



# International Journal of Contemporary Research In Multidisciplinary

## Research Paper

# History of Origin and Migration of the Ramos of Arunachal Pradesh

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18503644>

### Abstract

The Ramos are one of the smallest sub-groups of the Adi Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, inhabiting the Menchuka Circle of Menchuka Sub-division in Shi Yomi District. In some places, they are mixed with the Bokars in Monigong circle, and in some with the Pailibos in Tato circle. Ramos are very proud to claim a distinct identity and to differentiate themselves from the other tribes like the Bokars and Pailibos. They are a small group of people having their own culture and identity, customs and institutions.

Like most tribal people in the world, the Ramos do not have a written history or have not recorded their history and culture. The sub-group was less exposed to the outside world for several decades. The area has also been rarely visited by anthropologists in the past. Colonial rule had a very limited impact on them, which resulted on limitation of written records on the subgroup. Some studies generate basic data of the tribe, but we do not get satisfactory, detailed information. The study of the sub-group deserves attention from the scholar from a historical point of view. Nevertheless, the Ramos have preserved their past through memory in the form of oral traditions. Ramos possesses rich oral traditions embedded in their various myths, legends, folklores, ballads, etc. It is in this background that the present work seeks to trace the various myths, legends and traditions relating to their origin and migration. In order to construct their past history on migration, we have to rely on the oral traditions, which are to be corroborated with available works on the subgroup.

### Manuscript Information

- ISSN No: 2583-7397
- Received: 19-03-2024
- Accepted: 27-04-2024
- Published: 30-04-2024
- IJCRM:3(2); 2024:242-246
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- Plagiarism Checked: Yes
- Peer Review Process: Yes

### How to Cite this Manuscript

Riba T. History of Origin and Migration of the Ramos of Arunachal Pradesh. Int J Contemp Res Multidiscip.2024; 3(2): 242-246.

**KEYWORDS:** Arunachal Pradesh, Migration, Myths, Oral tradition, Origin, Ramos, Route, Settlement.

### INTRODUCTION

The Ramos are one of the smallest sub-groups of the Adi Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, inhabiting the Menchuka Circle of Menchuka Sub-division in Shi Yomi District. They inhabit the area along with the Membas. In some places they are mixed with the Bokars, particularly in Monigong circle, and in some with the Pailibos in Tato circle. The Ramos, like all other inhabitants of Arunachal Pradesh, were separated from Tibet by a line of unending snow peaks, tortuous rocky terrain and deep impenetrable forests. The area exclusively known as the Ramo

area consists of the main site valley from Menchuka to Tato, with the smaller valleys on both sides formed by tributaries of the river Site. The Ramo area in the north is separated from the Membas area. In the east and the west, there are number of ranges- Tamazen-Kongun, Tabing-Buke-Midak and Kamzeleeling-Rotung-Chatak-Takuk- that separate them from the Bokar and Tagin areas, respectively. In the south, Tato is the dividing point between Ramos and Pailibos. The area is mountainous and full of dense jungles at an altitude ranging from 5,000 to 15,000 ft. above sea level.<sup>1</sup> At present, the Ramos are settled in ten villages.

These villages are Lingdungloti, Rego, Rapum, Hiri, Purying, Lipusi, Padusa, Gapo, Menying and Chengrong. The Ramos are bounded by various neighbours like Tagins, Membas, Bokars, Pailibos and Boris.

Numerically, Ramo is not a big subgroup of Adis. The 2011 Census shows a total population of 506 with 246 males and 260 females.<sup>2</sup> They have distinctive features in terms of complexion, physique, dialect and attire. Ramos are very proud to claim a distinct identity and to differentiate themselves from the other tribes like the Bokars and Pailibos. They are a small group of people having their own culture and identity, social, economic, religious and political institutions.

Like most tribal people in the world, the Ramos do not have a written history or have not recorded their history and culture. Nevertheless, they have preserved their past through memory in the form of oral traditions. Their history is mingled in the midst of tradition and mythology. The Ramos possess rich oral traditions embedded in their various myths, legends, folktales, folklores, and ballads rhapsodies and so forth that have been passed from one generation to another and it provides information about the creation of universe, origin of human being, evolution of society, various stages of their migration and settlement enroute, the geographical difficulties, problems encountered and several inter-tribal feuds or conflicts during the course of their migration and experiences. Hence, in order to construct their past, we are to rely on the oral traditions. These events and processes connected to migration from Tibet to their present settlement, mentioned in oral accounts, can be verified with the help of other historical works on Ramos. Therefore, it is in this background that the present work seeks to trace the various myths, legends and traditions to construct the history of origin and migration of the Ramos, which are to be corroborated with other available works on the Ramos.

### The Myths of Origin

According to Ramo mythology, the origin of the universe, earth and life was created with the union of the *Seeching* (Earth) and the *Medong* (Sky). This union of the sky and the earth is called as *MeloMeya*. It is said and believed by the Ramos that before this union, there was no human activity, and by their union, the Ramos and other human beings were born. All the living and non-living things in this universe evolved through this union. Animals, birds, water, fire, mountains, leaves, trees and all other natural things were then created. Various other objects were also created, and these objects took the form of various spirits-benevolent and malevolent. Some of these spirits went up to live with *Medang Abo* (Sky), their father, but many stayed with *SeechingAne* (mother earth).<sup>3</sup> These spirits, because of their supernatural control and mystical existence, are either held in reverence or awe by the Ramos.

According to the genealogy of the Ramos, the first to be born as a result of this union were *Donyi* (Sun) and *Polo* (Moon). The genealogy goes thus: *Seeching- Chingri- Ringdo- Donyi* originated. Likewise, from *Seeching- Chiring- Ringpo- Polo* came into being. *Donyi* (Sun) and *Polo* (Moon) went to stay with their father, *Medang Abo* (Sky), and the Ramos stayed with their

mother, *Seeching* (Earth). *Donyi* and *Polo*, in course of time became gods and looked after the world of the Ramos.<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, the myths trace the origin of the Ramos from *Seeching*(earth). They claim to have originated from *SeechingAne* (mother earth). As per the genealogy, *Seeching* had a son name *Chingsing*, *Chingsing's* son was *Singtung*, and then from *Singtung* came *Tungri*. *Tungri* had four sons- *Ridong*, *Riki*, *Rini*, *Riso Somyo*. *Ridong-Dongjengalso* known as *Metehis* considered to be a heavenly father. From *Riki* came *Kibo-Rambo*, they are malevolent spirits. *Rini* is *Abo Tani*, the first man to be born and the ancestral father of all the Ramos. Then came, *Riso-Somyo*, (tiger). The Ramos claim *Riso-Somyo* (tiger) and the ancestors of Ramos as brothers. *Somyo* is considered as elder brother of the Ramos and with respect the Ramos addresses them as *Abi Paate*.<sup>5</sup>

*Rini* or *Abo Tani*, the ancestral father of the Ramos had a son named *Nijom*. From *Nijom* came *Jomsi*. It is also held that *Jomsi* was the common forefather of the Ramos, Bokars, Boris and Pailibos. *Jomsi* had two sons- *Sikar* and *Sitong/Sito*. From *Sito'sTopo* according to them is considered to be the ancestor of the Galos. As per the genealogy, Ramos and Bokars had a common origin but became different entities. *Sikar's* son was *Karbo*. From *Karbo* descended *Bosi*, then from *Bosi-Siku* and from *Siku-Kume-Mene-Nebo-Boni-Niyor*. From *Niyor* came *Yorhi* and *Yorkar*. *Yorhi's* descendants are considered as pure Bokars and now settled in Monigong. They are now known by the names- *Hige*, *Hiyor* and *Hibo* (as they all descended from *Yorhi*). Hence, today's Bokars are *Yorhi's* descendants. What separates Ramos who have now settled in Menchuka from Bokars is that the Ramos are the descendants of *Yorkar*. Some Ramos have settled in Monigong with the Bokars and is now fully influenced by the Bokars. From *Yorkar*- came *Kardung* and he had three sons called *Dungmi*, *Dungri* and *Dungram*. However, *Dungmi* and *Dungri's* children which are Ramos are now treated as pure Bokars. Present day Ramos are *Dungram's* descendants. It is pertinent to mention that ancestry separates both the tribes. From *Dungram* came *Ramgo* and from *Ramgo*- *Goyor*. Hence, *Dungram's* descendants consider themselves as pure Ramos. And from this time onwards, Ramo as a tribe became exogamous. In Monigong, still there are many of *Dungram's* descendants which were a former settlement of the Ramos before they migrated to Menchuka. They are now under considerable influence of the Bokars.<sup>6</sup> Though they are treated and recognized as Bokars now, they never establish matrimonial relation with the Ramos but marry Bokars or other tribes.

From *Dungram-Ramgo-Goyor*, from *Goyor* again the lineage separates. *Goyor* had two sons – *Yordung* and *Yorying*. However, from *Yorying* came *Yingpak* and from *Yingpak*- *Pakkong*. *Pakkong* had two sons- *Kochi* and *Koning*. *Koning's* generation is now extinct. *Kochi* had two sons- *Chije*(elder) and *Chiten* (younger). From *Chije* came *Jechi* and *Jepu*. From *Jepu-Pujen-Jenpe-Pepu-Puro-Pusang* and the generation goes on. We find *Chije's* descendants- *Jechi* and *Jepu* in Monigong as well as in Menchuka (Dorjeeling village). However, from *Chiten*(younger brother), descended *Tensam* and *Tenmang*. *Tensam's* descendants are settled in Menchuka now and *Tenmang's* in

Monigong. From *Tensam* came *Samyor* and from *Samyor* descended *Yorko* (elder) and *Yorny* (younger). *Yorko* is said to be the one who first found the route from Monigong to Menchuka and settled there. He also founded a village in his own name - *Yorko* village in Menchuka. *Yorny* had no sons. *Yorko* had five sons- *Kotin*, *Koje*, *Komi*, *Kochung* and *Kodung*. They are recognized as Ramos and are settled in the Menchuka valley. Except for *Kotin* all others, *Koje*, *Komi* and *Kodung*'s descendants has inherited the names of their forefathers as their surnames. As for *Kotin*, his son *Tinpu* had five sons- *Pusang*, *Pupor*, *Puchung*, *Puyor* and *Pusam*. Thus, *Kotin*'s descendants are now found settled with these names respectively.<sup>7</sup>

### Migration

There are various traditions regarding the Ramos place of origin and the subsequent migration to their present settlement. A tradition goes that Ramos along with other tribes initially resided in a place called Pemako, now in China-Tibet. From Pemako, they moved to a place called Donggin and from Donggin they proceeded to Some-Sega. Then from Some-Sega they moved towards Domle, from where they moved to Taga-dege. From Taga-dege they migrated to Manigong and settled in a village called Geching for some time. From Geching at Manigong, they moved to their present settlement. Now the Ramo area is under Menchuka circle.<sup>8</sup> According to another tradition recorded by M.M Dhasmana, states that Ramos and the Bokars came from Same-Segong in Tibet, crossed the Domla Pass near Manigong and settled in the Manigong area. They migrated towards the south due to population pressure. According to another theory, they migrated because of religious intolerance in Tibet in the fourteenth century. Since, all these tribes believed in nature worship and offer sacrifices they moved away from theocratic Buddhist Tibetan provinces.<sup>9</sup> Over the course of these migrations, there are instances of several inter-tribal feuds between Ramos and its neighbors Membas, Tagins, Bokars and Boris for supremacy, better lands and sometimes also for profit in trade.

According to another tradition, there were two brothers *Ame Pane* and *Birme Mane* residing in Same-Segong in Tibet. They were the sons of mother *Seeching* (earth). Ownership of land and produce was common. Later on, individual ownership came into existence. There was division of produce, between the two brothers. *Ame Pame* took *Kodo* (millet) wheat, garlic and onion, while *Birme Mane* took rice, maize, *Tayak* (sorghum), *Taki* (ginger) and chilli. The land was also divided and both the brothers started their own cultivation. *Ame Pame*'s cultivation yielded good results, while *Birme Mane*'s crop failed. This resulted in *Birme*'s exit from Same-Segong. Before leaving the place *Birme Mane* called his two sons *Topo* and *Karbo* and asked them to shoot their arrows.

*Karbo*'s arrow hit the Manigong area and *Topo*'s arrow hit the *Karka* area.<sup>10</sup> *Karbo* then migrated toward the Manigong area. Hence Ramos and Bokars are *Karbo*'s descendants.

It is said that the Ramos came from Same-Segong by crossing Domla Pass near Manigong. Bokars also came to the same place before the Ramos and settled in the area near Taga-dege. The

Ramos while migrating brought *Dao* (machete) and axe along with them, constructed bridge over the Yom river, crossed it and settled in Manigong. The Bokars did not bring any implements with them, so they could not cross the rivers and hence had to settle near Taga-dege. It is said that after the Ramos constructed that bridge over Yom river, the settlements in the Yom valley started. They then spread to Geching, Yarrang and Pangri. In Yarang they saw a stone carved with footprints of men and animals. They thought that the place was fit for settlement.<sup>11</sup> By settling near the Bokars they entered into matrimonial alliances with them.

Yet, according to another oral narrative, the Ramos before migrating from Tibet, resided in a place called Molo also called as Nepo Deli which is believed to be in Tibet. It is said that Ramos along with Bokars, Boris, Pailibos and Memba migrated from Nepo Deli. Before setting off on their respective journey all the tribe has said to have worn their own respective traditional attire. Each tribe also made a mark by placing a stone in the ground and then departed from Nepo Deli. The Ramos starting their journey from Nepo Deli have first come to a place called Sode. From Sode they proceeded to Nayu. From Nayu they reached a place called Karma. Then from Karma to Tomle, from Tomle to Lole, then finally reaching Monigong. All the places mentioned where the Ramos halted for time being is said to be situated in between Monigong and Tibet.<sup>12</sup>

On migrating from Tibet, the Ramos settled in the Monigong area and stayed there for some time. In Monigong, the first settlement of the Ramos was in Sit village and at *Taki Neta* village. One of the forefathers of Ramos named *Ato Yorko* is said to have discovered the route from Manigong to Menchuka. This route is called Song Pangri. From Manigong he spent the first night at Geching and thereafter from Geching he reached Pangri, then Libong to Song, Song to Dorjeeling finally reaching Menchuka. *Yorko* then founded a village under his name *Yorko* village which is still there by the same name.<sup>13</sup> Earlier, there were no inhabitants at these places and it was all covered with dense forest. According to the tradition, *Ato Yorko* migrated to Menchuka because of constant warfare between Ramos and Bokars. During the war with the Bokars they fled in the jungle and in the process discovered the Song Pangri and came to Menchuka valley via this track.<sup>14</sup> The Song Pangri track is situated on a very high altitude. It is a shortcut to reach Menchuka from Manigong. The Ramos were the first people to discover this track. It is said that the Ramos collected tax from the people of other tribes using this track. It is also said that they accidentally discovered it while fleeing from the Bokar area.<sup>15</sup> The track is surrounded by dense forests and high mountains and during winter it was not possible to cross because it gets blocked because of heavy snowfall. There were no any inhabitants on the way through this track.

A tradition of migration from Monigong to Menchuka to their present settlement it is said that, once *Yorko* while staying in Sit village (in Monigong, the first village of the Ramos after coming from Tibet) in the form of hunter went to hunt a *Seben* (Boar), an animal that resembled a *Sebe* (Mithun) and a cow having curved horns. His son-in-law accompanied him and a slave

named *PakboNangko*. They then started chasing the *Seben*. To their surprise, the *Seben* was white in colour which was an unusual colour for the same. After continuously chasing for days, they reached a village in Menchuka name Lhalung. It was a Memba village where Dor song and Mane clans of the tribe lived.<sup>16</sup> This account is also mentioned by M.M Dhasmana, when the Ramos came to Menchuka valley, the Memba settlers from Tibet were already there. The Memba Deva (the lord of the area) Phile Dorjee Mane permitted Ramos to settle down in the valley on the western side of the river Si for security reasons.<sup>17</sup> The Membasthen caught *Ato Yorko* and his followers Both the groups could not understand each other's language. However, the Membas could speak a bit of Tibetan language and both could barely communicate as there was an open trade route to Tibet during that time. The Membas tied them and performed many rituals to ascertain whether they were humans or devil. Later when they found out that they are humans, provided shelter and food to *Ato Yorko*. *Yorko* went back to Monigong, and that is how he found out the route to Menchuka valley. He could not go through the same track as it was covered with thick forests. He went from down the valley, the area between Menchuka and Tato which was occupied by Padus and Kiris. From the Padu clan he married a woman who became his third wife. From her *Kodung* was born.<sup>18</sup> It is said that the Padu population was decreasing hence they insisted *Yorko* to settle down as the area under them was considerably large.

When *Yorko* came back, he discussed the issue of migrating with his brothers. It was because he thought that if war with Bokars continues, his generation would go extinct, whereas there was plenty of land in Menchuka for settlement. Hence *Ato Yorko* with all his sons and brother *Yorny* migrated to their present settlement. The first village where they settled is *Yorko* named after him and village *Yorny* after his brother which still survives. Half of his brothers who were left at Monigong did not migrate further and still inhabit the area and are recognized as Bokars now. Many other brothers came after *Yorko* like *Chije*, he settled in Darge and *Tenmang* in Tema Inko. They returned back to their own ancestral land in Monigong after the relation was normalized with the Bokars.<sup>19</sup>

The names of the Ramo villages in Menchuka valley therefore have been associated with clans residing in the villages. *Yorko* settled in a place called *Yorko* now. The village is still a Ramo village though the areas around it are Memba villages now. *Yorny* settled in *Yorny*. His descendants have moved to southward in the Site valley. The village now is completely inhabited by Membas though the name of the village still remained same as *Yorny*. The villages of Ramo which comes in the first category are *Yorko*, *Yorny*, *Tenma Inko* and *Chije*, whereas *Rapum*, *Rego* and *Gapo Inko* fell in the second category. The Ramos have also settled in the Monigong and *Yapuk* areas and share their villages with Bokars and *Pailibos*. The names of such villages in Bokar areas are *Karo*, *Pede*, *Papikrung*, *Karle*, *Pogte* and in *Pailibo* areas are *Tato*, *Yapuk*, *Yapu*, *Tadogito* and *Tagur*.

Thus, we see that the Ramos did not confine themselves to one particular area. They migrated from Tibet, settled in Bokar and

Memba areas and left a number of people in those areas. Their marriages with *Pailibos* provided opportunities to some Ramo family to settle in *Pailibo* areas. The study of oral historical literature pertaining to Ramos indicates that the tribe has its own oral narrative regarding their origin and migration. The oral literature collection contributes to our understanding about origin of the Ramos and their subsequent migration to their present settlement. Before 1947, some of the villages in the Menchuka valley, where people lived were Lhalung, Dechengzung, Dorjeeling, Gallang, Singbir, Menchuka, *Yorko*, Segong, *Yorny*. Currently there are total ten villages inhabited by the Ramos only. They are *Lingdungloti*, *Rego*, *Rapum*, *Hiri*, *Purying*, *Lipusi*, *Padusa*, *Gapo*, *Menying*, *Chengrong*.

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