

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL
INSTITUTIONS OF THE AO AND THE SUMI TRIBES OF NAGALAND:
CHANGING DIMENSIONS**

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT OF
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

By

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Abbreviations

CEDAW	-	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
DC	-	District Commissioner
GB	-	Goanbura
MNGREGA	-	The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NNC	-	Naga National Council
NSRLM	-	Nagaland State Rural Livelihoods Mission
PMAY-G	-	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin
SHGs	-	Self Help Groups
STH	-	Sumi Totimi Hoho
UN	-	United Nations
VDB	-	Village Development Board

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Theoretical Framework

1.1 Introduction

The transition from traditional to a modern system of governance in most of the society is a slow but natural process. The changing nature, values, needs, and circumstances of the society call for making changes in the existing system to accommodate changes for the progressive and greater good of the society. During this period of transition the constant dilemma that society in general and tribal societies in particular faces is whether to substitute their traditional system of governance with the modern system or continue with it. In this regard, there is a constant discourse among scholars, intellectuals, government, and civil bodies regarding the relevance of the traditional institutions for governance, especially in the rural areas. This debate has become more prominent because of rapid spread of globalization and democratization. Based on different viewpoint there emerged three school of thoughts, one advocate for its continuation because they are of the opinion that rural population have been under such a system for generation and non-continuation of it will lead to disruption in their village governance and may threaten their traditional rights, customs, and way of life. The second school of thought advocates for its abolition because they consider traditional institutions as a hindrance to progress and development. They also consider these traditional institutions as discriminatory, undemocratic and male-oriented. The third school of thought advocates for the blending of traditional institutions with modern institutions for good governance in the village administration¹. Though the three school of thoughts are mostly related to the African societies, it also holds relevance and applicable in the context of the Naga tribes.

The village administration in Nagaland still largely revolves around their traditional political institutions, since Nagaland is among the few states² where the implementation of three tier

¹Rotimi Ajayi .(1992). Politics and Traditional Institutions in Nigeria: A Historical overview. *Transafrican Journal of History*, 21, pp.124-125.

²As per Article 243M of the Constitution of India , State of Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sixth Schedule Areas and Hill areas of Manipur are exempted from application of Part IX of

Panchayati Raj system has been exempted under article 243M(2) of the Indian constitution. Therefore, though it has adopted the system of electoral democracy at the state level, administration at the village level continues to be revolved around their traditional political institutions. There have been efforts towards the institutionalization and modernization of village administration through the passage of various acts, most prominently the “Nagaland Village and Area Council Act 1978”, which was amended as the “Nagaland Village Council Act 1978” by the Nagaland Village and Area Council (Second Amendment) Act 1990. The nomenclature of the Act was amended again by the Nagaland village Council (fourth amendment) Act 2009 as the “Nagaland Village and Area Councils Act 1978” to give legal status to the tribal councils constituted under Naga customary practices and usages³. However, adoption of such acts was not intended at abolishing or replacing the traditional political institutions with modern institutions. Therefore, adoption of such acts has resulted in assimilation of the traditional and modern institutions for the governance of the village administration. Naturally, under such an arrangement conflicts is bound to arise between the advocates of modern and traditional system of administration. In addition, there is also a tendency of overlapping of powers between the two sets of institutions, and traditional practices regularly trumping the modern administrative norms and practices, thereby giving legitimacy, and continuation of some discriminatory practices, domination of group of persons and exclusive system of governance. The traditional system of governance may suit the earlier way of life but those may be inefficient to deal with the changing values, needs, pace and aspirations of the villagers, and although the leaders under the traditional institutions claim their system to be participatory and democratic, in reality leadership in this system continues to be exclusive and male domain.

the Constitution.

³Moatoshi Ao.(2019). *A Treatise on Customary and Fundamental Laws of the Nagas in Nagaland*. Notion press, p.170

1.2 Theoretical framework

Change is essential for human progress; a society that resists change will be static and may not be able to reap the fruit of modernization. However, change without preservation of the past will be abortive and will lead to the loss of a unique social identity. Adoption or imposition of democracy based on liberal principles with total disregard for long-established traditional institutions has not been successful especially in continent like Africa which has a long history of traditional system of governance. Thus, it is essential for any society while moving forward to draw strength from their long proven traditional system of governance without discarding modernization.

Tradition

The concept of tradition is a popular and widely studied topic by different scholars and researchers in Anthropology, Cultural Geography, Sociology, and Political Science. The word tradition is derived from the Latin word “tradire” which means to transfer or to deliver⁴. Thus, tradition can be briefly summarized as handing down of information, beliefs or customs from one generation to another. A tradition in the anthropological literature often means time-honoured customs, respected beliefs seen as an ideal type of construct, stultifying force that engendered and enforced cultural homogeneity. One of the classic definitions of tradition was given by an American Anthropologists Carl J Friedrich who define it as the “internal handing on through time” of culture trait⁵. Tradition connotes the totality of the belief, customs and ways of life of a given community, clan or tribe⁶. According to Encyclopaedic of dictionary of Sociology, tradition refers to any human practice, belief, institutions or artefact, which is handed down from one generation to the next. While the

⁴ Carl, J, Friedrich.(1972).*Tradition and Authority*. Macmillan Publishing, New Delhi, p.14

⁵ A.L. Kroeber.(1948). *Anthropology*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, p.411

⁶ Rotimi Ajayi, op.cit.,p. 125

content of traditions is highly variable, it typically refers to some element of culture regarded as part of the common inheritance of a social group. Tradition is often regarded as a source of social stability and legitimacy but appeals to tradition may also provide the basis for changing the present⁷. Similarly, Macintyre highlighted the dynamic nature of tradition, he defines tradition as an element of an ongoing practice of inquiry, which might include large revision of inherited theory and practice⁸. Moreover, tradition, which appears or claims to be old, is often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented⁹. Tradition, therefore, may be constructed at any historical time according to the demand of the situation¹⁰. Further, tradition in order to survive necessarily undergoes modification over time in response to changing circumstances¹¹. Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin through their work on the national and ethnic identification in Quebec and Hawai concluded that tradition cannot be defined in terms of boundedness, givenness or essence. Rather, tradition refers to an interpretive process that embodies both continuity and discontinuity¹². Notable work on the concept of tradition is that by Edward Shils, he gives an immutable and basal definition of tradition by defining tradition simply as *traditum*, anything transmitted or handed down from the past to the present he, however, also insist that tradition changes continually. He said that “they change in the process of transmission as interpretations are made of the tradition presented¹³. He said that the legacy of the past is not immutable but essential identity persists even if there is continuous modification in the tradition of a particular community. This was highlighted in a

⁷ B.B.Sharma.(1992).*Encyclopaedic of Dictionary of Sociology*. Anmol Publication, New Delhi, 4 , p.1010

⁸MacIntyre Cited in Philip E. Devine.(2013). The Concept of Tradition: A Problem Out of MacIntyre .*Philosophy Department Faculty Publications, Reason Papers*, 35(1), pp.109-110

⁹Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.). (2010). *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.1

¹⁰Manorama Sharma.(2004). *Critically Assessing Traditions: The Case of Meghalaya*, Crisis State Programme, Working Paper No.52, London: Destin, November , p.4

¹¹Audrey Cartile, “The Concept of Tradition”, in R. J. Moore (ed.).(1979).*Tradition and Politics of South Asia*, New Delhi: Vikas Publication House Pvt. Ltd , p.12.

¹²Edward Shils.(1981) cited in Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin (1984). Tradition, Genuine or Spurious. *The Journal of American Folklore* ,97(385), p. 273

¹³ Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, op.cit., p.274

section titled “The identity of Societies through Times” where he notes that in spite of ceaseless change, “each society remains the same society. Its members do not wake up one morning and discover they are no longer living in, let us say, British society”. This unity over time derives from a shared tradition: Memory leaves an objective deposit in tradition....It is this chain of memory and of the tradition which assimilates it that enables societies to go on reproducing themselves while changing”¹⁴. He recognizes that traditions usually have ideological content and that views of the past may be changed through self-conscious interpretation. He notes that the perceived past is plastic and capable of being retrospectively reformed by human beings living in the present¹⁵. Therefore, tradition is not simply handing down of past practices from one generation to next. It changes frequently in that they adapt to suit the needs of “living” or the needs of the present¹⁶. Therefore, traditions are not static or monolithic. The dynamic nature of the tradition was clearly articulated by Oladipo. He said that “the truth, however, is that, tradition is also dynamic, it responds to changes in human experience through questioning or evaluation of some of its assumptions, particularly when they are rendered by new realities. Indeed, it can safely be asserted that the survival or competitiveness of a society is largely a function of the extent to which its cultural foundations are opened to such evaluations. So, although tradition plays regulatory conservative roles in social development, it can also provide inspiration or stimulate reaction”¹⁷. According to T.S Elliot, a tradition is not only the pastness of the past but of its presence. Tradition is not merely a custom passively received but something, which is actively entertained with admiration¹⁸. Therefore, though the tradition seems to be in clash or

¹⁴Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, op cit.,p.275

¹⁵ Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, op. cit.,p.276

¹⁶M. Tina Dacin& Peter A. Dacin. Traditions as Institutionalized Practice: Implications for Deinstitutionalization cited in Royston Greenwood.et al.(2008).*The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*. Sage publication, New York, p.331

¹⁷ Olusegun, Oladipo.(Ed).(2002). *The Third Way in African Philosophy: essays in honour of Kwasi Wiredu* Ibadan: Hope Publications, p.12

¹⁸T.S. Eliot cited in H John Sema.(2013). *Traditional and Modern Political Institutions of the*

contrast with modernity, however, it is incorrect to view, as traditions are not stagnant but dynamic in nature and that the relationship between tradition and modernity are complementary¹⁹.

Institution

Every society functions with some kind of institution in place based on their culture, tradition, terrain, history and other factors. The existence of a stable and inclusive institution is essential for the progressive development of all sections of society. According to Douglass C. North "Institutions are the humanly devised constraints that structure human interaction. They are made up of formal constraints (e.g. rules, laws, and constitutions), informal constraints (e.g. Norms of behaviour, conventions and self-imposed codes of conduct) and their enforcement characteristics²⁰. According to Hamilton institution is a verbal symbol which for want of a better describes a cluster of social usages. It connotes a way of thought or action of some prevalence and permanence, which is embedded in the habits of a group or the customs of a people. In ordinary speech it is another word for procedure, convention or arrangement: in the language of books, it is the singular of which the mores or the folkways are plural. Institutions fix the confines of and impose form upon the activities of human beings. The world of use and won't, to which imperfectly we accommodate our lives, is a tangled and unbroken web of institutions²¹. According to Malinowski, human beings have to organize themselves to achieve any purpose or reach any end. Organization implies a very definite scheme or structure and one main factor of it, is the universal application to all organized group in their typical form. Malinowski call such unit of human organization

Nagas. Mittal publication, p.2

¹⁹S. N. Ganguly.(1977). *Tradition, Modernity and Development*, New Delhi; MacMillan Company, pp. 45-46.

²⁰D.C. North. (1994). Economic Performance through Time. *American Economic Review*, 84, p.360.

²¹ Walton Hamilton.(1932)., "Institution," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. Retrieved from https://archive.org/stream/Hamilton1932Institution/Hamilton%20-%201932%20-%20Institution_djvu.txt

which he considered old but not always clearly defined or consistently used term as institution, which implies “ an agreement on a set of traditional values for which human beings come together”²². According to Bertrand, “institutions are system of social relationships for meeting various felt human needs.”²³. Gilbert Pascual defined “institutions as certain enduring and accepted forms of procedure governing the relations between individuals and groups”. With this definition is allied that of Ellwood who thinks that institutions are “habitual ways of living together which have been sanctioned, systematized and established by the authorities of communities”²⁴. MacIver and Page (Society: An Introductory Analysis) consider ‘institution’ as an established form or the condition of a procedure characteristic of group activity. According to them, whenever associations are created in society, certain rules and procedures also must be created for the dispatch of common business and for the regulation of the members in their intercourse with each other. Such norms can be called as institutions. Institutions are carefully planned framework for a balanced government²⁵. Institutions, according to Huntington, are "stable, valued, recurring patterns of behavior"²⁶. According to Hyden, institutions are, “inter-personal trust that is more immediate and exclusively reliant or unwritten rules in use”²⁷. Hudgson in his paper *On defining institutions: rules versus equilibria* define institution as “integrated systems of rules that structure social interactions”²⁸

²²Branslaw Malinowski.(1944). *A Scientific Theory of Culture and the Other Essay*, London: Oxford University Press, p.39

²³Social Institution, Definition, Function and Classification. Retrieved from <http://www.studylecturenates.com/social-sciences/sociology/370-social-institution-definitions-a-structure-of-social-institution>.

²⁴Pascual Gilbert S.J. (third revised edition 1973). *Fundamental of Sociology*. Orient Longman, pp. 43-44

²⁵MacIver and Page (Society: An Introductory Analysis) cited in H John Sema, op.cit., p.2

²⁶Samuel P. Huntington.(1965). Political Development and Political Decay. *World Politics* , 17(3), p.394

²⁷Hyden. (2006). *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.12

²⁸Geoffrey M. Hodgson.(2015).On defining institutions: rules versus equilibria. *Journal of Institutional Economics* , 11: 3, p. 501.

Thus, institutions are those norms established by people on mutual consensus based on their individual and societal needs. They are dynamic in nature since it get evolved based on the human needs and according to the changing times.

Traditional Political Institutions

What are traditional political institutions? We define them broadly as institutions whose legitimacy is based in part on their association with customary modes of governing a community. These institutions are political in the sense that they make decisions regulating and providing for the collective, and they are traditional in the sense that they are popularly believed to be connected to custom²⁹. It also refers to the indigenous political system or arrangements whereby leaders with proven track of records are nominated, appointed and installed in accordance with the provisions of their native laws and customs³⁰. Traditional political institutions encompass a wide range of entities, from village-level Shura councils in Afghanistan to the Zulu monarchy in South Africa.

Institutionalization

It refers to the development of stable patterns of social interaction based on formalized rules, laws, customs and rituals. Institutionalization makes social behaviour predictable by defining the behaviour that is expected and considered legitimate in specific social rules such as parent, employee, priest and so forth. A system of sanctions is associated with institutionalization, such that conformity to institutionalized expectations is rewarded and

²⁹Kate Baldwin and Katharina Holzinger.(2019). Traditional Political Institutions and Democracy: Reassessing their Compatibility and Accountability. *Comparative Political Studies*,p.2

³⁰Malami (1978), Orji and Olali (2010) Cited in Uthman Abdullahi Abdulqadir.(2016). Traditional rulers and security administration in Nigeria: Challenges for the 21st century . *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science* Volume 21,(8) Ver.6, p. 2

deviance is punished. Institutionalization provides an orderly system of social relationship³¹. According to Huntington institutionalization is the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability. He further states that the level of institutionalization of any political system can be defined by the adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence of its organizations and procedures. So also, the level of institutionalization of any particular organization or procedure can be measured by its adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence. The more adaptable an organization or procedure is, the more institutionalized it is; the less adaptable and more rigid it is, the lower its level of institutionalization.³²

Modernization

Modernization is not a philosophy or a movement with a clearly articulated value-system. It is a process of change. Earlier the term modernization was used to refer only to change in economy and its related effect on social values and social practices. But today the term modernization is given broader meaning. It is described as social change involving the elements of science and technology. It involves change based on rationality. In one sense all of the modernization ideals are contained in and derived from the ideal of rationality and planning³³. Modernization thus implies a process of rational examination of the value system of a society with a view to purging it of its irrational elements and incorporating into it more and more rational elements, in other words, it signifies a process of socio-cultural transformation along rationale lines. According to Alatas, modernization is a process by which modern scientific knowledge is introduced in the society with the ultimate purpose of achieving a better and more satisfactory life in the broadest sense as accepted by the society concerned. According to Pye modernization is the development of an inquiring and inventive attitude of mind, individual and social, that lies behind the use of techniques and machines

³¹B B Sharma.(1992). Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Sociology vol.2. Anmol Publications,p.428

³²Huntington op.cit., p.394

³³A.Kumar.(2001). *Social transformation in Modern India*. Sarup & Sons New Delhi, p.45

and aspire new forms of social relations. James O Connell talks about the flexibility of social structure and continuity identity aspects of modernization in which there is a willingness to accept continuous change on the plane of both individual and social structures together with a capacity to preserve individual and social identity³⁴. One of the main features of modernization is rationality. According to Robert Bellah “ where modernization means only an increased effectiveness in goal attainment with no increase in the rationalization of the goal-setting process very serious pathologies can result. Empirically such pathologies of modernization have occurred, but they are the products of partial or disturbed modernization, not the inevitable result of modernization itself. Modernization thus involves the rationalization of ends, according to Bellah, which means that the goals chosen by a society should be rational and the subject of discussion³⁵.

Modernization is the process of human development. It symbolizes a rational attitude towards issues and their evaluation from a universalistic and not particularistic view-point. It consists in modifying the existing tradition and creating room for new and better ones. Modernization is not only creating room for new and better tradition but also helps to enrich the existing value orientation in terms of new value that assures smooth progress towards image fulfillment³⁶.

Modernization is never about the cancellation of anything that is old. In fact, tradition is the very substance through which processes of modernization articulate themselves³⁷. Arguing against the dichotomous and incompatible argument between tradition and modernity, Srinivas cites how Hinduism is able to absorb rather than obstruct the processes of

³⁴Ram Ahuja.(2010). *Indian Social System*. Rawat Publication, pp.415-416.

³⁵Robert Bellah cited in M.N.Srinivas.(1966). *Social change in Modern India*. Orient Longman Limited New Delhi, p.54

³⁶ H.John Sema op.cit., pp.4-5

³⁷Yogendra Singh.(1978). *Essay on Modernisation of India*. Manohar Publications New Delhi, p. 22

modernization. Similarly, Milton Singer highlights how the Asian societies, far from being static, are able to adjust their religious institutions to the demands of modernization. Bendix also argues that elements of tradition will be found in modern societies and modern characteristics can be seen operation in traditional societies³⁸. Modernization consists in modifying the existing tradition and creating room for new and better way of doing things that suits the present world. He feels, it helps in enriching the existing culture but not the cancellation of the old pattern³⁹. Modernity can be only be understood in terms of tradition, therefore only those changes which effects the tradition in the sense of a richer modification can be regarded as a sign of modernity. Thus tradition and modernity infiltrate and transform each other⁴⁰. Modernization unlike social movements constitutes a process of social, political, cultural and economic transformation which by its very nature tends to be accumulative, adaptive and which selectively promotes structural replacement and differentiation in society⁴¹. Shils has maintained that the traditional society is not by any means entirely traditional and modern society by no means free of tradition⁴². Thus tradition and modernization as sets of values and role-structures interacts as they come in contact and between them a selective process of assimilation and syncretism starts⁴³. Tonnies theory of tradition-modernity continuum implies that no traditional or modern society is exclusively traditional or modern. There are elements of modernity in traditional society and vice versa. What is important is that traditional society in the process of rationalization becomes modern

³⁸Srinivas, Singer & Bendix cited in D.V.Kumar, *Modernisation and Ethnicity*(2006) A.Mittal Publication, New Delhi,pp.38-39

³⁹S.N. Ganguly. (1977). *Tradition ,Modernity and Development*. The Macmillan Company of India Ltd, p.52

⁴⁰H John Sema op.cit., p.6

⁴¹Yogendra Singh .(1997). *Indian Sociology Social Conditioning and Emerging Concerns*.Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, p.78

⁴²Ram Ahuja, op.cit., p.416.

⁴³Yogendra Sing, op.cit., p.214

society⁴⁴. Joseph R. Gusfield in his paper *Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change* highlighted the difficulty in separating the concepts at substantive level. He said “We cannot easily separate modernity and tradition from some specific tradition and some specific modernity, some version which functions ideologically as a directive. The modern comes to the traditional society as a particular culture with its own tradition”⁴⁵.

Based on the above theoretical framework, comparative research has been carried out on the traditional political institutions of Ao and Sumi tribes in an era of democracy, former follows a clan representative system of village governance under Putu Menden⁴⁶ and the later village administration based on an autocratic chief of the village.

1.3 Brief background of the two tribes

The Nagas based on their physical appearance and various traits belong to the Mongoloid race. In terms of the origin of the Nagas tribes there is no concrete proof, since most of the traces regarding the origin of the Nagas which the researchers and scholars arrived at are on the basis of oral tradition and speculation that lacks substantive evidence therefore it has remained inconclusive. Scholars basing their judgment on the Naga art, materials, culture, language, etc. theorized that Nagas have some links with Indonesia and Malaysia and belong to the Tibeto-Burma family⁴⁷ and most scholars points out the migration of Nagas to the present day settlement from China and South East Asia⁴⁸. On the question regarding the origin of the term “Naga” there is also no unanimity among scholars and researchers. Scholars and researchers have given different interpretation regarding the origin of the term

⁴⁴Tonnies cited in Puja Mandal.Retrieved from <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/sociology/theory-of-tradition-modernity-continuum/39856>

⁴⁵ Joseph R. Gusfield.(1967). Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change. *American Journal of Sociology*, 72(4), p.361.

⁴⁶ Putu Menden is the traditional governing institution of the Ao community.

⁴⁷Hokishe Sema.(1986). *The emergence of Nagaland*. Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, New Delhi,p.4.

⁴⁸N.Talitemjen Jamir &A.Lanunungsang.(2005).*Naga Society and Culture (A case Study of the Ao Naga Society and Culture)*.Mokokchung, p.10

Naga. Ptolemy, a Greek writer was considered to be the first to mention the word, Nagas. He mentions the people of the Nangalothae (“the naked”) at a geographical position quite possibly near the present-day Naga territory. However, it is now not possible to know exactly which people Ptolemy meant when using the term. ‘The naked’ might refer to any regional group, even the people of Assam, depending upon how one wants to interpret the account. The next mentions of the Nagas are said to occur in the accounts of Chinese travellers in the seventeenth century and thereafter mostly in the chronicles of the Ahom Kings, the *Ahom Buranji*⁴⁹. Capt. Butler and Hutton have favoured the origin of the term to be derived from the Hindustani word *nanga* or the Bengali word *nannga*, which had the same meaning that is naked, crude and barbarous. While another theory suggests it to be associated with the Kachari word, *naga*, meaning a young man and hence a warrior⁵⁰. Apart from all those theories, one of the commonly accepted versions about the origin of the term *Naga* is that it may have been derived from the Burmese word *Naka* meaning pierced ear⁵¹. Since earlier it was a common practice for both Naga men and women to have both their ears pierced to put flowers and creepers though the practice of piercing ears among men is rare in present days. Despite having different versions regarding origin of the term “Naga”, what is evident is that the term is given by outsiders because until the advent of the British each Naga tribe or village was a sovereign independent state known as the Aos, Sema, Angami, Konyak, etc. The term Naga began to be commonly used during the British rule for their administrative convenience and became more evident during the rise of Naga Club in 1918 and subsequently

⁴⁹Marion Wettstein.*Origin and Migration Myths in the Rhetoric of Naga Independence and Collective Identity*, pp 232-233 Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271844914_Origin_and_Migration_Myths_in_the_Rhetoric_of_Naga_Independence_and_Collective_Identity

⁵⁰Panger Imchen.(1993). *Ancient Ao Naga Religion and Culture*. Har-Anand publication, New Delhi, p.23

⁵¹Isak Chishi Swu.(2003). *From Generation to Generation*, A booklet

at the formation of the Naga National Council (NNC) as the united Naga political forum in Feb 2, 1966⁵².

Altogether there are 16 prominent tribes in Nagaland and like most of the tribal societies, none of the tribes possess a written script and record of their history, customs and traditions. Their knowledge and information about their history, culture and tradition are mostly based upon oral lore, as a result there are different versions regarding their place of origin and migration since those oral lore gets diluted in the process of handing down from one generation to generation. Thus like most of the Naga tribes both the Ao and the Sumi tribe have different version regarding their origin and place of migration.

Ao: The Ao tribe by way of language was categorized into three groups by J.P.Mills-the Chungli, Mongsen and Changki⁵³. He also mentioned about Sangpur dialects that was spoken in the Sangpur “Khel” of Longsa village but since it became practically obsolete he advocates that it may be discarded⁵⁴. The Ao Nagas inhabit the district of Mokokchung. It comprises of six ranges namely Ongpangkong, Langpangkong Asetkong Changkikong , Japukong and Tsurangkong and each of the range consist a host of villages.⁵⁵. With the coming of the Christian missionary Chungli dialect become the standard Ao dialect amongst the Ao, on the other hand, all the folk songs and traditions are preserved and transmitted through the Mongsen dialect.

Origin and migration: Like most of the tribal societies around the world Ao tribes do not have a written record regarding their history therefore there is no concrete evidence regarding their place of origin. The place of their origin is a traditional belief according to which Aos

⁵²Panger Imchen, op.cit., p.15

⁵³Due to some issue the Ao senden on 10th October 2014 expelled the citizens of Changki village Ayim Asem Sanger from the Ao tribe for one generation (traditionally taken as 30 years) . Since then the status of Changki as Ao tribe is in limbo

⁵⁴J.P.Mills.(2003). *The Ao Nagas Nagas*. N V press, Kohima(original work published 1926),p. 2

⁵⁵Temjensosang.(2013). *Self-Governing Institutions of Nagas*. Akansha Publishing House, p.11

are believed to have emerged from Long-trok/Ung-trok at Chungliyimti village, which is presently under Tuensang district, Nagaland. Long means stone and trok means six, thus literal meaning of Longtrok means six stones and Ung/Unger refers to the leaders, therefore Ungtrok means six leaders. According to the Aos oral lore three male and three female emerged from the six stones at Chungliyimti village. They were Tongpok with his sister Lendina, Longpok with his sister Yongmenala and Longjakrep with his sister Elongshe. Tongpok married Elongshe, Longpok married Lendina and Longjakrep married Yongmenala. Through these marriages, three main Ao clans came into existence and a well-knitted clan exogamy marriage is evolved while living in Chungliyimti that is followed even today. However, this version of origin is being contested by the Mongsen phratry, according to them apart from Tongpok, Longpok, Longjakrep there were three Mongsen ancestors who were Tsungremchang, Longchenti and Longmetang. In fact, the Mongsen version regarding the migration and origin of Aos is different from that of Chungli version⁵⁶ and there are research been taken up which have questioned and challenge the Chungli version regarding the origin of Aos ⁵⁷. In fact, Ozukum clan, a major clan of the Ao tribe is detached from the other clan in terms of their origin myth, in that they do not trace their descent to any of the three phatries that is Tongpok, Longpok and Longjakreb mentioned. Instead, a matriarch figure, by the name of Longkongla occupies the central position in the narration of Ozukum origin myth. However, she is not the progenitor of the clan rather a guardian, yet accorded the position of a progenitor, who raised an abandoned baby boy named Songmaket (meaning the one who is flawless) who had been transformed from the feather of a hornbill bird, hence the name Ozukum (Ozu=bird, akum=transform), to be the patriarch of the Ozukum clan⁵⁸

⁵⁶N.Talitemjen & A.Lanunungsang, op.cit., pp.24-25

⁵⁷ Information based on personnel interviews

⁵⁸Intimangyang.(2016) Tribal Memory: A Study of the Ao Naga Genealogies, *The Eastern Anthropologist*, 69: 3-4,p.281

Importance of Chungliyimti: The oral lore regarding the Ao ancestors from six stones was a controversial issue for many years. Scholars and researchers were fined, intimidated or even outcast for writing and challenging the Chungli version of origin of the Ao tribe which has a negative impact on the intellectual and academic discussion over the issue, as scholars are not able to move their discussion beyond the Chungliyimti origin. Though this narrow understanding relating to Ao ancestors is disappearing especially among the younger generation, however, even today this issue is a bone of contention among the Aos, and more than positive, it has a negative impact on the advancement of society. However, it is also a fact that with the advancement of the majority of the Ao population in terms of education and contact with outside world it is hard to hold on to the belief and propagate the mythology of humans being emerging from stones. Having said that there is also no doubt a consensus among the Aos regarding the symbolic importance of the legendary story of origin of their forefathers from Longtrok at Chungliyimti as they considered it to be the cradle of their civilization where massive cultural revolution took place giving rise and honing the customs and tradition that is still practiced today⁵⁹. Customs and traditions like clan exogamy, age group or peer group set like Zunga system, institutions of Ariju and Tsuki⁶⁰ and other institutions and practices were claimed to have originated from there. In the course of time those who migrated from Chungliyimti to other places carried with them those traditions and culture in their new settlement. Even the present system of village council which is known as Putu Menden in Chungli system and Samen Menchen in Mongsen is claimed to be initiated and formulated at Chungliyimti. All the conditions and rules of this institution were claimed to be laid down here, which were handed down from generation to generation through oral lore. According to Talitemjen and Lanunungsang, the Ao socio-cultural and customary beliefs and practices will be incomplete if one ignores those legends and events that took

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ariju was dormitory for men where as Tsuki was dormitory for women.

place in the process of socio-cultural evolution where the Ao renaissance occurred at this historical place and gave them a uniform pattern of social living⁶¹.

Village administration: The Aos traditional government is based upon a clan representative system known as Putu Menden in Chungli and Samen Menchen in Mongsen. It is the highest authority in the village. The representatives of various clans collectively form the government in the village. Chosen leaders to the Putu Menden were known as Tatar in Ao dialect. Putu means generation⁶² whereas Menden means seat. Therefore Tatar Putu Menden/ Samen Tatar Menchen mean those people who are selected and occupy the seat of generation to rule for thirty years in the village. The tenure of the Putu Menden varies from village to village, and with the changing times its tenure has reduced to great extent. The size of the Putu Menden also varies from village to village. Selected leaders of the Putu Menden had the overall collective responsibility to look after the welfare of the village. After the attainment of Statehood, though the State Government of Nagaland have passed the “Nagaland village and Area council Act 1978”, which made it mandatory for every recognized village to have a village council and with it, it is now the responsibility of the Village Council and the Village Development Board⁶³ to look after the development of the village. Despite those changes in the village governance, the system of Putu Menden continues to occupy an important space in the Ao villages.

Sumi: The 'Sumi Naga'⁶⁴ is one of the major Naga tribe in Nagaland, India. The Sumis mainly inhabit in Zunheboto and Dimapur district, although many have spread and are now living in a few more districts within Nagaland.

⁶¹N.Talitemjen Jamir & A.Lanunungsang, op.cit., p.26

⁶² Among the Ao tribe one generation is usually taken as equivalent to 30 years.

⁶³ Village Development Board (VDB) - A development branch under village council.

⁶⁴Until 24th September 1992 the Sumi naga were previously addressed as Sema Naga. However at the initiative of the Sumi Hoho (apex body of Sumis), the government of Nagaland issued an administrative order which replaced the term Sema to Sumi.

Origin and migration: Just like most of the tribes in the world Sumi tribes did not have their scripts, as a result of which they do not have written records of their past. Thus their history, customs and culture have been handed down from one generation to the other by word of mouth in the form of folktales, songs and genealogy. As a result there are several version regarding the origin of the place of their migration. One of the popular version trace back Sumi tribes migration from Khezhakenoma village. According to this folklore there was a man by the name Koza and his wife Kola who had three sons. Among the three sons Chakhesang was the eldest, followed by Angami and Sumi the youngest. The tale says that their father Koza had possession of a magical stone that had the power of doubling the paddy field at night. After his death, his wife in order to prevent quarrel amongst her sons over the possession of the magical stone decided to break the stone and distribute it among them. Thus she made fire on the stone until it broke into pieces and gave one of the piece to her youngest son Sumi. While handing out the stone she ask him to migrate towards Doyang river since his blessing lies towards that side. Thus according to this version Sumi tribe migrated from the Kkezakhonoma village to the present day Sumi territories. However, there is another version that indicates that Sumi tribes have not migrated straight out of Khezakhonoma village to the present Sumi territories. According to this version there were three sons of Sumi tribes namely Hebo, Chisho and Chishi. They in search of a favourable place of settlement migrated from one place to another. In their course of migration they temporarily stopped in many places like Kikruma, Vethisa, Thinuzumi, Cheszu and Ghathisa village. In due course of time Sumi tribes got settled in seven village namely Tepfulomi, Pfulomi, Latsholomi, Ciluomi, Chichulomi, Mobvolomi and Khezhakeno. But with the increase of population the seven villages were not able to meet the growing need of the masses as a result second migration took place. During this migration they dispersed to various directions in search of resources and got settled at the present day Sumi areas.

Another version regarding the migration of Sumi tribes talks about two parties who got split and went in two directions in search of greener pasture for permanent settlement. One that went towards the east was the Sumis of Tuensang and Kiphire area and the other group that went towards the north was the present Sumi tribes under the Zunheboto district. The group that went towards the north were Hebo, Chisho and Chishi. The three brothers' surveyed area in the north for permanent settlement and after coming to a favourable place they constructed the village chief house and the priest house, later the priest tested the water, followed by the villagers and that's how they got settled and further dispersed to other places at the present day Sumi territory.

Regarding the migration of Sumi tribes there is another version interpreted by the Ighanumi village. According to this version there was a man called Holo who had six sons of which Igha the third son after taking permission from his father went in search for a place to establish a village and upon reaching a favourable place he performed all the rituals and established the first Sumi village and name it Ighanumi and from there in due course of time Sumi tribes dispersed to many directions where the Sumi's today are habitat. However, this version is an ongoing bone of contention between Ighanumi and Lazami village on both the village claim of first settlement in the present area over Pfuiqa, a place between Ighanumi and Lazami village. In addition to all the above mentioned version there is also one interpretation of Sumi migration put forward by Mishilimi village elders. According to them Sumi forefather first migrated from Khezhakenoma to Mobvolomi. From Mobvolomi they came across places like Chesezumi and Thenuzumi, however after seeing this place already being occupied they continued their journey through Khesomi and from there they finally reached the place called Mishiluqa. From there Mishilimi forefathers went down to Doyang river and from there to the present Sumi territories. Apart from all those different interpretation

regarding the Sumi migration by Sumi village elders there is also a belief among the Sumi tribes that their forefather came out of the bowls of the earth where the thatched grass grew.⁶⁵

Village administration: The Sumi village administration is based on hereditary chieftainship and the chief is known as Akukau. The chief occupied an important position in the village administration. He is the owner of the village and acts as the guardian of law. Most of the villages are named after their chief. The chief is assisted by the various councillors called the village elders (chochomi) in its day-to-day administration. The influence of the chief in the village administration depended on the chief personality. If he is competent and powerful the advice of his councillors were neglected whereas in some village the councillors were powerful enough to control the chief which rarely happens. However based on the writings of Hutton,⁶⁶ Butler,⁶⁷ John Sema⁶⁸ and others have highlighted that though Sumis had a system of hereditary chieftainship, its functioning was democratic in the sense that, though chief were powerful he accepts the opinion of the council if it was in the interest of the village as a whole. Being the chief of the village he also shoulders the responsibility as the protector and provider to the villagers and abstains on most occasions in exercising his power in an oppressive and exploitative manner which is seen in most of the other autocratic system. This is the reason why chieftainship is respected and gets allegiance of the people. Though the introduction of acts like Nagaland Village and Area Council Act reduced the powers of the chiefs but its importance in the village administration has not been diminished. Further, the importance of the institution of chieftainship system lies on the fact that it is considered to be the foundation of all customs and the retainer of tradition of the Sumis tribes, which is also the main reason why the system of chieftainship is still holding dearly to the Sumis just like the Monarchy in United kingdom despite varied changes all around.

⁶⁵ H. John Sema, op.cit., pp. 9-11

⁶⁶ J. H Hutton. (2007). *The Sema Naga*. N.V. Press Kohima. (original work published 1921)

⁶⁷ Alexander Mackenzie. (1978). *The North East frontier of India*. Mittal publication (Original Work published 1884), p.86

⁶⁸ H. John Sema, op.cit., p.39

1.4 Literature Review

W C Smith (1925) in his book, *Ao-Naga Tribes of Assam* wrote a detailed study of the Ao society. He traces the similar characteristics of the Aos with the Dyaks of Borneo and Igorots of the Philippines such as headhunting, common steeping houses for the unmarried men, which are taboo to women, dwelling houses built on posts or piles, disposal of dead on raised platforms and other features. It also give an account about the habitat and general characteristics of the people personal appearance domestic life, social organization, religion and magic, the place of the Ao Nagas in the human family, and the changes brought about in

the Ao society through contacts with more advanced people. He also stress the democratic nature of the Ao society. In his concluding remarks he emphasis that the need to respect and understand the tradition and culture of those backward tribes to bring changes in an orderly manner and thus avoiding baneful impact on the tribal society

J P Mills (1926) in his book, *The Ao Nagas* gives a comprehensive account about the traditional Ao society. The book describes in details regarding its origin and migration, their villages, agricultural practices, means of production, village governance through the system of Putu Menden, social organization, customary laws and their religious, social customs belief and ceremonies. He also point out the importance of village to the Aos like other Naga tribes. He said that to the Aos the village is the most important aspect of his life, the cultural heritage is derived from the village and the village is where his roots are found and therefore his identity. The attachment to the village of birth is indeed very strong.

Bendangyabang Ao (2004) in his book, *History of Christianity in Nagaland social change*, gives a brief account of the background of the origin, migration, social, economic and political life of the Nagas and the impact that was witness in the Ao society with the coming of British administration, Christianity and education. He further highlighted the various means through which acculturation of the Ao society was initiated by the Christian missionary.

N Talitemjen Jamir & A. Lanunungsang (2005) in their book, *Naga Society and Culture (a case study of the Ao Naga society and culture)* made a comprehensive study about the Ao society. It talks about the social-cultural institutions like Arijju and Tsuki, village organization in the form of Putu Menden, festivals and ceremonies performed by the Ao, marriage, status of women and others. They also write about the changes that is witness in the social, cultural, economic and political life of the Ao community with the exposure to modernity because of

various factors like the coming of Christian missionary, modern education etc. It also talks about the transition of Ao society from tradition to modernity in various aspect of their life leading to both negative and positive impact on their society.

Temjensosang (2013) in his book, *Self-Governing Institution of Nagas* gives a detailed analysis of the structure and function of Putu Menden, the traditional political institution of governance of the Ao Naga. It also mentioned about the changes that brought about in the traditional system of village governance after the introduction of Nagaland Village and Area Council Act of 1978. It also discusses about the social life and traditional methods of conflict resolution, and the impact, the spread of Christianity had on the Naga society. In concluding observation the author commented that despite Ao society being exposed to modern world, and changes that is seen in their socio-economic characteristics with the introduction of education and Christianity, the traditional political institution of Putu Menden has resisted, and survived in the midst of such changes. He also points out the social inequality in terms of status and privileges, prerogatives and perquisites among the Aos in the Ao self-governing institutions. Though in his book he made some references of the changes brought about with the introduction of Nagaland Village and Area Council Act of 1978 but not an in-depth analysis have been made over the changes brought about by this act in the village administration. Further no comparative study have been made with other tribes.

J Longkumer (2004) in his chapter, The Ao village organization Origin to Present Day, in the book, *Naga Society: Continuity and Change* edited by N.Venuh talks about the origin of Ao Naga, and the importance of the Chungliyimti, the first Ao village, as it is considered to be the seat of Ao civilization. Aos trace all the customs, tradition and village organization, and others in this village. He also talks about the changes that were witness with the administrative and political control of the Naga Hill by the British, and with the introduction of education and Christianity among the Nagas. Such factors lead to weakening of various

taboos which were mostly based on superstitious belief and also the decline of the importance of traditional system like Arijū and Tsuki among the villagers. However, the author said that despite these changes there is still continuation of large number of traditional practices like the institution of Putu Menden for village administration, importance of clan and kinship for representation in village council, importance of age-set grouping and many more.

Tatongkala (2014) in one of the chapters, *Putu Menden customary laws and Ao women* in the edited book *Naga Society: Culture, Education and Emerging Trends* by Benjongkumba talk about the significance of customary laws and Putu Menden in Ao society, status of women in the Ao society and the creation of Village Development Board which was a significant effort made by the government for the empowerment of the women in the village decision making process. In her article, she concludes that despite the tremendous developmental changes the fundamental ethos and characteristics of the Ao society have remained the same.

Imnazenla Longkumer (2018) in her Thesis, *Political Obligation and Traditional Institutions: A Study of Putu Menden of the Ao Nagas*, provides a detailed description of the functioning of Putu Menden and the impact of modernity on its functioning. It also discusses about the political obligation of the villagers towards the Putu Menden. However, not much in-depth comparative study has been made with the traditional political institutions of other Naga tribes.

J. H Hutton (1921) in his book, *The Sema Naga* wrote about the origin and migration of the Sumis. He gives a comprehensive account of the culture, customary laws, religion, their belief, and way of worship, the chieftainship system and the village organization.

Christopher Von Furer Haimendorf (1962) in his book, *Naked Nagas* made a comparison between the Konyaks and the Semas tribes. Though there was great similarity between the two systems of governance. Like both were under autocratic rulers and follow a hereditary

chiefship but some difference was also witnessed between the two systems like the ranking system of Chiefs which was prevalent in the Konyaks society and not in the Sumi society.

M Horam (1975) in his book, *Naga Polity* made a comprehensive study about the political institutions of the three Naga tribes- Ao, Angami and Tangkhul. It talks about the democratic institution prevailing among the Ao and the Angami tribes. Whereas in the case of Tangkhul tribe there was existence of chieftainship system in which chief is either elected or selected for a definite period or lifetime. Despite his comparative study, there was no comparative study between Tangkhuls and Sumis. He made some reference of the Sumis, but no detailed comparisons with the Sumis.

Chandrika Singh (2004) in his book, *Naga Politics* gives a historical account of the Naga society, its migration and the importance of customary laws as the bedrock of their social and political behavior and also briefly writes about the ancient political system practice among the Nagas and also the changes brought about in the old Naga society with the coming of the Christian missionary, which laid the foundation for the growth of modernity in the Naga society.

B B Kumar (2005) in his book, *Naga Polity* mentioned the origin and migration of the Naga tribes and also highlight the political system prevalent among the Naga tribes in which he mentioned the hereditary chieftainship system prevalent in Sumi tribes and the system of democratic representative system of governance called Putu Menden prevalent among the Ao tribe. In his book, he highlighted the architectural loss due to the coming of Christian missionaries as they failed to differentiate between animism and culture.

A Nshoga (2009) in his book, *Traditional Naga Village System and its Transformation*, talks about the migration and settlement of the major tribes of Nagas , its village administration, beliefs, customs, customary laws, economy and the transformation of the Naga village with

the coming of British administration, education, medical services and the advent of Christianity and other factors.

H John Sema (2013) in his book, *Traditional and Modern Political Institutions of the Nagas* discuss in detail about the origin, migration and emergence of chieftainship of Sumi tribes. It also clarifies some of the misconception related to traditional Sumi society like the non-existence of dormitory system or the non-importance of oath taking among the Sumi tribes. He said that bachelor's dormitory or Apuki was very much part of chief's village administrative system. In his book he gave a detailed description of the village administration under chieftainship, its powers and functions, features of chief administrations. It also highlighted the impact of Christianity, modern education and electoral politics on the traditional political institutions like chieftainship. The author observed that the Sumi society is moving towards modernization while maintaining continuity with tradition and remarked that the traditional political institutions among the Sumi Nagas have by and large remained intact though some changes are also being accommodated in order to keep pace with the changing times. Despite his comprehensive study of the traditional and modern institutions of the Sumis, he did not make any comparative study about the Aos and the Sumis and also on the area of impact of institutionalization of village governance.

Jonali Devi in her paper, *Traditional village Government and the Village Council Act* made a comparative study of the Angami and the Rengma tribes - one democratic system of governance and other based on village chiefs. She highlighted the changes that were seen in the village governance because of various events like the coming of the British and their introduction of Goanburah and Dobashi for the village governance and the passing of Nagaland Village Area Council Act of 1978. She mentioned the uniqueness of village council though a statutory body but retaining the past in its evolution.

Despite the above mentioned literature, none of them have made comprehensive comparative study on various Naga tribes Traditional Political Institutions and its changing dimensions. Hence, the research proposes to undertake comparative study of Aos and Sumi Traditional Political Institutions and their changing dimensions.

1.5 Statement of the problem

Before the coming of the British, each village was functioning as an independent Nation. Some were under chieftainship and Angh system like Sumi and Konyak tribes; some were like a clan-based rule, which is seen among the Aos. While some were practicing a pure form of direct democracy like the Angami tribe. The rules and regulation for the village administration of each Naga tribe during the pre-colonial period was based on their custom and tradition, and according to the context of their society. Some of which are strongly adhered to even today like the non –inclusion of women in the main decision-making body. Though Nagaland have adopted a modern system of governance at the state level, the local village governance is still based on their respective traditional political institutions, since the state of Nagaland is among the few states where the Panchayati Raj system for local self-governance has not been adopted.

There has been lots of research work being done on the traditional political institutions of the Ao and Sumi tribes, however, no in-depth comparative study has been done thus far. Further there requires a critical examination on the relevance of traditional institutions and their role for the promotion of democracy, community development and social equality at the grass-roots level. There also requires an urgent review on the issue of transparency, accountability, gender equality, the justice system and the traditional institution's respect and compliance with fundamental human rights. And since large segments of the rural populations, the overwhelming majority of the state population,

continue to adhere principally to traditional institutions, it becomes crucial to review the functioning of the traditional leaders under the traditional institutions in order to redefine them for the current socio-economic and political environment. There is also a need for careful analyses of the characteristics and dynamics of traditional institutions in order to gain insight into their actual and potential contributions in order to explore ways to reform and integrate the modern and traditional institutions in a manner that promotes democratic governance.

1.6 Significance of the study

The present research is an effort to make a comparative study of the role and relevance of Traditional Political Institutions of the Ao and Sumi village in an era of globalization and modernization. The study seek to find out whether the Ao traditional democratic system of governance called Putu Menden and the village governance under chieftainship among the Sumi tribe has undergone change and adapted to the changing needs and aspirations of the people. It seeks to analyse whether the traditional political institutions have been able to retain their uniqueness and how it has been co-opted in the new democratic setup of the state.

1.7 Objective

- i. To make a comparative study of the Traditional Political Institutions of the Ao and Sumi Tribes.
- ii. To analyse whether Traditional Political Institutions like chieftainship and rule of elders (Gerontocracy) still hold relevance in the present times where emphasis is on democracy based on modern values.

- iii. To analyse the impact of modernity on the Traditional Political Institutions of the Ao and Sumi Nagas and examine its changing dimensions.

1.7 HYPOTHESIS

1. Modernity has impacted the traditional institutions of the Ao and Sumi Naga.

1.9 METHODOLOGY

This section highlights a review of the research design:

Sources of Data Collection

Data collection has been done through primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected using standard questionnaire administered as well as face-to-face interviews. In addition to the data collected from sampled respondents, people having expertise and knowledge on the tradition, custom and practices of the Ao and Sumi Naga tribes were interviewed. Secondary data has been gathered from published and unpublished texts, journals. Articles, official records, statistical documents and seminar papers located in relevant government departments, libraries and other institutions in Nagaland as well as in other parts of India.

Universe

The universe of the study consists of people from different age groups of both sexes, village council members, church leaders, government officials, academicians, etc.

Sampling method and size

The sampling design adopted for the study was purposive sampling. From each district, i.e. Mokokchung and Zunheboto three villages were selected. From Mokokchung district

Ungma, Kubza and Mopungchuket villages were selected. From Zunheboto district Khetoi, Khukiye Lukhai and Lumami villages were selected. From each village, 50 respondents were selected making it 300 respondents.

Data Analysis

The collected data has been analyzed using simple method of calculations such as averages and percentages.

Chapter 2

Traditional Political Institutions of the Ao and Sumi Nagas: Comparative Analysis

2.1 Introduction

If we analyse the history of the Naga society prior to the arrival of the British we notice lack of ethnic unity among the various Naga tribes, and also absence of a centralized

political structure unlike in the neighbouring Assam and Manipur where there was some form of centralized administration of the territories under Ahom kingdom and Manipur Maharaja. The reason being each Naga tribes, in fact each village within the tribes was independent of each other and most of the villages were in constant feud with each other for territories and resources. Commenting on such distinctiveness Hutton observed that it was not "possible even to attempt to give in detail the manifold divergences of any given custom from village to village. Such an undertaking would necessitate a separate monograph for each Angami village",¹ such view holds for other Naga villages also. Despite such diversities among the Naga tribes in terms of their custom, tradition and cultural practices, some resemblances that can be drawn among the Naga tribes are the exogamous patrilineal clan system, a common linguistic pattern within the Tibeto-Burman sub group². The practice of head-hunting, observation of gennas and taboos, practice of animist religion, existence of morung system³, agriculture based society, non-participation of women in the political affair of the village and the practice of slavery⁴.

Further it was also difficult to distinguish institutions of the Naga tribes in the pre-colonial period purely of political significance, for the individual was caught up in a complex web of ascriptive relationships and customary ritual duties. Apart from that there was no sharply defined border between the "political" and the "social"⁵. Similarly, the polity of the Sumi and Ao tribes in the pre-colonial period revolved around their traditional political institutions,

¹ J. H. Hutton(1921), *The Angami Nagas*, p. 11.

² Grierson, G. A., linguistic Survey of India, vol. III, Tibeto-Burman Family. (Calcutta, 1903). cited in Gerard Nicholas Van Den Brul, B. A, *An Examination of the Modernization Process and Ethnic Mobilization among the Nagas of Northeastern India*, p.30

³ Bachelor dormitory, which was a place where they learn about polity, culture and war skill .L Sosang Jamir (2012), *Ao Naga Customary Laws and Practices*. Heritage Publishing House, pp.2-3

⁴ A.W.Davis in Census of India ,1891,Assam,Vol.I,pp.241-5 cited in Elwin Verrier.(1969).*Nagas in the Nineteenth century*, p.326

⁵ Lucy Muir, *Primitive Government*.(1962), cited in Gerard Nicholas Van Den Brul, B. A, op.cit.,p.35

which was based on their respective customs and traditions. In both the tribes villages social, religious and political norms were interrelated which guided their society. Since villagers of both the tribes for most part of their history have lived under their respective traditional institutions, they have developed a strong attachment towards it and it has now become part and parcel of their life. This has naturally strengthened the legitimacy of these institutions in the minds of the villagers. In fact, the utility of these institutions in the governance of the village was such that British officials did not feel the need to make changes in the traditional village council in both the tribes' villages, apart from introducing institutions like Dobashi and Goanbura for better communication between the British officials and the village leaders. Similarly, Government of India after its independence exempted Nagaland from the preview of Panchayati Raj system under article 243M (2)⁶ and provided protection to their traditional custom and practices under the constitutional special provision of article 371(A)⁷. Thus, traditional political institutions since time immemorial have been an integral part of the Naga tribes and continue to play an important role in the village governance of both the tribe's villages even in the modern period.

2.2 Origin of the Traditional Political Institutions of the Sumi and Ao tribes

The traditional political institutions of the Nagas which were based upon their distinct customs and traditions can be categories into three forms of government: An autocratic form of government under chieftainship that was practiced among Sumis, Konyak, Chang, Phom, and Sangtams with slight variations. For instance, Sumis, Konyak and Chang have hereditary chief where as Phom and Sangtams have vague system of elected chief. Second form is that

⁶ P.M.Bakshi(2009). *Constitution of India*.(1991).Universal Law publishing co.pvt.ltd, Delhi, p. 209

⁷ P.M.Bakshi, op.cit.,p.308

of a clan representative form of governance that is practice by Ao tribe and lastly a form of direct democracy, which was followed by Angamis ⁸.

As mentioned earlier Sumi village administration revolves around a hereditary chieftainship. Though there is ambiguity regarding the origin of this institution, the common understanding is that like other traditional practices or institutions it might have grown out of the needs of the community⁹, which in due course of time because of its utility became an established norm. In this regard John Sema, in his book, *Tradition and Modern Political Institutions of the Nagas* had shed some light on this issue. According to him, Tukukha (chief of Michimi village) who is considered perhaps the first chief of the village, before his death declared his eldest son to succeed him as chief upon his death. According to him the chief might have taken such a decision with far-sighted thoughts to prevent any claim to chiefship by others. Moreover, since almost the entire land and properties belong to the chief, it might have necessitated that the post of chiefship to be hereditary to prevent power and resources of the chief passing outside of their family lineage or clan¹⁰. As for the Ao tribe, they traced the evolution of their traditional political institution from the legendary place called Longtrok in Chungliyiimti. The place is unanimously considered by the Ao tribe as the cradle of their civilization. It is considered the place where Ao ancestors developed their customs, rituals, rules etc. that governs the Ao society¹¹.

2.3 System of Chieftainship

⁸ Gerard Nicholas Van Den Brul, B. A. op.cit.,p.42; R.R.Shimrany. (1951). *Origin and Culture of Nagas*. New Delhi, p.58

⁹ H.John Sema,op. cit ., p.21

¹⁰ H.John Sema,op. cit., p.12

¹¹ N. Talitemjen & A. Lanunungsang,op.cit., p.28

The Sumi village governance revolves around a well structured centralized system of Chieftainship¹². The chief in the Sumi village is known as Akukau who occupies an important and powerful position. In most part of the pre-colonial period, the chief not only carried out political duties but also performed various religious duties along with the village priest *Awou*¹³. Usually, religious duties in other tribes were performed by separate village priest like *Kemova* among the Angamis and *Pvuti* among the Lothas . Naturally, this dual role played by the Sumi chief further enhance the status of chiefship among the villagers, as the post of chief was not only considered a political institution but also a sacerdotal institution because of which the chief did not find it difficult to get political and social obligation from the villagers. The chief presided over all the matters of the village. He was the chief administrator, chief commander during the time of war and head-hunting expedition in the neighbouring villages. He along with his elders presided over the village court to settle disputes among the villagers. All the cases whether civil or criminal were settled by the village court and their verdict was final and binding upon the disputing parties.¹⁴ He is considered as the guardian of the law, custom and tradition of the Sumi tribes and his word was final.

The powerful and privileged position enjoyed by the chief can be further seen by the fact that in most of the Sumi villages major portion of the village land is owned by the chief. Apart from that the villages were named after the founding chief of the village like Chishilimi,

¹² The word chief or chieftainship has been vaguely used to address the village headmen of other tribes like Kemova (Angami) and Onger (Ao) where there is no system of chiefship and they only act as titular heads because of which it gets confused with the powerful chiefship system practiced among the Konyaks and Sumis. Since the chiefship system in pure form existed most prominently among these two Naga tribes of Nagaland ("See also" J.P.Mill.(1926). Certain Aspects of Naga culture. the journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. VOL.569

¹³ J.H. Hutton, op.cit., p.151

¹⁴ H.John Sema op.cit., p.46

Hebolimi, Sukhalu and Vihokhu¹⁵. Such powerful position enjoyed by the chief among the villagers was not simply because of Sumi custom and tradition. It was based on the fact that in the pre-colonial period when there was state of anarchy outside their respective villages, when head-hunting was a glorified traditional and cultural practice among the Nagas tribes, it requires a capable warrior to conquer territories and establish a village for himself and his followers. Besides this, once the village is established it was the duty of the chief to provide protection from external attack and look after the welfare of his followers which was a difficult task. Therefore such responsibility carried out by the chief was one of the main reasons why the position of the chief was highly regarded and respected. Unlike the oppressive rule that is normally associated with monarchical system, in most of the Sumi village by virtue of being the Chief of the village he holds the dual responsibility to act as protector and provider to his followers. In return, he is obliged for certain privileges from his followers like free labour to prepare, cultivate and harvest his jhum fields. Further, as a mark of gratitude the villagers as a custom set aside a portion of animal meat taken during a hunt for the chief¹⁶. He also had in his possession the service of personal slave known as Mighimi¹⁷ who are indebted to him for lifetime. Polygamy was also being seen practiced by the chief as he invariably have three or four wives. However, Semas (villagers) as a rule do not practice polygamy¹⁸.

Creation of new village: Among the Sumi tribe setting up of new village holds great significance since it leads to the emergence of new chieftainship. Unlike in Konyak tribe where one chief rule over several villages, among the Sumi tribes one village is under one or

¹⁵ H.John Sema, op.cit., p.21

¹⁶ Harold Mason Young (1975). To the Mountain Tops: A Sojourn Among the Lahu of Asia.(Eds) Debbie Young Chase (2013)

¹⁷ H.John Sema, op.cit., p.30

¹⁸ A.W Davis, op.cit., p.374

multiple¹⁹ chief. Most importantly, the new chief enjoy the similar status and position like the old Sumi chief. According to John Sema new villages were usually founded to meet the requirement and address the needs of the villagers. For instance problems of scarcity of resources due to over population forced the leaders to search for fertile land leading to migration of some section of the village population to new place. Secondly, quarrels among the villagers or quarrel between the brothers of the chiefs or the desire of the chief son to be chief himself and independent of his father leads to founding of new villages leading to emergence of new chieftainship²⁰. It is because of such migration tendency from chief lineage to carve out a new village of their own especially by chief's sons that we find Sema villages are small as compared with the villages of other Naga tribes"²¹.

Qualification and Position of the Chief

To become the Chief (Akukau) of the village one has to be from the royal blood²². Further, any future chief of the villages is expected to be a capable, rich and intelligent person, a good orator, a warrior, and courageous person to lead and command the respect and obedience of his followers. He is also expected to be well versed with the customary practices and law of the tribes as he is considered the guardian of the law and customary practices. He is also expected to be a benevolent and married person²³. There is no prescription of age to become a chief, however, in case the heir apparent is minor, the mother of the heir or any relative from the chief clan is expected to take up the responsibility of the day-to-day affair of the village until the heir apparent attain maturity. The position of the Sumi chief is that of both autocratic and benevolent. He is autocratic in the sense that the chief ruled by himself arbitrarily with the assistance of his council members. His words was the law of the land. He

¹⁹ In Sumi tribes there are villages where there is more than one chief in the village , in such a scenario usually from amongst them they appointed one head chief who is assisted by other chiefs

²⁰ H.John Sema, op.cit., p.22

²¹ A.W. Davis, op.cit., p.373

²² H.John Sema, op.cit.,p.25

²³ H..John Sema, op.cit., p.23

acts as the chief judge; administrator and chief of commander during war time²⁴. However, he is also benevolent in the sense that for their obligation and obedience, villagers expect him to take care of them, provide general protection and extend all possible support in times of crisis/scarcity²⁵.

Succession: The process of succession of chieftainship is hereditary. It passes from father to eldest son. Further, the claim for chiefship is not confined to only one clan. Therefore, we can find in Sumi tribes Chief are from different clans like Swu, Chishi, Zhimomi, Yephthomi, etc. Further Sumis like the Konyaks and Zulu King in South Africa also advocate that anyone claiming the post of chiefship should be of noble or royal blood. Therefore if the heir apparent belongs to noble blood, as long as he is not hopelessly incompetent he can hold the post of the chief and in case of a minor then mother or uncle can act as the regent in the place of the chief till his maturity. Thus, the succession to the post of the chief take place within the family²⁶

Traditional Sumi Village Council

Chief (Akukau): In the Sumi village, the chief is the head of the village as well as the head of the village administration. He is aided by his councillors known as Chochomi (village elders). They are selected and appointed by the chief. He also has the authority to dismiss council members in the event he deems them useless to him. Moreover, all-important dignitaries were appointed by him. The chief's house was also served as an administrative office because all major policies were discussed and decided at his house. The chief house also acted as the apex court in the village. All the disputes of the villagers was heard and

²⁴ H.John Sema op.cit.,p.26

²⁵ C. F. Lucy Muir, *Anthropology and Social Change*, (The Athlone Press, London, 1969), where she defines the institution of clientship in which the poor and weak attach themselves to the powerful as retainers in return for subsistence and welfare goods. Cited in Gerard Nicholas Van Den Brul, B.A, op.cit.,p.124

²⁶ H.John Sema, op.cit., p.25

settled in the house of the Chief. Therefore, the chief as the village owner and head of administration had considerable influence in the administration and decision-making process of the village.

Chochomi: They are village elders or wise men of the village selected by the chief to assist him in carrying out the day-to-day administration of the village. They were equivalent to the present day cabinet ministers. The chief usually selects the most influential and wealthy person from the respected clan or Khel. There were no specific qualifications, but the councillors are expected to be mature in fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted to them. It is also expected the councillors to be well versed with the customs and tradition of their village. Another important criterion is that a council member must be a wealthy individual in order to host guests on behalf of the chief.²⁷. Besides Chochomi other influential people who may not be a member of the village council but exercise influence in the politics of the village were the Kukami Lagha. These are the chief's relations, men of his family, cousin and so forth, who though have no very recognised status, but often have much influence and are usually able (and often ready) to create and lead an opposition party²⁸. Thus, while Sumi society was a casteless society, it was not a classless society since class played an important role in determining villagers position and influence in village politics.

Size of the village council: The size of the village council varies depending on the village size and population. The appointment and removal of the council in most cases solely depended on the discretion of the Chief. One visible aspect of council members who work under the system of traditional institutions is that they received no remuneration. Their service was voluntary; however, they were highly respected and honoured for being a member of the village council.

²⁷ H.John Sema, op.cit., p.40

²⁸ J.H.Hutton, op.cit., p.152

Powers and Function

The responsibility for managing the village rests with the chief, assisted by Chochomi. Their powers and functions can be categorized under the following headings:

Legislative functions: The Chief in consultation with the Chochomi passed all rules and regulation for the smooth governance of the village. As the Lord of the Manor, the chief decides what land to be cultivated in each successive year. The chief also announces the time for carrying out community work of the village like clearing of the inter-village path, path to jhum cultivation, maintenance of village drinking etc.²⁹. It was also the chief responsibility to announce the time and date for observing important traditional festivals such as Tuluni and Ahunas. In addition, it was chief primary undertaking to give warning of most gennas in the customary practices and to issue orders of the day in the morning of any day on which the village is to act as a whole. The importance of performing these responsibilities in the pre-colonial period can be understood by the fact that, a man who cannot properly give warning of gennas never takes the position of a chief³⁰.

Executive functions: Before villages of Naga came under the British administration, each village of Naga operated as an independent state. This was also a period where there was constant threat of attack from other villages. Above all, it was a period when head-hunting³¹ was an honorable practice³². Therefore, in such a state of anarchy, the responsibility for the protection of the villagers falls upon the members of the village council headed by the village

²⁹ J.H. Hutton, op.cit., p.150

³⁰ J.H. Hutton, op.cit., p.151

³¹ J.H.Hutton in his article(1936) *Head-hunters of the North-East Frontier* highlighted that the practice of head-hunting is not a phenomenon exist among the Naga tribes alone. It has at one time or another been extremely widespread in other societies also

³² Scholars like J.H Hutton, J P mills , Panger Imchen in their book have highlighted that In the pre- colonial period, the ability to bring enemy head improves the social status of the warriors in the society just like education in the modern era. Further, it increase suitor for marriage. They also believe that it will bring prosperity to the whole community in the form of children and good harvest.

Chief. Apart from that, they were responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the village. They also ensure that the decision made by village council are implemented properly and followed by the villagers. Further, most of the tribal villages in the pre-colonial period observe many gennas and taboos for the prosperity and protection of their village. Therefore, it was the responsibility of the council members to ensure that those taboos and gennas are being honoured and followed by all the villagers. It also takes the responsibility of maintenance of village drinking water, footpaths, and construction of bridges across streams and rivers, sanitary systems and cleaning of jungles surrounding the villages.

Diplomatic function: The chief assisted by his council members resolves any issue arising with other villages or tribes. Matter related to land disputes or misdeeds done by a person belonging to other village was resolved by sending messengers to other village, in order to fix dates to settle the matters. In case it involves disputes between two Sumi villages, the chief and his elders go to the concerned village and in return, the village chief and his elders will go to the guest village. Such act was done to reduce the animosities and restore permanent peace between the two villages³³

Judicial function: One of the most important functions of the village council is that of judicial functions. The village chief and the kichimi mqo³⁴ occupy the helm of the village court³⁵. The villagers usually bring the dispute before the village court when they are not able to resolve the issue by themselves. The disputing parties bring the case before the court on the summoned date given by the village council. On that given day, both parties put forward their claims and counter claims before the village council which is presided over by the village chief. After hearing both the parties' arguments the village court gives their judgment.

³³H. John Sema, op.cit., pp.43-44

³⁴ Kichimi mqo and Chochomi both means council of elders.

³⁵ H. John Sema, op.cit., p.45

Once the court pronounced the judgment it remains binding upon all. Any disputing parties who do not abide by the judgment are seen as challenging and undermining the authority of the village court which ultimately leads to harsher punishment. All kinds of cases whether civil and criminal are settled by the court. It is the highest court in the village and has the final say in all matters. One thing that needs to be point out is that in the pre-colonial period all the issues were settled by the village court based on the customary law and practices, thus, the chief and the council members needed to be well acquainted with the customary practices of their village. The nature of punishment depended on the gravity of the crime committed by the culprits. Punishment usually involves a fine to be paid in the form of pig, cow and other similar things which the council members usually distribute among themselves or give it to old people in the village³⁶. The importance of evolution of such an effective and simple judicial system of settling disputes among the villagers can be seen by the fact that, even in the modern period majority of the dispute are still settled by the village court even though there is provision to go to higher courts³⁷.

2.4 Putu Menden: Ao Traditional Political Institution

The traditional political institution of the Ao Nagas is known by the nomenclature Putu Menden among the Chungli speaking group whereas the Mongsen speaking group generally uses the term Samen Menchen. The Ao villages are usually composed of people belonging to different clans³⁸ and each clan members select their leaders from among themselves whom they considered capable to represent their clan and work for the interest of the clan and the village as a whole. These representatives from different clans together formed the traditional

³⁶ Information based on interviews

³⁷ Information based on interviews

³⁸ Clan is a small group of families who are the descendent of a common ancestor. In Ao it is called Kidong in Sema it is called Ayeh

village council known as the Putu Menden. The word Putu refers to generation³⁹ whereas Menden means seat and Tatar means chosen leader or holder of share of meat. Thus “Tatar Putu Menden”, literally means persons who occupy the seat of power to rule for 30 years, where only the persons “entitled” can occupy that seat of administration⁴⁰ and the person by virtue of occupying seat has a share of meat⁴¹ in the structural organisation of Putu Menden⁴²

Brief interpretation on the working of Putu Menden

Tenure of Putu Menden: In most of the Ao villages especially in the Chungli speaking villages follow a cycle of five generations⁴³ namely Medemsanger, Mejensanger, Mepongsanger, Kosasanger, Riyongsanger. After the end of every generation, all the incumbent members vacate their office giving way to new batch to take over the seat of Putu Menden. However, there is no uniformity regarding the tenure and selection process to Putu Menden since during the pre-colonial period each Ao village were independent of each other. Therefore, there exist slight variation in terms of tenure, selection criteria, customs and others which is still being followed even today, but the core functioning value of Putu Menden remain the same in all the Ao villages. Further, in the case of the Mongsen speaking villages the Putu Menden is a continuous process unlike Chungli speaking villages where at the end of each generation all members is replaced by new members but in the case of Mongsen village, all council members do not retire at the same time⁴⁴. Further, the tenure of Mongsen traditional council is also not fixed and is quite flexible. For instance, there are villages where

³⁹ Generation is equivalent to 30 years in Ao term

⁴⁰ N.Talitemjen Jamir & A. Lanunungsang, op.cit., p.38

⁴¹ Share of meat: It is a custom practice during the transition of power. Meat is shared to only those persons who are part or will be part of the Putu Menden.

⁴² Temjensosang, op.cit.,p.19

⁴³ It simply means name of the Putu in power after the end of each generation. For instance, after the end of Medemsanger Putu whoever replace them will be known as Mejensanger Putu and after them it will be known as Mepongsanger and the cycle will go on.

⁴⁴ L.Sosang Jamir.(2012) Ao Naga customs and practice. Heritage publishing house, Dimapur, p. 9

tenureship of the Tatars is for six years⁴⁵ but this is not the general rule since there is no restriction in the tenureship which allows Tatars in Mongsen village to hold on Putu-Menden seat as long as he is capable to serve or till he resigns⁴⁶. Whereas in Chungli speaking villages the tenure of the Tatars usually ranges between 20-30⁴⁷. However, there are also exception like the Longmisa village (Chungli phratry) where after every 6 years the seat of power is replace by new batch of Tatars⁴⁸

Structure of Putu Menden

Putu Menden is a well-structured indigenous system of administration equivalent to the present day cabinet system under the parliamentary system of India. It is composed of the following tiers⁴⁹:

1. Ung Menden
2. Tazung Menden
3. Tekong Menden
4. Lashi
5. Tarsosang/Tarjung or Jamiya
6. Sosanglak/Chindangondang⁵⁰

The role and power of each tier are clearly defined and allocated⁵¹. In every village there is an Onger⁵² who acts as the nominal head of the Putu Menden (a titular head equivalent to the President of India). Usually the senior most person among the newly inducted members of the Putu Menden is selected to the post of Onger. Traditionally the post of Onger is occupied by person belonging to Imsong , Pongen and Ozukum clan of Chungli phratry and Longchar

⁴⁵ N.Talitemjen & Lanunungsang, op.cit.,p.42

⁴⁶ L.sosang Jamir, op.cit., p.10

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Satem interview on April 24 2018 at Mokokchung

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ The tier names and numbers of the council members may vary from village to village but the functioning of the Putu Menden in all the Ao village more or less follow the same pattern

⁵² Onger means treasurer

clan of Mongsen phratry or a descendent of the Tongpok clan⁵³. All the major decisions of the Putu Menden are taken at his place. Above all, his house also acts as the apex village court. Next to Onger are the Tazungpur equivalent to the cabinet ministers and they are the one who exercise the real power of the village council. From amongst them they select one member to be the head of this tier who is known as Aoula⁵⁴, he is equivalent to Prime Minister of India. The members of this tier occupy the most important position in the Putu Menden since all legislative, executive and judicial power in the village rest with them. Next in hierarchy is the Tekong Meden who carry out various important assignment on the direction of the Tazungpur including looking after the financial matters of the village. Tatars in this three tier carry out the most important function in the village, rest form the subsidiaries bodies in the village administration⁵⁵.

Criteria for selection: According to the customary practices of the Ao Nagas, there are certain qualities that a person must possess in order to be a member of the Putu Menden. Some of the notable qualifications that is taken into consideration during the selection process of members in the Putu Menden in both the Chungli and Mongsen speaking villages are⁵⁶:

1. He must be a bona fide member of a clan
2. He should possess commendable personality and morality
3. He should be economically sound
4. He should not be an illegitimate son
5. He should not be insolvent
6. He should not be a thief, murderer, or convict of any crime or offence
7. He should be chosen and approve by the clan

⁵³ Temjensosang op.cit., p.20; Imtimangyang,op.cit.,p.281

⁵⁴ Aoula: He is the head Tazungpur tier which is the most powerful branch of the Putu Menden.He is synonym to Prime minister of India (head of the cabinet). Though the village council is headed by the Chairman on most occasion he is just a nominal figure since the real decision of the village is taken by the Tazungpur tier headed by Aoula.

⁵⁵ Temjensosang op.cit., pp.20-21

⁵⁶ N.Talitemjen & Lanunungsang,op.cit., p. 49

Powers and functions.

The Putu Menden is the highest decision making body within the respective Ao villages. It had the overall responsibilities of protecting its citizen from external attack, maintenance of law and order and overall welfare and development of the village. There was no division of power under the traditional institutions as a result the entire legislative, executive and judicial functions powers were carried out by the Tatars. In fact, like in most traditional tribal societies, there was no clear division between the social-political and religious activities of the Ao Nagas; as such, the Putu Menden regulated all activities of the villagers. The members of the village council worked without any remuneration. The only remuneration they get is respect in the village.⁵⁷

Legislative: It had the sole authority to amend old rules, customary practice, rituals according to the changing circumstance and needs of the villagers. It finalize on the allocation of area for jhum cultivation for the particular season. It decides on the daily wage rate, rules and regulation to be followed in the village, rate of fines etc. Previously it was the primary duty of the village council to defend the village from enemy attack and organize head-hunting raids. Despite enjoying vast powers, members of the Putu Menden do not dictate or impose rules on the people but only execute policies according to the dictates of the villagers⁵⁸. Since all the rules and regulation taken by the Putu Menden becomes a law only when it is approved by the villagers after a thorough discussion in general meeting. However,

⁵⁷ However, despite no remuneration being paid to the council member they have great sphere of influence, which they can use for their personnel advantage, which is common in every Political system.

⁵⁸ Temjensasang, op.cit.,p. 29

most of the time decision taken by the Putu Menden are generally accepted by the villagers⁵⁹. Once accepted those rules and regulations are binding upon all the villagers.

Executive functions: During the pre-colonial period, Ao villages like other Naga villages were functioning as an independent state, naturally it had frequent inter-village and intra-tribes feuds for resources and territories. Therefore, it was the primary duty of the members of the Putu Menden to defend the village from enemy attack and organize head-hunting raids. It had the responsibility of maintaining law and order in the village and to maintain friendly relations with neighbouring villages. They were also responsible for ensuring observation of the gennas and taboos by the villagers. It organizes various community works for the welfare and progress of the village as a whole.

Judicial functions: Like in the Sumi villages, one of the most important functions carried out by the Tatar Putu Menden is that of dispensing justice in the village. It tries both civil and criminal cases. All disputes which the disputing parties are not able to solve among themselves or by their clan members are brought before the Putu Menden. On a fixed day the case is laid before the Putu Menden. Both the disputing parties are given time to put forward their arguments. It crosschecks their arguments and counter-arguments, and gives their verdict based on the customary practices. The culprit is usually required to pay fines in terms of cow or pig or in extreme cases are excommunicated⁶⁰. Such fines are distributed among the members of the Putu Menden. The verdict once given is binding on all the parties. In case

⁵⁹ It is generally accepted since members of the Putu Menden proposed the laws before the public only after through deliberation among themselves. Since most of the laws enacted by the Putu Menden are usually based on valid reason, it hardly face much opposition from the villagers.

⁶⁰ Excommunication in the pre-colonial period where head-hunting was widespread practice was equivalent to death penalty since outside the village there is little chance of survival on their own. However, in the modern period it does not hold much weight.

of non-compliance of its judgement, harsher punishment is ensues. All cases related to theft, arson, divorce, inheritance right, rape, murder etc. are tried and settled by the Putu Menden

2.5 A comparative analysis

A comparative analysis of the traditional political institutions of both the tribes' indicates that in both the tribes village traditional authorities carried out more or less the same responsibilities in the village administration. Both the tribes had a centralized administration where legislative, executive and judicial power was vested in the traditional village council. Since there was no written script, administration of both the system was based on customary laws, practices and usages which were passed on orally from one generation to another, as a result villagers with thorough knowledge of the customary law and practices were well respected and sought after for selection in the traditional village council. Therefore, elders in both the tribes for most part of their village history occupied the important seat of power in the village administration more so in Ao villages. And though both the tribes claim to be a casteless and classless society, like in any society some form of class division existed. For instance, in both the tribes villages apart from person with knowledge of the customary law and practice of the villages, those with wealth and resources were given preference for the selection in the village council⁶¹. Further, in both the tribes village slavery was in practice⁶².

Regarding the practice of slavery Hutton wrote:

⁶¹ In the pre-colonial period when the villagers were shortage of resources it was logical to have rich people to be in the council members since they have the resource to contribute to cover up for unforeseen expenditure of the council. For instance, using their house to welcome delegates. This practice is also being followed even today especially in church and tribal organisation where wealthy people are usually appointed as treasurers, youth advisor or other important position in the organisation.

⁶² Slavery was practiced universally throughout the Ao tribes. Slaves were those who were captured from other villages during raid or village feud. They were either kept with them, sold to the neighbouring village or presented as gift to settle disputes. No doubt harsh treatment may have occurred but generally they were well treated and considered almost as part of the family (Davis

That two forms of slavery existed in the Naga Hills Tribal Area-domestic and slave proper. Domestic servitude was a milder form of slavery and was so integral to certain Nagas like Semas that it could not and need not be relinquished. A more serious form was slave captured from British protected villages. Slave is referred as a chattel that can be bought and sold. Though there were instances where he was kept in servitude for work in the household his usual fate is to be sold into Burma for the purpose of human sacrifice. This kind of slavery was pandemic over a small area (referring to Pangsha and other unadministered villages in Burma) [emphasis added]⁶³. Finally, in the case of Ao tribes, late settlers⁶⁴ are constantly reminded though covertly of their low status by assigning them post of assistantship⁶⁵ and they were not liable to occupy the top tier position in the Putu Menden⁶⁶.

Apart from those general similarities about the two systems, the structure and working of the traditional political institutions of both the tribes are poles apart which are discussed under the following points`.

Representative and Monarchical system: One of the obvious structural differences between the Sumi and the Ao tribe is that latter follow a clan representative form of government whereas former follows a Monarchical form of government. The Sumi like Konyaks tribes of Nagaland, Syiem in Meghalaya, Zulu tribes in South Africa follow a Monarchical system of governance. The chief was not only the head of the village but also the head of village administration. The administration of the village revolves around him.

op.cit., p.326). No precise equivalent ,as slavery is not practices by the Semas (Hutton,op.cit., p. 134, 438)

⁶³ Debojyoti Das.(2014). The construction and institutionalisation of ethnicity: anthropology, photography and the Nagas , *The South Asainst*, 3(1), p .40

⁶⁴ Late settlers are those people who were not the original member when the village was created.

⁶⁵ Temjensasang,op.cit., p.144

⁶⁶ Principal Government college interview on December 2019 at Mokokchung

Whereas the functioning of the Putu Menden among the Ao tribes is similar to that of Indian parliamentary form of government where the electorate sends their representatives to work on behalf of them. Similarly, under the Ao system each clan members select and send their representatives in the Putu Menden to work on their behalf. Thus unlike in Sumi village where village administration revolves around one person (chief), Ao tribe village governance is based on representative of the people.

Selection process: Regarding the selection process, the post of the chief who is the head of the village and administration is hereditary. The power is passed on from father to his eldest son or heir in line. Thus, there is no room from outside of the family circle to occupy the post of chieftainship. In the selection of council members known as Chochomi, the chief enjoys great discretion. As in most cases, it is the Chief who nominates them⁶⁷. Whereas in the case of Ao tribes the members of the respective clan alone enjoys the sole discretion in selection of their respective clan representatives to village council.

Age-group system: Age group system known as Zunga system⁶⁸, is a customary practice followed by the Ao tribes and it is one of the most important feature under the Putu Menden system. The discontinuation of this Zunga system will completely jeopardize the working system of Putu Menden. The Ao age system is like school system where one have to spend some time in the lower class before being promoted to the higher class. Similarly, under the Zunga system one has to spend some time in the lower zunga before being elevated to higher zunga. In most of the Ao villages usually there are 6-7 age group (Illustration I) where they are automatically elevated to the higher strata of age-group after spending some years in the lower strata. Only when they reached the higher strata of the age group they will be eligible

⁶⁷ J.H. Hutton, op.cit., p.152; H. John Sem, op.cit., p.42

⁶⁸ Zunga system: It is a system where villagers (male members) are categories into different age group based on their year of birth or age and their future role in the Putu Menden is determined based on which age group they belong to. Higher they are in the upper strata of age group, higher the position and power they enjoy in the Putu Menden.

for selection as a member of Putu Menden. The existence of such arrangement for the selection of leaders under the zunga-system had ensured (apart from some odd events) smooth transaction of power as everyone knows when the term of the incumbent ends and which group will replace them. Such kind of arrangement is not seen in the Sumi tribes, though there is existence of age-group under the social organisation of Aluzhi ⁶⁹ but it does not have much role to play in the selection process of the member of village council.

Check and balance: There is more check and balance under the Putu Menden system compared to administration under the chieftainship system. The main reason being under the Ao system of governance there is internal check and balance in the exercise of powers by the traditional authorities. For instance, if there are eight clan in a village each clan will get equal representation in the Putu Menden regardless of the size of its members like in US Senate⁷⁰. All the clan representatives enjoy equal status in the Putu Menden and decisions are made on the basis of consensus among members of the Putu Menden. Therefore existence of such power structure under the traditional political institution of the Ao tribes ensures that there is no dominant clan, family or individuals to override the opinion of others leading to proper check and balance during the exercise of power by the traditional authorities. Whereas in the case of chieftainship system of the Sumi tribes though decisions are made on the basis of consensus with the council members, chief enjoys the discretion to accept or ignore the advice of council members, above all he can override their opinion and make decision on its own.⁷¹

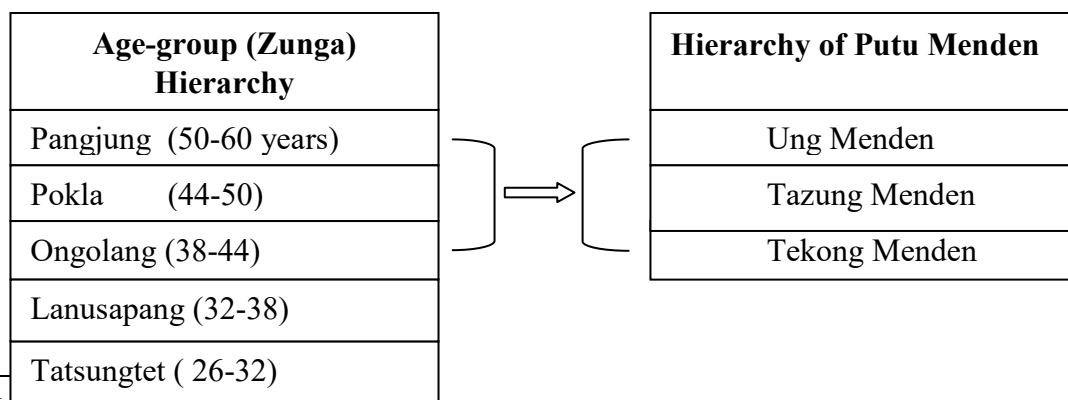
⁶⁹ J.H.Hutton in his book *The Sema Nagas* has elaborated that Aluzhi (literal meaning Alu-field, Azhu-labourers also known as gangs. They are villagers composed of both sexes in case of unmarried. From among themselves they select a commander (Atou) who decides what field are to be cultivate each.

⁷⁰ Senate is the upper house in US parliament which consists of 100 senators where each states (50) regardless of their population elect two senators. Senate and the United States Constitution. Retrieved from <https://www.senate.gov/senators/>

⁷¹ Village Chief interview on September 18, 2019 at Zunheboto

Gerontocracy: A comparative analyse of the working of both the tribes system of governance shows that elders occupy an important role in the village administration. However, comparatively “age” in Ao village’s acts as a major determinants with regard to access to power in the village council than in Sumi villages. For instance in Sumi villages a heir apparent even though a minor can become the Chief of the village, on the condition that till he attains his maturity he is required to be assisted by mother or uncles. Similarly, in the selection of the council members youth can supersede elders provided they are competent to shoulder the responsibilities as village council members, since it was not necessary that the eldest member from the clan or Khel is to be selected in the village council in Sumi villages⁷². Which is not the case in the Ao village since elders on most occasions occupy the highest seat of power in the village council. It is because the selection of the members to the village council is based upon age-group system. Under this arrangement, only members at the first and second tier of the age-group occupy the highest seat of power like the Tazung Menden and they are the one who exercise the real power (Illustration-I) . Thus, people at the lower strata of age group no matter how talented and qualified cannot supersede their elders at the upper strata of age group⁷³. Thus gerontocracy that is rule of elders or old people is still quite relevant in the Ao villages compared to Sumi villages.

ILLUSTRATION- I⁷⁴



⁷² H. Jomir Sena, op.cit., p. 40

⁷³ Panjung interview on October 18 ,2018 at Mokokchung

⁷⁴ Illustration examples of Age-group (Zunga) Hierarchy belong to Longmisa village. It may vary from village to village. Further age given for the particular age-group tier is not static.

Atsutsu (20-26)
Sungpo Sungsapang (14-20)

Source: Field work

Class: Among the Sumi tribes class was an important determinant in terms of power politics whether it is for the chief or during the selection process of council members. Any heir apparent uncle or sons who wish to carve out a new village for themselves need to have enough resources to incur the expenses during the establishment of new village. He should be rich enough to feed his followers while they spend many days clearing the jungles, arranging the sites, levelling and digging forts for defense. Chochomi who are appointed to assist the chief in the administration of the village are also expected to be wealthy enough to be able to host the guest on behalf of the chief. Further, there was also the existence of influential people like Kukami Lagha (Royal family)⁷⁵ who are capable of influencing the decision making of the village. In the case of Ao tribes there was existence of social inequality but unlike in Sumi villages there was no domination of a particular family or clan in the village power politics. Each clan, minor or major in number gets equal representation in the village council and enjoy equal status and power in the decision making process of the village. Thus, there was no ruling family class under whom others are suppressed⁷⁶.

Tenure of the village council: The post of the chief who is the head of the village and administration is hereditary, it pass on from father to the eldest son or to heir apparent. Further, the members of the council occupies their position in the council so long they enjoys the favor of the chief. There was no fixed tenure of traditional village council under the chieftainship system. In fact, the chief had the power to dissolve the council if he finds it

⁷⁵ J.H. Hutton, op.cit.,p.152

⁷⁶ Panger Imchen.(1993).*Ancient Ao Naga religion and culture*, p.90

useless to him⁷⁷ and form a new one. In the case of Ao villages, the term of village council ranges between 6-30 years. Once the term of the old council ends they are replaced by new batch of members. However, the transition of power does not always happen smoothly as was pointed out by J P Mills.

*“When the time comes to vacate office there is almost always a violent quarrel. The office holders, reluctant to relinquish their power and share of meat, argue that their time is not up yet, while the younger generation are eager to take their place”*⁷⁸. Such incidents are also being witnessed in the present day though they are rare where different camps formed their own separate Putu Menden due to major difference of opinion on some issues resulting in formation of two Putu Menden in one village but such situation does not remain for a long period of time as issues get resolved sooner or later and the status quo of Putu Menden gets restored⁷⁹.

Ownership of land: In most of the Sumi villages it is the Chief who owned the best and major portion of land. The reason being, establishing a new village in the pre-colonial period where there was constant feud among the tribes and villages was not an easy task. It required not only great valour but also wealth, since the heir apparent chief is expected, not only to protect his followers from external enemies but also to provide them food during the whole period of village establishment. Thus it was logical that once the village is established the chief keeps major portion of the cultivable land and distributes the rest among his followers. Thus the chief being the owner of the village land enables him to exert great influence in the village administration. In the case of the Ao, though there is ownership of land by individuals, vast portion of village land is owned collectively by the respective clans. Since villagers

⁷⁷ H. John Sema, op.cit., p.38

⁷⁸ J.P. Mill, op.cit., p.181

⁷⁹ Information based on observation during field work

collectively own the village, decision-making requires collective consensus. The collective ownership of land among the clans in Ao villages enables greater check on the powers of the traditional authorities which is not so much in the case of Sumi tribes as the chief has a great say in the decision making process of the village by the virtue of being the owner of the land⁸⁰.

Clan: Though clan play an important role in most of the tribal societies. A comparative analyse of the two tribes indicates that under the Ao village all the clan members enjoy equal status and are equally represented in the village council . Whereas under the Sumi chieftainship certain clans had higher inherited status, and it was from these that the chiefs were chosen⁸¹ . Also among the Sumis tribes it was not a customary practice or rule to select representation in the council from all the clan which in the case of Ao tribe under their traditional selection process is mandatory. Further, under the Sumi system when a clan is too small and negligible, the chochomi represented two or more clan at a time⁸², which is not the case among the Aos. According to the respondents in Ao villages no matter how small the clan members may be, in the village council they are to be represented by their respective clan members only.

Women representative: It is difficult to determine whether women were part of the decision making process at any given point of time in the history of Ao and Sumi tribes. Since the history of both the tribes is based upon oral interpretation, which in due course of time is bound to be diluted and modified according to their changing needs and circumstances. As there was mentioning of a women village known as Sangtamla under the Mokokchung district and existence of a women Tatar at the neighbouring Ao village of Khabza. There was

⁸⁰ Influence of the Chief in the Sumi village varies from village to village.

⁸¹ Gerard Nicholas Van Den Brul, B.A. op.cit., p.42

⁸² H.John Sema, op.cit.,p.38

also mentioning about Semas following a matrilineal system⁸³. Whatever the story/truth behind those recorded information may be, a closer analyse of the history of both the tribes, and some circumstantial evidence indicates that comparatively Sumi tribes are more flexible to the idea of women being part of the decision making process in the village council . This is because if we look at the selection process to the Putu Menden, women are not even eligible for selection in the village council. Only married male members of the village are considered for selection to the Putu Menden. Whereas there is no such customary practice in place under the Sumi system where women are considered ineligible to be part of the village council which can be seen from the fact that if the heir apparent happen to be a minor, there is provision for mother of that child to act as regent till he becomes an adult⁸⁴. The argument is also corroborated by the fact that usually most of the Sumi villages are named after their Chief but there is a village called Shesulimi which is a female name. This indicates that there were women who might have occupied the seat of power or act as a regent to the heir and for her great service; the village was name named after her⁸⁵. Thus compared to Ao villages, women in the Sumi villages have found formal political space at the apex level even if it might be on rare occasion only. This trend is continued even today as women in some Sumi villages are being appointed as council members. Whereas women in the Ao villages are still not considered eligible to be selected as council members. However, the paradox is that generally Ao women are more vocal and pro-active in availing benefits from the government schemes, which are specifically related to women as compared to that of Sumi women.

The comparative analysis of the structure and functioning of the traditional political institutions of the Ao and Sumi tribes indicates that both the tribes have developed a simple but a stable an effective system of institutions for village governance. Hutton who has done a

⁸³ J.H.Hutton, op.cit., pp. 96-97

⁸⁴ H.John Sema, op.cit.,p .25

⁸⁵ Prof H. John Sema, Department of Political Science Nagaland University interview on September 2020 at Dimapur

thorough ethnographic work on the Sumi tribes observed that the chief power in all the Sumi villages is not absolute. His observation was based on the plight of certain chief like that of the Sumi chief in Phushumi village. He pointed out that the chief found it utmost difficulty in obtaining labour to which he is admittedly entitled and sometimes compounds for it by accepting a purely nominal sum to save his face. This state was because of the chief degeneration to below the usual standard. Thus, chief ability to exercise his power in an autocratic manner depends on his charismatic personality and his relation with his Chochomi, therefore there were villages where chief were powerful enough to ignore the advice of the Chochomi and exercise the power own its own . Whereas in certain villages Chochomi might be powerful enough to control the chief entirely though this is rare ⁸⁶. John Sema also highlighted that though Sumi chief was an autocratic ruler, he administered the village as per the long standing customs and practices of the community⁸⁷. Observing the functioning of the Naga villages under their traditional political institutions Shimray wrote that

*“What was important and unique was the participation of the general public in the deliberation on any public issue, giving chance to everyone to have a say. This was direct democracy, the true and pure democracy in reality and in practice. This system of direct democracy was prevalent among the Lothas and Rengmas Naga also though with some slight variations. As in the case of Angamis where there is no village council at all but every villagers joined in the discussion and has the right to speak.”*⁸⁸ Which according to John Sema is the same in case of Sumi chieftainship system, since the chief accepts the opinion and advice of the council members if it is in the interest of the whole community even though he is all-powerful⁸⁹. A.W. Davis had his observation of the Ao village in the following words

⁸⁶ J.H.Hutton, op.cit., pp.149-52

⁸⁷ H.John Sema,op.cit., p.38

⁸⁸ RR Shimray,op.cit., p. 58

⁸⁹ H.John.Sema, op.cit.,p.39

“Each village amongst the Aos is a small republic, and each man is as good as his neighbor, indeed, it would be hard to find anywhere else more thoroughly democratic communities, headmen (Tatar)⁹⁰ do exist, but their authority is very small”⁹¹.

According to Temjensasang

“The traditional Ao Naga society since time immemorial has been a democratic society. Unlike the Indian society caste system and untouchable are non-existent and unknown to them. For all practical purpose the power rest with the people and the chosen administrator enjoys the office through public support”⁹². Talitemjen & Lanunungsang also stated that when the British government landed in their country (Ao villages), they were amazed to see the functioning of such a system of pure Naga democracy based on their own genius. They have appreciated the system of village republic and the way they managed to run such an indigenous system of administration based on un-written code from generation to generation⁹³. Thus, based on the observation of the past and present scholars one common observation in their argument is that, they find elements of democratic features in functioning of the traditional institutions especially the decision-making process based on consensus whether it is a chieftainship, a representative, or a direct form of governance.

Both the Ao and Sumi tribes system of village administration were created based on their needs and according to the context of their society during the pre-colonial period. Looking at the nature of their administration one need to appreciate that both the tribes developed a simple but an effective system of administration in an age where they were considered as savage people by the outsiders. Most of the functions that we find in the present day

⁹⁰ Tatar here seems to mean the head of the Putu Menden known as Onger who only acts as a nominal head.

⁹¹ A. W. Davis, op.cit., p.324

⁹² Temjensasang, op.cit., p.18

⁹³ N. Talitemjen and Lanunungsang, op.cit., p.72

governance can be found under both the institutions. There was clear division of roles distributed among the council members, which is equivalent to today's minister's portfolio. It was a well-organized system of administration providing a stable environment for the villagers to make progress. The most important features of both the institutions being their emphasis on decision-making based on consensus. Despite such similarity in the functioning of the traditional institutions, one major variation one can observed is that, in the Sumi village, Chief has great influence in the decision-making process where as under the clan representative system of governance that is practice in the Ao villages, there is no domination of one person, family or clan in the decision making process of the village. Each member of the clan have equal say in the decision making process. It is worth noting that despite enjoying vast power under the traditional political institutions, the traditional authorities in both the tribes village has in most part of their history has used their powers fairly and judiciously for the progress of the village as a whole. Which is one of the reasons why even in the era of electoral democracy there has not been much debate or opposition to do away the traditional political institutions. Further, the emphasis on the continuation of the consensus based decision-making under traditional institutions as highlighted by different scholars and researchers have continued to promote unity among the various clans living in the village. These are some of the core reasons why traditional political institutions like Putu Menden and Chieftainship as an institution is highly revered and respected even today.

The next chapter discussed about the impact of British colonialism, and the introduction of Nagaland Village and Area Council Act of 1978 had on the Traditional Political Institutions of both the tribes.

Chapter 3

The Impact of British occupation and Nagaland Village and Area Council Act 1978

3.1 Introduction

Nagas and the British

The encounter between British and Nagas began with the British government's decision to make direct communication between Assam and Manipur. Assam, before it came under the

control of British government was an Independent Kingdom under the Ahom rulers. The Ahom rulers were at constant war with its neighboring kingdom and other rebellious groups. One such group was known as Meomariah, a religious sect led by their priest. The Ahom Raja in order to defeat the rebellious group solicited and received assistance from the British government. With the assistance of the British army, Ahom ruler completely defeated the rebellious group and as a price of the British assistance, a brigade of British troops was allowed to station in the Assam territory. However, when the British troops stationed in the Assam territory were ordered to return to Calcutta in 1794, the Ahom kingdom soon lapsed into anarchy and confusion which provided opportunity to other Kingdoms to make an invasion on the Ahom Kingdom. Eventually after successive invasions, the territory of Assam was finally conquered by the Burmese in 1822. The Burmese further extended its territory when they brought Manipur and Cachar under its rule in the year 1821 and 1824 respectively. The British were alarmed at the growing power of the Burmese as it endangered their territory in the North-East Frontier. Therefore, on February 24, 1824 British declared war against the Burmese. The Burmese were defeated and driven out from Assam, and Assam became part of British possession. A treaty known as the Treaty of Yandabo was signed between the British and Burmese in 1826. According to this treaty independence of Manipur was acknowledged by both the parties and the king of Burma ceased to have control over the states of Cachar, Jantai and Assam ¹. With the occupation of Assam territory, British government felt the need to establish a direct line of communication between Manipur and Assam² for strategic purpose³. However, this could be possible only when they find a safe passage via the Naga Hills which was not an easy task since the Naga Hills was home to

¹Mills A.J Mofflatt, report on the Province of Assam 1854 cited in M. Horam.(1975). *The Naga Polity*. P.R Publishing Corporation, Delhi , p. 8

² Pomberton, R.B: (1966). *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*. D.H.A.S. Publication Gauhati p.66

³ Alexander Mackenzie. (1979). *The North-East Frontier of India*. Mittal Publication.(original publication 1884), p.101. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.231135/page/n3/mode/2up>

different Naga tribes who were having sovereign authority over their respective village and were very protective of their territories. Further, they were also accustomed to frequently carrying out raids in the neighbouring areas for human heads, resources and dominance. Therefore without winning over the trust of the village headmen or having control over the Naga territories passing through such routes was a risky undertaking. Initially the British were hopeful that the Raja of Manipur and Senapati of Cachar Tulum Senaputty would be able to contain the raid of the Nagas and thereby provide them a safe passage through the Naga territories. However, both of them expressed their inability to control the raids carried out by the Naga tribes, therefore British government decided to take the matter in their own hands and took it as an opportunity to explore into the unknown –land the Naga country, which ultimately brought contact between the Nagas and the British⁴.

The relations between the British and the Nagas can be summarize under the following broad categories.

1. Period of exploration
2. Period of expedition
3. Period of Non-interference
4. Period of control

Period of exploration: The first contact and subsequent conflict between Naga tribe (Angami Naga country) and British took place in January 1832 when a team consisting of 700 Manipuri troops with 800 coolies from the Manipuri valley led by captain Jenkins and Pemberton visited the Naga Hills. The party marched from Manipur to reach Assam but due to lack of proper planning, unfamiliarity with the terrain and paucity of provisions, the party suffered much at the hands of the Nagas, who repeatedly attack them and it was with great

⁴M. Horam.op.cit., pp.8-9

difficulty that they crossed the Naga territory. Following year another exploration was carried out by Raja Gambhir Singh of Manipur and Lt.Gurdon. The route they took was little to the east of the route taken by Jenkins and Pemberton. They too found stiff opposition from the Naga tribes and had to fight almost every step of the road⁵. After these initial contacts there were frequent, most of the time hostile encounters between the British and Naga tribes. Initially, British government were not keen to confront the Naga tribes despite their continuous raid on their occupied territories in the plain areas as most of the British officers were of the opinion that the cost of return for their investment and resources spent in carrying out expedition against the Naga tribes and occupying their territories will be of not much value. However, they were forced to act since the continuous raids by the Naga tribes especially from the formidable Angami Nagas started causing harm to their subjects and resources in the plain areas. Thus in 1838, the Court of Directors decided to bring the Naga affairs under the purview of the British government.⁶

Period of expedition: In order to subdue the raid of the Naga tribes upon their occupied territories, British adopted the same policy employed by the Ahom rulers that is conciliation backed by force⁷. The first expedition in the Naga territories was carried out by British Sub-Assistant Grange, however, it did not bring much success. In the second expedition adopting a more stringent policy, he achieved some success as he was able to make a truce agreement with some of the Nagas tribes. According to the truce agreement, the Nagas were supposed to pay annual tributes to the British government. Besides this, in 1841 Lieutenant Bigge, the Principal Assistant in charge of Nowgong conducted a 'promenade' through the Hills and established rapport with the chiefs of many Naga villages and entered into agreements with

⁵ Alexander Mackenzie, op.cit., p.101

⁶ M.Horam, op.cit., p.9

⁷ S.K.Bhuyan.(1949). *Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826*. Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, p.64

them for future peace of the frontier⁸. Further for the benefit of the Naga villagers a salt depot was also opened in Demapore (Dimapur). He was hopeful that such gesture will help in cementing friendly relations with the Nagas and in the process prevent them from raiding the neighbouring plain areas⁹. However, the cordial relationship between the British and Nagas did not last for a long period as hostility between the British officials and Naga leaders (Angami village) began to emerge when they refused to pay the annual tributes to the British Government when the British officer Eld came to collect it. Apart from that, against the agreed truce agreement, Naga tribes continued to carry out raid in the neighbouring plain territories. These raids were mostly carried out by the formidable Angami villages¹⁰.

After officer Eld, two expeditions were carried out by Captain Butler. In the first expedition he was successful in making the villagers pay the annual tribute to the British Government. In its second expedition he was able to open a market in the Naga territories, and erecting a stockade and grain go-downs at Demapore (Dimapur), several miles inside Naga territory¹¹. However situation took a hostile turn when British officer Boghachand was killed by feuding Naga tribes when he got involve in their internal feud¹². After this incident British adopted a more stringent policy towards the Naga tribes. In fact, orders like burning down of granary in case of armed resistance by the Naga tribes were also sanctioned to avenge the death of the British official¹³. During this period as much as 10 expeditions were carried out against the Naga tribes¹⁴ which were mostly under the command of Lieutenant Vincent. In one of such expedition as much as 100 warriors of Kikerima (Angami village) were killed in the battle

⁸ S.K.Barpujari.(1969). *Early peace mission to the Naga Hills. Proceedings of the Indian History congress*. Indian History Congress vol.31 p.370

⁹ Alexander MacKenzie,op.cit., pp.106-107

¹⁰ Alexander MacKenzie,op.cit., p.108

¹¹ Alexander MacKenzie, op.cit.,p.109

¹² Alexander MacKenzie, op.cit.,p.110

¹³ Alexander Mackenzie, op.cit.,p.111

¹⁴ Alexander Mackenzie highlighted that the expedition was mostly against the formidable Angami villages for they provided the greatest resistance to the Britishers

when the villagers openly challenge British soldiers equipped with musket gun for a fight in an open field ¹⁵.

Period of non-interference: Despite adopting the dual policy of diplomacy and use of force to subdue the Naga tribes, British were not able to bring a permanent truce with the Naga tribes. Therefore, further discussion were carried out on the relation of the Naga Hills to the areas controlled by Officers of the East India Company, finally on the advice of the various British officers, especially that of Captain Butler a policy of non-interference was finally decided upon by the then Governor General, Lord Dalhousie where in 1851 he lay down the following new directives

“we should confine ourselves to our own ground; protect it as it can and must be protected; not meddle in the fueds or fights of these savages; encourage trade with them as long as they are peaceful towards us; and rigidly exclude them from all communication either to sell what they have got, or to buy what they want, if they should become turbulent or troublesome”¹⁶.

Thus according to this policy of non-interference, so long as the Naga tribes kept to their own territories and do not raid the territories of British they will not interfere in Naga territories. This continuous reluctance of the British to interfere directly in the Naga territories was due to the continuous observation of many high rank British officials who feared that the expenditure involved in administration of hill areas would be enormous and that it would be incapable of contributing anything towards the cost of administration of these areas. Thus, the British taking account of the economic factor did not feel the necessity to invest their resources to occupy Naga territories. What finally prompted the British to start occupying the Naga territories was the constant raid of the Naga tribes on British territories, which became

¹⁵ A. J. Moffat Mills, Report on the Province of Assam, 1854, pp. cxlv clxii, cited in V. Elwin, *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, (O.U.P. London, 1969), p.142

¹⁶ Alexander Mackenzie, op.cit., p.114.

bolder and more destructive in nature¹⁷. Such arguments can be found in the writings of scholars and British officers who opined that the intention of the occupying Naga territories was to keep British subject safe from the constant raid of the Naga tribes. In the words of Tajenyuba Ao

“The intention of the British government was not to conquer and to rule over the Nagas but with the necessity of protecting their subjects on the borders of Nowgong and Sibsagar districts against Naga raids the British were compelled to enter the hills and control the Nagas from within. Indeed without any ambition for material gain the British were reluctantly compelled to occupy the Naga territories in order to protect peace loving people on the British borders, but later it become obligatory on then to intervene in the aged old custom of headhunting warfare between the tribal communities and to control them to live in peace and civilizes ways¹⁸ . Similarly According to B.C Allen (2010)

“Had the Angami Nagas consented to respect our frontiers, they might have remained as independent as the tribes inhabiting the hills to the south of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur, but it was impossible for any civilized power to acquiesce in the perpetual harrying of its border folk¹⁹.

However such narrative can also be viewed as an excuse or tactic used by colonializing powers to justify their motives and means adopted by them to expand their control over other territories.

Period of control: British Non-interference policy did not brought much truce between the Nagas and the British, since within the years of its implementation more than 100 raids were carried out by the Naga tribes (Mainly by the powerful Angami Nagas) in their neighbouring

¹⁷M. Horam,op.cit.,p.13

¹⁸Tajenyuba Ao. (1993). *British occupation of Naga country* . Naga literature society, Mokokchung.

¹⁹B.Callen. (2010). *Gazetteer of Naga Hills and Manipur*. Mittal Publication, New Delhi, p.10

plain areas for resources and dominance which naturally came into conflict with the British government, since it threatened their interest. Therefore, the British government in order to protect their investments especially that of the tea estates adopted many policies to put an end to the constant threat of Naga tribes raids. In this regard the British Indian administration established forays of headquarters in Samaguting (now Chumukedima) with an armed police post. Further, to reduce the friction between Naga villagers, and those British officials and labourers involved in tea cultivation bordering the territories of the Naga tribes, British government introduced the inner line regulation of 1873. This was done in order to prevent British officials and its subjects from venturing or encroaching into Naga territories, as the regulations restricted British subject to proceed beyond a certain line drawn on the ground without permission. Furthermore, compensation was to be made to the Nagas tribes whose territories were occupied by tea estate lying beyond the inner line.

In 1875 the British headquarter was shifted from Samaguting to Wokha in order to protect its interest in Nowgong and Sibsagar district. Finally the Headquarter was permanently shifted to Kohima in 1878²⁰. British imperialist were ambitious for further territorial expansion and thus Sema country was conquered in 1887 and declared a “control area”. The Ao territory was also brought under the control of the British Empire when it established a separate Mokokchung sub-division in 1889. The creation of a separate sub-division was necessitate in order to prevent the constant raid of Ao villages from among themselves and also from the neighbouring tribes²¹.

With the passage of time almost the whole of Naga inhabited areas were brought under the control of the British administration. Apart from bringing major portion of the Naga territories under their sphere of administration British also passed various acts relating to the

²⁰M. Horam, op.cit.,p.14

²¹Gazetter Of India.(1970).Nagaland, Kohima, p.46

Naga tribes which had a direct consequence on the present political and social status of the Nagas. Some of the important acts are:

1. **The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873:** The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, popularly known as "the Inner Line Regulation" (ILR), was first promulgated in Assam for the peace and governance of certain districts²². The act enabled the Lieutenant-Governor to prescribe a line beyond which no British subject of certain classes, or foreign residents, could pass without a license²³. The British government promulgated this act on the Naga territories with the objective of restricting access to the tribal areas by outsiders. The British officials hoped that by keeping personal contact between the inhabitants of the Naga areas and Assam to a minimum will help in reducing constant feud between the tribal and plainsmen on the issue of encroachment. In the same vein, it was envisaged as a means of separating the administration of the two areas, and of treating the "tribal" people in a different manner from the Assamese, whose social system was based upon the use of currency, an incipient capitalist economy and more universal legal norms. Thus the Assamese were to be ruled according to British law; the Nagas were to be left to themselves, provided that they did not interfere with the maintenance of law and order²⁴.

2. **Scheduled District Act of 1874:** The second important piece of legislation related to the hills was the Scheduled District Act of 1874. This Statute, as amended by the frontier tracts regulation II of 1880, empowered the government to ratify what laws would apply in the scheduled districts. It recognized that a simpler, more personal administration was needed in the hill areas, therefore exempted the hill people from prosecution under both the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Civil Procedure Code²⁵.

²² Edward Gait.(1992). A History of Assam cited in J. Zahluna.(2011). Inner line regulation and Mizoram. *The Indian Journal of Political Science* , 72(1), p.221

²³ Alexander MacKenzie, op.cit., p.55

²⁴ Gerard Nicholas Van Den Brul, B. A. op.cit., pp.76-77

²⁵ Verrier Elwin.(1961). *Nagaland. Assam Secretariat*, Shillong, p. 35

3. **Government of India act of 1935:** The Government of India Act of 1919 empowered the Governor-General in Council to declare any territory in India to be a "backward tract", within which the Governor-General could direct that any Act of the Indian Legislature should not apply, or should only apply with modifications²⁶. Furthermore, he could empower the Provincial Governors to give similar directions in respect of Acts passed by the local legislatures²⁷. Since the Naga Hills district was included as a "backward tract", the Nagas were effectively excluded from their neighbours in terms of administration. The system was continued and extended in the Government of India Act of 1935 according to which the Naga Hills district (along with the North Eastern Frontier Tract, the Lushai Hills, and the North Cachar Hills) became Excluded Areas within the Province of Assam²⁸

The adoption of a different policy relating to the governance of the tribal areas based on various acts had a profound impact on the future relation of the Nagas with the rest of India since the adoption of the above mentioned acts and other policies led to a situation where social and political changes that occurred in the hills happened in isolation from Assam and the rest of the Indian subcontinent. It had two major consequences that were of great importance in defining social and political boundaries in the post-independence period. Firstly, it meant that Naga society was essentially inward-looking, administrative and social isolation, and lack of an extensive network of transaction (both social and economic) between the Naga Hills and Assam, perpetuated a long history of minimal contact and increased the traditional mutual suspicion. This is illustrated by the arguments put forward by the two prominent group of Naga leaders to Simon Commission visited Kohima in January 1929. The first group was the Naga Club, which submitted a memorandum demanding that the

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Verrier Elwin, op.cit., p.39

Nagas should be excluded from the proposed reforms and kept under direct administration to save them from being overwhelmed by the people of the plains. They argued that:

"You are the only people who have ever conquered us, and, when you go we should be as we were".

The second group was a gathering of tribal chiefs and headmen who approached the Simon Commission whose encounter was recalled by the Honourable Edward Cadogan, M.P. whose concern based on their interpreters can be seen under the quote words

*"We hear that a black king is going to come to rule over India. If that is so, for goodness I sake, do not let it be a Bengali"*²⁹.

Second important consequence of the constitutional arrangements in the Naga Hills was that it provided for a system of government and administration specifically designed for the Nagas, and associated with a definite territorial area which in combination with the effects of modernization, such as the development of trade and communications; the expansion of literacy, and greater social mobility, the territorial system of government led to what Duchachek has defined as a "territorial community" or a "geographically delineated social communication system"³⁰. While a Pan-Naga ethnic awareness was gradually emerging as a result of greater inter-tribal communication and the development of inter-tribal Christian institutions, the political boundaries imposed by the British administration gave the ethnic identity a territorial dimension. Many Nagas were encompassed within the Naga Hills district, and this created an issue which became salient in the post-independence period. Nevertheless, the provision of a territorial system of government for a "core area" of the

²⁹ Gerard Nicholas Van Den Brul, B. A. ,op.cit., p.82-83

³⁰ Ivo D. Duchachek.(1970).*Comparative Federalism: The territorial dimension of Politics*. (Holt, Rinehart, Winston, N. Y, p. 20.

Nagas moulded and shaped the political aspirations of the Naga people, giving rise to a new political identity based on ethnicity³¹.

The brief historical encounters between the British and the Naga tribes was to highlight the circumstances behind the British occupation of Naga Hills and the attitude of the British officials towards the Naga tribes culture, customs and tradition, and towards their system of governance. Since it will give an idea the extent of impact, the British occupation had upon the working of the traditional political institutions of the Naga tribes.

3.2 Impact of British occupation of Naga territories.

As discussed earlier British government from the beginning adopted a non-intervention policy while dealing with the Naga tribes. They had no intention to alter or impose its system of administration on the Naga tribes. As a result of such policy, Nagas were allowed to carry on with their village administration based on their traditional political institutions. The main intention of the British government to control the Naga Hills was to keep their subjects and their investment on tea estate in the plain areas safe from the frequent raid of the Naga tribes. Further, most of the British officers did not found it necessary to bring drastic changes in the village administration of the Naga tribes since they found it to be a simple but an efficient and systematic administration under their traditional political institutions³². Despite such least intervention policy adopted by the British towards the Naga tribes, its occupation of the Naga Hills had some noticeable impact on the polity of the Naga villages which are being discussed below

End of state of Anarchy impacting Power and Authority of Traditional Authorities: One noticeable impact of the British occupation of Naga territories was that it ended the state of

³¹ S. K. Chaube "Interethnic Politics in India", Paper submitted to the VIIIth World Congress of Sociology, Toronto, August, 1974, p. 8. Cited in Gerard Nicholas Van Den Brul, B. A. ,op.cit., p.83

³²N. Talitemjen Jamir &A. Lanunungsang, op.cit.,p.72.

anarchy that was prevalent in the Naga areas³³. Before the coming of the British, every Naga villages were functioning as an independent Nation, however, with the British control over most of the Naga territories, the Naga villages lost their sovereign status and they became subordinate to the British government. Similarly, British occupation ended most of the intra and inter tribal feud for territory and resources. Some of those feuds ended through negotiation, others by use of force, as non-compliance to British government orders was followed by punishment. This attainment of peace among the warring Naga villages had an indirect consequence upon the power of the traditional authorities under the traditional political institutions. Since one of the reason for the social cohesion among the Naga villagers, and their complete adherence to the traditional authorities was due to the state of anarchy that prevailed in the pre-colonial period, the prevailing situation enabled the traditional authorities to have complete obedience of the villagers , since they depended upon the traditional authorities for their safety and security. But with the establishment of peace among the warring village strict adherence to traditional authority based on external threat of war and headhunting practice among the villagers began to decline³⁴. Further, with the spread of modern education amongst the Nagas, the importance of traditional educational institution like Morung lost its relevance which also had an impact on the powers of the traditional authorities. Since Morung was not only a place where young boys were trained to become future warrior and leaders but it was also a place where young minds were consciously or unconsciously cultured to have complete obedience to the authority of the elders.

Two-tier system: British government like in other colonized territories adopted the same system of indirect rule while administrating the Naga territories. According to this policy the British government imposed a two-tier system of authority upon the local Naga population.

³³ John Butler (1969): Rough Notes on the Angamis cited in Sanghamitra Misra(1988). The Nature of Colonial Intervention in the Naga Hills, 1840-80.*Economic and Political Weekly* ,33(51), p.3277

³⁴Gerard Nicholas Van Den Brul, B. A. op.cit., pp.91-92

At the village level traditional institutions were allowed to function according to the tenets of customary law and practices. As a result of such policy adopted by the Britishers in the Naga Hills, the traditional political institutions and political authorities (village councils) did not lost its relevance and to some extent retained a large measure of their importance in the governance of village administration despite the loss of sovereignty. Since they retained much of the power to deal with petty legal cases, both civil and criminal based on the procedure which approximated to traditional proceedings³⁵. Commenting and appreciating such policy Hutton writes

*“The policy of segregation, and of administration by tribal custom, has worked wonders, and in the Lhota Naga tribe at any rate, it has proved possible recently to obtain the election or selection by villages of a representative council, which, without any specific criminal or revenue powers, has become an instrument by which the tribe deals with many social questions, and has been enabled to tax itself for the improvement of its internal communications and the education of members of the tribe”.*³⁶

At the district, and sub divisional levels, political power remained with the District Commissioner and the Deputies, whose authority were maintained by sepoy battalions stationed at the outposts of Kohima, Wokha and Mokokchung. The colonial officers would make periodical tours of the administered villages, collecting the hearth tax, settling disputes and deciding important legal cases. Occasionally, as for example, when Mill led an expedition against Pangsha in November and December 1936³⁷ the District Commissioner

³⁵Verrier Elwin, op.cit., p.35

³⁶ J. H. Hutton.(1941).*Primitive Tribes. Modern India and the west (A study of the interaction of their civilization (ed.)*, L. S. S. O'Malley C.I.E (London,), p. 443

³⁷ Robert Reid.(1983). *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941*. Eastern Publishing House Delhi India, p.175.

would mount a punitive expedition against a village or group of villages that had broken the peace³⁸.

Institutional changes: British government brought some institutional changes in the working of the traditional village governance by introducing the concept of Dobashi and Goanbura in village administration for administrative convenience. Dobashi were people who were expert in two languages and were employed by the British officials to act as an interpreter between them and the Naga leaders. Though the original objective for the creation of the post of Dobashi was to act as a means of communication between the British officials and the tribal leaders, in due course of time British government started giving more powers to Dobashi which enabled them to hear and settle cases among the villagers. Even after the end of the British occupation of the Naga territory, the post of Dobashi was retained, which ultimately led to the establishment of Dobashi court. However, today they are not as powerful as they were during the British colonial period³⁹. Thus the post of Dobashi though initially was created to act as a translator between the British officers and tribal leaders, eventually evolved into an important institution which can hear and settle cases of the villagers based on customary practice, a role which was only played by the traditional authorities prior to the arrival of the British.

Spirit of Nationalism: Another noticeable impact, British occupation had on the Nagas was that, it led to the emergence of the spirit of nationalism among the Nagas and promoted ethnic unity. Prior to the arrival of the British, each Naga tribe's, in fact villages of same tribes were at loggerheads with each other. There was no unity among the Nagas prior to the arrival of British, therefore when the Naga territory were brought under the umbrella of British administration, it paved the way for emergence of friendly relation among the Naga

³⁸ Gerard Nicholas Van Den Brul B.A.op.cit., p.93

³⁹ Alexander MacKenzie, op.cit., p.124

tribes which brought about ethnic unity. Further, Nagas from different tribes numbering around 2000 were recruited as labour force and porter by the British government and were sent to France during the First World War. Thus, Nagas for the first time witnessed fighting among the nations⁴⁰ on the basis of their Nationalism. This greatly influenced the Naga tribes to give up their difference based on their tribe affiliation and work together for a common cause. Thus upon their return, together with British officials, and other leading Nagas Goanburas, Dobashis and government servants formed the Naga Club in 1918⁴¹ which became the basis for future Naga national movement for self-determination.

Thus, though the occupation of Naga Hills by British Empire led to the loss of sovereign status of the Naga village, it did not in any way brought about drastic changes in the working of the traditional political institutions. Since Naga tribes were allowed to continue the administration of their village based on their traditional political institutions. In fact, the British government even took step of preventing others from interfering in the territory of the Nagas by introducing various acts like the Inner Line Regulation, Government of India Act of 1919 and Government of India Act 1935. This non-interference policy adopted by the British Empire was continued by the Government of India after its independence by incorporating article 371(A) in the Constitution of India. The article provided special provision for the Nagas allowing them to continue their administration based on their customs and tradition. As a result of these policies there emerged a situation where despite the spread of modern education and adoption of modern system of administration by the Nagas, the importance of traditional political institutions has not diminished in the villages. As a result, there is strong influence of tradition and customs in the village governance even in the present day village administration and village politics.

⁴⁰ Sir Robert Reid, *Years of Change in Bengal & Assam*, p.163

⁴¹ P.N.Luthra, *Nagaland from a District to a state*, p.3

3.3 Nagaland Village and Area Council Act of 1978

The Government of Nagaland after it attained statehood on 1st December 1963 felt the necessity to bring some kind of uniformity in the working of the village administration for better supervision of the villages in Nagaland. Thus, the government passed the Nagaland Village and Area Council Act of 1978. In due course of time, the act has been amended several times by the state legislature particularly in the year 1990 (second amendment) and in 2009 (Fourth Amendment). The fourth amendment was done in order to give some statutory powers to the Tribal Council, which earlier did not have any legal status though they were playing an important role in the socio-political aspect of the Naga society⁴². However, these amendments did not affect the core foundation of the working of the village administration under the traditional political institutions. Before we analyse the impact of the introduction of Nagaland Village and Area Council Act of 1978 on the working of the traditional political institutions, it is important to highlight some key provisions of this act. This will help us to understand the nature of impact the provisions had on the traditional political institutions.

Some of the key provisions of the act can be seen below

1. The existence of a village under the Nagaland government will be legally recognizes only after it has been approved by the state government. The government will recognise the existence of a village only when
 - i. The area rightfully belong to the population or the area is rightfully given by the government or by the lawful owner of the land.
 - ii. It is established according to the usage and customary practice of the population of that area.

⁴² Moatoshi Ao, op.cit., p.170

2. Every recognised village need to have a village council whose members will be selected according to the prevailing customs and tradition, which need to be approved by the state government.
3. Hereditary Village Chief, GB (Goanbura) and Angh shall be the ex-officio members of the village council and shall have voting rights.
4. Villagers who wished to be a member of the village council should be a citizen of India and 25 years of age.
5. The tenure of every village council is five (5) years with the state government having the power to dissolve and extend the tenure of the council.
6. The act recognised the Putu Menden as the village council and allow to function as village council according to their respective custom and usage.
7. Every village council shall have a chairman and a secretary. The Chairman and Secretary are to be chosen from amongst the members of the village council. Though under this act there is an option where a person who is not part of the village council may be chosen as the secretary of the council, however in such case he will not have voting right.
8. The state government has the power to remove the members of the village council on the ground like conviction by court for offence, declared insolvent, disqualified for holding public office under Nagaland Gazette, has been guilty of misconduct while discharging his duties and 2/3 of the members of the village council recommend his removal, etc.
9. The powers and functions of the village council involves assisting maintain law and order in the villages assisting the state government in carrying out the activities of the government for development purpose

10. To constitute a Village Development Board⁴³. Thus, the concept of Village Development Board was formally introduced by this act.

11. In terms of administering justice in the village the act provided that the village council has the power to administer justice within the village limits in accordance with the customary law and usage on the condition that those usage are in conformity with the canons of justice established in Nagaland. The council has to report to the state government in case of serious crime committed in the village and in the event of unnatural death in the village.

12. Subject to the General superintendence of the State Government/the Deputy Commissioner/the Additional Deputy Commissioner or Sub-divisional Officer (Civil) in-charge of the Sub-Division, Extra Assistant Commissioner or Circle Officer shall have control over all the Village Councils within his jurisdiction.⁴⁴

This act brought about some visible changes in the structure of the village administration. How far these structural changes have affected the actual working of the traditional political institutions will be analysed after examining the structural changes brought about by the act which are under mentioned.

1. **Uniform pattern of governance:** The Nagaland Village and Area Council Act of 1978 brought some form of uniformity in the structure of village administration. Before this act came into force, there was lack of uniformity in terms of working of village council causing administrative inconveniences. The passage of the act led to the institutionalization of the traditional political institutions and brought some form of uniform pattern in the

⁴³ Mero Chiete. (2015) *A sociological study of the village development board in Nagaland. Thesis*)The concept of Village Development Board was first experimented and adopted in Kütsapo village , Phek District, in 1976. A. M Gokhale the then Deputy Commissioner of Phek district and Vamuzo Phesao state Industries minister played the leading role.

⁴⁴ Nagaland Village and Area council Act 1978

working of village administration in Nagaland. This act also provided statutory status and power to these traditional political institutions.

2. **The concept of Chairmanship was introduced by the Act.** Every recognised village needs to have a village council with the chairman as the head of the Village Council. The Chairman acts as the link between the state government and the villagers, a role that was earlier played by the Dobashi and Goanburas during the British administration in the Naga areas. In the case of the Sumi tribes during the pre-colonial period, the Chief was not only the head of the government but also head of the administration. However, with the passage of the act, it is the Chairman who becomes head of the village administration. Though, one needs to note that there was no provision in the act that gave chief, the right to claim or prevent him from occupying the post of Chairmanship. There was only one provision in this regard where it states that in the Naga villages where there is practice of hereditary Chief and Angh system, the chief will be the ex-officio member of the village council with voting rights. Therefore, there are many instances where Chief occupies both the post of Chairmanship and the Goanbura in Sumi villages. However, with the growing complexity in the working of village administration, it is a common sight where the post of Goanbura and Chairmanship is held by different persons⁴⁵. Among the Ao villages though there was also no system of chairmanship, the role equivalent to that of village chairman was performed by Onger⁴⁶ (who was only a nominal head) in the pre-colonial period.

3. **Membership of the council members:** Among the Sumis tribes as mentioned in the second chapter there was no tenure system for the members of the village council. The council members remain in office so long as they are in good faith with the chief. The chief usually appoints people as his assistance who happened to be the eldest in the clan or who are rich, capable, and above all well versed in the custom and usages of their tribes. However,

⁴⁵ Information based on interview with chief and respondents.

⁴⁶ Information based on interview with elders from Ao villages

with the passing of the village act, other than the Chief some members of the council are selected by the people. Further, strict adherence of having knowledge about the tribe tradition and custom as a criteria for selection in the village council has been to some extent relaxed, which was also highlighted by John Sema. According to him many young literates have been absorbed to the village council even though many of them are not well versed in customary laws and practices. Some of them hardly stay in the village. They are selected with the backing of political parties which has disturbed the sanctity and effective functioning of the village administration⁴⁷.

4. The concept of Goanbura: In the traditional political institutions of Ao and Sumi tribes there was no concept of Goanbura. This concept as mentioned earlier was introduced by the British. In fact, Goanbura were the first Naga appointees by British in their service ⁴⁸. Goanbura has an Assemese and Hindi origin and not derived from any of the Naga tribal dialects. Goan means village and bura means elder. The word Goanbura thus mean village elders. Goanbura are appointed from each village and khels. The appointment of Goanbura was a strategic decision adopted by the British to maintain cordial relations with the Nagas, for they know the influence of Chief and village elders have in the village administration. Goanburas were the link between the colonial administrators and the villagers because though they enjoy undisputed power in the village administration, they were appointed to serve the colonial master as loyal agents of the colonial administration ⁴⁹. Among the Semas and the Changs the system of relying on chiefs worked efficiently, because it conformed to the traditional structure of power. However, this was not the case with the tribes that were following a clan representative system like Aos, or some form of direct democracy followed by Angami tribes. The main reason being unlike the Sumi and Chang tribes the creation of

⁴⁷ H, John, Sema, op.cit., p. 50

⁴⁸ Moatoshi Ao, op.cit., p. 143

⁴⁹ Moatoshi Ao, op.cit., p. 144

Gaonbura came in conflict with their traditional structure of power because of which he was frequently viewed by his co-villagers as a colonial tool, and was treated accordingly. Being dependent upon the goodwill of both the colonial administration and the village population, the Gaonbura was placed in an insecure and ambiguous position, especially when a conflict of interest developed between the local leaders and district administration⁵⁰.

The concept of Goanbura was retained in the village administration even after the departure of the British. However, one thing to be noted here is, the power and influence of Goanbura is different in Ao and Sumi villages. In the Sumi tribe, the Chief of the villages by default becomes the Goanbura of the village, naturally they enjoy powerful position and plays an influential role in the village administration whether it is related decision making or during administration of justice. This is not the case in Ao villages since the appointment of the Goanbura in the Ao village usually requires the approval by the state government. Therefore they act as the representative of the state government. He usually helps the state government in terms of collection of yearly taxes and other formal duties. The Goanbura in Ao villages does not enjoy much power and influence unlike in Sumi villages when it comes to decision making or settlement of issues in the village. Thus, compared to the Sumi villages, Gaonbura in Ao village only acts as nominal figures⁵¹. Further in Sumi villages the village chief by default becomes the Gaonbura of the village and can also occupy the post of chairman which is not the case in Ao villages. There has not been an occasion where one person occupied dual post of Gaonbura and chairmanship in Ao villages.

5. Dobashi: Similar to that of Goanbura the concept of Dobashi was introduced by the British which was later incorporated by the state government in the working of the district administration. The word “Dobashi” is not a Naga word. It is a word coined during the period

⁵⁰ Gerard Nicholas Van Den Brul B.A.op.cit.,p.94

⁵¹ Ex-goanbura, incumbent Goanbura and village council members personnel communication 2019.

of British administration. It has an Assamese and Hindi origin. The word ‘Do’ means two and ‘Basha’ means language. Therefore Dobashi is the name given to a Naga elder who knows two language i.e., the Naga tribal dialect and the language of the British (Hindi/Assamese). Initially, the Dobashi was appointed by the British to act as a medium of communication between the British officers and the tribal leaders in the village. But over time British government gave more power to them which reduced the power of traditional authorities in the village administration. For instance, in the process of giving more powers to the Dobashi the position of the chief (Akukau) was considerably reduced. The chief and his elders were not empowered to try any civil and criminal cases. Such powers were taken over by the first class magistrate. Therefore, the Chiefs power was only to maintain law and order and to collect house taxes from their respective villages. Even in civil cases, if the other party was not satisfied with the decisions of the village chief and his elders, they took the cases to the district court or higher court. Thus the position of the chief was relegated below the position of the Dobashi who were originally appointed to act as a language mediator between the British administrators and the tribal people⁵². The post of Dobashi in due course of time became a statutory body leading to the establishment of customary court known as Dobashi court⁵³.

6. Term of the village council was fixed: The Nagaland Village and Area Council Act 1978 did not have much impact in the tenure of the village councils in the Ao villages. This is because the act recognized the traditional political institution of the Aos that is “Putu Menden” as village council. The only minor changes brought about by the act was the appointment of chairman post whose term was fixed to 5 (five) years. In the case of the Sumi tribes, it brought about major change in the structure of the village council. For instance,

⁵² H. John Sema, op.cit., p.48

⁵³ Chizokhobero” Justice Lodha praises customary courts in resolving disputes delivering justice”.
The Morung Express , December 19 ,2012

earlier there was no tenure system for the village council and its members under their traditional political institutions. However, with the enactment of the act the duration and the term of the village council and its members were fixed to five years respectively.

7. **Intervention of the state:** The act also gave power to the state government to interfere in the administration of the village council whenever it deemed necessary. For instance

i. Earlier the selection and removal of the council members were solely at the discretion of their respective tribes. But, with the passage of this act, the selection of members to the village council by the respective tribes requires the approval of the state government. Further, the state government has the power to disqualify the council members in the event of mass fraud, misuse of power by them. Also in the event of any dispute related to the disqualification village council members the state government has the final authority. Lastly, the state government has the power to dissolve the village council.

ii. Under the Act, governance of the village councils is now subject to General superintendence of the State Government/the Deputy Commissioner/the Additional Deputy Commissioner or Sub-divisional Officer (Civil) in-charge of the Sub-Division, Extra Assistant Commissioner or Circle Officer within their respective jurisdiction.

8. **Subordinate court of appeal:** Earlier the village court under the traditional political institutions was the highest court of appeal. They had the exclusive right to settle disputes among the villagers and any issue related to customary practice. However, with the recognition of the Dobashi court as a statutory body under the Nagaland Village Area Council Act of 1978, Dobashi can also hear and settle any cases arising among the villages and also issue related to customary practices of their respective tribes. Villagers had the option of appealing to Dobashi court and other higher courts other than the village court. Thus, the status of the village court as the highest court of appeal was lost.

9. **Village Development Board (VDB):** Under the traditional political institutions, there was no separate department for looking after the development of the village. It is the village council, which look after the overall development of the village. Under Nagaland Village Area Council Act 1978, a separate body of the village council known as the Village Development Board was established to make plan and monitor developmental work in the village. One important feature of this Development Board was that, selection to this Board was not based on customary usage and practice. As a result it opened the door for youths and women to directly take part in the development process of the village. As seen in the past most of the tribal societies young men and women hardly find space in the decision making process of the village administration, however, establishment of this board provided them the space to directly participate in the village governance.

10. **Women representation:** A closer analysis of the working of traditional political institutions one can notice lack of women participation in the decision-making process of the village administration. However, one also needs to analyse this situation according to the context of the Naga societies. All the Naga villages in the pre-colonial period have been functioning as independent nation based on their traditional political institutions. Though the British government brought all the Naga territories under its administration, it had always adopted a non-intervention policy. Even after India's independence from British rule the traditional political institutions of the Naga tribes were protected under the sixth schedule and article 371 (A) of the Indian Constitution. Thus to date there has not been much effort to bring changes in the working of these traditional political institutions around which the governance of most of the Naga villages are based upon as a result the "status quo" regarding the representation of women in the village council has not changed much.

Through the passage of Nagaland Village and Area council Act of 1978 there was some effort made to encourage women representation in the village administration. Though

the act did not provide any reserved quota for women in the main decision making body of the village council, 25% of seats were reserved for women in the VDB. However, evidence shows that such effort has not brought the desired effect but it was a step taken by the state government to address the issue of lack of women representation in the village governance.

11. **System of election:** The system of election was hardly prevailing in the village governance. Whether it is the selection of clan leadership, members of the village council, or selection of members of any committee or department, all were based on consensus method. However, one trend shared by one of the council members though limited in nature in village administration was the system of election for the post of Village Development Board (VDB) secretary⁵⁴. Such a situation arises when three or four villagers put forward their nomination for the post. In such cases, some villages, rather than adopting the consensus method of selection prefer voting method. It is not a major trend but it is being followed in some villages. The reason for emergence of such phenomenon is related to material benefit that comes with the post. Apart from the small honorarium, some secretary in collusion with government officials and other members of the village council misuse development funds. Further, loopholes in the audit process in the villages allow them to get away with such dishonest activities. Thus according to one of the council member compared to selection of village council members there seen growing instances of intense lobbying when it comes to the post of VDB secretary for by the interested candidates⁵⁵. Similar observation has also been made by Woulters in his book *In the Shadows of Naga Insurgency Tribes, State, and Violence in Northeast India*⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Voter is confined to members of the village council only

⁵⁵ Information based on observation and interview

⁵⁶ Jelle J.P Woulters. (2018). *In the Shadows of Naga Insurgency Tribes, State, and Violence in Northeast India*. Oxford University Press, India

The closer analysis of the Nagaland Village and Area Council Act of 1978, one can find that the act did not in any way drastically change the working of the village administration under the traditional political institutions. Whether it is the Sumi chief system or the Ao tribes Putu Menden system, the act did not in any way reduce the importance of these traditional political institutions in the village administration. No doubt the act brought about some visible structural changes in the working of the traditional institutions like the term of the council member was fixed to five years, laying down the criteria of qualification and disqualification of members to the village council and others. All these measures were adopted to bring some kind of uniform pattern of village administration for the convenience of state administration. The act was also an effort to institutionalize and give legal recognition to the Naga traditional political institutions. The Act of 1978 did not drastically altered the governance of village administration under traditional political institutions since the word “in accordance with the customary practice” has been place in many of the important clause under the Act of 1978. Some important clause regarding both tribes can be examined under the following point to support the argument.

1. **Chief the Ex-Officio Member:** Under the Act of 1978 Sumi chief and Anghs among the Konyak tribes were made the ex-officio member of the village council with voting rights. Further, there was no provision in the act which prevent the Anghs or the chief to occupy the post of chairman in the village council. Thus, the act in no way made an effort to reduce the influence and power of the chief in the village administration. Therefore, we find in many villages where the village chief (Goanbura) also holds the position of the chairman. Therefore even with the passage of this act the chief continues to have a great influence in the decision making process of the village administration. Some of the villagers argue that the village administration is literally rule by the chief and the VDB secretary. This shows the extent of influence the chief continue to have in the village administration even in the modern times.

2. **Putu Menden:** In case of the institution of Putu Meden, under 6 (b) of the 1978 Act states that Village institution which were traditionally established like the “Putu Menden” in Ao area and recognised as village council shall continue to function as village council according to the respective custom and usage⁵⁷. This means the act does not have much impact in the functioning of the Putu Menden. What the act has done is that it has provided legal status to the traditional political institutions of the Naga tribes like Putu Menden. Allowing it to function as it is, the only structural change that is seen in the Ao system of traditional governance is the introduction of post of chairman and secretary with a fixed term of 5 years. Thus the structural changes brought about in the Putu Menden by introducing the system of chairman and secretary has in no way disrupt the power structure and function of the Putu Menden in the village administration in Ao villages..

3. **Selection Process:** The Government of Nagaland while amending the act did not focus much in addressing the issue of non-representation of women in the village council like under the panchayat system where seats and post of chairmanship are reserved for women⁵⁸. In fact, the act has legalized or institutionalized the non-selection of women in village council especially in the Ao villages since the selection process provided under this act make it impossible for women in the Ao villages to be selected in the village council. The section 4 of the act states,

*“A village shall consists of members, chosen by villagers in accordance with the prevailing customary practices and usages, the same being approved by the state government”*⁵⁹. Under this act Putu Menden is allowed to function as village council, where only male members are eligible to occupy the seat of power in the village administration. Thus the continuation of the selection of members for village council based on age old

⁵⁷ The Nagaland Village and Area Council Act, 1978, p.63

⁵⁸ P.M.Bakshi, op.cit.,p. 206

⁵⁹ The Nagaland Village and Area Council Act, 1978, p.62

customary practice continues to act as the main stumbling block for women participation in the decision making process of the village . Compared to Ao villages, the selection process under Sumi villages is quite flexible though it is also based on customary practice. Under the traditional practices, the chief enjoy the power to select any member of the village to the village council. There was no strict guideline under customary practice of the Sumi tribes to select the council members only from a particular clan or gender. This argument is supported by the fact that in Sumi villages like Khukiye-Lukhai and Lumami village under Zunheboto district Nagaland, women are being appointed as member of the village council. Though the extent of their influence in the decision making process is debatable still then women are being selected in the council. Therefore so long the clause for the Ao area under the Nagaland village and Area council Act 1978 remains, discussion for women representation in Putu Menden will be a futile exercise.

4. **Village Court:** One of the most important responsibilities carried out by the village council is that of administering justice in the village. In this regard also, the act has not explore much in curtailing the powers of the village court to try and decide specific case. As a result village court continues to resolved all the cases whether criminal or civil, even sensitive cases of rape, domestic violence, divorce and murder that happens within the village jurisdiction⁶⁰. No doubt, in the post-colonial period the village court is no longer the highest court, and the disputing parties had the option of appealing their case in Dobashi Court⁶¹ or Higher Courts if they are not satisfied with the judgment of the village court⁶². However, in practice they are only few people staying in the village who take this route. It is rare for the villagers settling their disputes outside of village court. In this matter the Ao villages are found to be stricter then the Sumi villages, as one of the council member in the Ao village

⁶⁰ Information based on interview with council members and police personnel's

⁶¹ Village court are not subordinate to the Dobashi court

⁶² Moatoshi Ao, op.cit., p.192

share the view that there is a strict convention in the village where the villagers are discouraged to settle disputes outside the village court and even if the villagers take the case outside the village court, there is every likelihood that the case will be reverted back to the village court⁶³. Thus even today the village court has not lost its relevance and importance in the village administration as people still prefer it for settling their disputes whether it is civil or criminal cases⁶⁴. One of the reasons being it provides speedy and inexpensive justice. But most importantly people find judgment pronounced by the village court in most of the cases fair, which satisfies both the parties in dispute⁶⁵.

However, there is a need to explore the jurisdiction of the village court because though it is empowered to settle all types of civil and criminal cases, it is not empowered to dispose criminal cases of heinous crime in nature like rape, murder, counterfeit, arson, etc.⁶⁶. However, there are many instances where cases of that nature are being quietly settled by the village courts under their customary practices⁶⁷. Thus, the government needs to explore more in this matter because with the changing nature of the society and complexities of issues, more sensitivity is required in certain cases more specifically in terms of issues related to women and children. Since there are many instances where the method adopted by the village courts in settling cases under the customary practices are not in tune with the principles and values of modern justice system and since settlement under the village court focus more on compromise and reconciliation many a times justice is not served to the victims on sensitive cases especially related to women and child abuse. Thus, it is important to demarcate

⁶³ Council members (Ao villages) interview on September 18,2021 at Mokokchung.

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Information based on interview

⁶⁶ Moatoshi Ao, op.cit., p.151

⁶⁷ Though claimed to be in consensus with the family members of both the parties in dispute there are many occasion where under pressures from several quarter, victim or victims' families are forced to take this route.

jurisdiction of the cases over which the village courts can pronounce judgements and it should be implemented in letter and spirit ⁶⁸

Thus if we analyse the village administration of both the Ao and Sumi tribes we can find that traditional political institutions continue to occupy an important space. The Nagaland Village and Area Council Act of 1978 at no point in time was enacted to bring drastic changes in the structure of these institutions. It was done for the administrative convenience of the state administration. Thus we can add that though there is some form of uniformity in the structure of the village councils, when it comes to functioning of village council there are vast differences with heavy shades of working system that existed in the pre-colonial period.

Next chapter examine the impact of education, Christianity and electoral politics on the traditional political institutions.

⁶⁸ NGO leader working for women rights interview December 2018 at Dimapur

Chapter 4

The Impact of Christianity, Education and Electoral Politics

4.1 Introduction

Naga tribes for centuries have lived in isolation, having little contact with the outside world. However, it will also be incorrect to assume that prior to the coming of the British, Nagas did not have any contact with the outsiders. Nagas, before being wholly exposed to the outside

world were in constant contact with the Ahom kingdom as mentioned in the Buranjis, the officially compiled chronicles of the Ahom¹. The earliest relationship between the Ahoms and the Nagas were far from friendly, though in the later years, their attitudes towards each other gradually improved, as friendly relationships were cultivated for political and economic convenience which got further cemented by marriage relations². In the later years, the disintegration of the Ahom kingdom saw it being occupied by the Burmese, and later on by British after the Anglo-Burmese war. The occupation of Assam by the British subsequently brought them into contact with different Naga tribes. British government adopted two-pronged approach to deal with the Nagas that of showing friendly gesture and carrying out punitive attack. After some initial setbacks, the British over time were able to subsequently establish their control over the Naga Hills and divided into three Zones. a) Administered areas b) Political control areas c) Area beyond political control³. After establishing their the control over Naga Hills, British like in their other colonised areas introduce modern education and supported Missionaries for the spread of Christian teachings among the Naga tribes. The system of education promoted by the British government was utilitarian in philosophy, and one of their main objectives was aimed at producing clerks and assistants for office work. They did not have much intention to modernize the Naga society through education as a result British government did not make much emphasis to bring drastic change in the Naga tribe's style of life ⁴. This view can be substantiated based on the personal experiences shared by village elders. According to Holuvi, the school authorities did not allow him to study more than class II . In fact, he was demoted to class I on the excuse that he was too small though he was already 14 years of age. They were also not allowed to cut their

¹ H.Horam op.cit.,p5

² Ibid p 7

³ L.W. Shakespeare,.(1980). History of Assam Rifles, p.163; Dr.Piketo, Achumi.(1992) British Policy and Administration in Nagaland 1881-1947 . Offset press , Delhi. p 23

⁴ Mar Atsongchanger.(1995).*Christian Education and Change*.Christian Literature Centre, p.120

hair like western people or wear long pants and were allowed to wear only half pants. Further there was no school for higher education in the Naga areas⁵. According to the respondents some of the fortunate students from mission schools were sent to Jorhat for higher studies. All this indicates that British wanted to keep the Nagas as they were before. According to John Sema,

*“Maybe they intended not to civilize the Nagas but to keep them as their subject. Therefore they did not open high school for the Nagas”*⁶. Similar view of villagers not being allowed to cut their hair like westerners or allowing them to wear only half pants was also shared by elders from Ungma village based on their personal experience. It was with the coming of the Christian missionaries in Naga areas which not only led to the rapid spread of Christianity among the tribals⁷ but also expedite the spread of higher education among the Nagas which drastically broaden the outlook and mindset of the Nagas leading to changes in the cultural and social aspect of both the tribes which subsequently also had an impact on the functioning of the traditional political institutions.

4.2 Coming of Christianity and Education in Sumi and Ao areas

As discussed in the third chapter, the defeat of the Burmese in the Anglo-Burmese war resulted in Assam becoming part of the British Empire, and a common trend that was associated with British colonialism was that, colonialization of territories and promotion of Christianity went side by side. One of the reason being many British officers because of their faith and belief were keen on spreading the gospel and encourage conversion of the colonized people to Christianity⁸. Another reason being it benefited both the British administrators and

⁵ H.John Sema, op.cit.,p.62(Extracted from John Sema interview to Holuvi)

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Piketo Achumi. *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland 1881-1947*(3rd 2012). Scholar publishing house, p.77

⁸ Intimangyang, op.cit., p.78.

the Christian missionaries⁹. Therefore with the occupation of Assam, British civil servant David Scott serving in the North-East Frontier under the Bengal Presidency send his proposal to start missionary work in the region which got approved from the Governor General Council at Calcutta in 1828. After which Governor General Agent and commissioner of Assam, Captain Francis Jenkins, initiated the missionary work in the region. He wrote

“No intentions of mine of course are wanting to make the place comfortable to any missionary establishment. You may like to mention that I will subscribe Rs.1000/- if settled in Sadiya¹⁰.”

The invitation was accepted by Rev. Mrs. O.T.Cutter and his wife, and Rev. Nathan Brown and his wife, and they became the first American missionaries to enter Assam from Burma. Initially they did not have any plan to start their mission work in the Naga territories. Their initial plan was to extend their mission work from Assam to Shans of Burma and ultimately into China. However, when they were unable to move beyond Assam they abandoned their Shans and China mission. During this period, there was an invitation by Jenkins to start a mission work in the Naga territories which the American Missionaries readily accepted. Thus, Miles Bronson became the first American Christian missionary to settle and start mission work among the Nagas. He started his mission work in Namsang,¹¹ a Konyak village under the Tirap district where he established a school in which as many as twenty students got enrolled¹². The school primarily engaged in imparting Christian education along with personal hygiene and etiquette. However, the Namsang mission could not last long because of the ravaging deadly disease that struck the missionaries. With no medical assistance the

⁹ Kanayo Louis Nwadior & Nwachukwu J. Obiafor. (2015). The Gospel and the Flag: The Missionary Strands in the British Colonial Enterprise in Nigeria, 1841-1960. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy, 4(3),p.251.

¹⁰ Sadiya at present is a town in Tinsukia district, Assam.

¹¹ Namsang at present is a Tehsil in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. It is in the Tirap district of India

¹² Gordon E. Pruet.(1974). Christianity, history, and culture in Nagaland. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, p.52

situation got worse and it became impossible to continue their stay in the hills. Thus, the Namsang mission was abandoned towards the end of 1840¹³

In spite of the short duration of Bronson's missionary work among the Nagas, he achieved more than what was expected since for the first time, he was able to obtain a personal knowledge of the Nagas living on the border of British territories which enabled other missionaries to reside constantly amongst the Nagas without the slightest apprehension of danger. The contribution and importance of Bronson's earlier mission work was later highlighted by Downs;

*"If he had been able to remain at Namsang for another year or two, it is likely that the first church among the Nagas would have been established in 1842 rather than 1872"*¹⁴.

In fact, Bronson's pioneering services paved the way for future missionaries to work upon. "The Nagas remember Clark or Rivenburg today, but "it is highly doubtful that any of these would have had the opportunity to render service they did if it had not been for the foundations laid by Miles Bronson".¹⁵.

After Bronson's initial work among the Nagas nothing practically was done to carry forward his unfinished works until Reverend E.W. Clark along with his wife Mary Wead Clark came to join the Sibsagar Mission in 1871-2. The first encounter of the Rev Clark with the Ao Nagas came as a result of an epidemic probably chickenpox that occurred in Ao village that forced the villagers to seek shelter in the plain areas due to fear of disease. Secondly when the Ao villagers from Molungkimong came to seek food in the Assam area

¹³ N, Toshi, Ao.(1995) cited in Imtimangyang, op.cit.,p.79

¹⁴ Downs, F.S. : *Mighty Works of God* cited in S.K. Barpujari(1971). *Miles Bronson : His mission of civilisation in the Naga Hills* .Proceedings of the Indian History Congress , 1971, 3, p. 528

¹⁵ Ibid

after the village was hit by famine. During their stay, villagers came across new things like the printing press, type setting, and also witness children learning at the mission school. They were fascinated by this experience, thus invited the missionaries to come to their village to teach their children¹⁶. These two-encounter with the villagers also helped the missionaries to know about the Nagas tribes and they decided to bring the gospel of God among the Ao tribes. However, Clark initial request to visit the Ao village was denied, therefore he sent his assistant Godula and his wife Lucy to visit the Ao village. When they landed in Molungkimong village, the village leaders did not allow them to enter because village leaders were suspicion of him as being a British spy or a spy from neighbouring tribes. However, when they realized that he meant no harm he was permitted to make social contact with the villagers without any restriction¹⁷. Later Clark also join Godula after gaining permission to visit Molungkimong village at his own risk. Clark stay in the village was not easy as he faced opposition from the beginning, since his preaching were mostly aimed at doing away the age old custom and tradition practice by the villagers, which the tribal leaders saw as a direct challenge to their authority, and saw his preaching a seditious challenge to village unity. Clark responded by moving the converted christians out of the Molungkimong village. He founded a new Christian village calling it Molung (Molungyimsen). It remained the Centre for Baptist mission work in the Eastern Naga Hills until 1894, when the Centre was shifted to Impur¹⁸.

The spread of Christianity in the Sumi area was more difficult compared to the Ao areas in those days. Since there was stiff opposition to the spread of Christian religion in the Sumi villages as the village chiefs and elders persecuted those villagers who converted to

¹⁶ A.Bendangyabang Ao (2004). History of Christianity in Nagaland social change 1872-1972 .
Shalom Ministry Publications, pp 67-69

¹⁷ Ibid p.70

¹⁸ Intimangyang.(2017). A brief historical account: Christianity among the Ao Nagas of North-East India. *National Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 2(3),p.81

Christianity. The main reason for the stiff opposition was that the newly converts started to question and challenge the authority of the traditional leaders by refusing to worship or perform rituals and observe the gennas pronounced by their leaders, where the chief himself was the priest. Seeing the difficulties and problems faced by the newly converts in terms of not able to openly practice their Christian beliefs, missionaries visualized that the only way to spread gospel of Christ in the Sumi area was first and foremost to befriend the chief and convert him to Christianity. Rev.Dr, Bailey said that,

“Unlike Ao, the Sumi villagers were founded by the chief. Thus, he is the ruler of the village and the people obey the chief without any question. They have got hereditary chief who is autocratic and powerful. Therefore, to convert the Sumis, the chief should be first converted, then only the whole village can be converted because all the villagers are his subject and so they will obey him to accept the new religion”¹⁹.

Thus, when the most powerful Dobashi Inaho converted to Christianity the persecution of the villagers converted to Christianity was put to an end which subsequently helped in the spread of Christianity and education among the Sumis²⁰. Though the Sumis unlike the Aos did not have a resident American missionary until the late 1940s due to funding problems and remote geographical location, it did not prevent the conversion work among the Sumi as they were converted to Christianity at an amazingly rapid rate without any direct missionary influence on them ²¹.

4.3 Impact of Christianity and Education

The spread of christianity and education among the Nagas went side by side, since it was a common strategy adopted by the missionaries to start a mission school along with the

¹⁹ Najekhu Yeptho cited in H John Sema, op.cit., p.62

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Iliyana, Angelova.(2017). Colonila rule,Christianity and sociocultural(dis)continuities among the Sumi Naga. *The South Asianist*,5(1), p.28; Richard M,Eaton.(1984). Conversion to Christianity among the Nagas ,1876-1971. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* ,21,1 SAGE,Delhi/Beverly Hills London, p.34

establishment of church because they felt that “without giving education Christianity cannot be deeply rooted in the hearts of the Nagas”²². Nagas, before the coming of the Christian missionaries were following an animist religion which were clouded with superstitious belief. Further, under their old religion there were various gennas which were observed and followed by the villagers without any question. However, the newly converts began to question and challenged some of those practices. In fact they refused to participate in any of those gennas associated with their old religion. This had a direct consequence on the political relations between the traditional authorities and the villagers in both the Sumi and Ao tribes villages. According to John Sema, the influence of Christianity and education was intensely felt in the Sumi villages and it penetrated deep in their life and philosophy that resulted in changes not only in the socio-cultural and economic aspects but it also brought changes in the village political system²³. The reason being the chief in Sumi village was not only a political figure but also played an important role in the religious affairs of the village in the pre-colonial period. In fact, there were villages where he held and performed both the duty of the chief and the priest. And in villages where a separate person was appointed as the priest, it was the chief who guides the rituals performed by the priest. Thus, the Chief post was not only a political institution but was considered a divine institution, as a result there was complete obligation to the authority of the Chief. The order proclaimed by the chief was final and binding upon all the villagers and it was obligatory for all the villagers to obey the command of the chief. However, with the acceptance of Christianity people started refusing to follow the orders issued by the chief especially related to the observation of gennas in the village as the newly converts considered it against the teaching of their new Christian faith²⁴. They also refused to pay the customary contribution of meat to any chief who has not accepted

²² S.W.Rivenburg,” Report from the Ao-Naga Field” Sixth Session, December 22nd-23rd American Baptist Missionary union 1900, p.36

²³ H.John Sema op.cit.,p.64

²⁴ Ibid

Christian teachings and has not become a Christian. Further they also refused to go to the chief's field for free labour²⁵. Thus, villagers who embraced Christianity started opposing the sanctity earlier associated with the traditional institutions which directly impacted the power and prestige of the Chief. However, it is also to be pointed out that in villages where the Chief was an educated and wealthy Christian, his power and prestige was enhanced considerably²⁶. A fact, which holds true even today²⁷

The embracement of Christianity by the Sumis in the initial stage also brought about a situation in the village that led to the interference of the British administrators even in the selection process of the headman (Chief) though it was hereditary. For instance, the government passed an order that the village headmen's who converted to Christianity were not allowed to continue as headmen on the pretext that the headmen (converts) will not be able to serve the interest of the ancients (non-converts) on whose welfare and obedience the government put great emphasis. In such a scenario, the authority of headship had to devolve to any ancient who might be in direct line of succession²⁸. However, with the embracement of Christianity by majority of the villagers including the Headmen and Dobashi, such order was gradually relaxed. Therefore in 1946, it laid down that: "In future Christian who should by custom be appointed Gaonbura (village headman) will not be turned out of the village for failure to officiate in the office"²⁹. Thus, after the initial interference by the British administration there has not been interference by the government on the issue of appointment of village headmen/Gaonburas (chief) in Sumi villages.

²⁵ DC standing order no 8, D.R.O Kohima March 1938 /office records in 1961, Mokokchung Deputy Commissioner's office.

²⁶ Piketo, Sema. (1991). *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*. Sterling Pub, New Delhi, p.51

²⁷ The influence of the chief in the Sumi village varies from village to village, higher the socio-economic and political status the greater their influence and vice-versa

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Piketo, Achumi.op.cit., p. 90.

One of the positive consequences of the spread of Christianity in the Naga areas was that it brought about relative peace among the feuding Naga villages and led to cessation of warfare and headhunting practice among the Naga tribes which had a direct consequence upon the powers of the Sumi chief. The reason being, as the practice of waging war in the neighbouring areas came to an end, it also put an end to Sumi chief practice of expanding their territories by way of waging war in the neighbouring villages. Since this practice had enabled Sumi chief to allocate land for their sons to establish separate village for themselves thereby resolving any feud that might emerge on the issue of chieftainship among the chiefs' sons and his brothers. But with the stagnation of territories due to cessation of warfare for territories there emerge intrigues among the brothers on the consequent dissolution of authority³⁰.

Another change that was witnessed in the Sumi villages with the spread of education and Christianity was the emergence of educated middle class. The exposure to the outside worldview led to development of consciousness for greater political participation in the decision making process among the educated class. With the passage of time, they started taking over many roles which were earlier played by the traditional chief. Further, educated Christians started forming religious and secular organisation, which greatly affected the position of the chief³¹. Thus, education in the post-colonial era became a means to improve one's position in the village political hierarchy just like the practice of headhunting in the pre-colonial period³². This had an impact on the power of the chief because as the villagers' dependence upon the Chief for their survival got minimized due to changing socio-economic and political scenario of the village the influence of the chief upon the villagers also got reduced. However, some chiefs were wise enough to reap the benefit of education and

³⁰ Census of India 1921, Assam ch xi cited in Piketo Achumi, op.cit., p.91

³¹ H John Sema, op.cit., p.64

³² Angelova, op.cit., p. 23

modernization which further strengthened his position in the village enabling him to continue to exercise his power authoritatively. Thus villages where dependence of the villagers upon the chief is more, the chief has a greater say in the administration of the village. In fact, he can exercise his power in an authoritative manner. But in villages where the dependence of the villagers is less upon the chief due to their improved socio-economic and political status of villagers there is greater check upon the powers of the chief that prevent him to act in an authoritative manner³³.

One of the visible impact of the spread of Christianity in all the Naga villages that has been address by different scholars is the disappearance of certain cultural practice and traditional institutions. Important traditional practice like feast of merits³⁴ and Tuluni³⁵ was discouraged among the Sumi tribes by the missionaries and the newly converted ones, since those practices were considered against Christian principles. Similarly traditional educational institution like Tupuki or Apuki and Iliki³⁶ also got slowly replaced by the modern school. All these traditional practices and institutions were of great significance in the pre-colonial period since these important events and institutions revolve around the chief which greatly enhanced his power, prestige and position in social and political hierarchy of the village. However, the discontinuation of these traditional practice and institutions also led to a decline in the prestige and position of the chief among the villagers. Further, the spread of education and Christianity also led to the discontinuation of many of the privileges enjoyed by the chief and his elders (in terms of free labour from their subjects, gifts, hind leg of the wild animals and

³³ Prof H.John Sema Nagaland University personal interview on September 2021 at Chumukedima

³⁴ Wealthy and powerful men organizing feast for the whole village. The feast of merit in some form or the other is still practice .For instance wealthy men organizing Christmas feast for the whole village or community. The only difference being the strict rituals and gennas associated with the feast of merit inot observed. Kallol Dey.(2018 Indian express).Naga tradition: The Feast of Merit. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/north-east-india/nagaland/naga-tradition-the-feast-of-merit-5136086/>

³⁵ Tulini festival is still celebrated but not based on the rituals of old tradition but mostly based on Christian's beliefs.

³⁶ Tupuki or Apuki was boys dormitory and Iliki girls dormitory

other privileges on important ceremonies) as villagers started refusing to carry out services for the chief which in the pre-colonial period was carried out without any question. All this led to a change in the position of the chief system among the Sumis. Since he is now no longer the sole authority to decide on the affairs of the village. Similar observation was also made by Sukhato Rotokha, according to him the influence of Christianity had curtailed the dictatorial powers of the chief to some extent³⁷. In the pre-Christian society, the chief word was law and defiance to this order resulted in several consequences, or expulsion from the village. Today it is not so, his orders if against the benefit of the villagers would be debated and tested publicly at different forum. Further, the religious role of the Chief and traditional priest was taken up by the Pastors which diminished the sacerdotal status associated with the institution of chieftainship which naturally diminished the aura and power earlier enjoyed by the chiefs.

Compared to the Sumi tribes, the impact of the spread of Christianity and education on Putu Menden was not drastic. The acceptance and practice of the Christian belief did not brought about much change in the structure and functioning of the Putu Menden (**Figure 4.1**).

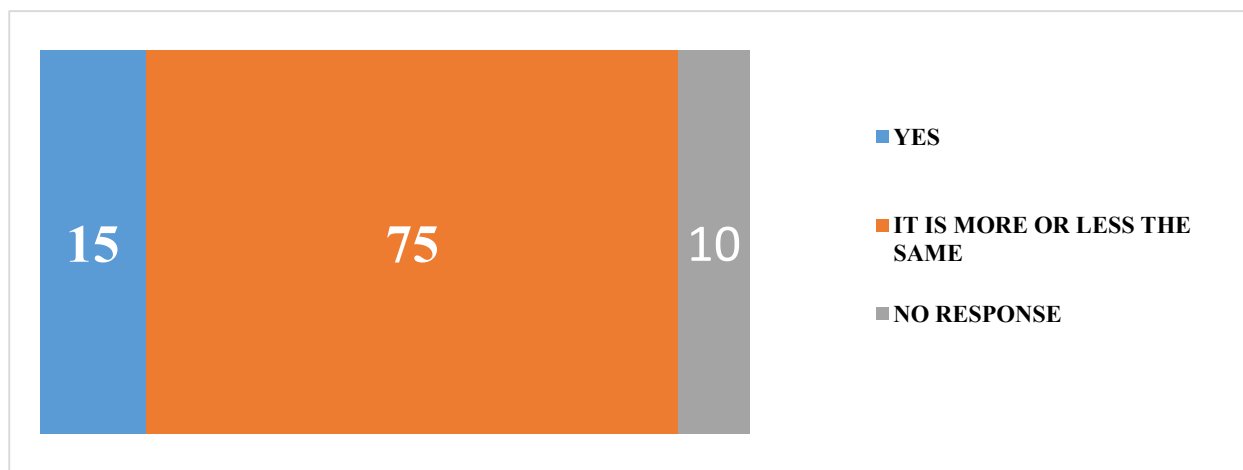
According to Talitemjen & Lanununsang

“Since recent years, many changes have started taking place in different dimensions but hardly any change is identified in the traditional institution like Putu Menden. In certain village, the size and tenure of the seat of administration are changing according to the changing trends and size of the population. The institution of Angship among the Konyaks and Chiefship among the Sumis still continues with honor and respect. Chungli and Mongsen system of administration among the Aos still continues and practice will continue in future too because this is their custom and practice. No change in application of customary law is

³⁷ Vesier Sanyu. Christian impact and conflict resolution abstract from J. Puthenpurakal (Ed). (1996). impact of Christian in North East India, Vendrame Institute Publication shillong.

*identified specially in its principle and the structure. The amount of fines imposed or the quantity may vary from village to village and from time to time but it does not mean that there is change in its institution'*³⁸. No doubt the spread of Christianity brought about wholesome change in the social-cultural aspect of the society. But in terms of its impact on the structure and functioning of Putu Menden, not much change was seen. However, similar to that of Sumi chief, the spread of Christianity combined with education has to some extent reduce the absolute authority exercise by the traditional authorities under Putu Menden. For instance, in the pre-colonial period Putu Menden had absolute power over religious, social, economic and political affairs of the village. In the religious matters it was the council members who for the welfare of the village initiated number of rituals and ceremonies to be observed by the villagers. The

Figure 4.1 Do you see any major changes in the working of the village administration (Putu Menden)?



days, nature of sacrifice and rituals that were to be observed by the village as a community were generally decided by the Putu Menden and those were observed by the villagers without any question. But with conversion of some Ao villagers to Christianity, and the start of church in 1872 at Molungkimong, the authority of the Putu Menden began to be challenged. In fact, it was due to the conversion of fifteen families to Christianity that led to division of

³⁸ N.Talitemjen Jamir & A Lanunungsang, op.cit.,pp.343-344.

village council and eventually resulted in the establishment of the new village Molungyimsen from Molungkimong in 1876³⁹. The newly converted villagers just like in Sumi villages refused to participate or observe the rituals or perform sacrifices related to the old religion. They also refused to contribute towards the expenses that were incurred due to the sacrifices made to several deities. All these disrupted the idea of community worship that had long existed in the Ao villages. In the initial period village leaders responded to such rebellion by the newly converts by imposing fine, asked them to render free labour for the community, their property being seized and as a last resort excommunicated them from the village. The numerous cases between the non-converts and Christians that were brought before the *Dobashi* Court, Mokokchung are evidence that with spread of Christianity, cohesion in the village was undermined⁴⁰. Again those members of Putu Menden and Goanbura who were converted to Christianity were also removed from their position. Under such circumstances, the deposed members of the Putu Menden and Goanbura reverted to their old religion in order to retain their position, since members of the Putu Menden and the Gaonburas were required to be non-converts under their prevailing circumstances. However, such requirement was ended with the acceptance of Christianity by majority of the villagers. The impact of the spread of Christianity upon the powers of the Putu Menden can also be seen by the fact that the traditional authorities had to pursue cases at the Dobashi court, Mokokchung, to compel the newly converts to follow their directives. In other words, the Putu Menden had to rely on the British administration to compel the Christian villagers to obey their directives. Put differently, it means that the Ao Christian villagers no longer felt the need to obey the Putu Menden. Thus, with the spread of Christianity, the functioning of the Putu Menden was restricted as they could no longer convince the newly converts to observe certain rituals, pay

³⁹. L. Kijung Ao.(1972). *Nokinketer Mungchen*, Gauhati: The Christian Literature Centre, pp. 47-48.

⁴⁰Lanusangla Tzudir.(2003). *From Headhunting to Christianity: Questions of Cultural Identity in Ao Land* (PhD thesis). Jawaharla Nehru University , New Delhi, p. 139.

for the expenses of sacrifices that were made to appease the gods and compel the villagers to send their children to the Ariju or the Tsuki (male and female dormitory respectively). Thus the absolute power of the Putu Menden upon the villagers got reduced since newly Ao Christian villagers refused to give their “ political obligation to the Putu Menden ⁴¹ on issue which were against their Christian beliefs .

The spread of Christianity and education among the Nagas also had an impact upon the justice system under the traditional institutions. According to one elder while narrating the functioning of the Putu Meden in the pre-colonial period said that earlier the members of the Putu Menden prayed for more crime be committed in the village, so that they can imposed harsh punishment upon the offender. The punishment were usually in the form of pigs, cows etc. based on the nature of the crime which the offender or in the event of non-payment, offender relatives has to pay. The reason he sighted was that in the pre-colonial period eating meat on regular basis was a rarity and since village councils did not have much source of income, it relied upon community collection to buy pig or cow to have such feast. Thus imposition of fines upon the offenders was an easy means for the Tatars to have meat for themselves on regular basis without having to collect money to buy it⁴². However, he pointed out that with the acceptance of Christianity, there is a sense of apathy towards fellow villagers and fines have been reduced considerably. He also pointed out that influenced by the Christian teaching of forgiveness, now emphasis during settlement of issue is more on forgiveness rather than on punishment⁴³ . Such changes were also observed by Lanusangla in her research work where she pointed out that the spread of Christianity among the Aos has made the Putu Menden more sympathetic and tolerant in its working. Earlier, all practices and rituals were to be observed in the village stringently and solemnly manner. Its violation would

⁴¹Imnazenla , Longkumer. (2018).*Political Obligation and Traditional Institutions: A Study of Putu Menden of the Ao Nagas* (Ph.D thesis). North-Eastern Hill University Shillong, p.97

⁴²Fines in any form on most occasions were distributed among the members of the Putu Menden

⁴³ Mar (ex-council member) interview on December 2020 at Chumukedima

invite severe punishment from the Putu Menden. But change was brought by the spread of Christianity and its teaching of forgiveness and tolerance. The relation between the Putu Menden and the villagers became more positive due to influence of Christianity. In addition, with the conversion to Christianity, members of the Putu Menden became more humble and the excessive use of authority by the Putu Menden was reduced. Also the hierarchy that had existed in relationship between members of the Putu Menden and the villagers was also reduced.⁴⁴

4.4 Issue of capable leaders

British occupation of the Naga Hills brought to an end the state of anarchy in most part of the Naga territories. Coupled with that there was conversion of Nagas to Christianity at a rapid pace and also spread of education among the Nagas. All these factors contributed to opening up better avenues and opportunities for the villagers to earn their livelihood outside their villages. This resulted in villagers migrating to other places in search of greener pasture and, this to some extent reduced the pool of capable leaders to be selected as council members. This is more prominent in the Ao villages since in the case of Sumi there is not much restriction in the selection of villagers as council members. Whereas in the case of the Aos, selection of representatives for village council is still based on traditional practices of age-group system where the pool from which the members to be selected is restricted. Such method of selection in the pre-colonial period was not a major issue because all the villagers were residing within their village but in the present day it is an issue, since villagers⁴⁵ migrating to urban areas has reduced the pool of villagers from which representatives are to be chosen. Because of this the strict adherence regarding sanctity of candidates to be selected as council members which was followed in the pre-colonial period has been relaxed to some extent in order to adapt itself with the

⁴⁴ Imnazenla Longkumer. *Political Obligation And Traditional Institutions: A Study Of Putu Menden of the Ao Nagas (Ph.D thesis)*, North-Eastern Hill University Shillong, p. 97

⁴⁵ Educated and potential good leaders do not stay in the village as most of them migrated to town areas.

changing circumstances. For instance, in the case of Ao villages illegitimate child, person with any record of theft, and any other similar wrong doing record are not even considered for selection no matter what the socio-economic and political background of the person may be. But according to one of the respondents today this is not the case, as villagers with dubious record are being selected as council members. Therefore, Putu Menden as an institution, people still have great regard but not so much for most of the Tatars like it used to be in the past. The sanctity which was associated with the post of Tatars in the pre-colonial period has been lost to a great extent in the modern period.

4.5 From oral society to written

Before the coming of the Christian missionaries, there was no written literature among the Nagas. The knowledge regarding their system of administration, customary laws and practices were passed on from generation to generation orally. The Christian missionaries thus introduced the Roman script among the Nagas. Horam wrote:

“The constant feuds and head-hunting of these people were cut short by the new doctrine based on love and brotherhood. Apart from this, the Naga literature before the coming of Christianity was purely oral, now they have been written”⁴⁶.

Thus, if we analyse the impact of Christianity and education on the traditional political institutions from the perspective of governance, it can be argued that it had positive outcome (figure 4.2). No doubt, the spread of education and Christianity among the Nagas have led to the loss of some traditional and cultural practices, and values. However, in terms of governance it had a positive impact on the functioning of these traditional institutions. Since with the spread of Christianity and modern education, villagers started questioning certain taboos and gennas that were based on superstitious belief. Such taboos and gennas were

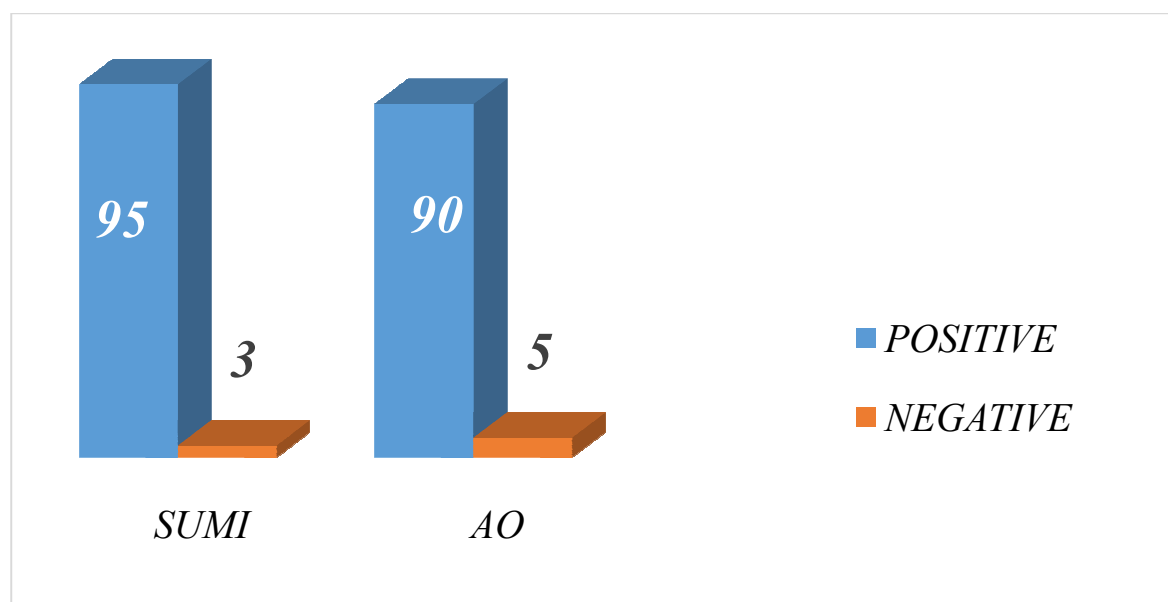
⁴⁶ M.Horam. *The Advent of Christianity and its Impact on Naga Society* (unpublished paper) cited in Vesier Sanyu.(2008). *A History of Nagas and Nagaland(Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Village Formation)*. Commonwealth Publishers , New Delhi, p.121.

countered and some got abolished. Thus the absolute authority enjoyed by the traditional authorities in the pre-colonial period got reduced.

4.6 Emancipation of women

The section of the community that benefited the most from the spread of Christianity and education was the women community. If we look at the research work and literature, we find that Naga society was very superstitious in the pre-colonial period as a result there were various taboos observe by the villagers. These taboos were observed without any question by the villagers, since they believe that it was necessary for the safety of the

Figure 4.2 Impact of Christianity positive or negative



community as a whole. Though both men and women observed various taboos, it impacted women more in the sense that those taboos act as a hindrance for the social and political progress of women in the pre-colonial period. For instance women in the past were viewed as perilous creature in many ways that can bring ill luck to the entire society.. Traditionally it was also considered a bad omen if a women comes nearby Ariju because they were considered as profane. Men also did not trust the ability of the women to maintain

confidentiality of the matter being discussed in the Arijū⁴⁷. They were debarred from performing religious rites and sacrifices. They were not allowed to come to village common altar. Female sexuality was believed to be impure and polluted⁴⁸. Thus in a sense most of the taboos was negative in nature. In terms of traditional center of learning also, women traditional educational institution like Tsuki, had secondary position compared to Arijū. In the sense that all the important decision of the village were taken at Arijū, Tsuki on the other hand was involved only in imparting socio-cultural education of carrying out activities like washing, cleaning, cooking, looking after children, caring for sick etc.⁴⁹. Thus Arijū was a place where future leaders were trained and polished to take up future leadership role of the village whereas Tsuki was a place where girls were trained to take up social role in the society and family as wife and mother⁵⁰. However, with the spread of education and Christianity among the Nagas, the superstitious negative attitude towards women started to diminish, which led to discontinuation of numerous taboos directed towards women. Also the embracement of Christian religion by majority Nagas resulted in religious role being separated from functioning of the Putu Menden which opened up the space for the participation of women in the religious affairs of the village which was a taboo in the pre-colonial period. The positive outcome of church ministry among the women community was also highlight by Toshimenla in her book *Women and Politics in Nagaland*, where she stated that the involvement of women in the church organisation helped women realize their self-worth and developed confidence in the patriarchal social set-up⁵¹. The traditional educational institutions like Arijū and Tsuki which was based on gendered role with different set of

⁴⁷ Toshimenla Jamir (2012). *Women and Politics in Nagaland: Challenges and Imperatives*. concept publishing company, p.25

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ N.Talitemjen Jamir & A Lanunungsang, op.cit., p.102

⁵⁰ However, if we look at the context of the Naga society such role assigned was based on the needs and context of their society during that period. The respective role played by both the gender was equally important for the survival of their family and village as a whole

⁵¹ Toshimenla Jamir, op.cit., p.27

curriculum got replaced by the modern school with uniform pattern of education and curriculum for both the genders. This enabled women to have access to the same education along with men which helped them to broaden their outlook and mindset to look beyond the household chores work. Though initially most of the parents were not in favour of women education, with the passage of time, especially after realizing education as a means to improve their children and family resources and status, parents have been at the forefront for girls' education. Thus easy access to education due to the support from the family has helped women to pursue higher education which enabled them to access white collar jobs and service sectors which would have not been possible with the education women were being imparted under the traditional education institutions. Therefore, spread of Christianity and access to modern education has positively expedite the emancipation and empowerment process of Naga women⁵².

4.7 Status of women in Naga society

Nagas society in the pre-colonial period were in a state of anarchy requiring the villagers to support each other for their survival. There was clear division of role based on the biological strength of each other. Men focused their energy on warfare and security of the village. Whereas women focused on taking up social responsibilities. Many of the scholars have interpreted the social role played by women as secondary role. However, if we take into account the context of the Naga society in the pre-colonial period, the role played by men and women were of equal importance for the survival of the village. The division of roles was not based on "gender bias" but based on merit as both the gender were assigned roles where they were best suited based on the prevailing nature of their society. Further there is also a tendency to interpret taboos and gennas being bias towards women. However, the fact is that taboos and gennas during the pre-colonial period touched everyone and it was performed by

⁵² Argument based on observation and discussion with respondents

all because of their belief that it was for the welfare of the village. According to the respondents women were not allowed to come near Arijū by council members for their belief that it will bring them bad luck during their raid on enemy camp or they feared that the secret of their warfare plan will be leaked due to the gossiping nature of women. Similarly, intercourse before warfare or hunting was not allowed as there was a belief that it will bring bad luck. Therefore, taboos and gennas in the pre-colonial period were observed by all and were not made with the intention of discriminating women. This argument can be substantiated by the fact that Naga society have done away with most of the superstitious belief and discriminatory practices with the spread of education and contact with the outside world which has enable upward mobility of women in various socio-economic field. But it is also a fact that there is still lack of visibility in terms of their formal political participation in the decision-making process, especially in the village council. Some of the causes that have continued to prevent upward of mobility of women in the political arena are discussed under the following points.

Culture and traditional norms

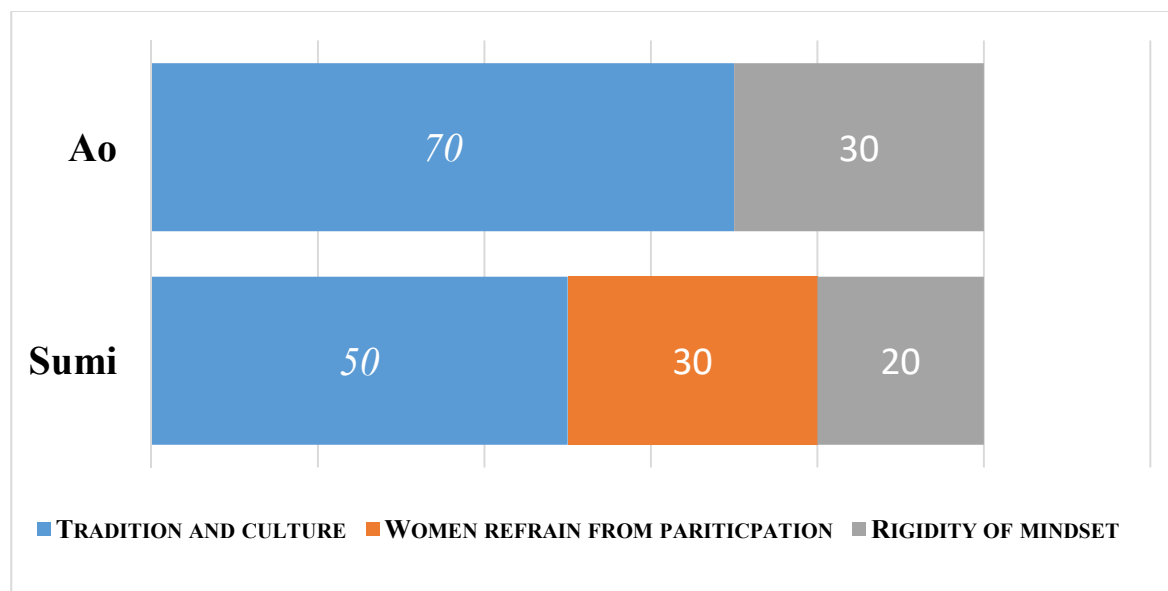
In the pre-colonial period tribals were at war with each other which naturally led to men taking up the responsibility to protect their village from the raid of other tribals. This trend continue to presist even in the modern times as there are only countable villages where women are being selected as coucil members, and the respondents mainly attribute it to cultural and traditional norms (figure 4.3).

Rigidity of mindset

In most of the societies, women are portrayed as weak and incapable of making smart political decisions. They have been depicted across generations to be only capable of trivial matters, constantly engaged in gossip and hearsay, incompetent, emotional and less intelligent when it comes to politics. Though their capability in the socio-economic sphere

is highly appreciated and respected by the society but when it comes to politics women are still considered inferior to men. Thus, in such a scenario, most of the women find it hard to pursue their political rights as an active participant ⁵³. During the interview, women in both the tribes villages do support the idea of inclusion of competent women in the village council according to the changing times. However, they find it difficult to push forward the agenda regarding selection of women in village council, since they knew that it will be dismissed without much discussion . Thus the continuation of such rigid mindset over

Figure 4.3. Main reason for non-inclusion of women in village council



issue of women representation in politics among majority of the population across gender continues to be a reason for their non-representation in the village council . The only difference one can find in this regard between the two tribes is that as the villages in Sumi areas developed in terms of education and come in close proximity with the urban areas there is more likelihood of women being selected as council members. For instance, Lumami and Khukiye Lukhai village has selected women as village council members. Lumami village is located near Nagaland University, where as Khukiye Lukhai village is near the Sataka town

⁵³ Komath, A. (2014). Why didn't the Arab Spring translate to political rights for women in the MiddleEast? Iknowpolitics.org. Retrieved from [http://iknowpolitics.org/en/knowledge-library/opin ion- pieces/why-didnt-arab-spring-translate-politicalrights-women-middle-east](http://iknowpolitics.org/en/knowledge-library/opin- ion- pieces/why-didnt-arab-spring-translate-politicalrights-women-middle-east)

under Zunheboto district . Further, the first and only Naga Woman chairman of a Village Council Tokeheli Kikon, Naharbari village, Dimapur is from Sumi community. Also Xukhepu village under Zunheboto district had selected a women, Suniho Zhimomi as VDB secretary⁵⁴ and in a first initiative Mrs. Kalito has been appointed as the head of the Deacon Board Sumi Baptist Church under Zunheboto district⁵⁵. However, in the case of Ao villages whether a village is in remote or town areas, developed or underdeveloped there is less likelihood of women being selected as council members so long as the criteria and selection process to the village council for Ao villages remain the same under the Nagaland Area and village council Act 1978⁵⁶ that can be understood by statements of one of the council members

“In the next 50 to 100 years there is less likelihood for women to be part of Putu Menden”

Family work and time constraints

Generally women in most of the societies around the world take up the responsibilities of household chores which enable men, time and energy to take up the societal responsibilities. Thus family responsibilities which usually are taken up by women leave them with not much alternatives to fully engage in politics. However on further probing whether they will take up the responsibilities of the council members given an opportunity majority of the interviewers responded negatively. In contrast women who were occupying some form of leadership role in various committees under the village council like leaders in Watsu, STH, SHG etc responded positively. Thus providing space and exposure, and support from the family play an importance role for women to actively participate in areas where traditionally their participation has been negligible.

⁵⁴ Naga women in decision making. Retrieved from <https://morungexpress.com/naga-women-decision-making>

⁵⁵ Prof H.John Sema interview on September 2020 at Dimapur

⁵⁶ Cited in chapter 3 (three),p.17

Women themselves adhered to their ‘exclusion’ from the traditional political institutions

Majority of the women in both the tribes villages adhered to their exclusion from the traditional political institutions. This continuous adherence by women to their ‘exclusion’ from the traditional political institutions can be attributed to their long period of non-participation in the decision-making process of village council which has resulted in majority of the women not feeling personally associated with the governance of the village which can be summed up by the statement of one of the women respondents (Ao village).

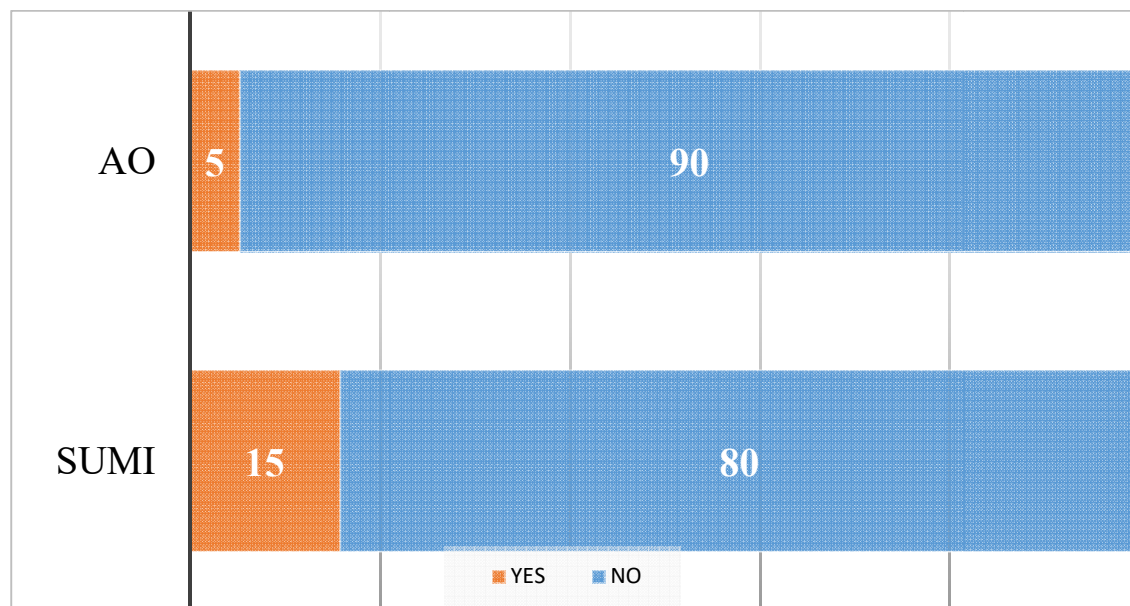
According to her

“Since women know that no matter how capable they may be, they will be not be selected in the village council so most of the women hardly show any interest in the functioning of the village council and consider it as the domain of men”

Thus, it is still a norm in most of the Ao and Sumi villages to have annual general meetings without the presence of a single woman. This is largely because of the political socialization regarding the different roles between man and woman especially in rural areas concerning politics. This has resulted in a political culture where even with acceptance of modernity, majority of women stays away from village politics as they considered it to be the domain of men, and family remains their main priority in rural areas . Therefore majority of the women in village do not see non-representation of women a major issue (Figure 4.4). They also pointed out that though there is no women representation in the village council, women specific needs are not being neglected . Further one of the respondents in the Ao villages pointed out that though they do not get formal representation in the village council, it does not mean that they have no voice in the village since they do indirectly participate through lobbying with the decision makers in informal meeting, which is popularly known as

Kitchen Cabinet⁵⁷ in politics . Therefore they do not feel helpless since they are able to influence the decision in their favour by lobbying through informal talks with the council members, their wife or some influential elders in the village.

Figure 4.4 Is non-represetnation of women in the village council a major issue for you.



Limited role of Women Organisation in the Village

Sumi Totimi Hoho (STH) in Sumi villages and Watsu in Ao villages are the most important women organisation which plays a crucial role in taking up initiatives to check anti-social activities in the village and protecting the rights of the women. These organisations are involved in various activities: from banning sale of liquor and other abusive substances to taking up issue of domestic abuse or adultery in their respective villages. Emphasising the importance of STH and Watsu one respondents said that women folk in the village may not

⁵⁷. "Kitchen cabinet" was first applied derogatorily by President of the United States Andrew Jackson opposition, to describe an informal group of advisers who maintained great influence over the President, particularly on matters of party and patronage by Richard B. Latner(1978). The Kitchen Cabinet and Andrew Jackson's Advisory System. *The Journal of American History*,65(2), pp. 367-388

understand women's rights but they know that any issues related to women will be taken up by the women organisation in the village. However, though these women organisations play an important role in the village, their activities are confined to economic and social issues of women. They have limited influence with regard to taking up the issue of women representation in the village council⁵⁸ especially in the case of Ao villages.

4.8 Women empowerment and political representation

The issue of women representation in politics has dominated the 21st century. Under representation of women in politics is a common phenomenon all around the world. To address the issue various conference have been held, some of the notable being the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. The main recommendation of this conference has been to take affirmative action by its member nation in the form of “quotas” reserved for women in party politics or parliament, in order to address the issue of lack of women representation in politics. However, there has always been question over the outcome of such affirmative action to bring about political equality. Does the increase of women in the parliament or village council through quotas able to address the issue of marginalized women (common women) which they advocate to address. Whether increasing number of women representation in parliament or local administration is the only way to address the issue of women, without which they remain powerless. This issue has been address thoroughly by different scholars which are been analysed below.

The paradox of gender representation and political empowerment.

If we look around the world women representation in legislature has been achieved through two ways one is voluntary quota without having any legal binding like in Nordic countries, and through affirmative actions “quotas” like in many Latin America and African countries.

⁵⁸ Moameren Pongen & Neizhanuo Golmei.(2021). Women and Traditional Naga Political Institutions: An Analysis. *Seshadripuram Journal of Social Sciences (SJSS)*, 2(3),p.48.

Among the countries with the highest female representation is that of Rwanda. Such high representation was achieved due to the genocide that happened during the civil war after which the country population was left with 70 % female. These necessitate women filling up the role which usually men would have occupied. Recent studies on the impact of such representation on women empowerment reveal that no doubt, the country achieved an impressive feat with its level of gender representation in politics, but there is more to be done to help translate that empowerment of women to daily society⁵⁹. Similar studies conducted on the impact of women reservation in Panchayati indicates that increasing gender representation through quotas does not necessarily lead to the empowerment of women. The findings of several studies also indicate that affirmative action in local government has given rise to what has been termed “de facto” politics, that is, a situation where individuals (husband/father/uncle /son) other than the elected representatives (Women Sarpanch) carry out the functions of the panchayat representatives⁶⁰. Further, though an increase in their numbers, most of the elected female representatives remain mute spectators to the proceedings of the panchayat meetings and rarely participate in the discussion⁶¹. Therefore, the effectiveness of women's representation depends to a great extent on the social and institutional structural environment in which it operates⁶². Quotas, no doubt increase numbers of women's representation in the village council or panchayat but their effective participation in decision making depends on the socio-political culture prevailing in that society. Therefore, without significant structural changes in society, the inclusion of women in political institutions through quota may not lead to any long-term political empowerment of

⁵⁹*Power and Politics in Rwanda* | Now This World (25 Nov 2018). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3J2_WyYH6UI

⁶⁰ V. Vijayalakshmi.(2008). Rent-Seeking and Gender in Local Governance. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 44(9), 1282; Anand Teltumbde.(2011). India's(Jati) Panchayati Raj. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 46(36),p.11

⁶¹Dasarathi Bhuiyan .Political participation of women in the local government: An Indian experience, p.1 Retrieved from: <http://repo.uum.edu.my/18547/1/ICAW%202013%201-8.pdf>

⁶² Praveena ,Kodoth & U,S, Mishra.(2011). Gender Equality in Local Governance in Kerala. *Economic and Political Weekly*,46 (38), p.37

women⁶³. Similarly argument was put forward by scholar based on their study on quota in parliament in South Asia. It is generally pointed out that the allocation of quota in the parliaments of South Asia created a large mass of women in the public institutions but they are not effective because they have no constituency. They cannot follow their agenda because they are elected by the members of parliaments of different political parties. These political parties do not have significant programmes for women in their manifestos. Therefore, the significance of these women parliamentarians is often debated. It is also argued that the women elected from reserve seats in the absence of direct election system “would not enhance women’s leadership quality, efficacy in legislation, especially legislation dealing with women issues and their role as individual legislators.” On the other hand if these women are elected directly by the people having their own constituency, they would prove to be more effective in law making and policy-making process. Though getting elected through direct election, rather than contesting through reserved seats would be more challenging but taking the former route will lead to political empowerment⁶⁴ women in real sense than just getting tokenism representation based on quota politics. Therefore without the transformation of the wider politics, quotas cannot lead to women’s empowerment⁶⁵ in politics.

There is also an anecdotal assumption which is accepted without much contestation that the induction of women in decision making is essential for development and good governance. The reason sighted being , women are considered better politicians as they tend to be less corrupt, self-sacrificing, multi-tasking, and other female qualities that they will bring to the fore in politics. However, such an assumption is debatable and sometimes exaggerated.

⁶³Drude Dahleru.(2008). Gender Quotas in Politics: Empowerment from Above or from Below?
Cited in Kazuki Iwanaga.(2008). Women’s Political Participation and Representation in Asia
Obstacles and Challenges. *NIAS – Nordic Institute of Asian Studies*, p.308

⁶⁴ Amna Mahmood. Political Empowerment of Women: A Comparative Study of South Asian Countries. Retrieved from: <http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/studies/PDF-FILES/Artical%20-%209.pdf>
, pp.160-161

⁶⁵Farzana Bari (2005). Women’s Political Participation: Issues and Challenges* (Draft) retrieved from
<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/enabling-environment2005/docs/EGM-WPD-EE-2005-EP.12%20%20draft%20F.pdf>

Vijaylakshmi , in the study of the panchayat system in Karnataka and Kerala found that there is no gender difference in attitudes towards corruption. Similarly, gender was not a significant factor in explaining the probability of corruption in panchayats. There was also no significant variation in the corruption level in the panchayats where women were the presidents and where women chaired the Standing Committees and Sectorial Committees. It was the institutional and political factors which explained the prevalence of corruption and the attitude of the representatives towards corruption⁶⁶. Further, the argument that more female representation leads to the adoption of more women-oriented policies is also not found to be a uniform pattern in all the villages. In fact, institutional and societal structure of the villages plays an important factor in the prioritization of policies regardless of gender⁶⁷. No doubt, some studies do suggest women leaders are more likely to priorities public goods, and there are plenty of case studies of women who individually or collectively seek to reduce gender inequality. But the evidence does not substantiate the premise that having more women in power – even a critical mass – will automatically improve outcomes for women more generally. There are two main reasons why descriptive representation (how many women?) does not equal substantive representation (what women do and who they act for?) First, women are not a homogenous group with a discernible set of ‘women’s interests’. In fact, women may have more in common with men from their own social group than with women from a different class, ethnic group, religion, location, or ideological persuasion. Second, even powerful women can find their options for advancing women’s rights to be limited. Its influence will depend on her relations with the key players within and outside the party. Nevertheless, whether women in formal positions identify as feminist, in public or private –

⁶⁶Vijaylakshmi, op.cit., p.1277

⁶⁷ Radu, Ban.,& Vijayendra, Rao.(2008). Tokenism or Agency ? The impact of Women’s Reservations on village democracies in South India. *Economic development and cultural change* 56(3), p.504

what Childs and Krook call ‘critical actors’⁶⁸ – and the quality of their relations with women’s organisations and activists does appear to be more important to gender equality gains than the number of women in power⁶⁹.

Paradox of un-representation and high score in gender index in Nagaland.

The administration of villages under the traditional political institutions has been under intense scrutiny in the modern era and often been labelled as outdated, traditional, and particularly discriminatory towards women. However, the status of women in the Naga villages under the traditional political institutions provides a paradox of non-representation in the decision making and high score in the gender index⁷⁰. One of the reasons for this is that traditionally women in the Naga society were highly respected and looked after⁷¹. The society is not plagued by the issue of child infanticide, child marriage, dowry, purdah system and other social evil which is still an issue faced by women in some parts of India even in the modern day. Therefore, according to the respondents non-representation of women in the village council has not made them worst off than their male counterparts. The reason being, their easy accessibility to council members which enabled them to raise any important issue related to village administration or issue specific to women. Thus by way of maintaining a close network with the council member and influential people in the village, they are able to highlight and push the needs, grievance, and interest of the women, and on most occasions those needs are being taken care of (Figure 4.5). Further, the existence of women organization like Watsu and STH in every village act as an important channel through which women are able to raise issues related to women to the council members. Substantiating this

⁶⁸ S, Childs & M,L,Krook (2008).Critical Mass Theory and Women’s Political Representation cited in Tam O’Neil & Pilar Domongo.(2015). The power to decide women,decision-making and gender equality. *Overseas Development Institute*,pp.5-6

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Directorate of Economics & Statistics Kohima Nagaland, Alison Saldanha & Angel Mohan Nagaland outranks rich states in health, gender equity, but jobs a concern. Retrieved from https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/nagaland-outranks-rich-states-in-health-gender-equity-but-jobs-a-concern-118022700141_1.html

⁷¹ Statement based on interview and observation.

point one of the women leader in the Ao village, sharing her experienced of working with the council members opined that, they are in no way treated as the secondary citizens in the village. Their voices are being heard and their opinion are been accepted if it was beneficial for the village as a whole. Thus while women may not be part of the formal decision-making body, this does not mean that they do not have any voice or influence in the decision making process in the village. Since they do participate behind the scene to lobby for decisions and policies in their favour. Thus through strategic networking and lobbying with key decision-makers ⁷² they indirectly take part in the decision making process of the village. This form of political process is crucial in societies where formal institutions are not strong and it is the informal norms and practices influence how formal laws and regulations work⁷³. Behind-the-scenes deliberations can be an important determinant of what it is being decided in the formal meetings. Since whether it is in business, civil or political leaders, influential person whether man or woman are those who are able to leverage informal relationships, build alliance and convince others. This is true of all societies because personal relationships and ability to bestow favours is the engine of politics the world over. Which is even more important for politicians and activist to be effective off-stage as well as on-stage in societies where the rule of law is weak, politics is patronage-based and trust derives from who you are and who you know⁷⁴.

Though for majority of women in the rural areas lack of women representation has not been a major concern for them, they do point out that inclusion of women representation in the village council will not weaken but strengthen the functioning of the village council

⁷² Nazneen, Sohela & Mahmud, Simeen.(2012). *Gendered Politics of Securing Inclusive Development*. Effective States Inclusive Development Working Paper No. 13. Waylen, Georgina.(2014). Informal Institutions, Institutional Change, and Gender Equality. Political Research Quarterly 2014, 67(1),pp. 212–223 cited in Tam O’Neil & Pilar Domongo, op.cit., p.3

⁷³ Mackay, Fiona.(2014). Nested Newness, Institutional Innovation, and the Gendered Limits of Change. *Politics & Gender*, 10 (2014), pp.549–571. Cited in Tam O’Neil & Pilar Domongo,op.,cit.,p.4

⁷⁴ Ibid

(traditional institutions). Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that there are competent women in the village who can do equal or better job than some of the selected leaders given a chance. Therefore there is a need to accommodate women in the formal decision making process according to the changing times⁷⁵. In the modern period they do not see the selection of women in village council a threat to the traditional political institutions (figure 4.6).

Therefore, the issue of formal representation of women in the decision making bodies cannot be ignored in the present day governance at the village administration. The non-inclusion of women in the decision making process during the pre-colonial period may be

Figure 4. 5 Are male representatives able to address the needs and interest of women?

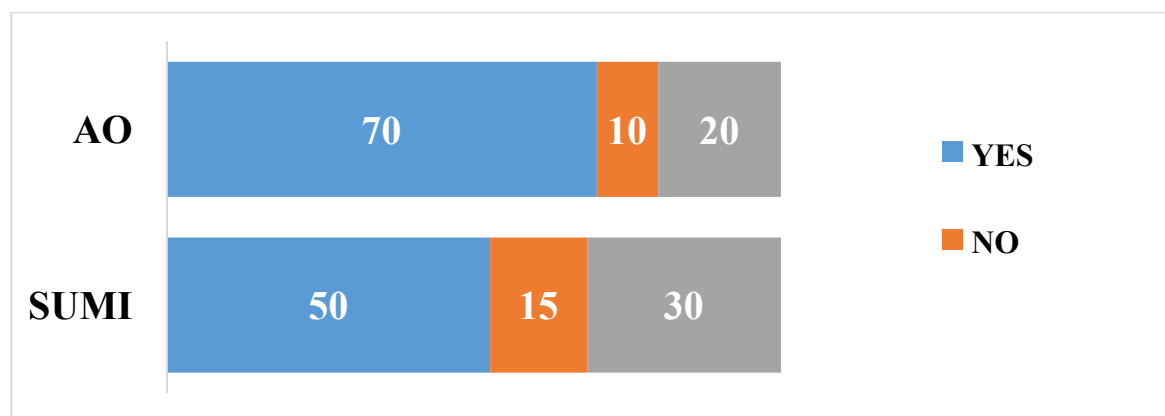
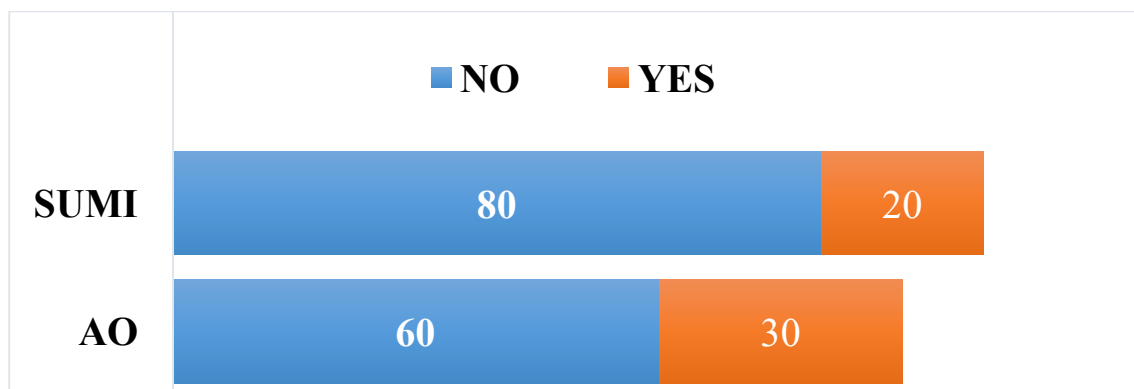


Figure 4.6. Is there a threat to our custom and tradition if women were to be part of a village council?

⁷⁵ Majority of the women emphasis on giving opportunity to competent women instead of knowingly selecting some incapable male leaders due to custom and tradition (such respondents of women mostly from Ao villages since selection process is still based on tradition and thus inclusive to male adult members



justifiable. However, continuing to adamantly oppose even to the idea of women representation in the village council on the pretext of protection of tradition and culture is to some extent holding back the progressive evolution of the traditional political institutions.

According to **Ndebele**

“Argued customs and culture are man-made, therefore they can be changed according to whether man continues to find value in them....when customs no longer cater for proper development of adequate human expression they should be removed”⁷⁶. Effort should be made to provide positive political space⁷⁷ and opportunities for women to take up the leadership role in village governance. Whether women come forward and grab those opportunities or how they will handle the workload as council members should be left to the women to decide. The socio-cultural freedom enjoyed by Naga women in the village cannot be an excuse for continuation of denial of political space in the decision making process of the village council since the pre-colonial period. The traditional institutions have gone through several changes after the British occupation of Naga territories. It has included administrative unit like Goanbura and Dobashi which has not taken away the cultural value of

⁷⁶ Ndebele cited in Prince Mashele (2004). Traditional Leadership in South Africa's New Democracy. *Review of African political economy*, vol. 31, No.100, two cheers? *South African Democracy's first Decade*, p.353

⁷⁷ There is a negative image for women who wants to plunge into politics or are actively involve. They are seen women with loose character, ambitious. Though mud sledging for politicians happen to men also but it tends to affect women in a negative manner.

this traditional institutions. In fact adapting itself according to the changing need of the society will enable traditional institutions to maintain its value and relevance in the society.

On the issue of women representation one observation made during this research work was that, Naga tribes which in the past had a system of autocratic chiefship system tend to be more accommodative to the idea of formal inclusion of women in the village governance than those tribes which follows some form of clan representative system or direct democracy. This observation can be substantiated by the fact that women has been selected as council members in Sumi and Konyak villages⁷⁸, both tribes having the system of chieftainship. In fact, Wanti village (Konyak village) under Mon district, Nagaland became the first Konyak village to elect a woman, W Wannu as VDB secretary⁷⁹. Therefore there is great likelihood of formal women representation in village council where in the past Naga villages followed a system of autocratic hereditary chiefship if women are vocal for their representation compared to those villages which follows a clan representative or a direct democracy. The main reason one can cite is that, under the autocratic chiefship system the selection of council members were not based on strict adherence to clanship as was seen in other tribes which followed a representative or direct democracy. Thus after the enactment of the Nagaland Village and Area Council Act of 1978, Sumi and Konyak villages were able to harmonize both traditional political institutions and modern institutions easily. Since under the 1978 Act, the hereditary traditional political institution like chiefship was retained by making him the ex-officio member of the village council and on the other hand the selection of members was made accessible to all the recognized citizen of the villages above the age of 25. However, such transition was not seen in those villages which were having a representative or direct

⁷⁸ Konyak village Totok Chingnyu and Sumi village of Kukhiye-Lukhai and Lumami has selected women as council members

⁷⁹ Vishu Rita Krocha.(June 6, 2021). First woman VDB Secretary in Mon. The Morung Express. Retrieved from: <https://morungexpress.com/first-woman-vdb-secretary-in->

democracy, as even today there is an unwritten convention where only male is preferred for the selection of the council members, and in the case of Ao village it is confined to only male members.

4.8 Electoral Politics

The concept of electoral politics was not known to the Nagas. There was no system of election practice by the Naga tribes in any form during the pre-colonial period. The representatives in the traditional village council were selected by the villagers based on their traditional practice and customs. The coming of the British and the introduction of education also did not bring much change in the selection process of representative to village council because not much emphasis was made in this regard by the British and even by the Government of India after its independence. Thus the idea of selection of representative based on election was an alien system to most of the Nagas more so for the people staying in the villages. However, the irony is that, since the first state assembly election of Nagaland (1964), it is voters living in villages that are deciding the fate of most of the candidates. The reason being, bulk of the voters registered in Nagaland resides in the villages⁸⁰ and since the electoral system of India is based on *first past the post system*, where ultimately it comes down to number games, “village voters” has emerged as the most important vote bank which decides the fate of most of the candidates during the state election. This has resulted in candidates relying upon money, power brokers (influential villagers) and in extreme cases using intimidation tactics through their agents to secure the crucial rural vote bank to improve their chances of winning the election. The adoption of such tactics by almost all the candidates has weakened the electoral process in the state where clientelism⁸¹ has become

⁸⁰ Out of 2238 polling station in Nagaland 1779 polling station were in rural areas compared to just 459 polling stations in urban areas. CEO Nagaland (Rural/Urban Polling stations 2020)

⁸¹ Clientelism amounts to the buying of votes and hence power, by a cadre of political for the delivery of direct benefits to the non-elite(clients) whose support is essential for maintenance of power. Elite patrons control government but promotes benefits to their clients in a quid pro

synonymous with election in Nagaland. The traditional authorities were also not immune from such political culture, although being council members they are supposed to act in a neutral manner during election. But they also do not shy away from using their position in support of a particular candidate in return of cash or kind. Thus unlike the spread of the education and Christianity which brought about positive changes in the functioning of the traditional institutions, the introduction of the electoral politics had a negative impact which has eroded the respect and honour villagers have towards their traditional authorities. Apart from such a change of perception towards the traditional leaders, some of the impacts upon the role of traditional leaders and on the village administration with the introduction of electoral politics are analysed under the following headings.

Chief and members of Putu Menden as intermediaries: As mentioned earlier village voters have become an important vote bank with the introduction of electoral politics in the Nagaland, in fact, it is the voters in villages who decide the fate of the candidates during election. And since there is lack of strong party or ideology based politics in Nagaland, candidates to some extent rely upon the traditional authorities to tilt the votes in their favour during election. In fact, without the endorsement and support of their candidature by the traditional leaders it becomes an uphill task for any candidate to win the election. John Sema highlighted this point based on his observation of election in three districts in Zunheboto area where he points out that during election, candidates who are not able to get the endorsement of rich and influential chiefs in a particular village find it difficult to garner votes from voters during elections votes. In fact there are times when they drew blank ⁸². Such influence of the Chief over the villages according to him is because of the fact that the chief with his own resources takes the responsibility of helping the villagers in times of their needs even without

quo arrangement that may see direct transfer to their clients but that will feature governance largely in the interest of the elite (Clientelism in Indian Villages Author(s): Siwan Anderson, Patrick Francois and Ashok Kotwal Source: The American Economic Review, June 2015, 105(6), pp. 1780-1816

⁸² H. John Sema, op.cit., p.88

the help of the elected representatives. That is why whenever a wealthy and influential chiefs shift his support to the new candidates during elections the balance of votes also went in favour of the new candidate. This is evident from the fact that the candidate in a particular constituency has been dislodged in every election with the change of support of the chiefs to new candidate. This shows that even today some chief do enjoy complete loyalty and support from the villagers⁸³ not based on force but based on inter-personal trust that exist between the chief and the villagers .

Similarly in the Ao villages, members of the Putu Menden play an influential role in garnering support for particular candidate during election. According to the respondents even before the declaration of results one can predict the outcome of the election depending on the support the candidates enjoy from the members of the Putu Menden. Thus, more than wooing the voters, politicians do campaign and try to win the support of the traditional authorities. Therefore politicians do campaign and try to push the selection of their supporters as members in the Putu Menden. Since the influence of the Tatars in the state electoral politics is such that without being in good terms with the traditional authorities it is difficult for the candidates even to hold election campaign in the village⁸⁴. However villagers and council members do mentioned that if the member of the Putu Menden are divided based on party lines they are not able to dictate the villagers in support of a particular a candidate. However, if the candidates is endorsed by senso⁸⁵ as village candidate they can ensure villagers vote enbloc for a particular candidate.

Division of clan and Khel based on party lines: Division of the villagers and the Putu Menden based on party lines is the common sight that is seen across villages with the introduction of electoral politics which has also affected the traditional selection process of

⁸³ H.John Sema, op.cit.,pp.87-88

⁸⁴ Observation and interview with respondents during Nagaland State Assembly election 2018

⁸⁵ All the Adult male members of the village.

leaders under the traditional political institutions as there is a growing trend where different interest group push for selection of their clan representatives in Putu Menden and village council based on party lines. This to some extent diminished the prestige and honour enjoyed by the traditional leaders among the villagers since there are growing instance of traditional leaders misusing their authority for personal gain at the expense of common villagers. Thus majority of the respondents were of the opinion that traditional leaders should be neutral observers during election and should let people decide for themselves how to vote and whom to vote. Further due to the commercialization of election process there emerge clientelism politics where individuals and families negotiates with the candidates on their own and cast their votes for the candidates that offers them the best alternatives in terms cash, government contracts or jobs.

Involvement of underground factions in elections: Another phenomenon that was witness after the introduction of electoral politics in Nagaland in the period of Naga struggle for self-determination was the involvement of various undergrounds factions who used intimidation tactics at the behest of their candidates to garner votes in their favour. Though the underground groups initially boycotted the election process, with the passage of time there involvement has also grown⁸⁶. Therefore the involvement of the underground groups in the electoral politics has also compromised the ability of the traditional authorities to dictate their terms upon the villagers with regard to whom to support during the election⁸⁷.

Thus if we analyse the impact of Christianity and education upon the functioning of the traditional political institutions it has brought about a positive impact. Since it reduced the absolute power of the traditional authorities to dictate their terms upon the villagers. The spread of education and Christianity helped diminish the aura associated with traditional

⁸⁶ It is an open secret though parties and candidates denied availing the services of armed group to garner support for them however in every election their involvement is quite visible

⁸⁷ Ex-MLA interview January 2019 at Mokokchung

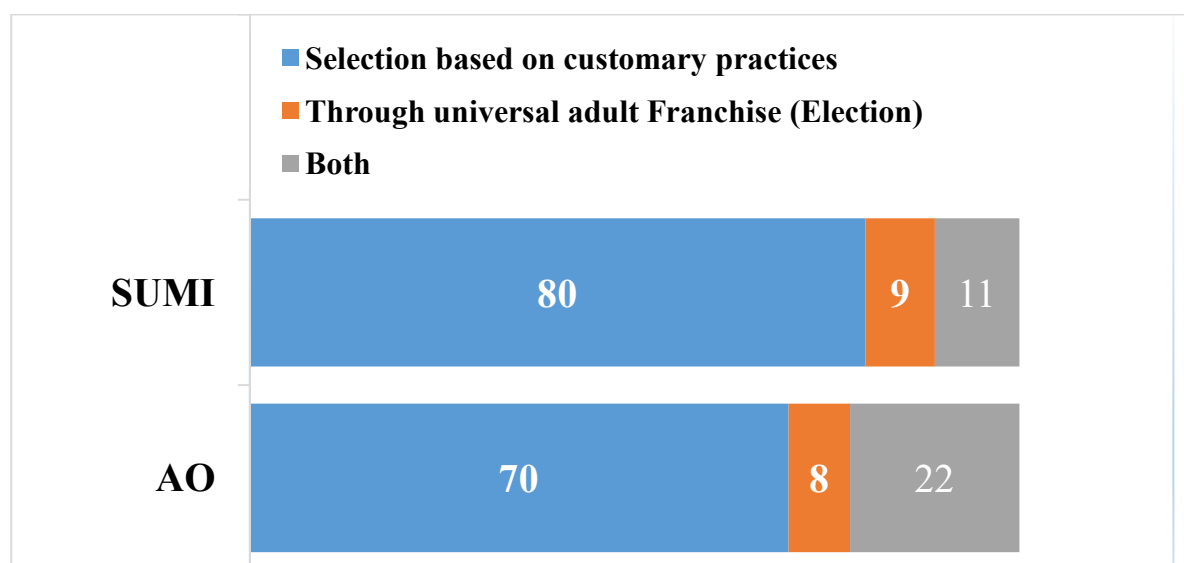
political institutions enabling the villagers to raise question upon their leaders without hesitation or fear of repercussion. The spread of education and Christianity further made the functioning of traditional political institutions more rational by doing away with practices which were not in tune with the changing need and value of the their society . The biggest beneficiary of such changes has been the womenfolk as it expedite the emancipation and their empowerment in various front. However in terms of women formal representation in the village council the status-quo of non-representation of women has more or less remained the same

In terms of the electoral politics majority of the respondents had advocated that it has impacted in a negatively. They pointed out that whenever election season is around the corner there is a sense of uneasiness and suspicious of each other and the villagers tend to get divided on party line. Observing the impact of the electoral politics in the Naga society, Talitemjen and Lanunungsang advocate that, introduction of political party system was a new thing for the Nagas because it was an alien system that came after their Baptism in Indian election system since 1960s. The election is determined according to size of the village population where free and fair means of casting vote has no room. It is, in fact, a village based election but not the true election of leaders through democratic means. Its impact is worse than what it is brought to their society⁸⁸. The growing commercialization of state assembly elections has further weaken and deteriorated the election process in Nagaland where most candidates rely on money and muscle power to win election. Therefore such negativity associated with the electoral process of Nagaland is one of the reasons why villagers hardly endorse the idea of election for selection of members of the village council (Figure 4.7). They do not see the election system as a better alternative to their traditional methods of the selection process. One of the respondents said that, if the electoral politics is

⁸⁸N. Talitemjen Jamir & A. Lanunungsang, op.cit., p.345

introduced for the selection of council members in the village, villagers will be deeply divided on party and clan line which will have grave consequences upon the unity and close knit village community life. Similarly one of the woman leader sharing her view said that, if election system is introduced in place of the traditional system of selection of council members those with money and muscle power

Figure 4.7. According to you which is the best method for selection of the members of the village council



will come to power, and she does not see those leaders doing any far greater job then the representative selected under the traditional system. One youth leader also pointed out that the merit behind the present traditional selection process is that most of the representatives selected under the traditional process have the approval of majority of the villagers as a result most of the selected representatives work for the development of the village as a whole. Where as in the case of selection of candidates based on election, most of the elected leaders lacks majority support of the community and on most occasion they works for the benefit of their base supporters only. Similarly in the Sumi villages also, majority of the respondents prefer village governance under the chieftainship system since such system has provided a stable system of governance and has keep together the villagers as a family for time

immemorial. No doubt, like any other system around the world, whether modern or traditional, there are short coming in the traditional system of governance of both the tribes; however, their merits outweigh their demerits. Above all, it continues to enjoy the support and legitimacy of the people because of the stable and peaceful governance their leaders are able to provide under their respective traditional political institutions since time immemorial.

Last chapter deals with summarizing, findings and conclusion of the research work

Chapter 5

Findings and conclusion

5.1 Introduction

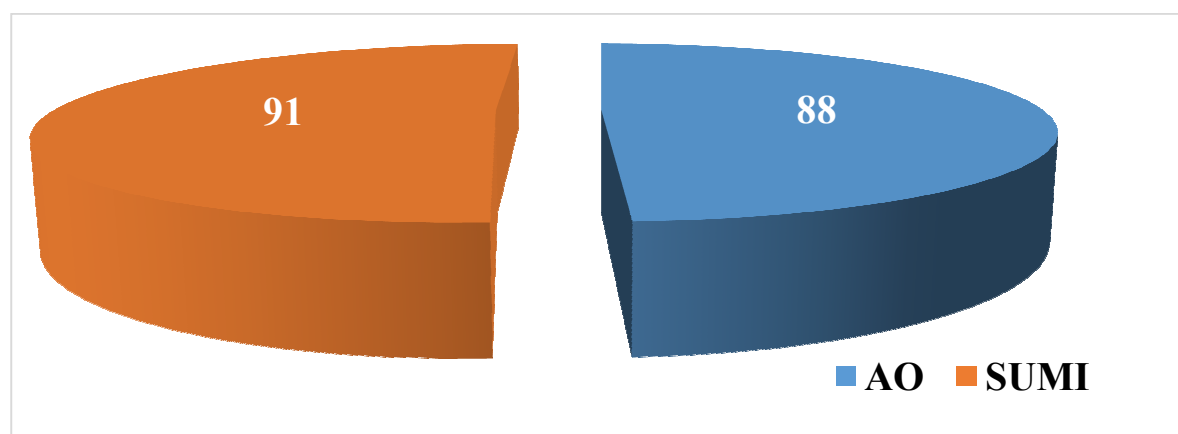
The British occupation of the Naga Hills brought about wholesome changes in the Naga society as highlighted in the third and fourth chapters. Nagas got exposed to the outside world and were introduced to the ideas of nationalism, freedom, rights, liberty, and other modern

concepts. They also got familiarized with the modern system of governance, particularly with the concept of electoral politics. Therefore, the question remains how supportive the villagers are for the continuation of village governance under their indigenous system of governance after being exposed to a modern system of governance.

People support for the Traditional Political Institutions: No doubt by default there is strong support for the traditional political institutions from the chief and his extended relatives. Similarly, in the case of Ao tribes, villagers who are part of it or have been part of the Putu Menden are strong advocates for the continuation of these traditional institutions. Having said that, the support base for traditional institutions is not confined to a small group of people in the village, but the vast majority of the villager support the continuation of these institutions (**figure 5.1**). Some of the reasons given by the respondents for their support are that, they associate these institutions with their tradition, culture, and identity. Apart from that they also pointed out that governance under these institutions since time immemorial has kept the unity and harmony among the villagers intact. Majority of them are against the idea of introduction of election like under the Panchayati Raj system. They are of the opinion that introduction of electoral politics for the state assembly election has led to division of family and village on candidate or party line and if the same system of election is introduced for the selection of chairmanship and other post under village council it will further divide the village which will be detrimental to the harmonious and well-knit family like coexistence among the villagers. They also pointed out that selection of leaders under the traditional practice is based on merit since within the village everyone is familiar with the capability of each other, and thus they have an idea who should be chosen as their representatives in the village council, and on most occasions those competent individuals are selected. Thus, under the traditional system of selection process, even a person from a humble backgrounds get an equal opportunity to be appointed as council members based on his competence to lead which

will not be the case if election system is introduced as people with money and muscle power will have greater chance of being elected in the village council just like in the State Assembly election.

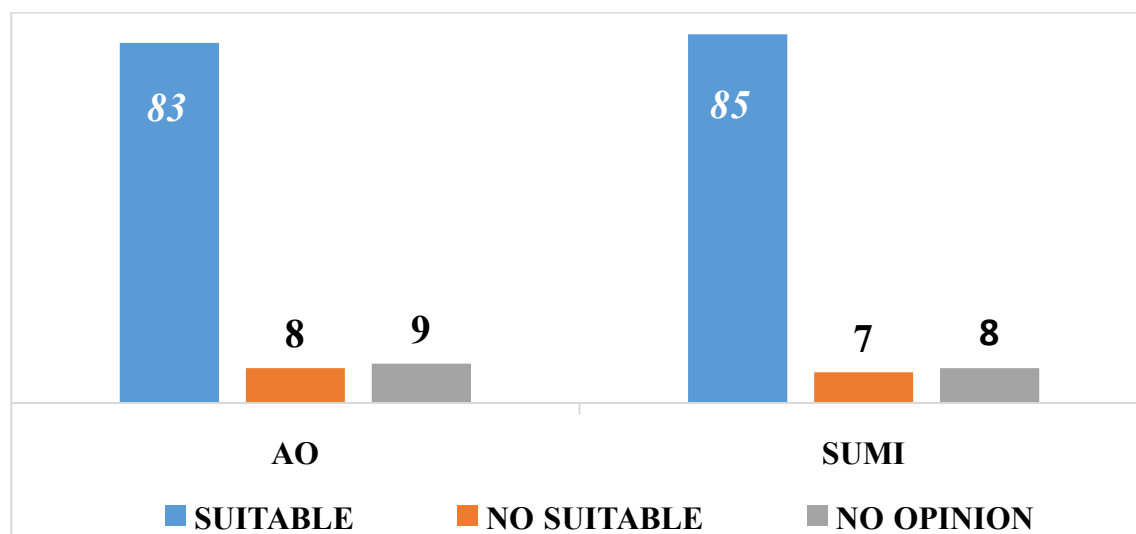
Figure 5.1. Villagers support for governance under Traditional Political Institutions



Suitability: On the question of the suitability of the traditional institutions for governance in the present era, majority of the villagers are of the opinion that the traditional institutions are suitable for the village governance according to the context of their society even in modern times (**figure 5.2**). But the respondents also emphasize on making the functioning of village council more transparent, accountable and encourage participation of competent women and youth to make it more efficient. For instance, one of the officials from the Rural Development department sharing her opinion said that village administration is becoming quite complex due to digitalization, especially relating to availing funds and schemes like free housing and other welfare schemes. And there are many villages where the council members are clueless and not competent enough to handle those complex issues because of which many times they missed out on fully utilizing the benefits of those funds and welfare schemes. Similarly, one lawyer pointed out that those villages where council members are not well educated and competent are often intimidated and are at the mercy of the government officials on the issue related to funding allocation and projects whereas those villages where

council members are educated¹ and competent and are well versed with the modern system of administration are able to judiciously use their position and negotiate better deal with government officials in terms of allocation of funds and availing projects for the benefit of their village. Therefore, one of the respondents was of the opinion that for the benefit of the villagers and village as a whole, selection of more capable person regardless of gender and age, in important decision-making bodies needs to be encouraged. The argument they made was it is important to fully utilize the best available resources (villagers) in the village by not confining the administration only to male elders on the pretext of tradition and culture. Such a rigid mindset prevents utilizing the best person for the job, and this to some extent holds back the pace of progress of the village.

Figure 5.2. Is village governance under Traditional Political Institutions suitable in modern times?

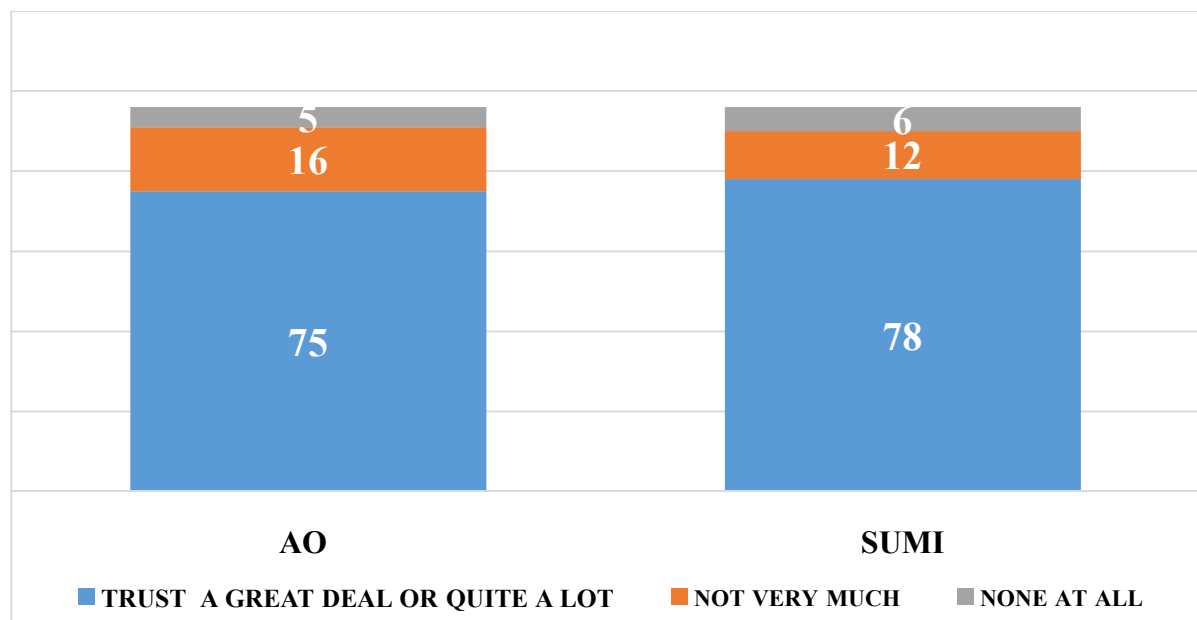


Trust towards the Traditional Authorities: On the question of trust towards the traditional authorities, though there is growing mistrust on the issue of transparency and accountability, majority of the villagers still trust the traditional authorities (figure 5. 3) and believe that most of them are to their best of abilities working for the greater good of the community. On the

¹ Educated here means not just the ability to read and write but the ability to judge the problem and adapt themselves according to the changing need of governance

issue of accountability of leaders under traditional institutions, one of the chief in Sumi village was of the opinion that if the chief is benevolent, he works for the welfare of the villagers. However, if the chief is selfish and lacks empathy, he mostly works for his welfare at the expenses of the villagers. Similarly, one of the Tatars under Putu Menden was of the opinion that how the Putu Menden functions depends on the character of the leaders selected, some leaders abuse their powers for selfish gains whereas good leaders exercise their powers judiciously for the welfare of the villagers.

Figure 5.3.Trust of the Villagers towards Traditional Authorities



5.2: Some core issues related to Traditional Political Institutions

No political institution can claim to be a perfect institution. Every institution has its own set of strengths and flaws. Some of the most prominent issues that came to the fore during the fieldwork relating to traditional political institutions are listed below.

Issue of Accountability and Transparency.

The transition of the Naga villages from an independent, self-sufficient village economy in the pre-colonial period to a dependent village economy for carrying out welfare and developmental projects have led to the growing issue of accountability and transparency. In

the pre-colonial period, the administration was simple and transparent. It was simple since administration was mainly confined to warfare strategy, imposition of gennas, taboos, land allocation for agriculture, and maintenance of law and order in the village. Furthermore, governance was transparent in the sense that traditional authorities were honest, and there was also greater participation of all the villagers due to the nature of their society prevailing during that period. Everyone was aware of the amount of tax collected and where it was utilised, therefore there was a great deal of transparency and accountability². However, in the post-colonial period, village administration has become a complex issue involving trail of paper works which was also highlighted by Piketo. According to him, as the administration of the village change from an oral to written administration, the situation was used to their advantage by Dobashi since village leaders were not able to read and write and British officials could not understand the dialects of the Nagas. Therefore, both depended on the Dobashi for administrative work because of which they got leverage in the decision making process during the colonial period³. Similar metaphor can be seen in the present context where from a self-sufficient economy, Naga villages have become dependent upon the centre and state fund for carrying out welfare and development activities in the village. Also, there are growing grievances of the villagers against the council members and VDB secretary's lack of transparency over the utilisation of funds. One of the respondents pointed out that most of the villagers were hardly aware of the fund utilisation. Similarly, there was accusation of fund meant for the villagers being utilised by the chief for his personal benefit. On the issue of accountability of council members, respondents said that on most occasions even if misuse of funds by the council members comes to light, there is not much repercussion against them, as on most occasions the issue gets resolved among the council members. Above all there is also lack of strong will shown by government officials to

² Interview with village elders

³ Gerard Nicholas Van Den Brul B.A.op.cit., p.94

monitor irregularities in terms of distribution and utilisation of government fund. In this regard one of the respondents pointed out that some government officials in nexus with the council members indulge in corrupt practices and it is the government officials who benefit the most by illegally appropriating bulk of the funds meant for village development. Due to this strong nexus from top to bottom, most of the welfare schemes do not reach to the needy and the implementation of projects only remains on paper. Thus, government officials and traditional authorities who are expected to fix accountability upon each other, in fact work in tandem making it difficult to fix accountability and maintain transparency over corrupt practices regarding the utilisation of government funds. Therefore, more mechanisms of accountability and responsiveness need to be introduced. The question of accountability of the leaders involved in village administration becomes even more important due to the growing amount of resources allocation for carrying out various welfare programmes under MGNREGA, NRLM, PMAY-G⁴.

Community ahead of the individual: One issue which is widespread in both the tribes villages is the diversion of funds meant for the poorest section of the village and farmers towards village development projects like constructing footpath, village dustbin, guest house and even construction of church. The argument can be substantiated based on some incidence that was encountered during fieldwork. In one of the villages, the council members were having a problem in showing project expenditure statements of work done under MGNREGA since they have diverted the funds towards the construction of church building. In another village there occurred a heated altercation between the council members and MGNREGA beneficiaries over the utilisation of the funds released by the government since the council members wanted to utilise the fund to purchase a bus for the village, whereas the beneficiaries were against such a move and demanded distribution of money

⁴ Interview with Rural Development officials Mokokchung 2019

which was rightfully theirs. In another village there was a tussle between the villagers and the council members over the possession of job cards since those cards which were supposed to be with the beneficiaries were kept by the council members, and many a times the council members avail government benefits using the beneficiary job card without beneficiary consent. Though according to the respondents, on most occasions council members utilised the beneficiary money to carry out developmental work in the village. However, such incidents show that under the traditional political institutions rights of the individuals tend to get sacrificed on the pretext of community development, and such conventions mostly affect the poorest section of the village . As a result, the objective of various poverty alleviation schemes gets nullified since most of the time it does not reach the targeted groups. As one of the respondents shared her view that since the village gets separate funds for development projects those funds should be utilized for the development purpose, and the funds meant for the poor section of the society must reach the concerned beneficiaries and should not be diverted for carrying out other developmental work. Therefore, such arbitrary actions need to be checked, and funds meant for farmers, poverty alleviation, youth and women empowerment should not be allowed to divert for carrying out community development projects.

Issue of neutrality during election: The introduction of electoral politics since 1964 in the State has brought the traditional authorities into focus as they have become an important medium for the candidates to increase their chances of winning election . However, it is not simple as one may think where the traditional authorities just issue a diktat to vote for a particular candidates. The traditional authorities (council members) usually holds meeting with the villagers to discuss and decide upon which candidates or party to support in the upcoming election. The main consideration they keep in mind while deciding on supporting a candidate is the benefit the villagers or village will get in terms of funds, projects or jobs . If

the village has a senso candidate , that is the candidate endorsed by the whole villagers, then the council members can ensure votes of the all the villagers for a particular candidate. However, if the villagers are divided over their support for candidates the village council cannot diktat terms upon the villagers on whom to vote. Therefore, the ability of the traditional authorities to make the villagers vote en bloc for a particular candidate depend on the political situation during election. Having said that, the traditional authorities many a times exercise their power beyond its scope. For instance, in 2018 state assembly election during the field survey there were many instances where the council members openly declare their support for a particular candidate and in an extreme case, harassed and banish villagers in the event of non-compliance to their decision. It also prevents opposing candidates from canvassing in their village. Such behaviour is against the government directive where council members are supposed to remain neutral during elections and ensure smooth conduct of election under their jurisdiction. Therefore, such behaviour by the council members should not be overlooked and the same yardstick must be used to check them like any other government agencies in the event of bias misuse of powers in favour of a party or candidate. Such accountability will help the democratic process in the rural areas enabling the voters to fully exercise their right to vote in letter and spirit. Compared to Ao villages, there seems less complication on the issue of support for particular candidates in Sumi villages as in most villages, villagers usually support the candidates endorsed by the chief which reconfirms the earlier findings of John Sema⁵.

Powers and jurisdiction of traditional authorities is vague: There is a tendency of the council members to act as rulers and not as representatives. This argument can be substantiated by one incident. There was a circulation by District Commissioner in the year 2020 barring any local authorities to take matter into their hand to eradicate dogs. However,

⁵ H. John Sema, op.cit., p.88

on being reminded about it the local leaders responded that they do not care about DC order, and in this area they make the rules. This is just one incident, there are other occasions when council members act in a rogue manner against the order of the DC and State government directive which creates resentment among the law abiding citizens as such acts undermine the concept of “rule of law” and promote “mob rule” or “mob justice” mentality. Therefore, abuse of power by the traditional authorities whether it is the chief or Tatars need to be checked in the same way as against any government officials. And since the governance of the village council is subjected to the superintendence of the state government officials⁶ any overlapping, regarding the scope of power of the traditional authorities should be clearly defined and imposed in letter and spirit.

Issue of compatibility with Democracy

Another frequent debate is on the issue of compatibility of governance based on traditional institutions with the principles of democracy . This issue has been thoroughly analyse by different scholar through their research work in the region where traditional institutions were and are in prominence . Thus scholar of this region based on their research work has noted that there is persistence and even resurgence of traditional political institutions, especially in the sub-saharan Africa (Englebert 2002, Logan 2009,2013, Mariaas 2011, Ubink 2008, in Latin America (Diaz-Cayeros, Magaloni and Ruiz-Euler 2014), Central Asia (Murtazashvii 2016) and South-East Asia (Henley and Davidson 2008). On the question of compatibility between the traditional institutions and Democracy we find that scholars like Mamdami(1996), Ntsebeza(2005) and Hariri (2012) highlighting the non-compatibility of democracy and traditional institutions, since they find the latter to restrict individuals right of citizens and inhibit the progress of development of democratic states. However such argument has been

⁶ The Nagaland Village and Area Council Act 1978, p.6

challenged by Osabu-kle (2000) , Oomen (2005), Logan (2013) who based on their empirical evidence highlighted the compatibility of traditional political institutions and democracy⁷.

The above research works on the issue of compatibility of traditional governance with democracy are based on societies of other continents especially that of sub-saharan Africa, but it is also applicable in the case of Ao and Sumi tribes because of the similarities in the structure and functioning of the traditional political system of the Ao and Sumi tribes with that of the traditional political system found in African societies. For instance, like in major part of African societies, Sumi tribe village governance revolves around the Chieftainship system. Gerontocracy that is the rule of elders, which is a common feature of most of the tribal village governance of Africa is also quite prevalent in the case of the Ao tribe. Further, like in most of the African village governance, leaders prioritise community needs ahead of individual needs. Additionally youth and women in both the Ao and Sumi tribes villages does not find much space in the village administration just like in African societies. Therefore, the issue raised by the scholars regarding the compatibility of traditional political institutions with democracy in the African countries is also applicable in the context of Ao and Sumi tribes. The issue can be better analyse if we make a comparative study of some core features of traditional political system with that of democracy.

In this regard, if only structural categories are used to make the political comparison between the traditional political institutions with democracy then the difference between the two will increase⁸ which can be seen under the following table.

Features of Democracy	Features Traditional political institutions
Periodic election for the selection of representatives	No election but selection of leaders based custom and tradition

⁷ Kate Baldwin & Katharina Holzinger. *Traditional Political Institutions and Democracy: Reassessing their compatibility and accountability*, pp.2-3 Retrieved from https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/campuspress.yale.edu/dist/c/442/files/2019/07/Traditional_Political_Institutions_and_Democracy_preprint.pdf

⁸ Susser B (1992). *Approaches to the study of politics*. New York Macmillan, p.205

	Hereditary devolution of power
Regular free and fair election yardstick of legitimacy	Legitimacy based on custom ,tradition, and culture
Inclusive representation	Exclusive representation of adult male members
Governance based on codified laws and constitution	Governance based on kinship,oral tradition customary law and practices
Priorities individual rights	Priorities community rights over individual rights
Seperation of power	No seperation of power
Bureaucratic	Charismatic
Paid service	Voluntary service

However when we analyse the functions performed by both the authorities under traditional and modern institutions then the non-compatibility gets blurred which are discussed under.

Election: One of the arguments regarding the non-democratic characteristics of the traditional institutions is that of non-election process to select their leaders. Why the scholars emphasis on the need for periodic election is on the assumption that it enables citizens to impose accountability upon the leaders for their action. Furthermore, election enable inclusive governance as it gives everyone an opportunity to get elected. Finally it give an opportunity to the citizens to select the most capable person to be their representatives. However, during interaction with the respondents it is found that the system of election has not enable the citizens to impose accountability upon their leaders or has led to the selection of most capable person as their representative or has brought about inclusive government ⁹. One of the least trusted leaders and institutions in Nagaland according to the respondents are

⁹ Nagaland and Mizoram have kept women away from legislatures. Business Standard (march 8 2016 retrieved from: (https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/nagaland-and-mizoram-have-kept-women-away-from-legislatures-116030800335_1.html))

the politicians and political party which re-confirms the earlier findings of Moayanger¹⁰. Majority of the voters in Nagaland do not have trust upon their representatives . However, despite this people are re-electing the same leaders with dubious track record of corrupt practices election after election . The main reason being state election in Nagaland is not fought and won based upon party manifesto or on the issue of providing good governance. Candidates on most occasion rely upon muscle and money power to win election. Further, the argument that election leads to inclusive decision-making does not hold ground since government in power many a times have gone ahead with policies that are being opposed by the masses . Therefore election is just one of the many components of democracy. The existence of election does not make an institution more democratic and the non-existence of this does not make an institution undemocratic . In the case of the tribal societies though there is no system of election there are many non-electoral accountable measure in place under their tribal institutions. For instance, according to the respondents in both the tribes villages majority of the decision are based on consensus. All the contentious issues are thoroughly debated and it gets passed only when it is approved by the villagers. Unlike in other Indian states where caste system in some form or the other in the rural area are still prevalent , the casteless nature of the Naga society enables everyone to have an equal voice in the village . Therefore, while discussing over the compatibility of traditional institutions with the principles of democracy it is important to take into account how these institutions are functioning according to the context of the society before coming to our conclusion based on the structure of these institutions . Further, though there is no election system under these institutions, leaders are not randomly selected, as the nominated leaders require the approval of the villagers. Since Naga villages are a close-knit family, the capability and leadership qualities of the persons are already known to the villagers and they have an opinion of who

¹⁰ Moayanger Ao.(2020). *A study of Institutional Trust and Democratic support in Nagaland*. Nagaland University(thesis), p.119

should be selected as their representatives and on most occasion those leaders are selected in the village council . Lastly, one needs to ponder on the question of whether introduction of democratic procedures like election will make the village administration worse or better off . This question can be summed up in the words of one of the respondents. According to him, election process is a zero-sum game where there will be a loser and a winner and this create division among the supporters and the candidates. However, under the traditional selection process, though there might be some argument regarding the selection of some members and issue of favouritism in the selection process but once selection process is completed there exist full support and cooperation among the villagers. This will not be the case in electoral politics because once elected the candidates will mostly think of looking after their support base rather than working for the benefit of the village as a whole and those selected leaders may also not have the approval of the majority since India have adopted the “First Past the Post”¹¹ system of election.

Performance : The next question to ponder upon is whether villagers under the traditional institutions enjoy less freedom and rights compared to alternative modern institutions. On this issue neoliberal views that traditional institutions contradict the idea of liberal democracy because they disregard democratic procedural standards , gender equality, and human rights¹². However, counter to those arguments the neo traditionalist view that traditional authorities is compatible with democratic governance due to elements such as consensus decision making and public participation ¹³. The fact that since 1990s , a large number of African countries have enhanced or formalised the position of their traditional leaders and world organisations like the World Bank under the project “ Promoting Partnerships with

¹¹ Under the first past the post system candidates does not have to secure majority votes from the voters but just has to secure one extra vote from the opponents to win the election

¹² Madami ,Mahmood(1996).Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism. *Princeton University Press*

¹³ Kate Baldwin and Katharina Holzinger,op.cit., p.4

Traditional Authorities Project” in Ghana (2003-2006) have directly granted funds to the traditional authorities bypassing the Ghanaian government¹⁴ shows that traditional institutions has a space and role to play even in a democratic country . Further traditional institutions cannot be put in one block. How it functions democratically or authoritatively depends on the nature of that society same as that of modern democracy. Again traditional institutions are not static as it also evolved according to the changing nature of the society . Ending of headhunting practice, discontinuation of Morung system and doing away with sacred gennas and taboos, which were the core values around which the traditional institutions of both Sumi and Ao tribes revolved in the pre-colonial period shows the adaptive nature of the traditional institutions. Thus the governance under the traditional political institutions is not always regressive and governance under the modern institutions is not always egalitarian as it is projected to be¹⁵. Thus the findings supporting the compatibility of the traditional institutions of African countries with democracy is also applicable in the context of Sumi and Ao tribes in the sense that like in African countries the structure of the traditional institutions of the Nagas may not have the features of modern democracy but when it comes to actual functioning, governance under the traditional institutions is compatible with democracy due to the presence of democratic features like consensus decision-making process and public participation.

5.3: Comparative Analyse of the Two Systems of Governance

The traditional political institutions of the Ao and Sumi tribes have shown their resilience and were able to withstand the changes that were brought in their society post-colonial period. Though both the traditional authorities of the respective tribes performed similar function of carrying out development work, maintenance of law and order, conflict resolution etc, in

¹⁴ Janine Ubink, op.cit., p.11

¹⁵ Kate Baldwin and Katharina Holzinger, op.cit., p.16

terms of structure of their political institutions one can see core dissimilarities which are highlighted under the following table.

Sumi system	Ao system
Governance based on Hereditary chiefship	Governance based on clan representative system
Term of village council fixed and uniform (5 years)	Term of village council not uniform varies from village to village
Selection process inclusive	Selection process exclusive to adult male
Selection based on meritocracy	Selection based on gerontocracy (tradition and custom)

The analyses of the above table regarding the structure of the traditional institutions of Sumi and Ao tribes shows a paradox in the sense that though Sumi system revolves around a hereditary chiefship which is completely opposed to democratic principles; it has shown more flexibility in incorporating democratic features in the structure of their traditional institutions according to the changing times compared to that of Ao system which follows a representative form of government, having democratic features in appearance. For instance, the selection process under Sumi system is inclusive in the sense every recognized villager is eligible for selection to village council. Whereas in the case of Ao tribe the selection to the village council is still exclusively confined to adult male members since the selection process is still based on their custom and tradition. Further, there is periodic selection of new members under the Sumi system since after every five years there is selection of new batch of members whereas in the case of Ao tribes technically there is no periodic selection of members since in most villages once selected the leader remains in power for 15-30. On this

issue, one of the stalwart Naga politician S.C.Jamir¹⁶ said that the village council in Sumi villages has become democratic where as in the case of Ao it is still traditional¹⁷. Further, the system of Gerontocracy is more prevalent in the Ao system of governance than Sumi village because of which “Age” gets preference over meritocracy in determining one’s position in the village council.

However, in terms of functioning of the village governance under the traditional institutions, compared to Sumi system governance under the Ao system are more in tune with the democratic principles in the sense that decision-making is more inclusive and voice of the majority is better represented since all the clans residing in the village are equally represented in the village council regardless of their strength in the village. No doubt, the decision making of both the tribes is based on consensus. However, in the case of Ao tribe there is no dominant clan to influence the decision making process. All the clan representatives have equal say in the decision making process. No clan is too small to be ignored or big enough to override other clans. Therefore, all the decision-making is based on consensus in true sense. Further, the existence of clan representatives system enables proper checks and balance upon each other which is not the case in Sumi villages, as the chief being the owner of the village have a great say in the decision-making process and there are times where he overturns the decision of the village council. One of the respondents said that the village administration is run on the whims of the chief and the VDB secretary. However, how much the chief wields his power varies from village to village and depends on various factors like how much the villagers are dependent on the chief, the socio-economic and political status of the chief and

¹⁶ S.C.Jamir is the former Chief Minister of Nagaland, former Governor of Odisha, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa and and Padma Bushan awardee (third highest civilian award in India) interviewed on 15th January 2020 at Chumukedima

his immediate families and other things¹⁸. Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson (2014) in their assessment of the traditional governance under Chief in Sierra Leone highlighted that whenever there is intense political competition in traditional polities (i.e, a large number of potentially ruling families in a given location) has a positive effect on local levels of literacy, education and child health. However, where there is less constraint on the powers of the chief it retard the development of the modern education and harm the economic prosperity of the individuals¹⁹. Similar findings were found during the assessment of the chiefship system of the Sumi tribes. One official was of the opinion that benefits of government schemes in Ao villages reached evenly to all the sections of the society in Ao villages due to collective ownership of land and governance based on clan representation. Therefore the Ao village and villagers grow as a whole, which is not the case in Sumi villages ‘as bulk of the development funds goes to the chief and his family in the form of chief share in village project and contracts. Further, most of the village contracts for development projects are taken by the chief and his close associate where many a time the quality of the work gets compromised since there are not many competing political entities in the village to impose accountability upon the chief. Similarly, one senior officer while expressing his frustration over the functioning of a chief in a particular village stated that

“May be the chief does not want his villagers to progress since the chief is mostly against any idea that leads to the development of the village as a whole. He does not do anything to bring development and the sad thing is that he prevents others from doing anything which will bring progress in the village”.

Highlighting such point’s one of the incumbent chief pointed out that benevolent chief always looks after the welfare of his subjects but at present there are some chief who

¹⁸ Prof H.John Sema Department of Political science , Nagaland University, interviewed on November 2020 Chumukedima

¹⁹ Acemoglu, Reed & Robinson (2014) cited in Kate Baldwin and Katharina Holzinger, op.cit., p. 474

appropriate all the funds for himself which were meant for the villagers. There is no doubt issue of misuse of funds by the representatives in both the tribes village. However, generally speaking, there is proper utilization of funds in the Ao villages compared to Sumi villages due to better system of checks and balance in place because of which development funds and schemes get properly utilized which benefits the village as a whole.

Thus comparatively there is a greater tendency for the traditional authorities under the chiefship system prevalent in Sumi villages to function in an undemocratic manner than governance under the Putu Menden since under the Ao system there is strong internal check and balance in place. Therefore internal and external check and balance upon the representatives is essential for the democratic functioning of any institution whether it is traditional or modern institutions. Since how the institution functions democratically or authoritatively depend on who wields the power. Therefore it is of outmost important to have concrete check and balance in place upon the power holders making them accountable to the will of the people. In this regard, it can be referred to one of the popular Canadian psychologists Dr. Jordan Peterson in his analyses of the authoritarian rule highlighted that abuse of power by the leaders' takes place when citizens abdicate their sovereign duty, individually and collectively to raise their voice against the leaders when they deviate towards authoritative exercise of power²⁰. Therefore villagers need to be vigilant in the event of abuse of powers by their leaders, and the state mechanism must come in support of those individuals or groups in the event of harassment by those in power.

5.4: Conclusion

Traditional governance is a global phenomenon. Of the 193 member states of the United Nations, 103 recognize the existence of particular ethnic group in their constitution. Seventy of them grant special cultural or political rights to these communities. Sixty one countries (as

²⁰ Dr. Jordan Peterson-Spain talk Amazing!Great discussion(26 Nov2018)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zENi4LoZblg>

diverse as Ghana, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Paraguay and Tuvalu) explicitly recognizes forms of traditional governance and customary law. Only in Europe, traditional governance seems to be mostly absent. According to the JuriGlobe World legal systems research group (2016) estimates that 57 percent of the world population lives in states where customary law and other forms of law coincide²¹. Therefore it should not be a surprise to see the continued existence of traditional institutions among the tribal societies which is substantiated by the data collected from both the tribe's villages which shows an overwhelming support for the continuation of village governance based²² on their traditional institutions. One of the reasons for their support and faith in the traditional authorities is that unlike the traditional authorities especially that of chiefship in sub-Sahara Africa where they have been associated with some of the worst excess of colonial powers. Predictably, after independence, there has been call for the abolition of these traditional institutions. However, in the case of both the Naga tribes, the traditional authorities in most parts of their history have been at the forefront, protecting the rights of the villagers as a whole. Most of the leaders have not abandoned the villagers for their gains. This is the reason for the wide support for the continuation of these institutions. The villagers do not see their traditional institutions as a symbol of exploitation or abuse of power but see these institutions as a symbol of their unity and identity. Another reason for their support is that the traditional authorities are downwardly accountable to the people. The proximity and intimate familiarity of the traditional authorities with the villagers enable them to effectively address the issue of the villagers and adjudicate dispute among the villagers. Further, the functioning of such traditional institutions is based on norms and rules which the villagers are deeply familiar which enable fruitful participation of their villagers in the village administration. Williams in his research paper found that 88 percent of the respondent in rural

²¹Katharina Holzinger et.al (2016). The Dualism of Contemporary Traditional Governance and the State: Institutional setups and Political Consequences. *Political research quarterly*,63(3),p.469

²² Figure 1

South Africa wanted chieftaincy to continue. 30 percent justified it because it leads, look after the community, or solves community problems. 20 percent justified it because it has always been there. Another 30 percent were of the opinion that chiefship provided discipline, dignity and respect for the community and that there will be disorder without the chieftaincy²³. Similarly, respondents from both the Ao and Sumi tribes cite the unity and stability of governance under their traditional political institutions as the main reason they support for its continuation. The abolition of such system in the present context of their society will lead to disunity and chaos in the village. No doubt like any other institutions around the world there are flaws in the system; however, comparatively its benefits outweigh its flaws.

On the issue associated with non-inclusion of women in the decision making process under the traditional governance there is a general assumption that non-representation of women is inherently bad for women since half of the population of villagers (women) does not have a voice in the decision-making process. However, majority of the women interviewed in the village does not view the issue in the same manner. They are of the opinion that non-inclusion of them in the decision making process has not made them worst off than men in the village. The reason is the easy accessibility of the council members where during informal gatherings they are able to lobby for policies specific to them and share their opinion regarding important issues related to the village. Further, they also highlighted that male council members are also husbands and fathers, thus they do make decisions taking into consideration the welfare of the children, youth, and women. Thus, non-representation of women for majority of them is not a contentious issue which the outsiders tend to make it to be. Lastly, the existence of women organisation like Sumi Totimi Hoho and Watsu enables them to raise any issue related to women. One of the lady in Sumi village shared her view

²³William's cited in Carolyn Logan.(2013). The Roots of Resilience: Exploring popular support for African Traditional authorities. *African Affairs*, 112(448) , p.374

that they do not know much about human rights, womens rights or womens issues but whatever issue they have relate to women it is taken up by Sumi Totimi Hoho .

On the issue of compatibility with the principles of democracy, the overwhelming support for the traditional political institutions by the villagers in both the tribes does not mean the rejection of modern system of democracy and its election process. It is just that they are familiar with the functioning of the traditional institutions and consider it essential for their identity, unity, and development of the village as a whole. Also, villagers do not find it a contradiction for their support for electoral politics and their continuous support for traditional institutions. The support for the continuation of these institutions is not confined to people living in the rural areas alone but is spread across urban and educated **class**. There are, of course, dissenters but mostly it is directed towards the leaders and not towards the institutions.

Thus, discussion about replacing an institution that have the support of the majority will be a wrong priority now. Therefore focus should be on strengthening the traditional political institutions not by way of giving more autonomy but by placing mechanism to make it more accountable and transparent since the traditional authorities has the tendency to exercise their powers in an authoritative manner, more so in the case of Sumi tribes . Further, effort should be made on making it more inclusive, and more than forceful implementation through quotas, positive contribution of women in the decision making will come about, when decision regarding selection of women as council members is based on consensus of the villagers. Further, women individually or collectively need to look beyond their selection in the village council. Since the creation of VDB was one of the initiatives taken by the state government to make the decision-making process in the village more inclusive, however, the observation made during the fieldwork indicates that participation in VDB is seen by both gender just as a means to avail funds. Thus, women folk need to show enthusiasm and participate in

organisation like VDB and women oriented programmes like Anganwadi, Nagaland State Rural Livelihoods Mission (NSRLM) for the development of their leadership skills. Women organisation like Sumi Totimi Hoho (STH) and Watsu should also be utilized as a training ground to develop leadership quality and confidence among the women. Their active participation in such women-oriented program will bring empowerment in real sense than just some token representation in the village council. As was highlighted by one of the women respondents, according to her participation in the self-help group helped her to improve her income and in the process help her to have greater say in the family and in the village governance. Therefore, women need to come together and make an effort to know women-orientated policies and schemes and makes the best out of it for their benefit and the village as a whole.

Finally, in an era when there is talk of holding only one election to reduce the cost of conducting elections in India, the traditional political institutions in both the tribes villages are providing stable governance and sustaining on their own since time-immemorial without the system of election. By providing stable governance and smooth transaction of powers it is providing the environment for the progress of the villagers and village as a whole. One of the most important aspects of the traditional leaders under traditional institutions is the ability to implement its decisions in the village. This strength came to prominence during the Covid-19 pandemic where the traditional authorities were at the forefront in implementing the lockdown rules as well as looking after the villagers and the migrant²⁴ in contrast to the scene of chaos in most of the states of India where strong party based state was divided on party line instead of working together for the welfare of those in need. Therefore this highly influential position enjoyed by the traditional authorities based on their customs and tradition needs to be explored by government to the advantage of the general public. For that, it is

²⁴Village leaders personnel communication 2020

essential to do away with the perception among the traditional authorities considering themselves being the rulers rather than representatives of the people and subordinate to central and state government. Government must fix the accountability upon the council members or the chiefs in the event of abuse of powers and be liable for punishment. They should not be given immunity for their corrupt practices in the name of tradition and culture. The traditional political institutions in both Ao and Sumi tribes continue to hold relevance and command legitimacy from the villagers even in the era of democratization therefore the way forward would be to harmonize the positive values of both modern and traditional values to foster democracy, social equality, and community development²⁵. One such successful example of utilisation of the rich social capital as practice in the case of the tribal societies under their traditional institutions for the implementation of progressive policies of the modern government is that of the program of Communitisation²⁶ which was conceptualised and implemented under the leadership of Mr. R S. Pandey, the then chief secretary to the Government of Nagaland for improving village governance for which the program bagged a United Nations Public Service award contributing towards improving the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of public service as cited by John Sema & Neizhanuo²⁷. Therefore, structure of the traditional institutions may not be in tune with the principles of democracy, however, when it comes to their performance, the governance of tribal societies under their traditional institutions shows features normally associated with democracy, particularly the tribal system of decision making based on consensus and reconciliation. Thus, rather than being alien to liberal values, tribal traditional institutions have their characteristics that could serve to strengthen democracy at the grass root level. Such a transitional arrangement of

²⁵ Prof Arun Kumar Singh Interview on September 2021

²⁶ P,S,Pandey.(2010) communitisation the third way of governance. *concept publishing company* pvt Ltd, New Delhi.

²⁷ H. John Sema & Neizhanuo Golmei.(2015). Local institutions of governance of the Naga: The village council ,its role and function in Nagaland. *Local Government Quarterly*, p.61

reconciling the two parallel institutional systems will be a way forward for good governance enabling the traditional political institutions to maintain their relevance and also strengthen democratic values at the lowest unit of administration. It is only by combining the best of traditional and modern values that the leaders Naga tribes will be able to effectively guide their people into the modern and developing world²⁸ otherwise rather than being an asset it will seen as a liability for development of the village and promotion of grass-root democracy among the villagers.

²⁸ Amanda J Bruning,.(1998).Tribal leadership : the traditional and modern leadership of the Xhosa, Zulu and Swazi of South Africa" (1998). *Honors Theses*. 1145. Retrieved from <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/honors-theses/1145>

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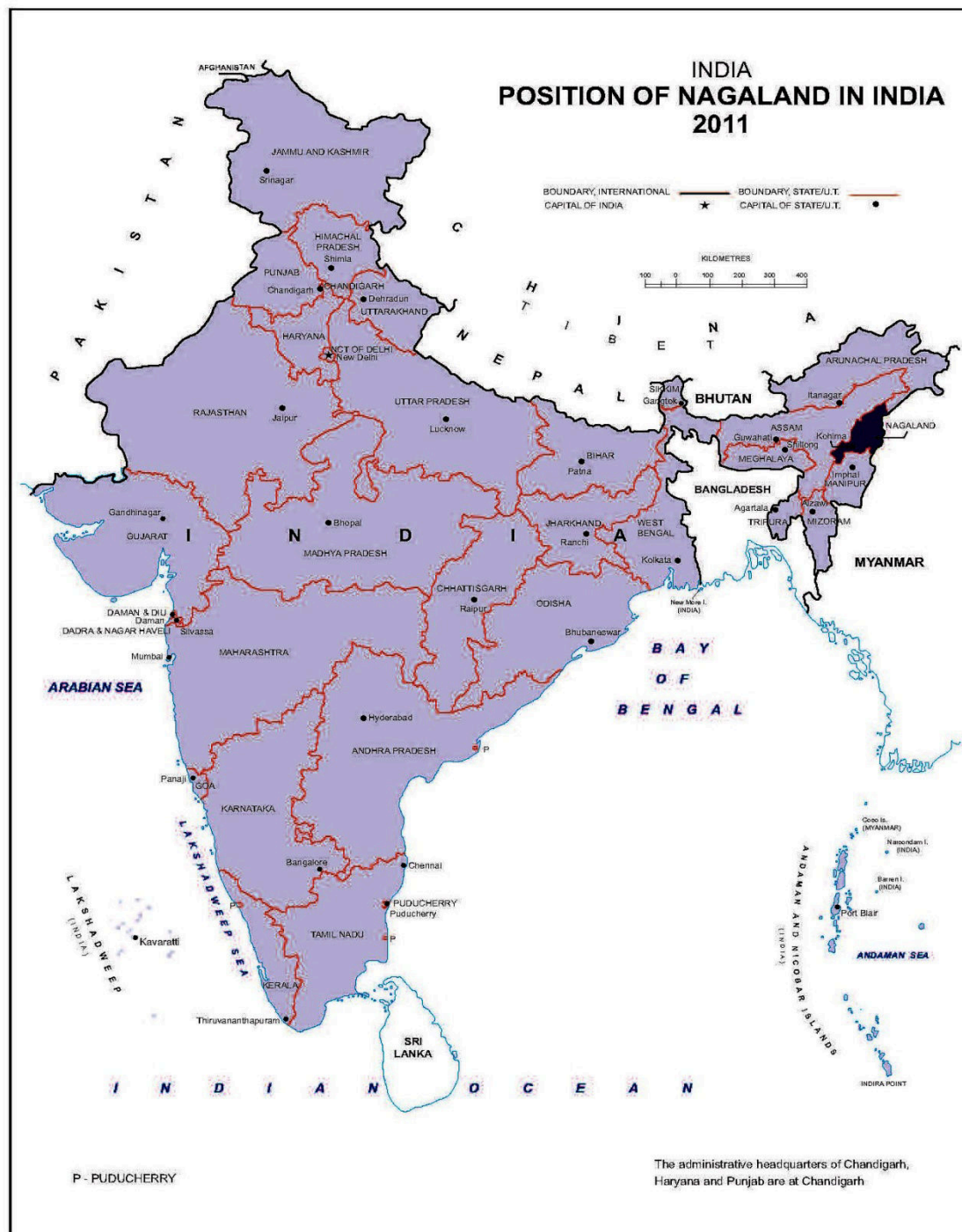
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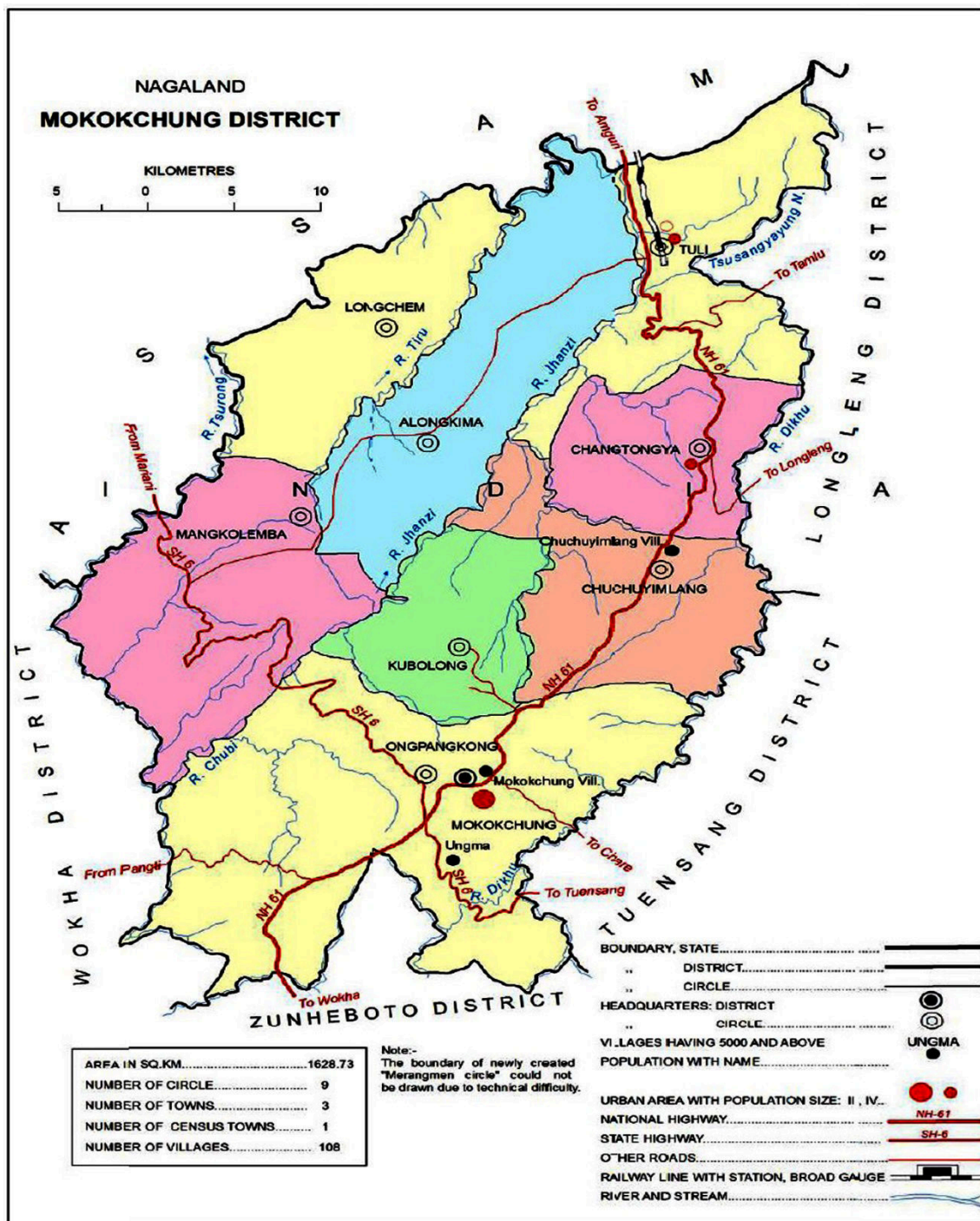
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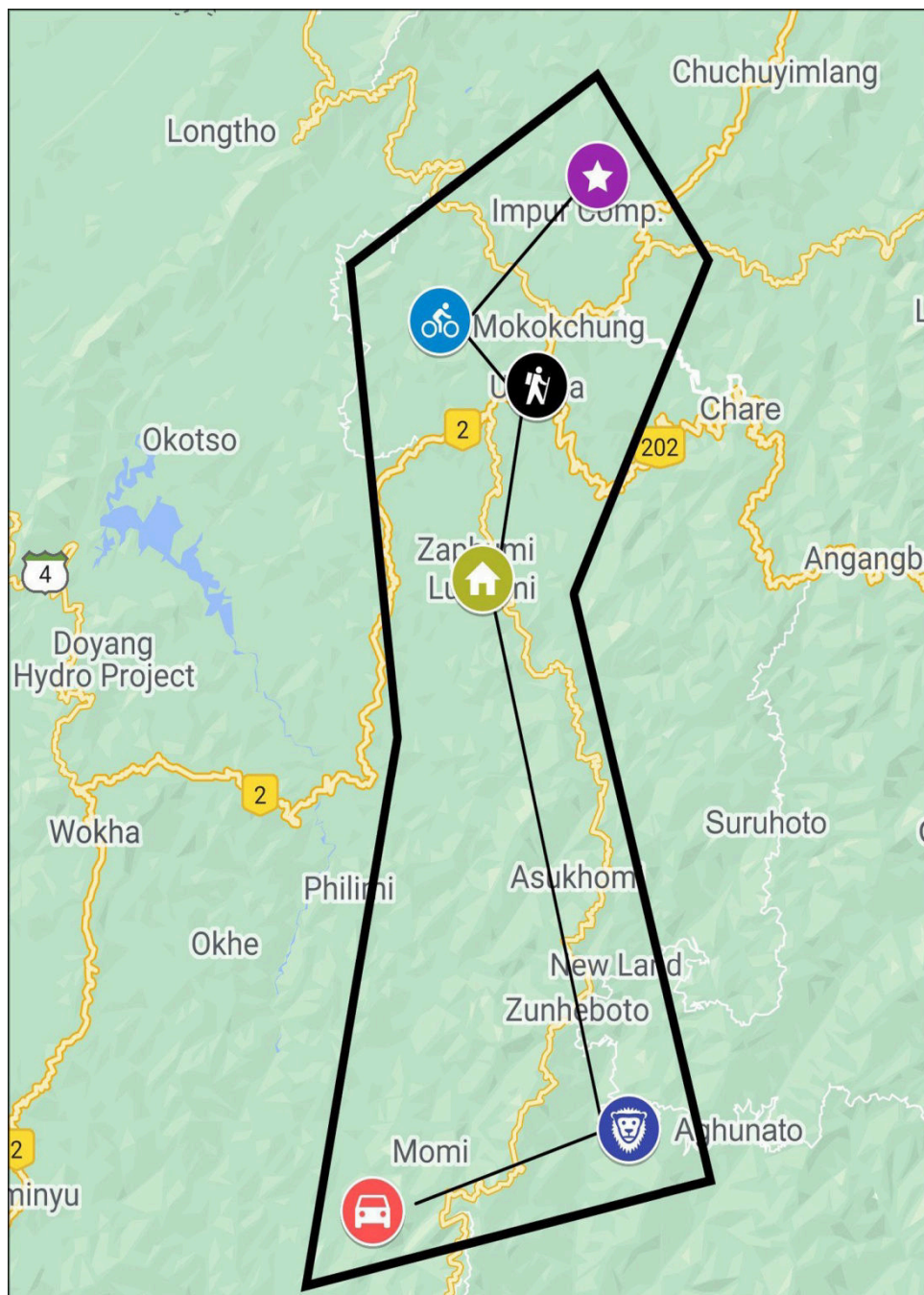
Map and profile of village



Source: Census of India 2011 Administrative Atlas Nagaland



Source: Census of India 2011, Nagaland, District Census Handbook Mokokchung



Source: Googlemap

Profile of village visited for collection of primary source

Kubza village - Mokokchung, Nagaland

Kubza is a medium size village located in Ongpangkong Circle of Mokokchung district, Nagaland . It is 15 km from the Mokokchung Town. It has a total 206 families residing. The Kubza village has population of 912 of which 471 are males while 441 are females as per Population Census 2011.

Kubza village has lower literacy rate compared to Nagaland. In 2011, literacy rate of Kubza village was 65.38 % compared to 79.55 % of Nagaland. In Kubza Male literacy stands at 66.15 % while female literacy rate was 64.59 %.¹

Workers profile

Total working population of Kubza is 435 which are either main or marginal workers. Total workers in the village are 435 out of which 229 are male and 206 are female. Total main workers are 407 out of which female main workers are 215 and male main workers are 192. Total marginal workers of village are 28.²

Mopungchuket village - Mokokchung, Nagaland

Mopungchuket is a large village located in Kubolong Circle of Mokokchung district, Nagaland. . It is located 16 Kms from the district headquarters, Mokokchung town

It has total 743 families residing. The Mopungchuket village has population of 3072 of which 1568 are males while 1504 are females as per Population Census 2011.

Mopungchuket village has higher literacy rate compared to Nagaland. In 2011, literacy rate of Mopungchuket village was 92.08 % compared to 79.55 % of Nagaland. In Mopungchuket Male literacy stands at 93.46 % while female literacy rate was 90.68 %.³

Workers profile

Total working population of Mopungchuket is 2214 which are either main or marginal workers. Total workers in the village are 2214 out of which 1111 are male and 1103 are

¹ Retrieved from <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/village/267198-kupza-nagaland.html>

² Retrieved from <https://etrace.in/census/village/kupza-ongpangkong-district-mokokchung-nagaland-267198>

³ Retrieved from <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/village/267159-mopungchukit-nagaland.html>

female. Total main workers are 1380 out of which female main workers are 727 and male main workers are 653. Total marginal workers of village are 834⁴.

Ungma village - Mokokchung, Nagaland

Ungma is a large village located in Ongpangkong Circle of Mokokchung district, Nagaland with total 2294 families residing. The Ungma village has population of 9443 of which 4809 are males while 4634 are females as per Population Census 2011.

Ungma village has higher literacy rate compared to Nagaland. In 2011, literacy rate of Ungma village was 92.34 % compared to 79.55 % of Nagaland. In Ungma Male literacy stands at 92.31 % while female literacy rate was 92.38 %.⁵

Workers profile

Total working population of Ungma is 5272 which are either main or marginal workers. Total workers in the village are 5272 out of which 2764 are male and 2508 are female. Total main workers are 4812 out of which female main workers are 2600 and male main workers are 2212. Total marginal workers of village are 460.⁶

Khetoi Population - Zunheboto, Nagaland

Khetoi is a medium size village located in Aghunato Circle of Zunheboto district, Nagaland with total 199 families residing. The Khetoi village has population of 1077 of which 518 are males while 559 are females as per Population Census 2011.

Khetoi village has higher literacy rate compared to Nagaland. In 2011, literacy rate of Khetoi village was 92.71 % compared to 79.55 % of Nagaland. In Khetoi Male literacy stands at 94.90 % while female literacy rate was 90.66 %⁷.

⁴ Retrieved from <https://etrace.in/census/district/mokokchung-262/>

⁵ Retrieved from <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/village/267203-ungma-nagaland.html>

⁶ Retrieved from <https://etrace.in/census/village/ungma-ongpangkong-district-mokokchung-nagaland-267203>

⁷ Retrieved from <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/village/267288-khetoi-nagaland.html>

Workers profile

Total working population of Khetoi is 519 which are either main or marginal workers. Total workers in the village are 519 out of which 244 are male and 275 are female. Total main workers are 407 out of which female main workers are 191 and male main workers are 216. Total marginal workers of village are 112⁸.

Khukiye Population - Zunheboto, Nagaland

Khukiye is a medium size village located in Satakha Circle of Zunheboto district, Nagaland with total 133 families residing. The Khukiye village has population of 614 of which 301 are males while 313 are females as per Population Census 2011.

Khukiye village has higher literacy rate compared to Nagaland. In 2011, literacy rate of Khukiye village was 80.96 % compared to 79.55 % of Nagaland. In Khukiye Male literacy stands at 85.17 % while female literacy rate was 76.98 %.⁹

Workers profile

Total working population of Khukiye is 375 which are either main or marginal workers. Total workers in the village are 375 out of which 175 are male and 200 are female. Total main workers are 121 out of which female main workers are 99 and male main workers are 22. Total marginal workers of village are 254¹⁰.

Lukhai Population - Zunheboto, Nagaland

Lukhai is a medium size village located in Satakha Circle of Zunheboto district, Nagaland with total 102 families residing. The Lukhai village has population of 540 of which 274 are males while 266 are females as per Population Census 2011.

Lukhai village has higher literacy rate compared to Nagaland. In 2011, literacy rate of Lukhai village was 85.50 % compared to 79.55 % of Nagaland. In Lukhai Male literacy stands at 90.79 % while female literacy rate was 80.17 %.¹¹

⁸ <https://etrace.in/census/village/khetoi-aghunato-district-zunheboto-nagaland-267288>

⁹ <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/village/267372-khukiye-nagaland.html>

¹⁰ <https://etrace.in/census/village/khukiye-satakha-district-zunheboto-nagaland-267372>

¹¹ <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/village/267373-lukhai-nagaland.html>

Workers profile

Total working population of Lukhai is 407 which are either main or marginal workers. Total workers in the village are 407 out of which 202 are male and 205 are female. Total main workers are 201 out of which female main workers are 95 and male main workers are 106. Total marginal workers of village are 206¹².

Lumami Population - Zunheboto, Nagaland

Lumami is a medium size village located in Akuluto Circle of Zunheboto district, Nagaland with total 187 families residing. The Lumami village has population of 820 of which 440 are males while 380 are females as per Population Census 2011.

Lumami village has higher literacy rate compared to Nagaland. In 2011, literacy rate of Lumami village was 88.11 % compared to 79.55 % of Nagaland. In Lumami Male literacy stands at 92.35 % while female literacy rate was 83.33 %.¹³

Workers profile

Total working population of Lumami is 457 which are either main or marginal workers. Total workers in the village are 457 out of which 245 are male and 212 are female. Total main workers are 373 out of which female main workers are 215 and male main workers are 158. Total marginal workers of village are 84.¹⁴

¹² <https://etrace.in/census/village/lukhai-satakha-district-zunheboto-nagaland-267373>

¹³ <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/village/267218-lumami-nagaland.html>

¹⁴ <https://etrace.in/census/village/lumami-akuluto-district-zunheboto-nagaland-267218>

Annexure I

List of the respondents interviewed

1. S. C. Jamir, former Chief Minister of Nagaland, Governor of Odisha, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa and Padma Bushan Awardee, 15th January 2020
2. Dr. Hokishe Yephthomi, former Sumi Hoho President 3rd March 2019
3. Bendangtoshi, ex-member Ao Senden, 5th December 2017
4. Kasuho Yephthomi, Chief, Khetoï village 6th March 2019
5. Kakishe ,chief Khetoï village 7th March 2019
6. Hooto , chief Lumami village
7. Akavi Awomi Council Chairman 16th March 2019
8. Dr. Pukhato Sema Assistant Professor, Zunheboto Government college 7th December 2018
9. Rongsentsula Government teacher Mopunchuket village 13th June 2019
10. Sunep ,Government teacher Kubza village 4th August 2019
11. Neizhanou Golmei Assistant Professor, Nagaland University 2018
12. Rokonienou, Assistant Professor Patkai Christian College 4th April 2019
13. Tebu Pharmacist Dimapur October 2020
14. Wati, Lecturer Fazl Ali college Mokokchung July 2020
15. Alina Ph.D scholar, Nagaland University 13th January 2020
16. Obed Ph.D scholar, Nagaland University 13th January 2020
17. Toshi, Ph.D scholar Nagaland University 13th January 2020
18. Hentick , Police , Chumukedima 5th January 2020
19. Satem Ex-council member ,Longmisa village 14th December 2021
20. Atitla ,Teacher Longmisa village 14th December 2021
21. Temsu Clerk Longmisa village 14th December 2021
22. Onen Clerk Longmisa village 14th December 2021
23. Amongla, Assistant Professor, Fazl Ali College 4th December 2020
24. Arun Tamang clerk Nagaland University 14th December 2021
25. Temjen clerk Mongsenyimti village 3rd March 2018
26. Ati NGO worker Mokokchung 4th April 2018
27. Senti NGO worker Mokokchung 4th April 2018
28. Akok NGO worker Mokokchung 4th April 2018
29. Dr. Chuba Dimapur December 2020

30. Sunep council member Mongsenyimti village 3rd March 2018
31. Saku council member Mongsenyimti village 3rd March 2018
32. Lanu council member Mongsenyimti village 3rd March 2018
33. Asen Rural Development Department Mokokchung 4th May 2018
34. Ayo Rural Development Department Mokokchung 4th May 2018
35. Arentemsu Chairman Mopunchuket village 7th June 2019
36. Imyumeren , council members Mopunchuket village 7th June 2019
37. Lipotemsu council members Mopunchuket village 7th June 2019
38. Aosadang ex- council member Mopunchuket village 7th June 2019
39. Tsukjemtems Goanbura Mopunchuket village 20th June 2019
40. Sutsungtoshi VDB secretary Mopunchuket village 20th June 2019
41. Toshisenla Watsu President Mopungchuket village 23rd June 2019
42. Repainla VDB member Mopungchuket village 23rd June 2019
43. Chubakumla VDB member Mopungchuket village 23rd June 2019
44. Akokla Mopungchuket village 8th June 2019
45. Sentila Mopungchuket village 8th June 2019
46. Susenchila Mopungchuket village 8th June 2019
47. Sunep Mopungchuket village 8th June 2019
48. Imlichiba Mopungchuket village 8th June 2019
49. Apenla Mopungchuket village 9th June 2019
50. Imlitoshi Lkr Mopungchuket village 9th June 2019
51. Akumla Mopungchuket village 9th June 2019
52. Amenla Mopungchuket village 9th June 2019
53. Achi Mopungchuket village 10th June 2019
54. Yanger Mopungchuket village 10th June 2019
55. Amongla Mopungchuket village 10th June 2019
56. Chubasangla Mopungchuket village 11 June 2019
57. Atula Jamir Mopungchuket village 11 June 2019
58. Asang Mopungchuket village 12nd June 2019
59. Along Mopungchuket village 12nd June 2019
60. Sutsungba Mopungchuket village 13th June 2019
61. Manenkala Mopungchuket village 13th June 2019
62. Asung Mopungchuket village 14th June 2019
63. Senchilemla Mopungchuket village 14th June 2019

64. Narojungla Mopungchuket village 16th June 2019
65. Chuba Mopungchuket village 16th June 2019
66. Imli Mopungchuket village 16th June 2019
67. Odinenla Mopungchuket village 16th June 2019
68. Shilu Mopungchuket village 16th June 2019
69. Chubakumzuk Mopungchuket village 18th June 2019
70. Atem Mopungchuket village 18th June 2019
71. Mendang Mopungchuket village 19th June 2019
72. Alemla Lkr Mopungchuket village 19th June 2019
73. Akala Mopungchuket village 22nd June 2019
74. Yimjungsunep Mopungchuket village 22nd June 2019
75. Tiamenla Mopungchuket village 22nd June 2019
76. Alepla Mopungchuket village 22nd June 2019
77. Lima Mopungchuket village 22nd June 2019
78. Asangla Mopungchuket village 22nd June 2019
79. Imlikokba Imchen chairman Kubza village 7th August 2019
80. Rechasangba Longkumer Council member Kubza village 7th August 2019
81. Jemdir Jamir council member Kubza village 7th August 2019
82. Watimeren Imchen ex-council member Kubza village 11th August 2019
83. Akantoshi Longkumer ex-council member Kubza village 11th August 2019
84. Yodang Kubza village 11th August 2019
85. Rongsenla Kubza village 13th August 2019
86. Tinu Kubza village 13th August 2019
87. Mayang Kubza village 13th August 2019
88. Akum Kubza village 17th August 2019
89. Lima Kubza village 17th August 2019
90. Tekatemsu Kubza village 17th August 2019
91. Alemla Kubza village 17th August 2019
92. Watitemjen Goanbura Kubza village 12th August 2019
93. Bendangnukshi Goanbura Kubza village 12th August 2019
94. Imtiyanger Imchen VDB secretary Kubza village 17th August 2019
95. Imchasangla Watsu President 17th Kubza village August 2019
96. Imchasangla VDB member 17th Kubza village August 2019
97. Moaniungla VDB member 17th Kubza village August 2019

98. Imlikokla Kubza village 23rd August 2019
99. Temsuwati Kubza village 23rd August 2019
100. Tsungpongmar Kubza village 23rd August 2019
101. Bendangla Kubza village 23rd August 2019
102. Imtila Kubza village 23rd August 2019
103. Arentola Kubza village 23rd August 2019
104. Bendangnaro Kubza village 23rd August 2019
105. Tiakala Kubza village 23rd August 2019
106. Aienla Kubza village 23rd August 2019
107. Amen Kubza village 28th August 2019
108. Tsuponynagla Kubza village 28th August 2019
109. Watisangla Kubza village 28th August 2019
110. Nukshenla Kubza village 28th August 2019
111. Asangla Kubza village 28th August 2019
112. Purlemla Kubza village 29th August 2019
113. Moangla Kubza village 29th August 2019
114. Watitula Kubza village 1st September 2019
115. Tekamongla Kubza village 1st September 2019
116. Sunep Kubza village 1st September 2019
117. Tali Kubza village 3rd September 2019
118. Sentila Kubza village 3rd September 2019
119. Ajungla Kubza village 3rd September 2019
120. Lima ex-council member Ungma village 28th July 2018
121. Imlolemba ex-chairman Ungma village 28th July 2018
122. Imli Ungma village 28th July 2018
123. Anungla Ungma village 28th July 2018
124. Alemla Ungma village 29th July 2018
125. Asen Ungma village 29th July 2018
126. Tali Ungma village 29th July 2018
127. Tako Ungma village 29th July 2018
128. Latongla Ungma village 29th July 2018
129. Akanglemla Ungma village 29th July 2018
130. Arenla Ungma village 29th July 2018
131. Merenozk Ungma village 29th July 2018

132. Imtisunep Ungma village 29th July 2018
133. Anungla Ungma village 29th July 2018
134. Mar Ungma village 4th August 2018
135. Rongsen Ungma village 4th August 2018
136. Wapang Ungma village 4th August 2018
137. Arenba Ungma village 4th August 2018
138. Chuba Ungma village 4th August 2018
139. Meren Ungma village 5th August 2018
140. Achila Ungma village 5th August 2018
141. Bendangla Ungma village 5th August 2018
142. Yashi Ungma village 20th September 2019
143. Sentimenla Ungma village 20th September 2019
144. Nukshi Ungma village 20th September 2019
145. Yapang Ungma village 20th September 2019
146. Yanger Ungma village 21st September 2019
147. Toshi Ungma village 21st September 2019
148. Imtikumla Ungma village 21st September 2019
149. Ali Ungma village 21st September 2019
150. Oti Ungma village 21st September 2019
151. Wapangsenla Ungma village 24th September 2019
152. Akokla Ungma village 24th September 2019
153. Temjensunep Ungma village 24th September 2019
154. Aren Ungma village 24th September 2019
155. T.K Jamir Ungma village 24th September 2019
156. Naro Ungma village 25th September 2019
157. Among Ungma village 25th September 2019
158. Ati Ungma village 11th December 2021
159. Sentikumla Ungma village 11th December 2021
160. Apok Ungma village 11th December 2021
161. Apen Ungma village 11th December 2021
162. Tali Jamir Ungma village 12th December 2021
163. Asangba Ungma village 12th December 2021
164. Ghotovi VDB secretary Lumami village 5th December 2019
165. Hukato Chairman Lumami village 5th December 2019

- 166.Hima council member Lumami 5th December 2019
- 167.Akani council member Lumami 5th December 2019
- 168.Aseni Lumami village 5th December 2019
- 169.Rubeka Lumami village 6th December 2019
- 170.Keholi Lumami village 6th December 2019
- 171.Vitoli Lumami village 6th December 2019
- 172.Toluvi Lumami village 6th December 2019
- 173.Kivito Lumami village 11th December 2019
- 174.Khekali Lumami village 11th December 2019
- 175.Tokheho Lumami village 11th December 2019
- 176.Vetoli Lumami village 5th January 2020
- 177.Khukhuli Lumami village 5th January 2020
- 178.Ayeto Lumami village 5th January 2020
- 179.Huli Lumami village 5th January 2020
- 180.Inali Lumami village 5th January 2020
- 181.Hutton Lumami village 8th January 2020
- 182.Khekato Lumami village 8th January 2020
- 183.Mulato Lumami village 8th January 2020
- 184.Ahoshe Lumami village 8th January 2020
- 185.Roto Lumami village 8th January 2020
- 186.Shinili Lumami village 8th January 2020
- 187.Kivito Lumami village 13th January 2020
- 188.Henitoli Lumami village 13th January 2020
- 189.Avitoli Lumami village 13th January 2020
- 190.Khelivi Lumami village 13th January 2020
- 191.Khekhesi Lumami village 14th January 2020
- 192.Quighani Lumami village 14th January 2020
- 193.Elina Lumami village 23rd January 2020
- 194.Tonali Lumami village 23rd January 2020
- 195.Akheli Lumami village 23rd January 2020
- 196.Hotoli Lumami village 23rd January 2020
- 197.Tokheli Lumami village 30th January 2020
- 198.Akhalu Lumami village 30th January 2020
- 199.Hekhesi Lumami village 30th January 2020

200. Alovi Lumami village 30th January 2020
201. Ahoni Lumami village 3rd February 2020
202. Anitoli Lumami village 3rd February 2020
203. Tovitoli Lumami village 3rd February 2020
204. Tolika Lumami village 3rd February 2020
205. Hokani Lumami village 10th February 2020
206. Khazheli Lumami village 10th February 2020
207. Tokali Lumami village 10th February 2020
208. Asheli Lumami village 10th February 2020
209. Nitoshe Chairman Khetoi village 7th March 2019
210. Ikavi Khetoi village 7th March 2019
211. Livitoli Khetoi village 7th March 2019
212. Boliho Khetoi village 7th March 2019
213. Phutoshi Khetoi village 7th March 2019
214. Kikato Khetoi village 7th March 2019
215. Bolika Khetoi village 7th March 2019
216. Atoshi Khetoi village 8th March 2019
217. Akali Khetoi village 8th March 2019
218. Hekatoli Khetoi village 8th March 2019
219. Totoli Khetoi village 9th March 2019
220. Ashibo Khetoi village 9th March 2019
221. Aliko Khetoi village 9th March 2019
222. Mukato Khetoi village 10th March 2019
223. Tokhuho Khetoi village 10th March 2019
224. Akhiholi Khetoi village 10th March 2019
225. Livika Khetoi village 11th March 2019
226. Awokali Khetoi village 11th March 2019
227. Alo Khetoi village 11th March 2019
228. Kithetoli Khetoi village 12th March 2019
229. Bokovi Khetoi village 12th March 2019
230. Avibo Khetoi village 16th March 2019
231. Anili Khetoi village 16th March 2019
232. Alomi Khetoi village 16th March 2019
233. Phukhutoli Khetoi village 16th March 2019

234. Tokikhi Khetoi village 16th March 2019
235. Rebika Khetoi village 16th March 2019
236. Ikato Khetoi village 16th March 2019
237. Hushili Khetoi village 16th March 2019
238. Vito Khetoi village 16th March 2019
239. Ilika Khetoi village 16th March 2019
240. Khehoni Khetoi village 19 March 2019
241. Jimokali Khetoi village 19th March 2019
242. Tukhukali Khetoi village 19th March 2019
243. Pitoka Khetoi village 19th March 2019
244. Ikavi Khetoi village 19th March 2019
245. Keyiholi Khetoi village 22nd March 2019
246. Abeto Khetoi village 22nd March 2019
247. Agha Khetoi village 22nd March 2019
248. Hoshito village chief Khukiye Lukhai 4th November 2019
249. Inashe village council chairman Khukiye Lukhai 4th November 2019
250. Avishe VDB secretary Khukiye Lukhai 4th November 2019
251. Jetoli female council member Khukeyi Lukhai 4th November 2019
252. Vilika female council member Khukiye Lukhai 4th November 2019
253. Hosheli Khukiye Lukhai 5th November 2019
254. Avika Khukiye Lukhai 5th November 2019
255. Hoshini Khukiye Lukhai 5th November 2019
256. Inahoto Khukiye Lukhai 5th November 2019
257. Livi Khukiye Lukhai 7th November 2019
258. Toshini Khukiye Lukhai 7th November 2019
259. Pikali Khukiye Lukhai 7th November 2019
260. Lutoli Khukiye Lukhai 7th November 2019
261. Mughotovi Khukiye Lukhai 7th November 2019
262. Toli Khukiye Lukhai 7th November 2019
263. Kato Khukiye Lukhai 7th November 2019
264. Iloli Khukiye Lukhai 12th November 2019
265. Kiye Khukiye Lukhai 12th November 2019
266. Tovi Khukiye Lukhai 12th November 2019
267. Tokeyi Khukiye Lukhai 12th November 2019

- 268.Kihoshe Khukiye Lukhai 12th November 2019
- 269.Kits Khukiye Lukhai 12th November 2019
- 270.Tohuka Khukiye Lukhai 13th November 2019
- 271.Alen Khukiye Lukhai 13th November 2019
- 272.Abeto Khukiye Lukhai 13th November 2019
- 273.Kevitoli Khukiye Lukhai 13th November 2019
- 274.Kashito Khukiye Lukhai 14th November 2019
- 275.Shikato Khukiye Lukhai 14th November 2019
- 276.Alino Khukiye Lukhai 14th November 2019
- 277.Zughuli Khukiye Lukhai 14th November 2019
- 278.Toka Khukiye Lukhai 16th November 2019
- 279.Vito Khukiye Lukhai 16th November 2019
- 280.Toheli Khukiye Lukhai 16th November 2019
- 281.Katoi Khukiye Lukhai 16th November 2019
- 282.Katovi Khukiye Lukhai 16th November 2019
- 283.Katoka Khukiye Lukhai 17th November 2019
- 284. Nivito Khukiye Lukhai 17th November 2019
- 285.Yeshiho Khukiye Lukhai 17th November 2019
- 286.Vihoi Khukiye Lukhai 17th November 2019
- 287.Kahuli Khukiye Lukhai 21st November 2019
- 288.Isato Khukiye Lukhai 21st November 2019

Annexure II

List of respondents to questionnaire

1. Jungshi Ungma village
2. Temsu Ungma village
3. Asen Teacher Ungma village
4. Anungla Ungma village
5. Achi Nurse Ungma village
6. Imlimongla Ungma village
7. Alemwati Ungma village
8. Sanen Ungma village
9. Arenjungla Kubza village
10. Tsupongsangba Kubza village
11. Akok Kubza village
12. Temsumongba Kubza village
13. Imolemla Kubza village
14. Kiyeshi Lumami village
15. Ayetoli Lumami village
16. Heli Lumami village
17. Kalivi Khetoi village
18. Nomi Khetoi village
19. Tokashi Khetoi village
20. Toshini Khetoi village
21. Kalibo Khukiye Lukhai
22. Amenli Khukiye Lukhai

Annexure –III

Questionnaire scheduled on topic: a comparative study of the traditional political institutions of the Ao and the Sumi tribes of Nagaland: changing dimension

Name of the respondent : _____

Age:	(a) Below 30 yrs.	()
	(b) 30-49 yrs.	()
	(c) 50-69 yrs	()
	(d) 70 yrs and Above	()

Educational qualification	(a) Below Matric	()
	(b) Matriculate	()
	(c) Higher Secondary	()
	(d) Graduation	()
	(e) Post Graduation	()
	(f) M.Phil and Ph.D	()
	(g) Professional qualifications	()

Occupation : _____

Gender	: Male	()	Female	()
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Marital status	: Married	()	Unmarried	()
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Have you been a member	: Yes	()	No	()
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Of the village council

1. Are you familiar with the working of the Village council (Putu Menden) ?
 - a. Yes ()
 - b. No ()
 - c. Little ()
2. Have you heard of the Nagaland Village Council Act of 1978?
 - a. Yes ()
 - b. No ()
3. Do you know the major/important provision given under the act?
 - a. Yes ()
 - b. No knowledge of it ()
 - c. Little ()
4. Do the village council follow the guidelines of Nagaland village council act or works independent of it ?
 - a. Yes ()
 - b. No ()
5. Do you observe any major changes in the working of the village administration?
 - a. Yes ()
 - b. Its more or less the same ()
6. Is the major decision of the village taken after thorough discussion basing on consensus or it is imposed upon the villagers?
 - a. Based on consensus ()
 - b. Imposed upon ()
7. Does the decision of the village council benefits?
 - a. All the section of the village ()
 - b. Few sections of the village ()
 - c. For the members of the dominant clan. ()
8. What are the major source of income of the village council?
9. In your opinion are you able to assert your rights and freedom under the traditional institutions?
 - a. Yes ()
 - b. No ()

10. Are you able to raise your grievances in the village council?
- a. Yes ()
 - b. No ()
11. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the work done by the traditional institutions?
- a. Very satisfied ()
 - b. Somewhat satisfied ()
 - c. Somewhat dissatisfied ()
 - d. Very dissatisfied. ()
 - e. Don't know ()
12. In your opinion how suitable are traditional institutions (Putu Menden)/Chiefship system for village governance to meet the challenges of the villagers?
- a. Very suitable ()
 - b. Suitable ()
 - c. Not suitable ()
 - d. Not at all suitable ()
13. Do you think the members of the village council functions in a transparent and accountable manner?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- If no, Can you cite some examples?
14. Are there enough mechanism under the system of Putu Menden/Chiefship through which the accountability of the members of the village council be made?
- a. Yes ()
 - b. No ()
 - c. Don't know ()
15. Has there been any convictions in the light of mismanagement of funds by the members of the village council?
- a. Yes ()
 - b. No ()

16. How much is your level of trust towards the traditional institution like Putu Menden/Chiefship

- a. A great deal ()
- b. Quite a lot ()
- c. Not very much ()
- d. None at all ()
- e. Don't know ()

17. How much is your level of trust towards the members of the village council?

- a. A great deal ()
- b. Quite a lot ()
- c. Not very much ()
- d. None at all ()
- e. Don't know ()

18. Do you think the selection process for filling up the post in village council democratic/fair?

- a. Yes ()
- b. No ()

Please cite some reasons

19. Do the council members selected under the customary practices possess the necessary skills and knowledge to meet and address the needs of the villagers?

- a. Majority of them ()
- b. Only few ()

20. Given a choice which one will you prefer for the selection/election of the members of village council?

- a. Selection based on customary practices ()
- b. Through universal adult franchise (election) ()
- c. Both ()

21. In your opinion should customary laws be codified for better, stable and transparent governance?

- a. Yes ()
- b. No ()

Give reasons

22. . According to you what is the source of legitimacy of traditional institutions?

- a. People ()
- b. Customs and traditions ()
- c. Legislation like Village council act ()

23. Do the villagers based on consensus able to change some of the old customs and practices which are irrelevant?

- a. Yes ()
- b. No ()

Give reason

24. In your opinion is it justified on the part of the traditional institutions to issue diktats to the people to cast their vote in favor of one candidates during elections?

- a. Yes ()
- b. No ()
- c. Don't know ()

25. in your opinion compared to past years has people being more vocal for their rights against some of the diktats of the village council?

- a. Yes ()
- b. No ()

26. Based on your experience is there any mechanism through which people sought redress against those village council diktats that violates the basic rights of an individual?

- a. Yes ()
- b. No ()

Can you cite some examples

27. What do you think is the role of women in the village governance?

28. In your opinion what are the reasons that women are not allowed in the decision making process under traditional institutions

29. Is there a real threat to the customs and traditions of your tribes in the village if women were to be a part of village council?

- a. Yes ()
- b. No ()

Cite your opinion

30. Are the male representatives able to address the needs and interest of women?

- a. Yes ()
- b. No ()
- c. To some extent ()

31. In your opinion has there been any steps taken by the central government, state government, NGO's to enhance the participation of women in village governance?

- a. Yes ()
- b. No ()

If yes can you cite some examples

32. According to you what are the steps need to be taken to enhance women participation in the village governance

33. In your opinion do you think that women though not being part of the village council have not affected the socio-economic and political empowerment of women in the village

- a. Agree ()
 - b. Disagree ()
- Cite your opinion

34. What is the impact of education, Christianity and other modern institutions on the traditional political institutions?

- a. Positive ()
- b. Negative ()

35. Has the introduction of the village council act of 1978 led to interference of the state government in the functioning of the village councils affecting its autonomy?

- a. Yes ()
- b. No, village council is supreme in the village matters ()

36. In your opinion do the village council and government officials hold any workshop to spread awareness of the various welfare programmes initiated by the government for the benefits of the village?

- a. Yes ()
- b. No ()

37. What are the changes would you like to see in the working of the traditional institutions to meet the emerging challenges?

Glossary

Akukau	-	Sumi village Chief
Ahuna	-	Post harvest festival of the Sumi tribe
Aluzhi	-	literal meaning Alu-field , Azhu-labourers also known as gangs. They are villagers composed of both sexes in the case of unmarried.
Angh	-	The sovereign authority of the Konyak tribe
Aoula	-	Head of the Tazung Menden , in other words de facto head of the Putu Menden
Ariju	-	The Dormitory of the boys
Awou	-	Village priest of Sumi tribe
Chungliyimti	-	According to oral lore it is claimed to be the first Ao village formed
Chochomi	-	Councillors under Sumi village council
Dobashi	-	An interpreter/agent, introduced by the British in their administration in Nagaland
Gerontocracy	-	Rule of elders
Goanbura	-	A government's representative in the village who act as a messenger between the government and the villagers
Imsong-Pongen	-	Name of a clan usually regarded as the eldest in Ao clan system
Kemova	-	Village priest in Angami village
Khel	-	Khel means division of a village into small colony or ward
Kidong	-	A group of people belonging to same clan
Kukami Lagha	-	They are the chief's relations, men of his family, cousin and so forth
Long-trok	-	six stones, according to the oral lore, Ao forefather said to be emerged from six stones.
Mighimi	-	Sumi Chief Slaves or bonded labourers
Moatsu	-	The cultural festival of Aos observed in the first week of May
Putu Menden	-	The highest governing body in Ao village
Pvuti	-	Village priest in Lotha village
Sumi Totimi Hoho	-	Sumi women organisation

Tatar	-	Chosen leader of Putu Menden
Tazung Menden	-	A tier under Putu Menden in Ao villages which is equivalent to the Cabinet Ministers
Tuluni	-	The cultural festival of Sumis which is celebrated to welcome the arrival of the new crop/fruit from the field
Tupuki or Apuki	-	Boys' dormitory in Sumi village
Iliki	-	Girls dormitory in Sumi villages
Tsuki	-	Dormitory of the girls in Ao villages
Ung/Unger	-	Treasurer of the Putu Mended in Ao villages, he acts as the nominal head of the Putu Menden
Zunga	-	Peer group
Watsu	-	Ao women organization