

**Historical Migration and Settlement of Nepali/Gorkha
Community in Imphal (Manipur)Valley as well as
Northeast India**

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Abstract:Manipur had been the homes of many Indigenous tribes and communities formed in different times either along with the conglomeration of various small tribes or smaller tribes to the bigger tribes. This was facilitated with the formation of Meitei/Manipur Kingdom in 33 AD under Ningthouja Dynasty, continued upto 16th century which was the beginning of the migration of people from the western side of the kingdom specially the Hindus and Muslims forming Meitei-Bamon and Meitei-Pangal communities respectively within the ruling/majority Meitei group. Many Indian communities were also migrated/coming to the kingdom during the colonial rule and post merger to India like Bengalis, Telis, Marwaris, Punjabis, Tamils, etc. During the same period, the foreigner migrants belonged to Nepal were also coming to the state via Assam and Dimapur respectively on the Old Cachar Road and Imphal-Dimapur Road till 1990-2000. This was facilitated under Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950, changes in Foreigners Act (Restricted and Prohibited). The Nepalis has largely settled down in present Kangpokpi District. Most of the settlement areas were formed in the post 1950 even though most of them have the colonial root. But They are settled down largely in Imphal valley like Saikul areas, Kanglatongbi, Pangei, Serou and sub-urban areas of Chingmeirong and Mantripukhri. There is about 63756 Nepalis in the state by 2011 where 19624 Nepalis distributed in the Imphal valley. The paper is part of the doctoral work of the author studying the historical settlement of the Nepali community in the state.

Keywords: Census, Colonial, Gorkhas, Nepalis, Population, Settlement, Kanglatongbi etc.

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Introduction

The Manipur has a population of 2166788 according to 2001 census where 45998 belong to Nepali population which account 2% of the total population of the state. Among 45998 Nepalis there are 24539 males (53.34%) and 21459 females (46.65%) whereas 32148 (70%) Nepalis are scattered in the hills and 13850 (30.%) Nepalis are concentrated in the valley. Besides, Sadar Hill West areas in Senapati district alone have 22494 Nepalis followed by Lamshang (4904), Porompat (3015), Sawombung (2717) and rest scattered in other divisions of the state.¹ The settlement of the Nepalis in the state was started in colonial period where they first tried to feed the new environment, land and people based on survival/economy strategy while the post-independence period show the rose of the community being recognized as a domiciled community of the state and formation of many social and political organizations led to the political and cultural connection with the rest of the country's Nepalis specially Assam, Sikkim and Darjeeling. The state govt also tried to put the old settlers under OBC category but failed until 1990s where some of the Nepalis/Gorkha's castes were added to it in OBC-O (Other) category. So, the Nepali settlement in the valley is in two phases- colonial and post-independence period, 1950.

The first contact of the Nepalis to Manipur was in the form of the soldiers accompanied the British during the 1st Anglo-Burmese war in defending the border of Eastern Frontier and later extended to northeastern Parts of India. So, the period of the 19th century was witnessed for the movements of Nepali soldiers and contact with the local environment and people. Basically, during this period there was no settling down of Nepali migrants in the state except that of service provided to the British in the form of job oriented either in soldiers or personal servants. Later on, they also were served as labour corps in the construction of roads and potters in the service of Manipur state apart from the service to British. Even the king also encouraged them to come to the state as there was a scanty of labors or people after the havoc of the Seven years Devastation of the Burmese invasion. But in the last decade of the 19th century, the beginning of Nepali migrants to settle down in the state was the ex-soldiers after the Anglo-Manipur war around Imphal areas.² These retired Gorkha soldiers along with the grazier Gorkhas even sought permission from the British authority and Manipur Kings for their settlement in the state from time to time. As a result, there were many orders from the British political agents and

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Manipur State Durbars through Foreigner Members respectively for the hill and valley areas from 1918 onwards allowed or granted permission to settle down officially. By 1930, there was 3000 Nepali in Manipur as per 1931 census.³

Few scholars mentioned in their writing, the first Nepali settlement village was said to be established at Koirengei, 9 km of north Imphal on the Imphal-Dimapur road sometimes in 1885.⁴ In this connection, there was another source that the Nepalis was first came to Manipur in 1885 as members of the Gurkha Rifles which was stationed there by the British.⁵ But there was no any official documents mentioned to prove it the beginning of formation of Nepali villages prior to 1891. No doubt there were some settled down earlier of ex-soldiers Nepalis/Gorkhas permitted by the British for their services and they also didn't want to back home seeing the misery condition before 1890 which can be noticed from the diary of Maxwell afterwards. As per Maxwell in his tour diary mentioned about the import of rations for their soldiers in Manipur and Kohima where the need of the ghee was going to be provided by the already settled Nepalis with buffaloes and cows near the capital in around Iroisemba.⁶ Here he mentioned the already Nepalis means there were some Nepalis already present in the capital possibly brought by or accompany the British soldiers before and during the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891. So the first settlement area or colony of the Nepali graziers in the state of Manipur must be possibly the Iroisemba area but the official colony arranged by the state was must be the present Keithelmanbi (Kaitamabi) area where both the areas were not occupied by them today.

For easy recruitment of Gorkhas in the Northeast for their service the British allowed them to settle around or nearby cantonment areas initially by rearing animals. So later on the said sites were grown to sizeable Gorkha population including the graziers and agriculturists and formed a society or environment of themselves with the name attached to the nearby cantonment areas. As a result, some early cantonment sites like Koirengei, Chingmeirong, Mantripukhri, Keithelmanbi and Kanglatongbi were formed with the retired Gorkha soldiers initially along some shopkeepers, servants and traders.⁷ But the non-soldiers caste Nepalis were also coming to the state directly after 1891 and started forming their own colony with assisted by the British officials from time to time where the foreigner's tax and animals tax were going to raise and become a primary source of income to the state exchequer/treasury which was already applied to Assam. For instance, the foreigners tax was levied since 1897⁸ and the Foreigners Mauzadar (official) was appointed from the community in 1903 to look after their settlement from

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Mantripukhri to Mao in the northern valley and hills specially in Sekmai-Kanglatongbi areas⁹ along a regular Thana out-post was established for the same where the Head Constable was belonged to Nepalis.¹⁰

Initially they preferred to move from place to place in grazing where the British tried them to settle in sedentary life and permanently which often looks many lands for them and led to conflicts with the local both local and hill-men over their activities of grazing land and crop destruction and also forest destruction. This was a challenging task for the British in the next century where dealing in their movement and settlement. The British did not like them often to settle in the state/valley called them loafers for their nature in wilderness and difficulty in control them as they scattered upto the far flung forest areas.¹¹ This was just come up after a short period of staying/allowing them to settle by rearing and grazing animal by the beginning of the 20th century.

In the valley there was already Nepalis in Imphal capital by the end of the 19th century like Iroisemba, Sekmai-Kanglatongbi and Mantripukhri-Pangei areas whereas the Heingangching lies between Mantripukhri and Pangei thereby mentioned of destruction of forests by the Nepalis in 1895 and later reported of permission of settled down of ex-soldiers in Mantripukhri by taking up the rearing and grazing of animals in the areas specially after the first world war. Further, they also reached the southern tip of the valley, Khuga (now in Churachandpur district) by early 1910s arranged by the British¹² but had to stop or moved out after the Kuki rebellion of 1917-1919. Simultaneously, the existence of three Gorkha Panchayats at Irang, Kangpokpi and Kanglatongbi during 1930s' also speaks the volume of the Gorkha population in those periods which showed the beginning of the sedentary life by the Nepalis in the state. Again, some Gorkhas were also returned after 1952 where they fled during the 2nd world war. Further the creation of Gorkha Reserve in Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi hill belts followed by the marriage of Nepali Princess, Ishwori Devi to King Bodhchandra in 1941 were continued to attract more Nepalis in the state during the colonial period. Further, in the post-merger of Manipur into Indian Union on October 15, 1949, the existing passport system was officially abolished and Indo-Nepal Treaty was enforced in 1950 followed by changes in Foreigners Protected and Restricted Areas Act which greatly increased the Nepali's population and led to the rise of many social and political groups. Thereafter, they were participated in the elections of Panchayat, ADC and Assembly elections which elected them as Pradhan/sarpanch and its members, ADC

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members including nominated and MLA in Kangpokpi. Besides, the Irang villages were included in Village Hill Areas Act which carried their function under chief system in the hill district of Kangpokpi.

Sometimes, the term Nepalese/Nepalis and Gorkhas/Gurkhas are confused and contradictory to each other but use to recognize the same stock of people speaking Nepali language. In India both the terms are used to recognize them. The term Nepali was entered as the language in the Sahitya Parishad, New Delhi and 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Nepalis, living/domiciled in India before 1950, are regarded as Indian Nepalis calling them as Gorkha following the Gorkhaland agitation in 1980s.¹³ Again both the terms are used by the govt in their notification to include them all but most Indian public use the word, Nepalis. Today, they are divided as Indian Nepalis as Gorkhas and Reciprocal Nepalis, one come after Indo-Nepal Treaty, 1950 and preferred to use Gorkhas only to recognize the old settlers from new settlers who were serving mostly in the Indian Army both in colonial and post-colonial period and the legacy continued till today. Besides, there are many caste groups within the community.

Aim and Objective

The aim of the paper is to attempt documentation of the Nepali settlement in the state of Manipur through the archival sources. For this, the following objectives are used as follows:

1. Identifying the settlement sites/villages of the Nepali in the whole Valley areas including periphery areas
2. Collecting and using the primary source of colonial and post-colonial works and secondary sources from archive sites.
3. Visiting and interviewing in field-works to collect the primary data.

Materials and Methods

The method used in the paper is based mainly on historical approach/study of qualitative method but also extensive field-works and interviews are being taken for the purpose in all the valley sites settled by the Nepalis. During the field-works, the photos were taken of the villages and settlement patterns are able to understand easily from it. The materials used in the paper are mainly based on primary sources of archival sources available at the state archive includes both colonial and state works and secondary sources of articles, journals, thesis/dissertation and

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books. It includes of order of Manipur Political Agents and State Durbar, British Administration Reports, Manipur Administration Report, Tour Diaries of Political Agents, State Gazette order, census and electoral data. To verify the authenticity of the data, the external and internal criticism method are being applied before generalization and interpretation.

The Settlement sites of Nepalis in the Valley

The state of Manipur has a geographical area of 22327 sq km of which 2238 is in the valley areas. It is about 10% of the total geographical area. The state has the population of 28,55,794 of 2011 census and 22,93,896 in 2001. Of this total population, 57.2% live in the valley districts while the remaining 42.8% in the hill districts.

Name of the district		Name of the Subdivision	Nepali Population					
			2001	Urban	Rural	2011	Urban	Rural
Valley Districts	Thoubal		1750	303	1447	1761	236	1525
		Thoubalkhang	2904	2819	1146	1784	162	1312
	Imphal - West		6266	997	5269	10391	147	9244
		Lamsang	4904		4893	9208	132	934
		Patsoi	1861	197	177	897	27	011
		Lamphel	6103	952	761	7953	94	507
		Wan	6140		138	036	25	111
		goi						
			577	243	334	690	246	443

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	h a l -		7	6	1	3	9	4
	E a s t	Jiri ba m Sa wo mb un g Po ro mp at Ke ira o Bit ra	4 4 2 7 1 7 3 0 1 5 1		4 0 2 7 1 7 5 8 3 0 1	5 2 3 8 9 5 2 9 3 3 2 3	3 2 2 4 4 2 1	2 0 3 8 9 5 4 9 1 2 2
	B i s h n u p u r	Na mb ol Bi sh nu pu r M oir an g	5 7	3 3	2 4	5 6 9	5 1 7	5 2
			0 1 3 1 2 5	0 1 2 4 8	- 7 1 7	8 5 1 5 4 6	4 4 9 7 1 6	4 1 8 3 0
Total			1 3 8 5 0	3 7 6 9	1 0 0 8 1	1 9 6 2 4	4 3 6 9	1 5 2 5 5
Grand Total			4 5 9 9 8	4 2 3 5	3 1 6 8 2	6 3 7 5 6	6 6 5 1	5 7 1 0 5

Table 1: The Nepali population in Manipur in 2001 and 2011

The notable places of the valley districts are Kanglatongbi, Pangei, Chingmeirong, Koirengei, Mantripukhri, Serou, and Sagolmang areas. As per 2011 census Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal (now in Kakching) and Bishnupur are having the Nepali population respectively 10391, 6903, 1761 and 569. Their brief study on settlement and demographic are discussed below:

Koirengei

It is one of the earliest, located on the NH-39, Imphal-Dimapur Road under Porompat Sub-Division and Nilakuthi Gram Panchayat of Imphal East District. It falls under the Heingang

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Assembly constituency of the state. In this village there is a small hamlet which is inhabited by the few Gorkha families. The first settlements were the ex-British soldiers where some of them were appointed as mauzadars for the collection of taxes from the community and some of their descendants were even believed to be living in the state.¹⁴ Later they brought their families and graziers and agriculturalists were also started to settled down specially after the Anglo-Manipur War in Koirengei followed the soldiers. Shri Durlav Singh Chettri, Shri Rambahadur Gopal Singh Chhetri, Shri SM Jitraj Limbu and Tintai Lama were appointed as Mauzadar exclusively for the collection of taxes from the Gurkhali settlement areas and for the settlement of disputes among them as early as 1920 till 1950s.¹⁵ Later some of them moved out to other places nearby specially the Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi Reserved areas. One such Tintai Lama was later moved to Chingmeirong along his families.¹⁶ The British had allowed the settlement of ex-soldiers of 44th Gorkha Rifle in 1899 in many places of Manipur including Koirengei along with their families.¹⁷

As per informant of the village, the present village is started under the first settler of Anand Kumar Bista on and after 2nd world war. It also written on the wall of the Temple of the village previously known as Anandgram. The village has 65 house earlier and almost army ex-servicemen and many of them left the area today by selling the land. In the absence of any documents the exact year of settlement cannot defined but the present of army cantonment around the village suggested that no doubt there was some sort of settlement earlier by the ex-servicemen around the Koirengei.

However the Nepalis were fled and deserted the place during the 2nd world war along with the local people and fled to the countryside and forest due to heavy bombardment by the Japanese followed by the heavy fighting in the Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi areas. Today there is about 20-30 households of about 300 population belonged to Nepali in Koirengei and some are landless as daily labors and shops. As claimed by the resident that many of them are the descendants of the ex-officers and soldiers (Chhetry 2022: Koirengei).¹⁸ The occupation of the Gurkha settlers are mainly cultivation of crops and cattle rearing.

Kanglatongbi

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The village is located at a distance of about 23 km away from Imphal to its northern part of Manipur along the NH-39. It is under Sekmai Assembly constituency and Kanglatongbi Gram Panchayat. It has a total geographical area of 1206.6 hectares and a population of 7152 with 1378 household in 2011.¹⁹ Kanglatongbi is the cultural centre of the Nepali community and an important place for them where socially and culturally decision of the Gorkhas of the state are taken and performed.

The historical settlement of Nepali in the area was being continued throughout the 20th century. The present village is in its form due to population increase, demand of land for grazing and cultivation and change in its economic activities of the Nepali settled down there. Towards the end of the 19th century, there was mentioned of maize cultivation in the Sekmai area but there was no exact location mentioned it.²⁰ It might be around Kanglatongbi areas as it was the nearest Nepali settlement area. It was reported in the British's record that the existence of Sekmai Thana of those days was meant for the maintenance law and order and protection of Gorkhali settlement in and around Sekmai areas where there was a Nepali Head Constable out of 4 Head Constables in the state police.²¹

It was mentioned that a Nepali settler deserted by his Manipuri woman for ill-treatment in Saitol Kukis was ordered to live with his race in Kanglatongbi in 1900. There were some 40-50 Nepali houses in Kanglatongbi where he could get a decent burial by his race.²² There was reported about the Kanglatongbi village living in a bad disordered and insanitary state as before where the houses were broken down and the village was covered by the jungle and yet they said they were happy.²³ All these Nepalis/Gurkhas were the pensioners from the Assam Regiments and lived in the dirty and careless manner. There were dogs, sheep, fowls, ducks, calves and cows were freely moved around and their houses and livelihood, sanitation were neglected and worst.²⁴ Thus, the Kanglatongbi village having a sizeable population was earlier used as a khuthi area or grazing ground filled by the jungle or inside the jungle where they were living there with their cattle and buffaloes in a very remote way of life by the end of the 19th century. Later it was enlarged the village with the coming of more retired soldiers and graziers and starting cultivation by clearing the nearby jungles upto the foothills. This was the 2nd Gurkha colony made by the British in the state after Kaitamabi by the end of the 19th century in Manipur.

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The Gorkha graziers found to be scattered and it was necessary to compact a specific area for them. The creation of Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi Gorkha Reserve Areas was the result of the situation by the British with an area of 140 sq mile covering the areas of Kanglatongbi to Kangpokpi in and around in 1915-16.²⁵ The present of headman and chaukidar had provided the systematic administration of the village and land revenue collection among the Nepalis and the state respectively and the stationed of Indian Bungalow in Kanglatongbi had further provided or facilitated the retired Gurkha soldiers to settle down and take up the rearing of cattle in the nearby jungles.

To start wet cultivation in Kanglatongbi and systematic settlement of Nepalis in the area, the Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi Gorkha Reserve Area was made de-reserved and ceased to be a grazing ground with effect from December 1, 1946.²⁶ Accordingly, those Nepalis graziers had to moved to Irang areas and those Nepalis who want to cultivate wet rice had to remain in the areas by applying for the regular pattas to give not more than 1/2 acre/hectare patta of land to each Gorkha family. As many as 64 Gorkha families²⁷ were applied for the pattaland on 25th October, 1946 and consequently granted them on 12th November 1946 by the Durbar.²⁸ Some Nepalis were also rehabilitated in Kanglatongbi after fled from Assam due to natural disaster of flood in Sadiya by the state govt.²⁹ Some of the retinues and bodyguards of queen Ishwori Devi were allowed and made to settle them down in and around palace including Kanglatongbi area.³⁰

Again in 1952, the then govt allowed the settlement of the ex servicemen of 4th Assam Rifle in the khas land of about 200 paris of land which lies as a jungle in the south west side of Kanglatongbi.³¹ Initially the ex-servicemen was shifted probably the retinues and guards accompany the queen from Pangei to Kanglatongbi³² and the granted land was the Agricultural farm which was abandoned so long before 1920. One Birkha Bahadur Chhetry was the first village headman of Kanglatongbi.³³ The Finance Minister, Manipur state issued an order dated 11th August, 1949 for appointment of Shri Gagan Bahadur Sunuwar, s/o late Ratanman Sunuwar of Kanglatongbi as headman of the village with effect from 5-8-1949. After this, Ganga Singh Niroula became the headman of Kanglatongbi.³⁴ Again the village was greatly affected by the 2nd World War and many forced to fled the village and run into the jungle. In 1971 census, there was reported of about 170 households with 1088 Nepali population in Kanglatongbi.

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When the UP Panchayat Raj Act, 1947 was extended to Manipur during 1960s, one Ganga Singh Chhetri from Kanglatongbi out of the three Nepalis appointed as a member of Imphal West-1 Block Development Committee in 1965.³⁵ Kanglatongbi Gram panchayat is the only foreigners panchayat created since colonial time to present where it existed and continued today in the valley.

The village comprises 6 hamlets of which 5 hamlets are predominantly inhabited by the Gorkhas. The six hamlets are Shantipur, AR Colony, Vijayanagar, Mandir, Tispari, Hatikhwa and Bazar board . Among this, only Bazar Board is having a less number of Nepali population whereas Shantipur and Tispari respectively are having the highest number of household and population. As stated above, the Nepali population in the village occupies a significant position with 6203 souls in as many as 1062 household, the Nepalis of this village constitute 13.48 % of the total Nepali population in the state (45,998 as per 2001 census) and 0.27% of the total population of the state (22,93,896 as per 2001 census). The agricultural and crop cultivation along with cattle rearing are the basic economic activities of the Nepalis of the area until the close of the 20th century.

Mantripukhri

It is located at a distance of about 5 km away from Imphal along the NH-39. The area is under the Wangkhei Assembly Constituency. It is one of the maximum concentration of Nepalis in urban areas of Imphal until recently changed its demographic. Coming to the settlement of Nepalis in the area, one must go to the British period. Some reported that they were settled down as retired soldiers and arrangement was made by the British authority as a reward for their service as commented by the renowned scholars like AC Sinha and TB Subba in their writings. Some might settled down early by the end of the 19th century but the systematic settlement was made after 1st world war as permission was granted by the British.³⁶

In Manipur in 1899 the soldiers of 44th Gorkha Rifles viz. Subedar Gopal Singh Chhetri, Subedar Ran Singh Chhetri, Major Jit Bahadur Limbu, Durlabh Singh Chhetri, etc were settled down in Colatombi (Kanglatongbi), Koirenga (Koirengei), Mantri pokhari (Mantripukhri), Pange Change (Pangei), etc by the British.³⁷ The Assam Rifle alone has rehabilitated its Gorkha ex-soldiers on at least 40 sites numbering as many as 3000 individuals in the Northeast India.³⁸ Among them, Manipur had 8 such sites and Mantripukhri was one of them. Subedar Major Jit

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Raj Limbu was conferred the title of Rai Bahadur by the then Viceroy and Governor General of India on 1st January, 1920.³⁹ Many ex-servicemen were allowed to settled down in the area and even allotted the land by the durbar as witnessed from the Durbar resolutions and proceedings. The area was remarked as for foreigner settlement by the British as mentioned earlier.⁴⁰ Some of the retinues and bodyguards of Queen Ishwori Devi were also made to settle down in and around Palace near Babupara and Mantripukhri, later shifted to Kanglatongbi.⁴¹ By 1990, there were 112 household with a total population of 663 out of which 318 were males and 345 were females.⁴² From the current data, there are around 140 households in the area out of 617 total households belong to Nepali population.⁴³

Chingmeirong

It is located in the heart of Imphal, the capital of the state under the Wangkhei Assembly. There is a Nepali Basti in Chingmeirong area just on the western side of the Imphal-Dimapur Road. No doubt there is already some Nepali settled down in the area prior to 2nd world war specially the ex-soldiers/retired army where arrangement was made by the British. One Purke Newar, ex-serviceman and one of the accompany of Queen Ishwori Devi was allowed to settle down in Chingmeirong and still his descendants are living in the areas.⁴⁴ As per informant, there were some 4-5 ex-servicemen of Assam Rifles settled down before the great war.

Originally the basti was filled by wasteland and jungle and later cleared by them for cultivation and grazing in the nearby hill. As per another informant, the area was settled started in 1930s with actual pattadar and currently there is around 60-70 households with 300+ Nepali population in Chingmeirong. The present BOC areas near Minuthong to dewlaland were once garbage dumping site and settled down by the Nepalis and used to be there a crematorium⁴⁵ of the Nepali people resided in Imphal area at that time since colonial time.⁴⁶ In 1936, there was mentioned of Chingmeirong Foreigner headman to exempt from paying the Foreigners tax for their service to the state by the durbar. So the Nepali village in Chingmeirong was already well established in the state basically by the retired soldiers in the urban area of the capital.

Serou

The village is located in Kakching district (formerly Thoubal) in the southern tip of the valley of the state about 70/80 km from Imphal. It is under Sugnu Assembly and Outer Manipur

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Parliamentary constituency. It is under the Serou Gram Panchayat. The Nepalis in the village had started settlement after 1950. They were forced to flee to Manipur after the devastated flood occurred in Sadiya, Assam where their houses were submerged and devastated.⁴⁷ Some of them were accommodated in Kanglatongbi and some were allotted the land in Makeng, Chengloun, Matakong, Serou and Moreh.⁴⁸

As per informants of the village, some of the early settlers are from Burma fled during 2nd world war and some of the accompany of Queen Ishwori Devi and later from other parts of the state specially Pukhou and Matakong areas were also settled down in Serou.⁴⁹ Originally the area is located with full of wasteland/khasland, hilly slopes and fertile soils. These factors had favoured them a lot for their settlement and livelihood activities through cultivation and cattle rearing. Officially, they were allowed to settle down permanently in the area through the order of then Additional deputy Commissioner, S.M. Krishnamoorthi in 1957 and 1958.⁵⁰ There was mentioned of rehabilitation of displaced persons from Burma and Bengal of about 500 displaced persons mostly agriculturists completed and its branch attached to the DC Office was abolished on 30-9-57 (AR 1960; 1960-61).⁵¹

As per 2011 census data there is 1761 Nepalis present in the same district where more than 1500 reported from Serou of Kakching C.D. One Man Bahadur Poudel was elected twice as Pradhan of the Serou Gram Panchayat from 1895 to 1996 but afterward no more candidate won again. Currently the panchayat has the elected members belong to Nepali community and became up-pradhan of the panchayat as per informant.

Pangei

It is located in the north of Imphal East District of the state about 12 km away on the Imphal-Saikul Road. It is under the Uyumpok Waiton Gram Panchayat and Sawombung Sub-division. It falls under the Khundrakpam Assembly and Inner Parliamentary Constituency. There is a small hamlet in the village known as Pangei Nepali Basti with a total household of about 95 and about 500 population.⁵²

The settlement was began from the colonial time where the British arranged their ex-soldiers/retired officers around Imphal areas specially to nearby army cantonment areas. As stated above, some of the 44th Gorkha Rifles were allowed to settle down in some parts of Imphal areas including Pangei in 1899.⁵³ Again after the arrangement of settlement of Nepalis

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was continued by the Assam Rifles were 40 sites more or less were rehabilitated its soldiers where Pangei was one of them.⁵⁴ As per informant of the village, Pangei is the oldest Nepali village in the state where it was established in and around after the 1891 as Nepali graziers not ex-soldiers.⁵⁵ For this, there was mentioned of damaged the considerable amount of forest in Heingangching covered with pine forest done by the Manipuris and the Nepali settlers in 1895 where the Pangei village was located on the other side of the mountain.⁵⁶ Many of the residents are said to be the descendants of the army officers/soldiers who after retired settled down in the area. It is mostly likely that the village was fully recognized by after the 1st world war. The village resident still hold the village map of 1923-24.⁵⁷

As reported there was headman system in the village too. In this connection there was mentioned of exempted the foreigner tax from all the foreigners headman including Pangei by the state durbar owing to their service to the state in 1936. Some of the servants who accompany the Queen Ishwori Devi were settled down in the area too. In course of time many retired Gorkha soldiers were settled down in Pangei and took up cattle rearing. Apart from ex-soldiers, the Nepali graziers, laborers/coolies, agriculturalists and other migrants were settled down in the area.⁵⁸ They get many agricultural lands and place for cattle rearing since there are many wasteland, forest fringe and foothills. The Chowkidari number of the Pangei Basti was 228 given by the British. A Nepali from Pangei, Shri Guman Singh Gurung was given an certificate for his excellent work as a enumerator of the census taken on 18th March, 1921 by the Political Agent of Manipur, L.O. Clarke.⁵⁹

Sagolmang SDC Circle

There are many villages of Nepali settled down in Imphal East district under Khundrakpam Assembly constituency. Most of them settled down along the foothills and in the hill ranges. Some of the villages are Matakhang, Molkon Nepali, Hangoipat Nepali, Makeng Ngularou, Bunglung Gorkha, Saikul areas, Liklithabi, Sadu Nepali, Ikou Nepali, Koupak Nepali, Pukhou Purum likli and Aison Nepali. All these villages are located about 20-30 km away from Imphal. All these villages formed after 1950-1970. All these mentioned above villages located within the Sagolmang circle and Sawombung subdivision of Imphal East district and under the Makeng Dolaithabi Gram Panchayat. The agricultural practice and animal rearing are their main activities for livelihood. The villages are under the land revenue having the pattas.

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The settlement in these areas was began after 1950 where some of the Nepalis migrated and fled from Assam flood of 1950 were started settled down in the Pukhou areas⁶⁰. In the year 1957 the govt of Manipur on receiving the plea from 42 families of Gorkhas, granted permission to settle down them at Matakhang village.⁶¹ As per informants, the Nepalis were started settled down in the areas in 1951 through the friendship and services with the nearby local people specially the tribal chief where at that time there was no much population in the areas either the land mostly cleared by themselves previously as jungles or later given in leashed or freeland⁶². Many of them are left today for the security reasons due to polarize the local tribes after the 1990s inter-tribal feuds in the state for land but their voters are on the electoral lists of the Khundrakpam Kendra still today. Today they mostly cultivators on their own land or in leashed under the village chiefs but cowherd still practised. In 2021, there are 72 Nepali households.

In another it mentioned that After 1950s in Saikul areas where Nepalese have villages (Molkon, Hangoipat, Makeng Chengloul) were to start to inhabit with 28 Nepalese personnel led by Shri Naran Chouhal, Shetri by caste in 1958 by clearing the jungles through the permission of two local Saikul village chiefs. The matter reached the court of then D.C. M.N. Phukan after objection their settlement by other local villagers to SDC Saikul and finally allowed to start their settlement under his order where each of them got 1 acre of khasland for agriculture.⁶³ As per 1971 census report, there were 69 houses with 386 Nepali population in Makeng Chongloul while 35 houses with 233 Nepali population in Makeng Ngularou.

The area is divided into Aisan Nepali, Molkon Nepali and Hangoipat Nepali respectively having the households of Nepalis of about 68, 65 and 66. In Makeng Ngularou there are 46 Nepali households as per electoral roll. In Bunglung Gorkha, there is about 34 Nepali households while in Saikul Liklathabi there is about 40 Nepali households. Ekou has about 22 households, Koupak about 23 household whereas on the other side crossing the Imphal-river flowing there on the Dolaithabi sides, there are about 30 houses belong to Nepali population in Sadu Nepali and Yengkhuman settled down with Meitei, Naga and Kuki. There is about 44 households in Pukhou Dolaithabi. Purum Likli has about 67 Nepali households with above 300 Nepalis. Purum Sadu Graham has about 35 households with about 170 Nepali population.⁶⁴

Besides, the Nepalis are also present in Ningthoukhong of Bishnupur District, Sekmi-Kanglatongbi areas, Leimakhong areas, Kangchup and Chirik-Tengri areas.

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Conclusion

The Nepalis are present in every districts of the valley with few household to a full-fledged villages though many of them are the mixed villages settled side by side with different communities of the state and the country. The city areas of Chingmeirong and Mantripukhri are under the Imphal Municipal Corporation and the only urban Nepali population in the state. The rest villages come under the panchayat system as the rural population having their own representations as pradhans (earlier) and members by now in the areas of Pangei, Sagolmang-Saikul, Kanglatongbi and Serou. These villages having the plenty of lands fertile with alluvial soil and wastelands provided by the mountain ranges with river water running through them are providing and facilitating them in producing the surplus products of rice, crops and animal rearing. Most of the paddylands/cultivate lands in the periphery areas of Saikul and Serou plains of the valley are pattaland under their settlement. This has greatly affected in their livelihood by able to accessing the education, health, good income and good quality with easy life. But they are not able to properly and permanent settled down in the areas as they still live in the traditional houses and some are moving out of the villages specially in Saikul areas due to activeness of the insurgency activities since 1990s. No doubt Kanglatongbi is still the largest Nepali village having their own system of local self governance with all other aspects of life or the community with many of their fellows still came, migrated and settled in the areas from both outside and within the state mainly of their relatives.

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- ⁴⁴ Interview with Kumari Pradhan, Suraj Pradhan, Chingmeirong dated 18th September 2022- Purke Newar was the father in-law of Kumari Pradhan
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- ⁴⁶ Interview with Krishnakumar Rajbangshi, Chingmeirong dated 18th September 2022- Krishna Kumar Rajbangshi, an Assamese community who is today a part of Nepali family resided his family before the 2nd world war in Chingmeirong
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⁵⁸ Shiwakoti, Hari Krishna. op.cit., p.30

⁵⁹ Acharya, Ghanashyam. 2019. op.cit., p.155

⁶⁰ As per mentioned by the informants from Serou, Kanglatongbi and Pangei.

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