CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh covers an area of 83,743 sq.km, bordering with China in the North, China and Myanmar in the East, Bhutan in the west and Assam and Nagaland in the South. The total border with its neighbouring countries comes out about 1628 km (one thousand six hundred twenty eight kilometres). The border length with its neighbouring countries like China 1030 km (one thousand thirty kilometres), Myanmar 441 km (four hundred forty one kilometres) and Bhutan 157 km (one hundred fifty seven kilometres) makes the region venerable. The social and religious diversity, strategic location has geo-political significance. It is the largest state in the entire North- East India.\(^1\) It has the total population of 13, 83,727 and out of which 7,13,912 are male and 6, 69,815 are female. The density of population is only 17 peoples per sq.km and the percentage of decadal growth is 23.10. The sex ratio in general is 938 female per 1,000 male. The child (0-6) population is 2,12,188 and child sex ratio is 960 girls per 1,000 boys. The percentage of literacy rate is 65.38, out of which the literacy rate of male is 72.55 and female is 57.7. The percentage of total tribal population of the state is 82.64.\(^2\)

The state was popularly known as NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency) and was administrated by the President of India through Governor of Assam acting as his agent. The NEFA attain the status of Union Territory from 21\(^{st}\) January 1972 under the provision of the North-eastern Area (Re-organisation Act of 1971), with the new name Arunachal Pradesh. It was brought under the charge of Chief Commissioner

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with its headquarter at Shillong in Meghalaya. The headquarter was then shifted from Shillong to Itanagar under the present Papum Pare District. The Arunachal Pradesh acquired the status of a State hood on 20th February 1987 and the Lieutenant Governor of the territory was redesigned as the Governor of the State.

The state in the beginning consists of five Districts of Kameng, Siang, Subansiri, Lohit and Tirap, named after the great rivers of the state. Thereafter, four more district were added after passing of the Arunachal Pradesh Re-organisation of District Act, 1980 by carving the area of Kameng into West Kameng and East Kameng, Subansiri into Upper Subansiri and Lower Subansiri, Siang into East Siang and West Siang and Lohit into Dibang valley and Lohit district of the state. Thereafter two new district Tawang and Changlang were created by carving West Kameng and Tirap district. As per the record of 1991 census, there were eleven districts in the state. In 1992, Papum Pare district was created by carving out the circle of Lower Subansiri. Next was forming of Upper Siang by carving few circle of East Siang district in 1994. In the year 2000 kurung Kumey district was created by bifurcating Lower Subansiri. Lower Dibang valley was curved from Dibang valley on 2001 and Anjaw was curved out of Lohit in 2004. As per the census, report of 2011 total number of district in the state is sixteen.

After 2011, the state witnessed the creation of four new districts of Kra Dadi, Siang, Namsai and Longding in the period between 2011 to 2015. The state at present consists of twenty districts. The Districts are Tirap, Changlang, Lohit, Anjaw, Dibang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley, East Siang, Upper Siang, West Siang, Siang, Upper Subansiri, Lower Subansiri, Papum Pare, Kurung Kumey, Kra Dadi, East Kameng, West Kameng, Tawang, Namsai, and Longding.

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3 The Times of India city, 9th February 2015, timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city.
Topography of the state consists of rugged mountains, hills, and valley covered by tropical rain forests. Due to its harsh topography, it is thinly and sparsely inhabited by human, but is rich in variety of rare flora and fauna. The wide altitude ranges within Arunachal Pradesh has brought about a great diversity of habitat and forest types, and a rich diversity of animal and plant life. The state harbours the world’s northernmost tropical rainforests and is estimated to have nearly 50 percent of the total flowering plant species in India. Of 1200 birds species in India, nearly 600 have been recorded in from the state. The state is also the home of fascinating species of large herbivores such as Mishmi Takin, Gorla, Musk deer and Serow, several species of primates, and carnivores such as tiger, common leopard, snow leopard and clouded leopard. The state can be broadly classified into five different vegetation. They are Tropical forest (upto 900m), subtropical forest (900-1000m), pine forest (1000-1800m), temperate forest (1800-3500m) and alpine forest (4000m above).4

As many as 25 tribes and many sub-tribes inhabit the land of Arunachal Pradesh.5 Within a relatively small area, there co-exist different religious groups and mutually incomprehensible languages. However, relatively very little is known about most of the tribes of this region. Fortunately the tribes have been able to preserve their customs and way of life to present day, this is because of their relatively isolation from the mainstream of Indian society.

More than half a dozen of tribes of the state are the followers of Buddhism. They can be divided into two groups viz., Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada

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4 Gazetteer of India, Arunachal Pradesh, op.cit., pp. 34-70.
5 For the information on the list of tribes, see P. T. Abraham, “Arunachal languages with Special references to Tani languages”, in Tamo Mibang & M. C. Behera (ed.), Tribal Studies: Emerging Frontiers of Knowledge, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2007, p.181-184.
Budhism. The followers of Mahayana Buddhism inhabit predominantly in the
districts of Tawang and West Kameng. However, some cluster of ethnic group
Known as Membas and Khambas inhabit the higher reaches of central part of the State,
which is mostly surrounded by the communities like Nyishi, Tagin, Galo, Adi, and
Apatani. It is interesting to note that the followers of Mahayana Budhism also
practice indigenous Bon religion side by side with the former and have their
literature in Tibetan script. On the other hand, followers of Theravada Budhism are
settled in the eastern part of the state. It is evident from their literature, they have
moved from South- East Asia in late medieval period and have a script called Tai
Script.

West Siang

It has an area of 12,006 sq.km. It is the second largest district in term of area
in Arunachal Pradesh, bordering Upper Siang and East Siang in the east, Upper
Subansiri to west, Assam in the south and international border with China in the
north. As per 2011 census, the total population of West Saing district is 1,12,274, out
of which the male population is 58,188 and female population 54,106. The density of
population is only 13 peoples per sq.km and the percentage of decadal growth is
8.04. The sex ratio in general is 930 female per 1,000 male. The literacy rate
percentage of the district is 66.46, out of which the literacy rate of male is 72.81 and
female is 59.63.
Table No.1.1: District Census 2011: West Siang District.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>CD Block/Town</th>
<th>No. of House hold</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Menchuka</td>
<td>1,439</td>
<td>8,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Manigong</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>4,472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kaying payum</td>
<td>1,315</td>
<td>7,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Darak</td>
<td>1,323</td>
<td>7,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rumgong</td>
<td>1,279</td>
<td>7,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Liromba</td>
<td>1,032</td>
<td>6,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Aalo East</td>
<td>2,599</td>
<td>14,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tirbin</td>
<td>977</td>
<td>5,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Basar</td>
<td>1,908</td>
<td>10,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Gensi</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>3,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Likabali</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>8,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Aalo west</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>3,737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Aalo (NT) urban</td>
<td>4,396</td>
<td>20,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Basar (NT) Urban</td>
<td>1,064</td>
<td>4,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total population of West Siang District</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,231</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,12,274</strong></td>
<td><strong>58,168</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** District Census Handbook of West Siang District.\(^6\)

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For the administration convenience, the district was setup into 6 sub-division and twenty one circles. Aalo, Menchuka, Likabali, Basar, Yomcha and Rumgong are the six sub-divisions. Aalo Sub-division comprises of two circles of Aalo and Bagra (Kamru). Menchuka Sub-division consists of four circles of Menchuka, Tato, Pidi and Manigong. Likabali Sub-division comprises of two circles of Likabali and Kangku. Basar Sub-division consists of four circle of Basar, Gensi, Daring and Sibe. Yomcha Sub-division consists of five circles of Yomcha, Tirbin, Liromoba, Darak and Kamba. There are four circles in Rumgong, which are Rumgong, kaying, Payum and Jomlo-Mobuk.

The district is inhabited by Galo, Memba and section of sub tribe of Adis called Ramo, pailibo, Bori, Bokar and Minyong. The Galo tribes mostly occupy the area that comes under Sub-division of Aalo, Basar, Yomcha and Likabali. The Memba and Ramo is inhabitant of Menchuka Sub-division, Bokar population is concentrated in Manigong Sub-division and in pidi circle of Menchuka Sub-division. Some cluster population of Tagin are inhabited in Menchuka. The Minyong and Bori occupy the area of Rumgong Sub-division.
Table No.1.2: Administrative Set-up showing District Sub-Division, Circle & Village of West Siang District.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Sub-Division</th>
<th>Circle</th>
<th>No. of Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>West Siang</td>
<td>Along (Aalo)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Along (Aalo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bagra (Kamru)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Menchuka</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Menchuka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pidi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Monigong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Likabali</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Likabali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kangku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Basar</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gensi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Daring</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sibe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yomcha</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yomcha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tirbin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Liromoba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Darak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kamba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rumgong</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rumgong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kaying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Payum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jomlo-Mobuk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: District Census Handbook of West Siang District

The Menchuka Sub-division is located 6000 feet (91,829 m) above the sea level in the northern part of West Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh. The place covers an area of 2897 km². It is located roughly between 28° 21’ north latitude and 94° 72’ east longitudes, bordering China on the north, Upper Subansiri and Yomcha.

7 District Census Handbook of West Siang District, op.cit., p. 10.
Sub-division on the south, Upper Subansiri on the west and Upper Sing district on the east. As per population census of 2011, the total population of Menchuka Sub-division is 13,310, out of which the male population is 6,823 and female population is 6,487. The child (0-6) population is 1,882, out of which the boy child is 1,009 and girl child is 873. The total number of 5,363 persons from total population of Menchuka Sub-division is literates.\footnote{District Census Handbook of West Siang District, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 22-23.}

The first administrative outpost centre was opened at Menchuka in the year 1951 with an Assistant political officer based on recommendation made by the then Political Officer Bhuyan.\footnote{L. N. Chakravarty, \textit{Glimpses of the Early History of Arunachal}, Directorate of Research Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar, 2007, p. 49.} Later the Menchuka was declared independent Sub-division vide Government of Arunachal Pradesh order No. GA (b) 45/82 dated 13-7-1990 with four circles viz Menchuka, Manigong, Tato and Pidi.\footnote{D. K. Dutta, \textit{The Memba: Arunachal Pradesh}, Directorate of Research Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar, 2006, p. 3.}

The Memba along with Tagin and Ramo tribe inhabits the Menchuka circle of Menchuka Sub-division. The total population of Menchuka circle is 5,091, out of which the male population is 2,697 and female population is 2,394. The Memba tribe is among one of the \textit{Bodic} group of tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and are followers of Vajrayana Buddhism. They belong to Tibeto-Burman linguistic family of mongoloid race.\footnote{S. Durra Choudhury (ed.), \textit{Arunachal Pradesh District Gazetteers east Siang and West Siang Districts}, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Shilong, 1994, p. 75.} The Memba tribe languages are one of the definitely endangered languages in a list of UNESCO (United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) interactive atlas of the world’s language in danger.\footnote{UNESCO interactive atlas of the world’s language in danger, UNESCO (UNO), \texttt{www.unesco.org/culture/en/endangeredlanguages/atlas}, 2014.} The Memba have a script of their own called \textit{Ume}. The script is of Tibetan origin. However, the literature of the
Memba is predominantly religious but it also deals with their origin and some aspect of their socio-cultural life.

As per 2011 census, the population of the Memba is 4,395. The Menchuka circle consists of 34 numbers of villages (see table no. 1.3). Out of which the Memba live in twenty-two villages. The Memba villages are Monigong, Thargelling, Lhalung, Segong, Dechengtang East, Dechengtang West, Singbir, Galling, Gauche, Menchuka village, Chorling, Yorni, Pharge, Bomjipang, Barangang, Kadasila, Lingdungloti, Dorjeeling, Sekar, Sorangdem, Chengrong and Menchuka HQ. McMahon Line bound the land of the Memba on the north, the Boker, a sub-tribe of the Adi on the east, the Tagin tribe on the west and the Ramo and Pailibo, another sub-tribe of the Adi on the south. The Memba like the other tribes of Bodic group of Arunachal Pradesh have their own socio-cultural heritage that can be seen in the form of monuments, monasteries, stupas and other minor Buddhist religious structures, Buddhist arts and crafts like painting, wood carving etc., and festivals, rituals and socio-cultural institution.

Table No.1.3: Village Census 2011: Menchuka Circle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>No. of House hold</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Monigong</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thargelling</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yorko</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lhalung</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Segong</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dechengtung East</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dechengtung West</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Singbir</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Galling</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The population of Memba given is the sum of the resident of total population of the Memba inhabitant village as per census 2011.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Male (10-14)</th>
<th>Male (15-19)</th>
<th>Female (10-14)</th>
<th>Female (15-19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Gauche</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Menchuka Village</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Chorling</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Yorni</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>63</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Pharge</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bomjipanga</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Barangang</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Tachinngpanga</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Kadasila</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Karte</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Lingdungloti</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Dorjeeling</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Sekar</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Rego</td>
<td>26</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Rapum</td>
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<td>100</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Hiri</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tr>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Lipusi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Padusa</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Gapo</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Menying</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Sorangdem</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Chengrong</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Menchuka H.Q</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>1,998</td>
<td>1,191</td>
<td>807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Pak</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total population of Menchuka Circle.</strong></td>
<td><strong>846</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,091</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,697</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,394</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** District Census Handbook of West Siang District\(^{14}\)

The settlement of Memba tribe in Menchuka Valley is a story shrouded with myth and legend in connection with Vajrayana and Mahayana Buddhism of Tibet. The Memba tradition claim that they have arrived from different parts of Tibet, Bhutan and Tawang. The legend claims that Mechuka Valley was known as “Baechakshiri” or “Pechakshiri” meaning to be a place where Guru Padmasambhava was believed to have hidden away religious text known as Terma. It was under Lama Lorde Gyatso and Terton Choeje Lingpa of Genchen Dzong in Tibet who set out

\(^{14}\) District Census Handbook of West Siang District, *op.cit.*, p. 44.
with many followers of Nyingmapa sect gathered from different part of Tibet, Bhutan and Tawang to discover those gospels and succeeded in reaching present day Mechuka Valley. After discovering the hidden gospel of Guru Padmasambhava, the Lama constructed a Monastery there and brought religious scriptures and images from Guchi in Tibet for the Monastery.

The Memba society is patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal. They are strict followers of endogamy but in rare cases, they are found to keep marital relationship with their neighbouring tribes of Ramo, Pailibos, Tagins and Bokars. However, among the Memba society father is the head of the family and practice of avoidance relationship is strictly followed in the society.

The practice of slave system among Memba was one of the important institutions, which differentiate them from other Bodic Group of Arunachal Pradesh. The slaves were the persons sold by the other tribes in exchange of goods. The Memba slaves were mostly from the neighbouring tribes. The slave system was an important component of the Memba society. Thee specifically employed them as potter for carrying goods from Menchuka to Tibet and vice versa. Prior to independence of India, the Memba of Menchuka used to have trade with Tibet on the North and on the other hand with the neighbouring tribes to the South. The Menchuka was an important trade centre for those tribal people who live near the border of the Tibet and has no access to the plain of Assam because of the hostile attitude of the tribe inhabited near the Assam and Arunachal Pradesh Border. It is believed that the Bokar, Ramo and Pailibo a sub tribe of Adi tribe and Tagin of Upper Subansiri district used to have trade relation with Memba. They exchanged goods brought from Tibet with tribal people of the adjacent area through barter system. However, after Independence because of the strain relation between China
and India the trade could not be organised further from Tibet and the tribal people had to depend on the goods came from the plain of Assam.\textsuperscript{15}

Like any other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, the Memba had their own organised political institution through which they settle various cases and disputes. The head of the political institution in Menchuka was called Deb. The Deb has a control over the entire village and has the power to punish the guilty person as per the local law and custom. He also acts as a supreme authority for maintaining law and order within Memba area. Village headman called Chim, who further assists the Deb in settling disputes and administering justice.

**The people**

The origin of the Memba nomenclature is unknown to the Memba people themselves and even to their neighbouring tribal people. Historically, Menchuka was known by the name *Pachakshiri (Baechakshiri)* by the Tibetans and the western people. In 1878-1879 A.D, Nem Singh\textsuperscript{16} a spy disguised as a Lama employee by British colonial government of India. He was given a task to explore-spy in Tibet. While on his exploration in Tibet area of Orong and Gacha (Gaza) he reports of his encounter with people who call themselves *Pachakshiriba* from *Pachakshiri*.\textsuperscript{17} A British botanist Captain F. Kingdon Ward and his companion Lord Cawdor in 1924 A.D, while on their expedition in Southeast corner of Tibet also mention of an


existence of a place called Pachakshiri and Tsari\textsuperscript{18} at the sources of the Subansiri, he describes that:

\begin{quote}
To the south of us now lay the passed into Tsari and Pachakshiri, as the country at the sources of the Subansiri is called; but they were all blocked by snow, and would not be given for another two month.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

The early Memba during those days identified themselves as Pachakshrisba (Bachakshrisba) and called Menchuka as Pachakshri (Bachakshri).\textsuperscript{20} Memba was also known by the Tibetan as Neh-nang (people living in holy place) and till now many of the old folk of the community also identify themselves by the same denomination. This may be because of the geographical location of the place, which was known to the Tibetan by the name of Cheri-Neh-Nang (Tsari-Neh-Nang), which means new pilgrimage place located adjacent to Cheri-Neh (Tsari-Chu). Among the neighbouring tribes this place is known as Nyem Nyoku (The place of women), which was a common term used by the Tani ethnic group of tribal people in order to recognize the Tibetan Place and people by Nyem Nyoku and Nyem.\textsuperscript{21} The term Memba for the people of Menchuka most probably came into general use only after the independence of India. The term Memba had been first used for the Buddhist people inhabiting in the Tuting circle of upper Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh. The early colonial British government records also maintain the same to recognize this group in Tuting circle known as Pemako by Tibteans. The term, Memba was also known to the neighbouring Adi tribe. However, George Dunbar while on his visit to

\textsuperscript{18} Toni Huber, \textit{The Cult Of Pure Crystal Mountain}, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, pp. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{20} 22\textsuperscript{nd} Deb Tashi Philley, 83 years, Dechang-Tang West village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 22-6-2014.
\textsuperscript{21} Pema Chukla, 67 years, Menchuka HQ, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 22-6-2014.
Pemako in 1913 A.D., refers the term to the Buddhist people inhabiting there from the neighbouring tribe. According to Kerstin Grothmann, the term Memba was a phonetic variant of The Tibetan name Monpa (one from Mon). Monpa was a name used by Tibetans to identify the people inhabiting in the region of Bhutan and Monyul (Modern Tawang District of Arunachal Pradesh). Based on the history of migration of early 18th and 19th century A.D., many people from the region of Bhutan and Tawang migrated to Pemako and settled permanently.

The term Memba recorded in British colonial government for the Buddhist people, inhabiting in Pemako area is widely used after Independence India. Thus, the Buddhist people of Menchuka and Tuting area are identified as Memba. However, culturally and linguistically they are very different. It is interesting to note that the Khamba people who had migrated to Tuting in early 20th century A.D., call them as Jira Memba in order to differentiate them from Memba of Tuting whom they called Sarchok Memba. The term Jira Memba means someone who carries some form of circular or rectangular wooden sheet, that Memba of Menchuka carry in their back to use it as some sort of chair to rest while on their journey. Khamba people most probably used the term to differentiate the inhabitant of Menchuka and Tuting only after 1951 A.D, when they came to know about the Memba people of Menchuka as recorded by Indian Government. The Memba is of Tibetan origin of mongoloid race.

24 Ibid., p. 135.
26 Tashi Dorjee, 39 years, businessman, Ganga mareket, Itanagar , Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on date 21-11-2012.
Memba peoples are slightly built and darker in colour; the nose are often straight and fine, some also have wide and flat nose with wide nostrils, their cheek bone are large and prominent. The eyes are less prominent and light brown in colour; hand and feet are large and clumsy; facial hair is rare with a few exceptions; and the colour of the hair is always usually black.

**Origin and Migration**

The origin of Memba ethnic group and their migration to Menchuka valley is shrouded with legends and myth related to the *Nin-ma-pa* tradition of myth of hidden treasure. The historical evidence of migration of Memba is scattered and difficult to interpret, our knowledge of their migration and of the main figure involved in the discovery and settlement in Menchuka valley is fragmented and incomplete. What little we do know is mostly based on small number of oral narration recorded by some researchers after 1947. Oral history is used to refer to formal, rehearsed accounts of the past, presented by culturally sanctioned tradition bearers; to informal conversation about the earlier tradition among the community. It is stories told about a time, which has been preserved through generations of the past for records. All history depends ultimately upon its social purposes. Therefore, it has been handed down by oral tradition among the communities who had no written material to record.  

The most detailed and hence most important account of the early period can be found in manuscript called *Cheik*, believed to be a written record kept in Menchuka old *Gomp* (monastery), which give some detailed description of their

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migration to Menchuka valley. Beside this manuscript, the Memba people also tell their stories of migration through memory orally passed from generation to generation. They also have another manuscript called Nayek, which literally speaks about the existence of hidden holy place in various part of Menchuka.  

Migration is a process of movement of human population from one place to another permanently or semi-permanently, which sometimes leads to cultural diffusion and social integration. It is considered as one of the most important aspect of social science and has maintained a close relation with mankind from its earliest stage. It gives information about historical event and the resultant population shift from the historically disturbed area to safe place through the means of forced or willing migration.

The mythical thinking is picturistic thinking or image thinking and its approach to the truth and reality is a gestalt approach. Its approaches invite its users to participate in active personal relationship with the mythically grasped truth. It is a way of approach to the reality rather than a definite philosophy, and it is found in attitude rather than concept. The myth can appear in the form of historical legend as an overlay of imaginative development of some central historic event or person or event intended to correspond harmoniously with the basic religious interpretation.

According to Winston L. King,

\[\text{The myth can appear in symbolic form by means which basic doctrine about the nature of the world, man, the moral and spiritual realities and mode of}\]

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28 Purba Tsering Naksang, 29 years, Menchuka HQ, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, interviewed on 01-6-2015.
30 Romila Thapar, Cultural Past: Esassey in Early Indian History, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 754-775.
perceiving them are stated and in our sense, myth is present in most of the religious tradition in a sacramental role.\textsuperscript{31}

According to legend and myths about Memma migration, it is believed that in Tibet, at a place called Samey, lived an ape like man named Pha-Zamju Sambo and women named Mada Simbo, who gave birth to thousands of children within a day. However, both parents were unable to cultivate crops due to lack of knowledge and technique as a result they were unable to take proper care of their children and were in a position to provide scanty of wild maize which grew naturally in forest. Because of eating, the grain their tails and the hair on their bodies grew shorter and shorter until they finally disappeared. However, because of shortage of food, many of his children died and in due course of time, the children who survived became adult and began to migrate in hopes of looking for new and better places for settlement. They moved towards every direction and gradually spread over entire Tibet with a dream to find plenty of food and comfortable shelter. Those people called themselves Mcbudungdu regarded as savages, variously ignorant or cunning beyond the pole of civilization, people who have no particular rules and regulation among themselves.\textsuperscript{32}

The oral narration indicates that they were hunters and food gatherers. They lived in a small community, which was nomadic and in due course of time learned to make fire, in order to shine not only in the Himalayan area but also all over the world and the people lived like this for thousands of years. It reveals that the story is of before ten thousand years ago when agriculture first emerged among the hunter and gatherer. Human history is evident of the fact that, we were all hunter gatherers, our

unique human traits are, presumably adaption of that way of life. The line of primitives that led to our species split off from to our closest ape relatives, Chimpanzees and Baboons, about six million years ago. About four million years ago, our ancestors were walking upright, and by two to one million years ago, they had much larger brains than other apes, built fires, made tools, lived in social groups, and survived by hunting wild animals and gathering of wild plant for food, with no domestication of animals. The hunting and gathering represent the original condition of human kind and hold the key to some of the central question about the human condition and their destiny.\textsuperscript{33}

The social organization during those periods may be was a band; small-scale nomadic groups of fifteen to fifty people related by kingship and tend to move their settlement frequently in search of food, mobility was also a means of resolving conflicts that would be more difficult for settled people. Here the leadership was less formed and more subject to constraints of popular opinion. The leader can persuade but not command and they are relatively egalitarian.

Like other civilization, Memba developed agriculture and permanent village, and a person who was strong and cleverer among them became the chief. Gradually many villages came under one chief, probably due to conquest of one by another and the convened later regarded as king.\textsuperscript{34} The Memba looked on the king primarily as a leader in war, responsible for the defense of the community. At this early period, he was in no sense divine and had no religious function. There was no mention of existence of regular revenue system and class division was not in practice.

There was mention of only one king named \textit{Sugin Gombo} who performed many deeds, which was of historical importance. He framed some law for judicial


function for the people and probably imposed physical punishment to the subject if the law and order were broken and disturbed. It may be possible that it was under him that all the people of Memba group came under one umbrella as an ethnic group because there is no mention of any other king in Memba stories before Sugin Gombo. After the death of Sugin gombo there was a story of a king of a very cruel nature named Gyebo Landgarang whose character was said to be equal to that of a devil who enjoyed human flesh. It is said that every day for his lunch and dinner he used to kill one woman and the people regarded him a blood thirsty tyrant whose cruelty could only be accounted for in terms of mental aberration, a sick man who killed and tortured for his own sadistic pleasure. The cruel activity of the king forced the people to abolish the kingship system and this may indicate that during early period it was upon the people to select the king through democracy and not hereditary.\textsuperscript{35}

The religion followed by them during the period was Bon (animistic) because in their oral tradition there is a story that indicates that it only after this period that some Buddhist Lama came into their place and began to guide them. Then gradually the Memba people began to believe in Buddhism under the guidance of a Buddhist Lama.\textsuperscript{36} It was only after the arrival of Guru Padma-Sambhava in 8\textsuperscript{th} century A.D on the request of king Thi-Sron Detsan to established Buddhist order in Tibet. The king Thi-Sron Detsan was the descendent of Sron Tsan Gampo who first adopted Buddhism, and married two Buddhist wives from China and Nepal. Before that till the seventh century Tibetan people were savages and reputed as cannibals and follower of an animistic religion, the Bon religion, resembling in many ways the Taoism of China. The king Thi-Sron Destan himself was the son of a Chinese


\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 46.
princess and inherited strong prejudice in favour of Buddhism. Under his patronage the construction of the first Buddhist monastery at Samye in Tibet was completed in the late eight century (probably around 779 A.D). The Lamaist Buddhist culture inhabits in the high Himalaya areas from Ladakh to Northeast India and in Arunachal Pradesh, the Lamaist Buddhist culture inhabited predominately in the western part and in some central part of the state.

It is popular among some of Memba people that earlier both Tani Group (Nyishi, Adi, Galo, Tagin, Apatani tribes) and Memba lived together in Tibet. During the spread of Buddhism in Tibet the Tani group of people along with Memba were brought to Samye monastery under the guidance of Guru Padhma Sambhabav. Both Tani and Memba were provided with the sermon and teachings of the guru in written record, in the form of animal skin to Tani and in the form of stone slab or tablet to Memba. However, Tani was not interested in the teaching of Guru and in order to avoid it, ran away from Samye with all their belongings including written record of the teaching of Guru in animal skin which was later consumed by Tani due to hunger. That is the reason why Tani group of people migrated from Tibet, settled in Arunachal Pradesh earlier than Memba, and had no script. Memba on the other hand stayed in the monastery and adopted Buddhism as their belief system.

The Memba today follows the Nying-ma-pa Sect of Lamaist Buddhism (Vajrayana Buddhism). The Nying-ma-pa sect whose Lamas wear and identified with red coloured hat. They worship Guru Padma-Sambhava, the founder of Lamaism in Tibet, in a variety of forms, both divine and demonical, expressive of his

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39 Deb Tashi Philley, *op.cit.*
different moods at different times. They also follow their favourite Kashmiri teacher, **Sri Sinha**, and the Indian teacher of the latter, **Gah-rab Dorjee**, who derived his inspiration from the celestial Buddha, **Vajra-satwa**, who in turn was inspired by the primordial deity, **Saman-ta-bhadra Buddha**.\(^{41}\)

According to **Nying-ma-pa** tradition the slope of the Himalaya are scattered with hidden lands which has been rendered inaccessible by the magic of the tantric **yogin Guru padma-Sambhava** for the faithful followers of dharma who might in future be able to find refuge from the enemies of their religion and live a life of happiness.\(^{42}\)

Tibetan legends refer to these places of enchanting beauties and earthly paradises in which the **yogin** can achieved complete fulfilment and enjoy mystic vision. It is believed that contact with one of these secret valleys eliminates negative thought and emotion, which cause suffering, and confers mental clarity and well-being. The religious literature concerning hidden lands is a part of the much wider religious literature of the **Gter-ma (Ter-ma)**. According to legends, these lands were hidden together with all the other treasures. Just as shepherds could only discover the sacred objects and texts of the **Ter-ma**, hunters and travellers quite accidently just had a chance to come across such text, which were either abandoned or objects left for worship or hidden in ancient temples and caves and could only be revelled and made accessible by those with the power to do it.\(^{43}\)

\(^{41}\) Austin. L. Waddel, *op.cit.*, pp. 97-134.
It is believed in Tibetan legend that the time will come when temples will be destroyed, the law will no longer be respected and the follower of Buddha will suffer great hardship and the reign of peace will be at an end. These signs will indicate that the time has come to escape to one of the hidden lands; these places may be ‘opened’ only by those who enjoy the trust of numerous disciples and display greatness of heart.

The first information concerning the Tibetan myth of hidden treasures or hidden lands was provided in 1912 by J.Bacot (1912: 10-12) in a study of Pad-ma Khod. It is one of the best known of the hidden lands of Tibet, situated in the southern part of the country in which he refers to the discovery of land at the end of the 19th century by a Tibetan Lama Sang-rgyas-r thog-med, together with a group of monk belonging to his monastery and their occupation of that site.44

In 1975 Michael Aris contributed with his account of an expedition to the region of northern Nepal (1975: 4587) describing the finding of a Sbas-yul in the region of Kutang known as sKyid-mo-lung or valley of happiness and four years later in 1979 he made a further notable contribution to the study of the culture of hidden land. Analyzing the tradition with regards to the myth of the origin of the ancient history of Bhutan (1979: 44-82) presented a very detailed account of Bhutanese version of Padma Gling-pa. The Padma Gling-pa was the first to recount this myth, using material belonging to the popular tradition of Bhutan and this legend spread from Bhutan towards the east among the Sherdukpen people who lives in the West Kameng territory of Arunachal Pradesh.45

44 Cited from Giacomella Orofino, op.cit., p. 241.
45 Ibid. p. 242-244.
Menchuka is also known by the name of *Baechakshiri* meaning place of pilgrimage before it came under Indian Government administration. The place is now inhabited by the *Memba* tribe who migrated to the area from Tibet, Bhutan and Tawang into eastern Arunachal Pradesh by back about Fourteen generation was known to them by the name *Baechakshingri* (Hidden Valley) which is located in the Vicinity of Himalaya Ranges, deep in the Subtropical forest near the *Yargapchu* River in *Tsari-Neh-Nang*.\(^{46}\) According to *Cheik*,\(^{47}\)

*Kham Khathog Lama Sogyal received a vision and was the first who went via Samgarong (Tibet) to Pema-Ziling (Menchuka). There he stayed in meditation for some time. Later, Lama Lorde Gyatso went on pilgrimage to the Sogyal cave, where he had many extraordinary visions and was able to stay in meditation for almost eight years. After that, he went to Par, and together with Rumdo Abo and others, he went on pilgrimage. However, something caused them great fear, so they could not proceed further and had to stop. There was a question of whether the time for the countless beyuls has arrived or not. Will it be helpful to the Dharma or beneficial for the people, if I Lorde Gyatso, with all my responsibility, were to declare the place as a beyul (a holy place), where people will settle and build roads?*

*Rumdo Abo, Tsetan Norbu and I Lorde Gyatso, together with 40 numbers of labourers, took off for pilgrimage. Drubchen Chozang Namgyal and Changchu Lingpa wanted to stay there during winter and build a stupa at Dechentang to cast out all evil from that region. Two Lamas and ten other people stayed near Pema-Ziling. In the Wood-Dragon year (1664 A.D), the Samge Chokyong told me to invite Tagsham Chogtrul on the tenth day of the Monkey month. Everything arrangement was made, but he was unable to come. Rumdo Abo and Tsetan Norbu, together with twenty numbers of Labourers, were sent to the west entrance via Palungthang for the construction of roads. Where, Norbu constructed the first building, a small temple at Pema-Ziling. In autumn, headmen Tenzin Norbu, accompanied by fifty labourers, came to construct road. In the Fire-Sheep year (1664 A.D), people constructed and repaired roads as well as bridges. In the Earth-Bird year (1669 A.D), the great government gave order to the people of Tsegang and Tongshongog that they would had to provide whatever labour force required. Already prior to the Water-Hare year (1663 A.D), it was evident that the place was special. Irrespective of the subjects, the pilgrimage site had to be provides with all necessary things and*


\(^{47}\) *Cheik* is a vernacular religious text of Memba, which contain some detail of their early history.
favourable conditions. This is how they inhabited the place. Lama Lorde Gyatso himself wrote this content in Cheik in the Iron Pig year (1671 A.D).

It is evident from the document that the exploration of the place by Lama Lorde Gyatso and gradually leading to the initial settlement of the Buddhist group of people in Menchuka in second half of 17th century A.D.

However very little work has been available to understand the origin and migration of Memba and it hardly gets any attention so far from the researcher. Although, few data have been collected by some of the researcher group viz., D.K.Dutta (District Research Officer, Government of Arunachal Pradesh), T. Norbu and few other. The data collected from questioning and interviewing of the local Lamas and the Memba People were able to recount some oral tradition related to the myth of their origin and migration, which is related to myths of hidden treasure of Guru Padma-Sambhava. The study reveal three different story related to their origin and migration:

The first information of hidden treasure of Lopin Pema Jungne or Guru Padma Sambhab in Baechakshiri came into light in Cheri-Chesom in Tibet where Torden Merek Lama Lorde Gyamtso (Lorde Gyatso), Lama Dupthop Thangdang Gyalpo and Lama Tebh yesi Dorjee discussed about Bachak-siri. The first attempt to search hidden treasure was done by Lama Kardu Sange Ringin, but during his attempt, he found only area full of dense forest with evil spirit constantly disturbing him. The situation demoralized him and he gave up the idea of further expedition and returned to Tibet. Guru Lama Segya Rimpoche made the second attempt from

48 Lama Pema Chong Kigar, 64 years, Dorjeeling village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed and translated the Cheik on 18-3-2015.
Kham provinces in Tibet, who is said to visit Baechak-Siri and meditated at Pema-Ziling for many days. After some days, he returned to Tibet where he informed about the existence of Baechakshiri. After that, Guru Lama Tebh Yeshi Dorjee tried and while on his return journey, he opened the treasure at Ter Sarma and Ter Ningba near Tibet border and on his return met the two Lamas at Cheri-Chesom and informed them about the existence of Baechak-Siri in Cheri-Neh-Nang.

It is believed that Lama Duk-Top-Thang-Dang-Gasp and Lama Lorde Gyatso were sent by Guru Lama Tebh yeshi Dorjee in search for the hidden treasure in Tsari-Neh-Nang or Cheri-Neh-Nang into two different directions. Lama Duk-Top-Thang-Dang-Gasp went to the Manigong side and Lama Lorde Gyatso decided to go to Baechak-Siri side. From there they would meet in a Rerak Mountain located near Rego village in Ramo area and would together open the hidden treasure of Guru Padma Shambhava.

According to the plan Lama Lorde Gyatso with a dog, a horse, a yak and his assistant Lama called Shap-zei first crossed Lo-La pass and Lama Duk-Top-Thang-Dang-Gasp crossed the Dam-la Mountain and reached Manigong, a place suitable for the construction of Mane. While on journey Lama Lorde Gyatso without having any injury and reached to a place, Kham-Sang-Nis (place of heaven) after crossing Lo-La pass, where they rested for a night. Next day, they reached Neh-Sang-Gong (Pilgrimage at the top most) and from there they reached to the place called Man-Gang (a place where they could construct Gomp). It is important to note that the route followed by them for the expedition was through a riverbank, because of the presence of dense forest in Menchuka there was a chance of a failure of recalling the route that was followed. On the other hand, there were every possibilities of encounter of wild animals. However, the route through riverbank makes it easy for
them to recall the route on the way back home. From Man-Gang they reached a place, which was like an open space field and named it Sam-Ling. From Sam-Ling (open space or field) where they rested for the night and the next morning during the course of further expedition the yak who came with the Lama Lorde Gyatso returned to Tibet because the vegetation of the place was not suitable for yak breeding. One could still find the footprint of Lama Lorde Gyatso, his horse and of his yak in a large stone in a place called Narbu-Chulung near Yargup-chu river bank, where the footprint of the yak facing towards Tibet. Next, they reached Pem-Ziling where Lama and his assistant found one cave and named it Saija-Pu-Dupuk or Pukh-pa, in the cave they constructed one large stone slab to sit and meditate for few days. During the time of meditation his assistant Lama while preparing hot water for beverage informed him that,

*Tea bricks that they had brought with them had been finished and they would not be able to have tea.*

In the mean time during discussion, one bird called Juh dropped tree leaves into the boiling water and shouted Jsa-Ludin-Bhya. By hearing the sound of the bird, Lama Lorde Gyatso and his assistant drank the boiling water, which tasted like tea. And the same leaves called Jsa-Ludin-Bhya are today used by Memba as beverage substitute to tea. From Pem-Ziling they crossed Yargup-chu river and as promised Lama Lorde Gyatso reached Rerak where he expected to meet Lama Duk-Thop-Thang-Dang-Gasp but Lama Lorde Gyatso met a crow who gave him a message that Lama Duk-Thop-Thang-Dang-Gasp inspite of being younger than him returned for Tibet halfway through the journey. The message, which later was found to be false when he met Lama Duk-Thop-Thang-Dang-Gasp on his return journey. By hearing the message from the Crow, Lama Lorde Gyatso got angry and hidden the key that
opens the hidden treasure under the protection of protector deity of Rerak Mountain into a place called Demabas near Rego, so that in future, the deity will hand over the key to another Lama who is capable of opening the hidden treasure. Before leaving Rerak Mountain area he kept a big stone slab of square shape known as Kunse-Lagang near Rego as a mark of his visit. While on his return journey, he reached Karte and camped there for few days where he discovered many holy places in Neh-Karte, which are now regularly visited by Memba community once in a year for pilgrimage. During his visit to Karte, the footmark of Lama and his horse is marked in a large stone near the bank of Yargapchu River. During his stay in Karte Lama Lorde Gyatso meet Lama Duk-Thuop-Thang-Dang-Gasp together constructed one Chorten (Stupa) called Sadha Bumba. From Karte they crossed the Yargapchu River and reached a flat land, which was named as Sher-Darjiling (flat land in the east side) by the Lama. Next, they reached Menchuka (medicinal water). It is believed that place is blessed with 108 quality of medicinal water. From Menchuka they moved towards north where they found flat land suitable for cultivation and they called it Singber. From Singber they reached a place where he felt very happy and named the place Galling or Gaoling. They moved further without holding and reached Dezing-Pang (open ground). Dezing-pang is the place where in coming future all the festivals and important ceremonies of the Memba would be celebrated. From Dezing-Pang they continued their journey and reached a place, which looked like the starting of big open space upto Dezing-Pang and named it Dezing-Tang. After holding for one night in Dezing-Pang, next they reached the place where they drank water from the nearby stream where the water was coming from the fountain from the nearby mountain and felt energetic and named the place Lung-Chu (medicinal water). In the Lung-Chu, Lama and his team decided to hold for the night.
But before sleeping *Lama Lorde Gyatso* stuck his stick made of Sandal wood into the ground reciting holy hymn and declared that if this place is holy and he will visit it in his next birth, then all the area covered with dense forest will become suitable for living. Next morning when they woke up they found that because of soil erosion and flood the area, which was covered with dense forest one night earlier now became converted into a flat area cleared with forest, which was named *Pango* (cleared forest). The Lama named the place where the incident happened Lha-Lhung (God place) and miraculously his stick, which was stuck in the ground, developed into a living sandalwood tree and in later period became one of the pilgrimage sites for the Memba people called *Chandan-Takp*. It is believed that because of this incident Sandal wood tree could be found around that area. From there he returned to Tibet, where he died in place called *Tse-da-sah* near *Molo*.

However, before his death *Lama Lorde Gyatso* promised of his rebirth to fulfil his task of opening hidden treasure and would took his followers with food, seeds and animals to settle in *Baechaksiri*. It is believed that he reincarnated through a virgin women in a province of Gaza in Tibet with the name *Yap-mein-Poh Dorjee*. It is said that in Gaza the princesses born was very ugly and of abnormal nature. When the princess grew and reached the age of marriage, no one was ready to marry her because of her appearance. However, after few years without marriage princess became pregnant and delivered a male baby child. Her father by hearing the birth of baby got angered and asked her the name of baby’s father. However, princess did not give answer and the family members begun to doubt that she might have had physical relation with a person from the lower class. Because of these suspect of sinful act princess was treated badly by the family, but when the child attain the age of two years he spoke to the family of princess that his name is *Yap-mein-poh Dorjee*.
(fatherless child) and is a reincarnation of *Lama Lorde Gytso*. When he attained the age of seventeen years he declared it became an appropriate time for him to fulfil his past uncompleted task. During his journey, *Dundo-Ao-Nomby* and *Leh-Lung-Am-Pem-Chom* and many other people accompanied him from Tibet. After reaching *Baechaksiri* he started the task of opening of the hidden treasure of *Guru Lopin Pema Jungne in Baechakshiri* such as *Neh-Pem-Ziling* (pilgrimage place), *Neh-Pema-Shubu* (Cave where *Guru Padamsambhava* meditate) and *Neh-Saram* (pilgrimage place). He was also credited for discovering *Do Pemako* and *Shinjong Saptra*, the engraved map-stone of Tsari region and Baechakshiri believed to be made by *Guru Padamsambhava* himself. In *Baechakshiri* he stayed at Pema-ziling where he performed many rituals and later sent one of his companions to Tibet to spread the message of newfound holy land and the opening of hidden treasure and invite all the Buddhist people in this newfound land. By hearing this message of newfound holy land, many people migrated and started to settle in *Baechakshiri*. During his period many people from Tibet, later followed by the people from Bhutan and Monyul region came and settled here.

When the time arrived for *Yab-mein-poh Dorjee* to leave *Baechakshiri*, he appointed *Lama Ter-ton Choje Lingpa* from Pha-Yul in Tibet to guide the people of *Baechak-siri*. *Lama Ter-ton Choje Lingpa* along with his father *Taksam Rinpoche* and his younger brother *Chogyur Dechen Lingpa*, accompanied by sixteen disciples arrived and stayed in pema-Ziling. It was during his period that the first monastery called *Sam-ten-yamchak Gomp* was constructed and ultimately laid permanent symbol for the spreading of Buddhism in *Baechak-siri*.49

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The second is an oral narration recorded by D.K.Dutta and T.Norbu.\(^{50}\) According to them, the treasures of Guru Pema Zungne (Guru Padma shambhava) who believed to have concealed thousands of Dharma treasures (Gter-ma) in eighteen forms to be recovered at a rightful time by his reincarnation (rebirth) or his disciples from which one of the dharma treasure was hidden somewhere in Bechak-Shingiri (Mehnhuka). In order to find the treasure, Lama named Kardu Sange Rinzin made the first attempt to look for the hidden treasure in Baechak-siri but on his way he encountered animals, spirits and dense forest, disappointed him of proceeding further. After the failure of the first attempt, the second attempt was made under Merak Lama Turden Lodye Gyamtso of Tsari Sarna in Tibet. Unfortunately, he returned after proceeding certain distance because of health problems and he breathed his last at Molo under district Gaza in Tibet. He had predicted that his reincarnation (rebirth) would be able to explore the hidden treasure of Guru Pema Zungne. The reincarnation of Marek Lama Lodye Gyamtso took birth with the name Cheeje Lingbo of Gengchen Dzong in Tibet, which came to be known to others after the attainment of seven years of age by Cheeje Lingbo. When, Cheeje Lingbo attained his adulthood, he was accompanied by brave men belonging to seventeen different district and some of his disciple viz. Tadung Gumbo Norge, Phogobia Tashi, Ramdo Awo Nombe and female disciple Lallung Pema Chom, gathered at Pelung in Tibet from where they started expedition via Lakhanya located somewhere at the border of India and Tibet. At the same time another expedition team under Lama Dukto Thandang Gyibo decided to move towards opposite direction with a promise to meet at the meeting point of river flowing from Monigong and Yargapchu rivers that flow from Menchuka into Tato.

Lama Cheeje Lingbo crossed Lo-la pass and from there they reached Norbu Tanya, which is believed to be a place where the entire domesticated animal, which they brought with them died except the bull, survived. But the group continued their expedition and reached Ne-sand Gong where Lama Cheeje Lingbo felt that they had reached the area close to where treasure of Guru Padamsambhava is hidden. On his way to expedition, Lama Cheeje Lingbo and his party encountered many hurdles but they did not give up their spirit and after a long tedious journey when they heard the sweet sound of running water from a split of rock, which pronounced like sound of holy hymn like “Om Mane Pema Hum”. The party felt the pleasure of hidden treasure, which boosted their spirit to move further and Lama Cheeje Lingbo declared that “now they are going to enter the land of Bachak Shingiri”.

On their way after declaration, Lama Cheeje Lingbo and his party encountered four hurdles. The first was in the form of a tortoise, which later turned into a big tortoise shaped stone. Second, he encountered a bear with her two infant who tried to attack them whom Lama Cheeje Lingbo with his power turned into a stone. Third an unusual scene under a sandalwood tree, where a tiger, a snake and an eagle in a positioned one above another in a dense forest and fourth all the three incident made their path more difficult. However, Lama Cheeje Lingbo with his meditation, power and belief in Buddha overrode all the hurdles and reached a place called Lumje where he threw his holy water, which he brought with him to get the indication of fortune of his journey and waited for the night. Next morning when he and his team woke-up they saw huge soil erosion due to heavy rainfall. Because of this incident, they found a downward path leading them towards the beautiful valley. After lots of difficulties, they found a beautiful valley, where they located several place for settlement and various names were given to that place by Lama Cheeje
lingbo. The places were named such as Lhalung (place of God), Dubu (place of meditation) where he discovered a hidden gospel of Guru Padma-Sambhava, Darjeeling (resembles a ball but suitable for habitation), Gellong (Place of happiness), Menchukha (medicine water which flow from snow) and Pemaziling (place where Lama and his companions settled and taught his people the philosophy of life). Gradually the news of founding of hidden valley spread to Tibet and people from different parts belonging to different clans began to move towards Menchukha with hopes of a better life.

Lama Cheeje Lingbo continued his expedition to find the meeting point of two rivers with a hope to meet Dukto Thandang Gyibo. However, when he reached Kunsellan-gage, he came across a crow who gave him information that the party led by Lama Dukto Thandang Gyibo had returned from Karte. Lama Cheeje Lingbo decided to stop his expedition further and declared the area as ending of Bachakshri expedition. Lama Cheeje Lingbo until his last breath lived in a Gompa Samden Yangchak at Pemaziling.51

The third oral narration recorded by C.K.Borpatragohain, which tells that during the time when there was chaos prevailing between the yellow sect and red head sect in Tibet. Lama Lorde Gaytso and his brother Druchak Thangling Gyamtcho who was of yellow sect decided to flee from Tibet. Lama Lorde Gyatso along with two followers and dogs reached Bachakshri. His brother on the other hand reached Tada-dage (Monigong) but was forced to return because of the hostile attitude of Bokar people inhabiting there. Lama Lorde Gyatso on the other hand continued his journey and reached Pemaziling on the bank of Yargupchu River, during the journey he died. Before his death, he predicted that he will incarnate and

would lead the people of Tibet to Bachakshri. As promised, he took birth as Gap-Dorjee-Giybu a son of very powerful king of Gaza called Deb Ongra. Giybu dreamed about going to Bachakshri and he along with Ta Chiden Norbu, Lalung Pema Chomo, Rumbo Nongde and Tadag Gumbu Norge started the journey for it. With all the hardels, they crossed above mentioned place as narrated by D.K.Dutta and reached Pemaziling where they felt weak and sick. Nearby they found stream and drank water from it, which tested sour but the thirst made them to take the risk and they continued to drink it. Instead of bad side effect after drinking the water, they all felt well and energetic. He named the place where the stream is located as Menchuka. Further expedition was conducted and they returned to Tibet where they spread the news of finding of holy land having fertile land and abundant of food. By hearing the news, many people from various part of Tibet started to migrate and settled in Bachakshri.52

The C.K. Borpatragohain theory of chaos between yellow sect and red sect in Tibet, ultimately led to the migration of Memba, who are the follower of yellow sect in Menchuka valley. His theory was based on the idea that, in Tibet after the establishment of power of Dalai Lama institution who is considered spiritual head of yellow sect (Geluk-pa). During the Time of the Vth Dalai Lama, Ngawong Gyatso (1617-82), there was a king of Tsang considered to be the strongest secular leader in whole of Tibet who belonged to Nying-ma-pa sect. The king of Tsang was bitterly opposed to the Gelukpa sect and completely suppressed Gelukpa people in his province. The fifth Dalai Lama with the help of Gushri Khan, King of Mongolia defeated King of Tsang and made him to exile with his nobility from Tsang. The

follower of yellow sect (Gelukpa) started torturing red sect (Nying-ma-pa) and in order to avoid the torture the red sect began to migrate to different place.

The Ramo (sub tribe of Adi) who is immediate neighbouring tribes of Memba also trace the migration and origin of Memba in Menchuka. According to them, it is believed that once there was person named Uyu Gamme of Tagin tribes who could fly. Uyu Gamme came to Menchuka valley through Takuk Pass and found the beautiful place uninhabited by human. While returning from the place he took some quantity of soil from Menchuka with him. While on his visit to Tibet, he took the soil of Menchuka with him where he met the Deb Sung of Sameh Semang and showed them the soil believed to be from Holy place. Uyu Gamme also informed Deb that the place was suitable for the human settlement and offered him to sell the land. However, Deb Sung refused the offer and instead presented Uyu Gamme with a woolen cloth, salt and a sword in exchange. After staying for few days in Tibet, he returned and kept the received present in a stone cave. The wife of Uyu Gamme got fed up of his flying power and in order to get rid of it she performed powerful ritual in which she sacrificed dogs and pigs. The blood of sacrificed animal was applied on the body of Uyu Gamme and because of which, he lost his power of flying.

In the other side in Tibet, Deb Sung sent one Lama named Lama Nepa tare-Gom (with family) for expedition and preparation of map of Menchuka. Lama Nepa Tare-Gom after finishing his work of mapping Menchuka area also wanted to go for further expedition up to Padu or kiri area. Padu people earlier settled the area but now it comes under Ramo. While on expedition Lama Nepa Tare-Gom towards padu or kiri encountered a Tiger at Kanda Shi-la, about three miles from Menchuka and six miles from Rego village. The sight of the tiger made the Lama to jump and he took shelter on a big stone in the middle of the river to save himself from the tiger.
From the stone, he crossed the Yargupchu River and settled in the right bank of the river with his family members. Padu who settled in Padu/Kiri during those days went for hunting in the place where Lama and his family settled and they were surprise to find sign of human settlement speaking different languages. The bond of friendship developed between the Lama and Padu. But when Lama Nepa Tare-Gom found that Padu people kill animals and practice animistic worship. Lama advised Padu not to eat rat, not to kill animals, not to practice animistic and to worship god. The Padu on the other hand did not listen to lama's advice. As a result, Lama told padu that he was not a good person. The Padu got angry on the comments of Lama Nepa Tare-Gom and killed him. After killing him, Padu captured his wife and married her. However, Padu's brother Kiri was not in favour of this marriage and considered her as bad omen for the family because of the belief that Tibetans are of non-marriageable group with their community, which led to the murder of her by Kiri. After the death of Lama Nepa Tare-Gom, Deb Sung sent a number of people of different clan from Tibet to settle down in Menchuka valley. This group migrated in Menchuka and formed the present Memba tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.53

From the folk tale narrated by the Ramo it can be assume that, as it is well known that the place inhibited by Tagin tribe near Tibetan border is known as Tsari-Chu (Cheri-Chu) by Tibetans where Guru Rimpochee has hidden his Ter-ma. Moreover, when Uyu Gamme informed the Tibetan authority of existence of a beautiful hidden place and shown the sample of soil as a proof from Tsari-Neh. The Tibetan authority named the place as Bachakshiri, meaning a new hidden holy place within Tsari. And it may be after this incident that the story of Cheri-Neh-Nang

spread among the Tibetans in Tibet and inspired many Lamas to conduct expedition in Menchuka area and ultimately leads to appoint of Lama Lorde Gyatso for the mission by Tibetan government for paving the way for their migration and permanent settlement in Menchuka area.

However, there are different views on the migration of Memba of Menchuka, one can find that though there is some dissimilarity in narration rendered, but the basis of their migration in the narration remains the same. In the migration of Memba in Menchuka, three Lamas, Lorde Gyatso, his re-incarnation Yap-mein-poh Dorjee and ter-ton Cheoje Lingpa played a very important role and holds a significant position in their oral narration. Interestingly, Lama Lorde Gyatso can be identified with two candidates. Merak Lama Lorde Gyatso from Bhutan, who constructed Tawang Monastery in 17th Century A.D, during the reign of Vth Dalai Lama.\(^5^4\) The second character of importance was the Lama Lorde Gyatso, the personal disciple of the Lama Mipham Lorde. His native place was Tron-karutra (southwest of Tsari in Tibet). His father was a military officer. In his early life, he murdered a man because of a women and fled from his native place to escape the scene of crime. It was during this period that he took refuge under Lama Mipham Lorde and completed a great deal of penance for his earlier sin committed and on the advice of his master visited Tsari-Neh in early 18th century A.D to obtain power of great Seal yoga. He was the one who opened and laid the foundation pillar for Rongkor Chenmo pilgrimage in Tsari area, place not far from Menchuka.\(^5^5\)

The Memba identify earlier one as the same Lama who had visited Menchuka. If their claim is to be believed, then he might have visited Menchuka


before construction of Tawang monastery. However, it contradicts with the story of Lama Lorde Gyatso returning to Tibet, where Memba claim that he died in place called Tse-da-sah near Molo, first Tibetan village located after crossing Lo-la pass. On the other hand, the people of Tawang claim that he died at his resident located near the south-eastern corner of Tawang Monastery.

On the other hand, the later Lama Choje Lingpa (disputed dates, 1682-1725 A.D) holds very important position in the history of Nyingmapa sect of Tibetan Buddhism and became one of the successors in the transmission lineage at Rechung Puk. He is believed to be the reincarnation of the 8th century A.D Tibetan king Tri-song De-tsan and his next incarnation was the famous treasure revealer Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798 A.D).\(^{56}\) Lama Choje Lingpa was a Ter-ton (treasure revealer) who received a prophecy from Lama Idam Dorjee designating him as the person to open the door to the hidden land.\(^{57}\) He was credited for discovering and opening Red Jambhala and Black krodhi treasure.\(^{58}\) Various Tibetan sources place his activities at the three Buddhist sanctuaries that extended south of the Himalayas in the eastern zone, namely Tsari, Baechak-shiri and Pemako region, considered a hidden land for refuge.\(^{59}\) The Memba people believe that before leaving Baechak-siri, Lama Choje Lingpa made a statue of himself in the monastery, so that in his absence the Memba people will not miss him.\(^{60}\) He left from Baechak-siri in 1717 A.D, headed for Padnakhod or Pemako (Tuting area) in the way of Poyul (Tibet) and successfully

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\(^{56}\) Stefan Larsson, Crazy For Wisdom: The making of Mad Yogin in Fifteenth Century Tibet, Koninklijke Brillnv, Netherland, 2012, p. 294.


\(^{59}\) Kerstin Grothmann, op.cit., p. 146.

\(^{60}\) Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, op.cit.
spread the Buddhist doctrine. He died at a place somewhere near the border area with Lopa because of rheumatic attack.\textsuperscript{61}

The period in-between these two Lamas was also the period when Tibet was witnessing regional political turmoil and military conflict. The existence of such unstable political scenario during this period contributed to the development of the belief of the emergence of the arrival of the time of earthly paradise located in the forested extension of the eastern Himalayas that served as a sanctuary for the Buddhist faith as predicted by Guru Padamsambhava.\textsuperscript{62} Thus, from the above we can assume that the migration of the Memba in Menchuka started most probably with the arrival of Lama Lorde Gyatso in 1624 A.D, most probably by the people from Tibet and later from the region of Bhutan and Tawang during the time of Yap-mein-poh Dorjee and Lama Choje Lingpa.

Language

Language is considered to be the most powerful, convenient and permanent means of communication through which a person could communicate and understand one another by written or spoken words. It is through language that human being can express their thoughts, desires, emotions and feelings. It is through language that one can store knowledge and transmit messages from one person to another across space and time. According to Dr. Niladri Sekhar Dash:

Language is a social institution. It exists within a society. It is a means of nourishing and developing culture and establishing human relations. It is a member of society that a human being acquires a language. We are not born with an instinct

\textsuperscript{61} S. Lazcano, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 47.
to learn a particular language such as English, Hindi, Russian, Chinese, Bengali, Tamil or French. We learn language as members of the society using that language, or because we want to understand that society, or to be understood by that speech community.\textsuperscript{63}

The native language spoken by them is Memba. In general, Memba language come under Sino-Tibetan linguistic group comprising of two linguistic stocks called Sinitic and Tibeto-Burman. It mainly developed because of crystallization of relationship between Chinese and Tibetan on the one hand, and between Tibetan and Burmese on the other hand. In India, there are more than 107 languages belonging to Tibeto-Burman, of which most number are from North-east India.\textsuperscript{64} In Arunachal Pradesh, we find both Tibeto-Burman and Sinitic group of linguistic stock, but most of the tribes of the state are of Tibeto-Burman group. The Tibeto-Burman group is further divided into three branches in Arunachal Pradesh, viz; Bodic group, main Arunachal group and Burmic group. The Memba language comes under the Bodic group of Tibeto-Burman branch of languages of Arunachal Pradesh.\textsuperscript{65} Besides speaking their mother tongue, they also speak and understand Tibetan language, which they regard as official language for understanding religious text, administrative function and for trade in Tibet.\textsuperscript{66}

F. M. Bailey while on his visit to south Tibet came across a couple of traders from Pachakshiri carrying bow and arrows with them, spoke the dialect of Monba. According to F. M. Bailey, they must have migrated from Tawang.\textsuperscript{67} It is interesting

\textsuperscript{66} Deb Tashi Philley, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{67} F. M. Bailey, No Passport to Tibet, Hart-Davis, London, 1957, p. 203. The Monba is a corrupted word used for referring the word Monpa of present day.
to know that some of the old Memba folk of Lha-Lung village speak a dialect similar to Monpa language of Tawang. These village people to communicate within themselves use the dialect, or otherwise they speak Memba language. They believed that Naksang clan, who migrated from Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh, had taught the dialect spoken.\textsuperscript{68} Some of Memba people also understand and spoke languages of Ramo, Boris, Bokars, Pailiboas and Tagins, which comes under main Arunachal group of Tibeto-Burman linguistic group. These groups were neighbouring tribes of Memba in Arunachal Pradesh. The Memba learned and spoke their language for trading purpose. The Hindi and English language, which is now spoken and understood, was unknown and had never been heard by them during earlier days.

**Dress and Ornaments**

The garments worn by Memba did not fundamentally differ from those worn by Tibetans of Tibet (see Plate I). The Memba of both sexes wears a long coat with sleeves like a caftan, girt about the loins made of wool, fur and animal skin. The male dress of fine quality is called Chub-Gyam and female dress of fine quality is called Pu-Gushi or Tiba-Gushi, which they wear mostly in special or ceremonial occasions. The commonly worn traditional dress of male is Punum Chuba, Chuba Khanjar, Dorma, Gugen-chu and that of female is Phume-chupa (skirt), Togye-meo. Men often let the right sleeve hang down, so that the arm and part of the chest remain uncovered and women wear Phume (skirt) as lower garment to cover lower part of their body. The dimension of the strips of cloth is 4 to 5 feet length and 1.5 feet width. The cloth strips cover the entire body from top to bottom above the ankle.

\textsuperscript{68} Phurba Tsering Naksang, *op.cit.*
Dress made of animal skin, the fur of animal made to remain inside and the plain side was exposed in outside to give sufficient warmth to body during winter season. They decorated border of the cloth with fine quality of silk brocade or designed brocade brought from Tibet, which made their cloth more beautiful. The cloth, which they wore mostly, consisted of red colour, but they also use colour like blue, black, green and yellow.  

At the waist, they tie their cloth with a belt made of animal skin, woollen string piece or silver belt. The female mostly uses the fine quality of decorated silver belt called Chari. On their head, both men and women in Memba wear a hat made of animal fur or woollen, which protects their head from cold. The men's hat called Tsering king-ghap and that of women’s hat called Chum or Gugi is decorated with ornaments of Yuh (blue stone) and Zur (red stone). The Memba also wore footwear called Soom-Lham or Ham, consisted of long boots of a coarse woollen fabric with leather soles, which protected them primarily against cold. They mostly wear boots during winter season and while on long journeys. However, during their stay in village they prefer to stay bare foot. Every Memba man carries at least a Tibetan sword designed with silver heaths or normal heaths made of woods, bow and arrow, a spear and sometimes a Tibetan firearm also (see Plate II).

The men also carries attractive coloured bags made of animal skin called fess-bogu (see Plate II), which was usually worn on left side to carry important and edibles during their journey. They hangs bag decorated with shells, small bell and yak tail in one side of the bag for decoration. They also wore a little metal box in

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69 Sange Naksang, 45 years, Housewife, Deching-Tang East Village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 17-6-2014.
their breast or chest containing various form of exorcism, as an amulet to drive away evil spirits.

The Memba women keep their long hair plaited in one or two little pigtails, which they tie together as one (see Plate I). They regularly comb their hair with a comb made of wood or bamboo called Tsed or Jugshe. Man on the other hand preferred to keep short hair and use to cut their hair with the help of sharp knife or sword at regular intervals.

The ornaments of various precious and semi precious Thanga (beads), Yu (earrings), Nga (necklaces), Cindu (finger-ring), Landu (bangles), amulets, made of gold, silver, turquoise and coral are worn by Memba and every family in the community remained unadorned without ornaments. They regarded ornaments as the symbol of assets and social status. The ornaments together commonly were known by the name Thang-nga. The most commonly used beads were Yuh (blue stone), Zur (red stone), Shena (black stone) and modi (pearl), which was consider valuable beads by Memba.70

The most valued ornaments worn by Memba are Gzi (Dzi) and still used as ornaments by wealthy Memba. They regarded Gzi, which can be white, red, dark brown, or black, as well as white and black colour as precious stone having medicinal value that can cure strokes and are historically significant stone, not only to Memba but also in Tibet. It is not yet known till date, how people managed to make them and there is a belief that these stone are found on high mountain slopes, cliffs, and boulders.71

70 Attam Goiba, 34 years, Business women, Pharge Village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 29-6-2014.
71 Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, op.cit.
According to Chogyal Namkhai Norbu in his book *A History of Zhang Zhung and Tibet (Volume one)*, argued that,

> It is possible that present days mountains, rocks and so forth were the prairies and rural areas of the long ago. In this respect, an indication that the Himalayas ranges was once buried under the sea is given by fossils of aquatic animals that have been discovered there; such fossils have also been found on the slopes of the mountains surrounding Lhasa. Under these circumstances, the precious Gzi stones could have been left behind by an ancient tribe living in those Prairies and rural area, and since the geological changes have transformed plains into mountains and vice versa, it happens that some Gzi stone can now be found on mountain side and rocky gorges.72

The Village

The village (*dongba*) of Memba is located in and around Menchuka valley, earlier known as *Baechakshiri* where Yargaupchu River passes through it. It is the most beautiful valley of West Siang district. The villages are situated on either side of its course. Before it came under the Indian administration the number of village were four in number viz. Lahlung, Dizing-tang, Menchuka and Galling.73 The villages’ increased to twenty-two because of introduction of new political system and *Panchayati Raj* and with the growth in population for past 65 years, which made the people to settle in a new place after 1951.74 From the entire villages, Dizing-tang was the administrative centre of the Memba administration. There is a place called Dezing-pang in Dizing-tang, which means an open ground where cultural activities used to be organized by the Memba. It was also used for declaration and celebration

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73 Deb Tashi Philley, *op.cit*.
of appointment of new Deb took place at Dezing-pang. It is believed that Lama Yap-mein-poh Dorjee selected the site of the village for the settlement through observing omen and religious rituals, so that the site will free of bad spirit and provides prosperity for the settlers.\(^75\)

Memba built their houses in the slightly sloping part of the village land adjacent to plain area and the plain portion of the village land was used for agriculture and cattle rearing. The village area covered by forest were used for gathering firewood, wild vegetables, wild animal, bamboo and other materials required for daily daily work. The water supply for the village was entirely dependent on the melting of the snow into the stream, which starts quite early. They used water from the stream for drinking, grinding, cooking, bathing and washing. They also carry stream water to the field for agricultural activity. Every village inhabited by the Memba are blessed with these sources of water. The village boundaries are demarcated by natural boundaries like river stream, hills, forest, large tree and stone pillar in the form of stupa.

The mode of communication within the villages was through foot march for which they had well maintained foot track to the adjacent village. They maintained the track regularly and collectively as a social responsibility, but during summer season when the river Yargupchu was in height they crossed the river with the help of boat made of bamboo and wood planks to visit the village located on the other side of the river.\(^76\) The distance between every village is only of one to two hour on foot. However, with the development of road transportation and inter linking road between most of the villages by the government, one could visit all the villages

\(^75\) Deb Tashi Philley, *op.cit.*
\(^76\) Tashi Naksang, 91 years, Dechang-Tang East Village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 24-9-2013.
together within seven hours a day by vehicle. Thus, it can assume that the each village is located hardly within a minimum of 2-8 Km distance from each other. This may be because of security purposes with an intention to help each other during raids or attacks by enemy tribes.

**Housing**

It can be said during their early settlement in Menchuka valley the Memba people used to have houses (*Khim*) made of stone slab and mud like their Tibetan counterpart. The ruins of one such house is located in *Dezing-tang* village. The ruined house believed to be that of *Deb Balu*, the first *Deb* of Menchuka valley appointed by Tibetan authority. By observing, the ruins it can be assume that the house may have been of two-storied building and for the roof the woods planks had been used. But in later period Memba began to construct single storied house with woods especially of blue pine tree which is found in abundance in their locality and the role of stone as building material had only ceded to the formation of foundation of the house. The reason for the changes in the material may be due to availability of large numbers of pine tree in the surrounding area and less hard work required for making house made of stone slab and mud. The stone slab which cannot found in abundance in one place, but wood planks can be collected from one particular area.

Before constructing new houses approval from the village deity was essential, which was took through the advice of the Lama and for which, horoscope of the person was required in the selection of the site. Lama through religious ritual and omen took the approval from the village deity to selects the suitable site for

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77 Deb Tashi Philley, *op.cit.*
construction of the house. If the omen was bad then they repeats the procedure until they select another site.

After the selection of the site, they began to start collecting material required for the construction of the house. Sometimes they had to do the collection before the selection of the site. Wood was the most important material required for the construction of house. Wood was required to cut into planks and pillar shape. They gathered stone from nearby area to support foundation pillar. Almost all the material collected was from the land owned by the family of a person within their locality. If the material was not available in their locality, they collect the material from family forest located in a distant place from where they transported the wood planks to the village through the Yargapchu River. If possible, they even collect it from other person who had sufficient raw material in forest with due permission, with an understanding to return him in future with the same kind when asked for, or in need.

With the completion of the task of collecting raw material, they further approach Lama to give auspicious day and time for the construction of the house. After the selection of the time and date, planning of layout of the house to be constructed is made in consultation with the persons of experience in such matter. Thereafter layout of the house is made by taking an account of the utter need of the owner. The most fundamental design of a house has four sides rectangular enclosure in shape, where the structure with wall will form at right angle, which is the basic design adopted by the Memba in general. They plan the length of the house according to the size of the family. For the construction of house every village member gave their helping hand by participating in it and the participants are provided with food and wine during the working time (daytime). This is the general concept in every Tribal society to help each other. It was during this time the
younger generation learns the architectural practice and detail technique from the elderly generation. The first step in construction of a house was to lay the foundation. The foundation lying of a house includes a ritual called *Sa-Yar*, where they hoisted the *darjo* (religious flag) at four corners of the layout and at its centre one. They performed the ritual with the help of Lama by offering some wine, tea and snacks to deity whose permission and blessing was required for the construction of the house. They considered foundation lying as one of the most important part of the construction of house. They raised their house well off the ground to avoid living on the damp and dirty ground floor. It is interesting to note that the whole structure of house is made to stand on the foundation pillar made of stone and wooden pillar is not dug into the ground but made to be stand on stone pillar foundation and wooden frame is erected according to the intended structure. They follow this method of foundation to protect the decomposing of wooden pillar from termite and rain water so that it will last longer. The stone and timber pillar (*furtum*) worked as a load bearing structure. The wall of the house is made of wooden planks (*pangli*). There is no facility for windows and ventilation except a few small holes in some cases. There is no provision of toilet and bathroom inside the house. The floor (*dorum*) of the house is of wood frame and roof (*thobang*) of the house is made of splits of wooden sleepers. The ceiling (*thoga*) of the house is also made of *pangli* (wooden planks) at a distance of 6-7 foot from the ground floor of the house. They use the gap between the ceiling and roof as storage area. They place the ladder in a corner of the house where the entrance to the ceiling is located. In their house architecture, they cut the wooden piece so perfectly to fit that no nail, rope and glue are required to fix

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78 Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, *op.cit.*
it. They fixed the wood piece by the interlocking support designed by them to form the skeleton of the house.

Because of the absence of nails and ropes in their house, the floor of the house could easily removed, which resulted in the constant occurrence of theft cases sometimes. It is said that during earlier days, the people kept the calf of their domesticated animals inside the house during night time for fear of robbery but unfortunately theft happened because of the absence of permanent locked floor in the house. After the completion of the construction of house, a grand feast was organised for the celebration and they invites everybody from the village and relatives from other village in the party. However, before the celebration they asked lama to perform Sang-Sar-grim and Jha-gan-Lha-Sang or Gai-nyen-Lha-sang for purification of house from evil spirit and to give blessing to the house for prosperity and happiness to the family who will be living there. During the celebration, some of the invitees also bring gifts in the form of ornaments beads, animal fur or utensils as a token of love for the family.

Membas houses usually comprise of three to four room. They called the first room as Gos, the second and third room as ze. The average size of the compartment was of 6 x 6 or 6 x 7 meter. The first room comprise of open fire alteration called Thap located at the centre of the room. They also made one more fire alteration at the second room. Above the fire alteration, they made trays of bamboo hangover, which is used for drying meat, fish and other item required for preservation that is to be consumed later. There is no provision for separate bedroom or bathroom inside the house. All the family members sleep either in the first or second room near the fire alteration. Almost in every Membas house there is a place for worship called Chesung. They construct Chesung (prayer hall) by dividing third or fourth room of
the house into two parts. They used another part of the room as storage or guestroom. They constructed the door (gom) for entry to the house at first compartment facing towards the Monastery. In some of the house, there was a provision of Verandah (bamjang) which they used for sitting casually during daytime. They kept the entire implement used for agriculture, and other outdoor activity in veranda. They used locally made locker for locking the door. At the top of the door, they hung animal horn in which some symbol of religious that is drawn for good omen. Inside the house though they separated the room but there is an absence of door for closing and opening of the room and entry to the other room is just left open. In some of the houses there used to be a provision for backdoor in the last compartment for emergency exit.

The house is well surrounded with bamboo fencing. Inside the fencing, they leave available space for kitchen garden (gorzo), cattle shed (barang), grain storage room (sar-gim) and double storied small house (shing-rang) for storing wood and grass for cattle. This entire house is located near the main house in a distance of 5-10 meter. The house for the cattle shed is called barang. The cattle house was divided into two compartment goda-barang and pha-rang. The goda-barang was used for keeping cow and pha-rang was used for keeping pig. The house is made of wooden planks. In some of the household, they constructed the shed for both cow and pig differently. They called the shed for the cow as khayap and that for the pig as phadang. In a phadang, they use stone as wall for construction. The cattle shed and pigsty floor was covered with fern as grass called pha or with hey of crops so that animal dung could mixed with the pha. After few days, they collect the grass mixed with dung in the corner of the shed with the help of stick. They later use this as manure for agriculture after decomposition.
They called the house for storing grain as Sar-gim. The construction of sar-gim is usually two to three feet above the ground to save the grains from water and use only wooden planks for construction. The sar-gim has one small door and small veranda in front. They also construct a small double storied house called shing-rang of 2 x 2 meter\(^2\) or 2 x 3 meter\(^2\) in size. Where they use the ground floor wall for storing firewood and permanently keep open. The first floor is use for storing grass for cattle during winter season. They use bamboo as material to cover the wall of the first floor. To reach first floor they use ladder made of wood or bamboo. The sar-gim and shing-rang is constructed distant from the main house to safeguard them from hazards of fire which were quite common in the structure containing lots of wood. Since the fire in Memba house is kept burning continuously for most of the year.\(^{79}\)

Before the introduction of modern toilet system most of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh used to have toilet in the pigsty where they kept the pig in the ground floor and toilet in the first floor. The idea behind the construction of such toilet was to give the toilet waste as a food for the pig, which indirectly provides a hygienic surrounding area. However, Memba construct toilet different from other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. In Memba toilet (aasi) they do not attach toilet house with the pigsty. They build toilet outside the house and constructed it two to three foot above the ground. They make hole into a wooden floor with a chute to take down all the human waste to deposit into the ground below. They regularly cover the human waste with ashes to keep flies away from it and leave for few days to dry. The

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\(^{79}\) Tashi Goiba, 67 years, G.B (Gaon Buraha), Menchuka Village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 22-5-2013.
ashes also help to keep the smell down. Later the waste is taken from the pits and used them as manure for agriculture.\footnote{Phurpa Naksang. 27 years, Deching-tang East Village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 22-5-2013.}

Every Memba village comprise of grinding house for grinding food grains. They called grinding house as Anda-khim. Grinding is done with the help of water turbine made of wood and the house in which they done it was constructed of either stone or wood with wooden slab in the roof. They constructed Anda-khim near the river stream so that water from the stream could be used to spin the Droh (turbine in the shape of wheel). They construct it two meter above the stream or ground. They place the wheel below the Anda-khim attached with stand called Phang. Below the wheel, they place stone called Anda-karche to make the turbine stand in one confined position. They connected the turbine with the house through the floor with large round stone slab used for grinding by Phang. The grinding stone consist of two stone slabs attached together, which provides friction to crush grains. The upper slab called Khado where there is a hole at the centre of the slab from where they put grains of wheat, corn and maize for grinding. The lower slab called Thei-do, connected with the turbine placed below the Anda-khim. The water from stream before reaching the turbine is diverted through Anda-oho (artificial canal) made by carving wooden log in semicircle shape. They released the water from the Anda-oho with full speed towards the Droh (turbine) to make it rotate. The turbine on the other hand makes the Thei-do to rotate and produce friction required for grinding. They
carve the stone slab required for Anda-khim with the help of a stone carver called Um-jeh.81

Food

The Memba people are largely self sufficient in diet, raising and gathering enough for their daily needs. These days Memba people usually take three meals a day- breakfast, lunch and dinner. As per census report of 1971, the staple food of Memba was maize.82 However, in early days Memba used to took two main course meals as followed by other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. One they used to take early in the morning before leaving for outdoor activity and another during evening time after returning from the outdoor activity. Since there was absence of electricity, the villagers used to sleep early at around 6:00 pm and rouse early at 3:00 am in the morning to prepare their meals. Between these two main courses meals they took light refreshment food at regular intervals.83

The staple diet consists of Oshum (Maize), Tami or Temi (Millet) and wheat. Among these three, Temi were consumed more. The Memba know about three variety of wheat called Neh, Doh and Khyung. Oshum. They consumed this wheat in two ways one as raw by burning it in the fire and by boiling it in hot water. Another was after drying of the crop and grinding it to prepare doh. They also used Oshum to make corn flakes, for preparing snacks. They consume Temi and wheat by converting it into flour by grinding. The Memba were fond of noodles made of corn or wheat flour, which they mix with water to prepare dough after which they prepare the dough to roll flat and slice into fine strip shape. The strip shaped noodles is

81 Pemba Naksang, 67 years, Businessman, Menchuka Village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 24-5-2015.
83 Tashi Naksang, op.cit.
boiled in water till it is cooked and served with hot vegetarian or non-vegetarian soup. The paddy (*Deysos*) or rice (*dey*) are also cultivated by the Memba but not in a large scale during early days. They called the local sticky rice as *De-yunde*. They brought the seed of *de-yunde* with them from Tibet. The Memba people also know another variety of rice called *dey*. They took it from the neighbouring tribes. They cooked the rice by boiling it in plain water. The fruits are also another source of food, mostly collected from the wild jungle. The fruit like *Khumb* (Peach), *Dodar* (Wild Nut), *Thal-Sici* (Rasp Berry), *Gyandab*, *Saksin-rib*, *Sici* (Straw Berry) and *Solum* were eaten by the Memba people.\(^{84}\)

They, consume varieties of vegetables, which they produced in agriculture and by collecting it from nearby forest. The vegetables, which they consume and cultivated are *Khae* (red potato), *Lobhu* (radish), *Guyang* (mustard spinach), *Mem*, *Dumsh* (pumpkin), *Agong* (cucumber), *Orsh* (small beans), *Solum* (Arum) and *Peje* (mustard leaf), *Kojang* (local onion), *benje* (chilli) and *Gokp* (large garlic).\(^{85}\)

They collect some of the vegetables from the jungle viz., *Songsh* (Bamboo shoot), *Lorum*, *Pep* (wild potato), *Au-ange* (wild potao) and *Yaram* (sinchuan paper). They also gather varieties of *shom* (edible Mushroom) named *Hum shom* (pine mushroom), *Luki shom* (Slippery Mushroom), *Bashar-pam shom* (red colour mushroom of large size), *Chu-shom* (white mushroom), *Dakpa shom* (mushroom that grow in marshy area), *Ling-tap-shom* (brown colour mushroom), *Grozen shom* and *kuku-shom* (most valuable edible mushroom).\(^{86}\)

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\(^{84}\) Sange Naksang, *op.cit.*

\(^{85}\) Attam Goiba, *op.cit.*

\(^{86}\) Mrs. Ley Drema Sarjo, 53 years, Housewife, Pharge Village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 10-6-2015.
Both men and women in Memba society chew tobacco and smoke it out of a little Tibetan pipe called *Gang-sa* made of metal and bamboo. They gathered tobacco leaves from nearby forest or purchased it from neighbouring tribes. The raw tobacco leaves collected from forest was keep in sunlight or above fire alters for drying after which they use it.\(^{87}\)

Unlike many tribes of Arunachal Pradesh who consume vegetables simply by boiling them in water with salt and add dried bamboo shoot for flavour, the Memba consume them by frying for which the favourite cooking medium is ghee. They also use to produce oil from a plant named *Lamching*. They collect the fruit from the *Lamching* plant and grind it to extract cooking oil. Milk is popular among the Memba, largely used to make curd, butter, *chulpi* and ghee. They consume milk product more than the milk.\(^{88}\)

Meat and *Nya* (fish) are also largely consumed by them and is an important part of their diet. Most of the meat they consume are produced from the domesticated animal like *yak*, *Balang* (cow), *Pha* (pig), *Bamin* (Mithun), *Rah* (goat), *Jijo* (Chicken) and *Zum* (cross breed of yak and cow). They also enjoy the wild meat of *Khash* (deer), *Ta-ke* (Squirrel), *ju* (bird) and wild boar, which they catch by conducting hunting activity in the forest. They catch *Nya* (fish) from the river and stream whenever they get free time from daily activities. They cut the meat and fishes into piece and boil it in water, add salt, chilly, onion, garlic until cooked well. The meat and fish was also cook by frying with ghee or with cooking oil added with salt, chilly, garlic, onion and is served hot. They later consumed the bones of animal especially the thigh and leg bones by boiling in water for two to three hour and the

\(^{87}\) Tashi Goiba (G.B), *op.cit.*
\(^{88}\) Chedup Sarjo, 29 years, Businessman, Pharge Village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, interviewed on 22-5-2013.
stew prepared from it as hot soup with spices and herbs. They preserve the excess amount of meat and fish through salting and by drying process through sun or fire alter in the house for consuming later. The preserved meat could last for one to two months. They also consume eggs whenever they get in excess produced by their domesticated hen.  

**Drinks**

Beside, drinking water the Memba people are fond of drinking alcoholic beverages. The beverages can be divided into two groups, non-alcoholic beverages and beverages containing alcohol. Tea is an important and popular non-alcoholic beverage, which is taken with milk and salt. Tea in those days were prepared from tea bricks added in boil water mixed with milk, adds salt according to the taste, and then after few minute the mixture was poured into a cylindrical hollow vessel made of wood. They churn the mixture vigorously with thick stick and add butter according to the taste. After few minutes when they churn whole mixture perfectly, then the tea is ready to be served. They drink salted tea at regular intervals during daytime along with snacks made of maize, millet and wheat flour served with it. They provide the guests with tea for drink and later on alcohol is served. In case of scarcity of tea bricks brought from Tibet, they prepared tea from indigenous leaves called *Tsa-Ludin-Bhya* that is found in the valley.

They call local alcoholic drink made from millet as *chang* consumed by both the genders in Memba society. They also make *chang* with paddy and maize. Every household in the Memba villages have facility to make *chang* in their house. They

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89 Interview with Mr. Kessang Goiba, 38 years, ASM (Anchal Samiti Member), Pharge Village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 09-6-2015.

90 Attam Goiba, *op.cit.*

91 Lama Pema Chonga Kigar, *op.cit.*
considered that without drinking *chang* no meal was to be completed and no guest entertained by the family in the absence of *chang*. It is also a required must for the offering in prayer of village deity and in rituals. The climatic condition of Menchuka also makes it necessary for consuming alcohol in large quantity. They also drink another alcoholic drink called *Arra* prepared from *chang* by distillation. The *arra* is much stronger and purified than *chang* and the percentage of alcohol is much higher than *Arra*. It is believed that before the introduction of modern medicine alcohol was treated as medicine and considered as good for health by the Memba, which was quite opposite of modern thinking where alcohol became a symbol of bad health and a cause of illness like cancer. The Memba use alcohol as a painkiller especially by pregnant woman who is going through the painful process of labor pain. In such a situation, the woman is served with finest and strongest quality of alcohol to give her relief from pain and strain at the time of delivery. The men and women folk after returning from day to day work usually got tired and took alcohol to energize their body from tiredness.92

**The Clan**

The Memba householder quote a clan name, which forms rightfully parts of his own name. Such as Naksang used as the last part of the name after his name (e.g. Phurba Tsering Naksang). The Memba emphasis on the supreme importance on the *tsembe* (clan) form, without which the individual is nothing at all, it is an element, found in many of the tribes of the North-eastern State. The Memba clan consist of twenty-three clans. The clans found among the Memba are *Chukla, Sona, Dabo, Dale-Gumbo, Sarjo, Kigar, Goiba, Maney, Dorson, Gyana, Buru, Chegong*,

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92 Buri Chukla, 67 years, Businesswomen, Yorni Village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 30-2-2013.
Gellong, Pilley, Onge, Ongb, Nyajung, Lam-Sang, Norbu-Chombey, Chena, Goum, Naksang, and Lobin. Chegong and Gellong clan considers themselves as brothers and sister where it is said that Gellong is the son of Chegong whose offspring followed the clan title as Gellong, while there is no other clans in Memba who are related to each other like Chegong and Gellong clan.93

Among the Memba clans it is believed that they migrated from different parts of Tibet, Bhutan and Tawang, gathered at Gaza and settled in Menchuka. Chukla who migrated from kong-Tado-Kha, a place located in Kongpo provinces of Tibet, Sona migrated from Yeh-Gong-Khangsar in Tibet, Dabo from Dhak-Poh in Tibet, Dale-Gumbo from Dhal-Gumb Monestry located in Phae-Rong in Tibet, Sarjo migrated from Ngobi in Tibet, Kigar migration place is authentically not known but it is believed that they came with Sarjo from Ngobi. Goiba migrated from Horb a place where salt was produce in Tibet. The Goiba clans were originally salt traders who came to Molo for trade activity. However, they later gradually migrated to Menchuka. Maney migrated from Kham (Tibet), Dorsom migrated from Dukp located in Bhutan, Gyana migrated from Yae-Chodi in Tibet, Buru migrated from Leh-Lung in Tibet, Chegong and Gellong migrated from Digong in Tibet, Pilley migrated from Lha-Giri (Son of God) in Tibet, Onge migrated from Yamro-Dighu in Tibet, Ongb migrated from Khamb in Tibet, Lam-Sang migrated from Changb in Tibet, Norbu-Chomby and Chena migrated from Chen an important market place located in Tibet near Tawang border, Goum migrated from Goum-Kang-Shar in

93 Thinley Sona, 72 years, Singbir Village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 25-6-2014.
Tibet and Naksang clan migrated from Men-Chaksom located in Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh.\textsuperscript{94}

It is believed that the Nakasang were sent by Tibetan authority at Lhasa to help the people who settled in Menchuka. The person’s name was Lam Naksang.\textsuperscript{95} Interestingly there was a similar popular oral story among the Naksang clan inhabited at Lumla in Tawang that there was once a person named Lam Naksang, who with his brother went to Tibet and never returned. Even now, the ruins of the house of these two brothers exist.\textsuperscript{96} From the above story of Naksang clan, it can be assume that if the two brothers left for Tibet and from which only Lam Naksang reached Menchuka, and the other brother must have stayed in Tibet or may have died on his way to Tibet before reaching Menchuka.

The Chukla clan had migrated most late into Menchuka valley from Manigong side. It is said that Chukla while looking for BaechakShiri in Cheri-Neh came to Manigong with Lama Dupthop Thangdang Gyalop and settled their along with Boris and Ramo. However, when there occurred a quarrel between Bokar and Ramo in Manigong for the purchase of two different cows in Tibet. The quarrel later turned in fierce battle between Bokar and Ramo in which many Ramo died. The Ramo fled with the help of two Chukla brother named Dundo-Ao Nombey Chukla and Kohdeb Chukla and reached Menchuka via Song-Pangri track. In Menchuka with the help of Chukla, the Ramo got land to settle down in the west bank of Yargapchu River and to Chukla being the member of Memba community were openly welcome by the Memba who had already settled in Menchuka. Between the two Chukla brothers, Khodeb Chukla was expert in making boat using animal skin.

\textsuperscript{94} Deb Tashi Philley, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{95} Tashi Naksang, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{96} Deb Tashi Philley, op.cit.
From the two Chukla brothers Khodeb Chukla died without an heir and all the Chukla clan now living in Menchuka are descendent of Dundo-Ao Nombey Chukla.\footnote{Tsering Chukla, 82 years, Dorjeeling Village, Menchuka Circle, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, interviewed on 08-4-2015.}

**Statement of the Problems**

Only spares of information is available on the people who live in the Himalayas and very few of the people have been studied scientifically and very few attempts has been made to know their history because of the absence of written record, and there is also some confusion over the classification of various ethnic groups. In general, four distinct groups have penetrated the relatively isolated environment of Himalaya. Which are People of Hindu (Indic), Islamic (Afghan-Iranian), animistic (Burman and Southeast Asia) and \textit{Lamaist} Buddhism (Tibetan).\footnote{Pradyumna P. Karan, “Population Characteristics of the Himalayan Region”, Mountain Research and Development, Bern, International Mountain Society, Vol-7. No.3, 1987, p.271.}

These groups encroached upon the Himalaya from the Tibetan Plateau to the north standing some four km above sea level, the world’s highest plateau, and leads to culture migrated in waves from the south, west, east and north making the Himalaya as their home.\footnote{Mark S. Aldenderfer, “Moving Up in the World: Archeological seek to understand how and when people came to occupy the Andean and Tibetan plateaus”; \textit{American Scientist Journal}, Scientific Research Society, North Carolina, Vol. 91. No. 6, 2003, p. 542.}

The Buddhist communities of the Arunachal Pradesh including the Memba of Menchuka have contributed immensely towards the development of Arunachal culture. The art, architecture, religion and religious practices, performing arts, crafts, socio-cultural institution of the Memba betray the influence from Tibet. Though the Memba are followers of Tibetan from of Buddhism, they also follow some aspect of Bon religion. We have a good deal of literature on history and culture of Arunachal Pradesh yet we do not get a clear picture of the Memba. It is to be noted that from
centuries together the Memba are living harmoniously with other non-Buddhist communities such as Adis and Tagins. So far, no systematic attempts have been made to understand the history and culture of the Memba tribe. Therefore, a thorough and scientific study on Memba tribe is essential for better understanding of their social, economic, political and religious institutions.

**Objective of the study**

1. Prepare a comprehensive history and culture of the Memba up to 1947 A.D.
2. Trace the origin and migration.
3. Study the political institution and their relation with other ethnic group.
4. Understand the development of Buddhism with a background study of Bon culture.
5. Study the traditional socio-cultural institution.
6. Examine the traditional economic base with special references to their agriculture, trade and crafts production.
7. Understand Buddhist ritual and belief practice.

**Literature review**

A number of scholars have contributed in the field of history and culture of Arunachal Pradesh. Lakshmi Devi in her book *Ahom-Tribal Relation* (1992) has thrown light on Ahom’s relation with North-Eastern Frontier communities, basing her research on Ahom Buranjis in which Ahom’s relation with Khampti, Singhpos, Bhutias are highlighted.

After the British occupation of Assam (1826), a number of colonial writers occasionally mentioned of the land and people of Arunachal Pradesh. In this aspect,
J.F. Neufville’s *On the Geography and Population of Assam* (1828), W. Robinson’s *Descriptive Account of Assam* (1841), John Butler, *A Sketch of Assam*, E.T. Dalton’s *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (1872), T.T. Cooper’s *New Route for Commerce: Mishmi Hills* (1873), A. Mackenzie’s *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal* (1884) are significant in understanding the nature of relations of the Assam with the tribe’s of Arunachal Pradesh. Though mention of Buddhism and Buddhist communities is dealt in brief in some of these pioneering work. There is hardly any information about the Memba of Menchuka. John Michell in his work, *The North East Frontier of India* (1883) refers to a community as *Pakchatsiriba* settled in North-West of the Adi border. These *Pakchatsiriba* was most probably no other than the Memba of present west Siang District.

In 1914, Captain F.M. Bailey published *A Report on an Exploration on the North-East Frontier* (1913). In this report, while discussing about Siang frontier where he has mentioned about the Memba, their migration, trade and relation with their neighbouring communities in brief.

R. Reid in his work, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941* (1942), while discussing about Sadiya Frontier Tract makes mention of villages of the Memba tribe in the north of Tuting and Jido by informing that these villages in the valley are on the Tibatan side. However, it does not mention about Memba of Menchuka and any other aspect of the Memba history or culture.

After independence, various scholars have thrown light on various aspects of history and culture of the state including that of the Memba. In this aspect V.Elwin’s *The Art of the North-East Frontier Of India* (1959), *A Philosophy for NEFA* (1965),
Myth of North-East Frontier of India (1968) refer to some aspect of the Memba such as their arts, crafts, oral traditions & belief system etc.

A few works have been published regarding Buddhism and Buddhist Heritage of Arunachal Pradesh. N. Sarkar’s, (1980), Tawang Monastery (1981), Dances of Arunachal Pradesh (1974), refer to Memba occasionally as a Mahayana Buddhist tribe following the Tibetan form of Buddhism.


S. Dutta & B. Tripathy have published a book “Buddhism in Arunachal Pradesh”(2008), in which origin and development of the Tibetan form of Buddhism among various communities have been discussed in length, besides throwing light on their cultural achievements. In this book, there are some references about Memba religion and society.

Recently, the Research Department of the State has published a book entitled Ethnographic Text, based on author’s fieldwork in the area. This text is helpful in understanding Memba traditional society and economy in brief.

Thus, so far, no detail work has been done on the Memba and they are yet to be studied from historical point of view. Most of the work done on Memba tribe lacks in providing detail picture of the tribe. Hence, the present study attempts to
highlight the society, polity, religion and culture of the Memba in historical perspective.

**Source and Research Methodology**

For the proposed study, both primary and secondary sources were taken into consideration. For the primary sources, the researcher has consulted the State Archives of Arunachal Pradesh at Itanagar, State Archives of Assam at Guwahati, State Archives of West Bengal at Kolkata and National Archives of New Delhi. The state library of Arunachal Pradesh, state library of Meghalaya, State library Assam, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies at Guwahati, National Library Kolkata, National Library at New Delhi and District library, West Siang of Arunachal Pradesh (Aalo) and Rajiv Gandhi University Library at Doimukh were consulted. Books, research and general articles on the Memba tribes of Arunachal Pradesh was scrutinised.

The secondary sources such as both published and unpublished works, Journals and general articles of academic interest were also scrutinised. The major portion of the research work was based on Ethno-historical research. For the collections of the field data, extensive fieldwork has been carried out in and around the Memba villages such as Menchuka, Deching-Tang East, Deching-Tang West, Kadasila, Darjeeling, Lha-Lhung, Galling, Pharge etc. The data was collected with the help of structured questionnaires. Beside personal interview with some of the Buddhist Lamas, intellectual, village headman, local traditional priest, artists and elderly citizens of the locality were undertaken. Both participatory and non-participatory observation method were restored while collecting relevant materials on society, economy, polity dances and festivals of the tribe. For the documentation
of the Buddhist art and architecture, plan and elevation of a Monasteries and *Stupas* were undertaken. Both coloured and Black & White photograph were used to highlight the Socio-cultural heritage of the Memba.

**Chapterisation**

For the convenience of the study, the proposed research works has been discussed in six chapters. The first chapter is a broad historical survey and includes introduction of the subject, its ecology, settlement pattern, their origin and migration, nomenclature, language, dress and ornaments, housing and food habit. The chapter also discuss about the objective, statement of the problem, review of literature and research methodology used. The second chapter traces the various aspect of social and cultural institution of Memba with references to their family structure, clan, status of women, institution of marriage, education. The third chapter deals with their political institution with references to their legal system, administrative, village council, their organisation and relation with their neighbouring tribe. The fourth Chapter explores the economic institution of Memba with references to their traditional trade and commerce, trade route, slave trade, agriculture, land tenure, production of arts and crafts. The fifth chapter is an account of Buddhism in Memba with references to devotion, monasticism, meditation, festival, ritual, pilgrimage. The final chapter is the conclusion, summarizing the whole work and highlighting the findings of the study.