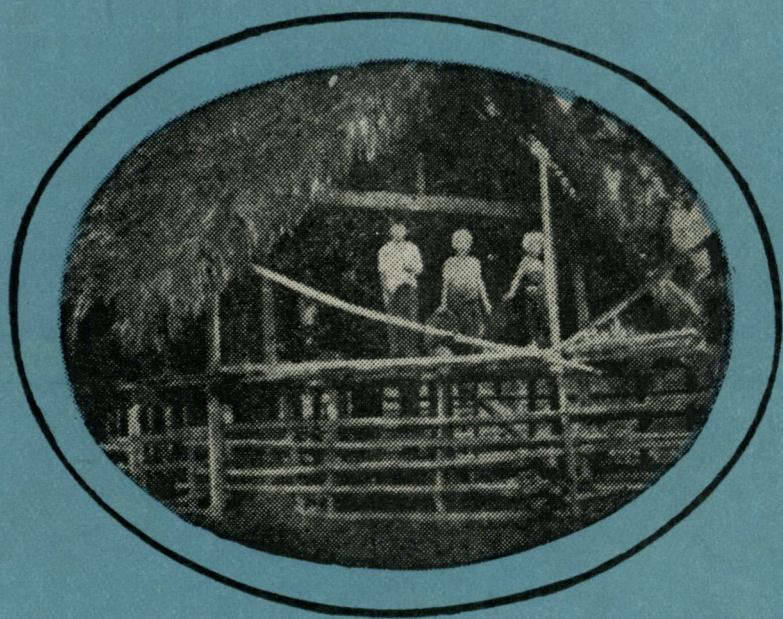


# *The* **SINGPHOS**



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**PARUL DUTTA**

# **THE SINGPHOS**

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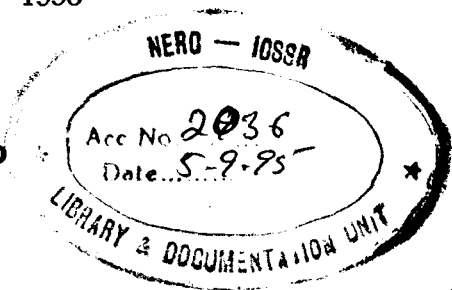
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## **CHAPTER :: ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **THE PEOPLE :**

In the plain foot hills, towards the north of present Changlang district, in the land watered by the rivers Buri Dehing, Noa Dehing and Tenga Pani, lives the Singphos, one of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Their population according to 1971 Census is 1567. (776 male and 791 female). They live in twenty four villages scattered over a fairly large area in Changlang and Lohit districts.

In their dialect the word "Singpho" means man. But the real name of the tribe as Sri Edward Gait has mentioned is Kakhyens by which name they are known in their original home in Hukong valley, between Chindwin river in Burma and the Patkai hills. Dalton has mentioned about the Singphos, in his "Tribal History of Eastern India" - thus, "The Singphos are of the race called by the Burmese Ka-Khyen or Kaku, whose original settlements, were on the great eastern branches of the Irrawaddy river, they are their in contact with the Kunungs, with whom they are closely allied in language and origin. They extended east of the confines of Yunan and west to the valley of the Kyendwyen; but it was only on spreading into the valley of Assam that they assumed the name of Singpho which in their own language means 'man'.

About the date of their first appearance in their present habitat Dalton agrees that they first came during the rebellion of the Motoks and Muamariah

against the Ahom King Gaurinath Singha, which was in 1793 AD.

Dalton further says that the Singphos on their arrival in this side of the Patkai did not find any opposition from the local inhabitants. In course of time they formed into independent states. Some of the Assamese inhabitants were also taken into their community mostly as slaves. The Duania community of Assam is said to be offsprings of Singpho through Assamese female slaves. Dalton wrote "From the intercourse of the Singphos with their Assamese female slaves, a mongred race has sprung up, well known in Upper Assam under the denomination Duaniahs. They have been found very useful auxiliaries in frontier wars from their knowledge of the Singpho language and tactics, and from their fidelity to the government that relieved them from the Singpho Yoke."

Sarbanada Raj Kumar in his book "Itihase Suwora Chasata Basor" has given a detailed account of the Singphos. According to his account the original habitat of the Sinphos was in the area between Barkhamti land and Mugong in Burma. According to Col. Sapeare "The Singphos are akin to the Cachin or Singgo of Burma. They are hard working, gentle and intelligent". Edward Gait has mentioned that the Singphos orginally lived in the hills between Sindwin river and the Patkai. Col. Hanney also agreed that the Singphos are akin to the Kakhiyen or Kaku of Burma.

Mackenzi in his "The north east frontier of Bengal" has stated that "The first appearance of the Singphos in Assam was during the troubles following on the

Moamoriah rebellion in the region of Gourinath Singha. They drove out the Khamptis from the low lands under the Patkai hills and settled themselves on the Tanga Pani east of Sadiya and on the Upper Booree Dehing, in the tract called Namrup. At first they were welcomed as deliverers by the Assamese peasantry and under their Chief Gakhenthu restored order to the country devastated by the Moamorias. But when the Burmese invaded the Province in 1897, an era of plunder and misrule supervened and every petty chief who could get together a following, pillage the Assamese on his own account. Thousands of Assamese cultivators were carried off as slaves; and the whole of east Assam was wellnigh depopulated."

Robinson gives an account of the Singpho habitat in this way - "On the north they are bounded by that branch of the Brahmaputra known as Lohit, on the east by the Langtang range, which separates them from the Bor-Khamtis; on the south by the Patkai range, which divides them from the Burmese. Singpos, from whom they derive their descent, and on the west, by an imaginary line drawn south from Sadiya till it meets the last mentioned mountains. "

### **Migration :-**

The Singphos living in this area have migrated from the Hukong valley some hundreds of years ago. "The date of their migration is given approximately as the end of eighteenth century". Some of them are still there in their original home-land, with whom the present population have got close relations.

The traditional story of their migration says that

they have come to their present habitat across the Frontier wall, the Patkai, through two routes. One is called Chowkang lam, along the bank of Upper Noa Dehing, and the other, Namjung lam or Kadak lam, through Pangchu pass. The Khamptis also as far as the information goes came through the first route. As they say, they did not come all at a time, but in subsequent batches. Those who came via Chowkang lam stayed in several places, settling in villages till they finally spread out over the whole area. First they established a village called Khumuga, where they stayed for a long time. From a Khumuga they came to Tufaga, where they stayed for a year or so when finally they came to Penga. At Penga they stayed for a considerable period, and then went batch by batch in different directions and established Miao, Phup, Bisi, Gagam and Luwang villages. The other group who came via Namjung lam, did not settle in many places. After crossing the river, Namjung, they came to Miao Kung, (Near present Miao village) where they stayed for few years. Thence they went to Wakhét Ku from where spread out in different directions and established, Gillnja, Bordumsa, Haru Dumsa and few other villages.

History also bears the fact, they first came during the Moamaria rebellions. Sri Edward Gait has described in his book " A History of Assam" as follows "The Singphos, who live, inter-mixed with the Khamptis, in the country watered by the Burhi Dehing, the Noa Dehing and the Tangapani, which formerly belonged to the Ahoms, are merely an outlying section of the tribe. Their real home is in the hilly country between the Chindwin river and the Patkai, where they are known as Kakhyens. The name by which they are known in the

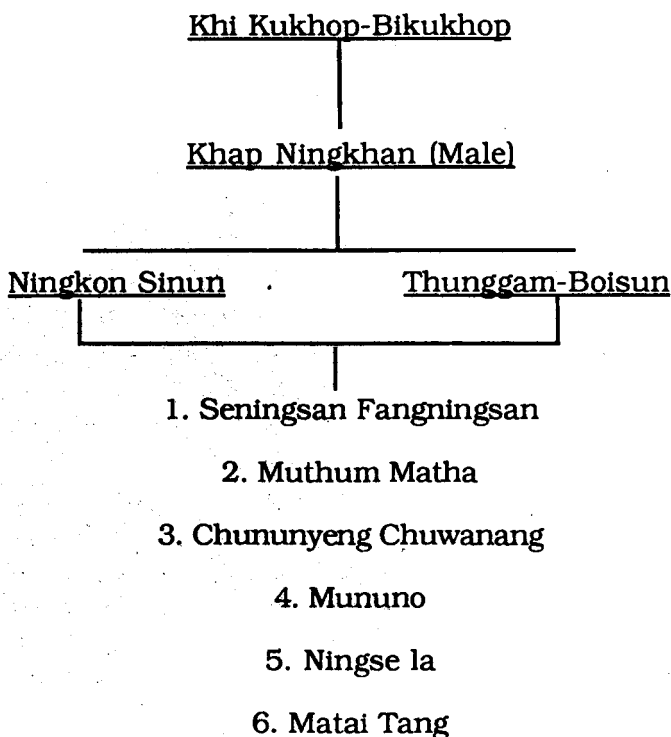
Assam frontier is simply the tribal words for man. They made their appearance on the outskirts of Assame during the Moamaria rebellion "

**Origin:**

The legend popular amongst the Singphos about their origin is as follows:-

Once upon a time there was a Supernatural body called Khi-Kukhop, Bi Ku Khop floating in the space. He had a son called Khop Ning Khan who gave birth to two child a male and a female. Ningkon Sinun, was the son and Thunggam Boisun the daughter. As they believe, all the spirit (Nat) were originated from these two child of Khap Ningkhan. Ningkon Sinun and Thunggam Boisun had six sons all of whom are regarded by the Singphos as spirit (nat). Seningsan Fangningsan was the first son. He possessed some spiritual powers by which he could say about the past and future happenings and about the genealogy of the Singphos. He spoke even while he was in his mother's womb. It was he who told that **Muthum-Matha** the second son in the God of the Singphos and that he stays in the sky. He remained a bachelor. The third son is Sununyeng, who is propitiated by the Singphos to have male child. Thus **Mununo**, **Ningsela** and **Matai thang** are the three other sons of Ningkon Sinun and Thunggam Boisun. **Matai thang** is the biggest spirit of the Singphos and he is worshipped only by the rich people to have a son.

## Genealogy of the Singpho Nats



Ningkon Sinun, then created the earth and the sky. After that the moon and the Sun, then water in the earth, then day and night, jungles, trees and forests. Thus, after creating the whole universe, with the various plants and animals, they gave birth to a gourd like fruit, called **Machang-Wakhum**, inside which lived all the human beings, when this gourd like thing came out of the womb of **Thunggam Boisun**, both, the husband and wife became astonished, and asked their son — **Seningsan Fangningsan**, what this fruit might be. Seningsan told his mother, **Thunggam Boisun**, to keep the fruit Muthum Matha Ningkhan, the place where

Muthum Matha, the God of the Singphos lived. The Mother acted accordingly. Muthum matha had a golden pipe called **Chathoiloi** (Just like a flute) and a golden knife. With the help of the pipe, he could give life to all the creatures. Muthum matha then took the fruit to cut, just to see what is there inside. Every time he lifted his golden knife to cut the fruit, some human voice from inside stops saying him 'don't cut there, it will stike me'. At last, **Inlajaga**, (name of a clan), cried out from inside, "Each on my head". Then muthum matha, cut on thehead of the fruit and opened it. Inside he saw amny human beings - Saning san then gave name to each one of them lie Singpho, Tangsa, Khamti etc, etc. All the human being of the world were named by Sening san. Thus Muthum matha Ningthon, to the cradle bed of mankind as the Singpho belived, Muthum matha, then gave life to all of them, blowing air through the golden pipe, as all of the were without life, and sex. Seningsa - gave sex to them and divided them into male and female.

Then all the human beings came down to the earth, from Muthum matha Ningthon, through separate laddress.

The Chinese came down first, through a ladder of dimond. Then the Burmese came, through golden ladder. Next the Ahoms - through Silver ladder, the Singphos through wooden, the Kacharis through brass, the Nagas through bamboos, the Abors, the Miris and the Mishmis, through cane, the Khamptis through brick of red soil, and so on all came down through different ladders, to a place called Tingthu Wayang. From there they went to a plain area called Singra Fang Wayang. Wayang means plain land. From this place they

went to different places, such Brudge, and uttered the word "Mirip".

The nextgroup was Michowa Singkhum -, who uttered the word 'Wakhum'.

After them, Lithong Nung Nunglon crossed the bridge. They uttered the word Wakang.

Like this the following ten groups took their names, each of them uttered different words while crossing the great bridge, one after another (the words they uttered are given in the bracket just after the name of each group).

Pichiwa Kumfoi (Wa Foi), Pending Cha (Watong), Changmucha (Faichang), Ingkha Khacha (Wakha), Ingdu Tuchen (Wachen), Tuliengkhop Pinwa (Wakhap), Pangwa Thangan (Wapang), Lofaite Nala (Wafai), Intenjo Yongcha (Wa den), Ichu Kum gong; and these thirteen were the original clans of the Singphos. The present clans on the Singphos are the descendents of these original thirteen clans.

List showing the origin of clan - name of the Singpho  
(these are original clans)

Names given	Word uttered while crossing the bridge.
1. Mirip Gam Kumja	Warip
2. Michowa Singkhum	Wakhum
3. Lithongnung Nunglon	Wakang
4. Pichiwa Kumfoi	Wafoi
5. Pendingsa	Watong

6.	Sangmusa	Faisang
7.	Ingkha Khasa	Wakha
8.	Ingdu Tuchen	Wasen
9.	Tuliyengkhop Pinwa	Wangkhup
10.	Pangwa Thangsn	Wapang
11.	Lotaife Nala	Wafai
12.	Intenjo Yungsa	Waden
13.	Ichu Kum Gong	Waden

After crossing the bridge all these different groups, went in various direction, and settled in different villages,

Mirip Gam Kumsa, the first group, went to Chingbum Tumpa, a place on the top of a hill. The Pendingcha group also followed them and stayed together. The next group Michowa Sing Khu went to a place, called Khacho Ningran. The Pichiwa Kumfoi group also went with them and stayed together, Lithongnu Nunglon group went to Tifro Ning Ran. And thus went all the remaining groups to Khangku Mochia, Bukhang Tingrom, Chinggong Pum, Tan Thing Nai, Kong Pum-chitum, Ngori Nola and Phupkhang Chitung respectively. Some of these places are in plain area, but majority are on hill top. These places are still in existance beyond the Hukong valley. After staying in these places for quite a long time they all went to Hukong Valley - from where a few number of clans migrated to this area.

List showing the dispersal of the different groups after crossing the great bridge

<u>Name of the groups</u>	<u>place where they settled</u>
1. Mirip Gam Kunja	Singpum Tumpa
2. Michowa Singkhum	Khaso Ningran
3. Lithongung Nunglon	Tifron Ningran
4. Lichiwa Kumfoi	Khaso Ningran
5. Pendingasa	Singbum Tumpa
6. Sangmusa	Khangkhu Mosai
7. IngkhaKhasa	Bukhang Tingrom
8. Taodu Tuchen	Singgong Pum
9. Tuliyengkhop Pinwa	Ten Thing Nai
10. Pangwa Thangan	Kongpum Situm
11. Lofaita Nala	Ngori Nola
12. Intenjo Yungsa (Iyungten)	Phup Khang Situn.

\* \* \*