The Traditional Technology of Pottery Making in Oinam Village.

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Abstract

Oinam village is a Poumai Naga village situated at some 40 kilometers from Senapati District headquarter and 22 kilometers from national highway 39 at Maram town. It is located in the heart of Leopaona area surrounded by Thingba Khullen and Thingba Khunou in the west, Purul in the east, Khongdei and Ngamju in the north and Barak River in the south. Oinam village is located on a hillock with a sloping curve from north to south and east to west. The art of indigenous pottery making is called 'Pouli' in Poumai dialect, whereas in Oiname dialect it is popularly called as 'Orae-La'. According to tradition, only the women folk engage in pottery making and men could only help the women folk in the process of collection of raw materials, firing pot, transportation and selling. Only the Oinam village women folk can practice pottery making. Women married to outsiders cannot practice the art of pottery making. Therefore, pottery making is solely confined within the territory of Oinam village.

In the early days many Naga tribes depended on the earthen wares produced by this village for utensils, to perform rites and rituals. A piece or whole part of earthen pot was used in the past in performing rites and rituals. It is an obligatory item that cannot be missed out. Oinam pottery are wholly handmade without using potter's wheel. The potteries are imprinted with unique designs known as "cord-marked". The use of cord-marked design makes Oinam pottery unique and different from the ones made by other Naga communities. Oinam potteries are unglazed and were predominantly manufactured from three types of materials namely Dongae, Ngashung and Ngahei, which are mixed together in a ratio of 2:2:1. The potters and her family members collected the raw materials by walking 5-6 kilometers to a mine or pit and digging out and carrying back home with cane basket locally known as 'Lao-Marei'. The black clay is known as Dongea. This black clay act as a glue

to the two other types of clay. The two types of clay Ngashung (brown in colour) and Ngahei (red in colour) provided strength to the pottery.

Pottery is the main source of income for the artisans and the poorer section of the society. In early days, the neighbouring Naga villages come to this village and exchange the pot with other commodities. The craft is practice by women only. This craft plays a major role in the economic life of the poor section of the society. The Oinam village was once a commercial hub before the arrival of metal and steel utensils. Thus, pottery industry sustains the village economy in the past. In early days, the potters were respected and honoured in the Poumai society. However, with the introduction of Alunimium and steel utensils the use of earthen wares lost its importance and thus pose a threat to the potters' source of income and livelihood.

Keyword:

Pouli, Orae-La, Womenfolk, Cord-Marked, Lao-Marei, Dongea, Ngashung, Ngahei.

The Traditional Technology of Pottery Making in Oinam Village.

Oinam village is a Poumai Naga village situated at some 40 kms from senapati district headquarter and 22 kms from NH 39 at Maram town and 76 kms from state capital Imphal. It is located in the heart of the Leopaona area surrounded by Thingba Khullen and Thingba khunou in the west, Purul in the East, Khongdei and Ngamju in the North and Barak River in the South. Oinam village is located on the hillock with a sloping curve from north to south and east to west.

The art of indigenous pottery making is called 'Pouli' in Poumai dialect, and 'Orae-La' in Oinam dialect. Only the women folk perform the art of pottery making but men cannot make pottery except helping the women folk in the process of collection of raw materials, firing, transportation and selling. In some cases, the whole process is done by the women folk in group or single. Only the Oinam women ('Oname') can practice pottery making within the Oinam village. Women married to outsiders cannot practice the art of pottery. Therefore, pottery making is solely confine within the territory of Oinam village.

In the early days Many Naga tribes depended on the earthen wares produced by this village for utensils, to perform rites and rituals. A piece or whole part of earthen pot was used in the past in performing rites and rituals. It is and obligatory item that cannot be missed out.

As earthen cooking pot is rarely available in the olden days, the Oinam village was once a mini-commercial hub for many neighbouring villages and tribes. Thus, pottery industry sustains the village economy in the past. However, with the introduction of Aluminium utensils and metal wares, the use of earthen ware lost its importance and thus pose a threat to the potters' source of income and livelihood. Despite this threat, the practice of pottery making continue to flourish till to this day.

Oinam is a large village, under Purul sub-division of Senapati district, Manipur. Oinam village is administrated by hereditary chief called Vang[1] and 24 Chame[2] (Village councillors). Oinam village is known for its traditional pottery, defined by the cord-marked design on the pots. Cord-marked pottery is also found in various archeological sites in North-East India. These handmade earthen pots were once in high demand, but now they have been replaced by plastic and metallic utensils. In Oinam, this art was once considered a viable source of income especially for women. Today pottery making is seen as labour-intensive and monetarily unrewarding. As such, the pottery making tradition is continued only by a few women of the older generation for preservation of the art, rather than for income generation.

Oinam pottery are wholly handmade without using wheel. The potteries are imprinted with unique design known as "cord-marked". The use of cord-marked design makes Oinam pottery unique and different from the ones made by other Naga communities. Today only a few artisans practise the art of pottery making as the demand for such earthen pot has sharply declined due to the introduction of metal and plastic utensils in the market. Even the artisans themselves use metal and plastic utensils which are more comfortable and cheaper. The people of Oinam now use these pots for storing drinking water, some family use this earthen pot for cooking meat. Some younger generation use this pot as a vase for decoration purpose. In Oinam this traditional pottery making is now left to elderly women, no younger generation want to practise the art of making pottery as it is labour intensive and unrewarding job. Moreover, modern education and fashion world hampered the practice of traditional pottery making. Now a days every child goes to school for learning and spent most of their time on books and other

[1] 'Vang', hereditary chief of the village.
[2] 'Chame': The village authority who help the Vang (village chief) in administering the village.

activities, so they do not have enough time to practice the art of making pottery. Moreover, those school drop-outs young girls failed to learn the art of making pottery believing that it is a lowly profession and it makes their skin dry and unattractive.

Oinam potteries are unglazed and were predominantly manufactured from three types of soil mixing together in the ratio of 2:2:1. The clay is usually gathered by potters along with other members by walking about 6-7 kms to a mine or a pit and digging out and carrying back with cane basket (locally known as Lao Marei) balancing on their head. The process of digging out the raw materials employed huge labour as the clay material is available mixed with plant roots and other impurities. Once the clay gets home it must be dried properly in the sun and later broken up and ground into a fine powder by pounding with large mortars locally known as Ngabung.[3] The black clay is known as Dongea[4] which act as a glue to the two other types of clay. The clays are semi-wet as it is dig out from the ground. The potters and the other members who help in collecting the raw materials used spade and locally made weapon called jamphu[5] for digging out the raw materials. The two types of clay Ngashung (brown in colour) and Ngahei (red in colour) provided strength to the pottery while on the black clay Dongea act as a binding agent. The black clay Dongea is collected from a pit or mine locally called Khure or Voh. Ngashung clay is collected from lowland area called Phae or Tharedaro, while Ngahei is collected from highland areas. There are several places for collecting Ngahei within the village. Dongea is pure clay while Ngashung and Ngahei are combination of clay and stone.

Dongea (black clay)

Ngashung (brown clay)

[3] 'Ngabung', is a large wooden mortar used for pounding foodstuff. The potters used this device for pounding clay and stone materials for pottery making.
[4] 'Dongea', is a black clay which act as a glue to the other two materials.
[5] 'Jamphu', is a locally made weapon specially used by the potters for digging raw materials.

Ngahei (red clay)

The materials are mixed together by adding water. Once the kneading is done a large ball shape is rolled out and kept covered with plastic in order to retain moisture, so that it can be used for several days. The potters take the readily mixed paste which was previously kept inside the plastic according to the size of the pottery desired to make. A large slab is rolled out in a large wooden flat log or plank locally known as Laso Bae[6] by smashing with hand and shaped the paste into cylinder form. One unique different feature of Oinam pottery is that the potters do not make the body and the base separately like that of Longpi pottery, but create out of single piece of lump paste.

Molding

The Oinam potters mould almost semilar types of cooking pots. The Oinam potteries have small open mouth, long neck and large bottom. The pots for cooking and storing water are of the same design. The only difference between pots for cooking rice and curry is that, pots for cooking rice has wider mouth and shorter neck. Depending on the expertness of the potters the thickness of the pottery varies from each other. The more adept is the potter, the thinner the wall is. The potters had to cautiously check the entering of other impurities into the paste while mixing the materials. If other substances or impurities are added to the paste, it explodes when firing. Pottery making employs many tools and implement, they are:

[6] 'Laso Bae', is a large wooden log with flat surface and flat bottom, used by the potters for flattening the paste.

Thurei and Lao Marei:

Thurei[7] and Lao-Marei[8] is an open basket made from bamboo sheath for carrying things. The craftsmen took the sheath of the bamboo and cane by peeling the outer layer with knife. After which the craftsmen soak the sheath inside the water for a week or months for seasoning. Thereafter, the craftsmen split the bamboo and cane sheath into smaller pieces according to the size of the basket he wishes to make. Thurei and Lao-Marei are of different size for different purposes. The process of manufacturing Thurei and Lao-Marei are different and the materials used are also different. Thurei is made from bamboo sheath whereas Lao-Marei is made from cane sheath. The main purpose of Thurei is to carry larger object like firewood, potato, stone or rock and spade while going to paddy field. While Lao-Marei is used for carrying foodgrains like rice, peas, beans, sesame, millet and wet clay.

Splitting of bamboo sheath.

Soaking inside the water for seasoning.

A craftsman making Thurei.

A craftsman making Lao-Marei.

[7] 'Thurei', is an open basket which is loosely interweave, it is used for carrying larger object.
[8] 'Lao-Marei', is an open basket which is tightly interweave, it is used for carrying foodgrains.

Chein:

Chein[9] is a rug made from bamboo sheath. It is made by tightly interweaving the bamboo sheath with each other. The craftsmen harvest bamboo during winter season as it prevents the materials from germs and insect attack. The Oiname used rug for drying foodgrains under the sun and above the kitchen hearth. The potters also used rug for drying the wet clay under the sun before pounding into fine dust. As the two types of clay Dongae and Ngashung are dig out from a mine in a lowland area, it is available in wet condition. Thus, it has to be dried properly before pounding.

Chein.

Ngabung and Mi:

Ngabung[10] is a large wooden basin made from Rhododendron stem. The shape of Ngabung is like that of bowl with wall on all sides and deep bottom. There is no definite shape of Ngabung, some are round, while some are square and some are rectangular in shape. The villagers used all the three types of Ngabung for different purposes. The villagers used these tools for grinding, milling, and pounding their foodgrains. The potters also used these tools for pounding their raw materials. Ngabung act as an object for holding the materials while pounding. Both the clay, Dongae (black clay) and Ngahei (red clay) are pound without breaking up into smaller pieces, while Ngashung (brown clay) cannot be pounded with this tool straight away without breaking into small pieces, as the clay is collected mixed with hard rock. Therefore, the potters had to break the Ngashung clay into

[9] 'Chein', is a traditional rug for drying foodstuff and wet clay.
[10] 'Ngabung', is a large wooden mortar, generally used by the villagers for pounding foodstuff as well as clay and stone for making pottery.

smaller pieces with Tuda[11] (a hard stone with an oval shape, weighing about 1-2 kilogram). The function of Ngabung and Mi is to produce fine dust when pounding.

Mi is a wooden stick used for pounding. The materials for making Mi should be hard enough to crush the substances nor worn away by it when crushing. Smooth and non-porous materials are chosen for making Mi, so that it will not mix the worn away materials of the Mi into the clay. The function of Mi is like that of pestle. It is about 5-6 feet in length and weighing about 4-5 kilogram.

Round Ngabung.

Square Ngabung.

Mi.

A potter crushing the Ngashung clay.

Tuda:

It is an instrument used by the potters for breaking the Ngashung clay into smaller pieces. Tuda is a hard stone with an oval shape, weighing about 1-2 kilogram. The women folk and the children used the smaller Tuda for breaking up the rock, while the larger Tuda is used by men folk. The potters and her family members used this tool for breaking up the Ngashung clay by placing the clay on the square or rectangular Ngabung and crush

[11] 'Tuda', is an object used for breaking up the hard stone. It is an oval shape weighing about 1-2 kilogram.

by hitting with Tuda by holding with one hand. The Ngashung clay is broken up into smaller pieces and then it is pounded with round Ngabung.

Tedu.

A potter crushing the Ngashung clay.

Dea:

Dea is a traditional sieve. It is used for separating fine dust particle from large size particle. It holds the large size particle when shaking the Dea. In early days' the potters used Dea made from bamboo sheath. The artisans collect the bamboo and break into smaller pieces and soak inside the water for several days. The artisans harvest bamboo during cold season, it is harvested during the month of November to February. After seasoning the bamboo for several days, the artisans collect the bamboo from pond and peel the sheath, and split the sheath into smaller pieces. The artisans made Dea by interweaving the warp and weft strands of the weave to produce bowl shape with no pile. Unlike the Chein (flat rug), Dea is not tightly interweave but were loosely woven with small hole in it. Although, sieve made from plastic by the factories are available abundantly in the market, the Oinam potters continue to use traditional Dea (sieve) even to these days.

Dea.

Jha:

Jha[12] is an instrument made from bamboo splinter. It looks like a small knife with sharp edge on both sides. This tool plays an important role in the process of pottery making. It is about one and half feet long and about one and half inches wide. The potters break the bamboo into smaller pieces and shaped the tools by smoothening the surface with sharp knife. The process of cutting and slicing are done with Jha. The shaping of pottery is done with Jha by holding Jha on one hand and removed the wet layer or thick layer by slowly slicing and pressing against the other hand which is inside the pots. Jha is known as the shaping stick. The thickness and the height of the pots are also done with Jha. The proficiency of the potter is known by how he handles the Jha.

Jha.

[12] 'Jha', is a bamboo stick with small knife shape. The potters used this tool for slicing and shaping the pottery.

Khouthing:

Khouthing[13] is a wooden tool used by the potters for spanking the lump pottery paste during the initial period of moulding the pottery. Unlike the Longpi pottery in which the body and the base of the pottery are being laid out separately, the Oinam pottery is mould with a single piece of lump paste. Khouthing is a tool resembling a kitchen utensil spatula with large and flat surface. This wooden tool can be done almost out of any hardwood.

The Oinam potters used two types of tools for spanking the paste. The main purpose of spanking the paste is to loosen and soften the paste in order to form desirable shape. The other tools used for spanking the paste is Tedu[14] and Khea.[15] Khouthing is a large flat wooden spatula structure measuring about one and half long long, and about two inches thick. The handle is round at one end with the circumference of 6 inches, while the other end is flat and thick measuring about three to four inches wide. The Khouthing do not have any thread interwoven to it but simply a plain wooden spatula. The potters use this tool only during the initial period of moulding the pots. The thickness of this tool is meant for loosening the tightened clay by spanking.

Khouthing.

In the initial stage, the potters do not use any instrument. The potters simply work with bare hand to form a ball shape. After which the potters turn the ball shape into cylindrical shape by pressing with roller locally known as Wu.[16] The cylindrical paste is rolled out with the help of Wu and place on the thigh of the potters and start the shaping procedure. According to Gertrude Eagle, "Begin by taking a mass of wedged clay and shaping it into a ball or a void. Then, with both hands, squeeze and press it into a simple form use no tools other than your

[13] 'Khouthing', is a large wooden plain tool used by the potters for spanking the paste.
[14] 'Tedu', is a thin wooden tool interweave with thread at one end, it is used by the potters for spanking the thin wall.
[15] 'Khae', is a tool used for spanking the pottery, it is smaller and thinner than Tedu.
[16] 'Wu', is a roller used by the potters for flattening the paste to form cylindrical shape.

hands, slowly organize the clay ball into an abstract shape which is esthetically pleasing. As you shape the abstract sculpture, organize the clay into rhythmic shapes and stress those lines which seem the most pleasing, he can begin making simple pottery".[17] The potters busy herself by dipping her hand inside the water and rub on the unfinished pots to moisten the paste. It not only moistens the paste but also mend the crack produced by squeezing and pressing previously to form a bowl shape. According to Banford, "When a person is engaging in free from modelling it is not necessary to worry if finger or hand marks show, for they lend interest and texture to the work. The hand should slide smoothly over the clay as it is worked; if they don't dip them in a bowl of water from time to time will help. This will lubricate them and help to achieve a smooth sweeping movement".[18] The potters form the bowl shape with bare hand without using any tools. When the bowl shape is made the potters started using Khouthing for spanking the thick wall to soften the paste, so that she can elongate the height and thinning the wall of the pottery. Spanking with Khouthing and slicing with Jha continues until the wall become thin.

Tedu:

Tedu is a wooden tool resembling Khouthing. It is smaller and thinner than Khouthing. The making of Tedu is much more complex than that of Khouthing. The material used for constructing Tedu is also different from that of Khouthing. Tedu tool is made with soft light wood. The size of Tedu is about one foot to one and half feet long and a half inch thick. Tedu is interwoven with thread at one end which has broad surface. The purpose of weaving thread on to one end is to absorb water, and spanking the wall of the pottery proportionately to moisten the paste. The quality and the shape of the pottery is largely dependent upon the quality of Tedu. Thus, a good craftsman is needed for the construction of Tedu. Sometimes the potters use Tedu which is made by themselves out of necessity. But the tools which is made by the skilled craftsman are much better and more convenient to use. As a result, the pottery made using good Tedu is more enduring and attractive. According to Thiru Dayanidhi Maran, Nagas are gifted with the skills of multi crafts.[19] Tedu are of two types, large Tedu and small Tedu.

[17] Engel Gertrude, How to Make Ceramics, New York: Arco Publishing Co., Inc., 1957, p. 49.
[18] Barford George, Clay in The Classroom, Massachusetts: Davis Publications, Inc., 1963, p.24.
[19] Thiru Dayanidhi Maran, A Treasure of Handicraft Clusters from India, Copyright ©2010, Development Commissioner of Handicrafts New Delhi, India, p.66.

Large Tedu.

The potters used these tools for different purposes. The large Tedu is used after spanking with Khouthing. The potters slowly spank the rolled clay sheet with large Tedu which was previously elongated by spanking with Khouthing. The process of spanking and slicing continue as the paste absorb water and dried up very quickly, moreover it is a part of shaping the pottery. The purpose of spanking with this tool is to supply certain amount of water to the paste in order to make it moist and soft, so that the potters can mould a desirable shape. During the time of spanking the potters dip the Tedu in the water so that it remains moist and saturated with water.

A potter spanking the pottery.

While on the other hand a small Tedu (Khae) is used for spanking the thin wall and putting the corded mark on the pottery. The difference between large Tedu and small Tedu (Khae) is that, the large Tedu is interwoven loosely with plump fiber, while small Tedu (Khae) is tightly interwoven with thin fiber. The potters first shape the rim of the pottery and secondly, that of the shape of the body, and lastly the potters shape the base of the pottery. Small Tedu (Khae) is mainly used for spanking the base and the rim (mouth) of the pottery. As the potters

first shape the body, the base of the pottery become hard, therefore, more water is needed to moisten the clay in order to form desirable shape. The reason for using Khae on the base of the pottery is that it absorbs more water. The same procedure of spanking and slicing continues on the base of the pottery until the potters form a desirable shape. After completing the shape of the pottery, the potters slowly spank the pottery with Tedu (Khae) to give corded mark. Here after the potter kept the pottery upside-down in order to dry the base portion of the pottery.

Khae (small Tedu).

Pheng:

Pheng[20] is a large wooden log made from hard wood. It has no definite shape, but has to be flat on one side while on the other side, the log is carved out so as to form a container for mixing the paste. Every potter uses different size of Pheng. The size of Pheng is ranges from two to five feet long and about one and half feet wide. The artisans cut a log to a desirable size, but be sure to cut sections long enough to allow room to drill section for

[20] 'Pheng', is a wooden log, flat on one side, while on the other side it is carved out to form like basin, it is used for mixing the paste.

space to place raw materials for mixing the paste. The artisans then drill a hole and carve out the inner layer of the log to form pocket for holding the materials. The artisans then used chisel for leveling the surface.

Pheng is a water tight container. The potters used this device for mixing the materials by adding water. The potters continue to knead with hand and later used Mi and then pound the paste in order to produce smooth paste. The paste should not be too soft nor too hard. If it is too soft, the paste wouldn't stand when shaping the pottery. If it is too hard, it is difficult for the potters to handle the paste to give a desired shape as the paste will not follow the sway of potter's hand.

Pheng.

Wu:

Wu is an instrument made from hardwood. It is wooden rod measuring about one to two feet long, and four inches to eight inches in circumference. Some potters used bamboo instead of wooden stick as they find it difficult to smoothen the wooden stick. The function of Wu is to proportionately distribute the clay in all the directions. It also smoothens the surface which is roughly created by hand while smashing and slapping the paste. The Oinam potters do not used other tools to roll the measured paste which is laid on the pheng, but used Wu to roll out the measured paste, and placed on the thigh of the potters and start the shaping procedure.

Wooden Wo (roller).

Aluninium Wu (roller).

The potter used bamboo Wu for flattening the surface.

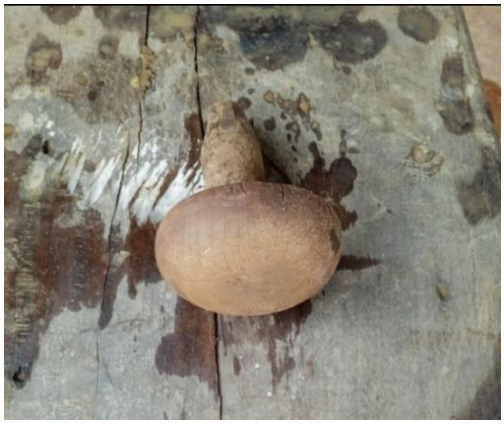
Peisu:

Peisu[21] is a hallowed object made from wood and bamboo. There is no definite shape of Peisu, some are straight while some are mushroom like in shape in varying sizes. This tool is used during the initial period of shaping the pottery in order to protect the wall from falling. Unlike the Longpi pottery, in which the coiled slab is made to stand on the stool for shaping the pottery, the Oinam potters placed the coiled slab on the thigh of the potters for shaping the pottery. The potters continuously move the soft paste while trying to give it a shape thereby causing the soft paste to change its shape while on the potter's thigh. In order to prevent the wall from falling and from changing its shape, the potters use Peisu. Peisu act as a protector when the potters turn around the pottery to give a desirable shape. So Peisu is a device which prevents the wall of the pottery from falling apart and changing its shape. The potters used this device until the paste becomes hard enough to stand by itself. When the paste becomes hard and stand by itself, the potters spank it with small Tedu (Khae) by dipping in the water. After

[21] 'Peisu', is a hallowed object used as a protector from falling during initial period of shaping a pottery.

which the potters slice away the wet layer and shape the pottery by placing one hand inside the pottery and slowly push the paste outward simultaneously with the other hand which is on the outside using Jha and slice the paste to give a shape.

Hallowed straight Peisu.



Mushroom design Peisu.

Paothing:

Paothing[22] is the park of an Alder tree. The Akder tree grows primarily in swampy areas, wet land forest and by riversides. The Alder wood becomes hard as stone when left emerged in water. The park is generally smooth and thin when young but the park becomes thick when matured. It improves soil fertility through its ability to fix nitrogen from the air. The inner park is brown in colour.

The Oiname used this tree for many purposes. They use Alder tree for building houses and firewood. In the days of yore, the best jhum area was where the numerous Alder trees grow. Even indigenous traditional forefathers knew that Alder tree improves fertility of the soil. The villagers also used Alder leaf for medicinal purposes. "The North American Indians used the park to treat many complaints such as headaches, rheumatic pains, internal injuries and diarrhea".[23] Moreover, the potters also use the park of Alder tree in tanning pottery. The potters collect the wet park of Alder tree by skinning the tree with knife or axes. Then the potters chop the park into smaller pieces before it is dried. Then, the potters deposit the smaller chopped pieces inside the finished pottery filled with water and kept it for a few days. The park of Alder tree provide strength to the pottery. It also controls water leakage and finally provide beautiful colour on the inner part of the pottery. Some potters use

[22] 'Paothing', is a park of Alder tree used by the potters to control leakage and for colouring the pottery.
[23] Moerman, D.E. 1998. Native American Ethnobotany, Tember Press, Portland, Oregon. P.927.

Alder Park for colouring the outer part of the pottery by applying the liquid collected from squeezing the chopped pieces. Not only the Oiname know the benefit of Alder tree but many other communities also used Alder tree for different purposes "A mixture of red Alder sap and charcoal was used by Cree and woodland tribes for sealing seams in Canoes and as a softener for bending boards for toboggans".[24] "The roots of red alder were used in baskets made by the Hupa, Whilkut, Nongatl, Lassik, Wailaki, Yurok Wiyot and Pomo tribes".[25]

Alder tree stem.

Alder leaf.

Skinning the park.

Soaking the Alder Park inside the pottery with water.

Drying:

When the pottery has been designed and formed, the pottery should be dried properly before firing. If it is not dried properly, causing the pottery to become frail, cracked or explode during firing. The basic theory is that pottery should be dried slowly and steadily. The weather condition is largely responsible for drying the pottery.

[24] Ibid, p.927.

[2525] Merrill, R.E. 1923. Plants used in Basketry by the California Indians. University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, Vol-XX. P.215.

A humid climate helps the paste to retain moisture for a long period of time. So, during rainy season it took longer period to dry.

Dry climate is particularly needed for pottery making. During dry season, even the large pottery is dried completely within a week or even sooner if the potters dried the pottery under the sun at noon and above the kitchen fire hearth at night. During rainy season, even though the pottery is dried above the kitchen fire hearth, the pottery absorb moisture from outside and remain moist for several days. However, drying up the pottery very quickly before reaching its maturity has also disadvantage, as sometimes it led to a crack on the rim (mouth) and also the pottery become whitest in colour. The drying-up of pottery also depend on the nature of clay used for pottery making. All clays have different levels of moisture and different additives. Clay with a high level of plastic and finer composition have higher water content. This means that they will take longer to dry.

Drying of pottery.

Firing:

When the pottery is dried properly, the potters carry them to a fired place for firing. Unlike the Longpi potters the Oinam potters do not polish the pottery during drying period. In Oinam, the potters cannot fire the pottery anywhere individually. There are firing places where several potters came together along with burning materials. These firing places are chosen by sacrificing chicken or other animals by their forefathers. If an individual wish to fired her pottery individually, she had to follow the same procedure of sacrificing animals and other rituals. If the potters do not follow the same procedure, the pots are wholly broken into pieces. Although the Oinam people follow Christianity they still believe the taboos and follow the procedure.

At the time of firing certain materials were used. The materials mainly used for firing are, straw, dried thatch, dried rushes, dried palm leaf, small tree branches, and split dried oak log. During firing any part of pine tree should be included. If a part of pine tree is included during firing, the whole pottery is exploded. So, the potters cautiously check of entering pine during firing.

Firing the pottery.

The potters remove the pottery from fire using long stick.

Pottery after firing.

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