A long time ago, in the age of dreams and magical times, when the gods and humans resided side by side, there lived a family with two daughters. One day, the parents went to their jhum field, leaving the two girls at home. The time of year is understood to be around end July to early August.

“Tenü (younger sister), today mother and father have gone to the fields, so today I will clean the rice and prepare the pigs’ feed. You go to fetch the water and firewood,” the older sister told her younger sister. The younger sister readily agreed and went to collect firewood. She came laden with the wood and dumping the load on the ground said to her sister, “Oya (elder sister), I am hungry, give me something to eat!” But the older sister, ignoring her plea, sent her to fetch water three more times. When the younger sister filled all the pots and containers with water, it was time to cook food for the evening meal and the older sister set the pot of rice on the fire. By now, the younger sister was famished and cried out to her elder sister, “Oya! I am so hungry, please give me some food!” But the older sister, ignoring her plea, sent her to fetch water three more times. When the younger sister filled all the pots and containers with water, it was time to cook food for the evening meal and the older sister set the pot of rice on the fire. By now, the younger sister was famished and cried out to her elder sister, “Oya! I am so hungry, please give me some food!”

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By now, the younger sister was famished and cried out to her elder sister, “Oya! I am so hungry, please give me some food!”

The older sister, instead of feeding her starving sibling, told her to open her palm and proceeded to hit her palm with the hot rice ladle. This was too much for the younger sister who was hungry and tired after so much hard work. Crying loudly, she ran out and huddled in a corner of the ‘sünglang’ (bamboo balcony) at the back of the house.

Meanwhile, her parents were on their way home, laden with fresh produce from their field. Their jhum field had yielded a bumper crop and the parents were overjoyed that their hard work had been blessed with such abundance. They were eager to meet their daughters and to see their surprise and joy at the food stuff they had brought for them.

However, when they reached home, they found only the older daughter.

“Where is your younger sister?” the mother asked. “Oh, she is too much; I had to do all the hard work while she has been just loitering around all day. She must be somewhere sitting outside!” the older daughter replied, pretending to be very busy.

The parents rushed out to look for the younger daughter. They knew very well the characters of both their daughters and concluded that the older sister must have done something bad to hurt the younger sister. They called out to their younger daughter, telling her that they had brought fresh cucumbers, maize and other foodstuff and that she would be given the first choice to eat whatever she wanted. But the younger sister had heard the blatant lies her older sister had told about her and could not bear the injustice of it all. So she climbed the nearest tree and transformed herself into a small bird (“kongliang”).

The parents looked for her everywhere but she was nowhere to be seen. Finally, when they came near the tall tree, they saw a small bird perched there. It was singing the following song mournfully.

“Oyalai sìngpeni oang ta
Oyalai tũlai oang ta
Aja-asa meki la
Sìngko lidi
Kongliang ta
Kongliang ta”

(Older sister sent me to fetch firewood
Older sister sent me to fetch water
Not once was I giving rice and meat
Better to live in the trees
Where am I supposed to stay
Where am I supposed to stay)

Repeating this song, the small bird darted from tree to tree and eventually flew off into the thick forests, leaving the parents heartbroken.

Epilogue:

Today, when people hear this small bird darting from tree to tree singing the song “Kongliang, kongliang, kongliang”, they know that it is time to harvest their jhum fields. The harvesting of new rice, cucumbers, chilli, maize, gourds, brinjal...
and various other vegetables are preceded by this song.

This story has been handed down from generation to generation with the idea that the song is a reminder for the parents to teach their children to love one another. The song “*kongliang*” (literally: where am I supposed to live?) is a constant lesson for older sisters and brothers to love, care, provide and sacrifice for their younger siblings, so that the younger ones will emulate them and, in turn, treat those younger to them in the same manner. The Aos believe that younger ones must be cherished, protected and taken care of and that the younger ones must be obedient and respectful of those older to them. The older children take on the responsibility of taking care of the younger ones and thus play an important supporting role when the parents are out in the fields the whole day. If there is no love between siblings, the home cannot be a place of harmony and contentment and, in such cases, we all become homeless. Material wealth (in this case bumper crops) become meaningless when there is no support, sharing, protection and affection among family members, resulting in disintegration of the most important unit in society.

In an oral society, such stories were told to children in order to instill in their minds the importance of filial loyalty and love as a strategy for harmonious survival. This and other similar stories can therefore be considered as examples of folklore performing a significant social function.

**Source:**
As told by Mr. T. Molungnenba Ao (86 years old) of Molung village.  
Place: Tuli, Mokokchung district, Nagaland  
Date: 19.4.2007

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**Re-interpreting the Myth of Longterok**

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There are two phratries among the Ao Nagas who are identified by the dialect they speak. One phratry known as ‘Mongsen-ür’ speaks the Mongsen dialect and the other that speaks the Chongli dialect is known as Chongli-ür. The Ao Naga myth of origin says that their ancestors “sprang up or originated” (Poktet) from six stones at a place called Longterok which is located in Chungliyimti village, Tuensang District, presently inhabited by the Sangtam tribe. In probably one of the earliest documented descriptions of Longterok, Hutton (1986:45) during one of his visit to Longterok in November 1923 observed that only three of the stones were standing and the largest stone identified as the female stone and a small phallus near it was knocked down by a Christian evangelist and the sixth one was seen leaning on a nearby tree. In January 2008, it was found that five roughly shaped megaliths in a slightly leaning position were located about 3 m away from the female stone lying on the ground. Beneath the ‘female’ stone was an elongated boulder identified as the sixth stone. This myth is so central to the Ao world-view that in Ao folklore, songs, narratives and all other customary practices are traced to Longterok and the ancestral village called Chungliyimti which was established by the first people there.

**The Myth of Longterok**

Though there are some slight variations among the Mongsen and Chongli speaking groups it is popularly accepted that in the beginning three