

DYNAMICS IN VILLAGE FORMATION AMONG THE LOTHANAGAS WITH REFERENCE TO WOKHA VILLAGE

**THESIS SUBMITTED TO NAGALAND UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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DYNAMICS IN VILLAGE FORMATION AMONG THE LOTHANAGAS WITH REFERENCE TO WOKHA VILLAGE

Thesis submitted to Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

By

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Mr. Libemo Kithan, bearing registration No. Ph.D. HAR/00059 of 2017 has completed his research work on “Dynamics in Village Formation among the Lotha Nagas with reference to Wokha Village” under my guidance and supervision.

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

It is further certified that the research candidate has fulfilled all the conditions necessary for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy under Nagaland University. I found him to be sincere and diligent in his research work, and he deserved to be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Dated, Kohima
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DECLARATION

I, Mr. Libemo Kithan hereby declared that the Ph.D. Thesis, titled “Dynamics in Village Formation among the Lotha Nagas with reference to Wokha Village” submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History has been carried out by me under the supervision of Prof. Y. Ben Lotha. The work is original and that, the thesis or a part of it has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree or diploma on the same title in any other University or Institution.

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Libemo Kithan
Research Candidate

ABBREVIATION

1. B - Bamboo
2. BMM - Baptist Missionary Magazine
3. CM - Centimetre
4. DB - Dobashi
5. DC - Deputy Commissioner
6. EXT - Extension
7. GB - Gaonbora
8. F - Fireplace/hearth
9. H - Humtsen
10. K - Kotsen
11. KR - Koro Old village
12. LS - Longsio
13. LZZ - Longzü
14. MT - Mhenkiton
15. NE - Northeast
16. NW - Northwest
17. SDO - Sub-Divisional Officer
18. SE - Southeast
19. SW - Southwest
20. T - Tsenro
21. T1 - Trowel one
22. T2 - Trowel two
23. TR - Trench
24. WKA - Wokha
25. WV - Wokha village
26. WVBC - Wokha Village Baptist Church
27. WVC - Wokha Village Chumpho
28. WVSU - Wokha Village Students' Union

GLOSSARY

1. *Akao*- Green pigeon
2. *Amhonile/ Amhonikhelo*- Bless me/ Bless us
3. *Avüti- Bamboo (Bambusa balcooa roxb*
4. *Byulokvü*- Quail
5. *Chumpho- Morung (Bachelor's Dormitory)*
6. *Erünhyan - Sterculia orientalis)*
7. *Hanrü-shum-Ceca*
8. *Hatitonake*- Time and again
9. *Hoho*- Assembly
10. *Humtsen/ Tsenpvü*- front kingpost
11. *Jerha*- Tree squirrel
12. *Jerhüing*- Monitor Lizard
13. *Joppha*- West
14. *Jüpvüo roro (woro)*- White capped redstart
15. *Khetsü*- Oriental turtle doves
16. *Koküing/ Shanka* - House beam
17. *Kotsen* -Rear kingpost
18. *Khovoro- Macaranga peltata*
19. *Khvükha or Soronki*- Indian scimitar-babbler
20. *Khvüli*- Pancreas
21. *Kvüniro*- Chipmunk
22. *Khvüshi*- Black and white laughing thrush
23. *Lepok*- Machete
24. *Liosangsü*- A songbird of the thrush family-*turdidae*
25. *Lishü* –thatch (*Imperata cylindrica*)
26. *Liso*- Hedgehog
27. *Mani*- Taro
28. *Mevü/ Melesü- Phoebe goalparensis*
29. *Mhonkisüing* -Rooftree/wooden ridgepole of a roof
30. *Mmhorü*-Tiger
31. *Mmhorü terio*- Leopard
32. *Mhenkiton*- Head-tree (Ficus and coral tree)

33. *Myok*- Evil fate
34. *Müingshiro*- Eagle
35. *Ndüing*- *Sterculia quadrifida*
36. *Nipong*- Male wild boar
37. *Nhyanran* - *Tremna orientalis*
38. *Nkyip*- Small bamboo (*Chimono bambusa nagalandeana*)
39. *Nokano*- Giant Wild rats
40. *Nnro*- Oriental pied hornbill
41. *Nsenro*- Litsea
42. *Oko*- wild roofing leaves- *Levistonina assamica*
43. *Omvü*- Bamboo tying string made of semi tender bamboo shoot of
44. *Ongum*- Python
45. *Onni*- Wild Boar
46. *Orü* –Cane (*myrialepsis*)
47. *Oshyu*- Mole rats
48. *Otssso*- Spear
49. *Oyan*- Village
50. *Phentso vara*- Smallpox epidemic
51. *Phitong-yantong*- Neighbouring village
52. *Potsow*- God
53. *Pvüji/ jipo*- Clan
54. *Pvüti*- Village Chief
55. *Ratssen*- Seer
56. *Rhüjüng*- Great pied Hornbill (Concave casqued hornbill)
57. *Selok*- Flying squirrel
58. *Seno*- Crimson sunbird
59. *Sepfü*- Reindeer
60. *Sethan*- Porcupine
61. *Sevan*-Bear
62. *Shakya* -Velvet-fronted nuthatch
63. *Shali*- Wild dog
64. *Shifü*-Tortoise
65. *Shompok*- *Cordia dichotoma*
66. *Shumo-zhü*-Bottle guard vine

67. *Siano*- Samber and barking deer
68. *Sotsü* –Elephant
69. *Syu*- Civet cat
70. *Thumpak*- *Rhus semialata*
71. *Tokhü therä*- *Vanda Coerulea*
72. *Tsenro*- Front and Rear smaller house posts)
73. *Tsintsan*- Bamboo (*Bambusa tulda roxb*)
74. *Tsiyo*- Serow
75. *Tsongoro*- Wild cat
76. *Vepvü*- Bamboo (*Bambusa tulda Roxb*)
77. *Yakso*- Monkey
78. *Yankho*- Colony/*khel*
79. *Yimtong*- Area
80. *Yingsüing*- Range
81. *Yipya*- Pheasant
82. *Yonjomotssen*- Money
83. *Vetyuru*- Bulbul
84. *Verhük*- Jungle fowl
85. *Votsü* - Wreathed Hornbill (*Rhyticeros*)
86. *Vüinggum*- Large Dove(*Columbidae* family)
87. *Vüngi*- Asian Barbets
88. *Wojarhü*- Streaked spiderhunter
89. *Yivan*- Blue whistling thrush
90. *Yolüing*- Common green magpie
91. *Yizum*- Greater racket-tailed drongo
92. *Zhütong*- Large wild rat

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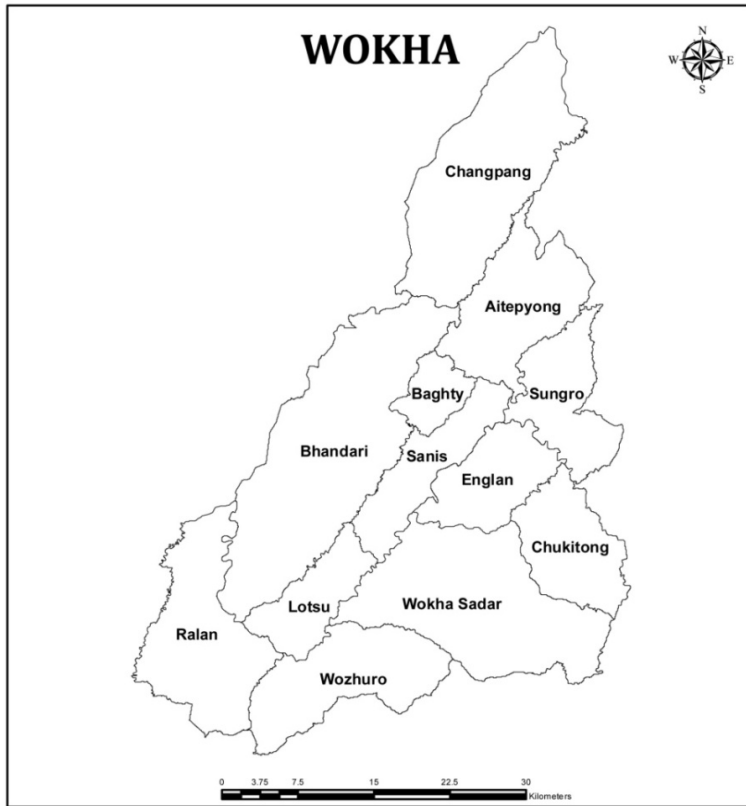
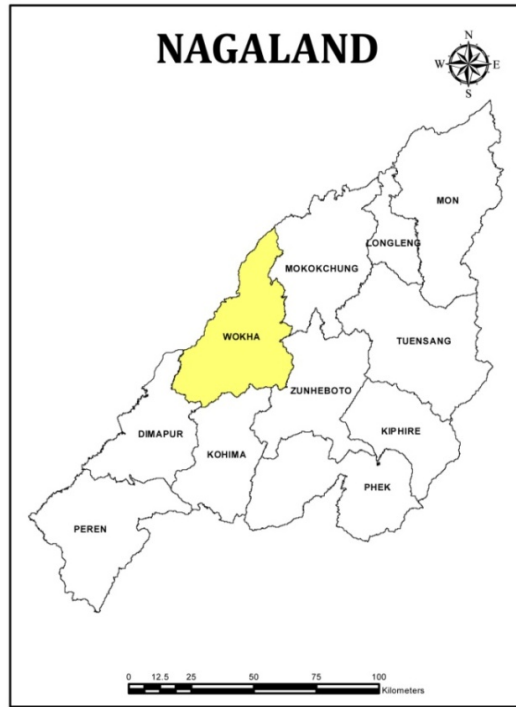
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Map 1: Map of India, Nagaland and Wokha

CHAPTER-I

Introduction

Background to the study

The village is a safe area for humans to live, with enough land for cultivation and plenty of vegetation. In a rural context, a village is a permanent or transient cluster of human settlement. Traditionally, many villages have formed as a sort of community centred on some kind of living facility. The availability of water is intricately linked to the development of human settlement around the world. In other areas particularly in forest area, tribal's lived in small villages and depended on forest products. The village settlement, being the simplest form of settlement, contains in its vicinity the simplest necessities for life: water, food and shelter. In Europe and the Middle East, the production economy criterion is considered to be predominant in the recognition of prehistoric societies (Verspay et al., 2018, p. 34). In the 19th and 20th centuries in Palestine, landscape played an important role in determining where village settlement arose and forms of that settlement. Security bears on village settlement in Palestine and resulted in the creation of 'Acropolis Village', which were built in locations more ideal for defence rather than ideal for access to resources (Amiran, 1953, p. 65).

Traditionally there are 3 (three) types of village settlement: dispersed settlements containing clusters of not more than 20 people placed at least 150 meters apart, hamlets of between 20 and 100 people and villages which are contiguous and have more than 100 people. However even these terms are flexible and have changed over time. Grossman (1987) sums this up, "Because of the difficulties of definition and classification, and because of the dominance of locally specific factors, rural settlements are subject to a bewildering complexity of customs, religions practices and economic techniques" (Grossman, 1987, p. 2). Rural people were almost uniformly illiterate until recently, which means that source material for scattered rural settlements is scarce. Written records do not often record the lives of the poor and rarely record the lives of the rural poor who make up the inhabitants, generally, of hamlets and villages. There are various models for predicting or explaining how village settlements appear. They all seem to be predicated on a landscape at one point being uninhabited. It claims that the larger the settlements are the fewer there will be and the larger they grow the greater the distance between them. Sonis and Grossman (1984) "Rank-size distribution" is another model that examines the size of villages

and cities in relation to one another an occurrence in a certain area (Sonis and Grossman, 1984, p. 373). The progressive importance of Marxist models later lead to a paradigm shift. In 1935, Childe proposed to classify societies as Neolithic from the time they are engaged in agriculture and livestock rearing (Childe, 1935, p. 2). Economic change in the form of food production is indeed regarded as paramount and as leading to other changes in society such as standardization and new technologies.

In reconceptualization the early village development in southern Ontario, Creese (2013), put forwarded the idea of place making as one of the emergent properties of village formations¹. The dichotomy between space in abstract term as opposed to place which has meaningful construction and memorialization of real or imaginary locations, paths, landscapes and monuments by people²(Creese,2013, p.189) is merged in his analysis and a less binary understanding of space and place termed as relational³ (Smith, A.T. 2003; Watts 2013 in Creese 2013, p. 189) as an alternative theory is incorporated. The idea emphasized as to how social realities emerge within a series of fluid relationship among people and things. Further, deconstructing the essentialist² and reductionist³ concept of traditional village model, Creese also dapped the theory of assemblage and territorialization (Manuel DeLanda, 2006 in Creese 2013, p.186) which says about settlement as complex relational assemblages of people, place, materials, organism and things, and that territorilization as an assemblage to form an identifiable whole with clear boundaries. From this perspective, village emergence in the sense of place making can be understood as a particular kind of entanglement process, one that tied people together in a new kind of enduring relationship with each other, with crops, with built environments and with social institutions. Therefore, in theorizing the village formation of Lotha villages, the concept of place making and assemblage theory has been adopted to study the dynamic of the village formation. The complex relational assemblages of people understood as the enduring kinship relations and territorialization that give an identity to the people is studied as the driving forces in the village formation as well as in dissolution and relocation of villages.

In India, the village has been the primeval unit of human settlement comprising a habitation area and agricultural land to pursue its food cultivation. Karve (1984), studies on India

¹ Place has gained currency in archaeological thought through its implicit contrast with space.

² Racial groups have an underlying reality or true nature that cannot observe directly.

³ Village reductively defined according to specific thresholds in subsistence economy or sedentarization.

Village found 3 (three) main types of settlement patterns, the most frequent and universal type is the nucleated village, i.e., a tight cluster of houses surrounded by fields of the villagers, perhaps with an outlying hamlet of several satellites. A second type is the linear settlement in which houses are strung out, each surrounded by its own garden or compound, with little or no physical demarcation to show where one village ends and another begins. The third type is simply a scattering of huts of 2-3 houses, with no necessary physical indications of the limits of any one village (Karve, 1984,p. 186). Powell (1957) study on Indian Village community has identified a variety of land tenures and tenancy, which have a vital bearing on agriculture and the economic conditions of the village (Powell, 1957, p. 276).

When discussing on “Village” Amin and Febrina (2017) identified 3 (three) kinds of interpretation or understanding. First, the sociological sense describes a unity of a society or community of people living and living in an environment where they know with other well and their life style is relatively homogeneous, and much depends on the goodness of nature. Second, the economies sense, the village as a community environment that seeks to meet the daily needs of what is provided by the nature surroundings. Third, the political sense, in which the “Village” as a government organisation or power organisation that has a certain political authority because it is part of the government of the state (Amin and Febrina, 2017, p. 358). The study is based on the premises that a village is a dynamic social phenomenon that encompasses a wide range of human activities. As a result, it is agreed with the interpretation of Amin and Febrina, who defines village formation process using sociological, economic, and political puzzles for the current study.

This study entails a multidisciplinary examination by combining oral sources with an archaeological method to uncover the historical validity of the region in question. Citing on the importance of archaeological approach, Irving Rouse (1965) considers people as basic to archaeology, and emphasis that archaeologists ‘dig sites not only to obtain artefacts but to learn all we can about the people who lived in the sites’ (Rouse, 1965, p. 2). He address four questions pertaining to the ‘people’ that are to be investigated by an archaeologists: a).Who were the people? b). When did each people lived? c).What culture did the people have? d). How did the culture change?

Many Lotha ancestral villages was either disintegrated or abandoned to establish a new village. Hence, it is vital to comprehend the impacts of village’s disintegration and abandonment

in order to perceive the formation of the village and the underlying elements of its growth and expansion. Cameron (1993) contented that, “Abandonment can occur at the level of the activity area, structure, settlement, or entire region. All purely archaeological sites have been abandoned, but not all structures or settlements were abandoned in the same way”. He further mentioned that, “Among agricultural villages in northeastern Iran, Horne (1988) recognises continuity in the occupation or reoccupation of areas (locational stability) and discontinuity in activities at these areas (occupational instability)” and “suggests that cyclical or periodic changes in locational and occupational stability directly affect archaeological patterns in arid parts of the Middle East” (Cameron, 1993,p. 4).

On the potential of Archaeological Research in Northeast India, Hazarika (2017) maintained that “Due to very limited research undertaken in the field of Archaeology, this region can still be considered as a terra incognita” (Hazarika, 2017, p. 9). Archaeological studies are now increasingly dependent upon a variety of scientific disciplines for gaining valuable insights to the prehistoric past and archaeologists in Northeast Indian Universities and state departments must therefore not only put an effort to integrate other branches of science to their research but must also take pains to keep themselves informed of the general principles involved in its application (Jamir and Hazarika, 2014, p. 9).

Historical records make statements, offer opinions, and pass judgements (even if those statements and judgements need to be interpreted). The objects that archaeologists discover, on the other hand, tell us nothing directly by themselves. In this respect the work of archaeology is rather like that of the scientist. The Scientist collects data (evidence), conducts experiments, formulates a hypothesis, tests the hypothesis against more data, and then in conclusion devises a model...The technical methods of archaeological science are the most obvious, from radiocarbon dating to studies of food residues in pots (Thames and Hudson, 2017, p. 13). Therefore, it is imperative for the present study to employ an archaeological input in order to support oral tradition of the Lothas about village formation.

The definition and dynamism of a village

The term "village" refers to a human habitation that existed many thousands of years ago. Sociological concept of a village refers to a small area with small population, which follows agriculture not only as an occupation but also as a way of life. The village is an important and

viable social entity to its people, who also take part in the larger society and share in the pattern of the civilization. Village is perceived to be units of society, production, identity and administration, and as such often form the structure on which analyses of rural life are based. Dasgupta (1978), in *Village studies in the Third world*, in which he talks of the 'historical continuity and stability of village' notes;

The case for studying villages (as units of social science research) rests on its being close to the people, their life, livelihood and culture, and on its role as a focal point of reference for individual prestige and identification. Villages have survived hundreds of years of wars, making and breaking up of empires, famines, floods and other natural disasters as the principal social and administrative unit. (Dasgupta, 1978, p. 1)

This conception of the village as an identifiable 'unit' is exemplified in Eric Wolf's (1967) designation of the villages as a 'closed, corporate community' (Wolf's 1967, p. 230) and in Marxist interpretations of the Asiatic mode of production where 'stagnant' rural society was governed by the communalistic nature of village life and hydraulic system of wet rice production. Whereas Scott's defined village as 'corporate', 'moral economies' (Scott's, 1976, pp. 38-70). Similarly Nartsupha (1986), has defined village to be an 'ancient institution', 'naturally set up by the people, based on 'subsistence production', 'self-sufficient', 'communal', self-sustaining', and 'relatively autonomous' (Nartsupha, 1986, p. 157). In a report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons England, Metcalfe (1833), a British administrator in India, depicted the Indian village as a 'monolithic', 'atomists' and 'unchanging entity'. He observed, "The village communities are little republic, having nearly everything that they want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations". Further, he stated that wars pass over it, regimes come and go, but the village as a society always emerges "unchanged, unshaken, and self-sufficient". Therefore, keeping in mind the definition of village by various scholars, the working definition of a 'village' for the present study is understood as 'egalitarian', 'unit', 'corporate' (community-oriented), 'peaceful', 'self-reliant' (subsistence oriented) and in a sense, 'moral' (Kaye, 1854, pp. 39-49).

For many centuries, the Nagas remained untouched by the modern civilization. The people were contented with their cultural heritage, which was transmitted from one generation to another. From headhunting to Christianity and to Naga Nationalism; from Naga Nationalism to modern democracy, Nagas have experienced a vast change in the socio-political and economic sphere of traditional village setting. This effect of processes and change in traditional Naga

village is not just of historical importance, but it also has contemporary significance, for the simple reasons that our views of the present are intimately tied to our understanding of the past. Therefore, while considering the dynamics in village formation from both geo-economic and security aspects, it is imperative to study the forces of historical change and evolution of traditional village society over the course of many years among the Lotha Nagas.

A brief overview of the Nagas

The Nagas consist of about forty ethnic groups (Yonuo, 1984, p.6) numbering approximately three million people (Vashum, 2005, p. 5). These Nagas, with a fairly well-developed culture, established permanently small village-states similar to those of the Greek city-states on the hill and mountainous ridges or spurs, high above the valleys (Op.cit., Yonuo, 1984, p.x). Politically Nagas live in a number of colonially segmented regions within India and Myanmar. The Nagas in India alone live in four different states: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland and in Myanmar, they inhabit the provinces of Sagiang and Kachin (Op. cit., Vashum, 2005, p.5). The British first invaded the Naga inhabited areas in 1832 (Johnstone, 1896, p. 22). British troops repeatedly launched military incursions into Naga territory over a long period of time, causing great harm and suffering to the population. It has been ‘one of the most violent chapters in the history of the British conquest of the sub-continent’ (Lotha, 2016, p. 45). During the colonial period, the European anthropologists distinguished the Nagas from other communities based on distinct features such as headhunting; common sleeping houses; dwelling houses built on posts; aversion to milk; tattooing by pricking; the double cylinder vertical gorge; a large quadrangular or hexagonal shield; residence in hilly regions and crude form of agriculture; betel chewing; absence of any powerful political organization; disposal of the dead on raised platforms; sort of trial marriage and simple weaving clothes (Horam, 1975, pp. 35-45). Jacobs (1990), an anthropologist, observed that “Naga society is one society, an aggregate of communities who share a set of structures or principles in common, but who emphasize them differently” (Jacobs, 2012, p. 64). Jacobs’ judgment seems to be sound in that, Naga society existed and functioned within a supra-social structure under which each tribe had a variation on their emphasis.

Each Naga village was autonomous from the others, and village was functioned like an autonomous independent state. Raile (2013) maintained that, “The Nagas lived in ‘independent villages’, which was never conquered by outsiders, was divided along the so-called Indo-Burma

boundary by the Britishers' under the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826, without the knowledge and consent of the Nagas" (Raile, 2013, pp.25-37). In the words of Longvah (2014), the Konyak Union official noted, referring to the arbitrary international border that slices through the middle of the dwelling house of the Konyak Naga chief of Longwa village in Mon district: "We are not bothered about it at all. It does not exist. India and Myanmar created it without consulting us so we do not accept it" (Longvah, 2014, p. 44).

Because the Naga village was independent of the other villages, village feuds including headhunting were common. Dzüvichü (2010) contented that, "Every Naga village was like a sovereign independent state. The Nagas bear intense love and pride for their village and land, which would not be affected by hard life or dangers. From the cradle to the grave, a Naga identifies himself with his village. He will always subscribe his interest and welfare to that of his village and strive for the good of the village. As time went on, different tribes and clans emerged on the scene. As population increased, every village grew in strength and the people's feeling of love for their village also increased. They became more and more defence conscious of their village. It compelled each village to become self-independent and especially to adopt a perfect defence system" (Dzüvichü, 2010, p. 54).

A brief outline of the Lotha Village

The Lotha Naga is one of the major Naga tribes. The Lothas are mostly concentrated in Wokha district of Nagaland. Wokha district is situated on the mid-west of Nagaland, adjoining the plain of Assam on the west, Mokokchung on the north, Zunheboto in the east and Kohima District in the south. The Lothas speak only one language unlike other Naga tribes. The headquarters of the District is also called Wokha, lying just below the Naga legendary mountain peak of 'Mount Tiyi'. According to the 2011 census, the district population is 1,66,239 and covers an area of 1628 sq.km. There are 142 Nagaland Government recognized villages with a village population of 1,19,071, which shows that 71.62% of the people dwells in the village⁴.

The migration of people and tribes has been an important aspect in history since the very inception of human society. This movement has always shaped and reshaped human history. The Angami, Sema, Lotha, Rengma and Chakhesang tribes have branched out from Kezhakeno.

⁴ Data based on Village Level Development Indicators as on 31/03/2014, Department of Statistics, Nagaland, Kohima, p. 15.

Kezhakeno is a village in Chakhesang area near the present Manipur border (Sanyu, 2016, p. 15). It is believed that the Lothas have settled in various places before they had permanently settled in present Wokha district. Some of the prominent villages where the Lothas dwells before they had finally settled in Wokha District of Nagaland are: Kezhakeno, Kohima, Thizama, Nehrema, Chiechema and Terogvünyu.

In Lotha, Village means ‘*Oyan*’ where a group of person(s) occupies an area to live together with proper shelter, water and agricultural land. They called it *Oyan*, meaning ‘found a good place’ (*vanphen mhom yani yan-checho*). From *Oyan*, all the basic needs of the people are found; the socio-economic, political, cultural, religious are well centered to the village and, functions all the constituent elements such as, norms, customs, traditions and institutions. Widjaja (2012) contented that, “The village is an autonomous institution with its traditions, customs and laws as well as relatively independent... that village autonomy is a genuine, round and whole autonomy is not a gift from the government. Instead government is obliged to respect the original autonomy possessed by the village” (Widjaja, 2012, p.4).

The Lotha villages today are exposed to cross-currents of tradition and modernity resulting in diminishing the traditional values and cultural identity. The growth of Western education and the British administrative policy in the Naga Hills gradually brought the people within the ambit of Western influence and control. Today majority of Lothas are professing Christianity, influenced by western education and a new trend of political institutions in the forefront. As Hutton in 1917 rightly observed that the Lotha “Tribe were beginning to lose their distinctive feature and were in danger of early denationalization between the upper and the nether mill-stone of Christianity, as taught by the American Baptist Mission, and Hinduism, as practiced by the Nepali settler or by the Assamese who are neighbours of the Lhota on the plain side”. By then, he found that it was already a very rare thing to see a Lotha in ceremonial dress which means the culture was in the decaying stage (Mills, 1922, pp. xi-xii).

According to the oral tradition, the Lothas established villages at Tiyi Longchum, Longsio, Lijüyo, Zükhumki, Lüngkhümchüng, Mmhorüjosü, Hayimong and Longlapa but all were abandoned to branch out new villages. Hence, the 7 (seven) oldest existing villages, namely, Koro Old, Phiro, Elumyo, Longsachüng, Longsa, Wokha and Nrüng Longidang are chosen to study how the village came to be and to understand the dynamics of village formation. However, the task to recover the process of settlement in the pre-historic period needs a committed effort

with extensive field works to get the credible oral sources. As Sanyu (2016) maintained that, “Reconstructing the history of societies dispossessed of any written records is an extremely difficult task requiring unique and unconventional methodology geared to meet this particular problem” (Op.cit., pp. 1-2). In terms of the number of household among the selected villages, Wokha is the largest. The village had a cohesive traditional way of life until recently, and they were adamant about not being impacted by Western culture and foreign religion.

On the 3rd January 1875, Wokha village was the first of the Lotha villages to stand up to the tremendous British power that had invaded their village. Despite losing as many as 20 (twenty) men and having their village being burnt to ashes, they fought without a hitch against the British under Captain Butler. Another scenario is that, the entire village resisted the evangelism of the American Baptist Missionary work in the latter part of the 19th Century and the people remained loyal to their traditional village authority and ancestral religion for so long. Mhomo Tungoe of Wokha village was the first Christian convert among the Lothas. In 1884, he was converted under Ao Baptist Mission through the influence of Mr. Robi, an Assamese evangelist, serving under Rev. Dr. Clark. The first Missionary to station in Wokha was W. E. Witter and his lady wife in 1885. However, there was no follower of first covert since the village authority was so strong to resist any foreign influence. Lately, the Baptist Church in the village was established on 25th December 1928 with only 7 (seven) Christian members (WVBC, 1978, p. 24). The last marriage through traditional culture took place in 1969 and the last *Pvüiti* (Chief) died in the same year. Thereafter, there was no reconstruction of *Chumpho* and gradually the traditional culture, polity and religion was more or less vanished. As a result, the Wokha village resisted being influenced by foreign culture and religion until the late 1920s, when the formal Baptist Church was established, creating a potential area of the study. In Wokha village, several historical sites such as standing head-tree (*Mhenkiton*), ancestral Morung (*Chumpho*) site and the ancestor’s ritual places were located for exploration. Nonetheless, the current situation in Wokha village represents decision-making unity and unanimity, with a powerful Village Council and democratically one voice, as well as religiously one denomination (Baptist), reflecting the intriguing village characteristics.

Statement of the problem

The Naga society and tradition is deeply rooted to the villages, which is their base and identity. However, there was no written scripts of the Nagas and no written historical account whatsoever has been recorded in the past; hitherto, the British officials and early American Baptist Missionaries has started literary works on the Nagas. Thence, oral account has become a knowledge base to study and establish about the Nagas, and so the Lothas. Therefore, it is an intriguing factor and not an easy task to face the difficulty.

In recent times, some scholars worked on the general account of the Lothas covering some aspects of the village life; culture, polity, economy and traditional religion. Yet, no detail descriptive works has been carried out on various components of the formation of village nor has micro research been undertaken. The reconstruction of the history of the village formation is an extremely difficult task as it requires commitment and reliable data to meet these particular problems involving social anthropology, sociological, archaeological and oral history approach.

One of the most important aspects of this research is determining the Lothas' initial settlement, as oral history tells different routes of migration and it is tough to track down the earliest settlers in different regions. Again, the study of clan organisation cannot be ruled out since every village has a composition of different clan structure. Some clan members joined the contingent in village site clearing, construction of Morung (*Chumpho*), construction of *Pvüiti* (chief) house, planting head-tree (*Mhenkiton*) and participated in the village formation ceremony as first settlers. Against the backdrop, it is evident that the different clan members came later and claiming as a part of the first settlers. Therefore, the combination of the underlying problems attracts thorough analytical and empirical studies of the 7 (seven) oldest villages in Wokha district as study area, with reference to Wokha village.

Significance of the study

The study of village formation will greatly aid in empathising the Lotha Nagas pre-colonial way of life which remained unexplored in many areas. The research will pave a way to understand the different routes of early settlement as to how and where it was settled in the first place and expansion thereafter. In the foremost, it will be a systematic documentation with archaeological data and therefore, it will turn out a clear understanding about the settlement and underlying

factors in depth. Hence, the work would largely contribute to the history of the Nagas as well as the Lothas to a great extent.

Review of literature

There has been a significant amount of research done on theoretical aspects of village formation. The literature reviewed for this study focuses on the concept of village formation process and how the village functions as a community. The theories on village studies were examined from the perspectives of the global, India, the Northeast, and Nagaland.

Jan Vansina (1985) work on '*Oral tradition as History*', has emphasis on the relevance and pertinence of oral approach to establish history where written source material is scarce, thereby, offered an assessment of oral tradition as source of history. He has demonstrated how hearsay, visions, dreams, hallucinations, verbal art, personal traditions, origin and genesis traditions, epic tales, proverbs, sayings, and memorised speeches are used to recreate history.

Paul Thompson (1988) work on "The Voice of the past" remains a guiding force to work on oral history explicitly as historical evidence. He has strongly articulated that where no history is readily at hand, it will be created. Through local history a village or town seeks meaning or its own changing character and newcomers can gain a sense of roots in personal historical knowledge. He said that can result not merely in shift in focus, but also in the opening up of important new areas of inquiry. He further maintained that the discovery of 'oral history' by historians which is now under way is, then, unlikely to be obscured. And it is not only a discovery but a 'recovery'. His work contributes to the demonstration of historical breadth, cultural diversity, and methodological consideration.

The work of Thomas David Dubious (2005), *The Sacred Village in Rural China* (2005), addresses the life of village in rural North China with special focus on religious belief in "traditional societies". His work projected a different facet on the role of the village, the circulation of knowledge, the inability of urban culture and sects to penetrate rural religiosity. He also analyzed the village remained a socially significant unit of organisation and personal identification, and ascribed village community throughout China can be characterized as having some sort of inscriptive value and sense of mutual welfare. He noted that if merits of being orthodoxy in religion and cultural life is being extracted it would have bring village history in a pure form.

Johan Callmer (1991), in his article, *'The Process of Village Formation'*, attempted the village formation process in North- West Europe from the late Bronze age and the early Iron age up to the village settlements of the early middle ages where he found that most of the areas are characterized by very light sandy soil. He further stated that village formation in North-west Europe is largely concentrated on several themes: the origin of genuine agglomerated settlement consisting of more than one household not belonging to the same kin group or family; the change of the agglomerated communities in the direction of society with a stable village structure. His study found that some settlements cease to exist, with their populations being incorporated into a nearby habitation site.

Jonathan Rigg's (1994) work on *'Redefining the village and rural life: Lesson from South-East Asia'*, is able to tell us the traditional village which is often characterized such as egalitarian; corporate (community oriented); and in a sense, moral. In contrast, the modern village is thought to be characterized by inequality; individualism; violence; dependency; and again in a sense, immorality. He has covered the village community of Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia for the changing pattern as traditional unit and modern unit, and classified how the village has been ruled by various leaders or head such as administrative, leader, village head, customary leader, irrigation leader, temple leaders etc.,

A.R Desai (1961) book on "Rural Sociology in India" highlighted the economic aspect of the village community. He reiterated that civilization began with the development of agriculture and the village became the first settled form of human habitation. The study found that the emergence of the village signified that man passed from the nomadic mode of collective life to that of the settled one. This was basically due to the improvement of tools of production which made agriculture and hence settled life in a fixed territorial zone possibly and necessary.

S.C. Dubie (1967), in his work on "*Indian Village*" throws light on the tribal village. He argued that the village settlement, as a unit of social organisation, represented solidarity different from that of the kin, caste, and the class, and played a vital role as an agency of socialization and social control. Thus, he viewed the village as a corporate entity, which represent solidarity, characterized by economic, social and ritual cooperation existing between different castes. About the tribal village, he pointed out 'the structure, ethos, and problems of a wholly tribal village will be very different from those of a village with a mixed or homogenous population. A tribal village

is often unitary in respect of its authority structure, the tribal authority itself being supreme in secular, ritual and cultural village matters.

There are some studies available on village formation based on archaeological evidences. Catherine M. Cameron (1993), in her paper on “*Abandonment and Archaeological Interpretation*” addresses the causes of village abandonment, and articulation between human behaviour at the time of abandonment and resulting patterns in the archaeological record. His study found that abandonment occurs at the level of the activity area, structure, settlement, or entire region. All purely archaeological sites have been abandoned, but not all structure or settlements were abandoned in the same way. Abandonment is an important stage in the formation of an archaeological stage in the formation of an archaeological site; in order to interpret sites accurately. Similar findings was found in Ricky R. Lightfoot (2010) work on “Abandonment processes prehistoric Pueblos”, where he articulated that the study of abandonment behaviour is important to archaeologists because abandonment processes influence the form and content of archaeological assemblages.

Ian Hodder (1976) book on “*The Spatial Organization of Culture*”, assumed that the archaeological evidence gave us a simple and straightforward picture of past spatial organization while narrating the simple correlations between material culture and society. He stated that much effort was, and still is, directed towards defining areas of similarity between total material culture assemblages. He looked on the evidence or the validity of simple correlations between material culture similarity and closeness of language, ethnic and tribal affiliation. Again in the same book, Phillipson’s (1974) study of “Late Iron Age pottery types in Zambia” has found three main pottery traditions which could be identified and shown to continue into present-day traditions. The archaeological sequence could be compared with evidence from orally handed-down accounts. The late Iron Age ceramic assemblages appear in Zambia in the 11th/ 12th Centuries. He has explicitly mentioned that if a village has little or no contact with other tribal areas, one would expect the pottery from this village to be more homogeneous than the pottery from a village which has a great deal of outside contact. It was evidently clear that ceramic styles vary between geographical areas. He opines that movement of women between areas could introduce new ceramic attributes into a village.

Trigger Bruce G., (1989) examines the relations between archaeological and its social milieu from a historical perspective in his book, “*A History of Archaeological thought*”. The new approach provides a comparative viewpoint from which problems of subjectivity, objectivity, and gradual accumulation of knowledge can be assessed. This book surveyed the main ideas that have influenced the interpretation of archaeological data, especially during the last 200 years. Bruce examined in detail some of the social factors that have helped to shape the ideas that have structured this work and the reciprocal impact that archaeological interpretations have had on other disciplines and on society.

There is considerable literature on village formation in North-East India. John Butler, in his book on *Travels and Adventures in the province of Assam (1855)*, describe the habits, customs and manners of the remaining wild tribes of the hills, viz., Angahmee Nagahs, Kookies, Meekirs and Rengmas Nagahs. He mentioned that, the Naga villages are generally built on the highest and most inaccessible hills where the internal economy (paddy field) can be viewed and a well judged attack with firearms would render opposition useless. He further commented that, no regular Government can be expected to exist amongst wild uncivilized tribes, who are ignorant of the use of letters or the art of writing, and whose dialects differ and whose leisure time is spent in the diversion of surprising each other in hostile attack, rapine, and murder.

Christoph Von Furer-Haimendorf’s (1973), *The Naked Nagas*, gives an account of Konyak village- the heading hunting, warriors, implements, horrific culture etc., which seem resemblance with the Lotha. Likewise, Verrier Elwin’s *The Nagas in the nineteenth century* (1959), give a good account on the various tribes, especially on festivals, domestic life, social life and religion. The importance of his work is for comparative point of view from which he has approached his subject. He also commented that, “the basic interest of every Naga is his family, the clan, the khel (sector or part of the village), and the village”. He is passionately attached to his land, his system of land tenure, the arrangement for the government of his village, the organization of cultivation, the administration of tribal justice through the village and tribal court. Hence, comparative studies to the Lotha Nagas is important.

Allen, B.C., (1905), in *the Gazetteers of Naga Hills and Manipur*, mentioned that the Naga villages are very different from the straggling groves of plantains, palms, and bamboos. The Naga villages are generally built along the tops of hills, and in the olden days of inter-tribal feuds

were strongly fortified and entered through a village gate. He has given a description that the village is like a little town, which often stands out sharp against the skyline, and it possesses distinct and definite village lands. He said the Lotha houses are generally arranged in regular streets along the tops of the ridge, thereby listed 61 Lotha villages' stands on the hills.

In 50 Years after Daojili-Hading, Emerging perspectives in the Archaeology of Northeast India (Eds), Tiatoshi Jamir and Manjil Hazarika (2014) highlighted the importance of archaeological evidence to confirm oral history. The authors stated that excavation of Daojili-Hading revealed the stratigraphic context of the Neolithic and extended the boundary of the Asiatic Neolithic 'corded ware' to Northeast India. The study also confirmed the earlier held hypotheses of E.C Worman (1949) and A.H Dani (1960) that the Neolithic culture of Assam is closely linked to the East Asiatic Neolithic complex.

Manjil Hazarika (2017), work on 'Prehistory and Archaeology of Northeast India, Multidisciplinary Investigation in an Archaeological Terra Incognita attempted to address the prehistorical 'people' responsible for the array of sites found, albeit sporadically, across the entire length and breadth of the Northeast region. The sites like Ambari (Dhavalikar 1973), Daojili Hading (T.C Sharma 1966), Nongpok Keithelmanbi (O.K. Singh 1993), Phynthorlangtein (IAR 1922-3), Sarutaru (Rao 1977), Sekta (A.K Sharma 1994), Selbalgiri 2 (IAR 1966-7) and 1967-8) and Vadagokugiri (A.K Sharma 1993) have proved to be of immense potential in the study of the 'people' and their cultures and, in a broader sense, in the reconstruction of history according to Hazarika.

The work of Premalata Devi (1998) on "*Social and Religious Institutions of Bodos*, envisaged the customs, tradition, taboos, rituals or religious ceremonies controlled primitive man's morality subjectively. He stated that all members did their share of work and stood equal relations that were firmly fixed in customs, taboos etc., They are very fond of helping each other of the same community. They never entered open conflicts, they were no consciousness about 'mine' 'his' in the primitive people. The life of each person was closely knit together with that of the community through their different rites and rituals. Hence, tribal morality was extremely restricted within the same community.

Alexander Mackenzie's (1979), *The North-East Frontier of India*, erstwhile, *History of the relations of the government with the hill tribes of the North-East frontier of Bengal*, 1884,

mentioned about the Wokha village. Again J.P Mills, in *Lotha Naga* made an empirical explicit work on the life and people of the Lothas covering every cultural trait, rituals and ceremonies, customary law and practices, polity and religion.

B.B. Ghosh (1979), in *Wokha District Gazetteer* has collected data's from the field situation and highlighted many aspects of life and practices among the Lothas. He has given a conclusion that "Being uncivilized in modern sense, their needs were few and they could somehow managed to be self-sufficient of their basic requirements of food, shelter and clothing in their own way". This reflects the village self-reliant and maintaining independent village which need in depth study because civilisation does not only meant modern industrial products and living in metropolis.

Visier Sanyu's (2016), *A History of Nagas and Nagaland (dynamics of oral tradition in village formation)*, has made a brilliant work of village formation, which emerged in the Angami country through oral tradition. He has brought out a particular persons involved in the establishment of Kohima and Khonoma, and gives a detail picture of clan organisation, a stronghold of village set up. However, other components under village organisation remain inconclusive.

N. Venuh's (2014), *People, Heritage and Oral History of the Nagas* made an extensive work on 10(ten) Naga tribes covering 8 (eight) district has brought about the traditional life of the people from migration to village formation, description of the tribes and its social, political, religious, customary laws and practices, festivals and narration through the prayers and songs. The common characteristics of Naga village formation are the importance of ideal and strategic site selection, composition of clan members, availability of agricultural land, and good water source. His effort on bringing out the prayers and songs associated with the village formation of the Lotha village is a limelight for in depth study on the formation of early Lotha villages.

Anungla Aier (2018), in her work on *Naga Oral Tradition: Memories and telling of origin myth and migration*, focused on folklores which is not just creative and inventive abilities of its originator but more importantly a receptacle of the collective memory of the people's experiences. She says, it mirrors their values, attitudes, social mores, customs and lifestyles reflecting the culture of the owners of the folklores and oral traditions. Folklores and oral traditions also provide a historical frame with which the people can connect, identify with and

around which the people's sense of people-hood, belongingness and historicity of their experiences are constructed and built. Her work covered many areas in Nagaland by collecting information from various tribes. It has concentrated mainly on the telling of myth, memories and legends of migrations, memories of ancestral sites and lived pasts. The notable remark is the identity label as 'Naga' is a colonial construct which is visible in the folklore and oral tradition of the people wherein reference to Naga is non-existent in any of the stories, myths and traditions that tell about their pre-colonial and ancient existence.

Tiatoshi Jamir, Ditamulü Vasa and David Tetso (2014) in their book "*Archaeology of Naga Ancestral sites, Recent Archaeological investigation at Chungliyimti and adjoining sites Vol-2*", made an extensive report on an archaeological excavation carried out at Chungliyimti, Longtikimong and Kubok, an ancestral sites in Tuensang district. The work reveals the wonderful exposure of ancestral residential areas at Ao's legendary longtrok uphill. The archaeological features of rock-cut drainage, circular pits, House postholes and hearth-like feature were unearthed from the excavation. Numerous potsherds, sand stones and artefacts were exposed and analyzed. It reflects that the settlement pattern data are used as basis for making influences about the social, political and religious organization of the prehistoric cultures. The study makes us to understand the needs and importance of preserving a cultural heritage basing on the richness of cultural resources in Nagaland where much similar knowledge is yet to explore.

Some vernacular works on the Lotha Naga Customs and Cultures are also available. Wobemo Shitiri (2019), in his '*Kyong/ Lotha Opomotsü Khentso-yitssö skikvü Kako*' (The Kyong/Lotha Customary Law), summarized the practices of Customary Laws among the Lothas. On Individual's land dispute, the traditional Judges comprises of *Dobashis* and *Goanboras*, erstwhile *Tongti-chochang* and village elders will pacify the dispute. In the event of further disagreement, the aggrieved person would take a traditional pledge to regain the land in question. The pledge says, if I falsely take a pledge: a tiger would kill me; I will die of drowning in water; fall down from the stiff of the hills and kill by one owns' implements and die before the current harvest time. The items that used during the pledge are tiger teeth, human hair and a slice of mud of the dispute land. The same yardstick would apply in family and village land dispute except the use of *Mhenkitonvo* (a leave of head-tree) during the pledge in village to village land dispute. He has written every aspect of customary laws and practices of the Lothas covering the distribution

of land and property among the family and clan; Village boundary, criminals, agricultural, fishing, marriage, adoption, bastard, elope and seduce case and property right of a women.

In the work of N.T Ngullie's (1993) '*Kyong Tathi Juli* (The Lotha Naga Customs & Cultures) emphasized various taboos associated to Lotha culture. Marriage within the clan is *Sari Emvü* (a taboo) and therefore imposed implicit prohibition on the ground that it would lead to *tathum* (degeneration of population), *omhyik ejuk* (complete blindness), *ojo okhe yesoi esi* (leg, arm fractures and deformity), and attract *lungkumvü* (fairy) to carry away in the deep jungle. He further stated it is also a taboo to eat the meat of elephant, tiger, bear, python, crow, eagle, owl, wild cat and flying squirrel.

The Church History publication of the Longsachüing Baptist Church in commemoration of its Golden Jubilee celebrations (1950-2000), titled, "*Longsachüing yimtung BaptistEkhumkho Motsü-2000*", narrated in brief how the Village was formed. They have mentioned around 23 Village Chief (*Pvüiti*) successions similar to that Wokha Village. It is recorded that the Villages-Niroyo, Aree Yanthan and Okheyen was branched out from Longsachüing Village. Several people have migrated to the villages like Tsungiki, Nrung Longidang, Koio, Yimkha, Longsa, Phiro, Yanthamo. Elumyo, imza, Yikhum, Aree, Longla, Yonchucho, Pongitong, Sunglup, Munga, Humtso, Wokha Village, Lakhuti, Yamhon, Riphyim Old, Changsu Old, Pangti, Nunging and Yimparasa.

In a vernacular publication of the Tsungiki Village, Wokha District, titled "*Tsungiki Yantso Motsü, 2010*" (A story of the formation of Tsungiki Village), mentioned that they are descendent of *Khezhakeno*. It is written that there were two routes of migration which culminates the formation of *Tsungiki*. One group came from Phiro village, to *Kangti (Kandinyu)*, to *Hayimong* (abundant village near *Nrung Longidang*) and settled in the present village. Another group came from *Lungkhumchung* (abundant village between Wokha Village and *Koio* Village) to *Mhorü Josü (Chukitong)*. They had recorded that around 80 members established a village called *Tsungiki*. It has mentioned how *Chumpho* was constructed, meaning of *Tokhü Emong* festival, monoliths, folksongs, indigenous fishing and usages of identical shawls. It helps for comparative studies in regard to Lotha village formation and socio-cultural aspect.

In his vernacular book on "*Nkolo (ancient) Nchung (modern) Kyong Liphong Phisa yansa (Ancient and Modern Lotha Administrative System)*", P. E Ezung (1993), mentioned about the

Lotha administrative system in pre-colonial and colonial period. He mentioned that *Tongti-Chochang* was selected in each Lotha village as political leaders or village administrators from the reputed family in the village. They are the backbone of the village law and order as well as the peace maker in times of conflict. *Pangki* was also selected from every khel as clan representatives to assist the *Tongti-Chochang* for effective and smooth functioning of the village administration. Each village selected one *Pvüiti* for the whole village who was supposed to be the most important person in the village. *Pvüiti* was the highest authority in the village who execute the village socio-political and religious affairs of the village. He worked with *Tongti-Chochang* and *Pangki* for important decision making in the village.

The review of the literature shows that there is substantial research done on traditional village society, economy, political, culture and religious life. A few studies on village formation have been made in North-East India as well. We have few writings covering useful aspects on the Lotha Nagas in general that are useful for providing insights into the subject of research. Moreover, it has not been done enough on the formation of village and settlement pattern. Therefore, a comprehensive study on village formation is attempted on the proposed area, which involves micro historical analysis.

Objectives of the research study

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To understand and discuss the theories concerning the village settlement.
2. To study how and why new villages were formed.
3. To undertake archaeological trial excavation at Wokha Village and Longsio (abandoned village) to supplement the existing oral source with archaeological findings.
4. To study and understand the polity, economy, religion and social evolution.,
5. To understand the basic traditional value system within the ambit of socio-cultural life.

Hypotheses

1. The formation of villages led to evolution of traditional polity, economy & social life and that, the practices of every Lotha villages are similar in nature.

2. Rituals and ceremonies are inseparable part of life to complete religious practices and social recognition.,
3. The clan representation in the process of establishing a village is strength for its existence.

Methodology

The study is based on data collections from both primary and secondary sources. The Primary sources includes: (a) personal and group interview (b) State and central government records, reports and documents, and Archival materials relevant to village formation (c) Trial excavation at Wokha village and Longsio, and test excavation of *Mhenkiton* (Head-tree) of Wokha village and Koro Old village (d) records, memoranda, leaflets, unpublished doctoral theses, petitions and pronouncements of Lotha elders organizations. In-depth interviews using unstructured schedules were undertaken with elderly persons from village and town. The members interviewed were chosen through purposive sampling from different backgrounds- village chairman, village elders, Church officials, Clan leaders and intellectuals from the chosen villages. Apart from the survey, the researcher has interviewed select academicians, student leaders, church leaders, political leaders and village leaders from the district to get their feedback on the process of traditional Lotha Naga village formation. The participant observation method was used for closer studies in the heritage development, Morung (*Chumpho*) reconstruction, and cultural festivals.

Secondary data were collected which include books of both published and unpublished, Journal papers, seminar paper presentation, Magazine, Souvenir articles, Newspaper, speech during the important functions of the Lotha culture and Vernacular writings related to current study. The approaches for data collection were developed with a focus on the dynamics of village formation and how villages functioned in the past. The formation of the social structure with the establishment of the village, as well as how the polity, economy, culture, and religion function together, was qualitatively examined.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter one has introduced the background of the thesis and outlines the main research problem. Scholarly literatures with reference to a number of key aspects pertaining to this study have been reviewed. The arguments of different authors are analyzed and reviewed to gain a much better

understanding of traditional village formation. Subsequently, the chapter has presented the aims and objectives of the study and provided the rationale for carrying out this study. In this chapter, the methodology used for the present study has also been indicated.

In chapter two, the migration route of the Lothas, their village formation, and its settlement patterns has highlighted. This chapter investigated how different socio-political and economic factors determine their traditional village formation.

The third chapter reported the trial and test archaeological excavation carried out at the study areas to support the existing oral history of Lotha village formation. Further, chapter four investigated the role of various village functionaries in running the day to day administration of the traditional Lotha villages. Since earliest times, the Naga village has been the pivot of administration. Subsequently the power and role of the village Chief (*Pvüiti*) and his assistants were discussed to understand the true nature of traditional Lotha Village administration.

The village serves as an important unit which links every individual member and family to the larger social group. Therefore, chapter five has examined the cultural practices, economic activities and religious life of the traditional Lothas villages.

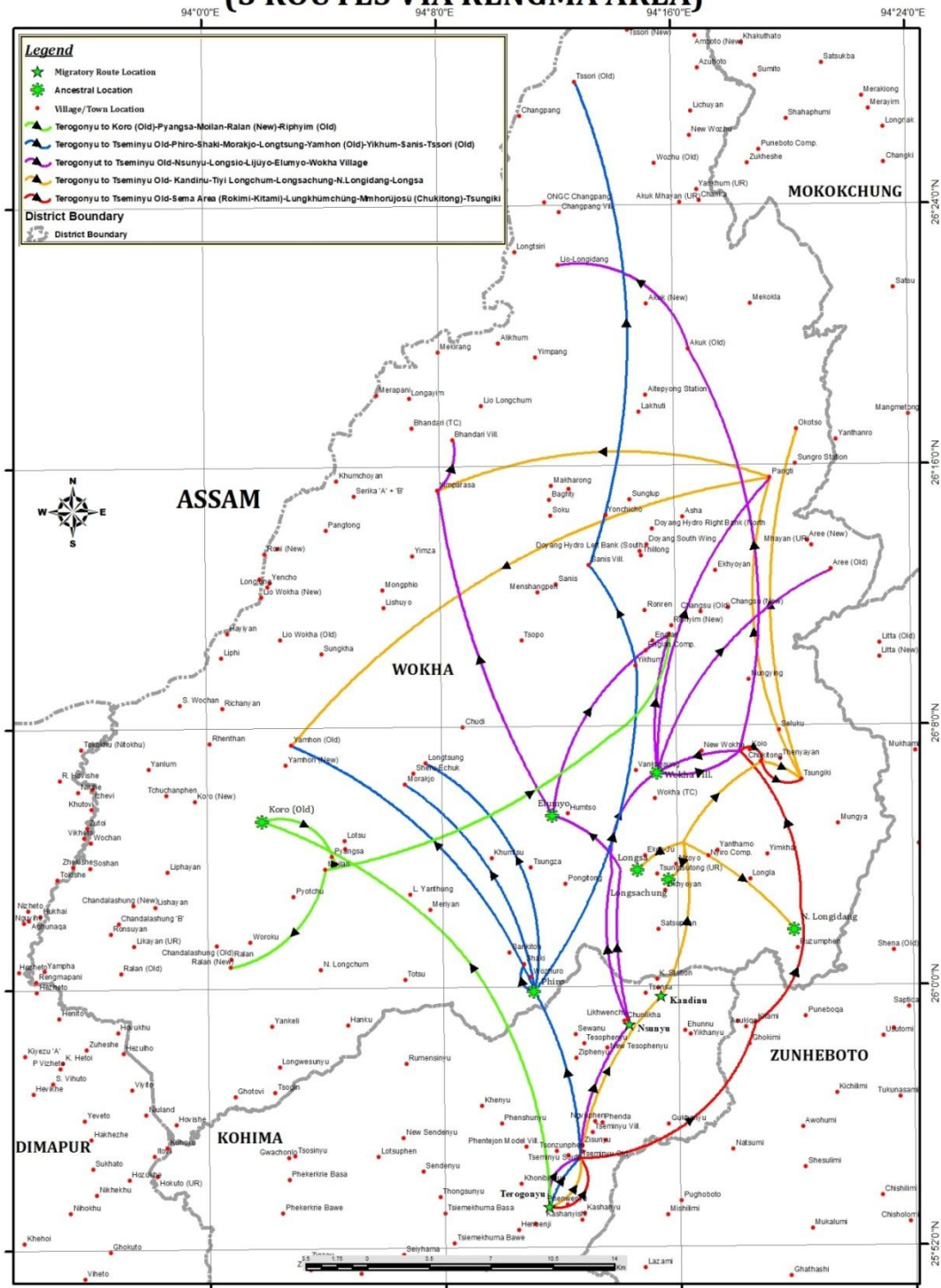
Chapter six brings together the main findings of the thesis and assess the wider implication for understanding traditional village formation among the Nagas and in particularly among the Lothas. In conclusion, it has proposed possible implications of the study, the limitations of the study and issues for further research.

MAP INDICATING LOTHA MIGRATORY ROUTE



Map 2.1: Map indicating Lotha Migratory Route from Khezhakeno (Phek District).

MAP INDICATING EARLY LOTHIA MIGRATION ROUTES (5 ROUTES VIA RENGMA AREA)



Map 2.2: Map indicating Lothia Migration Routes (5 routes via Rengma area).

CHAPTER- 2

FORMATION OF VILLAGE

Introduction

Earlier all Naga tribes lived in village settings. In both scholarly and popular writings on Naga history and life worlds, Naga village was often referred to as ‘republic’ (Vashum, 2000, p. 59), ‘ultra-republican’ (Kumar, 2005, p. 12) and ‘democratic republic’ (Bhattacharjee, 1978, p. 263), sometime even as the very ‘symbol of republic’ (Singh, 2004, p.12), somewhat akin to Greek city-states (Ibid., Singh, 2004, p. 14). Traditional Naga settlements are located in high-elevation or hilly areas with cold climatic condition, and they rely heavily on forest resources for shelter and sustenance. Nienu (2015), while describing the habitation of the Nagas stated, “Some call them hill dwellers or highlanders, other address them as mountain people or simple mountaineers. Whatever name you prefer to call the Nagas, the mountains are their habitat, for they live there all their life, ascending and descending the steep mountain slopes” (Nienu, 2015, p. xiii). Further Rev. C. D. King, who has been assigned to evangelise the Nagas as Missionary by the American Baptist Mission came in 1879 admired the scenic beauty of the Naga Hills made a poetic remarks;

“Mountain on the right of me!

Mountain on the left of me!

Mountain before me!

Range after range, peak on peak afar, they lift their towering heads in majesty, or, perchance, hide their heads to kiss the sky behind a fleecy mantle of white cloud (King, 1879, p. 145).

While discussing the formation of the village of Kohima and khonoma, Sanyu (1987) claimed that, “The examination of the landscape and the ecology of the area clearly reveals that these Naga Hills were rich in forests, pasture and fruits. Besides, there were varieties of wild animals in these thickly wooded forests to support human habitation” (Sanyu, 1987, p. 33). The landscape of the oldest Lotha villages (both abandoned and existing), were all situated in mountainous hills not very far from each other with a majestic and commanding view with sufficient spring water. The Lotha Nagas' way of life was profoundly anchored in the village, and the village was their identity. Therefore, this chapter will examine different theories of Naga

migration particularly the Lothas and recount the various socio- cultural and religious practices involved during village formation and its settlement patterns.

The Lotha Naga Migration

Migration has been crucial to understanding a people's history and the factors that impact how it leads to settlement. In European continent, the Germanic and Celtic tribes crossed over to Rome and laid the foundation of early medieval society in Europe. India also has its long history of migrations. Aryans crossed over from Central Asia and settled in India (McCrintle, 1972, p. 235). Gradually the migration theories of the Nagas have developed by various writers. As Mepusangba (2021) maintains, medieval writings from neighbouring states and the colonial era provide noteworthy works and narratives on the Nagas. "Such works that were re-written and produced by regional and local scholars occupied the literature of the Nagas for long decades" (Mepusangba, 2021, p.101). The formation and movement of such a large community can be explained using oral sources and migration theories. The recent work of Sanyu (2016) maintains, "The migration of peoples and tribes has been an important aspect in history since the very inception of human society. There has been migration from one country to another and from one continent to another. This movement has always shaped and reshaped human history" (Op.cit., 2016, p.5).

The migration of the Nagas, probably, took place in 3 (three) different successive waves. The first migrants are believed to be Angamis, Chakhesangs, Lothas, Rengmas, Semas and Zeliangs, who crossed the Chindwin valley and came to a place called 'Samsok' or 'Thaungduth' means 'parting place'. From there, the Zeliangs moved towards the west and came to the present site. The Lothas are believed to have moved far ahead of the Semas, Rengmas, Angamis and Chakhesangs. The advance movement of the Lothas is speculated to be true, by the fact that they have erected numerous monoliths in their abandoned villages. When the Chakhesangs followed the routes of the Lotha migration, they found an abandoned village with the erection of monoliths, and they thought that it was erected by the spirits, therefore, name the village as '*Terhuochiesemi*' means 'spirit erected stone village'. The second wave of the Naga migrants consists of the Aos, Changs, Khamniungans, Sangtam, Tikhirs and Yimchungrüs, who crossed the Patkai range along the course of Tisu river, and entered into the present place from western side of the Patkai range. While the third wave consisting of Konyaks and heimis went up along

the Tunia (Chindwin) river and some of them moved towards the western side, following the Hangnu river, but the rest stayed back and spread over the areas upto Hukawn valley⁵.

Every Naga tribes has its own oral accounts of migration and early settlement in different villages. In the words of Nshoga (2009), “When the ancestors of the Nagas entered the Naga Hills, they ramified into different locations, established their respective sovereign village by earmarking their territories independently with the mountain ranges, rivers, streams, ridges and boulders. While they moved into the hills, most of the Naga groups began to settle in a specific direction, resulting the formation of tribal areas (Nshoga, 2009, p. 26).

Like any other Nagas, the Lothas have no written records about their migration. Writing was not known to them until Dr. William Ellsworth Witter, the American Baptist Missionary who introduced “An Outline Grammar of the Lotha Naga Language” with a vocabulary and illustrative sentences in 1886 (BMM, 1886, p. 25). Thus, the analogy of migration was solely depended on oral tradition where the people migrated from place to place till they settled down in the present villages. The exact date of the migration of the present tribes of Southern Nagaland is not known. A tradition is vogue amongst the Angami, the Rengma, the Lotha, and the Sema is that their forefathers came together in one migration and reached their present abode via Manipur from Burma. The Lotha, the first who entered Nagaland via Moa, were followed by the Sema who came by the southern route, but the latter may have halted at Kigwema whose traditions are still vivid about that place connected with their migration. Rengma and the Angami were the last (Bareh, 1970, p. 15).

The prominent dwelling places prior to the migration to the present place are of Mongolia, Mansuria (Manchuria) and China. An elderly people remembered the places where the ancestors passed through and settled to different places as migration route. A prayer of the Lotha *Pvüti* (Chief) to the deity of crops (*Ronsyu*) during harvesting of paddy for goes: *Oh.. Mansuria vanathung ronsyu, Oh.. Kutcha vanathung ronsyu, Oh... Thungpocheura vanathung ronsyu*⁶ (Oh..*Ronsyu*, diety of harvest that dwells amongst us during the days in Manchuria, Kuthcha (Myanmar) and Thungpocheura (Manipur) and the actual prayers continue for blessings of good harvest).

⁵ Pamphlet issued by Isak Chishi Swu, The origin and migration of the Nagas (p.14).

⁶ Interview with Mhonbemo Tungoe, 86 Years, Wokha Village, 23/09/2020.

The migration routes recorded in a booklet of *Ezomontsü Rii* (2009) are as follows:

1.Lanka 2. Tichungpang 3. Terumyo 4. Chipoyo. 5.Mekuklia (Mangolia) 6. Chin 7. Burma 8. Kangkon 9. Manipur 10. Phitson (Khezhakeno) 11. Motana 12. Khayima (Kohima) 13. Sensa (Thizama) 14. Nerhuma (Nehrhema) 15. Tichuma 16. Hohohoyonton (Terogvünyu) 17. Chemung (Tseminyu) 18. Pensikya 19. Redu 20. Kisunyo (Nsunyu) 21. Tiyi Longchum (*Ezomontsü Rii*, 2009, p.14)

According to Kikon (1998), “Among the Nagas, Kyong (Lotha), Sema, Kheza, Ao, Angami, Rengma, Pochuri, Sangtam, Yimchungrü, Pomai and Mao are brothers unlike the present days of different tribes affinities. Earlier, both Lothas and Sangtam are known as ‘Kyong’. They had departed to form new villages before entering the present Naga Hills. Onward looking for a new place for settlement, they had decided to erect *Thumpak tssüng* (*Rhus semialata* wood) as an indication where the brother has gone. The elder of the *Kyong* (Lotha) left first and Sangtam followed thereafter. In between some passerby took out the *thumpak tssüng* and placed towards the East and put *Shompok-tssüng* (*Cordia dichotoma* wood) towards the West. On seeing *Thumpak-tssüng* towards the east, the Sangtam brothers went to that direction, whereas the *Kyong* (Lothas) went far ahead towards the Western direction” (Kikon, 1998, pp. 8-9). The *Kyong* migration route before settled in Phitssonyan (Khezhakeno) are: Mongolia, Manchuria, China, Kongon, Burma Ochongo (Inner Burma), Burma Opomo (outer Burma), Limyon (Jüsü Likok), Kutsa, Tssüdenpokphen, Yoren, Thepochanra, Nüngkha, Süngma, Chüporonchü, Phitsson. From Phitson, they had further migrated to Khayima (Kohima), Tssenza Wozhü (Thizama), Nerhema, Chechüma (Jichuma), Morayanke, Honohoyonton, Koro, Ngochüphen, Phiro, Kisüyo and Tiyi Longchüm (Ibid., p.13). Both from the oral account and through vernacular writings, the Lothas (they called themselves *Kyong*), abandoned from numerous established villages in different places and finally settled in the present place. In Khezhakeno, they called the Lotha tribe, ‘Latha’, meaning ‘gone to a far off place’ in *Kheza/Khuza* word⁷. The Lothas has their own name of some of the old places they lived in as given below:

Name of the village (according to Lothas)	New name (according to present inhabitants)
1. Phitsson Yan	Khezhakeno
2. Khayima Yan	Kohima Village
3. Tssensa Wozhü Yan	Thizama

⁷ Interview with Ngolo Kevi, 90 years, Khezhakeno Village, 20/03/2018.

4. Nerupa Yan	Nerhema
5. Jichuma Yan	Chiechema
6. Honohoyonto Yan	Terogvünyu Hill
7. Jemüing Yan	Tseminyu Old
8. Kisüingyo Yan	Nsunyu

Oral traditions tells that the Lotha ancestors comprises of three brothers Limachan, Ezomontsü and Rankhandan, the ancestors of the three phratries came out of the hole which they entered while chasing a porcupine. Mills (1922) observes that, this “hole” as mentioned in the traditions may not be a hole, but it might be a narrow passage somewhere in the Himalayan region through which they came out (Op.cit., p. 3). There is a legend about Rankhandan which literally means oldest, and possibly a totem. When the tribe moved from Manchuria (or Mongolia), the progenitor of the tribe ‘*Rankhandan*’ prepared a pack of rituals to take himself and follow the tribe. Unfortunately, he could not cross the hole due to his stag-like horns and so he was left behind. He requested the brothers to observe the rites and rituals of the old world and to give him yearly offering in remembrance. Therefore the primitive Lothas observed the “*Epo Etha*” ceremony every year in remembrance of *Rankhandan* (Ezung, 2014, p. 6).

Migration beyond *Phitsson Yan* (Khezhakeno)

Taking into account the Lothas' great orality, they were convinced that they had travelled from Mongolia to Manchuria via China and Burma. They had migrated from Burma to Manipur and then to *Phitsson Yan* (Khezhakeno). They built a strong village and stayed there for a long time, according to legend. Khezhakeno (Figure 2.1) is a village in Nagaland's Phek District, on the border with Manipur (Ukhrul District). The name Khezhakeno is a new name for the Lothas because they only know ‘*Phitsson Yan*’ which was their old village. According to them, *Phi*’ means dry (traditional way of drying paddy) and ‘*Tsson* means multiply or increase. Therefore, they called this village as *Phitsson Yan* and the stone slab as *Phitsson Long* (Grain multiplier stone). The legend which refers to *Phitsson Long* tells that the family did not disclose to other villagers how the grain is being multiplied by drying in the stone slab. One day, a lady (married to different clan member) narrated the secret how their in-laws were gifted with unusual blessings to her brothers. The lady’s brothers have starting asking to give the magical stone slab as a bride’s

value. Consequent upon the pressure inflicted for losing the stone by giving away as bride's value, they had decided not to concede but arranged a couple (widower and aged widow in the village) to sleep over the stone slab. There upon, the paddy never turned double even if they dry over the stone slab and it was never be a magical stone after illegal sexual encountered. A brother named, Aphong has broken the stone slab out of anger (Op.cit., Kikon, 1998, pp. 14-15). The Lotha migration route from Phitsson Yan is showing in Map 2.1.

Probably, after the tragic incident of the magical stone, they moved towards the south-west and sojourned at Rerang (Mao) and later they left Mao and went towards northern direction along the foothills of Japfu mountain and they reached Kohima (Khayima), means uncountable (Op.cit., Nshoga, 2009, p. 29). The tribe members have considerably increased by the time they reached Khayima and they could not accurately count the number of people. Therefore, they named the village as Khayima (*Kha'* means Count and *yima* means confused) which means confused in counting of people. As the members increased some of them established a village in Tsensa Wozhu (Thizama) while some of them had ansorbed and assimilated to Angami culture⁸. From Tsensa Wozhu, they had further established a village at Nerhuma (Nirhema) and Jichuma (Chiechema) which means dig and lay of monolith. The Lothas had again migrated to *Honohoyonton* (North-western site of the present Terogvünyu Old village).

According to both Lotha and Rengma oral tradition, *Honohoyonton* means 'fowl throat cut hillock'. It was a place where the Lothas performed religious rites involving rooster sacrifices. The Rengmas established a village called Terogvünyu (Figure 2.2) below *Honohoyonton* (*Tero'* means Cock and '*gvü* means power and the named the village after the mountain, *Thun*⁹, behind their village which is an altitude of 1750 above mean sea level). According to the Terogvünyu village oral tradition they were three (3) brothers, namely, Kasha, Tsemi and Rampha (Lotha). Kasha decendents established Terogvünyu, Phenwhenyu and Kashanyu. Tsemi established Tseminyu, while Rampha left further. They still believe that Rengmas and Lothas are brothers who migrated from Khezhakeno. It is said that there are Lothas absorbed to Rengmas in Tesophenyu and Kadinyu¹⁰. According to Rengmas, their forefathers came in search of metals; the Lothas maintain that they selected their present territory because of the availability of crags

⁸ Interview with Ekyimsao Ovung, 83 years, Wokha (Pyangsa Village), 05/10/2020.

⁹ Interview with Gwaseni Tep, 80 Years, Head G.B, Terogvünyu Village, 21/11/2019.

¹⁰ Interview with Daniel Tep, 46 Years, Chairman, Terogvünyu Village Council, 21/11/2019.

which were to be extracted in connection to their megalithic erections. The Angamis came in search of terrace fields which were developed along the precipitous slopes (Op. cit., Bareh, 1970, p. 16).

From *Honohoyonton* one group migrated to form a village called Koro Old¹¹ (Lower Range, Wokha District). Another group went towards Totsü Mountain and established a village called Phiro¹². Majority proceeded towards North-East and established a village called Jemung (Tseminyu Old) and Kisünyo (now Nsunyu). It is said that that the tribe population was massive that flooded the entire area. From there, one group went up to *Phonglan* (mountain) and established a village called Longchum¹³ (Tiyi Longchum an abandoned village), while some went toward North-west and established a village called Lijüyo¹⁴ and Longsio¹⁵ (both are abandoned). Another group went to Sema area such as Longotyü, Okyimi (Rokimi), Tsamphi (Tsaphemi), Kitami and further moved out to Hayimong, Lüngkhümchüng, Mmhorüjosü¹⁶. The Lothas has spread in the following manner (Figure 2. 3) before the final settlement in the present Wokha District:

1. Honohoyonton: Koro Old Village, Pyangsa Village and Moilan Village.
2. Honohoyonton: Jemüing (Tseminyu Old), Ngochitaphen (abandoned) and Phiro Village.
3. Honohoyonton: Jemung (Tseminyu Old), Kisünyo (Nsunyu), Lijüyo (abandoned), Longsio (abandoned), Elumyo Village and Wokha Village.
4. Honohoyonton: Jemüing (Tseminyu Old), Kisünyo (Nsunyu), Tiyi Longchum, Longsachung, Longsa, Nrüing Longidang, Niroyo and Yimkha.,
5. Honohoyonton- Jemüing (Tseminyu Old) to Sema area: Longotyü, Okyimi (Rokimi)- Tsamphi (Tsapemi- Kitami) and further proceeded to Lotha area: Hayimong (abandoned), Lungkhümchüng (abandoned), Mmhorüjosü (abandoned village at the outskirts of Chükitong), Tsüngiki and Nrüing Longidang (Map 2.2).

¹¹ Interview with Tsumongo Ovung, Retd. NCS, 74 Years, Wokha (Hankvu Village), 03/10/2020.

¹² Interview with Soshumo Enny, 81 Years, Kohima (Phiro village), 09/09/2020

¹³ Interview with Chanbemo Ngullie, 90 Years, Nrüing Longidang Village, 27/03/2019.

¹⁴ Interview with Yisansao Tsanglao, 73 Years, Elumyo Village, 23/03/2019.

¹⁵ Interview with Nrisao Humtsoe, 78 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

¹⁶ Interview with Tsuremo Ezung, 62 Years, Longsachung Village, 30/08/2021 and Chonchithung Ngullie, 86 Years, Niroyo Village 01/09/2021.

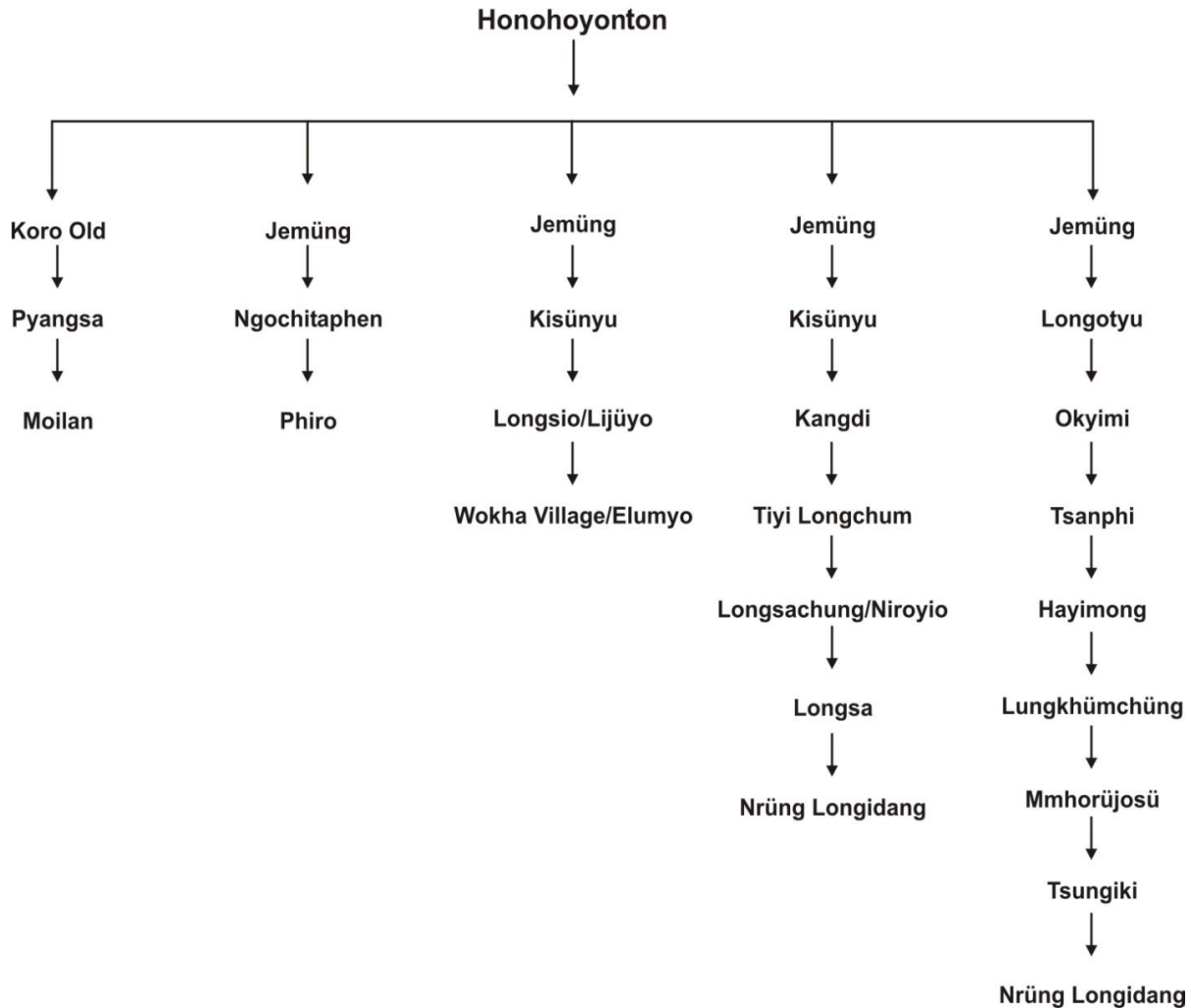


Figure 2.3: Early Lotha Migrations from *Honohoyonton* (see Map 2.2).

Formation of the Lotha village

The Lothas yearned to build a village for permanent settlement when they finally arrived in the current Wokha District, having moved from one place to another. The tradition and culture of the past has not diluted during their long course of journey from a distant place. They are one of the forerunners among the Naga tribes in terms of searching a feasible and suitable place to form a village braving against all odds that they had faced during the process of settlement. Bernal (1954) maintains that, “The setting up of human society does not alone depend on the amount of human labour power that will be utilized for various production techniques, but depends much on the ecology, environment and demography of the area they were settling in. It generally depends on the nature of the soil, the capacity of arable land, the availability of forest land, pasture, and other resources of the area” (Bernal, 1954, p. 68). Though we cannot assume the number of

people when they arrived in the present habitat sites, it is supported by both oral tradition and by the fact of dispersal in group to different locations to establish new villages from Rengma areas justifies that the tribesmen are in good number of population when they started first phase of village formation. A new village is established when the old village becomes over populated or if there is infant mortality, famine, drought, and destruction by fire; water etc., if they are not successful in hunting and defeating their enemies and the natural resources depletes and become insufficient for the people, and if there is struggle for power among the villagers. The village leaders and elders come together to discuss about the situation and decides to find a new place. Then along with representatives of different clans they set out in search of a place to establish a new village (Venuh, 2014, p. 257). Unlike inhabitants of the modern Naga village who interact more freely with the outside world, those in the olden days were more conservative and preferred to be confined to their own communes and ethnic groupings. The structure of the Naga village of today, therefore, is different from that of its ancestral past (Lohe, 2011, p. 19).

When an ideal place is located to establish a village, elders convened a meeting to discuss and select a person capable enough to be the *pvüti* (chief), *yingae* (*Pvüti helper*) and the person who can perform several rituals such as *hanjü ndong* (egg-offerer), *lishü phakphoe* (fresh soil clearer), *phalyu efung* (lot maker) and *omi lhaphoe* (first fire litter)¹⁷. These important personalities had been drawn from different clan who are deemed fit to do their duty. For establishing a village, several types of people are involved which include wealthy individuals, wise and good physique person, religious, warriors, outstanding hunters and a person who knows custom and tradition.

On satisfactory of the survey team, preparation will start for moving out to a new village with procedures as follows:

1. According to Lotha tradition, marriages will not be done among the same clan and therefore, they select leaders and proportionate members from different clans as ‘*Yantsso-kyon*’ (Village founding member) in the old village to migrate to a new one. In antonym term, it is called ‘*Yanshumi*’, which means came to the village later¹⁸.
2. They would chop out a branch of *Tsongontong* (figus tree) as ‘*Mhenkiton*’ (Head-tree) to be planted in the new village. It is said that a hole is being dug and sprinkled with rice

¹⁷ Interview with Bijamo Erui, 83 Years, Wokha Village, 26/06/2019.

¹⁸ Interview with Benry Ezung, 57 Years, Kohima (Longsa Village), 30/08/2020.

beer (*suko*) and a piece of ginger was put inside to thwart off the evil spirit before planting¹⁹.

3. They drew water from the old village ‘*Jükha*’ (pond), filled their ‘*jüthi* (bamboo jar) and carried with them to be poured in the new village *jükha*²⁰.
4. They will carry some grains and other edible items as per their needs for their initial survival²¹.
5. *Tsokro-mumro* and *tenjü-mojü*, *Mani-sungjü* (Crops of different kinds such as paddy, oats, millets, taro, ginger etc.,) will carry with them for cultivation purpose as seeds to be sown. Rice, being their stable food, they carried variety of them²².
6. They will carry with them piglets, fowls, eggs and dog. Cock was very important in their life because it served as a clock for them apart from rooster sacrifices: it crows in the morning as a wake up alarm, afternoon as lunch time and evening for retirement²³.
7. They would also entrust a person to compose a song of a new village and another one to prepare a sufficient bamboo spikes with a case²⁴.

On establishing a village, the *Pvüti* would invoke blessings and protection upon the village to the highest God that dwells above (*metseni evamo Postsow*). They considered and belief that their God is the source of all power and strength. The village dedication prayer goes:

Hatitonake! Amhonikhelo!

Ah! Pvüro-poroe pyimtsü-motsüi na tsophi-tanpi choena

Ah! Phitong-yantong na tsophi-tanphi choena

Ah! Phitong-Yantong Yimtong shijo

‘Tssüngrhyu (ottsüngrhyu) zachtetato, loro-khyinroe thiche-ranche tokhelo

‘hapvürhyu (Ehapvürhyu) zachtetato thiche-ranchetok khelo

Osi osolo lia, orilo lia

Süvonkiven lia, thiche-rancheta vantokhelo

¹⁹ Interview with Orenimo Ezung, 82 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

²⁰ Interview with C. Zumomo Tsanglao, 67 Years, Council Chairman, Elumyo Village, 23/03/2019.

²¹ Interview with Ngheo Ezung, 84 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

²² Interview with Yanpothung Ezung, 73 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

²³ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 76 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

²⁴ Interview with Jomishio Kikon, 92 Years, Longsa Village, 25/10/2021.

Ah! Jali-pangti khyingro-yingae na
Ah! Yimtong helona, oso ori yana voathung, rallo voathung jo
Yingsüing nlupa ntsina, 'khvütsü (zhükhvütsü) nlupa ntsina
Ah! Jakrho-tangki, longrhen-süren nlupa ntsina
Tssikhvu lona tsena voekhi, Eying kheno pena
Mmhorü zen pena, Ranfu zen pena, tssipüingina tsena voekhi
Opo ezalo chiyitoki , pipo-sümo rhanchoe khi
Ha! Pvüroe-poroe, pyimtsü-motsüi yikra ntok-tokna
*Myingthung hansı oyi ejantok-khelo!*²⁵

Illustration:

Bless us over and over! We are following in the footsteps of our forefathers in creating a new home. The new location that we have picked will be blessed with a large number of young boys and girls, much like a thicket of wild trees, and the population will grow like bamboo groves. As we come into contact with wild animals and foes, please protect us. May we be active and robust for the rest of our lives. May you offer courage to our young people and warriors while they search for human heads. Allow them to swiftly cross the rocky slopes and rivers. May you bestow wisdom on them so that they can defend themselves against enemy onslaught. Allow them to battle like tigers and achieve the throne of warrior's armour and elegant clothes. May their venture bring them glory rather than shame in the eyes of the community elders.

Criteria of choosing site to form a village

The initial process of selecting a new location for settlement includes debate, planning, strategy and programming, as well as choosing leaders from the clans. The elders with extensive knowledge of local environment provide perspectives of habitable lands and prospects that would meet their needs for final settlement. After much deliberation, they have decided who amongst them would relocate the new village. Because they were living in fear of enemy and wildlife attacks, a proper strategy had been established to carry out the plan of going forward by the selected team of survey. A plan has been put in place to conduct a thorough study the feasibility

²⁵ Interview with Chonchithung Ngullie, 86 years, Niroyo Village, 01/09/2021.

of the proposed site. Some of the primary criteria for establishing a new village according to oral tradition are as follows:

1. In terms of protection and defence, the Lotha ancestors typically prefer that the site be on a hilltop to protect the village from *ori* (enemy tribe) and wildlife attacks. They value the ability to flee in an emergency as well. The period was known as *Sochen-Rüchen/sokhyu-rikyu* (age of wildlife concerns and inter-tribal feuds) by the Lotha ancestors²⁶.
2. Because they were agriculturalist and pastoral, availability of sufficient area of land for farming activities was critical to them. Therefore, they inspected the cultivable land before establishing a village²⁷.
3. The survey team must be convinced that the location they have viewed was a good location for creating a village (*Yan-müing mmhom*). A stable source of drinking water is required²⁸.
4. The proposed village location should be rich in natural resources, surrounded by dense forest for easy collection of *belüing* (wooden cot), *tsumpho* (paddy grinder wooden slab), *ojen* (wooden container), and *jenkok* (Wooden Bamboo shot pounder), as well as adequate construction materials²⁹.
5. Bamboos (*vepvü-tsintsan/nkyip*) should be available on-site or nearby because it was a way of life for them³⁰.
6. People must be persuaded that edible plants of wild yam (*hotsü-horo*, *vona* and *elyoe-yingo* in local names) are available at the new location³¹.

Village formation under study area (Map 2.3)

According to legend, Koro Old was the first Lotha village being established in the current Wokha District (Map 2.4). As the population of *Hohohoyonton* grew, some villagers began looking for new places to settle. They spotted a gentle slope large terrain with a tall standing tree towards the north-west, which is now known as Pyangsa hill, from afar (Pyangsa is one Lotha village

²⁶ Interview with Thungarhumo Kikon, 76 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

²⁷ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 76 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

²⁸ Interview with Litsomo Ezung, 70 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

²⁹ Interview with Bichamo Erui, 83 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

³⁰ -do-

³¹ Interview with Tsatheo Humtsoe, 82 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

established by the people migrated from Koro). Rongkhyu and Pofüo led the village formation team to the desired location. They were perplexed when they arrived at a point halfway between Pyangsa and Moilan, and after a round of disagreement, they took a step further below and completed the formalities of founding a village there. The village founding group crossed the Baghty River and marched upward to the hill (*Pyangsa Baptist Ekhumkho Motsu*, 2001, p. 9).

There are 2 (two) possible explanations for why the village was given the name Koro (Figure 2.4). The first is tied to their subsequent steps after leaving the debate site, as *Kho'* means step ahead and *Ro'* means reach, and therefore the village was named Koro³². Second, because they took a step forward and arrived at the longing spot from afar, the village was given the name 'Koro'. The village has expanded in size and become a thriving community. Karanshan Ovung and Liphanshan had re-enforced the settlement, which had been on the point of being abandoned. The Ovung and Tsanglai (now Tsanglao) clans were instrumental in the village's establishment. Koro grew to be a large village but disintegrated as a result of tiger attacks and smallpox epidemic (*phentso vara*)³³. Koro Old was abandoned and re-established by the people from Yimkha Village (Niro range under Wokha District) and Elumyo village³⁴.

Phiro Settlement (Map 2. 5) is one of Wokha's oldest villages and the largest village in Wozhuro Range today. From Honohoyonton, their descendants created Ngochitaphen/Vochitaphen (now Rengma region) via the Jemung (Tseminyu Old) and Müngijü river. Many people died of diseases; therefore it was dubbed Etchüyan instead of Ngochitaphen, which means "death village"³⁵.

According to folklore, when they were residing in Ngochitaphen, an expected pregnant Sow in the hamlet went missing for several days without food. On one time, the Sow came back to eat in one fine morning. Therefore, the brothers Konsukhyo (older) and Kohonphyo (younger) were tasked with tracking down the pig. The duo sprinkled paddy husk over her body and followed from behind after a time, only to discover that she had given birth to 9 (nine) male piglets in a beautiful place beneath the *tekyu/kikyu* (coral) tree. They told the villagers a story about the occurrence. Konsukhyo had a dream that read, "*Longtsung rüi Konsukyo, Yonjak rüi*

³² Interview with Ekyimsao Ovung, 83 Years, Wokha (Pyangsa village), 05/10/2020.

³³ Interview with Tsumongo Ovung, Retd. NCS, 74 Years, Wokha (Hankvu Village), 03/10/2020.

³⁴ Interview with Nzamomo Ovung, 68 Years, Dimapur (Koro Old Village), 10/12/2020.

³⁵ Interview with Anyio Odyuo, 90 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020.

Kohankyo". An elder interpreted the experience as a good dream of *sokhyo-rikhyo* (victorious), which means that even if the village burns like iron and stone, it will stand³⁶.

The 4 (four) clan members, namely, Khomesa Odyui, Phirow patton, Longsüo Ennio and Asangrüi Jungio were said to be the earliest settlers. The team reached the place to clear the jungle but no one put the hand but only to return back after having a lunch, and repeated the same on the second attempt also. On the third attempt, as they were standing to expect someone to put hand, one person, named, Ashangrüi Jungio exclaimed, ah..ha..ha tired of standing! And bundled *Yotsoro (phrynium placentaum)* leaves; slit and sit over it. On seeing Ashangrüi, the team said 'it is done'; and thus cleared the jungle. Phirow performed '*lishü phakpho*' (clearing raw soil), Khomesa performed the rituals of rooster sacrifice while Longsüo lay the eggs that brought from the old village. The village was named after the senior most occupants 'Phirow', a Phiro village (Figure 2.5). Khomesa was the first chief (*Pvüti/ Yanpvüi*) of the village³⁷.

The Phiro village oral tradition tells that, the Lothas came along with Kachari till Khayima (Kohima). The Kachari reached Dimapang (Dimapur) in the year 600 A.D. and the Lothas went eastward. They are assuming the village about 1400-1600 years old basing on the life span of *mhenkiton* tree, as the third *mhenkiton* is standing tall and majored for the third time by assessing that the life span of the particular tree is about 500 years. The earliest settlement was concentrated in the *mhenkiton* area with single *Chumpho*. Later it has spread over 3 *kithang/ yankho (khel)* : *Jungi yankho (A-Khel)*, *Lahai yankho (Odyui)* and *Sonnyie yankho (Ennio & Patton)* with an expansion of 3 (three) *Chumpho*. Village was fenced into three (3) layers with one main gate at *Sonnyie yankho (son'* is a short form of *oson* which means granary). The village has further expanded with 5 (five) *yankho (khel)* with five *Chumpho* and seven (7) clan: Odyuo, Patton, Ennio, Jungi, Tungoe, Ovung and Tsopoe³⁸.

Elumyo village (Map 2. 6) is another old village that occupies the most fertile terrain in the area. Their forefathers remained in *Honohoyonton* before moving to Kisünyo (Nsunyu), and later left Kisünyo for Lijüyo. People from the nearby village of Lijüyo (an abandoned village

³⁶ Interview with Benrio Odyuo, 79 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020.

³⁷ Interview with Lithungo Tungu, 86 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020.

³⁸ Interview with Soshumo Enny, 81 Years, Kohima (Phiro Village), 09/09/2020.

below Longsa) used to go to this valley (present Elumyo area) for hunting and fishing before settling there³⁹.

Tsumthia Tsanglai, a good hunter who frequents this location for the hunting sport, was motivated to create a village due to the suitability of the settlement site and the dense forest surrounding it. He and others, including Longtsüthung Kikon, Tsongsüthung Murry left Lijüyo to establish a village there. Tsumthia was the one who cut down a tree branch, allowing the crew to clear the forest. The village's pond (spring well) was built by Longtsüthung Kikon. Tsongsüthung transported eggs (*hanjü-ndong*) from the old hamlet and used them to perform religious rites. While creating a village, Rasanto was also a member of the crew. On the night they slept, 'Kvükvu Ra Kvü Elumyo', a cock owned by Tsumthia crows. They named the village 'Elumyo' after hearing the squawk (Figure 2.6).

Members of the Patton clan arrived from Phiro village after a while and Ovung clan member from Lijüyo arrived. Ashum Yanthan and Rantsongti Rüi came from Longlapa (abandoned village between Wokha village and Yikhum village), while Tsenshan Ezung arrived from Wokha village. Elumyo village is claimed to be 17 generations old. Ashum yanthan was a competent and valiant fighter. He once slaughtered 30 people from the opposing hamlet of Yanke Tongti (abandoned village) on his own and brought all the heads back to the village⁴⁰.

Longsachüing village (Map 2.7) got its name from the words '*olong* (*long* in short)', which means stone, and '*sajüing*,' which means centre point surrounded by stone slabs. Longsachüing was the first hamlet to branch out from 'Tiyi Longchum' before it was distorted, according to village oral tradition⁴¹. When a man named 'Moran' served as the Chief of Tiyi Longchum village, Longsachüing was established.

According to legend, a pregnant Sow of Khatithung Ngullie disappeared for 9 days in order to give birth. When the gilt returned home for a meal on the tenth day, Khatithung placed a rice husk across the pig's back and loin and trailed behind him with his son-in-law Emora. In the hills on the western side of the village, the couple discovered the gilt giving birth to piglets. They performed a rite by burning the mound of twigs and leaves in the nest after carefully separating the mother and piglets. The smoke rises straight up and lands in Longsachung's current *A-khel*

³⁹ Interview with Yisansao Tsanglao, 73 Years, Elumyo Village, 23/03/2019.

⁴⁰ Interview with C. Zumomo Tsanglao, 67 Years, Council Chairman, Elumyo Village, 23/03/2019.

⁴¹ Interview with Khonchamo Kikon, 85 Years, Longsachung Village, 20/03/2020.

(Longsachüing Yimtung Baptist Ekhumkho Motsü, 2000, p. 13). They saw it as a sign of good fortune and decided to build a new village there. As a result, they organised a group and founded Longsachüing (Figure 2.7), a new village.

The following are the founding members of a new village: 1. Khatithung Ngullie 2. Moran Ezung 3. Yayio (Yayilumo) Ezung 4. Nmtso (Humtson) Kikon, and 5. Khiyong (Chiyong) Yanthan. Yayio Ezung began by cutting down a branch of a tree, after which the group began clearing the jungle. Nmtso (Humtson) Kikon laid eggs as a sign of dedication, and Yayio Ezung was named the village's first *pvüiti* (chief)⁴².

The Lotha folksong (Murry, 2021) tells that Longsachüing village was the ancient local commercial centre with a spectacular view as the village is situated in the topmost hill. The song goes:

Longsachüing Yan Epicho (Admiration for Longsachüing Village)

Shomna la Longsachüing ari to thiing

Yantaropen Longsachüing tvü nli

Pofü onhyo jüro jana hungkachi

Phiro khyingro pani ojo ritacho hungchochi

Jopha khyingro sümyon kikhotacho hungchochi

Jopha loro thyujü na emecho hungchochi

Sotsü obong hatili sumrocho hungchochi

Eng na jopha janathung Shaki lo

Rhujüing pyakacho hungchochi

Shom na Longsachüing ari to tsa

Khoro rhücho Longsachüing ari lo li

⁴² Interview with Yankhosao Ezung, 71 Years, Council Chairman, Longsachung Village, 20/03/2020.

Chokho rhiücho Longsachiüng ari lo li

Eng na jopha janathung, Longsachiünglo jo

Yonjomotssen hancho nhanlan (Murry, 2021, pp. 28-29).

Illustration:

Longsachiüng is admired by all for its commanding location in the hill, breathtaking view and beauty spot (*Ari*). For socio-economic reasons, many ancient communities congregate there. A scenic view of the Doyang river source (*pofü-nhgyo*) can be seen from the village, as can a handsome man of Phiro Village, a handsome man of Assam valley in red cap, a beautiful woman of Assam valley with glowing face, male elephant herding in the thick valley forest, and a beautiful hornbill at sunset (*Eng na chopha janathung*) in Shaki village. We have all of our requirements met because numerous people from several villages bring important items. No matter how much money (*yonjomotssen*) we have, we are getting depleted by procuring the goods.

A group of individuals from Longsio village (abandoned ancestral village) established Wokha village⁴³ (Map 2. 8). Their forefathers left Honohoyonton for Jemüng, Kisünyu, and Longsio. Some members of the group saw a mild hill to the east while staying in Longsio. A group of people decided to survey the location, according to Wokha village's oral tradition (Figure 2.8). They attempted, but failed, to get beyond the objective location and reach a river, which they named '*ngyanphenjü*' because they cleared the region by chanting (*ngyan* means chant). The second effort failed as well, since they arrived at a different river bank, which they called '*Wokha-penjü*' (outskirt of Wokha Village, Wokha-Mokokchung road).

They tallied the numbers to check if anyone was missing along during their venture, then ate lunch and returned to Longsio. They kept a close eye on the area and attempted a third time. They scanned the area thoroughly when they arrived at the mild slope and set a bamboo sheath (*yuken/lelupvü*) on top of a tree (near the present Baptist Church). They returned to ensure that

⁴³ Interview with Nrinimo Murry, 83 Years, Wokha Village, 10/12/2019.

the sheath was in the proper location. As a result, they had made the decision to march on and establish a village there⁴⁴.

Shishum Murry, Shishang Tungoe, Shimentong Kithan, Shenthi Humtsoe, and Tssokento Yanthan commanded the team. Tssokento Yanthan arrived at the location and cut off a short branch of a plant to hang his lunch bag. They took advantage of Tsokento's activities and cleared the forest as a result. They named the river 'Wokha-Penji' where they had lunch on their second attempt, and the new village 'Wokha Yan.' 'Wo' is a short form of *owo* which means number of people and 'kha' is a short form of *ekha* which means count, while *yan* (*oyan*) denotes a village. The first concentration to settlement was at *Chumphopvii, presently the B-khel* (Wokha Yan Baptist Ekhumkho, 2003, p. 6). Shimentong Kithan was chosen as a *Pvüti* (Chief), while Shishum Murry laid the sacred eggs that they had brought from the previous village⁴⁵. The oral tradition of Wokha village tells that Shishum Murry was the first *Ekhyo-Ekhüing* (victorious and brave person) in the village. Various historical places at Wokha village is showing in Map 2.11.

The folksong represented the story of Wokha village's creation. Like any other ancestor's folksong, the village formation song (Murry, 1999a) is in poetic version. It is known as *sprechgesang* (German word meaning for "spoken call") or singing speech in music⁴⁶. It is a type of traditional Lotha chanting. There are 2 (two) types of sounds in Lotha folksong: *Okhen phyoa* or *khenphyo* and *Okhen nsoo*⁴⁷. *Okhen phyoa* means song chanting which is in poetic chant but with unique timing beat and *Okhen nsoo* means singing like a vocal song.

Wokha yantssso Khen (Folksong of Wokha village formation)

Emüngyanti Longsio lo jaliro(e) na

Wokha lisha meria hungkachi khi

Wokha yimtung mhom tssov khentae

Murry khyingro yansaronthio ha jüayi

Tungo khyingro yilo santhio ha jüayi

Kithan khyingro sükhying khumthio ha jüayi

Humtso khyingro ralo tssontsamo ha juayi

⁴⁴ Interview with Bichamo Erui, 83 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

⁴⁵ Interview with Ekon Kithan, 72 Years, Wokha Village, 20/09/2020.

⁴⁶ Avoni Odyuo, Music Director, Golden Crown Theological College, Dimapur.

⁴⁷ Interview with Rev. Ezamo Murry, 79 Years, Dimapur (Wokha Village), 26/09/2021.

Yanthan khyingro ebensü benthio ha jüayi
Enni khyingro ralo tsong shathio ha jüayi
Ngullie khyingro chungiyi nsothio ha jüayi
Ezung khyingro lumbum eshum hamo ha jüayi
Ena pvüjilan myanta khentai khi
Rhüjüng emhi myancho to
Wokha yimtung mhomvü tsoa (Murry, 1999a, p. 55).

Illustration:

The song tells that, a beautiful gentle slope hill of Wokha has seen while living in Longsio village. The formation of new village in that place has initiated with the following clan members: Murry gentleman with a quality of administration; Tungoe gentleman of eloquent speaker; Kithan gentleman with a charisma of invoking blessings; Humtsoe gentleman expertise in war scheme; Yanthan gentleman prowess in handling implements; Enni (Ennie) gentleman a skilful warrior; Ngullie gentleman a talented singer and Ezung gentleman, the flicker. The combination of these clans in one accord established a village called ‘Wokha’ like a straight hornbill feathers. A group of Ennie warriors were killed in Rengma village while they went to bring human heads to warm the rebuilt *Chumpho* (*Kitong Chumpho*) at Tungoe Khel. They became lesser in number and finally migrated to Changsü village. Ezung elder had bad dreams of degeneration and therefore the many clan members have dispersed to Longsa village⁴⁸. Tsenshan Ezung came to Elumyo village from Wokha village⁴⁹.

The community grew stronger as they lived contented, and the Wokha Village forefathers composed a village formation song (Murry, 1999). The song is being transcribed by Avoni Odyuo (Figure 2. 9).

Wokha yimtung mhom tsochekhi
Epvüjilan myanta khentai khi
Tungu khyingro yizumro ha jüayi
Kithan khyingro rhüjüngro ha jüayi
Murry khyingro yiphiro ha jüayi
Humtso khyingro rali tssüngthanro ha juayi

⁴⁸ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 76 Years, Wokha Village, 12/08/2021.

⁴⁹ Interview with C. Zumomo Tsanglao, 67 Years, Elumyo Village, 24/03/2019.

Yanthan khyingro yoliingro ha jüayi

Rhüjüng emhi myantato

Yamo khyingro myantasi

Wokha Yan kopang to ehakata (Murry, 1999b, p. 73).

Illustration:

The song tells, “Several clans got together to established the beautiful Wokha village. The young man of Tungu (Tungoe), the racket-tailed drongo; the young man of Kithan, the hornbill; the young man of Murry, the black drongo; the young man of Humtso (Humtsoe), a successful warriors; the young man of Yanthan, the green magpie. Like the feathers of hornbill, with one accord the young man with different talents and qualities established a seamless village⁵⁰.

Wokha yim tong mho-m tso che - khi Ep vü ji lan myan ta khen tai - khi Tun gu

4 Khyingro yi zum ra ha jü a yi Ki than Khyingro rhü jün gro ha jü a yi Mu rry

6 Khyingro yi phi ro ha jü a yi Humtso Khyingro ra li Tssongthan ro ha jü a yi Yanthan

8 Khyingroyo lün gro ha jü a yi Rhü jü ng em hi myanta to Ya mokhyingro m-yan ta si Wo kha

10 Yan ko pang to e ha ka ta

Figure 2. 9: *Yantsso Khen* (Folksong of Wokha village Formation). Transcribed by Avoni Odyuo.

While in Tiyi Longchum, the Lothas grew their population and cultivated a large area of land. They even made nine (9) 'echenranki' (stoppage) while harvesting to temporarily store paddy because they couldn't carry their plentiful harvests in one stretch from a distant field. One of the stoppages was the current Longsa village settlement (Map 2.9). A few of them chose to

⁵⁰ *Yizum*- racket-tailed drongo, signify handsome; *Rhüjüng*- hornbill, signify ruling ability; *Yiphi*- black drongo, signify smartness; *Rali Tssüingthanro*- signifies victory in battlefield and *Yoliing*- green magpie, signifies bravery.

break away from Tiyi Longchum and created their own hamlet. They could see a magnificent hilltop down from Tiyi Longchum. As a result, they organized a survey team to assess the site's viability. The squad went down to the location and erected a 'yukken' (bamboo sheath). It was discovered that the sheath had been installed incorrectly. The second attempt was also unsuccessful due to the same location error. Only on their third effort were they able to secure the sheath in a suitable tree known as '*Yanpvütssiing-rhum*'. The survey team also looked at the availability of water and discovered adequate water sources⁵¹. The basic reason for taking step to leave parent village (Tiyi Longchum) was due to the scarcity of water⁵².

After a considerable preparation, the team led by Lithungo Kikon (Athungo), Tsoren Kikon, Shanthungo Ezung, Melensang Murry, Yimpvuthung Humtsoe, Rachenshan Ezung, Shanrhumo Ezung, Rusang Humtsoe and several others occupied the place to form a Village. Longsa (Figure 2. 10) was the name given to the settlement because they discovered a terrace that looked like a giant stone (*Long'* means stone and *Sa'* means terrace or platform). Later, Yanphantzu Shitiri, Mongathung Kikon, Yikhumshan Kikon, Ratsu Kikon, Manthungo Kikon, Kali Ezung, Konken Ezung also arrived and settled in the village. Yanthan clan members from Wokha village also came and settled in the village. A few members of the Humtsoe clan relocated to Wokha village, but later returned. The first Chief, Asharü Ezung, was the first of a line of 13 (thirteen) Chiefs (*Pvüiti*). Tsenchi Ezung who died in 1965 was the last Chief⁵³.

Longsa Yantsso Khen (Longsa village formation song)

*Emüngyanti Tiyi Longchumo Jaliroden
 Longsa tssov chungina khyentavala
 Longsa lo jo ochoang punga le jovo
 Ezungo jali na Shanrhomo, Rachen
 Kikomo jali na Athunga, Tssoren
 Humtsovo jali na Rasang, Yimpvüthung
 Murry khyingro lina Melesango
 Emoyolamoe evamo nrui ekfüreni ni
 Phaja tssotoka Melesang⁵⁴.*

⁵¹ Interview with Chomishio Kikon, 93 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

⁵² Interview with Orenimo Ezung, 82 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

⁵³ Interview with Litsomo Ezung, 70 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

⁵⁴ Interview with Ngheo Ezung, 84 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

Illustration:

While in Tiyi Longchum (abandoned ancestral village) a batch of young men from initiated to form a village Longsa. A chosen men form 4 (four) clan represented to form a new village as founding member, namely, Shanrhomo and rachen of Ezung's clan, Athunga and Tssoren of Kikon's clan, Rasang and Yimpvüthung of Humtsoe's clan and Melesango of Murry's clan.

Nrüng Longidang village (Map 2.10) was founded by a 71 (seventy one) member village formation contingent that includes members from many villages. Several attempts had been made, but they were unable to complete the mission of building a village due to the presence of nearby tribe villages such as Sema, Rengma, and Ao. *Nrüng* means Upper; *Longi*' means centre and *dang*' means defend and thus they named the village as 'Nrüng Longidang' (Figure 2.11). There is Lotha village in Lower Range of Wokha district called Lio Longidang (*Lio* literally means lower). On the 9th (ninth) try, Ayotsünga Nguillie enlisted the help of Chumpochang Murry (Brother of Shishum), a fierce fighter from Wokha village. Longotyü (Sema village) villagers assassinated Chumpochang near the spring at the place called *Longla tongti*. The latter informed them that no one can establish village unless they are paid *elo/ekhup* (tribute). As a result, a *Tssiro (mithun)* tribute was provided to Longotyü village in accordance with their wishes⁵⁵.

The formation contingent decided to sleep during the day on the 10th (tenth) try, and they arrived at the target location in the late afternoon. After arriving at the location, Süngrüsünga Jami cut down a plant branch and the group began clearing the jungle. Semas, Aos, and Rengmas are supposed to have been among the 71 members. As a result, they speak the following 5 (five) languages:

1. *Chumi na eyi Yi* (language speaks by the members came from Sema village).
2. *Chungli na eyi Yi* (Language speaks by the members came from Ao village).
3. *Kyongi na eyi Yi* (Language speaks by the members came from Lotha Villages); differences of tone otherwise same language.
4. *Mvüyoe na eyi Yi* (Language speaks by the members came from Rengma village.,
5. *Longchumi na eyi Yi* (Language speaks by the members came from Longchum)⁵⁶.

Later, they had decided to speak only one language, that is, a language of the people came from Longchum. The prefix Tiyi in Longchum (Tiyi Longchum) must be a recent origin.

⁵⁵ Interview with Tachamo Ezung, 86 Years, Nrung Longidang, 27/03/2019.

⁵⁶ Interview with Chanbemo Nguillie, 90 Years, Nrung Longidang, 27/03/2019.

Long’ means stone and *’chum* denote *ochum*, which means end point⁵⁷. There is a village called Longchum in lower Lotha area, established much later. Probably, ancestral abandoned village was known as Tiyi Longchum and the village in Lower range was called as Lio-Longchum, like in the case of Nrüng Longidang and Lio Longidang.

The prominent founding members are: Ayotsünga Ngullie and Atsüngla Ezung from Longchum (abandoned), Loyo Patton from Tsanphi (Kitami) Village (abandoned), Therongche Kikon from Hayimong Village (abandoned), Merüng Kithan from Sepvü (abandoned), Kivontang from Tsüngiki Village and member of Jami’s clan from Lumtoksha village (probably Sungrusanga Jami). Therongche was the first village *Pvüiti* and the first *Chumpho*, called *Jami chumpho* was constructed at present Baptist Church compound⁵⁸.

Construction of *Pvüiti* (Chief) House

The main priority after forming the village was to choose the *Pvüiti* from among them as the Chief and head. *Pvüiti*’s function in the Lotha village has been given a lot of weight because they can’t start farming without him as the Lothas are known for being ceremonial and systematic in their religious and administrative practises. As a result, the first priority was to build the *Pvüiti* house for his comfortable stay. In Phiro village, *Pvüiti* was called *’Yanpvüii’* which literally means owner and head of the village and he was the sole authority of the village that hold the administrative power as well as theocracy⁵⁹. He was regarded as the village’s top authority in Wokha village. They would build a house for *Pvüiti* first, before building a dwelling for themselves⁶⁰. The people saw it as their primary obligation to collect construction materials from the village area and, above all, to finish the house so that their *Pvüiti* could live comfortably. The culture is resemble to Kachin community in Mynmar as Leach (1964) observed that, “The house of the chief or the village headman normally serves as a public guest-house at which any casual travellers is entitled to hospitality. The maintenance of the chief’s or headman’s house is thus to some extent a public responsibility, villagers as already mentioned, have an obligation to assist in the building and repair of the chief house” (Leach, 1964, p. 117).

⁵⁷ Interview with Tsuremo Ezung, 62 Years, Longsachüing village, 30/08/2021.

⁵⁸ Interview with Vanchumo Murry, 85 Years, Nrung Longidang Village, 27/03/2019.

⁵⁹ Interview with Benrio Odyuo, 79 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020.

⁶⁰ Interview with Tsatheo Humtsoe, 82 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

Construction of *Chumpho* (*Morung*)

Following the foundation of a village and the construction of the *Pviiti* house, the next major aspect of the community was the construction of a *Chumpho*. Without *Chumpho*, no Lotha village would exist because defending the village from enemy invasion was the most important responsibility. Boys known as *myolo-thekhung* (wage-earners) will be chosen to serve in the *Morung* as defenders of the community. *Chumpho* (*Chum'* or *chuma* means to lay a large post, and *Pho'* means first) is a term that refers to the first village community-based construction, which involves erecting large house posts. As a result, it was given the name *Chumpho*, which meaning "first lay"⁶¹. While discussing the culture of *morung's* construction by the Trans-Dikhu-Doyang (Lotha, Ao and Rengma), Nienu (2015) maintains that, "..... this was vital to the village welfare because the *Ariju* was always the first structure to be built when a new village was established" (Op.cit., p. 174). Mills (1937), while describing the Rengma *morung* observed that, "It is an undoubted fact that among the Naga tribes that build '*morungs*' the state of those buildings in a village gives a sure indication of the state of the village itself. Decaying '*morungs*' mean a decaying village, and well-kept '*morungs*' a vigorous community" (Mills, 1937, p. 49).

For the Lothas, the *Chumpho* was essential to the village's survival, and without it, the village would be vulnerable. Yanthan and Kithan reported, "The *morung* was the core of village institution, through which the material culture of the Nagas is derived. This Institution is the mother of art and culture" (Yanthan & Kithan, 2019, p. 267). At the *champo* (*Chumpho*) raids were first were planned and discussed, and to it all heads taken were first brought. It is the sleeping-place of every Lotha boy from the time he first puts on his *dao*-holder till he marries, this rule being only relaxed in the case of boys who are allowed to remain at home and nurse an ailing and widowed mother, or when the *champo* falls into such a state of despair that is no longer habitable (op.cit., Mills, 1922, p. 24).

The recruited boys were made to stay in *Chumpho* until he gets married in different category of rank, namely:

- a. *Thekhoren*: In a village, every normal and winsome boy at the age of 12-13 years was obligated to be recruited in *Chumpho* and the first recruits are called '*Thekhoren*'. They were properly trained to become a warrior and safeguard young and old in the village

⁶¹ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 76 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

diligently and efficiently. He will remain in the post for about 4½ years under training stage and promoted to next level of rank.

- b. *Pangti*: By the time *Thekhoren* are deemed fit to be a warrior's promoted to next level of rank called *Pangti*. They give training to the juniors and remain abreast in their all round duties. From the mid night till dawn, they will send the juniors to guard the village pond and they will give serious punishment if any boy is found asleep. Generally they are called *Chumpho khyingroe* (Morung boys), and with the young recruits (*Thekhoren*) they guarded the village round the clock.
- c. *Chumphoran*: The eldest among the *Pangti* will be promoted to the highest rank called *Chumphoran* or *Chumphoramo* ('*ran* is a short form of *eramo* which means eldest). He was the commander-in-chief of the *Chumpho*. He will give punishment to those who arrive late in *Chumpho* in the evening by letting the boys enter the *Chumpho* by jumping over the burning fire and a stick. He pours water to late sleepers and instructed them to be more vigilant from the attack of wild life and enemy. At the most, a person can occupy a post of *Chumphoran* for 9 years and gets retired from *Chumpho*⁶².,
- d. *Humjipoe*: Literally *Humjipoe* is a pensioner who does not married and continues his service even after the expiry of 9 years as *Chumphoran*. He will enjoy the honour of 'efivoro' (honour in terms of fine brew, hunting and fishing luck, meat of pork and mithun from the *Chumpho* boys) so long as remain in *Chumpho*⁶³. The rank was an exceptional and he will be retired from *Chumpho* as and when he gets married.

Planting of *Mhenkiton* (Head-tree)

During the formation of the village, the ancestral Lotha practised heroic culture by planting *Mhenkiton* (head-tree). To hang and exhibit hunted enemy skulls, trees such as *Tsongon-tong*, *Nitso-tong* (*Ficus* family), and *Kyukyu-tong* (*erythrina* family of coral tree) are planted. In Lotha, *Mhenki* means 'enemy head' and *ton*' (short form of *tona*) means 'hang or fix'. Therefore, the

⁶² Speech delivered by Bichamo Erui, 84 Years, during the inauguration of traditional *Chumpho* at Wokha Village on 13/02/2021.

⁶³ Speech delivered by Y. Mhonbemo Humtsoe, Retd. NCS, during the inauguration of traditional *Chumpho* at Wokha Village on 13/02/2021. He interviewed elders in the village for his M.Phil dissertation (NEHU) in 1982.

Lothas called this tree a *Mhenkiton* which was named after the culture of displaying human skulls as a sign of valour of the village but not after the name of a tree⁶⁴. A branch of *Tsongon-tong* was either carry from the old village or find out a similar tree in the vicinity where they had established a village. When they finally prepared to moved out from the old village, a new village's founding members will hold a branch of *Mhenkiton* and offered a prayer: *Ena nchung khochiala, Sukhying soa ephana roa, Ngazo soa ephana roa* (May the spirit of good luck and abundance follow us as we move out today). Then, one of the members would chop off a branch of *Mhenkiton* to be planted in the new village⁶⁵. The tradition of Elumyo and Wokha village tells that the ancestors planted a coral tree before finding out *tsongon-tong* as the former grows faster and stronger to hang the hunted heads⁶⁶. Similarly, in Longsa village, the Kikon clan has planted coral tree as *Mhenkiton* which is already withered⁶⁷. Nienu (2015), while explaining the belief system of displaying human heads, maintain that, "Displaying heads....not only carries the religious significance intended, as the soul is believed to reside in the head, thereby adding more power to the village community, but it is also advertises the collective power of the village, creating a psychological fear on the part of their enemies" (Op.cit., pp. 207-208).

Mhenkiton is believed to be a sacred tree that was guarded by both local warriors and *Chumpho* youths because a member from another village could come and chop off a branch to plant in their village as they believed of fading the village luck. Longsa village has a tradition that Pongitong Village has branched out from Longsa Village with a belief that prosperity and luck will be diminished. A man who was about to leave to the new village (Pongitong) attempted to take the branch of their village *mhenkiton*, but the Longsa warriors apprehended him. His aunty, who knew him, suddenly brought his reaping knife and slashed him across the forehead to prevent from inflicting harm. She warned the warriors not to harm him because she had already hurt him by spilling blood on his head⁶⁸. Women and children are forbidden from even looking at *mhenkiton* for fear of being terrified by the terrifying human skulls⁶⁹. The head is transported to

⁶⁴ Interview with Yanpan Murry, 75 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

⁶⁵ Interview with Bona Tsopoe, 79 Years, Pongitong Village, 09/11/2020.

⁶⁶ Interview with C. Zumomo Tsanglao, 67 Years, Elumyo Village, 24/03/2019 and Yitsomo Murry, 76 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

⁶⁷ Interview with Ngheo Ezung, 86 years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

⁶⁸ Interview with Orenimo Ezung, 82 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

⁶⁹ Interview with Rev. N. T. Murry, 72 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

the village and taken to the *Cchumpho* for the *Ramvü* rite, after which it is placed in the *Mhenkiton*. The head-fixing ritual will be performed by the *Pvüiti* and the village warriors.

Spatial setting

The Lotha village's spatial surroundings were meticulously planned and organised. Even before they moved to the settlement site, they ascertained the position in such a way that it would fulfil all of their intents and wants. When they eventually arrived in the village to settle, they chose a location for the construction of *Chumpho*, which serves as a central point of defence against enemy attack, as well as sites for *Pvüiti* home and dwelling places, after completing the ceremonies. The village's major water source and spring were thoroughly cleaned, and a pathway was built. Woodthrope in 1876, while describing the villages in Western and Eastern Naga Hills stated that, "The villages are remarkable for their sanitary arrangement, small raised houses in which calls of nature are obeyed being built in various parts of the village, and fenced round" (Woodthrope, 1959, p. 49). *Pikhvü* was the Lothas' term for village fencing and the village dwelling area were properly demarcated by erecting fencing. They situate the *Mhenkiton* a little distance away from the dwellings in order to avoid disturbing the residents. Individual dwellings will be built in two rows facing each other, with space in the middle for free passage. The warriors demonstrate their talents with songs and dances through the village routes (passage), which cover the entire habitation, during festivals and religious events. A new *Kithang* (*khel*) has created as the population grows and the first concentration point becomes congested. In terms of housing and passage, the same village planning pattern is used. The construction of *Kithang Chumpho* will take place in a picturesque environment with wide space slightly far from any populated areas.

According to Mills (1922), "The Lotha village is as a rule built along a ridge and has a main entrance at either end, with smaller paths running down to the fields from the sides of the village, and may contain anything from a dozen to 350 houses. The entrance of the world of the dead being on Wokha hill, the spirits of the death must leave the village in that direction. The path leading towards Wokha hill is accordingly known as *etchhilan* ("dead man's road"). It is curious sight, flanked with offerings to the dead (*sochipen*) and bamboo erections (*nritangpeng*) showing the prowess in war and hunting of those recently deceased" (Op.cit., p. 22). The correct spelling is *etchülan*, *sochipen* and *nritangphen*. Every household attaches the seating platform

(*ossa*) when building a house. At the back of the house, a *kitajo* (small additional house) will be attached for family domestic activities. Every *khel* would set aside a forest area for the latrine, which would be separated from the home and for both men and women. This designated latrine location was normally shared by the entire neighbours. Unlike the Angamis and Chakhesang, the Lothas kept their unhusked rice in granaries (*oson*) far away from their homes, ensuring that it would be saved even if the village was destroyed by fire. The layout of granaries on the outskirts of settlements may still be seen in Lotha villages today. The majority of ritual sites are found on the outskirts of the settlement. According to the village's landscape, '*Tssüingchenphen*' (a ceremonial place for spearing logs), '*Kijanphen*' (a place with large stone slab for ritualistic pig killing), '*Ratssiphen*' (a place to act as a perplexing enemy and perform ritual), '*Ronsyu tsalanphen*' (place for invoking blessings for good harvest), and '*Among*' (*Pvüiti* ritual place) were located. *Tssüingchenphen* is situated along their migration path, while *Ronsyu tsalanphen* is located on the way to the paddy field.

Clan composition

When it comes to village formation, land allocation and acquisition, and marriage, the Lothas place a high value on clan composition. Based on kinship with a common progenitor, it is an important aspect of the Lotha tribe. Until the post-colonial period, no single clan formed a village as a community, and each clan received roughly equal amounts of cultivable territory. Lotha society was patriarchal, with no inter-clan marriages. Phratries is known in Lotha as *Motsü-rüü*, and all of the major clans and sub-clans are profoundly entrenched in their ancestors. Following the Lothas' tradition of not marrying someone from their own clan, they found a new village made up of members from various clans. Faced with enemies, the Lothas would not risk his life by leaving the village in search of a wife⁷⁰. A village was not always founded by one man. It was quite common for two men of different clans to join at founding a new village, each bringing his quota of families. Each clan would supply wives for the other, and the inconveniences of marriage outside the village were thus avoided (Op.cit.,Mills, 1922, p. 5).

The Lotha social structure is distinctly classified into 3 (three) phratries as articulated by Lotha (1996), who maintains the commonly accepted tradition, “In the beginning there was a man and woman and the union of the two gave birth to three sons, namely- *Ezomontsu* (*Ezomontsü*),

⁷⁰ Interview with Y. Mhonbemo Humtsoe, NCS, 66 Years, Kohima (Wokha Village), 13/02/2021.

Tonphaktsu (Tonphyaktsü) and *Limhathung*. The names of these brothers later came to be known as phratries among the Lothas. It is to be noted here that since these brothers found it difficult to give their children in marriage they had a discussion to solve this problem...each of them would give their children in marriage, excepting that of the same parents. It was at this point that the three brothers got one step a part and thus phratries came into being in the society” (Lotha, 1996, pp. 161-162). According to *Ezomontsü Rii (Ezomontsü phratry)* (2009), Limhathung and Limhachan are brothers and with them several clans were emerged as the members of the tribe increased. Therefore, it is generally accepted the 2 (two) phratries among Limhachan, i.e., Limhachan *Tonphyaktsü rii* and *Limhachan Ezomontsü rii*. *Ezomontsü rii* believes that their forefather is a descendent of Limhachan (Ezomontsü Rii, 2009) as the genealogy shown below:

Limhachan son- Bankhum-1 son- Longkurü son- Limhachum son- Khepho son- Montsüthung-1 son- Phitsüo-1 son- Ezomontsü-1 son- Bonchio son- Esao son- Tumloktsü son- Limhachum-11 son- Nrano son- Vontsü son- Bankhum-11son- Phitsüo-11 son- Monlio son- Montsüthung-11 son Ezomontsü-11(Ezomontsü Rii, 2009, p. 30).

Ezomontsü-11 had 9 (nine) sons, namely, Humtsohung, Kithamo, Ngullio, Shitio, Mozhüo, Tungu, Ennio, Rangphango and Lapomo. All of them emerged a clan as follows: Humtsoe, Kithan, Ngullie, Shitiri, Mozhüi, Tungoe, Ennie, Rangphang and Lapon (see Table 2.1). In Lotha Naga, *Limhachan Tonphyaktzü rii Motsü*, Vol.1 (2001), Tonphyaktsü had 6 (six) sons, namely, Kikomo, Khyochamo Pattomo, Ovungo, Tsopo, Jamio and Jungio. All of them had generated into a different clan maintaining a strong ties amongst them. Thus, emerged a clan: Kikon, Patton, Ovung, Tsopoe, jami and Jungi (Limhachan Tonphyaktsü Rii, 2009, p.22).

According to Limhathung Rii⁷¹, their ancestry Longkum had 9 (nine) sons, namely, Tsanglao, Odyui, Ezongo, Yanthamo, Khenchongo, Murrio, Khvüvüngo, Khumyingo and Lapomo. It is believed that Khumyingo (7th son) has degerated and the rest has emerged as a separate clan under one phratry, such as, Tsanglao , Odyuo, Ezung, Yanthan, Khenchung, Murry, Khvüvüng and Lapon. However, both *Ezomontsü-rii* and *limhathung-rii* claimed that Lapon was the last son of their phratries.

⁷¹ Interview With R. Thungbemo Tsangalo, 73 Years, Vice President *Limhathung-rii*, Elumyo Village, 05/09/2021.

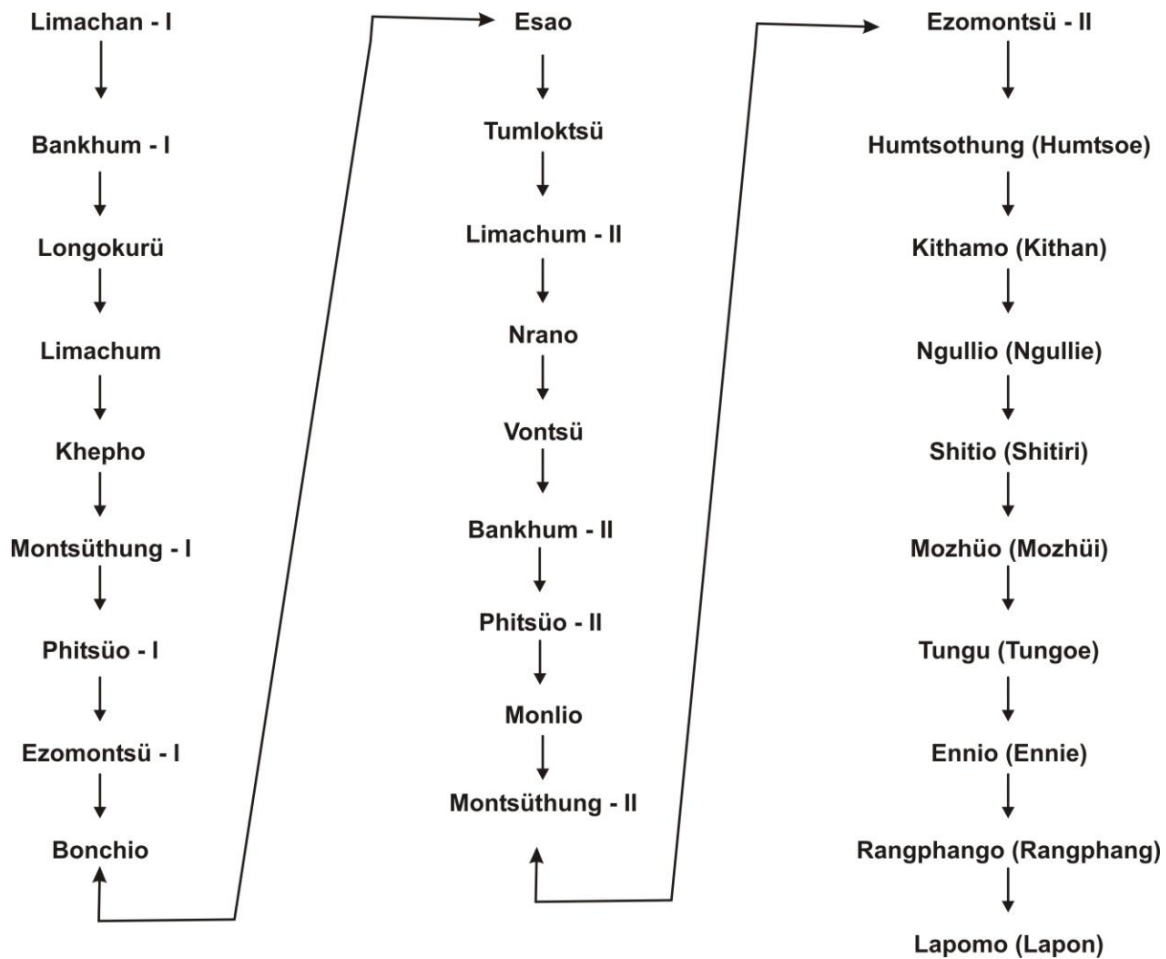


Figure 2. 12: Geneology of *Limhachan Ezomontsü Rii*

Therefore, under 3 (three) phratries, the different Lotha Clans are given below (Table 2.1):

Table 2.1 Lotha Phratry (*Motsü-rüi*)

<u>Phratry (<i>Motsü-rüi</i>)</u>	<u>Clan (<i>Jipo</i>)</u>
<i>Ezomontsü-rüi</i>	:Humtsoe, Kithan, Ngullie, Shitiri, Tungoe, Ennie, Mozhüi, Rangphang (Rangthan) and Lapon.
<i>Tonphyaktsü-rüi</i>	: Kikon, Patton, Ovüing, Tsopoe, Jami and Jungi.,
<i>Limhathüing-rüi</i>	:Tsanglao , Odyuo, Ezung, Yanthan, Kenchung, Murry, Khüvüing and Lapon.

Land acquisition

The Lothas, as agriculturalists, requires substantial amount of agricultural land as well as other necessities for establishing a settlement. Land acquisition and possession were valued assets in the community because they rely on land resources for any type of economic activity. When it comes to obtaining land for settlement, the members of the village's founding clans respect one another, and everyone obtains a piece of land through mutual agreement to build a house. They had classified the land as follows: residential area, community reserved land for ceremonies (*pikvüchakphen*, *yoktsonphen*, *kijanphen*, *amongphen*, *chumpo kimiüng*, *tssüingchenphen*, *ronsyu tsalanphen*, *menkitong chumphen* etc.), unoccupied and reserved forest (*enong-eran*), land for *chumpho* boys (*chumpoe-li*) and agriculture land (*nrung-li* and *ntsoli/hapo-li*). When it comes to farming land, the village community chooses which area they will cultivate for a year in the start. The similar scenario will play out in the coming years, with every household cultivating in the same block called *Liphyu*. A block of land for cultivation will not be held by a single household, but by a group with combination of clans, and a tiny stone will be laid as a boundary demarcation after clearing and burning⁷². A vast area of forest in different location is reserved (*Enong-eran*) and well protected by the village. A rich man in the village rears *Mithun* by obtaining permission from the village authority. All the necessary raw materials of the construction of *Chumpho*, *Pvüti* house, log (*ophya*) etc., were usually collected from the village reserved land⁷³.

The size of the land depends on the family member how big they can cultivate in one *liphyu* and that becomes an individual land. As the members and household increase, a group of people expanded the village in a form of new *Khel* (colony). Naturally, that area which has already cultivated becomes a land to those members left behind in the old *Khel*. The new *Khel* (s) expanded the village and the households would cultivate an uncultivated area, and that would become their *khel* land. New *Khel(s)* can be formed by either combination of a clans or a single clan. Therefore, the land becomes either a family's individual land or clans land. Mills (1922) observed that, "The whole village cultivates in one block, each man (clan) having his own piece of land" (Op.cit., p. 45). Apart from helping their families in cultivation, the *Chumpho* boys cultivate every year in *Chumphoe-li* (land of the *Chumpho* boys). The yielding is utilized either during social festivals and ceremonies or for humanitarian services by helping the family who

⁷² Interview with Pithungo Shitiri, 80 Years, Wokha (Changsu Village), 13/10/2020.

⁷³ Interview with Bijamo Erui, 84 Years, Wokha Village, 12/08/2021.

faces untoward eventualities in the village. Nshoga (2009) states, “Among the Lothas, the ownership of land is held by individual, clan, *Morung* and the village. The land, located near a village, is the common property and it is held by the village. Every *Morung* of the village owns land and it is the property of the *Morung*. Such land is utilized by the *Morung* boys. The Products from *Morung*’s land are used to buy meat for the ceremonies, such as rebuilding of the *Morung*. A large proportion of land is usually held by the clan in the Lotha Country” (Op.cit., , p. 88).

Traditional warfare

The Nagas' traditional battle is incomplete if they do not take the head of a defeated human being in a single or numerous instances. Naga headhunting is based on a belief in a soul matter asserting that the vital essence that the vital essence of supernatural power resides in the human head. By sacrificing human heads, therefore, it was believed that vital and creative energy was added to the village, a source of human and animal fertility (Op.cit., Nienu, 2015, p. 167). Hutton (1930) observed that the Nagas believes the possession of magical power in human head which is capable of enhancing “the fertility of human population, the cattle, and the crops” (Hutton, 1930, p. 207).

According to Lotha legend, there was no such thing as war or peace time, and combat was a daily occurrence. They were subjected to raids, invasions, and ambushes throughout the year, with or without provocation, and their goal was not only to kill and chop off the heads of the defeated men, women, and children, but also to seize the body parts of the defeated men, women, and children. John Butler (1988) observed that, “the very common practice among the *Lotah* tribe was cutting off the heads, hands, and feet of any one they meet with, without any provocation or pre-existing enmity, merely to stick them up in their fields, and to ensure a good crop of grain” (Butler 1988, pp. 156-157). He went on to say that, on 18th Feb 1850, a party of *Angahmee Nagahs* carried off a three (3) small children (a girl and boys) from the village of *Loongree (cacharee)* and sold to different villages. The third boy was purchased by the adjoining tribe of *Lotah Nagahs* and the man (purchaser) died immediately after the purchase. It was considered a bad omen, and that ill luck had befallen them on account of this captive child. They therefore flayed the poor boy alive, cutting off his flesh bit by bit until he died. These cruel and superstitious savages then divided the body, giving a piece of the flesh to each man in the village

to put into his *dolu* (*phari*), a large corn basket. By this they suppose all evil will be averted, their good fortune will retain, and plentiful crops of grain will be ensured (Ibid., p. 189).

The Lothas named the battlefield or combat '*Rallo*', and venturing out for a war from the village to hunt human heads was referred to as *Rallo-evo* (*rallovo*) or *Rallo-voa*. The Lotha men go for *Rallo* to hunt human heads for a variety of reasons:

1. Need based mission to perform rituals.
2. Achieving the position of *Ekhüing* (brave warrior).
3. A mission of vengeance.,
4. Protection of the population.

On the eve of *Rallovo*, the warriors will assemble in a place called *Ratssiphen* (place to perform warfare ritual). A ritual was performed to puzzle the opponent warriors so that they will overpower them however brave they might be. The warriors would not go back home but slept in *Ratssiphen* for a night which was usually an open jungle at the outskirts of the village. The idea of sleeping in *Ratssiphen* was to observe chastity so that they will not die from the hand of the enemy. The Lotha warriors always carry rotten eggs in the battlefield with a belief that it confuses the enemy. Amongst them, a brave warrior will be chosen to carry a bunch of spikes (*otssi*) called '*Tssikhemo*' who would lay spikes behind the warriors while returning after chopping the enemy heads. In the event of retaliation by the opponent, they get injured by the spike and *Tssikhemo* will attack them. A fearless warrior called *Ri-vüing* ('*ri*' is a short form of *ori* which means enemy and '*vüing*' means in the front) will always be in the lead, in a triangle formation with one in front and two on the left and right. If they kill a group of individuals, one of them, known as '*Rithüing*', will be sent alive to his village or tribe to relate the story. As retaliation for killing 6 (six) members by them, the Wokha village warriors slaughtered around 30 (thirty) opponent tribesmen at a place called *Phonshanka*. The place where the village lost six members was named *Tirok-jü* (*tirok* means 6 and *jü/ojü* means water). One of them was not slain; instead, his foot was peeled and he was released to tell the incident to his tribe⁷⁴.

The first category of warfare is a need based in which the warriors set out to hunt human heads to inaugurate the newly constructed *Chumpho*. This is amounting to human head sacrifice since the head is placed on the kingpost (*humtsen*) of the *Chumpho* called *Humtsen elum/humtsen luma* which is the *Chumpho* warming ritual. This ritual assures and gains confidence in

⁷⁴ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 76 Years, Wokha Village, 12/08/2021.

the mind of the villagers and the *Chumpho* boys that they can defend the village from the attack of wild animals and human's enemy. The second category of warfare is fulfilling the criteria of becoming an *Ekhiing* (brave warrior) of the village by bringing human head's in the village as trophy. Only those warriors who bring heads would be able to host a feast of merit (*osho eyu*) and drag monolith (*longzü*) as a sign of gallant. These category of men will also be allowed to worn the prestigious shawl called 'Longpensü' (Figure 2.13) and become *Ekhyo-ekhiing* (successful and brave warriors). The village *Pvüti* will be selected from the *Ekhyo-ekhiing* in the village. The third category of warfare was meted out consequent upon the loss of head in the village by the enemy. The warriors will locate the culprit and they will revenge at any cost, and the person who killed enemy will make known to his opponent village or tribe. The fourth category of warfare was in defence of the entire village. The warriors and the *chumpho* boys remained alert round the clock on rotation basis to make sure that no head was lost in the village from the hands of enemy tribes.

Important personality in the Village

a. *Ekhyo- Ekhiing*

To become *Ekhyo- ekhiing*, an individual life of a man has to pass through different stages of ceremonies through organising a feast among the Lothas. The first step to organise a feast by a man was called *shishang-nrü*, the beginning of organising a feast of merit. A man will be allowed to wear *Phangrup-sü* after performing *shishang-nrü* (see Figure 2.13). This was the beginning of hosting a feast to reach the status of *Ekhyo-ekhiing* (victorious, brave and successful man). There were 2 (two) types of *Ekhiing* in the village. During the formation of a new village, a person who has completed the stages of rituals can be recognised as *Ekhiing* by the village, and the second category was attaining that status through merit and efficiency in the village.

The next step was to kill pig and give the meat to the village elders known as *Ozü Oka*. He himself will go to the house of the elders including elders of his clan with a share of meat. He will be qualified to wear a shawl called *Rikyusü* or *Orisü* (enemy frightening shawl or enemy shawl) after performing this ritual. The *Rükhusü* (correct spelling is *Rikyusü*) of the Northern Lhotas is exactly similar to the cloth ordinarily worn by rich Aos, and is dark blue with six very broad red stripes, set closely together at top and bottom (Op.cit., Mills, 1922, p. 10). The shawl contains

combination of *mithun* and human heads as drawing shown by Miss E. Paterson in J. P. Mills, *Lhota Nagas*⁷⁵. A large flat stone will be dragged involving the community and erect in front of his house called *Longzü* (monolith). After organising *Ozhu Oka*, another feast of merit called *Etha Sho* will be performed. It is said that *etha sho* will be completed only after 9 (nine) days. In this, a pig was killed and gives 2 *efü* (4 kg) to *Ejun-erang* (elder most men) and another 1½ *efü* (6 kg) will be given to *Eho-erang* (*wise men*). A man who was performing this rituals will organised a community feast and with the help of the men's folk, another *longzü* will be dragged and erected. He is qualified to wear *Longpensü*, which is the most prestigious shawl for the Lothas (see Figure 2.13). Mills, (1922) observed that, "Finally, a man who has completed the series of social "genna" by dragging a stone wears a handsome cloth called *Lungpensü* (*Longpensü*), which is dark blue with five bands of light blue about one inch broad, and three very narrow lines of light blue at top and bottom. A man who has dragged a stone more than once has four or rarely even five narrow lines at the top and bottom of his cloth, which is called *eshamsü*... with a broad median band of white cloth ornamented with highly conventionalized representations of men drawn on cloth with black gum" (Ibid., p. 10).

In every occasion of stone dragging ceremony, the *Ekhyo-ekhüing* organised a feast of merit. Therefore, when he ran out meat, he was forced to trade a piece of cultivable land for *Mithun* or pigs in order to prepare a feast in the village. As Ezung (2014) remarks,, ".....the man 'boasts in victory' not for accumulating wealth for himself but for sharing his wealth with the community by way of lavish sacrifices and feast, and thus earning respect and recognition from the people" (Op.cit., p. 221).

b. Kipvü-napvüi

A men's life in the Lotha traditional village was to pass through different stages starting from *Chumpho* life to warriors, marriage, erecting several megaliths through organizing feasts of merit and took part in all social festivals and ceremonies. Amongst them, a man who brought the highest enemy heads and erected the highest number of megaliths was called '*Kipvü-napvüi*', the bravest man in the village. Having obtained such an accolade, ordinary boys and women will

⁷⁵ Drawing of *Rikhyusü* by Miss E. Paterson in J. P. Mills, '*The Lhota Nagas*' (2003).

Interface page 10.

never lift up their heads and look on his face as a sign of undue respect to him. If they lift up their heads, a fine will be imposed on them⁷⁶.

Remaking of the village

One of the most important ceremonies in the village was *Phitssso-yantsso* (village remaking)⁷⁷. The *Pvüiti* (chief) will announce the '*Phitssso-yantsso*' ritual to be observed in the village when he believes that the community's crops, children, and animals will proliferate. The new *Pvüiti* can also announce for the rituals of village remaking on the death of his predecessor, when the *mhenkiton* branch collapses and losing heads to the enemy. Kithan (2019) reported that, "The ceremonial rituals and events include rebuilding of *Chumpho*, killing of dogs, dragging of log (*ophya*), preparation of mock spear/ bamboo spear (*tangi*), fencing of 'Mhenkiton' (head tree), prayer, feast and warrior dance" (Kithan, 2019, p. 312). According to Wokha village oral tradition, the event was also done when a new *Chumpho* was built during village's formation or when it was reconstructed every 8-9 years.

During the '*Phitssso-yantsso*', one of the most important activities that included the entire community was the reconstruction of the *Chumpho*. The village priest would announced that the rebuilding of *Chumpho* will take place on the next 8th days; the ninth (9th) day being the culmination of ceremony with spearing of log and feast⁷⁸. Following the declaration, the boys will prepare building supplies such as thatching grass (*lishü*), posts, tying-park, fine bamboos, and whatever other raw materials are required, under the supervision of the senior most *Chumpho* member (*Chumphoran*). During the *Chumpho* reconstruction process, touching and eating flesh killed by wild animals (*sochak-ramiing/ rajak*) is forbidden since there was a taboo that there would be a lot of unnatural death (*apotia*) in the village.

Kingposts (*humtsen*) will be exclusively prepared by the *Chumpho* boys; first cut (*tanpho*) will be done by the *Chumphoran* (eldest among the *Chumpho* institution). They would sleep in the jungle until the posts were completed. The boys selected the tree carefully that no holes of birds, flying squirrels or any other mark in it, neither do they take a trees that the branches has fallen apart. In Elumyo Village, it was believed to be a bad omen when a leaves falls at the first

⁷⁶ Speech delivered by Y. Mhonbemo Humtsoe, Retd. NCS, during the inauguration of traditional *chumpho* at Wokha Village on 13/02/2021.

⁷⁷ Mills wrote *Oyantsoa* ceremony, In the Lhota Nagas, 2003, p. 47.

⁷⁸ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

stroke⁷⁹. For the kingpost, they usually choose the 'mevü' tree (*diospyros phoebe*), which is perfect for ground fixing, carving, and longevity⁸⁰. The best carver amongst them carved the kingposts with *Mithun* heads (*Tssiro-kvüri*) and hornbills (*Rhüjung*). The back post which is called 'Kotsen' is being prepared by *Chumphoran*. When the kingposts are finished in both cutting and carving, a message will be sent to the village, and the men will prepare a good meal for the day. The kingposts were so revered that they were not allowed to travel through the village's main thoroughfare while dragging. It will drag through narrow corridors on the outskirts of the village where there will be fewer people⁸¹.

After all of the construction materials have been arranged, on the fourth day, in his residence, the *Pvüti* would prepare a pig, cow, and rice to be consumed the next day. For the event, a variety of rice beers will be brewed. The *Pvüti* and his assistant then transport the pig to *Kijanphen* (a stone slab used for ritualistic pig stabbing) near *Tssüingchenphen* (a ceremonial place for spearing wooden log). To commemorate the occasion of 'Phitsso-yantsso' this ritual is known as 'Among-enan'. The elders will take the stabbed pig to cut into pieces for the feast, a cow will also slaughter along. They kept the carcasses comprises of skeleton, private parts and the waste meat which cannot usually eat, in a separate place for 'Nonpvü-rotä', a ceremony of a fake fight between *Chumpho* boys and women in the village. On hearing the news of stabbing the pig by the *Pvüti*, the villagers will pass on the message by saying 'Among-nantaka' which means rituals is being performed. Thereafter, the men folk will be alerted to celebrate the day of village remaking day (*Yantsso Tsungon*) in a form of rebuilding the *Chumpho* and related ceremonies⁸².

The fifth day was *Chumpho* rebuilding day, when no one was neither allowed to leave the village nor allowed to work on that day. Construction involves not only the *Chumpho* lads, but also the *Pvüti*, his attendant or helper (*yingae*), and the village elders. The *Pvüti* climbs to the top of the old *Chumpho's* roof and carefully cuts the string of the topmost piece of thatch, removing a punch of thatch to the ground. His attendant then takes the luck stone (*oha*) and places it a little distance away from the spot, to be placed in the new *Humtsen* (kingpost). The remaining men folk then go up to the roof and thoroughly removed all the roofing materials. The posts are pulled out

⁷⁹ Interview with Yisansao Tsanglao, 73 Years, Elumyo Village, 23/03/2019.

⁸⁰ Interview with Yankhosao Erui, 70 Years, Head G.B., Wokha Village, 08/01/2019.

⁸¹ Interview with Yananimo Humtsoe, 79 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

⁸² Interview with Bijamo Erui, 83 Years, Wokha Village 29/06/2019.

systematically and the entire structure is dismantled. As and when the debris are cleaned and re-levelled, the *Pvüiti* then performed the formal ritual of digging a small hole with the butt of his spear at the place where three (3) main posts are to set up. He then pours a brew in each hole with a prayer. When the posts are finally erected, he sprinkled a rice beer with ginger at the base of the inner king post (*Humtsen- tachungo*) with a belief to keep away the evil spirits. They believed that ginger is obnoxious for the evil spirit⁸³.

The building team will arrive on the sixth day, happy that just thatching and merrymaking remain. When the roofing is completed, the *Yingae* will return with the luck stone, which will be put in the inner king post's basement to bring blessing and good luck to the village. Mills (1922) maintains that, "Everyone feasts and puts on his best clothes, the men wearing full dancing dress. The first bunch of thatch having been put in place by the *puthi(Pvüiti)*, the braves of the village dance, some on the ground and some on the roof of the "*morung*", all singing the *pangashari*, a slow dance in which the war-like deeds of the village in the past are recounted. This song goes on all the time the thatch is put on..." (Op.cit., p. 27). After the *Chumpho* lads have re-occupied the freshly constructed *Chumpho*, a ceremony known as *Nongpvüi-rotä* (*Nongpvüi-rotä*) would be held later that evening. As previously stated, the pig and cow carcasses that had been reserved for this occasion were delivered to *Chumpho*. The *Chumporan* and the boys will remain within the *Chumpho*, closing the bamboo front and back doors with thread and the fake fight will begin with the senior ladies (*Humjupvüi*). Women will assemble in the *Chumpho* with bamboo baskets (*bhari*) in order to enter inside and snatch the meat (carcasses). The *Chumpho* lads would keep slamming the doors shut. As the women tries to enter forcibly, the boys will throw a piece of meat carcass by saying, "*Lo...Ladong ka khitalo...oh ncho ka khitalo...oh emvü ka khitalo..oh oryuka khitalo...oh eno ka khitalo..oh emhi ka khitalo...*" (Lo...take the private parts...oh take the bone...oh take the ears...oh take the tail etc.). The women not only take the carcasses of meat, but also tried to touch the lads' private parts by breaking the apron's thread (*rüve*). The boys will try to remove their *mekhala* (*sürum*) in revenge⁸⁴. Eventually, they encountered sexual activity. The sham fight was observed for want of child by the ladies. This was the only time a female was

⁸³ Interview with Yankhomo Erui, 72 Years, Wokha Village, 20/01/2019.

⁸⁴ Interview with Bijamo Erui, 83 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

allowed to enter the *Chumpho*. Otherwise, females were not permitted to enter the *Chumpho*, and this was strongly enforced⁸⁵.

A spotless bamboo (*vepvü*) is taken outside the *Chumpho* on the seventh day. The two vertical stands keep the bamboo in a horizontal posture. The *Chumpho* boys would meet clothed in warrior gears and holding weapons, to learn their fate through the '*phyalu*' (omen). All of the warriors bring their *daos* (*lepok*), which they use to hunt human heads, as shiny and sharp as possible. When the bamboo is laid, they will surround it in two rows- one on the left and the other on the right. They all then keep the *dao* in the ground near them. The *Pvüti* would arrive on the scene with a cock on his shoulder.

The *Pvüti* then held the cock, squeezing both wings and neck, and recited the following prayer: “*Oyano khyingro-loroe jo seno-yolüing esüa thichetokle, otssi-ozü emhayile.... Hamonile..*” (Bless upon the village with young boys and girls, beautiful as *seno-yolüing* (Crimson sunbird and common green magpie), bless us with bountiful harvest. His assistant (*yingae*) will kill the cock by slashing the neck with a short bamboo (*ticho*) stick and throwing it in the middle of the lining *daos* in the ground at the end of the prayer. On the verge of death, the cock would move from place to place. After the rooster is killed, the warriors will reclaim their *daos* in the same manner that they used to kill the enemy. They examine their *dao* (*lepok*) for any traces of the rooster's blood. If there was a sign of blood, it was a bad omen, and he would sacrifice a chicken to purify himself of an unfortunate fate. According to eyewitness accounts, witnessing this type of rite was terrifying⁸⁶.

A dog killing ritual was staged on the eighth day of the *Phitsso-yantsso* ceremony to commemorate the spearing of a Log (*ophya*) with a bamboo spike (*Tangi*). Outside the *Pvüti*'s house, every *khels* brings a dog. Each *khel*'s senior member would place a bamboo lock around the dog's neck. The *Pvüti* will remain indoors with a prayer; pounding ginger and burning dried chilly in his hearth to ward off the bad spirit from interfering with the villagers' lives. The group's elder males then got out their *daos* (*lepok*) and struck the dog in the middle of the skull with a single strike. The dog ears are removed and thrown over the top of the *pvüti* house, and the head is given to the *Pvüti*'s wife saying, ‘take the enemy's head’ (*Lo..ori kvüri ka khialo*). The *Pvüti*'s wife, who received the skull for further ritual in the *chumpho*, will be the only female participant.

⁸⁵ Interview with Rev. N.T Murry, 72 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

⁸⁶ Interview with P. Merio Kikon, 83 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2021.

Because it was a terrible omen, a man who couldn't decapitate the dog in the middle of the skull wouldn't participate in the '*tssüngchenta*' rite and would instead sacrifice a fowl⁸⁷. For the next day's event, the dog flesh was cooked for a lunch.

The single males will venture into the bush to prepare '*opyha*' (log). Usually, they go for a soft tree like *hanchum* or *yakzü* (*milicia excels species of tree*)⁸⁸. To make '*ophya*', a log measuring about 10-12 feet long and one foot and a half in diameter is required. The bottom end is square, but the top end slopes away. They brought it and set it up at '*Tssüngchenphen*' (ritual place of spearing log). A human head is drawn in charcoal on the topmost area of *ophya*, roughly one and a half foot. The bottom end side, which is around 4-5 feet long, will be marked as well.

On the Ninth day, the *Pvüti* will come and keep his basket and spear (*otsso*) in *Kijanphen* (a ceremonial stone slab). Then he prays thus: “*oyamo nochonori, ezup-etsu, nmen-myak shiang topvu nihantokala to suko rakata randansi ombo meta jilo nvana khoi yisicho*”. (All the village illness, intolerable problems, grief and sorrow will be carried by you). According to oral tradition of Wokha Village, when the *pvüti* left the place, the *khel* members whose *chumpho* is newly rebuilt will start hitting the '*ophya*' in a group. For Instance, if *chumpho*'s rebuilt took place in *C-Khel*, they will hit first; followed by *B-khel*; and then *A-khel* followed by *D-khel* and *E-Khel*. In Wokha Village, the first *Chumpho* was built in *B-khel* called *Chumphopvü* (*pvü* or *pvüi* literally means owner or custodian) and therefore privilege was given to that *khel*. The villagers respect each other and thus no *khel* is seen breaking the sequence. The elder one in each *khel* led and hit the *ophya* in group.

After throwing the bamboo spike (fake spear) of 3 (three) each called '*Tangi*', the participants will say, “*tai.. ezup-etsü, nmen-myak topvü nihantoktaka*”- *to yanthongphen* (*yanathongo*) *ji ezoa saniyitacho*. (Finished... all the illness, intolerable problems is being carried by you. Then, they left the place)⁸⁹. The participants ate their lunch, which included a prepared specialty of 'dog meat' and then left the location. It is stated that anyone who misses the goal by striking the top piece of the target that looks like a human face is cursed, thus he would sacrifice a

⁸⁷ Interview with Yankhomo Erui, 72 Years, Wokha Village, 20/01/2019.

⁸⁸ Interview with Riphamo Kithan, 70 Years, Wokha Village, 20/09/2020.

⁸⁹ Interview with Tsatheo Humtsoe, 82 Years, Wokha Village (Eldest son of *Pvüti* Tssiyingo Humtsoe), 29/06/2019.

fowl to protect him from death, sickness, and bad luck⁹⁰. Every house closes the door and retires early in the evening, believing that *Yan-mon* (the village's harmful ghost) will cry at night. '*Yanathongo*' (revenged upon him by the villagers) is the name given to the '*opya*' that he has received as a result of his rage at bad luck and an unpleasant condition in the community. According to legend, the village evil ghost visits '*Yanathongo*' and yells, 'Oh *Yanathongo*..*Yanathungo*' in sadness on seeing the devastated log (*ophya*).

In Elumyo village, under Wokha District, a wooden log (*ophya*) of about 8 feet was trimmed flat in the front. The top most portions are curved a human head; a women breast in the middle; and a small piece of cotton cloth was bind across the waist. Any one speared the *ophya* in the head was a bad omen for he may die early. Those speared in the middle would get a good yielding from his field and hit below the waist was a sign of ill luck⁹¹. The tradition of the Kabui Nagas of Manipur tells that they used to take heads because the possession of a head brought wealth and prosperity to the village. It was usual to keep the gruesome trophy for five days, and return it to the village to which it belonged...Then for three years all raids on the particular village were forbidden. They erect outside the village of an image of a man, made either of straw or of the stem of a plantain tree, and throw spears at it. If a spear hits the head, the successful marksman will take a head, while, if he hits the belly of the image, the crops will be good (Op.cit., Hudson, 2013, p. 119). Among the Lotha Nagas, the enemy head tree (*mhenkiton*) will be fenced and the gate will be shut after the series of ceremonies is completed, according to oral tradition. When the *Chumpho* lads bring an enemy head to hang in the tree, the gate will be opened⁹².

Conclusion

The formation of the Lotha villages was systematic, yet gradual in movement by dividing into 5 (five) groups which has spread out in different locations of the present area settlements. The current generation has unanimously recognised the oral narrative that describes the Lothas' migration route through Khezhazeno (*Phitsson Yan*), Kohima (*Khayima*), Thizamo (*Tsensa wozhü*), Nirhema (*Nehruma*), Chiechema (*Jichuma*), and Terogvünyu (*Honohoyonton*). Many

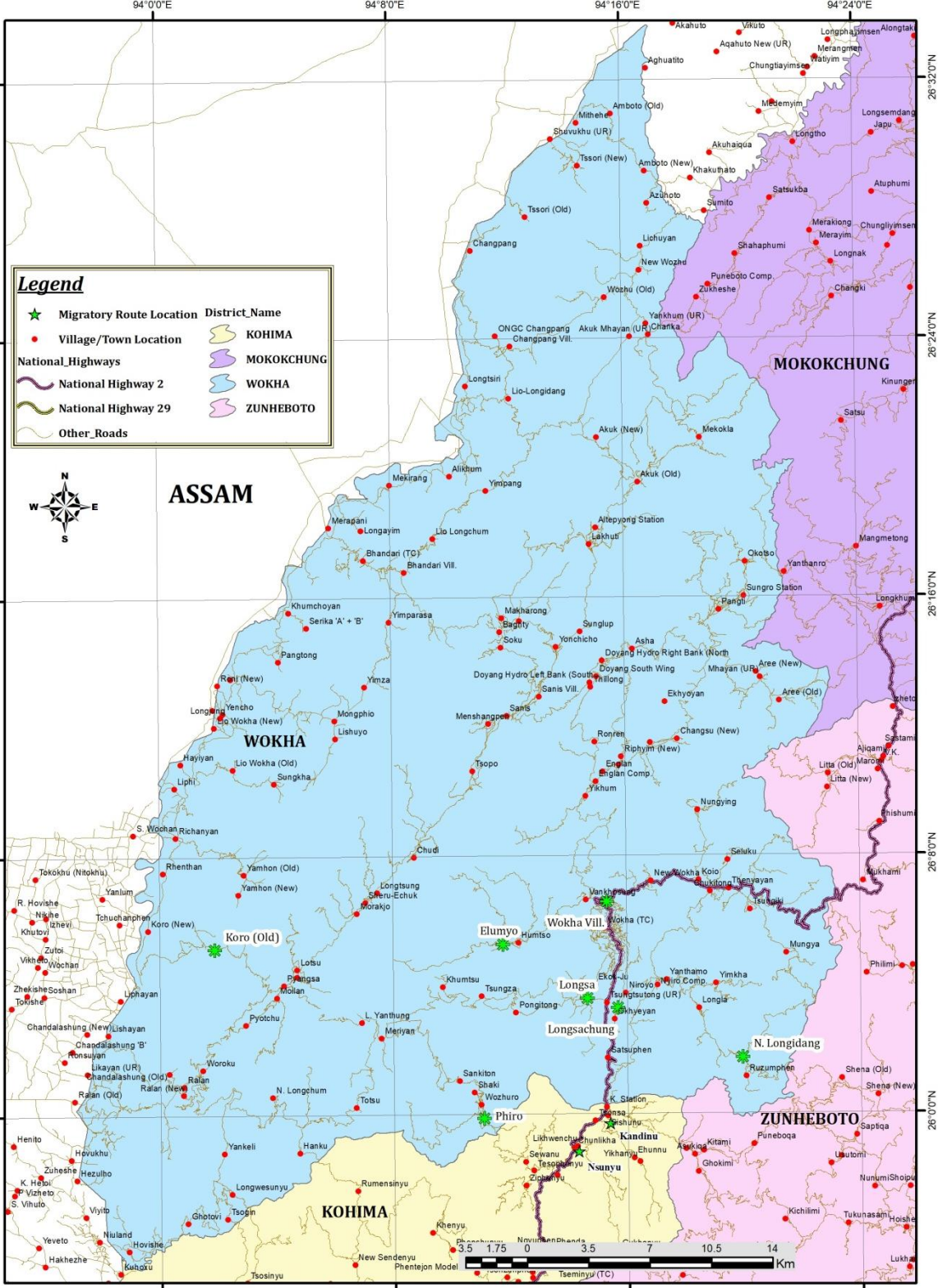
⁹⁰ Interview with Renasao Tungoe, 86 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

⁹¹ Interview with C. Zumomo Tsanglao, 67 Years, Elumyo Villager, 23/06/2019.

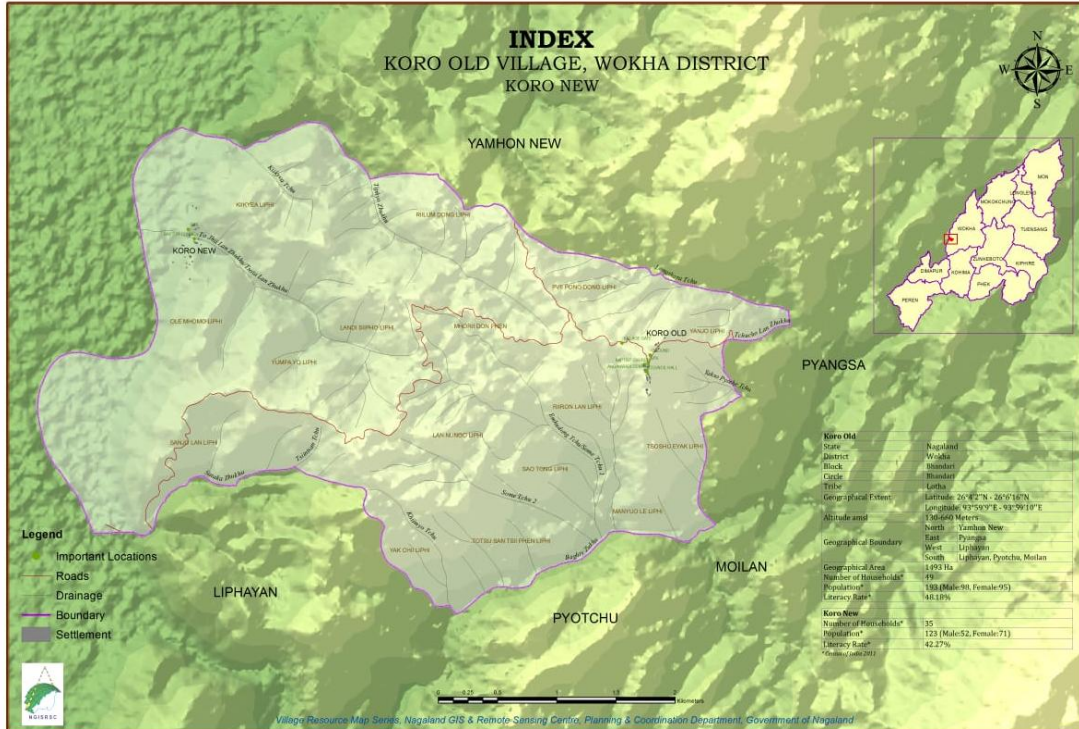
⁹² Interview with Yanpan Murry, 75 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2018.

villages were either disintegrated or abandoned to find out a better village for the final settlement. A plan for forming a village has been put in place to undertake an extensive investigation of the area to determine whether the site was suitable for the establishment of an ideal settlement or to get access to a new location. The uniqueness of the village settlement was the composition of different members of a clan. There was a feeling of brotherhood among the different clans and every members of a clan was important for the formation of village. The spectacular culture while establishing a village was planting of head-tree (*Mhenkiton*) and construction of the village *Chumpho*, which they considered utmost necessity and sacred. The elaborate village remaking ceremony (*Phitssso-yantssso*) remained an example how the Lotha ancestors has established a village involving a systematic procedure and observing a methodical rituals. Therefore, it is found necessary to undertake an archaeological excavation to locate buried evidence to supplement the oral account of the village formation. The year of the establishment of the village and activities of the past can be determined through the scientific analysis and conventional Radiocarbon Dating. Therefore, the next chapter is predominantly an archaeology supplemented by the oral accounts.

MAP INDICATING STUDY AREA IN WOKHA DISTRICT

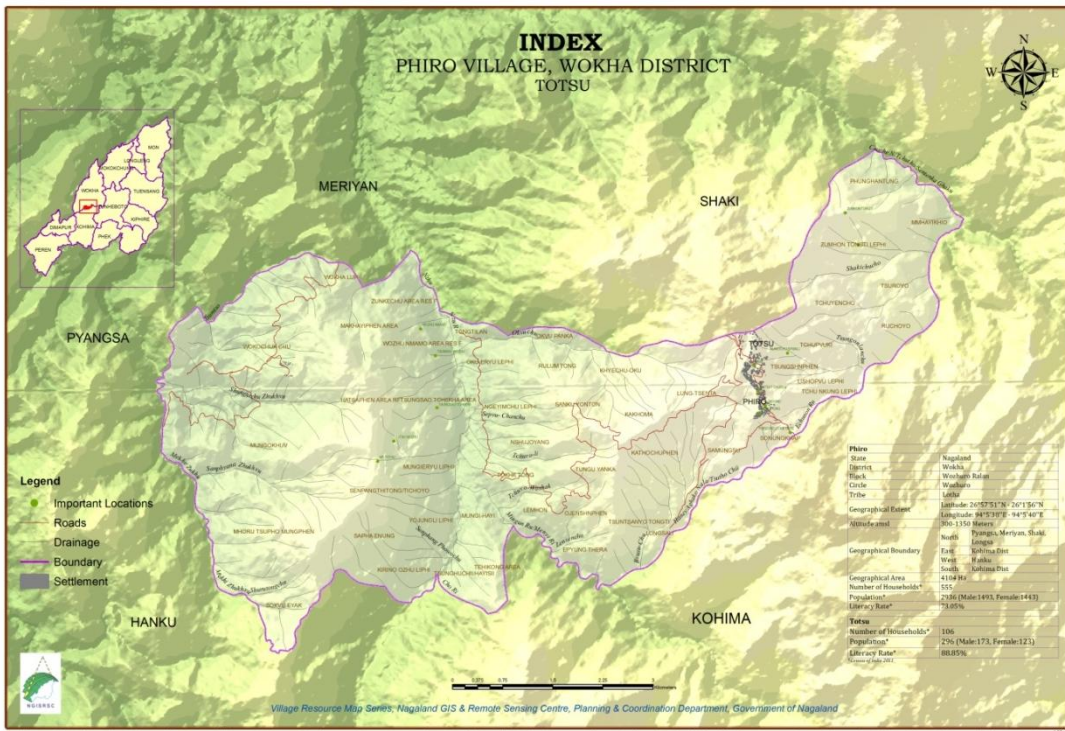


Map 2.3: Map indicating Study Area in Wokha District.



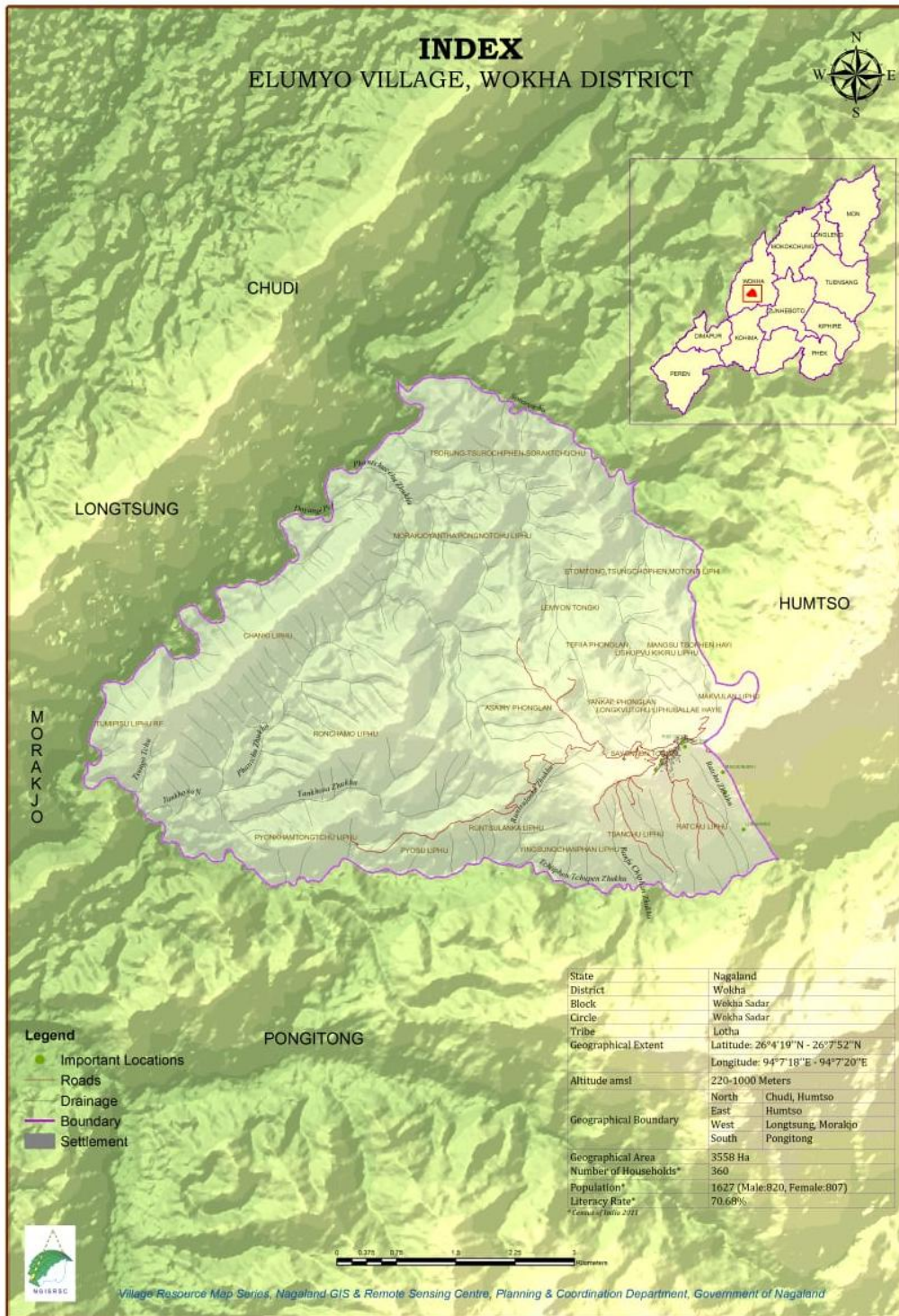
The Village Boundary is delineated in consultation with the concerned village council and is purely for the purpose of resource mapping and perspective planning. The Boundary however, cannot be considered as traditional and final until legal process or mutual agreement between the neighboring villages, whichever applicable, is initiated. B11

Map 2.4: Index Map of Koro Old Village

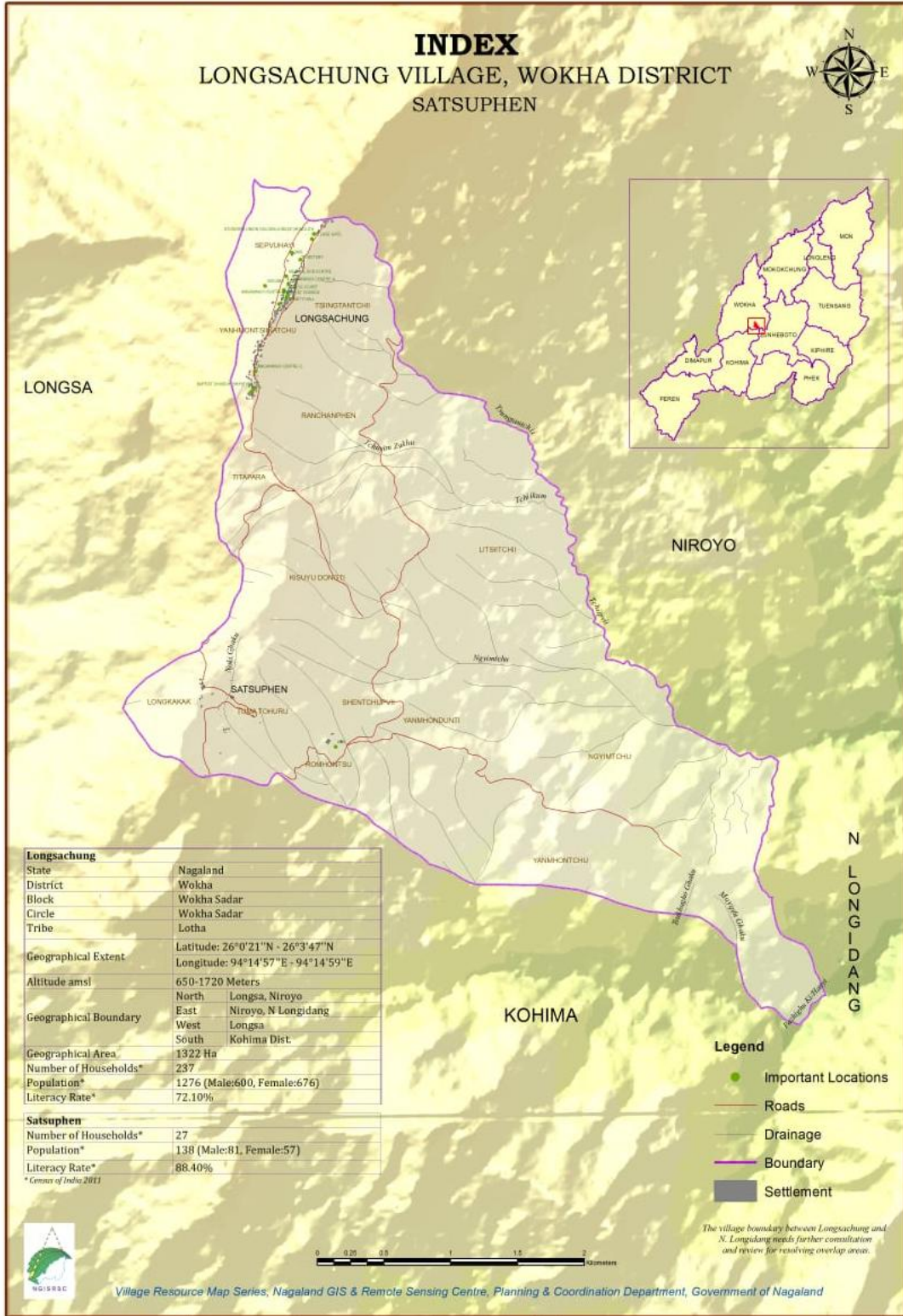


The Village Boundary is delineated in consultation with the concerned village council and is purely for the purpose of resource mapping and perspective planning. The Boundary however, cannot be considered as traditional and final until legal process or mutual agreement between the neighboring villages, whichever applicable, is initiated. K31

Map 2.5: Index Map of Phiro Village

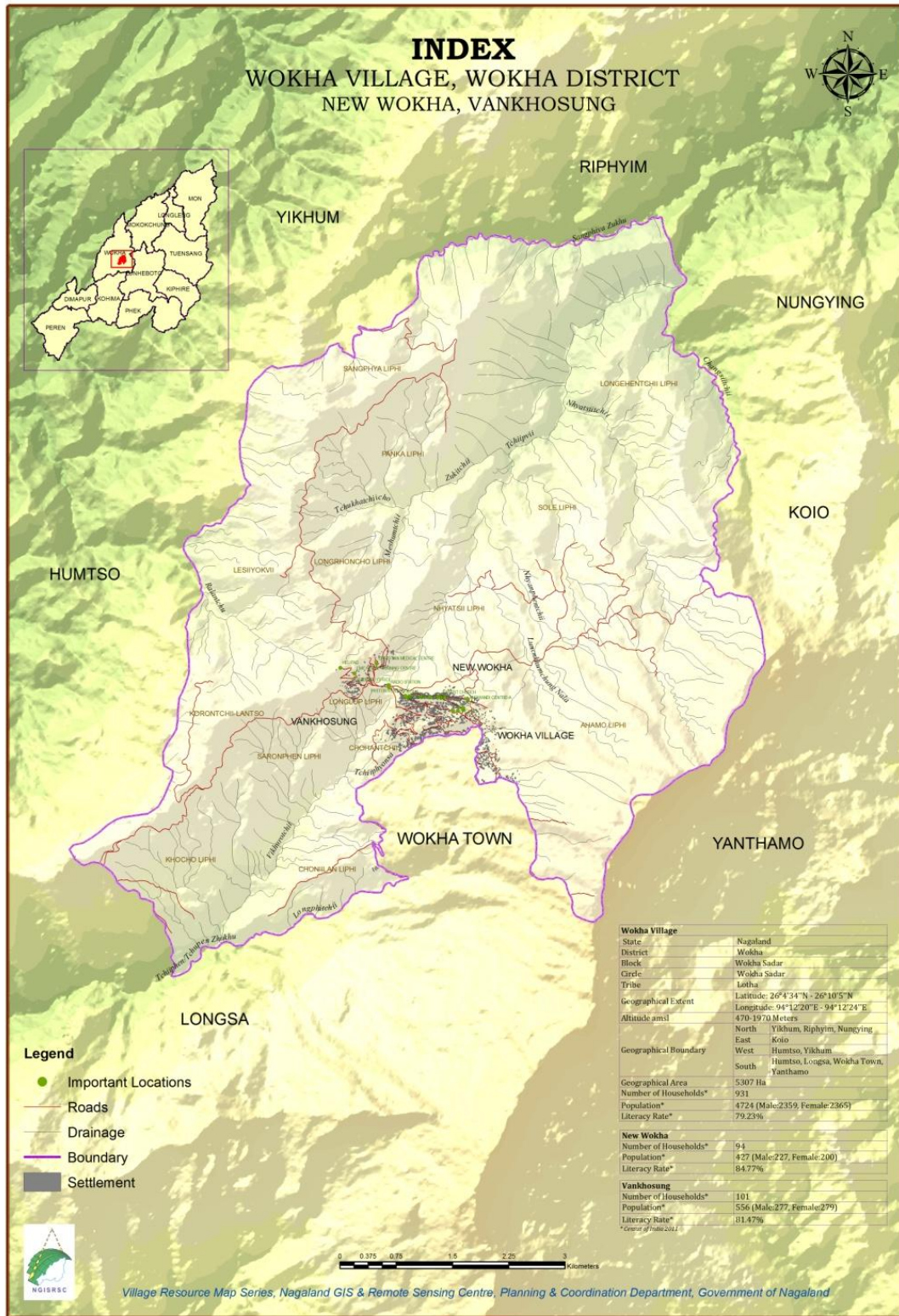


Map 2.6: Index Map of Elumyo Village.



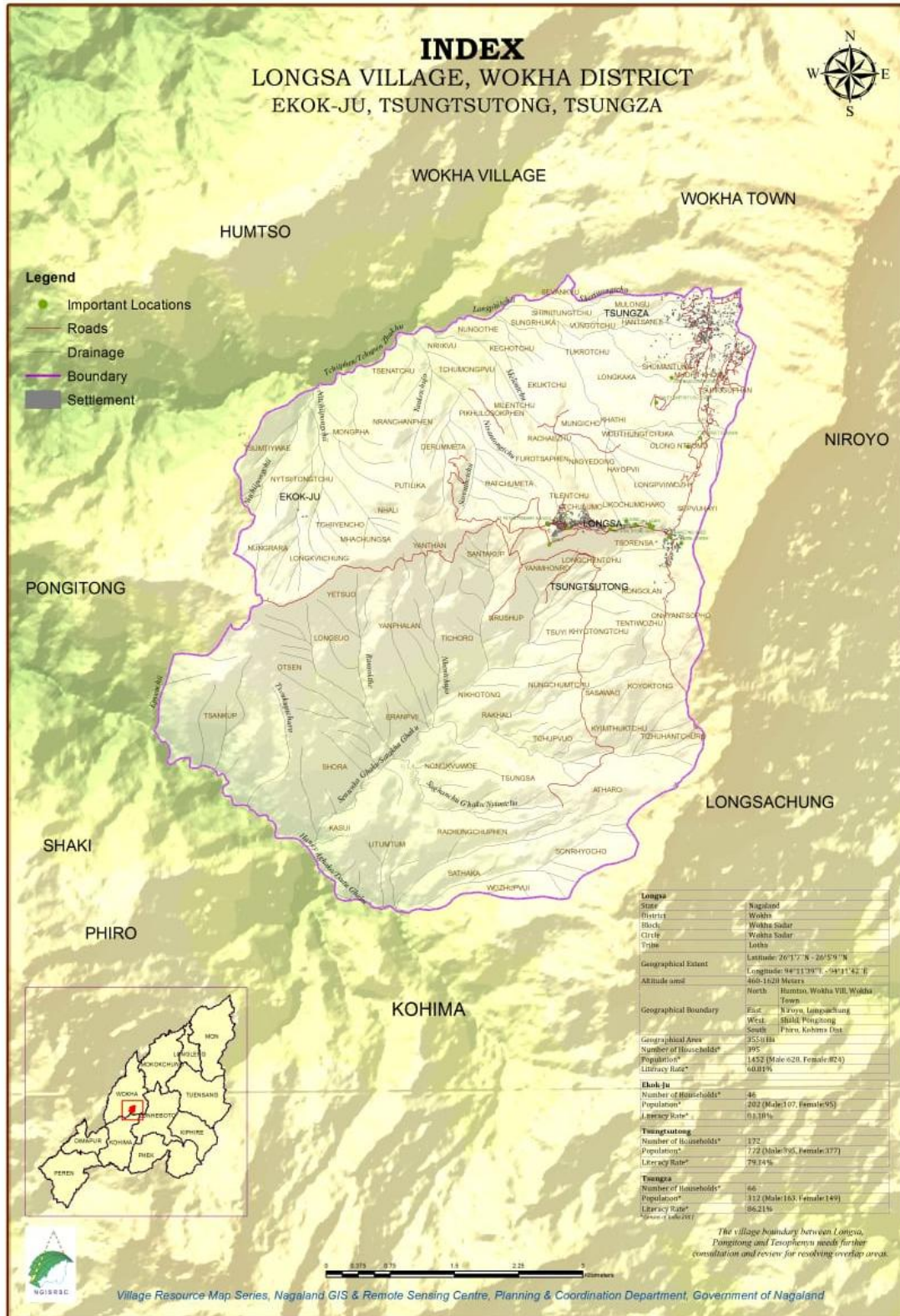
The Village Boundary is delineated in consultation with the concerned village council and is purely for the purpose of resource mapping and perspective planning. The Boundary however, cannot be considered as traditional and final until legal process or mutual agreement between the neighboring villages, whichever applicable, is initiated

Map 2.7: Index Map of Longsachung Village.

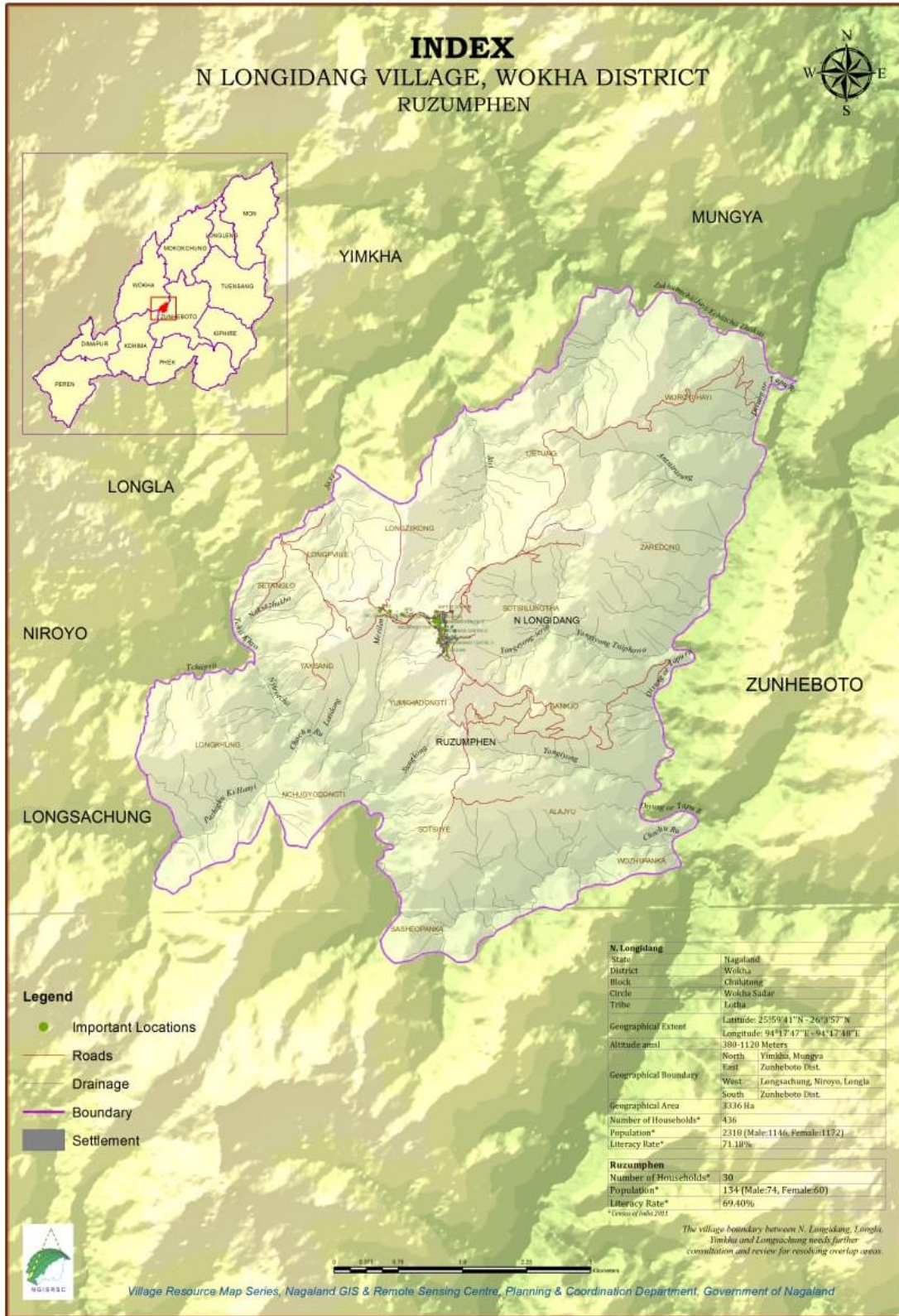


The Village Boundary is delineated in consultation with the concerned village council and is purely for the purpose of resource mapping and perspective planning. The Boundary however, cannot be considered as traditional and final until legal process or mutual agreement between the neighboring villages, whichever applicable, is initiated"

Map 2.8: Index Map of Wokha Village.



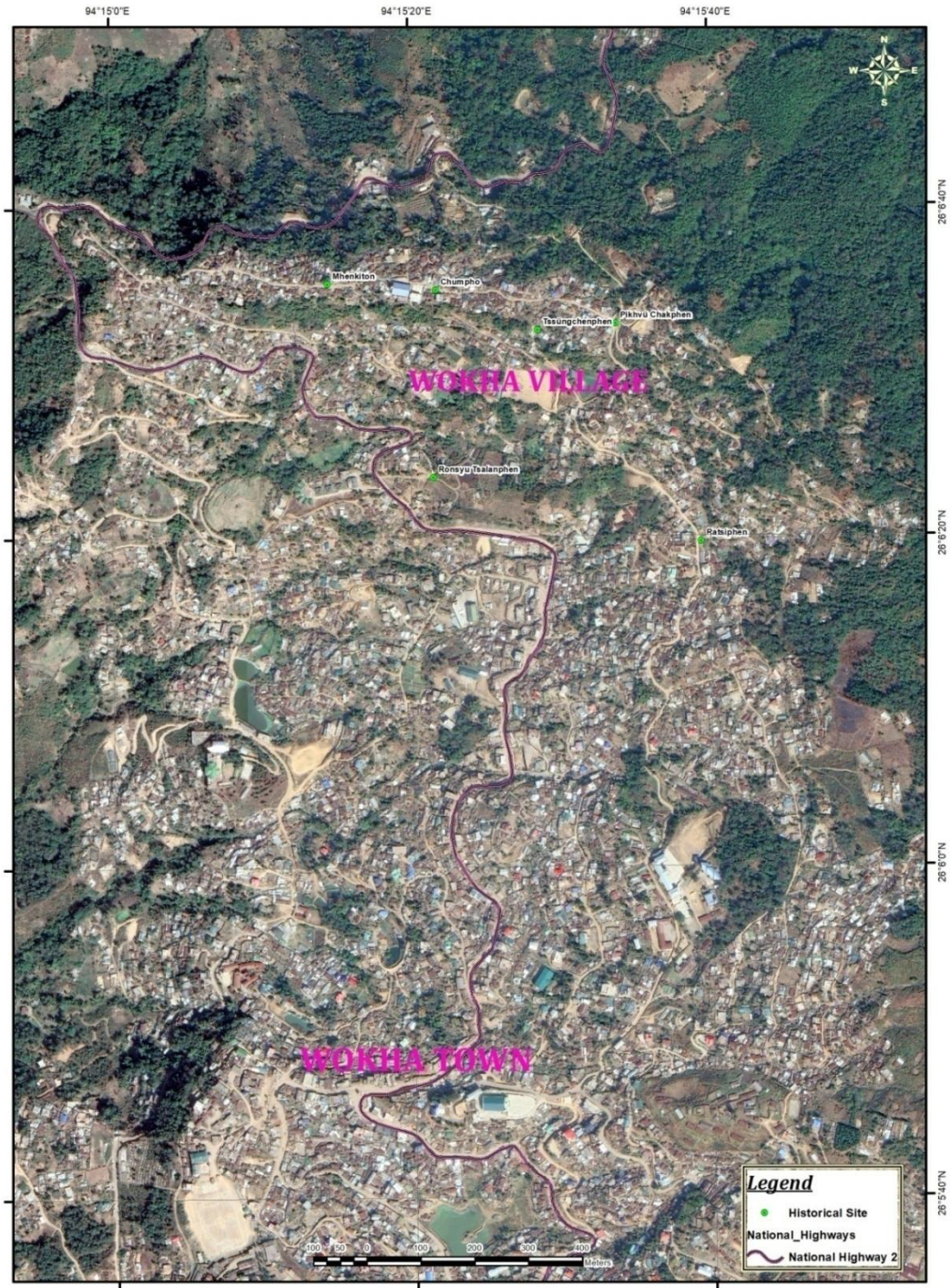
Map 2.9: Index Map of Longsa Village



Map 2.10: Index Map of N Longidang Village.

"The Village Boundary is delineated in consultation with the concerned village council and is purely for the purpose of resource mapping and perspective planning. The Boundary however, cannot be considered as traditional and final until legal process or mutual agreement between the neighbouring villages, whichever applicable, is initiated."

MAP INDICATING HISTORICAL SITE AT WOKHA VILLAGE, WOKHA DISTRICT



Map 2.11: Map indicating Historical Sites at Wokha Village- *Mhenkiton* (Head-tree); *Chumpho* (Morung); *Tssingchenphen*, *Pikhvu-chakphen*, *Ronsyu Tsalanphen* and *Ratssiphen* (ceremonial places).



Knowledgeable elder of Khezhakeno village



Grain multiplier stone slab



Chief House (*Mowo Ke*)



Field interaction with Scholars from abroad

Figure 2.1: Khezhakeno Village (Phitsson Yan).



Knowledgeable elders at Terogvünyu village





Honohoyonton



Fowl sacrifice's place, in which village name derived

Figure 2.2: Terogvünyu Village (Honohoyonton).



Only means of transportation to reach Koro Old village during field visit



Knowledgeable persons of Koro Old village

Figure 2.4: Koro Old Village



Head-tree (Mhenkiton) at Phiro village



Knowledgeable Elders at Phiro village

Figure 2.5: Phiro Village.



Knowledgeable elders of Elumyo village



Village First Pond (Renovated and in use)



Luck stones (*Oha*)



Grainaries (*Oson*)

Figure 2.6: Elumyo Village.



Longsachung first settlement area with *Mhenkiton* and luck stones



Knowledgeable elders of Longsachung

Figure 2.7: Longsachung Village.



Knowledgeable elders of Wokha village

Figure 2.8: Wokha Village.



Knowledgeable elders of Longsa village

Figure 2.10: Longsa Village.



Village name of Longsa derives from this stone slab



Knowledgeable elders of Nrung Longidang village

Village First Pond (Jami Jükha)



Preserved Monoliths at Nrung Longidang village

Figure 2.11: Nrung Longidang Village.

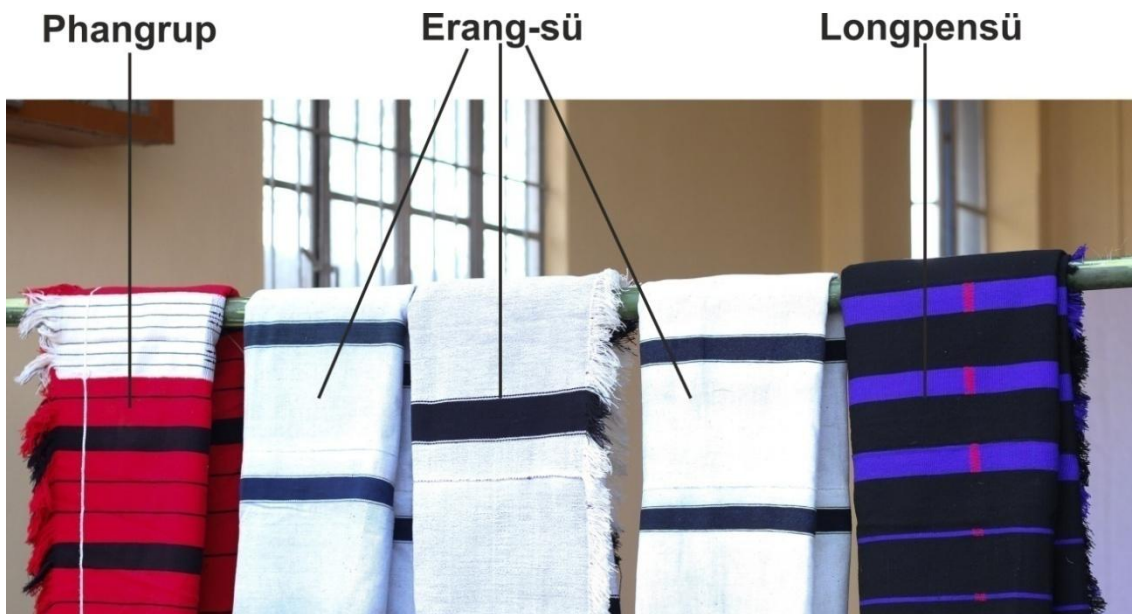


Figure 2.13: Traditional male shawls of the Lothas.

Chapter-3

Synthesis of Oral History and Archaeological Data

Introduction

There are several oral accounts and narratives of Lotha Naga cultural practices and way of life, yet archaeological evidence has not made remarkable breakthrough be it Palaeolithic and Mesolithic or and skimpy evidence on the Neolithic culture. It is genuinely felt that the oral historical studies can be incorporated by scientific findings in such a way that it would pave way to authenticate oral tradition as far as possible. Trigger (1968) has discussed the concept how settlement pattern reflects the adaptation of a society and its technology to its environment (Trigger, 1968, pp. 53-77). In relevance to the synthesis of oral history and archaeology, Blackburn (2008) maintains that, “Sometimes oral traditions act like a photograph, a selective mirror to social realities, and at other times like blueprint, a charter of ideas and actions” (Blackburn, 2008, p. 259). While discussing what a planned excavation is all about, Fagan and Durrani (2017) notes, “Archaeological excavation is not digging by formula, but a carefully managed process that requires constant creative thinking. There are general methodologies for excavation, but the appropriate one varies from site to site and from moment to moment as an excavation proceeds. In a way, excavation is a process of negotiation that balances acquiring the maximum amount of information against potential destruction and the needs of the contemporary society (Fagan and Durrani, 2017, p. 157).

Walling (2016) argues that, “Oral narratives have been used to collaborate with archaeological evidence in order to test the reliability of site locations, time depth and socio-cultural developments”. She goes on to say, that “oral traditions incorporate the cultural knowledge of many ancestors at multiple levels of signification. Similarly, archaeological sites incorporate a complex record of past human behavior embedded in artifacts and archaeological deposits. Both oral traditions and archaeology thus constitute sources of knowledge that have intricate structures that must be systematically and carefully analyzed in terms of their own internal logic in order to use them in scholarly research” (Walling, 2016, p. 74). Northeast India has been called a ‘living museum of man’ because of the ethnolinguistic diversity, with different groups adopting different socio-economic strategies and cultural lifestyles and professing

divergent indigenous or imported religious belief systems (Roy, 1991, p. 73). Nagaland serves as a “natural boundary” between South and Southeast Asia and China, and contains representative fauna, flora, and species unique to the area, including hominid groups. These features, and the geographical isolation, afford the region archaeological and ethnographic significance (Nienu, 2014, p. 117). For quite some time, Nagaland remained out of the picture of archaeological literature until recently. He further remarked that, “Based on ethnographic manifestations, and unique biotic and physiographic features, it was assumed that Nagaland could have played a vital role prehistorically” (Ibid., p. 118). Acharya (1985) notes that, “Numerous archaeological remains lying scattered in the region of western Assam, Nagaland and so far as Wokha district possessed both historical and archaeological rich heritage. Western Assam especially the districts of Goalpara, Dhubri and Kokrajhar is full of archaeological wealth. This region has its important past since the dawn of the historical area in Assam. In ancient times, when Assam was regarded as Kamarupa, this region was known as ‘Ratnapitha’- centre of richness of wealth” (Acharya, 1985, p. 43).

Several attempts has been made on prehistoric studies of Northeast India and Nagaland, but thus far in Wokha district inhabited by the Lothas, only Ngullie (2014) has undertaken trial excavations at Tiyi Longchum and reported numerous potsherds and megaliths. A large number of potsherds were recovered throughout the layers in all the 3 (three) trenches at Tiyi Longchum. However, no complete pot was found and reconstruction with the help of the potsherds was not possible. The potsherds comprised mostly of body sherds, bases and few rim sherds. The potteries recovered from Tiyi Longchum were very crude, rough, thick and heavily tempered with stone granules ... a large number of potteries were recovered throughout the layers in all the three trenches. However, no complete pot was found and reconstruction with the help of the potsherds was also not possible (Ngullie, 2014, p. 255). Earlier, T.C Sharma also collected stone tools from the Lotha area as noted by Hazarika (2017, p. 104). Likewise, Devi and Neog (2014) have reported several megaliths in four Lotha villages, namely, Wokha village, Humtso village, Yikhum village and Riphyim village under Wokha District of Nagaland. The megaliths in 4 (four) villages are found in four types of location. On an average, the frequency of the megaliths distributions is found to be highest within the residential sites of the people. The next type of preferable location is the common burial cemeteries that are specific to each *khels* (colony). The other two locations are the road side location and the public buildings such as churches, common

ground, etc., (Devi & Neog, 2014, p. 342). Many Naga tribes have a strong tradition based on megalithic culture. While writing an account of the megalithic culture of the Maos (Ememai village), Devi (2011) observes, "... passing down several tracts lined by the houses, one finds oneself in a large open space where a number of megaliths are found scattered here and there. They are found generally roughly circular in arrangements of horizontal stone slabs, stone seats (dolmens) and upright menhirs. The horizontal stone slabs resting on a number of upright stones are very common. Some horizontal stone slabs are erected as raised platforms while some are found lying on the ground level" (Devi, 2011, p. 132).

Our understanding on the transition from hunting-gathering and foraging to the advent of farming and domestication of plants and animals have also been largely informed by tool typologies with ambiguity in dates, which has remained wanting for long (Jamir et al., 2014a, p.1). Similarly, if the village settlement pattern, architectural design of the house or any other artefacts are unearthed from archaeological excavation, accurate historical accounts can be established. The art of pottery making, the meaning and uses of artefacts are enshrined in some deep philosophy that permeates the socio-cultural life of the people. In the excavation of Rito (an abandoned Ao settlement, near Longkhum village, Mokokchung), Walling (2008) reported that "Pottery which bear affinity with the Lothas. She noted that, "As per oral tradition the Rito people used two types of pottery. One was brought from Changki (Ao region) and the other from Bangkulong (Burma region) having Lotha affinity" (Walling 2008, p. 273).

The Lothas have a long history of pottery making utilized for both domestic and commercial purposes. Several elders in the field recall purchasing crockery from Wokha village. The old indigenous method of pottery making is today passed on to the present generation a case of which is the surviving potters of Wokha village. "Wokha village is the only actively pottery producing village since it is the only village that has good quality clay for pottery manufacture in its vicinity. Such potteries are made for their own use as well as for sale to the other Lotha villages and the neighbouring tribes like the Semas and the Rengmas (Ngullie, 2006, p. 304). "In Nagaland, pottery production methods and products are still traditional and are highly valued for their aesthetic and religious significance" (Vasa, 2018, p. 19). The art of making pottery, as well as the meaning and applications of the artefacts, are all enshrined in a deep philosophy that penetrates people's socio-cultural lives.

The challenges posed by present construction activities and the rising population in the area at the old settlement stimulated and spurred trial and test excavations. As a result, the objective was to find buried evidence within these ancient settlement sites. According to oral tradition, the locations are both socio-culturally and religiously significant. Therefore, archaeological evidence was in need to place the past ways of life in a larger perspective and in a broader context. The oral tradition of the Lothas recounts many old villages that are left abandoned and thereafter formed new villages at suitable places according to their traditional needs. “At some stage in the life of an activity area, a settlement area.....may be abandoned. At this stage all features, pits, buildings, roads, will be abandoned, but also a range of artefacts, which although still perfectly usable, will be left behind (Drewett, 2011, p. 21). The recovery of artefacts discovered on the sites can produce results that can be used to understand past culture and human activity.

Oral sources passed on from generation about past cultures might get diluted over time, if narrated randomly without any records but rediscovery through scientific technique with proper analysis can produce an accurate history with evidence. While discussing on processual archaeology (also known as ‘new archaeology’), Bahn (1991) maintains, “A further objective has been termed ‘the construction of the lifeways of the people responsible for the archaeological remains’. We are certainly interested in having a clear picture of how people lived, and how they exploit their environment. But we also seek to understand why they lived that way: why they had those patterns of behavior, and how their lifeways and material culture came to take the form they did” (Bahn, 1991, p. 17). However, the interpretation of the evidence depends very much on one’s theoretical perspective. The past has gone; we cannot reconstruct it, but we can only present our interpretation of it based on the material evidence recovered (Drewett, 1999, p. 151). Therefore, in the present research, an archaeological investigation was undertaken to understand the pre-colonial cultural components of the study region.

If the human activities of the past are investigated using the method of age calibration dating, the research may give historically and chronologically significant results. Radiocarbon dating provides absolute dating, allowing researchers to determine the age of an organic substance prior to the present. It is used to determine the age of carbon-based materials, and as a result, it encourages the discovery of historical actions that lead to the reconstruction of the history of

village formation. Radiocarbon, developed by physicists J.R. Arnold and W.F. Libby from 1949, is the best known of all chronometric methods within archaeology (Fagan and Durrani, 2017, p. 117). Therefore, studies were conducted using scientific approaches including radiocarbon dating of the recovered organic samples during the course of excavations. “ Previous excavation at Khezhakeno (KNA), Movolomi (MLI) and Khusomi (KSI) reveals Radiocarbon dates for KNA dated to Cal. AD 1320 to 1350 and MLI Cal. AD 1420 to 1640” (Jamir et al., 2014, p. 672). The derivation of dates from the samples of charcoal and wood through excavations of Wokha village (WKA-18 & 19), Wokha village *Mhenkiton* (MT-2020), Koro Old village *Mhenkiton* (KR-2020) and Longsio (LS-2020) sent for radiocarbon dating have immensely contributed towards chronology of the village set up.

Archaeological Excavation

Excavation was conducted at the following ancient sites:

1. Wokha village ancestral *Chumpho (Morung)* Site: 17th to 18th December 2018 and 7th to 9th January 2019.
2. Wokha village *Mhenkiton* (enemy head-tree) planted during the formation of village at Wokha village : 4th November 2020.
3. Longsio, an abandoned village site of the Lothas between Pongitong and Longsa village under Wokha District, Nagaland: 9th to 10th November 2020.,
4. Koro village *Mhenkiton*: 13th November 2020.

Excavation method of the proposed ancient sites

Detailed and meticulous notes of the finds from the excavation were made in lot books, and recording the provenience of the objects, depth and layer of finds recovered from excavations. The trial excavation of the *Chumpho* or ‘morung’ site chosen to expose the postholes and the extent of the past activities and therefore, only 1(one) trench with 7 (seven) lots covered the whole existing ancestral *Chumpho* site. A similar method was used in the excavation of Longsio site, whereby two trial trenches were excavated. For the test excavation of *Mhenkiton* or the ‘head-tree’ in Wokha village and Koro village, small shovel pits within the perimeter of the trunk was applied to trowel through the decayed wood of the tree.

For the tree excavation (*Mhenkiton*), the decayed trunk at the base of the tree was chosen for excavation in order, also to determine the age of the tree by radiocarbon dating. Since the method of dendrochronology cannot be applied in the case of this decayed tree, a new method of meticulous trowelling in phase-wise manner was undertaken. Tools such as chisels, hammer and steel knife was cleaned prior to its use, and carefully avoiding exposure to direct sunlight and using surgical hand gloves. The pith of the decayed wood attached to the trunk was systematically excavated.

In the case of Longsio site, site exploration was done with direct visual observation for a few days. Subsequent field investigation followed to trace out past human activities and to locate the monoliths of both standing and those disturbed monoliths lying on the ground. Proper GPS coordinates was recorded for the trenches and monoliths for preparing an accurate map. The location of the site was determined via a foot survey of the terrain with the assistance of local guides ('knowledge-bearers') who are well-versed of the site's history. The site's physiographic conditions were determined using Geographic Information System (GIS) data, and the landscape attributes were generated using Google Earth imageries.

Background of the ancient *Chumpho* (Morung) site and activities

The oral tradition of Wokha village is clear about the site of the first *Chumpho* that was constructed while establishing the village. The last construction was in 1964, whereby many people above 55 years confirmed to have seen the structure standing at that time. Some elders in the village have witnessed the activities of the *Chumpho* culture. Mills (1922) observed that, "Every Lotha village, except the very small ones, is divided into two or more '*khels*' (*Yankho*) and writes, "In every '*Khel*' there is a common 'bachelors' house or *morung*, a building which plays an important part in Lhota life. In it no women must set her foot. At the *champa*, raids were planned and discussed, and to it all heads taken were first brought. It is a sleeping place of every *Lhota* boy from the time he first puts on his dao-holder till he marries, this rule being only relaxed in the case of boys who are allowed to remain at home and nurse an ailing and widowed mother, or when the *champa* falls into a state of disrepair that is no longer habitable" (Mills, 1922, p. 24). Wokha village is one of the largest and oldest standing villages in Wokha District,

Nagaland. Oral tradition narrates that the *Chumpho* system was very strong and its structure was massive with 8 (eight) sleeping cubicles called *Mijen*⁹³.

Site description: Location and Topography

The ancestral *Chumpho* (*morung*) site is located in the heart of the village, *B-khel* (*Chumphopvü*), between 26° 06'. 585" N latitude and 094°15'.362" E longitude, at an elevation of 1456 m above mean sea level. A small house was constructed by the *B-Khel* community within the vicinity of the *Chumpho* site for the purpose of prayer fellowship (Figure 3.1). Towards the east, the village main road passing through along the site was partially encroached the *morung* site, and a foot path passage passes through the North. The old *morung* once stood on a prominent and commanding location with stable soil condition except for a gentle gorge towards the south-west which is supposed to offer good defence to the village. However, the main site remains protected from any new permanent structure. The temporary structure is today dismantled by the colony (*Khel*) members in order to examine the site and to reconstruct the traditional *Chumpho* (Figure 3.2).

Oral history of *Chumpho*

Numerous interactive sessions were conducted with the village elders in the form of meetings and personal interviews. The *Chumpho* culture was in prominence and well maintained until British arrival. Wokha village was burnt down twice- first on 4th January 1875 (*Wokha Yan Baptist Ekhümkho Platinum Jubilee Motsü*, 2003, p. 10) by the British under Captain Butler in retaliation for the murder of British coolies, and in 1956 (Ibid., p. 49) by the Indian Army during the aggression against the Naga Nationalist group. During this time, the entire *Chumpho* was also razed down by the fire. It is said that, the *Chumpho* was reconstructed and the tradition was followed even after the inferno in 1956. However, when the majority of the village populace was converted to Christianity, the *Chumpho* culture lost its value and significance. After the death of the village's last Chief (*Pvüiti*), Late Pichamo Kithan, in 1965⁹⁴, no new *Chumpho* construction took place in the village.

⁹³ Interview with Chichamo Erui, 72 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

⁹⁴ Interview with Rev. M. C. Kithan, 67 years, Wokha Village, 16/10/2018.

The *Chumpho* sites and the architectural pattern were accurately located with the help of knowledgeable village elders (Figure 3.3). A front main door faced towards the North-east of the village facing the lower *khels* and the back door facing towards the upper *khel*. The proposed excavation site is the place where first *Chumpho* was constructed at the time when Lotha ancestors established a village called *Wokha Yan* (Wokha village). The credible oral tradition suggest that the name ‘*Chumpho*’ derived from the meaning- *Chum* or *Chuma* (‘erecting post’) and *pho* (first community ritual). It was believed that the founding members, after selecting the site for the new village first constructed the *Chumpho*, *Pvüiti* house and thereafter the individual houses of the community. As population increased, a new *khel* called ‘*Yankho*’(colony) was formed and the habitation was further expanded. Every *yankho* built their *Chumpho* but all the sites are presently disturbed by present building houses and other public amenities. However, the first site where the earliest settler of the village constructed the *Chumpho* site was preserved, which therefore drew the present researcher to excavate of this first *morung* site of Wokha village attracted for archaeological excavation.

Village Reconnaissance

A brief site survey was conducted at the proposed excavation site (*Chumpho*). The Village Council and elders were invited to the spot for further consultation and for possible demarcation and extend of the site such as the provenience of the main posts (kingpost), possible location of the sleeping cubicles, and the hearth of the *morung*. During the process, no sign of earlier construction could trace out since the surface soil has been tempered when the village road was constructed where the top layer was mowed down for an approach road. Under the initiative of the Village Heritage Committee, the *B-Khel* community dismantled the temporary structure at the *Chumpho* site. Oral tradition says that the particular *morung* which excavation of the site was done was known as ‘*Benka chumpho*’- ‘*Benka*’ means first ever⁹⁵. By constructing the first *Chumpho*, all the activities in the village commenced and later, Wokha village was expanded to 5 (five) *Yankho* (*khel*/colony) witha *chumpho* in each *khel*.

⁹⁵ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 73 years, Wokha Village, 10/12/2018.

Trial excavation of *Chumpho* site

On 17th December 2018, a trial excavation was undertaken by laying a trench with an objective to know the exact spot where the ancestors of the village had set up the *Chumpho*. The objective of the excavation was to retrieve the evidence of postholes in order to reveal the architectural plan of the *morung* and its the extent. Excavation was suspended on the second day (18th December 2018) owing to winter rain which hampered the progress of the excavation. Basing on the potentiality of the site, excavation was further resumed on 7th January 2019. The excavation culminated on 9th January 2019 with potential findings. In all, it took 5 (five) days to complete the excavation as showing the excavation Ground Plan in Figure 3.4.

TR-1, Lot-1:

A trench measuring 3 x 1.50 m (TR-1) was laid out over the *morung* site (WKA-18) as a trial in Lot-1, Dig-1(WKA-18), and divided into four quadrants-NE, NW, SE and SW with each dig assigned in Lots (Figure 3.5). With the top brownish humus scrapped, the excavation revealed that it was rammed with by hard soil with a mixture of small stone packings which doubted the excavators to find anything beyond this. Scrapping of the humus continued at a depth of 10 cm after which the excavators were able to trace out a small posthole and a small part of fire place revealing some kind of recent activity of black topping during road construction. A portion of the earth filling was further removed. This led the excavators to the original compact soil and the bedrock in the south-west direction. The excavation datum was maintained on the south-western peg of the trench (Figure 3.6).

TR-1, Lot-2:

Within the trench, the excavation was narrowed down to 60 cm in the North-west direction recorded as Lot-2, Dig-2 (Figure 3.7). A portion of black soil was traced and an outline of a bigger posthole emerged, measuring 30 cm in diameter towards the north, which was bigger than the previous posthole encountered in Lot-1 (Figure 3.8). A hearth measuring 50 cm was traced towards the lower left portion of the trench in north-west. South-east of the trench was the bed rock and therefore, further scrapping was undertaken to trace a possible posthole. At a dig of another 15 cm depth, a decomposed wooden post measuring 50 x 16 cm was found. The diameter of the posthole measured 30 x 27 cm which is possibly the king post/ inner main post (*Humtsen- ochungo*) of the *Chumpho* with large fragment of wood remains. This posthole was labelled as posthole-1, measuring 70 cm deep from the datum point (Figure 3.9). A number of potsherds, charcoal, human tooth (Figure 3. 10) and dark blackish soil was

found inside the posthole. Bone fragments were also recovered from this posthole (Figure 3.11).

The trench was further extended towards the north-west; a bigger hole was traced out measuring 46 x 36 cm diameter. It is very likely that this could have been the outer king post/ outer main post (or *Humtsen-opomo*). Several potsherds, charcoal (Figure 3.12), deep black soil, decomposed wood particles (Figure 3.13), a human tooth (Figure 3.14) and an animal jaw bone were found inside the posthole. This was labelled as posthole-2.

Excavation was extended towards south-west with a trench measuring 1 x 2 m for want of smaller postholes (*tseuro*) and to see the extension of the *Chumpho* structure. On removing the hard soil with small stone packing, there were traces of smaller post holes. Due to this, a separate trench has laid out at the rear measuring 3 x 3m. This additional trench was laid out in order to understand the extension of the *Chumpho* towards rear end. Post holes measuring 34 x 45 cm diameter, semi-circular in outline was found (Figure 3.15a; Figure 3.15b). Excavation was stopped owing to winter rain and was decided to be resumed during good weather condition.

TR-1, Lot-3:

A floor remains of the demolished concrete base structure without a pillar, measuring 30 x 12 ft formerly a colony (*B-khel*) prayer fellowship house and later handed over temporarily to the State Government as *Anganwadi* Centre was removed carefully. The dug out heights of the concrete structure measured to about 25 cm (Figure 3.16a; Figure 3.16b).

Traces of charcoal and ash were found that was probably hearth of the *Chumpho*. The area with ash and charcoal measure 140 cm circumference. Therefore, it was identified as hearth No.1 (Figure 3.17) which is 44 cm from the main rear king posthole (or *Kotsen*) (Figure 3.18). The main rear posthole was labelled as posthole No.3. Altogether 10 postholes were identified. About 96 cm away from the posthole No.7, an extension of trench towards the south-east was taken with dimension of 6 x 9 ft (south-east Ext.1). The dig in this trench was with the aim to examine further possible postholes (Figure 3.19). According to the oral history of the Wokha village, this *Chumpho* was repaired and reconstructed over time and years. In Dig-1 within Lot-1, the humus layer exposed an old coin of 20 paise with the year 1988 inscribed. An animal bone fragment, identified as Pig upper jaw) also collected from the dig (Figure 3.20). The humus layer composed of compact soil and stone rubbles.

TR-1, Lot-4:

A trench measuring 9 m x 60 cm (Lot-4) was extended corresponding to the earlier trench (Lot-3) and marked SE EXT-2. Remaining debris of the concrete floor was systematically removed and further scrapped to expose an animal bone fragment at the depth of 16 cm (Figure 3.21).

TR-1, Lot-5:

A small dig measuring 1 x 2.50 m was done and in it, black and brownish soil was traced. Several potsherds were found and labelled. After digging for 16 cm depth, an ashy deposit was exposed towards the south-east, measuring an area of 14 cm diameter. At the depth of 31 cm, a bamboo fragment was found towards north-west direction (Figure 3.22). Underneath this bamboo piece, a posthole was exposed and recovered another bamboo (posthole-11). A stone object (work stone) was also exposed measuring 8 cm (Figure 3.23).

A posthole measuring 22 x 19 cm in diameter was exposed and a decomposed wood was found at the depth of 40 cm (Figure 3.24a). Two (2) additional wood samples were collected at the depth of 64 cm from the datum and the feature was labelled as posthole No.9. (Figure 3. 24b).

TR-1, Lot-6:

On the last day of excavation, a trench measuring 9.60 x 1 m was laid (TR-4). The objective was to expose the side postholes and ascertain the architectural lay out of the postholes. A copper coin of 1 Anna, inscribed with the year 1918 under King Edward was retrieved (Figure 3. 25). Several potsherds were also found within this area. Another posthole was located with fragments of wood and bamboo, and its provenience labelled as posthole No.5. (Figure 3. 26). Further hand trowelling of posthole-1 was done to trace the extent of the pit feature, and expose the decomposed wooden pillar (Figure 3. 27). The posthole was oblong in shape which is why the wooden pillar may perhaps be roughly flattish and facing westward. The depth to the natural hard soil from the datum is 73 cm. Besides the modern drain flooring to the north western direction, 2 (two) small postholes were exposed beneath a concrete floor. Thus far, 32 postholes were exposed.

TR-1, Lot-7:

Further scrapping and removing of the concrete floor measuring 3 x 1 m in the North West side, adjoining the *Chumpho* area was done to determine whether any postholes lay

underneath and in the process found a fragment of wood. Another small posthole was exposed within this area. The soil appeared very compact and some portion showed modern deposit as well. Modern materials of plastic and bricks became visible. The process of excavation concluded in Lot-7 on the fifth day. Altogether, 33 postholes were unearthed from the excavation of the *morung* site (Figure 3.28).

Hearth feature

Altogether, 5 (five) hearth features were excavated and ash samples were collected from feature No.3 (Figure 3. 29). The 5 (five) hearth were labelled feature 1,2,3,4 and 5 (Figure 3. 30a, 3. 30b, 3. 30c, 3. 30d & 3. 30e). The recovery of hearths suggests that the *morung* boys make fire inside the *morung*.

Site Chronology: Radiocarbon Dates

Different samples in the form of decomposed wood from postholes and charcoal were collected for age determination from Trench-1 which were examined and analysed by the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences (BSIP), Lucknow, U.P, with the following sample and lab codes:

1. WKA-19/1 (Wood sample from Posthole No.1). Lab Code: BS- 5111, S- 5172
2. WKA-18/2 (Wood sample from Posthole No.2). Lab Code: BS- 5112, S- 5173
3. WKA-18/3 (Wood sample from Posthole No. 9). Lab Code: BS- 5113, S- 5174
4. WKA-19/4 (Wood sample from Posthole No.12). Lab Code: BS- 5114, S- 5175
5. WKA-19/5 (Charcoal sample from Posthole No.17). Lab Code: BS- 5115, S- 5176

The following are the dating results⁹⁶:

1. BS- 5111, S- 5172

WKA-19/1, Wood, AAApretreatment, vi/ vf=0.4809

Radiocarbon age BP 1473 +/- 87

95.4% probability: 410-772 cal AD

2. BS- 5112, S- 5173

WKA-18/2, Wood, AAA pretreatment,

Radiocarbon Age BP 1+/- 1 (Modern)

3. BS- 5113, S- 5174

⁹⁶ Note for Radiocarbon dates: Calibration ages and ranges are rounded to the nearest year which may be too precise in many instances. Users are advised to round results to the nearest 10 years for samples with standard deviation in the radiocarbon age greater than 50 years.

WKA-18/3, Wood, AAA pretreatment,

Radiocarbon Age BP 1+/- 1 (Modern)

4. Code: BS- 5114, S- 5175

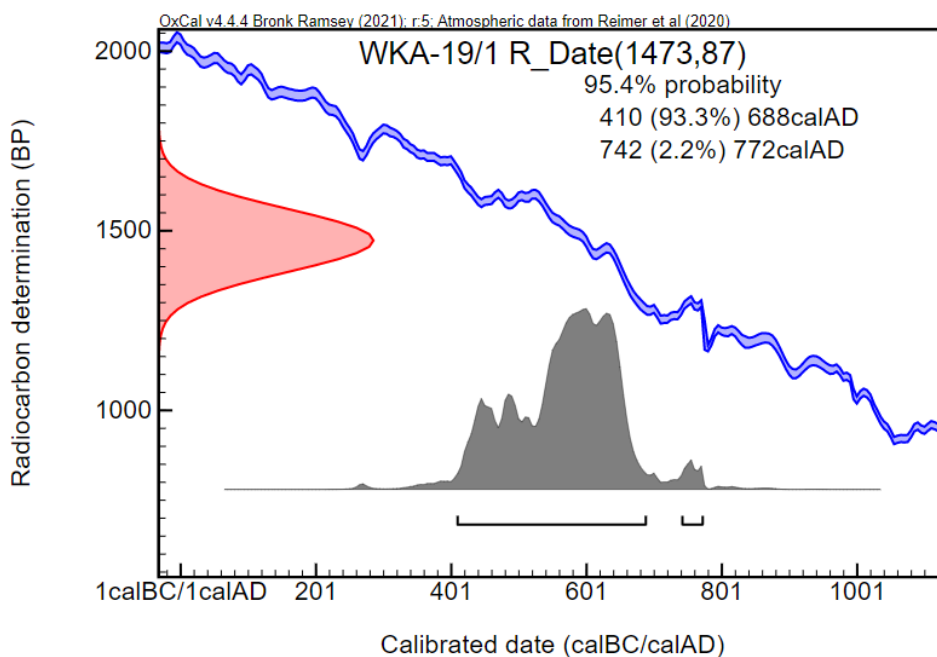
WKA-19/4, Wood, AAA pretreatment, vi/vf= 0.4750

Radiocarbon Age BP 1+/- 1 (Modern)

5. 5115, S- 5176

WKA-19/5, Charcoal, AAA pretreatment, vi/vf= 0.4186

Radiocarbon Age BP 1+/- 1 (Modern)



* BS- 5111, S- 5172: Dates calibrated using OxCalv.4.4

Oral history of *Mhenkiton* (Enemy head-tree) at Wokha village

Mhenkiton is a large ficus tree found at the centre of every Lotha village. Tradition informs that while establishing a village, it is mandatory to plant a specific ficus tree (*Ficus sycomorus*) tree in the village. Wokha village oral source reveals that the word *Mhenki* means 'enemy head' and *ton* means to 'fix', hence the term *Mhenkiton*. The main purpose of planting this tree was to 'hang the decapitated heads of the enemies'. There was a practice that *kikyuu* (coral) tree was planted first, followed by ficus tree (*tsongontong*) in the later years⁹⁷. It was a sacred and ceremonial tree for them. Women were not allowed to go near

⁹⁷ Interview with Yanpan Murry, 75 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

the tree during the ritual of head hanging. The falling of *mhenkiton* branch whatsoever was a bad omen. There was a belief that a person might die towards the direction where the storm caused the branch to fall. It was said that fruiting is irregular and so does not bear fruits in every direction of the branches in a year. The direction where the *mhenkiton* branch bears fruits was an omen of good harvest for the people dwelled in that direction. As per the oral tradition of Wokha village, where in during the village remaking ceremony called ‘*yantssocholan*’ or ‘*oyantsoa genna*’, the *mhenkiton* remained fenced and will not be opened unless an enemy head is brought to the village. The same oral account was narrated in Elumyo village where a coral tree was planted initially and *tsongontong* was planted later. It is said that at one point of time, the coral tree branches was not enough to hang all the hunted heads⁹⁸. Nyimkhomo Murry⁹⁹, who resides much close to the tree remarks, “I have not seen or heard that the *mhenkiton* as we see today has completely withered; our ancestor’s planted *kikyutong* (coral tree) before the standing *mhenkiton* was planted”.

Generally, the tree was planted a little distance from the habitation in a strategic location. The hunted enemy heads were brought to the village *Chumpho* and taken to *Mhenkiton* after performing several rites called *ramvü*. Every man who had taken a head or jabbed his spear into one, had to pour a little “*madhu*” on the ground and throw away a little rice before he could eat or drink anything. This was an offering to the spirits of the slain enemies. It was believed that if this was not done the “*madhuchunga*” and food would be knocked out of his hand by a blow from an invisible spirit (Op.cit., Mills, 1922, p. 108). The enemy heads are then taken to *mhenkiton* to be either fixed or hung about 6 (six) feet from the ground¹⁰⁰. The man who had taken the most number of heads in the village push a sharp piece of wood through each head from one ear to the other, so that a piece of wood about six inches long is stuck to each side of the heads. A man’s head was ornamented with the big cotton wool ear pads which are worn with full dancing dress. A long bamboo with a cane string ornamented with cane leaves on its end was leant against the branches of *mingetung*, and the head tied by the piece of wood running through it to the string, so that it hung about six feet from the ground (Ibid., p. 108).

⁹⁸ Interview with Yisansao Tsanlao, 73 Years, Elumyo Village, 23/03/2019.

⁹⁹ Interview with Nyimkhomo Murry, 84 years, Wokha Village, 04/11/2020.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Benrio Odyuo, 79 Years, Phiro Village, 30/9/2020.

Site description

The Wokha village *Mhenkiton* is located in the heart of Wokha Village, C-khel (*Hayili*) at an elevation of 1490 m asl. The tree is properly maintained by the village authority with security fencing and retaining wall. The vicinity of the site is disrupted by the construction of the Village Council Court and the Youth Office very close to the tree (Figure 3.31). The height of the tree is 53 feet and the upper branches is found withering owing to its age while some of the branches have decayed. The branch spread of the tree is 55.5 feet approx. The total stem circumference of the excavated part of the trunk at is 25 feet and the branches have sprouted from 6.9 feet from the ground level with the total trunk circumference of 29.7 feet (Figure 3.32 Profile view). The central portion of the stem is rotten along with its middle top branch (Figure 3.33). It was found that several branches had apparently fallen down earlier.

Test excavation

Permission was taken from the Wokha Village Council authority (Annexure 3.1) for the archaeological excavation and several site surveys has done. Proper measurement of the height and branch spread with the help the local community. The circumference of the stem was also measured from the breast level (4.4 ft) from the ground and another measurement was done between 4.4 ft and 6.6 ft height from the ground level, the excavation area being 2.4' x 18' (2.4 ft x 18 inch). The measurement was properly documented in the graph. The decayed wood was visible with the measurement of 2.4 feet x 18 inches. There was a vacuum portion between 0 cm to 16 cm (Figure 3.34) and therefore, excavation was commenced from 17 cm to 21 cm.

Trowel Pit -1: 17-21cm

Excavation using hand trowel of 5cm depth from 17-21 cm (T-1) was done properly as the first phase with iron chisels, hammer and knife to extract the rotten wood.

Trowel Pit -2: 22-26 cm

The second excavation of another 5cm depth from 22-26 cm (T-2) trowelling was done and systematically extracted the rotten wood (Fig. No.3.35). A decayed wood was systematically recovered and labelled for further examination (Figure 3.36).

Radiocarbon Dates

Sample of both the layer of decayed wood were labelled as MT-2020/1 (wood sample of 22- 26 cm depth) and MT-2020/2 (wood sample of 17 -21 cm depth) and sent to the Birbal Sahni Institute of

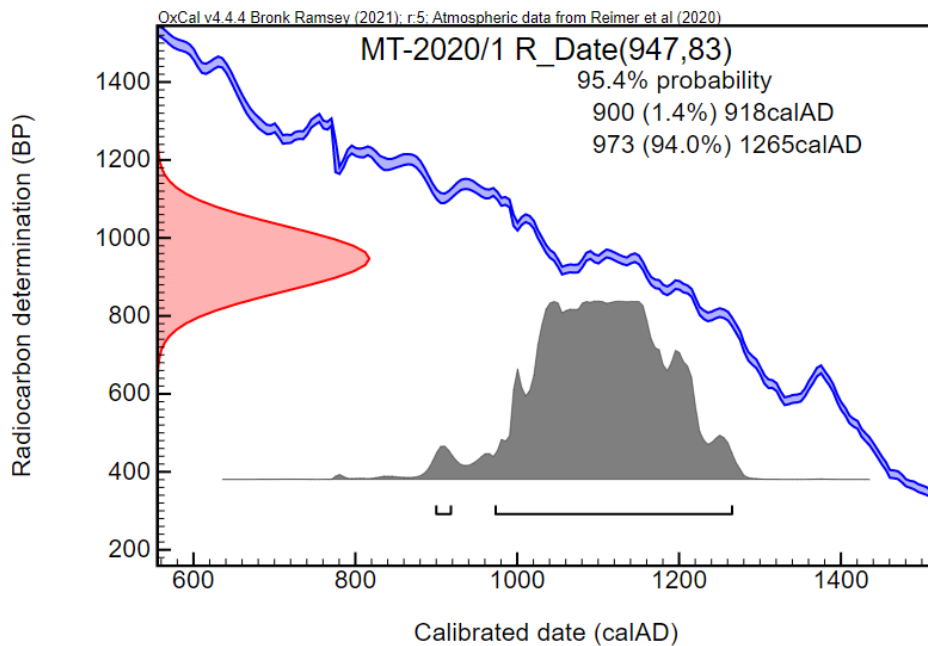
Palaeosciences (BSIP), Lucknow, U.P. for radiocarbon age determination. The following are the dating results:

1. BS-5116, S-5178

MT-2020/1, Wood, AAA pretreatment, $v_i/v_f=0.5047$

Radiocarbon age BP 947 \pm 83

95.4% probability: 900-1265calAD



*Dates calibrated using OxCalv. 4.4

2. BS-5117, S-5179

MT-2020/2, Wood, AAA pretreatment, $v_i/v_f=0.4501$

Radiocarbon age BP 3595 \pm 108 (Modern)

Trial excavation of Longsio: ancestral Lotha village

Longsio is located between Longsa village and Pongitong village, under Wokha District with an elevation of 1189 m amsl. According to oral history of Wokha village, the ancestors lived in Honoyonton (near Terogvunyu), Jemung (Tseminyu), Kisunyo (Nsungyu), Longsio, and migrated to present Wokha village. Longsio was established before the formation of Longsa village¹⁰¹. Wokha village was established by a group of people from Longsio, an abandoned village¹⁰². The founding member of Wokha village lived in Longsio and established a village

¹⁰¹ Interview with Orenimo Ezung, 82 years, Longsa village, 16/09/2020.

¹⁰² Interview with Yanpothung Ezung, 73 years, Longsa village, 16/09/2020.

called Wokha¹⁰³. Several elders of Wokha village narrated the same account. A folksong (Kithan,1999), *Ojü Ntsencho* (scarcity of water) tells that Longsio was deformed owing to scarcity of water and a place called Wokha was located with a good water source to establish a village.

Ojü Ntsencho (scarcity of water)

Longsio lisha lo vanchiing Jü ntseni khi

Yamo loro mmhomvü pyontssov la nli

Yamo khyingro mmhomo pyontsov la nli

Yinsüing oju yena joroyi, Longsio lilo yentheyia

Jilona yamo loro' na pyontssota

Jilona yamo khyingro na pyontssota

Longsio lo jaliro na, yinsüing ojü yantava owo

Wokha lisha mmhomvü yanchecho sayi (Kithan, 1999, p. 39).

The song tells that there was acute shortage of water to continue to live in Longsio village. Water was so scarce to even bathe the young boys and girls. They struggled to survive by bringing water to the village using slit bamboo pipes from the hill stream. Yearning for water, they set out to find a suitable new village called Wokha.

Basing on the oral account of the abandoned village (Longsio) and having learnt that the site is under the jurisdiction of Longsa village, site survey and further investigation was done on 15th September 2020 with elders from Longsa village, Wokha village, and Pongidong village (Figure 3.37). On preliminary investigation of the site, 3 (three) monoliths were located (Figure 3.38) and trial pit was laid measuring 12x 12 inch and unearthed charcoal and potsherd which are indicative of the presence of a human habitation site in the past. The entire area was verified and identified as an ideal site for excavation. After seeking consent from the land owners, a trial excavation was initiated.

¹⁰³ Interview with Pichamo Erui, 83, years, Wokha Village, 04/10/2020.

Site description

The site is a gentle slope which was found to be an ideal habitation site and strategically located from the defence point of view. There are steep gorges towards Sankitong and Shaki village facing Rengma area (Southwest). The soil condition is found to be fertile for cultivation unlike other abandoned Naga villages. Longsa, Humtso, Elumyo, Wokha Village (Fig. No.3.39), Mount Tiyi, Wokha town, Vankhosung, Phiro, Shaki, Sankitong, and a few Rengma villages can all be viewed from the spot. Looking at the topography of the abandoned site, it is convincing to say that the ancestors of Longsio village did not come from Longchum (Tiyi Longchum). The inhabitants of Pongidong village have purchased several plots of land from Longsa villagers. The site is found to be a Jhum cultivation area of Longsa village. Several plots of land have been purchased by Pongidong villagers.

Trial excavation of Longsio site

Trench-1: A trench size of 3x1m was excavated at a place called *Longsio Tongti* (Hillock) towards the western direction at the edge of the hill (Figure 3.40). The habitation area is covered with bushes and several plants. The excavation has the following layers:

Layer 1: Composed of semi-compact soil of dark brown with roots, twigs and some rectangular stones particles. Removal of the humus done at 0-16 cm from the datum point but no artefact was found (Figure 3.41).

Layer 2: Semi compact soil was evident with light brown soil. Roots and angular stone particles continue. No findings except 4 (four) pieces of potsherds towards the western part. Natural deposit was exposed at a depth of 16- 21 cm (Figure 3.42).

Layer 3: Semi compact soil continued but with wet light Brown soil. It composed flat and angular stones particles. A posthole was exposed towards western the part of the trench and the depth was 26 cm from the datum point. The size of the posthole is measured 85 x 60 cm (Figure 3.43). Since in all the parts of the trench the natural soil was exposed and no findings recovered the trench was closed (Figure 3.44). The stratigraphic profile is shown in Figure 3.45.

Trench-2: Excavation advanced to Trench -2 (Figure 3.46) within the vicinity of Trench-1 few yards from monolith (LLZ-1) and sitting platform (Figure 3.47) facing towards the north –west at the base of a hillock. The cultural layers are given as follows:

Layer 1: The layer is a mixture of semi compact and wet soil of dark brown in colour. It is composed of roots, twigs and stone particles. Cleared humus of 0-20 cm with a thick layer but there were no findings (Figure 3.48).

Layer 2: Light brown semi compact soil with roots and angular stones particles continue. A piece of potsherd with design was found and followed by few more pottery. The southern part was exposed to natural soil with lot 2 and 3 taken together (Figure 3.49).

An erected spherical top stone portion familiar to small luck stone was exposed towards the west corner. On exposing the flat stone, it contained a groove mark possibly used as a machete sharpening stone. The village elders confirmed that it is a cotton ginning stone tool (Figure 3.50). The diameter of the cotton ginning stone hole is 22x 25 cm with a depth of 64 cm from the datum point (Figure 3.51). The size of the cotton ginning stone is 20.5 length x 8 cm breath x 3 cm thick (Figure 3.52). Charcoal sample was collected from the stone tool's hole (Figure 3.53). The stratigraphic profile of Trench 2 is given under Figure 3.54.

The monoliths are found scattered covering a large area which suggests that it was a large village in ancient times. An old man present in the field during excavation informed that all the 11 (eleven) megaliths were erected by individual ancestors commemorating the feast of merit¹⁰⁴. Ethnographic observation also suggests that all the 11 (eleven) monoliths (Figure 3.55: LLZ 1-11) are menhirs locally known as *Longzüü*. It was found that 4 (four) monoliths (LLZ-1, LLZ-4, LLZ-5, LLZ-10) are intact and upright without any disturbances, 3 (three) monoliths (LLZ-2, LLZ6, LLZ-11) are disturbed while 4 (four) monoliths (LLZ-3, LLZ-7, LLZ-8, LLZ-9) are slightly disturbed. The disturbance is caused by the cycle of jhum cultivation in the area. According to Mhao Lotha¹⁰⁵ (former MLA, Nagaland Legislative Assembly) there was an old foot passage in the middle of the excavation site and the approach road was constructed in the same passage during his tenure as Local MLA. This was ascertained by the fact that all the menhirs were found adjacent to the approach road in a regular stretch. This evidence suggests that the abandoned village of Longsio was a planned village. They reserved a space for a passage in the middle of the village and constructed house adjoining the passage (path) in a regular pattern facing each other. This clearly shows that the menhir was erected in front of the individual house. The same path was connected to

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Ramvüshumo Humtsoe, 72 Years, Pongidong village, 10/11/2020.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Mhao Lotha, 82 Years, Wokha (Longsa Village), 22/10/2021.

either leading to their field or friendly villages. Mills (1922) has rightly observed that, a village usually consists of one long street with a line of houses on each side facing inwards. In the middle of the street are the “genna” stones standing opposite the houses of their owners (Op.cit., p. 23). The types of megalithic (monolith) monuments found at Longsio are referred in the following (Table 3.1):

Table No. 3.1 Types of megalithic (monolith) monuments found in Longsio

Sl.No.	Local name	Classified type	Functional type
1.	<i>Longzii</i>	Menhir	Memorial stone for organising feast of merit (<i>osho-yu</i>)
2.	<i>Longpyak</i> <i>khokthephen</i>	Raised platform	Sitting place which serves for public meeting

Radiocarbon date

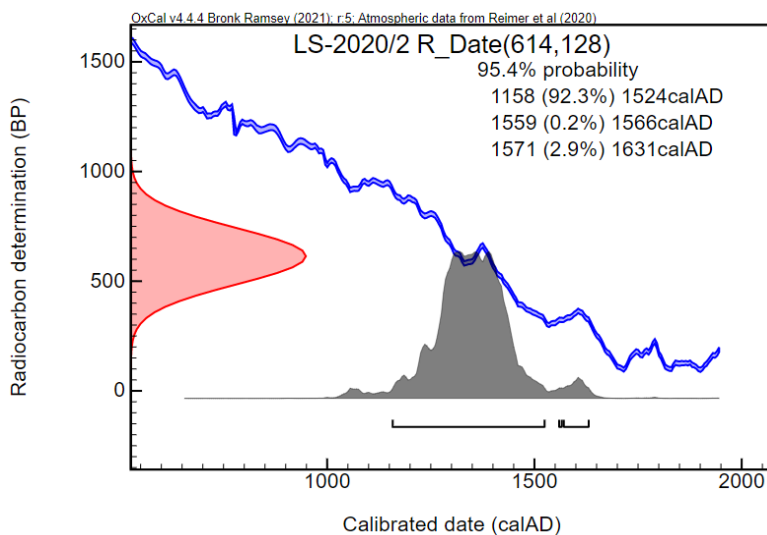
A charcoal sample which was collected from the hole of the cotton ginning stone tool was labelled as LS-2020/1 and sent to BSIP, Lucknow, for age determination. The following is the dating result of the site:

BS-5118, S-5180

LS-2020/2, Charcoal, AAA pretreatment, pi/ pf=0.3986

Radiocarbon age BP 614 +/- 128

95.4% probability: 1158-1631 calAD



Excavation of Koro Old village *Mhenkiton*

Mhenkiton at Koro Old village is located at lower range of Wokha district, Nagaland. According to oral tradition of the Lothas, Koro Old is one of the oldest villages in Wokha District. The ancestors migrated from Honohoyonton, an abandoned Lotha village near the present Rengma village of Terogvünyu to establish a village called Koro¹⁰⁶. One of the founding member of the village, named, Thungbemo Ovung, an assistant of Village Chief (*Pvüti Yingae*) shared close relation with the Ahom Raja, Shupatpha alias Gadadhar Sima probably in the later part of 13th Century AD. The Ahom Raja recognised Thungbemo Ovung as a powerful person and so became good friends. Raja Gadadhar died earlier than Thungbemo Ovung. On hearing the news of the death of Thungbemo, the Rani (Gadadhar's wife) sent the royal guard with numerous gifts of jewellery, drum and vessels etc., for the funeral rite. These gifts were buried along with the body of Late Thungbemo. A *ficus* tree, called *onitong* was planted over his grave and the tree has become a *mhenkiton*¹⁰⁷. The tree is found tottering to almost extinction (Figure 3.56). Proper identification of the tree was done with the help of the village elders (Figure 3.57).

Test Excavation of Koro Old *Mhenkiton*

The pith (inner wood part of the tree trunk) is found decayed and thus led the excavator to extract a piece of decayed wood by excavating the trunk. Upon taking permission from Koro Old Village Council authority and the Church, preparation for the excavation was impulsively done during the field visit to collect oral information about the village on 13th November 2020. Decomposed wood of the tree was found undisturbed and thus collected by troweling at the breast height (about 4.4 ft from the ground) of the tree. The collected sample was wrapped by an organic dried banana leaves for further scientific examination since the aim was to determine the age of the tree. The profile view of the tree excavation is shown in Figure 3.58.

Radiocarbon date

A decayed wood sample of *mhenkiton* was collected and labelled as KR-2020/1 and sent to the laboratory for age determination of the tree. The result is given as follow:

BS-5119, S-5181

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Tsumongo Ovung, 74 Years, Wokha (Hanku Village), 3/10/2020.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Mhabemo Tsanglao, 73 Years, Koro Old village, 14/11/2020.

KR-2020/1, Wood, AAA pretreatment

Radiocarbon Age BP 1+-1 (Modern)

Pottery

Wokha Village Chumpho site (WKA – 18)

Altogether, 71 (seventy one) number of sherds was recovered from the TR -1 at *Chumpho* locality and 8 (eight) sherds from Longsio locality (Table 3.2). All the sherds were handmade. Potteries were recovered mostly around the smaller postholes and inside the bigger postholes which consist 85 % of body parts and 15 % of rim and neck portion. Also 30 % of the sherds were found to be in weathered condition. Colour of the pottery was determined using a Munsell Colour Chart.

TR - 1

Lot -1(posthole-1) Depth: 70 cm

5 (five) plain body sherds were recovered. The color varies from very dark grey (5YR 3/1) to reddish brown (5YR 6/4) with thickness of 7 mm.

Lot – 3 / Depth: 25 cm

6 (six) body sherds with soot stain and two rims devoid of any designs were recovered. The colors consist of light reddish brown (5YR 6/4), pink (5YR 7/4), yellowish red (5YR 6/4) and reddish brown (5YR 4/3) with thickness from 8 – 10 mm.

Lot – 4 / Depth: 23 cm

Out of the total 17 (seventeen) sherds recovered, 15 (fifteen) sherds are of plain body sherds with colors ranging from light reddish brown (six)(5YR 6/4), reddish grey (five) (2.5 YR 5/1), red (two) (2.5YR 5/6), light red (one) (10 YR 6/6), reddish brown (one) (5YR 5/3) and the two sherds are of grey color (5 YR 6/1) neck devoid of designs. The thickness of the sherds varies from 6mm – 10 mm. 8 (eight) sherds have soot stain on the exterior surface. The fabric of the assemblage is coarse.

Lot – 5 / Depth: 40 cm

Contrary to the previous lot, the sherds collected from this lot are lesser. A total of 4 (four) sherds were recovered out of which 2 (two) sherds were of body and two neck sherds. The

color of all the sherds is of grey (5YR 6/1) with thickness varying from 6 – 7 mm. The exterior surface has coarse fabric with soot stain.

Lot – 6 / Depth: 47 cm

This lot has the highest number (29) of potsherds at the depth of 47 cm, out of which 8 (eight) sherds were recovered from posthole No. 16 at the depth of 58 cm. All the sherds are of coarse fabric which consists of sixteen plain body sherds, nine rims sherds and four neck sherds. The colours consist of light reddish brown (seven), grey (six), light brown (five), pinkish grey (four), pink (three), light brownish grey (two) and reddish brown (two). The thickness ranges from 6 mm – 11 mm with soot stain on the exterior surface of 18 (eighteen) sherds.

Lot – 7 / Depth: 110 cm

A total of 10 (ten) sherds were recovered from this lot consisting only of coarse body sherds devoid of any designs at the depth of 110 cm from the surface. The colour consist of two light reddish brown (6 YR 6/4), three pinkish grey (5 YR 7/2) and five black (5 YR 2.4/1). The thickness ranges from 8 mm – 10 mm and all the sherds have soot stain. Some of the rim and neck image of sherds is given in Plate No. 3.59.

Longsio (LS – 2020)

TR – 1/Layer -2/ Depth: 26 cm

4 (four) sherds were recovered from this layer out of which two body sherds have paddle mat impression of light red in color (10YR 6/60) with sandy fabric and two coarse body sherds of light red in color (10YR 6/6) which are slightly weathered on the surface. Thickness ranges from 5 mm-10 mm.

TR – 2/Layer – 2 / Depth: 46 cm

1 (one) body sherds of paddle mat impression of reddish brown in color (2.5 YR 5/4) with sandy fabric and three coarse plain body of pinkish grey in color (5YR 6/2) were recovered from this layer. The thickness ranges from 7 mm – 10 mm (Figure 3.60).

The sherds of paddle mat impression of both trench-1 and trench-2 are given in Figure 3.58, and Rim forms of *Chumpho* Locality in Figure 3.61 and Rim forms of *Chumpho* and decorated sherds from Longsio Locality in Figure 3.62.

Reconstruction of Traditional *Chumpho*

Chumpho was reconstructed using oral sources, eyewitness accounts, and archaeological evidence from a previous trial excavation of the ancestral site at *B-Khel (Chumphopvü yankho)* at the centre of village. According to eyewitness account, the year 1964 was the last to rebuild the community's *Chumpho* at the ancestral *Chumpho* site¹⁰⁸. The Wokha Village Council approved and sponsored the reconstruction, which the village Heritage Committee carried out the construction till completion. It was a challenging task as it involved commitment and sincerity since the legacy of a distant past has eroded to modern generation owing to modernization and almost the traditional domestic and community architecture has vanished. Dutta and Ao (2017), observed that, “For revival of the traditional domestic architecture, it therefore, needs a careful study to explore its historical science and merit, which has sustained the indigenous practices developed in the region” Dutta and Ao (2017, p. xii). The construction materials which have been used traditionally over the years for *Chumpho* construction has been collected from Wokha village Reserved forest. Roofing material such as *Lishü* (thatch) and *oko* were collected from Yikhum village and Elumyo village since it has been told that durability of the thatch grown in higher altitude those found in Wokha village area is low. Vasa (2017) reported, “The traditional house types in Nagaland are built of local materials and designed to meet the needs of the local people” (Vasa, 2017, p. 21). The Lotha *Chumpho* architectural design and usage is different from domestic dwelling house. Mepusangba (2017) observed, “Cultural identity of a community is known from the genre of architecture it evolves. The geo-political conditions, the availability of raw material, the climatic condition, and livelihood generate the traditional architecture of a community” (Mepusangba 2017, p. 29). The reconstruction of *Chumpho* represents the traditional cultural practices of the Lotha community of bygone era. Trivedi (2017) observes, “Culture also has a great influence on the appearance of vernacular buildings, as occupants often decorate buildings in accordance with local customs and beliefs” (Trivedi 2017, p. 6). Several ritual practices were involved while preparing the raw materials as well as while erecting a *Chumpho* kingpost. Devi (2017) maintained, “In the construction of a typical Meitei house, the selection of the *jatra* (king post) and its installation is one of the most important task not to be treated lightly....the erection of the kingpost is generally termed “*jatra hunba*” and are made after performing due rituals and offering (Devi, 2017, pp. 133-134).

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 73 years, Wokha Village, 10/12/2018.

The following are the basic elements for construction that were required jungle-based materials according to oral tradition:

1. *Humtsen/ Tsenpvü* (front kingpost)
2. *Kotsen* (rear kingpost)
3. *Tsenro* (front and rear smaller posts)
4. *Mhonkisüng* (Rooftree/wooden ridgepole of a roof)
5. *Kokiüng/ Shanka* (house beam)
6. *Nsenro* (*litsea*) pole for front and back curve roof
7. *Tsintsan* (bamboo- *Bambusa tulda roxb*) for roof structure
8. *Avüiti* (large bamboo- *Bambusa balcooa Roxb*) for side post
9. *Nkyip* (small bamboo- *Chimono bambusa nagalandeana*)
10. *Lishü* (thatch- *Imperata cylindrica*)
11. *Oko* (wild roofing leaves- *Levistonina assamica*)
12. Tying bark/ string: a. *Erunhyan* (*sterculia orientalis*)
b. *Nhyanran* (*tremna orientalis*),
c. *Orü* (Cane-*myrialepsis*) d. *Omvü* (bamboo tying string- made of semi tender shoot of *Vepvü- Bambusa tulda Roxb*).

A group of elders identified a tree called *Mevü/ melesi* (*Phoebe goalparensis*), at the Reserve Forest of Wokha village (Figure 3.63) and felled the tree on November 23, 2020 for the front and rear kingpost (*Humtsen* and *Kotsen*) and hauled it on November 30, 2020 with the help of the community (Figure 3.64). A local craftman carved important *Rhyujüng* (hornbill) and *Tsiro kvüri* (mithun head) motifs, which were carried to the building site on January 5, 2021, to kick start the project. In the past, installing the kingpost (*Humtsen*) required rituals in which the village chief drank rice beer (*suko*) and dusted it over the posthole before laying it as a sign of warding off an evil spirit.

Before carving, a tree trunk intended for the kingpost is known as *Humtsen*, and after carving, it is known as *Tsenpvü* and erected at the *Chumpho* (Figure 3.65a, Figure 3.65b & Figure 3.65c). The initial phase was to erect *Humtsen* and *Kotsen* at a distance of 20 feet once the construction location and raw materials had been prepared for the final reconstruction at the ancestral morung site (excavated site) (Figure 3.66). The roof-tree (*mhonkisüing*) of 29 feet long, which is slightly low in the middle and curves up horizontally linking the highest point of *Humtsen* and *kotsen* was concurrently fixed, and simultaneously erected the side posts according to the floor plan. The roof-tree was connected by a bamboo root in both the ends to carve a hornbill head facing upward which is called *kopioro* or *kokiario* and therefore the height from ground level to the front roof-tree is 14 feet and 13 feet at the rear. The elevation of *Humtsen* is 12 feet high and *Kotsen* is 11 feet high. The front and rear smaller carved post (*Tsenro*) numbering 10 (5 for the front and 5 for the rear) were erected (Figure 3.67a and Figure 3.67b). *Shanka* and *Koküing* are two different types of beams: *Shanka* is a horizontal beam supporting the post that is 21 feet long and 7.3 feet tall, and *Koküing* is a breadth beam that is 10 feet long and 7.3 feet high. The *Chumpho's* overall length (thatch end to end) is 38 feet, and its breadth is 14 feet (Thatch end to end).

The roof structure was made of strong bamboo (*Bambusa tulda roxb*) named *Tsintsan* in local language, side posts were made of large bamboo (*Bambusa balcooa roxb*) called *Avüiti* in local name, and the wall was made of smaller bamboo (*Chimono bambusa nagalandeana*) called *nkyip*. According to Wokha village's oral history, the *Chumpho* wall used to be formed of knitted bamboo called *okyim*, but as the adversaries came and pierced the wall with spears, the forefathers switched to the *nkyip* wall. The roof of the *Chumpho* is made up of *lishü* (*imperata cylindrica*) and *oko* (*Levistonia assamica*). It has a typical *rafub* or *ngherpüing fika* roof at the front and rear supported by the carved smaller post called *tsenro*. *Rafub's* architecture is made of a tempered tree called *nsenro* (*Litsea*), which can bend into a semicircle shape. Warming bamboo over an open fire is a traditional method for bending and curling it. At the *kopioro* and the border of the thatch roof, tinkling ornaments made of reed-stem called *lijü* (*arundo donax*) were fastened.

There are 2 (two) sleeping cubicles (*mijen*) enclosed together, each measuring 6 x 10 feet and containing 2 (two) bamboo beds with a height of 2½, and a hearth in the middle. It has a door at the entry, with a 3 ft corridor in the middle flowing through the hearth. According to oral tradition, there were approximately 6 to 8 sleeping cubicles in the past without a window, and the *Chumpho* lads slept in wooden planks fixed in a beam to protect them from

enemy attack at night. A traditional metric system was used to measure things in the past. Each *mijen* was 4 x 6 *khejü* in size (elbow length-from posterior band to middle finger). In the contemporary metric system, one *khejü* equals to 1½ ft. As a result, it is safe to conclude that single *mijen* used to be roughly 6 ft by 9 ft in size approx. During a raid, the attackers (enemy) breaks in and pierce the roof with spears even while the *Chumpho* boys were sleeping in wooden plank fixed in the beam¹⁰⁹. A wooden water pot (*jüpvü*) and bamboo jar (*Jüthi*) are maintained at *Chumpho's* entrance porch for the commander (*Chumphoran*) to swiftly wash his face, hands and feet. When enemies arrive or wild animals attack cattle and fowls, *otssi* (bamboo spike) and *milon* (bamboo torch) are kept in hand as emergency kits. Firewood and a water-filled bamboo container would be brought by the *thekhoren* (newly recruited members). The whole structural description is given in Figure 3.68.

The full reconstruction took seven days, from 5th to the 12th January 2021, with the assistance of experienced labour drawn from the village's traditional house-building knowledge following the technical Floor Plan given in Figure 3. 69. Because few of them have witnessed a *Chumpho* construction before, it had a unique and original appearance. It was once considered forbidden for women to participate in the *Chumpho* construction process. Even when dragging the carved kingpost, they choose a different route (*jükhalan*) to avoid the common crossing, which the forefathers considered a hallowed ceremonial rite¹¹⁰.

Conclusion

Archaeological survey and excavation helps us to understand the range and type of human social and political organisation that existed at different periods of time. Therefore, this chapter recorded the archaeological excavations carried out at the study area to collaborate oral narratives in order to test the reliability of site locations and socio-cultural developments. The archaeological trial and test excavations carried out at various sites of the study areas were promising, and has provided new information about the villages past activities. It has uncovered the previously unknown history of the village from the depths of time. It is a fact that the Lothas do not have written records of their pre-colonial past, yet the richness in their oral tradition in the form of hearsay, folk tales, folk songs, prayers, dances and eyewitness account made a valuable contribution to establish an oral history that linked its missing history. The *Chumpho* culture, practices and significance were remembered

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 73 years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Pichamo Erui, 83 Years, Wokha Village, 04/10/2020.

vividly by the elders in the village and in continuity, they are the one who passes the story to the present younger generation. The ancestral site, where in *Chumpho* was constructed at first while establishing a village thousands of years ago, is revered and preserved. However, it could not be authenticated until the exploration and archaeological trial excavation was done which brought to light the culture that prevailed when the postholes and other remains were exposed. The unearthing of all the ancestral *Chumpho* postholes in the site was a huge step forward in our understanding of pre-colonial cultural activities and architectural pattern. It was an epoch making event in the history of the Lothas for reconstructing the traditional *Chumpho* integrating archaeology, oral tradition and eyewitness accounts. The exposure of the postholes and other artefacts clearly indicated that the *Chumpho* institution is an integral part of the village formation among the Lothas

The trial excavation of the ancestral site of Longsio (abandoned village) reveals the existence of a large human settlement in the past. Until the present excavation, such account remained a mere folk story. The evidence from the excavation helps in reconstructing the Lotha migration along with their associated history of the Lotha megalithic culture and indirect evidence of cotton cultivation. The test excavation of *Mhenkiton* at Wokha village, thus offer a new impetus to the chronology of the village establishment.

Table 3.2: Potsherds at Wokha Village Chumpho Site (WVC-19) & Longsio Site (LS 20)

Regd.No.	Area of collection	TR-1 Lot. No.	Depth	Colour	Decoration	Thickness	Sherd part	No. of Sherd	Remark
WVC 1/19	Posthole-1	1	70 cm	5 YR 3/1 very dark gray	Plain	7 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 2/19	-do-	1	70 cm	5 YR 3/1 very dark gray	Plain	7 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 3/19	-do-	1	70 cm	5 YR 3/3 Dark reddish brown	Plain	7 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 4/19	(Lot-3)	3	10 cm	5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown	Plain	10 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 5/19	-do-	-do-	10 cm	5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown	Plain	8 mm	Neck & Rim	1	-
WVC 6/19	-do-	-do-	10 cm	5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown	Plain	8 mm	Body	1	-
WVC 7/19	-do-	-do-	10 cm	5 YR 7/4 pink	Plain	8 mm	Rim	1	Soot stain
WVC 8/19	-do-	-do-	10 cm	5 YR 7/3 pink	Plain	8 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 9/19	-do-	-do-	10 cm	5 YR 6/4 yellowish red	Plain	10 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 10/19	-do-	-do-	10 cm	5 YR 4/3 reddish brown	Plain	8 mm	Body	1	Sooth stain
WVC 11/19	-do-	-do-	10 cm	5 YR 4/3 reddish brown	Plain	8 mm	Body	1	-
WVC 12/19	Chumpho surface	4	23 cm	5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown	Plain	10 mm	Rim	1	-
WVC 13/19	-do-	-do-	23 cm	5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown	Plain	10 mm	Body	1	-
WVC 14/19	-do-	-do-	23 cm	5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown	Plain	8 mm	Body	1	-

WVC 30/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	40 cm	5 YR 6/1 gray	Plain	7 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 31/19	-do-	Lot 6	-do-	47 cm	5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown	Plain	7 mm	Neck	1	-
WVC 32/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	47 cm	5 YR 6/4 light Reddish brown	Plain	10 mm	Neck	1	-
WVC 33/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	47 cm	5 YR 6/4 light Reddish brown	Plain	10 mm	Rim	1	-
WVC 34/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	47 cm	5 YR 6/4 light Reddish brown	Lining	10 mm	Rim	1	Soot stain
WVC 35/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	47 cm	5 YR 6/4 light Reddish brown	Plain	7 mm	Rim	1	Soot stain
WVC 36/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	47 cm	7.5 YR 6/2 pinkish gray	Plain	9 mm	Rim	1	-
WVC 37/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	47 cm	7.5 YR 6/2 pinkish gray	Plain	10 mm	Neck	1	-
WVC 38/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	47 cm	7.5 YR 6/2 pinkish gray	Plain	9 mm	Body	1	-
WVC 39/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	47 cm	7.5 YR 6/2 pinkish gray	Plain	8.5 mm	Rim	1	-
WVC 40/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	47 cm	5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown	Plain	6.5 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 41/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	47 cm	5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown	Plain	6 mm	Rim	1	Soot stain
WVC 42/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	47 cm	10 YR 5/1 gray	Plain	9 mm	Rim	1	Soot stain
WVC 43/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	47 cm	10 YR 5/1 gray	Plain	10 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 44/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	47 cm	10 YR 5/1 gray	Plain	6 mm	Body	1	Soot stain

WVC 15/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	23 cm	5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown	Plain	8 mm	Body	1	-
WVC 16/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	23 cm	5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown	Plain	8 mm	Body	1	-
WVC 17/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	23 cm	5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown	Plain	8 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 18/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	23 cm	10 R 6/6 light red	Plain	10 mm	Body(towards neck)	1	Soot stain
WVC 19/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	23 cm	2.5 YR 5/6 red	Plain	9 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 20/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	23 cm	2.5 YR 5/6 red	Plain	7 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 21/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	23 cm	2.5 YR 5/1 reddish gray	Plain	9 mm	Body	1	-
WVC 22/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	23 cm	2.5 YR 5/1 reddish gray	Plain	6 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 23/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	23 cm	2.5 YR 5/1 reddish gray	Plain	6 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 24/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	23 cm	2.5 YR 5/1 reddish gray	Plain	7 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 25/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	23 cm	2.5 YR 5/1 reddish gray	Plain	7 mm,	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 26/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	23 cm	5 YR 5/3 reddish brown	Plain	11 mm	Neck	1	-
WVC 27/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	23 cm	5 YR 6/1 gray	Plain	7 mm	Neck	2	Soot stain
WVC 28/19	-do-	-do-	Lot 5	40 cm	5 YR 6/1 gray	Plain	6 mm	Neck	2	Soot stain
WVC 29/19	-do-	-do-	-do-	40 cm	5 YR 6/1 gray	Plain	9 mm	Body	1	Soot stain

WVC 45/19	-do-	-do-	47 cm	10 YR 5/1 gray	Plain	7 mm	Neck	1	Soot stain
WVC 46/19	-do-	-do-	47 cm	10 YR 5/1 gray	Plain	7 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 47/19	-do-	-do-	47 cm	10 YR 5/1 gray	Plain	11 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 48/19	-do-	Posthole No.16	58 cm	10 YR 6/2 light brownish gray	Plain	10 mm	Rim	1	-
WVC 49/19	-do-	-do-	58 cm	10 YR 6/2 light brownish gray	Plain	10.5 mm	Body	1	-
WVC 50/19	-do-	-do-	58 cm	2.5 YR 5/4 reddish brown	Plain	10 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 51/19	-do-	-do-	58 cm	10 YR 4/1 dark gray	Plain	9 mm	Body	1	Soot stain
WVC 52/19	-do-	-do-	58 cm	7.5 YR 6/3 light brown	Plain	7 mm	Rim	1	-
WVC 53/19	-do-	-do-	58 cm	7.5 YR 6/3 light brown	Plain	6 mm	Body	1	-
WVC 54/19	-do-	-do-	58 cm	7.5 YR 7/4 pink	Plain	9 mm	Body	3	Soot stain
WVC 55/19	-do-	-do-	58 cm	7.5 YR 6/4 light brown	Plain	6.5 mm	Body	3	Soot stain
WVC 56/19	-do-	Lot 7	110 cm	6 YR 6/4 light reddish brown	Plain	8 mm	Body	2	Slight soot stain
WVC 57/19	-do-	-do-	110 cm	5 YR 7/2 pinkish gray	Plain	10 mm	Body	3	Slight soot stain
WVC 58/19	-do-	-do-	110 cm	5 YR 2.4/1 black	Plain	8.5 mm	Body	5	Soot stain

Potsherd at Longsio Site (LS-20)

Regd.No.	Area of collection	Layer No.	Depth	Colour	Decoration	Thickness	Sherd part	No. Of Sherd	Remark
LS-1/20	Trench-1	2	26 cm	10R 6/6 light red	Mat	5mm	Body	2	Slightly weathered
LS-2/20	-do-	-do-	26 cm	10R 6/6 light red	Plain	10 cm	Body	1	Rough surface texture
LS-3/20	-do-	-do-	26 cm	5YR 6/2 pinkish gray	Plain	5 cm	Body	1	Weathered
LS-4/20	Trench-2	2	46 cm	2.5YR 5/4 reddish brown	Mat	7 cm	Body	1	Sandy texture
LS-5/20	-do-	-do-	46 cm	5YR 6/2 pinkish gray	Plain	10 cm	Body	3	Slightly weathered

Trial Excavation of Wokha Village *Chumpho* (WKA-18)



Figure 3.1: Structure at *Chumpho* site Figure 3.2: Dismantled structure Figure 3.3: Elders presumption of the *Chumpho* kingpost hole

LEGEND

- Posthole : 33 Nos
- Fireplace/ Hearth : 5 Nos
- Length of Excavation : 41' (Ft.)
- Breath of Excavation : 12' (Ft.)

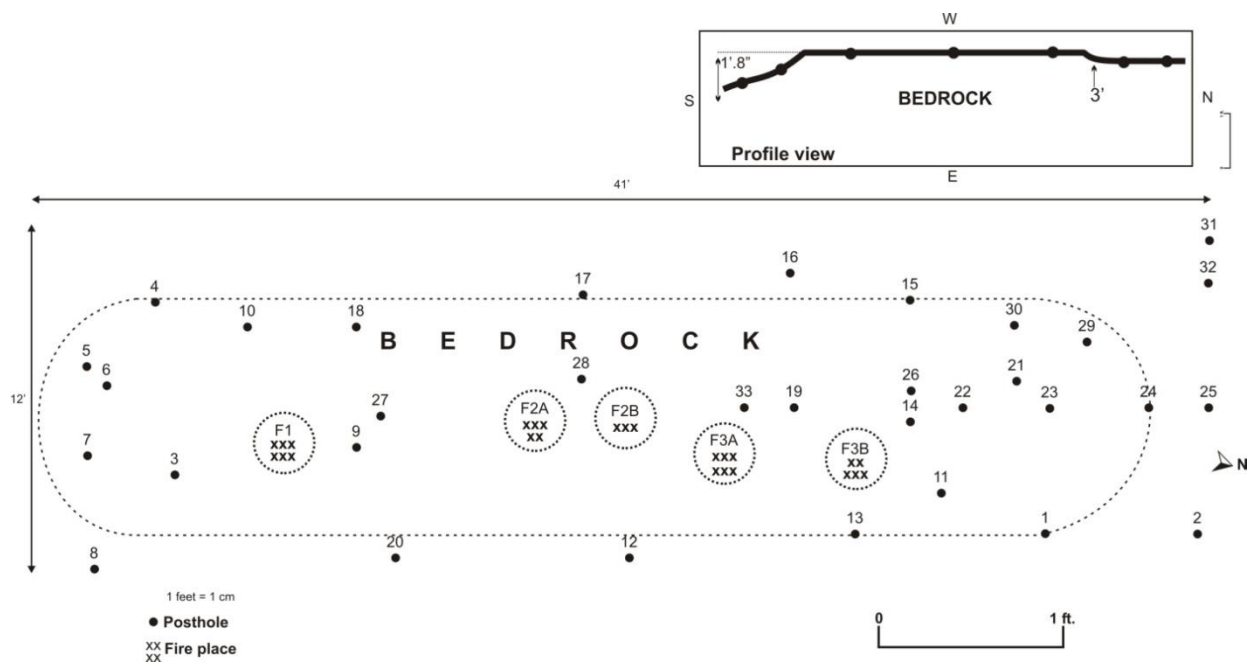


Figure 3.4: Ground plan of *Chumpho* in association with Postholes and Fireplaces/Hearths (WKA-18 & 19, TR-1).



Figure 3.5: WKA-18, TR-1 (Lot.1)



Figure 3.6: TR-1 (10 cm depth)



Figure 3.7: TR-1, Lot.2



Figure 3.8: Posthole -1, TR-1: 30 x 27 cm



Figure 3.9: Decomposed wood remain of Inner kingpost hole-1 (*Humtsen*)



Figure 3.10: Human tooth excavated from TR-1(Lot-2)



Figure 3.11: Bone fragments

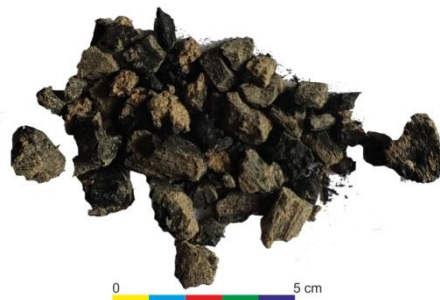


Figure 3.12: Charcoal, Posthole-2



Figure 3.13: Decomposed wood (Posthole 2)



Figure 3.14: Human tooth (Posthole 2)



Figure 3.15a: Rear end of the *Chumpho* site (facing towards SE/A-Khel)



Figure 3.15b: Large posthole exposed (34 x 45 cm)



Figure 3.16a: Preparing for 2nd phase excavation



Figure 3.16b : Concrete floor debris is being removed



Figure 3.17: Hearth/ fireplace-1



Figure 3.18: Rear Kingpost hole (*Kotsen*)



Figure 3.19: Partially exposed portion of the *Chumpho*



Figure 3.20: Pig Jaw (posthole-1)



Figure 3.21: Animal Bone Fragment



Figure 3.22: Bamboo fragment



Figure 3.23: Worked stone tool (SE-EXT-2, Lot-5)



Figure 3.24a: Decomposed wood (posthole-12)



Figure 3.24b: Decomposed wood (posthole-9)

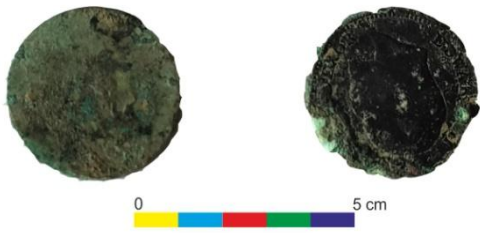


Figure 3. 25: Copper coin of 1 Anna (Lot-6)



Figure 3.26: Decomposed wood (posthole-5)



Figure 3.27: Decomposed wood (Posthole-1 extension)



Figure 3.28: View of the exposed postholes

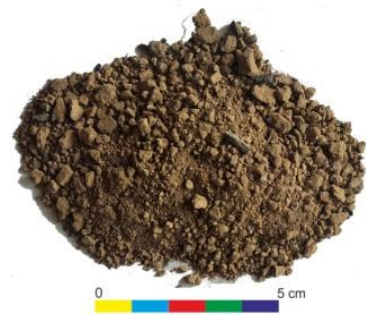


Figure 3.29: Ash sample (Hearth/fireplace feature-3)



Figure 3.30a: Hearth/fireplace features-1



Figure 3.30b: Hearth/fireplace feature-2



Figure 3.30c: Hearth/ fireplace feature-3



Figure 3.30d: Hearth/fireplace features-4

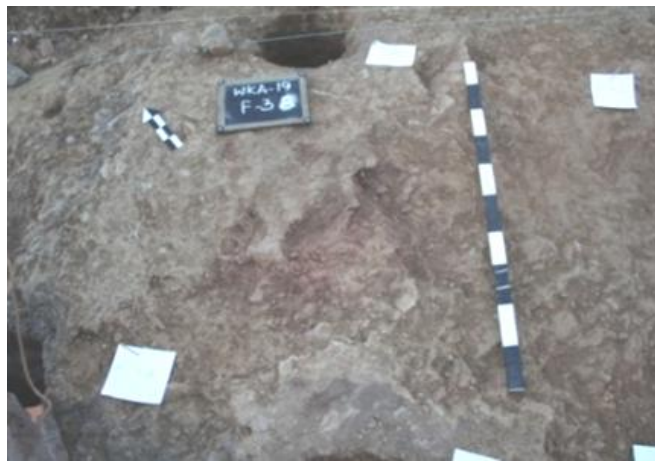


Figure 3.30e: Hearth/ fireplace feature-5

Test Excavation of *Mhenkiton* (Enemy Head-tree), Wokha village (MT-2020)



Figure 3.31: *Mhenkiton* at Wokha village

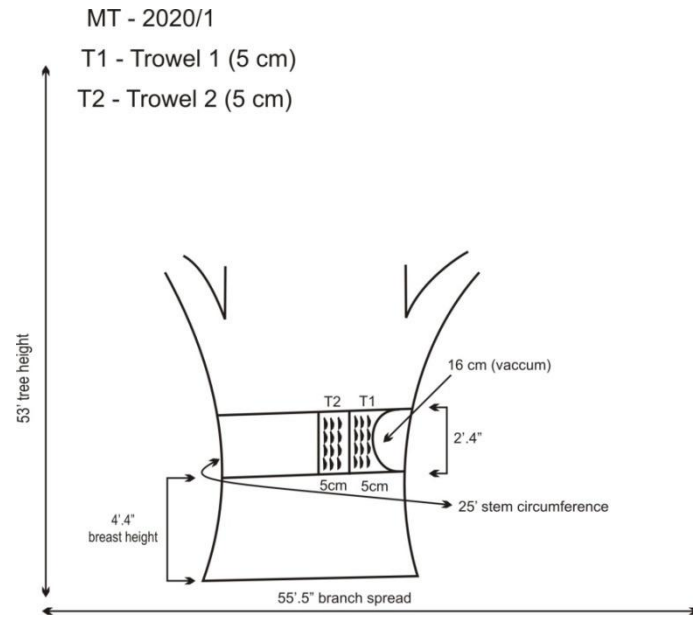


Figure 3.32: Profile view



Figure 3.33: Decomposed portion of the tree



Figure 3.34: Trowelling of first layer (17-21 cm depth)



Figure 3.35: Trowelling of second layer (22 -26 cm depth)

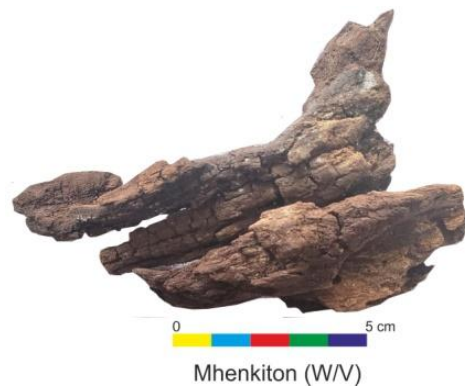


Figure 3.36: Decayed wood sample

Trial Excavation of Longsio (LS-2020)



Figure 3.37: Survey team



Figure 3.38: Identified 3 (three) monoliths



Figure 3.39: View of Wokha Village from Longsio



Figure 3.40: LS 2020 Begin



Figure 3.41: TR-1 Depth 0-16 cm



Figure 3.42: TR-1 Depth 16-21 cm



Figure 3.43: Posthole 85 x 60 cm



Figure 3.44: Posthole at 53 cm depth

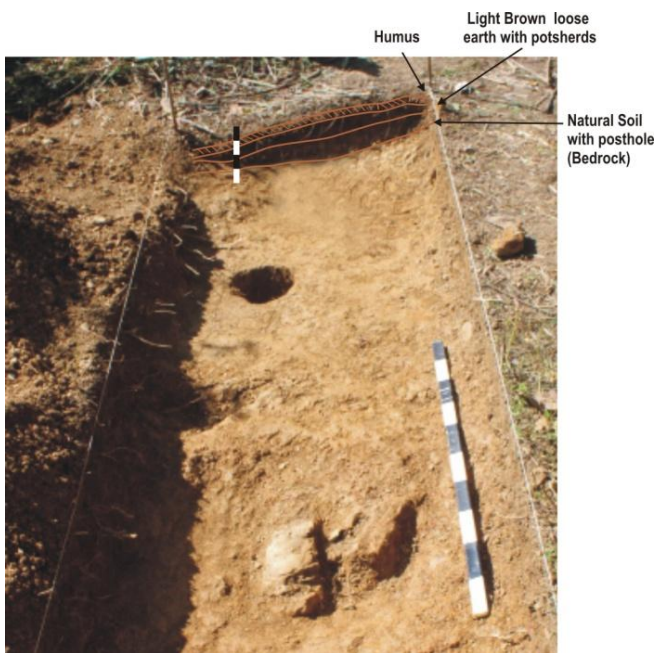


Figure 3.45: Stratigraphic profile of TR-1



Figure 3.46 : TR-2 layout



Figure 3.47: Sitting platform



Figure 3.48: View of trench at Depth 0-20 cm



Figure 3.49: layer 2



Figure 3.50: Exposing the cotton ginning stone



Figure 3.51: Cotton ginning stone hole (22x25 cm)



Figure 3.52: Cotton ginning stone tool

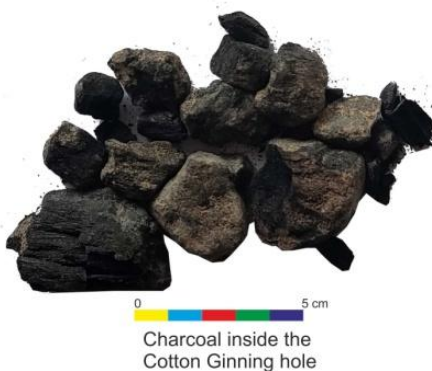


Figure 3.53: Charcoal from cotton ginning stone hole



Figure 3.54: Stratigraphic Profile of TR-2

Figure 3.55: Monoliths at Longsio: LLZ 1 to 11



LLZ-1



LLZ-2



LLZ-3



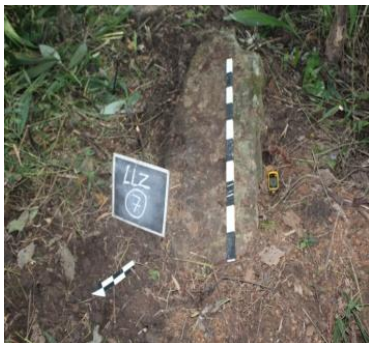
LLZ-4



LLZ-5



LLZ-6



LLZ-7



LLZ-8



LLZ-9



LLZ-10



LLZ-11

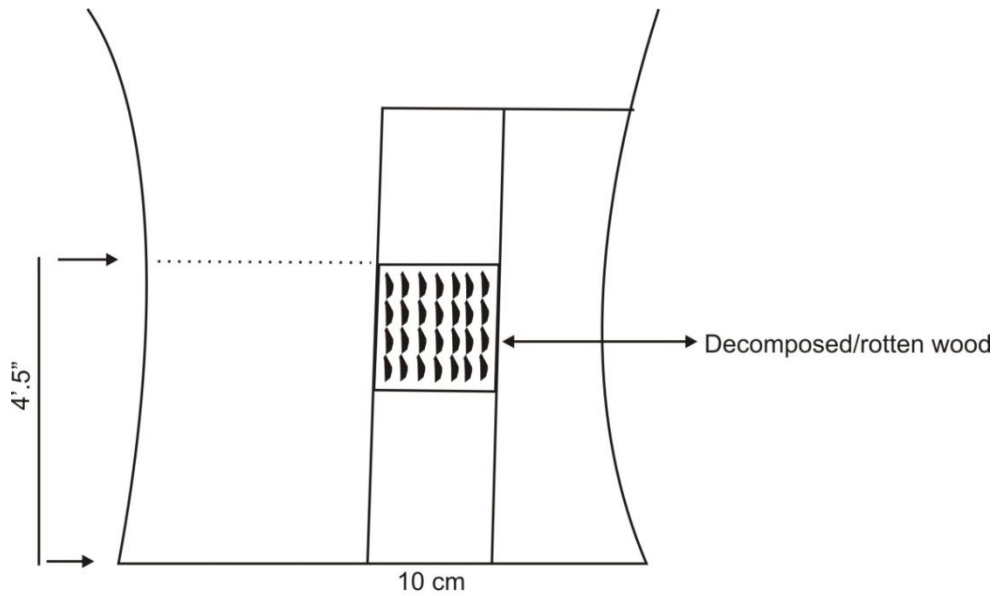
Excavation of *Mhenkiton* at Koro Old village (KR-2020/1)



Figure 3.56: *Mhenkiton* of Koro Old Village



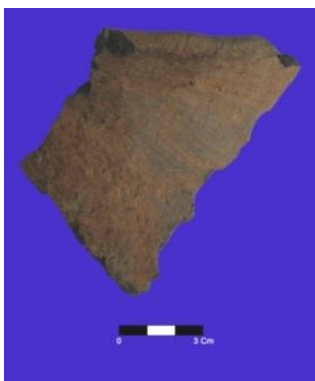
Figure 3.57: Decayed wood of *Mhenkiton*, Koro Old



T- Trowel (10 cm)

Figure 3.58: Profile view of excavation

Pottery from Wokha Village Chumpho (WVC) site (see table 3.2)



Reg. No. WVC/5/19



Reg.No. WVC/7/19



Reg. WVC/3219



Reg. No.WVC/33/19

Reg. No. WVC/34/19

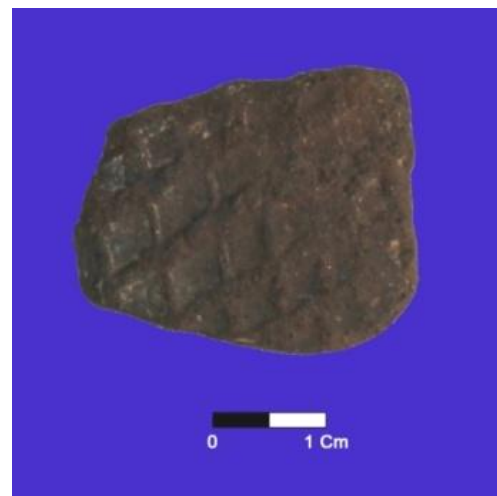
Reg. No. WVC/35/19



Reg. No. WVC/39/19

Reg. WVC/51/19

Figure 3. 59: Rim and Neck sherds of *Chumpho* Locality



Reg. No. LS/1/20

Reg. No. LS/4/20

Figure 3.60: Paddle mat impressed sherds (decorated) from Longsio (LS) site

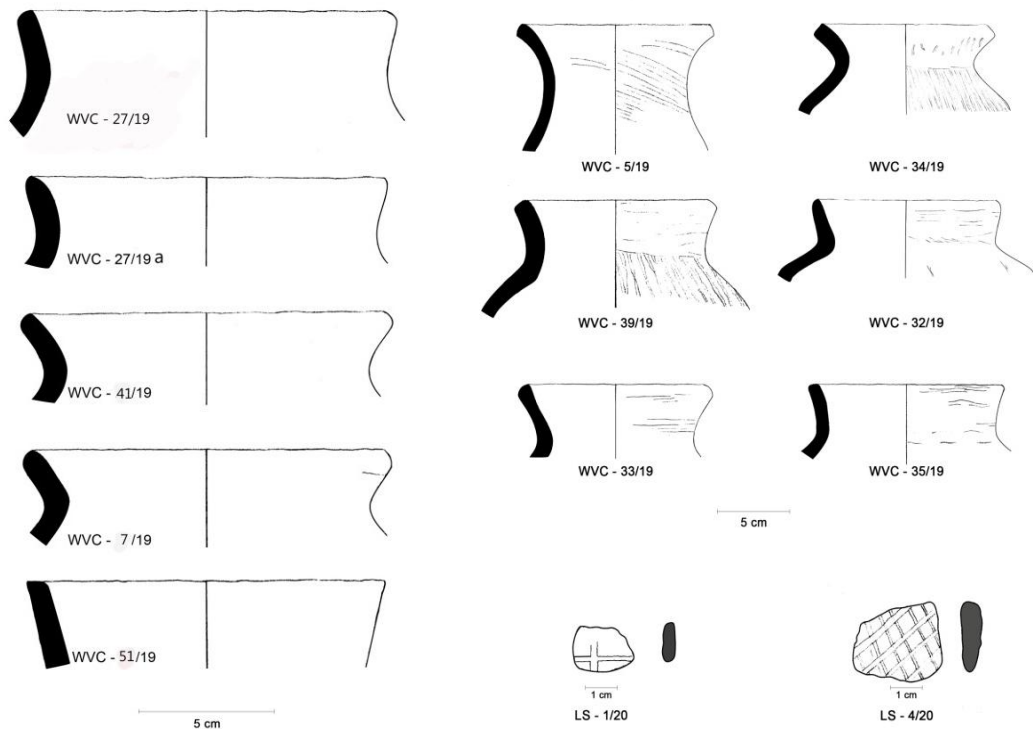


Figure 3.61: Rim forms from *Chumpho* (WVC) locality. Figure 3.62: Rim forms from *Chumpho* and decorated sherds from Longsio (LS) locality.

Reconstruction of Traditional *Chumpho* (morung)



Figure 3.63: *Mevü* tree (Phoebe)



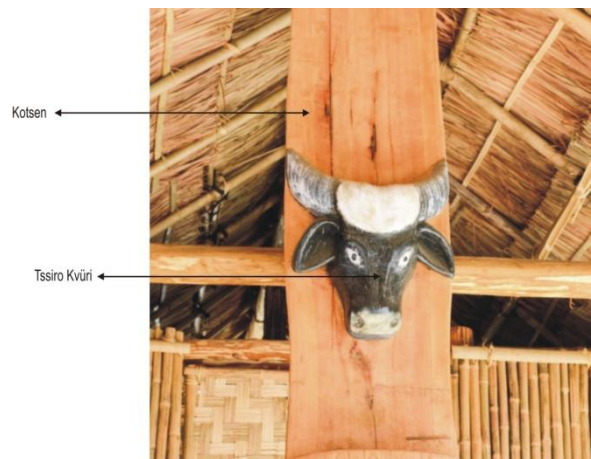
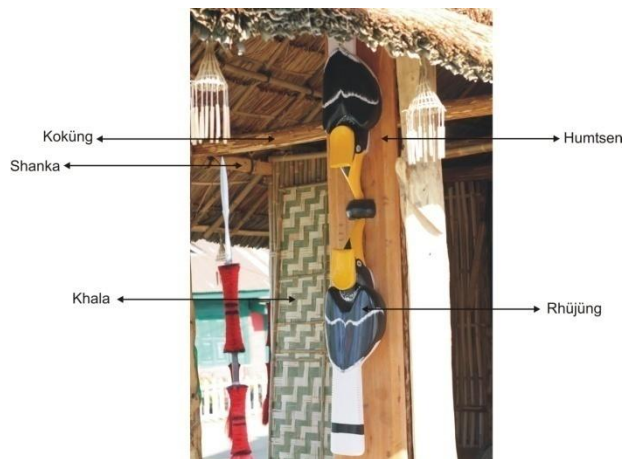
Figure 3.64: Section of the community dragging The Log (post) for the kingpost

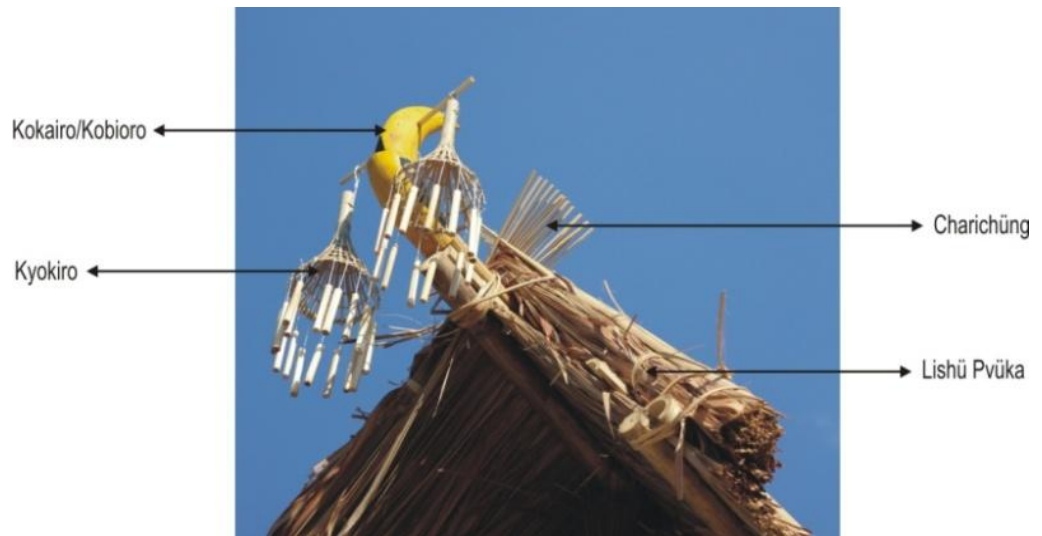


Figure 3.65a: Carved posts (*Humtsen and Kotsen*) Figure 3.65b:Erecting *Humtsen* Figure 3.65c:*Kotsen* being erected



Figure 3.66: *Chumpho* excavation site Figure 3.67a: *Chumpho* structure Figure 3.67b: Roofing the morung





LEGEND/DESCRIPTION

- Mhonki-süng : Roof tree
- Lishüchak : Thatch roof (bundle)
- Nkyip Echung : Bamboo (Chimono bambusa nagalandeana) Wall
- Rafup : Curved thatch roof
- Tsenro : Smaller post of portico
- Jüthi : Bamboo jar
- Jüpvü : Wooden water container
- Otssi : Spike
- Evan : Wooden Seat
- Nkhum : Wooden billow
- Belüng : Bed (Bamboo bed)



Figure 3.68: *Chumpho* description.

LEGEND (for Chumpho reconstruction)

H- Humtsen (Front Kingpost) : 12' (Ft.) High

K-Kotsen (Back Kingpost) : 11' (Ft.) High Ft.)

T- Tsenro (Smaller carved post): 5+5 (T1 to T10)

B- Bamboo Post: 12 Nos (B1 to B12)

Tsenro to Tsenro: 34' (Ft.)

Mijen (Sleeping cubicle with a passage of 3'): 2

Belung (Bed): 4 Nos

Humtsen to Kotsen: 20' (Ft.)

Mhonkisung (Rooftree): 29' (Ft.)

Shanka (Beam): 21' at the height of 7' 3" (7.3

Kokung (Beam to support the post): 10' at the height of 7'.6" (7.6 Ft.)

Total Length (Thatch end to end): 38'

Total Breadth (Thatch end to end):14' (post to post is 10')

Rafub/ Ngherpung fuka: Traditional curved roof (front and back)

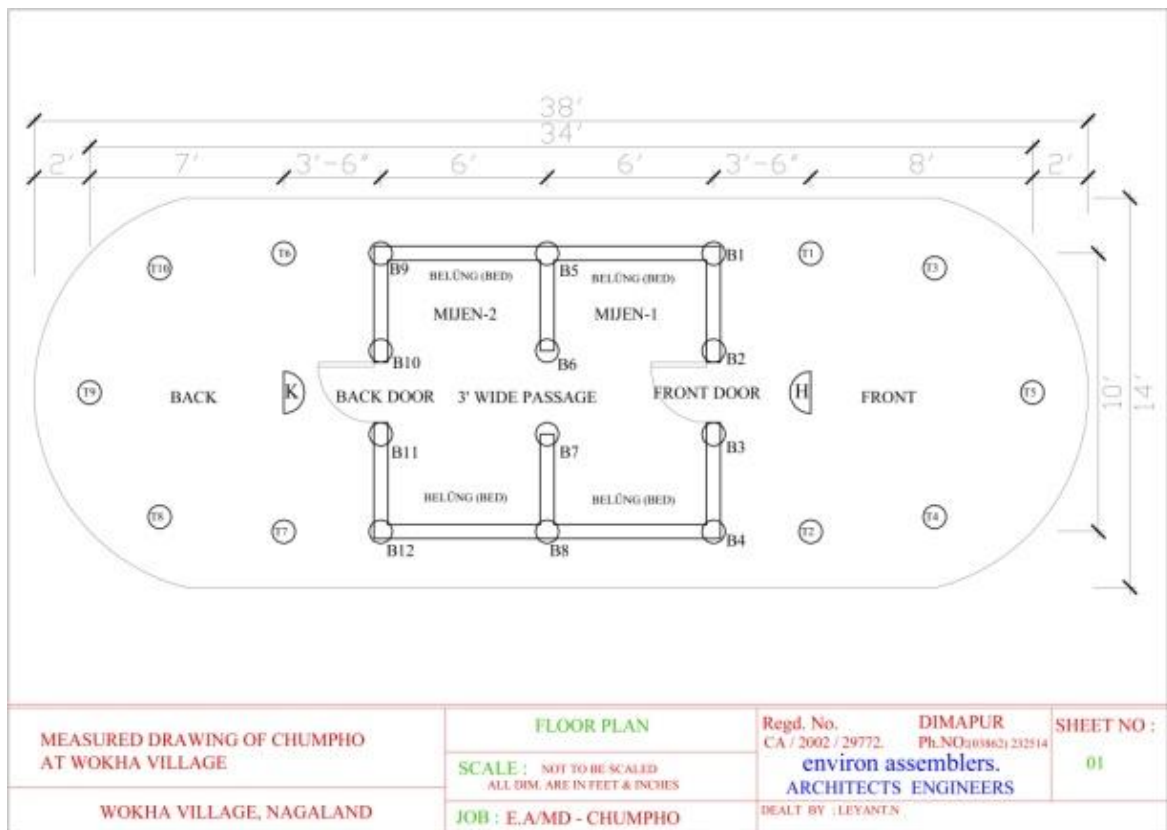


Figure 3.69: Floor Plan of the Chumpho (Morung) construction.

MAP INDICATING CHUMPHO TRIAL EXCAVATION SITE AT WOKHA VILLAGE, WOKHA DISTRICT



Map 3.1: *Chumpho* excavation Site at Wokha village.

MAP INDICATING MHENKITON TEST EXCAVATION SITE AT WOKHA VILLAGE, WOKHA DISTRICT



Map 3.2: *Mhenkiton* (Head-tree) excavation Site at Wokha village.

MAP INDICATING LONGSIO TRIAL EXCAVATION SITE BETWEEN LONGSA AND PONGITONG VILLAGE, WOKHA DISTRICT, NAGALAND



Map 3. 3: Longsio Excavation Site, between Longsa village and Pongitong village.

MAP INDICATING MHENKITON TEST EXCAVATION SITE AT KORO OLD VILLAGE, WOKHA DISTRICT, NAGALAND



Map 3.4: *Mhenkiton* (Head-tree) Excavation Site at Koro old village.

Chapter-4

Village Administration and Customary Law

Background of Political organisation

Since earliest times, the Naga village has been the pivot of administration. The concept of self governance within the village set up was evident among the Nagas even before exposing to the external world. In both internal and exterior matters, all traditional Naga villages were independent and sovereign village states, regardless of their size or population. The 'internal sovereignty' implies that the village has its control over all individuals and residents living inside its borders. Inside the village, residents must follow the village's officials and customary law. There can be no legal recourse against the village officials by any external authority. The village is the only entity that recognises and enforces the rights of its residents. The village has 'external sovereignty', which implies that it was not under the control of other powerful village. External sovereignty established the village's quality of independence from any other village's meddling in the village's affairs. In the past, these two crucial elements combined to form a powerful Naga village with a characteristic of independence.

Naga village polity owes its genesis to the institution of Chieftainship. Every Naga village irrespective of big or small village, was govern by a powerful chief as "Ang" in case of Konyak, "Akakau" in Sema, "Thevo" or "Peyumia" in Angami, "Sungbo" in Ao, "Repvugu" in Rengma, "Ong" in Phom, "Khulong Zopuh" in Yimchungru, "Sanglebou" or "Ngakobou" in Chang, "Thevo" or "Kumuvo" in Chokre, "Mewu" in Kheza, "Yingziba" or "Tsupuru" in Sangtam, "Nampou", "Tingnapu", "Singkuk" in Zeliang (Nshoga, 2009, p. 115). Conventional descriptions about traditional Naga polities have been about Chiefs and Democrats (Jacobs, 2012, p. 69), as nobles and commoners (Fürer-Haimendorf, 1973, pp. 3-12), bodies of elders and village councillors (Mills, 1926, p. 181), powerful village chiefs (Fürer- Haimendorf, 2016,p. 104), sovereign village states and extreme egalitarianism (Woodthorpe, 1981,p. 46), and, on the whole, represented as a continuum with hereditary autocracy, if not near dictatorship, and radical democracy at its opposite ends. In the words of Hutton (1965), "The Konyak Angh is a repository of fortune, virtue, or life-principal of his village.....in some villages, he is, or was, so heavily tabooed that he must not touch the ground" (Hutton, 1965, pp. 16-43). About the Sema Naga, Hutton (1921), observed that "Their traditional chieftainship was not sacred but secular, but that like the Konyak Anghs their powers were hereditary. The chieftain families, "form an aristocracy in the literal sense

of the word". A Sema village was usually called after its founding chief, who was the "lord of the manor" (Hutton, 1921, p. 150). While, according to Mills (1937), "Before the British took over the country every Western Rengma village had a chief called *Kokhügi* ...the office of the chief was hereditary in the clan, but not in the family. It is not necessarily pass from father to son, but to the most suitable man in the leading families of the clan" (Mills, 1937, p. 138).

On the basis of their Chief's selection, it may be assumed that the Nagas, who had a Republican form of government, had a society founded on meritocracy and plutocracy. The republican Nagas usually selected Chiefs on the basis of his merit, like prowess in war, physical superiority, skill of judgement, influential leadership quality as the part of his leadership, through hereditary system was the usual custom. While the other characteristic of republican government was the plutocracy polity, based on the selection of the Chief on the ground of his wealth. This is evident from the fact that most of the Nagas selected their Chiefs from the wealthiest man in the village (Op.cit., Nshoga, 2009, p. 122). However, the succession of chieftainship among the Sema Nagas was hereditary and transmissible to father to son. Hutton (2007) observed, "The generally accepted rule, however, is that the eldest of the original chief's sons who remains in the village ultimately succeeded his father and is again ultimately succeeded by his son, the interludes of brothers and uncles being temporary, and not affecting the general succession" (Hutton, 2007, pp. 148-49).

The organisation of village council was strong in the traditional Ao Nagas society. According to Mills (1926), "The Ao Nagas have the Council of Elders called *Tatars*, elected from every clan of the village. Unlike the Konyak and the Sema Naga, there are not in the Ao tribe any hereditary chiefs. There is nothing corresponding to hereditary chieftainship" (Op.cit., p. 177). After his time in the "Morung" is over a man settles down and marries, and probably in time becomes a councillor (*tatar*) (Ibid., p. 177). The locus of authority was thus vested in the village council, which was "composed of elders representing various clans and kindred for fixed if fluctuating periods" (Op.cit., Hutton, 2007, p. 23). Non-councillors were expected to bow to their authority as they ruled over the village, upholding the common good. This body of village councillors was supported by a number of subsidiary bodies made up of junior age groups who would eventually climb through the ranks to become councillors. The admission of young boys into the village *morung* (bachelor dormitory) began this age-based ranking. The Village Council (*Putu Menden*) and the village's apex body, the *Senso Mungdang*, deliberate the village's collective vote at the level of the Village

Council (*Putu Menden*). Those who attempt to overturn the political decision adopted during the *Senso Mungdang* hearings was labelled as "traitors" and sentenced under customary law.

The Angami villages are found to have internal cohesion and they do not lack internal discipline in spite of lack of powerful chief and the village councils. Traditional aristocrats are absent, while village councillors and clan-leaders have little or no influence over the behaviour of "ordinary villagers." Among the Angami and Chakhesang, it was usually the elders, warriors and wealthy who deliberated the village issues and makes decisions. In the words of Yonuo (1984), "The Angamis, Lothas, Rengmas, etc. practice a peculiar type of democracy with variation in the nature of its composition. They are nominally governed by the two kings or chieftains of their respective villages, chosen for their bravery in war, skilful diplomacy, richness in the form of cattle and land..." (Yonuo, 1984, p. 15).

The Lotha Chief's (*Pvüiti*) power and governance were democratic in nature, and he was consulted on all significant village occasions, private or communal, warfare, social, and religious, and he was aided by his *Yingae* (helper). *Pvüiti* was one of the members of the assembly of *Tongti-chochang* and he remained closely associated with them¹¹¹. The custodian of the customary law and political affairs, *Tongti-chochang* would consult him for any important decision.

Traditional Lotha Village administration

Among the Lotha Nagas, each village was ruled by a chief (*Pvüiti*) assisted by his *Yingae* (helper), team of *Tongti-chochang* (custodian of the customary laws) and an informal council of elders from each *khel* (colony). Traditionally, the citizens of a village are classified into three groups: (1) Rulers (*esopvui*), (2) victorious and mighty men (*ekhyo ekhüing*), and (3) commoners (*arushurui/ kishoroe*) (Ovung, 2012, p. 24). The selected members of the village administration constitute the first group. It include the village chief or headman (*pvüiti*) assisted by the second group. They are decision making body and all the disputes in the village are settled by them. The second group consists of those who have done a meritorious social feast. They had the right to be chosen as members of the village administration and to participate in debates and decision-making on village affairs. A village *pvüiti* can be picked from this group if he was living with his wife, whom he married first, blameless, and has never been bitten by wild animals. The technique in Lotha for approaching the most eligible candidate to make him *Pvüiti* and obtain his consent is known as '*pvüiti nshum* or *pvüiti*

¹¹¹ Interview with Chonchithung Nguillie, 86 Years, Niroyo village, 01/09/2021.

nshuma'. A respectable persons of this group can be also become *Tongti-chochang* who were the custodian of the customary laws. The third group was the people who had not performed social feast of merit, known as '*ari-shürüi*'. They are not eligible to be chosen as leaders of the village or decision making. However, they were assigned duties for religious rituals, burial rituals and all other minor domestic rituals of the village.

Mills (1922) attributed the Lotha Chief to *Ekhiing* who was supposed to be the village ruler. In the days when villages were constantly at war, each village was ruled by *ekyüing* assisted by an informal council of elders. The Chieftainship was hereditary in the family of the man who originally founded the village, but did not at all necessarily pass from father to son. The most suitable man became a chief by force of character. His main function was that of a leader in war, and his perquisite all the spoils brought home from raids. In some villages he is said to have had the privilege of the free labour of the village for his field two or three times a year, but this right has not been exercised anywhere within living memory and apparently lapsed before the Hills were taken over, if indeed it ever existed (Op.cit., p. 96). However, his predecessor Hutton has mentioned in a different way about the Lotha Chief. Hutton (1921) stated that, "The Lhota traditions say that they once occupied the country which is now Angami: that the Aos broke off from Lhota stock and went north, and as the Angami pressed in their rear the Lhotas followed suit, going first west, then crossing the Dayang at Baghtimukh and spreading up the Dayang to the Ao country or avoiding the Doyang and going north-east towards Sema country. Even now they (Angamis) point to Lhota genna stones erected on long-deserted and tree-grown hills to the south of the Dayang as marking the sites of their former homes, and remember stories of the great Lhota chief Pamevo, who led them against the Angamis" (Op.cit., pp. 6-7).

In regard to the Lotha traditional polity and administration, the work of Hutton was also not clear enough when he says, the Ao and Tangkhul villages are governed by bodies of elders representing the principal kindred's in the village, while the Angami, Rengma and Lhota (Lotha) and apparently Sangtam villages are run on lines of democracy. It is difficult to comprehend how this villages held together at all before they were subjected to the British Government. Similarly, while narrating the Anglo-Lotha relation in Wokha District, Ghosh (1979) has mentioned that, "In 1842 Captain Brodie during an inquest of Naga Raids passed through the Lotha area which now forms Wokha district. From Borahaimong (molungyimchen in Ao area) to Lakhuti (Lotha Village) he was received all along by Lotha chieftains in Lotha area and by Ao chieftains in Ao area. All the way the party took assurances taken from them were violated in many villages and they had taken up arms

among themselves whilst the chief in fault refused to appear in Sibsagar when summoned to do so” (Ghosh, 1979, pp. 20-21). The oral tradition tells that the dress of the Lotha Chief was simple as ordinary men worn but when he met a neighbouring village chief’s on the appointed time, he would wears chief’s ornamented dresses and hair baited spears called *Joven-tssso*¹¹².

The Village *Pvüiti* (Chief)

Lotha *Pvüiti*'s function as a secular and religious authority has been assigned by a number of writers in recent years. Ngullie (2010), found that “A village without Chief (*pvüiti*) was considered to be incomplete in traditional Lotha Naga village.....being the head of the village, the Chief enjoyed the supreme power of the village” (Ngullie, 2010, p. 23). *Pvüiti* was the village Chief before the advent of the British colonisation alongside the activities of the American Baptist Missionaries. The Lotha village select one *pvüiti* for the whole village who was supposed to be the most important person in the village. *Pvüiti* was the highest authority in the village who execute the socio-political and religious affairs of the village. According to Murry (1985), “In order to maintain peaceful atmosphere, every traditional Lotha village select one *Pvuti*, one *Yingae*, a group of *Tongti*, *Chochang* and *Pangi*” (Murry, 1985, p. 23). *Pvüiti* is aided in every administrative and socio-religious duty in the village by his helper (*Yingae*). *Yingae* was an average man, but he was a close friend of the *Pvüiti*, and his assistance was utmost needed in the village¹¹³. Murry and Vinod (2018) reported that “... the Lotha villages were headed by a Chief, which they call ‘*Pvuti*’ in their dialect. The structure of administrative setup in the Lotha villages was democratic in nature. Initially, the position of chieftainship would go to the family who originally founded the village but this privilege was not permanently confined to them” (Murry and Vinod, 2018, p. 892).

Therefore, it is found that the traditional Lotha village has a strong and democratic system of administration with a classified power and function hold by the *Pvüiti*, *Yingae*, *Tongti- Chochang* and *Pangi*. Besides, there are important personality in the village in a form of *kipvünapvü* and *ekhyo-ekhiüng*. *Ekhyo-ekhiüng* transforms into *Tongti- chochang* and *Ekhyo-ekhiüng* are responsible to choose the capable man as the village *pvüiti* (*Tongti-*

¹¹² Interview with Solanthung Humtsoe, 72 Years, Wokha (Sanis Village), 02/10/2020.

¹¹³ Interview with Yanpan Murry, 77 Years, Wokha Village, 14/03/2021.

*chochang jo ekhyo-ekhyung jiang na kumcho osi oyan pvüti jo ekhyo-ekhyung jiang na owo nshumcho)*¹¹⁴.

Qualification of the Lotha *Pvüti*

Among the Lothas, there may be many courageous and triumphant warriors and people of distinction in the village, but the most effective and perfect one amongst them will be chosen as the village chief. The question of ‘noble blood’ did not arise at all in selecting and nominating a chief among the Lothas as found among the ‘Konyak Nagas’ (Op.cit., Furer-Haimendorf, 2016, p. 52). Abeni (2021) maintained that “When the village chief was being selected, the community would meticulously study each, carefully keeping in mind certain qualities which mattered to the well-being of the village. The individual was to be someone who was married and had a family, a man of integrity, visionary, a wise man, one able to make wise decisions and who possessed considerable wealth” (Abeni, 2021, pp. 79-80). He cannot refuse it when people chose him to be the *Pvüti*. The eligible criteria for the post of the *pvüti* are as follows:

1. He must be a founder member of the village formation team or a descendant of one (*Pvüti etsov jo yantso kyon tsov shikfü*).
2. He must have son and daughter (*Tsokhying tsolo vam shikfü*).
3. He must be a handsome man with good physique and have done social ‘*genna*’: organised a feast of merit (*Osak ophong mhona osho penri-mori takvü shikfü*).
4. He must be a man of distinction and social standing (*Oyamo na zeka-tongkae ethelan eli tvü tsov shikfü*).
5. He must not have a scar mark wounded by an enemy or wild animals (*Okhvü-ori mhorük-mori npaotvü tsov shikfü*).
6. He must be a trustworthy individual with no blemishes on his record. (*Ntsa-nrük eli osi phyoka sanko nlio tvü tsov shikfü*).
7. He must be wealthy and come from a well-known family (*Ombo otssi-osi lia, kyon na cheka lupkata tvü tsov shikfü*).
8. He can't be a scumbag and bastard (*Motso-moni ntsov shikfü*).
9. He must have married outside his clan (*Jipo thampoe lolan etsoe jitvü tsov shikfü*).
10. He must not be a refugee (*Tsanthan-rüthan ntsov shikfü*).

¹¹⁴ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 78 years, Wokha village, 13/07/2021.

11. He must have a good relation with young and old (*Ngaro eran topvü thungi khyingta-rata evan tsov shikfü*).
12. He must not be a divorcee but having a good relation with his wife (*Poni chukso-lyuso nlihan osi poni shumjum tsov shikfü*).
13. He must be familiar with local customs and be able to undertake religious rites and ceremonies (*Opo-motsü tsolan phyolan penritakvü shikfü osi khumkvü-khumtsa lan ntsiv shikfü*)¹¹⁵.
14. He must be in good health and be free from any ailments (*Nochonori ejüi ha ntsotok*) (Kikon, 2018, p. 18).

Installation of *Pvüti*

The Lotha tradition tells that it was not easy to find a suitable person to be the Chief of the village. The respectable elders and *Tongti-chochang* would prepare a *suko* (special rice beer) and took it to the house, which they had chosen to make him the *pvüti* of the village to express the interest and wishes of the people. This is articulated by Ngullie (1993) who maintains, “If the person whom the village elders and *Tongti-chochang* met agreed to be the *pvüti*, the *Chumpho* boys and in-laws would batter rice and prepare *suko* of about 9 to 10 cups of rice for the most respectable person in the village. A cow without any scar mark called ‘*pvüti zhütso*’ will be bought with the contribution of the whole village. A cow was killed and distributed to the entire household in the village. On the next day, the new *Pvüti* would killed a pig and share his predecessor called ‘*nniv*’, which was an act to seek blessings from him. If the old *pvüti* is dead, he will give half of the pork to late *pvüti*’s wife and the remaining meat share to the midlife members (*jali*). The new *Pvüti* will also give a 120 pieces of garlic to his predecessor which symbolise a high yielding of crops in the village. During the *pvüti* coronation ceremony, no member from different village will be allow entering the village and forbid to eat the meat killed by wild animals (Ngullie, 1993,p. 64).

On the third day, the new *pvüti* will go to the jungle and cut a big log called *ophya* to be erected in the village. A special prayer is performed:

“*ophi oyamona phitsso yantssoathung ni zekata, ni etitüngtoka, e phi oyan etssolo ethev tsukona ni danaka, tsatso mori, tssoso phyoso ntssothokna, phiamon nochoa ni zathuksi, elani yantsso njanthung otssi ozu mmha, khyingro loroi ha thichethoka mmhoni leho*” (Ibid., p. 65).

¹¹⁵ Based on the field interviews under study area.

Illustration: we have chosen you while the village is observing village remaking ceremony and as we make use of it, may we not be injure as you may protect all sort of evil and may there be a bountiful harvest and increase the youth populace in the village. Thereafter, they will fence the *mhenkiton* (head tree) and 120 pieces of cooked meat is wrapped with a banana leave and place there. Elders representing all the khels with a traditional warrior's attire will go round the *mhenkiton* 12 times and distribute the cooked meat.

The installation of the new *pvüiti* is marked as village remaking ceremony (*phitsso-yantsso*) to discard the entire bad omen in the village and replaced it with manifold blessings as the new *pvüiti* take over the administration of the village. The selected *pvüiti* who holds both administration and religious authority will take up his assignment by invoking prayers of blessings in agricultural high yielding, plenteous domestic animals and fowl, and to increase village population. However, the rule of the *Pvüiti* is neither autocratic nor dictatorial as the people chose him to be the protector, custodian and a religious leader of the village. The succession of the *pvüiti* in the 3 (three) villages, namely, Longsachung, Wokha and Longsa is shown in the table (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Succession of *Pvüiti* at Longsachung Village, Wokha Village and Longsa Village¹¹⁶.

Longsachung and Niroyo was the twin village in the past with same chief.

Sl. No.	Longsachung Village	Wokha Village	Longsa Village
1.	Yayio Ezung	Shimentong Kithan	Asharü Ezung
2.	Shumlo Ezung	Elothung Kithan	Tsüponthung Ezung
3.	Tsantso Kikon	Pangkhum Humtsoe	Yankhe Humtsoe
4.	Mhondamo Ezung	Yimtung Murry	Mongjen Murry
5.	Tingiti Kikon	Chütho Murry	Mhonsao Kikon
6.	Tsakho Ezung	Thumthi Kithan	Konchio Ezung
7.	Eshonthung Ezung	Yenjamo Murry	Rülumo Ezung
8.	Phironthung Ezung	Lumchamo Murry	Eliyamo Ezung
9.	Shenthungo Ezung	Tsalikhon Kikon	Shanchithung Ezung
10.	Pvütithung Ezung	Chumshan Tungoe	Yaktheo Ezung
11.	Akhao Ezung	Njanshio Murry	Likhao Ezung
12.	Lithungi Ezung	Pikhvüo Kithan	Tsüthungshio Ezung

¹¹⁶ Source: Longsachung Baptist Church Golden Jubilee History, Yananimo Humtsoe & Chibemo Kithan (Wokha Village) and Benrio Ezung (Longsa Village).

13.	Phanlanthung Ezung	Yalow Humtsoe	Tsenchio Ezung (died in 1965)
14.	Nmtso Kikon	Hayimongo Murry	
15.	Nlikathung Ezung	Murio Süngphi	
16.	Vanchamo Ezung	Thungao Humtsoe	
17.	Yanpeshio Kikon	Phyosow Murry	
18.	Lihao Ngully	Rensa Murry	
19.	Phanpemo Ngullie	Nlumo Murry	
20.	Süvungthung Kikon	Nzio Murry	
21.	Nchemo Kikon	Zacheo Murry	
22.	Ntsemo Ngully (Died on July 24, 1964)	Tssiyingo Humtsoe	
23.		Pichamo Kithan (Died in February 1969)	

Tenure of the *Pvüiti*

Pvüiti was appointed for a life time in the village so long as he remained politically devoted for the well being of the society and steadfastness in socio-religious duties without any biasness. He is well protected by his own people and all his family needs is provided by the villagers. However, if a member of his family died unnaturally, he could lose his rank and be removed from the chieftainship. Eyewitness account tells that the last 3 (three) *Pvüiti* of Wokha village, namely, Zacheo Murry, Tssiyingo Humtsoe and Pichamo Kithan served as village *pvüiti* till death¹¹⁷. Once in Wokha village, a *Pvüiti* was removed from his position when his wife died on child delivery, since the death is considered as taboo (*nmeni na echüi*)¹¹⁸. Another instance was the removal of *Pvüiti* at Longsa village¹¹⁹ and Wokha village¹²⁰ for their selfish prayers of invoking God's blessing only for his clansmen but not for the whole village.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 76 Years, Wokha Village, 10/04/2022.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Yananimo Humtsoe, 80 Years, Wokha Village, 25/10/ 2020.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Yanpothung Ezung, 73 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

¹²⁰ Interview with Yananimo Humtsoe, 80 Years, Wokha Village, 25/10/ 2020.

Powers and functions of the *Pvüiti*

a). Political and Judiciary Function

Soon after his selection as *Pvüiti*, he lived a careful, righteous and exemplary life. Being the head and chief of the village he would change even the food habit by not consuming insects (*Khomong-shyingrü*), rats and squirrels (*azum-chera*) and a meat killed or injured by a wild animal¹²¹. Even during the individual and community sport fishing he would not make drain to dry up water in the shallow edge of a stream or thalweg with a purpose of catching fishes (*Phyokha jüpen lo votalia ezhu tia nphochi*)¹²². The *Pvüiti* himself would not harm even the fishes in the river. He dedicated his life for the wellbeing of the village throughout his life. He would not simply set out his foot from the village. He cultivates at the area close to the village and the entire village warriors would protect him at any cost. The death of *Pvüiti* in the village is deeply grieved by the whole village. The whole village is worried when a *Pvüiti* is sick and this evidence is found from a folk song (Murry, 1999c), which goes:

Pvüiti Nocho-noricho (Pvüiti get sick)

Yamo pvüiti ndüing therao

Ntio tssona ni vomvüryua to

Oyamo yanro te nchumsi

Ni chiiv to mvüryua alo?

Süingphi loro rhoni ni lumvü ka

Tichü le ndüing thera pvütio (Murry, 1999c, p. 29).

Illustration: Village Chief that warmth the village like *ndüing thera*, a *sterculia* flower (*sterculia quadrifida*) that warmth and beautify the deep jungle (Figure 4.2). Why are you sick and feeble while dedicated your life to the village's well-being? Please don't die because we've arranged a gorgeous girl from the *Süingphi* clan to comfort you.

¹²¹ Interview with Orenimo Ezung, 82 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

¹²² Interview with Yanpothung Ezung, 73 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

Lotha *Pvüiti* was a key figure in the village's administration. He was consulted for all major village events, whether private or communal, warfare, social, or religious. The war schemes of hunting human heads called *Rallo evo* (warfare) was planned by the warriors with the knowledge of the *Pvüiti* and when the human heads was brought to the village, he was the first person to stab by the butt of his spear called *Ramvü* at *Chumpho* before fixing or hanging the hunted heads at the Head Tree¹²³. *Pvüiti* was the overall and highest authority in the village; however, he can be removed and replaced by a new one from his seat if any discrepancy is found through his action against the will of his people. It is evident by the Lotha folk song, sung by a commoner against the proud *pvüiti* in a village (Murry, 1999b):

Nyimshi Nyimrakcho Janlanta (Dared to question the haughty pvüiti)

Yamo pvüiti oyi konchorowo
Nti jito pvüji zamo nyima to
Nti jito yantsachio nyima to
Jo Choro Shantio jiang zekachia khüa
pvüjizamo vansanati, Yantsachio vansanati
Yingsüing lüma meta luma sala
Pvüji zanlea ezamo nyimphento
Era (ha) thung ena ranpung tssoa za
Morantsan thungi khonda thung, Tongti lo za
Ojeni eli eyio echü kyua shanyalana
Yani sani evan etsomo nkhyoala
Shompo rali jo oyi evamo ha
Ezamo ha ekyimphia ezoa, tssila woro (Ibid., p. 14).

Illustration: *Yamo Pvüiti (Oyamo Pvüiti)* was the village chief; *Oyi konchorowo (kangtsüa oyi tsuphov nsamoji)* means proud with suppressing word; *Pvüjizamo/pvüjizanlea (wozanro/owo mataroe)* means lesser member in a clan; *Yantsachio (yantsae jiang)* means poor people and *Yinsüing luma* means to warm land. *Morantsan* means enemy and *Tongti* means hillock: During warfare the commoner warriors fiercely fight standing in the hillock.

According to the song, a commoner in the village dared to question the haughty *Pvüiti*. They slammed his actions, labelling him a haughty individual for criticising a villager who

¹²³ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 78 Years, Wokha Village, 12/08/2020.

was impoverished and has less clan members. They also advised him to look up at the moon and stars in the sky, which together create a beautiful sky. Similarly, the village appears to be powerful because of the mix of poor and wealthy residents, which makes the community as lovely as the shining sky. The commoner warriors were the ones that battled valiantly to defend the village. The song portrays the Lothas' traditional village governance and political power, which is based on democracy.

b). Social and Religion Function

According to Lotha oral tradition, the *Pvüiti* were married males. Unlike Konyak Ang, who married someone from his own clan, Lotha *Pvüiti* married someone from another clan. He was in charge of all public functions and ceremonies in the villages, as well as determining the dates on which they will take place. In agricultural related festivals, the main responsibility of the *Pvüiti* was to perform sacrifices and to keep track of the village's annual observances. He was the local calendar's caretaker. All public *Emongs* (holidays) are declared by him. The *Pvüiti* was the one who signals the start of the festival, and he also sets the dates for the community festivals. For religious practices there are *Ratssen* (Seer) and *Havae* (mediator between dead and living) under him. As Murry (1985) recount, “For any important ritual ceremony in the village, *Pvüiti* and his *Yingae* would met and discussed the modalities, and consensus decision will make known to *Tongti*, *Chochang* and *Pangiten* as an order (*azha*) for the announcement to the villagers. Disobedience of the *Pvüiti*'s order was liable to face consequences of heavy fines” (Op.cit., p. 2).

Subordinate Village Authorities

In traditional Lotha society, the execution of the powers and duties of the village political system was vested upon 3 (three) *Pvüiti* subordinates; *Tongti*, *Chochang* and *Pangi*, which form an Assembly called *Hoho*. *Tongti* was selected from a reputed family and well conversant with the traditional customary laws and practices. There was only one *Tongti* for the whole village and he was responsible to lead the village related to law and order problems in the village. For the smooth functioning of the village Assembly, *Chochang*, who was considered as a mediator to guide the assembly and the tradition of the village was selected as the second category in the village. The number may be 5 or more in the entire Lotha village, usually depends on the magnitude and proportions of the village population. *Tongti* and *Chochang* are equally respectable in the village and the people address commonly as *Tongti-Chochang*. Depending upon the size of the village and *the khel/ yankho* (colony in the

village), *Pangi* were selected from every clan in the khel and they are considered the family or clan representatives. The *Pangiden* (group of *Pangi*) are not ordinary members of the clans but the responsible persons who can voice out the welfare of the village in general and the *Khels* in particular. The most significant task assigned to them was the role of selection of the *Pvüiti* as and when the post was vacant. This was usually done along with the elders in the village who has a suffrage in the village assembly.

Before the arrival of the British in Naga Hills (Pre-colonial), Nagas was independent in nature and were practicing their own traditional system of Village Assembly to safeguard the village in their own entity. The traditional Lotha village selected *Tongti-chochang* and *Pangiden* who remained the guardian of the village to lead the people and safeguarded the land, wealth, people and the herds of cattle and poultry. For the smooth administration of the village, *Tongti-chochangden* (collective of *Tongti-chochang*) and *Pangiten* (group of *pangi*) formed a *Hoho* (Assembly) which they called this assembly as *Pangi Hoho* (village assembly or village council). Murry (1985) maintain, “The *Hoho* made the village constitution (*yansasa*), law (*azha*), resolution (*shikfü methak*) and Customary Laws (*shikfü niro*) and deliver the justice according to the set of laws. At least 2/3 majority of the *Hoho* is required to adapt such laws or resolution in the village” (Ibid., p. 2). The Institution of *Tongti-chochang* was resemble to Ao’s *Tatar opr Tazung*. Bendangkokba (2019) stated, the status *Tatar opr Tazung* was equivalent to a cabinet minister. He played active role in all the customary proceedings (Bendangkokba, 2019:16).

Among the Lothas there was no superior clan during the selection process of choosing a member to make him a member of *Tongti-chochang*. It was not based on preferable member from the eminent clans but entirely depends on the calibre and efficiency of an individual whom the elders in the village finds him suitable for the post. *Tongti-chochang* and *Pangi* can be from any bona fide members from any clan in the village. Another version based on eyewitness account is that, *Tongti-chochang* was a village administration body under the *pvüiti*. Their role is similar to present Gaonbora (GB), who assembled nearby the *pvüiti*’s place to chalk out the modalities for social ceremony and festivals. They were also deputed by the *pvüiti* in times of law and order problem in the village. They announced in every khel on behalf of the *pvüiti* when important matter arose in the village. The members of

Tongti-chochang are not khel or clan representatives but only the suitable person in a village who performed social *genna* can occupies the post¹²⁴.

The qualifications requires for the selection of *Tongti-chochang* are as follows:

1. He must be *Ekhyo-ekhiing* (Successful and brave warriors).
2. There was no minimum age requirement to become *Tongti-chochang*. The merit of valour was used to determine eligibility.
3. A reputed individual with significant income can become *Tongti-chochang*.
4. He must be a trustworthy individual with no criminal history.
5. There was certain Procedure for selection when a person expresses his desire to become a member of *Tongti-chochang*.
 - a. A fire wood was arranged and burnt to observe the smoke. In whose fire smoke goes up straight was selected to be a member.,
 - b. A contesting candidate will ask to bring a cock and whose cock crows first was selected to become a member of *Tongti-chochang*¹²⁵.

Pangiden (a group of *Pangi*) were selected from every clan in the village and since they represented the clans the village administration becomes stronger and efficacy. There were mixtures of clans in all the traditional Lotha villages, except one or two villages that established in the recent past. The Village *Hoho* was the custodian of the unwritten customary laws, be it executive, judicial and legislative functions within their village. They cannot encroach upon the functioning and affairs of other villages because every village has their own *Hoho's* or Assembly. Citing the importance of *Hoho* (Assembly), Lotha (1996) articulated, "In the administration of the village, they believed that the handling of the important issues required not an intemperate but a cool and experienced head. And the dispensation of justice to all was the primary concern of the administrative machinery, which was the council of elders" (Op.cit., p. 77).

Traditional Lotha Village Customary Laws and Practices

The term "customary law" refers to the tribal laws that are more developed, logically accepted, and more common in today's tribal societies. It also includes those laws that are

¹²⁴ Interview with Tsansow Kikon, 88 Years, Wokha (Former Pastor, Wokha Village Baptist Church), 11/04/ 2021.

¹²⁵ Based on the field interviews under study area.

recognised and approved by the general public in the society and endorsed by the community's will. These are customs and traditions that people have upheld over time and have shaped as binding laws which are dynamic in nature. Customary law is a recognised set of ancient laws that developed from peoples' natural desires and ways of life. Gangte (2008) observed that, "Customary law is the written and unwritten rules which have developed from the customs and traditions of communities. Customary law is the term most commonly used to describe the largely unwritten indigenous laws of the indigenous people" (Gangte, 2008, p. 19). Customary law, which governs things like marriages, property rights, and inheritance, is often regarded as the most significant legal framework in the lives of many people. Customs and traditions need to be accepted by the community, followed by the community, and enforceable or practicable in order to qualify as law. Customary law is essentially the etiquette followed by residents of an area under the control of a governing authority. Every culture is governed by certain laws, standards of conduct, norms, and customs that are codified as customary laws. It might be described as a body in charge of enforcing laws made up of social norms and laws that the society is required to follow. The keys to adjudication in every tribal group are the customary laws, which enable the harmed party to obtain justice from repression and persecution.

According to Kumar (2005), "The pre-colonial history of the Nagas was the history of the individual tribes, several separate clans and villages" (Op.cit., p. 20). Kabui (1993) brings out the variable of Customary Laws practices among the Naga tribes: "Different types of political systems were found among the Nagas" (Kabui, 1993, p. 21). One can see differences in their traditional customs, religious beliefs and customs. Naga villages exercised their customary law clearly defined tenets that differ from village to village and tribe to tribe. Naga customary laws originated from the remote past and it is handed down to the succeeding generations. These laws are not enacted or amended by prophets, chiefs, priestess, but it is a wise decision of the common agreement adopted during the distant past. Customary laws emerged from the inner conscience and knowledge of virtuous men in the village. This law is framed according to the customs, cultures, traditions and the local environment of the people that it varies from tribe to tribe. Customary laws are properly developed unwritten laws outside the framework of our written constitution which control the conduct of tribal people (Aye & Sangtam, 2018, p. 31). The advent of the British in Lotha country could not erase the practices of customary law and the legacy is being carried to the modern Lotha society. Venuh (2014) noted that, "The Naga customary law is an unwritten mutual agreement,

transmitted to the succeeding generations through oral tradition. Customary law is basically dealt with social code of conduct. It is framed by wise and virtuous men on socially acceptable solution for delivering smooth justice to all the cross section of the people” (Op.cit., p. 436).

The genesis of the customary law among the Lothas goes back to the inception of the Village *Hoho* (Assembly) where a collective men of virtue in a form of *Tongti-chochangden* (group of Tongti-chochang) and *Pangiden* (group of Pangiden) in consultation of *Pvüiti* has framed the verbal laws to deliver justice when the dispute arise in village for any kind of infringement in their custom and socio-economic and cultural life. In Lotha villages, the *Pvüiti* and *Tongti-chochang* was the custodian of customary laws. However, the *Pvüiti* do not go to the dispute sites for hearing and to pronounce judgement. The laws shall be made known to the people through *Tongti-chochang* and the elders of the khel. Defaulters and violators of law faced the promulgation of customary lawsuit. The ordeal of oath against the criminal or culprit was very frightening but it is the only means for prosecution and settlement of the case such as land dispute, criminal offences- in murder, theft, marriage, rape, elope, adoption, divorce, arson and distribution of parental moveable and immovable property etc., The object used in customary’ ordeal of oath protocol for the final judgemental verdict are:

1. *Mmhorii-ho* (tiger tooth).
2. *Otssan* (swearer hairs).
3. *Ochon* (soil of the dispute site).
4. *Mhenkiton-vo* (leaf of head tree).
5. *Shumo-zhü* (bottle gourd vine) .
6. *Otsso* (spear),.
7. *Lepok* (machete)¹²⁶.

The Lothas termed the oath '*Echum Randan*', which means 'prayer of oath taking'. The symbolic meaning of using a tiger tooth is that, if a person is guilty and falsely swears an oath, he will be killed by a tiger; human hair symbolise unnatural death or being choked to death; soil symbolise a person dying before harvesting his own field with mud on his face; leaf of *mhenkiton* symbolise the death of all the male members of his family like a tree falling

¹²⁶ Based on the field interviews under study area.

its leaves. The spear and machete stand for self-inflicted death, while the vine of a bottle gourd represents the sudden death of all of his family's male relatives. An oath taker would say, if an oath is falsely taken: May the tiger kill me, may I drown in a river, may I fall off a cliff, may I choke to death, may my family deteriorate like *mhenkiton* leaves and a bottle gourd vine, and may I die before I get the harvest from this particular plot of land, etc. He will be under close observation by everyone in the village, and if he is found giving out eggs and chickens to fend off illness, the accused will face legal action from the other party who claims ownership and the accused will be prosecuted in accordance with the law.

Murder Case

According to Lotha customary law, a murder case was the most terrible offence. Murder might occur within or outside of the village's clan. Murderers (*müinghamo*) are expelled from the village, and their entire family is forbidden from fetching water from the village common pond until the following summer season. Until a new season of collecting fresh water arrives, the entire village outlaws mingling or dining with the Murderer's family members. As Shitiri (2019), in his vernacular writing stated, "The community will obstinate both the family of the victim and the murderer and feasting or dining with them is forbidden for 9 (nine) generation" (Shitiri, 2019, p. 23). In Lotha's traditional past, an entire family were excommunicated from the community. The village administration will be notified in the case of a suspect. A member of *Tongti-chochang* would killed pork and cooked the meat with pork's blood in the victim's family dwelling, according to the suspect's report. Male members of the suspected family over the age of 15 (fifteen) will be summoned and forced to partake the prepared dish. If someone refuses to consume the cooked meat, he will be apprehended, and if a person hides the meat without eating it, he will be apprehended and prosecuted according to customary law. The Lotha tradition tells that the family circle of the murdered forbids eating food with the murderer.

Land Dispute

The Lotha method of defining a private or clan's land consists of placing 3 (three) small stones as boundary demarcation, each in a triangle arrangement that will go around the perimeter of the area. When a land dispute arises, it will carefully examine the laid stones because it is possible to find the triangular structure inside by tracing even a small portion of one stone. A border stone's moisture content can be used to determine its age. The creek and mountain ridge are frequently used as boundary lines. According to customary norms,

tampering the erected stone and re-demarcation with fresh stone was a significant worry. If a disagreement arises, it will be resolved by an oath including the soil of the specific area in question as well as other symbolic objects. The use of mud in that particular region represents the fact that if an oath taker falsely swears the oath, he will die before reaping the field he cultivated by falsely claiming. Mills (1922) observed that, "This oath is very rarely taken, and is thought to involve certain death for the swearer if taken falsely. Land disputes are occasionally decided on oath, which is invariably sworn on a little soil from the land in dispute. Whichever side will take the oath gets the land. It is probably never knowingly taken falsely, as the *Lhotas* firmly believe that whoever swears this oath falsely will die before he can reap a harvest from the land he had dishonestly gained". Land dispute was rare among the traditional Lotha society and occasionally decided on oath. (Op.cit., p. 103). The eldest in the family or the eldest in the clan, in case of clan's land, sworn the oath.

If there was a land dispute between the two villages, the *Tongti-chochang* and *Pangiden* from each village tried to resolve it. When the situation is investigated and no acceptable solution is found, elders from both villages will be summoned. The dispute will be resolved once and for all if there was a legitimate witness who can explain and testify to the ownership of the land, and if both the community and the witnesses agreed upon. Otherwise, the village with the strongest claim to the land will demand that an oath be taken by the opponent. According to customary law, none of the village will be allowed to cultivate the land and will be subjected to a 3 (three) year term of surveillance. If the oath taker performs any kind of rites on the property in question, he will be defeated (Op.cit., Murry, 1985, p. 56).

Cattle Intrusion

Apart from domesticating pigs, dogs, and fowls, the Lothas raised live-stock such as *Tssiro* (*mithun*) and *Mangsü* (cow) as a source of income. The owner of the herds (*Tssiro-mangsü*) is allowed to graze near the village. The Lothas had 3 (three) types of farming: *ekonli* or *ntsoli*, *enhyanli* or *nrüngli*, and *pharili* (*li'* denotes *oli*, which meaning field). *Nrüngli* is cultivated nearby (*enhyano*) the village with mix cropping such as rice, taro, beans, ginger, chilli, tomato, and so on; *ekonli* is farmed mostly for rice far away (*ekoni*) from the village and *pharili* (backyard garden) is cultivated primarily for vegetables. In *Nrüngli* and *pharili*, the inclination for animals to destroy remains high. As a result, the cultivator must erect a high fence for the *tssiro* grazing area which was 6 (six) arms long (about 9 feet). The

condition of the fencing will be judged when a plaintiff for animal destruction is discovered. If the fencing is done properly, the case will be dismissed. If an animal is being detected for destroying crops in the cultivated area without properly fenced, the owner of the animal will face a live-stock fine.

Sexual Crime and Divorce

Rape, adultery, elopement, and incestuous are all crimes that can be prosecuted under customary law. 'Mo' means refuse in Lotha, and 'rama' denotes violent intercourse, which literally translates to rape (*morama*). A family of the victim would impose a fine of one pig (*woko*) called *elo-ejup* on the rapist family in the case of *morama* without the moral permission of women through physical force. Apart from *elo-ejup*, the village will impose a fine in terms of *tssiro* (*mithun*), *mangsü* (*cow*), *woko* (*pig*), and *ora* (*land*) on the rapist family if she is physically injured in any area of her body. If the victim is a minor under the age of consent, both *elo-ejup* and *yanzüing echa* (*yanzüing* is a village law/rules and *echa* is a fine) will be enforced, and the rapist will be further punished by being bound with a wooden plink and imprisoned in village *Chumpho* for 9 (nine) days (see Figure 4.1). Even if the girl inflicted hurt or murdered the guy (rapist) while attempting to flee the clutches of being raped, she has the legal right to do so under customary rules.

Adultery case differs from village to village and from family to family. In rear case, when a wife commits adultery with another guy, her husband takes it as a pride on the context that his wife is still sexually capable¹²⁷. If a married couple has been without a child for a long time, according to Lotha tradition, the husband will butcher pork and poultry and ask his brother to live with his wife in order to have a kid. The husband will either spend the night on the field or partake in some sort of outdoor activity¹²⁸. Another tradition of the Lothas in regards to open sexual affair was during the inauguration of reconstructed village *Chumpho*. There was an occasion called *nongpvüi-rotä* when married childless women (*humjupvüi*) forcibly enter the *chumpho* and encountered sexual activity with the *Chumpho* boys for want of a child. Customary law does not imply here if the husband and wife comes to the term.

¹²⁷ Interview with Chanbemo Ngullie, 90 Years, Nrung longidang village, 28/03/2021.

¹²⁸ Interview with Yananimo Humtsoe, 80 Years, Wokha Village, 25/10/2020.

Nonetheless, if a man commits adultery with another woman, he may be prosecuted and lose his pig, livestock, and land. Some villages levied a fine of *Tongkho* (headgear), *otsso* (spear), *lepok* (machete), and other warrior's equipment. It is stated that a single person committed 9 (nine) acts of adultery in one Lotha village (Nrüng Longidang), for which he was fined in animals, bamboo grooves, warriors' implements, and land¹²⁹. Mills (1922) observed that, "For adultery the guilty man had to hand over to the husband's and woman's families all his clothes and personal ornaments and a cow or a large pig. The husband could not himself take any of these fines, for it was the price of his wife immorality. A clear distinction is drawn between adultery by a man of the husband's clan and adultery by a man of another clan. The former offence is often condoned on the guilty party promising not to repeat it, but a fine is invariably demanded for the latter offence" (Op.cit., p. 101). Konyak (2008) while trying to explain the nature of punishment for the birth of illegitimate children and adultery maintained, "Adultery was punishable and as with other offences, the scale of compensation varied with clans. In most of the clans the co-respondent was held to blame and had to pay the compensation fixed for the offence. In most of the groups the erring ones are beaten and they succumb to injuries, besides having to pay the compensation. In most groups, this type of offence is regarded as a very serious case, and a portion of land, residential sites, or paddy field or reserved forest was given as a compensation as per the decision of the village court" (Konyak, 2008, pp. 78-79).

The same standard is applied in the instance of '*sochota*' (elopement), in which the offender pays a hefty payment to the previous husband in the form of pigs, cattle, and land. The family and clan elders normally decide on the elopement of a young lady and boy. In the case of *poni pyonta/ sichita* (divorce), a thorough investigation will be carried out to determine the source of the problem. If the husband is at fault, he will let the wife to take all of her possessions and pay her a *losiman* (divorce payment) of Rs.10/- (Rupees ten) only. In the event of a wife's fault, her parents or her new husband will reimburse all of their marital expenses. It was only in 1933, the British Government has issued an Order that 'the husband must build a house for her and give her such proportion of his property as he thinks fair'¹³⁰.

¹²⁹ Interview with Chanbemo Ngullie, 90 Years, Nrung longidang village, 28/03/2021.

¹³⁰ Standing Order No. 9 of 20/06/1933 (PR. 226). Issued by J. P. Mills, the then Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills (Archival source).

Incest, such as sexual behaviour between people in consanguinity, is highly forbidden under Lotha traditional law. Sexual encounters between clan members or close relatives are frowned upon and regarded as evil and humiliating. Inter-clan marriage and incestuous behaviour between siblings and sisters, fathers and daughters, and mothers and sons are strictly forbidden by the Lothas. Such occurrences are uncommon in Lotha civilization. If such a situation arose, the clan's elders acted quickly to intercede and disciplined the perpetrator, as the action was shameful to the clan.

Bastard and Adoption

Lotha customary says that keeping or adopting someone whose parents could not be traced out (*motso*) is restricted on the pretext that the family or the clan would be degenerated. Therefore it was totally restrained to adopt such kind of child. It is also said that adopting a child of sister and niece by father or brother and make him or her as their clan member will bring disaster to the family and clan. Hence, the customary law offended such kind of adoption. Those people were not allowed to become *Pvüiti*, *Yingae*, *Tongti-chochang* and village council member.

There are different categories of adoption among the Lotha society and the genuine adoption cannot be avoided. Customary laws deal according to the nature and circumstances over adoption:

- a. Adoption by paying ransom in term of *mithun*, cow, pig, salt, spear, machete etc., in the hand of enemy: This category of adoption is called *eho-tso*. When *eho-tso* is grown up and married, adoptive parents will allow cultivating his private land. He has a right to inherit the purchased land and bamboo grove given to him by his adoptive parents with the knowledge of clan members but he cannot claim the rest of land and property after the death of an adoptive father. Land and property goes to clan or kindred as per customary law.
- b. Adoption for want of male child: The Lothas call this category of adoption as *kumtok-tso*. The adopted son got the legitimate right to inherit land and property belongs to his father who adopted him; even the share of the clan's land apart from the purchased land of his father. He will also get his share of meat during clan's female member marriages called *hanlamso* (bride's value meat). We have seen the similar customary practice among the Sema Nagas. The adopted places himself under the adopter's protection and calls him father, and the adopter becomes heir to the assets

(and liabilities also) of the adopted should the latter die without heirs standing in the same relation as he did to his adopter. This form of adoption is called *anu-shi*, which means “son making” (Op.cit., Hutton,2007, p. 162). While among the Ao Nagas, orphan male is eligible for adoption for the purpose of (a) heirship, and (b) for service (Ao, 1980, p. 80).

- c. Adoption through purchase: Adoption of a child through purchase is called *Eshi-tso*. This was done basically to help the adoptive parents in the household chores and agricultural work. There was an exceptional case of recognition by the clan of the adoptive father provided he invited his clansmen to express the interest of making him a legitimate son or daughter. If the clan members agree the adopted son will get the share of the adoptive father. If female, she will be recognised as a clan member and gets cooperation and help even during marriage. Her husband will also recognised her as legitimate daughter and respect her parents and clansmen. If such kind of understanding is not taken place the adopted son or daughter will not get any share of land and property of the adoptive parent and the clan.

Theft

Stolen pigs, animals, fowls, grain, and property are all significant offences. If a thief is caught by the *Chumpho* lads, he will be beaten up outside the *Chumpho* for the crime. If such action is conducted in *Chumpho*, no further customary rule will be enforced on the thief, according to Wokha village oral tradition¹³¹. A habitual thief will be punished with ‘*Nangkvü*’ clamp (See Figure 4.1), which is a traditional method of tying both hands and clamping both legs in a wooden plank so that he cannot even move. In the Lothas' traditional past, it was a customary open jail for thieves. The length of his sentence was determined by the nature of the offence he committed. A thief can be released provided he returned the item(s) to the owner. Mills (1922) observed that, “A thief had to return the goods in full, or their equivalent, to the owner, and pay a large pig or a cow to his clan. If he could not pay up, he was sold as slave” (Op.cit., p. 111).

¹³¹ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 76 Years, Wokha Village, 12/08/2021.

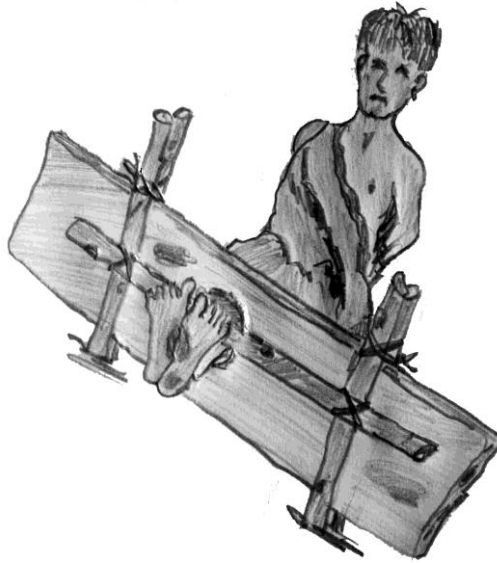


Figure 4.1 Nangkvü (Confinement)¹³²

Women's Property Inheritance

Land and properties are inherited by the male heirs in Lotha society, which is patriarchal and patrilineal. The inheritance of land and property is passed down from father to sons and grandson. Women were not allowed to claim her father's property, land, or bamboo grooves. So long as she is not married, the daughter has the right to cultivate land. All parental benefits are available to her as long as she stays with her parents. A parent, on the other hand, can give her a plot of individual's land as a present, and that land becomes her licit property. According to the traditional rule, a bestowed land cannot be reclaimed by her brothers or clansmen. On their wedding day, a wealthy parent offers their daughters ornaments, traditional costumes, and weaving implements as gifts.

Customary Law Confederate to warfare

The Lothas, like any other Naga tribe, practised head hunting, although there were certain customary prohibitions that prohibited the killing of enemies or the chopping off of heads. When the enemy (*morantsan*) was overwhelmed and unable to flee, he would approach them and say, "*Apo, ati lungthata, A nzana nchuma*" (Father, don't murder me, have compassion on me) and hug one of them. He was not to be murdered at this time but will be taken to

¹³² Drawn by Nchumbemo Erui, *B-Khel*, Wokha Village.

Chumpho and imprisoned by clamping '*nangvii*.' He will be released if his relatives or villagers pay an '*Eloo*', ransom in *mithun*, huge pig, cow, and other animals. It will not be counted as killing an enemy if he was ambushed and killed on his way home. Instead, the perpetrator will face severe punishment in accordance with the customary law¹³³.

Changes in Lotha Village Administration during Colonial era

With the arrival of the British in Lotha territory and introduction of foreign religion by the American Baptist Mission, the native Lotha village administrative system has been diluted. Ezung (1993) maintained that, "The Lotha traditional system of village administration and functionalities comprises of the role of *Pvuti*, *Yinga* (*yingae*), *Tongti*, *Chochang*, *Pangki* and *Yiro Yiri lo ewoe* has been either substitute or altered by the British authority when they British invaded the Lotha area in 1876. The British has started appointing *Dobashis* in every range and *Gaunboras* in every khel in the villages" (Ezung, 1993, pp. 26-27). In pre-Christianity, there was no confusion about village administration and traditional religious practises, but when the American Baptist Missionary arrived in Lotha area, *Pvüti's* authority was reduced to perform only traditional religious ceremonies, and the Evangelist or Pastor was appointed in Christian Churches to perform religious duties based on Christian principles. The Christian members in the village becomes out of the traditional control. With the arrival of the British, the new village administration was established, and the role of *Tongti-chochang* was replaced by new form of Village Council, with the appointment of *Gaonbora* (GB) and Village Council Member (VCM) to operate under the village council¹³⁴.

The concept of appointing a *Dobashi* is a recent phenomenon in Naga Hills which was introduced during the colonial regime (Figure 4.3). The *Dobashi* derived from an Assamese word of *Dho basha*, a Hindi origin. *Dho*' means two and *basha* means language and therefore, the British appoints a person who is capable to speak tribal dialect and Assamese. Later, they were trained to speak English to translate the happenings to the British officers. Aye and Sangtam (2018) reported, "The introduction of this new administrative system by the British government brought changes not only in the Naga culture but also altered the traditional legal procedures through the introduction of the *Dobashi* and weakened their polity as well. They continue to say that, The *Dobashi* system was first started in 1842 as a trial system and continues as the system proved to be useful for the promotion of Anglo-

¹³³ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 76 Years, Wokha Village, 12/08/2021.

¹³⁴ Interview with Yankhosao Murry (Former Head G.B), 67 Years, Wokha Village, 15/03/2021.

Naga relations. This institution served both as an instrument of pacification on the Nagas and as a native team of intermediaries between the British government and the masses, the chief means through which the British government established successful relations with the Naga tribes in general” (Op.cit.,2018, p. 34).

The British administration under Captain John Butler (Jr.), Political Agent, erstwhile Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills District official Letter to the Commissioner of Assam stated:

“Last year, I explained how, on first introducing the system, I had met with considerable difficulty in getting the Nagas to respond to my invitation to furnish “Dobhashi” from their respective clans; but that on their understanding how much it was to their advantage to have paid spokesman residing at Samoogooting, my only difficulty had been to settle which village be allowed the privilege, and I therefore at first only filled up eight out of the ten appointments sanctioned. This year I have completed the list, and thus secured the services of one man from each of the following villages: Kohimah, Mejamah, Phesamah, Jakhamah, Khonomah, Kerumah, Narhamah, Jakamah, Sepamah, and Chichamah. These men have always accompanied me on my several tours into the interior on which occasions their services were of the greatest assistance to me, and I have much pleasure in here to acknowledging the efforts they have always made me to ensure me a hearty welcome from the several tribes through whose villages we passed.....which I have been enabled to traverse the whole country in every direction is in a very great measure attributable to the indefatigable exertions of these “Dobhasa” of the Khonoma clan of that village” (Barpujari, 2003, pp. 87-88).

Therefore, it is evident that the *Dobashis* were appointed to assist the British Officers wherever they go in Naga Hills as local guides and translators or interpreters. Initially they were appointed as interpreters of languages but gradually they were given a significant role as interpreters of rules and regulations. There was a political upheaval in Lotha area when Lieutenant Robert Gossett Woodthrope, Captain Butler and Lieutenant Austin with a military guard of 70 men and coolies came to Wokha village as eastern survey party. Mackenzie (1979) noted that, “From the very beginning of operations the Nagas showed a hostile spirit. The eastern survey party under Captain Butler marched from Samoogooting (Chümoukedima) on the 23rd December 1874” (Mackenzie, 1979, pp. 126-127). On the 3rd January 1875 they reached Wokha, a large village on the western slope of the Wokha peak. The party has stationed at *jükha hayi* near Tungoe *jükha* (pond) Wokha village. The warriors

of Wokha village were agitated to see the alien power occupying their land. Sensing that war may break out between the British and Wokha village, Phandemo Kithan of Akuk Village, an Interpreter, warned Butler not to take risk of engaging a war against the village, lest you will be wiped out. On the next day, Abemo Süngphi Murry and Shanrhumbemo killed a British subject (Kuki collie) when the survey party went up to Mount Tiyi for installation of radio signal and mapping. An Angami Dobashi reported the incident to the British and they were horrified to see the headless body. Butler found that the head was already hanged in the village *mhenkiton* (Kikon,1999, pp. 233-234). In retaliation, the British attacked Wokha village. The village was completely gutted down to ashes on 5th January 1875. Butler left Wokha on 20th January 1875 and returned to face ambush on 25th December 1876 by Pangti village who succumbed to spear wound¹³⁵. Ghosh (1979) stated, “The frequent harassments given by the Lothas bringing about John Butler’s death, compelled the Government to establish a regular administration in Lotha area. Prompt and decisive action was taken on the proposal and Wokha-Sub-Division of Naga Hills was started in the year 1876. Wokha was occupied as the district headquarters and buildings for that and a garrison were raised” (Op.cit., p. 23). Ezung (1993) observed that, “The British government has appointed Dobashi in every range of Wokha and Gaonbura in every village. In 1876, at the time of establishing the British headquarter appointed the following: Ezanthung Ezung (Longsa Village), Sophamo (Yonchicho Village), Aphamo (Shaki Village), Khyodemo (Pongitong Village), Chumbenthung (Chudi Village), Vantanshan (Lotsu Village), Surhon (Pongitong village), Anio (Phiro Village), Sulumo (Tsongiki Village), Limonthung (Yikhum Village) and Nyamo (Wokha Village)” (Op.cit., pp. 25-26). DBs were paid nominal salary and GBs and issued only (1) one red blanket in every 3 (three) years to oversee the local administration basing on customary laws. Nrithung of Wokha Village was also a first appointee of DB by the British in 1876. The criteria for the post of *Dobashis* in those days are: must not have a past record of crime such as murder, theft, rape and with strong physical structure. The British gave to *the Dobashis* a hoe (*chukchü-khotirang*) and other agricultural implements but not in a form of monthly salary¹³⁶.

Therefore, consequent upon the political domination of the Lotha area, the British has started appointing *Gaon Buras* (GBs), which means ‘village elders’, in Lotha villages.

¹³⁵ PR-231, The Survey of Naga Hills- the death of Captain Butler (Archival source).

¹³⁶ Interview with Etsorhomo Ezung (GB), 82 Years, Longsa Village, 13/04/2021.

The nature of initial appointment of *Gaon Buras*, its qualification, and powers and functions was resembled to the traditional system of selecting a *Tongti-chochang* in the village. A person of high calibre, good physique and commanding voice were appointed as GBs in the village. In 1878, the British district headquarter was shifted to Kohima and Wokha was made Sub-Divisional headquarter. When the Sub-Divisional headquarter was shifted from Wokha to Mokokchung in 1889, the British gives an appointment order of GBs in Mokokchung. In Wokha Village, there was a contest for the post of GB between Zachamo Murry and Chumdemo Murry. The British under SDO P. F. Adams (1939-1944) invited the duo to Mokokchung office and selected Chumdemo Murry as GB on the ground that he has a commanding voice who can be an ideal spokesperson of the village concerning law and order¹³⁷. The present Lio-Longidang village was established in 1927 with around 30 households (both Christians and non-Christians) when the entire Wokha district was under British administration. The first *pviiti*, Zaremo Kithan has a dual role- *Pviiti* and *Gaonbura*¹³⁸. This development reflects that Lotha village *Pviiti* was not a mere priest who performed only religious duty as stated by some British writer hitherto influenced the local writers in the 20th century.

When Nagaland became a state in 1963, the Customary Court (Dobashi Court) was established in each district headquarters (Figure 4.4), and the Village Court was established under the village council, with Head *Gaonbora* and *Gaonburas* representing major clans in each khel, and Village Council Members led by the Chairman, Village Council. Ao (2014) maintains that, “Articles 371A of the Constitution of India has recognized and provided special safeguards to the Naga customary law, practices and procedures as the British Government has done during its Raj in the Naga Hills. This special provision was inserted in the Constitution to provide the Nagas to grow and develop in the ways that has been followed for generations and as the people desires” (Ao, 2014, p. 183). The technical law and processes are well above the rural population's comprehension. Furthermore, the village's population is unable to afford the protracted and costly litigation. In such cases, customary law is best suited for its quick justice and lack of litigation costs.

The Nagaland Village Council Act, 1978 (Nagaland Act No.1 of 1979) enacted and recognized villages in Nagaland to have a Village Council. A village Council shall consist of

¹³⁷ Interview with Bonshamo Murry, 67 Years, Wokha village, 15/03/2021.

¹³⁸ Interview with Rev. Dr. Nzan Odyuo, 68 Years, Dimapur (Lio Longidang Village), 27/09/2021.

members chosen by villagers in accordance with the prevailing customary practices and usages, the same being approved by the Nagaland State Government. The Village Council is being authorised to choose a member as Chairman of the Council. Some of the Powers and Duties of the Village Council are: a). To formulate Village Development Schemes, to supervise proper maintenance of water supply, roads, power, forest, education and other welfare activities. b). To help various Government agencies in carrying out development works in the village. In Village administration, the Village Council is an auxiliary to the administration and shall have full powers to deal with internal administration of the village, and to maintain law and order (Angami, 2008, pp. 1-10).

Conclusion

The post of the *Pvüiti* was not hereditary among the Lothas but selected through the merit and ability. In Wokha Village, the first *Pvüiti* was Shimentong Kithan who had been chosen even before the formation of the village. He was selected from Longsio village (now abandoned) while making a strategy to establish a village called Wokha. Upon his death, he was succeeded by his youngest son¹³⁹. But it does not mean that the post is hereditary that passed from father to son. The next *Pvüiti* in succession was Pangkhum Humtsoe, member of a different clan. Similarly in Longsa village, the first *Pvüiti* was Asharu Ezung and the third, fourth and fifth are from Humtsoe, Murry and Kikon clan respectively¹⁴⁰.

Lotha *Pvüiti* plays a very important role in the administration of the village. In Wokha village, *Pvüiti* holds a strong administrative power controlling all in all affairs of the village and even the British administration under C. R. Pawsey, the then, SDO, Mokokchung (1924-26), Naga Hills District, regarded *Pvüiti*-Zacheo Murry, the third last *pvüiti* of the village, who lived about 106 years and died in 1956¹⁴¹, as the village authority for being the Chief. It is proven by the fact that Pawsey sought permission to make *Tiyi-esüng* (top most part of Mount Tiyi) to convert as 'protected forest'¹⁴². As per the official letter of Divisional Forest Officer, Wokha Division, to the Chief Conservator of Forests, Nagaland, Kohima, the total area the protected forest as per the survey of 1976 is 315.04 hectares. The letter also

¹³⁹ Interview with Ekon Kithan, 72 Years, Wokha Village, 20/09/2020.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Orenimo Ezung, 82 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 76 years, Wokha Village, 10/04/2022.

¹⁴² Interview with Dr. K. C. Murry, 78 Years, Wokha (Wokha Village), 22/09/2021.

indicated that the area is intact and no encroachment has made as on February 1986¹⁴³. The Tiyi forest has 2 (two) layer: Wokha Village 'Reserved Forest' (lower portion) and Nagaland Government 'Protected Forest' (Upper portions).

Even before the British Government introduced modern administration, the Lothas had an excellent village administration. Every village had a *Pvüti* as the village chief, a body of elders known as the '*Tongti-chochang*,' and a *Pangi* who was in charge of the village's political affairs. They were in charge of maintaining law and order as well as dispensing justice. These elders, in collaboration with the *Pvüti*, resolved any problem or conflict in the village or with other villages and neighbouring tribes. The British introduced modern government to the Lotha since 1876, when Wokha was made a sub-division. The 2 (two) institutions of *Gaonbura* (GB) and *Dohashi* (DB) were established after the advent of British administration. The Sub-Divisional or District administrative officers used to get certain works done by the villagers or certain directives carried out through the GBs, who are village heads. They are also in charge of maintaining law and order. They had no judicial powers but by virtue of their position as village elders they used to appropriate themselves for feasting on meat and drinks. The Dobhasi is above the Gaonbura in status. His duty is to translate the language of the villagers to the officer in broken Assamese and vice-versa. He also interpreted customary laws and traditional practices. Later, Dobhasis were endowed with *defacto* judicial as well as police powers (Op.cit. Ghosh, 1979, p. 167).

The ultimate authority of village chiefs has been eroded since the establishment of the state bureaucracy. However, among some Naga tribes, the chieftainship continues to play a major role in village affairs and, by extension, in who would be chosen as a Member of the Legislative Assembly in their constituency. It is very prominent among the Konyak Nagas and the Sema Nagas. Discussing on traditional village authorities in Nagaland, Srikanth stated, "While Mizo students and youth opposed Sailo Chiefs; the Khasis pay respect to them and the Nagas lend conscious support to their traditional elite" (Srikanth, 2014, p. 36).

The next chapter examines the social-cultural practises, economic activities, and religious life of the Lothas after examining the vital role played by the Village chief and other functionaries in operating the administration of the traditional Lotha village, customary laws, and traditions.

¹⁴³ Kabui, A., DFO (District Forest Officer), Wokha, letter to the Chief Conservator of Forest, Nagaland, Kohima. Vide Letter No. WKA/GEN/39/86/116, dated, Wokha, the 2th April 1986.

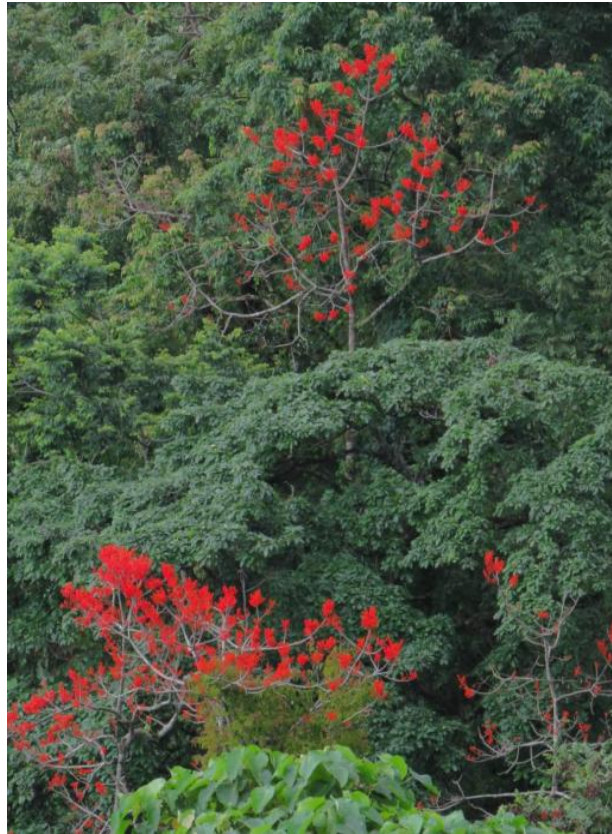


Figure 4.2: Sterculia (*Nding ther*)
Photo credit: Lochamo Ezung, Longsa village



Figure 4.3: C.R. Pawsey, DC, Naga Hills, 1937, with the Lotha Dobashis (D.B's)



Figure 4.4: Yiphow Kithan (left), Head, DB (w.e.f.2021)
Lotha Customary Law Court, Wokha

Chapter-5

Culture, Economy and Religious life

Introduction

Culture, Economy and Religious life are all vital components of the established village. Culture represents the traditions of people and community which envisage the way of life in which society they belong. The historical approach to culture focuses on cultural tradition and how it interprets historical experience through narrative accounts of the past situations pertaining to culture. The social practices and practical way of life of the ancestors can be examined in a cohesive manner or collectively. Every community in the world has its own historical culture that is distinct from the other. Fagan and Durrani (2017) maintains that “Human beings are the only animals to use culture as the primary means of adapting to the environment... Culture is the dominant factor in determining social behavior; human society is the vehicle that carries our culture (Op.cit., p. 59). While discussing the Naga culture, Nshoga (2009) notes, “The present culture of the Nagas was also the culture of the past, and that the acculturation has not been noticed in the Naga culture but the continuity and change is apparently discernible. It is the culture that distinguishes us from other culture” (Op.cit., p. 135).

In order to understand the Lotha culture and the cultural practices, it is important to know the structures of the family and the role played by every member in the household. As Chowdhury (2020) maintains that, “The Naga individual’s close association with the larger community is visible in every walk of his life. The important occasion of his life is all marked by the traditions and cultural norms that he needs to strictly adhere to it. The village serves as an important unit which links every individual member and family to the larger social group” (Chowdhury, 2020, pp. 27-28). The family is a small unit in the society which can uphold the tradition and culture. A family is a group of two or more people who are linked by marriage, blood and adoption who live together in a single household. Each Lotha family is seen as a social fabric in a village, without which the village’s functionality would be impossible. The society is patriarchal in nature, with male members inheriting land and properties through their father's ancestry. Sons keep their father's clan and participate in all village rites and festivals, but daughters enjoy the profusion of their parents until they marry and later incorporate their

husband's clan. The family is where cultural and ritual activities begin, and the clear division of labour is seen among the family members.

The Nagas, so as the Lothas enjoys self sufficient village economy. Agricultural products are the mainstay of their economy life. Desai (1961) reiterated that “Civilization began with the development of agriculture and the village became the first settled form of human civilization.....the rise of the village is bound up with the rise of agricultural economy in history” (Desai, 1996, p. 13). Both male and female children are equally cared for by the Lotha family, and as they reach adolescence, they are assigned various tasks, and they become a major contributor to the village's socio-economic development as well as its cultural life. Daughters have been trained from home tasks of various types of economic excess in the same manner that mothers have been handling family matters. Women in the village weave clothes by learning a way of yarning for the family out of their effort in cotton farming and engaged in pottery manufacturing in addition to their typical agricultural activities. Apart from economic survival, cultural life will not flourish without it. When a male child can use implements like a spear and a *dao*(machete), he is seen as a valuable asset in the village's defence. At the age of 10-12 years, he is obliged to enrol at the *Chumpho* institution. According to Mills (1922), “At the *champo* (correct spelling is *Chumpho*) raids were planned and discussed, and to it all heads taken were first brought. It is the sleeping place of every Lhota boy from the time he first puts on his *dao*-holder till he marries...” (Op.cit., p. 24).

The concept of the supernatural, as well as God of the sky above and God of the earth below (*Oyak Potsow* and *Liko Potsow*), dominates Lotha tribal religion, which is endowed with both benevolent and malicious faith. The Lotha God is kind (benevolent) that he cares for all of his offspring while also appeasing the wicked (malevolent) who damages the people. The malevolent was considered to be an evil spirit and demons. For the Lothas, social and religious are interwoven and inseparable. Sinha (1997) maintains, “Religion becomes a part of their life and is interwoven in their socio-religious beliefs and rituals” (Sinha, 1977, p. 11).

It is pertinent to examine the festival of both ‘family’ and ‘social’ in order to grasp the Lotha culture in its whole:

Family festival: Marriage

Marriage is one of the most important Lothas family's festival and celebrations, as it is not only a custom but also a covenant of love between a man and a woman, as well as a means of expanding the family circle. It is not only an agreement between husband and wife to start a family, but it also fosters camaraderie among the village clans. There was no fixed age for a boy and girl to get married among the Lotha society. In the past, a girl's marriageable age was 14 to 16 years, and some women did not marry until they were 20 years old. Similarly, a boy can marry between the ages of 20 and 25. A parent observes for physical and mental readiness in their sons and daughters to see if they are ready to marry. Even if a man's family approaches their daughter about marrying, parents can refuse on the grounds that she is too young to be responsible for a family or that she has yet to learn particular skills, such as weaving clothes for herself and her spouse. Similarly, a man must be physically strong enough to sustain a family and achieve a specific social rank. Both must be able to make their own bamboo baskets (*phari*), wooden plates (*okong-ophi*), bamboo cups (*oyoo-obvü*), *lejup* (machete holder), and weaved clothing (*mpen-surüim*). Ezung (2009) articulated that, "If both the family agrees to let their son and daughter gets marry a bride and groom exchange a gift. The groom used to give handicrafts such as *okhyak/ phari* (a basket like carrier) and *onhyan* (basket rope). The bride in return gave to the groom *lejupzhü* (dao holder rope) and *rüve* (apron)... "These gifts were exchanged out of love" (Ezung, 2009, p. 4).

Stages of a men's life before marriage involving ceremonies

a. The first notable event for a male child is the naming ceremony or christening day in contemporary times, known as *omying tsayi* or *omying etssa*, which takes place on the sixth day of his birth. In honour of the new born child, the parents will plan a feast and invite their close relatives. The clan's younger female member (child's aunt) will receive a share of 6 (six) pieces of cooked meat (5 pieces in case of female child) and will be responsible for carrying the child on her back. A child's aunt who got the meat share becomes a baby sitter (*ngaropvüi*)¹⁴⁴.

b. The second stage was his first meal ritual, known as '*ngaro-eshan*,' which occurred around the age of 4-5 months. The kid's father will go hunting for a bird, ideally a *liosangsi* (a song bird of the thrush family), and place it in the baby's hand, symbolising that the child will grow

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 78 years, Wokha Village, 12/08/2021.

up to be talented like the bird that sings various tunes. This first meal ritual was observed for both male and female child. In the modern days the father go for hunting bulbul (*vetyuru/oyeni*) and let the child taste the meat as the first food¹⁴⁵.

c. The third stage is to participate in the '*raho-ramvü*' (warrior's ritual), in which the boys jabs the hunted enemy head brought by the warriors in village *Chumpho*. Depending on his age, the boy jabs a number of times with a stick or a spear (in case of grown up boys). There was no age restriction for performing this ceremony and the father may carry the newly born baby boy at his back and allow him to jab the enemy's head with a stick. The boys who performed *ramvü* ritual, accompanied by their parents, will go to *Ronsyu Tsalanphen* (a location to summon the Lord of the harvest) on the outskirts of the village with a good food with pork meat for a feast. The boys would return to their village after eating the meal, which is similar to a modern love feast, by inviting the Lord of Harvest to accompany them. *Arishürüi* (poor and ordinary boy) was the name given to a youngster whose parents were unable to kill pork and prepare the feast's food with fine brew. Therefore, those boys cannot perform *ramvü* ceremony¹⁴⁶. Parents will weave *rüve* (apron) and *sütum or shipang* (a white cotton shawl with a black horizontal stripe) for him as he grows up. *Ramvü* ritual was also observed at the time of inaugurating the reconstructed *chumpho* where the warriors brought hunted enemy heads and let the boys jabbed the skull with the butt of their spears. This ceremony was an act of adding hornbill feather in the warrior's headgear (*tongkho*) and then participating in the warrior dance¹⁴⁷.

d. When he was about 10-12 years old, the fourth stage is to enlist as a member of a *chumpho* institution to guard the village against wildlife and enemy attack. During this time, he will go through several rounds of training and service the village until he married.

e. The fifth stage entails organising a feast known as '*shishang-nrü*' (attaining adulthood), which was a man's first social ceremony. In this ritual, he will slaughter one pig and 3 (three) cocks to invite elders from his clan for a feast. A special pork curry will be prepared to dine in single plate (*tsorhyuta*) with the eldest clan's member. That elder man will take him to the village pond with one little *lifü-ro* (small bottle gourd as cup) and *shika-phük* (*Shika* means

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Tsensao Erui, 79 Years, Wokha Village, 14/06/2021.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Yankhomo Erui, 72 years, Wokha Village, 16/03/2022.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Zumomo Tsanglao, 67 years, Elumyo Village, 24/03/2019 & Yitsomo Murry, 78 years, Wokha Village, 12/08/2021.

recognition and *opküik* is a bamboo mat for drying grains; it is called *shika-phüik* for this ritual).

They will spread the bamboo mat around pond's edge and break the *lifü*. They will then clean the bamboo mat before returning home to eat the prepared supper. If he speaks up while eating the clan members will take the plate and will be denied further eating. This act was the test of patience and tolerance. After completing this ceremony, he will be eligible to wear the bachelor's shawl, called '*phangrhup*' (Figure 5.1).

f. The next stage was to engage in warfare called '*ralovo*' to hunt down the opponent (enemy) and bring the head back in the village.

A man's life progresses through the stages listed above as he prepares to marry. When the engagement ceremony (*loji-longa*) is completed, he will construct a home for himself and his wife.

Stages of a women's life before marriage

There are numerous stages in a woman's life before she marries. Women go through various stages of life before marrying, but there are no significant rites or ceremonies in their lives as there are in men's. Women are treated with great respect by the traditional Lotha family and community. '*Tsokying-tsolo penria nini mhayi tokvüka*', which roughly means, 'may you be blessed with sons and girls', is the ancestral saying upon the married couple. This proverb expresses how the traditional Lotha society values both the male and female child's lives. Devi (2011) while summarizing the hard work of a Tangkhul woman notes, "In Naga society, the role of a women in running a family is no less important than that of a man" (Devi, 2011, p. 34). The stages of a Lotha women's life are also recognised by the cotton woven girdle and *mekhala* (skirt) she worn. The important stages that the woman passes through before marriage are as follows:

a. The naming ceremony for a female child was same as for a male child; however it will take place on the fifth day after her birth, rather than the sixth day for a male child. The parents will arrange a meal in order to invite all of their close relatives to the feast. A younger female member of the clan will be invited and she receive 5 (five) pieces of cooked beef, and she will be assigned to babysit.

b. When a female child is between the ages of 5 and 6, she is required to wear a girdle called *konrosü*, which is a short cotton woven girdle that covers the waist and hips. During this time, the girl learned how to do housework. Mills (1922) stated, “When about five to six years old a little girl puts on her first skirt (*khondrosü*). This is about a little red embroidery in the middle” (Op.cit. p. 9).

c. When she is about 12-13 years old, she enters the teenage or adolescent stage. She will be able to socialise by engaging in a peer group for labour exchange, similar to how boys enter the lives of *Chumpho*. This is the most crucial stage for girls to learn useful skills such as pottery making, spinning, and weaving. She intends to make her own garments, especially a *mekhala* (*sürhum*). The age of a woman can be established by the clothing she wears. Despite the fact that women was not permitted to undertake the same ceremonies and rituals as men, she develops capable and responsible enough to enter marriage life.

Engagement

The Lotha marriage system is based on exogamous marriage, in which a man marries outside his clan. After completing the pre-marital rituals and ceremonies, a man is ready to marry the female of his choice or the female of his parents' choice. Shitiri (2019) noted that, “We discovered that a male or his parents would choose a girl to marry on her naming day (the 5th day of her birth) and subsequently, when she was about 10 years old, married to a boy” (Op.cit., p. 74). Her husband will treat her as a child; kept lunch for her when he goes to the field and the girl will call her daddy for several years. They will start intimacy after staying for 5 to 6 years. Gradually, the marriageable age was raised, and a girl might marry at the age of 14 (fourteen) and a male at the age of 20 (twenty)¹⁴⁸. According to Murry (1985), “A boy get married between the age 17 to 20, and a girl at the age between 14 to 16” (Op.cit., p. 48). There were few cases of arranged marriage, but it was also common practise for a man to announce his desire to marry a female of his parents choice. Male parents would approach the girl parents with a proposal for the girl to get married with their son (*logi-longa*). In some circumstances, a *longa-pvüi* (proposer), an elderly woman relative, visits the girl's parents. In some cases the family of the boy may decide to let him marry a girl of their choice and with his consent approach the girl's family (Art and Culture, 2016, p. 34). In most cases if a boy likes a girl and wants to marry her, he seeks the help of a female relatives or an aunt to put forth his marriage proposal to the girl's parents. If a girl's parents accept the proposal, the boy's

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Riphamo Kithan, 70 Years, Wokha Village, 20/09/2020.

parents will make '*longa-suko*', a rice beer. Only a few close relatives from both the families will be invited to the proposal feast. After this proposal feast between the two families, an engagement feast called '*lantso-tsoyuta*' will be fixed at the girl parent's house. For the engagement feast, rice beer will be prepared by the girl's parents.

After planning an engagement party, the bride and groom goes to the jungle to collect a leaves called *yotsoro* (*phrynium placentarium*) to wrap a meat. On the same day, a man cut firewood, specifically choose *khovoro-tssiing* (*macaranga peltata*), called *Lomyak-tssiing* (Figure 5.2) and kept outside the girl's parent house as a sign of being engaged. On the next day, a pig is killed and a number of invitees will be ascertained and accordingly a pork curry will be wrapped. After cooking was done, the message will be sent to the bride's family, and accordingly the groom's family went to the bride's parents' home with a cooked and raw meat for the feast called '*lantso-tsoyuta*'. A piece of meat measuring four and half *efü* (one *efü* is equal to 4 kg, so 18 kg) will be given to girl's family. A pork meat of 3 pieces each will be wrapped in *yotsoro* to be given to all the invitees. Then a girl will go behind her fiancé carrying cooked pork called *sophi-mapphi*, a special curry for the feast. *Sophi-mapphi* curry will be served with a fine rice beer prepared by the girl's family. The wrapped cooked pork curry will be distributed according to the members in each household in the groom's family house.

After the engagement ceremony is done, a groom is obliged to serve his in-law for a year until wedding called '*lomyak*' (serving for the girl's sake). Marriage ceremony takes place only after *Rithak Tokhü/vami-tokhü* (a social festival after harvest). During this time, the groom prepares construction materials to build a house to stay after marriage. According to Lotha tradition, when the village Chief (*Pvüiti*) died, no social or religious ceremony or festivals were held until a new *Pvüiti* was chosen. It can take up to two or three years to find a suitable and effective *Pvüiti*. Marriage cannot take place during this time, and because the groom had been closely acquainted with the bride for a long time, they had sex and had a baby before the wedding ceremony. Such an incident was accepted in society, and they could still wait for *Pvüiti's* announcement for the festival. When the chief announce the date for the festival by performing a ritual of killing pig at the place called '*Kijanphen*', the groom will construct a new house to be opened only on the wedding night¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁹Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 78 Years, Wokha Village, 12/08/2021.

Marriage ceremony

Following the *Rithak Tokhü* festival¹⁵⁰, a 3 (three) day wedding ceremony will be scheduled. The initial bride's value given to the bride's family is a paddy of 16 (sixteen) baskets (*etiik*); the affluent bride's family will only accept 8 baskets. This paddy payment will be used to make rice beer and a dinner for the bridal feast. *Hanlamvü* (taken back) will be given to the bride's family in the form of a large pig. In return, the bride's family who receive the meat portion will be given cash and kind to the bride, hence the name 'taken back'. The pig will be sent to the bride's house alive. The pig will be burnt and cut from the bride's place and give *efü* 7½ (30 kg) along with the head to the bride's family for distribution to their kindred and close relatives and in-laws (*tsoyutalo-ethe*). Normally it was only *efü* 6½ of meat but another 1(one) *efü* (4 kg) is being added called *tssüingvoman* (price of the firewood cutting). Then the remaining meat will be cut into 2 (two) equal parts. The first half will be given to the bride's clan for the feast on the next day and the other half will be reserved for the wedding day, to be taken to the groom's place. This half portion of the pork is called '*sorhon woncho*'. On the second day, the elders from every clan, relatives of the bride and groom (*kishum*) will be invited along with the *tsoyutalo-ethe* (close relatives from both sides) at the bride's parents place for a feast. The relatives will come with a gift called '*khelum*' in a form of food grain, vegetables, taro, ginger, salt, handicraft items, cotton yarns, weaving implements etc., A share of meat will be given to all the relatives who came for the feast. Those brought a valuable items will get the bigger share of meat.

The wedding ceremony on the third day is extremely essential and gorgeous, not because a man and a woman tied a knot to live together, but because of the high social recognition of living as a family. In the past, finding a soul mate was valuable and difficult for the Lotha lads and only the brave and hardworking could succeed. A man and a woman can have a child, but unless they go through various rites to obtain marital status, the couple/parent and their siblings will be shunned and ridiculed in the village from generation to generation. Those children and their families will never be included in the village's socio-political and religious realms.

On the wedding day, the bride's female relative (aunts, sisters and immediate cousins), known as '*pväshi-yeni*' would assess how much gift items has received through *hanlamvü* feast. They packed all the gifted items and her belongings in bamboo paddy carrier (*okhyak*)

¹⁵⁰ A post harvest festival calls differently, such as *Vami Tokhü*, *Pvüthehanthe Tokhü* or *Loroe Tokhü*.

and cane yarn basket (*yingkhi/chapa*). Her parents will offer her *tivü-rumbum*, *yikphyan*, *lakup* etc., (ornaments) exclusively prepared as gifts. In the evening at sun set time, wedding procession will take place comprises of newlyweds couple, ‘*pviüshi-yeni*’ and the close relatives to the *Yanpi-kithan* (newly constructed house by the groom to receive the pride). The eldest member from the groom’s clan will open the new house and lighted fire in the hearth before the arrival of the newly wedded couple. During the ceremonial wedding procession, *pviüshi-yeni* will carry the entire bride’s belongings; the eldest aunt will carry the *yingkhi*; groom will carry 6 piece of cooked pork (*sophi-maphi*); two males (*sorhon-ejum*) will carry the reserved half portion of *hanlamvü* meat (*sorhon woncho*) from right hand and bamboo torch holding from left hand and follow the group. The male members with good voice (one pilot and one escort) with bamboo torch would shout – *Loroe soaka oro zetavalo* (come and see the beautiful bride) where the villagers will enjoy watching the wedding procession. On reaching the *Yanpi-kithan*, one of the elders will say, ‘*A motsü-rüi ki jo kvüla?*’ (where is my phratry’s house?), and the elder who was warming the house will respond, ‘*A motsü-rüi ki jo hepika*’ (my phratry’s house is here). Then, the group will enter inside the *Yanpi-kithan*. The groom will hand over the *sophi-maphi* to the elder who received them. The two persons who carried the meat (*sorhon ejum*) will get 1 kg of meat each and the remaining meat will hang near the hearth. The elder clan member will warn the couple- ‘*ojo tipyanta khena*’, which means to remain chaste for the night.

The next day is the day of ritual for the couple which is known *Poni Ratsen* (blessing upon the newlywed couple). The *hanlamvü* meat which has been reserved will cook on this day. Feast will be organised by inviting the *ekhyo-ekhiing* (victorious man who has done the feast of merit and completed all the rituals). The couple will get 6 pieces of meat and the widower will get 3 pieces. The remaining meat will be distributed by the wives of *ekhyo-ekhiing* who will perform the rituals. They will place their armlets in a bamboo tray (*lokso*) and shake them to create music as they sing for the couple. The lyric of the song goes: "*Potsüivo chumina, ojo rüm-rüm esongta tsavla; Ni kvütokroji khokata*" (Sons and daughters arriving from the sky above; open up your genital). Then, they will prepare *ratsen-ha* (waste meat/ carcasses) and placed underneath a big tree (*ratsen-tongpvü*) outskirts the village. The eldest among the *Ekhyo-ekhiing* wives will carry the load. They will disperse to their respective homes without going back to the newlywed house. The marriage ceremony ends here and the married couple will observe 5 days aloof from the society (*sari*) to avoid the visit of widow and widower. Within this period, i.e., on the third day, the couple will go to the wife’s parent

house to dine with them. This occasion is called '*pikilano*', meaning to check if any of the bride's articles remain uncollected. The wife parents will give chicken or any others accessories needed by the couple. Early morning on the 6 day, they will visit the house (*oki-eyu*) whose wife and husband lives in marital stability with strong bond of love (*poni-shumjum*) separately with a hope of blessings that they may also live like those couple. The entire process of wedding concludes here and the couple will live happily ever after and the married man is nearing to enter the stage of *ekhyo-ekhüing*¹⁵¹.

Bride's value

The Lotha culture for the payment of bride's value was not one time mode but continuous process where the groom (husband) pays to his wife parents until death. Traditionally it was not a payment of money but in a form of paddy, pork, firewood, land for temporary cultivation etc., Marriages in the Lotha society were sealed by the payment of bride's value to the family of the bride after fulfilment of bride's service. Kikon (2016) observes, "The payment of payment of bride's value points out the economic value of the girl through which the parties benefitted at her expense: the parents for losing her labour and the groom for gaining one. The bride, having been secured through a laborious process, the husband expected her to be under his authority and the husband claimed the right to enforce the obedience of his wife" (Kikon, 2016, p. 86).

The payment of bride's value varies village to village but the following are the most common one: *Tssiügvoman* (value given during the process of marriage), *Tsoroman* (value of pre-wedding), *Hanlamvü* (taken back), *Chiika* (paid to maternal uncle), *Nvaman* (price for not working in his father-in-law's house), *Kitsoman* (value for not constructing his father-in-law's house), *Sontsoman* (price for the construction of granary), *Opyae etssoman* (value for bride's brothers) and *Myingshiman* (value of naming).

Social festivals and ceremonies

Being an agricultural community, the traditional Lothas centred all of their festivals round the cycle of agricultural work. Ghosh (1992) found that "The Lothas are a tribe of festivals and ceremonies" (Ghosh, 1992, p. 2). Most of these festivals revolve around agricultural seasons. Agriculture traditionally has not merely been a means of living but also a way of life. Therefore, religion and spiritual sentiments are inter-woven into secular rites and rituals.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Bichamo Erui, 83 Years, Wokha Village, 04/10.2020.

Culture has been integrated with social structure on the one hand and religion on the other (Thomas, 1992, p. 173). Butler (1988) observed, “The very common practice among the Lhota tribe was cutting off the heads, hands, and feet of any one they meet with, without any provocation or pre-existing enmity, merely to stick them up in their fields, and to ensure a good crop of grain” (Butler, 1988, pp. 156-57). The ceremonies and festivals are intended to please their *Potsow* (God) as well as invoking his blessing throughout the agricultural year. On the other hand, they appease the evil spirit or demon (*Tsiingrham*) to stay away and not to interfere in individual, family and village life. The Lothas strictly performed the mode of worshipping and rituals of different kinds in every activity, such as agriculture, fishing and hunting. Based on the extensive interviews of the elders in several villages, all the rituals were performed according to different cycle of agricultural activities.

Epo Etha

In one agricultural year, *Epo Etha* is the foremost ceremony (*Tsolan-phyolan oviingo*) in the village. After clearing the cultivable jungle, this ritual was done in a location where it had selected to erect a paddy field hut. A wealthy farmer with a large family constructed a gazebo known as *zenki*, whereas commoners constructed a small hut known as *liki*. However, there was no hard and fast rule about whether to build *liki* or *zenki*. It was customary in the community for a well-to-do person to execute the rite first, selecting a suitable location for the construction of a *liki* or *zenki* and offering a prayer for excellent agricultural yields in the coming year. The first ever *epo-etha* ceremony was performed by a member of the Humtsoe clan when Wokha village was founded. It is said that the choice to apportion this ceremonial practise was taken while in Longsio¹⁵².

Rhyuven

The next ritual performed by the Lothas before the burning of cultivated paddy field was called *Rhyuven*. No family was allowed to burn their fields and sow seeds of different kinds before *rhyuven* rituals. It was the festival of the Lotha ancestors for the beginning of agriculture for the current year. The ritual was performed besides the path of their field. *Rhyu*’ is a short form of *orhyu-tsiing* which means wild seeds resemble to rice and *ven*’ or *vena* means spread to sprout. It is a symbolic wild seeds used particularly for the festival. The village Chief (*Pvüti*) will fix the date far ahead and the eight day; he himself will perform this ritual first which will

¹⁵² Interview with Bichamo Erui, 83 years, Wokha village, 04/10/2020.

be followed by *Ekhyo-ekhiing* on different days. The *Pvüiti* will cut down bamboo, the straightest one from the grove, took only the upper most part and collected a leave of *yotsoro* (*phrynium placentarium*). He will make a bird-like head out of *yotsoro/rizüyo*, and prepare an items such as, burnt meat and fish, *orhyutsüing*, *osiing* (ginger), rice beer (*soko,zutsü*) from a bottle gourd, a bunch of thatch (*lishü*), dried bamboo, lunch with chicken curry and a fire stick. His wife will accompany him carrying some of the ritual items in *Bhari* (bamboo carrying basket).

He will cut a little plant and lay the stem, and hang the basket when he arrives at the selected location: the site leading to the cultivated jhum field. He then clears a small area adjacent to the field path and constructs a miniature field hut out of small plants and leaves. He would erect a makeshift fence around the little hut, light a fire with the fire stick, and burn the dry bamboo and thatch while claiming to be burning the cultivated field. He then scattered all of the seeds (*rhyutsüing nroka*) around the fenced area. He will return to the village and sow 8 (eight) pieces of rice in a little area behind his house. *Mojü khorum* (propagation of seeds) is the name given to this rite. The spot where the *pvüiti* performed ‘seed sowing ritual’ will be properly fenced to prevent birds and animals (Murry, 1994, p. 51).

On the ninth day, every member will remain in the village to observe *tokhü* (feast) called *Rhyuven Tokhü*. On the next day, all the *Ekhiing* (those person performed a feast of merit by killing *mithun*) in the village will perform a ritual just like the way *Pvüiti* has performed. On performing this ritual, every household in the village will start burning the cultivated field and sow the seeds of different kinds. An individual prayer’s during *lichen* (sowing of paddy seeds) says, ‘*Heh, emhayile; tssukro motsunga shumthechicho na; Ah, litsalinoe mpa esenthechia mhonitokhe heh*¹⁵³ (Bless us, as we have sown the seeds. We have sown a single seed, yet it sprouts across the field, reaching the field’s edge).

Mvüthan-Ratssen or Among Enan

When the sown rice has germinated and grown green, about 1 foot, the *Mvüthan-Ratssen* ceremony takes place. The *Pvüiti* will monitor the progress of the rice plant and, when the time comes, will summon all of the Chumpho boys to his home. He will advise the boys of the ceremony's date, and the chumpo boys will inform the village of *Mvüthan-Ratssen tokhü's* day.

¹⁵³ Interview with Thungtamo Ezung, 73 Years, Longsa Village, 25/10/2021. The lone non Christian (traditional religion believer) under study area.

Mvüthan refers to newly sprouted rice, while *Ratssen* refers to rites. The purpose of this celebration was to protect agricultural crops from insect attack and to ensure a good harvest. After the *Pvüti's* announcement, no strangers are allowed to enter the village until the festival is over. The *Pvüti* will take his *yingae* (helper) and the *Chumpho* boys on the fourth day of the declaration to collect rice from every household in order to brew rice beer and to feast.

On the seventh day, the *Pvüti* will kill a pig outside his house with prayer to perform the ritual. A piece a pork will be cooked to carry along with a bunch of *Phrynium's* (*yotsoro*) leave, firewood, egg, unused clay pot, small pig, rice beer, cock, chilly, salt, ginger, bamboo shoot juice, uncooked pork and fire stick to make fire to take it to the ritual site called 'Among' towards the field. The *Pvüti* will go along with his *yingae* and his wife to a ritual place called *Among*. On reaching the place, the load will be placed in a proper place and cut long bamboo (*vepvü-vephyo*). He then clear a small patch of land and two fire places- one is to produce smoke and the other one is to cook. He would fence the cleared area by the bamboo and place an egg in the middle along with the entire load they carried. He then kept the wrapping leave (*yotsoro*) on his left and right side and put 42 (forty two) pieces of cooked pork in both side and put a slice of ginger. The *Pvüti* will pray the blessing of a plentiful harvest for the current year by invoking *Ronsyu* (diety of a harvest) by sipping rice beer and sprinkling through his mouth over the placed items.

He would kill the small pig and see if there is a mark in the spleen. If the spleen is in a proper form, he would considered to be a good sign of good omen and if the spleen is small with marks he will say it is a bad omen. Similarly, he will see the gallbladder and said to be a good harvest if it is found proper shape and a sign of bad harvest if it is small and in bad form. Innards of the pig will be cooked from the clay pot they carried and eat only by him and his helper (*yingae*) from the ritual's place. The remaining meat will take it home and organise *Mvüthan-Ratssen* feast. Here in, only *Ekhyo-ekhyüing* in the village will be invited for this feast. Again, the *pvüti* will pick up a cock and pray for the good agricultural year by removing the *evüing hum* (neck hairs of a cock) and slit through the neck. He then removed the *rupfü hum* (belly hairs of *coaca* area) and slit to take out the intestine to observe the *hanrüshum* (ceca). The meaning of this ritual is to tell a good harvest but a year of maximum rainfall if the ceca is filled with liquid and bad harvest and moisture stress year if ceca is dry and thin. After the rituals, the cook meat will hang in a bamboo pole. Finally, the *Pvüti* makes a bamboo cups and fill with rice beer and goes back to the village. On the next day, no villager will be allowed to go out of the village and the entire village will observe *Emong* (rest day). An individual

household will also observe *Mviüthan-Ratssen* rituals at their convenient time after the *Pvüiti* rituals¹⁵⁴.

Lanvon-chak

Lanvon-chak is a day of celebration for the *yingaden* (age/peer group) in the village. An age group of 10 or more people is formed to help each other in all agricultural and household works. They help each other on rotation basis during clearing of jungle, weeding, harvesting, and cutting and carrying of firewood. A *yinga* consists of both male and female belonging to the same age (Venuh, Op. cit., 2014, p. 273). In some *yinga*, few members are one or two year older than the rest of the members. *Lanvon-chak* is a big occasion for this working group where they can relax and feast. *Lanvon* is a short form of *Lilan evon* which means clearing the field's path and *chak* means culminate and it is celebrated in the middle of the year and during this time, a bud is sprouted out from the rice plants. The group will work in weeding the field on rotation basis and on completion, they work in some other field and in return they will get meat, chicken, rice and other eatable items. With this they will rest for a day and celebrate with much gaiety and fun called *Lanvon-chak* or *Lanvon Tokhü*. On the next day every *yinga* in the village will take part in cleaning the path of the field (*Lilan evon*) since the weeds are lesser and the harvesting time is approaching. A person who fails to take part on this day is condemned and imposed a fine of one wage. A prayer on this day as they partake lunch goes: *Amhonile! Ah..nchung tsungon lanvono nroe jo khe, Etsi-lirithung jo, Ah..okhyak chenchuo hantoksi, Ah..lantssa-lanoe zethechia, lomoro myiphia vantokvüka hey*¹⁵⁵ (Those whoever did not participate be carried an empty basket upside down during harvest, peering across the field route and feeling the wild grasses).

Rithak Tokhü

Rithak Tokhü was the post-harvest festival of the Lothas. It was celebrated after the cultivated crops are being harvested. The villagers are in a festive mood to celebrate the good harvest of one agricultural year. *Ri'* is a short form of *oli eri* (paddy harvest) and *thak'* is a short form of *ethak* (complete). Some Lotha villages called it *richak tokhü*. By celebrating this grand festival an engaged young men and a women will be allowed to get married and therefore, it was also called *Loroe Tokhü* (*loroe* means damsels). The Lothas shows deepest sympathy for losing life

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Orenimo Ezung, 82 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Thungtamo Ezung, Longsa Village, 73 years, 25/10/2021.

in the family and village. With much respect, the family kept the share of food at his/her grave until *Tokhü* is being celebrated. The soul of the dead in the village was released at the celebration of *rithak tokhü*. Therefore, they also called this festival as *echui vachi tokhü* which literally means releasing the souls to second life. It is also called *Pvüthe-hanthe Tokhu*. *Pvüthe*’ means carry, *’hante* means storing the paddy in the granary and *Tokhü* means feast. This festival was celebrated after the harvested paddy is being carried and stored in the granaries (*Pvüthe-hanthe*) by the whole village.

Pikhvüchak Tokhü

Pikhvüchak Tokhü was the last social festival to end the agricultural cycle in the traditional Lotha village. *Pikhvü*’ literally means village fencing and *’chak* means separation (a separation of old to new, and bad to good). The festival is to mark the culmination of one agricultural year and welcoming a new year. It was celebrated after the engaged men and women gets married and settled to live together as husband and wife. The engaged men and women must get married before this festival of fencing the village, otherwise they will have to wait till the next *Rithak Tokhü* festival. The *Pvüti* will collect paddy from the newly married couples purposely for the festival and he would announce the day of celebration on the 6th day (including the day of announcement). Since a new year is entering from that day onwards, the *pvüti* will perform a ritual in which a hen will be killed by slicing its throat by a bamboo stick to observe the intestinal caeca (*hanrüshum*). The purpose of this ritual is for the prediction of the destiny of individual and village life of the following New Year. If there is a blood in the intestine where the *pvüti* is holding, it was believed that he himself will be inflicted injury. It was believed to be a bad omen for the villagers for serious injuries and unnatural death if blood is traced below the holding line of the intestine. If the intestine is filled with normal stool it was believed a good harvest in the village. If the intestine is filled only with gas it will be a misfortune year for the village (Op.cit. Ngullie, 1993, p. 90). On this occasion, *Pvüti* will announce by saying, Oh! *Sükhying nmhom jiang chaklanchia sisi, sukhying mmhom sothetaka je*¹⁵⁶ (Oh! Let the evils goes out and good things comes in). All the men’s folk will go to the place called *Pikhvüchakphen* in the outskirts of the village to participate in the ritual and returned for a grand feast and merry making.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Rev. Dr. Ezamo Murry, 79 Years, Dimapur (Wokha Village), 26/10/21.

Tokhü Emong

The traditional Lothas celebrated festivals in every cycle of agriculture with a distinct rituals, ceremonies and feasts. In a vernacular writing, published by the Lotha Hoho, “*Tokhü Motsü*”(Account of *Tokhü Emong*, 2016), mentioned that, when Nagaland attained statehood in 1963, the Government has decided to recognize the festivals of every Naga tribes. Besides many festivals, the Lotha elders decided to celebrate the *Tokhü Emong* on 7th November every year, thereby, approached the government to recognize as Lotha tribal festival. The Government of Nagaland recognized *Tokhü Emong* which is to be celebrated as Lotha festival on 7th November. In 2014, Nagaland Government has made 6th and 7th (2 days) as restricted holiday to celebrate the *Tokhü* (Hoho, 2012, p. 4).Therefore, *Tokhü Emong* has become the festival of the festivals for the Lothas. Likewise, the Government of Nagaland issued notification declaring every Naga Tribal festivals dates as restricted holiday¹⁵⁷.

The celebration of *Tokhü Emong* has been found to have the following remarkable significance in individual and social life of the Lothas:

1. The engaged couples would be allowed to get marry and new houses were constructed following the festival¹⁵⁸.
2. The family’s food share in the grave for the dead would cease by the celebration of *Tokhü*. The occasion marked the separation of dead from the living ones and families bade adieu to the spirits of the dead¹⁵⁹.
3. The young lasses in the village participated in the festival. They would wear new woven clothes, prepare a special meal, carry fine rice beer, a bale of cotton and *Tokhü Thera* (*Vanda coerulea* or Blue orchid) were gathered in a place called ‘*Among*’(ceremonial place) in the outskirts of the Village. The young women spent the day playing traditional games, competing in spinning thread of cotton and observed a love feast (Ibid., p. 16).
4. It is a festival of love, camaraderie and reconciliation from the context of sharing and fellowship through special meals, and exchange of gifts among brothers, sisters, friends, in laws, uncles, aunties and neighbours.,

¹⁵⁷ Home Department (GAB), Govt. of Nagaland, Dated, Kohima, the 12th September 2018.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 76 Years, Wokha Village, 12/06/2021.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Riphamo Kithan, 70 Years, Wokha village, 20/09/2020.

5. The Lotha traditional culture is widely preserved through the celebration of *Tokhii Emong* because it is during this time that people learn about the past's life, ceremonial, customs, manners, clothing, folksongs, and dances. As a result, even in current times, this event acts as a platform for merging traditional and modern elements.

Traditional Economy

The Lotha communities' economy revolves around meeting the necessities of each family member as well as meeting the village's social obligations during ceremonial functions. By exploiting the area under each village's customary sovereignty, each Lotha village serves as a base for economic organization. Agriculture was their primary source of income, and in most cases, the villagers grow enough food grains, vegetables, and spices to meet their needs. They help one another in times of drought and famine by lending each other food in exchange for a debt that will be returned over time. Depending on the meteorological conditions, the agriculture cycle and crop species cultivated vary from village to village. The traditional Lothas enjoy a self-sufficient village economy since the community is equipped with all types of food production, clothing, and implements, among other things, to meet the needs of its people. Kikon (2012) maintains, "The Lotha ancestors were energetic and active who were dedicated in farming activities. They were honest people and never depend on others for livelihood but work consistently and contended to what they had harvested" (Kikon, 2012, pp. 39-40).

Agriculture

Agriculture was the lifeblood of the Lotha traditional village economy, and their entire way of life revolved around it. Every clan and household in Lotha villages has their own piece of land, both cultivable and non-cultivable. Cultivable land is terrain where every household cultivates rice, cereals, and vegetables, with rice being the most staple food. Uncultivable land is an area where the people collect wood fuel and construction materials within the clan's and individual's land. In every compact block of land there is a land owned by every clan in the village. Therefore, the villagers were engaged in agricultural activity in a specific block of land each year for jhum cultivation (*hapo-li*). Jhum cultivation or shifting cultivation is a simple primitive method of agricultural operation, using rudimentary implements of *dao*, hoe, axe, dibble, sickle, knife, scraper, rake and winnowing fan. The simplest explanation of this cultivation is simply slash-and-burn of the forest, dibble or broadcast the seeds, remove the weeds, reaping and threshing complete the series of entire operation...the basic characteristics

of this cultivation method is to cultivate a land for two years and when the fertility declines, the jhumias shifted their cultivation site to new locations and established fresh fields. The former field is abandoned to lie fallow long enough to regain fertility (Op. cit., Nshoga, 2009, p. 227).

The village having a vast cultivable land shifted to a new place for cultivation with a cycle of 9 years while some village maintain 8 years as a period of jhum cycle. They still cultivate for the second year called 'ophen' and the new cultivation site is called *hapoli* or *ntsoli*. Along with paddy, they practice mixed cropping such as Taro (*mani*), Yam (*horo*), pumpkin (*emhathi*), oil seeds-common perilla and black perilla/egoma (*bentsii/ benjüng*), Chilly (*machi*), brinjal (*khontyu*), corn (*tsongoro*), cucumber (*lishakthi*), ginger (*osüng*), millets (*oten*), bottlegourd (*shumo*), lufas (*longphyongvü*), ladyfinger (*phenthi*), Tomato (*phera*), soyabean (*lüngkyim*), lentil (*orho*), string beans (*lejupzhürho*)¹⁶⁰ etc.,

There are several species of rice cultivated in different Lotha villages according to oral tradition and the most prominent and common as remembered by the elder are: *konpemo*, *taphala*, *motso*, *maloken*, *moro*, *mangen*, *tsoknyikvü* (black rice) and *epyo* (sticky rice)¹⁶¹. Both men and women devoted their time, energy and skills for agricultural produce. Mills (1922) noted that "Many varieties of rice both white and red-grained, are sown by the Lhotas. For example:- White, *amorü* (very coarse), *otsi emhumo* (coarse), *laza* (medium), *motiro* (fine), *wochio* (with black husk), *tambaktsok* (with red husk): Red, *oriepyo* (coarse), *kamtiya* (fine), *santungo* (fine), *moyo* (fine), *changkiu* (fine), and *mhumyandro* (very fine). No variety is used exclusively either for eating or for "madhu", but the best kinds for "madhu" are *santungo*, *otsi emhumho*, *oriepyo*, *kamtiya* and *moyo*"(Op.cit., p. 56). The size of the paddy field depends on the family members in terms of labour. Big family produces abundantly and the small family produces average food grain. Until recently 9 to 10 number of granaries owned by an individual were seen in many villages in Lotha upper range.

The *Yinga*, a working group of men and women of the same age who assist one another in agricultural operations, plays an important role. Young and old in a village developed a work force by forming a group based on age. Every *Yinga* has a different age range differences, ranging from 2 to 3 years. They operate in groups on a rotating basis, especially during paddy seed sowing, weeding, harvesting, and carrying paddy to the granaries for

¹⁶⁰ Based on the field interviews under study area.

¹⁶¹ Based on the field interviews under study area.

storage. The members of the working group (*yingaden*) are ready to assist with the village's humanitarian efforts. They assist a village whose family is facing death due to an illness. In Longsa village, an elderly man who still practices traditional religion told a prayer for a plentiful harvest :

A prayer of plentiful harvest (oli riathung randan)

Heh.. Emhonile! Hatitonake!

Ah..Baghty nghyoli ejon

Nzhü ngholi ejon

Ah..ngophük-oluk na ngadiüingvü

A tsencho rüchoa tsata to phyoaka ze

A pvüri-ronsyu emiphongcho shana

E josü-khesü etsia, ephana rokhe

Ah Phiro toshio ronsyu ha yia he

Ah Humtso Elumyo ronsyu ha yia he

Ah Wokhae ronsyu ha yia he

Ah Longla Yanthamo ronsyu ha yia he

Ah elok shena to, otsongro chenta to

Lanphina, landongna, oro dum dum ehanthechiyi le

Olong jilia khikhela, ochon jilia khikhela

A epongro enghyua richona

A humlokro enghyua richona

A shanka mhonki etsonga

A ngophuk na nngadangvü

Oro emhayia hey¹⁶²

Illustration: Hey...Bless us time and again! Bless abundantly upon the cultivators of *Nzhü* and *Baghty* Valley; May the yielding be beyond their expectation and May the deity of harvest

¹⁶² Interview with Thungtamo Ezung, 73 years, Longsa Village, , 25/10/2021.

(Ronsyu) accompany us. May the deity of the villages of Humtso, Elumyo, Wokha, Longla and Yanthamo visit us during harvest and bless us abundantly like a thick cloud.

Domestication of fowls and animals

For meat, festivity, rituals and companionship, the traditional Lothas raise fowls, pigs, cattle, and dogs. Those were their wealth and it was common for every household to live with fowls and pigs in the same house. Almost every house reared a few cattle, both cows and bulls. The cows are kept mainly for breeding purpose as milking was not yet popular. When it was no longer good for breeding it is slaughtered for its beef. Bulls are reared mainly for meat and not for any other work since there was no plough or any cart of any type. Every house has got a few pigs and it entirely meant for meat... (Ghosh, 1979, p. 76). Dogs were kept for meat, guard, companion in hunting and to sacrifice in the ceremonies. Rearing *tsiro* (mithun/ *bos frontalis*) was a pride and treasure of the village for meat and festivities. A man can exchange a plot of land with a *mithun* if he lacks *mithun* to conduct a merit feast. In Nrüng Longidang village, it is found that a herd of *mithun* is still grazing.

Spinning and weaving

Cotton was the important crop cultivated by the traditional Lothas probably next to rice cultivation. It is cultivated in separate area and not mixed with the *jhüm* cultivation. It is learnt through oral source that, cotton was cultivated in a large scale which was sown during the month of *Emhü* (March) and harvested in *Rongorongi* (October). On the importance of cotton, Mills (1922) maintains, "Sufficient is grown for home consumption and for a considerable export trade (Op.cit., p. 57). Kikon (2016) reported that "Cotton was important not only because it clothed the entire family but because of its economic value. For centuries women have farmed cotton and indigo, spun, woven and dyed cotton textiles. The entire process of cultivation, picking, deseeding and turning it into balls of yarn was done by women. All activities associated with cotton were done with the simplest and crudest of implements. Cleaning of the cotton was done by means of a flat stone and a small rod about 6 inches long. The stone was placed on the ground and a handful of raw cotton was placed on it and the rod was rolled over it with pressure to separate the seeds from the fibre" (Op.cit., p. 86). According to oral tradition of Elumyo Village, the present Humtso village was the cotton field of Elumyo Village¹⁶³.

¹⁶³ Interview with Yisansao Tsanglao, 73 Years, Elumyo Village, 24/03/2019.

In a village, every household weave different types of clothes for male and female in the family through the locally produced cotton. The most prominent woven dress for the male besides warrior accessories are: *Rüve* (apron), *phanrup* (bachelor's shawl), *longpensü* (warrior's and wealthy people's shawl), *rikyusü* (shawl of fear by an enemy), *tupkasü* (ordinary shawl) and *eransü* (old men's shawl) The woven dress for female are: *Muksu* (dark blue worn by unmarried girl) and *lorosü*, *Konrosü*, *charaksü* (worn by a women whose husband has dragged a monolith). Besides, there was a distinct shawl for women in every village with different designs and colours.

The Lothas produced sufficient cotton for their use and sparingly exported to the neighbouring tribes and to the plain of Assam. Brodie (1978) stated that "Raw cotton was brought down by the westerly dwars, particularly by the Lotha tribe (Brodie, 1978, p. 65). Sanglir (2014) in reference to the Ahom *Buranji*, reported, "A number of agriculture farms, which become the known as Nagakhat and fisheries were reserved in the plains for the sole use of the friendly tribes who were called Bori (submissive Nagas). Those non-submissive Nagas were called the Abori Nagas. The Nagas who were known to have maintained friendly relations with the Ahoms were mostly the Aos and the Lothas (Sanglir, 2014, pp. 411-412). The Census of 1891 noted, "Large trade in cotton was carried out with the Marwari traders of Golaghat, a great deal of which was taken down the Doyang by boat in the cold season (1891, p. 248). In the words of Smith (2002), "The Lotha cotton traders and the numerous contacts they made with the people of Assam Valley. These *Bori* Nagas carried on trade in the Ahom territory (Smith, 2002, p. 117). It is also found mentioned that one important trade centre frequented by the Nagas was Borhat. These two branches of the Naga tribes also acted as intermediaries in conducting trade with the rest of the Nagas in the interiors, through the plains along the foothills and the mountain terrain to the eastern Country (Gazetter of India, Nagaland, Kohima District, 1970,p. 124). Cotton was exported to the Angami Nagas who lived at a high elevation with little success in cotton cultivation and had to import whatever material they used from the Rengma and Lotha tribes (Samman, 1897, p. 16). In 1903-04, it was estimated that about 4,500 maunds of cotton were exported to Golaghat (Allen, 1905, p. 45).

Artisans and Blacksmiths

Every Lotha man in the past makes their own domestic use of mugs (*obvü*), baskets of different kinds (*lokxa*, *phari*, *okhyak*), paddy mats (*ophük*), war shields (*ottsong*), umbrella (*lipvüjo*), Rice bear container (*Yimtük*), winnowing tray (*mvüro*) and clothes closet (*chapa*) out

of bamboo. Bamboo has been integral part of the village lives. Basketry were made of bamboo species called *Dendrocalamus hamiltonii* (Naithani, 2011, p. 133) which the Lothas called it *vepvii*. The outer part of tender bamboo of this species were collected and slit to make baskets and treat in smoke for durability. There were skilled artisans who can produce quality bamboo and cane made basketry to exchange with fowls and rice. They learnt the art of making during chumpo days and through elders at home. Baskets in wide range and number serve not only as containers for harvested crops, household goods, food-stuffs, but also as packages for carrying luggage and merchandise (Op.cit. Ghosh, 1979, p. 82). War Shields were made of strong bamboo known as *Dendrocalamus asper* which is still cultivating in Nrüng-Longidang Village. A basketry items made of *orii* (cane-calamus genus) found in Lotha area has an artistic looks and hold great value for domestic use and export to neighbouring tribes and to the plain of Assam.

Woodcarving was another ancestral practice of the Lothas. Different species of tree were used carving construction poles, batons, cross beam, chumpo kingpost; trough and vats (*ojen*) for storing brews and bamboo shoot pounding and different sizes of *tsumpo* (paddy pounding table) were made of tree trunk. Ghosh (1979) stated that, “The most exquisite manufactures out of wood are dishes with legs, saucers, platters, cups and other utensils which exhibit their own fashion and splendid workmanship” (Ibid., p. 83).

However, not everyone in the village worked with cane and bamboo, woodcarving, or blacksmithing. In the settlement, there were expert artisans and a blacksmith. Tsiyingo Humtsoe, the Wokha Village's second last *pvüiti*, was a blacksmith. He did metal works at the outskirts of the village closed to the village heritage site, ‘*tssüingchenphen*’¹⁶⁴. It was evidently clear that Lotha ancestral has done a blacksmith’s works to produce war implements and agricultural tools. According to the oral tradition of the Lothas, the ancestral brought metals from nearby Assam commercial station. In referring the Lotha iron works, Mills (1922) described that, “The trade of a blacksmith is regarded by the Lhotas as a very unlucky one, and is restricted to the families members of which have been blacksmith in the past. It is believed that no blacksmith lives long after he stops work. It is therefore not surprising that Lhota blacksmiths are few and far between” (Op.cit., p. 41).

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Yankhomo Erui, 72 Years, Wokha Village, 20/01/2019.

Pottery making

Pottery making and its utility is fascinating and the traditional Lothas are great pottery makers. Mills (1922) stated, “Though foreign articles are being used more and more Lhotas still make most of their pots (Ibid., p. 40). This reflects that the art of making clay pottery was inherited from their ancestors down to new generation. Vasa (2014) reported that, “When we consider the mode of production and the continuity of this tradition, it has been found that the cultural transmission of information relating to pottery making and its style variables has been inherited through the mechanism of social learning shared among the people within some spatial and temporal range. Women potters seemed to have learned from their mothers and grandmother whereas some learned from close friends and there seem to be others who picked up by watching others (Vasa, 2014, p. 206). It is evidently clear that there were professional potters in the Lotha village and they made it utmost care and observing certain precautions. Kikon (2016) has described that, “Pot making, as in all primitive societies, a profession of great utility was left to the women. Women skillfully searched for areas where the proper layers of clay were exposed and quarried out the raw material” (Op. cit., p. 87).

The Lothas called it *Chonpfü* where a wide range of pottery size and shape has been produced for cooking purpose and brew rice beer. One massive clay mining area was located at the bank of the stream at Wokha Village. The area is called *Chonhanjü* (*chon* or *ochon* means clay or mud, *han*’ is a short form of *ehan* which means carry and *jü* or *ojü* means stream/water) below the Springdale School. In the past Wokha Village was the great producer of pottery and the neighbouring villages and tribes came looking for a pot in return for food grains, oilseeds and dried chilly. Pot making was a trade which was not undertaken by all the Lotha villages therefore it was a thriving industry in some village (Kikon, 2016, p. 87). The people of Nrüing Longidang village have a traditional bonding with Wokha Village and solely depended on them for cooking clay pots. When asked the trespassers of a group of Sema men about their journey in Nrüing Longidang, they replied in slang Lotha ‘*Wokhae liko hano wotachoka*’, meaning they carry cooking pot purchased in Wokha village¹⁶⁵. The Rengmas goes to Wokha village in search of cooking clay pots with a basket full of fresh and tried vegetables, taro, perilla etc.,¹⁶⁶. Therefore, Wokha village was a trade center for earthen pottery of different kinds in the ancient days since it is evidently clear that the pot buyers from neighbouring Lotha

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Chanbemo Ngullie, 90 Years, Nrüing Longidang Village, 28/03/2019.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Gwaseni Tep, 80 Years, Head G.B, Terogvünyu Village, 21/11/2019.

villages and Naga tribes went there to meet their ends. According to the oral tradition of Wokha village Potters, when the first group of settlers came and settled in the village, they invoked their God to bless them with good clay and good hand in pottery manufacture. This implies that they had knowledge of pottery manufacture even before they settled in the present village (Op.cit., p. 304). The tradition of making pottery is carried forward to the modern days where earthen pots are readily available even today (Figure 5. 3).

Traditional Hunting and Fishing

Hunting and fishing, which the Lothas had practiced since the beginning of time, were an integral and necessary component of their lives. They valued the game for its nutritional value, cultural significance, and social standing. The fallow lands, deep jungles with sufficient wild foods and numerous streams and lakes on the country where the Lothas lived must be abundance in flora and fauna and therefore it makes them to easily venture out hunting and fishing. Hunting which was once considered as a mode subsistence economy that carried human society until agriculture took as a way of life continues to have its important role in the socio-cultural life of the Nagas (Lohe, 2014, p. 184).

Kithan (2021) reported that “Hunting plays an important role in the socio – cultural life of the *Lothas*. The Lothas go for hunting of wild animals and birds with a variety of purpose. They do not kill and consume the meat of all the wild animals and birds that comes to their way during hunting expedition. They are very cautious and selective about what species of animals, birds, rodents and reptiles to be hunted. There are certain wild animals and birds which cannot be consumed by young and old for they consider eating of those meats was a taboo. Eating some animals and birds were restricted for the young, adults, women and children. At times they set out for hunting searching for a specific animals and birds as the first food for the new born baby. Some wild animals and birds are hunted not for meat but for the feathers, teeth, skull, tusk and bones which are associated to ceremonies and festivals” (Kithan, 2021, p. 101). He further listed out the names of the hunted animals, birds, rodents and reptiles as remembered by old men in Lotha village:

- a. **Wild animal:** *Sotsü* (elephant), *Mmhorü* (tiger), *Mmhorü terio* (leopard), *Tsiyo* (serow), *Sepfü* (reindeer), *Siano* (Samber and barking deer), *Sevan* (bear), *Onni* (wild boar; *Nipong* (male wild boar), *Yakso* (monkey), *Kyatsü*, *Shali* (wild dog), *Liso* (*Hedgehog*), *Syu* (civet cat), *Tsongoro* (wild cat), etc.,

- b. Birds:** *Votsü* (Wreathed Hornbill-Rhyticeros), *Rhüjüng* (Great pied Hornbill-concave casqued hornbill), *Nnro* (Oriental pied hornbill), *Yizum* (Greater racket-tailed drongo), *Seno* (crimson sunbird), *Müingshiro* (Eagle), *Vüingngum* (Large Dove-Columbidae family), *Verhük* (jungle fowl), *Yoliüng* (common green magpie), *Yipya* (Pheasant), *byulokvü* (quail), *Akao* (green pigeon), *Vüingi* (Asian Barbets), *Khetsü* (Oriental turtle doves), *Yivan* (Blue whistling thrush), *Khvüshi* (Black and white laughing thrush), *Wojarhü* (streaked spiderhunter), *Shakya* (velvet-fronted nuthatch), *Jupvuo roro* (white-capped redstart), *Khvükha or Soronki* (Indian scimitar-babbler), (*Liosangsü* (a songbird of the thrush family-turdidae), *Vetyuru* (Bulbul), etc.,
- c. Reptiles:** *Jerhüng* (Monitor Lizard), *Ongum* (Python), *Shifü* (Tortoise) etc.,
- d. Rodents:** *Sethan* (porcupine), *Jerha* (tree squirrel), *Selok* (flying squirrel), *Zhütong* (large wild rat) *Nokano* (giant rats), *Oshyu* (mole rats), *Kvüniro* (chipmunk) etc., (Ibid., pp. 101-102).

The hunting of Hornbill of different species, greater *racket-tail drongo*, cock crimson sunbird, a songbird of the thrush family, red-vented bulbul, elephant, bears and wild boars are associated with ceremonies and festivals as they decorated their festival dress and implement as well as wearing its ivory and teeth as an ornaments to exhibit their bravery. A songbird of the thrush family-turdidae (*liosangsü*) was hunted as first taste for the newly born child with a belief that the child may be grown up talented bearing a good voice like the bird. The Lothas hunted elephant through digging large pitfall for want of its trunk and meat.

The community was interested in tiger hunting, and the inhabitants took pride in killing it. According to Lotha oral tradition, killing a tiger is more difficult than killing an adversary (man). Because the tiger is such a dangerous animal, it is hunted by the entire village. Tiger hunting can take place in the winter, summer, or any other season. The village's refusal to accept the loss caused by the tiger's attack on domestic animals and fowls prompted the community hunting. The chosen hunters will track down the tiger's territory and sleeping spot. The tradition of Wokha village tells that the tiger will sleep after consuming sufficient amount of meat they killed. After spotting the tiger, the community will clear a path and observe whether he comes out or still inside the territory. Nrüng Longidang Village tradition tells that a tiger will not cross the path that was cleared by the human (Ibid., Kithan, 2021, p. 102). The Lotha way of tiger hunting was unique as they applied a method of constructing a palisade and confinement hut (Figure 5.4). During tiger's hunting occasion in Nrüng

Longidang Village, Tachamo Ezung, one of the huntsmen was injured. The tiger while trying to escape, bitten his right thigh¹⁶⁷ (Figure 5.5).

In hunting tiger and leopard the Sema do not, like the Lothas and Aos, build a palisade, but merely surround the animal with spears and shields. The dead body is treated much as that of an enemy, at any rate in many parts of the Sema country, the head brings back to the village and hung up outside where the heads of enemies are hung (Hutton, 2007, p. 77). However, Imchen and Jolekar (2015) reported that, “Hunting of tiger by constructing a stockade in Ao village (Mangmetong) bordering Wokha District. “The stockade was fenced heavily using wooden logs or bamboos” (Imchen & Jolekar, 2015, p. 510). Earlier, Mills (1937) has also reported the adaption of Lotha tiger hunting method by the Rengma village. “The Tesophenyu group of villages build a fence and stud the ground with “panjis” after the Lotha fashion, from whom they say they learnt the method a generation ago” (Mills, 1937, p. 97).

A trained dog which the Lothas called ‘*Sophan-Fü*’ was a companion and effective partners for the hunters. *So* denotes *oso* which means meat and *phan* denotes *phana* which means chase, while *fü* denotes *füro*, meaning a dog. The *Sophan-Fü* is an indigenous dog specifically trained by the hunters for hunting purpose which resembles with the *Dingo Indochina* and *black Thai Ridgeback*. It is a well trained dog for the purpose of hunting animals which is of both the ears and tail which is chopped off during the course of the training. This type of dog was seen till mid-1980s in Lotha villages. On reaching the hunting territory, the hunters release the dogs to different direction to sniff for animals’ presence. Once the *Sophan-Fü* notices the presence of animal it starts barking to confuse and intimidate the wild animal. On hearing the barks the hunter would go to that direction and kill the animal. The *Sophan-Fü* will not stop chasing until the wild becomes tired of running. This was one of the most successful and easiest ways to kill an animal by the Lotha ancestors. The owner’s of *Sophan-Fü* is highly paid in terms of the meat (Op.cit., Kithan, 2021, p. 103).

The Lothas' hunting implements are the *otsso* (spear) and *lepok* (machete), and a firm bamboo spike was employed in an elephant's pitfall (*sokvü*) and a tiger's confinement hut (*vükshup*). Birds, small animals, reptiles, and rodents were killed using various traps and snares (*tsirhi*, *zentyu*, *kvütok*, *chungra*). Bears, civet cats, wild cats, and monkeys were slain with fall traps (*okyo*). Crossbow (*lotssi* and *lotsso*) and birdlime were two other methods of hunting (*oni-khum*). Elumyo Village oral legend claims that the *jerhüing* (monitor lizard)

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Tachamo Ezung, 86 Years, Nrung Longidang, 28/03/2019.

strength and power came from his tail, and that it kills readily when his tail is seized. When his head rests over there, Python (*ongüm*) is killed by laying a piece of wood there.

The fishing venture for the Lothas was a yearlong without any season. In summer when the water level is high they used a bamboo made fish entangle basket called *osa* and *najen* to trap different species of fish, frog and brawn. During the lean season when the water is less they either change the course of the stream or through applying poisonous wild creepers. In a small river, they used the stem and roots of creeper called *opyak*(*legume family*), *niro* and *lirhi*. They also used fish poison berry called *cheti* (*diospyros*). In a big river when the community is involved, they used a poisonous wild plant called *notsü* (*legume family*). The Lothas are keen fishermen and expert swimmers. Fishing rights over a particular stretch of water are governed by custom, being held by the village or villages who exercised them in the past (Op.cit., Mills, 1922, p. 70). The Ao tradition tells that the Lothas were expert in water and a great swimmer. This implies that many the traditional Lothas are expert in river fishing as their land is surrounded by rivers. Mills (1922) noted his eyewitness account of the traditional fishing practice of the Lothas by saying that “He watched the fishing of a pool insufficient poison was used. Yet thirty-six huge cat-fish were caught, while the rest of the bag consisted of only about a dozen small fish” (Ibid., p. 71).

Religious life

In simple terms, religion is a belief in and worship of a supernatural ruling power attributed to God or gods, as well as a particular system of faith and worship. Religion and culture are two inseparable entities, and religion is an integral part of culture (Jamir, 2017, p. 92). Earlier, the British administrators, anthropologists, sociologists and western Christian missionaries have regarded the Naga Religion as ‘animism’. In India, under the influence of E.B Taylor, the then British Government of India informed the official administrators including ethnographers to employ the term ‘animism’ to explain the religion of the tribal or indigenous communities (Longkumer et al., 2012, p. 29). Taylor’s classical term of animism is “ a belief in souls and in a future state, in controlling deities and subordinates spirits , these doctrines resulting in some kind of active worship” (Taylor, 1958, p. 427). Contradictorily, Mills (1922), a British administrator and anthropologist has termed the Lotha religion as animism by stating that, “The religion of the Lhota is that type which is vaguely termed Animism. He believes in no Supreme Being who rewards the good and punishes the Evil” (Op. cit., p. 113).

However, a Naga Theologian prefers the term “practical theism” to describe the Naga religion, in which the idea of a “high God” is present (Renty, 1988, p. 50). Further, Keithzar (1995) also suggests that the Naga Religion in general should be called “Naga Traditional Religion” (Keithzar, 1995, p. 83). Another Naga Theologian, Ezamo Murry (1995), stated that, “The Nagas are strong believers in a benign father-God who created the world, the people and everything in the world. In practical daily life, however, they are overwhelmed by the sense of omnipresent spirits. So, we can speak of a deity in Naga religion in two ways- benevolent, and the malevolent” (Murry, 1995, p. 58). People in every part of the world whether they are white or black, or whether they belong to the east or west, believe that there is a creator of universe. The conception of a supreme being is not borrowed from any other religion, but it is handed down from the ancestors’ (Philip, 1976, p. 28). Pongener (2011) in his “Morung Speaks” has described the Naga Religion: “The Naga Traditional religion did not possess any sacred books as norms of authority for the faith and practice of the believers. However, they did have rich heritages of rites and ceremonies, myths, customs and traditions which have been handed down orally from generation to generation” (Pongener, 2011, p. 42).

Traditional Lotha also believed in a wicked evil spirit that brought death, sickness, ill luck, and poor crop yielding in their agricultural lives, and they blamed the evil spirit or demon, which they named *Tsüingramvü*, for all of their woes. Kithan (2019 reported, In a ceremonial place called ‘*Tssüingchenphen*’ (Figure 5.6), a wooden log called ‘*ophya*’ was erected and the men folk would thrown upon to cast away all miseries of life which include losing human heads from their enemy, sickness and illness and grief. After hitting by a bamboo spikes upon the *ophya* (they also called it *yanathongo* which means village vengeance and this *yanathongo* is representation of monster or evil spirit), they would say, finish! All the illness, intolerable problems is being carried by you” (Op.cit., pp. 315-16). The Lothas like some of the Naga tribes feared the malevolent spirit with a belief that it harms them and therefore, performed offering and rituals to appease him. Horam (1975), while discussing the traditional religion of the Nagas stated, “He, therefore, took shelter under religious observances and tried his best to placate the angry spirit, ward off the evil ones and please the ones that could be, as per his belief, pleased by rituals, offerings, prayers and sacrifices. No step could he take without consulting these spirits and his entire life becomes a means whereby he may gain their favour” (Horam, 1975, p. 120).

The primitive religion of the Lothas is endowed with a duality of faith in benevolence and malevolence. The people in fighting against the order of nature believe that all misfortunes

is caused by the malignant influence of the supernatural, and ultimately they had to make their own philosophy of life which could give them a moral force to fight the various odds of nature, a philosophy which can see a universal role of supernatural in destiny of man, and which invariably warrants an hierarchy of Gods, Deities and spirits in shaping their small and big fortunes and prosperity in life. And each of these performs definite functions in its own sphere (Sinha, 1977, p. 22).

The traditional Lothas believes in supreme *Potsow* who gives life's (*liyingpvüi*), protect and bless them in their day to day activities and therefore, they worship the super natural being who dwells in the sky above and on earth. The kingdom of Gods of the Lothas may be classified into three dimensions, viz; the Supreme God, Deities and the spirits. Different kinds of functions were associated with these supernatural beings, and with these functions the activities of the people are supposed to be efficiently controlled, either malevolent or benevolently. To turn malignancy into benevolently, and to ensure their blessings, invocations in the form of sacrifices and prayers have to be made from time to time (Op. cit., Ezung, 2014, p. 27).

The Lothas called their God- *Potsow* ('*Po* is a short form of *Apo* which means father; '*tsow*, a short form of *ntsontsow* or *tsuphotsow* which means 'great' or 'highest') and thus, for them it is "Great Father". According to Lotha Dictionary (Lotha yishup), '*Potsow*' means God who is the creator (*liyingpvüi*) of the universe, almighty (*thotsü*) and the Lord (*opvüi*) of all his creation. Witter, who was the first foreign Missionary (American Baptist Missionary) in Lotha soil (1885) has recorded the belief in a high God among the Lothas: The evil spirit when angry with the children of men sometimes determined to destroy them by hurling down great blocks of ice. At such time, *Potsow* of the lower heavens rushed from his abode, and seizing the huge door of his dwelling, raises it abover his head and goes rushing hither and thither crying, '*A honoro nzana vana, a honoro nzana vana*' (show my chicken favour) and the block of ice falling upon this door are dashed to pieces and fall to the earth as hail (Witter, 1886, pp. 88-95). The traditional prayers began with: *Hey, meta shilo evamo omon sukyhingo osi liko Potsow...*¹⁶⁸, which means, the spirit or God that dwells around them and the God of the earth. They believe that their *Potsow* is unseen and rarely visit the people in the village.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Thungtamo Ezung, Longsa Village, 73 years, 25/10/2021.

Religious Officials

The Lotha *Pvüiti*, having more or less a theocratic power, is the religious leader in his own village apart from socio-political responsibility. He is divinely guided person who is well protected by his people and usually do not allow him to go far of his village. Oral tradition of the Lothas tells that they were ritualistic and very particular to observe social ceremonies and festivals. Thus, the *Pvüiti* takes a leading part in all the festivals and ceremonies without any lapses for the welfare of his people. Mills (1922) observed that, “An awkward interregnum is thus avoided, for in the absence of a *puthi* public ceremonies cannot be performed” (Op.cit., p. 122). Nobody can substitute in the event of the death of *Pvüiti* since tradition tells that any verbal mistake in the public ceremony attracts divine displeasure upon the performer. Murry (1995), while describing the power and function of the *Pvüiti* noted, “The office is either hereditary or charismatic, but once filled it is a lifelong position. He is the highest religious official of the whole village. He is the guardian, mediator, and announcer of religious events to the people. The tradition of the people is the source of his authority. He initiates religious events, intercedes on behalf of the people to the Creator God. He does this for the whole village in general and not in an individual’s life crisis, or the religious events of individual homes (Op.cit., p. 63).

The next important religious official in the village is the *ratssen*, a seer and soothsayer, who is a diviner and treats sick people through an indigenous medicine. *Ratssen* can be either male or female who has a magical power to tell the cause of diseases and cure sick people. The culture of curing people through the soothsayer is similar to Mishmi of Arunachal Pradesh. Copper (1844) articulated that, “In the case of sickness a soothsayer is called in, and he generally prescribes the sacrifice of fowls or pigs, according to the state of the patient. These sacrifice he orders as propitiation to the demon who is supposed to be instrumental in causing sickness” Copper, 1844, p. 25). Tradition tells that God’s visit and communicate with the *Ratssen* but not with *Pvüiti*. Murry (1995) noted that, “S/he is the medium of divine communication to the people, as in the case of God’s visitation as well as predicting events and diagnosing illness.....In some way s/he acts as a prophet, a surgeon and counselor of the village...” (Op.cit., p. 63). On the appointment with God for his visit, *Ratssen* will inform the villagers not to trespass his house and shut his door to remain aloof. *Potsow* would communicate with a voice which nobody can hear and it is believed that God shows him symbolic objects and foretold the future of the village. The symbol of reeds means sunny day; thread means death in the village and broom symbolize the damage of crops by a storm. Mills

(1922) maintained, “*Potsos (Potsow)* are believed to visit earth from time to time and hold converse with the village seer (*ratsen*), coming in pairs with a train of attendants and bringing articles symbolical of the fortune the village is going to enjoy during the year. They send a servant ahead who appears to the ratsen in a dream and tells him that his master will come on such and such a day” (Op.cit., pp. 113-114).

Another religious official according to Lotha tribal religion is *Havae*, which literally means the mediator. The post of *havae* was usually held by women in the village. Murry (1995) describes that “Her (*havae*) task was to mediate between dead spirits and their living relatives. On the evening of someone’s death the family would prepare a sacrifice of food, put in a basket and take it to the medium’s house to be kept for a night. The spirit of the dead person would tell his/her wishes to the living family, and the medium would pass the message along to the bereaved family. This is an occasion for the family to do the wishes of the deceased, and thus is therapeutic for the bereaved family members (Op.cit., pp. 63-64).

Deities

The economic life of the traditional Lotha society largely depends on agricultural activities, hunting and fishing besides their engagement in small scale cottage industry. They believe that every yielding and luck in hunting and fishing comes from unseen supernatural powers. The deities, since they guide most of the phases of human activity, are supposed to be closer to man. They exercise a closer influence over their destiny (Op.cit., Sinha, 1977, pp. 55).

The Lothas pray to deities such as *Ronsyu*, *Sükhyingo*, and *Jüpvüo* for their blessings. They believe that good yielding is a blessing from *ronsyu* in the agricultural sector. *Ronsyu* is the lord of crops (fertility) who has control over the harvest of the year. Prayers and sacrifices are made to this godling in different periods of the agricultural year. *Ronsyukhum* (literally, worship of *Ronsyu*) is the most important appealing sacrifices made to this godling. His main abodes are the fields and granaries. In his presence humans will not misbehave or speak irreverently lest he or she will be hurt (Op.cit., Murry, 1976, p. 4). The Lothas invoke blessings of *Ronsyu Potsow* especially at the time of harvest. *Ronsyukhum* ceremony was performed every year when the rice began to sprout firstly by the *Pvüti* who also has priestly authority in his own paddy field. He offered a prayer to the Lord of crops by sacrificing a chicken- *Hey, A maloken na maloken nliyikh;: A motso na motso nliyikhe; A moro na moro nliyikhe. Maloken, motso and moro* are the species of rice cultivated in their field and the *Pvüti*

prayer's was to blessed the village with high yielding. Then the individual household would also perform in their own field at convenient day¹⁶⁹.

The Lord of the wild animals who bless the hunters as a good sport is known as *Sükhyingo*. The Lothas believes that all the wild animals are owned by *Sükhyingo* and therefore, hunters and trappers are at his mercy. Folktales of the Lothas says that whoever does not satisfied or contended with whatever *Sükhyingo* gave or complained, his blessings would be taken back, or would not get the next blessing (Mozhui, 2004, p. 17). According to oral tradition of Wokha Village, *Sükhyingo* has a twisted neck that can see only one side. Therefore, the hunter who has been glanced by *Sükhyingo* gets more wild animals in every hunting trip. It is also believed that he is a short man carrying *zhola* (cotton woven bag).

Another deity whom the Lothas believes to be giver of fishes is known as *Jüpvüo*. *Jü'* is a short form of *ojü*, meaning water, and '*pvüo* is a short form of *opvüo* which means owner and thus, owner of the river fish or master of water. He lives at the bottom of deep pools and uses human skulls as hearth-stones. He is the Lord of the aquatics and looks like a man with long hair. He is said to be kind, granting at least something for the children even when the fishers cannot trap much (op.cit., Murry, 1976, p. 5). To appease this deity, small offerings were made to him after *oyantssoa* ceremony, before the fields are cut for the next year's cultivation (Op.cit., Ezung, 2014, p. 36).

The life after death

When a person died, the Lotha ancestors believed that his soul entered the home of the dead (*etchüli*) and continued to live. The elders of the village all pointed to Wokha Hill (mount tiyi), where the souls go after death (Map No.5.1). According to oral tradition, a person's soul can be recalled after death and the person will still be alive. However, it cannot calls back if the soul goes beyond a specific area or a hill. The Wokha village called this area as *nzolan-engum*¹⁷⁰, meaning the soul is gone far and cannot hear the call. The Nagas, so as the *Kyongs* (Lothas), believed that the soul continues to live after physical death. One of the two souls of a person left the body as soon as the person died and entered the abode of the dead in the underworld, through the caves on the mythological Tiyi Mountain at Wokha. All Nagas believe their souls come to this mountain at death. The other soul remained with the family, at least up to the last

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Thungtamo Ezung, 73 Years, Longsa Village, 25/10/2021.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Rev. M.C Kithan, 67 Years, Wokha Village, 20/09/2020.

funeral rite conducted on the twelfth day from the day of death. At all family meals, food for the deceased was kept in the usual plates until that final rite, the day of (*Etchüi vachi*) release (Op. cit., Murry, 1995, p. 65). The word ‘Tiyi’ is originated from the word *tiyi-tiria*, meaning, feeling insecure and afraid of entering the Tiyi forest alone¹⁷¹.

The Lothas adopted burial with utmost care when someone dies and kept a share of food until *Tokhü Emong*, which is also called *etchüi vachi Tokhü* (release of the dead soul’s). The person who makes necessary arrangement for the burial is known as *müngben* (*müng* is a short form of *omüng* which means death body and ‘*ben*’ is a short form of *eben* which means handling. The funerary ritual is observed for those natural deaths. The Rengmas also believes that the souls of the deaths leave their houses to Wokha hill and the hole through the road of the dead after Ngada festival. Hutton (In Mills, 1922, “The Lhota Nagas”) observed the cultural similarity of the Lhotas, Sangtams, Semas and Aos for building thatch roof over the grave except the difference of smoke-dried the dead body for two months when rich Aos men died. The second life of the dead soul after entering the abode of the dead is obscure (Mills, 1922, p. xxiv). Mills (1922) opines that, “Life in the land of the Dead is certainly not regarded as everlasting, but the Lhotas is very vague as to what the next stage is- the truth being that he does not worry himself about the matter. One theory is that men die again and becomes flies. Another theory is that every man passes through nine successive lives and then ceases to exist” (Ibid., p. 121).

Any unpleasant and unnatural death, such as drowning in rivers and streams, killing by wild animals, childbirth, falling from a tree, and suicide, were considered a sari *emvü* (taboo) by the Lothas, and so the people abstain from even looking at the corpse for fear of meeting personal evil fate (*myok*). Visiting or looking that corpse will effect on them by facing similar fate of death. They consider those death are *nmeni na echüi*, meaning, death through personal sins and caused by the wrath of devils or evil spirit, and that corpse will not be brought to the village but buried in the spot where he has died by only close relatives. Those attended the burial will wash the hands and pass through the smoke of fire in the hearth to prevent *myok*. In such cases, it is believe that the soul of the spirit remains at the place where he has died. Those souls, who faced unnatural death, will not enter the ‘*etchüli*’ but continue to remain worldly and occasional blathers the people. It was believed that the soul of the death through suicide polluted the water by the rope in which he hanged, therefore, his soul is not allowed to drawn

¹⁷¹ Interview with Yankhosao Erui, 70 Years, Wokha Village, 08/01/2019.

water. The Lotha oral tradition tells that at the end of the ‘village remaking ceremony’ (*phitsso-yantsso*), the *Pvüiti* will go down the stream at the outskirts of the village (*oyan jüjowoe*) to perform the ritual of ‘solacing the soul of accidental deaths (*nmenina echüi*)’ called ‘*pherü etsen*’. The carcasses of a dog will be cooked at the ritual spot and pray:

Ah! Ojüi na erhe tsolia

Ah! Olong na ejuptsüing tsolia

Kvütata emung ntoki chiücho sana

Kyon lani na nyina, kyon tsüko okhe nthena

*Shi tsotasi yitale!*¹⁷²

At the end of the ritual, the *Pvüiti* will choose a man with commanding voice to let him shout- “*Pvüijulyu*”, meaning- let new life, new hope and prosperity prevail in the village.

Illustration: Ah! Those dead by drowning in water; Ah! Those dead out of the anger of stone; all the souls those living in dark; Do not come towards the village passing the human path; Do not harm any member in this village, but enjoy the food being prepared and go in your own way.

Humtsoe, in *Morung Express* (2017) wrote, “The mountain is believed to consist of three mystical things: orchard or garden of the dead (*Etchui phari*). The entrance or hole to the land of the dead souls (*Etchükvü*), and the *Etchüi jü*, spring or water of death (Humtsoe, 2017). The entry of the soul enters in the abode of the dead in Tiyi hill through the cave and enjoy the water of death is supported by the fact that once the son of the *Pvüiti* has died and he sent message through song to the custodian of the dead ‘*Apisangla*’ and ‘*Tsüingkhumrhoni*’ (couple). The desire of the grieving parents was to let the soul of their beloved son rest in peace in *echüli*. The message in a form of song goes:

Echülio vandamo Apisanglao

Echülio vandamo Tsüingkhumrhonio

He..nchungha eni penro tsoena

¹⁷² Interview with C. Zumomo Tsanglao, 73 Years, Chairman Elumyo Village Council, 24/03/2019.

Senthanro zhü nki khelo rumi tsoena

Müktsüro ji nkikhelo rumi tsoena

Yandero chonchenjü yua tizatokna

Ni yuphen jü longrojü thotho zhüa zatokle¹⁷³.

Illustration:

The song tells that, the custodian (*vandamo*) of the abode of dead (*echüli*) is a couple *Apisangla* (husband) and *Tsiüngkhumrhoni* (wife). The grieving father sent a message to *vandamo* to take care of his beloved child's (*eni penro*) soul. A precious ornament (*senthan* and *muktsü*) is being tied around his wrist so that you can take it in return of a pure water that drops from gravel of hill (*longrojü*) for his survival eternity but not filthy water (*chonchenjü*).

The reality of the world after death is telling through the folksong of the soul (Murry, (2021) relates the world of the dead (*echüli*):

Shantiwoe na Omi phungcho

Echükhamvü Shantiwoe na Omi phungala!

Yamo Pvüti mmhom naha chiro jan

Yamo Chochang mmhom naha chiro jan

Yamo Khyingroe mmhom naha chiro jan

Yamo Loroee mmhom naha chiro jan (Murry, 2021, p. 11).

Illustration: The literal meaning of *Echükhamvü* is 'everyone is destined to die'; *Shantiwoe* (stars), *omi* (fire), *phungala* (smoke) meaning- smoke emerged from the star); *Yamo Pvüti mmhom*- good village chief; *Yamo Chochang mmhom* -good village leader; *Yamo Khyingroe mmhom* -handsome boys; *Yamo Loroee mmhom*- beautiful girls and *Chiro Jan*- reached the world of dead. According to traditional system of knowledge, important personality dies in the village when the smoke emerged from the stars. They believed and so it happened in Wokha village even in the recent times. Once the villagers seen smoking stars in the sky at night and

¹⁷³ Interview with Chonchithung Ngullie, 86 Years, Head G.B, Niroyo Village, 01/09/2021.

eventually the second wife of Zacheo Murry (*Pvüiti*) died¹⁷⁴. The folksong of the soul tells that, upon reaching the world of dead, he has seen the *Pvüiti*, *Chochang*, *khyingroe* and *loroe* whom he knows are already there in a beautiful *echüli*.

Another folksong of Wokha Village (Murry, 2021) tells that, as the souls of the death dwells in Tiyi hill swinging in the branch of rhododendron. They cried when they saw their parents keeping a share of food in banana leaves and flower in the grave. They love to stay there without entering to *echüli* through the cave. The song goes:

Chülea Lichungi nrheyihungcho Khen (The soul's reluctant to enter the cave)

Echüvü samona kongkena shompo,
Echüleha Tiyi sumrolo mongu ena
Echüleha süben joyango mongu ena,
Echumpvüü Tiyi woro kfüala to kya,

Tsoyuloyu süben woro kfüala to kya
Eng na Jopha janathüing,
Kio opo na, Kio opvüna,
Ralo yotso juki okhelo nkeni thesi
Hoji jungu to chiroathüing
N kyato aha kyamhoala (Ibid., p. 34).

Illustration: Afraid (*kongkena*) that we may die someday; we will stay in the world of death at Tiyi; we will play and swing in rhododendron branches (*suben joyango*); our parents (*echumpvüü*) cries when they hears the chirping sound of Tiyi birds; our close relative (*tsoyuloyu*) cries when the bird sings; as the sun set (*eng na jopha janathung*); our beloved father, our beloved mother (*kio opo na , kio opvüna*); putting a share of provision in banana leaves (*yotso juki okelo nkeni thesi*); as they come out to keep in the grave (*jungu to chiroathung*); whence we try not to cry but we just cry seeing them (*nkyato aha kyamoala*).

Conclusion

The objective of the present study was to ascertain the traditional Lotha Village's cultural activities, economic life and religious practices. Major conclusions of this chapter are as

¹⁷⁴ Rev. Dr. Ezamo Murry, 79 Years (Wokha Village), Retd. Professor, Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, 26/09/2021.

follows; every cultural and ritual practice start from the family and it is found that there is a clear division of labour among the family member. Though the lineage is from father side, daughter also enjoy the profusion of her parents until she get married. The ancestral 'saying', '*tsokying-tsolo penria nini mhayi tokvüka*' signifies that the traditional Lotha society treasures the life of both male and female child. Marriage among the Lothas is not merely a custom but a covenant of love between a man and a woman. It is not only an agreement of husband and wife to established a family but it brings friendship among the clans in the village. Marriages in the Lotha society were sealed by the payment of bride's value to the family of the bride. The payment of bride value points out the economic value of the girl.

Agriculture was the backbone of the Lotha Village economy and their entire life was centered round the agricultural practices. All the festivals were centred round the cycle of agricultural activities. Some of the early festivals related to agriculture are *Rhyuven*, *Among Enan* and *Pikhvüchak*. The study also found that traditional Lothas are fond of rearing fowl, pigs, cattle and dog for meat, pride and festivities and as a companion. Apart from rice cultivation, cotton is the important crop cultivated by the traditional Lothas. Hunting and fishing plays an important role in the socio – cultural life of the Lothas. However, they are very cautious and selective about what species of animals, birds, rodents and reptiles to be hunted. There are certain wild animals and birds which cannot be consumed by young and old for they consider eating of those meats was a taboo.

The traditional Lothas lives a very religious life. They believes in supreme God who dwells above (*metsemi evamo Potsow*) who gives life's (*liyingpvüii*), protect and bless them in their day to day activities and therefore, they worship the super natural being who dwells in the sky above and on earth. They also believe that it is the evil spirit who brings death, sickness, ill luck and poor yielding of crops in their agriculture life's and they blamed the evil spirit or demon which they called it *Tsiingram*. (Aside from the *Pvüiti*, the hamlet has a number of

prominent religious officials. The Seer (*Ratssen*), who was regarded as a diviner uses indigenous medicine to help ailing people. *Havae*, was another religious official. Women in the village usually hold the position of *havae*. Her job is to act as a mediator between the spirits of the deceased and their surviving kin. The Lothas invoke blessings from the deities such as *Ronsyu*, *Sükhyingo* and *Jüpvüo*. *Ronsyu* is the lord of crops (fertility) who has control over the harvest of the year. Prayers and sacrifices are made to these deities in different periods of the agricultural year. *Sükhyingo* is the lord of the wild animals who bless the hunters. *Jüpvüo* was believed to be a giver of fishes. He lives at the bottom of deep pools and uses human skulls as hearth-stones. He is the Lord of the aquatics and looks like a man with long hair.



Figure 5.1: Yitsomo Murry , in *Wokhae Phangrup* with his wife Nriilo. Last non-Christian marriage in Wokha village.



Figure 5.2: *Lomyak-tssiing (Macaranga peltata)* (Engagement firewood)



Figure 5.3: Wokha Village women potters.

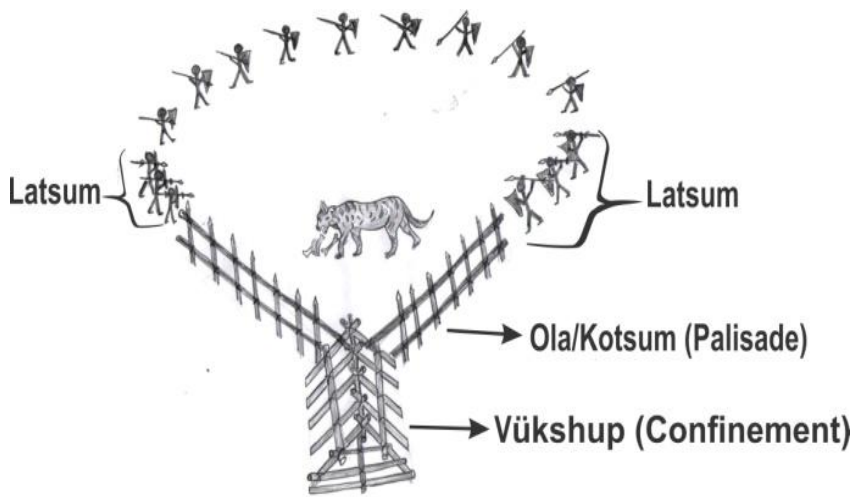


Figure 5.4: A model structure of palisade and confinement hut during tiger's hunting

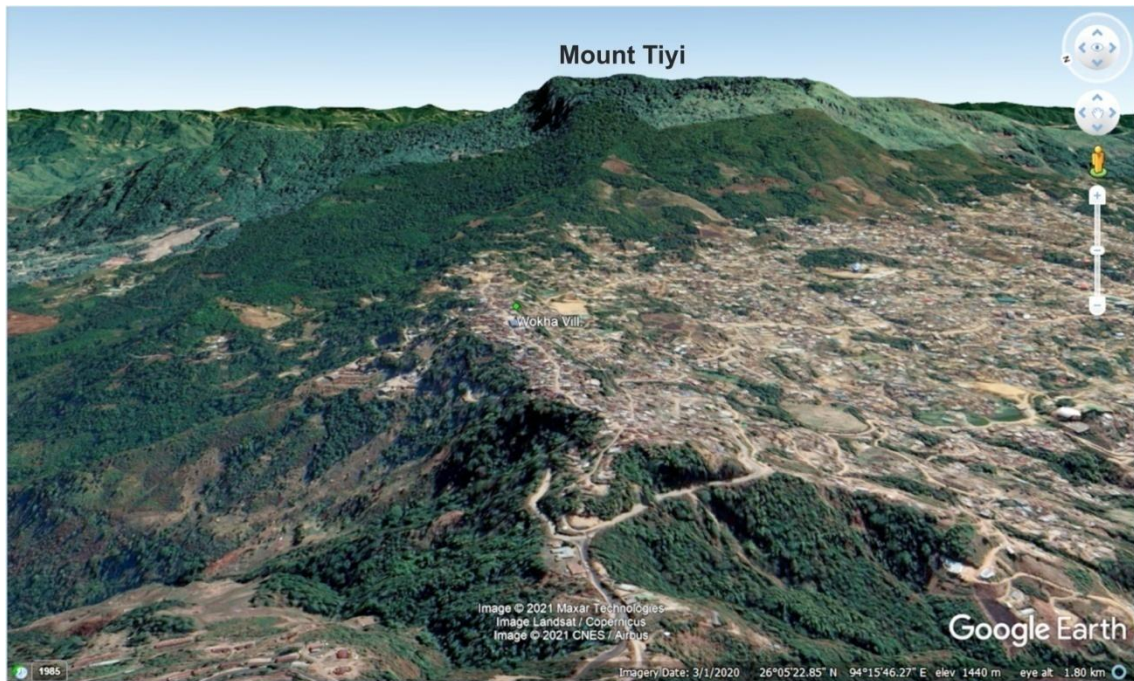
Figure 5.5: Tachamo Ezung, injured while hunting tiger





Ophy (Log)

Figure 5.6: *Tssinchenphen*, a ceremonial place at Wokha village



Map 5.1: View of Mount Tiyi

CHAPTER- 6

CONCLUSION

The persistence of the Lotha village formation as a vibrant community with separate boundaries to manage their own socio-economic and political concerns is found to be dynamic to expand and flourish. The traditional Lotha Naga village is found to be democratic self governing republic with the village Chief (*Pvüiti*) and supporting political and religious functionaries (*Yingae, Tongti-Chochang*) in charge of running the village. A true sense of a principality of one's own village is a traditional village with a characteristic of autonomy to manage independently. While the villagers must submit to their authority, they also have the right to speak out if something is done that they feel is wrong. The Lotha ancestors' migration from one location to another prior to absolute settlement was not nomadic as oral history clearly suggests that they formed a village and resided there for many years with evidence. They left a legacy of history and culture for generations to carry on. Only a few villages were identified as the primary settlement, both abandoned and existing, but within a span of one century, the settlement has expanded and grown to 142 (One hundred forty two) which are recognised villages (Data Based on Village Level Development Indicators as on 31/03/2014 (2014, p. 15) in a small district called Wokha, home to the Lothas, covering 1628 square kilometres demonstrates the village formation as a dynamic process. There is continuity in village formation as we have seen many new villages have established in the recent years.

Different oral sources make us to believe their long journey from a faraway location, yet their past's history and culture were not diluted. They are the forerunners among the Naga tribes in terms of locating an ideal location for establishing a village, despite the challenges they faced during the initial settlement process. Though, we cannot estimate the number of people who arrived in the current habitat sites, both oral tradition and the fact that the tribesmen dispersed in groups to different locations to establish new villages from Rengma areas support the idea that the tribesmen were a sizeable group when they began first phase of village formation. The study's benefit is that, it has examined closely about the old villages such as Koro Old, Phiro, Elumyo, Wokha, Longsa, Lonsachüng, and Nrüng Longidang. In contrast to villages such as, Yikhum, Okotso, Changpang, Mekokla, Tsungiki, Longtsung, Sanis, Bhandari, Changsu Old, and Nungying, the village falls under study areas were resolute

to declare foreign faith and established Churches lately. Many people in the study area kept to traditional faith and upheld strongholds of traditional culture and tradition for a long period of time, and provided rich data for the research directly through them and their immediate siblings with vivid memories in relaying oral knowledge.

The majority of the Lothas modern generation believed that their forefathers wandered from place to place until they formed a village named Tiyi Longchum (abandoned), from which all the old villages fanned out. Although there is no question that Tiyi Longchum was one of the Lothas earliest settlements, research has proven that the Lothas ancestors were numerous in number when they established a village in the present Rengma districts. According to credible oral accounts, the Lothas' old settlement of Honohoyonton (now abandoned) near the Rengma village of Terogvünyu (at the base of Terogvü hill, *Thun* in Rengma) was prominent and important. The Lothas eventually dispersed in 5 (five) directions in quest of suitable and sufficient land as follows:

1. Koro Old Village group
2. Phiro Village group
3. Elumyo Village and Wokha Village group
4. Tiyi Longchum group, and
5. Hayimong, Lüngkhümchung and Mhorüjosü group (all abandoned and dispersed in different villages).

While the tribe formed villages in the current district, they were in the midst of a period of head hunting, therefore security and defence was the primary considerations when selecting a site. However, only Tiyi Longchum, one of the oldest abandoned settlements, was discovered on a hilltop. The remaining settlements, such as Ngochitaphen (Vochitaphen), Longsio, Lijüyo, Hayimong, Zükhumki, Lüngkhümchüng, and Mhorüjosü, are located on a mild slope. Among the existing old villages (study area), Koro Old, Longsachung and Longsa are situated in the hills but Phiro, Elumyo, Wokha Village and Nrüng Longidang are situated comparatively in the lowland area. As a result, the availability of a spring in the proposed village's vicinity for water, and a large tract of fertile land appear to be the primary requirements for spotting an area for a settlement. The occupation of fertile land by the Lothas is supported by the fact that, "the varieties of rice both white and red-grained, are sown by the Lothas (Op. cit., Mills, 2003a, p. 56). As a result, economic subsistence was another important factor in establishing a village.

The main requirements for founding a settlement are the concern for safety and defence against attacks from *ori* (enemies) and wildlife. Since it was a time of *Sochen-Rüchen/sokhyu-rikyu* (age of wildlife concerns and inter-tribal feuds), they value the ability to flee in an emergency as well as the availability of sufficient area of land for farming activities, a reliable source of drinking water, natural resources, being surrounded by dense forest for easy collection of *beliing* (wooden cot), *tsumpho* (paddy grinder wood slap), *ojen* (wooden container) and availability of bamboos (*vepvü-tsintsan/nkyip*) because it is a way of life for them.

The Lotha villages had a comparable representation of clan in the entire formation process and the process for selecting the village sites is similar in nature since they follow the ancestors' tradition. The studies found that, no single clan member established a village among the Lothas, and this provided an advantage for the members of the village to coexist in mutual respect. Because the village was their realm, and all socio-cultural and political activities took place there, marriage inside the clan was forbidden. Even inside the phratries (*motsu-rüi*), no weddings took place in many circumstances. '*Opyim-omoe jo ehung Potsow*,' says the Lotha adage, implying that 'the perceiving God is the maternal uncle' and close relatives of the mother's clan members (the high God cannot be seen). Even if there was a fight between father and son, and there was confusion among the clan members in the village, the maternal uncles were able to calm them down and counsel them to live in peace. Those who reside in a village with a mixture of clans live in peace, which helps the village's administration takes sound decisions. New Riphyim, a village in Wokha district, is home to Odyuo's clan, but there is no evidence of marriage among them. Only in 1947 did one *khel* (Odyuo *khel*) split out from the parent village (Old Riphyim village). The traditional Lothas believe that there is a risk of degeneration in case of marriages within the clan and their siblings become desolate. They are not permitted to participate in village governance.

Another important characteristic of Lotha village formation process is the selection of the village *Pvüiti*, and the planting of a head-tree (*mhenkiton*) and the establishment of *Chumpho*. Every established Lotha village required the construction of a *Chumpho* in a strategic location. *Chumpho* is a phrase that alludes to the first village community-based construction, which entails erecting enormous house posts (*Chum'* or *Chuma* means to place a massive post, and *pho'* means first). As a result, the name *Chumpho* was given to it, which means "first laid". For the Lothas, the *Chumpho* was essential to the community's survival; without it, the village would lose its dignity and be prone to collapse and disintegration of

village. The boys that were recruited were obligated to stay in *Chumpho* till he married. *Thekhoren*, *Pangti*, *Chumphoran*, and *Humjipoe* are the rank categories. Every normal and smart boy between the age of 12 and 13 must be recruited in *Chumpho*, and the initial recruits are known as '*thekhoren*'. They were appropriately groomed to become warriors who would dutifully and skilfully protect the village's population and territory as well as from the attack of wild animals on their fowls and cattle. He will be in the position for roughly four and half years, during which time he'll be promoted to the next level of rank. *Thekhoren* is raised to the next level of rank, '*pangti*', by the time he is recognised fit to be a warrior. They train juniors and stay on top of their overall responsibilities. They will assign the juniors to patrol the village pond from midnight till daylight, and if any youngster is seen sleeping, they will be severely punished. *Chumphokhyingroe* (*Morung* boys) is the common name for them. *Chumphoran* or *Chumphoramo* (*ran* is a short form of *eramo*, which means eldest) will be promoted from '*pangti*'. He is the *Chumpho's* commander-in-chief. He will punish those who arrive late in the evening at *Chumpho* by allowing the lads to enter by jumping over a flaming fire and beat up by a stick. He gives late-sleepers water and warns them to be more careful against wild animals and enemies. A person can only hold a *Chumphoran* post for 9 (nine) years before retiring from *Chumpho*. *Humjipoe* was a rank that appeared only once in a while. *Humjipoe* is a retiree who is not married and continues to serve even after his 9 (nine) year term as *Chumphoran* has expired. So long as he stays in *Chumpho*, he will have the honour of *efüvoro* (honour in terms of great brew, hunting and fishing luck, and pork and *Mithun* flesh from the *Chumpho* boys). His rank was extraordinary, and as soon as he marries, he will be released from *Chumpho*.

Chumpho served as a guard house to protect the village, a military camp or stronghold to train the young males in battle skills and tactics, a court house and a jail to discipline thieves and criminals, and a victor home where the beaten enemy's head was brought as a sign of success by the warriors. *Chumpho* is discovered to be more than just a place for young people to sleep at night. Even when they sleep, they maintain a rotation: one group is asleep, while the other is awake. No indication of a girls' dormitory or an art and craft training centre has been discovered in *Chumpho*. *Chumpho* existed in the past, and as a result, the community did as well. There would be no village without a *Chumpho*. Above all, the spirit of 'we feeling' is alive and well in *Chumpho*, as seen by the fact that *Chumpho* lads not only retain brotherhood despite being from a mixture of clans, but they are always ready to serve in times of need. They never imagined that they would be responsible for simply protecting their own family

from natural disasters, wildlife attacks on domestic fowls and cattle, and the brutal hand of neighbouring tribes.

The Lothas did not normally name their village after the individual who established it. They named the village after an incident that occurred during the formation process or because of the materials available on the site. Only Phiro village was named after a founding member's (Phiro) surname. Phiro and Longsachüng, both in the study area, have a relation to the creation of a village while searching for a fugitive pig. A pig, according to folklore, normally gives birth in a warm and comfortable environment. As a result, both Phiro and Longsachüng's ancestors chose a pig's delivery location to establish a village. Elumyo was named after an occurrence involving a cock's crow, while Longsa and Longsachüng were named after the stone's availability.

The name Wokha came about as a result of the Wokha village's formation. It has nothing to do with general census or population counts, as some writers have suggested. Wokha comes from the words '*Wo* or *owo*,' which denotes a group of people, and '*Kha*' means counts for numbering. The Wokha village's forming contingents counted themselves to see if anyone had gone missing during the search for a new home. Every time they counted on one side of the river, one person was absent. When they returned to their village (Longsio) to count, they discovered that no one had gone missing. The explanation for this is that the individual who counted did not include himself in the total. Basing on this incident they named their new village 'Wokha', and the river where they had lunch and counted the members was named '*Wokhapenju*'. In terms of people living in the village, currently it has the highest population among the Lotha settlements. The village had the most acreage, which shared boundary with 9 (nine) other villages. According to Wokha village legend, the name 'Tiyi' was formed from the expression '*A Tiyi-tiria*,' which signifies feeling insecure, nervous and apprehensive of approaching the dense mountainous forest.

A person who first cuts down a branch of a plant in the location where a hamlet is to be created, according to Lotha tradition, is a bad omen. He would not prosper and believed that the number of members of his clan would not grow. The village founding contingents took advantage by clearing the forest to construct a village by an act of the first hand. This belief has been passed down through the generations. However, research has shown that the majority of those who cut the branch of a plant to hang the lunch bag were mentally ill and unable to comprehend the old ideas. Even in this context, it is true that those founding clan members's are few in number. The notable finding is that the Lothas require a mix of high-calibre,

wealthy, brave, smart, religious, and insane or deranged individuals from various clans while establishing a village.

The Lotha ancestors lived in a culture that was not entirely devoid of conflict and violence between neighbouring tribes' villages. It was discovered that, there was a time of conflict and a time of peace. The conventional war (*Rallo*) plan was another excellent one that employed meticulous tactics. Separated from the common folk, the village warriors would congregate in *Ratssiphen* (place to perform warfare ritual). In order to defeat the enemy warriors, despite their bravery, a ritual was performed to confound them. The warriors spent the night in *Ratssiphen*, which is typically an open jungle in the outskirts of the village maintaining chastity with a belief that they wouldn't perish at the hands of the enemy in a war.

The Lotha warriors believe that bringing rotten eggs to combat will confuse the adversary. A valiant warrior from among them will be picked to carry a handful of spikes called '*Tssikhemo*'. He would lay the spike behind the warriors when they returned after hacking off the enemy heads. If the opponent strikes back, they will be hurt by the spike and assaulted by the *Tssikhemo*. In a triangular formation with one at front and two on the left and right, a fearless warrior known as *Riviüng* ('*ri* is a short form of *ori*, which means enemy, and '*viüng* means in the front) will always be in the lead. One of the captured individuals, referred to as "*rithüing*," will be sent alive to his village to recount the events. To inaugurate the freshly built *Chumpho* and carry out the ceremony known as *Humtsen-elum* (*Chumpho* warming ritual), the warriors of the first category of warfare headed out to hunt human heads. The second type of warfare entails bringing human heads into the community as trophies in order to meet the requirements to become an *ekhüing*. Only warriors who bring heads will be able to conduct an honour feast (*osho eyu*) and drag a monolith (*longzüü*) as a show of valour. These guys will also be permitted to don the coveted *Longpensü* shawl and become *Ekhyo-ekhüing* (successful and brave warriors). When the village loses a head, the third category of combat is applied. The warriors will locate the culprit and they will revenge at any cost, and the person who killed enemy will make known to his opponent village or tribe. The fourth type of conflict is when the entire community is being defended. To ensure that no head is lost in the community at the hands of rival tribes, the warriors and the *Chumpho* youths stood vigilant round the clock on a rotating basis.

During times of peace, the village *Pvüti* can pay a visit to his counterpart village chief's to establish friendships. They exchanged spear (*otssso*) and machete (*lepok*) as a sign of friendship and enjoy the finest brews and meals. During such time, the warriors also

maintained a sense of friendship. If a warrior kills someone from the ally village and delivers their head to the village as a symbol of valour, he will be viewed as a criminal and punished. During a period of calm in Nrüing Longidang, a warrior brought a head called *yimtsü*¹⁷⁵ from a neighbouring Sema village to their village. The Chief of the Sema village issued a message threatening to kill Nrüing Longidang's Chief if the perpetrator was not punished. The assailant who killed Sema man was eventually punished by having his house demolished and being expelled from the village¹⁷⁶.

Therefore, the formation of village leads to evolution of traditional polity, economy and social life, and that, the cultural practices of every old Lotha villages are similar in nature. The villages' formation boosted Lothas social organisation and created a sense of unity and cooperation among communities in times of need. During times of warfare, it is known that ally villages assist one another in combating neighbouring tribes. According to oral tradition, the Wokha village warriors frequently aided Nrung Longidang village during combat with neighbouring tribe's villages.

The vital character of the oral sources in the present research is reinforced by the archaeological data under the study area, which greatly aids in gathering information from different scientific lines of inquiry in order to provide a vivid picture of the early socio-political and religious development of Wokha Village. In recent times, the Church's construction activities at Wokha village disturbed the area where the founding members of the village concentrated for settlement. Many of the village heritage sites, on the other hand, remain undisturbed, attracting archaeological investigation to validate established oral histories on village formation and the activities of the past. The head-tree or *Mhenkiton*, the first ancestral *Chumpho* site, *Tssüingchenphen* (a place to cast away ill-luck and misery of life), *Ratssiphen* (warriors gathering place on the eve of warfare), *Pikhvü chakphen* (the final ritual place of a year to separate Old and New Year), and *Ronsyu tsalanphen* (a ritual place to invite the deity of harvest/crops) are few notable places of socio-cultural and religious importance (See map 2.11). It is vital to note that Wokha Village is home to all these traditionally and historically significant locations, which offers the studies context through eliciting cultural values. When thoroughly and carefully examining the oral inputs, it is discovered to be accurate. The oral information is found to be accurate while investigating closely and scientifically.

¹⁷⁵ Killing enemy and brought its head to the village in times of peace is known as *Yimtsü*.

¹⁷⁶ Based on field interview at Nrüing Longidang Village.

The excavations of various archaeological sites was a major breakthrough for the region, particularly Wokha District, because the pre-colonial human activities had remain unknown for long until an archaeological investigation, supported by oral tradition and ethnographic sources provided a glimpse of the pre-colonial past. While reporting recent archaeological investigation at Chungliyimti and adjoining Sites, Jamir, et al. (2014) has rightly put forward that, "... Oral narratives on human settlements, tales on myths of origin, other folktales and folksongs have been used to guide archaeological descriptions on site locations, time depth and socio-cultural developments. Ethnographic parallels, particularly on settlement pattern, subsistence strategies, pottery manufacture, their decoration, function and discard, storage structures, house architecture, its orientation and plan, other artefact functions and a host of others have been employed in order to integrate such sources to our interpretation of the site archaeology" (Jamir, et al. 2014, pp. 428-406). Oral tradition, eyewitness account, prayers, saying, myths, and folksongs have all aided in present studies.

The trial excavation of Wokha Village *Chumpho* site, the first *Chumpho* ever constructed in the village called by the local, a '*Benka Chumpho*' was indeed a breakthrough of scientific findings. It has uncovered that *Chumpho* faced toward the north-west in the main settlement area and it has a door at the rear side facing towards mount Tiyi in the south-east. Altogether 33 (thirty three) postholes (big and small) and 5 (five) fire place/hearth were unearthed. A sizeable wooden remain of the inner king post called '*humtsen ochongo*' (WKA-19/1, Wood sample) was unearthed in Trench -1, Lot-2 and through the Radiocarbon calibration dating, bearing Laboratory Code No. BS-5111, S-5172, shows 95.4% probability of 410-772 cal AD with median probability date of 578 AD. The date is being calibrated using OxCalv.4.4. The tree which the ancestors used as the main curved post with hornbill was identified both by the local elders and the Scientist¹⁷⁷ as "Phoebe goalparensis"¹⁷⁸, *Melesi* or *Mevü* in local name. The 4 (four) samples (3 wood samples and 1 charcoal sample), bearing Laboratory Code (BSIP) No. BS-5112 (S-5173), BS-5113 (S-5174), BS- 5114 (5175) and BS-5115 (S-5115) turned out to be influenced of nuclear testing C-14. Bomb effect which refers to the phenomenon that produced "artificial" radiocarbon in the atmosphere due to nuclear bombs. Nuclear weapons testing brought about a reaction that stimulates atmospheric production of carbon 14 in unnatural quantities. The huge thermal neutron flux produced by

¹⁷⁷Phoebe species of tree confirmed by Dr. Nribemo Odyuo, Scientist 'E', Botanical Survey of India, Shillong.

¹⁷⁸ A 1000 year old Phoebe Zhennan tree was found in Enshi, central China's Hubei province. The tree is 32 meter high, 1.2 meters in diameter at breast height. Source: People' Daily Online, April 26, 2016.

nuclear bombs reacted with nitrogen atoms present in the atmosphere to form carbon 14¹⁷⁹. *Chumpho* was reconstructed every after 9 (nine) years and the last was reconstructed in 1958 until it was reconstructed basing on oral tradition, eyewitness account and archaeological excavations' finding in 2021. The different types of findings such as a copper coin of 1 Anna, inscribing 1918 under King Edward (TR-1, Lot-6) and a modern Indian coin of 20 Paisa (TR-1, Lot-3) and the evidence of charcoal and potsherds in the postholes reveals that *Chumpho* institution was existed for long and reconstructed numerous times. Some of the potsherds have a soot stains on the exterior surface and it is strongly indicated that those were used for cooking but the oral tradition of Wokha Village says no one cooks in *Chumpho* which attracts further investigation.

Two (two) human teeth discovered inside postholes No. 1 & 2 (TR-1, Lot-2) are considered to be teeth from a human skull carried to *Chumpho*. The *Ramvii* custom of jabbing the hunted heads with spears before hanging in the head-tree (*mhenkiton*) is supported by an oral source. *Ramvii* ritual was commonly observed at the time of inaugurating the repaired or reconstructed *Chumpho* where the warriors brought hunted enemy head's and let the boys jabbed the skull with the butt of their spears. This ceremony was an act of adding hornbill feathers in the warrior's headgear (*tongkho*) and then performing in the warrior dance. Another noteworthy finding is the recovery of the scores animal bone fragments within the laid trench which is identical to the past's fictitious fight between the *Chumpho* boys and the ladies in the evening of *Chumpho* inauguration. A ceremony of sham fight known as *Nongpvü-rotä* was performed. The childless ladies would come to the *Chumpho*, a bastion of the boy's camp, with a desire to get pregnant on the guise of longing for meat carcasses.

The test excavation of *Mhenkiton* (MT-2020) marked an epoch making effort and a quantum leap in the history of the Nagas in general and particularly Wokha Village formation history. A tree known as *kyukyu/ kyukyu-tong* (*erythrina* family of coral tree) was planted as head-tree to fix or hang hunted enemy heads by the first settlers of the village. According to most credible oral source, the ancestors planted a tree called *tsongon-tong* (*ficus* family) after few years of settlement. *Tsongon-tong* (a strangler tree) starts as an epiphyte (a plant that grows on another plant), send roots to the ground and eventually form a huge tree over the coral tree. In the process of the test excavation, 2 (two) layer of decayed wood of the coral tree has trowelled from 17 cm- 21 cm (T-1) and 22 cm – 26 (T-2), 1 cm to 16 cm being a vacuum. A wood sample of second layer (T-2, MT-2020/1), with a Laboratory Code No. BS- 5116, S-

¹⁷⁹ <https://www.radiocarbon.com> Radiocarbon testing-beta analytic. Accessed, 12/02/2022.

5178 resulted 95.4% probability of 900-1265 with a median probability year of 1103 AD. The other sample of first layer (T-1, MT-2020/2), bearing Lab. Code. BS-5117, S-5179 resulted a median probability year of 1954, with comment that, “1955 denote influenced of nuclear testing C-14”. Both oral and the written accounts revealed that Wokha Village was bombarded by an Indian Army stationed at Wokha (present Assam Rifles Battalion Headquarter) in 1955 and eventually burned the houses of national workers (underground) and the most heinous crime committed by Indian Army was razing the entire village to the ground in 1956. According to Wokha Village Baptist Church Platinum Jubilee Souvenir (2003), “Wokha village was burned down by an Indian Army in 1956, July 20 due to the political disturbance in Nagaland” (WVBC, 2003, p. 21). Wokha Village was one of the strongholds of the Naga National Movement during this time, when the struggle to determine the future of the Nagas to live apart from Indian union was at its peak.

Longsio (LS-2020) was identified as one of the oldest villages that the Lotha had established in the present Wokha District. Wokha village was also established by a group of people from Longsio. The land is now possessed by the Longsa villagers and a few plot of land at the earlier settlement area has been purchased by the Pongitong villagers. The trial excavation was carried out at the land possessed by Ezanthung Ezung and Lanchibemo Tsopoe (Both are from Pongitong). Altogether 11 (eleven) megaliths (*Longziü* in local name) were recovered which are identified as a classified type of ‘menhir’ and a functional type of memorial stone for organising feast of merit (*osho-yu*), and 1 (one) stone sitting platform (*longpyak khokthephen* in local name) was uncovered which is a classified type of ‘raised platform’ and a functional type of sitting place which serves for public meeting.

The most spectacular findings in the site are the potsherds of paddle mat impressed and a cotton ginning stone. In Trench one (TR-1), Layer-2, a body sherds of paddle mat impressed of light red in colour (10 YR 6/60) with sandy fabric was recovered at the depth of 26 cm, and another body sherds of paddle mat impressed of reddish brown in colour (2.5 YR 5/4) with sandy fabric was recovered at the depth of 46 cm from TR-2/ Layer-2. A designed earthen pottery of paddle mat impressed was rare and unique in Lotha area.

Cotton ginning stone tool, measuring 20.5 cm length x 8 cm breath x 3 cm thick was unearthed in Layer-2 of Trench-2 (TR-2), at the depth of 64 cm from the datum point. In the cotton ginning stone tool’s hole, a charcoal sample was collected for further analysis with a tag LS-2020/1 was sent to BSIP for determination of an age. The recovery of cotton ginning stone validated the oral account of the Lothas’ cultivation of cotton in large scale for their own clothing and commercial purpose. It has proven to what Mills (1922) observed that “Sufficient

is grown for home consumption and for a considerable export trade” (Op.cit., p. 57). The Radiocarbon date for charcoal sample that recovered from the hole of cotton ginning stone tool at Longsio excavation with a Lab code BS-5118, S-5180 resulted Radiocarbon age (BP 614+/-128) 95.4% probability of 1158-1631 calAD with a median probability date of 1350 AD. The village (Longsio) still exists during the colonial period as J.H. Hutton commented in April 1921 that, it was on the verge of deformation. He noted “... Mr. Mills (1922), observed that “There had been no village *puthi* (correct spelling is *Pvüti*) and therefore, no communal ceremonies for twenty years” (Ibid., pp. xi-xii). Longsio was a huge village with 300 *Tsongpvüi* (brave warriors) and 3 *ozen ejüi* (wizard) of Tungoe clan by the name: Tsenchothung who has a tiger instinct; Ralanthung who has an eagle instinct, and Alanthung who has a cat instinct dwelt there, according to oral sources¹⁸⁰. It demonstrates that Longsio was once a thriving and powerful village with a good number of warriors and talented people.

Due to a lack of written records and reputable oral accounts, the Lothas' polity remained a mystery for a long time. However, research on existing old villages revealed that Lotha villages had a democratic Chief (*Pvüti*) who was assisted by his helper (*yingae*) and a plethora of learned customary regulations (*Tongti-Chochang*) for seamless village administration. The Lotha *Pvüti* wields political and religious influence, and the village chooses one *Pvüti* for the entire village, who is thought to be the most powerful person in the village. *Pvüti* was the village's top authority, in charge of the village's socio-political and religious issues. The Lothas' oral history claims that they were ceremonial and meticulous in their observance of social events and festivals. Rituals and ceremonies are inseparable part of life to complete religious practices and social recognition. The Lotha *Pvüti*, having more or less a theocratic power, is the religious leader in his own village apart from socio-political responsibility. He is a divinely inspired individual who is well protected by his people, who rarely allow him to leave his village.

The village can either remove or correct him if he (Chief) was found arrogant, proud and selfish, which is justified by a folksong- “*Nyimshi Nyimrakcho Janlanta*” (Dared to question the haughty *Pvüti*, which says, “a common people can slammed his actions, labeling him a haughty individual for criticizing a villager who is impoverished and has less clan members. They also advised him to look up at the moon and stars in the sky, which together create a beautiful sky. Similarly, the village appears to be powerful due to the mix of poor and wealthy residents, which makes the community as lovely as the shining sky. The commoner

¹⁸⁰ Interviewed with Zubemo Ezung, 76 Years, Pongitong Village, 04/11/2020.

warriors were the ones that battled valiantly to defend the village”. Therefore, it is found that, the power of the Lotha village Chief was not autocratic but democratic in nature.

The studies have found that the *Pvüiti* does not have absolute influence over other settlements. His authority and function were limited to his own village, yet he was capable of forming positive relationships with other villages or tribes. In village administration, *Tongti-Chochang* wields considerable power. They are the custodians of unwritten customary rules and administer justice to citizens. They choose their own *Pvüiti* and work hand in hand with him. *Tongti* means hilltop, and *Chochang* means complete man or men who threw several feasts, according to Wokha village oral tradition. The *Chochang's* gives important announcement in consultation with the *Pvüiti* at the hillock of every khel in the village so that every household would hear it and hence it is known as *Tongti-Chochang*, a merging word. *Tongti-Chochang* is village elders who are well-versed in village customs and traditions. Similarly, Elumyo, Longsa, and Niroyo village traditions claim that *Tongti* and *Chochang* are a single term and that there is no differentiation in the *Tongti-Chochang* institution. They would congregate in *Pvüiti's* home after he died to make choices regarding the community and village concerns in the presence of *Pvüiti's* wife. According to the investigations, there is neither a criterion for the *Pvüiti's* wife of becoming *Pvüiti* nor found a priestess in any Lotha villages.

The traditional based application of customary rules demonstrates that Lotha civilization was not lawless in the past. The customary rules were unwritten, but it was accepted as a legal obligation that the people accepted as necessary for social management. To maintain a pleasant atmosphere in the village, the customary law was developed according to the demands of the people and their culture. No inhabitants were exempted from the village's customary rules and practices, which imposed various punishments on anyone who disobeyed it. An oath was administered to resolve a land dispute and other criminal offences. Even the British Officers during the colonial rule in Naga Hills, found it to be pertinent to modern Naga civilization and that it has survived. *Tongti-Chochang*, the guardian of traditional regulations, was supplanted by the installation of *Dobashis* in urban areas and *Goanburas* in villages to supervise customary laws. Eventually, When Nagaland gained statehood in 1963, the Customary Court (*Dobashi* Court) was established in each district headquarters, and the Village Court was established under the village council, with Head *Gaonbora* and *Gaonburas* representing major clans in each khel, and Village Council Members led by the Chairman, Village Council. The vernacular writing based on oral account mentioning *Pangi Hoho* (Elders Assembly) requires further study.

The community valued the life of each individual in the village. Both male and female children are equally cared for by the Lotha family, and as they reach adolescence, they are assigned various tasks, and they become a major contributor to the village's socio-economic development as well as the promotion of cultural and religious life. The community went through a period of combative and bellicose battles, which included frequent headhunting. Women were always placed in the middle, protected by the men folk even when working in the field or walking to and fro in the field. Because wooded regions are enemy hideouts, they were not allowed to clear the edge of the field. This is supported by the Lotha proverbs, “*Eloe jo litssa-lino nlhuptok*”, which means women are not allowed to chop or clean the weeds at the border or edge of the paddy field. The way her parents and community respected her when she reached marriageable age and his parents valued her during marriage are testaments to her respectable status. Likewise, the boys in the village are thoroughly trained in the village to be brave and self-reliant. We have seen how the lads were trained to be great warriors to protect the community throughout their time in *Chumpho*. “*Eboe na jo hochi tia ntsokhok nüng*”, says the Lotha adage, aren't you do after being a man? The society always expects them to be active, brave and strong. He attained the position of *Ekhyo-ekhiing* (Victorious and successful man) as a result of his resilient and sincere experience at his formidable age and the community expects those person to be their leader.

The traditional Lotha marriage was a (3) three-day ceremony that was extremely extravagant. The first day was marked by providing the bride's value to the bride's family in the form of paddy and a share of pig, known as *Hanlamvü*, which literally translates as "taken back" in the context of gifts from the bride's relatives. The bride's parents will host a feast for the elders from each clan, the *tsoyutalo-ethe* (close relatives from both sides), and the relations of the bride and groom (*kishum*) on the second day. The relatives will bring a gift known as ‘*khelum*’ in the form of food items including grains, vegetables, taro, ginger, and salt as well as handicrafts like cotton yarns and weaving tools. All the relatives who attended the feast will receive a portion of the meat. The greater portion of the meat will go to those who brought valuable gifts. The wedding ceremony on the third day is extremely essential and gorgeous, not because a man and a woman tied a knot to live together, but because of the high social recognition of living as a family. The bride's female relatives, or ‘*Pvüshi-yeni*’, who includes aunts, sisters, and close cousins, would evaluate the amount of gifts that had been given during the *Hanlamvü* feast on the wedding day. They placed all of the gifts and her possessions in cane yarn baskets (*yingkhi/chapa*) and bamboo paddy carriers (*okhyak*). Her parents will give her handcrafted ornaments such as *tivü-rumbum*, *yikphyan*, *lakup*, etc. as gifts. The wedding

procession of welcoming the bride to a new home (*yanpi-kithan*) will take place in the evening at sundown. Before the married couple arrives, the eldest member of the groom's family will open the new home and light the hearth fire. On reaching the *Yanpi-kithan* one elder will ask, 'Where is my phratry's house?' (*A motsü-rüi ki jo kvüla?*) and the elder who was warming the house will reply, 'My phratry's house is here' (*A motsü-rüi ki jo hepika*). This event testifies how the bride is being warmly welcome to the family of the groom and to the fold of the phratry.

Pottery making and its applications are fascinating, and traditional Lothas are excellent potters. The Lothas called it "*Chonpfü*" and "*Wokhae Hanpfü*" (cooking pot that produced in Wokha village), and it was a place where a vast variety of pottery sizes and shapes were made for cooking and brewing rice beer. A large pottery clay mining place on the side of the stream is located at Wokha Village. *Chonhan-jü* (*chon* or *ochon* means clay or mud, *han'* is a short form of *ehan*, which means to carry, and *jü* or *ojü* indicate stream) is the name of the place. Wokha Village ladies are still enthusiastic about making pottery, and there is a great demand locally even today (See Figure 5.3).

Hunting has always been a part of the indigenous Lothas' culture. It was done for meat consumption as well as cultural reasons. *Rhüjüng* (great pied Hornbill) and *yizum* (greater racket-tailed drongo) were hunted for their feathers to add to the warriors' headgear; elephants were hunted for both meat and ivory and bones; wild boars were hunted for their teeth; and Small bird *liosangsü* (a song bird of the thrush family) were hunted for the first taste of a child (*ngaro eshan han*) in the hope that the infant would grow up to be gifted with a lovely voice like the bird. They hunted with the techniques of hunting with dogs; with spear and dao; applying traps and snares (*tsirhi-zentyu*), fall trap (*okyo*) and with crossbow (*lotssi/ lotso*) and birdlime (*oni khum*). They hunted wild animals, birds, reptiles and rodents. We labeled them primitives, but they are smart as a result of their experience. They know what to eat and what types of meats should be avoided. Tiger meat was tabooed because it was thought that humans possessed a tiger spirit; monkey meat was tabooed for pregnant women because it was thought that the new born would look like a monkey and *khvüshi* (black and white laughing thrush) was tabooed because it was thought that the person who eats would have early grey hair. The crow (*kyashak*) was not eaten for fear of becoming a thief; the *yivan* (blue whistling thrush) was tabooed for causing debts because the bird goes to as many as nine rivers when he wakes up; Owls were forbidden to women and children due to a worry that if they were eaten, they would lose their wisdom and intelligence; flying squirrels were forbidden to women and

children due to a belief in extraordinary sexual excitement and reptiles were forbidden to women and children. Kithan (2021) reported that, “If at least eating of those birds’ and animals’ meat which were tabooed by the ancestors is being respected, it will indicate a sense of love for the environment and ecology” (Op.cit., p. 111).

The traditional Lothas believes in supreme *Potsow* who gives life’s (*liyingpvüi*), protect and bless them in their day to day activities and therefore, they worship the super natural being who dwells in the sky above and on earth. The forefathers believed that when a person died, his soul went to the home of the dead (*etchüli*), where it continued to live. The elders of the village all pointed to Mount Tiyi, which is where the souls go once they die. According to folklore, a person’s soul can be recalled after death (*etchüi racho*), and the person can continue to live. If the soul leaves a specified place or a hill, it will not be able to call back. The Wokha village called the area as *nzolan-engum*. The Lothas believed that the soul continues to live after physical death. One of the two souls of a person left the body as soon as the person died and entered the abode of the dead in the underworld, through the caves on the mythological Tiyi Mountain (Mount Tiyi) at Wokha. The other soul remained with the family, at least up to the last funeral rite conducted on the twelfth day from the day of death. At all family meals, food for the deceased was kept in the usual plates until that final rite- the day of releasing the soul (*Etchüi vachi*). The word ‘Tiyi’ is originated from the word ‘*Tiyi-tiria*’, meaning feeling insecure and afraid of entering the Tiyi forest alone.

The Lothas adopted burial of death body with utmost care and kept a share of food until *Tokhü Emong*, which is also called *etchüi vachi Tokhü* (release of the dead souls). The funeral ritual is observed for those natural deaths. Any kind of unpleasant and unnatural death such as drowning in river and streams, killed by wild animals, on childbirth, falling from the tree are considered taboo (*sari emvüi*) and therefore, they abstain from looking at the corpse with a believe that of personal evil destiny. Visiting or looking that corpse will effect on them by facing similar fate of death. They consider those death are *nmeni na echüi*, meaning death through personal sins and caused by the wrath of devils or evil spirit, and that corpse will not be brought to the village but buried in the spot where he has died by only close relatives. In some case they buried the corpse at the outskirts of their village. Those attended the burial will wash the hands and pass through the smoke of fire in the hearth to prevent *myok* (evil fate), which they believed that the person would face the same fate like the death one. In such cases, it is believe that the soul of the spirit remains at the place where he has died. The custodian (*vandamo*) of the abode of dead (*echüli*) is a couple *Apisangla* (husband) and

Tsiingkhumrhoni (wife). When a person died, precious ornaments (*senthan* and *muktsii*) are being tied around his/her wrist in lieu of pure water that drops from gravel of hill (*longrojü*) for the survival of eternity but not filthy water (*chonchenjü*). As a result, they are not animists, but rather believe in a high God and life after death, for which the tribe's or 'tribal religion' is found more appropriate.

When the Lothas are attempting to recover the original form of their culture, which was completely destroyed by American Baptist Missionaries in the late 1800s, the restoration of *Chumpho* and *Tssüingchenphen* at Wokha village demonstrates their sincere desire to learn more about their cultural and religious practices. The Nagas, so as the Lothas indigenous culture was met with ambivalence by the missionaries. Their commitment to the people was tempered by a harsh critique of traditional religion and numerous cultural norms, as well as conscious or unconscious emotions of superiority in their interactions with the non-believers of Christian faith. The village remaking ceremony (*phitsso-yantsso*), which includes the reconstruction of *Chumpho* and the spearing or hitting of a log (*ophya*) with a bamboo spike in the ceremonial site at *Tssüingchenphen*, exemplifies how the Lothas lived in the past. Only the spiritual revival is advocated by current Christian churches but the Lotha forefathers practiced both spiritual and social revival in the village by casting away all ill-lucks and sufferings of life at *Tssüingchenphen* to regain a new vigor of life and prosperity during the much elaborated village remaking ceremony.

The current study, like any other research, is not without limitations. The relevant data has been gathered from a variety of sources, the most credible of which appears to have come from the field (villages) and the retrieval of ancestors' prayers, proverbs, sayings, and folksongs. As time passes, the basic meanings of terms become indefinable to the modern generation. Many villages have embraced fast-paced modern development that has encroached on traditional culture, ignoring the importance of preserving the heritage. It is difficult to recover ancient past glory in such a scenario. Longsio's ancestral site was left undisturbed for extensive archaeological investigation, but due to limited resources, the possibility of recovering sufficient evidence through excavation was not pursued.

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Oral Source (Interviews):

1. Ngolo Kevi, 90 Years, Kezhakeno Village, 20/03/2018
2. Chumdemo Murry, 102 Years, Wokha Village, 10/12/2018
3. Yitsomo Murry, 76 years, Wokha Village, 10/12/2018, 29/06/2019, 12/08/2021 & 10/04/2022
4. Yananimo Humtsoe, 79 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019 & 25/10/2020
5. Yankhomo Erui, 72 Years, Wokha Village, 20/01/2019
6. Bijamo Erui, 83 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019, 04/10/2020 & 12/08/2021
7. Rev. N. T. Murry, 72 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019
8. P. Merio Kikon, 83 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019
9. Tsatho Humtsoe, Elder son of *Pvüti* Tsiyingo, 82 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019
10. Renasao Tungoe, 86 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019
11. Yanpan Murry, 75 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019 & 14/03/2021
12. Yankhosao Erui, 70 Years, Head G.B, Wokha Village, 08/01/2019 & 16/03/2022
13. Nrisao Humtsoe, 78 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019
14. Yanasao Kikon, 78 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019
15. Nribemo Kikon, 72 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019
16. Mhombemo Tungoe, 86 Years, Wokha Village, 23/09/2020
17. Ekon Kithan, 72 Years, Wokha Village, 20/09/2020
18. Riphamo Kithan, 70 Years, Wokha Village, 20/09/2020
19. Nchumbemo Kithan, 65 Years, Wokha Village, 20/09/2020
20. Rev. M. C Kithan, 66 Years, Wokha Village, 20/09/2020
21. Nyimkhomo Murry, 84 years, Wokha Village, 04/11/2020
22. Nrinimo Murry, 83 Years, Wokha Village, 10/12/2019 & 04/11/2020
23. Bona Tsopoe, 79 Years, Pongitong Village, 09/11/2020
24. Y. Mhombemo Humtsoe, NCS Retd. 76 Years, Kohima (Wokha Village), 13/02/2021
25. Tsensao Erui, 79 Years, Wokha Village, 14/06/2021
26. Chichamo Erui, 72 Years, Wokha Village, 29/06/2019 & 14/06/2021
27. Yankhosao Murry, 67 Years, Wokha Village, 15/03/2021
28. Phyanyamo Murry, 66 Years, Wokha Village, 15/03/2021
29. Bonshamo Murry, 67 Years, Wokha Village, 15/03/2021
30. C. Zumomo Tsanglao, 67 Years, Council Chairman, Elumyo Village, 23-24/03/2019
31. Yisansao Tsanglao, 73 Years, Elumyo Village, 23-24/03/2019
32. R. Thungbemo Tsanglao, 71 years, Elumyo Village, 05/09/2021

Kilonser, GPRN (NSCN-IM) & Vice Chairman, Limhathung Rii

33. Chanbemo Ngullie, 90 Years, Nrüing Longidang, 27-28/03/2019
34. Tachamo Ezung, 86 Years, Nrüing Longidang, 27-28/03/2019
35. Vanchumo Murry, 85 Years, Nrüing Longidang, 27-28/03/2019
36. Njanthung Ngullie, 67 Years, Nrüing Longidang, 27-28/03/2019
37. Longtsüman Ngullie, 64 Years, Nrüing Longidang, 21/05/2021
38. Rülanthung Ezung, 51 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020
39. Thungarhumo Kikon, 76 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020
40. Yanpothung Ezung, 73 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020 & 24/10/2021
41. Zantsemo Humtsoe, 68 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020
42. Orenimo Ezung, 82 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020
43. Chomishio Kikon, 93 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020
44. Ngheo Ezung, 84 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020
45. Litsomo Ezung, 70 Years, Longsa Village, 16/09/2020
46. Benry Ezung (AIR), 57 Years, Kohima (Longsa Village), 30/08/2020 & 16/09/2020
47. Soshumo Enny (Kohima), 81 Years, Phiro Village, 09/09/2020
48. Rev. Rapvüo Odyuo, 82 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
49. Nkoamo Ovung, 88 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
50. K. Chami Odyuo, 80 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
51. Apungo Ovung, 78 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
52. Nyamo Ennio, 81 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
53. Kitsowo Tungu. 92 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
54. Benrio Odyuo, 79 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
55. Lithungo Tungu, 86 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
56. Rhonbenthung Tungu, 89 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
57. Chungao Tungu, 82 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
58. Anyio Odyuo, 90 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
59. Kenishen Odyuo, 90 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
60. Nungothung Ennio, 82 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
61. Lophyo Patton, 82 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
62. Nrio Ovung, 85 Years, Phiro Village, 30/09/2020
63. Tsumongo Ovung, NCS Retd. 74 Years, Wokha (Hankvu), 03/10/2020
64. Ekyimsao Ovung, 83 Years, Wokha (Pyangsa Village), 05/10/2020
65. Solanthung Humtsoe, 72 Years, Wokha (Sanis Village), 02/10/2020

66. Dr. L. Tsanlungo Tsanglao, Wokha (Sankiton Village), 85 Years, Wokha, 04/10/2020
67. Pithungo Shitiri, 84 Years, Wokha (Changsu Old Village), 02/10/2020
68. Zubemo Ezung 76 Years, Wokha (Pongitong Village), 04/11/2020
69. Ramvushumo Humtsoe, 72 Years, Pongitong Village, 15/09/2020 & 10/11/2020
70. Mhao Lotha, Ex- MLA, 82 Years, Wokha (Longsa Village), 15/09/2020 & 22/10/2021
71. L.Mhonyamo Ezung, 93 Years, Longsa Village, 05/11/2020
72. Yilano Ezung, 81 Years, Longsa Village, 05/11/2020
73. Pithungo Shitiri, 80 Years, Wokha (Changsu Village), 13/10/2020
74. Wosüo Humtsoe, 87 Years, Koro Village, 13/11/2020
75. Woremo Ovung, 61 Years, Pastor, Koro Village, 13/11/2020
76. Renchumo Odyuo, 46 Years, Koro Village, 13/11/2020
77. Wochumo Tsanglao, G.B, 44 Years, Koro Village, 13/11/2020
78. Thungchamo Tsanglao, Deacon, 52 Years, Koro Village, 13/11/2020
79. Chenithung Ovung, Council Secretary, 48 Years, Koro Village, 13/11/2020
80. Mhabemo Tsanglao, 73 Years, Koro Old village, 14/11/2020
81. Nzamomo Ovung 68 Years, Dimapur (Koro Village),10/12/2020
82. Rikho Kikon, 110 Years, Longsachung Village, 20/03/2020
83. Khonchamo Kikon, 85 Years, Longsachung Village, 20/03/2020
84. Yankhosao Ezung, Council Chairman, 71 Years, Longsachung Village, 20/03/2020
85. Lithungo Ezung, 73 Years, Wokha (Longsachung Village), 30/08/2021
86. Tsuremo Ezung, 62 Years, Wokha (Longsachung Village), 30/08/2021
87. Tsansow Kikon, 88 Years, Wokha (Former Pastor, Wokha Village), 11/04/2021
88. Yiphyow Kithan, 63 Years, Head Dobashi, Dobashi Court, Wokha (Wokha Village), 13/04/2021
89. Etsorhomo Ezung, 82 Years, Wokha (Longsa Village), 13/04/2021
90. Chonchithung Nnullie, 86 Years, Head G.B, Niroyo Village, 01/09/2021
91. L.Renathung Yanthan, 54 Years, Pastor, Niroyo Village, 01/09/2021
92. Daniel Tep (Rengma), 46 Years, Chairman, Terognvünyu Village, 21/11/2019
93. Gwaseni Tep, 80 Years, Head G.B, Terognvünyu Village, 21/11/2019
94. Rushvülo Semy, 66 Years, Terognvünyu Village, 21/11/2019
95. Logvupu Tep, 51 Years, Terognvünyu Village, 21/11/2019
96. Poreshe Semy, 54 Years, Terognvünyu Village, 21/11/2019
97. Kegwahu Tep, 64 Years, Terognvünyu Village, 21/11/2019
98. Josholo Tep, 53 Years, G.B, Terognvünyu Village, 21/11/2019
99. Rev. Dr. Ezamo Murry, 79 Years, Dimapur (Wokha Village), 26/09/2021

100. Rev. Dr. Nzan Odyuo, 68 Years, Dimapur (Lio-Longidang Village), 27/09/2021
101. Dr. K.C. Murry, 78 Years, Wokha (Wokha Village), 22/09/2021
102. Jomishio Kikon, 92 Years, Longsa Village, 24/10/2021
103. Thungtamo Ezung (Non-Christian), 73 Years, Longsa Village, 25/10/2021
104. Dr. Arenla Walling, 50 Years, Senior Dental Surgeon, Naga Hospital, Kohima, 15/11/2021
105. Mepusangba, Research Scholar, Nagaland University, Meriema Campus, Kohima, 20/10/2020

OFFICE OF THE
WOKHA VILLAGE COUNCIL
WOKHA:797111. NAGALAND.

Ref.NO.WVC-GBs/24/10/020/RES/C-2020

Date. The 24th of Oct. 2020


“NO OBJECTION CERTIFICATE”

The authority of Village Council, Wokha Village is pleased to permit Shri. Libemo Kithan, Assistant professor, Dept. of History, Mount Tiyi College, Wokha and research scholar, Nagaland University, to carry out the Archaeological method of Excavation to determine the age of “**Mhenkiton Tree**” which is being planted by our ancestor’s during the formation of this village. Hence, the village authority has “No Objection” upon his endeavour.

Wishing him a successful exercise


(S. Yanphamo Tungoe)
Chairman
Wokha Village Council
Wokha Village Council
Wokha Nagaland




(Zujanbemo Lotha)
Secretary
Wokha Village Council
Secretary
Wokha Village Council
Wokha: Nagaland.

Annexure 3.1