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Processes, Products and Uses of the Indigenous Laruri Pottery, Nagaland

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Abstract

Academic interests in indigenous or local knowledge of Nagaland has increased in recent years owing to the region's rich cultural heritage and oral traditions that offer tremendous scope in anthropological and archaeological research. This paper presents an ethnographic study of the Laruri potters of Nagaland with an emphasis on the Laruri indigenous pottery. Interviews and observation methods were employed for data collection on the cultural transmission to ascertain the reasons for the pottery decoration and the ideas behind them. The study discusses pottery production technology right from the extraction of clay until the vessels are fired.

Introduction

What is known about the indigenous pottery production and related beliefs of Nagaland is largely based on the results of the ethnographic studies conducted among the various tribes, such as the Angami and Sema Nagas (Hutton 1921, 1968), Lotha and Ao Nagas (Mills 1922, 1926, 1937), and Konyak Nagas (Furer-Haimendorf 1969). However, those studies only briefly mention pottery making in the respective communities, and researchers have yet to systematically investigate the morphological and technological peculiarities of this local traditional craft and to understand the factors that influenced the emergence of local differences in the production process. The present study is focussed on Laruri potters to understand the mutual relations between people and clay resources and how people used pots, focusing on the traditional knowledge of the craft handed down through generations. Observation and data collection were conducted directly on the field, involving interviews with potters. Structured and semi-structured questions were prioritised to assess the population's responses towards local pottery products while maintaining cognisance of the information the research required. In-depth interviews and a collection of oral histories were conducted with individuals who still possess knowledge of the history of pot making. This information was recorded and analysed to understand the art form and its utilitarian functions within the larger cultural frame of the community.

Background of Laruri Village

Laruri village is a Pochury Naga village under the Phek District, and they operate administratively under the Meluri subdivision (Fig. 1). The village is located on the Indo-Myanmar border and is one of the lesser-known areas of Nagaland. Among the Pochury villages, Laruri is the only pot-making village. However, the neighbouring villages, such as Phor and Akhegwo, also have an oral history of manufacturing pots in the olden days, but due to beliefs that the pot-making activity results in loss of fertility and prosperity, it became taboo to engage in the making of pottery. Hence, they depend on Laruri pots for their requirements and needs. Pots manufactured by the Laruri women potters were traded all over the Pochury area until metal wares and plastic containers arrived in post-colonial times.

Characteristics of Laruri Pottery

The production sequence in general of the making of Laruri pottery has seven stages: (1) raw material procurement, (2) clay processing, (3) shaping, (4) decoration, (5) drying, (6) firing, and (7) post-firing treatments, such as surface treatments (Rye 1981; Fowler 2011; Gosselain 2018). Following this, a discussion on the Laruri pottery-making process is presented here.

Identifying clay sources

In Laruri, there are two main sources of clay – one is for making pots, which can be mined on a hill slope near the village, and the other one is called '*tsüngleli*', which is used for making smoking pipes and is available by the river Tizü. Clay sources are located about 1-2 km away from the village, and potters mine clay in groups or by individual potters as needed (Fig. 2). Clay sources are open to all and widely shared. The act of obtaining clay for the finished product of pottery is the sole responsibility of women, such that although mining the raw material is a backbreaking task that involves digging and carrying the load to the village, by tradition, it is taboo for men to participate or help the women in this activity. The potters have stated that when a trench gets too deep after continuous mining, it becomes potentially dangerous with the fear of collapsing. In such cases, they start test digging in a nearby plot to see if it contains the desired quality. Clay of superior quality is usually extracted from greater depths of the mine. Greater variation is seen in the mixing of clay at Laruri, where a type of grey-coloured clay called *Küsükhong* of 1 part is

* Posthomous

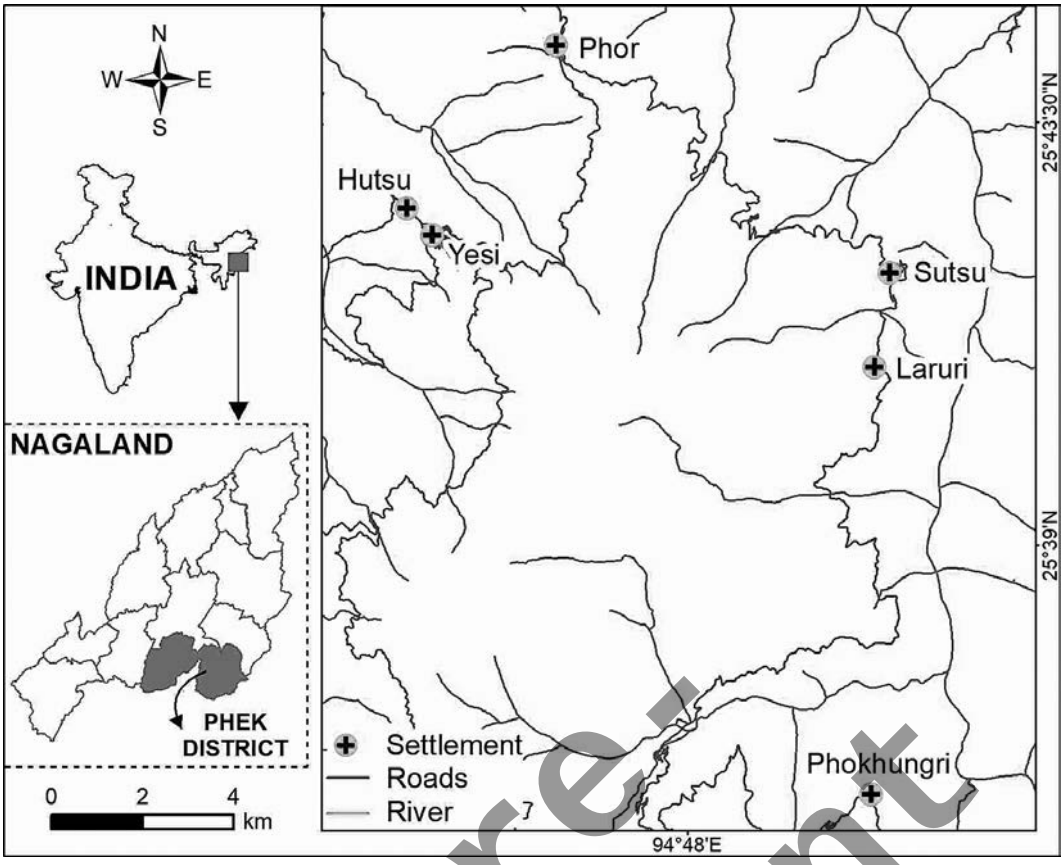

Fig. 1: Location map of Laruri village (Map by Sanen)

mixed with half a part each of *Ledripe, Lüley, Yowsingsey, Shileli, Rutileli, Legwelaleli, and Lelimeching* clay types. Another type of clay called *Longmengu* or *Nalülü* is soft powdery dust, white in colour, and applied to cooking pots only.

Clay preparation and tempering

Mined clay is sorted out in the mining area itself. Women work together by removing the impurities like roots of trees, dead plants, and pebbles. After the required amount of clay is collected, it is carried back to the village in bamboo baskets by the women on their backs. (Fig. 3). The clay is dried in the sun for 2-3 days to remove the moisture, but depending on the water content, the drying period can be extended to over a week. After drying, large lumps of clay of the *Küsükhong* variety (1 part) are mixed with half a part each of *Ledripe, Lüley,* and *Yowsingsey*. *Küsükhong* is considered the best and the main source of clay, which is sticky, and the rest are used as tempering materials. These clays are mixed proportionately and later pounded to a fine powder with a wooden pestle; the pounding of clay involves only women (Fig. 2). After pounding, they are removed and sieved using a fine basket sieve with a mesh of not more than 3-4 mm, and the clay particles that do not pass through the sieve are pounded again (Fig. 3).

Pottery implements and tools

All the materials are locally available within the village; an anvil is collected from the riverside, and a fishtail palm tree is used for making paddles. A small stick hewn from local bamboo is used to smoothen the vessel's mouth, whereas old broken pots are reused as turntables. The menfolk prepare paddles and bamboo sticks; although it is taboo for them to participate in the pottery-making process, the preparation of tools is not restricted.

Manufacturing procedure

In preparation for the potting, the potter kneads it on a wooden trough where clay is pounded, adding water and mixing them vigorously until it gets the right texture and thickness. Observations are made while kneading so that the water is distributed evenly and thereby eliminate any air pockets that may later cause breakage while firing. This continues until the clay becomes stiff as a solid dough, ready for use. The dough is further pounded using the same wooden pestle to let the water mix well with clay

Fig. 2: Pounding of clay

Fig. 3: Sieving the pounded clay

Fig. 4: Re-pounding of clay to increase plasticity

and increase its plasticity (Fig. 4). This is then removed from the trough and moulded into lumps whose size depends on the size of the pot to be made. Sometimes, the wet lumps of clay dough are broken into halves and stored in a taro leaf for later use. The dough is struck down with full pressure over a bamboo mat placed on the hard ground. The women continue with the process of striking and turning over the dough alternately till it becomes flat. Next, the periphery of the flattened clay is rolled like in a cartwheel to get the rounded shape. Pots are shaped using the anvil, and the forming and finishing are done using paddles. The flattened clay, which is shaped like a bun, is beaten by the anvil '*mütsü long*' while the clay is still on the ground; the beating is mostly concentrated on the sides, leaving the epicentre. This is lifted, upturned, and held onto the left palm while the anvil is used again to beat the thick central part of the flat dough. The surface is beaten continuously till it creates a shallow depression. This is then lifted and held by the left hand, and the beating continues slowly while the potter turns the dough in an anticlockwise direction, making the depression into a bowl-shaped cavity. Next, the potter places the clay on a pot stand called '*mürü'* to begin shaping the pot (Fig. 5). A potter selects the right pot stand out of the several different sizes based on the pot size to be made. Complete rims of vessels with the body broken off are used as pot stands

Fig. 5: Initial shaping of the vessel starting from the base

Fig. 6: The hollow opening is smoothened by rubbing it all along the surface with wet hands

or cradles during the different stages of manufacture. A similar observation was also cited by Solheim (1965: 259) made near Vientiane, Laos, where he states that, "complete rims of vessels with the body broken off evenly below the neck are used as stands for unfired pots while they dry or hold them off the ground during the different stages of manufacture. These whole rims are occasionally used for stands to hold the rounded-bottom pots on the floor in the house." The dough is left to rest on the cradle in a slanting position, and the shaping and forming of the body starts from the sides and the base, holding the anvil by the left hand and the paddle by the right hand. The potter beats on the outer surface of the vessel and rotates it at certain intervals until the maximum expansion of the vessel's body is reached. After the initial shaping of the base, this is then made to rest on a pot stand in an upright position. The potter then wets her hand and grips the so-formed mouth of the hollow opening to smoothen it by rubbing it all along, running her hands in opposite directions, and at the same time removing bits of clay that show unevenness all along (Fig. 6). Leaving that aside, another lump of clay is taken and rolled by squeezing with both hands, meant for the neck and rim, and then joined to the partly finished lower part of the body. Likewise, after both ends of the roll are joined, the potter uses her thumb to pinch down clay from the roll towards the body to fuse. The same method of beating with a paddle and anvil is incorporated till all the chunks of clay are made even (Fig. 7). After forming the neck, the vessel is upturned for the final formation of the lower half, including the base. After the base is made round and smooth, another lump of clay is rolled and joined at both ends to make a ring, which is then attached to the base using the index finger. The ring is then fused to the base of the vessel with her hands without using any tool; she just keeps her hands wet by frequently dipping into the water provided in a bowl kept close (Fig. 8).

Another method employed for manufacturing pots is the coiling or ring-building method. This method is exclusively employed for making big storage jars. The initial procedure followed is the same, but a bigger lump of clay dough is rolled out and attached to the wide opening of the base. Succeeding coils are joined one on top of the other, and in this manner, the vessel wall is built up (Fig. 9). The joints are welded by hand and beaten with a paddle and anvil (Fig. 10). The same procedure is repeated until the required thickness and height are reached. The job is tedious and requires much more time and concentration since she cannot afford to redo it and start again if something goes wrong. In the initial stage, the pot is mounted in the clay pot stand '*mürü*', but as the body gradually expands, this is transferred to a cloth-wrapped ring made of straw, which, according to the potters, provides better support and is more stable than the former.

Decoration

Decorations on the pots are applied just after forming and finishing the body when the pot is still wet. The designs applied to the pots are varied, with incised decorations ranging from criss-cross lines, vertical lines, or appliqué

Fig. 7: Clay rolled and shaped in the form of a ring (Photo by A. Aier)

Fig. 8: Fusing the ring to the base (Photo by A. Aier)

Fig. 9: Joining the coil to lower half of the vessel

Fig. 10: Using paddle and anvil to make it firm

designs to all the different designs in a single pot. Pots here are incised with the help of a quill and the tip of the fingernail. Usually, bigger pots and jars are seen to have more elaboration. Decorations are found all over the body, as in funerary jars, or sometimes a row of appliqué designs with few incised designs along the body, as is seen in the storage jars, or sometimes just a plain body with an incised V-design on the rim, as is seen in the cooking

Fig. 11: Decoration on funerary jar (Photo T. Jamir)

Fig. 12: Decoration on funerary jar using incised and applique pattern (Photo by T. Jamir)

vessels (Figs. 11-12). The complexity of designs is noticed in the funerary jars. In the funerary jars, the whole body is incised with double criss-cross marks with two or more rows of appliqué designs around the body. Concerning the designs on such jars, the potters state that the designs' complexity depends on the potter's love for the deceased. However, such designs on some of the funerary pots bear similar tattoo patterns as seen on the female body. Similarly, some other funerary jars bear designs similar to that of the fishbone pattern found on the *dao* (machete) holder carried by a man, along with some other designs identified by potters as spear symbols, a very masculine symbol among Nagas. Based on this observation, it can be presumed that the different designs on funerary jars are gender specific and be distinguished as such (Vasa and Aier 2008: 39-40). Another type of jar worth mentioning is the storage jar used for rice beer during festivals such as the *Yemshi* festival. The vessel locally called *'naksülüküphuis' is characterised* by a flaring mouth and a very narrow neck with a round bulbous body and is extensively decorated on the body as well as the inner surface of the mouth. Besides, the outer surface is appliquéd with bands numbering 3-4 rows, which is followed by incised criss-cross lines. This type of jar is manufactured only in Laruri village, and it is used only during annual festivals for communal drinking competitions of locally produced rice beer among the young men (Fig. 13).

Drying and Firing

Drying time involves complete evaporation under sunlight for a couple of days. When drying, the pot is rotated at certain intervals to make sure the moisture on the pot has completely evaporated. This is then shifted indoors, where they are left in a room. Usually, they keep a separate room for this particular process. After another three days, the pots are brought outdoors, signalling they are now ready

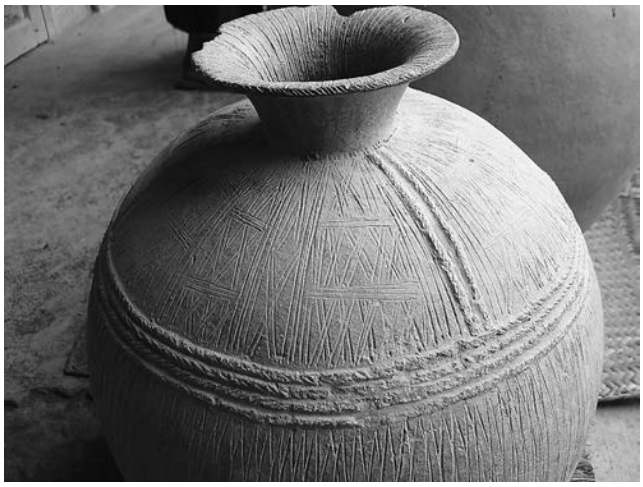

Fig. 13: Vessel used during communal drinking competition (Photo by A. Aier)

Fig. 15: Applying solution of water and red soil on the vessel (Photo by A. Aier)

to be fired. The firing procedure is simple; they do not construct any firing kilns or chambers. Pots are fired in the village where a suitable site is selected, and this is usually done outside the potter's house. A basket of ash is poured over the ground to make the base, and *Rhus* sp. firewood is placed over it. Above this, pots are placed and then covered with a pile of grass. This is then set to fire. The grasses catch the flame easily, and at this time, potters keep an eye on the flame so that it burns uniformly in all directions. The potter uses a stick to push the half-burnt grasses into the fire (Fig. 14). As the flame begins to lower down, another basket of ash is scattered over the flame. This action, as it has been told, is done to stop the air passages from acting upon the pots, or it could be an insulation to keep the fire from burning too fast. The firewood underneath the pots then burns slowly, and the heating temperature bakes the pot. The whole process of firing takes about 1-2 hours. Meanwhile, a red-coloured soil is mixed with water and is kept ready, and when the jars are fired to a certain temperature, they are removed from the kiln. A soft cloth is then dipped in the water solution and rubbed all over the body when the jar is still hot (Fig. 15). Other than the jars, this treatment is not applied to the other pots. After firing, the colour of the pot becomes light brown to tan, whereas the jars are red due to the wash treatment applied to them.

Fig. 14: Firing pots by covering with firewood and grass (Photo by A. Aier)

Trade and Exchange

Laruri is the only pottery-making village among the Pochury community, and so most of the neighbouring Pochury villages, as well as the Chakhesang villages in the Phek area, procure their pot requirements from Laruri. As such, the need to meet the demands of the trading partners for their various purposes was found to be an important element that sustained the continuation of this tradition. The medium of exchange was through the barter system. Before the introduction of monetary units, trading with other villages was mainly based on a barter system, and the exchange items were mainly salt, clothing, grains, food, or agricultural products. Women potters seem to have enjoyed the occupation and financial contribution they could make to the family coffers by selling or bartering the pots, as was also observed among the Phom potters of Longleng (Vasa 2023). The authors were also informed that brine springs, the main source of salt, are not available in the vicinity. It is, therefore, not surprising that these two commodities were the most traded items in exchange for pots. Even in the present scenario, it is observed that the villagers cultivate very limited crops, so considering this perspective, it is presumed that pottery trade occupied a vital and central place for the sustenance of the village's economy.

Table 1: Local names of various tools employed by Laruri potters

Sl. No.	Local name	Material	Usage
1	*Mütsü long*	Sandstone	Anvil used while shaping vessels
2	*Phutam*	Wood	Paddle for shaping the vessel
3	*Phuasüng*	Bamboo	Smoothening the mouth of the vessel
4	*Mürü*	Clay	Used as a turn table

Table 2: Vessel types and their usage

Sl. No.	Vessel name	Colour	Use	Surface treatment
1	*Yutshü*	Red	Grain Storage jar	Red Wash
2	*Yükum*	Red	Water Storage jar	Red Wash
3	*Lampang*	Red	All types of food grain	Red Wash
4	*Shalü Küphu*	Red	Cooking meat	None
5	*Phusü*	Tan	Carrying water	Coarse and rough
6	*Naksülüküphu*	Tan	Jar for brewing rice beer	None
7	*Nna (Tsüna*)	Tan	Cooking	None
8	*Alere*	Tan	Any purpose vessel	None
9	*Marütiting*	Tan	A broken vessel for storing water while making pottery	None
10	*Rüphu*	Red	Funerary jars for secondary burial or disposal of the dead	Incised and applique designs
11	*Tumting*	Red	Grain storage jar	Wash
12	*Naksüsaphu*	Tan	Storing rice beer after filtering from *Naksülüküphu*	None
13	*Phzütey*	Tan	Small basins	None
14	*Tiyalüsang*	Tan	Filtering water	None
15	*Phzülaüng*	Reddish brown	Footed plate	None

Symbolism in Laruri Pottery

Symbolism in pottery designs in Laruri village are visible on the funerary jars. Laruri women potters manufacture a type of jar that is used for the sole purpose of bone internment in secondary burial. This type of funerary jar is manufactured only in Laruri village among the Pochury community, and the oral tradition states that trading of such types of jars to almost all the Pochury villages was a vibrant practice. The designs on the jar are found to be elaborately incised with criss-cross marks incised with the help of a thumbnail or sometimes done with the help of a quill and appliqué bands with rings at certain intervals. The design patterns on funerary jars are found to be in a particular fashion and are regular, having a type of their own. No part of the design is found on other vessels, and as such, these jars can be easily identified with the rest of the vessel variety (see Figs. 11-12). One important feature is to consider how the jars are used because they display symbolic concern. The Pochury tribe celebrates a festival called the *Phutsangtüngme* festival, which falls in January when the jungles are burnt for *Jhum* cultivation. Oral sources revealed that during this festival the bone internment of a person, who died the previous year or in the preceding months or days before the festival takes place, should occur, and that the jars should be disposed of at a particular place. It is also to be noted that only during this festival does such an event of disposal of bones of the dead take place. Thus, in case a person dies in any other month, the corpse is laid above a specially prepared hearth in a separate room, usually next to the kitchen, where they put firewood continuously till the flesh decomposes. After the corpse is left with only the skeletal remains, it is shifted to the eaves of the house. Closer to the festival and the disposal day, the bones are then carefully collected and interred in the jar. However, care is taken while placing the bones, making sure that all the bones are taken one by one in a uniform pattern, starting from the toes up to the skull, and they are laid vertically in the jar. The tarsal, metatarsal phalanges, carpals, and metacarpals are arranged carefully. After the body parts' bones are interred, the jar is taken to the common disposal area and placed there. In cases where the death occurred months before the festival, the flesh of the corpse is smoked and then dried properly so that the bones are easily detached to be arranged in the jar. One noticeable feature in the pottery designs in this type of jar is that 2 distinct types could be identified. It was told that if a female member dies, the designs of the tattoo found on the female body are incised (refer to Fig. 12), and if a male member dies, then the jar is designed with vertical lines. It can be assumed that since they have a common cemetery for both males and females, the incised designs on the jar could be for the identification of sexes. Rites are performed, and the relatives of the dead get an opportunity to attend and participate in the death ceremony. The death ceremony is not only sacred but also constitutes an important occasion, as they help in making the burial ceremony in the most dignified manner so that the villagers and the future generation remember (*personal communication* Alok K. Kanungo).

Since the dead were disposed of in such a manner all over the Pochury villages, the Laruri funerary jar was traded across many villages. A similar type of jar burial was also noticed in Phokhungri village, a village that is located in another circle, but can be accessed through the mountain tracts and passes. It was also observed that the contexts of the use of pots transform from one system to another. Such instances were noticed in a village called Yesi, which is located further from Laruri village, which cannot be easily reached, and communication takes days. It was observed that the large jars used to store grains and paddy and kept in the granaries in Laruri village (Fig. 16) were being used as funerary jars in Yesi village, signalling

Fig. 16: Storage vessels in the granary

Fig. 17: Secondary burial in Jars in a rock sheltered area in Yesi village

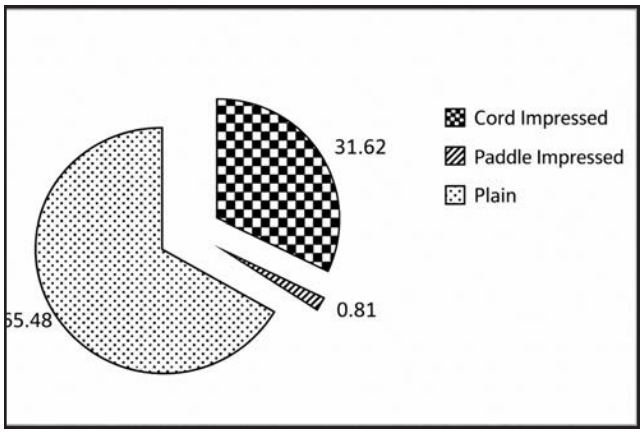

Fig. 18: Pie Chart showing percentage of wares in Trench-1, LRI

a completely different message (Fig. 17). So here is McLeod's view (1984) as cited by Judy Sterner, which holds that 'ritual' and 'non-ritual' or 'secular' and 'profane' are not absolute terms and that a pot (and many other things) can move from one category to another according to circumstances. The practice of burial in the earthen pot seemed to have been a characteristic feature among the Nagas, as also reported among the Aos, particularly of men of distinction, where they smoke the corpse for 10-12 days, and then after the flesh cures, the head is wrenched off and placed in an earthen pot (Davis 1969). Unlike the case of Jotsoma and Laruri, where the former was covered with a slab of stone and the latter covered with a lid, Davis (1969: 400) observed that among the Aos the pot bearing the head is "… then neatly thatched over with toka mat and deposited at the foot of the tree in which the coffin containing the body is placed."

The pots discussed above serve various purposes, including cooking, storage, and funerary use. Pottery making among the Pochury tribe remains in the hands of women, who apply indigenous techniques to secure the survival of this tradition. Amongst the Laruri potters of the Pochury tribe, cooking vessels are mostly plain except for short strokes of slanting lines on the lip done with the help of the thumbnail. The body of the vessel is found to be mostly plain.

Pottery from the Archaeological Site of Lüradvü

Excavation at the habitation area and funerary jar disposal site at Lüradvü (LRI) was carried out in 2008 and 2009. This site, an old settlement of Laruri people, is located around 500 m away from the present Laruri village. The present study has incorporated the findings made from trench-1, which is considered a habitation area having rich and diverse deposits. On a slope gradient of roughly about 20°, a trench of 2 × 4 m was laid in an east-west direction, exposing 6 layers of 2.8 m depth. While the sixth layer is the natural soil without any cultural materials, the other findings from the layers of trench-1 included potsherds, numerous worked stone pebbles and burnt phyllite, quartz nodules, an iron sickle, both animal and human bones, a terracotta smoking pipe, a clay spindle whorl and sharpening stones and charcoal. Based on calibrated conventional and AMS radiocarbon dates from charcoal, the radiometric chronology from trench-1, layer-5 at a depth of 270 cm was dated from Cal. CE 690-1000 (Jamir *et al*. 2014).

A total of 8132 sherds constitutes the assemblage of trench-1. Most of the sherds are well preserved. The maximum size of the fragmented sherd of the pottery assemblage ranges between 0.5 cm and 12 cm. Based on the physical features, the pottery assemblage was classified into Cord Impressed Ware, Paddle Impressed Ware and Plain Ware. Each ware constitutes a percentage of 31.62%, 0.81% and 65.48%, respectively (Fig. 18). The Plain ware dominates the assemblage right from the earliest level, which is followed by Cord Impressed ware that has a decreasing trend towards the upper levels (Fig. 19). The hardness of all the wares is less than 4 (based on Moh's Scale of Hardness). All the wares are probably of simple hand moulding and utilised beating/paddling either with or without cord wrapped in paddle as a manufacturing

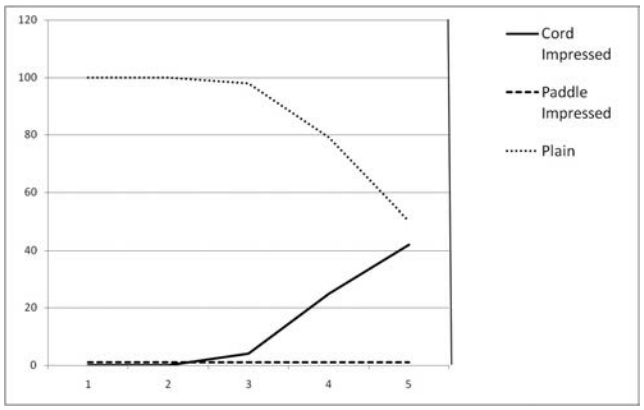

Fig. 19: Line chart showing frequency of wares in Trench-1, LRI

technique. Indication of anvil marks is also observed in some potsherds. Soot marks/smoke clouding and scratches were observed on the external surface, and the firing method must have been open firing, as indicated by the unoxidised core showing grey and black colour. On the basis of morphometric analysis by measuring the rim diameter (RD), throat diameter (THT) and neck height (NH), the formal classification of the pottery assemblage was categorised into several types. These types includes medium to very wide mouth jars on the basis of rim, medium to wide on the basis of throat diameter, and short to medium on the basis of the neck height. The majority of the jars have funnels and simple everted rims with tapering, rounded and beaded tips.

Discussion and Conclusion

The importance of pottery tradition is indicated by the wide variety of designs associated with rituals as well as everyday usages. Taking into account the elaborately globular vessel of Laruri, if we consider the intended uses and how they are stored, an emphasis on Sterner's observation made in Sirak Bulahay, North Cameroon, in which she stated, "… One cannot help but wonder why anyone bothers to decorate them in the first place" (Sterner 1989: 453). In Nagaland, traditional homes are very dark even during the daytime. Only when they bring the pots outside can one see the designs blackened with soot stains since most of them are cooking vessels. Further, it was observed that the partially broken ones were used to store grains and seeds and even store personal belongings. Although modern metal wares and plastics have replaced most clay vessels for cooking and serving food, they exist, though in minimum frequency for the production of particular vessels for cooking and steaming rice. Although, pottery studies incorporating different designs and styles in society's social realm have not been thoroughly viewed and documented, albeit archaeologists have traditionally used pottery to construct cultural histories using perceived similarities and differences in style. Further, decoration is considered an essential and integral attribute of almost all pots (David *et al*. 1998:370), and such studies into the characteristic patterns, the decorative patterns, the decorative styles, and the analysis of these encompass anthropological and archaeological inferences about social and economic interactions, artistic communications, and the dating of prehistoric sites. The establishment of cultural links based on the styles of pottery have been interpreted in past studies, but the role gender plays has been hardly studied or interpreted. The living tradition of pottery making in Nagaland displays a technological style similar to an ancient tradition that prevailed in other Southeast Asian contexts during the Neolithic times. The paddle and anvil technique, especially in pottery manufacture, is widely distributed all over the Southeast Asian countries. Further, the appliqué and incised decorations on the jars are also found to be common features in pottery of Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. Rao (1977: 203) states that, "…the pottery tradition seen here in Northeast India exhibits the survival of one of the oldest traditions of hand fashioning."

It is observed in the ethnographic study among present-day Laruri potters that they do not use corded paddles. They employ only a plain paddle with an anvil. This holds significant evidence for the archaeological pottery, where the dominant Cord Impressed ware from the early level gradually decreases to be replaced and dominated by Plain ware towards the late levels (Fig. 19). The analysis from the thin section and XRD reveals a feldspar fabric with very coarse sand tempered, which is in conformity with the geological setting of the region (Changkiri 2024). Thus, it indicates the evolution and continuity in the tradition of Laruri pottery manufacture from the early to the modern period. Besides, most attributes possess similarities in both archaeological and ethnographic pottery, such as the utilisation of raw material, the handmade method, incising, appliquéing and the shape and forms of the pots.

Overall, the observations made on the production technology and the continuity of this tradition have 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. It is also necessary to make analogical reasoning from known contemporary phenomena to past phenomena and make connections on the differences between past societies or the ways that societies changed over time and space and the distribution of activities in which pottery were used within or between sites or regions. Sinopoli (1991) has clearly stated that we can only study the past if we assume that the same processes we can observe in the present world also occurred in the past, with similar material consequences. Because ceramic forms represent cultural choices of people living in specific historical contexts as a product of human action, ceramic analysis can also inform on the structure of past social, political or ideological structures. Women potters seemed to have learned from their mothers and grandmothers, whereas some learned from close friends, and there seemed to be others who picked it up by watching others. In the present Naga context, this proposition is perhaps untestable in an absolute sense in the archaeological record but is ubiquitously observable in contemporary Naga society.

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