

***DIALECTICS OF COMMUNITY LIFE IN THE FOLKLORE OF THE POUMAI NAGAS
OF MANIPUR: TRADITION AND CHANGE***

(Thesis submitted to Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of requirements for award of

Ph.D. degree in English)

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Regn No.: PhD/ENG/00034 (w.e.f. 14/08/2017)

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2021

Chapter-1

Introduction

The research work, titled "Dialectics of Community Life in the Folklore of the Poumai Nagas of Manipur: Tradition and Change, " primarily explores the elements of community living that Poumai forefathers held and the gradual changes that have taken place. Moreover, it attempts to investigate the values of community living, why they have proposed all these aspects of community living and how they lived through ancestral traditions and what we see at present. Nagas have always been community-oriented people, including the Poumai Naga tribe, which can be interpreted as a community way of life which we find reflected in their oral traditions. That is also true for all the groups of Nagas in and outside Manipur. Nagas have certain commonalities in their community living. There are various aspects of commonness passed down through oral traditions such as folksongs, folktales, folk sayings, the culture of food habits, customs, beliefs, practices etc. However, we find in each tribe distinct features of community living since time immemorial. The Poumai Naga tribe has no written literature for many years. They have realised that community living has been imparted to Poumai through their folklore and oral traditions such as folktales, folk songs, legends, sayings, proverbs, etc. All these elements of ancestral traditions are yet to be investigated methodically. Though they have no written records, people are well-versed as they have respect for their ancestral traditions, rights and duties. These practices and elements depict the Poumai Naga tribe community life as unique from other tribes and safeguard their identity.

The thesis begins with the origin and migration of the Nagas, Shüpfomei Nagas and Poumai Naga tribe and its geographical location to understand the history of origin and culture of the Poumai Naga tribe. The Poumai Naga tribe inhabits the present Senapati District of Manipur. It was initially formed as 'Manipur North District' on 14 November 1968 with its headquarters at present Karong, but it was shifted after nine years to Senapati on 13 December 1976. Moreover, the district name 'Manipur North District' was renamed as Senapati District, given after the name of the place on 15 July 1983. According to the 2011 census, the total population of Senapati district was 479,148, of which the number of male and female was 247,323 and 231,825,

respectively. The total area of Senapati district is 3271 sq. km, out of the entire Manipur state of 22,327sq.km (Bhatt 399 & 411). The Senapati District of Manipur is bordering Nagaland state in the north, Imphal to the south, Ukhrul district to the east and Tamenglong district to the west. The average literacy rate of Senapati district, according to the 2011 census, is 75%, of which male and female were 81% and 69%, respectively (indiamapia.com/Senapati.html). For administrative purposes, Senapati district is divided into six sub-divisions offices: Purul, Tadubi, Poamata, Kangpokpi, Saikul and Saitu. The Poumai Naga tribe falls in Purul and Paomata sub-divisions. The district has six Manipur legislative assembly (MLA) constituencies: Saikul constituency no.46, Karong constituency no. 47, Mao constituency no. 48, Tadubi constituency no. 49, Kangpokpi constituency no. 50 and Saitu constituency no. 51.

The work mainly focuses on Poumai Naga tribe who inhabits parts of Senapati District of Manipur and parts of Phek District of Nagaland in four villages and other adjoining areas. Poumai Naga tribe is recognised as schedule Tribe by the government of India. The Poumai Naga tribe is one of the prominent Naga tribes. The land area extends about 1200 square kilometres and divided into four circles: Chilivai, Lepaona, Paomata and Razeba. The major rivers that originated in Poumai areas are *Vourei* (Barak), *Ngairi* (Laini), and *Phaomai Sorei* (Iril). All these rivers are benefiting the agriculture of Poumai. The Pouli (pot) and Poutai (Salt) have been produced in Poumai villages. It is said that some of the neighbouring Naga tribes used Pouli in their religious rites and rituals. The Pomaies live in 94 (ninety-four) villages, of which 85 (eighty-five) is revenue recognised villages and 9 (nine) are unrecognised. The total population of the Poumai, according to the 2011 census, is 179,189 (Andrew 39). The term "Poumai" can be traced back to a grand old name, "Pou", who is also called "*Shipfo*" by Mao, "*Sapvo*" by Angami and "*Shapo*" by Chakhesang. It must be noted that there are more than one name for a people or a village because natives call themselves by a name, while others give them another name. The Patriarch Pou was one of the prominent leaders before they dispersed from Makhel, the original site of the Nagas. There is a legend that tells about the sacred Pear tree, also called *Raheu Taobe*" at Makhel Sajoba was sprouted from the walking stick of Pou. In the olden days, when a tree branch was broken, Nagas observed *genna* (abstention from works as prohibition or taboo).

After examining the elements, values and causes that have brought about changes, the present research is expected to point out the elements and values that are still relevant and suited

with the changes that may occur in future. Traditional community of the Poumai people have been neglected for long. Only recently, few intellectuals and theologians from the community began to trace and write about their ancestral traditions and culture. Many traditional folk songs, folklores and legends are fading away. All these need to be studied to understand the identity of the Poumai Naga tribe and the authenticity of their community living. The fact of having no written literature has caused severe doubts and questions to the young generation about their own identity and ancestral community living. Therefore, to preserve their traditional elements and significance of community living, writing and documenting about their ancestral traditions and culture based on folklore, folksongs, historical facts and legends are urgently required.

1.1 Origin Myths of the Nagas

The history of Nagas is handed down orally since time immemorial through oral traditions; folksongs, folktales, legends of different tribes of Naga. There are only a few books and records about the origin of Nagas and their migrations written by the Britishers and European researchers when they encountered Nagas. As a result, we find different stories and legends heard from different groups and scholars. Some of the Nagas histories can be traced from British ethnographers who studied Nagas in the early 19th century. One of the first clues of the Nagas in ancient literature was written by Ptolemy in the 2nd century A.D. Ptolemy noted in his *Geographia*, the land of a people whom he talked as “*Nanga-Logae*” i.e. “naked people” (Ao Alemchiba 22). It was recognised with the nation populated by wild hill-tribes to the east of India, and it is supposed that the term "Nagas" resulted from this term (Visier 7).

The uniqueness of the Naga tribes stimulates British ethnologists to study and write monographs about Naga tribes. Some British ethnologists who were interested and wrote about Naga tribes were J.P. Hutton, Damant, William Robinson, James Johnstone, A. Mackenzie, J.P. Mills, Woodthorpe, R.B. Pemberton, etc. Many of their writings were notes on tour diaries, reports and administrative purposes. Some of them were not well trained, and many ethnographers were soldiers who came to Naga Hills. The British ethnologists must have tried to gather the history of the Nagas, but they have limited knowledge as Nagas do not have written history. There is some difference between folktales, folksong, legends that Naga ancestors had, and Britishers' narratives about Nagas. Sir James Johnstone had written about Nagas origin

"Where the Angami came from must be uncertain till the language of our Eastern Frontier is scientifically analysed. The Late Mr. Damant, a man of great talent and a pioneer in the research, had a valuable paper regarding them in hand, but it perished in the insurrection of 1879. The probability is that they came originally from the South-Eastern corner of Thibet" (Johnstone 28).

J.H Hutton has written about Nagas' origin "The Angamis point to Mao and the country south of that as the home of their race, and to this day the priests of the Angami villages wait for the priests of Mao and Makhel to give the word before appointing the day for the celebration of any of the regular village festivals, and point to the ceremonial of the Mao village of Mekroma ("Makhel") as the type of Angami ceremony *par excellence*" (Hutton 7). J.P Mills writes, "It is generally assumed in a vague sort of way that those tribes which are spoken of as Nagas have something in common with each other which distinguishes them from the many other tribes found in Assam and entitle them to be regarded as a racial unit in themselves. It has been asserted that the Naga tribes are marked by a very strong affection for their village sites in contradiction to the Kukis and perhaps other tribes like the Garos and Hill kacharis" (Mills xv). Even the British ethnologists have different views about the origin of the Nagas, like Naga ancestors. Most of the Nagas, though not all the Naga tribes, can be found in Mon-Khmer and Bodo race; the Thai and the fourth southern origins are similar to the natives of the Philippines and Borneo and some other parts Indonesia (Mills xxxix). Murot Ramunny an Indian writer wrote "The origin of the Nagas, before they reached the areas they now occupy, is rather difficult to ascertain. Different authorities have connected them with headhunters of Malay, the races of the southern seas, while others trace them back finally to China" (9). Dr Horam, a Naga scholar, researched the origin of Naga that Naga came from Southern Seas. He writes, "There can be little doubt that at one time the Nagas must have wandered about before they found their permanent abode; from their myths and legends one gathers that there is as dim relationship with the natives of Borneo in that the two have a common traditional way of headhunting; with the Indonesians, as both use the lion looms for weaving cloth. The embroidery on the Naga clothes resembled the kind done on Indonesian clothes" (28)

According to Kean's view, Naga migration has started in the Asiatic country. People of countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, China etc. seems to be similar with the group of

Nagas. According to Poumai legend, Nagas are Japheth descendants. Folktales and legends of Poumai Naga tell that 'Pou' was one of the heads of all the Naga tribes when they came from Indo-Myanmar to Makhel. Makhel was the place where all Naga tribes scatter to different places of the Nagas hills. Before Nagas scattered from Makhel, there were no such tribes' names that Nagas have at present, and all the tribe's names originated from their progenitor. The various legends, theories, folktales provide the origin of Nagas in different ways. On the other hand, it was Britishers that the word Naga became popular. Therefore, the word 'Nagas' is synonymous with all the Naga tribes existing in different states in India and in the neighbouring country of Myanmar (Burma).

1.2 Man Emerged from the Bowel of the Earth

Some Nagas inhabiting Nagaland believed a legend that narrates both men and animals originated from a pool known as Kheso (Pao 2). The place was not in Nagaland but somewhere in the south. H Hutton also writes, "And all the weight of tradition points to migration from the south, except in the case of Kacha Naga, who believes that his ancestors came from the direction of Japvo mountain, whence they spread towards the south, which indeed would be the natural course if they came through the Mao gap and spread south where the other Naga tribes spread northwards" (Hutton 6).

1.3 Origin and Migration of Naga and Meitei

It is believed that all the tribes migrated from a place called Babel/present-day Iraq (Babel was in the land of Shinar, located in the southern part of Mesopotamia) to Mongolia. The Nagas and Meitei were one community that migrated from Mongolia to the present Makhel village. When the tribes dispersed from Mongolia, including China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Myanmar and Naga, all the tribes were given each script. The legend says that Naga and Meitei ancestors lived for some years in China near *Hauri* (river name in Poumai language). The place is fertile, but their crops are not safe due to the flood. As the floods destroyed their crops from time to time, they left the place in search of a better place. Naga ancestors were the first group who crossed Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh. It is said that there is a monument at Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh that states that Naga ancestors crossed Sarnath. They continued their journey from Sarnath and reached Kesho in Nagaland, five kilometres from Kohima after a long journey

(Thaio, D.S. Personal interview. 2nd May 2019). During their stay at Kesho for some years, the nomenclature of Tenyimia came to exist. A kind of bird, *Taiti* in Poumai language, take shelter in their house, their excreta dropped in front of them from the nest. They considered that God had sent the bird; the ancestor asked the bird not to forsake his children and grandchildren even after he passed away and protect their house from any dangers. The ancestor blessed his children to become great leader, those who have patience like the bird and those who wake up early in the morning and do their work as the bird. The Tenyimia forefathers believed that the bird takes shelter only in the roof of Tenyimia, and those tribes dispersed from Makhel.



Fig.1.1. *Taiti* nest (Picture credit: John Basho)

It is believed that the place Kesho was not conducive for them to live. Thus, they migrated to the present Makhel and settled there permanently. The legend says that Naga and Meitei ancestors landed at Makhel in 350 B.C. As the years passed, they had a meeting on proving their history that they have been living at Makhel and to say so, if anyone asks their origin and history. The legend says that Maram's ancestor proposed erecting three menhirs such as God stone, Men stone and tiger stone to prove that they have lived together at Makhel since time immemorial. They held a meeting at *Deifii* (present Sajaoba village ground); *Deifii* means 'secret decision-making site' (Thaio, D.S. Personal interview. 2nd May 2019). According to the Poumai folktale, when Tenyimia ancestors reached Makhel the chief's wife gave birth to a son, she jabbed her walking stick on the ground for support while giving birth. Later on, when she tried to remove the walking stick, the king asked her to leave it. Eventually, the walking stick

sprouted its leaves, and the tree turned into a pear tree. The pear tree is still growing in Upper Sajaoba village. It is said that when the chief's son was 50 years old, the Tenyimia's chief died.

After the death of the chief, the son became the chief of Makhel. According to D.S. Thaio, there was around 1400 household before they migrated from Makhel. When the son became the chief of Makhel, Tenyimia ancestors migrated to a different direction, searching for new settlement since Makhel was overcrowded (Thaio, D.S. Personal interview. 2nd May 2019). The Tenyimia ancestors migrated to various parts of Naga hills, and Meiteis dispersed to Imphal valley. Based on this folktale, the Tenyimia and Meitei ancestors lived together 50 years at Makhel before they dispersed. The present Tenyimia tribes dispersed from Makhel; some of the Poumais migrated to Tangkhul Villages. It is said that Late Rishang Keishing, former Member of Parliament ancestors migrated from Ngimai (Oinam) village to Bungpa Tangkhul village.

Moreover, Thuingaleng Muivah, General Secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), ancestors migrated from Sirong Poumai village to Somdal Tangkhul village. The present nomenclatures of Naga and Meitei are coined in recent time after they migrated to different hills and valley from Makhel. The present Meitei Mayek/script was given to Naga and Meitei ancestors, but Meitei took it away and claimed it as Meitei script (Thaio, D.S. Personal interview. 2nd May 2019). There are two categories of Meiteis; Meitei and Meetei. The people who brought fire from Makhrel to Imphal are called Meitei, and the people who came from other places are called Meetei. The Meitei ancestors who migrated from Makhel are believed to be members of the oldest Meitei villages. The name of the villages set up by those who migrated from Makhel are:

1. Huikap
2. 2. Andro
3. 3. Sekmai
4. 4. Phayeng
5. Leimaram
6. Moirang
7. Kanchipur
8. Khurkhul
9. Kwatha
10. Kakching

11. Koutruk
12. Ningthoukhong
13. Pukhao.

The Meiteis who migrated from Makhel believed that their ancestors brought fire from Makhel. They still practice their forefather's culture of making the fire burning continuously at Andro village. They make rice beer like Nagas and drink, it is said that Nagas rice beer and Meiteis' rice beer taste the same. In the olden days, it is taboo for a Naga chief to douse the fire off in his hearth, and when the fire went out, the chief makes his fire with the help of dried twigs and a slice of bamboo. Some of the distinct tools shared by the Nagas and the 13 Meitei villages from Makhel are spade, spear, billhook. The evidence is clear that Meitei and Naga ancestors migrated from Makhel while performing the ceremonial rituals of *Mera Hou Chongba*. It is taboo for Meiteis to dance without wearing Naga traditional attires. In the olden days, when people go to war, the oldest person leads the group, and when they return home, the oldest person walks behind the group. Likewise, it is a tradition that the first and the last Meitei dancers wear Naga traditional attires. The Meitei still follow the tradition as they consider Nagas as their brother, and it is a sign of respect to their elder brother. When the population increased at Makhel the younger brother (Meitei) migrated to Imphal valley, leaving the elder brother (Naga) to safeguard the hills from the enemy.

The Naga ancestor and Meitei boundary is unique; both the brothers agreed to divide their land at Pheidinga river. Meitei ancestor dispersed from Makhel along with diamond stone covered by cloth; Makhel king directed them to settle where the stone moved. When they crossed Pheidinga river, the diamond stone moved. Thus they named the place called Pheidinga. The literal meaning of Pheidinga means the vibrating piece of cloth. The uniqueness of the Naga ancestor and Meitei boundary is that before reaching Pheidinga, there are numerous stone in the river but starting from Pheidinga, there is only sand in the river. The legend states that Naga ancestor dropped the younger brother Meitei at Pheidinga, and from there, the brothers divided their land. The elder brother asked his younger brother to put up the fire and a white piece of cloth from time to time on top of the bamboo, once he settled his village to symbolise that he is still alive, as he can see from the hilltop. It is taboo for the girls to pull up the fire on top of the bamboo; the pulling of fire on top of the bamboo pole is called *Mera Hou Chongba*.

The ancestral religion of Meitei is called *Sanamah*i. Santidas Gosai landed in Imphal ‘*Sana mahi*’ valley in 1772 AD (Stephen, K.S. Personal interview. 17th August 2020). He was a Bengali who converted king Pamheiba of Meitei to Hinduism, and his descendants are called Meetei. After king Pamheiba converted to Hinduism, he ordered his elder son to demolish Meitei Puran and change the ancestral religion Sanamah*i* to Hinduism. When the elder son refused to demolish the puran and change the religion, the king banished the elder son. Then the king asked his younger son, the second son executed what his father ask him to do. It is said that Meiteis were forcefully converted to Hinduism by the younger son along with Santidas Gosai and banished those Meiteis who were refused to embrace Hinduism from the heart of the valley to the outskirts of the valley. Moreover, the king ordered to burn down Meitei Puran (religious text), a woman retained one text from the fire covered with her maternity dress. Therefore, today the 13 Meitei indigenous villages are scattered on the outskirts of the valley. As the Nagas and Meitei were one group before dispersal from Makhel, the present Meitei mayek is supposed to be christened as Makhel mayek (Stephen, K.S. Personal interview. 17th August 2020). The following folksong talks about how the Tenyimia chief blessed and presented a gift to all the present Tenyimia tribes' ancestors before they dispersed to different directions.

Hahoe daorei khyareifii hai ranao koropa jiiya khao zhao hei mai kappa.

1. *Hoe jiiya she kipouna hubei potadoenuo terou dohaini nesha yii veini yotou-a dei she kipoupao.*

2. *Hoejiiya she ngha pouna ne raveih pota doeni, terou dohaini ne rasa-a keingu vei-a dei she ngha poupao.*

3. *Hoe jiiya she Mao pouna chorai potadoeni, terou dohaini nehu yii veini zhotuo-a dei she Mao poupao.*

4. *Hoe jiiya paotya sii-a daina ma shavei pota doeni, terou dahaini nesha yiivei-a dei paotya poupao.*

5. *Hoe jiiya she ngapouna zhaote sana choveire potadoeni, terou dohai ni nasei ziivei-a dei she nga poupao.*

6. *Hoe jiiya zhaote liipoupaoni dorou-a nguru thuotai pota doeni, terou dohaini nerou zii vei muodu pii-a dei she liipoupao.* (Thaio,D,S. Personal interview. 4th July 2019)

English translation: In the beginning, God, Tiger, men, rat and *hetou* (a kind of bird) lived together at Makhel. They departed from Makhel. The Meitei ancestor migrated with an iron bar to make knife, spade, axe etc. Maram ancestor migrated with a sacred rope, and he became an exorcist with the help of sacred rope. Mao ancestor migrated with a rope, to rear domestical animal. Paomata ancestor migrated with *Dendrocalamus hamiltonii* bamboo to weave baskets. Angami ancestor migrated with traditional costumes. Lepaona ancestor migrated with paddy seed. With their blessing and gift from Makhel's chief, the tribes of Tenyimia and Meitei are earning their livelihood.

People bought agricultural tools and weapons such as machete, spade, axe, spear, gun etc from Meitei. The other Tenyimia tribes did not know how to make all these tools. Maram ancestors practised shamanism in the past with the sacred roped they received from Makhel chief. Many neighbouring people were healed by the Maram shamans as there was no doctor among the Tenyimia tribes. Mao ancestor was blessed with animal rope, they reared cows and buffaloes and sold to other Tenyimia tribes. Paomata land is blessed with *Dendrocalamus* bamboo than any other Tenyimia tribe land. They weaved various bamboo baskets and sold them to other Tenyimia tribes. They earned their livelihood by weaving a bamboo basket in the past. Other Tenyimai tribes bought their traditional costumes from Angami. Angami tribe is rich in traditional costumes and the tribe is well known for their rich traditional costumes. Lepaona ancestors were the last batch who dispersed from Makhel. They were late while asking for paddy rice seeds from Makhel chief.

1.4 Etymology of the word “Shüpfomei” and its Descendants

William Nepuni, one of the Mao Naga scholar, wrote, "'Shüpfomei' is not a nomenclature coined, nor the composite name given to identify any tribe. Instead it is the original, real name and the only name of the present nomenclature "Mao Naga tribe" (Nepuni 3). One of the reasons is that the phrase 'Shüpfomei' refers only to Mao Naga because Britishers' first contact is with Mao tribe. 'Ememei' is among the four groups which formed 'Shüpfomei tribe'. Since they could not pronounce the word 'Ememei' correctly, they wished to entitle these inhabitants as Mao Naga tribe. To them Ememei is Maomei. Due to this reason, '*Mei*' assumed as people and understood as such, therefore 'Mao' came to represent not only Maos/Ememei but the whole Shüpfomei (Nepuni 3). That is how Britishers misinterpreted and changed the history of the original Shüpfomei tribe. Because of the misinterpretation, the four kindred people (i.e. Ememei -

western Shüpfomei, Lepaona – southern Shüpfomei, Paomata – Northern Shüpfomei, and Chilivai – Eastern Shüpfomei), are divided into two tribes, namely, Mao and Poumai.

According to William Nepuni, "Shüpfowo" is the name of a person and 'Shüpfomei' are the progenies of Shüpfowo" (Nepuni 5). Maomei believes that "Shüpfowo" was the first son of "Khephio". The phrase 'Shüpfomei' is formed by two words 'Shüpfowo' is the name of a person and 'Mei' in Mao language means people. Therefore, it connotes the descendants of Shüpfowo. Some writers and some people believe and write that the four sub-kindred are the progenies of 'Shüpfowo', they are known as:

1. Ememei
2. Chilivai
3. Lepaona
4. Paomata

N.Saleo, a Mao writer, believes and writes that Shüpfowo was blessed with three sons, their names are Kapewo, Toliwo and Choro. Kapewo descendants are known as Paomata; they moved out for the new settlement from Makhel and established at Saranamai village on an auspicious day. The descendants of Toliwo became recognised as Lepaona, migrated from Makhel and established at Koide. The descendants of Choro came to know as Maomei (Nepuni 5). This legend is not inclusive; the most numerous Chilivai villages are not included in this legend. Chilivai people believe that many of their forefathers migrated directly from Makhel.

1.5 Descendants of Dzüliamosüa

Mao Naga still firmly believes in this legend that Man, Spirit and Tiger were the descendants of dzüliamosüa. Based on this legend, one fine day, while Dzüliamosüa was taking a nap under the Banyan tree, she was found to be with a child from the white cloud that came and overshadowed her. As a result, she was blessed with three sons, Tiger, Spirit and Man. This legend is originated from Makhel. The other legend related to Dzüliamosüa descendants is that she always sleeps under the Banyan tree. In the meantime, the white cloud stopped over her. Hence, she conceived and begot three sons. The name of three sons are, Asüpfö Alapha, Chütuwo and Alewo. According to this legend, Asüpfö Alapha was the forefather of non-Nagas

people (Mayang). Chütuwo descendants are called Meitei (Manipuri). Alewo descendants came to be known as the Naga race (Nepuni 46).

According to Poumai legend, when Pairai was sick, her three sons look after her; when Tiger and Spirit take care of their mother, she gets worse, but she gets better when the man takes care of her. When Pairai was old and sick, she asked Tiger and Spirit to hunt wild animals and cook the best curry. While the two sons went hunting, she blessed her sons. First, she blessed Tiger, the eldest son, saying: since you are strong and can travel to any mountain, forest and cliff may these places be yours and rule over these places. She blessed Spirit the second son, saying: since you can travel the whole world day and night may you rule over darkness and the cave, where huge stones and big trees are growing. Third, she blessed Man, the youngest son, saying: since you are the weakest and the youngest may the futile land be yours and rule over the land. While the two sons went hunting wild animal for their mother, she instructed Man, the youngest son, to bury her under the kitchen hearth when she is dead fearing that Tiger may eat the corpse. The man buried the mother when she died according to her wishes. (Rao, Th.Ngaopuni. Personal interview. 30th January 2020).

1.6 **Makhel** (*Makhrüfii*)

There was no written historical record for the Nagas, as well as the Poumai Naga. However, Nagas' history can be traced back through oral tradition such as folklores, legends etc. It is generally believed and agreed by many Naga tribes that Makhel is their original homeland. The Naga forefathers reached Makhel from different directions with their group and settled at Makhel, and from Makhel they migrated to different areas. The word Makhel (the original site of the Nagas) or Makhrifii' in Shüpfomei language has two syllables 'Makhri' means 'secret', 'fii' means 'place'; thus, Makhrifii means secret place. The traditions of Poumai Naga, particularly oral tradition, state that they originated from the sacred land of Makhel with Tiger, Spirit and man. The forefathers might conceal their origin as they fear threat about their origin being revealed and fear retribution from some other greater power. The pledge they made not to reveal other people could be 'Let us from this moment start saying and singing that we have originated from this place with god and tiger'. The tribes which have a common origin and agreed to have migrated from Makhel are the Angamis, the Chakhesang, the Semas, the Lothas, the Zelengrongs, the Maram, the Poumais, the Thangals, the Tangkhuls, the Mao, the Anals and Mayons, etc (Pao 6).

Numerous folk songs and legends state that Poumai ancestors originated from a floating land called Makhel. Initially, when Naga ancestors migrated to Makhel from an unknown place, the land might look like an island. Some Naga scholars assume that at the time of Naga ancestors settled at Makhel, the place may be a wetland, and thus they stated that they originated from floating land. During their important occasions, the ceremonial call of the Poumai supports the assumption that initially, the land may be wet and marshy. The Poumai read their ceremonial call during their essential occasion in this way;

Dziima fii nou pyaza, khyafii nou pya-a?
Nika nilu pya kua kusi mao,
ni reilo pya lou a samai khyamai a khe lo kaithyou woo a,
reilo nou pya thou vo bao votou wo,
shi kou lou nii khache bacha wo,
vao lai khe lou nii kho su bacha”.

English translation of the ceremonial call; we migrated from a marshy land, we migrated from Makhel and we migrated from Siifii. So we converse about you, we utter about you, you should let your friends under you and be the head of the barns, may you catch the big fish when you go to the river, may you kill deers when you go to the forest.



Fig.1.2. A wild pear tree at upper Sajaoba known as Tyaobe



Fig.1.3. Makhel memory stone at upper Sajaoba

1.7 Origin Myths of the Poumai Naga Tribe

Poumai forbears did not have a written history, thus, it is hard to ascertain the accurate time of its origin and migration. The only source to trace its origin and migration is the oral tradition: folktales, folksongs, legends, and stories heard from older adults, passed down from generation to generation. The other evidence is through their usage of different ornaments and certain items such as cowrie, conch, seashell, utensils, foods, drinks etc. Their movement and activities can be only outlined in the form of monoliths, wooden trunk etc. Based on such oral tradition Poumai ancestors assumed that they migrated from the sacred land of Makhel along with Spirit and Tiger. As there was no written record, the origin and migration of Poumai Naga could not trace further than Makhel, and thus it is considered that Makhel was the final settlement after their long journey from some unknown places. One of the pieces of evidence that they were sea-farer is their use of seashells such as conches and cowrie as their ornaments and decoration.

The Poumai Naga is one of the Naga Tribes inhabiting the Senapati District of Manipur and Phek District of Nagaland and other adjoining areas. The term Poumai originated from a person name called 'Pou'. 'Pou' was the progenitor, and his descendants are called Poumais. There is a legend of the Poumai that 'Pou' was one of the Naga forefathers who led the Nagas in their migration till they reached and settled the present Makhel village. It is believed that they came from Indo-Myanmar. The Poumai legends tell that since the following day the walking stick which he had thrust on the ground sprouted and was alive, he took it as a good omen that his walking stick took root, he settled down at Makhel (Pao 5). The walking stick that grew a wild pear tree is still alive in upper Sajaoba known as Tyaobe.

Naga tribes who migrated from Makhel consider this pear tree as sacred. This historical pear tree found at upper Sajaoba (Mao) in Senapati district (Manipur) is also believed by the Nagas as a 'Dispersal tree', as the tree was supposedly planted during their departure with a vow they will reunite one day. Whenever any major branch of the tree fell or broke away, the Mao king of Makhel would pass the message to other Naga tribes, such as Angami, Sema, Lotha, Rengma etc for a joint observation of *genna*. Hence, it is considered a bad omen in the past

(Shimray 26-27). In due course of time, Pou was blessed with many descendants, and they dispersed from Makhel to a different part of the regions in quest of new settlements. It is said that Pou had three sons, they are Meo, Leo and Pao and their descendants are called Poumais. The descendants of Meo are called Moas, Leo offsprings are called Lepaona and Pao are called Paomata. There is no particular forefather's name for Chilivai as there was no written record at the time. However, Chilivai people believe that some of their forefathers migrated directly from Makhel, and every village has a history of their origin. The Poumai legend states that Poumai ancestors migrated from Makhel around 300 B.C. to the present Poumai territory (Thaio, D.S. Personal interview. 2nd May 2019). According to Purul village custom, every village chief placed a memorial stone near the chief house. There are 18 chief stones which signified 18 Purul village chiefs had passed away.



Fig.1.4. Village chief monolith stones at Purul Village

It is believed that the Poumais have been living in their present territory after they migrated from Makhel for thousands of years. Vaison Pou narrates a legend that tells about eight patriarchal heads: Memiiwo, Khrasi, Akrow, Paodu, Dukku, Liidu, Lapaosuru and Prowo. These eight patriarchal heads lived together as neighbours for some years before they dispersed to different directions and settled their villages (Pou 58). As there was no written history and legends, there are different stories and legends of the origin of Poumai Naga and their migration from person to person. The sub groups that are called as Poumai are: Chilivai, Lepaona, Paomata, Maomadai, Ma Khra, Tobu Takai (Pao 7).

J.H. Hutton writes Poumai as 'Sopvoma' in his book 'The Angami Naga', till today Poumai is known as Sopvoma to the people of Nagaland, Mao called Poumai Shipfo,

Chakhesangs call them as Sopuma, and Tangkhul as Shokpao. However, it is said that when the British Anthropological survey in Manipur took place, the interpreter incorrectly interpreted the Britishers that Poumai and Mao are one and known as Mao Tribe (Pou 58). Due to this misinformation in the olden days, Poumai is considered as Mao for administrative purposes. The tribe 'Mao' has only sixteen villages, and Mao is one of the Naga tribes. According to K. Sani, "The new nomenclature of "Poumai" can be traced back to the early 1970s and the late 1980s when the Mao Naga Baptist Churches Association (MNBCA) which was inclusive of the four groups, namely – Ememei, Chilivai, Lepaona, and Paomata were under the same banner. He further said that Lepaona, Chilivai and Paomata group are ready to accept the Mao dialect and the script, use the Bible and Songbook etc. However, they put one objection that is, to remove the term "Mao" and use "Shüpfomei", which the Ememei group (generally called the Maos) rejected, and the real departure and formation of the new nomenclature "Poumai" began (Nepuni 13). Though Poumai is a distinct ethnic group and different from Mao in many aspects, they are known as Mao until the government of India recognised Poumai Naga tribe. Poumai started demanding their tribe recognition in the 1960s. However, the central government of India recognised Poumai Naga tribe as a separate tribe under the constitution of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Order (Amendment) Act 2002. The president of India has given assent on 7 January 2003. The government officially recognises the Poumai Naga tribe and is now one of the Naga tribes in Manipur.

There are numerous evidence and possibilities that Poumais are the offsprings of 'Pou' in certain things that Poumais have in common. They are utensils, foods, drinks, tools, rituals, festivals, customs, traditional practices etc. They produced their pottery in their village. Some of the utensils produced by Poumais are, Toolee (rice pot), vuly lee (curry pot), Naikhaoti (curry bowl), khouli (pitcher), duki (jar), ngaki (a big jar for fermenting rice beer). Pou Yao (Rice Beer make by Poumai), Pou means the name of the Poumai progenitor, and Yao means rice beer. According to R.K James, some of the names of things and domesticated animals have been named after "Pou" from time immemorial such as, Pou Hou (Poumai spear), Pou Tyai (salt made by Poumai), Pou Soushi (a typical chili of Poumai), Pou Lou (Poumai songs), Pou Lee (Pottery of Poumai), Pou phou, Pou raincoat (8).



Fig.1.5. Poumai spear



Fig.1.6. Poumai indigenous salt



Fig.1.7. Poumai indigenous spade



Fig.1.8. Poumai indigenous earthen pot

One of the vital pieces of evidence is 'Poudeifii'. Pou means the name of the community, fii means the place of the discussion. Therefore Poudeifii is a composite word that means the decision making place of the Poumai community. A meeting of all the Poumai ancestors held in Koide village and a monolith was erected at Poudeifii to commemorate the meeting. It is stated that Angami and Chakhesang tribes also joined the auspicious meeting. Today there are 94 (ninety-four) Poumai inhabited villages of which 85 (eighty-five) are revenue recognised villages and 9 (nine) are unrecognised, they are Laii Shirafii, New Laii, Laii, Katafiimai, Chingmai Khullen, Chingmai Khunou, Phaibung Khullen, Phaibung Khunou, Phaibung Lower, Lakhamai, Sirong Khullen, Sirong Sofii, Kodom Khullen, Kodom Khavii, Ngari Khullen, Ngari Lishang, Ngari Raidulomai upper, Ngari Raidulomai Lower, Khongdei Khuman, Khongdei Shingphung, Khongdei Ngawar, Thiwa ,Thiwa Shongdo, Purul Rosofii, Purul Atongba, Purul

Akutpa, Koide Upper (Mathak), Koide Lower (Makha), Biisho, Oinam Hill, Ngamju, Thingba Khullen, Thingba Khunou, Tingsong Khullen, Tingsong Khunou, Tingsong Centre, Khamsom Upper, Khamsom Lower, Sorbung, Khabung Upper, Khabung Lower, Keize, Reafii, Kapao Upper, Kapao Lower, Liyai Khullen, Liyai Chilao, Tungjoy, Tungjoy Rekhumai, Tungam Khullen, Tungam Afii, Paomata Centre, Saranamai, Rekhutao, Khakho, Maiba, Maiba Vaofii, Phuba Khuman, Phuba Thapham, Tungam Makhufii, Kathekho Karong, Khabung Karong, Vakho, Poulea (Council), TNK Village, Reikhumai Taphou, Oiname Taphou, Taphou Phymai, Mahika, Liyai Kompao, Phyapou, Liyai Kalapahar, Lower Thanamba, Saranamai Khaikho, Zhaimai Khreilo, Khumai (Tunggam), Laila, Chofii, Khabung Khunou, Vaisiichu, Ngari Wungphro, Liya Roshikho. Four villages in Nagaland state viz. Zhavame, Zelome, Razeba, Tsufume.

1.8 Migration Memories of the Poumai Naga

Human migration occurs by individuals, family units, tribe, large groups etc, into a new territory or nation to establish their permanent habitats or future homeland. People migrated from place to place due to many reasons, such as natural calamity, escape from persecutions or economic problems. Nomadic movements are not considered migrations since there is no plan to settle permanently; it happens only seasonally. It is believed by the modern historians R.K. James and other scholars that Naga ancestors migrated from China during the reign of Qin Chin Haungbi, when the emperor build the Great Wall of China around 215 B.C, to hold out the Mongols. Some of the modern Naga historians like Thohe Pou had concluded a story narrating about Naga ancestors who ran away when the Great Wall of China was in progress. It is said that the emperor oppressed them with forced labour imposed a heavy tax. So, for a better livelihood, they migrated to hilly terrain and reached Makhel. It is believed that due to the hard life in China, Nagas are fond of asking the phrase, 'have you taken your food'? To share their food who are in need and hungry. By nature, Nagas love sharing their food with poor people who are hungry and do not have enough food. A legend of the Poumai Naga tells that 'Pou' was one of the heads of all the Naga tribes when they came from China to Makhel (Nepuni 31). As their population increases, they decided to split and spread from Makhel. According to the Heraka tradition, before they depart, they took an oath pledging to meet again in the future and live together as one nation.

The movement and exodus of people is a very significant fact in human history from time immemorial. Migration was widespread in search of a better place and to settle permanently. Such a movement formed and reshaped the Poumai Naga history that is distinct from other Naga tribes. Poumai history of migration is solely based on oral traditions, passed down from one generation to the next generation. These listeners retold such stories according to what they have learned and heard. There are different legends of the Poumai forefathers who led Poumais from Makhel village. There is a legend, as the number of population increased, Pou's offsprings migrated to different areas in search of new settlements. There is more than one legend of their migration. Some Poumais believed that all the forefathers of Poumais first migrated to 'Siifii', the present Saranamai village and then migrated to different parts of the present Poumai villages. The Poumai Naga tribe is divided into three circles or units for administrative purposes.

1. Chilivai circle
2. Lepaona circle
3. Paomata circle

Since Poumai Naga history of migration and origin is entrenched solely in oral tradition, every circle and village has their history. Paomata circle considered that they are the descendants of Ranapao and Raonapao. Lepaona believed they are the descendants of Leo, and they have two histories of migration. One history traced that they migrated from Saranamai village and the other history is that Leo's progenitor migrated directly from Makhel to Koide village. Unlike the two circles, there is no particular progenitor for Chilivai circle. Most of the Chilivai villages have their history of origin and migration. Some villages believed that their forefathers migrated from Makhel, and some migrated from Poamata and Lepaona villages.

1.9 Distribution of the Poumai Naga

There were no such circles or units in the Poumai Naga tribe before Britishers came to Poumai Naga land. During that time, each village was isolated within the village boundary and had no contact with the outsiders. They have their own respective democratic system of governance, only deigning to approach their neighbours when they long for the heads of their enemy. It was only when the British came to Poumai land, Poumais came into contact with other villages. Therefore, it is essential to trace the origin and migration of all the circles or units that

came into existence. There are different stories and legends of origin and migration heard from village to village—however, there are some common legends and stories of its origin and migration, which the Poumais generally believe. The three circles or units of Poumai Naga are divided for administrative purposes: Chilivai, Lepaona, Paomata and Razeba people in the Phek district of Nagaland. As earlier pointed out, there are more than one name for a people or a village because while the natives have their own name, outsiders call them by another name or names.

1.9.1 Chilivai Circle (Eastern Poumai)

The Chilivai Poumai Nagas inhabit the eastern part of the Poumai region which consists of 24 villages. Under Chilivai circle, there are four sub-circle, Khongdei circle, Lakhamai circle (Proumai), Laii circle and Phaibung circle (Pfichu). The term Chilivai has two versions. The name ‘Chilivai’ is derived from ‘Chi-livai-mai’ which means “within household people”. There is a mountain called Houdu; people living beyond Houdu mountain are called *Chilivaimai*. The people of Mao called Chilivai *Pfiikachelumai* means people living beyond the mountain (Henry, S.P. Personal interview. 1st March 2020).

Though they have their own village history and have different progenitors, they believed that they are brothers as their forefathers migrated from Makhel. They lived together peacefully as brothers and have many similarities in their traditional rituals, rites, festivals etc. The language spoken by these people is called Poula. The language spoken by the Poumais belongs to the Naga subgroup of the Tibeto-Burma subfamily. It comprises many dialects. Some villages have their own dialect named after their village. However, Poula is the common language. Unlike the two other circles or units, Chilivai circle does not have their common progenitor. Most of the Chilivai villages have a history of migration and origin. In the olden days, every village was constantly at war, and headhunting was very common in all the villages. Continuous assail from the neighbouring villages became insecure, and that has led to isolation. This isolation could be one of the reasons they started their dialects. Their effort to communicate clandestinely due to fear of headhunting has brought different dialects to many villages. The origin and migration account of the Chilivai villages are as follow:-

Raimai (Ngari)

The folksong tells that before Meiteis and Nagas migrated from Makhel, people were scared of wild animals stepping out from Makhel. Raimai ancestor was the first person who walked out from Makhel and migrated to the present Raimai Villages. The literal meaning of Raimai means early people. The legend says that Raimai ancestor had two sons. Over time, they established their own villages. One son settled at Ngari Raidulomai Upper, and the other son settled at Ngari Raipalomai (Khullen). It is said that Raimai forefather, before he established his village permanently at Raimai hill, he and his descendants stayed for some years at present Purul/ Hiimai. The Raimai ancestors sold the land to Hiimai ancestors because *Hamushu* (a type of thorny plant where cow and buffalo are keep) grew in large numbers. The literal meaning of Hiimai means people who bought the land. The Raimai stone platform at Purul shows that Raimai ancestors had stayed at Hiimai for some years. It is believed that after they sold their land to Himmai a group of Raimai ancestors moved to the present Chumai village (Phaibung Khunou) and lived there for some years before they migrated to the present Raimai village and settled there permanently. It is said that some of the Rangvfiina clan (R.V) migrated to the present Chingjaroi Tangkhul village and to present Tungjoy village. The group leader migrated to Chingjaroi and became the chief in Chingjaroi village. It is said that Chingjaroi village chief left the village with some of his clansmen to Raimai village for some years. The chief could not pay the fine imposed by the neighbouring villagers when the villagers stole or killed neighbouring domesticated animals. The neighbouring villagers imposed a fine on the chief when they did not catch the culprit. The chief returned to Chingjaroi because the villagers begged their chief to come back by presenting white cock to the Rangvfiina clan. As the Chingjaroi villagers begged the chief to return, Rangvfiinah clan elders sent the chief back to Chingjaroi. The Chingjaroi village is the only Tangkhul village which erected Feast of Merit monoliths.



Fig.1.9. Feast of Merit monoliths at Chingjaroi village

Raimai village has a distinct dialect that others cannot understand to pass information when they practised headhunting. The legend says that Poumai learned traditional war-whoop from Raimai. The *Tati* and Bamboo Mouth organ are two of the oldest Poumai traditional musical instruments. In the olden days, the Poumai musicians first played Raimai whoops and their village whoop when they play *Tati* and Bamaboo mouth organ music (Stephen,K.S. Personal interview. 20th June 2020).

Like other Naga Villages, the people of Raimai believed their ancestors come from Makhel, the ancestral place of the Tenyimia Nagas. The Raimai villages are situated in Chilivai area, Purul Sub Division of Senapati District, Manipur. It is said that Raimai ancestors first settled at present Ngari Raidulomai Upper and dispersed to the present four villages. The Raimai believed that their forefathers were brothers and all the four villages are closely related in their rituals, rites and traditional festivals. The names of the four villages are Ngari Upper, Ngari Raidulomai, Ngari Khullen, Ngari Lishang. Raidulomai means 'Ancestors of the Raimai village, believed to be one of the first and most courageous men who dispersed from Makhel to find a new settlement. Thus, the term 'Raimai' means the people who first dispersed from Makhel, to find a new settlement. The present Ngari Raidulomai Lower village is dispersed from Ngari Upper, and Ngari Lishang village is a break-away group from Ngari Khullen because of their conversion into Christianity.



Fig.1.10. Ngari Raidulomai dance troupe in traditional attires



Fig.1.11. Ngari Khullen dance troupe in traditional attires



Fig.1.12. Ngari Lishang dance troupe in traditional attires

Ngari Raidulomai village is also known as "Rangphongdia or Ranga" which means the ancestor of Raidulomai and the present four villages are known as *Marangkhane*. The Britishers and the Meitei named the village as Ngari. It is said that, in the olden days, the menfolk of Ngari villages used to be naked while at work. They were said to be adventurous and hard-working people. While at work, they preferred to remain naked to avoid sweating and ant bites, especially during paddy transplantation. While doing so, they put a ring (made of bone) over their penis in order to protect it from hurting and stinging insects (Ngari Raidulomai Lower Baptist church 5-13). This song relates the history of Raimai and how Raimai name came into being.

1. *Daomai hrii hai (two times) oh khrafii nou hriipae (two times) Emai vei hrii (two times) Hey, Hey*
1. *Khrafii hinou (two times) oh Eraimainah nou (two times) Rainou tapasei (two times)*
2. *Hey, Hey, siikuyu vanou (two times) oh Eraimai zihai Raimai tea kusei (two times)*
3. *Hey, Hey, Daopoupao maihrii (two times) Oh rashi chusii thosei (two times)*
4. *Hey, Hey, Dao Poupao maihrii (two times) Oh peidei Peiva hriisei (two times) Dao poumaihrii (two times)*
5. *Hey, Hey, dao poupao nou (two times) Oh teili chopeiyu (two times) Raimarou khou (two times)*
6. *Hey, Hey, Raimairou khou (two times) Oh siihou nou lapae poupanou pawe Raimairou khou (two times)*

7. *Hey, Hey, deiphaomai nou (two times) oh Raimarou khou hi. Matai thou we (two times)*
8. *Hey, Hey, teibe kounou (two times) Oh teinou boukhede oh teinou side. Raimarou khou (two times)*
9. *Hey, Hey, rakutuwo rawokawo oh teili cholou-a teili sii lou-a vei arawe maru khou hi*
10. *Hey, Hey, zho bonakhra (two times) oh poupao vei nanou (two times) Thaolai mokhe ngailaimokhe*
11. *Hey, Hey, zho bonakhra (two times) Christa siilou vanou (two times) Ramai kalo pao Eraimainah*
12. *Hey, Hey, eraimainah (two times) Oh linou lishi hriikhe, chavei lathou hriikhe eraimainah (two times)*
13. *Hey, Hey, E chikhelou nou (two times) Oh lou souyu hainou khai hainou khaisoula Hey Hey (Thila, S.K. Personal interview. 2nd May 2020)*

English translation: Our ancestors once lived at Makhel, Raimai (Ngari) forefather was the first person who migrated from Makhel in quest of the new settlement. Due to this reason, the village is called *Raimai* (early people). Our ancestors worshipped malevolent spirits, stone and wood. Our ancestors practised headhunting culture; they chop off their enemy head. Our ancestors reckon the month of *Raimarou khou* (Raimai traditional seed sowing festival). During the month of *Maru* festival, new leaves germinate, and flowers are blooming. People sow seeds in the month of Maru festival. When the third month arrived, the sky became dark and gloomy from the west, thunder and rain. The seasonal cuckoo comes and chirps her song in the month of Maru. Oh, young people do not forsake and forget ancestor *gennas*. The People of *Raimai* have embraced Christianity, Raimai praise His name. People of Raimai let us unite and love one another.

A legend tells that a present Sümi village in Nagaland state can be traced back to Ngari (Raidulomai). In Ngari dialect the present Sümi village is known as Merao. The term Merao derived from 'Me' means 'people' and the 'Rao' means seer or people led by the spirit. It is said that Merao were the present Rangviina clan before they dispersed from Raimai village. The ancestral legend tells that once upon a time, the present Rangviina (R.V) clan in Ngari Raidulomai has three brothers, and they lived together at Ngari Raidulomai. All three brothers were blessed with lots of livestock and became wealthy. Since they had lots of livestock, an

argument arose between the eldest and the middle brother because of their buffaloes. The middle brother claimed that all his buffaloes have both upper and lower teeth, and the elder brother asserted that all his buffaloes have only lower teeth. When they checked all their buffaloes, they found only one buffalo had both upper and lower teeth, and the rest had only lower teeth; the elder brother took all the buffaloes which had only lower teeth.

After that incident and confrontation, the middle brother became unhappy with his elder brother. Therefore, the middle brother separated from his elder brother at Ngari Raidulomai (Thatzii, R.V. Personal interview. 10th January 2017). It is believed that before they reached the present Sümi village, they must have sojourned at the present Vafiimai (Laii) village. Till today, at Vafiimai village, there is one water pond known as Raimai ziikhao (Ngari water pond). There is a place known as Maraphun or Merao (Sümi) dophon, which means the place where Merao were departed or Merao site. The old Ngari people in the village said that when they constructed their village playground, which is just above Merao (Sümi) dophon, they found human skulls and broken clay pots which they believed are Merao skulls and their utensils. This legend also tells that some of the people from Rangvfiina clan migrated to the present Chingjoroi Tangkhul village. There is a saying that when the people dispersed, they change their dialect slightly and cross seven mountains and valleys to avoid inter-marriage among the brother's sons and daughters. It is believed that because of this culture, Merao ancestors also went to a far away place from the present Ngari Raidulomai. Although there are some similarities in their dialects, Merao has changed their dialect.

J.H. Hutton's book, *The Sema Nagas* mentions that there were probable locations before the Sema Nagas reached present habitation that their sojourned places were in the Naga Hills district where present Nagas inhabit within Manipur state. The book says that the small village of Ngari, the present Raimai (Ngari) village in Manipur state, speaks their own dialect, which is very much similar to the Sema tribe. In dialect, speech, vocabulary, hair-dressing, and physiognomy they have a close affinity to the Sema tribe. The Ngari and Chingjoroi villages believed that Sema tribe lived there for some time and migrated to the present Sümi village (Hutton 377). It is true that though Raimai is Poumai, they have their own dialect, which is quite different from Poumai common language. There is convincing evidence of the Ngari traditional legend that the Sümi village migrated from Raimai (Ngari) village. The term Sümi is believed to

be derived from Süpumi, which means the people of Süpu. It is said that Sümi village is one of the oldest villages in Chakhesang tribe. According to oral tradition, when the forefathers of Sümi came to the present site, no other village was there. It is said that Sema Nagas migrated from the present Sümi village (Sümi village Baptist Church 27).



Fig.1.13. Maraphun or Merao (Sümi) dophon (Merao site)

There is a water pond known as Siimi water pond near Laii village. It is said that Merao ancestors halted for some years near Laii village. The Laii elders stated that the crow came and drank water from their water pond every morning before they fetched water. They considered it was a bad omen for them to continue to reside there. Therefore they migrated to the present Siimi village and settled there permanently.



Fig.1.14. Raidulomai traditional long jump stone



Fig.1.15. Cactus tree planted by Raidulomai Ancestor as a mark of their first settlement



Fig.1.16. Siimi water pond at Laii village

From time immemorial Raimai has its own lunar calendar. Name of the months in Raimai lunar calendar are as follows:

Raimai	English
1. <i>Chohou Sou</i>	Month 1
2. <i>Lilou Maru Sou</i>	Month 2
3. <i>Me Maru Sou</i>	Month 3
4. <i>Daonii Sou</i>	Month 4
5. <i>Khrakna Sou</i>	Month 5
6. <i>Leshim Sou</i>	Month 6
7. <i>Tordi Sou</i>	Month 7
8. <i>Viisamni Sou</i>	Month 8
9. <i>Raki Kapzii Sou</i>	Month 9
10. <i>Vou-du Shongzii Sou/ Tharma Chouzii Sou</i>	Month 10
11. <i>Moura Phan Sou</i>	Month 11
12. <i>Moudi Phan Sou/ Khanglouni Sou</i>	Month 12

Dumai (Khongdei)

There is a legend believed and agreed by the people of Dumai, it is said that Khudai (Duo), the ancestor of Dumai migrated from Makhel which is the dispersal site of the Nagas. The people of Dumai are the descendant of Khudai. The ancestor Khudai and his wife Dailo

once lived in the southern vicinity of Makhel near the present Kaibi Mao village. The place is still known as kozhifii by the Mao and khudai Dophung in Dumai dialect. Later on, when the population increased, Khudai family went toward the East to find a better place and new settlement carrying a Reiwui (migration stone) and a cock as was commonly practised in the past. They were to settle at the site where the stone falls and the cock crows. They crossed the Barak River and passed through the present Koide and Purul villages. When they reached Purul seeing the rich fertile land, they were tempted to settle there, but the stone did not fall, so they moved further to the east. The stone finally falls when they reached Sumaido, the present Khongdei Khuman village, and they settled there. Over time, from Khongdei khuman village, two more villages viz. Khongdei Shimpfung and Khongdei Ngawar are established near Khongdei Khuman (Hillson. Personal interview. 10th December 2018). The following songs narrate the Dumai forefathers' history.

Khiin liin

1. *Howainozao: adu reifiide napoutouye raokhai peirao siirao kii ekii ma ne khai peirao.*
2. *Howainozao: sheakiirefiide nahpoutouye raokhai sourao, sourao kii ekiima ne khai sourao.*
3. *Howainozao: Adu reifiide huori bu-a du-o aduo orepage za zho-a tei lei lei chi puna pumazha loumode du punaki.*
4. *Howainozao: Sheakiireifiide houri-bu-a du-o aduo orepage za zho-a tei lei lei chi puna pumazha loushude shadii maiki.*
5. *Howainozao: Adu reifiide seirao bu-a duo orepage zha zho-a pao khao khao du puna pumazha loumode du punaki.*
6. *Howainozao: Sheakii reifiide seirao bu-a duo aduo orepage zha zho-a pao khao khao du puna pumazha loushude shediimaiki.*
7. *Howainozao: Adu reifiide chomade adu aduo orepage zha zho-a pao khao khao du puna pumazha luomode dupuna ki.*
8. *Howainozao: Sheakii reifiide chomade adu aduo orepage zha zho-a pao khao khao du puna pumazha luoshude shedii maiki.*
9. *Howainozao: Sheakii reifiide seidao koko sourei madao ashe shedii maiki.*
10. *Howainozao: Adu reifiide seidao koko souvu vata-a she dupu naki.*(Shimthing, K. Personal interview. 6th January 2019)

English translation: May Dumai/Khongdei population increase, unlike other villages. Even the eagle could not attack and kill Dumai cocks, when other villages rear chicken eagle attack and kill. Tiger does not attack/kill Dumai dogs, whereas a tiger kills other villages dogs. Tiger does not attack and kill Dumai cows, whereas, in other villages, cows are attacked and killed by tigers. In other villages, when dogs are barking, people assumed that demons are coming to the village, whereas at Khongdei, dogs are barking because people are distributing meat.

Ngao katariim napeya phungdai wui ngao mikiin (The story of Mapeya Phungdai/Khongdei Ngawar)

1. *Ngao kiitariim da mapeya phungdai laid a. lui lao thaoni, dupiim lao thaoni lung chao.*
2. *Mapeya phungdai lai, hao kuda mashu hao chao. Mapeya phungdai lai, khei da dakpa ludat chao.*
3. *Ngao kata riim vii, tai sha phung na rei hao ngei chu mashi mi vii, thai ngii la da rei hao ngei.*
4. *Ngao kiita riim vii, rei ziila nii, rei ziila nii shunglung ngei chu mashi mi vii, thai ngii la nii shunglung ngei.*
5. *Mapeya phungdai lai kahao nii reihao pi hai. Pfi pi, wui lai-kham matei shuna tatmak hei.*
6. *Mapeya phungdai wui ngao mi kiin malao makhei matei kazukhu liingshi mashun na lung hei.* (Andrew. H. Personal interview. 4th January 2019).

English translation: Once, Khongdei Ngawar village had 700 buffalos and 700 households. The three hearthstones were made of dry meat. Fish is abundant in the village, and they feed fish to their pigs. Our ancestors fought the enemies with a spear, but today, people compete in education as their weapon. During our forefathers, brave warriors are respected and rule the village, but today learned and educated people will rule the community. Khongdei Ngawar is the one village blessed by God; we should not forsake our forefathers land. Let us not forget our village history; let us live together peacefully.

Doulou we Narekha

O-howai dou zhou khongdei circle hasii mai mai velai do re nou.

Howai douzhou-doulouwe narekha tapas ii khaide

Howai douzhou- ne re-a dainou maniilaige

Howai douzhou-zhire-a dainou manii laige

Howai douzhou- taotapu rotsiire taoti noupei woro.

Howai douzhou- zhou-a nepou kholu-o

Pfïichi sii kholu-o sahii lai (Mazamo, Joyson. Personal interview. 5th January 2020)

English translation: The older generations are happy to witness many young women, beautiful and wise warriors, strong and capable. It is time for you, come forward and take responsibility for leading our people toward progress and prosperity.



Fig.1.17. Khongdei khuman dance troupe in traditional attires



Fig.1.18. Khongdei Shimpung dance troupe in traditional attires



Fig.1.19. Khongdei Ngawar dance troupe in traditional attires

Raovumai (Chingmai Khullen)

The term "Raovumai" comes from Poumai language and is one of the Poumai villages located in Chilivai circle. The term "Raovumai" is derived from three syllables 'Rao', which mean bone, 'Vu' mean bury, and 'Mai' mean people. The nomenclature of the Raovumai village is, 'the bone bury people'. One may wonder why their ancestors buried the bone. It is said that when their ancestors chose the present Raovumai to settle, they took an oath by burying the bone and promised not to disperse from this place but to settle down permanently. It is also known as a bone agreement among the leaders during those days. Thus, the village is recognized as Raovumai in Poumai language. Raovumai village is also known as Chingmai Khullen in Manipuri, which means "Hill People" and the term Khullen mean old and original village. Raovumai traced back their origin to Makhel, the ancestral and original place of the Tenyime Nagas (Amos. Personal interview. 15th December 2019).

Zhobumai (Chingmai Khunou)

Zhobumai is one of the villages in Chilivai circle. The word "Zhobumai" is derived from two syllables "Zho" means Kheza (a language group in Chakhesang), and "bumai" is from buhmai meaning the first people or chief village. The literal meaning of Zhobumai means Kheza origin or chief village. A legend enlightens that their forefather migrated from Makhel, the

original place of the Tenyime Nagas. As they moved out from Makhel, they tried to cross the Lanier River to set up a new village. However, they could not cross it due to the massive summer flood of the Lanier River. While waiting for the flood to calm down, they permanently settled there as the place was fertile and commodious. Therefore they are called Zhobumai, meaning the held up Kheza people (Recosoto). In Manupuri Zhobumai is known as Chingmai Khunou.

Vafiimai (Laii)

The origin and migration of Laii traced back to one legend that passed down through folktales and songs. It is said that one fine morning a woman fetched water from the village pond. On her way, she saw a giant Antler with seven horns on its head. Seeing the strange stag, she went back and informed the villagers. After she informed the incident, some hunters went to kill the strange stag. The hunters kept on chasing the stag tirelessly from stream to stream. When they reached the present Shirafii hill range suddenly, the stag disappeared. The place where the hunters returned home is known as Kokhaivei (turning back) in the local dialect. When they reached the present Laii village, it was dark; they stayed the night without food. Near the place where they stayed, they found an edible leafy plant called "*Vavu*" in their dialect and survived for the night. That night, the oldest man among the hunters had a dream. The following day he narrated his dream to his friends, that four boys were born to his family, and he beheaded a warrior. They thought it was a good dream, that four boys would defeat those who were living near this place and that beheading was an excellent sign to overpower the enemy who is a great warrior. After listening to his dream, all of them were so excited and planned to settle there. Before they left the place, some of them inspected the soil. To their surprise, they discovered lots of ants, and the land was fertile for the crops. They thought that if they settle there, their population will multiply like ants. After discovering all these promising signs, they determined to settle there and went home happily. When they shared their experiences with their villagers, all the people in the village were so excited. The villagers chose sixteen people from each clan to settle in the place which the hunters had discovered. That was how Laii village was established.

Nagas in Nagaland called Laii as Gazephema. The Meitei named the term Laii meaning God. The original name is Vafiimai. The term Vafiimai is derived from three syllables "Va" means an eatable leafy plant, "Fii" means place, and "Mai" means people. The literal meaning of Vafiimai means the people where "vavu" is growing and breeding. From the original Laii village, people migrated and established New Laii village and shirafii village. Following the hereditary custom, the village has two village chiefs till today (A brief history of Laii Village 1-2). The first two village chiefs were Awo and La.

Proumai

Proumais includes five villages namely Lakhamai, kodom Khullen, Kodom Khavii, Sirong Khullen, Sirong Sofii. It is said that, including Shamai village, there were six villages, but Shamai village dispersed. They migrated from Siifii (the present Saranamai village) to Khoubu, the present Phuba Thapham. After settling down at Khoubu for some years, they moved towards the East in search of a better place to live and established a new village. Still, the present site of Phuba Thapham is known as Proufii (Proumai place). It is said that the word Proumai originated from two syllables, "Prou" and "Mai". "Prou" was the progenitor of Proumais and "Mai" is the descendants of Prou. The literal meaning of Proumai means "Descendants of Prou". In the olden days, Proumais practised joint religious observation of *genna*, rites, ceremonial festivals etc (James 20).

A legend tells that Shamai and Yangna a clan in Ngari Khullen and Lishang were close friends once upon a time. Shamai village was located at present Shamaifu in northern part of the present Lakhamai village; there is a place called Yangna Douphon. At one festival Yangna invited his friend Shamai to his house and presented a gift telling him not to open the gift on the way but to open it when he reached home in front of all his family members. When Shamai opened the gift, wasps came out and stung all his family members. To take revenge, Shamai invited his friend Yangna to one of their festivals. He prepared a gift with Douva (an insect that causes landslide). Before his friend returned, he presented a gift telling him not to open on the way. Before he reached home, he was tempted to open, and when he opened one insect jump out from the box, the rest he opened when he reached home. It is believed that the insect that jumped out on his way damaged some of the fields (Kadangla) and damaged their entire village.

It is assumed that because of their iniquitous deeds, both of them abandoned their respective village (Hriikhainii, S.K. personal interview. 5th January 2020).

Zhifiimai (Phaibung Khullen)

The history of Zhifiimai is in sync with the history of the general Poumai, which is about the exodus of many Naga tribes from Makhel. Thereon, the people of Zhifiimai traced their origin to Siifii (the present Saranamai village). Based on traditional legend, folklores and folksong, the ancestors of Zhifiimai migrated, taking the name of Ranapao (a mystical being), from Saranamai village in quest of a better place to settle permanently. It is said that before they moved out, the ancestors faced resistance from four Paomata villages, namely, Siifii (Saranami), Zhaifii (Leyai), Khimai (Maiba), and Phymai (Phuba). These four villages were ready to comply if they were provided with an ox to each of them. However, their demand could not be afforded by the ancestors of Zhifiimai. Again the ancestors of Zhifiimai requested the four villages to let them settle at Zhaifii (Liyai) but their demand was denied. As such, the people of Zhifiimai boldly shifted from Saranamai Village. At first, they migrated to Zhaifii and from Zhaifii to Zhifii, the present Zhifiimai village. Before Zhifiimai ancestors moved out from Zhaifii they made an expedition to Houduchii peak. From their expedition, they discovered the rich fertile land of Zhifii. Seeing the beauty and fertile land of Zhifii, they decided to settle there. Then they moved to the present Zhifii hoping that they will prosper and increase their numbers. In the olden days, Zhifiimai claims their territory up to Ngairi River, protecting the land from neighbouring Thangkhul villages. In the course of time Zhifiimai settled under the administration of two Muvii (King), twelve Yaochii (minister), twelve Thaipa (deputy minister) and four Monu Thaipa (secretary) performing the rituals, rites and looking after the affairs of the village (Chozii, R K. Personal interview. 10th December 2019)

Zaimai (Katafiimai)

Zaimai village is located in the northern part of Chilverai circle of Manipur along the border of the Chakhesang in Nagaland. The Zaimai traced their origin to Makhel. The term 'Zaimai' is derived from their progenitor called 'Zai', which mean 'law' and 'Mai' means 'the people'. The literal meaning of Zaimai means the descendants of Zai. It is said that the ancestor 'Zai' decided to settle in this land because the range of Zaimai region environment is suitable and

has beautiful landscape. When they performed feast of merit in the olden days, they chopped the meat into pieces and distributed it to every household and other surrounding villages. It is said that when a wealthy family performed the feast of merit, the distribution of meat was given even to the neighbouring Mao villages. Since neighbouring Mao villages are in the far distance, the meat used to get stale. Therefore, Maos call Zimai Zaitamai because of the stale meat they distributed when they performed feast of merit (Zimai Baptist church 1-2). Manipur government recognized Zimai as Katafiimai for administrative purposes.

Pouhmai (Thiwa)

According to legend, the ancestor of Thiwa is called Ngao; he and his descendants migrated directly from Makhel. He was blessed with a son; he named his son Hrai. After living together for some years with his father, Hrai migrated to the present Thiwa Shongdo and established his village. The legend says that once some Thiwa villagers reared a giant hornet and some hornets flew to a Tangkhul Longpi village. According to the legend, two persons from Ukhrul came looking for the hornet. However, unfortunately, one person was killed by some Thiwa villagers and sent back the other person. When the incident was reported to Tangkhuls, the clash between the two parties was about to take place, but the problem was solved when Thiwa village agreed to pay taxes such as firewood, cock, cow etc. from time to time to Ukhrul. After some years, the same Tangkhul person came to Thiwa to see his friend cemetery and settled permanently at Thiwa. Over time he married a Thiwa woman and increased his descendants. The village chief agreed when the Tangkhul man asked the chief to look after some part of Thiwa's land as he married to Thiwa woman. It is said that only the tribes under group Tenyimia tribes erected monolith stones when they performed 'Feast of Merit'; other Naga tribes were forbidden to erect a monolith stone. Though Tangkhul is a neighbouring tribe of Poumai, they did not erect a monolith stone when they performed Feast of Merit. Still, many monolith stones erected by Thiwa forefathers remain near the village gate. The forefathers sang Poumai folksongs when they celebrated festivals and sang Poumai agricultural songs while working in the field. One of the first and oldest Tangkhul villages is Hungpung village, and the forefathers of the village migrated from Kongdei circle (Leinama. Personal interview. 12th November 2019).

Pouhmai (Thiwa) village is one of the indigenous Poumai Naga village. They traced their origin to Makhel the dispersal site of the Tenyime Nagas. In Manipuri Pouhmai is called Thiwa. Poumai village is situated in Chilivai circle 54 kilometres away from Senapati district

headquarter. Pouhmai village is bordering Huimi Tangkhul village in the East, the Dumai (Khongdei) Poumai village in the west, the Raimai (Ngari) Poumai village in the North, Kachai Tangkhul village in the South. The most significant historical, traditional and cultural facts are that traditional Poumai edible salt called *Poutai* is produced by the Pouhmai villager and supplied to other Poumai villages. Unlike Tangkhuls before they converted to Christianity, they performed feast of merit by erecting monolith stones like any other Poumai village.



Fig.1.20. Monolith stones at Thiwa/Pouhmai village

It is said that Tangkhuls erected only wooden post when they performed Feast of Merit (*A Brief fact of the problem in the Thiwa village* 1). Pouhmai has two villages, Thiwa Shongdo and Thiwa.

Chumai (Phaibung)

Nagas are believed to have dispersed from Makhel. The Poumai ancestors, after their dispersion from Makhel settled at Saranamai (Siimai) for a certain period before their ultimate migration to different villages and places. The ancestors and predecessors of Chumai then settled down at Chumachi.

The term "Chumai" is a compound word of "chu" meaning peculiar, and "mai" which means people. Thus "Chumai" would then mean "Peculiar people". The ancestors of Chumai were unique, different and peculiar in their outlook and lifestyle. Therefore they were called and known by the name Chumai (Peculiar). They then called their place of settlement as

"Chumaichi" which means "Peculiar people place". Over time the population of the village increased, and it was believed that there were around 700-800 adult males at one point in time.

Several patriotic men were much loved and admired. Among the most famous and well known were: ChudziiSho-o, ChudziiTi-wo, Rei-Bviiba and Chi-Bviiba. They lived at different interval and time, yet the unifying element was that they were all skilful, talented and great leaders. For instance, a story goes about how it was during the time of Rei-Bviiba and Chi-Bviiba that the people of Chumai scattered. Rei-Bviiba was a great warrior and very skilful at headhunting and, because of this, had developed many enemies from the neighbouring villages. Though loved and revered by his villagers, many from nearby villages hold grudges and wanted revenge on him.

To seek revenge and overtake Chumai village, the neighbouring villages, Mothuzii (Paoyi and nearby places) came together because they see Chumai as the common enemy. However, when they came to attack, Rei-Bviiba, a skilful whistler of "Uhloulou" means "war cry" would warn the village with his shrill sharp voice and shake the ground with his feet. So on the first and second days, he successful drove away the enemies. Nevertheless, on the third day, due to lack of rest and tiredness, Rei-Bviiba slept away. During this fatal moment of his sleep, the enemy came and put a trap on his life. On the ground/spot where he used to stamp to warn off the enemy and alert his people, they buried the tip of a spear. As dawn approaches and morning breaks in, the enemy came with prominent battling soldiers. Rei-Bviiba, on seeing the advance of the enemies, stood up to shout his usual war cry and to shake the ground with his feet. But alas! The trap got its intended target. The pointed and sharp tip of the spear cut his heel and made him vulnerable. He was then captured and killed mercilessly without the awareness of his fellow villagers.

Then Chumai, people go about their daily activities without comprehending the danger and the fate of their great warrior. Many were captured and killed in their field, gardens and the forest. Groups of people ran away and escaped while many were killed. Few remnants of war and escapist then settled at neighbouring villages seeking protection and safety. Thus the predecessors of Chumai survived as scattered races for a certain period.

As time passed, the people of Chumai heard about a great warrior named Nuhu from "Ngazholonou" which would mean "Angami land". They went to seek his assistance, saying, "Come and be the king in the land of Chumai". Nuhu replied, "I will not come alone but with a partner". They agreed to the mutual terms, and that was how he became the king and reigned along with his friend Ngaoba. Chumai people scattered but were called and invited to return home. They then sign the "KukhaidaVeiSouto" which might be translated, "Call Back Again Treaty". Many chose not to return, but many happily returned home to start a new life at Chumaichi.

This is how even today, king and GB were the descendants of Nuhu and Ngaoba. As the village lives on, Christianity came in the year 1949. Moreover, many youths went to Chingjorai (Tangkhol) seeking education, and many also took water baptism from there. They then, along with the founders, spread Christianity in the village. In 1964-65, the village was separated into two, which is called Phaibung Khunou and Phaibung Lower or Chumai and Chukhemai (Abel, C.D. Personal interview. 16th January 2017).

1.9.2 Lepaona Circle (Southern Poumai)

There are two legends of their migration as ancestors did not maintain a written record. One of the legends narrates that they are the descendants of 'Leo/Liio' who came from Saranamai village to present Koide village. 'The term 'Leo' is called Lepaona 'Siidai' Lepaona four villages' (James 18). The four villages are Koide, Purul, Thingba Khunou and Thingba Khullen. The other legend traces their migration from Makhel guided by a Tiger and Eagles and reached Koide Village. 'The name Lepaona is derived from Pao-liio-na, which means "grandfather Liio's progenies or descendants". The literary meaning of Lepaona means "grandchildren of Liio or descendants of Liio". One of the legends narrates that when Lepaona ancestors migrated from Makhel, Khyapou Dukhuo obstructed them. Nevertheless, a courageous Lapaosuru (Rou) shouted at the peak of his voice and faced the strong man Khyapou Dukhuo. During the fight, the shield of Lapaosuru was faintly cut. The Lanamai still preserved the shield at Purul Atongba King's house. Lepaona considers the shield as evidence that their forefathers migrated from Makhel (Pou 62). The Poumai Naga Poudeifii (the meeting place) is situated at Koide village, one of the oldest villages in Lepaona circle. When they commemorated the auspicious day, a

monolith was erected. This monolith is still preserved. It is stated that in this historic meeting, Angami and Chakhesang tribes also participated.



Fig.1.21. Poumai Monolith at Koide village

At present, there are 22 villages in Lepaona circle. There are two legends about Lepaona history of migration. Several villages have their own legend of migration and history. According to the legend, Koide and Purul are brothers, they are closely related in many ways like rituals, practices and feasts. It is said that they celebrate the feast of merit together in the olden days. When their population increased, Purul village is shifted from Koide. The origin and migration of the Lepaona circle villages are discussed below based on traditional folksongs, folklore, legends, saying etc.

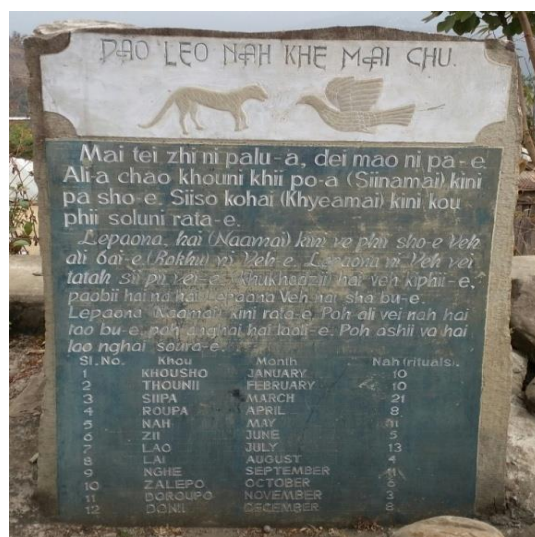


Fig.1.22. Lepaona Monolith at Koide village

The Lepaona history of migration and the legend of the eldest among them is slightly different from village to village as the history passed down through oral tradition in the form of folksong, folklore, legend etc. The older adults from Purul village who are well versed in oral tradition asserted that once the Lepaona ancestors had asked the Makhel chief who was the eldest among them. The chief presented them with a food pack and told them that receiving the chicken's head is the eldest among them. When they opened their food pack, Hiimai ancestor got the chicken head. Therefore, Hiimai is believed to be the eldest among the Lepaona ancestors. The Makhel chief told them the eldest ancestor should first plant the paddy and harvest the paddy. The Purul village elders stated that once the Koide villagers claimed that Koide ancestor is the eldest among Lepaona ancestors, they first planted the paddy before Purul began planting the paddy. They say that the rivers in Koide territory had dried the year Koide planted the paddy before Purul village (Shelly, P.D. Personal interview. 12th June 2017)

As Raile of Purul chief was the oldest among Lepaona chiefs, they agreed to let him be the eldest chief among them. There are legends of Lepaona ancestors claiming to be the eldest among them. One of the legends narrates that among the Lepaona ancestors there were incessant claims of being the eldest. Lanamai grandfather appealed them to clarify the matter from a diviner Rang. When the ancestors approached him to enlighten them who is the eldest among them, he brought *lechepou* (a kind of grass) from the village gate and asked them to hold the grass one by one. Hiimai ancestor was the first person to hold the grass; the grass became pale the moment he held the grass. The grass turned pale when the ancestors held it one after the other. Koide's ancestor was the last person to hold the grass, and the grass remained its freshness in the hand of Koide ancestor. He told them that Koide ancestor was the eldest among them. (Thaio, D, S. Personal interview. 11th January 2020).

Nahmai (koide)

The Nahmai ancestor did not migrate with other Poumai villages from Makhel as the ancestor asked for paddy seeds from Makhel's chief. Thus, the Nahmai ancestor migrated to the present Nahmai village only after Makhel chief gave paddy seeds. The literal meaning of Nahmai means 'late comers'. There is a legend that once there were no paddy seeds to sow in four Mao villages, as there were no paddy seeds to sow, so they planned the most beautiful Kapane to marry Koide man to ask paddy seeds. After the marriage, some Maos came to Koide

to ask for paddy seeds, but the Koide villagers did not allow villagers to give paddy seeds as the paddy seed sowing was not yet over. As the Koide village did not allow sharing the paddy seeds with others, Kapane's family fed the two chickens with paddy seeds and presented them to her two uncles. She instructed her uncles to kill the chickens once they crossed the village gate and take paddy seeds from the crop of the chickens. That was how four Mao villages took paddy seeds from Koide village through Kapane. Till today, there is one particular paddy seed called chicken paddy as they took the seed from the crop of the chicken (Thaio, D.S. Stephen, K.S. Personal interview. 12th November 2019)

Ngimai (Oinam)

The other ancestral legends of Lepaona tells that the forefathers of Onaeme (Oinam), Koide, Purul and Thingba khullen village dispersed from Makhel for their new settlement. It is said while marching out, Maos appealed to them to continue to live with them and obstructed their way before crossing Barak River. At that moment, a gigantic eagle flew over them, and while Maos looked up in the sky at the eagle, Lepaonas' forefathers crossed the Barak River. It is believed that the name "Leapaona" came into existence only after they crossed the river and settled at Paodeifii, the present Koide village. It is said that before Lepaona ancestors dispersed from Makhel, they were given each *tozhoh* (food pack) by their old mother, saying that the one who gets a particular food pack that has a cat's head is the eldest among them. One of their traditional folksongs narrate the story in this way,

*“Daorai Khyaraifii haino koropa siiza,
Khyahaino haita mara-o panao khaitoudei,
Zaorou thaopou paono tsii...apoupou-a nero,
Lahapei sapei louyunano sutsii-yenoza liipiipou,
Zaorou vou-arei kala patoliiza,
Zaorou-a Nae diikho-a reitapaza,
Zaorou-a thaopou paono tsii sarou
Lahamaizii phei lai kherouza liipoupao-a siiza,
Seangi paonae lahapei sapei loudoyeno
Ngi pounaeno sutsii khaidei.”*

English translation, "Once upon a time we resided at Makhel and dispersed from Makhel. The one who received the packed food with the cat's head is the eldest among the brothers. When they have crossed the Barak River and reached Koide, they open their food packs to see who the eldest is. It is believed the cat's head was there at Ngipao (the forefather of Ngimai or Onaeme) food pack. Therefore Ngimai believed that Ngipao was the eldest among the brothers".

It is said that Oinam ancestors moved out along with a cock from Paodeifii in quest of a better place to settle. Before they reached Oinam, they passed through the present Purul villages. When they reached the present Oinam, the cock began to crow. Thinking that was a good sign, the ancestress digs out a piece of mud with her walking stick. The smell and soil were quite familiar and ascertained the exact clay for making earthen pot. They settled there and named their village name "Onaeme" in their dialect, and in Manipuri "Oinam", meaning a place found out by smelling (Oinam Hills 5). In due course of time, the population increased, some migrated to different places and established five more villages, namely, Onaeme Taphao , Tingsong, Sorbung, Laila and Ngamju.



Fig.1.23. Oinam indigenhous earthen pot

Hiimai (Purul)

The Hiimai village is geographically located in Lepaona circle and one of the major villages of the Poumai. They are the descendants of Pao Pou, the forefather of Poumai. Hiimai traced back their origin through folk tales, songs, legends etc. One of the folk songs of Hiimai is still popularly sing. This song is known as “*Khyahii lou*”, which is in Poumai language, *daorei khyareiphii, ra-a naorei phii hai die-a mou phii loni kopa*” it means, in the beginning, we originated from the submerged land where we departed from God. *Siizii mathai deiru naopou nahphii kholii no bukha toure hiipou paono...*” from the land of departure the Hiimai forefathers stayed at the valley of Nahphii. *Siizii mathai hiidzii phiila hai deila hino bukha toure hiipou paono!* Hiimai ancestors settled in the heart of Hiimai valley of the earth umbilical. Therefore, based on this song and other legends, Hiimai looked back beyond Deimouphii (sort of island or believed as submerged land), Deimouphii is derived from the word "Dei" which means Earth, Mou, means submerged, and Phii means land/site. The legends of migration from Makhel, which has passed down through oral tradition in folk songs, folktales, saying, etc are still very fresh to the present generation. The Hiimai is the descendant of Paoleo and Paoleo was also the descendant of Pao Pou. After having settled at the present Koide for some time, the forefathers of Hiimai migrated towards the East and established Hiimai village at Hiikhonii (Hiimai valley). It is said that before Hiimai discovered Hiikhonii, Kumai, the present Hungdung which is a Naga Tangkhul village and Nanamai, the present Phungjam village settled first at Hiikhonii (Hiimai valley). It is believed that due to the anxiety of possible attack from Hiimai, the two Tangkhul villages left Hiikhonii as headhunting was widespread in those days. The word Hiimai is originated from Hii, Hiitayu and Hiitayumai, which means one who travels bravely. The literal meaning of Hiimai is people who move/ explore courageously. One Maram interpreter named Purul during British rule (Purul Akutpa Baptist Church 17-23). Today Hiimai has three villages namely, Purul Rosofii, Purul Atongba, Purul Akutpa.

Chaonamai (Thingba Khullen)

Oral history in the village conserved that the Progenitor of Thingba Khullen (Chaonamai) Village parted from Makhel with other Lepaona Progenitors searching for respective places of settlement. Legends of Thingba Khullen Village maintains that Lepaona progenitors halted for

some period at Koide (Naamai) en route, wherein, during meal, in the packed food (packed by elders as a sign of blessings) of the Progenitor of Chaonamai, the head of cat was found, which is generally accepted as the sign of eldest among the Progenitors. Chaonamai ancestors further proceeded to respective places of settlement as it exists today. As a sign of respect, major villages of Lepaona continue to reserve the opening of the most special jar of wine during important occasions for the grand arrival of Chaonamai with their signature whooping sound. As per folklore and folksongs, the christening of Chaonamai occurred after the Progenitor of Thingba Khullen (Chaonamai) Village created fire and other Progenitors lighted/carried fire from Him, which explains the literal meaning of the word Chaonamai, an idiom of three distinct words in local parlance viz. Chao—the process of obtaining fire from a source, Na – Children and Mai - Community.

Chaonamai is also called Piidiikhii (means Motherland) by a villager in recognition of being a land of legends, as they proudly hail and perpetuate narratives through generations, that Piidiikhii has never been passed or crossed alive by any Warrior or even by the fiercest of Beast. This glorified claim is immortalized by the King of Meitei, one of the greatest King in the region. At the same time, christening Chaonamai as Thingba Khullen, in Meiteilon (Dialect of Meiteis) Thingba means Blockage or Stoppage, as none of his warrior could cross or pass through the village alive and Khullen being the eldest, to distinguish from Thingba Khunou, after the Progenitor of Shomai migrated to Thingba Khunou.

Chaonamai or Piidiikhii is believed to be a sacred land. It is firmly believed that any insane or retards setting foot on Piidiikhii is cured. The village's legend maintains that the parents of mentally ill patients would wish and bless them to set foot on Piidiikhii and return home cured. Thingba Khullen or Chaonamai or PiidiiKhii is also called "Priimai" by Mao/Memai in recognition of being the rightful custodian of the spleen (in Mao dialect, "Prii" is spleen), considered the most delicious organ of an animal, it is traditionally reserved for the eldest. Other major villages of Lepaona are named after Priimai, (by Mao, endorsed by elders, mostly of Makhan and Sajouba), such as Priihriimai for Purul, Priishomai for Thingba Khunou, Priinimai for Oinam, Priinaamai for Koide etc. Thingba Khullen or Chaonamai or Piidiikhii or Priimai is situated in the Naga Hills, on a distinct hilltop, about 15 km from Maram Bazaar and about 20 km from Karong on NH 2. The village is surrounded by other Lepaona villages, Koide

in the North, Purul and Oinam in the Northeast, Kitao, the highest peak in the region in the East and overlooking, on the reverse side of which situates Ngamju Village, Thingba Khunou in the South. The mighty Barak River gracefully flows in the valley to its west, which is situated by another legendary Village, Maram Khullen. The hilltop of Thingba Khullen, strategically sited, used to be well fortified by walls of the natural cuttings of about 10 feet on Southern and Eastern sides and by a nonnegotiable cliff on the Northern and Western sides. Legend has it that warring intruders approaching and overlooking Kitao, the only gradual approach up to the cuttings, could never trace the entry/exit gate to the village despite days of surveillance. After exiting from the village, even shepherded herd of cattles would appear at the base of the hill, about 2 km, at a beautiful bump known as Varipao. Warring intruders, therefore, would never dare to attack. Thus the village inherited the legendary status of never been conquered or crossed. Both the remains of the main entry/exit gate "Kao" in its dilapidated state, indiscriminately destroyed by the villagers due to expansion of vehicular road, and barely exists today, though distinctly traceable.

Thingba Khullen, from its legendary location, further branched out to Reafii and Keize, the two sub-villages of Thingba Khullen, at about 4km and 6km, respectively. Even today, the village stands out in preserving and observing cultural and traditional practices of Poumai while making healthy progress in overall growth. The villagers continue to proudly challenge themselves, with the responsibilities of one of the referral points of various practices of the glorious cultures and traditions of Poumai and Nagas, and make continued endeavours to carry on practising the same in its purest form possible, amidst fear of extinction under the rapid transition of society (Thaoveinii, Isaac. Personal interview. 16th May 2018).

Shomai

According to Shomai traditional legend, the Shomai progenitors were also dispersed from Makhel along with Lepao, the forefather of Leopaona, and first settled at Paodifii (present Koide village). They settled at Paodifii for some time and went to reside at Piidiifii (Thingba Khullen). Having resided for some years, they shifted to the present village. The village was then named Shomai Village. Shomai is derived from two syllables; 'Sho' means wander from one place to

another place and 'mai' means the people. Thus, the literal meaning of Shomai is 'people who migrated from place to place' in search of a better place (Shomai Baptist Church 13).

Kisumai (Khamsum)

The Kisumai village is located in the extreme south of the Poumai territory known as "Pouchii Range", 60 km away from Senapati district headquarter. The Kisumai owned a vast territory of Poumai land with a total area of 45 sq km approximately. Based on folksongs, folk tales, and folklores, Kisumai ancestors came from Makhel the original site of the Tenyimia. The Kisumai consists of two main clans, namely, Lanamai and Raomai. Their origin is traced back to two major groups of Poumai community. It is believed that Lanamai clan is a descendant of Liio/Leo the forefather of lepaona, and Raomai clan is from Proumai, the progenies of Paoh prou. The lanamai lived for some years at Koide village called Phiichikho after migrating from Makhel and dispersed toward eastward to search for a better place and establish their own village. It is said that the Lanamai settled at Purul village after wandering to different places. Later on, some group of Lanamai, the descendants of Lapao Shuru moved to the present Kisumai and settled there permanently. It is said that the forefathers of Lanamai were brave and adventurous, and they discovered and settled in the extreme southern part of Poumai territory. The Raomai clan came from two Proumai villages, namely Raomai (Sirong) and Phaomai (Kodom) village. There is no evidence why the ancestors of Raomai clan left their village and settled at Kisumai village as there was no written record. It could be because of constant attacks by the enemy as headhunting was prevalent among the Naga tribes. It could be around the late 17th or early 18th century that a group of Lanamai and Raomai clans set out from their respective villages searching for a better site to establish their own village toward the south. They reached the present village, which is on top of the hill, by climbing with the helped of the wooden ladder. Seeing the beautiful and fertile land, they were tempted to settle there. The place is relatively safe for them to defend themselves from the enemy, so they took an oath to settle there by naming their village Kisumai. The term "Kisumai" is derived from two syllables, " Kisu" and "Mai". Kisu means ladder, and Mai means people. The literal meaning of kisumai means the people of the ladder. After having settled at present Kisumai village, they kept on actively engaged in headhunting to neighbouring villages. The enemy would continuously attack it; they abandoned their village six times, and on their seventh effort, they settled permanently at present

Kisumai Phiivu Khullen (Kisumai Baptist church 14). As their population grew, they decided to split and establish one new village called Kisumai (Khamson) lower, not far from Kisumai Phiivu (khullen).

Vamai (Khabung)

The traditional legend of the Vamai tells that the progenitor of Vamai started his journey from Makhel in quest of a suitable place. They dispersed toward the eastern side of the Makhel. After crossing the Barak river, they reached Naadufii present Koide village, where Pao Leo (Lio) settled with his people. Having stayed for some time, the Vamai progenitor, along with his people, dispersed to southwestern hill ranges. Lastly, he managed to reach the highest Khabung hill range known as Vamai Fiivo (old village or Vamai Khunbi). Thus, they opted to establish their village as the land is fertile, and the spot was beautiful and one of the highest ranges from where one can see the surrounding villages. One of the Vamai folksongs tells that as the forefathers of Vamai decided to settle down at the newly found hillock, they solicited divine help to name the new village by observing rituals and fasting. After making a voluntary fast, the ancestor went outside the village and slept under the bushy tree to seek a sign from the divine spirit to name the village. He woke up from his deep sleep in the middle of the night by a sudden divine bright light, and after hours, the night continued again. In this way, the village ancestor named his village Vamai, which means the land of light or his people as the people of light. The village name is recorded in 'Touji book' as Vamai, and in Manipuri Vamai is known as Khabung. A new village was established as lower Vamai (Khabung) in the year 1955 due to conversion into Christianity (Vamai (Khabung) Baptist Churches 13-14).

1.9.3 Paomata Circle (Northern Poumai)

Before Christianity arrived in Poumai region, rites, rituals and *gennas* are observed throughout the year devotedly. The Paomata chief taught all the rites, *genna* and rituals before his descendants dispersed from Saranamai village in search of new settlement. The ancestor instructed his descendants to remember what he taught them and cautioned that he would not teach them again, once they dispersed. In the course of time, Khimai (Maiba) ancestor could not remember the rituals and *genna* taught by Saranmai village chief. As they feared the consequences of observing rites, rituals and *gennas* inaccurately, Khimai ancestors asked

Saranamai's Chief to instruct them once again how to observe *genna*. However, the chief replied that he pledged before they dispersed that he will not instruct them again. Therefore, the chief asked Khimai ancestor to settle as Saranamai village branch since he cannot establish his own village without understanding how to observe rites and *genna*. Khimai is derived from two syllables, '*Khi*', which means returned and "*Mai*" means people. The literal meaning of Khimai means the 'returned people'. In the olden days, when the Paomata *Siidai* (Paomata four villages) observed rites and distributed meat to Siidai, Khimai meat was given to Saranamai. When there was *genna* in Siidai villages, Khimai did not observe them and they were allowed to do any work. It is believed that when headhunting was practiced Koidei and Saranamai were enemies; Saranamai sent Khimai to Koide as a messenger before they attack Koide.

It is said that Tunggam and Saranamai ancestors were brothers who migrated from Makhel. The Saranamai's ancestor name was Rohnapao and Tunggam's ancestor name was Raonapao. Rohnapao the ancestor of Saranamai, Liyai, Phuba was blessed with three sons and Raonapao the ancestor of Tunggam was blessed with one son. The legend says that Raonapao's descendants asked for a plot of land from Saranamai to establish the village. As a brother, Saranmai gave the land which was preserved to cut firewood. In the Poumai language, Tunggam is called Khumai since Saranamai gave the land *khukhaitouyu* (preserved) for cutting firewood.

There are several legends of Poumai Naga origin and migration as the forefathers did not maintain a written record. A legend tells all the Poumai forefathers migrated from Siifii (present Saranamai/Siimai village). At the same time, every circle or unit and many villages have their own legends of origin and migration. It is said that the eldest son of 'Pou' called 'Pou Row' led the descendants of Pou Row from Makhel to Siifii, the present Saranamai village, as suggested by their Grand Matriarch. When they reached Siifii, they killed an unblemished pig to make the necessary ceremonial rituals for the new settlement. 'Rou Pao', the son of 'Pou Row', performed the ceremonial ritual by asking the Supreme Being to bless and protect his people from the enemy and from evil. After they performed the rituals on arriving at the new settlement, they build different houses. First, they build Rachi (building for the Supreme god) and then Veo Chi (Chief or King house) and Napao (Priest House), lastly Maisou (house for the villagers) (The Siimai Tyahrii Nii 12). This practise is still followed when they shift to a new place for settlement. The Poumai forefathers invoke this prayer before they start their speech or in their songs as an introduction:

*Makhriifii nou Siifii tao-e,
Teidai nou Apu-e,
Zhadei nou Apdii-e,
Lou nou chidzii chii-e,
Teiinou Anghaa moupeilai,
Zhi haa pimoe, rah tho-a*

English translation: We came from Makhel to Siifii. The high sky above my head is my father. The earth below the sky is my mother. Music first before starting a speech. The heavens shall pour the blessing over me. I will fear no evil. Heavens shall bestow favour upon me.

The legend that Poumai villages migrated from Siimai is evident in Siimai oral traditions that tell the reasons of migration of the people to different villages. One reason that led to migration was lavishly performing the 'Feast of Merit' (Zhosou), which caused shortage of food and famine. The long nourished feast, which took days and months, wasted the seed sowing season while observing the feast of merit and various *gennas*. Thus there was famine and compelled the villagers to migrate to different places. The other reason that led to the dispersal was Rahchi, and a ravaging wildfire burned the whole village down to ashes.

Paomata circle considered they are the offsprings of 'Ranapao' and 'Raonapao'. According to the legend, 'Ranapao' had four sons, and 'Raonapao' had two sons. These are the names of 'Ranapao' sons and descendants, Siipao (Siimai or Saranamai Village), Khipao (Khimai or Maiba village), Zhipao (Zhaimai or Liyai village) and Phypao (Phymai or Phuba village). It is said that the four villages came into existence through the descendants of Ranapao sons, and the villages are named after the four patriarchal heads. These four villages are also called 'Siidai'. There is also another legend that tells Tunggam and Tungjoy are the descendants of Raonapao. It is believed that Tunggam and Saranamai are blood brothers, and Tungjoy village people emerged from Saranamai and Tunggam Village. At that time, headhunting was very common. There were fear and enmity among all the villages. A legend narrates that before the descendants of 'Ranapao' dispersed from Saranamai village, they took a vow not to fight among them but fight together if the enemy attacks any of their villages. Paomata siidai villages are closely related and have some common rituals. They jointly observed *genna* in the past when someone dies (Stephen, K.S. Personal interview. 25th October 2020).

Tungjoy is one of the Paomata villages. Like other Paomata villages, Tungjoy has a history of migration and settlement. There is no written record of the village history of migration and settlement. The only sources to trace the history of origin and settlement are legends and folksongs. The folksong of Tungjoy origin states that:

*Adao araimy hodei amaofii lai nu hriipa,
Tyahrii rai ho mochhahrii khai nghia nu,
Ho mochhafii nu khao-ra nyaopae my nyaopae.
Phya avei ry foo kao chhya ta pae.
Asiifii nu dei asou dao moe.
Zhee veypunya cheejii fiichhee kha athrey nesii.
Monghi khaobo ry phao vaolou.
Athrothroche chha chhee lou a nu.
Nghousei avei ry aphao kapfii a nu,
Zhee vey punya cheejii fiichhee kha threy dao moe.
Akhai bey adoo zhou avei anghi aveio
Phfiishe lou khai dei veypunyasii.
Jari jüikhao achhii ho mozhe puh madai
Khii lou dao anu.
Chheedoo mave hair y khii lou dao anu.
Ne a thraisou, zhee a thraisou.
Paorikhao khaodoo vei nu amii tauko
Ne-a miitrii zhee-a miitrii.
Chee teirao jii a lyari jüinu achhii nu shi
Triitrou lou hodei mochee khaopho.
Tery Pou Row tery veypunya dei.
Zhee veypunya sii talou
Azhao lou rao, abu lourao
Tey nou khailou ho rao, veypunyasii.
Cheephfii zhadei nu vei chhue.
To zhao nu moni pei.
Cheejii rallya nu vei chhue.*

Souripu modu a hrii dei.
Zho wo rapfii punu throoh pei
Rapfiipu ye tho sa hriilai.
Veypunyasii.

English translation:

From an island, the ancestors migrated to this village,
Direct descendants from Makhel they were,
Land from which began the separation,
The God, the tiger and the man.
With their cattle, they halted at Siifii,
And from there came our forefathers
In quest of a habitation,
On the back, their haversack strapped,
On the waist, their sword fastened,
On the shoulder, their spear hung,
Taken possession of inheritance so ideal
At the foot of a colossal tree.
Three well-heads and a drain-gutter the four dugout they.
Hornetnsted, the colony
“Be brave, for I am brave” invoked they.
And besides, the well-heads roared a tiger
Mooring in the manner of a Mithun,
“Do roar as I do”, invoked they again.
Teiraoree and Laree-the two rivulets were too torrential
Which drain through the rough terrain.
This is Pou Row-Tungjoy, the formidable.
Resolute and final is their choice.
Gathered they together
At the blissful land to dwell-abundant in food and drink,
A warrior to reckon with amidst enemies,
Always available the divine presence,

Marvellous is this place built and blessed

To fear and serve God Almighty (Souvenir, Tungjoy Baptist Church 29-30).

In this way, the Paomata villages were dispersed to different areas from Asiifii (Saranamai) after some years. The literal meaning of Asiifii means rest or shelter

1.9.4 Razeba People

The Poumai tribe inhabits the areas now under Indian states of Manipur and Nagaland since time immemorial. There are four Poumai villages permanently settled in the Phek district of Nagaland though the majority of the Poumais settled in the Senapati District of Manipur. These four villages are known as 'Razeba People' in Nagaland. The Razeba people live with Chakhesang people, and they are known as Chakhesang in Nagaland. The names of the four Poumai villages in Nagaland are, Zhavame, Zelome, Razeba and Tsufume. There are around 900 households, and the population is around 6500. The ancestors of these four villages migrated from Makhel. Though they live in Nagaland, they speak the original Poumai language apart from Tenyidie, Chokri, Khezha of Chakhesang and Nagamese. The adjoining Poumai villages in Manipur are, Tungjoy, Liyai, Ravomai, Zhobumai, Laii.

1.10 Demography of the Poumai Naga

Poumai Naga tribe is one of the prominent tribes of Nagas. According to the 2011 census, the total population of Poumai is 1 79,189. The Poumai villages entirely occupied three Sub-Divisions, namely Paomata SDO/BDO, Purul SDO/BDO, Chilivai SDO/BDO, Phaibung and 1/3 of Mao-Maram, Tadubi Sub-Division. Some of the villages are under Kangpokpi Sub-Division, and some in the Phek District of Nagaland. The Poumai is bordering Chakhesang in Phek District of Nagaland in the north, Ukhrul District in the East, Mao and Maram in the West, Thangal and Kukia in the South. As per the 2011 census, the literacy rate of Poumai is 53.3, male literacy is 58.98 %, and female is 47.6%. Poumai is the major community in Senapati District. There are two religions follow by the Poumai, Christianity is the main religion where most people follow, which constitute around 95% and people who follow ancestral religion is about about 5%. Poumais have published New Testament Bible and Old Testament Bible Bible in their native language, apart from elementary School textbooks, booklets, hymnals etc. in Poumai language.

The land of Poumai Naga is located in Senapati district Manipur. Surrounded by hills, the total area is approximately 1200 sq. km. The maximum temperature is 34.0°C (i.e. from May to June) and the minimum of 3.0°C (December to January), recorded in Kangpokpi. The land of Poumai is very fertile, rich in flora and fauna. The annual rainfall is approximately 1,135.5 mm in the Poumai regions. There are some important rivers in Manipur originated from Poumai Naga regions, name of the rivers are Vourei (Barak), Ngairi (Lane River) and Phaomai Sorei (Iril River). Evergreen and deciduous forests are common; forest occupies approximately 80%, and other arable covers around 20%.

1.10.1 Social Organizations

Some of the Poumai organizations, today, are working as the representatives of the Pomaies and working as a civil society. There are various organizations within the Poumai Naga tribe. Some of the major organizations are,

1. The Poumai Naga Union (PNU)
2. The Poumai Naga Tsiidoumai Me (PNTM)
3. The Poumai Naotoumai Me (PNM)
4. The Poumai Naga Baptist Association (PNBA)
5. The Poumai Naga Catholicmai Me (PNCM)

1. The Poumai Masou Me (Poumai Naga Union) (PNU)

The Poumai Masou Me is known as Poumai Naga Union in English, which was once known as Poumai Progressive Union when it was formed in 1957 at Khaikho (Siimai). Late Mr. Sani Dahrri of Tungjoy and Mr. Kh. Thaiho of Purul were elected as the first President and General Secretary, respectively. In 1967 the Poumai Progressive Union was renamed "Poumai Naga Union" (Poumai Tribe Recognition 23). The Poumai Masou Me is the general body of the Poumai tribe having 94 villages, of which 85 are revenue recognized villages, and nine villages are unrecognized, with a population of 1 79,189 as per the 2011 census. The village of Poumai is run by the village authority council, which comes under the Poumai Masou Me. The General Assembly of the Poumai Masou Me is represented by the village chairman/headman and secretary for overseeing the law and welfare of the Poumai. The Poumai Masou Me is affiliated

with different higher organizations like the Naga Hoho, Tenyimia Union, United Naga Council (UNC) and Naga People Organization (NPO).

The Poumai Masou Me has the following subordinate organizations which are also actively involved in the all-round development of Poumai community:

- a) The Poumai Naga Tsiidoumai Me, PNTM. (Students Union)
- b) The Poumai Naotoumai Me, PNM. (Women organization)
- c) Chilivai Naga Union, CNU. (North Eastern Poumai Organization)
- d) Lepaona Naga Union, LNU, (South Eastern Poumai Organization)
- e) Paomata Council, PC. (Western Poumai Organization)
- f) Razeba Public Organisation, RPO. (Northern Poumai Organization in Nagaland)

2. The Poumai Naga Tsiidoumai Me (PNTM)

Modern education slowly spread to all Poumai villages during the first quarter of the 20th century. It paved the way to launch an organization for the Poumai students' studying in different towns and cities. Therefore, a meeting cum picnic was held on 17 September 1976 at Sendra (Loktak) with Mr R. Ngaopuni Amos, of Maiba as the convenor, participated by politicians, public leaders, intellectuals, and students. The participants decided to form the "Poumai Naga Students' Union" with the election of office bearers on the same day and deciding to have the first session of the Union at Hiifii (Purul). During the later part of the 80s, the Union was re-christened as Poumai Tsii Doume (PTD). It was changed again as Poumai Naga Tsiidoumai Me (Poumai Naga Students' Union). Mr R. Haba Pao served as the first president of the Poumai Naga Students' Union (Poumai Tribe Recognition 38). The Poumai Naga Tsiidoumai Me (Poumai Naga students' Union) is affiliated with the Naga Students Federation (NSF), All Naga Students Association (ANSAM), and All tribal Students Union Manipur (ATSUM).

Since the Pomaïs accepted Christianity lately, educationally and economically, they were behind others. However, after they converted to Christianity, they are progressing in all

aspects of development. Some of the first academic qualification possessors in Poumai tribe are: Mr N. Modoli Khumai was the first Matriculate in 1932 and the first Graduate in 1949. Mr L.S. John (Veymai) was the first Hindi Matriculate in 1958. Mrs M. Ngaoluru (Khumai) was the first lady Matriculate in 1965, and the first B. Science and Nursing. Mr. Asoso Yonuo (Khumai), was the first postgraduate in 1966.

3. The Poumai Naotoumai Me, PNM (Poumai Women Organization)

The Poumai Naotoumai Me is founded in 1987 during the Oinam incident "Operation Bluebird". It is the apex women organization of the Poumai Tribe. It was defunct for some years and revived in the year 1994 with the following aims and objectives:

1. To secure equal rights, status, and privilege in social, political, and economic aspects with men.
2. To cultivate cultural and traditional values.
3. Attempt to uplift education and socio-economic of the Poumai society.
4. To promote various programmes for the welfare of women, children and healthcare (Poumai Tribe Recognition 17).

After the central government of India recognized Poumai Naga as a separate tribe, the womenfolk has a significant role to play and contributed many things for the welfare of the Poumai tribe. The Poumai Naga Women's organization (Poumai Naotoumai Me) is affiliated with all the Naga Women's organization.

4. The Poumai Naga Baptist Association (PNBA)

The first Baptist church in Manipur was established in 1902 at Phungyo Tangkhul village. All the churches in Manipur were under Manipur Christian Association (MCA) till 1928. The name was renamed as Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) in the year 1928 along with three Associations, namely North-East, North-West and Sadar, based on a regional basis. In 1977, the Poumai Baptist Churches first met at Purul Akutpa and decided to form the PNBA (Poumai Naga Baptist Association). R.L. Tennyson and R.S. Kahaoson were appointed the first Field Director and Field Assistant, respectively. MBC (Manipur Baptist Convention) recognized the Association at its Annual Assembly in February 1978 and by CBCNEI (Council of Baptist

Churches in North-East India) at its sitting at Guwahati on 26 February 1979 (Poumai Naga Baptist Association 13). The Poumai Naga Baptist Association (PNBA) is for the Poumai Baptist Christians. The PNBA has 81 (Eighty-one) churches. The headquarter for the Poumai Naga Baptist Association is at Purul village.

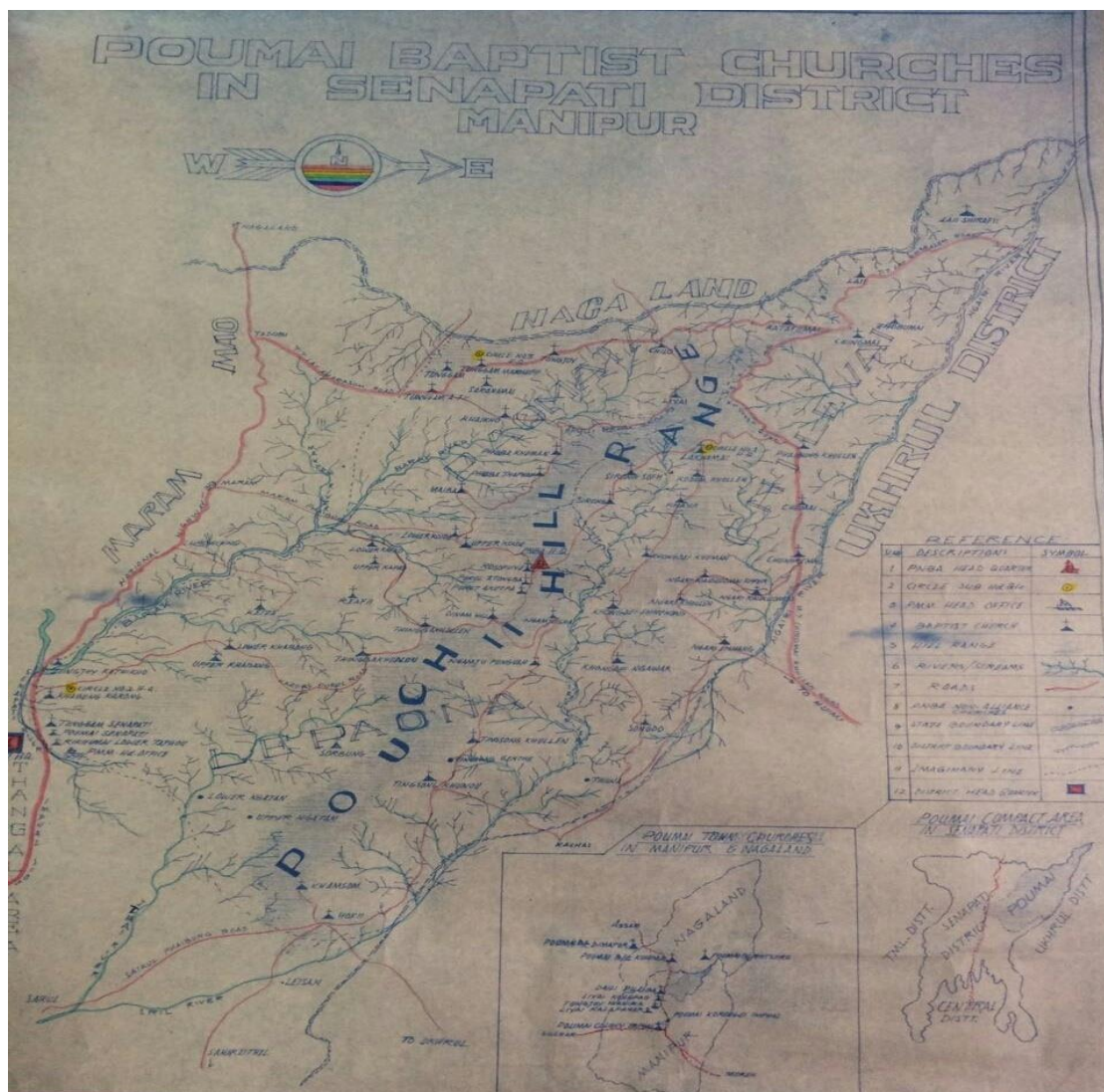


Fig.1.24. Map showing the Poumai Baptist churches in Senapati District Manipur

5. The Poumai Naga Catholicmai Me (PNCM)

The Poumai Catholic Congress (PCC) is looking after the Poumai Catholics with the help of three parishes: Purul Parish, Paomata Parish and Phaibung Khullen Parish Christians. In the

beginning, Fr. Ravalico and Fr. Bianchi took the initiative with Mao catholic community to introduce Roman Catholic Mission in Poumai area. Along with the introduction of Roman Catholic faith, catholic schools were established at Veymai (Tungjoy) in 1974, Hiimai (Purul) in 1975, and Zhifiimai (Phaibung Khullen) in 1980, to give education and for evangelization (Silver Jubilee St, Mary's Parish 77).

1.10.2 Economic Life

The Poumai Naga, though illiterate they are thoroughly equipped about agriculture and domestication. From time immemorial, they are self-reliant and have the distinct basic knowledge and requirements for community life. They did not depend on others for any thing. They make their own basic needs. Some of the indigenous articles produced by Poumais are Poutai (salt), Pouri (axe), Pouli (earthen pot), Pouhi (raincoat), Poubao (barn), Pousii (basket), Pouyao (rice beer) etc and other handicrafts made in Poumai designs are export today to the outside world. Poumais are fond of rearing domestic animals as well as gardening and farming. Names of the animals were prefixed with "Pou" the progenitor of Poumai, like Pou Cho (cow), Pou Vo (pig), Pousei (dog), Pou Soushi (chilly), Pou Shaoro (onion) etc. They also grow rice, vegetables, fruit etc., they made wooden utensils with their own hands, weave their own clothes. They practised Terrace and Jhum cultivation as the sole occupation for their livelihood. The staple crop is rice paddy. They eat three meals in a day, and about 90% of the people solely depend on agriculture. Timbers, bamboos, wild fruits etc., are the forest resources. In the olden days, people follow the barter system of purchasing and selling their commodities. Due to a lack of transportation, people could not export their resources to the outside world.

The changes brought in Poumai economic life are due to the coming of multi-factors of modern civilization to their areas. One of the main factors that brought changes in the Poumai economy is the coming of Christianity along with modern education to their society. Though modern education spread to Poumai land hardly a century ago, education has radically transformed their lifestyle and work. As the transportation and communication system are becoming better day by day, trade and commerce also one of the factors replacing the traditional work culture of the Poumai Naga.

1.10.3 Religious Beliefs

The Poumai Naga forefathers believed in supernatural beings. The traditional religion of Poumai is called Yaosomai (who drink rice beer and practice the rites and rituals of their King/non-Christian). They believed in the existence of Supreme Being and spirits. Spirits like good and evil are prevalent in their religion, they believed good spirits bring luck and success, and evil spirits bring bad luck, diseases, famine, death of the cattle etc. Before they start any important works, offering ceremonies and religious rites are always performed. Among the people, to be religious means to be true to the traditions of the tribe, and everything in the routine of life is bound up with some belief, tradition or superstition, which is an integral part of the religion. A person's life is guided by his religious beliefs and practices (Smith 76). The religious beliefs of Poumais are intensely practical in daily life. They perform and observe rites to get favour from the Supreme Being when required. According to Christian missionaries and anthropologists, the religion of Naga comprising Poumai Naga was termed as animists (Horam 59). Though religion is bound to their daily life and activities, they did not have a well-established structure of worship. The view of W. Robinson on Naga religion in the early 19th century, "The Nagas have no established form of worship, they have no temples...they have the knowledge, however, of several superstitious ceremonies and practices handed down to them by tradition" (Robinson 502). Some places of worship were beneath the sacred trees, which were preserved and the village gates. The interpretation of dream also plays an important role; many vital activities like waging war, hunting expedition, naming a child, selecting stones for the feast of merit and marriage engagement were depended on and decide if the dream is good. When any ceremony rites were taking place, Napao (priest) and Napai (Priestess) played an important role in performing the ceremonial rites. All these religious rites and values are diminishing gradually after Christianity came to Poumai land.

There was no specific worship, but their worship was distinctive in its approach. Though the people honour and mention the sun, moon, stone, tree etc., in their prayer, they worship the Supreme Being who created everything and who controls them. There are several stones nearby in Poumai villages, and they believed the deities live near these stones. Therefore, the village chief offer sacrifices such as rice beer, eggs near these stones. They set free a rooster in the jungle as an offering to their deity. These offerings made to their deity in the jungle are prohibited to be eaten or brought home. In Poumai traditional religion, there were several deities.

Therefore they offer sacrificial offerings accordingly to different deity when situation demands. They made sacrificial offerings believing that the deity takes the animal spirit they offer.

The Poumai Nagas have their liberty and systematic religious beliefs and practices. They have their way of appeasing and approaching the Supreme Being by performing religious rites rituals, sacrificing animals and libation of rice beer, etc. One of their typical traditional religion is the belief in the existence of numerous spirits. Several ceremonials were performed in their religious practices.

1.10.4 Changing Scenario

The Poumai forefathers did not know about the outside world as they were mostly confined to their village territory for many reasons. The practice of headhunting culture restricted them to cross their village territory. They crossed their village territory only when they waged war with their neighbouring villages. The Britishers, along with Christian missionaries, intervened and stopped the culture of headhunting amongst the Nagas. After the encounter with the Britishers and the dawn of Christianity they came into contact with the outside world and slowly adapted new culture. Willaim Carlson Smith writes: "Old beliefs and customs are dying, the old traditions are being forgotten, the number of Christians, or quasi- Christians, is steadily increasing, and the spirit of change is invading and pervading every aspect of village" (Smith 179). The new religion and culture have replaced some of the traditional practices. Though new cultures and different religions have been introduced and replaced some old practices, traditional culture and beliefs are not completely discarded in their society.

Before the Manipur hill peoples (administration) Regulation, 1947, Poumai villages were isolated. When this act was passed, it introduced local self bodies in the hill areas. This act has brought Poumai Naga as one tribe distinct from other Naga tribes. Poumai areas were divided into circles, sub-divisions. The coming of Christianity was also one of the milestones in the history of Poumai Naga; it brought interaction among Poumai Naga villages, not only spreading the gospel of God. However, the arrival of Christianity had also merits and demerits on the Poumai society. Haimendorf states that, "The Christian missionaries were responsible for the adulteration of Naga culture. The discontinuance of the feasts of merit, the loss of the knowledge of wood-carving as an art and means of subsistence, replacement of the rice-beer for tea were the negative developments" (Haimendorf 51-52). No one can deny that the process of Christianity has affected the culture of Poumai Naga. With the coming of Christianity, the socio-

cultural life of Poumai has transformed as it transformed the life of the people positively and negatively. Education is one of the crucial factors that has transformed into the progress of Poumai Naga. As said by Burman, "one of the most striking features of the impact of Christianity on the social and political life is the introduction of modern education system" (Burman 13). Indeed modern education has the mind of the people and aspects of life. Modern education has transformed the traditional customs and practices of the Poumai Naga to a great extent. Although the impact of Christianity and modern education can be seen in Poumai society, traditional culture, customs, practices, and festivals are still observed and will be discussed.

1.11 Scope of Research

The Poumai traditional community living can be seen through their different practices, beliefs, customs, traditions, festivals, dresses, ornaments etc., that have been transmitted through oral traditions. So far, only a few Poumai scholars and theologians have written Poumai literature. Still, many areas need to be explored. It is a great challenge to work on community living based on oral traditions. There is no written literature and oral traditions such as folk songs, folktales, and legends are diminishing year by year. There are limited written sources such as articles, books and souvenirs available to trace. Therefore, the present work will investigate through primary source materials to be collected from the field and understand the theoretical perspectives, legends, folk songs, folktales, sayings etc and analyze the elements and values of Poumai community life. The present work is expected to contribute to studying the Poumai community life through their oral traditions.

1.12 Aims and Objectives

1. The present work is expected to study the nature, elements and significance of the Poumai community living passed down from generation to generation.
2. To explore the values of ancestral community living.
3. To study the transformations and impact taking place in the Poumai community.
4. To study how to preserve and revive the traditional community life to keep their identity and culture with the changing world.

1.13 Review of Literature

R. K James, the first Poumai research scholar, has conducted research on the history of origin and migration of the Poumai Naga tribe in his unpublished M. Phil Dissertation, titled

“The Poumai Naga Tribe of Manipur: A Socio-Cultural Study”. He traced the Poumai origin from Makhel to the present habitat based on folksongs, folklore, legends etc. He also deals with traditional social systems that have been passed down from ages, such as clans, rites and rituals of birth, death, marriage dormitory etc. It also discusses the traditional village administrative system such as village chief, its function, power, customs and laws of the Poumai. The rich cultural life of the Poumai, such as dress, festivals, music, dance, games and sports, also study in his dissertation. He tries to bring out political movement and various social changes, such as building relationships with other tribes after the British came to Manipur.

R. B Thohe Pou (2007), in his unpublished PhD thesis, *“The Poumai Naga: Socio-cultural and Economic Change”*, had discussed the topography of Manipur, particularly the geographical location of the Poumai Tribe and its people. It traces the history of origin and migration of the Nagas concerning the Poumai Naga tribe based on the various theories of the Nagas and Poumai in particular. The study also includes the natural pattern of ownership and activities of the Poumai Naga tribe. The writer attempts to study the changes taking place in the socio-cultural life of the Poumai.

Ng. David Sha (1999), in his unpublished B. Ed. thesis, “Influence of the traditional rites and rituals of the Poumai on Christianity in Manipur”, attempts to study the people of the Poumai and their traditional religious beliefs. He has discussed various traditional beliefs such as the concept of Supreme Being, Spirits, sacrifices and souls. He elaborated some selected traditional concepts of rites and rituals practised and believed by the Poumais, such as agriculture rites, sacrifice for the sick, construction of village chief’s house, birth rites, funeral rites, *genna* days etc. He examined traditional concepts and attempted to analyze how traditional rituals and rites have impacted the present Poumai Christians in their lives and beliefs.

It is essential to review the literature to identify what others have worked on and explore which areas still need more research. In R.K James dissertation, some of the information is unjustifiable and limited. As no one possesses the complete knowledge of oral tradition, some areas need more research, especially the Chilivai circle history of origin and migration. As Poumai history is passed down through oral tradition, it differs from person to person and from village to village. Therefore, to work on history based on oral tradition, it is important to study different legends from each village. Many of the R. B. Thohe Pou information is an up-gradation of R.K. James's dissertation. The Poumai Naga tribe history cannot be written only

considering a few persons and villages. In his dissertation, much of his information is based only on a few village legends, folk songs, saying etc. His work requires more investigation, as much of his information and figures are unjustified. Ng. David Sha viewed that Christianity is the sole factor that transformed the Poumai traditional religion. There are other factors like the western culture that changed the Poumai traditional religion, rites and rituals. And not only Christianity influenced the Poumai converts, but modern education also equally influenced Poumai Christians. Taking into account the unexplored areas in their work, the present work attempts to find out the nature, elements and significance of the Poumai community living and the transformation that has taken place with the dawn of Christianity and modern education.

1.14 Hypothesis

Elements and values of Poumai community living practices and other important elements observed in the community emerged from the belief systems operating in the community since time immemorial. The system has undergone drastic changes due to the influence of external forces, such as conversion into Christianity, westernization, modern education and globalization. The indigenous features and values of Poumai community living can be identified from the existing belief systems and practices that go either parallel with the modern practices or separately in the traditional way. Poumai community living and values act as a powerful force to exhibit the community's identity as a separate group among different tribes of Nagas inhabiting Manipur, particularly in the Senapati district. The investigation intends to begin with the above hypothesis, where the outcome is not expected to be far from the present observation.

1.15 Research Methodology

Due to the influence of various forces, many changes are noticed in Poumai community life. Only a few research scholars from the community have been undertaking to record Poumai oral tradition; hence sources are limited. The study's primary data will be from information gathered during fieldwork through personal interviews at different Poumai villages and from people who are well-versed in oral tradition. It comprises meeting different persons such as village elders, informal groups, seminars and individuals who have the knowledge and information of Poumai ancestral traditions, culture and beliefs. Furthermore, the secondary data of this study will be from articles, books, souvenirs, unpublished works and thesis. The researcher will also apply a descriptive inductive method and analysis of oral literature and folklore.

1.16 Outline of the Chapters

The present work is divided into six chapters.

Chapter -I

The first introductory chapter introduces the topic of the present work. This chapter explains the scope, aims and objectives, review of literature, hypothesis and research methodology. This chapter discussed the structure of the present study.

Chapter -II

The second chapter deals with Naga and Shüpfomei origin, migration and settlement concerning the Poumai tribe. It brings out the different legends of their origin, migration and settlement based on their different oral traditions. The geographical location of the Poumai is also discussed in this chapter. It includes three Poumai circles, Chilivai circle, Lepaona circle and Paomata circle. This chapter also focuses on indigenous elements of Poumai ancestral community life that integrates the Poumai community.

Chapter -III

The third chapter explains the significance of the ancestral Poumai community life, the indigenous elements and the values of Community Living. This chapter focuses on the traditional feasts, festivals and practices that have been passed down for ages. The chapter examines the value of the festivals, culture and practices. Observing and practising these festivals and practices provide lots of benefits to individuals and society. Moreover, it is the best means to pass down to the younger generation because the younger generation could witness the old traditional values during such festivals. This chapter also includes the perspective of traditional religion like the concept of God, spirits and soul. And the traditional practices of village administration, social culture, *gennas*, oath and taboos.

Chapter -IV

The fourth chapter explores the Poumai tribe ancestral community life based on their oral tradition, such as folk songs and folktales. Oral tradition, especially folksongs and folktales, are regarded as the mirror of the past, as they replicate the past life of the community, and it is a major source to connect the present and the past community life. The importance and functions of folksongs and folktales of the society are discussed.

Chapter –V

The fifth chapter deals with the factors that caused the transitions of the Poumai Naga tribe community living. This chapter focuses on the transformations and impacts of the sudden different external forces on the Poumai Naga community life. It also attempts to evaluate how to preserve and revive the old ancestral community life to keep their identity and culture intact. An attempt is made to study how to counter the adverse effects in their community life.

Chapter –VI

The sixth chapter sums up briefly the main findings, observations and recommendations from the whole study.

Chapter-2

Governance and Community Life of the Poumai Nagas of Manipur

2.1 Role of the Village Chief

Since time immemorial, the village administration is under the village chief. The village council is the representatives of their respective clans. The Headman is the chief not only in secular matters but in religious affairs as well. He oversees any dispute with the neighbouring village in secular matters, plays a vital role in war expeditions, and acts as a village priest in religious matters. R.R. Shimray wrote, "whether or not the village was always a social, political and religious unit, the fact remains that it was an independent unit...The village is an independent in the tribe" (44). The village chief publicizes at the top of his voice all important information like the village *gennas*, taboos etc. When the monsoon rains failed during paddy transplantation, the chief make announcements to observe *genna* for timely rain. In this *genna*, he performed rituals on behalf of the village. These religious rituals and *genna* is called *dzii khoyu* in Poumai language.

When a family performed a feast of merit, the village chief was the first to taste rice beer. He tastes it with a prayer saying, 'may God eat first and the man next'. The chief did not trim a portion of hair; the portion of long hair at his back signifies the village's chief. The chief wore a simple traditional white kilt, white upper garment and cloth called *yusah* in Poumai language. As the chief was the secular and religious head, he was the first person to sow seed, plant the paddy and harvest before the villagers begin. However, village priest performed religious worships and sacrifices on behalf of the villagers, and the presence of the village chief is required as per their tradition. As a secular head, he summoned all the crucial meetings, the village council meeting and the village meeting, and presided over the meetings. The chief's house served as the village court and office of the village administration. However, the chief has no absolute veto power in all matters, as each Naga Chief was bound to different tribal customary laws which were strictly followed (Butler 524).

The selection of a Poumai chief followed a hereditary system, and he is the head of the village administration. Poumai village *constitutes different clans/Khel*, which plays an essential role in the village administration. The village council is a body of only the male, representing each clan in the village. The village council with the chief as its head also acts as the village court. They settled all disputes, both civil and criminal matters. The element of democracy is the hallmark in their administration. “Where there is a chief or *khulakpa* in a village, he shall be the ex-officio chairman of the village authority of that village; and where there is no such chief of *khulakpa* in the village the chairman of the village authority of that village shall be elected by the members of the village authority from among themselves” (Government of Manipur Law Department 2). When the village council could not solve the case amicably, the court referred to the general body of the village. Of all the crimes, thief, rape and murder are considered severe crimes in the village. Those who committed these crimes were imposed a heavy fine and banished from the village. As they imposed drastic punishment on those who breached the laws and order, crimes such as rape, theft and murder are rare in the village. When a land and boundary dispute arises in the village before they give a verdict, they examined the disputed site. People who examined the disputed site were paid commission, and the report is to be submitted to the village court. Based on the report, the court gives the verdict of the case. When both the parties or one of the parties did not agree and is not satisfied with the court verdict, they solved the case by taking the oath. J.H Hutton wrote: “Question of fact are usually decided by oath, and an oath, at any rate if the lines of others are made responsible for its truth as well as the life of the swearer, is usually accepted by either party, and is usually, provided always that if, embraces a fairly large number of lives, say those of a kindred, evidence that the swearer and the others whose lives are offered believe in the truth of this case” (144).

They believed those who took oath falsely will be punished by the Supreme Being with misfortunes. When they settled the case amicably, the village council collected the fee of the case from both parties. With the collected fee they slaughtered cow or pig and celebrated which marked the end of the case (James 53). Though Poumais have no written customary laws, they are aware of their rights, duties, norms, and village conventions. High priests, minor priests and priestess performed different religious matters, and the father performed religious rites for the family. They are great exponents of democracy. Their unwritten codes of conduct have provisions to deal with murder, robbery, marriage, inheritance and divorce.

The process of selecting the village chief took a month and involved several rites and *genna*. During this period, no one was allowed to sell domesticated animal and agricultural products. Any ordinary person from the village or the chief's clan cannot inherit the village's chieftainship. The man who would succeed the village chief must be from the royal family and be born from wedlock. No one can claim that he is the eldest or youngest and the right person to be a chief. The village does not have any right to elect the village chief in the village meeting. The chief decides his successor from his sons or close cousins who are blameless, can handle and tackle any issue, and meticulously observe the rites and rituals. The following persons are forbidden to succeed village chief,

1. Disfigured person
2. Stammerer
3. Deaf person
4. A person who eloped
5. A person involved with witchcraft
6. Illegitimate son

Once the chief selects a person to succeed his place, village elders announce to the villagers about the coronation day. Before the coronation of the village chief, the whole villagers observed certain social restrictions and rites. Women were not allowed to weave cloth; village elders who observed rites and rituals with the chief abstained from sharing the same bed with their wives. The village folks are forbidden to carry a fishing basket on their waist; they use fishing creel when villagers go fishing. They are forbidden to carry fishing creel while fishing; they keep their fishing creel somewhere nearby the river. Even when they collect green vegetable in the forest for their pigs and dogs, they are forbidden to put green leaves or vegetable on their cloth, and they use only a traditional basket. Those who observed rites and ritual with the chief are forbidden to smoke in the village compound before the coronation; they smoke outside the village compound.

Their custom forbids them from engaging in traditional weaving such as bamboo baskets, bamboo mats before the coronation. The villagers are forbidden to burn chicken inside their house; they burn and clean chicken outside the village compound when they eat chicken. They keep their environment conducive, free from any odour in the village. Before the coronation, the village elders appoint some volunteers to capture a human or cut the hair of a person from

neighbouring village to sacrifice on the coronation day. On the coronation day, the chief offered rice beer and slaughters a cow or buffalo without blemish and distributed it to the entire household of the village. It is taboo to succeed a village chief without offering rice beer, and meat to the villagers. The chief also offered a basket of paddy each to all the village authority. The new village chief fasts for ten days before the coronation. While he fasts he was not allowed to drink rice beer on the first and the second day, and on the third day, he was allowed to drink only rice beer. He fasts ten days so as the land will yield enough grains and the people will enjoy the fruits during his reign. During these ten days, he prepared mentally and physically and practised announcing such as *genna* and vital information. During these ten days, he practised announcing public holiday six times a day inside his newly constructed house.

Once he fasted for ten days and completed all the rituals, he announced a general holiday on top of the stone platform reserved for the village chief on the first day. On the coronation day, the chief wears a shawl called *Hrasha* (a white shawl with big stitches in the middle) and holds the coveted wine cup known as *Liisao* made of the banana leaves marking the ascension of the village chief. After the chief is enthroned, all the villagers come to the chief's house and drink rice beer. The chief should not show his face and drink with the villagers as per their custom though the villagers want to see the chief. The royal family helped the chief to hide inside his house while villagers are drinking.

The village chief and persons who had performed the Feast of Merit were forbidden to borrow rice beer, and paddy from others. They are forbidden to slaughter animal during the festival and do any business. These professions of slaughter and business are run by the poor and needy in society. The village chief is forbidden to sell his paddy field and plot of land. The chief is forbidden to quarrel with any of the villagers and gossip. When the customary village court could not solve the case, the chief advised and warned both the parties to reconsider their stand and admit their flaw and respect each other's right. It is taboo to climb on the stone platform preserved for the chief to give vital information to the villagers. It was a tradition to show respect and pay attention when the village chief announces any vital information to the villagers. It is taboo to gossip about chief, argue with the chief and imitate when the chief announces any information on top of the stone platform.

The chief and those who had performed the Feast of Merit were forbidden to earn daily wages. If the village chief faithfully observes rites and ritual, the village prospers and lives in

peace—the chief fasts and worship every first day of the month. When an affluent family in the village throws a feast such as *Zosou*, *Mouzii*, *Kiveisou* and *Raso*, the host family presents the front limb and two tins of paddy to the village chief as a sign of respect and gratitude. Since time immemorial, Poumai chief did not collect land revenue nor collect any tax from the villagers. As a tribute for his service, the village reserves a plot of land for the chief's house construction, terrace field and land for cutting firewood for the village chief. According to their tradition, only the chief successor can inherit the reserved terrace field, house, and land to cut firewood reserved for the chief.

When the village chief faithfully observed rites and rituals, the people prosper and live in peace. In addition, the people enjoy the following blessings when the chief devotedly observed rites and rituals for his people.

1. The flowers and plants that grow in the village compound bloom in abundance.
2. The fish and crab in the river will be plenty.
3. The people will live together in harmony.
4. Sexual immoralities among bachelors and maidens will decrease in the village.
5. The village will be free from plague and famine.
6. The mortality rate declined in the village.

The following are the consequences of neglecting rites and rituals by the village chief:

1. Mushroom will not grow, and the flowers will not bloom in the land.
2. The river fish and crab will be extinct.
3. The sexual immorality among the youths increased.
4. The people suffer from plague and famine.
5. The mortality rate increased in the village.
6. There will be disunity, and the people groan.
7. The crops fail to produce fruits.

The village chief village clan is forbidden to have a war of words with the villagers. The village chief is forbidden to kill an animal and shout at anyone with anger. The chief considered the entire population as his people, and the chief is taboo to gossip about his people. The chief is forbidden to eat any dry meat and certain meats and foods. When there is a chieftainship dispute in the village, the villagers can discern through some signs. The Poumais still believe that if the village chief was not a hereditary chief when he offered meat to the villagers during his

coronation, the cow's liver will tear into pieces by itself. The torn liver signifies that he is not a heredity chief of the village. The royal family is considered the highest family in the village. They are highly concerned about social shame; they maintain their status in all spheres of life. They even maintain themselves when they laugh with their friends, and walk watchfully to avoid falling in front of others. Twelve holy men represented their clans in every Poumai village who observed rites with the chief and took any important decision in all the village matters.

The present generations seem to be forgetting the old culture of respecting the chief and elders in the society. In the present Poumai society, Pastor, church deacons, the village chief, Village chairman, secretary, village authorities are the leaders who govern the village and the whole community. Many present leaders neglect traditional taboos and lack credibility in their leadership, and the public has also forgetting the culture of respecting the leaders. This trend of neglecting the taboos and forgotten the age-old culture of respecting the leaders have changed the ancestral community life. The merchandisers are wealthy people in society, unlike in the past. The hallmark of the Poumai ancestral community was that they respect their leaders as the ancestral culture governed them. In the olden days, they have separate shawls for the rich and the poor to identify themselves their status in society. Today as the Poumais abandoned their rich culture, their ancestral community life has drastically changed from their ancestral community living. The new religion has become one of the factors that affect the power and status of the chief. Although the power and function of the chief are declining drastically, still a chief is the nominal head in all the Poumai villages.



Fig.2.1. Unattended stone platform reserved for the village chief at Ngari Raidulomai Upper village

2.2 Construction of the Chief's House

The construction of the chief's house followed certain rites, unlike the construction of the commoner's house. The construction of the chief's house commences from *Thounii khou* (January). The village chief offered wine to the village council members, seven months before the construction of the house. When the time for house construction is approaching around November and December, the chief offered gifts to the following persons:

1. One pig offered to the village council in honour of his house construction.
2. Ten coins, leg of an ox, about one kilo of salt and a cock to *Napao* (priest), traditional *ruveaa* (lungi) and a cock to *napai* (priestess). The priest and priestess performed all the ceremonial rites and rituals for the house construction and dedication of the house.
3. Buffalo limb, a packet of salt and a cock given to an old person known as *khudiipu* and a woman known as *khudiipai*. The two persons accompany the chief and his wife until the house's ceremonial rites and rituals are completed.
4. He offered a packet of salt to the two guards deputed to guard the entrance of the chief's house during the time the priest performed the house ceremonial rites. The job of the two guards is to report and give an alarm to the people when they hear any unwanted noise. They are forbidden to be touched by anyone and touch anyone while discharging their duty. If they do not adhere to the rule, they are imposed a rigorous punishment.
5. He offered a cock, a packet of salt, and a buffalo leg to two persons deputed to guard the two main pillars known as *tyah* (first front pillar) and *houvuh* (second pillar).
6. The chief and his wife fast for eighteen days, starting from the day they erect the central front pillar—the priest and the priestess fast along with the chief family for fifteen days. He deputed *khudiipu* (man) to accompany the chief and his wife during the ceremonial period and the chief family for twelve days. After the chief family fasted for eighteen days, a black cow is slaughtered and distributed to the older people. This meat can be eaten only by old menfolks in the village and the royal families. The next day a black ox is slaughtered exclusively for the young menfolks of the village. The meat is distributed to all the young menfolks of the village.

7. Upon completing the chief's house construction and its ceremonial rites, the village elders conduct a traditional fire-making competition. They believed that the one who first ignites the fire has good fortune in his future.

All the village menfolks are engaged in chief's house construction. The duration of abstaining from sleeping with their wife varies from village to village, some village chiefs abstain five days, and some village chiefs abstain seven days. Menfolk engaged in collecting materials from the jungle for the house construction also observed *genna* with the chief. It was taboo to keep the construction woods in the jungle for a night. They brought the construction woods from the jungle on the day they cut down the tree to avoid wild animal to cross or fly over the woods. They select the best woods in the jungle and construct the chief's house. Before they cut down the tree, they considered their dream. If the dream is favourable, they cut down and use it for the construction. If the dream is not favourable, they select a new tree. They make a fire the whole night till early in the morning near the tree and watch so that birds do not fly over the tree or perched on the tree. If the birds fly over the tree or perched on it, they considered it worthless to construct the chief's house. The persons who had performed the Feast of Merit cut down the tree and prepared the central middle pillar and house horns. Moreover, it was taboo to put down the wood once lifted on the roof. The builders first set the two main pillars and put a long post on the two pillars.

While lifting the woods to the roof, a person who has performed Feast of Merit made a war cry. Women and outsiders are taboo to touch or walk over any material for constructing the chief house before they complete the construction. Some Poumai village chief house have roofs made of wooden planks or thatch; men prepare all the materials for the construction. It was their custom that the chief house has to face the East direction. The village elders appoint a volunteer from each clan to hunt an enemy head from the neighbouring villages to sacrifice and place the head near the sacred stone beside the middle pillar before lifting the middle pillar. As per their custom, the house construction should be completed in a day itself. Either the village chief or the village priest buried the head after observing its rites. When the volunteers could not hunt the enemy head, they cut a piece of cloth or hair and place it near the central pillar before erecting the main pillar. They did not simply fix the house horns; the right horn is placed outward and the left horn is placed inward. It is taboo to dismantle the horn house. The villagers halted their

regular work from the day the construction begins until they complete the chief's house. After performing the rites and rituals, they slaughtered and sacrificed three black cows without blemish and distributed them to all the village menfolks. Women are taboo to eat the meat only menfolks eat the distributed meat.



Fig.2.2. Phuba Chief's house

2.3 Setting up a New Village

The village was the only social and political unit in the past. There was no Poumai tribe before Britishers came to Poumai region. The polity of Poumai Naga was democratic in nature since time immemorial. R.R. Shimray has rightly stated:

“Naga village-state was an independent unit and accordingly enjoyed the right of sovereignty. Every-village state pursued an independent foreign policy and implemented its own customary laws on all walks of life of its citizens. Each village state had its own defence system. Administration was indigenous and independent”(45).

The traditional administration of the Naga tribes is said to be varied,

“dictatorship and extreme democracy. There is a system of hereditary chieftainship among the Semas and the Changs. The Konyaks have a very powerful chief or Angs who are regarded as sacred and whose word is law; before the greatest of them no common may stand upright.

The Aos, however, have bodies of elders who represent the main family group the village and Angamis, Lothas, Rengmas and others are so democratic that Hutton remarks that the case of the Angamis, it is difficult to comprehend how in view of their peculiar independence of character, their village held together at all before the coming of the British government” (Elwin 6-7).

The polity of Poumai Naga gives equal opportunity to participate in the decision making of the village. Though their administration was democratic in nature, the Poumai villages were gerontocratic. In other words, the Poumai villages were governed by the village council in secular and religious. Ao Alemchiba asserted that

"All men were equal, no high class or low class of people, no caste distinctions, no communal feeling, no difference in religion, men and women enjoyed equal status and no majority or minority problem existed. Economically they were self sufficient, beggars were unknown. Every family lived in the village on its own rights, possessed its house, built on its own land, cultivated his own land” (162).

Every Poumai village has their well-defined boundary. The boundary lines are either marked by the stream, river, mountain or stone. Generally, Poumai village is established on hills top or ridges for security reasons as headhunting was practised in the past. Stockades and fortified trenches were built near the villages to defend and prevent a sudden attack from enemies. They guard their village day and night as the enemy could attack the village at any time. The practice of headhunting ceased with the coming of British imperialism in the Poumai region. The Poumai village gates are strongly built; the gates are made of stones and wooden planks. In olden times, most of the Poumai villages are around 20 to 700 houses. For administration, four or five clans exist in the village. They built their house in rows facing each other. As there was no water tank, they fetched water from the pond. Every Poumai village had three or four water ponds in the village.

It is said that the village chief's clan did not involve in the construction of village water ponds. They cultivate a kitchen garden in their house backyard. They plant vegetables, fruits, millet, maize, sugarcane etc., in their courtyard. Every Poumai village has common land and forest for the villagers to use and cultivate and also have private land. No private lands are permitted to be cultivated and firewood to be cut without prior permission from the landowner. Till today all the village boundary is strictly maintained by the entire Poumai village. With the

coming of the British and Christianity in Poumai region, the people of Poumai are brought together as one tribe. About 80 per cent of Poumais are still living in the villages though around 20 per cent have shifted to the nearest town and cities in search of jobs and business.

In the past, every Poumai village is an independent country headed by the chief. According to Poumai folklore, when a group migrates searching for a new settlement, a group leader carries a cock, an iron bell, and a sacred stone for guidance and protection before settling at the right place. They continue to explore the new site to settle until the cock crows, the sacred stone moves and the bell rings. In this way, the entire Poumai indigenous villages settled and established a village. Once they choose the right site to establish a village, they first build a place to worship God. They placed the sacred stone nearby the sacred place. In the second place, they construct the chief house and then the house of the *Prou-roh* (Minister). Only after they build all these buildings, the house of ordinary people are constructed. During headhunting days, migrating from one village to another village was common when people were not safe. According to Poumai custom, the village can grant a separate clan to migrants if they comprise thirty households. If the migrants are not reaching thirty households, they attached to another clan in the village. In the past, when the Poumais go to the field in a group, they usually employ warriors to guard them while working in the field as the enemy can attack them at any time. The owner of the field offered the best wine and meat to the warriors for guarding his workers. The entire agricultural footpaths pass through the village gate. Most of the village gates are build with stone; there was a specific time to open and close the gate. The village gate is at the front of the village, and at the back of the village, they made a fence made of thorns, wood and stone to prevent outsiders. The gatekeeper's post was given to a particular clan, and on special occasion when they distribute meat to the villagers, a particular portion of meat was given to the gatekeeper.



Fig.2.3. Traditional Poumai village gate

Some small villages had no priest in the village to look after the sick persons in the past. Many Poumais were killed, including priests and priestess, by the neighbouring villages as they practised headhunting. People migrate from one village to another because there was no priest to attend when people get sick. They preferred to live in a populated village with priests, priestess and warriors to defend the village. The Poumais considered April the best and most holy month; the priests collect bamboo in the jungle for divination and treat the sick people.

Though Poumais have no written customary laws, the people are very much aware of their rights and duties, norms and convention of the village. R.R. Shimray has rightly stated,

"Naga society is found in its village was a compact and well-knit society where rigid customs and discipline were observed. Any violation of these brought heavy punishment. The laws of the land were not only to be respected but also to be feared. As the village was an independent unit, the customary laws were supreme and dispersion of punishment was quick" (44).

There are numerous priests and priestess who perform different religious matters and the head of each family also carry out religious rites for the family. They are a great exponent of democracy. Their unwritten codes have provisions for murder, robbery, marriage, inheritance, divorce, festivals, rituals, etc.

2.4 Construction of Pou Horn House

The Poumai Naga tribe is one of the tribes that builds *hyapeityai Nghapeite* (carve out Buffalo horns) house, and this house was permitted only to those who performed the 'Feast of Merit'. This house is called 'Pou House' or 'Pou Holy House'. The house signifies that the house owners had shared their wealth with the poor and needy. It also denotes that Poumai forefathers had lived a luxurious and pompous life. Before the family build this holy house with *Chikai* (house horn), the family abstained from sharing the same bed for six months and observed the rites and rituals. The owner began to observe its rites from September to January; the house begins to be build in January. They select a person whose name is admirable and extraordinary to put and fix the house horn on top of the house. It is said that the owner has to invite the workers one day ahead for carving buffalo horn in order that they abstain from sharing the same bed with their wives. The workers also abstain from sleeping with their wives until they finished their work.

It was taboo to keep the pillar and plank in the jungle for a night. The workers bring them home to prevent birds or animals walking or flying over the pillar and plank. To build an ordinary house, the owner has to observe rites for five days and abstain from sleeping with his wife. They did not cook all the meat in the same room and the same hearth; they cook in a different room and different hearth according to the meat. In the past, only Tenyimia tribes build holy house. As per their tradition, when a family construct the horn house, the family gives a grand feast to the villagers providing meat and rice beer.

2.5 Customary Laws

Customary laws are as old as Poumai tribe. Customs and customary laws have their implication and rule though they may seem synonymous. U.A. Shimray, one of the renowned Naga scholars, quoted the following lines, "Customary laws are binding as it has the sanction of the society and a violator is liable to be punish in accordance with the existing customary laws" (Shimray 48). Whereas, customs are specific ways of conduct, according to the customs of a society. Therefore customary laws are obligatory to all the people, while customs cannot be made compulsory like customary laws. Customary laws are for the betterment of the community and for members to co-exist in a society conductively. Therefore, customary laws demand to be followed, and those who defy would be inflicted the penalty accordingly. Customary laws are

passed down verbally. These laws are an indispensable part of the Poumais society even today. Poumai ancestors respected customary laws and practised safeguarding their identity and rites and rituals to keep them safe from misfortunes and evil spirits.

Moreover, customary laws help members to live harmoniously with one another in society. Customary laws comprise of collective knowledge and wisdom of the society. It is not only an obligation of dos and don'ts, but it also endowed a culture its direction. It is said that infringement of these laws would bring God's anger and punishment according to the customary law. G.S Narwani quotes about customary laws, "If we move towards the justice in the tribes of north-eastern states, the most significant feature among them is that customary law plays a predominant role in the administration of justice" (Narwani 41). Customary laws control and deal with every aspect of life in Poumai society.

Today older adults are saying that the present generation faces different societal problems because they neglect their culture. The so-called 'customary laws' are still practiced; they settled any disputes within the society according to the law of the land. Until today, the village council solve most cases, except rare cases like vehicle accidents and murder registers in the government court are solved by court. Every Poumai village has its chief to decide over the affairs of the village. The village council, with the headman as its head, acts as village court. The chieftainship of the Poumai Naga is through hereditary. Although there are no written customary laws, people are aware and respectful of their rights, duties and convention of the village.

2.6 Traditional Village Court

The Poumai traditional village court was established along with the village settlement. The village court solved all the disputes within the village. Since all Poumai villages were independent village, there was no apex court to deal with when there was a dispute between the two villages. As no apex court exists to deal with the dispute of the two villages, the dispute often leads to war. Although the two village courts attempt to deal with the dispute, hardly the decision of the two courts was successful as the public voice was not taken into consideration (Tiba 103). The traditional village court is also known as the customary court or village authority court. The customary court, a powerful conventional court, is also known as the age-old institution of justice or village Authority Court, an apex court at the village level. They establish customary court with their village settlement based on their tradition and custom. Generally,

traditional village customary court consists of twelve members; the twelve judges represent their respective clan. They are called *Yaochi mai*, which means entitled persons to partake rice beer and dog meat while performing rituals and celebrating feast of merit. Including the village of the chief village, the customary court comprises thirteen members. The traditional customary court members were highly respected in the village. They are men of wisdom, trustworthy persons, impartial in judging any dispute, and capable of making the right decision. Besides the prominent twelve members, there are another twelve members to assist in any decision making. The twelve court members carefully decide any dispute after hearing the statements from both parties.

The Poumai Naga customary court is the apex court of the Poumai Naga. Under the Poumai Naga customary court, there are three subordinate courts in the Poumai community. The following are the three subordinate courts of the Poumai Naga.

1. Chilivai Customary Court
2. Paomata Customary Court
3. Lepaona Judicial Court.

The three subordinate courts also have their jurisdiction and an appellate court of the village customary court.

When there is a dispute in the village, they file a petition to the village customary court. When the court accepted the petition, they offered rice beer for initiating the case. The court members cross-examine the matter thoroughly before they call for hearing the statements from both parties. After scrutinizing the matter, they take up the matter and call for hearing their statements along with their witnesses. The court gives the verdict after hearing their statements. Before they read out their statements, they take an oath saying, 'the sky is my father, the earth is my mother, the sky is the saviour, and the earth is the sustainer of me. Elders, let me state only the truth as the sky and the earth are my witness; if I speak lies, they will oppose what I speak'. With this oath, they state their statement. The court members declare the court verdict after having examined the facts and witnesses presented by both parties. The court members decide based on majority votes; they count the vote by raising their hands or voice endorsement.

2.7 Village Administration in the Present Times

By the end of the Anglo-Manipuri war, including Poumai Naga, Manipur was governed by the Britishers directly or indirectly. After the British administration was introduced in Manipur, they slowly spread Christianity in the Hills tribal areas. As the Britishers imposed their administration in Manipur, the government creates a separate administration for the hill tribes (Devi 59). The administration of the tribal area function under the rules approved by the state Darbar and some officers in place of the government of Assam (Singh 101). The British administration did not affect the tribal existing institutions much. Even during the British administration, tribals continued to enjoy their own native institutions under the British administration. The British recognized the age-old practice of Chieftainship of the Tribal, which allowed them to be governed by their customs and practices (Dena 40). As the western missionaries did not understand the importance and value of customs and traditions of the Hill tribes, they considered them undesirable and immoral.

Today, the religious duty of the Poumai priests and the role of the elders began to erode because of the introduction of the new religion of Christianity and new administration. It is interesting to observe that those firmly against the new religion later became devoted Christians. The missionaries worked tirelessly for many years before Christianity was deeply rooted in people's faith, since the village chiefs and elders of the village opposed the preaching of Christianity. In the process, new converts were emerged as a threat to the traditional administration of the village and they were even excommunicated newly converted Christians. The main opposition to introducing the new religion was from the villages that were ruled by the traditional autocratic chiefs because they did not want to change to a new ideology (Fürer-Haimendorf 51-53). No doubt missionaries brought the gospel and taught and trained them how to run the church and self-govern the village. In the meantime, Christianity provides them with the platform where they earned social status and respect, which is not similar to the old customs and tradition. Today, the traditional administrations of the Poumai villages have replaced and adopted a new and standard system of administration looked after by the deputy commissioner and the district officers. Though the power and function of the village council still exist, apparently, it is reduced by limiting the traditional authority to settle all the disputes. However, it does not entirely abolish native rule and some traditional customs are still practiced and followed.

Although 95 per cent of the Poumai Populations converted to Christianity, in reality, very few people practised Christian doctrines in their daily life. In the past, the village chief, including the council of ministers, lived a dignified life and governed the village according to their customary laws. No one was above the customary laws in the village, including the village chief and the council of ministers. Though customary laws are not entirely abandoned in the village administration, the present village authority does not uphold customary laws and practices like in the past. The role of the ancient council of ministers has replaced by the village chairman, secretary and village authority. As the present village leaders do not fully uphold either customary laws or Christian principles, ordinary people hardly get justice. In the present Poumai villages, justice always favours people who have a relationship with politicians and the rich. In the past, the village chief was the secular and the religious head; he ruled the village without favouritism between rich and poor. As the chief, he fasts every new month and observed *genna* religiously, and he wisely ruled the village. When the hereditary chief governed the village, faithfully performing rites and rituals for the village, the villagers lived together in harmony with one another. Many present leaders do not fear God, and they do not lead the people according to the words of God. According to the older adults, there was no discrimination among the Poumai community before they abandoned their taboos. In the present Poumai community, influential individuals discriminate the powerless people. As the people slowly abandon their old culture, customary laws and taboos, the village administration becomes loose, and people do not seriously pay heed to the law and order of the community.

With the coming of the British, Christianity and western education has transformed the age-old ancestral way of life and governance though it has not entirely changed. When they practised headhunting, the sense of "village" to Poumai is permanent and sovereign. Every Poumai village upholds customary laws to promote peace in the village and have good relations with the neighbouring villages. The entire Poumai village has their village council, the ruling body of the village known as the village customary court representing each clan. The village court decides any dispute or cases related to social, religious and political matters in the village. The village member can be banished if he does not abide by the law and found guilty while judging any matter and dispute. Some of the customary practices are still relevant today when they establish new villages, social and cultural life, settlement of any dispute, and food habit etc are more or less the same with some few variation and replacement from the old practices.

During the days of headhunting, people killed the enemy to prove their skills and bravery and show them as good fighters. However, today as the practice of headhunting is abandoned, killing a fellow human being is a crime. As per the customary law, if anyone murders a fellow being, he/she has to pay a fine and be banished from the village.

Moreover, according to Christian doctrine, if he/she is a Christian, they shall be excommunicated from the church. Poumai Naga has been strictly following and practising exogamy and monogamous system till today. It is taboo to marry paternal cousins and have more than one wife simultaneously. Earlier arranged marriage was more common than love marriage, but today love marriage and elopement are more common though it is against the Christian doctrine. Both the customary law and Christian doctrine opposed adultery, divorce and physical contact before marriage. The custom of observing a *genna* when someone dies in the village is still practised by the Christians as a mark of respect, to mourn and pray for the departed soul. After the arrival of Christianity, the Poumai Naga customary court acts as the apex court for the Poumai tribe. Under the Poumai Naga customary court, there are three subordinate courts, namely:

1. Chilivai customary court.
2. Lepaona Judicial court.
3. Paomata customary court.

Disputes or cases, both civil and criminal, which arise in the Poumai community, are decided and finalized by these courts to deliver justice.

Poumai Nagas are fortunate that Christianity came at the height of animism and traditional headhunting practices, which isolated them from the other world. The gospel of Christianity is so powerful that it has changed the mindset and age-old customs which can be violent. It paved the way for the Poumai to see the other world by opening new life and hope. Modern education came along with Christianity; it has transformed the Poumai society. As Christianity and education grow steadily, side by side, the old traditional practices and customs become irrelevant in the society. Even the administration of the society and the village is compelled to adopt a new policy and method to suit the situation.

Chapter-3

Socio-Cultural Life of the Poumai Nagas and Values of Community Living

3.1 The Essence of Ancestral Community Life of Poumai Naga

The sources available about the Poumai ancestral community life are folksongs, folktales, legends and proverbs. There is no written document about Poumai community life. They start every activity with a festival along with rituals, and when there is a festival, they exchange their food and eat together. The owner slaughters cow or buffalo and distributes it to every household when the villagers pull Feast of Merit stone from the jungle. After they performed the feast, they become more economical and work hard. They were ashamed to borrow paddy from others once they performed the Feast of Merit. Their culture of social shame has made them a better people and helps them to be more economical. They made their utensils such as pots, plates, cups etc. These utensils are made of bamboo and wood. They are self-reliant people, and they sell their products to the neighbouring tribes.

Since time immemorial, Poumai has their unwritten lunar calendar and name of the weekdays. The village chief and the chief priest memorised the calendar; they count the date and month for the whole village. According to their lunar month, the chief counts the lunar calendar by observing the rites. He announced the villagers' religious rites, observed *genna* and celebrated festivals according to their lunar month. The name of Poumai lunar months are as follow:

Poumai	English
<i>Thounii khou</i>	Month 1
<i>Siipa khou</i>	Month 2
<i>Roupa khou</i>	Month 3
<i>Khonihi khou</i>	Month 4
<i>Khana khou</i>	Month 5
<i>Zii khou</i>	Month 6
<i>Lao khou</i>	Month 7
<i>Lai khou</i>	Month 8
<i>Nge khou</i>	Month 9

Zalepo khou	Month 10
Chadu khou	Month 11
Donii khou	Month 12

Name of weekdays in Poumai language.

Poumai	English
<i>Rahtho</i>	Sunday
<i>Tapa</i>	Monday
<i>Fiikha</i>	Tuesday
<i>Thaoshu</i>	Wednesday
<i>Vekou</i>	Thursday
<i>Kizii</i>	Friday
<i>Hahpha</i>	Saturday

Before they sow the seeds, they celebrate together seed sowing festival sharing rice beer and meat. According to Poumai custom, during any festival, they are forbidden to ask for debt. Their culture has concerns for the poor so that they celebrate the festival without any tension. Their culture and tradition forbid them to refuse when a poor person asks for paddy or meat during a festival. During the festival, poor people ask for paddy, rice beer and meat from the rich people. In this way, the poor people also celebrate with the rich in any festival.

Respect for elders, mother-in-law and father-in-law was one of the hallmarks of their community life. They respect one another and live together in harmony. They firmly believed that those who ill-treat their mother-in-law or father-in-law, the Supreme Being, inflict them with incurable disease. Many people who ill-treat their mother-in-law or father-in-law died with incurable diseases. They believed the Supreme Being inflicts incurable disease even to their children and their domestic animals. People considered those who violated this taboo as 'people who will not be rich and perform the Feast of Merit'.

They stringently observe forbidden laws and customs. One reason was they firmly believe that evil people do not die calmly. The evil people who have committed crimes, sins and violated the customs usually go through hard times on the deathbed. They believe that when an

evil person dies, the corpse foul immediately. As there was no coffin in the past, people hesitate to go near and attend the funeral. These were some of the visible signs when a wicked person died; due to this reason, people live a pious life. It is believed that when a pious person dies, the sky and the earth rumble and shake. According to Poumai traditional religion, there are seven stages in the land of death, both for the wicked person and pious person. The wicked die down from top to bottom according to their deeds and how they lived their lives. The most wicked persons live in the last seven-stage. The place is not pleasant to live; those wicked persons live near the fire day and night. The pious persons die up from the bottom to the top according to their deeds. Those who lived a good and pious life live in the highest stage in the land of death. The people who live in the lower stages look up to them and envy their lives (Henry S.P. personal interview).

Every aboriginal Poumai village has its traditional village gate. The newly established villages do not have a traditional village gate at the entrance of the village. From the traditional village gate, the village can be identified whether the village existed before the arrival of Christianity in the Poumai region. Different villages have different village gates; some Poumai villages have six, five, four, three, two and one according to the village households and population. In the olden days, sicknesses are believed to be inflicted by demons or sent as punishment by the gods due to misdeeds. The only physicians were priests and exorcists; they heal the sickness by performing certain rituals and sacrifices. It is believed that Poumai tribe is one of the blessed tribes, but they did not realise and acknowledge God's gift to them. Some of the evidence is, the Poumai chiefs set the fire continuously in his hearth, it is taboo to put off the fire like Israel priests kept the fire burning on the altar continuously as God commanded them that the fire must not be put off. Even when the fire goes out, the chief makes his fire with the help of dried wood, grass and bamboo strip since it is taboo to bring fire from outside. When the Angami, Mao, Maram, Rengma, Pochury got sick in the olden days, they came to Poumai priests, shaman and soothsayers to performed *Pouh Souyu* (a ritual performed to read the cause of the sickness) for healing. They were asked to sacrifice by killing Pou Cow without defect in order to be healed from their sickness. They believe that when they sacrifice a cow, the sick people get healed. Only a few chosen persons performed the Pouh Souyu. The other way of animal sacrifice was, the person who performed the *Pouh Souyu* asked the sick person to slaughter Pou Pig, cut it into pieces and put it on the top of the doorframe of the entire old people

house in the village. When they put a piece of meat on the doorframe, older people blessed the sick person will recover from his/her sickness; it is said that the sick person recovered. When the sick person sacrificed the animal, it is believed that the people shared the sickness like pieces of meat. Poumai buffalo, cow, pig, cock are considered unique from other tribes.

In the past, the exorcists and priests used Lou (herb) to discover the illness's cause and cure the illness by performing what the exorcists tell the sick person. The exorcist asked the sick person to release a white *Pou* cock nearby the site where the sick person offended/ encountered the spirit. When a sick person purchases a cock to offer the spirit, it is taboo to bargain the price of the cock. If the spirit accepts the offering of the cock, the sick person recovers from sickness within no time. When a person is sick because of the curse by the older person, the priest offer five pieces of *Pou* King Chilly along with some pieces of iron and egg as an offering to God for healing. The priest or exorcist lay his hands on the sick person's body with *Luo* to diagnose the cause of the illness. *Pou* earthen pot made in Ngimai (Oinan) village was used while performing rituals even by other tribes.

In ancient days when a person or a family falls sick in the village, friends and the clan people help in field works, like ploughing the field, paddy plantation etc. It is said that many Naga tribes such as Chakhesang, Tangkhul, Angami, Mao, Maram, Rengma and Pochury invite Poumai priests and exorcists to perform rites and rituals for them. As a sign of respect to God, Poumai exorcists and priests usually pour out some drops of rice beer and some food before they drink and eat the food. It may be noted that this practice of giving to gods as a sign of respect is similar to Noah's instruction to his daughters-in-law to remind this practice of giving to the generations to come. Many religions and people still practice this culture of giving first to God before drinking and eating (Thaio, D.S. Personal Interview. 22th May 2019).

One of the hallmarks of their social life in the village is sharing wealth, and they live together in a close relationship helping one another. The Poumai Naga, as a group, has always been community-oriented people; they work together in the field, sleep together in the dormitory, eat and drink together. They are committed and always willing to extend help for the well being of the community and safeguard their village together. Social service for their community was spontaneous and part of their community living. The undying zeal of voluntary service for the society and the poor, build the bond of oneness and live together as one community in peace. Some of the voluntary services for their community and the poor are: construct new roads,

playgrounds, dormitory, watchtower, and Village Park. They helped those who are not able to build their house and lend paddy without interest. They extend help to those who are weak, sick and poor. Since they were economically self-sufficient, there was no beggar in the society. There was no social class distinction between rich and poor in the society; they live together in peace and harmony. The orphans were the unfortunate people in society. There are untold stories of how stepmothers ill-treated and abused the orphans. They expressed their untold stories through songs. The only place for orphans to forget their burdens and spend time with friends was in the dormitory.

It is said that when Poumai hunters were attacked by the tiger or wild animal, together with neighbouring villages, hunters hunt the tiger until they killed the particular tiger that attacked the hunters. During headhunting days, Poumais were known for their bravery and unity; neighbouring tribes fear to attack the Poumais. It is believed that through inter-tribes marriage by some few Poumais, witchcraft came to exist among the Poumais. By nature, Poumais are fond of talking about themselves. Due to this nature, many times, they were disappointed before others. As Poumais were fond of helping each other even in field works, they competed to perform "Feast of Merit". Thus, today, Poumais are backward than other tribes as Christianity and education came late in the Poumai region.

Trade plays an important role in boosting their economy and helps in building relations with the neighbouring tribes. In the past, they practice the barter trade system as they did not have cash to sell and buy necessary items. The neighbouring tribes such as Tangkhuls, Marams, Angamis, Chakhesangs are trade partners of the Poumais. Both men and women are equally taking part in business though there were no communication and transportation facilities. The footpath was the only means for them to travel and do their business. Every village had a footpath connection to do business and for other purposes. They carried their products on their head and trade with the neighbouring tribes. As Poumais are living in the far-flung area, there was no motorable road connection. Earlier, they carried their products on foot and sold them at Maram, Kohima and Imphal. The distance from the Poumai area to Imphal and Kohima is about 100 to 160 kilometres. They also travelled on foot to Imphal and Tadubi to pay their house tax. They trade rice, green vegetables, fruits, tobacco, baskets, mat, barn, cow, buffalo, pig, fowls. The salt *Poutyai* produced by Poumai was in great demand by the neighbouring tribes. As they follow the barter system, Poumais also bought essential commodities from other Naga tribes

markets. Although Poumais inhabited Manipur, most of their products are sent to Nagaland due to the language barrier. It is believed that Poumais could understand and communicate with Angami, Chakhesang and Tangkhul. Therefore most of the Poumai products were sent to Nagaland and Ukhrul District in the past. Moreover, in the meantime, Poumai built relations with these Naga tribes through their trade.

There are three types of traditional houses Poumai built in the past as mentioned earlier. The names of the traditional house are:

1. *Chikaiki* (horn house/holy house).
2. *Chiriiki* (Common house).
3. *Chikyoki* (widow or widower house)

Chikaiki: The family who had performed feast of merit built the Horn house or holy house.

Chiriiki : The ordinary folks built simple houses. The ordinary house was not carved any wood on the wall like the holy house. The common village folks live in the simple house build by them in a simple way. They slaughtered a dog when they inaugurated the house. A person who had hosted feast of merit performed libation on its inaugural day.

Chikyoki: The widower, widow and the poor village folk built the house called Chikyoki. They slaughtered a cock and performed libation to the house deity on the inaugurate day.

3.1.1 The Traditional Clan Kinship of the Poumai

Among the Poumai people, the village is an outstanding social and political unit. The village may consist of just ten households or as many as one 700 to 800 hundred households. In any village, the member of clans may range from at least two to more clans. It was the clan, not the tribe, which was the rallying point among the Nagas. Each village has a headman or chief who is the patriarch of the village. The Poumai chief is hereditary, and he is responsible for matters relating to the settlement of disputes in the villages, observance of festivals, rituals, cultivation and building. The village councillors assisted the chief, who are representatives of the village drawn from the various clans. In the past, the village chief was a judge, administrator and even commander in times of war. The headman and village councillors act as an administrative body and village court.

The concept of citizenship, for the Poumai, is closely associated with kinship rather than with territory. Poumai society is based on the patrilineal system and is rigidly exogamous. In Poumai society, a lineage is a political unit. They chose their lineage heads to represent in the

village council, and the lineage heads look after the village's affairs. Therefore, in the political system of the Poumai, the primary loyalties are centre on lineage and tribe.

Clan: Every indigenous village of Poumai village has four or five clans, respectively. A clan is a group of families with a common ancestor. All the clans have a common ancestor; the members of the clan are closely related. The clans are divided into sub-clans based on their paternal origin. The sub-clan members are close cousins. According to Poumai customary laws, Inter-marriage amongst the clan is prohibited. The clans' names are used as their surname, but some Poumais use their father's name as their surname. The clans constitute social as well as a political unit in the village. The clans play an important role in uniting the villagers and build the village bondship. The elders of the clans are represented in any decision making in the village or village council. The clan elders solve any dispute within the clan. When any dispute involves more than one clan, the matter is forwarded to the village court. Even now the village court is the apex court in the village. The same clan members always extend help in every works and matter. A clan member can be banished from the clan and village if he or she does not follow the laws and customs of the village (Tiba 65). Poumais are the descendants of a person called 'Pou'. However, in the course of time, Pou's descendants increased and migrated to different directions in search of a new settlement. As the Poumai population increased in their village, more clans originated. Each clan has a strong bond among them and having a shared plot of land.

3.1.2 Traditional Democratic Elements

Naga tribes have always stressed the value of a democratic outlook, considering everyone as equal to oneself. Though certain tribes have hereditary or elected village chiefs, the village chief is reduced to nominal heads. The tribals do not have highly complex or sophisticated government machinery; a democratic way of life is their living essence. High-handedness, bureaucratic chauvinism, corruption, bribery, autocracy and equality are the products of the so-called modern civilisation. The tribal polity provides dispensation of justice. Today, even more so in the past, democracy is the hallmark of the government of every Naga village. Their unwritten codes have separate provisions for marriages, divorce, rape, theft, murder, adoption, inheritance, defamation, settlement of disputes, religion, war and peace, besides laws of the relationship between village and village, tribe and tribe etc. Every village is the custodian of its tribal laws, and there is a marked similarity of laws among various Naga tribes on vital issues.

As they strictly implement laws, there are very few cases of breach of law. They lived peacefully in their village, and people are generally content and happy with their respective lots.

In the past, those who can cleverly manipulate were also considered notable persons and honoured in their society. In the olden days, those men who slept with women and touched women's breasts wore a separate bangle called *Loubahkha*, during special occasions and festivals decorated in rainbow colour. People recognise those who are wearing *Loubakha*, that spinsters admire them and they let them touch their breasts. However, these titles were not conferred by society; they claimed their own title and achievements. In the pre-Christian era, people who achieved these titles were respected in society and influence society. This period was called the Dark period, as harmful and savage practices were widespread in society. All these self-proclaimed titles were overwhelmed when they pull Feast of Merit stone and fix the horn house. The bachelors who had not slept with women or touched women breasts first pull the stone and lift the horn. During harvest, bachelors who had not touched women's breasts and slept with women first carried the biggest giant paddy load tightly pack in shawls. This tradition of carrying a giant load of paddy during harvest showcased the strength of the men in the village.



Fig.3.1. Men folks carrying giant paddy load.

Poumai Naga considers cat as the eldest animal, and they are taboo to beat, steal, sell cats. The Poumai legend says that once the sun was dejected because humans always complained sun both on rainy day and sunny days. Therefore there was only darkness as the sun refused to shine its light. All the animals had a meeting to appeal sun to shine its light on the living beings. All the animals agreed to appeal sun to shine its light, they sent different animals to appeal, but the sun declined their request. At last, they sent the cock to call sun on their behalf, the sun

rebuffed in the same manner. The cock decided to play a trick and let the sun come out. The cock pretended he was dead near the gate; the neighbours informed the sun that her guest is dead. As the cock pretended and lay down but when the sun came near, the cock flapped its wings. The sun was shocked and ran away. In this way, the sun came out and shone its light. The sun said that it would slam its door whenever the sun is about to rise and set and, therefore, asked cock to crow when the sun opens its door and closes its door. The Poumais believe that due to this accord between them, the cock crows in the morning when the sun is about to rise and crow in the evening when the sun is about to set. The cock announced to the animals that the sun would rise the next day and urged all the animals to watch and welcome the sun. It was decided that the first animal that catches sight of the sun will be considered the eldest animal. All the animals were waiting to catch sight of the sun the next day. The cat shrewdly went to the extreme west and waits for the sight of the sun. As the cat was waiting from the extreme west, the cat first caught sight of the sun, and announced to other animals. Therefore, the cat is considered the eldest animal.

The older people narrated that unity among the Poumais was one of their hallmarks in the olden days. They did not only help each other in all their activities, but they also love sharing their wealth, food and rice beer among them. The Meitei called the tribals *Hao* because when the tribal people worked together, they sing *hao, hao, hao*. Since immemorial, Poumai people always work together in a group. When Poumai people work in the field or carry anything in a group, they usually sing together *hao, hao, hao*. In another version, *Hao* means the chief's descendants or the royal people (Stephen, K.S. Personal interview. 21th June 2020).

Poumai ancestors defend and protect their village land since time immemorial. It is said that enmity and headhunting started among them due to their boundary dispute and hunting expedition to their neighbouring territory. When they practised headhunting, people honour and respect those warriors who slew the enemy and brought heads. It is taboo to disrespect a corpse, even during the war. It is said that some great warriors did not respect the corpse when they beheaded their enemy. The older people who are well versed in the oral tradition narrated that those great warriors who made fun with the corpse lost even their generation because they violated the taboos. R.V Weapon has rightly stated how women played an important role when the people practiced headhunting culture:

“Women played an important role between neighbouring villages, they brought reconciliation, love and peace amongst Poumais during the practice of headhunting culture. Inter village marriage was commonly practised by all the Poumai villages for security and to bring brotherhood amongst them. During the war between villages, women who were married to other villages go to their village on behalf of the village with rice beer and cooked meat to ask forgiveness and brought reconciliation among the villages” (2).

Before the dawn of modern education in Poumai community, they erect monolith stones to mark their achievements. It is taboo to erect stones without performing rites and prior permission from the village council. The monolith stones erected in the past have a connection with the oral tradition of the community. Since ancestors were illiterate, they did not write anything on the monolith stones. They brought monolith stones from different locations, and the stones have different shapes and sizes. Jelle J.P Wouter has asserted that " the local command of monoliths lies in their robustness. They withstand and endure, unlike wood that rots, clay that dissembles, and unlike humans who decompose" (21). He further asserted based on his personal experiences, "A study of the social lives of such stones can provide a window into the past, casting rays of light on a history that has gone largely unwritten and undocumented, although not, of course, unremembered as rich repertoires of oral history flourish from one Naga to the next" (ibid.). They erected monolith stones near their village gate. These stones are erected when a family performed feast of merit or the villagers erected them for ritualistic purpose. The Poumai forefathers did not worship stone, but they acknowledged that stones have a spirit. They believed stones possess different spirits. Some possess good spirits, and some possess a bad spirit. Most of the Poumai ancestral villages traced back their village history of migration and settlement through the stones erected by their ancestors at the time of settlement.

The monolith stones erected by the ancestors depict the ancestral community life of the Poumai Naga. Concerning menhirs erected by the forefathers, Haimendorf asserted that they are "a living and vital part of the Naga culture" (24). The wealthy people compete to erect monolith stones as they measured their wealth by the stone they erect. They considered monolith stones as a trophy of one's achievement in life and in this way, they preserved their stones. The monolith stones erected on the village's outskirts portray the unity and prosperity of the village in the past.

Though they were not educated and engaged most of their time in field works, the people had a strong bond of brotherhood and a sense of oneness as one community. The monolith stones remind the past community life of the Poumai Naga. It reminds the past glory of the Poumai community life where hosting a feast of merit was considered the highest achievement in life. People work hard in order to host the feast. They did not erect the monolith stone within the village compound, for they believed that stone possesses a spirit. Therefore, they did not dare to bring stone inside the village compound because they feared that it would curse the villagers. They did not erect stone within the village because they believed malevolent spirits dwell near the big stone and the cave. Different stones were erected and placed in different places for different purposes. People predict their luck during war or weather, and during paddy plantations, they performed rites involving these stones. They distinguish the stones as male and female, dead and living stones. The feast of merit stones is different from those stones which predict luck by performing rituals (Tunyi 69).

All the Poumai indigenous villages construct traditional stone platforms in their village compound in the past. These stone platforms serve as a village community hall. The stone platforms were built on the raised ground to view the village and get sunlight early in the morning and late in the evening. Women are taboo to step over the stone platform and sit with men folks. Women are taboo to step over the stone platforms due to their physical nature. They believed that if women step over the stone platform during their monthly period, it brings misfortune to the village. Before they go to the field, they assemble in the village stone platforms and spend time sharing their rice beer.

Moreover, in the evening, when they are back from the field, they gathered with their rice beer at the stone platform and spent time together narrating folktales, and singing folksong. The stone platforms served as an open village court or open community hall. They held any meeting from this stone platform as there was no community hall. Furthermore, they discussed all the disputes and gave a verdict by the village council from this platform. The male members of a clan or an individual constructed the stone platforms to mark significant achievement, events and boundaries etc. The construction of stone platforms within the village is not limited; the bigger villages had more stone platforms. In the olden days, when men folks became old and retired from the daily work, they spend most of their time together at the village stone platforms. From the stone platform, old folks taught their history, culture, traditions, belief to youngsters. In this

way, they passed down their history, culture, belief and customs from generation to generation. Z.K Pahrii, a renowned Poumai scholar, has rightly stated that "In the absence of newspapers, the platforms served as a place of dissemination of news. Almost all male members would come there whenever they are free and interact with each other. Suggestions for the improvement of their society, personal observation of someone's life, dreams, events and challenges were all part of the discussion. Hence, all the news and issues, ranging from personal through the village and the world were discussed" (47). Before modern institution was introduced in Poumai region, stone platforms also served as an institution of learning like a dormitory. Stone platforms not only served as a recreational platform for the old folks. During festivals or any special occasion, the villagers exchange food and rice beer, and eat together at the stone platform—the unity and community way of life is displayed through the stone platforms in the village compound. The united and wealthy villages constructed more stone platforms. These stone platforms are still intact and preserved though they do not hold the meeting and drink rice beer like in the past from these platforms.

3.2 The Gist of Folklore in the Poumai Community Life

The Poumai Naga history is based on oral tradition. The Poumai Naga oral tradition is not only folksongs and folktales passed down from generation to generation. In the Poumai community, folklores such as traditional beliefs, customs, and legends constituted and governed the ancestral community life. The folklores are the assets and pride of the Poumai community. The history and ancestral community life of the Poumai Naga are passed down through word of mouth, such as legends, myths and customs to the present generation. Their social, ethical values, morals, and structure are based on legends, beliefs, and religion. The history of migration, settlement, culture, customs, beliefs that shaped their community life is still alive in the present society. Their traditional beliefs, customs, stories represent their ideal community life. Through folklore they passed down their social structure of community living to the next generation. The community life was simple, yet they advocate justice. Their traditional taboo, their phrase 'God forbid', and sense of 'civic shame' played the most crucial role and maintained social order in the society.

3.3 Regulation of Erecting Menhir

In the olden days, Nagas did not simply erect a menhir when they performed 'Feast of Merit'. It may be mentioned here that, the Tenyimia like the Israelites erect their feast monolith.

They erect the monolith, the front-facing toward the north and the back toward the south. It is believed that some unwanted incidents happened in Poumai village due to neglecting the regulation of erecting the monolith. One person died after a short illness for neglecting the regulation of erecting the monolith when he performed the Feast of Merit. In the pre-Christian era, only Tenyime tribes erect monolith stones. As Christianity came first to those Naga tribes who did not practice erecting a monolith stone, they distorted the culture of erecting a monolith stone. The older people who are well versed in oral tradition stated that due to overriding the age-old regulation of erecting memorial stones, various misfortunes occurred in that generation. The Israelites and the Poumai ancestors share some common cultures before Christianity is introduced in Nagas territory. The ancient Poumai culture and regulations of erecting a stone monolith and celebrating festivals are linked with Israelite culture. Like the Israelites, Poumai also celebrates three major festivals in a year: *Tathou nii*, *Donii*, and *Laonii* (Thaio, D.S. Personal interview. 5th March 2019).

3.4 Origin of *Poutai* (Poumai Indigenous Salt)

According to Poumai legend, there was a woman called Pairai from Saranamai village. As salt is scarce in Poumai area, people did not add salt to their curry. When Pairai husband cooked food, the food was not delicious since he did not add salt. However, whenever Pairai cooked food for the family, the food was delicious. On one occasion, Pairai husband peeped while his wife was cooking; he saw Pairai adding her saliva in the curry. He understood that her curry was delicious because she adds her saliva to the curry when she cooks. When he came to know her cooking method, he did not want to eat her food. He divorces his wife and banishes her from the village. The legend narrates that she went to Marangphung Tangkhul village via Pouhma (Thiwa) village. It is believed that in the spot where she spits her saliva and pee, the water is salty, and salt can be obtained. The researcher interviewed Marangphung villagers and they narrated that according to their village legend, a superwoman migrated from the Poumai area and she lived near the village. She has long hands and legs. Whenever she passed the village, she steals eggs with her long hands. The legend asserted that her walking step was more than a kilometre, and she walks around the region. The villagers stated that she died near the village, and they believed that the spots where she pees and spits the water are salty. The villagers make traditional salt and supply it to the surrounding villages.

In the past, Poumais bought salt from Marangphung village, Poumais called the salt that is made at Marangphung village as Pou Tyai (Poumai salt). Poumais believe that Pairai must have spat while crossing Pouhmai village. The older people state that there could be more salty water sources in the adjoining villages.



Fig.3.2. Salty pond at Marangphung village



Fig.3.3. *Pou Tyai* (Poumai salt)

3.5 Indigenous Poumai Pottery

The pottery of Poumai is linked to Oinam village since time immemorial. It is believed that they produced pot before they dispersed from Makhel, the original dispersal site of Tenyimia. According to Poumai legend, folksong and folktale, Painaorou, the mother of humankind, blessed the ancestor of Oinam with the art of making pot. The legend says that the matriarch lived with her children for some years after the death of Tenyimia's patriarch. While she was alive, she taught household chores to her children and how to cultivate the paddy. On her deathbed, Painarao summoned all her children and presented a gift to her children before she died. The legend says she presented an iron to Meitei ancestor, telling him to make a pot. She presented a piece of soft clay to Oinam ancestor, telling him to make an earthen pot. She told her children to use earthen pot while performing rites and rituals without which a rite or ritual is not complete. Therefore, in the olden days, Tenyimia tribes used Oinam earthen pots while performing their rites and rituals.

Naga tribes that used Oinam earthen pots are Tangkhuls, Maram, Mao and Chakhesang. The Tenyimia tribes used Oinam earthen pots while performing the birth of a child, Feast of Merit, harvest, house dedication, marriage ceremony, rites, and rituals. It is said that when Oinam earthen pot is not available while performing their rites and rituals, they used a broken piece of Oinam earthen pot to complete their rites. In this way, Poumai earthen pots are inseparable with their religious ceremonies.

It is believed that Tenyimia ancestors lived together around 50 years at Makhel before they dispersed to a different direction in search of the new settlement. They dispersed in different directions as their population was thriving, the place became congested to live together. The ancestor of Oinam, along with the other ancestors of Lepaona crossed Barak river and halted at Paodeifii, the present Koide village, for some years before they permanently settled at their respective villages. The ancestor of Oinam, while in search of a new settlement, explored the clay with his walking stick. He discovered the same type of clay found in Makhel at Oinam hill. As he discovered the same type of clay, he permanently settled at present Oinam village and produced earthen pots. The literary meaning of Oinam or Ngimai in Poumai language means the site discovered through smelling of clay.

The pottery of Poumai is found and successfully produced only at Oinam village. As per their tradition, womenfolks make earthen pots and menfolks are taboo to make pots. Only those women born from Oinam village make the earthen pots. It is said that though a woman whose origin is from Oinam, once married outside the village used the same type of clay but is not successful in making the earthen pot outside Oinam village. It is said that earthen pots made outside Oinam village usually cracks while drying near the fire. The Poumais strongly believed that God has truly blessed the art of pottery to Oinam womenfolks.

Three types of different clays are used while making earthen pots and other utensils. The three types of clays are 1. Black clay. 2. Brown clay and 3. Red clay. The particular clays are different from ordinary clay though the colour is similar. The clay used in making pots can be differentiated from the smell and weight of ordinary clay. The three different types of clays are found in different locations. The potters examine the clay properly before they use the clay for pottery. Once they examined the right clay and chose the particular site, they performed a ritual before using the clay. A black unblemished cock was usually sacrificed at the place where they chose to use the clay. A ritual was performed to appease the deity so that the clay can be used for

making the pots productively. The potters produced different designs and utensils. Some of the utensils made in Oinam are cooking pot, jug, cup, pitcher, curry pot, bowl, flower vessel.

Before modern utensils are introduced during the pre-Christian era, the tribes dispersed from Makhel used the earthen pots manufactured at Oinam. Oinam pottery is commonly used, and the demand was higher than the produce. Most of the products are traded through the barter system. With the coming of modern products, the pottery of Poumai is replaced by modern utensils. Though the demand is less, still people use earthen pots in different ways.

3.6 Traditional Ceremony of Buffalo Dragging

According to Poumai folklore, Naga ancestors came from the furious flood. Some consider the furious flood mentioned in the book of Genesis, and that the culture of offering some food and drink to God before they drink and eat had passed down from Noah. When Noah family came out from the ark, he first offered burnt offerings to God. The ceremony of buffalo dragging which leads to the death of the animal has a close affinity with the Isreal culture. It takes a long process to host the feast of merit. The host family go through hard times preparing mentally, physically and economically. Poumai ancestors considered the buffalo as one of the most important animals and considered the biggest animal. The host family trained buffalo before they offered the village to drag and kill as part of the feast ceremonial rite. The meat of this buffalo is cut equally into pieces and distributed to every household of the village. The host family slaughters buffaloes without blemish. According to their custom, they are forbidden to slaughter a blind buffalo, those without whorls of hair on both sides of the body, broken horn, wrecked ears, defective leg and defective tail. They are not cruel people but they dragged the buffalo to death according to their culture with respect and sympathy.

The event was held in the afternoon at the village public ground. The owner usually blesses his buffalo not to assault anyone though people beat him, before handing over his buffalo to the village youths. The buffalo is kept near the public ground before the ceremony. The youths tied the animal with a rope on the head and legs, to pull back when the buffalo tries to run away and tries to attack them. A person who performed the rituals of the feast of merit tamed the buffalo and tied it with a rope. After the ceremony is performed, they brought the buffalo to the public ground where the village youths wait with sticks. Some of the youths drag the rope tied on the head, and some pull the rope tied on the leg. They start to make whooping sounds and some youths with sticks start striking the buffalo in the public ground until the buffalo got exhausted.

After the ceremony of dragging, the youths bring the buffalo to the host house. They fixed two wooden posts to tie the buffalo, and they strangled and pierced the animal with the spear to death. When the village menfolk have beaten the buffalo, the priest pierced it from the side with a spear.

According to their custom, they dragged, strangled and pierced the buffalo to death in this way. When there was more than one performer of the feast in a year, they let their buffaloes fight at the village public ground as per their tradition. At the sight of these animals, they would invariably express their sorrowful wish that the animals might not be killed for the festive sacrifice. The villagers beat their chest when they hear the whoop of the youth to begin the ceremony of dragging the animal. Nonetheless, the animals would win the heart of the village folk by allowing them to strangled them to death on the wooden posts as a perfect sacrifice. (50th Anniversary souvenir of Paomata Govt. high school 48-49).

3.7 Soutouyou (Treaty of Peace)

The headhunting was considered dignified as an act of valour among the menfolk of the warring Naga villages. In the wake of Christianity, the people realised the threat of such barbaric practices. The warring villages came to understand and stopped hunting human heads by slaughtering cows or buffaloes, vowing to stop the evil culture.

Rituals of peace treaty: After signing a treaty of peace, both the village headmen and the village authority announced the following resolutions of the treaty of peace to the villagers to be strictly observed by both the villagers:-

- 1) Headhunting against the village involved in the treaty is forbidden.
- 2) Shall not commit adultery.
- 3) Shall not steal other properties.
- 4) Shall not occupy other land or remove boundary stones.
- 5) Shall not sin against each other.

On the treaty day, after the men folks whooped in the backyard of the village chief, the two village chiefs exchange their spears, swearing to stop waging war and build a strong relationship as friends and neighbours after that. After the announcement of resolutions and promises made in the treaty by the headman, all the men folks wear their traditional attires and

arrange a big feast where they had the best rice beer and meat as a treaty feast (Ngari Raidulomai Lower Baptist church 1-2).

3.8 Socio-Cultural Life of the Poumai Naga Tribe

The Poumai Naga tribe, as one of the major and oldest tribes of Naga people, has its distinct cultural heritage. The identity of Poumai Naga can be identified through their folksongs, folktales, customs, dances, tradition, religion, feasts, games, festivals, dresses, ornament, rituals, practices, handicrafts etc. In the olden days, the life and activities of Poumais were within their village. In Poumai Naga society, there is no class and caste system and any social distinction between them, and therefore, every person enjoys equal rights. The Poumais are by nature cheerful, humorous, hospitable, honest and industrious. They live in a simple house built without the nail as it was not available. They only used jungle vines to build their house. They did not lock their house even when they go to the field. They had their traditional bed; they carved their bed from the big log.



Fig.3.4. Poumai traditional commoners house



Fig.3.5. Poumai traditional carved bed

The people practice several customary laws and traditions in their societal formation. For instance, they practised the dormitory systems, where separate dormitories are allotted for the bachelors and the maidens. Unmarried young men socialize and sleep together in their own dormitory, and also women also sleep together in groups, usually with their own group. The spinsters and married women can be identified from their hairstyles. The spinsters keep their hair short, and the married women tied back their hair in a ponytail. They expect young people to greet elders when they meet, and women greet men before men greeted them. They believed that if elders greet young people first, they have a short span of life. They considered those women who are not under the control of their husbands, do not greet and respect men in general to be disrespectful. In the present Poumai society, as Poumais have abandoned their ancient culture, women also lack respect for men like in the past. The piercing of the ears of both men and women was their culture. It is said that God was not pleased with humans because of their disobedience. Thus, God let humans pierce their ears. In the olden days, though a person does not pierce his/her ears while alive, it was a tradition to pierce the ears after death (Thaio, D.S. Personal interview. 2nd May 2019).

The Poumai Naga society is agrarian, as agriculture is the main source of livelihood. Apart from agriculture, hunting is one of the best traditional pastimes. When hunters killed wild boar or deer in the hunting expedition, young lads are invited to eat the head of the hunted animal. The bone of the head is forbidden to be broken while eating the flesh. There was no separate place for men and domesticated animals; they kept their animals in front of their house. Traditions, laws, customs, beliefs and social structures were very central to the socio-cultural life

of the Poumais. All the social activities and individual life are closely linked to their social structures, customs and beliefs. Poumais followed patriarchy and the patrilineal system, where the father is the head of the family. Men wear a loincloth and a traditional shawl. They also wear ornaments such as armlets, shin guards, necklaces, earrings etc. They usually trimmed their hair according to their status in society. Women are fond of decorating their bodies with various ornaments. They wear bangles, necklaces, earrings, clothes tight knotted on both the shoulders and skirts that reach their knees.

The practice of the traditional religion of Poumai Naga was considered animism as described by the early Christian missionaries (Horam 59). They believed in one supreme God and the spirits. Festivals are one of the main social activities of the Poumais tribe. All the festivals are celebrated by observing religious rites and rituals stringently. Though Poumais speak different dialects, the common language of the Poumais is called *Poula*. Some important practices and laws provide a good atmosphere and safety for society, like traditional customary laws and Christian laws and duties. There is no other more significant law than these two law and order in Poumai Naga society.

3.9 Festivals

Festivals are one of the main social activities in the life of Poumai Naga. The Poumais have got long nourished traditional festivals in which both rich and poor take part equally. The traditional festivals are celebrated, keeping all the rites and rituals firmly. Though different villages on different occasions celebrate specific unique festivals, they have similar traits and purposes. The Poumai villages have common customs and traditions in their ceremonial festivals, religion, songs, dance, legends, art, customary law etc. Poumais being agrarians, agriculture and festivals go together throughout the year. The festivals revolve around the agricultural cycle, observing varied rites and rituals according to the lunar month. In this way, festivals and feasts provide awareness to the people of the importance of spiritual aspects and values while observing all the rites and rituals during the festivals.

The Poumai traditional festival rituals and rites are varied according to the festival and celebrated on different occasions. Some of the common festivals are, *Thounii* (harvesting/new year festival), *Raimarounii* (seed sowing festival), *Zhosou* (feast of merit), *Laonii* (post-transplantation festival), *Khanglouni* (Group festival), *Ramyapzii/Reiziiyu* (Camping in the jungle). All these festivals are celebrated with blissful sharing, eating, singing and dancing.

Celebrating all these festivals keep alive the old traditional cultures. While celebrating these festivals, young people learn their old traditional cultures and values. Festival and feast are held throughout the year along with the agricultural lunar month. They celebrate the different feasts with the purpose. Some of the feasts which elevate their social status are as follow:

1. *Vouve* : As per Poumai custom, when a man gets married, he offered meat to the villagers signifying his passage to married life and averting unexpected misfortunes and diseases that befall his family. This offering of meat also served as the beginning of *Mouzii* feast in the coming year.

2. *Mouzii*: In olden times, before a family performs the Feast of Merit, the performer of the feast has to offer rice beer, slaughter buffalo and distributed meat to all households in the village. The feast signifies the first stage of preparation to perform the Feast of Merit. The feast displays the wealth and generosity of the performer.

3. *Hrihu*: The performer of this feast performed rite by offering an unblemished ox to the adjacent villages. It is a kind of displaying and sharing of wealth to the neighbouring villages.

4. *Khokhoh*: The performer of this rite invites the village folks and offers a grand feast. The village folks come along with a stone each to the performer house to dine with him. The stones brought by the villagers are piled up and made a traditional stone platform. In such stone platforms village, folks drank rice beer and held meetings.

5. *Liishoh*: The performer of the Feast of Merit erects a wooden trunk and placed buffalo heads on top of the trunk. The heads of the buffalo slaughtered during the feast are kept to be cherished, and it indicates that the owner has offered a feast to the villagers.

6. *Chichi*: This rite is the last rite a person performs to achieve their community's highest status. According to their custom, the performer of this rite has to rear a pig for seven years. The performer slaughtered the pig after seven years and dried the meat. The dried meat is distributed to their neighbouring villages. After distributing the dried meat, the performer attained the highest social status and was honour by the villagers. Though they practised headhunting, they are forbidden to attack and kill the performer of this rite. During the war between the two villages, he acts as a mediator and declares a truce for six months to reconcile and bring them closer to live together in peace. At the dead of such a person, the villages that share the dried meat mourn and observe the day. The villagers came to the funeral service along with rice beer in a gourd to present the bereaved family. The bereaved family collected rice beer and put it in a

wooden vessel to offer those who came to mourn and attend funeral service. The deceased family slaughtered cow or buffalo and distributed it to the people present in the funeral service. The meat is called *Pyasou* in Poumai language. This meat is forbidden to be cooked in the main hearth, and a separate pot is reserved to cook this meat. The particular pot that is used to cook this meat is called *Pyali* in Poumai language (Poumai Thounii Souvenir 23).

The following festivals are some of the major traditional festivals that have passed down from generations.

3.9.1 Maruni (Traditional Seed Sowing Festival)

Of all the festivals, *Maru* festival is one of the biggest and most important festivals celebrated by the Ngari villages. It is a famous festival among Poumais as well as among the neighbouring Tangkhul villages. The festival falls during the favourable time of spring when new leaves begin to grow, and the flowers start blooming. Cuckoo (Kutu), the season bird, the harbinger of spring, comes during this festival. *Maru* festival is the festival of seed sowing, celebrated in March. The festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm and traditional gaiety. It is an expensive and exciting event in the village. As was practised in the olden days, counting the date when reaching 20 was done in descending order by starting from 9 downward. In this manner, on the eight days of the month, the festival started. The festival is observed for five days. It is mandatory that, on the evening of the seventh day of the month (2nd day of the festival), every household should kill a cock, mingled with different meats and cook a delicious curry called *mothokvan* (*Thoukhaovii*) in a new pot to be eaten for two days. It was taboo to share this curry with the guests in the past. On the sixth day of the month (3rd day of the festival), early in the morning, either father or mother of every household sow seeds in their respective fields. The persons who sow seeds observe certain rites from the beginning of the month. He/ she should avoid taking any food which is considered taboo for the purpose. The couple should also restrain themselves from their usual activities and keep away from sharing the same bed until they sow the seed. On the fifth day of the month (fourth day of the festival), the bachelors of the neighbouring villages visit the village for wrestling. A big gathering takes place on the same night for wrestling between the visiting bachelors and the locals. This traditional Naga wrestling is one of the fascinating events of the festival. On the fourth day of the month (fifth day of the festival), visitors leave the village as they are forbidden to stay at the village beyond that as per the village's customs.



Fig.3.6. Traditional games tug of war and Naga wrestling during *Maru* festival

Cock rituals: A ceremony rite is performed in the festival to forecast the prospect of the coming monsoon of the year. This rite is performed by slashing the mouth of the chicken with a sharpened slice of bamboo. If blood gushes out when the mouth was slashed, it was a favourable sign of a good monsoon. On the other hand, if the mouth remains with mere blood saturation when slashed, it shows that there will be a weak and dry monsoon that year. The blood that gushed out from the chicken's mouth was dropped over the seeds to be sown. During the five days of this festival, it usually happens that the weather is cloudy with thunder and showers even to this day. If nothing of such weather condition occurs during the festival, it is believed that there will be insufficient rainfall that year. Even to this day, all the neighbouring villages curiously await the news of this ceremonial rite. With this news, the visitors of this festival return home and make known the information in their respective villages.



Fig.3.7. Traditional killing of a chicken with the help of sharpened slice bamboo

Post-Marriage Feast: - As a custom, on the first day of the festival, bachelors of the male's clan and the couple visit the girl's family for the feast usually offered by the female's family. As a token of love for their sisters and daughters, female families give presents in the form of cooked meat, cock, legs and heads of animals etc. The presents of cooked meat are distributed among the families of the male's clan and the whole households of the village, depending on the presentations.

The beauty and the significance of this festival upholds traditional values and customs. Before this festival, no one can sow any seed as it has to start with a certain rite. The people strongly believe in the ceremonial rites performed during the festival. Certain beliefs and rites give uniformity to the villagers because no one is permitted to go against the law of the festival. This festival brings together near and dear ones who stay away from their family. The following song is a recent song composed by S.P. Pune:

MARUNI (RAIMAROUNI) THEME SONG

*Raimarou khou hai vei ngaolou zii,
Siinghounou lapawe, siipa pawe;
Deiphao mainou Raimarou Khouhi matai thouwe,
Khai teile veilaiho shilaisa touyu hai;
Raimarou khou, hinou ngaowe.*

*Chorus: Teibe kounou, Rakuttu Rawoka,
Teilesii cho anou bude;
Raimarou khou hisii puh tapade,
Teibe kounou teinou bou khede,
Teinou side teiriide Raimarou khou sii ve ngaode;
Leshiye, leshiye, rakuttu siibe avei peinou;
Ve taolou-a-kuttu, kuttu teanou rayuhai siilou-a,
Deiphao mainou kuttu-o neye leshie;
Jehovahnou teile chopei vanou.
Maphao ye sii paosholai.*

Deiphao mainou Raimarou khou hai,

*Dai souchi veilai sa tea nou khowe;
Kuttu nou siimano pei hinou tao-a rawe,
Kuttunou arawe Raimairou khou vede;
Touyu hai deiphao mai siiloue.*

*Kuttunou paomazii khoungaoloua,
Siih thou kro hai poloua thai maichi hoe;
Kuttunou athai maihi paowe siihthou krohai,
Ahri maivei toushoe teanou poho mangaoe;
Rakuttu-o neye leshi.*

English translation

When the month of Maru festival falls,
New leaves begin to sprout and flower blooms;
People sow seeds this month,
The year's climatic conditions,
Is foretold during the month of Maru festival.
Chorus:
Cuckoo sings from the western coast,
Counting the time;
She has moved out during this month,
The sky has become cloudy from the west; the sky thundered and rained.
The month of March has arrived.
Lovely, lovely, is the sight of a cuckoo perched on a beautiful branch;
As she chants "kuttu kuttu",
Hearing her song, the world says, "We love you oh cuckoo,
For counting the time of God".
Praise be to the Lord.
The people of Earth,
Keenly wait for the month of Maru (March);
Cuckoo rested on top of a tree,

Chanting that the month of Maru has come;
Hearing the chant, people can discern the month of Maru.
With the onset of August,
She takes a bunch of millet to the world of death;
Cuckoo then tells them that it is the food of the living,
Oh! Cuckoo, we love you.

3.9.2 Viisam/ Laonii Festival

The *Viisam/laonii* is a major traditional festival; the festival occurs right after the transplantation every year. It falls in the month of Lao (July). The phrase *Laonii* is *derived* from two syllabus *Lao* means sanctification, and *nii* means festival. The literal meaning of *Laonii* means sanctification festival. The duration of this festival is varied; the people of Chilivai and Paomata celebrate five days, whereas Lepaona celebrates for nine days. *Laonii* is one of the festivals celebrated by the Poumais generally with the same objectives though celebrated on different occasions according to the fitting time of the village. One of the objectives of celebrating *Laonii* is tracing family lineage and renewing ties with brothers, sisters, relatives and friends.

During this festival, brothers present a gift in the form of meat to their married sisters. *Laonii* is one of the most important customary festivals of the Poumai Naga; during this festival, all the rituals and rites of *Laonii* are performed. *Laonii* is celebrated lavishly, and no family should be short of meat and rice beer during the festival. During *Laonii* festival, no one should be denied to borrow paddy or meat if anyone approaches them. Every family prepared rice beer in advance for the family and shared it with friends and neighbours during the festival. Some of the Poumai villages observed *genna* on the first and second day of the festival, asking their deity to sanctify their house.

Moreover, in this festival, they performed the sacred ceremony for the male child who is three years old. This ceremonial celebration is called *Loutouyu*. This ceremony ritual was performed by the priest who had performed in feast of merit. The male relatives of newly born sons are invited to the ceremonial celebration. The parents killed several unblemished cocks in this *Loutouyu* celebration. They usually ignite the fire and cook in a new hearth. Women folks are taboo to involve in these sacred rituals. They offered the heart of the cock to their deity; they

invoke God to protect them from all evils. After they offered the heart of the cock, they performed a ritual to bless the male child. After completing these rituals, a male child is considered a bonafide member of the village to enjoy equal rights with his fellow villagers. The five phases of Laonii celebrated in the past are as follow:

Chazii: The first day of the festival is called *chazii*. On the first day, they performed a ceremony of male purification. They slaughtered an unblemished cow at dawn and distributed a piece of meat to every household of the village as *Laonii soukhu*. It was their tradition to dry the meat and keep it for one year; this meat was used while performing rites and rituals. After they distributed a piece of meat to all the village households, they slaughter other animals for the festival. They offered rice beer, and meat to their house deities to bless them with good health and a bountiful harvest.

Niidu: The main event of Laonii falls on the second day of the festival. They share *Laonii* rice beer and meat with their near and dear ones. On this day, they invite their sisters, relatives and friends to eat and drink to their heart's content. According to their custom, asking of debt, quarrelling is prohibited on the festival's second day. As required by the tradition, it was mandatory that on the morning of the festival's second day, every household sacrificed a chicken and performed a ceremonial rite for the coming harvest. With a feather of the sacrificed chicken in his hand, the family's father sways it at the house entrance and asks for a divine blessing for a bountiful harvest for the year.

Shepao: The third day of the festival is called *Shepao*. On this day visitors of the festival like sisters, relatives and friends leave the village as per their custom. It was their tradition to drop the visitors till the village gate or village boundary. The guests returned to their respective villages with meat and rice beer presented to them by their dear and near ones. This sharing, such as gifting of meat and rice beer at this festival, renews and strengthens their relationship.

Niidai: The fourth day of the festival is called *Niidai*. On the fourth day, they divided into different groups and played different indigenous games.

Phaohainey: The last day of the festival is called purification day. On this day, all the able village menfolks whooped when they go and take a bath in the river. They did not only purify themselves; they wash their weapons used in hunting and war. After they purified themselves and their weapons from the river, the priest who perform feast of merit rites and rituals bless all the menfolks by dabbing *Lou* (scented herb) with sacred water for bravery and victory. Upon

completing this ritual, they erect a tall pole in the middle of the village whereby a piece of pork is kept on top of the pole, and they pronounce the wrath and curse on the piece of meat and let it fly with the wind.

They make fire on a pole in front of their house at nightfalls until the festival is over. When they celebrate *Laoni* they brought a tree from the jungle and erected it in the village. They select few persons to cut down the tree to be erected as a festival column. They select a person whose name has a significant meaning and who has not slept with a woman. Persons who had slept with women are taboo to be the first to cut the tree. They erect the column cautiously; it was taboo to drop the column while erecting. People believe that if the column falls while erecting, the generation of those who cut down the tree gets extinct. The unity and strength of the village bachelors can be seen from the column of *Laoni* festival. Before the erection of the festival column, the owner of the bachelor's dormitory abstain from sleeping with his wife for five days. If the owner sleeps with his wife, misfortunes occur to the bachelors and the owner of the dormitory family. As usual, an insect called *Krankhii* (*Seikru*) comes just before or during the festival and sings *ri-ri-ri*, which shows that the transplantation period is over. Transplantation done after the coming of this insect does not have yield fruits.

Laonii was an exciting festival for the bachelors and females when they practised dormitory culture. During this occasion, both bachelors and maiden exchange gifts. The male presents gifts like pork, beef meat, and the female, offered rice beer and other food in return. The bachelors usually visited females' dormitory at night in a group and compete in singing folk songs was one of the main events during *laonii* festival. According to the tradition, *laonii* festival has to conclude with the village chief performing certain rituals for the villagers. The chief offered a cock to the deity by setting the cock free into the jungle. They believed that the offering of cock as a living sacrifice to their deity heals the diseases of the villagers.

3.9.3 Chozii/Zhousouyu (Feast of Merit)

It is believed that Meitei king and Maram king had a good relation in the past. On one occasion, the Meitei king visited the Maram Naga king to ask some critical questions. The Meitei king came along with two buffaloes with the same horns and size; he asked the Maram king which buffalo is the mother. An orphan was tending village cow; the boy told Maram King to

take the buffaloes into the pond; the boy told the king that the buffalo that submerge first is the mother. Accordingly, the king answered that the particular buffalo that submerged first is the mother. The Meitei king was shocked to hear the wise answer from the Maram king. Then the Meitei king asked a riddle to the Maram king, a mother and a daughter, the first woman has grey hair and teeth, and the other woman has black hair but without teeth. The king contemplated that a person's hair can turn grey at any time, but teeth will not remain when a person is old. Therefore, Maram king answered that a woman with teeth is the daughter. Then Meitei king presented a pen that has the same size at both the ends. He asked the Maram king to tell him which side is cap and barrel without opening the pen's cap. The orphan cowboy suggested that the king lift the pen and let it fall on the ground and that the side that first hit the ground is the barrel. Maram king answered according to the cowboy's suggestion. The Meitei king was amazed hearing the wise answers from Maram Naga king. Both kings' wives were pregnant when the Meitei king visited Maram king; Meitei king asked Maram king to let their children marry when they grew up. They agreed that they would let their children marry if their wives will give birth to a baby boy and a baby girl accordingly. The Maram queen gave birth to a baby girl and named her Kine. The Meitei king was blessed with a son.

When the kings became old with time, they let their children marry. On the wedding day, the Meitei king sent an elephant to fetch his daughter-in-law to Imphal. Kine went to Imphal on the back of an elephant on her wedding day. While riding on the elephant back to Imphal, Kine saw different creatures through her hallucination. On the first night, she could not sleep, thinking what made their parents to marry them though they are from different places. She decided that very night that she will present a shawl to her father. She sketched the shawl patterns, the gifts she received from her father-in-law and what she saw from her horrific hallucination on her way. Meitei king presented Kine elephant, garland, flower, bird as wedding gifts.

The next day she shows her sketches to her husband and asked him to present a shawl to her father with the sketches as patterns and motifs on the shawl. The prince concurs with the idea of presenting a shawl since the shawl will pass down generations. The shawl, called *Hapeiteisha* (buffalo horn shawl/ chief of chief's shawl), is entitled only to those who performed the Feast of Merit. Kine asked her father-in-law to make it a taboo for Meiteis to wear it as the shawl is given to her father by her as a wedding gift. The Meitei king solemnly prohibited Meiteis to wear the shawl, saying cursed be anyone who wears the shawl. The Maram king was pleased to receive

the first-ever shawl of its kind as a gift from his daughter. The Maram king blessed his daughter's family to live like a shining sun and moon. Women are forbidden to wear this coveted shawl, as this shawl is entitled only to men who host the Feast of Merit. Maram king thought that if he and only his descendants wear this shawl, people will not recognize the value of this shawl. Therefore, the king permitted those who perform the "Feast of Merit" to wear this shawl. After that, the Feast of Merit introduced in Maram and spread to other Naga tribes. The first family who performed the Feast of Merit among the other Naga tribes was Yongio from Koide village. The legend says that some Maram people migrated to Khonoma village, and Zapu Phizo, the father of Naga Nation, was a Maram descendant (Thaio, D.S. Personal interview. 2nd May 2019). As the feast of merit was very popular among the Naga tribes, some Khonoma villagers who migrated from Maram asked the rites and rituals of the feast from Maram to perform Feast of Merit. However, the people of Maram forgot the rites and rituals of the feast and taught them the wrong rites and rituals. Therefore, Maram tribe was the first Naga tribe that ceased to perform the Feast of Merit. God forbids them to perform the feast as they forgot the rites and rituals of the feast. In the olden days, only Tenyimia tribes were allowed to erect monolith stones when they performed 'Feast of Merit'. Thus other Naga tribes erect wooden trunks instead of stone when they performed the Feast of Merit.

The Feast of Merit was widespread and admired by many Naga tribes before the pre-Christian period. The Feast of Merit was one of the most important feasts, and festivals aspired by every married couple. The other reason was that people believe that performing Feast of Merit would bring blessings in the form of wealth, children and a long life span. The rich people in the village performed this feast to attain higher social status and respect in society. The socio-economic status of the village considered from the performance of the feast of merit. When there was none to perform the feast in the village, they considered the year as unceremonious and unproductive. The Feast of Merit is usually held in the last part of *Thouniikhhou* (Dec-Jan). The family who is to perform has to announce to the village by feeding rice beer to the villagers and distributes meat to every household of the village. This feast is called *Vaovii*. Once the person announced to village elders, he is forbidden to dispute with anyone as they considered incomplete if the whole villagers do not partake in the feast. Therefore, the performer avoids quarrelling with anyone, and he forgives others.

The villagers help the family in preparation for the feast, starting from ploughing the field till harvest. The rich people help the poor perform the feast by providing their paddy field without charging any amount or paddy. Many people performed Feast of Merit with the help of the villagers and the rich people in the village. The united villages had performed more Feast of Merit and erected more monolith stones in the village. After the performer of the feast performed the feast of *Vaovii*, the family performed a *genna* called *tho-tho*, eating of new rice. The husband and wife refrained from physical contact. The couple is prohibited from cutting hair and taking a bath until the feast is completed.

The performer of this feast required to keep two male buffaloes without blemish, one bull, and three healthy pigs and three to four barns of rice. The performer keeps the two buffalo away from the herd for about six months to feed them with exceptional and fresh fodder so the buffaloes will be healthy. The owner trained the buffaloes to obey the command as people will be dragging and beating it before they kill on the main day of the feast. The performer works hard to host the feast, preparing and performing several rituals before the feast. With these, a big feast is offered to the village folks to relish over varieties of food with meat and rice beer. One of the most challenging works is selecting the monolith stone for the feast. Before the performer selects a particular stone, he performed rites near the stone and decides according to his dream. They believed stone has its spirit and has different sex, male and female. The feast's significant feature is the pulling of monolith stone from the jungle and erecting it on behalf of the performer. A day is fixed in advance to pull the selected feast stone and erect. The monolith stone is erected either at the village gate, or nearby the village. All the able men folks of the village attired in their traditional dresses come out and pulled the stone engaged in advance by the performer by performing rites over it with traditional dance and songs. As per their tradition, pious persons who did not commit adultery look after the stone as pulling of the stone progress. People who had slept with women are forbidden to come near the stone. As the pulling was in progress, the women folks came out and watched the scene with excitement. In this way, they erect the stone to mark the achievement of the feast. The erection of monolith stone ceremony was held five days after they brought the stone from the jungle. Once they erected the monolith stone, they put the sacrifice buffalo's blood on the stone. This erected monolith stone stands as a mark of respect and status for the performer. Persons who had performed feast of merit were entitled to wear certain shawls called *hriirisii/hrasha* (a white shawl with big stitches in the middle) and

lukisii/hapeiteisha (buffalo horn shawl). These shawls serve as a sign of attaining a special status in society. Ordinary people are not entitled to wear these shawls in the past. At twilight, the village folks come to the host house with their traditional attires to celebrate the main event of the feast.

Before the village folks proceed to the host house, every clan member gathered at their respective village park. All the clan members proceed together to the host house, singing their traditional songs. The youths of the host's clan serves rice beer and meat to the village folks. In this way, the village folks celebrated the evening together. At the same time, while serving rice beer and meat, the male youth court the female by feeding them drinks and meat in their mouth. Widows are also allowed to perform the feast of merit even after the death of their husbands. The Poumai custom forbidden widows from erecting feast of merit stone. Thus, when a widow performed feast of merit, the stone is erected beside her husband's stone.



Fig.3.8. Widow monolith stone

Today the unity of the indigenous Poumai village can be seen through those Feast of Merit stones in the outskirts of the village. The big and united villages had erected bigger stones and more stones in their village compound. It is said that once upon a time, the present Sirong village has around 700 households. The Sirong village has erected one of the giant monolith stones and the highest number of Monoliths in Poumai Naga tribe. There are 302 feast monoliths in the village. The monoliths indicate that the village had around 700 households in the past. There are four distinct stones in the village, the name of the distinct stones are:

1. *Chuh Veo* (Stone's chief)
2. Hapou Paode (male stone)
3. Hapfii Ronai (female stone)

4. 4. *Zhosho Chuh teitei hi aduna* (biggest monolith stone).
5. Stone legs.

The Sirong villagers believed that stone has its legs. The villagers narrated that earlier, the two stone legs are taller than at present. They filled mud as the stones are about to fall due to poor foundation. It is said that the present Proumai five villages helped while erecting the giant stone as Sirong villagers alone could not erect the stone.



Fig.3.9. Stone's chief



Fig.3.10. Hapou Paode



Fig.3.11. Hapfii Ronai



Fig.3.12 Biggest monolith stone



Fig.3.13. Stone's legs



Fig.3.14. Monolith stones at Sirong village

The older people in the village who are well versed in the oral tradition narrated that before the performers of the Feast of Merit select and pull the particular stone, they took permission from *Hapuo Paode* and *Hapfii Ronai* by offering ginger and rice beer. According to their dream, they select the stone and pull the stone. If the dreams were not favourable, they would select a new stone. The people who did not perform the Feast of Merit, chopped off enemy heads, slept with girls were not respected in society. They did not have any voice in any decision making in the village meeting. Due to this ill-treatment in society, many people worked hard and performed the Feast of Merit to elevate their social status. The responsible elders encourage and help young married couples to perform the feast to elevate their social status and lead the village. At times warriors challenged those who had performed Feast of Merit to show their courage on the battlefield.

When a person performed the feast of merit, he builds a house covering half of the roof with wooden planks like a tin sheet. They considered this house as the house of a wealthy person. The typical horn house is permitted to be build only for those who had performed feast of merit. He curved buffalo horns and built the house. After this feast, the performer of the feast performed a feast called *Thouzhi*. The performer offered rice beer and distributed paddy and meat to the villagers. This feast signifies higher status and sharing of wealth. Then he performed the feast called *Chukokho*. In this feast, the performer constructs a stone platform near his house. The stone platform signifies the social position and status in the village. The credit of hosting a feast of merit was given to the wife, and constructing a typical horn house was given to the husband.



Fig.3.15. Traditional stone platform



Fig.3.16 Carved wooden vessel for brewing rice beer for the feast of merit

Surong Lifting (Feast of Accomplishment)

The feast of accomplishment was an honourable and rare feast performed by the persons who had achieved specific remarkable works and attained the highest social position in the village. Before this feast, the performer of this feast should have performed Feast of Merit twice as required by tradition. The importance of this event was *Surong-lifting* (wooden trunk). It was obligatory that all the able persons of the village in traditional dresses brought three wooden trunks looked out in advance by the performer. They erected at the gate of his house as honourable columns. The performer, in return, kills two male buffaloes, cut into equal pieces and distribute them as *soulan (souvii)* to all the households in the village. He also organizes a public gathering and offers a big day feast. After the big feast, as a continuation of this feast of accomplishment, the performer kills two to three male buffaloes and distributes *soulan (souvii)* to all the village men known as *kadi thanglanzii* (manly offered). At the death of such a person, the villagers mourn and observe five days as a mark of respect. The feast of accomplishment was considered to be the highest achievement in one's life. The following Poumai villages erect wooden trunks after performing feast of merit and erecting the feast stone in the past.

1. Ngari Raidulomai village
2. Ngari Raipalomai/Khullen village
3. Dumai/Khongdei village

4. Pouhmai/Thiwa village
5. Chingjaroi village



Fig.3.17. Surong (wooden trunk) and traditional unique house covering half of the roof with wooden planks



Fig.3.18. Hapeiteisha /Buffalo horn shawl



Fig.3.19. Hrasha (a white shawl with big stitches ordinary in the middle) shawl entitled only to those who people performed Feast of Merit



Fig.3.20. This simple shawl is worn by

3.9.4 Pao Shithene (Pre Paddy Plantation Festival)

Some of the Poumai villages celebrate this traditional festival. This festival falls in the second week of May every year before the paddy plantation begins. This festival is celebrated for two days observing rites and rituals, and indigenous games are played by young and old. In this festival, the village chief performed *genna* on behalf of the village for the coming paddy plantation. After the chief performed *genna*, he transplants the paddy sapling before the villagers start the paddy plantation. On the first day of the festival, the Naga wrestling competition is held between local bachelors and the visiting bachelors. Naga wrestling is one of the important indigenous games played by the Poumais in their traditional festival.

On the second day, both the villagers and the visiting guests go to the paddy field for the paddy plantation. Every household brings rice, rice beer and meat to the paddy and feed the workers. The day is exciting, especially for the bachelors and maidens to mingle and get to know each other in the paddy field. The bachelors usually visit different fields and help to plant the sapling. While planting, they get a chance to introduce themselves and get to know each other in the paddy field. Before the festival, the villagers usually invite neighbouring youths to help the plantation on the second day. It was their tradition to return home before sunset on the second day of this festival. In the evening, unmarried boys and girls gather at a different house and sing

folksong and drink rice beer. In this way, they build trust and relations between the neighbouring villages.

3.9.5 *Donii* (Post-Harvest Festival)

This traditional festival is celebrated after the completion of the harvest. This festival marks the end of the year. The festival is celebrated for two days. It was their tradition that every household baked rice bread in this festival. They exchange gifts in the form of bread, meat, rice beer etc. among friends and relatives. This festival is considered vital as it rebuilds their relationship with their old friends and relatives through their gifts during the festival. In this festival, they observed parting *genna* for the deceased souls called *kyo*. Poumais believed that before they observed parting *genna* the souls of the deceased continued to stay with the bereaved family. Before the bereaved family performed the parting *genna* they usually keep food and rice beer in the corner of the house for the deceased souls. They believed that the deceased souls eat the food provided for them at night. This *genna* is performed on the last day of *Donii* festival. The bereaved family kills the dog on this day, believing that the dog's soul accompanies the deceased soul to the land of the dead.

3.9.6 *Khanglouni* (Age-Group Festival)

This festival is an unforgettable and enjoyable occasion which falls at the end of every year. The village is divided into different groups based on age and seniority to raise funds as much as possible by selling labours throughout the year. This is a festival of sharing and harmony among different age groups. Each age group selects a house in advance for the feast to be held. As the festival starts, each group brought a wooden trunk and erected it as a festival column used to be smeared with pork fat and a piece of fat is kept on top of it. The young lads entertained by climbing the column. The festival was celebrated with excess meat and rice beer. This is the last of a year's festivals, which was celebrated after harvesting. Rituals like *fiikhitousii* (*baoloutouzu*), was performed for the newly replenished barns just before the festival. *Nayarzii*-rite is performed to prevent the spread of disease among children. *Mashuzii*- Sacrifices made for the dead were performed after this festival. This group festival is practised even to this day with much enthusiasm, which now falls during Christmas season.

3.9.7 *Ramyapzii/Reiziiyu* (Camping in the Jungle)

At the end of every year, all the village menfolk with well-packed food go to the jungle and camp at a place for a night which was already scouted out in advance by the village

bachelors. As they reach the place, they make fire with a dried slice of bamboo. In this peculiar manner, the fire was made and a giant bonfire set up, they spent and enjoyed the night with rice bear and meat. At midnight, the campers get up to curse the neighbouring villages that are waging war against the village. The following day, they wake up as early as possible, armed with sticks they rush to hunt for birds, and campers fasted while hunting the birds. When birds were caught, they tore it into pieces, distributed among them, and with a stick each, they poked it at the top of their sticks and marched home with the traditional fashion of singing folk song and danced to make their offering by placing them under a tree called *RAVIE (Reivah)* which was preserved for the purpose. The people regarded it as a sacred tree and look upon it with reverence and awe. After sacrificing the hunted meat to the sacred *RAVIE* tree, a rite is performed to see the luck of the coming year. A dish filled with fresh water and two feathers of birds, one cut at the top (considered enemy force), were made to fight in the dish. The two feathers, when put into the dish, actually fight and wrestle with each other. If the domestic force won the fight, it shows that there will be a boom time for the year. On the other hand, if the enemy force won the fight, it was a sign that hardship and misfortune awaited the year. The day was also observed as New Year in the past.

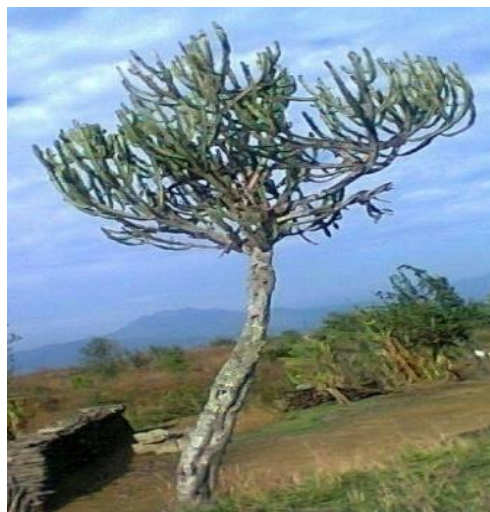


Fig.3.21. *RAVIE (Reivah)* tree

3.9.8 Thounii (Post-Harvest Festival)

It is one of the most important and common traditional festivals celebrated amongst the Poumai tribe for five days. The festival falls in January, starting from 18th to 22rd in the modern

calendar it falls in the first week of the month. The Poumais fix the day to celebrate *Thounii* on 5th January all over Poumai villages. The term “*Thounii*” is derived from “*Thouniikhou*” which is the first month (January) of the year. The word “*Thounii*” has two syllables “*Thou*” means new, and “*nii*” means festival. The festival of *Thounii* marks some important events of the Poumai Naga. As the festival indicates different events, the *Thounii* festival can be called in three different names. *Thounii* is a post-harvest festival celebrated when all the food grains are harvested and gathered. This festival can be called the 'Post harvesting Festival'. It is a time when people acknowledge their deity for a bountiful harvest and good health. *Thounii* festival can also be called “New Year Festival or the festival of dawn” as it falls in the first month of the New Year. *Thounii* festival is a festival of seed sowing, as Poumais start sowing the seeds after this festival is celebrated.

The village chief officially announces the date of the festival, seven days before the festival. In the olden days, *Thounii* festival is celebrated for seven days. It is recently celebrated only for five days. The first day of the festival is known as “*Shaa*”. On this day, people prepared their surroundings and houses for the festival. They prepare rice beer for the festival, and different kinds of local bread are baked and share with neighbours and relatives. The second day is called *Chiziiyu*, which means the consecration of the house. They slaughter animals for the festival and give thanks to their deity for the good harvest. The third day is called “*Shepao*”, which means sent off the guests. The guests should leave the village on the third day of the festival. The fourth day is known as “*Niidai*”, which means fourth day of the festival. On the fourth day, the menfolk whoop with their traditional attires, and the whole villagers gathered and shared their food and rice beer. The fifth day is known as “*Niingouto*”, which means the last day of the festival. On this day, all the strong and young menfolk of the village go out to the jungle to catch the particular bird call “*Seitu*” with their hands without any weapons and bring home to erect at the village gate. Thus, the festival comes to an end in this way.

Thounii is a festival where traditional cultures that were forgotten by the younger generation are rejuvenated. This festival provides traditional culture education to the young ones through traditional dances, games, folklore, folksongs. It also provides social interaction between rich and poor people. It is one of the festivals where people retrospect and revive the traditional culture by wearing ceremonial shawls and costumes. *Thounii* is an occasion where the community spend together and share their possessions and amusements. Rice beer, pork,

beef, chicken are the main provisions of the festival. In this festival, people invite their relatives, near and dear ones, friends for food, and other entertainment. During this festival, they declare and inaugurate the site of a new village to be set up. On the last day, the village chief concludes the festival by sowing the seeds on behalf of the village. *Thounii* heralds the coming of spring and reminds the farmers to start their work.



Fig.3.22. Folk dances performed during *Thounii* festival

3.10 Dress and Ornaments

The dresses and ornaments define the identity of a tribe. The traditional dresses and ornaments have their meaning and are worn according to the status of the person in the community. Setolu has rightly stated that "The dresses and ornaments of the people always have its significance among the community. Be it dresses or ornaments, the community identity lies in it. The patterns of the traditional dresses and ornaments always have a motive behind it. The people have no idea as to where their ancestor learnt the art of weaving. The village elders believed that their ancestors have probably learnt it from their neighbouring countries or they might have learnt from the place to where they have migrated" (77). Poumai has its own unique and colourful traditional attires, which are worn according to the occasion. They did not simply wear their traditional attires at any time or occasion. Different attires are worn on different occasions such as daily wear, festivals attires, singing or dancing dress, war attires and certain unique shawls for those who have achieved certain social status. In the olden days, the menfolk of Poumai were half-naked or naked while at work. They used to put a ring (made of bone) over their penis to protect it from harm and nakedness. There are two types of garments for the men,

for the upper and the lower. The upper garment was worn from the left shoulder and below the right arm. The lower garment is short and black cotton kilt embroidered with white cowries. They commonly wear a loincloth and a shawl on most occasions. Though ancestors were half-naked or naked, there was nothing to feel odd about, as it was their custom and tradition.

During important events or festivals, they wear traditional attires to show respect and keep their own identities. They wear *Roh-lai* (diadem), *Vee-hoxzii* (a colourful bird's feather), *Phao-hah*, *Paongi* (ivory bangles). There are different types of shawls, but some specific traditional attires are not permitted to be worn by common people. The people who had performed feast of merit were entitled to wear shawls called *hriiriisii/hrasha* (white shawl with big stitches in the middle) and *lukisii/hapeiteisha* (buffalo horn shawl) to show that these people have attained higher social status. Festival dresses are the most colourful and lively that exhibit different types of shawls. Many of the traditional attires are colourfully embroidered of different animals and weapons like shield and spear. Women attires are simple; they wore cloth worn around the waist which reaches below the knee. They wear *Lakiteisha* (black shawl with red and green stripes), *Bao-sa* (bangles), *Baoda* (brass bangle), *Toutah* or *Tou* (necklaces) and a pair of clothes tightly knotted on both the shoulders (Tenyimia Union 22). Children have their own dresses; when a baby boy reached one month or more, a strip made of cloth is tied around his waist. It is believed that it will help the boy to be strong when he became old. Unlike boys, girls start covering their bodies at an early age.

Poumais usually wear colourful ornaments, especially during festivals. They wear on their arms colourful ornaments such as ivory armlets, brass armlets and decorated with bird feathers in their ears. They wear rings of cane dyed black on their legs below the knee. Both men and women pierced their ears to decorate with colourful earrings. Poumai women did not put ornaments on their legs. They wear various colourful necklaces made of beads and long brass rings on their ears. Women ornaments have different varieties, they wear red cornelian beads, and they wear bangle on their arms. Ornaments indicate the wealth of the wearer. Therefore the rich people wore with honour and respect. In the past, women beauty is based on her character. They are expected to work hard and help with household chores. Every girl learns how to weave their own clothes, and they weave for their family. Unlike today people did not buy shawls from others; they weave their own shawls. They took time to master how to weave

delicate shawls. People can quickly know how professional the girl is from the shawl she weaves.



Fig.3.23. Poumais with their traditional attires

3.11 Traditional Dormitory

In the olden days, every Naga village, including every Poumai village has its dormitory system both for men and women. The dormitory is a big hall where bachelors and maidens sleep in their respective dormitories. It serves as a centre of entertainment in the evening when they come back to their dormitories from their daily activities. There are two types of dormitories, the men dormitory and the women dormitory. It is said that the term '*Morung*' is derived from Assamese (Shikhu 21). The name dormitory or *Morung* has different names among the Naga tribes. The significance and role of the dormitory system slightly differ from tribe to tribe. In Poumai villages, the dormitory plays a vital role as the base of learning, educating social values and serving as the centre of social control. In the dormitory, both men and women learned basic principles of social conduct, manner and behaviour. The dormitory was regarded as one of the important institutions for both men and women because they were trained with physical, mental, moral and spiritual needs. The rich people at times provided the rooms which serve as dormitories. According to Akong Ao, "*Morung* also served as incessant 'Watch Tower' to detect the incoming enemy's raid and for other village safety. The safety and prestige of the village were in the vigilance of *Morung*" (Ao 42). Major General S.C. Sardespande wrote about Khiamnungan society dormitory system as, "Dormitories are useful institutions where young boys and girls rub shoulders with their friends, develop their character and personality, learn the arts and crafts, get best possible social and cultural education and are methodically initiated into the basically strong tribal customary discipline of co-operative living, accommodating other

opinions and thoughts, adjusting the self to the group, and identifying the group as more important than the self. Problems of ego, complexes, immorality, selfishness and shyness are smoothened, and a much wholesome, mature and polished personality emerges as a social individual” (Sardespande 35).

3.11.1 Boys’ Dormitory

Every Poumai village had two to three bachelors’ dormitory according to the numbers of bachelors in the village. When a boy reached puberty (about seven or eight years), he enters the dormitory until he get married. Bachelors were permitted to visit girls' dormitory in groups at night time, and from there, boys started their romantic feeling toward women. Women were prohibited from stepping inside the boys' dormitory. The landlord of the dormitory was the main guardian to look after their needs and train them to become responsible people in society. In return, the bachelors helped the owner in any work when needed during their stay in the dormitory. The beds were made in the hall's attic, and the boys had to climb up with the help of a log ladder. According to Fürer-Haimendorf Naga, the bachelor dormitory was, "the men's house or Morung appeared, with its open front, like the wide-open mouth of some gigantic whale; numerous carved sticks and boards, dangling from the eaves, sounded soft as the wind hit them one against another. Powerful posts carried the palm-thatched roof, and gable carvings painted a faint red and forming the happiest contrast against a delicate blue sky, stretched their arms heavenwards" (Haimendorf 33). Inside the dormitory, they maintained strict discipline, and they were taught warriors skills, folksongs, dances, teamwork. In times of war, raids and head-hunting bachelors stay awake and guard the village.

3.11.2 Girls’ Dormitory

When a girl attained puberty, she sleeps in the dormitory after her evening meal. It is an important institution for unmarried girls where they were trained in every field before getting married. In the dormitory, she learned how to weave shawls, play music, sing folksongs, folk dance, and right discipline for women. In the olden days, the girls’ dormitory was one of the best places where girls were courted for life partners. Both boys and girls spent their youth with lots of merriments during their stay in their dormitories. When boys visit the girl's dormitory, they brought maize, fruits from the forest and shared them with girls. Girls also make rice beer and socialise with boys. The boys gather near the hearth of the female dormitory, whereas the female

engages with their handlooms. They had singing competitions between boys and girls and through songs they wooed each other. Every year during *Laonii* (post plantation of paddy festival), a feast called *Khachi votou* was observed. Before the feast, the owner of the dormitory repairs and fences the compound to rear pigs for the feast. He sets the pig free in the compound on the feast day to be killed with their bare hands. They cooked the meat and shared it with girls in a particular female dormitory. The boys use to feed pork fat to females as part of the entertainment. They spend the evening together with great fun, and they dedicate folksongs to each other.

3.12 Role of Family Members

The Poumai Naga family is divided into two, the chief family and the commoners family. The union of each clan forms Poumai villages, and there is no discrimination among the clans. The Poumai Naga family followed the patriarchal and patrilineal system. According to Murdock, "The family is a social group, characterized by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sides, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of sexually co-habiting adults" (Murdock 325). It is the primary social group that launched a society as a consequence of family formation.

Being a patriarchal society, the father acts as the head of the family in secular affairs and religious affairs and looks after his *khel*; if he managed his family well, he is highly respected. Even when it comes to religious matters, he acts as the priest of the family. Family plays an important role and contribute to different aspects of the welfare of the village. As agriculture is the mainstay and occupation, they prefer to have a big family to support their parents. In the past, most of the Poumai family have an average of five to six children. The parents expected their children to support and look after them in old age. When a family brought up a brave and strong warrior, people respect the warrior and the whole family. However, when a son or daughter brings shame to the family, the whole members are looked down upon by society. According to Poumai culture, both husband and wife do not call each other by their names. They called each other by their first child's name, like '*Reipao pfii or Reipao pou*', which means Reipao's father or Reipao's mother. As they practice and follow the nuclear family system, the status of the women

is not greatly impacted by the laws of the patriarchal society. Women were given specific rights to enjoy in society as discussed below. The functions and roles of the family members contributed to society.

3.12.1 Role of Elders

Poumai Naga Clan consists of a group of families descended from the same ancestor from the male line. The administration of the village is a democratic form of governance. Each clan represents the village council and looks after their clan, and safeguard the village. The head of the clan is usually conferred to the eldest. He directs and guides his clan affairs when things go wrong. He encourages his clansmen to live a harmonious life and strengthen the bond of the clan in every matter. To build the prestige and unity of the clan, the elders play a significant role through encouragement and advice to cooperate and help one another. The bond of the clan is so strong that they assist each other in almost every sphere, such as building their house, marriage preparation, sickness. The elders of the clan solved any dispute or problems that arise within the clan.

3.12.2 Role of Women

In Poumai society though women are viewed as weaker beings, they are respected in society. In the Poumai society, the violent dispute between couples is significantly less. A wife's position is secured and more respect is given to her after she bore a child. Those women who beget more children were regarded more by the family and by the society. Those barren women who did not beget children were looked down upon and not treated equally with those women who beget children. In society, divorce takes place for those who did not beget children. Widows and those who are divorced, were not encouraged to remarry; people look down upon those who remarry. Thus widows are more in the past than the present in society (Tiba 87).

The Poumai people followed the patriarchal system since time immemorial. Though the father is the head of the family, the mother takes part equally in different ways. Mother takes the responsibility of household chores such as gardening, looking after children's needs and educating them. The duties and responsibilities of the mother are diverse as her domesticity includes cooking, cleaning, washing, besides the other works that she does with her husband.

She always accompanies her husband to the field and helps him in almost every work, both of them are co-workers. G.Von Furer Haimendorf has written in his book, *The Naked Naga* about Naga women, "Many women in more civilized parts of India may well envy the woman of the Naga hills, their high status and their family and happy life; and if you measure the culture level of a people by the social position and personal freedom of its women, you will think twice before looking on the Naga as Savage"(20). Though women are not given power in village administrations, they are influential directly or indirectly in the society and have influence over their husbands in many ways. During headhunting days, women played a significant role in saving men's lives by acting as peacemakers among the Poumai society.

In the olden days, before Christianity came to Poumai society, numerous traditional rituals and rites are performed by women. In marriage engagement and marriage ceremonies, older women (priestesses) performed the rites. During the marriage ceremony, the priestess blessed the couple to have a happy family life. When the Feast of Merit was performed, the host's wife would first offer prayers and blessings upon the rice beer before serving so that the preparation for the feast did not run short. If the performer family did not observe all the rites and rituals well, it is said that the wooden vessel for brewing rice beer used to burst or leak. Although women are influential and play an important role in society, there are certain social prohibitions in society. Some of the prohibitions are as follow.

1. They cannot inherit immovable property and man's property.
2. They are restricted to put their legs over men while sitting.
3. Women are not supposed to pat spears, shields which are used in war and hunting.
4. They cannot go with men on hunting expeditions.
5. Women are restricted to climb the roof of the house.
6. Women are forbidden to do traditional yell or any other form of yell.
7. Women are not supposed to cross men's legs (Nepuni 158).
8. Women are forbidden to sow seeds, pluck chili and enter inside the barn during their menstruation.
9. It is taboo for women to weave cloth after sunset.
10. Women inner pants and inner wears are considered unhygienic. Women are forbidden to dry and expose their undergarments in open spaces where men are walking and working.

11. It is taboo for local women to visit their parents' house five days after the marriage. Women from other villages are forbidden to visit their parents' house one month after the marriage. It was a tradition to visit her parents' house first before the newly wedded couple visits her relatives' house.
12. It is taboo for two married women to live in the same house. If the daughter divorced her husband, she is forbidden to live with her mother in the same house; a separate house is built.

The patriarchal structure of the Poumai still prevails in society concerning women education. Society still considers women as the weaker sex, subordinate in the family and society. Even in the family, equal opportunity is not given to a girl child and women were confined to domestic work and agricultural activities. The parents give preference to boys; they send their sons to school and college. One of the factors is due to an economic problem as the parents could not meet the educational expenses of all their children. Thus the parents let their daughters help them in their agricultural activities and contribute to the family income. The tradition and structure of the society have slowly changed in the society. Society begins to realize the importance and need of women education. The Christian missionaries, along with their educational institutions, played an essential role in changing the rigid mindset of society to a great extent.

3.13 Manners and Etiquette

The Poumai Naga is known for its hospitality, humorous, generosity and cheerfulness. Their nature of generosity is not limited only to the family and the village. They do not differentiate even strangers; they treat and respect them equally. The same hospitality can be seen both to outsiders and friends when they host them. They share and feed the best food to their guests. They do not expect anything in return from the guest. If the guest does not eat or drink everything they provided, they assume that their guests are not happy and like their prepared food. They assume that the guest is happy and satisfied their hospitality if the guest eats and drinks well. Christoph Von Furer-Haimendorf, in his book 'The Naked Nagas', has vividly written about Naga hospitality and generosity based on his experience in one of the Naga villages,

"The beer was good, and according to customs, I accepted another gourdful. However, I was not through with this one round. I had hardly taken leave of my old man, with gestures of thanks.....the villagers brought me a cock as a present. It is a Naga custom to honour distinguished visitors with gifts of chickens and refusal of such a gift would be a serious insult..... I was given more than I could eat and ended by travelling with chickens in small coups tied to the carrying baskets" (15).

According to their custom, young people usually address their elders as father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, and aunt before calling their actual name. The parents teach their children social etiquette at home, and the children practice social etiquette learned from the family. The children usually give away their seats to visitors and reserved seats for their parents. The villagers know each other, and they respect each other. There is no stranger in the village, so when a person needs help they extend help to needy people and share their paddy with the poor. They never forget to say *kralode* (thank you) when someone helps them or give them something. It was their custom to exchange what they have; they usually exchange their curry during festivals. As they stringently follow and heed what god will forbid and "social shame", there was generally no enmity among them. One of their unique cultures is that when a family construct a new house, the villagers come and help voluntarily without any expectation in return. According to their traditional religion, they firmly believed that God bless them more when they extend help and share their wealth to the poor and needy.

Though their taboos, "God forbid", customs and social shame were not written, they are constantly aware about them and follow accordingly. Their custom stoutly forbids stealing others' belongings, including fruits, without prior permission from the owner. The people adhere to their customs and taboos. They did not build walls, gates and lock their house even when they go to the field as there was no fear of thief in the village. It was their culture to greet each other even when they meet on their way to the field and wish each other to complete their work early. In this manner, they maintain mutual understanding and respect for each other. All these gestures, generosity, customs, and taboos helped build a strong bond of understanding and respect among them (Tunyi 31).

3.14 Indigenous Games

Poumai has different games for men and women. Men and women are forbidden to play games together. Men played the following games in the past.

1. Shot put
2. Javelin throw
3. High jump
4. Long jump
5. Wrestling
6. *Riithou*
7. *Toukhaoyu*/ The game is played with a round slap stone
8. Big stone throw
9. Climbing of pole
10. Cockfighting

Women have their traditional games played in the past. Some of the popular games are:

1. *Chuhtaoyu*/ Pebble game
2. *Houkhe-Ngakhe*
3. *Nale-Zhoule*
4. *Hapei Cho-haleicho*
5. *Kakayu*/ The game is played with dried gourd seed)
6. *Araru ahaina*
7. *Siithelou-we*

Like other Naga tribes, Poumai people also has its indigenous games since time immemorial. The Poumai indigenous games are passed down from generation to generation. The indigenous games and sports were part of their life and part of their culture. Poumais did not play their indigenous games and sports throughout the year; they played their indigenous games and sports during the specific season and festival. Games are played during the festival and special occasions so that the village folks can participate and witness the games together. Poumai men and women both play and enjoy the games during their agricultural festivals. Poumais were very fond of games. Life cannot be imagined without the games, festivals and celebrations. Game participation also helps to build relationships and unity. Many festivals and feasts are related to traditional games. Most of these games are played by men on the open ground. The game Tug of War is a game played by both sexes. The people of Ngari celebrate their traditional seed sowing festival in the month of March every year. During this festival, a big gathering occurs at night for

wrestling between the visiting bachelors and the locals. This traditional Naga wrestling is one of the popular fascinating events of the festival among many Poumais villages.

Toukhaoyu is an indigenous game of Poumai played in the past. The game is divided into two groups; the groups comprise of 12 members each. The players possess a round slap stone each, with the flat round shape of stone hitting the opponent team's erecting stones. *Kakayu* is an indigenous women game played in the past. The game is divided into two groups which comprise of five players each. The two groups compete with each other. The women game, like *araru ahaina* was played with a stick put between the two groups, and both the team has to drag the stick out beyond the line which is called *araru ahaini*. When the village observed *genna* most of the women's games are played at night. The indigenous games require physical strength and proper coordination among the group members. In this way, the team spirit and coordination among the team members was built. Although there was no proper playground whenever there was any festival or feasts, people were so excited to play their traditional games.



Fig.3.24. *Kakayu*



Fig.3.25. *Chuhtaoyu*

3.15 Socio-Cultural Life of the Poumai Nagas and Values of Community Living in the Present Times

The Poumai culture is an accumulation of age-old practice thoughts and values. It is their common social heritage transmitted from generation to generation through learning and practising. The Poumai Naga people have a rich cultural heritage passed down from generations through word of mouth. It is based on their age-old beliefs, philosophy, morals and customs. Some of the Poumai distinct social heritages are folksongs, folk dances, feasts, traditional festivals, rules of behaviour, ornaments, games, whoop, handicrafts, customs and social status through merit. The Poumai ancestral community life was consolidated, governed and shaped by two main natural practiced guidelines, ‘God forbid’ and ‘civic shame’. When the two main natural practice governed the society, people lived in harmony with one another. When we listen to older people about their community life, they have a glorious past. They discovered the core human philosophy and translated it as their cultural heritage. Although there were no formal schools and education like today, they are taught to work together, live together, help one another, sing together and grow together as one community in their respective dormitory. However, today the rich cultural heritage of Poumai is slowly disintegrating as the people are exposed and turning to modern way of life. The native people who live in remote villages are slowly changing their mindset due to various forces such as conversion into a new religion and modern education. When Poumai ancestors followed their traditional religion and practised their age-old tradition

and culture, there was no identity crisis in the community. Before Christianity was introduced in Poumai ancestral community, every Poumai village lived in their village territory, performing their rites and rituals according to their religion.

Every Poumai village defended their village territory and had a constant war against each other. The Christian missionary intervened to stop the practice of headhunting by introducing Christianity in the Poumai community. Verrier Elwin had precisely narrated about the Nagas in general during the pre-Christian period when he encountered Angamis, "Blood feuds were common among all the hill tribes, but the system was carried to excess among the Angamis. Life for life was the rule, and until each of the opposing parties had lost an equal number, peace was impossible" (313). The Poumai did not pave a way more accessible for the missionary to share the word of God and convert them into Christianity. The Poumai, endowed with wealth, were arrogant and love merriment. The Poumais were adamant about changing their faith, fearing unwanted backlash in the village due to converting to another religion. In some Poumai villages, the first Christian converts were banished from the village. Although there was strong opposition and persecution against Christianity in the initial stage, God's miraculous work slowly changed the mindset of the people.

The Christian missionaries brought a tremendous change in the Poumai community, and it paved the way to reach out the gospel. Meanwhile, as God started working among the people, the Christian converts slowly cultivated the teaching "love your neighbours as you love yourself". The practice of headhunting was discarded when the Poumais converted to Christianity. The Poumai villages reconciled after they accepted Christianity by signing a treaty of peace. The people who witnessed the violent practice of headhunting regret to narrate how wars were waged between the Poumai villages and other tribes. The older adults who are still alive expressed sadness for killing their fellow men. They acknowledge the intervention of Christianity and the new religion that taught them to love and forgive their past grudge and brought reconciliation among the Poumai people in particular and the Nagas in general.

No doubt, the early missionaries have transformed the ancestral Poumai community. However, some new developments replaced some of the age-old tradition and culture according to the Christian doctrines. Without realizing the core value of the native culture and tradition, the

early missionaries imposed their culture on the native along with the gospel. When the missionaries imposed new culture on them, the natives discarded their culture and tradition and embraced the new culture. In this way, Christian missionaries have devastated native culture and replaced native religion and culture in the Poumai community. They abandoned most of their traditions and culture when Christianity is introduced in the Poumai community as most of the traditions and culture are connected to their traditional religion. The missionaries misunderstood their tradition and culture, and thus they convinced the people to discard their tradition and culture. Initially, Poumais embraced the new culture thinking that the new culture is superior to their age-old traditions. J.H Hutton has stated how missionaries misunderstood the native culture and their traditional religion, "The missionaries in their blindness teach the Angami convert to regard all *terhoma* as evil.....translating the generic *terhoma* in English or Assamese as Satan" (180). After Poumais converted to Christianity, Christian doctrines have replaced almost all their traditions and culture including religious rites and rituals. Verrier Elwin rightly asserted that

"Conversion to Christianity has made other changes: stress on personal salvation has introduced a new individualism in place of the former community spirit. Hymns have taken the place of the old songs; many dances, which celebrated headhunting raids, cannot now be danced or simply linger on for exhibition to important visitors" (16).

The early missionaries did not realize and understand the importance and value of their tradition and culture. They failed to understand that their culture and tradition are their inherent community identity. The missionaries converted the people into Christianity; they convinced and brainwashed the natives to demolish and abandon their worship places, rites, and rituals. Not all the native rites, rituals and *genna* are evil. After the native demolished their religious places and traditional Morung, they built a church, school and slowly embraced Christian ideology. The early missionaries interfered and changed their food habit by discouraging them to host feast of merit and their drinking habit. As they discouraged their food habit, they gradually ceased to celebrate and observed some of their traditional feasts related to drinking and feasting. In this way, some of the important traditional practices are abandoned. They discarded their cultures, such as drinking rice beer, celebrating some important traditional festivals, animal sacrifices to the spirit and divination. The early missionaries dismantled the native tradition and culture

because they introduced Christianity along with western culture. They imposed and promoted western culture to newly converted Christians believing that western culture is superior and more advanced than the native culture. Undoubtedly, religious belief systems and traditions have undergone drastic changes in the wake of Christianity and modern education. However, some of the traditional beliefs and practices are still prevailing in the community. Some of the traditional practices still prevailing in the present community have changed their nature to suit the situation and present context.

In the pre-Christian period, they were fond of singing folksong during their leisure time and traditional festivals. As per their tradition, they also chant and sang folksong while performing rites and rituals. All these folksongs are discarded after missionaries intervened and discouraged them to sing. Today young people cannot sing their folksongs as they are suddenly abandoned in the wake of Christianity. Christian hymns and western songs replaced the traditional folksongs that have passed down for ages. As people sing only Christian hymns in church services and promote western songs, they slowly abandoned their rich folksongs. The people became more interested in western songs than their traditional folksongs as the church and school constantly promote and instil western culture. The people who can speak English and sing western songs were proud of themselves, and there is a sense of superiority. The educated people prefer to speak in English rather than their language, even within the community. Over time, they composed their folksongs with western music to suit the present trend in the community. Though many changes have been taking place in their belief and tradition, the people still retain the core components of their traditions and practices. When the church celebrates an important celebration such as Church dedication, Silver Jubilee, Golden Jubilee, Platinum Jubilee and centenary jubilee, they still practice erecting a monolith stone to mark the celebration. Jelle P Wouter has precisely asserted about the Phugwumi a Naga Chakhesang village, "Even as local megalithic expression have waned, they have also re-casted themselves, while the presence of these stones-the tales, meanings, and values invested in them-provide a crucial source for the unpacking of local social histories..." (37).

Before Christianization, every Poumai village waged war and occupied their village territory. Each village was independent, economically self-sufficient and had no contact with the outside world. Head-hunting was common and practised by the entire Poumai village. The

practise of headhunting was continued among the Nagas tribes till 1958 (Elwin 12). The initial changes were brought to Poumai society by the Britishers when they came to Poumai society. With the dawn of Christianity and the coming of the British administration to Poumai society, the practice of headhunting gradually disappeared and finally discarded by the community. The Christian missionaries spread the message of love, brotherhood and community living. The main reason for the conversion of Christianity and accepting the Bible's messages was the exemplary life of the Christian missionaries. The most outstanding characteristic of the early Christian lives was that they solidly felt that they are one. They cooperated with the truest bond of love in their new adopted village. This change has brought a significant impact on the socio-cultural life of the Poumai Nagas. During headhunting days, there was no unity among the Poumaise like today. After introducing Christianity, the Poumai tribe came to exist, and the feud of inter-village was ceased. With the help of the "Treaty of Peace", Poumai villages are reconciled and forgave each other. It was only after the treaty of peace was made, that people started contacting other villages. Today anyone can freely visit another village without any fear and live together as one tribe.

After converting to a new religion, many new changes occurred in their rituals, practices and traditional festivals and feasts. Many changes are taking place even in their social and political life to suit and follow according to the Christian principles. These changes are evident in the disappearance of *Morung*, which was a social platform of learning and a place where rituals were performed. As the *Morung* institution became a thing of the past in Poumai society, churches were built in the *Morung* institutions' location. Since the church replaced the age-old *Morung* institution, all the social rituals, ceremony and prayers are performed in the church. The transformations include all the public rituals, family rites and rituals to Christian rites and ideology. Because of all these changes in the present society, the traditional priests lost their role and importance in society. Due to the influence of western culture and American missionaries, Poumai culture has been replaced. American missionaries spread the gospel, but they popularized their culture, thinking that their culture is superior to the native traditional culture. As M. Horam rightly pointed out, "The modern Nagas have imitated a good deal of western life-style and yet they do not feel comfortable. At the same time they feel out of place because they do not fit in the traditional Naga society" (Horam 82). This is true of the present Poumai society. As old religion has changed to a new religion, the Poumai socio-political life also transformed.

Although a drastic religious shift and changes in ritual performances have taken place, Poumai still preserves some of the important traditionalistic characters exhibited during their traditional festivals to revive the old culture. However, notable changes are seen in the present society while celebrating and performing traditional festivals and rituals.

Before Christianity, when all these traditional festivals such as *Raimarounii*, *laonii*, *Ramyapzii/Reiziiyu*, *Chozii/Zhosouyu*, *Khanglouni* and *Thounii* were celebrated, the main focus of the ceremonies were to appease their god, offering thanksgiving and rituals cleansing. Today the purpose and focus of celebrating the old traditional festivals are radically changed. One of the important changes that are taking place in all these traditional festivals can be seen in shifting from agro base to community base. Though the traditional festivals like *Maru*, *Viisam* and *Thounii* are still celebrated, the rites and rituals were replaced by Christian prayers and modern order of sequencing the events. During these festivals, Poumais recount their memories through folksongs, folk dance and games. When celebrating all these traditional festivals and feasts, educative values are imparted to the younger generation. The important events of such traditional festivals are traditional games, folksongs and folk dances. Today the older people are disappointed seeing all those performances and express their feelings that present agrarian feasts and festivals are no longer in the true spirit. The sudden changes are brought about due to the influence of western culture and the acceptance of Christianity. Among the Poumais, Mr Th. Sahriinii family performed the last Feast of Merit at Liyai Khullen in January 2004. With the conversion of Christianity and the introduction of modern education, Poumais began to abandon the Feast of Merit. All these social changes have led to the gradual vanishment of the traditional social life of the Poumai Community. Nevertheless, old traditional festivals and beliefs were not totally abolished. Still, some traditional festivals and beliefs are practiced.

The present Poumai way of dressing and fashion was influenced by western fashion. At present people hardly wear traditional dress in their daily life. People ceased wearing their traditional dress after missionaries came to Poumai society because they were discouraged from using forefathers traditional items such as dresses, shawls, earrings. When people were converted to Christianity, they were allowed to wear Assamese jackets and body cloths. Slowly missionaries encouraged the believers to follow European styles such as long shirts, mauve coats, *khakhi*, short or white blouses made from plains (Clark 33). Today traditional dresses are

worn only on some special occasions like during traditional festivals and some events. The present generation has neglected the value of traditional dress and motifs. Even the colour of the traditional dress and motifs are becoming modernized.

The dormitories were the traditional learning institution where boys and girls learned the basic principle of life and guarded the village. The Christian missionaries misunderstood the system of dormitories and considered it an immoral institution. With the coming of Christianity and modern education, the importance of dormitories have been lost and abandoned in Poumai society. Today young boys and girls are busying studying outside their villages and those who do not study live with their parents till they get married. As the young boys and girls are now competing in education and exams, they hardly get a chance to visit their village and spend time with their friends. Modern education has influenced young minds, and most are not interested in old traditions and customs. After modern education has been introduced, the young boys and girls are educated and changed their way of thinking and looking at things differently from their parents and elders. After the inception of Christianity, hostels are introduced both for boys and girls in place of dormitories though the purpose is different. The closing of traditional dormitories has marked the end of the golden age of Poumai Nagas civilization. This is one of the most lamentable aspects of Poumai culture and tradition. After introducing hostels and modern education in place of dormitories, many dropout students are loitering in the village and live without any aim. Modern education does not only educate the individual but contributed to the development of human society. However, it also failed to adopt the value of education and discipline taught in dormitories. There are some negative results due to the downfall of dormitories which can be seen in society. When they practised dormitories system, young men and women were hardly seen at night roaming purposelessly. Today, dropout youths create many problems in society as there is no other place to train them. There was no particular course or curriculums to teach and learn in the dormitories, but it includes the basic ingredients of modern education. some aspects are missing in modern education, which was taught and learned in the dormitories. In the dormitories, young men and women were taught the basic principle of life, the value of life, good behaviour, and to live with the community peacefully.

The Poumai Naga Christians still follow patriarchy and patrilineal system. Even though the father is the head of the family, the role of the mother has become more significant and has

more freedom. Unlike the pre-Christian period, the role of the mother is not only bringing up the children but there has been a radical change in decision-making. With the arrival of modern education, the mindset of the fathers also changed toward their wives. They are given more freedom to their family decision making. Earlier, male children were given more opportunities than female children, but now girls also are given more freedom and opportunity before they get married. Before the dawn of Christianity, women hardly get the freedom to choose their life partner; after conversion into Christianity, parents are more lenient than before. With the coming of modern education, children also play a significant role in the family. The introduction of Christianity has transformed the role of the family.

The role of the elders and the system of the clan still exists in Poumai Naga society. The influence of traditional administration and the function of the village councils are seen even in the present Poumai society. Apart from church activities and administration, the Poumai Christians still follow the customary laws passed down for ages though some changes have occurred after Christianity. The clan elders continue to play an important role and build the prestige and unity of the clan. The elders take important decisions or matters relating to family disputes and clans. The elders do the marriage engagement and important matters like the gifts to be offered to the engaged couples. The elders handle important matters and issues. After introducing modern education, more opportunities are given to younger ones for they are more familiar with the emerging society.

In the traditional Poumai society, women were not given any important roles in the political sphere. It is a male-dominated society and patriarchal in nature; women's roles were confined in the household spheres. In any of the political bodies in the society, women were not given any privileges, and they are not allowed to take part in the decision making in any circumstances. However, there have been many changes and transformations seen today, where women are also given opportunities and privileges in expressing their opinions and taking part in decision-making. We can see a higher rate of women involvement in political issues of the community. Many organizations give more power and role to women. One notable among them is the Poumai Naotoumai Me (PNM). It is one of the strong women bodies among the Poumai Nagas community; it stands to maintain the order of the society, uplift the women and society at

large. They organize many social, cultural, political and environmental programmes to acquaint the people to promote their standard of life.

The social pictures of society have a lot to do with the role of women. They have a great role in the family, bringing up the children in a well-cultured manner. Women are taught to be soft, submissive, and not to be aggressive in the family. In this way, the high morale of women in the family greatly contributes to the community's social life. Earlier their main occupations were mainly weaving and handicrafts; they were not given enough chances to be exposed to the outside world. Though they continued to engage all these works, the condition is not like before.

With the arrival of modern way of life, indigenous games are slowly forgotten, as modern games are becoming more popular. Some of the indigenous games are still played on different occasions and festivals. The indigenous games played during traditional festivals are wrestling, long jump, shot put, high jump, climbing of bamboo pole and tug-of-war. The competition of wrestling is widespread in Poumai villages. Different villages held wrestling competitions every year in different seasons and festivals. Most of the Lepaona circle villages and Paomata circle villages held wrestling competitions during *Paonii* (paddy transplanting festival). Different villages celebrate the *Paonii* festival on different days according to their convenience. During their *Paonii* festivals, young bachelors visit different villages for wrestling and wrestling competitions are held between the visiting bachelors and the locals. The wrestling competition usually occurs at night, where all the village folks gathered to witness the event. In Chilivai circle, different villages celebrate their seed sowing festivals on different dates and months. The four Ngari villages celebrate their seed sowing festival of *Raimarounii* (*Maru* festival) every year in March. At this festival, wrestling competitions and other traditional games like tug of war and climbing of bamboo poles take place. The Proumai five villages celebrate *Doanii* (seed sowing) festival every year in April. During this festival, all the five villages played all their indigenous games, and one of the most exciting game is wrestling. During these festivals, bachelors from neighbouring villages visit for a wrestling completion. Dumai (Khongdei) villages celebrate *Kafiingai* just before the transplantation of Paddy every year. It is one of their traditional festivals where indigenous games are played.

Many new modern games are introduced in Poumai society as Poumai began contacting the outside world. The modern games played in Poumai society are football, shooting ball, cricket, basketball and volleyball. The Poumai Naga Tsiidoumai Me, the apex Poumai student union, organizes a tournament for all the Poumai villages every two years. During this tournament, all the villages compete with each other in every game. It is sad for the older people that indigenous games are not given importance and excluded. Apart from the whole Poumai tournament, all the three Poumai circles organize their respective tournament. Today people are more interested in modern games than indigenous games. Most of the indigenous games are played only during traditional festivals and feasts.

Chapter 4

Religious Beliefs, Taboos, Oaths, *Gennas*, Rites and Rituals

4.1 Beliefs

Ancestral Poumais have their own beliefs and strong faith in their religion. The religion they followed was called *Zhaosomai* (believers of traditional religion). They have their way of appeasing and worshipping the Supreme Being. Although they do not have written creeds, they are aware of their rich heritage of beliefs, rites, rituals, customs and traditions. (Sha 7). A renowned Thangkhul Naga scholar R.R Shimray asserted that "the Naga had the complete freedom of religion and worship. They had their own gods and goddesses and they worshipped them without any interference from outside" (129). The Poumai traditional religion has its own Supreme Being, and they believe in the existence of both good and evil spirits. Though they believe in the existence of spirits, they worship only Supreme Being. In the Poumai language, the Supreme Being is called *Raimai*; they mentioned the name *Raimai* when they worship and sacrifice animals. They believed their God dwell in heaven and he created everything. According to their belief, spirits are living among human beings; they caused natural calamities, sickness and death. Due to this belief, they sacrifice animals and observed *genna* when natural calamity, death, sickness occurred in the village. They always followed everything they do in life according to their beliefs and religion. To them, the universe is packed with different spirits and gods whom they must deal with (Smith 74). Though they sacrificed and worship different gods and spirits, they believe in the Supreme Being above all gods and spirits.

They acknowledge that the Supreme Being was the God of gods, and it is he who created everything. Early missionaries considered Poumais' ancient religion as animism because they believe in different gods and spirits apart from the Supreme Being. According to J.H. Hutton, among Nagas religions, there are plenty of animisms, particularly regarding stones. One of the Sema villages called Lazemi was proud of their two pairs of stones; male and female breed annually, similar beliefs may have existed in all Naga tribes (Hutton 180). Their beliefs are observed through rituals, customs, traditions, according to their needs and belief. To them, a religious man was to be faithful, following their traditions and cultures. Their whole life activities are bound up with their beliefs and religion. They strongly believe and depend on

dreams while taking any vital decision, like when they will go for a war with their neighbours, marriage engagement, selection of monolith stone for the Feast of Merit, hunting expedition and visiting neighbour villages. They believed in Shamanism, where shamans play an essential role as agents for communication with God, mediating on their behalf of people when they need God's help. Shamans act as a prophet, healer, and interpreter in society. They are aware of how to make sacrifices to their gods and serve them. Even though they believed in different gods and spirits, they are no idolaters. They fear the unknown supremacy over them in various ways, such as diseases, death, madness and famine. In order to soothe the malevolent spirits, they performed rites and ceremonies.

4.1.1 Spirits

Although Poumai ancestors worship only Supreme Being, they believe in the existence of numerous spirits. The white missionaries who came first to Naga hills misunderstood the Naga concept of spirits; they misunderstood Nagas traditional religion as animism. According to Poumai traditional religion, there are types of spirits benevolent spirit and the malevolent spirit. When early missionaries came to Naga Hills, they misunderstood that all the Nagas deities and the spirits as evil. They translated Nagas deities translated into English or Assamese as "Satan". The term "Satan", which missionaries taught and believed, is different from the natives' traditional beliefs about spirits. Poumais believed that not all spirits or deities are malevolent.

Some spirits are benevolent, guarding them physically and spiritually from malevolent spirits. The benevolent spirits protect their village, crops, epidemics; thus, they sacrifice animals and observe *genna* to show honour and appease them (Longchar 39). The propitiation was common and performed as a religious act for the benefit of the community and to drive out malevolent spirits. The benevolent spirits are called *Rako*, Supreme Being as *Mapao* and the malevolent spirits as *Rashi*. They believed that benevolent spirits lived with them in their house, protecting them from diseases and death. They believe benevolent spirits as the guardian and the source of blessing, both spiritually and physically. It is said that when benevolent spirits inspired a person, he/she became a shaman. A shaman is believed to have direct contact and close relation with god and spirits; inspired by them, a shaman can predict and knows secret things which a mere person does not know and understand (Longchar 59). A shaman operates as a healer, foreshadows in different ways such as ecstasy, prayer, chants, sacrifices, omen and divination but not magic (Longchar 91). Thus, Poumai ancestors offered animal sacrifice not out

of fear but as an honour and acknowledgement. It is said that some malevolent spirits inflicted unnatural death and that they are mischievous. It is also believed that malevolent spirits cause sudden human death, accident, earthquake and storms. When these events are happening, the only means to get rid of them was in offering animal sacrifices, eggs and chicken.

4.1.2 Souls

The Poumais believed that every human possesses a soul, and it is a gift of God. They believed that human beings and souls could not separate. When a person soul does not follow the person gets sick. The soul can be given only by God alone, A. Wati precisely quoted from R.L. Roy's "the body is given by the mother but the soul which is divine is given by God" (Longchar 92). Poumais traditional religion believed that the body and the soul are inseparable. The souls continue to live even after death in the "land of death". Poumais believed that the soul continues to live in the "land of death" like earthly human beings, they continue to cultivate, rear animals, get married and visit their family members who are alive.

4.1.3 Ancestral godhead, Deities and Spirits

Before the dawn of Christianity in the Poumai region, they worship their god. The Poumai ancestors worshipped *Fiideirako/ chi-dou-rako* (Home spirit and field spirit). They worshipped and performed various ceremonies to please their god (*Raimai*) to gain favour and save their domestic animals and crops from destruction. They give respect and honour to their God in 'Feast of Merit' and dedicate their house. They fear many evil spirits, but they did not worship them. They believed and worshipped *chi-dou-rako*. They proclaimed and call the name of house spirit and field spirit whenever they prayed and asked for any blessing.

4.1.4 Veneration of the Ancestors

Many Naga tribes, including the Poumai Naga tribe, venerate their ancestors on different occasions and in different ways. The Poumai Naga tribe came into existence through their ancestor name "Pou". This is the oldest religion of Poumai; some people still give veneration in different ways. The worshippers trust that the general wellbeing of the society comes from the departed soul of their ancestors. This inspiration and belief of this religion, the early structure of the family, including family properties and the right to inherit, in led to the formation of ancient society. Before conversion to Christianity, Poumais consider happiness and wealth of the family came from fulfilling all the rites and rituals of their ancestors. It is said that those who neglect the rites and rituals faced various calamities. Th. Robert Tiba, one of the Maram Naga tribe

scholars, asserted, "The people worship the spirits of their ancestors by performing certain rituals ceremonies. It was family worship of penance, repentance and apology towards the ancestors. This worship removed the worries and anxieties of the family and the living family members were reconciled with their ancestors. The worship accomplished the need of harmonious, co-operative, affectionate and peaceful co-existence among the members of the family" (Tiba 177). Thus, ancestral plays a vital role in giving new hope, new life and fortune to those devoted worshippers and performers of rites and rituals.

4.2 Taboos

Before Christianity came to Poumai society, traditional taboos control and uphold the Poumai Society. The term taboo came from the Polynesian word 'Tab', which means "forbidden". Taboos are social disapproval passed down from ancestors through oral narratives. Although taboos are not written, people are pretty aware of it in their minds. Some important taboos are; immoral manners, incest, thief, murder, and premarital sex. Taboos played an important role; they help people live harmoniously and coexist with their surroundings, including animals and nature. Taboos mean traditional prescriptions or, in other words, prohibition ordered by society. No one is above taboos, including village chiefs and priests. According to S. Liangao Soto, "Taboo is a system and practice that sustains and preserves not only the nature, animals, human, and human culture but also it maintains the theo-anthropo, theo-cosmo and anthtropo-cosmo as well as intra-anthropo integral relationship" (71).

There are various types of taboos in Poumai Society that is applied and designated in different aspects. Out of different types of taboos, some are productive, defensive and related to religious matters. There are taboos for the family as well to be maintained and stringently followed in olden days. Marriage of the same clan is prohibited. The religious lives of the society have been shaped and strengthened by the observance of the taboos laid down since time immemorial. It also includes offering and presenting as a sign of respect and acknowledgement to spirit, God and elders. It is said that when taboos are violated, there will be dreadful consequences imposed by the spirits. Therefore, they firmly believed and fearfully followed their traditional taboos in all of their aspects of life. The knowledge of taboo becomes apparent when it affected the whole society when somebody violated the taboo. It was a community that conferred the sanction to follow the taboos, sanctifying the culture. It differentiates the role for men and women to observe (Nepuni 157).

Poumai sages and religious thinkers propound taboos and social shame since time immemorial, and these have been passed down from generation to generation. Although Poumai people lived in their respective village territory in the olden days, they commonly practice the same taboos and social shame. Though Poumai ancestors were not Christians, they were religious minded people in all their activities. Poumais ancestors had propounded the ritual laying down the dos and don'ts for their community. The consequence of violating the taboos of dos and don'ts is even happening in the present Poumai community when they do not heed it. Some of the essential taboos are:

1. It is taboo to disrespect and put hands on parents with anger. An incident happened in the Poumai community. Once when a fight broke up between son and father. The father could not fight back his son as father was old. Therefore he bowed down and said sorry to his son. After his father passed away, the son lived a miserable life. The people believe that it was a punishment because he put a hand on his father in anger.
2. It is taboo to slaughter domesticated animals when the animal is sick.
3. Husband is forbidden to call back his wife when the wife returned to her parents due to misunderstanding. It is believed that a husband will have a short span of life. Family members called back the wife.
4. It is taboo to make a profit from the poor and needy when they borrow paddy just before harvest. The poor borrow because they could not manage just before the harvest. It is forbidden to ask debt during the festival and after the sunset so that the borrower can celebrate blissfully without any tension and rest the night peacefully. It is taboo to ask for debt directly with harsh words, the lender usually asks indirectly from outside the door.
5. It is taboo to walk away deliberately without patching, when someone's paddy field is spilling the water.
6. It is taboo to say that he/she do not want several children. They considered children are God's greatest blessing. Thus they are forbidden to rebuff procreation or express their ill-favour of having many children.
7. Women are forbidden to beat their sex organs. There is a story about why they forbid women to beat their sex organs. There was a family whose family had nine sons. One fine day seeing all her sons having food together with their father, she was overwhelmed, and

she beats her sex organ praising it for giving nine sons in front of her children. It is said that a few years later, all her sons died because she violated the taboo.

8. It is taboo to turn back and go inside the house.
9. It is taboo for a twin to come near and let tears fall over the corpse when one of the twins die. The twin is forbidden to touch any belonging of the deceased person. They believed that otherwise, the person will have a short span of life.
10. Pregnant women are forbidden to spit, pee and clean the mucus in public places. They believe others will come to dislike those children due to violation of this taboo.
11. Pregnant women are taboo to carry burned firewood from the jungle. If the mother carries burned firewood, the children will have large birthmarks on the body.
12. It is believed that if the pregnant mother observes rites and rituals rigorously, the child is obedient and lives a virtuous life. If a child always hurt only the right hand or right leg when he/she falls, it is believed that the father did not observe rites when the child was in the mother's womb. If a child always hurt his/her left hand or left leg, it is believed the mother did not observe rites when she was pregnant. It is said that children steal because their mothers stole when they were pregnant. The children inherit the blessings and punishments of their parents.
13. It is taboo to rear a female pig that does not have pairs of breasts and give birth only to one piglet.
14. Poumais are forbidden to rear a dog that climbs on top of the roof and barks at the house.
15. It is taboo to rear or slaughter neighbouring stray dogs.
16. Young people are taboo to eat animal eyes and brains. The eyes are reserved for elders in the family. They believed that those who eat animal eyes and brains have myopic or nearsighted sickness, and their hair gets to turn grey early before they become old.
17. It is taboo to attack buffalo and cows with guns or knives though they enter paddy fields or farms.
18. It is taboo to steal an egg. They believe those who steal an egg become dumb.
19. It is taboo to rear a hen that eats her egg.
20. It is taboo to sell female domesticated animals at a cheaper price than their babies.
21. It is taboo to kill a cuckoo or imitate her when she sings her song.

22. It is taboo to make promises between the lovers. They believed that the couple dies in the same year. There is a legend, once Kapou Hra and kuchaoru were deeply in love. The lovers made promises with ginger that he/she becomes like rotten ginger who betrays their love. They promised with their hair that he/she die like their hair who betrays their promise. They broke the egg and swore to shorten the life of the one who betrays their promise like a broken egg. They made a stone wall and swore to shorten the life that betrays their relationship like a broken stone wall. Unfortunately, before their marriage took place, Hra passed away. In the past, women usually weave shawls in August and September. When Kuchaoru was weaving, cuckoo perched on the rooftop and chirped unexpectedly. She was broken-hearted as her lover passed away before their marriage. She scolded Cuckoo and asked if it want to suffer like her? She questioned why the bird is coming during at that season? Cuckoo replied that her beloved Kapou Hra is sending her to convey a message. Cuckoo tells her that her beloved is asking her to come early. After sometimes Kuchaoru passed away.

23. It is taboo to challenge and provoke wild animals though they eat and damage the crop. It is said that if wild animals are provoked, they become more aggressive.

In the past, before Christianity was introduced in the Poumai region, taboo (what forbids) and social shame (civic sense of discipline) were considered as the constitution of ancestral community life. The taboo of don'ts, dos and social shame shaped and promote social etiquette in the ancestral Poumai community life. People respect and honour those who live an ethical life based on their taboos. The consequences of violating taboos and social shame are as follow:

1. God inflict them with incurable disease.
2. They have a short lifespan.
3. God curse their domestic animals and their fields. When God curse their animals and field, God inflicts plague on their animals, and their fields do not yield good fruits.
4. God closed their womb, and they become barren.
5. God inflict their mental illness and disfigurement on children.

It is said that Poumais coexist peacefully and their community life was thriving as the leaders of that time highly regarded the taboos and social shame in their lives. People believed that Supreme Being bless wealth and children of those who devotedly observe and live according

to their taboos. Today Poumai Christians believed that God bless those who faithfully obey God's commandments and live a God-fearing life (Rao, Th. Ngaopuni. Personal interview. 13th February 2020).

It is forbidden to remove land boundary stones. Poumais believed that when humans remove the boundary stones, the cry of the stone reached heaven. Therefore forefathers instructed not to remove land boundary stones. Though it is not a customary law, when a person murders another person, the deceased family or the villagers usually dismantle the accused house. However, the custom does not permit to destroy, or it is taboo to raze the accused house twice. It is taboo to raze the accused house if he commits the crime not deliberately. They believe that if the victim family takes revenge on such a thing, it continues to happen in future.

4.3 Oaths

When a dispute could not be solved amicably or compromise is not achievable by both the parties involved, oaths are the only means to settle the dispute. Oaths are part of the customary law; people do not simply take oaths. It is said that those who falsely took an oath face harsh consequences in return. J.H Hutton has written how the people value and respect taking the oath,

" The owner of the stolen property assembles his kindred before the morning meal and taking a cat, or kitten, ties up its legs and mouth and impales it on a bamboo stake which he plants in the ground outside the village gate beside the path. He then goes with his kindred to the *tehuba* and curses the thief that he may suffer as the cat suffers. The kindred confirm the curse shouting "ho! Ho!".....(The people and chant and curses thief saying) "*A lha regurr teyopono chize kerri titowe*" ("May the thief of my paddy perish tonight"). To which the kindred made answer "*Hooooo*". "*A vo regurr teyopono*"...etc. ("May the thief of my fowl", etc.) to which the kindred made answer as before, the curse being repeated with "*Ho, ho-ing*" for each theft" (Hutton 242).

Oaths are of various types such as an individual oath, between families, clans or villages, murder or thief, unpaid debts. J.P Mills writes about oath in the case of a man accused of adultery,

"I your wife with have not committed adultery; but I your wife with committing adultery if I am in the habit of, by a tiger me allowing to be bitten all the village men bamboo shavings fire-stick using for me let them keep emung (gathered together)" (Mills 102).

When there is a land dispute or any kind of disagreement between two villages or tribes, if the dispute cannot be solved through mutual understanding, they take oath in a water pool or river. Both the village headmen represent their village and plunge into the pool; the one who stays longer under the water is declared the winner.

Oaths are usually taken at the disputed locations or the common village stage. In stealing, oaths are taken in this way; the accused uses a stone as an eyewitness while taking the oath. In this manner, the oath for stealing paddy is said, "If I have taken the paddy, then let the grass grow in my field" (Jose 134). When a thief could not be traced or is not caught red-handed, the villagers made a effigy of a man by grass or piece of clothes and tossed their curses to the effigy. It is said that the one who committed would die or faced the consequence.

Taking a false oath for a plot of land is taboo. Several incidents occurred in Poumai villages. It is said that once in one Poumai village, 12 young people died in a year after one clan falsely took an oath for a plot of land. Till today, people take an oath when the case or dispute cannot solve amicably by both parties.

4.4 *Gennas*

"*Gennas*" play a significant part in Poumais community life. The word *genna* means prohibition or taboo. Poumais ancestors depended for their livelihood on agriculture. Thus Poumais observe numerous *genna* associated with the crop for the good harvest and the protection from sickness and unwanted things. Throughout the year, various rituals or traditional social *gennas* are observed and performed stringently by everyone in the village. The village chief announces on top of the stone platform when there is *genna* to be observed. Harsh penalties were imposed on those who violate the rule of the *gennas* because they believe it would bring the curse of the Supreme Being or spirits. An incident took place in one Poumai village where a man consistently violated whenever the villagers observed *genna*. The chief was not pleased with the man and he washed his hands in the man's field, declaring the dirt of the hands to remain in the field. The land turned to a barren field after the chief washed his hands with anger. Observing *genna* also meant to recover strength and begin anew. Thus, it was not only for the sake of refraining from doing work but also about building a good sense of attitude to their health and

mind. *Gennas* are also observed with religious sacredness and it is also a time when villagers, or individuals express their gratefulness, miseries and plans. When there is an unexpected epidemic, *gennas* were observed to protect them from the epidemic. *Gennas* were also observed when a man or family erects a monolith stone if a family gives a feast to villagers. J.P Mills writes about *gennas*, “Beginning from the first small “genna” they increase in costliness and importance till the ceremony at which two stones are dragged is reached. Almost every one of them entitles the doer to wear distinctive cloth. The wealth and consequently, the importance of a man is gauged by the number of these social “*gennas*” he has done, for the Lhota, like all Nagas and members of not a few other races is a great respecter of wealth. It is, therefore, the ambition of every man to perform the full series if he possibly can” (Mills 136). Most of the traditional festivals and feasts were associated with *gennas*. When somebody dies in the village *genna* are observed as taboo. There are several rituals performed till the dead body is buried. Some of the important *gennas* observed by Poumais in the past are:

1. *Rahnaiyu*, a day to acknowledge God.
2. *Phaohrainaiyu*, a day of cleansing for all.
3. *Meinaiyu*, a day to pray for fortuitous fire not to happen.
4. *Taokhonai*, a day to implore for the food.
5. *Dzükhonai*, a day to plead for water.
6. *Khaosounai*, a day to pray for protecting from destruction.
7. *Molusüyunai*, a day to pray for protection from earthquake.
8. *Reinai*, a day to pray to be free from hail storms
9. *Rashihupanai*, a day to chase out evil and harmful spirits from the house
10. *Baolutouyu*, the consecration of fresh rice.

4.5 Headhunting

During ancestral times headhunting is widely practised all over Naga villages. The Nagas, particularly Poumai Naga tribe, was one of the famous tribes known for bravery. It is said that by nature, Poumais were a brave and victorious tribe. In the olden days, every village fought against each other. Though headhunting is now a thing of the past in Poumais society, it has a profound social impact. When headhunting was at its zenith, Poumais believed that the enemy heads would be a great addition to the fertility of the soil. Headhunting was a practice of beheading and preserving human heads because they believed the soul is located in the head.

There were many reasons when the inter-village fight happened. Many wars were fought for justice when there is a boundary dispute. The other reason is that the persons who chopped several heads were respected and also gets the best and most beautiful woman in the village. Those who did not chop any enemy head were looked down upon in society, and it was hard to find a good and respected girl for marriage. In Poumai society, the two most important well-known methods for achieving social status and fame was headhunting and performing Feast of Merit. People who did not chop enemy heads were not respected in the society, and when any crucial decisions were taken, their words were not counted. Though common people cannot perform feast-of-merit, rich people attain better status by performing feast of merit.

Head-hunting is associated with the faith of gathering the good harvest, safeguard the village and prosperity of the village. It is connected with ordinary blood feuds, revenge, agrarian rites, funeral rites and eschatological beliefs. Hodson writes, “Headhunting is associated with the blood feud, where the deity of vengeance remains until the tally of heads is numerically equal” (Hudson 115). “The Nagas held the belief that the whole human personality is in the head. That was why human hair was priced in Naga society for decorating spears, daos and headgear of the warriors” (Shimray 13). Once a warrior decides to go for head-hunting, he would abstain from sharing the same bed with his wife and listen to dreams. If the bamboo prediction is good or the cock /hen prediction is good, then the warrior announced his decision to the willing persons to follow him in the secret hunting of heads (Shimray 77). The warriors went to other village and fields to chop the enemy heads and brought them home. This was the prestige and honour of the warriors in the past. When the warriors brought enemy heads, the village chief performed *genna* on behalf of the village. Poumai preserved the skull of the enemy head with respect.

The Poumai forefathers did not use many weapons in the past. Some of the primary weapons they used during headhunting days are sword, bow, shield and spear. The shields are generally made of buffalo and elephant skin. The size and shape of the shields are differing from village to village. The general indigenous shields of the Poumais are around five to six feet long. The indigenous Poumai spear is known as *Pou nghou* Poumai spear. The *Pou nghou* is different from the Meitei spear in shape and size. In the olden days, courageous warriors and who had slain enemies heads were entitled to use shields and spears on both sides. A cap knitted with bamboo is also worn as a shield when headhunting was practiced. Today most of the ancient

weapons are not available as they did not preserve them. The Poumais use the following weapons in the past.



Fig.4.1. Poumai indigenous shield

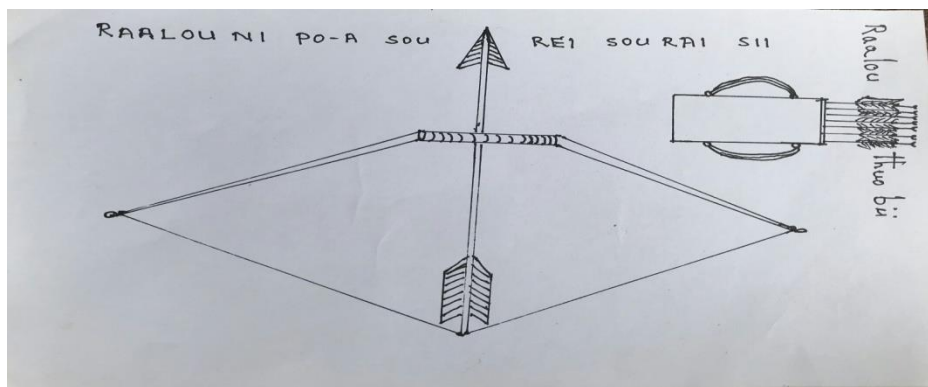


Fig.4.2. Ancient Raalou (Bow and Arrow) war weapon

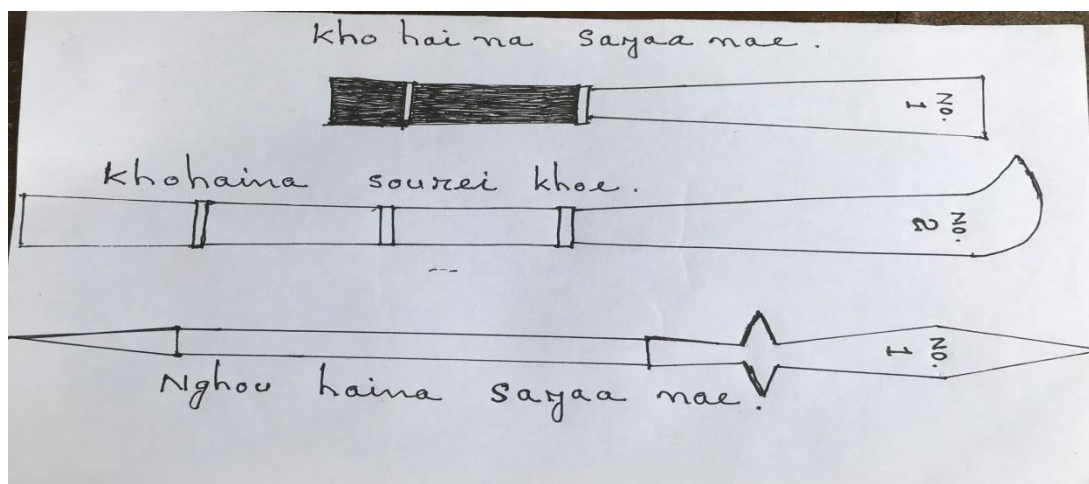


Fig.4.3.1. Ancient ordinary sword 2. Ancient war sword 1. Ancient ordinary spear

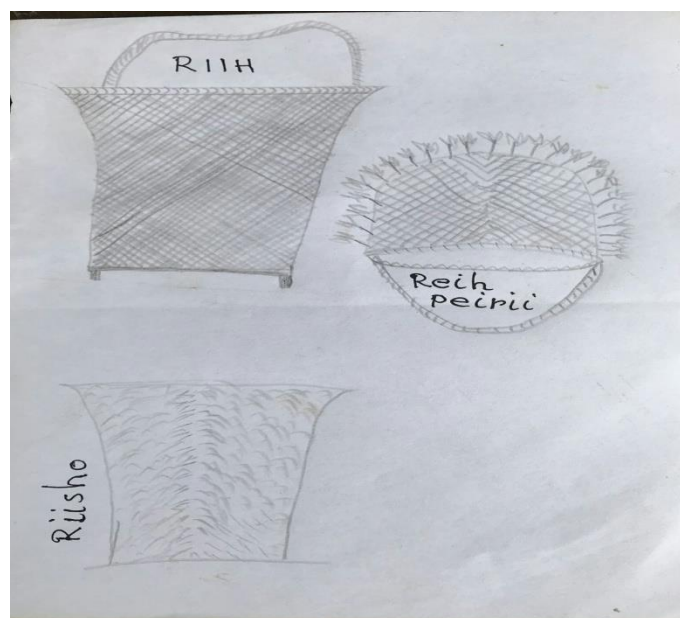


Fig.4.4. Ancient war helmet

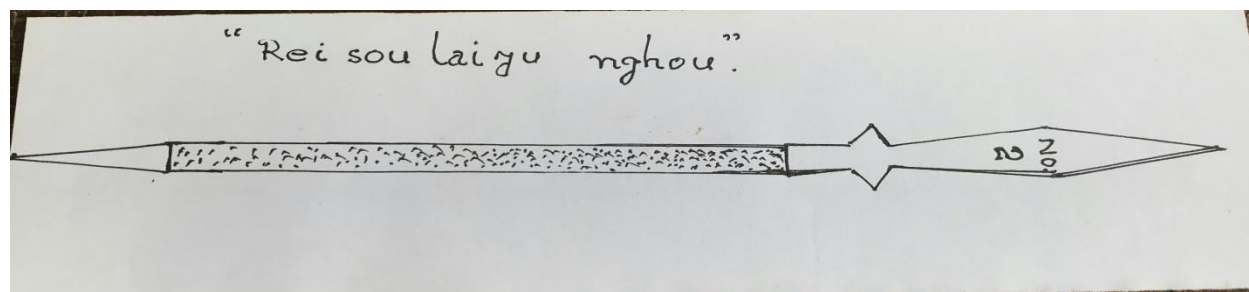


Fig.4.5. Ancient war spear

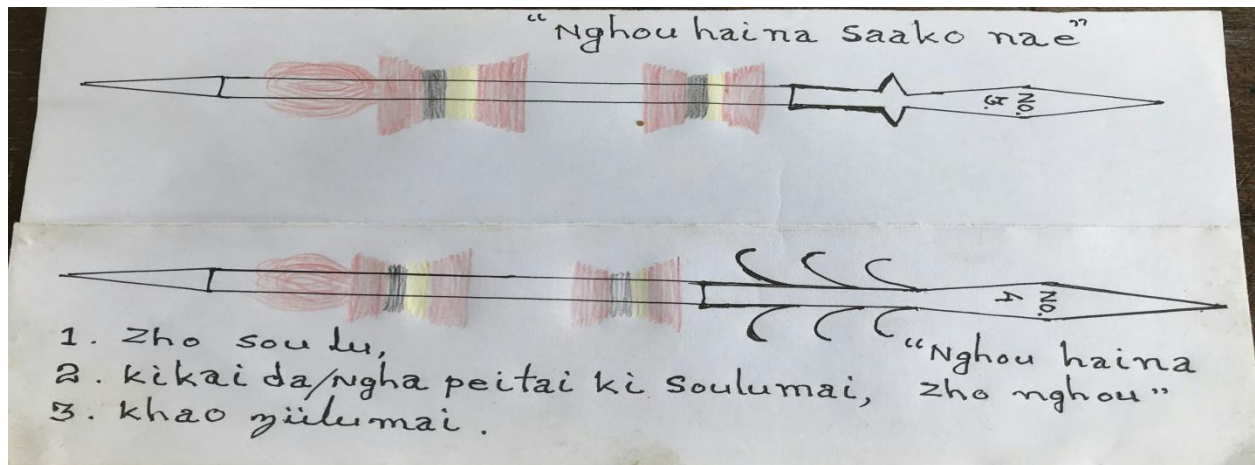


Fig.4.6. 3. Ordinary spear used during the festival 4. This spear is permitted only to those who performed 'Feast of Merit, Built Buffalo horn house and killed Lion

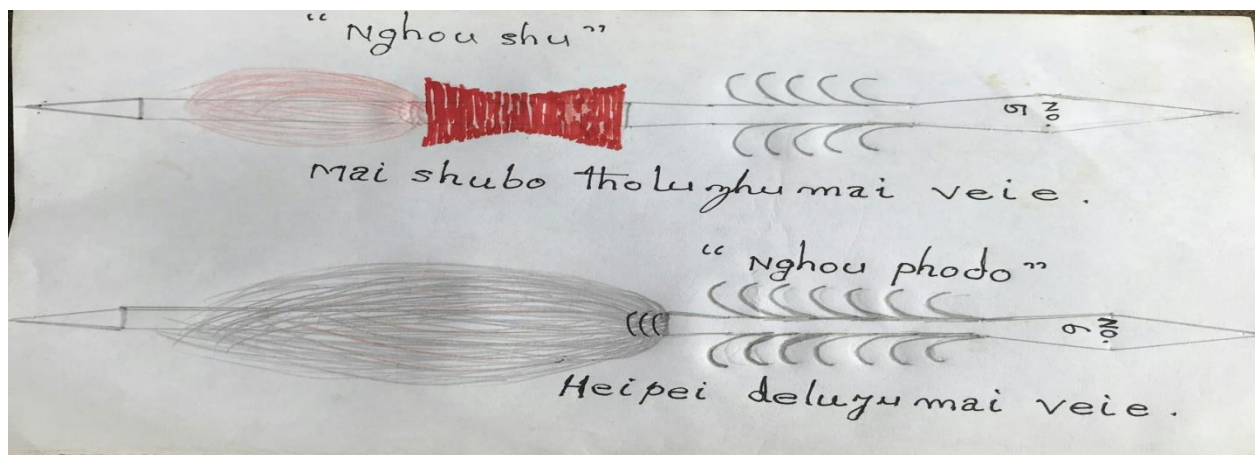


Fig.4.7. The spear is permitted to persons who had trimmed hair from other villages to sacrifice when the village chief dedicates his house or when the chief died. No. 6 This spear is permitted to those who have chopped off enemy heads.

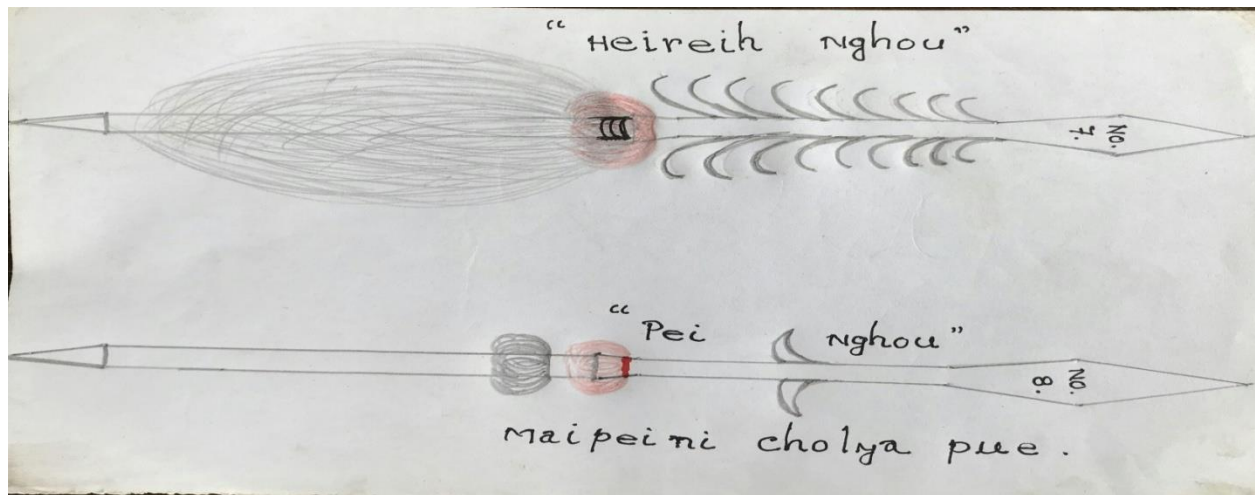


Fig.4.8. This spear is permitted to be used by those who had apprehended the enemy alive. No.8 This spear is entitled to those who have chopped off the highest number of enemy heads.

4.6 The Role of Priest and Priestess

In the past, all the Poumai village had their priests and priestess to performed rites and rituals. There were two types of priests, the chief priest and the lower priest. The chief priest performed the village's major and most important rituals: feast of merit, marriage, and agricultural-related rituals and ceremonies. In the Poumai language, the priest is called *Napao*, and the priestess is called *Napai*. *Napao* and *Napai* were pious persons who observed rites and rituals meticulously. The chief priest served as a mediator between the Supreme Being and the people. Most of the *Napao* and *Napai* were not from well-to-do family. When they administered feasts, weddings and house dedication, they were given meat and paddy. The priest and priestess were forbidden to eat specific meat such as eagle, sparrow, cat, dog and tiger. They were invited to every important ceremony to performed rites and rituals for the village. According to the lunar month, the village priests helped the chief count the days for the village to observe *genna* and celebrate festivals. The lower priests assist the chief priest in ceremonies when necessary. The minor priests performed the rituals and ceremonies such as unnatural death, digging the graves and the other minor ceremonies. The priests were highly respected in the society as they performed all the rites and rituals, seeking god's blessing and protection for the village. The father performed household rites and rituals such as sowing seeds, birth rites, for both humans and domestic animals. While performing rites and rituals, the priests used animal blood, human blood, iron piece, crab, fish, clay pot and wooden plates.

4.7 Traditional Rites and Rituals

Rites and rituals have been an essential part of ancestral Poumai Naga social and religious life. The traditional rites are an act of worship, asking for divine blessings. Raghuvir Sinha defined the rituals as, “The rituals were to appease God, to secure their blessings, for thanksgiving, to mark supremacy in kinship as well as in atonement of some wrongful act. It formed a sort of communication between the man (human) and the God” (68). The traditional rituals are series of actions performed according to the events and needs. According to Irving Hexham, “It is a sacred custom or any form of repetitive behavior which is fixed by tradition. in the study of religion it means Traditional religious behavior or action (190). The rituals are performed to appease god and to ask for blessings. It is also an act of thanksgiving to their god for the blessings they received. Therefore, human beings and gods communicated through performing rituals and rites. The priest was the main performer of any rites and rituals for the community or the villagers. The father acted as a priest and performed rites and rituals for the family members. To them, the universe is filled with a multitude of spirits. Hence man is ever on the watch. The fear of evil spirits also lead to the performing of rituals and rites and formed an integral part of the religion guided by their belief.

They followed certain norms while performing traditional rituals and the rituals have different functions. They affirmed their identity as they performed their traditional rituals. While performing their ancestral rituals, young people were educated about their traditional culture and connected to their roots. Their traditional rituals define who they are and their ancestral social boundary. Their rich rites and rituals safeguard their culture, customs from any external forces. It also helps them embrace and value their ancestral beliefs and customs. Rituals play an essential role in passing down tradition and history as they invoked their ancestor's names when they performed their rituals as one community. As most of the rituals were performed in a group, they impacted and transformed the individual, family, and community.

The Poumai ancestral rites and rituals were performed in two ways, they sacrifice animals and also use different items such as rice-beer, egg, ginger for different purposes according to their custom. They sacrifice animals such as Rooster, cat, dog, pig, cat, cow, bull etc., while

performing rituals. They observed and performed numerous ceremonies throughout the year. All the ceremonies are closely associated with certain rites and rituals.

4.7.1 Traditional Marriage Ceremony and Inheritance

Poumais meticulously followed the ritual saying of dos and don'ts concerning marriage. After converting to Christianity, they abandoned those rituals. Some believe that today many unwanted incidents are happening in the Poumai community due to abandoning the age-old rituals. The researcher interviewed one of the first Christian converts in the Poumai community who married his maternal relative violating the age-old taboo. He stated that the missionaries who came to Poumai land misinterpreted the Bible. He was taught, when he converted to Christianity, to discard the culture and beliefs of their forefathers. The first Poumai Christian converts abandoned almost all the Poumai forefathers' culture and customs thinking their forefathers' culture and customs were opposed to the Christian doctrines. He asserted that today many people are deaf, blind, disfigured because their parents violated the taboo concerning marriage. Today the values and ethics of ancestral Poumai community life are ignored in Poumai community life. They renounced the culture and customs of their forefathers as the first missionaries understanding of the native culture was shallow.

The Poumai Nagas firmly followed monogamy and practice the patriarchal and patrilineal family system. They do not practice child marriage and the dowry system. Poumai customary laws forbid marriage within the same clan/*khel* and consider it an atrocious felony against the laws and society (Banee 428). In the past, the girl family examined some details of the groom-to-be before their engagement.

1. Whether a person is into witchcraft.
2. The record of his family regarding observing rites and customs of the village. They believed that those who infringe rites and customs are not rich and increase their population. If a person could not or is not in a position to perform the Feast of Merit, the girl family declined the marriage proposal.

Marriage to a maternal cousin is allowed and practised, whereas marriage to a paternal cousin is prohibited. In the olden days before the engagement, the elders choose a girl for their sons during their paddy harvest. While winnowing the paddy in the field, the elders observed women adroitness and modesty. Concerning marriage engagement, a dream was considered to

see whether it is favourable. If it is favourable, then as a tradition, the elders of the boy's family would visit a female's house and discuss it with the parents and elders of the girl's family. The marriage engagement was made in August, and the wedding took place in September. As per their tradition, the wedding was administered by a village priestess following the village's custom.

On the wedding day, as per their tradition, the priestess took the bride to the groom's house at night. The bride would come to the groom's house with an iron walking stick on the right hand and a bamboo basket on her back to carry her clothes and a jar of rice beer. She is led by the priestess. Before she enters the groom's house, the groom places an axe at the entrance, and the bride would sweep her right foot lightly over the axe as she goes inside the house. This symbolizes that the couple would be free from sickness and will lead a happy married life. The priestess serves to share the rice beer brought by the bride for their first libation together as a couple. It is taboo for the new couple to have physical relations for the first three days of their wedded life. The practise of polygamy is forbidden in Poumai society. As they forbid the practice of polygamy, divorce is a rare case in Poumai society. One of the reasons the couple divorced was the inability to beget a child and usually the blame falls on the wife when the couple could not beget. The Poumai customary laws do not restrict any person to divorce if the couple agreed to part due to their differences. Before they divide the property equally owned during their marriage, the husband and the elders of his clan have to consent to the divorce. The wife is not permitted to get any property acquired during their stay together if the elders of the husband clan or the village court officially approved the divorce. Divorce can occur on the following grounds:

1. When either husband or wife commits adultery.
2. If either wife or husband had gone insane.
3. When the husband brings another wife, the second wife is not accepted by their customary laws.

"Divorce was rare for they fear of the customary laws, wrongful divorce would lead to war between the two villages if the woman were married to a man of another village. However, in the case of divorce, the children belonged to the husband" (Shimray 68). The Poumai Nagas followed this customary law when the divorce occurred. Remarriage is allowed if the case of

divorce is solved amicably. Some men and women remained widows and widowers and looked after their children which is a commendable.

As a patrilineal society, the right to inherit the property of the parents goes to the males. "Only males then permanently inherit real property, and the males of one generation share alike. That is to say, if a man leaves no son but several first cousins, these will divide the property equally" (Hutton 135). The Poumai customary law also permitted only males to inherit immovable properties of the family. "Law of inheritance relate to a mode of acquiring property and of succeeding to office which is occasioned by events, such as death, which cause a discontinuity of possession" (Hodson 98). The Poumai Naga also follows the same law of inheritance. Usually, the eldest son gets the best properties such as a house, paddy field and cattle. At the same time, females are also entitled to share specific movable properties of the family when married. The immovable and movable properties to be given to the male and the movable properties to be given to the female are mutually agreed upon during engagement. Males inherit the properties like houses, paddy-field, the plot of land, while females are given gifts like cattle, paddy rice, and household goods. If a man has no son, his immovable properties are inherited by his closest cousins. Some of the Poumai villages reserved parents houses for the youngest son though the eldest son inherits larger property than the younger sons. According to Poumai customary law, women are prohibited to inherit immovable property. If a man divorces his wife, the husband takes care of the children, but movable properties are equally divided between wife and husband. If the husband dies after having children, she can live with the children at her husband's house as a widow.

When a married couple do not beget children, they adopt a child of a close relative. The Poumai customary law allows an adopted child to inherit the movable and immovable property. It is not mandatory to adopt a child as close relatives can inherit the property. The married couple adopts a child in order to look after them in their old age. In the past, when family planning was unknown, people wanted to have as many children as possible.

4.7.2 Birth Ceremony and Naming of a Child

The Poumai Nagas performed different rituals starting from birth to death according to the stages of life. The mother plays a vital role in observing the taboos of dos and don'ts before

the birth and after the birth for a child's wellbeing. These taboos of dos and don'ts shape her to be a good mother. She was taught and groomed by grandmothers, mother-in-law, and her mother to obey such taboos for her child's well-being. Though she performs essential rituals related to agricultural practices, she does not go to the field alone during her pregnancy. They believed that the evil spirit could kill the child in her womb if she goes alone to the field or jungle. Before she gives birth, she is forbidden to eat crab and kill snakes so that the child would not imitate like a snake licking the tongue. She is forbidden to cover any hole on the ground so that the child will not become dumb or deaf. She is forbidden to visit a bereaved family, believing that the child will die young.

As a tradition, the Feast of Merit was usually followed by a ritual of child naming and birth rites for blessing and protection from evil spirits. When a woman is pregnant, the husband prepared a wooden bed like a boat for the baby, and when the baby is delivered, the parents placed the baby on the wooden boat. Some believe that it signifies that Poumais are Noah's descendants as Noah's family was saved from the flood by the ark he built. Moreover, the father would prepare pinewood twigs, a wooden cradle and sharp bamboo split for the childbirth ceremony and rituals. When a child is about to be delivered, only the father and older women can stay with the expectant mother. After the child is delivered, the father cut the umbilical cord with the help of a sharp bamboo split. The placenta is buried inside the corner of the house. It is taboo to bury the sibling placenta at the same place, for it is believed that it will cause enmity among the siblings. Also, it is believed that if a dog eats the umbilical cord, the child will become abnormal. Therefore much care is taken for its differentiation, protection and security. When a male child is born, a young boy and a girl performed the birth rituals. The young boy fetches water from the sacred spring along with the older adult, and the girl anoints the forehead of the baby boy with the water from the sacred spring and pronounces a blessing. When a baby girl is born, two young girls performed the rituals for the baby girl—one girl with complete traditional attires, bamboo basket and iron stick. The other girl anoints the baby girl's forehead along with a verbal pronouncement of a blessing. It is believed that the child's lifespan could be foretold while performing the rituals. If the twig burned completely, the child would have a long life. (Our Culture is our Identity 22). When a baby boy is born, the parents tied a thread or strip of cloth on the waist, believing that evil spirit will not harm the baby and the waist will be strong when he grows old. They did not observe or celebrate birthdays in the past. As they were

illiterate, they did not remember their dates of birth. It was not their culture to observe and celebrate birthdays or birth anniversaries.

The ritual of giving names to children was performed after five days, with three or four children gathered in a place, wine is brewed for the occasion. On the day of performing this rite, pure water/clean water and new pots are used for cooking. This ritual was performed with a cock having no sign of defect. Parents gather in a house the whole night as a sign of protecting the child from evil spirits. The ritual is performed in a concrete way to avoid complications like dreadful diseases and a short span of life. Generally, they christen their child compounding the father's and grandfather's name if a child is a boy. Moreover, they christen their daughter with meaningful names. They usually changed the names if a child grew sickly, thinking that the name is not suitable. The mother can resume her usual work after the completion of the birth ceremony. As a tradition, when a child was born, the parents named the child by killing two good matured cocks as a mark of thanksgiving and sacrifice to the Supreme Being with certain rites. As soon as the child was born, either father or mother declares that the child belongs to them to avoid the evil spirit from taking the child's life. Such practices were bound by the customs and belief systems of those days. When a child was born, they predict their child's future based on the signs. They believed a child would be cruel or violent if born on Sunday. They predicted a child would be a murderer if a child has two spots on the head. They believed those who were born in the morning would live a long life. Those who were born during the daytime would be strong and brave. Those who were born at night would be weak and timid. If the parents dreamed of a tiger, they considered the dream a bad omen; they believe an evil spirit would attack the child.

4.7.3 Death Rite

The Poumai ancestors believed that when the person is dead, the deceased soul goes to the land of death. In the Poumai language, the land of death is called *thai man nuh*. Death is not the end of human life. According to Poumai traditional religion, the dead souls continue to live in the land of death. Those who live a pious life on earth enjoy in the land of death. The soul goes through a long journey to reach the land of death. On the way to the land of death, the soul crosses a gate. The name of the gatekeeper is called *Tuturou*, a typical owl. It is believed that children and feeble souls are vulnerable before they crossed the gate. Therefore, older adult bless

the deceased soul to reach the land of death in peace. J.H. Hutton has stated the blessing as: “do not be afraid, do not mourn, you have only followed your parents custom. Although you have died, let us remain happy. Although God has not been kind to you, and you have died, fear not” (227). The dead souls are said to come back when a family member died to escort the dead soul to the land of death. It is believed that the dead souls come back and help the family. There is a story related to this belief. Once upon a time, the parents died while their son and daughter were still young. The deceased souls of the parents came back and helped their children in their paddy field. One day the siblings decided to watch who were helping them at the corner of the field. In the evening, when all the people left home, their parents came and silently worked. The siblings jumped inside the working bag of their parents. The girl jumps inside her mother’s bag but unfortunately her bag was not knotted properly thus she fell. The boy was taken to the land of death from his father's bag. He stayed there for a few days with the souls. He went to the field and hunted with them. He went to the girls' dormitory with them at night, but they changed to house fly and slept on the roof when they were about to sleep. As he was left alone at night, he did not enjoy his stay with them. Therefore, he finally decided to go back to his sister. Accordingly, he informed his parents that he would go back to the land of living beings. His mother presented him with the packed food and told him to have it on his way before he reached the land of the living. The boy was determined not to open on the way as he wants to share the packed food with his sister. However, when he opened the packed food with his sister, they found mud (Lasuh 49). This story tells that the deceased souls continue to live in the land of death like human beings. When old persons are about to die, they usually pronounce their last wills to their children and relatives and bless them. When a person is dead, the villagers gather to mourn and pay respect. No one would go to the field of work when someone is dead in the village.

The funeral rites are performed and observed to let the dead soul reach the 'land of death' serenely and as a sign of respect to the dead person. The funeral rites were performed and initiated by the minor priest. As a custom, animals like cow, buffalo and dog were slaughtered and distributed to all the households in the village. It is believed that the dead soul takes the souls of the sacrificed animals and continues to be wealthy and highly regarded even in the land of death. It is commonly practised when a person is dead that the corpse is washed with plain water and laid into the coffin along with his/her belongings such as dresses, shawls, spear, dao,

shield and others. Poumais buried the corpse along with spear, dao and shield, believing that the soul continues to use them in fighting against the evil spirit on their way to the land of death. Not all the dead were given proper rituals or buried in the same manner, for instance, unnatural dead such as suicide, accident, killed by the wild animals, women who died in childbirth were not buried formally. (Hodson 147). It is believed that if the dead body was laid to rest formally in such an unnatural death, the soul lingers with the living, and similar disaster and hardship happen again to the bereaved family. When the village chief died, villagers mourned and observed rites for five days as a mark of respect. During these five days, villagers were prohibited from selling agricultural products and do any works. When headhunting was at its zenith, those who were killed by the enemies outside the village or in the field were buried at the village gate or the village outskirts (James 33). Once funeral rites are over and the corpse is buried, the priest sanctified the bereaved house by removing the old three stones of the fire hearth, believing that death may not happen again in the family. Poumais believed that the dead soul continued to stay in the house until '*Khrouyu*' (departing ceremony to the death) was performed (Sha 28). *Khrouyu* is observed in the months of *thounikhou* (Dec.-Jan.)

4.8 Agricultural Rites

Agriculture is the mainstay and occupation of Poumai Naga, and its rites and rituals are varied according to the lunar months. They practised jhum cultivation and terrace cultivation. Terrace cultivation is more commonly in the Poumai region. Every Naga, including Poumai, owns a paddy field, and they cultivate paddy. J.P. Mills says, "A Naga's life depends on his crop. It is therefore, not surprising that from childhood to the old age he depends most of his days in his fields and that almost all the ceremonies of his religion are designed to protect and increase his crops" (75). In this way, Poumai traditional festivals are celebrated according to the lunar months throughout the year, observing all the rites and rituals diligently. Most of the Poumai practices are calendrical rituals indicating important agricultural events. The following are some of the Poumai traditional agricultural ceremonies and calendrical rituals of agricultural events.

4.8.1 Field Plough Ceremony

Field ploughing ceremony is performed along with the festival called *Baolou touyu*, which means using newly replenished barns. This ceremony is celebrated last part of November.

In this ceremony, Poumai dedicated the newly harvested paddy to their Supreme Being. According to their custom, womenfolk go to the field and catch crab and *khani* (small fish). The next day they put the cooked crab and fish on the four corners of the granary and invoke Supreme Being to bless their paddy. On the last day, either priest or village chief fast and observed *genna* on behalf of the village. The last day is called *Deidaosouyu*. The following day either priest or chief went to the field with rice beer and offered it to the diety. As he offered rice beer to the diety, he invokes God's blessing to have a bountiful harvest. The villagers start ploughing their fields only after this festival.

4.8.2 Sowing Seeds Ceremony

The farmers sow seeds after the ceremony of *Tiemou Thouyu* (sowing seeds) is performed. The rites of this ceremony are performed either by the village chief or priest; it varies from village to village. The sowing of seeds festival falls from February to March. The practice of sowing seeds and the date varies among the Poumai villages though the purpose is the same.

4.8.3 Harvest Rites

When harvest time approaches, before villagers start harvesting, the priest fasted and performed rites and rituals for the harvesting on behalf of the village to have a bountiful harvest. In the Poumai region, they start to harvest the paddy from October to November. Before the harvest, they observed certain *genna*. They are prohibited from exposing white cloths in the sun, playing musical instruments, and cutting down trees to avoid storms and hailstone before they harvested the paddy.

4.9 Traditional Calendrical Rituals of Poumai

Poumai counts the month's date from the day they first saw the new moon in the olden days. They performed rituals from the first day of the month. The following are some of the Poumai agricultural rituals performed in the past. The date and its rituals are as follow:-

The Rituals Performed in *Thounii Khou* (January) are:

The festive spirit of 'Feast of Merit' continued the following year as the performers of the Feast of Merit was celebrated.

Date1. Purification of the body: The traditional ritual of the purification of the body falls in January. As per their tradition, the menfolk purify themselves ritually on the first day of the new Moon. On this day, they performed tho (a kind of bamboo) ritual of predicting their fortune for

the coming monsoon. Moreover, they cut the bamboo (*tho*) for prediction of the year, to see the prospect of all their important activities such as hunting and raids.

2. Offering of cock: The ritual of releasing cock in the jungle is performed by the eldest of each *khel*. The cock without blemish is offered as a thanksgiving to the Supreme Being. The eldest of each *khel* invoke God's blessing on behalf of his *khel* for the coming monsoon to have a bountiful harvest and protection from plague and sickness.

4. Worshipping of fire: On this day, early in the morning, the villagers worship the fire deity by observing *Meivo sou/Trei mane genna* so as no unnatural fire occurs. During this ceremony, they blessed the house, and they spray water at the house. They are prohibited from setting fire in the jungle, and they cease from their normal work.

5. Blessing by the elders: Before they start felling the trees for firewood, according to their custom, village elders performed the ritual and prayed for the whole villagers so that none of them will be injure while cutting firewood for the year. After this ceremony, the villagers start cutting firewood for the year.

7. Making treaty with wild beasts: In the olden days human life was menaced by the wild beasts as there was no gun. Therefore, on this day, this ritual is performed in order to co-exist peacefully.

8. Blessing of yeast for the brewing of rice beer: When a family performed Feast of Merit, the host family provides rice beer to all the villagers. Before the host family prepares rice beer, they wrapped yeasts with leaves on a particular day. The host family, along with the siblings, refrained from normal work and observed the day.

12. Pounding of the paddy: The family who will be hosting feast of merit pounded paddy on this day for brewing rice beer.

13. Prevention of earthquakes: On this day, the villagers observed rituals to prevent earthquakes in their land.

17. Starting of new harvest festival: They slaughtered animals for the harvest festival.

Rituals Performed in *Siipa Khou* (February).

1. *Deiyao sho-e, sei sou tou-e*: In this meeting, the village chief offered rice beer to the village menfolks. The villagers deliberated important laws and orders of the village and enacted specific laws in this meeting. They amend and repeal the existing laws and taboos in this meeting led by the village elders.

4. Purification of the village chief: This ritual of purification is performed on this day. In this ritual, the village chief took a bath ritually to cleanse all the misfortunes ahead.

6. The village chief migrated from Makhel reared *thepao* (Sacrificial dog) for the annual oblation. On this day, the chief sow seed of millet before the villagers begin to sow the seeds.

7. *Hai yu rei mo mai bah nu vei*: As the hands of the humans play a significant role in cultivation, the day is observed and people refrained from their normal work. They believed that those who neglect to observe this ritual with *genna*, their hands would be weak while working in the field.

Hai yu chu sii the-e: All the village menfolks pulled the feast of merit stone. The host family provided meat and rice beer to the village menfolks.

Rituals Performed in *Roupa Khou* (March) are as follows:

1. Rituals to invoked wealth and prosperity for the village are performed on this day.

8. On this day, the host of the feast of merit, along with the priest and friends who assisted in performing rituals during the feast, make two clay models for buffaloes in the paddy field.

9. *Chikai sou-e*: The horns of the house are prepared on this day.

11. *Shori nai-e* (commencement of rituals)

(a) *Rolai mei sou nou-e, harou hasa nou-e pyane hi*: The rituals of the coming year commence on this day.

(b) It is taboo for spouses to have sex on this particular day.

(c) They are forbidden to set fire in the forest, burn or roast anything before seven days of the rituals. They strongly believed that if anyone breached the taboo, God inflicted his rage in the form of plague, famine, and misfortune in the village. They strictly observed *genna* and taboo to avoid God's wrath on them. When any villager violates the taboo, they imposed a heavy fine on the violator. In this way, the villagers guard the evil consequence of God's wrath on them.

12. Pounding of paddy: Those who will construct new houses, including horn houses, pounded the paddy.

14. Sowing of seed by the chief: The village chief sow paddy seed on behalf of the villagers before the villagers start sowing the seed for the year by performing rites. The villagers start sowing paddy seeds the next day.

Rituals Performed in the Month of *Khoniuh Khou* (April):

1. Purifying month of the menfolk. The month is called purifying month of the menfolk. The following rituals are performed according to their custom:

- a. The cleansing of menfolk, arms and tools.
- b. Rituals performed with a kind of bamboo to read their luck and fate.
- c. They blow buffalo horns as part of the ritual.

8. *Hurrah Me Du-e* (Beheading a cock): *Zhousou mai nou nya sou khaina* (the ritual of beheading a cock is the last rite by those who performed the feast of merit).

14. On this day, the village chief sows the paddy seed, and the villagers start sowing the next day.

15. *Khou teinghi the nai* (venerate the lunar and solar eclipses). The day is commemorated as a day of grieving.

16. The day is observed to avoid natural calamities such as hailstorms, heavy rainfall, storm.

17. On this day, villagers are prohibited from digging soil. They believed that soil would remain its fertility to give a bountiful harvest.

18. The day is observed to protect barley and millet from wild animals. Villagers are prohibited from burning the forest, provoking or challenging monkeys.

24. *Veomai chitei* (Renovation of chief's house): On this day, villagers are prohibited to stay back in other villages. According to their custom, young men go hunting, and young women go fishing.

25. *Roro mai chitei-e* (refurbishment of diviner/priest house). On this day, the village priest/diviner house is renovated.

Rituals Performed in the Month of *Khana Khou* (May)

24. Offering of the paddy: The village chief digs a deep hole and puts the seeds into the deep soil to prevent sprouting. This ritual is practised as an offering to god with the aim that he may be pleased and bless the other seeds to sprout so that they will have a bountiful harvest.

25. Ritual of first transplantation of paddy: On this day, either the father or the mother performed the ceremony of paddy plantation. Pregnant women are forbidden to perform this ritual of paddy plantation.

28. The day is observed and god is invoked to protect the paddy from hailstorms, pests and wild animals.

Rituals Performed in the Month of *Zii Khou* (June).

5. *Kupao laoye*: On this day, they performed the ritual of purification for the blacksmith. After the ritual is performed, the blacksmith begins reshaping and repairing the old tools for cultivating.

6. *Duhniih nii-e* (water festival): The water festival is celebrated before paddy transplantation. In this festival, they beseech god's favour for a good monsoon.

Rituals Performed in *Lao Khou* (July).

1. *Phao hrai naie*: The young people who would perform rituals observed the day along with their father.

18. *Siih thoraoshi*: They observe the day before they start harvesting of millet.

20. *Khao shi naie* (observing the day to beseech God to protect the paddy from pests and natural calamities): The Poumais believed that poor harvest happens due to pests and natural calamities. Therefore they constantly asked God to protect the paddy from pests and natural calamities by observing rituals conscientiously. The following are some of the important rituals they strictly observed.

- a. The chief puts the chick of the babul that hatch after the transplantation, an insect (*tya khao*) that eats the paddy plant's roots in a reed species known as *khu* and is floated down the river.
- b. On this day, they are forbidden to cut firewood, fetch water, and pound paddy, including housework. They strictly observed the day refraining from their normal work.
- c. Visitors are prohibited from entering the village on this day.
- d. Apart from cowherds and shepherds, villagers are taboo to work.

26. *Hongu* (midday work): The villagers come home at noon from their field on this particular day.

27. *Mou rah soue*: This ritual is performed after the completion of paddy transplantation. On this day, they invoked God's blessing to cleanse the paddy plant in the field.

28. *Laoniih*: This festival celebrated after transplantation. In this festival, menfolks purify their body, mind and soul by taking baths to avoid misfortune that may befall them. Some of the main rituals performed during this festival are:

- a) Before they drink the rice beer, they offered it to God. The mother, son and father performed rituals in a different room. The mother performed rituals in the kitchen, the son in the middle room and the father in the outermost room.
- b) A piece of ginger is arranged for all the male members of the family to read their fortune. They generated fire by rubbing a piece of dried wood and bamboo strip. The male members fetch water to be blessed by the chief. The son slaughter an unblemished cock. The male members eat the meat. Women are forbidden to eat this meat.
- c) The village priest observed six days of the festival. He set the cock free in the jungle as an offering to God and implored God to bless the paddy.

Rituals Performed in *Lai Khou* (August)

9. *Mou ki naie*: They observed the day and asked God's blessing for good paddy flowering.

Rituals Performed in *Nge Khou* (September)

4. *Teidei thoe* (worshipping the sky and the earth): They worship the sky and the earth to give them good weather and hold back hailstorms, storms during the paddy harvest.

7. *Mu chao naie*: They observed the day for the ears of paddy to be filled wholly.

22. *Lehu zii*: The Poumai forefathers relied on omens and dreams. They consulted and forecast their future in different ways. One of the practices is the village chief forecasts the fortune of crops by strangling the chicken. When the chief strangles the chicken, they will have a bountiful harvest if it generates dried excreta. Moreover, if the chicken produces liquid excreta, then the yield of crops is expected to decrease. If the feathers are fallen, they considered it bad luck and hailstorms are expected. The chief performed all these rituals and forecast their future without eating and drinking the whole day.

23. *Veo tho thoe* (fresh grain offering): The village chief performed *tho tho* a symbolic ritual of fresh grain offering to God. The fresh grains are placed in a container and covered by a sacred stone kept in the chief's house. As per their tradition, the chief eats the fresh grain before the villagers start eating the fresh grain. The villagers start eating the fresh grain the next day.

24. *Mai sou thoe*: On this day, the whole villagers performed a symbolic ritual of the first grain from the standing paddy plant. On this particular day, they are forbidden to eat meat.

27. *Shapha*: They celebrated the festival of *Neh* for three days, and the festival begins on this day. As per their tradition, they pull a calf without blemish inside the chief's house for a moment.

After this ritual, they tied the calf in the chief's backyard and set the calf free in the evening. This ritual continues for three days. They forecast the climatic condition of the year.

28. *Naihnii*: An unblemished calf is tied in the backyard of the chief to hear its mooing by the chief. According to the position of the calf, while mooing, the chief predicted for the coming monsoon. The chief predicted the location where a hailstorm is expected according to the calf's position while mooing. The chief slaughtered the sacrificial dog and distributed it to all the village households. The dog meat signified a sin offering to God. If the sacrificial dog dies or get lost before the 28th of September, the villagers observe a *genna*.

29. *Veih hro nai*: On this day, an unblemished calf used in their ritual and predicts the climatic condition of the year is released. The ritual of cleansing is performed by placing Ficus leaves in front of the house.

Rituals Performed in *Zalepo Khou* (October)

2. *Ludu vae*: The villagers renovate the roads that lead to their field for the coming harvest.

3. *Hudzii khao pha*: The priest who ministers the rituals on behalf of the village set the unblemished cock free into the jungle as a token of thanksgiving to God for protecting them and ask God's blessing for a good harvest.

4. *Teidei thoe* (worshipping the sky and the earth): They observed the day and invoked God to bestow good weather during the harvest and avert heavy rain and hailstorm until they complete their harvest.

18. *Chou po soue*: The village priest officiates the ritual. The priest stones a cat to death by announcing to the villagers that the evildoers will also die like the cat. The following persons are considered evil doers:

- i. Those who refused to observe and performed rituals.
- ii. The thieves in the village.
- iii. Those who claim and snatch others property.

27. *Dziivo naie*: They observed the day and asked God for good weather during the harvest time.

Rituals Performed in *Chadu Khou* (November)

1. *Tokhoe*: In the past weddings are held on this day.

20. *Raokue*: According to their custom, old utensils are replaced with new utensils on this day. The couple who will be hosting feast of merit abstains from sharing the same bed. The couple

sacrifices the sexual urge for three months until the rites and rituals for the feast are completed. The couple hosted the feast of merit with a lot of sacrifices following the norms of the feast.

24. *Boh khai sou-e* (ritual performed post-harvest): This ritual is performed by every family, desirably by the mother. The mother goes to their field and performed this ritual in the field along with reed, worm cast and millet. The performer of this ritual is prohibited from talking with anyone before returning home from the field.

25. *Baoh krowe*: This ritual is performed after the harvest when the granaries are filled. The performer of this ritual added some paddy into the granary.

26. *Baoh lou tou*: After the harvest, they performed a fresh grain offering ceremony before they eat the fresh grain. In this ritual, they performed the ritual ceremony along with a kind of fish (*khanii*) and a kind of crab (*vabao*). The performer placed the fish and crab at the four corners of the entire granary—the performer of this ritual fast starting from 26th to 29th of November.

27. *Boah pei ropa*: On this day, they performed the ritual of adding some paddy into the granary marking the end of the harvest.

28. They asked Supreme Deity to take control of their senses, particularly the sexual urge. From this day, the couples who will host Feast of Merit in the coming year abstain from sexual copulation for three months.

Rituals Performed in *Donii Khou* (December).

December is the month of festivities, drinking, and singing at the expense of the wealthy persons in the village who have volunteered to perform the Feast of Merit.

1. *Vei palai*: According to their custom, they start blowing flute and play indigenous games on this day.

17. *Khoshue*: The family and the relatives clean the cemetery to perform the last rites.

22. *Donii sha*: The family who wishes to perform feast of merit offer rice beer, and meat to the villagers.

23. On this day, they celebrate *Mouziimai chishu* (big day feast), wherein all the villagers drink rice beer and eat meat offered by the host family with singing and dancing.

27. *Khro dzii sao*: They fetched water to use for the death rites on this day.

28. *Kro kro du* (the parting of the living and dead soul): On this day, the village priest performed the last rites for the departed souls. In this ritual, the priest sends off the dead soul into the land

of death by killing a dog, and he offered rice beer. Male dogs are slaughtered on this day. Women are taboo to eat this meat ("Siimai tyahrii nii" 26-52).

Some important rituals and *gennas* are not included in the agricultural lunar calendar. These rituals and *gennas* are also observed stringently by the forefathers. The quintessence of traditional religion believes in good and evil spirits and their invisible activities around them. They performed and observed various rituals and *genna* not to inflict physical harm and protect their crops from natural calamity. They performed these rituals for the welfare and security of the village. Therefore all the villagers took part in these rituals and *genna* sternly. When one of the incidents listed below happened in the village, they observed *genna* and performed rituals.

1. There is a wild pear tree in Sajouba Mao village not far from Makhel village. It is believed that Naga ancestors planted the tree at the time of dispersal from Makhel. The legend says they took an oath under this tree to reunite one day again before they dispersed. When a branch of the tree broke, all the village folks observed *genna*.

2. They observed *genna* when there is a landslide in their village gate.

3. When unnatural death occurred in the village, they observed *genna* to send away the ghost so, as such, unnatural death will not occur again. They buried the dead body the same day; they believed the deity is not happy and inflicted a curse upon the dead person.

4. They observed *genna* when there is an unexpected hailstorm in the village.

5. They performed a ritual when their fields are damaged due to landslides, floods etc. They performed this ritual by offering a cock to appease the deity.

6. They observed *genna* when the epidemic strikes their domestic animals. All the village folks observe *Genna*.

7. When any house in the village is gutted in a devastating fire, the whole village observed *genna*.

8. They performed rituals and observed *genna* five days when the village chief dies. The priest who ministers the rituals stay with the bereaved family until he completed the rituals. They slaughtered animals in his honour while observing *genna*. On the first day, they observed *genna* for the dead body. On the second day, they invoked the deity to bless their wealth and fortune. On the third day, they invoke God to sanctify them physically and spiritually. On the fourth day, they invoke God to take away greed from them. On the fifth day, they prayed for the departed

soul to rest in peace. The villagers are forbidden to sell any agricultural products outside the village before performing the *kro kro du* ritual.

4.10 Egg and Ginger Rituals

In the olden days, the villagers collect rice hulls at one place for an egg ritual to forecast the coming year. After the rice hulls are completely burned, the priest cracks an egg and put it on top of the rice hulls. If the foam of an egg covered without a hole, it is a favourable sign of a good monsoon. If there is a hole in the foam, it signifies the year will bring drought.

The Poumai ancestors performed rituals using ginger to foretell the future. They shaped two ginger like a top for spinning. Before they spin the ginger, they marked one ginger as local and the other as an outsider. They spin both the ginger simultaneously. There will be a good monsoon if the local ginger top wins, and if the outsider wins, there will be a dry monsoon.

4.11 Ritual of *Pouh Souyu*

Bamboo is used when performing a ritual to read the prospect for the raid, hunting, and sickness. They used a typical bamboo, which was not available like ordinary bamboo. In the Poumai language, the bamboo is called *Tho*. They guard the bamboo vigilantly day and night, one day ahead before they cut bamboo for the purpose. It was their tradition that no bird or animal climb the bamboo and fly over it. The village priest or the performer of the ritual cut the bamboo by observing rites. The performer split the bamboo invoking the name of the spirits. The performer predicts by observing the fibres of the bamboo. When they practised headhunting, this ritual was commonly practised by the Poumai village.

4.12 Religious Beliefs, Taboos, Oaths, *Gennas*, Rites, Rituals and Their Present Status in the Wake of Christianity and Western Education

After Poumais converted to Christianity and embraced modern education, their religious belief system and traditional practices have undergone drastic changes. Modern gadgets such as television, Cell phone and computer also changed the mindset and outlook of the natives towards westernisation. When all these external forces penetrated the Poumai community without realizing the negative impact on their community life, they discarded their age-old practices.

Along with Christianity, the early missionaries infused modernisation and westernisation in the Poumai community. As there was strong opposition against Christianity, modern education was introduced before they convert them into Christianity. They introduced modern education to

change their mindset and worldview and educate them to explore beyond their community. Gradually people are attracted to modern education as they are taught how to read and write. Soumen Sen has rightly asserted the motive behind the introduction of modern education to the native people, "The early indigenous literature in print was mostly religious and moral, motivated by an urge for preserving the religious-cultural mooring" (115). The missionaries introduced the Bible as a textbook to the people and motivated them through God's word and gospel songs. They taught them Bible along with gospel songs and later translate it to their language. When people could read, write, and understand English, they feel proud of themselves with a sense of superiority. Slowly, westernisation and modernisation penetrated before people realised that it would endanger their community life. In this way, the early missionaries introduced Christianity in the Poumai community through modern education. The people failed to apprehend that new culture has jeopardized their age-old tradition as they were blindly attracted to modern education and westernisation. Today due to the influence of western education and westernisation, the Poumai community is rapidly shifting to western thoughts socially and politically. Gradually people abandoned their age-old practice of dormitories and felt the need to establish school and college. Thus, the missionaries first educate the people as there was a communication gap to spread the gospel. Eventually, education has broadened their mind and uplifted their economic condition. The missionaries established schools to impart modern education. In the course of time, the first educated people from the community translated the Bible and Hymnal into their language. After introducing modern education, the people started tracing their history based on their available folksongs and folktales.

When the people discarded their tradition and embrace Christianity, the impact of westernisation and modernisation are greatly felt in the community. Setolu Tunyi has rightly asserted the drastic change of traditions and culture due to the impact of westernisation and modernisation "The present cannot stick to the past primitive tradition and culture, and cope with the modernistic technological world. It has to be dynamic, or else man would not develop and progress this far. In spite of rapid changes, every individual person carries his or her own identity, through culture. Culture identity becomes a personal identity" (55). The impact of westernisation and modernisation can be seen even in their traditional attires. They gradually abandoned their traditional attires and embraced the latest western fashion trend. The people abandon their traditional attires before they realized the value of their traditional attires. Today,

young people are not comfortable wearing their traditional attires. Although there is a drastic change in their traditional dress, people still preserve and wear traditional costume during their traditional festival. With the coming of westernisation, they have changed their traditional clothes and added more colour and patterns to suit them. As the present generation is attracted to Westernisation and modernisation, western culture becomes more comfortable and suitable than traditional traditions. The impact of westernisation can be seen even in their lifestyles and manners. Though they were illiterate and not exposed outside their community in the pre-Christian period, they uphold honesty and respect among them. With the coming of westernisation, some community hallmarks such as honesty, respect, hospitality are declining rapidly in the community. Though Poumai ancestors were known as community-oriented people, they become self-seeking people when they adopted modern individualistic culture. As honesty is diminishing, the charisma of the ancestral community is decreasing in the present community. Ancestral people did not lock their houses when they go to the field. However, today people do not only lock the house; they start erecting fences around their house compound. Instead of becoming more civilized and obeying the rules and regulations, people show disrespect and become more corrupt. In the past, they honour and respect their leader, but today exemplary leaders are scarce in the community. Initially, newly Christian converts were prohibited from drinking rice beer and abandoned their culture of drinking rice beer. However, they do not completely stop the culture of drinking rice beer. Some people still drink when they celebrate some of their traditional festivals. Though they have discarded many of their rich cultures, they still practice some of their cultures that are still relevant and applicable.

When new religion was introduced to Poumais by the outsiders, the Poumais embraced the new religion and culture without proper knowledge. The new culture and religion are new to the Poumais. While adapting to the new religion and culture, Poumais slowly discards their age-old culture. Due to these external forces, the ancestral Poumai community life has undergone drastic changes. Modern education came to the Poumai community along with Christianity, and it replaced the traditional dormitory system. Modern education changes their mindset and connects them to other people and their culture. With the introduction of modern education in Poumai community, westernisation gradually replaced the traditional customs and culture of the Poumai Naga. Poumai ancestors did not have a written record as they did not a written script. They start writing their oral traditions in written form only after the introduction of modern

education. Modern education has contributed and boosts the living standard as well as their economy. No doubt, Christianity and modern education transformed the old social values and upgraded their living standard. However, it also brought negative changes and devastated the age-old tradition, culture and certain social values.

The cultural heritage and practices such as laws, customs and taboos are being discarded by the present generation and embracing the western culture. Undoubtedly, western culture and modern civilization have contributed to progress in many aspects. At the same time, it is obliterating their ancestral community life. Due to the influence of western culture, disunity, misunderstanding and ignorance of traditional culture are increasing in the present Poumai community. The strong foundation and fabric of their ancient society have been wrecked. Thus the rich people have become arrogant, and the poor people become poorer in society. Though there was no class in the past, today, there is a wide gap between the rich and poor, literate and illiterate. The rich and literate people have been siphoning development funds and projects for the village and society. The equality that they have been enjoying for generations has weakened with the coming of modern culture. Due to the impact of western culture and formal education, people have started harbouring a sense of superiority or inferiority in the community. The educated and the rich people slowly dominates and take advantage of the common people. Thus a spirit of equality among them is declining in the community. These social evil and corruption have started as they abandoned and neglected their customs and culture. Injustice, inequality, favouritism and nepotism are prevailing in the present society. Modern culture has replaced the age-old cultural heritage of the Poumai Naga. Poumai society would have been better if they civilized their society based on their cultural heritage passed down from ages. After conversion into Christianity, cultural heritages and traditional beliefs have been replaced by Christian principles. They did not preserve their cultural heritages after the conversion into Christianity. In order to rebuild the forgotten ancestral Poumai community life, they need to revisit and salvage their age-old cultural heritage.

There are both negative and positive influences of Christianity. It was at such a perishing period that God sent his royal messenger to the Poumai region. The coming of Christianity along with modern education marked the new transformation of Poumai Nagas socio-cultural life. Christianity plays an important role in transforming the old social values and ways of life. When

missionaries came to Poumai Nagas, they faced many difficulties, but they could introduce a new religion because of their relentless effort. Christianity was first introduced at Maiba Village among the Poumai Nagas in 1934 by the Evangelist and teacher, M. Lorho from Mao Punanamai Baptist church. At first, he was not allowed to set up a church at Maiba by the villagers. Through M. Lorho endeavour and encouragement, the Maiba Baptist Church was established in 1937 (Souvenir, Poumai Naga Baptist Association 12).

Moreover, in 1940, the second Poumai Baptist church was established at Khamsom (Souvenir, Kisumai Baptist church 19). After these two churches were established, slowly Christianity spread to other Poumai Nagas villages. Though there were numerous obstacles at the beginning of Proselytization, Christianity happens to be an inevitable phenomenon in all aspects of life. Some Scholars have concluded that Christianity has brought more development than otherwise. However, because of the coming of Christianity, a new era has begun (Longkumar 302).

Education is one of the main factors adding to the overall development of the Poumai Nagas socio-cultural life. Burman writes, “One of the most striking features of the impact of Christianity on the social and political life is the introduction of modern western education.”(Burman 13). Before Christianity spread to Poumai Nagas, they were illiterate and did not have any written records. When there were no Schools, *Morung* was their institution where they were educated and taught the social values and lessons on discipline. It was considered one of the best institutions for boys and girls. Therefore, considering all the facilities and purposes, the *Morungs* were appropriately considered the Naga Schools (Shimray 193). Due to their simple existence they believed and performed rites and rituals out of fear. With the dawn of Christianity, they built churches, whereby *Morung* system was not encouraged and gradually disappeared from society. Modern education has replaced the old traditional *Morung* institution to wards a formal world different from the old social values and primitive mindsets. When people are educated, their perspectives and approaches undergo a sea change resulting in the acquisition of new things. Along with modern education, Christianity became more practical and pleasing to the people. P.H. John has rightly pointed out that one should acknowledge the credit of modern education in North-East India to the British and missionaries (John 59).

The only regret is the way traditional cultural aspects could not be differentiated from religious matter, for example, folksongs were neglected and many songs disappeared. Some positive changes include the introduction of Christian marriage taking a vow before God to be faithful has given more stability to tribal Christian families (Karotemprel 24). It has added more sacredness and commitment to Poumai Christian nuclear families. In the pre-Christian era, women were hardly exposed to the outside world as they engaged in their daily household activities. They did not influence decision-making; they were helpers only to their husbands and sole caretaker of their children. Only after the arrival of Christianity and modern education, they start contributing to society and participating in the decision-making. Initially, parents are not encouraged to send their daughters to school; only a few women were educated. In the course of time, women also rapidly progressed in every field. The role of women and their contribution is noteworthy in the present society.

Before Britishers and Christian missionaries arrived in Poumai Nagas society, every village waged war against each other. There was no relation and unity among Poumai Nagas villages. However, when people converted to Christianity, headhunting was gradually given up and disappeared from society. After converting to Christianity, they reconciled and forgave each other for their past life. After they abandoned the old practice of headhunting, they build unity and live together as the Poumai tribe. The expensive and lavish "Feat of Merit" aspired by everyone for fame and respect has died down and totally abandoned. When the Feast of Merit lost its popularity and Christianity became the religion, drinking rice beer was considered immoral, and people refrained drinking. In this way, the old traditional practices which were against the new religion were discarded.

Before Christianity came, the Poumai traditional society attempts to foretell their future and control their life through their traditional religion. A two-tiered scheme governed the traditional Poumai cosmology, the upper tier was Supreme Being, and the lower tier was of minor spirits. It is believed that the two-tiered system controlled everything of their everyday life, including disease, crops, rain, human population, cattle and death. Out of fear, they appeased these malevolent spirits by performing *gennas*, rites and rituals. It was only after the dawn of Christianity, all these beliefs and practices were discarded and considered ungodly acts by the new religion. Missionaries began to firmly implement and replace traditional rites, rituals, and

gennas with the new Christian principles. As the new religion brought all these socio-cultural changes, the Poumai way of life has transformed radically. Almost all the traditional festivals, feasts were associated with religious sacrificial rites and rituals, all these practices were abandoned and replaced by Christian festivals, like Christmas, Easter and New Year. Today Poumai Christians only pray and worship Jesus Christ. The changes that have been brought by the new religion have been both positive and negative to Poumai society. Although numerous changes have taken place, some traditional beliefs remain in the mind of the people with some alteration.

The arrival of Christianity has changed the traditional concept of spirits, soul and local goddess to some extent, but the new religion does not eradicate all these traditional concepts. The Poumai Christians also believe in the existence of spirits and soul, though the new faith replaced local goddesses. The present Christian concept of spirits and soul is similar to the traditional concept. However, they do not worship and performed animal sacrifices to the spirits. Instead of performing traditional rites and rituals, they pray and worship God to protect them from evils. Like ancestral belief, the Poumai Christians also believed in the existence of the soul after death. The Christians believe that all the dead persons would come back to life when Jesus comes back again to this earth to take them to heaven, their permanent home.

The Christian worship of God has replaced the traditional religion of worshipping the ancestor. Though the Poumai Christians worship only God, still they give respect and honour to their ancestors. During Poumai traditional festivals, Pou is honoured and praised for being the ancestor of Poumai. After the dawn of Christianity, the rituals and rites for their ancestors were discarded. In place of worshipping the soul of their ancestors by performing rites and ceremonies, the Poumai Christians pray for the soul of the ancestors because they did not know God. As they did not know God, they must have committed many sins against the Christian God. In the olden days, people worship the spirit of their ancestors, but now the Christians praise God for their ancestors' life.

As the Christians read and understand the Bible in Deuteronomy 5: 8 to 9, which says

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You

shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me".

Since the ancestors were not Christian, they worshipped different gods and performed various rites and rituals to appease their gods. Therefore, on many occasions, the Poumai Christians pray for the sins of their ancestors so that God's wrath and punishment will not come to them. Many transformations are taking place with the arrival of Christianity, but still, people do not forget their ancestors. When they celebrate the traditional festival, people remember their ancestors by singing their traditional songs, which narrate their ancestors' stories. They wear traditional attires and observe their traditional festivals in remembrance of their ancestor. The Poumai Christians still valued the traditions, customs and culture of their ancestors passed down from ages.

After converting to a new religion, many traditional taboos are abandoned. Despite the drastic changes, many relevant taboos are still followed strictly in Poumai society. The taboos that are still strictly prohibited include incest, thief, murder, premarital sex etc. The age-old taboos continue to play an important role in Poumai Christian community life. The taboos are followed and maintained by the people to live a harmonious life and live a good life. Even today, Poumai Christians are equally respectful to both the taboos and Christian principles. Both are the basis of law and order in the society; they contribute towards peace and respectable life in the community. No one is exempted and free from these principles and taboos, which create a better place to live together as one community. Christianity has brought a radical shift in the socio-religious life of the Poumai Nagas, but it does not completely abolish the traditional practices and customs. It is taboo to marry within the same clan; this taboo is still practised in Poumai society. Although present Christians believe in God, some traditional beliefs are still lingering in the minds of Poumai Christians. Poumai Christians still believe that there will be a bad outcome in the family or society when somebody or society violates the taboos. The age-old traditional taboos continuously play an important role in promoting the sanctity of life in the Christian community.

The traditional oaths are sacred and contribute towards peaceful and harmonious life in the Poumai community and its surrounding villages. Although lots of old traditions, cultures and

customs have been abandoned with the introduction of Christianity, oaths are the only means to settle any disputes that are difficult to solve. With the arrival of Christianity, the old way of life and practices are replaced by the new culture and way of life. However, when the external life of modern culture is peeled off, many traditional cultures, customs and norms are not wholly eliminated from the society. However, it is interesting to observe that traditional values, forms and norms are reinterpreted to suit the situation. Though Poumai Nagas believe and follow Christian doctrine when serious disputes arise between families and clans, if both parties cannot solve and compromise in goodwill, oaths are the only option to settle the disputes. The most common disputes happening in the present times where oaths are the only option to resolve are, swearing to maintain secrecy and abide by the village decision, land dispute, murder, stealing and adultery. All these oaths assist and guide the Poumai community to live peacefully as 'one community and maintain relations with neighbouring villages.

Gennas served as part of their religious activities, and it shaped their sense of respect to their Supreme Being in every circumstance. The traditional social *gennas* and family *gennas* associated with religious matters are no longer observed in the present Poumai society. There are various types of *gennas*; a number of *gennas* are closely associated with their religion. When they observe *gennas*, they usually pray and perform rites and rituals. Today as Christianity has taken roots in Poumai society, traditional rites and rituals were replaced by Christian prayers and ceremonies. All the *gennas* associated with agricultural rites and rituals are abandoned and replaced by Christian prayers and fasting.

With the coming of Christianity and according to the Christian perspective, people were restricted to follow traditional practices, beliefs, rites, rituals, drinking rice beer and animal sacrifices to the spirits. Panger Imchen says, "In trying to establish the church of Christ among the Aos, there was lamentable destruction to valuable ancient traditions, customs and moral values"(Imchen 148). The same destruction of cultures, customs happened to Poumai Nagas. Christianity has brought a radical change in traditional rites and rituals, including social, moral and religious aspects. Though the drastic shift is happening in their rituals and rites, it does not peel off totally. When somebody dies in the village, they still observe *genna*. Their traditional practices, customs, rites and rituals have reinterpreted to meet according to the situations and needs.

When Poumai completed their house construction, the priest administered the house dedication by a libation of rice beer, slaughter of pig and dog. In this way, the priest sanctified the new house performing all the rites and rituals accordingly. The owner of the house provided a grand feast to the villagers on the day of house dedication. When Christianity is introduced in Poumai society, the old traditional way of house dedication is replaced by the new religion. Today, Poumai Christians abandoned the age-old practices and followed the new religion. Pastor replace the role of the village priest. The church leaders dedicate the house with prayers along with the family and relatives. Earlier, selection of the materials for the house construction depends on the dream. The present Poumai Christians believe the materials brought from the jungle may possess evil spirits. Therefore they sanctify the house with prayers and the word of God so that evil spirits will not disturb the family. The belief of evil spirits in the materials they use in their house construction still exists in the mind of Poumai Christians.

Today the Poumai Christian marriages have undergone a sea change from the simple traditional practices, rites and engagement. With the change in both the status of boys and girls, and the dormitories systems abolished, mate selection, engagement, and wedding ceremonies have also changed from traditional practices. Before Christianity, the marriage ceremonial was administered by the priestess, but today it has replaced by the Reverend. Christian marriage made different impacts on Poumai society. It has brought the sanctity of marriage, but it also becomes expensive, spending lots of wealth during the wedding and burdened families after the marriage. Many people believe that many elopements are happening in Poumai society due to economic constraints. The other reason is to escape the objection of their parents and because of the pre-marital sex union. Earlier, the bridegroom provides rice beer and meat, but now in Christian marriage it is almost like a compulsion to give cash and moveable wedding gifts. Giving a big feast on the wedding day has become very expensive. People have forgotten the simplicity and dignity of the old traditional practices and culture (Shangjam 104). One of the main reasons that brought sudden change is due to contact with western culture and values. Although Christian marriage is different from traditional marriage, the sense of solemnity and religious implication of traditional practices are not drastically changed.

Regarding the family structure, the Poumai Nagas still follow the nuclear and patrilineal system even after conversion to Christianity. When it comes to immovable properties, and

inheritance like paddy fields, house and plot of land is inherited only by boys. Today, though girls do not inherit immovable property at their wedding, many movable properties starting from kitchen utensils to cars, are given as wedding gifts. During the pre-Christian era, girls were not given equal opportunities like boys. However, today girls are given more freedom and enjoy the same opportunity as boys before they marry.

The coming of Christianity has transformed the traditional rites and rituals of childbirth and the naming of a child. The new Christian beliefs and norms have replaced the superstition and traditional ceremonies of a child's birth and naming. In the past, when the child was born, the father proclaimed that the child belongs to the Supreme Being to avoid bad things happen to a child through the evil spirit. However, now parents pray to God for blessings before the child is born and submit the child's life to God. Earlier, the naming of a child took place within five days, but now there is no norm to christen the baby. The ceremony of christening the child is done in the church by the pastor on a Sunday service. However, not all the old tradition has vanished. Even today rich family kills buffalo or cow and distributes a piece of meat called '*Souvii*' to all the households in the village when they christen their children like in the pre-Christian era.

The Poumai traditional religion and new Christian religion believe in life after death and the existence of the soul. Although Christian is a new religion, the concept of life after death and soul after death is the same. Therefore Christian belief in salvation gives hope and courage to death. Christians believed that this life is only a sojourn; the permanent home is heaven. The traditional practices of washing the dead body, making the coffin by plank are still very much practice. Moreover, the practice of putting personal items like a knife, spear, knife and shawl in the coffin is still followed. When a person is dead, it was a tradition to remove the three stones of the fire hearth, but now this practice has changed, pastor and church deacons pray for the family. Even today, in the case of unnatural death like suicide, the church does not give formal funeral service. It is taboo for people to go to the field when a person is dead; this custom is still practised in the Christian community. The traditional rituals and rites of death have not completely disappeared from the present Poumai Christian community.

Following the conversion to Christianity, significant changes occur in traditional agricultural rituals and rites. Most of the Poumai traditional festivals revolve around the agricultural cycle observing varied rites and rituals according to the lunar month. The traditional festival rites and rituals of Poumai are closely related to agricultural rites. All the rites and rituals were strictly observed; before the chief or village priest performed rites on behalf of the village, no one could start the cultivation. R.R Shimray has pointed out that, "at the time of showing paddy, the village chief offered sacrifices and performed the paddy sowing rites one day ahead of his subjects. If in some rare cases, an individual by mistake did the sowing ahead of the village the entire village suffered from failure of crops that particular year and had to face famine" (227). When any person violated rites and rituals, the whole village faced the consequence. Many of the rituals and rites are discarded and replaced by Christian prayers and ceremonies. The rites and rituals that were performed by the priest or villages chief are replaced by the pastor. Though they still observe some of the agricultural festivals, they are no longer in the true spirit of the festivals but out of formality to mark the festivals of their ancestral times.

Chapter-5

Folksongs, Folktales and Folk narratives of Poumai Nagas

5.1 Depiction of Community Life Through Folksongs and Folktales

The Poumai folksongs and folktales are passed down from generation to generation through word of mouth. The folksongs and folktales reflect the ancestral community life of the Poumai Naga, such as history, miseries, suffering, achievements and festivals. Through oral tradition such as folksongs, folktales, proverbs, sayings, the present generation can peep into the ancestral community of the Poumai Naga. Their history of community life has been transmitted through oral tradition such as folksongs and folktales. Their precise historical exact time and dates cannot be traced as much. They traced their history through folksongs, folktales and monuments as primary sources. Since folksongs and folktales are oral, the tone of the songs and stories are slightly different though they express the same story. The people's joy, miseries, and love are important themes of their folksongs and folktales. Not all cultures, customs, beliefs and taboos are transmitted verbally. As they also learn by practice and follow the culture of dos and don'ts out of habit.

As long as people follow and practice their forefathers' culture and tradition, oral tradition will play an important role in maintaining law and order in society. Oral tradition connects the past and the present generation by preserving and practising the age-old cultures (Tunyi 89). Though one cannot deny the impact of modern education, westernisation and Christianity in Poumai society, some traditional beliefs and customs are still followed. Oral tradition such as folksongs and folktales take the listeners and the performers to the past world.

5.2 Folksongs and Their Function in the Society

Poumai history and community life is transmitted through folksongs and folktales. Learning folksongs and singing folksong was part of their culture and community life. As they are trained and taught especially in dormitories, how to sing the folksong, young and old can sing folksong so well. The people did not sing folksong just for the sake of entertainment and celebration. Every folksong carries a deeper meaning about their history and community life. Their folksongs also depict their feasts, festivals, wealth and unity of the past. The traditional festivals are connected with agricultural activities, and they are celebrated by performing rites

and rituals. Traditional festivals provided young and older people with an opportunity to learn folksongs and revisit their past through folksongs. In this way, festivals help to build a sense of one community among the people. During festivals, young people learn folksongs from older people well-versed in their folksongs and perform with their peer groups. In the past, people are forbidden to compose new folksongs, and the young people are not allowed to talk about their ancestors' history. People express their emotions, sadness and suffering through folksongs. Thus some of the folksong themes are about unspoken emotion, sadness, suffering and love. They find relief while singing folksong as they express their deep unspoken feelings.

Different types of folksongs such as historical songs, song of warriors, romance, adventure, spiritual, agricultural, and funerals songs are the primary sources to trace ancestral Poumai community life. Traditional folksongs are very popular and are sung on special occasions. Folksongs are sung either by a male or female, single person or group of people. Group songs are normally sung by young people, mainly during the festival with their peer groups. Most of the group song themes are related to their community life, and the individual songs are related to a personal message to a lover or a friend. Unlike men, women are forbidden to yell or ululate even while singing folksongs. The community believed that if a woman yells it brings misfortunes to the village. Folksongs brought villagers together and recalled their past glories through their folksongs. In this way, folksongs brought them together and cherish their memories. Various songs are sung at different events, namely, love songs, *Khroshi* (agricultural songs, sing while working in the field), folksong, folk song. In the olden days, young unmarried people expressed their love, attraction and wooed for their life partner through folksongs. There are traditional songs sung along with dance during the festival at the social gatherings. Through these traditional songs, people are reminded their forefathers' life.

Moreover, agricultural songs are sung while working in the field. Community participation in folk songs during the festival or at work boosts their spirit to face the challenges in life. Their culture of singing folksong is inseparable from the Poumai community life. There are different types of traditional folksongs such as marriage songs, love songs, agricultural songs and historical songs. The different types of traditional folksongs are as follow:

5.2.1 Love and Marriage Songs

In the past young people convey their admiration, feelings and love for each other through love folksongs when they gathered in a place. When bachelors gathered at the girl's dormitory, they spent the evening together singing and dedicating love folksong to each other. They express their unspoken love and feelings. Youths are compared to flowers and nature in love folksongs. The lovers convey their hidden feelings for each other. The love folksongs depict the life of young people and love stories of the past. The following love folksong tells about how young boys and girls met at girls' dormitory. The boy asked a lady not to forget him and wait for him. He even requested a lady not to give false hope to another man to let him her woo her.

VESÜYU LOU/ VEDAORAI LOU (Welcome Song)

Daonou rohusü more liishi more liida more
Yaonou ro rohu süpei zü-a lima shipeihai teisa alaisa
Arairu/ araio küzüo züda ngalai namoru hai kikhelou
Teisane lounikha laiho teisa küzü laige?
Teisane lounikha zümo teis küyü yomo teisali kinou lou
Khei yozüre hai kikhelou.
Teisane lounikha puva küzü küye peio yaotei naio
Eloukhe maiva kizü küye peomo daiso saru loudoyiru/khedoyio
Nero amaiye kuye dasouro mai aku lounü küye sou mozü,
Ero maiyekuye dalaimo mai aku lounü küye lai more.
Nenou maiye kuye da atu mai aku lounü küzü atuzü lenou
Roku maku-a lema shimo baizü baimo saya kilou/kikhe hailori
Sanü lunü maizü hailo rivero enou bakha shu voloulai.
Nero/kikhe/kilou maibu shitouzü aru kikhe maiye sabaro shipoloune
Kilou/kithe mai tei kheipeilai ehamaisü nedaiye do.

(Shelley, P.D. personal interview. On 26th June 2017).

English translation: Today is the first time our bachelor visit and meet your girls personally. If we had known each other before, we might have known and loved each other. However, today we are so elated to meet and know each other personally. So from today do not forget me and I

will not forget you. Do not give hope to another bachelor to woo you. I will not approach any other woman. Let our love be truthful and faithful to each other.

In the olden days, the lovers dated outside the village. The lovers communicate and plan out to meet at a particular spot through songs. As the lovers could not communicate directly in front of the parents and elders, they communicate through songs. The song talks about how the lovers are dating in the jungle away from friends and parents.

Hoye rao (lover's relation)

Hoye rao we shoune hai a teichii

Avei ne-a holou

Hai holou lourao zhi ne chibu lai hone ho lairao

Hai lairao zhi, zhi sii achi ma vakou

Thri rai-a mava zho riilai

Hai riilai, thri rao zhi ne chibu lai

Hone ho lairao

Hai lairao zhi, zhi achi-e noubu acha-a

Dai soulai hi anou

Hai anou zhi chi-e pea rai-a ra holou

Zhi, chi lou pee rai-a ra holou

Hai holou, holou zhi pai mochu shi.

Makhai-a rama cheo shianou

Hai anou zhi, chilou pe-e hinou

Amoa- sei lai soupei machu pe lai

Rao te lai soupei machu pei lai rao

Te rai zhi chi-e lou pfii paibu

Chii ho chii marao.

Hai morao te rai zhi chi-e lou pfii pai

Bu chii charai anou

Hai nou zhi, pfii puoye hisou-ye

Ka tou sou-a malai loulai rao,

Hai lai rao zhi, pfii pou-ya hisou-ye

Katou sou-a malai lou khai dzii

Hai khai dzii. Zhi pfii-e pou-e hisou
Apei souyu-a pou-sou yu-a malai lou lai moe.
Hai lai mo zha, ziithriimai zhou te ne
Thra-a thro-a bai lai-wo na ne a thra,
Thra-a thro-a bai lai-wo na ne a thra,
Thro-ma nou bai thru laiwu za zii thri mai khai rio da.
Hai rioda maphou sei cha zhi sii shero lai
Thu, shero-e pei dao pfii nu lah theu pfii tapa
Hai tapa zhi zhou ri ye thri ma souri ludu veipa.
Hai veipa zhi zhouri thri masou
Mangao she-a mathri veipa.
Hai veipa veipa zhi, chhii vii lou ahai ahrao lai yu.
Hai lailu zhi, hrao sou rao za eh thrimai
Zhe sii rai rina zhi sii ahrao dasou
Rao turai leika shiru mai
Hai rumai zhi, chi-e nou athra moe
Siisou palai zhi eh hrao lai yu.
Hai lai yu zhi, zhou-o ri ih thrii masou
Zhe sii rai-a rih na zhi sii ahrao dasou
Rao turai-a leka shirumai
Hai rumai zhi chi malao a ludu apei
Dosou ahai bai sou lai ho.
Hai lai ho zhi zho ahai baibu thru khai
Lai rao tu-rai-a lika shiru mai
Hai-rumai zhi chi malao aludu apei
Dosou ahai bai sou lai mo.
Hai lai mo zhi zho ahai bai bu tru khai
Lai rao tu-rai-a likashiru hai
Hai ru hai zhi chii zii zha churi ekhu
Rao hao zhi, puchu-chu chu ri ekhu dalei
Hai dalei tu-o rai hrashu pei hra dazho

Pei hra machi peie rao.
Hai rao zhi pu-oh hrashupe, hrada
Zhou pei hra machii pei lai rao
Hai lairao, thru ri zhi mai ne, ne hra
Ne ro-a tali chii dai ne athou bhou-a
Teisa na bhou lou rao
Hai lou rao lourao zhi ne-e
Chuo nechi alei lai ho ephao lai rao.
Hai lai rao zhi ne echuo achi
Aphao dzii zhi ephao lai rao.
Hai lai rao zhi ne-e nu achi alei
Ri dzii ehlei lai rao
Hai lai rao chuo chi teu sii dalei zii
Shape ho apfii mourai-a acheru khumai
Dalei zii, mai dalei ku khai turao cho chi teu sii
Hai teu sii ne-e sii asou-a mokhe
Mokhe-a ne ta lou ye rao
Hai rao zhi-zhi-e sii asou-a mokhe
Mokhe-a zhi ta loulai rao
Hai lai rao zhi ne sii angao-o mokhe.
Mokhe-a ne chilao verao
Hai verao zhi zhi-e sii angao-a
Mokhe mokhe-a zhi chilao velai
Hai ve lai hai the amane ana anu
Maneana nou dairi alou ma chu-a
Bai sii hao lairao muraia leka shirumai.

(Ngaopunii, KH. Personal interview.14 November 2020).

Paraphrase in English: In August when the paddy fields look lively and green, the lover asks his beloved where she will go. She replied that she would go to her friend's field. The woman asks her lover what he will do; the lover replied that he would stay at home. The lover was restless, staying alone without his beloved. The lover goes to the field where his beloved has

gone. Though the lover is near the field, he could not call out his beloved as she works with her friends. The lover calls her like the bird's *mo*, and *si* (birds) chirp to come out from the field. The lover asks her whether she can understand his call. She replies she understands his call, chirping like the birds' *mo* and *si*. What reason should I give to the field owner and meet you at this hour? The lover instructs her to tell the owner of the field that she is sick. The field owner allows her to go home as she told the owner that she is not well. She goes back home with her spade and wine in her basket. The lovers meet in the way and decide the spot of their dating place above the road. They made their dating place with leaves and grass. After they slept together, the lover asks her if she will tell people that they slept together. If you share with others about our dating, I will also share with others. The woman requests him not to share with others about their dating. The lover asks her to go home as if nothing had happened to them. The lover assured her that they would meet again when the villagers observed *genna*.

The following song talks about how the lover restlessly waited to get a glimpse glimpse his beloved's face on the way to the field. They communicate through songs. Here in this song, the lover is guessing where his beloved has gone.

Kheloumai lesa lou (Love song)

Sourina touhi aveinarolou.

*E nou Rolou shobuh hori lou khrii hou maprii khrii mazhe yenou alounii yehramayurou
pai hokou mo-e daisou sadao. Siuh ludu mazire neha thai ngaomoe daisou sarou.*

Vao ludu mazire neha thai ngaomoe dai sou sarou.

Sarou pfii-pou phi rounphinou nepei sou-a nepou sou-a douho.

Eho pfii-pou rounphinou nepeisou-a nepou sou-a doumo.

Emo pfii-pou hraishi adai mava adai lutawo sahoyu sarou.

Sarou pfii-pouwo hraishi adai mao me adai lutawo sahoyu sarou.

veze phrelou hrao sourou daori maizhai zhido mai prozhi

do-anou hraoda sou-rou loumareirou.

(Shesou, S.K. Personal interview. 24th June 2020)

English translation: Like a hero, I walked down the village gate and stood at the stone platform where weary travellers are resting, watching my lover on her way to the field. I have watched both North and South, but I did not see you. Is it because your parents are not well that you did not go to the field. I was told that none of your parents are sick. Where did her parents take her

to? To whose field her parents took her? Do not feel shy if you happen to meet me on the way waiting for you.

The song given below talks about the short span of youth life. Youth life is like a flower that blooms alone and dies alone. Youth life is compared with the pine tree, like pine tree once it passed away, it will not come back again.

Kheloumai lou (Youth song)

Sei-o votou thaitulouzii opai a-paonou thulo khotouyadei.

Edei, khewo thaitulouzii lourou toulouziimo, solouziimo.

Emo lourou thaitulouzii khewo toulouziimo, solouziimo.

Emo khewo thaitulouzii deinou apriziimo zhadei

aduonou pome nouzii maihriinou haziimo emo lourou

thaitulouzii deinou apriziimo zhadei aduo nou pome nou-a ziimo maihriinou haziimo.

Emo, khewo thaitulouzii phou-ashi aveinou deima sakou sazii sama paowu paire.

Ere, lourou thaitulouzii phou-ashi aveinou deima sakou sazii samapaowu paire.

Ere, haori sii haiwo yemai hrii paokhadi mosa .

Esa zhoho makhre chi ha haiwo kao-kao kai peidu

edu nehri vii chiwo nekho nerao machou-adou mo,

emo, ne thaidulouzii, nekai rilalou ateilo a-vaipai a-lata azhorou pai hounachou

laire. (Shesou, S.k. Personal interview. 24th June 2020).

English translation: When a pig or a dog died, grandparents eat them. When a man died, his lover cannot eat him. In the same way, when she died, her lover cannot eat her. When a man died, the sky will not fall, and the earth will not break. When a woman died, the sky will not fall, and the earth will not shatter. When a man died, people buried him with a spade. When a woman died, people buried her with a spade. Humans are like pine trees. Once it cut down, it will not sprout a new plant. While he is alive, she did not hear about him as she married a man from a distant place. Thus, he is like an Imphal bull; only when a bull has died his horn is used as a musical instrument.

The song depicts how the parents arranged a life partner for their daughter. In the olden days, parents and elders choose a life partner for their children. As per their custom, the parents presented different movable gifts to their daughter on her wedding day. According to their tradition, the daughter asked her parents to prepare her gifts before the wedding. The daughter

seeks blessing from her parents as she will marry Maram prince. Parents and elders blessed their sons and daughters at their wedding to have many children like crab and fish in the river. Seeing the preparation of their daughter's wedding gifts, people came to know their daughter wedding is approaching. The following folksong is the conversation between parents and daughter before the wedding while preparing for her wedding.

Shra lou (Blessing song)

Ronairou pfii Ronai Rou Pou.

Nezii Ronaerou laimai-ozii shiri adai chi khai laihisarou herou,

Azii Ronairou laimaiozii hrapou maveo kadio chi khai laiheanou.

Anou Ronairou pfii nezii Ronairou sho rihi ehrii peiro.

Ero Ronairou pou nezii Ronairou, hau-siuh ehrii peiro.

Ero Ronairou pfii nezii Ronairou Yaoha ehrii peiro.

Ero, Ronairou pou nezii Ronairou phoushi ehrii peiro.

Ero Ronairou pfii ne Ronairou paosha ehrii peiro.

Ero, Pu-a zhou maidai na pu-a zhou mangaona saloulai tea saloulaide tea paokou bure.

Ere, Ronairou pfii, Ronairou pou, nezii Ronairou laimai-o nou zhoho naotou,

Poutou hriikou dazii zhih thousou,

zhih thou sapeilaire.

Ere, zho-ho azii Ronairou laimai nouo zhoho a-pou ahrii koudazii.

Khemai Saniio soupeio Saniio zhih sapeiro.

Ero khemai louniio soupae, louniio zhih sapazii.

Zhih thou sou, zhih thou sapeilaire.

Ere khemai louniio saupae louniio zhih sapaziikhemai saniio,

soupeio saniio zhih sapeiro.

Ero, Ronairou pfii-Ronairou pou,

nezii Ronairou laimainou zhoho a-noutou a-hriikoudazii zhih thou sou zhih thou sapei laire.

Ere, zhoho azii Ronairou laimai nou zhoho nautou ahrii koudazii loumai lounii rou soupeio.

Louniirou zhih sapeio.

Ero loumai louniirou sau pa-e louniirou zhih sapazii,

zhii thou sou zhii thou sapeilaire.

Ere, loundai loundirou soupae.

Loundirou zhii sapazii, loundai sanirou soupeio, sanirou zhii sapeiro.

Ero vanah mana hraina mana ko-a thou soulouro, aziitouna. (Shesou, S.k. Personal interview. 24th June 2020).

English translation: Ronai's father and mother to whom you will let your daughter marry, we will let our daughter Ronai marry Kadio, son of Maram king. Ronai asks her mom to buy her basket. Ronai asks her father to buy her iron walking staff. Ronai asks her mother to buy her gourd bottle. Ronai asks her father to give her spade. Ronai asks her mother to buy her bangle. They send a message that they will come after five days. Ronai asks her parents how she should name her children when she gives birth. If you give birth to a son, you name him Loundii; if he does not like the name, you name him Sanii. If she gives a baby girl, you name her Loundirou; if you do not like the name, name her Sanirou. May you give birth like crabs and fish in the river.

The following folksong tells about how young people brought wood to construct a house from a far distance. The youth went in a group to cut wood from the jungle. This song describes how people work together and help each other when a family constructs a new house. The unity and love among them can be understood through the way they work together.

Kheloundai pouh pfiiyu lou (Shiba, Yaonai)/ youth collect wooden plank song

Vaori pouh apfiimai kalonou khe-a pouh pfiiyadei,

edei vaori pouh pfiiimai mahra kipeilonou khe-a pouh pfiiyadei.

Edei vaori pouh apfiimai vekou chido holou chidimosa esa,

vaori pouh a-pfiimai. Maihre hokou chido holou chi do-a nou.

Enou zhoho sheba-a Yaonai hokou mohe anou pamalalairo.

Vaori siinou medouho echi kaoheloundai vanou medouho,

vori siinou domo echi khelou vanou menou

Ero vaori siinou rai-reili hai yehra hophouzii phou mahawo nou chunou lei-a,

taye Sheba Yaonai dai vii-vii dei. (Shesou, S.k. Personal interview. 24th June 2020).

English translation: From where wood is brought, the wood is brought from neighbouring Maram territory. Those who went to fetch wood, are they arrived? They all arrived except

Sheba and Yaonai. Call them where they are. Have they lost their way in the jungle, or our group lost them in the jungle? When they met in the jungle after the long search, the group asked them how they lost their way. They replied they did not lose the way; they were late while searching for the best wood they wanted.

The folksong describes how the lover spent the night together in his beloved room. In the past, the lovers met and spent together in the jungle or their room. The following folksong is the conversation between the two lovers in his beloved's room. The song depicts the romance and love affair of the young people at that time.

Teibi raikono deidei mara chakhe

Teibei raikonou deidei mara chakhe zhihao

houkhaoraiwo khaohkre do-a nou.

Teibei raikonou deidei mara chakhe

zhihao houkhao ano houkhra donou

shuloukhaitou loumarairou khemaraiwo

eche rairouziinou houma khaokhe buwe

puh shasourao kaokouziirou, nechiye kulu

charou loudo vakhre loudonou zho-o enchizii

douwo chehrou pasii rovii pashenou

maisoulouzii dasoudaola mainou ngaoulouzii

dadudaolai mainou siilouzii loumarairou chitei nou

rodei papeiro papeiladei ne damado khremaraio.

(Shesou, S.k. Personal interview. 24th June 2020).

English translation: The lover asks her to wake up for it is daybreak. She tells him to sleep for a while. He tells her the cock had already crowed twice, and even the room is very bright. Your house is in the middle of the village, how will I go back, people will notice me. She replies, not to worry that if he does not want people to notice him stepping out from her room, she can open the back door for him.

The young people did not express their feelings and love directly. The following folksong talks about when maidens see charming wildflowers in the jungle and compared these flowers to men they are secretly in love with. As they could not express their feeling directly, they expressed their feelings through these flowers and wished to claim these flowers as theirs.

Hao sii zhao ho nai teishu wo vei nai ho lou sii zhao.
Pouv-u-a vei Pu ea kuhtsii pa mai kiibo mai sii zhao.
Sho nghou kou ea kuhtsii pa mii bo siizhao.
Ve khe ge lah he siizhao,
taire,ye thao Mai Mai Bo tou ro sei-a Lea ve lai ge.
Siizhao tai re Pou vu khe mai-o mai bo-o tou ro sei-a lea
ve lai die mai vei mai zii e hache.

(Isaac, Kh. Personal interview. 21st January 2019).

English translation: The maidens saw the bud of orchid and Curcuma Angustifolia on their way to the paddy field. When they returned home in the evening, they saw orchids, and Curcuma Angustifolia flowers are blooming. They inquired the owner of these flowers, and they asked among themselves to whom they should compare these flowers with. They compared these flowers to praiseworthy bachelors, and they wish to claim these flowers as theirs.

5.2.2 Babysitter Song

Many orphan girls worked as a nanny for wealthy children in the past. As the Poumai community is an agrarian community, the rich people engaged a nanny for their children while they went to the paddy field. Many orphan girls worked as a nanny and earned their livelihood since there was no other job. Ill-treatment by the stepmother was common in the community. The ill-treatment of the stepmother was one of the reasons orphans took the nanny job. And many of the orphans lived with the wealthy family as a helper. When the parents go to the field, nannies gathered the children and take lunch together. To kill their boredom, caring and nursing the rich children the whole day, they sang nanny songs walking around the village. Again they sang in the evening when kids eagerly waited for their parents to return home from the field. They expressed their unspoken feeling through songs as they cannot scold the kids directly although the kids are naughty and did not obey them.

Pfii wow o ah paomei wo, owo la o eya la namilayo

A liladi khopong phungna, khalak thao thao

Khalakyang yangna tak nga

Elaya mathuphide mokphok phokna

Krapshu shuna na neinga.

E mana poti posounga, e mana pfidi e pfii sou nga

Lupe na reo a ma, kape na reo a ma

Owo la ah eyala

Lungsiilou a phaksamlo

Masam kathi taozii la

Tao thi nga sakzii la sak thi nga

Shimlo wo a shimla mashim kathi

Tao ziila a tao thing nga

Sakziila a sakthi nga.

Khangao a prao thaklo

Mathak kathi taozii laya

A taothi nga sakzii la shak thinga

Eya la owo la. (Theila, R.V. Personal interview. 4th January 2021).

English translation: Mother, you are working cheerfully in the field with your friends every day. We are sitting near the fire hearth crying as we miss you. I called someone's mother and father as my mother and father as you are not around me. Cowherd has returned home. Lungsiilou, can you fetch water from the pond; you do not know how to fetch water. You are good only at eating and drinking. Shimlo, can you unfold the mat; you do not know how to unfold the mat. You are good only at eating and drinking. Khangao, can you perform *Pou sou* (a ritual performed to read the prospect of the raid, hunting and sickness). You do not know how to perform *Pou sou*. You are good only at eating and drinking.

5.2.3 Festival Songs

Through folksongs, one can glimpse the forgotten life of the past. The traditional festivals are connected with agricultural rites and rituals and celebrated by counting the lunar month. They celebrated traditional festivals to observe and perform rites and rituals of the festival— young people in a group sing festival songs during the festivals. Festival songs tell about the cultural heritage, social life and agricultural activities. The festival songs educate the young people about their culture, customs and traditions. The following folksong are contemporary folksongs which talks about how culture and traditional values of the past has diminished in the

present society. The song reminds the forgotten culture, beliefs, practices and agricultural activities—the song helps to revive the past practices and beliefs.

Haoye ziidao taiye oh zhiye hrii hola

*Hohrii nanou dzii taire oh khou teile ngaomo doye nou daisou doule,
doule rairou marou-o khou dai prou oh dziila pra siidzii-a veila prade homoe,
homoe zha tai-o shi-o kou kuttu hai-o oh khou teile cholou hainou zhaokhre budo
zhaovii bude homeo,
homoe teirou-a beye hounou teima paikhre teima sii khre-a shi-o kou kuttu maivii ye
sou bushe,
bushi zha tai-o shi-o kou kuttu hai-o teimai-o sii zha tai-o shizhiye hrii ne kho nela
veihi bu doye nou lishi shikou,
kuttu zha tai-o hai eh chi khelou mai nah hroburei nou khre-a rade homoe shikou
kuttu karouho.
Rouhou tai-o shi-o kou kuttu hai-o lai mai-o siizha taire-o khai teile velai hi homoe
hisadao,
sadao rairou marou-o khou nou oh khai teile ngaolai hiye dou.
Houdou zha taire-a rei-o khre masou nou taire-o chu houzii chipolou-a
datha lou-a nou taire eh chu houzii hai-o zhai hri-o dzii daiye polourou
homa chuna tapir rei daipo anou dakhai tourao.
Tourao taire-o chu houzii hai-a zhai hri-o dzii taiye prou
louzii oh khai teile tsiilai hi dai nou paokhai douye shidao,
shidou zha taire-o chu louzii hai-o zhai hrii-o sii zha taiye
prou mo louzii ye khaitei kola hidou nou paokhai dou hi shidao,
shidao zha rairou marou oh khou dai shi oh zhiye hrii
hola hohrii nanou taire-o chu ma taithao-a hoye.
Hoye zha paomaziiye khrou lou louye zii taiye siiye thousii
rairou kro hai-o zii machaoye nou polouye nouthai mai chi
hode she kou kuttu. Kuttu thairou alu oh kou dai buvei hoshe
sadao she kou kuttu.
Kuttu thairou alu oh koudai dainou bu avei buashi sou laihe shadao.*

Shadao siisiira nouye sou sou-a tou buye.

Buye vourei dzii hourai nou zhao sou-a khrii buye.

Buye zha thaimai hao hodei pahaodei dohao baiye khra oh khra main gale dodei.

(Parmangla, R.V. Personal Interview. 13th March 2019)

English translation: The old way of life is diminishing, and the present era is different. Is Raimarounii/Raimai traditional seed sowing festival has arrived? Are new leaves start sprouting? Is cuckoo arriving and sing her melodious song? Cuckoo comes with thunder and rain. The cuckoo song is lovely; the cuckoo sings her song near where farmers rest after their long journey. Oh, cuckoo tells us about the coming year climate condition. This traditional seed sowing festival foretells the climate condition of the coming year. During this festival, every household of the village performs a ceremony rite by slashing the beak of the cock. If the blood flushes out from the beak of the cock, it is a good omen for the coming monsoon. If not, it is a bad omen for the coming monsoon. Starting from the month of *Raimarounii* (March), people sow seeds. In June, cuckoo tastes and takes a bunch of millet to the world of death. People ask the cuckoo how is the world of death. She replies that they eat rotten wood instead of meat and drink flash flood instead of wine in the world of death. No one can escape the power of the grave; all will go to the world of death as all came from the dust, and all will return to the dust.

The song below gives a vivid description of ancestral Poumai community life. It talks about the culture of headhunting among them and with other tribes. They practised headhunting with pride and honour in their community life. They safeguard their village territory from the enemy. They waged war against the village that attacked them. They work hard and compete among themselves to perform feast of merit. They were religious people who stoutly observed rites, rituals, *gennas*, taboos etc. They respect each other and highly honour those who performed feast of merit and chopped off enemy heads. Though the people were primitive, their society consisted of strong bondship with impressive culture of family ties and friendship.

DAORAI PAIPAO HRII

Daorai paipao maihrü, haibüa nou hrüpashe, hey hey (2 times)

Daorai paipao maihrü, süih chuh rashi thoshe, hey hey (2 times)

Daorai paipao maihrü, maili nou maili ye, hey hey (2 times)

Daorai paipao maihrü, peide peiva hrüshe, hey hey (2 times)

Daorai paipao maihrü, soureih sou-a hrüpashe, hey hey (2 times)
Daorai paipao maihrü, zhosou-a zhivei phoushe, hey hey (2 times)
Daorai paipao maihrü, nuhli nou nuh liye, hey hey (2 times)
Daorai paipao maihrü, reihsou-a hraishi hrüshe, hey hey (2 times)
Daorai paipao maihrü, nanou teishoa reishe, hey hey (2 times)
Daorai paipao maihrü, haibüa nou zho soushe, hey hey (2times)
Daorai paipao maihrü, zhochuh sühla hrüshe, hey hey (2 times)
Daorai paipao maihrü, zho soulou yu maiye, hey hey (2times)
Daorai paipao maihrü, tsükhau-a hrüpashe, hey hey (2 times)
Daorai paipao maihrü, hasü hangao moma, hey hey (2 times)
Daorai paipao maihrü, haibüa nou hrü pashe, hey hey (2 times)
Zho eh nahkhra maihrü, daopai pao hrü ngaire, hey hey (2 times)
Zho eh nahkhra maihrü, Jesu Christa donou, hey hey (2 times)
Zho eh nahkhra maihrü, lero lisoulai khe, hey hey (2 times)
Zho eh nahkhra maihrü, etao hrüdalaikhe, hey hey (2 times)
Zho eh nahkhra maihrü, mai linou mailiye, hey hey (2 times)
Zho eh nahkhra maihrü, lüsha zho hrülaikhe, hey hey (2 times)
Zho eh nahkhra maihrü, nuh soudu shulaikhe, hey hey (2 times)
Zho eh nahkhra maihrü, teile buki hinou, hey hey (2 times)
Zho eh nahkhra maihrü, lero lisou anou, hey hey (2 times)
Zho eh nahkhra maihrü, etao vah sou laikhe, hey hey (2 times)
 (Hriikhainii, S.K. Personal interview. 5th June 2019).

English translation: Our ancestors lived in this way; they worship stone and evil spirits. They practised headhunting culture; they chopped off their enemy head. They competed to performed Feast of Merit for fame in the village. Attacking one village to another village was part of their community life. They meticulously observed rites and rituals and performed the feast. They erected Feast of Merit monolith stone. Villagers pay respect and honour to those who performed the Feast of Merit. Though they were illiterate, they lived together in this way. Today young people feel admiration for our forefathers' way of life. Young people, in the name of Jesus, let us live together. Young people let us repent and change our way of life. Let us love

one another and live together when there is time. Let us build our village better. Let us unite as one and move forward.

The folksong below talks about the short life of youth, the best stage of life. Young people do not want their youth to wither very soon. Young people wish to remain young and enjoy their youth with their friends, but time does not wait for them. They recollect their youth memories with tears in their eyes. They compare their youth to a flower that blooms for some days. As the years passed by, they settled down and got busy with their own life. The song reminded them of their youth and their heydays with their peer group. The song is sung into two parts by two groups.

SOHI MAZHAO SONA DE ZHAOLAI

<i>Sohi mazhao</i>	<i>Sona de zhaolai (2 times)</i>
<i>Echi khelou</i>	<i>Thaochi khelou mai (2 times)</i>
<i>Echi khelou</i>	<i>Raidu khelou mai (2 times)</i>
<i>Echi khelou</i>	<i>Zhou lou sou ma ngaolai (2 times)</i>
<i>Velou buyu</i>	<i>Oh eh Raimai nah (2 times)</i>
<i>Macho vekhaio</i>	<i>Ne leshi homoe (2 times)</i>
<i>Echi khelou</i>	<i>Oh ehchi khelou (2 times)</i>
<i>Macho veiloua</i>	<i>Leshi oh leshi (2 times)</i>
<i>Khou teile wo</i>	<i>Thasho takoure (2 times)</i>
<i>Khou teile nou</i>	<i>Echi khelouye (2 times)</i>
<i>Khou teile nou</i>	<i>Kho moa takoude (2 times)</i>
<i>Echi khelou</i>	<i>Oh Raidu khelou (2 times)</i>
<i>Mara nüimoe</i>	<i>Oh mara nüimoe (2 times)</i>
<i>Echi khelou</i>	<i>Poupa büa laido (2 times)</i>
<i>Teile thaipfüa</i>	<i>Mara talaído (2 times)</i>
<i>Echi khelou</i>	<i>Mara nü mode (2 times)</i>
<i>Teile thaipfüa</i>	<i>Mara nü moma (2 times)</i>
<i>Teile thaipfüa</i>	<i>Mara lalaído (2 times)</i>
<i>Echi khelou</i>	<i>Oh echi khelou (2 times)</i>
<i>Khelou hrühai</i>	<i>Teisa ko bunü (2 times)</i>

<i>Echi khelou</i>	<i>Teile khapei mode (2 times)</i>
<i>Teile thaipfua</i>	<i>Kilo soutayu thaio (2 times)</i>
<i>Soulou hore</i>	<i>Oh khelou hrühai (2 times)</i>
<i>Macho veloua</i>	<i>Ne leshi homoe (2 times)</i>
<i>Echi khelou</i>	<i>Oh Raidu khelou (2 times)</i>
<i>Soulou shire</i>	<i>Oh echi khelou (2 times)</i>
<i>Rata buyu</i>	<i>Oh echi khelou (2 times)</i>
<i>Rata Yuma</i>	<i>Lou hai ngai souda (2 times)</i>

(David, S.K. Personal interview. 13th August 2020)

English translation: Our youngsters' group, whose youngsters group is this, our group is Raidu (Ngari Raidulomai village) youngsters. The youngster group will dedicate a song to all who are present today. Recall our memories, do you love or not. Remembering our sweet memories, we love our past life. Months and years have gone very fast. Months and years have not waited for our group. We do not want to depart oh Raidu youngster group. Our youngster group is like flowers; as the years passed by, our youth days will wither like flowers. We do not want to wither our youth, although we do not want to wither we have to accept it as time wait for none. Our youngster group wants to remain young forever, our youngster group, time wait for none. When we settled down, we will not be able to enjoy youth life. Do you yearn when you recollect our youth life? Our youngster group, we cannot stop this, though we wither and depart, do not forget our song and memories.

The following folksong is sung while dancing in a group during the festival. The folksong talks about how their forefathers choose the site of the village according to their tradition and custom. The song narrates how the forefathers lived together, celebrate their festivals, and wore their traditional costumes according to the occasion. The song also reminds how their forefather counted the day and season for their agricultural activities. The song gives an accurate account of their forefathers' social life.

Oh hey oh hey - ahuwa

<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa hrü pashe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>khrochi hai poloua (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>zhachi pfü phouloue (2x)</i>

<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa hrü pashe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>peikala pfüshe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>reih peirei rülauo (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa hrü pashe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>phikho hai kholoua (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa reih soushe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>shapu hai pushe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>phizao hai zhaoshe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>sühpo hai poshe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa hrü pashe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>teile hai choloua (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>thoutai hai vüshe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa dou shashe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>hai büa dou shoshe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa dou hrüshe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa dou vashe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa thou taishe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa thou pfüshe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa thou shaoshe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa sou deishe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa zhao shoshe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa nou poshe (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa me me she (2x)</i>
<i>Dao poupao maihrü (2x)</i>	<i>haibüa hrü pashe (2x)</i>

(David, S.K. Personal interview. 13th August 2020)

English translation

This is how our forefathers lived.

Our forefathers took hold of the sword.

Our forefathers chose/identified their plot of land.

This is how our forefathers lived.

Our forefathers embellished themselves with a traditional crown.

Our forefathers wore the barret of war.
This is how our forefathers lived.
Our forefathers tied wooden anklets.
This is how our forefathers' wage battle.
Our forefathers tied the shawl.
Our forefathers wore the sarong.
Our forefathers used a walking stick.
This is how our forefathers lived.
Our forefathers by counting the seasons.
Our forefathers sowed the seeds.
This is how our forefathers ploughed the field.
This is how our forefathers plant saplings.
This is how our forefathers weeded the field.
This is how our forefathers harvest.
This is how our forefathers foot-grinded the grains.
This is how our forefathers carry the grain.
This is how our forefathers pound rice.
This is how our forefathers powdered the grain.
This is how our forefathers drink wine.
This is how our forefathers wrestled.
This is how our forefathers get together.
This is how our forefathers lived.

The Poumai ancestors followed the lunar calendar. They count the day and month meticulously and observed *genna*. They performed agricultural rites and rituals every month according to the lunar month. The village chief counts the date and month based on the lunar month, and he makes announcement to observe *genna* and perform religious and agricultural rites and rituals. The Gregorian calendar was introduced in the Poumai region after the conversion into Christianity. Respect among the people was one of the hallmarks of their community life. Their past community life, rites, and rituals are passed down from one generation to the next through their folksongs. The following folksong talks about how their

forefathers count the date and month, perform rites and rituals, and live together in peace and harmony.

HAOWE HAOWE

<i>Sohi mazhao sona dezhaio</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Daorai paipao haibüa hrüpa</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Daorai paipao teile choloua</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Daorai paipao teile thaifüa</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Daorai paipao nanou sousei</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Daorai paipao maili nou li</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Daorai paipao tsükhöu hrüshe</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Daorai paipao haibüa hrüshe</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Zho polu khra teile chomoe</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Zho polu khra nanou reimoe</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Zho polu khra maili nou li</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Zho polu khra tsü khöu hrümoe</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Zho polu khra Raimai siimoe</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Zho polu khra haisü kaomoe</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Zho polu khra Raimai phoulo</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Zho polu khra ratho touloua</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Zho polu khra hrü dalaikhe</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Zho polu khra linou liye</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Zho polu khra lüsha zhoa</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Zho polu khra liro lisoua</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Pfüpou thaihou zürai khemai</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Tsüvei cho vasou laikhe</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Society sü soudou laikhe</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>
<i>Sohi mazhao shone de zhao</i>	<i>(2 times), Haowe</i>

(David, S.K. Personal interview. 13th August 2020)

English translation: That is how ancestors lived; our forefathers cautiously count lunar days and months, according to the lunar months they performed rites and rituals. Our forefathers respect

one another and lived together. Today people do not count lunar days and months; today, people do not observe rites and rituals. The present generation does not respect one another and live together in peace. The present generation does not fear God; the present way of living is wrong. Young people seek the kingdom of God and worship him faithfully. Young people let us change our lifestyle. Young people let us love one another and build unity. Let us put our heads together and work together for the welfare of our society.

Hunting was one of the Poumai traditional pastimes in the olden days. They go hunting in a group with spears and dogs. They did not hunt wild animals for commercial purposes. The following folksong talks about how the forefathers hunt wild animals in the jungle with spears and dogs. The hunters hunt animals crossing different mountains and streams until they killed the animal.

EH RAIMAI POU

<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Eh Raimai Pou hey</i>	<i>Raidu nah Pou hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Zhou teithe wo hey</i>	<i>Zhou teithe wo hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Pou maveo nou hey</i>	<i>Pou maveo nou hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Na nou soupei hey</i>	<i>Na nou sapei hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Poutou khenou hey</i>	<i>Poutou veinou hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Sei salou-a hey</i>	<i>Sei sapo nou hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Romü talou hey</i>	<i>Romü Kalou hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Reitou hukou hey</i>	<i>Reitou hulou hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Matao hupra hey</i>	<i>Matao hukhe hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>

<i>Sou hatsü lou hey</i>	<i>Sou hazhulou hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Eh Raimai Pou hey</i>	<i>Raidu nah Pou hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Zhou teithe wo hey</i>	<i>Zhou teithe wo hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Thaopeilai moe hey</i>	<i>Phrapeilai moe hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Eh chi khelou hey</i>	<i>Eh chi khelou hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Zhou teithe nou hey</i>	<i>Zhou teithe nou hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Soupei pfüilai hey</i>	<i>Sou bao pfüilai hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Eh chi khelou hey</i>	<i>Eh chi khelou hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>
<i>Dolou souyu hey</i>	<i>Hainou khaisoulai hey</i>
<i>Sohi mayao hey</i>	<i>Sonade yaolai hey</i>

(David, S.K. Personal interview. 13th August 2020)

English translation: Raimai menfolk, Raidu menfolk. Today the chief observes *genna*, and perform rite and ritual. The menfolks walk down the village gate with hunting dogs, hunt down the stream, the hilltop and the valley, Raimai menfolk, Raidu men folk, today we will not leave and will not let it go. Today our menfolk, we will carry home head and hands.

The ancestral community life was different from the present Poumais way of life. As Poumai ancestors were agrarian, they fully engaged in agricultural activities throughout the year. According to the season, they cultivate the crops throughout the year. The subsequent folksong gives an account of how the forefathers engaged in agricultural activities throughout the year. The folksong talks about the difference between ancestral community life and the present Poumai way of life.

Emai Hiiti Haire Cholua Leshie

Emai hiiti cholua leshie

*Potei ponao hizii,
Tatayu mai larii doumai hai biia hiipo tarae*

*Donii khousho khoungao
Tatamai ni chii, ha, bei vou taizii phourae
Donii khousho khoungao
Larii doumai ni larii doure buh phourae*

*Thounii thounii khou ngao
Poumainah ni thounii niirae, poumai nahzii*

*Siipa rounpa khoungao
Tatamai ni, laota soua taithou nghorae
Siipa rounpa khoungao
Larii doumai ni lariidouni hiirae*

*Kheloumai me souphepota haire cholou-a ni leshie
Zaipo doroupo khoungaoe
Tatamai ni dorou ngurou taizii podzii
Zaipo doroupo khoungao
Larii doumai ni kporikha sourae*

*Emai hiiti haire cholua leshie
Potei ponao hizii tatayumai lariidoumai
Haibiia hiipotarae*

*Nakhou ziikhou hai ngao
Tatamai ni khova sa-a khohi sourae
Nakhou ziikhou haingao
Lariidoumai ni shoyu teile hai ngaorae*

Laokhou laikhou haingaoe
Tatamai ni tasho thao-a laonii niirae
Laokhou laikhou haingao
Lariidoumai ni khaiho larii doutarae

Hounge khou hai ngaolou
Khe-a lou-a buyuni
Lounghi noua shinghi tarae
Hounge khou haingaolou

(Benison. Personal interview. 20th February 2017)

English translation

Our human life is so endearing (loving)

In a year,

Farmers and students get on with their lives in this way.

After the month of December,

Farmers prepare various seeds for sowing

After the month of December,

Students begin their academic admission.

After the month of January,

The people of Poumai celebrate Thounii festival.

In the months of February and March,

The farmer begins to plough and sow.

In the months of February and March,

Students are sent off to their schools.

In the month of May and June.

Farmer gets busy with their works

In the month of May and June,

Students come back home for vacation.

In the month of July and August,
Farmer breaks their activities and celebrates Laonii festival
While students resume schooling.

In the month of September,
Lads and lasses are engaged and wedded.
In this month, it is pitiable to see that the sweet bonds of
The youths are dragged apart.

In the month of October and November,
The farmer gathers the harvest.
In the month of October and November,
Student gives their final academic exams.

Human life is so endearing (loving)
In a year's time, farmers and students get on with their lives
In this manner.

Before the dawn of Christianity in the Poumai region, the village chief was the head of the village. The chief defends the village, and the village administration was under him. All the bachelors and girls sleep in their respective dormitories. In the past young people work together in the field and celebrate the festival together with their peer group. The following folksong talks about how bachelors and girls carry firewood together from the jungle with members of their peer group. Their tradition was to sing agricultural folksong while working in the field or carrying firewood from the jungle. They encouraged one another through songs to walk steadily and rest together at a particular resting place.

Sohi mazho hey, Sonadi zholai hey

1. *Kaching pat prou, hey, e pou mungna hey, phanea tsiina hey.*
2. *Malou khanglou hey, shing shing ngahu phungma hey, khala shingkhuh hey.*

3. *Phouva nou hey, neala yamshing hey, khuphou viima kha hey.*
 4. *Mala khanglou hey, peata rakhi hey, mala louram hey.*
 5. *Shing pak khalapla hey, khalan phung khelou hey, mala yarvi hey.*
 6. *Shing pak khalila hey, khalan phung khelou hey, mala khanglou hey.*
 7. *Tad phok thamakha hey, mala louram hey, phikan kathaloue hey.*
 8. *Phikan makheloue hey, lounna kanthat lou hey, mala yarvi hey.*
 9. *Phikan kathaloue hey, phikan makhiloue hey, lonna kanthadlou hey.*
 10. *Shimphrak phanouda hey, para machung ma hey, mala louram hey.*
 11. *Shangphau khvak tsiilo hey, mala yarvi hey, shamlu mekhiye hey.*
 12. *Mala yarvi hey, shangphan khvak tsiilo hey, mala louram hey.*
 13. *Shonlu metkhiye hey, mala khanglu hey, tad phok thamakha hey.*
 14. *Mala khanglou hey, hu mala thadlou hey, hu khalad thadla hey.*
 15. *Mala khanglou hey, wonlu long thadma hey, ramna pupou hey.*
 16. *Vat shak thu-na hey, mala khanglou hey, yangna neatha moa hey.*
- Oh, etea loncha hey, peata teakhama hey, peata pat thama hey*

(Rocky. Personal interview. 6th January 2019)

English translation: The village chief defends the village. The bachelors and girls help each other carrying firewood. From where shall we carry firewood, we shall go to the southern hillside. We shall find the best wood, we gather firewood from there, girls select the small piece of wood, bachelors choose the bigger piece of wood, we shall go back, girls walk slow, do not slow down the steps. Bachelors do not walk fast, do not slow down your steps, we shall rest together at the stone platform, girl give your cloth tied in your waist let me wipe the sweat, Let us move, sing an agricultural folk song. Our group is like a water flow in the river. The elders of the village discontinue their work and watch us.

5.2.4 Agricultural Songs

Agricultural songs are different from folksongs. Agricultural songs do not have proper lyrics like other folksong. The singers sing while working to encourage the co-workers. The singers entertained the farmers through songs to forget the harsh reality while working in the field. Agricultural songs are not only one theme; the agricultural song's themes range from their ancestors' origin, migration, past glories, and day-to-day happenings. It was a habit for the farmers to sing while working in the field. The agricultural folksongs are about agricultural-

related works and day-to-day life. Through these songs, they encourage one another while working in the field. The singers awake through their songs, those who are lazy and taking rest while others are working. The farmers, while working in the field, encourage and cheer each other through their songs. As the singers encourage through the song to work harder and awake those idle, they compete without rest. It was their custom to provide more meat and rice beer to singers. It is said that listening to those songs, farmers were shaken from their laziness and worked harder. The following agricultural folksong talks about how the farmers encouraged one another while working in the past. They communicate and convey the messages through songs while working in the field.

Khroshi (shidu)

<i>Amairou hrii hai:</i>	<i>Zhimai hriihai</i>
<i>Kalo ainou:</i>	<i>Kalo ainou</i>
<i>Ahrii paye:</i>	<i>Ahrii rii kouye</i>
<i>E Poumai Pou:</i>	<i>Raidu napou</i>
<i>Makharou pfiinou:</i>	<i>Makharou pfiinou</i>
<i>Ahou polou:</i>	<i>Arii pfiilou</i>
<i>Takhre dore:</i>	<i>Takhre dore</i>
<i>Rairou ziipou:</i>	<i>Radu napou</i>
<i>Luta dao:</i>	<i>Aphou shidao</i>
<i>Ahorei kouye:</i>	<i>Aho louye</i>
<i>Zhi mava mai:</i>	<i>E khrelou mai</i>
<i>Zhou tei zhouwo:</i>	<i>Zhou teinai wo</i>
<i>Kho rou:</i>	<i>O shidaikhorou ladai</i>
<i>Ahao maizii:</i>	<i>Hao hai thoulo</i>
<i>Makairou kholo:</i>	<i>Ashidalou</i>
<i>Khorou shihai:</i>	<i>Khorou lahai</i>
<i>Oh hao ahai china:</i>	<i>Ahai touna</i>
<i>Mada laidou:</i>	<i>Azhi laidou</i>
<i>Kuttu shina:</i>	<i>Aka rou shina</i>
<i>Siima borou peinou:</i>	<i>Mabo rou peinou</i>
<i>Taoloua nou:</i>	<i>Cholou ainou</i>

<i>Asou-o phri:</i>	<i>Ami-o zha</i>
<i>Ara buye:</i>	<i>Ara rou khaiye</i>
<i>Oh hao ahai china:</i>	<i>Oh hao ahai tou na</i>
<i>Motou shina:</i>	<i>Seitou shina</i>
<i>Mazhoulo cha:</i>	<i>Anah lo cha</i>
<i>Oh ahai tou na:</i>	<i>Ahai china</i>
<i>Thaolai mohe:</i>	<i>Phralai mohe</i>
<i>Zhou tei zhou-o:</i>	<i>Zhou teinai-o</i>
<i>Ateirou maikhe:</i>	<i>Atei zhikhe</i>
<i>Poutou khrenou:</i>	<i>Romanii anao</i>
<i>Natou ahriinou:</i>	<i>Phizhao anou</i>
<i>Aholou ye:</i>	<i>Ahorei kouye</i>
<i>Echikhrelou:</i>	<i>E chimava</i>
<i>Teikou kanutou:</i>	<i>Ronai ropa</i>
<i>Pao akha buye:</i>	<i>Paomadu buye</i>
<i>Rairou zii pou:</i>	<i>Raidu napou</i>
<i>Rairou zii pou:</i>	<i>Raidu napou</i>
<i>Nah nou shou pei:</i>	<i>Nah nou sapei</i>
<i>Rairou ziipou:</i>	<i>Raidunapou</i>
<i>Poutou-o hriihai:</i>	<i>Atai adu</i>
<i>Seihu nanou:</i>	<i>Seihu nanou</i>
<i>Romo taloude:</i>	<i>Aho loude</i>
<i>Seihu nanou:</i>	<i>Seihu nanou</i>
<i>Asouhangao:</i>	<i>Asouhasii</i>
<i>Shizhao pou nalu:</i>	<i>Poupou nalu</i>
<i>Matao hukhrei:</i>	<i>Machi hula</i>
<i>Ve lou rei nou:</i>	<i>Khailu rei nou</i>
<i>Pei pfiilou a:</i>	<i>Bao pfiilou a</i>
<i>Achirou kriilo:</i>	<i>Achidolo</i>
<i>Takhredore:</i>	<i>Ve khredore</i>
<i>Reikhrei masouhai:</i>	<i>Rei khrii masounou</i>

<i>Asou ro ngao:</i>	<i>A sou rosii</i>
<i>Vii khre laiye-e:</i>	<i>Vii koulaiye-e</i>
<i>Rairou ziipou:</i>	<i>Raidunapao</i>
<i>Oh a khriipou do:</i>	<i>Reiziinado</i>
<i>Dosho-o shu:</i>	<i>Daonai-o ra</i>
<i>Thaolai mohe:</i>	<i>Phralaimohe</i>
<i>Zhou tei-azhou-o:</i>	<i>Zhou tei nai-o</i>
<i>Menao laido:</i>	<i>Maralaido</i>

(Thila, S.K. Personal interview. 5th June 2018)

English translation: Our Poumai and Raidulomai ancestors came from Makhel with spears and shields as their main source of protection. Field cultivation was the occupation for the men and womenfolk of *Raidulomai*. This day *Raidulomai* folk have gone to the field with a group of *mavamai* (mutual labour hiring). This day the language/dialogue of *shiko* (regional/location language) will begin and end the conversation. This day the male folk will make a war cry of “*hoah*”, “*ah-ao*” (typical yelling sound of the peasants), adjusting the rope of the sack/basket in such a way that it is neither too long nor too short like the cuckoo flapping its wing and tail perched on a branch. Like the House-Finch and Sparrow, both the left and right sides increase and multiply the grain. We brothers, we sisters, let us not stop nor leave/release our grasp till dark. During the winter season, Raidulomai grand old king will create and circulate the rites and rituals. In the land of Poupu (Poumai forefathers) and *Shizaopu* (Tangkhul ancestors) Raidunapu (*Raidulomai* forefathers) go hunting with the male dog. On seeing the footprint of the hunted animal, they ran and explored the hills and plains, chasing until ultimately killing and returning home with the head and the hands. On the morning of the next day, the meat basket is carried home, and *souvuh* (where meat is proportionately distributed among the people) is given to all from the upper end to the lower part of the village. Our *mavapu* (male) and *mavapfii* (female) if the *Shizaopu* came chasing from the lower end, let the expert warrior with his shield and spear move his arms, turn his chest and swerve and displace. Similarly, if the Poupuna came chasing from the front wearing the shield and holding up the spear move the arms, turn the chest and swerve and displace to escape. When the month of Raimarou dawned, by keeping track of the time, both Poupuna and *Shizaopuna* came lured by the festivities. The men will searched and readied the meat in the month Raimarou, while the ladies prepared wine

and is engaged in hosting and hospitality, providing drinks and food. If you do not have enough drinks and meat for the celebration, isn't it a shame *Raidunapu* and *Raidunapfii*? *Raidunapu* and *Raidunapfii* this is the day to part and say goodbye *Raidunapfii* *Raidunapu*.

They sing about their ancestors' origin and how their ancestors migrated from Makhrafii, the original site of the Tenyimia tribes, in their agricultural songs. As they were agrarian and depended on agriculture, their festivals are connected with the agricultural cycle. They also sing about their traditional festivals, which are closely linked with agricultural activities. The songs cheer them for their laziness and tiresome work as they sang about their traditional festivals. They renewed their strength when they recalled their celebration memories while working in the field. The following song talked about their ancestor's origin and migration and their traditional festival to excite them and renew their strength as they sang memories while working with their co-workers:

Raimai agricultural folksong

Hei mavawo hei khrii maiwo heo

Yeo teowo yeo deinei Raiduwo pou nou

Wo Raiduwo paomai Raiduwo

Paomaiye makhrifiinou hriiprya

Raiduwo pao maiye khrochii a

Paolou ara a pfiiloua Raidupao makhranou hriiprayei

Ramarou khrii ngao adao

Tei pei kaonou tei paohrii yii

Kutu a akhra heo Raimaru khrii ngao adao teikhrii teira sapo-a

Raimaru khrii vei peiye.

Raimaru khrii prou pa pawe siiheo lapra dei

Raimaru khrii hisii siiheo a lapradei

Dao paopao mainou paodei pei khaithuyu kohei.

(Thila. R.V. Personal interviewed. 7 January 2021)

English translation: Hi today, mutual labour hiring friends, Raidulomai ancestors originated from Makhrafii. They migrated with sword and shield to the present Raidulomai village. In the month of the Raidulomai *Maru* (traditional seed sowing festival celebrated in March) festival,

the sky has become cloudy from the west, cuckoo comes along with wind and rain. Cuckoo chirps in the month of *Maru* festival. The flowers bloom, and the new leaves begin to sprout in the month of *Maru*. What was foretold by Raidulomai forefathers has been fulfilled.

Female:

*He mava okhe
Tave madalou,
Ve merü loukhe,
Bu-a hairainu-
Dei ataozü bu
Chu aduzü bu
Kaite a pomai oh hailo-ari,
Dei matao pholai,
Chu madu daolai
Oh phou a pomai,
Nasei li takhe,
Jousei li takhe
Ngou pfüma vakhe.*

Male:

*Oh hao, chekhaodao,
Teih mazo mohi
Zou haopu nanu
Zou tashu laido,*

Female:

*Ho hailu tava, mai a
Khouzüingao,
Mai achizü ngao,
Oh maina mainu,
Oh phiba veipfü
Oh pfüzo dupfü
Oh pfüzodupfü*

Male:

*Ho haipfü pairai
Terai paokhaisou,
Zhi hrao dado
Oh haipfü paitou
Oh chükha sanü
Oh lükhya sanü
Nü zova kudao.*

Female:

*Oh Danü-opu,
Chi abuchao
Ne putu zaisou
Chi adu chipao
La adu lapao,
Oh nechi khelou,
Mai thyai lao chinu
Toushisü sou-wu
Hrallasü sou-wu
Ne pfüla khaitya
Ne datou laiwu
Ne ngumairai,
Souve velaiwu
Tole matei toulou,
Yaochi matei solou,
Tou makhi laiwu,
Raohou tou sina
Sübolichinu taomaracha-i*

*Tou makhi moda,
So makhi moda,
Mai mala modo,
Bao leirao chado,
Mi ami soudo,
Zü adu soudo,
Terai yuveido,*

Male:
*Ho hepfü pairai,
Zhi sourei pudo,
zhi tadao moda
Zhi khupu dao,
Ta douwo moda
Hao chinu bu lou peisei-a
Sa-a ku a bu chamo.*

(Stephen, K.S. Personal interview. 14th February 2021)

English translation: Female: My exchange labour group, get ready and stand in line to start the work. We shall begin the work from here. Those who carry mattock pickaxe turn this side there is stone, we shall level it. Those who carry spades come to the opposite side. We shall compete with one another.

Male.. : oh yes, ladies, you are right, we shall begin the work for today

Female: when we work, people see how strong we are. Oh, You are huge and healthy, we eat together openly, and we work together. You are incredible; people admire the way you dig with your spade. We are satisfied with the way you dig with a spade.

Male: Oh, Ladies, do not say that we are ashamed listening to your song.

Female: Oh, Danii's father, act like a man. You were bragging about your ability before; why are you standing alone while your friends are working hard. What will you do with your muscle if you will not work? Will, you cut your body into pieces and distribute it to the villagers. You will not work and show your skill though you have eaten the food and drank the wine. If you are a man, why don't you yell? Even a bird perch on top of the tree and chirps.

Male: Oh lady, I am a warrior; I do not work in the field. My job is to guard you and the village from the enemy. Though I do not work, I lack nothing as girls provide for my needs. They feed me because I protect them from the enemy.

5.2.5 Naga and Poumai History Folksongs

The available folksongs are one of the primary sources to trace the Poumai Naga origin and history. Folk songs are not only talking about their day-to-day life, customs and community life. Through folksongs, the people can revisit and recollect the origin and history of the Poumai Naga. The folksongs give a detailed account of their forefathers' origin and history. It is

believed that Tenyimia ancestors lived together at one point in time as a group at Makhel. In the course of time, their population increased, and they migrated in a different direction in quest of a new settlement. The bond of brotherhood still exists among the Tenyimia tribes. Their culture, traditions, customs, beliefs are alike in many ways. The following folksong gives an accurate account of how the present Tenyimia tribes are migrated from Makhel to different locations. The folksong also talks about the bond of these tribes called Tenyimia.

Machhahrii

Adao aria pupao araimai kalao nu hriipa buri sarou.
Adao aria pupao araimai kalao nu hriipa buri kheidzii,
Ho machhafiinu dei-a sou maihrii asou parao.
Zho-a matru alao-o laimai hainu mouchhi rai datraofii mahi aka
Hodei akawosii phoufuturao,
Zho-o apou ahao wo laimai hainu ho deimachi hodei matao hainu,
Moudzii dziikhai anu apou hao nya fiichii khathrei daomoe, zhi pou ahao
Zho-o avoukao rai atraphao sou-e matru alaa laa riipeikhaidei
Shoushee ali-e vanu apou ahao laa riipei khaidei
Te-e nu seinu toulou pfiimaha wu-a bai,
Teko vanu mailaa rii mailaa madou tou-a bai, zhi pou ahao,
Polaomai anghalaa soutu rao, polaomai angha mazho hrii souturao,
Polaomai ho thraa mahra-o laa sii souturao,
Polaomai ho thraa mahra hrii souturao,
Pou ahao asiifiinu dei asou rai chherao, zho-o amao pupao-o me-o she,
Pu-e lou maolaa sou amaopupao hrii souturao,
Paomata pu hopu apao-o she, pu-e lou poula sou alepu paomatyahrii souturao,
Zho-o lee pupao lee-o she, pu-e lou leelaa sou aleepupao hrii souturao,
Zho-o poulee anghah avei-o sii, she mangu punya sourai sherao,
Terai apao ahao nya chidai pfii marao hao charao.
She hai adaimai chinu matey hreipa buri sarou.
Zho-o apoumai chinu matey hreipa buri sherou.
Terai apou ahao nya to southou khaitourao,
Terai apou ahao nya chidai pfii marao hao charao.

She hai anghah nu zhaochi maru soupa daomoe.
Terai apou ahao nya chidai pfii marao hao charao.
She-e hahpfii nu toupee toudey soupa daomaoe,
Terai apou ahao nya hrarai pfii alya-a charao.
She hai adaimai chinu apha-o zhe pari sarou,
Shemazho punya chinu apha-o zhapa ri sherou,
Terai amai atru meinya buhrao,
Zho-o apou ahao nu bu ahrao atrei buhrao hrii lou anu,
Zho-o apou ahao nya nu rii adu sa sou-a nou hapei sah sou anu,
Zho-o apou ahao nya matao machi aveili
Maipei buthrei saba southourao.
Teko-a vanu apou ahao nya ahrii tru dao-a tya tru daomoe,
Zhi pou ahao. (Law. H. Personal interview. 12th Decomber 2020)

English translation: From where did our forefathers originate. Our forefathers originated from Makhel. They lived together at Makhel for some years and migrated to different areas in quest of a new settlement. Meitei ancestors migrated with *moushi* (a kind of tree) as a sign of migration for a new settlement. Poumai ancestors migrated to different hills in search of a new settlement. Meitieis scripts are written on the culm sheath of bamboo, Poumai scripts are written on the dried skin of cow/buffalo. The dog eats Poumai scripts. Therefore Poumai started to learn others scripts. Some of the forefathers spoke Angami language and migrated to a different area; some forefathers migrated to Makhn Mao village and some to the Maram area. Some of the Poumai forefathers halted at present Saranamai village for some years. Mao's ancestor is called Meo; his descendants are called Mao and speak Mao language. Paomata ancestor is called Apao, they live in Paomata area and speak Paomata language. Lepaona ancestor is called Leo; they lived in Lepaona area. Oinam villagers first made Pou earthen pot; they export their product to all Poumai villages. Poumai manufactured their salt; they were sufficient with their product. Angami manufactured an earthen pot for brewing rice beer. Teniymia traditional necklace was made in Khonoma village. Poumai bought the necklace in Khonoma village and wore it as their traditional necklace. Cotton was produced in the Angami area; the Poumai wealthy people bought cotton from Angami and weave *hrasha* (white shawl

with big stitches in the middle). The shawl was worn only by the rich people. Poumai lived a dignified life different from other tribes.

The Tenyimia folksongs tell that they dispersed from Makhel to different parts of the present villages. They had a common language, shared a common ancestor and lived together as one tribe at Makhel before they dispersed. As they migrated to different parts of the present villages, they eventually changed their language, culture, tradition and customs. After they settled in their own respective villages, they began to claim and defend their own territory, resulting in headhunting among them. The following folksong describes how they originated at Makhel and eventually dispersed to different parts of the present villages. The folksong gives an account that Tenyimia tribals groups are blood brothers and share a common ancestry.

POUMAI KHYANOU PALOU

Daole khyarifü arah nourufü hodei-a moufû hainou kopa.

Khya hainou haipou süzoa paosü yoropa.

Maihou maiyai sü zosüre.

Maihou maila kore zo züre.

Maihou maizai sü zomore daisousaru

Maihoa maila kore zomore daisousaru

She kilo konou shekila souropa

shela loukonou she lasouropa

She zhoulo konou shezhou la souro

shenga lusonou shenga lasou ropa

she mao lukonou shemao la souro pa süza

e poulokonou epoula soropa

Dao hainou hai peidei peiva-a tomo

Chacitinou haishi

ronou kao ropo chaci tinou haishi

ronou pede peiva doupei khaishe

Taire rahfû puosha moshi nou taire mai ashi

maiveiba sha bai shinou epoumai natai sülouro e rahtho.

Khaona lire pibü peibaire, vaa hainou pibü pümore, hairo ngouta,

taire nükhi nena mara soupei shilewu ho puonare.

(Shelley, P.D. Personal interview. 7 June 2017)

English translation: Our forefathers originated from Makhel with God. In the beginning, their faces were similar, and they had a common language. In the course of time, they have changed their own languages and departed from Makhel. The forefathers of Meitei, Tangkhul, Angami, Mao, Poumai had departed with their language. Human beings learned to defend their own territory and headhunting from ants. Because of headhunting among them, they could not live together at Makhel. They eventually realised the violent practice and stopped headhunting; they reconciled among them and lived together peacefully.

Numerous folksongs give a detailed account of the Poumai forefathers' origin and history. Numerous folksongs and folktales narrate that Poumai ancestors migrated from Makhel and halted for some years at Saranmai/Siimai before settling permanently at their respective villages. The folksongs tell that Meitei ancestors and Tenyimia ancestors were brothers and lived together as one group at one point in time. As they migrated to different hills and plains eventually, they change their language, culture and tradition. Ancestors who migrated from Makhel have many similarities in their culture, customs, beliefs and tradition. The following folksong describes how the Poumai ancestors migrated from Makhel with other Tenyimia and Meitei ancestors. The song tells how they changed their language and dispersed to different parts searching for a new settlement.

DAO POUPAOMAI PFIISHOLOU-A RATAYU LOU

Dao paipao maizii khyafii kinou maopa

pfiisho lounou hinou ve Siimai ratashe.

Emaizii zhaizhoyu ma lah zhomo she.

Haomaizii haomai lah soutare lamaizii

lamai lah soutare alea kimaizii kilah soutare.

(Thaile. S. Personal interview. 2nd March 2018)

English translation: The forefathers of Poumai settled at Makhel after their long, perilous journey; they migrated from Siimai (Saranamai). Though Human beings have similar countenance, they have their language. They departed with their language from their original homeland Makhel, Nagas migrated with their language and Meitei migrated with their language.

The Poumai forefathers sang different types of folksongs according to the occasion and festival. Some of the folksongs are sung to convey moral lessons on a pious, diligent and hard-working life. They sang about nature and animals in their folksongs to relate to themselves and give life lessons. Through such folksongs, people learn a lesson and become better and responsible people in society. They did not sing folksong without any meaning and moral lessons. The subsequent folksong gives a moral lesson through how animal selects their king. The folksong has influenced the Poumai community and reflected in the ancestral Poumai community life. Though Poumai followed hereditary chief, they elect village chief by following certain criteria according to their custom. Like *bapou* (a kind of bird), the king of animals, the Poumai village chief did not eat certain food like the ordinary people. As with the king of animals, any person cannot be the chief of the village. Moreover, the chief did not simply mingle with the villagers; he wisely counts the lunar day and month and performed rites and rituals on behalf of the village. The chief was expected to live a pious and dignified life. The folksong conveys a message that those who live a pious and ethical life, like the king of the animal, will achieve great things in life.

Teinu marih-a zhadei mathri anu

Teinu marih-a zhadei mathri anu

Teizhadei ko hinu machi mari hrii

Hriiri mah, pa rai adai khou nya nou

Tsii rai pa maveo mane poach rao

Teizhadei ko hinu machhiiamari hrii

Hriiri ma pe rai adai khou nya nou tsii rai-te

Maveo mane paokhai dzii

Paori khao khaodu ne-a tsii rai ne maveo mane paorao

Paori khao khaodu zhe-a tsii rai te maveo mane pao horao

Khounya lisou tu khounya ali macheo

Teko vanu zhi-a tsii rai zhi maveo mane paoho rao

Ato ali liche-a tsii rai ne maveo mane pao rao

Khunya lisou tu khunya ali, macheo

Teko vanu zhisii tori mey-a ri lou horao mane ho rao

Siiko loudzii-ye thru avao ku chingu chu-o

Neatsii rai ne maveo mane pao rao
Chhe lirao tekhe nya mai-o hou lou louye zho.
Hra lirao mai ma hri phaye zho
Thru lirao tekhe nya mai-o vepa louye zho.
Teko vanu zhi-a tsii rai zhi maveo mane pao horao.
Siiko loudzii ye thru, teibe thriku raofii.
Aku tou rai ka ka.
Ne atsii rai ne maveo maveo mane pao rao.
Zhisii sheli chi rao teile chopei liho
Te thao cho pei anu
Teko vanu zhi-a tsii rai zhi maveo mane paohorao
Siiko loudzii ye thru chioridzii ababouteu ne-a tsii
Rai ne maveo mane pao rao
Chioridzii ababouteu zhisii tsii rai-a maveo mane paolai rao
Zhisiiadai mai tou zhisii dai mai so-o maveo mane paolai rao
Atei rihnu teirii zhao triou ho dzii matei-a
Maveo paowo rao zha baboutu.

(Law,H. Personal interview. 12th December 2020)

English translation: All the animals gathered to select a king over them. They asked the lion to be their king. The lion replied that he could not be their king as he kills and eats any animal. Since a lion cannot abstain from killing and eating animals, they approach an eagle to be their king. The eagle replied he could not be their king as he kills the animal and eats the animal as his food. They approached *Chinu* (a kind of bird) to be their king. The bird refused to be the king as he chirps all the time without any season. They approached cuckoo to be their king, cuckoo denied as he chirps anytime and everywhere he flies in the spring season. The animals approached *bapou* (a kind of bird) to be their king. They elected *bapou* to be their king. *Bapou* the king of animal drinks and eats only morning dew.

As ancestors did not maintain a written record, their history and ancestral community life were transmitted through oral tradition such as folktales and folksongs. The Poumai ancestral community life can revisit and trace through folksongs and folktales passed down through word

of mouth. The following folksong talks about the Poumai roots and how people revered and valued their core of life.

HO Machafii

Ho machafii nu khao-a hriipa mai-a hriipa.

Hriiri ma pa rai adainu sii te amah sarao

Hrii ri ma pa rai adainu sii te amah khaidzii

Achi theu bao poulimo rai ye te makai chhii.

Bu hainu sii te amah ho moe?

Achi theu bao poulimo raiye te makai chii

Bu hainu sii te amah moshe.

Chi rou chidei-a velou te-a dei wote chihi dei phou te amah moshe.

Siiri therai adainu sii te amah sarou.

Chi te marii pouli mo rai te makai chhi.

Bu hainu sii te amah ho moe?

Chite marii pouli mo rai te makai chhii.

Bu hai nu sii te amah moshe.

Chi te marii masha theve te chihi thiphou te amah moshe.

Siiri therai adai nu sii te amah sarou.

Dou hai vei chuye moko lou zhenou vei chuye.

Thri-a zhede.

Bu hai nu sii te amah ho moe?

Dou hai vei chuye moko lou zhenou vei.

Chuye throu arao hao.

Bu hai nu sii te amah moshe.

Zho-o ami midu nou kaotru chalou te palou.

Te arih sii mave tout e amah moshe.

Siiri, terai adainu sii tea ma sarao.

Siiri te rai adainu sii te amah khaidzii.

Zho-o tupei tudei nou amah sarou.

Siili-a mohirao ne nyotou mai amah sarao.

Zho-o ne nyotou mai mo loudzii-a puhtou mai.

Sii apea anyori shemo-a nyo to lai rao.

Mai hrii teu-a mo rao.

English translation: In the beginning, humans and tiger lived together at Makhel. What is the root of their community life? Are twenty barns of paddy the core of life? Twenty barns of paddy is not the root of life as the barns can be burned when the house gets burned. What is the core of life? Are 20/30 cows the core of life? 20/30 cows are not the core of life as the cows cannot be saved when natural calamity strike. What is the core of life? Is the red foam like a moon in the paddy field the core of life? Red foamy water is not the root of life as landslides can damage paddy fields anytime. What is the core of life? The necklace of a woman is the core of life. The above folksong gives an accurate account of the ancestral Poumai community life.

The above folksong depicts the core of Poumai ancestors. Though ancestors Poumai were agrarian, 20 barns of paddy or 20/30 cows was not the core of life. They considered a woman's necklace as their root of life as women wear the necklace on their neck, nothing can damage or burn it. Necklace served as their inherent culture and identity of Poumai Naga in the past. It is said that necklace is not found in Poumai region, they bought from Angami people. As they bought from the outside necklace is costly, they wear a necklace with pride and honour.

Since time immemorial, every original Poumai village has its village chief. It is said that when the relationship between the village chief and villagers is not on good terms, the village was not strong, united and prosperous. When the chief faithfully observed *genna* and performed rites and rituals for the village, the villagers lived together in peace, and the people prosper. The chief is highly respected by the villagers and the chief rule the village and defend its territory judiciously. The following song depicts how the village chief and the village folks contribute to the village's well-being.

Kaopou-Vepou lou

1. *Ha hoe daorei khyareifii, hai ranao korapa jiiya khao zhao hei mai kopa.*
2. *Ha-hoe jiiya-ho vao ro viire pa-a hiima che hiima vei-a dei-vao rei khege viiha-a vei shawlu kho sha thaini bochuo, jiiya vilo korairo zhuolo kona kochuo.*
3. *Ha-hoe jiiya-kaopou nani loumei sou pa raie kaoni chiiesii, jiiya kaopou nani jii khao khiirai pei kaoni chiiesii, jiiya kaopou nani khelousa parai kaoni chii sii.*
4. *Ha-hoe jiiya-kaopou nani seihu saparai kaoni chiiesii, jiiya kaopou nani sourei zii parai kaoni chiiesii, jiiye kaopou nani zho du sou parai kaoni chiiesii.*

5. *Ha-hoe-ekaoe dusu pao-a tainou su khao hun sumo zii-ne ve e duzii pao-a thaida liisu phada sumozii jiiya vepou nro kao pou veimo lu-dupa lunghore.*
6. *Ha hoe vaorei sii-a du hudu laige puliro dumo siirou tainia beikhei papei dupao pao a dei jiiya hochu-a du hodu laige puli rodumo churou tainia beikhei papei du pao-pao-a dei. Ha hoe hourou jii-a du hodu laige pulire dumo tyuo rou jiiia kiikou hiipei ni khapo dungho.*
7. *Ha hoe ekao edusu pao-ateinuo su khaonghuo sumo zii jiiya vepou nani kifii toe ludu zii efiishi mai shoku haobai lai, jiiya vepounani jii khao toe ludu zii e jiiikhao mai khii ku hao bai lai, jiiya vepou nani ludu toe ludu zii ludu mai waku haobailai.*
8. *Ha hoe daorei khya reifii hai renao koropa, jiiya apii pao veiro apou paovei ezhao tulaire.*
9. *Ha hoe heiya lailii kuwa khedu ge-heiya lailii kuwa baro thaithainai, jiiya neni zhaola li porotoli khao po jiiya neni khao lima ya dei ma ka-karou buhaire esii chuomo, jiiya eni zhao lali poro toil khaopo, jiiya eni khaolima yadei ma ka karou buhaire nesii chuomo nero angai ero angai. (Thaio, D.S. Personal interview. 23rd July 2019)*

English translation: When God and human beings departed, human beings departed with a bird and rat. There was plenty of wild bananas (Musa) growing together in many places. When the wild banana stalk is chopped off, the stalk first sprouts its leave from the left side (left side compared to the public and right side refers to village chief). People tell village chief that even wild banana first sprout its leave from the left side, we made a fire for you, prepared village water pond, and slept with girls before you. Do not underestimate us, and do not forget what we have done for you. When we go jungle hunting, we go ahead of you with a dog and kill the wild animal. When we go for raid public, go ahead of you. They tell the village chief that before the village chief performed Feast of Merit, they performed the Feast of Merit. The people remind the chief to love and respect each other, not to look down upon them; without them, the chief alone cannot be powerful like without the small trees, a giant tree cannot stand firm when the strong wind blows and a big stone cannot stand tall without the help of small stones beside the big stone. During the rainy season, the river overflows only when the brooks joined the river.

5.3 Indigenous Musical Instruments

The Poumais have their indigenous musical instrument since time immemorial. Men and women have their respective musical instruments. Men are forbidden to play women musical instruments and vice versa. They produced their indigenous musical instruments with their own hands. Their musical instruments and folksong are passed down from generation to generation. Their folksongs and musical instruments are as old as their history and origin. The Poumais are fond of music; they are great singers. They celebrated their traditional festivals with music and folksongs. Without music and folksong, their festival or any special occasion was considered incomplete. Music and folksongs are part of their community life. They convey the message through their folksong and music to their friends, lovers and strangers. There are many musical instruments and folksongs; they use their musical instruments accordingly. In the past, bachelors and young girls were trained and taught how to sing and play music in their dormitories. All of them are expected to sing well and know how to play musical instruments. The bachelors visit the girls' dormitory along with their traditional musical instruments. They spend the evening together playing music and singing folksongs. The bachelors wooed the girls in the dormitory through their music and folksongs. The Poumai indigenous musical instruments are distinct from other tribes musical instruments. Though their musical instruments are simple, they need to master certain skills to handle and play the music according to the song's tune. Their musical instruments produced a harmonious sound in the hands of the musicians.

The traditional folk dance accompanied by music and folksong was performed when they celebrated their traditional festival and special occasions. They have different folk dances that have passed down from generation to generation. Some common traditional dances are war dance, seed sowing dance, harvesting dance and festival dance. Their traditional dances are performed according to the season and occasion. They performed their war dance in warrior attires along with their weapons. In this dance, they display the art and act of fighting with their enemies. Those who never been to war learn the art and act of fighting with the enemies from the war dance. The traditional dances such as seed sowing dance, harvesting dance festivals dance are performed during their festivals in a large group. The Poumai traditional dances are performed mostly by bachelors and young girls. While performing seed sowing dance and harvesting dance, the performers enacted seed sowing and harvesting with their traditional dresses. Some of the important indigenous musical instruments are as follows:

Hahkai (Bamboo horn trumpet): The Poumais used *hakai* as their trumpet since time immemorial. The term *hakai* means buffalo horn in Poumai language. This indigenous musical instrument is made of buffalo horn, about two to three feet long. They removed the inner part of the horn and cut off the tip of the horn. They inserted a bamboo pipe about one to two feet long into the horn to give a better sound while blowing. They blow the trumpet from the tip of the horn by firmly holding the horn. The blow of *hakai* signifies victory and manhood. Women are forbidden to blow *hakai*. The instrument requires strength and skill to blow correctly. They usually blow *hakai* on a platform or top of the village so as villagers hear the sound of the trumpet.



Fig.5.1. *Hahkai* (buffalo horn)

Soukai: This musical instrument is one of the indigenous musical instruments used by the Poumais since a long time ago. The term '*Soukai*' is derived from two syllables, '*Sou*' and '*kai*'. *Sou* means made, *kai* means horn in the Poumai language. The literal meaning of '*soukai*' means man-made horn or horn made by man. This musical instrument is made of bamboo about three to four feet long; a hole is bored in the centre of the near end. A small bamboo pipe is fixed into the borehole of the bamboo for blowing. This musical man-made horn is blown by a man on a public stage or raised stone platforms.

Bhe: This musical instrument is used by Poumai forefathers like other indigenous musical instruments. This musical instrument is made of wild Himalayan lily stem known as *Bhe* in the

Poumai language. The plant has no branch except the main stem; the stem inner is hollow. The plant is matured and suited to make a musical instrument in October and November. They cut from the base when the plant is matured and dried either above the hearth or under the sun. When the stem is completely dried, a dried gourd shape like a funnel is fixed at the bigger end of the stem to produce a loud and clear sound. They blow *Bhe* from the smaller end of the stem. *Bhe* also blows like *Hakai* by a man on the public platform or raised ground.

Sha: It is a typical indigenous musical instrument made of *bhe*. The musical instrument is about three to four feet long. Both the ends of the stem are cut and tightly closed with pieces of gourd skin. Two holes are required to be bored near the ends of the stem. The bigger end of the stem is required to be bored bigger than the other smaller end of the stem. This musical instrument is played as a flute with the middle finger over the smaller hole, and the lower lip of the user is placed on the bigger hole. While the user blows on the bigger hole, the middle finger keeps moving and thumping over the finger hole according to the song's beat. This musical instrument produces a melodious sound when the expert user plays the instrument.

Sha-khei: *Sha-khei* is another typical indigenous flute of the Poumai. It comprises two arms made of *bhe* tube, and the arms are fastened at about 45 degrees. The bigger arm is one and a half feet long, and the smaller arm is about three to four feet long. The two arms are fastened tightly to avoid leakage of air while blowing the flute. In order to hold the two arms more tightly, the two arms are tied with a bamboo split. Both the ends of the arms is firmly covered with gourd skin. The bigger arm is bored bigger hole than the smaller arm near the endpoint of the arms. The flute player blows the flute from the bigger hole like the instrument *Sha*. Though the sound is lower, it produces a more harmonious sound than *sha* instrument as *sha-khei* instrument is longer and larger. Both the instruments are not played with songs as the instruments cannot play along with the tune. The instruments can produce different sounds like the sound of whooping and traditional chants. Men play both musical instruments.

Gaigong: This indigenous musical instrument of Poumai is played by men in the past. The name of the instrument is given after the sound of the instrument. The musical instrument is made of matured gourd. After the seed of the matured gourd is removed, the hardcover is dried properly above the kitchen hearth. A bamboo stick about five feet is pierced through the gourd for handle and fix the string. The musical instrument is played with the right hand by holding the handle made of bamboo and the left hand towards the other end of the instrument. The right forefinger

plays the string of the instrument, and the left hand tap the left to control the beat and sound of the instrument according to the beat of the song. This indigenous musical instrument is played by both men and women while singing folksongs on a special occasion.

***Lanae*:** This musical instrument is like a modern violin with a string. The materials for *lanae* and *gaigong* musical instruments are the same. The only differences are the length of the instrument and the way the instruments are played. *Lanae* instrument is about two and a half feet long, whereas *gaigong* is about five feet long. *Gaigong* instrument is played with a forefinger, and *lanae* instrument is played with the help of a bow-like instrument. The instrument's head is placed on the left shoulder just below the chin, and the left-hand holds the handle. As the bow-like instrument is placed over the string and pulls up and down, the instrument's sound is produced harmoniously. This indigenous musical instrument was played while singing their folksong.



Fig.5.2. Playing Naga traditional musical *Lanae*

Chii/Tati (a single-stringed musical instrument). This indigenous musical instrument is made of bamboo. Like other musical instruments, *Tati* instrument is also played by the Poumais.



Fig.5.3. *Chii* (bamboo flute)

Chii: *Chii* is one of the indigenous female musical instruments played by Poumai women from time immemorial. The musical instrument is called the Bamboo mouth organ. The instrument is made of matured bamboo, the bamboo is split, and the split is smoothened for the purpose. The required size of the instrument is about five inches long and half an inch in width. In the middle of the split bamboo, two holes are carved out to produce sound and vibration. A thread is tied at the end of the two bamboo splits to pull while playing the instrument. The left hand held the head of the instrument while playing the instrument. As the instrument is placed between the lips, the player continuously pulls the thread with the right hand. In this way, this indigenous musical instrument produced harmonious music. This musical instrument is not played along with a song, it produced the sound of a traditional whoop.



Fig.5.4. Blowing Bamboo mouth organ

All the indigenous musical instruments are not permitted to be played throughout the year. Poumais played their musical instruments according to the lunar month. The musical instruments that are allowed to be played throughout the year without any restriction are *Gaigong* and *Lanae*. Other musical instruments are forbidden to be played in September, October and November as during these months, paddy fields are ripe, and during these months, paddy is harvested. The Poumais considered these months as holy and sacred. They believed that playing a musical instrument other than *Gaigong* and *Lanae* during these months invites the malevolent spirit's wrath. Therefore during these months, playing other musical instruments was strictly prohibited. With the coming of Christianity in Poumai villages, the people did not value and preserve the age-old musical instruments. As the people discarded their indigenous musical instruments, their folksongs are also slowly being forgotten.

5.4 Folktales and Their Reflection of the Society

The Poumai forefathers did not have a written record of their history as they were illiterate and did not have a written script. They transmitted their history, culture, customs and beliefs through oral tradition such as folksongs and folktales. The mode and method of passing down their history through folksongs and folktales are different in some ways. Folksongs can be memorised, sung in a group or performed. Whereas folktales cannot be memorised like

folksongs, folktales are narrated to young boys and girls in the evening at the dormitory or near the kitchen hearth according to a narrator's way of narrating the story. At times folktales are slightly exaggerated or changed as the narrator cannot narrate the story exactly the same to different people. Herold Scheub's view on the role of the folktale narrator is relevant in Poumai folktale narration, "We always return to the real world. But for the moment of performance, of fantasy, we return to the time of the beginnings, to the age of mythology, and with the assistance of chaos-causer and the culture hero, the same person necessarily, we reduce reality to a void, and create an alternative world in its stead.....we are constantly in a state of transition" (31). Folktales may be originated from their wild imagination, but they can still relate their history and connect to the present. N.Scott Momaday has rightly asserted about the nature of changes and flexibility in the narration of folktale, "The verbal tradition by which it has been preserved has suffered deterioration in time. What remains is fragmentary: mythology, legend, lore, and hear say and of course the idea itself, as crucial and complete as it ever was. That is the miracle"(4). Changes are taking place in the narration of the folktales in order to suit the listeners of the time. Though changes are taking place in narration, people can still connect with the past through the characters and themes of the folktales. In this way, through folktales, people can trace past history and reconstruct their history and identity.

There are different types of folktales. Some folktales give a moral lesson to the listeners, whereas some folktales are humourous and satirical yet depict the vices of the community. According to their lunar month, the folktales portray how the forefathers celebrated the great feast of merit and the traditional yearly festivals. The stories of the great warriors are passed down through legendary folktales from one generation to the next. The present generation recalls their village past glories through folktales. Though the present generation did not witness the period of headhunting, through their folktales, they can peep into how warriors were respected in the community and how the community had waged war against each other. The folktales give an account of how warriors fearlessly attacked the neighbouring villages and defend the village. The belief systems of the community are also portrayed in the folktales. The characters in the folktales portray how the forefathers invoke blessings, protection from Supreme Being. The community believes in life after death is also portrayed in the folktales. The folktales promoted moral values, peace, and brotherhood among the people. The characters portray the nature and mindset of the people of that time, and the themes of the

folktales are beliefs, social issues, miseries, joys and happiness. As folktales are passed down from person to person through word of mouth, the narrators required good memory power in narrating the folktale. At times folktales are exaggerated or omitted some part of the story while narrating. Thus, folktales are slightly different from person to person, but the story's theme and story are the same. The narrator can excite and inspire the listeners by the way the narrator narrates the folktale. The effectiveness of a folktale depends on how the narrator expresses, attracts the listeners, and conveys the story's lesson. Robert Candel has accurately asserted that "Mime adds texture to the developing tale, providing data that focus audience attention on the storyteller's interpretation of narrative action and imagery" (67). The young people can revisit the ancestral community life of the past by listening to the folktales.

Numerous folktales tell different stories about as origin, migration, social and community life of the past. The available folktales are part of the ancestral community life of Poumai Naga. Harold Scheud has rightly asserted the power of the folktales and their vital role to connect the past and the present:

"The tale is the moment in which past and present are blended in a performancethe tales are simultaneously depictions of the immediate present, of real difficulties and genuine human emotions, at the same time that they point to the infinite; the human emotions and the problems of the hearth become generalized into cosmological infinitude. This is the power of the performance (the narrator); it is the potency of the tale.....tale is reality, tale is performance; the image is real, the image is fantastic; the tale is the present, the tale is the past" (30).

Numerous folktales portrayed the life of the ancestral Poumai community life. Most of the folktales themes are on hardships, happiness, origin, beliefs and wars. All these themes are narrated directly or indirectly, along with fictional names and places. In this way, folktales revive the past glories, history and connects it to the present community.

How the early men discovered and christened God's creations is being narrated and passed down through folktale. The following folktale talks about how early men explored God's creation and christened the biggest, the longest and the thing that never dies and rot. The folktale is still narrating among the Poumai community.

5.4.1 *Raimaivei Bashatao* (God's creation)

When God created everything, he gave man the authority to look after all his creations. The early human slowly discovered and gave some particular name to a thing. They searched and decided that nothing is bigger, in its feature, size and shape than the land. They named the land as the biggest thing. The early human again decided to discover and give a name which has the longest thing. From their long search, they decided to give the river the longest thing in the world. The ancestors continued and decided to search for a thing that never dies. After a long search around, they found the stone is the only thing that never gets rotten and never dies. Although about 71 per cent of the earth's surface is water, the forefathers were not aware of the size of the water bodies. The Poumai still accept and acknowledge that the river is the longest of God's creations, and it is a fact that stones never get rotten and die. (Thaile. S. Personal interview. 23rd July 2019)

5.4.2 Zhudu and Kade the bravest men among the Poumai and the Maram People

The story of Zhudu and Kade is a familiar folktale among Poumai and Maram. This folktale is still popular among them though the narration might slightly different as different persons narrate the story through word of mouth.

Once upon a time, there was a great man called Zhudu from Laiviimai (Willong) village. Moreover, there was a brave man called Kade from Maram. They were trying to prove who was stronger and wiser as they were popular in their respective village. Accordingly, they fixed the day to wrestle and prove who is stronger at Barak river. Kade won the wrestling competition. They fixed the date again to prove who is stronger. In the second matched, Zhudu from Willong defeated Kade. After some time, all the menfolks of Willong went to the forest to fetched logs to construct King's house. On that day, Kade was waiting for Zhudu; he saw that Kade and Rupaorou were the last persons returning home. Rupaorou asked Zhudu to rest and have food; while they had food, Kade slaughtered Zhudu and chopped off his head. Rupaorou informed the villagers that Kade had slaughtered Zhudu and taken away his head.

It is said that Rupaorou was one of the courageous women in Willong. Villagers took the corpse and buried it according to the custom of the village. Zhudu had three younger brothers and one younger sister; her name was Ronai. Ronai urged her three brothers to take revenge, but her brothers told her they would not take revenge. Ronai replied to her brothers that she would avenge her brother death on Kade for killing her brother. In order to take

revenge, Ronai sharpened her sickle and threw the sickle on the roof; she sharpened again and threw the sickle for the second time. When she sharpened the sickle and throw the sickle again on the roof for the third time, the sickle cuts much more thatch; she said to herself that it is enough to expedite her plan.

Early in the morning, Ronai walked down the village gate with the packed food and rice beer to meet Kade. When she crossed the Barak river she met some Maram farmers, they asked her where she is going. She replied that she would meet Kade; she asked them whether Kade is at home or had gone to the field. They told her that he does not usually go to the field; he stays at home as a village sentry. As she continued her journey, she met a group of farmers; they asked her where she was going, and she replied the same answer. When she reached Maram village gate, she met Kade's parents on their way to the field. They asked her where she is going. She replied that she is coming to meet Kade. She asked them if he at home or gone to the field. Kade's parents told her that Kade is their son and he is at home. When Ronai reached Maram village, she met some kids in the village. She asked for Kade's house. The kids directed her the way to Kade's house. As she walked up according to the kids' direction, Kade saw her and asked her where she was going. She told him that she wanted to meet Kade and asked where Kade's house was. He answered that he was Kade so she asked him where he wanted to meet her. Kade told her that he wants to meet her in the jungle to prevent talks about meeting her. She said, "then dress up, we shall go to the jungle and meet in the jungle".

When they reached the spot, she gave him two options to sleep first or eat her packed food and rice beer. Kade replied first to have food and drank. After they had food and drink the rice beer, they arranged the bed. They gathered wild banana leaves to make their bed. While gathering the leaves, Kade could not remove the leaves without breaking the leaves like Ronai. When they have arranged the bed with wild banana leaves, Kade asked her to sleep beside him. Ronai hides her sickle in her waist. She tells him to get up once, saying that a stone is on her back. While Kade got up, she took out her sickle and kept her sickle on her stomach. When Kade bent down over Ronai, she wounded him in his stomach. When she turned back, he told her that he was not aware of her trick and requested her to cut his head decently. Ronai chopped Kade's head and went away. On her way, she met a group of people who asked if she met him and if he received her warmly. She replied that he received her warmly, just like any important guest. Ronai met a group of people again who asked her the same question, and she replied

them in the same manner. Ronai met Kade's parents on the way; they asked her, “did you meet our son Kade, how did he welcome you, and what did he give you as gifts?” Ronai replied, “your son Kade slaughtered his dog, and he presented dog’s head and leg as his gifts”. Kade's mother asked her husband to check what their son had presented to her, but Kade's father refused making her ashamed. When Ronai crossed the Barak river, she called Kade's parents to turn back and see their son Kade's head. Seeing their son's head, they beat their chest and called his villagers to take revenge. Unfortunately, when Kade Parents brought his village menfolks to take revenge, thunder, lightning, and heavy rain started to pour down. They could not cross the Barak river and went back with tears. The story conveys how brave women ensnare great warriors in the past. During the headhunting period, women played a vital role in bringing peace and harmony among the community and the neighbouring communities. Many great and brave women took revenge for their brothers and the community, when men could not do so. Poumai women were highly respected in society and played important roles in contributing peace and order in their community. (Shesou, S.K. Personal interview. 24 June 2020)

5.4.3 Kha, the great performer of *Pouh souyu* (a Ritual Performed to Read the Prospect of the Raid)

The story of Kha from Purul Poumai village is a common folktale among the Poumais. Kha was well known in Poumai region for his *pouh souyu* during the period of headhunting. During Kha prime days, Purul warriors had chopped off numerous enemy heads.

There was a great warrior name Kha from Purul village who was well known for his *Pouh souyu*. He directed his village warriors according to his *Pouh souyu* to raid neighbouring villages. Through his direction, Purul warriors had mercilessly killed several Poumai people. Therefore, Poumais were not happy with him, and they planned to kill him without further delay. One fine day one of Kha’s friends asked him to help cut down the tree to construct his house. Kha was down with fever, but he could not refuse his friend’s request to help him. In the morning, before Kha went to help his friend, he wanted to have food with his daughter Kine, but his wife could not find her. She told him that their daughter must have visited her friend's house. Kha turned back three times to his wife as he went with his axe. Unfortunately, on that day, Ngari Raidulomai warriors raided Purul village. Sourio, the great warrior, killed Kha. When Raidulomai warriors killed Kha, Purul warriors chased and attacked Raidulomai warriors, but Sourio caught hold of their spears with his hand and defended the warriors.

The news spread to Poumai villages that Sourio has killed the notorious Kha. The Poumai leaders appealed to Raidulomai leaders not to return Kha's head to his villagers. As appealed by the Poumai leaders, Raidulomai warriors did not return Kha's head to his family. The people of Ngari Raidulomai hanged Kha's head on top of the bamboo pole in the middle of the village. If the head turned towards the East in the morning, the village would be free from natural calamity, and the village would prosper. However, if the head turns west, there would be plague in the village, and the village would have a poor harvest. At the request of Poumai elders, the head was removed. It is said that Ngari Raidulomai warriors were brave and feared by the neighbouring villages. The Ngari warriors had chopped off many heads as they were brave. (Shesou, S.K. Personal interview. 24th June 2020)

5.4.4 The Origin of Numerals

The origin of the numeral system has passed down from one generation to the next through folktale. The Poumais believed that the method of counting the numbers originated from tiger. There is a folktale that narrates how Tiger count the numbers from one to ten. Once a tiger came to attacked men who were sleeping together in the dormitory. Eleven of them were sleeping in the dormitory; one of them saw a tiger approaching towards their dormitory and before the tiger attacked them, he hid on the roof. As the rest were sleeping tiger killed all of them one by one. The man saw the tiger counting the corpse one by one and the man learned how the tiger was counting the number. When Man, tiger and spirit lived together, the man records how the spirit counts the numbers.

The tiger way of counting the numbers.

1. Ama.....One
2. Ane.....Two
3. Taoche.....Three
4. Taovai.....Four
5. Leleh.....Five
6. Lepao.....Six
7. Paokai..... Seven
8. Soro.....Eight
9. Louvai.....Nine
10. Koro.....Ten

The spirit method of counting the numbers is as follow.

1. Hai-tsiini
2. Hai-paone
3. Tsiipaoni
4. Khoulalee
5. La

The Poumais believed that Tiger and spirit are also counted the numbers like human beings. It is said that Poumai ancestors learned the art of counting from the tiger.

Paul Punü has brought out a collection of folktales entitled, Poumai Naga Folktales. Here are some analyses of folktales from the said book. In the legend, "Proupuzhi", we find the story of how Proupuzhi grew up and killed dangerous wild animals (23-31). The legend reflects how Poumai ancestors believed in dreams and omens in the past. They always consulted dreams and performed pouh souyu (performed a ritual to read the prospect for the raid or hunting) before going for hunting or war. The legend tells how dreams and omens guided them when they went out to war or hunting. Before Poumai ancestors migrated to another place and expanded their territory, they always consulted a fortune teller, dreams and omens. They migrated to a new place according to the direction the fortune-teller told them to go. It is said that there were hazardous wild animals in the Poumai regions as there was no gun in the past. Thus, people are scared to explore new places without consulting the fortune teller, dreams and omens. There are numerous legends about how the Poumai ancestors killed dangerous wild animals by consulting the fortune teller or performing a ritual to read the prospect. Even today, Poumai hunters still practise the culture of giving the head or the best portion of meat to the person who killed the game. If the hunters go with the hunting dog and kill the game, they give the head to the dog owner.

The Legend "Macha and Akho" tells how Poumais respected the rich and great warriors in the past (159-160). Since there was no class and caste in Poumai community, the rich and the poor lived together in peace. The neighbours of the village are scared to raid if the village has great warriors. The great warriors defend the village and rule the people. When neighbouring warriors beheaded the village warrior, the village warriors avenge their village warriors' death.

When the warriors went to war, they consulted omens, dreams and went with the king's blessing. Even today, Poumais still regarded the king's blessing as precious and potent.

The folktale “Lashilu” is about an only son (31-43). The tale reflects how sons are much coveted, of how it is expected of everyone to join a dormitory when they attain a certain age, of Peace Treaty Meal between two villages, of how the need for lock and key was not there in the olden times, about ritualistic prohibitions and gennas.

The legend “Shozii” tells about the most worthy person in Poumai community (43-50). It also portrays that when Poumai ancestors worked in the field or carried logs in the jungle, it was their tradition to whoop and sing agricultural songs to encourage one another. In the past, people who killed enemies, built their own house, seduced young girls and slept with a virgin, performed feast of merit were considered manly and worthy people. People fear them and respect them in society.

5.5 Proverbs and Poem

Like folksongs and folktales, Poumai proverbs are passed down through oral tradition. The Poumai proverbs are traditional sayings about practical knowledge based on community experience and profound thinking. The forefathers coined proverbs to give life lessons and to impart their wisdom to the coming generation. Proverbs connect the people to the wisdom of the past. Different proverbs deal with different topics related to their life and agricultural activities. The agricultural-related proverbs are still relevant in the present generation. As the present generation do not treasure the proverbs and neglected them, they began to forget the ancestral community life of their forefathers. The proverbs reflect how they count the year's seasons and cultivate crops according to their season and time. Though ancestors were illiterate, they were wise in their way. Their proverbs are a mixture of wisdom and philosophy. People did not question their proverbs since proverbs are coined based on native experience and profound-thinking. Their proverbs on agricultural activities and for the coming generation proved to be prophetic. They relied on their proverbs which related to agricultural season to sow the seed and plant. Their proverbs do not only talk about agricultural activities, they also cover all aspects of life. The proverbs are the treasure of the past that have been passed down to the present generation through word of mouth. Some of the important proverbs and predictions are as follow:

1. *Khona khokouluzii teile datalai, teibe konou teipai teisii khelai. Tyaw pa pahlai, phopa pah lai, wapapahlai, kutu sika rabii palai, siih thao thuolai, tai du thaolai, taimounghou daliilai.*

When the spring season arrives, the climate will gradually change, there will be thunder, lightning and rain, the tree such as pear tree, wild apple will bloom, cuckoo and Sikaa (Brainfever bird or common hawk-cuckoo) will be chirping all around, people sow millet seeds, and people sow paddy seeds.

2. *Sikaa-khelouzii süthuo pulai*

When Sikaa (Brainfever bird or common hawk-cuckoo) comes, it heralds the agricultural time to sow millets.

3. *Kutu khelouzii ruthuo/thao thaolai.*

When Cuckoo comes, it heralds the time for seed sowing of paddy.

4. *Paokhao ralouzii lushotalai*

When Paokhao (Cicada) chirps, it heralds the time for the transplantation of paddy sapling.

5. *Teishipalouzii Shikuh ravelai*

When Shiku (a kind of insect) comes, all agricultural activities of plantation must stop.

6. *Kutuhai laonii nüche louzii laonii soujü püi-a talai*

After Laonii festival, the Cuckoo migrates back.

7. Poumai saying: The future generations will climb the chilli plant. It means human beings will become smaller than their grandparents and parents. Today many people are smaller than their grandparents and parents.
8. The future generation will be seated while travelling. Poumais walked on foot to visit other villages in the past, but today, every Poumai village has a road connection and travel to different villages by vehicle.
9. The future generation will wear like cow and buffalo hoof, which means humans will wear shoes like cow and buffalo hoof. In the olden days, Poumai ancestors did not wear shoes as there were no shoes.
10. Man dies of their words, and animals died because of the hoof. If a man is not careful with his words it can create a problem and kill him.

11. The future generation will live like a spider web. It probably means the coming of electricity, there was no electricity in the past, today every Poumai village has access to electricity now.
12. The future generation will eat food on a steel plate. Poumai ancestors used only wooden plates, they did not use steel plates in the past.
13. The future generation will live with horns. This prediction is yet to happen.
14. The future generation will communicate with a far distant place sitting at home. Today almost all the Poumai villagers can access the Mobile network.
15. The future generation will see their naked face. Poumai ancestors did not use mirrors but today, everyone uses a mirror.
16. The future generation will increase the population like an ant. Today Poumai population has crossed nearly two lakhs.
17. The future generation will carry ember in their pocket. In the past, Poumai ancestors made fire with bamboo string. Today the present generation can carry a matchbox and set fire anytime and anywhere.
18. The future generation will be able to replace their eye. Today those who have eyes problem can wear glasses.
19. Succeeding generations will be born with grey hair. Today many young people hair turn grey while they are still young, unlike in the past.
20. Later generations will be born with discerning power. Today, with modern technology and modern education, children know many things. In the past, there was no modern education and modern facilities such as gadgets, internet and social media to educate and improve their living standard.
21. Later generations' lifespan will be shorter. The present generation lifespan is shorter than the past people.
22. In the coming generation, wild rats will subdue domesticated rats. It means people who migrated from other places will have more population and rule the village.

It is said that when all these proverbs are fulfilled, humans' lives will come to an end.

Poem

Poumai poems can be mixture of wisdom and traditional saying. Many poems are composed according to the context of their community to convey moral lessons. The ancestral poems are the gem of their community. For example, the following poem talks about the accountability of life.

Raato Rana (Be Accountable)

*Peikhoh remai tatouzii,
Pheikaa cho-a takou lai.
Teile poulo deiphe-a talai,
Raato rana zhu-a talai.*

*Kheinah rei kheina khailu-o,
Peito tou shoto tou.
Kaani hei totou su-o,
Raato rana zhulu-o.*

*Teidei kaa zhi-a tasu-o,
Teili thai phii-a nuopelai.
Teili zhu-a laha-a hei chalai
Raato rana zhulai.*

*Boh hiina poupa khemai,
Reijii du pehei kousu-o.
Tei khaitei rosi zhulu-o,
Raato rana zhulu-o.
-D. S Thaio Naamai*

English translation:

The footsteps of the distinguished leader,
Keep moving, counting the footsteps.
Normally walk vigilantly,

Be accountable in all circumstances.

Ignore when people instigate,

Do not snatch someone's food and inherit someone property fallaciously.

Do not grab other inheritance,

Be accountable.

While walking, do not look around at the far distant,

Avoid unnecessary arguments.

Better conceal than to hurt others

Be accountable.

Young people,

Do not go nearby flood.

Be alert of the storm.

Be accountable.

5.6 Folksongs, Folktales, Folk Narratives of Poumai Nagas: The Changing Perspective

In the olden days, traditional songs are very common and part of their festivals. The traditional songs are not sung only in the festivals but also sung at different times. There are songs sung while working in the field to awaken the idle farmers in the field. When there were festivals or special occasions, the lover expressed and conveyed his/her admiration and love through traditional love songs. The traditional songs are not sung for the sake of singing but to communicate and convey different messages. Today all these traditional songs are merely sung and cherished during traditional festivals and social gatherings. The modern singers replaced the old traditional songs with their new modern songs to suit the situation and events. Since the old traditional songs are not recorded and preserved properly it is hard to find and revive them. The modern composed songs have been written, recorded in cassettes and on video albums. The youngsters prefer to sing modern songs than the old traditional songs as it suits their interest and is familiar to them. The older people are disappointed and sad seeing all these changes as the old songs disappear slowly from society. Today, in most festivals and social gatherings, people are

more interested in singing and listening to modern songs than traditional songs. As the old songs are diminishing, modern songs have become more popular in society.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The present study, "Dialectics of Community Life in the Folklore of the Poumai Nagas of Manipur: Tradition and Change" has discussed the rich folklores of the community that have passed down from generation to generation and the changes that are taking place. It has been discussed that tradition and culture were the basic foundation of their ancestral community. In the course of time, changes have taken place according to the current modern order and Christian perspectives, but it did not totally change all their traditional practices. In fact, many traditional practices and beliefs are still relevant in today's life. The important outcome of the study is briefly highlighted.

The present study attempted to explore and identify Poumai history of migration and its ancestral community life, based on primary and secondary sources like folk songs, folktales, legends, books and articles. From this study, the present Naga tribes are said to have once lived in Indo-Myanmar before they migrated to Makhel and were considered the original migrants of the Nagas. There are different legends and waves of Naga migration before they reached Makhel. All the tribes' names originated from their own progenitor's names. It was by the British government that the term "Naga" became well known. Thus, the term "Nagas" is synonymous with all the Naga tribes inhabit besides Nagaland, parts of other states like Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and even the neighbouring country of Burma, now Myanmar. Since Poumai ancestors did not have a written record of their history and migration, it is not easy to trace their accurate history. There is no evidence about Poumai origin and migration beyond Makhel and the Poumai folktales, folksongs and legends do not go further than Makhel. Since Poumai history could not be traced beyond Makhel, Makhel is considered the original site of their settlement from some unknown places.

In the first phase of Poumai, the village chief reigned the village both in secular and religious affairs. When the chief announces anything on the top of his stone platform, the villagers strictly follow accordingly. The chief publicises all the important information, both secular and religious affairs. The villagers honoured him, and he played a vital role in any decision making for the village. In the second phase, the great warriors replace the role of the chief in the village. Before the dawn of Christianity in the Poumai region, they practice

headhunting. Their lives were not secure as every village had a war with each other. During that time, people fear and respect prominent warriors in society as they defended the village when the enemy attacks the village. Though warriors sleep with other wives and daughters, people did not raise their voices as they fear, respect and honour the warriors. People who slept with other wives and daughters were respected and regarded as manly. Men who slept with sisters, mother and daughter and two women on the same bed were considered the bravest men in the village. Those men lead the villagers during the festival when they whoop in the village. During that time, people build their house with more than one door to let the warriors go when the husband returns home. Those men who slept with women, beheaded the enemy's head and killed the lion were the only persons allowed to yell while they showcase their traditional war skills in front of the villagers. In the olden days, Nagas made fake coughs before entering the house to let the warriors go away from the back doors.

The older people are still practising the culture of fake cough before entering the house to inform in advance that they are coming. In the third phase, the Poumai Naga society was dominated by those who performed the 'Feast of Merit'. People who did not perform feast of merit did not dare to yell and say a word they wish to in front of those who had performed the feast. In this phase, the wealthy people who had performed the feast of merit reigned the society. In the fourth phase, the society was ruled by educated persons. The dawn of modern education in Poumai society has transformed the structure of society drastically. Educated persons replaced the role of those who performed the 'Feast of Merit' in society. In the fifth phase, the wealthy people and the educated persons are competing to dominate the society. In the long run, rich people have more prospects to dominate society. The wealthy people are gradually dominating the educated people as they can employ them and provide a job. In this way, wealthy people are gradually dominating the educated people in the present society.

In 1832 the British first set foot in Naga Hills. The coming of the British had brought many changes in their outlooks and their traditional feasts, festivals, culture, tradition, beliefs and practices. Before the dawn of Christianity in Poumai region, the Poumais followed indigenous religion. In the Poumai language, the indigenous religion is called *Zhaoshomai*. In the wake of Christianity, the indigenous religion has renamed *Pupaonariimai* (people who observe ancestors rites and rituals). The Indigenous Poumai religion is declining in the present

community with the coming of Christianity. By conserving indigenous religion, the people can promote and revive the ancestors' history and identity.

One of the significant changes is that it was only after the British intervened that the violent practice of head-hunting was gradually abandoned. With the introduction of Christianity and the "Treaty of peace" among the Poumai villages, Poumai rival villages reconciled and forgave each other's grudges. When head-hunting was stopped in the Poumai community, this impact brought Poumais together as one community and created the feeling of brotherhood among the Poumais. After the Treaty of Peace, Poumais started to contact each other and built a relationship without fear. After their conversion to Christianity, they became soul hunters though they were head hunters in the past. With the introduction of Christianity, they became peace-loving people. The words of God in the scripture changed their lives, and they live together as brothers. The British played an important role in transforming the old traditions, where the new modern or western culture and practices replaced the old. Most of the transformations took place after the dawn of Christianity and the introduction of modern formal education to Poumai society.

The Poumai Nagas formally accepted Christianity in 1937, although the light of the gospel was preached much earlier. Initially, new Christian's converts were ill-treated, persecuted and even thrown out from the village. Any man who readily accepted a new religion was looked down upon in society. However, Christianity slowly extended across the people through the hard work of the missionaries. The first Poumai Christian converts are Lachao Daile, Souva Row, Dasou Rihe, Danii Shehe, Saosii Show, Thaikhu Panii and Husou Sounii. First converts were given education and trained on how to run the church and the self-government of the village. The Paomata High School was established in 1958. The school has made a profound social impact in the Poumai region. With the arrival of Christianity to Poumai villages, most of the old traditional feasts, festivals, and practices were slowly replaced by Christian values and principles.

The Poumai community is divided into three circles for administrative purposes. The names of the three circles are Paomata, Lepaona and Chilivai. The first graduate in Paomata circle was N. Modoli from Khumai (Tunggam village). He graduated in the year 1949 from St. Edmund College Shillong. The first graduate in Lepaona circle was P.S. Sow from Hiimai (Purul village). He graduated in the year 1965 from D.M College, Imphal. The first graduate in Chilivai circle was CL. Ningkhalem from Pouhmai (Thiwa village). He graduated in the year 1976 from

D.M College, Imphal. The statistics report clearly shows that Paomata circle is more advanced educationally, financially and economically than Lepaona circle and Chilivai circle. Christianity first came to Paomata circle in Poumai region. This is one of the reasons Paomata is more advanced than Lepaona circle and Chilivai circle.

One of Christianity's negative impacts is that the new religion unites as much as it divides the community. Due to the various denominations, the community and the village are divided among the followers of one denomination against those of another. In the past, all the villagers celebrated festivals together as one village, but today, due to the various denominations, the villagers celebrated festivals with their own denomination. The new religion drives the community apart. Today in the Poumai community, the new religion affects intermarriage among the Christian denominations. The Poumai Naga Baptist Association (PNBA) restricts marriage with members of other denominations. The new religion not only changed the Poumai community, it also poses a threat to ancestral community life.

Before modern education was introduced in Poumai villages, agriculture and animal farming were the community's economic mainstay. It was their tradition to burn the jungles to clear the woodlands to hunt wild animals and birds. They also cut down the trees and grass around their village perimeter and set fire to prevent the wildfire from spreading to the village. Today, there is the need and awareness to conserve nature. To prevent destruction of forests and woodlands along with rich fauna and flora.

On the other hand, the present Poumais abandoning the traditional method of agriculture is adversely affecting their occupation. They also forget the precious knowledge of agriculture which they learned from their ancestors. With changing times, the community is losing many traditional methods of agriculture. Today many young people do not have an idea about agriculture that their forefathers practised for many years.

After receiving formal education from schools and colleges, they have changed their outlook and slowly shifted their job to white-collar jobs and different jobs outside their community. As they are looking out for jobs outside their village, they gradually migrate to towns and cities. Those who shifted to towns and cities for jobs and different purposes replicate new culture as they live with people from other communities. Those exposed outside the village form a sense of superiority and find it hard to adjust when they return to their village. In this way, the educated people, exposed outside the village, slowly bring a new culture to the Poumai

society. As they fuse new culture with their old culture, the present generation is facing identity crises. People gradually lost the sense of 'belongingness' in the community. The present Poumai community is facing some serious hindrance to progress and development as one community. The educated people are after status, power and fame for their vested interest. 'Ism' between the clans in the village and 'ism' among the Poumai villages has crept in the community.

Intermarriage among different tribes increased when they migrated to towns and cities searching for jobs and different purposes. As they live in towns and cities, their children follow their parents' traditions and culture. These people are confused as they follow both of their parents' traditions and cultures. Due to this evolution, today, many young people have dual traditions and cultures in the community. They do not only discard their tradition and culture. Many of them could not even speak their mother tongue. Today young people are comfortable speaking in English rather than their mother tongue. If they do not preserve and practice their tradition and culture to counter the adverse effects, their culture and tradition will vanish.

Before Christianization, traditional feasts are among the leading social activities with deep significance in Poumai Nagas's life, in which the rich and poor equally take part. The Poumai Nagas depend on agriculture. Festivals and agriculture simultaneously go together throughout the year. The Poumai traditional feasts and festivals circled the agriculture cycle by observing and performing rites and rituals of agriculture accordingly. With the dawn of Christianity, most traditional feasts and festivals are transformed and replaced by Christian festivals like Christmas, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, etc. Earlier festivals are celebrated to appease their god, offering thanksgiving and rituals. Today the purpose and focus of celebrating some old traditional festivals are no longer a religious matter but a social celebration. As agriculture is the mainstay, they carefully observed and performed its rites and rituals throughout the year according to the lunar months. The village chief or the village priest played an important role in performing rites and rituals on behalf of the village. The significance and deep meaning of the traditional agriculture rites and rituals passed down from generation to generation are replaced by Christian ideology. Instead of performing traditional agricultural rites and rituals, the Christian community pray in church for a good monsoon and bountiful harvest by praying and fasting. Nevertheless, some similarities can be seen in Christian ceremonies and prayer though they do not worship house spirit and field spirit like in the past.

The ancestral traditional death rites and rituals were obligatory in their social and religious life. Some rites and rituals are libations of rice beer, animals sacrifice and offering an egg. As the result of Christianization, the traditional rites and rituals are replaced by the Biblical funeral ceremony, prayers and western rationalisation. Although the traditional rituals are abandoned, it does not get erased from the social and cultural life. There were certain rites and rituals to be observed and performed when a child was born. Again, in fear of evil spirits, either father or the mother would say that the child is their's, and it is a tradition that the child was christened within five days by killing animals as a mark of thanksgiving and sacrifice to the Supreme Being with certain rites. As Christianity has spread and has rooted in people's minds, traditional rites and rituals of birth and christening of the child are transformed and replaced by Christian prayers. Although a child's christening is performed in the church following Christian doctrine on Sunday by the pastor and the church elders, the procedures are very much similar to traditional rites and rituals. Even today, a wealthy family gives a big feast to the village or kills buffaloes or cows and distributes a piece of meat to every village household when they christen their children like in the pre-Christian era. Like those pre-Christian days, even today it is taboo to go to the field and work when a person dies in the village. The washing of the dead body with plain water and burying his/her belongings such as spears, shawls, and clothes are still practised. The village priest performed earlier death rites, but now the role of the traditional priest is replaced by the pastor.

The traditional marriage practices and inheritance of property can be seen in Christian marriage and inheritance of property. Even today, Christians strongly believe and consider a dream before the engagement. They pray to God to reveal them through a dream before they officially engage. They believe that through a dream, God reveals them and guides them. Earlier, they worshipped spirits and the Supreme Being to reveal them through divination and dream for the marriage engagement. Once the engagement is officially announced as a sign of final agreement, the priestess performed certain rites at the bride's home. According to the tradition, the wedding was administered by the village priestess. Today, pastors and deacons pray for the marriage engagement along with the bride's families and the bridegroom families. The Reverend has replaced the traditional role of the priestess to administer the wedding. It is still the same as it was in the pre-Christian period when it comes to property inheritance. Today though women are not entitled to inherit immovable properties, they are given more opportunities before

getting married. They start to work in many offices holding higher posts than their male counterparts, and their role in the family and society is notable to a large extent. The divorce and the properties issues have seen significant changes in the present context, for instance, Poumai Naotoumai Me (PNM) has passed a resolution regarding sharing a property with daughters after marriage without discrimination. Examining all the issues in the contemporary society of Poumai, the shift in the roles of women was quite evident in the socio-political context.

The Poumai Nagas still practised the old traditional patriarchal and patrilineal system practised since the pre-colonial period. The father's position being the head of the family remained the same as in the Christian family. Even today, the role of the elder is crucial in the decision making of the clan and the village and the traditional solid bond of the clan exists. Though the church is looking after the religious matters, when it comes to other social issues like family problems, theft, murder, land dispute, inter-village dispute etc., all these disputes are settled according to customary laws. With the introduction of modern education, young educated people also began to play an important role in the decision making of society. Women hardly participated in socio-political and religious matters in the pre-colonial era. According to Poumai traditional patriarchal society, the participation of women in male-dominated public meetings defiles the dignity and prestige of the male. It is taboo for women to participate in a head-hunting expedition, traditional yell, inherit immovable property and man's property. All these taboos and restrictions have changed to some extent since introducing modern education, Christianity, and contact with other modern societies. A strong woman organisation, 'Poumai Naotoumai Me' (PNM), was formed in 1987 to promote society's welfare and uplift the women in the community. All these aspects have shifting away from traditional norms of women and giving social status to women. However, there are still many areas where women's role needs to improve and be encouraged. There is no women representative in the village council today, and they are not invited to socio-political decision-making meetings.

One of the unique features of the Poumai village before Christianity was that it was a sovereign socio-political by nature, run by the village chief along with village elders according to the customary laws in all matters, both religious and secular. The traditional Naga village consists of different khels (a village division), which are again divided into clans and lineage. In the post-independent days, Hill Areas Act has introduced Act and a village authority system was launched in Manipur to run the village self-government in a democratic form. With the

introduction of the village authority system, the Poumai Nagas traditional village system also changed and introduced a new system consisting of the village chairman, secretary and the village councils. Today the village authority councils handle any development and scheme from the government and take care of the village in any issues. The Poumai Nagas has formed a higher apex body apart from the village authority council to look after the whole Poumai Nagas in every matter relating to social, political and religion. The main and highest apex bodies of the Poumai Nagas are, The Poumai Masou Me (Poumai Naga Union), The Poumai Naga Tsiidoumai Me (PNTM) (Poumai Naga Students Union), The Poumai Naotoumai Me, PNM (Poumai Naga Women Organisation), The Poumai Naga Baptist Association (PNBA) and The Poumai Naga Catholicmai Me (PNCM). Apart from the village authority council, different departments at the village level maintain law and order in the village. Some departments are Youth & Students Department, Women Society and Baptist Youth Fellowship (BYF). Even though most Poumais follow Christianity, customary laws are still respected and settled the dispute according to customary laws.

Since time immemorial, Poumai Nagas has had its systematic form of religious practices and beliefs. The Poumais traditional religion strongly believes in the existence of the Supreme Being. Apart from Supreme Being, they also believed in the existence of good and evil spirits. They believed that the Supreme Being is the creator of the universe. Supreme Being, along with the spirits, control the whole universe. They performed and observed rites, rituals and gennas out of fear and to appease the malevolent spirits. In the wake of Christianity, traditional rites and rituals are replaced by Christian ideologies. Christianity and modern education have brought different outlooks and transformed Poumai society. The traditional concepts of spirits and soul are not entirely lost to contemporary of Poumai Nagas. Though Christianity is deeply rooted in Poumai society, the essences of the traditional socio-cultural practices passed down from ages are not entirely abandoned.

The rich and colourful traditional attires and ornaments of Poumai Nagas are still preserved and used with honour and respect. One of the unique identities of Poumai Nagas can be recognised through their traditional attires and ornaments. There are similarities in traditional attires and ornaments among the Naga tribes. A new way of dressing can be seen in the present generation as they connect with the rest of the world. The young men and women prefer wearing western dresses instead of their traditional attire. The present generation is neglecting the value

and importance of their traditional dress and motifs. Although traditional attires and ornaments are no more fashionable in Poumai society, they still wear and show their identity to other people when they celebrate their traditional festivals. Today younger generations are encouraged to have their traditional attires and ornaments. Some Poumai villages are now mandatory for every bachelor and unmarried woman to have traditional attires and ornaments.

Poumais followed the dormitories system in the pre-colonial period, and every Poumai village had their traditional dormitories both for the bachelors and girls. The traditional dormitories are not only the place where unmarried men and women entertained themselves in the evening, but it is a place where the owners of the dormitories or elders teach social values, social conduct, manner and behaviour. The dormitory is regarded as one of the most important social institutions. From there, they are trained in physical, mental, moral, and spiritual needs. The British and the missionaries misunderstood the importance and values of dormitories as dormitory culture were new to them. They considered dormitories as unconducive and discouraged the new converts to discard the culture. With the introduction of modern education, dormitories are replaced by schools, hostels and churches. The disappearance of the dormitories system has had many negative results in the present Poumai Christian community. One of the saddest effects of the disappearance of dormitories is that many young students drop out of school. These students create problems in the family and society as there is no other place than the school to teach them the value of life, good behaviour, and live with the community harmoniously.

Though Poumai ancestors were illiterate, they were well-versed in traditional songs and indigenous games from time immemorial. The traditional songs are popular because their past fame, history, and community life are recorded there. These songs also include narrating their daily activities sung in their festivals and the field while working. When they sang all these songs, they were reminded of their memories, refreshed their minds, and moved on with their life activities. Today the present generations do not give much interest in traditional songs. They merely sing during their traditional festivals and social gatherings without understanding the deep meaning and significance. As modern songs are becoming more popular, traditional songs are diminishing in the present Poumai society.

Since time immemorial Poumais are fond of sports and have their own indigenous and typical games played during their traditional agriculture feasts, festivals and leisure time. Most

of their traditional games are outdoor games played on the open ground. The traditional games and musical instruments which are played during their festivals have a deep meaning. The traditional games are important because it gives them relaxation from their work and teaches them discipline. With the arrival of the British and contact with advanced people, modern games replaced some of the indigenous games. Sadly, the present generation does not have interest in their indigenous games as they are attracted to modern games. However, the indigenous games have not entirely vanished in the present Poumai society. Poumais play their indigenous games with honour when celebrating their traditional feasts and festivals.

The traditional taboos, oaths, social gennas and customary laws play an important role in Poumai Nagas society during the pre-colonial period. Before British and Christianity came to the Poumai community, Poumais firmly followed and practised their taboos, genna and customary laws. The taboos protect them from immoral conduct, incest, thief and murder in society. When any dispute arises within the family, village and inter-village, they settle by taking oaths. When the two parties are unwilling to compromise the case through understanding, taking the oath is the only means to settle the case. The customary laws play an important role in the administration because it provides justice to the society. Earlier Poumais believed that by observing social gennas, they would be saved from sickness, including their livestock and their crops. With the dawn of Christianity and modern education, Poumais have abandoned many traditional taboos, oaths, and social gennas and replaced them with the modern social order to suit their lives accordingly. Although gennas associated with agricultural rites and rituals are abandoned and replaced by Christian ceremonies and prayers, many traditional taboos, oaths, and customary laws are still practised. Until today, any family, society, and inter-village disputes are solved according to the customary laws. All these social elements control and maintain the social order and laws in the Poumai society.

In the olden days, Poumais idolise their ancestors and performed rites and rituals for their ancestral worship. Before converting to Christianity, Poumai appeased their ancestors by performing rites and rituals to receive their blessings. The ancestral worship gives new hope and fortune to those who devotedly worship and perform rites and rituals. Out of fear from calamities and their livestock, they worship their ancestors, perform and observe rituals and rites. Today, all the traditional ancestors' worship of rites and rituals is abandoned with the arrival of

Christianity. When they celebrate traditional festivals and feasts, they still honour their ancestors by singing folk songs, folk dances and playing indigenous games to remember their ancestors.

The present study has cautiously analysed the aspects of the ancestral community life of Poumai Naga. The ancestral community life shows that Poumai has been community-oriented people. In the wake of Christianity and modern education, many transformations occurred in their traditional feasts, festivals, tradition and culture. The study affirmed that a lot of positive changes have contributed to the upliftment of the Poumai community. However, some changes have brought adverse developments between the new and the old at the same time. No doubt change is inevitable, but it is sad to note that some negative changes have devastated their cultural heritage. Due to this, today, there is the real danger of cultural conflict and identity crises in Poumai society. The present Poumai Christians need to reconsider their old traditional values, customs, festivals and practices and revive them. The Christian faith is not a threat to all the traditional festivals and practices. Following and observing age-old festivals and practices will make the gospel more effective and relevant to the present Christian Poumai community. The Poumai ancestral community life is passed down through oral tradition in folksongs, folklore, legends, sayings and proverbs. Today all these are recounted by singing their folksongs, wearing their traditional attires and playing their indigenous games when they celebrate their traditional festivals. Therefore, to preserve folksongs, folklore, legends, sayings and proverbs, traditional festivals, feasts and practices should be encouraged and renewed, if not, young people will not connect with their roots and there will be end of a people. It is imperative that more and more research and documentation of Naga tribes be carried out. It is this researcher's hope that the present thesis will help towards comparative studies among the Naga tribes and beyond.