Chapter VI

Summary and Conclusion

Power is the most contested issue in the society. Many theories of power seek to explain in different ways, but the operation of less visible or internalized forms of power in the society is hardly defined. Pierre Bourdieu, a prominent French social anthropologist, attempts to explore the conception of power which starts from the perspectives of structure or which explore the interplay of agency and structure, or which seek to transcend this divide altogether.

Unlike Foucault who sees power as ubiquitous and beyond agency and structure, he sees power as culturally and symbolically constructed and constantly re-legitimized through an interplay of agency and structure. Bourdieu (1985) defined that the construction of power is made possible through “habitus” which means socialized norms or tendencies that guide behavior and thinking, capital (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic) which can be transformed one form to another, fields, the various social and institutional arenas in which people express and reproduce their dispositions, and where they compete for the distribution of different kinds of capital; also explain the differential power in the society.

Levi-Strauss, Arjun Appadurai and many other prominent anthropologists argue that food is a cultural system of symbols, categories and meanings or a semiotic system in a particular social context. Different consumption patterns differentiate men from women and rich from poor (Bennett, 1943; Fitchen, 1987; Weismanel, 1988). On the other hand, Pierre Bourdieu (1984) argues that tastes are markers of class; these tastes distinguish between what he called a “taste of necessity”, defined by
economic circumstance and a “taste of luxury” where the emphasis is on the presentation of the food and stylistic nuances.

With this distinction, women always play the role of subordinate to men in the patriarchal society. Because of their socio-economic and political subordination in the patriarchal societies, women are always second to men. Men eat first, best and most. On the other hand, women eat vegetables, fruits, and grains rather than meat. This sexism in eating is based on a myth that meat is a masculine food and meat eating a male activity (Adams, 2010). Food thus, cannot be seen as a mere cultural item that one eats to live or survive. Rather it reflects gender disparity, femininity and masculinity, differential power relations, class and the world view of a particular society.

The present study shows the power relations manifested in the food and its eating habitus in a patriarchal society. Kabui is one of the scheduled tribes of Manipur. It consists of four exogamous clans, namely Gangmei, Gonmei, Kamei and Rongmei (Longmei). Each clan has its own totem locally known as Kagai, which may be a bird, an animal or a plant. They follow the rule of clan exogamy. Kinship is reckoned and determined through the male line only. The rights of inheritance and succession both to the moveable and immovable properties of the family are inherited in the male line only. Inheritance is ultimo-geniture; the youngest son inherits parental properties, both moveable and immovable. Traditionally women have no rights to the inheritance of parental properties both moveable and immovable in the society. Among the Kabuis, there are different ways of acquiring mates. They are as follows, i) Thanmei Noukao or Khamthan (Marriage by engagement) ii) Charai Noukao or Saam tuanmei (love marriage) iii) Nimjaimei (marriage by force) iv)
Meinou Kasoumei (marriage the wife of the other man by force or by wooing) vi) Noumangei (marriage by servitude or espouse) vii) Chami (marriage to defray debt) and viii) Kakhaomei (marriage of the widow of the elder deceased brother).

Monogamy is the ideal form of marriage. Polygyny is reported in few cases. They strictly follow the rules of clan exogamy. Matrilateral cross cousin marriage (Mother’s Brother’s Daughter) and marrying of deceased elder brother’s wife (junior levirate) are preferential forms of marriage among the Kabuis. The marriage of Mother’s Brother’s Daughter is locally known as Kanei Pidoikadoimei (a follower of her aunty). Such marriage is believed to be strengthened the marriage ties between the two clans.

Widow re-marriage is acceptable. The bride wealth of a widow is half of the girl’s and it is given not in pair. Divorce is simple and easy every spouse has the right to seek get divorce in the village court called Pei as per customary laws (Kamei 2004:260).

There are both nuclear and joint families among the Kabuis. Nevertheless, the first is now much more common than the latter. For them, family is a primary institution where different patriarchal values are usually inculcated to the individuals. Male is the head of the family and holds the supreme power as well as the unique responsibility in the maintenance and administration of the family. He is not only responsible for looking after the welfare of his wife and children, he also takes a great responsibility for performing family worship, religious duties like village genna, house genna, and all other social and customary duties observed in the village from time to time. Women also have a great responsibility in the maintenance of the family.
Their economic life is simple and mostly depends on agriculture. They practice both terrace and wet cultivation. They earn their living selling vegetables and running a small vendor in the village but Kabui middle class lives a luxurious life.

Though they believe in one supreme God who created all the living beings in the universe including man, they also worship other local deities. However, with the introduction of Christianity in Manipur, most of them who are living in the hill areas are converted to Christianity. Yet the basic structure of the society remains unchanged.

In Kabui belief system, there is another world after dead locally known as Taroilam, the land of dead. It is also believed that a person goes to the land of dead or to the place of God depends on one’s deed. This stream of thought deters deviances in the society. So death is culturally divided into two; one is natural and other is unnatural. Natural death is again sub-divided into three depending on his/her social position. They are, i) ordinary death (the death of ordinary person) ii) special death, the death of a person who successfully performed special religious ceremonies like Banru (celebration of bounty harvest), Tarangkai (construction of traditional ornamental house), etc. iii) Kamang Lamei and Ri Ngammei Ramthei (the death of the person who killed tigers or enemies in defense of their village). A person who is in the second and third categories is buried with extra ceremony.

Apart from patriarchy, Kabui society is gerontocracy in nature. Their village is managed and controlled by a council called Pei, a council of elders. It is the highest and most powerful institution of a village, where the opinion of the heads of the clans, lineages or sub-lineages or their representatives is counted. It is believed to be a sacred institution of Apou Ragang, the Almighty God. All the political, social,
economic and religious life is being controlled by it. It decides how a new village establishes and what its related rites are, how a founder of a village is being selected and how a village council is come into being, and what are its compositions and functions. In fact, it is the sole authority in matter of all administrative, judicial, religious and military actions. *Nampou* or *Khunbu* (owner of the village), *Nampei* or *Khullakpa* (chief administrator), *Nammupou* (functionary in-charge of agriculture) *Duikhun Khumei* (functionary in-charge of water supply or irrigation), etc. who are being chosen through cock divination, are the main functionaries of the village Pei.

All the secular functions like general administration, judicial and social practices are under the control of the *Nampou* or *Khunbu* and *Nampei* or *Khullakpa* of the village while the religious affairs are controlled by the *Taku* or *Chaku* (the eldest male in the village). The *Taku* used to occupy a high position in the administration of the village as well. Even the *Nampou* and *Nampei* had to accept his primacy, that he still holds an important position in the village. He used to control most of the social and religious functions in the village. He therefore may, sometimes, regard as the head of the village Pei and Pei as a form of theocracy (Kamei, 2004). *Nampou* and *Nampei* will take care of the village administration where the *Nammupou*, on behalf of *Nampou*, takes care of ritual activities related with the agriculture in the year. In case there was no *Nampou*, the *Nampei* or *Khullakpa* will chair the session in the Pei.

Traditionally *Nampou* (*Khunbu*) and *Nampei* (*Khullakpa*) were the heads of the village. The two officers were almost equal in social and ritual hierarchy and normally addressed as the *Nampou*-*Nampei* (*Khunbu*-*Khullakpa* in Meitei language, the *lingua franca* of Manipuris). But the office of the *Khullakpa* became more important to the British ruler or king of Manipur.
Though *Nampou* is the owner of the village, the state sponsored *Khullakpa*, the administrator of the village, was given a greater importance by the state. So, the question of power relation between *Khunbu* and *Khullakpa* turned out to be a bone of contention when the Manipur Hill Areas Village Authority Act, 1956 was introduced. Under the provisions of this Act, the *Khullakpa* or the administrator of the village has been made the ex-officio Chairman of the Village Authority. The Law Department of the Government of Manipur nevertheless, issued an order that *Khunbu* and not the *Khullakpa* shall be the Chief and the ex-officio Chairman of the Village Authority (Kamei, 2004:327).

Amidst this controversy over power relations, *Pei* still functions as the most powerful body in the village. All the social and religious institutions like *Khangchu* (boys’ dormitory) and *Lchu* (girls’ dormitory) are arranged and worked under the supervision of *Pei*.

A woman has no right in the village *Pei*. They are still considering as lesser and inferior partners in the society. They are hardly counted in the process of decision making in the family as well as in the *Pei*. Besides, a woman hardly came to the *Pei* and looked in despise way when she came. In this male dominated society, a woman’s inferior and lesser status is also reflected in their food culture and this power relation (re)produced from one generation to another through their habitus.

A woman is defined and located in the social structure with reference to a man. The relationship may be daughter, wife or even daughter-in-law. She is not recognized as an independent being; she is considered to be incidental, an inessential in a patriarchal society. She sacrifices her life for the family but hardly counted her in a male oriented society. A man is a decision maker in the family and so does in the
society. In patriarchal societies, apart from decision making and property right, women’s subordination and their inferior social positions are also reflected in their food and food culture.

Rice is a staple food of the Kabuis. They eat twice a day; one in the morning and other in the evening. Food is normally prepared using simple method like boiling, roasting and steaming. Oil is rarely used in the preparation. Cooking is a private and a domain of the women. Nevertheless, men help women in many social and religious gatherings like marriage, feast, etc. where men cooked curry (pork, beef, etc.), not in the kitchen but some other places and women cooked rice, the task assumed to be simple and physically less involved. Men’s superiority is largely expressed through their disengagement from the daily domestic chores like cooking, cleaning and washing clothes. But superiority and the social hierarchy is also existed among the women. This hierarchy is manifested in the management of cooking processes and organized on the principle of seniority.

In society, a woman especially a new bride is expected to play a meek, subordinate, and labor-intensive role in her husband house. She became the instrument of her mother-in-law’s desires (her father-in-law’s desires to be précised), especially in the culinary domain. She has been trained to master the specific ritual and aesthetic codes that govern her new household. However, this balance of power may change in course of time as she gains seniority and when her mother-in-law begins to relinquish her active control of the hearth. Moreover, with the modernization, certain disharmonies or conflicts crept up in food related activities in the family as well.
Men’s superiority is expressed not only through their disengagement in the domestic chores but also from their priority of being served foods first in the family as well as other ceremonial eatings.

However, children of both sexes, stand to some degree outside the arena in which above rules are systematically applied. Still male children and female children are differently socialized the culinary etiquette. Female children are increasingly socialized into the subordinate, passive and taught to behave like little wives or daughters-in-law, and their counterparts are encouraged to become active, aggressive and taught to behave like husbands. In short, male children are taught to behave like husbands and their female counterparts are encouraged to become little wives.

A woman or a wife often accedes to the choice and the dietary demands of her husband, the head of the family. A family, male dominated institution plays a critical role in maintaining a patriarchal social order. This social order is being transmitted from one generation to another through social or cultural reproduction, i.e. reproduction of the structure of the social space and social relations. Besides family, men’s superiority and sexism of eating foods (especially meat) are also manifested in their secular and religious practices of food in the society.

*Gan Ngai* festival plays a critical role in shaping a gender-based habitus of the Kabuis. Boys and girls in the dormitories are taught gender based division of labor and basic cultural values in the festival. Dormitories play the role of a family in the society. They also learned certain male-oriented customs and traditions during the festival. Girls learn to become an ideal wife and boys learn to become a warrior, a protector of the family and society. For example, women should be submissive, passive, soft spoken and kind hearted whereas men should be aggressive, rough and
tough in the society. These values are conditioned in their mental category and these then (re)produced in individual’s habitus through time. In the language of Bourdieu, a French anthropologist, habitus is an acquired system of generative schemes of objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted the habitus engenders all the thoughts, all perceptions and all the action consistent with those conditions and no others. The dispositions and generative classificatory schemes which are the essence of the habitus are embodied in real human beings. This embodiment gives three meanings. First, habitus exists inside the head of the actors. Second, it exists because of practices of actors and their interaction with each other and with the rest of the environment i.e. ways of talking, moving making things etc. Third, the practical taxonomies which are at the heart of generative schemes of the habitus are engendered in the body (opposition between up/down, masculine/feminine, large/small, etc.). For him, the body is a mnemonic device upon which the very basics of culture, the practical taxonomies of the habitus are imprinted and encoded in a socializing or learning process which starts during early childhood. The power of the habitus derives from the thoughtlessness of habitus and habituation, rather than consciously learned rules and principles. So socially competent or sanctioned performances are produced as a matter of routine without explicit reference to a body of codified knowledge and without the actors necessarily knowing what they are doing (Jenkins, 1992).

Besides being generated gender based habitus, this festival also manifested male chauvinism. Men enjoy more privilege than women in terms of food items and food sharing in the festival. Women accept their positions and guard the male’s social and cultural capital in the society because women are taught to be submissive and soft.
in the early childhood socialization. As it is internalized in the habitus, the dominated
groups work in the tune of dominant groups and think that it is nature.

The Kabuis followed a strict normative order or rules both in killing a pig and
so does in the distribution of meat. There are basically nine important portions of
meat in a pig or a cow. Age, grade and sex define what portion of meat goes to whom
in the society. Accordingly, elders in the Khangchu (boy’s dormitory) are being
honored by giving extra meat to them in the festival of Gan Ngai. One hind leg each
of the pig is given two Khangbon (eldest in the boy’s dormitory) as a prerogative.
Two elders next to them are also honored giving one front leg each. Meat is given to
one who is going to be promoted from Khangbon (a head of Khangchu) to Ganchang
(a new member of Banja). There is a tradition of honoring a dead (who were a
member of boy’s dormitory) giving meat (pig’s leg). The penis and spleen (of the pig)
are prerogative foods of Taku or Chaku (a man who is the eldest) of the village
thereby recognizing his power and leadership in the field of spirituality.

Moreover, the Khangchu gives a portion of meat for Luchu (girl’s dormitory)
and also for the owner of the Khangchu as Kaibang Jan (meat for the owner). The
meat consists of Katingtei (flesh of the back bone), Kanakpai (rib bones), Katingrou
(backbone), Karingkoklou (bone of the pelvic girdles), Laikhum (breast bone),
Kalunghu (heart), Japdai Japna (flesh cut out of the abdomen), Kalungtingtei (flesh
attached to the inner side of the backbone), Kathapaklaona (piece of fats or adipose
tissue), etc. of the pig. It also honors Banja (elders of the village) by giving a good
portion of meat which is locally known as Shanang or Chakhong Jan (honor meat). In
return, elders also gave blessing to all the members of the Khangchu. With due
permission of Pei or elders, Khangchu recruits the new members of Khangchu and
Luchu giving a piece of meat among the young who attained puberty, during the festival of Gan Ngai. It is traditionally known as Janhop Phaimei (giving of recruitment meat).

Similarly, meat is allocated to the elders or functionaries of the village Pei whenever a pig is killed there. One hind leg each is given to the Nampou or Khunbu (owner of the village) and Nampei or Khullakpa (chief administrator), the key decision makers of the Pei. The other two front legs of the pig go to Nammupou and Duikhun Khumei. Two Karoudon (bones of the hind leg) and two Kaphurow (bones of front leg or shoulder blade) are allocated to Ganchang on seniority. As a tradition, around one by four of the meat cut such as Japdai Japna (muscle removed from belly), Karungting (meat removed from ventral side of the pig), Pangting (meat removed from dorsal side of the pig), Kanakpai (ribs) Kathin (liver), Karungthhu (heart), etc. is given to the host or owner of the Pei. Taku eats the penis of the pig killed signifying the end of hierarchy and power. It is locally known as Khutung Phaktung Tumei (a person who is permitted to eat tabooed foods) or Karon Thuimei (a person who reached the end of hierarchy). A piece of meat is also given to every house hold if the pig is killed against/over a person who breached or defied customary laws in the society. This is traditionally known as Ronggairak Tumei (a traditional form of taking fine). It is believed that eating such foods reminds the degree of penalty and discourages such crime in the society. But most families hardly eat such meat in the fear of its effects toward the family.

As a tradition, elders eat Zeigan (a food item cooking blood with internal organs of the pig) and they also have the privilege to eat the food with certain hymn before anybody else in the festivals as well as in other ceremonial eating in the
society. The food that remained when they ate is returned with them or reached home by one young member of Khangchu. The food may eaten by other members of the family, especially wives. However, the family without elders or husbands usually does not have the chance to have such foods. Such food is believed to be filled with curses and envies. So when a person just entered the category of Banja, he worships to protect himself from such curses or evil eyes. As there is a tradition of not raising voices against/over the elders, the young members of Khangchu used to sing a traditional song at the end of the Gan Ngai festival thereby expressing their dissatisfaction over the food allocation.

Women do not get any shares of meat in the festivals or other communal eating. When they got some, it is from the dispensation of their husbands. They stood outside the age set of men and main political system of the society. Men are the decision makers both in the family as well as in the local Pei. The androcentric social structure denies women both authority and possibility of their participation in the Pei. They are still considered to be weak, need protection from men and most important capital bearing objects (for husband) in the society. They also accepted their positions as a reality as the very androcentric structures are already internalized during childhood socialization and (re)produced through individual habitus in the society.

A woman could sacrifice her starvation for her husband or for her family. She helps her husband giving best food and providing her best service for the family. She thinks first for the family (husband) and then for herself. However, they (married women) reached the category of Kengjapei (old women), they have some privilege of eating but from the shares of Banja. Kengjapei get a little share of foods like that of Changlamjan (meat in the worship of God of seven brothers), Najumjan (meat in
child rite), *Mairakjan* (meat in the marriage ceremony). They used to help *Banja* in the delivery of a child in the village. As a tribute, the family brought delicious foods known as *Nathan Tamcha* (gift for elders from the family of new born baby) in the festival of *Nanu Ngai*. In Sawombung Kabui village, all the families of *Nashan Kanmei* (a rite performed for first ever born baby) brought a leg of dog including other edible items in the house of *Kengjapei* and a head of dog to the *Khangchu* (boy’s dormitory). They eat or share the foods among themselves.

The Kabuis observe certain food taboos in the society thereby reflecting their power relations in the society. This taboo is more on the consumption of meat (one of the most important sources of protein in the society) and so does more on women than on men. It is believed that breaking or eating tabooed foods (consciously or unconsciously), made a person early greying of hairs and falling of teeth. It is also believed that the person will easily slip down when he climbed the tree and made him *Phaiban Deomei* (inefficient in hunting and fishing). Moreover, there are certain qualifications for eating such tabooed foods like *Changlam Jan* (foods in worship of god of seven brothers), *Najum Jan* (food of the child rite), *Mairak Jan* (food in the marriage rite) and *Zeigan* (curry cooked with blood and internal organs of the pig at the occasion of *Mat Tunei*) in the society. *Banja* (old men), *Kengjapei* (old women) and children (who hardly know what is good or bad) eat the foods but not with *Banja* of the village. They eat separately.

A woman observes certain food taboos before and after the delivery of a child. She is restricted bitter food items and other aphrodisiac foods when she conceived. Besides foods, she cannot have conjugal relationship when she is conceived for three
months. She sacrifices her nutrition for her child who is an important capital of men in the society.

After the delivery, she eats only simple foods avoiding fresh meat and fish, fruits and other food items like Ganhoi (food made of vegetables with meat and coarse powder of rice), uti (a local recipe consists of vegetables, soda and coarse power of rice), Bi (Colocasia esculenta), etc. which believed to cause a health condition locally known as Chakmangmei (a symptom associated with an extreme cases of diahorrea, loss of appetite, dizziness and other changes in body thereby causing loss of complexion, speedy aging, wrinkles, melanin pigmentation, dark spotted, etc.). Her food taboo lasts three months. Sometimes husband also observes certain food taboo in the first baby. He eats only boiled rice for a week or five days or ends symbolically having five mouthfuls of boiled rice.

Culturally a woman is assumed to be one who could not control her emotion, lust or sexual drive in the society. Rather she is a source of pollution and one to be blame of infidelity. Women were not allowed to eat the penises of bull or ox, pig, and goat, lips of pig and even the meat of wild animals in the fear of being retained the wildness.

They are tabooed to worship and cook foods when they are in the period of menstruation. Besides, certain domestic chores, they avoid fruits during their periods. It is believed that menstruation may pollute or ruin the sanctity or the power of men in the society. So they restrict menstrual women in the worship and even not performed the rite of Rang Pammei, a sacred principal part of migration and settlement of the Kabuis when the Khangchu is being polluted by a child birth or pregnancy.
In Sawombung, women are tabooed to enter the place of *Rangpatmei* (worship of god of seven brothers). When a woman unknowingly entered the place, one of the elders shouted with angry. She would be punished but she begged pardon. Strategically, the refusal to eat certain categories of perfectly edible food marks one out as belonging to one particular group. Men eat, chew and drink with lesser degree of restrictions in the society.

On the contrary, people look and talk in despise ways when a woman is drunk. The case of two Kabui women (that is, Tanthailu and Ajaomuna) may be cited. Men blame women by saying “*Laosi loi ganthuimak, nousi kao muthuimak; tukho karou, gankho Jan*”. (Free translation: one cannot be leaving behind his bad crops in the field and similarly his bad wife. It cannot be thrown away because it is a meat and at the same time it cannot be eaten because it is a bone). Similarly it is also often said that “*Tumeirui gaimeti jei shenphai kamme, Tumeirui gatei pum suna karui ye*”. It means that if a wife is bad, the family lost its tranquility, peace and cooperation and brings fighting and bloodshed. But a good wife brings not only peace and prosperity in the family but also helps in cooperating among brothers and other family members like a bridge between two river banks.

Men observe food taboos to enhance or to reify their masculinity, to be more proficient in hunting and fishing or adept in war while women observe food taboos to reify their inferior positions and culturally to effeminate them by sensitizing their biology in the society. A woman with divine power to some extent distinguished herself from other women in the society. She is differentiated from others eating unpolluted foods and observing certain food taboos in the society. She is also performed certain religious duties in the society. Still she is not counted in the
hierarchy of men in the society. Akena and Thaballei are female dream diviners who perform certain divine duties in the society. But a male dream diviner like Namkhondai may be chosen as a priest in the village. He may perform all the religious duties in the village. The male priest in the village is paid by Pei (council of elders).

Besides this sexist food taboos, men often accumulated capitals (cultural, social, economic and symbolic) in the marriage as well. Besides increasing ties between two clans, it may also provide a space for accumulating capitals (social, cultural, economic and symbolic) thereby producing a kind of symbolic violence against one who is socially inferior in position. For instance, a father may earn or enhance his social and cultural capital marrying his daughter to a boy in other clan or family. A daughter hardly goes against the wishes of her parents.

In Kabui society, the wife-taking group is inferior in position. Their inferior position is reflected in the food and other culinary tasks in the society. They are to be blame when there is any problem in the ceremony. But when they did something good, the prestige goes to the father in law (wife giving group). A marriage is performed with a series of rites and feasting. Marriage negotiation, fixing and payment of bride wealth, bridal march, marriage rite, etc. are principal parts of a marriage ceremony. Son in-law performs most of the tasks in the marriage, starting from the killing of a pig for marriage ceremony to the carrying of bride’s property including rice packets and pig’s head to the groom’s house. In the morning of wedding, they prepared Bangdun (square shaped piece of pork). The bridal march is usually led by two sons-in-law carrying the head of the pig and others carry the bride’s property. When the bride reached the village gate of the groom, son in-law in
groom side ran and informed the arrival of the bride to the family. The villagers welcome the bride and rest a while drinking rice beers in the gate. Sons-in-law received the bride wealth brought by sons in laws in the bride side. The groom’s mother brings her inside the house and performed the marriage rite known as Mairakmei (a rite pronouncing to be husband and wife in the name of God) holding a cock. The priest killed the cock strangulating and observed the legs of the cock that whether they will be forever. Sons-in-law cooked the chicken and distributed among the village elders.

After the rite, (that is, Mairakmei) both the parties eat the head of the pig in the groom’s house. And members of Khangchu consume the rice beers and boiled liver of the pig brought by the bride. Bangdun were distributed to the families of the village. Women of the groom’s family eat the Kaipui Napdom (food packets for women in the groom’s family) brought by the bride. It is said that a woman dies twice in her life time because she has been offered seven packet of rice and meat curry, one in her marriage and other in her dead (Kamson, 2013). It is also traditionally assumed her to be dead from the moment when she first accepted for marriage. The wife taking group especially sons-in-law took a major role in the entire process of marriage among the Kabuis. Culturally speaking, all the sons-in-law (Lugan) belonging to the groom’s family or clan enjoy more privilege than those of the bride’s in terms of food items and sharing of food items such as Gangkam (meat from the neck region), Gakpham (meat from belly region of a pig), etc. The Gangkam eaters are more privileged in the society. And the relatives (Chanao) of the bride have the privilege to eat the heart of the pig.
In the marriage, *Nouthanpou* (marriage negotiator or matchmakers) also plays a unique role. He has been chosen by Pei on the request of the groom’s family. A smart marriage negotiator is highly appreciated in the society. He has been honored by giving meat (pork) in the marriage. He thus earned his social and cultural capital in the society.

The Kabuis perform feast of merit on certain conditions, like when one member of a family has been fallen sick for long time or when something unusual things occur in the animals or plants of the family or when there is a bounty harvest or wealth in the family. In all the cases, it is believed that blessing from the feeding of others especially from elders may cure the illness or may protect from evil things to come or the family will become more prosperous and wealthier. The couple is distinguished and honored in the society. Thus, besides manifesting one’s economic status in the society, it also enhances one social, cultural and symbolic capital in many ways. The person is honored in the society not only when he is alive, but also in the dead. His body marched with honor in the village street before buried him. People follow him singing, dancing and *Ho-Hoing*. Moreover, his soul is believed to go to the place of *Ragang*, the Almighty God along with the melodious sounds of drum beating and *Ho-Hoing*.

Among the Kabuis, it is believed that a person go either to the place of *Ragang* or *Thunjjiang* (the last point of the land of dead) according to the deeds when a person is alive. It is also believed that a person who performed feast of merit or one who gave charity to others goes to the place of *Ragang*. This myth works as one of the most important functions in shaping an ideal member of the society and intimidating its members of going against the normative values of the society. They
buried a dead with certain rites. Family offered animals and birds to the dead. It is believed that the dead eats the food on his/her way to the land of dead.

However, unnatural dead is usually buried without any funeral ceremony in the society. They just buried outside the village or left the dead in the house. So *Nasi Theimei* (mother who died in delivering the child or died with a baby inside her womb) is often considered to be unnatural dead and abominably rejected in the society. It is believed to be a result of a curse or a sin committed in her past life. The term “*Nasi Theinimei* (to die with unborn child)” itself is an extreme and tabooed word to use against each other in the society. It is also believed that the soul of married woman cannot go to the land of dead or the place of *Ranggan* freely if the husband left to pay the bride wealth. So whenever a woman (married) died, her uncle or brother or other relatives offered a pig for the dead which is locally known as *Theigui*. Before eating the food (*Theigui*), the family of the husband may ask the reason behind the offering of *Theigui* and whether the family is left to pay the bride wealth. The husband has to pay a cow or a bull to the relatives of his wife if he left to pay the bride wealth when she was alive. This is locally known as *Mandu Goigang pammei*. When the matter is settled, they eat the food. Sometimes it may also symbolically resolve just having a cup of tea or a glass of wine. In male dominated Kabui society, a woman’s life, living or dead, in the society is defined standing on male’s ideology or masculine order.

It is obviously seen that every human action is moved by need-gratification. However, it may sometimes be explicit or implicit. Men, as observed in Kabui society, always struggle to accumulate cultural capital to maintain or to increase their symbolic capital (prestige, honor and legitimation) in the society. Women, instead of
accumulating capital for them, act as capital bearing agents (for husband or family) in the society. This phenomenon is clearly observed in the discussion and analysis of Chapter III, IV and V of the thesis.

Even in the traditional society like Kabui, there is sexism in eating and their access to food in the society. Men, the head of the family as well as of the society eat the best and also got more share of meat than those of the women. This sexism in eating is inscribed in the things of the world, but also inscribes itself in the bodies (habitus) through early socialization. It is also living through generation.

Moreover, this patriarchal order is reflected in the routines of division of labor, of collective or of private ritual. The regularities of physical and social order are imposed and inculcated through habitus thereby excluding women from the noblest tasks by designating inferior places for them. This order teaches them how to hold their bodies and assign them menial drudging tasks. It also takes advantage of biological differences, which thus appears to as the basis of social differences (Bourdieu, 2001).

Hence, it can be concluded that gender is a culturally constructed habitus. It is inculcated in the early socialization. The habitus is thus (re)produced from generation to generation. This gender habitus is reflected not only in the routines of division of labor or of collective or of private ritual but also in their eating patterns of private as well as of collective in the society. Thus a man is what he eats and how he has to; a woman is how she serves her husband thereby producing a “symbolic violence”, the violence which is exercised upon asocial agent with his or her complicity. And if this patriarchal structure and sexism remain intact in the system of a society, the question of equality which is jealously striving for will become a mirage in the desert.