

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTEMPORARY FUSION: A STUDY OF ARTS AND CRAFTS OF PHOM NAGAS

Thesis submitted to Nagaland University, in partial fulfilment for the award of
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

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*Dedicated to my parents and siblings, Rev. Baii-üh, Mrs. Tongchi, sister Mene,
and brother Konduk, and Nganshak.*



नागालैण्डविश्वविद्यालय

NAGALAND UNIVERSITY

(संसद द्वारा पारित अधिनियम 1989, क्रमांक 35 के अंतर्गत स्थापित केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the research data presented in this accompanying thesis titled **“Historical Significance and Contemporary Fusion: A Study of Arts and Crafts of Phom Nagas”** has been carried out by Ms. Henshu Aeihly bearing Regd No. Ph.D/HAR/00014 under my guidance and supervision.

The present work is original in its content and has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree or diploma in any other University/Institute.

It is further certified that the candidate has fulfilled all the conditions necessary for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History under Nagaland University.

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DECLARATION

I, Henshu Aeihly, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institution.

This is being submitted to the Nagaland University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS SUBMITTED TO NAGALAND UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

The significance of arts and crafts in the Naga civilization has been consistently profound. Attributing to everything is an inherent aspect within the context of Naga history, rendering it implausible to contest its significance outright. All objects, including as dwelling houses, clothing, jewellery, weapons for warfare, hunting equipment, and household items, were created on an individual basis using the resources that were readily accessible. Historically, the Nagas inhabited their territories autonomously, exhibiting a cultural inclination towards self-reliance and a lack of familiarity with interdependence. As stated by Stirn and Ham (2003), “The art and craft of the Naga, despite their utilitarian aspects, are deeply embedded in their socio-religious beliefs and ceremonies.” Consequently, it profoundly impacts on various aspects of Naga society, including social dynamics, cultural practises, economic activities, and religious beliefs. The dress and customs of the Naga people exhibit a remarkable display of vibrant colours and intricate patterns, showcasing their cultural magnificence. The motif and design of apparel, regardless of gender, are clear indicators and symbols of the wearer’s social and cultural status within society, thereby conveying significant meaning. The bulk of Naga ornaments possess inherent symbolism, imbuing them with considerable potency. As a result of the rigorous limitations imposed by prevailing traditions and customs, only a limited segment of the overall populace is granted the privilege to don them. The Nagas exhibit exceptional workmanship and artistic prowess in their various crafts. The artisan's craftsmanship is exemplified by their use of locally sourced resources to fabricate textiles, pottery, baskets, and various other artefacts, showcasing their inherent artistic prowess. Bamboo is often regarded as the foremost craft material the Naga community employs. The saying “Man commences existence within a receptacle constructed from bamboo and concludes it within a receptacle constructed from bamboo” holds significant popularity within the region of Nagaland. According to another adage, a grove of bamboo is said to contribute to

an individual wealth. Nagas have demonstrated behavioural adaptations that are well-suited to their respective environments.

The Nagas are a diverse ethnic group characterised by many dialects, cultures, traditions, and narratives passed down through generations by oral traditions and cultural norms. They represent a distinct cultural identity. The clothes and jewellery worn by the Nagas are visual representations of their collective identity and individual variations within their community. The community's textiles, basketry, jewellery, weapons, metallurgy, and woodcarving are remarkable manifestations of their dynamic material culture.

The scarcity of written records of the Nagas indicates a dearth of historical material pertaining to their history. The historical accounts of the Nagas are mostly transmitted by oral tradition, wherein knowledge is transferred from one generation to the next through various forms such as myths, stories, folklore, fables, customs, traditions, as well as artistic and craft practices, each of which holds distinct significance. The initial recorded records of Nagas emerged after to the advent of British officials and American missionaries in the Naga Hills during the 19th century. The differentiation between arts and crafts within Naga culture is important due to its rich historical significance. This division encompasses all aspects of Naga life, including social, economic, and political dimensions. Moreover, it is worth noting that this historical account is well-documented, offering a reliable depiction of the past Naga society.

Statement of the problem

Art and craft have a significant role in engaging individuals from all segments of society. The knowledge of a society's social, cultural, economic, and religious aspects is acquired through the practical implementation of these elements. Historically, the Nagas adopted a self-sufficient lifestyle, independently producing all necessary goods for their daily existence. In practical terms, most of the Nagas were engaged in artisanal or craft-related occupations, often encompassing both domains. The training methods were either passed down from generation

to generation, or the information and technology were transferred within the morung, an essential traditional educational institution among the Nagas.

The existing historical literature about the Nagas provides concise and comprehensive narratives that have been undertaken for scholarly investigation. The traditional art and craft of the Phom community holds great importance for the entire region of Nagaland. It reveals the various types, methods, and techniques of art and craft practiced by the Phom people and also sheds light on the social, cultural, economic, and religious aspects of their lives. This aspect of Phom culture remains relatively unexplored and serves as a valuable archive of knowledge.

Study area

The scope of this study is limited to the examination of the “Traditional Arts and Crafts of Phom Naga” of Longleng district. The geographical areas and the localities under consideration are Auching, Shakshi, Yongphang,, Pongo, Pongching, Yongam, Nyang, Bhümnyü,,Yachem, Yongnyah, Yongshei, Tangha, Kangching, Tamlu, and Bura Namsang.

Significance of the study

- The suggested study has the potential to benefit the Phom people specifically, and the Nagas in a broader sense. This study delved extensively into the realm of oral tradition to scrutinise and explore its roots through the implementation of oral interviews with esteemed elders and potential interviewees. Additionally, the study gathered information on the origins of traditional arts and crafts practiced by the Phom group.
- This study sheds light on the endangered traditional arts and crafts practices of the Phom people. These practices have been increasingly neglected or undervalued, prompting the need for their preservation through recorded documentation. This authentic documentation will serve as a valuable resource for future generations, providing data for reference and facilitating further research. Moreover, this

phenomenon sheds insight into the tendency of individuals to disregard or diminish the significance of a matter due to its impending documentation.

Objectives of research

- Document the methods and techniques involved in traditional Phom arts and crafts.
- Understand the important relation of arts and crafts with social, cultural, economic, and religious practices.
- Survey the discontinuation and continuity of some traditional arts and crafts and the impact of modernization.
- Examine the historical and contemporary significance.

Research hypothesis

- The availability of natural resources and the knowledge capacity to exploit them led to the introduction of various art forms.
- The strict maintenance of the knowledge system handed down from the forefathers bolstered in maintaining the unique material culture.
- The twin impact of modernisation and the use of money have led the artisans and craftsmen to refrain from practising their profession and are on the verge of disappearance.

Methodology

During this research, both historical material and oral narratives were utilised. This research employed a qualitative approach, adopting an exploratory methodology. Data for the research was collected by observing and interviewing the residents of the aforementioned villages, who are involved in various artisanal practices such as weaving, bamboo basket building, and pottery making. Personal interviews have been carried out with persons involved in these activities. During the interviews, careful attention was taken into account regarding the

experiences of the individuals who participated and provided their responses. Throughout the interviews, structured questions were conducted, employing open-ended questions to obtain the participants' viewpoints and understand their perceptions.

To curate a compilation of secondary sources, multiple library resources were reviewed. Secondary sources encompass a range of printed resources and online data. The resources encompass a variety of printed sources, such as books, documents, reports, dissertations, research journals, published and unpublished documents, newspaper articles, magazine articles, and other similar objects. Furthermore, the study also examined the personal art and craft collections belonging to specific individuals, and the aforementioned items.

Throughout the data gathering process for this research, there were occasions wherein a few individuals exhibited reluctance in recounting the rites associated with the pre-Christian era that were pertinent to the undertaken study. A woman with tattoos, who has adopted the Christian faith, declined to discuss her tattoos openly. She expressed regret for having obtained them, as they were associated with headhunting practices, and chose not to share the details of their origin. She accused the researcher of attempting to promote alternative beliefs and undermine her commitment to Christianity.

Chapterisation

This thesis is organised into six chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This first chapter addresses several key components, including an introductory section, literature review, and an examination of the study area, an exploration of the study's significance, the establishment of objectives, the formulation of a research hypothesis, the delineation of the technique employed, and a succinct synopsis of the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2: Vernacular Architecture: House Type of Phom Naga

This second section provides a comprehensive overview of seven distinct classifications of domestic houses. Additionally, it encompasses the procurement of raw materials and the corresponding acquisition methods, the use of tools and implements, the construction process, and the different conditions, taboos, and rituals that are interconnected with it.

Chapter 3: Traditional Costumes and Ornaments: Continuity and Change

The third chapter delves into many categories of attire and embellishments, examining their purposes, the symbolism and importance of the motifs, the materials employed, and the evolution and contemporary observance of this practice.

Chapter 4: Endangered Art Form: Elements of Tattoo and Traditional Pottery Making

This chapter provides an overview of the cultural practices surrounding traditional pottery making, the cultural relevance of tattoos among individuals of both genders, the diverse array of patterns employed in tattoo designs, and a case study highlighting the experiences of select individuals with tattoos. Furthermore, this course will explore the cultural aspects surrounding the practice of tattooing, with an analysis of case studies featuring persons adorned with tattoos.

Chapter 5: Sustainability and Traditional Uses of Bamboo

The fifth chapter examines a diverse range of arts and crafts derived from varieties of bamboo, in addition to exploring its multifaceted applications and assessing its economic viability.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter explores the historical significance of various arts and crafts within the economic and social framework of the Phom Naga community, as well as its contemporary integration and culmination, discussion and conclusion of the study undertaken.

CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Nagaland is a state mostly inhabited by several indigenous tribal communities, encompassing a land area of approximately 16,579 square kilometres. The cultural heritage of these communities comprises a robust oral tradition that has been transmitted across many generations, each characterised by unique linguistic and cultural attributes. The Naga Hills Tuensang area was transformed into a distinct state with the enactment of the State of Nagaland Act in 1962. Subsequently, on December 1, 1963, the newly established state of Nagaland was officially inaugurated. The inauguration ceremony was overseen by Dr S. Radhakrishnan, who served as the President of India at that time. Assam geographically borders Nagaland to the west, Myanmar (Burma) and Arunachal Pradesh to the east, Arunachal Pradesh and some regions of Assam to the north, and Manipur to the south (Aye, 2015). A total of 17 prominent tribes inhabit Nagaland.

Phom Naga tribe is one of the 17 major tribes in Nagaland, and Longleng is their district headquarter. It is in the Northeastern part of Nagaland, between 94⁰E - 95⁰E longitude and 26⁰N - 27⁰N latitude. Identical to any part of Nagaland, Longleng district is mountainous with an area of 1066.80 sq. km and a total population of 50484 according to the 2011 census. It is bounded by Mon district in the East, Assam state in the North, Tuensang district in the South, and Mokokchung district in the West. The district's boundary is well demarcated by natural rivers such as Dikhu with the Mokokchung district in south west, Yongmon with the Mon district and Nyapa stream with the Tuensang district (B.Phom, 2015, p.5). Phom area comprises of three ranges- the Yingnyü range, the Shemong range, and the Chingmei range.

The establishment of Longleng town as an administrative outpost was represented by an Assistant Political Officer in 1951. Until the 2001 census, Longleng town was included within the Tuensang district. The Longleng district was established as the tenth district of Nagaland by transferring of three circles, namely Tamlu, Yongnyah, and Longleng, from the Tuensang district. The Government of Nagaland implemented this administrative changes, and on 24th January 2004, Longleng district officially attained the status of a full-fledged district.

The origin and migration patterns of the Phoms in this hilly region are not documented in written records. Nevertheless, certain stories and oral narratives recount these entities' genesis and subsequent movements of the Phom tribe before settling to the present villages. In broad terms, the Phom tribe can be categorised into two distinct groups, each attributing varying narratives to their ancestral roots and migratory paths. One oral narration maintains the belief that their forebears originated from an eastern region known as Pongngaihong, which remains unidentified and is said to be situated on the Myanmar border. They underwent a migration process, moving from Pongngaihong to Apaihong, and subsequently settling in the Yingnyiüshang mountain region. The establishment of the Mongtikang village is said to have occurred in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when a collective of Phom individuals from Pongching and another group from the Chang tribe came together and intermingled. Consequently, this villages inhabitants can communicate in both the Chang and Phom dialects. Other oral narration traces the story of their origin to *Longtrok* (six stones), near Chungliyimti village, a place where the Ao tribe traces its origin. This group of people probably migrated along with the Aos from Chungliyimti village to different places of Mokokchung by crossing the Dikhu River. Afterwards, being separated from the Aos, they again migrated to the east of the Dikhu River in search of new settlements. Yachem and Yaong are the two Phom villages immediately east of the Dikhu and closely allied to the Ao tribe, with whom they claim a

common origin. However, this group does not reckon themselves as Ao since the bygone days (Rahman, 2015). However, the Phom community typically traces their origins to the establishment of Mount Yingyiüshang, where their sociocultural knowledge developed. Subsequently, a significant landslide occurred at Yingnyiüshang, leading to their migration to other areas within the current Phom settlement.

Derivation of the term Phom: Before the name Phom was given to the Phom tribe, Phoms called themselves *Kahha am* or *Yingnyiüli*. The word *Kahha am* is the antonym of the word *Ühüm-am*, because Phoms call the people of hills *Kahha -am* and the people of the plains are called *Ühüm-am*. The word *Kahha* means children of God or the children of agriculturists. *Yingnyiüli* means the descendants of Mount Yingnyiüshang (B.Phom, 2015, p.2). The etymology of the appellation ‘Phom’ remains enigmatic. There exist numerous narrations concerning the etymology of its designation. According to some accounts, the word’s etymology can be traced back to an individual of aesthetic appeal known as ‘*Bhumla*’, denoting ‘the female entity associated with atmospheric formations.’ According to legend, the woman and her spouse were purportedly blessed with numerous descendants, who came to be known as the ‘Phom’ lineage. According to another account, it has been suggested that the English bestowed the name based on the term ‘*Bhum*,’ which is believed to signify “cloud” in the local language. The name “Phom” was assigned to this region due to its predominant cloud cover, particularly in winter. Therefore, the appellation of “the land of clouds” is given to it. According to several accounts, it is posited that the appellation ‘Phom’ originated from the term ‘*Bham*’, denoting either the rubber tree or the banyan tree. This designation was purportedly given by the British colonialists during their visit to the Phom region when they observed the prevalence of banyan trees adorning the primary entrances of Phom settlements. Upon inquiry regarding the nomenclature of the tree, the indigenous individuals responded by

stating that it was denoted as '*Bham*'. Consequently, the appellation 'Phom' was subsequently coined. Defining the term 'Phom' and ascribing it to a certain tradition presents challenges due to its ambiguous nature. Nevertheless, the Phom community has embraced and retained the name 'Phom' (Noklang, 2002).

Except for establishing a British Government outpost bungalow in Tamlu, the Phom region remained un-administered during the British colonial period. According to historical accounts, it is documented that Dr. E.W. Clark, recognised as the initial Baptist missionary to the Naga Hills, visited Tamlu village during the period spanning from 1881 to 1883. However, it is noted that he needed help in disseminating the teachings of Christianity during his time there. On September 22, 1929, the initial three individuals from Kangching village embraced the Christian faith through baptism, marking the introduction of Christianity into a significant number of Phom villages.

One of the most significant festivals of the Phom is the *Monyiü* festival which is an annual event observed from 1st -6th, April. Historically, this celebration has been observed for twelve (12) days, symbolising the transition from winter to summer. The festivities encompass communal dining, traditional dances, melodic singing, and collective efforts towards social welfare, including the maintenance and construction of bridges. During the celebration, male individuals show care and respect towards their married daughters or sisters by offering them pure rice beer and specially prepared meals. The imminent advent of a certain day, occurring within around 48 hours, is traditionally announced through the rhythmic resonance of log drums, producing a unique melodic pattern referred to as *Lan Nyangshem*. The festival's outcome is foretold by the priests or the esteemed community elders, whether it would bestow a blessing or a curses. Additional examples of traditional festivities include *Moha*, *Bongvum*, and *Paangmo*. The Phom Nagas observe a notable "Phom Day" event annually on June 6. This

occasion commemorates the signing of the Peace Making Day on June 6, 1952, symbolising the cessation of headhunting customs and resolving conflicts within the Phom Naga community. The State Government has officially designated this day as a public holiday for the Phoms (District Human Development Report, 2013: Longleng, 2014).

Human beings gather knowledge basically for two purposes: survival and development. They try to understand and come to grips with the environment to survive and find reasons for their survival that go beyond the intuitive reaction to physical threats. This is the basis for all activities aiming to build a knowledge system. Long before the development of modern science, which is quite young, indigenous people have developed their ways of knowing how to survive and also ideas about meanings, purposes and values (“Indigenous Knowledge, Definition, Concepts, and Application,” (n.d.), p.3). Warren (1987) stated that indigenous knowledge can be characterised as a form of localised knowledge distinct to a particular culture or civilization. Rajasekaran (1993) posits that indigenous knowledge refers to a structured corpus of information acquired by individuals within a specific culture through accumulated experiences, informal experimentation, and a deep understanding of the environment. According to Haverkort and de Zeeuw (1992), indigenous knowledge refers to the knowledge possessed by a certain population that is derived from their encounters with contemporary technologies. It is sometimes called an unconventional field of knowledge that encompassing certain aspects of theory. Still it mostly focuses on beliefs, practices, and technologies established independently from the modern, formal, scientific establishment. Specifically, this pertains to the domain of farm management (Chamber *et. al.*1989).

The significance of arts and crafts in the Naga civilization has been consistently profound. Attributing to everything is an inherent aspect within the context of Naga history, rendering it implausible to contest its significance outright. All objects, including as dwelling

houses, clothing, jewellery, weapons for warfare, hunting equipment, and household items, were created on an individual basis using the resources that were readily accessible. Historically, the Nagas inhabited their territories autonomously, exhibiting a cultural inclination towards self-reliance and a lack of familiarity with interdependence. “The art and craft of the Naga, despite their utilitarian aspects, are deeply embedded in their socio-religious beliefs and ceremonies” (Stirn and Ham, 2003, p.134). Consequently, it profoundly impacts on various aspects of Naga society, including social dynamics, cultural practises, economic activities, and religious beliefs. The dress and customs of the Naga people exhibit a remarkable display of vibrant colours and intricate patterns, showcasing their cultural magnificence. The motif and design of apparel, regardless of gender, are clear indicators and symbols of the wearer’s social and cultural status within society, thereby conveying significant meaning. The bulk of Naga ornaments possess inherent symbolism, imbuing them with considerable potency. As a result of the rigorous limitations imposed by prevailing traditions and customs, only a limited segment of the overall populace is granted the privilege to don them. The Nagas exhibit exceptional workmanship and artistic prowess in their various crafts. The artisan’s craftsmanship is exemplified by their use of locally sourced resources to fabricate textiles, pottery, baskets, and various other artefacts, showcasing their inherent artistic prowess. Bamboo is often regarded as the foremost craft material the Naga community employs. The saying “Man commences existence within a receptacle constructed from bamboo and concludes it within a receptacle constructed from bamboo” holds significant popularity within the region of Nagaland. According to another adage, a grove of bamboo is said to contribute to an individual wealth. Nagas have demonstrated behavioural adaptations that are well-suited to their respective environments.

The Nagas are a diverse ethnic group characterised by many dialects, cultures, traditions, and narratives passed down through generations by oral traditions and cultural norms. They represent a distinct cultural identity. The clothes and jewellery worn by the Nagas are visual representations of their collective identity and individual variations within their community. The community's textiles, basketry, jewellery, weapons, metallurgy, and woodcarving are remarkable manifestations of their dynamic material culture.

The scarcity of written records of the Nagas indicates a dearth of historical material pertaining to their history. The historical accounts of the Nagas are mostly transmitted by oral tradition, wherein knowledge is transferred from one generation to the next through various forms such as myths, stories, folklore, fables, customs, traditions, as well as artistic and craft practices, each of which holds distinct significance. The initial recorded records of Nagas emerged after to the advent of British officials and American missionaries in the Naga Hills during the 19th century. The differentiation between arts and crafts within Naga culture is important due to its rich historical significance. This division encompasses all aspects of Naga life, including social, economic, and political dimensions. Moreover, it is worth noting that this historical account is well-documented, offering a reliable depiction of the past Naga society.

1.2 Literature review

The present study provides a comprehensive evaluation of the existing literature pertaining to research.

- Aglaja Stirn and Peter Van Ham (2003), the book titled “The Hidden World of the Naga: Living Traditions in North East India and Burma” provides a thorough analysis of the indigenous communities residing in the elevated regions of North East India and Northwest Myanmar. This literary work presents a comprehensive representation of the conventional artistic and artisanal practices of the Naga community during a particular

epoch in their cultural chronology, with a highly valuable examination of several aspects of their traditional way of life. Given that this book provides comprehensive coverage of several Naga tribes, conducting an in-depth investigating of the Phom group is advisable.

- A Lanu Ao (ed.1999), the documentation titled “Naga Cultural Attires and Musical Instruments” is a visually captivating portrayal of the material culture of the Naga people. The book explores the intricate relationship between the social, cultural, and religious practices of the Nagas and their material culture, which is a fundamental aspect of their existence.
- A Rahman (2015) in “Change and Development in Phom Naga Society,” the Phom Naga’s socio-political and cultural aspects are subjects of discussion within society. The text also discusses the climatic conditions, topography, and demographics of Longleng district, which is the residence of the Phoms. It further explores their traditional beliefs, practices, institutions, and historical migration patterns. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the social change, economic transformation, administrative evolution, and political development of individuals in relation to their involvement in the state’s political affairs of the state following its independence.
- B Henshet Phom (2015), in “The Phom Indigenous Religion”, expressed concern over the impact of Christianity on the Phom indigenous religion. He observed that the spread of Christianity has led to the decline of the Phom indigenous religion, which played a crucial role in guiding the moral values of the Phom people. Furthermore, the author noted that this shift has also contributed to the erosion of the Phom community's extensive socio-political and cultural heritage, and their overall ethos. The omission of the significant contribution made by the Phom indigenous religion in upholding

stringent moral principles within the Phom community beyond its ceremonial aspects was observed.

- C Amop Noklang (2002) in “Phom Day: A Basis for Peace in Nagaland” explores the socio-cultural aspects of the Phom community and delves into the historical significance of the Peace Day, which the Phom people officially embraced on June 6th, 1952. On this particular day, the Phom ethnic group solemnly committed to discontinuing the cultural tradition of head-hunting. Furthermore, with the dissemination of modernity and Christianity in the area, the Phom community embraced Western cultural practices, disregarding their indigenous culture.
- Christopher Desser (1994), the discussion topic concerns Japan’s traditional arts and crafts. The aforementioned publication, entitled “Traditional Arts and Crafts of Japan,” is a comprehensive introduction to Japan’s artistic and craft traditions. The provided coverage is distinguished by its exceptional scope, encompassing several domains like architecture, decorations, pottery, calligraphy, drawing, lacquerware, metalware, textiles, and religious symbols, among other subjects. Desser provides a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of Japanese society. Several notable characteristics encompass the depiction of Japanese *geisha*, the ceremonial practices of *hara-kiri*, the historical significance of the *Mikado*, the traditional tea-drinking ceremony, the lush greenery of Japan, and the grandeur of Japanese temples and landscapes.
- J Longkumer (2010), in the book “Pottery: Earth Stories” conducted a comprehensive examination of the pottery production process in the Ao villages of Changki, Longsemdang, and Japu. This section examines the artistry involved in pottery production, encompassing its utilisation as a medium of exchange for various commodities and the protective function of the auditory disturbances generated by

potters, which deterred possible intruders and safeguarded their respective communities. Furthermore, she has recounted the narratives of numerous renowned potters who operated within these rural communities.

- John Seymour (2001), the book, “The Forgotten Arts and Crafts” provides a comprehensive account which was initially released as two distinct volumes (The Forgotten Arts and Forgotten Household Crafts). This literary work consolidates the knowledge of John Seymour, a renowned intellectual in self-sufficiency, traditional arts, and voluntary simplicity, to document the Forgotten Arts and Crafts. The author's approach lacks extensive elaboration, instead offering a concise overview of the essential elements of overlooked endeavour driven by passion. The author leads the reader through a captivating exploration of individuals pursuing traditional trades and skills.
- Julian Jacob’s (1990) book entitled “The Nagas: Hill peoples of Northeast India” offers an in-depth analysis of Naga society during the pre-British era. The text also examines the influence of British colonisation on the Naga society, particularly in terms of modernization. This colonial presence significantly affected several aspects of Naga life, encompassing social and cultural customs, religious rituals, governmental frameworks, and economic circumstances.
- M Alemchiba (1968) “The Arts and Crafts of Nagaland” delves into the myriad detrimental elements contributing to the erosion of traditional arts and crafts in the region. Additionally, the article explores strategies for cultivating a feeling of pride among artists involved in producing their creations. The book provides thorough descriptions and illustrations of the technical skills employed in spinning, weaving, wood carving, basketry, pottery making, blacksmithing, and the production of symbolic

designs on textiles. Furthermore, it assembles a complimentary rendition of many conventional folk melodies. These songs are transmitted by oral tradition across many generations and afterward adapted into musical compositions. Concerning the Phom, the author has provided a cursory overview of several aspects, namely their attire and pottery production, which would benefit from a more comprehensive elucidation and elaboration.

- Milada Ganguli's (1984) publication titled "Naga Art" offers a comprehensive examination of the diverse artistic expressions that emerged as a direct consequence of the veneration of headhunting and the ceremonial banquets that were intricately linked to this practice. The majority of these art styles are presently regarded as being extinct. The author briefly mentions the Phom woodcarving and the traditional clothing worn by both men and women. The article also presents visual representations of Phom ceremonial *daos*, warrior shawls, and a young woman adorned in a ceremonial garment, warranting additional scholarly investigation.

Researchers from within and outside of Nagaland have made significant contributions across numerous disciplines, shedding light on the rich cultures and traditions of the Nagas. However, it is worth noting that there remains a dearth of scholarly work specifically focused on the arts and crafts of the Phom Naga community. Consequently, conducting comprehensive and in-depth research on this subject matter is of great use to the Nagas as a whole, with a special focus on the Phom tribe. Therefore, researching on this subject matter undoubtedly yields a more comprehensive understanding of the Phom society and its broader implications.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Art and craft have a significant role in engaging individuals from all segments of society. The knowledge of a society's social, cultural, economic, and religious aspects is acquired through

the practical implementation of these elements. Historically, the Nagas adopted a self-sufficient lifestyle, independently producing all necessary goods for their daily existence. In practical terms, most of the Nagas were engaged in artisanal or craft-related occupations, often encompassing both domains. The training methods were either passed down from generation to generation, or the information and technology were transferred within the *morung*, an essential traditional educational institution among the Nagas.

The existing historical literature about the Nagas provides concise and comprehensive narratives that have been undertaken for scholarly investigation. The traditional art and craft of the Phom community holds great importance for the entire region of Nagaland. It reveals the various types, methods, and techniques of art and craft practiced by the Phom people and also sheds light on the social, cultural, economic, and religious aspects of their lives. This aspect of Phom culture remains relatively unexplored and serves as a valuable archive of knowledge.

1.4 Study area

The scope of this study is limited to the examination of the “Traditional Arts and Crafts of Phom Naga” of Longleng district. The geographical areas and the localities under consideration are specified in the accompanying table.

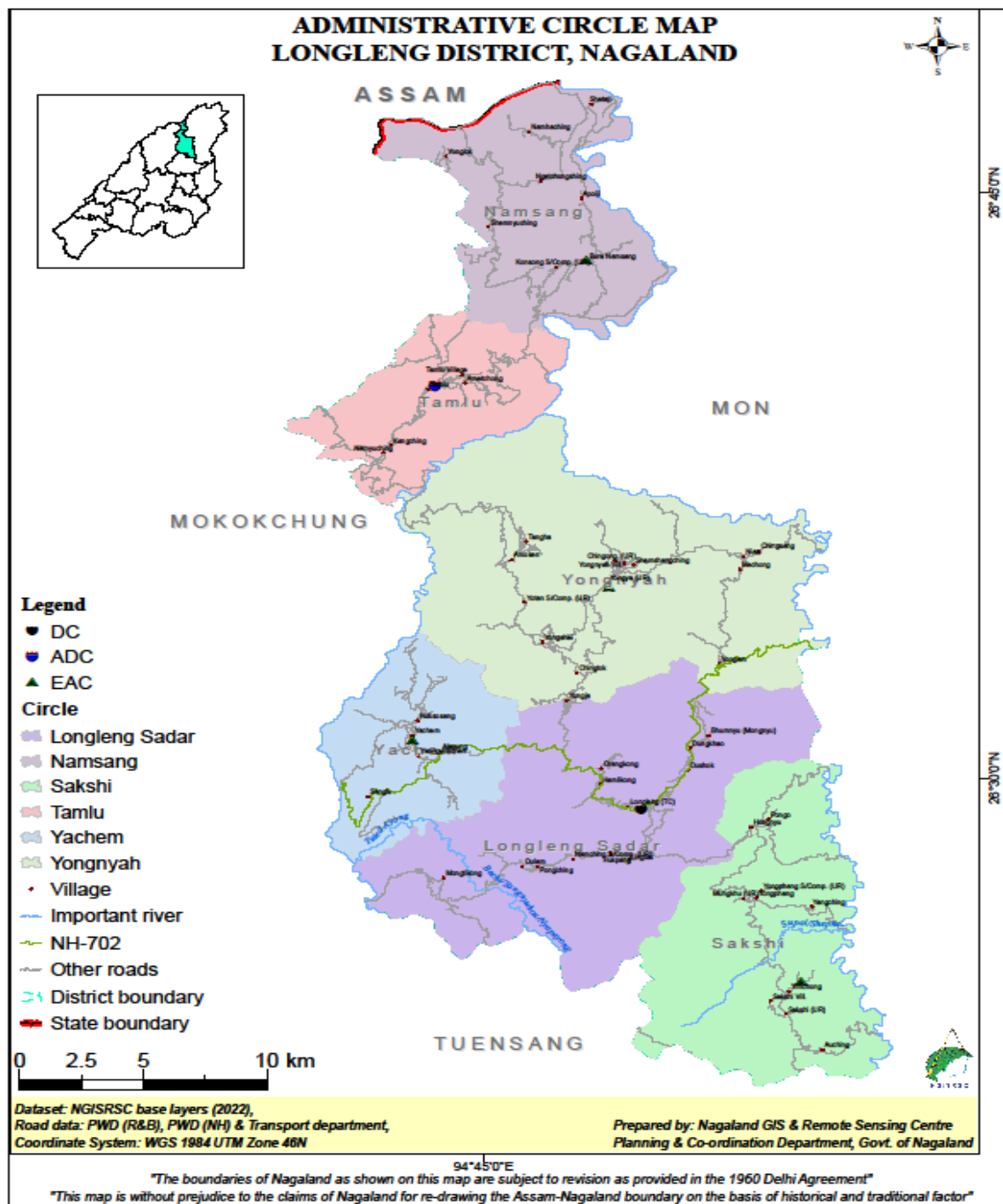
Table -1

Study areas

Figure 1

Map of Longleng district

Sl.no	Name of the village	Latitude	Longitude	Distance from Longleng
1.	Auching	26 ⁰ 23'4.46"N	94 ⁰ 53'16.54"E	31 km
2.	Shakshi	26 ⁰ 24'22.99"N	94 ⁰ 52'4.36"E	28 km
3.	Yongphang	26 ⁰ 27'2.71"N	94 ⁰ 51'43.24"E	14.9 km
4.	Pongo	26 ⁰ 29'0.18"N	94 ⁰ 52'1.29"E	10.6 km
5.	Pongching	26 ⁰ 27'49.77"N	94 ⁰ 46'13.83"E	9.4 km
6.	Yongam	26 ⁰ 33'3.35"N	94 ⁰ 50'55.48"E	9.5 km
7.	Nyang	26 ⁰ 35'44.71"N	94 ⁰ 51'28.92"E	21.0km
8.	Bhümnyü	26 ⁰ 31'13.60"N	94 ⁰ 50'39.70"E	5.8 km
9.	Yachem	26 ⁰ 31'19.97"N	94 ⁰ 43'26.42"E	16.3 km
10.	Yongnyah	26 ⁰ 35'34.42"N	94 ⁰ 48'35.62"E	27.7 km
11.	Yongshei	26 ⁰ 33'36.22"N	94 ⁰ 46'39.81"E	19 km
12.	Tangha	26 ⁰ 36'10.29"N	94 ⁰ 46'19.06"E	25 km
13.	Kangching	26 ⁰ 38'45.32"N	94 ⁰ 43'3.26"E	61.6 km
14.	Tamlu	26 ⁰ 40'26.58"N	94 ⁰ 44'41.19"E	64.7 km
15.	Bura Namsang	26 ⁰ 43'20.37"N	94 ⁰ 47'44.14"E	89.4 km



1.5 Significance of the study

- The suggested study has the potential to benefit the Phom people specifically, and the Nagas in a broader sense. This study delved extensively into the realm of oral tradition to scrutinise and explore its roots through the implementation of oral interviews with esteemed elders and potential interviewees. Additionally, the study gathered information on the origins of traditional arts and crafts practiced by the Phom group.
- This study sheds light on the endangered traditional arts and crafts practices of the Phom people. These practices have been increasingly neglected or undervalued, prompting the need for their preservation through recorded documentation. This authentic documentation will serve as a valuable resource for future generations, providing data for reference and facilitating further research. Moreover, this phenomenon sheds insight into the tendency of individuals to disregard or diminish the significance of a matter due to its impending documentation.

1.6 Objectives of research

- Document the methods and techniques involved in traditional Phom arts and crafts.
- Understand the important relation of arts and crafts with social, cultural, economic, and religious practices.
- Survey the discontinuation and continuity of some traditional arts and crafts and the impact of modernization.
- Examine the historical and contemporary significance.

1.7 Research hypothesis

- The availability of natural resources and the knowledge capacity to exploit them led to the introduction of various art forms.

- The strict maintenance of the knowledge system handed down from the forefathers bolstered in maintaining the unique material culture.
- The twin impact of modernisation and the use of money have led the artisans and craftsmen to refrain from practising their profession and are on the verge of disappearance.

1.8 Methodology

During this research, both historical material and oral narratives were utilised. This research employed a qualitative approach, adopting an exploratory methodology. Data for the research was collected by observing and interviewing the residents of the aforementioned villages, who are involved in various artisanal practices such as weaving, bamboo basket building, and pottery making. Personal interviews have been carried out with persons involved in these activities. During the interviews, careful attention was taken into account regarding the experiences of the individuals who participated and provided their responses. Throughout the interviews, structured questions were conducted, employing open-ended questions to obtain the participants' viewpoints and understand their perceptions.

To curate a compilation of secondary sources, multiple library resources were reviewed. Secondary sources encompass a range of printed resources and online data. The resources encompass a variety of printed sources, such as books, documents, reports, dissertations, research journals, published and unpublished documents, newspaper articles, magazine articles, and other similar objects. Furthermore, the study also examined the personal art and craft collections belonging to specific individuals, and the aforementioned items.

Throughout the data gathering process for this research, there were occasions wherein a few individuals exhibited reluctance in recounting the rites associated with the pre-Christian era that were pertinent to the undertaken study. A woman with tattoos, who has adopted the

Christian faith, declined to discuss her tattoos openly. She expressed regret for having obtained them, as they were associated with headhunting practices, and chose not to share the details of their origin. She accused the researcher of attempting to promote alternative beliefs and undermine her commitment to Christianity.

1.9 Chapterisation

This thesis is organised into six chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This first chapter addresses several key components, including an introductory section, literature review, and an examination of the study area, an exploration of the study's significance, the establishment of objectives, the formulation of a research hypothesis, the delineation of the technique employed, and a succinct synopsis of the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2: Vernacular Architecture: House Type of Phom Naga

This second section provides a comprehensive overview of seven distinct classifications of domestic houses. Additionally, it encompasses the procurement of raw materials and the corresponding acquisition methods, the use of tools and implements, the construction process, and the different conditions, taboos, and rituals that are interconnected with it.

Chapter 3: Traditional Costumes and Ornaments: Continuity and Change

The third chapter delves into many categories of attire and embellishments, examining their purposes, the symbolism and importance of the motifs, the materials employed, and the evolution and contemporary observance of this practice.

Chapter 4: Endangered Art Form: Elements of Tattoo and Traditional Pottery Making

This chapter provides an overview of the cultural practices surrounding traditional pottery making, the cultural relevance of tattoos among individuals of both genders, the diverse array of patterns employed in tattoo designs, and a case study highlighting the experiences of select

individuals with tattoos. Furthermore, this course will explore the cultural aspects surrounding the practice of tattooing, with an analysis of case studies featuring persons adorned with tattoos.

Chapter 5: Sustainability and Traditional Uses of Bamboo

The fifth chapter examines a diverse range of arts and crafts derived from varieties of bamboo, in addition to exploring its multifaceted applications and assessing its economic viability.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter explores the historical significance of various arts and crafts within the economic and social framework of the Phom Naga community, as well as its contemporary integration and culmination, discussion and conclusion of the study undertaken.

CHAPTER-2

VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE: HOUSE TYPE OF PHOM NAGA

2.1 Meaning of vernacular architecture

“The etymological roots of the word ‘architect’, from the Greek *arkhi-* and *tekon*, mean ‘chief builder’, while ‘architecture’ is defined as the science of building’. The word ‘vernacular’ derives from the Latin *vernaculus*, meaning ‘native’, so the definition ‘native science of building’ is quite appropriate. In usage however, ‘vernacular’ generally refers to language or dialect of a people, while architecture is given a qualitative status” (Oliver, 2006, p.4).

“Vernacular architecture is defined as architecture that are built by ordinary people to meet their specific needs, accommodate their values, and respond to their economies and ways of life of the cultures that produce them” (Oliver, 1997, p .ii). “Architecture involves not just the provision of shelter from the elements, but the creation of a social and symbolic space which both mirrors and moulds the world view of its creation and inhabitants” (Waterson, 2009, p. xv). The word “vernacular architecture” refers to a style of architecture that is rooted in tradition and indigenous practises. It involves the design and construction of buildings utilising locally available materials and resources, while also taking into consideration the specific cultural and climatic conditions of the region. The phrase is employed to characterise edifices and habitations that have been gradually erected by indigenous individuals, frequently in the absence of professional architects or engineers. The following points succinctly delineate the various concepts surrounding vernacular architecture: Vernacular architecture is the architectural style that is characteristic of a specific locality or region, encompassing traditional, indigenous, or native designs. This form of architecture is primarily concerned with functionality, taking into consideration the available resources, cultural values, and the requirements of its inhabitants. Notably, a prominent feature of vernacular architecture is its

close relationship with the surrounding natural environment. Vernacular architecture encompasses a range of structures, including houses, barns, sheds, and temples, that are constructed using locally accessible construction methods and materials in the given area. Vernacular architecture is a building style that integrates various elements of the local climate, geography, and way of life. It is characterised by the incorporation of cultural norms, historical events, and the historical relevance of a specific area or community. The analysis of a certain community can provide valuable insights about its cultural practices and worldview. Contemporary buildings, constructed by professionals, may not exhibit the same level of sustainability and resource efficiency as their counterparts featuring vernacular architecture. Consequently, safeguarding and conserving vernacular architecture can serve as a means to uphold the historical and communal identity of a given locality, while also paying homage to the cultural heritage of bygone eras.

2.2 Southeast Asian vernacular architecture

The vernacular architecture of Southeast Asian countries is a rich and diverse subject that reflects the cultural, historical, and environmental contexts of the region. This architectural style is characterised by its use of local materials, traditional construction techniques, and adaptation to the tropical climate. The vernacular architecture of Southeast Asia encompasses a wide range of building types, including houses, temples, palaces, and communal structures.

One of the most prominent features of Southeast Asia covering Northeast India vernacular architecture is its use of natural materials. In many cases, buildings are constructed using locally available materials such as wood, bamboo, thatch, and palm leaves. These materials not only provide insulation against the heat and humidity but also blend harmoniously with the natural surroundings. For example, in rural areas of Indonesia and Malaysia, traditional houses known as “*rumah adat*” are built using timber frames and thatched roofs

made from palm leaves. Another characteristics of Southeast Asian vernacular architecture is its emphasis on open spaces and indoor-outdoor living. Many traditional houses are designed with large verandas or open courtyards that serve as social spaces for family gatherings and community events. These open spaces allow for natural ventilation and create a seamless connection between the interior and exterior environments. The Balinese compound houses in Indonesia are a prime example of this design approach, with their central courtyard surrounded by various pavilions. Furthermore, Southeast Asian vernacular architecture often incorporate intricate decorative elements inspired by local traditions and beliefs. Ornate carvings, colourful murals, and intricate patterns can be found on the facades, doors, windows, and interior spaces of many traditional buildings. These decorative elements not only add aesthetic value but also carry symbolic meanings related to spirituality, folklore, or cultural identity. The Thai temples or “*wats*” are renowned for their elaborate architectural details and vibrant colours that reflect Buddhist beliefs. In addition to aesthetic and cultural significance, Southeast Asian vernacular architecture is also designed to respond to the region’s tropical climate. The use of elevated structures, steep roofs, and wide overhangs helps to protect buildings from heavy rainfall, intense sunlight, and high humidity. For instance, stilt houses commonly found in Vietnam and Cambodia are built on stilts to prevent flooding during monsoon season.

It is important to note that while there are common elements in Southeast Asian vernacular architecture, each country has its own distinct architectural styles and regional variations. For example, the traditional wooden houses of Thailand differ from the brick and tile houses of Vietnam or the longhouses of Borneo and the vernacular architecture of Nagaland. These variations are influenced by factors such as local building traditions, available resources, historical influences, and cultural practices.

In view of these differences, a study on the vernacular architecture of the Phom Nagas was conducted and is discussed below.

2.3 Traditional Phom Naga House Design

The Nagas inhabited settlements that were encompassed by a lush forest, characterised by an abundance of natural resources. Consequently, the necessary resources for the construction of housing were procured from the forested areas surrounding to the respective settlements. The vernacular architecture of the Nagas is characterised by its organic integration with the natural environment and its adaptability to the local climate and topography. The Nagas live in hilly terrains, and their architectural styles have evolved to suit these challenging landscapes. The construction techniques used by the Nagas are primarily based on bamboo, wood, thatch, and stone. Bamboo is one of the most important materials used in Naga architecture. It is abundant in the region and offers several advantages such as flexibility, strength, and durability. Bamboo is used for various purposes, including structural elements like columns, beams, and walls. Nagas have mastered the art of construction, creating intricate patterns and designs that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also structurally sound. Wood is another commonly used material in Naga architecture that is primarily used for framing structures and creating floors, walls, and roofs. The Nagas carefully select timber from local forests, considering factors such as strength, durability, and resistance to pests. Wood carving is also an integral part of Naga architecture, with intricate motifs and designs adorning the facades of buildings. Thatch is used for roofing in Naga architecture. Thatched roofs provide insulation against both heat and cold while allowing for natural ventilation. Thatched roofs not only blend harmoniously with the natural surroundings, but also reflect the sustainable practices of the Nagas. Stone is utilised in the construction of foundations and walls in Naga architecture. The Nagas skilfully stack stones without the use of mortar, creating sturdy structures that can withstand earthquakes and

other natural disasters. Stone walls are often embellished with carvings and motifs, showcasing the artistic skills of the Naga people.

The architectural designs of Naga houses vary among different tribes, reflecting their unique cultural identities. However, there are some common features found in many Naga houses. The houses are typically rectangular or oval in shape, with a thatched roof sloping down on all sides. The interior of Naga houses is simple yet functional. The living area is usually a single large room, with central hearth for cooking and warming. Bamboo mats or bamboo planks serves as flooring, and bamboo partitions is used to create separate spaces within the house. The walls are often adorned with woven bamboo panels.

The Phom Naga tribe, residing in the north-eastern part of India, has a rich cultural heritage deeply rooted in their vernacular architecture. Their traditional dwellings not only provide shelter but also serve as symbols of their identity. The following data were collected through oral narratives from different interviewees to identify the various symbols, meaning and significance of the Phom vernacular architecture.

The architectural style observed among Phom Nagas predominantly adhered to a consistent design and construction approach, but with minor deviations in terms of dimensions and embellishments. It is rectangular in structure and to cite the specification, typically, three posts are aligned in a straight configuration. The second post is positioned as the primary post and exhibits the greatest height among all posts (as shown in figure 2). Thatch or palm leaves are frequently employed as roofing materials in conjunction with bamboo constructions, which serve as a supportive framework for the thatch. The walls of the home are typically enveloped by a woven bamboo frame, and the construction process involves securing the raw materials using bamboo slips. Generally, the dwelling is partitioned into three separate residential units (figure 4). The entryway of the structure fulfilled multiple functions, including serving as a

space for rice pounding and shelter for the pigs as well. The second room included both the kitchen and bedroom quarters, while the third unit consisted of a *varandah* known as *dülang* (*machang*).

In the process of measuring, the elongation of either one or both arms, as well as the extension of the fingers, were typically taken into account. These kind of measuring unit are termed as *phak hük*, *phak nyi*, and *lakham* (as shown in figure 3).

“The process of selecting a suitable location for the construction of a residential dwelling necessitates the careful consideration of preserving all stones within the designated plot prior to commencing the building process. Failure to adhere to these practices is supposed to result in negative consequences, such as the spirit feeling displeased or offended, and it was commonly believed that individuals who resided in such locations would have a shortened lifespan” (Bomkup, personal communication, February 26, 2019).

The *morung*, known as *bang* in the Phom civilization, held a prominent position as a social institution. Consequently, the selection of an appropriate location for the construction of a *morung* was considered a crucial undertaking during the founding of any village. According to Phom cultural beliefs, the concept of establishing a village is thought to have been inspired by the intricate structure of a spider’s web, which serves as a means of ensnaring numerous creatures. Once the location for the establishment of the village was determined, a *morung* was erected, and each clan was allocated a specific plot of land within the village.

As stated by Lavan (Personal communication, March 29, 2019), following that, the leaders of the village were selected. The celestial bodies, namely the sky and stars, served as the foundational criteria for the selection of village heads. At the break of morning, a group of celestial bodies convened, comprising a collective of six stars, consisting of one *litpong* (the most luminous star) and five *litha* (smaller stars). Consequently, six individuals were chosen

to assume the roles of village chiefs or leaders, regardless of the size of the community's population. As a result of the patriarchal structure prevalent in Phom society, leadership positions were exclusively reserved for men identified as the chief of the village and the priest.

The designated title and their role are discussed below:

(i) *Lung*: This individual was chosen to serve as a representative and advocate for the community, specifically as the village chairman in the current setting.

(ii) *Oungh*: He possesses the privilege of being the first individual responsible for the ceremonial pouring of rice beer, a customary practice that took place upon the arrival of an enemy's head within the village.

(iii) *Moipü*: According to traditional practices, he takes the initiative in commencing the construction of a *tap* (hut) at the paddy field, and he is also responsible for initiating the seeding of paddy or any other crops. In addition, he assumed the responsibility of slaughtering a chicken and offering rice beer as part of the post-harvest rituals, while also gathering seeds for subsequent sowing endeavours. Overall, he was an important person who assumed the role of instigator for all the favourable circumstances within the community.

(iv) *Metbü*: Following the conclusion of the agricultural season, the people engages themselves in hunting activities. During this period, *metbü* would seek blessings for the weaponry employed in the act of animal hunting and killing. The act or ceremony is commonly referred to as “*vambüwabü*.”

(v) *Vongba*: He actively assists in all tasks undertaken by the above leaders. The sole activity in which he engages independently is “*thäinyümong*.” The *thaii* tree holds significant cultural and ritualistic importance within the village. It serves as a central location for pouring rice beer and seeking blessings, particularly when an enemy's head is brought into the village.

Additionally, the villagers engage in traditional folk dances around this tree as part of their ceremonial practices.

(vi) *Oungh Phühüi*: He plays a supportive role in various aspects. In the event of *oungh*'s absence, he was authorised to assume responsibility until a new *oungh* was chosen. He was responsible for all the tasks carried out in the village. He was alternatively referred to as *vongpa ongpa* or *lung oungh*.

2.4 House types of Phom Naga

There are seven distinct classifications for houses.

i) ***Bang (morung)***: The institution of *bang* held significant social importance since it served as a crucial means of transmitting traditional beliefs and cultural heritage across generations. The knowledge was transmitted orally from older generations to younger individuals. The villages were often subdivided into *khels*, each of which possessed its own *bang* distinguished by a distinct appellation. In traditional societies, it was customary for unmarried males to reside in communal spaces known as “*bang*” within their own social groups, commonly referred to as “*khels*.” This practice typically commenced at a specific age range, typically between 10 and 13 years, and continued until the individual entered into matrimony. During their instruction, individuals were educated on a range of practical abilities, including wood carving, bamboo basket weaving, military strategy, traditional melodies, traditional dances, and folklore narratives. In addition, women were provided with separate dormitories known as *ywo*. In Phom traditional societies, it is customary for each clan to own a distinct *ywo*. Consequently, a young man would be cognizant of the specific clan *ywo* he should approach and engage with in order to pursue courtship. It is important to note that within the societies, the act of marrying individuals from the same clan is considered highly disgraceful. (Noklang, 2002). The *bang*

served as a reflection of the community's social standing, with a well-preserved *bang* indicating a robust village, while a deteriorating *bang* signified a vulnerable village.

Before the commencement of the construction of *bang*, its members engaged in discussions pertaining to the tasks that needed to be accomplished. Additionally, the younger members were assigned the duty of procuring the necessary raw materials, while two landowners were required to undertake the responsibility of sacrificing two animals. These preliminary actions were undertaken in preparation for the initiation of the construction endeavour. The practice of carving animal figurines on the pillar typically entailed conducting the carving process within the forest environment. This approach aimed to reduce the overall weight of the tree, facilitating its transportation to the village. The canes were also subjected to a drying process inside the forest environment, thereafter employed for the purpose of securing the pillar. This utilisation of canes facilitated the transportation of the pillar to the village, as it could be conveniently pulled along (Bomkup, personal communication, February 26, 2019). Following the initial attempt of the male members of the community in gathering trees, women also partake in the process of transporting the trees from the forest to the village. All married daughters or women who have relocated to other *khels* of the village after marriage should also participate in the tree pulling event. Once the tree has been transported to the village, the villagers engage in a customary practice of collectively encircling the village while vocalising a traditional folk song, which goes as follows: “*Bang lung donglüng bühong kham yahkeinüing hih, veipha hongnyü ching-i veishih*” (Hongnyü villagers, which refers to Yongnyah villagers, observe our activities as we gather tree for the construction of *bang*.).

In the process of roofing a *bang*, it is customary for each male member of the family to contribute one bundle of thatch. In such circumstances, it is expected that the family of a male infant would also contribute their portion. Before initiating the process of deconstructing the

previous structure, it is advisable for two individuals of the male gender to ascend to the rooftop. One individual should position themselves at the front, while the other should position themselves at the rear. The individual positioned at the forefront ought to embody the role of a warrior, tasked with vocalising the identities of the adversaries whose heads have been severed. Subsequent to this proclamation, the remaining male constituents ascend to the rooftop, commencing a melodic rendition of traditional songs, while concurrently engaging in the dismantling of a structure colloquially referred to as “*bang*.” Furthermore, it is recommended that the two individuals who previously ascended to disassemble the old roof should be the ones to commence the installation of the new roofing. As a gesture of appreciation for their contributions, they are presented with a spear each, representing the collective gratitude of the members of the *bang* (Chengan, personal communication, February 26, 2019).

Traditionally, it was customary to disassemble the deteriorating roof of the *bang* structure during the period of *lenja nga*, which corresponds to the fifth new moon. Subsequently, it was expected that the construction of the new *bang* roof would be finalised by the fifteenth (15th) day. During the roofing activity, people engaged in the performance of traditional folk songs. Prior to the construction of the main support structure, known as *shemnyü*, it was customary to inter a canine, either a mature dog or a young puppy, in a live burial. Subsequently, the post would be erected upon this animal. The purpose of this ritual is to appease the spirit (Bomkup, personal communication, February 26, 2019).

During the traditional practise known as ‘*bang jou vetpü*’ which involves cutting the edges of the front roof, it is customary for two individuals to partake in the activity using their *dao*, a traditional cutting tool. It is essential to note that these two individuals must belong to different clans. It is recommended to make a cut on the right side of the edge for one, and on

the left side for the other. For this service rendered, they are provided with meat, as a gesture of goodwill from the members of the *bang*.

Following the completion of *bang* construction, the ‘log drum’, a crucial component of the *bang*, is traditionally placed inside the structure. To get this log drum, a specific tree is carefully selected from the surrounding forest. A certain clan is chosen for the purpose of felling the tree. If any branches detach during the descent from the tree, it is advisable to exclude that tree from consideration for the log drum. During the log drum construction process known as ‘*pü thokpü hepak*’ (wood curving), it is customary for the younger members of the community to reside in that specific location until its completion. The sons-in-law associated with this particular community also actively engage in the process of wood carving. After its construction, all the participants, including both male and female individuals, adorned themselves in traditional costumes and proceeded to the forest to engage in the act of pulling it. Young individuals, particularly females, attempt to acquire male adornments and scream the phrase “*oh ho.*” Upon arriving at the entrance of the village, the people pronounce the phrase, “*Kongmong naiipa, shahnyü dong-ei ngoidaishah,*” (dear foreign brother, let us enter the ear of a tiger) which, when translated into English, conveys the sentiment of addressing a cherished foreign acquaintance and expressing the desire to embark on a daring adventure.

In order to ensure the sanctity of a newly constructed dwelling, few male member venture into the forest with the intention of procuring animal, particularly monkeys, to serve as substitutes for humans. This act is believed to serve as a protective measure against negative omens and evil spirits. During the ceremonial occasion of dedication, two *hamba* (warriors) vocalise the name of the adversary and present the severed heads of the enemy/enemies within the designated area. The male members of the *bang* are also welcome to bring their fiancés. The participants, accompanied by their guests, engage in the performance of traditional folk

songs, engage in dance, and partake in the feast (Chengan, personal communication, February 26, 2019).

The primary raw materials employed in the creation of *shemnyü*, the main post, include tree trunk that are skilfully adorned with carving of animal figures. The creation of these figurative carvings was often undertaken by those possessing a high level of proficiency in this craft. The concept of the “bigger bang” encompasses four primary components, while the notion of the “smaller *bang*” is characterised by three primary elements. *Pülu* was bestowed or contributed by a member of the adjacent bang community. The married daughters, known as *yiükha*, provide bamboo materials and assist in the construction of the *bang* till its completion. Each individual *yiükha* is granted the right to present a minimum of one bamboo. During the final day of the construction of the *bang*, a gesture of appreciation is usually extended to all the *yiükha* participants in the form of a chicken each. This act served as a token of gratitude for their contribution of bamboos. Notably, the eldest *yiükha* received the biggest chicken as a mark of respect. All members of the community actively engage in the communal feast, known as the *bang* completion feast. Moreover, it is customary to extend invitations to the senior members from each respective community within the village to partake in this celebratory event.

The roofing material for the *bang* consisted of either thatch or palm leaves. Bamboo slips were utilised for the purpose of securing materials in necessary locations.

Bamboo was employed as a means of measurement, whereby its length was determined by extending one’s arms (figure 4). The doors situated on the left and right sides are referred to as ‘*müksha nyi*’, a term denoting the presence of two eyes (figure 7). Distinct clans occupied these separate entrances. Individuals belonging to different clan who sleep toward the same

entrance were prohibited from engaging in inter-marriages (Chengan, personal communication, February 26, 2019).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the construction of *bang* was solely attributed to men. During the construction of the *bang*, women were prohibited from crossing the raw materials. The act of a woman touching construction materials was considered a taboo due to the prevailing idea that it would hinder the success of the menfolk in headhunting warfare.

However, it is the women who are responsible for cooking food for the men involved in the construction of a *bang*.

ii) *Shemmei shem/shemnyü shem*: The second category of dwelling is referred to as *shemmei shem* or *shemnyü shem*, sometimes known as a residence of affluent individuals or a huge house (figure 8 & 10). These types of dwellings were erected by couples who had hosted a feast of merit to their fellow villagers, and the construction takes place during the third stage of the feast of merit. This type of dwelling houses possesses unique characteristics that set it apart from the rest. Specifically, the front edges of the roof, commonly referred to as the thatch, are deliberately trimmed and adorned with the vine of entada plant. Additionally, a prominent *shemchong* post, situated at the front of the house, serves as a decorative element. This post is intricately carved with depictions of *mithun* heads, elephants, hornbills, and, in certain cases, human figures. The inclusion of a human figure carving signifies the presence of a domestic slave within the household. The wall is adorned with a bamboo-woven frame design, known to as *aimong* (figure 5). Following the culmination of the fourth stage of the feast, *mansholanpü*, a V-shaped structure called *vongkangkangpü*, constructed from bamboo, is positioned atop the roof.

The members of the *bang* community actively contribute to the construction of the house, while their family and friends typically participate in culinary activities. The

construction process for the house typically requires a duration of approximately five to six days. When determining measurements, it is often accepted to utilise the span of outstretched arms, from elbow to fingertip, as well as the length of extended fingers (figure 3). A measurement of three to four stretched arms is considered appropriate for the post. However, in the case of a house constructed on a hilltop or cliff, a measurement of five stretched arms is taken into account (Pangsha, personal communication, February, 2022)

According to another informant, Longhah (personal communication, March 29, 2019), the person under whom a house is to be constructed, he designate a specific period of two years for the reservation of their forest. In the event that they anticipate their own resources to be inadequate, they would seek to conserve more jungle or resources. In instances where a tree or wood resource is not readily accessible within their local jungle, individuals have been observed engaging in barter transactions, exchanging one tin of rice for the desired resource (Takah, personal communication, March 28, 2019). In the scenario when an affluent individual intends to commence the construction of a residential dwelling, a pig is ceremoniously sacrificed within the premises of his residence. Subsequently, the meat is transported to a nearby forested area, where it is prepared through culinary means. This forested location serves as the designated site for the procurement of a tree, which will be subsequently felled and used as a structural post, adorned with intricately carved figures. According to personal conversation with Pangshing, Pongying, and Lamtan (on February 8, 2022), following the act of carving a post in the jungle, a chicken was then slaughtered, and the chicken coop was fastened to the aforementioned post by the individuals involved. According to Kamnyei (personal communication, March 28, 2019), the owner places *ongsho* (white rice) in the centre of *angcha* (red rice) when providing food to the labour force. Upon the finalisation of the construction of the house, a substantial pig is killed and its limbs are bestowed upon to the in-laws. In the

context of a cultural ritual called *phong yom*, individuals engage in the act of sacrificing chickens of various colours, namely red, white, or black. This ritual involves a man who is said to be possessed by a tiger spirit, who use the intestines of the sacrificed chicken to make predictions regarding the future well-being of the family. These predictions encompass the likelihood of encountering sickness, disaster, or prosperity (Longhah, personal communication, March 29, 2019). In traditional family customs, the senior male members of the household undertake the ceremonial act of purifying the dwelling by warding off malevolent spirits. Subsequently, an intimate gathering of friends and relatives convenes to partake in a nocturnal celebration that involves communal singing and the consumption of rice beer.

Feast of Merit

To enhance comprehension regarding the construction of *shemmei shem*, it is imperative to examine the feast of merit, which facilitates the couple's embellishment of their dwelling with diverse forms of adornment subsequent to different phases of the feasts.

“There are a series of feast, each one costlier and more lavish than the preceding one. The sequence of feasts does not happen at a stretch but it takes years to complete the series of three times or more, the completion of which becomes an earned achievement. Every feast entitles the host to social distinction and increase progressively his standing and position in the community. It also entitles him to wear special dress and ornaments and decorate his house in a particular manner, marking him out from others in the village. Every feast gives the person an additional identity marker like a pattern in his shawl or design or motif in the frontal façade of his house” (Sanglir, 2021, p.199).

The Feast of Merit was discussed in a personal communication with B. Shami (on June 30, 2023). During the ceremonial occasion of a merit feast, a wealthy individual engages in a customary practise known as “*ken*,” which involves the act of wrapping food items in leaves

of the katamfe (*thaumatococcus daniellii*), also referred to as “lai”(figure 11). The task must be undertaken by a married couple who are members of the same clan, rather than by an individual who has lost their spouse. Two katamfe leaves are selected and positioned with one leaf facing the outside side and the other leaf towards the inner side. It is customary to place finely diced pork, together with black and white sticky rice, as well as *dongnyak ongshu* (a locally cultivated rice variety) onto katamfe leaves. This process is traditionally performed with only three fingers, namely the thumb, pointing finger, and middle finger. The *ken* is traditionally offered upon the wedded daughter/s, in-laws, village priest, and attendees of the feast. Subsequently, the *ken* is ceremoniously fastened at *vonghong* at the recipients' respective houses at *machang*. This is performed in every stage of feast.

The feast of merit encompasses several distinct stages, which can be delineated as follows:

(i)*Phaipow*: On the initial day of the *phaipow* fest, a single pig is sacrificed, and subsequently, the most senior male representatives from five distinct clans are presented with *hantak*, which is meat securely fastened with slip bamboo. On the second day, a communal feast is provided for all the villagers, during which another pig is ceremoniously sacrificed. On this particular occasion, the senior male individuals from six distinct clans partake in a customary ritual including the presentation of six *hantak* and six *nükjoh*. The *nükjoh*, a form of sustenance consisting of rice wrapped in katamfe (*thaumatococcus daniellii*) leaves, is meticulously folded into a cone shape, with the V-shaped top being folded inwards and secured with a bamboo strip punch and inserted through the centre of the leaf. All the participants of the feast, including the village priest, female members of the community, and the bang members engage in festivities throughout the day at the residence of the host.

(b) *Chiiphom*: Refers to the latter phase of the ceremonial feast. During this particular stage, several types of flowers such as *laklu chü* (scented long green leaves), *lakdoi chü* (geranium), *chouhha chü* (canna lily), and *apongkeloih chü* (cockscomb) are carefully wrapped in katamfe leaves and thereafter fastened to the entrance door post, typically referred to as *chipa shaden*. During this stage of the feast, a single cow and a single pig are butchered. A total of eight *handak* and eight *nükjoh* are provided. The eldest sibling of the one hosting the feast is allocated a single thigh from the slaughtered animals, while the youngest sibling is allocated a single arm. *Jeinaü*, a term used to refer to a close and intimate friend, is given with the abdominal section of the animal commonly referred to as *khapa vomshow*. These privileges are exclusively granted to the male relatives of the husband's family. The practice of giving meat called *nyanaü ou* is given to a wife sister/s. If any daughter of the feast giver is married, it is customary for her to receive a portion of the animal's thigh as part of the distribution. The wife's relatives are offered with a portion of the animal's limb. On the particular day, the village priest, with the entirety of the local inhabitants, engage in festivities and partake in the bountiful meal provided by the individual responsible for organising the feast.

(c) *Towsheü* represents the subsequent phase of the feast of merit. The term "*towsheü*" is derived from the literal translation of "hanging of basket". On the particular day, the anterior sections of the dwelling are adorned, generally denoted as '*shemju vetpü*.' A woven carrying basket is created from *vei poo*, the inner portion of the cane, while a *mahpü pü* (sumac tree), which has had its bark removed, is sliced and placed inside the carrying basket till the top. The practice of securing *shakok vü* (entada vine) to each tree that is placed within the carrying basket is fastened them from the bottom. A basket containing *mahpü*, which is adorned with *shakok vü*, is suspended at *ajung*, the uppermost part of the front roof, by elderly married man

who engage in vocalisation characterised by the phrase “*oh....mannyü lüng a hoi*” (the basket hanged figure 8)

The practice involves providing animals’ innards to the young individuals engaged in the traditional activity of rice pounding, who then engage in a competitive struggle to acquire these internal organs. They throw *vaam yüü* (rice beer made from *vaam* rice) at each other while collecting the innards. The youth engage in recreational activities and derive pleasure from the communal celebration. During the evening hours, the male youths rest in designated areas known as *machang*, while the female individuals occupy the kitchen space for their sleeping arrangements. The aforementioned celebration is commonly referred to as ‘*shan hahpeip mo*’. Following this event, on the sixth morning, *mithun*, is securely fastened to a tree using a cane. The children who participated in pulling *mithun* are subsequently rewarded with food. Furthermore, *mithun* is specifically tied in the designated location where rice is pounded by the host.

During this celebratory occasion, a cow and three pigs are killed along with a *mithun*. The village priests are offered ten *phai handak* and *niükjoh*. In accordance with traditional customs, it is customary to allocate the stomach portion of the meat to relatives from the wife’s side, while the chest, arms, and legs portions are often reserved for the husband’s close friends. The allocation and completion of tasks should adhere to their initial assignment, as well as with equitable distribution of ken. The task of trimming the front edges of the house’s roof should be exclusively carried out by members of the clan. The individual responsible for trimming the edge at the front is provided with a sickle, while the individual whose task was to trim the lateral edges of the frontal roof is presented with a spear.

(d) *Lüng jetpü*: This stage of feast is also known as *mansholenpü mo* and is the last series of the feast. As stated by Daüshauh (personal communication, February 26, 2019), on the first a

group of people were selected to pound the rice and a rotation was established wherein two females and one male were given the responsibility for pounding of rice and they took turn for this particular task of pounding rice. This rotation continued till the conclusion of the sixth day. The pounding of rice occurred exclusively during the morning hours. On the sixth morning, it is expected that the three individuals who initially participated on the first day of the rice pounding activity at the host's residence should reconvene for another round of rice pounding. Following the completion of the rice pounding process, it is customary to refrain from utilising the *manshem shong*, which is the wooden mortar for pounding, for a duration of one (1) month. Once the process of pounding rice has concluded, it is customary for the host of the feast, typically the husband, to venture out into the jungle to gather *mahpü* (sumac tree). The individual carefully selects a tree that exhibits a distinctive V form in the vicinity of his forehead. Subsequently, he proceeds to provide rice beer and undertake the task of removing the surrounding weeds from the roots. Subsequently, he articulated a form of proposition, stating, “*ngelei ken hi han kü shinghen nüng dangpeih*,” signifying “I have identified you as an appropriate candidate to be used for my portion of blessings.” *Mahpü* (sumac tree) is commonly employed due to its lightweight nature when desiccated. Furthermore, it is utilised in the production of gunpowder, a substance use in gun to kill birds and animals. The utilisation of this item was commonly seen as a means to attract favourable outcomes and economic well-being.

The initial phase of the feast involves the gathering of *shakok vü* (endata vine), from the surrounding jungle. Subsequently, the relatives are notified to commence the search for animals to be included in the feast. The proprietor of the feast has the authority to solicit certain individuals from the family to produce rice beer, which will be afterwards presented to the labourers.

The feast host determines the specific date on which it will occur. The female members of his family venture into the jungle to gather firewood. Individuals who observe the firewood actively seek out the host family. Subsequently, domesticated animals such as *mithuns* and pigs undergo an assessment to figure out whether they will be sufficient for feast. If not, then their relative embarks on a quest to locate large pigs. If the domesticated animals are adequate, they refrain from procuring from others.

Upon the designated date, the village priest, along with the sisters and daughters, bring the *mahpü* (sumac tree) and *shahkok vü* (entada vine) from the jungle. These items had been previously acquired by the host. The individual's family members are tasked with procuring *mithun* and cows from the surrounding forested area. *Chingngon* (village priest) and *yiükha* (sisters and daughters) chops the *mahpü* (sumac tree) and make a knot with *shahkok vü* (entada vine) and then it is attached to a wood which is crafted with hornbill and hang them on both edges of the front roof the house of the feast giver. Host clan and *yiükha* collect the thatch leaves and the same individuals start by cutting the thatch leaves. This *mah hi lang* (sumac tree and thatch leaves) are hung by the village priest and they shout saying “*thongyong mangnyü lüng kei vüingpha*” meaning let the world know that they gave the feast. Subsequently, a V-shaped architectural element, referred to as *vongkangkangpü* (figure 8 & 10), constructed from bamboo, is positioned atop the frontal roof of the dwelling. During the installation process of this structure, it is imperative to observe the sequential placement of the bamboo components. Specifically, it is recommended to commence by positioning the right side of the bamboo, and thereafter proceed by placing the left bamboo in a manner that intersects with the bottom right side of the aforementioned bamboo. The foregoing statement highlights the symbolic representation of the conclusion of all the successive series of the feast of merit, emphasising the need of acknowledging and preserving the value of the individual or entity responsible for

organising the feast. Furthermore, the house is adorned with intricately carved animal motifs on the primary support beam known as the *shemnyü*, which is prominently positioned at the front of such dwellings. The walls of the house are adorned with the skulls of various animal that were sacrificed for the celebration.

After this, they commence with the feast by killing five (5) smaller pigs as this pigs are considered as *ken ap oak* (pigs meant for *ken* wrap) which are killed and cooked by the elders and friends. Subsequently, individuals who are sleeping in the bang are summoned to participate in the ritualistic killing of the *mithun*, a bovine animal prior to daybreak. This process involves securing the *mithun* using *shahkok vü*, and cane. However, it is essential that the initial act of pithing the *mithun* is carried out exclusively by the eldest male members belonging to the clan responsible for hosting the feast. At the feast, individuals are provided with little portions of food in *lai*-wrapped which comprises of pork, puff rice, local fishes like *nyah ngo* fish, *nyah chem* fish, ginger pickle mixed with shrimps, and dried bamboo shoot pickle combined with shrimp. It is fundamental that all individuals must receive share of this packed food item and if anyone misses out this *ken*, it is customary for them to come back and collect their share. Additionally, this *ken* should also be wrapped properly, if not, it is thought that either the husband or wife will have a shorter lifespan.

To initiate the process of preparing the *ken*, the wife gets a sickle and dried meat pickle, while the husband obtains an axe or *dao*, pig thigh, and rice beer. They then proceed to the rice pounding area, where they recite a prayer: “*opa nüing kü mo ken dükpükü kahong yong nga düpong hüma thenshouh vanshohpü düponghüma.*” This prayer, when translated into English, conveys the following meaning: “Father, as we engage in the preparation of this *ken* for the celebratory occasion in your honour, we beseech you to avert any misfortunes or calamities and grant us a long and prosperous life.” During the feast, it is not advisable for the members

of the household, namely the husband and wife, to engage in any form of labour or venture into the forest for the purpose of gathering firewood. It is necessary for them to remain within their house.

During this particular stage of feast, a total of twelve animals are slaughtered and *chinglüng* (chief of the village) *handak* twelve and twelve *nükjoh* are prepared. The process of steaming rice in bamboo, known as *nükphet*, is traditionally conducted in jungle, after which the rice is presented to the host of a feast. The process of steaming must be carried out by a married couple. The steamed rice should be enclosed within *katamfe* (*thaumatococcus daniellii*) leaves, with six (6) leaves on the outside side, six (6) leaves on the inner side, and one (1) leaf each on the inner and outer sides, stacked on top of one another. The rice should be portioned and wrapped within each leaf. This practise is commonly referred to as '*aümnyak aümshu*.' However, it is worth noting that on a certain leaf, a *ken* is wrapped and tied, however without the utilisation of a bamboo strip. *Nükjoh lai* should be given to everyone along with rice. A total of eight (8) units of *athang vam* rice beer should be produced. It is recommended that village priests reside within the households of their respective clan members.

After a period of twelve days, individuals who participated in the festivities known as *chingngong* (village priest) and *yiükha* (sisters and married daughters) proceed to a nearby location to engage in a communal feast. Upon the conclusion of the communal gathering, *chingngong*, in a display of appreciation, expresses gratitude towards the forest through the medium of a traditional folk song while making his way back to the village.

Upon arriving at the house of the feast giver, the wife is greeted as *haba olunglanyüü*, while the husband is addressed as *haba olungvanpa baipü*. And recite "*bhümnyü nyeivang jük ngüphivang thaikei shei nyükpeih*." During that evening, *chingngong* sleep at the location

where rice is traditionally pounded, while participating in festivities and indulging in a celebratory meal. The aforementioned feast event is commonly referred to as '*chiyuh mo.*'

Subsequently, the host family of the feast adhered to a period of six (6) days of *genna*, during which no guests were permitted within their residence. The *chichi lai pong* leave is prominently displayed at the entrance to signify the observance of *genna*. The senior members of the clan remove the leaves on the sixth day. The host family eagerly anticipates the arrival of their guests, offering traditional rice beer and a selection of pickled delicacies, including shrimp, dried bamboo stalk, and other meats. The *chingngong* serves the purpose of warding off malevolent spirits and offering prayers for the longevity of a married couple. Even in the event of the death of the hosts of the feast i.e. both husband and wife, the same number of animals are slaughtered which is twelve. The utilisation of an *aimong* bamboo frame with an intricate weaving design is commonly used in such houses.

Raw materials used for *shemnyü* (main post) are *jahpü*, *düingpü*, *hanghaiü*. Three post straight line; *ajung* (*kenji*), *büyü*, *vitha* bamboo (three feet distance), *baksho*, *lung* (bamboo strip) used for tying wall made up of weave bamboo frame.

According to Lavan (personal communication, March 29, 2019), a *manphak* post, which is a Y shape post, was erected outside the residence of the host of the feast giver. Additionally, a banyan tree was planted with the intention of promoting the growth and expansion of future generations.

Taplu: It is customary for the host of a feast to visit his paddy field after the feast in order to construct a hut and placed *vongkangkangpü*, a V shape structure at the front top of the roof. On this particular day, twelve animals are selected for the occasion. Additionally, the village priest and the in-laws from the wife's side provide a package of dried meats wrapped in a katamfe leaf, along with a rice beer known as *yüüji ahshaiü*. The arm portion of the slain animal

is allocated to the in-laws from both the husband and wife. In the context of the husband's family, the eldest male member, referred to as “*bajei*,” traditionally receives the thigh piece of the killed animal as a customary offering. Conversely, the youngest male member, known as “*banai*,” is typically presented with the arm portion of the animal. The wife's closest companion, referred to as *nyanaü*, is presented with the abdominal section of the meat, known as ‘*nyanaü ou vomshow shüshong*,’ whereas the husband's closest companion, known as *jeinaü*, is offered the rib section of the flesh. The husband's friend, typically bestowed with a neck section of the meat (known as *mongchempa üng vah teipü*), arrives bearing a bundle of dried meat and rice beer. Subsequently, this individual proceeds to serenade the husband and wife of the host with the following song.

*“Ngoshü/Wangnyü nyi-i daknyü mongmatei,
 Baongi jongvong aai lakyom langpheikü
 Nüki shingnüing nyiami chingkon mongma küp
 Nüjepne-ü pünüing dükon shemnyühüh, hüşhem mülen
 pheinaü baongjai lakyomhen
 Bhamnyü nyeiwang jük kao shimjüm aeivong peih.”* (B. Shami, personal
 communication, June 30, 2023).

The English translation of the provided text indicates that:

“The granary belonging to Ngoshü and Wangnyü (name of the husband and wife of the
 feast giver from Yongnyah village) is fully stocked.

Additionally, the animals remain present, and the servants have diligently attended to all
 necessary tasks.

Rice grains possess a substantial and compact structure, and its cultivation is associated
 with economic prosperity within the local community.

The phenomenon is likened as an inexhaustible crimson body of water.

Their descendants will continue to enjoy wealth for generations to come, without ever experiencing poverty.

We have convened to partake in the consumption of the banyan tree's fruit, indicating our collective engagement in the act of consuming food and drinking rice beer.”

This is the manner in which feasts are traditionally observed and songs are sung.

iii) Common men's house: This type of house is built with the help of relatives and slaughtered any animals which is usually completed within two to three days. It has no decoration like carving of any figures and the front edges of the roof are not cut off (figure 12 & 14). The walls of this kind of house is made up of woven bamboo frame pattern known as *aiphang* (figure 13). No payment is made to the labour force; instead friends and relatives or the labour force gives rice, firewood, chicken, vegetables etc. to the owner.

The raw materials are usually collected from their own forest. A jackfruit tree is generally used for main post and the houses is said to last for 10-15 years.

After harvesting, house construction was made and raw materials was collected and thatch was collected by the bang member. 50-60 bundle of thatch was required. For those family without men, women goes to carry the thatch bundle. *Hangmei* was used to make the thatch roofing and it was tied with a bamboo strip called *vongnyü lung*.

The villagers are not allowed to enter the house before dedication. For dedicating the house, a crab or bamboo rat (*vü*) meat are used to ward off the bad omens. There is no prevalence of taboo for any injury while constructing the houses. Measurement was made according to human height and size of the plot. No particular measurement instrument were used.

After completion of the house, in the evening, the eldest clan members first enter the house by jumping saying '*shahnyü shepdao omngoibha, meinyü, meila, omngoibha, nyahmih nyahho omngoibha, opong oakpan yangpha bongmeihelebha, thedong lalong pha*' and bring in the skull of pig carried in bamboo basket and the people inside the house welcome him who are usually the owner and the workers. Men brings their own dao. No guest are allowed in a new house.

iv) *Metshem*: Typically, this type of dwelling is associated with the most senior individuals within the community. The house was adorned with entada vine. The occurrence of such dwellings are no longer observed in all the Phom communities. However, according to oral accounts, villages such as Nyang were known to have this type of housing.

v) *Hashihha or Vamnyü shem*: Hashihha means orphan, *vamnyü* means widow. This kind of house is small and simple and can be differentiated by its appearance (figure 15). The pervasive occurrence of gender-based discrimination and exploitation has been a global issue, and the comparable mistreatment of women in previous generations has been deeply distressing. Genealogy was traditionally traced through the paternal lineage. The birth of a female child in the absence of a male offspring was traditionally regarded as circumstance that was unfavourable, leading to significant social disapproval and marginalisation of affected families. In such instances, it was common for certain individuals of the male gender to pursue divorce with the intention of increasing their chances of fathering a male offspring through subsequent marriages. The possession of a greater number of male offspring was traditionally regarded as a source of familial pride and perceived as indicative of a courageous and audacious lineage, frequently instilling a sense of intimidation in others. From a psychological perspective, the prevailing belief has been that men have historically held an advantage in various domains, such as the workplace or conflicts,

regardless of whether they are physical in nature. The absence of a male child is inherently devalued and disheartening, without considering the potential reactions or actions of others. Phoms had a very satirical remark analogizing women with feathers of a hen and teeth of a pig. It goes like this: '*ounyiiü shau nehaong, oaknyiiü bha nehaai.*' That means, feathers of a hen and teeth of pig are worthless and never used as part of traditional ornaments. That was the mentality of understanding the womenfolk's (L. Phom, 2018, p.50).

If the husband dies, a wife has to go back to her parents' home without taking anything except the clothes she wears. She is not allowed to take even the children with her (Imrongnaro, 1986, p.8). As per the property rights within the context of Phom, it is established that a daughter does not possess the legal entitlement to inherit the assets, whether they are movable or immovable, that are possessed by her father. The offspring of the male progenitor who is held in high regard is destined to depart without any possessions to the residence of her spouse. During ancient times, the absence of intricate wedding ceremonies, as observed in contemporary society, necessitated parents to provide their daughters with a modest assortment of items upon their transition from the parental household to the marital residence. These items typically included a basket equipped with a strap, a machete, a sickle, a small hoe, a few shawls, and a collection of available agricultural seeds.

Not all women were privileged enough to have a warm welcome back to their parental home following a divorce from their spouse or in the event of their spouse's death. In certain instances, a widow without children may be compelled to return to her parents home by her deceased husband's relatives. In such instances, she found herself in the position of residing in a parcel of land provided by her parents, siblings, or extended family members, where she would then sustain herself by engaging in manual labour within the paddy fields of

others. There have been instances where certain orphaned individuals, upon the demise of both parents, have found themselves abandoned by relatives who were unwilling to assume the responsibility of their care, thereby forcing them to fend for themselves. However, it is worth noting that such situations were infrequent. In the majority of cases, it is common for parents and siblings to extend a warm reception to their daughters or sisters following a divorce, granting them permission to reside in their familial residence. Following the demise of her spouse, the deceased's extended family members, commonly referred to as in-laws, let her to reside with her offspring within the residence formerly occupied by them when the husband was alive. Additionally, she assumes responsibility for nurturing her children and tending to the paddy field that is part of her late husband's ancestral property.

vi) *Pung* (Granary): Granaries hold significant importance in Naga society as they serve as storage spaces for agricultural produce. These structures are typically elevated on stilts to protect the stored grains from pests and dampness. The granaries are constructed using locally available materials such as bamboo, wood, and thatch. The walls are made of bamboo woven together and floor by either woven bamboo or wooden planks, while the roofs are either of thatched or palm leaves (figure 16 a & b). The design of Naga granaries varies among different tribes. For instance, the Angami Naga construct cylindrical granaries with conical roofs, while the Ao Nagas build rectangular-shaped granaries with sloping roofs. The Phom *pung*'s are similar in structure like the Ao Naga. It is rectangular in shape with sloping roof which is made up of thatch. It was normally built away from the dwelling houses so as to secure the grains in case a fire breakout in the village. It was located in groups in specific location. It is a kind of stilt house, where big stones were used for their raised platform. It has one apartment with one door, and its floor were made up of bamboo frames. *Pung* were usually constructed with the help of the family members.

vii) *Tap* (hut): Huts are another prominent feature of Naga vernacular architecture. Since Phom people were agriculturist, every family/household were engaged in its activity. The fields were usually located far away from the village. *Tap* is a rest house for them to take rest, cook, eat, and provide shelter during bad weather. It is normally small in structure with two doors- front and back, has a hearth and a small *machang* towards the back door which serves the purpose of drying vegetables and other food grains after harvesting (figure 17). It is also usually constructed within a day with the help of the family members. The hut of a man, who has offered all the stage of the feast of merit has *vongkangkangpü* at the front top of the roof.

In addition to the mentioned houses, in Hutton's (1999) own words from his observation, "To Yangam alias Shimung, a small Konyak, or Phom and Konyak, village never before visited. It is divided from Yungnya and Nyan by the Phangla stream and is on the same spur as Mongnyu, but below it. It was while leaving Yungya that I first saw one of the enormous field-houses built in these parts by men who have reaped a particularly good harvest. They built in a form which probably represents buffalo horns, which, like mithun horns elsewhere, are everywhere here used as a fertility symbol. The houses which shelter the effigies of the dead in Urangkong are built on a similar pattern, so that one may suspect that there, as in other parts of the Naga Hills, the dead are intimately associated with the village crops. And although a different explanation was given me in Yacham, one may perhaps surmise that the horns attached to an enemy's head originate in the same fertility symbol, and may be associated with the forked wooden posts erected by so many tribes, and the stone ones at Dimapur" (Hutton, 2018, p. 7-8).

However, it can be noted that Yangam is referred as Yongam, Shimung as Shemong (Yongam village/villagers are also known as Shemong), Yungya as Yongnyah, Nyan as Nian/Nyang, Urangkong as Orangkong, and Yacham as Yachem.

Figure 2

Post layout structure

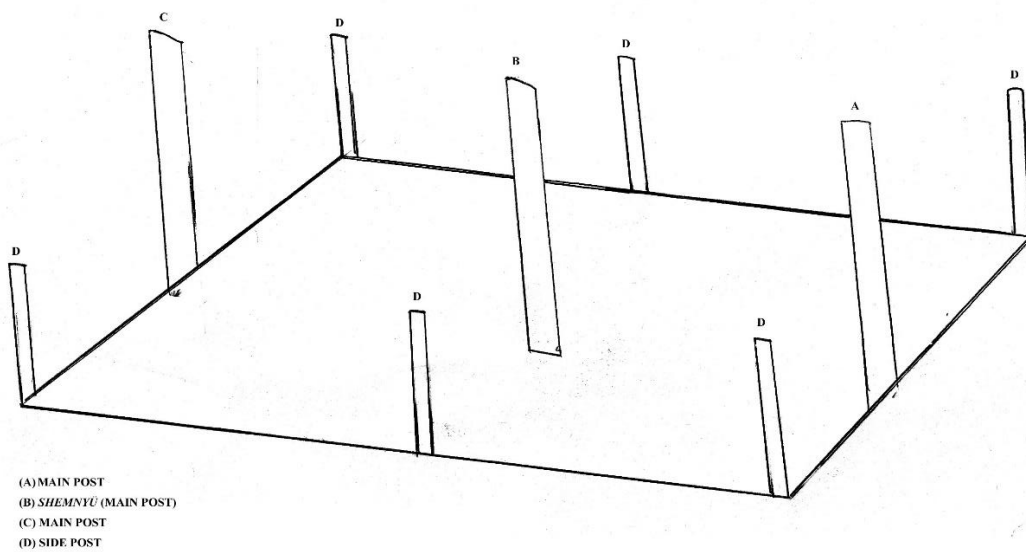
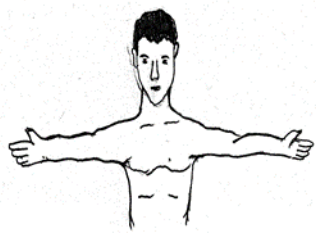
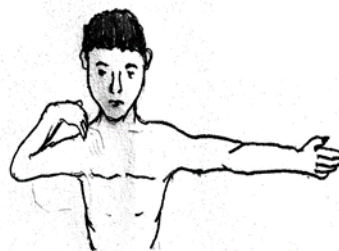


Figure 3

Types of measuring unit



PHAK NYI



PHAK HŨK



PHAK HŨK



LAK KHAM

Figure 4

Interior aerial view of Phom Naga house

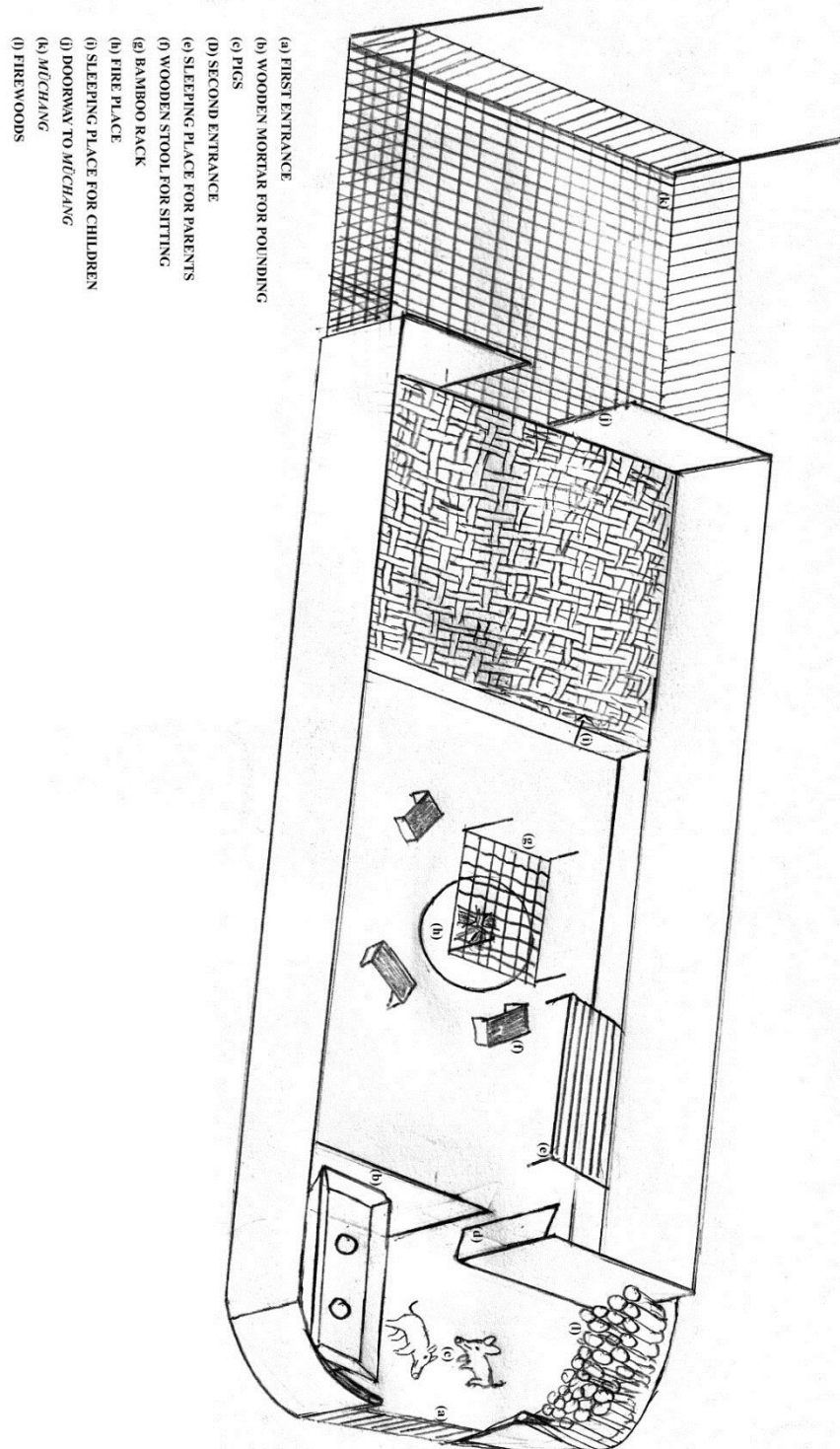


Figure 5

Bura Namsang village bang



Figure 6

Tamlu village bang



Figure 7

Doors at Yongnyah village bang



Figure 8

Sketch of shemmei shem

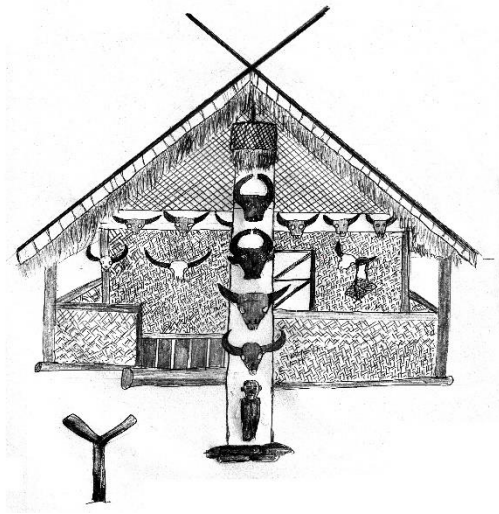


Figure 9

Aimong pattern of bamboo frame used in shemmei shem

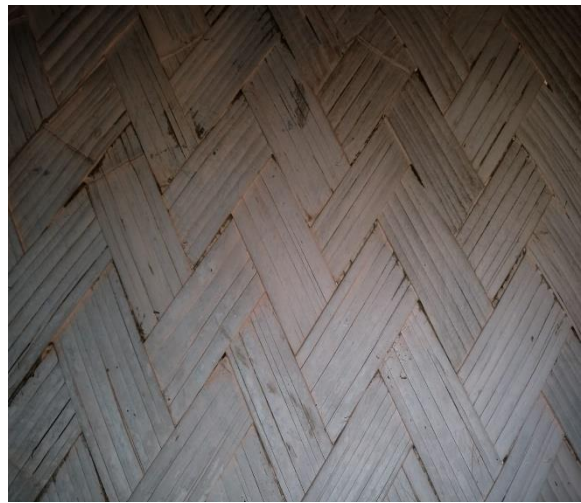


Figure 10

Shemmei shem, a blend of traditional and modern architecture at Yongshei village



Figure 11

Laii (Katamfe/Thaumatococcus daniellii)



Figure 12

Sketch of a common men's house

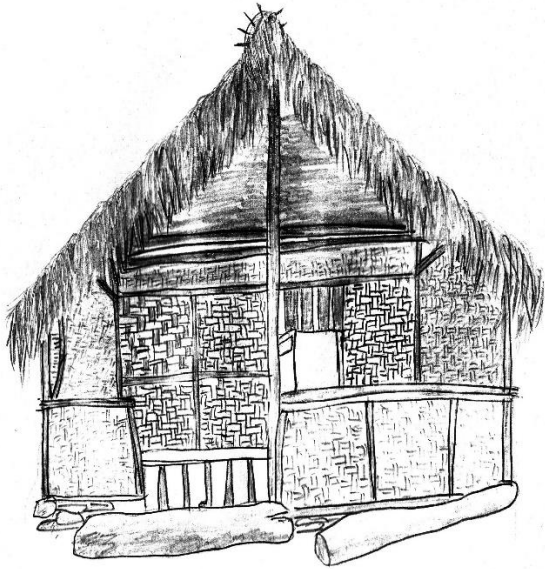


Figure 13

Aiphang pattern of bamboo frame



Figure 14

a. Common men's house at Auching village



b. Common men's house



Figure 15

A house of a widow



Figure 16

a. View of a pung (granary) at Shakshi village



b. Interior view of pung at Pongo village



Figure 17

Tap at Shakshi village



CHAPTER -3

TRADITIONAL COSTUMES AND ORNAMENTS: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The history of costumes and ornaments can be traced back to ancient civilisations such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome. In these societies costumes were not only worn for practical purposes, but also held symbolic meanings. Costumes and ornaments have played a significant role in human history, serving as a means of self-expression, cultural identification, and social status. Throughout the ages, costumes and ornaments have evolved and adapted to reflect the changing beliefs, values, and aesthetic of different societies. For example, in ancient Egypt, elaborate costumes were worn by pharaohs and high-ranking officials to signify their authority and divine status. These costumes often incorporated precious materials such as gold, silver, and gemstones.

3.1 Ideologies of costumes and traditions

Some ideologies on the significance of costumes and traditions are discussed as follows. In ancient Greece, costumes played a crucial role in theatrical performances. Actors would wear masks and elaborate garments to portray different characters and evoke specific emotions. These costumes helped to enhance the storytelling experience and engage the audience on a visual level. During the Middle Ages in Europe, costumes became more intricate and ornate. The Feudal system heavily influenced the types of costumes worn by different social classes. Nobles would wear luxurious garments made from expensive fabrics such as silk and velvet, adorned with intricate embroidery and jewels. On the other hand, peasants would wear simpler attire made from coarse materials like wool or linen.

The Renaissance period marked a significant shift in costume design. Inspired by classical art and literature, Renaissance fashion embraced a more naturalistic approach. Costumes became more tailored to the body, emphasizing individual proportions rather than

concealing them. Ornamentation was still prevalent, but became more refined and focused on enhancing the overall aesthetic appeal.

The eighteenth century witnessed another transformation in costume design with the rise of Rococo fashion. This style was characterised by its extravagance featuring voluminous skirts, intricate lacework, and elaborate hairstyle. Costumes during this period were often seen as a reflection of wealth and social status, with the upper classes donning opulent garments adorned with ribbons, bows, and feathers.

The Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century brought about significant changes in costumes production. With the advent of mechanisation, clothing became more accessible and affordable for the masses. The rise of department stores and ready-to-wear clothing allowed individuals from different social background to express themselves through fashion. However, this also led to a decline in the uniqueness and craftsmanship associated with handmade costumes and ornaments.

In the twentieth century, costumes and ornaments continued to evolve alongside societal changes. The emergence of subcultures and countercultural movements brought about new forms of self-expression through fashion. From the flapper dresses of the 1920s to the punk rock attire of the 1970s, costumes became a powerful tool for individual to rebel against societal norms and establish their identities.

Today, costumes and ornaments continue to hold significance in various context. In theatre and film, costumes are essential for character development and storytelling. They help actors embody their roles and transport audiences into different time periods or fictional worlds. In cultural celebrations and festivals, costumes play a vital role in preserving traditions and showcasing cultural heritage. Furthermore, costumes have become an integral part of popular culture, with cosplay (costume play) gaining immense popularity in recent years.

Cospalyers recreate characters from movies, video games, anime, and other forms of media by meticulously crafting costumes and accessories. This form of self-expression allows individuals to immerse themselves in their favourite fictional universe while also connecting with like-minded enthusiasts.

Costumes and ornaments have a rich history that spans across civilisations and time periods. From ancient Egypt to modern-day cosplay, they have served as a means of self-expression, cultural identification, and social status. The evolution of costumes reflects the changing beliefs, values, and aesthetics of different societies, while their significance remains prevalent in various contexts today.

3.2 Phom costumes and ornaments

There are no records of how the Phom people begin to use attires or how they learnt the art of making them. “The Phoms have a variety of colourful dresses and they differ among different villages, and even among clans. There were distinct dress for warrior, rich and the ordinary people. Men used pieces of cloth, bark of trees and canes as belt. In some villages, males were naked, but not women. If any man among the naked group covers himself by cloth, his cloths would be snatched away on the pretext that cloths were not meant for him. Women used cloth for covering their body and breasts were covered by a shawl tied just above the breasts” (H. Phom, 2015, p17). They adorned themselves with clothing and ornaments to protect themselves from the sun and rain, for a special feast or occasion, and to expose their wealth and power in society.

Clothes were made using a backstrap loin loom by women (figure 18 c), but the looms were made by men. Every woman were expected to learn and know how to weave for her family members. Cotton was obtained from their own village, which was planted in their own paddy field, at a site where they felt that the soil was not suitable for paddy. The yarn was

obtained by using an indigenous method to remove the seeds from cotton (cotton placed on a flat rock and cleared of seeds using a small bamboo stick) and spin the yarn using a bamboo stick. The sticks are placed on a thigh with one hand holding the upper side and the other hand rolling the bottom end (figure 18 a and b). The colours used were white, black which was obtained by boiling the yarn with a plant leaves called *nyiamlak* (*strobilanthes flaccidifolius*), and red, acquired by boiling the yarn with the creeper roots of the plant name *akhenthangkhen* (*rubia sikkimensis*) and wild fern known as *long atak*. The yarn was dyed by womenfolk without any restriction, however, pregnant woman were restricted from dying the yarn as it was belief that a child will be born with a birthmark on their body. It was usually boiled at night and dried in the sun the next day. Weavers woven the garments in exchange for manual labour to their rice field and sometimes dried meats were offered. It took two, three, or even four or five days to weave a cloth, depending on the pattern and motif of the particular cloth.

Costumes and ornaments can be sorted in two groups; men and women.

3.2.1 Men attires and ornaments

“*Nethe hñk-ei yangnyu ü oupong hñk nevaijü ouhangpa lepeih,*” which in English translation means, “a man’s life is like a rooster or a hornbill.” Headgear is worn as a symbol of a rooster’s comb, *püouh/paksho* waist belt, which has slender bark of a tree at the back symbolises a hornbill tail, and *laapen* (anklets) represent the feet of a rooster. Shawls were composed later on (Lavan, personal communication, 29 March,2019).

Attires and ornaments of Phom men are as follows.

a. Conical head gear (*homlu athen/minpap shethen*): This headgear is made of finely woven cane interlaced with orchid stems and is one of the famous and priceless adornment worn by the men folk of Phom Naga. It exhibit variety to appear perfection by decorating with amazing pieces such as; wild boar’s canine teeth (*meila pha*), goat’s hair (*miü*), hornbill feather’s

(*ouvangsho*). It was worn as a prized possession by a rich men and successful warriors during festivals, while performing folk dances, and some important events and gatherings (figure 19).

b. Wild boar's canine teeth (*meila pha*): It perpetually signifies an immortal thing, which sparks or shines for a longer period of time. For instance, it is believed that the animals which lives longer possess these canine teeth. These teeth was also worn as necklace around the neck. A man who had successfully killed the wild boar during hunting would wear them or bartered it to a rich man or a warriors. This wild boars' canine teeth necklace was wearable only by a venerated warrior of great courage and endurance who has killed the ferocious wild beasts, he called himself as a great warrior or hero. In recent years the prominent figures, luminary, wealthy men etc. wear it during the celebration of traditional festivals or on special occasions (figure 20).

c. A goat's hair (*miu*): It is a finely fabricated or dyed with a red colour. It is adorns by a men accessorising attires like *dao*, headgear, carrying basket and *dao* holder.

d. Hornbill feather (*ouvangsho*): This implies gorgeousness, fine looking, and admiration, and possess unique qualities. It is symbolic; representing reverence or honouring of the great man. It is usually put on top of the headgear.

e. Conch Shell earrings (*thong kü shihbü Shokchü*) : It is zealously emulated of sea shell conch worn by a male folk to enhance attractiveness. It is an attire of a rich men who has successfully offered the feast of merit to his villagers (figure 21).

f. Iconic metal-head necklace (*Nyiamsho Yüük*): A traditional necklace worn by a great warrior (a head hunter) to mark the brave deeds of warriors and head heroes. According to oral sources, it was usually brought from Konyak areas which was procured from Burma (Myanmar) region (figure 22).

g. Chest tattoo (*Hamphak*): Only an audacious man who had taken heads of enemy in the war was entitled to design a tattoo on his chest to mark his triumph or success in headhunting. Men get tattoo for every skill they master and the number of heads they get. Every tattoo has a significance for which it is worn. The Naga headhunting tattoos are earned and worn with pride throughout their life.

h. Dao holder (*yanpishong/shongmong*): It is put around the waist by men to carry *dao*. It was commonly used during war (headhunting), hunting of animals and also while working in the field (figure 23).

i. Loin cloth (*küplak*): The ancestors of Phom Nagas lived naked for many years and centuries, but the advent of Christianity brought a radical change to their lifestyle. Men started to hide their private body part with a piece of cloth called '*küplak*' (figure 24).

j. Elephant task armlets (*phakshep*): The armlets are intricately made of carved ivory (elephant task) taken from the largest land animal in the world. Enormously a man folk wore them to indicate his bravery (figure 26).

k. Gong (*nyiamnyü*): A 'gong' is popularly known as priced possession. It was used to announce the death of a great man or warrior by the ancestors. It was also offered by a man to the parents of a woman during his proposal (figure 27).

l. Dao (*yan*): A dao is a powerful weapon of the man folk. *Dao* which is decorated with a red dyed goat's hair was used during headhunting raids, or while performing folk dances. A part from it, a *dao* has many utilities for the menfolk. It was used during construction of houses, chopping of trees, cultivating of paddy field, hunting etc.

m. Spear (*ngo*): It is a sort of supportive staff, evidently a thrusting weapon with pointed and long shaft decorated with black-red dyed goat's hair. It is also one of the powerful weapons.

Spear was used to kill enemies and also hunting of animals. Originally, there are two types of spears called i) *miü ngo* ii) *miü dom ngo* (figure 28 a and b).

n. Shawl

i) **Hinyü:** Earlier this shawl was used by both men and women who has offered the feast of merit to their villagers. Therefore, it is known as *shemmei ashak* (rich men's shawl). It has a design called *müknyi*. It has a horizontal design of black, white and red. Before weaving this shawl, the weaver should pour rice beer at the main post (*shemnyü*) of the owner's house and then, at the main post of the weaver's house (Bongom, personal communication, March 5, 2019). Their children were also entitled to put on this shawl (figure 29 a).

ii) **Nyo-am:** This is a shawl of the warriors. It has a detailed motif at the middle as well as the top and bottom. It was worn by those men who were successful in head hunting warfare (figure 29 b).

o. **Shield (i):** Shield was usually made up of animal skin like *mithun*, tiger, and cow. It was used during headhunting warfare as a shield/protection.

3.2.2 Women attires and ornaments

a. **Mükhen langnyü and langha (hairband):** It is a traditional hair band worn by a women folk. It symbolically shines or sparkles which has been compared to the sun. It was used to keep her hair from covering her face and ears, so as to refrain it from disturbing while doing different activities (figure 30).

b. **Chü sheü:** This earring are worn to cover the face partially to enhance gorgeous and charming and a white colour feather of a rooster is used to appear more beautiful (figure 31).

c. **Tattoo (hühkokbü):** A traditional tattoo was designed on the face, besides, naval and also legs which evidently showed that women had attained her maturity.

d. Bangles (*Lakthet*): The authentic piece of bangles or bracelets are adorned with brass or ivory. Only the daughters of well-off family possessed them to show off their wealth or possession (figure 32).

e. Necklace (*yiük*): It is a colourful, intricately designed jewellery gilded with beads, shell etc. A variety of traditional necklace are being portrayed: according to Phom custom, a necklace called '*yiüknyü*' is worn only by the affluent man's daughters to show off their wealth and others were '*üngshang yiük*' and '*yong yiük*'. The significance of wearing necklace was to damage the blade of the dao, when an enemy try to chop off the head (figure 33 & 34).

f. Shawl: In Phom dialect, shawl is referred to as "*ashak*" in its literal sense. The different shawls of the Phom women are as follows;

(i) *Ngeih Ham (phop-iy)*: *Ngeih ham* means wrap around and this shawl is called *phop-iy* is worn in place of a blouse/top to wrap the chest part. It was predominantly worn by young / unmarried women. It was usually used by woman folk from poor or low status. Today, it is used as a shawl by both married and young women (figure 35 and 44 a).

(ii) *Lakshoung ashak*: This shawl was introduced in the year 1968 by Rev. L. Paushen Phom, hailing from the village of Tangha. During his tenure as a student at Eastern Theological College in Jorhat, Assam, he used to put on the shawl *hinyü*. It was observed by his acquaintances that when he adorned this particular shawl, his appearance bore like to that of a deer. This observation served as a source of inspiration for him to conceive the design of a shawl known as *lakshoung*. The design was presented to Mr. Imdong, and thereafter, collaborative modifications were made to the pattern and design. The shawl was exhibited for competition during the Phom Student's Conference in the 1968 at Orangkong village. Although this shawl was adjudged second position during the competition, the executive members of the Phom Student's Conference subsequently sanctioned for widespread use of this shawl among

the Phom community, encompassing both genders. This shawl known as the *lakshong*, derives its name from the book titled “Phom Lakshung,” authored by Lt. Wanlei, Rev. Paushen, and Imdong, which was published during the 1960s (Paushen, personal communication, June 29, 2023) (figure 36 and 44 a).

(iii) *Shaiinei ashak*: As narrated by Atang (personal communication, February 15, 2019), the theme of this shawl is believed to have been inspired by celestial influences. He gave an account that a man named Bhakahnaying, maintained a floral specimen known as *pungsho chii* within the confines of his residence. On one certain occasion, the two daughters of the individual proceeded to engage in the act of flower plucking, only to discover that the flowers had already been plucked by another individual. This phenomenon has kept on recurring for an extended duration. The sisters had the belief that the flower had been plucked by either one individual or the other. On a certain day, the father positioned himself within the confines of a boundary during the early hours one morning, concealing his presence beneath a mat covering made from bamboo. He witnessed the descent of two celestial lady who proceeded to gather flowers. He then apprehended one of the celestial lady and observed the presence of a tattoo on her leg. The shawl incorporates the design of her tattoo as a recurring theme. This traditional shawl is specifically donned by women belonging to the Shontokshoh clan residing in Pongching village (figure 37).

(iv) *Pai ashak*: The term “*pai*” refers to a plain. Traditionally, it was commonly woven with unadulterated cotton fibres, devoid of any dyeing process to introduce colour variations. The shawl was commonly utilised by individuals of lower socioeconomic status, both male and female (figure 38).

g. *Shüingnang (mekhela)*: The Phom Nagas are known for their diverse range of wrap around or *mekhela*, which exhibit unique characteristics according to specific villages within their

community. There are several types of *mekhelas* worn by women, which can be categorised as follows:

(i) ***Shaka***: *Shaka*, a resplendent tri-coloured pattern wrap around or *mekhela*, was accessible to the prosperous man's wife and daughters who were able to offer the feast of merit. According to prevalent beliefs, it was thought that individuals who wore the item without having performed the meritorious act of offering a feast would experience visual impairment, such as blindness or blurred vision. The motif known as “*mük nyi*” is characterised by the representation of two eyes, which serves as a symbolic depiction of the eyes of the *mithun* (Pongyau, personal communication, February 28, 2019). According to Bongom (personal communication, April 5, 2019), it is customary for the owner to provide a weaver who weaves a *shaka mekhela* with dried meat and rice beer. This *mekhela* was traditionally worn by women hailing from villages like as Tamlu, Kangching, Tangha, Yongshei, Yachem, and various other Phom villages (figure 39 and figure 44 c).

(ii) ***Mükho or owshih shüingnang***: A traditional wrap around known as *mekhela*, specifically referred to as *mükho shüingnang* (figure 40 and plate 44 d), was created with the intention of paying tribute to a female member of the Mükho clan. This individual had achieved the feat of eliminating an adversary hailing from Mimi village, situated near Yingnyü Ching, a location associated with the migration history of Phom community. During the aforementioned occasion, she engaged in the act of weaving in the vicinity of her residence and paused momentarily to observe the process of grain drying in close proximity. During that particular instance, the enemy made his entrance and that Mükho woman successfully eliminated the enemy making use of a weaving loom referred to as “*meyong*” which is a beating sword/batten (Pongyau, personal communication, March 28, 2019). The female residents of Yongshei and

Yongnyah village commonly don a comparable *mekhela*, but with minor variations in the designs.

(iii) ***Kochok mokhala***: Similar narration is associated with a *kochok mokhola*, a *mekhela* worn by Yachem women as narrated by Sangla (personal communication, June 27, 2023). *Mokhola* means *mekhela* in Yachem dialect. According to oral traditions, it is believed that Lt. Mrs. Pangtitenla, a resident of Pangti village, encountered an adversary while engaged in the act of weaving. In response to the enemy's approach, she took action and successfully eliminated the threat. It is worth noting that there are allegations suggesting that the inhabitants of Yachem village trace their origins back to Pangti village through migration. Consequently, the male members of the community provided her with this attire to assume the role of a warrior woman. The design of this *mekhela* draws inspiration from the form of a python's head, while its name, "*kochok*," conveys the concept of courage and resilience. In the past, the traditional practice involved the limited use of this attire by wife and daughters of a men who had organised a significant ceremonial event to demonstrate their virtuous deeds known as feast of merit. During the commemoration of the feast of merit, a ceremonial event referred to as *pongko shitongma*, the wife adorned herself with this traditional *mokhola*. This ritual involves the act of the feast host pair, accompanied by the husband's close acquaintance, chopping at the midpoint of the *mithun* head. Furthermore, the daughters of the host also adorned herself with this *mekhela* during the festivities and proceeded to distribute the feast's meat to her maternal uncles (figure 41).

(iv) ***Soti luli mokhola***: This *mekhela* was primarily worn by married women from Yachem village. The term "*soti*" refers to the animal species known as the elephant, whereas "*luli*" is used to denote a lady who is married. This *mekhela* embodies a courageous female figure who exhibits fearlessness in the face of adversity. It was a prevalent practice among ladies of various

backgrounds to wear this *mekhela*. When subjected to the dyeing process using *osak* leaves (*strobilanthes flaccidifolius*) which is generally referred as *nyiamlak* by the Phom community, the outcome of the colour of the yarn was not black or blue but in between these two colours. The current shade of this *mekhela* is blue, accompanied by subtle white lines arranged both horizontally and vertically (figure 42).

(v) Müchang shüingnang: This *mekhela* is traditionally worn by women hailing from the Kangching village. Previously, this *mekhela* was referred to as the “poor women’s *mekhela*” and was predominantly worn by ladies belonging to the lower socioeconomic strata.

(vi) Aloo and Apangkhaktah mekhela: These *mekhelas* were worn solely by women belonging to the Yongphang village. The *aloo*, a black-colored *mekhela*, was historically worn by affluent women, sometimes accompanied by the *shihthat*, a waist belt. The *shihthat* yarn was crafted using cotton yarn that had been coloured with pounded perila seeds. The dyed yarn was then wrapped in banana leaves and subjected to heat from a fire, after which it was left to dry for a duration of one month. The red and black, *apangkhaktah mekhela* was traditionally worn by women of lower socioeconomic status or the general populace.

(vii) Yunglak shüingnang: This wrap is a Pongo women *mekhela*. Previously, it had a coloration consisting of black and red hues. Nevertheless, the current iteration of this *mekhela* is woven using green and subtle black threads.

In addition to the aforementioned attires and accessories, the people of Phom also adorn themselves with a diverse array of costumes and ornaments, each featuring distinct designs and motifs.

During the January 1990 session of the Phom Student's Conference (apex Phom students’ organisation), the resolution was passed to designate *hinyü* and *nyo-am* shawls for exclusive use by Phom males, while *lakshoung* shawls were designated for women. *Mekhela*

like *shaka*, and *mükho*, and *phop-iy* shawl are frequently worn by Phom women as per the regulations established by Phomla Hoichem, the top organisation representing Phom women. This practice is observed without any differentiation, in contrast to past societal norms.

3.3 Change and continuity

Every culture possesses a historical record of transformation processes. It is improbable to encounter a society that has remained unaltered in its original state, devoid of any influences or alterations. One potential catalyst for cultural transformation is the presence of internal tensions and pressures within the cultural fabric. Certain transformations stem from and are propelled by cultural advances, while others are influenced either directly or indirectly by other things (Zhimo, 2011). The traditional costumes and ornaments of Phom Naga have undergone both changes and continuities over time. These changes can be attributed to various factors, including social, cultural, economic, and other influences. Additionally, the continuity of traditional costumes and ornaments can be attributed to factors such as cultural preservation, identity maintenance, and the significance of these elements in their daily life.

One of the primary factors responsible for the changes in traditional costumes and ornaments of the Phom Naga is the influence of modernisation and globalisation coupled with the arrival of Christianity and modern education. As societies became more interconnected through advancement in technology and increased access to information, traditional cultures often experience a shift towards more contemporary practices. The Phom Naga community has also been influenced by these external forces, leading to changes in their traditional attires and ornaments.

With the advancement of modern fashion trends and the availability of ready-made clothing from outside sources, there has been a gradual shift towards incorporating elements of modern fashion into traditional Phom Naga attire. This can be observed in the adoption of new

fabrics, colours, and designs that reflect contemporary fashion sensibilities. The younger generation, in particular, may be more inclined to embrace these changes as they seek to align themselves with global trends. *Mekhela*, which was one panel, worn above the knee is now replaced with two panel or three and that covers up to the ankle like a long skirt. Men, no longer wear loin cloth to cover themselves, but prefers trousers and shorts. Waist coat, necktie, scarfs are introduced with traditional motifs that are worn during cultural events or some important occasion. Nowadays, men hardly put on shawls except on winter season.

Furthermore, economic factors play a significant role in shaping the changes in traditional attires and ornaments. As societies undergo economic development and transition from subsistence-based economies to market-oriented ones, there is often a shift in priorities and preferences. The Phom community is no exception to this trend. Economic opportunities outside their traditional occupations have led to change in their lifestyles and consumption patterns. Increased access to income has allowed individuals within the Phom community to purchase clothing and accessories from markets beyond their immediate surroundings. This has resulted in a diversification of their wardrobe choices, with individuals opting for garments that are not necessarily rooted in their traditional costumes. The availability of new materials and various design has also influenced the production of traditional attires and ornaments, leading to a fusion of traditional and contemporary elements. Money, on the other hand, has also played a crucial role in influencing the traditional attires and ornaments. With increase access to monetary resources, there has been a gradual shift towards modernisation and westernisation. The availability of money has enabled community members to purchase ready-made clothes and accessories from markets rather than relying on traditional hand-woven textiles and locally sourced materials. The introduction of cash economy has also led to changes in the percentage of wealth and status within the community. In the past, traditional attires and

ornaments were considered symbols of wealth and social standing. However, with the influence of money, there has been a shift towards valuing material possessions as indicators of prosperity. This shift has resulted in a decline in the significance attached to traditional attires and ornaments, as people now prioritise acquiring modern clothing and accessories that are associated with wealth and status.

Furthermore, the influence of money has also led to the adoption of more practical and convenient attire choices. Traditional attires, such as shawls and *mekhelas* requires significant time and effort to weave and maintain. With the availability of readymade clothing options in the market, many community members have started opting for more comfortable and low-maintenance garments made from modern fabrics.

During the course of the present research, the Phom community has fully discontinued the practise of producing clothes from locally cultivated cotton and use of traditional dyeing techniques for yarns. Instead, various type of colourful yarn, such as doli, thailand, and bornali, are obtained from the market in order to create a diverse range of *mekhela* garments featuring distinct motifs and colours. And thus, the Phom community is currently witnessing a decline in the practice of traditional backstrap loin loom weaving. There are only few number of women who continue to engage in the traditional method of weaving. At present, the production of traditional Phom women's apparel primarily involves the utilisation of machine loin looms. This process is carried out by a group of Manipuri women residing in Dimapur, with few Phom women serving as intermediaries for the purpose of marketing and selling these attires. The garments produced using such machine loin loom have a lower price point, rendering them more accessible to individuals belonging to the middle socioeconomic class. However, there remains a preference among certain individuals for backstrap loin loom. In contemporary society, conventional ornaments and jewellery have transitioned from being

commonplace attire to being reserved for exceptional occasions. In recent times, there has been a noticeable trend among individuals, particularly ladies, to adorn themselves with gold jewellery such as earrings, necklaces, and finger rings as a means of displaying their affluent social standing.

Christianity which was introduced to the Naga tribes during the colonial period, has had a profound influence on their traditional practices and beliefs. As Christianity spread to the Phom Naga community by 1929, it brought about changes in their religious and cultural practices. The adoption of Christianity led to a shift in their worldview, and customs. With the acceptance of Christianity, many traditional beliefs and practices associated with attire and ornaments were either abandoned or modified.

One significant change that occurred with the advent of Christianity was the shift from traditional belief system to monotheistic Christian beliefs. The Phom Nagas started embracing Christian values, which emphasized modesty and simplicity in dressing. This led to a decline in the use of elaborate traditional attires and ornaments that were associated with pre-Christian rituals and ceremonies. Furthermore, it is worth noting that in the year 1976, the revival mission successfully extended its reach to the Phom regions, where the local inhabitants were made to abandon their traditional practices and embrace the newly introduced religious beliefs. A significant portion of their ornaments and jewellery were discarded in dense forests and burial sites (Baü-üh, personal communication, June 8, 2023). Due to their perception of these ornaments as being associated with their previous religious belief system, which was deemed as the veneration of malevolent spirits, they promptly without any hesitation chose to dispose all of these personal ornaments and jewellery.

However, despite these, there are also factors that contribute to the continuity of traditional attires and ornaments among the Phom. The idea of cultural preservation plays a

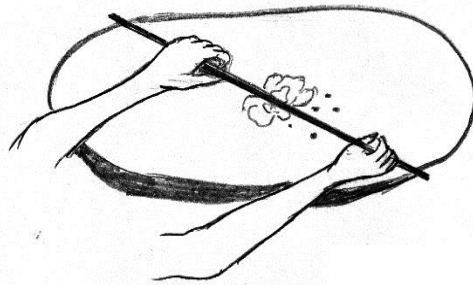
crucial role in maintaining the identity and heritage of indigenous communities. Traditional costumes and ornaments are often considered as symbols of cultural pride and are deeply intertwined with the social fabric of the community. As such, the Phom Naga community preserved their cultural heritage, including their traditional costumes and ornaments to serve as markers of identity, distinguishing them from other communities and reinforcing a sense of belonging. The continuation of these traditions is often bestowed to honour their ancestors and maintain a connection with their roots. Additionally, traditional costumes and ornaments hold significant ceremonial and ritualistic value within the Phom Naga community. They are worn during important cultural events such as festivals, weddings, and religious ceremonies. These occasions provide opportunities for individuals to showcase their traditional attires and ornaments, reinforcing their cultural significance. Moreover, the practicality and functionality of traditional attires also contribute to their continuity.

The changes and continuities observed in the traditional costumes and ornaments of the Phom Naga can be attributed to various factors. Modernisation, globalisation, economic influences, cultural preservation, identity maintenance, ceremonial significance, and practicality all play a role in shaping these changes. While external influences have led to some modification in their traditional attires, the Phom Naga community continues to value and preserve their cultural heritage through the continuation of these traditions in a contemporary fusion way.

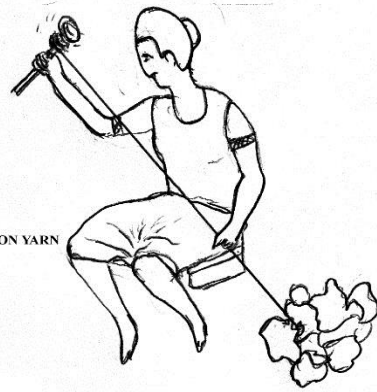
Figure 18

Process of spinning cotton into yarn and weaving

(a) REMOVAL OF SEEDS FROM COTTON



(b) SPINNING OF COTTON YARN



(c) BACKSTRAP LOIN LOOM



Figure 19

Conical head gear/homlu athen



Figure 20

Wild boar teeth neckla



Figure 21

Conch shell earring



Figure 22

Iconic metal head necklace



Figure 23

Dao holder



Figure 24

Loin cloth (küplak)



Figure 25

Waist belt made from the bark of a tree

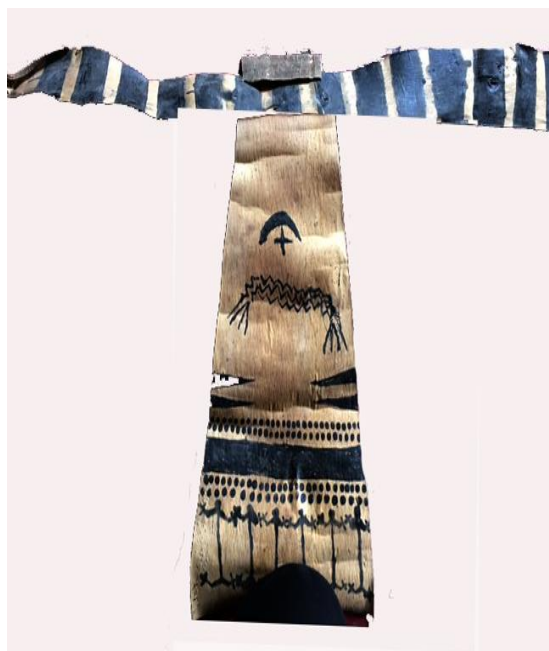


Figure 26

Elephant tusk armbands



Figure 27

Gong (brass plate)



Figure 28

a. Spear (ngo)



b.



Figure 29

a. Hinyü shawl



b. Nyoam Shawl



Figure 30

Mükhen langnyü and langha



Figure 31

A Yongnyah woman with chü sheü earring



Figure 32

Bangles



Figure 33

Yiüknyü necklace



Figure 34

Üngshang yiük



Figure 35

Phop-iy shawl

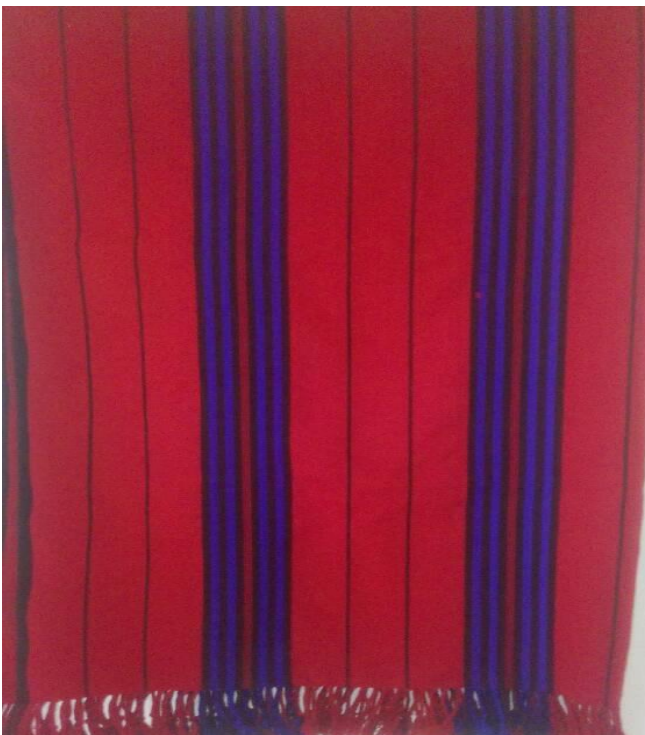


Figure 36

Lakshoung shawl



Figure 37

*Mrs Shosha, from Pongching village
wearing Shaiinei shawl*



Figure 38

Pai ashak



Figure 39

Shaka mekhela



Figure 40

Mükho/owshih mekhela



Figure 41

Kochok mokhola



Figure 42

Soti luli mokhola



Figure 43

Men contemporary attires

a. Hinyü muffler and shawl



b. Embroidered men waist coat



c. Men neckties

Figure 44

Women contemporary attires

a. Lakshoung and phop-iy shawl



b. Shaka mekhela

c. Mükoh vang mekhela

d. Owshih/Mükho mekhela



e. Lakshoung yiük



f. Kokkai khongha (bag)



g. Phomla yiük



CHAPTER -4

ENDANGERED ART FORM: ELEMENTS OF TATTOO AND TRADITIONAL POTTERY MAKING

The practice of tattooing has been a prominent aspect of various cultures throughout history, often associated with the ritual of head hunting. The act served as a method for individuals to demonstrate their courage and achievements in headhunting conflicts, so allowing them to acquire a certain standing within the community. But owing to the introduction of Christianity in 1929 to the Phom region prompted a decline in the custom of headhunting, as it contradicted Christian beliefs. Consequently, the traditional tattooing culture gradually diminished. The art of traditional pottery manufacture is currently facing the threat of extinction, mostly as a result of various causes such as shifting societal perspectives, the influence of globalisation, and the diminishing proficiency in traditional craftsmanship. These art forms possess a profound cultural and historical significance; nonetheless, they confront several obstacles that jeopardise their continuity and preservation.

The art forms of indigenous tattooing and pottery are currently facing endangerment as a result of multiple circumstances that pose significant challenges to their ongoing existence and conservation. Several variables contribute to the phenomenon under examination, namely cultural integration, colonisation, globalisation, erosion of traditional knowledge, and the ramifications of modernisation. The confluence of these several factors has resulted in a decrease in the prevalence of indigenous tattooing and pottery production, hence compromising the survival of these artistic traditions. The process of cultural integration has a notable impact on the vulnerability of indigenous practices such as tattooing and pottery. Indigenous populations have historically endured the effects of colonisation and the imposition of

dominant cultures, resulting in the suppression or discouragement of their traditional practices, such as tattooing and pottery production. Consequently, there has been a waning of enthusiasm among the younger populations, resulting in a downward trend in the perpetuation of these artistic expressions.

The process of colonisation has had adverse effects on the practices of indigenous tattooing and pottery. The act of colonisation frequently resulted in the repression or restriction of indigenous practices due to the imposition of alien cultures and principles. Indigenous communities frequently encountered circumstances that compelled them to relinquish their customary artistic expressions in favour of European or Western artistic conventions. The discontinuity in cultural practices has played a role in the vulnerability of indigenous tattooing and ceramics.

The phenomenon of globalisation has intensified the difficulties encountered in the realms of indigenous tattooing and ceramics. The proliferation of mass-produced commodities and the standardisation of cultural practices have resulted in a decline in the market for traditional indigenous art forms. In light of the prevailing emphasis on mass production within global markets, the economic motivation for indigenous groups to sustain their traditional practises, such as pottery manufacture, has diminished. The erosion of indigenous knowledge systems constitutes a prominent determinant in the jeopardy faced by these artistic expressions. The practises of indigenous tattooing and pottery production frequently exhibit a strong connection to cultural traditions, rituals, and symbolism. Nevertheless, the potential loss of specialist knowledge becomes a concern when older individuals expire without effectively transmitting their wisdom to younger cohorts, so posing a permanent risk of its extinction. The absence of access to this knowledge is a growing difficulty for indigenous groups in maintaining these artistic traditions.

The decrease of indigenous tattooing and pottery has been influenced by the impact of modernisation. In the context of indigenous cultures, the presence of socio-economic pressures and the necessity to accommodate contemporary ways of life may lead to a perception that traditional art forms are comparatively less pertinent or utilitarian. The labour-intensive process involved in pottery production, the recognition of head hunting as a savage practice, and the influence of Christianity in conjunction with the pressures of contemporary society, pose challenges for individuals in committing themselves to these activities.

4.1 Elements of indigenous tattoos

“Tattooing is a form of graphic art or body modification which is marked permanently on the body of a person by pricking pigments into the skin. Body modification as a cultural practice have spanned through ages and deftly infused numerous cultural boundaries” (Frecentese, 2013, p.1). As with other ornaments, tattooing serves to make statement about membership of groups and status within groups. In some cultures, tattooing is a symbol of certain kinds of status that are not achieved by other means. This is not the case with the Nagas, where it would seem that tattooing, which is confined to certain eastern and northern groups, makes statements which in other communities are made with material ornaments. The Naga communities which practice tattooing are the Konyak, Ao, Chang, Sangtam, and Phom (Jacobs, 1990, p.112).

Tattoos frequently possess symbolic connotations that exhibit variation among diverse cultural contexts and individuals. Symbols have the capacity to embody individual convictions, cultural legacy, spiritual or religious connections, social standing, and personal encounters. In Polynesian societies, distinct tattoo designs are employed to communicate social position and genealogical information. Rituals and ceremonies frequently accompany significant life events or transformations. These rituals not only serve as a method of bodily embellishment but also possess profound cultural and spiritual importance.

Tattooing possesses a significant historical heritage throughout several civilizations globally. Throughout the course of history, the practice of tattooing has been observed across a diverse range of contexts, serving numerous functions. These functions are not limited to the establishment of individual identity, safeguarding against malevolent supernatural forces, facilitating significant life transitions, and serving as a means of personal expression. Gaining knowledge about the historical backdrop of tattooing offers valuable perspectives on its cultural relevance and evolutionary trajectory throughout history.

Tattoos can function as a means of self-expression and the construction of personal identity. One's ideals, beliefs, interests, or personal experiences can be reflected by them. Tattoos also have a significant impact on social interactions, as they can function as catalysts for conversations or indicators of group associations. The interpretations ascribed to tattoos are highly subjective and exhibit significant variation across individuals.

4.1.1 Indigenous Phom tattooing culture

In the Phom dialect, the pronunciation of the term “tattoo” is represented as “*hühkokpü*,” with “*hüh*” denoting the concept of a thorn and “*kokpü*” signifying the act of being pricked. According to Yanlom (personal communication, April 24, 2021), the act of tattooing was employed as a means of averting unfavourable omens subsequent to triumphant headhunting expeditions. Additionally, it served as a ritualistic practice by which individuals might expel any perceived transgressions by allowing the release of blood from their bodies, particularly if they believed these transgressions to be associated with the adversaries they had slain. Tattooing was used as a means to symbolise one's lineage as a descendant of the *shahnyü* (tiger) and *shaw* (wolf), highlighting their prowess in combat by likening their actions to those of these formidable animals. The practice of women acquiring tattoos typically commenced upon reaching a level of maturity that enabled them to engage in occupational pursuits and

collaborate with their cohorts, commonly referred to as *aiha shabü*, within their respective domains. Conversely, men typically sought to obtain tattoos subsequent to their induction into the *morung*. Women who obtained tattoos were considered eligible for marriage. Following the completion of the tattooing process on the ladies, men from both their own village and a surrounding villages were invited to participate in the traditional practice of *mylokbü*. This practice involves males engaging in activities such as singing folk songs in an effort to pursue and gain the affection of women. In the event that a male expresses interest in any of these women, he may extend a formal marriage proposal to both the woman and her family. Individuals adorned with tattoos were traditionally regarded as “*bümei li*” or “reborn/born again” in Phom cultural contexts. This designation symbolised their status as warriors, signifying their readiness for marriage and their preparedness to face whatever challenges that life may present. The presence of this tattoo serves as evidence of their participation in a celebratory occasion, specifically the arrival of an enemy’s head within their village. Moreover, according to Kanlong (personal communication, April 24, 2021), tattooing held significant cultural significance within the Phom community, as it was deeply rooted in their traditions. In instances where tattoos were absent, they were regarded as ‘*lan pongpeih*,’ signifying an occurrence that deviated from the natural order and was deemed forbidden within the community. Hence, in the event of the demise of a small kid, it was customary to adorn the child’s body with charcoal markings resembling tattoos, ahead of burial. According to Phongang (personal communication, April 24, 2021), it has been reported that in the village of Yongam, ladies received tattoos on their legs, while males adorned themselves with ear piercings as a symbol of accomplishment after successfully bringing an enemy’s head from the Konyak region. The villagers took a finger off their deceased adversary, and started to adorn themselves with a tattoo and ear piercing.

The Phoms adopted diverse techniques for the practice of tattooing. One approach involved the combustion of desiccated *ayingshü* (the aromatic sap of a shrub referred to as *ayingshü*) over a flame. When the *ayingshü* is ignited, a pot is placed over it to contain the rising smoke. Once fully incinerated, the ashes of *ayingshü*, characterised by its black hue, are gathered. The ashes are combined with the residual water from cooking sticky rice. The components are thoroughly blended until they achieve a cohesive and malleable consistency. The aforementioned mixture is subsequently applied onto the rattan thorns, which serve as implements for tattooing. These thorns are organised and secured using a holder, like a comb, and then punctured onto the skin, allowing the mixture to permeate the skin. Bleeding occurs upon puncturing the skin, subsequently resulting in the formation of the tattoo. Another technique involved the utilisation of a combination of *ayingshü* and pounded charcoal, which were subjected to boiling in an earthenware. During the process of boiling the mixture over a flame, the condensed water or steam that accumulates on the lid of the pot is initially employed to create a design or pattern on the skin. Subsequently, the instruments, namely the rattan thorns, are coated with this condensed water/steam and then applied to the skin by pricking it. According to popular belief, during the process of boiling the mixture over a fire, the presence of a significant amount of condensed water on the lid is thought to indicate future prosperity for those individuals who are to receive tattoos. Conversely, a lesser amount of condensed water is supposed to signify a predetermined fate of poverty. Traditionally, *ayingshü*, also known as sap, was gathered from the *homphet* (*canaruim subulatam*) (figure 47 a & b) tree trunk.

The profession of tattoo artist did not require affiliation with a particular clan. Typically, individuals who possess the ability to perform puncturing procedures with precision and without inducing septic conditions, as well as those who have proficiency in creating

intricate designs, are often selected for the role of a tattoo artist. However, it is worth noting that eligibility for this profession is typically limited to senior individuals who bear tattoos on their own bodies. Nevertheless, the pursuit as a tattoo artist was stigmatised among young individuals due to its association known as *lan* (being unusual or deviating from societal norms). If there is a lack of tattoo artists in their community, individuals have the option to seek the services of artists from surrounding or other villages. However, as per P. Shingnyü (personal communication, May 8, 2018), it was often held that the hands of other individuals may potentially transmit infections or cause non-healing wounds. Consequently, the practice of tattooing was restricted to a select few village chiefs who possessed the authority to administer tattoos to their people. In the cultural practice of the Phom community, it was customary for men to receive tattoos from male practitioners, whereas women would typically seek the services of female tattoo artists. Each tattoo possesses a certain significance that warrants its display. Tattoos were observed among individuals of both genders, albeit with distinctive variations in form and pattern. Females hailing from the Yingnyü and Shemong ranges, adorned their bodies with tattoos on their chin and legs. Conversely, ladies from the Chingmei range only inked their legs, with a subset of individuals extending the tattoos encircling their belly and reaching up to their breasts. “The Phom men tattooed on their chest after taking the first head. The pattern consists of four lines which springs from the navel, diverging as they ascend, and turn off into two large concentric curves over each breast, the line broadening out to about one inch in width at the middle of the curves” (Rahman, 2015, p. 14).

The *hampak* tattoo design was traditionally applied by any men who successfully brought an enemy’s head inside their community. Individuals who presented the remaining components of the physique were also deemed acceptable for this *hampak* (figure 45 a). The

shahla pattern was engraved onto the bodies of individuals who had successfully eliminated a minimum of ten enemies (figure 45 c). It was customary for all men to have a *tüpa kong* tattoo pattern on their nose, regardless of their war achievements or lack thereof (figure 45 b). In Phom cultural contexts, women were observed to have tattoos as a result of specific circumstances. These circumstances typically involved the bringing of an enemy's head by male members of their peer group within their village, or their victory in headhunting warfare. The women from upper range areas initially chose to have a tattoo on her chin (figure 46 a), then afterwards opted to have tattoos on her legs (figure 46 b, c & e), following the successful headhunting of an enemy's head by male members from their village. The women's tattoos lacked explicit designations. If the tattoo was applied in the vicinity of the chin, it was referred to as *ju nyang/hühkok*, denoting a mouth tattoo. Conversely, if the tattoo was made on the legs, it was designated as *laa nyang* or *laa hühkok*, signifying a leg tattoo.

After achieving their tattoos, men exhibited a sense of pride in displaying them. It functioned as a perpetual symbol of his courageousness and esteemed position as a warrior. Tattoos were employed by women as a means to signify their transition into maturity. Prior to it, she is commonly identified as "*aa laanyü*" (a term denoting a female being in a state of servitude). Women were granted permission to marry after receiving tattoos on their chin and legs. According to Tangpe (personal communication, February 8, 2022), it has been seen that following the acquisition of a tattoo by a woman, there is a possibility of a male individual that may extend a marriage proposal to her. A woman adorned with tattoos may engage in the practice of *aiha shapü*, wherein individuals within her peer group collaborate to help cultivate each other paddy fields. However, her ability to provide babysitting or engage in manual labour within others' fields becomes restricted after receiving tattoo on her body.

Due to the requirement of barter-based compensation for the services of the tattoo artist, not many individuals were fortunate enough to undergo the process of receiving a tattoo. Historically, women who did not possess tattoos were often subjected to either enslavement or engaged in wage labour, wherein they provided their services in the cultivation of others' agricultural lands in return for a modest remuneration of a grain of rice. The local population adhered to a traditional practice known as *nyeübü*, where they maintained a one-day period of seclusion within their own villages, refraining from venturing outside or engaging in agricultural activities. This practice was specifically observed in cases where an individual that had passed away without having received a tattoo and afterwards underwent a burial that lacked the necessary ceremonial procedures.

In the past, tattoos were commonly administered in a collective manner or batch wise, where multiple individuals would receive them simultaneously or in a sequential manner within a single day. This practice was sometimes accompanied by a celebratory event referred to as a "tattoo feast," during which pigs and chickens were ritually slaughtered. The tattoo artists were provided with a selection of dietary items, including vegetables and meat. According to information provided by Tangpe (personal communication, February 8, 2022), a total of twelve portions of flesh/meat were allocated to the right hand of a tattoo artist, while the left hand received seven portions. This procedure was implemented as a preventive measure to mitigate the exacerbation of the wounds. Both the tattooist and the recipient of the tattoo meticulously documented the healing process of the tattoo for a duration of twelve days. They were restricted the means to communicate with each other and hence remained confined to their own residences. This was observed in order to mitigate the risk of infection in the incisions and prevent the tattoo from losing its opacity. In preparation for receiving a tattoo, it was customary for a female individual to undergo head shaving at least five days prior to the scheduled tattoo

session. However, it is important to recognise that women from few villages under upper ranges area of Phom regions did not maintain long hair until the introduction of Christianity in their communities. Consequently, the practice of shaving the head before a tattooing session was not uniformly observed in all Phom villages. It is worth noting that in certain villages, a group of individuals who bore tattoos would reside exclusively in a designated dwelling where the tattooing process took place, strictly prohibiting any kind of external guests or visitors from entering those premises. They return to their respective homes the following day. This was followed and practice in order to enhance its brightness and clarity of the tattoo. The consumption of fish was deferred until the wounds had fully healed due to the belief that fish consumption could potentially disrupt the integrity of the tattoo by means of licking it off.

Figure 45

Phom men tattoo pattern

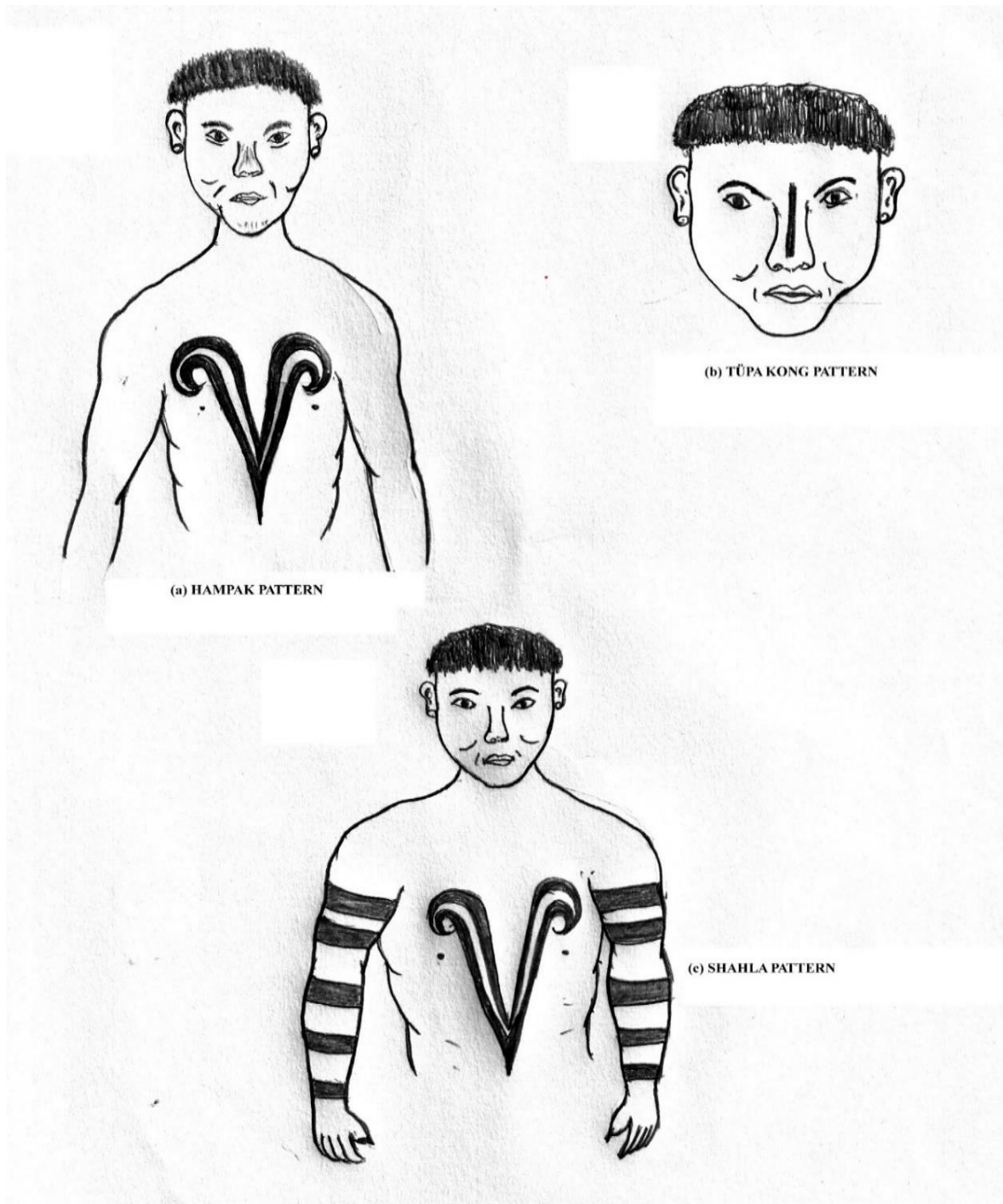


Figure 46

Phom women tattoo pattern

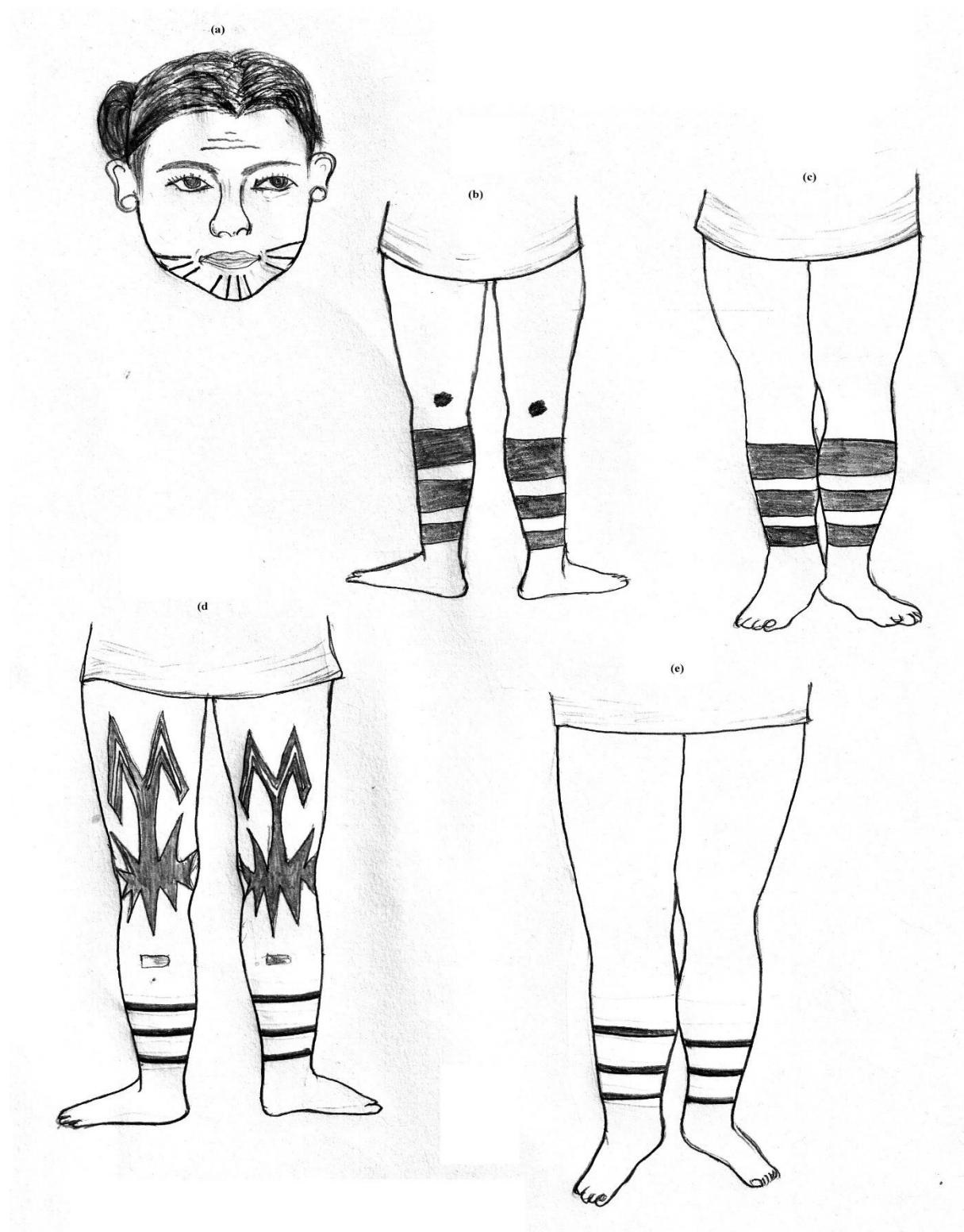


Figure 47

Homphet(*canarium subulatum*) branches with fruit

A whole and a cut homphet



Some case studies undertaken pertaining to the subject of tattoos are presented below:

Case 1

Figure 48

Wan-i tattoo pattern



Name -Wan-i (interviewed on April 24, 2021)

Age- 80 years

Village - Yongam

Name of the tattoo pattern – La-nying kok-bü (Nian la)

Tattoo artist – Yimang from Yongam village.

The individual obtained her initial tattoo at Nian village, which subsequently became extinct. Therefore, she underwent the process of receiving her second tattoo in her own village of Yongam, under the artistic guidance of Yimang.

Case 2

Figure 49

Movang tattoo pattern



Name – Movang (interviewed on April 24, 2021)

Age – 90,

Village – Yongam

Tattoo name – Shemong/Yongam la

Tattoo artist – Yimang from Yongam village.

Case 3

Figure 50

Inyü tattoo pattern



Name – Inyü (interviewed on April 24, 2021)

Age -80

Village – Yongam

Tattoo name – Shemong/Yongam la

Tattoo artist – Yimang from Yongam village.

It is worth noting that Movang and Inyü share a sibling relationship as sisters.

Case 4

Figure 51

Shaje tattoo pattern



Name – Shaje (interviewed on April 22, 2021)

Age – 108

Village – Kangching

Tattoo artist – Shuching from Tamlu Konyak village, whose origin is from Wanching.

She was tattooed at Mr. Mankup's place at Kangching village. According to the account provided, the process of a tattoo artist sketching a design prior to creating a permanent tattoo is referred to as *hao-thak*. There are two distinct groups of tattoos: the Tamlu, Kangching, and Anaikhai group, collectively known as *hük shak*, and the Yongnyah, Tangha, and Yongshei group, referred to as *hüh lom*.

Case -5

Figure 52

Yungmei tattoo pattern



Name – Yungmei (interviewed on February 26, 2019)

Age – 90

Village – Yongnyah

She obtained a tattoo encircling her umbilicus, influenced by her father's warrior lineage and his notable triumph in decapitating an enemy. The emblem served as an indication of her lineage as the offspring of a warrior.

Case -5

Figure 53

Taüdüng tattoo pattern



Name – Taüdüng (interviewed on April 5, 2019)

Age – 95

Village – Tangha

Tattoo name – *Hampak*

He had shown prowess in headhunting warfare, achieving a notable status as a successful warrior. This distinction was symbolised by a tattoo, which was acquired by the act of eliminating four adversaries. He proudly displayed this tattoo as a testament to their achievements. Subsequently, he embraced the Christian faith and devoted a significant portion of his time to engaging in prayer both within the confines of his personal abode and within the local village church.

4.2 Elements of Phom traditional Pottery

The art of pottery manufacturing is a time-honoured activity that entails the manipulation of clay to fashion utilitarian or ornamental items. These objects are subsequently treated to intense heat during the firing process, resulting in the solidification of the clay and the formation of a resilient substance. Pottery making comprises a diverse range of factors, encompassing techniques, materials, cultural relevance, and creative expressions. The process of pottery manufacturing encompasses a variety of techniques utilised to mould and embellish clay. The techniques encompass different stages of hand-building processes, including pinching, coiling, and slab construction, with wheel-throwing techniques. Each technique necessitates the acquisition of certain skills and knowledge in order to skilfully operate the clay.

Pottery is commonly crafted using clay, a naturally sourced material. Various varieties of clay exhibit unique characteristics that impact their ability to be worked with, rates of contraction, and temperatures required for burning.

The practice of pottery production has seen significant transformations over numerous civilizations spanning millennia. The examination of the historical progression of pottery offers valuable insights into the evolution of technology, the establishment of trade networks, and the facilitation of cultural exchanges. Furthermore, it aids in comprehending the stylistic influences and inventions that have played a significant role in shaping pottery traditions.

The production of pottery in the Phom community is notably characterised by the exceptional skill exhibited by women hailing from the villages of Pongo and Yongphang. The two pottery villages currently extant in the Phom region are, in fact, the sole remaining ones. The pottery is meticulously created, with certain individuals in the village acquiring their knowledge and skills through a combination of personal learning, teaching, or inheritance from maternal ancestors. According to oral traditions, it has been ascertained that several additional

communities purportedly engaged in the aforementioned practice, despite ceasing their activities due to the unavailability of fundamental raw materials such as clay. The production of pottery in the villages of Pongo and Yongphang is facilitated through the utilisation of locally available raw materials and indigenous technology. They believed that they had been honing their skills in this particular art form ever since their time in Yingnyü Ching, and subsequently imparted this knowledge to the present generation. It is believed that the individual credited with pioneering the art of pottery was Mrs. Bithakhamla, hailing from the village of Yongphang. Subsequently, consequent to her marital union with a resident of the Pongo village, she proceeded to impart her knowledge of pottery-making to the female inhabitants of Pongo village (Shemei, personal communication, February 19, 2019).

The Pongo potters engage in the collection of fresh clay from a specific location adjacent to the Yongmon River, which serves as a natural boundary between the Pongo region and Jakphang, a village inhabited by the Konyak community. This particular site, referred to as “*hamkhe*” in the local dialect, derives its name from the combination of “*ham*” meaning clay and “*khe*” meaning hole. Consequently, the clay obtained from this particular source is commonly referred to as “*laiüshong*.” Another type of clay, known as *yangshong*, is characterised by its reddish hue. This clay is obtained from a specific location named Yangshong, located near *shotha*, which translates to “small stream” in the local language. Additionally, a third type of clay, referred to as *yemyan*, is obtained from pottery fragments (Chaüla, personal communication, May 7, 2018). The inhabitants of Yongphang village procure fresh clay, referred to as *hamnyak* and *pangtak*, from a location in close proximity to a stream, and a site commonly referred to as Üphaoshe. Another type of clay, referred to as *echem* clay, is obtained from a specific location known as *Echem*. Another raw material utilised in this context is known as *yemyan*, which refers to a fragment of pottery.

4.2.1 Restriction and taboo

Pottery manufacture entails adherence to a number of regulations and taboos that necessitate unwavering observance. There exist certain restrictions and taboos pertaining to the process of mining clay using leaves or branches from any tree, one of which is the requirement to ensure that the chosen area is thoroughly cleansed of any foreign particles prior to digging.

In order to preclude the presence of guests, it is imperative that family members are informed in advance of their visit to the premises for the purpose of clay collection. In the event that individuals failed to follow the appointed day, they may instead encounter small stones instead of clay. If they are well maintained, they often receive significant quantities of *laüshong* clay. To prevent the pots from cracking, it is advisable to refrain from engaging in conversations with unfamiliar individuals both during the visit and departure from the site (Nyeila, personal communication, May 7, 2018). In the event of a death within the community, pottery production ceases.

According to Shingnyü (personal communication, May 8, 2018), it is necessary to utilise firewood that lacks any discernible aroma in order to facilitate the drying process of the vessels. The individuals residing in the home are required to maintain a state of complete purity. It is imperative that no occurrences of mortality or childbirth take place on the specific day when the clay is gathered, pots are crafted, and the vessels are afterwards dried and subjected to the firing process.

It is advisable for women to refrain from engaging in sexual activity with their husbands throughout the pottery production process until the pottery has undergone the necessary drying process over the fire. Any sour or citrus fruit, such as sumac, salt, ginger, perilla seeds, chaff, and husk, should be avoided in the vicinity of pot manufacturing areas (Jenyang, personal communication, May 8, 2018). Pottery-making is a practise exclusively

reserved for women. Women who are experiencing menstruation are subjected to stringent limitations. It is advisable for women residing in a household to refrain from engaging in clay collection, pot-making, drying, and firing activities throughout the duration of their menstrual cycle.

It is recommended to refrain from visiting the clay collection site during inclement weather due to the anticipated deterioration of weather conditions. In the event of a storm, it is advised for villagers to identify the individual responsible for bringing *laüshong* from *hamkhe* and request their prompt return of this clay to its original position, therefore effectively resolving the storm (Amaü, personal communication, May 8, 2018).

Visitors and pregnant women are prohibited from accessing the vicinity where pottery firing takes place. The production of the perforated/steaming pot is restricted to individuals who are not single women or young mothers. It is postulated that individuals may encounter ear obstruction or auditory impairment, ultimately leading to the condition of deafness. As stated by Amaü (personal communication, May 8, 2018) the production of this item is limited to elderly women.

No potters involved in the firing process should be interrupted by any external communications. Furthermore, it is widely held that during the process of firing pottery, if a pregnant daughter-in-law is in attendance, she is traditionally requested to initiate the ignition of the fire. This practice is rooted in the notion that the combustion will effectively eliminate any unfavourable signs or omens.

4.2.2 Steps involved in gathering of clay and manufacturing of pots

Both males and females actively participate and engage in collective activities to collect clay. The drying process of clay renders it suitable for collection between the months of November to April and not suitable during the monsoon season. Hence, it is recommended to refrain from

engaging in the collection of clay or the creation of pottery during monsoon. The recently acquired clay obtained from the clay source is retained for a duration of one year or longer.

Tools

The implements employed in the fabrication of pottery items are:

Appang (paddle)

Longmet (Pestle)

He-ang (paddle wrapped with aluminium wire)

He-aap (paddle wrapped with cane)

Hamshü yong (anvil)

Yemyan (broken pots used for storing water while making pots)

Dükkam (neck part of broken pots used as pot holder)

Vongnah (bamboo split used for clearing off the excess clay)

Following is the stepwise method of the sequential procedures entailed in the production of traditional Phom clay pottery.

In the initial stage, prior to the amalgamation of the three clay varieties, each clay type undergoes individual pounding or grinding. The clay is pounded using a *hamkai mü*, which is a pestle, on a flat, sizable stone or a wooden mortar. The three types of clay are combined in the subsequent approximate proportions: *hamkhe* weighs 2 kg, *shotha* weighs 1 kg, and *yemyan* also weighs 1 kg. The utilisation of a *hamkhe* leaf, specifically a leaf derived from the wild taro plant, is employed as a means to envelop the clay material following to its amalgamation with water and subsequently keep it for a duration ranging from two to three days, or sometimes up to a week. The wrapping of the mixed clay is contingent upon the size of the pot to be made. The Yongphang potters utilise a balanced proportion of *hannyak* and *echem*, with a minor quantity of *pantak* for the purpose of achieving coloration, and a small quantity of *yemyan* to

prevent the occurrence of cracks. In order to minimise moisture loss from the clay, the lump is enveloped by a wild taro leaf and preserved for a duration of some few days.

The next step as mentioned by Vasa (2023) “initially, a cavity is created in a lump of clay mass with the aid of a wooden pestle. As soon as the vessel has acquired the desirable size and depth, a dabber, or paddle, wrapped with aluminium wire is employed for shaping, which is performed by holding the anvil with left hand inside the vessel, while pressing the vessel wall against the movement of a dabber. To shape the shoulder and lower half of the vessel, it is placed on the upturned base of a broken vessel, which function as a pot stand. The neck and rim parts of broken vessels are also used as cradles for the formation and shaping of new vessels. The final step is decorating the neck with vertical bands, using the edge of the paddle, and the lower half of a vessel with horizontal bands; the decoration elements, or bands, on the neck and the lower half of the vessel are not aligned but slightly overlapping each other. The angle of the paddle impressions is purely a function of how the pot is held during shaping, and the uniform vertical bands on the neck were left by the edge of the corded paddle, rather than by a comb-like tool” (Vasa, 2023, p.8). The pots are thereafter subjected to a drying process lasting for a duration of one week, during which they are placed on a rack positioned above the kitchen hearth.

In the subsequent step, the pots are transported to the periphery of the settlement or the surrounding forested area for the purpose of undergoing the firing process. While it is not advisable to construct a burning kiln using stones, the foundation of the kiln is reinforced by fire-resistant stones that are impervious to damage. Once the kiln is constructed, placing the firewood in horizontal position, the pots are strategically placed in a slanted position to prevent the entry of smoke inside the pots. The placement of larger pots is prioritised, followed by the ensuing arrangement of smaller pots. The lids of the pots are placed above or besides the

vessels. Once more, a stack of wood is placed atop the pots, followed by the ignition of a fire. The fire is then permitted to burn until the wood has been completely transformed into ashes. Bamboo and *mahpü* (sumac tree) are commonly selected as fuel sources for the firing process because of their advantageous properties. Bamboo is highly flammable, facilitating the burning process, while *mahpü* is chosen for its adhesive qualities, believed to enhance the strength of the pots and prevent cracking. After the burning process is concluded, a long bamboo or tree pole is used to lift the pots, positioning them on the opposing side. Following that, the pots are smeared with ashes and boiled taro, applying them in both vertical and horizontal orientations. The application of yam as a sealant is recommended on pots to prevent cracks. They believed that applying a layer of yam onto the pots following the burning process would enhance their durability and prevent water leakage. In addition to it, “this symbolizes for Phom potters that the transformation of the raw material (clay) into vessels for food preparation – the preparation of taro – is completed and that from this moment, the item belongs to the potters, not to the mud or the soil” (Vasa, 2023, p.8).

The concluding phase involves the transportation of the kiln-fired pottery to their designated residences. After the pots have undergone the cooling process, a cluster of foliage is employed to remove the residual ashes from the pots. The cleaned pots are then transported back to the household utilising a carrying basket known as *hanglu* and *koh*, which is skilfully crafted from bamboo slips (figure 61 b and c).

4.2.3 Different types and functions of pots

The two Phom villages i.e Pongo and Yongphang are known for its production of a wide variety of indigenous pottery. There are seven types of traditional pots commonly made and used for a number of purposes: the *owdük* (figure 55 a), which is a specially designed vessel with applique is utilised for yeast storage, the *ngü dük*, a perforated pot at the base is mostly

employed for steaming sticky rice (figure 55 b). The term *kangkang dük* refers to a type of cooking vessel that is characterised by a single handle (figure 55 c). “*Lanja dük*” refers to a pot that lacks a handle or any decorative elements (figure 55 d). The *thong dük*, commonly known as the pot with two handles or the ear's pot, is a traditional vessel used for several purposes (figure 55 e). The production of this particular pot was discouraged subsequent to the introduction of Christianity in the village because to its association with the historical practice of headhunting, wherein it was believed to represent the cut-off head of an enemy. The term “*yimbi dük*” refers to a concept known as the “pot of the dead soul” in Phom cultural settings (figure 55 f). The diminutive vessel, measuring 10 cm in height, was employed in the process of rice preparation for the purpose of nourishing the soul of the departed individual, and thereafter conserved within its boundaries of the cemetery. “*Meshü dük*” refers to a large container utilised for the storage of bamboo shoots and grains within a granary (figure 55 g).

These vessels have been referred to as “*yongphangdakkoh*” by the inhabitants of Hükphang and Pongching villages, which translates to “Yongphang pots.” In contrast, some villagers have designated them as “*aaching dük*,” where “*aaching*” denotes Pongo and “*dük*” signifies a pot.

These vessels were commonly employed for culinary purposes, as well as for the preservation of grains for future consumption and the containment of skeletal remains following decomposition. Furthermore, it was provided to the labourers as a form of daily remuneration. Pots were exchanged for other commodities, including salt, clothing, and food items, with neighbouring Phom villages as well as with adjacent villages such as Yampi and Shaosho of the Chang community under Tuensang district, Ükha and Jakphang a Konyak tribe under Mon district, Chuchu and Ünger an Ao villages from the district Mokokchung. Currently, the pottery product is solely accessible for procurement within the Phom regions, as

residents have the option to purchase the required items within their respective villages or at Longleng with monetary means.

Figure 54

Tools used for making pottery

a.Appang, he-aap, longmet and hamshü yong (paddle, paddle tied with cane, pestle, and anvil)



b.He-aap (paddle wrapped with cane used for cord impression)



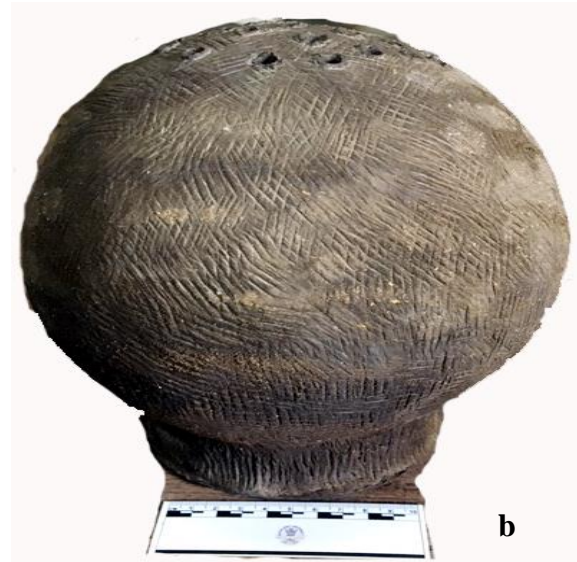
Figure 55

Different type of pots

a. Owdüik



b. Ngü dük



c. Kangkang dük



d. Lanja dük



e. Thong dük



f. Yimbi dük



g. Meshü dük



Figure 56

Pots drying on the rack above the hearth



Figure 57

Pots right after firing



Figure 58

A Yongphang woman making pot



Figure 59

A Pongo woman making pot



Figure 60

Researcher with the oldest potter's from Pongo



CHAPTER -5

SUSTAINABILITY AND TRADITIONAL USES OF BAMBOO

5.1 Sustainability of bamboo

Bamboo is a plant known for its versatility and high sustainability, which has been utilised by diverse cultures across the globe for an extended period of time. Bamboo has held considerable significance in the daily life of the Nagas, a community residing in Northeast India, where it has served as a fundamental resource for sustenance, habitation, and economic means. This chapter aims to examine the sustainability and traditional applications of bamboo within the Phom Naga community, emphasising its significance in their cultural practices and overall lifestyle.

Bamboo is often regarded as an exceptionally sustainable plant because of its rapid growth rate, significant output, and minimal water demands. The growth rate of this organism can reach up to one metre each day, enabling it to reach maturity within a relatively short period of three to five years, in contrast to the significantly longer maturation time required by trees, which can span many decades. The quick rate of development exhibited by bamboo enables it to effectively store substantial quantities of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, thereby serving as an efficient means of mitigating the impacts of climate change. Moreover, bamboo exhibits a remarkable capacity to thrive with low water usage and without the need for excessive pesticide application, rendering it a very suitable agricultural option for regions characterised by resource scarcity.

The historical connection between Nagas and bamboo may be traced back to ancient times. Bamboos are found in abundance in locations inhabited by the Nagas, where they cover every glen and forest. Consequently, the availability of this resource has fostered a symbiotic relationship or dependence between the Nagas and bamboos. The life cycle of a Naga

commences within a receptacle constructed from bamboo, and ultimately culminates in a last resting place enclosed by a coffin made of bamboo. “With a grove of bamboo I am always a rich man”- once remarked aptly by an old man of Khari village. He says, “I construct my house with bamboo, use bamboo utensils and equipment in the bamboo house, burn dried bamboo as fuel, use bamboo torches and eat bamboo pickles.” This statement illustrates how deep is his attachment to this plant *gramineane* (Ao, 1968, p.71-72). Similar account has been mentioned by Major V.K. Anand where he mentions that “bamboo is the life of the Nagas, it being as important as the warm rays of the sun. The Nagas do not use either tubs, buckets, cups or tumblers. Water is carried and stored in broad day light. The beds and other furniture are all made of bamboo or timber. Split bamboo is used in making drains for conveying water from higher level to the lower region. Another bamboo novelty was the tobacco pipe. Raw shoots of bamboo are also cooked to form a part of their food. Bamboo has been equally useful in making punjis. Bows and arrows and a variety of traps for animals are all made of bamboo” (Anand, 1967, p.43). Bamboos have been of great importance in the cultural and practical aspects of the Nagas’ existence. Bamboos have endured for millennia due to their diverse applications, rendering them an invaluable resource. The acquisition of raw materials from this source had a significant role in sustaining their social, economic, and cultural well-being. Bamboo was utilised in the production of a diverse range of everyday necessities, including household articles, garments, and decorative accessories. The utilisation of bamboo and the conspicuous existence of bamboo within the territory of the Nagas serve as evident indicators of the Nagas’ autonomous lifestyle. The reliance on external sources was not a common practise within the historical Naga society, and the significance of bamboos in the daily lives of the Nagas has great importance. “The most important species of bamboo found in the Nagaland are *dendroclamus homiltonii*, from which the best type of splints for basket work are extracted,

bambusa bamboo, best suited for house construction, *Melocana bamboo soides*, suitable for making floor and walls of a Naga house and *Bambusa tulda* and *Teinostachyum*” (Ao,1968,p.72). In addition to its employment as a construction material for residential structures and its significance in everyday routines, bamboo is also consumed by the Nagas as a customary dietary component.

5.2 Types of Bamboo available in Phom region and its uses

The Phom region is marked by a diverse range of natural resources, which play an essential role in supporting the livelihoods and ensuring the long-term survival of the local people. Bamboo is a crucial resource upon which the population relies for their daily sustenance. In the Phom dialect, the term “*vong*” functions as a linguistic equivalent to the word “bamboo.” Bamboo is typically cultivated throughout the months of February and March, with harvesting typically taking place from September to March. This cultivation and harvesting schedule is mostly observed when bamboo is intended for use in house construction and the production of various baskets for everyday purposes, as it helps mitigate the risk of infestation by pests and termites. Alternatively, it can be collected at any time of the year as needed. Bamboo shoots are usually collected between the months of July to August, a period in which it is advised to refrain from harvesting bamboo.

The Phom region is home to various species of bamboo, which can be classified into the following types:

(i)*Bambusa utilis*: This is often known as *nget* among the local communities, is a species of bamboo. It is frequently used in various significant applications, such as its incorporation in residential construction. Specifically, it serves as auxiliary posts that provide essential support to the overall structural integrity of a house. The utilisation of *nget* is also observed in the establishment of enclosures and barriers surrounding residential dwellings and privately owned

land within forested and jungle environments. *Nget*, because of its durable characteristics, is commonly employed in the fabrication of handles for tools such as machetes, axes, spades, hammers, and others. Additionally, this bamboo is frequently utilised in the construction of *mechang* floors, which serve as *verandah*. In the present era, this particular species of bamboo is additionally utilised in the production of a diverse range of things, including cups, and is distinguished by its comparatively elevated market value in comparison to other bamboo varieties.

(ii) *Müng vong (bambusa balcooa)*: This is commonly utilised as a purlin for roofing purposes in the construction of houses. Additionally, it can often be used as a substitute for tree trunks as the main post of a house. If necessary, it is used for flooring a residential dwelling. There exist two distinct variations of *müng vong*, namely the smaller and the larger variety. The smaller variety of bamboo provides edible bamboo shoots, whereas the larger variety is typically not harvested for this purpose. This is due to the limited availability of the larger bamboo type, which cannot be cultivated in large quantities. Harvesting its bamboo shoots for eating would result in economic loss or wastage. Currently, there is a prevalent usage of *müng vong* in concrete slab *dhalai* construction as a substitute for wooden planks. This is due to the fact that one *müng vong* may cover three to four rows, whereas a wooden plank can only cover a single row. Consequently, this substitution offers economic convenience. Furthermore, it is widely employed in the construction of communal facilities, such as community halls, that serves as multifunctional space for multitude of purposes and activities.

(iii) *Vongnyü*: This is scientifically known as *dendrocalamus homiltonii*, and holds a special place among the Phom community. *Lung*, a bamboo strip which is a kind of rope, finds extensive application across various domains due to its significant practicality. During the construction of houses, this was employed to connect the various components of the structure

in situations where nails were not yet discovered or were not accessible. The strip of bamboo is utilised in the production of a range of everyday items that serve different purposes. These include *aam* (mat), *shai* (carrying basket), *ou dou* (chicken coop), *mühdou* (basket), *anshok* (large basket used for storing grains in a granary), *hub* (small basket), *om* (used for winnowing husk/chaff from rice), *doulu* (basket with a lid for storing dried food items), and various others. In addition to these applications, *vongnyü* is commonly used for the construction of temporary fence in different settings when needed in times of emergency. Furthermore, the bamboo frame, composed of interwoven split bamboo, is utilised as a structural element for housing walls, also derived from the aforementioned bamboo species. The bamboo shoot, which holds prominence as a food component within the Phom population, is widely regarded as having the most favourable taste when sourced from this particular bamboo species. Traditional steaming methods involve making use of bamboo tubes to cook a variety of food items like as fish, meat, and rice, resulting in a distinct and notable flavour and taste.

(iv) *Ah-vong (melocana bamboo soides)*: This has been commonly used in the construction of bamboo frames with diverse patterns and designs, serving as walls in houses since ancient times and as partition walls between rooms. This practice predates the usage of bricks and timber planks by the Phom ancestors. The bamboo tubes were utilised for the purpose of transporting and storing water sourced from rivers or streams, specifically for domestic consumption. The process often involved the extraction of nodes from the ring sections of bamboo, resulting in the creation of hollow structures capable of storing significant volumes of water. The preservation of dried seeds and seedlings intended for sowing in the upcoming season was achieved by storing them in this bamboo tubes (figure 73). This practice was based on the belief that the seeds would remain intact and unaffected by spoilage when stored within these bamboo containers. In ancient times, prior to the existence of lockers and almirahs,

bamboo tubes served as a means to securely store money, coinciding with the emergence of currency. The Phom people asserts their preference for consuming black tea prepared through the process of boiling it within this bamboo tubes. Currently, there is a notable trend wherein several persons engage in the production of bamboo frames, using this bamboo as their primary material. These frames are subsequently marketed and sent to urban regions, resulting in significant financial gains for the producers. Consequently, this economic activity contributes to their financial well-being and stability.

(v) *Dendrocalamus brandisii*: The local term for this is known as *go vong*, which is a species of bamboo that is mostly employed for temporary applications. This particular entity is alternatively referred to as *shan pong happü*, a term denoting its utility during times of need. Tent dwellings are commonly constructed using this material in forest or jungle settings for camping activities, as well as in the construction of temporary halls for various occasions. The primary source of bamboo shoots is derived from the bamboo plant. It is widely prevalent in forested and tropical regions.

(vi) *Chiha vong*: This is scientifically known as *teinostachyum dullooa*. This particular species of bamboo is utilised for many tasks and functions. This particular bamboo variety stands out by its exceptionally slender dimensions when compared to the other bamboos under discussion. The construction of ceilings in residential dwellings and granaries involves the use of split bamboo, which is skilfully woven into frames. This bamboo can be used as well in the making of *ashüm* or *anshok*, which serves as a receptacle for storing grains within a granary. These baskets have the capacity to hold approximately 50-100 tin of rice grains. Due to its inherent softness and lightweight properties, this material finds application in a wide range of diverse tasks.

(vii) *Ngoha*: This is scientifically known as *bambusa tulda*, a species of bamboo recognised by its narrow dimensions. Additionally, it serves for temporary projects with a maximum duration of one year. The consumption of bamboo shoots from this particular bamboo species is not preferred due to its inherent bitter flavour. It is noteworthy that *müing vong* and *ngoha vong* exhibit a recurring pattern of disappearance for extended periods following seed-bearing, only to re-emerge after a gap of some years from their own seeds.

(viii) *Dendrocalamus strictus*: This is often known as *iy-vong*, a species of bamboo that is found in the Phom region. This bamboo is commonly employed as a type of rope for securing diverse objects and materials, as well as for crafting numerous essential commodities. Additionally, it can be used in the construction of fences and flooring within residential structures.

(ix) *Bambusa vulgaris*: This bamboo is locally known as *meihang vong*. The cultivation of this bamboo was not a traditional practice during the ancestral period of the Phom community. However, it was introduced at a later stage by acquiring saplings from nearby regions such as Assam. Presently, it is widely employed in the context of concrete residential construction to provide reinforcement for various constituent materials and structural elements of the dwelling. Additionally, it is employed in the making of ladders. One notable attribute of this particular species of bamboo is that its durability is directly influenced by the timing of its harvest. When collected after a three-year growth period, the bamboo exhibits a lifespan of three years when utilised for any given purpose. Conversely, if picked after two years of growth, the bamboo demonstrates a tendency to survive for a duration of two years exclusively.

5.3 Traditional uses of bamboo

For decades, the people of Phom were using bamboo for a multitude of reasons. The following are examples of the traditional applications of bamboo within the Phom Naga community.

Bamboo shoots serve as a fundamental dietary component among the Phom population. It is typically gathered at their early stages of growth, when they possess a desirable level of tenderness. Subsequently, they are frequently utilised in the preparation of culinary dishes such as stews. The shoots possess a significant nutritional profile, containing ample amounts of protein, dietary fibre, and several vitamins, so rendering them a crucial component of their dietary regimen. Bamboo shoots are subjected to pounding and subsequent juice extraction. The practice of storing and preserving pounded fleshy bamboo shoots and their juice is widely used in the culinary preparation of curry, particularly when meat is involved. This is attributed to the belief that incorporating either the juice or fermented bamboo shoots into the curry recipe can effectively mitigate the occurrence of stomach upset or gastrointestinal disturbances.

The utilisation of bamboo is prevalent in Naga architecture, namely in the fabrication of various types of houses. Bamboo possesses inherent qualities of flexibility and durability, rendering it a very suitable material for constructing structures capable of withstanding the adverse weather conditions prevalent in the region.

Bamboo serves as a crucial means of sustenance by generating numerous items to Phom Nagas, since earliest time. The material is utilised for the production of a diverse range of goods, including household items for daily needs. The following are examples of objects that are produced using bamboo since time immemorial.

(i) Carrying baskets encompass a diverse range of types, each serving a distinct purpose. The item in discussion held substantial significance within the Phom community, particularly among women. The carrying baskets are constructed with strips of bamboo.

Shaidou: This carrying basket under features a circular pattern composed of bamboo and cane strips. The item in question is utilised for the transportation of firewood from forested areas,

vegetables from agricultural fields, as well as the retrieval of water from natural sources through the usage of bamboo tubes, among other purposes (figure 61a).

Hanglu: A traditional carrying basket, employed for the transportation of harvested vegetables such as taro and tapioca from the agricultural fields to the village or dwellings (figure 61b).

Koh: It is used for the purpose of transporting harvested rice from the paddy field to the household. This carrying basket is securely bound within the structure through the interweaving of bamboo strips, so decreasing the risk of spillage during transportation from the field to the village (figure 61c).

Hangman: It's a customary gift bestowed to a daughter upon her marriage and relocation to her husband's residence. The hangman along with a *dao*, spade, hand weeder, and *baak* (head strap for conveniently carrying a basket) are given to the bride by her parents. The aforementioned items are essential instruments for agricultural cultivation. The groom's relatives and family members will assess these items and provide their consent. Upon the demise of the bride, it is customary for these items to be returned to either her parents or, in the event of their absence, her brothers. This practise is commonly referred to as *baak-hi-koh-hang* in Phom customary practices (Plate figure 61d).

(ii) *Mühdou*: A type of basket, which is commonly employed for the purpose of storing and dehydrating a variety of crops. There exist three distinct design or pattern variations of *mühdou*. The *hükle* design is made through the interweaving of individual bamboo strips, with one strip being omitted in each iteration. Similarly, the *nyile* pattern is created by alternately omitting two strips of bamboo, while the *jemle* design is formed by alternately omitting three strips of bamboo. *Mühdou* is made in a range of dimensions and possesses a square configuration (figure 62a). The *hub* is a circularly designed apparatus utilised for the purpose of drying chiles and meat over the hearth, as well as for the storage of taro (figure 62c). Another

little basket, referred to as *kothah* or *changkoh* is utilised for the purpose of measuring one kilogramme of rice (figure 62b).

(iii) *Anshok*: Refers to a large receptacle utilised for the purpose of storing grains, particularly rice, within a granary setting. Traditional *anshok* is capable of storing roughly one hundred tin of rice. The structure consists of a recurring motif known as the *jemlem kaap* design (figure 63).

(iv) *Aam*: There exists a variety of *aam* (mat) that serve different needs. *Aam nyü* is utilised during the process of *hah tenpü*, which involves the threshing of rice in the field. *Shin aam*, on the other hand, is used to create a comfortable sleeping surface in a designated area. *Hahyem aam* serves the purpose of drying grains under the sun, while *phü aam* is employed to spread various items on the rack above the hearth for the purpose of drying. *Veeling aam* is spread at the *machang* in the paddy field after the harvest, serving as a means to keep the grains (figure 64).

(v) *Om*: *Om* is used in the process of separating husk or chaff from rice subsequent to the act of pounding. There exist two distinct categories of *om*, namely *omnyü* and *omha*, which can be distinguished by their respective sizes, with *omnyü* being the larger variant and *omha* representing the smaller version. The design of this object follows a *nyilem* pattern, characterised by the alternating absence and interweaving of five bamboo strips (figure 65).

(vi) *Baak*: it is considered to be an essential commodity in everyday life. The head strap serves as a means of suspending the carrying basket of many types (figure 66).

(vii) *Aongshen*: It is an item employed for sieving of rice, enabling the separation and removal of chaff or undesirable components from the rice grains sequential to the process of pounding (figure 67).

(viii) *Doulu* : It is a type of storage container that is designed with a cover and is commonly utilised for storing dried products like as meat, yam leaves, and chillies. It is typically suspended from the ceiling of the kitchen by means of its handle (figure 68).

(ix) *Yungjei*: This is a receptacle designed for the purpose of storing and retrieving water from various sources. Typically, it has been made from a species of bamboo known as *ah vong*. Typically, the height of the bamboo structure ranges from three to four feet, achieved by selectively eliminating the internal nodes along the rings of the bamboo.

(x) *Mülok*: A mülok is a versatile vessel that is employed for a range of functions, including the pouring of water, the collection of bamboo shoot juice, and the serving of rice beer (figure 69).

(xi) *Athang*: It is a type of basket container that serves the dual purpose of collecting juice from pounded bamboo shoots and also facilitating the production of rice beer (figure 70).

(xii) *Vongnyü nükshong*: This plate is made of *vongnyü* bamboo. It serves the dual purpose of facilitating the consumption of food and the presentation of a variety of food items (figure 71).

(xiii) *Shemdak* refers to a large platter that accommodates the collective dining experience of an entire family. This platter can accommodate a group of ten individuals for a meal. There is a belief that consuming food from a shared plate fosters a sense of oneness among the individuals partaking in the meal.

(xiv) *Oudou*: This structure is a chicken coop. There exist two distinct categories of chicken coops: one designed for the purpose of housing and raising chickens within one's own residence (figure 72a), and another (figure 72b) intended for the act of presenting chickens as gifts to acquaintances during times of illness, childbirth, or various auspicious and inauspicious occasions.

(xv) Weaving looms: Weaving looms made by the Phom Nagas using bamboo are an integral part of their rich cultural heritage and traditional craftsmanship. They have been practicing the art of weaving for centuries. To begin building the looms, bamboo is carefully splinted using a *dao* or machete. These splinted bamboos are then shaped into various looms, which are the wrap beam, lease rod, beating sword, extra wrap beam, and stick. Though weaving is exclusively practice by women, it is men who makes the looms for them.

As mentioned by M Ao (1968), the making of baskets and mats to which the Nagas are experts, is a task reserved exclusively for men and boys. There is no professional basket makers, but every man produces baskets for his own domestic use. Living in a land where cane and bamboo are plentiful, the Nagas are naturally expert basket makers. It is true in the case Phom community as it is men who weaves baskets and various items from bamboo for their domestic use for the whole family. Every male members of the family were skilful in bamboo works.

The transmission of this traditional craft from one generation to another carries considerable cultural and economic significance for the community. The Phom people demonstrate a high level of workmanship in the creation of bamboo baskets and other items, employing sophisticated techniques and processes.

The initial stage in the production of bamboo items involves the careful selection of appropriate bamboo materials. The utilisation of *vongnyü* is a common practice within the Phom society, although alternative types are also regularly employed for this objective. After the appropriate bamboo species has been determined, it is collected during the dry season when the sap concentration is minimal. Subsequently, the bamboo that has been gathered is subjected to a process of being chopped into preferred dimensions and further divided into slender segments by the utilisation of a *dao*/machete. The strips undergo additional processing wherein

the outer layer, nodes, and any irregularities are removed in order to achieve strips that are smooth and homogeneous, suitable for the purpose of weaving.

The Phom community bamboo weaving technique is referred to as “*aapii*.” In the craft of basket making, a circular foundation is formed through the process of coiling many bamboo strips in a spiral pattern. The base functions as the fundamental component for constructing the sides of the basket. The coiling procedure entails the interlacing of bamboo strips along the vertical axis of the basket. The artisans demonstrate their artistic ingenuity by integrating diverse motifs and patterns into their bamboo creations. The designs frequently draw inspiration from natural elements, fauna, or geometric forms.

Figure 61

Different types of *carrying basket* made from bamboo

a. Shaidou



a

b. Hanglu



b

c. Koh



c

d. Hangman (bride's gift from her parents)



d

Figure 62

Different types of *basket for storing various items.*

a.Mühdou



b.Kothah



c.Hub



Figure 63

Anshok filled with grains inside a granary



Figure 64

Grains drying on aam (mat)



Figure 65

Om



Figure 66

Baak (head strap for carrying basket)



Figure 67

Aongshen (Shieve)



Figure 68

Doulu



Figure 69

Mülok



Figure 70

Athang



Figure 71

Plate made from vongnyü bamboo



Figure 72

a. Chicken coop for home



b. Chicken coop used for gifting chicken



Figure 73

Bamboo tube used for storing seedlings and dried food ingredients



Figure 74

An elderly man weaving a basket at Pongo village



CHAPTER -6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This culmination chapter discourses about the historical role that diverse arts and crafts played in the economic, cultural and social system of the Phom Nagas, how they fit into modern culture, and conclusion.

The vernacular architecture of the Phom Nagas carries substantial historical significance as it serves as a reflection of the cultural, social, and environmental setting of the region. The architectural styles and techniques employed in Phom traditional dwellings have been influenced by extensive periods of indigenous handicraft. These architectural creations not only demonstrate the innovative and resourceful nature of the local populations, but also function as tangible connections to historical periods, safeguarding the cultural legacy and regional identity. The historical value of Phom vernacular architecture lies in its ability to depict indigenous building practices and the utilisation of local materials. The utilisation of locally accessible materials, including bamboo, timber, thatch, and palm leaves, in the construction process not only exemplifies sustainable building practices but also highlights the ability to adapt to the tropical environment that is present in numerous regions across the globe. The incorporation of the natural surroundings has been a distinctive characteristic of traditional building in the region. The architectural styles frequently reflect the social structure and values prevalent in the Phom community. The arrangement and spatial configuration of traditional residences frequently mirror the hierarchical dynamics within communities, as evidenced by the allocation of specific areas for various activities such as rice pounding, family and communal cooking, outdoor pursuits in the *machang*, communal activities in the *bang*, and sleeping quarters for unmarried individuals. This element underscores the interconnectedness

of vernacular architecture with societal conventions and traditions, offering valuable insights into the socio-cultural dynamics of many historical epochs.

Phom vernacular structures possess historical worth due to their role in reflecting colonial influences, in addition to their cultural relevance. The amalgamation of indigenous architectural components with external design ideas introduced by Christian missionaries and colonisers has engendered distinctive hybrid styles that are discernible in several edifices throughout the area. The amalgamation of many inspirations serves to emphasise the fluidity of Phom architectural legacy and its capacity to adapt and develop while yet maintaining its fundamental essence. The historical relevance of Phom vernacular architecture is primarily rooted in its embodiment of indigenous building practices, cultural diversity, social structures, and adaptation to environmental conditions. These architectural structures offer significant insights into the historical and cultural heritage of the Phom community, while also providing as a rich source of inspiration for contemporary sustainable design practices. The amalgamation of vernacular architecture in the Phom region is a captivating synthesis of old construction methods and materials, harmoniously integrated with contemporary architectural ideas. The fusion observed in this context can be attributed to the interplay between colonial influences, local interactions with the external sphere, and the rapid process of urbanisation. The architectural designs are influenced by the specific climatic conditions, the availability of materials, and the cultural traditions, resulting in distinctive and enduring structures that have demonstrated long-term sustainability. An exemplary illustration of this amalgamation is the incorporation of natural elements such as bamboo, thatch, and wood in contemporary architectural practices. These materials serve the purpose of establishing a connection between the new structures and their cultural origins, while also providing sustainable and environmentally friendly answers to the current issues faced in the field of architecture.

Moreover, the Phom Nagas are actively adopting a synthesis of traditional architectural styles with contemporary technological advancements and inventive construction techniques. In contrast to the previous practice of having a single common area for the entire family, contemporary housing designs now have two or more rooms to accommodate the spatial needs of family members. The integration of traditional elements in architectural design enables the development of structures that not only respect the cultural history of the region but also fulfil the requirements of modern lifestyles. The current amalgamation of vernacular architecture within the Phom community exemplifies a dynamic interplay between traditional practices and innovative approaches. Architects are currently employing a novel architectural language that combines traditional features, natural materials, and indigenous processes with modern design principles and technology. This approach allows them to simultaneously honour the region's abundant legacy and tackle the complex issues of the 21st century.

The costumes and ornaments of the Phom Naga community possess significant historical importance due to their important role in shaping their identity, preserving their traditions, and facilitating their ceremonies. The garments and embellishments donned by individuals include more than just aesthetic value, as they bear profound symbolic significance pertaining to their historical context, social hierarchy, and spiritual ideologies. The costumes worn by individuals within the society often bear sophisticated designs, patterns, and materials that serve as indicators of their social rank, clan connection, marital status, and ceremonial role. The traditional attire and accessories worn by the Phom people not only function as a visual manifestation of their ability to withstand challenges, but also as a means of expressing their cultural pride and unique identity in the midst of modernization and foreign influences. Moreover, the transmission of knowledge and skills in the art of crafting Naga costumes and ornaments has remained intergenerational, thereby playing a significant role in safeguarding

their cultural legacy. The customary clothing of Phom Naga males often comprises loincloths, shawls, headgear embellished with hornbill feathers, animal horns, necklaces crafted from animal elements such as wild boar teeth, and armlets made from elephant tusks. Conversely, Phom Naga females don wraparound garments known as *mekhela*, shawls, and beaded necklaces. Both males and females adorn themselves with a diverse array of embellishments, including necklaces, earrings, bracelets, armlets, and anklets, crafted from materials such as beads, shells, and other metals. The adornments frequently exhibit fine craftsmanship and incorporate symbolic designs that depict elements from nature, as well as creatures that possess cultural significance within their folklore and belief system. The Phom clothing and jewellery possess historical significance that beyond their mere aesthetic appeal. These cultural artefacts assume a pivotal role in a multitude of occasions, including festivals, marriages, funerals, and rites of passage. During such occasions, people or communities make use of particular garments and accessories to effectively communicate messages pertaining to their roles, accomplishments, or affiliations. According to Stirn and Ham (2003), the utilisation of ornaments and attires has served as a means of conveying attributes such as courage, skill, affluence, social standing, and distinction across diverse societal domains. Moreover, the traditional attire and adornments are intricately intertwined with Naga folklore and oral traditions, functioning as visual representations that convey tales of valour, cultural heritage, and metaphysical affiliations. In the present era, Phom Naga costumes and jewellery persist as a symbol of cultural pride and identity within the Phom community. Efforts dedicated to the preservation and promotion of traditional handicraft have given rise to several programmes focused on revitalising time-honoured weaving techniques, enhancing the artistry of jewellery creation, and safeguarding indigenous knowledge pertaining to costume design. Moreover, it is worth noting that these conventional garments and adornments have garnered

acknowledgment on both domestic and global stages as emblematic representations of indigenous craftsmanship and cultural legacy. The Phom costumes and decorations possess historical value due to their multifaceted functions within Phom society. They serve as vehicles for preserving tradition, representing identity, indicating social standing, preserving cultural knowledge, and showcasing artistic quality. These elements collectively contribute to the rich and complex fabric of Phom culture. The amalgamation of Phom Nagas' attires and adornments in contemporary times serves as a manifestation of the Phom community's abundant cultural legacy and artistic customs. Over the past few years, there has been a discernible transformation observed in the attire and accessories of the Phom Naga community, wherein traditional components have been amalgamated with contemporary influences. The mix of brilliant colours, detailed motifs, and new techniques is readily apparent, serving as a reflection of the dynamic nature of Naga culture in the present era. The conventional attire has undergone reinterpretation to integrate modern styles and materials, while preserving its cultural importance. In a similar vein, Phom ornaments have experienced a notable shift, wherein conventional jewellery patterns have been reinterpreted to cater to contemporary preferences, all the while safeguarding its cultural significance. A diverse range of materials, including as beads, shells, metals, and natural fibres, are utilised in the creation of decorative accessories like necklaces, earrings, bangles, and headgear. The amalgamation of conventional Phom Naga jewellery with modern aesthetics has yielded distinctive artefacts that seamlessly integrate cultural history with inventive elements. The amalgamation of Phom attire and adornments in modern times serves the dual purpose of safeguarding cultural history and accommodating societal transformations, all the while commemorating the unique essence of Phom identity. The aforementioned evolutionary process exemplifies the Phom community's ability to adapt to contemporary stimuli while also preserving their cultural heritage. The

current amalgamation of Phom attire and embellishments exemplifies a seamless integration of traditional and contemporary elements, thereby highlighting the Phom Naga community's ability to creatively and adaptively express their cultural heritage through fashion and adornment. Notably, this cultural expression transcends socioeconomic divisions that were prevalent in earlier societies. Through the efforts of organisations such as the Phom Students' Conference and Phomla Hoichem, individuals of both genders belonging to the Phom community are granted the opportunity to freely wear traditional Phom dress that is specifically designated for their cultural group, without any imposed limitations.

The Phom Naga tattooing tradition bears considerable historical and cultural significance within the Naga population. Tattooing has long been an intrinsic component of their cultural legacy spanning numerous generations, functioning as a representation of individual and collective identity, courage, and societal standing. The Phom Naga tribe's engagement in the practice of tattooing is firmly grounded in their mythology, customs, and ceremonies. Tattoos possess more than just aesthetic value, as they hold profound symbolic significance and serve as manifestations of the communal social and spiritual ideologies. Historically, Phom warriors utilised elaborate tattoos as a means to symbolise their accomplishments in headhunting conflicts, display acts of courage, and seek safeguarding from malicious supernatural entities. Furthermore, these tattoos were seen as a ceremonial practice that symbolised the progression from adolescent to adulthood. The design frequently included themes that drew inspiration from the natural world, with each motif carrying distinct cultural importance. The introduction of Christianity to the Phom region resulted in the cessation of the traditional tattooing culture, since it was deemed incompatible with Christian beliefs due to its association with headhunting practices. While the Phom group does not currently possess a distinct form of artistic fusion, it is observed that certain members of the younger generation

have adopted the practice of tattooing various body parts such as hands, arms, neck, and back. These tattoos are created using modern technology and lack any historical or cultural meaning pertaining to achievements or acts of courage. The patterns and designs employed are not derived from traditional sources, but rather inscribed onto the body using the individual's initials or any design or pattern of their preference. The inter-generational transmission of pottery manufacturing skills has been a prominent aspect within the Phom people, exerting a substantial influence on their social and economic spheres. The Phom community engages in the production of traditional pottery, utilising locally sourced clay and employing time-honoured tools and techniques that have been refined over an extended period of time. The cultural identity, economic value, and social cohesiveness of traditional Phom pottery manufacturing contribute to its historical significance. The practice of pottery holds significant importance within the Phom culture, serving as a crucial means of safeguarding and perpetuating the community's cultural heritage. The pottery of the Phom people exhibits a manifestation of their beliefs, values, and customs through the use of traditional designs and patterns, which are frequently transmitted across many generations. Pottery holds significant economic value for the Phom community, with a special emphasis on the pivotal role played by women as the major practitioners of this craft. The trade of ceramic artefacts has afforded the local populace with a livelihood and enabled them to sustain their financial autonomy. The practice of pottery manufacturing has been essential in fostering communal cohesion and solidarity. The production of pottery frequently involves collective engagement, facilitating opportunities for social contact and fostering interpersonal connections. Moreover, pottery has historically served as a medium of exchange, enabling the facilitation of trade and commerce within local communities. The current amalgamation of conventional Phom pottery crafting entails the incorporation of contemporary procedures and designs alongside the classic

methodologies and styles of pottery manufacturing. The objective of this fusion is to safeguard the cultural heritage of the Phom tribe, while simultaneously responding to the evolving market demands and integrating inventive methodologies into the craft of pottery production. Phom potters of the traditional craft have begun integrating contemporary glazing techniques into their practice, aiming to augment the overall quality and productivity of their pottery manufacturing process. This integration enables individuals to produce a diverse array of utilitarian and ornamental ceramic artefacts, including kettles, flower pots, and kitchenware, with a multitude of designs, all while preserving the fundamental elements of their cultural legacy. There is a concerted endeavour now to facilitate the promotion of these modern amalgamated articles through the organisation of exhibitions and cultural events. These initiatives aim to provide Phom artisans with an opportunity to access a worldwide audience and demonstrate their exceptional skill in craftsmanship. It is noteworthy to mention that the Pongo and Yongphang potters have established a Self Help Group (SHG) within their respective villages. Through this collective, they engage in collaborative work with the aim of preserving the practice of pottery making and imparting knowledge to younger generations of women who express a keen interest in learning this craft.

Bamboo carries significant cultural importance within the Phom community. The emblem is widely regarded as representative of attributes highly esteemed in Naga culture, namely strength, resilience, and flexibility. Bamboo is frequently employed in religious rituals and ceremonies, such as the construction of a V-shaped structure known as *vongkangkangbü*, which is placed on the uppermost part of a man's dwelling upon the successful completion of the last series of the feast of merit. Bamboo is employed in the construction of traditional dwellings and a variety of domestic artefacts, so exemplifying its importance in daily existence. The Phom tribe has traditionally depended on bamboo as a means of economic sustenance.

Bamboo has been utilised in the creation of various tools, agricultural implements, and hunting equipment. Bamboo holds significant cultural and societal importance within the Phom community, serving as an essential component of their cultural practices and overall way of living. Due to its inherent sustainability and versatile nature, this particular crop proves to be an optimal choice for the region, as it effectively caters to the essential needs of sustenance, habitation, and economic sustenance for a significant portion of the population. The utilisation of bamboo within the Phom Naga community is indicative of its significant role in their everyday activities and cultural traditions. In the context of global efforts to address climate change and promote sustainable development, the use of bamboo by the Phom Nagas serves as a noteworthy illustration of living in symbiosis with the natural world and its surroundings. The sustainable interaction with the environment of the subject in question is further emphasised by their historical dependence on bamboo. The practice of ethical bamboo harvesting has been a longstanding tradition among them, ensuring the regeneration of bamboo and the preservation of ecological equilibrium in their environment. In the present era, although the Phom culture continues to hold strong reverence for the historic importance of bamboo, there have been adjustments made to accommodate modern ways of life. Bamboo remains a prevalent material in the domains of construction, crafts, and home goods, typically in conjunction with contemporary materials. Subsequently, artists frequently promote and distribute these hybrid products through local markets and fairs. The sale of these products is a significant source of income for many households.

Additionally, it is important to acknowledge the significant contribution of women in the traditional arts and crafts of the Phom Naga. The art of weaving holds an essential place in Phom society, with women assuming the primary role in this skilled profession. They professionally create elaborate designs on shawls, *makhelas*, and other traditional garments

using backstrap looms or loin looms. These textiles frequently showcase symbolic designs that symbolise many features of the Phom community. Moreover, the selection of colours and patterns employed in the weaving process serves as a means to express one's social standing or membership in a certain clan. The skill of weaving is transmitted from one generation to the next, guaranteeing the conservation of ancient methods and patterns. Within the Phom community, women hold the predominant role as potters, excelling in the production of functional vessels. Women incorporate unique motifs and structure into their creations, imbuing them with cultural symbolism. Naga women not only serve as artisans and guardians of traditional knowledge, but they also play a crucial role in transmitting cultural values and narratives through their artistic pursuits. Their artistic expression exemplifies the interdependence of arts and crafts with social norms, spirituality, and identity within the Phom community.

Cultural Relativism and the Phom tribe

Frans Boas (1858-1942) and his pupils in anthropology created the notion of cultural relativism. Cultural relativism is the principle that an individual's beliefs and actions should be comprehended by others within the context of that individual's specific culture. It implies that there are no universally applicable criteria for assessing civilizations, and that each culture should be assessed based on its own unique characteristics. Examining the transmission of knowledge and skills among the Phom people through their arts and crafts is especially pertinent in this context.

Transmission of knowledge and skills through arts and crafts

The Phom tribe has a longstanding tradition of transmitting information and skills via diverse kinds of artistic expression. Transmission primarily happens through the production of traditional crafts, including weaving, wood carving, ceramics, and jewellery making. These

crafts serve as both a form of artistic expression and a way to preserve and pass on cultural information between generations.

Weaving carries a distinct importance within the Phom tribe, with women assuming a pivotal position in this artisanal practice. The traditional attires of this culture feature intricate designs and patterns that hold symbolic significance. These meanings are transmitted verbally from elder women to younger generations. During this process, young Phom women acquire knowledge not only about the technical aspects of weaving but also about the cultural importance associated with each design.

Wood carving is a prominent craft within the Phom people, particularly in the context of their vernacular architecture, such as the *bang (morung)* and the residences of wealthy individuals. The elaborate patterns etched onto wooden artefacts frequently portray narratives, legends, or symbolic representations of their cultural heritage. Wood carving skills are transmitted through apprenticeship under skilled artisans, who teach not only the technical skills but also the narratives linked to each theme.

The Phom tribe utilises pottery manufacturing as a means to transfer knowledge and skills, serving as an additional art form. The art of moulding clay into diverse shapes, such as pottery and ornamental objects, is transmitted from senior potters to younger individuals within the community. The clay products feature intricate designs and motifs that convey historical histories and cultural symbols, which are elucidated during the learning process.

Cultural relativism in transmission of knowledge

The Phom tribe's transmission of knowledge and skills through their arts and crafts serves as a tangible demonstration of cultural relativism. Every craft is intricately connected to the Phom culture, encompassing a plethora of historical, social, and symbolic importance that is exclusive to their society. To properly assess these artistic traditions, it is crucial to consider them in the

context of Phom culture, rather than imposing external criteria or evaluations. For example, a specific weaving pattern may possess distinct cultural significance within the Phom group that may not be readily evident to someone unfamiliar with their culture. By adopting cultural relativism, individuals can fully acknowledge the profound wisdom inherent in these trades without imposing any previous assumptions or biases.

Moreover, comprehending these artistic customs from a culturally related perspective enables a more intricate recognition of the interdependence among art, culture, and identity within the Phom tribe. It appreciates that their artistic works are not independent creations but rather essential elements of a vibrant culture with its own systems of worth and significance.

The Phom tribe's transmission of knowledge and skills through their arts and crafts exemplifies cultural relativism by safeguarding and perpetuating their cultural legacy. To obtain a more profound comprehension of the complex relationship between art, culture, and identity within the Phom community, it is crucial to acknowledge and honour the distinct cultural environment in which these traditions thrive.

Conclusion

The Phom community also exhibits the effects of colonialism and the presence of Christian missionaries. Historically, individuals resided in seclusion inside their respective communal spheres, adjusting to the surrounding environment. The indigenous population saw a significant shift in their way of life as a result of the advent of colonial governance and the presence of Christian missionaries, which exposed them to external influences and impacted their formerly autonomous existence. The younger cohorts have increasingly ventured beyond their local communities in order to pursue educational opportunities and seek employment in both government and private sectors. Furthermore, the implementation of a monetary system within the society facilitated the ability of numerous craftsmen to produce a limited number of crafts.

Conversely, some artisans chose to abstain from practicing their skill altogether, as the prevalence of the barter system diminished and individuals began utilising currency to acquire necessary goods and services. The incorporation of Western concepts has exerted a significant influence on various creative forms, resulting in alterations to conventional approaches in production and marketing.

While incorporating contemporary techniques and designs, the fundamental principles of traditional Phom arts and crafts production remain unaltered. The fusion process does not aim to supplant tradition, but rather to evolve and adapt it in order to guarantee its long-term viability within a dynamic and evolving global context. The Phom tribe effectively transmits their ancestral wisdom to future generations while simultaneously adjusting to present circumstances by means of incorporating their cultural legacy into a fusion of modern elements.

For example, the tradition of celebrating feast of merit is still practised by the Yongshei people, who follow the church board's recommendation to divide it into four stages. The feast is bestowed in the form of a Christmas and New Year celebration by the benefactor of the feast. Although the traditional houses of the wealthy feast givers are no longer built, they still adorn their modern houses with *vongkangkangbii* (a V-shaped structure on the front roof) and decorate the walls with the horns and skulls of animals that were killed during the feast. Historically, women used to wear a single-panel *mekhela*, but nowadays they typically wear two or three panels that extend down to the ankle. This could be attributed to the increased accessibility of yarn in the market, which was not the case in the past. Men typically wear contemporary traditional attire consisting of a waistcoat and necktie adorned with embroidered headwear and a *dao* (*mahete*). These ancient attires are still utilised for specific occasions due to their impracticality for regular wear. Pottery practice remains widespread in the villages of Pongo and Yongphang. It is commonly present in every household in these two villages and

continues to be used for cooking and storing reasons. However, in other Phom villages, it is often utilised as a decorative item or reserved for specific festive occasions. The traditional tattoo art is becoming obsolete as it is not being carried on in the present day, dying away along with the individuals who have these tattoos. The researcher was also unable to locate any tattoo artists in the Phom regions during her inquiry. Bamboo crafts and products are integral to the Phom society. This may be attributed to the accessibility of resources in their environment and the practicality it offers in their daily activities.

In summary, the current amalgamation of conventional Phom artistic and artisanal practices signifies a cohesive integration of cultural legacy and inventive elements. This phenomenon stands as evidence of the enduring nature of indigenous crafts, as they successfully adapt to modern surroundings while maintaining their inherent cultural character. Greater endeavours should be undertaken by several village associations and the Phom community to sustain these artistic expressions by incorporating them with the demands of the present era.

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Oral Sources

- Mr. P. Ongche, 60 years, Nyang village, date: 03/05/2018
- Mr. H. Ayu, 60 years, Nyang village, date: 03/05/2018
- Mr. P. Mongmei, 40 years, Nyang village, date: 03/05/2018

Mr. P.Tonyei, 63 years, Nyang village, date: 03/05/2018

Mr. P. Hamphe, 60 years, Nyang village, date: 03/05/2018

Mr. H. Shahpong, 60 years, Nyang village, date: 03/05/2018

Mrs. B. Chaüla, 43 years, Pongo village, date: 07/05/2018

Mrs.Y. Nyeilang, 68 years, Pongo village, date: 07/05/2018

Mrs. P. Shingnyü, 70 years, Pongo village, date: 08/05/2018

Mrs. Jenyang, 96 years, Pongo village, date: 08/05/2018

Mrs. Amaü, 75 years, Pongo village, date: 08/05/2018 and 09/01/2019

Mrs. Amüng, 40 years, Pongo village, date: 09/01/2019

Mr. Daüshauh, 80 years, Yongnyah village, date: 26/02/2019

Mrs. Yungmei, 90 years, Yongnyah village, date: 26/02/2019

Mr. Bomküp, 95 years, Yongnyah village, date: 26/02/2019

Mr. Yemnyei, 85 years, Yongnyah village, date: 26/02/2019

Mrs. Bongchem, 80 years, Yongnyah village, date: 26/02/2019

Mr. Bonglang, 95 years, Yongnyah village, date: 26/02/2019

Mr. Chengan, 80 years, Yongnyah village, date: 26/02/2019

Mr. B. Shami Bomshakhü, 75 years, Yongnyah village (interviewed at Longleng),
date:30/06/2023, retired P.A to DC, Longleng.

Mrs. Shosha, 82 years, Pongching village, date: 15/02/2019

Mr. Y. Atang, 42 years, Pongching village, date: 15/02/2019

Mr. Tendok, 99 years, Pongching village, date: 15/02/2019

Mrs. Shemei, 54 years, Yongphang village, date: 19/02/2019

Mrs. Abe, 65 years, Yongphang village, date: 19/02/2019

Mrs. Ayung, 50 years, Yongphang village, date: 19/02/2019

Mrs. Angoi, 52 years, Yongphang village, date: 10/02/2019

Mr. N. Anyak, 85 years, Yongphang village, date: 09/02/2022

Mrs. Inyü, 80 years, Nyang village, date: 22/04/2021

Mr. Yanlom, 86 years, Bhümnyü village, date: 23/04/2021

Mrs. Wan-i, 80 years, Yongam village, date: 24/04/2021

Mrs. Movang, 90 years, Yongam village, date: 24/04/2021

Mr. Kalong, 60 years, Yongam village, date: 24/04/2021

Mr. Phongang, 95 years, Yongam village, date: 24/2021, Goanbura.

Mr. Kamnyei, 78 years, Tamlu village, date: 28/03/2019

Mr. Takah, 74 years, Tamlu village, date: 28/03/2019

Mr. Metlang, 85 years, Tamlu village, date: 28/03/2019

Mr. Manchang, 72 years, Tamlu village, date: 28/03/2019

Mrs. Bhavaü, 68 years, Tamlu village, date: 28/03/2019

Mrs. Vangnyei, 58 years, Tamlu village, date: 28/03/2019

Mrs. Nyemla, 67 years, Tamlu village, date: 28/03/2019

Mrs. Pongyau, 59 years, Tamlu village, date: 28/03/2019

Mr. Bäüdong, 63 years, Tamlu village, date: 28/03/2019

Mr. Longhah, 76 years, Bura Namsang village, date: 29/03/2019, former village Council Chairman.

Mr. Lavan, 86 years, Bura Namsang village, date: 29/03/2019, retired Govt. Teacher.

Mrs. S. Omei, 71 years, Bura Namsang village, date: 29/03/2019

Mr. Chingbong, 87 years, Yongshei village, date: 05/04/2019

Mr. Yongko, 60 years, Yongshei village (interviewed at Longleng), date: 21/07/2022

Mrs. Bongom, 85 years, Tangha village, date: 05/04/2019

Mr.Yongnyei, 90 years, Tangha village, date: 05/04/2019

Mr. Taüdüng, 95 years, Tangha village, date: 05/04/2019

Rev. Paushen, 90 years, Tangha village (interviewed at Longleng), date: 29/06/2023,
Former Executive Secretary, Phom Baptist Christian Association.

Mr.Pangshing, 80 years, Auching village, date: 08/02/2022, village council member.

Mr.Pongying, 80 years, Auching village, date: 08/02/2022, Goanbura.

Mr.Lamtan, 82 years, Auching village, date: 08/02/2022, Goanbura.

Mrs. Tangpe, 60 years, Auching village, date: 08/02/2022

Mr. N.Yongkai, 80 years, Shakshi village, date: 09/02/2022, retired Govt.Teacher.

Mr. Phongchei, 80 years, Shakshi village, date: 09/02/2022, Head Goanbura.

Mr. Manngam Avennoho, 80 years, Yachem village, date: 11/02/2022

Mr. T. Asangba, 67 years, Yachem village, date: 11/02/2022

Mrs.Taren, 58 years, Yachem village, date: 12/07/2022

Mr. P. Chinglong, 60 years, Yachem village (interviewed at Longleng), date:
27/06/223, Headmaster at GHS.

Mrs. Y. Sangla, 50 years, Yachem village (interviewed at Longleng), date: 27/06/2023,
Govt. Primary Teacher.

Mrs. Shaje, 108 years, Kangching village (interviewed at Longleng), date: 22/01/2021

Rev. M. Bai-üh, 65 years, Kangching village (interviewed at Longleng), date:
08/06/2023, Pastor Centre Baptist Church, Longleng.