

TRADITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS & YOUTH INSTITUTIONS AMONG THE JANAJATIS OF NORTHEAST BHARAT



INDEPENDENCE DAY SPECIAL ISSUE



HERITAGE EXPLORER

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VOL. XV, NO.8 AUGUST 2016

गर्भवती महिलाओं के सुपोषण का अभियान



महतारी जतन योजना

- गर्भवती महिलाओं को आंगनबाड़ी केन्द्रों में रेडी टू ईट के साथ **पौष्टिक गर्भ भोजन**।
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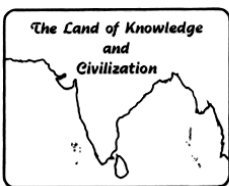
Traditional Administrative Systems & Youth Institutions among the Janajatis of Northeast Bharat

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Heritage Explorer

A Monthly News Bulletin

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***Success is not Permanent.
Failure is never Final.
So always do not stop effort until
your Victory makes a History.***

- Chanakya



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FOREWORD



It is enterprising and encouraging to note that Guwahati based HERITAGE FOUNDATION located at Uzan Bazar has brought out the Independence Day special issue of Heritage Explorer on a topic *Traditional Administrative Systems and Youth Institutions among the Janajati of North East Bharat* edited by Mr Amarendra Brahma. It is come to known that the foundation is bringing monthly publication on various issues focusing on north east. This particular issue is a special one focusing on various indigenous practices pertaining family, clan, village administration, traditional administrative system as well as youth dormitories prevalent among the various indigenous groups of the north east.

The North East is the home of diverse ethnic groups with their colourful customs and traditions going on across the generations. Each group is unique from one another in terms of their dialect, dresses, traditions, festivals, customs, indigenous organizations as well as local self governing institutions. These aspects are very much interesting so far as various disciplines are concerned. The interesting aspect of these societies is presence of customary laws which is responsible for maintaining peace and harmony in the society through an

indigenous mechanism. Most of the societies have well structured indigenous mechanism to sort out various disputes within their own. Prior to advent of modern administrative system, such institutions are functioning as dispute redressal mechanism. Still they have their own importance. Except grievous offences most of the disputes are settled through such mechanism. They are known by different names among different communities. Their foundation is based on the traditional laws of the respective communities. Though they are continuing in the same manner, there are changes in terms of power and functions due to advent of modern justice system, *panchayati raj*, modernization, spread of modern education and changing outlook of new generation. Due to influence of globalization, it is seen that every society is passing through a process of transition and transformation. So there are changes which is inevitable. It is due to that the youth organizations like bachelors dormitories have lost its importance. It was used earlier as centre for education, training to make a person for responsible community member and recreation. It also involves in various welfare activities of the communities. Now except a few, it lost its relevance. The *murung* of Nagaland and *jirkedam* of

Karbi Anglong are some good examples of bachelors' dormitory. Among the Tiwas of Assam, we can see the structure of *samadi*, the erstwhile bachelor dormitory that lost its significance in the present context.

Under such circumstances, this volume is very much important to provide us an insight view of the various indigenous self governing institutions, village councils, youth institutions, customary practices of the various ethnic groups of the region. Except of few most of the scholars are indigenous scholars. They know better their own society than others. Their emic perspectives are always significant. This volume comprises are 38 articles contributed by various noted scholars of the region. I am sure that this volume will be helpful for all kinds of readers, academicians, planners and policy makers. The editor must be complimented for his untiring effort.

Dr Ranga Ranjan Das
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Law Research Institute
Eastern Region
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Guwahati-781001

Date: 08.08.2016



Dear Readers,

We would like to have your comments on the articles published in the Special Issue of **Heritage Explorer** with the title, '**Traditional Administrative Systems & Youth Institutions among the Janajatis of Northeast Bharat**'. We hope it will be helpful for other readers too in developing new ideas and better insight.

Also we would like to have comments from Esteemed Readers on articles being publishing in our **Regular Issues** also. It is to share ideas with all others and to give a direction to this publication.

With Regards
Amarendra Brahma
Editor

Write your letters....



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From Editor's Desk



We are glad to offer this Special Issue of 'Heritage Explorer' on the eve of Independence Day 2016, with its subject centered on - **'Traditional Administrative Systems & Youth Institutions among the Janajatis of Northeast Bharat'**.

A number of Janajati communities use to dwell here in this region, may they have a small or big population, but each of them have their own social administrative systems which are rooted deep in their village and family life. All those systems are being inherited by them through generations. All of them were learned people who had evolved such systems keeping in mind their impact in the community life for all times to come. Today, such people are rare who can see into the very essence as well as causes of all such systems – “why and how they were evolved in the society, their impact; what new systems can be evolved and what modifications/reformations should be done to the existing ones.”

Today, due to modern education systems and changed life styles, some of those systems are changing which is inevitable. Youths started moving outside their main inhabitations in search of livelihood where they do not find a society of their native villagers and so they remain away from the traditional administrative systems, but these systems are still in practice in many a villages in this region of NE Bharat. They differs from one community to another and each of them have their own logic, no one can be said illogical!. It may be suggested that some social-scientists should come forward to study and analyse them.

The presence of police personnel in the village and hilly areas is very negligible here and Courts invites only a few number of litigations. The reason of this effect is the administrative systems of the Tribes in the Northeast. There are village councils, which functions in various names, use to settle all types of village cases- both civil and criminal, due to which only a few cases use to reach the

courts. But it is interesting to say, the higher Courts always use to refer the decisions of the village courts with utmost importance as the people who had put their mind into it knows either of the parties and their backgrounds. If, with some modifications, such self-rulling systems put into practice nation wide, which was true once upon a time in the ancient Bharat, Courts' burden along with their expenditures can be minimised. **The next step of "Panchayati Raj" should be "Village Courts" or "Gram Darbar"!**

There were systems of youth dormitories in each of the janajatis which were used for their training and putting the youth force in village economic engine which are no more in practice, vanished now a days. But they took the shape of **students organisations**, units of which are formed even upto village level which can not be found any where in the country outside Northeast. In other parts of the country Students organisations are college centric. Alas to say, in many of the students' organisations elders' role is negligible. Though Youths are a Force but Elders are the Eyes, without the giuidance of the elders youths power may prove to be devastating. Hence the youth organisations should be given a new shape for their integral develoment as well as for the welfare of the community as a whole as Youths are the Future of that Community.



Amarendra Brahma
Editor



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Local Self-governing Institutions of the Tribal in North-east India: A Study of the Village Authority/Council

- Vanthangpui Khobung

In the wake of India's independence from British rule, the tribal were allowed to have institutions in accordance with their traditional-customary laws and practices. This was done to preserve their cultural identities, interests and allay their fears of exploitation at the hands of the non-tribal. Therefore, a variety of institutions dominated by the traditional tribal culture with semi-autonomous and self-managing indigenous local institutions at different level exist. Changes have been introduced from time to time. In most cases, these changes have been introduced in response to the administrative needs for the various developmental policies of the state. This paper presents an overview of continuities and changes of the local self-governing institution existing in the form of Village Authorities/Councils in the three states viz. Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland located in the north-eastern parts of India. Though known by different names –Village Council in Mizoram and Nagaland and Village Authority in Manipur, they are the only institutions in the village level that still has a traditional ethos in modern local government setting.

North-East India comprises of eight States namely Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Sikkim and Tripura. All these states have a remarkable number of tribal populations. Tribal populations may be grouped into plain tribal and hill tribal. To the hill tribal, a policy of minimal political interference was followed by the British. None of the political reform introduced were extended to the hill tribal of North-east India. As such, a variety of local self-governing institutions with their associated participatory structures and processes existed among the hill tribes. Tribes belonging to Kuki-Chin-Mizo and Naga groups are hill tribes mainly found in the states of Nagaland, Mizoram and hill areas of Manipur. This paper presents an overview of the continuities and changes of the local self-governing institution of these groups. For this purpose, the pre-independence scenario is laid out first followed by the various legislative acts introduced and the consequent changes along with this. The study is based on both primary and secondary sources.

The pre-independence scenario

Before the British came, the tribal communities belonging to Kuki-Chin-Mizo and Naga groups subsisting on shifting cultivation as the dominant mode of production and livelihood lived in small groups. Each groups were organize into villages with a defined territory. This mode of living gave rise to strong regulated village governments in the form of Chieftainship and Council of Elders. However the functioning of this institution differs from tribe to tribe. Among the Kuki-Chin-Mizo groups and some tribes among the

Nagas like Semas and Konyaks, hereditary chief possessed executive, legislature and judicial powers in the village. His decisions were final in all matters. The chief decided both civil and criminal cases according to the customary law of the village. He was the traditional village head having authority to enact laws and at the same time executed these laws at his discretion. The chief appointed members of the council of elders to assist him in village administration. Council of elders was chosen from among

the subject who possessed tact and wisdom and who was well versed with customary laws and usages of the people. Theoretically all powers were vested in the hands of the chief, yet in practice he would never try any case without consulting his council. A chief who govern strictly according to custom could do almost everything he liked without losing his followers, but a weak chief who tried petty tyrannies soon found himself without any subjects. The only recorded incident where people revolted against this system was in 1880 when some of the chiefs became unduly oppressive and arrogant failing to follow the traditional customary norms in the erstwhile Lushai hills. But this was shortly put down before it assume a large- scale nature. On the other hand, the rest of the other Naga tribes had relatively democratic village administration. The chiefs were either selected or elected for a definite period or for lifetime. He was assisted by a council consisting of most senior male heads of the clans of the village. The council of elders occupies an important position in village administration and their function was to aid and advise the chief in the village administration. The British colonial administration formally recognized the traditional authority of villages as an effective means of administration at the grassroots level. Except for few changes, the chief and his councils continued all internal and local administration with hardly any interference from them.

The Legislative Acts and the continuities and changes

Various acts have been passed regarding the village Governments after India gained independence from the British rule. This is followed by legislative recognition by most of the states. Various Acts were passed in this regard. Some of them are Lushai Hill District (village council) Act, 1953; Nagaland Village and Area Council Act, 1978; Nagaland Village and Area Council Rules, 1979; Manipur State Hill People's Regulation Act 1947; Manipur Village Authorities (in Hill Areas) Act, 1956. These Acts provides the village authority/ councils with a varied and well defined powers, responsibilities and more statutory cognizance than before. While some functionary and socio-political functions were either abolished or co-opted and incorporated under these acts, some functions have also been added. The institution of Chieftainship was totally abolished in Mizoram when the village councils took over the new system of village administration on 16 August, 1953 with the passing of Lushai Hill District (village councils) Act, 1953. For some tribal living in Nagaland and Manipur who previously had hereditary chiefs, it is still a continuing process. The hereditary chief becomes ex-officio members or chairman of the village authority.

The composition of members for the village councils/authority envisage under the different acts

accorded due emphasis to traditional customary practices and usages. Members for village council are chosen in different ways depending upon the acts and existing customary laws and practice. They may be directly elected by the people or by clan members and also nominated by the chief or deputy commissioner or clan members. The changes do not happened over a single act. For example in Manipur, the first act in 1947 gave the chiefs the right to nominate the members of the village authority/council while the subsequent act in 1956 tried to impose restrictions on this power by introducing the provision for election of the members, if not to be nominated by the Deputy Commissioner of the District.

The new acts also provide a separate administrative, judicial and developmental role for the village authority/council. In addition to the general administration of the village according to customary laws like settlement of land disputes, management of community and forest land, fixation and allocation of jhum sites, developmental functions are entrusted to the Village Authority/Council by the various acts. In Manipur, a Notification for village authority, 1971 entrusted village authorities to identify and select beneficiaries under poverty alleviation schemes. They are also entrusted to review all the developmental works within the village and report to the Block Development Officer.

Developmental role of village council in Nagaland is more pronounced than that of the village authority in Manipur. Along with their role in the identification of beneficiaries for development programmes, they are to formulate and supervise village developmental scheme; help government agencies in carrying out developmental works in the village, receive grant-in-aid, donations, subsidies from the government or any other agencies; to provide security for due payment of loan by any permanent resident of the village from the government, bank or financial institutions, to lend money from its fund to the deserving villagers; to enter into any loan agreement with the government, bank or any financial institutions. Another important function of village council is to constitute Village Development Board (VDB), a statutory body to assist the village council in executing development policy programs. In Mizoram, one peculiar functions entrusted to the village council is enforcing Hnatlang, where all able bodied of villagers are supposed to offer their services for the welfare of the village. They also assist Local Area Department (LAD) in conducting elections to village council. It is also their duty to report to the government about paddy harvest in the village and the needs of the villagers like school, post-office and, construction of inter-village path. Through their membership in the Village Development Committee (VDC), they oversee

the identification and selection of beneficiaries under the various schemes meant for rural development and ensured proper implementation of various programmes of the central and state governments.

Conclusion

The extant local self-governing institutions – Village Authority/ Council – of the Kuki-Chin-Mizo and Nagas have evolved from traditional institutions which were primarily geared to maintaining social cohesion, security and spirituality of the community. No notable economic functions were found in the traditional institutions, whereas the village Authority/ Council has very important economic functions besides its normal socio-political functions, though its religious function is no more significant. Village Council plays an important part in economic planning and implementations of policy programs at the grass-root level. However, it is very important to note that since time immemorial the women folks are not given opportunity to participate in the functioning of village governments and till date such discrimination continues to exist in the Village Authority/Council. Therefore, to effectively pursue the various powers and functions of Local Self-governing Institutions, there is an urgent need to include women in such institutions through amending the existing laws.

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[8] H. Kamkhenthang, An aspect of Tribal Poverty and Remedy among the Tribes of

Manipur' Directorate of Development of Tribals & Backward Classes, Imphal, 1987. pp. 23-25.

[9] Hnatlang is a form of cooperative labour and can be seen as a forced labour called upon the village communities either by the chiefs, village councils or the youth leaders called val upa. It is practiced by all tribes of Kuki-Chin- Mizo groups.

[10] Arvind K. Sharma, Rural Development in Mizoram -A Study of IRDP, Har-Anand Publication, New Delhi. 2004. Pp. 34-35 (*Source: Internet*)



Indigenous System of Justice among the Akas of Arunachal Pradesh

- Dr Ranga Ranjan Das

The Akas are numerically small but significant tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. The word 'Aka' means painted, as it is their custom of painting their faces profusely with distinctive marks, especially among their womenfolk (cited in Barooah 2011: XII). They call themselves as Hrusso. According to a myth, BusloAou was their ancestor and they originated from the earth and the sky. They believe that they migrated to the present habitat from a place known as Ziga (Lanka pur) which might be somewhere in upper Assam (Singh 1994: 57). They are inhabited in the eastern valley of the Bomdila range in the West Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh. Their main concentration is the Thrizino area and is confined to twenty three villages of which Dijungania, Jamiri, Buragaon are some of the largest and prominent. The society is patriarchal and there are two main clan: kavastsun and kaotsun (Koley 1990: 169). In the West Kameng district, they are predominantly settled in three circles: Thrizino circle, Jamiri circle and Bhalukpung circle. The observations reflected here is on the basis of the study conducted in three different villages: Thrizino Headquarters, Giziri and Jamiri Point.

The tribal communities in Arunachal Pradesh including

Akas, have been retaining their self-identities by practising their customs, laws and institutions through the existence of Village Council. Such practices are prevailing since time immemorial. According to Aka mythology, *Mukhugobro* and *Thingobram* started the first Village Council. The disputes, if any, are settled according to their customary practices and norms.

The *Nugouor* the *Sothkokunubrou* and his deputies, *Bhaga* and *Gibba* of the concerned village usually settle the disputes. For inter-village disputes both the *Gaonburas* and members of the Village Council settle it. In few complex cases the *Gaonburas* from neighbouring villages are called for help in settling a case. At the last stage people go to district administration to solve their problem. The Aka people distinguish between civil and criminal cases. Settlement of cases may or may not involve fine- by a cow, a pig, *mithun* or cash, depending upon the nature and gravity of the case. A habitual criminal e.g. thief, is punished by threatening or handing over to police. Disputes are also settled by oath (*tsigratha*) in exceptional cases.

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCY

The structure and function of administration of justice among the Akas are age-old and customarily practised from time immemorial. Some of the salient features are highlighted below.

The Village Council in Aka dialect is called as *Nyetchi Raaj Rai* and a meeting of the council is known as *melley*. All the important matters relating to the villagers are subjected to the territorial jurisdiction of the Village Council. It acts as a court of justice guided by traditional usages and customs for offences committed against individuals or community. Village Councils are the supreme administrative agency of the villages. The Village Council can deliver a judgement from house hold disputes to inter village conflicts in both the civil and criminal cases. The villagers can participate actively in the council meetings and discuss publicly without any hesitation. The Village Councils allow both the accused and the complainant to argue for themselves. The judgements are pronounced in accordance with the age-old traditions and customary laws after careful considerations of the divergent viewpoints. The discussion continues until a consensus is reached.

The *Nyetchilew khew* also known as *Nyetchilew Nugow* is the Chief of a village. The

Nyetchilew Khew is usually distinguished as the wealthiest of all the villagers who also have good knowledge and more experience in the customary laws and traditions. There may be more than one *Khew* in a village, depending on the size of population of the concerned village. There are two other functionaries known as the *Bhaga* and the *Gibba*, who assist the *Khew* in discharging his responsibilities. There are instances when the same person can be a *Nyetchilew Khew* and the *Gaonbura* at the same time.

The main duty of the *Bhaga* is to inform the *gaonbura* about the local activities and important happenings in the village such as commission of crimes, degree of punishment, disputes, and so on. Sometimes the *Bhaga* also presides over the meeting of the village council in absence of the *gaonbura*. The *Gibba* keeps watch over the people and their activities, character and happenings, which may likely to disturb the peace of the community.

Formation

The unit of political organization in Aka society is the village community, as a whole, acting in the form of a Village Council. All adult men are the primary members of the Village Council. The active members are selected out of the primary members. Usually the active members are elders, having experience and knowledge of the customary laws. The term of active member is for full life span. The youngsters are given scope

to have experiences from the council's sessions regarding all aspects of the community. It is the institutionalised way of transmission of cultural heritage among the Akas.

There is no fixed term of office for the council and its members. They donot get any special privileges in the village. The fines collected in any case are not given to the council members, rather kept for any developmental activities to be utilized in the village. However, the membership may temporarily be suspended for dishonesty or major loop-holes in the eyes of customs.

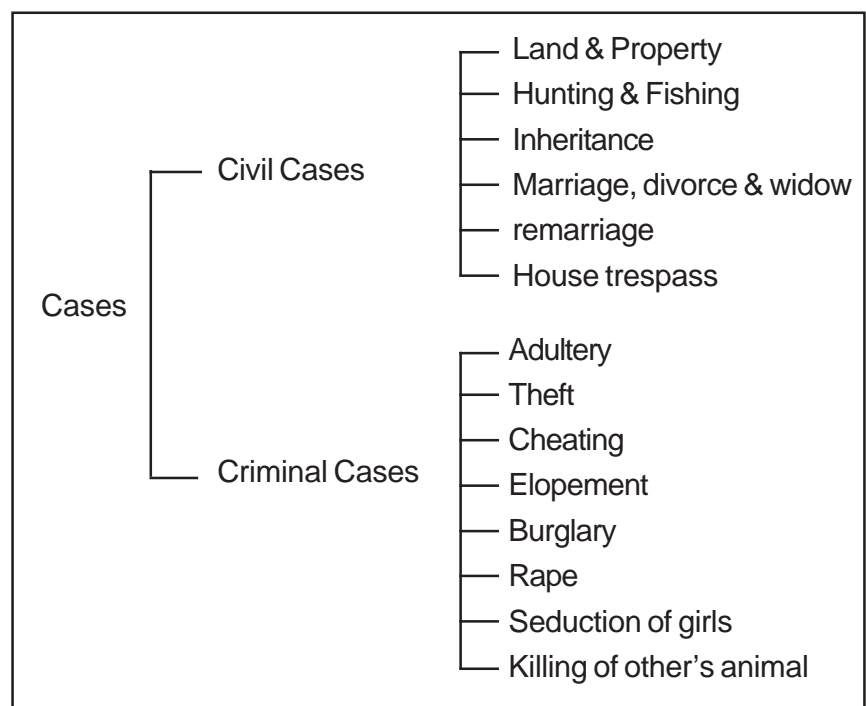
No woman has the right to be a member of the Village Council. Women only posses the right to speak in the council's session, if she is invited or summoned to give her opinion or evidence.

Gaonbura is usually unanimously selected in full

session of the council. It is the convention for all the members of the village to participate in the meetings. The position of *gaonbura* is not hereditary. Quality, knowledge and experiences are the main criteria for eligibility to become a *gaonbura*. However, a son or a younger brother of the preceding *gaonbura* may get better chance if they possess the desirable qualities for the post.

Functions

The Village Council has the jurisdiction on all-important matters affecting village community. Its functions are manifold i.e. judicial, administrative and developmental. As the Village Councils are responsible for maintaining the law and order situation of the village, a variety of cases or suits are tried by the councils, which are presented below in a categorized way.



To prove someone guilty or innocence the following steps are generally followed:

a) A meeting of the council is convened when a plaintiff files a suit against somebody,

b) The council summons the accused. The accused will have to be present before the council and explain the fault committed by him,

c) If he denies his involvement, he is directed by the Village Council to take an oath,

d) He will be responsible to prove of his innocence through eyewitnesses, if any,

e) Before the meeting begins, the *gaonbura* collects some relevant information regarding happenings through his own informants - the *Bhaga* and the *Gibba*,

f) If eyewitness is not available or appeared to be reliable, circumstantial evidence may be considered,

g) If the accused confesses the charge, then there is no problem to prove. If they do not confess, the council initiates the



system of oath and ordeal to prove guilt or innocence. Oath and ordeals are used only when normal procedures of judgment fail to yield any result. Ordeals are not preferred normally, but in some of the interior villages occurrences of ordeals were reported.

Nature of Punishment

The degree of punishment and its nature varies from crime to crime. It also varies for some crime depending upon the submissiveness and behavior of the accused. Sometime fines are imposed. The degree of

punishment imposed by the customary laws among the Akas is presented in a tabular form. It shows that some crimes are taken as serious and some are lighter.

Oath and Ordeals (Tchagajiu)

The Akas follow a traditional form of oath and ordeal as a subsidiary method of administering justice. The main objective of this process is to provide speedy justice and immediate solution of dispute. There are various forms of oath and ordeals among the Akas.

Degree of Punishment and Fines among the Akas.

Sl. No.	Nature of Crime	Punishment & Fine
1.	Petty theft	a) To confess and return the stolen articles b) No fine
2.	Seduction of girl (if the girl becomes pregnant)	a) Forced to marry or b) Fine of Rs. 1,000-10,000/-to girl's parents.
3.	Adultery	a) One mithun to the council. b) One mithun, edi cloth & pig to the victim c) Remuneration of the priest (Fine imposed only on male partner)
4.	Elopement	a) Payment of Bride-price to the husband of the woman, for the elopement of married woman. b) An extra amount as penalty to the council by the man.
5.	Violence & Disturbance of Peace	a) Fine of Rs.1000/- or more b) Fine may be in kind also. c) The accused is socially ostracized for a temporary period or permanently in some cases.
6.	Rape	a) Forced to marry and compulsory payment of bride-price in raping an unmarried girl. b) Highest amount of fine is imposed in raping a married woman.
7.	Murder	a) Forced to pay penalty to the victim's family; the amount varies. 30-50 <i>mithuns</i> for the murder of a well respected and rich person and 5-10 <i>mithuns</i> for the murder of an ordinary person. b) If the culprit is unable to pay the fine imposed on him, he may be handed over to the family of the victim.

Two examples are mentioned below:

a) Hot-water process - It is a very common form of ordeal among the Akas. This process is usually administered in case of major or heinous crime i.e. murder, attempt to murder or practice of black magic etc. In this process, water is boiled in a metal pot with the head of a snake or a piece of skin of tiger or panther in it. After the priest (*megou*) utters *mantra*, the accused is directed to put his hands into the boiling water. If the culprit can bring out his hands without injury, he proves himself innocent of the crime caused. On the contrary, if his hands are injured or burn marks are appeared on his hands, he is proved guilty undoubtedly. He may be forced to pay sufficient compensation to the victim as decided by the council.

b) The procedures of the Red-hot Iron Piece ordeal are as follows:

At the beginning, the accused who has to prove of his innocence, needs to cross a gate of wild thorns' without hurting himself. Then, he has to keep five leaves of wild plants, which are *Gyigi*, *Sthoguma*, *Nyethugoma*, *Somse* and *Mechime*. These leaves when touched, causes irritation to the skin. These leaves are put in his palm. Afterwards, a red hot iron

piece is put on top of the leaves on his palm. Then he has to take five steps ahead and throw the iron piece at a stack of dry bush at the end of the place of ordeal. If after the ordeal, the accused remains uninjured and his palms do not burn, he is considered as innocent.

The age-old values and traditions are changing due to advent of modernity. However, the people still like to follow clan and village exogamy in marital relationship. But, at present marriages between Akas and non-Akas are occurring and being accepted in the present day society. However, there is still relevance of traditional village council. Although the institutions of traditional Village Council and Panchayati Raj system perform their functions independently, till today the village council is functioning almost in the same way (*ibid* Koley 1999, p 58). But with the introduction of modern justice system, a section of people like to approach it. To understand the present situation, further research is necessary.

Note: This write up is reproduced from our published work on the customary laws of the Akas of Arunachal Pradesh. The chapter IV is reproduced here for making it greater readers and inviting their comments, remarks, inputs and suggestions on the changes that happened in last fifteen years.

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Traditional System of Justice Among the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh

- Dr Ranga Ranjan Das

The Apatanis is one of the most interesting and significant tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. They trace their decent from a mythical ancestor Abo Tani. It is believed that their ancestors came from a place in the north known as Upyo Supung (Mudu Buru, according to some) which lay close to Tibet. According to their legends, they arrived in three batches by three different routes to their present habitat and cleared the area of a species of wild reptile called buru with the help of some magical objects. They are mostly concentrated in the seven villages in and around Hapoli and Ziro now called Apatani valley in the Lower Subansiri district of the state (cited in Singh 1994: 65). They are an enterprising, industrious and most advanced group of people in the state in respect of intense cultivation, utilization of cultivable land, agriculture cum pisciculture and orchid cultivation (Barooah 2007: XVII).

The Apatanis have a popular democratic form of village authority called buliang. Only male members can become its members. There is no bar against women's participation in the *buliang*, but the convention has been that women have so far remained aloof from taking active part in the formal *buliang* meetings.

There are three classes of Buliang, - Akha, Yapa and Ajang buliang as classified by Prof Haimendorf and others. The Buliang is a two structured organization. They are,

(i) *Buliang* and (ii) *Miha Pillo*. *Miha Pillo (Buliang)* are selected by *buliang* usually from those families of a clan who do not contribute a *buliang*. This makes more representative and democratic. *Buliang* and *Miha Pillos* are treated equally except in contributions given by the performers of Subu and Murung performers to their fund called Amang. If *buliang* gets Rs.100/- (Rupees one hundred) only, then the *Miha Pilloos* get Rs.50/- (Rupees fifty) only as their *Amang*.

Meetings of *buliang* are usually presided over by the eldest *buliang* among those gathered for the deliberations. Decisions are usually arrived at by consensus.

Though the *buliangs* are said to be strong enough for settlement of any dispute, in practice, it is not so in the present day society. The *buliangs* now act primarily for the duty related to festivals like *myoko* and some traditional practices during the festivals. The *buliangs* normally act as arbitrators of tribal law and do not

take notice of a dispute unless it becomes a public issue which deserves immediate attention. These offices of *buliangs* are hereditary in the sense that a capable son of a *buliang* becomes a *buliang* afterwards. Generally if a father of a particular clan is *buliang*, then one of his sons, who is an able one, can succeed to the position of the father and the honor of the office of *buliang* is given at the time of *myoko* festival. For rendering service to the clan or community, the buliang is rewarded with ceremonial gift like rice beer and meat at the time of festivals. When there is any dispute in the village, the buliangs sit in the lapang (public platform) and settle the dispute in a customary rule. But settlement of the disputes is not in the manner of a Judge in a court of law. The council of Apatani *buliang* meets informally. The parties to disputes are given a chance to put forward their views through knowledgeable relatives.

If there is any dispute between two villages in the Apatani valley, then the *buliangs* of two villages try their level best to settle the dispute. If they fail to come to a fruitful decision, there will be sittings among all the *buliangs* of seven original villages in a

particular village, which can be said to be an inter-community *buliang*. Then they will find solution between the two contending villages. *Dapo* is not a treaty. Treaty is called *Gyotuh* in Apatani. It is a notification; it is a means of soliciting support of the *buliangs* on a decision given by some *buliangs* for implementation.

The *buliang's* importance are somewhat reduced, as *gaonbura* is held as an administrative wing at the lower rung. Though the powers of the *buliangs* are not curtailed by the administration, yet it becomes reduced, in the presence of *gaonburas*, panchayat and the Deputy Commissioner's Court. It may be said that men are more keen to adopt new ideas disseminated through the village level, area level and district level organizations. Introduction of *gaonbura* system is not very old in Apatani valley and they are appointed by the district administration. They are provided with red coats by the government. The government also appoints one or more head and assistant head *gaonburas* in the villages. The *gaonburas* are also paid honorarium by the government.

In the Apatani society, each clan has at least one *gaonbura* and each village has at least one head *gaonbura*. Now in the Apatani plateau *gaonbura* plays an important role in the village administration. Presently for any village dispute the villagers come to the *gaonbura* for settlement as the latter is directly under the

district administration. It does not mean that the role of *buliang* is minimal in the village administration. As a matter of fact, the authority of the *buliang* members over the members of the clan is undisputable.

In order to regularize the co-operation between the *buliang* and *gaonbura* in the matter of running the village administration the government revised parts of the Assam Frontier Regulation 1945, para 5, and established Village Council by an order of the Commissioner. The member of such council is appointed by the Deputy Commissioner from *gaonbura* and *buliang* members.

The *gaonbura*, by virtue of his position as the head of the village council, acts as a representative of the administration at the village level. Besides the *gaonbura* there is political interpreter (*katoki*) employed by the government for maintaining cordial relations between the villagers and the administration. The *gaonbura* and political interpreters assist the government officials to perform their duties.

In the year 1969, Arunachal Pradesh (then known as N.E.F.A) introduced the three-tier structure of local self-governing bodies, namely:

- (i) Gram Panchayat
- (ii) Anchal Samiti
- (iii) Zilla Parishad

(i) Gram Panchayat: Introduction of Panchayati Raj in Arunachal Pradesh is based on the report of the Ering

Committee. *Gram Panchayat* in Apatani valley started in the year 1969. The North East Frontier Agency Panchayati Raj Regulation 1967 (Regulation of 1967, as amended by the N.E.F.A. Administration) Supplementary Regulation, 1971 (Regulation 4 of 1971) defines that Gram Panchayat is the Unit of the Panchayat system of local- self-government at the village level. As per the latest amendment of this Act, the Gram Panchayat constituencies have been delimited in which one member shall represent a population of 100 and if the population is more than 250, three Gram Panchayat Members (GPMs) could represent. The Anchal Samiti and Zilla Parishad constituencies have also been delimited.

(ii) Anchal Samiti: Anchal samiti is the block level local self-government in Arunachal Pradesh. In Apatani plateau also Anchal Samiti is one of the important local self-government agencies, which deals with most of the important developmental work at the block level. Anchal Samiti consists of the following members:

(1) An Anchal Samiti includes near about twenty five Gram Panchayats and one member of each Gram Panchayat must be represented in the Anchal Samiti.

(2) Five members from Co-operative Society, which is situated within a Block.

(3) The Deputy Commissioner nominates five members.

(4) The Sub-divisional Officer (S.D.O). Of a Sub-Division represents the Administration as an ex-officio member.

The S.D.O. who represents the administration acts as President of the Anchal Samiti. Vice President is elected from among the members of Anchal Samiti. The main function of the Samiti is to look after the planning and development of the Block. In fact, Anchal Samiti is one of the important self-government units through which many developmental and welfare works are being done in the villages of the Block. On the other hand, Samiti has to play an active part for improving the standard of education, agriculture and to look after the administration in the Block. Besides this, Panchayat Raj Regulation Act of 1967 has vested some important powers with the Anchal Samiti, namely,

- (1) Improvement of sanitation and public health,
- (2) Public works, such as improvement of village roads,
- (3) Education and culture,
- (4) Self defence and village defence,
- (5) Administration,
- (6) Welfare activities,
- (7) Agriculture and preservation of forests,
- (8) Improvement of industries including cottage industries, etc.,
- (9) Improvement of sanitation and public health,

(10) Public works, such as improvement of village roads,

- (11) Education and culture,
- (12) Self defence and village defence,
- (13) Administration,
- (14) Welfare activities and
- (15) Agriculture and preservation of forests.

In the Apatani plateau, Anchal Samiti has done many public works, such as most of the villages are now provided with piped water so that the villagers might drink water. Implementation in Central Govt. schemes are not initiated by the Anchal Samiti.

In Apatani society, there are seven Zilla Parishad segments viz, Reru-Kalung, Tajang, Hari, Hong Nichi, Hong Niithii, Hija and Diibo. In Reru-Kalung Zilla Parishad Member (ZPM) segment, there are 17 Anchal Samiti Member segments (ASMs), in Tajang 16 ASM segments, in Han 19 ASM segments, Hong Nichi have 17 ASM segments, Hong Niithii have 17 ASM segments, Hija have 17 ASM segments and Diibo have 24 ASM segments,

(iii) Zilla Parishad: This parishad is the highest authority of the three-tier system of local self-government in Arunachal Pradesh. The Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Regulation of 1967 provides Zilla Parishad for every district. It is the district level local self-government.

The Panchayati Raj

Regulation of 1967 has been amended several times. As per the amendment of the 1997, 2001 and 2003 the Panchayati Raj election was conducted in the month of March-April 2003 where the members of three-tier system, i.e., Gram Sabha, Anchal and Zilla Parishad were elected directly by adult franchise. The candidates were elected on political party basis, and the respective chairpersons of all levels were elected by the respective elected members for the first time. In the Zilla level for the first time the chairperson was elected by the elected ZPM that was earlier held by the Deputy Commissioner. Now, the Project Director of DRDA acts as Member Secretary of the Zilla Parishad and the Block Development Officer (BDO) acts as Member Secretary at the Block level. For the first time 33% of reservation has been given to women at all levels.

Administration and Customary Laws

The administration of justice in some of the tribal societies is carried out by the tribal or village councils in accordance with their own tribal customary laws. Among the Apatanis also the customary laws still prevail. Though the customary laws are considered as most important for administration of justice among the Apatanis, still for some cases, the people are required to go to the Deputy Commissioner's court and sometimes also to the High Court.

After the emergence of the new administration system and

appointment of the *Gaonburas* by the local administration, sometimes a conflicting situation arises between the traditional village council system *buliang* and the administration. *Gaonburas* are the representatives of administration and not head of the villages and village councils. In this respect an order is issued by the Deputy Commissioner. (Appendix - IV)

Internal disputes and inter-village disputes occasionally disrupt the harmony of the Apatani society. The most important internal disputes, which occur among the villagers, is with regard to boundary of land, theft of cow, mithun, etc. The extreme form of dispute among the individuals of Apatani village is *lisudu*. This dispute is the final stage of challenge between the contending parties regarding the correctness of their rival's claims. It starts with *gasudu* and goes on increasing gradually in intensity and seriousness of the rival claimants for the right cause. Their firm belief is that the righteous cause prevails in the long run. On the contrary, one who contends falsely gets defeated, loses his wealth and prestige and ultimately physical harm is caused. A false claim is indicated by illness, death or heavy loss of material wealth. *Gasudu* is the preliminary stage of such a dispute. In this stage, the quarrel starts as a result of argument and counter-arguments between the two parties. This *gasudu* leads to the second stage, which is known as

pasudu. In this stage there is every possibility of manhandling, which may cause injury to both sides, If there is injury to one side then a fine may be imposed on the person who injures the man. Then the opponent will kill a chicken, tear into pieces and sacrifice a dog or a cow in front of the house of the opposite party, which is called *lisudu*. Then the meat of the sacrificed animals is left to be eaten only by the parents and the old men of both the parties. Thereafter, the old men of both the parties will try their level best to settle the case in presence of both the parties. If they can come to a settlement, then the additional things, which are sacrificed, are required to be returned. In this regard, generally the maternal uncle and other relatives of the respective contenders help a lot for returning the additional animals or articles. If however, they fail to arrive at an amicable settlement then the *lisudu* starts. The competition of mithun sacrifice is an important thing to be noted in *lisudu*. As for example, if a man kills 10 *mithuns* in front of the opponent's house, then the opponent will kill equal number or more *mithuns* in return to prove his superiority. In this way the sacrifices of *mithun* will start increasing. The meats of sacrificed animals are consumed by the relatives and kin of the person at whose house the *lisudu* takes place. It is to be noted, however, that the rivalry between two individuals automatically spread to the kin groups of the parties involved. Ultimately it turns out to be a

question of prestige for each of the rival parties. In case there is too much of destruction of material wealth, the elders decide to intervene to stop it. Now a days *lisudu* is a thing of the past that is not allowed as decided by the young generation. In this regard the uncles and relatives of both the parties try their best to help in the matter of sacrificing *mithun*. In this way, when both the parties come to the extreme point, then the *buliang* intervenes and tries to come to a settlement. From 1974 onwards, the Apatani Youth Association has tried its best to reduce the competition of *lisudu* to eradicate and has succeeded to a great extent.

Gyambo sonii is a type of demonstration of war by a village or clan against a person's family or clan. This type of war demonstration is adopted to force an adamant party to pay their dues or accept the decisions arrived at through arbitration. In a *Gyambo sonii* there is every likelihood of destruction of properties of economic value not only of the person or family involved in a dispute but other properties adjacent to disputant also. Thus, this is a form of coercive method of getting things.

Nature of Offence and Punishment

There are different types and quantum of punishment for different cases depending on the nature of the wrong committed, time and occasion of the occurrence, age and sex of the

person who committed, etc. The following penalties have been in existence according to the customary laws of the Apatani society.

(1) Adultery: In case of adultery, the village authority imposes punishment and fine upon the offender. According to the customary law of the Apatanis, the fine for adultery is as follows:

(a) If a woman is found to have committed adultery, then no fine is imposed on her. But a wife's lover will be fined. A wife can be divorced immediately and if her husband keeps her then the man who committed adultery has to pay a fine of 1 *mithun* costing Rs. 14,000/-, which is termed as *hinyang*.

(b) If the husband divorces her on the ground of adultery, the *hinyang* is not required to be paid.

(c) In case where the husband himself is involved in adultery, the case stands on a different footing. Then he will be required to pay a fine imposed on him as follows:

(1) One *mithun* costing Rs.14,000/-

(2) One *lama dao* or *chirrie ilyo* costing Rs. 7,000/-

(d) If any unmarried woman gives birth to a child and if the man, responsible for her pregnancy, does not want to accept the child and the mother as his wife, then the man would be required to pay fine as follows:

(1) One *mithun*.

(2) One cow.

(3) One *endi chadar*.

(4) One *dao*.

2. Theft: The village council decides this type of case.

Earlier, the punishment for habitual theft was very harsh and the thief could be killed for his offence. The fine imposed in the case of theft varies according to the nature of theft. The customary laws in the Apatani society for theft are as follows:

(I) Theft of *mithun*

(a) A *mithun* of the same size of the stolen one is to be returned. This is called *paku sima*, meaning dead body of a dove. It is a word used in Apatani mythological love story. But here it refers to a substitute for the original size of *mithun* killed or stolen.

(b) *Khako*: 1 medium sized *mithun* costing about Rs. 7,000/- . It is a general fine.

(c) *Supung mefang*: 1 *mithun* costing Rs.1 000/-. This amount of fine goes to the public for a feast.

(d) *Dulu sogyang*: 1 cow costing Rs. 300/-. *Dulu* means caretaker; and *sogyang* means the post to which the *mithun* is tied or tethered.

(e) *Lut pake nani*: 1 *Lama dao*. At strategic places fencing is erected in the tracts through which the *mithun* has to be brought to house or taken to other places. Hence, the use of *dao* is to break the fence. *Dao* made in Tibet is

usually called *Chirrie*.

(II) Theft of cow

(a) *Paku sima*: Original size of the cow to be returned.

(b) *Khako*: 1 cow costing Rs.4, 000/-

(c) *Supung melang*: 1 cow costing Rs. 3,000/-

(d) *Dulu sogyang*: 1 *Chirrie dao* costing These two Rs. 2,000/- *Lama daos* are given because these are of

(e) *Lut pakenani*: 1 *Chirrie dao* costing two Rs. 2,000/- different fines.

If a man intentionally kills a *mithun* and if he does not disclose it, then the following fines are imposed on him.

(a) Original cost of *mithun* is to be returned.

(b) *Khako*: 1 *mithun* costing = Rs.14,000/-

(c) *Supung melang*: 1 *mithun* costing = Rs.14,000/-

(d) *Dulu sogyang*: 1 cow costing = Rs. 3,000/-

(e) *Lut pakenani*: 1 *Chirrie dao* costing = Rs. 2,000/-

(f) *khiininanll*: 1 *Maji* (Tibetan prayer bell) = Rs. 4,000/-

(g) *Harninanii*: 1 *dao* (*Chirrie*) = Rs 2,000/-

(h) *Hartanani*: 1 *Talo* (brass plate) = Rs.2, 000/-

But in case a man kills a *mithun* accidentally and confesses it, then only the cost price of the *mithun* is to be returned

(III) Theft of goat

- (a) A goat of same size is to be returned.
- (b) Fine of –Rs.1,000/-
- (c) *Dulu sogyang* –Rs.50/-

(IV) Theft of Pig

- (a) A pig of the original size is to be returned.
- (b) Fine of –Rs.1,000/-
- (c) *Dulu sogyang* – Rs.50/-

(V) Theft of Dog

- (a) A dog of original size is to be returned.
- (b) Fine of - Rs. 200/-

(VI) Theft of Poultry

- (a) Poultry of original size is to be returned.
- (b) Fine of -Rs. 100/-

(VII) Theft from house and granary

If any man is caught red-handed in his attempts for stealing things from another's house and granary, then following fines are imposed:

- (a) *Aji kawa Nesu kawa* – one *mithun*.
- (b) *Lyaping* – One *mithun*.
- (c) *Myotung su* – One *mithun*.
- (d) *Chantung* – One hen.
- (e) *Disi yopo* – One small cow.
- (f) *Pere Tajer* – One small cow.
- (g) *Uko Pamung* – One hen.
- (h) *Byago Pamung* – One hen.
- (i) *Pai Pano* – One hen.

(VIII) Theft of Bamboo and Ropes, etc.

- (a) Articles, which are stolen, are to be returned.
- (b) Fine of 1 cow costing Rs. 300/-

(IX) Theft of fish and fruits, etc.

- (a) Stolen articles are to be returned.
- (b) Fine of Rs.100/-

(X) Theft of Maize with basket

- (a) Stolen articles are to be returned.
- (b) Fine of Rs. 50/-

(XI) If someone is found destroying a house illegally, then the following fines are imposed:

- (a) Fine of Rs. 500/- (if the destruction is caused inside the house).
- (b) Cost of destroyed articles to be returned.
- (c) Fine for damage caused to the house (outside) - 1 cow.

3. Incest: The incestuous union is regarded as injustice committed towards their community. Heavy punishment is inflicted on the person or persons so involved in incestuous sex relations.

4. Physical offence of human beings: If one commits an offence to a fellow being then the village council or its substitute imposes the following fines:

- (a) Fine for causing any grievous hurt – Rs. 1000/-

- (b) Fine for causing any simple hurt – Rs. 500/-

- (c) Fine for causing hurt by bicycle – Rs. 500/-

Besides these, some other fines are also imposed as mentioned below:

(I) Any false allegation such as adultery, etc. - 1 *mithun* as *Hingyang*. It is a fine. Generally after second marriage the husband is required to give one *mithun* to the relatives of the first wife if they want it. For instance,

Mr. X of Hari village gave the *Hingyang* recently to the relatives of his first wife who was divorced.

Besides that, this fine is imposed in the case of adultery too.

(II) Cheating of any kind - Rs.1, 000/- The articles are to be returned.

(III) Attempt to murder - 1 *mithun*.

(IV) Fine for *Yalu Lisu* - Rs.900/-

It is a competition of slaughtering cattle, *mithun*, etc. and destruction of valuables like Tibetan bell, bell-metal vessels, etc.

(V) Fine for gambling - Rs. 500/-

(VI) (a) Fine for destruction of land and other properties - Rs. 500/-

(b) Value of damaged articles is to be returned by the offender.

(VII) If any younger brother beats the elder brother the

following fine are imposed on the offending younger brother:

(a) 1 (one) hen costing Rs.10/-

(b) 1 (one) pig skin costing Rs.200/-

(VIII) Fine for cutting *Dapo Pogyang* (It is a fixed post where the *mithun* or cow is slaughtered after getting fine from the accused person) - 1 (one) *mithun* costing Rs.650/-

(IX) Fine for beating or assaulting father, mother and elderly person - 1 (one) *mithun* to all the relatives.

(X) Fine for beating or physically assaulting a woman is imposed according to the degree of grievousness of the assault. And this action is always taken by the relatives of the woman.

(XI) Fine for beating or quarrelling during the penit procession in the *Mururig Puja* and *Khayibe* procession during the *Myoko puja* - 1 *mithun* costing Rs.1,500/-

(XII) In case someone catches the *puding* (lock of hair of male folk). A fine of 1 *dao ghanti* or Rs.500/- is imposed on the offender.

A noteworthy phenomenon in Apatani society is that there is no higher appellate authority, which the disgruntled offender can approach. As a matter of fact, every person is aware of the quantum of fine or punishment for infringement of the customary rules and regulations. Hence nobody appeals against the standing laws, which regulate their conduct in private and public

life. They meekly submit to the standing customs.

5. Homicide

In deciding the cases of homicide, the Apatani traditional system was in vogue till the firm establishment of British administration in the 1940s. The system did not provide for imposition of fines on the offender, but for revengeful counter homicide was permissible till the highest coercive authority of the Dapo intervened. A case of homicide committed in the Hija village on 25th March 1983 is outlined below:

Kago Tayo, Kago Bida and Kago Tajyo were three brothers (in order of seniority) of Hija village. Many years ago, Kago Tajyo killed his elder brother, Kago Tayo following a land dispute.

In 1974, Kago Tajyo killed his surviving elder brother, Kago Bida following a dispute over the share of meat from their "rabi mura" (slave), Kago Mikhi. Kago Mikhi killed a deer and as per custom he offered the head portion of the deer to his *gyuth* master, *Kago Bida*, the next in seniority to the deceased eldest brother, Kago Tayo. Formerly the share of meat went to Kago Tayo. While he was alive. This time when Kago Mikhi offered the share to Kago Bida (according to seniority), Kago Tajyo demanded the same for himself. Kago Bida protested against it. As he protested, there were altercations whereupon Kago Tajyo killed his immediate elder

brother, Kago Bida. Kago Tajyo was then arrested by the police and kept in jail custody for 7 years.

On the day when the crime was committed, Kago Chada, son of Kago Bida went to their ancestral bamboo grove for cutting some pieces of bamboo. In the meantime, Kago Tajyo met him and obstructed him from doing so. There was a hot exchange of words between Kago Tajyo and Kago Chada, whereupon Kago Tajyo gave a blow by his dao causing serious injury to Kago Chada. This murder was a sequel to the previous ones stated above. This murder took place on 25.3.83. Kago Chada took it upon himself to avenge the death of his father at the hands of Kago Tajyo who was mercilessly beaten to death by the former. The fact that no one else intervened in this type of reciprocal homicide hints at their belief and practice of blood for blood, tooth for tooth. Kago Chada then fled away and received treatment in the Hapoli hospital. Then Kago Chada along with his brother Kago Dukhong went to the house of Kago Tajyo and forcibly dragged him out from his house and then took him to the graveyard of their late father, beat him mercilessly and tied him with a rope. Kago Tajyo died then and there.

However, it appears that their clansmen did not stand on the way of such homicide. Instead they remained silent on both the occasions of killing of Kago Bida as well as at the time of killing of Kago Tajyo, although they were

fully aware of the gruesome episodes.

It is important to note that in the present day society, the intellectuals feel the need for traditional customary law in written form. It is also felt that such written traditional customary laws are not only necessary, but it would be an asset in the fast changing society like the Apatanis due to change in socioeconomic development and advent of modern education.

The Apatani traditional system of administration is still important. No doubt there are changes due to advent of Panchayati raj. But it is still significant. In this regard, Yapa (1999: 117) observes 'the introduction of Panchayati Raj system has not affected the functioning of the council rather it has strengthened the functioning of the village council. The Gaon Panchayat members, the Anchal Samity members and the Zilla Parishad members may also be the members of the

village council, since the provision for due membership is there. The Gaon Panchayat member or the Anchal Samity member being the member of the same community shows respect to their traditional village instructions'. It is very much interesting to look at the present situation under changing circumstances with modern administrative mechanism.

Note: This write up is reproduced from our published work on the customary laws of the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh. The chapter IV is reproduced here for making it greater readers and inviting their comments, remarks, inputs and suggestions on the changes that happened in last fifteen years.

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Traditional Administrative System and Youth Institution Among Idu Mishmis of Arunachal Pradesh



- Khindikio Mega

The Mishmi hills located in eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh is homeland of the janajatis called Idu Mishmis, Digaru Mishmis and Mizu Mishmis; combinedly they called **The Mishmis**. The depth of traditional heritage and cultural values of the Mishmis can be accentuated by its strength to uphold the age old traditional systems in this modern transitional period.

Through the ages the Mishmis have survived with cultural ethos of their own. The great pilgrimage sites like Parasuram-kund in Lohit, Bishmak Nagar in Lower Dibang Valley and Authu Poppu pilgrimage site of Idu Mishmis in Dibang Valley substantiates the Mishmis as integral part of mother BHARAT.

The Idu Mishmis are inhabitant of Chithu Huluni (Owner of twelve rivers) where there different clans (Ebas) have settled down since time immemorial. The 12 Rivers (Dri, Taloh, Ahi, Emra, Ehi, Elthu, Chuyu, Mathu, Ethi, Chupu, Thuwu and Ellu) are source of Idu Mishmi cultural civilization. Though living in rough landscape and tough geographical location

Idu Mishmis have followed a convenient administrative system to adopt and adjust themselves in larger society. The administrative system can be classified under different nomenclature for easy understandings.

1. Family Administration

Administration system within a family among Idu Mishmis is very important where the elder person is head of the family who manages the affairs of the family. Usually father is the head of family and takes care of family affairs who is assisted by wife and children as well. Head of the family has to look after day to day domestic requirements like fire wood, water, property, land, live stocks, farming, hunting and business etc. In Idu Mishmi family Mother plays very important role in upbringing her children. Mothers are source of happy home who toil hard day in and day out and keep accounts of food items for family survival. In case of death father or during his old age eldest son takes responsibility as the head of the family. The head of family looks after all affairs of family life, its relationship, Kingship and Clan, conduct of ceremonies or Igu,

organizing puja etc. Social Taboos are first learned from family members.

2. Social Administration

Among Idu Mishmis social administration is considered as most important in maintaining social system that has been passed down to younger generations. Every Idu Mishmi is part of social administration; however reputed elderly persons of society impacts much in social administrative system of Idu Mishmis. Reh Festival is an important festival where socialization is accredited to learn one another and upgrade work culture systems besides learning Myths, Chanting mantras, and performing sacrifices. The elderly persons or experts educate the younger generation to own their Anna system (Relationship) through which social fabrics of Idu Mishmis is protected and preserved. Every elderly person of respective clans contributes and gives their best guidance to come over any controversy in future relationships. In social aspects the elderly person of Idu Mishmi society guides in many ways.

a. Ashuu-Etho - Major Crime matters and solution of it.

b. Abechi-Aheyla - Performing middle man.

c. Ayuthri – Aketu - Narrating Clan wise relationship.

d. Taju- Taye - Narrating stories on relationship and others.

Social Administrative system among Idu Mishmis has shaped the social structure and act as pillar of the society.

3. Priesthood administration

Priesthood administration is pristine beauty among Idu Mishmi Society. Since from time immemorial Igu with their spiritual powers have played a vital role in structuring in social laws and preserving it. Social Taboos are preached by Igu which has scientific reasons in one way. Interestingly Ena system, after hunting wild animal among Idu Mishmis is viewed as a way of preserving wild life today. Igu has different way of performing in different occasions and unfortunate events, be it fire, accidental death due to suicide, murder, drowned in water, epilepsy, snake bite etc. Though Igu is performing through Chanting Mantras, its

uniqueness is of being its scriptless but have perfect description. Its unwritten words and sentences are conveniently passed and practiced since time immemorial from elderly Igu to young ones. This scriptless Igu system has differently molded a way of life among Idu Mishmis to a new height and accredited with natural powers to serve and protect humanity.

4. Youth Administration

The Institute of youth administration among Idu Mishmis is vital with much challenging nature. Youths are backbone of every society who shoulders responsibility according to norms and systems followed and practiced. Though Idu Mishmis are regarded as individualistic by nature the youth institution among Idu Mishmis grant best platform and opportunities to them to mingle up and manage social affairs their growing stage. The Idu Mishmis youths have wide scope of socialization, patents learning, art of Igu and Tamrola, craft making, developing work culture, respecting elders etc. Both boys and girls are engaged in agriculture and domestic works since ancient times. With fast approaching modernization and

due to effect of transition period, changes among Idu Mishmi youths cannot be denied. The spheres of Idu Mishmi youth social affairs can be classified as per their activities oriented.

a. Ondoruta – Pata Cheta

Active participation in construction of dwelling house and Agriculture works both Boys and Girls.

b. Reh Brey – Ahbrey

Active participation in Reh festival and extend helps to needies.

c. Annjita - Suta

Particularly Idu Youths in ancient days enjoys hunting as their favorite sports through which the youths image were shaped in society.

d. Laho-lawron

Any boy or girl attending marriageable age is still bachelor or spinster were publicized through Laho system. Laho is a way of informing those able bachelors and spinster for getting marriages of their choice. Laho system was an important institute for youth affairs among Idu Mishmis in ancient days.

(Shri. Kotige Mena and Shri Abuyu Saya provided me all assistance in writing this article)



Traditional Administration Systems in Kman Mishmi Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh

- Mr. Sodyong Kri

In this paper an attempt has been made to investigate the traditional administration systems that have been prevalent among the Kman group of Mishmi community living in Lohit & Anjaw districts of Arunachal Pradesh and its applicability in true sense of the term. The machinery available for enforcement of administration varies from one tribal group to another. There are different types of offences and punishment meted out to offenders. Although the basic principle of judgement is almost same all over Arunachal Pradesh, there is, however differences in the matters of degree and seriousness in different kinds of offences. As for example, the act of stealing from the granary may be viewed very seriously by some tribal groups whereas some other may not take such act as serious offence. Likewise, there is variation in consideration of some act, omission or commission as serious or less serious. The punishment meted out also varies accordingly in nature and degrees.

As the traditional administration system's origination is concerned in the Kman Mishmi Society, there is no mention of a uniform law but the society was not anarchist.

Rather there were norms and social restrictions on how, when, where and what is to be done during rites and rituals of festivals and marriages etc. That's to say there were certain sets of social norms which everyone had to follow, though there was no enforcing authority or the body. One of the elderly and well known person has stated that "It originated at the very beginning, when the family started to organize into a village". Unlike many other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, Kman Mishmi had no organized system of administration, but it was not a lawless society. There was a strong existence of the arbitrary system commonly called as "Pharai" by the Kman Mishmi which can be said as administration system. Most of the disputes were brought and solved on bilateral negotiations. As a matter of fact, with the emergence of modern political machineries and political institutions, the indigenous political system has dramatically changed in the Kman Mishmi community, but even then "Pharai" (Arbitration) is still a strong tool for major cases like criminal cases, theft, allegation, etc. Through the institutions such as the village council based on it, the leaders manage the internal affairs of the village. its

interpretation of the reality around it or what can be called its philosophy, expressed through its customs, social relations and organisation, language, rituals, festivals, dress, ornaments and arts. It culminates in its identity.

The system of local self government keeping in conformity with traditional administration of a particular tribe or tribal groups in a village level is known as village council. The nucleus of this system is the village itself or villages in the case of inter village disputes and the authority is divided by a council of elderly and influential person of the village or villages on the basis of age old traditions and customs of a particular tribe. However, it is an indigenous legal system of a tribe in a village level where all types of disputes are settled amicably except some serious crimes. The Kman Mishmi doesn't have any codified laws as they don't have any written records.

The village council or so called gathering of elderly or influential persons of the villages is called "PHARAI" by the Kman a.k.a Miju Mishmi and the body of elderly men and man of substance are called "Pharaitabrap". For the settlement of any kind of

disputes there is a mediator as selected either by the convicted or the complainant for amicable settlement of a case and he is known as "PHARAI K•THAI". In the so called village council trial of cases like theft, adulteracy, bodily injury, killing of domestic birds and animals, stealing of ornaments, marriage affair, payment of bride price, damage of crops, etc. are held in accordance with their customary laws. But, murder cases are not taken up in the village council and for that matter the concerned parties approach civil courts for getting justice.

Classification of The Administration System

As stated earlier no organized set of legal framework exist in the Kman Mishmi community to whom law is to be vested but the cases which arise from time to time settled by themselves with the help of influential and capable village elders who are called "PHARAI K•THAIs". In the Kman Mishmi community there is no central authority to whom cases are to be brought for trial and as such all cases are settled by themselves in presence of the influential and capable elders of the village or villages. During the time of settlement elderly persons who are capable to give decision, take part in the deliberation of a case or otherwise every attendant is regarded as a member. There is no fixed limit of membership.

In the context of the working of administration in Kman Mishmi community, we need to

know in detail, of the most prevalent system of resolving cases of every nature, criminal, civil as well as social. The arbitrary system called "*Pharai*". In Kman Mishmi community there is faiths and beliefs as an administration pertaining to the various aspects may be discussed as follows:

1. Administrations Relating to Criminal Justice

i. Ta'•Hu Ta'ue (Theft)

Taking away dishonestly any movable or immovable property from the possession of its rightful owner without the latter's consent is considered theft (Ta'Yhu Ta'ue) which is considered as crime in Kman Mishmi community. The property if found or traced should be restored to the rightful owner and the guilty is liable to be fined as deemed fit according to the extent of the value of the property through arbitration.

ii. Tadam Taphoung (Assault)- Assault and causing hurt, grievous or otherwise to any person without any provocation is an offence which is believed as crime and the guilty has to pay compensation to the person or the family, often proportionate to the extent of assault. In case the hurt ultimately caused death of the person within one year, the case will be treated as murder and the arbitration will be processed on the lines of murder.

iii. Tasaat (Murder)- Murder is a very serious crime in Kman Mishmi Community and it should be compensated with

the heaviest amount through the arbitrary system as demanded by the family of the deceased. Sometimes, it leads to the selling of the guilty for lump-sum as slave in case it cannot be compensated. The guilty should compensate in terms of KÜ TA'FIT or face TA'CHIT wherein every possession of the offender is confiscated by the family of the deceased. But most probably, especially in olden days, no compensation was sought but revenge was apprehended in that case. A head for a head was the slogan and still many tend to opt for that even today termed as "TA'YUL" or the revenge. The Kman Mishmi never considers a woman as a target of revenge. The reason behind this is that, women belong to the two clan's i.e. natural parent's clan and her husband's clan. So, considering a woman as target for revenge means giving challenge to a number of clans which may lead to a complex situation and a chain of murders.

iv. Incest- It is a sexual crime less common but very abhorrent. This act if committed is believed to be the wrath of the spirit and classed as evil and offenders become subject of public ridicule, shame and ostracism. The offenders were drowned, pushed from the high cliffs etc. in olden days. Kman Mishmi firmly believes that natural punishment is bound to befall the offender, and one cannot escape it. There are also narrations that a mithun of pure white colour is to be either sacrificed/gifted to the family, to

give it a legal sanction. But, finding one was very difficult and a chance of finding one of such kind was ruled out. Most often it is told that the offenders elope and they are extradicated from the society thereafter.

The Kman Mishmi has also administrations for punishment for omission, commission and negligence.

a. TASÛM (Defamation)

Defamation is a punishable offence in the Kman Mishmi community. The person on whom the statement or allegation has been made can challenge and claim heavy fine. But if the allegation is proved, then the person has to face the consequences as per the magnitude of the crime. In case if the defamation case is not proved, it will lead to payment of heavy compensation to the person. Many times it has led to enslaving of the offender in case, if the statements were made against a person of great repute and popular personality. These cases are processed through arbitration wherein, the parties challenge and defend the commission, or the omission and they invite each other for oaths or ordeals such as 'TILAM'. So in Kman mishmi society no one dare to make statements without conformity for its harsh consequences.

b. Kam•T Tanaam (Violation of Taboo) Violation of taboo in Kman mishmi is considered unpleasant and a punishable offence because, it is believed to nullify all the good

effects of the ritual. So that defaulter/violator is supposed to compensate his guilty by sponsoring the whole consequences such as the burden of paying heavy fine.

2. Administration Relating to Civil Justice

The Kman Mishmi have always been an agrarian and economy operating on barter economy lines, the civil suits are concerned with the moveable and immovable properties such as forest, rivers, land, domesticated animals, jewellery, other valuable articles includes precious stones, beads, etc. And as on today the suits now comprise not currency as well.

i. Administration Relating to Immovable Properties

a. The Kman Mishmi people have always been adverse to the strangers/foreigners and this has been described by many writers. So, obviously the village land is entirely owned by the clan (Brong) or the family occupying that village and no other person can construct or cultivate that land without the prior permission from the clan owning that village. The Kman Mishmi intrusion into the ownership right would become a cause of inter-clan feuds leading to serious consequences. However, the land could be leased out or rented to be cultivated for settlement mainly in terms of heads, jewellery, livestock etc. The system is termed as "TA'TAF" meaning paying lease.

b. Every village has a boundary called the "T•KA PHAAL". The village is established in between the two TYka Phaal and it is called the "T•KA GUK" is under the de-facto ownership of any villager and has access to it for cultivation and any other.

c. Unauthorized clearing of fallow land belonging to others and encroachment are punishable offences, which many a times lead to disputes and solved through arbitration.

d. Almost all villagers/clans in the Kman Mishmi society have special areas of their economic operation such as:-

- Land for cultivation called the "TÜI"
- Land for taking up hunting operations is called the "SHIN RÜL" meaning hunting ground.
- The fishing area is called the "•NGA RÜL".
- The bird catching and hunting spots are called the "WA RÜL".
- The spot of hunting and trapping rodents is called the "S•I RÜL'.

If an individual encroach the areas owned by an individual or the clan invites dispute and are seldom solved through arbitration by paying fine or can be legalized by paying the "TAF" (rent).

e. Villages are separated by barriers erected, which is of religious and cultural importance and it tantamount to a declaration of hostility towards a stranger, who, if removes it without the

consent of the village head in whose territory it is erected perpetuates an insult punishable by death or heavy fine often with a declaration of war against the clan of the defaulter.

f. In big rivers/streams portions are divided and owned by some clans or individuals. This means that the clans who own it have a possessive authority of whatever comes or discovered from that portion or spot of river or stream. Trespass is punishable and cleared by paying compensation or fine.

ii. Administrations Relating to Moveable Properties

Livestock (mithun, cattle, poultry, piggery), personal valuables (beads, silver, jewellery, utensil of brass, copper, silver, gun) etc. And the household items make up the moveable properties of the Kman Mishmi society. They are in daily use in the barter economy and therefore, of great importance to them. They are certain laws regulating the raising of livestock, rearing, transfer and distribution etc. of these moveable properties.

3. Administration Relating to Punishment/Fine/Penalty/Compensation

According to Kman Mishmi there are two baskets of goods that are paid as fine or compensation. The first basket constituted the hard assets such as utensils made of copper, brass, etc. and jewellery made of gold, Silver, copper, valuable beads and precious stones. This

also includes land and landed property. The second are preferred to basket constitutes the livestock such as mithun, cattle, buffalo, pig, fowls, etc. Now with the advent of time and paper currency coming into their lives the currency notes are preferred to. The basket of goods that make up the components of barter, fine and compensation are equated to "KÜ" meaning "HEAD". The head in context of the Kman Mishmi means the human head which is valued the highest. The human head may be valued at 40-50 heads of mithun. Different heads are fixed through negotiations by arbitrary system for different offences.

However, there is no fixed punishment, compensation or penalty under the traditional administration, the punishment may differ from clan to clan and person to person and of course on the efficiency of the arbitrator to either reduce or increase the magnitude of the penalty, fine or compensation.

In the Kman Mishmi society there is no scale or prescribed laws to measure the magnitude and gravity of the offence/crime but, there are various kinds of penalty or fine and compensation to be paid for various offences as a mark of punishment as follows:

i. TAYUL (Revenge):- The word "TAYUL" means revenge.

ii. Capital Punishment:- Capital punishment was quite common among the Kman Mishmi in the very recent past.

iii. Physical Punishment

(TA-CHIL):- These punishments often accrue to the minor crime such as petty thief and the women coming faux pas. A recalcitrant girl, who was constantly immoral, was stripped naked and tied to trees and were beaten with a leaves called the "K•NJI" and "M•KAR" which causes irritation and is very painful. Unfaithful wives and slaves were put in the stocks, beaten and many a times private parts were also not spared.

iv. Payment of Compensation:-

Payment of compensation is the most popular and common form of settling disputes in the kman mishmi community. It is the most resorted instrument to give amicable solutions to any kind of disputes. The offence of murder was also compensated in the society in absence of corporal punishment. The most common compensation has been categorized by the Kman Mishmi as follows:

✓ **KÜ TA'FIT:-** The penalty of highest magnitude in the Kaman Mishmi Community is penalty paid for murder or an accident where human life is lost is termed as 'KÜ TA'FIT' meaning "compensating Head". This may amount to 40-50 heads of mithun. This can be paid in terms of the mithun established as penalty.

✓ **TA'CHIIT:-** The term "TA' CHIIT" means imposing penalty on someone who has caused severe damage to someone other person's life and property.

✓ **PH•L (Rape Penalty):-**

This is the penalty to be paid in connection with rape and adultery. The penalty for rape will be of higher magnitude than adultery and it may go up to 5-10-15 or more mithun heads. The penalty for adultery may vary depending upon the person concerned attitude and the character of the victim. Rape leading to death of the victim will be taken up to be a murder and punished in terms of "Kü' TAFIT" or "TA' CHIIT".

✓ **Ta' K Nam (Compensate for Repair):-** The term simply means compensate for repairing the relations. This fine is paid for simple offences and for offences not intended. This is of low magnitude and usually cleared on bilateral negotiations on a cup of tea or wine or slaughtering a pig.

✓ **Ta' H Tong:-** Compensation or penalty paid for violation of taboo is called the "TA'H•TONG". The offender has to meet all the expenses of the rituals or must provide with the main components required for the ritual to solemnize afresh as it is the belief of the Kman Mishmi that if the taboos are not observed as required after the ritual the whole exercise becomes useless.

4. Administration Relating to Marriage Practices

Regardless of its formal status, Kman Mishmi tribe regulate their community and social affairs according to the custom and treat it as integral to their culture and basic to their identity. This custom or

otherwise law reinforce the tribe's age-old traditions and binds it together through normative rules by regulating the social and personal relations of its members. As a matter of rule, the social structure of the Kman Mishmi tribe is endogamous, and is divided into a number of clans which are exogamous. That is to say, marriage is legitimate within the tribe, but not within the clan. In fact, clan is very important element in the organization of tribal society as a whole, and so is in Kman Mishmi tribe, and which is why a breach of the clan rule is a serious offence. It also plays a very important role in regulating marriage. Marriage within a clan is strictly prohibited, and nobody is violating this rule. The society as a whole is patrilineal with monogamy a widely prevailing form of marriage, but polygamy is also recognized.

The traditional administration in marriage of Kman Mishmi follows the following procedures and has to be invariably followed to give the marriage a social sanction.

i. Selection of an Arbitrator/ (Pharai K Thai) As per Kman Mishmi's customs is concerned, without an arbitrator there is incomplete in marriage proposal. First of all an elderly folk of their choices is selected for an arbitrator or the Pharai KYthai or the mediator of repute and renowned person in that society. He will be a person who will persuade the girl's parents for the marriage and negotiate the number of mithuns to be offered

and all other important discussions.

ii. Chaar Tangrat the term "Chaal" means "Mithun" and "Tangrat" means "Gifting", which means gifting the mithuns and cattle to the family of the bride by the groom and his family or in otherwise may be called as mithun ceremony. There exist certain Number of mithuns to be dispatched to bride's place is communicated to boy's parents through mediator. The exchange of mithun takes place first.

iii. L•I Tarü The second ceremony which follows after the "chaal tangrat" is the "LYi Tarü", meaning offering slaughtered pigs. This ceremony is fixed at the convenience of both the families. The actual marriage feast is conducted sometimes later for which the dates are fixed by the bride's parents. The bridegroom's party (beside his own parents, his married sisters and brother-in-laws who contribute pigs and dry meat and fish, mediator is also have to accompany) has to reach the marriage venue on scheduled day with loads of pig-dressed (Küntshei) and alive (K•Rang), dry meat (Shin Jaw) and fish (•Nga Jaw).

First of all, the flesh items which were brought by the boy's party forms a principal menu at the time and the bride is required to make a certain packets of the meal called the "SHIN JUM" {packaged in wild leaves (Longwiit laap or laaphoo)} and served to the guests and invitees (HUL). The SHIN JUM comprises of pieced Pork meat (Lüi Syai

San) and “*Syat Kluk*” (compressed rounded shape rice).

Secondly, the invitees in turn are to reciprocate with the offering of gifts (*Anzawng*) in cash or kind which is payable to the bride and bride’s parents.

Thirdly, the ceremony is also participated by the “*Chhaas*” (brother-in-laws) of the groom who aid the groom with pigs and smoked meat and dried fishes. It is therefore, mandatory on the part of the “*Nank*” party or the bride party to decorate all the ‘*Chhaas*’ and the sisters of the groom participating in the ceremony with all the personal decorations that needed by a man and women. Moreover, the “*Anzawng*” is distributed among the “*Chhaas*” as per their contribution in the ceremony.

Therefore, the “*Chaar Tangraŋ*” and the “*L•I-tarū*” are the two most important events which have to be solemnized so that the marriages can get the social sanction. This ceremony puts the groom and his party in a dept trap as they acquire it from their “*CHHAAS*” and other relatives. A bride-price received in any form of the bridegroom is refundable (*HÜPAI*).

5. Administrations with Regard to Divination, Oaths & Ordeals

Many a times the human power proves inadequate in resolving the cases/disputes. Upper these circumstances supernatural guidance is sought by way of divination, oaths and

ordeals. Under certain circumstances like suspicion, the aggrieved party may solemnize some rituals to confirm the suspicion as they deem it not proper to disclose the offence committed without conformity.

The supernatural intervention is sought through some rituals performed by the *Kümbring* (priest). These rituals are similar to the rituals that are performed for the diagnosis of the diseases. The rituals perform for divination is:-

a. *Miksung Ta’thong*: “*Mik*” means the “eyes”, “*Sung*” means the “divine/tube like” and “*Ta’thong*” means see. i.e. sight with the eyes of the divinity. The ritual may last for a night. The priest by recitation of certain hymes ascertains the offence of a person. It is believed to have very effective.

b. *Moon Ta’tthok*: “*Moon*” means a pack of closes possessions of an individual in this context; it may be thread from the cloth or sputum of the accused. On certain occasions if the priest is very reputed, recitation of the name of the individual accused is sufficient to establish the crime. The rituals are performed by appliances such as the “*Thl•l*” or the bow, “*Chükrok*” (a very small drum like apparatus filled with beads which makes sound when shaken by the priest embedded in his fingers) and “*Langveeŋ*” (a long leaf). The movement of these objects in response to the chanting of hymes is believed to

reveal the reality.

Depending upon the outcome of the divinations, the case is either continued, if the case is proved or dismissed if the offences are not proved. The fine or the compensation is sought through arbitration and it is inclusive of the cost of the ritual, the materials, priest and the middlemen.

One may also take an oath after the allegation is labelled against the concerned individual. The Kman Mishmi term for the oath is “*M•Sai*”. In the kman the oath does not signify simple promise or swearing but it is believed to invoke the supernatural powers and the defaulter has to face the wrath of the supernatural powers.

There are many other forms of oaths taken by the Kman Mishmi, like the recitation of hymes that invoke the spirits for causing harm to oneself and the guilty. But, the above discussed ones are the most prevalent. Many times both the aggrieved parties may take oaths thereby, complicating the case and the human discernment proves inadequate for deciding the case. In such circumstances the supernatural guidance is sought through ordeals. The Kman Mishmi has several forms of ordeals. The most prevalent forms are, viz.,

a. *Tilam* “*Tilam*” or hot water is an ordeal performed when cases are not solved by “*Pharaŋ*”. It is the system of proving the guilty when the “*Tasüm*” (allegations) are made

or when the guilty is not established. Both the parties (sufferer and defendant) invite a common “*Tilam kYathap*” (priest), who has the power to perform “*Tilam*”, which is witnessed by “*Kip Tsong*” (neutral persons) generally the elders of the particular place right from the day of his invitation as a *Tilam kYathap*. When the trial date comes, the priest is told about the allegations and stands of both the parties by a neutral elderly person. Then the priest starts performing rituals asking all the “*Buru-Shuto, Tmik-Kagam*” (Gods and Goddesses) to deliver justice to stop further chaos and conflicts. At the same time a pot (Bronze Saucepan) filled with water, is allowed to boil, finally the priest puts “*Hümbong*” (bee wax) in the boiling water to boil with water and a stone is put into the boiling water. The alleged person has to pick the stone from the Saucepan with his naked hand which is called “*Tilum Ta’nyap*”. If the hand of the person is scorched after inserting it in the boiling water then the guilt is proved and contrary result proves innocence.

b. Pa’long in this form of ordeal a person suspected to have committed the crime is asked to consume “*Chapati*” (roti) made of flour after the ritual by the priest. If the person is a culprit, then the person cannot consume it as it won’t go down his throat.

6. Administration in Respect of Dead and Mortuary Rituals

A. The Dead

The death body is cremated only at the sun set. It is believed that cremation at the sunset will lead the death to the other world at the sun rise, as the Kman mishmi believe that, everything is opposite to that of the visible world in the invisible world to which the dead goes. The body is first of all wrapped in a “*Hümbuw*” a mat woven out of a special kind of bamboo. The dead body is folded at the knees so that the knees touch the chest and then tied with cane ropes. No other rope is used other than the cane. The dead body is then tied to a piece of bamboo and carried to the cremation place by the family members. The route followed to carry the dead is not through the usual doors but via the “*Kalif*”, the side doors which has no entry, but are used only for feeding the pigs and hens. After that the body is kept at the “*Kram*” memorial hut for some time for the last view of the dead. To construct a “*kram*” is mandatory in mishmi society.

The belongings are also removed from the house and kept here in the “*kram*” and some are carried to the “*mürü*” (cremation Place). The women folk mourn the death but, they are not allowed to go to the place of cremation. Only male folk go to the “*mürü*” and cremate the body. At the “*mürü*” a pyre is made staking the woods and the dead body is placed on the pyre and some more firewood is staked above it. The sons or the closest

member of the family put fire on the pyre. The cremation party waits there until the body is completely burnt. While cremating the cremation party wears cap, as it is believed that, if they do not wear cap their hair may fall down in near future.

During this period, in every door of the houses in the village is kept shut, so that no smoke enters the house which is believed to bring evil spirit or bad eventuality to the house.

The days which follows the cremating of dead body is called the “*Kachaa*” which prohibits people from hunting, plucking leaves for consumption and usually people stays inside the houses. The people flock in the deceased house to comfort the family members and help them in the preparations that would follow after the dead. This affair continues till the third day in case of deceased being female and fourth day in case of male.

The third night (female) or the fourth night (male) is observed as the “*Laung Süt*”. Every member of the family, near and dear ones of the deceased and the villagers assemble at the house of deceased on this day at the fall of the day. The belief is that the dead resides in the house for the last time during this night. So, it is mandatory to awake the whole night for all the persons that have come to the house. At early in the morning everyone in the house makes queue and pick sliced firewood (*Maidup*) with left hand and put it beside the “*kram*”. The female folk mourn

at the “*kram*”. Moreover, some raw bamboo pieces are kept along with the *Maidup* and when the bamboo blasts due to heat, then it is treated as back to the home.

In the days to follow the “*Laungsüt*” the family members are required to make a miniature basket and a miniature tumbler of bamboo to hang on the outside wall of the house. These are used for offering the eatables and water to the departed soul. The first food after cooking is served to the departed on leaves and put on the miniature bamboo basket. The quantity of food served is only a spoonful or two. This continues till the “*T•Lu*” or alias the death ceremony is convened.

B. Mortuary Rituals

The mortuaries that are performed after the death of a person are called the mortuary rites. The following headings of rituals can be discussed:

i. Tylu: the ritual solemnized within two or three months depending upon the availability of the resources and the capacity of the family members. After this ceremony the departed soul is directed to stay at “*Kamao Lam*” (*Kamao*=spirit of the dead, *lam*=land) meaning the land of the soul/spirit of the dead. In case of the deceased being a minor the ceremony is called “*Tathang*”. The ritual continues for 3-6 days. During this entire period the “*kümbring*”, *madiu*” and the “*KY’twats*” are having tough time chanting hymns to appease the ancestral spirits

and the gods and the goddesses.

ii. •pong the “*Ypong*” ritual is the last mortuary rite conducted in honour of the deceased soul and during this ritual clothes, food stuff, other materials of the warfare etc. are offered to the departed soul. Moreover, a person may conduct two to three rituals in lifetime is called “*Pong K•Sa’*” wherein, the departed ancestors are provided with new cloths and food materials.

Besides *Ypong* there are many other rituals for protection from evil spirits such as “*Tanu*” and “*Chingrang*”.

7. *Pharai* (The *Kman Mishmi’s Social Council*)/ (Arbitration Proceedings)

The arbitrator system refers to a system where arbitration is done by the people who are specialized or skilled in settling disputes through negotiation and mediation. The *Pharai* is being practiced since time immemorial. The mediator may be one or more depending on the nature of the case. The selection of a mediator plays a vital role for peaceful settlement of the disputes. The *Kman Mishmi* always engages a mediator who is not related to either of the parties. The principle behind this is that the impartial interference of an unrelated person to the disputes, leads to an impartial judgement. If any related person is assigned for mediation, there is every possibility that, the counter party may disgrace or harm him, for which the party who assigned him should take

the responsibility. So the *Kman Mishmi* is always cautious while assigning a mediator.

All types of disputes in the *Kman Mishmi* society are settled by a mediator. According to customary practices of the *Kman Mishmi*, the party who assigns the mediator is required to pay him after the settlement of disputes. The payment to a mediator is not fixed. If the mediator fails to settle the disputes, the party can assign another mediator. The mediator is to arbitrate the disputes assigned to him, decide upon the extent of the offence and determine the amount of fine through negotiation. In *Kman Mishmi* society the disputes are settled with the imposition of fine as punishment which can be in cash or kind.

Social justice in tribal societies is always dispensed by social councils which are consisting of elderly and influential members of the society. The council held in a particular place publicly and settles disputes of any gravity and the verdict is always accepted by the parties. In this sense *Pharai- K•Thai*, though not strictly termed as social council but acts as dispenser of justice in *Kman Mishmi* society. The only difference is that *Pharai kYthai* is a man mission and designated social post till the mission is achieved or requirement is fulfilled.

Kman Mishmi practice a socially accepted set of their silently governing laws which may be primarily termed as their

political laws in terms of modern democratic world. The *Kman* Mishmi makes a need base political arrangements for solving any type of conflicts, controversies and inter/intra clan differences based on clanship interest. The most often practiced systems are *Pharai*, *Tilam*, *Tachit* and *Ta'kYnam*.

Pharai is done basically in three forms viz *pharai* for marriage, *pharai* for imposing fines and penalty to guilty person or defaulter and *pharai* for paying heavy compensation for a death of a life caused by the sender. In a **first** instance the process of *pharai* is initiated by the groom's family wherein the *pharai kYthai* is chosen and sent to the bride's family to seek the pleasure of the girls' parents. The *pharai kYthai* enters to the girls' house through a room called *MYnthang* meant for male guest. While entering the house, the *pharai kYthai* will take a right leg first towards the groom's house and he would take a single long step to cross a duel door in between *Handah* (varanda) and *MYnthang*. The *pharai kYthai* would have elderly discussions with the house owners and he would take a day or two to come to the real subject of seeking the pleasure of the girl's parents to marry their daughter with his client. On the other hand the bride's side do not generally assent at single time even if they don't have any reservations on the proposal rather they would ask the *pharai kYthai* to come again at some other occasion and the process goes for three or four times or

even more. The process ends when the bride side gives their assent to the proposal and fixed the bride price. The **second** form is initiated to earn something for irregularities caused to him by *Tasum* (allegation) or *Ta' Yhu* (theft) etc. And the third means for which the *Pharai-KYthai* is sent is to solve the critical problems which are made generally in critical cases like *Tsong kü* (murder) or theft etc, where the victim party generally goes for revenge. Hence the offender's family, in order to save the lives of their family members, seeks to solve by paying necessary penalties and compensation as desired by the victim's family. Here the success of arbitrary depends on the arbitrary ability of the *Pharai KYthais* (mediators), which is generally dual in critical cases. In some critical cases, a person who seems crueller is given a *Taksuu* (bribe) confidentially to make his heart soft so that negotiation can be brought. But if anybody takes *Taksuu* is known by others, then it proves the case more critical.

In minor case such as allegation & counter allegation, disputes, thefts and other known cases of guilty, a *Pharai KYthai* is sent by the victimized group/individual to seek compensation for their suffering. In case when the *Pharai* is unable to settle the case, the victim can seek settlement through *Tilam*. The first party sends the *Pharai KYthai* to do a *Pharai* to seek compensation for the suffering inflicted upon the victims. On the

other hand, if an alleged party denies and if the first party continues on their stand, then the door of the justice will be knocked which is called *Tilam*.

Especially in "*Kü Taprai*" means arbitration for Murder, the two parties described above comprises of the family members of the person concerned and in addition to that all the close relatives, especially the maternal uncles, son-in-laws, members of the clan and kinsman, village members and any one related to the contending parties also participate. These can be called to from the arbitrary council in the *Kman* Mishmi society.

Firstly, usually the offender party selects an eminent person of the society (preferably male though female may also be engaged) for an arbitrator. The arbitrator is to be a person of good repute, respect, and command in the society and should be well versed in deliberations of history of the clans. Most importantly he must be genuine and convincing. The most important role of the arbitrator is to convince both the contending parties to come to unanimity so that no crux remains after the amicable solution is reached at.

Secondly, the arbitrator so appointed goes to the house of the accused or the suspected and he briefs about the matter and the gravity of the matter and consequences thereof. The arbitrator hears to the explanation/comments of his

defending party and sets back for the offering party.

Thirdly, the arbitrator comes to the offering party and narrates the will and the explanations of the defending party and if the offering party is convinced on the decision/proposals of the defending party the arbitrator is suggested to fix a date so that both the parties could sit together to give final hearing and final solutions to the matter.

Fourthly, the arbitrator or the middleman conveys the consent of the offering party to the defending party. If both the parties are convinced by their proposals, then a date and a venue are fixed at the convenience of both the parties.

The venue should usually be a place which is less frequented by the people in order to avoid any disturbances and interference. Apart from the contending parties, few old folks having prominence in the society and village heads/head of the clan from both the parties only are allowed to participate or invited to witness the proceedings. A notable feature of the system is that, the person accused of the offence also takes part in the proceedings to rebut the blameworthiness by justifying the offence labelled against him. For this purpose a temporary structure may also be constructed at the site selected for deliberations. This is termed as the "*M•Ha-khyap*" (meaning a temporary hut where dispute are taken up for discussion). No other people except those

mentioned above are allowed to enter the *M•Ha Khyap* and its premises. The persons once entered the *MYha Khyap* are not allowed to leave the premises until the unanimity is arrived at on the issue. The food materials and essential goods are stored in the "*M•Ha-khyap*" in advance which can last for a week or even a month.

The process of negotiation starts with informal discussion and repetition of the history of the clans, their lineage and the alliance of other members of the party and their relation to the matter. The gravity of the offence is discussed in length. The defending party is given every right to defend his act/omission/commission and every chance to repair the damaged by compensation. Depending on the depth of the matter the damaged party starts claiming compensation by putting small cylindrical sticks in array. Each stick indicates a head of mithun which the defending party has to pay the damaged party. For example, ten sticks means ten mithun. This system is termed as "*Phal Takral*". On the other part defending party defends his act as and tries to make offence a simple one so that they pay less heads. For every convincing and genuine claim, a stick is placed which should be subtracted from the sticks of the damaged party. Once the guilt is adjudicated, the penalties are imposed in the nature of economic sanctions, though social sanctions may also follow often. Nevertheless, it is not

mandatory to pay in *mithun* heads but may be equated to other commodities belonging to the two commodity baskets as described in the components of the atmosphere gets heated up.

In case, there is no outcome of the deliberations the matter will again be routed as per the process, the negotiations by the arbitrator continue and it is not surprising that the process can continue for a year as well. When the matter worsens and the defending party is unable to pay/compensation as demanded, many a times tooth for tooth and head for head i.e. revenge equivalent to the damaged is resorted to. The main merit of this systems that after unanimity is arrived at, both the contending parties are contended and no crux remains between them and every effort is made so that the matters is not raised in near future by any of the members.

Pharai KYthai is no more a *Pharai KYthai* when the particular case for which the *Pharai* has been necessitated is over, though he may be known by *KYngit* (Wiseman) and he may be preferred being experienced and able mediator. The role of woman is somewhat low, though no restriction is there. A case of a woman participating in *Pharai* is there. But there is no record of critical case being solved by women in the designation of *pharai*.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion it can be said that
(Contd. to Page 53)

Aspect Of Indigenous Justice System Among The Mishmis Of Arunachal Pradesh

Dr Ranga Ranjan Das

The Mishimis are one of the important tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. They were first reported by the colonial authorities in 1825, when Lieutenant Burlton mentioned the tribes who inhabited the 'Mishmih Hills'. Later on, Dalton (1872) gave a short ethnographic account of the Mishmi. Mackenzie (1884) stated that the Mishmi were also called *Mezho-Mishimi* and *Miza-Mishmi*. They were distributed from the Dibang valley to Digaru, in the ranges lying north of Sadiya; and maintained trade with British possessions. The Mishimi are divided into three major groups: *Idu Mishmi*, *Digaru Mishmi* and *Miju Mishmi*. The Idu are the inhabitants of Dibang valley district. The Digaru and the Miju Mishmi occupy the hilly terrain of Lohit district (cited in Singh 2015: 787). In another, the different groups are mentioned as Idu, Taraon and Kaman, each of which is gain divided into clans and sub-clans (cited in Barooah 2007: XVII). At present, they are confined to Lohit, Anjaw, Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley.

The customary laws for administration of justice among the three groups of the Mishmis are unique without their formal village council, local self government or Chieftainship. The Mishmi people adopt a specified

system known as arbiter system which the Idu call *abella*, the *Kamans* call *harai* and *kabeya* by the *Taraons*.

The arbiter system refers to a system where arbitration is done by the people who are specialized or skilled in settling disputes through negotiation and mediation. The mediator may be one or more depending upon the nature of the case. The selection of a mediator plays a vital role for peaceful settlement of the disputes and the process of selection differs in different sub-tribes. Due to close proximity among the *Kaman* and *Taraon* Mishmis, they do not have any specific difference among customary laws. But, the Idu are different in some respects regarding their customary practices. The *Kaman* and *Taraon* Mishmis always engage a mediator who is not related to either of the parties. The principle behind this is that the impartial interference of an unrelated person to the disputes, leads to an impartial judgement. If any related person is assigned for mediation, there is every possibility that the against party may disgrace or harm him, for which, the party who assigned him should take the responsibility. So, the *Kaman* and *Taraon* are always cautious while

assigning a mediator. On the other hand, reverse to that of *Kaman* and *Taraon* Mishmis, the *Idus* while assigning any mediator, put emphasis on relation. According to the Idu customary practice, the mediator should be related to both the contending or disputant parties. According to the Idu people, the reason for this is that a relative mediator of both the parties can easily convince the accused and victim and without any partiality, the mediator can settle the disputes. It is reported that if they assign a mediator to settle a dispute, who is unrelated, the mediator cannot settle it or gets any co-operation, rather he may feel insulted.

Thus, all types of inter and intra village disputes in the Mishmi society are settled by a mediator. According to customary practices of the Mishmis, the party who assigns the mediator is required to pay him after the settlement of the disputes. The payment to a mediator is not fixed; sometimes, they are entertained meal with rice beer, If the mediator fails to settle the disputes, the party can assign another mediator. The mediator is to arbitrate the disputes assigned to him, decide upon the extent of the offence and determine the amount of fine

through negotiation. In all the three Mishmi groups, disputes are settled with the imposition of fine i.e., in terms of kind or cash as punishment.

With the advancement of the society and social changes, the traditions are also changing. In the past, among the Mishmis, no formal meetings were held because the disputes were always settled by the mediators. In the Mishmi society, from the petty cases to the culpable homicide cases, all were settled by the mediator. But nowadays, with the introduction of *Panchayati Raj*, the *gaonbura*, *Anchal Samity* member, *Gram Panchayati* members also hold some power over the village administration. So, the disputes are also settled in the formal meeting, in the presence of above officials and other influential persons of the village. On the other hand, the cases of complex nature, which is not settled and when both the parties are not agreeable to the decision, may be brought to the modern court.

Nature of Offences with Case Studies

Among the Mishmis, the nature of offences are mainly, theft, breach of taboo, adultery, murder, non-payment of debt, divorce, land disputes, etc.,. Some of the offences with case studies are cited below:

i) Theft

Theft cases are common as reported during the field study. There are different types of theft

cases i.e. theft from granary, theft by trespassing the dwelling house, theft of domestic animals, etc. All types of theft cases are settled by the mediator or by organizing a meeting in the village by the *gaonbura* where other influential persons can also participate. It is a recent development among the Mishmi groups. In case of theft of movable property, the victim first tries to trace his stolen property. If it is traced, the victim sends one mediator for amicable settlement. The mediator first tries to restore the stolen items to the rightful owner and negotiates the dispute by imposing a fine on the accused. The amount of fine is not fixed. Generally fines are imposed by referring to earlier cases of similar nature. It depends on the gravity and nature of the case. The same process is applied in cases of animal and grain thefts.

The mediator plays a vital role in settling a dispute. The mediator always tries his best to settle disputes without any interference. Failing to settle a case indicates his inefficiency. An example of theft case is narrated below:

A purchased one cow from B of Tafragram village. The same cow was stolen from the cowshed of A on 29th May, 2002. A traced the cow to be in the custody of B who was working under C. After tracing the stolen cow, as per customary practice, A sent two mediators X and Y of the same village (Tafragram) to the house of C for an amicable settlement of the case. But the

mediators were informed that he had purchased the cow from E of Tezu in 2001. As C refused to return the cow to A, the case was referred to the police. After enquiry, it was found that C did not purchase the cow from E of Tezu. But, even then C refused to return the cow.

On 22.10.03, a *kebang* was held to settle the dispute at the Deputy Commissioner's office premises under the supervision of the political interpreter of Tezu. The *kebang* asked C to return the said cow to A but he refused. So, the *kebang* opined that the dispute may be settled only by resonating to trial by oath taking according to Mishmi custom. To this, A raised a strong objection on the ground that as he had traced his cow on the basis of size, color and other physical traits, the question of oath does not arise. A did not agree to go through procedure of settling the dispute.

The trial could not arrive at any conclusion and was submitted to the Extra Assistant Commissioner for final settlement. The outcome was still awaited.

Sometimes, disputes occurring between tribals and nontribals are also tried under the traditional system. One such case was reported during the course of our study which is cited below:

X, a non-tribal, is a village level worker and a resident of Loiliang village. A, B and C trespassed the house of X and took away valuable ornaments from his

house. X lodged a complaint with the head *gaonbura* of *Loiliang*. The *gaonbura* called a meeting for an amicable settlement of the dispute. Some other influential persons were also present in the meeting.

In the meeting, the accused A, B and C confessed their guilt. The incident that took place on 30.07.03 in X's residence was a mischief committed by the three while they were drunk. The accused accepted the charge against them. An agreement was made to avoid any future conflict.

(i) The accused took a solemn pledge before the elders that in future they would never commit any such act.

(ii) The accused also promised before the elders that they would not harbour any grudge and assault X or his family members in future.

(iii) X promised not to lodge any legal complaint in any court against the accused since the stolen articles were duly recovered.

(iv) Further, if the accused violated the agreement, they would be liable to be punished unconditionally by the *kebang*.

This agreement was signed by the complainant, the respondents and others including *gaonbura* as witness to avoid any future complications.

(ii) Breach of taboo

Breach of taboo is regarded as a major social offence and invites punishment from the community on the violator

Sexual relationship within the clan is tabooed. It is regarded as incest. In the past, such couples were hacked to death by other members of the clan. But nowadays they are outcasted and socially looked down upon. Such a couple found it very difficult to get their children married. They faced a lot of difficulty for the breach of taboo.

Among the *Idu* Mishmis, it is reported that any marriage within the prohibited degrees of relationship is opposed by the clan and an attempt is made to separate the intending partners from entering into marriage.

iii) Adultery

Adultery is considered as a serious offence. But no compensation is imposed on the woman. The male offender has to pay compensation to the husband of the woman, if the woman is an unmarried; the man has to marry her. A man can beat his adulterous wife but he does not divorce her in view of the heavy bride price.

In case of abduction of a married woman with the intention to have illicit relation with her, the compensation to be paid by the abductor is amounts double the value of her bride price. The reason behind this is that a married woman is considered as an asset for her husband's family. Even after the death of her husband she is not free to marry a person of her choice, but under customary laws one of the brothers of the deceased husband has the right to keep her as his wife.

iv) Murder

Among the *Kaman* and *Taraon Mishmis*, murder is considered as the most serious offence. Murder invites revenge against the murderer in these communities. The victim waits for years to get an opportunity to take revenge. In murder cases the feuds spread to follow the clan members of the victim and become a question of prestige for the clan. The principle of retributive justice goes beyond the actual culprit; revenge can be taken by murdering a very close relative of the culprit. Nowadays, the system of eye for eye revenge is on the wave through the intervention of the administration. Though a murderer is punished by the modern court, the victim's relatives at times wait years for the culprit to come out of jail. The case is again tried under traditional customary laws. The culprit has to pay heavy compensation to the victim's family. The demand depends upon the age and status of the victim. If the culprit is not able to afford the amount of compensation, it is the responsibility of his fellow clan members to contribute and to meet the demand of the victim's party.

A case of murder is cited below:

A belongs to *Kathak* clan of *Loiliang* village and his nephew B belongs to *Moron* clan. B was mentally unsound. The informant did not exactly recall the date, but the incident occurred in 2001.

On the day of the incident, A and B were in A's house. They were enjoying the evening with alcoholic drinks. Suddenly they started quarrelling and B took out his dao and struck his uncle. A died on the spot. Out of fear, B fled from the house to hide somewhere in the jungles. On the next day, B surrendered before the police and confessed his guilt. The police prepared the charge sheet, arrested him and put him in jail. The villagers came to know that B was in police custody on the following day.

The rites connected with unnatural death was performed by the clan members of the victim. Talu puja was performed for peaceful rest of the soul of the deceased. On the same day, the members of A's clan threatened that they would take by killing one person of B's clan. When B's clan members heard this, they assembled and discussed the matter. They decided to approach the DC for bail of B. Accordingly, they went to the DC's office and requested and convinced him that the case was of familial nature because the accused was the nephew of the victim. They wanted to settle it according to their customary laws. The DC therefore, granted the bail. The group then took away B and hired an auto rickshaw to go to the village. But before reaching the village, the auto rickshaw was stopped by an angry mob belonging of A's clan and killed B on the spot. The case was settled with this act of revenge. No further investigation was made by the administration.

The feuds between the two clans ended with the murder of B. No further consequences followed and no enmity continued between the two clans.

The *Kaman* and *Taraon Mishmis* never consider a woman as a target of revenge. The reason behind this is that, a woman belong to the two clans i.e., natural parent's clan and her husband's clan. So, considering a woman as a target for revenge means giving challenge to a number of clans which may lead to a complex situation and a chain of murders.

The custom of revenge is absent among the Idus. The Idus settle murder case with imposition of fine on the culprit. The amount of fine is not uniform but depends upon the economic status of the parties involved as well as the age and status of the victim in the society.

A case of murder settled according to customary law in the modern customary court is outlined below:

One A of *Kora* clan accused *Tamai* clan for the murder of B of *Kora* clan. The dispute had arisen for alleging to cause death of Mrs B, wife of Sri C of *Loiliang* village by the members of the *Tamai* clan.

The case was referred to the office of the Extra Assistant Commissioner's office. Accordingly, political interpreters were deputed for settlement under the provisions of customary laws. A long discussion was held in the

kebang under the supervision of political interpreter Sri Tabronyu and Sri B. Billai in the presence of head *gaonburas*, *Gram Panchayat* Members, *Anchal Samity* Members and the members of both the clans. After a long discussion, the following decisions were taken to which both the parties agreed.

(i) The *Tamai* clan promised that they will not pursue the charge against *Kora* clan in the future for the murder of B.

(ii) Sri Torelum Kora of *Kora* clan also admitted that as per mysterious statement of their priest, he had blamed the *Tamai* clan for killing Mrs B, who actually died due to thunder and lightning. Sri Torelum Kora also promised before the councils that he as well as the *Kora* party shall not blame *Tamai* clan in the near future regarding the death of late B.

iii) Both the parties agreed and the case was treated as settled and closed. In this case, there was no eyewitness or sufficient evidence. But, after settlement no further conflict was reported. Once it is decided in the customary court, the *Mishmis* honour the decision.

(v) Debt

In *Mishmi* society, debt cases are also settled under the purview of customary laws.

A case of debt is mentioned below:

Sri Babulum Donjee borrowed Rs.10, 000/- from Sri Khijam Drai in the year 1994. But Babulum did not return the

amount within the stipulated time. Sri Khijam requested him several times for the said amount but Babulum did not respond. Sri Khijam then filed a case in the local court to get justice.

A *kebang* was invited by the customary court to decide upon the matter. Under the supervision of the political interpreter, both the parties put forward their arguments. After due deliberations, the *kebang* rejected the claim of interest but served one notice to Sri Babulum to deposit the amount of Rs.10,000/- within ten days from the *kebang*. The *kebang* was held on 25.08.03, and one Sri Khugechum Donjee deposited the amount on behalf of Babulum in the office of the Political interpreter which was handed over to the creditor.

vi) Divorce

Divorce is rare among the Mishmis as the custom of bride price makes it difficult. A Mishmi husband does not go for divorce. If his wife is barren he takes a second wife. In case of adultery he demands heavy compensation from the offending man. The compensation is double the amount of actual bride price. But now a days, divorce is granted in extreme cases when there is no other alternative to settle the case. A case of divorce is mentioned below:

In February 1988 a divorce between Smti P and Sri P was granted by the local court. Smt P of Tezu lodged a complaint against her husband, Sri R, that

he would forcefully take their minor child from her and threatened her. So she prayed for retaining the minor daughter with her.

A *kebang* was invited under the guidance of a political interpreter where both the parties expressed their grievances. The *kebang* found that Smt P did not marry Sri R according to customary traditions. Both husband and wife refused to stay together and expressed their desire to live apart. Hence the *kebang* granted them divorce and directed them to stay separately. According to customary rules, the minor girl child was given the mother's custody until she attained the age of eighteen. Thereafter, she would herself decide with whom she would stay. The *kebang* also decided that if the father desires to give clothing and maintenance to his daughter, Smt P should not object. Thus the case was settled and they lived separately without any compensation or maintenance granted to Smt P.

(vii) Land Disputes

Land disputes are quite common in all the Mishmi groups. Illegal encroachment of another person's land often leads to a dispute. Sometimes the land disputes lead to lights involving the contesting parties. Sometimes people from another village surreptitiously enter hunting and fishing ground of a village. If caught, such acts may lead to inter-village disputes.

A few cases of disputes are described below:

(a) Sri Talisha Tamblu,
Complainant

Versus

Sri Sakhri Tayeng,
Respondent

Village- Tafragram

The dispute arose after encroachment of Sri Talisha Tamblu's land by Sri Sakhri Tayeng.

During the time of land allotment to the villagers for the purpose of cultivation in the year 1974 -75, an area of approximately 13 acres at Dag no. 62 and approximately 7 acres at Dag no. 25 were allotted to Sri Sakhri and Sri Talisha respectively. However, the allotted land of *Talisha* at Dag no.25 was subsequently required for construction of school, dispensary, etc. So, to compensate Sri Talisha in lieu of his land at Dag no. 25, the then village level executive worker, *gaonburas* and village elders allowed Talisha to occupy and cultivate in the spare plot of land which was abandoned by Sri *Sakhri* at Dag no. 62. Both the parties agreed to the decision and mutually adjusted to the reallocation. Sakhri possessed a large area of land. So he agreed to offer a portion of land covered with jungle. However, no written agreement was made. Tamblu cleared the jungle in the said plot and began cultivating there for the last 28 years. Out of jealousy and greed for the land formerly owed by him, Sakhri claimed the entire area under Talisha's possession. Sakhri erected new

fencing around the land to reassert his claim over Talisha's land.

Sri Talisha filed a case of illegal land encroachment against Sakhri. For settlement of the case, it was decided to conduct measurement of the entire plot at Dag no. 62 and reallocate the plots to both the parties. On 7th May 2002, the measurement of the entire plot was conducted with the help of the staff of the land records from the Deputy Commissioner's office which was witnessed by both the parties in presence of the head *gaonbura* and other influential persons of the village.

Thus, the entire plot at Dag no. 62 was measured and errors found were corrected through re-allocation to both the parties.

To avoid any further conflict over the plot in future, a *kebang* was held at Tafragram village community hall under the supervision of the political interpreter and *gaonburas*. The following decisions were taken in the *kebang* to which both the parties agreed and they duly signed the agreement:

(i) That Sri Talisha Tamblu has a plot of land under his possession for the last 28 years without any interference from any part. It was decided that he will continue to cultivate in the area under his occupation.

(ii) Sri Sakhri Tayeng shall not interfere, encroach or trespass upon the land of Sri Talisha Tamblu in future.

(iii) It is also decided that the

land under the possession of Sri Sakhri is not enough. Therefore, he has the right to get the balance land from Govt.'s vacant land which lies towards the east of his plot.

(iv) That if any party or any body in the village violates the above decision, he or she shall be liable to pay the penalty of a sum of Rs.5, 001/- to the aggrieved party as a fine or six months imprisonment in a Government jail.

(v) Sri Tamblu or his successors may register or obtain a Land Possession Certificate from the Government whenever required to stop future conflict. The land occupied by Sri Tamblu, for the last 28 years is free from claim of anyone in future.

(b) Smt Helonsai Tayeng
versus

Sri Samblu Tayeng Village-Khoraliang

According to a complaint made by Smt Helonsai, a plot of land was sold to her by Sri Samblu. Smt Helonsai started a pan shop on this plot under license no. Tas/7, dated 31.04.88. She alleged that Sri Samblu had stolen all the goods from her shop and started to torture her by killing her domestic animals, destroyed the pan shop and demanded back the said plot. The *gaonbura*, *gram panchayat* members and other influential persons assembled for an settlement of the dispute. But, in spite of summons, Sri Samblu did not attend the So the case

was referred to the Commissioner's office.

The DC's office deputed the political interpreter to settle the case under customary laws. After inquiry, it had been found that there was no record of ownership of the disputed plot and the case was therefore settled in the *kebang* itself.

So the *Anchal Samity* member, *Gram panchayat* member, head *gaonbura*, *gaonburas* and other influential persons settled the case in the following manner:

(i) The disputed plot originally belonged to Sri Samblu Tayeng, which he had given to Smt Helonsai Tayeng for temporary settlement.

(ii) That the huts and sheds built by Smt Helonsai shall be removed from the said plot to vacate the land.

(iii) That no proof could be established by the complainant regarding killing of domestic animals, stealing of articles from the shop by Samblu Tayeng. Hence, no case could be established.

(iv) The vegetables and banana grown by Smt Helonsai should not be removed from the disputed plot. The *kebang* decided that Sri Samblu must pay a sum of Rs.1,500/- to Smt Helonsai as compensation.

Both the parties agreed to all the above mentioned points and the case was treated as closed.

Oath And Ordeal

Taking of oath is a method of

settling disputes when disputant parties do not agree on a verdict arrived at through liberations. It is especially applicable in situations where proper document, evidence and witnesses are not available.

For settling of cases of theft, adultery, land, water, hunting ground, fishing ground, encroachment, etc., the following methods of trial by oath and ordeal exist in Mishmi society.

(i) *Ipuhu*

In the outskirts of the village and by the riverside, a large tire is kindled. A bamboo tube filled with water is then placed over the fire. An egg is put on the water. When the water is in full boil, the accused has to take out the egg from the boiling water with his hand. It is believed that the priest ritually charges the water so that the innocent remains unscathed while the guilty gets his hand scaled. It proves his guilt and accordingly he has to pay compensation.

(ii) *Alankobu*

It is also a kind of ordeal observed by the Mishmis to settle a case when the accused devises his guilt. A piece of an iron is heated in the fire till it becomes red hot and then placed on the palm of the disputants. If the hand of a disputant burns, it proves that he is guilty; if not, it proves his innocence.

(iii) *Amralambro-Akhru*

A retaliatory raid could take

place if anyone committed theft of mithun or committed murder. Similarly, capital punishment was very common among the Mishmis in the past. But nowadays, due to intervention of the district administration such kind of punishments are declining.

In theft cases the Mishmis used to swear in the name of deity Initaya. Sometimes, they swear by biting the tooth of the tiger. It is a common belief among the Mishmis that, if one swears by biting a tiger's tooth and tells a lie, he will face a tragic death due to tiger attack in the jungle.

iv) *Iku Tayen Athase*

In this type of ordeal, a dog is selected and fed with rice and observed for a few days. If the dog dies within the specified period, it proves the guilt of the accused. This is conducted by a priest.

There are lots of changes in customary laws. The customs differs from one group to another and from one place to another. There are variations within the same group. But with the changing perspectives, new generation has different views. Deuri observes (1999: 314) 'there is a tendency among the people for deviation from traditional concepts and procedures prevailing in their traditional village councils to a new set of norm since their traditional system is more rigid than the present system of government.....therefore

younger section of the societies is keen towards the civil courts.....'.

Acknowledgement : I am thankful to Dr Jeuti Barooah, Niramoni Bordoloi Bora, Bodh Prakash Upadhyaya, Baharul Islam Laskar and Tutumoni Bhuyan for their research work.

End Note: The write up is based on an earlier research work of LRI. After a gap, there might some changes in customary laws. The recent changes are yet to document.

Reproduced: Chapter IV, from "Customary Laws of the Khamptis of Arunachal Pradesh" directed by Dr J. Barouah.

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Indigenous Justice System Among the Khamptis of Arunachal Pradesh

Dr Ranga Ranjan Das

The *Khampti* are a *Tai-Shan* community who inhabit the plains of the Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh. *Mackenzie* (1884) writes that *Bor-Khampti*, *Moonglair-Khampti*, *Kmajangs*, *Phakials*, *Shan* and *Aitonia* are synonyms of the *Khampti*; he states that the *Bor-Khampti* and *Moonglair Khampti* are divisions of the community (Dutta Choudhury cited by Singh 1994: 500). They are Hinayana Buddhists by religion, call themselves *Tai* or *Tai Khamptis* claiming descent from Tai race and speaking a language belonging to Siamese-Burman family. They are mostly concentrated in the three circles: *Chowkham*, *Namsai* and *Piyong* under *Namsai* subdivision of Lohit district (cited in Barooah 2007: XVII). The Khamptis are divided into a number of exogamous clans, namely *Namsdon*, *Manpoong*, *Manwai*, *Manpang*, *Manphai*, *Monchi*, *Monchai*, *Manjakhoon*, *Mantaw*, *Man Sai*, *Long Kheng* and *Chae Nao*. These clan names are also used as surnames by them (*ibid* Singh, p 501).

The *Khamptis* have a traditional system of administration of justice. Therefore, it is imperative on the part of social scientists to identify and investigate into the traditional

village councils and village authorities in order to make a proper study of the systems, status and position, powers and functions, which have been proved to be of vital importance in the socio-cultural fabric of the tribal people. It appears that the democratic institutions, viz. the village councils, are functioning effectively among the Khamptis from time immemorial and their role in the society is still remarkable. The decision or verdict delivered by the council is still duly honoured by the people as well as by the administration. The elected council members also hold a respectable position in the society.

As mentioned earlier, the Khamptis are a Buddhist tribe of Hinayana sect. They mostly follow the *Thamasat* in delivering justice system. The village council i.e., *Mokchup* or *Mokchup Khai-Kham* of the *Khamptis* and the practices of customary laws have been preserved, in fact, all through the long years of their existence. But, it is very difficult to say when it originated.

The Khampti society is divided into classes having distinct social status. The Chief occupies the highest status. The priests or the monks hold the

next lower status (second). Below them is the class of freemen. The slaves were at the bottom of the structure. The Chieftainship no longer exists, but each village has a theoretical Chief or *Chowfa*. In the social hierarchy of the Tai Buddhist migrants, the Khamptis occupy the highest position, followed by the Khamiyangs, Tai Phakes and Aitons in that order.¹⁶ The Khamptis are divided into innumerable clans, each clan having its own village and Chief or Gohain.

The Khampti *Mokchup*

The Khampti customary practices are supposed to be based solely on a sacred text known as *Thamasat*. The Khamptis regard their customary laws as commands, not of any temporal sovereign, but of the supreme being - *Chaukhun Chang*. The *Thamasat* contains a good deal of secular law such as criminal law and procedure, law of contracts and civil procedure as well as rules of morality and religion. Through the ages, the principle of law as laid down in the *Thamasat* has been used for deciding legal matters by interpreting it to suit the changing requirements of the people. The *Thamasat* lays down that the minimum number of members who are to sit for the

purpose of deciding any legal case shall not be less than six, and that they must have such qualities as noble birth, fluency of speech, knowledge of the law, a sense of humour and an indifference to bribes.

The system of Chief was prevalent among the Khamptis. There was a paramount Chief for the whole tribe, who was designated as the Raja. Nevertheless, below him, every village also had a Chief, normally belonging to one of the royal clans.

The Khamptis too, have the institution of Chieftainship and there is only one Chief in the community. The Chief is known as *Chowpha-Hun* or *Chowphakan-Mung*. He may be called the *defacto* owner of the land of his area. At present, for the Khampti areas of Namsai Sub-Division, Shri Chowkhaman Gohain, the first M.P (Member of Parliament) of Arunachal Pradesh is the Khampti Chief. The Chief continues to hold office till death or till incapacitated by old age. Moreover, the Khamptis have a council. The members of this council are drawn from the people of the various social statuses in the community. The body politics of the community thus formed is called *Mokchup*. This is also called the Khampti council. In addition to the Khampti Chief and the Khampti council, there are village headmen in Khampti villages. They are known as *Chowman*. These persons were men of noble birth and good moral character, with adequate

knowledge of customary laws. At the village level also, the village Chief was helped by a similar *Mokchup* (village council).

Among the Khamptis, political authority vests in the village Chief, who normally belongs to one of the royal clans - *Lungking (Namsun)*, *Mansi Lukh-khun*, *Mannu*, *Mungyak*, *Chautang* and *Munglang*. The office of the Chief is hereditary in the clan, but not in the family. The Chief is the political head, but he exercises his authority through a council of members recruited from people of various social statuses, and this is called the *Mokchup* or *mokchup-khai-kham*. The village Chief settled petty disputes, in most cases amicably with the help of the village council but all major disputes were brought to the Chief of the tribe (the Raja) who held the cases following a detailed procedure.

The method followed by the Khampti Chief in trying cases

When any man brings a case to the Chief, he first forms a *Mokchup* and with the concurrence of it, fixes a date for the hearing. Before the proceedings are opened, both the parties offer flowers to the councillors as a token of honour to them. The Chief then summons the plaintiff to state his case who may bring with him any of his elderly relatives to plead for him. All the important points of the statement made by the plaintiff are recorded by one of the councillors. If there is any witness of the case, he is also

to be summoned and his statements are recorded properly.

After the hearing is over, the plaintiff and his witness are allowed to go out of the house and the accused is called to give his statement of the case, which is patiently heard and recorded properly. If he produces witnesses in his defence, their statements are also heard and noted down.

Now, in the absence of the plaintiff and the accused, there begins a long session among the councillors and the Chief in which the statements made by the parties are discussed thoroughly until they arrive at a decision. The sacred book *Thamasat* is then consulted to determine the nature of any punishment to be administered.

The parties of both the defendant and complainant are then summoned to attend the *Mokchup* together, and the Chief announces his findings in their presence.²⁴

Punishments

Khampti customary law prescribes the following punishment for various offences like death, fines or deportation and whipping. It is said that in olden days, punishment by death was inflicted for the most heinous offences, such as murder and mutilation, but this of course, is no longer done. Punishment by payment of a fine is considered appropriate for all kinds of offences. Anyone practicing sorcery and thereby

causing harm to other people is normally deported from his village. Punishments such as whipping and chastisements are imposed upon women and young persons.²⁵

In olden days, punishments in the form of death, deportation, whipping and fine were prevalent, according to the gravity of the offence. In case of adultery, men were whipped and fined. For committing theft and rape, the head of the convict was shaved and he was paraded through the streets and also was whipped at intervals. Extortion, grievous hurt, kidnapping, house trespass, adultery, rape, etc. involved heavy fines in addition to any other punishment like excommunication inflicted by religious or social authorities.

Punitive action by religious authorities had a powerfully deterrent effect. Thus, a woman convicted of adultery might be debarred from entering into temples and participating in



festivals, and also considered it a much more severe penalty than the imposition of heavy fines. One-fourth of the fine went to the *Mokchup* as fees and the balance was paid to the aggrieved party. In civil cases, the *Mokchup* retained only one-tenth. It is said that very serious cases went to the paramount Chief of the tribe (Raja) for original trial; otherwise, ordinarily he used to hear only appeals from the decision of the village Chiefs.

Heinous crimes were rare among the Khamptis even before the British Government annexed their territories. This is said to be due to the compassionate, pacific and kindly nature of the tribe and the ethical qualities derived from their Buddhist religion.

Buddhism in its Khampti form adds authority to justice by its teachings on the fate of the soul after death, for it has, unlike many other tribes, a well-defined code of rewards for virtue and punishments for sin both in this world and the next. A faithless wife, for example, may not, after conviction, be allowed to enter the temples or join in festivals now, and she may turn into a bitch when she dies. In addition, the possibility of a sinner's being reborn in an unpleasant situation is a further powerful deterrent against crime.

The Village Council (*Chow-Tra*)- Its formation

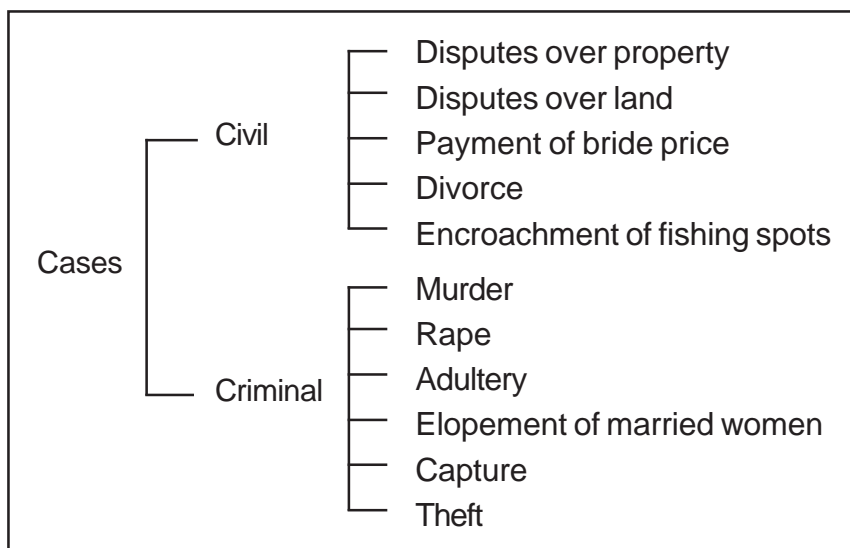
The Chief (*Chowfa*) is the most important institution among the Khamptis who

believe that all laws are ultimately derived from the King or the Chief and his council. The Chief normally belongs to one of the ruling clans - *Lunking (Namchoom)*, *Mansai*, *Lukhkun*, *Manu*, *Mungyuk*, *Chutang* and *Munglang*. The office of the Chief is hereditary in the clan, but not in the family (*supra*) The Chief is the political head among the Khamptis. However, *gaonbura* or *Kenan* assists the Chief in discharging his duties. The Chief exercises his authority through a council of members chosen by the villagers in accordance with the written rules of procedure i.e., *Thamasat*. The *Chowfa* is assisted by the *Chow-sing* and *Chowoog-mung*. The *Chowfa* often settles the inter-village disputes related to property matters and inter-family conflicts. Minor cases involving theft, adultery and inter-personal conflicts are settled by the *Chow-sing* and *Chowoog-mung*.

Functions

The *Chow-tra* has manifold functions to perform at village levels. Basically, the functions of village councils are three-fold viz., (i) Judicial (ii) Administrative and (iii) Developmental.

The judicial role in effect is the most important function. The council settles disputes at village level and pronounces verdicts for different crimes committed in Khampti society. The judicial powers of the customary village council are focussed as follows -



Procedures

The village Chief hears the cases when any person lodges a case to be settled. On getting the complaint, the Chief constitutes a *Mokchup* and fixes a date for the hearing. On the fixed date, both the parties are called and they offer flowers before the proceedings begin to the councillors as a token of honour to them. The plaintiff is then ordered to state his case and the witnesses also make their statements. The council then discusses these statements before a decision is taken. Punishments are generally inflicted in concern with the *Thamasat*. Then, both the parties are summoned and the Chief announces the decisions in their presence.

If any party fails to carry out the decision, fine may be reimposed by the council and if the party fails repeatedly, he may be excommunicated from the village. The information is then served to as many villages as possible. The settlement of any

dispute may or may not involve fine. If fined, it may be in cash or in kind.

The judicial hierarchy goes as follows:

i) At the first level, the village chief or the village council comprising of village elders, settles the disputes;

ii) At the next level, the representatives of nearby villages settle the issues;

iii) At the third stage, the Khampti-Singpho Council, the highest customary judicial body, settles the disputes;

iv) At the fourth level, it may go to the modern court of justice. However, sometimes the cases are referred back to the customary body by the modern court for settlement. Nowadays, the judiciary in Khampti society is a complete mix-up. The case studies reflect such a contention (infra).

The witnesses of persons of unsound mind, insane or minors are not accepted. In extreme cases, disputes are settled by

taking oath (sapot. In fact, bulks of the disputes are settled through customary bodies of the Khampti society. There is no system of appeal to a court of law before summoning of the village council and against the decision of the village council. A few of the punishments prescribed by Khampti customary law for offences are as follows :

a) Death sentence is pronounced for most heinous crimes i.e., murder or mutilation. This is not in practice at present.

b) Fine is imposed for all kinds of offences such as theft, property disputes, girl kidnapping, divorce, adultery, slander, etc. The fine may be in cash or kind.

c) Persons practising sorcery and causing harm to other people are excommunicated from the villages.

The administrative functions of the council are the maintenance of the paths and bridges, supervision of water supply, sanitation, fixation of dates of community hunting and fishing, taking of decision regarding main agriculture operation and problem of land and acquisition by new settlers, etc. In addition, the council also deals with the developmental aspects of the Khampti society.

Khampti-singpho Council (KSC)

It is a council registered under the Societies Registration Act, 21 of 1860. It is located at Chowkham in Lohit District. Its jurisdiction is the entire Khampti

and Singpho area of the district. The aims and objectives of the council (KSC) are as follows:

1) To form and develop a proper organization of the traditional Khampti-Singpho Council called *Mukchum* as per the Constitution of India, Part IV, Directive Principles of State Policy, Act

2) To seek general participation in preserving and promoting traditional moorings of the people of the areas of this council through modern line of requirements.

3) To nurture bonds of fellow citizenship between the people of the area with rest of the country.

4) To co-operate and co-ordinate in all matters relating to the local administration and execution of Government Rules, Acts, etc.

5) To strive for improving the sense of political development among the people and to achieve motto towards better living of the people.

6) To seek general participation in preserving and safeguarding the interest of the original inhabitants and their rights over land and natural resources.

7) To help administration in its functions and to serve as a link between general public and administration.

8) To preserve and promote traditional culture and faith, monuments, scripts, literatures, etc.

9) To re-organise, mobilise and integrate the local people and persons settled in the area.

10) To stop unauthorized immigrants into the area and to stop the village headman in granting allotment of any land without previous permission of the council.

11) To support Government administration in the administration of the village panchayat.

12) To be useful to the Government as well as to the people and conduct and guide activities like holding of meetings, disposal of petty cases, civil and criminal, miscellaneous and religious, social and economic matters of the villages.

13) To promote mutual co-operation among the people within the council area to live in a happy way and to arouse and sustain the feeling of oneness of the various groups of the people living in the area.

14) To decide matters which villagers cannot decide themselves or individually seek for council's help.

15) To maintain peace and harmony among the people and help administration in preventing unlawful activities.

16) To introduce the practice that applications for trade license or any other license to be made through the council.

17) To introduce the practice that if any household in the area wants to hire a helping hand from outside for any purpose, must

apply through the council.

18) To provide for spread of education and establish and maintain libraries, reading rooms, clubs and other places of recreation and games and sports.

19) To promote for introduction and diffusion of scientific and technological knowledge among the people.

20) To protect and promote traditional handicrafts.

21) To spread application of scientific and technological knowledge in agriculture and commercialised agriculture.

22) To strive for extension of irrigation facilities.

23) To strive for development of livestock and to develop plantation crops.

24) To preserve environment and soil conservation by checking reckless felling of trees and abuses of natural water resources.

25) To carry out any other work which is likely to promote health, safety, education, social or economic well being of the people of the area.

Some of the byelaws of Khampti-Singpho Council (KSC), which are framed for its smooth functioning, are briefly mentioned below:

1) The General Body (GB) of the council (KSC) shall consist of headmen or *gaonburas* of all the villages situated within the area of the council, and are the elected representatives from

each village. In case of any village where number of households are less than twenty, such village shall be amalgamated with other village or villages to make the total number of households twenty or above, which shall be considered as one village (unit) for the purpose of electing members to the GB of the council.

2) The GB of the council shall continue for five years.

3) There shall be a President, a Vice-President, one Secretary and such other office bearers as may be decided by the GB. If the President of the council elected happens to belong to the Khampti community, the Vice-President shall be from the Singpho community and vice-versa.

4) The council shall have an Executive Committee (EC) of not less than 11 (eleven) members and not more than 15 (fifteen) members.

5) All persons belonging to the Khampti or the Singpho community living in the area, by virtue of being born in either of the community shall be a member of the council. Any other person lawfully settled in the area, should on application, be also a member of the council.

6) All properties, movable or immovable, money, funds, saving certificates, etc. belonging to the council shall be vested in the Executive Committee.

7) The Executive Committee

shall have the power to take disciplinary action against any member guilty of misconduct.

8) The funds of the council shall consist mainly of the money collected from

(a) Public contribution,

(b) Grant-in-aid from the Government,

(c) Subject to approval of the Government, the council shall collect all taxes, license fees and other dues from leaseholders, license holders, mill owners, traders, businessmen, etc.

9) The Secretary shall be in the overall charge of the fund of the council and shall be responsible for its proper management and current accounts.

10) The council may sue or be sued in the name of the Secretary and all properties belonging to it shall be described as the properties of the Khampti-Singpho Council.

Therefore, it seems that the KSC is by the people, of the people and for the people. The Appendix-II reflects a case study of land dispute settled by the KSC. The Deed of Transfer of land possession is shown in Appendix -111.

Thus, the entire social life of the Khampti people is regulated and controlled by the collective decision of the people through village councils and other institutions. However, changes are inevitable in keeping pace with the modernity. That is why, we find people coming to the

modern court of justice also at times to settle their disputes.

Every society is passing through a process of transition. Elements of modernity are percolated down to the traditional society. Under such circumstances it is difficult to maintain traditional system of governance. The new generation is in favour of modern court. They do not always like to follow age old system in the changing situation. To understand such deviation, further research is suggested.

Note: This write up is reproduced from our published work on the customary laws of the Khamptis of Arunachal Pradesh. The chapter IV is reproduced here for making it greater readers and inviting their comments, remarks, inputs and suggestions on the changes that happened in last fifteen years.

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(Contd. to Page 63)

Traditional Administrative System of Nyishi Tribe of India



Dr Nabam Nakha Hina

The Nyishis, one of the major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, is regarded as the single largest tribe in terms of numerical strength. According to 2001 census, there are 2,76,502 Nyishis out of total population 10,97,968 of the state and distributed in Upper Subansiri, Lower Subansiri, *Kurung Kumey*, *Papum Pare*, East Kameng, West Kameng, Kra Dadi and some parts of West Siang, including Sonitpur and North Lakhimpur districts of Assam. The Nyishis are the descendants of *Abhu Thanyi*- a mythological forefather.

Nyishi word is Derived from three words- Thanyi (Abhu Thanyi) + Nyi(Human) + Shi(this is) = Nyishi(This is Thanyi being). Accordingly Nyishis are- Children of Abhu Thanyi, who believes Abhu Thanyi as ancestor. A Nyishi is a off spring of a Nyishi father and any woman married to him.

They belong to the Mongoloid stocks and speak the Tibeto-Burman group of language. The Nyishis are divided into five major kins based on lineage called *hosos*. They are *dopum*, *dodum*, *dolu*, *anyia hari* and *hagung*. Their society is governed by its customs and customary laws since time immemorial. Women

can become priests and members of traditional village council. Clan exogamy and tribe endogamy are the rule of marriage.

Nyishi Traditional Village Council, Customary Laws and Practices

The traditional village council among the Nyishis is known as *Nyelee* to resolve disputes (*yallung*). *Nyelee* means a council of elderly persons who are well versed in traditions, practices, customs and customary laws of the society to settle the disputes. It is a quasi-permanent body based on convention which is constituted as and when required according to the circumstances to resolve the disputes. There are different types of *Nyelee* as per requirements and nature of disputes: *nyodo nyoku Nyelee* (dispute with outsider); *nampam nyelee* (inter-village dispute), *nubuh nyete Nyelee* (dispute between two or more clans), *nampam* or *gutang gorra barck* or *gorra Nyelee* (within the village), *nambung Nyelee* or *nambung barik* (matter within the same house) and *emme barik* or *emme Nyelee* (within the same family). The Nyishis always try to resolve their disputes within their family or village on the basis of a

maxim '*emme barik kam koda ligmumab*' (family matters should not be allowed to go public). The Nyishis consider *Nyelee* as custodians of justice, peace, prosperity and harmony. The constitution of *Nyelee* could be initiated by any of the disputant parties or elder persons of the family, clan, village or relatives. The purpose of punishment is to compensate to victims, and to deter, and for reformatory and retributive purposes. There are **different terms** used for various **types of crimes** in the Nyishi society: *Nye mingdum nam/Reedumnam* (intentional killing), *Reeprelapnam* (accidental killing of persons), *Mingtanam* (attempt to murder), *Ungne megenam* (injury/hurt), *Dudu yallung domab resamnam* (wrongful restraint), *Dodu yallung domab natung tumnam* (wrongful confinement), *Mading marebnam* (force), *Reedumnam/redumbulem medingmarebnam* (criminal force), *Reejap recrapnam/reeje reparnam* (assault), *Natung tumnam/bonam* (kidnapping), *Nye rehnem* and *Nye puknam* (buying and selling of a human being), *Tubli yoonam/yali yulla* (rape): There is no distinction made whether the sex is with mutual consent or without

consent. Rather all sexual relation other than between legal husband and wife is considered as offence. *Nyakuu reekamanam/reemanam* (unnatural offence/inhuman act) like sodomy or incest is regarded as unnatural offence.

Marriage are of different types among Nyishi society: (i) marriage by lineage or continuation of marriage from mother's family/clan (ii) arranged marriage (iii) forced marriage-A marriage in which one or more of the parties is married without his/her consent or against his/her will. (iv) levirate- where a woman marries one of her husband's brothers after death of her husband, if there were no children, in order to continue his line (v) by elopement due to love (vi) by capture- where a woman is kidnapped by a man to make as his wife. This form was prevalent during the period when women were considered to be the prize of war. Here, the bridegroom takes away the bride from her house forcibly after killing and injuring her relatives (vii) child marriage- where the parents of two small children (even infants) arrange a future marriage (viii) widow inheritance where she has the right to get a new person arranged by her late husband's extended family and she is obliged to marry the one they choose.

In traditional society, cruelty of husband is rare. Among Nyishis, *Heenam tunam/Jengnam Panam* (cruelty by husband or relative of husband) leads to breaking of marriage. The other

important aspect of Nyishi marriage customary laws: *Nyahang anye aum nanam* (polygamy) is regarded as sign of status of family and person concerned. *Nyalu aneye aum nanam* (polyandry) has no place. Any such act attracts extramarital status and that may lead to penalty to the male partner and divorce. *Hangmi nyalu/nyaga nader nam ortumba nyemel/ nyahang nadarnam* (widow/widower remarriage) with certain conditions. They have to look someone from her deceased husband/wife's family. It keeps the property intact and continues the relationship. If there is none from deceased family, they are free to marry from anywhere of their own choice. Any issue from her deceased husband remains with that of deceased father family. There are provisions for punishing the guilt pertaining to *nyahang nyalu yoming sumanam* (unjustified cessation of cohabitation). Generally if the mistake is done by man, he is bound to give *sabbe* to wife's family. And if made by wife, her family is also liable to give any valuable ornaments as sign of *teeka-nyaka* (compensation for keeping the relation cold period).

Divorce (*nyahang nyalu/nyeme nyega napak/apak mengsunam*) is very rare. However, if it happens, heavy penalty is imposed to the actual guilt, so that, it does not reoccur. For example, in marriage case between Mr X of Leporiang village and Mr Z of Seramputung village. The daughter of Mr Z was

married to Mr X as second wife. But after seven years, she deserted and went back to her parents' house and eloped with another man. Nyelle found Mr Z guilty due to not convincing her to rejoin with her husband and also taking shelter during eloping. He was directed to return the entire marriage gifts given by X, after deducting marriage gifts given by the girl parents. One additional *sabbe* as *Ryalo Haniaing* (compensation for shame of breaking marriage bond) and another *sabbe* as *hapung pahi* (as purification celebration).

Nuisance (*Adikakuul tadikkaku*) means annoyance, anything that hurt, inconvenience and damage to the others. *Meanam* (cheating), *Reesam rayam nam* (mischief), *Lusup lasap* (trespass), *Rumhumnam/chohumnam* (defamation), *Benglaknam/relaknam* (abetment or instigation), *Pathinam* (intimidation), *Benji bengpamal/reeji repanam* (insult), *Nuur nyepingnam* (conspiracy) are considered as offence.

Guardianship (*Kachum tape buo*) of property, aged person and of minor and disable person. In certain circumstances, the properties may need to be looked after by other person as guardian. When the owner of the property [is away, not in good mental condition, under unsecured situation, wants to appoint guardian/agent and minor or disabled person], guardian is appointed. When a person is incapable of managing its own, the burden may fall upon

any one but generally it is the first or last son to look after. They are also bound to perform rituals called *bungu panam* (sacrifice of animal in the name of departed soul). Sometimes daughter and near relative may also look after the aged parent. Whoever looks after the aged person has the right to inherit and right to claim over properties remain with the aged person. In Nyishi society, under certain circumstances a child may have to be looked after by other people as a guardian especially when child is an orphan. The **guardianship** is based upon agreement. If no agreement is made, then it is up to the will of other guardian to decide the future of the child. Marriage should be arranged in due course in case of female child. The male child gets the responsibility to look after his guardians during their old age and gets right to inherit their properties.

Adoption is made in order to continue the family lineage. The adopted child can inherit and succeed their property, but such adopted child is counted as offspring of that person. But they prefer multiple marriages in order to get a male child rather than adoption.

Inheritance/succession (*Sangee geegsae gagebhu/sangnam geenam nasebu*) is based on the principle of propinquity. There was no established custom on succession. It depends upon the owner of the property to decide the shares. There is no distinction between sons or

daughter. The parental properties go to any of their child. If he or she is issueless, it goes to nearest relatives' of the owner of the property or anyone who looked after the owner. However, if the property is ancestral and valuable, it goes only to the family/clan members. If the owner dies without declaring which portion of property goes to whom, then family member divide the property proportionally. If there is no family member alive, then it goes to clan member or blood relatives. The nearest lineage gets the first preference over distant relative or half relation.

Exceptions (*Tungu kyagu neel/kyagunee yupak/apak/kayu sumab*) the acts of children (*hamil/anyo*), women/female (*nyame*), insane/lunatic (*pacha damal/ruga rariya buo*), person under intoxication (*tangkum dariak buo*) are considered casually, if their offence are not serious. There is a common saying "nyeme hami reenam apato/yopato" (forgive the act of women and children). However, the parent/husband/guardian is vicariously liable to pay compensation, in case of serious offences. *Nye reemunam* (person under compulsion) who has committed any offence under compulsion is given concession up to a certain extent. However, the person who compelled them to do the offence shares the greater liability. '*Reeka/maka thkal bengtul reetun/mattun*' (consent is given voluntarily) equivalent to '*voluntati nonfit injury*' i.e. an act

committed due to voluntary consent is not a crime. In the acts, like *suha ngabseh ngam anyo meanam* (for the greater interest of benefit of victim), *reepreelapnam* (accidental act), *seer darhee nam/dedar rache* (act of god/act of super natural), the accused get concession under customary laws.

The Nyishi customary laws are interwoven with faiths and rituals. The oaths and ordeals (*dingdung* and *sudung enam*) are important ingredients of the Nyelee. There are omen examinations like *peepchenam* (boiled egg examination), *pachu Kuknam / ruksing kanam* (chicken liver examination), *reksing Kanam / keenam* (pig liver examination). The priest plays a vital role in the process. In complicated cases, justice is done through *sudung enam* (ordeal), where a stone or any special object is kept in a bamboo tube. As per direction of priest water is poured into bamboo tube and kept in fire. Accused is asked to take out the object from the boiling water in the bamboo tube. If there is blister on the hand, his guilt is convicted, if not, declared innocent. *Nyagam aabhu/abb* and *Nyub aabhu/aab* are the expert persons of Nyelee.

The ideological perceptions of the Nyishis have undergone tremendous changes. The institution like Nyelee is degenerated gradually due introduction of regular justice system. They came to know that the verdict of the Nyelee is not final and binding and can be

challenged in the higher court. The political appointment of *gaon burahs, buris, kotokis*, and party based leaders is affecting the age old customs and traditions.

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(Contd. from Page 36)

Traditional Administration Systems in Kman Mishmi Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh

administrations may not perhaps be viewed from the same point of views of codified norms and guidelines because laws and customs are two different concepts. To identify law with custom is a difficult task. However, the society has accepted the customs or the administration process as correct and abides by it. Every member of the society is expected to follow it. It is known to all that Arunachal Pradesh is inhibited by a large number of

tribal populations with socio cultural diversities. The various traditional administrations of the tribes of the state also differ in degrees, strength and applicability. On many points administration do not entirely agree with the codified laws for which cases are required to be settled variously. For smooth functioning of the legal system and to meet the ends of equity and justice it is therefore essential to think over the question of codification of

traditional administration systems and to find out possibilities of their applicability in terms of local administration as well as in Indian Penal code and other laws.

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Traditional Governing System in Wancho Tribe

- Nokkai Wangsaham

Wancho is one of the major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh living in Longding district. They maintain primogeniture in their society, the eldest son has right to inherit his father's properties. They have their own traditional governing system called Ngowang comprising of different clans headed by Village chief. They were nature worshipers, now a days their believe and worship system are diluting with the change of the globe. Their primary source of income were agriculture, this is also replacing with small business and serving in the government service. Interestingly Wancho speaking people are found in nearby district, state and the country. Some of the villages mentioned are *Longo, Chasa, Luthong, Lapan* etc. are in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, Baregaon and Deopany in the state of Assam, *Nokyan, Zangkham, Yannu* etc. in the state of Nagaland and *chuja, Longpa Kamkah* etc in Myanmar.

Paa - male institution of the Wancho

Paa in Wancho is inseparable in Wancho Life.. There are two *Paas* in Wancho one is *Pannu*, a male institution of chiefly clan and another is *Paamal* or simply *Paa* a male institutes of commoners' *Paa* is also called

as *Morung*. In the book the wanchos in transition the author Thomas Vittoh has mentioned about *Phanu Morung* "it would have been simply Paanu. *Paa* cannot be named as *Morung* or youth dormitories just as the following tribes of Arunachal Pradesh like *Minyong* call it *Dere*, *Padam Moshup, Milang Hgaptak, Boris* call it *Bange*, *Nnocte* call it *Po* or *Pang* and *Wancho* call it *Paa*. Functions of *Paa* in Wancho are different from the other tribes. Of course youth use to stay in *Paa* but not only as a dormitory in Wancho society. *Paa* can be described as the following:

Paa is a male organization/ institution

Every of *Paa* members have equal rights and duties in doing any activity for the welfare of *Paa* and during *Ludan* festival.

To become a member of *Paa*, every body has to attain rites called *Paa dann*. *Paa* means male institution; *Dann* means entry ie admission in *Paa*. The following items are to be paid by the family of newly admitted boy (i) ring full of firewood approx half truck once a year for consecutive five years. (ii) *paa Sanghto*/basket full of *Hingziak/ Chilly* approx half 2 kg, (iii) a bundle of *Ngak*/banana leaves as disposal plates and glasses,

(iv) locally available vegetables, (v) a bundle of *ongo*/leaves of *yam/katchu*, (vi) a bundle of salt (now a packet) (vii) 6-7 bamboo tubes full of water. clearance of nearby *Paa/Paathozang* during *Ludan* festival as fees by the newly admitted boy. This festival is celebrated only by male members in *Paa*.

In addition to the items mentioned above items the following items are also paid during different occasion such as *Heenai aan/ gum* millet during *Nyikha Pungzam* offering, *zaam aan / gum* paddy rice during *satho pungzam* and *Vongkam* during *sahling pungzam*. The word *pungzum* means offering prayer to almighty God through sacrifice of fowl in granary for bumper harvest. Further small bundle of firewood every night for five years are also given to the *paa* members.

Behavioral culture and respect, songs, folk tale, art and craft making techniques of collecting forest product are trained here, selection of brides for the youths are also discussed and many more which are necessary in lives are learnt in *paa*.

Paa is an administration

Duties of concerned *Paa* members like road clearance

and bridge construction are decided in *Paa*. If any member(s) found absent in above assignment fines are imposed mostly in kind, now cash is also accepted. The rules of *Paa* cannot be neglected by anyone by any means. The direction of *Paa* to be followed by everyone.

***Paa* is Legislature**

Plan and policies for the development of concerned zong sector are made in concerned *Paa* and for the village as a whole resolution is made at *Paanu*. Community fishing and hunting are also decided in *Paa* after divination is observed. The rule framed in *Paa* is the final in the concerned *Zong/segment* and the rule framed in *Paanu* for the whole village.

***Paa* is court**

Cases of both civil and criminal of that segment are adjudicated in the concerned *Paa* in the witness of elderly *Paa* members and major cases are heard in *Paanu* under the supervision of the village chief. If the case heard in *Paanu* is

violated is any one he is expelled from the village.

***Paa* is gaurd house**

The youth of *Paa* members are used to gaurd the the village staying turn wise in their concerned *Paa*. Whosoever gaurds during a day times is called *tingo* and who gaurds during night is called *paajipnawsan*. Duties of *tingo* and *paajipnawsan* are to help the needy within the village. If any untoward incident occurred in and nearby village they (*tingo* and *paajipnawsan*) play *kham* as a signal to rush to the spot for rescue, and help.

***Paa* is sacred and secret institution**

Every sacred performances are observed in *paa* in wancho society. Killing of some animals like tiger, leopard, python etc. is regarded as bad omen/sacred. If a those animals are killed by chance the killer is to or purify himself in *Paa*. If any one who attended to fire accident he has to enter to *Paa* before his home for a purification. Hunting

weapons are also offered prayer in *Paa* for getting more Game.

Secret topics which are not be heard by ladies in the village are also discussed and resolved in *Paa*. Puberty rites or clothing ceremony of a boy locally called *khiatham* is also done here. Searching of marriageable girl for a youth is also discussed in *paa* first.

***Paa* is Museum**

Kham a long drum known as the biggest musical instrument of the world, different types of wood curving, basketry, weapons, skulls and bones of animals, skulls of enemies' head of those days and many local made articles are displayed in both *Paa* and *Paanu*.

Not only as a student of social science but as an indigenous member of the community this article is an outcome of my participant observation.

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Traditional Administrative System and Youth Institution of Zakhring (Meyor) Janajati of Arunachal Pradesh

- Bellai Ruzing

Arunachal Pradesh, the land of rising sun is the homeland of a numbers of an indigenous tribes belonging to different culture and linguistic groups. The Meyor tribe inhabit in a very beautiful wide flat valley of the present Anjaw district, bordering with Tibet in the North and Myanmar in the East. They are lesser known tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. In fact, till today no anthropologists have ever carried out any research work to highlight the socio-culture pattern of this tribe. Moreover, the Meyor language as spoken in Arunachal Pradesh has not been studied by linguist. Neither, the foreign visitors of earlier days like French missionary Fr. Krick and Fr. Boury, J.F. Needham, Neol Williamson and F.P. Main price referred any significant information in their tour dairies and travelogues.

It remains unclear as to the origins of the Zakhrings, who are traditionally paddy cultivators, strictly profess and practise Buddhism (Hinayana sect). It is assumed that the *Zakhrings* immigrated over to Arunachal Pradesh in two waves from the north of Tibet. The first group perhaps arrived in the later part of 1800, and the second group

is perceived to have arrived in the early part of 1900 and settled themselves on the banks of the river Lohit. This is evident from the distinct dialects the two groups speak— Lower *Zyphe* and Upper *Zyphe*.

Land & People

The Meyors are little known tribe of Arunachal Pradesh inhabiting in the flat valleys of Kibithoo and Walong administrative circles of Anjaw district. The area lies between 28°5'-28°15' North and 98°-97°5' East. According to the Census of 2011, the number of Households is 205 comprising of a total population of 989 with 489 Males and 500 Females. The Sex ratio stood at 1022 and Literacy rate at 55.97%. The Meyor Population is scattered in 15 (fifteen) villages namely *Kahao, Mashai, Dhanbari, Kundun, Khrowti, Yaikung, Bara Kundun & Kunjuk* in *Kibithoo circle* and *Walong, Tinai, Dong, Tilam, Sapkung & Pangung* in *Walong circle*. These villages are located along the both banks of the Lohit river. The plain areas available have been used for the wet rice cultivation (WRC). The entire hills and mountains are covered with pine trees. The altitude of the areas varies from

4000 feet to 9500 feet from the sea level.

Historical Background: Origin and Migration

The 1978 Gazetteer of Lohit district mentions that Zakhrings and Meyors are separate groups. The Census of India (1981) could find only 14 Zakhring people which declined from 23 (Census of India, 1971), while the population of the Meyors increased from 100 (Census of India, 1971) to 238 (Census of India, 1981). My ethnographic field observation reveals that *Zakhrings* and Meyors are considered as synonymous. Therefore, taken together the total number of both the tribes stood at 249 (*Singh, 1995*). Evidence suggests that in 2002, the total number of both these groups stood at 300 (*Aiyadurai, 2011*). In 1988, the Meyors were officially recognised as a Scheduled Tribe (ST) of Arunachal Pradesh.

In the wake of the plummeting numbers of *Zakhrings* on one hand, and perhaps the economic need to avail the conveniences provided for ST status by the Government of India (GoI) could have roused the *Zakhrings* to label themselves as Meyors. These two tribal groups are also

referred to as Charumba (Barua, 1995).

The Meyors believe that they are the descendants of *Limsar* mythical ancestor of the tribe. They racially belong to Tibetan-Mongoloid stock and linguistically speak Tibeto-Burman of Kachin sub-group. No definite statement can be made about the original home of the Meyors as this part of history still in doubt. However, the Meyors consider themselves to have migrated from the place called Mei which they say, exist somewhere in the far eastern part, most probably in the upper Myanmar or Irrawaddy range. In absence of their myths and traditions of migration, it is difficult to presume about the original home of the Meyors. Now, only source which may throw some good deal of information on migration of Zakhring ethnic group is language. If the language is to be taken as the guiding factor, then probably they dwelt somewhere in the remote part of the upper Myanmar bordering with the Kachin group of tribes. The Meyor have some language affinity with Kachin group. Col (Dr.) D.S.Grewal (Rtd) in his work, the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh has classified the Meyor dialect as sub-Kachin group of Tibeto-Burman family language.

In his book -"The Meyors & their Language", Victor Landi describes the migration of the Meyors from the direction of Khamti-Long in northern Myanmar entering through Kronjang Pass by the following the river course of Kullung and

thereby settling in the areas around the confluence of the Lohit and *Kullung* for a considerable period of time. They later went up towards the North but were harassed and pushed back the Lamat Clan of the Mishmi (*Kaman*) tribe as they considered themselves to the original owners of the *Kullung* route.

The first village, the Meyors established was Dong which literally means the "right place". Then they slowly and gradually migrated to other villages like *Tinai*, *Mushai* and *Kahao* with the coming of more batches of immigration. The Migration probably took place in the later part of the 18th Century. At the time of migration to the Lohit, the Meyors had to face bitter opposition from the Mishmis. The Mishmis raided and forced most of them to retreat from Walong area to *Zayul* province of Tibet. In spite of the repeated raid, the villagers of Dong, Tinai, Mushai and Kahao withstood the Mishmis. In the last part of the 19th Century, some intellectuals of the Mishmi tribes initiated peace talks and successfully managed to bring peace into this region by sacrificing a "Cat" at Yapak and made an agreement not to attack each other in near future.

Village & Domestic Life

The Village is called "*Newok*" by the *Meyor*. The village names are named after a small stream or river passing by the village. The villages are very sparsely populated and situated at 2 to 10

Km distance from each other. The Meyor layout a systematic plan while settling a village houses and agricultural fields. The site selection is always guided by the two factors, namely the availability of water at a very close distance for drinking as well as irrigation of the wet rice fields and availability of the suitable flat cultivable areas. In fact, the Meyors are specialist in wet rice cultivation. The Meyors generally prefer wide open compound. The pattern of the Meyor house is almost square in shape and sufficient space is left between the two houses. The village cremation ground generally occurs on the outskirts of the villages.

Land Tenure System

In Meyor society, the entire area is divided on the basis of the village unlike the other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh where the land with defined natural boundaries is owned by the community and again further divided on the basis of clans. In Meyor villages, the individual land ownership is recognized legally. Therefore, each household has its share in the village land for the purposes of habitation and cultivation.

The mode of acquisition of ownership over the land is only through inheritance and opening a new plot of land by an individual himself. Transferring and selling of parental land property is not common in Meyor society. The land owned by the individual families is categorized on the basis of its utility like settlement,

agriculture, forest & pasture and Burial ground.

The agricultural land is invariably a private land in the Meyor community. However, in due course of time, if they require additional land for cultivation within the radius or jurisdiction of the village boundary, no permission is required from anybody for expansion.

The rule of inheritance over the land among the Meyors is same as that of any other patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal family of Arunachal Pradesh and as such the land properties owned by the parents passes to his sons.

Religion and Language

However, Jean Kingdon-Ward (1952) commented that Zakhings bear dissimilarity with that of the Tibetans. In the words of Jean Kingdon-Ward (1952: 104), “[t]hey [Meyor/ Meyer and Zakhing] as are known variously as Maiyi or Zakhing.... They are neither Mishmi nor Tibetan, though they speak a language that is understood (with difficulty) by Tibetans”. Kingdon-Ward (1952) also argues that although the Zakhings might wear outfits and dresses like the Tibetans and follow Buddhism, however, Zakhings are “much darker in complexion and coarser in feature” (104). Again, to further establish the difference between a Zakhin and a Tibetan, Kingdon-Ward (1952) argue that Zakhing women, who are mainly from the peasantry background, are obviously, and, from a common sense, very different from the posh Tibetan women of Lhasa.

In other words, *Pierre Bourdieu's* cultural capital² (Bhattacharyya, 2009; 2013; 2014) that signals social assets in the form of power and status of Tibetan women are much higher than *Zakhing* women—the way the Tibetan women talks, their voice, their sense of dressing, etc. (Kingdon-Ward, 1952; see also, cultural capital, Bourdieu, 1984).

Notwithstanding, some believe that linguistically, the Zakhings belong to the Sino-Tibetan/Tibeto Burman. Another theory as to the origins of Zakhings, (although could be speculative) emerge from the fact that the 20th Century kingdom of sPobo, also referred to as *sPoyul*, located in the river *gTsangpo*, in the eastern region of Tibetan Himalayas was also a home to Tibeto-Burmese ethnic groups—*Mon pa* and the *Klo pa*³ (Lazcano, 1966). The sPobo monarchy was so powerful that its influence often felt beyond the great Himalayas “and the kingdom received tribute from the *Klo pa* (mainly *Adi*) and *Mon pa* tribes from the southern part of the frontier. *sPobo* enjoyed a great level of autonomy in its relationship with the government in *Lhasa*; so much so that the region could almost be considered independent” (Lazcano, 1966: 42).

However, likewise, the differences chalked out by Kingdon-Ward (1952) between Tibetans and Zakhings, Lazcano (1966) too argues that the physical appearances of the sPo bas are different from the ‘standard Tibetans’—the sPo

bas are short in their stature with darker skin colour and long and loose hair. *Lazcano* (1966) even goes on to describe the sPo bas as ‘uncivilised’ and that the sPo bas bear similarity with the *Klo pa* tribes of Eastern Himalayas. Evidence suggests that in 1913, the immigrants from Eastern Bhutan, that is, the *Dkupas* reached the powerful land of *sPobo*. With mounting pressure of population on the *sPobo*, the *Klo pas* were pushed further to the south, which is indeed the India’s state of Arunachal Pradesh. As stated above, though it could be speculative, it is suggested that the *Klo pas* could bear some close connection with the *Zakhings*. This is because the *Zakhings* maintain close-knit relationships with the *Mon pas* and the Tibetans. *Driem* (2007) argues that Zakhing as a language bear similarity with *Midzuish* language (Blench and Post, 2011; Landi, 2005), while others believe that the language of the Zakhings is bodish and they perhaps came from *Zayul* district of Tibet (*Aiyadurai*, 2011). However, further research is required to unfold the origins of the Zakhings.

In the following sections, based on the findings from my interviews intertwined with ethnographic research, I analyse the discussions on Zakhings, first from a Tibetan perspective, and, second, from an Indian perspective.

Social System of Meyor

The Family setup of the Meyor tribe is known as

"*Namgung*" and it's patriarchal and the father is the head of the family. On his dead, the eldest son succeeds him. In the domestic affairs of the family, the father usually wields a dominating influence and his will generally reign supreme. It is he who arranges the necessities and comforts of the family. The nuclear family is the primary unit of the Meyor society. The Meyor family comprises of husband, wife and the children. The children stay with their parents till they attain maturity and are married. The sons may not necessarily separate from their parents after marriage till suitable accommodation is ready. Normally, the youngest son remains with the parents to look after them during old age though there no such an established rule. It largely depends upon the mutual adjustment between the parents and the sons. The daughters on marriage go to live with their husbands. The extended joint family is not popular among the Meyors.

The marriage locally known as "*Mooneharmai*" by Meyor community involves negotiation between the parents with the consent of their children. The Meyor prefer cross-cousin marriages between the father's sister's daughter and the mother's brother's daughter. The parallel cousin marriage with one's father's brother's son or daughter is strictly avoided.

The levirate form of marriage is also practiced by the Meyor in the event of death of the

husband. In such a marriage no elaborate ceremonies are performed nor any bride price paid. Both junior and senior levirate exists and widow re-marriage is permitted in Meyor society. Sororate type of marriage between the wife's sister after wife's death is also not uncommon. Monogamy is the rule. Polygamy and Polyandry are never practiced. A Meyor cannot have two wives at the same time under any circumstances.

In negotiation marriage, the go between *Drepun (Dipen)* and his assistant *Dreyok (Dryok)* plays the most important role and success and failure of the proposal depends upon their intelligence and tactfulness. Generally, in Meyor society, the girls parents never accept marriage proposal in the first visit of negotiation by *Drepun* and *Dreyok* because it causes suspicion among the people and the bride-groom parent that the girl may be lacking something. If the girl's father continuously rejects the presents or gifts offered for the third time, it is taken for granted that the proposal for marriage is being turndown and he is not ready to accept the boy as his son-in-law.

The bride price (ring) is essential for conducting a marriage alliance and it has two parts namely *Manchak* and *Sisi*. The Meyor marriage is simple and last only for a day. A day after the marriage, the newly married couple is allowed to sleep together.

Divorce (*Garlongchum*) in Meyor tribe is permitted through uncommon. Both the spouse has the right to seek divorce. The ground for divorce is disobedience, misconduct and maladjustment between parents, adultery, bad temper, desertion of husband or wife and barrenness. If the women divorce her husband, she has to give compensation amounting to bride price to the husband. After divorce, the son's become the father's liability and the daughters stay with their mother. If the divorce is initiated by the husband then nothing is to be returned to the husband, he will loose his bride price.

Death Rituals

The funeral system or death is taken inevitable truth by the Meyor but they believe that the premature death is attributed to the evil actions of some spirits. The death is generally cremated. But in case of stillborn or newborn child the death body is disposed off into the river. The cremation site is located outside the village parameter. The charred bones and ashes are collected on second day of the cremation and mingled the ashes to keep in the small hut constructed in the entrance of the village.

Beliefs & Practices

The Meyor religion is a blended of local beliefs of animism and Mahayana sect of Buddhism. They venerate the Bud- dhist spiritual leaders and worship in the *Gompa*, which have images of Lord Budha,

Dalai Lama and his disciples. They also worship family deity, village deity, the deity of hills and water, both benevolent and malevolent in the nature. All these deities are propitiated with fowls and animal sacrifices. The performance of sacrifice is conducted by a shamanistic priest "Kahu", the sacrifices and offering of fowls and animals are made to deities or spirits after testing an omen from chicken liver, egg and measuring of land of the respective areas. It is very symbolic gesture by observing chicken lever which is closely similar way of Tani groups of Arunachal Pradesh.

Inheritance of property

The immovable property of a Meyor family consists of the house, the cultivable land (*wik*), dry land (*Kuwer*) and Jungle (*Janak*). The movable property includes livestock, household belongings, costly clothes, ornaments and so on.

In Meyor society, the rule of inheritance is male equigeniture or male line. The properties of the family is divided equally amongst the sons at the time of separation except the youngest sons who may get little more than his other brothers because he is eventually the successor of the parental properties and the household items after the parents death.

At the time of distribution, the close relatives or prominent persons of the village are being called upon to witness the proceedings and to keep in mind that who gets what and whether

the distribution is accepted by all the family members. The ancestral ornaments which are kept reserved for the girls to be given to them at the time of marriage. The daughters have no legal claim or right over any immovable properties of the family even those who have no sons. Meyor society is patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal, therefore male authority is accepted.

The movable and immovable properties of father are inherited by the male members. However, the movable properties belonging to her mother like jewellery, beads, necklace, earrings and bangles etc... may be given to daughter at the time of marriage. A woman has exclusive right over her own earnings at home before marriage and at husband's house after marriage.

Widows in the Meyor society continue to enjoy the same right as she did during the time of her husband. She is also the guardian of the properties of her deceased husband until the children grow up and get married. A divorcee woman is excluded from her temporary rights over the properties of her separated husband. Even she has no claim over the children of the terminated marriage.

Social Arbitration

The society has no class, caste or clan distinction. The existence of a strong political organization is not an important role rather than the men possesses of wealth, wisdom,

repute and influential people are asked to arbitrate in case of dispute. The arbitrators of Meyor are called Gempo and the village council is constituted on a purely temporary basis.

Village council

The Meyors have no organized village council. The elders who are able, capable and expertise in customary law assemble when a dispute arises and needs to be settled. The council (*Genpo*) thus formed is presided over by a chairman called *Parbo*. The council headed by the *Parbo* and assisted by group of influential persons settles all the disputes related to ownership of agricultural lands, thefts, adultery and other inter personal and inter family conflicts. Its jurisdiction is restricted only to the judicial matters and does not include village administration.

The amount of fine depends on the nature of the offence. The council is generally held in the house of the accused person for giving full opportunity to express and to depend about his/her innocence. There is no separate building where the proceedings of the council are conducted. In the assembly, the head of the council announces the verdict jointly taken with loud voice so that everybody present in the council hears. He also pronounces the amount of fine imposed upon an offender. No physical punishment is given to the culprit. The decision announced by the council is always final and regarded by all

because the council's judgment is always impartial. If the accused is not satisfied with the decision, he may appeal to the local administration but effort is made to solve the case through the village council in accordance with the customary law.

Since time immemorial, the Meyor have been performing the oaths and ordeals to testify the innocence or guilty of a person. Sometimes, the accused is reluctant to confess the crime committed by him and often deliberately try to give false statement. In that case, the council fail to arrive at any conclusion, then oath and ordeals are administered by the council to prove the innocence of the accused or vice-versa. Generally, in oath, the accused is asked to tell his non-involvement of the crime charged upon him by taking oath in the name of Gods, Goddesses and spirit who supposed to be witness of the crime committed by the accused. It is believed that guilty will meet bad consequences or unforeseen danger within a very short span of time because the local high priest appeal to these gods or deities to give judgment in favour of the innocent.

Besides the oath, they also perform various forms ordeals. The methods of putting a heated dao, burning charcoal on palm, taking out a stone from the boiling water are the common system of ordeals. The accused person getting burns or injuries was acclaimed guilty and he has to pay fine as per the judgment given by the village council. The ordeal process is administered usually in case of major or heinous crime such as murder or attempt to murder, theft of valuable articles etc... The entire process of ordeal is performed under the strict supervision of the high priest.

Despite some changes that has occurred after the introduction of the Panchayati Raj Systems, the traditional village council still try petty case viz...theft, mischief, assault, adultery etc... People have got strong faith in council for obtaining speedy justice.

Conclusion

The socio-economic conditions, history of their migration, their political status, cultural practices and their relations with neighboring Mishmi tribe and Tibet is a much needed academic task and a detailed

ethnographic study of Meyor will help in understanding a lesser known indigenous group of Arunachal Pradesh, their traditional way of village administration and youth institutions.

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The Raseng of Adi Peope

- Dana Moyong, Ado, Mebo

The Raseng is an institution or organisation in olden days for the girls whereas the Dere or Mushup is for boys in Adi area of Arunachal Pradesh. The Raseng has two meaning—One is for hut and another meaning is the girl who attended the hut. For example, Borang Raseng, here Borang is a title of a clan and Raseng is a girl which means Borang girl. The merry making and recreational are main activities among the teenage girls night under the hut. Simultaneously, socially important matters are being trained. The origin of the Raseng couldn't be traced out. It has been inherited from generation to generation upto last three decades.

In this institution there is no restricted age to attend the hut, but in general assumption, the 14-15 years are marked as eligible age. The hut (*Raseng*) is constructed in the corner of the village by boys of similar age like that of girls. The boy may be from same or other village as per choice of girls. The benefit of constructing hut in corner is that there will be no noise problem or disturbances from *Raseng* to the common people during night. And also for fire accident which may happen due to negligence by *Raseng* girls during playing or

chatting with boys. The materials required for erecting hut are contributed individually among the girls themselves or they request well to do person in the village to donate the same, in return they help him in his field activities.

Generally, hut is not attended during peak period of cultivation and harvesting as they help their parents in their fields. They attend Raseng hut during festival or any other holidays in order to add more colour of festive atmosphere and to spend the time and cut of their homes. The girls attend hut in night after completion of their evening duties i.e. serving all family members. The senior girls call up one another and reach the hut in group. Since no electricity was during those days, they used to burn firewood as a source of light.

The gathered girls would start folksong/ folk dance so that the Mushup Yameng (Mushup Boys) could hear them which indicated indirect invitation. At last the boys would join them in folk song/ folk dance/ Ponung dance. The boy who had well versed or knowledge of Aabang would lead the *Ponung* dance in the middle of encircling dance of girls chanting about creation of universe, evolution of earth, its living being, or some interesting

topic of life, or love songs or any current topic etc. The boys from different village can visit any hut whenever they like but by mutual understanding. On arrival of another group, the first one will leave the hut and they can visit another Raseng hut. In this way they dance and sing whole night with full discipline. The bachelors are entitled to visit the hut, so during this course of time one can exchange the willingness to his favourite one. This also enable to know the behaviour or character of each other in detail. In such circumstances, if the signal is positive from opposite direction, then only the negotiation for marriage is placed through the parents from the boy side to girl. But sometime some boy may fail to win heart of his favourite girl in spite of spending year because those days girls were conscious about their future, they didn't yield to all the visited boys and as a result some Raseng girls remain unmarried. This may happen to bays also.

The one important festival specially for the hut girls (*Raseng*) was *nokyin-anggonng*. The *nokyin-anggonng*—a making of friendship in the name of local beer. *Nokyin* means fermented rice which is used as drink (*Apong*) and *anggonng* means

friend. In this occasion the youth (Boys) from same village or other village will propose the Raseng girls as a friend by placing a twig of bamboo leaves keeping them in safe place inside the hut. If the Raseng Group (girls) accepted the invitation then all the activities will be carried out accordingly.

During this festival, the boys of the village will go for hunting in jungle and all the meat will be offered to the villagers of girl and in exchange the girl (villager) will offer nokyin/Apong to them. The girl will serve apong to the boys returning from day long hunting. During this festival even elder/aged people took part in ponung dance through this platform they suggest for proper maintenance of Raseng spirit. The validity of this friendship is for one year only.

Hence the Raseng in other sense was a part of social

organisation where all activities necessary for building of life were trained. Besides, merry making relevant to the biological changes in human life, the manner of living, importance of punctuality and discipline, fashion of Ponung Dance, folksong and dance, spinning of cotton and loin, womanhood related matter, maintenance of relation in between relatives, study of one's character, folk tales, weaving of traditional dresses etc were trained and on other hand the boys learnt the proper tuning of singing the ponung, chanting aabang and how to build their character.

On the arrival of modernisation the respect for Raseng has diminished considerably and treated it as outdated tools of olden days, with no value, the position of Raseng followers have been kept away from normal society. In addition,

the introduction of education is one of the major factors for declining of Raseng system because every parents want their daughters to be educated and want to see them as service holder, the girls want to attend the school the Raseng remain only in the name. Another reason responsible for declining of Raseng that the parents, themselves, do not like to send daughters to Rasang.

So, among Adi people Raseng is as dead as Dodo. But its role in maintaining the dignity of women in yore must be praised and taken note of. The writer of his article has not seen a Raseng by himself. He has collected the information from the grandmothers living in the society and who while young were in Raseng. The grand old ladies are still all praise for Raseng. ■

(Contd. from Page 49)

Indigenous Justice System Among the Khamptis of Arunachal Pradesh

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Traditional Administrative System & Youth institutions among the *Hrangkhols* of Assam



- Sumneibul Hrangkhol

The Hrangkhols are an important tribe of Dima Hasao district of Assam. They are hardworking people and their main occupation is agriculture. In education sector, the community seems a little bit changing in recent years. In average the community literacy rate would be around 85%.

In respect of culture, custom and tradition, the Hrangkhols community have distinct identity. In matters of religion, almost 60% of the total population have embraced Christianity. Since 1935, conversion works has been experienced in the community. Before that the Hrangkhols were 100% Hindus.

The Hrangkhols Community has their own rites and rituals in the sphere of religious worships and practices. They worship and have their own God and Goddess namely Maliraja(Shiva), Kalakhi(Bishnu), Chempiri(Ganesh), and Fapite(Lakshmi) etc. in their own indigenous way. Sacrifice of fowls is compulsory. Ju (rice beer) locally prepared are also offered.

In respect of *Customary Laws* and Traditional Administrative System, the Hrangkhols community has some unique features. Family and Clan

Administration are most important. No matriarchal system prevails in the community. Marriage within the same family tree (clan) has been restricted up to three generations.

Regarding family property, there is no any hard and fast rule, sometimes it is mutually distributed among the sons. However, claiming of such inherited property, first preference goes to the eldest brother and the next preference would be the youngest brother. In Hrangkhols community, properties generally refer to Gong, Bell, Brass Plate, Jewellery, Ornaments and Gun etc.

Another important aspect of customary law is Judiciary System. Basically clan judiciary system works at the primary level. It is known as "Pafong Devan". The oldest person amongst the Clan is the chairperson of the system. There is no system of selection or election of the Chairman. It is the traditional Chairman of the **Clan Administration System**. In this judiciary the subject matters is not vast. Disputes, problems or issues of the same clan or cases within the same clan are generally discussed and settled.

For placing any case or disputes before the Clan Court, He/She must give 'Jubel' (Kalash) of rice beer especially in the earthen pitcher as a mark of respect. All final verdict are pronounced orally. No written documents are maintained.

Under the Village Administration System, minor cases like defamation case, allegation, hurt, theft, attempt to rape, murder, adultery and illicit relation cases etc. are placed and made settled.

In case of failure in settlement of any dispute or case in the lower level, the same can be placed at the **Hrangkhol Halam Devan**, which is the Highest Court of Justice in the community. Its consists of Kalim (Chief) and two assistant – Kabur and Chapia.

Although good numbers of the Hrangkhols people had left their original religion they equally participated in the Hrangkhol Halam Devan. To occupy the post of Kalim, Kabur and Chapia traditional system of oath taking ceremony are held wherein offering of pujas to *Naran Kalakhi* (Bishnu) is a must. It is called "*Telmalri-inring*" in the community. In this ceremony all pujas are performed by the chief priest called 'Ocha'. Further he

would be assisted by 8 (Eight) additional priests. They are known as “*Nokphang*” in Hrangkhols dialects. They play a very important role, right from beginning to the end of the ceremony. It is also worth mentioning that all the assistant are to be well informed one day ahead of the ceremony. Some basic things required in this ceremony are fowls, rice beer (specially in earthen pitcher) and flower garlands etc. In fact, it is democratic in nature and practical by religion.

Hrangkhoh Alam Devan, plays a very important role in maintaining discipline, good manner to the people (in the community). It acts as the regulator of the Hrangkhoh Customary laws. Issues and problems related to community can be directly discussed in the Hrangkhoh Alam Devan. Fees and fines related to customary laws can be fixed as well as made alteration in its Devan only.

Besides this, its main duties also include – to solve cases, disputes, problems and to give equal justice to all. To maintain peace within the community in particular and with other tribes and communities in general of the society. To preserve and to protect Hrangkhoh Alam Devan property. Over and above, its main duty is to safeguard the identity of the Hrangkhols Community. This is the main body for the proper Administration in respect of Political, Social and Judicial matters of the Community. However, in its administration

system, the Hrangkhoh Community or the Hrangkhoh Alam Devan does not maintain any written documents. Instead it follows the Oral Constitution and still going on since time immemorial.

The presence of strong customary laws such as clan wise, village wise and area wise administration helps the community in many ways. For example- poor members of society need not require to approach the government for redressal, which are very expensive as well as beyond their reach.

Regarding **Village Establishment**, a village is established by a select group of people. So they have an equal right in the administration of the village. Accordingly they unanimously select the ‘Gaon Burha’(Village Headman). Like the members of Lok Sabha of the Indian Parliament, the ‘Gaon Burha’ will remain in the post as long as He enjoys the popularity of the villagers, if not he would be substituted by another clan by way of simple selection. There is no fixed term. In brief the system is both traditional as well as democratic in nature.

But in the rare cases, some villages are founded by one or two family members and their descendent finally claims Gaon Burhas as their hereditary rights. In this case, they enjoy some privileges in the village such as in decision taking, hunting and Jhum cultivation etc.

In Hrangkhoh Community, there

is no any **Club or Dormitory System**. Meeting can be held in any suitable residence. The most efficient youths both from the boys and girls simply lead the youths. In Hrangkhols dialects youth is known as ‘*Vengasuo*’. Although there is no any club or dormitory, “*Vengasuo*” can efficiently organize the youth for social work, helps the needy people. Youth groups also earn lots of cash and kind for the community festivals like Ruolsafak, Parngot etc. Their active participation in the annual pujas like “*Bahnarinsuk*” and “*Tuiroi*”, etc. are also appreciable. In those days, youth are generally trained the art of singing and dancing in evening time in the open space as there was no any types of Hall or Dormitory. Amongst the youth, one is selected as “*Tangva*” (Publicity Secretary) whose duties are to announce the meeting, to pass messages, home work and social work of the village.

Last but not the least, that the Tribal Traditional Institutions and Administrative Units etc. are in need to be upgraded with modern amenities and infrastructure as it is an indispensable part of the Tribal Society, so that it may become more and more strong at the roots level and to play an important role in developing the tribal people of the Bharat.

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The Oraons' Traditional Administrative Systems and Youth Institutions



- Jugeswar Oraon

The Oraon tribe living mostly in Assam of North-East Bharat came from Chottanagpur area comprising the present states of Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha, nearly 150 years ago. They were brought to Assam by British Tea Planters to work in the Tea Estates started in and after 1839 A.D. Since then, they have been working in the tea gardens. Some of the Oraons came out of the tea gardens and used to live in the villages by clearing the thick jungles of cultivable lands. The Oraons like to live independently on cultivation, so they have spreaded in the whole north east Bharat in search of their livelihood by way of cultivation.

The Oraons known as Orang or Urang also have brought the tradition and customs that have been followed or done in their original places since time immemorial. An eldest one unless otherwise incapable of a family or house is the head man of the house. He maintain the house or family and liason with the society. He sees that no member elder or young indulge in creating chaos in the house and all should contribute to the

maintenance of harmony in and out of house. Likewise, the Oraons established the administrative system of their society both socially and religiously. Mahtos are the village head for social administration. There are established customs and traditions coming down from generation to generation and on the basis of which society is administered. The customs though unwritten are very much binding on the people. One cannot defy or break it. If any one goes against or breaks the customs, he must face the trial of social headmen and suffer punishment and pay fines etc. Some of the established customs are that one cannot marry a person of the same gutra or equal gutra. The gutras denote the origin of persons out of the same parents in long past and they are meant to be consanguine. Marriage in consanguinity is not permissible. Breakers of this custom ate to suffer the punishment like ousting from society forever. Also one cannot marry a girl outside of the society. If anyone marries and brings by eloping a girl of other caste, he will be left alone until he surrenders by way

of social trial and agrees to be chastised as per customs.

The Oraons made classifications of the other janajatis as touchable and non touchable. An Oraon man is permitted to take water and food from the hands of some touchable janajatis or jatis and if a girl of a touchable community comes to an Oraon youth, she is chastised and accepted in the society by way of fine and feast. No Oraon can take water and food or marry a girl of the non touchable jati or community and if any one contravenes, it will be considered that this Oraon has lost his jati i.e, he has become a member of that non touchable jati. For chastisation his fine and feast will be bit heavier than other social offenders.

Now a days, an organisation named Assam Pradesh Kurukh (Oraon) Sangha founded in 1961 plays the role of social administrator. In view of the present day developmental situation, it has made some of the harsh customs liberal and simple. It gives emphasis to the all round development of the Oraon society keeping pace with other societies of the area.

Another aspect of traditional administration in Oraon society is religious systems. In this system the Baiga or Pahan plays the role of priest in community puja or religious functions. He is regarded to be a media or link man to god or deity whom the members of the society worship with devotion. He is considered or regarded to be a person of character, purity, justice, equality and divinity. He performed the puja etc. for the wellbeing of the community as whole. Village deities, water deity and other benevolent deities are appeased by worship to shower their kindness and blessings on man, cattle and crops with plenty of rain and sunshine. It is their faith that deities always keep them under protection from all sorts of natural calamities and cruelties.

Very recently an organisation named 'Assam Kurukh (Oraon) Dharam Sabha' has come into being among the Oraons. Its aim is to analyse the faith (dharam) and customs (Riti-rewaz) of the Oraons that have been followed since time immemorial. This faith is known as 'Sarna Dharam' or 'Addi dharam' or 'Sawnsar dharam', in different places. It is researched whether there is spirituality, science, astronomy, philosophy and other ingredients in Sarna Dharam or Addi Dharam as claimed by other religions. Another aim of the Dharam Sabha is to make the people of the society best known about

their faith that has been long followed and check future conversion to other religions. Regular prayers to their God (Dharames Mahadeo) in Dharam Edpas established in Oraon villages are done.

Dhoom kudia (kuria) or Jonkh – Edpa (Erpa) is a youth dormitory in the Oraon society.

Jonkh means youth and kudia or Edpa means house. It is the house of youths where they stay together in the night. Like wise there is Pel Edpa i.e., house where the virgins of society together use to stay in the night. The Dhoom Kudia is a place of training or learning of singing, dancing, playing, mandor, dhol and other musical instruments and acquiring of knowledge of hunting. It is the institution of the far flung forest residing Oraons who had no knowledge of present day schools or formal education in their localities and with the advent of schools these Dhoom Kudias are now a days in extinct situation.

There were the practices of hunting in the jungles twice in a year known as 'Faggu Sendra' and 'Bisu Sendra' i.e., hunting in February (Fagun) and April (Baisakh). This practice has also come to halt as the killings of wild birds and animals now have been prohibited by law of the land. For music and art and culture, there is the Akhra in the midst of the village. People of all ages used to gather in the

evening in the Akhra where the young boys and girls played instruments and sang the seasonal songs and danced. Akhra is the place where community sittings are held to discuss various subjects. Regular singing and dancing in the Akhra were held since time immemorial but now it has been restricted and done occasionally i.e. on the occasion of festivals only. The reason behind this is that the school/college going children will be attracted to the regular dance and their evening studies will be hampered.

Some of the traditions and institutions of the Oraons that were prevalent in ancient times have been going to be obsolete now a day due to rapid progress in education, economy and other fields as these sometimes stand on the way of progress. Though it is one or other way a loss of culture, character and identity of Oraons, still restriction is unavoidable in view of all round progress of the Oraons in these days of competition in various fields.

(The writer is a retired Financial Advisor of the Govt. of Assam and ex-General secretary and ex-advisor of Assam Pradesh Kurukh (Oraon) Sangh and presently founder president of Assam Kurukh (Oraon) Dharam Sabha. The present residential address is Banipur, Dibrugarh and his mobile nos. are 9864359472 & 8474804177.)



Traditional Village Administrative System of Dimasa Kachari Society

- Dr. Phirmi Bodo

The Dimasa Kachari is one of the dominant and oldest *Janajati* of Assam and is one of the many Kachari tribes. They are said to be the one of the earliest inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley. The Dimasa Kacharis greatly inhabit the northern half of the Dima Hasao District and ravines of the Jatinga valley and the adjoining tract, Lower portion of Karbi Anglong District (East), Lower Crescent Region of Nagaon district, Cachar district of Assam and Dimapur (Nagaland) and Jiribam region of Manipur respectively. However, they live mostly in Dima Hasao District, an administrative district of the state of Assam.

The name 'Dimasa' stands for "children of the big river," referring to the Brahmaputra river (known as Dilao in Dimasa). So, the meaning of Dimasa literally the son of Big River where the word 'Di' means water and 'Sa' is son. If we turn the pages of Dimasa history it is very interesting to note that Dimasa are always very keen to live and established their kingdoms on the banks of the river.

In India eighty percent of the population lives in villages. Hence, to get the real images of Indian Social Structure one has to understand the every aspects of the village system. The

present article tries to explain the village system of one of the significant community of India namely Dimasa community.

Village System

The village system can be known from the village structure of Dimasa people. In Dimasa, the village system is called *Nohlai* meaning a cluster of houses and the whole village with its population is called *Raji*. Dimasa tend to live on river banks and next to streams. Therefore, Dimasa Kachari villages are on hills, with thirty to fifty, though sometimes (rarely) as many as four hundred houses. The houses are built in two facing rows. The houses, with a timber superstructure, mud-plastered bamboo walls, and thatched roof are called *Noh-Dima*. Each families in a village has a few fruit trees—like Guava, mango, Jack fruit, plantain and others.

The traditional village headman, who is at the top of the village administration, is a *Khunang*. He has both executive and judiciary powers. He is assisted by another official called the *Dillik* (Assistant Headman). Next to him is *Daulathu* who occupies the third place. Next to the *Daulathu* is the *Haphaisgao*, who holds office for two years. Other village officials include *Phrai*, *Montri*, *Hangsbukhu*, and

Jalairao.

Dimasa houses use a floor plan called *Noh-Dima* that partitions the structure into a drawing room, sleeping room, kitchen room, and granary. A place for pounding rice is called *Thengkhikho* in Dimasa. *Samtho-rimin* is another kind of pounding rice tool. Dimasa use a household article like to keep water used the bamboo and for cooking use silver utensil, spoon made of wood and Dish made of wood and banana leaf and other, a house for latrin, bath room and others also.

The village, earlier in Dimasa society, there is grouping system of houses which is called punji which consisted of one a place around. *Nohdrang* named in Dimasa called club is placed in the middle or centre in the village or Punji. The road communication is connecting from the village to centre i.e. market, shop, town and another place. In the socio-economic life of the Dimasa, the role played by livestock is of great significance. Domesticated animals and birds are not only required during the celebration of socio-religion festivals and performance of rituals but required for Domestic consumption and sometimes for commercial purposes also. The Dimasa Kachari rears Buffalo,

Pigs, Fowls, Goats, Ducks, Cows and others.

Many stone monoliths are lying scattered at Kachomari Pathar on the Daiyang River in Golaghat District Assam, bears the triumphant victory in the battles many times by Dimasa King from the 13th century. The remains of the palatial buildings, the traditional capital gateway and the decorative art of architecture, geometric and floral ornamentation found in these relics are marvellous. The sculptural design of animals and birds on the pillars at Dimapur by Raja Makardwaj Thousen in the tenth century show clearly the state of cultural development of the Dimasa Kachari. Many erected ramparts, temples were not seen at capital complex Dimapur due to the destruction by Ahom period in 1536. Stone house was erected at Maibang by Raja Harish Chandra Hasnusa in the 16th century. Stone inscription was installed at capital gate of Maibang by Raja Meghanarayan Hasnusa and statue of Horse is mentioning. Numerous temples of Gharer-Bhitor, Khaspur and Singhadowar of Khaspur both palace of Queen Indraprava Devi were erected by Dimaraja in the 18th century bear the cultural of that time.

Nodrang

In the traditional Dimasa society *Nodrang* or bachelor's dormitory plays a very important part. A young boy of above 12 years in age can stay in the *Nodrang* till his marriage. *Nodrang* is artistically decorated and musical instruments like *the Kharam (Drum), Muri, Suphin (Flute) etc.*

The *Nodrang* is used as a club house and serves the purpose of an organisation of youths of the village. It is a hub of the youths; it serves as an effective body during the time of the village festival like this. *Busu* is an important annual harvest festival of Dimasa society. This festival is always under the leadership of a very efficient young boy known as *Nagahoja*. He is also helped by a female counterpart of same efficiency known as *Malahoja*; they have also young assistants called *Malapharais*. The members of the *Nodrang* make elaborate arrangements attending to the minutes details for the success of this annual festival. Besides these, the boys of the *Nodrang* render social services such as tilling the land of the invalid, roofing the house of the widow and clearing of jungles. The composite life of the *Nodrang* fosters spirit of

discipline, social service, cooperation and fellow feeling besides offering opportunities of learning traditional arts and crafts.

However, it is unfortunate to mention that with the impact of westernisation and introduction of its subculture into the Indian societies the importance of *Nodrang* decreasing day by day. It is become a social problem which needs a special attention. I hope in the coming days such issues will be resolved politically, economically and socially.

Conclusion

Throughout history, India has been a society based mainly in villages. Yes, it has definitely seen modernisation, but to say it is a very traditional village system still holds true. India's lands are still dotted with thousands of villages that rely on agriculture for their survival. Throughout India's history, these small villages have been respected as the foundation of Indian culture.

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Traditional Administrative Systems of Halam Tribe

-Jugen Tripura,
- Rila Halam

The community 'HALAM' is a group of more than 16 sub-caste like as Chorei, Ranglong, Rangkhali, Sakachep, Moulson, Langkai, Kaipeng, Rupinee etc. The biggest part of Halams is living in the state of Tripura. A huge population of the community also lives in the district of Karimganj, Hailakandi, Cachar and N.C.Hills of the state of Assam. They are also found in some parts of the states of Meghalaya, Manipur & Mizoram too.

As like as some other castes the Halams have rich traditional culture, folkdance, folksongs & folkstories. All the sub-casts of Halam have their own administrative system, but all the sub-casts system are mostly same to each other. The Halams are generally male basic cast. The most senior male member administers the family. All the decisions of the family is taken by him. He represents in the village administration on behalf of the family. The property belongs to the eldest male of next generation by virtue. In rare case for the families that not having a senior male member is administrated by the senior most women. She took part in the village administration system too but she could not hold a rank in the main body of village administrative committee.

Most of the the sub-casts of the Halam community have their administrative system on different stages as like as village level, circle level, district level & of all the sub-community level. The head of the village administration is called 'KALIM'. And gradually follows 'chapia kalim' as head of circle level administration, 'vantang kalim' as the head administrator of district level & 'HALAMASHA' is the head administrator of a sub-cast.

A village administrative committee forms as like this

Kalim - the topmost post, than comes - kabhur, mukhtiar, suktiar, kut-anlek, dongrat & tangba. The priest, who is called Ochai is also an important member of the committee. From this committee, tangba is selected by the villagers & committee. Besides this dongrat is the most junior post and there may be persons more than one in the committee. From the dongrat members who perform a special kind of 'puja' promoted to 'kut-anlek'. Members of this post also may be there more than 1/2 in the village administrative body. Others members of the body is gradually promoted from this rank & all the others posts are of singlen. All the important decision of the village is taken by this administrative body & also solve

all kind of judiciary problems of the village. Among the body the mukhtiar has the responsibility to contact with the other villages & the tangba has the duty to gathered the villagers in the meet that satled by the Kalim.

It is found that in some sub-casts of the Halam community, the youth also their own administrative system. In this regard there are two most powerful post. They are 'Tangulien' & 'Pansang'. They also works for the improvement of the villagers. They kept united the young generation & also solve some judiciary problems of the youth. This youth committee represents the youths to the senior bodies meet and helps them to take the perfect decision.

It is found that the Halams have rich administrative system, judiciary system, & customary laws, but all this are running barbally tradition by tradition. They have no written constitution. That's why many unvaluable things are going to be lost. The Halams have a rich languages, but not having any script. so it is must necessary to think about this & have a useful step.

*(Collected by-
Jugen Tripura of Bazaricherra &
Rila halam of Sobri, Karimganj
(Assam))*

Social Administration of the Dalu/Daloo community of Meghalaya

- Shankar Dalu

The Dalu/Daloo's are the indigenous people of north-east India, Meghalaya in particular. The place Dalu situated in the South West Garo Hills along the border of Bangladesh has been named after the name of the community. The Dalu communities are matrilineal society, they take the clan (dafa) of the mother and inter-clan marriage among the Dalus is strictly prohibited. They have various dafa like - *Chongong chichong, chundi, Diglop, Dorong, Gandi, Hajong, Hawaii, Nengma, Nengmai, Nengthing, Kara, Kona, Luru, Marchi, Maibara, Mengkera, Pabar, Patang, Pira, Puka* etc.

They follow Vaishnava Hinduism as well as animism called shakta-shakti cult believe in nature as well as offering of sacrifice.

Family and Clan Administration

The father is the head of the family. The inheritance of properties differs in different prospects. In practice the son inherits the major share of properties about 70-30 in ratio. Because the son had to perform duties of parent's death rituals and maintain the rituals of Goddess (*Kanidew*), snake goddess which is an inheritance deity.

Some of the other properties shares are:

1) If the mother inherits ancestral property, the major share is to be given to the daughter and then to the son in the ratio of 60-40.

2) In case the son-in-law (*Ghar jamai*) stays at his wife's house, her father makes special provisions of property share for her. In most cases, when the girl's parents do not have any son.

3) Naturally the parents usually depend upon the eldest son in their old age, but due to circumstances the parents can live according to their choice. Either in any son's house or daughter's house. A child who looks after their old aged parents till death and performs all the death ritual according to Dalu custom which is 13 days rituals. They are entitled for the major share of the property (without disturbing the daughter's share). In case of daughter she is entitled to get more than the other daughters but the death ritual had to be performed by the son only.

4) However the parents have the right to give share according to their choice.

5) In case of any disputes in a family. The maternal uncle (Mama) and their elders of the

clan (dafas) are the first to try to resolve the dispute along with the paternal clans (dafas). If the dispute cannot be resolved by both the clans then the dispute will be brought to the notice of the gram Panchayat headed by Gaobura.

Disqualification of share of properties

If any son is not performing the rituals of inherited deities (Kani dew) and parent's death ritual son/sons is/are derecognised from the share of parental properties.

Village and area administrations

The Dalu/Daloo land owner is called be "the Bhuia". "The Talukdaar" "The Morol" "the sirdar" and present gaonbura are the main custodian of their area of jurisdiction. The Bhuias and the Talukdaar who are the main land owners use to provide their people in a specific area suitable for settlement, accepting all the requirement like clean drinking water facilities needed raw materials and surrounded by cultivable land under their area of jurisdiction. Because the prime occupation of the Dalu/Daloo is agriculture and all the ceremonies and festival depend upon agriculture, they use to collect tax called "tonka" from the

people according to the share of land they are provided annually. (there is a scope of research for the above case).

Now the Gaonbura is the only recognised authority in the present era. His area of jurisdiction is reduced to a judiciary purpose only, as their land are sold to private parties or occupied by other's. In Dalu communities the gaonbura is selected from among who has education, financial status and cultural knowledge. Once the gaonbura is elected he will remain as gaonbura till his last (death). He is the sole authority to maintain peace and harmony among the villages

a) The Gaonbura has to take consent of the village elders before deciding cases where clan (dafa) rules have been violated in marriage as well as violation of death rituals.

b) In case of killing cow, the punishment is accorded by the Gaonbura in accordance with the customary practices.

c) He handles petty theft cases by lavying fine.

d) But in case of land dispute among villagers and rape and murder the Gaonbura registers the case with the concerned authority.

Youth Institution

The parents bring up their children with love and devotion bringing them to the norms of daily life. In their old age the sons are supposed to look after their aged parents.

As the time passes by the child grows up to adolescence, during this time the children are separated from parents. For the sons, they are accommodated with separate structure called "Kashari Ghar" at some distance away from the main homestead but inside the village boundary. And the girl child will be looked after at home called as "rakpohor" by the elderly women like grandmother and other, where girls learn all the household works like cooking, weaving and

embroidery skill, art of gidduni (tattoo) singing etc.

The main learning of adolsent and teenage boys comes from the common "Kashari ghar" called maa kashari ghar a big thatched house built at the gaonbura's place or any other morols (prosperus farmer) place which will accommodate all the village teenager boys in a single structure where they learn the way of Dalu/Daloo's life and culture.

They also learn different skill like cane and bamboo crafting, music, dancing, sport like wrestling (gangi) art of playing different weapon from their elder experts and practice at their respective kashari ghar along with their friends.

All this art and skill are to be demonstrated during the festival of "pushna" and "maichari".

*(Shankar Dalu
Dalupara, West Garo Hills)*



Traditional Administrative Systems and Youth Institutions of the Karbi Community of NE India

Dhaneswar Engti

The Karbis constitute an important ethnic group of the north-east India. The Karbis are mentioned as 'Mikir' in the Constitution Order, Govt. of India, is one of the foremost ethnic Hills Tribes of Assam. The Karbis never call themselves as Mikir, rather, they prefer to be recognized as 'Arleng' at all time, which means 'the son of man'. They consider that the term Mikir is given to them by the non-karbis of their neighbors. Moreover, there is no mention of the term 'Mikir' in their folk-lore and folk-tales in the Karbi cultural history of the past. At present, they are mostly found dwelling in the district of Karbi Anglong, Assam. But, there are some pockets in the Dima - Hasao, Kamrup, Morigaon, Nagaon, and Sonitpur district where Karbis are making their homes in since time immemorial. Apart from that, there are large numbers of Karbi population living in the state of Arunachal Pradesh even today.

According to a great Art Scholar, Bishnu Prasad Rabha, - Karbis are the Columbus of Assam. Therefore, the term Mikir is not proffered by the Karbis and they consider it to be derogatory. The closest meaning of 'Mikir' is said to be derived from the Karbi word 'Mekar', which is a corrupted word of 'Me-

akar', means the flame of fire. The word 'Mekar' also denotes subject of a village headman.

The Karbis are the principal tribal community of Karbi Anglong district of Assam and it is administered as per the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, having an autonomous power to govern the autonomous district of Karbi Anglong. This Autonomous District of Karbi Anglong, the then Mikir Hills District of Assam, was constituted on 17th November 1951 and the Autonomous District Council was formed on 23rd June 1952 which was inaugurated by the then Chief Minister of Assam, Bishnu Ram Medhi.

According to 2011 census, most of the Karbis still practice their traditional belief system, which is animistic. They like to call themselves as the sons and

daughters of 'Hemphu and Mukrang'. The Karbis, practitioners of traditional worship, believe in reincarnation of soul and honour the ancestors like the Hindus. The religious percentage of Karbi tribe living in the Karbi Anglong district according to 2011 census is – (1) Animism – 84.64%, (2) Christianity – 15.00%, (3) others – 0.36%. The Karbis perform 'Rongker Karkli' (Rongker Puja) in the month of January and February every year seeking good health and seek blessings from the gods and goddesses of every member of their family for the whole year. They also perform pujas of other family gods and goddesses for keeping good health of their family members for the entire year. It is like thanks-giving to the various gods and family puja, which is performed for the prosperity and well-being of the community as well as every member of the Karbi household.



(Kathar Bura, the Head Priest, performing 'Botor Kekur Karkli', a ritual in presence of Karbi Recho with Habes and Pinpos invoking for timely monsoon at Rong Arak, Ronghang Rongbong)

Administrative System

Karbhis are literally divided into 3(three) provinces from the point of view of their habitations. These three provinces are namely, - 'Chinthong Longri', 'Ronghang Longri' and 'Amri Longri'. The immediate meaning of the word 'Longri' is Province. These three provinces are otherwise known as – 'Ronghang Rongbong', 'Chinthong Rongbong' and 'Amri Rongbong'. It is the Ronghang Rongbong where Karbi traditional king resides. He is called as 'Lindokpo', the Chief of all these three provinces of Karbi traditional kingdom. The Karbis who live in the plains are called as – 'Dumrali'.

Karbi Anglong is a mosaic of culture, races, language, and it is a religious followings which has reflected in its ethnic and cultural plurality. From the remote past Janajati or the indigenous tribal communities had come into contact with other civilizations, - Buddhism from Eastern India and Tibet, and Christianity from the west. Culture in practical term is reflected in the profession and organization of religion, promotion of behaviour of the individuals and community, aesthetic expression in the forms of festivals and performing arts, dance music and arts, co-existence or confrontation with other culture and imbibing the righteous moral values among the individuals and the community.

The original capital of Karbi

Kingdom was – 'Socheng', which is located in the present West Karbi Anglong District of Assam. But due to large numbers of wild tigers menace and wide scale loss of lives of men and women from epidemics, the Pinpomar had suggested the Karbi Recho to make a shift of the capital from Socheng to 'Rong-Arak' in Niz Rongkhang, the present Ronghang Rongbong, which is situated about 16km south of Hamren town. Hamren is the Head Quarter of the present West Karbi Anglong District of Assam.



(Harsing Ronghang, Karbi Recho with Habe and Pinpos at Rong-Arak)

Karbi Traditional King (Karbi Recho) There is a strong political system to govern the Karbi kingdom in the past and it is still prevalent in the Karbi society. There is a Council of Karbi kingdom and the Karbi Recho is the head of the institution. There is a Recho Adorbar where all the three heads of Ronghang Rongbong, Chinthong Rongbong and Amri Rongbong have to take part. They are called 'Lindokpo'. The head of these three Lindokpos is called 'Ronghang Lindok, who is

also called as - "Kong Lindok", or, the Karbi Recho. During the Recho Adorbar (Council) session all three Lindokpos and all the Pinpomars of those three provinces have to participate and required to submit their annual reports before the Recho Adorbar (Council), in which the Karbi Recho presides over the Dorbar session. Thus the serious cases which could not be settled at the level of the Pinpomar are generally discussed and got settlement of such serious cases, like 'Lisenem', disputes between Habes and pinpomar, etc. The case of 'Lisenem' is a heinous crime of committing adultery and illegal marriage amongst the same clan which is prohibited as per Karbi Customary Law. In the Karbi Customary Law, a girl and a boy of the same clan are brother and sister relationship of the same family. Hence, a brother cannot marry a sister of the same clan in Karbi society. All such critical cases are settled by the Lindokpos through a consensus and final judgment order of the judgment is proclaimed by the Karbi Recho. He is the last and supreme authority to settle the all such critical social cases of the Karbi social order. Karbi Recho of Rong-Arak still exercises his conventional authority in respect of socio-cultural and socio-religious matters when cases of such disputes are brought to his notice by the Habes and Pinpomars.

Kathar Bura (The Chief Priest)

In Rong –Arak, Ronghang Rongbong, the capital of Karbi traditional kingdom, there is one priest who is recognized as “Kathar Bura”. He is the Chief Priest of Karbi Recho. He resides at Rong- Arak, the capital of Ronghang Rongbong where the ‘Karbi Recho’ lives along with Pinpos. That is why, the village of Karbi Recho is also known as PinpoArong e.g. village of the Pinpos. He has to perform “Botor Kekur” rituals every year, invoking for the timely monsoon in the kingdom of Karbi Recho and the entire humanity. This ‘Botor Kikur’ Puja is performed by the Kathar Bura on 11th of March every year at Rong-Arak, Ronghang Rongbong. In this very ritual, a White Cock is sacrificed to goddess Rasingja to pacify her. During this Botor Kekur ritual, Kathar Bura has to sing the pathetic song of Ha-imu. Ha-imu is regarded as the goddess of rain in Karbi mythology.

There is another important ritual (Karkli) to be performed by Kathar Bura, the Head Priest of the Karbi Recho at Rong-Arak. This very practice is called “Minu Kekur”. This ‘Minu Kekur’ practice is performed for good yielding of crops for that very year. In this ritual, a Red Hen is sacrificed to goddess of wealth to appease her. During this ceremony, the song of “Lokhi Keplang” origin of goddess Lakshmi, is recited by Kathar Bura to pacify the goddess of wealth for good yielding crops.

Village Headman:- In the Karbi political system, each village under erstwhile Karbi kingdom, it was headed by a village headman called ‘Rong Asar’. Under ‘Rong Asar’ there are many households families to be constituted for a Karbi village. At the same time, ‘Longri’ is constituted with several contiguous Karbi villages under erstwhile Karbi kingdom. So, in order to administer ‘Longri’ one administrative officer is appointed which is called as ‘Habe’ or ‘Habai’. In the erstwhile Karbi kingdom there are 12 (twelve) such Longris and these Longris are constituted with “Artus.” It may be mentioned here that - there are 4(Four) Artus under Ronghang Rongbong, 3 (Three) Artus in Chinthong Rongbong and 2 (Two) Artus in Amri Rongbong. These ‘Artus’ are governed by officers called “Lindokpo.” And at the apex of these 9 (Nine) Lindokpos, there is the king called “Kong Lindokpo” or “Karbi Recho.” He is the Chief of all nine Lindokpos and it is still prevailing in the West Karbi Anglong District of Assam.

Like other tribes of Assam, the Karbis have some traditional institutions. These traditional institutions have been functioning from time immemorial. The characteristics of these traditional institutions are socio-political in nature, while some others are of economic character. These traditional institutions are playing very important roles for the sustenance of Karbi culture and

tradition even in the modern context, but some of these are proven to be outdated in the contemporary perspective.

Traditional Village Council:-

There is traditional village council of the Karbis which is called “Mei” and it is constituted with the elderly members of the family units of the village. This village council is presided by the ‘Rong Asar’ or Gaonbura, the village headman at his own residence, called as “Basehem”. In this village council, the village headman, called ‘Rong Asar’ or ‘Rong Asarthe’ has to settle all such petty disputes after due consultations with his ‘Mekars’ or subjects of his village in a very egalitarian way. He has to fix the time and dates of ‘Rongker Puja’, ‘Chojun Puja’ and ‘Chomkan’ Festivals including the marriage ceremony of his village to be carried out for the whole year to come. Thus, the Village Council plays an important role in regulating the social, economic and religious life of the Karbis. The Village Council settles all disputes which are not very grave and serious in nature by the village headman or ‘Rong Asarthe’ of the village. But, in the present context, the Village Council is losing its original supremacy of settlement of such trivial cases of disputes by the village headman; they rather prefer to go to the law courts for settlement of such disputes instead of referring the disputes to village court, or “Rong Asarthe” of the village.



(Riso Aterank, Karbi Youth Dormitory at Rong Arak, Ronghang Rongbong)

Traditional Karbi Youth Dormitory

The Karbis have traditional Bachelor Dormitory system, which is normally known as 'Riso Aterank'. This is associated with Karbi's "Jirkedam" performed by unmarried Karbi youths that is why the name of the house built for the youths is called "Riso Aterank" means training house of the unmarried youths. It is like the youth club. In one word, it is a bachelors' dormitory of the Karbi youths. The functionaries of the 'Riso Aterank' are many in nature



(Klengsarpo, the person in command of Youth Dormitory)

and it is like a training institute of farming, handicrafts and various cultural activities to be taught at the young age. They are taught by the experts of different fields like -cultivation, handicraft and art and music, etc. essentially required for sustenance Karbi culture and virtually to make man fit to live independently on his own. In fact, it is like a school,



(Ritnongchindi dance at Jhum field)

the participation in it means the preparation of the youth for the future life, so that, he can run his family when he attains manhood as a family holder.

The Karbi Bachelor Dormitory is constructed with locally available materials like bamboo, wood and straw by youths of the village. It is generally constructed in a centre place of the village. In the bachelor dormitory, all unmarried boys of the village from the age 10 years are the members of the dormitory. As per the established norms, all young unmarried boys are required to spend the nights at the dormitory called 'Riso-Aterank.'

The office bearers of 'Jirkedam' are as follows: –

1. Kleng Sarpo, 2. Klengdun,
3. Sodar-Kethe, 4. Sodarso, 5. Sanghorai Kethe 6. Sanghoraiso

7. Chengburup Kethe 8. Chengburupso 9. Barlon Kethe 10. Barlonso 11. Motan Ar-e' 12. Motanso Arvi 13. Langbong kethe 14. Langbongso 15. Chinhak –Kethe 16. Chinhakso 17. Me Apei 18. Lang Apei 19. Phankri. 20. Marpi

The above mentioned office bearers of "Jirkedam" have their respective allotted duties and responsibilities to be performed very sincerely and most obediently. It is clearly instructed by the Rong Asar to Klengsarpo during his ceremonial appointment as 'Klengsarpo' in presence of his Mekars or villagers. So, he has to follow all the rules and regulations of Jirsong very strictly with honesty. The Rong Asarthe, therefore, bestows the entire responsibility to Klengsarpo so that every member of the Jirsong beautifully complies with the instructions of Rong Asarthe very sincerely, so that, he need not have to face humiliation from 'Habes' and 'Pinpos'. Otherwise, Rong Asarthe has to pay penalty to the Karbi Recho as a mark of punishment which is a matter of same for him or he might have to lose the post of Rong Asar. These rules and regulations are



(Dance performed by Karbi young boys and girls during harvesting season)

framed by the Rong Asarthe after due consultation with his 'Makers'. So, every member of the youth dormitory must follow the rules and regulations of the Jirsong very truthfully. Here in the 'Jirkedam', Klengsarpo is the captain of the ship. He is the leader of the Youth Dormitory, while Klendun is his Deputy. At the sametime, Sodar-Kethe is the commander of the team and Sodarso is the Deputy Commander of the Jirsong.

And, at the same time, 'Sanghorai Kethe' is the in charge of food and medication of the Jirsong, while 'Sanghoraiso' is his assistant, So also, 'Chengburup Kethe and 'Chengburupso are the persons in charge and assistant person in charge of 'Chengburup', a small drum used for 'Jirkedam'. Klengsarpo and Klengdun, give command to Chengburup Kethe and Chengburupso call out all the members of the Youth Dormitory by beating the drum before proceeding to the site of jhum field. After hearing the sound of Chengburup, all the youths of Riso Terank have to follow them immediately to jhum field for cultivation. There is assigned duties of 'Barlon Kethe' and 'Barlonso', who are the head and assistant head. They are the Surveyors of land in the jhum field. So also 'Motan Ar-e' and 'Motan Arvi' have to perform their duties as right and left in charge of land demarcation in the jhum cultivation, so that, the area of jhum cultivation does not cross or encroach from the allotted area of land to work. Another

important portfolio of Jirsong is 'Langbong Kethe and Langbongso'. The duties and responsibilities of Langbong Kethe and Langbongso are to facilitating drinking water to the team members during the jhum cultivation. They are also responsible for providing sufficient drinking water at the Riso Aterank, the Youth Dormitory. Therefore, they are the in charge of water supply of the 'Jirsong'. Like that, 'Chinhak Kethe' and 'Chinhakso' are the in charge of food grain and seeds of different crops for cultivation. They have to arrange seeds of different crops and make available for cultivation in the jhum fields. So, their responsibility also carries an important role to play in the Jirsong. Other important portfolios of Jirsong are – 'Me-Apai' and 'Lang Apai'. Me-Apai' is the fire keeper and 'Lang-Apai' serves as water keeper. Apart from that there is another important post of 'Phankri' in the Jirsong. The duty and responsibility of Phankri is very specific and he has to serve the entire team members of Jirsong. He has to distribute food packets collected from every household of the village by Sanghorai Kethe and Sanghoraiso to every member of the Jirsong. He is also to carry the responsibility of distributing betel nut and leaf to every member of the Jirsong after finishing their lunch and dinner every day. He is to pass on massages of Klengsarpo and Klengdun to other office bearers of the Jirsong.

There is another special arrangement for Klengsarpo and Klengdun to be served at Jirsong. A provision is made to serve both Klengsarpo and Klengdun by the 'Marpi'. The duty of Marpi is to serve the Klengsarpo and Klengdun during term of Jirsong. The term of Jirsong or Jirkedam is from two to three years without break as assigned by the Rong Asarthe. Young girls are appointed as 'Marpi' and they are allowed to serve the Klengsarpo and Klengdun only. But, during the term of Jirsong, marriage is not permitted as per the rule of Jirsong. One who violates the rule shall have to face stringent punishment from Rong Asar. So, every member of the Jirsong has to live under strict discipline and has to carry his responsibility sincerely. They have to perform their assigned duties and responsibilities as per direction of the Kleng Sarpo and Klengdun very honestly. The rest of the young boys are to perform their duties at the jhum field as per the instructions of the Klengsarpo and Klengdun. All are required to perform their duties sincerely and faithfully, else it is the duty of Klengsarpo and Klengdun to report the offence committed by its members to the Rong Asarthe, the village headman for hearing in the village court as per law of the Jirsong.

So, the Bachelor Dormitory of the Karbi society can be regarded as an institution of social work. The Jirsong, in the name 'Jirkedam', performs all sorts of social services for the benefits of the village in general

and the families of the village in particular when such occasion arises. It is interesting to note that the members of the 'Jirsong' or 'Jirkedam' do not claim any monetary remuneration from the economically poor families and the widows against their works, it has rendered by them at free of cost. Therefore, for the invalids, destitute and widows and poorest of the poor in the village has become a boon from this Bachelor Dormitory system of the Karbi Community.

Today, this very traditional institution of Jirkedam has, however, gradually died down and it fails to withstand against the onslaughts of rapid changes brought about by development activities including spread of western education in the Karbi society. The spirit of 'Jirsong' or 'Jirkedam' by offering a helping hand to the needy people of the society by the members of 'Jirsong' in the Karbi villages is still alive, although, it has been eroded even by the absence of the 'Riso-Aterank', the Youth Dormitory structures in the present day Karbi villages.

The Karbis during the 20th century had encountered the crisis and resolved their cultural identity crisis through the organization of their religion and culture, through a capable and enlightened social leadership. The present exercise to understand the indigenous faith and culture should not only aim at the preservation and protection of culture, but also in interpreting the significance of the religion and culture and their relevance in present times. Culture in practical term is reflected in the profession and organization of religion, promotion of behavior of the individuals and community, aesthetic expression in the forms of festivals and performing arts, dance, music and arts, co-existence or confrontation with other culture and imbibing the righteous moral values among the individuals and the community.

Conclusion Thus, in every outline of the blue hills and its frozen and resilient rocks has a hidden history of very interesting



(Karbi damsels with baskets of opulence on their back at the jhum field)

cultural accounts of the Karbis in Karbi Anglong and outside Karbi Anglong of Assam. Its shady and bottomless caves and fast running red rivers are the manifestations of the Karbi history of the past. Let us try to go deep empathy of the blue hills and brave to swim in the red rivers of the plain to unearth the true history of the past; while doing so, we will be able to make out the most tangible roots of the sentient cultural and religious accounts together with the philosophy of nature worship of the Karbis.



Traditional Administrative System & Youth Institution of the Bodos of Northeast Bharat

- Pratibha Brahma

Bodo tribe is the aboriginal and one of the most dominant tribes in the northeast Bharat. They are scattered all over Assam, North & East Bengal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland & other parts of north-east region of India as well. They are also found in small pockets outside India in Burma, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. However, the state of Assam is the main abode of Bodos and their main concentration is in the north bank of Brahmaputra valley under Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD). Presently, many amongst the Bodo tribe who are service holders under public or private sectors or who have gone looking out for jobs in cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore have settled down there forming sizeable population.

Occupation & Economy

Agriculture is the chief means of livelihood or occupation of the Bodos. They mainly depend on paddy cultivation of different traditional varieties till today. Jute cultivation which was very common is waning nowadays. They grow pulses and oil seeds like mustard, sesame etc. during winters. Cultivation of areca nuts & betel leaf is a culture among the Bodo tribe because apart

from benefits of economic point of view in its plantation, many social functions or ritual cannot be complete without them in Bodo society. Endi & Muga rearing is another tradition of the Bodos. Bodo women are skilled weavers and hence generate good economy by weaving. With changing times socially, new ventures of plantation which are commercially viable like tea & rubber plantation are gaining popularity among Bodo tribe. Educated Bodo population prefers government jobs in modern times unlike Bodos of earlier decades in pre-or post independence of India.

Social Structure of The Bodos

The Bodo society is primarily patriarchal & patrilineal in character. The family members live together at home which is termed as **Nokhor** in Bodo language. Both nuclear & joint families exist in Bodo society. Father is the sole guardian and head of the family. This position is immediately exercised by his eldest son after his demise. Generally, landed and other family property is equally distributed among the sons in the family though it is observed that a son who agrees to take care of his parents during old age get

additional property. Daughters in the family do not have right to property in presence of son/sons in a family. However, portion of mainly the landed property is sometimes given to wife by her husband who is also the head of the family. In case of marital separation, woman is denied any rights of husband's property though she is allowed to keep her ornaments with her.

Position of Women in Bodo Society

In spite of patriarchal and patrilineal structure in Bodo society, position of Bodo women is high and a lone female child in absence of sons in **Nokhor** inherit the entire paternal property. In such cases, it is generally observed that bridegroom comes to live in bride's family and this accepted norm of marriage is known as **Garjia Lakhinai**. Significantly, after her death this property is inherited by her sons but not daughters. In modern times however, daughters in Bodo family also inherits some portion of paternal property though it is not a traditional practice. Bodo women are industrious and work hard in the agricultural field for equal hours as men in the family.

Structure of social groups or clans in Bodo Society

There is no caste system or classification of any groups as high or low and all are held in equal status in Bodo society. But social division among Bodos since ancient times could be traced according to their adopted occupation for smooth functioning in administration of Bodo society. For instance, **Swargiary** (**Sawrga**-heaven, **ari**-folk) were entrusted with the duty to worship Gods & Goddesses for the well-being of the community.

Commonly, groups or clans prevalent in Bodo society named according to their chosen occupation were:

Basumatari (**Basumata**-earth, **ari**-folk) were the proprietor of lands and mainly related to the cultivation and any matter related to land.

Narzari (**Narzi**-jute leaves, **ari**-folk) were groups or clans among Bodo tribe who were entrusted to collect and supply dry jute leaves which were traditionally chewed in bits after cremation of a dead body or during Sarada ceremony. Bodos believed that taking of bitter dried narzi leaves sever their ties with the dead ones who have departed to other world.

Musahari (**Musa**-Tiger, **ari**-folk) were group of people who kept watch at night to protect their tribe and domestic animals from the attack of tiger.

Gayari (**Gay**-areca nuts, **ari**-folk) were group or clans who

were engaged in cultivation and supply of areca nuts to the tribe during the **Kherai** festivals and other ceremonies because without areca nuts and betel leaves many rituals remained incomplete.

Owari (**Owa**-bamboo, **ari**-folk) were group or clans engaged in bamboo plantation, another important plants required during **Kherai** festivals. Besides, bamboo plants were extensively used by the Bodos for multipurpose reasons in all walk of life from building a shelter to household articles. Bodos are credited to be the tribe who grew bamboo for the first time.

Khangkhari or Khaklari (**Khankhla**-a type of plant, **ari**-folk) were groups engaged in collection of **Khagkla** plants essential during **Kherai** festival.

Daimari (**Daima**-river, **ari**-folk) were people who lived near river banks and were engaged in fishing or transferring of logs or timbers through means of floating them in a river.

Lahari or Laihari (**Lai**-leaves, **ari**-folk) were group or clans engaged in collection of leaves during **Kherai** festival and other ceremonies as huge quantity of leaves were required during its rites especially the banana leaves.

Hazoari (**Hazo**-hill, **ari**-folk) were group of people who lived in the hills or the foothills.

Mahilari (**Mahal**-lease, **ari**-folk) were group or clans who lived on fishing by taking the fisher tanks on lease or were

lessees of timber mahals and did trading on timber. They were the mahaldars.

Kherketari (**Kherkata**-cutting of straw, **ari**-folk) were group who were engaged to collect thatch essential during the traditional Bodo festivals

Islary (**Isar**-God, **ari**-folk) were also group entrusted to propitiate and worship gods and goddesses for the welfare of the Bodo tribe during festivals.

Bargawari or Bargabari or Bargayari (**Bar**-blessings, **gab**-cry or prayer, **ari**-folk) were also group or clans who were priests like the **Swargiari** or the **Islary** clans.

Ramsiari or Ramsari (**Ramsa**-name of place, **ari**-folk) were group of people who got its name from the place called **Ramsa** which is situated in the southern bank of Brahmaputra today in Kamrup district of Assam.

In addition to these common groups we also have groups like **Sibingari**, **Sabairiari**, **Bibaiari**, **Bingiari**, **Mao Marari**, **Sangphramari**, **Phadanggari**, **Gajlerari**, **Thalirari** etc.

All the above mentioned groups or clans have equal status with no bar or restriction in inter marriage. Today, such division of the groups or clans classified during ancient times has survived only as surnames without any class distinction of high and low in Bodo society. After the Brahma Dharma was introduced amongst the Bodos by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma

different group or clan as classified above adopted the surname of **Brahma**.

Structure of Traditional Bodo Village

Bodo villages are generally not very big in size and consist of 50-60 families. Bodos prefer narrow and long shape villages and houses are generally constructed on both sides of common Street. In present times, however, there are existences of Bodo villages much bigger in size with hundreds of families inhabiting in them due to manifold increase in population and land crisis.

Paddy field for rice or other cultivation is kept on one side of the village. The grazing field is generally prepared by the bank of river so that there is enough feed and water for the cattle. **Garja Sali** or common place of worship to gods and goddesses by the villagers are placed in the corner of the grazing field. In villages where a follower of Brahma Dharma inhabits, **Brahma mandir** or temple of worship is built in the middle of the village.

The Bodo village is controlled by Gaobura or headman who is selected by the villagers. Gaonbura selected by the villagers is a prominent, elderly and popular person from amongst the villagers who is fit to take the responsibility of the welfare of village people. He is highly regarded and can enjoy the office or position of **Gaonbura** till the villagers desire him to stay without limited time-frame.

Meetings to discuss matters related to the affairs of villages are conducted and presided over by him in cooperation with the villagers. He is also responsible to operate the common fund kept in name of the village and hence, he also assumes the role of treasurer of the village fund.

Messenger or Halmaji is another person selected by the villagers and he performs his duties under the advice and supervision of **Gaonbura**. He generally conveys messages or information of meetings to be convened to the villagers by going from house to house. Meetings are organized to discuss diverse issues pertaining to village matters, religious festivals and ceremonies to be observed in the village.

Oja, Deuri or Priest is another important person who is regarded high in Bodo villages. He performs religious festivals organized in the village. He also performs functions of eradicating evils that is suspected to loom large over the village folks. They also practice traditional method of healing with ancient knowledge of medicine traditionally inherited from forefathers of Bodo tribe.

Structure of Traditional Bodo House

Modern Bodo houses in towns and cities today do not follow the traditional method as practiced by their earlier brethren. Even in rural areas visible changes have cropped in due to coming in contact with diverse socio-cultural societies

co-habiting as immediate neighbours or exposure to different surroundings in global world of high scientific technology. However, the Bodo tribe has survived the onslaught of all these challenges and kept intact and alive traditions and customs which are practiced even today.

Selection of plot for construction of house

Bodos follow the traditional system of selecting plot of land that would be suitable for constructing a house for a family or **Nokhor**. A plot selected is cleaned with a spade and plastered with a required and proportionate paste of mixture prepared with cow dung, mud and water. A pair of **Tulsi** or basil leaves, nine pair of rice grains are placed on top of banana leaves and covered with bamboo basket (**don**) and kept overnight. If materials placed remain undisturbed in the next morning, it indicates that the plot is suitable for building a house and if not it is believed that the plot of land is not suitable for any construction.

Position of homestead

Any traditional Bodo house or village is generally recognized by typical design of homestead which is surrounded by areca nut or bamboo plantations.

The first construction done in a Bodo house is traditionally the granary termed **Bakhri** in Bodo placed towards the east of homestead. Another important building is the cowshed or **goli**

built in the direction of south-east corner of the homestead. The main house or **Nomano** is built in the north side facing towards south. **Nomano** traditionally consists of three rooms namely **Khopra** which is used for sleeping, **Akhrong** used for dining and the **Ishing** or kitchen which is used for cooking. The altars of Chief Deity, **Bathou Bwrai** and Goddess of Wealth **Mainao** is placed and worshipped there in the **Ishing**. In modern times, however Bodo families have adopted culture of having separate kitchen though those who are traditionally conservative followers of **Bathou** religion use **ishing** as kitchen till today.

The guest house termed as **Choura No** or **Nosuna** is built in front of the homestead and generally it is kept outside the inner compound of the homestead. Some Bodo families in earlier times, especially those who were economically well-acclaimed built **Changbangla** with raised platforms.

At the north-east corner of courtyard and in front of the granary and parallel to the room of **Ishing**, an altar about a foot high is built. This place of worship is known as **Bathou** by the Bodos. At the main altar **Sijou Plant** is planted and towards the south of **Sijau** tree is planted the basil plant or the **Tulsi**. Nine pairs of split bamboo poles which stand as posts surround the altar and fencing with thinner surface of cut bamboo splits is wound and twisted around those poles five times. A small passage in

front of the altar is made. **Sijau** tree symbolically signifies the Supreme God or the **Bathou Bwrai** and **Tulsi plant** signifies Goddess-in Chief or the **Bathou Buri**. The members of family worship at the altar everyday by lighting the lamp. The Bodos believe in the sacredness of homestead and sanctity of courtyard for the welfare of all family members.

Youth Institutions in Bodo Society

In traditional Bodo household, the guest house termed as **Choura no** or **nosuna** are used by bachelors who sleep there in group singing, dancing and merry-making together. **Choura no** or **nosuna** are generally built in the front side of homestead which are kept outside from the inner compound of homestead. Bodo girls in their maidenhood also enjoy the liberty to participate in singing, dancing and festivals but separately and in room built in the inner compound of homestead.

Impact of Philosophy of Bathou in Bodo Way of Life

The **Bathou** religion and its philosophy as based on **Asarba** or five Principles have upheld the whole fabric, social customs, economic institutions, beliefs and rites in Bodo society till today.

According to this philosophy, the invisible creator who is the Supreme being can be realized by his five elements of life or virtues and they are-soil, air, water, fire and sky. These five

elements of earth and sky have been tied into five principles:

1. To save procreation by giving & taking birth.
2. To spread offspring by means of wedding.
3. To follow the principle of rejoicing as formulated by Bodo gurus without surpassing the limit of rejoicing as life is mixture of joy & sorrow.
4. Not to lose patience during sorrow but to keep calmness by performing **Kherai or Garja Puja** and remembering the Supreme God when illness or sorrows occur in daily chores of life.
5. Man is mortal and everybody is destined to die in his/her old age. So he or she should not have attachment to land, money, property, sons, daughters or kiths & kin and earthly luxuries. As death is inevitable, so he/she should devote life to God for ultimate salvation or **Udang Janai**.

Social systems for morality and offences for smooth administration of the society:

The traditional Bodo villages strictly adhere to principles of morality for smooth administration of the society. There are five categories of offences and guilty person who have committed those offences have to do penance termed as **Udrainai** in Bodo. They are as follows:

Agarbad: It includes the offence of committing incest,

physical assault on parents or grandparents, killing of a cow and indulging in illicit sexual relationship with person belonging to another community or religion. A person guilty of one of these offences must undergo the penance of nine bows method in the society.

Phongslothbad: If a person touches body of young girl or other caste, he is said to commit this offence and he has to purify himself by performing the penance under **Seven bows** method.

Daokibad: A person commits the offence of **Daokhibad** when he eats meat left over by a tiger or vulture, if somebody receives goat, pig, cocks and pigeon in exchange of a cow, if somebody eats beef, if a person received money by cutting someone's hair, if a person takes food prepared by other caste. It however, excludes food prepared by any of the four Hindu castes namely the Brahmin, Kalita, Baisya and Sudra as offence. In such an offence he must perform the penance under the five bows method.

Khaoalibad: This offence is said to be committed when a person uses the coins or utensils offered to dead bodies. It also includes selling of bulls of a cow after a year from date of its purchase. He must then perform penance under three bows method for this guilt or offence.

Khoulwbwd bad: If a person deliberately accuses someone else without any reason he/she is blamed of committing this offence and he/she has to perform penance in a simple way or he/she is fined with some amount as charged by the village folk.

Performance of penance under bow methods termed as **Udrainai** in Bodo follows the practice of certain rituals by throwing pieces of meat from sacrificed chicken towards the sky with the help of bow and arrow as per the number of times mentioned under penance of bows method. **Agarbad** which is taken to be the most serious offence has to undergo severe penance. This is usually not practiced in today's Bodo society.

Conclusion

The Bodo tribe has inherited rich tradition of custom and heritage from its forefathers and has been able to preserve them to gain special ethnic identity in India. The traditional Bodo society, no doubt has undergone numerous changes especially in the 20th century due to coming in contact with different culture and societies. These changes are apparently visible in the traditional institutions like religion, marriage, economy, social customs, food habits, dress etc. Influence of Hinduism, Christianity, modernization, westernization, development of science & technology or the commonly used word of globalization have greatly influenced in bringing changes in today's Bodo society. But significantly, it has to be appreciated that the upward movement in the traditional Bodo society has taken place without losing their basic values, principles, customs and identity.

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The Role, Power and Functions of Sarpanch

- Chandra Sonowal

A Sarpanch (the village head) is an elected head of a village-level statutory institution of local self-government called the Panchayat (village government) in India (gram panchayat), Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Sarpanch, together with other elected panchas (members), constitute the gram panchayat. The sarpanch is the focal point of contact between government officers and the village community. Recently, there have been proposals to give the sarpanch small judicial powers under panchayati raj.

In some states of India like Bihar, Assam etc, Sarpanch has been empowered to look into various civil and criminal cases, and given judicial power to punish and impose fine on those violating rules.

In Reference I'd like to mention about the power of Gaon Burha (Sarpanch) in Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and all the North Eastern States specially in tribal areas. Gaon Burha is all in all in his own areas and in these states Gaon Burha is not elected rather this system is traditional. The Gaon Burhaship comes through inheritance. In Assam Namghar and in different tribal areas like Marang Ghar (Village Court) in Nagaland, Bapu chang

(Conference Hall) in Khamti, Singhphow, Fhakial community etc. are the main Judicial point in the village. Gaon Burha can decide the different cases, which occurs in villages giving in right punishment to the accused persons through some rules and regulations like for minor penalty Rs.101/- with Tamul-pan, major penalties like social boycott for 5/10 years and so on. A severe punishment on accused is sent out of the village. In these way Gaon Burha could decide and maintain the discipline of the villages.

Meaning of Sarpanch

Sar, meaning head and panch meaning five, gives the meaning head of the five decision makers of the gram panchayat of the village. He is elected by all the people in the village. Gaon Burha is selected in tribal villages of Assam and certain parts of North Eastern Region.

Panchayati Raj (governance by Sarpanch)

Although panchayats have been in existence in India since times immemorial, in post-independence India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, most of the rural development and community development projects have been sought to be

executed through panchayats. In the federal Indian polity, different states had different laws governing the powers of the gram panchayats and sarpanches.

Panchayat elections

In many states, elections were not held for decades and instead of the elected sarpanches, the gram panchayats were run by bureaucratically appointed administrators. However, with the passage of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992, a number of safeguards have been built in, including those pertaining to regular elections. However, even the constitutionally mandated devolution of the functions of 29 core subjects remains a distant dream in most states of India. "Power to the people" remains more of a rhetorical slogan than an actual practice.

Reservation for Women

Nowadays, there are instances of women also being elected to the post of sarpanch and they are called sarpanchini. This follows legislative reform in which reservations or minimum quotas are set for sarpanch positions to be held by women. Around one-third of the seats are reserved for the women

contestants.

A Gram panchayat in India

A Gram or the Village Panchayat is the cornerstone local government in itself in India of the Panchayati Raj System at a small town or the village level. A sarpanch is the elected head of the Village Panchayat.

A gram Panchayat or the members of the Gram Panchayat (Panch and Sarpanch) are elected for a period of 5 years. Some seats for the SC, ST, BC and women are reserved based on the population and majority of the group.

Panches and Sarpanch have big responsibility and both are elected to work for the

development of the village that includes infrastructure, social & economic activities and above all try to maintain harmonious relations in the villages. They are expected to work honestly and keep away themselves from the partiality even after someone have voted against him or in their favor.

Sarpanch (Gaon Burha) in Tribal villages of Assam and North Eastern Regions has been empowered to justify the cases of the villages. As for example, Unlawful marriage, Barnyard, animal stealing, Land disputes etc, are commonly justified by the Sarpanch (Gaon Burha) and gives the right judgment, and punishment to the guilty person(s).

Some of the common responsibilities are as follows:-

- To maintain the discipline of the village.
- To maintain public health and hygiene
- To arrange for the higher education and job oriented programs for the youngsters
- To implement agriculture and animal husbandry related development schemes.
- To settle almost all kind of disputes happening in the village and try to join hands back between the disputed families

After all, Gaon Burha (Sarpanch) is the legal representative to cooperate with the government. ■



কাৰ্বি আংলঙৰ মান টাইভাষী জনজাতিৰ গাঁও প্ৰশাসন ব্যৱস্থা

চাও কোটঅং লুংকিং

মান টাইভাষী জনজাতি উত্তৰ-পূব ভাৰতৰ অন্যতম বৰ্ণাঢ্য পাহাৰীয়া জনজাতি। এই জনজাতিৰ লোকসকলে কাৰ্বি আংলঙৰ লগতে উজনি অসমৰ অন্যান্য জিলাসমূহত বসবাস কৰি আহিছে। কাৰ্বি আংলং জিলাৰ মান টাইভাষী সকলে বোকাজান মহকুমাৰ বালিপথাৰ, বৰপথাৰ, শিলনীজান, কালিয়নি আৰু চকীহোলা অঞ্চলত বিস্তৃত হৈ আছে। মানটাই সকলে থেৰবাদী বৌদ্ধ মতত বিশ্বাস কৰে। বৰ্তমান কাৰ্বি আংলং জিলাৰ মান টাই ভাষী জনজাতি জনসংখ্যা চ,সেৰু জনতকৈ অধিক।

অসমৰ অন্যান্য জনজাতিসকলৰ দৰে মান টাইভাষী জনজাতিৰো স্বকীয় গাঁও প্ৰশাসন ব্যৱস্থা আছে। মানটাই সকলৰ পৰম্পৰাগত গাঁও প্ৰশাসন ব্যৱস্থাৰ মূৰব্বীজনক 'চাও-হো-বান' বুলি কোৱা হয়। মানটাই সমাজৰ গাঁও প্ৰশাসন ব্যৱস্থাৰ সৰ্বোত্তম কৰ্তৃপক্ষজন হ'ল 'চাও-হো-বান'। এই জনগোষ্ঠীৰ চাও-হো-বান (গাঁও বুঢ়া) পদবীটো বংশানুক্ৰমিক। অৱশ্যে কোনো এটা বংশৰ অন্ত হ'লে অন্য এজন ব্যক্তিক

গণতান্ত্ৰিক প্ৰথাৰে চাও-হো-বান হিচাপে নিৰ্বাচন কৰা হয়। গ্ৰাম্য সমাজখনক সু-সংগঠিত ৰূপত পৰিচালনা কৰাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত তেখেতৰ ভূমিকা আৰু ক্ষমতা অতুলনীয়। উল্লেখ্য যে গাঁও প্ৰশাসনৰ বিচাৰ ব্যৱস্থাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত চাও-হো-বান সৰ্বেসৰ্বা যদিও স্বেচ্ছাচাৰী নহয়।

প্ৰত্যেক সমাজৰে কিছুমান প্ৰচলিত সামাজিক মানদণ্ড থকাৰ দৰে মানটাই জনজাতি সমাজৰো কিছুমান পাৰস্পৰিক সামাজিক আদৰ্শ তথা মানদণ্ডবোৰ গাঁৱৰ ৰাইজে সঠিকভাৱে পালন কৰাৰ নিশ্চয়তা প্ৰদান কৰাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ ভূমিকা পালন কৰে।

সমাজৰ জনসাধাৰণৰ মাজত সমতা আৰু ন্যায় প্ৰতিষ্ঠাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো চাও-হো-বানৰ বিশেষ কৰণীয় আছে। সমাজত বিশৃংখলতা তথা অন্যান্য দেখা দিলে চাও-হো-বানে ভোক্তভোগী জনক ন্যায় প্ৰদান কৰাটো তেওঁৰ অন্যতম কাৰ্য। তদুপৰি কৃষ্টি-সংস্কৃতি আদি সঠিকভাৱে পালনৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো চাও-হো-বান দৃষ্টি ৰাখে।

ধৰ্মীয় ৰীতি-নীতিয়ে সমাজক সু-সংগঠিত কৰে। সমাজৰ ধৰ্মীয় পৰম্পৰাৰ লগত সামাজিক প্ৰমূল্যবোৰ অক্ষুণ্ণ ৰক্ষা কৰাত গাঁওবুঢ়াই বিশেষ গুৰুত্ব দিয়ে।

বিবাহ এখন সমাজৰ পতি-পত্নী স্বীকৃতিৰ সামাজিক অনুষ্ঠান। মানটাই সমাজৰ বৈবাহিক অনুষ্ঠানত চাও-হো-বানৰ স্থান অনস্বীকাৰ্য। তেওঁ বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠানৰ দিনা সমাজৰ লোকসকলৰ উপস্থিতিত নৱ-দম্পতীক সামাজিক জীৱনৰ উপযোগী বিভিন্ন দিহা-পৰামৰ্শ প্ৰদান কৰে। সমাজৰ বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠান তেওঁৰ অনুপস্থিতিত সম্পন্ন হ'ব নোৱাৰে।

গতিকে উল্লিখিত আলোচনাৰ পৰা পোৱা যায় যে মান টাইভাষী জনজাতিৰ গাঁও প্ৰশাসনৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত চাও-হো-বানৰ স্থান উল্লেখনীয়। গ্ৰাম্য সমাজৰ সামাজিক মানদণ্ড, কৃষ্টি-সংস্কৃতি, ধৰ্মীয় ৰীতি-নীতি, সামাজিক প্ৰমূল্য তথা সামাজিক আচাৰ-অনুষ্ঠান আৰু বিচাৰ ব্যৱস্থাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত তেখেতৰ কাৰ্য অতি গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ।



Traditional Village Administrative System of Zeliangrong

Dr. Kamei Budha Kabui

The Zeliangrong, one of the indigenous peoples of North East India belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family of Mongoloid racial stock. The population of this ethnic group is found mainly in Tamenglong District of Manipur. These people are found scattered also in the neighbouring districts of Tamenglong District, namely Churachandpur District, Senapati District, Imphal West District, Imphal East District, Thoubal District and Bishnupur District. Outside the state of Manipur, they are found settling in Nagaland in its Paren District, and Kohima District, and in Assam in its Haflong sub-division of Cachar District and Hailakandi District. Incidentally Zeliangrong is the acronym of the three constituent clans ZEmei, LIANGmai and RONGmei

The Zeliangrong people follow a profound indigenous religion known as *Tingkao Ragwang Chapriak*. It is basically based on the fundamental belief of *Tingkao Ragwang*, the Supreme God, literally means the Heavenly God, or God of the sky or Lord of the Universe. *Tingkao Ragwang Chapriak* means the religion of *Tingkao Ragwang*. This profound religious tradition is preserved and practised through oral traditions by the Zeliangrong community for ages.

Sir Henry Maine and Lewis Henry Morgan have taken it for granted that all human societies have governments. This view is held also by some other scholars. But modern scholars have sometimes denied that government does happen everywhere. For instance, A. R Radcliffe-Brown says, 'there is no organized government in an Andamanese village and Bronislaw Malinowski, that, 'political organization does not exist or absent among such people as the Veddas, the Firelanders, and Australian natives. M Fortes and Evans-Pritchard have defined government as 'centralized authority, administrative machinery, and judicial institutions,' and Bronislaw Malinowski also holds the view that, 'political organization implies always a central authority with the power to administer regarding its subjects, that is, to co-ordinate the activities of the component groups.' Although the Nuer and Tellensi have chiefs (like Leopard skin chief of Nuer) and among the Andaman Islanders, 'the affairs of the community are regulated by the older men and women;' 'in each local group there was usually to be found one man who thus by his influence could control and direct others. The views or

opinions expressed by these scholars are in all tribal societies systems of government. However, it is generally established that government in its formal aspects always involves direction and control of public affairs by one or more specific persons whose regular function that is.

Isaac Schapera observes, "By a political community I mean a group of people organized into a single unit managing its affairs independently. Each community also has its own territory and an official head or chief. But the criterion I wish to stress here is independence. No community is completely isolated; its members may exchange visits, trade, and intermarry, with those of other communities, and may also fight against them or as their allies. But so long as it alone decides on matters of local concern, so long as there is no dictation from outside, and so long as its decisions and actions cannot be overruled by any higher authority, it may be said to have political independence." According to K. E. Read, political action expresses the internal identity and unity of the group on the one hand and the external identity which it assumes towards outsiders. The internal identity is expressed in the

prohibition of force within the community, or by sanctioning the 'illegal' use of force by the 'corrective' use of force on the part of the community or its agents. The external identity which the community does assume towards outsiders is expressed in the use of force in war. Within the boundary of the political community there is an acceptance of a common law and mechanisms for enforcing the common law; outside the political community there is no such common law, but there is action in the form of war. Though, there is also linked with other neighbouring groups/villages by ties of historical tradition, intermarriage, corporation in major ceremonies and trade.

In a society where there is no concept of nation or tribal state, the political system is confined to the village level. In other words, in stateless societies, villages are the important socio-economic and political units. The Zeliangrong lives in the villages and their attachment to the village and village lands is very strong. The real political unit of the Zeliangrong is the village with its definite territory with a well knit social system and religious organization. Each Zeliangrong village consists of at least two exogamous clans. Unlike the other tribes, democracy is the form of government of almost all the Naga tribes. On the nature of traditional Naga polity, Varrier Elwin has stated that Naga villages are characterized by a varied pattern of near dictatorship and extreme

democracy. There is a system of hereditary chieftainship among the Semas and the Changs. The Konyaks have a very powerful chief called *Angs* who are regarded as sacred and whose word is law. The Aos have bodies of elders based on clans and Angamis, Lothas, Rengmas and others are so democratic that Hutton observes that the case of the Angamis, it is not easy to understand how in view of their peculiar independence of character, their village elders held together of all before the coming of the British government. In such a system, everyone has a say in the decision making process. Though the Zeliangrong polity is also democratic in nature however gerontocracy, the rule of elders is the form of their village government in which the public opinion is an important factor in the process of decision making. Moreover, the opinion of the clans' heads is also counted.

In their long history, the Zeliangrong did not have or develop the concept of polity formation at tribe level. In other words, the Zeliangrong polity did not develop beyond their village. However the internal political and social structures were uniform and similar with little local variation. In this regard, T. C. Hodson writes, "A Kabui (Zeliangrong) owes no duty to the tribe; he enjoys no rights as a member of the tribe; it affords him no protection against an enemy, for as often as not his worst enemies are those of his own village or tribe. He

acknowledges no tribal head either in matters of religion or in secular affairs." When we consider this condition, it will not surprise us that we find no tribal organization of any kind. It is true that the traditional mechanism of social control is characterized by the absence of any centralized authority over the entire community living in different region. Therefore, the village is the autonomous political, social, economic and cultural unit.

Each Zeliangrong village small or big is ruled by a council of elders expressed as *Pei* headed by a chief. The village chief is known as *Nampou* in Zeliangrong, in Poumai, *Maveo*, in Maram, *Sagong* and in Tangkhul, *Awunga*. He is the chief of the village and also the head of the *Pei*. He is the central point within and outside the village. The generic term of the word chief is *Nampou*, a recognized head of a political community. Recognition in this sense does not mean merely that the other members acknowledge him as their leader; it implies also that they expect him, as holder of the office, to perform certain duties. This he does with the aid of his advisors and other assistants, all of whom likewise have their own special tasks. The Naga chief cannot operate his office in opposition to his councilors and the subjects, rather he is the trustee of their interests, and to do the welfare of his people is the sacred duty of the chief. It is stated in Kautiliya's Arthashastra that "In the happiness of the subjects,

lies his happiness; in their welfare his (king) welfare; whatever pleases himself he shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good." Indeed, the chief is a friend, guide and philosopher of the people.

Hereditary in chiefdom is common among the Nagas; as such the law of primogeniture is generally followed. However, among the Zeliangrong, after the death of a chief, either his eldest son or an eldest male of the clan succeeds him, but the successor should be a married man. Meijinlung Kamson opines, "Strict rule of hereditary chief ship has not been observed among the Kabui, despite the fact that some importance is given to the founding clan." According to J.P. Mills, the office of chief is hereditary in the clan but not in the family. It does not necessarily pass on from father to son, but to the most suitable man of the clan.

The chief is given a prominent position at the social and religious gatherings and festivals of the village. The words of the chief are obeyed respectfully and promptly. As a symbol of love and respect he is always given a right hind leg of any sacrifice animal in the village. Among the Tangkhul, the chief receives the head of the victim (*Sakuiphit*). During the festivals, the chief is always offered the best rice beer locally known as *Zou-Ngao* because rice beer is the national drink of the Nagas. Like the Kuki and other Naga tribes, the house

of the chief normally serves as a public guest-house at which any casual traveler is entitled to hospitality. The maintenance of the chief's house is thus to some extent a public responsibility. Villagers have an obligation to assist in the building and repair of the chief's house. In short, village chief (*Nampou*) is a very privileged person. He selects the best lands for his home and jhum fields in the village and is also "entitled to a portion of meat of all animal killed in the village."

According to customs and tradition, the village chief has some customary rites and rituals like *Namgutmei* (village entry) and *Khun Nummei* to be performed. Such ceremonies are performed when a new village is founded or re-entry to the village after dissertation of the village due to war, epidemic etc. and when the village requires occasional purification in which all the villagers, domestic animals therein move out of the village and stay outside the *Rang*, (village gate). During such occasions the villagers, the domestic animals, the fowls are kept under the control of the village youths till the *Khun Nummei* is completed. The *Nampou* will supply the required items for the *Namgutmei* ceremony. On this occasion, he prays to *Tingkao Ragwang*, the Supreme God for the welfare and prosperity, bountiful harvest, fertility of population and life stock of the village. Every year during the *Gaan-Ngai* festival, the *Nampou* performs the *Khunumei* ceremony for the

affirmation of his position and strength of the village. This rite has social and administrative significance. It is believed that a *Nampou* who carries out such rituals of the village will die early without an heir if he does not follow a virtuous life. If the *Nampou* breaks the marriage code, he has to step down from the office of village chief in favour of one of his brothers or near male relative. Among the Tangkhul Nagas, the chieftainship is cut off from the day he violates the marriage rule and from the day onward none of his children shall ever be crowned as *Awunga*.

Nampou has some other powers and functions. He is the leader, advisor and protector of the village community. When any serious crime such as adultery, land disputes, murder etc. cropped up in the village the chief acts as a judge. The matter is brought to the *Pei* and any decision taken by the *Peis* is to be finally approved by the chief. Likewise, any other serious problems of the village like external threats to the security of the village. The village chief is to act as chief of the army in the defence of the village. This has indicated that the chief is powerful and final authority of the village administration. However, as the administration in Zeliangrong village is democratic in nature the chief does not have an absolute power because any decision he has is to be supported by the majority in the *Pei* and such decision is to be based on the customary laws. In

fact *Nampou*, owner of the village, is in theory the chief functionary of the *Pei*. Unlike the Kukis who have strong chieftainship system, the Naga chief has relatively limited powers and while exercising his powers the village chief is checked by the council of elders.

***Pei* (Village council)** Each Zeliangrong village is administered by a *Pei* which is a council of elders of the village. The *Pei* is not only a council of elders but also the collective supreme body representing all the heads of the clans, lineage or sub lineage. And the elders are also collectively called *Peikhang Peiru* (a respectful term). Among the Tangkhul, any married man may be selected to represent the clan in the village council and he must be able to speak well and boldly. However, in Zeliangrong polity only the aged person (55 to 65 years) can represent the clan in the *Pei*. This age grade determination is still in practice in every traditional Zeliangrong village. Women are however, not allowed to represent in the *Pei* as it is a tradition that they are not given the right to represent in the *Pei*. Mangthoi Thaimai states that "One of the most distinctive features of the public life of the Kabui people is the predominance of the elders in the village administration. Generally, no woman is given a place in the village administration, and in the same way, young men were of little importance in any customary deliberation in the village council."

The Zeliangrong polity has its basis also on the territorial principle; as such the founder of the village who is known as *Nampou* is the chief of the village. And the *Pei* is represented by the chief of the village. Kautilya has rightly stated that "A single wheel cannot turn." It is not possible for the *Nampou* alone to run the village without the advice of the village elders. Hence, every Zeliangrong village has a village council and the primary reason of establishing the village council is to check the tyranny of the chief so that the chief shall give full consideration to their advice. Gangmumei Kamei says, "The *Pei* is the most powerful body in the village polity. Its existence was based on age-old customs and traditions of the Zeliangrong people." The elders of the *Pei* work on an honorary capacity, and as such, they do not receive any salary or remuneration. However, they receive a portion of meat of any sacrificed animal of the village. The elders of the council are also a relatively privileged group. Apart from their social status, they also occupy some of the best jhum lands because of their position. The house of a respectable elderly man with influence and reputation in the village is selected as *Peikai*, (the office of *Pei*). The Zeliangrong people hold the *Pei* in high esteem. Among the Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Poumai Nagas and Kuki tribes, the house of the village chief serves the office of the council. The owner of the *Pei* is called *Peipou*. Arrangements and hospitalities

are looked after by the *Peipou*. He is a member of *Pei*. All these things indicate that a high political status enjoyed by the Zeliangrong people, when everything is taken into consideration. It may be safely laid down that the form of government in traditional Zeliangrong village is one in which three elements: the chief, the village council and the subjects are equally balanced and served as checks against one another to build a strong and powerful village.

The *Pei* has elaborate functions and duties. The main functions of the *Pei* are administrative, military power, religious, and judicial. The legislative function of *Pei* is less because there are already well set of unwritten customary laws, which seldom require amendment. The decision given by the *Pei* is final. No members of the village even the *Nampou* can go against the decision of the *Pei*. No other village is permitted to interfere in the internal affairs and decision of the *Pei*.

The *Pei* is the supreme body for the entire village administration. It does maintain peace and social cohesion and decides the dates of agricultural process such as selection of sites for cultivation, felling the trees, burning the fields etc. The *Pei* fixes the date, days for festivals, the day for mass hunting and fishing, also announces the *Neihmei*, gennas in the village and strictly puts in force it. The *Pei* has the authority to make a decision on any

important subject and the decisions turn into law in the village. The authority of the *Pei* is based on the customs and it puts into effect the customary laws. However, the *Pei* rarely moves away from the general customary laws of the community dealing with the law of person and property and religious matters. In the distance past, the *Pei* maintained almost independent relation with other villages and the outside world.

In Zeliangrong villages, there are different social institutions based on sex and age gradation. These social institutions locally called *Then* are supervised by the *Pei*. At the time of establishment of the village, the *Pei* established the social institutions like *Khangchiu*, (boys' dormitory), *Luchiu*, (girls' dormitory), *Ganchang Kaibang*, (house of elders), *Mathenmei Kaibang*, (house of married women) and *Kengja Kaibang*, (house of old women) for smooth functioning of the village. There is no separate house for the social institutions. The *Pei* therefore, did appoint owner of the social institutions. The institution of boys' dormitory occupies the central figure in the village with a view to purvey village defence and institute of cultural learning, where the future of the village society is built and from which the village obtains security. It is the responsibility of *Pei* to keep firmness and harmony in the functioning of these institutions. And it can be stated that the strength and ability of the village as a military force,

culture, religion and social discipline depends on the quality of the members of the dormitories. In addition, the *Pei* also maintains village paths, ponds, and repairing of them, construction of new paths, cleaning of the village, making bridges across the streams and rivers. In general all decisions of the *Pei* are to be executed by the *Khangchiu* members. Maintenance of community granary and grave-yard of the village is another notable feature of civic administration in the traditional Naga villages. This kind of arrangement in the village is important for sanitation and civilized of the people. The idea of constructing a separate granary in isolation from the dwelling houses is to prevent fire incident in the village, and which indicates the wisdom of village administration, found in the past. In short *Pei* looks after the welfare of the village.

Each village is a self sufficient and independent unit. Rice was and is the staple crops of the Zeliangrong. The main occupation of the Zeliangrong is Jhum/shifting cultivation of rice. Unlike the other Naga tribes, the Zeliangrong like the Kukis practises shifting cultivation due to their geographical location which demands a vast land. The *Pei* has overall control over the whole economic activities of the village. There is a three-tier system of land ownership in every Zeliangrong village. They are the *Nampou*, owner of the village (either clan or the village community land), *Rampou*,

(intermediary owner of land within the village land which may be individual families or clans) and *Laopou*, holders (tillers) of plot agricultural field. As an authority, the *Pei* regulates the transfer/sale of land within the village. It maintains the village forests and decides on the selection and allocation of the forest lands for jhum cultivation in a particular year. It also fixes the rental fee in the form of paddy to be paid by the tillers of the agricultural land to the land owner, *Rampou* and the *Nampou*. In general, the *Pei* gives no consent to transfer or sale of the village land to outsiders. But the sale of a plot of land to a Zeliangrong of other village is possible if it is permitted by the *Pei*. They also collect the rents and give to the landowners and keep a portion of the rent as fund of the *Pei*. J. N. Das says, "The rent is paid in the form of crop. It is fixed by custom at one tin of paddy per year per fixed plot. But the rent is to be paid for the year of cultivation only. For the remaining years of the cycle during which the plot remains fallow, he is not required to pay the rent, though his right over the same plot continues for the hollow period, too. 'Produce and pay;' 'no produce, no payment' seem to be the basic principle, which is certainly very humane and reasonable." The *Pei* also looks after the *Duikhun*, village pond and if there is shortage of water in the pond they perform a ritual called *Duibukaomei*, calling the soul of water by offering a matured female pig or cow to

Tingkao Ragwang for abundant of water.

In olden days, head hunting was a common practice amongst some hill tribes of the Northeast. So the defence and security of the village were primary importance. The Zeliangrongs selected village site on the slopes of the highest hills and not far from the top and occasionally a ridge, when flat enough was selected as a site. They constructed village gates and fortified the village with wooden palisade under the supervision of village elders. *Pei* as a supreme military body had command over the fighting forces of the village. It decides on wars, raids or defence of the village. The *Pei* had a control over the youth dormitory. *Riphen* (*Ri* means war, *Phen*, fighting), the fighting force of the village includes all males of the dormitory but the actual warfare is performed by the *Khangtan*, senior members of the dormitory. They are a group of well trained and experienced warriors. The warriors sit and discuss the defence matters in the *Khangtan Kaibang*, the house of *Khangtan* presided by *Khangtanpou*. They put forward their proposal to the *Pei* for approval. The *Khangtan* executes the plan when it is approved by the *Pei*. The owner of *Khangtan Kaibang* is a warrior who had taken at least a head or a wild animal like tiger or bear etc. Regarding the security of the village, two *Riphens* from each dormitory keep a vigil over the village, day and night alternately.

At night time, two *Riphens* assume responsibility of guarding the village by moving up and down and across it. They sing village guarding songs (*Kairong Lonluh*) to keep themselves awake. This song does instill a sense of security among the women, children and old people of the village and they can sleep properly. Among the other Naga tribes, a regular sentry is deployed at the gate and look-out platforms to watch the approach of the enemies in the village. The Morung boys are usually deployed as the sentry guard on rotation basis. *Riphens* are not paid salary for their service. However, it is customary that during the annual festival of *Gaan-Ngai* the villagers always offer them special treatment in the form of offering special type of rice beer (*Zoungao*) and piece of meat (*Zan*) to them. Apart from this *Pei* has also full power to intervene in any types of ill-feeling arises between two different clans and two different families in case the matter is brought to the notice of the *Pei*. Once the matter is placed to the knowledge of the *Pei*, the question of further feud or clash is not acceptable and if any party violates this tradition, then they are to be punished by charging huge fine. Whenever, there is a crime, the *Pei* sends immediately able bodied persons to protect the victims and to stop the aggressors until a final decision on matter of dispute is taken by the *Pei*.

The main weapons of the Zeliangrong are the spear and

dao and they also use shield of wicker work ornamented with painted figures and dyed hairs. These shields are of great length and curved slightly across. In the use of spear the Zeliangrongs are very expert and they have the faculty of aiming and throwing the weapon with fatal skill. Like most of the hill tribes, the Zeliangrongs aim at surprising their enemies, and after throwing the spear, come to close quarters with the dao. The dao is an instrument resembling a bill hook is universal amongst all the hill tribes. In fighting, those who do not have shields use wrapper of thick cloth folded round the abdomen several times for protection. In defending villages and roads, the Zeliangrongs also use of stones and panjis.

Pei is the authority over the of the village. It is a well known fact that without the *Pei* the religion cannot survive because *Pei* carefully guards and regulates the religious customs and practices. The priest and elders of *Pei* are entrusted to perform the religious rites and ceremonies related to the community and individual welfare. In a year, the Zeliangrong celebrates nine ritual festivals like *Gaan-Ngai*, *Nanu-Ngai*, *Rih-Ngai* etc. at the various stages of agricultural operations. They decide the dates to commence and days of the festivals based on the lunar calendar. The rites and rituals of the festivals are carried out by them. It is also a compulsory duty and function of the *Pei* elders to take part and supervise the traditional great

sacrifices like the *Taraang*, *Maku Banru*, *Matui*, *Mureng* etc performed by the individual families and dormitories. The *Pei* performs regular observance of *Nuhmei* (taboo) and *Neihmei*(gennas) as part of sanctification of the village. However, it is done with the advice of the village priest. Everyone abstains from breaking it because of the fear of evil consequences flowing from the will of a divinity. Colonel McCulloch says that the Zeliangrong observes several gennas like, crop, deities, animal, food gennas and many others. In Zeliangrong society, *Neihmei* for good paddy (*Napchang Lingpui Nei*) and crops (*Loidui Boumei Nei*), safety from rats and rodents (*Pu-Pok Mong Thingmei Nei*), pests and birds (*Thaoroi Mun Thingpui Nei*), animals and beasts (*Su-Jou Mun Thingpui Nei*) and genna for rich harvest (*Nap Thuipui Nei*) etc. are strictly observed for welfare and prosperity of man. To break or violate it is a taboo and treated as a serious punishable crime. Punishment meted out of the taboo breaker is mainly in the form of sacrifices of animals and other ceremonies to placate an angry supernatural power. The performances of lifecycle ceremonies like *Najumgaimej*, birth, *Noushonmei*, marriage, and *Theimej*, death are supervised by the elders of *Pei*. It also decides on the sacrifices to be offered to *Tingkao Ragwang*, the Supreme god, *Naragwang Chanaren Chanei*,

the Seven Brothers God (lower realm gods) and *Bambu*, presiding deities of the village.

The most important function of the *Pei* is judicial administration. *Pei* is the highest court of justice of the village and it decides on disputes, civil and criminal cases based on the aged-old customary laws. *Peikai Rakaiye* means *Peikai* is the house of god. So they believe they will get justice from the *Pei*'s elders in discharging their judicial functions. All civil (marriage, divorce, adoption, succession, property, recovery of debt etc.) and criminal cases (assault, adultery, abduction, murder, killing, theft, rape, fighting, injury, dismantle of house etc.) are brought before the *Pei* for justice. But some emergency cases like murder, killing etc. are settled in the household of the killed. The boundary disputes in respect of paddy fields, *Noukashoumei*, adultery, *Meibairoimej*, murder, *Kaidoumei*, dismantle the house of another person etc. are termed as serious crime. It is also a crime to call somebody as *Chagamei*, vampire, *Napneimej*, beggar etc. in Zeliangrong society. *Luang Warak* (punitive fine), a pig of five cubic with a jar of wine is imposed on the guilty person; (*Luang* means village; *Warak*, punishment). All the disputes are settled and give justice to the aggrieved party by enforcing the customary law of the people. Among the Zeliangrong, capital punishment is unknown but severest is banishment and excommunication. However, all

the disputes and differences between the families are decided as far as possible by the clan elders. Junior members have respect and obey their clan elders because of their position in the society. The decision taken by the clan elders is equally honored as the decision of the *Pei*. If the clan elders can not settle a case satisfactorily, the case is referred to the *Pei*, village court. The decision of the *Pei* is final and there is no appeal against its decision. The *Pei* often settles the cases of all and sundry, giving no room of discrimination on the ground of rich or poor; this clan or that clan; this village or that village and this tribe or that tribe, but they look equal in the eye of customary laws. However, the decision of the village court must be acquiesced by both the aggrieved and accused party, and if any party tries to contempt the court decision, such party will be castigated under the provision of customary law within the jurisdiction of the village court. Traditional Naga village courts are known for their prompt delivery of cases without delay. The practice of prompt judgment indicates that in the past the Nagas had no jobbery, favoritism, red tapism and the use of suborn were non-existence. The judicial procedure is simple, as an aggrieved person or party can lodge a complaint orally to the *Pei* by giving a jar of wine. This is locally called *Peikai Joulai Ponloumei*.

Various remedies are available to the victim of a civil

wrong. The two most common are restitution and compensation. Both can be obtained either through agreement between the parties concerned or through the decisions of the village court. In restitution, the effect of the remedy is to cancel, so far as possible, the wrongful act. A trespasser will be removed; borrowed property will be restored; an unfulfilled contract will be carried out; a disputed right will be upheld. In compensation, the victim receives damages for a wrong which cannot be undone, such as seduction, damage to property, defamation etc. Generally speaking, however, the tendency has been for the tribal authority to eliminate retaliation as far as possible in favour of the acceptance of compensation. The most common punishments are the imposition of a fine. The fines, like most forms of compensation, usually consist in livestock. The amount varies from a single beast to the confiscation of the culprit's entire property, according to his position, the enormity of his offence, his previous record, and his ability to pay. Any offender may be punished regardless of sex or social position. Banishment or excommunication from the village is an alternative punishment. Another form of punishment sometimes administers in the olden days was bodily mutilation, such as depriving a man of his ear or hand if he is a habitual offender.

Imprisonment has not yet become part of the tribal system. The character of a wrongdoer also plays an important part in determining the attitude adopted towards him. If he readily admits his offence, he may be dealt with lightly, and sometimes even excused altogether. But if he is insolent or obstreperous, even in the overwhelming evince against him, he will be penalized more severely than usual. Similarly, a habitual offender is always more severely penalized than first offender.

In Zeliangrong society, the head of the family is responsible for all his dependents. He is responsible for the payment of their debts, as well as of any fines imposed upon them or damages awarded against them. But where they commit an offence meriting punishment by thrashing/ beating, it is the actual offender who is punished, and not his guardian. The owner of livestock is similarly liable for any damage they do, provided it can be shown that he has failed to look after them properly. There is a Zeliangrong saying *Si Bayita Sipou Phuye*, meaning: If Dog is mad it is traced dog's owner.

Zeliangrong customary justice is a product of natural justice. Though it is transmitted orally from the forefathers, it has become enriched with the experience thus gained during the process of practice through the generations. It is here discussed how they administer justice regarding the followings:

Theft (*Kaihou Laohutmei*):

The common practice among the Zeliangrong Nagas in case of theft is the culprit will offer a pig of five cubits (*Guaku Pungu*) with a jar of wine (*Joulai Akhat*) as punitive fine (*Luwang Guarak*) to the *Pei* whose duty is to trace and find out the culprit and force him to return or compensate not only for the stolen things, but also the fine for stealing. Thus, the pig with a jar of wine offered to the court is considered as *Luwang Guarak* and at the same time he will also pay an appropriate fine or compensation; either by returning the stolen articles or by giving the value of the goods that he has stolen. M McCulloch says that "if the thief should happen to be a married man is punished severely, but a young unmarried man might with impunity steal grain not yet housed, while theft from a granary would subject him to the severest punishment." In the opinion of T. C Hodson, the fine for theft from a granary is one pig. An act of thief committed by a married man is considered very shameful in the society. The simple fact is that he does dishonour and disgrace the whole clan as well as his own family. In any circumstances theft has been regarded as an act of laziness and those who committed theft always receives a curse from the society. In case of professional thief, the *Pei* pushes him out of the village for years or forever, because the further presence of such a person in the village is harmful to the community. Sometimes, such case of theft is also settled

without referring to the *Pei* by a joint sitting of two clans' heads. It is usually held in the house of the injured family; the offender will offer a pig as fine called *Goiton* in addition to either by returning the same thing or by compensating the same value of articles he has stolen. A feast called *Jeigan Tumei* is arranged in the same house where two clans' heads and *Pei* elders including the *Nampou* as arbiters will take part. The two individuals or parties involved in the case will exchange their food plates and eat, which signifies the closing of unfriendliness. This is locally called *Ginkha Ginlondatnuthé*. If thief happens within the same clan or lineage, the case is settled by the elders of the clan.

Rape (*Pumshumanmei*): A man is said to have committed if he has had sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent through the use of force, or by threatening her with death or other punishments. This is locally called *Pumshumanloumei*. It is a serious offence in the society. Since early days, it was believed that rape brought bad luck to the rapist, no wise man ever dared to rape. Thus, rape was and is very rare among the Zeliangrong though it is rare, if it is complained by the affected woman or girl to the village *Pei*, it is the responsibility of the *Pei* to trace the offender and the case is heard and punished him. The *Pei* will impose heavy fine upon the family of the rapist such as a pig of five cubits with jar of

wine as punitive fine (*Luwang Guarak*) and a buffalo/cow/bison (*Mashi/Jaoshi Goi*) to be given to the family of the girl for causing disgrace to the prestige and chastity of a woman or girl. It is also said that the cloth of the rapist will be removed by the villagers and will hang in a place where everyone can see and saying these: "It is the cloth for the man who can rape woman." Mere attempt of rape also, if proven, resulted in a punitive fine for the *Pei* and a four-legged animal (buffalo/cow/bison) to be paid by the culprit to the girl. Among the Maram Naga, in the rape case, the accused person has to pay a minimum fine of one cow and may even be beaten up by the villagers. In Poumai society, the man will be either bashed up or crippled by the woman's relatives or pay a heavy fine of cattle or paddy or both. As a general rule, the rapist can be beaten to death or cripple for his life so that he may not repeat the same, if the cry of the girl or woman attracts others to the scene of raping. The rapist would also be beaten even latter at the first chance if he had escaped earlier.

Marriage with another man's wife (*Langdai Noukasoumei*): If a man gets married with a woman whose husband is alive, such a marriage is called *Langdai Noukasoumei*. This kind of forced marriage does happen sometimes in the society. Such marriage is considered a serious crime in the society and a sin in religion as marriage is a

sacrament. The outcome of such marriage was usually killing or dismantling the house of the abductor by the disgraced husband and his relatives, unless the *Pei* is immediately informed by giving the punitive fine (a pig with jar of wine) to proclaim *Khamdanmei*. Violation of this customary sanction means imposition of a huge fine (a big pig of 5-10 cubits), but no one goes against the *Pei*. There is a custom to be followed by the avengers in demolishing the culprit's house. Usually, a Zeliangrong traditional house is divided into three rooms; the front room is called *Kaijao/Gaanmeikai* where men sleep. The avengers are permitted to destroy only the men's house (*Gaanmeikai*) because the next room is *Tumeikai*, women house where women sleep. If they break this rule they will be placed heavy fine and also be treated as offender. Such a serious case is settled by the *Pei*; the family of the abductor will have to pay a punitive fine (a pig with a jar of wine) to the *Pei*, a compensatory fine (*Chanao Mundom*) in the form of one buffalo/cow/bison and also a reconciliatory fine (*Nousou Goi*), one cow/buffalo/bison to the family of the injured husband. Moreover, the family of the culprit has to request to the injured husband for forgiveness the crime or of breaking their marriage. The *Pei* will also punish the agent (*Munthun*) who helps the abductor by putting a punitive fine. This is locally called *Munthun Rukhou Guak Phentumei*. It is a custom that the

main accused wife abductor has to repay the price of the pig and wine to his agent (*Munthun*) soon after. In addition, the abductor has to refund the bride price (*Nouman*) of the woman in double to the injured husband. Among the Todas, the village council was “chiefly occupied with the various complicated transactions which are always arising out of the custom of transferring wives from one man to another. This custom is the chief source of disputes and at times the council may sit for several days before one case is settled.”

Adultery (*Nou-Gan Kachumei*): Voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a partner other than his/her spouse is locally known as *Nou-Gan Kachumei*. Historically, adultery has been considered to be a serious offence by many cultures. In the same way, adultery is a great offence in Zeliangrong society. If the case of adultery is caught in the act, both the man and woman could be killed at the spot and the matter comes to an end. In such cases, the injured husband on receipt of secret report or on his suspicion naturally looks and waits for an opportunity to spear the seducer to death and even his own wife in moment of high temper. According to M McCulloch, “The adultery, if he did not fly the village, would be killed; aware of the penalty attached to his offence dare not stay, and leave his house and property to be destroyed by the injured husband. The family of

the adulteress is obliged to refund the price in the first instance paid to them by her husband, and also to pay her debts.” The act of adultery has brought sometimes disorder within the village. The village is regarded as ‘one place’ and its members share an important area of common life. Adultery within the clan is very rare, though, if it occurs, it strikes at the very foundations of clan unity. It is, in fact, a most serious offence which sets brother against brother. For this reason, the clan elders usually try to settle the matter within the clan as far as possible without referring to the *Pei*.

According to traditional Zeliangrong custom, if a person commits adultery, punishment is given to both of them. Physical torture (*Kng Chapmei*), shaving hair of the woman (*Kapi Gotkokmei*), confiscation of properties (*Kapot Kachei Lamei*) etc. are the kind of punishments. Shaving is commonly performed at the village jumping ground (*Daanshanpung*) or main road of the village (*Changdai*) so that the villagers can see the act easily. It is one of the severe and humiliated punishments awarded to them who committed serious crimes like adultery and immoral act in the society. The man is turned out of the village if he is a habitual offender. Sympathy is with the injured person. But, should the injured party remain obdurate, he is likely to forfeit the support of his fellows, his obstinacy being held responsible for prolonging the

dispute and jeopardizing village solidarity. If the matter is to be compromised, then the seducer will have to pay heavy fine inflicted by the *Pei*, usually, the penalty consists of: (1) a punitive fine (*Luwang Guarak*) to be paid to the *Pei*, (2) a buffalo, and (3) a cow to be offered to the family of the injured husband. Meijinlung Kamson writes, “An adulterer, if he wishes to take the woman, must refund the bride-price to the offended husband, and other fines to the council for the offence.” If the adulterer could not pay the fines in time he must be expelled out of the village. However, adultery is tainted, for a man to accept the fines will seem equivalent to selling of wife’s flesh and therefore, the fines in terms of animals are suggested to be given to the *Pei*. It is said that “in adultery cases the husband has suffered the insult, and likewise in abduction the husband...is the injured person.” On the other hand, the husband of the adulteress and his party have the right to demolish the seducer’s house. As a consequence, the seducer not only aware of the heavy penalty, but also the fear of that husband’s party usually vanishes from the village.

Divorce (*Noumumei*): In Zeliangrong society, divorce is permitted by custom, but it is very rare. Bareness, adultery on the part of the woman and maltreatment towards the woman, biological defects like impotency on the husband are assumed main causes which may lead to the division of the

mates. The procedure of divorce is that, the *Pei*, village council is convened and it is done on the initiation of the man or woman who wants to get divorce by giving a Jar of wine to the *Peikai*, house of *Pei*. The elders of *Pei* will try to reconcile them. If at all, there is no hope of reconciliation between the two; the initiator will get divorce from his or her partner. If the husband introduces a divorce, he has to pay a buffalo (*Mashi/Jaoshi Goi*), a big brass vessel (*Napkok*), and a hoe (*laogai*) to the wife as compensation and in turn wife, has to return the bride-price (*Nouman*) to the husband. The woman along with the buffalo, a *laogai* and a brass vessel will be sent to her parental house escorted by the *Changloi* of *Pei*. If the divorce comes as a result of adultery committed by the wife, she has to give one mithun (*Goichng*) or at least a pig (*Guak Akhat*) to the husband's relative apart from the bride price and either belongings of the husband. After divorce, children are supposed to remain with the father. The young and nursing one can stay with the mother until the child can eat and drink solid food. After three years, when the father retakes the child, he is required to pay a buffalo to the former wife, which is supposed to compensate for the cost of bringing up the child locally called *Nagongjang*. The village council plays very important role in bringing two people together for life and it also has the role in giving to their separation. In Kabui society, a

divorced wife and husband are permitted to remarry only after a purification ritual called *Charungchuk*. This ritual is performed at the residence of the husband in which an elder or priest purifies the couple offering a black colour fowl or dog to God with relevant hymn. The omen is read by observing the legs (fowl) or spleen (dog) of the victim. They are further consecrated by contacting a slice of the mixture of *Chukgah*, a kind of turmeric, leaves of *Kah* plant, *Ngeinem*, a kind of thatch grass, *Sampripra*, a kind of grass and blood of the victim.

Law of inheritance: Being a patrilineal society, only sons inherit the family property. All the sons get their shares, but the youngest gets lion share including the ancestral house because he has to look after his parents. Other elder sons move out of the house after their marriage and establish their own separate houses. Unlike the other Naga tribes, it is customary among the Zeliangrong that the youngest son should stay with his parents. If the parents are poor, the other sons are not given property. Unlike the Garos, no daughters can inherit property of the parents. In some cases, daughters are also given movable properties such as cows, buffaloes, pig, dress, ornaments, utensils and many other domestic materials on their marriage. The inheritance is responsible for repayment of the debt of the father if any. If a man dies leaving no male child, his nearest kinsman will inherit the

father's property. The adopted son has his due right to inherit and succeed the family. A widow has the right to her deceased husband's property as long as she lives in her husband's house looking after her children. But, if she marries to another man all the properties go to her male children. According to the Zeliangrong custom, it is the bounden duty of the brother or uncle or any other surviving male member of the family to give shelter to, as well as to look after the welfare of the daughter or sister or aunt as and when she comes back to her parental home or her being divorced by her husband. In other words, divorced or unmarried daughters are entitled to live in the house of their deceased father's house or in the house of their surviving brother, and they also have the right to claim for maintenance of their life. According to the customary laws, the illegitimate son is not entitled to claim for inheritance and succession.

Adoption: In Zeliangrong society, adoption is in practice and the common motive for adoption is lack of child. A couple who does not have offspring can adopt a child. Generally, they use to adopt the son of a brother of the husband or of a close relative and the boy then becomes the principal heir. The sentimental relationship comes to approach very closely that based on natural tie. There is no ceremony for adoption, however they can take the approval of the village court for practical purpose. It is done in presence of both the

natural parent and adoptive parent.

Disputed paternity: There is no question of having an illegitimate child in Zeliangrong Naga society as the girl usually points out the father. If a man denies paternity, people wait until the child is a few months old, and then look to see if they can find any resemblance between the two. Such tests are sometimes applied in cases of adultery based on disputed paternity. If the case is to be settled, the father's family will take over the responsibility of the child. If the mother refuses to marry, the father of the child has to pay or give a paddy field (*Lao Akhat*) for the sustenance of both the mother and child. In some cases, where the father of the disputed child is already a family man, the disputed child normally does refuse to separate with the mother. This is called *Kapui Ngamkhang Timei*. Thus, according to the Zeliangrong custom, the paddy field allotted to them will remain forever with them. But, the child will remain to his/her father's clan, not to his/her mother's clan. The girl will be treated as a married woman and also enrolls as member of *Laakpui Kai*, house of married women. On the other hand, if the man refuses to marry the girl; the man will be imposed a punitive fine (a pig of five cubits with jar of wine) and a cow/buffalo/bison (*Mashi/Jaoshi Go*) for the girl as compensation and the child will be given to the father. The girl has been spoiled and her prospects of marriage

greatly decreased. It is said that "A cow does not change its mode of lowing;" and the people fear that the boy who has impregnated the girl will continue to be her lover even if she marries someone else, or that she herself will continue to lead a dissolute life.

Murder (*Meibairoime*): In olden days, head hunting was a widespread practice among the Naga tribes. Head hunting is quite different from put to death. Head hunting has its own laws and therefore breach of other customary laws becomes a crime as murder and is not covered by the law of the head hunting. Murder within the clan is very rare, but murder in the village occurs in the past. Murder is a serious crime in Zeliangrong society and the punishment of a murderer is banishment from the village. Moreover, a heavy fine is inflicted on the criminal. Such serious cases are decided and settled in the house of the murdered. Once the case is referred to the *Pei* the afflicted family will not be allowed to take revenge on the family of the killer as the *Pei* announces *Khamdanmei*, a customary ban against the use of force. The logic of the *Khamdanmei* is to avoid bloodshed in the village. All the clan elders of both parties are summoned immediately through the *Changlois*, messengers of *Pei* to present in the house of the killed. The elders of *Pei* negotiate to settle the case as quickly as possible. The kind of fine imposed varies according to the types of the cases occurred.

However the family of the murderer has to pay compensation to the family of the killed in the form of kinds as per customs of the Zeliangrong and the said compensation is required to be paid within the period fixed by the *Pei*. If the stipulated period expires one can take revenge. The customary compensation of a human loss consists of ten items such as pot (*Takhian Lai*) for head (*Pijang*), hoe (*Laogai*) for teeth (*Hujang*), goats' hair (*Juhu*) for hair (*Meisamjang*), necklace (*Tariutu*) for intestine (*Meireijang*), shawl/cloth (*Phei*) for skin (*Meigijang*), cattle (*Goi*) for body (*Pumjang*), bronze plate (*Jeisenkuak*) for bottom (*Lingkokjang*), Neckband (*Beih*) for shoulder bone (*Guangkamjang*), armband (*Nathang*) for intestine (*Meileijang*) and beads (*Tuthuliang*) for eyes (*Meimikjang*). This is locally called *Charum Khapmei*. A plot of land is to be given to the family as part of compensation for murder of treachery. As punishment, the murderer (*Meibairoimeipu*) is excluded from the village. Sometimes, the family of the murderer also vanishes from the village because of harshness of the crime. This is locally known as *Kaipui Phukmei* (to uproot the crump). Among the Mao and Tangkhul Nagas, the period of punishment for a murder by accident extends up to seven years, and in some other tribes; it goes beyond this period depending on the circumstances

leading to the murder. The main objective of expulsion is to mollify and defuse the tension of the injured family.

Inter-village dispute (Namnei Agaimi): There are two mechanisms for attempting to mediate between two villages to avoid fighting; first mechanism is the oath and second is mediation through an old man. Oaths are also performed within the village. In 1936, a dispute did arise between *Totok* and *Wangching* villages relating to an alleged trespass which signified hostile intentions. The two parties agreed to take oath. From each side a man went to a tree trunk which had been struck by lightning, spoke the oath while his hand touched the tree, and then bit into the tree. The oath of the *Wangching* man said approximately, 'We went to *Chi* to see the dead man. *Totok* fired shots. *Gha-wang* you can see it all. May you strike me down if I tell a lie.' After this oath both parties were satisfied. In fact, oath is a part of the feud process; it may delay aggression/violence but cannot be in all probability replace it. According to second mechanism, an old man from a village may act as an intermediary or a go-between in a dispute between two villages. During the colonial rule, *Lambu* (often translated as herald) also acted the role of a messenger as he is held to be sacrosanct and shall not be attacked. He takes no independent initiative of his own towards negotiating a settlement. But in times of

serious violence, the sanctity of the *Lambu* is not respected. In other words, his role is not structural, in the sense of automatically being a part of the dispute, but it is an option that may prevent fighting. As a matter of practical politics, it is usual when reconciling two villages to insist on the return of the heads (*Rihpi*), for by this means a recrudescence of the feud is effectively prevented.

In general, a *Pei* has authority over its own village. Inter-village disputes are therefore, usually settled by the joint sitting of the council of elders of those villages affected by them, and to prevent any future hostilities between villages, the elders of those villages have to arrange for truces and alliances known as *Guot* promising herewith that members of the villages entering into the truce shall maintain a peaceful co-existence and anyone who violates the terms of the agreement is liable to be punished. *Guot* is usually arranged and conducted somewhere at the border of two hostile villages. In the truce and alliance, a purification ritual known as *Rihchuk Shumei* is observed by sacrificing a big fully black colour dog (*Shimu*) to God; it is carried out by a priest. The blood of the dog is removed and mixed with *Kathainong* (a kind of leave), *Chukgae* (a kind of turmeric), *Shampripra* (a kind of grass), and *Ngeinem*, (thatching grass); the mixture of it is known as *Gaa*. It will be put in a big cup made of banana leaf known as *Chukkong*. All the members

present there will contact a slice/ piece of *Gaa* at their temple (*Gaaroumei*) by saying my body is not the abode of sin, go away. The priest after the ritual recitation purifies the present members with *TenMhaimit*, a kind of thatching grass and then throws away the *Chukkong* in direction of sun set (*Neikeiroubektho*). This is called *Shiangkok Ganmei*. The victim is consumed by the present elders after offering holy wine to *TingkaoRagwang*. The interpretation of the ritual: Sacrifice is a worship of God. By sacrificing they invoke to God to witness the truce and alliance made between the two villages. Contact with *Gaa* means they are free from sin of killing/murder. Eating together or communal meal is a vow not to commit bloodshed in future. It is also said that a feast may be the means of setting the seal on an important event such as of cementing an alliance between groups. It is a rite of incorporation. The priest acts as a medium and he throws away the *Chukkong* in the western direction as east stands for life and west, dead. Another means to avoid inter-village hostilities, the *Zeliangrong* encouraged to get marry girls from outside the village because marriage gives a "man friends among his enemies." But in case, the inter-village dispute is unable to settle amicably, the only option to settle the dispute is resort to fighting, where rattling of daos and spears will be the final arbiter of

(Contd. to Page 102)

Zeme Nagas' Traditional Administrative system

- Irang H. Johny

Irang H. Johny Every Zeme Naga villages are independent Republics in respect of their social administrative system which varies from village to village. We have inherited this system from our forefather or ancestors. But some of these systems may not suit the mindset of the present generation as the educated youths like to find reasoning behind them. I think, there may be some reasoning behind their introduction in the past but they are least known to our people now.

1. Family administration

In a family, father is the head of the family. He supervises all the family activities. He plans and decides the programmes and executes accordingly and the mother is the in-charge to look after the household works like cooking and looking after their children's well being.

2. Zeme Clans : Origin, Diversification and its administration

The Zemes after migration from Makuilongdi were influenced by two circumstances. Those who migrated to north and came into conflict with the Angami Naga had been influenced by the Angamis in their kinship system

whereas the western Zemes, based on the original clan from Makuilongdi developed diverse clans. A study made by E.H Pakynthien and Dr, B.R Roy Burman (Zeme Naga of Assam, 1961) revealed the existence of seven clans. They are :- 1. *Newmei*, 2. *Pamei*, 3. *Nkaume*, 4. *Nriame*, 5. *Ndaime*, 6. *Sogame*, 7. *Hezame*, 8. *Mpame*, 9. *Bouriame*

Among the upper Zeme specially in Ze-Mnui (Yanfgkhulen) the oldest Zeme village, Hoi and Hau exist but only as lineage at the village and family level. The totem of Hoi is hornbill and Hau is huluk/black monkey. There are so many sub-clans or lineage in other villages like – Lungalang of Benreu, Haralu of Poilwa & N dang of Peren etc. Such lineage are found also adopted in Tamenglong villages like – Taothing Panmei, Amang Puina Panmei. These are only family's name but the clan structure remains intact.

Lineage of Newme clan: 1. Guang kaching cha 2. Namgang cha 3. Lung kancghui 4. Lung keherut 5. Lungkanchagn 6. Disong puiname 7. Laing

Nriame/Bouriamei : They belong to Newme clan and Hezame whose totem is frog is

also to Newme and Nriame/Bouriame clan.

Mpame and Nkaume clans: Both these clans belong to Pamei clan with green pigeon as its totem.

Among the Zeme, Nkaume lineage are :-

1. Njing Nkaume 2. Rangkat Nkaume 3. Mphai Nkaume 4. TYeriaja Nkaume 5. Bumlo Nkaume

Ndaime Clan : The historians say that Ndaimei clan migrated from Makuilongdi.

The Zeme clan follows clan exogamy for inter-clan social relationship, specially marriage, and permitted relations. A clan is a group of people organised 8 families who are descended from one ancestor. Each clan will follow exogamous system, where marriage within the clan or sub-clan or lineage is not permitted. The clan exogamy of the Zeme society is the universal rule but there are instances of deviation when clan endogamy is found to be practised mostly for marriage purpose. Endogamous marriage has been widely practised among the Christians. So deviation from exogamy has been gradually converted into clan endogamy, which has been checked by the Christian Church leaders

themselves. Unless check in time, clan endogamy perversely practised by the Christians will have a disastrous social effect.

The clan is considered as a large family. They help one another in times of need. Gifts (moveable or immoveable) are exchanged among them. In Zeme society, women are not a custom to inherit their parents' properties like house, field, farm land etc except households properties. In case of his/her death, the properties (immoveable) belonging to the deceased will be inherited by its own clan if he/she has no heir to succeed him/her. In this case, first preference will be given to the deceased family member/ clan and secondly to the villagers and thirdly to the general public for auction. The clan means - not an organisation/community like other NGOs, but it is blood relationship by birth. Each clan has its own totem like – Pame/Hoi (Green Pigeon/hornbil) Newme/Hau (Loingao bird/black monkey) etc and use as second name or title while writing their names.

3. Youth Dormitory

The dormitory is an important institution which sustains the Zeme society, religion and culture. We do not know the origin of the institution. Functional analysis shows that the dormitories make the educational needs of the young men and young women. It is also meant the defence requirement of the village and the manpower requirement to organise public

works, religious ceremonies and cultural festival including dance and music. The dormitory was perhaps evolved to meet these needs of the people. It exists among the people/village who follow the traditional indigenous religion. Membership of the dormitory in a village was compulsory for the boys and girls at the time of reaching their puberty. The boys when they reached pre-puberty stage started sleeping in the boys dormitory. Even married men slept in the dormitory but not it is compulsory. For the female, the membership in the girl's dormitory ceased with her marriage.

Functions of the Dormitory : a) to serve as a common sleeping hall for the boys and other members of the dormitory. b) to impart traditional education, warfare and arts of fighting by using weapons, dance, music and crafts, customs and traditions and folklore etc. c) to act as a guard house for the defence of the village. (d) To act as a centre of cultural activities, the festival and ceremonies for the village or individual are organised by the dormitory. The dormitory renders service for the individual households or village council during the time of marriage and other social occasions. The members of the girls dormitory also render service in cooperation with the male dormitory. The girls get education in folklores, arts of spinning, dance and music in the dormitory.

The dormitory inculcates in the young men and young women a strong sense of fraternity and corporative life in the village, which is essential for sustaining the tribal community life. In modern time, it has declined but it still serves to perform its social, religious and cultural function of the village. The Zeme people still mainly live in the village. Where there is no dormitory, its functions has been taken by the youth club. Thus, we find that Zeme society at the village level is well organised through sex and age grades. The social hierarchy is not based on economic classes but on what has just been described.

4. Village administration

The villages are governed by Gaon Burha along with the village elders. Among them, there will be Chief Priest (Speaker) who used to announce the day today's affairs like – festival or gennas and some of the restricted holidays. The Gaon Burha is chosen but not selected nor appointed through electoral process. For the Zeme, Gaon Burha is not hierarchy unlike other Nagas. The tenure of the Gaon Burha is not fixed. He will remain as Gaon Burha as long as villagers requires his service until, he himself resigns for health ground or any other reasons. In a village, there will be one Head Gaon Burha. He is the chief executive. They will look after the law and order of the village and decide the fate of defaulters (theft, immoral activities and others etc) in the village. The Gaon Burha and the

village elders once decide for the village welfare and made any resolution is final and binding. They also formulate laws for the village and to obey such laws (rules and regulations) is mandatory since, there is not Kingship system in the Zeme community but only conventional. They will act as bridge between government and the villagers.

5. Area administration

A specific area Gaon Burha Association/Union uses to exist. They will have their own office bearers and from time to time, they will discuss for the

area development. They will chart-out their demands points and will submit to the government for implementation. They will also formulate their rules and regulations sand imposed thereof to the area villagers to strictly adhere for security and developmental reasons.

The other responsibilities of the area Gaon Burha is – if any land dispute arises among the area villages or any animal trespasses to the other's land boundary, they will settle the case in the spirit of good neighbourhood/area. And, any

misadventure or unintentional behaviours meted-out to its neighbourhood which hurt him/her physically/mentally will also settled by them. In return of their good rendering services as a village guardian, government use to issue red blanket to them every year during Independence day or any other national remarkable day to honour them. This is a tradition initiated by the British rulers. ■

(Irang H. Johny)

Convenor

Zeme Literature Committee

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Traditional Village Administrative System of Zeliangrong

the dispute. The village who won the pitched battle is the winner of the dispute, and the case is invariably dismissed.

Oath and ordeal: When human discernment proves inadequate for deciding a dispute, divine guidance is usually sought through oaths and ordeal. In other word sometimes the cases are vague and can not be settled peacefully then the *Pei* resorts to taking of oath and ordeal. This is called *Sengding Dingmei*. The important oaths and ordeals are *Ganrih Tao Sinmei*(oath on a meteoric stone), *Kamang Neih Kaime* (biting the tiger teeth), *Bambukhou Sengding Dingloumei* (oath in the name of village presiding deity), and

Duilupmei (diving). Usually, oath and ordeal are directed by and under the direct supervision of the elders of *Pei*. With the introduction of modern judicial system in the country, traditional oath and ordeal systems are no longer in use. In traditional society, politics, judiciary and religion are interdependent.

To conclude, it can be stated that each Zeliangrong village is a distinct social, economic, cultural and political unit. The *Pei* or Council of elders headed by *Nampou* does act as the village government, a court of justice, an authority on religious affairs and the Supreme Command on defence and security of the village. It is true that the

Zeliangrong village government is one fine form of government of the people, by the people and for the common interest of the people. The village council or the *Pei* does continue to function as usual in Zeliangrong inhabited areas, either in the original villages (hills of Manipur) or in the plain and Cachar, Assam. The village council deals with the religious, social and customary laws in the Zeliangrong villages. The continuation of this institution will mean the preservation of a vital component of the ethnic identity. It has now become a social institution as it no longer controls over the land, but the village council (*Pei*) acted as a law enforcement body during the British rule. ■

A Neat View on the Administration in The Maring Tribe



Ks. Angdun Maring

The Maring Tribe is one of the oldest tribes in Manipur. Marings are mostly inhabiting in Chandel District and some are inhabiting in Senapati District. They have their own administration i.e. they are autonomous. They have different types of cultures which are very different from others. According to the Maring traditional law, father is the head of the family. If the father is weak and absent, he will be replaced by his first son. Naming culture is interesting in Maring culture. The first son is started with the prefix Mo which is applicable for all clans. The second son cannot be named as Mo if the first son is dead. If the father is dead, sometimes the mother may be got married to another person who is a bachelor. In that case if they bear a son, he should not be named as Mo, because Mo was born at the first husband. The same case is applied to which they bear a daughter. The second son's name is started with the prefix Ko. The third son's name is different according to the clans. According to Maring profile, Maring clans have four major clans. They are Charang, Dangsha, Tantang and Makung. The third son's name is started with the prefix Me for the clans, Charang, Dangsha and Makung.

And Ang prefix is the third son of the clan, Tantang. The fourth son of the clans Charang, Dangsha and Makung is started with the prefix Ang and fourth son of the Tantang is started with Me. The last son is started with Lei or Khamba. This is applicable for all clans. Regarding daughters, the first daughter's name is started with the prefix Te and the second, third, fourth and last are named as To, Tung, Shangku and Lei/Khambi. Suffixes are put according to the opinion of the family and the relatives. These are the naming cultures of Maring.

As for inheritance if the father is dead, the first son will replace him i.e. then he is the head of the family. But if the first son does not bear a son, i.e. though he bears 3 or 4 daughters, his properties must be got by the second son. i.e. his younger brother (successive).

Every Maring village is governed by its own rule. Before the arrival of Christianity, it was ruled by Khulpu and Khullak. Khulpu belongs to the clan Charang and Khullak belongs to the clan Dangsha. If these two clans are absent in a village, only Tantang clan may replace them. Dangsha cannot be Khulpu and

Charang cannot be Khullak. They are the priestly heads of the village. The successive leaders of the Kho-lamal are Khulpu, Khullak, Keishang and Salung respectively.

One leader is elected between three or four villages or more than four villages. The name of the leader is called Chingshanglaak. It is not based on the clans. He is elected according to his ability, power. He will solve the problem which can not be solved by the villagers itself.

Youth Dormitories: Maring Naga has two types of Youth Dormitories. One is named as Karlang Rakhangcheem (Boys) and the other is named as Nangaka Rakhangcheem (Girls). These two houses were built by the villagers. Karlang Rakhangcheem was built by the clan, Dangsha which is the youngest generation of the clan. And the Nangaka Rakhangcheem was built by the clan, Tantang which is the youngest generation of the clan.

Karlang Rakhangcheem was practised till 1983 in our village, Sandang Shenba. The marriageable age of the boys and girls were determined by being

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The Thadou-Kukis

- S. L. Engels

The origin of the Thadou-Kuki is shrouded with myths and mythologies. One such myth includes the traditional account handed down from centuries. According to tradition, the Thadou-Kukis came out of the bowels of the earth or a cave called Khul, or Chiniung, the location of which was believed to be somewhere in Tibet. Presently the Thadou-Kukis are widely scattered all over the Northeastern states (Manipur, Nagaland, Assam, Mizoram and Tripura etc) and in some parts of Myanmar, with its highest concentration in the state of Manipur. There is no historical record of the Thadou-Kukis migrating from Burma or elsewhere to Manipur but early reference to the Thadou-Kukis has been made in the traditional literature of the Meitei people of Manipur, "The pooyas" two Kuki Chiefs named Kuki Ahongba and Kuki Achouba were allies to Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, the first historically recorded king of the Meithis (Meiteis), in the latter's mobilisation for the throne in 33 AD'. The Royal Chronicles of the Meitei Kings (Cheitharol Kumbaba) records that in the year 186 Sakabda (264 AD) Meidungu Taothingmang, a Kuki, became king.

Family and Clan

The Thadou-Kukis follows a system of primogeniture where the eldest male member/offspring of the family inherits the family property but in most cases today the family land and property are being shared amongst the male members. It is a patrilineal patriarchal society where the father is the head of the family and lineage, family name and clan is handed down through generations through the head of the family. However, the beauty of this Patrilineal-Patriarchal primogenitive Thadou-Kuki society is that the women members of the family including the mother, and female off loved and respected well although they don't have much say in the socio-political and family matters.

The clannish system is deeply entrenched into the sinews of the Thadou-Kuki society. Through lineage-ancestry the Thadou-Kukis are divided into several different clans viz. 1. Guite , 2. Doungel, 3. Sitalhou, 4. Singsit, 5. Kipqen, 6. Haokip, 7. Chongloi, 8. Hangshing, 9. Touthang, 10. Lotjeni, 11. Haolai, 12. Tuboile. Sa'um, 14. Khuolhou, 15. Lupho, 16. Lumpheng , 17. Misao , 18. Mate, 19. Baite, 20. Lhungdim, 21. Ngailut , 22. Kiloung, 23. Insun, 24. Jongbe, 25. Lunkim,

26. Lienthang, 27. Thangngew, 28. Changsan, 29. Lhang'um , 30. Khuongthang, etc. The Thadou-Kukis took pride in their clannish lineage and the family genealogy has been handed down through oral tradition from generation to generation. One factor which plays vital role and helps in recalling the roots of the family tree is the unique naming system of the Thadou Kukis. The Thadou-kukis always name their first born, son after their grandfather and the daughter their grandmother. Therefore a Thadou-Kuki man is not randomly named but inherits his name after his grandfather's name ie. the last syllable of his grandfather's name becomes the first syllable of his name. This unique naming system helps in recalling the genealogy. The Thadou-Kukis have owed too much allegiance to their clan so much so that the present day political as well as social life and even their insurgent movement is deeply influenced by their respective clan.

Youth Institutions

There was an age-old traditional institution among the youths of the Thadou-Kukis called "LOM" a kind of community work and the institution of "SOM INN" a kind of village youth dormitory. The young villagers among the

Thadou-Kukis in the early days have this practice of sleeping over in this “Som Inn and performing “Lom” in the jhoom cultivation. Lam and Sam Inn contribute a great deal in the social life of the youths. Talents and skills are displayed, performed as well as learned in this Som Inn and Lom. It also served as a selection ground for the eligible bachelors and damsels of the village. However these two traditional institutions have become redundant and almost extinct in the modern era.

Administration:

The village is an independent political unit among the Thadou-Kukis and the Chief called HAOSA of the village and his Council of Ministers are the political leaders. The political life

of the Thadou-Kukis centered around the institution of Chieftainship. Chieftainship is a very powerful institution based on kinship structure for the purpose of village administration which is the highest and independent political unit. According to Customary Law, the office of Chieftainship is hereditary passing from father to eldest son among the Thadous. It is associated with the concept of ‘UPA’ or the eldest male descent who becomes the Chief (Haosa). The Chief (Haosa) is assisted by Council of ‘Ministers’, and ‘Elders’ of the village, which is known as ‘Semang-Pachong’. The village chief is the administrative head with full power of executive, legislature and judiciary. However the chief and his council of ministers does

not administer as per their whims and fancies but as per the terms dictated by the customary laws and tradition handed down from generation to generation which are meticulous in nature. The Thadou-Kuki communities whose social institutions are influenced overwhelmingly by tradition and customary laws have a strong faith in ‘Chieftainship’ has effectively managed their administrative affairs as well as in the dispensation of justice.

The family, custom and culture and other traditional institutions of the Thadou-Kukis is unique amongst the various tribes of the North-East region. Their meticulous customs and culture and administrative system is indeed laudable. ■

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A Neat View on the Administration in The Maring Tribe

member of the houses. If he or she is the member of the houses, he or she must use head gears. Boys’ head gears are called Murshum and girls head gears are known as Lukhum. One is elected as the leader of the house. The name of the leader is called Khangshillaak which is meant for both houses.

These two houses may be mentioned as the institutions of the village. Because in these houses, good morality, singing, dancing, playing musical instruments, playing of games etc

were being taught. Lesson on leadership was also taught. Every bachelor and maiden must go and sleep there during winter after harvesting. But before going there, one old man or the honour of the house must set fire nearby the house with rituals in the early morning of the month, then in the evening of the day, every bachelor and maiden must go to the house. In every morning, one of boy/girl may set fire near by the house. So they need fire wood for that. So the leader kept routine for bringing fire wood. If one failed to bring it, he/she would get punishment or fine.

At the end of this practice, one old man who knew rituals might extinguish the fire with rituals in the early morning where there is a ritualistic work known as Phoongtung which is the first ritualistic work of the year. In this process, Khulpu, Khullak and Keishang will go to each house of the village after every villager has slept. Phoong Upa (a small drum which is supposed to be the master of drums) is hanged by Khulpu and he will strike it three times after reaching each house. ■

The Dorbar System in the Jaintia Tribal Community



Dr. Rikil Chyrmang

This paper attempts to expound the Dorbar system in Meghalaya with a focus on the Jaintia tribal community. The Dorbar system is a form of traditional self-governing institution functioning like the democratic political institutions based on the age-old traditions of the people. The study is based on focus group discussion conducted in Jalaphet village in the East Jaintia Hills District and on participant's observation. Jalaphet village falls under Saipung Block situated about 114 kms from the State capital Shillong, and 20 kms from Khliehriat, the district headquarters. Around 12 people were participated in the discussion. Some of the participants are teachers and some are members of the village council. Jalaphet has two parts that falls under the jurisdiction of two Dollois namely; Jalaphet Bri-Sutnga is under the controlled of the Dolloi (chief) of Elaka (province) Sutnga, and Jalaphet Bri-Sumer by the Dolloi of Elaka Raliang. The village consists of seven clans and spreading in 10 localities; five localities belong to the Bri-Sutnga and five to the Bri-Sumer. The majority of people living in the village belong to the Scheduled Tribes (99.56%)

which are called *pnar* (tribal) community. The number of permanent residents was 2945 in Jalaphet Bri-Sutnga in 492 households, and about 2292 in Jalaphet Bri-Sumer in 371 households. Thus the total population of the whole of Jalaphet village is about 5239 with 863 households and the literacy rate is just about 30 % according to the Indian Census 2011.

The Genesis of the Dorbar System

Meghalaya has had deep-rooted traditional institutions of local governance since time immemorial and they still function today. They include: i) the *Nokmanship* system is the traditional institution of the Garos and the leader of the Garo clan used to be designated as the *Nokma* (leader), ii) *Syiemship* is the distinctive traditional institution of the Khasi tribes. *Syiemship* is rule of a Khasi state by a leader called the *Syiem* (King). Finally, among the Jaintias, is found the system of *Dolloiship*. It is a system of judicial administration based on the principle of social disapproval of wrongful activities and actions, with a *Dolloi* (chief) acting as the administrative head of each territory. All these three

popular traditional institutions of local self-government continue to work under the over-all control of their respective District Councils. During the British period the village people of the Jaintia community began to use the word *durbar* or '*dorbar*' (committee) in *pnar* language to what had previously been referred to as the village tie (the informal meeting of the villagers). Firstly, the British adopted the Mughal term '*darbar*', which referred to any sort of meeting, and used it to refer to the meetings in which the people settled such dispute of wrong doing person within their village administration. All rules and regulations are oversee and incorporated within the dorbar system.

There are Dorbars at different levels like the village dorbar, the elaka dorbar, and the Syiem dorbar. The power of the Syiem and the Dolloi were checked by the Dorbars of their respective areas. The Dorbars provide opportunities to people to take part in and charge of in their own affairs. Therefore, consent is the basis of political authority. Historically the Jaintias have had a fairly organised three-tier system of governance under a Syiem which was the highest

level in the hierarchy. The Jaintia system was divided into 12 elakas (consisting of groups of villages) under a Dolloi, the second level. The next and lowest level of territorial/geographic entity was a village represented by a Waheh Chnong constituting the third level, who was selected from amongst the male adults. Each of these three levels had councils or dorbars. Each village was usually organised along clan lines with a Village Headman (Waheh Chnong) concerned with basic administration and justice (Meghalaya Vision Document, 2011).

This old political system of government continues to exist except for the Syiem. When the British took over the Jaintia administration in 1835, they abolished the office of the Syiem. However, they retained the other two traditional institutions, the Dolloi and Waheh Chnong. The three-tiered system of administration which was in existence during the pre-British era was reduced to a two-tier system. After Independence, the formal institutions at work in the first level called Autonomous District Council (ADCs) were established under the Sixth

Schedule along with the existing two-tier system (See Table 1).

The other structure of organisation of the traditional institutions from district to the village level are – i) Ka Dorbar ki 12 Dolloi (Full District Committee of 12 Dolloi), ii) *Ka Dorbar Elaka* (Committee of the head and the village members who coordinate the affairs of a group of villages, i.e. larger area in an elaka comprising of several villages), iii) *Ka Dorbar Chnong* (a village committee, which is the smallest council of people at the village level). They each meet frequently, and has administrative, financial and judicial functions to discuss a variety of subjects related to their respective jurisdiction or province.

A Case Study on the Traditional Functions of the Dorbar System

In the olden days people have some title in their village to perform ritual (puja) that would be given to some clan, the people of the village used to decide which clan would performs which type of puja and etc. so, after times pass by people migrate to other village after having some village they

called it a Raid. That Raid falls under one roof, one social organisation, and they used to elect the head, called as a Dolloi. Only man has a right to elect that head, in Jaintia hills they called that head a Dolloi and in Khasi Hills they called that head as Syiem (King). The Syiem is used to appoint U Langdoh (religious priest). U Langdoh is used to look after the administration of the village also. At that time they don't have the headman service; they use to have a Langdoh. From Dolloi to Langdoh and the Langdoh to perform that service he uses to have a team, with him there is a Langdoh Kynthai (Female), Chutia, Kitkhoh, Syngot, Maji. The team has their own specific thing to help the Langdohs in performing the puja and the main head of any functions, Dolloi used to be the head, give order, fixed the date etc. and those team used to help him. This system was practiced for a long time, when there was only one type of belief, one type of cultural practice and when the time passes by then people start adopting other type of belief, so they don't go to the Langdoh for their daily needs of supervision, so people started thinking that why not elect one old man of the village who is a good man to look after the village administration because some are believing in some types of religious performance some are followed other types of belief, so to make a neutral man they used to choose a very old and honest man to be the Headman. So now the duty of the Langdoh is to look after the indigenous religious

Table 1: Three Tier System of Traditional Institutions and Local Self-Government

Levels	Before Independence	After Independence
1 st Level	Syiem	ADC
2 nd Level	Dolloi	Dolloi
3 rd Level	Waheh Chnong	Waheh Chnong

Source: Meghalaya Vision Document 2011

faith only not to interfere another new belief of the people, so the village Headman now he is a neutral man. He don't have any right to do that religious, but he used to look after the administration of the village only not quarrel so on and so forth, so that to maintain peace and harmony in the village. There is no election process to elect the village members; they are unanimously named with consensus of the community. However, today, election to the post of village headman is conducted by the district council if the community or people object to the proposed Headman.

The Dolloi was elected for life from the senior clans through an election process, in which only men are allowed to vote. The services of the Dolloi and Waheh Chnong are unpaid. The Dolloi is the chief in hierarchy form to look after the Elaka and below the Dolloi it is called a Pator as the Elaka is bigger and pator will look a smaller area under the Dolloi of the same Elaka. Below pator comes Waheh Chnong. Waheh Chnong duty and responsibility is to look after the work/help of the pator and Dolloi. This is the earlier situation. But now the situation of the Waheh Chnong is to look after the poor people and to look after various development schemes available with the government office for the village welfare and development. Earlier village headman was elected from a particular locality by only male members as per the custom and tradition and female have the right to

participate in the dorbar but have no power to choose headman.

In the earlier situation only men have the right to sit in the dorbar to elect the village headman but after introducing the district council, it has becomes an election issue and the situation has entirely changed. If two person stands for that post the district council have to conduct the election both men and women were allow to vote.

Role and Functions of the Dolloi

Dolloi is the head of an Elaka function like a King. There may be some Elaka who is having 50 villages, some have 40 villages and can be an Elaka of only one village. So the Dolloi during the olden days used to be the Rajah (King) of that area and whatever his decision was final, he was the Magistrate and everything and below him in each village they have the village headman and the Langdoh. The Langdoh is covering all those villages under that Elaka where there are people who are still in indigenus. But the role of the Headman is limited to only one particular village. In the present-days the position of the Dolloi is entrusted by the District council just to verify the land property of the people give recommendation. And in case if there are any conflicts or land dispute the Dolloi has to report in the dorbar. There are some cases of dispute in the olden days where customarily the victim have to pure full of the pot like a cucumber with what they have

called rice bear (local wine) then handed over to the Dolloi. The village will report to the Dolloi by saying that this man created some problem (e.g. petty conflicts or claiming land etc.). As soon as the Dolloi got the rice bear after two to three days the Dolloi summon the second party to report to him then the Dolloi will call a Dorbar that consisted groups of people's gathering to hear the judgment of the case. The one who lost the case he has to pay some fine. Those time people who don't have money they have to pay a fine by giving one bottle of rice bear, or one Cock or a Pig.

The Dolloi was elected by the people in the Dorbar by raising hand (voice vote) or by making a queue. If there were more than two candidates then the people will stand in the queue of that particular candidate whom they want to elect. Like this then they will count the number of people standing in the queue for the respective candidates. The candidate who got the highest number declare elected. The participant said that there was some setting among people to elect a Dolloi by standing in a queue system. This system changed much later by secret ballot only after the setting up of the District Council and only male were allow to cast vote as followed since time immemorial and even now female were not allow and not possible. Money power also played a big role in the Dolloi election.

Role of the Dolloi on land allotment after land became

register private property. He had limited role, only to give recommendation to the District council that this land belongs to that person. Now a day Dolloi doesn't have land. All the land now private property, his recommendation required that this land is belong to a person and selling it to another person.

The Dolloi dorbar is called the Elaka dorbar. From some villages they elect or nominate the headman to be the Elaka member and they used to attend the Elaka dorbar and to get information only regarding how to give No Objection Certificate (NOC) to any company, otherwise they don't have any role to play now a day. Earlier days the entire dispute was settled by the Dolloi and he used to be the final. Now a day the Dolloi doesn't have many role and power to play due to the setting up of the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC). The need of the Dolloi is to perform the traditional puja because he is the chief and had to do with the Langdoh and act as the main head of the puja.

Role and Functions of the Village Headman

Figure 1 show that the Village Headman and other members explained about the working of the dorbar system at Jalaphet village as per people custom and tradition (i.e. Dorbar Chnong). He said firstly, a dorbar was called to elect the Waheh Chnong by raising hands through voice vote. Those who can participate in the dorbar were 15-18 years of age

earlier. But now is being raise to 18 years old to be able to participate in the dorbar election. There is no such restriction for the girls/women but mostly only for male. To elect only male can become the members of the dorbar system. The one who secure the majority is elected as village headman from that date and then elect other members following the same procedures like the secretary, chairman and other executive members.

Traditionally the tenure of the dorbar election depends from village to village. The dorbar system is from the previous to the presents days is same what you have seen. Before, the time was not fixed for the elected headman but if he is not doing much or bringing some development to the village community in 1 or 2 years the public will ask the secretary chnong to convene a meeting to recall him. Previously to elect a headman first they look at a person who is working hard and can have a close relation to the public and able to bear all the responsibility. The village headman has the power to issue the residential certificates and the no objection certificates.

Traditionally the village headman has a lot of power as far as land allotment is concern. But now at present-days in some villages they have misused their power by giving land to other then the district council interfered. Now the power and position of the headman also very limited.

The Village Headman also

elected by the people in a particular village after they elect the Headman then they has to send his name to the Dolloi's for recommendation and then forwarded to the District council for appointment. The participant said that when the District Council was set up they have changed many things such as by passing the "appointment and succession of chief/headman Act 1959". From those times onwards the District Council kept the power of the Dolloi and Headman with them.

As per their old customary practices the participant explained about that the non-inclusion of women in the dorbar. The men felt that being a lady if she gets a power on par with man then quarrel will be always. Their duty and responsibility was restricted only to look after family affairs and the men collect the property and give in the ladies name to maintain them. Because the men have to fight a war always and can increased their Kingdom by fighting with the help of spear and sword. This property will be kept to her for maintaining because the men may die in the war. Regarding fighting the women is nothing they were powerless. Though we are same rank both men and women but we are separate. To think, manage, hold, control and share of the property women got strong power but regarding doing business and fought a war women are nothing they are powerless. So the Gentleman has to do these things. So for administration purpose men

direct the women no need to worry. Men arrange in such a way that women do not bother to involve themselves. Once they are doing like that and accepted then became their custom and tradition and continued to practice. And slowly what men felt that if the women gets chance like men then in can be dangerous also.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Dorbar System

The dorbar system also called as the village courts or customary law courts in the present-days under the purview of the District Council as the members of the dorbar in a particular village automatically becomes the members of the

village courts recognised by the District council. Table 2 shows some of the advantages and disadvantages of the dorbar system.

Conclusion

The purpose of the dorbar is to secure the welfare of the village community in a democratic manner. But the village members headed by Waheh Chnong have a high potential to fall prey to bribery as they are rendering their services free of cost. There are instances where the systems including X, Y, and Z, have misused their power when issuing of residential and no objection certificates to the non-tribals. Identifying some of these loopholes, the local

government proposed a bill for codification some of the customary laws by way of implementing the Village Administration Bill, 2014 that was passed for the Jaintia hills. Also, the traditional institutions are subjected to poor auditing, the lack of monitoring, uneducated members, and the complete absence of women members in the village dorbar. These are some of the drawbacks. With careful monitoring of the village activities, proper auditing the village funds from time to time with proper documentation, and regular meetings to see if schemes are implemented correctly, dorbar system can be a very effective measure.

Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of the Dorbar System

Advantages	Disadvantages
i) If there is any dispute, hearing of the case proceeds very fast. ii) Before judging, the property in question is visited and properly scrutinised, with strong witnesses and village community representation. iii) It allows females member to hear the trial cases. iv) The case can be dissolved in the village courts or at the disputed site and if both parties compromise, the case can be dissolved on its own then and there.	i) Females are not allowed to be a member of the village dorbar (village court). ii) There exists a gender gap. In some cases, the judgment of the village dorbar can be partial. iii) The village headman is very powerful, and has influence over the decisions that are made. There is the possibility that he may exert some influence to favour a party win the disputed case over land or delay the trial case in the village court. iv) The system is not free from bribery. v) The dorbar can't imprison any person.

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Nokpante: The Bachelors' Dormitory of the Garos

Tengsrang A Marak
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The institution of youth dormitory has been traditionally one of the most important social institutions among the tribal people. Youth dormitory is a place where boys, usually those who have entered into adolescence become members mandatorily. According to Julius Marak (2000), The *Nokpante* of Garos is also such type of institution which is the centre of traditional life. The Garos form the major tribal population in the Garo Hills Region of the State of Meghalaya. The Nokpante is a bachelor's dormitory constructed by the Garos at the courtyard of the village head or at the heart of the village. The word "Nokpante" literally means the house of the unmarried young men. Here, the Garo boys acquire knowledge in the fields of art, crafts, wood carving and basketry, music, culture, physical fitness, medicine, agriculture, defence, sports, moral standard and etiquettes which are propagated by the village elders. It also provides a community life of the youths and inculcates strong sense of unity, discipline and corporate life. Nokpante acts as an institution for acquiring and imparting knowledge through oral tradition.

They are to learn and adapt the rules and discipline of the

nokpante. *Nokpante* in a village is constructed through joint cooperative labours of married and unmarried young men of the village. Depending on the population in the village, *nokpante* is constructed separately for each clan. In the bachelor's dormitory of Marak clan (*chatchi*) only *marak* bachelors can sleep and learn the art, while it is the same for the clan Sangma, Areng, Shira and Momin.

Nokpante Nokdonggaa (Inauguration)

On the very first day of completion of constructing *Nokpante*, *Nokpante Nokdonggaa* is performed. *Nokpante Nokdonggaa* is a ceremony where the bachelors are ready to move in to a new bachelors' house. The first day of inauguration itself it becomes an introduction of rituals performed by the *Kamal* (teacher/priest), by the unmarried young men and by the elderly male villagers. The *Kamal* at this ceremony takes the opportunity to teach the bachelors as he chants out sacrificial songs over the burning incense at the altar in the *nokpante*. The *Kamal* chants out *doroa* (ordinances) on the native rhythmic beat of drums singing

on the origin of *nokpante*. The *Kamal* inculcates how *nokpante* started since the era of the Demi-Gods. This ceremony becomes as a seminar where *Kamal* gives lectures and bachelors act as disciples inside the *nokpante*.

Nokpante and Semiotics

The basic historical background the bachelors need to know are the totems carved on the posts and pillars of *Nokpante*. It becomes important for every bachelor to know because as they build *Nokpante*, they carved the pictures of the stories they have seen in the past of their lives. It acts as an observation, experimental and participatory education system. The important part of the totem in *Nokpante* is *Do kaku*. *Do kaku* is carved on a pillar that connects the roof above the entrance which signifies the 'beginning and salvaging' of what has been practised in the past shall be redone and remembered through totems and cultural preservation. *Do kaku* consists the symbols of diamonds (*miksep*) which signifies 'keeper and the holy eye', shield (*sepi*) which signifies 'protection', Closed gongs (*rang kingkipa*) which signifies 'property' and Necklace with a precious stone (*Ripok dokatchi*) that signifies

'*beauty and high status*'. These symbols act as the signs to inculcate the bachelors of their origin and the need to preserve their culture through visual communication or traditional media.

Other totems on the woods inside the Nokpante are made for judgment and oath taking. The cause and effect of the crime can be known after having taken the oaths by touching the totems if a person is really saying the truth or lying. The totems consist of the sun, moon, star and all the wild animals and insects that are liable to hurt human beings. Animals and insects like elephant, tiger, alligator, snake, Goral, scorpion, centipede etc, are engraved on the posts. Nokpante at the same time acts as the court for judgement for them. Sun, moon and star refer to as witness and proof both for truth and lie. With fear of these animals groom the bachelors to live a truthful and peaceful life inside the Nokpante and in the society in future.

Education system in Nokpante

The first and foremost practice the bachelors need to do in *nokpante* is to keep the traditional kitchen, the indoors and surroundings clean. The bachelors are also taught to be well-behaved, show respect and learn the social etiquette they need to show in front of elders and women. Members in the nokpante are led by the eldest bachelor, a leader selected among them to guide the younger

bachelors. He makes sure that other bachelors learn and grasp the knowledge in a right way. Boys in the *nokpante* learn about epic stories, myths, legends, Gods, origin, migration from the elders told by way of reciting poems, ordinances, chanting, mourning and mostly singing. They mostly learn all these through singing, merry making, sharing stories and their experiences during recreation hours after going through a hard labour of the day. The Garo bachelors and other elders mostly pay attention on the knowledge of ritualism. Their practice in nokpante becomes ritual and it gets propagated to the younger generations. Bachelors in *Nokpante* learn to grasp the information without any attempt to test its validity by argument. The bachelors learn from each other through conversation, songs, dialogues, etc.. It acts as a casual institution of knowledge where nature motivates to groom them through their observation and act of participation.

Today, the Nokpante system is almost dead. There are very few unproductive Nokpante structures still to be seen. Time has relegated it to the background. Modernisation (as in modern education) and Christianity have impacted the Nokpante system. In Garo hills, in 1857 after the British territorialisation and influence of Christianity the villagers themselves destroyed artefacts, musical instruments, metals and structures including

nokpante. There are few nokpante preserved and reconstructed in few villages. The nokpante from the year 1800 is still being preserved in Eman A'sakgre, South Garo Hills. Chidaogre village still preserves its old nokpante but abandoned without any renovation. The transmission of oral literature, recitation of sacred texts and texts in performances are like a syllabii in *Nokpante* where each and every individual besides learning other things can also specialize their own interests through oral tradition and observations. However, construction of *Nokpante* and the institution itself in villages is now rare in today's digitized era which once acted as an important oral educational institution.

Songs and Texts

When Garo bachelors, elders and women speak, their conversations and dialogues are in a form of songs and ordinances. The texts are orally executed since there has never been a culture of writing a record in the ancient Garo society. The verbal communication existed since time immemorial where a language itself acts as a song. These are regularly practised inside the nokpante where daily life's event is sung for the other persons and the other persons reply back in a form of ordinances and other folk form of singing of the Garos such as Doroa, gonda, serinjing, ajea, ahom ring'a, dani doka, ajema ring'a, gogae doka, nanggorere ring'a,

harara and many more.

Bachelors, as stated earlier, acquired the sacred rituals and techniques from the village elders in Nokpante. Every action of human and nature are converted into a form of songs inside nokpante. Mistakes committed by the boys are corrected by elders and lines are added to the mistaken line. During few festive occasions the Kamal (priest) recites and sings the history of every living being, nonliving being, origin of mankind etc, for a week long days as they drink and make merry. These are not just festivities but a time to grasp every words and tunes which needed to be carried forward for the upcoming generation. These occasions for gathering knowledge and bachelors listening with an educated ear can become a difficult task as there are beating of drums and gongs being played inside the nokpante. The bachelors strictly follow their own responsibility in completing the characteristics of the institution.

Today, there is a grave risk that much indigenous knowledge is being lost and, along with it, valuable knowledge about ways of living sustainably. This module illustrates ways that indigenous knowledge may be integrated into education and thereby, brings the benefits of helping to 'sustain' indigenous knowledge and societies to all. It also encourages teachers and students to gain enhanced respect for local culture, its

wisdom and its ethics, and provides ways of teaching and learning locally relevant knowledge and skills. Hence, there is a need to study the indigenous knowledge of tribal people like that of Garos. This knowledge needs to be captured and preserved.

Conclusion

The bachelor dormitory practice among the Garo, emerges at the outset is the centrality of the *nokpante* institution in the settlements of the community. Another point that became explicit in the linkages of the institution of *nokpante* with the family organization, marriage system. Concept of manhood and chastity, institutional enabling of parental privacy, mobilizing of youth labour, juvenile socialization and imitation to community polity and so on. Most of the studies on the variety of dormitory practices with or without gender exclusiveness prevailing among the different tribes in India clearly show that the *nokpante system* also was primarily an arrangement to ensure privacy for the cohabitation of husbands and wives.

The *nokpante* functions as if it is a club, a place of juvenile happiness, a non-formal school, a training center, and so on for the making of unmarried man to a mature community member. It enables them to get to know how to protect the community by learning the ways of defence

against animal raids and enemy attacks, teaches them how to be useful for the community through co-operative labour, enables to know the community rituals and rites and also how to participate in them, provides an avenue to be community conscious and corporate in their feeling and actions thus making them responsible to the community. The *nokpante* is also function as a common shelter of the community, serving a variety of public purposes like community's guesthouse, space for convening meetings and conducting political deliberations, and after all a site for community entertainment and amusements. All these features make it obvious that the existence of the *nokpante* amongst Garos is not accidental. To conclude, *nokpante* is still a pivotal institution entrenched in the community culture of the Garos.

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Hynniew Trep Society

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Meghalaya is one of the eight states of Northeast India. Shillong is its capital city. It has an area of 22,429 sq km. In 2014, the population marked 3,211,000. It is inhabited by two major tribes, namely the Garo People in the west and the Hynniew Trep People in the east. Most of the people, especially in rural areas depend on agriculture. Though both of them practised matrilineal system, where the children inherited the clan title from their mother, their languages and village administration are different from each other. The Hynniew Trep have settled in this land for thousands of years. They are the religious tribe. They have the Religion of their own, which is practised right from the family background. They have rites which are performed amongst Families, Clans, Villages and Kingdoms. Likewise, they have their own administration to run. There are customary laws which made this ethnic group very unique. In June 2016, archeologists found artifacts at Lum Sohpet Bneng (the peak which the Hynniew Trep believe they descent from Heaven to this earth) dated 1200-300 BC. With the coming of the British, the Hynniew Trep Land was shattered in pieces. Most of the Hynniew Trep territories were occupied by others. Up to these days, Meghalaya has no proper boundaries. With the government

slowness to initiate development in border areas, this allowed immigrants from outside to settle easily in these areas. There were confusion for people from outside, that Khyntiam, Pnar, Bhoi, War, Maram, Lyngngam were different tribes differ from one another. In fact, they are one tribe only, the Hynniew Trep. They are also known by the ethnic name, the Khasi Tribe. The names were given only to define the geographical areas they settled. Meghalaya has now become one of the tourists destination. It has many historical places and monuments that defined history, natural beauties that connect folklores with realities and teach humanity morals.

Family and Clan Administration

Family: In the Hynniew Trep society, the father is the head of the family. He is the bread earner, and his wife and children depend on him. Whatever matters arise within his family, he is the one to look off. His relatives and in-laws can only advise him. He has the power over his children. But he cannot interfere if matters arise in his wife's clan except only to give advices. When it comes to inheritance of properties, most of them will be in the name of the youngest daughter of the family. In the Hynniew Trep society, the youngest daughter has to stay with her parents even after

marriage. She has to look after them. But if there are enough properties, the parents will share these between their children. After the death of the parents, though most of the properties inherit by the youngest daughter, she cannot use them whatever way she pleased. She had to consult with her elder brothers or sisters (depending on family members they have). Because of this, the people misunderstood that woman rule the family. In fact, man has the power over his own family. The man himself is considered, in his family as the father and mentor of his children and in parents' he is the eldest to his clan's generation.

Clan

In the Hynniew Trep land there are more than 300 clans. (In every kingdom one clan is chosen to represent the Royal Bloodline to look after the particular kingdom). This was chose by the people). To administer the clan, Kni Rangbah or Basan Kur (the eldest male of the clan) is chose. To help him 4 to 5 elders were chosen. The eldest will look after the matters that arise within the clan. Most of the administrations of the clans are the same. These clans, they do have properties, but these properties do not inherited by one family or individual of the clan. For example, if they possess land, the land will be used by the clan or it

is given to use by the poor families from within the clan. They also gave to relatives who did not have any property. If they have forest, the products will be used by the people of that clan. In this way the properties are administered and saved for generations

But today, most of the clan properties are taken by the government as they do not possess any legal documentation. Like in Shillong, most of land properties were inhabited by illegal immigrants from outside.

Village Administration

Since they settled in this land, the Hynniew Trep ancestors had left for their generations well Constituted Institution. With these institutions every village is administered. The real power in the village institutions is the Dorbar Shnong (village Parliament). This consists of village authority (appointed by the people) and all the male members of the village. Whenever the dorbar held, every male from each house of the village have to attend. If some families have no male member, they have to send someone to represent them in it. In it every one has the right to speech and right to be heard. During the dorbar, no one can use false speech, if someone does so, he will be condemned. That is why this dorbar is also known as Dorbar Blei (God's Parliament). To administer the village institutions, the dorbar will choose one Rangbah Shnong (Headman) and his executive of 6 to 8 members. These will be

appointed in the Village Parliament itself. The headman and his executive are only the head of the village and possess no power. Every decision will be taken only with the consent of the dorbar. There is no tenure for the village executive. It can enjoy its administration as long the people seem him fit to run it. It can lose it power when people find it do illegal activities. It is the duty of the executive to organize dorbar. A well aged man was always appointed as headman or a member in the executive and must be the resident of the village for many years. Person from outside the village is not allowed to attend the dorbar unless there are official works. In some villages, one can attend the dorbar only after that person had been the resident of that village for the last 25 years. There is one annual dorbar which is compulsory and any other will be held if issues regarding the village or the people arise within the village. These 'traditional institutions' are recognized and empowered by the Sixth Scheduled of the Constitution of India. This Sixth Scheduled was drafted by J.J.M. Nichols Roy, the first among the Hynniew Trep to be elected in the Assam Assembly. It empowered the Autonomous District Councils of the State to strengthen the 'traditional institutions' from village level to the state level. Though there is an opposition, now there is an attempt by the Meghalaya High Court and the present ruling government to weaken these institutions in all the Hynniew Trep Land. The government has

started to draft bills which will give it more political access in these areas. If it succeeds the Hynniew Trep People will lose their 'true democracy' which they practise for thousands of years.

Youth Institutions

Youths are the other sections which are important in other sphere of the society. We have witnessed history how young people did 'extraordinary' things for their Nations. They dared to face consequences and accomplished their desires. These 'youth institutions' are functional in every village of the Hynniew Trep Land since time immemorial. Every village has the Seng Samla Shnong (Youths Organization) which was recognized by the Dorbar Shnong (Village Parliament). In village administration, this organization has no village authority and has limited power. But in their functions, these institutions do have executive power and jurisdiction within their village. Unlike the dorbar, the organization consists of both male and female members. This section has become very helpful in the society development as it engaged in almost all the social activities. They are against social injustices. Through their aided activities in the village, the youths transformed themselves into the societies' important tools. With the increase in literacy, these institutions have become more functional. They bring unity in the society and Nation as a whole. These institutions are now recognized by the government of India under the Society Act. ■

কোচ জনগোষ্ঠীৰ পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজ ব্যৱস্থা আৰু বাৰ্ণায় নক'ৰ ভূমিকা

নিৰ্মল কোচ

কোচ জনগোষ্ঠীৰ লোকসকল উত্তৰ-পূৰ্বাঞ্চলৰ অতি আদিম জনসমষ্টি। এসময়ত এইসকল লোকে প্ৰাচীন কামৰূপ ৰাজ্য ব্যাপি প্ৰভাৱ বিস্তাৰ কৰাৰ কথা ইতিহাসে উনুকিয়ায়। কালক্ৰমত এইসকল লোকে বিভিন্ন জাতি-প্ৰজাতিৰ সৈতে সান মিহলি হোৱাৰ ফলত বহু বিভক্ত হৈ পৰে আৰু স্বকীয়তা পৰিহাৰ কৰি কিছুসংখ্যক বিভিন্ন নামেৰে পৰিচিত হোৱা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। কিন্তু ভাৱিলে আচৰিত নহৈ নোৱাৰি বিভিন্ন ঘাত-প্ৰতিঘাত হেলাৰঙে অতিক্ৰম কৰি হ'লেও কিছুসংখ্যক থাকি গ'ল কোচ উপাধিধাৰী, যি সকলে আজিও বৰ্ত্তি আছে স্বকীয় মাত-কথা, সাজ-পাৰ, ব্যতিক্ৰমী সমাজ ব্যৱস্থা, ৰীতি-নীতি, কৃষ্টি-সংস্কৃতিৰ ধৰাজা উৰুৱাই নিজকে মই কোচ বুলি পৰিচয় দিয়াৰ মানসিকতা সাৰটি এইশ্ৰেণীৰ সৰহ সংখ্যক লোকক বৰ্ত্তমান মেঘালয় ৰাজ্যৰ গাৰোপাহাৰত দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। ইয়াৰোপৰি অসমৰ বিভিন্নপ্ৰান্ত যেনে - ধুবুৰী, গোৱালপাৰা, কোকৰাঝাৰ, বাক্সা, শোণিতপুৰ আদি জিলাত বসবাস কৰা কোচসকল কিছুসংখ্যকে নিজকে ৰাভা বুলি পৰিচয় দি ভাল পায় আৰু ক্ৰমাগত খৃষ্ট ধৰ্মলৈ ধৰ্মান্তৰিত হোৱা দেখা গৈছে। আনহাতে উজনি অসমৰ ফালে থকা কোচসকলে বিভিন্ন উপাধি গ্ৰহণ কৰি সিঁচৰতি হৈ থকাৰ ফলত চিনাক্ত কৰণ

কৰা একপ্ৰকাৰ দুৰূহ হৈ পৰিছে। এওঁলোকে কোচসকলৰ প্ৰায়বিলাক বৈশিষ্ট্য হেৰুৱাই পেলাইছে বুলি ক'লেও একো ভুল কৰা নহ'ব। কমতাপুৰ অথবা কোচবিহাৰৰ কোচ ৰজাৰ বংশধৰ সকল ৰাজবংশী নামেৰে অসম তথা উত্তৰবঙ্গ, নেপাল, বিহাৰ আদি অঞ্চলত বিয়পি আছে। সময়ৰ বিৰুদ্ধে ফলত অনেক কোচ উপাধি বৰ্জন কৰি বিভিন্ন উপাধি গ্ৰহণ কৰাৰ ফলত এই শ্ৰেণীৰ লোক সকলৰ প্ৰকৃত স্বৰূপ আৰু বৰ্ত্তমানো স্বকীয়তা ৰক্ষা কৰি বৰ্ত্তি থকা কোচসকলৰ মাজত এটা দেখ দেখ বৈসাদৃশ্য আহি পৰিছে। ফলত জনসম্প্ৰদায়ৰ মাজত কোচ উপাধিটো বিভ্ৰান্তিৰ সৃষ্টি কৰাটো নিতান্তই স্বাভাৱিক। ভাষিক দৃষ্টিকোণেৰে চালে মেঘালয়ৰ কোচসকলৰ ভাষা তিব্বত ধৰ্মী আৰু অসমত থকা কোচ, যিসকলে নিজকে কোচ ৰাভা বুলি পৰিচয় দিয়ে তেখেতসকলৰ ভাষাও মেঘালয়ত থকা কোচসকলৰ সৈতে একে মূলীয়। বাকী প্ৰায়বোৰে আৰ্যমূলীয় ভাষা ব্যৱহাৰ কৰাৰ ফলত আৰু বিভিন্ন উপাধি গ্ৰহণ কৰাৰ ফলত কোচ নামৰ মূলসূঁতিৰ পৰা আপোনা-আপুনি আঁতৰি গৈছে যাৰ ফলস্বৰূপে প্ৰকৃত কোচৰ সংখ্যা নিৰূপণত বাধাৰ প্ৰাচীৰ থিয় হৈছে বুলি ক'ব লাগিব। সেয়েহে ইয়াত কেৱল তিব্বত বৰ্মী ভাষী আৰু পৰম্পৰাগত

বৈশিষ্ট্য ৰক্ষা কৰি কোচ বুলি পৰিচয় দিয়া জনগোষ্ঠীৰ প্ৰসংগৰে খুলমূলকৈ আলোচনাৰ আওতালৈ অনাৰ বাবে চেষ্টা কৰা হ'ল-

কোচসকলৰ গোট বা শ্ৰেণী :-

কোচসকল প্ৰধানতঃ সাতটা গোটত বিভক্ত যেনে - হাৰিগাইয়া, ৰানাং, তিনতিকিয়া, চাপ্ৰা মাৰ্গান দশগাইয়া, সাতপাৰিয়া, সংকৰ আৰু বানাই। সদ্যহতে অসমৰ বৰপেটা আৰু ইয়াৰ আশে-পাশে কোচ মান্দাই নামৰ এক বুজন সংখ্যক কোচ থকাৰ কথাও পোহৰলৈ আহিছে। এখেত সকলৰ ভাষাও তিব্বত-বৰ্মী মূলৰ বুলি জানিব পৰা গৈছে।

কোচসকল মাতৃ তান্ত্ৰিক। মাতৃৰ গোত্ৰৰ ধাৰাই কোচ সকলৰ বংশলতিকাত অগ্ৰাধিকাৰ পোৱাটো নতুন কথা নহয়। অনাদি কালৰ পৰাই এই ধাৰা সমাজৰ এটা চিৰাচৰিত ৰূপত চিহ্নিত হৈ চলি আছে। মাতৃৰ গোত্ৰ, কোচ সমাজত, নিকিনি বুলি জনজাত। পুৰুষৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত পুৰছা বুলি কোৱা হয়। এটা সময়ত প্ৰতিটো নিকিনিৰ উপাস্য দেৱতা বা নিকিনিৰায় আছিল। পৰিয়ালৰ সুখ-সমৃদ্ধিৰ বাবে নিকিনিৰায় বিশেষ তাৎপৰ্য্য বহন কৰিছিল। বিভিন্ন নিকিনিৰ সামাজিক পৰম্পৰা আৰু স্বকীয় ৰীতি-নীতি আৰু সামাজিক ব্যৱস্থাই সমাজত

বহু ক্ষেত্ৰত কিছু বিশৃঙ্খলতাৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিছিল। কোচ জনসমাজত প্ৰায় দুশৰো অধিক নিকিনি পোৱা যায়। প্ৰায়বোৰ নিকিনিৰ আকৌ উপ নিকিনি আছে যাক ছাৰু জুখু বুলি কোৱা হয়। কোচ সকলৰ সাতটা গোটৰ নিকিনিবোৰ বেলেগ বেলেগ যদিও কিছু সংখ্যক ইটো গোটৰ সৈতে সিটোৰ মিল থকাও দেখা যায়। কোচসকলৰ নিকিনিবোৰ তলত উল্লেখ কৰা ধৰণে পোৱা যায়।

হাৰিগাইয়া বা ছংগা ৪- হাৰি, হাক্ৰা, দিংদুৰ, লাংছা, তুৰ্ণি, লঙ্গাম, মাজি, দংছং, কাত্ৰাক, কৰা, বানাং, বাৰ্মা, বানাই, হাৰচুম পাৰা, তৰবক, পাত্ৰেক, দিখিলা, মান্দা, নাকলা, কাংক্ৰা, বঞ্জা, মজাৰ লাবুৰ, বান্দু, মাচিতক, দুংচুং, লবা ইত্যাদি।

তিনতিকিয়া ৪- দম্বা, আজুনন্ত, হিন্দিতপা, বালুকচাপা, ছিমছাং, আজম, আজুমজিৰি, ছিমছাংজিৰি, মাচি, হাচুপ, ছিমছাং হাচুপ, মাজিকাম, তিৰিদিচিকামা, এনেকৈ প্ৰায় চল্লিশটা।

বানাং ৪- কামা, দুলুঙা, মাচিতক, খোপাই, বঞ্জা পাঞ্চিবক ইত্যাদি প্ৰায় পঞ্চাশৰো অধিক।

চাপ্ৰা বা মাৰ্গান ৪- কামা, মাচিতক, খোপাই, লুগা, বালিহাতা, দাখিন, আদি কৰি প্ৰায় ষাঠিতকৈ অধিক নিকিনি পোৱা যায়।

সাতপাৰী ৪- নামকেন, দালাংছা, কাংক্ৰা, মান্দাক, দিৰো, হাজং, আদি প্ৰায় পচিশৰো অধিক।

কোচসকলৰ সামাজিক ব্যৱস্থা ৪-

কোচসকল সমাজপ্ৰিয়। মিলিজুলি গাওঁ পাতি বাস কৰা কোচসকলৰ চিৰন্তন

স্বভাৱ। চহা জীৱনৰ নিভাঁজ বৈশিষ্ট্যবোৰ কোচ জনমানসত চিৰ প্ৰবাহমান। কোচ গাওঁবোৰ দহ বা বাৰ ঘৰ পৰিয়ালৰ পৰা আৰম্ভ কৰি প্ৰায় এশ বা দুশ ঘৰ পৰিয়াল বাস কৰা গাঁৱো দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। গাওঁখনৰ পৰিয়ালৰ সংখ্যা যিমানই নাথাকক এখন গাওঁত সমাজখন দুভাগত বিভক্ত হলে সেই গাওঁখন চৰ্চাৰ বিষয় হৈ পৰে আৰু স্বজাতীয় অন্য গাওঁবোৰে হয় প্ৰতিপন্ন নকৰিলেও সমালোচনাৰ সন্মুখীন হব লগা হয়। প্ৰতিটো কোচ গাওঁত একোজনকৈ মাথাই অথবা গাওঁবুঢ়া থাকে। গাওঁৰ সকলো সামাজিক সিদ্ধান্তবোৰ মাথাইৰ দ্বাৰা নিষ্পত্তি কৰা হয়। জন্ম, মৃত্যু, তথা বিবাহ আদিৰ পঞ্জীয়ন গাওঁৰ মাথাই বা গাওঁবুঢ়াই ৰাখিব লাগে। গাওঁৰ অসামাজিক কাৰ্য্যৰ পৰা আৰম্ভ কৰি কাজিয়া পেচাল আদিৰো মাথাইজনেই সমাধান সূত্ৰ উলিয়াব লগা হয়। এক কথাত গাওঁবুঢ়া হ'ল গাওঁৰ সৰ্বনিয়ন্তা। অৱশ্যে বিভিন্নজনে মাত-মতাৰ অধিকাৰ আছে। যি সকলে সমাধানৰ সূত্ৰ দিব পাৰে তেখেতসকলকো সমাজৰ গণ্য-মান্য ব্যক্তিৰ ৰূপত আদৰণি জনোৱাটো সমাজে কৰ্তব্য বুলিয়ে ভাবে আৰু মুৰব্বী বুলি সন্মানসূচক শ্ৰদ্ধা নিবেদন জনায়। কোচসকলৰ গাওঁ সংগঠনবোৰ মাথপ বুলি জনা যায়। মাথপ বা সংগঠনৰ গুৰি ধৰোতা হ'ল মাথাই (গাওঁবুঢ়া)। কোচসকলৰ মাথপবোৰৰ কোনো সাংবিধানিক স্বীকৃতি নাথাকিলেও সমাজ জীৱনত ইয়াৰ ভূমিকা অতি গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ। সমাজৰ সভা সমিতি আদি আহ্বানলৈ লক্ষ্য ৰাখি স্বনিয়োজিত দূত বা ডাকোৱাল নিযুক্তি দিয়া থাকে। সমাজত ব্যক্তিজনে

ডাকোৱা নামেৰে পৰিচিত লাভ কৰে আৰু প্ৰতিঘৰৰ পৰা বছৰৰ শেষত বা মাঘ বিহুৰ (পুছনা) আগে আগে এদোণকৈ খান মাননি দিয়াৰ প্ৰথা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। প্ৰেম, প্ৰণয় সংক্ৰান্তবোৰ ডাকোৱাৰ দ্বাৰা সোধেপোছ কৰাৰ নিয়ম আৰু তেনেক্ষেত্ৰত ডাকোৱাৰ ভূমিকাই অগ্ৰাধিকাৰ পোৱা দেখা যায়। কোচ সমাজত দায় ধৰা, দণ্ডিপ্ৰথা আদি এসময়ত অতি প্ৰবল আছিল বুলি জনা যায়। সমাজত ইতিবাচক আৰু নেতিবাচক দুয়োটা দিশ থকাটো নতুন কথা নহয়। তেনেদৰে কোচ সমাজৰ নেতিবাচক দিশ দুটামানৰ উল্লেখ নকৰিলে সামাজিক দিশটো অসম্পূৰ্ণ থাকি যাব। দুনাই উনুকিয়াইছো, কোচসকল মাতৃতান্ত্ৰিক আৰু মাতৃসূত্ৰী সমাজত নাৰীয়ে সকলো দিশতে অগ্ৰাধিকাৰ পায়, মেঘালয়ৰ অন্যতম বাসিন্দা গাৰো আৰু খাচি সকলৰ মাজতো সমানেই প্ৰযোজ্য। পৰিয়ালৰ সা-সম্পত্তিৰ অধিকাৰ কোচ সমাজতো সামাজিক প্ৰথা অনুযায়ী পৰিয়ালৰ নুমলী জীয়েক একমাত্ৰ সম্পত্তিৰ অধিকাৰিণী হয়। পৰম্পৰাগত সামাজিক প্ৰথা অনুযায়ী কোচ ডেকাসকলে জোঁৱাই খটা নিয়ম আছিল। অৱশ্যে এই প্ৰথাৰ এতিয়া সাল সলনি ঘটিছে আৰু সুবিধা অনুযায়ী জোঁৱাই খাটিবও পাৰে নাইবা বোৱাৰী কৰি আনিবও পাৰে। পূৰ্বতে সাংসাৰিক জীৱনত পুৰুষজন স্ত্ৰীতকৈ আগতে মৃত্যুবৰণ কৰিলে পুৰুষজনৰ বা মৃত ব্যক্তিজনৰ সকলো ব্যৱহাৰ্য বয় বস্তু নিকটস্থ আত্মীয় তিৰোতাসকলে গ্ৰহণ কৰাৰ প্ৰথা প্ৰচলিত আছিল। এই প্ৰথা কোচসমাজত লায়দাৰা নামেৰে

জনাজাত। এই প্ৰথা পুৰুষ অথবা তিৰোতা দুয়োপক্ষৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতেই সমানে প্ৰযোজ্য আছিল। তদুপৰি স্ত্ৰীৰ মৃত্যু আগত হ'লে জেঁৰাই খটা ব্যক্তিগৰাকী পত্নীগৃহ এৰি নিজ আত্মীয় স্বজনৰ লগত থকাৰ নিয়ম আছিল। এই ব্যৱস্থা এতিয়া মৰ্মান্তিক। স্ত্ৰীৰ ঘৰৰ পৰা বহিষ্কাৰ হৈ সৰ্বস্ব হেৰুৱাই মৃত্যুৰ ক্ষণ গণা এগৰাকী ব্যক্তিৰ অন্তৰ্দৰ্শা কি হব পাৰে সেয়া সহজেই অনুমেয়। কোচ সমাজত এই প্ৰথা বাছেক বাল্য বুলি খ্যাত। সময়ৰ পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ তাগিদাতে হওক নাইবা সমাজ সংস্কাৰৰ চিন্তাৰে কোচ সকলৰ বিভিন্ন সংগঠনৰ মুখ্য ভূমিকাৰ সিদ্ধহস্তত এই প্ৰথা বৰ্তমান নিঃচিহ্ন বুলি ক'লেও ভুল কৰা নহ'ব। বিবাহৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত একে নিকিনিব মাজত বিবাহ সমাজ বিৰুদ্ধ। প্ৰেমজনিত কাৰণত কাৰোবাৰ সম্বন্ধ গঢ় লৈ উঠিলেও সমাজৰ পৰা বহিষ্কৃত হ'ব লাগে আৰু গাওঁ পৰিত্যাগ কৰিব লগা দৃষ্টান্ত সমাজত নথকা নহয়। সমাজৰ বিশৃঙ্খলতা তথা কোচ জন জীৱনৰ হিত সাধনৰ উদ্দেশ্য সন্মুখত ৰাখি মেঘালয় কোচ সন্মিলন নামৰ বেচৰকাৰী সামাজিক অনুষ্ঠানটোৱে কোচসকলৰ বিভিন্ন গোটক একেখন মঞ্চত বহুৱাই কোচ সকলৰ সামাজিক ব্যৱস্থা আৰু ৰীতি-নীতি প্ৰণয়ন কৰি উলিয়াইছে আৰু কাৰ্যকৰী কৰাৰ বাবে প্ৰচেষ্টা অব্যাহত ৰাখিছে। এই ব্যৱস্থা কাৰ্যকাৰী হ'লে কোচ সমাজত থকা বিশৃঙ্খলতাবোৰ দূৰীকৰণত কিছু পৰিমাণে হ'লেও সকাহ পোৱা যাব বুলি কৰ্ম কৰ্তা সকল নিতান্ত আশাবাদী।

কোচসকলৰ বাৰ্ঠায় নক' বা

কাছাৰীনক' এক যুৱ অনুষ্ঠান :-

কোচ ভাষাত বাৰ্ঠায় মানে ডেকা আৰু নক' মানে ঘৰ। গতিকে বাৰ্ঠায় নক' হ'ল ডেকা সকলৰ বাস কৰা ঘৰ। উত্তৰ-পূৰ্বাঞ্চলৰ বিভিন্ন জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজত এনে ধৰণৰ উদাহৰণ পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। কোচ ডেকা সকলো তাৰ ব্যতিক্ৰম নাছিল। এখন গাওঁত আদিতে হয়তো এখনেই বাৰ্ঠায় নক'ৰ প্ৰচলন আছিল আৰু তাৰ কাৰণ বহিঃশত্ৰুক প্ৰতিহত কৰাৰ লক্ষ্যৰে এই অনুষ্ঠানবোৰ গঢ় লৈ উঠিছিল। পৰিৱেশ সাপেক্ষে বা সময়ৰ পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ গতিশীলতাই এখন গাওঁত পাঁচ বা ছয়জন ডেকা মিলি এখনকৈ বাৰ্ঠায় নক'ৰ প্ৰয়োজনবোধ কৰি সাজি উলিয়ায়। সমাজত ডেকাশক্তি সময়ে সময়ে অতিকৈ প্ৰয়োজনৰ কথাষাৰ কোনেও নুই কৰিব নোৱাৰে। এসময়ত সমাজৰ প্ৰতিটো কামে কাজে বাৰ্ঠায়নক' বা ডেকাচাঙয়ে এক মুখ্য ভূমিকা গ্ৰহণ কৰা বুলি স্বীকাৰ কৰিব লাগিব। কাৰণ প্ৰত্যেক বাৰ্ঠায়নক'ত চিকাৰৰ অস্ত্ৰ শস্ত্ৰ আদিৰ উপৰিও থলুৱা বাদ্যযন্ত্ৰবোৰ সংৰক্ষিত কৰি ৰখা দেখিবলৈ পোৱা গৈছিল। গাওঁখনক বিপদমুক্ত কৰি ৰখা আৰু গীত মাত আদি চৰ্চা তথা কৃষ্টি সংস্কৃতি ৰক্ষাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো এই বাৰ্ঠায় নক'ৰ ভূমিকা অতিশয় অপৰিহাৰ্য্য হৈ পৰিছিল। জাতীয় বীৰ আৰু সংস্কৃতিৰ জন্ম আৰু মৃত্যুৰ সাক্ষী এই বাৰ্ঠায়নক' শিক্ষাৰ পোহৰ নপৰা কালীন বাৰ্ঠায় নক'ৰ ভূমিকাই তাৎপৰ্য বহন কৰিছিল যদিও সময়ত ডেকাসকলো পঢ়া-শুনাৰ বাবে আছুতীয়া কোঠালীৰ প্ৰয়োজনীয়তা অনুভৱ কৰিবলৈ ল'লে আৰু বাৰ্ঠায়নক'ৰ সমাদৰ লোপ পোৱাটো নিশ্চিত হৈ

পৰিল। কোচ সমাজত এনে কিছুমান ঐতিহ্যমণ্ডিত বাৰ্ঠায়নক'ৰ মৰ্মস্তুক কাহিনী জীপাল হৈ আছে যেন ঘটনাবোৰ সৌ সিদিনাহে ঘটি গ'ল। তুৰাৰ পৰা মানকাচৰলৈ গ'লে আধবাটতে এখন কোচ গাওঁ নাম হাৰছং বা হাৰিগাওঁ। কালো নদীৰ পাৰত হাৰিগাওঁৰ এটি সৰু টিলাটোৰ নাম ছয় কুৰি বাৰ্ঠায় তাৰি। টিলাটোত ছয় কুৰি কোচ ডেকা সকলে একেলগে থাকিব পৰাকৈ বাৰ্ঠায় নক' সাজি উলিয়াইছিল আৰু অঞ্চলটো ৰক্ষণা-বেক্ষণৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত অগ্ৰণী ভূমিকা গ্ৰহণ কৰিছিল। তেতিয়াৰ দিনত কোচ আৰু গাৰোসকলৰ মাজত প্ৰায়ে সংঘৰ্ষ লাগিয়ে আছিল। সেই সময়ৰ সংঘৰ্ষৰ তিক্ত অভিজ্ঞতা মান্দায় ধুম নামেৰে কোচ সকলে আজিও সোঁৱৰে। কাৰণ ছয় কুৰি বাৰ্ঠায় ঘুমন্ত অৱস্থাত মান্দায় ধুমৰ বলি হ'ব লগা হয়। তাৰেই বেদনা বিধুৰ স্মৃতিত কোচ সমাজৰ লোকে আজিও গায় -

'মঙায়াৰ বকজোক,
তাউয়া তাউৱা ছেপ জোক,
ছাৰায়, ছাৰায়, ছাৰায়।'

এগৰাকী মাতৃৰ সন্তান হেৰোৱা অন্তৰৰ কাতৰ ত্ৰন্দন আৰু বুকুৰ নিভৃততম প্ৰদেশৰ পৰা নিগৰি অহা শোক গাহন। গীতৰ অৰ্থ ৰাতিটো পুৱাল, শেষ প্ৰহৰৰ কুকুৰাই ডাক দিলে, উঠা, উঠা সন্তানহঁত উঠা।

নিৰ্মল কোচ

চিপুয় কলনী, তুৰা - ৭৯৪০০১,
পশ্চিম গাৰো পাহাৰ, মেঘালয়
মো. - ৯৪০২১৩২৯৮৪,
৯৬১৫৩০৬০৫০

হাজংদের ঐতিহ্যবাহী সমাজ পরিচালন ব্যবস্থা

হাজং অর্ণব

হাজং সমাজ কি ভাবে পরিচালিত হয় তা জানার জন্যে অতীতের সমাজ কাঠামোর কিঞ্চিৎ ধারণা দরকার। সে জন্যে কিছু সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ দেওয়া হলো।

পাড়া তথা গাওঁ :- কিছু সংখ্যক পরিবার নিয়ে একটি পাড়া বা গাওঁ গঠিত হয়। প্রাচীন কালে পরিবার গুলো যৌথ পরিবার ছিল। কৃষি নির্ভর অর্থনীতি হওয়ার কারণে প্রয়োজনের তাগিদেই যৌথ পরিবার এবং অর্পন বংশধবদের নিয়ে একটি পাড়া সৃষ্টি হতো। পাড়ায় একজন প্রধান থাকেন, তাকে বলা হয় গাওঁ বুড়া। পাড়া তথা গাওঁ যে শান্তি শৃঙ্খলা রক্ষা করা, বিচার শালিশী করা, গাওঁবাসীদের নিয়ে বৈঠকাদি করা গাওঁবুড়ার দায়িত্ব থাকে। গাওঁ বুড়া একজন প্রভাব প্রতিপত্তিশালী, প্রবীণ ব্যক্তি হয়ে থাকেন। একজন গাওঁবুড়া আজীবন তাঁর দায়িত্ব পালন করে যেতে পারেন। যোগ্যতা সম্পন্ন হলে বংশানুক্রমে গাওঁবুড়া চলমান থাকে। প্রয়োজন সাপেক্ষে পাড়ার লোকেরা সন্মিলিত ভাবে বসে যোগ্য ব্যক্তিকে গাওঁবুড়া নির্বাচিত করে।

গ্রাম :- কয়েকটি পাড়া নিয়ে একটি গ্রাম গঠিত হয়। গ্রামের প্রধানকে বলা হয় মড়ল। গ্রাম ভুক্ত এক পাড়ার সাথে আরেক পাড়ার কোন্দল দেখা দিলে

অথবা কোন আপত্তিকর বিষয় একাধিক পাড়ার সাথে সম্পর্কিত হলে তার সমাধানের চেষ্টা করা হয় এবং তা মড়লের উপর বর্তায়। সাধারণতঃ গ্রাম ভুক্ত পাড়া গুলোর বিচক্ষণ গাওঁবুড়াই মড়লের পদে অধিষ্ঠিত হন।

চাকলা বা জোয়ার :- অনেক গুলো গ্রাম সমন্বয়ে একটি চাকলা বা জোয়ার। চাকলার প্রধানকে বলা হয় সর-মড়ল। কোন সমস্যা পাড়া বা গ্রামে সমাধান সম্ভব নাহলে, অথবা একাধিক পাড়া বা গ্রামের মাঝে কোন্দল দেখা দিলে সমাধানের দায়িত্ব চাকলার উপর এসে যায়। সব মড়ল সেই দায়িত্ব গ্রহণ পূর্বক সমাধানের উদ্যোগ নিয়ে থাকেন।

পরগনা :- অনেক গুলো চাকলা বা জোয়ার নিয়ে একটি পরগনা গঠিত হয়। পরগনার প্রধান রাজা। তিনি শাসন ক্ষমতার অধিকারী। সামাজিক বিধি বিধানের উপর তাঁর হস্তক্ষেপ থাকে না। সমাজ রক্ষা হয় চাকলার মাধ্যমে।

উপরোক্ত বিবরণ ভারতবর্ষ বিভক্ত হওয়ার পূর্বাভাসের কথা। বিভক্তির পরবর্তী পর্যায়ে ভারতের এবং বাংলাদেশের হাজংদের সমাজ পরিচালনায় ভিন্নতর অবস্থা দেখা যায়। সু-প্রাচীন কাল থেকে হাজং সমাজে ঐতিহ্যগত ভাবে প্রতি গাওঁয়ে একজন গাওঁ প্রধান বা গাওঁবুড়া থাকার কথা জানা যায়। বর্তমানেও এর

ধারাবাহিকতা চলে আসছে। তবে গাওঁ বুড়ার ভূমিকা এবং দায়িত্ব লঘু হয়েছে, গাওঁবুড়া নিয়োগ করা পদ্ধতিরও পরিবর্তন এসেছে।

ভারত বর্ষ বিভক্ত হওয়ার পরে অনিবার্য ভাবেই হাজংদের সমাজ ব্যবস্থা প্রভাবিত হয়েছে। ভারতের মেঘালয় এবং স্থানীয় শায়ন্ত শাসিত জেলা পরিষদ অথবা পঞ্চায়েত দ্বারা প্রভাবিত বা নিয়ন্ত্রিত হতে হয়। বৃহত্তর গারো পাহাড় জেলা বর্তমানে গারোহিল্‌স্ অটোন'মাস্ ডিষ্ট্রিক্ট কাউন্সিল দ্বারা নিয়ন্ত্রণ করা হচ্ছে।

ভারতে কোথাও হাজংদের নিজস্ব শায়ন্ত শাসিত জেলা পরিষদ নেই। আসামে পঞ্চায়েত ব্যবস্থার অধীনে এবং মেঘালয়ে খাসিহিল্‌স্ ও গারোহিল্‌স্ শায়ন্ত শাসিত জেলা পরিষদের নিয়ন্ত্রনে রয়েছে। সরকারের দৃষ্টিতে গাওঁ বুড়াদের শায়ন্ত শাসিত জেলা পরিষদ দ্বারা অনুমোদিত হতে হয়। ঐতিহ্যগত ভাবে প্রতি গাওঁয়ে যে গাওঁবুড়া থাকে এরা ভিলেজ হেডমেন নামে আখ্যায়িত এদের রেজিষ্টার্ড ডকুমেন্ট থাকে না। গাওঁবুড়া হিসাবে যাঁরা রেজিষ্টার্ড প্রাপ্ত তাঁরা কতিপয় গ্রাম তথা আঞ্চলিক প্রধান। অতীতে এদের সর-মড়ল বলা হতো। বর্তমানের এই রেজিষ্টার্ড গাওঁ বুড়াদেরকে হাজং দের জন্য সামাজিক গাওঁবুড়া বলা চলেনা,

যদিও এই গাওঁবুড়া হাজং সমাজের লোক হয়ে থাকেন। কেননা রেজিস্টার্ড গাওঁবুড়ার অধীনে যে পরিমান গ্রাম থাকে। সেইসকল গ্রাম গুলোর জাতি-ধর্ম-বর্ণ নির্বিশেষে সকল সম্প্রদায়ের গাওঁবুড়া তিনি। তাছাড়া এই গাওঁবুড়া পদে অধীনস্থ অঞ্চলের ভিন্ন জনজাতীয় লোকও আসীন হতে পারে। তিনি নিদিষ্ট একটি সম্প্রদায়ের গাওঁবুড়া হন না। সুতরাং কথিত ভিলেজ হেডম্যানরাই হাজং সমাজের সামাজিক গাওঁবুড়া। আইনের দৃষ্টিতে যাই হোক, সমাজ পরিচালনায় এদের দায়িত্ব এবং গুরুত্ব রয়েছে।

সরকারের ভাষার রেজিস্টার্ড গাওঁবুড়ারাই গাওঁবুড়া, কিন্তু হাজং সমাজ পরিচালনায় ভিলেজ হেড ম্যানরাই সামাজিক গাওঁবুড়া। পূর্বকালে গাওঁবুড়া নিয়োগ বংশানুক্রমিক ভাবে হতো। বর্তমান কালে গাওঁবাসীদের সমর্থন ক্রমে যোগ্য ব্যক্তিকে নির্বাচিত করা হয়। গাওঁবুড়া কার্যকালের নির্দিষ্ট মেয়াদ থাকে না। তাঁর কার্যকাল কর্মদক্ষতা এবং বিশ্বস্ততার উপর নির্ভর করে।

সাধারণ দৃষ্টিতে পাড়া এবং গাওঁ একই বস্তু। কিন্তু হাজং সমাজে এই দুটোর তত্ত্বগত পার্থক্য আছে।

কিছু সংখ্যক পরিবার নিয়ে গঠিত একটি নিদিষ্ট ক্ষুদ্র সীমানার ভিতরে বসবাসকারী লোকেরা এক পাড়া অন্তর্ভুক্ত বা পাড়াবাসী। কিন্তু যারা সমাজের যৌথ উৎসব অনুষ্ঠান, পূজা পার্বন, শ্মশান কর্ম প্রভৃতিতে একত্রে অংশ গ্রহণ করে বা করতে বাধ্য থাকে

তারা এক গাওঁ অন্তর্ভুক্ত বা গাওঁবাসী। সুতরাং কেহ এক পাড়ায় বাস করেও পরিবার পাড়া থেকে মানবিক সহায়তা পেতে পারে কিন্তু সামাজিক সহায়তা তাকে আপন গাওঁ থেকে নিতে হয়।

একজন হাজং ব্যক্তিতে স্থানেই বসবাস করুক না কেন, তাকে যে কোন একটি গাওঁ এর সদস্যপদ নিতেই হয়। প্রত্যেক হাজং ব্যক্তি আপন গাওঁএর ধর্মীয় এবং সামাজিক উৎসব অনুষ্ঠান গুলোতে অংশীদার হওয়ার জন্য নীতিগত ভাবে বাধ্য থাকে। গাওঁবাসী গাওঁ সমাজ থেকে ধর্মীয় ওবং সামাজিক সকল প্রকার সহায়তা পাওয়ার দাবীদার হয়, কিন্তু পাড়াবাসী বা প্রতিবেশী কেবল মানবিক সহায়তা পেতে পারে।

কোন পাড়ায় বাস করেও ঐ গাওঁ যের সদস্যপদ গ্রহণ না করলে সে গাওঁবাসী না হয়ে কেবল পাড়াবাসী রূপে থাকে।

বাংলাদেশে শায়ত্ত শাসিত জেলা পরিষদ নাই। সেখানে গাওঁবুড়াদের রেজিস্টার্ড হওয়ার প্রয়োজন হয় না। তথায় ভিলেজ হেডম্যান নামে কোন শব্দ প্রচলন নাই। পূর্ববং গাওঁয়ের গাওঁবুড়া আছে।

চাকলা বা জোয়ার সরকারীভাবে বর্তমানে কোথাও স্বীকৃত নয়। তবুও বাংলাদেশে সামাজিক ভাবে চাকলার মান্যতা আছে এবং অতি প্রয়োজনে চাকলা বৈঠক হতে পারে।

কোন বিষয় যদি চাকলার আওতার বাহিরে হয় এবং একাধিক চাকলার উপস্থিতির প্রয়োজন দেখা দেয়

তাহলে চৌদ্দ-আনি বৈঠক নামে হাজং সমাজের সর্বোচ্চ বৈঠক বা শালিনী বসতে পারে।

ষোল আনা মানে পূর্ণতা। কিন্তু সমাজের ষোল আনা লোক একত্রিত হওয়া সম্ভব নয়। কাজেই সর্বোচ্চ যোগদান বুঝাতে চৌদ্দ আনা শব্দ ব্যবহার করা হয় বলে মনে হচ্ছে।

হাজং সমাজ পিতৃতান্ত্রিক এবং পুরুষ শাসিত। পিতা বা বয়োজ্যেষ্ঠ পুরুষ পরিবারের প্রধান থাকেন। প্রধানের নিয়ন্ত্রণে পরিবারের সদস্যবৃন্দ পরিচালিত হয়।

হাজং সমাজে গোষ্ঠী বিভাগ নাই। তাই গোত্র প্রধান বা গোত্র সম্পত্তি থাকে না। পুরো হাজং সমাজটাই কেবল একটি গোষ্ঠী। অতীতে পরগনার নামানুসারে অঞ্চল চিহ্নিত করা হতো এবং ভৌগলিক ব্যবধানের ফলে ভাষা ও জীবন যাত্রায় কিঞ্চিৎ তারতম্য দেখা দিত। সাধারণ দৃষ্টিতে অনেকেই এই তারতম্যকে গোষ্ঠী দেখা বিভাজন বলে ধারণা করে থাকে। সমাজ জীবনে এর কোন প্রভাব নাই। গোষ্ঠী বিভাজন না থাকলেও গোত্র এবং নিকনি নামে দুটি পরিচয় সূত্র সমাজে অস্তিত্ব আছে।

গোত্র হলো বংশ পরিচয়। মহান পূর্ব পুরুষদের নামানুসারে গোত্র পরিচয় হয়। এই গোত্র পরিচয় পিতৃ ধারায় প্রবাহিত হয়। পিতার গোত্র পরিচয় সন্তানদের উপর বর্তায়। কিন্তু কেবল মাত্র পুত্র সন্তানেরাই গোত্র পরিচয় বহন করে চলে। কন্যা সন্তান বিয়ের পরে স্বামীর গোত্র গ্রহণ করে,

অর্থাৎ বিবাহ মাধ্যমে নারী গোত্রান্তরিত হয়।

নিকান হলো পূর্ব পুরুষদের সুদূর অতীতের মূল ভূমিখণ্ডের নাম, তথা বাসস্থানের নাম নিকনি মাতৃ ধারায় প্রবাহিত হয়। কেননা হাজং সমাজে নারী বৈবাহিক বন্ধনে আবদ্ধ হয়ে স্বামীর ঘরে চলে যায়। পুরুষেরা জন্মস্থানেই বহাল থাকে। নারীরা স্থানান্তরিত হয় বলে তাদের বংশ পরিচয় বহন করে চলার দরকার আছে। একই নিকনিভুক্ত লোকদের একই পরিবারের সদস্য মনে করা হয়ে থাকে।

একজন পুত্র সন্তান পিতার গোত্র এবং মাতার নিকনি বহন করে। একজন পুরুষ তার বাহিত গোত্র সন্তানদের উপর বর্তাতে পারে, কিন্তু তার নিকনি সন্তানদের অর্পণ করতে পারেনা।

একজন নারী তাঁর বাহিত গোত্র স্বামীর ঘরে এসে বিসর্জন দেয় এবং স্বামীর গোত্রে পরিচিতি হয়। কিন্তু তার নিকনি পূর্ববৎ বলবৎ থাকে এবং সন্তানদের অর্জন করে।

দেব্য কাজে এবং পারলৌকিক

ক্রিয়া বা কর্ম গোত্র পরিচয় দরকার হয় এবং বৈবাহিক সম্বন্ধ স্থাপনের বেলায় নিকনি পরিচয় প্রয়োজন হয়। সম নিকনিতে নারী পুরুষের বিবাহ অবৈধ। বর্তমানে নিকনি প্রচলন বিলুপ্তির পথে।

সম্পদ সম্পত্তির উপর গোত্র বা নিকনির কোন হস্তক্ষেপ থাকেনা। পরিবার পরিচালনার দায়িত্ব পুরুষের উপর থাকে। যেহেতু নারী বধু রূপে স্বামীর ঘরে চলে যায় কাজেই সম্পত্তির মালিক পুরুষেরাই হয়। এবং উত্তরাধিকার পুত্রগণ হয়।

পুরুষ এবং নারী প্রত্যেকের ব্যক্তিগত সম্পত্তি অর্জনের অধিকার আছে। নারীর সম্পত্তি কন্যা প্রাপ্ত হয় এবং কন্যার অবর্তমানে পুত্রগণ লাভ করে।

কোন দুষ্কর্ম বা অপরাধ গাওঁ সমাজে গাওঁবাসীর সহযোগীতার গাওঁবুড়া দ্বারা বিচার করা হয়। গাওঁ বিচার মেনে নিতে দোষী ব্যক্তিকে বাধ্য করানোর জন্য প্রয়োজন বোধে গাওঁ অবরোধ দেওয়া হয়। গাওঁ অবরোধ চলা কালীন তার সামাজিক অধিকার গুলো স্থগিত

করা হয়। এই প্রকারের অবরোধ কোন ব্যক্তি বা পরিবারের উপরে আরোপ হতে পারে। কেবল মাত্র গাওঁ সমাজ দ্বারা অবরোধ আরোপ হলে দোষীব্যক্তি দূরতী কোন গাওঁ সমাজে গিয়ে সামাজিক অধিকার ভোগ করার সুযোগ গ্রহণের সম্ভাবনা থাকে।

সমস্যার বিষয় গাওঁ সমাজের আওতার বাহিরে হলে চাকলা বৈঠক বসে। চাকলার দ্বারা গৃহীত সিদ্ধান্ত চাকলা অন্তর্ভুক্ত সকল গাওঁ মেনে নেয়।

চৌদ্দআনি বৈঠক বসার মত গুরুত্ব সমস্যা সচরাচর দেখা যায় না।

বর্ণিত সামাজিক ব্যবস্থার দ্বারা হাজং সমাজ পরিচালিত হয়ে চলেছে। গাওঁ সমাজেই সমাজ সদস্যদের সমস্যা ও অপরাধগুলো সুরাহা করা খুবই ইতিবাচক দিক। সমাজের বিধি বিধান গুলো গাওঁ সমাজ দ্বারাই বঞ্চিত হয়। তরে এই বিধি বিধানগুলো লিখিত আকার দেওয়ার দরকার এবং আধুনিক উপযোগী পরিমার্জন দরকার।

হাজং অর্ণব

গারোবাধা

গারোপাহার, মেঘালয়



Traditional Administrative Systems and Youth Institutions of the Lais of North East India

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The Lais are descended through Tibet and Burma (now Myanmar), and now inhabiting present day Sagaing Division and Chin State of Burma, Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh and Manipur and Mizoram State of India. However, this writing mainly focuses only on a section of Lai people living in Lai Autonomous District Council Area of Mizoram State of North East India. People living in Lai Autonomous District of Mizoram State had descended from Chin State of Burma between AD 1700 and AD 1900. People descended prior to this period, that is, between AD 1500 and AD 1700, had passed through this Lai Autonomous District and disappeared to Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.

Traditional Administrative Systems

The Lais, as other Chin ethnic groups, such as Mizo, Hmar and Thado, construct patriarchal society, in which all important decisive roles centre around men not women in the society. Traditionally, they established *khuah* meaning “village”, that is, a group of families living for a longer period of time in one

settlement. *Bawi* meaning “chief”, ruled the village and *upa* which means “selected elders from his subjects” helped *bawi* in his ruling of the village. *Bawi* system of administration seems to be first appeared when they lived at *Simpi* in Chin State about AD 1400. The power of *bawi* was supreme and was unlimited. He was the guardian and ruler of



his “subjects” *zapizaran*. He could expel his subject if he wished and could also terminate one’s life.

Bawi had population, territory and sovereign power over his subjects and territory. This relationship between population, territory and *bawi* of the village is determined by *phung* which means government. This relationship can technically be termed as “chieftainship” in English and *bawiphung* in Lai

language. In chieftainship, *bawi* possessed religious and political powers mandated from *khuahrum* which is the guardian god of village territory. *Bawi* ruled village on behalf of this guardian god, which was believed to be the real owner of land. As a result, no one from other lineage had the right to inherit chieftainship, it must rather be inherited by direct descendents. Traditionally, eldest son inherited chieftainship.

Bawi also ruled more than a village, sometimes more than fifty and even more or so; this kind of *bawi* is termed as *ramuk bawi* in Lai language. Chief Con Bik of Chin State and Vanhnuaitlir Hlawnceu of Chittagong Hill Tracts are cases in point: they ruled fifty or more villages in their times. *Ramuk bawi* collected taxes from the chiefs of all the villages under their suzerainty. By this fact, even T.H. Lewin, in his *Wild Races of South Eastern India*, described Lai as “to be more a nation than a tribe”.

The most fundamental unit in the political structure of Lai traditional society is *chungkhar* which means “family” in which *pa* “father” is the head of the family. Males are very important

in Lai society, traditionally eldest son inherits father's property/ies. So, groups of families, as mentioned before, constitute **sang**, "a section of a village" and **khua** "village" which in turn contributes to be identified as **ram** in Lai traditional concept of polity; and the peoples therein along with all their ways of life are termed as **miphun**. By this very fact, **ram le miphun** go hand in hand in Lai traditional concept of polity. Ram is also expressed as **ti le tlang**; for example, "Lawngtlai cu Hlawnceu bawinak ti le tlang pei a si cu" meaning "Lawngtlai is the suzerainty of Hlawnceu clan".

So, the traditional system of administration in Lai society is chieftanship **bawiphung** which is a government by the "chief" **bawi** and his "council of elders", that is, **bwi le upa**. The political activities of chief and the council of elder are meaningfully expressed as **khuakhan lairelnak** in which we find the intrinsic values of supernatural forces in the phoneme of **khua** and human-natural forces in the phoneme of **lai**. In Lai traditional understanding of political administration, the significance of religion is clearly manifested as in other society. However, our forefathers were keen to know dividing lines between religious and political activities, despite the fact that religion and politics are intertwined in tribal society.

As traditional Lai society was and even now agrarian in nature,

bawi along with **upa** was responsible in plotting and distributing of lands among the citizens of his village. For **bawi** is the owner of land for cultivation, citizens of the village in turn paid **sachiah le rawlrel** meaning "taxes on meat whether domestic or wild animals and paddy from fields" to ensure his royal status and powers. In addition **bawi**



received revenues from foods of water and bees of cliff. **Bawi** could also be identified by the construction of his house, dresses and his exemption in normal social services rendered by his citizens as work forces for the welfare of the village.

Youth Institution of Lai Ethnic Group

As is intrinsic to human nature, even different Chin ethnic groups developed internal conflicts among themselves in seeking their communal interests. For this reason, there arose several conflicts even between the Zos and the Lais. As the Lais were the most war-like peoples in the past among various Chin ethnic groups, tribal group such as Mizo (Lushai) living next to them were fought

and chased down towards northern part of present day Mizoram State of India. So, in order to defend themselves from Lai warriors, the Mizo (Lushai) intrinsically developed a kind of defensive institution or dormitory called **zawlbuk** in which young men of a village gathered together and remained alert at night on security ground due to Lai warriors. Eventually, **zawlbuk** developed into a centre for discipline and education of the youth of the Mizos. However, for the coming of Christianity in Mizoram and the growing irrelevancy of the existence of **zawlbuk**, it had now disappeared and had been replaced by a voluntary organization called **Young Mizo Association**.

But, for the youth of the Lais, there was no circumstance like that of the Mizo (Lushai) in the past to compel them to develop a kind of institution like **zawlbuk**, for this being so, the Lais had no institution of **zawlbuk** or dormitory. The youth of the Lais in the past depended mainly upon their families and elders in the society. Father and mother or elders in the family gave counsel to young boys and girls; they told them how to help father and mother, how to work and how to behave among others. By this very fact, importance of family in Lai society is very high. Moreover, young boys by custom courted a girl of their choice in a group, they learnt making friendship, dealing with opposite sexes and

many things from there. In Lai traditional society, the house of **bawi** and his **thinthang** “platform” played important roles and even as a kind of social institution for the public. However, we now developed a kind of social institution called **Young Lai Association** in which, in addition to family and the church, young boys and girls are trained in many ways.

Conclusion

In writing about the past, care must be taken to make correction of the mistakes of the past. For this, this writing is intended to make correction of some writings about the past of the Lais. The Lais are of one of the Chin ethnic groups of Mongoloid stock in origin, descended through Tibet and

Burma, and presently inhabiting Chin State of Burma, Mizoram State of India and Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. However, this article focuses mainly on the Lais living in Lai Autonomous District Council Area of Mizoram State of North East India.

Traditional administrative systems of the Lais are **bawiphung** “chieftainship” and **ramuk bawiphung** “chiefdom”. **Bawi**, “chief” was the head of the political and the religious institution of the Lais in the past. He was helped by **bawi upa** and was obeyed by his subjects of the village. For the chief is the administrator of his village, the members of the village paid **sachiah rawlrel**, “taxes on meat and paddy”. Chieftainship was normally hereditary and the

eldest son traditionally inherited chieftainship in Lai society. There are six principal royal clans of the Lais, such as **Fanai, Cinzah, Zathang, Hlawning, Hlawnceu** and **Khenglawt**. However, there were few persons who became chiefs by chances and abilities; these were exceptional. In addition, just as the eldest son of the chief inherited chieftainship, the eldest son of **zapizaran** “commonners” inherited father’s properties. Family played crucial roles in Lai society, because of this reason coupled with the bravery of ethnic Lais in the past, there was no institution like **zawlbuk** or dormitory for the youth of the Lais.



Traditional Institutions of the Hmar Tribe

The Hmar tribe's traditional institution can be grouped under different heads such as the family, clanship, marriage, Buonzawl (Youth dormitory), the Chief and his Councilors, the Priest, the Village Crier, the Blacksmith and the Youth Commander.

1. Family: The family was the smallest unit in every social kinship system throughout the world and is also the first centre of learning or in other words, the first institution. It is the first major tendency to introduce the child to his many social roles. The family also acts as important educational institution for the child as he learns to live in the society. Opportunity is given to him each day to observe family administration through a trained and experienced head of the family. He learns to respect his parents and elders. He learns to share, to play, to cooperate and to conduct himself before is called upon to shoulder public responsibility. He cannot be selfish in such a family set-up, and corporate life of the most congenial type is cultivated. Educational activities and processes surround him from sunrise to sundown. He is thoroughly educated to perpetuate the religion, culture and tradition of his family before

he leaves his parents to start a new home of his own.

A Hmar family usually comprises of the grandparents, the husband and wife, married and unmarried children and grandchildren. The father is the head of the family and is the presiding authority in all socio-religious matters of the family and also, the representative of the family in all community affairs. His decision is always final and binding. The father enjoys widespread and unquestioned authority from his subordinates. The relationship between a father and the offspring was of respect and obedience on the part of the offspring and authority on the part of the father.

Mealtime is regarded as the best time for family discussion of any matters and topic as this is the only time where they usually attend to one common thing in a day. Children are taught the value of life, the need to respect their elders, what to do and what not to do, etc during this time.

2. Clanship: The Hmars social structure is based on Tribe-Clan-sub clan-Family-Individual category. They have a strong social interactions based on Tribes as a whole not only on the basis of clans. There are as

much as 24 different clans found among the Hmars. Each of these clans is divided into sub-clans. Each of these clans resides in a particular area or village and many of the villages are named on the name of the clan occupying it (Dr. Laldena, 1995). Clanship among them does not regulate marriage rules. An individual can select his mate from any clan including his own. But the incidence of preferential marriage is not rare as reflected from some of their kinship terminology (Mother-Brother - Daughter). There is no rule prohibiting clan endogamy or exogamy. These clans are further sub-divided into 180 sub-clans/families. The Zote clan has the largest sub-group numbering as many as 14 and Sakum clan is without any sub-clan. Hmar society is patrilineal. It is obligatory for the clan members to help each other during agricultural operations, house construction, and birth and death ceremonies.

A Hmar can marry any woman except a consanguineous kin. Traditionally, marriage with the mother's brother's daughter was preferred. The Hmars are monogamous. In olden days, a chief desired to marry another chief's daughter.

Kinship Terminology

<u>Hmâr terms</u>	<u>English translation</u>
Zuo-pa, Pa	Father
Chuon-nu, nu	Mother
Pa-hrawn	Step-father
Nu-hrawn	Step-mother
Û	Elder
Û-pa	Elder brother
Û-nu	Elder sister
Sang-pa	Younger brother
Sang-nu	Younger sister
Pu	Grand father
Pi	Grand mother
Mâk-pa	Female relative's husband
Mo (Mou)	Daughter-in-law
Pa-te	Father's younger brother
Ni-te	Father's younger sister
Pa-pui	Father's elder brother
Ni-pui	Father's elder sister
Pu-pui	Mother's elder brother
Nu-pui	Mother's elder sister or father's elder brother's wife
Pu-te	Mother's brother
Unau-pa	Brother
Unau-nu	Sister
Far-nu	Female relative from the same clan
Laibung	Male relative from the same clan
La-va	Sister's younger brother son
Nu-lam	Two mâk-pa who married a girls from the same clan/sisters
Tu-pa	Grandson or Father's sister's son
Tu-nu	Granddaughter or Father's sister's daughter

3. Marriage: Marriage is either by mutual consent or elopement; the latter is less respectable though. At first, the boy and girl go through a period of mutual understanding, usually at the girl's residence. When the boy wishes to marry, he sends messengers to the girl's parents to settle the marriage. The clan members of the boy and girl then go through a period of negotiation and work out the details of the marriage. After a certain day is agreed upon, the

marriage takes place in the church in front of a pastor in case of converted Christians. The amount of bride price ranges from Rs.300 to Rs. 500. The amount is divided among the kin of the bride's family. The major share goes to the bride's father and smaller amounts are given to the paternal and maternal relatives. The rule of residence after marriage is patrilocal. In case the girl seeks a divorce, she has to persuade her parents to agree to refund the bride price,

which they have received, called "sum insuo". In case of the boy, he simply gives a sum of Rs. 40 to the girl, called "mâkman". The bride price of the boy is forfeited if the divorce is initiated by the boy. Widows can remarry again, and this is practiced by quite a good number of divorcees.

In case of original believers (no converted) perform marriage in traditional way.

4. Buonzawl: One of the most important characteristics

features of any olden tribal society is the existences of one social institution called Buonzawl (dormitory) for the youth. The origin of this important institution known as, Buonzawl or Sier in a Hmar village was lost in oblivion. It was invariably built in the largest open area in the centre of the village near the Chief's house. The Hmar of Mizoram and those villages bordering something called this dormitory as Zawlbuk, like the Lushais. This important dormitory institution can be regarded as the most effective agency of education among the Hmars as well as their kindred tribes before the introduction of modern system of education in their areas and, in the absence of any formal educational system.

Buonzawl is built and operated by the whole village community. It is similar to other houses in materials but different in shape and size. A single entrance obtains access to the building by a platform of rough wood at the uphill end. A large fireplace is constructed in which a fire is kept burning day and night. Right by the fire is an open space used for recreation including wrestling and dances. This particular place, according to some writers is what was known's as the 'Buonzawl'. The Hmar term of 'Buon' means 'wrestling' and 'zawl' means "a flat surface" or "an open space". There are sleeping platforms on all side of the wall except the front part. All the male youth of the village who had attained puberty are supposed to sleep here at

night. Each young boy in the village is under obligation to supply fire wood for the Buonzawl and failure of which will be reprimanded or punish by the Val Upa or Youth Commander.

Its role and importance:

i) Security: In the earlier tribal societies, it was a common affair to attack the people of another tribe for some reason or the other. This led to inter-tribal feuds endangering the peaceful living of the common people. More detrimental than this barbarous act was an inter-clan feud that commonly occurred among the tribes for want of being dominant over the other. For this reason, it became necessity for all the young man to sleep together in one place in order to protect the village from the enemy, or prepared them for any emergency. To meet such a possible attack, a collective action with prompt move was more desirable. The Buonzawl served as a control room in times of such an emergency. The Pawi (Lai) and the Lakher Mara tribes who are now mostly concentrated in the southern part of present Mizoram state do not have this type of institution. The Pawis claimed that they, being a dominant tribe or clan do not fine any reason to have such an institution. As such, the security factor can be attributed as one of the most important reason for the origin of 'dormitory house' in many tribal societies. War strategy or, hunting expedition are discussed and planned here under the leadership of the Val-Upas.

ii). Education: Buonzawl, at the beginning was just like any other hall meant for discussing matters concerning the public, but it was later developed into a kind of institution where youngsters were given rigorous training in the art of tribal war, discipline, wrestling and village administration. Besides, the Buonzawl played a very significant role in imparting the tribal philosophy of life, Tlawmngaina, an untranslatable term binding all to be hospitable, kind, unselfish and helpful to others- a moral force which finds expressions in the self sacrifice for the service of others. Buonzawl also gives an important opportunity for the boys to socialize by mixing and sleeping with others. The boys also learnt how to respect the elders, one very important moral duty of every human being and prepared them to be a better man.

iii). Recreation & Guest House: As the name implies, the Hmars' 'Buonzawl' is a 'wrestling place' or, a ring. Wrestling is one of the most important forms of recreation and games. All male visitors to the village and guest who are younger than forty are required to sleep in the Buonzawl. A wrestling match quickly arranged and the visitor cannot escape the challenge. Wrestling here is different from others in that the wrestler's sole intention is not to hurt but to cultivate friendly feeling. Even the Reverend Edwin Roland, one of the English pioneer missionary among the Mizo

tribes, along with his teammates Vanchunga, Savawma and Taitea were spared from this type of challenge and had to agree to it in one small village called Sihfa in the den Lushai Hills. When a wrestling match is over, the Val-Upa will send the boys to collect cloths enough to keep their guest warm through the night. The Buonzawl is not that cold even in winters as the 'fire' is always kept burning to give warmth to the inmates.

Abolition of Buonzawl: Like any other tribal traditions and customs, the Buonzawl also could not withstand the force of social changes that took places in a fast and forceful pace. Of all the forces that contributed for the decaying of this important tribal institution, the coming of Christianity along with the introduction of modern education can be regarded as the most important and forceful because, with the little formal education they got from the Christian missionaries in the Churches and schools, parents began to feel that they could control their children better at home than the Buonzawl and were prepared to send their children to school where the children could gain more educationally. The relatively peace and calm atmosphere maintained by the British administrators and the undermining power of the village chiefs may also be attributed to the down fall of the Buonzawl.

This very important traditional house of education was completely abolished in the then Lushai Hills in the year 1938.

While the Val-Upas also lost their powers and popularity with the immediate establishment of the Young Lushai Association (latter changed into Young Mizo Association), the Hmars somehow withstand that change- of-guard and retain the Val-Upas with more vigour and go without their own Hmar Youth Association till April 7, 1985.

5. Political Administration : The Hmar society, from time immemorial, has a complex and complicated political set-up. Political set up and hierarchies were divided into various capacities.

A. The Chief: The Hmars were once a nomadic tribe and their frequent movements and migrations were solely motivated by economic forces; that is, the search for a better cultivable land. In their grim struggle for existence and their constant war with other tribes, they must have needed at that stage of their evolution a strong leader who could maintain the cohesiveness of the society and also protect it from external aggressions. Thus, a person who has the capacity to lead the people in their struggle for charisma and the readiness on the part of his followers to conform to the institution or models laid down by him, emerges as 'Lal' (chief) and are being recognized as such by the people.

The Chief was entitled a certain portion of paddy harvested by their subjects and also the foreleg of each four legged wild animals shot or

trapped by the villagers. If a villager decided to migrate to another village regardless of the Chief's order, the Chief could confiscate his property. And if he sold a 'Mithun' or any other cattle to other villagers, some specified portion of the price was to be given to the Chief. The right of the Chief to these services were in fact the foundation of his political power and his accumulated wealth, which enable him to command respect and loyalty of his own clan or tribe and other clans or tribes. This practice actually amounted to virtual recognition of the Chief as the supreme authority and the sole owner of the land.

Though the Hmar Chiefs wielded immense power, they hardly lost their democratic character. Theoretically though all the land belongs to him, yet the owners and the Chiefs were only the distributors of these lands. They also had according to the advice of the Council of Ministers called 'Khawnbawl' and the prevailing societal rules and regulations. He hardly takes decisions independently. However, one point to be noted here is that the Hmar societies being highly patriarchal, involvement of women in village administration is practically nil.

B. The village Council and Counselors: In each Chieftom, there was a Village Council. The specific character, composition and methods of function of the Council varied from clan to clan or from village to village. The Chief was the supreme head of the Council. Below the Chief

were the Muolkil, Mitha (Chief Counselor) and ordinary Khawnbawls (Counselors). In the absence of the Chief, the Chief Counselor took the place of the Chief and presided over the meetings. The Counselors who were selected by the Chief himself were normally wealthy and influential group of persons, kinsmen or close friends of the Chief. They were rewarded with the most fertile 'Jhum lands' and also exempted from forced labour *this point needs to be elaborated. Thus, the Chief and the Counselors were in a sense, constituted a privileged group in a traditional Hmar society and Village Council through which they operate, tended to serve their own personal interest many a times.

In Manipur, with the enactment of the Manipur Village Council Act of 1956, the office of the Chief was diminished to a great extent though its total abolishment could not be completed due to opposition from various quarters especially the Thadou-Kuki community in particular. In the bordering state of Mizoram, the institution of the Chief was already abolished in 1946 with the then Mizo Union, the first political organization of the Mizos spearheading the movement for the same. Under the Act of 1956, the Chief was made the Chairman of the Village Authority without any other discretionary powers. Even the benefits he usually gets in the past, such as 'Busung-Sadar' and free

voluntary services from his subjects are also no longer given to him.

A Hmar traditional Village Council combined in itself, both Judicial and Criminal. Before it hears any dispute, the complainant was under obligation to offer Zu (Rice Beer) to the Councilors and, if he won the case, the other party not only reimbursed his expenditure but also fined Pigs or other livestock as the case maybe. The most serious offence committed by a person if found guilty by this Council will be fined with a term called 'Siel le Salam'. The Chief was armed with extra-Judicial powers, which nobody questions. For instance, if a criminal or adulterer managed to touch the 'Lal Sutpui' (Middle post of the Chief's house), the avenger would be considered guilty or enemy of the Chief if he continued to make attempts at vengeance.

C. The Priest: Another very important official next to the Chief and his Council of Ministers is the Thiempu (Priest). All such transferring of cases shows that the Hmar traditional (pre-Christian) society, their politics, religion and judiciary were independent. Administering an oath or subjecting the party concerned to ordeal to test innocence or guiltiness normally settled such cases that are referred to the Priest by the Village Council.

One of this methods performed by the priest is called 'Thingkung deng'. Under this

system, a pot of rice beer is kept and filled with water up to the brim. The Priest then chanted, "God of haven, god of the universe revealed his sin and may his picture appear on the water of the rice-beer. Give him fear and let him live only for one lunar month". After this, the real culprit used to disclose their hidden crimes fearing that the priest will be really calling their spirits. It is also said that the face of the culprit sometimes appears on the rice – beer pot.

The final method of bringing justice employed by the priest to find out the offending person is caught, Tui Lilut (water immersion). For this trial or final traditional judgment, the two persons who have the dispute are taken to a nearby river after performing a certain rite at the Chief's house before they moved out along with the Chief and his Ministers. On the bank of the river, the priest sprinkles the blood of a fowl on the top of their head and if the blood flows down the nose line of either of them, the onlookers just believed that he is the innocent of the two. The Priest then chants, "Ye God of above and God of under, Who ever tell truth among these two; Let him immerse in the water and who ever tell lies, Let him float like an empty can".

As the priest chants these lines, the innocent person was emboldened and strengthened and so dived deep into the water and came out with a handful of sand from the floor. On the other hand, the guilty person, with already fear and guilty feeling in his mind

can hardly survive in the water for long no matter how good a diver he is. The responsibility of the priest is automatically transferred to the church Pastors and church elders after the Hmars as a whole embraced Christianity in the beginning of the twentieth century.

D. The Youth Commander:

Other important official of village government is the Val Upa (youth commander). The Youth Commanders operated through the organization of Buonkaw (Bachelor' Dormitory) by imparting strict discipline and vigorous training in the art of tribal warfare, defence, etc to youngsters (except women). In times of peace, the youth commanders mobilized the youths and rendered free but compulsory service to the society. Their influence was so great that even the Chief and his Councilors could at times be subject to the will of the youth.

The Hmar traditional institution of Val Upa is on the wane with the closing down of Zawlbuk in the then Lushai Hills in the year 1938 and, although the Val Upas-

are still there in the village to lead and commands the youths in certain social activities, their work and importance to switch on the Hmar Youth Association, an umbrella organization of the youth of the community which had its branches in almost every Hmar villages since 1985.

F. The Black Smith & the Village Crier:

The main function of the Thirsu (blacksmith) in a Hmar village was to make weapons and agricultural implements and, he received a certain specified quantity of paddy annually from the farmers who utilizes his services. The Tlangsam (Village Crier) proclaimed the orders of the Chief and the Councilors; and he was exempted from force-labour or any other community labour. With the advancement of modern systems of governance and equipments in the present days, the function of the village Blacksmith and, Messenger have lessened considerably. With their benefits of exemption from compulsory social services no more, and the donation of

paddy for them no longer enforced, Black smithy is taken up by who ever have the talent and a Village Crier is now employed by the village with a certain honorarium.

Rule of inheritance:

General rule of inheritance is ultinogeniture i.e. the youngest son inherits all property. The older sons can expect at least a portion of the property. In the olden days, in wealthy families when a son marries he receives a certain number of houses and becomes an independent chief. At the same time a share of his father's guns, necklaces, and other valuables are made over to him. The youngest son remains with his father till his death and then succeeds to the village. Much the same custom prevails among the common people even today, though the material form of the inheritance has changed.

Succession of family office is patri-potestal i.e. the eldest son becomes the head of the family after the death of the father.

(<http://www.inpui.com/2009/02/traditional-institutions-of-hmar-tribe.html>)



स्वच्छता से समृद्धि



शिवराज सिंह चौहान, मुख्यमंत्री, मध्यप्रदेश

स्वच्छ मध्यप्रदेश

- मध्यप्रदेश में 54 लाख से ज्यादा ग्रामीण घरों में शौचालय बने।
- 2400 से ज्यादा ग्राम पंचायतें खुले में शौच से मुक्त।
- सभी स्कूलों एवं आंगनवाड़ी में शौचालय निर्माण प्रगति पर।
- दो अक्टूबर 2019 तक सभी घरों में होंगे शौचालय।
- इंदौर जिला देश में स्वच्छता में दूसरे नम्बर पर।

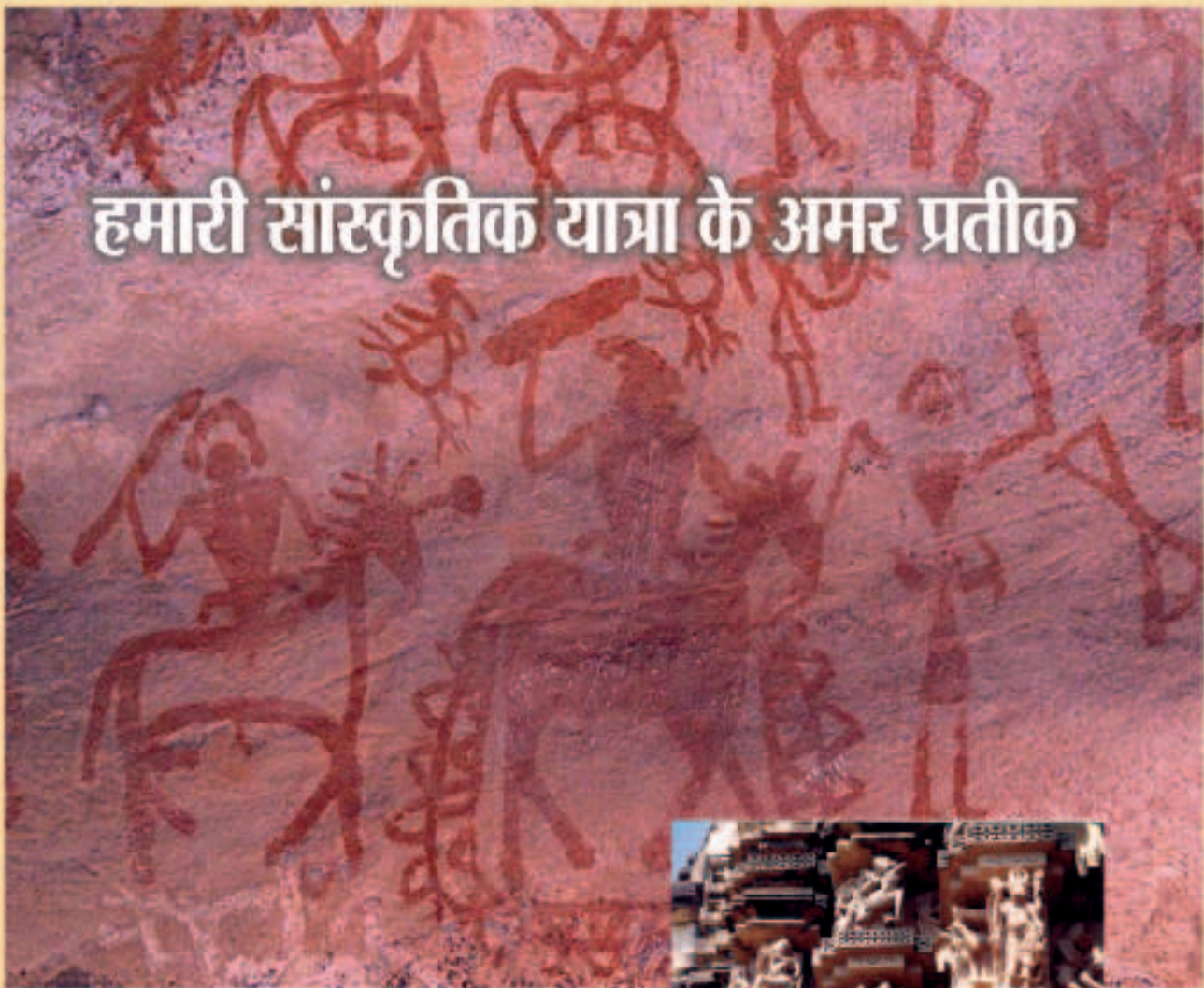
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स्वच्छ मध्यप्रदेश



सुरक्षित परिवेश

हमारी सांस्कृतिक यात्रा के अमर प्रतीक



ये मानव सभ्यता की यात्रा के निशान हैं,
भीमबैठका के भित्तिचित्र,
साँची के स्तूप,
खजुराहो के मंदिर।
लगातार याद दिलाते हुए कि
हम परिभाषित होते हैं
इस यात्रा से।

इन्हें बचाना है,
क्योंकि हमें बचाना है।

विरासतों को सहेजता
मध्यप्रदेश



Digital India
Power To Empower

डिजिटल इंडिया डिजिटल मध्यप्रदेश

मध्यप्रदेश में डिजिटल इंडिया की पहल

सहूलियतें आपके लिए :

- डिजिटल लोकर
- एम.पी. मोबाइल एप के जरिये 120 सेवाएँ
- सरकारी काम-काज में सेवा के लिये एम.पी. ई-नेल सेवा
- 400 से अधिक सर्वोत्तम क्वालिटी रूज की सुविधा
- 60 लाख, 40 हजार से ज्यादा डिजिटल जाति प्रमाण-पत्र जारी
- लोक सेवा गांठटी अधिनियम में 22 विभाग की 135 सेवाएँ
- एस.एम.एस. नेटवर्क के जरिये 8 करोड़ से अधिक एस.एम.एस.
- जी.आई.एस. तैब स्थापित।

और यह भी पढ़ें

- कम्यूटर दक्षता प्रमाणीकरण परीक्षा (CPCT) की शुरुआत
- ई-शक्ति अभियान के छिट्ठीय चरण की शुरुआत
- लगभग 1 करोड़ महिलाओं को मिलेगा लाभ
- ई-दक्ष
- ई-ऑफिस
- एक क्लिक पर संपत्ति का पंजीयन
- ई-ऑनलाइन से रेट की नीलामी।

श्री शिवराज सिंह चौहान
मुख्यमंत्री

विकास पथ पर निरंतर अग्रसर मध्यप्रदेश



“ अगर सही नेतृत्व हो, नीति स्पष्ट हो, नीयत साफ हो, इरादे मोक हों, दिशा निर्धारित हो, मकसद पाने का इरादा हो तो बीमारू राज्य भी प्रगतिशील राज्य बन सकता है। इसका उतम उदाहरण शिवराज जी, उनकी टीम और मध्यप्रदेश ने दिखाया है।

नरेश्वर शर्मा, प्रशासनिक
जलेश्वर शर्मा, डॉ. में अग्रसर



शिवराज सिंह चौहान
मुख्यमंत्री, मध्यप्रदेश

- प्रदेश, देश में सबसे तेज गति से बढ़ते राज्यों में एक, विकास दर दो अंकों में, वर्ष 2014-15 में सकल राज्य घरेलू विकास दर 10% से अधिक।
- पिछले चार वर्ष में कृषि विकास दर औसत 20% रही, दुनिया में सर्वाधिक।
- वर्ष 2014-15 में कृषि उत्पादन रिकार्ड 456 लाख मीट्रिक टन।
- लगातार तीन साल से कृषि उत्पादन के लिए राष्ट्रीय कृषि कर्मण पुरस्कार।
- पिछले एक दशक में सिंचाई क्षमता 7.5 लाख हेक्टेयर से बढ़कर 36 लाख हेक्टेयर।
- प्रदेश की पहली नदी जोड़ो योजना- नर्मदा-क्षिप्रा सिविल लिंक योजना पूर्ण। नर्मदा-नालवा गंभीर लिंक योजना का कार्य जारी, निर्मित होगी 50 हजार हेक्टेयर सिंचाई क्षमता।
- प्रदेश की उपलब्ध विद्युत क्षमता पिछले दस साल में 4 हजार मेगावॉट से बढ़कर हुई 15,500 मेगावॉट, 24 घंटे विद्युत आपूर्ति से ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में बड़े रोजगार के अवसर।
- नवीन और नवकरणीय ऊर्जा के क्षेत्र में अग्रणी, 1600 मेगावॉट क्षमता स्थापित, नीमच में 130 मेगावॉट का एशिया का सबसे बड़ा सोलर प्लांट स्थापित, 750 मेगावॉट का विश्व का सबसे बड़ा सोलर प्लांट के साथ, 3000 मेगावॉट क्षमता के कार्य निर्माणाधीन।
- उद्योगों में निवेश दस साल में ₹ 53,382 करोड़ से बढ़कर हुआ ₹ 1,14,467 करोड़।
- प्रदेश की 95% सड़कों का अग्रण, 62 हजार किलोमीटर सड़कों का निर्माण, 14,800 बसाहटें ग्रामीण सड़कों से जुड़ी।
- एक करोड़ 64 लाख बच्चों का शाला में हुआ नामांकन, हर बच्चे तक गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा की पहुँच, बारहवीं कक्षा में उत्कृष्ट प्रदर्शन पर 10 हजार विद्यार्थियों को मिले लेपटॉप।
- आदिवासी वर्ग के विद्यार्थियों ने कक्षा 12 के साथ-साथ राष्ट्रीय प्रवेश परीक्षा द्वारा IIT/NLIU/Medical में प्रवेश प्राप्त कर गुणवत्ता की पहचान बनाई, राज्य सरकार इन विद्यार्थियों का समस्त शैक्षणिक व्यय का भुगतान कर रही है।
- आदिवासी विद्यार्थियों को स्नातक योग्यता उपरान्त IAS परीक्षा की तैयारी हेतु दिल्ली में कोचिंग की सुविधा तथा विदेश में अध्ययन हेतु फयनित विद्यार्थियों को समस्त शैक्षणिक शुल्क का भुगतान राज्य सरकार द्वारा किया जा रहा है।
- महिला सशक्तिकरण के नये प्रयास, पंचायतों, नगरीय निकायों में 50% आरक्षण, संविदा शिक्षक में 50% और पुलिस की नौकरियों में 30% आरक्षण, बेंटी बचाओ अभियान संचालित।
- लाइली लक्ष्मी योजना में 21 लाख कन्याओं को मिलेगी जीवन के हर पड़ाव पर मदद।
- मुख्यमंत्री कन्या विवाह योजना में तीन लाख 57 हजार से अधिक जरूरतमंद कन्याओं के विवाह सम्पन्न।
- बाल विवाह के विरुद्ध “लाइडो” अभियान संचालित, 70 हजार से अधिक विवाह रोकने में सफलता।
- मातृ मृत्यु दर में 114 बिन्दुओं की गिरावट, मातृ मृत्यु दर 335 प्रति लाख प्रसव से घटकर अब हुई 221, राष्ट्रीय औसत से अधिक गिरावट।
- लिंगानुपात पिछले दशक में 919 से बढ़कर अब हुआ 933।
- शिशु मृत्यु दर 76 से घटकर 54 हुई, गिरावट की दर राष्ट्रीय औसत से अधिक।
- छात्रवृत्ति तथा अन्य शासकीय योजनाओं का लाभ सीधे हितग्राहियों के बैंक खाते में।
- युवाओं को उद्योग और व्यवसाय के लिए विभिन्न योजनाओं से अनुदान और ऋण 51 हजार से अधिक युवा लाभान्वित।
- 20 हजार लघु और सूक्ष्म उद्योग स्थापित।
- देश का पहला राज्य जिसमें लोक सेवा गारंटी अधिनियम में 23 विभाग की 163 सेवायें समय में मिलने की गारंटी। इसमें 102 सेवाएँ ऑनलाइन हो गयी हैं।
- डिजिटल मध्यप्रदेश ई-रेगुलरिंग, ई-पेमेंट, ई-पंजीयन, ई-स्टाम्पिंग, ई-साइन जैसे नवाचार, छात्रवृत्तियों, सामाजिक सुरक्षा योजनाओं की तथि हितग्राहियों के बैंक खातों में ट्रांसफर, फारदर्शी प्रशासन।
- सीएम हेलपलाइन- सरकार और नागरिकों के बीच की दूरी सिर्फ एक फोन काल पर, जन शिकायतों का त्वरित और समाधानकारक निराकरण, 60 लाख कल के दिये गये जवाब।
- जन धन योजना अंतर्गत लक्ष्य प्राप्त करने वाला प्रथम राज्य (बड़े राज्यों की श्रेणी में), 1.54 करोड़ परिवारों के पास कम से कम एक बैंक खाता।

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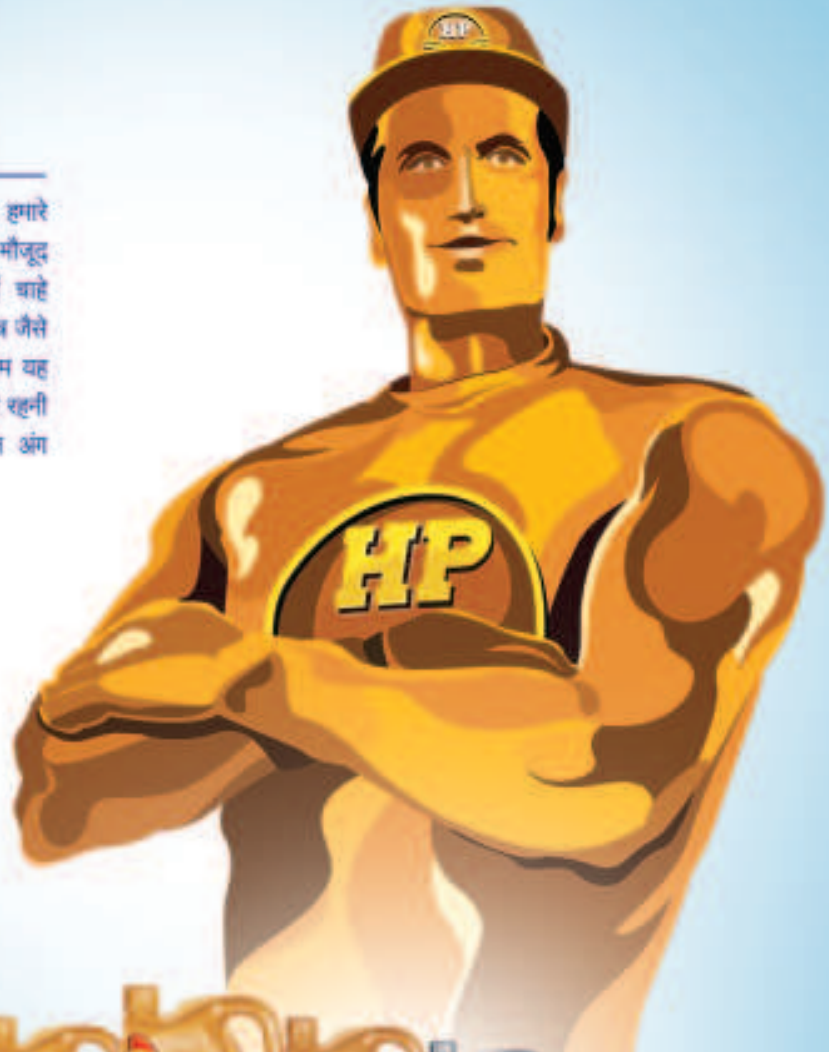


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The Village Organization and Administrative System of Ao Naga Society

- Along Ao

In the study of Naga society and culture, the village identity occupies the most important position in respect of every tribe. The identity of a person is known better through these answers that start from the village and clan hold followed by the tribe's name. Generally, the character of a person is well read even by the name of village in Ao society because every village has peculiar traits of its own whether its history, manner and character, behavior, mode and style of living, accent and administrative system etc. The foundation of socio-cultural pattern among AOs is found in the early civilization at *Chungliyimti* village.

Generally, the sizes of Ao villages are fairly big enough having several hundred of households even a thousand. The social cohesion and stability achieved by these village-communities have succeeded in preserving their traditional values till today. The Ao system of government is known as *Putu Menden* and *Shamen Menchen*. The representatives of various clans form this government. Clan is a small group of families who are the descendents of a common ancestor. Since the members of a clan have a blood relation because of their common ancestor, an

exogamous group represents the 'Tatar Putu Menden. The word 'Tatar' means the chosen leader/entitlement that refers to generation that consists of thirty years in Ao term and Menden means seat. Therefore, 'Tatar Putu Menden' means 'the persons who sit upon that seat of generation to rule for thirty years, where only the persons who are entitled can occupy that seat of administration. After the introduction of the Nagaland Village and Area Council Act of 1978 and the village Development Boards Model Rules, 1980 it is the responsibility of the Village Council to look after the overall developmental aspects of the village. However the existence of traditional system of Putu Menden is recognized by the said act.

Putu Menden is the highest authority in an Ao village and the Tatars exercise their supreme power collectively in their village administration. The younger group carries out the decisions of the Tatars. Tatar Putu Menden is the highest executive office and the seat of judgement, the law enforcing authority over the community. The members of the Tatar Putu Menden are solely responsible for administration of law and justice.

It can be said that the system of *Putu Menden* is based on the practice of meat sharing. The system was established in Chungliyimti and it is found to be very distinct which is followed even today in Ao society. The cutting pattern of meat established at Chungliyimti is still in practice. In one way it can be said that the fundamental basis of the Ao system of administration is based on the share of meat sharing system which is entitled to every clan. Acceptance of a share of meat signifies the registration in Putu Menden. This practice denotes a kind of oath taking in confirmation of accepting the responsibility in the administrative system. Therefore, every individual clan/member in every Putu has a share of meat to eat that confirms the affiliation of his clan and Putu in the Tatar Putu Menden. In the *Mongsen Group* it is known as *Shamen Menchen* which means 'the seat of fundamental basis of meat eating/sharing'. The members who are qualified to sit in Shamen Menchen by virtue of his term/clan/generation are entitled to the share of meat according to their custom. This is how one can understand the system of affiliation of members in Tatar Putu Menden, the "Peoples Parliament" which is the

highest assembly of people. They maintain law and order and settle all disputes in the village. They follow conventional law that was established in Chungliyimti. These laws are transmitted from generation to generation. However the Mongsen System of running the village government is different than Chungliyimti system.

There is great difference between Chungli and Mongsen system of Putu Menden/Shamen Menchen. Generally, the Chungli group follows a longer period tenure system based on a fixed duration of 30 years. However, the Mongsen system is more flexible with a tenureship of six years in the Putu Menden. In certain Chungli speaking villages like Longmisa six years term is followed. It is just like that of the Shamen Menchen system which is entirely based on age group system. The most striking feature of the Chungli system is that, at the end of every generation, 30 years, all the members of putu/councilors vacate the office and a new batch takes over. This new body of administrators consists of several age groups.

In most of the villages, *Chungli* group follows a cycle of five generations who sit in *Putu Menden* in turn. The evolution of this process has strong cultural and social evolution of the society over generations. It depicts the sense of realization among the people for reorganizing the whole system of administration. These generations are as follows: 1) Medemsanger Putu: The

generation of equal people. It is said that they wanted to rule forever without retiring from their seat of administration. But as they become old they were compelled to hand it over to new generation. 2) Mejsanger Putu: The generation who does not run away. 3) Meponsanger Putu: The generations of wind people, uncatchable like the wind. During the time of retirement from Mejsanger there was a heavy wind everywhere. 4) Kosasanger Putu: The generation of broken people who die young. Infact this generation refers to generation of tiger during which they were forced to fight with wild animals, especially the tigers. During this generation the practice of tiger attack by the community was common. 5) Riyongsanger Putu: The generation of many people who proclaim the war. It is time of war with many foes. During this generation more headhunting practices were at hand. People of this generation were real fighters and war heroes. This system of renaissance in Aos began with Medemsanger Putu.¹

Tatar Putu Menden is the highest assembly of people having supreme power in the village administration. It is the highest executive authority of the village. It has the supreme power with regards to external matters of the village. It has supreme judicial powers. It has supreme powers to declare war on another village. It decides on cultivation, how and when paddy should be sown, best time for

marriages and divorces, public ceremonies. It settles disputes on ownership of lands, civil and criminal cases. It makes the public announcements too.

In the event of a debate on certain critical subjects in the village one or more members from each clan of the Putu Menden may make a public utterances or speech dealing with the subject during which words are uttered by putting the spear upright and thrust into the ground. In the process, the speaker uses only his own spear. He simultaneously puts his spear on the ground synchronizing with his words to add more authority and impression in the speech. Only a member of the Putu Menden is entitled to perform such an act of agreement which is highest degree of public pronouncement according to AOs practice. While performing such public pronouncement if the speaker commits a mistake or miscarries his words he is liable to be fined or else certain misfortune occurs which may take even his life. Such performance begins only after swearing to the moon and the sun which implies whatever he speaks should be true.

Putu Menden is composed of different clans. Every clan chooses their clan representatives to be the members in this seat of administration. Putu Menden is generally composed of three tiers. The first tier is called *Ongtsudong*, formed by the head known as *Onger* and his deputy

known as *Tonglu*. The second tier is called as *Tazung Menden*. This is the vital tier in the village republic who acts as the cabinet members in modern times. *Tazung* means 'trunk'. It is presided over by the senior most members *Tazungtiba*. The major clans who are the founder of the village have the right to hold the office of the *Tazung Menden*. The third tier is composed of the following subsidiary groups namely 1) *Tsidongmen*, 2) *Chidangongdang*, 3) *Sosanglak*, 4) *Sungtep*, 5) *Jameja*

Every unit of the Tatar Putu Menden performs distinct roles which are well defined according to their customs. All clans who are said to be founder of the village are entitled to represent in the Putu Menden and they are regulated by traditions. This is a clear example of social stratification in the context of other Indian societies.

All political, social, and cultural business of the village is discussed in the house of the *Onger*. Any decision made at the *Onger's* house becomes statutory in the world of village administration. The court of *Tatar* is held in the house or courtyard of the *Onger* whenever there is any dispute in the village or with other villages, violation of tradition and customs and when any heinous crime is committed. When any case or any business is taken up in the *Onger's* house or courtyard it must be settled in

the same stretch of proceeding. When proceedings of *Tatars* meeting are in progress in *Onger's* house or courtyard, non *Tatars* are not allowed to enter the house or courtyard. Violation of this is penalized according to customary law.

The Penalties are imposed generally by *Putu Menden*. The quantum of penalty varies for offences committed with intention or accidentally or through negligence and the like. The penalty is imposed in consideration of the consequences of the external action and intention. The same penalty is imposed for abetment of conspiracy. Guardian is held responsible for the offences committed by their wards. An offence committed against a stranger is treated quite differently from that of the things done against a person of the same village. In cases of disputes, after ascertaining the consensus by voice, the decision is announced in the presence of both the parties. No death sentence or imprisonment is awarded. The fines are imposed either in cash or in kind or both. The offender has to pay the fine whatever cost may be fixed by the Tatar Menden. When the offender fails to pay it is the responsibility of his clansmen or near relatives to pay the cost.

The Government of India has adopted a special constitutional measure to protect the interest

of the Naga system for managing the affairs of their traditional system. For this purpose, Article 371 (A) had been incorporated in the constitution of India that supports the existing self governing institutions like *Tatar Putu Menden*. It is one of the living examples of traditional self governing institution under this provision. The application of customary laws and usages relating to religious and social practices including the administration of civil and criminal justice and ownership right over the land and its resources have become a legal binding under this special provision. The Village and Area Council Act of 1979 passed by the Legislative assembly of Government of Nagaland confirm the legalization of such provision. In one way or other Nagas are fortunate to have such kind of traditional system of village organization and their own system of self governance from where lessons can be learned. If the Nagas are to inherit and protect the traditional rights for future use, the self governing system will be the most valuable property of the Nagas.

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The Social Administrative System in the Konyak Tribe

Naiwang Konyak

The word 'Konyak' is derived from 'Koanyak' which means 'blackhead' or human; the connotation is that the look of human appears black with headblack. The Konyak land is situated in the north eastern part of Nagaland. The land is a mountainous region with rich product of natural forest. The climate of the land is temperate. The days are warm but nights are cold. Most of the Konyak villages are situated on the mountain top.

The very social system of the Konyak is dependent on the hereditary kingship or Wangship. They make it a point that every village must have a Wang who will have the authority on village administration. In the entire district of every village have Angh (Wang). Some of the villages are Chui, Shengha Chingnyu, Wakching, Longwa, Wanching Shiyong etc. in addition to reigning their respective villages, they have to control some satellite villages, 54 villages are in Arunachal Pradesh. It is worth mentioning that the Wangkhao Govt. College is situated in Mon town and the College was name after the Angh Wangkhao Konyak.

The Konyak society is mostly patriarchal. The entry of women in the re-construction of society

has been very recent. In the changing scenario, the role of women in Konyak tribes is remarkable. They have engaged themselves in uplift of the status of women for the first time through the organization called KNSU in 1986. Till 1992 the number of graduate among women was only 2 and by now the number of graduate women has increase.

The Angh rules each village. He is the sole authority in the village and held in high esteem by his villagers and hold immense power in his village and other subordinate villages; There are altogether seven chief Angh, within Mon district namely: (1) Mon (2) Chui (3) Sengha Chingnyu (4) Longwa (5) Shangnyu (6) Juboka and (7) Tangnyu. The chief Anghs of these villages rule over a group of satellite villages under them some of which are in Arunachal Pradesh with 54 villages and 87 villages in Myanmar. All these villages are Konyak villages having strong customary and traditional relationship with the rest of the 110 villages of the Mon district having no land dispute between the villages and all under the umbrella of the Konyak union. The Angh of a village is assisted-in his task by the Deputy Anghs of each Morung

(Pan) and the elders of the Gaon Burras, each village has a ruling clan and commoner clan or the 'pan' clan. The members of a clan are bound by blood-ties and so inter-marriage is prevented. But they can marry a boy or a girl of other clans. The Anghs belong to the ruling clan.

A heir to the post can take any girl from other clans as his wife but he has to marry a princess of another village as his real wife. The other wives are treated as his concubines and their children cannot claim to become the Angh. The Anghs practice polygamy and can have a number of wives. But only the eldest son of a real princess has the right to inherit his paternal property and to be adorned as a Angh after his father's death.

The Konyak are recognized among other Naga by their tattoos, which they have all over their face and hands; facial tattoos were earned for taking an enemy's head. They are called the land of Angh's. They have the largest population among the Nagas.

Three features are very prominent among the Konyak. We can discuss these in the following way:

Head-hunting: This custom of killing enemy and bringing the

head was indicative of courage and pride in the past. They belief among our forefather's was that some magical power was there in the human skull. In the past, a heroic reception was accorded to a warrior who entered the village with the captured head of the enemy. The village-folk, men and women used to offer ceremonial reception to the hero. The skull was tied in the log drum and dance and merry-making continued throughout the night. A ceremonial fanfare was customary in the recent past. The young men and women in their respective Morung enjoyed such occasions in festival.

1. Tattooing: This is a kind of permanent dying. The skin of the body was perforated and some designs were drawn on the different parts of the body specially on face, chin and bosom. The design making was painful but the men and women in the past accepted it for it was something like a status symbol. But nowadays such practice is

not any more found among the school and college children.

2. The system of Morung: The word 'Morung' is Assemese in origin and it means 'bachelor's dormitories'. The Morung is a survival of the communal house from which private dwelling split off' and the purpose of the dormitory was to prevent incest. With the attainment of the particular age, of boys and girls were sent to these institutes and they remained there till adulthood or till marriage. The young folk were trained in discipline warfare and art of dealing with an emergency, with is losing ground but then still exist in a lesser extent.

The most important festival among the Konyak is Aoling Monyu which is celebrated in spring season and the occasion is related to the sowing of seed the festival start on 1st April and continues till the 6th April. They wear their traditional attire and sing folk song to celebrate the

Aoling festival. Another festival called Laolongmo is celebrated in August after the harvest.

Christianity entered in this area as late as in 1932, under the benign influence of Christianity, there came a change in the mindset of the Konyak. Today most of the Konyak are Christians. The Konyak are hospitable, laborious and lover of games and fun. Khalap or the black tea is their favourite. They are expert in cane-craftsmanship. Other then Nagamese, the lingua-franca among different clans of the Konyak is the Wakching dialect. The present generation however has an inclination towards English which is the medium of instruction in school and college.

The Konyak are intelligent and the spirit of give and take makes their life smooth, viable and inter-dependent.

- *Naiwang Konyak*
Shiyong Village (Mon District)



Administrative Systems and Youth Institutions of Chakhesang Tribe of Nagaland

Dr. R. K. Singh
and Ms. VelavoluTheluo

The Naga tribes are conglomeration of many tribes inhabiting the north-eastern part of India and north-western part of Myanmar. The Naga hills and Arunachal Pradesh region inhabited by 'Nagas' the ethnic groups having almost similar culture and traditions have been named as Nagaland and statehood was given to this region and it became the 16th state of India on 1 December 1963. Apart from Nagaland, there is significant presence of Nagas in Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and small population in Assam.

There are different theories for the origin of the name 'Naga' but most popular one suggests that it originated from the Burmese word 'Naka', meaning people with earrings, where others suggest it means pierced noses. History of the Nagas is unclear, but some anthropologists suggest that they have come from Northern Mongolian region, Southeast Asia or Southwest China and have migrated at different times and settled in the North-eastern region of India well before the arrival of Ahoms in 1228 AD. Whereas description of Nagas, Kirats, Pannagas, Uragas, Kinnars in ancient literature like

Mahabharata suggests that they or similar tribes were inhabiting northwest, north and northeast region during that period.

There are many tribes and sub tribes in Nagas but about 66 of them are distinctly different from each other in terms of dress, language and custom present in the region, out of which 35 tribes exist in Nagaland. Nagaland state officially recognises 17 tribes that includes *Angami, Ao, Chang, Chakhesang, DimasaKachari, Konyak, Kuki, Khiamniungan, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Rongmei, Sumi, Sangtam, Yimchunger and Zeme-Liangmai (Zeliang)*. Though all the Naga tribes speak distinct Tibeto-Burman languages and each one is different than other, but Nagamese, a lingua-franca is commonly used to communicate among the tribes.

Chakhesang is one of the prominent tribes of Nagas, generally referred to as "Eastern Angamis" by the British administrators during the British rule, have separated from Angami tribe and now recognised as a separate tribe. They are distributed in Pfutsero, Chozuba and Phek subdivision of Phek district of Nagaland.

Chakhesangs consisted of three major sub-tribe, namely "chokri", "khezha" and "sangtam", and the name Chakhesang is an acronym derived from these three major sub-tribe taking "cha" from "chokri", "khe" from "khezha" and "sang" from "sangtam".

Customary laws

There is no account of legendary lawgiver but they are believed to being handed down from ancestors to next generation. But in recent times they have formed an organizational setup termed as Chakhesang Public Organization that looks the matters related to traditions and customs. Normally people follow the traditions and customs due to the motives of fear and of reverence of the supernatural being or rami. The laws and customs are not rigid and they are not closed to changes and innovations. For them these are not merely the inventory of rules but actually an intelligible system of relationships between individuals and groups, which do not merely entail the observance of certain actions and avoidance of others, but mental and emotional attitudes as well.

The Family Administration

Chakhesang are close knit society having paternal authority. They are usually monogamous and fidelity to the spouse is considered a high virtue. Marriage within the same clan is not permitted, as it considered to be incest and such couples are ostracized from the villages. There is deep respect for parents and elders in the Naga society. Material inheritance, such as land and cattle, is passed on to the male offspring, with the eldest son receiving the largest share. If someone does not have the male member in the family then male from the closest family inherits the property.

Traditional System of Village Administration

The village may be inhabited by many clans, so it is run by the representatives of the clan 'thenukriita' and the priest 'Mawo' or 'Thiivo-o'. The priesthood is normally hereditary. The priest of the village commands authority and is considered as ceremonial head of the village. He is considered as guardian of the village and performs rituals for the village. The actual authority is vested to the council, which is represented by clan heads and normally chaired by priest. The council is instrumental to framing the rules and implementing them. Normally the rules are in the forms of 'gennas' or 'menyi', restrictions and taboos and compliance of these restrictions and taboos are essential for the

wellbeing of individual and the community. It is a common belief that non observance of these may call for the wrath of super natural power and the individual may suffer from disease or sickness or natural calamity may occur to the whole village. Community also awards punishment for the violation, which includes being ostracized from the village for a particular period of time. The fear of facing the wrath of the unseen supernatural being, greatly helped in the proper functioning of the traditional customary law in almost every part of life.

Farming and Traditions

The life of the Chakhesang mainly revolves around farming practices so different activities carried out by the people based on agricultural seasons. This system helps them in sustaining their life and maintaining order in society. Celebration of festivals, feasts and marriages were done in accordance with the agricultural season. The people practices generally jhum and wet rice terraced cultivation. The method of each practice preceded by the strict observation of restrictions and taboos, because it is believed that if they fail to follow them then it may result either in rain or storm and that would destroy the field of that particular person or sometimes insects or animals would eat up or destroy the field of the guilty person and in some extreme case it may destroy the crop of whole village. The

village priest announces such restrictions and taboos and declares when each agricultural practice was to start. He also announced what kind of rituals the people had to observe.

Agricultural practices are described below: January or Zathokhrri and February or Chide Mechiikhrii were the months when people had to perform the process of ploughing and tilling the fields. This particular activity is carried out by both men and women. Sowing of seeds is done in the month of March or Tinyikechiikhrii. Before sowing the seeds, a ritual had to be performed by the women. One woman from each house had to go to the field very early in the morning and sow a few seeds and offer a sort of prayer invoking the blessing of the super natural power for the success of the seeds sowed. It is believed that seed sown will not bear much fruits if she talked to any bad mouthed person during the ritual. It is also a custom that if anyone is out of the village during this time then he or she is not allowed to come back for the entire year. Transplanting is done in the month of June or Pfiizhikhrii. On the day of transplanting no one is allowed to go out of the village on enter in the village. June is also referred to as the 'month of darkness' because this was the time when the hardest work was done. On the last day another restrictions and taboos is observed where it was totally forbidden for anyone to go to the

field because of the belief that bad storm would destroy the field of the particular person who violated such customs. Another reason was the belief that, whoever touched the water, had to face the consequences of boils erupting out on the hands and feet. If such a thing were to happen then it was considered to be a shameful thing for the person concerned. So people were careful not to do those forbidden things.

On the last day of the month of May, i.e., just before the starting of the transplantation season, all the villagers would gather together and would have an oath taking ceremony where all the village traditional customary laws would be made known. The people would have to swear that they would not speak ill of their village and of the people nor steal or covet others' things or properties, commit murder nor try to harm others, nor quarrel with others and do bad things.

The month of November or Buliekhrii or Chide khrii is the time of harvest that showed the result of the hard work put in by the people. Women had to again perform a ritual just before the start of the harvest known as buliemenyi. The woman performing the ritual had to go to the field early in the morning and reap a few stalks of paddy and seek blessing from the romi for the success of the harvest. The ritual was carried out on the day of the genna or menyii was observed. Only then did the harvesting begin.

January or Zathokhrii to May or Kranakhrii is time which is considered suitable for constructing or repairing of house, cleaning of surrounding, felling of trees for firewood. Hunting is also done in the months of April and May. The people had to seek the blessing and advice from the village priest. Rituals are observed just before the hunting season began. On this day women were not supposed to touch the bedclothes of men or fetch water from the ponds where men take bath themselves. This was done because of the belief that bad luck would fall on the hunting party. The women are not allowed to weave till the hunting party comes back.

Present System of Village Administration

In the present society, the village is headed by the 'Village Chairman' who is also the head of the village council, the apex body of village administration. The Village Council is the overall authority for the administration of justice within the village that was established under Nagaland Village and Area Council Act, 1978. The different organisations existing in the village are under the control of the village council, though each organisation functions independently of its own. This way the administration of the village functions smoothly. The village council formulate Village Development Schemes to supervise proper maintenance of water supply, roads, forest,

education and other welfare activities. It helps various Govt. Agencies in carrying out development works in the village. Even in the present society the traditional customs play an important part in regulating the life of the people in spite of the many changes taking place in the traditional customary laws of the village. If anyone steals from others, then he or she has to pay back fifteen or thirty times of the stolen item. If the theft took place outside of the village then it has to be fifteen times but in case if it had been done inside of the village then one who steals have to pay thirty times of the stolen goods. There is also the belief that something bad would befall the family of the person who commits such an act of stealing from others.

Morung, an Important Youth Institution

The morung or youth dormitory constitutes significant social and cultural institution which also serves as basic educational foundation of Nagas. Apart from the family, a person's time living in the morung was the most important part of education and acculturation. They were normally constructed at village entrance of any other well-guarded place. At the beginning of the puberty, boys and girls were admitted to their respective morungs, where they learn the art of life. The time spent in morung can be

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Dzumsa: Traditional system of governance in Lachen and Lachung villages of North Sikkim

- R M Pant

Different ethnic communities of Sikkim have different names for Sikkim. For Limboos, its 'Sukhim' meaning 'happy house'. Bhutias call it 'Denzong' or 'the valley of rice' and Nepalis call it 'Indra-khil', the 'abode of Gods'. Sikkim fully justifies the names given by different habitats of this small but beautiful state. Like its eternal scenic beauty, Sikkim also has some fascinating age old traditional practices still playing significant roles in the lives of people in these two Bhutia villages of North Sikkim i.e. Lachen and Lachung. One such unique system of governance these two bhutia villages still practice is the traditional system of local self-governance known as Dzumsa. Dzumsa means 'the gathering place'. A place where all the villagers gather to discuss and decide future course of action for the village. To preserve this unique traditional system of governance, the state government has given statutory recognition to these two villages under the Panchayati Raj Act 1993. The Dzumsas have been recognized as Gram Panchayats vested with its traditional powers and functions in addition to the powers and functions delegated to Gram Panchayats.

Dzumsa is responsible for

organizing all the events in the village. Dzumsa also ensures proper maintenance of community's law. Norms and rules enacted by Dzumsa are adhered to strictly by all. Dzumsa also schedules meetings of village councils.

Lyna, the executive body: Dzumsa, the village level body comprising of all heads of the households elects 'Lyna', an executive body, headed by two Pippsons. To assist these two Pippsons, there are eight Gembos. Two Tsipos are also elected to maintain the accounts of Dzumsa. Pippsons select two Gyabens whose duty is to inform people about Dzumsa meetings. Gyabens in order to inform people about the meetings climb a rock or a big boulder and call thrice "Jumke", meaning 'there is a meeting and all have to attend'. Anyone who fails to reach the Dzumsa house within 30 minutes will attract fine.

Election of Lyna: Lyna is elected for one year. On the day of new year, after the 'Chhang dance', the Lyna closes its accounts and wraps up all pending works and hands over the keys to Lama in the presence of General Body of the villages. A feast 'Thenton' follows which is provided by the departing Lyna.

A committee consisting of 5 lamas and 10 other respected members of the Lachen village nominate 10 deserving persons as probable for Lyna. Then, all Dzumsa members are given ballots with these 10 names. The person securing highest votes is declared as 1st Pippson. The runner up is also declared as Pippson 2. Six persons in the same way are elected as Gembos and Two as Tsipos (accountants). Two Gyabens are also picked up by each of the Pippsons who help Pippsons in various activities and also deliver Pippson's messages to villagers. After Lyna is elected, new Pippsons go to DC's office for taking their approval for the Dzumsa. All the members of villages approved as voter by Dzumsa are allowed to participate in election process. Lyna's tenure may be extended by another year if general body is happy with the performance of Lyna and approves their term for one more year. Dzumsa after its constitution goes to Lama to seek his blessing. Lamas bless them with Khadas (sacred cloth) and administer the oath to serve the people.

Membership to Dzumsa is open only to male members of Bhutia community, normally heads of the households. Ladies

can attend meetings however they do not have voting rights. In case a member dies, his widow can be the member till her son is grown up or she adopts one to participate in Dzumsa activities.

Meetings: Dzumsa meetings are conducted as and when need arises and it is mandatory for all the members to attend the meetings. Meetings are held in Munkhim, the Dzumsa house. If gathering is bigger, it may take place in open field. All the members of Dzumsa sit in circle. Members of Lyna sits together in a row. If Lamas are present, they sit on benches facing Lyna. A member failing to attend the meeting has to pay a fine decided by the Dzumsa. If due to some unavoidable circumstances, a member is not able to attend a meeting, his wife is permitted to represent him and fine imposed is reduced by 50%.

Mediocrity preferred: One very important criterion for identifying Dzumsa Executive members in Lachen and Lachung is not to select highly qualified or people with high exposure as it is believed that these highly educated people can manipulate rules for their vested interests and mislead the simple highlanders. To become member of Lyna, one must attain the age of 40 years, as popular belief among these people is that after 40 years of age a person is not influenced by his vested interests and materialistic needs are subdued.

Jurisdiction of Dzumsa: Any

matter of common concern and general interest comes under Dzumsa. Ranging from settling disputes to celebrating festivals, granting of contracts, collection of revenue, distribution of income to all, deciding imposition of fines on defaulters in terms of cash and labour, Dzumsa's decisions are bindings on all. Rarely disputes are referred to formal state administrative/judicial bodies. Most of the cases of dispute are solved within Dzumsa. Parties having conflicts are brought before Dzumsa and are heard in the presence of all the villagers. Dzumsa delivers the justice which is accepted by both the parties and penalty/fine is imposed on the person found guilty. Fine is collected on the designated day normally once in a year before festival. Guilty is administered a 'Kasam' (Swear by the holy book) not to do that and people have a firm belief that anyone who does not live by his/her 'kasam', does not live for more than 6 months. There is no case of breaching the pledge in the village so far. For not obeying Dzumsa's orders, a person is boycotted by the community.

Revenue collection: Dzumsa collects revenue from various sources like shops, contracts, fines and public contribution. Out of the total annual earning, one part goes to Lamas for the maintenance of Monasteries and remaining goes to common public which is equally distributed among all the villagers in an open meeting before festivals. Revenue from

shops is determined on the basis of their expected earnings and it may range from Rs 1000 per year to Rs. 50,000. **Contracts:** Dzumsas have a very interesting tendering system for identifying contractors who would carry out all jobs in the villages for a term of 2 years. An open tender is invited from all the interested individuals from the village in anticipation of the future work and highest bidder is granted right to take all the contracts from government and other sources. This money is collected from the contractor by the Dzumsa. It's a gamble. Contractor may or may not get projects from the government but money he has paid during his bid is not refundable. This risks makes contractors more proactive in bringing government developmental schemes to the village.

Will Dzumsa survive the tempest of time? Various agencies, governmental and non-governmental question Dzumsa's special status. All local self-governments in the country have to abide by the norms prescribed by the state. Modern educated women of the village are increasingly finding it objectionable that Women cannot become member of Dzumsa. A young lady teacher says, 'it's male chauvinism'. A good number of young students are studying in metros like Bangalore, Delhi and Kolkata etc. Will they conform to the ascetic life of these two villages? Will they continue to follow the stringent rules that residents of

Lachen and Lachung are expected to follow religiously? Will growing materialism not affect the age old systems? Dzumsa is based on the principle of 'not competing for the resources but sharing of meagre resources equally that these village have'. With new opportunities coming to these villages, will scientific thinking replace superstitions that still play a great role in social control? Some basic facilities like

health care, education etc. continue to elude people of this valley and how long people will avoid the temptation migrating to cities like Gangtok which offers better facilities is one question that is bothering Dzumsa members.

Dzumsa today is faced with several questions but an institutions that has sustained its practices without any dilution for centuries looks poised to take

this present wave of changes. Dzumsa rests on the very foundation of trust which is the soul of this institution. As long as human values do not succumb to materialism, Dzumsa will continue to thrive and chants of 'Om Mani Padme Hum' will continue to purify this valley. ■

*(Dr. R M Pant, Director,
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Administrative Systems and Youth Institutions of Chakhesang Tribe of Nagaland

categorised as - purpose and pleasure. The purpose is to prepare the young ones for all the tasks and responsibilities of life. The village elders often visit morung to teach them naga culture, customs and traditions. They also teach techniques of agriculture, basketry, making weapon, hunting, blacksmith. Folk-song-dance and narrate folk-tales are also taught to them in the morungs. The pleasure activities are social-interactions like playing, dancing and competition. Through such activities, Nagas

developed their unique traditional folk songs and folk dance and different styles of spear and dao. In girls' dormitory, weaving clothes is one of the important activities. Such practices and collectiveness imparts knowledge and skills. A beautiful Naga shawl is the sole production of the Naga women's creativity. Announcements of meetings, the death of a villager, warnings of impending dangers, etc., were also made from the morungs by the beating of log drums. But now with adoption of

modern education system and practices, the Naga have abandoned the use of time in morungs for their youths.

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Traditional Administrative System & Bachelors' Institution of Tripuri people

- Dr Atul Devburman

Tripura is one of the eight North Eastern states of India ie Bharat. The state is connected through a 'chicken neck' with rest of North East, like the North East with rest of India. Tripura was an independent kingdom for thousand of years until it merged with India in 1949. The Tripuri people who were majority turned into a minority community after the merger due to refugee influx from the erstwhile East Pakistan. The villages of different communities of Tripura used to be administrated by the traditional system during the time of monarchy since ages. The different indigenious Janjatis of Tripura have their own distinct administrative system, which are by and large similar to a great extent. There is no scope to elaborate the village administrative system of different Janjatis here, so I am describing the traditional administrative system of Tripuri Community who constitute about 60-65% of Janjatis population of Tripura.

Composition of Tripuri Family:

Family is the basic and universal social unit of the structure of Tripuri Community and is known as 'Nukhung' among the Tripuris. At a

minimum the Tripuri family is a nuclear form comprising of husband, wife and their living offsprings, of course there may also be a family with a single member, if a male or female resides alone maintaining the elements of a family. More often Tripuri Family comprises of extended family consisting old father and mother, or widow mother, unmarried sisters, brothers. Based on its condition i.e. residence, authority, succession and descent, a Tripuri family is a patriarchal and patrilineal. The father or the elder male member, in whose name Lampra Puja is performed, is the head of the family. His decisions in all matters domestic, religious and socio-political is abide by all members of the family. Of course both the husband and the wife jointly share the responsibility and take decision in the matter relating to the family affairs.

With the changes in economic life, the forms and functions of Tripuri family had undergone adaptive changes. The changing trend from shifting cultivation to plough cultivation and from plough cultivation to service as means of livelihood have also changed the

composition of their families. Thus, extended or joint types of families started with their burgeoning agrarian society, in essence due to necessity have now transformed to nuclear family based society to some extent.

A Tripuri family must be recognized by the *Chokdiri* (village chief) of the village. Tripuri family must fulfill the following conditions to be recognized by the village Chokdiri:-

- (i) Loyalty to the Tripur *Kshatriya Samaj*,
- (ii) Must pay the subscription to the village, as may be prescribed by them from time to time,
- (iii) Must perform *Lampra Puja* at the time of opening new dwelling house and at least once in every subsequent years,
- (iv) Must worship '*Mailuma Puja*', '*Khuluma*', and '*Noksuma*'
- (v) Must worship *Garia*, the chief deity of *Tripuri* community,
- (vi) Must worship *Kharchi mutai*, that is the fourteen gods, the *Kul Devta* of *Tripuri* community,
- (vii) Must follow rites, rituals and customs of Tripuri community.

Composition of a Village:

A Village is constituted with at least 15 families. The head of village is known as *Chokdiri* who shall manage the affairs of the village. The Chokdiri is nominated/appointed by the head of families of the village in its annual conference.

Eligibility of village Chokdiri: A person to be a village *Chokdiri* (village chief), he has to (i) be a resident of that village, (ii) be of good moral character; (iii) must worship all the deities of Tripuri Community; (iv) follow and practises all the Tripuri rites, rituals and customs; (v) be married by following all social customs, usage; (vi) be and have his first wife living; (vii) preferably be at least Class X educated.

Tenure of village Chief: The Chokdiri holds office for a period of 3(three) years and he ceases to be Chokdiri if his wife dies during his tenure. Same person may be re-nominated for next term.

Appointment of new Chokdiri on emergency: If the office of Chokdiri becomes vacant due to death of Chokdiri or his wife or otherwise a new Chokdiri is nominated/ appointed by convening an emergency meeting of village.

Village working committee: The village committee is formed to the aid and advice Chokdiri to carry out the business of village and contingency matters.

In the event of Chokdiri's inability: The Secretary shall

perform the religious functions of Chokdiri temporarily if the Chokdiri is unable to perform religious functions due to illness or otherwise.

Composition of Village Committee: The members of village committee are nominated by the heads of the families. Composition of village committee is as follows.

- (i) Secretary;
- (ii) *Ochai* (Priest);
- (iii) *Barua* (Helper of Priest);
- (iv) *Khandol* (Collector of subscription);
- (v) *Karbari* (Treasurer);
- (vi) *Bhandari* (Store keeper);
- (vi) *Adongs* (Volunteers) generally two to five in numbers.

The village chokdiri is the ex-officio president of the village committee. The village committee meets at least thrice a year to discuss the problems of village and formulate plans for advancement of education and new rules in the interest of village keeping in parity with the rules and decisions of Samaj.

Duty and Responsibility of Village Chokdiri: (i) It is the responsibility of Chokdiri to execute/put into operation the resolutions of the Samaj in his village. (ii) The Chokdiri shall be responsible to send Adongs in the meetings of Mandal and the Samaj. (iii) The Chokdiri shall lodge a complaint to the Mandal Chokdiri or to the President if he fails to control the anti social activities in his locality.

(iv) The Chokdiri shall keep a close contact with the Presidents. (v) If there is any change in the office of Chokdiri or in the village committee it shall be responsibility of Chokdiri to inform the Mandal Chokdiri. (vi) If a person leaves a Village or has been expelled from village, it shall be immediately reported by village Chokdiri to Mandal Chokdiri.

Power and Privilege of village Chokdiri: Chokdiri used to be responsible for maintaining law and order of village, in accordance with Samaj Rules and regulations, for which he must obey the following rituals:-

- (i) must perform Lampra Puja every month. (ii) Chokdiri must wear Puita & Dhuti at the times of all functions of the village, (iii) Chokdiri should not bow to the senior persons on the days of village pujas, (iv) He must observe the rites and rituals relating to death up to 5th generation (grandparents to grandchild). (v) He is entrusted to solve any problems/ disputes of village with the help of at least 3-4 members of village committee, (vi) He can direct to collect funds for the welfare of villagers by Khandols as per decision of village committee. (vii) The Chokdiri shall submit a detail working report and annual account report in each annual meeting of village and must submit the same to the annual conference of Mandal. (viii) It is one of the important duties of Chokdiri to communicate with the Mandal Chokdiri and to attend in the meetings of Samaj. (viii)

Chokdiri must obey the order and instruction of Presidents of Samaj and Mandal Chokdiri. (ix) Chokdiri can propose new rule and regulation and plan in the annual meeting for welfare of village. (x) He has the authority to summon an urgent meeting with the help of village committee if necessary.

There is a Mandal chokdiri with a President comprising of some neighbouring villages.

Duty and responsibility of Village Secretary: The Secretary of village committee has the following duty and responsibility for the welfare of the village that- He shall

(i) Comply the directions of Chokdiri.

(ii) Assist in the implementation of the rules and regulations passed by the Samaj.

(iii) Conduct meeting with prior approval of Chokdiri

(iv) Implement the decision and resolution taken by village committee.

(v) Help prepare the annual report and detail expenditure of the village and submit to Mandal Chokdiri.

(vi) be acting-Chokdiri in absence of Chokdiri or other wise unable to perform due to ill health etc.

Duties of Ochai: He performs all the Pujas, rites and rituals related to birth, marriage and death ceremony in the village and all other religious functions as per the decision of village committee.

Duties of Barua: Barua assists Ochai in all his activities relating to performance of Pujas and festivals.

Duties of Khandols: Number of Khandols is two. Khandol are responsible for collecting the fees, subscription, contributions from the families as per the directions of Chokdiri.

Duties of Karbari: He maintains records of all the income and expenditure of the village and prepares report and submits to the Chokdiri.

Duties of Bhandari: He maintains and keeps all the properties of the village, like utensils, assets, and materials purchased and collected for Pujas etc.

Duties of Adong: Adong be more two or more in numbers. Their duty is to obey, comply and perform any job assigned by Chokdiri for the welfare and betterment of village.

Performance of Puja in Village: The village committee performs Lampra Wathop, Ker Puja, Nakri, Ganga Puja, and Raksha Kali at least once in a year. Few members of village committee shall attend the annual Kharchi puja.

In Absence of Chokdiri: If the Chokdiri is unable to perform his duties due to unavoidable circumstances (like death, birth etc in his family), Secretary shall be acting as Chokdiri.

Application for settling in village: The application for leaving or residing in the village is to be taken up for detail

discussions and decisions on the night Vijaya Dasami.

Impartiality of Chokdiri: The Chokdiri must be impartial. No political meeting shall be convened in the home of village Chokdiri.

Permission for political meeting: A political meeting may be convened with the permission of Chokdiri in any house of village.

General Rules and Regulation of Village

(i) The Chokdiri with the help of village committee shall settle any dispute of the village amicably and peacefully.

(ii) The aim of village committee is to maintain peace and harmony in the village and enforce discipline so as to prevail the peace, order and security of the villagers.

(iii) Each and every member of the village has the duty to ensure education, health and safety of villagers.

(iv) Village is a place to live together through cooperation, faithfulness in brother and sisterly relation.

(v) To resolve any disputes of the village through arbitration mediation, dialog and discussion in an impartial way.

(vi) Solution of any dispute of the village must be non-political, non-vindictive and non-prejudice one.

(vii) Any person desirous to settle in a new village should submit his necessary documents to the Chokdiri of the

village.

(viii) He must clear all his dues before leaving the village, he can not claim any right or benefit out of it.

(ix) Any head of family desirous of leaving the village must inform to the Chokdiri at least fifteen days in advance.

(x) The head of a family must apply at least thirty days in advance to the Chokdiri of new village about his desire to settle down there.

(xi) If anybody shifts his residence to another village without prior permission, must be informed the reasons of shifting within ten days. Otherwise he may summon for proper action before the village committee.

(xii) Chokdiri must send two Adongs at the annual conference, Kharchi Puja, Kerpuja of the State to the Samaj.

(xiii) Every village must perform Ker puja either in the month of Sraban or Agrahayan or Chaitra for the welfare of village. The entry and exit of anybody in the village boundary during Ker puja is strictly prohibited. If anybody disturbs or breaks the rules during the Puja period he/she shall be penalized to pay the full expenditure of puja. Ker puja shall be once again performed afresh with this amount of fine imposed.

(xiii) Village Chokdiri must perform the Ker puja within village boundary (Duary). The definite boundary of village is

known as holy duari. No dead body shall be allowed to cremate or bury, no cow shall be allowed to slaughter; no placenta or baby's umbilical cord or no dead animal (dog, cat, cows etc.) shall be allowed to bury or dumped within the Duary. Breach of any of these rules shall be dealt strictly and punished accordingly.

General Functions & principles of Tripuri Janjati Samaj:

A person becomes a member of the Samaj by birth in a Tripuri family which follows the rites, rituals and customs of Tripuri community.

All the members of Tripuri Community must adhere to the aims, objectives and customs of Samaj.

(i) To be eligible for membership of Tripuri Samaj, a person of any other Janjati community shall –

(a) perform Lampra Puja and take Lampra Twi from Ochai;

(b) must reside in a Tripuri village for least for one year;

(c) abide by the Samaj Rules and regulations

(d) apply for inclusion in the Tripuri Community through village Chokdiri and get approved by the Samaj.

(e) execute an affidavit changing his existing surname by accepting the surname of Debbarma before a Notary Public/ First Class Magistrate and submit the same to the President.

(ii). The President may either accept or reject the application citing reasons recorded in writing.

(iii) The decision of President on application shall be final.

Any woman may become a member of Tripuri community by marrying a man of Tripuri community.

For that the woman must take Lampra Twi from the Ochai of the village before her marriage.

Any man of other tribal community of Tripura may become a member of the Tripuri community if he marries a Tripuri woman by following proper procedure of the Samaj rule.

All families shall pay the fixed subscriptions of village, as may be decided by Samaj.

A member of Tripuri community shall not have two or more wives/husbands living at the same time.

Giving and receiving dowry is strictly prohibited. A member shall be liable for punishment along with minimum fund of Rs.10,000/- if he indulges either in giving or receiving dowry.

The minimum age of marriage is-

(i) 21 years for male; and

(ii) 18 years for female.

General Functions and Principles of Samaj: Drinking liquor is prohibited for minors and adolescents.

A person shall be liable for physical & financial punishment

for enticement and rape of a woman over and above the law of the land.

All members of the community shall ensure proper education of their children. The members of the community shall maintain a cordial relation with fellow members. Due respect must be bestowed to the guests and to attend them humbly is considered as humility in the community.

The Tripuri community does not tolerate any anti-social activities such as burglary, dacoity, theft, serious offence etc in the Society.

The Samaj shall decide and settle all disputes impartially irrespective of party affiliation of the persons.

In order to maintain unity in the community and to preserve the characteristics and unique customary features of the Tripuri, the following procedures are to be strictly followed-

(i) Birth, marriage and funeral ceremony be properly performed by Ochai; or with the help of Brahmins if some one desires.

(ii) The traditional Tripuri dress should be worn by all during different Pujas & Social Rituals.

(iii) Cultural programs, sports, fairs, etc are desired to be performed on different Pujas and Festivals of Tripuri people.

(d) Due respect must be given to the Ochai and he shall be offered dakshina according to duties performed, which shall not be less than one day's

remuneration of a non-skilled worker.

General Rules of Trials

Rules/ Principles of trials: (i) A member may approach Village Chokdiri for settlement of any disputes.

(ii) The Village Chokdiri has the power to decide and settle any dispute relating to Tripuri person.

(iii) Any disputes between a Tripuri and person of other community shall be dealt with as per the law of the land.

The Village Chokdiri shall try any matter/offence relating to woman with prior permission of the President.

The Village Chokdiri may try and settle petty offences and civil disputes committed within his village.

A desirous to lodge a complaint shall apply in writing to the President, Mandal Chokdiri or Village Chokdiri as the case may be.

The Applicant/Complainant/ Plaintiff shall pay the required fees at the time of submitting application.

The application fee shall be at the following rates-

(i) Rs. 100 if it is submitted to President

(ii) Rs. 50/ it is submitted to Mandal Chokdiri;

(iii) Rs. 30/ if it is submitted to Chokdiri.

If the dispute pertains between two persons of two

villages, then it shall be tried in the village of complainant/ plaintiff. However some members of respondent's village committee shall have to be present in the meeting. Disputes involving between residents of two villages may be tried by the Mandal Chokdiri if both parties desire so.

The Chokdiri of a Village in which the defendant /accused resides shall be communicated by the Twitun (Informer) in due time if case is to be decided by President.

Penalties and Fines

The fine/penalties vary according to the gravity of offence.

Distribution of fine money:-

(i) If disputes is settled by the Samaj two third of the penalty fine shall be retained by Samaj to be deposited at Samaj Fund. The rest one third amount of money will be sent to concerned Village committee.

(ii) If any dispute is settled by the Mandal Chokdiri or Village Chokdiri one third of the fine money must be sent to the Samaj fund.

(iii) The fund so received will be spent on education, health care and cultural purposes only. This money cannot be spent on any other purpose.

The penalty/fine that shall be imposed by the President shall be

(i) Rs. 5000/ (Rupees Five Thousand) in case of divorce;

(ii) Rs. 10000/- (Rupees ten thousand) and canning of both the parties in case of illicit extra marital relation to both the persons involved.

(iii) Rs. 1000/- (Rupees one thousand) and canning of for both the parties for illicit premarital sexual relationship between the young boy & girl, and they will be barred from holy Bedi marriage.

(iv) Rs. 2,000/- (Rupees two thousand) for violation of rules;

(v) Rs.1,000/- (Rupees one thousand) for defamation;

(vi) Rs.10,000/- (Rupees ten thousand) for conspiracy to disturb the peace and tranquility of the society or the accused may be handed over to State police.

Jainok: Tripuri Bachelor's Institution

Youth is the period of development in one's life. It not only consists of physical growth but also of mental, psychological, emotional and skill development of a person. It helps him to gain knowledge and experiences for his livelihood as well as for a healthy and peaceful co-existence in the society and he learns social etiquettes, cultural heritages and traditions. In the past, the youths of Tripura would learn these aspects of life staying in a house built on the out skirt of a village. It can be called as Sanskar Bhavan. The western concept of dormitory will not be appropriate to define this house. So the term 'Youth Dormitories' as described by some historian will be injustice

to this noble cause house and demeaning to the glorious traditions of Tripuri people and other tribes who had similar youth institution.

The institution where Tripuri people train their bachelor youths in their traditional knowledge and cultural heritages is known as Jainok. It is combination of two words Jai- means to civilize and nok- means house, which literally means civilize to human being. The Bachelors' Institution is also known as "Sikla mwrwk nok" means Youth Assimilation Hall. Some people use to call it "Chalay nok" means house of similar ages. This type of youth Sanskar Bhavan was widely prevalent till the late 19th to early 20th century in most of the villages of different Janjatis of Tripura.

Location of Jainok

Jainok is constructed in a convenient place in the village, some where in the outer boundary of the village in a high land or hillock, so that youths from different parts of village can converge here. The Jainok used to be made of bamboo and thatch with raised floor about 5-10 feet from the ground level. Raised floor makes the Jainok safe from wild animals and other poisonous snakes, lizards and other creepers. The Jainok used to be constructed free of cost collectively by the bachelors of the village.

Selection of Head

The leaders of a Jainok used to be selected unanimously from among the senior bachelors.

There was no secret voting or election system to assign the leader of a Jainok. All the bachelors attending the Jainok had to comply with and obey the directions of the head. Generally his decision is final and binding in cases of any differences or unruly behavior of the bachelors.

Activities at Jainok: There are different types of activities being held at the Bachelors' Institution at that time. Both males and female bachelors used to assemble in the Jainok. Some of the activities can be listed in the following head lines.

Handicraft and handlooms

The handicraft and handloom products of Tripura used to be among the highest standard in the past. The handicraft and handloom skills were transferred from older generation to younger generation since ancient times. It was made possible because of training imparted by the older youths to comparatively younger generation at the Jainok. The male youths are trained in making handicrafts of different types of house hold articles. They used to learn making of baskets, suitcase, almirah, mat, back basket and other many necessary household items. The experts among the youths would teach and train other practically in handicraft makings. On the other hand the girls learn making thread by hand spinning wheel and then weaving cloths of different uses for both the male and females members of the family. They also would learn different intricate designs here in the Jainok and the senior girls

would guide and teach them in these skills.

Dance and song activities:

Tripuri people have very rich folk dances and songs. They are very fond of music, song and dances; they would sing even while working in the Jhum cultivation. They would throw questions through songs and answers would also given by songs. Frequently they would compete in such song during the Jhum cultivation activities. Some times boys would sent there proposal for love and marriages through the songs, and the girls would also send replies either in positive or negative through songs only. One would put questions through song and other would answers it, others would listen and enjoy. Some times such questions and answers songs would continue for hours together. Various types of traditional musical instruments like Sarinda, Sumui, Dangdu, Chongpreng, Kham etc used to be practices and taught to younger generations in the Jainok. Folk songs and dances used to be practiced and trained in the Jainok; and this way such cultural traditions used to be passed from one generation to the next since ancient times.

Story telling and Riddle:

Tripuri people have hundreds of folk tales, which had been transmitted unchanged from one generation to the next since time immemorial. Each and every folk tales have moral values in the end. Though such stories are generally told by grand parents to the children, but folk tales

which are for adult are re-told by senior bachelors in more interesting way at the Jainok. Apart from this they would play riddles, where question are thrown open for every one in a tricky way. There are several hundred such riddles. If no one can reply hen one put the question would answer it.

The bachelor youths, both boys and girls used to make fun, crack jokes, would tease and mock etc to one and each others. Who are expert would entertain others by making mimicry, mono acting etc. also. The Jainok used to resonate on the laughter and shouting of youths. They would also use to share life experience of their personal life and interact in different skills that were essential in those times. Like how to make dye for threads, its recipes and ingredients, making of herbal perfumes, extracting oil from mustard and sesame, making of comb etc.

Time of Jainok attendance:

Shifting cultivation used to be labour intensive, so the people in those days all the adult members of family used to be totally engaged in that. The period for Jainok activities used to be after harvesting the Jhum crop which used to be from November to February-March. During these months the bachelors used to be free of jobs. They would attend the Jainok after the dinner till the mid night.

Occasionally young boys and girls of mature age would fell in love while attending in the Jainok, then in such cases this would be communicated to the parents by

other youths. If the marriage between the boy and girl is within the permitted relationship they would be given married off. If the relations are not within the permitted customs others youths would exonerate and advice them accordingly. When a youth breaches the discipline of the Jainok, he would be expelled from it and would never be allowed in future.

The importance of Jainok that is Bachelors' Institution in Tripuri peoples life in the past was indispensable, the village head and elder people would support, protect and promote such activities. To some extent it can be equated with gurukul system of education of India in the past. With the democratic movements of the mid 20 century, and the subsequent abolition of Monarchy of Tripura followed by merger with India, the bachelors' institution of Tripuri Janjati, the Jainok had been totally lost in the dust of history. But the importance and utility of such bachelors Institution, a place for building carrier and character, the debates still goes on.

Darlong Janjatis Bachelors' Institution: Bukpui

The Darlongs are one of the Janjati of Tripura. The bachelors' house of Darlong community is called 'Bukpui'. In the past such home used to be there in every village of Darlong community. There is little difference between Darlongs and Tripuris bachelor Institution. It used to be constructed near the house of head of the village and preferably in a centrally located area for

Darlong community. The size of the house depends on the size of the village, that means bigger village will have bigger hall, to accommodate large number of bachelors. It is constructed like any other house hold with bamboo and thatch. Two doors are kept, one in front other on the back. The bachelors with the active participation of the village head would build such house.

Unlike that of Tripuri community, the bachelors' institution of Darlong is not for both the boys and girls, it is exclusively for boys. The youths gather in the hall after the dinner. They used to make fun, jokes, sing and dance till midnight. There are many topics discussed in the Bukpui, the bachelors' house. The matters discussed in this house are kept secret, rather it is forbidden to tell any outsiders about the topic discussed there. It is considered as social crime to disclose the A

senior bachelor is selected as leader of the house.

If the secret matter has been disclosed to any one, then the youth committing breach of trust is tried and punished according the customary law of the society. This way the discipline, unity and integrity is among the bachelors youth is maintained. There fore the importance of Bukpui in Darlong society is very high. It has been found that the youths of Darlong village which has bachelors' institution are far more disciplined than those which do not have. These bachelors' also used to be helpful for the village; they would come forward as volunteers for any emergency need. The youths of the Bukpui would defend the village from the enemy aggression. Whenever any outsider enters a Darlong village he has to report to Bukpui, and he would then be taken to his

destination host. The Bukpui has its own administration system. The bachelors' of Bukpui are largely dependent on the chief of the village. The chief also develop cordial relationship with the youths to maintain discipline of the village. Younger boys and girls are duty bound to fetch water and fire wood for the Bukpui. If any young boy or girl relinquished his or her duty then it is brought to the notice of their parents, because both are mutually benefitted from each other's. The successful of a village is dependent on the discipline of Bukpui. The village which has large numbers of youths in Bukpui is safer and secure than other village.

Source

1. Tripuri Customary law
2. Tipra Janjatir Samaj o Sanskriti: By Rabindra Kishore Debbarma



Traditional Administrative System and involvement of Youth among the Malsom Janajatis of Tripura

- Chandra Krishna Malsom

The Malsom Dofa is a sub-group of Halam community of Tripura State in North-east of India. It is believed that the Malsoms are known as No.1 Halam in the long past and is prevailing till today. It is, therefore, taken for granted that the culture of the Malsoms must be similar to that of the rest of Halam sub-tribes in comparison. On the other hand, it is also revealed that little variation in regard to their traditional food habits, rites and rituals, dialectical pronunciation are worth mentioning today.

From customary popular belief, we know that the number of sub-groups or sub-tribes in the Halam community is 12(Twelve) in number. This is why, all sub-tribes or sub-groups of the Halam community are popularly called as 'Baro Khil Halam'(a community consists of twelve sub-tribes).

As stated the Halam Community consists of the sub-tribes, namely, mainly, (1) Malsom, (2) Kaipeng, (3) Hrangkhawl, (4) Kalai, (5) Rupini, (6) Bongcher, (7) Karbong, (8) Langkai, (9) Chorai, (10) Morsophang, (11)

Ranglong and (12) Thangachep. In addition to the above, the following sub-tribes also subsequently merged with the Halam Community. They are– (1) Natianglong, (2) Nasbang, (3) Saimar, (4) Dab and (4) Sangachep. Actually, all these sub-tribes came from some original Halam sub-tribes like Bongcher, Karbong, Langkai, Morsophang, Ranglong and Thangachep etc.

It is interesting to note that each of the Halam tribe is, however, consisting of some clans (Tero-Panchi). For instance, the Malsom tribe also consists of 13(Thirteen) clans, such as – (1) Sungphun, (2) Uisa, (3) Lengman, (4) Mapu, (5) Nokham, (6) Nawmpor, (7) Lourak, (8) Singar, (9) Achep, (10) Lungthung, (11) Dourai, (12) Tuisum and (13) Rawnte. All these clans (Panchi) are named after some natural objects. For instance, Nawmpor is named after leaf; Nokham after a fire; Achep after forceps; Lungthung after oven; Singar after a wild cat and so also others.

Social Life:

The Malsom village pattern is same as that of other tribes

of Halam Community in Tripura. They live in separate groups consisting of about fifty of more households in each. Most of the villages are built nearby jungles and interior areas. In such villages, some significant social activities are being performed. Each of the village is under the jurisdiction of the village headman called Choudhuri. He is the headman in the village in their society. In any dispute or controversy whichever is not disposed off at his level, he may refer to the court of Community Chief called Rai or Halamsa for disposal.

The Traditional Authority Structure in Malsom Dofa:

The conduct of the members of the Malsom Dofa is regulated through three-fold structure, viz. (1) the family authority structure, (2) the village authority structure and (3) the community council. They are described below.

(1) The Family Authority Structure:

In Malsom Dofa, the conduct of the members in the family is regulated and the socio-economic and politico-religious activities of the family are

determined by the head of the family (In-pu). Nowadays, the oldest male member heads the family and his wife acts as assistant. After the death or otherwise, invalidation of the former, the next oldest male succeeds him. The new head could be the eldest son or eldest son-in-law (in case the family has no son or eldest son has been staying with his father-in-law's family). In case the family has no adult male member, the wife of the head takes up this responsibility.

The head represents his/her family at the village and community affairs such as selection of village chief (Choudhuri) and the other members of the council, and to attend village meetings called by the village council.

(2) The Village Authority Structure:

In respect of administrative point of view, the Malsoms have a unique establishment of their own. Choudhuri (village headman) is the powerful local authority in every Malsom village. A lot of disputes, quarrels, controversies and minor clashes etc, which take place in a village, are usually justified in the court of the Choudhuri. Hence, the Choudhuri is the competent authority to dispose of the cases lodged in his court. There are two Khandols (peon-cum-messengers). In every Malsom village, to assist the Choudhuri. Two Khandols are

as follows.

(i) The Khandol Ulwn (Senior Khandol) :

The Khandol Ulwn (Senior Khandol) is appointed by the people of the village at the discretion of the Choudhuri concerned. His duty is to perform as a senior messenger-cum-police. He informs about any meeting that to be held in the residence of village Choudhuri. By virtue of his social position, he arrests the accused and produces the offenders in front of Choudhuri for justice. One Khandol Tom (Junior Khandol) is attached to him for collection of contributions from each household for community festivals, pujas and the like.

(ii) The Khandol Tom (Junior Khandol) :

He is also appointed by the Choudhuri concerned at the discretion of the people of the village. He is the assistance of Khandol ulwn. His main duty is to act as and assistance of Senior Khandol while bringing the convicts to the court of the village Chowdhri. He is bound to abide by and work under the direction of Senior Khandol as well as the Choudhuri.

On production of the accused in the court of the village Choudhuri, the Choudhuri will try the offender in the court in presence of Nutrws and Patrws (generous elder persons of the village who can give good suggestions for

the case) as he deems fit to be attended. The case is generally disposed of by the verbal verdict given by Choudhuri. Hence, Choudhuri is the competent judge in the village court.

In case, the Choudhuri could not dispose of a critical case lodged in his court, the case is automatically referred to the higher authority (i.e. in the court of the Halamsa); the Halamsa will settle the case along with his associates and jurisprudents.

It is to be noted that the exact amount of fine or particular type of punishment against any offence is normally determined by the village headman (Choudhuri) and his associates.

The Choudhuri and his associates have a negotiation for finalizing the fine or punishment against the accused with Nutru-patrws (aged and knowledgeable persons) of the village.

(3) The Community Authority Structure:

The Malsoms also have a salient Administrative feature in their samaj. The Malsom Dofa (No.1 Halam), Tripura regulates the whole community. The structure of their administrative set up is given below. To note that the above administrative set up of the Malsoms, generally consists of 13 (Thirteen) members in total.

Earlier, Head members of

TRADITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SET UP OF MALSOM DOFA, TRIPURA

Sl. No.	Name of social dignity.	Duties assigned to
1	Rai/Halamsa.	The Chief of the entire <i>Dofa(Community)</i> , heads the administration, maintains co-ordination and co-operation among the <i>Halamsa</i> villages, clans, other tribes etc.
2	Kanchikao.	The Deputy Chief who may be equated with <i>Jubraj</i> of the period of kings, assists the chief in all his public duties, succeeds the <i>Halamsa</i> when the latter's office falls vacant.
3	Galim/Kalim.	He is the assistant of the <i>Kanchikao</i> .
4	Kabur/Gabur.	He superintends all over public duties in the <i>Dofa</i> .
5	Chapiya lwn. (Senior Chapiya)	<i>Nazir</i> . He makes arrangement of food, tobacco, <i>Paan/Betel</i> leaf etc., for the <i>Rai/Halamsa</i> and his associates in any social meeting. Besides, he is to arrange accommodation to make them stay.
6	Chapiya tom. (Junior Chapiya)	He assists the <i>Chapiya lwn</i> while performing all duties.
7	Khoukusung.	Police. His duty is to arrest the accused as and when asked for by competent authority for trial in the community court.
8	Hajira.	His duty is to produce the offenders in the court of the <i>Rai/Halamsa</i> in due time on call. The offenders are generally kept under his custody at the time of hearings of any case while in the court of the <i>Rai/Halamsa</i> .
9	Karbari.	Caretaker of the guests who delegated from different villages while performing public duties in the <i>Rai's</i> residence.
10	Yaksung	Peon-cum-messenger. He informs the people about any meeting, distributes tobacco, rice bear and makes sitting arrangement for the dignitaries in courteous manner.
11	Dolai/Doria	Peon-cum-messenger. He informs the people about any meeting by beat of drum (<i>Dul hem</i>) etc. His specialty is to beat drum in every big community festivals or <i>pujas</i> .
12	Karma	Peon-cum-messenger. He is the helper of <i>Chapiya</i> in all-public duties along with other peon-cum-messengers.
13	Sengkanta	Executor of corporal punishment of the accused person in the court of the <i>Halamsa</i> .

every clan of the community form Panchi in order to represent all the clans in the community administrative set up. It is worth mentioning that this salient authority structure and traditional system is going to face some sort of cultural crisis by the intrusion of foreign religious beliefs, alien culture through Christianity in the state of Tripura. This is why, Malsom Dofa, Tripura is working to protect their own traditional culture, religious beliefs and social system involving youths of the community against this vicious foreign design.



Traditional Administration System & Youth Institution Among the Jamatia Community

- Utpalendu Jamatia

In Tripura, there are 19 clan Scheduled Tribes having 9 Lakh population in all out of 32 Lakh total population as whole. Jamatia community stood in 3rd position. From the time immemorial, the Jamatia were, in the Army of the Kings of Tripura and their loyalty to the Kings was famous. For worthy and worries of the community leader like Parkshi and Pub Naran from the King's Regime, the community was treated best subject of Maharajas and allow not to pay any tax and called Jamatia i.e. Jama= Tax, Twiya = no need to pay due to their best loyal to the King. The Maharajas also recognized the communities social customary Judiciary system and their oneness of religious faith (i.e. Sanatan Hindu) by giving permission "Beta Dandas and Royal Flag" to honour. Since then community has been maintaining their that customary system of unity and religious faith of oneness.

Hoda means- Apex Body of the Community. Okra means- Supreme of the community.

Moial means- Apex Body of the Region, Panchai means- chief of the region.

Luku means Village, Chokdiri means Chief of the village.

The whole Jamatia population has been divided under the Moials with 325 villages in the state, which consist of 36 Panchais. The Panchais can dispose off all the Regional disputes but they cannot give any physical punishment. Under Panchai, there is again a Working Committee consisting 7 members who are responsible for the proper functioning of the Moial i.e. Regions.

A Moial (Region) Formed by 5 to 52 villages where two Panchai (Region Chief / Sardar) in each Moial who are selected by that Regions Chokdiri and Prominent persons amongst the villagers for a period of 5 years. At present Jamatia Hoda have 18 Moials x 2 Panchai and two Hoda Okras of the community. Hoda Okras have also been selected unanimously by the Chakdiri & Moial Panchai in the Annual conference after every 5 years. Total population of Jamatia community is near about 1.00(one) Lakh so far Hoda is concerned.

The Supreme powers of the Society are vested collectively on the two Hoda OKRAS who are selected once for the 5 years. They are assisted by an Advisory Board having 7(seven) members who have knowledge

& experienced in Hoda Religious, cultural, Administration (3 Tier Judiciary system) & Customary of Jamatia Hoda. Besides, it has 10 Pujaries who are directly accountable to Hoda Okras. These Pujaries perform the Pujas of Madav, matabari, Twima, Garia, Bolng Suamani, Mailuma, Khulukma consecutively all over the year for the peace and prosperity of the Jamatia in particular and the whole world in general.

There is provision of one Hoda Working Committee consisting of 33 Members (1/3 women) which function under the direct jurisdiction of Hoda Okras for the proper functioning of the system imbued with the Modern way of life especially educational and Cultural affairs.

Hoda have also an Audit Board consisting of 5 members and 1 spoken person who are also selected by the Hoda after 3 years. All papers relating to accounts are audited by the said Audit Board 3 Times in a year to maintain the financial discipline of Hoda and all the press meet. Press Release on behalf of Hoda Okra done by the Hoda Spokesman. Hoda's Financial year is from 1st day of Agrahaian to last day of kartik.

The Jamatia Hoda has also

formed an NGO named Baba Garia Mission (RN 3853/2001) for providing Model Education to the Society. At present 3 nos. residential English medium schools are being run by Baba Garia mission under the overall supervision of Jamatia Hoda in the State. 4 Units of Madhyamik Drop Coaching Centre and 50 nos. of Coaching Centres for the students of Govt. Schools in the different villages of the state are also running by the Mission for poor family students.

The Garia is the Deity of Jamatia Hoda, worship of the deity begins from the date of last of Chaitra (Chaitra Parab), and it continues round the clock for seven days. The Jamatia Hoda worship two Garias, one is Bia Gwnang Garia (as a symbol of Shiva/Mahadev) and the other is Bia Kwrwi Garie (as a symbol of Narayan). On the day of emerson of the Deity Garia all the Jamatia Families who are members of Jamatia Hoda worship Mailukma & Khulukma which are called Laxmi and Swaraswati. In addition to that, The Jamatia communities Pujas start from the Mata Tripureswari Puja, Ganga Puja which are celebrated in the month of Chaitra. In the Ganga Puja the Sun and Moon are also worshiped along with the Ganga. The Garia Puja, Mata Tripurasundari Puja, Ganga Puja, Sun & Moon Pujas, Ban Puja (i.e. God Godness of Jungle) are worshiped by the Hoda for the peace and prosperity of the whole Jamatia Community has also for the

whole world. For the purpose of Pujas(Festival) only, Rs. 75/= has been collected from every family of Jamatia Hoda per anum by the representative of Okars of JAMATIAHODA.

Thus they gradually become disciplined in their social life and them still maintaining their social customs and order in the like manner. At the same time the Jamatias were the first amongst the tribes to adopt settle cultivation on plain lands and they found to be comparatively better off in economy than those of other tribes. They are still possessing a sizeable portion of fertile and plain land. Next, the Tripuris came forward in this practice of plough cultivation. The Jamatia are still maintaining III-Tier Social judiciary system. In every village there is one Chakdiri who is being helped by 5 members of village Committee who are acquainted a good knowledge about the traditional and ultra modern culture, education, religious faith and customary Law and two Khandals who function more or less like the helpers. Chokdiri as village (luku) Chief and Khandals have selected by the Villagers for three years. Chokdiri decide any emergency decisions with the consultation with the Luku committee. At present the community has 325 villages.

Genealogically speaking Jamatia, Bodo, Myanmaris, Chutia, Deuri, Dimasa, Garo, Hajong, Hajai, Kokbrok, Kuch, Nech, Rabha, Tiwa, are Debama Reang Jamatia Koloj Kwtal

Murasing Rpini Tripura Uchoi all sanguine brothers.

Family and Clan Administration

1. Family, like any other human society, is the basic and universal social unit of the structure of Jamatia Community and is known as a Nukhung among the Jamatias.

2. At a minimum the Jamatia family is of unclear from consisting of husband, wife and their living off-spring, of course there may also be a family with a single member, if a male female resides singly maintaining the elements of a family.

3. A Jamatia family is based on monogamous marriage. Based on its condition i.e. residence, authority, succession and descent, a Jamatia family is a patrilocal, patriarchal, patrilineal and patronymic.

4. The father or the elder male or female member, in whose name Lampra Puja is performed, is the head of the family. According to the customs of of jamatias, the Lampra Pujas is generally performed, in the name of both husband and wife. His/her decision in all matters – domestic, religious and Socio political is abide by all members of the family. Of course both the husband & the wife jointly share the responsibility and take decision in the matter relating to the family affairs.

5. With the change of economic life, the forms and functions of Jamatia family has

undergone adaptive changes. The shifting trend forms sifting trend from the sifting cultivation to plough cultivation also changes the composition of their families. Thus, extend or joint type of families started with their burgeoning agrarian society. The transition from to joint type family nuclear family is in essence, a structural change due to necessity.

6. A Jamatia family must be recognized by the chokdiri of the Luku (Village). A Jamatia family must fulfill the following conditions to be recognized by the Luku Chokdiri :-

- (a) Loyalty to the Jamatia to the Jamatia Hoda,
- (b) Must be subscribe to the Luku, Moial and Hoda as prescribed from time to time,
- (c) Must perform Lampra Puja at the time of opening new dwelling house and at least once in every subsequent years,
- (d) Must worship Mailuma Puja, and
- (e) Must worship Baba Garia, the mightiest deity of Jamatia community.

The economic condition of Jamatia clan is same as rest of the indigenous Tripuris. Nowadays many youths are educated and being employed in various state and central government offices.

Villages and Area Administration

Social Structure and Functions of Jamatia Hoda

The main functions of the Hoda are:-

- (a) To maintain discipline, social unity, characteristics of the Jamatias;
- (b) To remove superstition (erroneous notion), illiteracy from the community;
- (c) To develop culture;
- (d) To ameliorate condition of women and ensure proper honour of women in the society;
- (e) To promote /encourage overall education in the (Jamatia) community;
- (f) To encourage overall development of the community;
- (g) Okra is the highest Chieftain of Hoda. There are two Okras in the Hoda.
- (h) Okras are unanimously on universal consensus nominated in annual conference of the Hoda.
- (i) Both the Okras are nominated at the same time in the annual conference.

The Jamatia clan had three tier social structures for smooth inter action and social order. These are:

1. HODA, 2. MOYAL, 3. LUKU

Hoda means the apex body of the Jamatia society. It is headed by the Okra who is the supreme of the clan. The whole of the Jamatia population is divided into 17 (seventeen) region called Moyals these are:-

1. Kalyanpur moyal
2. Borima moyal
3. Kwthar pitra moyal.

4. Pitra saka moyal
5. Yalwkma moyal
6. Khumpuilung moyal.
7. Raiyo Khupuilung moyal.
8. Khama moyal.
9. Tarpadung moyal.
10. Manu moyal.
11. Marandi Moyal
12. Twi-khama moyal
13. Sowng-gan moyal
14. Twi kwthar moyal.
15. Twima kolok moyal
16. Isra moyal.
17. Raima moyal

The head of the moyal is known as panchai & Sardar.

The Moyal consists of five to thirty-two villages, where two panchais & sardar are selected in each moyal by the region's Chokdiri and prominent person of the villages for the village for the period of five years.

The Main Function of Panchai shall be -

- (i) To maintain peace and order in the moial;
- (ii) To settle the disputes except matters or disputes relating to women with the aid and advice of members of working Committee and many impose fine or penalty.
- (iii) To work with the aid and advice of the members of the Working and Advisory Committee for welfare of the member of Moial.
- (iv) To work with aid and advice of the members of the

Working and Advisory Committees for overall development of Moial;

(v) To execute the work entrusted by the Hoda;

(vi) To report to Okras at least once in a month the progress of development works.

(vii) To adopt and enforce any resolution expedient for maintenance of peace and order subject to the approval of Okras.

(viii) To raise subscription as per customs and rules of the society for socio religious performance performances and welfare of community;

(ix) To preside over the meeting of working Committee;

(x) To issue direction to every Chakdiri of the Moial to implement and execute any work for the interest of the Moial;

(xi) to direct the secretary of the working Committee to convene a meeting of Moial committee in conn

(xii) to take appropriate action with the approval of the Okras, if there is any obstruction/hindrance to the implementation/execution of any approved resolution of Hoda.

(xiii) to try and decide the matters relating to women and divorce, subject to prior approval of Okras;

(xiv) to constitute a peace committee on an emergency, with 5 (five) from every Luku for maintenance of peace and

order in the Moial subject to the approval of Okras.

(xv) to aid and advice the government in all matter relating to peace and order and development.

(xvi) to construct a house building for accommodation of the office of the Panchai and also For meetings of the Moial. The house or building so constructed be the property of Hoda.

(xvii) to pay "Lukudusturi" for holding a meeting a house in any Luku within the Moial. Action with the development and or maintenance of peace and order of the Moial;

It Shall Be the Duty of Panchais

(i) To execute/put into operation the decision of the Hoda;

(ii) To be alert of and spread education and make endeavour to create favourable /conducive atmosphere therefore;

(iii) to prevent the works/ actions that are likely to be detrimental or affect adversely the society;

(iv) To undertake such works and adopt such resolution for the interest of the people of the Moial which do not adversely affect other Moials;

(v) to exercise his powers in consultation with the members Moial Working Committee;

(vi) To convene the meeting of the Moial Working Committee at least three times in a year;

(vii) To submit the names address of newly nominated Panchais and members of Working Committee to Okras;

(viii) to constitute a development fund for the Moial in which shall be credited all moneys received;

(ix) to submit in annual conference of Moial a reporting writing in detail indicating the income, expenditure, properties, both movable and immovable, and problems, if any. The same report shall also be submitted in the annual conference of the Hoda;

(x) To deposit/keep all the moneys in an account and ornaments and other valuables and documents of Moial in a scheduled Bank;

(xi) to operate the bank account jointly with the Secretary and Treasurer;

(xii) to receive in writing the charge of cash, ornaments and other valuables and documents from the outgoing panchai at the time of yaktwi khuktwi (handing and taking over);

(xiii) to be the instruction and directions of Okras;

(xiv) to issue certificates of Permanent Residence, Birth, Marriage & Death under his region/Moial.

Luku Administration

The Luku is the village whose chief is called chokdiri.

The village head or the chokdiri is selected unanimously by the head o each family of the

village once in every five year.

Similarly the head of the Hoda, which is the hoda Okra, is selected unanimously by the village chokdiris and Moial panchais at the annual conference for five years. There are two hoda okras at the apex body at present.

The supreme authority to govern the society vested collectively with the two Hoda Okras. They are assisted by an advisory board consisting of four members, possessing sound knowledge and experience of traditional religion, culture affairs, administrative rule, and Jamatia customary law.

There are ten priest appointed by Hoda Okras and accountable to Okras. There is also a Hoda Working Committee consisting of 33 members which function under the direct supervision of Hoda Okras. One third of the board members have to be women. Hoda have an audit board with five members for three years. All the income and expenditure are audited by this board once in every year, to maintain the financial regularity of the Hoda. The hoda has 321 villages which re governed by the above social system. The hoda is very strong and influential and among the Jamatia clan, and that is why the traditional social life and the customary laws are still strictly practiced by the Jomatia clan of indigenous Tripuri.

(i) Duty and responsibility of Chakdiri:-

Chakdiri is the responsible for maintaining of rules & regulation of Luku, for which he must obey the following rituals:-

(a) Lumpura Puja must perform every month.

(b) Chakdiri must worn Paita & Dhuti.

(c) Chakdiri can bow to the senior persons except on the days of Luku pujas.

(d) He must obey custom relating to death upto 5th generation (grandparents to grandchild).

(e) He solves the any problems/ disputes of village with the help of at least 2/3 of Luku committee.

(f) He can collect the fund for welfare of villagers by khandals as per decision of Luku committee.

(g) The Chakdiri shall submit a detail working report and annual account report in each annual meeting of village and must submit the same to the annual conference of moial.

(h) To communicate with the Panchai and to attend in the meetings of Hoda is one of the duties of Chakdiri.

(i) Chakdiri must obey the order and instruction of Okra and Panchai.

(j) Chakdiri can proposed any rule and regulation in annual meeting for development of village.

(k) He can summon an urgent meeting with the help of Luku committee if necessary.

(ii) General rules and regulation of Luku:-

(a) Luku may settle any dispute of the village peacefully.

(b) The ambition of luku is to complete any duty to keep peace and discipline as well as to confirm the security of the villagers.

(c) Each and everybody of the village have the right to ensure education, health (i.e. development of life style).

(d) Luku is place of leave together through co-operation, faithfulness with friendship relation.

(e) The duty for the development of village can be vested on any responsible person or committee.

(f) To solve any disputes of the village through proper discussion and witness one must be impartial self-patient and must keep the situation in peace. ?

(g) Salvation of any disputes of the village must not be political viewed. Otherwise it may be accused as violation of social rules.

(h) A person must submit all his necessary document to new village (chakdiri) if he / she wants to sift his dwelling.

(i) One must clear all his dues if he/ she wants to leave his village.

(j) One must inform the Chakdiri at least fifteen days before his leaving, though not so, he must carry on all his

necessary dues but he has no right to claim for any benefit.

(k) One must pray at least thirty days before to the Chakdiri of new village.

(l) if anybody sifted his dwelling to another village without prior information, must be informed the reasons of sifting within ten days. Otherwise he may summon for proper action before the Chakdiri.

(m) Chakdiri must send two Adongs, at Annual conference, Ganga Puja and Bana Puja etc.

(n) Every village must perform Ker Puja in the month of Sraban or Agrahayan or Chaitra on Saturday/Tuesday for the welfare of village. To entrance and exit in the area of the village during Ker puja is totally forbidden. Anybody, disturb/break the rules of puja during the period of full expenditure of puja must charged as penalty. Ker puja must be performed once again with the amount of penalty.

(o) Chakdiri must perform the Ker puja within its boundary (Duary). The definite are boundary of village is known as holly duary. To burn/buried the dead body of animals (Dog, cat etc.), to puts baby's navel & placenta, umbilical cord within this duary (holy boundary) is strictly prohibited.

Youth Institution

Tripura, being a remotest and communication all most backward state, is devoid of all educational facilities, specially for the tribal's who are living in this hilly State and to overcome this

problems, the Jamatia Hoda had taken a decision and formed an NGO named "*Baba Garia Mission*" and subsequently registered under the Societies Registration Act vide NO. 3835/2001. Since then the Baba Garia mission is dedicate to impart quality education to the tribal with the 17 objectives. These are:-

(1) To establish and maintain quality-Educational institutions for the deserving people particularly for Tribal Student, libraries and reading room for the Welfare of the Society.

(2) To devote in this activities for overall welfare and development of the Educational institution and to make Endeavour to establish Technical Wing in the institution.

(3) To take initiative for preservation of indigenous religious faith and traditional culture of the Jamatia Community and for development of human Resources of the Tribal people.

(4) To run Coaching Centre for drop cut students and also for the current students.

(5) To establish and run Vocational training Centre in free of cost i.e. (a) computer, (b) Motor Driving school, (c) Motor Mechanic, (d) Weaving, (e) Welding, (f) Scooter Mechanic, (g) Mobile phone & repairing, (h) Bamboo, (i) Electrical, (j) Tailoring, (k) Monteswari Teacher.

(6) To establish Centre for coaching of Sports & Games.

(7) To take steps to set up

health care Units in the villages, and also to create awareness on health, Nutrition, Hygiene, on water & other related matters.

(8) To foster, maintain and improve friendly and co-operation among the members of the society and also among the members of the Tribal community.

(9) To public books and journals, posters for betterment of the youngsters in connection with the in connection with the attainment of the objectives of the society.

(10) To collect subscriptions and donation from members and others to attain the objects of the society.

(11) to take up with the government of India or state Government or any other organization for financial assistance for effective and proper management of the institution.

(12) To acquired by purchase or lease or otherwise, lands, buildings and other properties movable or immovable as the society from time to time may think fit for the welfare of members for the society.

(13) To accept, bequeath, gift, grant or endowment for the attainment of the object of the society.

(14) To do all such other things as may be conducive or incidental to the attainment of all or any of the objects.

(15) To work as a non-political organization.

(16) The Mission may organize for unity, integrity, peace and consensus among the people for the course of protection of interest and fulfilling the aims and object of the community and the state.

(17) Keeping peace with the time in the need for changed situation the mission may launch a wide democratic movement for the cause of Jamatia Hoda and for the interest of the state and Nation as a whole.

At present the Garia Mission is running one secondary Model residential School Hostel intake capacity 525 student named (1) Garia Academy (Model) (affiliated to CBSE, Delhi, Code No. 2030015) situated at Garia Hathai, Atharabala, Udaipur Under Gomati Tripura district and it will be spread out/extend to District within next 10 years and upgraded from primary to HS+ stage regionally. Jote Lands for these purposes have already been purchased and now it is under possession of Baba Garia Mission. Three nos. of Sr. Basic Schools one at (2) Tentuibari (Residential), second at (3) Kafru (residential), (4) Burburia Bari Under Amarpur Sub-Division, Two Nos. of primary School one at (5) Hati Chara and another at (6) Tulabari both Under Udaipur Sub-Division and three nos. of pre primary (Nursery) schools are situated at (7) Tui Harchung bari, (8) Raiabari, (9) Indra Basi Bari all under Udaipur Sub-division and another at (10) Khumpuilwng bari, Jampuijala sub-division, Sipahijala District all run by Baba

Garia Mission. Tripura State Committee.

Baba Garia Mission is also running 4 Units Madhyamik drop out Coaching Centre named as Garia Academy Madhyamik Drop out Coaching Centre since 2002 by the help of tribal welfare Deptt., Govt. of Tripura Garia Hathai, Atharabla, Udaipur, Gomati District, Tripura.

In every Saturday we are also providing special moral teaching class to the students by our prominent person of the society who have good knowledge in national Integrity & National building, communal harmony, traditional ethos & culture of the tribal etc. Through this Academy we have already taught and given full ideas to the 1129 youths selected by the Baba Garia Mission from remote areas about demerits of extremist life and as a result there is not a single person who has been mis-guided joined in extremist group since August 2002 from Jamatia Community.

We are confident and firmly believe that these youths who were selected by BGM Authority from different communities cannot be displayed from main stream of the Nation in their lifetime and they are also carrying the good message to the different societies as well as to the young generation. Through this policy we are getting good result and good response from general people in fighting against the evil forces i.e., extremists activities in the state.

In addition to the above, we

are organizing several seminars/ meetings on necessity of proper education to generation, Vocational Training, Peace, communal harmony, national integrity, awareness of health and Hygien, Legal Awareness and against superstition, traditional Culture & Ethos, Afforestation etc. in the different villages of Jamatia dominated areas at least in 18 Moials (Region) of jamatia Hoda every year. Since Shillong is the centre for conversion to Christianity, we are encouraging the student to go outside the Shillong for higher study for the welfare of student and also in the interest of preservation of our old age heritage & culture. The Jamatia Hoda has resolved in its 514th Annual Conference (on 12-12-2005) for establishing a Hostel for the students of Higher Education group at New Delhi, Capital of India. The Hoda also approaches to the state and central and state Governments to recruit youths through special drive in the Forces among the indigenous people of Tripura.

We are also participating in the competition of culture programmes organized by the government in South Tripura district every year. In the 60th anniversary of independence day celebration, our Garia Academy (Model). Garia Hathai, Atharabla, won the 2nd prize. This year i.e. 2007 sub-Divisional level culture competition organized by the SDM, Udaipur won 1st prizes and District level also won 3rd prize.

Now we seek all sorts of co-

operations from the people of different walk of life and we request the Government of India, State Government, TTAADC, NGOs' and all other organization like ONGC, CRPF, Assam rifle BSF, Akhil Bharatiya Vanabashi Kalyan Ashram who are really looking after the welfare of down trodden people for extending more financial assistance for construction of Academy building, Hostels, Technical and Vocational Training School and to supply the educational materials like Computer, furniture for hostels, technical & Vocational Training schools and to supply the educational materials like

computer furniture for hostels, Schools, sports etc. and skill development technical materials for effective and proper management of the institution (academic and technical) so that we can achieve our motto for the interest of the peace, prosperity and Integrity of India.

“It is also mentionable that Jamatia Community was and has been fighting against all injustice, anti-socials and evil forces from the 600 century, from the time of regime. The Jamatia Hoda is still fighting against heinous activities of so called extremist and also fighting to preserve their traditional ethos

and culture splendid. We can still boast of our glorious activities. No other social organization or communities of the North East region are found so brave and determined to fight out against such extremists' activities but we are fighting in spite of all dreadful situation.

The Jamatia Hoda and Baba Garia Mission strongly believes that imparting quality and constitutional education to the students of present generation, can be the only permanent solution to the problems of extremism particularly in Tripura and India in general. ■





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