The concept of poetry is systematic versification in literary context. In the earlier period when written text was not the norm and when everything was oral, poems were sung. Oral poetry was sung by bards in palaces as well as amongst the simple folks. This comes from the simple fact that the bards are simple folks who are adept at systematizing their life and happenings around them into oral poems or what one may call it as the folk songs. Folk poetry or folk songs in essence are oral activity that in a way is making real and visible in one’s relationship to the world. Folk songs are thoughts that emanates from within, when a person or people are moved by happenings around them, when they feel ecstatic joy or sorrow. As a result they become speechless but their thoughts are driven by a force from within and that is when a song comes on their lips in the most natural circumstances.

Folk song singing is universal and widely practiced in every folk community since time immemorial. These songs are the history of the events that have happened in the life of the folk and their community. Folk song or poetry is thus relived by future generations disseminated through the word of mouth. At the same time it has to be understood that the songs are community specific in many cases. Folk songs can thus be of different themes. The folk songs need to be categorized at different levels but that has to be done with the understanding of a community in context. The Mao community has a rich tradition of folk songs in the past. The songs are composed and sung on
themes of head-hunting, tragic circumstances, on their origin and other cultural attributes of the valour and courage, of love affairs, honour and in praise of the man of consequence. In fact, the entire life cycle is traced through songs. Therefore, songs are the common outlet for the people’s feelings, on festive occasions, religious ceremonies, funeral, or simply during common gatherings, or while engaged in agrarian work, songs features in all of them.

Folk song is not only about the people and the events of the past or for that matter oral history of the people alone. Folk song singing rejuvenates and sharpens the mind and tests the knowledge and wit of a person and is also a tool for communication. Song dueling is a feature of Mao folk singing which is an exciting exercise to test the intellect, wit and also instill cultural values and attitude to the participants. Again community form of singing is prevalent in the work songs sung during agrarian engagements. These forms of singing often led by an individual are traits that display an expression of traditional wit and wisdom. It helps to cope with the physical rigours of work throughout the day. The dirge is the ultimate soul of all folk singing; they are spontaneous on the spot compositions bringing out the innermost feelings of the performer. The non-verbal phonetic rendering are a special treat to observe or to participate. Still more is the underlying semantics of these non-verbal renderings that show a complex philosophy of the community and their culture.
To know the past of your community, you have to know the oral tradition of the community especially the folk tales and the folk songs. These genres of verbal arts open the hidden treasure house into the ways and life of your community of the past. Like other communities across the globe, the Maos too have a rich oral tradition in the past. But no attention or little effort has been devoted to safeguard this rich oral heritage in term of documentation or analysis. Therefore it is pertinent to document, study and understand them to unravel the rich oral lore of the community from the past.