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The Identity of Pakhangpa: The Mytical Dragon-Python God of Chothe of Manipur

Cheithou Charles Yuhlung

Dept. of Anthropology, Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam, India

Abstract

This paper centres on the identity of the llegendary King Chothe Thangwai/ Thangmei Pakhangpa of Manipur whom the Chothe believe and worship him as the avatar or the Divine-incarnate of their Principal Supreme God Pu Lungchungpa (the Dragon-Python God). It also attempts to throw light on the doubt and confusion surrounding with the mysterious identity of “Nongda Lairen Pakhangpa” the assumed first historical king of Manipur by the Meitei. The study reveals that Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa and King Nongda Lairen Pakhangpa to be one and the same person. It also describes his childhood, parentage, wife and his egnimism. This assertion is substantiated with the sacred manuscript under the titled, “Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa” written in ancient Meitei language and Meitei (Mayek) script and also supported by other important manuscripts of Manipur like Cheitharol Khumpapa and Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba etc. besides the Chothe oral history. The paper calls for the review of the Manipur history as it reveal many insights in the nature of inter-relationship in the past and the confusion and doubt existing between the Hill people and the valley people.

Key words: *Chothe, Thangwai Pakhangpa, Nongda Lairen Pakhangpa, Dragon-Python god, Manipur.*

Introduction: The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines “Legend as a traditional story sometimes popularly regarded as historical but unauthenticated; a myth, or accepted as a popular but unfounded belief”. It is understandable from the above definition that legend is a traditional story accepted as history that serves to explain the world views of the people. Therefore, the story of a person or people related with an event after many years becomes a history and the history became a legend, and thereafter, the legend becomes a myth. Myth and legend are sometimes inter-connected often portraying of plants, inanimate objects and non-human animals as personal beings that has certain supernatural power. But it says that myth focus largely on corporeal beings rather than spiritual ones, the latter may be absent entirely in some cases.

The Chothe is a very small old indigenous tribe of Manipur located in the North-eastern region of India. They are mainly concentrated in two districts viz. Bishnupur and Chandel

respectively. The Census of India 2011 gives the Chothe population as 3850 (1706/M-1879/F) and with a literacy rate of 69.79%.¹ They belong to Mongoloid racial groups and speaks Tibeto-Burman language of the Sino-Tibetan family. They are considered one of the earliest groups of tribes of Manipur on the basis of their advance migration to the state (Bose 1933). They have their own distinctive indigeneous religion, political, economic and kinship and marriage institutions. The tribe in study has been in the anthropological map of the world as renowned scholars of the world like Rodney Needham, Floyd G. Lounsbury (1962), Frank B. Livingstone (1959), E. R. Leach (1951) debated on their distinctive “matrilineal cross-cousing marriage system” with respect to the “Alliance” and “Descent” theory of marriage.

The Chothe oral history on the legend “Chothe Thangwai/ Thangmei Pakhangpa” described herein was provided by the Chothe village elders like H. Thambaljao, Y. Maipak, Y. Tomalsingh, H. Jaikan, Pr. Roushi, Mk. Neilut, Pr. Wailum and Kh. Manjou besides, many other village elders and leaders. This oral history supported by the sacred manuscripts of *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa (CTP)*, *Cheitharol Kumpaba (ChK)*, *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (MNL)* and other literatures available believed to unveiled one of the most controversial socio- religious history of Manipur that concern the origin and genuine identity of *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa* or *Nongda Lairen Pakhangba* whose childhood and parents identity are also shrouded with confusion and mystery.² The available literatures mentioned above serve as the basis to fill up the incomplete oral history of *Pakhangpa* the first Sovereign Ruler of Manipur that is still obscured and subdued. It also highlights that the Chothe and Meitei shares similar beliefs in the realm of ancestor-worship and animism since early days.

Like the Chothe, the Meitei also revere and worship Pakhangpa as their mythical and first historical king of Kangla (Imphal) Kingdom. As a result he is known to various Meitei clans by different names and the most popular one is “Nongda Lairen Pakhangpa”. It is important to note that his parents and childhood history is seen unclear to the Meitei though various written records are available about his mysticism and his kingdom. Many historians 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.

For example, some Meitei scholars have tried to link with their Meitei mythical story of “Atiya Guru Sidaba” or “Kuptreng and Sentreng” (Sanamahi and Pakhangba) with *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa* but failed to establish the Pakhangpa’s origin and his parentage. The various contesting opinions about Pakhangpa from different sections of Meitei further denied any acceptable version about the genealogical identity of Pakhangpa from the Meitei side. Prof. Gangmumei Kabui one of the renown historian of Manipur asserts that “Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was a prince of mysterious origin, opinions about his origin and parentage runs from 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, Kabui says that “the chronology of Pakhangpa is one of the most controversial issues in the history of Manipur”, which I believed is because of Pakhangpa’s enigmatic personality (ibid: 90).

Therefore, on the basis of Chothe oral history and other secondary sources we shall analyse the elements of Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa’s origin, identity and background in the light of his parentage and wife Sunurembi (Leima /Laisana).

Chothe Genealogical Myth: The Chothe genealogical myth is based on the Dragon and Tiger myth like most of the Sino-Tibetan speaking groups like China, Bhutan. The Chothe religion is polytheistic who believes in cosmology, totemic, animistic and ancestral-spirits besides many other lower gods and goddesses. They believed that *Pu Lungchungpa* (the Rain God) the Dragon-Python God is their Supreme Guardian god on earth the benefactor and protector of the people. According to Chothe myth as narrated by the village elders mentioned above says that *Pu Lungchungpa* the Dragon-Python God had assured them when they lived in their mythical cave *Huipithoranga* (cave of five people who came forth) that he will come and dwell with them when they led a prosperous and settled life. Some of the village elders are of the view that this mythical cave must be located probably in the southern China, which the Kuki-Chin-Mizo speaking groups called it as *Khurpi or Hurpi or Chinnlung or Shinglung* since they claim to have migrated from the north toward south i.e. following north-east direction to the state. According to their oral history they also claimed to have inhabited at Lungleh-Waishu (Lungleh in Mizoram) but was pushed out by another powerful group in the early days. As they keep on migrating from place to place they finally entered the present southern region of Manipur and re-established their permanent settlement around Lungsukbung near Henglep, then around Leimatak river basin.³

The Chothe oral history, *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa (CTP)* and *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (MNL)* describes that in the early days Chothe was a powerful tribe and their country occupies a huge beautiful tract of area where prominent villages are situated on the five hill ridges in which each gorges serves as the river tributary in the region (Singh 1982: 92-94). It is believed that the promised made by their god *Pu Lungchungpa* was manifested in this region in the person of “Chothe Thangwai/ Thangmei Pakhangpa” as the avatar or the Divine-incarnate of their god.

Like any religion, as the legend begins where the myth ends, the Chothe legend also starts with the legendary King “Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa” most probably before 700 A.D. According to the oral history provided by the Chothe village elders, this legendary King Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa was born by a Chothe girl called Daishin, daughter of Surou the village chief and Lenghoinu (chief’s wife). They said he was also known as “Meingai” because he had “protruding tail” a mark of his divinity. This very legend re-instills the Chothe mythical beliefs and practices of what is today called as ancestor-worshippers. The present Sacred-grove (banyan tree) of Lamlanghupi (at Khuman)

is considered to be His resting place, now under the list of “National Preservation of Religious Heritage and Monuments” of Manipur.⁴

The Oral History of Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa: The Chothe oral history on the legend of “Chothe Thangwai/ Thangmei Pakhangpa”’s origin, parentage and his backgrounds as narrated by the village elders like; H. Thambaljao, Y. Maipak, Y. Tomalsingh, H. Jaikan, Pr. Roushi and Pr. Wailum besides, many other elders and leaders is constructed lucidly and described below. According to them:

“Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa was the son of Daishin the eldest daughter of Yuhlung Surou (Tarang also known as Nungkarakpa or Sanarakpa by some Meitei) one of the great chiefs of Chothe. They said Surou had two beautiful daughters namely, Daishin and Joushin. Surou, being a good man, their Principal Guardian God Pu Lungchungpa or the Dragon-Python God bless him being the last descendant in his family line. Therefore, the Dragon-Python God who promised long before to his Chothe people transformed into human form and disguised himself into a strange young handsome man and appeared before Daishin in her parents’ jhum field. This mysterious young man started frequently visiting Daishin in the jhum field, and later she fell in love with Him (the Dragon-Python God), and was later found impregnated. Surou became infuriated and restless since his daughter could not specifically identify the young man’s identity. To find out whether he is a demigod or human being, her parents suggested her to pierce the mixture that contains turmeric, garlic, ginger, snail, etc. when the mysterious young man visits her again in the jhum’s hut. Daishin, on the suggestion pierced the mixture package, the liquid drops down on the mysterious young man, being a divine person he could not bear the burn and rushed to the nearby brook and disappeared mysteriously. They also said that Joushin, the younger sister who was working in the same field saw from a distance the strange young man transformation into python (just the tail part) when she looked out in response to her sister screaming. From that day onwards Daishin was prohibited from going to their jhum field. But she escapes several times from her house expecting to find her lover but said he never show up. But it said her lover appeared in her dreams assuring his existence and protecting her and the unborn child giving her different signs and instructions about the do’s and don’ts of food habits and other religious taboos that she should observe during her pregnancy. After nine months, Daishin bore a son called “Thangwai” (Healthy or bright or enlighten youth). But they said because of his protruding tail he became commonly known as “Meingai” (Tail-man). Since the mysterious strange young man did not appear anymore to claim Daishin as his wife, Thangwai 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 without knowing that the child was endowed with divinity and supernatural powers.

According to them, Surou in the first attempt, took Thangwai Pakhangpa into a deep forest and left him alone to die. But the Dragon-Python God appeared as strange old man and rescued him. In the second attempt, Surou took his grandson to a forest again and pushed down a big boulder with his leg to kill him on the pretext of a foot-slip but the child mysteriously escaped by deflecting the boulder with his hand.

The third attempt is said to occur when Thangwai the innocent boy followed his grandfather (Surou) to the deep forest again, who went to fell trees. When the tree was about to fall Sorou then, asked the boy to go and catch hold of the falling tree. Since, the boy went in the direction of the falling tree, he is believed to have been crashed by the huge falling tree. Surou returned home thinking that young Thangwai must have been crashed to death. But late in the evening, surprisingly young Thangwai returned home with the log of the tree and asked his grandfather where to put the log. That night the boy told his mother the strange dreams he had while he was crashed to asleep by the falling tree. Hearing the story, his mother realised it was the spirit of her mysterious lover and asked her son not to be scared of him.

They said as the pressure of the village was mounting on Surou to decide on the fate of his daughter for bearing an illegitimate child. Therefore, he asked his daughter Daishin and young grandson Thangwai (Pakhangpa) to leave the village. He gave them a hen and a cock and instructed them to move north and performed egg-divination (artui-san) at a place and established his settlement where the cock crows. Accordingly, it is believed that Daishin and young Pakhangpa moved north and settled near "Langthabal" on a small hill-lope beside the Loktak Lake since the cock crowed. It is also said that his grandfather Sorou often visited them with some gifts like ropes, bamboo baskets, fats for lighting and some traditional clothes for them. Much latter as the inter-tribal wars became frequent and worst in the northern region Thangwai Pakhangpa and his mother move down south and took refuged at Moirang. Thangwai because of his skillfulness in the war and conquest became popular as a great warrior of Moirang in the southern region but subsequently after King Thangwai Kongding died he succeeded and became known as one of the greatest kings of Moirang. Legend says that after he consolidated all the small kingdoms of the southern region he marched north and established a new kingdom by defeating his rivals and unifying all the neighbouring groups and thereby become the first Sovereign ruler of entire Manipur valley".

Literatures on Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa: There are very few old literatures on Chothe Thangwai/ Thangmei Pakhangpa which suggest the origin, parentage and his background. They are like the record materials of Kh. Manjou, *The Origin of Chothe*, the sacred manuscript of *Chothe Thangwai/ Thangmei Pakhangpa (CTP)*, *Cheitharol Kumpaba (ChK)*, *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (MNL)* and few remarks found in some

books written by various early scholars like; J. Shakespeare (1912), William Shaw (1929), W. Ibohah Singh (1986), M. Kirti Singh (1989) and K. Mangpu (2002) and T.C. Tensuba (1993).

The *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa (CTP)* sacred manuscript is written in ancient Meitei language and Meitei script (*Meitei-Mayek*) in paragraph form on a scroll paper folded accordingly numbering 167 paragraphs without the author's name while the reverse side of *CTP* is written in the 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. However, there is also abridged copy of the original sacred manuscript of *CTP* written in Bengali script which is retained by each Village Chief of Lamlanghupi successively in accordance, along with two celebrated necklaces connected to the folktale, *Shantheihoi and Yangngeir* also known as "*Lungthun Maythanu*".

The Sacred Manuscript of *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa*: The original sacred manuscript, *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa (CTP)* is in ancient language written in the *Meitei-Mayek* (script) by unknown person in 1870 A.D. Like any ancient manuscripts of the Meitei the statement is in the form of questions and phrases which makes the reader very difficult to comprehend the semantic and syntax of the text since it is cryptic, poetical and often in rhyme with deep underlining literal meanings running in opposite style.

The original manuscript starts with the introduction (para: 1-2) that ["*Chothe Thangwai/Thangmei Pakhangpa*" (*CTP*) is a sacred manuscript that records the origin and identity of the Chothe tribe. This story is a very old history probably destroyed during the Sankritisation (Vaishnavism) movement and hidden from public knowledge in the early part of the eighteenth century].⁵

Since the manuscript *CTP* is considered a very sacred document to the people of Chothe it 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 any access to this manuscript till dates accept S.N. Khelchandra who abridged the sacred *CTP* manuscript.

The cover page of the abridged text *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa (CTP)* which has ninetythree (93) paragraphs is translated by S.N. Khelchandra in Manipuri and it reads as (in free translation):

"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 lojabane).

Therefore, it states that the original sacred manuscript *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa* is most probably re-written during the reign of King Chandrakriti (1850-1886) which is

believed to have destroyed during King Garib Niwaz/Pamheiba (1709-1748) or Sankritisation or Vaishvanism or Hinduism imposition movement in Manipur.

Since, the manuscript *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa (CTP)* is considered a sacred text it begins with a religious salutation note like any other ancient sacred books in the opening prayer of the ritualistic recitation, as shown;

(Hung! Hayahe, heiyao; Nahalnong Chothe Mareipung, Yangdou lammahanbu, mayum Chothe meinungthou Khunpu Tarang khullakpa, Loibi hao reima loiya Lenghoinugi palempibuknunggi, chingpal khom-ol angalla. Huiyai liklu ahanbibu phuina rakle haidabara, adunong-gibu mayum Chothe mareipungda, Chingngu nongthou Sorarel, awang pakhang yoirenba, korou thangba nong-ningthouki, chingngu mityeng panchumpana, chingngu manongtampu, khoiyum Shingtum luroi paina, nongtamkhire haidabara), (CTP - para: 1, p.1, the abridged text).

The above excerpt reads as, *Hung! Hayahe, heiyao*; that once in the Kingdom of Chothe, Khamlang-Taopi (Daishin) the eldest daughter of Tarang (Surou) the village chief and Lenghoinu the queen of the hill people found their daughter mystically pregnant. The Dragon- Python God *Pu Lungchungpa (Pu Soraren)* 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 a strange young handsome man and met her in the yam field (*CTP*-para: 1, p.1).

The *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa (CTP)* manuscript further describes that the strange young man (the Dragon-Python God *Pu Lungchungpa*) frequently visited Khamlang-Taopi in her jhum field and got impregnated. Tarang was so hurt by Khamlang-Taopi pregnancy that he repeatedly reprimanded her to tell the identity of her lover or the father of the unborn child. Khamlang-Taopi uncertain about the true identity of the strange young man, her parents become more doubtful and apprehensive (*CTP*-para: 2). Therefore, to find out whether he was a divine being or human the angry parents asked 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 pierced it when he comes to visit her (*CTP*-para: 3).⁶

According to *CTP* manuscript, Khamlang-Taopi (Daishin) gave birth to a son, who was named as "Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa" (para: 28-32, p.16-18). According to N. Vijalakshimi Brara, "Pakhangpa is said to be 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 *CTP* manuscript states that *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa* was named on the fifth day as instructed by the Dragon-Python God and was also called as "Lairen Meitingu" (Python's protruding tail) by the Ngangngoi or Yangoi of southern Moirang group (Para: 32). This naming ceremony is believed to be in accordance to the Chothe's indigenous child naming ceremony.⁷

This particular para of *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa (CTP)* manuscript clearly states that “The king of Keke Moirang was known as Thingkri Nachaoba. But before he was known as Thingkri Nachaoba he was called as “Chothe ThangwaiPakhangpa”. The great uncle or the foster father of Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa was known as Kege Thangwai Kongding Ahanba and his mother was known as Thamoirembi the young princess from the Marimpa of Chakha-khong region”⁸ (CTP-para: 25,p.15).

(Keke Moirang ningthou Thingkri Nachaoba touna kau-ae. Thinkgri Nachaoba kaudringeidi Chothe Thangwai Pakhangba tauna kauye. Keke Moirang Chothe Thangwai Pakhangba mapanthou ningthou Keke Thangwai Kongding ahanba kau-aena, panlem mama Chakhakhong Marimpa chanu leima Thamoirembi tauna kau-aena).

In line with the oral history provided by the Chothe elders the *CTP* manuscript also describes about the assassination attempts made by *Tarang* (Surou) to kill the boy (Pakhangpa). The third attempt mentioned in the *CTP* manuscript states, Tarang (Surou) cursed his grandson who neither knows his father’s identity or clan, to go and catch-hold of the huge falling tree so that he might be crashed to death.

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

In connection to the manuscript, the Chothe elders also saythat young Pakhangpa grew up to be extremely notorious and trouble maker to his friends whenever they played with him. His extraordinary strength and power surprises and horrifies the villagers. Unable to bear the shame due to notoriety and illegitimacy of the child, Tarang (Surou) asked his daughter Daishin to leave the village with her son and settled far in the north. As instructed by Surou they performed theegg-divination (*artui-san*) at a place called Langthabal since the cock crows.⁹ But later Pakhangpa and his mother moved down south to Moirang and subsequently became one of the great kings of Moirang succeeding King Khongding.

The cause of Pakhangpa’s movement toward south, writes Kabui that, “according to *Chakpa Khunta Khunthok*, Nongda LairenPakhangba when he became of age, fought against the Khabas under the leadership of Khaba Nungchenba. In the struggle, Pakhangba was defeated by the Khabas (Khaba-Nganba) and Pakhangba was forced to take refuge in Moirang principality” (2003: 83). This apparently suggest that Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa after his defeat by the Khaba-nganba the northern (*Koubru*) group fled to the south and made alliance with Thangwai Kongding the eldest son of Moirang King Tushemba.¹⁰ It is believed thatsubsequently Pakhangpa’smother Khamlang-Taopi became one of Kongding’s wives, since her reference name from Khamlang-Taopi was henceforth changed to as “Thamoilempi” and King Kongding is referred as the foster-father or guardian (*Mapan-panthou*) of Pakhangpain the *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa (CTP)* manuscript (Para: 58, 61, p. 30).

Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (MNL): The manuscript, *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (MNL)* is also considered as one of the most important historical texts of Manipur besides the *Cheitharol Kumpaba (Ch.K)*. The chapter - nineteenth (19) of MNL is titled as “*Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa: Thingkri Nachaoba*” that exclusively deals with Pakhangpa describing him as one of the greatest kings of Moirang. According to *MNL*, Pakhangpa was popularly known as “Purek lai Thangwai Atengba” meaning, “Thangwai the aide of the ancestor god” before he became king of Moirang (Singh 1982: 90, *CTP-Para*: 83, p. 43). The *MNL* describes Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa as a great warrior and gives detail account of his successful conquests both in the south-western region and south-eastern region in the expansion of the Moirang kingdom as an aide to the King Kongding. In the subsequent page the *MNL* describes how Pakhangpa acquired a new titled again as “*Thingkri Nachaoba*” after he defeated a great king Nachaopa in the battle of Nungsuk ching in the south-western region and later succeeded King Khongding after his death (Singh 1982: 93; see *CTP- para*: 25, p.15, 90-91).¹¹

Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba like *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa* manuscript states that after unifying all the southern small principalities into one and peace was maintain later Pakhangpa accepted a truce with Thokchao the Angom prince the elder son of Kouburel Angom- ngagi of the northern kingdom. The treaty was made between them at *Taibelou Pukphat Sapeilou* (the elongated inter-locking field) near Khuijuman (Singh 1982: 97, *CTP- Para*: 90, p.46). Gangmumei 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 (2003: 83, see, Kamei 2004: 46).

On the above analysis it is seen that Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa perfectly engineered the war strategy and became one of the most successful warrior and earn the name as “Thangwai the aide” (*Purek lai Thangwai Atengba*) to the King Kongding of Moirang. Subsequently, after his successful conquest and defeat of a great King Nachaopa in the western region Thangwai Pakhangpa again earn another feather on his cap a titled as “*Thingkri Nachaoba*” and thereafter become known as the greatest kings of Moirang. The truce with Thokchao the Angom prince appears to be the most fortunate event that led Pakhangpa to be the greatest kings of Manipur who put the power of Khabas to an end in the north and established his historical kingdom at Imphal (Kangla).

Other Literatures: The legend of *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa* is also strongly supported by William Shaw (1929), M. Kirti Singh (1993) and Mangpu Kilong (2001) writings. Accordingly, M. Kirti Singh, “The myth of Pakhangpa 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 is precisely accentuated by William Shaw’s description, who wrote it as:

“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... 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 Arhtuisan, he found the place suitable and he founded a village there. Thus the Manipuris were originated. At that time they live like kukis and Nagas but later a Brahmin came from the south who so impressed them with his preaching that they took on their present religion” (1929: 47-48).

Mangpu Kilong also remarked 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).

But with regards to the Manipuris (Meitei) origin the Chothe elders based on their oral history says that the early Meitei are a small group of immigrant known as “Poirei” who came from north-west. Historically, this group is believed to be a section of Thai-Ahom origin trying to cross the south-western mountains of Manipur. Therefore, on the basis of the history the present Meitei is considered admixture or conglomeration of seven salais (ethnic groups) or various old tribes of proto-Tibeto-Burman speaking groups of Manipur connected through political and inter-marriages ties. Similarly, S.N.A Parratt and W. Ibohal Singh also wrote that “the Chakpa and the Loi were assimilated, while the hill peoples formed alliances with the Meitei or became tributaries... and of the gradual acculturation and assimilation of the yeks (clans) and tribes into their kingdom” (2005: 3, Singh 1986).¹² This is obvious from the historical point of view as the assimilation took its momentum during the process of Sankritisation or Hindunisation from later 17th-18th century onward in which it became more dominant in the political and economic front after that state got its statehood. It is also believed that there are few scholars among these new immigrants as they are on a kind of pilgrimage mission tour and as silk traders probably finding a shorter route than the silk-route. This presumption needs further research and deeper investigation.

Pakhangpa’s Coronation at Kangla (Imphal): According to G. Kabui, soon after defeating the Khabas and the Poireiton groups by Pakhangpa, he was crown as the New Sovereign-King by three great cheifsi.e. Puleiromba the Angom chief, a Luwang priest (Luwang Langmaiba) and Ningthem Apanba of the Mangang by pouring the Nungjeng pond water on the body of the king and queenon his coronation ceremony day besides attended by many of the Pakhangpa’s leaders and relatives (2003: 84). Kabui mentioned that it is the poets and singers who gave the regal title, “Tubi Yoinongda Nongda Lairen Pakhangba” on his coronation day for his greatness and mysticism. He was also given the title, “Meitingu or Meidingu” (ibid: 84-85). Further, Kabui mentions that

according to *Chakparol* text, Kansuroi a leader of the Chakpassent four persons 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.¹³ According to *Shanglen Puba Puya*, the coronation ceremony was performed on 1st Saturday of Kalen (June / July) the Meitei lunar calendar (ibid: 84-85). Thus, Pakhangpa become the first Sovereign-Ruler of the entire Manipur valley and the adjoining Hill-kingdoms. My informants also says that many of the Pakhangpa's relatives i.e. Chothe elders and leaders went and assisted him on his coronation day to perform as per the Chothe custom and tradition.¹⁴ It is clear here that Pakhangpa is known differently by different group of people where he is identified by his relationship and his great deeds.

Analysis of Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa: Let us de-construct and analyse the description from the above evidences and also from other sources too as it suggest that the legendary king *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa* and *Nongda Lairen Pakhangpa/ba*, as known by the Meitei, is one and the same person.

Meitei mythology: According to Meitei mythology, there are four Pakhangbas viz.; Loimanai Pakhangba, Leinung Lonja (Ariba) Pakhangba, Lolang Pakhangba and Nongda Lairen Pakhangba (Kabui 2003: 75). If locally translated all these names it points to his birth place to which his mother belonged. Only Nongda Lairen Pakhangba is considered as the genuine historical king of Kangla (Imphal) as proved by *Cheithourol Kumpaba (ChK)* while the rest are considered as mystical Pakhangbas, including the other eighteen (18) cognomens of Pakhangpa, see in second the para.

According to Meitei mythical version of "*Sanamahi and Pakhangba*", the *Atiya Guru Sidaba* the Supreme God the creator of the Universe and his wife *Leimaren Sidabi* has two sons. The elder son is known as *Ashiba* or *Kuptreng* or *Sanamahi* and the younger is known as *Konjin Tuthokpa* or *Sentreng* or *Pakhangba*. 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 and did not bother but *Pakhangpa* recognized his father and performed the funeral rites. On this ground 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 *Sanamahi* was covering the whole universe, *Pakhangpa* on the other hand, rounded up his father's pedestal seven times on the advised of his mother considering him 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).

Such mythical and historical confusion is vindicated by different scholars like K.C. Tensuba who asserts that "*Nongda Lairen Paakhangba* was not that *Paakhangba*, 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). In the same way, Kabui affirmed about the Meitei myth 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 Lairen Pakhangpa in the late historical time to give a garb of divinity to the king” (2003: 57). Similarly, W. Ibohal Singh claims that there are eighteen cognomens of Pakhangpa as mysticism seen from different accounts 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 of Pakhangpa are: 1). Nongta Tukuplik, 2) Nongtreng Apumba, 3) Leinung Lonja Ariba, 4) Laloyang Tanouba, 5) Nongpok Poklen, 6) Umtha Ningthou Yoirma, 7) Chingwang Ningthou Atenba, 8) Laiyingthou apanba, 9) Ching-U Langba Apanba, 10) Leinung Longja Pakhangpa, 11) Lai Pakhang Atengba, 12) Tangja Leela Pakhangpa, 13) Lolang Pakhangpa 14) Tubi Yoi Nongta, 15) Nongta Lairen Pakhangpa, 16) Ningtem, 17) Sa, and 18) Javista (Singh 1986: 271-272).

Therefore, Gangmumei Kabui comes to 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). His remark is clear that the history of Manipur has been seriously manipulated to claim the Meitei supremacy over the Hills peoples by few scholastic groups, admitting the fact of his inconclusiveness of the conclusion he made. Kabui’s remark is supported by many of the Chothe elders like **Mr. and Mrs. Tharaklei** (98 yrs) of Tampakhu saying that “The Meitei has suppressed many of the Chothe ancient history and have assumed and narrated to be as their stories, which is not at all theirs. Even if they claim certain Chothe stories to be theirs it will not be accepted because certain elements of originality or factual evidences will be missing, if and when authenticated, since they did not know all the truth”.

Genealogy of Pakhangpa: Still many local scholars continue to speculate to construct the true identity of Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa or Nongda Lairen Pakhangpa but proved to be unsuccessful because they could not ascertain about his true origin, identity and parentage. True to the words of **Mr and Mrs. Tharaklei stated above**. Kabui also claim that the historicity of Nongda Lairen Pakhangpa is clearly proved by the historical chronicles and his dynasty’s genealogy, but with regards to the origin “the identification of his parentage has been quite a controversial problem” (Kabui 2003: 75, 77). The confusion over the identity of Pakhangpa is quite obvious as there is no any other historical record available on his origin and parentage other than this *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa (CTP)* manuscript which is kept sacred by the Chothewhile those Meitei scholars who knew probably remain silent for fear of discrimination and assault from others.

Mother of Pakhangpa: Pakhangpa’s mother is commonly known to many Meiteias “Yakha Chanu” though the Chothe claim to know her as Daishin the daughter of chief Surou and Lenghoinu. According to some texts, Kabui writes that like, *Khagemba Yangbi, Chada Laihui, Pakhangpa Nongkarol, etc.* Nongda Lairen Pakhangpa’s mother was known as *Leinung Yaibirok* one born three times as queen and married to three chiefs or kings (2003: 76-77). Similarly, Y.M. Singh and N.B. Singh based on *Meihourol Lathup Latam* a sacred text said the mother of Pakhangpa was “Liklabicha Nungtangnu” who was

illegitimately touched by Luwang Langmaiba and she forcibly married to Puleiromba, the Angom chief (See Kabui 2003: 77). Likewise, W. Ibohal Singh based on *Cheitharol Kumpaba (ChK)*, *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (MNL)* and *Leithak Leikharol* states that Pakhangpa's mother was called "Leinung Yabirok Yakha Chanu" believed to be neo-Tibetans or Tai or Shan groups (amalgamated old tribes), (1986: 76-82, 266). In Meitei the term "*Leinung Yabirok*" means "the slanting stream" probably the Leimatak river basin and "Yakha or Chakha" refers to "an indigenous tribe" and "Chanu" means "a girl", which definitely identifies that Pakhangpa mother belong to an indigenous (old) tribe from the Leimatak river basin area. Further, W. Ibohal Singh says that the people of Lei-Nung or Yakha or Chakha (indigenous tribes of Manipur) are groups of people who migrated to the south-western region of the state after a sequence of expulsion of the Tai by Tsi-Wang-Tsi in the 3rd B.C. who had earlier occupied the *Khampat* region of the north-western Myanmar (Burma) originally belonging to *Kham-pa* tribe of eastern Tibetan (1986: 77-78, 146-149). Literally, if translated in Chothe "*Leinung Yabirok Yakha Chanu*" means, "a girl from the interior place of Lei-Nung". The place "Lei-Nung probably refers to "Chothe Nungsuk/Lungsuk-bung" settlement near Henglep mentioned in *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa (CTP)* and *MNL* (Chapter 19) where the historic battle occurred with the Chothe and Keke-Moirang (CTP-para: 25, p.15, 90-91; Singh 1982:93).

The *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa (CTP)* manuscript states that Pakhangpa was an illegitimate son of Khamlang-Taobi or Thamoilembi the eldest daughter of Tarang the Chothe chief and Lenghoinu, whom they believed was impregnated mysteriously by the intercession of their principal guardian god the Dragon-Python (*Lungchungpaor Soraren*), (Para: 1, p.1, Para: 91-93). However, according to the Chothe oral history, informants like Kh. Manjou, H. Thambaljao, Y. Maipak, Pr. Roushi, Mk. Neilut says that Pakhangpa mother's name was called as "Daishin" the elder daughter of Surou (Tarang) the Chothe chief and Lenghoinu. It is said that Surou or Tarang is also known as Nungkarakpa or Sanarakpa by the Meitei because he usually give decision standing above a slab of stone as dais or pulpit" which is an ancient Chothe tradition.¹⁵

Father of Pakhangpa: Gangmumei Kabui wrote that according to the genealogy of the Ningthouja clan the father of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was projected to be Sentreng. But Y.M. Singh and N.B. Singh assumed 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 to W. Ibohal Singh Pakhangba's father was Likleng alias Luwang Langmaiba from a royal family of Lei-Nung tribe and was holding the post of Tupu, a designation derived from "Lambu Tupu" meaning, "a guide" or "officer-in-charge" (1986: 274-275). K.C Tensuba contested W. Ibohal Singh proposition that Tupu Likleng alias Luwang 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. Since, "Lu" means, the head or the intellect, "Waang" means, high. While Laangmaiba means, one who can set someone, who is trapped, free from the dangerous trap... (1993: 137). Kabui in accordance with the Chothe oral history argues that Tupu Likleng or

Luwang Langmaiba was an old man, a priest and the chief advisor who behest on Pakhangpa's coronation (Kabui 2003: 85).

Further, W. Ibohal Singh opined that "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). The term "Lambu Tupu" in Chothe if spelled as "Lampu (village guide), Tarpu (an old man)" means "an old village guide" probably refer to an aged experience man who knows the geography of the land. Therefore, from the perspective of the oral history narrated by the Chothe elders, on the criteria of *CTP*, *MNL*, *Ch.K* manuscripts and also from the above discussion it points that Surou (Tarang or Nungkarakpa or Sanarakpa or Likleng or Luwang Langmaiba) was one of the chiefs of Leinung-Yakha area probably refers to Chothe *Nungsuk/ Lungsuk-ching* who is the maternal grandfather of Pakhangpa but not Pakhangpa's father. Thus, the identity of Pakhangpa's father is still shrouded in mystery.

Leima Sunurembi Thoukham-lei: The Forbidden Flower: Most significant evident that probably suggest Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa or Meingai or Thingkri Nachaoba or Nongda Lairen Pakhangpa the legendary king, the mystical ancestor or the greatest king of Moirang or the first historical king of Manipur to be one and the same person, is that, all of these names is associated with only one girl known by different names as Sunurembi or Laisana or Laisna or Leima who is believed to be the beloved wife of Pakhangpa. She is considered a distant relative of Poireiton besides several other clues. According to *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba* she is known as Sunurembi, the daughter of Hekhamba Nongyai Kokcha a Royal family of the early-immigrant of the Poireiton group but after her marriage she is known as Leima (Singh 1982: 98). Similarly, the *CTP* manuscript in many occasions states that "Thongnang Loinempa" was the father of Leima Sunurembi of Mayang chanu (Bengal girl) a descendant of the new-immigrant group (Para: 42, 45-47, p.22, 24-25). W. Ibohal Singh said that according to *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, in the north Pakhangpa married a girl named "Laisara" or "Laisana" of Tai origin who got mixed with the new-Tibetans, originally belonging to Poireiton group (1986: 273).¹⁶ The outcome of marriage is stated by G. Kabui that Poireiton ultimately acknowledged the supremacy of Pakhangpa and on behalf of him, his younger brother Thongaren (Thongnang Loinempa) offered his younger sister Laisra or Laisana (Lei-sena) who accompanied him to be the queen of Pakhangpa who were subsequently coronated formally as the new King and Queen of Imphal (Kangla) before the three great chiefs on 1st Saturday Kalen (June/July), (2003: 84-85).

The passionate relationship between Pakhangpa and Leima Sunurembi is described in *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa (CTP-Para: 87)* and also in *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba (MNL)* manuscripts that a memento had been inscribed on a kind of rare beautiful red flower known as *Kharam Leishok Angangba*. The red flower is commonly now known as *Leima Sunurembi Thoukham-lei* meaning "The forbidden flower of queen Sunurembi" after a decree was issued in honour of their true love and relationship (Singh 1982: 94).

According to Chothe oral history, Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa had been instructed by his mysterious father the Dragon-Python God not to marry any girl in his lifetime, if he does, he will become mortal like any human being. On this ground it is said that Pakhangpa avoided Sunurembi by deserting her and left for his heavenly abode in order to fulfill this obligation not to marry Sunurembi and remained bachelor so as to immortalize himself. It is most probable that his commitment to bachelorhood or late marriage life might have led to knowing him as “*Pa-khang-pa/ba*” which literally means, “virile youth” or “bachelor” in Meitei. But the CTP manuscript describes that Pakhangpa subsequently married Sunurembi after she passed the test of her true love for him which is consented by the Dragon-Python God. Though Pakhangpa married Sunurembi at Moirang Kingdom she was made Queen of Imphal (Kangla Kingdom) of Manipur on the coronation day as he brought the two principalities into one umbrella. Henceforth, she is known as “*Laisana / Leima*” (lit. Mother of the land).

Death: The mysticism of Pakhangpa did not just end with his mysterious childhood activities and parentage but carries on even after his death. Kabui wrote that Pakhangpa and Laisana lived in constant fear of the Khabas after he defeated them, and that one Khaba rebel named Huitao Tington Khaba Tousuba ambushed and speared Pakhangpa to death (2003: 90). Another version mentioned that Pakhangpa was killed by his own son Khuiyom Tompok in connivance with the Khabas (ibid: 90). According to the Chothe elders, Pakhangpa was killed by some people from the north with magical spell whom they believed to be the Maring tribe (Khabas-Nganba). The Maring tribe is considered very skilful in the art of magic even today.

The Secrecies of Pakhangpa Identity: Several proverbs, phrases and socio-religious decrees are very much alive among various groups of people about the secrets with regards to the identity of Pakhangpa and his genealogy often not shared especially by the Meitei for fear of condemnation. According to Y. Maipak and H. Thambaljao of Lamlanghupi one of the most revered secrets about the religious history of Manipur as told to them by early Meitei scholars (*Purohits*) is that, “*the sacred story of Manipur is kept inside the Chothe basket*” (*Manipur-gi, athuppa washingdi Chothe lubak manungda lei*).

Pr. Roushi of Ajouhu and Mk. Neilut of Old-Wangpal 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*).

These coded verses are in Meitei language used because of the lingua-franca. The Chothe claimed that *Lubak* meaning, the bamboo basket in Meitei, having the dimension of (1 x 1 ½) ft (1 x b), usually made by Chothe from a particular bamboo species called *U-tang*.

There are also strict taboos based on folktales that prohibit any Meitei to kick or touch any Chothe with his feet or use any Chothe men as palanquin bearers because the Meitei believed the Chothe are the direct descendants of their great great ancestor King. It also says that the Chothe were always treated with royalty and there is always a reserved

seat for the Chothe chief in the King's Court in early days till the time of King Chandrakriti (1850-1886).

Confusion of the Identity: The confusion and contradiction in the socio-religious history is bound to have occurred because of misunderstanding, wrong interpretation, and interpolation and varied references made by various ethnic groups in describing each other. M. McCulloch clearly points out about the nature of naming style or identifying hill peoples in early days especially, by the valley people. According to him, "all the Hau (tribals or hill peoples like Anal, Chothe, Maring, Koireng, Kabui, Tangkhul, Khonjai, etc.) are the names used amongst the Meitei to distinguish the principal tribes, and though each of these tribes has a distinctive name of its 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 used it" (1857: 41). This means that the indigenous people of Manipur have it own way of identifying their own group of people, simply not understood by outsiders.

S.N.A. Parratt also affirms about the historical interpolation that the *Cheitharol Kumpaba (ChK)*, the court's chronicle manuscript was re-written twice, first during Garib Niwaz (1709- 1748) and secondly at the time of Chingthang Khompa or Bhagyachandra (1759). She even feels 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 Shan dynasty (2005: 3, 5, 14). But much before Parratt it was W. Ibohal Singh who refused to accept the year of N.L Pakhangpa's coronation i.e. 33 A.D (76 Saka) as the first historical year of Manipur considering it to be too early for reasons like geographical settings, population, genealogical calculations and archaeological findings, etc. and presumed the date should be around 980 A.D (1986: 41, see also Parratt 2005: 5, 18). It is apparent now from the perspective of Manipur history, the distortion and interpolation of the religious history of Meitei began when Garib Niwaz's under the influenced of Shanti Das Goswami imposed Vaishnavism (Sanskritization) to his subjects against Sanamahism (the ancient Meitei religion) who even went to the extent of forcibly burning down all the ancient historical records written in Meitei-Mayek (script), and therefore, rewriting the history of Manipur in Bengali script (Parratt 2005: 14).

However the major damage of Manipur religious history seems to have taken in the early twentieth century. According to S.N.A Parratt, the serious twist and misinterpretation of the history of Manipur began from the early twentieth century, broadly classifying into two trends. Firstly, the early scholars like Phurailatpam Atombapu Sharma and his disciples writings were all highly influenced by Brahmanical Hinduism, and the second real damage comes from the congress supporters after 1950 for political reasons to integrate the state's culture with the Indian mainstream (2005: 1-2).

From the above discussion, it is also evident that misunderstandings, misinterpretations and the interpolations and suppressive histories occurred due to the nature of multi-

ethnic groups, the naming nature of the people and also political reasons. Thus, we see the metamorphosis of Pakhangpa's name changing from *Thangwai* to *Meingai* to *Meitingu* to *Chothe Thangmei Pakhangpa* to *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa* to *Thangwai Atengpa* to *Thinkri Nachaoba* and to *Nongda Lairen Pakhangpa* and so forth by different groups of people according to his mythical personalities and deeds, whose mother, Daishin is believed to be the daughter of a Chothe chief who originally came from the far east and settled in the south western hills of Manipur.¹⁷

Endnotes:

1. Census of India 2011.
2. Chothe: They are believed to be one among the oldest tribes of Manipur who migrated from the south-east of Manipur. The Mizo (Lushei) speaking groups considered that Chothe or Chawte as one of their missing clan of the twelve clans. Some Mizos considered Chothe a relative of Sailo clan. Besides, there is a clan by the name "Chawhte" who inhabit in the south-western part of Mizoram assumed as a relative of Chothe of Manipur who have been assimilated with the Mizos like the Hmar of Manipur. Many Chothe leaders have tried to establish a relationship with their old Chawhte brethrens of Mizoram and some cognatic tribes of Tripura since 1970's but could not strengthen the ties owing to many social-economic and political reasons.
3. Leimatak: The name of this river basin is said to have been derived after the queen of Manipur frequently visited her ancestors place (Leinung Yaibirok Yakha) and catches fishes. Now the area is known as the Leimatak Hydro Electric Project that generates the electricity for the state and Assam.
4. Sacred-grove: The present sacred-grove of *Chothe Thangwai/ Thangmei 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 14, 1929). 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. The quotations used are quoted from the abridged text of *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa* after having read and compared the original *Chothe Thangwai 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 somewhat simple and comprehensible unlike the original text.
6. The Chothe believes that the mixture of turmeric, garlic, yam, eel, etc. dispels any kind of evil spirits when exposed. As instructed by her parents, Daishin (Khamlang-taopi) pierced the mixture package secretly and the liquid drops felt on

Pakhangpa's body. Being a Divine person (demigod) endowed with supernatural powers he could not bear the smell as it burnt his body, so he immediately rushed to the nearby brook and disappeared mysteriously.

7. Meingai: This term is used by some Meitei to mean "Lord of the kings" for being the "Sovereign king of Manipur" without precisely understanding the intrinsic local meaning. Such usage is clarified by S.N.A Parratt who states that "the use of the term "Meetingnu" (lit. Lord of the Meeteis) for "king" indicates that the chronicle is essentially the repository of the Meitei writing of history" (2005: 3). According to the Chothe elders "Meingai or Meitingte" means "a person with a protruding tail" the mark of his divinity. In accordance with the Chothe elders version, M.Kirti Singh also remarked that "another title for the king is Lairel Meidingu (Lord, straight tail), Pakhangba, being the Lord of the snakes is better known as Meidingu" (1993: 55). This clarifies that Pakhangpa was also known as Meingai or Meidingu by some people.
8. Thangwai: This particular para clearly suggests that one of the greatest kings of Moirang was known as Thingkri Nachaoba and he was originally called as "Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa". Besides it further says that his mother Thamoilempi was the daughter from land of Marimpa country. It is also believed that his foster father who was earlier known as Khongding Ahanba (Khongding the Elder) acquired the prefix name "Thangwai" Kongding being his only step-son. Moreover it is a common style of addressing the parents using their first child's name as a prefix by others in consideration with regards and respect in Manipur. Such addressal nature is still commonly practice in Manipur among most of the tribes or communities.
9. Langthabal: Tensuba also opined that Nongda Lairen Pakhangba (Chothe Thangwai 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. Heingangching 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 connected with the Chothe folktale too called "Asha changnu: A lady who transformed into an animal" in which one of the King's huge boat brought from Chothes was mysteriously lost in the northern Loktak Lake near Langthabal. It is also believed that subsequently the place was occupied by a group of Chothe in the later period of their south-east migration which they called it as "Yangpalkung". According to Moirangthem Rajendra the settlement is known as "Chothe Yangbi" when abundant the place it was given to the first group of Meitei-Pangals (Muslim) who came as soldiers by Khakempa in 1606 (2000: 30).
10. Khaba-nganba: It is said that Khaba-nganba is an old name for the Maring tribes of Manipur who are also known as Poi or Falam by others in ancient times who also migrated from the south. They are distinguished from other ethnic groups as they tie their hair knot towards the forehead unlike others who tie above the head or behind the head.

11. Battle of Nungsuk ching: The Chothe legend says that Chothe Pakhangpa's attacked on the south-western groups of people and on Nungsuk-ching (Lungsuk-bung) on his own group of people is considered to be his retribution and to bring them under his own subjugation primarily for personal reasons of ill-treatments and humiliation he and his mother suffered during his childhood. Accordingly, the humiliations are the rebukes, assaults, accusation of being illegitimate or fatherless child, banishment from the village, the mockery and scoffing at his protruding tail as *Meingai (Meitingte)*. 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 mother of Pakhangpa, Daishin (Khamlang- Taopi or Thamoilempi) after the devastating war went to her parent's village in the Chothe country and explained 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).
12. Chakpa or Yakha: It is an ancient name for indigenous tribes of Manipur who inhabited the land prior to other new-immigrant groups. The older indigenous tribes of Manipur in the south according to Shakespeare are like the Chothe, Koireng, Kharam, Anal, Vaiphei etc. categorized as "Old-Kuki" including Loi's the scheduled caste of Manipur (see Parratt 2005).
13. Kansurol: There are folktales that say Kansurol was one among the great Chothe chiefs of Makan clan. It is said in early days a settlement called "Kansui" was posthumously named. In Chothe "Kansu" means "be strong" and is associated with one of the early ancestors found in the Chothe genealogical myth (CLAM, Souvenir 2000: 3).
14. This is the reasons why tribal participation and a tribal costume is a must in any Meitei (coronation) ceremony and other important ceremonies as Kabui stated (2003: 84). The living example is that the Meitei priestess (*Maibee*) should adorned any of the tribal (Hao) dress whenever they performed certain rituals and divinations otherwise it is consider ineffective reflecting for the origin of genealogical or the cognate relationship of their gods. They said the mother of the land was a tribal woman who comes from the east whom they called as "Nongpok Panthoibi Leima". This probably refers to the mother of Pakhangpa according to them although many did not have clear idea about it.
15. Nungkarakpa: The Meitei knows Surou as Nungkarakpa because traditionally he decides and gives orders by stepping above a rock like on a dais or pulpit. It is said such was the custom of Chothe chief in ancient days when the Chothe conduct the village court meeting usually around a banyan tree the place being represented with stones.
16. Poireiton: The other name for Loiching is Loiyang refers to the hill ranges stretch from Laimaton of Lamangtong (Bishnupur) and Thangjing peaks. The foothill is also said to be known as *Poireiton Chingkhong* first occupied by Lois in olden days

that was subsequently occupied by the Bodo-Cacharis or Bengal in the latter period. Evidently, the place is near the old-Cachar road. Therefore, the Loiching foothill or Lammangtong subsequently came to known as Bishnupur after the Vishnu temple was constructed by 18th century A.D.

17. The different names of Pakhangpa's mother as mentioned above are not at all specific names of an individual as none of it bears any genuine indigenous names. But rather found to be common nicknames or terminological references associated with a place she belonged or the group, as it is the traditional way of identifying any person in Manipur. This is why, outsiders were often confused and misled in interpretation, since the original or the birth name "Daishin" is known only by Chothe the nearest and closest kin groups.

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NB: *Chothe Thangwai Pakhangpa*, the original sacred manuscript written in ancient Meitei Mayek (script) retained by the Lamlanghupi Village Council has no author's name.