CHAPTER II.

ORIGIN AND DISPERSAL OF THE MARAMS

2.1. An Overview of Manipur

The Marams have their domicile in Manipur, one of the Northeastern states of India, that lies between 24.8170 N and 93.950 E. Lord Irwin preferred to call Manipur the ‘Land of Jewels’ and ‘Switzerland of India’. It has an area of 22,327 sq.km.\(^{24}\) Manipur became a full-fledged state of the Indian Union on 21 January 1972. It has now nine administrative districts, the hills consisting of five districts and the plains of four districts.

Geographically, the hill areas of Manipur are contiguous to Myanmar in the east and southeast, Assam in the west, and Mizoram in the south-west. The land routes connecting Manipur valley with Myanmar, Cachar district and Nagaland lie across the hills. Thus, the state of Manipur is linked by the National Highway No.39, from Dimapur in Nagaland to Imphal in Manipur. National Highway No.53 links Imphal with Silchar in Assam.\(^{25}\)

The hill ranges of Manipur cover about 92% of the total land area of the state and have 30% of the population. They stretch mainly from north to south with an altitude ranging from 2,500 feet to 10,000 ft. They are part of the Assam - Myanmar tertiary ranges, which sweep in a long curve from the northeast corner of Assam to Cape Negrais in Myanmar.\(^{26}\) The Manipur valley covers about 8% of the total area but 70% of the population live here. It is an oval shaped plain area with an average


altitude of about 2,600 ft. The Jiribam plains cover about 277 sq.km which is only 1% of the total area. The valley is surrounded in the west by Koubru Hills and Mapithel in the East. The highest peak in Manipur is Mount Tenipu (Esso) situated at a height of 2,994 metres, in Senapati district, close to Nagaland border.\(^{27}\)

The Mao-Maram hills form part of the Manipur western hills which includes also Sadar hills, Tamenglong and Churachandpur hills. Geologically, Manipur belongs to the Alpine system of young folded mountains which came into existence as a result of the tertiary folds of the sedimentary strata formed in the shallow Tethys sea, some 40 to 90 million years ago.\(^{28}\)

### 2.1.1. The Barak River System of Manipur

The state lies in the catchment area of two river systems, viz., the Ganga-Bramaputra and the Chindwin-Irrawadi. The tract of land between the plains of Cachar and Manipur forms the catchment of the Barak river.

Among the principal rivers of the hills as well as of the whole state, the Barak is the largest and the most important one. This river originates from the foothills of Liyai and Tungjoy of Paomata area,\(^{29}\) about 20 kms east of Tadubi and follows a westerly course. Other tributaries from Tadubi area, Makhan and Maram join the Barak below Maram Bazar near Besa village. From there it flows southward and crosses the Imphal - Dimapur road (NH 39) at Karong near Senapati and skirts towards the north. Near Karong, the Senapati stream joins the Barak,\(^{30}\) from where it follows a westerly course, traversing the heart of Maram area, till it reaches the north-west corner of the state. This river is of special importance to the Maram people.

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\(^{30}\)n. 26, p. 15.
because the agriculture in this region depends on the Barak to a large extent.

2.1.2. Senapati District

The Senapati District is located between 24.300 N to 25.450 Latitude and from 93.300 E to 94.300 E longitude with an altitude of 1061 mts (Kangpokpi) to 1788 mts (Mao) above sea level. The district has an area of 3271 sq. kms bordering the Ukhrul district on the east, the Phek district and Kohima district of Nagaland on the north, the Tamenglong district on the west and the Imphal districts on the south. The Temperature ranges from 3.36 centigrade to a maximum of 34.14 centigrade. The annual rainfall measures from 671 mm to 1454 mm per annum. About 80% of the land surface is forest land and 20% is arable land. Senapati is blessed with a pleasant and salubrious climate. It is the home of high mountains, the Esso, the Koubru, the Khuchi, the Houdu and the Ngapu, and the source of the famous rivers, the Barak, the Lane, the Irl and the Imphal. Senapati district, the gateway to Manipur, has the NH 39 passing through the heart of the district from Sekmai in the south-end to Mao in the north-end. The Maram area and habitat fall under the Senapati district, with the main area under Tadubi Sub-division and the rest under Kangpokpi.

2.1.2.1. The People

Since several centuries, tribes like, the Marams, the Maos, the Pounais, the Tangkhuls, the Thangals, the Kukis, the Zeliangrongs, the Marings, the Chirus, the Vaipheis, the Koiyengs live in the district since ages. There is a sizable Nepali population also in the area. Christianity is the predominant religion of the people in the district and Manipuri is the lingua franca among the people. The growth rate in the district is very high. According to 1981 census the population of the district was 1,55,421. It increased to 2,10,841 in the 1991 Census and reached 3,79,241 in 2000 according to Hill house tax assessment report in 2000.

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32 Ibid., p. 4.
2.1.2.2. Administrative set-up

The first administrative setup was called the Manipur North District which came into existence on 14 November 1969 with its headquarters at Karong. On 13 December 1976, the District headquarters was shifted to Senapati. On 15 July 1983, the name of the district was changed to Senapati District. The district has six subdivisional offices and has 6 Vidhan Sabha seats.

2.2. The Maram Tribe

Capt. R.B. Pemberton refers to the ‘most powerful, populous and wealthy villages of the great Muram (Maram) tribe of Nagas’.33 He writes,

In noticing the several tribes around Muneepoor (Manipur), I had occasion before, to mention the Murams (Marams), through whose country these routes pass. On the east they are bordered by the Loohoopas (Tangkhuls), and on the west, by the Cacharees; the villages of all the principal clans are large and populous, some of them numbering more than 1,000 houses each, and capable of bringing into the field from three or four hundred men; their cultivation which is principally rice and cotton, is most extensive, and the system of terracing their fields prevails very generally: their herds of cattle are numerous and they are in appearance, and courage, very superior to any of the tribes with whom we had previously become acquainted, except the Loohoopas whom they very much resemble.34

G. Grierson, writing about the Marams says:

To the south of the Maos lie the Marams, inhabiting one large village with a population of perhaps 2500. The two tribes claim to have a common origin but are perpetually at feud with each other. They are nevertheless closely allied by inter-marriage.35

According to Roland Shimmi, Maram is certainly a quasi-Angami tribe and

33The History Committee, Lairouching Baptist Church (2006), A History of the Maram Lumsyipou Baptist Church (1956-2006), Senapati, p. 28.
one of the tribe that possibly came from the east. M. Horam holds that the Angamis with whom the Marams claim to be one ethnic group, are principally of a southern origin. Elwin speaks of the Marams and the Maos claiming to have descended from the Angamis. The Angamis themselves believe that 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 Kachcha Nagas, and the third remained in the country and became Angami.

The fact finding survey of G. Grierson, shows a compelling similarity between the dialects spoken among Thangal, Maram, Mao, Kaουi, Kachcha and Tangkhul Nagas. The other groups are included in the Kuki-Chin group of dialects. The Maram language has a close affinity to many of the dialects.

During one of his expeditions against the Angamis, Sir James Johnstone, refers to the Marams as “the once powerful village of Murram (Maram), still populous but submissive”. Though the Marams were a great people, they lost their ancient greatness in the 19th and 20th centuries. The 1971 census showed that the dominant tribes in the Manipur North district were the Maos and the Thadous and not the Marams.

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36 n. 7, p. 68.
38 n. 14, p. 459.
39 n. 35, p. 193.
42 It must be noted that at that time the Mao and Poumei tribes were clubbed together as Maos.
Probably, this group came to their present habitat after having halted at Meikhel for a considerable period of time. Meikhel is a small village in the Mao-Maram area, about 42 km to the southeast of Kohima. The legends of the Angamis, Šemas, Lothas, Tangkhuls and Maos claim Meikhel as their place of origin. There is a huge tree at Shajouba near Meikhel which is revered by these tribes as their place of departure. The Angamis call Meikhel as Mekhromia which means, ‘the place of departure’. As the place became congested due to the growth of population, they began to disperse looking for better places.\textsuperscript{44}

2.3. Affinity With Other tribes

The Marams have affinity with some of the Naga tribes of Nagaland and Manipur.

2.3.1. The Angamis

That there is a close relationship between Angamis and Marams is beyond doubt. Mr. K. Raina\textsuperscript{45} speaks how the former Chief Minister of Nagaland, Vizol (1974-75; 1977-1980) as a boy of Class 7 came with some delegates from Khonoma and Viswema and stayed at Maram Khullen in 1928. He recalls having slept at Mathak Sagai of Maram Khullen. Marams too went to Viswema at their invitation to renew their friendship in 1931.

Mr. Raina recalls of having heard the story of Lakhatingdou narrated by the

\textsuperscript{44}Lorho Mary Maheo (2004), \textit{The Mao Naga Tribe of Manipur}, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, p. 21. T.C. Hodson says that Maram legend does not support the belief that they were all together at Makhel. T.C. Hodson (1996), \textit{The Naga Tribes of Manipur}, Delhi: Low Price Publications, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{45}K. Raina, of Maram Bazar, former Deputy Speaker of Manipur Assembly, now an MLA in the Manipur State Assembly, is a very knowledgeable person regarding Maram customs and traditions. He was also the general Secretary of Maram Students’ Union (MKS) in 1985-86.
people of the Gaili village similar to a story of the Marams. The story narrates how Lakhatindou, a wealthy lady, using 30 baskets and 30 shawls carried up stones and heaped them up on the mountain top. This common story clearly indicates that the people of Gaili village are related to the Marams.

When Dr. Vizadel Sakhrie was standing for election, Mr. Raina also came to Jakham and campaigned for him. During the Silver Jubilee of the Maram Students Union held at Lairouching, from 21-25 Feb 1986, Dr. Sakhrie, Minister, Health, Nagaland, was invited as the Chief guest. Dr. Sakhrie brought a delegation of 39 members from Viswema and 56 members from Khonoma. In his speech he referred to himself being a Maram, belonging to N'giimai clan. On 4 March, same year (1986) about 20 delegates from Maram went to Khonoma for renewal of friendship. For the 1994 Maram Students Conference, held at Maram Khullen, four delegates came from Khonoma. It is beyond doubt that there has been close ties with the people of Khonoma and Viswema.

2.3.2. The Khamrangs

Marams are also closely related to the Khamrangs of Tangkhul area. There is also a saying among the Marams that the Khamrang group of Tangkhuls originally belonged to the Maram. Thus, at ‘Somdal or Suimdal’ village in the Tangkhul area, the people still follow certain Maram customs. They erect memorial stones quite different from the Tangkhul style. The Khamrangs used to attend Maram conferences earlier. ‘Maram folktales’ mention this group settling down in Ukhrul area, to escape the wrath of the Meitei king.\(^{46}\) It is said that from Maram, a group migrated southwards to settle at Ruithar-Leihao and established a village with 500 families.\(^{47}\) The villages of Somdal, Leisan, Maichun, Padang and Houman villages are inhabited by Khamrangs.

It was a customary practice among the Khamrangs to send a delegation to

\(^{46}\) n. 25, pp.22-23.

\(^{47}\) n. 7, p. 63.
attend the Anuual Maram Students Conference. In 1962 seven delegates of
Khamrangs came to Oklong for the student conference. Mr. Thumbu of Tumuyon
Khullen accompanied them to Oklong. After the conference they went to Maram
Khullen along with him to enquire more about their origins. At that time Mr. Kanii
and Mr. N’tuba were the leaders. After this some of the Maram elders attended a
meeting at Somdal in 1965. In 2006, Khamrang chief Pien Khamrang came along
with 20 youth for the conference at Willong Khunou. In 2007 only Pien Khamrang
came.

2.4. Villages of Maram

According to the data collected by the office of the Maram Union) the population of the Maram is 42833. A detailed list of the villages along
with their population village is given in appendix 2

2.4.1. Topographical Placement of Maram Villages

Most of the villages are located on hill tops. With the improvement in
communication and establishment of the National Highway 39, villagers from Maram
Khullen began to establish villages along the Highway. And thus the villages of
Maram Centre, Maram Bazar, Ramlong, Sagongbam and Kiiinam are found along
the Highway. There is a concerted effort among the Marams to come down from the
hills to the river side or nearer to the National Highway, to take advantage of the
communication facilities. Rajaimei, Lower Sangkhongmei and New Maram are
villages that came down from the hills and settled down near the river valley for
agricultural purposes. Maram Centre, Maram Bazar, Ramlong, Sagongbam, Kabinam,
etc., are rather new settlements of the Marams located along the National Highway for
easier communication and to enjoy the benefits of modern civilization.

2.5. The Maram Cosmogony

Every group of people has their own concept of the universe and expresses it

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n. 25, pp. 23-24.
through folklore. Its transmission from person to person and its exposure to various influences that affect it consciously or unconsciously, have made it evolve over time. Folklore has a pedagogical function of adjusting the members of a social group to the needs of the group. Folklore thus ultimately becomes the means of expression of a group’s attitudes and cultural life.\textsuperscript{49} The folklore of Marams too is no exception to this rule.

Their folktales hold that \textit{Paramhaha} (God) created heaven and earth. The earth was flat and much bigger in size than the heavens, and the heavens could not cover it up. The heavens requested the earth to fold itself till it was fully spherical. The earth obeyed and the heaven covered the earth. As the earth folded itself, hills and valleys were formed.

Meanwhile there was a vacuum and \textit{Paramhaha} felt all alone and lonely. So, he thought of creating some creatures. Though he created creatures one after the other, he did not like them to live with him. So he set them free one by one after naming them. He was exhausted and still unhappy even after creating all such living beings. Then he stood up and walked down to a place and stood catching on to a tree called Madungbang.

He thought for a while and spat into his right hand fingers and picked up \textit{Nchet} (a stem-borer insect that infest the oak tree) from the tree called Madungbang. Holding the insect in his hands, he whispered to himself and threw the insect on to the ground. Instantly a man similar to himself stood up out of the insect. Now he was happy and called the man “Madiingkasii” meaning, man created out of the tree and the insect. Nevertheless, he was not fully satisfied with himself. So he walked down a little further and stood beside a pond.

For a while he thought to himself and repeated the action of spitting into his fingers and scooped up some water from the pond using his hands. He felt that a creature was in his hands. It was a water creature named ‘Samongpui’. Again, he

\textsuperscript{49} n. 1, pp. 2 - 7.
mumbled to himself and threw the creature on to the ground. A woman came out of
the creature, whom he named, "Samotingdungpui". Now he was fully satisfied with
himself. He made them partners and put them in a place called Taikong Rajaimu or
Katunglung. According to Maram folktales, they were the first human beings.
However, according to Hodson the first man and woman were the only survivors of a
great flood.\footnote{T.C. Hodson (1996), \textit{The Naga Tribes of Manipur}, Delhi: Low Price Publications, p. 13.} Even the custom surviving to this day, of putting spittle on the palms
and rubbing them together before any important function, is believed to have
originated from this story of creation.

After creation, \textit{Paramhaba} told all the creatures that there would be light the
next day and the one who saw the dawn first would be rewarded. As it was becoming
dawn, an owl started hooting. \textit{Paramhaba} heard the sound. So he came asking about
the sound that broke the silence of the first dawn. The owl was afraid of \textit{Paramhaba}
and kept silent. \textit{Sarang} (hornbill) took the opportunity and replied "I cried at the
dawn". So \textit{Paramhaba} rewarded the bird by colouring its body and painting its beak
\textit{(Sashidhi)}.

Having seen the dawn, all the creatures were happy and wanted to see the
rising of the sun. Everyone agreed that the one who first saw the sun would be
considered God's first creation. While all were looking towards the East, one of them
hit the cat, and the cat was weeping and it turned towards opposite side. But the cat
saw the light first on the top of a hill in the West. The cat shouted that it had seen the
light. All of them turned towards the cat and saw the light. So it was agreed that the
cat was the eldest of all creatures. In Maram custom, it is observed that cats should
not be beaten as it is the eldest fruit of creation.

\textit{Paramhaba} put the first man and woman at Taikong Rajaimu or Katunglung
under the care of Sarah Kachingnii (a god of mercy). The \textit{Sarah} commanded them to
eat all the fruits except one growing in the middle of the pond. They lived as
commanded.
It is said that Madungkasii had sexual intercourse with Samotingdungpui under a tree called Kababang. She conceived and gave birth to three sons. Their first son was Marambungsaa, Makikangba, the second and Kla Sanglung the youngest. The brothers departed from one another at a place called Meikhel. At this place, Marambungsaa planted his walking stick; this stick took root, sprouted and grew into a big tree. It now stands as the historic tree of the Nagas in general and the Marams in particular. Marambungsaa, the eldest brother, chose the present site of Maram Khullen for his village. Different authors have given a few variations of this lore. We shall consider a few of them.

According to T.C. Hodson, the legend of the origin of the Marams presents several features of interest. Medungasi and Simoting, the only two survivors of the great flood, did not know whether they could get married. While they were in a jungle together, God revealed to them in a dream that they can get married, provided none of their descendants eat pork. Even now the habit of not having pork is strictly observed strictly in the court of the king and it is a punishable offence to bring pigs to certain areas of the village.

From the couple whose union was approved by the divine, were born two sons, Kela Sangmuk and Maram Pungsa. The elder went to Cachar and the younger, as his name shows, founded the village of Maram; of whom were born four sons and the names of the first four clans of the Marams are named after them.

According to H. Kamkhenthang, the Marams were the descendants of the first man and woman. The first man and woman were Pou Madungkasii and Pei

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51Some authors refer to the eldest son of Madungkasii as Marambungsaa. Maram elders say that Marambungsaa is the eldest son of Madungkasii, and Maram Roukang belongs to a much later generation.

52T.C. Hodson mentions only two sons, Kela Sangmuk and Maram Pungsa. He considers Kela Sangmuk as the elder of the two. Cf. n. 50, p. 13-14.

Tingrampui. Pei Tingrampui was an extra-ordinary woman. Pou Madungkasi was a strong man. He used to visit Pei Tingrampui at a place called Teikong Ragiimii where they had intercourse under a tree called Kababang. They had three sons. The eldest son was Maram Roukang, Makikangba the second and the youngest one was Kala Sangong. The three brothers departed from one another at a place called Makhel. At this place of separation the eldest brother planted his walking stick. The stick took roots and and sprouted. It is said that the seed of the stick which grew into a big tree (Tamdonbang) stands as the historic tree of the Marams in particular and of the Nagas in general.

Maram Rokung, the eldest brother, chose Maram Khullen for his settlement. The population of Maram Khullen gradually increased and he became the master of the Maram Nagas and of some other Naga tribes. Because of over population at Maram Khullen, the inhabitants moved to different locations. The presence of big stone slabs on top of the hills, and the footpaths paved with stone slabs in Maram area indicate that the village of Maram Khullen was very strong and powerful.54 Makikangba or Makikarunii as he is also called went southward and settled in the valley of Manipur.

A collection of folklore published by Lumsyiipou Baptist Church, on the occasion of their golden jubilee, states that Madungkasyuuii and Samutingdangpui had 32 children. The first son was Rapii and the second was Dipii. Dipii was a sphinx with the head of a man and the body of lion. A similar story is also narrated by Apao Taruba of Maram Centre, a person well-versed about the Maram culture. His narration of the folklore on Maram cosmogony is given in appendix 1.

2.6. Maram Dispersion

Marambungsaa fathered four sons who formed the four clans of Maram Khullen. They are Magaimai, Bungnamai, Lamkhana and Kagamna. The village of Maram became very prosperous, and at one time there were 1500 houses at Maram

54Ibid., pp.1-2.
Khullen. Because of infighting among the descendants of Mambungsya for chieftainship, they decided to establish new villages and thus the migration of the Marams began.

2.6.1. Migration to Zeliang area

The first group who migrated were the Sanglungmei or the descendants of Kla Sanglung. They founded the present village of Sangkhongmei and Willong. It is believed that the Zemeis are the descendants of Kla Sanglung. A possible explanation for this can be found in the following story, which narrates the Hangking Sasat (eight brothers) decided to pull a stone of the living (A pangtaiganiit). As the stone was brought to the village it turned into a magical stone (N pangtaigamei in). It is said that when a basket of paddy was dried on the stone the person who dried the paddy could collect back twice the amount of grain. After a while, the wives of the brothers started to quarrel for their turn to dry the paddy. So to maintain peace among the brothers, they decided to erect the stone and the stone was erected. This particular stone still stands at Dinamai of Khullakpa Sagai at Maram Khullen. Once the stone was erected its magical power was lost. It is from that time some people decided to migrate to different places especially towards the Zeliang side. Thc Migrants from Bungnamai and Magaimai settled down at Tamphung near Peren and erected two stones which are still called Magaimai and Bungnamai stones.

2.6.2. Founding of Willong

The reason for the migration for the migration of the Marams to Willong and Sangkongmei, is explained by the following story. The Sagong of Maram Khullen had two wives, among whom he favoured the second wife more than the first wife.

As per the convention of the Marams, the queen is not to get up from her seat while drying the paddy in the courtyard, to chase the birds that come to eat the paddy. One day the king spread the paddy in the courtyard and instructed both the wives to look after the paddy. One sat at one corner and the other in the opposite corner. As the paddy was drying, the birds came to eat the paddy. The first wife started making some
sounds to chase away the birds but the second wife remained quiet as she was instructed by her husband. The first wife could not accept to see the birds eating the paddy on the side of the second wife, so she got up to chase the birds. The king happened to come at that time and seeing the disobedience of his first wife, shouted at her saying that she was wandering about like a gypsy (Api matang katumei). The first wife, knowing that the king favoured the second wife more than her, became very angry and decided to move out of the village. Further, the sons of the two wives were in constant fight to obtain the office of Sagong. So the first queen with her three sons Rang, M’poi and Buishing went to Willong and settled there.

After settling at Willong, the eldest son returned to Maram Khullen to collect Sagah, a precious jewel, from his father. The King gave one of the Sagahs to him and instructed him not to halt on the way but proceed straight to Willong. His aunty who was at Sangkhungmai came to know about this and wanted to intercept him at her village. As he was moving towards Willong, there was a heavy rain and his aunty waited on the way and invited him to take shelter for the night at Sangkhungmai. After some hesitation, he agreed to halt there. On account of this it is said that the Sagah never reached Willong.

2.6.3. Thangal Migration

According to T.C. Hodson, “The Kolya Nagas or Khoirao Nagas or as I prefer to call them, the Mayang Khong, inhabit nine villages in the hills south of Maram and Kairong. They are now almost indistinguishable, in so far as customs and appearance are concerned, from Mao and Maram and I was informed that they were descended from Maram”.\(^{55}\) According to folklore and common belief, the Thangals were part of the Marams. It is assumed that Sitiiba of Maram Khullen along with some people went and settled in a place called Pungung\(^ {56}\). The land they occupied was very fertile and the people became wealthy, they had abundance of food. There were no deaths in their village. One day some of the people of pungung visited Maram Khullen. They

\(^{55}\) n. 50, p. 4.

\(^{56}\) Pungung is located near the Barak River adjoining the Raguining fields.
were surprised to see the people wailing but at the same time they were having a great feast with meat (Agha). This incident amused them and they enquired what kind of festival it was. They were informed that this was part of rituals for the dead. Then the Pungung people enquired how how men could have a natural death. They were instructed to carve out the image of a man from taketarang wood. After dressing up the image for burial, a cow (agha) was to be slaughtered and then the image was to be buried.

According to the instructions, the people went back to their village and did what was told to them. Thereafter it is told that great number of people died, so much so the villagers were unable to bury the dead. Because of the numerous deaths, many became widowers and widows, leaving them in a state of licentiousness (sarakahok), creating great social and family disorders. On account of this situation, many decided to settle at a place called N’khapanggang. Later they shifted to N’kalungdi the present habitat of the Thangals.

The group that settled at N’kalungdi had a very prosperous life, where monkeys and people lived together. The land was very fertile and yielded rich harvest. It is believed that prophetess Tinglula Nzanglula from Maram Khullen visited this village in its heyday. In order to mark their prosperity, the villagers of N’kalungdi wanted to erect a stone monument, in which the monkeys came to help the villagers for pulling the stone. The men were not very happy to have their help and so asked them to go to the rear side of the stone and help in bringing up the logs used for rolling the stone. It is said that some of the men pulling up the stone, left the ropes and the stone slid down killing and injuring many monkeys. It was considered a very bad omen and so they abandoned the village and settled down at places like Mayangkhang, Tumuyon Khullen (Thimbowhow), Tumnoupokpi, Makeng and Thangal Surung (near Saikul). At present, the villages of Thangal Sarung, Mapao Thangal, Tungnoupokpi, Yaikungpao, Ningthoupham, Mayangkhang, Makuilonrdi,

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57 N’khapanggang is located near Katiluga fields along the Barak River.
58 Ngkalungdi is located in the eastern hill side of Senapati across the stream.
59 n. 25, p. 28.
Makeng Cheijenba, Taphou Makeng and Katomei Makeng are inhabited by the Thangals.

The clan of Sagongduimai is the most populous among the Thangals. Originally Sagongduimai clan belonged to Sangkongmai village near Maram Khullen. Sangkongmai had four clans viz: Sagongduimai, Jungnamai, Tuibinanmai and Luisongnamai. The Sagongduimai clan which had the least population among all the clans had a fight with the Tuibinanmai clan. The Tuibinanmai clan was defeated and were forced to migrate to Thamai\(^{60}\) and settled down there. Before their departure, they asked that their houses be not destroyed. Their wish was honoured; however, wild animals infested their empty houses, and disturbed the people. So the Sagongduimai clan too left the village and settled down in the present site of the Thangals - like Tumndoupokpi and Tamuyon Khullen. Therefore, it is believed that the Thangals belong to the Maram heritage, because of the story narrating about their origin.\(^{61}\)

2.6.4. Ngatan

From N’khapsang, some people also came to Ngatan. They came and settled first in Tingnadi. Even though the population increased, there was great unity among the people. The people usually played a game called *Kokchii Karot*. Once while playing this game a person was injured and became blind. Due to this injury conflict arose and dispersion took place. Tingnadi along with some others went to Ngatan village. Since then Ngatan became the permanent place for them.

2.6.5. Founding of N’khapsang

The second migration to N’khapsang came during the chiefship of Pungkapa. He was a capable chief of Maram Khullen. He had a brave brother called, Huibina Rang who fell in love with Pungkapa’s wife. Rang’s house was just in front of the

\(^{60}\)Thamai is the present N’gatan Village.

\(^{61}\)n. 25, pp. 28-29.
chief's house. The chief's wife pretending to throw dirt in front of Rang's house, was in fact throwing packets of salt for Rang and salt being a precious commodity those days. The Chief suspected Rang to be having an affair with his wife; consequently no love was lost between the two.

Rang realised that he could not stay for long at Maram Khullen. So he started looking for a suitable site for his village. He reached a place called N'khapang and began to cultivate chilly and cotton. He said to himself that this is an excellent site for a new village. He wanted only brave men and selected them through various ordeals to found the new village.

Rang took a flawless heifer to N'khapang to be sacrificed as per the custom of the people for starting a village. But on the night before the day of the sacrifice, a tiger came and ate the heifer. Rang went home and told his brother about it. In his effort to hold back Rang, the brother interpreted the incident as a very bad omen. One day Rang overheard his brother telling his wife that the incident was a very good omen – it meant life and prosperity for the villagers and his descendants. Rang was overjoyed and shouted a victory yell as is done after a successful head hunting expedition and on the appointed day called all his selected followers in the compound of the chief. To the king and queen's surprise, the place was so overcrowded that there was not enough place even to stand. The queen, in her dismay, took out her inner skirt and started beating the ground cursing them. The people knew the cursing of the queen was not a good thing. But since they had given their word to Rang, they all went to N'khapang and founded the new village of N'khapang. There were no famines or epidemics for seven to eight years and the people prospered.

One day Rang's only son became very ill and was on the verge of death. In order to placate Sarah, he went and tied a dog on a pillar in the veranda and a slave on the pillar of the backyard of the house. He asked the god to take either of the two and

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62 N'khapang is located above Pungung across the Barak River.
63 Elders of Maram Khullen say that the tiger took away not the cow but a dog.
64 n. 25, pp. 25-27.
give his son back. But to his pain, the son passed away. Rang was grieved and made a big tomb for his son and placed the son’s body along with three roosters and asked the slave to stay with his son for five days in the tomb. He also buried the dog along with his son. On the fifth day he went and dug the tomb and found the slave and the dog dead. After this incident, many people began to die and they were unable to stay there. Huibina Rang himself left N’khapsang and settled at Tungba (the present Kabung village). Some others settled at Tumuyon Khullen.

After some years, a group moved out from Kabung to N’Kalungdi (known in Maram dialect as Lung Kalundi) while others moved to the west and settled down in a place called Tingsong. The village of Tingsong became very prosperous. This village had commercial relationship with the Maharaja of Manipur.

Tingsong had very friendly relationship with the Meitei king. The king invited the chief and his daughter to his palace, where the king is said to have misbehaved with the daughter of the chief. The chief and his daughter came back broken hearted. The chief then proceeded to build a large hall without any window, but with only a single door. The Meitei king was invited to inaugurate the hall. When he and his men entered the hall, the chief bolted the door from outside and set fire to the hall. Many people, including the Maharaja, died. When news reached the palace the Meiteis sent a strong army to Tingsong. The people fled the village and settled down at Somdal and Leisan in the Ukhrul district of Manipur. They are called Khamrangs.

2.6.6. Psiina N’fii Matiikina Kapak

There was a man whose name was Matiikina. He was a talented and a skilful person who made the best spears and instruments in the village. It is said that some of the villagers became jealous of him. It happened that a particular year there was no rain and people couldn’t cultivate their fields. His enemies seized the opportunity to malign him and said that there was no rain because he boiled human hair to make his spears. It was believed that if someone could turn the head of the big snake that resided at the Tiipungpa cliff (located along the steep hill ranges near Willong), rain
would fall in the direction the snake’s head faced. So he was asked to turn the snake’s head towards the Maram area. He succeeded in turning the snake’s head by throwing a stone to the proper direction. This brought about a very heavy rainfall, which caused flood and the crops were destroyed. Again the villagers started blaming him. On this account he was unable to live at Maram and he called his relatives and close friends (Tiiga namai) and migrated to a place called N’gatan.

2.6.7. Migration on Account of Poverty (Malunampak)

Among the population of Maram Khullen there were people who were poor. So this group of people decided to move to another place in search of greener pastures. Some went to Tangkhul side and the others went to Poumai side and still some others went to Zelianrong. According to Mr. K. Raina of Maram Bazar, over 50 Maram families are in Phaibung Khullen.

2.6.8. Kalangnampak

A group of people from Magaimai went to live at a place called Kalangnampak. It was Rapungtung who was to become their king. It was a custom for the new king to have M’biim zhou (wine without the yeast) for a month during the putak katuki (establishment of the village). Rapungtung fasted for seven days and worked with the people but after the seven days he became quite weak and went to bed. The people felt that he was weak and he shouldn’t become the king and started feeding him. In spite of this he did not have anything and it is reported that only after the completion of a month he started taking food. But this village became unbearable for the people to live in despite the fertility of the land due to Kalangzunggii (a scary bird) who used to eat away the new born babies whenever they were kept outside the house to sleep. And the people went back to Maram Khullen.

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Kalangnampak is located along Maram-Peren Road, 9-10 kms away from Maram Centre.
2.6.9. Sadiimei and Katomei

A man called Tingfii Rangsung of Mathak Sagai had four sons. They were Kapuibii, Raba, Diba and Rang. It is narrated that Kapuibii the eldest brother, was a hot tempered man and the younger brothers couldn’t live with him and so they started looking for a new place. It is said that Raba went to Katomei and formed the village while Diba went to Sadiimai and formed the village. The younger brother Rang came down to Kiisimai ki in Mathak Sagai, while the elder brother continued to stay at Puinamai ki in the Mathak Sagai of Maram Khullen.

2.6.10 Houmai

They are the people who take care of the rites and rituals not only of the Marams, but also of the other tribes. As new villages were being established, their presence in those villages too was required. They too started spreading themselves to different tribes. But most of them migrated to Willong.

2.6.11. Miichiiba Kimai

This clan was specialised in treating the sick. This clan had an exclusive pond of their own for their use. Neither could they take water from other ponds nor could others take water from their pond. But when a strange kind of disease started afflicting the people of Maram they were unable to offer them adequate remedy. The villagers, especially the sick families, got angry and polluted their pond by washing their dirty clothes in it. Because of this even the family of Miichiiba began to die. The people of Maram asked the Meitei king to help them by shifting this clan elsewhere. The Meitei king took the whole clan and settled them in the outskirts of Imphal. According to Hodson, King Khagemba took some captives from the neighbourhood of Maram in the North in 1645 AD, and sent them to Shuganu. This could be a reference to the dispersal of Miichiiba clan.

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66T.C. Hodson (1999), The Meitheis, Delhi: Low Price Publications, p. 9. Shuganu is now known as Sugnu. It is located in the Chandel district of Manipur.
2.6.12. Mapoumai

This clan was incharge of defending the Maram people against wild animals and enemies. The monoliths at Majangmai are the stones of Mapoumai. It is said that the people used to offer a human being to a big snake. It was a kind of a sacrifice given to the snake (saniiha). The clans would take their turns to offer a human being as the need arose. It is said that 10 girls were all together offered to the snake over a period of time. This was done so that the big snake wouldn't come and disturb the whole village. The Mapoumai people tried to end this menace by killing it. One of the Mapoumai built a trench where the human body was usually placed as food for the snake. He asked his wife to make a good rice beer and he exceptionally sharpened his spear the whole day. It is said that his spear became so sharp that even a fly that sat on its tip would be cut into two by itself. When the time came he had wine and went inside the trench and placed the spear on the way where the snake would come. The trench was covered with grass and bushes. When the snake came it started getting cut from its throat and was cut till the end of its body, killing it on the spot. With this the snake tax ended in the history of Maram.

The skill of Mapoumai again rescued the Marams when a terrible beast called Ragungkouchot\textsuperscript{67} was killed. It used to hop around and take away humans, and people were afraid to go to the fields. One day a Mapoumai sharpened his spear and made an image of a man with bushes and it was covered with a sharp edged shield called Liipa. The spear was hidden inside the image of a man. The Ragungkouchot mistook it for a man and was trapped and killed.

The Mapoumais were able to do away with the scary bird called Katifiirang\textsuperscript{68}.

\textsuperscript{67}Ragung is the forest farmland on the mountain side where people cultivate and hunt but do not stay; Kouchot - a huge spider like creature.

\textsuperscript{68}Kati - the fields along the Barak River on the eastern side of Maram Khullen. It is also called katiluga. Fiirang means something scary, big and powerful. Katifiirang
who used to take the lives of the people who used to go to the field called Katiluga. It is said when the people returned from Katiluga in the evening, the last person was attacked by this scary bird, by plucking off a hair from the person and sucking his blood. So, on the way itself or as soon as he reached home, the victim died having lost his blood. One of the Mapoumais tried to investigate the cause of this type of death. He sat on the top of a tree and watched the people as they returned home. He saw a scary bird approaching the last person and pulling out his hair, and saw it flying back to its hole. He lost no time in coming down. He collected dry bushes and put them inside the hole and set it on fire. As the bird tried to come out of the hole to escape suffocation, he thrust his spear and killed it.

Though the killing of men was stopped, the population began to decrease as many people died without any sickness. The people began to accuse the Mapoumai for killing the spirit. Life became difficult for Mapoumais and they started migrating towards the Lepona area.

2.6.13. Malingli

The people of Maram Khullen selected a few brave men from all the clans for defense purposes. This group along with their wives and children came to Malingli, near Sadim, and settled there, to defend the Marams from the Meiteis. It is said that they were around 70 clans at that time. Malingli was on the main route connecting Maram Khullen to the Meitei land. Over the years, this developed into a village called Malingli. At one time these people tried to drain the water of Sadim Pukkri (Lijai) for irrigation. The spirit of Lijai did not favour this. As a result, several people died while some others became mad. Due to this many people migrated to other areas.

would mean a kind of scary bird living in the field. It was a kind of evil spirit that killed humans.

69It is a village located between Sadim and Katomai.
2.6.14. N’tanam\textsuperscript{70}

This village was started by Karang the son of N’zangfii Karasiiba. Though an excellent location, the men living there were not active or lively enough. People began to say that this was because a lady of the village jumped over the Akungki (main gate) of the village. Therefore, some of the people returned to Maram Khullen and settled there again with Pouzai of Rangnamei clan as the king.

2.6.15. Taphou

The village of Taphou was formed by a group of people who migrated from Malingli after the incident of Lijai.

2.6.16. Rajaimai

They belong to N’giimai clan. The story has it that a man from Maram Khullen on his way to the Siingu field\textsuperscript{71}, saw his dog barking at a tree called Tamhingbang near a stream called Makiikarii. The tree had a very unusual height and had some magical powers. Marams used to make mattresses and mats with this tree. So he cut a part of that tree and made a mat to dry the paddy, and this mat had the magical power of doubling the paddy. As years passed, this mat came in the possession of N’gii Chiina and N’jangrana. They began quarrelling over this mat as each wanted to posses the mat for himself. To solve the problem they decided to cut the mat into two, but unfortunately the mat lost its magical power. On this count, there were many quarrels among them and they migrated from the village. N’jangmai went to Rajaimai and N’giimai went to Sangkhungmei.

2.6.17. Ragiimai (New Maram)

A group of people from Maram Khullen migrated to Ragiimai and formed the

\textsuperscript{70}N’tanam is located near the Barak River on the eastern side of Lairouching.

\textsuperscript{71}Siingu field is located below Lairouching on the western side, near the Barak River.
village. It is said that Rangrambana became the king of Ragiimai. But due to constant war among the tribes he led them to return back to Maram Khullen. This migration might have taken place some 100 years ago. Again in 1956, those converted to Christianity moved to New Maram as they could not stay in Maram Khullen. 72

2.6.18. Samoumaringmai (Khonoma)

There were four brothers who wanted to move away from Maram Khullen without any reason. As they were moving from place to place a group of hunters from Angami tribe caught them. They were taken to Samoumaringmai and the four brothers continue to live there. In Maram, Khonoma was referred to as Samoumaringmai.

2.6.19. Angamai Mina (few of the Angamis)

They were also the descendants of Maram. A group of people from Maram Khullen went to live in ‘Mulung’. 73 They migrated along with the Thangal group from Maram Khullen. It is said that after the incident of the burying of the image of a man, some of them migrated to Nagaland side.

2.6.20. The Marams Who Fled To Nagaland.

According to the book ‘The History of the Maram Nzang N’giimei Union’ 74, from the place called Sangkung Kaziipung, Katalung, the eldest son of Punglem, went and settled at Rajaimei and his brother Roupii settled at Willong. Roupii was a courageous, energetic, wise and highly respected noble man in the society. One day the villagers went for annual customary hunting. The custom was that as soon as an animal was killed all the hunters would rush forward to cut as much flesh as possible

72 n. 28, p. 83.
73 Mulung is located at the foot hills where the Mariak stream reaches Barak River.
for each one’s share.

During the hunting, a deer was killed and the hunters rushed to the spot and fought for their share. In the process, an enemy of Roupii cut off a hunter’s testicles from the back and threw them into the basket of Roupii. When the scramble for the meat was over people saw the man, whose testicles were cut off, lying there dead. The people resolved to trace out the culprit among them. Since it was difficult to identify the culprit, Roupii proposed that in whose basket the testicles are found, he should be declared the culprit. During the search, they were found in the basket of Roupii. Though innocent, Roupii accepted the crime and with much sorrow and disgrace. He voluntarily exiled himself along with his family and fled to Nagaland. According to the Maram custom, as he approached a big stream he tied a string across the stream to make a passage for their souls to cross the stream. After crossing the stream, he splashed water back to the stream to ward off the evil spirit. Marams believed that the soul of a living person sometimes separates itself from the body. When a traveller crosses a river, a string may be passed across the river he crosses that his soul may also pass over the river through it.\(^7\)

2.7. Skirmishes and Relations with Neighbouring Villages

In the historic folklore of the Marams, though one rarely hears of great wars, their traditions are full of feuds and battles. The Marams did not appreciate compromising attitudes. The Maram Naga lived for his village and tribe. He fought when his traditional values were at stake or the very existence of his life was in jeopardy. Often fights were for attaining quick fame or for looting the goods of others. Border disputes and marriage problems were also causes of disputes. It is said that in the olden days when erection of monoliths was common, there was no time for wars. The rich and the wealthy in whose honour the stone was pulled would feed the whole village with the rice beer and meat. But later on when such celebrations became less frequent, feuds and conflicts increased.

\(^7\) n. 7, p. 126.
2.7.1. War with Mao

There is a belief at Meikhel that the Maos and the Marams are very closely related and do not intermarry, though Maram legends do not support this view. In the words of McCulloch, the Mao and Maram tribes “state themselves to be of one common stock, but they are at deadly feud though closely allied by intermarriage.” In the earlier days, Marams felt themselves very superior and for no reason they would loot the goods of Mao people. It is said that they would capture some of them and keep them as slaves. The Mao people were not happy with this and fought a war with Maram.

Boundary disputes with Maos have been very common even during the recent times. In 1985, the security forces had to intervene to prevent a major war among them. According to the Marams, some Mao people occupied the Maram land at Katiluga and constructed houses. The Marams went and destroyed them because of the illegal occupation. Because of this, the 16 villages of the Maos came to wage war with the Marams. They reached upto the Mariak River. But the Assam Rifles and the Manipur Rifles intercepted them there and the war was averted with much difficulty. The leaders of the two communities were helped to come together and peace prevailed.

2.7.2. Poumai

According to a Maram tradition, some of the Poumais were originally Marams. Over a long period of time, some of the Marams migrated to Lepona, Chilive and Paomata areas due to different problems and established villages of their own or joined existing villages.

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76n. 50, p. 85.
Some of the Marams went to the Poumai land to specialise themselves in making baskets and to sell them to the Marams in return for rice. Over a period of time, they lost their Maram identity and merged with the Poumais. So in olden days there was no war between Poumai and Maram as they were considered brothers. Occasionally one comes across someone coming from Poumai area claiming to have been a Maram in the past. Many of the Poumai villages have also Maram names. Some of these villages are: Purul (Piroimai), Koide (Namai), Tingbakhunou (N’tiimah), Sorbung (Tingbamai), Phuba (Duipsinamai), Liyai (Rajaimei and Poumais sometimes refer to Liyai as Jaimai), Saranamai (Katungmai), Maiba (Makiuma), Tungam (Tungam), Tungjoy (Tungjoymai), Phaibung (Jabama), Lakhamai (Rakiima), Khongdai (Khongdimai), Oinam (Panammai).

According to their tradition, Marams say that they cannot fight with Paomata people because they are brothers. When the dormitory system was in place, the youth from Saranamai would come in the evening to Maram Khullen and return very early the next morning. The same practice was also followed by the Maram Khullen youth as well. The elders can recall only one incident in which there was a battle between N’tjagmamai clan and Tingba Khullen (Kapyimmai) a very long time ago. But even this did not involve the whole of Maram and whole of Poumai.

2.7.3. War With Angami

McCulloch described the Angamis as a tribe “known by their blood-thirsty attacks on their weaker neighbours”. They came to know many of the good things about the Marams and about the powers of Rangtaiba of Bungnamei, Pungtingbii of Magaime and Raitunglung of Puinamei, from the four Maram brothers caught by the Angami hunters from Khonoma village. Accordingly, they came to a field called

78 The king of this village is a Maram. The people of Maram area gave tins for the Marams living at Sorbung.
79 n. 77, p.71.
N’dangkang,\textsuperscript{80} where Puntingba was cultivating. They killed him in the field and went off with his head. At that moment, Rangtaiba was having rice beer in his home and a drop of blood fell into his cup. He understood that Puntingba was either hurt or killed. These three powerful men had a pact among themselves to help one another in difficulty and to avenge the death in case anyone was killed. The Marams identified the killers of Puntingba as Angamis and Apou Rangtaiba send a band of Maram warriors. He encouraged the warriors saying that there would be rain on the side of the Marams while hail stones to the size of an egg would fall on the Angamis. The Angamis seeing only a small company of Maram warriors, started laughing at them. But, according to the prophecy of Apou Rangtaiba, rain started falling towards the side of the Marams and mighty hailstones on the side of the Angamis. The Angamis warriors became numb and were unable to fight effectively. Taking advantage, the Marams slaughtered all the Angami except a small boy who was an orphan. It is said the Marams could not carry all the swords of the slain Angami warriors and hid some of them in the hollow of a big tree. The orphan returned to the village and informed the Angami queen what had happened. The queen of Angami had a son who was exceptionally skilled in warfare that people thought no one could kill him. The queen and the people couldn’t believe that even this man had been killed.

The next day the queen of the Angamis came to Maram to get the head of her son. She opened her hair and spread pieces of grain on her head which was a sign of blessing to the people of Maram or blessed them to multiply their population as the grain of rice. On the other hand she took out her inner garment (petticoat) and started beating the ground with her inner garment cursing the Angami king never again to wage war with Maram. Since then there was no war fought between the Angami and the Maram.

J.H. Hutton, in his book, “\textit{The Angami Nagas}” writes about the warfare between Angamis of Khonoma and Maram. At Khonoma, there is a place of the

\textsuperscript{80}It is a field near the Barak river below the Peren road after 8 kms from Maram Centre.
dream-stone. The men of Khonoma, after seeing favourable omens with the help of chickens, would go and sleep on the dream-stone. If the dreams were good, they send word to the villagers and people would come and take them to the village. It is said that the men of Marhena (Maram) came to know of this custom and tricked the Khonoma people by calling the villagers to come and pick someone or other from the dream-stone and took away many heads. To avenge their death, Phuyim, a man of Khonoma, led a raid on Maram and carried away many heads, and made a song about Maram. But the men of Maram pretended not to be angry about it and even appreciated the song saying that it was good. Khonoma then went on a second raid, crossing over to Maram, but there was heavy snow fall on Japfi and the men of Khonoma became numb. Some people who heard the shouts and cries of the Khonoma men, went and reported to the Marams, who came up and killed 140 men; only fifteen persons including Phuyi and one Viya got away, for Khonoma men could not use their spear due to their numbness. One Shetzu was taken prisoner and ransomed himself promising a mithun as yearly tribute. This tribute was paid for two years. The first year, Khonoma sent a good mithun, the next year a little one, which Maram at first refused to accept, but Khonoma said that they could have that or nothing. But Marams replied that they could have the next year. But the third year, instead of giving a mithun to Maram, Khonoma gave it to Jotsoma and these two villages unitedly went against the Marams and took many heads. Once again a second time 20 to 30 men from the two villages went up and killed two Marams and carried away their heads. On their return home, 15 men in the rear lost their way in the cane jungle and could not find their way back. After 50 days, four men who survived starvation got back to Khonoma. On their arrival in the village, two of them overate and died. But Chasamo of Khonoma and Navuno of Jotsoma, eating very little, were saved. And after this, Khonoma, realising that fate was against them, left the Marams alone.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{81}n. 16, pp. 254-55.
2.7.4. The Liangmeis and Zemeis

The Liangmeis and the Zemeis form the Zeliangrong group along with the Rongmeis (Kabuis) and Puimais. In the heart of Maram area we find the Liangmei village of Oklong. Hodson includes Uilong (Willong) and Mayangkhang villages with the same group at Oklong (Quoirengs / Liangmeis). The Uilong (Willong) group never considered themselves a part of Oklong. They always held the view that their original home was Maram Khullen. Even Mayangkhang has no trace of allegiance to the Liangmei but are Marams. The Liangmeis of Oklong have Maram names generally, adopted Maram habits and shawl in their everyday life. Hodson is of the opinion that the Marams who were great warriors themselves, exercised a sort of dominion over them. Probably, this might have been the case at the early stage of settlement. When one small group is surrounded by a numerically larger one, there can be domination without being domineering, due to the very superiority of numbers. In early times, the Liangmeis of Oklong might have been allowed to settle down in their present habitat provided they followed the Maram way of life. The Liangmeis were then allowed to live in peace and they so continue to this day. This peaceful co-existence with the Maram might have been initiated also through inter-marriage.

The Zemei in this area have the festival called Herakomhepa (Day of offering). It is a day set apart each year when sacrifice is offered to Herafsi. Only a black or a red cock is offered to this god in atonement for the sins of the people.

Another feast of the Zemei is Roekelieh. This is a festival after the harvest, lasting two days, to augment the fortunes of a village for the coming year. This feast is primarily for males as divine intercession is sought for success against enemies. A cock is killed and the intestines are offered to the deity. A lot of rice beer is also

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\(^{82}\) n. 25, pp. 33- 34.

\(^{83}\) n. 50, p. 85.

\(^{84}\) n. 25, pp. 33-34.

\(^{85}\) n. 50, pp. 85-86.
consumed.\textsuperscript{86}

There is no doubt that the Zemei of Yangkhullen village is influenced by certain Maram customs. This is shown by the fact that the Zemei too respect the cat, and observe Kangi—a festival of the Marams.

In his observation, Hodson may have probably mistaken Yangkhullen for Uilong (Willong) group, thinking that this village also belonged to the Maram group. There existed between these two big villages, constant warfare.\textsuperscript{87}

\textbf{2.7.5. Mazangmai (Yangkhullen)}

A Maram woman was married to a man of Yangkhullen. After some years the husband and wife started quarrelling. So the wife wanted to come back to her parents’ house and she carried the child with her too. On her way she got sick and she died. The child stayed with her mother placing flowers on her ear and head. Later on too the child passed away. Seeing this the people of Maram got angry and started a war against Mazangmei.

\textbf{2.7.6. Anpamei (a tribe of Zeliangrong)}

Once the people of Maram went to wage war against the Anpamei. The king of Anpamei cut the leg of his own son and threw it before the people of Maram. The Marams felt that the spirit was on the side of Anpamei and they returned without waging war against them. This brought about a good understanding among them. Later on Anpamei would lead the path and give direction to the Maram people whenever they wanted to wage war against the Zeliangrong. It is due to this reason that the king of Maram blessed the Anpamei and no wars were fought between them.

\textsuperscript{86}n, 25, pp. 33-34.

\textsuperscript{87}Ibid., pp. 34-35.
2.7.7. War With Makuilungdi

The people of Maram had a precious hat called Amyii Psiihung that could cause or stop rain. A Maram girl from the family that had the hat, got married to a man of Makuilungdi. One day while her parents were away in the field, she went back to her home, cut the hat into two pieces and brought one half of it to her husband’s house. Due to this a war was fought between Maram and Makuilungdi. The people of Makuilungdi were very good at war and there was an extraordinary man who killed many Maram people. The Maram people, realising that it was going to be difficult to win the war, went to the people of Makuilungdi and pretended to surrender to them and then attacked them. After few days again both parties set out planning to surrender to the other. The Maram man saw a man of Makuilungdi and asked him what he was going to do. The man replied he came to surrender and henceforth the people of Makuilungdi started paying taxes to the people of Maram.

2.7.8. War With Tangkhuls

The people of Maram came to know that the Tangkhuls were good at war. So they wanted to see for themselves how good they are and went to wage war against the Tangkhuls. The Maram came with their ordinary spear while the Tangkhuls had a long handle to their spear which was more advantageous. The Tangkhuls took full advantage of this and Marams became an easy prey. Some of the Marams wanted to retreat while others wanted to fight to the end. It suddenly dawned on the Marams that they should use stones to get advantage over the Tangkhuls. After few days of tough fighting, both sides retreated and the war came to an end.

2.8. Relation with Meiteis

W. McCulloch advanced a theory that the Meiteis are descendants of the Kukis and Nagas.\textsuperscript{88} R. Brown subscribed to this view or the tribal origin of Meiteis and speculated that “should it be a correct view that the valley of Manipur was at not a very distant period almost covered entirely by water, the origin of the Munniporces

\textsuperscript{88}n. 77, p.4.
from the surrounding hill is the proper and only conclusion to be arrived”. 89 T.C. Hudson says

“... two hundred years ago in internal organisation, in religion, in habits and manners, the Meiteis were as the hill people now are. The successive waves of foreign invasions, Shan, Burmese, English, Hindu, have each left permanent marks on the civilisation of the people so that they have passed finally away from the stage of relatively primitive culture into one of comparative civilization, but their ultimate homogeneity with the Nagas and Kukis of the hills is undoubted, and in my opinion needs no further insistence.”90

According to Grierson, G.A, the Meiteis, the Kukis and the Nagas are all of Mongoloid stock belonging to the Tibeto-Burman Family.91

In the history of relationship between hill people and valley folks, it was very often the valley, peopled by the Meiteis who had some sort of written records of their deeds of derringdo, military exploits, matrimonial alliances and the like. Valley rulers wanted to widen their domain and extend their power to the hills. The hill men often cascaded into the valley and carried away whatever they could. But though there was a history of bloodshed, there was also a history of peace and friendship. The relationship between the hill and valley people was often bridged by overtures of peace, marriage and trade.92 And the Meitei Maharajas maintained a very friendly relationship with the Marams in the past.93

90 n. 66, p. 10.
92 n. 25, p. 36.
As regards a historical relationship between the Marams and the Meiteis, existing records are scanty. We get some sort of information from Ningthouron Lambuba (the account of the royal tours). But these accounts do not mention the years when the recorded events took place. Besides, these accounts are only from 1586 to 1709. This is because after the accession of Gharib Niwaz, the style of maintaining records was different.\(^{94}\)

Another source of information is ‘Cheitharon Kumbaba’ (the palace diary). It traces the accounts of the Court from 33 A.D., from the time of Pakhangba, who was the first king to be chronicled and who is regarded as the ancestor of the Meiteis. But in it too the dates are quite misleading. There are other minor works, but for our requirements, they are of no value. Therefore, we have to depend a lot on oral and folkloristic traditions. Historians, or at least a few of them admit, the usefulness of oral traditions in connecting the missing links in history.\(^{95}\)

In the history of the relationship of the Meiteis with the Marams, there is a significant period starting with the reign of the Meitei king Paikhomba who died in 1697 A.D. He was succeeded by Charairongba who ruled till 1709. Charairongba was succeeded by Pamheiba, alias Ningthem Mayamba, alias Gopal Singh, popularly known in history as Gharib Niwaz.\(^{96}\) Gharib Niwaz ruled from 1709-1748.

Hodson says that there was considerable intimacy between the Naga tribes and the Meiteis. That explains the legends that Manipuris used to marry Naga girls from


\(^{96}\)n. 29, p. 53.
the great village of Maram. During the reign of Gharib Niwaz, Hodson again states, the king made friendship with all the Naga chiefs. "The ministers and Sirdars of Manipur received the Naga Chiefs continuously and made friendship and intimacy with them. The Raja entertained the Naga chiefs with good feasts and wine."

There seemed to have been warfare between the Marams and the Meiteis before the comparative peace under Paikhomba. The earliest reference that we can trace to Marams is in the 14th century, during the reign of minor kings. Telheiba was succeeded by his younger brother Tonaba (1355-1359). The latter was succeeded by Tabungba (1359-1394), a son of Telheiba. Tabungba had many successful hill expeditions to his credit. While touring the northern hills in Maram area, a hill-chief killed him out of a personal grudge. But neither his son Laienba, nor his brother Punsiba in his long reign of 28 years, not even Ningthou Khomba, Punsiba's son, avenged the murder of Tabungba. This might have been because at this time, the Marams were a formidable force to reckon with.

Hodson mentions that during the reign of the Meitei king Khagemba (1596-1652) the Loi villages were used as places of detention for prisoners probably captured in the war with Marams and sent to Shuganu in the year 1645.

Maram folklore and tradition allude to a prolonged war between the Meiteis and Marams. In one of the skirmishes, the Marams carried off the head of a royal prince. But the kith and kin of this prince took revenge on the Marams by defeating them badly.

Now an aunt of the leader of the Marams lived near Saikul. She brought

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97 n. 66, p. 11.
98 Ibid., pp. 11-12.
100 Ibid., p. 9.
Maram youths to her place and trained them for a year. On a particular festival, she sent these young men to attack the Meiteis. They defeated the Meiteis and carried off the head of a royal prince to their village in Maram.

Some time later, the son of the royal prince whose head was carried off by the Marams, came in search of his father's skull. He lived in cognito among the Marams and fell in love with the daughter of the Chief of Maram. He eloped with her on the promise that if he abandoned her, 'the sun and moon will take revenge'. But the palace courtiers did not take kindly to a tribal queen and so she was kept in a village called Thangal Surung near Saikul.

The name of the Maram princess was Makinai. She became pregnant and in due course gave birth to a son. Since the king could not bring the son to the palace, he established an institution to take care of the orphans of the hill people called Loishang'. Makinai died heart broken in the Thangal village. But the sun and moon avenged her death, for her husband, Charairongba, was struck by lightning while returning home after subduing a rebellious village, at Khongnang-Hogaibi.

History has recorded the fact that the Meitei king Charairongba was struck by lightning and died at the young age of 37. The peepal tree standing on the Nambul river bank at Khongnang Hogaibi still bears the hollow mark of the bolt of lightning.\textsuperscript{101} Charairongba had five sons by his four queens. It is said that Charairongba (alias Pitamber Singh) married Nungthil Chaibi in 1688 and she died in 1696.\textsuperscript{102}

It is commonly believed among Marams that Nungthil Chaibi was the Manipuri nomenclature for Makinai. The son she bore to Charairongba was Gharib Niwaz. Sir James Johnstone speaks of a Rajah of Manipur who belonged to the Naga tribes to the north. Johnstone writes:

"There can be little doubt that some time or other the Naga tribes to the north made one of their chiefs Raja of Manipur, and that his family, while like the

\textsuperscript{101} n. 29, p.67.
\textsuperscript{102} n. 99, p. 17.
Manchus of China and other conquerors, adopting the civilisation of the country, retained some of their old customs. This is shown in the curious practice at the installation of a Rajah, when he and the Ranee appear in Naga costume; also that he always has in his palace a house built like Naga's, and wherever he goes he is attended by two or three Manipuris with Naga arms and accoutrements. I once told a Manipuri what I thought on the subject, and he was greatly struck by it and admitted the force of what I said."\textsuperscript{103}

It is also possible that the war between the Meiteis and Marams ended with a matrimonial alliance. The subsequent comparative peace may have come during the reign of Paikhomba. During his reign, his brother Charairongba might have married a Maram chief's daughter in order to create an alliance of friendship with the Marams who were a large group by any standards. After this one finds records of Meitei kings trying to please hill chiefs. Chaitharol Kumbaba speaks of Charairongba initiating mutual friendship with hill tribes along with his court nobles in 1700 AD.\textsuperscript{104}

British writers refer to the use of the Naga costumes by Meitei kings at the time of coronation as indicative of their Naga origins. Some historians are of the view that it seems not to have been introduced by Gharib Niwaz only. So Jyotirmoy Roy concludes that Gharib Niwaz's friendship with Nagas was only a tribal syndrome, because Gharib Niwaz was sent among the Nagas to escape a conspirator's knife. Other historians like W. McCulloch, E.A. Gait, R. Brown, Hodson and A.F.M Abdul Ali, subscribe to the Naga origins of Gharib Niwaz.\textsuperscript{105}

Modern historians like R.K. Jhalajit Singh who had recourse to Chaitharol Kumbaba, hold a different view. As Paikhomba was childless, Charairongba and his infant son could be killed by unscrupulous persons. It was a practice in those times due to political instability, to send male children to live in remote villages.\textsuperscript{106} There are many legends about the origins of Gharib Niwaz and Nunghil Chaibi. Just one legend is given below:

\textsuperscript{103} n. 41, p.88
\textsuperscript{104} n. 29, p. 52; cf. \textit{The Cheitharon Kumbaba} (C.K.). 53.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., pp. 58, 63.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., p.61.
According to Bijoy Panchali, as soon as Charairongba got the report of the pregnancy of Nungthil Chaibi, he consulted astrologers who foretold that he would die at the hands of the son who is to be born. Apprehending the consequence, the queen made a secret plan in collusion with Samnura, the wife of the Makeng Thangal chief, for the safety of the forthcoming child. At the birth of the child, Samnura took it off her village. A false report was given to the king. The child grew up in the Thangal village. When the child was grown up, the chief of the Makeng village became careless in paying tributes to the Meitei king. Charairongba was enraged and made a punitive expedition against it. But the chief surrendered without any bloodshed. It was then that the king found the boy dressed in Naga costume, commanding some strange attraction in his personality. The king asked the chief to part with his son and took the boy along with three of his friends to the palace. He was kept in a special house. This is the beginning of Haomacha Loishang.\textsuperscript{107}

A similar story is retold by Hodson.\textsuperscript{108} Hodson is of the opinion that Gharib Niwaz was hidden at Meikhel and that the Nagas of Meikhel had precedence over other Nagas at the time of the Naga sports held in the capital annually. This preference could be considered as a reward for the protection which the people of Makhir provided for the king in his early days.

According to a Maram folklore, Nungthil Chaibi was the Makinai of Maram.\textsuperscript{109} However, scholars like R.K. Jhalajit and M. Kaoba Singh, after having close examination and comparative analysis with the royal chronicle, Chaitharol Kumbaba, hold that these legends have no authenticity.\textsuperscript{110}

2.9. Later Relations with the Meiteis and the British

The Marams do not remember much about their relationship by way of trade,

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid. p.55.
\textsuperscript{108} n. 66, pp. 78-80.
\textsuperscript{109} Cf. n.25, pp. 36-41.
\textsuperscript{110} n. 29, pp. 58-61.
commerce, etc., with the Meiteis, though some sort of transactions took place. After Gharib Niwaz, there was political instability till Jai Singh, alias Bhagyaachandra, alias Chingthangkhomba ascended the throne (1762). It is recorded that the hill tribes used to exchange products. Thus, plantain leaves, cotton, cane, bamboo goods, beads, spear, etc., were brought to the valley in exchange for goods like salt, rice, clothes, etc. The market condition of the times was influenced by the degree of bargaining power of buyers and sellers, and according to mutual agreements.\(^{111}\) Probably, the Marams may have traded in rice, as salt was available at Maram itself. It is doubtful if they ever used the coins of the pre-British period of Manipur viz. seljao and sel makhai.

After the abdication of Jai Singh in 1798, Rabindra Chandra succeeded to the gukdee of Manipur but was murdered by his brother Madhuchandra after a brief reign of only three years. But the brother of Madhuchandra, Chaourjit, usurped the throne in 1803 and ruled upto 1813. It was at this time that another of the brothers, Marjit, captured the throne of Manipur with the help of the king of Ava in 1813. He ruled upto 1819.\(^{112}\)

It was in 1819 that Marjit refused to pay the customary dues to the king of Ava. The Burmese king Bodawpaya, under whom Myanmar reached the zenith of its power, had died in 1819 and was succeeded by his inexperienced grandson, Bagyidaw, whose army overran Manipur. “Famines followed the Burmese raid culminating into the saddest period in the history of Manipur”.\(^{113}\) As such Manipur was completely devastated for full seven years and this period of in history of Manipur is known as ‘Chahi Taret Khuntakpa’.


\(^{113}\) n. 29, p. 394.
This ‘Black Era’ (1819-25) in the annals of Manipur had its repercussions even in the hills. The Burmese looted and plundered and burnt. In such a state of affairs the victorious Burmese generals, Pakhaun and Kane-Un, when they found the valley almost deserted, summoned the Burmese envoy Chaka-Piyang to whom they entrusted the task of collecting those people who were taking shelter in the hills. Many raids followed. The hill people were deprived of their provisions. The elders of Maram khullen do not remember having heard of any such deprivation due to this Burmese invasion. But they say that the Meiteis during the Burmese invasion made pact with the Marams to learn the special art of making spears and knives that would hit the target with great accuracy so that they could face the menace of the Burmese.

During the war of 1891 between Manipur and the British, the Marams seemed to have given some sort of harassment to the British. Because of this 60 guards were stationed at Maram in the area of the present Maram Bazar Baptist church. Hodson says that the village itself was burnt as a punitive measure. Maram elders say that Marams as a custom never harassed the British, but certain individuals could have been a sore point for them. Sir Johnstone himself observed this fact when he refers to the Marams as ‘the once powerful village of Muram, still populous but submissive’. What happened was that the Khullakpa Sagai and Mathak Sagai had a fight among themselves for some unknown reasons and the British came to quell the fight. They banished both the sagais for three years from the village and burnt the house of the Sagong.

It seems that the British tried to win over the cooperation of the Marams after 1891. They recruited people for their services in government offices. The case of Shri Raisung Naga who served from 1924-44 in the Manipur Government service indicates

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114 Ibid., pp.400-401.
117n. 41, p. 100.
the need felt by the government of the time in winning over rather than subjugating.\textsuperscript{118}

2.10. The Marams and World War II

The Maram region witnessed one of the most vital rearguard actions during World War II (1939-45). The Japanese certainly had designs on the Indian subcontinent. Thus the allied defeats in the early stages of the war and especially the storming of Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941, boosted Japanese imperialistic designs. They wanted to breech the mountain barrier of Assam and go beyond the borders of Bengal where, they were sure, the Congress politicians were inflaming the mob. With a Japanese army sitting on the borders, the whole population would tear the British Raj to pieces.\textsuperscript{119}

The Burmese, through whose territory the Japanese marched towards India, at first received the news of the advance of the Japanese with great joy. After all, the Japanese too were of the same racial stock as the Burmese. The Burmese expected equal or sympathetic treatment and camaraderie from the Japanese. When the Japanese reached Myanmar, they regarded themselves the masters and spewed attitudes of despisal of the Burmese. One example would suffice:

When asked about the sort of treatment the Japanese meted out to them, one replied: “Don’t talk about it. We expected the Japanese Commander to be very thankful for our bowls of rice, but all he did was to take his hand out of his trouser pocket and give “us a hard slap in the face”.\textsuperscript{120} Another man said: “Talk about rough treatment! After he had slapped our faces he made us drag logs, and draw water, drag, draw; drag, draw. It almost broke our backs”.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{118}n. 25, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{121}Ibid.
In its march to India, the Japanese army was led by Lt. Gen. Renya Mutaguchi, the Commander of the 15th Army. Under him there was Lt Gen. Kotoku Sato, the Commander of the Japanese 31st division. The second in command to Sato was Major General Shigesaburo Miyazaki.\textsuperscript{122}

Sato had his headquarters at Homalin (a town on the Chindwin) while Mutaguchi had it at Maymyo, some 220 miles southeast of Homalin and 25 to the east of Mandalay.

Earlier in May 1942, the Japanese had contemptuously swept the weak British forces from Myanmar, but did not pursue them across the border into Manipur. This time, there was no stopping the Japanese. The Japanese 15, 23 and 31 divisions and a division of the INA crossed the Chindwin river on 6 March 1944 and struck out across the jungles of Naga Hills and Manipur.\textsuperscript{123}

The Battle of Kohima from April 4 to 17, 1944 decided the fate of India. According to Lord Mountbatten, “the battle of Kohima will probably go down as one of the greatest battles in history”.\textsuperscript{124} After the battle of Kohima, the retreat of the Japanese was painful. They were battle scarred, struck down by tropical diseases and above all hunger.

2.11. The Maram Reaction to the Japanese

The defeated Japanese were retreating by way of Viswema and Mao-Songsong. At the great ridge\textsuperscript{125} of Maram, the bridge on the road was blown off.\textsuperscript{126}

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\textsuperscript{122}n. 119, pp. 5-6; Japan Information Centre, Embassy of Japan, New Delhi (2008), email to the author, 17 April 2008. \\
\textsuperscript{123}Asoso Yonuo (1984), \textit{The Rising Nagas}, Delhi: Manas Publications, pp. 143-144. \\
\textsuperscript{124}n. 119, p. 8. \\
\textsuperscript{125}The ‘Great ridge’ of Maram stands between Makhan and Maram Khullen hills. \\
\textsuperscript{126}n. 119, p. 240.
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The allied troops however pursued them and a great battle was fought at Maram on 18th June 1944.

Though Miyazaki was told to hold on to Maram for ten days, the brilliant battle plan executed by Michael West and the Worcestershire regiment made the Japanese retreat within a matter of hours.\textsuperscript{127}

The Japanese would have learnt from their Myanmar experience that winning over the local populace is very important for victory. They acted very justly towards the Marams, and offered them jobs as porters and guides for a monthly wage of Rs. 50. The Marams, in turn, helped them with rice, clothes and other necessities. Many were also given merit certificates by the Japanese.

After the war, Shri Raisung was dismissed from government service without pension or gratuity under Hill Criminal Case No.18 of 1944-45, for aiding the Japanese.

It was probably a case of being caught between the devil and the deep sea. He realised that his refusal would have endangered his people. He was faced with the army of the Japanese, desperate in defeat, defiant in retreat, at his own door step. They were without enough provisions and, after Kohima, "their eyes blazed in their lean bodies... all they had to keep them going was grass and water".\textsuperscript{128} It was a question of survival or death for both the Marams and the Japanese. That the Marams co-operated with the Japanese for their own survival is in no doubt at all. It was not a case of whipping up anti-nationalistic feelings. It was a question of their bread and butter, their life. So the co-operation with the Japanese was a saving means for survival and not a case of fuelling up anti-patriotic feelings as it is commonly understood.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., p. 241.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., p. 243.

\textsuperscript{129} n. 25, pp. 45-47.
Thus we see that the great country of Marams had its own share in world history and the history formation of the region. Through their interactions in various forms with their neighbouring tribes and communities, they developed a system of administration and set of laws for their own survival and growth. The various movements of history have helped them to compare their own customs with the new inputs and make themselves move along the tides of times.