

## AIMOL Questionnaire

### 1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

AIMOL: Part of a larger tribal community called Kom or Kom-rem, which includes the Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, Kom and Purum. [2; 1] The Kom-Rem people have a common language known as 'Kom-tong' which means 'Kom language'. [3] All the tribes constituting it can communicate through this language. Language is Aimol, of Sino-Tibetan, Kuki-Chin family. Written with latin script. Dialects include Langrong, though this may be a separate language. Also related to Chiru (CDF) and Purum (PUB). Reportedly intelligible to Koireng (NKD). Most Aimol also highly proficient in Meitei (MNI) [1]

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

AIM

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

The Aimol tribes reside in north-east India, in the districts of Manipur. 22° 28' 0" N, 89° 14' 0" E

1.4 Brief history:

The Aimols, recognized as one of the Scheduled Tribes of the Indian Union, inhabit three districts in Manipur. Etymologically the name *Aimol* corresponds to a past habitat of the people whereby the term is derived from the word, 'Ai' denoting 'wild turmeric', which is found in abundance in the hill 'Mol'. Thus, Aimol owe its name to such historic mark and is thereafter believed to be known as 'Aimol'. Among other things, the Aimols trace their origin to *Khur*, a mythical cave or passage through which all Kuki tribes are said to have emerged from a netherworld. This place is believed to be somewhere in the Southern part of Myanmar bordering China. In fact, some even disagree to this proposition and allege that they must have migrated from the eastern part of China.

More or less all the Kom-rem languages are similar and their customary practices too. They have common associations like the Kom-rem Baptist churches association and union. Despite their gradual diversification in their dialects/languages, names and clans, they still assert having common ownership of the original cave song (folk songs), shawls, dresses etc. Today, the Kom Rem consists of Aimol, Chiru, Kom, Koren (Koireng) and Purum which are all recognized separately as a scheduled tribe by the Indian Constitution. Komrem, known as the united banner of five small tribes Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, Kom and Purum, seems to be heading for disintegration as some of its constituent members are showing the indication of pulling out from the common platform. Some sections are believed to have moved towards Mizoram and Tripura. [9; 36-37]

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

The ATU (Aimol Tribe Union 1991) favor to live autonomously of any affiliation and prefer to maintain a distinctive identity. [6; 2]

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

The Kom tribe originally inhabited the hills lying south of the Imphal valley and some in the hill area, the western part of Manipur. Today, they are scattered in a number of villages and many are settled in the plain of Imphal. [2;6]

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

5,500 (2005) [6; 2]

The Aimol families are largely small to medium in size. The families are by composition of nuclear type comprising of parents and children. [7]

### 2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

Rice, supplemented with vegetables [4]

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Raise water buffalo, pig, ox, and chicken [4]

2.3 Weapons: N/A

2.4 Food storage:

Food is stored in sheds around the home dwelling. [7]

2.5 Sexual division of production:

Cultivation of paddy is carried out by both sexes. [7]

2.6 Land tenure: N/A

2.7 Ceramics: N/A

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: N/A

2.9 Food taboos: N/A

2.10 Canoes/watercraft: N/A

### 3. Anthropometry – N/A

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

### 4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): N/A

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): N/A

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

Most of the Aimol families are nuclear and comprise parents and children. [8]

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): N/A

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

Men marry commonly in age group of 22-27 while girls mostly marry between 16-21 years of age. [7]

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: N/A

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry:

In modern days, the bride price is payable in cash without kind, equivalent to its value. [2; 14] The bride's eldest brother gets Rs.6 and each of the others one rupee less than his immediate senior. The paternal and maternal uncle receive Rs.2 each, the aunt and the elder sister also receive Rs.1. [9; 39]

Apart from paying all items of marriage payments such as mithun, cow, pig, gong, bead, necklace, spears, dao, money and whatever ought to be paid by the bridegroom, three years service is to be served to the bride's family. [11]

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

In the case of property inheritance, the eldest son of the family inherits the parent's property. Moreover, in case of succession to the post of Kamsakoi, the eldest son within the family is considered legitimate. Woman has no right to inherit or to succeed. However, a divorced woman who has returned to her natal residence is allowed to live with her male siblings. Here, although women are strictly restricted to succeed their parents for the post of Kamsakoi but can inherit their parents' property in case there is no legitimate son to inherit. No matter what women are, considered illegitimate for the post of *Kamsakoi* and are normally transferred to the closest male kin of the deceased. [9; 38-39]

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: N/A

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: N/A

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

The clans are exogamous and so also the sub clans. However, nowadays, intermarriage among sub-clans of a clan is becoming frequent with or even without a fine. [7]

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? N/A

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows") N/A

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? N/A

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape N/A

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) N/A

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? N/A

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring N/A

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? N/A

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females N/A

4.22 Evidence for couvades N/A

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older) N/A

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? N/A

4.24 Joking relationships? N/A

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

The Aimol society is a patrilineal and patronymic society where the descent goes to the male line. [9; 39]

4.26 Incest avoidance rules N/A

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

Engagement is revered as a sacred marriage whereby it is generally solemnized in congruent with Christian faith. [9; 39]

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? N/A

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community?

Marriage within the clan is prohibited and marriage between sub-clans of a major-clan is also prohibited. [2; 13]

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

In Pre-Christian days and even to these days in some cases, marriage of a son or a daughter has to be arranged by the parents. The alternate form of acquiring a bride is a love marriage. The third form is through elopement. At present, the practice of acquiring a bride or a groom is done through mutual consent of both the parties. Arranged and love marriages are the two most common forms of marriage. [2;13]

In the case of elopement, the boy's side is usually asked to slaughter a full-grown cow, buffalo, or pig to serve the girl's village as a mark of fine for demoralizing cultural and religious norms. This is done after one or two months after elopement. [9; 39]

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

#### **Warfare/homicide - N/A**

4.31 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: N/A

4.32 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: N/A

4.33 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: N/A

4.34 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): N/A

4.35 Cannibalism: N/A

#### **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: N/A

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): N/A

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

The indigenous mode of political organization of a village centers around the council known as *Pasakariat* (elected eight males). *Pasakariat* consists of eight councilors of which the head is *Kamsakoi*. Apart from these elected councilors, *Kamsakoi* administers the village. Like all other Kuki tribes, the post of *Kamsakoi* is hereditary among the Aimols unlike the post of *Pasakariat*. Ethnologically, and based on the widely perceived agreed notion, Chongom clan is basically revered as a king or chief's clan. This is similar to the case of Sailo clan among the Lushai speakers before it was abolished recently. *Kamsakoi* remains as the exclusive right of the eldest son as a successor.

Despite the perceived notion of cultural homogeneity of the Aimol society, over the years this traditional polity has undergone remarkable change and difference. Although the hereditary post of *Kamsakoi* was considered inherent, this system of traditional administration over the years in *Khurai* villages has been considerably diluted. That is to say, this inherent system of succession continues only among the *Sutpongs*. Today, the *Khurais* have adopted a more liberal and democratic system where periodical elections are held to elect person(s) for various posts in the village administration. [9; 40]

5.4 Post marital residence:

After marriage the young couple lives at the residence of the parents of the boy. [7]

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): **N/A**

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): **N/A**

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: **N/A**

5.8 Village and house organization:

The traditional house of the Aimol people reveals much similarity in the general look with those of the Meiteis, Purums etc living in their close proximity. It is a rectangular box type with slanting crest roof. The length-breadth ratio is roughly 1:3 or 1:5. The number of compartments would be either 3 or 5 in number.

The houses are basically made of wood, bamboo and mud and roofing material used being thatch. Around the dwelling house, one will notice satellite sheds generally used as granary storehouse, cattle shed, and pig stall. The direction of houses is always towards the east, facing the rising sun. Now, the modern Aimol would prefer using modern factory products as house building materials. [7]

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): **N/A**

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

5.12 Trade:

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

## **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: **N/A**

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): **N/A**

6.2 Stimulants: **N/a**

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): **N/A**

6.4 Other rituals:

The Aimol clans possess totems of their own which is associated to their ancestry. They are regarded and prayed to as the gods of the clans. A goat or a hen is sacrificed at the time of worship. [7]

6.5 Myths (Creation):

The Aimol tribe are said to have come out of a cave:

“A tiger was there on the mountain ranges waiting to kill us. The females made a cloth named “*Laijiang*” very cleverly. The colour of “*Laijiang*” was exactly equal to that of the tiger. Then a man was wrapped in “*Laijiang*” and told the tiger that they belonged to the same appearance, caste and creed and proposed friendship. When the tiger was thus tamed, the man killed the tiger with an arrow. Thus came out we, the Aimol.” [10; 9]

All the Kom-rem groups of communities have similar story regarding the origin of their tribe. However, there is a slight variation in the story from one tribe to another. All these communities believe that they came out from a cave. [2; 2,4]

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

Aimol are adept weavers, sing and dance at their festivals, and particularly pass down myths through “cave songs.”

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: **N/A**

6.8 Missionary effect:

Aimol are primarily Christian.

6.9 RCR revival: N/A

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: N/A

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? N/A

6.12 Is there teknonymy? N/A

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.):

The majority of the Aimol tribe has adopted Christianity. Before the adoption of Christianity they were animist. [6; 2]

## 7. Adornment

**Amthar:** This is an upper garment of the Aimol men woven by the Aimol women for their men in the family. It is fabricated from the colour pattern of parrot's feathers.

**Laizjak Puan:** This is also a traditional garment for Aimol men. It was designed by man and woven by woman.

**Uikechu:** The other name of *Uikechu* is *Uikhelim puan*: Firstly designed by men, the shawl was practically brought out by women. It is a traditional garment of the Aimol men, with a white, black and blends composition. [5]

## 8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: N/A

8.2 Sororate, levirate: N/A

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): N/A

## 9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

### Numbered references

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