



## ‘Môsēra Kihīr’-Folk Narrative of Karbi Tribe of Assam: The Migration Memory And History.

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**Abstract:** This paper is an attempt on the Karbi epic narrative popularly known as *Môsēra* among the Hills Karbi. ‘*Môsēra Kihīr*’ literary means ‘recounting the past from memories’ is fundamental recitation presentation among Karbi during funerary ceremony (*chômkan or thī-kārhi*) and the ‘collective youth ritual’ i.e. ‘*risō chōjun*’. The long verses of ‘*Mosēra*’ are ceremonially chanted, in breathless tone where recounting the memories of the tribe’s migration from origin place to different habitat and the ordeal they faced. The existing ‘*môsēra*’ traditions in various regions in Karbi Anglong exhibits a uniform theme of the origin of the tribe and the extraordinary narrative style. But the *Chinthong* version of plain Karbis seems to have retained more detailed and interesting explanations of the ordeal of the tribe’s migration from the “earth’s navel” or “*lōnglè achetē*” through diverse lands and endless persecution to its present habitat.

The inexact in oral literature like the ‘*môsēra*’ are obvious as they are dependent on the capacity of human memories alone as folk knowledge is ‘mouthed’ down from generation to generation through centuries. The importance of this form of folk knowledge in the form of migration memories is to trace out and assume an authenticated past history from the meeting points of legends, popular beliefs and myths.

**Keyword:** ‘*Môsēra Kihīr*’, Karbi, Narrative, Oral, Memory

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Karbis, mentioned as the Mikir in the Constitution Order of the Government of India, are one of the major indigenous ethnic tribe in Northeast India and especially in the hill areas of Assam. The Karbi is a Tibeto-Burman<sup>1</sup> speaking linguistic group with a population of 5, 11,732 as per the 2011 census<sup>2</sup>. It shows the population of two autonomous hill districts of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao only. As Karbis living in the plains are not yet given schedule tribe status, so, in the census report plain Karbis are categorised in the list of general population. Population of Plain Karbi community in Assam are approximately 2, 23,237 as per a survey conducted by the Karbi Students Union with the help of experts during 2015.

The tribe, one of the first to inhabit the Brahmaputra valley, migrated from their ancestral homeland in the central part of Asia through Tibet, China, Burma, Manipur and Nagaland. They have inhabited the hill districts of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao and also found in the plains, scattered in pockets at Kamrup, Morigaon, Nagaon, Sonitpur, Golaghat, Lakhimpur and Cachar districts of Assam. There are some Karbi villages also in Papumpare district of Arunachal Pradesh, Ri Bhoi district of Meghalaya, Dimapur district of Nagaland and in Manipur of North East India as well as in Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Commonly by tradition the Karbi is an endogamous group with tight clan exogamy. Prescriptive asymmetrical cross cousin marriage relation is the quality standards ethos. The division of the community is clan based and there are mainly five clans, these are-Teron, Terang, Ingti, Ejang and Timung. Furthermore, these clans comprise of sub- clans. Furthermore, habitually the Karbi community is divided into two principal groups based on location resulting from migration:

1. Hills Karbi (*Inglong* Karbi) - Amri, Chinthong, Rongkhang and Killing<sup>3</sup>.
2. Plain Karbis (Dumrali or Dimoria) - Plains Karbi are settled in the Kamrup and Morigaon districts of Assam, and the Ri-Bhoi districts of Meghalaya. They are also called as Thoi Karbi among the Hills Karbi.

Depending on their settlements, there is dialectal differences and cultural disparity may be present as characteristic features and may be assigned to migration, cultural contacts and historical courses.

In this paper the researcher will try to focus on the Karbi epic narrative popularly known as *Môsēra* among the Karbis living in hills area i.e. The *Inglong* Karbi. And also to understand the historical background of the Karbis and their migration through oral narrative. ‘*Mosera*’ literally designate ‘*recounting the past from memories*’ and it basically re-enacts the anecdotes of the origin and the difficult migration ordeal of the Karbi peoples in the form of a dramatic monologue.

Epics are the substratum of a tradition of a community where the elements of culture come to the life of people through the oral transmitted from generation to generation. Here the researcher categorizing *Môsēra* in the genre of epic; which contains

creation and migration and settlement myths, oral history, and origin of funerary customs that gives a lot of information about the Karbis.

## II. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to focus the epic narrative of Karbi tribe living in the hills and plains of Assam.

(i) To know about the historical background of Karbis or Mikirs and their migration to plain area.

(ii) To explain and know about the struggle, settlement and migration through the memory passed through generation.

The study proposes to observe the processes of change in their age old practices and their believe in terms of faith.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

To study the epic narrative of Karbi people, the researcher collected data from both the primary and secondary sources. To collecting secondary data, the researcher had gone through some important books, articles, magazines, souvenir, newspaper, journals, published and unpublished thesis, webpages etc. on socio-cultural life of the Karbis and their folk literature. For authenticity of the collected data from the secondary sources, the researcher visited the field selected for the study and observed the socio-cultural life of the Karbis. The researcher was also attend in Chômkan festival to observe and listen the 'Môsëra kihîr'. The researcher also interviewed the aged persons, traditional bearer, priestess chârhépi' and scholars of Karbi literature to know about folk narratives through their migration memory.

In doing the field work the methods of (1) Interview (2) Observation and (3) Participation have been adopted. Some tools of the field study like camera, voice recorder, pen and paper etc. have been used to record the items of folk literature from the active bearer of the tradition

## IV. THE FOLK NARRATIVES OF 'MÔSËRA KIHÎR':

'Môsëra Kihîr' is a prominent genre of Karbi folk narrative which literally means 'recounting the past time from memories. It is a necessary recital verses in Karbi funerary ceremony (*chômkan* or *thî-kârhi*) and the during collective youth ritual known as '*risô chôjun*'. This is the occasion when the 'village youths head', known by their traditional titles of '*klëngsârpo*', chant the 'Môsëra', in the manner of a long 'question and answer' session, recounting the memories of the tribe's migration and the difficulties it suffered. The long verses of 'Môsëra' are ceremonially chanted, in breathless mode, during the '*risô chôjun*' as well, at the completion of the co-operative of unmarried youths, known as *Jîr Kedâm*.

In Karbi funerary ritual '*Chômkan*', '*Kechârhé*' or dirge singing is an unavoidable part. It is an important genre in the stock of Karbi folk narratives. It describes the universal journey of the soul into the 'land of eternal happiness' (*chôm rôngmé*, *chôm rôngsô*). The Karbi funeral ceremony is celebrates for three to five days. '*Chômkan*' is a very intricate and expensive affair. The important central figure is the '*chârhépi*' or '*uchépi*', the woman dirge, who play the role of singer cum priestess. The '*kechârhé*' is a solely female affair and there is taboo for a male to do so. It is taboo for even the '*chârhépi*' to chant the dirge in other occasions within the village boundary. The '*chârhépi*' and sometimes a group of them acts as the guide of the soul to its final journey into the land of 'eternal happiness' through pre-ordained resting places. It is believed that without the chant and the heart-rending weeping of the dirge, it is believed that the soul cannot reach its destination through a journey of difficult and hard territory, thorny jungle and Rocky Mountains covered with thick layer of clouds and big rivers.

### IV (i) RECOUNTING THE PAST THROUGH 'MÔSËRA':

The alive '*môsëra*' traditions in different areas in Karbi Anglong basically exhibit a uniform subject matter of the origin of the community in peculiar narrative way. But the plain Karbis i.e., the *Chînthông*<sup>4</sup> version seems to have keep more detailed explanations of the sufferings of the migration from the "earth's navel" (*lônglè achété*) through various lands and endless persecution to their present habitat. '*Lônglè achété*' is the place where the Karbis appoint their first community head or king '*Sôt Recho*' which means the 'Truthful King'. The '*môsëra*' narrates that '*lônglè achété*' is neighboring by the offspring and followers of '*Je and Hova*', which seems to be a direct reference to 'Jehova', the God of the Jews. '*Môsëra*' describes that the Karbis' invocation for passage through the habitant of '*Je and Hova*' followers, they allowed to proceed to the '*lônglè achété*' for install their king. A stone street is constructed to the highest peak of the '*lônglè achété*' and '*Sôt Recho*' is appointed. But '*Tongklông Meji*' or '*hi-i*' (demon) attempt to kill their new king. The Karbis tried hard but fail to defend their king. The king asks his people to allow the attackers to come to him. '*Tongklông Meji*' with followers reach the highest peak with '*sër anôkjir*' (golden swords) and the King resist them. Ascertain his unavoidable defeat, the king asks for a last wish to have '*ingtat*' (betel leave and nut) before the demon enemies behead him. But every stroke of the sword delivers the king growing in size. The enemies frustrated and put him in a '*îngchin a: ûm*' (iron cage) and imprisons him for three months without food and water but the truthful king survives. Frustrated enemies decide to kill his subjects instead of him finding no alternative. By knowing this the King asks his subjects to flee to a protected and secure place with their families and confirm them that he would join with them in a new avatar in his next birth. He said them to look for some signs that people will become dwarfs, chili plants will grow too large in original sizes that people can climbs, '*lông- lëngpum*' (rice pounding wooden tools) will germinate with cry voice, and eggs will vegetate, these are the pre warnings of the King's oncoming rebirth. The truthful king would be reborn in the middle of a '*Rônghâng village*'<sup>5</sup> now in western Karbi Anglong, where the traditional chief of Karbi have their capital. The following *Chînthông* version verses of the '*môsëra*' narrate the Karbi migration through the 'navel of the earth'—

*Ansi Sum asò tangté lepu, Sāng asò tangté lep*  
 (And then the children of Sum and Sang)<sup>6</sup>  
*Ili ta recho chomè lepu, kethe chomè lepu*  
 (We also can have our king, our great leader)  
*Lasi recho chebātlonàng lepu, kethē chebātlonàng lepu*  
 (Therefore, let's ordain a king, a leader)  
*Richo athèng rinang lepu, kethē athèng rinang lepu*  
 (Let's look for one befitting a king)  
*Richo atheng nang-ri lepu, kethē atheng nang-ri lepu*  
 (Search for one befitting a king ensued)  
*Timung asòr tangté lepu, Rongphar asòr tangté lepu*  
 (There's one among the Timung and Rôngphār)  
*Pap klemklè dolang lepu, pun klemklè dolang lepu*  
 (Sins or wrong doings have he not committed)  
*Ri asèk kechok lepu, keng asèk kechok lepu*  
 (Strong arm and legs he possessed)  
*Laphan-lè recho batnang lepu, laphan-lè kethe batnang lepu*  
 (Him we ordain king, we ordain our leader)  
*Inglông kangthir adim nangji lepu, ārlók kangthir adim nangji lepu*  
 (Mount of holiness required, canyon of purity required)  
*Lasi inglông kangthir tangté lepu, ārlók kangthir tangté lepu*  
 (Therefore mount of holiness, canyon of purity is where)  
*Pirthe la achetédet lo lepu, mindar la achetédet lo lepu*  
 (Earth's navel, universe' navel is....)  
*Lasi pirthē la achētē adim, mindār la achētē adim*  
 (Then earth's this navel, universe' this navel)  
*Ahem la kimpidamlonang lepu, arit kimpidamlonang lepu*  
 (Home thus begins to be built, hearth thus begins to be built)  
*Ansi Karbi asò atum, ansi Karbak asò atum*  
 (Then Karbi followers.....)  
*Ahem kimpidampo kepu, arit kimpidampo kepu*  
 (Home they commit to build, hearth they commit to build)  
*Lasi loti jokjé lepu, tovar jokjé lepu*  
 (Then passage not being free, access not being free)  
*Lasi sadu jokjé lepu, lasi samé jokjé lepu*  
 (Then road not being free, route not being free)  
*Bang ing-lông kômchen tangté lepu, bang ārlók kômchek lepu*  
 (They mountain surrounded, they canyon surrounded)  
*Ji atum dothip lepu, Hova atum dothip lepu*  
 (Ji in their strength resided, Hova in their strength resided....)<sup>7</sup>

The 'môsēra' also narrates the movement of the community to the territory of 'white sky and white soil', 'white hill peak and white canyon' accompanied with many communities of the Kuki-Chinpi, the Lama and the Tamang, the Lepcha and the Dukpa. The following verses give a concept of the Karbi exodus:

*Bang Kuki-chinpi atum tangté, Kukichinpo atum tangté*  
 (They the great Kuki-Chins ..... )  
*Do adim cherai lepu, La thak adim cherai lepu*  
 (Demarcated their areas to dwell....)  
*Dak nedung tangté lepu, Dak nereì tangtélepu* (Here surrounding us....)  
*Nangtum Dukpa atum tangté lepu, Nangtum Lepcha atum tangté lepu*  
 (You Dukpas and Lepchas...)  
*Nangtum Lama atum tangté lepu, Nangtum Tamang atum tangté lepu*  
 (You Lamas and Tamangs....)  
*Do adim nangjangpônpe lepu, thak adim nangjangpônpe lepu*  
 (Can not be accommodated we are told....)  
*Lasi bang Kukipi (Huki) atum pudet, lasi bang Hukipo atum pudet*  
 (Then they the great Kukis or Hukis spoke to us.... )  
*Bang Chinpo atum pudet lepu, bang Chinpi atum pudet lepu*  
 (They the great Chins spoke to us .....)  
*Bang dakpen thurnoi pu kipu, bang dakpen damnoi pu kipu*  
 (They ordered us to leave from their land.....)  
*Lasi Lama atumpenta, lasi Lepcha atum penta*  
 (Therefore with the Lamas and the Lepchas....)  
*Bang Kukichinpi atum, bang Kukichinpo atum*  
 (They the great Kuki-chins....)  
*Ron chepho lepu, mai chepho lepu*  
 (Battles among them ensued...)  
*Si Karbi atum tangté, si Karbak atum tangté*

(So Karbis all of them.....)  
*Ron kapheredun lepu, mai kapheredun lepu*  
 (Being afraid of the battles.....)  
*Lasi Karbi atum chingvai lepu, Karbak atum chingvai lepu*  
 (Then the Karbis consulted among themselves)  
*Dak bang ron dokok lepu, dak bang mai dokok lepu*  
 (Here a battle is being fought)  
*Jo arni chithu lepu, Jo arni chithat lepu*  
 (Every night killings took place, every day killings took place...)  
*Lasi sining kelôk lepu, lasi lônglé kelôk lepu*  
 (So in sky-white, in earth-white..)  
***Inglông kelôk tangte lepu, ârlôk kelôk tangte lepu***  
 (Mountain-white and canyon white...)  
*Sining ta kanphuri vanglo lepu, Longlè ta kanphuri vanglo lepu.*  
 (Sky we roamed around, earth we roamed around.....)<sup>8</sup>

The difficulties and sufferings continue for the Karbis as they are driven out from this land also, as there was battle within the communities that killed 'every day, every night'. The 'White Mountains' is very close reference to the Himalayas while the Kuki-Chins, the Lama and the Tamang, the Lepcha, the Dukpa are support the places to trace out. There is a beautiful story of the 'first discovery of rice'<sup>9</sup> by the Karbis while closeness with the Kuki-Chins yet persists.

The following verses of the 'môsêra' narrates the next places of stop in Karbi's migration:

*Bang Karbi aso tangté lepu, Karbak aso tangté lepu*  
 (They the Karbi offsprings.....)  
*Mung-ri bang rong nangkim lepu, Mung-ram bang rong nangkim lepu*  
 (Mungri and Mungram are where they built villages..)  
*Mungri kedo thirthé lepu, Mungram kedo thirthé lepu*  
 (Mungri and Mungram settlements did not last...)  
*Taipi pen ron chepi lepu, Taipo pen ron chepi lepu*  
 (Battles with the great Tais ensued...)  
*Ansi Mung-ri pen nangbethu lepu, Mun-gram nangbethu lepu*  
 (Then from Mungri and Mungram Karbis dispersed...)  
*Sining ta kanphuri lepu, lônglé ta kanphuri lepu* (Sky and earth they roamed...)  
*Ningkan krehini aphi lepu, ningkan krekethôm aphi lepu* (After twelve-thirteen long years of wanderings...)  
*Manghu pen vangsita lepu, Mangram pen vangsita lepu*  
 (Through blunders and slip-ups they advanced...)  
*Arakan nangpho lepu, la Paikan nangpho lepu*  
 (To the Arakan and Paikan ranges...)  
*Inglôngpi la akengri, ârlôkpi la akengri*  
 (By the shadows of the great mountains and canyons...)  
*Lasi rong nangkim lepu, lasi rup nangkim lepu*  
 (Then villages were built again...)  
*Lasi Arakan kedo jokta, la Paikan kedo jokta*  
 (Then settlements in Arakan-Paikan too...)  
*Havar cho chithi dokôk, hapat cho chithi dokôk*  
 (Land disputes arose....)  
*Lasi jaipek alam chepho lepu, lasi jaihôi alam chepho lepu*  
 (Then confrontation arose on boundaries...)  
*Lasi Barmipi pudet lepu, Barmipo pudet lepu*  
 (Then the great Barmese ordered...)  
*Thoipi lônglé kejôi dolang, joipi lônglé kejôi dolang*  
 (In the great plains there are vacant spaces..)  
*Kôpli la apirthé lepu, Kôlông la apirthé lepu*  
 (It is where rivers Kôpli and Kôlông flowed....)  
*Lônglé kejôi dolang lepu, phêlang kejôi dolang lepu*  
 (Vacant lands existed there...)  
*Lalè nang Karbi asò tangté lepu, nang Karbak asò tangté lepu*  
 (Then the Karbis with their offsprings...)  
*Nākā la dongponput damnon, Nārā la dongponput damnon*  
 (You proceed through the Nagas...)  
*Ānké nangtum thoipi phōpō lepu, ānké nangtum joipi phōpō lepu....*  
 (Then you will reach the great expanse of the plains....)<sup>10</sup>

As narrates here the Karbi clash with the Tais at the place *Mungri-Mungram*. The Karbis are force out from that place after their defeat. The place '*Mungri-Mungram*' seems to be derived from Mungri-Mungram<sup>11</sup> of the present-day Myanmar or Burma where the ancestor of Ahom Kings Khunlung-Khunlai have descended from heaven. The Karbi settlement did not last long in that place, they further travel for shelter in the foothills of Arakan mountain range of Burma. The Karbis thereafter encounter with the Barmese who force them to leave their territory. Then they started their journey towards the Kôpili and Kôlông

river valley through the terrain of the Nagas. J.H. Hutton and H. Barih states that southern Nagaland offered land route to the “tribes migrating from Burma via Manipur hills through which a passage was made by tribes who preceded the present people of the Patkoi mountain. The other preceding tribes are described to have Austric and Karen affinities”<sup>12</sup> But before their final stay to present habitat, they stop over different places in Burma that following verses reveal —

*Lāsi sālu nāngpholô lepu*  
(Then sālu they reached..)  
*Lāsi mukindon nāngpholô lepu*  
(Then mukindon they reached...)  
*Lālè inglông kāngtui lepu*  
(So high was the mountain...)  
*Lālè ārlôk kāngtui lepu*  
(So deep the canyon...)  
*Lāsi ārlôk bātlô lepu.....*  
(Then deep canyon was crossed...)<sup>13</sup>

The quotation from a paper, ‘Nevertheless, and despite this uncertainty about chronology and geography, there is a broad consensus that the homeland of Tibeto-Burman is somewhere in that famous region where northern Burma meets southwest China and four major rivers (Yangtze, Mekong, Salween, Irrawady) run side by side from north to south.’<sup>14</sup> *Mukindon* is of a rocky hill and it is standing in the border of North Cachar hills district and Nagaland.

*Chomangpi-along chomangpo along*  
(In the land of the great Chomang...)  
*Ili nāngbé loké, ili nāngché loké*  
(We migrated...)  
*Tāmu nangdoloké Nāmdông nāngdoloké....*  
(Tāmu and Nāmdông are where we landed...)<sup>15</sup>

In the ‘*môsēra*’ of the *Rôngkhāng* version narrates about the exodus into the present North Cachar hills. They travelled across to the Jaintia and Khasi hills. The Karbis given the name *Chomāng* to the Khasi people. As referred to in the *môsēra*, ‘*Tāmu- Nāmdông*’ is a place that located in the present day Meghalaya ( Jaintia Hills district). *Tāmu* and *Nāmthlông*<sup>16</sup> are two small places of Burma. The Khasis of Meghalaya refer the Karbi migrants as ‘*Nongpoi na Tāmu*’ or ‘*Nongpoi Tāmu*’ means migrants from *Tāmu*. Some migrant Karbis who assimilated to Khasis still holds the title ‘*Jait Tāmu*’ means belonging to *Tāmu*. These ‘*Tāmu Tribes*’ are still around as a sub-tribe of the Khasis, located in *Henrulangso Āmang* in Karbi or Khli Umwang in Khasi, *Langtui* (Umteli), *Lāng-Mek-kri* (Ummat) villages, numbering about 4 to 5 hundreds, inside Karbi Anglong. They also are found in some more locations inside Meghalaya. Karbis who migrated to Khasi hills from *Rôngkhāng* areas and assimilated to Khasis are now referred to as ‘*Jait Ryngkhang*’. These sub-tribes are located in Umpawin (*Langchingthu*), Bhoi Lymbong (*Where a Karbi Thigh Lies Buried*), Umrôî (*Lāngprô*) and Umdothali (*Ôk-lāngsò- ārôî*) etc.<sup>17</sup>

There are many present-day references that the Karbi migrants across N.C. Hills. A reference to ‘*Vò-Amūr*’, or ‘flower of bird’, is found in the Karbi mournful (*kechārhé*) and the memory of the location direct to Maibong in N.C. Hills. Historical facts sketch the presence of Karbis in the areas of present N.C. Hills. ‘*In 1866, in the month of January, the Nagas of the village of Razepemah raided and destroyed a Mikir village in North Cachar. Lieutenant Gregory took retaliatory measures by burning the village of Razepemah. In the same year, in the month of June, the men of Razepemah, to retrieve their honour, raided the village of Sergamcha in the Mikir community. They killed twenty six Mikirs on this raid. The rains followed soon after, and prevented any retaliatory steps being taken. In the following winter, Lieutenant Gregory visited Razepemah again and burnt down the whole village. He further prohibited them from re-occupying their old lands and fields. The lands were distributed among other communities.*<sup>18</sup> “Mill’s Report on the Province of Assam”<sup>19</sup> has states that- ‘According to the tradition of the tribes they were originally settled in Toolaram Senaputtee’s territory under various Chiefs of their own selection. Some years ago they were conquered by the Rajah of Cachar from whose oppression they were driven to take refuge in Jynteah there meeting the same treatment; some migrated to Demoroo, Beltollah and Raree in the District of Kamroop, the remainder took up their present abode in the locality as described above. In this position however having the plains of Assam on the North, a portion of Cachar on the South and being only separated from Jynteah by a space of thirty miles of low land, the Mekirs were subjected to continual demands from these neighbouring States.’

In many instance, the particulars provided by the ‘*môsēra*’ about the roaming of the Karbis find parallels in the ‘*kechārhé*’. The names of the hills, rivers and territory mentioned to in the narratives are undergo changes as it passes through the word of mouth. The use of the word ‘*chôm*’ among Karbi as the corrupt form of Sanskrit word *yama*<sup>20</sup>, Lyall and Stack described in ‘The Mikir’ that the Karbi belief of a deceased soul that ‘*gains admittance*’ to ‘*chôm ārông*’ at most through the death ritual performance of ‘*chômkan*’ and that of obtain rebirth. Lyall and Stack remarks that this ideas of rebirth to be borrowed from Hinduism (The Mikir: P-29). But, Prof. Kosambi argues that the ‘large succession of rebirths is characteristically Buddhist’<sup>21</sup>. It has possibilities that the Karbi idea of rebirth may have been a Buddhist impact considering the certain reference of ‘*Dukpa*’ exist in the migration memories of ‘*môsēra*’. Further, the references of ‘*lāsā*’ in the folk songs of Karbi, ‘*Jili ālūn*’ as well as in ‘*kechārhé*’, cause to consider the past closeness of the Karbis with the Tibetans. Apart from these, there are interesting and fascinate references to toponyms in ‘*môsēra*’. The ‘*môsēra*’ versions that are widespread in rural Karbi Anglong

The Karbi migration as narrated in the *Chinthông* version of 'môsēra' described to have begun their first shifting from 'Lônglè achētē', i.e.- 'navel of earth' fleeing from the chasing of more powerful opponent mentioned as 'Tôngklông Meji'. Similarly, the nearby neighbour of the Karbis, the Khasis believe that their origin was came from the 'navel of sky' (*sohpet bneng*). The Khasi forefathers are believed to have come down by a golden-ladder from heaven at 'sohpet-bneng' situated on a hilltop by the river Bārāpāni. The reference of 'navel of earth' is similar to the Christian and Judaic believe of Jerusalem as the 'navel of earth'. The reference of 'Jehova' in 'môsēra', the Jewish god, is mystify. It is hard to guess on so many coincidences that one continually confront in the Karbi migration memories without having any 'historical' occurrences in the forgotten past.

## V. CONCLUSION:

Some information about the Karbi migration into Ahom territory and Karbi-Ahom political relations have become known only after the advent of the Ahoms in 1228 AD, they were recorded clearly in the Ahom Buranji. Popular belief of the Karbis refers that they came to their present habitat of Karbi Anglong, from the east. Mr. P.C. Phangso states that 'Considering these evidences, it can be said that the route of migration of the Karbis from Burma into the present Karbi Anglong and its neighbourhood was through northern Manipur, south-western Nagaland and north-eastern North Cachar Hills.' For authenticity of his claim for settlement of Karbis in N.C. Hills, Mr. Phangso observes that 'there are some monoliths in the neighborhood and north of Maibang, N.C. Hills, situated in memory of the deceased. K.L. Baruah states that 'Khasis and Jaintias do not have the practice of digging pond in memory of the dead.'<sup>22</sup> The Karbi migration and settlement in the plains area of Assam, Phangso comments "It is not exactly known from where the Dumurals began to settle in the plains. According to a tradition prevalent in Panbari, Chenimur, Sonapur and Jagiroad area, a group of Karbis came down from the neighbouring hills on the south and established a kingdom under the king named Dumura. Henceforth, these people came to be known as Dumurali or Thoi Aso or 'Thoi Asor'— meaning plains dweller."

The Karbi migration narrative as a principle genre is a possible guide to uncover the tribe's history, which had never gain the importance. Rather regretting the absence of any written history of the tribe group, these orally transmitted memories of the past could skillfully serve as the purpose of significant starting point. 'Everyone of an oral society believe that memories can be truthful and faithful archives that contain the sum total of past human experience and explain the cause and factor of present day condition.'<sup>23</sup> The practioners of oral traditions among the Karbis have rapidly decrease in the last two decade but some artisans and folk singers yet practice the 'môsēra' tradition in front of the Karbi youth.

## Notes and References:-

1. <http://www.languagesgulper.com/eng/Tibeto.html>
2. <https://nezine.com/info/bnhUV3NpcjlsUkxwVTVkNkFhdFJKdz09/census-2011-language-data:-assam-recordsdecline-in-percentage-of-assamese,-bodo,-rabha-and-santali-speakers.html>. This figure however does not mention anything about Karbi living in other districts such as NC Hills, Kamrup, Morigaon, Nagaon, Darrang, Sibsagar, and Cachar within Assam and in the neighboring states of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.
3. These are traditional geographical units of West Karbi, parallely at the same time people from these areas and batches of Karbi from other areas migrated to the present day east Karbi Anglong. Present day Karbi Anglong is divided into Karbi Anglong- Samelangso, Rongmongwe, Nilip, Langsomepi, Howraghat, Bokajan, and Lumbajong and Karbi Anglong West-Amri, Chinthong, Rongkhang, and Socheng.
4. One of the four distinct cultural divisions of the community viz. Chinthông, Rôngkhāng, Āmri and ūmbajōng
5. Ronghang is a traditional ruling clan.
6. *Sum and Sāng* are the first Karbi parents according to the folk narratives of 'Karbi Keplāng' (Legend of the origin of Karbis)
7. As stated in the article "Migration Memories" in Karbi Oral tradition" by D.S. Teron incorporated in *Karbi Studies, Vol-1*. D.S. Teron Ed. Assam Book Hive, 2012, p-71
8. Ibid.
9. 'Sôk Keplāng' the legend of the first discovery of rice.
- 10 As stated in the article "Migration Memories" in Karbi Oral tradition" by D.S. Teron incorporated in *Karbi Studies, Vol-1*. D.S. Teron Ed. Assam Book Hive, 2012, p-71
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15. As stated in the article "Migration Memories" in Karbi Oral tradition" by D.S. Teron incorporated in *Karbi Studies, Vol-1*. D.S. Teron Ed. Assam Book Hive, 2012, p-72
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17. Inputs are provided by Lôngsing Bé of Murāp, Chinthông in Western KA. quoted by D.S. Teron in *Karbi Studie*, Karbi young writers Guild , Angik prakasan, Guwahati:2011.
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20. Lyall and Stack, *The Mikir* , p-28
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22. Baruah,K.L, *Early history of Kāmarupa*,Shillong:1933,p-126.
23. Vansina, Jan, *Oral Tradition as History*, Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

