CHAPTER - 6

SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE POTTERS
OF OINAM AND NUNGBI (LONGPI) POTTER VILLAGES

Human beings have always regarded themselves as a unique creature. They have been keenly aware of a great gulf between themselves and the rest of the animal kingdom, a gulf not matched elsewhere is the sentient world. Not only have they been aware of their uniqueness, but after the manner of men, they have tried to explain it.

If there is any single factor explaining man's uniqueness, it is this - he and he alone has culture. His social life is governed by culture. Culture is therefore a profound possession that ramifies throughout human life and accounts for all of man's truly unique qualities. It adds an extra dimension to existence, and makes humans what would otherwise be merely animal.

Man and society from the beginning of civilization and cultural evolution have been looking for materials that are desirable towards
development and that would also possess aesthetic expressions which are indigenous to a particular society. American anthropologists argue for the total plasticity of human personality and its ability to be moulded into any shape during the process of enculturation (Hatch 1973:88). Thus the plastic human personality was a convenient analogy to use for the plastic clay of the potters, which they could mould into any shape. Further, it is argued by the Anthropologist that human personality as well as ceramics are totally shaped by culture. They also viewed as an integrated whole with its parts interacting in such a way that change in one part produced changes in the others. Arnold (1988:10-11) opines that ceramics are interrelated with the rest of culture and can thus provide information about other aspect of culture. Therefore ceramics is such an aspect of culture which could be used for synchronic social and cultural reconstruction of ancient societies with views in mind the socio-cultural patterns of the present day living potters of Oinam and Nungbi (Longpi) Villages will be analyzed.

Among the tribes of Manipur, the two living potter villages in the hilly region are Oinam and Nungbi (Longpi). Even though these tribes have changed their faiths from animism to Christianity, the important role of
pottery is still in their lives and society, particularly in their economy. However, the religious connotation of pottery has declined.

**Oinam**

The social life of Oinam Village is basically classless, where the riches of the rich are not held too highly and the poorest of the poor are not too lowly treated. Every family possesses their own land and cultivates fields to suffice their annual consumption of crops. Village common lands are properties of every bonafide member of the village, irrespective of haves and have nots. Therefore all are equally treated and respected in the society. Theft and adultery are very rare, beggars are unknown. Women are treated as the equal partner of man in the family, though there is a division of functions depending on the gender. But unlike the Khasis and Garos, the patriarchal system is followed and only male members are the inheritors of immovable properties of the family. Social cohesiveness among the village clans and age groups are very strong. And the reciprocity of good will forges sturdy links in the chain of village relationship.

Within the Poumai tribe, only the villagers of Oinam can be potters. Poumai living in other villages are not allowed to be potters. Further,
pottery is the exclusive work of women folk; it is taboo for men folk to make pot. Both married and unmarried woman can engage themselves in this craft. Poumei or non Poumei women whose origins are not from Oinam cannot engage themselves in pottery craft in spite of high skill in the craft. Again, quite interestingly, a woman who marries outside the village has to abandon the pottery making profession. It is believed that if a woman of Oinam makes pots outside the village, such pots would crack during firing and if she still continues, she gets scabies all over her body and dies with a rotten body. Even if a woman from another village marries an Oinam man and makes pots, the same thing happens. However, a woman of Oinam who returns and resettles in her native village, because of divorce or any other reason, can again take up the job successfully. According to Ka Khopuneme 78 years of Oinam, the Poumai believe that the gift of making pots was given only to Oinam women. This is perhaps for maintaining of the secrecy of the pottery craft.

The discovery of pot-making clay was a woman. As it was given to a woman, only a woman made pots. No man is a potter. In the olden days men went to war. If he made pots during the war, he was defeated and suffered shame. To top it all, he had no chance to kill and cut a man's
read. During hunting, if a man made pots, he never got to kill animals. Hunting is mostly done in groups. Men who make pots have no chance of killing animals. Instead, others among the group got the first chance to hit the animal. There is a custom that a man who first hit the animal got the right foreleg; the second got the hand, while the rest of the hunters divided the remnant into equal parts.¹

The rites and rituals, social functions and ceremonies where the pottery is inevitably used in Oinam are described below.

Rites and ritual performed in pot making

The villagers believe that every site is the abode of some spirits. Therefore the villagers seek permission from them by setting free a white spotless hen or cock, according to the supposed sex of the spirit, at the site where the clay for making pots is to be collected for the season or whenever a new site is chosen. It is believed that this will appease the spirit and prevent pots from breaking while firing. The pots will also be strong and the people will not get hurt or sick in the collection of the clay. The sex of the spirit is determined as per the vision in the dream of the potters.²

¹ Informant, R. Thithi 72 yrs. of Oinam.
² Informant, Raoping of Oinam.
The firing of pots is mostly done near the forest at a place where there is a big space to burn 100 to 200 pots at a time. But there is no such restriction on the selection of a firing place. It depends on their choice and convenience. Pots usually break during the firing. If many pots are broken, they perform a ritual in the next firing. They set a spotless white chicken free at the firing place by saying that the god will accept their gift and will not make the pot break while firing. The chicken that was set free cannot be taken back or eaten by the villagers.¹

Uses of pots in ceremonies and rites

Pots are used everyday for cooking, drinking, storing, washing and so on. It is a necessity for human survival. Earthen pots are used as utensils as well as for ritual purposes specially at the birth of a baby, construction of new houses, feast of merit, harvesting time and marriage etc. Earthen pots were their only utensils besides wooden plates before the present alluminium products were introduced in the market.

Siinga festival It is a festival to fix the date to start plantation and to get the prediction of the year by butchering a cow. The prediction of the year

¹ Informant, Ka Khopuneme of Oinam.
was observed by cooking the meat in a pot either in *Lakho* or *Sailani*. If the gravy spills down in the fire while cooking it predict bad harvest.

**Tiilu festival**  A paddy transplantation festival, on this either the mother or father takes a cooked curry in a *Lakho* or *Sailani* pot, the curry consist of leaf locally known as *Paimope*, a pair of fish and a meat that was distributed in *Siinga* festival. This was sacrificed to field god.  

Feast of merits and house construction

In erecting a memorial stone and a house construction the owner gives a feast to the villagers. If the person is a well-to-do man, he butchers many animals like buffaloes and pigs. The wealth is counted by the buffalo heads killed for the feast. In this kind of feast cooking of their food should be in new pots and all the old pots are to be thrown out and replaced by the new pots. This includes all the utensils used by the family.

Marriage

At marriages, when the bride is brought home, the first meal should be cooked in new pots to represent a new life, a new family and a new beginning. When the couple separates from the parents one or two years later, the family

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4 Informant, Raoping Khopuneme of Oinam, 104 yrs.
5 Ibid.
needs all the utensils for cooking, eating, fermentation of rice beer, and so on. At this time the parents give all these essential utensils to the couple.\textsuperscript{6}

Birth

Pottery is also used in the life cycle rituals of the Oinam. At child birth, the first and foremost item needed is the \textit{Lakho}, because as soon as the mother gives birth, the placenta of the newly born child is cut off and kept inside the pot and paddy husk is spread over the placenta and covered with a piece of broken pot. Then the pot and the cover are tied with a rope and hung behind the house, or tree, or under the pillar to keep it out of the reach of dogs and other animals. After a year, when the placenta is completely decayed, the pot is thrown out. The mother, at the child birth, should not eat along with the family members. Her food is cooked in a new pot (\textit{Lakho} or \textit{Sailani}) separately in a different room or kitchen.\textsuperscript{7}

Sickness

Sickness is believed to be caused by some spirits. Therefore, a priest performs rituals to appease the spirit by offering cooked meat of a sacrificed chicken for healing the sickness. Cooking is done in a new \textit{Lakho} pot.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{7} Informant, Ka Khopunene.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
Death

If a potter dies, the tools used by her in making pots are buried along with her body. As she was a potter, the tools can be used by her in the next world also. If a non-potter of a potter family dies, the potter stops making pot for at least a day or two. There are no such restriction as to how many days they are to stop. If the dead person is not a family member, it depends on the potter to stop making pots or to continue with her work.⁹

Trade

The most important and deciding factor in regards to the progress and development of any industry, simple or sophisticated craft or enterprise or unit, is its demand. Demand operates as an amplifying mechanism for promoting or demoting the production. Moreover, demand can control and maintain the balance of production in the market. When demand increases the production also will have to be increased at the same rate. Arnold had given an excellent justification in regards to the demand of the ceramic products. He opines, “Demand can provide both regulatory and deviation amplifying feedback for ceramic production. If there is no demand for ceramic containers, there is no advantage in making pottery and demand acts as a deviation counter acting mechanism preventing the

⁹ ibid.
development of the craft. If demand for ceramics is limited, demand acts as a deviation counter acting mechanism, permitting some production, but limiting its development into a full time craft. If however, demand for ceramic vessel is great or growing demand acts as a deviation amplifying mechanism which results in intensification of pottery making and its evolution into a full time craft”. (Arnold 1988:127).

This is very true with regard to the production of ceramics at Oinam Village. In the days of yore, only Oinam made pots in their area and there was no market for pots as we have these days. Oinam village is famous for the corded pottery produced in the village. The pottery from here is widely used in the northern parts of Manipur and Nagaland. No other pots are available, so they use these pots for cooking, storing and drinking purposes. The uses range from domestic to ritual purposes. The potters made pots in their home and it was the other villagers who came in search of pots to be exchanged with goods like paddy, chilli, ginger, meat, yam and whatever was produced in their villages. The villages depending on Oinam pottery are Paoyi, Maram, Purul, Koide, etc. The pots of Oinam are very much in demand. The exchange is done as per the wishes and desires of the potter. If the potter likes the goods, it is exchanged for the pot if not, she waits for
another customer. Selling of pots to other villages is mostly done by men. They go from village to village halting a night in any house they know by face, or anybody who welcomes them. Pots are usually given to the host in gratitude for their hospitality. This trading system was purely barter. The potters usually got whatever they wanted in exchange for their pots. Slowly and gradually pots began to sell for money. In a day, if the potter could make 15 to 17 pots, basic necessities like food was cared for and they even made a profit.

Chief’s Family

The chief’s family is not allowed to make pots as they consider making of pots below their dignity, for the chief’s family members are to act as the leaders of the village. Therefore, no chief’s wife is a potter and the chief’s daughter before marriage do not make pots. After marriage she can be a potter in her husband’s house, but not during her stay in her father’s house.

Status of the potters

There is no caste system; all were treated equal. Any job done is for their survival, and this included occupations like farming, pottery making, carpentry, basket making, etc. But it should be noted that their main
occupation is cultivation. The other kinds of work are done mostly during their spare time. Traditionally there were full-time potters. The potters of Oinam could get whatever they liked in exchange for pots and could earn money by selling the pots. For instance, Mr. Ka's sister was a potter; she made 15 to 17 pots a day. In a day she earned 50 paisa to one rupee during the 1940's. With this income, she supported Mr. Ka and got him educated. At present, he is a retired headmaster of their village school. Oinam men preferred to marry women who can make pot. The better the pot, more was the demand by the people. Oinam men did still marry non-Oinam village girls also depending on their choice. If they married outside village girls, she could not be a potter. If a man wanted his wife to be potter, he was compelled to marry an Oinam girl. In festivals or any celebration, there is no difference in their status. Every girl is treated equally.

Changes in the Socio-Cultural Aspect of Oinam Village

It was during the rule of the two chiefs of Oinam Village, Kho Ngulani Vang and Roilang Bowang Vang, Mr. Ruichumhao from Somdal visited the village in 1936 to preach Christianity. He sowed the seed of Christianity and slowly, the villagers were converted to Christianity. With the coming in of a new religion, the light of western education was also introduced to
them. Christianity had stopped the traditional cultural practices of rites
and rituals. People no longer performed any sacrifices. Pottery in Oinam
is gradually declining primarily for the reason that the use of pottery has
been considerably replaced by modern utensils. Again, the time consuming
and hard labour required in pottery making has discouraged the younger
generation to continue with pottery making, thus threatening for the
extinction of the craft. Thirdly, the lack of market and demand discouraged
the potters from going full time in the craft, preferring instead to take up
agricultural activities to earn their livelihood. Fourthly, the lack of
patronage has definitely discouraged the continuance of the craft.

It is often argued that Christianity has destroyed culture and has
therefore created a sort of cultural vaccum in the Poumai society. The
people, after the conversion to a new religion, no longer performs rites
and rituals. We no longer hear of sacrifices. Instead of sacrifices, prayers
are offered to God, our Heavenly Father. Education has drawn the younger
generation to white and blue collar jobs resulting in the younger generation
to keep aside their age old tradition.
The rites and rituals performed in pot making are no longer practiced. There are no more sacrifices. The people no longer place the placenta of the mother in a pot and food for the new mother is no longer cooked separately. The Oinam, prior to their conversion to Christianity had their distinct culture, religious beliefs and practices. But after conversion to Christianity, they consider themselves superior and totally different human beings.

Therefore, most of the valuable cultural life of the forefathers has been regarded as worthless. As a result, traditional socio-cultural life is slowly sinking into oblivion as years pass by.

Today, some of the Christian converts have begun to realize this mistake and efforts are being initiated to revive and integrate the traditional socio-cultural life. Oinam people now realize the importance of their indigenous culture and the uniqueness of their pottery making. They started giving effort to raised their pottery making and women started to form an organization and pot making are being encouraged, it is only 10 years back that effort are being put on their indigenous pottery making. So far the potters could not come back to the traditional economy of making
pot. The reason is due to the market product like aluminium, steel, etc. It last for longer, easier for handling for this the pot are no longer in demand like the earlier days.

**Nungbi (Longpi)**

The social and cultural life of Nungbi (Longpi) village is also similar to that of Oinam. It is basically classless, where the riches of the rich are not held too high and the poorest of the poor are not too lowly treated. Every family possesses their own crops for consumption. There is no caste system. Theft, adultery and beggars are unknown. There is no division of labour in its strict sense. Both sexes participate in all kinds of work like ploughing, fetching water, collecting firewood. Parents take the full responsibility in rearing children. The influence of grand parents is not negligible even though they live in a separate house. Even in old age, grandparents help in tending the baby when their son and daughter-in-law go to work. The father sometimes sells pot, potato, cabbage, etc. or even works as a labourer. The mother does all the household works like cooking, washing, pounding rice, baby sitting, etc. In the family, the children help the parents from the early age of 10. The boys get training from their fathers to play a responsible part in the agricultural work. In
the villages, even before they attain the age of 10, they start participating in agricultural work. Similarly, the girls also from the age of 10 or even earlier in the villages, start helping their mothers in domestic work. The girls pound rice, carry water, cook meals and also look after the younger siblings when the parents are away in the field.

Nungbi (Longpi) follow patriarchal system. Only male members are the inheritors of immovable properties of the family. Social cohesiveness among the village clan and age groups is very strong. Exchange of working force and in groups in the field among the age groups of the village clans irrespective of sex is one of the initial force of the social tie in the village. There is no distinction between rich and poor, literate or illiterate. In the exchange of such a working forces all are freely mixed together.

The youth stay the night in the youth dormitory where they learn everything after the whole day's work. The learning includes all kinds of craft work, folksong, etc. They leave the youth dormitory only after marriage. During festivals all are freely mixed and dance together without any reservation. There is no differentiation between the have and have-nots. To commemorate the feast, they erect tall tree trunk in front of their
houses, the man who is to host the feast goes to the forest in search of a tree and places an axe leaning against the foot of the selected tree to observe a dream in the night. If the axe is seen fallen, another tree is selected and the same observation is made. The man cuts the tree with the axe when the axe is found undisturbed. The villagers then bring the tree home and erect it in front of his house. A buffalo and a pig will be killed for the feast. A man can erect as many tree trunks as he wishes. A warrior who could fetch the heads of slain enemies is also honoured in their society. He is a local hero and sets a respectable place and status in the social hierarchy.

The houses of Nungbi (Longpi) are made to symbolise their significant achievements in their society. It is a custom to carve buffalo skulls with horns in high relief on the front wall so as to see distinctly at the first sight. The number of skulls represent the number of killed cattle for the inaugural feast of the house. It indicates the wealthiness of the house owner. The other carved motifs are heavenly bodies like stars, sun and moon. The star motifs are painted on the crossed wooded projection at the front side of the house, while the sun and moon symbols are painted in rows on the front wooden wall of the house. These are symbolic representations of their beliefs in the worship of heavenly bodies. Human heads representing the number
hunted are also carved in high relief as freeze on the front roof panels of
the house.

At present Nungbi (Longpi) is the only potter village among the Tangkhuls. Till the nineteenth century Humbum, villagers also made pots. Now they have stopped. In Nungbi (Longpi) unlike Oinam village, potters are generally male, though women are not prohibited from participating in this craft. Women are sometimes engaged in pounding and sifting the rocks and clay powders. Collection of raw materials, baking the pots and marketing them are the exclusive assignments for menfolk.

Rites and rituals performed in pot making

In the collection of clay, a ritual known as Kapa Khayang (Bamboo Divination) is performed. In this a small piece of bamboo of about 2 feet long is kept on the fire hearth. In the evening, it is again placed on the roof to make the bamboo soft when the dew drops. In the morning, during the Kapa Khayang, the bamboo piece placed on the roof is taken and slightly cut in the middle. Then the village priest or an elderly man pulls the bamboo piece apart by holding both ends and observes meticulously the minute part of the cut portion of the bamboo for the Omen to be predicted. This
Kapa Khayang is performed before war, hunting, collection of clay, etc. It is performed only by men and not by women.\(^{10}\)

The people of Nungbi (Longpi) also believe in the supernatural. Supernatural aid is sought for the successful making of pottery. Often, failure is attributed to supernatural intervention. Hence, people pray to propitiate the spirit (Katang nali), in which usually a hen is sacrificed and intoned on “Katang nali nangna yam mila”, means “under the inspection may the danger not be repeated”. They stain the blood of the hen on hanging rack above the hearth where the pots are dried before baking. It is believed that if the bird chakren produces the ‘Chak-Chak’ – like sound while the potter is walking through the jungle for work related to pot making, some bad Omen might occur and hence the potter returns home. If the same bird produces the note ‘Pio-Pio’, it is taken as a good sign and the potter would win the day. If a squirrel crosses the road in front of the potter, it would be the best day; if it happens to be at the back, though danger might not occur, success is not predicted.\(^{11}\)

\(^{10}\) Informant, Mathing Shangrei of Nungbi (Longpi) Kajui.
\(^{11}\) Informant, Machihan Sasa of Nungbi (Longpi) Kajui.
**Shanat**

*Shanat* meaning *Ashi Khamanat* (mixing blood) is performed on a day before the work of pot making begins. On this day the bird *Chakren* is caught and cut into small pieces. Every household takes a piece of meat and the *Chakren* blood is sprinkled on all the tools they use for making pots, ploughing, hunting, etc. So that the tools may not break while working. *Chakren* is believed to be the predictor.\(^{12}\)

**Uses of pots in ceremonies or rites**  Pots are used everyday. It is an essential element for survival of man. Pots are used in the following rites by the Tangkhuls.

**Luira Phanit (Seed Sowing Festival)**

Tangkhuls are known for their festivals. Whatever the nature of the festivals, food, meaning meat and drink, figure prominently at each. The Tangkhul New-year starts from “*Luira Phanit*” (Seed sowing festival). This is the festival which heralds the New year. It is also the biggest festival of the year to give a ceremonial start to the sowing of various crops. *Luira phanit* is celebrated for 12 day. It is celebrated on the full moon. Three days

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\(^{12}\) Ibid.
before the Luirá, people are divided into groups and they go to the paddy field. Here they collect fire wood, burn it, and on top, put fresh leaves to produce smoke. This is done by each group as a symbol to the neighbours that Luirá phanit is beginning.

The second day is spent in cleaning the house, utensils, compound etc. On the third day, a pig is slaughtered in every household. Cock divination (Harkho Khayang) is performed and the cock’s blood and intestines are sacrificed to the housegod by placing it on a banana leaf below the main pillar. The meat of the chicken is cooked in a Hampai. After lunch, wooden dishes are applied with pork fats. Throughout the year this is the only day plates are washed, After applying the fat, plates are dried in the sun. Pork fats is also applied all over the body from head to toe after a bath. When it is about sun set, guests from other places are not allowed to stay in the village and are sent to their own villages. The father then cooks a blessed curry of pork in a new pot Kasorham for the family members. The portions cooked are mouth, chin and chest. The mouth portion is for the mother, the chin for the father and the chest for the children. The significance is that since the mother toils in the field, her body should be as strong as the pig’s mouth. The chin and mouth are not separated so like
wise, may the father and mother stay together till the end of their lives. The chin portion is for the father. In the meat portion, the chest part is the tastiest. The children are given the tastiest portion. This curry is cooked with lots of chillies. In another pot kasorham, the other portion of meat is cooked particularly for the guest. The blessed curry including the soup is not to be shared with other people. The children are not permitted to share the respective meat shares of their parents. It is believed that when it is shared, the blessing of the father goes to the other.

On the day of slaughtering meat, makhokhayang is performed by the village priest (Sharva). The priest sleeps in the chief's house, and is not allowed to sleep with his wife. Violation of this would lead to incorrect prediction. On the fourth day, Vamshok-thang, early in the morning, the priest (Sharva) takes a bath, wears new loin cloth (Malao), cleans a new pot hamvum, and covers the mouth of the hamvum with a clean or new cloth and places it on a branch of the tree. It is tied in such a way that the pot does not fall. The other villagers perform bamboo divination (Kapa Khayang) to see the prediction for the year about sickness, harvest, domestic animals, etc. Whatever prediction the family wishes to know will be sought on this day.
The fifth day is known as *Vamvarathang*. In the morning, the priest (*Sharva*) goes to take the *hamvum* which was placed on the tree. The pot predicts the year ahead. Upon opening, if the pot contains water, then that year will have rain. If there are insects in the pot, the insect will eat up the crops that year. If there is nothing in the pot it indicates a good year. This prediction is known as *Makho kaka*.

On the sixth day, the chief sacrifices a cock in the morning. Its blood is sprinkled on all the seed that is to be sown. The cock is cooked in a *hampai* without salt and chilli. After cooking, three pieces of meat are sacrificed to god, these three meat pieces is for god, man and animal. Only the chief can eat the remaining meat. After the chief, each family takes a chicken and sacrifices as the chief does. In the evening guests can come from other villages and join the festival with the villagers. This is known as *Kashotla*. The celebration goes on for six more days.

*Luira phanit* is the seed sowing festival. Seed sowing cannot be started until the celebration of this festival. It is the chief who has to start. If anybody is found planting seed before the chief does, he is fined as there is
a belief that the harvest will not be good. People start the seed sowing and the making of pot only after *Luiru phanit*.

**Kasamphung Matai/Ramphung Mathai**

When the paddy is about to ripe, each household takes a cock to their field and sacrifices it to the god of fields. Chicken intestine is placed on top of a spread-out banana leaf to thank the field god for protection from insects, animals, birds, etc. The chicken is cooked in a *hampai*. Of the cooked meat, three pieces are also sacrificed; one to field god, one for man and the other one for animal. The remaining is eaten by all the family members. Unfinished meat has to be buried in the ground as it is not allowed to take it back.

**Chumpha**

This ritual is performed after the harvest. On this day, all the male members from 6 (six) years and above are not allowed to stay in the house. Even the very elderly are to go and sleep behind the house garden. The other male members go and sleep in their field. In the middle of the night when everyone is asleep, the oldest female member of the family sprinkles water over the granary and places on the top of paddy a ball made of
Nichalungnai clay or ash. Inside it, khaiwonla, manik rong, nupnar kaho, are packed with a leaf of phunghun and placed on the top of paddy. Early in the morning the paddy is taken from the granary, pounded and cooked in a new cooking pot hampai. Chicken is killed below the granary and they sacrifice this to the god of granary. The children along with their mother eat the food. The pot in which food is cooked should be left empty. The menfolk are allowed to come back home after this.

Birth

Pottery is also used in the life cycle rituals of the Tangkhuls. In the child birth, the first and foremost item needed is the pot Hamvum because as soon as the mother gives birth, the placenta of the newly born child is cut off and kept inside the pot. The pot is then covered with a broken pot and buried behind the house garden.

War

If the villagers are to go for war, they cook food in a pot known as Rai Ham in a Hampai. Without washing early in the morning, then put on their warrior dress and gather in the chief’s house from where they all together set out to war. They were head hunters. After the war, the heads
were chopped off are brought in the chief’s house and placed on Rihai Ngalung. The chief kills a pig and cook it in Hampai. The pot is unwashed as their belief was that if the pot is washed they will not bring heads from the next war. All the warriors eat the food without washing their hand. If they wash their hands they will be defeated in the next war.

Marriage Engagement

In Nungbi (Longpi) Tangkhul marriage is mostly done by arrangement. There are very rare elopement cases. For arranged marriages the priest performs “Harkho Khayang” to settle the engagement. The priest holds the cock by the head and when the cock is about to die, the two legs cross one upon the other, the priest observes the movements of the leg carefully. If the right leg is above the left leg, it is said to be good. If the left leg is above the right leg, it is a bad Omen. The killed cock is cooked in a Hampai without salt and chili. A portion is taken out for the gods and priest. The family eats the remaining meat along with chatni as the meat is cooked without salt and chilli.
Sickness

If there is a sick person in a family, a priest is called to perform rituals. The priest kills a cock and it is cooked in a new pot *Hampai*. While cooking, the gravy should not spill: if it spills, the sickness will not be cured. The cooking is done behind the house without salt and chillis. The cooked chicken is offered to god with a plea to heal the sick family member by mentioning the name. All the left over curry is eaten by the priest.

Sarpahor

When a dreadful disease spreads in the neighbouring villages, the village priest performs a ritual with a cock a little away from the main entrance gate of the village. He kills the cock and its intestines and blood are placed on a banana leaf to prevent the disease from coming to their village as it can be easily carried by wind. It was to be taken away by the evil spirit and not allowed to cross the main village gate. Then he burns the cock and cook the meat in a *Hampai* without salt and chilli. While cooking; the curry is not to spill, if it spill down the priest body bruise like spilling over by the hot water. The meat cooked as a sacrifice to god should be cooked without salt and chilli. If it is cooked with salt and chilli, there is a belief that the god will not eat the meat. The sacrificed meat, cannot be taken back to the village. The priest goes along with
the village children they eat the meat. The pot *Hampai* is taken by the priest. In this way, if there is a dreadful disease of human being or animals, or if the neighbouring villages houses are burnt, this same ritual is performed by the Sharva village priest.

**Dead & burial**

Tangkhuls also believe in the existence of life after death. So goods like *hampai* and *hamvum* along with some of the articles used by the deceased during life time are buried along with the dead body. The reason for the burial of these two pots is to cook rice and curry in the next life.

After the burial in the grave yard, the deceased family lights a fire in the *Ham* pot for five days if the deceased is a woman and six days for a man. The reason for lighting the fire is that from the day of death, the grave becomes a home until the funeral rites *Tasam*. Untill then, the soul returns to sleep in the grave every night. As it is a new home, the soul might fall and break a leg or a hand in the unfamiliar darkness.
Tasam

Tasam is a funeral rite performed after one year of the death of a person. A buffalo is killed on this occasion and a meal is cooked. In the case of a chief’s family, sticky rice is cooked in a new cooking pot Fouham; and a small piece of boiled buffalo skin is peeled off. The skin becomes white after peeling. The cooked rice is packed with the peeled buffalo skin. The village priest takes this and opens it at the village entrance gate Harshang. If the buffalo skin is found spotted with blood, it is the Omen that yet another person will die that year; if it is not spotted and the skin remain as it is, then no person will die during that year. The whole village comes to dine with the deceased’s family at this occasion.

Thangska Kashat

In the month of August, the family of the deceased person keeps things for the deceased. This includes all the seeds to be sown, a new pot, wooden plate, bowl, to be used in the Kazeiram. These are placed on the thangska kashak. The thangska kashat is made with four trees. The one with branches symbolizes the living person, the one without branches, but the cut one symbolizes the dead person and the other two are just supporters. This is made and kept at the side of the deceased’s house and the shelves are where the things are placed. The tree with the branches
the living people passed on the stuff to the deceased person. The stuff, is kept until the *tasam*. After the *tasam*, it is taken away by the *sharva* priest.

*Mangkhap*

After the plantation they celebrate *Mangkhap phanit*. On this day, a fully matured cock is taken to the field and killed. The intestine, blood, wings, leg, tail are sacrificed to the field god. This is done so that the field god will look after the paddy that was planted. The remaining meat is cooked in the *Hampai* without salt and chilli. The cooking should not spill on the fire. If it spills on the fire they believed that the body will bruise. The meat should be eaten there and no remainders can be taken home.

*Construction of House*

Before the chopping of wood for the construction of a new house, a woman of the family prepares rice beer. During this time, no one is allowed to enter the house. In order to make the people know, at the door a walking stick is laid on the floor. If a person enters, it is believed to be a bad omen for the construction of a new house; people will get hurt during the course of all work done in connection with the construction of the house. After the making of rice beer, it is kept for 6 to 7 days for fermentation. When the rice beer is ready, a clan elder or family elder is
called. He kills a cock and cook it in a new hampai, offering the cooked meat and rice beer to god in the main pillar of the man’s house so that no trouble arises during the construction.

Trade

Like Oinam, Nungbi (Longpi) potters make pots and exchange these with goods and foodstuff. It is the potter’s choice to choose the items of exchange. Some potters even wait for the foodstuff to cook by placing the pot on the fire without any curry as they are sure that people will come with foodstuff to exchange with their pots. Some potters carry the finished pots in a basket and go to other villages to sell them. With the making of motorable roads, potters carry their pots in a basket by bus to Ukhrul, Imphal and even to Nagaland.

Status of the Potters

In Nungbi (Longpi), there is no caste system and the people are treated equally. Any jobs are under taken for their survival. The potters too have a land for cultivation and are cultivators. In the olden days, the potters got all the foodstuff in exchange with their pots and today they sell it for money. Some educated people even quit their jobs to became potters as they are unable to attain suitable jobs.
During marriages or other festivals, there is no differentiation between potters and non potters. All are equally treated in the village.

Prohibition for making pots

Throughout the year, the pots are made: rainy season, winter season, summer, autumn, spring. But during the year, before the celebration of LuiRa phanit (Seed sowing festival), the firing of pots is not allowed. This is because of their belief that by firing all the seeds which are supposed to be planted will be spoilt. So, for this reason the firing is not allowed. Not only firing of pots is prohibited, but also firing in garden, fields, etc. is not allowed. This festival is celebrated in the third week of January. Any kind of firing is done only after this celebration. The making of pots stopped for some days, only when a family member die: three days for a woman and four days for a male. If the potters make pots during these particular days, it usually breaks, or never takes proper shape, or breaks during firing.

Changes in the Socio-Cultural aspects of Nungbi (Longpi)

With the coming of Christianity, education and westernisation, many have neglected their indigenous culture. Instead, they are drawn more towards the western culture. People have now started to use aluminium pots in each Nungbi
(Longpi) household and it has replaced the earthen pots. Few earthen pots are seen. The pots for brewing rice beer are also hardly available, as most of the people have adopted Christianity. The rites and rituals are no longer preformed. Instead people pray to God for most occasions.

After receiving the national award by Machihan Sasa for pottery work of the indigenous in the year 1988 in Delhi, people began to pay more interest to pot making. Women also make pots. Today we find many women potters. People formed groups to make pots together. Interest to make pots with different designs and styles other than the traditional ones is building, with the intension of bringing up their indigenous culture, the potters now make cookers, flower vases, frames for decoration, water filters, ashrays, etc. The most popular pots in demand is the cooker as it has a proper lid. With the availability of many pots. There is much export to other states. This reveals that the younger generation is bringing up different styles and design other than traditional ones displaying their creativity and interest in their indigenous pot making culture.