

Culture and Worldview of Olo Tribal People Group

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Abstract

This paper discusses the culture and worldview of Olo tribal group living in north-eastern region of India and Myanmar.

Key words: Olo people group, north-eastern India, Myanmar

The Land and Its People

The Ollos live in two distinct countries. They are settled in the adjoining hill tracts of extreme north-eastern part of India, Arunachal Pradesh or NEFA, known as North-East Frontier Area, and Myanmar (Burma). So far, the size of the area could not be measured due to distinct national complexities, and as a result it is unknown to us. Even though they live in two distinct countries, they know each other, share their common interests, and help each other. As they are of the same blood, they maintain a close relationship. It is a very interesting thing to note that the international boundary cannot part their matrimonial, fraternal, clannish, and social relationships between them. They speak the same dialect, practice the same religion, and follow the same traditions and customs. Through a personal interview with Moben, it is learnt that about 30 per cent of the villages of Olo tribal group live in Indian region while almost 70 per cent of them live in Myanmar region today (Moben, *Personal Interview*, March 22, 2009).

The following are some of the major rivers in this region - Chineuku, Jopu, Barap, Shumhau, Shumna, Hatnam and Jonneu. These rivers serve as important means for fishing and livelihood. Also, Shilom, Loongvi, Benkhon, Wakkhoolom, Pongkang, Mangyang are some of the major mountain peaks.

The Origin of the Ollo People

Concerning their origin, the Ollos are ascribed as Tibeto-Burma family on the basis of philological studies. There is a clear oral account that these people migrated from Tangnyu. They believe that this Tangnyu might be somewhere located in southern China. It might refer to Tang dynasty that we read in the history of China. The stones that their fathers erected between *Senzik Shikneu* and *Sezik Shiksho* are still there as undeniable evidence until today. Again from there, they moved toward different places and established several villages for better agricultural purpose and security from wild animals and human enemies. They also believe that Tangnyu is the centre point from which culture, dresses and ornaments were obtained (Phawan, Personal Interview, Lazu Village: October 12, 2010). Festivals like Voorang, and Vozup, have been started from Tangnyu. It is the place of settlement of all the Ollos prior to their migration to India and Myanmar. Besides, the folk song of Voorang festival gives us an undeniable fact that the Ollo has come from Tangnyu. The folk song goes like this, “Ollo a Tangnyu vang” meaning, “Ollo has come from Tangnyu.”

It is a belief that from Gangnyu, the people of Ollo had come down to Senzik and the stones that they laid are still there in between Senzik Shikneu and Senzik Siksho. However, the Ollo do not have any written documents, so it is very difficult to trace out the exact places where they had settled prior to Senzik after they had started their journey from Tangnyu. And years later, they came down to Longkho which had become the permanent dwelling place for the Ollos.

Longkho is the first and oldest village among the Ollo tribe. The history of Ollo vividly tells us that during the time of war, Longkho was raided by enemies and was totally destroyed. So the people of Longkho fled and settled at the present village known as Hazik and other places. Hazik is the largest village among the Ollos in Myanmar region. Lazu is the largest among the Ollo villages on the Indian side and is also the largest village of the entire Ollo tribe. Many other villages came through migration from out of these larger villages.

The People

The people of Ollo are of the Tibeto-Mongoloid race. The Ollo people in general are

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friendly, amiable and colourful. The tribal customs bind the tribesmen together into a strong community. The society is patriarchal and primogeniture.

Regarding their physical structure, the majority of the population are short while a much lesser number are of medium and fair complexion. They are naturally strong, especially the womenfolk. One may correctly say that the women are the source of the family survival because most men folk do not work in the fields except during the time of cutting of the jungle for making a new field. Women are left alone to work throughout the year for family sustenance.

They love singing, dancing, hunting and any other social gathering. They establish close relationship with one another. They are naturally humorous and hospitable. They are very open and straight forward in their dealing and approaches.

Demography

Due to the absence of established government, it is difficult to establish an accurate figure of the total population of this region. However, the researcher (Suluveyi Rhakho) along with about forty of his co-workers in the field did a lot in estimating the population. This is done through personal visits to almost all the existing villages and regions. The estimated population of the region is about two hundred thousand.

Lifestyle

The Ollos construct houses made of stilts, although the chief's houses of the villages are constructed with massive carved blocks and wooden pillars. Dormitories are provided for bachelors and unmarried woman separately. According to their tradition, it is a place where the elders teach the children about traditional mythology, folklore and religion. Today, Christian teaching is also mixed with traditional teaching.

The dormitory of the bachelor is known as a "Poh", while a bachelor boy' is known as a "Yanpo" (*Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh*, Delhi: Pushka Press, 2007, p.76). However, women are not permitted to enter in the boys' dormitory, although the reverse is permitted. Dormitories are built upon wooden raised piles, usually measuring four feet above the ground. The bachelors'

dormitories are decorated with human skulls taken in head hunting in the past. They are used for containing large log drums carved out from wooden logs. The drum, known as “*thum*”, is carved with designs of hornbills and tigers. However, with the advancement of Western education, it has been witnessed that these practices are on the decline. Headhunting, which once proved to be popular among the Ollos, had been banned since 1991.

Hygiene Issues

In spite of their nomadic look and lifestyle, the Ollos are well set up in their house-keeping with good awareness of health related matters. This is seen through the way they construct the houses. Unlike most tribal people groups of the world, they do not simply construct their houses on bare ground. Instead, the floors are mostly laid with bamboos and the houses are constructed in such a way that dust and worms will not affect them. Their houses and the household items are kept clean along with the inhabitants. This may seem quite advanced in a way, but until the entry of Christianity, there was no toilet and the people defecated anywhere. Also their domestic animals like pigs, fowls, goat and others lived together with them in their houses. The pigs and other animals lived just underneath where the family lived. Whatever the inhabitants discarded away as garbage, the pigs would eat them up, including human faeces.

The Ollos followed an age-old tradition of keeping bodies of the deceased relatives in the open, either near a river or just outside their houses. The Ollo Christians, like neighboring Nocte tribe, would keep their corpses exposed for three days, although they were kept in the house. Inevitably, the decomposed bodies would attract bacteria, insects and germs which produced a terrible stench. This was the cause of frequent outbreaks of health-threatening diseases.

Owing to public health education by reformers, burial of the deceased in proper coffins have completely replaced this traditional rite since 2004. The Kheti village, which is not far from Khonsa, was the last village to give up this practice in the modern Nokte society (*Tribesmen bury Last Rites*. Bombay: Prakash & Co. Ltd. 1984, p.94).

Thus with the arrival of Christianity, there are tremendous changes and improvements in their total living conditions and lifestyle, including hygiene.

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Political Life

So far, in the history of Ollo, there is no available record that they were under any other ruler; there was no division, but only one autonomous people group. As a result, they have their own political history and social system. Generally, the people of Ollo were ruled by 'Vang' or 'Lowang' which means Chief King, 'Vangtsa' means 'helper of Vang and 'Ngong' or 'governor'. The 'vang' or 'lowang' and 'ngong' used to have consultation meetings with clan leaders, elderly men and warriors prior to taking decisions with regard to disputes, social problems and any other community related matters.

Among the Ollos, the *Kyakte* and *Hodioong* clans are the most popular and they are usually the ones who rule the villages as chieftain clans or 'Ahng clan'. Although the chieftains and *ahngs* have the power to rule, they are expected to consult with other clan leaders with regards to decision making.

If one village was defeated by another in warfare, the defeated village became the subject of the victorious village and had to pay bon or tribute. So the inter-village fighting was for the sake of tribute and prestige.

Lowang System

The 'Lowangs' are the chieftains of the villages. Each village has its own *Lowang*. The system of *Lowang* is as old as the tribe itself. In the early period of the tribe the *Lowangs* acted as dictators of the villages. Their will was the law sometimes. They were extremely powerful. However, they were not cruel in their rule, as one might assume (Hongrang Longse (85 years), *Personal Interview*, Lazu village: March 24, 2011). Rather, their administration in general, was beneficial and protective of the people. The villagers in return were obliged to offer free services and they were to bring the products of the field to the *Lowang*, as a kind of tribute (C. Longwa Longse, *Personal Interview*, Lazu village: March 24, 2011). Another obligation of the villagers was to bring the sinewy portion of the hip of their slaughtered animals to their *Lowang*.

Lowangship or Angship is hereditary. Powerful *Lowangs* could have many villages as they could conquer many villages and make them their subjects and receive their tributes. The *Lowangs* of these conquered villages became subordinates and subjects of the great *Lowang or Angh* (A. Yanang Konyak, *From Darkness to Light*, p.8). Until today in the case of the death of any *Ahng* without a successor (i.e. his son or brother), the ruling *Lowang* has to nominate a successor. If a village is taken over by a more powerful village, a new *Lowang* for the village will be appointed.

Thus the kingship or *lowangship* system of the Ollo people group is purely based on blood relationship. The blood relationship continues generation after generation. All ascendants and descendants of an individual are kin related through blood relation. Family lineage and clan are consanguine kin-groups.

Similar to that of Banjara people group in Jharkhand state of India, the Ollo people group uses classificatory and descriptive kingship terminology for designating their relatives. A group of relatives are called by the same classificatory kingship term. The descriptive terminology refers to exact relationship between the two persons (Diwakar Menz and Delo Mai Hansda, *Encyclopaedia of Schedule Tribes of Jharkhand*, Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2010, p. 30). Apart from kingship blood relationship, no one can become a king or chief of the village under any circumstance.

If a *Lowang* commits a crime which is regarded as a violation of traditional law or if he misleads the people, his subjects could depose him or even kill him and ultimately a new *Lowang* will succeed him. The *Lowangs* have developed into a ruling clan and only the *Lowang* clan is entitled to be a *Lowang*.

The *Lowangs* will marry only daughters of *Lowangs* of another village. It used to be that the *Lowang* could have as many wives as he wanted or could afford to have. But the line of succession goes only to the sons of the principal wife, who must be a daughter of a *Lowang* of another village. If *Lowangs* could have concubines, they could be from among commoners also,

but in a strict sense it was considered taboo. The *Lowangs* usually choose their wives from the clans of *Lowangs* to preserve their dignity and honour.

No villager has dared to have love affair with any of the daughters of the *Ahng* and vice versa. There were some *Lowangs* in the past who had as many as sixty wives. Whenever a powerful *Lowang* paid a visit to his subject village, he was usually offered the fairest damsel of the village during his stay there.

Priest System

Every village has its own priests who perform all the religious rites and sacrifices. These priests are called as '*Tote*' which means 'priest' or 'medium', as well as '*Mütü Tote*', which means 'high priest' or 'great man of god'. Sacrifices of chicken, piglet, food items and eggs are offered by the priests on behalf of the village or individuals to the gods or spirits with a view to appease the anger of the evil spirits. The same is also performed to the benevolent spirits to show their gratitude to the benevolent spirits (Horan Longse, *Personal Interview*, Noglo Village: April 27, 2011). The priests are highly respected and honoured by the common people as well as by the chieftains and warriors. Everyone takes the consent of the priests, regardless whether they are private matters or community affairs. The priest is considered as man of god/spirit and has some spirits with him that enable him to represent god/ spirit on one hand and fellow human beings on the other. He is hence the mouth piece of both god and men.

Like *Lowangs*, the appointment of priests is hereditary in practice. Usually, the eldest son of the priest will become the priest after his father. Therefore, there is priestly clan in every village. The village elders, in some cases, have the power to assist the priests of the village. In some cases, especially in the absence of any priest, they can act as priests as well.

Customary Law

The people of Ollo have proper rules and regulations since time immemorial. There is an administrative body or council called '*losavang*' in every village. The members of *losavang* are selected from each clan as clan representatives. They function under the headship of the *lowang*. The *losavang* is the final administrative body of the village. They pass or impose the resolutions

and declared it to the villages as customary laws of Ollo. Everyone is informed to abide by it and the defaulter is to be punished severely by the *losavang*. Every citizen strictly maintains the rules and regulations passed by the *losavang* in the highest respect and solidarity. Some of the common laws are given here:

1. If anyone leaves or migrates to another village without prior permission from the village authority or *losavang*; his property would be confiscated by the *losavang*.

2. When a person is murdered, the total expense of the funeral of the victim would be borne by the accused.

3. When a person is murdered in conflict, the cost of his/her life is to be given to the victim's family. It is known as *Khoo chok*. The family of accused has to give as much as the victim's family would demand.

4. When a thief is caught, one chicken is to be asked by the owner to prevent any backlash and as a mean of declaration to the villagers that he/she has stolen his belongings. This is known as *Vooyangrak*. Then the case is brought to *losavang* and the *losavang* would ask for one swine as a fine for breaking the customary law and the thief would have to give back to the owner double of what he stole. However, if the thief is a child, a special consideration might be given.

5. When a divorce happens after engagement, one cow would be given as a fine.

6. When divorce occurs after marriage, three buffaloes would be given as a fine. And then the *losavang* would slaughter one swine from the family of divorce as a means of declaration that the problem has been resolved. This is known as *Vanmikvak*.

7. When marriage occurs within the same clan, it is considered as crime against society and is illegal. In such a case, the couple would be expelled from the village as well as from the clan lists. In addition to this, a heavy fine would be imposed on both parents for bringing shame

to their clans.

8. According to the customs of Ollo, a widower cannot remarry unless the parents of the departed wife consent. If this happens, it is considered as a divorce. So he has to give three buffaloes to the parents of the departed wife for violating the rules. After three years, he is permitted to remarry.

9. When a widow remarries without the prior permission from the departed husband's parents, it is considered as divorce. So she would give three buffaloes as fine to the parents.

Social and Cultural Life

The life of the Ollo tribe revolves around the community. Their social and community life involves working and sharing together. The Ollo people have the communitarian ideology of social living. They were very much part of the community they belonged to and they actively participate for the welfare of the community.

Family Life

As far as family life of Ollo people group is concerned, the father of the household is the head of the family. He shoulders all the family affairs like protection and security from enemy and wild animals (Yangrin Panlong, Personal Interviewed at Noglo Village on April 17, 2009). He determines the family matters and all the other members of the family, including wife are to respect him. The wife is of lesser value and respect. In some cases, husbands treat their wives as material beings. This, I (the researcher) personally experienced several times. For instance, the wives have to carry their children on their backs, laboured in the fields throughout the day in the scorching heat of the sun and in the midst of stormy rain. When the evening came, they again would carry their crops or fire-wood on their backs while carrying their children upon their chests and walked back home.

The husbands usually spend the whole day in the village doing nothing but chatting with friends in a group and consuming tobacco, opium or cocaine till their wives returned from the fields. As if that is not bad enough, they would order their wives to cook quickly the moment

they return from their work. Even when food is prepared, it is the wives who would tolerate their hunger and serve their husbands first and they would eat to their hearts' content. Only after that, will the wives or female members of the family share the remaining left over food (Yangrin Panlong, Ibid). The female members are often being scolded or accused when unable to finish their field work in a specific period of time (Sena Longse, Personal Interviewed at Raho Village on February 20, 2009). They are often being abused verbally and assaulted physically. Often, they only see the weaknesses of their wives rather than caring for them and love them. Looking at them, one can easily understand how painful it is to be a woman in this society.

In spite of the cruelty of the men folk, there is strong unity and harmony in the family. Everyone respects the father and always seeks to please him and make him a happy father or husband.

The Ollos sternly discourage joint-family life. When a couple or a household is unable to construct a house of his or their own (so that they can live separately without troubling of their parents), this couple or family will be forced to leave their village while their properties and access will be seized by the village authority under the village chieftain or *Lowang* (Sena Longse, Ibid). Hence, it is very rare to see joint-family among the Ollos. Thus, every family has its own house headed by the husband.

Concerning the establishment of a new family and construction of a new house for the family, the neighbours and relatives extend their free-will contributions and kind help to the said family by means of contributing material like bamboo, wooden pole, thatch and so on for house construction, gifting with food stuffs and personally helping the family in constructing the new house. Thus, the new family or household receive help to establish a new house without spending much on their own. Sometimes, the whole clan participate in constructing the new house for the new couple.

The Village

The Ollos, like many other tribes, choose their habitation on mountain tops for reasons of security and health. The Ollo village is divided into *Paan* or *Khels* according to the different

clans and locations. The *Paan* is being administered by the organization of the Paan itself. The village consists of a number of clans. The villagers are united under their authority of the village Ahng. The members of a paan are closely united in their social and economic life. For instance, if a member of a paang finds it difficult to construct a house for himself, as the Ollo houses are usually large, the “paang” members will come to his aid and construct his house. The village as a whole is a unit and acts in all such matters.

Social Service and Its Obligation

Social service is an obligatory vocation determined by the customary law for every one among the Ollo tribe (Thokwang Hodong, *Interview*, Lonyan village: April 20, 2009). The work often entails construction of roads between villages or roads leading to the fields, rivers and to the water springs. The old ones who are not able to work or walk and the young ones who have not yet attained ‘Bachelor Age’ are excused, but have to stay and guard the village during the social work days. On these social work days, the village will supply meat and other food items to the workers as well as those who stay back at the village. For anyone in the community who is within the ‘limited age group’ and is absent without genuine reason, he or she is fined according to the law of the community. This social works stand as the expression of unity and solidarity of the people.

The Ollos also have a time for community fishing and hunting. On such days every male member of the community joins these pursuits. The fishes caught are collected and divided among each member present, from the oldest to the youngest. They are also interested in hunting animals. Besides their regular individual hunting, they join community hunts which they regarded as very significant. The one who kills or hurts an animal first is usually honoured by the community because they believe that such person owns some super power or super blessing (Nate Nokte, *Personal Interview*, Lower Chihan Village: April 21, 2009).

The Religious Life

The people of Ollo tribe were purely animists by religion prior to the entry of Christian gospel message. They have never become Hindu, Muslim or any other world established religion (Phawan Lazu, *Personal Interview*, Lazu viilage: May 20, 2010). They are a very religious

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people and everyone strictly maintains their social, culture and religious order. There is no written code of conduct but everything they do is through oral tradition. The parents or senior persons are responsible to pass-on the information to the junior or inexperienced fellow citizens. In addition, it is the obligation for the junior or inexperienced ones to heed and ponder the moral lessons and social code of conduct passed to him by someone, especially seniors and experienced persons.

Generally, they are very humorous and the feeling for community concern is very strong among them because their religious beliefs and teachings emphasise practical living rather than being merely theoretical. In every village, there is a village priest called 'Tote' or a high priest of the particular village or region whom they called 'Mütü Tote'. The priest looks after the religious affairs of the village. He also assists the worshipers to worship in a proper order. They take religious matters as seriously as personal and community affairs. They observe sacrifices individually as well as communal.

Economy

(i) Agriculture

As far as the economic life of the Ollos is concerned, agriculture is their main occupation. Therefore, be he a blacksmith, warrior or head hunter or the priest, every one owns a field and cultivates it. An Ollo's life depends on his crops. As Mills states; It is therefore not surprising that from childhood to old age he spends most of his days in his fields, and that almost all the ceremonies of his religion are designed to protect and increase his crops (J.P. Mills, *The Lotha Nagas*, London: MacMillianand Company, 1937, p. 75). They cultivate different varieties of crops like millet, paddy, maize, yam, cucumber, sweet potato, mustard leaves, soya bean, tapioca, pumpkin, chilly, ginger and so on. Thus, the jhum cultivation is the main source of substance. Almost all the Ollos engaged in jhum cultivation and only very few people practice terrace cultivation. All the cultivable portion of land is used for jhum cultivation with the preservation of forest. Agriculture is not so extensive, but the harvest always aims enough to reach the next harvest. Each family gathers enough harvest for the year. The rich people store the surplus for the subsequent years. A man's status is determined by the number of filled granaries he has.

(ii) Hunting

The Ollos are very fond of hunting and they are very expert hunters too. They often formed a group and go for hunting. When one killed any animal, the head will go to him, while remaining portions would be shared equally among the members of the group (Sena Longse, Op.cit). When they bring such an animal meat to their village they would again share with their neighbours and relatives as well as the priests and chieftains or Lowang. Thus they all would enjoy together. They also give a good portion from their hunts to the orphans, aged, challenged, the poor and the widows and widowers. Because of this family-type of integral relationship, every villager rejoices when a fellow villager brings his good hunts back to village. The normal or abled people would share with the disabled or needy ones because they feel that it is their social responsibility to look after them. They do this to them not out of compulsion, but out of their true love and concern for them. Hence, charity practice is very common and it remains one of the highest practices among the Ollos.

They also believe that some particular men are more experts and fruitful in their hunt because of the favour of good spirit or Tekhio is upon them. Apart from the group hunting, individual hunting is very common practice and part of their practical life.

(iii) Fishing

Like most tribes of Nagas, fishing is also an interesting part of life among the Ollos tribal group. In hunting, women are not allowed to participate except in sharing meat, but in fishing both men and women would participate together and enjoy fishing together (Suluveyi Rhakho, *Tribal Concept of Spirit*, Jorhat: ETC 1998, p. 12). It is a time for enjoyment, recreation, sharing and knowing each other and experiencing the beauty of community life. Whether young or old, male or female, all are equally treated in sharing. Usually young people and adult work harder. It is shameful thing for a person to sit idly while others are working hard (Ibid. p.12).

Like several other Naga tribes, selling of the hunted animals or any of their portion are very uncommon. Rather they would prefer to share freely to others out of love than making money for themselves. This is one of the practices that make widows, widowers and orphans feel secured, loved, comforted and cared by. Sometimes these groups would have more than other

families as more people would share with them. Therefore, the people would share with the disabled or needy ones because they feel that it is their social responsibility to look after them. They do this to them not out of compulsion, but out of their true love and concern for them. Hence, charity practice is very common and it remains one of the highest standard practices among the Ollos.

(iv) Cattle Rearing

The economic life of Ollo also depends upon the cattle. So they rear buffaloes, cows, oxen, goats, pig to meet their daily needs. Whenever they are in need of money or some other goods, they would slaughter and sell it and acquire money or exchange with goods they need. Whenever there is a feast or an important occasion in the family they would slaughter their own cattle and give a feast to the people. They also rear chicken which helps them to sustain their family life.

Head Hunting

Killing men or female and taking their heads by the killers is called head hunting game. Headhunting was a common practice among the Ollos in the olden days. Success in the headhunting was considered as the highest achievement of an individual to be recognized as a great warrior. A man who had taken an enemy's head was awarded with the address, 'Kahang' which means 'great warrior'. He was honored and respected by the entire community as a hero in his lifetime and also remembered for generations after him (T. Yangvok Khooza and Mutu Muniak, eds; *N. Longboo Baptist Church Silver Jubilee Souvenir*, Kohima: N.V. Press, 1997, p. 13).

The menfolk preferred to take the title as Kahang so they were fearless to confront enemy with a hope to get enemy's head. Thus, they could defend and protect their people from invasion. They never thought that headhunting was a sin but considered it as a sacred game and a way of life. Moreover, they believe that by winning over their enemy and bringing home their enemy heads, this would bring them good fortune, prosperity and good health into their villages. Hence, the Ollos valued human skulls very highly for political, economic and religious matters. It was mainly used for the dedication of a Paang of the village chief. With the coming of Christianity

and by the help of Naga National workers (Army) it is almost abolished from Ollo community.

Worldview Assumption of Ollo Animistic People

Every tribe of the world has her own unique culture and world view, based on her own understanding about things around her and beyond. Often times, many incomers, especially Christian pioneers, overlook them or take them for granted and present the Gospel in their own context, and not in the context of their recipients. As a result, there is misunderstanding. Sometimes, the message of Salvation is abused by the converts themselves for purposes of money-making or position enhancement. This hampers and weakens the rapid growth of the Christian Gospel among the unreached people world and least reached people groups. When the presenter of the Gospel has an accurate understanding of his recipient's religious and cultural values, he will be able to present the Gospel in that context. This will pave the way and open more doors to let the Gospel grow and penetrate into the hearts of the people. Their practical life is more or less related to their religion. Thus, presenting the Gospel and biblical truth in the context of their everyday life is crucial.

This Section deals with the culture and worldview of the animistic Ollo people group with a view to bring the information about Ollo tribe, who are less regarded or neglected by other nations for many centuries, to the knowledge of the world, especially the Christian and scholastic world, with an aim to expose these long- deprived people to the Gospel. The religious practices stand at the centre of their lives and everything they do is connected in one way or another, to their religious and economic beliefs.

The Ollo tribal people understand 'culture' as the total behaviour of the people. Culture exhibits itself in habits, preferences, ideas, thoughts, music, arts, language and dance. A person's considerations, contemplations, beliefs, practices, lifestyles and actions are deeply affected by his culture. To the Ollo people, culture is a way of life embracing a total design for living. To tribal people, culture is more or less traditional manners, customs, work tools, dress, food habits, housing system, values of unwritten laws and moral conducts and physical nature

(Sundararajan G. Immanuel, *Indian Culture and Christianity*, Secunderabad: OM Books, 2002, p. 26).

In some cases, it is very difficult to distinguish between culture and religion. They go hand in hand and we cannot be too dogmatic in drawing distinguished line to classify that one is of culture while the other is of religion. For instance, culturally, to call one's own father by name is taboo, while religiously, it is impure or a sinful thing to call one's own father by name. Both culturally and religious-wise, it is considered as an insult to the elders and to the creator of the universe. Hence when we ask a tribal person about his or her father, he or she might not come across as being willing to reveal. However, we can approach his fellow friends to enquire about the name of the father.

One cannot isolate religion from the cultural context as a person's culture forms within him even as he grows into the cultural and religious ritualistic manners. The people of Ollo understand culture as the total practical life of a people. When they talk about "Culture", they mean to include social life, religious life, economic life, moral life, family life, housing, social conduct, singing, dancing, dressing, dialect and language, social and political administrative system, and even rituals.

To them, culture is more or less interconnected with the social life rather than individual life. They possess a firm idea that a human being is a social animal and our life, action, concerns, vision and plans must be rooted within the community. They strongly believe that this is God's purpose that "as we live as a people group speaking the same dialect, living in the same region, having same cultural trait and physical trait, and dresses, we should never break this culture or forfeit it but preserve it" (Mokwang Kongkang, *Personal Interview*, Lazu Village: April 20, 2009).

The attitudes and behaviour form a particular social group or organization. According to The All Nations English Dictionary "culture" is the beliefs, customs, institutions, arts and all other products of human work and thought created by a people or group at a particular time (*The All Nations English Dictionary*, Pasadena, CA: All Nations, 1990, p. 148). Culture is learned

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behaviour and is not inherited by birth. Culture is shared, patterned and adapted by every member of society. It is learnt through education, observation, and unconscious combination by all humans as members of their own societies through the process of enculturation.

Thus, “culture” is the sum total of learned or transmitted behaviour which distinguishes human beings from other animal beings. It is more or less an assimilated structure of ideas, feelings and values, and their associated patterns of learned behaviour and products that characterize a particular society (Marvin K. Mayers, *Christianity Confronts Culture*, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1947, p -98).

Theology

Once, this author was travelling on a mission trip in Indo-Myanmar, among the Ollo tribal people group. On encountering one aged man, who was the chieftain of the clan, this author realised many things that the Christian Gospel presenters must remember. Talking in regards to life and death matters, this author asked him about his religion and beliefs. He became so abusive and vehemently negative towards this author. He said, “I believe in the existence of One Supreme God, I believe in the existence of both good and bad spirits. I believe that my ancestors are living somewhere else. The Supreme God is so high and he is beyond my reach. Hence I choose to worship the lower spirits who are subjected to that Highest God. I worship the good spirits as they are from that Highest God’ He also told this author about his earlier meeting with a Christian who attempted to convince him. He narrated the event saying; ‘That man (the Christian who attempted to convert him) accused me, saying “you are worshipping the devil, the worthless religion. Your religion is evil religion, the religion of the man eater. You will die to enter into hell, the lake of fire.” After that, I do not want to hear the word *Christian* or any other religion, but decided to remain faithful to my religion because the more I give ear to the other people, more accusation upon my religion I hear. But today, the way you listen to me and my religious thoughts is something different from other people. I like it and am willing to hear you more. Please come again tomorrow evening.”

Concept of a Higher Being

The Ollos are firmly convinced that there is one Supreme God and this God is known as ‘*Tekho*’. He is the highest God, the God of heaven and earth. He creates, preserves, and cares for

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everything. He is the Creator; the Provider and the Giver of life and must be revered. They believe that *Tekhio* is the One who helps people in times of need, sickness, depression and sorrow. Thus, the people pray to *Tekhio* in the following manner:

“*O yangdioong Tekhio bakhang I, o ha Tekhio bassoksam I*” (Thoonghak, *Religious Life of Ollo*, Longboo: HBMA, 2007, P.15).

The literal meaning of the above cited phrase is, “Oh God of heaven, look upon us, oh God of the earth, protect us”.

However, they cannot comprehend who this God is; they believe that *Tekhio* is the Supreme Being. The Ollos do not know anything of a wife of *Tekhio*, but they say, “We are the children of *Tekhio*” (Mokwang, *Personal Interview*, Lazu Village: April 22, 2009). When people become rich or poor, it is *Tekhio*'s will. When people have plenty to eat, it comes from *Tekhio*”

According to Ollo's realistic and practical philosophy of the life, *Tekhio* does not hold the fault of men and wait to judge the offenders till after death. But the reward of his reward and punishment are mainly in this world as well as after death. He awards untimely death punishment to whosoever steals from his neighbour or incites misunderstanding in the village or among the neighbours (A. Yanang Konyak, *Ibid*, p. 17). *Tekhio* watches everyone, over every matter and sees everything that goes on. He also watches over the taboos and sees that they are observed. It is not only during feasts and ceremonies that the Ollos invoke the *Tekhio*. In their daily life, they offer prayers to *Tekhio*. For instance, when an Ollo begins to eat, he throws a little bit of rice from his plate saying, “*Tekhio*, eat yours first”. When he is fortunate in the hunting, he cuts off a small piece of flesh and throws it into the forest for *Tekhio* with saying, “In future, give me again such luck”.

Concept of Spirits

It is believed that there are spirits and the Ollos worship them and offer them food items and other pieces, but these spirits are lower than *Tekhio*. *Tekhio* alone has the supreme power (“*Nocte Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh*, [www. Arunachalpradesh.com](http://www.Arunachalpradesh.com)// August7, 2009). The

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spirits of the earth, the wood, the rivers, the mountains and the fields are not that powerful or important as *Tekhio*. Some of these spirits may be harmful toward human beings and cause trouble, and therefore they must be appeased, especially during sickness, with offerings of chickens, pigs and other items, but it is only *Tekhio* who holds the power of life in his hand. It is only *Tekhio*'s wrath that can send a man to his death (Haimendorf Furer Von., *Return to the Naked Nagas*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976, p. 203-205).

Territorial Spirit

Like many other people groups of the world, the Ollos are strongly convinced about the existence of territorial spirits.

During another occasion on 21 April 2009 at Lazu village, this author was there with another colleague on an extended ministry tour. It was during the *Voorang* festival time. The male folks were out to perform the traditional ritual dance to their god and spirit but due to heavy rain, they were unable to proceed. As usual, the chieftain and his priests and magicians offered their locally made beer and food to their god. They also performed rain magic in order to appease the spirit of the rain so that the rain would cease.

Sometimes the Ollos might appear to be merely superstitious. They believe that there are territorial spirits; the spirit of a certain mountain, stone, river, place or particular area of the field and they believe in the spirit of water, fire and many more (Phawan, *Personal Interview*, Dimapur; August 15, 2009).

Benevolent Spirit

The Ollos believe that there exist both a benevolent spirit and a malevolent spirit. The benevolent spirit does good things to humans as well as to nature, while the malevolent spirit causes harm to both humans and nature.

The benevolent spirit never harms human beings nor causes any destruction upon human welfare. This spirit is the healer and comforter. The Ollos do not know this spirit by name, as they dare not do so. They just trust and worship this spirit because they believe the benevolent

spirit keeps their individual or community life safe and prosperous (Wangmok, *Personal Interview*, Longliang Village: 17 November 2008).

Malevolent Spirit

The people of Ollo strongly believe in the existence and presence of evil spirit. To them, this evil spirit is not merely causing man to commit crime in society, it causes man to fall into suffering and misfortune. In some sicknesses, the spirit of the patient is believed to have been taken captive by the evil spirits or the territorial spirits of the place such as a river, forest, spring or field, which he or she last visited. As the spirit of the person is under the captivity of the evil spirits of a particular place, he or she becomes sick. This kind of sickness is called in Chakhesang, *Thürübipü*. In such cases, the relative of the sick person or the priest will go to the place which the patient had last visited and perform the necessary sacrifices to the spirit or spirits. He will then come back with any insect or stone which appeared at the location, believing that it is the spirit of the patient. The priest or the relative will refuse to talk to any person whom he meets on his way home. He will instead speak to the spirit of the sick periodically, “come home, come home, follow me, follow me”, until he reaches the place where the patient is lying. In actual fact, most patients do get well soon after using this method. In some cases, they believe that sicknesses and other physical ailments may be the result of the influence of the spirit of the dead. In such cases, sacrifices are offered to appease the dead soul or spirit, and sometimes a threat is made to the dead souls to warn them not to trouble the living relatives.

The Joben

The Ollos believe in the existence of *joben*, which means ‘Evil Spirit’. They believe that this evil spirit is the source of misfortune in their family and community. Therefore they offer some locally made bread that is made of rice to the *joben* or evil spirit in order to appease him, hoping that misfortunes or famines will not occur again. This offering is made for the purpose of keeping themselves free from any harm caused by *joben*, the harmful spirit or the spirit that destroys.

The Sudiaba

The *Sudiaba* is another malevolent spirit. They believe that *Sudiaba* is the spirit of the evil dead. This spirit brings sicknesses, problems, misfortunes, death and all kinds of human afflictions. Hence they offer sacrifices to this spirit with items such as eggs, chickens, piglets, or even some larger animals in the case of serious sicknesses to appease *Sudiaba*. The priest or person who is capable of seeing omens will offer these sacrifices (Yumniang Kongkang, *Personal Interview*, Lazu Village: April 20, 2009).

The Ancestor Spirit

Most tribal peoples of the world believe that the spirits of their ancestors are still active in the life of their living relatives and therefore, the living relatives and generation venerate them in order to please those departed souls (Shaw, William, *Notes on the Thadou*. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1972, p.24). The Ollos have a strong belief in the existence of ancestor spirit.

The ancestor spirit is believed to not let their relatives suffer. Rather, they protect the people from dangers and diseases. They sometimes convey the message about future events, future dangers and even give corrections to their living relatives. They often convey their messages through dreams and the medium. When a person faces evil forces and suffers severe sicknesses which may even lead to death, the ancestor spirits will reveal to that person so that the same person may observe *genna* or perform some kind of ritual with the help of a priest or a medium in order to escape from such dangers (Wongmok, *Personal Interview*, Longliang village: November 17, 2008). Sometimes these spirits convey their wishes to their families to accomplish their unfinished work. The physical body of the medium remains the same but her way of talking and voice are total transformed into the original voice of the person whose spirit is speaking through her (Suluveyi Rhakho, *The Tribal Concept of the Spirit: A special Reference to Chakhesang Naga*, Op.cit. pp. 26-27).

It is strongly believed that when a person dies, his/ her ancestor spirits and departed relatives will come and take her to a place called “*Liumlam*” or the abode of the departed souls. There he/she finds his/her departed parents, relatives, friends and ancestors who died earlier and he/she begins a new life with their help. This happens to the people who live well and do good thing during his/her life on earth. Conversely, people who were mischievous and rebellious

during their earthly life will never go to that place. They will instead go to the place of suffering, where they will have endless suffering and struggle. This place is called “*Sülam*”.

Thus, like Nagas, the Ollos believed that the ancestors’ spirits are active even after they are physically dead. They are believed to never leave their living children isolated, but will continue to care for them until they go back and reunite with them in the second life. Therefore, like Chakhesang Nagas, the Ollos treat their ancestor spirits with reverence and offer them sacrifices.

Metaphysics (Reality)

Death

Death is the most unwanted event in the life of all living creatures. It is the most unbearable painful incident. ‘Even an aged man does not wish to die. Should he wish to die, the people around him do not wish for his death’ (Sundararjan G. Immanuel, Op-cit. P.49). As death approaches, the family, relatives and the village as a whole fear, mourn and are in deep grief.

Meaning of Death

The Ollos do not regard death as the result of natural causes or event, but they strongly believe that it is due to the activity of the devils, demons or other evil spirits. The benevolent spirit wishes human to live for a long time and enjoy the family members and relatives, but it is the malevolent spirit that snatches away the souls of human or kills the human soul. Thus death is looked upon by the people of Ollo as an unnatural event and this pains the relatives and dear ones beyond measure. In some cases, they even curse the spirit of death and warn or chide the spirit of death by saying, “You, human eater; you, the spirit of pain, never again do kill and snatch my people from this day onward. This is the last for you!” Usually, they utter this word at the time of burial.

Burial and Belief

Traditionally, they assume that a person has as many as six spirits apart from his physical body. But when he dies, all five spirits slowly vanish, but one spirit or the sixth spirit never dies. This spirit is immortal and remains forever (Velacuyi Khamo, Personal Interviewed at Dimapur

on March 15, 2009). Further detail is given in the chapter five of this paper under the caption 'Life after Death'. The soul is believed to be immortal but not interested in history (Sundararajan G. Immanuel, Op. cit. p.49). When it leaves the body, the soul is regarded as a feeble being which can take temporary abode in an animate or inanimate object. It is also believed that the soul might wander around a house or a grave. In such cases a fire, candle or a lantern is kept for the soul to find the way to its place of quietness (Ibid p. 49). Placing the clothes that the deceased used to wear in the grave or by the side of the grave is a very common practice for it is believed that the soul lives a second life not unlike those who are still living and therefore still requires the clothes.

Lycanthropy

The Olo people group strongly believe that Vangs (kings), Ngongs (deputy kings), Vangtsa (helper of king) and leaders of clans have tigers' or lions' spirit. It is a popular belief in Olo community that if a tiger dies, a man having a tiger's spirit would die. When a tiger gets wounded, a man having a tiger's spirit would also get wounded. When a tiger comes and kills a pig, cow or buffalo, it is a sign that the time of death of is approaching, for the person carrying that particular spirit. Moreover, it is also a belief that the common people can have the spirit of bear, snake, wild boar and even domestic animals.

Evil Eye

Evil eye, among the Olos, refers to the raising of jealousy and spiteful look from any ill-intentioned person. This happens when there is a marriage ceremony performed for a newly-wed couple, when a person of lower rank rising to higher rank, in the case of animals that have been purchased by someone, a newly purchased field or when distinguished members of the society give a public performance. To avert the evil eye, some kind of mark is placed on their house or a black mark is placed on their bodies. For instance, a black charcoal mark is put on the face of a boy so that the evil spell would not affect the boy. This practice is somewhat similar to that of Indian local Hindus' practice of 'arati water' (Abbe Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs & Ceremonies*. Great Britain: Oxford Press, 1953, p.148). In order to ward away the evil spirit or to avert the evil spell, they even named their children after any un-pleasant name like 'Cükhu' mean bitter. The same concept and practice is found among the Nagas in India. For example, a child is

named as '*methobü*' in Chakhesang which means 'cow dung'. They presume that in doing so the evil spirit will not harm them because of their strange and unpleasant name.

Sorcery

The practice of sorcery is found among the Ollo people. 'Sorcery' simply refers to 'spell casting,' 'spell kits,' 'voodoo,' 'amulets' and 'charms'.

The term 'sorcery' originates in the 14th century. From Middle English *sorcerie*, and Old French *sortier*, derived from the Vulgar Latin *sortarius*, traced back to the original Latin, *sors*, meaning lot, or chance, and *sortis*, the genitive case meaning *of*, or *by*, lots. It indicates and refers to the practice of divination by lots. Its practices date back to prehistoric and pre-Columbian religions, as well as those of the Middle East and ancient Egypt; by the Middle Ages, it referred to the practice of malevolent magic, or black magic, most commonly the use of supposed supernatural power by the agency of evil spirits called forth by spells by any person with a desire for malice, often motivated out of envy or revenge. Sorcery refers to the destructive methods that can be used by anyone, and is different from witchcraft, which is used one with the special innate powers attributed to witches. Sorcery also involves the use of special charms, potions, or rituals to cast a particular spell. Practices abounded in certain regions of Africa and Oceania among the tribal peoples into the 21st century (<http://www.brittanica.com/>. April 11, 2000).

In the case of Ollo, everyone is afraid of one thing or another. Certain events happened to bring a man to living in constant fear because of the evil nature or limited nature of man. He is powerless and helpless, lesser than the power of the spirit. Hence he is in constant fear of some supernatural power. To be free from such power and all other dangers, man seeks the higher powers of the spirit for his protection. Magic is the dominant feature in the lives of the Ollo people. It is believed to control the weather, restores the sick people to health, brings success in business and other affairs, to afford safety during journey, and in marriage. To them, rituals bring about a great deal of *manna* (J.H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 280).

Witch Doctors and Medicine Men

A witch doctor originally referred to a type of cunning man who treated ailments believed to be caused by witchcraft. It is currently used to refer to healers in some third world regions, who use traditional healing rather than contemporary medicine (*Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia*, March 2008). In its original meaning, a witch doctor was emphatically not a witch himself. Witchcraft-induced conditions were his/her area of specialization (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, <http://www.brittanica.com/>. April 11, 2000).

In the case of Ollo, they believe that there are some people who have some supernatural power or who possess some higher spirit. They can communicate with the spirits and convey the message to human beings. They have power to insist the spirit to take away the sickness of the people. In some cases, these people have the power to even heal the sick person by performing some rituals or observing *genna*.

Thus, when a person gets sick, the same person or any relative of the sick person goes to a medium or medicine man or woman for consultation, seeking for healing upon the *genna* patient. In most cases, the medicine person would visit the patient. The medicine person knows the cause of the sickness. They even know what would be the result of the sickness. In the case of his/her inability to personally visit the patient, advice would be given. Whichever way it is done, the same advice is given and as a result the sick person would recover. The witch doctors and medicine people are highly honored, though they are not to be worshipped (Phawang, *Personal Interview*, Op. cit).

Mediums

The mediumship is the practice of certain people known as mediums to purportedly mediate communication between spirits of the dead and other human beings. The emphasis is on talking to spirits of the departed fellows and talking on behalf of the departed souls. 'In Spiritism and Spiritualism the medium has the role of an intermediary between the world of the living and the world of spirit. Mediums claim that they can listen to and relay messages from spirits, or that they can allow a spirit to control their body and speak through it directly' (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediumship/> October 15, 2014).

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Among the animistic Ollo tribal group, the practice of mediumship is very common. Usually a medium in this area is an elderly woman. She speaks to the family and relatives of the departed soul and conveys the message. It is mystery to note that when a particular departed person fellow happened to speak, the appearance and voice of the medium are changed to that of the departed person and the medium speaks and acts like the departed person. Sometimes, even before the medium mentions or introduces the departed soul by calling his or her name, the living fellows or villagers begin to recognize the departed person in the manner of talking and appearance of the medium. The living fellow human beings would immediately call upon the family members of the departed relative so both the living and the departed relative could talk. The living relatives and dear ones would prepare food and drinks and offer to the departed soul through giving to the medium who in turn eats and drinks in the presence of the living family members. It is a mysterious process and beyond what a common man can fathom.

Unlike the priest or any ruler of the village, a medium is not appointed by a human person. The appointment happens to her in a supernatural way and usually happens in a person who is blameless. Therefore, the common people considered it as an endowment of some supernatural power upon her and honour the medium with high regard and respect. Religiously, the medium is considered as a pious person. A medium also abstains from all kinds of questionable practices and avoids certain kinds of foods like intoxicating drinks, fermented drink or food, wild animal meats like bear, wild boar, eagle, vulture, tiger, wild cat and many more.

Fertility

Usually grown trees, hug stones, rocks, and big rivers are believed to possess *mana*. Apart from them, anything which they cannot comprehend is considered to be the abode of the spirit. For example; a tree that makes sound when the wind blows or during bad weather, is considered to be the abode of some supernatural power. Anything that appears to happen beyond natural comprehension is worshipped. Sometimes the Ollos offer blood, animals, food items and other items so as to appease the spirits or to acquire power from them.

Structure of Religious worship

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Like the Nagas, the people of Olo have no established form of worship but observance of *genna*. *Genna* is considered an act of worship (Vaprumu Demo, *Naga Primal religion – Christianity Convergence and Divergence in CBCC Golden Jubilee (1950 -200)*, Pfutsero: CBCC, 2000, p. 51). The ‘gennas’ are observed as community worship and every individual person is bound to participate for the benefit of the whole community. Wati Lonchar observes;

The tribal religion is basically a community religion. To be truly human is to belong to the whole community, including the ancestors and creation, and to do so involves the active participation in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of the community. A person cannot live in isolation from one’s community. Therefore, on the tribal religion, an individual life and community life are inseparable (Wati Longchar, *The Traditional Tribal Worldview and Modernity*, Jorhat: Eastern Theological College, 1995, p.5).

The Olos are very pious and oriented toward religion and spiritualism. They practice ‘Animism’ in general while a few of them are believers in Buddhism. A few also came under the influence of Shri Shankardeva and took up Hinduism in the eighteenth century. This trend followed afterwards. The priests, known as ‘Mahantas’, supervise the charge of all the religious ceremonies of the Olo tribe.

There are several local deities which they worship with reverence to appease them. As cited earlier in this writing, *Jauban* is a significant one amongst other spirits, apart from *Tekhiho*, the Supreme God. Ample food and water are used as offerings to Tekhiho.

Place and Structures of Worship

The community life of the people of Olo has always been related to his religion. There are two distinct types of worship places. The first one is where stones are erected for the spirits. Every clan has such an erected stone for their clan members. This stone is placed or erected in a very careful manner at the home of the clan priest. The priest of the same clan, usually an aged

man, will worship and offer food and drinks to the spirits through offerings to the stone on behalf of his whole clan members.

The second type of worship place is - any open place like near the big tree, stone, rock, field or river. They believe the spirits are present everywhere. They do not have man-made temples or constructed building for worship purposes. They are careful in their way of living since the spirits are everywhere. To them, it is too cheap to think that the spirit deals in only one particular place (Suluveyi Rhakho, Op.cit. p.56).

Modes of Worship

As far as Ollo tribe is concerned, there is no temple prostitution or children of the temple. They believe that every individual is equally important and unique before their god (Mokwang Rumchu, Op.cit). Therefore everyone has to worship their god and revere him from the bottom of his/her heart. When the time comes for sacrifice or making offerings to the god, the priest will do so on behalf of the worshipper or worshippers. Sometimes, the procedure of worship includes the bath and wearing of new clothes; adorning themselves (devotees) with colourful garments, flowers and anything that appears strange and beautiful. Animal sacrifices are made to their god.

Cosmology (Creation)

The people of Ollo believe that God 'Tekhio' is the originator of the universe. This God created the entire world from nothing and bestowed life to all things. He is the origin of all. He created people and the surrounding environment during a particular creation period at the beginning of time. There is only Creator whose name is 'Tekhio'. He alone created everything and therefore everything is subjected to him (cf. genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:16-17). They do not have any knowledge about how Tekhio created the universe. Yet they dare not to know about how Tekhio created the universe because to enquire about it may invite some kind of disaster or curse to the world. But they strongly believe that Tekhio is so powerful and can create anything at any time. Thus, he created the universe from the beginning.

Ethics (Morality)

The Olo people do not have a written code of moral law. Their idea of right and wrong comes from their tradition. Tradition is their measure of truth.

The Taboos and Gennas

The people of Olo strictly maintain Taboos and Gennas. Their entire life is controlled by taboo and genna. It is strictly tabooed to call any elder person by name. They used to address them by using polite and veneration words like ‘uncle’, ‘auntie’, ‘elder brother’ or ‘elder sister’, ‘grandfather’, ‘grandmother’. They believe that in doing so, Tekhio blesses them as they keep due respect to one another. This pleases God as well as brings personal relationship to each other.

It is also taboo to insult or mistreat any handicap person, widow, orphanage or person living with need. In contrary, every normal person is responsible to take care and extend any possible helping hand to those people living in need.

The Morung or Paang

Paang is the bachelor’s dormitory for boys where all the unmarried men sleep at night. It has become the good social institution for the people of Olo. According to colony wise, they would have a paang. For each Paang, one family is to be elected as the owner and that owner is called in Olo language as Paangthioongte. Besides, one more person is chosen to lead and supervise the youths and that person is called Paangsoongvang. He is fully responsible for the welfare of the youths who are under his control. According to the tradition of Olo, every normal male is a must to admit to the paang or morung from ten years old till to their marriage. If the parents fail to send their children, an action would be taken and even imposes a fine as penalty.

The Butap

Butap is female dormitory where all the unmarried girls sleep. The Butap is not constructed separately like a paang rather the girls of the same clan sleep in the house of the opposite clan. It is in this butap, they are trained up by the elders of the art of spinning cotton thread, making cotton balls, weaving and many other crafts. They also learned dance, folksong,

love song, discipline and good manners. In this Butap, young boys come and have a social fellowship or develop friendship affair with girls.

Epistemology (Knowledge)

Pedagogy

Pedagogy is the art or science of being a teaching (*The All Nations English Dictionary*, Pasadena, CA: All Nations, 1990, P.478). The term generally refers to strategies of instruction, or a style of instruction. Pedagogy is also sometimes referred to as the correct use of teaching strategies. For example, Paulo Freire referred to his method of teaching adults as "critical pedagogy". In correlation with those teaching strategies the instructor's own philosophical beliefs of teaching are harbored and governed by the pupil's background knowledge and experiences, personal situations, and environment, as well as learning goals set by the student and teacher. One example would be the Socratic schools of thought (Emile B. Brooke, *Analysis of Pedagogy*, Secunderabad: OM, 1989, p. 182).

As for Ollos, there was no formal educational school until recent few years ago. In spite of the absence of such a school where the children and young one can learn things around them and for future, they are very clear about their practical life in all spheres, especially agricultural life, social, religious and political life. The seniors would teach the juniors in process of doing things. In other word, they learn by doing things. They learn from seniors and experienced person whether at home or outside. They are aware that every minute of every hour that the experienced person tells or teaches, they take it with seriousness and sincerity and make individual determinations of what to do in these particular circumstances. This increases the spirit of honor and respect to the seniors and parents on one hand, while on the other hand the seniors and parents have the obligation to teach or train their generation with right information and motive. When things go wrong with a child of the family, the community condemnation goes to both the child and parents or senior with equal treatment. In the case of visitors, the host is responsible to pass on the right information to his guest so that the visitor may not commit anything that break or violate the local law or vices-versa (Phawan, *Personal Interview*, Lazu Village: April 18, 2009).

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Learning by Doing

People have different ways to learn and to remember many various things, events, dates and seasons. Some people learn by doing things, others by reading books, listening, watching or writing. For the people of Olo, they learn almost everything by doing and by practice. They learn to pray from their parents at home, learn to plant crops from their parents or any senior person, learn social and community life through parents or from *Paang*, learn to sing and dance from pang. They learn things only through participation and practice. Therefore they are more practical. They talk less but work more. They have a good understanding of the things because their learnings are based on their practical experiences.`

The Paang

Paang is the social training center where all young men learnt different types of works like basketry, carving of wood, making of mat etc. They have been trained in this *Paang* the techniques of war, wrestling, folkdance, folksong, love song, games and sports. It is also a place of learning good manners, discipline and the customary laws of village and Olo in general. The young men have been guided by the *Paangsoongvang* and his subordinates. Tutsa has a Paang like the Olo Naga. Its function is almost similar of Olo. This is precisely described by Narayan in his book that “The Paang acted as the centre for the military training to be imparted to the male youths for the village” (Narayan Singh Kao, The Tutsa tribe of North East India, Mittal publications, New Delhi, 2010, p.343). It also serves as a military training center where all the male youths are trained to fight against the enemy to protect their village from invasion.

Psychology (Human nature)

Human, the Highest of All Living Beings

The people of Olo strongly believe that human being is the highest natural living being on earth. Apart from supernatural beings, human being is the highest and closest to ‘Tekhio’. Human has ability to discern, control, rule and do whatever pleases to him because he is higher than any other living being on earth. This concept is very closely related to Biblical teaching (cf. Genesis 1:25-26; 9:3).

The Limitation of Human Beings

They also believe that human being is higher than other living beings on earth but not as powerful as angel or any other supernatural beings. Man dies but angels or god gods do not. Unlike supernatural beings, man has limitation many areas. Man lives for a short span of time during which he goes through many pains, joy and happiness, sorrow, sickness, death, lost and challenging situation. Man goes through all such situation because he is authority over them to control. Angel or god can do them away or control over them but human has no power to act in order to do them away.

Soteriology (Redemption)

Human Being Always in Danger

Since man is lower than any supernatural being either good or bad spirit, he is always in danger. His life is always at risk due any unforeseen happening. His life can be affected any time by natural calamity, sickness, death, and loss of their love ones.

His Needs for Supernatural Power

The people of Olo have a clear understanding that since human being is always in danger, he needs some supernatural power and protection from some higher being. Of all the higher beings, Tekhio alone has complete authority. To be out of danger, man cannot help himself but Tekhio alone can do so. Tekhio can keep all the other gods away from harming human being and prosper him. Hence, human being always seeks the god or Tekhio for help and protection and as well as his favour. Human being in always in danger

Sacrifice Required

Offer sacrifice offering to supernatural being is essential as it pleases god. This is not a burden but a great privilege to express his inner feeling of gratitude and respect to God. With this concept, the people of Olo used to offer sacrifices at different occasions, such as, at the time of cutting and clearing jungle for cultivation, sowing seed, harvest time, constructing road or bridge, during sickness, and hunting time. Some sacrifices are made by individuals, some by families and other sacrifices are made by the entire community or village. They strongly believe that when a person behaves well, cares for fellow human beings, and worships the spirit

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accordingly in the will of the god or spirit, he achieves because the favour of the spirit is on him or her. Since the favor of the spirit rests on him, the 'Tekhio' blesses him and the same person is blessed with all the good things. Sickness is away from him because the spirit protects him. In everything he lays on his hand there is success and prosperity. Since god blesses him and shows him favor, the worshiper is expected to sacrifice some kinds of animal and crops out of his harvest as an expression of humble thanksgiving to the god as well as a sign of commitment to remain faithful to god and loyal to his fellow human being. The sacrifice offering should be any animal like cock, pig, or egg without any defect. The crop offering should be the first harvest from the field. 'This also should be without any defect or spot caused by any object or animal or insect bite' (Sena Longse, *Personal Interview*, Raho village: May 13, 2013).

Invoking the Presence of Higher Beings

The sacrifice offerings are offered to invoke God's presence and protection in their individual as well as community life. They believe that when the presence of God is with us, nothing will go wrong with them; they will not commit any crime against God or community but will prosper in whatever they do.

Thus, their deepest desire is the presence of Higher Being with them. Their offer sacrifices to God in order to build relationship with him and appeal his very presence in their lives.

Thanksgiving Sacrifice to Benevolent Spirit

All the good things that they have are directly from Higher Being and the benevolent spirits. Man does not deserve to have all the good things because even to fight against the evils around him is more than his ability. But it is the god spirit who always does well to man. He keeps man from danger, gives him good rain and good harvest, brings them success over their enemy, blesses them good health, increases his cattle, and gives him generation. All the good fortunes are attributed to benevolent spirit and Higher Being. Therefore, it is man's obligation to give thanksgiving offering to Higher Being and honour him.

Sacrifice for Redemption

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They affirm that human being is always at danger and often falls in the grip of evil spirit, as a result of which they used to sacrifice the animals in order to appease the spirit and save the life of the person. In some cases, they just do so to please the spirit so that they are at safe. They assume that it is necessary to sacrifice to their God because unconsciously or consciously they might do things against their 'Tekhio' or other spirit. Hence, the practice of sacrificing animal or blood is essential in order to save the worshippers. Thus, they sacrifice the animals with the intention of saving or redeeming the worshippers' or devotees and establish strong personal relationship between God and man as Lord and worshiper. In this way the wrath of God is kept away and an integral relation is being built.

Appeasing the Malevolent Spirit

Sometimes, they offer sacrifice offering to malevolent spirit. The intension is not that they honour or revere him, but simply to appease him and ware him away for harming the worshiper. For example, when a person is attacked with mysterious sudden sickness, they consider it to be the handy-work of evil spirit. They believe that the soul or the spirit of that particular person is under the grip of the evil spirit. In such case, the relative or family members of the sick person will offer animal or food to the spirit saying, "*Hihi püh-eno ha rüpi khalasü vate,*" which literary means 'take this and release the soul.'" This shows that the sole intension of giving offering the malevolent spirit is simply to appease this bad spirit and keep the worshiper safe

Teleology (Purpose)

Purpose of Creation

Tekhio is the Highest Being. He is the Creator and all the creation occurred by his will. Everything is shown to have a purpose; it is natural for a human being to wonder about the purpose of his own creation.

Tekhio created every in the beginning of creation with a purpose to see the beauty of his creation and to fill the gaps of darkness which was there before creation took place. This belief is closely related to the biblical account of Creation (Genesis 1: 1-2). The purpose of creation is to increase it's own kind and fill the earth (cf. Genesis 1:16). God does not want empty world,

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hence he expects the creatures to fill those empty world with its seeds. They say, “Sometimes there is land landslide and takes away all the vegetation in a particular area of land, God blows wind and brings seeds to cover that empty landscape. As a result, within few months or a year, the grass and other natural plants grow up and cover that area. God wants the land to be filled with his creation” (Sina Longse, Op.cit, 2013).

Purpose of Human Beings

The main desire of Tekhio is his personal relationship with human being. Human is created in a higher level so that man can understand him and honour him. He also gave a special ability to control and rule over the other creatures. So, to Ollos, the purpose of human have three dynamic purposes: first, to honour the Creator Tekhio with highest respect and live a good life, Second, to rule over the other creatures and have peace with them through proper care for them, and third, to increase his seeds (procreation) and fill the land.

The purpose of other creatures is to meet the need of human and show the beauty of the creator through their lives. They are subjected to the Creator and also subjected to human being. They are subjected to human because human is higher and more capable than they are.

The belief of Ollo people group, in regarding to creation account, is very closely similar to the Biblical teachings and Christian belief. These similarities show that the ground is ready for planting the gospel seed in the region without any further delay.

Eschatology

Life After Death

Like other tribal people, there is a strong belief that the death of physical body is never the end of a person’s life. The same person continues to live in another world in the spirit realm. In this regard, Sundararajan G. Immanuel writes:

There are a number of beliefs that drive the bereaved to observe several practices to appease the dead. It is believed that the dead are living on the other world similar to ours but in the spirit realm. They need house and other

commodities in the spirit matters. Therefore they need to be established by the residual members in a transformed way. It is believed that the livings need to provide for them the same things that they used (Sundararajan G. Immanuel, Op. cit. p. 54).

In the case of Ollo, the good people would go to the village of the departed souls and meet his/ her dear ones who are already deceased. They again live in peace and harmony. While the bad people will go to the village of bad people where there is suffering, pain and grief. They will suffer unending suffering, yet cannot come again to live or convey the same message to their living relatives.

Liulam

The Ollos believe in the immortality of the soul. The soul of the dead goes to the land of the dead known as “*Liulam*” which means ‘way of the dead’. People who died a natural death would meet their ancestors at *Liulam* and reunite with them. They continue to live as human beings on earth. It really resembles the life on this earth. The dead work on their fields, celebrate festivals, marry, have children and eventually die once more. Then they go to another world of which Ollos have no idea. Yet, according to their folklore of Ollo, when a person dies, his spirit transforms into eagle. Thus, when a person dies, the relatives used to bind the leg of the dead body with a thread to disturb the eagle (Yangvok. Op-cit. p.15) or keep the soul of the dead from turning to the animal (Wongamok, Personal Interviewed on November 15, 2008). According to their belief, there is no sorrow, no sickness, no misunderstanding or enmity or fighting in this place. Instead, there is peace, love, concern and harmony among the citizens in this place.

Süulam

Conversely, the people of Ollo believe that the souls that had died in accidents or murdered by someone would never meet their ancestors even after death. They will go to the land of struggle and suffering known as “*Süulam*” and will continue to live in hardship. This place somewhat resembles the Christian idea of ‘hell’ (Phawang Ollo, Personal Interview at Dimapur on August 12, 2009). People who died as a result of accident, as well as people who had caused trouble to other people during their earthly life, would definitely go to this place. They believe

that bad people die from unnatural death and that those who died from unnatural deaths will never go to *Liulam* or a place of peace and prosperity, but they will go to *Sülam* or place of unending suffering. Thus, the animistic society of Ollo strongly believes that this place, *Sülam*, is purely for bad people who are disloyal to both God and fellow human beings.

End of Other Creatures

The people of Ollo believed in a world populated by spirits and deities that were an organic part of nature itself. Every creature had a spirit and significance but they do not have any idea about the spirit of that spirit when they die. Some believe that those spirits or souls become flies or insects once they die and disappear slowly.

Axiology (values)

Concept of Birth

To Ollos, a newly born baby is considered as very pious for the couple, the family and community. The birth of the child proves that the couple is fertile, not barren. Thus, to them, the greatest blessing to the family as well as to the community is the birth of children. This blessing is none other than the result of the mercy and blessing of the Supreme Being they called 'Tekhio'. Hence it is the best and highest blessing from 'Tekhio' and the highest joy of the recipients, especially the family to whom a child is born. If the child is a boy, he will carry the name of the family and inherit the family property.

Naming of "Niakra" or "Minghon"

The ceremony of child-naming is known as '*Minghon*' in Ollo language. It is the most joyous moment of the child's parents, relatives and the whole village, to welcome the addition of one more person to the family and village as a whole. However, if a male child is born, they would be happier as compared to having a female child, because their heir has been born. The people of Ollo believe that barrenness is a curse; whoever does not have an heir after him is also considered as cursed. A family that has an heir is called a blessed family.

As soon as a child is born, local rice and one chicken are to be prepared for the child's mother and mid-wives. This preparation of meal is known as *Nuchontorik*. All the males are

prohibited to eat this food. It is a belief that if a male person eats this food, he would be unsuccessful in fishing and hunting. Hence, the leftover food would be kept secretly so that any male person would not eat this food by mistake. After this meal, a fire is quenched and a new fire is to be started to prepare food for all the other members of the family. On the day of *Minghon* a *Niappa* is called to see an omen on leaves of *Niapkham* (the leaves are typical wild banana leaves) to give an appropriate name. *Niappa* is the one who looks at the omen on leaves on different occasions. For example, when a child is born, he is called upon to give the name of a child, or when there is sickness, he is called upon to see what has caused his sickness. *Niappa* would pick up the name of ancestors according to the wish of parents and look at the leaves and thus declare the name of a child.

On the early morning of child-naming day, one old lady would go to a fountain to fetch water and with that fresh water, the family would prepare the meal; cook rice and curry in the corner of a kitchen in an earthen pot for the ceremony. Food would be prepared with new fire, firewood and fresh water. This food would be eaten only by the child's mother, midwives and the ladies around them. After the meal, the fire would be extinguished and a fresh fire would be started. All the children and male folks are prohibited to partake in the earlier meal because it is a belief that anyone who eats it would be infected by a skin disease and scabies. This meal is known as *Jonien torik* in Ollo language. After choosing the child's name by observing the leaves of *Niapkham*, the same leaves are kept on a rock and that rock is placed on a ladder one use to enter the house. The mother of the child would enter stepping upon the leaves three times. An experienced lady would pierce the ears of the child. The *Niappa* would then perceive the destiny of the life of a newly born child by killing a chicken. The fortune of child is known this way: "If the chicken dies its legs apart indicates misfortune in the child's life. If it dies its left legs over its right leg he will be blessed abundantly with wealth and lastly if it dies with its right leg over left leg, it means the child will be successful in whatever he/she does" (T.Yangvok Khooza and Mutu Muniak, eds; Op cit., p.29). Finally, *Niappa* names the child and prays for his/her long life as well as for the family members. After the child-naming rite and the performance of rituals by the *Niappa*, a grand feast is given to all villagers. After the feast, another experienced lady would shave off the hair of the child and give him/her a bath.

Following that, the *Niappa* would proceed with the child and child's mother to the way which leads to the field to perform the last rituals. They would place the liver of chicken and pig, rice and meat on leaves and the *Niappa* would ask blessing for the child. They would bring back the remaining rice and meat and share it to others. This visit on the way leading to field is known as *Lamket*. The following day, the relatives and villagers go for fishing and are merry. This fishing is called *Niakthionro Joon*.

Purification

Namot is a special day of purification of the child and as well as a day of bestowing blessing upon the newborn child by the maternal uncle and family members. According to a very old woman, who is also the oldest woman of Lazu village, "Maternal uncle would fix a particular day to invoke blessing for a newborn child of sister's sons and daughters. Prior to this prayer, a child is not taken to the residence of his/her maternal uncle." (Posen Manyang, personal interview at Lazu Village on May 12, 2013). The people of Ollo have a concept that if a child is taken to the maternal uncle's residence prior to *Namot*, misfortune might occur in the child's life. Hence, non-Christians still observe this practice strictly and everyone is afraid to visit the maternal uncle's house with newborn baby before *Namot*. As a result, whenever a child is born, the maternal uncle would arrange and fix a day and bless the child as early as possible so that the parents may bring the child into the house thereafter. The child is first brought to the maternal uncle's house on *Namot*.

On the day of *Namot*, the uncle would tie a ginger necklace upon child's neck and pronounce blessing upon the child and offer a prayer for the child. After this prayer, a special meal is to be provided by the child's uncle and a gift of fifteen pieces of meat along with rice would be given to the child in a basket. It is believed that in doing so, the child is protected from the evil eye and would be blessed.

Nubeet

Nubeet simply means 'twin'. It is a term in Ollo language used for twin-child birth. To Ollos, giving birth to two children or more at a time is considered as a curse to the family, not a blessing. Therefore, whenever a twin is born in a family, they would kill them as early as

possible without exposing the birth to the knowledge of others. The Ollo people have the perception that human beings are meant to give birth to only one child at a time since they are not animals like swine or hen which gives birth to many offspring at one time. With this belief, they would pray to God that twin births would not occur in their family. Nevertheless, when there are twins born in a family, the whole village would observe a strict *genna* - taboo for seven days, and within these seven days, everyone is prohibited to work in a field as well as go out from the village to another village. They have to observe *Kania* strictly in the Ollo community.

The prohibition of seven days of work is known as *Kania*. When the twins are born, the family would slaughter all domesticated animals and start a fresh rearing. They would obtain new seeds of all kinds of plants and begin sowing and planting in the field. They also renounce the use of the ornaments and clothes of the twins' mother with the concept that if they do not, the same curse would happen in the family in the near future. If the ornaments and clothes were used by others, the same curse would transfer to their families too. So the women of Ollo maintained discipline to avoid using the ornaments and clothes of twin's mother. The reason for destroying domesticated animals, seeds, ornaments, clothes, etc. was to destroy the power of the spirit of twins, so that in future, no more twins would be born in the family.

The family with the birth of the twins is also considered as cursed and others generally would not give honor to them. It is like the practice of untouchability that is most prevailing in the Hindu community. As we look into the scripture, twins are not a curse but a blessing. Patriarch Isaac begot twin through Rebecca namely Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25: 19-26) and ultimately Jacob became the father of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Tattoos or “Viphap”

Tattooing of bodies is a very common practice. The female members of the community have to tattoo their faces and their shoulders while male members have to tattoo on their chest. The significance of the tattoos are;

Identification

The primary reason of tattoo is to identify with one's own people group and clan. By looking at the tattoo marks, one can easily identify the clan he or she belongs to. Thus by observing tattoo marks on the body, the observer is able to identify even the distant stranger or visitor.

Security

The people of Ollo believe that even the evil spirits dare not harm anyone who has tattoo marks on his or her body. It is also strongly believed that when a girl marries without having a tattoo mark on her, her child would die and she would remain childless.

Honor and Respect

A tattoo is a sign of "kahang" or great warrior for males. There are different designs of tattoo marks according to the different reasons. One such design that signifies the great warrior or "Kahang" is a broad tattoo covering the entire chest portion. When one sees this, he identifies that this particular person is a great warrior or head of a village (T. Yangvok Khooza, Personal Interview, Longlian Village: November 15, 2008).

Attire

Dressing

The Ollo Nagas had simple and unfashionable dresses in the olden days. Men usually wore a long piece of cloth, which was made of the tree called *Yeekhu* to cover their private parts. The thread which is extracted from *Yeekhu* is known as *Tuloong*. The cloth that is used for covering their private parts is known as *Yomkhit* in Ollo language. They also usually use a cane-belt to tie their *Yomkhit* round their waists. In the earlier days, there was no shirt as we have today. The women who were experts in weaving would made cloth out of furlong thread and that cloth was worn by men as their shirt. In those days, there were no sewing machines for stitching the shirts. They would tie that cloth in an x-shape. Presently, the Ollo people have two types of *Yomkhit*. They are;

Yomkhit Khitthio

It is used only by the heads of village. The common people are prohibited to wear it. It is

white in color.

Yomkhit Khitniak

This *Yomkhit* is black in color and worn by common people.

Even today, whether a believer in Christ or pre-believer, he would wear *Yomkhit* on special occasions or festivals. During traditional festivals like *voorang*, no one is allowed to wear any other dress other than *Yomkhit*, so as to show the identity of the Ollo. It is a must for everyone to wear *yomkhit* on festivals for singing and dancing.

Ornaments

Today, the Ollos are lovers of ornaments. There are different types of ornaments for both male and female. Beads called *Likpha* has been used by men and it is regarded as a precious treasure in the Ollo community. A family who has the *Likpha* necklace is considered to have come from a rich and elite family. *Likpha* is bigger in size and very costly. It is red in color. Today, *Likpha* is considered as rare and hard to obtain. Another type of beads is called *Mumeit*. *Mumeit* is smaller in size than *Likpha*. It has been used by men on *Voorang* festival while singing and dancing. It is also red in color. Ivories are also worn on the arm.

The Ollo Naga regards gong as the most valuable property. So, those who have *Likha*, *Mumeit*, ivory, gong, and guns are considered as rich and respectable persons in the village and community. These ornaments are still regarded as precious by the people of Ollo. Females put on necklaces made of silver called *Ngunpak*, necklaces of *Likthaap*, made of beads of smaller size. There are two types: red and green. The Ollo ladies also use bangles of copper called *Jenmeen* and of bronze called *Chimee*. They also wear a shell cover on their waist. It is known as *Vunke*. *Vunke* is used especially on *Voorang* festival by girls while performing dance at night in the *Paang/morung*. They also usually wear a necklace of coins on their neck. This necklace is called *Nguntsakom*. Ollo ladies are fond of ornaments. Even today, the Ollo ladies preserve ornaments well and regard them as the treasure of ancestors. The Ollo men put on *Jokkhookam* garland, made of shell cover while performing dance on *Voorang* festival.

Marriage

Origin

Every religion has developed through the years certain guidelines for the significant events in life. One of the most important events in one's life is marriage. Marriage brings two persons of the opposite sex together and unites them as husband and wife. Though the act of marriage is very simple, the procedure is not neglected (Sundararajan G. Immanuel, *Indian Culture and Christianity*. Secunderabad: OM Books, 2002, p.37). The marriage has reference to a union for procreation but continues after the birth of an offspring until the young are capable of serving their own essential needs (W. Goodsell, *A History of the Family as a Social and Educational Institution*, New York: The Macmillan Co, 1942, p. 6). It is a union for life for the love and for the companionship of the couple and for the establishment of the future generation. Keeping all these things in mind, a marriage ceremony is carefully performed with appropriate vows. This ceremony seems to create a sense of belongingness toward each other. Whatever religion it is, the participation of the elders as well as the witnessing of the event seems to establish and confirm the union of the couple. Without the witness of the society, a marriage is not regarded as valid and proper. This seems to emphasize the need for a proper procedure by which the couple can be recognized as part of the social structure vis-à-vis society.

Marriage Ceremony

The Ollos practice polygamy. Any man can have more than one wife if he can afford to do so. In the case of an Ollo named Ahng, he can have several wives and exogamous restriction does not apply to him. Marriage is arranged by the parents. Like neighbouring tribe Konyak Nagas, the marriage of a girl is arranged by the parents of the girl when she is still a minor and when the girl grows up, she is compelled to accept her already engaged husband against her choice. She cannot refuse, at the same time no other man can marry her (S.S. Shimray, *Origin and Culture of Nagas*, New Delhi: Brahma Printing Press, 1985, pp. 178-179).

As far as Ollos are concerned, dowry is not practiced (Phawang Lowang, Personal Interview, Dimapur: August 15, 2009). Marriage is not isolation from the rest of the family members, but it is a blessing to both families and the society. They are very careful in selecting the bride or groom. The ceremony itself consists of rituals followed by pronouncement of

blessing upon the newly marriage couple and then the couple is pronounced as husband and wife. This gives recognition. An unmarried person is considered as a semi created being who becomes a real human being only when he is married. The creation is completed as the partners are joined together into one body and one soul. For this reason, divine guidance and blessings are sought for a marriage. The unmarried person is less valued and less regarded.

The normal religious marriage was and still is arranged by the parents of relatives of the couple, after much consultation, and the observation and study of omens. Normally the groom would send a marriage proposal to the bride.

Usually the marriage ceremony is a time of feasting, celebration, observation, joy and merriment. Most grooms meet the needs and requirement of the wedding expense. Gifts of different items and cash are given to the couple and blessings upon the couple are pronounced. Like any other marriage, the wedding feast is the climax of the marriage ceremony. The greatest significance of all, however, is the exchange of vow and the pronouncement of social recognition of their marriage.

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