

Chapter: I

Introduction

1.1. Genesis of Pottery

The basic universal human needs motivates one to creates functional and serviceable related gears; stone and bone tools to defend himself, hides and later cotton or wool to cover himself, baskets to help carrying or to store items, etc. and most importantly, the invention of pottery, the 'Backbone of Archeology'.

Pottery is one of the *magnum opus* which, concretely proves that mankind has acclimatized and bended himself according to his ecosystem. Man learned that, baskets could help in carrying as well as in storing solid items but for liquid he needed something more apposite, which would retain the content. An idea to make use of the clay might have been extracted from the clay toys, which possessed substantial characteristics. "In the long course of his history, man has been learning to understand his physical environment and to make himself at home in the world. At first he learned by shaping and altering for his use and convenience the materials nature offered" (Shepard 1956). The story of usage of baked clay can be directed towards the finds from Vela Spill, Croatia. In regards to the 36 Epi-gravettian figurative artifacts from the archaeological site of Vela Spila (Fig.1), Croatia dated back to the late Upper Paleolithic Europe, c. 17,500–15,000 years B.C. Fragments of figurines have been encountered at Gravettian (Pavlovian) sites in Moravia, Czech Republic, c. 31,000–27,000 cal BP and at Jomon sites in Japan, c. 12,000 cal BP. Karim Shahir, a Neolithic site dated to 8000-6000 B.C. in the Zargos region show evidence of clay figurines consisting of both human and animal.

In regards to the utilitarian pottery, K. Kris Hirst on About.com Guide referring to the Upper Paleolithic Pottery of Yuchanyan Cave (Hunan Province, China), talks about sherds, which are some of the earliest examples of pottery yet found. They are all dark brown, coarsely made pottery with loose and sandy texture. The pots were hand-built and low-fired (ca. 400-500 degrees C); kaolinite is a major component of the fabric.

The paste is thick and uneven, with walls up to 2 centimeters thick. The clay was decorated with cord impressions, on both the interior and exterior walls. Enough sherds were recovered for the scholars to reconstruct a large, wide mouthed vessel (round opening 31 cm in diameter, vessel height 29 cm) with a pointed bottom; this style of pottery is known from much later Chinese sources which are known as a *fu* cauldron.



Fig.1. Clay Artifacts from Vela Spila, Croatia

The invention of pottery in the worldwide human civilization can doubtless be marked in during the Neolithic Period about 10,000 years before present in the beginning of Holocene Epoch, of course with regional exceptions for example; Karim Shabir (8000-6000 B.C) located in the Zargros region hand-made potteries were discovered. In India too, pottery as a utilitarian purpose can be traced back to as early as Mesolithic Period at Langnaj (Gujarat, India) dated to about 2500 BC. It is difficult to rightly conclude the very beginning of pottery inventory due to several factors in terms of the ecological niches.

Though pottery in simple term, means a mixture of clays (earthen ware) which is desirably shaped and fired, has multiple interpretations and meanings. Pottery in Manipuri is known as *Chaphu* literally meaning *Cha* (food) and *Phu* (vessel/pot) hence vessels engaged in food consumption. This very word *Chaphu* has various interpretations. “A belief traces the term *Chaphu* from two roots *Chak*=epoch and *Phu*=vessel and thus the word determines the vessel manufactured right from the reckoning of epoch. Another oral tradition speaks, that the meaning of *Chaphu* (*chak* or *chakpa* plus *phu*) is the earthen vessel of the *Chakpas* (an aborigine of Manipur), as they are treated as innovator of pottery and still are regarded as potter community” (Imoba, et al. 1999).

In Manipur, it is believed that pots are made in an imitation of the thalamus of *Nora Khudonglei* (*Melastoma malabathricum*) flower due to its morphological similarity. According to the *Chakparol Khuntaba puya* (Literature) pottery making was initiated by a lineage group, *Leisha Onbaman* and also mentions that Chakpas, ethnic group, were originally potters. The Chakpas are potters who are settled at Andro, Thongjao, Chairel, Sekta, Sekmai Leimaram, Phayeng, etc. Of these, the first three mentioned sites are actively involved in pottery making till today. “In the hill areas Poumeis and Tangkuls do practice pottery” (Imoba, et al. 1999). The Oinam potters are the Poumeis and the famous serpentine Nungbi potters of Ukrul are the Tangkhuls.

The cord marked pottery is the hallmark of Neolithic pottery assemblage in Manipur. Similar pottery type has also been found in present Changki village in Mokokchung, Nagaland and elsewhere in Neolithic sites in Nagaland. The Nagastoo, make earthen pots by hand alone without the use of a wheel. Pots are produced by a few villages notably

Viswema and Khuzama of Angami tribe; Thenyezuma, Runguzuoma and Kholazumi of Chakhesang tribe; Tseminyu village of Rengma tribe; Peron and Puihua villages of Zeliang; Changki, Japo and Longsemdang villages of Ao tribe; Tokikehimi and a few other villages of Sema tribe; Wokha and several other villages of Lotha tribe; Kongsang, Yali and Nakshao villages of Chang tribe; Wakching, Shiyong, Leangha, Chui, Choshachinguyu, Longkai, Sheanga and Tangjen of Konyak tribe; Nguro and Lungmutra of Sangtam tribe; Noklu, and Sao villages of Khemungam tribe, and a considerable number of villages in Phom area. The study of hand-made simple pottery among these communities can reveal behavioral aspects of the Neolithic culture.

The pottery tradition in plains of Assam is continued by the two potter communities, Kumars and Hiras, who are significant in the field of art and crafts in Assam. They make earthen items like pot and pitchers, plates, incense stick holders and earthen lamps, and many decorative items. Earthen ware is still widely used in the household activities. In the potter communities of Manipur, female play an imperative role. The existing pottery manufacturing areas like that of Thongjao, Sekmai, Chairel, Oinam and Ningthamcha Karong show that female potters have a major role except at Ukul Nungbi. The tradition of pottery making in former communities are tutorial from older female relatives to the younger newcomers.

There are ample examples of gourds being used for fluid storage. Gourds making its appearance as one amongst the tangible cultural objects from Ukhul, a hilly District of Manipur, presently exhibited in the museums in Manipur compliment the very beginning of a fluid container. "All decorated calabashes, and many undecorated ones, are used to contain and serve cattle and goat milk" (Hodder, 1991). According to Warren R. DeBoer till today, calabashes and bottle gourds provide as multiuse containers for the Chachi (Ecrudor) where pottery was abandoned during the 1950s. Baskets and gourd played a pivotal role in the onset of pottery craft. It will not be incorrect to state that, the basic shape of a clay vessel used for drinking purpose could have been styled in imitation of a bottle gourd.

History of Pottery in Manipur

The earliest pottery in Manipur can be traced and verified by the presence of sherds from Neolithic sites; Napachik (Bhisnupur District), Nongpok Kheithalmanbi 4460+120YBP (Senapati District), Laimanai and Phunan (Thoubal District)(Fig.2). O.K. Singh has classified these pot sherds into seven types based on their surface decoration: plain, corded, incised, appliqué, net impressed, circular impressed and grooved. The pottery shapes in Manipur can be made clear by understanding the table below.

Table: 1

Pottery in Manipur

Site	Period	Shape	Technique	Decoration	Colour
Nongpokkheithalmanbi, locality-1, Thoubal Dist. (4460+_120Y.B.P).	Pre & Proto History (Neolithic)	Bowls & globular pots	Handmade & some slipped.	Plain,& Cord marked.	Red & reddish brown dominant, Various shades of red, brown & grey & pinkish white in colour.
Napachik, Bishnupur Dist. (1450 B.C)	Pre & Proto History (Neolithic)	Bowls, tripod wares, spindle whorls, globular pot, jar, cup.	handmade	Plain,& Cord marked.	Reddish brown dominant, grey, dark grey and whitish.
Laimanai, Thoubal Dist.	Neolithic	Cord wares & tripods*	handmade	Plain,& Cord	—

				marked.	
Phunan, Imphal	Neolithics	Bowls, jars & globular pots.	Handmade & majority slipped.	Majority plain, corded, incised, appliqué, circular impressed, net impressed, grooved neck.	Red, brown, grey & whitish.
Kangla, Imphal	?	Tripod, Jar, bowl, basin, cup, plate, vase, smoking vessel (hookahs) & TC	?	plain, corded, incised, appliqué, grooved neck, etc.	
Chibu (Churachandpur Dist.)	?	Globular vessels? & bowls.	handmade	Majority cord marked, plain & impressed.	Light red, reddish brown or light brown.
Mongjam Imphal (510+ ₉₀ YBP)	?	Tripod, dishes, jars	handmade	Plain majority, cord marked & punctured marked.	Reddish yellow, grey, reddish grey, reddish brown,

					brown,
Moirang, Bishnupur Dist.		Pots, jars & bowls	handmade	plain	Whitish & reddish brown.
PanjaoPallumChin g,Kakching		Globular jar, bowl, cup on stand	handmade	Mostly plain	Red slip
Sekta, NE Imphal		Jars, dishes, basins, bowls, vase, spouted pots & porcelain wares	Handmade & import	plain, corded, incised, , grooved & painted.	Red or orange red, grey
LuwangChing		Spouted vessel, globular pots, vase& porcelain wares.	Handmade & import	Plain & corded	_
Khamaral, imphal		Ring footed plate, dish or bowl, small globular pot, jars	Handmade & slow wheel turn	Plain & corded	Light red
Nongpokkheithalm anbi locality-3, ThoubalDist		Bowl? Globular pot?	handmade	Plain, corded, incised, punctated,	Grayish brown, light brown, reddish brown, pale brown, dark grey, reddish

					yellow.
Khangabok, Thoubal Dist. (226YBP)	Historic	Bowls, globular pot		plain, corded, incised rare,	
Kangla	Historic	Bowls, globular pots, smoking vessel, porcelain,		Plain, painted, corded,	Grey, reddish brown, black, red.
Ningel, Thoubal Dist.	Historic	Smoking vessel, jars, bowls		Plain, corded,	Grey, reddish brown, shades of red.
Khaidem M'ang, Chandel District (19 th Century A.D).	Historic	Jars, bowls, basins,		Plain & corded.	
Nongpokkheithalm anbi locality-4, Thoubal Dist	Historic	Smoking vessel, bowl, pots, stoneware		Plain, corded,	Reddish brown, reddish grey, black and light red, etc
Kanchipur, Thoubal Dist.	Historic	Smoking vessel, dish, jars, bowls		Plain, corded,	Shades of red, grey, black
Khurai, Imphal (19 th century A.D)	Historic	Glazed ware		–	–

*cord marked pots and stands of tripod ware.

In Indian societies, utility of pottery is inexorable and inseparable part of various cultures, though in varied forms. Its use is registered as a pivotal element in the “Social System” known as the *Ashramas*. Like all cultures, in Manipur too, every society belonging to various social classes follows varied customs in which pottery too has

convictional and functional roles in the human life cycle. For instance, *Lakho* pot is used on the occasion of inaugurating a new kitchen, house or at weddings. Almost in all the festivals in Manipur, earthen pots have been an essential part of this culture. Till today, earthen pots are used in *sosti* (child birth), *Karna Beda* (ear piercing) and *Upanayana* ceremonies. Most importantly, earthen pots are used to store water for *Leimara*, the Mother of the Lord of Household, *Leindao*.

Earthen vessel marks the beginning of one's life on this earth; the placenta of a baby is buried by inserting it in an earthen pot and buried near the house. A pot also marks the death, when a child dies the body is inserted in a pot before burying. Earlier in Manipur, adults too were buried in earthen vessels in which after the primary burial charred or unburnt human relic was interned in layers of earthen pots and carefully covered by an earthen bowl or dish as a lid. These layers of pots were buried again with funerary goods consisting of pottery assemblages, metal ornaments and implements, beads, coins, etc. This system of burial is known "Pot Internment system" of secondary burial. The present research will focus on this style of urn burial emphasizing on the pottery assemblages at Andro Khuman, Khangabok, Khamaran, Koutruk and Sekta.

1.2. Insight into Burial Customs

*“A man acteth according to the desires to which he clingeth,
After death he goeth to the next world bearing in his mind the
subtle impressions of his deeds; and , after reaping there the
harvest of his deeds, he returneth again to the world of action.
Thus he who hath desire continueth subject to rebirth”.*
Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

The death of a person, as believed by us is not the end of one's life; what we leave behind is the material world, there are expectancies to one's after life. The customs and rituals involved in a death ceremony have been practiced since the time when man started to sense emotional attachments with its beloved ones and the associated evil spirits thus; with every disposal of a body certain death rituals followed by offerings (mortuary

goods) are associated with the process of departure in every culture. Within a society, these funerary customs and rituals varied culturally, ethically, and religiously. "Within a single socio-religious sections are found. Thus the socio-economic fragmentation and backwardness coupled with magico-religious taboos of all types, explain vividly the causes of variability in the funerary practices of all the primitive peoples all over the world" (Gupta, 1972:6). The disposal of a body involves some mandatory elements; the modes of disposal, rituals, mortuary goods, sepulchral monument or memoir and of course the body of the deceased. By analyzing the mentioned parameters, one can shed light on the following perspectives.

1. They reflect some part of a cultural Phase i.e. whether it was a period of peace, or migration, or acculturation. This of course has to be analyzed along with literary sources.
2. The prevalence of different modes of burial and styles can be understood which need further comprehensive study.
3. The Establishment of religious behavior of the people.
4. They will help in reconstruction of the socio-economic life of the people.
5. The typo-technology of the pottery assemblages can be concluded by analyzing them.
6. The probable dates of the sites can be concluded by correlating with the burial styles and its mortuary associates.

In order to avoid confusion, on the basis of the varied methods of disposal of the death encountered worldwide, one can broadly categorize into:

1. Primarily Disposal.
 - a. Exhumation
 - b. Burial
 - c. Cremation
 - d. Symbolic
2. Secondary Disposal
 - a. Post Cremation Urn-burial
 - b. Post Burial Urn-burial

c. Symbolic

In the primarily mode of disposal the corpse can be either excarnated, buried, cremated or can be symbolic in nature. The secondary mode of disposal is generally followed after performing any form of the primary mode of disposal; this burial could consist of human relic (bone) in form of inhumation, disarticulated/fractional or fragmentary style. This type of burial custom is followed after the Primary burial, in which the corpse is either buried or burnt accordingly, it is known as Post Cremation Urn-burial or Post Burial Urn-burial respectively. The former involves collection of selected unburnt human relics either by unearthing the grave or by collecting the bone relics in case of excarnation and in the latter charred bones were collected. In both the cases, the burnt or unburnt human relics are interned in an urn, which in turn is inserted inside one or two bigger urns forming layers of urns known as "Pot Internment system", which is finally covered by either a bowl or a dish or a base of a pot. This Secondary Urn-burial practice is known as "*Lufu Chanba*" in Manipuri. This ritual is carried out at a certain period, which differed in all the ethnic groups, for example; the Payeng (Chakpa) collects the bone soon after the cremation ritual but the secondary burial of the Meitei King Naothingkhong (C.660-736 A.D) was conducted after a year of the primary burial.

A Brief History of Disposal of the Dead

The earliest evidence of proper disposal of the dead in ancient India can be traced back to as early as the Mesolithic Period. "Another noteworthy feature of the mesolithic burials is the fact that the idea of cemetery had already taken roots at this early stage" (Singh 1970:22). At Langhnaj in Mehesana District, Gujarat, a probable cemetery of an area of about 65 to 35m has been identified with eleven human skeletons. The bodies were oriented east-west and their heads usually on the right and the mortuary goods associated include animal bones and a dentalium shell bead in one of the burial. There is a concrete evidence of grave goods in case of one adult male skeleton buried in east-west direction in an extended burial form, associated with fragments of both wheel-made and hand-made pottery. At Lekhakhia in Mirzapur District, Madhya Pradesh a rock shelter (LKH-RS-I) has a probability of being a cemetery as more than seventeen human skeletons were encountered only in this rock shelter leaving out the other rock

shelters which might have been used as habitational shelters. The associated goods were microlithic tools, pieces of ochre and weathered lateritic modules. Other Mesolithic sites from where human burials were encountered included Beghai Khor and Bagor.

The Neolithic Period of Nagarjundakonda, Andhra Pradesh exhibit an extended inhumation burial as well as an urn burial of a child associated with funerary goods including hand-made as well as wheel-made burnished grey ware pottery, spouted pots were numerous amongst the mortuary goods. Burial of infant in an urn is also found at Brahmagiri, these urns are hand-made coarse grey ware with globular body, flared mouth and round base, they are without any funerary goods except in one case where a small rod of bronze and two small earthen ware pots were found in an urn. At Tellalakota, there are evidences of child urn burials, where single or double urns were used and the most notable feature of this site is the existence of fractional burial. Secondary burial have also been noticed at Burzahom where the skull and long bones /have been collected after desiccation and are treated with red ochre before burying them. The funerary goods at site are few but miniature vases, a paste bead, circular disc stone and animal bones were amongst the finds. Other Neolithic sites like Pikhial, Utnur, T Narasipur, Hallur, etc bear evidences of proper disposal of the death.

In Chalcolithic sites of SohrDamb (Nal), south of Quetta, fractional burial is a common mode of disposal of the death. "Human bones in 'fractional' burials included skull, jaw-bone, and fragments of long bones, vertebrae, ribs and phalanges. These bones were placed over funerary earthen ware vessels and sometimes in comparatively bigger jars". (Singh, 1970: 27). Trench no I.8 of Mehi bears a large pot containing small fragments of bones and ash, similarly trench no I.4 revealed a large urn and a small jar, which contained bone fragments and ash. Trench no III.10, 11 & 5 yield urn with either human skull or bones associated with mortuary goods. This practice of Post-cremation in a cinerary urn was also seen in the Chalcolithic sites like DabarKot, Sur Jangal, MoghulGhundai of the Zhob valley in North Baluchistan.

There are evidences of proper cemeteries at Indus Valley Civilization sites like Harappa, Rupar, Lothal, Kalibangan, etc. At Harappa, grave pits are dug for burial, normally the body was placed in north-south direction along with burial goods consisting dish-on-

stand, cup-on-stand, pointed bottom goblet, jars, globular vessel, perforated jars, ornaments, etc. Sir John Marshall revealed complete burials, fractional burials and post cremation burials at Mohenjodaro. Excavations at Kalibangan in Rajasthan, Lothal in Gujarat, Sutkagendor in Afghanistan, Chanhu-daro throw light on the prevalence of urn burial apart from the common inhumation in the grave pit types of burial. The pot burial are either associated with or without human bone fragments. The cinerary urn burial customs prevailed during the Post Harappan Period at Harappa, in Startum I, Cemetery H shows disarticulated bones in urns.

The Chalcolithic sites like Tekwada, Nevasa, Chandoli and Inamgaon in Maharashtra, Amreli in Gujarat, Pandu Rajar Dhibi in West Bengal, etc reveal either grave pits for adults or urn burial type of disposal of the dead generally for children in the habitation area or away either with or without funerary goods. The Diamabad Culture Period III (1800-1600 B.C.) yielded evidence of post cremation urn burial and symbolic burial.

The Megalithic period is a well renowned phase in the cultural chronology for eschatology. The Megalithic culture is spread in several parts of Southern and eastern regions of the Indian subcontinent. This culture shed light on the various types and styles of the disposal of the dead, viz. dolmenoid cist, carin, mehris, pit grave and as well as urn-burial style, which are accompanied by mortuary goods like black and red wares, metal ornament and implements, beads, etc. Some of the sites with urn burial practices are Yeleswaram in Andhra Pradesh, Amirthamangalam in Chingleput District of Tamil Nadu revealed an urn burial cemetery by N.R. Banerjee, these urns were interned with human relics such as skull, long bones, ribs or teeth along with iron implements and three to four pots. Similarly, A. Rea and J. Burgess report about Adichchanalur in Tinneveli District which yield an urn cemetery, associated with several metal implements and ornaments. The so called urn fields were also found from sites like Gaurimedu, Mangalam in Pondicherry, Nanjalus and Kattumamannargudi in Chidambaram Taluka, Nachchiarpettai-medu and Mangalapettai in Vridhachalam taluka, Kottampatti in Tiruchirappalli District, Mayavaram, Nannilam, Nagapattinam and Oorthanadutaluka, Kelpperumpallam, Manigramam, Viramethiruppu and Vanadiri etc. There are several sites which have been excavated by the Department of Archaeology,

Madras University. Maski, Gajendragad, Gondageri, Kalakaleswara, Unachageri were some of the sites around Mysore where urn burials have been found. In Kerala some of the urn burial sites are Nedumpuzha and Porkalam in Trichur District.

The burial customs of the first millennium (Iron Age) to the present day, wholly or partly bear Megalithism characteristics. Evidences of Post Cremation pit burial as well as Post Cremation urn-burial have come across while excavating sites like Soneput, Chirand and Rajgir in Bihar and Deosa in Rajasthan. The post cremation pit burial type has been revealed at Rajghat in Bihar and Amreli in Gujarat. An example of post cremation burial is found at Ziwanri, Take-dap, Gatti and Moghul Ghundai in Baluchistan.

Records of Secondary Urn-burial Customs Practiced in Indic Society

The Lusheis clean and dress the corpse and then attach the body to a bamboo frame in a sitting position and meat preparation is done for the funereal feast (*ral*). The animals killed for the purpose are to accompany the dead to *mi-thi-khua*. The body is placed in a roughly shaped wooden coffin which is plastered with mud and has holes. A bamboo log or tube is passed through the holes and through the stomach of the corpse. A hearth is lit non-stop near the coffin for three months. After six weeks the coffin is opened to check the decaying process of the corpse, this event is known as “*en-lawk*”, which is celebrated by meat and drink. “When it is thought that everything but the bones has been destroyed, the coffin is opened and the bones removed. The skull and the larger bones are removed and kept in a basket, which is placed on a special shelf opposite the hearth. The remainder of the bones are collected and buried generally in an earthen pot” (Shakespeare, 1912:85). Later a rough platform known as “*lung dawh*” is erected in memory of the deceased. Amongst the Lusheis, unnatural death such as killed in war or by wild animal, the body is deposited in the forge and this event is known as “*sar-thi*”.

According to H.H. Godwin-Austen, the Khasis of North eastern India burned their dead on a funeral pyre after which the bones and ash are collected in an earthen urn. The urn is then buried in a burial ground which is demarcated according to the gender of the deceased over and a menhir is erected over the secondary grave. Such examples of urn

burial have also been recorded at Darebora in Chachar, Assam by Calvert, JP.Mills and J.H.Huttop.

The urn-burial custom is just not confined to children; there are instances of adults being buried in an urn in the form of varied burial styles, as in the case of Pandu Rajar Dhibi, west Bengal, “The two urn burials show some difference. One at the west contains a few human bones and a broken lid. The other at the east comprised long bones and the skull of an adult covered by an earthen lid”. (Singh 1970:66).

The Mundas and the Ho tribes of the Chotanagpur Plateau practiced Post Cremation burial. The deceased is cleanly dressed before placing in a coffin and burned. The next day, water is sprinkled over the ash after which the bones are collected in a vessel and hung in the house of the deceased. On a particular day the bone is transferred to an earthen urn and buried in a pit dug in a family burial ground known as *sasan*. Then the pit is filled and a stone (menhir) is erected over it. Similarly, the Oraon of the northern and western parts of the Chotanagpur plateau after burning the body, selected bone fragments are collected in an urn and hung in the house, after which it is buried in the family burial ground known as *kundi*. In the *kundi* each clan has a stone slab erected demarcating their areas.

S.C.Roy records the burial practices of the Asura of the Purnea, Ranchi and Palamau Districts of Bihar where the grave yards revealed earthen burial urns or copper urn containing human relics as well as ornaments and beads, which is covered by a stone slab. Similarly urn burial associated with personal belongings are found at Khuntitola, Pokla, Jupungidi, Digri, Ridari, Oskea, Saridkel, Elre, Hiturola, etc in Ranchi District.

“The Chalcolithic inhabitants of Amreli cremated their dead and buried the cinerary vessel (urns) along with charred bones in small pits on the banks of the river Thebi. These urns are of coarse red fabric with a slightly raised neck, wide mouth and round base. The urns contained human bones, fragments of beaten copper and agate flakes.” (Singh 1970: 64).

Several tribes of the Nilgiri hills in Tamil Nadu such as the Toda, Kota, Kurumba, Kanikkar, Nayar, Tiayar, etc practiced both primary burial consisting either of burial or cremation and then followed by secondary urn burial, in which bone fragments are collected in an earthen pot.

Special Reference to Burial Customs in Manipur

A funerary ritual during the reign of *Meetingu Tangchampa*, Sakabda 1464 (1542 CE) is referred in the *Chetharol Kumbaba* (Chronicle) as, “At the monthly memorial for Meetingu Kapompa, Thokchaochampa the Pukhranpa was killed by Paopam Phana” (Parratt, 2005:50). This monthly memorial is written as *than (tha) thokpata*, which is the monthly death ritual, currently prevailing in some ethnic groups amongst the Manipuri society as *thagi din*. This monthly death ritual was undoubtedly practiced in the 16th century A.D. of course, with different trait. There is possibility of it being secondary burial, in which the bone reminder of the cremated or buried body is collected and interned in a container or an earthen pot for future burial. The same chronicle records erection of memorial pillars known as *Ukrong*, “Meetingu Mungyampa and Meetei Reima Serampi dedicated the erection of a wooden pillar in memory of Meetingu Chalampa” (Parratt, 2005:56).

It is clear that the Manipuris or the Meities, buried their dead within their house premises. In the chronicle, *Cheitharon Kumpapa*, in the year of Keisam Myang, Sakabda 1527 (1605 CE) during the reign of Meetingu Khakhemba (1597-1652 CE), it is recorded as, “All the graves from the midst of the housing areas were made to be moved outside the (city) wall” (Parratt, 2005:67).

According to DrR.Brown, describing the death ceremony of Kowpoi group belonging to the Naga tribe, the corpses are first placed in a coffin along with grave goods such as hoe, spear, earthen vessels and even clothes. Each village has its proper graveyard where the coffin is then buried in a pit which has been dug by relatives and a stone is erected over it (menhir). The Maram bury the corpse without even a bier and the Paite and Marring either bury their corpse in a coffin or without a coffin or bier.

“The Kuki racial order has two sub-orders as the old and new Kukis and all followed the same model of burial disposal of death. The sub-orderwise ethnic group-Kom,Chiru, Chouthe, Aimol.Purum , Anal, Lamgang, Monsang, Moyon, Kolhem and Vaiphei of old Kuki and Gangte, Mizo/Zomi, Paite, Simte, Thadou, Ralte, Salhate Hmar and Zow of new Kukistick to the bier burial funeral” (Devi, 1999:50). They are known to have separate graves; death caused by natural way is buried separately from those who died of unnatural death. The general burial customs comprises of the corpse being washed and dressed in new clothes before lying on the bier. Colonel McCulloch recorded that the Kabuis buried their ancestors in and around the house premise and eventually abandon the village. Amongst the Quoirengs and Kabuis, a woman who dies during child birth is buried inside the house. In such a case, the Kabuis abundant the house and the Quoirengsbury moveable articles and utensils along with the woman, as grave goods for the dead.

There is also reference made by T.C.Hudson (Political Agent) that in a Kabuis settlement in the valley there is a practice of carrying the corpse out from the house through a small door at the side of the house or from a special exist made for the purpose. There is always a special custom linked to the carrying out of the corpse from the house: as in the case of the Chakpas of the Payeng described later.

A child of tender age is generally buried close to the house and not in the general grave. The corpses of the unnatural dead caused by snake bite or child birth or violence are buried away from the general grave too. Amongst the Tangkhuls, it is believed that when a person dies the soul of the deceased is transformed in a form of ‘Kaha’, a kind of bee and flies away to a place called “Kazairam” where the king “Kokta” judge the spirit on the basis of the deeds conducted on earth. Reverend William Pettigrew, who was a Christian Missionary in Manipur in 19th century, describes series of costly rites following the burial of the dead, which includes the “Onra (oblong stone) erection” and other feasting ceremonies. “In any case where the person dies away from home, and where there is a difficulty in getting back-crossing a river for instance- the person is buried near the place of death, but the skull is brought to the village under the following condition” (Pettigrew,1909:37). In such a case, a wood or generally a wooden pillar belonging to the

dying family is taken and covered with a black cloth, representing the body of the dead. “Friends are expected to bring gifts for the spirit to take with after burial. It is believed that these gifts, comprising two spears and clothes, according to circumstances of deceased, also beer (weak and strong), tobacco and pipe, and if the deceased has been musical in his lifetime, his musical instruments are taken by the spirit to a place called “Kazairam” in the bowels of the earth, where the spirits of the relations departed before are met with on the road. The more plentiful the gifts the more pleased is the spirit towards the giver”. (Pettigrew, 1909:38).

The inhabitants of the plain area was under the Ningthouja rule, many kings of this clan were patronage of Hinduism but King Gopal Singh GaribNiawaz (A.D. 1709-1748) enforced Hinduism as the state religion in the 18th century thus it is clear that this enforcement would have affected the cultural aspects of the Meities, including the mode of disposal. “It is well known that up to the advent of Hinduism, the dead were buried, and the chronicles mention the enactment by Khagemba of the house GaribNiawaj ordered the Manipuris to exhume the bodies of their ancestors, which they formerly used to bury inside their compounds. At a later date in his reign, in the year 1724, GaribNiawaz exhumed the bones of his ancestors and cremated them on the banks of the Engthe River, and from that times ordered his subjects to burn their dead. The system of cremation in vogue among the Meitheis is very thorough, as Mr Colquhoun remarks, and the frontal bone is preserved and thrown in the Ganges at a later date, as opportunity arises” (Hodson, 1908:116-117). The above quote shed ample light on the burial customs practiced doubtlessly during the reign of Garib Niawaj as well as to the conditions prior to the aforesaid period.

The term “*sing-lup*” which literally means wood/ log club signifies, that the corpse were cremated. This club is still prevalent in the present Manipuri society, each locality (*leikai*) has its own “*sing-lup*” which is run by the male members of the locality. Periodically, money is collected from each house of the locality to meet the cost of the wood “*sing*” for cremating the deceased of the locality. This term has been recorded by T.C.Hudson, the Assistant Political Agent of Manipur.

Some Ethnographic Records of Secondary Urn-burial Customs in Manipur

The body of the deceased is bathed and changed into new clothes. A pot filled with water is placed at the threshold of the house; the body has to pass this, as this water in the pot is a symbolic representation of the River *Veitarani*, a river which divides the two worlds. The body is then placed in the *khangenbam* or *Khangenpham* which is located in the south-east corner of the courtyard, behind the sacred Tulsi plant. The *khangenpham* is believed to be the resting place of the deceased where a wooden coffin in which three layer of clothes known as *pheijup marolahum* along with some belongings of the deceased mainly consisting of clothes and a money bag containing some money are placed. One of the important parts of the cremation ceremony includes the *Mungleiba*, which literally means buying of the grave by the deceased family by throwing a coin in the graveyard. An earthen pot known as *Meikoi chapu* is used in the process of cremation.

After the burning of the body, apart of the frontal bone known as *Asti* is collected in a container and buried in a corner of the graveyard, which is later taken back to the house of the deceased on a certain day depending on the clan to which the deceased belonged to. This ceremony is known as *Asti* and the process of collecting is known as *Asti laokhatpa*. The *Asti* is left hung in one of the corners of the house and eventually offered to the Ganga or any sacred river.

The Chakpas (Lois) of Phayeng village resides in the western side of Imphal at about 13 km from Imphal. The corpse is carried out through the left side of the portico (*mangsok*) of the house to the right side of the courtyard known as *khangenpham*. When the corpse is at the *echumtapham* (place at the courtyard where rain drops sliding from the roof strike), coins are offered to the dead body. The body is then bathed and dressed in new clothes before laying down on a wooden platform which is covered with three layers of clothes (*pheijupmaitha*). Some grave goods are associated with the deceased in the coffin. The corpse is then, made to bite a coin which is meant to use in the land of death and burned. "The old women who are called *misubi* pick up the bones which are not burnt with the help of the tongs. This is called *lu-khunba* (*lu* means 'bone', *khunba* means 'to pick up'). The picked up bones are tied and arranged anthropomorphically with the help

of non-starched thread/sacred thread (*langahingba*) and put into the *luphu* (earthen pot) which is then covered with a special lid called *kegam* (bowl). The *luphu* which is a symbol of the head of the decease is decorated with non-starched threads in the form of hairs. Over the *luphu*, eyes, ears, nose etc. are designed with the help of crisp paper. Based on the sex of the decease, relevant dresses are put on it (*luphu*). The *luphu* is then carried away by a *misubi* on her back by using a cloth which is used in keeping babies on their mothers' back (*nahong*) to a secluded burial site which is belonged to the particular clan of the decease". (Singh, 2011:100).

The secondary urn burial customs described above assimilate to the urn burial customs reveled at the five sites, viz. Andro Khuman, Kamran, Koutruk, Khangabok and Sekta undertaken for the research. The burials at these sites display the, "Pot Internment System". The "Pot Internment System" which refers to a secondary urn burial style in which, the human relic is interned in an earthen vessel, the bone being either unburned or burned, incase of the latter a charcoal pieces is apart of the relic, which is covered with a lid (bowl) and placed inside a bigger pot which is again inserted inside another much bigger pot. This secondary burial type is firmid by three layers of pot internment. Sometimes a fourth pot is inverted on all the three pots, covering the entire tiers of urns.

Andro Khuman

According to the report of the Manipur State Archaeology, the nature of the burial at the site is the "Pot Internment System". An elongated pot is generally the innermost of the pot layers, which contains the burnt bone fragments and charcoal. The pot is then covered with a footed or unfooted bowl or a china clay bowl. Like all the other sites, the "Pot Internment System" consists of a big fourth broken inverted pot which covers the entire urn layers. The burial is associated with long neck drinking vessels. In between the pot layers or outside the pots, grave goods such as beads (rarely), ornaments, iron implements of sickle, dao, spade, butt-end of an arrow, knives were found. "The probable chronology of the burial site might be from the last part of 18th century to the early part of 19th century" (Dr. Devi. 2005:32).

Khamaran / Khamaral

The “Pot Internment System” burial is accompanied by few pottery vessels like the grey vase, long neck drinking vase and spouted vessel, which are found mostly outside but sometimes placed between the outer and the middle pot layers. Another interesting feature is the lower half portion of a pot, which is used to cover the three layered pot by placing it upside down, but there are cases where this upper fourth pot is omitted. At Khamaran every burial has remains of human bone fragments which are burnt. The innermost complete pot contains the burnt bone fragments along with charcoal. This practice is different from those of Sekta and Khangabok where the bones are unburnt and so without charcoal.

Koutruk

According to the report of the Manipur State Archaeology, every burial follows the “Pot Internment System”. Each burial consists of three urns, the innermost contains fragments bone or charcoal or sometimes the grave goods like coins, copper plates, bangles, etc. and covered with a ring footed or unfooted bowl. According to S. Rupobon Singh, Assistant Archaeologist (Excavator), there were four burial layers at Koutruk.

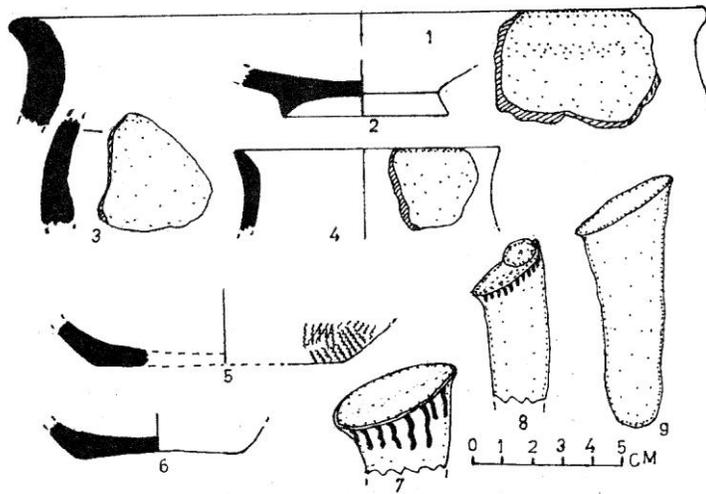
According to Dr. L. Kujeswori Devi, the site is a burial group of the *Lurel* (head) of the Ningthoujam and Leisangthem clans. The innermost pot is a footed or unfooted elongated pot. Fragments of burnt bone and grave goods such as beads, fingerings, bangles, etc were found inside this pot. This pot is placed inside a bigger pot which contains the coins. Both the pots are then covered by another pot of which the upper portion has been removed. At the bottom of the outer jar there is always a small hole which may be for moisture.

Khangabok

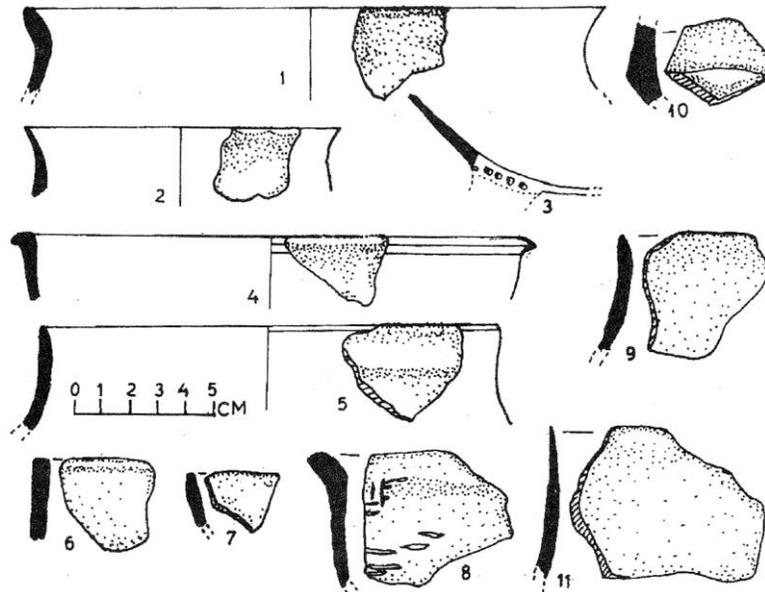
The burial here is different from those of the other four sites as the burial of human bones, skulls and grave goods were found inserted inside or outside the pots. The type of burial practice at Khangabok comprises of relic burial, symbolic burial, memorial burial and double burial. It is clear from the report that, it was a mass graveyard where different types of burial practice were carried out with unburnt bone fragments or skull where some without any human relics at all.

Sekta

Normally the skull of the deceased along with other fragmentary bones and offerings consisting of his personal belongings, were interned inside a big jar. Sometimes the human skulls were covered with thin copper mask or fragments of bone were inserted in a pot which was then interned inside another pot. There were three or four pot layers. The mouth was then covered with a pot base or an inverted bowl or dish as a lid. The human skulls were generally found in Period V, VI and VII.



Neolithic pottery from Laimanai : 1, Light red plain pot with everted rim ; 2, ring-footed plate ; 3, plain dark-brown sherd ; 4, plain light red small jar ; 5, cord-marked dish with flat angular base ; 6, plain bowl with concave base ; 7-9, tripod legs.



Neolithic pottery from Napachik : 1,2,5, plain globular pots ; 3, tripod bowl ; 4,6,7,8, shallow bowls ; 9,11, grey plain wares ; 10, carinated shallow bowls.

(Courtesy: Singh, 1997)

Fig: 2. Neolithic Pottery