

Social Structure of Porba

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Introduction

This paper presents a brief outline of some important cultural and historical aspects of Porba Village, a Chokrimi community in Phek District, Nagaland. Information is given on the traditional history of the community, including the settlement, the importance of major cultural practices, and the structure of the society. Though societal norms have changed considerably these practices and heritage still hold importance to the residents of Porba village as a significant part of their culture and identity. In addition, the clan system, practices around the naming of babies, the system of inheritance, the economy system, education, and language are also discussed.

Methodology

This paper has a collection of narration, phone recording, call recording, and interviews. The first author is a member of the Chokrimi society from Porba Village and collected the data in this paper directly from the community members themselves.

Brief historical background of Porba village

Porba Village is said to have been first settled by the historical figure *Poru. Poyo*, the ancestor of 'Poru' initially lived in *Viswema*. He was involved in a crime and therefore moved to *Muzhora*. From *Muzhora*, he then settled at *Phusachodu*. He had a son named *Mudikhru*, who was also known as 'Thurikha'. Thurikha had three sons: Ren, Murora, and Poru who all settled separately over time. It is believed that during 1700-1730, Poru settled in the present-day Porba Village (Sheniezo personal communication). Settlement in a new place was a challenge in the past as people lived with a constant fear of war, head-hunting, various spirits, and fierce wild animals. In the initial settlement, the village was divided into three khels: *Kusozumi*(upper Khel), *Ciekumi*(Middle Khel), and *Basapumi* (Lower Khel). Presently, two colonies; the Medical colony and the *Wibo* colony were added to these three khels.

Cultural practices

Warfare and Head Hunting (Sheniezo personal communication)

Porba Village like other Naga villages was also known to have actively participated in inter-village warfare in the form of head-hunting. Hence, the village folks at that time were either involved in agriculture or guarding the village boundaries. 'Thurifu' as an act of menfolk in the villages means to protect the village from any external disturbances or enemy warriors. Each Khel was assigned to guard their share of boundaries in the village. *Kusozumi* to guard from *Yiemoruto Vambu* River through *Mukhio*, *Ciekumi* to guard from *Yiemoru* to *Ciedzuju* through *Chohomoru*, *Basapumi* to guard from *Hutio* to *Ciedzuju* through *Chozu*. As per oral records, Porba Village is said to have been involved in headhunting warfare with around 30 villages viz., *Pfutseromi*, *Leshemi*, *Lekromi*, *Zapami*,

Khezhakenoma, Lasumi, Kami, Phusachodu, Khulazu Basa, Thenyizu, Cesezu, Thurutsuswu, Nahoto, Sohomi, Jessami, Losami, Lower Khomi, Chizami, Ranumi, Gazhephu, Muvumi, Zhavame, Jotsoma, Khonoma, Mezoma, Sechu, Murhemi (A Zeliang village), Sorhumi and three other villages.

At that time, the glory of a warrior was directly proportional to their headcount i.e., the number of heads they could hunt during headhunting. The more senior and seasoned warriors would try to provide enemies on a platter to the younger and junior warriors to aid their glory. During such headhunting exercises, the young warriors were made to camp at *Pfutseromivillage (Renba)* while the senior warriors would proceed to hunt at *Kami, Lekromi, Zapami, Lasumi, Leshemi, and Khezhakenoma* villages, with the faith that they would be able to capture men from the enemy village for the young men to stab with spear and earn the warrior name. In one such episode, the young men from Porba committed a blunder and killed one villager from *Pfutseromi* village (a friendly village) and took his head home which angered the *Pfutseromis* to seek a retributive justice. A similar incident occurred when Porba conflicted with *Khulazu Basa*, a Porbami headhunted a villager of *Khulazu Bawe* in a case of mistaken identity but in this case, the victim village was forgiving and did not retaliate against Porba.

Naming of babies

Before the child is born, an unblemished tree will be cut, and the wood used as firewood and ready to cook for the food of the mother. After the child is born, a good, sound, and healthy person will be selected to cut the umbilical cord from the placenta. After this, the child's father will say '*ingoraho*' which means 'I saw it first'. This is said to own a child before '*Thurumi*', a supernatural God denoting negativity, owned the child. The belief is that if they don't utter the above line then the child may die and may be owned by *Thurumi*.

According to the ritual, '*Zotho*', a traditional rice beer will be put to touch the baby's lips. After which an unblemished wood and unblemished cock is made to prepare the food for their mother and the child. The first three days the child and the mother are not allowed to go out from the house. After the completion of seven days, the child will be named '*khumuzu*' for a male child and '*khumuzulu*' for a female child to save from *Thurumi*'s clutch. This process is called '*Nubo*' *Nubo* will be observed for three days. '*Nuso*' is observed for four days. In total seven days of ritual are observed. The same ritual will be performed even in '*Nuso*'. Only the mother and the child are allowed to eat chicken meals during this ritual. After this ritual is performed, babies' names can be given as they like.

Festivals of Porba

There are five festivals but this paper will discuss three festivals which is still practised and share the significance of past and present celebrations.

1. Sokronye festival is popularly practised in January every year. Sokronye festival is initially celebrated in February end or 1st week of March. In the present day, it is celebrated in January. This festival is celebrated to have self-purification and sanctification of one soul, rituals were made to see the fortune of the year. Blessings were spelt for year abundance in crops, rituals were made to forbid and avoid disasters and unpleasant death in the village. Wrestling is played in the latter days of the celebration to build friendships, health fitness, and strength among men-folk, and the training of young boys to play.

Presently, *Sokronye* is celebrated by conducting a formal program, significance of the festival will be deliberated. Even though there is a change in the significance, it is observed to have a good meal with near and dear ones, to build friendships, indigenous games, and folksongs were conducted and learned. Rituals were no longer practised with the encounter of Christianity.

2. other festivals like '*khilovato*' presently known as '*khilonye*' are the only festivals celebrated by Porba in November after the harvest is over for thanksgiving, sustainability of crops and to regain wellness.

3. '*Khukhunye*' is a festival for the girl child and damsels to give respect and honour to the girls before they reach womanhood/motherhood. This festival is celebrated in August. It is only practised in Porba village in the Phek district.

Some of the festivals could not carry through until now because some rituals were not prevalent in the Christian era. '*Khilonye*', '*Khukhunye*', '*Vaphumona*' and *Sokronye* festivals still carry on to the present generation by replacing rituals with prayer, significance has changed today it is observed mostly for exchanging of meals, gatherings, greetings, and merry-making.

Inheritance: Ancestry heritage like property and land was inherited by the male child, female child does not inherit the land except if it is bought or earned by herself. Female children can inherit clothing and ornament from their mother's bloodlines and sisters. This inheritance culture is practiced till today however there is a new condition for the female child who was recruited by giving a government job representing the clan, even after she gets married, her job is not taken away but already has ownership in her job. The job/service is inherited from the clan as she represents the clan for the Government appointment (in the case of land owner employment).

Economy

1. In the olden days, Rice terrace farming and jhum cultivation is widely practised and is one of the main sources of income for livelihood and self-reliance for survival.

2. Rearing of mithun is also widely practised in each household as it holds a valuable significance in the context of Porba as every marriage, feast, and festival needs mithun meat to celebrate, a person having a big number of mithun is considered the richest in the village. Mithun farming is another source of income, today the significance has changed though it has been practised as there is mithun Research Centre (ICAR) in the village, where people rear mithun for individual financial earning and employment purposes.

3. Presently, kiwi and cardamom plantation, vegetables, and fruit farming are practised widely as this has a better scope of income compared to rice farming, young youths also engage in entrepreneurial jobs. Few sections of people are engaged in government service.

Relations with the Angamis

Many of the southern Angami villages were at constant war with the Zeliangrongs but they were unable to capture them so *Khonoma* village decided to seek support from Porba Village, under the leadership of some Porbamis, they captured *Murhemi* village (a Zeliang village). *Khonoma* village acknowledged the due credit and treated the warriors of Porbami with fine wine and food.

on one occasion, the village was invited by the *Dapfhutsomiakhel* of Kohima village and was warmly hosted. *Dapfhutsomia Khel* also granted many agricultural tools to the village in times of severe landslide. Kohima village also offered their forest for the collection of firewood when the sick patients travelled to Kohima. They also gave first preference to Porbamis who dwell in Kohima when in queue to fetch water. During the construction of the Naga Hospital, many villages from various places worked together to level the site for the construction which Porba Village also went to work. Even during this time, Kohima village offered a meal and wine to the Porbamis. Till today, Kohima village is regarded as one of the most affectionate and warm-hearted people towards Porba village.

When Porba would go to war against *Jotsoma, Khonoma, Mezoma, and Sechu* villages, the warriors of Porba on the way would spend the nights at *Kigwema* Village. However, the *Kigwema* felt that they were not duly acknowledged for their hospitality by the Porbamis, instead they felt that *Viswema* and *Jakham* villages were treated better than their village. To convey their discontentment, it is said that a folksong was composed for this act of ingratitude. It should be noted that Porba village considered *Kigwema* village as a friendly village to this day.

Inter-village Feasts

The Porba village used to make peace and friendship treaties with many tribal villages to maintain/start good relations while ceasing all political warfare between them. To mark such friendships, feasts would be organized. The village has held friendship feasts with *Thuvomikhel* of *Khonoma* Village, *Khulazu Basa, Zhavame, Zelome, and Chizami*. During feasting and merry-making with *Khonoma* village, Porba village usually rests at *Kidima* village.

'Tali-center' is a culture in which a woman from Porba gets married off to a man from another village and the man hosts a feast to celebrate with the girl's village as a remembrance. *Vesoyi* from *Phek* village, and *Dobashi Thupusuyi* (husband of *Phutazulu*) both hosted such feasts. (*SheniezoDzudo* narration). When a person from the village hosts a feast for another village, he is entitled to build a Naga House, *ceka* (house horn) both front and back. (*SheniezoDzudo* narration) on one occasion, while having a friendship feast with *Khonoma*, the village failed to perform certain necessary rituals before the feast which people believed was responsible for an unprecedented rise in the mortality rate in the village following the feast. To redeem themselves from that mistake, the villagers organized a feast with *Zelome* to ask forgiveness and seek blessings. This site of the story shows that rituals were made to worship or a prayer for them to make living better. Inter-village feasts are still prevalent in Porba society during festivals and church celebrations whereas '*Tali-cenye*' is no longer practised.

Structure of the society

Clan

1. *Dzudo* clan, this surname was given after the name *Poru*, the first settler who came from *Phusachodumi* village.
2. *Sakhamo* is the surname of *Zhovesa* the second settler who also came from *Phusachodumi* village.
3. *Ruhocame* from *Phusachodumi* village.

4. The *Thuluo* clan came from Phusachdumi village.
 5. *Cuthao/Vadeo* came from Phusachodumi village.
 6. *Puro* came from Kikruma village.
 7. *Chiero* came from Kami village.
 8. *Lohe* came from Sakraba village.
 9. *Swuro* came from Sumi village.
- Dzudos* was the generation of *Poru* who is considered as the first settler.

Marriage among clan members is prohibited and is considered incest because they are from the same bloodline. Before Christianity, wedding rituals were performed by strangling the fowl. During this process, the bride-to-be is given a prescribed amount of time to either reject or accept the suitor depending on the dream she sees. If the dream signifies something inauspicious then she can reject the suitor. Clan-to-clan marriage is allowed as long as the groom or the bride is '*rava*' which means for some reason he/she left his/her biological clan and adopted another clan's surname. In this case, both the surnames can be the same but with different bloodlines. In other words, clan names are the same, but bloodline is different. This case is exceptional only in the case of marriage.

To cite a case of the importance of the clan system, in 1911, the British Government ordered certain villages to work as porters (coolie) in Abhor Rihu (Arunachal Pradesh). From Porba, two representatives from nine clans were also sent: *Vethatsu* and *Vehurifrom* *Puromiclan*, *Pohunu* and *Vepuhuhu* from the *Cierami* clan, *Yiehu* and *Vetsoyi* from *Sakhamotsomi* clan, *Sosuh* and *Huritso* from *Porunumi/Dzudo* clan, *Pukhuyi* and *Husoyi* from *Tazhumiclan*, *Yiehutso* and *Huvesuh* from *Ro-otsomi* clan, *Sanuruh* and *Rahu* from *Thuluotsomiclan*, *Vakhru* and *Thupusa* from *Cuthapunumi* clan.

Administration

In the olden days, there were two *thuvo*; *Thuvo-1* and *Thuvo-2*, where *thuvomi* performed like a priest. The first settler of the village will become *Thuvo-1*, second settler will be *thuvo-2*. Before Christianity, *Thuvomi* were regarded as God and were well respected. They were also regarded as village luck in decision-making; decisions were made only after the acceptance and pronouncement of good fortunes by *Thuvomi*. To start any work for every season, in times of joy and sadness, *thuvomi* will perform rituals by pronouncing some lines. For every festival, *thuvomi* will start and end with rituals. In every thanksgiving, feast of merit, the first share of meat will be offered to *Thuvomi*. The share given to *Thuvomi* in time of harvest, in time of abundance and thanksgiving is called '*thurishe*'.

Clans play an important role in village administration even today. *SotsuzuSakhamo* was the first Gaonbura in Porba who was elected by British officials, likewise three more *Gaonburas* were also elected on the ground of Clan and intellectuals. *SotsuzuSakhamo* was the grandfather of *SovamuSakhamo*, *SovamuSakhamo* was the father of *ZakamuSakhamo*, the longest serving GB member in Porba, and he has been serving for the past 30 years till date. In times of grief and sadness, the clan took the first step to support one another, this could be one factor that put Clannism in a high spirit in Porba society. In the initial structure of the village, clan spirit is very high by competing in Physical power and feast hosting however to the present generation, clan compete in all aspects, having more positivity in their competition in a good spirit and vision.

Gaonbura is selected, representing each clan. GBs and intellectuals will plan and bring agendas,

laws, and village rules and regulations to *Thuvomi*, the decision will be made by *Thuvomi* and he will be blessed with it, and the laws will not be removed or changed until *Thuvomi* dies. Today, the Village Council Chairman (VCC) along with GBs execute together for the welfare of the village. once *Thuvomi* gives an announcement of laws, it is forbidden to go against such laws.

Education and Language

In the year 1933, government primary school was introduced. In the mid-1960s, Mr. *Tazuhu Puro* with the help of Father Philip of Shillong and five Gaonburas in the village initiated to establish one of the first Jesuit schools in the Chakhesang region known as Cambridge School. The school soon began to grow rapidly. Some of the eminent personalities like the Late *Veyieta Chiero*, and *Dr.ZaveyiHiese* among many other villagers pursued their early studies at this school. After some years, Father Coelho transferred the school to *Chizami* village. Though the institution was taken away, the villagers felt the need for a school to continue in the village. So, a School under the name of Middle English School run by local authority continued for many years while seeking to transfer the administration to the Government of Nagaland.

In the year 1976, a conference of the Naga Students' Federation was held in Dimapur in which *Veyieta Chiero* was elected as the President but unfortunately, he died on the election night. In memory of his death, Naga Students' Federation, the Middle English school was taken up by the government with the nomenclature *Veyieta Memorial Government High School Porba* and was inaugurated by the then Education Minister *Dr.Shurhozelieliezetsu*. In the year 1989, under the leadership of *ZakamuSakhamo*, Village Education Chairman, the school was upgraded by transferring government teacher *Gogoi* from *Pfutsero Government High School* to the village *Porba High School*. Till now, the Village Education Chairman has played a major role in the upliftment of village education.

During 1981-82, with the efforts of Mr *Satuo* of *Kohima* village the then Director, Directorate of Veterinary, Government of Nagaland, initiated the establishment of the National Research Centre on Mithun (NRCM) in the village. In 1984, the then Additional Director General ICAR, Acharya approved the feasibility of mithun in the village. on 15th October 1987, G.S Dhillon the then union Minister for Agriculture inaugurated the National Research Centre on Mithun in the village.

This centre has become a great source for the village to learn about the scientific way of animal farming education.

Porba language is a variety of *Chokri* language, a Tibeto-Burman Language of the Naga sub-group spoken by around 6,500 speakers. *Porba* village is situated in the area of centre of *Chakhesang*. The language used in schools includes *Chokri*, *Porba* variety, and English. There are poems written about '*Khukhunya*' festival in *Porba Chokri* by Lt. *PuthitsoSakhamo*. Some hymnals and a few books in the Bible were translated into the *Chokri* language by Pr. *NgotsoSakhamo*. Lt. *VesazoSakhamo*, who was the father of Pr. *NgotsoSakhamo* was one member among the five Pioneer of *Chokri Literature Board*, who laid invaluable fostering contributions of the *Chokri* language for its posterity.

Conclusion

This paper presents a brief outline of the social structures important to *Chokrimi* Society of *Porba* village in Nagaland. once a headhunting community as was common throughout Nagaland and

other parts of Northeast India, Porba village has since undergone considerable development along with the surrounding communities. However, despite this modernization, the cultural practices on which the *Chokrimi* community was built remain important, and as a community efforts are made to maintain these traditions and oral histories as the foundation upon which the society is built. In doing so, by remembering traditions and continuing those that are not at odds with today's society, communities may be better able to retain a sense of pride while continuing to take part in such a multicultural society as India today.

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