately coming to the origin and migration of the Poumais a brief account of the Nagas in general may be presented here.

The origin or the original home of the Nagas before they migrated to the present country is rather obscure as the proto-history of the Nagas is shrouded in mystery. Many sociologists, Anthropologists, historians and other social scientists had propounded different views and theories but it is difficult to establish the precise account of their origin and migration as they are mostly based on conjecture. The legends and oral traditions which the Nagas have been relating give only a very thin gleaming to the past.

According to the traditional myths and legends of the Nagas, the ancestors of many of the Naga tribes are believed to have emerged out from a cave or trough of the earth and some from sea or lake. The Southern Nagas, viz., the Marings, Anals, Moyon, Monshang and Lamkang have the tradition of coming out from the caves mostly located in south east hills of Manipur. The Mao legends point to Makhel from where their ancestors emerged from the earth and refer to Khezakhenoma as the center for migration. The

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33 Gangmumei Kabui, *Genesis of the Ethnoses of Manipur in Sanajaoba*, Naorem, ed., The
Zeliangrong of western Manipur have a tradition that they came out of a mythical cave known as Taobhei. They migrated to Makhel then to Ramting Kabin, a village in a deep gorge, then to Makui Longdi. From there they dispersed to three different directions, the South, the West and the North.\textsuperscript{34} J. P. Mills wrote, "It is narrated that three brothers Limhachan, Izumontse and Rankhanla who were the ancestors of the three phratries of the Lotha tribe came out of a hole near the miraculous stone at Khezakhenoma."\textsuperscript{35} Another tradition says, the common ancestor of Lothas, southern Sangtam, Semas, Rengmas, came from somewhere near Mao.\textsuperscript{36} The Angami legend says, they sprung up from ancestors who emerged from the bowels of the earth.\textsuperscript{37} According to another tradition of the Angamis there was a lake out of which emerged three men; one went south and gave origin to the Mao and Maram clans, another west, the great ancestor of the Kacha Nagas, and the third remained in the country and became Angami. Tangkhul traditions point to Makhel as the place of their origin from where they migrated to Hungdung which was their dispersal point. The folk song of Tangkhul points their origin to Samsok (Thangdut) of Kabow valley of upper Burma (Myanmar) and moved into Imphal valley, which they left due to heat and mosquito.\textsuperscript{38} The Aos believed that men emerged from cave and according to Phom tradition, they came out from cave at Lungterok.\textsuperscript{39}

J. H. Hutton wrote, "...Semas point Southwards to the village of Swemi (Angami village) or the hill of Tukahu (Japvo) in the Angami country as the place from where they sprung, and the Rengmas point to Sopvoma (Mao), Angamis point to Mao and the country south of that as the home of the races, and to this day the priests of the Angami villages wait for the priests of Mao

\textsuperscript{34} Manipur Past and Present Vol. 3, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1995, P. 27.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{36} NSUD, Nagas at Work, op. cit., P 8.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., P. 13.
\textsuperscript{38} J. H. Hutton, op. cit., P. 6.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 12.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., P. 13.
and Makhel to give the word before appointing the day for the celebration of any of the regular festivals of Mekroma (Maikel) as the type of Angami ceremony per excellence.\textsuperscript{40} Kacha Naga ancestors were believed to come from the direction of Japvo Mountain, whence they spread towards the south.\textsuperscript{41}

These legends of the Nagas are probably the old legends of the race, which have local values. However, the autochthonous origin of the Nagas is rather absurd to give credence. It can be considered as a stage of human society and culture, which they passed through. Therefore, it can be inferred that the traditions of Makhel, Khezakhomena, Ramtingkabin in Manipur, Lungterrok in central Nagaland, etc. point to such state of life and their routes of migration to the present country.

There are also many other theories of origin and migration of the Nagas propounded by a number of modern social scientists. Some of the modern historians have drawn a conclusion on the origin of the Nagas dating back to the emperor of China, Qin Chin Haughi, who built the Great Wall of China about 215 B.C. to keep out the Mongols. The short-tempered Emperor demanded force labour, heavy taxation from his subjects, which led to discontentment among the population. Many people died of starvation; exhaustion and more over political unrest forced the people to depart from the situation. Their miserable lives and survival led to a mass exodus during the period. People escaped through hilly terrain, valleys and meadows in search of better livelihood. They slowly moved to the vast plains of Assam, experiencing the heat, the rain and flood, then moved into deep jungles of the present Assam. The fittest survived and moved gradually towards the foothills of the mountain ranges following the course of rivers and streams and finally reached Khyafii (Makhel village).\textsuperscript{42}

In Kinghen's version the original home of the Nagas was Manchuria. According to him, the people had a very hard life there. Punishment was very severe; beheading was the usual punishment even for a single mistake. Therefore, a group of people decided to leave the country. They traveled and came along the foothills of the Himalayas as far as Burma. They lived there for

\textsuperscript{40} J. H. Hutton, op. cit., Pp. 6-7.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 6.
\textsuperscript{42} William Nepuni, op. cit., P. 14.
years and when people began to multiply in great numbers, it became necessary to move again. They sent some people to spy out a suitable land for migration. They crossed over the Patkoi hills and found a land beautiful with fruit trees. They plucked the fruit (probably Indian goose berry) and drank the water from the nearby stream and exclaimed, “even the water is sweet”. They then set out in search of a new country and came to Manipur and eventually tribe after tribe moved into the present habitations.\textsuperscript{43}

Dr. Horam, M. opines that the country now occupied by the Naga tribes was most likely subjected to mainly four immigration waves. This view is supported by Joseph Ethickal, Richard Haleng, etc. According to them, the first immigration was from the direction of Tibet and Nepal which probably entered via Arunachal Pradesh (formerly known as NEFA) as some of these tribes like Noctes and Akas belong to the same Naga family. The second immigration wave was the Mon-Khmer, also called Kol-Mon-Annam; these were the tribes of the Indo-China Peninsula which is now inhabited by the Nagas from the south. The third wave of immigration was probably from the Southern China province of Yunnan across the Valley of Irrawadi River and in this movement the Tais, Shans and Ahoms formed a part. “This takes back to the first millennium of the Christian era. Groups of Thai people were moving south from or through province (now in the southern China) and beginning to establish small independent kingdoms in what is now Laos, Northern Thailand, the Shan state of the present union of Burma and the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra (Dihang) valley of Assam (India)\textsuperscript{44}. The fourth immigration wave was from the Chin-Kuki group who belongs to Chin tribes of Burma. This migration was the most recent one, as late as 1918. There was migration towards Lushai Hills (now Mizoram) and the district of Churachandpur, south west of Manipur. There are a few Kuki tribes scattered all over the Naga Hills.

\textsuperscript{43} R.S. Dowang, op. cit., P. 2 (quoted Smith, Dr. W.C., Ao Naga tribes of Assam, London 1925).

\textsuperscript{44} M. Horam, Naga Insurgency, Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1988, P. 5.
This Chin-Kuki migration was stopped by the British government during the (1917-1918) Kuki revolt.45

According to Marshall as quoted by R. R. Shimray in his book ‘Origin and Culture of Nagas’ and B. B. Ghosh, in ‘Problems of writing History of Nagaland’, the early home of the mongoloid people of Eastern Asia was in the upper reaches of the Howangho river or yellow river (in the sinkiang province of China). One group of this mongoloid people moved towards East and South East and came to be known as Chinese. Another group migrated towards West and South West came to be known as Tibetans and a third group moved towards South and formed different tribes of Indo-China. One of the tribes of this last group is the Karens who are now living in Burma. It is likely that the Nagas belong to this third group of migration. Marshall opined that the Nagas could be said to have followed the early tribes of Indo-China.46

According to Keans, the races which followed the southward had distributed to different directions, some to the Archipelago and thence to the pacific, some went further down to Malaysia and Indonesia and some back to mainland pushing north-eastward and perhaps gradually followed the Irrawadi River and the Chindwin River, then reached the mainland of Burma. The migration wave routed through river courses. They gradually moved up and finally settled at Hsawngsup now Thangdut in Burma (pronounced as Samsok by Tangkhuls) and later they came to the present Naga country.47

In ‘Manipur Past and Present, Vol. 3 (Naga Kuki Chin)’, Gangmumei Kabui wrote: “As they are Tibeto-Burman, they must have lived with other groups of the same family in south west China before 1000 B. C. and migrated to eastern Tibet, upper Burma. Then into the Irrawady valley, Malay and Indonesia and they returned northward and entered northeast India through

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47 The Shepoumaramith op. cit., P. 11-12.
Manipur River and some tracts of Indo-Burma border to the present Naga habitat.\textsuperscript{48}

Considering the various theories, traditional songs and legends, it may be deduced that the Indo-mongoloid race particularly the Nagas have migrated from China which was considered as the mother country of South East Asia. They took southward movement, reached Myanmar (Burma) and some further down to Malaysia and Indonesia. Perhaps, they settled there for years. But leaving some of them there, they returned to the mainland of Myanmar. Taking the northwestward movement they gradually followed the Irrawadi and Chindwin river courses. Some sojourned at Hsawngsup now Thangdut in Myanmar (pronounced as Samsok by Tangkhuls) and other crossed the Indo-Myanmar border and entered Imphal valley. The valley at that time was covered under water surface and no habitation was possible. From there one group moved towards the east who became the Tangkhuls and the other group moved northward who finally reached the present Khyafii (Makhel).

In support of the above contention, there are a number of legendary tales and songs of the Poumai Nagas. According to some of them, the ancestors of Nagas came from between two ‘\textit{Siilizai}’ meaning ‘violent seas’ one on the right and the other on the left side. Here, ‘\textit{Siilii}’ means ‘violent’ or ‘bad temper’ and ‘\textit{zai}’ means ‘sea’.\textsuperscript{49} The ceremonial call of the Poumai people at the time of \textit{Chazii} during the Salaonii festival reads as: “\textit{Dziimaosfii nou pajaya, Khyafii nou pya-a.”}\textsuperscript{50} It means we came from floating land; we came from \textit{Khyafii} (Makhel). Here the floating land might be no other else than the Islands like Malaysia and Indonesia that seemed to be floating on the sea and the violent sea might be the Indian and the pacific Oceans that surround the Islands.

\textsuperscript{49} Interview with Kadu Daihrii, 01/10/2006.
\textsuperscript{50} Tho Raimi Pao, op. cit., P. 4.
According to another story, the first wave of the Naga migration was divided into two groups. One group proceeded north-eastward, who on their way cut down plantain trees to mark the direction they moved for those who would be coming after them and the other group went north-west, cutting and splitting Mousii (a type of tree in Poula). Those who were to come later were to follow the advance party by examining the marks of the cut trees. When they found the offshoots on the cut plantain trees, they thought that they won’t be able to catch up with the advance party who went in that direction. Therefore, they followed the Mousii marks left by the group which went north-west, as the marks on the Mousii seemed fresh. The advanced group who took northwest direction making the tree mousii marks was considered to be the first group who reached Makhel followed by the other groups of latter waves of migration.

The relation between islands and the migration of the Nagas is further strengthened by the socio-cultural affinities between the Nagas and the South East Asiatic Islanders. “A close examination of the implements and weapons used by the Naga tribes reveal that these very same tools are used by the Indonesian group as well as by the Igorot tribes of Philippines” McGovern wrote, “Nagas are very similar to the Dyaks and Kayans of Borneo, Battaks of Sumatra and certain groups of Formosa (Taiwan) and several other groups in Philippines.” W. C. Smith points out many similarities between the Nagas and the Dyaks. The Dyaks of Borneo grew rice on the steep hillside just as the Angami Nagas do. The long war drums of Nagas that hewn out of huge logs, feature very much alike the canoes which are said to be very common with the Islanders.

According to R. R. Shimray, a group of people having pierced ears was living in Chiang Mai area of Thailand. People with holes in their ears were also

52 M. Horan, op. cit., P. 7.
53 The Shepoumaramth, op. cit., P. 11.
55 Ibid., P. 13.
found in Myanmar who were known as Naka meaning people with holes in
cars. (‘Na’ meaning ear and ‘ka’ meaning hole in Burmese).\textsuperscript{56} It is also said that
in many small pockets of South East Asian countries where civilization had not
invaded, many customs and practices very much akin to those of the Nagas,
such as head hunting, tattooing, morung system, platform burial, looms,
terraced cultivation, etc. are found among the Dyaks and Kayans of Borneo and
Sarawak (now Indonesia and Malaysia respectively), Battaks of Sumatra, the
Igorots of Philippines, Kal-Mon-Annam of Indonesia and certain groups of
Formosa (Taiwan). About the Igorots, Barrows wrote that it is the custom of all
these tribes to chop off the head of the victims in battle or murder and carry
them home as trophies where they performed as the objects of feasting and
celebration.\textsuperscript{57} Further, the use of conch shells by the Nagas as their precious
ornaments and their fondness of cowry shells for beautifying dresses, and many
are quite similar to those living in the remote parts of Borneo, Sarawak,
Indonesia, Malaysia, etc. Besides, many aspects of the socio-cultural lives of
the Nagas are also found quite similar to that of these tribes.\textsuperscript{58}

Shakespear, in the History of Upper Assam wrote on the Nagas thus:
“they recognize a slight resemblance in matters of counting names for
domestic implements, in a way, village architecture and their head hunting
propensities to those of the Dyaks; while their love for marine shells (which
they part with but rarely) may seem to point to a bygone home near the sea;
though they are a far inland residing community.”\textsuperscript{59}

\textbf{1.7.1. The Poumai version of Migration}

While most of the theorists and authors belief one place or another in
China as the place from where the Naga tribes have migrated, the Poumais
have their own belief about their original place from where they have migrated.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., P. 14.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., P. 14.
\textsuperscript{58} R.R. Shimray, op.cit., P. 13.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., P. 15.
According to the Poumai folk songs and legendary tales, Pou or Shipfo was one of the great leaders of the Nagas in their exodus to Khyafii (Makhel) in the present Mao area. The ancestors who migrated to Khyafii includes: Poumai, Memai (Mao), Mahramai (Maram), Thangal, Tenyima (Angami), Chakhesang, Mazhamai (Rengma), Louzemai (Lotha), Sumi/Siuhmai (Sema), North western Tangkhuls, Zeliangrong (Zemaï, Liangmai, Rongmai also Impuiimai or Kabui). Among them, Poumai, Mao, Maram, Angami, Sema, Lotha, Rengma, Chakhesang and Zeliangrong were known to be the first wave of Nagas settled at Khyafii. According to Liangao Soto, the ancestors migrated to Khyafii also included Anal, Lamkang, Moyon and Chiru. They lived at Khyafii for generations together with love, harmony and unity. As years past by, the number of population multiplied and the place became too congested to provide adequate cultivable land to the younger generations. This led the people of Khyafii including the Poumais, to move out for new habitation. As a result, at present the Poumais are found dispersed in different parts of Nagaland and Manipur. Even then, the descendants of Khyafii are still known by the name “Tenyimia” which means the ‘kilt wearers’ or Khyafiimais (the descendants of Khyafii). All the Tenyimias practiced more or less similar traditional festivals, rites and rituals and most importantly the ‘genna’ that observed after the fall of every branch of the venerated Pear Tree (Khya Taobe) which grows at Charahou, Sajaoba in Senapati District of Manipur.

1.8. Progenies and descendents

According to Mao tradition, Dziilimasiiirou, a primordial female believed to be the mother of human beings, got mysteriously conceived after

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61 UNC., P. 7.
63 R.S. Dowang, op. cit., P. 3.
64 Interview with Lakhrei Hriipunii, 05/08/06.
embowered by a spirit in the form of white cloud while she was dozing under the banyan tree which grew in the premises of the present Khyafii (Makhel) village Chief’s house. She gave birth to Chaleo (spirit), Alew (man) and Kozo (tiger). It is further believed that each time she sleeps under the tree the spirit visited and impregnated her. She once again gave birth to three sons. They were as follows:

1. Asiipfo Alapha, the eldest son and the progenitor of the non-Naga Indian (Mayan in Manipuri) race,

2. Alew, the second son and the progenitor of the Nagas and

3. Chituwo, the last son, progenitor of the Meiteis.

It is further said that Alew gave birth to Khephio the forefather of Shiipfowo or Pou. Shiipfowo was known as the progenitor of the Poumai and Maos. He gave birth to three sons, Kapewo, Tolewo and Memiiwo. Kapeo and Tolewo respectively formed Paomata and Lepaona communities of the Poumai and Memiiwo formed the Maos. According to another legend, Pao-Ziileo (grand Pa-Ziileo) and Pai-Masirou (grand Ma-Masirou) were the ancestral parents who gave birth to Rah the father of Hao. Pou the son of Hao was the ancestral father of the Poumai. He had three sons namely Row, Leo and Prou. Row was the eldest son and the forefather of Paomata; Leo, the second and the forefather of Lepaona and Prou, the last and the forefather of Chilevai. The descendants of Prou established four villages namely, Kodom, Lakhamai, Sirong and Shimai or Shamai. These four villages were also known together as Proungidai. However, the last group Shimai or Shamai exists no longer as a village today. According to another legend, ‘Row’ the only son of Pou had four sons by the name, Pao, Leo, Duo and Meo who formed the present Paomata, Lepaona, Chilevai and Mao communities respectively.

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65 William Nepuni, op. cit. Pp. 75-76.
66 Ibid., P. 85.
67 Interview with Kadu Dalhirii, 11/10/06.
68 Interview with Kadu Dalhirii, 01/10/06.
69 R. S. Dowang, unpublished manuscript P. 4.
Raini Pao maintains that, Pou had two sons, Pao and Leo. Pao was blessed with two sons, Ranapao and Raonapao. Ranapao fathered four sons who established four villages of the Paomata region. They were, Siipao, Khipao, Phrepao and Zhipao who formed Saranamai, Maiba, Phuba and Liyai village respectively. The descendants of Raonapao formed Tungam and Tungjoy villages. Leo, the second son of Pou was blessed with four sons who formed the Lepaona community.\(^7\) According to S. Ngaoni, Pou was blessed with three sons namely Pao, Leo and Meo who formed Paomata, Lepaona and Mao. He further said, Leo was the father of four sons who were settled at different four villages of Lepaona. They were Ngipao, Naepao, Hriipao and Chaopao who established Ngimai (Oinam), Naemai (Koide), Hiimai (Purul) and Chaonamai (Thingba) villages.\(^7\)

1.9. Dispersal of the Poumais from Khyafii

Poumai comprises three sub-communities, viz., Paomata, Lepaona and Chilevai. The forefathers of Paomata took the eastward direction and first settled at Saranamai village. From there three of the four sons of Ranapao (Khipao, Phrepao and Zhipao) moved further eastwards and established three villages namely, Khimai (Maiba), Pheamai (Phuba) and Zaimai (Liyai) and Siipao the eldest son inherited the father’s land. The two sons of Raonapao moved north eastwards and settled at Tunggam and Tungjoy villages.\(^7\)

According to another ancestral legend, as the four forefathers of Lepaona were marching out from Khyafii to look for better place to live on, the Maos requested them not to go and blocked their way from the bank of Barak River. In the mean time, an eagle (*Leche* by Poumais and *Toleo* by Maos) appeared flying over them and while everyone was watching at the *Leche*, the Lepaonas’

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\(^7\) Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 08/09/06.

\(^7\) Interview with Shanglong Ngaoni, 09/02/06.

forefathers escaped by crossing the river. Therefore, the name ‘Lepaona’, by the Pounais or ‘Tolepemata’ by the Maos was given to them after the name of the Leche that made them escaped from the Maos. Thereafter, the forefathers of Lepaona went up to Paodeifii at the present Naemai (Koide) village where they sojourned. Later they moved further and established four villages, viz., Koide, Purul, Oinam and Thingba.\textsuperscript{73}

The legendary tales and songs of Lepaona tell that Leo had four sons who were the forefathers of Oinam, Koide, Purul and Thingba. At the time of their dispersal from Khyafii, they were presented a food pack each for their journey by their old ancestral mother. At the same time they were informed that the person whose food pack contains cat’s head is the eldest among them. On hearing it they were keen to know who the eldest among them was. After reaching Paodeifii, they opened up their food packs and found a cat’s head in one of their food packs. As a song in one of their legends says:

\begin{verbatim}
"Daorai Khyaraifii haino koropa siiza,
Khyahaino haita mara-o panao khaitoudei;
Zaorou thaopou paono tsii... apoupou-a nero?
lahaha sapei louyunano sutsii-yenoza liiipipou;
Zaorou vou-arei kala patoliiza,
Zaorou-a Nae diikho-a reitapaza,
Zaorou-a thaopou paono tsii sarou?
lahamaizii phei lai kherouza liioupao-a siiza,
Seangi paonae lahapei sapei loudoyeno ngi pounaeno sutsii khaidei."
\end{verbatim}

\textbf{English translation}

Once we lived at Khyafii,

We departed from Khyafii;

Whose forefather is the eldest?

The one whose food pack contains cat’s head is the eldest among the

\textsuperscript{73} Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 08/09/06.
\textsuperscript{74} Interview with Shanglong Ngaoni, 11/09/05.
Brothers; (said the old ancestral mother)
After they had crossed the Barak River,
After they reached the water pond at Koide,
(they were keen to know who was the eldest among them)
Whose forefather is the eldest?
Let us open the food packs and see,
The cat’s head is in the food pack of Ngipao (forefather of Oinam) and he is the eldest.

According to Ph. Haitho of Sirong, Prou, the forefather of the Proumais commonly known as Proungidai (the four villages of Prou) of Chilevai community took a diamond and migrated from Khyafii with his kith and kins. After a long and tedious eastwards journey they reached at a place and sojourned there. This particular place was named as ‘Proukhoufii’ (meaning the place where Prou kept his diamond), the present Phuba Thapham village. In the course of time, the place was found too limited for further expansion in the near future. As such, they moved out of the place and came to settle at Phaoifi (the present Kodom village). From there they branched out to Sirong and Lakhamai.75 According to K. Dahirii of Saranamai, the forefathers of Khongdai or Dumai (another Chilvai village of Poumai) came to Khyafii with the last wave of migration. From there they moved to Saranamai and sojourned there. Later they migrated to the present Khongdai village.76

1.10. Historic Sacred Trees and Monuments at Khyafii

There are many sacred trees, ancient relics, stone monoliths, magical stones, etc. in and around the Khyafii (Makhel) village. These ancient things have high historical significance. Some of them which are still found there are being briefed as under:

75 Ph. Haitho, A Brief History of Raomai/Muinao, Sirong. (A pamphlet).
76 Interview with Kaju Dahirii, 01/10/06.
a) *Khyataobe or Chuteby (Pear Tree)*

*Khyataobe*, the venerated wild pear tree at *Charahoung* (Sajaoba) is considered as the ancestral abode of the Nagas of Khyafii origin. Even to this day, they pay great respect and homage to the tree and take great care for its protection. It is believed that Pou, the grand old man known to be the leader of the team who migrated to Khyafii, found Khyafii to be suitable for their settlement. There, Pou transfixed his walking stick into the ground. Later the stick grew into a big tree. It was believed that so long as the tree gives rich flowers and fruits the Khyafii descendants would prosper. However, if the tree failed to bear flowers and fruits it indicates that hard time is ahead. If only a branch or two bear fruits the people living in the direction of the fruit-bearing branches would yield good harvest and vice-versa. The breaking down of any branch or branches means impending natural calamity or serious epidemic or famine in their country. In the event of dying of any branch the brothers who have gone in the direction of the death branch would be in a helpless predicament caused by war or similar disaster. By observing all such signs they extended all possible help to each other. Till the last few decades, whenever any branch of the tree falls the descendants of Khyafii observed a genna called ‘*Ratho*’ which forbids them from doing any field works by way of asking for divine protection and as a sign of respect and remembrance to their ancestors.

b) **Sacred Banyan Tree**

There is a big banyan tree in the premises of the house of the Khyafii village Chief. The tree is considered to be sacred and believed to have grown form the tomb of the first woman who died at Khyafii. The tree is known as the ‘Life Foundation Tree’. It is considered to be an ominous tree as it manifests various signs of imminent natural calamities. If any branch of the tree begins to

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78 Interview with Shanglong Ngaoni, 11/09/05.
79 Interview with Thaile Sani, 08/07/06.
dry it is believed to be a sign of impending calamities like flood, hailstorms, famine, epidemics, etc. to the region and people living in the direction of that branch. It is also believed that when the tree dies the humanity will also come to an end.  

c) Farewell monolith

A menhir monolith called Tarachu or Tamaratu (departure stone) is there in the village of Khyafii which is said to have been erected on the eve of the departure of three brothers, Alapha (Mayang), Tutuwo (Meitei) and khephio (Naga) the sons of the first man Aleo, to commemorate their life at Makhel. The monolith was engraved with a bull tied with a rope on the neck, a mithun, a cock, a fish, a shield, a tiger claw and some undeciphered scripts. It is said that the scripts implied that one day all the brothers shall come back and live under one family.  

d) Tri monolith

According to legends, God, tiger and man were brothers, born and brought up in a same family at Khyafii. On the eve of their departure, they erected three monoliths known as ‘Linotu’ at Chizelophi, at the suburb of three km. away in the south of the village to commemorate and perpetuate their memory, symbolizing their brotherhood and one common mother. The three monoliths are said to be representing God, tiger and man. According to legends, the fall of any the monoliths would indicate the decline of that particular species represented by the fallen stone. It is said that in 1914 the Tiger Stone fell. Subsequently the population of tigers declined remarkably and the tiger menace is no longer there. It is also believed that when the stone
representing man falls all humanity shall be perished and when the stone of God falls, the world will end.83

Besides, there are Orah Tobuchu (Hailstorm observation stone), Village settlement Stone, Magical Stone, Sacred Shield of Pou, Gun, etc. which have traditional values and significance to the people of Khyafii origin.

1.11. Village Settlement of the Poumais

The Poumais are indigenous settlers to their present country. Villages were perched here and there on hilltops far away from each other in thick jungles. Their choice of such village sites as their permanent habitation was for reasons of having better views around and better defense purposes from the sudden raid of their enemies as well as attack of wild beasts as during those days head hunting war was on its climax and the menace of wild beasts was also very much there.

Their villages were totally secluded in jungles. The small footpaths traversing across the rugged terrains and thick forests were the only means of connecting one village to another.84 Being totally isolated they were neither contacted nor properly accessed by any outsider. Murkot Ramunny wrote: “...the geographic and climatical conditions under which they lived for centuries had forced them to live in isolation. Isolated from the outside world, separated from other tribes, they lived a secluded life in their own villages. Their world extended upto the horizon as far as the eye could see from the village top” 85

1.11.1. Village distribution of the Poumais

Today, the Poumais are scattered here and there. Almost all the original villages had branched out to a number of villages. Some of them were demarcated into the Chakhesang area of Nagaland, some migrated to Ukhrul

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83 Shepoumaramth, op. cit., P. 17.
84 Interview with Shanglong Ngaoni, 11/09/2005.
district, some have migrated to the Thangal areas of Senapati district and still some moved to towns and cities in search of easy and better standards of life.

The Poumai villages

Chilevai Area

1. Ravomai : (Chingmai Khullen)
2. Zhobumai : (Chingmai Khunou)
3. Zaihmai : (Katafiimai)
4. Dumai : Khongdei Khuman
5. Dumai Ngawar : Khongdei Ngawar
6. Dumai Shimphung : Khongdei Shimphung
7. Phaomai : (Kodom Khullen)
8. Phaomai Khavii : (Kodom Khavii)
9. Zhamai : (Lakhamai)
10. Vafiiimai : (Laii)
11. Shirafiimai : (Laii Shirafii)
12. New Laii
13. Raidulomai Lower : Ngari Lower
14. Raidulomai Upper : Ngari Upper
15. Raimai : Ngari Khullen
16. Raimai Lishang : Ngari Lishang
17. Zhiffiimai : (Phaibung Khullen)
18. Chumai : (Phaibung Khunou)
19. Chukhemai : (Phaibung Lower)
20. Raomai : (Shirong Khullen)
21. Raomai Shofii : (Shirong Khunou)
22. Pouhmai : (Songdo)
23. Pouhmai : (Thiwa)

Lepaona Area

1. Khusomai : (Khamson)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Khusomai Hofii</td>
<td>(Khamsom Hofii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Dziinoo</td>
<td>(Khabung Karong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vamai Shiffii</td>
<td>(Khabung Khunou)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Vamai Khelo</td>
<td>(Khabung Lower)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Vamai Reiilo</td>
<td>(Khabung Upper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Nakhemai</td>
<td>(Koide Makha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Nareimai</td>
<td>(Koide Mathak)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Kuhmai</td>
<td>(Ngamju)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Ngimai</td>
<td>(Oinam Hills)</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Laila</td>
<td>(Oinam Laila)</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Hiimai Biinamai</td>
<td>(Purul Akutpa)</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Hiimai Dunamai</td>
<td>(Purul Atongba)</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Rosofii</td>
<td>(Rurul Rosofii)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Homai</td>
<td>(Sorbung)</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Chaonamai</td>
<td>(Thingba Khullen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Shohmai</td>
<td>(Thingba Khunou)</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>Saomai</td>
<td>(Tingsong Khullen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Saomai Tochii</td>
<td>(Tingsong Center)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Saomai Khelo</td>
<td>(Tingsong Lower)</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Vakho</td>
<td>(New Karong)</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>Chofii</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Kapao</td>
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<td>24.</td>
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<td>Reafii</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>Taphou Onaeme</td>
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**Paomata Area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Chilao</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Zhaimai</td>
<td>(Liyai Khullen)</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Khimai</td>
<td>(Maiba)</td>
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4. Khumai : (Tungam Khullen)
5. Afii : (Tungam Afii)
6. Paomata Centre : (Tungam)
7. Makhufii : (Tungam Makhufii)
8. Ekhro : (Tungam Ekhro)
9. Phyamai : (Phuba Khuman)
10. Phyamai Khoubu : (Phuba Thapam)
11. Phyamai Taphou
12. Siimai : (Saranamai)
13. Rakhutao : (Saranamai Rakhutao)
14. Khaikhoo : (Saranamai Khaikhoo)
15. Veymai : (Tungjoy)
16. Tuosii Ngaonii Nuh : (Senapati Village)
17. Kathikho
18. Rikhumai Taphou

Kangpokpi Area
1. Zhaimai Kalapahar : (Liyai Kalapahar)
2. Zhaimai Kongpao : (Liyai Kongpao)
3. Phyapou
4. Thanaba
5. Mahika

Razeba Area, Nagaland
1. Razeba
2. Tsiisiimai
3. Zelomai
4. Zhavamai

Town Area
1. Poumai Colony, Imphal
2. Poumai Colony, Dimapur.