Longkongla’s Story,  
-or-  
The Origin of a Clan

Reproduced from the book “The Ao-Naga Oral Tradition” by Professor Ms. Temsula Ao. Published by Bhasha Publications -1999. The author is Head of the Department of English at North Eastern Hills University, Shillong.

Longkongla is the name of the heroine of this origin myth who is supposed to be the foster mother of the progenitor of an Ao clan called the Ozukumer (literally meaning one who was transformed from a bird. Ozu in the Ao language means a bird).

This myth dates back to the first village established by the Aos called Chungliyimti. Longkongla, who lived in this village, was sitting at her loom one day, when she noticed a beautiful hornbill fly past her house. Seeing such a magnificent bird, she cried out saying how wonderful it would be if she got even a feather of this bird. The next instant, a beautiful feather came fluttering down from the sky and settled on her loom. Longkongla picked up the feather very lovingly and treating it like a precious treasure, locked it up inside her cane basket where she kept her valuables. After a few days, when she went to look at it, to her surprise, she found that it had turned itself into a cocoon of some sort. So she took it outside and left it in the fork of a tree. Not long afterwards, there was the sound of a child’s cry emanating from the exact spot. Many people of the village came to look at the male child and tried to quieten him. But he would not respond to anybody. But when Longkongla approached him with a crooning tone, he immediately stopped crying and came willingly into her arms. So she took him home and brought him up as her own son and called him Songmaket. But since she knew that he was transformed from a bird’s feather, he was also called Ozukumer and to this day his descendants are known as the Ozukumer clan among the Aos.

It is apparent from the story so far that Longkongla did posses some supernatural powers. The son that she acquired as a gift from the beautiful bird grew up to be a very handsome and accomplished youth and his fame spread far and wide. Longkongla too prospered and became the owner of many paddies and a great number of various domestic animals.

As mother and son prospered thus, many a villager became jealous of the two and incited the whole village to plot their destruction. After several unsuccessful attempts on the youth’s life, the villagers, during a collective fishing expedition, treacherously drowned him in a deep eddy of the river and made it appear as an accident. But when Longkongla was told by his closest friend about the facts of the incident, she began to plot her revenge on the villagers.

One day, while all the men and women of the village had gone to their fields (at a considerable distance away from the village) she gathered the young children and fed them a sumptuous feast. She then lured them into an empty house and set fire to it, thus killing all of them.

It was open hostility now, between Longkongla and the villagers. When her life was threatened several times, she had to flee from the village. But here her supernatural allies came to her aid. They sent her a fine thread from the sky on which to escape from her enemies. As she clung to the thread and was being gradually pulled heavenward she was prohibited to look towards the earth even once. Midway Longkongla could not bear to ignore the cries of her domestic animals that were clamouring to come...
along with her. In her anxiety for them, she glanced towards the earth. The thread snapped and she dashed upon the sharp branches of a tree called *kabusing*. Thus died this mythical heroine.

Incidentally, till today, this particular tree, when cut, oozes a reddish sap which the Aos say is Longkongla’s blood. And it is believed that all her domestic animals who fled from the village along with her became the wild animals inhabiting the Ao areas – boars (from pigs), stags (cows), deer (goats), wolves (dogs), ocelots (cats), wild fowls (chickens), etc. The Aos still refer to these wild animals as Longkongla’s animals.

And the Ozukumer is one of those clans among the Aos who trace their origin not to Lungterok but to Songmaket, who was transformed into man from a bird’s feather and raised by Longkongla. This clan is accepted as a sub-clan of the Longkumer clan.

In some versions, the names *Tsungpi* or *Pongdangti* are used for the same person.

*(Obtained by the author of the book from Mr. Y. Temjen Jamir of the village Mopungchukit, District Mokokchung, and translated into English by her from original Ao text. The author has used the narration after obtaining due permission.)*