Chapter- 4

ORAL TRADITIONS OF SITES REFERRED TO IN THE RESEARCH

Map 10 (Not to scale)
Map11: Google earth Map showing the villages (within Nagaland) referred to in the research

4.1 Introduction

As referred to in earlier chapter(s) about the strong link between the oral narratives and ground reality of physical presence of the villages mentioned therein, this chapter offers an opportunity to confirm the authenticity of the knowledge that has been passed on to generations together and yet reiterates the importance of such line of evidence in archaeological researches. The following pages highlight the sites which were subject to archaeological field investigation and whose whereabouts were found in oral narratives. What degree of authentic information that one can provide is the crux of this endeavor. It implies that every segment of tales or fables/songs/poems-ballads sung are nothing short of documentary evidence that needs to be seen in juxtaposition and deciphered for meaningful interpretations of actual episodes in history.
4.2 Kübok

According to an oral source\(^1\) a group of people had already come to the Ao country ahead of the people from Chungliyimti. They formed pockets of villages, and were from the Mongsen speaking group. JP Mills (1925: 7) gave a similar view that the Mongsen group came out of the earth first and settled at Kübok, a site near Mokongtsü (present Mokokchung village) towards Dikhu River. The Chungli in turn emerged and settled at Chungliyimti.

Among the villages founded by the Mongsen community the village name Kübok attains some historical significance in the context of Chungliyimti Ao migration. According to oral narratives the Kübok Mongsen use to constantly raid the Chungli’s of chungliyimti. These became a serious issue for the Chungli group and they decided to raid the Mongsen at Kübok under the leadership of Shiluti. The existence of a Mongsen village not far away from Chungliyimti was not aware by the Chungliyimti people. The location of Kübok had a lower altitude then Chungliyimti, which is located on a hill top. Thus the people of Chungliyimti gave the village a name as ‘Kübok’ meaning, ‘\textit{down below}’ or a village below Chungliyimti. The Chungliyimti warriors raided Kübok and defeated it and the Mongsen of Kübok were forced to come to Chungliyimti and form a Khel or Müphu side by side with Chungli. Thus began the relationship and partnership between Mongsen and Chungli. According to an oral narrative, on the day when Kübok was attacked by Chungliyimti, many escaped and took shelter in nearby mongsen villages.\(^2\)

There are slight differences between the customs of Mongsen and Chungli, like the women folk using white threat for the Mongsen and black threat for the Chungli for binding their hair, the tattoo for example, on the chin is missing for Mongsen whereas three vertical line tattoos is prominent in Chungli women (Fig.4. 1). However the languages differ much that sometimes it becomes difficult for each other to understand. Mongsen and Chungli for a long time did not intermarry and stayed at different khels or müphu within the village. Dr. Clark (1911: 477) also referred that there was no intermarriages for a long time between the two and frequently occupied different parts of the same village.

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\(^1\) Interview with Bendangashi Imsong, 2015

\(^2\) Interview with Bendangashi imsong, 2015
4.3 Longma tenem

Longma tenem (Fig.4. 2) is situated in between Khensa and Mekuli village in the Ongpangkong range of Mokokchung district. During the establishment of a new village, it has been a custom for the Aos to assess and reckon hillocks, rivers and spot of natural springs, where they relate to certain Gods. It is only when these Gods bestow blessings to the village that they shall have prosperity and protection from enemies. The existence of Gods in the hillock is believed to be the most powerful than the Gods of rivers and Gods of natural springs\(^3\). Hence the Aos worshiped the Gods of hillocks in the utmost sacred ways.

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\(^3\) Interview with T Senka Ao, 2007
Like any other villages, Khensa village started worshipping hillocks, of which Longma tunem, is considered to be one of the most important. Long, means rock, ma, means above, meaning a place or spot above a solid rock. Since the establishment of Khensa village, the spot of Longma and its surroundings is carved out as a worshipping place and nobody is allowed to cultivate within the sacred place. It is believed that failure to please the God of Longma shall result in poor harvest and sometimes inviting epidemic diseases to the people. Whatever worshipping and ritual materials were taken to the spot were not brought back home as it was offered to the Gods. This has been in practice for the last many centuries till the coning of Christianity to the region.

![View of Longma tenem](image)

Fig. 4.2: View of Longma tenem

**4.4 Rito**

An oral tradition of the Ao Naga says that\(^4\) when at koridang, a certain group of people moved to Alimang and then to the very site called ‘Rito’ which is now abandoned. This village was only a few kilometers away from Longkum village. The two villages thus could respond to each other in

\(^4\) Interview with Pongenchang, 2006
their everyday activity. Rito was divided into two müphus. The upper mophu was the main habitation area, more lifted up compared to the lower müphu, which was called as ‘pongen kemong’. However no name is assigned for the upper mound. For centuries the village prospered. The land could sustain the whole village and society flourished. Thus there was no poor to borrow grains; the rich sacrificed mithun each year and the village was in merry making throughout.

The villagers blinded by its prosperity never realized for the coming days ahead. No sooner scarcity creped in and the village administration to carry out started taxing the villagers with high collection of grains. The villagers toiled hard on the land, yet more grains were charge to them. The village was in upheaval with no joy and peace, which continued throughout. At this time there were two rich persons in the village by the name Aremyang and Nungshikaba. Nungshikaba blocked the river used by the villagers which was flowing through his land, and denied the villagers to carry the water. As the villagers didn’t have even the grains to sow in the field they borrowed grains from Aremyang. However he boiled the grains in salted water before giving it to the villagers. Thus not even a single grain grew in the fields. Poverty was prevalent, the whole village struggled for existence. The villagers were angry yet they couldn’t go or turn anywhere. Lastly they decided to abandon the village for good.

4.5 Noksenkeni- Longjang

Molunger, according to JP Mills (1926: 9) were a group of people whom the Ao found in possession of their present country when they invaded it along with the Isangyongr and Nokranger. Mills further states that the Molunger migrated from Mulongkong, lying between Mupongchuket and Khensa Village who were expert blacksmiths and potters. Bendangangshi (2008: 50) opines somewhat similar with Mills in stating that various villages like Küpok, Chuchu, Mongsenyimti Mulongkong, Mongoya etc were the earlier settlers of the Ao country ahead from the Chungliyimyi people and they were from the Mongsen group. However who are they and from where they come from is still a debate. Nevertheless as JP Mills highlighted, these different groups’ stories and their study can give us some rare glimpses of the early history of the hills and may throw light on the question of origin and composition of the Naga tribes.
Molunger gets talked about in the oral narratives of the Aos in association with certain sites within the Ao region. One of their sites as they migrated from Molungkong to another was Noksenkeni presently at Longjang village. The oral narrative regarding the Molunger by the Longjang village goes back to the time of the establishment of Longjang village where four persons by the name, Ningensangba of Jamir clan, Nokenchang of Jamir clan, Yimta of Aier clan and Naben of Aier clan bought a plot of land from the Molunger, which the Molungers were occupying.

After they have bought the land, the Longjang villagers and Molungers stayed side by side. According to the Longjang oral narrative, Molungers were staying in different pockets within the area neighboring Longjang village. The Molungers settlements were, Khanimo (who was a potters), Zaktsu long, Noksen keni and Tsuden kong. As time went by, these Molungers became proud and aggressive towards the Longjang villagers for staying in the land bought from them. They did many unsocial acts like cutting the clothes which the women folks were weaving, cutting the threats which were dyed and kept for drying, throwing away the rice kept for drying, chasing away the fowls and pigs and taking away whichever they like for their food. These acts, the Longjang villagers did not like and came to a solution that the Molungers have to be chased away from the neighbouring region. Longjang villagers were successful in chasing away all the Molungers from all the places surrounding them and their areas were brought under the village fold. Presently the ancient settlement area of the Molunger is occupied by the Longjang villagers. Molungers after their defeat got dispersed to different parts of the Ao area and it is said that the present people living at the Molungkimong village (Ao Naga) of Mokokchung district, are the generation of the Molunger clan (Longchar 2002: 143)

4.6 Ao Naga Ahom Relationship

The relationship of the Aos with the Ahoms is marked in many oral narratives of the Ao Nagas. There are instances of war, exchange, friendship, intermarriages and even Ahoms coming and settling at the Ao lands. Mokokchung district being boarded with Assam on its northwestern

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5 Interview with Nungsashikaba Aier, 2010
6 Interview with Nungsashikaba Aier, 2010
frontier, the contacts with each other would have been effortless during the early days. It was believed that since the Ao lands were atop the hills, water ran down, flooding the plains. Thus the Aos called the plains men as ‘tsumar’ which mean people on the plains of the water or people above the water.

According to the oral narratives, the precise time of beginning of contact between the Nagas and Ahom cannot be ascertained. However, it is believed to have a far greater antiquity. These contacts were primarily at the levels of economic exchanges while social and marital relationship followed the priority. Most often the bordering areas of the plains were raided by the Nagas and this led to the intervention of the Ahom kings. Oral narratives also talk about seeking the help of Ahom Chuba (King) for settling disputes, for friendly relationship in the times of village and tribal wars. For the Ahoms, the hills must have been a strategic area to be protected from outside infiltrators and also to take refuge in times of wars. Such incidents are mentioned both in the Ahom Buranjis and the oral narratives where Ahoms came and settled in different areas of the hills hitherto occupied by the tribe. What we get from the oral narratives regarding the Ahoms was a kind of wonder and admiration with a feeling of different ethnic identity and culture. Though there were social and economic contacts in the form of friendship and exchanges it did not impact much on the socio-cultural set up of the Ao Nagas. This has to go to the kind of maintaining one’s own identity, racial and cultural differences, the setting up a social boundary and demarcation. However the plains men whoever willing to stay in the hills were received into the fold of the Ao Naga, which shows a kind of acceptance of outsiders into the community.

Another issue on the Naga Ahom relation is the different Naga group names mentioned in the Buranjis which do not coincide with the present names. Thus it becomes imperative to look at the oral narratives and understand the Ao Naga Ahom relationship. Oral narratives speak about different Ao groups known by the names of Hatiguri or Hatikurai, Assiringias, Dopdarias, Mulotopias etc which were the ancient names given by the Ahoms for the Aos. These names also find mention in the Ahom Buranjis. Citing an example regarding the naming of Hatiguri meaning ‘Elephant turned back’, an oral narrative talks about a battle between the Ahoms and

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7 Interview with Tiameren Imchen, 2014
some Ao Nagas where the fierceness of the Naga warrior even turned the Ahom war elephants who fled the site of conflict. Because the elephants turned and fled, the place is called as *Hatiguri* or *Hatikurai* by the Ahoms and some groups of the Aos are known by this name. However, another version says that since the Ahom army on the elephants would not overtake the Naga warriors because of their strong stand and the steep landscape which could not make the elephants go further the Ahoms called them as *Hatiguri* or *Hatikurai*. Even though there are slight variations in the oral narratives, it talks about war with the Ahoms and how their elephants could not overcome, naming as *Hatiguri* or *Hatikurai*.

### 4.7 Chuchuyimlang village

There was once a rich man at *Chuchuyimlang* village, belonging to the *Pongen* clan, whose wife was pregnant. It was due time to deliver the baby and she was in great labor pain, but couldn’t deliver. So some of their relatives went to meet the *arasentsur* (fortune teller/gods men?) who told them to spread a mat at the *majang* (uplifted platform behind the house) and let her deliver the baby, for she was carrying the child of *ita anu* (moon and sun’s child), which means the child was specially blessed. A boy was born and they name him *Imkonglemba*.

*Imkonglemba* was the perfect man. Handsome, brave, rich and well known not only among his people but among the Ao’s as well. *Imkonglemba* had four sons and among his sons, *Imdangmeren* was like his father who was well built, wise, rich and brave and well known all over the Ao region as well as outside. Now this was the time before the British had entered the Ao land and it was easy for the people to go to the plains to get necessities, especially salt and other needs. Very soon the Ahom *Raja* residing at Rongpur (Sibsagar) came to hear about *Imdangmeren Pongen* and wanted to meet and know him. *Imdangmeren* was invited by the Ahom King to his palace at Rongpur. On meeting the King, he was called as the Naga raja and as a sign of their friendship the Ahom *Raja* gifted him a brass anklet (Fig.4. 3).

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8 Interview with Alemtet Pongen, 2011

9 The anklet is now a part of the Pongen clan heritage of Chuchuyimlang which is now preserved and kept with Mr and Mrs Alemted Pongen who is the great great grandson of Imdangmeren Pongen. They wear this during festivals to show the Ahom relationship.
Fig.4. 3: Anklet gifted by Ahom Raja

4.8 Merangkong village (known as Noarokong/Naogong by the Ahoms)

Map12: Google earth Map showing Merangkong village
Merangkong village of Langpangkong range is situated on the border area towards Assam and had close contact with the Ahoms during the pre colonial period. According to the oral narratives of Merangkong village- (merang means trying or tried hard, kong means land or elevated land thus Merangkong means getting through and settling by working hard on an elevated land), they were known by the Ahoms as Noarokong or Naogong, meaning a village which could not be defeated by the Ahoms. Thus from the early days there were contacts between the Ahoms and the Merangkong village. Their contact started when the Ahoms started to make wooden boats on the river bank of Melak (Jhanzi River) which was on the territory of the Merangkong village. Seeing the activity of the Ahoms, the Ao villagers use to go and defend their land creating enmity, leading to war between the two. However seeing the need of the area for their economic benefit, the Ahoms made friendship with the village and peace agreement was made between the two near Pangkalong (ancient name, now Amguri train station)\(^\text{10}\). This was the start of a friendship which was an economic advantage for both. For the Ahoms it was the river bank and the huge logs they draw from the village land and for the villagers it was exchange of chapi (Ahom cap) clothes, salt, iron for dao and other necessities which were hard to get in the hills. Because of their friendship even a plot of land at Rongpur (capital of the Ahoms) was given by the Ahom King to the villagers\(^\text{11}\). Oral narratives says that during the times of Ahom rule in Assam, the territory of the Merangkong village stretched up to Amguri (Assam), where the Ahoms resided. The Village collected bond (Tax) on those lands in the form of rice and other essential necessities\(^\text{12}\).

**Places in Merangkong where the Ahoms came and settled\(^\text{13}\)**

When the Burmese during came into war with the Ahoms, the village extended their help towards Ahoms allowing them to come up and take refuge at their village and even two of their villagers, Azukolak and Yangpidangnok were taken captives by the Burmese for helping the Ahoms.

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\(^{10}\) Interview with Pangjongmayang, 2011  
\(^{11}\) Interview with Rentisosang Imsoang, 2011  
\(^{12}\) Interview with Imsutemjen Longkumer, 2011  
\(^{13}\) Interview with Imsutemjen Longkumer, 2011
**Tuli lenden**

This area did not have any name before the Ahoms came and settled; however one day the villagers saw a group of Ahoms taking bath at the area. They asked them what they were doing in their land, which then the Ahoms replied, ‘Kao tuli’ meaning taking bath. From that day onwards not knowing what they have said, the villagers though that, the Ahoms were talking about the very area, and thus named this area as **Tuli**.

**Borbarua lenden**

A group of Ahoms under a certain person by the name **Borbarua** stayed in this area. Thus they named it as **Borbarua lenden (plains of Borbarua)**

**Chuba toba ayong (also as Ahomlar yimkong)**

Under a great Ahom leader, **Chouba** (King) a group of Ahoms crossed a river, thus the villagers named the river as - **chouba toba ayong**- River where king went up (a tributary of Melak ) and occupied an elevated plain, taking refuge against the Burmese. The villagers named the area as **Ahom lar yimkong**- residing place of the Ahoms.

**Longli Lenden**

**Longli lenden** meaning, a stony plain area. Under the leadership of **Tamuli**, a group of Ahoms came and stayed. Within **Longli lenden** there is an area called as, **Horo Moroli**, where a young boy died taking bath at the River **Melak (Jhanzi)**

**Places within Merangkong village where Ahoms settled:**

**Lemtala Kimong**

Meaning of **lemtala** not known. A group of Ahoms came and settled here.
An area given by the villagers for the Ahom sepoys to stay. Jupeyah, an Ahom, stayed here making dao and the villagers learned how to make dao from him.\(^\text{14}\)

After the Man Sepoy War, Ahoms vacated their various settlements at Merangkong and left for their homeland. However there were some Ahoms who stayed behind and were permitted to settle in the village, imbibing into the fold of some clans and intermarrying within the village. It is said that these people came with technique of dao making and use to make daos for the village before which the villagers use to go to the plains to procure it. The Ahoms made curved daos but since it could not be used by the villagers for all their works they made their own version in between.

**Ahom’s as citizens in Merangkong village**

Tamuli (an Ahom, according to oral narrative), came to Merangkong (year not known) and stayed in Tuli as a trader. He became rich, married Mejakola of Merangkong village and even did Mithun Sacrifice (Su-ajî). There are some songs sung by the villagers in praise of him as \(^\text{15}\)

\[ 
\text{Longle Longpang merensang} \\
\text{Konang Tamuli Merensang} \\
\text{Ne narokum Longpongmeren (longpong- lenden) jatsungma} \\
\text{Your glory extends throughout the hills and the mountains} \\
\text{Your glory and grandeur is recognized by one and all} \\
\text{Let your son be synonym to that of a mighty rock} \\
\]

Another song for Tamuli, having some Ahom words, passed on from forefathers \(^\text{16}\)-

\[ 
\text{O ha ahi o ha} \\
\]

\( ^{14} \)Interview with Rentisosang, 2011  
\( ^{15} \)Interview with Nangshimeren jamir, 2011  
\( ^{16} \)Interview with Nangshimeren Jamir, 2011
Aji noka jaile koili jai

(not Ao Naga oral narratives says Ahom language)

Jangaya nung olo kobang Mejakola

Like the beautiful feathers on the head of a bird

Oh tsulen hong sungha rojo Pangmeremla jangaya

Oh water bird seated so beautifully with your mouth beautifully red peak

The beautiful damsel Mejakola is feting to the beautiful bird

The song tries to projects how the union of Mejakola and Tamuli is so fitting and compatible, and how Mejakola looks like a beautiful bird, in the house of Tamuli

Another song for an Ahom who came and settled in Merangkong was Jupeyah. He stayed at Harpart in Merangkong. Staying there he became quite rich. Later he decided to go and reside in a nearby village at Kilengmen. There he became rich and decided to do Mithun sacrifice- su achi. However he wanted to invite even the Merangkong villagers for the big function. This is the song the villagers made for him on his great achievement17,

O ali temen sanger, Tamdoor nangpong

Debuia den tongpang shilua chuba

Yimnukenba tebo.

Jupeyah a nashi pongji

Neijem so tsu masula.

Watsu limatola, tongpangsanger yimpok yimla.

O brave and honorable men from the soil of Tomdoor

Regaining once again the glory after a contest with Debuia

17 Interview with Nangshimeren jamir, 2011
You are the father of the one who is focused by every village eyes  

*Jupeyah* you are great to give the feast  

Your wife *Limatola*, who feeds on and all during the time of war and peace  

is like the mother cow  

4.9 Mopungchuket village (known as Molotopias by the Ahoms)

Oral traditions say that the ancient name for Mopungchuket village was Molotopia and they were known as such by the Ahoms. The territory of Mopungchuket village during the pre colonial period extended up to Tongata Ali (towards Amguri, Assam). Ahoms use to occupy this land (during the time of King Gadadhar Simha) and tax was levied towards those who stayed there in the form of Sheep’s, Ducks, Cow, Hen and other economic needs. No collection in the form of money was made.\(^\text{18}\).

An oral narrative of the village on its relations with the Ahoms goes to the time of Ahom King Chandrakanta in 1832.\(^\text{19}\) It goes on that two villagers of Mopungchuket, *Pongendong* and *Sabangnenba* went towards the plain where on the way they were killed by Yajang villagers (Ao Naga). Mopungchuket village got infuriated of why a small village like Yajang should mistreat them. Thus they got prepared to go on a war against Yajang. Hearing that they were coming, Yajang villagers ran off to the nearby areas deserting the village. Not being able to kill any of the Yajang villagers, Mopungchuket village informed to all the nearby villages that if any of the villages gives shelter to Yajang, that village will be destroyed by them. However Lirmen village gave shelter to Yajang. Mopungchuket went and defeated *Lirmen*. Fearing the Mopungchuket village to come again *Lirmen* asked help from the Ahoms, for armies with guns to guard the village. When Mopungchuket village went again to Lirmen, they saw the Ahom army on duty lighting lamps and guarding the village (Lirmen). Since they couldn’t go inside the village they waited till dark hours and slowly went towards the fortress (*mitsa*) and saw the Ahom soldier on

\(^{18}\) Interview with Satiba Jamir, 2011  
\(^{19}\) In the Ahom chronologies, reign of Sudingpha or Chandra Kanta Singha is from 1810-1818. If we take into account the oral narrative of Ao Naga it gives an earlier king with a later date, which does not matches with the Ahom chronologies. However the year mentioned in the oral narrative-1832, coincides rightly with the reign of Purander Singha
duty fast asleep. Taking the chance they killed the soldier. Lirmen villagers went to the Ahom king and reported the incident. The Ahom king sends his army to fight and defeat the Mopungchuket village. On reaching the village they rested at the Sungkotenem Lake (within the village) (Fig.4. 4). During the past, Mopungchuket forefathers regarded this lake as place of God, where the God of evil stayed, the god who saves the village and thus the lake was worshiped. Twice a year making sacrifices of pigs the lake was worshiped.

While the Ahoms were resting on the lake side, one of the Mopungchuket villagers went secretly to the Lake God and said, ‘there are many gathered to defeat our village. Rise up, why are you not taking a move’. After he had left, the lake God stood up tall and mighty in front of the Ahoms. Seeing the mighty figure, the Ahoms got scared and fled the area. Thus the Mopungchuket villagers could chase away the Ahom and won over them. Some daos (machete) (Fig.4. 5) were collected by the villagers while clearing the lake in recent times, which they hold that it belongs to the Ahoms which they left while trying to fled away during the Ahom- Molutopia battle at Süngkotenem Lake.

![Sungkotenem lake](image)

**Fig.4. 4:** Sungkotenem lake

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20 Interview with Satiba Jamir and Longermongba Jamir, 2011
Fig. 4.5: Daos (machete) recovered from the lake

4.10 Nokpu (known as Asringayas or Charmgayas by the Ahoms)

Map 13: Google earth Map showing Nokpu village
According to the oral narrative of Nokpu village (Kojachanger Putu Menden Nokpu 1999), when Ao’s were staying at Koridang, a group went towards the east leaving the rest. It is said that this group of people were seen leaving Koridang, carrying along with them daos, singing and dancing. Thus they were called by the rest as Nokpur, (Nok- dao, pur- carrying) meaning going carrying dao.

Nokpur followed the Tzula tzu (Dikhu River) and as they were standing on the bank of the river, they saw a mount towards the Phom area (a Naga tribe) resembling a hat. Thus they named the mount Korangkong (mount of hat) and settled there for a while. Their neighbor was the Owengyenching village of Phom tribe and with whom they had cordial relationship. Nokpurs stayed at Korangkong for more than three generations. However because of the enmity with Yaonger, Tsungkhor, Nagdanger (their other neighbors), they could no longer stay at korangkong and decided to retreat toward the Ao area and settled at an elevated area called as Sungmerongkong Ali (land) or Akholongshi. They could not stay here long because of the misunderstanding with Tzusa village and also the retreat coming from the previous eastern enmity. Hence they had to move towards the west and settled at the Natushi tenem where they prospered with unity. Many became wealthy. It is said that there was a rich man by the name Natushi at the village. One day he decided to have a feast of merit. He called the villagers to celebrate the feast by killing a fat pig. Many tried to catch hold of the pig but could not since the pig was too big. At that time a person by the name Ongpangsangba tried to catch the pig by jumping towards the pig but got hit and fall death along with the pig. The village because of the incident became a ‘menen kimong’-unclean place, left the site and settled at a new site called as Atu tenem (mount). This place was occupied for around 70 years. When Nokpur were staying at this place a group of people came from Yaong Yachem (Phom area) and occupied an area near Atu tenem. Nokpur named the place where this group has settled as Tongar Telang meaning “others have come with more than 100 families”. This people brought with them anvils and use to make daos. Thus they name this people as “Anokranger”-“Nokranger” meaning “Dao makers” and for around a Putu (around 30 years), Nokpur at Atu Tenem and Nokranger at Tongar Telang stayed as neighbors.
During this time Nokranger started warfare with Longkhum village. Since the enmity between the Nokrang and Longkhum grew more, Nokpur had to leave Atu tenem in search of a new place. Thus they selected the highest mount at the vicinity and shifted the village to that mount. It was around 1210 AD according to the oral narrative when they shifted to the new village from Atu tenem. However due to the steep landscape and shortage of water the village had to be shifted down towards a less elevated area just below the village and at the year 1985 a new Nokpu Model village was made and occupied. There are still around 7 families occupying the old village and the villagers calls the two areas which comes under the Nokpu village jurisdiction as Nokpu old village and Nokpu new village.

According to Nokpu oral narrative the relationship between the Nokpur and the Ahoms started around 1335AD during the time of Ahom King Sukrangpha with the opening of a Duar- gates or paths, for economic interest. This was called as Asheimba- Yimyudangba Duar, which was constructed on account of friendship between king Sukrangpha and the Nokpur. The relationship between Nokpur and Ahoms grew when later King Godapani married a Nokpu girl by the name Sentishila who was the daughter of Assiring of Nokpu village. Oral narratives opines that once, Ahom king Godapani (also known as Gadadhar Singha, the 29th Ahom king who ruled from 1681- 1696 AD) sends a team of delegation to Nokpu during festival of Moatsü. It was at this occasion, they saw a beautiful Nokpu girl dancing, which struck them with wonder and awe. The Ahoms enquired about the girl and came to know that she was Sentishila, daughter of Assiring Walling. They made a sketch of her and took along with them to show it to their king considering it as a message of the festival at Nokpu. The poses of her dance captivated the inner heart of the king who was determined to marry her. An idea was made by the Ahoms where they lured Sentishila and took her away to Rongpur (capital of Ahom) from the village without the notice of anyone. When the Ahoms were luring Sentishila away towards the plain area, an elderly Nokpu woman named Kokmeyula saw her moving out of the village with strangers. Seeing Sentishila taken away by the Ahoms, Kokmuyala started to sing

“Wora Atzutelang shine;
Shijangmeshiymne owangkone

21 Interview with Rongsenkokla walling 2013
Assiring and Nokpur came to confirm about Sentishila being taken by the Ahoms for their king and decided to go and meet the king and Sentishila to negotiate and also for making greater relationship with the King and the Ahoms. The king married Sentishila and granted a huge demarcated area- Khat, to Nokpur at Naganijan 22 naming it as ‘Assiring Khat’.

A system prevailed on the Ahom frontier area by the Ahom kings, where the Nagas of each groups were allotted Ahom agents, called as Kotokis, who managed small plot of revenue free lands, called as Khats or Naga Khats. These khats were sanctioned by the Ahom kings to the Naga groups for contact, exchange, negotiation and peaceful affair with the Nagas. All together it is said that there were twenty two Naga Khats of which three villages came under Mokokchung district, namely, Changki, Longsemdang and Nokpu villages. The khat which belonged to the Nokpu village, Assiring Khat, was established along the boundary of the Dodhar Ali near Naganijan. Three occupational groups of the Ahoms were posted, viz, the cultivators, blacksmith and traders. All the three sections were known as Chokies, who catered to the needs of the Nagas in transit either on trading expeditions or on militia movements in aid of the Ahoms during ‘external’ threats. (Imchen 2006: 116).

In 1842 captain T. Brodie and the Nokpu villagers came to an understanding of making use of some part of the Khat land near Naganijan for Tea plantation. This was agreed and the Naganijan Tea Factory was established. Till date the Nokpu villagers gets a certain payment from the Naganijan Tea Factory as tax for occupying their land (Fig.4. 6). Also those staying at the khat paid to the khat owners a part of what they could cultivate from the land called as posa. Nokpu villagers use to get posa from those plains men who occupied the Assiring khat. However in the year 1924 with the intervention of the British Government, posa was converted into an annual payment of Rs. 70/ which was paid till the year 1974. There were exchanges in the Assiring khat in the form of weekly market. Today the market even though shifted from its original place has developed into a Saturday marketplace near the Naganijan Tea factory, which is used more for

22 Jorhat district, Assam, bordering Nokpu village. Naganijan meaning ‘Naga girl has gone taking alive’
the interest and needs of the tea garden laborers. However some of the local products like beetle leave; ginger, yam etc are brought down to the market by the nearby villagers including the Nokpu villagers to sell and also gets daily their essential needs from the market.

![Payment receipt from Assam Tea Corporation LTD. to Nokpu village](image)

Fig.4. 6: Payment receipt from Assam Tea Corporation LTD. to Nokpu village

Also the Asheimba- Yimyudangba Duar was renamed to Assiring Duar in honor of that marriage which opened the path between Nokpu and Rongpur, enhancing further extensive trade and socio-cultural exchange between the Ahom and Nokpu, as well as with the rest of the Ao Naga villages. The Ao Naga villages that passed through the Assiring Duar for the purpose of exchange and contact with the Ahoms in the Assiring Khat at Naganijan were Longjang, Debuia, Khar, Mongchen, changdang, Nokpu, Lirmen and Waromung (Rattan 2004:44). According to oral narratives such types of Duars, lying between the River Dikhu and Doyang were six in numbers, viz, Assiring Duar, Namsangia Duar, Dopdoria Duar, Doyangia Duar, Hatiguria Duar and Panee path. Out of which three Duars belonged to the Aos. They were Assiring Duar, Dopdoria Duar and Hatiguria Duar. Assiring Duar was also called as Charringia Duar, Dopdoria duar as Doboka Duar and Hatiguria duar as Bordobia duar. An oral narrative speaks
about constructing shades and resting places along the Duars by the Ahom King Godapani as well as wells (Pukhuris) for water sources for travelers. Barua (1985:262-272) also mentions about the construction of roads, stone bridges and several tanks by the Ahom King Gadadhar Simha alias Godapani. By April 1861, the Duars were closed to the Naga traders by order of the commissioner of Assam (Mackenzie 2003:97).

The friendly relationships made by Assiring with the Ahom King, led Nokpur have many economic advantages. Thus the village council assembly of that time sang this song in praise and thanks to Assiring (Nokpu Putu Menden. 1985: 44):

“Oh, Nokpu Lima Merenang-de soba Sentishila teba soke.

Ora- otzü telang chuba denni yushi ajümer,

Saring rongpang chuba maong”

“Oh, the glory of Nokpu country, angel father of Sentishila,

The divine bestowed upon thee the fame and glory.

You have own the heart of the king of far away sea,

There by open the highway that leads to Saring”

The walling Women of Assiring’s clan sang for him this praise worthy song23:

“Tzumaryushi Kulepshī, Ayu henshi heniko,

Chuba kongro nangpongkum,

Assiring pa nangpong sentijangne,

Shiwari nungjang ali senseneke,

Oh, Sentishila teba, alima maong kakeiya”

“Talented and gifted you are with linguistic art, to win even the King’s heart.

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23 Interview with Rongsenkokla Walling, 2013
Your daughter Sentishila, the radiant of the Ahom palace.

The undaunted Assiring,

You are known and renowned till the farthest of the horizon,

The world pronounced in your favor.”

Oral narrative says that such was the relationship between the Ahoms and the Nopur that they helped each other in times of needs. During the Burmese invasion or the Man Singpho war the Ahoms staying near by the Nagakijan Naga Khat were given refuge by the Nokpu villager at their land. Orla narratives of Nokpu villages say that three groups of Ahoms at different Nokpu areas were given refuge. They were (Kojachanger Putu Menden Nokpu. 1999):

1. A group of traders under the leadership of Dellai, who were placed at Lisemyong Ayongkum Lenden or on the plains of the river bank of Lisemyong. Called now as Dellai lenden-plain of Dellai valley, where the Nokpu villagers do farming of wet cultivation.

2. A group of blacksmith was given refuge near the village gate. They made daos which benefited the villagers. Now that area is called as Anokjangjen Yenden- dao making plain, this is under Jhum cultivation by the villagers.

3. Under the leadership of Ahom Kahulong a group of farmers were given refuge at Tzurong lenden or Tzurong plain. There they did cultivation. The area now is called as Kahulong lushi or Kahulong cultivation land.

After the Burmese war, all the three groups left the area and went back to their original places towards the plains.