

A BRIEF OF MANIPUR

Manipur is a state in northeastern India, with the city of Imphal as its capital. It is divided into two parts: Manipur Proper which was the historical Kangleipak over which the Meitei Kings had ruled and Outer Manipur, over which Meitei Kings had never exercised authority. Manipur proper, is sometimes referred to by alternative names such as Kangleipak and Meeteileipak. It is bounded by Nagaland to the north, Mizoram to the south, and Assam to the west; Burma lies to its east. The state covers an area of 22,327 square kilometres (8,621 sq mi). Its people include the Nagas, Meeteis, Kuki, and Pangal, who speak different types of Sino-Tibetan languages.

Manipur has been at the crossroads of Asian economic and cultural exchange for more than 2,500 years. It has long connected the Indian subcontinent to Southeast Asia, enabling migration of people, cultures and religions.

Manipuri style of embroidery is a unique type of embroidery that uses one stitch, in deference to the weavers in the area. This is done in dark matching shade with untwisted silk thread on the border of the phanek (a lungi or lower body wrap worn by women). Colours in dark red, plum or chocolate are usually used. The embroidery is so artistically done that it does not clash with the weave and is often mistaken for it.

Akoybi embroidery is done in an elegant snake-like pattern or design, derived from the legendary snake, pakhamba (killed by the husband of a goddess, who later tried to atone for this act by imitating the pattern). Akoybi means circular and the design involves one circle joining the other, each broken further with a significant motif in shades of shades of red along with black and white. Hijay is another pattern where black and white, along with shades of pink thread are used in a continuous pattern.

Angami Naga shawls have animal motifs in black. This was previously called sami lami phee (which means warrior cloth of wild animals) and was given to brave distinguished warriors by the royalty, in recognition of their prowess and ability. The colours are bright green, red, yellow, and white. Abhala or mirror-embroidery work is done only on ras dance costume.

M. Radhama
Secretary
The Pioneer Women's
Welfare Association

HAND EMBROIDERY CRAFTS IN MANIPUR

Next to Weaving, Embroidery was an important craft among the people. It was a supplement to pattern making in Weaving. Weaving could produce only simple cross pattern; round pattern could not be produced on loom weaving. But the aesthetic sense of the people evolved to envisage the beauty of rounded patterns, and to achieve it they had taken recourse to embroidery with the help of needle.

It is believed that the needle was introduced from Burma with the introduction of the new tool and silk, the Textile crafts in Manipur made an aesthetic stride.

Tools and materials required for Embroidery are very few and simple. These are comprised of a needle, a wooden frame and coloured cotton or silk yarn of different colours. No thimble is used.

The uses of needle work in dresses and decorative clothes has been a practice. Since early time and design created with needle work are the hook-like motifs of animals, fishes, flowers, Plants, insect etc. Which are highly stylised forms. During the time of Meidingu King Yanglou Keifaba (969 - 984 A.D.) the designing with needle work of hook like motif on the borders of Phanek (mekhala) was introduced. The needle work was also used with MANA-PHI (awards offered in the form clothes by the monarchs). All the needle works start from the right side and then proceed and finish on the left. The methods of needle work can be broadly classified in two categories. These two categories are namely : (i) the needle work is applied on the wrong side of the cloth and then the right side where the design is created, is used in wearing (ii) the needle work is applied only on the right side of the cloth are used in wearing.

The technique of needle work employed by the Meitei (Manipuri) women are namely Thouri Khutlon, Chain stitch, Pumhanbi, Romanian stitch, Satin stitch and Back and Long stitch etc. etc.

M. Radhamei

Secretary
The Pioneer Women's
Welfare Association.

1ST DOCUMENTATION REPORT FOR
"SAFEGUARDING THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE
AND DIVERSE CULTURAL TRADITION OF INDIA" 2014 - 15
UNDER

SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI, MINISTRY OF CULTURE, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
sanction No. 28 -6/ICH-Scheme/79/2014-15/11312 dT. 3rd February, 2015

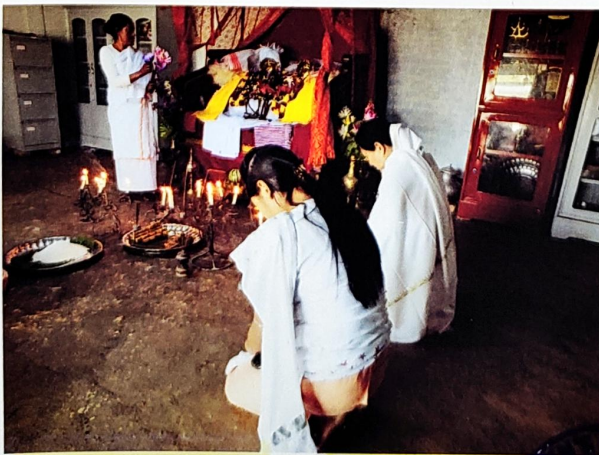
Resuscitation and Preservation of Historical Craft under the Scheme "Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Tradition of India" 2014 - 15 sanction by Sangeet Natak Akademi, Ministry of Culture, Government of India vide sanction No. 28 -6/ICH-Scheme/79/2014-15/11312 dated 3rd February, 2015 after receiving 1st instalment of last part of March, 2015 as below :

We decided to take up our project on the historical cloths found in Bishnupur District. The cloth found in the Thangjing Temple has its unique lovely immortal history. The Love story of the Khamba and Thoibi is retold and told from time immemorial. It is said that the two lovers are incarnation of Lord "Lainingthou Nongpok Ningthou" and Goddess "Panthoibi".

- (i) Visited Moiring Thangjing Temple a very important historical site in the history of Manipur for the documentation and research work on 5th April, 2015. We found a historical cloth "Yengao Mayek" guarded by the Temple Board of Moirang Thangjing, Bishnupur District. The historical cloth was found being keep in a wooden box with glass on the top highly guarded as if it was used by the gods or goddess. We faced very difficulty in reaching the cloth for our project purpose and identifying the hand embroidered crafts because the cloth was very old, torn and colours of the embroidery patterns were hardly seen.
- (ii) Visited Ningthoukhong, Bishnupur District on 19th April, 2015. We found the cloth keep in a temple inside a wooden framework with glass on the top for viewing. The temple was found to be guarded by forming a committee. We contacted the keepers for opening the temple for our project work and the keeper opened it with praying by chanting certain hymn.
- (iii) Princes Chakpa Makhou Ngambi daughter of Yubraj Tongthengamba younger brother of Maharaj Paikhomba of Manipur was married to Maharaj Sa Nay Nim Dyi (Saney) in the year 1702 king of Burma during the time of Tangoo Dynesty he was reign during 1698 to 1714 in order to keep peace in his country. The meitei king give sarvents or her compenions as a dowry for her daughter. Still now a community of the compenions carried by the Manipuri Princess were dwelling at Mandalay, Myanmar. Smt. M. Radhamani (National Awardee Hand Embroidery) visited the place and found "Pumthit Phanek" very rare kind of undergarment used only by the Queens of Manipur (Chakpa Makhoungambi). The undergarment was embroider all part of the cloth.

M. Radhamani
Secretary
The Pioneer Women's
Welfare Association

VISIT TO THANGJING TEMPLE



VISIT TO THANGJING TEMPLE



M. Radhame K

VISIT TO NINGTHOUKHONG, Bishnupur District



The keeper prayed before opening



Prayer before entering



M. Rodhamei V.

CRAFTED CLOTHES "WATHOKPHI" INSIDE THE BOX



M. Radhama V

PREPARATION OF THE SILK CLOTH

The Shilk Cloth to be embroidered is specially engaged for weaving as the matter is different from day to day use.



Dying of the Silk Cloth



Dying of the Silk Cloth



M. Radhamao G.

OFFICIAL DISCUSSION



Resource Persons with the Artisans



M. Radhamei ✓

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE EMBROIDERED CRAFTS



M. Radhamei K

HIGHLIGHT TRAINING IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROJECT



Resource Persons with the Artisans

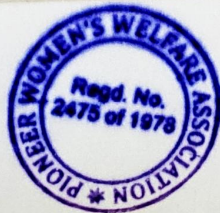


Resource Persons with the Artisans



M. Radhamee

HIGHLIGHT TRAINING IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROJECT



U. Radhamesi

YENGAO PHI



WATHOK PHI



Preparation for the Embroidery Work



Ms Radhamani with the artisan



U. Radhamani



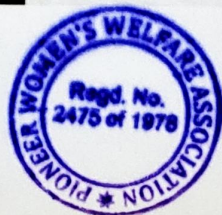
PUMTHIT (PUMTHET) PHANEK



Embroidery Work

M. Radhamesi K.

EMBROIDERY CRAFTS ARTISANS ENGAGED IN THE PROJECT WORK



M. Radhamei

INAUGURAL FUNCTION AND CONSULTATION WITH RESOURCE PERSON :

Inaugural function was organised with a simple function, as the project focuss only on the documentation and resuscitation and preservation work. From 22nd April, 2015 resource persons were engaged for the project, **Shri Mutua Bahadur**, Pioneering figure in the field of Traditional Art and Culture, **Dr. K. Sobita Devi**, Rtd. Director, Art & Culture, Manipur and **N. Indramani**, Rtd. Archivist (Micro Film), Manipur State Archives. Selected embroidery craft artists were given a highlight training course about the embroidery stitch technique used in the aged old historical crafts with great care. Crafts persons were instructed to work with sincerity and to bound their work to the originality of the historical cloth.

All the historical crafts found in our research and documentation work were of fine silk cloths highly decorated with hand embroidery in various colourful patterns.

WEAVING OF CLOTH :


Specially contected a handloom weaver on 23rd April, 2015 and assigned the work of weaving the special silk cloth maintaining the size and quality of the cloth. The weaving of cloth was completed 2nd May, 2015.

DYING WORK :

Dying work was done by the Master Crafts Persons herself with her satisfaction.

EMBROIDERY WORK :

15 (Fifteen) selected artists are working under the guidance of Smt. M. Radhamani Devi, (National Awardee, Hand Embroidery). We are hopping to complete the project successfully.

M. Radhamani 
(Ms. M. Radhamani Devi)
Secretary, PWWA
Secretary
The Pioneer Women's
Welfare Association

YENGAO PHI :

This cloth is also a kind rare piece which is now preserved at Thangjing Temple, Moirang is around 40 km. from Imphal along with other cloths like Wathok Phi, Shasaba Ngasaba, Khambagi Phurit, Khambagi Phi etc. According to the version of the custodian of the cloths as well as the people of Moirang, this cloth was also woven by Moirang Thoibi, the daughter of Chingkhuba, the heir brother of Moirang king Chingkhu Telheiba reigned during eleven century. This cloth is also like the above cloth Wathok Phi, which artistically and subtly embroidered muslins made of silk with embroidering techniques. This cloth is also now in shabby condition as has long been preserved for about 1100 years. The motifs of the design of the cloth is in kicking position of cock. So the name of this cloth was named from the design as Yenkao Phi.

The shawl is generally made of silk and the whole body is commonly woven with cream colour. the borders are embroidered with stylized "Yen" (Cock), "Tinthrok" (Earthworm) design with floss silk thread of different appropriate and matching colours like Black, Arkana and cream.

The technique used therein are chain and satin stiches.

This is the reason why this cloth is considered to be of highest socio-cultural value pertaining of Meitei cosmology.

M. Roelhamer
Secretary
The Pioneer Women's
Welfare Association

PHOTOGRAPHS DURING WORK



Yengao Phi



Yengao Phi



M. Radhamei K.

PHOTOGRAPHS DURING WORK



Yengao Phi



Yengao Phi (Different Colour)



PHOTOGRAPHS DURING WORK



Yengao Phi (Different Colour)



Yengao Phi (Different Colour)

M. Radhesni

PHOTOGRAPHS DURING WORK

WATHOK PHI :

This rare piece of cloth is now well preserved in Ningthoukhong, near Moirang. The distance of this place from Imphal is around 34 k.m. During the period of independancy at Moirang, the only daughter of Chingkhuba, the heir brother of Moirang king Chingkhuhelheiba was exceptionally skill in weaving and embroidering, works on cloth. It is believed that this kind of cloth 'Wathokphi' was the cloth woven by the Thoibi. One day her father Chingkhuba asked for the cloth, but Thoibi denied and said that was for offering to god Thangjing. On the occasion of Ukai Kappa festival, Chingkhuba saw the cloth worn by Khamba, the lover of Thoibi. Accordingly, a dispute arose about the cloth. So, the cloth was named after that event as 'Wathok Phi', the cloth of dispute. This kind of cloth was artistically and subtly embroidered muslins made of silk with embroidered techniques. The cloth is now in shabby condition as has long been preserved for about 1100 years.

Wathok Phi is generally made of silk and whole body is commonly woven with cream colour and dye it in grey colour. the whole body are embroidered with stylized fishes, insects and flowers design with floss silk thread of different and matching colours like cream, red and yellow.

The technique used therein are chain and satin stiches.

This is the reason why this cloth is considered to be of highest socio-cultural value pertaining of Meitei cosmology.

M. Radhamei
Secretary

The Pioneer Women's
Welfare Association

PHOTOGRAPHS DURING WORK



Wathok Phi



Wathok Phi

M. Radhamei

PHOTOGRAPHS DURING WORK



Wathok Phi



Wathok Phi

M. Radhama: *[Signature]*

PUMTHIT PHANEK :

Among the rare artifice of Pumthit PhaneK, the female loincloth is a kind of female garment which has a highly valued specialities because of that since its use was strictly restricted to the eldest princess, the 'Tamphasana'. This particular type of female loincloth emerged during the reign of king Khagemba (1597-1652), to be worn only by the eldest princess of the Meitei king born through a mother of the Angom royal house and who assumed the title of Khuraileima by virtue of her being the eldest sister of the brother who succeeds the throne of the Meitei king, in her generation. This female loincloth had very limited weavers and is not popular among the common man.

The informants who happened to see this kind of garment years back provided of this rare kind of cultural relic is that the garment was embroidered in each of different pattern of seven strips, each of different colours. Various designs are reported to embroidered on these strips and the motifs used in this loincloth are not known as specimen today. This female loincloth was provided with embroidered in two strips borders and is said to have been decorated with design in floss silk threads as normally observed on the Mayek Naibi PhaneK.

Even a single piece of this royal female loin garment which was highest cultural value among the Meitei female dresses is not longer available today. Even the Pumthit PhaneK of the last Tamphasana who wore it cannot be traced now. But recently, a piece of this kind of female loincloth, Pumthit PhaneK was able to trace from Myanmar (Burma). During the reign of king Charairongba (1697-1709), in the year 1702, the king of Toungoo dynasty of Ava, sent emissaries asking for the hand of a Manipuri princess. King Charairongba gave his sister Chakpa Makhao Ngambi in marriage to the Burmese king Sanay. The Burmese king made her Chief Queen of Burma. This rare piece was worn by Chakpa Makhao Ngambi.

This Pumthit PhaneK is generally made of thick silk is commonly woven with "Yureirom" colour. The whole body is embroidered with stylize peacock and flows design with floss silk thread of different and matching colours like black, light red, cream, chocolate, Maroon, Light Pink and white. The technique used therein are satin and back stitch stitches.

This is the reason why this cloth is considered to be of highest socio-cultural value pertaining of Meitei cosmology.

M. Rakhumai
Secretary
The Pioneer Women's
Welfare Association

PHOTOGRAPHS DURING WORK



Pumthit Phanek



Pumthit Phanek

M. Radhamei K.

PHOTOGRAPHS DURING WORK



Pumthit Phanek



Pumthit Phanek (Different Colour)



N. Radhama

**FINAL DOCUMENTATION REPORT FOR
"SAFEGUARDING THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND
DIVERSE CULTURAL TRADITION OF INDIA"**

UNDER

**SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI, MINISTRY OF CULTURE, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
Sanction No. 28-6/ICH-Scheme/79/2014-15/11312 of 3rd February, 2015**

The Pioneer Women's Welfare Association, Keishamthong Laisom Leirak, Imphal express our sincere gratitude to Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi for providing grant. It is our desire to preserved the aged old crafts and its value in this contemporary world. The Sangeet Natak Akademi make it happen a part of our dream come true. It is our desire to continue this venture in the future to come.

BRIEF ABOUT THE PROGRAMME :

We are organising the programme "Resucitation and Preservation of Historical Crafts" under the scheme of Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Tradition of India under the sponsorship of Sangeet Natak Akademi, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, New with our sincere effort and careful procedures.


RESEARCH WORK :

It is a very hard work for re-organising, shaping the old torn cloths and finding out the exact figure, patterns and type of stiches used. We engaged experts in drawing and micro filming experts in the region to figure out the techniques and design of the old clothes found at the temples and museum. It takes whole 6 (Six) month to map the exact graphs for the embroidered patterns and type of stiches.

SELECTION OF CLOTHS AND THREADS :

After research work we found out the type of cloths used is silk and the threads used for the embroidery work is also coloured silk. Selected weaver is engaged for the weaving work for maintaining the exact size, thickness of the cloth and patterned used in the old cloth.

M. Ralhannei
Secretary
The Pioneer Women's
Welfare Association



RESUCITATION AND PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL CRAFTS

Conducted by
PIONEER WOMEN'S WELFARE ASSOCIATION
Keishamthong Laisom Leirak, Imphal (Manipur)

Under the aegis of
SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI
New Delhi





WATHOK PHI

This rare piece of cloth is now well preserved in Ningthoukhong, near Moirang. The distance of this place from Imphal is around 34 k.m. during the period of independency of Moirang, the only daughter of Chingkhuba, the heir brother of Moirang king Chingkhuh Telheiba was exceptionally skill in weaving and embroidering works on cloth. It is believed that this kind of cloth "Wathok Phi" was the cloth woven by the Thoibi. One day her father Chingkhuba asked for the cloth, but Thoibi denied and said that was for offering to god Thangjing. On the occasion of Ukai Kappa Festival, Chingkhuba saw the cloth worn by Khamba, the lover of Thoibi. Accordingly, a dispute arose about the cloth. So, the cloth was named after that event as "Wathok Phi", the cloth of dispute. This kind of cloth was artistically and subtly embroidered with muslins made of silk with embroidered techniques. The cloth is now in shabby condition as has long been preserved for about 11000 years.

Wathok Phi is generally made of silk and whole body is commonly woven with cream colour and dye it in grey colour. The whole body is embroidered with stylized fishes, insects and flowers design with floss silk thread of different and matching colours like cream, red and yellow.

The technique used therein are chain and satin stitches.

This is the reason why this cloth is considered to be of highest socio-cultural value pertaining of Meitei cosmology.



PUMTHIT PHANEK (MEKHALA)

Among the rare artifacts of Pumthit Phaneik, the female loincloth is a kind of female garment which has a highly valued speciality because of that since its use was strictly restricted to the eldest princess, the "Tamphasana". This particular type of female loincloth emerged during the reign of king Khagamba (1597 - 1652), to be worn only by the eldest princess of the Meitei king born through a mother of the Angom royal house and who assumed the title of Khuraileima by virtue of her

being the eldest sister of the brother who succeeds the throne of the Meitei king, in her generation. This female loincloth had very limited weavers and is not popular among the common man.

The informants who happened to see this kind of garment years back provided that this rare kind of cultural relic is that the garment was embroidered in each of different patterns of seven strips, each of different colours. Various designs are reported to be embroidered on these strips and the motifs used in this loincloth are not known as specimens today. This female loincloth was provided with embroidered borders in two strips and is said to have been decorated with designs in floss silk threads as normally observed on the Mayek Naibi Phaneik.

Even a single piece of this royal female loincloth garment which has the highest cultural value among the Meitei female dresses is not longer available today. Even the Pumthit Phaneik of the last Tamphasana who wore it cannot be traced now. But recently, a piece of this kind of female loincloth. Pumthit Phaneik was able to trace from Myanmar (Burma). During the reign of king Charairongba (1697 - 1709) in the year 1702, the king of Toungoo dynasty of Ava, sent emissaries asking for the hand of a Manipuri princess. King Charairongba gave his sister Chakpa Makhao Ngambi in marriage to the Burmese king Sanay. The Burmese king made her Chief Queen of Burma. This rare piece was worn by Chakpa Makhao Ngambi.

This Pumthit Phaneik is generally made of thick silk and is commonly woven with "Gray" colour. The whole body is embroidered with stylized peacock and the flowers design with floss silk thread of different and matching colours like dark pink and blue. The technique used therein are blanket stitch and back and long stitch.

This is the reason why this cloth is considered to be of highly socio-cultural value pertaining of Meitei cosmology.



YENGAO PHI (CHADER)

This cloth is also a kind rare piece which is now preserved at Thangjing Temple, Moirang is around 40 km. from Imphal along with other cloths like Wathok Phi, Shasaba Ngasaba, Khambagi Phurit, Khambagi Phi etc. According to the version of the custodian of the clothes as well as the people of Moirang, this cloth was also woven by Moirang Thoibi, the daughter of Chinghuba, the heir brother of Moirang King Chingkhuh Telheiba reigned during eleven century. This cloth is also like the above cloth Wathok Phi, which artistically and subtly embroidered muslins made of silk with embroidering techniques. This cloth is also now in shabby condition as has long been preserved from about 1100 years. The motifs of the design of the cloth is in kichking position of cock. So the name of this cloth was named from the design as Yenkaoh Phi.

This Phi (Chadar) is generally made of silk and the whole body is commonly woven with cream colour, the border are embroidered with stylized "Yen" (Cock), "Tinthrok" (Earthworm) design with floss silk thread of different appropriate and matching colours like cream, Brown and green and Black (mix).

The technique used therein are chain and satin stitches.

This is the reason why this cloth is considered to be of highest socio-cultural value pertaining of Meitei cosmology.



Pumthit Phanek



Yengao Phi



FINAL DOCUMENTATION REPORT FOR
"SAFEGUARDING THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND DIVERSE CULTURAL TRADITION OF INDIA"
UNDER
SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI, MINISTRY OF CULTURE, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



WATHOK PHI



WATHOK PHI :

This rare piece of cloth is now well preserved in Ningthoukhong, near Moirang. The distance of this place from Imphal is around 34 k.m. During the period of independancy at Moirang, the only daughter of Chingkhuba, the heir brother of Moirang king Chingkhuh Telheiba was exceptionally skill in weaving and embroidering, works on cloth. It is believed that this kind of cloth 'Wathokphi' was the cloth woven by the Thoibi. One day her father Chingkhuba asked for the cloth, but Thoibi denied and said that was for offering to god Thangjing. On the occasion of Ukai Kappa festival, Chingkhuba saw the cloth worn by Khamba, the lover of Thoibi. Accordingly, a dispute arose about the cloth. So, the cloth was named after that event as 'Wathok Phi', the cloth of dispute. This kind of cloth was artistically and subtly embroidered muslins made of silk with embroidered techniques. The cloth is now in shabby condition as has long been preserved for abut 1100 years.

Wathok Phi is generally made of silk and whole body is commonly woven with cream colour and dye it in grey colour. the whole body are embroidered with stylized fishes, insects and flowers design with floss silk thread of different and matching colours like cream, red and yellow.

The technique used therein are chain and satin stiches.

This is the reason why this cloth is considered to be of highest socio-cultural value pertaining of Meitei cosmology.

M. Radhamani
Secretary
The Pioneer Women's
Welfare Association

FINAL DOCUMENTATION REPORT FOR
"SAFEGUARDING THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND DIVERSE CULTURAL TRADITION OF INDIA"
UNDER
SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI, MINISTRY OF CULTURE, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



YENGAO PHI



YENGAO PHI (CHADER)

This cloth is also a kind rare piece which is now preserved at Thangjing Temple, Moirang is around 40 km. from Imphal along with other cloths like Wathok Phi, Shasaba Ngasaba, Khambagi Phurit, Khambagi Phi etc. According to the version of the custodian of the clothes as well as the people of Moirang, this cloth was also woven by Moirang Thoibi, the daughter of Chingkhuba, the heir brother of Moirang king Chingkhu Telheiba reigned during eleven century. This cloth is also like the above cloth Wathok Phi, which artistically and subtly embroidered muslins made of silk with embroidering techniques. This cloth is also now in shabby condition as has long been preserved from about 1100 years. The motifs of the design of the cloth is in kicking position of cock. So the name of this cloth was named from the design as Yenkaio Phi.

This Phi (Chadar) is generally made of silk and the whole body is commonly woven with cream colour, the border are embroidered with stylized "Yen" (Cock), "Tinthrok" (Earthworm) design with floss silk thread of different appropriate and matching colours like Cream, Brown and Green and Black (mix).

The technique used therein are chain and satin stiches.

This is the reason why this cloth is considered to be of highest socio-cultural value pertaining of Meitei cosmology.

M. Radhamani

(Smt. M. Radhamani Devi)

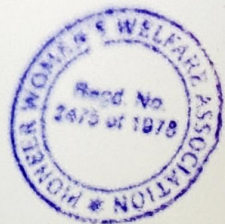
Secretary

**The Pioneer Women's
Welfare Association**

FINAL DOCUMENTATION REPORT FOR
"SAFEGUARDING THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND DIVERSE CULTURAL TRADITION OF INDIA"
UNDER
SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI, MINISTRY OF CULTURE, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



PUMTHIT PHANEK



PUMTHIT PHANEK (MEKHALA)

Among the rare artifice of Pumthit Phanek, the female loincloth is a kind of female garment which has a highly velued specialities because of that since its use was strictly restricted to the eldest princess, the 'Tamphasana'. This particular type of female loincloth emerged during the reign of king Khagemba (1597-1652), to be worn only by the eldest princess of the Meitei king born through a mother of the Angom royal house and who assumed the title of Khuraileima by virtue of her being the eldest sister of the brother who succeeds the throne of the Meitei king, in her generation. This female loincloth had very limited weavers and is not popular among the common man.

The informants who happened to see this kind of garment years back provided of this rare kind of cultural relic is that the garment was embroidered in each of different pattern of seven strips, each of different colours. Various designs are reported to embroidered on these strips and the motifs used in this loincloth are not known as specimen today. This female loincloth was provided with embroidered in two strips borders and is said to have been decorated with design in floss silk threads as normally observed on the Mayek Naibi Phanek.

Even a single piece of this royal female loin garment which was highest cultural value among the Meitei female dresses is not longer available today. Even the Pumthit Phanek of the last Tamphasana who wore it cannot be traced now. But recently, a piece of this kind of female loincloth. Pumthit Phanek was able to trace from Myanmar (Burma). During the reign of king Charairongba (1697 - 1709) in the year 1702, the king of Toungoo dynasty of Ava, sent emissaries asking for the hand of a Manipuri princess. King Charairongba gave his sister Chakpa Makhao Ngambi in marriage to the Burmese king Sanay. The Burmese king made her Chief Queen of Burma. This rare piece was worn by Chakpa Makhao Ngambi.

This Pumthit Phanek is generally made of thick silk is commonly woven with "Gray" colour. The whole body is embroidered with stylize peacock and the flowers design with floss silk thread of different and matching colours like dark pink and blue. The technique used therein are blanket stitch and back and long stitch.

This is the reason why this cloth is considered to be of highly socio-cultural value pertaining of Meitei cosmology.

M. Radhamani
(Smt. M. Radhamani Devi)
Secretary
The Pioneer Women's
Welfare Association