CHAPTER FOUR
CHOTHE MYTHOLOGY: THE BASIC FOUNDATION
OF BELIEF AND PRACTICES

4.0 Introduction: Myth and Legend

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines myth as ‘a traditional narrative usually involving supernatural or imaginary persons and embodying popular ideas on natural or social phenomena, etc. It is a traditional story accepted as history; which serves to explain the world view of a people and usually connected with religion’. Therefore, the story of a person or people related with an event after many years becomes history, the history becomes legend and thereafter, the legend becomes a myth. In Greek *muthos* means, just a tale, or mythos something one utters, in a wide range of senses: a statement, a story, the plot of a play. But for Plato, the first known user of the term, *muthologia* meant no more than the telling of the stories, like the Greek tales of Perseus and Medusa, Odysseus and the Cyclops, Oedipus and Iocaste or Hermes and the cattle of Appolo (Kirk 1998: 8). But Stith Thompson (1955) argues that myth is somewhat different from an ordinary folktale. Accordingly he defines myth as something that “has to do with the gods and their actions, with creation, and with the general nature of the universe and of the earth” (1955: 484). But it is seen that the distinction between myth and folktales is very narrow as often found confusing with one another because the folktales of some primitive societies are also connected with gods and demigods. The folklorist considers all myths as religious (sacred) stories, but not all religious stories are myths; religious stories that involve the creation of the world (like the story in Genesis) are myths. However, religious stories that do not explain how things came to be in their present form (i.e. the legendary stories like hagiographies of famous saints, heroic persons) are not myths. It is stated that it is the early Christian theologians of the Greco-Roman, who first started to use the term “myth” (Greek *muthos*) to mean “fable, fiction and lie” (Eliade 1968: 162). So, any mythical story is viewed by the Christian as a lie or a false story and negates their views.

According to Malinowski and Mircea Eliade one important function of myth is to provide an explanation for rituals. Eliade notes that, “in many societies rituals are considered important precisely because they were established by the mythical gods or heroes” (1968: 7). But Robert M. Wallace (1987) says that Blumenberg suggests we shall discover myth, in
its own way, also seeks to produce a mastering of reality without which human life would be impossible.\textsuperscript{1} This is why, every community or society or country has its own story, history, legend and myth in different forms that resulted out of historical eventful incidents comprising things like, the first man and woman, a great warrior, a great religious reformer or political leader, a famous hunter, a skillful magician that can be distinguished from one another. All these stories may not necessarily have a connection with gods and goddesses or nature-myths or myth-rituals but are accepted as great tales because of the intervention and connection with gods in their experiences and overcoming the hurdles. In short myth can be understood as a complex story of a person and its surrounding compressed into a simple mythical story related with gods and goddesses or creation of the world while the others may be considered as folktales or history. Levi-Strauss (1972) in \textit{The Structural Study of Myth} asserts that ‘myth of one culture is astoundingly very similar to the myth of a different culture’, this he believes and proposes that there must be some universal law which guides basic human thought. This ‘universal law of basic human thought’ is seen in the mythical concepts of cosmology, animism and totemism like Oedipus, Zuni and Hopi origin myths. According to Levi-Strauss each myth may seem unique, but it is this particular principle of universal law of human thought that shows seemingly similar elements with one another which he says was based on the criteria that “mythical thought always progressed from the awareness of oppositions toward their mediation” (1972: 299). In other words, myths consist of (1) elements that oppose or contradict each other and (2) other elements that “mediate” or “resolve” those oppositions (ibid:). This similarity principle of universal law of human thought does not necessarily mean that all myths of different cultures of the world are exactly identical and have same functions, rather he means that most myths that oppose, contradict, mediate or resolve follow a similar framework or trend in the construction of beliefs and ritualistic practices (ibid: 300). This assertion is criticized by Malinowski and G.S. Kirk that despite the similarity, many elements contradict itself. Therefore, William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt states that the term “myth”, should be used advisedly as a convenient general label for an enormous diversity of narrative styles, contents, forms, and functions (1972: 249).

In a sense, it is believed that a large part of mythology is based upon a belief in ‘souls or spirits’ that is ‘animist’ or ‘animism’. Myths that portrayed plants, inanimate objects, and non-human animals as personal beings are examples of animism in its more
restrictive sense. But a large amount of mythology focuses largely on corporeal beings rather than spiritual ones, the latter may be entirely absent in some cases. For example, the mythology of the Australian Aborigine largely focuses on corporeal, non-spiritual beings. The later mythology began to include numerous complex ideas about future life and purely spiritual being, as a result the overlap between mythology and animism widens. So, it is believed that a rich mythology does not necessarily depend on belief in many spiritual beings but on the criteria of possessing certain religious elements of supernatural characteristics, thus the idea of spirituality emerged only at the later period. Such features are observed in the context of the Chothe tribe too.

The Chothe belief is polytheistic; they thus worship a host of cosmological gods, nature gods, house gods, village gods, forest/land gods and river/water gods. These are like Thangvan-Rengpa (Heavenly King) or Chung-Pathein (Almighty God), Tui-pathein (Water God), Pu Lungchungpa or Pakhangpa (Rain God), Sanamahi (God of Wealth), Leimaren (God of Fertility), Bumbu (deities of village gates/directions) besides many other gods and goddesses. Similarly, various British Political Administrators like; M. McCulloch, T.C. Hodson, J. Shakespeare, William Shaw, and national scholars like T.C. Das, A.S. Ansari, M. Kirti Singh, T.C. Tensuba and H.M. Bareh remark in their anthologies, ethnographies and books that the Chothe worship the gods of Pu Lungchungpa, Pakhangpa, Pu Soraren, Sanamahi and Leimaren. They also believe in totems, superstitions, dreams and magic.

The most important fundamental principle of Chothe indigenous religion lies in the doctrine of avatar or reincarnation or re-birth of their Supreme Guardian God Pu Lungchungpa or Pakhangpa that form the base of their animism or ancestor-worship practiced till today. Like many cultural myths of the world, the Chothe mythology also has its own distinctive genealogical myth which mediates or resolves their mythical belief in the person of “Chothe Thangmei/Thangwai Pakhangpa” the legendary king of Manipur.

According to their genealogical myth, the Chothe from time immemorial believe that they are the descendants of their God Pu Lungchungpa (the Dragon-Python God also called as Ruipi Santai rengpa) the Principal Heavenly Guardian God who saved and protected them from the clutches of the lower gods and also from the ferocious Tiger King Kamkeirang-rengpa. This genealogical myth is built around the mystical personality of the Dragon-Python God (Water or Rain God) entrusted by the Divine Heavenly God (Thangvan rengpa) to be the protector and benefactor of the people who blessed his descendants
according to their own personal attributes. The story centres around three characters i.e. the Celestial or Heavenly or Abode gods, the Lower gods and Mankind, which is a triangular entity represented by the dragon, the tiger and the human being, symbolising the good, the evil and the innocent man. This triangular or the trinity concept is also found in other religions of the world. Subsequently, after many centuries the Dragon-Python God (Pu Lungchungpa or Ruipi Santai Rengpa) fulfilled his promise by interceding in the human form and resolving himself as the avatar or Divine-incarnate in the mystical person of Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa (Meingai). The Pakhangpa’s mysticism re-instils their religious zeal because of his manifestation to the promised made earlier that he will come and dwell with them when they live a settled prosperous life. But when Pakhangpa appeared to them as a strange mysterious young man and fell in love with Daishin the eldest daughter of Surou (Tarang) chief of the Chothe village the people failed to acknowledge him as their Divine-incarnate because of his anonymity. The people unaware of His divinity as the avatar during his childhood branded him as an illegitimate child, and ignorantly banished him and his mother from their country. When he grew up, he asked his people to perform certain rites and rituals to absolve themselves from the sins of ill-treating him. Therefore, some rituals like tuihumpa (rite for the water), lamleh thoipa (village gate rite), punningpa (born again rite), ta-sanpa (divination) and taboos (ashei-asi) which are practiced even today, are based on their myths and legends.

We also find some similarities of the Chothe genealogical myth with some of the other tribes of Manipur particularly the Old-Kuki tribes like; Kharam, Koireng, Anal, Lamkang, Tarao, Chiru, Kom, Aimol, Maring and other communities in different literatures. For example J. Shakespeare mentions that the Lamkang originated from a place “on the Kangmang hill, away to the south, there is a cave, out of this came a man and woman, and were eaten up by a tiger that was watching. A god who had two horns, seeing this horrible sight, came out and drove away the tiger, and so the next couple to emerge escaped and became the ancestors of the Lamkang” (1912: 150). Accordingly Mrs. Y. Tharaklei (96/F) on the basis of folktales says that, “the Maring came out of the cave only after a bull that belonged to Chothe chief pushed out the rock that covered their cave for which they had paid thirty pieces of silver coins to the Chothe chief”.

On the other hand, there is also a close affinity between the Chothe indigenous religion and that of the Meitei Sanamahism religion as both the religions begin with
Pakhangpa the legendary or historical king of Manipur, who is known to the Chothe as *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa* and to the Meitei as *Nongda Leiren Pakhangpa*. Both the Chothe and Meitei consider him as their divine or mythical ancestor king.

The concept of spirituality though, was in existence from the beginning and it was strengthened through Pakhangpa, who is also considered as the avatar with super natural power. K.C. Tensubu remarks that, “the god Pakhangba is believed to be a Dragon-Python” probably for his mysticism (1993: 46). Further, N. Sanajaoba also points out that, “Pakhangpa has a supernatural power to transform himself into anything like a stone, a tiger, a dog or a human being, and can even take human birth at any time and place” because he is endowed with divine supernatural powers (1991: 104). Therefore, from the above perspectives the Chothe socio-religious historical myth can be divided into two categories on the basis of the historical period; “Chothe Genealogical Myth” and the legend of “Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa” since the elements of opposition and contradiction found in a myth fits into the Levi-Strauss’ paradigm in the legends of resolving.

This particular chapter focusses on the *Chothe genealogical myth* and the legend of *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa* which is the foundation of their religious beliefs and practices. The oral history on *Chothe genealogical myth* and the legend of *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa* provided by different Chothe village elders; H. Thambaljao, Y. Maipak, Y. Tomalsingh, H. Jaikan, Pr. Roushi, Mk. Neilut, Pr. Wailum, Pr. Herachou and Pr. Chandbabu (Vincent), besides many other elders and leaders are elucidated below. The Chothe genealogical myth contains almost every element of a religious myth which is evolutionary in its nature (nature-myth) that resolves or mediates in the legend of Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa. This genealogical myth is also based on the recorded work of Khiyang Manjou of Khongkhang titled as, ‘*Chothe Athouna*’ (*Chothe’s origin*) written in the Chothe language. Similarly, the legend of *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa*, besides the oral history, is also based on the titled of sacred manuscripts, *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa* (*CTP*) which the people have preserved and kept secretly for many centuries. Important manuscripts like *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba* (*MNL*), *Cheitharol Kumpaba* (*ChK*) and other available literature of Manipur are also referred to construct a coherent legend of *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa*. 
4.1 Chothe Genealogical Myth

The *Chothe genealogical myth* is deliberately elaborated because no literature exclusively studies the Chothe indigenous religion apart from other socio-cultural aspects. Another important reason is that readers can sufficiently analyze the evolutionary development of the Chothe socio-religious and historical aspects to clearly understand their culture from the light of their indigenous religious beliefs and practices. The deliberate elaboration is also in line with Clyde Kluckhohn who critically remarks that the writings of J. Frazer, E.B. Tylor, E. Durkheim and others provide insufficient primary data or description in their books to substantiate for their arguments, and considers that they have analyzed it from the peripheral points which the readers are made to believe with their hypotheses (1972: 98). Therefore, this descriptive study, it is hoped will help readers analyse the subject from different perspectives depending on the nature of his/her interest.

**The Genesis of Mankind:** According to *Chothe genealogical myth* ‘in the beginning, there were no human beings between the abode of gods i.e. Heavenly and Earthly kingdoms’ (Amating-nga Thangyan-Shimlei anih kai hinna ‘mamashi’ tapa hi amphuino-e, leihu mani chakka amphui-a). But one day, all the higher and the lower gods assembled at ‘the centre of the universe where the light and the darkness (sun and moon rises) originates’ (Koikung suhlam shimni suknamun) to find out the most rational creature to serve them and to lighten the burden of the lower gods, who have been complaining of their heavy workload. So, the lower gods first brought the fish (*Ngavok* or *Sp.Channa punctatus*), but the higher gods examined it and were not satisfied with it, so it was sent back into the water. Next, they brought *Ajongpa* (a monkey) but still the higher gods were unhappy and dejected with the ugly physical appearance of its tail and body hair, so they took it back to the forest and left it on a banyan tree. The lower gods were unhappy as they were unable to please the higher gods so they finally decided to create a human being. They created a man (*a-pa*) and a woman (*numei*) in their own form called them “*Mamashi*” (human beings). The higher gods seeing the beautiful creations gladly accepted and gave them the breath of life. Thus, mankind came into existence, and hence they were kept at Koikung, the centre of the universe or earth.
The Division of Mankind: Since, the lower gods were responsible for the welfare of mankind they began to use this human being according to their own wish and will. Subsequently, it is said many of the lower gods began to fear that they might be attacked sooner or later by human beings as they became populated, powerful and unruly. Therefore, they decided to destroy mankind before they would be subjugated. As a result, the Heavenly King (Thangvan rengpa) and the mother of Earth (Shimlenu) decided to have their own child in case the lower gods determined to do away with the human being. But later the two powerful gods bore a lovely son. Similarly, it is said that the couple i.e. the Moon (Tha-pa) and the Sun (Ni-nu) gods also bore a beautiful daughter whose face shines like gold. Since then, both the children of the abode or powerful gods were lovely and beautiful they became apprehensive that some of the wicked lower gods might steal their children and claim them as their own. Hence, both the children were secretly hidden inside a rock and both grew up eating the cloud shoots or dew (Sumphai adon) growing above the rock (Lungpi) every morning. In the mean time, as the human population substantially increased and became chaotic, unruly and powerful the lower gods ultimately decided to divide them into clans (phung) instead of destroying them. Thus, mankind was divided into different clans and scattered to different directions of the world.

Disappearance of the Child: The Heavenly and Earthly gods too decided to give their beloved son to the lower gods so that they could also give him a name and a clan among human beings. But when they went to get the boy, he had already disappeared from the hidden place and was nowhere to found, this upset his parents. Meanwhile, the Dragon King or the Rain God (Lungchungpa or Pakhangpa or Ruipi Shantai) and the Tiger King (Kamkeirang rengpa) were on their way to the abode council house to demand their human share as both of them did not get their share due to their absence on the day human distribution. When the Dragon King, with his assumed son the Bottle-Gourd (A-Uum), was on his way to the house of council they suddenly heard a child’s cry from a brook side. When the bottle-gourd (Uum), out of sympathy, was persuading the Dragon to take the child along with them, the Dragon saw the Tiger wagging its tail from afar and approaching. The Dragon not willing to disclose to the Tiger about his discovered child he quickly wrapped and hid it inside the cave.
The First Agreement between the Dragon and the Tiger: As soon as the Dragon met the Tiger, he enquired from the Tiger, who replied, he was also on his way to the abode council’s house to claim his human shares, so that he can also bring up the humans as his descendants. The Tiger who felt humiliated, expressed his resentment to the Dragon accusing the lower gods for ignoring him and also taking the decision of human distribution without consulting him. The Dragon disclosed to the Tiger that he also did not get his human share and was not informed about it, so he has decided to destroy all of mankind with landslides. Immediately, the Tiger interrupted and said that he also had thought of killing and sucking all the gods’ blood. But the Dragon calmed him down telling him that the gods might overhear their plans and he being a carnivorous animal would not be able to kill all the gods unlike him, so instead he requested him to do his favour. Hearing the Dragon’s words the Tiger boldly asked whether he had denied any of his requests. But the Dragon re-affirmed his stand that he could not trust the Tiger because “carnivorous animals are forgetful”. So, he asked him to swear that ‘if any of the two breaks their promise all his thirty-two teeth will fall’ (I-hongnga aluita shaita ngak-nenapa meeha aha somthum ani tickhap su-o, ta washak ke). Then the Dragon brought out the hidden child and gave it to the reluctant Tiger and requested him not to go to the council house anymore instead to take care of the child until he returns, in case they did not get their human share he would bless, protect and multiply the children as their own descendants.

The Gods Submit Before the Dragon King: Then, when the Dragon reached the abodes’ council house he saw all the gods in chaos, afraid of the Heavenly king (Thangvan) and the Earthly queen (Shimle) because they already knew their secret child had disappeared from their hidden place and that both might punish them to death if they did not find the child at the earliest. It is said in the midst of the commotion a decree was also announced that whosoever informed them about the whereabouts of the child or admitted to taking the child would be forgiven. Learning the information, the Dragon took advantage of the situation and appeared before the scene and threatened all the gods who assembled there that he had conspired with his other six powerful great kings (gods) to punish all the culprits for stealing the Heavenly and Earthly gods’ child and kept him hidden near a brook. Besides, he also said that his friend, the Tiger King (Kamkeirang) has decided to kill all of them for ignoring his status. All the gods, then, bowed down before the Dragon King (Ruipi-Santai) and
requested him to have mercy on them by sparing their lives. Taking advantage of the situation, the Dragon asked them to surrender everything to him including their human shares to save themselves otherwise he would join with the powerful gods and the Tiger and destroy the whole earth by landslides separating the gods and the human beings forever. Before he could finish talking, it is said the lower gods trembled in fear and ceded themselves before the Dragon seeking apology and acknowledging him as a great god who could do anything and everything like any other powerful great gods.

The Second Agreement between the Dragon and the Tiger: Accordingly it is said that when the Dragon returned from the heavenly council meeting he told the Tiger not to worry anymore because all the lower gods had submitted themselves before him and so all the human beings including the child belonged to them now. But the Dragon said to the Tiger that since both of them cannot bring up the child together as they lived in different places he will bring up the child under his protection and blessings as their own descendant. Further the Dragon said that the two of them (i.e. the Tiger and the child) might commit mistakes against each other and kill one another in the near future, so the Dragon asked the Tiger to swear to the child before him that he will not harm the child. Accordingly the Tiger swore saying, “My human grandson, if I, your grandfather happen to kill you mistakenly let your gods who create you kill me. But even if I die let your gods re-incarnate me from my bones in the next re-birth” (Katu mamashi unga-o napu keina ihongnga nangta thet-man a-lechu, katu navon choih ngeina napu keita that shuh-o, chutihleiko napu keichu voihai thileko voihai saruh ha navon choih ngeina ringthou pishi suh-o). Similarly, the boy also swore to the Tiger after which both bid farewell by slightly bowing at each other and parted.

The Dragon Becomes the Principal Guardian God of the Heavenly Child: Then, the Dragon took the child to the Heavenly abode where the seven powerful celestial gods live, and requested the Heavenly king and the Earthly queen to release the Sun, the Moon, the Storm, the Fire and others from since he had found their beloved son beside a brook, otherwise all the lower gods and human beings would die of suffocation. On hearing the good news the Heavenly king and the Earthly queen granted the Dragon’s wish and the world was restored to normalcy. Thus, on the basis of the decree the Dragon became the
Principal Guardian God and the first mythical ancestor of the Heavenly and the Earthly gods’ child “Ka-chokte / Ka-choite”.

The Dragon Names the Heavenly Child, Kachokte (Kachoite): The Dragon King then took the child to his cave and gave him a name. He said “My dear grandson since I, your grandfather, have brought you this far from the brook by holding you and stirring the gods, you will need a name to identify your settlement later when you have many descendants. So, I have named you as, “Ka-chokte/Ka-choite” meaning, ‘the child that I held or stirred’ (Katupu nangchu apuna kuiput kuilei yaiya kachokka kaluih phaosouchu, katu naramingangchu natu-nate ngei pha-mungtinga dangnata apuna naraming “Kachokte or Kachoite” ta bohshingnge). Henceforth, the descendants of Ka-chokte or Kachoite became known as Chokte = Choite = Shote = Zote = Chawte = Chote and Chothe.

Kachokte Marries Thanidam: After many years Kachokte or Kachoite grew up to be a strong, young handsome man, but the Dragon King seeing him always alone felt sympathy and so, decided to find a suitable girl for him. Hence, after a long search he finally found a girl who was the secret daughter of the Moon and the Sun gods. The Dragon approached his friends, the Moon and the Sun gods, and sought the hand of their beautiful daughter for Kachokte with an assurance that he will bless and protect them as his own children throughout their lives. The Moon and the Sun gods became subservient to the proposal and so the Dragon brought the girl along with her helpers across the big river on his back and introduced her to Ka-chokte (Kachoite). The Dragon on this day itself gave her a name telling her that since her parents the Moon and Sun were very apprehensive and worried when he initially approached them, but since they are now happy, he will name her by taking both her parents names as, “Tha-Ni-dam” (Thanidam) literally, ‘the Moon and Sun are alright’. Thus, Thanidam was named, and thereafter she marries Ka-chokte’s and became his wife.

Beginning of Veneration, Divination and Ritual: Later on the Dragon King (Ruipi Santai or Lungchungpa or Pakhangpa) called upon the two grandchildren and instructed them on the basic socio-religious and cultural norms that they should adhere to in the future. Accordingly, he first asked them to venerate to the rock before they gathered any food
(cloud shoots or the dew) growing ‘above the rock’ (Lung-chung) by invoking both their parents’ names i.e. Thangvan rengpa - Shimle rengnu and Thapa - Ninu and allowing them to gather food every morning. Secondly, the Dragon brought a rooster and a hen, and explained that if the rooster crowed they would know that it was morning and that he was awake, and that the hen would lay about 15-16 eggs, it would be helpful for them in many ways. So, if they needed anything from him in future they should always offer a chicken by cutting into seven meat shares (salam sari), only then would he be pleased and oblige their request. Thirdly, the Dragon asked them to consult with the chicken-leg divination (Aike-jan) if they wanted to know the signs of his approval or disapproval to their request, then, if the right leg of the fowl overlapped the left leg it would indicate a positive sign but if the left leg overlapped the right it would indicate a negative sign, and the degree of his approval and disapproval would depend on the nature and degree of overlapping. Later, it says that he also taught them how to harvest and adopt some customary norms so that they would be able to know the passing of the seasons, months and years.

**Descendants of Chothe (Ka-chokte and Thanidam):** Accordingly, it is said that Ka-chokte (Kachoite) and Thanidam became prosperous and bore five sons and two daughters. But another version said it was seven sons. They are (1) Hiyang (Khiyang), (2) Yuhlung, (3) Makan, (4) Marim, (5) Athao, (6) Parpa and, (7) Rangshai, and the two daughters are; (1) Singinluh Singinthum and (2) Chonginglu Chongingchong. The first version said seven children while the second version makes nine children altogether. Accordingly the Dragon King after carefully examining each of them after birth, he named and blessed them. Hence they became the first descendants of the Chothe clans.

It is said that the Dragon named the first son as Aihung (lit. rooster’s crow) because he was born at dawn when the rooster crowed and told his parents that he is named as Keyang (Khiyang/Khiang/Hiyang) meaning, ‘relief after parturition’ as his mother relieved herself after giving birth, and that his name will also bear his clan’s (phung) title. Thus, the first son came to be known as Aihung Khiyang (Hiyang). Similarly, the Dragon named the second son Zurung/Zulung/Yulung/Yuhlung (lit. intoxicated with wine) because he was born when his parents were brewing wine (Zu) and were drunk. But the Dragon also assured his parents that he would grow up to be intelligent, a capable leader and a good administrator because of his calmness. Likewise, the third son was named, Makan (one who stops the
fight) because he was born at the time when his father was stopping the fight between his two elder brothers i.e. Aihung and Zulung. The Dragon remarked that the child would be a great craftsman as his hands move constantly. Since, the fourth son was born when they were happy and having fun the Dragon named him Mareem/Marim (merry or happy) and assured that the baby would grow up to be a great theimpu (priest or magician) where all the gods and human beings would fear him because he was sound asleep when the parents brought him. The fifth son was named as Athao (fatty or oily) because he was born during the spring festival when his mother was preparing a special dish with linseed oil (Saningtha sathao tha kamma soiya amleiya) to offer to the gods as part of their custom, so the Dragon assured them that he would grow up to be a great warrior.

Later two sons i.e. the sixth child was named as Parpa (blooming) because he was born when the flowers were blooming and assured them that he will be wild and free. The seventh child was named as Rangshai/Riangshai meaning, erection of a stone, as he was born during the time of man-animal conflict, where the Dragon assured that he would grow up to be in the forefront in times of war to defend his people.

Since, the sixth or eighth child was a daughter; she was named as Sheinu Shingingluh Shingingthum (long sweet-scented linseed) by the Dragon assuring her parents that whatever food items she prepared with her hands would always taste good and pleasant, since she appeared quiet and composed with her folded hands, even in her mother’s womb. The last seventh or ninth child was called Chongnginluh Chongnginchong (wealthy and prosperous). Since she was born when all of them were happy and content with their lives the Dragon assured that she would grow up to be a very beautiful girl, like an emerald and she would be creative and an excellent weaver which was indicated by her palm. These are some of the prominent personal characteristics the Dragon King endowed and blessed the first descendants of the Chothe with.

**Dragon Arranged Marriages:** With the passage of time the sons and daughters of Kachokte and Thanidam grew up and the Dragon King arranged marriages for each of them accordingly. They say that Aihung, the eldest son married Shinrung, Zurung/Yulung married Paihudam, Makanpa married Theishinni, Marimpa married Tuanshinni and Athaopa married Neiamni. But the wives of Parpa and Rangshaipu cannot be ascertained.
The Dragon’s Blessing: It is said when the Dragon finished providing each of them with a wife he called them one by one and blessed each one according to their own inborn personal traits, attributes and charisma which the Chothe believe is still visible amongst the members of each clan. Aihungpa Khiyang, the first the eldest son was blessed with an assurance to be his right man who would shoulder every responsibility by overseeing the welfare of his people and decide internal issues as the head of the lineage/tribe on his behalf. The Dragon then blessed Zulung/Yuhlung saying that he would become a potential leader and chief of his people since he had the diplomatic skill and so he would assist his elder brother in decision making. However, the Dragon cautioned him that since he was clever and intelligent he would definitely have some jealous enemies who would obstruct his path but he would outwit them. In case of any serious trouble he would personally come and help him. Further, the Dragon instructed him to give the chicken’s liver and heart to his elder brother in any sacrificial offerings. Similarly, the Dragon blessed Makanpa and told him that he should take the magical strength of his grandfather the Tiger (Kamkeirangpa) and provide all the necessary weapons like swords and spears to all his kin members so that they would be able to defend their country with his powerful weapons. Besides, the Dragon asked him to make sacrificial offerings to the Tiger at the beginning of every year so that his weapons would remain strong like the jaws and claws of the Tiger and would bring his people back home after battle. Further, the Dragon suggested that if he maintained a close relationship with the Tiger by offering gifts annually the Tiger would reveal his secret techniques of warfare and also improve his craftsmanship, and so also his heavy heart and depressed mind would be unfolded and he would live a prosperous life with many descendants. But the Dragon cautioned him that the lower gods and neighbouring people would together wage wars against them out of envy, and so, if he wanted to be successful in such battles he would have to perform the annual rite to the Tiger since the power and strength of his weapons lie with the Tiger.

The Dragon then called upon the fourth son Mareempu (Marim) and told him that he would be the priest of his people because he has been blessed from birth with the power to dispel and cast away evil spirits with his powerful magical charms, and that his magic would be one of the most powerful of all mankind and even the gods would fear him. He was also reminded to perform all the necessary rites and rituals according to the divination instructed to him. Likewise the Dragon also said to the fifth son Athaopa that since he is strong and
brave he would be a great warrior, and therefore he should defend and protect his village in the absence of his brothers so that savage and barbaric people would not be able to enter the village. Moreover, his descendants would enjoy fame and popularity by outshining others and his daughters would be well known for their beauty.

Like the sons of Ka-choite and Thanidam, their daughters were also blessed by the Dragon. The Dragon said that Shinginluh Shingingthum would be like the grandmother of the house, and whatever food or drinks she prepared would always taste good and pleasant and no one would be able to compete with her in quality and taste. Similarly, the Dragon blessed Chongnginluh Chongnginchong and told her that she would be creative and weave beautiful clothes for her brothers and kin, and the first cloth would have to be named as “Amtin-amvai or Awa-ampi” meaning, ‘pure bright motif’ or ‘mother of all bright motifs’ and the rest could be named according to their motif.

The First Ancestors of the Chothe: Thereafter, it is said that the first ancestors of Chothe had many children. Shangthun (the rice carrier) was believed to be the eldest son of Aihung Khiyang. Tangkip, the eldest son of Zurung was considered to be the first leader and chief or Hulak of Chothe. Kansuh Kanrung the best craftsman of the people was believed to be the eldest son of Makan. Lakung or Rukung became the first theimpu (priest or magician) was considered as the eldest son of Marim. It is said that the fifth son, Athoupa had three sons, viz. Theirang, Mushin and Tubei.

Preparation inside the Cave: Many years later, the cave became overpopulated and congested so the Dragon King asked the giant monkey to remove the slab of rock that covered the opening of the cave, so that they could come out and live on the surface of the earth freely. Accordingly, the monkey opened the cave and the people of the Chothe began to move out but soon the Tiger, Kamkeirangpa began to kill them because he could not recognise them as his descendants. So, all the surviving Chothe returned to the cave and the monkey immediately closed the opening of the cave. Henceforth, they lived for another seven years inside the cave again and during those days the Dragon told them his plans of how to overcome the ferocious Tiger and how they were supposed to live later. So, the Dragon asked Chongnginluh Chongnginchong, the youngest daughter to weave a cloth copying his pattern or stripes and wear it so that they might dupe the Tiger from attacking
them. Then, he asked Shingning luh Shinginthum to brew wine (zu) for him and his friend, the Tiger. He also told Kansuh Kanrung, the eldest son of Makanpa to make swords and spears. Finally, the Dragon King assured his people that he would come and live with them when they would lead a prosperous and well established life.

**The Mythical Cave (Huipithoranga):** Thus, after seven years the Dragon once again instructed the giant monkey, the guardian of the cave to open the cave. When the cave was opened Kansuh Kanrung of Makan wrapped in the ava-ampi shawl first sneaked out and faced the Tiger by holding his sword in his right hand and offering the wine (zu) to the Tiger. He told the Tiger that the wine was a gift from the Dragon King (Ruipi Santai rengpa) his friend. Kansuh also told the Tiger that his headgear and his body patterns i.e. his ava-ampi shawl motif matched with his body pattern, and so also it was similar with the stripes of his grandfather the Dragon King. While the Tiger was baffled, bewildered, drunk and confused about the patterns, Kansuh promptly told the Tiger that they belonged to the same clan since both their patterns are similar, and asked the Tiger why he wanted to kill him and his people. After convincing the Tiger of their oneness, Kansuh asked the Tiger to swear that in case if he (the Tiger) happens to kill Kansuh and his descendants in the near future all his thirty-two teeth would fall and so would it be with him too if he (Kansuh) killed and ate his (the Tiger) descendants. While Makan Kansuh Kanrung was conversing and distracting the Tiger all the Chothe men and women come out of the cave and that is how they began to live on the surface of the earth. Henceforth, the cave was known as “Huipithoranga/ Hurpithoranga” (lit. the cave where the five brothers came out).³

**The First King Tangkip Yulung:** It is said that as soon as they began to settle on the surface of the earth there arose a leadership conflict amongst the eldest sons of the every first generation. Lakung Marim claimed leadership on the grounds that he had cast away the evil forest spirits with his magical power from the chosen settlement. Theirang Thao claimed leadership for killing the Tiger, Kansuh Kanrung Makan for outwitting the Tiger and Tangkip because of the assurance given by the Dragon King. As they could not come to a consensus, all agreed to a bet that whosoever sees the Sun first on the next morning whether elder or younger would be declared as their first king or chief. Accordingly, when the rooster crowed at dawn all the five brothers went in different directions in the darkness
to see the dazzling Sunlight. *Kansuh Kanrung Makan* went towards west, *Lukung Marim* towards north and *Theirang Thao* on the south. *Tangkip Zulung* went east and climbed up on the top of a banyan tree, and found the morning’s sunrise first. Therefore, on the basis of the agreement *Tangkip Zulung* became the first king (*A-reng*) of the Chothe people. Accordingly, it is said the Dragon instructed *Lukung Marimpa* the priest to perform the sacrificial offerings to the seven celestial great gods and also seek the chicken-leg divination on *Tangkip*’s coronation.

**From Myth to Legend:** According to Chothe village elders, a popular folktale called ‘*Shangtum shang*’ describes an event that occurred during their migration. It says, the bundle of paddy (rice) given by the Dragon King to *Shangtum*, the eldest son of *Aihung Khiyang*, was lost during their journey, stolen by a rat. As they were in trouble, they reprimanded the Forest God and through his advice they smoked out the rat with chillies, and got back their paddy. Similarly, at another stage of their migration, another bundle of their paddy was carried away to the other side of a big river while crossing it. Being helpless, they called the rat for help, and the rat brought it back for them. It is said that it took them seven years to complete the paddy plantation, when the paddy plants began to fill its ears, *Lungkung Marim* offered the “*Shanghong lethoi*” (thanks giving rite of paddy) in honour of their Powerful gods. Not forgetting the rat, the Chothe also put aside a small basket of paddy for the rats after each harvest; if this is not done they believe that the rats attack their rice-burn. This belief and rite was institutionalised and is still practiced by some Lamlanghupi.

There are many genealogical myths and legends relating to their sojourn during their pre-historic migration period similar to some other ethnic groups. Since there is no any written record or work done on the Chothe pre-history, it is very difficult to clearly distinguish or differentiate between their myths and legends. However, on the basis of their phase of migrations their socio-religious history may be broadly divided into pre-history (myth) and history (legend). Their genealogical myth (origin) begins from *Huipithoranga* the mythical cave (place of origin) to *Lungleh-Waishu* (*Lungleh* in Mizoram) and up to *Lungsukbung* (*Nungsuk ching*) near Leimatak river basin (south-western region of Manipur).
4.2 Brief Analysis of the Chothe Genealogical Myth

There are several important elements that reflect the many religious aspects from this genealogical myth apart from various other factors of socio-cultural and historical accounts. Some of the prominent features that have religious significance under this study are:

1. The *Chothe genealogical myth* portrays how the world originated and living organisms and creatures came into being stage after stage before mankind’s existence. According to this, in the beginning the empty world was filled only with energy or spirits and with the combination of the seven basic cosmic and natural elements the first form of life began from water. The first water creature was believed to be a fish (*Ngavok* = dogfish, *Spe. Channa punctatus*) then, come the land creatures like apes (*Ajong* = monkey). The last stage in the creation by the Heavenly Supreme gods is believed to be mankind (*Mamashee*).

2. The Chothe genealogical also describes its genealogical origin. The Chothe mythically believe that they are the descendants or progenitors of *Ka-Chokte* and *Thanidam*; the son of the Heavenly (*Thangvan rengpa*) and the Earthly Queen (*Shimleinu*), and the daughter of the Sun (*Ninu*) and the Moon (*Thapa*) gods, and the Dragon King (*Lungchungpa*) as the Principal Guardian God, the protector and benefactor of the people. Thus, the tribe’s name, “Choite or Shote or Zote or Chawte or Chote” is derived from *Ka-Chokte/Ka-Choite*. It also describes their primitive cave lives at *Huipi/Hurpi/Chinnlung*.

3. Besides, the Dragon (*Lungchunpa* or *Ruipi-santai*) being considered as the Principal Guardian God, the sole protector and defender of the Chothe, the Dragon is also considered as mediator between the Supreme or Almighty Heavenly-Earthly Gods and the mankind. Of all the Celestial elements, the Chothe believe the Heaven (Sky) God as the most powerful god, known to them as *Thangvan rengpa* or *Chungpathein*, to the Meitei sometimes he is known as *Pu Soraren*, the controller of human destiny. Since the rest of the cosmological or celestial gods are invisible, the Dragon god is considered as the mediator between the two worlds. G. Elliot Smith (1919) in his book *Evolution of the Dragon* says that in China the Dragon is considered as the earliest mythological beast symbolising fertility of the earth and power of the emperor. According to the Chinese myth there are fifteen meaningful gods in order of personal involvement. One of it is the *Lung-Wang* or the Dragon King, the Ruling God of the sea because he controls the
weather especially the rain. He appears in the human form but can transform into a Dragon, especially when he makes rain and thunder. There are many folktales about his colourful life reflecting like a rainbow and an elaborate golden palace beneath the sea and his symbol seems to be one of the most popular symbols found in almost all ancient Chinese temples (Channa 1998: 143-144, 156). Similarly, the Chothe also address the Rain God or Sea God as “Lung-chung-pa” (lit. as the god above the head or rain). The term ‘rain’ in Chothe is “Ru” or “Lù”, and ‘above’ is “chung” or “van”. Like the Chinese, the Chothe also worship and revere the Dragon God as their Supreme Guardian God on earth since early days. The deep-pink or light reddish colour motif of their main traditional shawl “Awa-ampi” is assumed to be the pattern and colour taken from the Dragon-Python God. Likewise, the “Rainbow” the radiance of Dragon is considered as their emblem.

4. Like any other religions of the world, the Chothe religion also believe that certain numbers are very important, sacred and profane to them. To the Chothe the number “seven” (7) plays a very significant role especially in their ritualistic activities because they believe in the seven Celestial elements or natural gods identified as (1) The Heaven, (2) The Earth, (3) The Sun, (4) The Moon, (5) The Fire, (6) The Air or Storm, and (7) The Water or Rain, in which all forms of lives depend for their survival. The religious philosophy behind these seven Celestial or natural elements is that all these elements together created the human being, shaped and formed the world for their existence, and their seven clans represent the seven Celestial or natural elements. Even the Khasi of Meghalaya consider number seven as important in their religious affairs because they are the descendants of original seven household units “Ka khun Ki Ksiew U Hynniewtrep” (Nongkynrih 2002: 131). The belief in numbers as sacred or profane is found in almost all walks of life from individual to cultural perspectives. For example, the Christian believe that triple six (666) is the number of the beast or Satan. To the Hindu astrologers all numbers have their own significance depending on the individual personality (rashi). Likewise, for some cultural groups ‘odd numbers’ like one, three, five, seven, nine are considered good and sacred, while ‘Even Numbers’ like two, four, six, eight are bad or profane. In any Chothe ritual activity, the ritualistic items should be in odd number like, one, three, five or seven reflecting the concerned cosmic-elements to be addressed.
5. The genealogical myth with the Dragon and the Tiger portrays the nature of conflicts in life. The conflicts and mistrusts that exist between the two animals are believed to have passed on to human beings and they continue to exist in different forms even today. Therefore, the Chothe believe that if two good friends have opposite characters like the Dragon and Tiger they will always be in conflict. The Chothe Lamlanphupi elders; M. Khundo and H. Ibochou gave an interesting story about the relationship between the two animals. They say some twenty years ago particularly in the months of March-April and before full-moon they used to see a Tiger’s footprints that was believed to have come down from the western Leimaton hills to their sacred-grove to pay homage to Lungchungpa or Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa. On such nights the atmosphere is unusually still; by midnight the village dogs bark and howl in the direction of the sacred grove sensing the Tiger.

6. The Chothe still believe in the Dragon’s blessings bestowed upon each of their first ancestors with distinctive personality characteristics. Such distinctive personality traits and charismatic characters are claimed to exist in some of the clan’s members even today. For example, most of the Makan men are said to be good craftsmen and artistic while their girls are strong and hard working compared to other clans members. The Thao men are brave and courageous and outshine others in sports and games, and their girls are considered beautiful and seductive. For example, Thaowon Samtharnu (Nunghil Chaibi) wife of King Charairongpa was said to be exceptionally beautiful. Yuhlung (Zulung) men are generally considered gentle, humble and diplomatic and often become the first person to obtain a new status while their girls normally seem to control their husbands. Khiyang (Hiyang) men often occupy high status in the village and their girls are brave and defensive. Mareem (Marim) has the record of being powerful and skilful in magic and their girls are said to be introverts and clever. Parpa men being born free during spring season love leisure and an easy life while their girls are said to be hardworking, bold and dominating. While the Rangshai men are considered argumentative and ill-tempered but their girls gentle and soft.

7. The most significant belief of the Chothe is in the assurance given by the Dragon King (Lungchungpa) before they came out of their mythical cave, that he will come and dwell with them when they live a prosperous and well settled life. These prophesies are believed to have been fulfilled and have manifested themselves after many centuries in
the person of Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa (Nongda Leiren Pakhangpa) the legendary king of Manipur. Signifying the life after death or the existence of soul. But initially they did not recognise him as their Divine-incarnate and ill-treated him during his childhood as they were unaware of the specific time, place, how and when he would appear to them. The Chothe Genealogical Myth of avatar or re-incarnation is in part seen similar with the birth of Jesus Christ and also to the Lord Krishna. This law of similarity of myth is explained by Claude Levi Strauss (1972) as the universal law of human thought in his study of myth.

4.3 The Legend of Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa

The Chothe genealogical myth is based on the Dragon and Tiger Myth like most of the Sino-Tibetan speaking groups of people. The Chothe firmly believe in the cosmology and ancestral-spirits. They believe to have migrated from Huipithoranga a mythical cave to Lungleh-Waishu (Lungleh in Mizoram), and then moved to the present region. As the legend begins where the myth ends, the Chothe legend also starts with the legendary King “Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa” or “Nongda Leiren Pakhangpa” probably believed to have existed before 700 A.D. The Chothe folklore elucidates the genealogical history of Pakhangpa but the later part of his life story is not very clear to them since they do not maintain a written record. This legendary King Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa is considered as the avatar or Divine-incarnate of Pu Lungchungpa or the Dragon-python their Principal Heavenly Guardian God, the protector and benefactor of the people. This legend re-instils the Chothe mythical religious beliefs and practices. According to them Pakhangpa, their Divine-incarnate or Supreme Guardian God is always with them and His earthly resting abode is identified with a sacred-grove or banyan tree. The present sacred-grove of Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa is at Khuman an old settlement of Lamlanghupi village, Bishnupur.

Though the Chothe genealogical myth is similar to other indigenous communities of Manipur especially the so-called “Old-Kuki” tribes like Kharam, Koireng, Kom, Anal, Lamkang, Maring, Tarao, Moyon, Monshang, Aimol and Chiru in its origin, the acceptance of the Chothe Pakhangpa as the Divine-incarnate of the Dragon-Python God is not found among these tribes. The Chothe consider Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa as the reincarnate of their god the Dragon-Python God (Pu Lungchungpa) and revere and worship him as their ancestor god for his extra-ordinary greatness as a king and for his mystical personality. He is
known to various Meitei clans by eighteen different cognomens of Pakhangba and the most common one is Nongda Leiren Pakhangba. Like the Chothe, the Meitei also revere and worship him as their mythical and first historical king of the Imphal (Kangla) kingdom but call him Nongda Leiren Pakhangba/pa though he is originally known as Chothe Thangmei or Thangwai Pakhangpa. It is important to note that many among the Meitei are confused and ignorant about the real identity of his parents and childhood history because the available written records are mostly about his kingdom.

Therefore, in connection to the above, some Meitei scholars have tried to link their Meitei mythical story of “Atiya Guru Sidaba” or “Kuptreng and Sentreng” with Pakhangpa but in futility as they failed to establish the Pakhangpa’s origin and his parentage. The various contesting opinions about Pakhangpa and his cognomens from different sections of Meitei further denied an acceptable version about the genealogical identity of Pakhangpa even within themselves as the constructed evidences of his origin and parentage are incoherent with the folklores. Many historians have speculated about his origin and parentage by constructing various myths and legends around his mysterious personality in different ways but the origin and parentage of Pakhangpa is still shrouded in mystery in the context of the religious history of Manipur. This prevailing speculation is pointed out by Prof. Gangmumei Kabui, a renowned historian of Manipur: “Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was a prince of mysterious origin, opinions about his origin and parentage runs from him being an Aryan prince from upper Burma to an adventurer from the Brahmaputra valley or the Himalayas to Divine-incarnate to put an end to anarchy in the land or an illegitimate child of a clan chief, made a ruler by his foster father” (2003: 75). Further G. Kabui says that, “the chronology of Pakhangpa is one of the most controversial issues in the history of Manipur” (ibid: 90). This is probably because of his enigmatic personality. But the Chothe consider Pakhangpa as the avatar or Divine-incarnate of the Dragon-Python God born by a Chothe lady. Therefore, the Chothe adore, revere and worship him as their Ancestor God the Supreme Principal Guardian God the protector and benefactor of the people.

4.3.1 The Oral History of Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa

The legend of Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa’s origin, parentage and his background in the oral history as described by different Chothe village elders; H. Thambaljao, Y. Maipak, Y. Tomalsingh, H. Jaikan, Pr. Roushi, Mk. Neilut, Pr. Wailum, Pr. Herachou and
Pr. Chandbabu, besides many other elders and leaders is lucidly explained below. In the subsequent discussion, the oral history clears some confusion found in the CTP, MNL manuscripts and other literature relating to the history of Pakhangpa. According to Chothe oral history:

“Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa was the son of Daishin the eldest daughter of Yulung Surou (also known as Tarang, Nungkarakpa and Sanarakpa) one of the greatest chiefs of the Chothe. Surou had two beautiful daughters namely, Daishin and Joushin. As he was getting old, their Principal Guardian God Pu Lungchungpa or Ruipi Santai or the Dragon-Python felt sympathy on him because he was the only descendant left in his family line after all his kin members died fighting in different battles. Moreover, Surou was a good man, so, the Dragon-Python decided to bless him. Therefore, the Dragon-Python God transformed into human form and disguised himself into a strange young handsome man and appeared before Daishin in her parents’ jhum field while she was working. This mysterious young handsome man, who introduced himself as stranger, started frequently visiting Daishin in the jhum field. Thereafter, she fell in love with him. Later, when her father Surou came to know that she was impregnated by this mysterious young man, and she could not specifically identify him, he got infuriated and restless. In order to find out whether he is a demigod or human being, her parents asked her to pierce the mixture package containing turmeric, garlic, ginger, snail, etc. when the mysterious young man came to visit her again in the jhum’s hut. Daishin, on her parents’ advice pierced the mixture package and when the liquid dropped down on the mysterious young man, he could not bear the smell and was burnt by the mixture. He rushed to the nearby brook and disappeared forever, testifying that he was not human, but a divine being. Joushin the younger sister, who was working in the same field saw from a distance the strange young man transform into python (the tail) when she suddenly happened to look out in response to her sister’s screams. When they reached their home Joushin informed her parents about the incident. On learning the news, Daishing was prohibited by her parents from going to the jhum field from that day onwards, Daishing spent the rest of her days weeping. It is also said that she escaped many times from her house and took refuge among the neighbouring villages expecting to find her strange lover but he never showed up anymore. However, her lover appeared in her dreams assuring his existence and protecting her and the unborn child with different signs, directing and instructing her about the do’s and don’ts of food habits and other religious taboos, which
she should observe during her pregnancy. After nine months Daishin gave birth to a son called Thangmei. But later because of his protruding tail he was nicknamed as Meingai (tail-man). Since the mysterious young man did not appear anymore after the incident to claim Daishin as his wife, Thangmei was considered as an illegitimate child by the society. Therefore, great Surou, in order to save his image and status, attempted to kill the child three times not knowing about the child’s divinity and supernatural powers given by the Dragon-Python God.

In the first attempt, Surou took Thangmei (Meingai) into a deep forest and left him alone to die. But his mysterious father, the Dragon-Python God appeared as strange old man and rescued him with his old friend, the Tiger King (Kamkeirang rengpa) who helped him take the child to the village area. It is believed that when a tiger approaches the child’s cries worsen but it stops after seeing the waging tail of the tiger. So, the child slowly followed the tiger’s waging tail and left him in the middle of the village road. As soon as the tiger left, the child began to cry and this was heard by some villagers who identified him and took him to his mother. As Thangmei grew up he became notorious and often created problems among his friends, especially while playing, because of his extraordinary strength and power. So, his friends often refused to play with him. Therefore, he always stayed alone and sometimes played with his grandfather.

The second attempt was made when Surou and his grandson Thangmei went to a forest. They said that when they were climbing a steep mountain Surou on the pretext of his foot-sliping pushed down a big boulder with his leg to kill Thangmei but the child escaped by deflecting the boulder with his hand.

Surou made the third attempt when the young innocent boy Thangmei Pakhangpa followed him into the deep forest to fell trees. It is said that when the tree which Surou was cutting was about to fall, he asked the boy to stand in the way of the falling tree and catch hold of it. Accordingly the boy did so by going in direction of the falling tree. So, Surou returned home thinking that young Thangmei Pakhangpa might have been crushed to death by the tree. As the boy did not return home till late evening, his worried mother asked her father about her son but her father told her that the young boy had left ahead of him and he must be playing with his friends. So, his worried mother searched the whole village but could not find him. But surprisingly, late in the evening, the young Thangmei returned home with a log of the tree and asked his grandfather where to put the log, as suggested, he
dropped it down at their front courtyard. That night, young Thangmei told his mother the strange dreams he had during the day while he was crushed to asleep by the falling tree. Hearing the story, his mother realised that it was his mysterious father the Dragon-Python God, so she ask him not to be afraid of it nor disclose it to anyone.

As the pressure of the village was mounting on Surou, the village chief, to decide on the fate of his daughter for bearing an illegitimate child, asked his daughter Daishin and young grandson Thangmei Pakhangpa (Meingai) to the leave the village. He gave them a hen and a rooster, and instructed them to move north and perform an egg-divination (artuisan) and settle at the place where the rooster crowed. Accordingly, it is believed that Daishin and young Thangmei moved north and settled near Langthabal on a small hill-slope where the rooster crowed. They also said that later his grandfather sometimes visited them carrying with him some ropes, bamboo baskets, fat for lighting and some clothes for them. But during the inter-tribal wars in the northern region, Thangmei and his mother moved down south and took refuge at Moirang. In due course, he had become one of the greatest kings of Moirang after Thangwai Kongding. Legend says that after he consolidated all the small kingdoms in the south, he marched north and established a new kingdom by defeating his rivals and subjugating all other neighbouring groups, who thereby became the first sovereign ruler of entire Manipur valley as “Pakhangpa”.

Though Chothe oral history does not give much information about Pakhangpa after he and his mother left the village but it is clearly revealed in the MNL that Pakhangpa (Meingai) was a great warrior in Moirang commonly known as, “Thangwai Atengba” meaning, ‘an aide of King Thangwai Kongding’. Later he succeeded Thangwai Kongding and became one of the greatest kings of Moirang and acquired the titled “Thingkri Nachouba” after defeating the great Chothe King Natoi Nachoupa in the fierce battle of Chothe Nungsuk ching (Lungsuk). Thereafter, one by one he conquered, consolidated and subjugated all the small southern kingdoms into one big principality of Moirang. Later he mobilized a huge number of soldiers from the south, and then marched towards the north and defeated the Khaba-nganba (probably Maring) and brought them under his direct control. Pakhangpa then brought Moirang principality of the south, the south-western kingdoms (Chothe, Kharam and Koireng), the north-west kingdoms of Luwang (Liangmei) and the north-east kingdoms of Angom (probably of Tangkhul) under one administration.
Thus, Pakhangpa became the first Sovereign-Ruler of the entire Manipur valley and the adjoining hill-kingdoms. According to some Chothe elders, their folktale mentions Pakhangpa’s relatives and three elders assisting him on his coronation day as per the custom and tradition. This could be the reason why tribal participation is a must in a Meitei king’s coronation ceremony and other important ritualistic ceremonies (Kabui 2003: 84; also see Chothe chief’s coronation ceremony in Chapter - 3).

4.4 Analysis of Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa

To construct the socio-religious history of Chothe in the mythical person of Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa (their ancestor god, the avatar of Pu Lungchungpa the Dragon-Python God) and that of Nongda Leiren Pakhangpa/ba (historical king of Manipur) to be one and the same person, we need to de-construct the socio-religious histories of the Meitei mythology from the available literature and compare the contrasting views with that of the Chothe oral history and the CTP manuscripts with respect to his identity i.e. origin, childhood background and genealogy or parentage for its authenticity.

4.4.i Literature on Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa

There is a very small amount of literature available on Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa which gives the account of his origin, parentage and background. The available writings are the record materials of Kh. Manjou, Chothe Athouna (Chothe’s origin), the ancient sacred manuscript of Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa (CTP), Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (MNL), Cheitharol Kumpaba (ChK) and few remarks found in some books written by various British administrators and scholars like; J. Shakespeare (1912), William Shaw (1929), M. Kirti (1989) and K. Mangpu (2002). Except for Kh. Manjou’s manuscript the all rest are written by outsiders. The CTP sacred manuscript is written in ancient Meitei script (Meitei-Mayek) in paragraph form on a folded scroll paper accord with 167 paragraphs without the author’s name. On its reverse is the transliteration into Bengali script. This CTP manuscript along with some sacred archaic materials is preserved successively by the village deities’ keeper (leihu jokpa) of Lamlanghupi Village Council. There is also a copy of the translation of the original manuscript written in Bengali script which is retained by each village chief successively along with the two celebrated necklaces related to the folktale, Shantheihoi and Yangngeir (Lungthun maythanu), (see Pic.18).
A closer look into Chothe oral history, the manuscripts of \textit{CTP, MNL} and other literature available seems to unveil one of the most controversial socio-religious histories of Manipur: the origin and identity of \textit{Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa} or \textit{Meingai} or \textit{Thingkri Nachaoba} or the so called \textit{Nongda Leiren Pakhangba}, whose childhood and parents’ identity is shrouded in mystery.\textsuperscript{5} The above available literature may serve as the basis to fill up the incomplete history of the \textit{Pakhangpa} or the first Sovereign Ruler of Manipur. They also highlight the similar beliefs of the Chothe and Meitei in the realm of animism, ancestor-worship and socio-cultural relations since early days. Based on the Chothe oral history and other secondary sources we shall analyse the elements of Chothe Pakhangpa’s origin, identity and background, and also examine the identity of his parentage and his wife, Leima Sunurembi or Laisana and thereby re-construct the socio-religious history of Chothe and also the Meitei.

\textbf{4.4.ii \textit{Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa}: The Sacred Manuscript}

The sacred manuscript \textit{Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa} (\textit{CTP}) is in ancient language written in \textit{Meitei-Mayek} (script) by unknown author in 1870 A.D. The reverse side of the manuscript is the transcription of the same story in Bengali script. There is also an abridged text of the sacred manuscript written in Bengali script under the same title.\textsuperscript{6} Like any ancient manuscripts of the Meitei, the statements are in the form of questions, interrogative remarks and phrases which make it very difficult for readers to comprehend the semantics and syntax of the text. It is very cryptic, poetical and often in rhyme with deep underlying meanings.

The original \textit{CTP} sacred manuscript has 167 paragraphs. The manuscript starts with the introduction (Para: 1-2) that, \textit{Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa} is a sacred manuscript which records the origin and identity of the Chothe. The story is a very old history that had been destroyed during the Sanskritisation (Vaishnavism) movement and was hidden from public knowledge in the early part of the eighteenth century. The author has re-constructed it with much difficulty from a few reliable texts obtained after an extensive search. During his investigation tour the author met an old man, the elder son of Khaibam Yaimou Sagei (probably a priest) near Khujuman road (a village in Bishnupur). This man told him the story of Chothe Pakhangpa from ‘\textit{Tej Kumari}’ manuscript, but he found the story was incomplete. After searching further, he luckily met another man from Nagamapal (Imphal) and who provided him a very good ancient manuscript called ‘\textit{Sahui Loirempa Moirang}'}
“Kanglarol” that features more information about the history of Chothe Pakhangpa’s origin and identity”.

Hence, it is seen that the sacred original manuscript *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa* is one of the most important historical accounts of Pakhangpa compiled by him (anonymous author) based on oral history and other archaic materials with much difficulty (see Pic. 8 & 10). This manuscript is still preserved by the Lamlanghupi village council as a sacred document and is shown only to a few selective villagers on certain auspicious occasions after performing a very strict ritual. In other words, neither any researcher nor outsider has had any access to this manuscript till today except S.N. Khelchandra who abridged the sacred *CTP* manuscript.

The abridged text of the *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa* has ninety-three (93) paragraphs, translated by S.N. Khelchandra and the cover page in free translation reads:

“This is an important book which was initially written in ancient Meitei-Mayek (script) and rewritten into Bengali script. The writing was completed on Saturday, the 3rd of the first month of July-August 1870 A.D."

*(Aruba leirikne, Meitei ariba mayektna eirambadagi, Bangla mayekta ethokpane. Kristabda 1870, gi Thawan ahanba humni panba, thangja numitta eiba loijabane), (see Pic. 9 &11).*

The period given in the manuscript *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa* indicates that the anonymous author must have probably compiled and re-written it during the reign of King Chandrakriti (1850-1886) which is believed to have been destroyed during King Garib Niwaz or Pamheiba (1709-1748) during the Sanskritisation process.

The *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba* (MNL) specifically indicates that Pakhangpa was one of the greatest kings of Moirang in Chapter - 19, titled, ‘*Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa: Thinkgri Nachaoba*’. Since, the book does not record the period of any of the kings or dates of the events, some scholars consider it a collection of fables. But one cannot deny the large amount of invaluable information provided by this manuscript that describes holistically the early culture and history while some even argue that *MNL* is much earlier than the *Cheitharol Kumpaba* (Ch.K).

Since, *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa* (*CTP*) is considered a sacred manuscript of their legendary king it begins in ritualistic recitation form like an opening prayer, as shown;

The above excerpt reads: Hung! Hayehe; once in the kingdom of Chothe, Khamlang-Taopi (Daishin) the eldest daughter of Tarang (Surou) the village chief and Lenghoiinu queen of the hill people found their daughter mystically pregnant. The Dragon-Python God (Pu Soraren in Meitei) of the north-western hills while wandering around spotted Khamlang-Taopi in her parents’ jhum (yam field) and her beauty captivated his eyes. Therefore, the Dragon God transformed into like a young handsome Pong man and met her in the field (CTP-Para: 1, p.1). Thereafter, he developed intimacy with her and started frequently visiting her in the jhum field. They had a physical relationship, and Khamlang-Taopi was impregnated. Tarang was so hurt by Khamlang-Taopi’s pregnancy that he got angry with all the village youths for seducing and impregnating his daughter before he declared her marriageable. After being repeatedly reprimanded by parents to disclose the identity of her lover or the father of the unborn child, Khamlang-Taopi revealed that it was neither any of the Chothe boys nor any neighbouring youths from Keke Chaopapung (probably a village near Moirang), (CTP-Para: 2). Her parents became more doubtful and apprehensive about the identity of the young man i.e. his name, clan and village on hearing Khamlang-Taopi’s disclosure.

Therefore, in order to find out whether the stranger was a divine being or human, the angry parents told their daughter to hang a package containing mixtures of white linseed, onion, fresh yam, garlic, ginger, turmeric, snail and eel wrapped in the wild-yam leaves in the inner roof of the jhum hut just above his usual sitting place and pierce it when he comes to visit her (CTP-Para: 3, p.2);
chothe mareipung shanglou mathel lang ngambabu, thangpak mem man, thoiding
ngouja, panphuk panphoi, shoikari mayangba, thilhou, chanam, lilwai khomwai, shingkha
shingthum, yaimu yai-ngang, tharoi khoujao, ngaparum ngaril khangkabol)

So, when the young man visited her jhum hut and sat at his usual place he initially
sensed and expressed the unusual smell but Khamlang-Taopi convinced him that the smell
came from her lunch package. As instructed by her parents, Khamlang-Taopi pierced the
package secretly during their conversation; few drops of the liquid mixture fell on his body.
Being Divine (demigod) and endowed with some supernatural powers he could not bear the
smell and burn of the mixture on his body he immediately rushed to the nearby brook and
disappeared forever.7

According to the CTP sacred manuscript, Khamlang-Taopi was prescribed with
many do’s and don’ts of the food habits and other religious taboos in her dreams by the
stranger (her lover) as a result it is mentioned that she did not go out from her house for the
first four months of her pregnancy until she gave birth (Para: 28-32, p.16-18). The taboos
instructed in her dreams are discussed in the religious norms and taboo section in the
following chapter.

The CTP manuscript also states that Khamlang-Taopi (Daishin) gave birth to a son,
who was named as “Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa”. According to N. Vijalakshimi Brara,
Pakhangpa is said to have been born on Thursday, the 15th lunar day of the Inga month (15th
June) and all the Mangang worshipped their ancestor on this day (1998: 86). Further, the
Para: 32 of the CTP manuscript states that Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa was named on the
fifth day as instructed by the Dragon-Python God. This is in accordance to the Chothe
tradition (see, child naming ceremony). The Para: 32 of CTP sacred manuscript also
mentioned that Pakhangpa was referred as “Lairen Meitingu” (Python’s protruding tail)
especially by the Nangngoi people. According to the oral history “Meingai or Meitingte”
means, ‘a child with a protruding tail’. The protruding tail is believed to be the mark of his
divinity. This particular term is seen to be wrongly interpreted by the Meitei from a different
angle. According to them the term means, ‘Lord of the kings’. This wrong usage and its
misconception are clarified by S.N.A Parratt who states “the use of the term ‘Meetingnu’
(lit. Lord of the Meeteis) for ‘king’ indicates that the chronicle is essentially the repository
of the Meetei writing of history. It reflects the Meetei viewpoint against that of the other
yeks or clan groups, as well as of other peoples, probably pre-Meetei autochthones (like the

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Chakpa and the Loi) while others are today classified as ‘tribal’ (2005: 3). Similar to the Chothe oral version, M. Kirti also remarked that “another title for the king is Lairel Meidingu meaning, ‘Lord, straight tail’, Pakhangba, being the Lord of the snakes is better known as Meidingu” (1993: 55). The Para: 25 of the CTP abridged text in Bengali script or Para: 2 of the original CTP states that one of the greatest kings of Moirang was called as “Thingkri Nachaoba”. Before he was called as Thingkri Nachaoba he was known as “Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa” and his great uncle / foster father was called as “Thangwai Kongding Ahanba” and his mother was called as Thamoirempi the princess/queen of Chakha-khong Marimpa.8


In line with the oral history the CTP manuscript also describes the third attempt made by Tarang or Surou to kill the boy (Pakhangpa). According to the CTP manuscript Tarang cursed his grandson who neither knew his father’s identity nor clan to go and catch-hold of the huge falling tree, so that he might be crushed to death.

(Tarang makhoi shaona, pacha khangda shalai toukhangdaba-o nangbu pamel Uru tuple tare U-ngakluro (CTP-Para: 13, p.7).

According to CTP Para: 14-17, ‘Tarang returned home without the boy, but the young boy miraculously survived from the incident and surprisingly brought home the big log of the tree on his shoulder and dropped down in their courtyard. This astonished his grandfather Tarang or Surou. It is said that he narrated everything about the strange dreams he had to his mother when he was knocked off by the falling tree and fell asleep. He told his mother that an old man came in his dreams and told him to pick up some particular falling dry leaves found around the area and asked him to keep the leaves on his shoulder on the side that he would carry the log’. However, the manuscript does not specifically mention which particular types of plant or leaf it was, although the old man is believed to be his mythical father the Dragon-Python God in disguise. Daishin, from her son’s dream realized that it was her lover the Dragon-Python God that saved her son’s life. The manuscript also mentions that she had many strange dreams and visions from time to time foretelling and
warning her about certain future consequences. It also mentions that she was asked to perform a ritual (Khuiyum in Meitei) with seven (7) eggs in her dreams in case she was shaken or frightened and fell sick (CTP-Para: 20-22). This indicates the spiritual connections between Khamlang-Taopi (Daishin) and the Dragon-Python God who provides instructions in her dreams as he did not want to make himself visible.

In accordance to the above, the Chothe oral history says that young Thangmei Pakhangpa grew up to be extremely notorious and a trouble maker among his friends. Whenever they played with him he often landed up hurting them. His extraordinary strength and power surprised and horrified the villagers. Unable to bear the shame due to notoriety and illegitimacy of the child, Tarang or Surou asked his daughter Daishin to leave the village with her son and settle far in the north. He gave them a hen and a rooster and instructed them to settle at a place where the rooster crowed and also perform the egg divination (artui-san). As ordered by his grandfather Surou, young Pakhangpa and his mother left the village and marched north, whom they believed first settled at Langthabal (near Imphal) on a mound close to the lake since the rooster crowed and also performed the egg divination accordingly.⁹

4.4.iii Other Literature on Pakhangpa’s Parentage and Childhood

Other literature that describes Pakhangpa’s origin and parentage, and that supports the Chothe oral history and the CTP manuscript are written by; William Shaw (1929), M. Kirti Singh (1993), K. Mangpu (2001) and G. Shangkham (2006) to name few. Accordingly M. Kirti remarks that “The myth of Pakhangba recalls the association of the Meiteis with the Chothe of the Kuki groups of tribals” (1993: 153-154). The above very important statement on Pakhangpa’s origin, the identity of his mother and the origin of Meitei are precisely accentuated by William Shaw’s description, who wrote:

“There was a girl by the name Lenghoi or Nungmaidenga, who fell in love with a large snake, which resided near the village. She was of the ‘Chothe’ tribe of Old-Kukis. To others the snake appeared as a snake but to the girl it was a very handsome young man. Eventually she became pregnant by the snake and a male child was born to her. He grew up and all spoke of him as father-less at which he used to be ashamed. His mother told him not to mind that but to go and make friends with his father, the snake. The boy was not afraid and met the snake who he caught by the neck and the snake told him many wonderful things
that were to happen to the boy. The boy then went and told his mother of this and she gave eggs to perform the “Arhtuisan” when searching for a new site where he was to set up a new village. He tried Langthabal first but because of inauspicious omens he moved to the middle of the valley where, on performing the Arhtui-san, he found the place suitable and he founded a village there. Thus the Manipuris were originated. At that time they live like kakis and Nagas but later a Brahmin came from the south who so impressed them with his preaching that they took on their present religion” (Shaw 1929: 47-48).

Similarly Mangpu Kilong remarks that, “sometime in 700 A.D a Python-god fell in love with a lady - Lenghoi by name, of Chothe, a member of Old-Kuki who was renown as Pakhangpa” (2002: 42, 54). G. Shangkham was informed by Kharam her informant that the Meitei king (Pakhangpa) was, “the son born of the Chothe lady” (2006:45). Most of the descriptions provided by these scholars (including William Shaw) in their literature are believed to be authentic as far as the sources and their writings are concerned since they are obtained from reliable local folk based on their own oral history. However, as far as the origin of the Meitei is concerned it is believed that the Meitei is a conglomeration of various old tribes of proto-Tibeto-Burman speaking groups of Manipur formed by political, economic and matrimonial relationships started since many centuries.10

However, the oral history about young Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa and his mother after they left their village and settled at Langthabal, and how he became a powerful young man in the north, the cause of his movement toward south after his defeat by the Khaban-ganba, and his alliance with the Moirang king are very vague and obscure among the Chothe people because they do not maintain written records nor do they live together. Yet, this missing life history of Thangmei Pakhangpa in the Chothe oral history and his kingship at Imphal is found recorded in many documents. His existence at Langthabal in the north, his defeat by the Khaba-nganba and refuge at Moirang, and his mysterious personality as king of Imphal (Kangla) is described by Gangmumei Kabui and W. Ibohal Singh based on the historical materials like Cheitharol Kumpaba (ChK) besides a host of other scholarly material. His life and battles, as a great warrior and conqueror in the south, and also as the greatest king of Moirang, before he became the first sovereign king of Imphal Manipur valley is well described in Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (MNL). His origin and parentage, passionate romantic relationship with Sunurembi (his beloved wife) is well elaborated in the sacred manuscript Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa (CTP). The evidence available in the above
mentioned literature may clear some of the prominent features of doubt and confusion of Pakhangpa amongst various people of Manipur is discussed below.

The cause of Pakhangpa’s movement toward south, Kabui writes, “According to Chakpa Khunta Khunthok, Nongda Leiren Pakhangba, when he became of age, fought against the Khabas under the leadership of Khaba Nungchenba. In the struggle, Pakhangba was defeated by Khabas (Khaba-ngaanta) and Pakhangba was forced to take refuge in Moirang principality” (2003: 83). This apparently suggest that Chothe Pakhangpa, after being defeated by the Khaba-ngaanta the northern (Koubru) group, fled south and aided or made alliance probably with King Thangwai Kongding the elder son of former Moirang King Tushemba. Subsequently, Pakhangpa’s mother Khamlang-Taopi, being beautiful might have either agreed or was forcefully married to Thangwai Kongding or became one of his concubines in order to help her son and the name Khamlang-Taopi was also changed to “Thamoilempi” in the manuscript CTP where Thangwai Kongding is referred as the foster-father or guardian (Mapan-panthou), (Para: 58, 61, p. 30).

But the story of how Pakhangpa perfectly engineered and became one of the most successful and the greatest kings of Moirang and how he acquired the new name “Thingkri Nachaoba”, and his treaty “Taibelou Pukphat Sapeilou” (the elongated inter-locking field) in the south with Thokchao the eldest Angom prince is well elaborated in Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa (CTP, Para: 90, p.46) and Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (MNL). His treaty at Taibelou Pukphat Sapeilou proved to be one of the most fortunate events that led him to be the greatest kings of Manipur by defeating Khabas.11

4.4.iv Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (MNL)

The manuscript Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (MNL) is also considered as one of the most important historical texts of Manipur. The nineteenth chapter titled ‘Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa: Thingkri Nachaoba’ exclusively deals with Pakhangpa describing him as one of the greatest kings of Moirang, the ancestor god (Purek lai).12 The same account is also found in the Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa (CTP) manuscript. According to MNL and CTP, Pakhangpa was also known as, “Purek lai Thangwai Atengba” meaning, ‘the ancestor god who aided Thangwai’ (Thangwai Kongding the eighth king of Moirang) because he helped subjugate the people living on the south and western areas of Moirang which King Thangwai and his predecessors could not do (Singh 1982: 90, CTP-Para: 83, p.
MNL also gives detailed accounts of his conquests, successful expansion of his kingdom and the titles he acquired after defeating his rival kings in the south and south-western region.

Pakhangpa, after his victory over Koireng, Kharam and also Chothe (by defeating the great Chothe King Natoi Nachaopa in the fierce battle of Nungsuk-ching or Lungsuk) of the south-western kingdoms, started his campaign against the small kingdoms in the south and south-east region on Sugunu Ewaita and Ashong Kunlen who gained complete control after devastating battles. According to MNL, Pakhangpa plundered and burnt the entire village of Ashong Kunlen a village beyond Sugunu Ewaita inhabited by Poirei, the huge and brave warrior and also the youngest son of queen Peyai and defeated his brave King Salikpu and gained control over them (Singh 1982: 95-96, CTP-Para: 88-89, p.45-46).

Thus, the manuscript describes how Pakhangpa brought all the southern principalities directly under his control by breaking all the ancestral socio-political equations and ties.

Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba like the CTP manuscript states that after unifying all the southern principalities Pakhangpa accepted a truce with Thokchao, the eldest son of Kouburel Angom-Ngagi of the northern kingdom and a treaty was made between them at Taibelou Pukhat Sapeilou near Khuijuman (Singh 1982: 97, CTP-Para: 90, p.46). This alliance treaty between the two leaders can be considered as the turning point in the history of Manipur as it resulted in overthrowing the rival Khabas by the combined forces. As G. Kabui says, while staying in Moirang, Pakhangba organized support from Moirang Chaopa Mathipa and Sapon Sanoupa who whole heartedly helped him. The forces of Moirang for Pakhangpa defeated the Khabas and completely destroyed them. Some Khabas surrendered to Angom Puleiromba, some fled to hills and became Tangkhul (Kabui 2003: 83, see also Kamei 2004: 46). Thus, Pakhangpa put the power of Khabas in the north to an end and established his historical kingdom at Imphal (Kangla).

4.4.4 Meitei Mythology

According to Meitei mythology, there are four Pakhangbas, viz.; Loimanai Pakhangba, Leinung Lonja (Ariba) Pakhangba, Lolang Pakhangba and Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. Nongda Leiren Pakhangba is considered as the historical King according to Cheithourol Kumpaba record, while the rest are considered as mystical Pakhangbas, besides the other eighteen cognomens, given below (Kabui 2003: 75). One of the most popular
mythical versions which tries to construct a connection between the mythical Sanamahi, Pakhangpa and the legendary King Pakhangpa is the Sanamahism religion. According to this version, Atiya Guru Sidaba the Supreme God and the creator of the Universe, and his wife Leimaren Sidabi had two sons, the elder is known as Ashiba or Kuptreng or Sanamahi and the younger known as Konjin Tuthokpa or Sentreng or Pakhangpa. One day their father, Atiya Guru Shidaba floated down the river in the form of a dead cow to test the faith and wisdom of his two sons. Sanamahi thought the cow was already dead and stinking so did not bother but Sentreng recognized his father and performed the funeral rites. Based on this he is known as Pakhangba (lit. one who knows the father). Again their father asked both of them to go round the universe and whosoever wins the competition will succeed as king. While Kuptreng attempted to cover the entire universe, Pakhangpa on the other hand went around his father’s pedestal seven times on the advice of his mother, as he was considered to be young and weak. Thus, Pakhangpa became royal king of the earth and Sanamahi was made the house or family god (Kabui 2003: 57, Singh 1986: 396-7).

Many scholars like, K.C Tensuba attempted to clear such mythical and historical uncertainties by asserting that, “N.L. Paakhangba was not that Pakhangba, the younger brother of Sanna-mahi the son of Yaibirel Sidaba and Leimarel Sidabee, which was in fact, not historical but something like a religious story reflecting the concept of the creation of life of the earth” (1993: 137). Similarly, Gangmumei Kabui affirms that, “The tradition of Pakhangpa as their divine King of the earth and Sanamahi as spiritual deity of the Meities perhaps was a myth created by rulers of Ningthouja dynasty founded by Nongda Leiren Pakhangpa in the late historical time to give a garb of divinity to the king” (2003: 57). On closer look, W.I. Singh says that there are eighteen cognomens of Pakhangba as mysticism seen from different accounts by the Meitei that began by 16th and 17th century A.D. in the pursuit of Tantric culture, in order to please the autocratic rulers of the kingdom. The eighteen cognomens are; 1). Nongta Tukuplik, 2) Nongtreng Apumba, 3) Leinung Lonja Ariba, 4) Laloyang Tanouba, 5) Nongpok Poklen, 6) Umtha Ningthou Yoirmba, 7) Chingwang Ningthou Atenba, 8) Laiyingthou apanba, 9) Ching-U Langba Apanba, 10) Leinung Longja Pakhangba, 11) Lai Pakhang Atengba, 12) Tangja Leela Pakhangba, 13) Lolang Pakhangpa 14) Tubi Yoi Nongta, 15) Nongta Lairen Pakhangba, 16) Ningtem, 17) Sa and 18) Javista (Singh 1986: 271-272).
G. Kabui, one of the most renowned historians of Manipur has also come to the conclusion that, “The origin of the Meitei is shrouded in mystery and the study on the subject is greatly influenced by the religious faiths and the political ideologies of the Meitei themselves, thus making the problem highly speculative and controversial” (2003: 15, also see notes on Meitei and Poireiton). Such speculation and controversies may be further analysed incorporating the oral history, the sacred manuscript of CTP and other available literature.

4.4. vi Pakhangpa’s Coronation at Kangla (Imphal)

According to G. Kabui soon after the defeat of the Khabas and the Poireiton groups, Pakhangpa was crowned as the New Sovereign-King of Kangla (Imphal) by the three great leaders viz.; Puleiromba the Angom chief, Luwang Langmaiba (Luwang priest) and Ningthem Apanba of the Mangang (the ruling prince of Mangang) by pouring Nongjeng pond water on the body of the King Thangmei Pakhangpa and Queen Leima Sunurembi or Laisana (2003: 84-85). He also states that many of his leaders and relatives attended his coronation ceremony, as it was performed in the indigenous manner. The manner described by Kabui according to the Chakparol text says, ‘Kansurol a leader of the Chakpas sent four persons namely Chakmaringba, Langmaringba, Mungmaringpa, Ngangan maringba to call Pakhangba from Langthabal to Kangla for the coronation where they guarded Pakhangba during the coronation ... All the people were invited to the ceremony and Pakhangba, along with his queen Laisana, were formally coronated.16 According to, ‘Shanglen Pupa Puya’ the coronation ceremony was performed on the first Saturday of Kalen (June / July) the Meitei lunar calendar’ (ibid: 84-85).

According to G. Kabui, on his coronation day the poets and singers gave Pakhangpa (Meingai) the regal title “Tubi Yoinungda Nongda Lairen Pakhangba” (lit. son of the Rain- Python God born by a Leinung lady).17 It also mentions how he was given the title, “Meitingu or Meidingu” too (ibid: 84-85). Thus, we see the metamorphosis of Pakhangpa’s name from Thangmei to Meingai to Meitingu to Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa to Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa to Thingkri Nachaoba and to Nongda Leiren Pakhangba, and so forth according his stages of life. It also describes how Pakhangpa embraced the clan “Mangang” as one of the Ningthoujas or Royal clanship and was crowned as the first Sovereign King of Kangla (Imphal) Kingdom.18
4.4.vii Death

The mysticism of Pakhangpa did not just end with his mysterious childhood activities and parentage but went on even after his death. The Chothe elders said that Pakhangpa is believed to have conspired and killed by his enemies using magical charms. While some claimed he died after he revealed his secrets to his beloved persuasive wife as he was not supposed to do under any circumstances. In this way, the Chothe believe that a man should never disclose secrets to his wife because if he does, his life will be short.

According to G. Kabui, Pakhangpa and Laisna lived in constant fear of the Khabas with great risk as he defeated them and that one Khaba rebel named Huitao Tington Khaba Tousuba ambushed and speared Pakhangpa to death by a strong sharp reed and threw his dead body into the Nungjeng pond. Another version mentions that Pakhangpa was killed by his own son Khuiyom Tompok in connivance with the Khabas (2003: 90). Even today the Chothe in their folktales speak highly of Khabas-Nganba (Maring) as a tribe, very skilful in magical practices in olden days, so also now. G. Kabui mentions that after Pakhangpa died Laisana fled and took refuge among the Angom and subsequently Khuiyom Tompok, the eldest son of Pakhangpa succeeded to the throne. These suggest that Pakhangpa was probably killed by the conspiracy of the Khabas with an internal person with some magic involved.

4.5 Pakhangpa’s Genealogy

From the above it is seen that many Meitei scholars have speculated and presumed different names to construct the true identity of Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa or Nonda Leiren Pakhangba but proved to be unsuccessful because they could not ascertain his origin, identity and parentage authentically. G. Kabui claims that the historicity of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba is clearly proved by the historical chronicles and his dynasty’s genealogy. But with regards to origin, Pakhangba was a prince of mysterious origin; opinions regarding his origin and parentage vary from his being an Aryan prince from upper Burma to an adventurer from the Brahmaputra valley or the Himalyas to divine incarnate born to put an end to anarchy in the land, an illegitimate child of a clan chief, made a ruler by his foster father. Thus, Kabui endorse that, “the identification of his parentage has been quite a controversial problem” (Kabui 2003: 75, 77). The confusion or controversy over the identity of Pakhangba is obvious as there is no any historical record available on his origin and
parentage other then the *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa (CTP)* manuscript which is kept as sacred with the Chothe until today.

4.5.i Pakhangpa’s Mother

To many Meitei Pakhangba’s mother is known as, “Leinung Yaibirok”. G. Kabui says that, according to *Khagemba Yangbi*, Pakhangba’s mother was *Leinung Yaibirok* one born three times as queen and married to three chiefs or kings. Similarly, *Chada Lathui*, a book on genealogy of the queens of Manipur of Ningthouja dynasty mentions *Leinung Yaibirok* as the mother of Pakhangba, while *Pakhangba Nongkarol* a text dealing with the death of the rulers also mentions Nonda Lairen, Pakhangba’s mother, as *Leinung Yaibirok* (2003: 76-77). According to Y.M. Singh and N.B. Singh *Meihourol Lathup Latam* a sacred text says that the mother of Pakhangba was “Liklabicha Nungtangnu” who was illegitimately touched by Luwang Langmaiba and was forcibly married to Puleiromba, the Angom chief (See also Kabui 2003: 77).

On the basis of the *Cheitharol Kumpaba, Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba* and *Leithak Leikharol* W. Ibohal Singh also describes that Pakhangpa’s mother was called “Leinung Yaibirok Yakha Chanu” believed to be of the neo-Tibetan or Tai or Shan groups (amalgamated old tribes), who settled around the slanting stream of the Yakha (Chakha) or Khamnung (*Kham*) areas (1986: 76-82, 266). According to the Chothe history this slanting stream probably refers to the Leimatak river basin which is in the south-western region of the state. Therefore, in accordance to the oral history W. Ibohal Singh also believes that the people of Lei-Nung or Chakha (Chothe) are groups of people who migrated to the south-western region of the state after a sequence of expulsions of the Tai by Tsi-Wang-Tsi in the 3rd B.C. who had earlier occupied the *Khampat* region of the north-western Myanmar, originally belonging to *Kham-pa* tribe of eastern Tibetan (ibid: 77-78, 146-149). In Chothe the literal meaning of *Leinung Yaibirok Yakha Chanu* means, ‘a lady from the interior region of Lei-nung (*Nungsuk ching*)’.

The sacred manuscript *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa (CTP)* states that Pakhangpa was an illegitimate son of Khamlang-Taobi (Thamoilembi) the eldest daughter of Tarang Chothe chief and queen Lenghoinu (chief’s wife) without specifying his father’s name, whom they believed was impregnated mysteriously by the intercession of their Principal Guardian God the Dragon-Python (Para: 1, p.1). The different names of Pakhangpa’s mother
as stated above are not at all a specific name of an individual as none of them bears any true indigenous names but rather found to be common reference terminological names of an area or region with whom she associates or belongs to, which is a traditional way of identifying any person broadly by outsiders or valley people with various ethnic groups which often misleads and becomes a misnomer for the specific referred people.19

There are also similar myths found among different communities about the mother or parentage of Pakhangpa. Mangpu Kilong, in his paper *The Koms* mentions three related stories of a girl having relationship with the Python God, which is seen to be a deviation of the legend Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa as they are genealogically related. Kilong says a lady called “Chongnu fell in love with the Python God” and in another story of, ‘*The Genealogy of Rengam the Hero*’ he says, “Shilnu, a girl cohabited with a Snake God, a daughter of Zetei” (probably Chote). He also mentions a similar legend in, ‘*Sherdukpen*’ folktale written by N.B. Batra that, “a girl fell in love with a snake who was handsome in disguise” (2001: 42-43, see also Batra 1964).

However Kh. Manjou, Mk. Neilut, H. Thambaljao, Y. Maipak besides other Chothe village elders say that, Pakhangba mother’s name was “Daishin”, the elder daughter of the great Chothe chief Surou (Tarang or Nungkarakpa or Sanarakpa by Meitei) and his wife Lenghoinu. Therefore, analysing the above perspectives of their oral history and the *CTP* sacred manuscript the name mentioned by William Shaw: Pakhangpa’s mother as “Lenghoi” or “Nungmaidenga” seems to have been confused with Pakhangpa’s grandmother for his close relationship (1929: 47-48, Singh 1993: 153-154). But the second name, “Nungmeidingu” which is of two terms is believed to be the common referred name used by the valley people in identifying with her parents’ place Nungsuk ching or Lungsuk, while “Meidingu” probably refers to Pakhangpa’s nickname as it is common way of addressing or referring to others in Manipur using their first child’s name instead of calling the person by their actual names, though sometimes they use birth names. The *CTP* sacred manuscript also clearly indicates that Pakhangpa was the illegitimate child of Khamlang-Taopi (Daishin) the biological mother (Para: 91-93). She even visited her village and asked the villagers to perform the forgiveness ritual with the liquor (*Wangle zu*) to exonerate themselves from their past sins; expulsion of Pakhangpa and his mother from the village (*Ipam Chothe ide khungang pumna hupna langei khumsheng khudingee ningol eina panthou khallei pamngapgi loidam manung-o*), (*CTP*-Para: 91-93, p.47-48).
G. Kabui states that Pakhangpa’s mother, Daishin (Khamlang-Taopi or Thamoilempi or Leinung Yaibrok Yakha Chanu) was born three times queen and married to three chiefs (kings) or was associated with three great men in her lifetime (Kabui 2003: 77, 79). First, Daishin the eldest daughter of Surou fell in love with the mythical king the Dragon-Python God or the anonymous strange young man and subsequently bore a son Pakhangpa. Since Pakhangpa was considered an illegitimate child, she and her son were cast away from their own village. It is most probable that Daishin (Khamlang-Taopi) became one of the wives or concubines of King Thangwai Kongding of Moirang as she acquired a new name as, “Leima Thamoilempi” when she and her son Pakhangpa lived in Moirang. After Kongding’s death, Daishin developed a close relationship with Puleiromba the Angom chief, for which the people considered her the consort of Puleiromba and referred to her as Leinung Yaibrok Yakha Chunu (a girl from the interior region of Yakha or Chakha) identifying with her place of origin and the group to which she belonged. Except for the first mythical man or Dragon-Python King, the identity of the other two men viz.; Thangwai Kongding and Puleiromba have been established as historical kings and also as foster fathers of Pakhangpa. Some scholars claimed that Pakhangpa had a biological younger sister called, Sira Khongthingnu probably daughter of Thangwai Kongding and Khamlang-Taopi (Singh 1986: 269). Therefore, it follows from the above, that the real name of Pakhangpa’s mother is Daishin, of Chothe origin/birth, the first daughter of Surou the village chief.

4.5.ii Pakhangpa’s Father

Scholars continue to speculate and presume different names to identify the father of Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa or Nongda Leiren Pakhangba. For example G. Kabui writes that according to the genealogy of the Ningthouja clan the father of N.L. Pakhangba was projected to be Sentreng, while Y.M. Singh and N.B. Singh assume that Sentreng was one of the aliases of the father of Pakhangba and that the real father was Luwang Langmaiba, and the social father was Puleiromba, the Angom chief (2003: 78). But according W. Ibohal Singh Pakhangba’s father was “Likleng” alias “Luwang Langmaiba” from a royal family of the Lei-nung tribe and held the post of Tupu a designation derived from “Lambu Tupu” meaning, ‘guide’ or ‘officer-in-charge’ (1986: 274-275). K.C. Tensuba contested W. Ibohal Singh proposition that Tupu Likleng alias Luwaang Langmaiba as the father of
Pakhangba might be a title given to one who was able to solve social problems at times, in short, a man of high thinking, *Lu* means, the head or the intellect, *Waang* means, high. While *Laang-maiba* means, one who can set someone who is trapped, free from the dangerous trap... (1993: 137). G. Kabui argues that Tupu Likleng or Luwang Langmaiba was an old man, a priest and the chief advisor who executed Pakhangpa’s coronation (Kabui 2003: 85). Further W.I Singh opined, the reason for the invitation or selection for the chieftainship of the Leinung and Leihou is that Pakhangpa was the grand-son of Leihou chief and son of Lambu-Tupu (1986: 274-275). Accordingly it points, Pakhangpa’s maternal grandfather Surou (Tarang or Nungkarakpa) was the chief of Leinung-Yakha or Chothe *Lungsuk ching* of Leimatak region. W. I. Singh traces out only the maternal lineage (i.e. Likleng or Luwang or Tarang or Surou) and not paternal lineage. Thus, the identity of Pakhangpa’s father is still shrouded in mystery. The most probable hypotheses with regards to the mysterious identity of Pakhangpa’s biological father is that he could be either a temporary visitor or a youth from the neighbouring rival group whose identity remained concealed for fear of war or heavy penalty or to avoid the defamation of the clan because of the rigid cultural norms.

**4.5.iii Leima Sunurembi and Thoukham-lei**

Another significant evidence that suggests *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa* or *Thingkri Nachaoba* or *Nonda Leiren Pakhangpa* to be one and the same person is that the person identified with the names is seen associated with only one girl, known differently as Leima Sunurembi or Laisana or Laisna the beloved wife of Pakhangpa. She is considered a distant relative of Poireiton besides several other clues found in Manipur historical texts. In the south, according to *Moirang Ningthourool Lambuba* she was known as Sunurembi, the daughter of Hekhamba Nongyai Kokcha a Royal family of the early-immigrant of the Poireiton group by the Moirang before she was married (Bhagashore 1982: 98). Similarly, the *CTP* manuscript on many occasions states that ‘Thongnang Loinempa’ was the father of Leima Sunurembi of Mayang chanu (Bengali girl) after her marriage as a descendant of the new-immigrant group that migrated from the north-west and temporary occupied the southern region at the foothills of Loiching (Loiyang or Leimatol) or Lamangdong (Lamlanglon) also known by some as *Poireiton Chingkhong* in olden days, now called as Bishnupur (Para: 42, 45-47, p.22, 24-25). In the north, W. Ibohal Singh, said, according to
the *Cheitharol Kumpaba* Pakhangba married a girl named “Laisara” or “Laisana” of Tai origin who got mixed with the new-Tibetans who originally belonged to Poireiton group who came from Basa of Sena (1986: 273, 305-308). The outcome of marriage, as stated by G. Kabui, is that Poireiton ultimately acknowledged the supremacy of Pakhangpa and on his behalf, his younger brother Thongaren (Thongnang Loinempa) offered his younger sister Laisra or Laisana (Lei-sena) where she accompanied Pakhangpa to be his queen. Thus, Thangmei Pakhangpa and Sunurembi (Laisara or Laisana) were formally crowned as the new King and Queen of Kangla (Imphal) before the three great chiefs on first Saturday of the Meitei month of Kalen (June/July), (2003: 84-85).

The passion of love Pakhangpa and Leima Sunurembi had for each other is well described in *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa* (*CTP*) manuscript and also in *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba* (*MNL*) that the memento had been inscribed on a kind of rare beautiful red flower known as *Kharam Leishok anganba*, which came to be known after a decree was issued in honour of their passionate romantic relationship. Accordingly, it says when Pakhangpa returned with his army from the fierce battle in the south-west he gave his beloved girlfriend Sunurembi the beautiful red flower (*Kharam Leishok anganba*) plucked from the abandoned village gate of Kharam as gift a token of his love brought from a trip. Out of her deep admiration of the act, she thereby requested her lover Pakhangpa to pass a decree to symbolise his love for her by prohibiting any one from destroying the flower and also forbidding any women, especially the Ngangoi groups of Moirang, from wearing it on their ears, and whosoever disobeyed the decree would be penalized with severe punishment by shaving off their heads. The manuscript, henceforth says that later the Kharam red flower was renamed as “Kharam leisok anganba leima Sunurembi Toukham-lei” now commonly known only as *Sunurembi Toukham-lei* meaning, ‘the forbidden flower’ (Singh 1982: 94, *CTP*-Para: 87, p.45). Below is transliteration of the decree:

(Hi eshabe, Moirang Ningthou (Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa) ibungo shingel leirang ashibu karamnabu asuk phajabano, leirang ashigi maong machuga karamnabu asuk Chunakhrabano ko. Aduga leirang ashibu Kege pakhang kanana hek chaillambada, masam kokpagi dandhi peduna chindanaba khambe-u, aduga Ngangoi chanurasingna karigumba na-da thetlabasu momnu nuja oibesingi masam samlang adu kaklaga arumba warak cheithang phangani haina yathang louthokpiduna chindanaba warol louthokpe-u haina
Chothe village elders say that according to their oral history, Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa being a divine person obliged not to marry Sunurembi despite the romantic affair he had because his father the Dragon-Python God instructed him not to marry any girl in his lifetime, because if he did so, he would become mortal like any human being. For this reason Pakhangpa avoided and deserted her for his heavenly abode. The incident could probably mean during his long expeditions in the south south-east and north after he consolidated all the small southern kingdoms into one administration. The CTP also says that Thongnang Loinempa a royal prince was in low-spirits and unhappy with Pakhangpa when he deserted her or for being ignored as an outsider. The native womenfolk also sympathised and begged Pakhangpa to accept her as his wife as they were a perfect match for each other (CTP-Para: 29-41, p.15-21). Further, the CTP manuscript describes that Pakhangpa requested the gods to create some obstacles for Sunurembi to discourage her from following him but warned them not to physically harm her in any situation. On this basis, the gods created three obstacles for Sunurembi: first, the gods sent a big flood, second, a wild-forest-fire, and third a ferocious tiger to obstruct her path. But the manuscript says because of her wisdom, knowledge, patience and endurance she could overcome all these hurdles, even the ferocious tiger ultimately gave up obstructing her path and gave way to her. Since, she had overcome all these obstacles the Dragon-Python God sent back Pakhangpa with a consent to marry her (Sunurembi or Laisana). It is believed that Thangmei Pakhangba (Thingkri Nachoupa) accepted Sunurembi as his wife at Moirang and hence, the people of the south called her “Leima Sunurembi”. Therefore, in consonance with the available literature, Thangmei Pakhangpa after subjugating the northern groups and becoming the New Sovereign King of Kangla (Imphal) also made his wife Leima Sunurembi Queen. Thus the people of the north called her as “Laisana”, since no specific birth name is used by the Meitei as a sign of disrespect in addressing men and women of high status and also on socio-religious grounds. From the above explanation it suggests that Sunurembi/pi (Sena/Sona/Suna-rembi = queen, princess of Sena) who originally belonged to Basa migrated from Sena town of Bengal (Mayang or Cachar) a descendant of Poireiton whose predecessors were an admixture of the new-Tibetan of the south group (Singh 1986: 305-308). Thus, she is known as Leima Sunurembi in the south and as the wife of Chothe
Thangmei Pakhangpa (Thangkri Nachoupa) by the Moirang people but in the north, she is called as Laisana meaning, Queen of the Kangla principality. The change is believed to be because of the nomenclature of people used since the south Moirang people are ethnically different from the northern Imphal groups.

4.6 The Secrecies of Pakhangpa History

With regards to the identity of Pakhangpa and his genealogical relation with the Chothe and Meitei, there are several proverbs, phrases and socio-religious decrees very much alive among various old tribes of Manipur but often not shared for fear of condemnation. According to H. Thambaljao and Y. Maipak of Lamlanghupi, one of the most revered secrecies about the religious history of Manipur as told to them by early Meitei Purohits is that, “the sacred story of Matei is kept inside the Chothe basket” (Matei-gi, athuppa washingdi Chothe lubak manungda lei).

Similarly Pr. Roushi and Mk. Neilut also assert in their oral-history that “The history of Chothe ancestors is kept sacred inside the King’s basket” (Chothe-gi puwaridi ningthougi lubak manungda lottuna thamkare).

The above coded verses are used in Meitei language because it is the lingua-franca. The Chothe claim the term Lubak mentioned in both the coded verses, meaning bamboo basket in Meitei [(having the dimension of (1 x 1 ½) ft (l x b)] was made by Chothe from a particular species of the bamboo called, U-tang (mature wood). Accordingly they say that it is taboo for any Meitei individual to kick any Chothe man or touch him with his feet, neither should any Chothe men be used as palanquin bearers by the Meitei considering that the Chothe are their great forefathers or ancestors.24 It is also said the Chothe were always treated with royalty and there was always a seat reserved for the Chothe chief/king in the King’s Court of Manipur in early days.

The confusion and contradiction that frequently occurs regarding the history of Manipur in describing the hills people is seen to be because of the wrong interpretation and references made by various ethnic groups in their own way. This common mistake had been pointed out by M. McCulloch, to how the tribals or hills people of Manipur in early days were often referred to wrongly by outsiders. He says, “all the Hao are the names used amongst the Meitei to distinguish the principal tribes, and though each of these tribes has a distinctive name of their own, often quite different from the Manipuri one, still as with the
latter all are familiar, and as it is the name a stranger would be most likely to hear and use it” (1857: 41). This is one factor, while the other factors are seen because of the interpolation, distortion and manipulation by the later kings of Manipur and the Purohits of Meitei high priest during the Vaishnavism (Hindu) movement in order to claim overall supremacy over the hills people by distinguishing themselves as the superior group. The supremacy concept of the Meitei over the hills people politically, economically and culturally may not be true as the Chothe oral history says that the reason why the Meitei established a settlement on the foothills or the valley was because in early days they were driven out by the hills people from occupying their hill territories as they were considered the later immigrant groups. But it is only in the later periods that the valley people, due to their scholastic advancement and matrimonial relationship with the hills people, began to dominate politically and culturally. No doubt, the early kings of Manipur bear indigenous tribal names, pointing to the fact, that Meitei is a conglomeration of various tribes.  

With regards to historical interpolation S.N.A. Parratt also asserts that the Cheitharol Kumpaba (Ch.K) the Court’s chronicle of Manipur was re-written twice; first during Garib Niwaz (1709-1748) and second at the time of Chingthangkhompa, alias Bhagyaachandra (1759). She is also sceptical about the existence of this Ch.K manuscript to be in written form before Kyampa (1467-1508) as the standard of recording the events and deeds chronologically began in 1485 A.D after Kyampa met the Pong king of the Shan dynasty (2005: 3, 5, 14). Similarly W. Ibohal Singh also refuses to accept the year of N.L Pakhangpa’s coronation i.e. 33 A.D (76 Saka) as the first historical year considering it to be too early for reasons like geographical setting, population, genealogical calculations and archaeological findings and presumes the date should be around 980 A.D (1986: 41; Parratt 2005: 5, 18).

It is apparent from the perspective of Manipur’s history that the distortion and interpolation of the religious history of the Meitei began when Garib Niwaz’s under the influence of Shanti Das Goswami imposed Vaishnavism on his subjects against Sanamahism (the ancient Meitei religion). He even went to the extent of forcibly burning down all the ancient historical records written in the Meitei-Mayek (script) and Manipur’s history was rewritten in Bengali script (Parratt 2005: 14). The Chothe oral history too remarks about incidents where some hills people who had good relations with the predecessors of Garib Niwaz including Chothe were extremely angry and many stopped paying tributes to the later
kings of Manipur. They say their age old relationship often got estranged due to frequent imposition of taxes and edicts on them. S.N.A Parratt also asserts that the serious twist and misinterpretation of the history of Manipur began from the early twentieth century, broadly classifying into two trends, both with clear ideological agendas. Firstly, according to her, the early scholars like Phurailatpam Atombapu Sharma and his disciples writing on the histories of Manipur were all highly influenced by Brahmanical Hinduism, which they somehow rectified again later. The second, real damage to the history of Manipur came from the Congress supporters after 1950 when the state merged with India and subsequent to integration of their culture with the Indian mainstream for political reasons (2005: 1-2). These evidences support our contention that the genuine history of Pakhangpa and Manipur were distorted, interpolated, misinterpreted and re-written especially by scribes as wished by the later kings of Manipur to claim the dominance and superiority of the valley people (Meitei) over the supremacy of Pakhangpa or the hills people for various reasons.

4.7 Pakhangpa’s Mysticism

The sacred manuscript Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa (CTP), the oral history and other literary works indicates the mysticism of Pakhangpa right from the time he was conceived as an illegitimate child till the time of his mysterious death. First, his mysticism began with the anonymity of his father’s identity, assumed to be the Dragon-Python God who disappeared when the mixtures of turmeric, garlic, snail, etc., dripped on his body in the jhum field. Second, his three miraculous escapes from the attempts on his life during his childhood made by his maternal grandfather (Surou) who was ignorant about his extraordinary power and strength (i.e. how he enigmatically managed at the young age to return home alone in the dark from the thick forest when left to die, how he deflected the big rolling boulder from the cliff, and how he mysteriously survived being crushed by the huge falling tree). The third aspect is Pakhangpa’s commitment not to marry any girl and that he would remain a bachelor throughout his life in order to immortalize himself. According to CTP, to fulfil his commitment he deserted his beloved girlfriend Sunurembi (Laisana) for several years and asked the gods to obstruct her path while following him. The CTP mentions Thongnang, Sunurembi’s brother expressed his displeasure at Pakhangpa for deserting his sister and even the womenfolk pleaded Pakhangpa to marry Sunurembi (CTP, Para: 20). It is most probable that his commitment to bachelorhood might have led to calling
or identifying him as, “Pa-khang-pa/ba” literally in Meitei means, ‘virile youth’ or ‘bachelor’ instead of Thangmei or Meingai or Thingkri. The name also carries the same meaning with Chothe and other tribes as virile or healthy youth (khang –thang).

Similar to the Chothe oral history there are also many other folktales associated with Pakhangpa describing his mysticism. T.C. Tensuba mentions that says Pakhangpa was a divine being, believed to be ‘Dragon-python’ god by day and human by night (1993: 46). He also describes that Laisana was the most beloved wife of N.L. Pakhangpa but she was unhappy with him because he did not invite her during the daytime transactions of the Royal Council meetings as he acted like Lai (god) in the affairs of administration. But Pakhangpa did not forbid her from joining them at the night-time gathering of the Royal Assembly as he acted like Mee (man or ordinary layman). Because of such reasons and his in-different attitude Laisana who was unhappy, offended him twice asking why he treated her in such a manner. Further she accused Pakhangba saying that he must have some hidden wives or that she was of low origin of Poireiton, the immigrant group, and that is why he avoided her (1993: 136, see also Kabui 2003: 89). This mystical belief is supplemented by Naorem Sanajoaba that the Dragon-Python God has supernatural powers to transform himself into anything like a stone, a tiger, a dog, a human being, and could even take human birth at any time and place (1991: 104). It is believed that even after his death he is seen to have appeared in such forms at many places as a sign of his being divine and such places are treated as sacred places by the believers.

The mythical anonymity of Pakhangpa’s father plays an important role in the Chothe religious beliefs and practices systems. The Chothe still uphold their indigenous religious beliefs and continue to practice their ancestor-worship like other indigenous or Tribal communities of the world. In other words the mysticism of Pakhangpa and his paternal lineage form the basis of the Chothe religion and their belief in connection to their genealogical myth.

Thus, Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa’s birth and life is much alike in the mysticism of the Christian Biblical story of Jesus Christ who was born of a virgin (Mary) through the intercession of the Holy-Spirit, so also in the case of Krishna the Hindu god believed to be mysteriously conceived by Divine power of Vishnu or the Buddha of Buddhism. In all these cases we see that all are endowed with certain supernatural powers and considered as the avatar or the in-incarnate of their own Supreme God they believe in. Thus, Chothe ancestor-
worship from the perspective of their mythology re-instills their beliefs and practices in “Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa” as the avatar of their God Pu Lungchungpa.

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Notes


2 Chothe: Chothe or Chawte is considered as one of the missing clans out of their twelve clans by the Mizo (Lushei) speaking groups. The Mizo have a clan “Chawhte” who live in the south-western part of Mizoram considered a relative of the Chothe (Chawte) of Manipur. The Chawhte of Mizoram has been completely assimilated with the Mizo like the Hmar of Manipur. For example, the Hmar though a tribe in Manipur is consider a clan of the Mizo in Mizoram.

3 Huipithoranga/Hurpithoranga: In Chothe “Hui” or “Hur” means, a hole or a cave, “tho-ranga” means, five that jumps out. This mythical hole or cave is refer by the Kuki-Chin-Mizo speaking groups as, “Chhinlung” or “Shinglung” meaning, hole or cave of a hill, claiming the place to be somewhere around in southern China.

4 Sacred-grove: The present sacred-grove of Chothe Thangmei/Thangwai Pakhangpa of Lamlanghupi (Chothe) at Bishnupur has been, Ordered by the Governor of Manipur, Imphal on 16th June 2007, as the ‘Protected Historical Monuments and Archaeological site’, of No. 5/24/99-S(AC), Under Sub-section (3) of Section 4 of the “Manipur Ancient and Historical Monument and Archaeological sites and Remains Act, 1976”, published by the Manipur Gazette: Extraordinary. No. 145 Imphal, Thursday July, 2007. (Asadha 1929: 14). On the basis, brick fencing had been constructed around the sacred-grove as the village received financial assistant from the Govt. as per the order.

5 Thangmei: The term, “Thang” in Chothe means, ‘virile/healthy youth’, and “mei” means, ‘fire or tail’. Sometimes King Thangwai Kongding of Moirang is also referred as his foster father probably because of his mother relationship with Thangwai, who therefore succeeded Thangwai after his dead. Thangmei Pakhangpa later acquired a new titled as, “Thingkri Nachao ba” after defeating the great Chothe King Natoi Nachaoba as the victor, as an ancient tradition of identifying the victor king. Thereafter he brought the kingdoms of Moirang, Wangoo, Ewaita, Chothe, Kharam and Koireng who inhabits in the south-western regions under his direct control by unifying into one political administrative unit (also see CTP-Para: 25, p.15; and MNL chapter -19). Much later with the treaty of Taibelou Pukpat Sapeilou he successful defeated Khaba-nganba (probably Maring-khoibu tribe) of the northern kingdom. Thus because of his successful conquest Chothe Thangmei
Pakhangpa was given a new regal title by the poets and singers of the valley people on his coronation day at Kangla (Impahl) as, “Tubi Yoinongda Nonda Leiren Pakhangba” (Kabui 2003: 85). But here, the word “Tubi Yoinongda” seems to be a spelling/pronunciation error in a syllable for “Leinungda Yabi-rok” (Tubi=Yabi, and Yoinongda = Leinungda) that is often identified with Pakhangpa’s mother and her birth place (origin) as, “Leinung Yabirok Yakha Chanu” mentioned in many archaic historical materials (Singh 1986: 76-82, 266; Kabui 2003: 76-77).

6 CTP: These quotations are quoted from the abridged manuscript of Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa (CTP) after having read and compared the original Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa sacred manuscript with two experts namely, Dr. Lai Imo (Assistant editor of ‘Erei Leibak’, Daily local newspaper) and M. Gourachandra (founder of ‘People’s Museum, Kakching’). The reason is that the language used is the original sacred manuscript is of very ancient, cryptic and in poetry form as compared to the translated abridged manuscript which is somewhat simple and understandable in the description.

7 Khuman: Pakhangpa clan is also assumed to be the Mareem/Marim clan or the Khuman clan of Meitei because most of their men have a kind of small-pox marks on their faces, believed to be the mark caused by the mixture liquid; turmeric, garlic, snail, yam, eel, etc., dropped on stranger’s (Pakhangpa) face from the jhum hut when Daishin pierced it connected to the myth story. But this assumption seems to be the inference version of Moirang’s people who tried to incorrectly establish the genealogy of Pakhangpa since he had lived for certain period in Moirang who are predominately dominated by Khuman clan, because he also succeeded King Thangwai Kongding (his foster father). Moirang are formerly known as “Kege” (Chinese stock). But he assumed the Mangang clan during the confederation of the royal clanship where his lineage settled around Lammangtong.

8 Chakha-khong Marimpa: In ancient days the Meitei identified the indigenous tribes like Chothe inhabiting around Leimatak river basin as “Chakpa” where the people in general was referred as “Chakha-khong” (Chakha or Yakha-, khong means, stream, probably referring to Leimatak stream). Probably this suggests to another great Chothe chief who belong to Marim clan. From the above, it points that Pakhangpa’s mother Daishin or Khamlangtaopi also known as Thamoilempi (by the Moirang) originates from the land/area of Chothe Marimpa (Chakha-khong Marimpa).

9 Langthabal: Tensuba also opined that Nongda Leiren Pakhangba (Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa) son of Leinung Yabirok, who married Laisaana, a daughter of one in the line of Poireiton, had established the first capital at Hangjing range (900 Mtr. M.S.L.) i.e. Heingaangching hill range near Langthabal hill (around Mayang Imphal), six-seven km south of Imphal (Tensuba, 1993: 134-135). The place has many religious significant as the first capital. The place is also connected in the later period with the Chothe folktale called, ‘Asha changnu: A lady who transformed into an animal’, where one of the king’s huge boat made by the Chothe was mysteriously lost in the northern Loktak Lake near Langthabal. It is also said that subsequently a
group of Chothe in the later periods occupied around the place who named it as “Yangpalkung” before they further moved down south-east. This is evidently pointed out by Moirangthem Rajendra that the settlement place at Langthabal known as “Chothe Yangbi” to others was given to the first group of Meetei-Pangals (Muslim) by Khakempa in 1606 who came as soldiers after Chothe abundant the place (2000: 30).

10 **Meitei:** To speak bluntly, today’s Meitei of Imphal valley does not belong to one specific tribe or racial group but composite of many old and new tribes or communities formed by the process of acculturation and assimilation. No doubt, there are some who still have their own distinctive indigenous and immigrant genealogical roots. This genealogical picture of Meitei of Manipur is also pointed out by S.N.A Parratt that the Chakpa and the Loi were assimilated, while the hill peoples formed alliances with the Meetei (Meitei) or became tributaries. In which, the earlier part of the Ch.K is essentially the story of the expansion of the Meetei across the valley and hills of Manipur, and of the gradual acculturation and assimilation of the yeks (clans) and tribes into their kingdom (2005: 3). Nevertheless, the speed of acculturation and assimilation of the hills people with the valley people from cultural and religious point of view seem to have taken its momentum from 17th century during the Sankritisation or Hinduism process, after which only the term Meitei derives from “Meetei” meaning, ‘outsider or different people’, synonymously refer with the Vaishanavists.

11 **Taibelou Pukphat Sapeilou:** According to CTP after Pakhangpa finished his subjugation and consolidating all the small kingdoms in the southern region, and became king of Moirang as Thingkri Nachaoba, there was peace for certain periods of time under his able leadership. But during this peaceful period Thokchao the eldest son of Koubrurel Angom-ngagi of the northern kingdom came down and took refuge near Moirang. Thokchao for fear of aggression he immediately proposed a truce and a treaty with Thingkri or Pakhangpa came to be known as, “Taibelou Pukphat Sapeilou” (the elongated inter-locking field) which is an old place beyond the river Khoijuman (Thongjourok) between Oknarel and Thangnarel (Singh 1982: 97, CTP: 90, p.46). This alliance treaty between the two leaders is believed to be the turning point in the history of Manipur that resulted in overthrowing the rival Khaba-nganba (Maring) groups by the combined forces. Gangummei Kabui writes, while staying in Moirang Pakhangpa organized support from Moirang Chaopa Mathipa, Sapon Sanoupa who extended whole hearted helped to him. The forces of Moirang for Pakhangpa defeated the Khabas who were completely destroyed by him. Some Khabas surrendered to Angom Puleiromba, some fled to hills and became Tangkhul (Kabui 2003: 83, Kamei 2004: 46).

12 **MNL:** The text Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (MNL) of chapter -19 well elaborates the nature of its people, landscaped and its devastation, its tactics, costumes and methods of warfare. It describes how Pakhangpa ousted the great Chothe King Natoi Nachoupa and subdued him in the Nungsuk/Lungsuk battle.

13 **Nungsuk ching/ Lungsuk:** According to MNL, Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa by breaking all the traditional political and kinship ties first plundered and burnt the whole village of Koireng and defeated their brave warrior Nungnangchong. The war was so devastated that the entire atmosphere of the area was covered with
black smoke. It further says that Pakhangpa’s name and famed did not end just there as he continued to attack Hoirei kha pangda too, a nearby village of Koireng (Singh 1982: 90-91). Then, Pakhangpa later gathered all his brave warriors of Kege Moirang and assembled like a fence on the border sides and attacked the great country of Chothe located on the five ridges of the high mountains separated by the five rivers and the five valleys, and defeated the great Chothe King Natoi Nachaopa in one of the most fierce and devastating battle known as, “Chothe Nungsuk ching” (Lanpham ashida Chothe gi Ningthou Natoi Nachouba koubabu maithiba perakkhi). It says because of the fierce battle even the nearby Kharam village fled away (Kharam khungangshu pumchhai chaikhaikhi), (ibid: 92-93, CTP-Para: 84, p. 43). Thus, it states that after defeating the great Chothe King Natoi Nachaopa one of the great kings of south-western region in the battle of Chothe Nungsuk-ching (Lungsuk lai), Chothe Pakhangpa acquired the title “Thingkri Nachaopa” as a symbol and custom of identifying the victor king, who subsequently became the king of Moirang under the assumed titled succeeding King Thangwai Kongding. However, the derivation of the name ‘Thingkri’ or ‘Thinkgri’ cannot be ascertain, but some believed that it could have derived from the nature of killing or weapon used as, “thing-ki/thingkri” means, pierced with a stick (spear), in Chothe and other similar linguistic groups.

The Chothe oral history says that Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa’s attacked and subjugation on the south-western groups of people and to Nungsuk ching (Lungsuk bung) his own Chothe people is said to be his retribution primarily for personal reasons of ill-treatments and humiliation he and his mother suffered during his childhood. The humiliations accordingly are like rebukes, assaults, accusation of being illegitimate or fatherless child, banishment from the village, the mockery and scoffing at his protruding tail as Meitingte or Meingai. Kharam and Koireng neighbouring communities also became victims because they refused to give food and shelter when her mother Daishin escaped among these villages in search of her lover to elope. However, the last three paragraphs of CTP manuscript describes that the Pakhangpa’s mother Khamlang-Taopi or Thamoilempi (Daishin) after the devastating war went to her parent’s village in the Chothe country and explains about the past event and asked to perform a rite with their best wine (wangle zu) for the recourses (Para: 90-91, p.46-47).

14 Poirei/Poireiton: It is believed that Poirei was a prince son of queen Peyai who was a brave warrior with huge structure. Many archaic materials also mention that they are new-immigrant group or traders from the west who tried to pass Moirang to Kabaw valley. It is most probable that after Pakhangpa defeated them and brought under his direct control he must have ask them to return to their land. So, we can presume that Poirei, or Poireiton the father of Meitei probably stayed at Leimaton foothill near old-Cachar road where the place in ancient days is known as Poireiton chingkhong, though the place now is identified with Bishnupur. Thereafter, due to political and matrimonial relationships with the hill people they were acculturated and assimilated as loi.

15 Angom - ngagi: The term “Angom”, clan of Meitei is believed to be a mispronunciation of the syllable by the new Bodo-Cachari (Poirei) immigrants for the descendant of “Angam Puleromba” the great king of the north (Tangkhul). There is no specific term for ‘Angom’ in Meitei, but “A-ngam” literally means, ‘steep or be winner’, in Tangkhul, commonly used as a prefix or suffix in a person’s name. Similarly “Khaba-nganba” is
believed to be an old name for Maring tribe commonly refer by Meitei who are also known as Poi by the tribals or Fhalum by others in ancient days. Thus Khaba-anganba refers to ‘Khoibu-Maring’ now located in the extreme eastern region of the state.

16 Kansurol: There are folktales that say Makan Kansurol was another great Chothe chief. One of their settlements called “Kansui” (Brave fighter/warrior) was posthumously named in memory of his greatness by his descendants (lineage and kin groups) during their sojourn to south-east. The name also suggest that it is purely a Chothe indigene name as seen from the genealogical myth of the first ancestor of Chothe, so also the Thao or Tao clan, and the Marim or Mareem-pa’s names mentioned which should not be confused for ‘Maring’ tribe as the term Maring is believed to have derived much latter from the nickname “Mei-ring” (one who steal live fire), (CLAM, Souvenir 2000: 3).

17 Tubi Yoinongda Nongda Lairen Pakhangba: See endnotes 5 above.

18 Mangang: It is obvious that Pakhangpa by virtue of his Divine power and military skills defeated the Khaba-anganbas of the northern kingdoms and after subjugating all other small kingdoms in and around the valley, subsequently established a new confederate kingdom by combining the surrounding south, south-western and northern kingdoms at Imphal (Kangla) by affirming his clan-ship as “Mangang” among the confederate Ningthouja (Royal) clans. There are many versions about his acceptance to Mangang clan. Among the Chothe the Mangang of Ningthouja clan is equated with their Yulung clan. According to W. Ibohal Singh (1986) in the section “Mangang” he said they are groups of people who mainly inhabited in the Lammangdong (Bishnupur) area in early days, pointing to his genealogical root or origin of his birth place. But the Meitei history states that N.L. Pakhangba was considered as the founder of Mangaang Salai (Clan) although he descended from Taang-Shaang Leela Paakhangba as the ancient Meitei composed an eternal formula for the Meitei that the three prayers: (1) Prayer for Mangang kuru, (2) Prayer for Luwang kuru and (3) Prayer for Khuman Kuru were strictly prescribed for the Meitei since time immemorial (Tensuba 1993: 136-137).

19 Misnomer: The frequent misnomer, confusion and paradoxical terms, names of persons and places and its variation found in many of the Manipur historical texts is probably seen to be because of the interpolation, misinterpretation and also the nomenclature of the syllable, syntax, semantic and morphology used by the varied multi-ethnic groups in the naming system in their own ways which is often understood only by the group itself or by the regional people. For example, Pakhangpa’s metamorphosis names, as some names are often confused with his posthumous names given by different ethnic groups on the credibility of an incident, his extra-ordinary feat or trademark or talent or achievement. Likewise, ancient names and places are more confusing when their meanings are not very clear and certain mythical elements are added to the name or place or story, often by the folk narrators and writers. For example, in the CTP manuscript Pakhangpa’s grandmother named have been written as “Leng-heinu”, but in Chothe and other similar linguistic groups of Kuki-Chin, a girl is often called as “Hoi-nu or Boi-nu” (sweet girl) or Thei-nu (clever girl) but not as “Hei-nu”. Similarly
Daishin, Pakhangpa’s mother name as called by Chothe, is known by the Meitei as Khamlang-Taopi or Thamoilembi which is their translation and reference names identified with her birth place and personality, and linguistically it did not sound as indigenous tribal names. Probably another spelling error is “Tupu” the assumed Pakhangpa’s father that has no meaning but the word “Tarpu (Tar-pu)” means, ‘old-man’ referred to any old man or grandfather.

20 Anonymity: It is the anonymity of Pakhangpa father’s identity and its mysticism that Chothe indigenous religion survived till today as ancestor-worshippers. On the other hand, even if Pakhangpa father’s identity happens to be known by few people it must have been deliberately concealed because of the extreme rigidity of the Chothe customs and traditions or cultural norms practiced by them in the past. Another custom the Chothe follows is that if a person did not claim illegitimate pregnant lover as his wife and illegitimate child as his child within a short period, if the person is identified he is imposed with a heavy penalty of fine, but if they/she cannot identified the person or is not willing to accept he is considered as a dead man, where the mother and child is expelled from the group considered as a whore.

21 Lambu Tupu: In Chothe and other similar linguistic groups the term “Tupu” has no meaning but if pronounced as “Tarpu” or “Tarpu-pa” means, old man, generally referred to any grandfathers, where ka-pu = my grandfather, napu = your grandfather. This term is often use as prefix in referring or addressing any old man or elderly person by others as, ‘Tarpu Wailum’. Most old men generally in a society are considered as knowledgeable wise men because of their life-long experiences. Therefore on the basis, they usually hold certain position or are a member of the village council, in that case some of them are village elders or leaders designated as “Lambu Tarpu” meaning, ‘old (man) geographical guide’, since in early day they acted as geographical guide who explain the geography and histories of the country to any friendly foreign visitors. This suggest that Yulung Surou (Tarang) being the chief/leader of a village and being a maternal grandfather of Pakhangpa probably must have referred him as “Tarpu Tarang”, while some other groups might have identified him as Luwang Langmeiba because of his close association with the Liangmei tribe. The Chothe oral history also says they have close affinity with the Liangmei and Puimei or Manipur, and Riang of Tripura and Mizoram tribes since early days genealogically, this is proven by the language and cultural similarities.

22 Luwang langmeiba: The Chothe village elders according to their oral history says that Pakhangpa’s maternal grandfather Surou (Tarang or Nungkarakpa or Likleng or Luwang Langmeiba) and his relatives often helped Pakhangpa and his mother materially and militarily. They said when Surou visited Pakhangpa and his mother he often took with him some basic valuable items like; clothes, jute ropes, fats for lighting, cane and bamboo baskets, boats, etc. for them as part of courtesy tradition. Such regular meetings suggest that Surou must have also given certain advices or act as advisor to him being a cognate relative. Such ourtesy tradition of gifts giving or exchange of gifts for the kindred groups is believed to be very common from the historical and cultural perspective. Another significant custom of the Chothe is that if the parents could not bring up their children because of certain conditions of being poor or due to daughter’s second marriage the first children
bore by husband are often taken care especially by maternal grandparents, rather than the paternal grandparents for its closeness or sometime by the closes kin groups accordance to the nature of their relationship.

23 Pakhangpa’s wife Sunurembi or Laisana is sometime confused with Chingurembi the wife of Naethingkhong. As W. Ibohal Singh said that Chingurembi was a Bengal princess, daughter of a Sena prince of the Senas of Bengal who first settled at Lamangdong (Bishnupur) at the time of marriage which the Poirei took as Mayang principality. In olden days the inhabitants of Bengal at Lamangdong principality were not called as Mayang but known as ‘Bas’ (1986: 305-308). Here it is most probable that both of them marry a Bengal girl from the same area but not the same girl, as the oral history says that political and matrimonial relationship had already taken place amongst various ethnic groups, though often discouraged.

24 Taboo: See details, Taboo section in the following chapter 5.

25 Some of the early historic kings of Manipur such as, Taothingmang, Naophangpa, Sameireng, Naethingkhong, Aayangpa, Yirengpa, Senhongpa, Loiyumpa, Tapungpa, Punipa, Marampa, etc. of the Kangla (Imphal) principality all bears the indigenous tribal names significantly pointing they originally belong to tribal groups especially the Old-Kuki groups like Chothe, Kharam, Koireng, Anal. While the names of the early kings of Moirang principality like Fang Fang Ponglenghanba, Iwang Telheiba, Laiphangchong, Ura Ngangoiba, Laiya Punshiba, Tushemba, Thangwai Kongding, Nungnang Tomba, Thanga Ifan, Kaba Purang, etc. which are of contemporary rulers to one another clearly shows the difference in their names that they are of different ethnic groups from the linguistic view (see list of Kings, Parratt 2005: Tensuba 1993:172-73)

There are many blurry legendary stories which tells about the close affinity of the early historical kings of Imphal (Kangla) with that of Chothe and other allied ethnic groups like Koireng who fought together in their territorial expansion, battles and conquest probably before seventeenth century. The disassociation of matrimonial and political ties between hill and plain people began when the latter kings are not considerate enough to give gratitudes to the hill people despite their help who began to live as independent entity without jeopardising the other groups. Now many educated people of Manipur seem to agree that the history of Meitei (Manipur) has been somehow distorted, but these people remain silent to comments about it openly for fear of repercussion.

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