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Linking Past and Present: An Ethnoarchaeological Insight into the Handmade Pottery-making Traditions of Andro Village, Manipur, India

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Abstract: *This paper examines the cultural continuity of pottery-making traditions in Andro village, Manipur, with an analysis of ethnographic observations and archaeological evidence drawn from earlier documented sources. It provides an ethnoarchaeological perspective on the tradition of handmade pottery practices of the Meitei community residing in Andro, where ancient ritualistic traditions remain integral to pottery-making. The research documents the whole process of pottery production and further records the typological variations and their corresponding functional attributes of pottery, followed by a morphological analysis. The field survey documents 29 different types of pottery meant for household and ritualistic purposes. Some varieties of pottery are found to be decorated with designs like herringbone patterns and small circular patterns. Findings reveal that plain potteries are found to be produced more than decorated pottery, and household vessels outnumber those made for ritual use, suggesting that the Andro people still use earthen vessels for various household activities, yet the use of ritualistic-purpose pottery does not reduce its significance. The study highlights the persistence of making pottery by hand and emphasizes the cultural significance of pottery as a living tradition.*

Keywords: *Andro, Manipur, Pottery-making Tradition, Handmade pottery, Cultural continuity, Living tradition.*

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Introduction

Pottery findings are considered one of the most important aspects of portraying the prehistoric lifestyle. These findings are very crucial since they are abundant, diverse, and nearly imperishable,

and have been found in many geographic areas for a long period. Ceramics are a specialized aspect of the techno-economic subsystem of culture, helping adapt and modify the environment for cultural purposes. Though not an independent subsystem, ceramics are closely linked to technological, ideological, social, and environmental systems (Arnold 1985). Alok Shrotiya (2007) suggested that valuable insight into prehistoric and proto-historic human behaviour can be produced through the interpretation of analogies between living societies and ancient societies. The ethnoarchaeological approach is mainly devised for explaining the recovered artifacts such as pottery, stone tools, and architectural remains, and for the reconstruction of the cultural system as a whole.

Stiles (1977) defines ethnoarchaeology as encompassing all the theoretical and methodological aspects of comparing ethnographic and archaeological data to interpret past human behaviour using relevant insights from contemporary cultural practices. David and Kramer (2001) suggested that ethnoarchaeology is neither a theory nor a method but a research strategy that embodies a range of approaches in living contexts, using analysis of archaeological records to form archaeological concepts and to improve interpretation. Ethnoarchaeological research has intensified the understanding of varied environmental and cultural factors that can affect or determine the nature of static archaeological remains that we recover (Sinopoli 1991). Bezbaruah (2019) suggested that the continuity of past society and culture can be thoroughly investigated through the study of megalithic tradition, pottery tradition, shifting cultivation, and culinary practices. Ceramic analysis through ethnoarchaeological perspectives focused on whole pots; differing study units hinder ethnographic application to interpret archaeological findings (Skibo, Schiffer & Kowalski 1989). A space-time framework based on stylistic variation produced temporal sequences and spatial patterns, reflecting social interaction levels, cultural boundaries, and aspects like identity, status, wealth, and belief systems (Plog 1983).

For many ritualistic activities, including marriage ceremonies, death rites, childbirth rituals, etc., earthen pottery is essential in Northeastern India. Pottery is also commonly utilized in everyday tasks, including transporting water, storing and drying grains, cooking, and serving food. In Northeast India, several communities, including the Hira, Kumar (Assam); Wokha, Pongo, and Yongphang (Nagaland); Oinam, Nungbi, Andro, Nongpok Sekmai, Thongjao, Chairel, Ningthemcha Karong (Manipur); Apatanis (Arunachal Pradesh), and others, are actively involved in the pottery-making craft (Manibabu 2005; Ngullie 2014; Roy 1977; Singh, & Devi 2017; Tangvah & Marak 2015; Vasa 2023; Vidhyani & Manibabu 2017; Yamang 2023). In light of shifting social dynamics, this study provides a thorough report on the pottery-making methods in Andro, one of the Manipur pottery-making villages, as well as their continuity and changes over time. Documentation of the pottery-making tradition and its related traits in Northeast India was started by Roy in 1997. In this significant study of two indigenous potter communities in Assam, i.e., the Hira and the Kumar, Roy suggested a change in the morphological characters and functions of potteries which reflects the nature of adaptation of the population under different socio-economic and ecological conditions wherein they survived (Roy 1977). Hira potters of Mornoi in Gaolpara, Assam, and Hirapara in Nalbari, Assam, employed the same technique of pottery-making; however, a few vessel forms differ from region to region according to the local needs (Sarmah & Manujil 2018).

Many ethnoarchaeological studies revealed that the present pottery-making tradition of Manipur might be a continuation of prehistoric days. Manibabu started the investigation into Manipur's pottery-making tradition in 2005. The researcher looked into the Andro people's handmade pottery-making customs from varied perspectives. The pottery-making practice of Andro village shares many

characteristics with the prehistoric evidence that has been gathered so far from Manipur, according to Manibabu's ceramic ecology study and general ethnography methodology (Manibabu 2005). Seven villages in Manipur—Nungbi, Oinam, Andro, Nongpok Sekmai, Thongjao, Chairel, and Ningthemcha Karong—were predicted to be involved in the pottery-making industry at present. While the others are located in valley regions, Nungbi and Oinam are located in hilly locations. Manibabu (2010) holds the view that ceramic fragments were reused for drying grains, and, in another way, potteries are permanently broken during ritual ceremonies and the urn-burial of the dead. Manibabu (2012) suggested that ritual restrictions on the exploitation of ceramic resources lead to craft monopoly and boundary-maintaining mechanisms of regulating and preserving the resources. It reveals that this craft is deeply related to non-material aspects of culture.

Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted in the Andro village situated in the Imphal East district of Manipur, India (Figure 2). The village is inhabited by the Andro Meitei population who follow indigenous Meitei culture and traditions. Andro village was deliberately selected for this study because 1) it is one of the contemporary pottery-making villages of Manipur. 2) Different kinds of earthen pottery are made solely by hand. 3) Ritualistic practices and beliefs continue to work in tandem with pottery manufacture. 4) Given its many similarities to the pottery found in prehistoric sites, the Andro pottery-making tradition may have been continuing from the very early period based on its many analogies with the potteries collected from ancient sites.

The present research aims at detailed documentation of the functional utilities associated with different pottery forms and shapes. The investigation also looks into the geomorphology of the area, ethnographic significance, and the socio-cultural tradition of the population. Fieldwork was conducted during the dry season of 2023 and the first half of the year 2024. During the fieldwork, verbal consent was obtained before data collection from the village and specifically from the potters. To investigate the archaeological finds, records from documented archaeological ethnography by earlier scholars have been analyzed through an extensive literature review of published works. A morphological analogy between the ancient potsherd finds recovered by O.K. Singh (2008) and the morphometric measurements of the present Andro pottery was made in the study. Using the ethnographic analogy method, the current study sheds additional information on its continuity to the present. Here, changes and continuity are outlined, based mainly on the stylistic and forms of the potsherds. The current study thus elaborates not only the methods and processes used in the production of handmade pottery but also its typological and stylistic variations and numerical changes over time. This will facilitate a detailed comparison of Manipur's ancient ceramic evidence with current ethnographic data.

To assess and document the varied characteristics of the numerous kinds of pottery now utilized in Andro village, a household survey was carried out within the village. For this, ten distinct statistical parameters—full height, rim-neck height, body circumference, neck circumference, body diameter, neck diameter, rim thickness, and neck thickness—were undertaken. Statistical data on the functional utility of the pottery were documented within the Andro household during the survey alongside the different morphometric attributes of pottery. The measurements were taken using sliding calipers, measuring tapes, measuring scales, etc. During the study, the potters were interviewed and observed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the procedures used in producing various types of pottery. SPSS software and Microsoft Excel were utilized for data analysis. Various maps were located and illustrated using Google Earth Pro and QGIS software. The entire pottery was categorized into four

groups according to its functional attributes: carrying, cooking, storing, and serving vessels. Based on its uses, the entire Andro pottery is once more separated into two groups: household and religious vessels. Finally, the whole Andro pottery can be further classified into two groups: plain and decorated pottery, based on surface treatment (Figure 1).

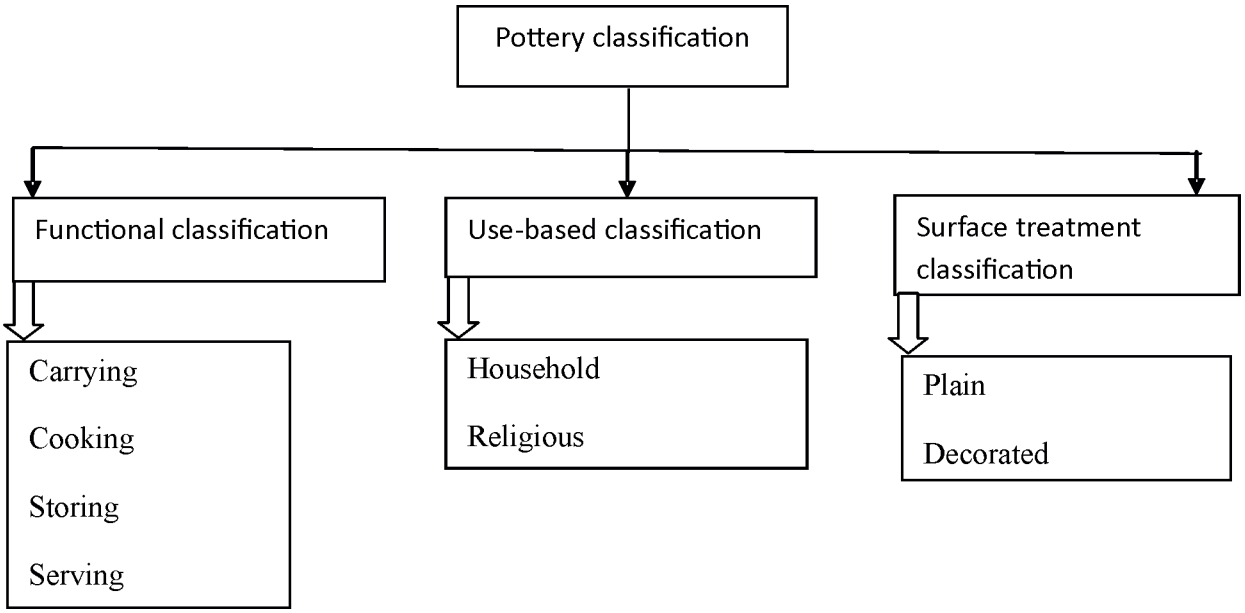


Figure 1: Flow chart representing the various stages of classification and grouping of Andro pottery (Illustration: Authors)

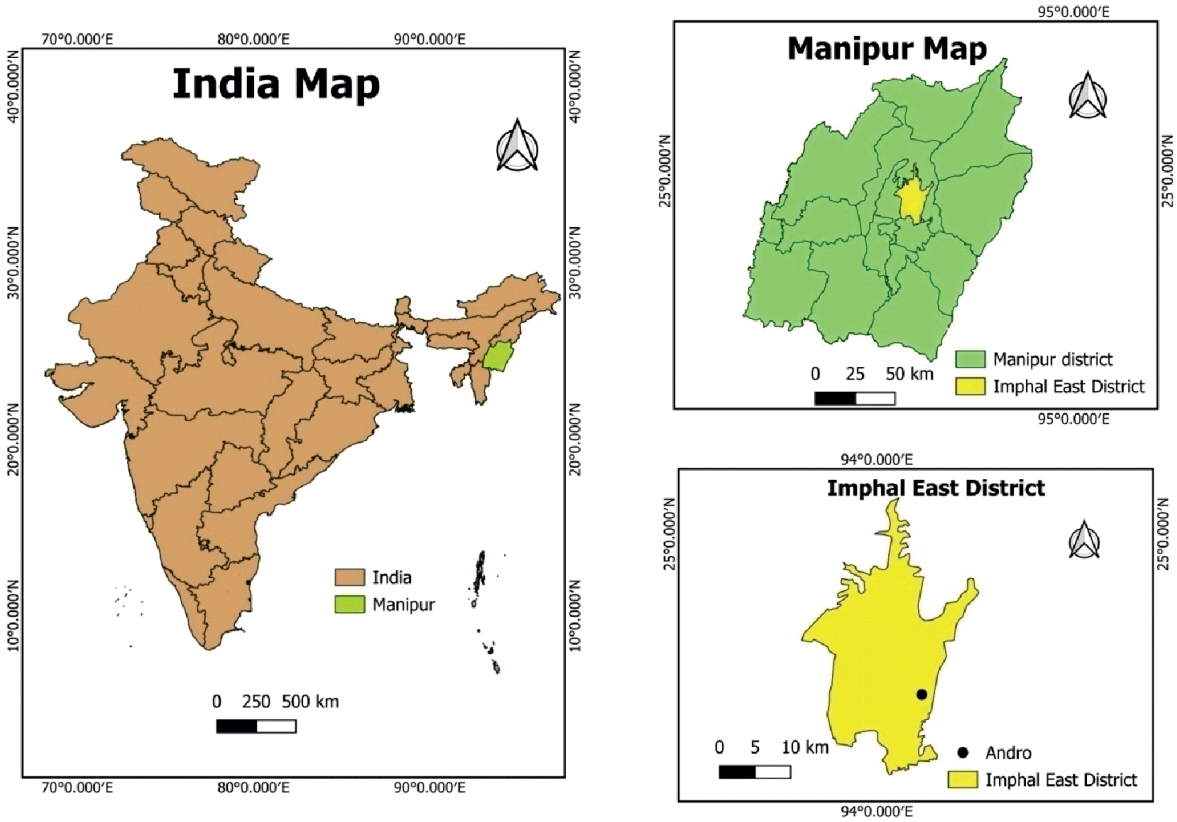


Figure 2: Maps showing the study area (Illustration: Authors)

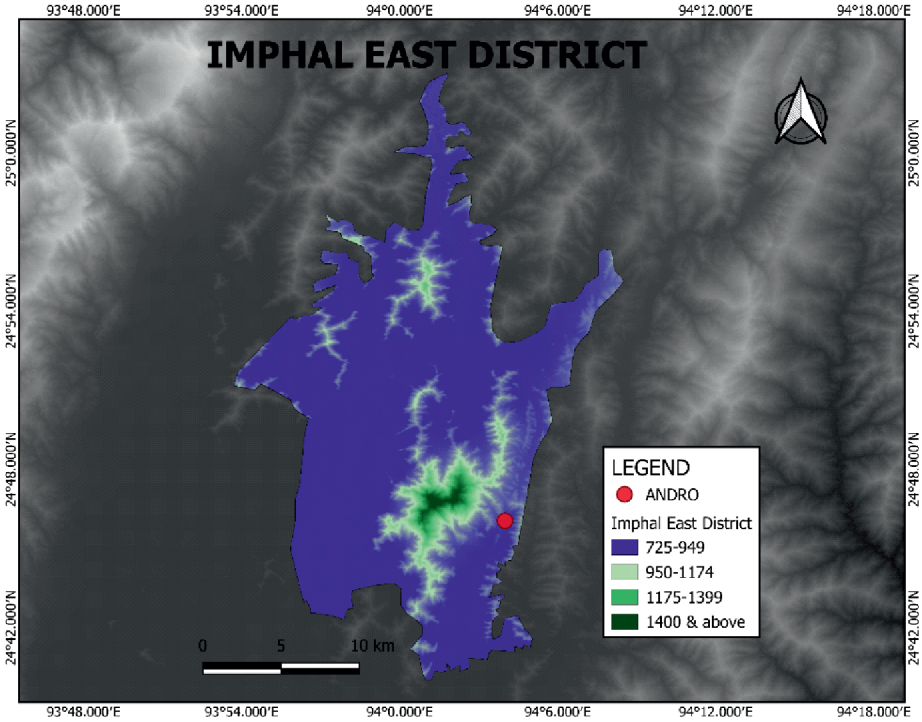


Figure 3: Maps showing the study area (Illustration: Authors)



Figure 4: Map showing Andro village (Source: Google Earth Pro) (Illustration: Authors)

Results

Andro Village and the Potters: Ethnographic Observation and their Implications

Andro village lies between 24°44'53.34"N; 94°02'31.39"E. It is located at a distance of 28 km east of Imphal, the capital of Manipur, India. Andro village is situated at the eastern fringes of the *Nongmaiching* hill range (Figure 3, 4). The *Nongmaiching* hill lies on the eastern side of Imphal city, and it runs in a north-south direction. The village is surrounded by Thayong village, inhabited by the

Kom tribe, in the north; Poirei Lake, Uchon village, and Huikap village in the south; the Koireng tribe in the east; and the Nongmaiching and *Shandangsenba* hill ranges in the west. Small streams originate from *Nongmaiching* Hill, like *Umang Turel* and *Salang Lok,* flowing through the village. Small lakes, viz. *Lai Paat, Sana Paat, Lamphelsoi*, and many other small water bodies serve as important water bodies of the village.

There are around 207 households in Andro village, with a total population of around 1014 (as per the 2011 Census). The Andro people belong to the Mongoloid race and the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family. They speak the Meitei language. The village is composed of small territorial units called *Leikai* (hamlets), which are primarily demarcated by territorial lines of division based on certain geographical natural settings. In each *Leikai,* there are several *Yumnaks* (lineages) that are not restricted to a single *Leikai*; in Andro village, there are 23 *Leikai.* The village is still carrying on the tradition of choosing a village head, known locally as *Khullakpa,* and his subordinates having administrative, judicial, and religious authority over the village.

Andro village is well known for its traditional ceramics, particularly the distinctive coil pottery known as *Charei Taba*. Since ancient times, the majority of the women in this village have made pottery and brewed liquor as part of their customary occupations. Currently, about 40 households are actively involved in the pottery-making craft. In addition to being practiced in individual homes, the craft is also practiced at a collective community level, where members of various houses gather to create pottery in groups. It is believed that *Panthoibi*, a goddess, invented pottery for humans by imitating the form of the thalamus of the flower *Nura Khudonglei (Melastoma malabathricum)*. From the gathering of raw materials to the final stages of pottery production, the pottery-making tradition in Andro village adheres to its ritualistic rules.

Andro potters strictly maintain the various taboos related to the pottery-making process. At Andro, only married women can engage in this occupation, which is also after six months of marriage. It is because men, after six months of marriage, are socially recognized as *Pana Thou Chanba Mee,* and this status of men allows their wives to become potters. Men and unmarried women are taboo for practicing the craft. Andro potters maintain these norms to keep their ways of manufacturing pottery in their village, so that they can preserve their age-old tradition of making handmade pottery without being modified. Unfired pots and even pounded clay are also prohibited from being handed out to outsiders.

While there is no dedicated marketplace for Andro pottery, potters sell their wares at exhibitions and local markets. Most of the Andro potters do not typically go to the city market to sell their products; instead, buyers or those in need of pottery visit the potters' village directly to make their purchases. The Andro potters primarily create pottery for ritualistic and household purposes, mainly to meet the needs of the local villagers. This may explain the limited presence of Andro pottery in city markets. However, they also produce other items such as flower vases and piggy banks, which are more commonly found in city markets.

Andro Pottery Manufacturing Process

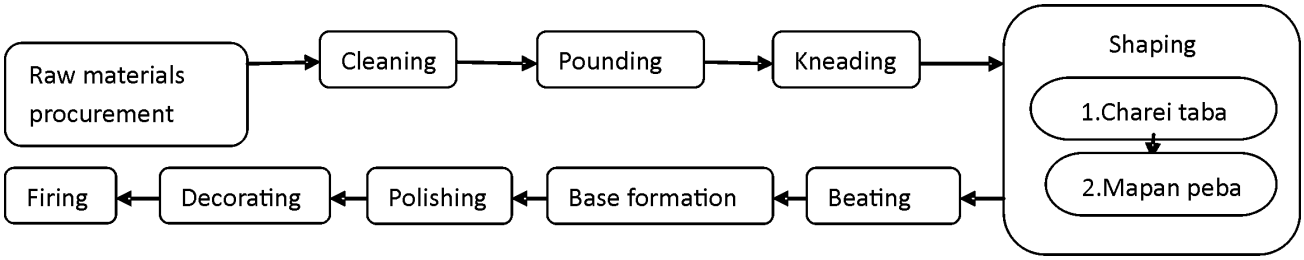


Figure 5: Flow chart representing the manufacturing process of Andro Potteries (Illustration: Authors)

The Andro pottery-making process (Figure 5) starts with the procurement of raw materials—*Leitan* and *Leichreng*. *Leitan* is black clay collected from the *Chingdon* area (Figure 6b); for this collection, the three headmen (*pibas*) of three lineages, i.e., *Ningthoujam, Phanjoubam,* and Khunumayum, conducted the *Leithong Hangba* ceremony (Figure 6a) on the collection site on the fifth day of the lunar month of *Phairel* (February), which then allowed the other villagers to collect clay. As the villagers narrated, these three lineages are believed to have been the first to arrive on Earth; therefore, they are required to start the ceremony. This ceremony consists of two main ritual activities – *Lei-yengba* and *leiphu phatpa*. *Lei yengba* is the act of appeasing the custodial deities of the area by offering mainly rice beer and red or black live cock. It is then followed by *Leiphu phatpa*, where the digging is done with a spade only once each by the three Pibas, which marks the beginning of the collection of clay for that year. In the evening of the same day, *Paothang Chenba* (an oral mode of informing) is done to inform every household in Andro village to come and join the first collection of raw materials to be conducted the next day. Collection for the year ends after performing the *Leithong Thingba* ceremony (June/July) by throwing a lump of clay on the collection site. The other material*, leichreng,* is a weathered rock used as a tempering material; it is collected from *Chingdon* and *Machengpat.* The collection of *Leichreng* starts in September after performing a ritual led by the same headman, and this collection is allowed until April/May. All the materials necessary for making pots for one year will be collected during this particular season. Further collection of raw materials beyond the limited period is prohibited. According to the villagers, this specific ritualistic process of procuring the raw materials has been followed in this village without any changes since time immemorial.

The collected clay (*Leitan*) is soaked in water in a large container and is kept for one or two days. In between, it is stirred. The process is called *Leibak Sonba,* by which unwanted and lightweight particles other than clay come up to the surface level of the water, and it is drained out carefully. The whole process is repeated 2/3 times, leaving only the muddy clay, which will be kept undisturbed for ½ day. On a long and large carved-out wooden mortar, the two materials are mixed in equal proportion and pounded using a wooden pestle *(Suk)* (Figure 6c). While pounding, a little bit of water is sprinkled on the paste. Pounding of the mixture will be repeated after leaving the first pounded paste for around one and a half or two hours. Then the paste is kept in the shade, covered with a cloth for around 2/3 hours, which makes the paste easy to knead later. The pounded paste is kneaded uniformly by hand, which can remove air pockets and any foreign particles if present, thereby increasing its plasticity and consistency. Then the resulting clay is kept in the shade, covered with a cloth, and the product is now ready to make pots.

Making of the pots started with the potter rolling the desired amount of clay into long circular strips called *Charei* on a wooden board (*Leibak Upak*) (Figure 6d). A slightly larger strip, *Phei* (about one *Khudup* long, i.e., the length from the elbow up to the tip of the middle finger), is formed first to start the coiling. Its ends are joined to form a ring, beginning the coil method. The *Phei* ring is placed on an inverted pot (*Phuhou Chaphu*) to build upon. Smaller *Charei* are layered above it (Figure 6e), joined by pressing with fingers of the right hand in an upward direction on the outer surface of the pot, with the left hand backing the force from inside (Figure 6f). The potter moves around the vessel, which remains fixed, until the desired height is attained. The neck and rim are shaped from the top of the joined strips using the hand-beater technique. A wetted beater and the potter's finger shape an outcurved neck and flaring lip. The area is then smoothed with a wet rag (*Petap*) and left to dry. The pot is kept in the shade for a day to harden.

Further, using a stone anvil (*Nung*) and plain beater (*Tetap*), pots are shaped and enlarged. (Figure 6g). The surface is wetted to prevent cracks, and uneven areas are repaired with clay paste before

final drying and beating. The base of a pot is made by keeping the pot in an inverted position above *Phuhou Chaphu* (Figure 6h). For this, the thickened area on the lower portion of the body is tapered carefully with the hand till a little hole remains, which will be filled up with a small flat piece of clay. The number of beating processes is based on the size of the pot. More beating processes are engaged in case the potter wants to make a large pot. Different decorative patterns, mainly herringbone patterns and circular impressions, vertical appliqué, etc., are made on the pot by beating with a beater marked with such a pattern. The undecorated or plain pots are then polished by rubbing the seeds of *Kang* (*costus spacious*) uniformly on the surface of the pot, especially in the base, body, and shoulder parts (Figure 6i). Finally, the pots are fired using husk, straw, and cow dung for around four hours (Figure 6j). After this, a maroon-colored solution of water made from the bark of *Kuhi* is applied to the pots to give a permanent dye, which also increases the longevity of the pot



Figure 6: Images showing Andro pottery manufacturing process (a)-Leibak Leithong Hangba ceremony, (b)-raw material collection, (c)- pounded raw materials, (d,e,f)- rolling and joining circular strips, (g)- beating, (h)-Base formation, (i)- polishing (j)- firing. (Photo credit: Authors)

Morphological Analysis of Andro pottery

In the present study, a total of 29 different types of earthen vessels meant for different household (Table 1) and ritualistic (Table 2) functional attributes were recorded. Large-sized potteries are found to be made by applying ring-building and anvil-beater techniques, while the slab-building technique is used to make small-sized potteries. To shape the rim and neck part, the orbiting technique is applied. They made red and carved paddle-impressed ware. Most of the pots are plain; however, some are designed with herringbone patterns, small circular designs, vertical appliqué, etc. Pots having circular impressions are also made by pressing with a hollow tube. Almost all the pots are in burnished plain and light brown. Pots having rounded bases are used to keep above a ring base locally called *Phei.* However, some are ring-footed. Andro potters mainly produced medium- to large-sized pottery having globular bodies, rounded bases, short to high necks, where some are curved or angular in form, out-turned rims, and rounded lips.

Table 1: Details of various household-purpose earthen vessels made in Andro along with their respective function

Sl. No.	*Local name of the pot*	*English Equivalent*	*Description*	*Function*
1	Ishaiphu	Pot	Large globular pot having a wide mouth, short neck, out-turned rim, and convex body wall.	Used to store drinking water
2	Pun makhum	Pot	Small globular vessel without turned rim and convex body wall.	Used as a lid to cover Ishaiphu
3	Korek	Jar	Small pot having flared rim, wide mouth, and plain body	Used as a drinking vessel or as a liquid server
4	Chengphu	Pot	Large globular pot having wide mouth, short neck, out-turned rim, and convex body wall. Some have ring bases, mostly without base.	Used to store rice grains
5	Chengphu makhum	Pot	Small globular vessel with an out-turned rim and convex body wall.	Used as a lid to cover Chengphu
6	Yuyapun	Pot	Medium-sized globular vessel with an angular neck, flared rim	Used for collecting overflowed wine during brewing
7	Kharung/ Mera Kharung/ Mera Chaphu	Pot	Large globular pot having a wide mouth, short neck, out-turned rim, and convex body wall; the whole body between neck and base is decorated with a herringbone pattern.	Used to keep clothes, paddy, grains, and sometimes water as well
9	Maring Kharung	Pot	Long and large vessel having an out-turned rim, high neck, wide shoulder tapering towards the base, decorated with three lines of small circles on the shoulder.	Used for storing water and also for fermenting bamboo shoots
10	Uyan	Pot	Medium-sized globular pot having a wide mouth, flattened rim and plain body.	Used for cooking curry
11	Hentak Chaphu	Pot	Medium-sized globular pot having a wide mouth, short neck, out-turned rim, and convex body wall.	Used to store fermented pounded fish
12	Khujam Chaphu	Pot	Small globular pot having out-turned rim and convex body wall	Used to wash hands during cooking.
13	Yukhum	Pot	Ring-footed globular pot having short neck, wide mouth, convex body wall	Used as a wine server and as a drinking vessel
14	Phutoi Macha	Pot	Flatten-bodied pot with high neck, flaring rim, plain-bodied, dyed with *Kuhi* solution.	Used for cooking curry and sometimes rice as well
15	Phei	Ring base	Barrel-shaped ring base with convex wall	Used as ring base for keeping earthen vessel

Sl. No.	*Local name of the pot*	*English Equivalent*	*Description*	*Function*
16	Kabok Chaphu	Pot	Globular vessel with slightly carinated neck, everted rim, and convex body having a hole of about 10 cm in diameter.	Used to prepare popcorn of rice grains
17	Koklou	Bowl	Ring-footed bowl having flat and rounded lip, angular neck, and convex body.	Used to drink liquor
18	Kamuk	Bowl	Plain bowl of medium size	Used to make chutneys
19	Wangkem	Bowl	Plain bowl similar to Kamuk, but it has a ring foot	Used to serve rice for women during the postnatal period
20	Kegam	Bowl	It is a small variety of Wangkem	Used as a lid of cooking pots or as a bowl for making chilly chutneys

Table 2: Details of various ritualistic-purpose earthen vessels made in Andro along with their respective function

Sl. No.	*Local name of the pot*	*English Equivalent*	*Description*	*Function*
1	Meikoi Chaphu	Pot	Medium-sized globular pot with angular neck, convex body wall, rounded base; decorated shoulder and body part with herringbone impression	Used to carry water during funeral rites
2	Ngangkha	Pot	Globular vessel having a slightly constricted neck, convex body wall, rounded base; decorated shoulder and body part with herringbone impression.	Used for cooking rice during the *Yangkeng* ceremony
3	Ngangkok	Steamer	Flared rim, flat lip, wide mouth, angular neck, convex body wall markedly tapered towards base.	Used to steam mainly brown rice during the *Sorat* death ceremony
4	Thumkhrung	Pot	Large globular vessel having a narrow mouth, elongated neck, and flaring rim, decorated with small circular design of three rows on the shoulder.	Used to carry rice beer during a pre-marital ceremony called Waroipot
5	Lai Kharung	Jar	Long-necked globular jar having a slightly flared and rounded lip and rounded base. It is decorated with a small circular design of two rows on the shoulder followed by a short vertical depressed design and vertical appliqués design of semi-circular shape.	Used in ritual offering
6	Thali	Dish	Flat dish having a flat base and lip with slightly raised body decorated with two grooved lines.	Used to keep fruits, betel, etc. while offering to God
7	Kambi	Dish	Flat base dish having a flat lip with slightly raised	Used in rituals to offer incense stick
8	Walong	Pot	Large globular pot having a wide mouth, short and angular neck, everted rim, and convex body wall with polished surface.	Used for cooking curry during the *Yangkeng* ceremony and to keep water as well. An already-used Walong may also be used for burying the dead body of a baby below the age of 3 months.
9	Yukhom	Jar	Long, elongated gourd-shaped vessel with rounded base	Used for drinking intoxicating beverages during the *Panam Haraoba* ceremony made by womenfolk a few days ahead of the festival



Figure 7: Images showing some of the Andro's plain pottery (a)- Ishaiphu, (b)-Ngangkha (c)-Yukhom, (d)-Thumkhrung (Photo credit: Authors)

From Table 3, it is found that household-purpose vessels have the highest maximum in all the considered parameters when compared with the religious-purpose vessels. Vessels meant for religious aspects have a larger mean of full height (mean=27.32cm) and rim-neck height (mean=4cm). Household vessels have a larger mean of neck circumference (mean=44.68cm) and body circumference (mean=87.28cm), rim thickness (mean=0.6cm), and neck thickness (mean=0.88cm). The mean of rim diameter (mean=16.5cm) and neck diameter (mean=13.26cm) is larger in religious vessels, but that of body diameter (mean=26.82cm) is found to be larger in household-purpose vessels.

In another aspect, the decorated vessel has the highest maximum in all parameters compared to the plain potteries except in the case of rim thickness (1.2cm) and neck thickness (1.1cm). The decorated vessel also has the highest mean among plain vessels in all the parameters. The mean (36.67cm), standard deviation (10.83cm), and minimum (26.3cm) of the full height of the decorated vessel are larger than those of the plain pottery. The mean (122.77cm), standard deviation (39.11cm), and minimum (93.1cm) of body circumference of the decorated vessel are larger than those of the plain pottery. From this data, it can be suggested that most of the decorated vessels are larger than the plain pottery (Table 3).



Figure 8: Images showing decorated potteries (a) Mera Chaphu (b) Meikoi Chaphu (c) enlarged view of decorated herringbone designs found in images a) and b); (d) Maring Kharung (e) Lai Kharung (f) enlarged view of decorated small circular designs found in images (d) and (e) (Photo credit: Authors)

Table 3: Table showing the statistical results of different parameters measured of Andro potteries based on uses and texture (Measurement unit=cm., Total number = 29)

	Religious				*Household*				*Plain*				*Decorated*			
	Max	*Min*	*Mean*	*S.D.*	*Max*	*Min*	*Mean*	*S.D.*	*Max*	*Min*	*Mean*	*S.D.*	*Max*	*Min*	*Mean*	*S.D.*
Full Height	30.2	23.1	27.32	2.73	47.6	11.3	23.53	11.54	31	11.3	21.13	6.66	47.6	26.3	36.67	10.83
Rim-neck Height	5.5	2.6	4	1.06	7.5	1.8	3.76	1.77	6.0	1.8	3.40	46.02	7.5	3.5	5.3	1.8
Rim circumference	64.4	38.7	52.44	12.04	91.4	33	50.55	17.91	82	33	46.02	12.82	91.4	59.4	68.75	15.27
Neck circumference	54.5	31.4	43.58	10.06	74.6	28.4	44.68	13.92	67.8	28.4	40.51	10.42	74.6	49.6	57.87	11.33
Body circumference	98.8	46.1	83.32	22.04	178.4	41.9	87.28	39.86	130.7	41.9	75.72	27.15	178.4	93.1	122.77	39.11
Rim diameter	20	12	16.5	3.86	28.6	10.3	15.71	5.66	25.6	10.3	14.35	4.1	28.6	18.3	21.47	4.80
Neck diameter	16.9	9.5	13.26	3.35	23.4	8.6	13.2	4.57	21.2	8.6	11.85	3.26	23.4	15.6	18	3.64
Body diameter	31.2	14.6	25.68	6.63	56.7	13	26.82	12.85	41.5	13	23.22	8.63	56.7	28.5	38	13.09
Rim thickness	0.7	0.4	0.58	0.10	1.2	0.4	0.6	0.22	1.2	0.4	0.56	0.20	0.8	0.6	.7	.08
Neck thickness	1.1	0.6	0.94	0.20	1.6	0.6	0.88	0.27	1.1	0.6	0.81	0.61	1.6	0.9	1.2	0.29

(All the data are based on measurements undertaken by the author during the field survey)*

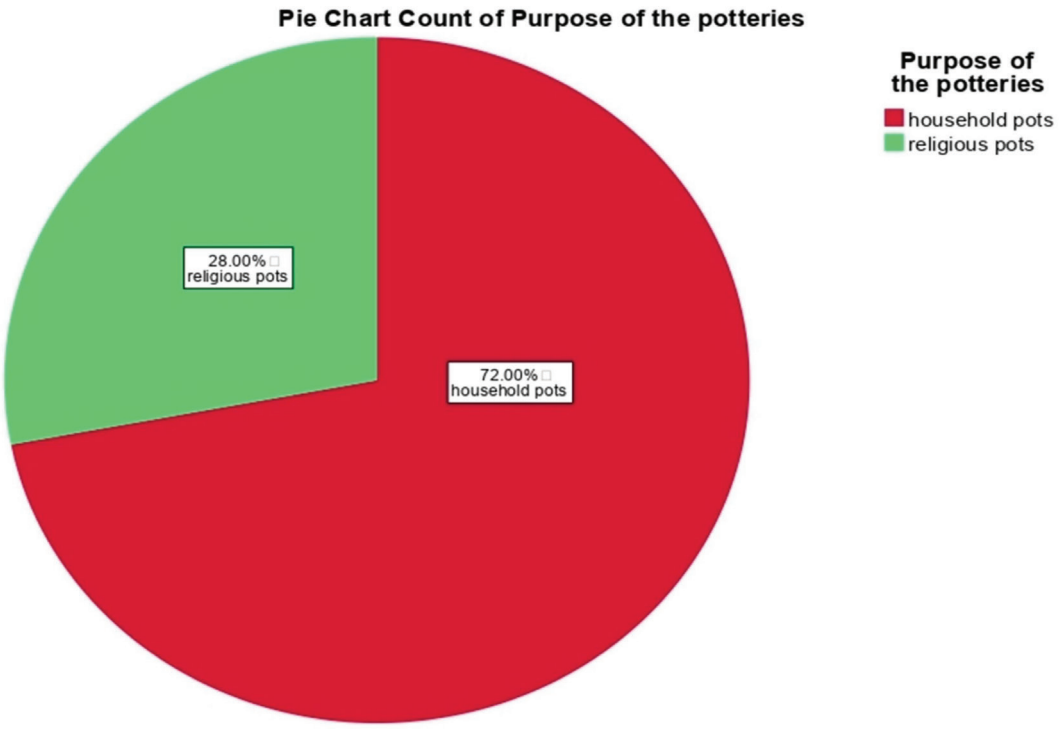


Figure 9: Pie chart showing the percentage distribution of household and religious pottery (Illustration: Authors)

The above pie charts show that household-purpose potteries hold 72% while ritualistic potteries occupy 28% (Figure 9). It shows that Andro potters still produced various types of pottery which are meant for household purposes.

Table 4: Table showing the statistical results of different parameters measured of Andro potteries based on functional attributes (Measurement unit=cm., Total number = 29)

	Carrying vessel				*Cooking vessel*				*Storage vessel*				*Serving vessel*			
	Max	*Min*	*Mean*	*S.D.*	*Max*	*Min*	*Mean*	*S.D.*	*Max*	*Min*	*Mean*	*S.D.*	*Max*	*Min*	*Mean*	*S.D.*
Full Height	30.2	28.5	29.35	1.20	28.5	14.3	19.88	6.32	47.6	14.8	29.67	12.50	23.1	11.3	18.97	6.65
Rim-neck height	3.5	2.6	3.05	.63	5.5	2.0	3.43	1.24	7.5	3.1	4.87	1.69	4.2	1.8	2.70	1.30
Rim circum-ference	59.4	40.2	49.80	13.58	64.4	33.0	49.73	11.38	91.4	33.0	57.19	22.14	46.0	36.4	40.37	5.01
Neck circum-ference	52.8	36.4	44.60	11.60	54.5	31.0	42.57	7.73	74.6	28.4	48.63	17.44	49.5	31.4	37.90	10.07
Body circum-ference	98.8	93.1	95.95	4.03	98.0	46.1	64.50	18.82	178.4	69.0	112.20	38.86	80.6	41.9	62.30	19.43
Rim diameter	19.0	12.6	15.80	4.52	20.0	10.4	15.60	3.55	28.6	10.3	17.71	7.06	14.4	11.2	12.53	1.66
Neck diameter	16.1	10.2	13.15	4.17	16.9	9.3	12.85	2.48	23.4	8.6	14.86	5.73	11.7	9.4	10.20	1.30
Body diameter	31.2	28.5	29.85	1.91	29.4	14.6	19.73	5.46	56.7	21.4	34.50	13.12	24.7	13.0	19.17	5.87
Rim thickness	.6	.4	.50	.14	.7	.4	.57	.10	1.2	.4	.69	.26	.6	.4	.50	.10
Neck thickness	1.1	.6	.85	.35	1.1	.8	.88	.12	1.6	.6	.96	.36	1.0	.7	.83	.15

(All the data are based on measurements undertaken by the author during the field survey)*

From the above table (Table 4), it is found that the storage vessel has the highest maximum and highest mean value of all the considered parameters. The storage vessel has the largest full height of 47.6 cm, followed by the carrying vessel (30.2cm), cooking vessel (28.5cm), and serving vessel (23.1cm). Rim-neck height is found to be the largest in storage vessels, i.e. 7.5cm followed by the cooking vessel – 5.5cm, serving vessel – 4.2cm, and carrying vessel- 3.5 cm. Body circumference is largest in the storage vessel (178.4cm) followed by the carrying vessel (98.8cm), cooking vessel (98cm), and serving vessel (80.6cm). This finding indicates that storage vessels are the largest, which may be because they are less prone to crumble down since they do not need to move frequently from one place to another.

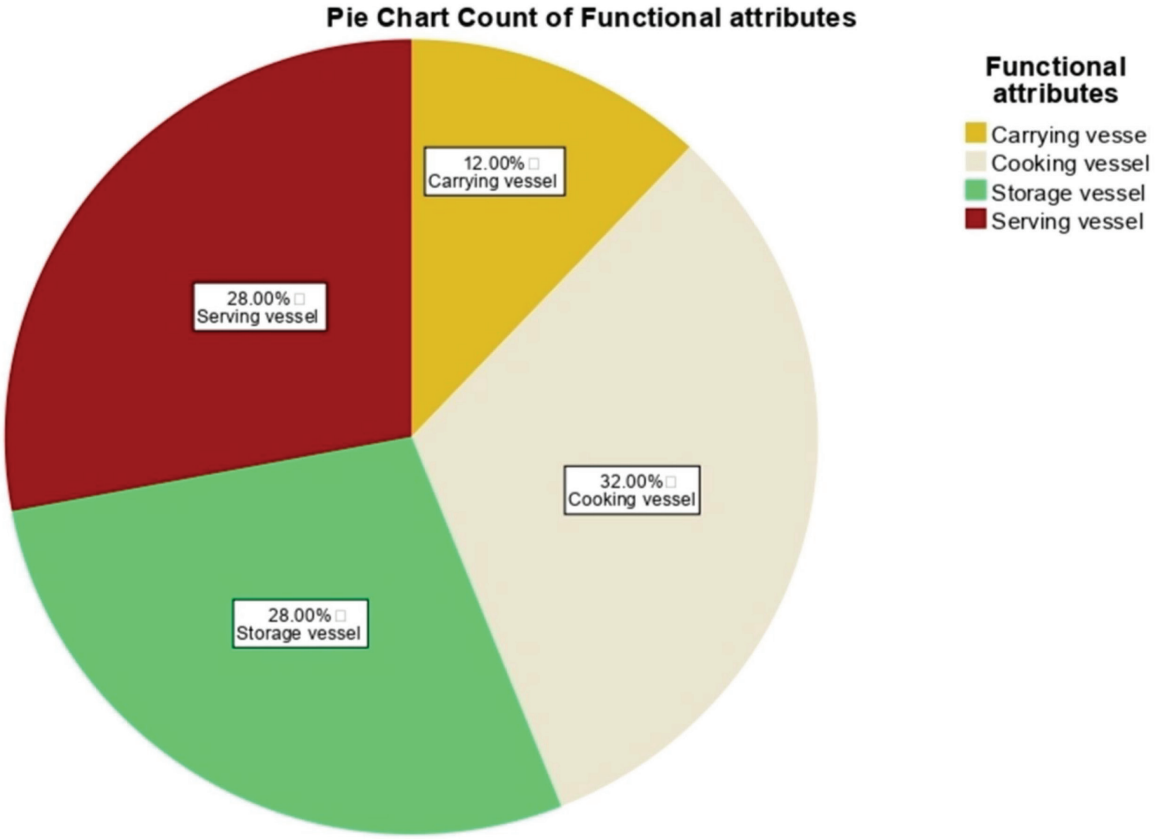


Figure 10: Pie chart showing the percentage distribution of potteries of varied functional attributes (Illustration: Authors)

Based on the functional attributes of potteries, Andro potters produced cooking vessels around 32%, storage vessels and serving vessels around 28% each, and carrying vessels around 12% (Figure 10).

Discussions

The findings of the study suggest that the form of Andro pottery is closely linked to its intended use. Rather than being shaped solely by aesthetic preferences or tradition, the vessels display morphological features that correspond to specific household and ritual activities. Variation in size, body form, neck shape, rim form, and wall thickness suggest that Andro potters have developed vessel designs through generations of practical experience, ensuring that each type effectively serves a particular function. Storage vessels are significantly larger than the other categories. Their greater body circumference and

thicker walls provide stability and durability, making them suitable for storing rice, water, fermented fish, and other household materials. Serving and carrying vessels are generally smaller and lighter, allowing them to be handled comfortably during everyday activities.

As this study also tries to unveil an analogy between the contemporary pottery-making tradition of Andro potters and their potteries with the ancient ceramic evidence so far collected from different sites in Manipur, ancient potsherd findings have been analyzed. Furthermore, changes and continuity regarding different traits have also been investigated here. To draw a comparative analysis between the prehistoric and contemporary potteries, stylistic analysis using multiple attribute-based typological classification has been undertaken. Potsherds recovered from four Neolithic sites of Manipur, viz. Nongpok Keithelmanbi Locality-1, Napachik, Laimanai, and Phunan, are in the form of sherds, which possess characteristics of handmade pottery such as irregularities of form, uneven thickness, imperfect rotundity, beater marks, and depressions of finger impressions on the inner surface of the sherds (Singh 2008).

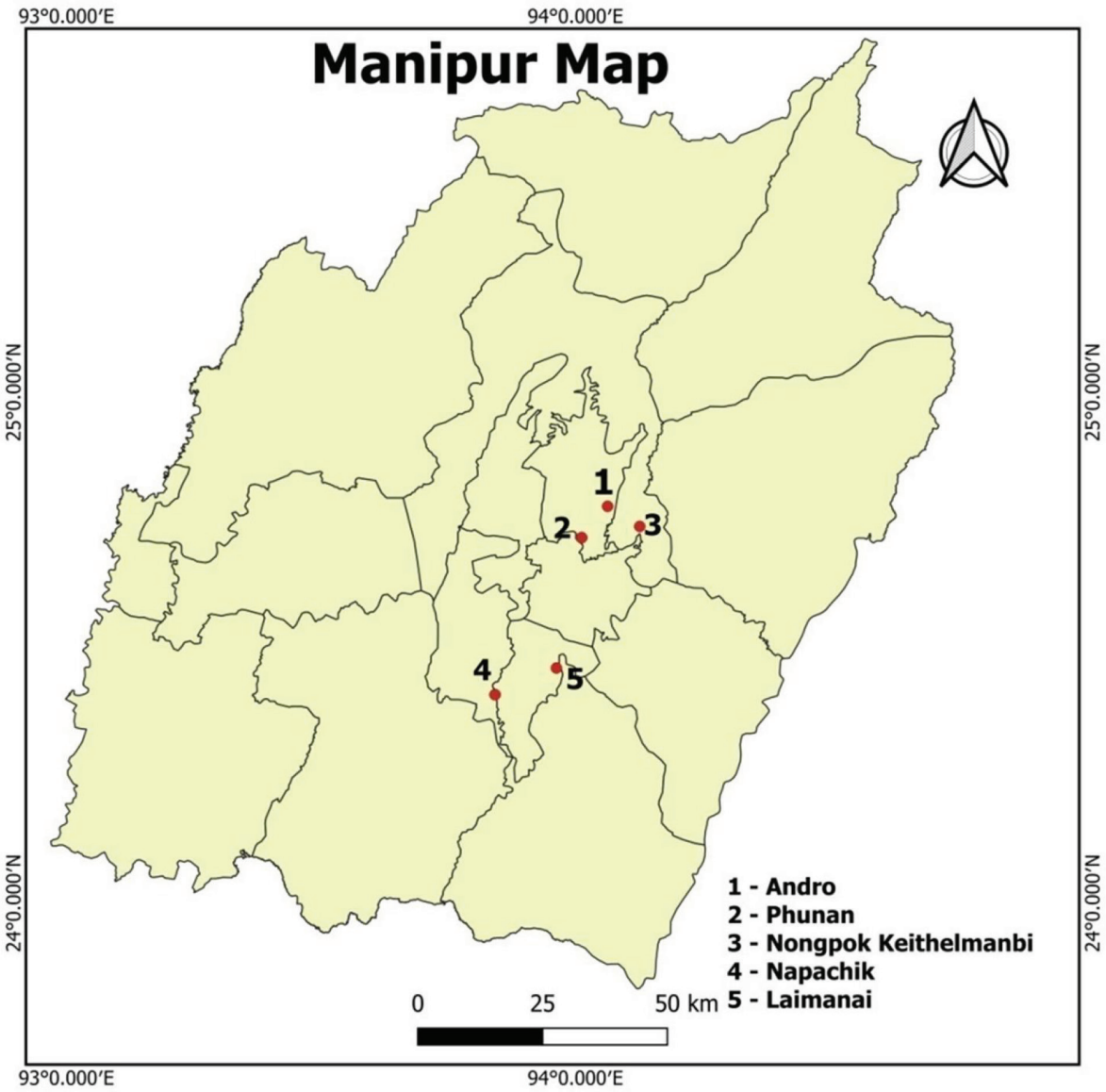


Figure 11: Map of Manipur showing Andro village and the prehistoric sites from which pottery was recovered. (Illustration: Authors)

Table 5: Potsherds recovered from the four Neolithic sites of Manipur (analyzed by the author from Singh, O.K., 1997, 2008)

Site name	*Geocoordinates*	*Types of potsherds*	*Reconstructed shapes*	*Decorations*	*Color*	*Thickness*
Nongpok Keithelmanbi Locality-1	24°43'59.14"N; 94°7'31.43"E.	Plain, cord-marked ware	Medium to large bowls, globular body pots, small jars	Carved paddle-impressed herringbone, criss-cross, basketry pattern, cord-impressed, criss-cross and linear pattern	Reddish brown dominant with few red, brown, grey	4-5 mm dominant, 2 mm-8 mm
Napachik	24°24'38.91"N; 93°50'18.78"E.	Tripod, low ring-footed ware, plain, cord-marked ware	Globular body pot, bowl, cup, jar, wide-opened mouth. Long leg conical type, flat slanting top, solid flat leg tripod ware	Cord-impressed, punctuation scars at the base part	Reddish brown dominant, grey, dark grey, whitish	4-5 mm dominant, 2-7mm
Laimanai	24°27'49.23"N; 93°57'35.08"E.	Tripod, cord-marked, ring-footed ware	Globular body pots, Dish, Conical-shaped tripod ware	Cord-impressed linear and criss-cross pattern	Light red, brown, dark grey	5-7mm
Phunan	24°42'54.73"N; 94°00'42.33"E.	Plain, cord-marked, incised, appliqué, net-impressed ware	Globular body pot, jar, bowls having wide mouth,	Circular-impression, net-impressed, appliqué, incised, grooving on neck	Dominant grey color with few red, brown, and whitish	5-8mm dominant, 5-13mm

The Neolithic ceramic evidence so far collected from Manipur provides a view that the pots are handmade and produced by using anvil-beater techniques, and decorative patterns made on the surface are cord-marked, incised, applique, circular-impressed, net-impressed, and grooved-neck (Table 5) (Singh 2008). The Andro potteries are also made solely by hand using coil and ring building along with the anvil-beater technique, representing evidence of continuing handmade pottery-making techniques. Decorations engraved on the surface of contemporary Andro pottery include herringbone patterns on the body part, circular impressions on the neck and shoulder, and appliqué designs, which are analogous to the potsherd findings from the Phunan and Nongpok Keithelmanbi Neolithic sites. The shape of the contemporary Andro pottery as a whole represents a globular body of medium to large size with a few small sizes, an outturned rim, a short to high neck, a rim diameter of a mean ranging from 12 to 21 cm, bowls with wide opening mouths, jars, and dishes, of which some are ring-footed. This overall shape has affinities with the potsherds from Neolithic sites of Manipur as reconstructed by O.K. Singh (2008). It is also found that the mean thickness of the overall contemporary Andro potteries is 0.5mm, which is almost similar to the thickness of Neolithic potteries (Table 5). Geographically, Phunan and Nongpok Keithelmanbi Neolithic sites are situated 10km south-west and 19km east, respectively, from Andro village. While Laimanai and Napachik sites are situated at 47 km and 67 km, respectively, south of Andro (Figure 10). The closeness in distance also suggests that there might be cultural diffusion or the migration of populations from the core ancient sites.

The similarities thus produced hold a connection between the Neolithic and the contemporary Andro pottery. The study also strengthened the view of the continuation of various ancient ceramic traits in the northeastern regions of India. Hazarika (2013) suggested a cultural connection of the prehistoric people inhabiting various regions of Eastern Asia, comprising China and the countries of Southeast Asia and Eastern India, based on the spatial distribution pattern of cord-marked pottery as a dominant ceramic ware in association with a polished stone tool. Contemporary Thongjao pottery of Manipur also has some affinities with the prehistoric and ancient historic potteries collected from varied regions of Manipur—the composition of raw materials with Laimanai and Napachik pottery of Manipur; multi-edge tools in the incised decoration of Phunan, Sekta, and Kangla pottery; and vertical parallel designs with Phunan and Kangla. The similarities thereby revealed a continuity from Neolithic days, and the villagers still engaged in the tradition as a primary occupation (Devi 2017). Vidyani & Manibabu (2017) unveiled an analogy in the process of making cylindrical-shaped clay in the initial stage of Oinam pottery with the clay cylinder found at the Khok Phanom Di site in Central Thailand.



Figure 12: (a)-Storing rice grains in Chengphu, (b)-Soaking rice grains for liquor brewing, (c)-Author measuring pottery. (Photo credit: Authors)

Based on the manufacturing technique of using molding and paddle beater techniques and cork-marked designs, it was concluded that the pot-making tradition of the Oinam has been a continuing technology since the early days.

From the present research, it is found that Andro pottery, along with its manufacturing process, holds a deep socio-cultural significance to this day. Andro potteries still play a cardinal role not only for religious purposes but also in household activities. Though the number of earthen vessels produced in Andro has reduced, they produce different types meant for different purposes. The tradition of storing water in earthen pots such as *Maring Kharung* (Figure 8d), *Ishaipun* (Figure 7a), and *Mera Kharung* (Figure 8a) still prevails in Andro village, reflecting its continued importance in daily life and the preservation of age-old practices. Potteries such as *Lai Kharung* (Figure 8e)**,** *Yukhom* (Figure 7c), *Ngangkha* (Figure 7b)**,** *Meikoi Chaphu* (Figure 8b), and *Thumkhrung (*Figure 7d) still sustain their importance in varied ritualistic activities. People store rice grains in *Chengphu* (Figure 12a), where they maintain their sanctity and are kept in every household. Above *Chengphu*, a small pottery called *Chengphu makhum* is used to serve as a lid, and whenever the rice grain is taken out from *Chengphu,* a handful of the grain is further placed in *Chengphu makhum, believing* that whatever amount they have taken out will be gained again. In Andro village, potteries are also still widely used for the liquor-brewing process (Figure 12b). Traditional ring-footed pots like *Yukhum* are still being produced, preserving the village's rich pottery heritage. However, some household potteries, such as *Khujam Chaphu*, *Wangkem*, etc., have decreased in importance as they are replaced by metallic utensils. Although the tradition of pottery-making still follows today, the use of earthenware for household purposes has reduced to a great extent, where many of the earthen vessels have been replaced by metallic utensils.

As discussed above, the present study conducted at Andro village gives immense insights into the continuity of handmade pottery-making as a living tradition. The potters solely employed the manual technique of making pottery using ring building and the anvil-beater technique, which depicts the preservation of the traditional ways of life amidst the strong waves of modernization. The coil and anvil-beater technique being employed by the Andro potter showed the uniqueness of their manufacturing process. Every piece of pottery is made with great care by the potters so that it is less prone to crumble down. Till today, pottery-making has been entirely associated with ancient ritual cults. Analogical analysis of the contemporary pottery with the ancient findings gives immense support to its continuity from an earlier time period.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the handmade pottery tradition of Andro is sustained by a close relationship between vessel form and function, where each type has been developed to meet particular domestic or ritual requirements. The study thus sheds light on the different traits of Andro pottery with special reference to their manufacturing process, raw materials procurement, typo-technology, morphology, stylistic and functional attributes, and gender specificity as well. The ethnographic analogical comparison with ceramics from Neolithic sites across Manipur further indicates that similarities in vessel morphology, stylistic pattern, and manufacturing techniques may also reflect a continuity. Some changes were also observed in the sense that the use of earthen ceramic wares has somewhat reduced due to ongoing modernization. The people of Manipur still engage in making several forms of handmade pottery necessary for varied purposes such as storage jars and other ritualistic purposes. Many studies suggest that the present pottery-making tradition in Manipur may be a continuation of ancient practices, as both share similarities with respect to the manufacturing techniques, surface

decoration, and raw materials. The present study thus reveals a close analogy between the ancient and ethnographic present. The resemblance in the stylistic and morphological structure between the ancient potteries and the contemporary Andro pottery brings to light a close affinity between these diachronic traditions of pottery-making techniques.

The number of potters in this village has significantly declined over time, likely due to the replacement of traditional earthen vessels with modern metal utensils and the rise in women's employment. Although the use of earthenware for daily household activities has decreased, ritualistic pottery remains important. As a result, the production of household vessels has dwindled, making it crucial to pass the traditional knowledge to younger women to preserve the craft. The study thus provides valuable insights for more in-depth ethnoarchaeological studies to generate strong similarities between the ancient and contemporary pottery tradition in Manipur.

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Competing Interest

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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