

Changing Social Life of the Potters of Nongpok Sekmai in Manipur, India

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Abstract—Background: The tradition of the development of pottery through the handling of clay is one of the earliest skills known to the Chakpas of Manipur. Nongpok Sekmai, a Chakpa village in Thoubal district of Manipur, India, is strictly associated with making pots of red ochre colour called *uyan*. In the past, pottery was in great demand, each family needed them in rituals, festive occasions and also for day to day use. The whole village was engaged in the occupation of pot making. However the tradition of pottery making is fast declining. People have switched over to other economic activities which can provide them a better socioeconomic life leaving behind the age-old tradition of pottery occupation. The present study was carried out to find out the social life of the potters of Nongpok Sekmai. Materials and Method: In-depth interviews, household survey and observation were conducted to collect information on the pottery trend in the village. Results: The total population of the surveyed village is 1194 persons out of which 582 are male and 612 are female, distributed through 252 households. At present 4.94 % of the total population are still engaged in this profession. The study recorded 19 occupations other than pottery among women indicating decline of the traditional occupation. Conclusion: The study has revealed the changing life of the potters due to technological development, globalization and social network.

Keywords—Chakpas, Nongpok Sekmai, pottery, uyan

I. INTRODUCTION

THE domestication of plants and animals marked the beginning of effective food production by man, a stage in human socio-cultural development that has frequently been called the Neolithic age [1]. Neolithic which means ‘of the new stone age’ originally signified the cultural stage in which humans invented pottery and ground-stone tools [2]. This period involved the domestication of plants and animals, thus providing a more reliable food supply and thus allowed for population growth, the emergence of cities, the specialization of labor, technological complexity, and many other features that are characteristic of agricultural state [3]. From this time the human being was associated with the food production and utilization of other domestic materials, like vessels [4].

In the hoary past man lived in wilderness solely dependent on the Mother Nature. He started settled cultivation and domestication of animals when he reached the threshold of civilization. During this period as it was essential man started making containers for various purposes: to store his food and later for cooking [5]. Clay is most abundant of all materials and as such the earlier men were found associated with the clay. The development of craftsmanship called pottery was made out of necessity during his course of life. It was some

accidental fire, which produced the knowledge that clay can be hardened on firing and its shape stayed for all time [6]. From this time the style and artistic values became attached to this permanent shape of the clay product. The tradition of the development of pottery through the handling of clay is also one of the earliest skills known to the *Chakpas* [7] of Manipur. From time immemorial lumps of clay were hand-moulded to form containers, toys and idols. This form of craft is an expression of nature, creativity and values of their way of life. As found today, this craft is restricted to some villages which are inhabited by the *Chakpas* and women belonging to this community are known for their expertise in making different types of pots meant for ritualistic and ceremonial purposes. Places associated with pottery making in Manipur are Andro, Nongpok Sekmai, Chairen, Thongjao, Nungbi and Oinam. Nongpok Sekmai village in Thoubal district of Manipur, India (where the present study was carried out) is strictly associated with making pots of red ochre colour [8] called *uyan* which is a flaring mouthed globular curry-pot having fish bone pattern and paint of *kuhi* (*Pasaniapachyphyla*) [9] solution at the shoulder region.

Nowadays, a drastic change in the world economy has been witnessed due to the development of science and technology, rapid urbanization and modernization [10] and advanced mode of communication. As a result of these, many ethnic groups are compelled to leave their ancestral occupation to cope with changed economic structure in the society. People switched over to other economic activities which can provide them a better socio economic life [11]. Owing to the rapid changes taking place in the economic front, Indian artisans and craftsmen are worried that their trades will die out one day. Due to these reasons, pottery in India and everywhere is experiencing a slow death. In China, the tradition of pottery craft has faced the problem of disintegration as this industry has been featured with inefficiency in production and the resultant low profit margin [12], [13]. Manipur is no exception as far as decline in the age-old tradition of pottery making is concerned. According to Lisam [8], “In the past, pottery was in great demand, each family needed them in rituals, festive occasions and also for day to day domestic use. However, with the advent of metal utensils in the 19th century, the pottery industry in the state has decreased. The factors responsible for causing hindrance to the tradition of pottery making are inaccessible of suitable clay, diminishing expert potters, cultural tradition of producing pots only during season when there is less rain and the tiresome work of operational sequences of the production [14]. As the financial returns of the production of Manipuri pottery is quite negligible people

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look for other livelihood options rather than the traditional pottery occupation. In this paper, we address the changing social life of the potters of Nongpok Sekmai village. The ethnographic data presented here highlights the changing social life of the potters of Nongpok, Sekmai.

II. STUDY AREA

Nongpok Sekmai, a pottery village located in the eastern corner of Imphal valley is situated at a distance of 35 km. from the capital Imphal in Thoubal District of Manipur, India. Within a few kilometers from the village, the eastern hill ranges begin to rise. In a way, it marks the far end of the plain area in the east. The village is located in the plain and the residential cluster is surrounded by the extensive paddy fields which ultimately merge with the hills in the eastern border. The village has a settlement area of approximately 1 sq.km. This settlement area is surrounded by the extension of paddy fields in the west and north whereas the eastern border is formed by a single road, which connects the village with Ningel, a village renowned for its salt springs. The southern border of the residential area is marked by the metallised Yairipok-Shikhong road. The village has joint boundary with Kwarok Maring in the west and Kakmayai Meitei village in the north. The village of Ukhongsang has common boundary with Nongpok Sekmai in the south. All these surrounding villages are located within a short distance from the village, roughly within one kilometer. This village enjoys a climate similar to the valley areas of Manipur. According to Census of India (1991:9), the Shikhong-Sekmai area which is an extension of the Eastern Hill system belongs to the Barail Series and Singsang formation (Garo hills).

The village of Nongpok Sekmai is linked with Imphal, the capital of the state by all-weather metallised roads. There are two roads connecting the village with Imphal. The roads are Imphal – Yairipok– Nongpok Sekmairoad via Thoubal and another Imphal – Yairipok – NongpokSekmai road via the Ngariyan hills. The distance from Nongpok Sekmai to Yairipok is 7 kms. Shikhong bazar, the most immediate market place at Nongpok Sekmai, is the primary outlet of their products-the earthen pots. Most of their products are transported to the nearby markets by various means. At present Imphal-bound buses (usually, the winger / tata magic – smaller passenger vehicles of 14/12 seating capacity) and other public conveyances transport earthen pots to the main market in Imphal town.

There are altogether four schools in the village. They are (i). The Sekmai Khumbi High School, (ii). The Shikhong Sekmai Junior High School, (iii). The Little Rose English School and (iv). The Nongpok Sekmai Primary School. Distinctiveness of Nongpok Sekmai, in terms of religious beliefs and practices is discernible by the presence of three local deities, *umanglais* [8] called NongpokNingthou, Ikop Ningthou and Sawang Ningthou. The people of Shikhong areas worship Nongpok Ningthou while the people of Lilakambong, Makha Leikai and MayaiLeikai (three localities in the settlement area) worship Ikop Ningthou. Sawang Ningthou is worshipped by the people of Awang Leikai.

As the village falls under the “notified areas” of the Government of Manipur, it has a local self-government in the form of Shikhong Sekmai Nagar Panchayat which is divided into 9 wards and pottery making is confined to only 3 wards i.e. ward Nos. 2, 3 and 4.

The society consists of seven *yeks* [15] in different proportions–Khuman (71 households), Mangang (49 households), Angom (48 households), Luwang (42 households), Moirang (20 households) and Kha-Nganba (19 households). The presence of all the seven clans of the Meitei (the largest community in Manipur) is a clear indication of the self-contained nature of the village. The society being patrilineal and patriarchal, men play important roles in various social activities and engage in major economic pursuits. Marriage within the village has been a regular practice although inter-village marriages are on the rise these days.

Although traditional pottery making plays an indispensable economic and socio-cultural role within the Nongpok Sekmai society, the potters who are women (both married and unmarried) have lost their earlier importance as makers of pots of royal dignity. In the olden days, pots from this village were used in *Walhoushang* (the royal kitchen) because of which they occupied a social status equal to that of other groups including the Meitei. Traditionally, the potters of Nongpok Sekmai were skilled *uyan* makers. Life of the people revolved round the pots so much so that all transactions were made in terms of “*pot*” (a local unit of measurement used by potters to indicate a bagful of pots) and values were measured depending on the size of the pot. But today the potters are facing difficulty in keeping the tradition alive. Despite its potentialities for self-employment, the number of potters in Nongpok Sekmai has reduced drastically and new types of pottery like *kambi* (earthen tray) [16] and *sangom chaphu* [5] have started featuring in the industry indicating a struggle for existence.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Few ethnographic studies of pottery villages in Manipur have been attempted. However, no anthropological study addressing changing social life of potter groups has been undertaken. This study is an attempt to explore the changing social life of the potters of Nongpok Sekmai from anthropological perspective. Such a study may provide a body of knowledge that promotes logical thinking and generalization for the sustainable development of lost trade like pottery on one hand and why the people abandoned the traditional occupation and shifted to other occupational trades on the other. The finding of this study may be a contributing factor for planning and development strategies and the knowledge gained from this research may contribute while framing economic policies and development for the artisans in the national level. This study may help in conserving the traditional wisdom of the occupation and also in paving the way of conserving the tradition in the changing scenario.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from the field by using four research tools such as in-depth interviews, household survey, observation and focus group discussion. A number of questions for each tool were formulated to achieve the desired objectives of the study. In-depth interviews of every potter in the village were conducted with the help of interview schedules regarding the present occupational shift and the trend of socioeconomic marginalization. Stratified random technique based on their income has also been applied for assessing detailed information about their social life in relation to pottery occupation. The schedules were pre-tested before administering in the field. The interviewees were given a uniform instruction highlighting the purpose and objectives of conducting the interview. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used for data collection. As the present study focuses on the changing social life of the potters, socio demographic data which included political life, occupation, language, religion, education, social organization and pottery were collected through survey. Four focus group interviews (FGI) were also conducted among the potters. A checklist was used to guide the focus group interview. The focus group interview was conducted to assess their group characters and behaviors of self-rejection from the mainstream and the factors that led them to it. 4-6 potters attended in each FGI whose names were not recorded though responses during the sessions were tape recorded and their verbatim were presented in the report. Recorded data were sorted and analysed with simple statistical method.

V. OBJECTIVES

The following objectives have been formulated for the conducted research.

1. To assess the status of potters in Nongpok Sekmai.
2. To identify the reasons responsible for occupational change from pottery to other occupational trade.

VI. FINDINGS

The total population of the study village is 1194 souls out of which 582 are males and 612 are females distributed in 252 households. Pot making is a traditional occupation of this village apart from agricultural activity and is confined to females only. According to census data, out of 612 women, only 59 of 21 to 74 years are engaged in pottery with a percentage of 9.64 (4.94% only, when calculated with the total population of the village). Maximum number of potters (35.60%) is found in the age range 50 to 59 years closely followed by women in 60 to 69 years (28.81%). There is distinct decrease in number among the younger and older age groups. 59.32% of them are illiterate, 16.95% read and write, 20.34% read upto tenth class and the rest read upto class XII. Monthly individual income of the potters is very low with 71.19% earning a mere amount of \leq Rs. 2677 (Table I).

Traditionally, pottery was the primary income generating occupation among women. However, the study recorded 19 occupations other than pottery among women (as presented in

Table II). The type of pot manufactured today is no longer restricted to the traditional *uyan*. The most commonly manufactured types of pot are the traditional *uyan*, *kambi* and *shangom chapphu* using the turn-table method. In most of the households, the traditional *uyan* has been replaced by vessels of metal and other alloys like pressure cooker, sauce pans etc.

TABLE I
 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Indicators	Classification	f.	p.c.
Age	20-29	4	6.78
	30-39	4	6.78
	40-49	10	16.95
	50-59	21	35.60
	60-69	17	28.81
	70+	3	5.08
Literacy	Illiterate	35	59.32
	Read and write	10	16.95
	Under Matric	12	20.35
	Upto- XII	2	3.39
Marital Status	Unmarried	1	1.69
	Married	58	98.30
	Living with husband	40	68.96
	Married		
	Separated	1	1.72
	Widow	17	29.31
Family Type	Nuclear	24	40.68
	Joint	25	42.37
	Single	1	1.69
	Broken	9	15.25
*Income (in Rupees)	\geq 17,850	0	0.00
	8,925 – 17,849	0	0.00
	5,355 – 8,924	5	8.47
*Income (in Rupees)	2,678 – 5,354	12	20.34
	\leq 2,677	42	71.19
Housing	Traditional	6	10.16
	Slightly Modern	53	89.83
	Modern	0	0.00

* Prasad's income classification revised for 2014 using real-time update tool [17].

Prasad's social classification revised for 2014 using real-time update tool, was used for the socioeconomic status classification for the potters of Nongpok Sekmai. Maximum number of potters (71.19%) is found in the fifth (Lower) social class, which is followed by social class IV (Upper Lower Class) (20.34%). The remaining 8.47% only can attain III (Lower Middle Class) social status (Table III).

Within the society, though, endogamous is traditionally slowly becoming exogamous. Out of the total 58 married women, 16 are from different adjoining villages like Ingourok, HijamKhunou, Ukhongsang, Chandrakhong, Pitra, Charangpat, Icham Khunou, Keirembikhok, Shikhong and Kakmayai. These villages are situated within a radius of 2-5 kilometers from the village. Some women are from still farther places like Wangjing, Lamding, Thouba and Tentha (Thoubal district) and Kwakeithel and Kanto (Imphal West district) (Table IV).

It is also observed from the finding that there are skilled and unskilled potters in the village. Out of 59 potters, 69.49% are skilled potters and the remaining 30.50% are unskilled potters (Table V). Kamphang situated about 1.5 km at the foothill of

Gwarok hill on the western side of the village is the place from where raw material is procured.

TABLE II
OCCUPATIONAL TRAITS OF FEMALE

Sl. No.	Occupational Trait	f.	p.c.
1.	Farmer	12	1.96
2.	House wife	191	31.21
3.	Potter	59	9.64
4.	Weaving	35	5.72
5.	Embroidery	12	1.96
6.	Dress designing	1	0.16
7.	Beautician	2	0.33
8.	Social worker	1	0.16
9.	Rice mill owner	2	0.33
10.	Chengkokshubi	2	0.33
11.	Shop keeper	2	0.33
12.	Business	5	0.81
13.	Hotel manageress	3	0.49
14.	Vegetable vendor	3	0.49
15.	House work	2	0.33
16.	Beautician	2	0.33
17.	Teacher	7	1.14
18.	Asha worker	2	0.33
19.	Angalwadi worker	3	0.49
20.	Nurse	1	0.16
21.	Student	181	29.57
22.	Too old to work	15	2.45
23.	Too young to work	62	10.13
24.	Unemployed	7	1.14
Total		612	99.99

TABLE III
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF POTTERS

Sl. No.	Social Class	Classification of per capita income / month (as on January 2015)	f	p.c.
1.	I (Upper Class)	≥ 17,850	0	0.00
2.	II(Upper Middle Class)	8,925 – 17,849	0	0.00
3.	III (Lower Middle Class)	5,355 – 8,924	5	8.47
4.	IV (Upper Lower Class)	2,678 – 5,354	12	20.34
5.	V (Lower Class)	≤ 2,677	42	71.19
Total			59	100.00

TABLE IV
NATIVE VILLAGE OF MARRIED WOMEN

Sl. No	District	Name of village
1.	Thoubal	Ingourok, HijamKhunou, Ukhongsang, Chandrakhong, Pitra, Charangpat, IchamKhunou, Keirembikhok, Shikhong, Kakmayai, Wangjing, Lamding, Thouba and Tentha
2.	Imphal West	Kwakeithel and Kanto

TABLE V
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF SKILLED AND UNSKILLED POTTERS

Sl. No.	Occupational Trait	f.	p. c.
1.	Skilled	41	69.49
2.	Unskilled	18	30.50

However, today some potters collect clay from another site at Ingourok and pots are manufactured by hand and beater technique. Pot making starts by preparing dough of clay. This is done by kneading clay and *nungjreng* (coarse sand) in the proportion of 3:1. The prepared dough is then rolled on a wooden plank using both hands to make a solid cylinder. Then the rod is flattened into a thin slab by pressing the paste on the plank. Curving followed by joining the two shorter ends, it is turned into a tube. One of the open ends of the tube is also closed either by squeezing or adding another round cake of the clay paste. The neck and rim are made with a piece of wet coarse cloth and by the joint digital movement. Shaping of the body of the pot is done with a wooden beater. The pot is kept either on the *Lepsum*, a wooden prop or knees of the potters. The potter taps with the wooden beater on the outer surface and force of the beater is restricted from the inner wall with a biconvex or oval shaped stone held by the other hand. The pot is then dried in the shady area for about 3-5 hrs. There is a second and final shaping. Then the pots are again dried in the shady areas for about 5-7 days. Firing is done in open air with straw.

The village is well connected with Imphal and other neighbouring villages. Imphal bound public vehicles ply from early morning till late evening after every 15 minutes from Shikhong bazaar, the main market in the village. Numerous auto rickshaws are also serving as means of communication with other villages and smaller townships like Yairipok bazaar and Thoubal bazaar. Means of communication is good as the village has been exposed to modernity and globalization. Out of 59 potters, 86.44% own mobile phones (either by the potters or members of the family) and the remaining 13.55% do not have. Regarding about the T. V. set, 49.15% of the potters family have T. V. set in their family and the remaining 50.84% of family do not have. Nearly one by fifth of the families have radio with 77.96% and only 22.03% do not. Only 8.47% have acquired DTH pay channels among the potters family (Table VI).

TABLE VI
MODERN COMMUNICATION GADGETS POSSESSED BY POTTERS/FAMILIES OF POTTERS

Sl. No.	Item	Have	f.	p. c.
1.	Mobile phone	Have	51	86.44
		Have not	8	13.55
		Total	59	99.99
2.	T. V. Set	Have	29	49.15
		Have not	30	50.84
		Total	59	99.99
3.	Radio	Have	46	77.96
		Have not	13	22.03
		Total	59	99.99
4.	DTH	Have	5	8.47
		Have not	54	91.52
		Total	59	99.99

VII. DISCUSSION

The above findings suggest that the traditional *uyan* manufacturing is no more a sustainable livelihood system in Nongpok Sekmai. Decreased demand of products, low socioeconomic status, decreased number of women with traditional knowledge, inadequate raw material, preference of modern occupation, traditional technology and improved means of communication are identified as the factors behind their leaving the occupation.

A. Decreased Demand of Pottery Products

Fast decline in the demand for the traditional *uyan* both within and outside the village has put the potters in a difficult situation. The introduction of products of modern technologies such as ceramics, plastic and metallic utensils which are more durable, attractive and cost effective is affecting economic status of the potters. "Many families now prefer to buy aluminum utensils rather than earthen pots" says one of the participants in a FGI (FGI-2: 14/02/16: MayaiLeikai/N.S.). The tradition is greatly challenged by the inevitable replacement and under this circumstance potters have lost and are still losing their traditional rural markets and their position within the community. In an attempt to save the traditional knowledge from extinction and also to provide income to the illiterate and poorly educated potters, other types of pots like platter, decorative items, piggy bank and flower pot are manufactured. It is also observed that even in the potter's family use of metal utensils have been witnessed.

B. Low Socioeconomic Status of the Potters

The term 'socioeconomic status' is a social construct that one's position in the society that could be constructed by material goods, money, power, friendship networks, health care, leisure time or educational opportunities [18], [19]. It has also been defined as the position that an individual or family occupies about the average standards of his prevailing cultural possessions in the society, his income, his material possession and participation [20], [21] in the group activities of the community. As most of the potters have very low income and no or low educational qualification, their socioeconomic status is low. "I can't carry on. There is no money in this anymore. Many of us are leaving the jobs. At least we can make better money elsewhere. And the government has not helped at all." (FGI-2: 14/02/16: Mayai Leikai/N.S.), said one of the participant in a FGI. Because of this status, they are not able to maintain a respectable living standard and therefore voluntarily marginalize themselves from the main stream. They avoid company of better placed families and individuals as the difference becomes distinct especially at the time of making contributions for ceremonial, religious and social gatherings. They live with a low profile and become insignificant.

C. Increased Level of Literacy among Younger Generation

Literacy in the village compared to the earlier generation has improved. Improvement in literacy is a good social change. However, the present-day potters being low in

educational level as compared to the younger generation have limited scope to earn a respectable income from better paid jobs, governmental or non-governmental. As the level of literacy increases, the younger generations become more inclined to the salaried jobs leaving behind the traditional occupation. "The literate younger has wider range of other occupational traits leaving behind the traditional occupation" said one of the participants in a FGI (FGI-3: 17/02/16: Awang Leikai/N.S.). Another woman participant lamented, "My children have not followed into this profession and I will not continue much longer as I am becoming old" (FGI-3: 17/02/16: Awang Leikai/N.S.). Only individuals who cannot enter into the arena of the modern world glue into the traditional occupation. "We are poor. We have no other option to earn money as I am illiterate and old" (FGI-3: 17/02/16: Awang Leikai/N.S.), said one participant. Since pot making is a traditionally inherited knowledge which requires no educational qualification, the potters did not give much importance to education when pottery existed as a flourishing trade. Today they are unable to earn enough through pot making and yet unable to switch occupation.

D. Decreased Number of Women with Traditional Knowledge

Women are in general keepers of cultural traditions and knowledge. They build strong communities through supporting religious functions, producing handicrafts, using natural medicines, wearing indigenous traditional dress and performing indigenous songs and dances. Roles of women in maintaining the traditional heritage are of particular significance that may be considered as an important domain and expersions of cultural traditions that are very often centred around the women in the society in maintaining cultural identity [22]. In Nongpok Sekmai, potters are women. Women born and brought up in the village are familiar with the traditional knowledge and hence can carry forward the tradition. "I have been born and brought up from this village. As far as I remember, almost all the families in this village had been engaged in this occupation. But now only a few of us retain this occupation" (FGI-4: 05/03/16: Awang Leikai/N.S.). Today, partners from outside the group are slowly making entry into the village. This has resulted in a gradual decrease in the number of women with knowledge of the traditional occupation. These women try their hands at other occupations to supplement the family income and some are engaged in pot making as unskilled artisans. Others have opted for small scale business like vegetable vendor, dress designing, beautician, teacher, Asha worker [23], Anganwadi worker [24] and nurse. Regarding about the decrease number of individual participating into the occupation, one participant commented, "My children have not followed into this profession and I will not continue much longer as I am old" (FGI-4: 05/03/16: Awang Leikai/N.S.). "The younger generation does not want to joint this occupation because it is tedious job, less profit and dirty" (FGI-4: 05/03/16: Awang Leikai/N.S.). The decline in the number of skilled potters greatly affects the quality and quantity of goods. Further there is no scope to train the

younger generation as most of them do not find the occupation lucrative, hence young unmarried women have more or less stopped participation in the traditional occupation. "The younger generation does not want to joint this occupation because it is tedious job, less profit and dirty" (FGI-1: 07/02/16:Makha Leikai/N.S.).

E. Inadequate Raw Material

Production is impossible without raw materials. Kamphang was the place from where good clay was procured for making pottery. Due to continuous digging since time immemorial, today this site can no longer supply sufficient raw material leading to retardation in the rate of manufacturing. As an alternative means, clay from another site known as Ingourok is used. But the quality of clay is not suitable for *uyan* making. People look for quality in a product and the sub-standard quality of *uyan* made of clay from Ingourok has failed to convince buyers as quality cannot be compromised.

F. Traditional Technology

Pottery in Nongpok Sekmai is produced solely using traditional technology. One potter said, "We still follow the traditional method of making pots" (FGI-1: 07/02/16: Makha Leikai/N.S.). Owing to use of outdated technology, production is possible only during season when there is less rain. The seasonal mode of production does not guarantee regular income throughout the year. Such a condition makes survival the trade difficult.

G. Improved Means of Communication

In the past, the village remained remote with limited means of communication with the outside world. Improved means of communication brings remote populations/groups close to other groups. Women in the village have started seeing a life better than what they had been seeing. Exposure to better opportunities and better living standards has invariably marginalized the traditional trade as more and more women have become aware of better occupational opportunities.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The potters of NongpokSekmai are struggling for survival in an era of globalization and modernization where culturally important items are fast losing significance. It is only because of demands that markets survive. In a village like NongpokSekmai where change in economic sector is rapidly taking place, gradual decline of a less profitable trade such as pottery comes as no surprise. Though the tradition has not become extinct, possibilities of extinction cannot be undermined as unavailability of suitable clay, lack of expert potters, customs of producing only with simple technology and only during favourable season, low financial return, better job avenues etc. have emerged as factors for economic marginalization of potters resulting to change their social life. The village is no more an isolated as the modern means of transportation and communication have reached the village. Movement of people from one place to another place for various purposes is increasing due to the emerging transport

facilities. Apart from this, communication keeps them informed about the world's events and trends thus bringing in positive changes in the life of the people of NongpokSekmai by enhancing job and education facilities to the younger generation leaving behind their age old traditional occupation. The study has also revealed the helplessness of potters who are caught between tradition and modernity, who are trying their best to produce and sell at markets where the goods are no longer in demand, who are trying to use their skill in designing items which may attract buyers.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

Traditions need to be preserved. But when survival becomes difficult, people tend to compromise. Occupational shift becomes the only solution and when such a shift takes place, age old traditions die. Death of a tradition marks the disappearance of a knowledge which had been transmitted and carried forward through generations. If such compromises continue, the cultural identity is at risk. There is every need to preserve traditional knowledge in general and the pottery making knowledge of NongpokSekmai in particular. Some suggestions which may hopefully check complete marginalization and eventually extinction of pottery making in NongpokSekmai are:

- Government intervention to promote the trade by giving training to artisans to improve quality, quantity and design of their products to be competitive in local or national market.
- Workshops on saving time, resource and capital will enhance the trade.
- Diverse groups of community members should be motivated to make combined effort to preserve the knowledge of cultural pride.
- Transferring the new technical know-how and organising appropriate training to improve the quality of products to the potters will certainly help in [25] preserving the tradition.
- Government supported loan facilities will save the potters from desperate situations and thereby stop them from shifting occupation.

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