

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF AN AO NAGA VILLAGE A CASE STUDY OF CHANGKI VILLAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Village studies have been carried out extensively by social anthropologists and sociologists. The saying that India live in its villages is as close to reality now as it was in the pre-independence period. Even with five decades of economic planning after independence, the bulk of the country's population live in the rural areas. Agriculture and its allied activities still provide employment and income to a substantial segment of the rural work force. During the post-independent period, rural India had absorbed the impact of institutional, structural and technological improvements leading to multi-faceted transformations and changes.

Yogendra Singh in *Modernization of Indian Tradition* stated that 'institutional changes introduced through land reforms, community development programmes, panchayat elections and national elections have considerably changed the structure of community cohesion and its pattern of inter-group relationship and power structure. But none of these factors has completely eroded the sense of village identity nor do they portend to do so in future. Since independence, many government-sponsored schemes of development and reform have been introduced having the village as a unit of administration and communication of change-producing values and techniques. The significance of village as a social micro-cosm has thereby been further reinforced.'¹

He goes on to say that 'in traditional India there were continual instances of change without implying modernization'² and that the 'changes were initiated both through orthogenetic and heterogenetic causal sources, and related to social structure as well as culture, but these were essentially

pre-modern in nature and quality.’³ Before the western influence permeated the traditional Indian society, many changes had already been introduced through orthogenetic sources such as Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and so on leading to differentiation within the traditional framework of traditional social structure and values. The Islamic tradition came from a heterogenetic source the establishment of which was by conquest. Endogenous changes in the cultural tradition of Hinduism were mainly confined to Sanskritisation before the beginning of Western contact.⁴ M.N. Srinivas in *Social Change in India* defined sanskritisation as the ‘process by which a “low” Hindu caste, or tribal or group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently, “twice-born” caste’.⁵ However he pointed out that the sanskritisation results only in *positional* changes in the system and does not lead to any *structural* changes. The traditional caste system remains stable and the system itself does not change. Exogenous changes were mainly brought with the Western contact through the establishment of the British rule. Yogendra Singh stated that ‘this contact had a special historicity which brought about many far reaching changes in culture and social structure of the Indian society. Not all of them, however, could be called modernizing. The basic direction of this contact was towards modernization, but in the process a variety of traditional institutions also got reinforcement.’⁶ David G. Mandelbaum in *Society in India* stated that ‘village society was not static under the colonial regime; there were some systemic adjustments, but generally villagers tended to assimilate the main innovations in government, technology, and communication into the established pattern of *jati* relations. British culture was too alien from the village world to provide a new reference category and British society in India was far too isolated and aloof from village life to yield a new reference group for mobility.’⁷ S.N. Eisenstadt in *Tradition, Change, and Modernity* noted that ‘the reactions of Indian civilization, of the major social and cultural groups in India, to these various changes were throughout history characterised by a relatively great variety of responses with what we have called the “adaptive” response the most predominant.’⁸ He wrote that despite

the heterogeneity of Indian society there was continuity of identity and postulated that 'the root of the explanation of this paradox of continuity of cultural identity in the face of great heterogeneity or variety, as well as of the predominance of the adaptive response in situations of change in the very central core of Indian tradition, can be found, first, in the structure of centers of Indian society and civilization, and second, in some of the major aspects of the contents of the Indian value system and of its structural repercussions – that is, in the nature of the Brahminic value system and especially of the structure of the caste system.'⁹ This was so because 'the basic religious and cultural orientations were not necessarily tied to any particular political or Imperial framework, and the cultural identity of Indian civilization was not bound to any given political framework.'¹⁰ Eisenstadt explained this by saying that the caste system was not organized as a homogenous, unified center as it constituted of a series of networks and many organizational-ritual sub-centers in the form of temples, sects and so forth. On the other hand, the various political centers although themselves organizationally more compact, were not continuous, nor did they serve as major foci of Indian cultural identity. He further elaborated by stating that 'parallel to the relative independence of the cultural traditions from the political center (*sic*), the complex of castes, the villages, and the various networks of cultural communication were also to a very high degree autonomous and self-regulating in terms of their own cultural and social identity, with but limited recourse to the political center or centers (*sic*).'¹¹ The continuity of cultural and social identity is exemplified best by the Indian village, in spite of the tremendous external changes that were impinged on its internal arrangements; as a territorial unit, it has endured and continues to be most important point of reference for individual prestige and identification. The vast literature on the Indian village gives credence to this assertion and 'the Indian villages as a micro-structure has thus not only been recognised, but has gradually become a vital aspect of national developmental planning and politico-consciousness.'¹² In the light of this we may say the villages of India are subsystems within greater systems and serves as the focal point of

individual identification within a greater field. The villages of India were never isolates nor were they static. Although changes from various sources were introduced, incorporated and diffused into the traditional social structure, such changes did not diminish the importance and necessity of villages for the people. The simple reason being that from the village stemmed the roots of one's cultural background and most importantly one's identity.

The Naga villages may be discussed as a distinct universe of social arrangements significantly different from other Indian villages because the Naga villages are wholly tribal and they differ vastly in social, cultural and politico-jural institutions. The Nagas as a whole do not form one homogenous tribe but comprises of fourteen major tribes each with its own territory, language and identity. Each Naga village has their own local customary laws and traditions and its internal affairs are managed internally. W.C. Smith in *The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam* stated that 'the Ao Nagas, as well as the other Naga tribes, made very few changes during their long residence in these hills. Their non-migratory ways and their head-hunting habits kept them insulated from all other influences...' ¹³ However with the establishment of British colonial administration and rule from 1866, when a new district in the Naga Hills with its headquarters at Samaguting was established, changes were brought about especially in 'improved methods of travel and communication and the development of commerce which have annihilated distances and the world has grown smaller...' ¹⁴ Under British control headhunting was abolished and this had an impact on the agricultural sector, mainly jhum cultivation, as the men could go farther from the villages to grow crops in safety, thus improving the economic condition. The construction of bridle paths through the Naga territories also improved conditions of travel and inter-connections between villages and free access to the markets in the Brahmaputra valley was also opened.

The introduction of Christianity (1872) and in its wake, education, proved to be the most important and influential instrument of change for the

Nagas in general and the Ao in particular. Education opened new vistas of opportunities for the Nagas like employment as teachers, pastors and low-level administrative clerks in the district offices. People began to migrate to newly established towns and a new elite emerged. The changes brought about were exogenous, mostly through imposition of new ideas and new set of rules and regulations. From a pre-literate society the Naga society became a 'modern' society, the changes being sudden and rather drastic. The social, psychological and ideological changes in Naga culture were manifested in myriad ways but they also influenced in the formation and crystallization of cultural identity. The British policy of not interfering in the internal affairs of the villages under their control and their utilization of the prevailing local systems albeit with certain modifications, as well as giving the tribes a nomenclature - Naga - and popularizing it to identify the various tribes in Nagaland, contributed in the formation of a united cultural identity among the Nagas. The British introduced the *Dobashi* (interpreters) and *Gaon Bura* (village headmen/elders) institutions but these were meant mostly to facilitate the British administrators in maintaining law and order and in collection of household taxes. The traditional village government 'still acted as a tribunal for the adjudication of petty cases, and the district officers intervened only in cases which the village authorities could not settle at their level of administration.'¹⁵ Furthermore the British introduced the Innerline Regulation in 1873 and with this 'the possible socio-economic exploitation of the Nagas by the plains people was effectively warded off'.¹⁶ Piketo Sema in *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland 1881-1947* stated that 'on the whole the colonial administrative policy of keeping Naga Hills isolated benefited the Nagas in so far as it helped to preserve and promote Naga identity...' and ... 'Nagas maintained an exclusive socio-political entity in a classical colonial situation.'¹⁷

Nagaland became the sixteenth state of the Indian Union in 1963 and under the Constitution of India, provisions for safeguarding social and religious practices, customary justice and landed property of the Nagas were

included in Article 371 A (1). This Act states that the processes of dispensing justice, administration of the villages and land ownership and transfer will be according to the Naga customary laws. In effect the customary laws are recognised as legal and binding. Only the State Legislative Assembly can amend the Act. Thus the Naga people were protected and their traditional village governments according to customary usages remained intact.

Many books have been written about the Nagas in general and about particular tribes, but single village studies are few, the most notable among them being N.K. Das' study of the Zounou-Keyhonou (Angami tribe) living in Viswema village in Kohima district (1993). Another study is by Visier Sanyu (1996) of two Angami villages: Kohima and Khonoma. With regard to the Ao tribe apart from monographs written by J.P. Mills (1926), W.C Smith (1925) and S.N. Majumdar (1926); and except for a village survey by B.K. Roy Burman on Waromong village, an Ao village in the Changkikong range under Mokokchung district as part of the Census Monograph series (1961), single village studies have not been carried out. This study based on Changki village, an Ao village in Mokokchung district of Nagaland, is an attempt to fill this lacuna and to record the village way of life so that it might contribute to a sociological understanding of an Ao Naga village. The present study is based on one village located in the Ao area of Mokokchung district and as a case study it is restricted by the local differences because even among the Ao Naga villages there are variations in the institutions found in the villages. But the significance of case studies is by no means diminished. A necessary step in understanding the different tribes of Nagaland divided by local differences is to establish the local types; and adequate study of each divergent part is an obvious requisite for the proper understanding of the whole. This is even more so as there have been very few studies conducted on single villages in Nagaland.

In the preface to the first edition of *The Angami Nagas* (1921) J.H. Hutton cites Mr. S.E. Peal who in his book "Fading Histories" lamented the delay in the study of the eastern Naga tribes, and the consequent loss of

much material out of which their past histories might have been recovered, pointing out the remarkable rapidity with which the Nagas were changing and had already changed. J.H. Hutton reiterated this by stating that the changes taking place among the western Nagas such as the Angami, Lotha, Ao and so on was even more rapid. He wrote that 'it is barely forty years since Captain Butler wrote, but many customs of the Angami at war which he records are almost entirely forgotten by the sons of those from whom he learnt them.'¹⁸ If in the early part of the twentieth century changes had already taken place among the Nagas, the changes over almost a century after would be overwhelming. Despite the changes it is also important to take cognizance of the fact that continuities exist and this study aims to highlight this factor – that is, although changes have been pervasive in the traditional village society, there are continuities of institutions and traditions that binds the village society and contributes to its survival. The importance that Nagas attach to their village, for it is from the village that the Nagas get their identity and their cultural roots stem from the village, is still very relevant.

The aim of the study is to examine the dynamics and internal arrangements of the village in terms of the various institutions: social, economic, political, religious and kinship. The present study attempts to highlight the importance of the village as a unit; for membership to a village is the most important factor as a focal point of reference for individual prestige as well as for identification for a Naga. The focus is on the village as a case study where common residence and kinship ties as well as the economic, religious and political spheres are analysed. An attempt is made to trace a comprehensive understanding of an Ao Naga village as an independent social system that has persisted through generations despite various general processes of change that has taken place. It will also attempt to understand the contemporary transformations and changes taking place and how these have affected village life in Changki.

Changki village is situated in Mokokchung district in the Ao Naga territory and is part of the Mangkolemba administrative circle. The unit of study is the village but it may be stated that Changki people are settled all over the state as well as outside the state of Nagaland. Therefore the demographic details of this study pertain only to the permanent residents of Changki village. However the people settled outside the village maintain links and ties with the village through various means, which will be explained later.

Before introducing Changki village, it may be useful to understand the scope of the term 'village' by examining how it has developed from the British colonial era, to its usage in the post colonial social anthropological and sociological literature as well as in the census reports.

Review of Literature

The Indian village has been a subject of intense study for a very long time. The first account of the Indian village appeared in the *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East Indian Company (1812)*, authored by Sir Thomas Munro, whose authorship was traced by Louis Dumont.¹⁹ The study of Indian villages began with the intensive survey work conducted by the British administration for the collection of revenue and the data collected have been valuable sources of information of that period.

Among the social scientists, economists first undertook the village studies. In the early 20th century, the efforts of the economists' surveys of individual villages have been of significant importance as it was based on first hand empirical investigations. However the drawback of such investigations was that although the economic life of the villages was given in detail, the socio-economic and cultural relationships of the villages were not examined.

Among the early anthropological studies, the American missionary W.H. Wiser's *Behind Mud Walls* and *Hindu Jajmani System* based on

intensive field work gave some insights into village life and his works are considered important in the sense that these were the first studies of village life in the Anthropological tradition.²⁰

In the beginning, the idea that the Indian village was a monolithic, atomistic and unchanging entity, originated from a report by Sir Charles Metcalfe, one of the founding administrators of British colonial rule. He reported that 'the village communities are little republics having nearly everything that they want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations.'²¹ He viewed the Indian village community in an oversimplified and idealized account where despite wars, pillage, oppression and so on, it carried on undisturbed and unchanging thus contributing to the preservation of its traditions.

Sir Henry Maine's *Village Communities in the East and West* depicted the Indian village communities as having communal land ownership, where the 'village community' known for its immense antiquity and great stability comprised of a group of people connected by common descent owning the land in common or collectively. He wrote of a village-community that was 'perfect' and where the 'clearest signs of an original proprietary equality between all the families composing the group'²² was shown. The village council was viewed as a representative body and not as an inherently authoritarian body. He viewed the Indian village-community as an 'organised and self acting' 'brotherhood' where there was political and economic self sufficiency, completely removed from outside influence and interference. He also stated that the village-community 'include a nearly complete establishment of occupations and trades for enabling them to continue their collective life without assistance from any person or body external to them.'²³

But later empirical studies especially in the fifties on village communities not only refuted and questioned such views but also proved that most Indian villages have ties of an extensive nature and rectified the myth that the Indian village was a self-sufficient isolated unit. Marriage

affiliations, the jajmani system and the caste system are some of the important ties. M. N. Srinivas rebutted the idea that the Indian village was self-sufficient for economically, socially and religiously the villages were anything but independent and self-contained. 'Even a basic commodity like salt was not produced by most villages. Iron, indispensable for ploughs and other agricultural implements, was not available everywhere, and iron smelting was a localized industry.'²⁴ Even the essential artisan and servicing castes were not found in every village. He concluded that 'caste ties strand so onhed across villages, and in a great part of northern India the concept of village exogamy, and the existence of hypergamy on a village basis, constitute an advertisement for inter-village interdependence. The partiality of peasants for pilgrimages and fairs also highlights the fact that the Indian village was always a part of a wider network.'²⁵

David Mandelbaum in *Society in India* also stated that no *jati* stands alone. 'Its people necessarily cooperate with some people of other *jatis*; commonly they compete with still others. The main locale of this cooperation and competition is the village. The groups involved are primarily the families and *jati* groups of the same village and its vicinity; rather than whole *jatis* of a region. To a villager then, his village is far more than just a collection of houses, lanes and fields; it is a prime social reality.'²⁶ Mandelbaum regarded the village as an important and viable social entity, which is 'not a neatly separable social and conceptual package but it is nonetheless a fundamental social unit.'²⁷

Mandelbaum focused on the roles, groups and systems of village society and the rules of the social game and considered these important in the study of villages for a better understanding of the whole system enabling us to get a better idea of the Indian village. 'The village, in sum, is a basic feature of civilisation and continues to be a viable community for its inhabitants. A person's village provides him with one source of his self identification, with a nexus of his activities, a stage for his status, and an

area of conflict. Observers can view it as a system comprising component *jati* groups and functional activities, and also as a subsystem of larger social systems.²⁸

A. R. Desai in *Rural Society in India* also reiterated that civilisation began with the development of agriculture and the village became the first settled form of human habitation. The growth and development of the village according to him was the outcome of development of agriculture: 'the rise of the village is bound up with the rise of agricultural economy in history. The emergence of the village signified that man passed from the nomadic mode of collective life to that of the settled one. This was basically due to the improvement of tools of production which made agriculture and hence settled life in a fixed territorial zone possible and necessary.'²⁹

S. C. Dube stated that 'no village in India is completely autonomous and independent, for it is always one unit in a wider social system and is a part of an organized political society.'³⁰ In *Indian Village* Dube has described an Indian village in terms of its features: ' i) as a territorial, as well as social, economic and ritual unit, the village is a separate and distinct entity. The residents of this settlement recognize their corporate identity, and it is recognized as such by others; ii) These settlements have a composite population comprising a number of groups belonging to different Hindu castes, and in some cases to tribes as well as to other religious groups; iii) The members of this local group are bound together by ties of mutual and reciprocal obligations. Interpersonal and inter-group relations in several spheres of village affairs are governed by established usage and social ethics.'

31

Dube argued that the village settlement, as a unit of social organization, represented a solidarity different from that of the kin, caste, and the class, and played a vital role as an agency of socialization and social control.³² He also stated that each village was a distinct entity having individual mores and usages and thus possesses a corporate unity. Mutual

and reciprocal obligations sanctioned by the caste system also integrate economic, social and ritual patterns within the village. Thus he viewed the village as a corporate entity, which represented a solidarity, characterised by economic, social and ritual co-operation existing between different castes.

However Dube also pointed out that the Indian village does not have a similar pattern all over the country. The ethnic and linguistic composition of a village, as well as its caste constitution, also determines its character. Dube classified the villages into distinguishable types based on i) size, population, ii) ethnic composition and caste constitution, iii) pattern of land ownership, iv) structure of authority and power hierarchy, v) degree of isolation and vi) local traditions. He felt that classifying the villages on these criteria would give a better understanding of their social structure.

About the tribal village Dube pointed out 'the structure, ethos and problems of a wholly tribal village will be very different from those of a village with a mixed or homogeneous population. A tribal village is often unitary in respect of its authority structure, the tribal authority, itself being supreme in secular, ritual and cultural village matters'.³³

K. Ishwaran also classified the villages according to size, land distribution, economy, caste and religion. He categorized the villages as small, medium and large-sized villages. About the land ownership he stated that 'there are villages where land is owned by the cultivators, in others it is largely by village landlords, and in others again absentee landlordism is the norm.'³⁴ He went on to say that villages may be heterogeneous or homogenous in terms of religion and that the economy may be built around one occupation or it may represent many but certain uniform characteristics are found in all Indian villages such as the caste system, the statutory Panchayat system and schools.

In his study of Shivapur, a medium sized village in Mysore, Ishwaran states that Shivapur is representative of India's villages in size, land

distribution, economy and caste and religious composition. Thus he hypothesized that what is typical of Shivapur is typical of village India. However he acknowledged that cumulative evidence is necessary to prove this.

According to M. N. Srinivas 'each village has a pattern and mode of life, which is to some extent unique. Villages next door to each other differ considerably and this fact is recognized by the rural folk'.³⁵ He made a distinction between two types of village: the nucleated village and the dispersed village. The nucleated village is one where the houses and huts are huddled in the middle with the farmland surrounding it, while the dispersed village is one where the house or hut is surrounded by the farmland and is independent of the other houses and huts. The organisation of the two types of village was based on defence. In the nucleated village the defence against wild animals and dacoits lay with all the people of the village, while in the dispersed village, the responsibility lay with the kin groups and servants.

In the essay *The Social Structure of a Mysore village*, M.N. Srinivas defined the village of Rampura as 'an interdependent unit, largely self-sufficient, having its own village assembly, watch and ward, officials and servants. Inside each village each caste lives its own life, though it is dependent on other castes within and without the village'.³⁶ The Indian village was thus viewed as a vertical entity made up of several horizontal layers, each of which was a caste.

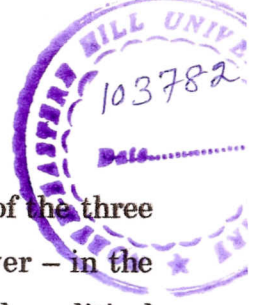
The various empirical studies show that marriage affiliations, the *jajmani* system and the caste system are some of the important ties that link a village to a wider social sphere. Marriage affiliations were made commonly between families of different villages thus setting a lifelong relationship between the villagers. The inter dependence of the villages was reflected on the fact that resident specialists were not found in a single village and in this context, specialists and skilled workers go from village to village for work and trade. In examining Senapur, near Benares, Opler wrote that the

articulations of Senapur people with other communities and far-flung places are 'not a recent development or a consequence of modern systems of communication or transportation. They rest on ancient practices and patterns.'³⁷

Each village is connected through a variety of crucial horizontal linkages with other villages and with urban areas both near and far. Most villages are characterized by a multiplicity of economic, caste, kinship, occupational, and even religious groups linked vertically within each settlement. Factionalism is a typical feature of village politics. In one of the first modern anthropological studies of Indian village life, anthropologist Oscar Lewis called this complexity "rural cosmopolitanism."³⁸

Even if it is true that the Indian village is not a 'little republic', yet it is an important and viable social entity. Village even today exists as a territorial cohesive unit. 'Village identity, solidarity and loyalty cut across caste and community, but divisive factors also exist simultaneously. Land reforms, changes in power structure and social and cultural mobility could be witnessed within a given village as well as village of a given area in terms of new form of stratificational relations'.³⁹ Thus, it is argued that the view of Indian village as 'static' or 'unchanging' does not hold true.

Andre Beteille's *Caste, Class and Power* dealt with social stratification or social inequality where he tried to 'combine the craft of anthropology in the collection of data through the method of participant-observation with the broad conceptual and theoretical concerns distinctive of sociology'.⁴⁰ Beteille in his study of Sripuram sought to systematically describe the different dimensions of social stratification in the community, to examine the relations among them and to explore the changes taking place in those relations. For Beteille, the physical structure of a village reflected its social structure so much so that the distribution of population in the village in territorial divisions depicted characteristics of similarities and differentiation in structural terms. The contradictions and conflicts inherent in the Indian



village is given a wider meaning by examining the interrelations of the three principle dimensions of social stratification – caste, class and power – in the context of change. Social mobility, economic change, and political modernization lead to the creation not only of new relations, but also of new values, new attitudes and new aspirations.⁴¹ The simple traditional structure was thus open to changes due to external forces, which brought about new articulations in the social, political and economic spheres.

McKim Marriott's "*Village India*" (ed) conveys a general impression of great variety within prevailing similarity. It calls attention to the rapid changes taking place and the inter-relation of an Indian village with the larger society and with the civilization of which it is a small and focal part. In his study of Kishan Garhi in the essay *Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilisation*, Marriott stated that 'viewed from the perspective of Kishan Garhi, the village which are the little communities of India today may be conceived as relative structural nexuses, as subsystems within greater systems, and as foci of individual identification within a greater field.'⁴² He went on to say that the villages cannot be conceived as entities in themselves in their organisation of marriage and kinship, residence patterns, modes of conflict, or caste organisation. India's villages were never isolates and the greater community of India cannot be understood apart from the continuing existence of the little communities. 'Both little communities and greater communities are mutually necessary conditions of each other's existence in their present forms. One must consider both in order thoroughly to understand each other.'⁴³

From the review of the social anthropological and sociological literature, we find that the authors themselves see a village clearly as an important and viable social entity. The various village studies have focused on the internal structure and dynamics of inter-relationships of the population within the village. These studies show that the village in general has been analysed in terms of: i) unity of the village, that is, the territorial boundaries of a village are clearly demarcated and the people of the village

act in unity against other villages; ii) different types of solidarity from that of caste. Caste stresses on the ties between members of the same caste scattered in different villages (horizontal solidarity), whereas the village stresses on the ties of the different castes living in the same village (vertical solidarity); iii) extension of the village into the outside world and the inter-penetration of the wider world into the village (e.g., through the market forces); iv) kinship networks; v) affinal ties; vi) the changes that have been brought about in the village due to external forces and hence the changes in traditional inter-relationships in the community.

In the village studies highlighting the various aspects of village life we find a common consensus when it comes to the physical aspects of the villages. The territorial boundary especially that of the nucleated village is clearly demarcated, for such demarcation identifies the village as an individual entity. With a specific local name and clearly delineated borders a village is recognised as a separate and unique entity not only by the villagers themselves but also by outsiders. The physical area of a village is usually divided into the residential areas, the area for cultivation and the forests or unutilised/barren lands. In multi-caste villages the division of residential areas also reflects the social distance between caste groups.

The definition of the village as found in the decadal census reports since 1871 essentially show a marked emphasis on the physical aspects of the village as a geographical unit for revenue collection but there is a gradual shift in defining a village. In the 1871 census report the term village has been defined as 'all areas demarcated for revenue and all other administrative purposes as a mauza and having its nearest part of hamlets were treated as villages.'⁴⁴ The demarcated areas were largely for revenue purposes and this was the officially recognised definition of a village.

In 1921 there is a shift in treating the village as more than just a geographical area for it declared that the houses were located without any reference to civic unity or corporate life and that 'there was nothing that

corresponded to a village in the ordinary sense of the word, and the mauza, which for convenience's sake was translated as a village, was merely that tract of land, inhabited or not, which had been demarcated as a unit for revenue purposes.⁴⁵ It is given to understand here that the criterion for defining a village is not merely geographical but also administrative in nature. The 1931 census report distinctly mentions that the mauza as a revenue unit was rather administrative than geographical.

From 1951 after India became independent the term village was defined not only for census purposes but also for administrative purposes. 'A village was defined as a cluster of houses (or more than one closely adjoining cluster of houses), whose inhabitants were regarded by themselves as well as by others as a distinctive social unit with its identity marked by a distinctive local name. The village in the administrative sense was the mauza – a settled area with defined boundaries, for which village records had been prepared.'⁴⁶

The term village in the census reports has been replaced since 1961 by the nomenclature 'rural area' and for the sake of convenience adopted the administrative classification of a revenue village as a common definition.

From 1971 to 1991 the census reports say that the basic unit for rural areas is the revenue village, having definite surveyed boundaries. The unsurveyed areas like settlements within forest areas and habitations with locally recognised boundaries within the forest range officer's beat were treated as one unit.

The term 'village' as defined in the Census reports shows that the villages have clearly demarcated boundaries that are distinct social entities having administrative functionaries and recognised as a 'village' not only by the inhabitants themselves but also by others.

With regard to Nagaland the village is defined in the *Nagaland Code Volume III*, under the chapter on The Nagaland Village and Area Councils Act, which extends to the whole of Nagaland, in the following:

'Village means and includes an area recognised as a village as such by the Government of Nagaland. An area in order to be a Village under the Act shall fulfill the following conditions namely:

a) The land in the area belong to the population of that area or given to them by the Government of Nagaland, if the land in question is a Government land or is given to them by the lawful owner of the land; and

b) The Village is established according to the usage and customary practice of the population of the area.'⁴⁷

Under this provision the villages in Nagaland have ownership of the land as well as land transfer rights. The establishment of the village as well as the administrative set up according to the usage of customary practices is recognised by the Government of Nagaland. The land ownership and customary practices of Naga villages are protected and safeguarded under this provision.

The village as defined in The Nagaland Village and Area Councils Act has been accepted as the general definition of Naga village for it has never been amended. This could be interpreted to mean that it provides the prerequisites for protecting and safeguarding the traditional village in its entirety and is therefore accepted by all sections of Naga society.

Under the Constitution of India, provisions for safeguarding social and religious practices, customary justice and landed property of the Nagas are included in Article 371 A (1). This article deals with the special provisions with respect to the state of Nagaland. The religious, social, customary laws and procedure, administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law and ownership and transfer of land and its resources of the Nagas are protected under this article.

In the villages in present day Nagaland, we find that physically they are invariably built either on the summit of a hill, on a high saddle, or perhaps more frequently on the ridge of some spur running down from a high range. The village sites were selected mainly for defence purposes as the Nagas practiced headhunting in the olden days. The village sites were positioned in a location that made them highly defensible, if not impregnable from the point of view of Naga warfare.

Verrier Elwin in *Nagaland* states that the Naga villages are characterised by a varied pattern of near-dictatorship and extreme democracy.⁴⁸ There is a system of hereditary chieftainship among the Semas and Changs. The Konyaks have very powerful chiefs or *Angs* who are regarded as sacred and whose word is law. The Aos have bodies of elders based on clans and the Angami, Lothas and Rengma are democratic and independent.

Asoso Yonuo in *The Rising Nagas* says that the Sema, Konyak and Mao Naga tribes have hereditary monarchy. The Konyak kings (*Angs*) have greater powers than the Sema or Mao chiefs, for the *Ang's* word is law. According to Yonuo the Sema chiefs have no arbitrary power, either secular or religious as he has to work in tandem with the village council and is bound to the web of ancient tribal customs and laws. He goes on to say that the Angami, Lotha and Rengma have chiefs who are chosen from the clans for their oratory skills, proficiency in diplomacy, bravery or wealth. These chiefs were assisted by the village council who exercised moderate authority. But the chiefs were more or less nominal heads with very little authority and the office of chief was not hereditary.⁴⁹

J. P. Mills in *The Rengma Nagas* says that the office of chief was hereditary in the clan but not in the family. It did not necessarily pass on from father to son, but to the most suitable man in the leading families of the clan. However among the eastern Rengmas, Mills says that hereditary chieftaincy was not the norm, as influential men always ruled the village.⁵⁰

J. H. Hutton in *The Sema Nagas* says that the basis of the Sema society is the village, or part of a village, which is under the control of a chief. He goes on to say that the 'real pivot of Sema society is the chief'.⁵¹ This is so because although a village may comprise of many clans but the predominant position of the chief and his agnates, leads to the rough classification of the whole group as of their clan. About the Angami tribe Hutton says that 'although the village may be regarded as the unit of the political and religious sides of Angami life, the real unit of the social side is the clan.'⁵² In the olden days each khel was founded by a clan and intense clan rivalries kept each khel separate and barricaded against the other, so much so that it was almost like each khel was a village itself within the village.

But whatever the internal organisation of the villages according to the authority structure may be, each Naga village may be regarded as a 'village-state' for they are independent of external forces and within its own jurisdiction every village was autonomous and free from any outside interference making each village distinctly different from the other. Milada Ganguli in *A Pilgrimage to the Nagas* asserts that 'every village is an independent, self-contained administrative unit.'⁵³ Without exception, none of the Naga villages recognised the authority of another village when it came to internal matters.

The Ao Naga villages are independent administrative units which function according to customary laws and traditions. The Ao villages are independent of outside forces and the village administration and the maintenance of law and order is taken at the clan and Village Council level.

A typical Ao village is characterized by: (i) multi-clan population, (ii) the Village Council, (iii) the age set grades, and (iv) the khels.

The villages are organized on two main principles. The whole village is divided into age-set grades to which various communal duties are assigned. Secondly the control of village affairs lies with the Village Council,

represented by elders of the respective clans residing in the village, the tenure of which varies from village to village, or represented by the age-set grades, the tenure of which is fixed. The Ao have two dialects; Mongsen and Chungli, based on which local traditions and customary laws have been formulated. Among the Mongsen speaking villages, the village government is called *Samen Menchen* (literally- meat share rule) and among the Chungli speaking villages, the village government is called *Putu Menden* (literally- generation rule). The tenure of these two types of local traditional government is not fixed as each village follows its own system of village rule. The local village government based on age-set system is called *Yanga Menchen* (age-set rule) and the tenure is fixed.

A review of literature with regard to the Ao Nagas of Nagaland might be useful to understand the Ao village and to help define the Ao village. The review reveals that three major monographs on the Ao have been written; namely *The Ao Nagas* by James Phillip Mills,⁵⁴ *The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam* by William C. Smith⁵⁵ and *Ao Nagas* by Surendra Nath Majumdar⁵⁶. While Mills was a British administrator, Majumdar was an Indian doctor and Smith an American Sociologist. Along with these three, a few other authors are also reviewed.

William C. Smith, an American sociologist and missionary, wrote a detailed comparative study of the Ao tribe in the monograph *The Ao Naga Tribes of Assam*. He traces the similar characteristics of the Aos with the Dyaks of Borneo and Igorots of the Philippines such as (1) headhunting; (2) common sleeping-houses for the unmarried men, which are taboo to women; (3) dwelling-houses built on posts or piles; (4) disposal of dead on raised platforms; (5) a sort of trial marriage or great freedom of intercourse between the sexes before marriage; (6) betel chewing; (7) aversion to milk as an article of diet; (8) tattooing by pricking; (9) absence of any powerful political organisation; (10) the double -cylinder vertical forge (double barreled air-forcing pump); (11) the simple loom for weaving cloth; (12) a large quadrangular or hexagonal shield; (13) residence in hilly regions and a crude

form of agriculture. He traces the immigration of the Aos based on these facts and the process of acculturation that the Aos presented then.

Smith stated that 'among the Aos there is no tribal organization of any kind, although the geographic boundaries of the tribe are rather distinctly marked. It is difficult to find any unifying principle on which the tribe might be said to depend; yet it is not difficult to recognize people not of their fold.'⁵⁷ He goes on to say that the physical appearance, language and customs are markedly different from the other Naga tribes and observes that the 'Aos believe they have a common origin, and this feeling of kinship tends to hold them together. So far as the tribe is concerned they hold fairly well to the rules of endogamy.'⁵⁸

About the Ao village, Smith says 'in the land of the Ao Nagas the villages are some distance apart and are always entirely distinct. The Ao Naga villages are large. Intense love for the ancestral village site seems to be a characteristic of the people, which keeps the villages from breaking up easily.'⁵⁹ He says that among the Ao the largest unit is the village, and that is bound together by social, political and religious ties. Theoretically the village acts as a unit in all things, and if anybody fails to attend a village function he is punished. Thus in these small homogeneous communities there is but little room for any individualistic tendencies.⁶⁰ It was mandatory for every man to contribute their quota of work for clearing the village paths to the rice fields and water reservoirs and to attend the religious festivals and to observe the *gennas* (taboos).

For convenience of administration the villages were divided into khels and each khel had an *ariju* or male dormitory and every man belonging to the khel was responsible for the building, upkeep and repairing of the *ariju* as well as other duties which would be too unwieldy for the whole village. Smith observed that in matters of the duties towards the village and khel the individual will was subservient to the good of the entire group. But in many things it seemed that the individual was more important than the village. He

further elaborates by saying that the 'Ao villages are very democratic and one man is as good as another'.⁶¹ Although the headmen had some influence they did not have any authority. He noted that 'in a Naga village the will of the majority is not binding upon the minority.' But if 'something was all wrapped up in tradition and supported by magic,'⁶² there was no difficulty in compelling the individual to yield to the village.

James Phillip Mills, who served as the Sub Divisional Officer at the Sub Divisional Headquarters at Mokokchung from 1917 to 1924 with a break of one year's leave, wrote a detailed monograph *The Ao Nagas* published in 1926. This book gives a comprehensive account of the habitat and affinities of the tribe, their dress, ornaments and appearance, their villages, agricultural practices, methods of production and the technology of crude tools; their religious and social customs and ceremonies are also described in detail. 'As with all Nagas the real political unit of the tribe is the village. For most purposes however, the social unit is the khel'.⁶³ The khels have separate administrative councils which oversee all matters pertaining to the khel but in trans-khel matters the village acts as a united entity. The villages are highly organised units in which everyman shoulders his burden of service and responsibility.

To the Aos the village is the most important aspect of his life; the cultural heritage is derived from the village and the village is where his roots are found and therefore his identity. The attachment to the village of birth is indeed very strong as J.P. Mills observed, 'it is very rarely that an Ao does not stick to the village where his ancestors lived before him. An immigrant finds he has little status in his new home.'⁶⁴ To an Ao the village of birth gives him not only an identity but also a place in society. The newcomer thus finds that he is not included in the age-set grades for he did not enter the age-set system of the village along with others of his age; therefore he cannot do any community work assigned on the basis of the age-set grades, thus he is excluded from community related activities. In the village council too he has no standing and certainly no meat shares will be given to him. Clearly

then, it is the village that gives an Ao his identity and sense of belonging, without which he is nothing. Thus the Ao villages do not break up easily as Smith observed for the villagers do not leave their birth place permanently.

Surendra Nath Majumdar who served as a medical officer in charge in Mokokchung wrote a short monograph on the Ao Nagas, which gives a faithful but skand so onhy account of the life, habits, customs and institutions of the Ao. While his work might not have generated as much academic interest as did Mills and Smith's works, it is the first monograph written by an Indian on the Ao Nagas.

About the Ao village Majumdar says, 'every Ao village is a well barricaded fortress.'⁶⁵ He writes that 'every Naga village is divided into several khels or localities, and the young men of every khel have their *morung* (male dormitory), where they commence spending the night from the age of ten or twelve.'⁶⁶

Majumdar's work does not give much insight as to the sociological or anthropological implications of what he describes but it is of general interest, particularly since it is a first hand account of an Indian doctor, written in the early twentieth century. Apart from these three monographs some of the other studies on the Ao Nagas are as follows.

A case study of an Ao village was done on Waromung village, situated in the Changkikong range, under Mokokchung district by B.K. Roy-Burman published in the Census of India 1961, monograph series. A description of the village, its social and political organisation, food habits, agricultural practices, patterns of land ownership, religious and social customs and so on are given in detail and analysed. About the village, Roy Burman says that 'the village is no longer an isolated corner of humanity, that it was a few decades ago.'⁶⁷ The improvement in the means of communication, spread of education, advent of Christianity and so on brought about far reaching changes and development in the village and connected the village to a wider

network with the outside world. However, despite all these changes Roy Burman says that some aspects of the village remained intact such as the traditional Village Council, the clan organisation and age-set system, which constitute the core of Ao social structure.

Another essay on the Ao Naga is by K. L. Bhowmik in *Tribal India A Profile in Indian Ethnology*. A general description of the habitat, people, their customs, social and political organisation, agricultural practices, community activities, kinship and marriage and so on are given.⁶⁸

In the book *The Ao Naga Customary Laws*, Tajen Ao⁶⁹, an advocate, gives in detail the customary laws that govern the Ao people. The customary laws are unwritten and have been passed down since time immemorial through the oral tradition. Ao says, 'an Ao village is a highly organized unit in which every man of the village renders his service for his village. He thinks much of the welfare of his village, takes part in the government of the village, works and helps to run it and fight and defends for it. He contributes and subscribes for the service of his village.'⁷⁰

For the Ao living in the village, his contribution towards the community is mandatory for without cooperation with fellow villagers his own survival comes into question. 'In the democratic system of government there is a council formed by representatives of clans. The participation of the people in the village government is reflected through the representatives who are the elder members of the clans. The representatives are jointly responsible for executive and judicial actions of the government but they have no inherent power for making laws. It rests on the direct participation of the people.'⁷¹

The political organisation of the Ao rests with the respective Village Council with a Council Chairman presiding and although the powers and authority of the Village Council and the Council Chairman is not binding, but the people usually abide by its ruling for such ruling is based on

customary law for which the people have the greatest respect. Such time-honoured customary law is not issued by a ruler or by a ruling body but is part of the culture of the people and thus such law brings a measure of order and stability to the society.

Panger Imchen in his book *Ancient Ao Naga Religion and Culture*⁷² deals with the Ao Naga culture and religion, social organisation, customary laws and procedures, economy, land relation, institutions and the system of social control. In this book Imchen discusses the socio-political beliefs and practices of the Ao Nagas before the advent of Christianity, the arrival of Christianity and its impact on the Ao religion, the culture and society.

Describing the ancient Ao village, Imchen wrote that 'the ancient Ao village was thus a sovereign state, capable of internal administration and external diplomatic relations and welfare with a pure form of democracy where every citizen enjoyed his freedom of speech and was respected.'⁷³ Imchen reiterates that customary law regulated individual and societal behaviour and as the social, political and religious life of the Ao was bound by customary law the activities of every man revolved around this value system which is community related.

N. Talitemjen Jamir's *Ao-Naga Cultural Heritage* gives in detail the emergence and social evolution of the Aos, their learning institutions, laws, customs and rites and the traditional organisation of the Aos.⁷⁴ He also compiled the Ao poetry and songs, which he had learned through the oral tradition.

From the literature reviewed on the Ao Naga tribe, we can see that village as an entity and the internal structure and the dynamics of the relationships within the village gave the people a distinct identity and sense of belonging. The traditional and customary way of village self-rule has also ensured a well-defined and independent village society. The autonomy of the

village within its own jurisdiction is jealously guarded and the customary law enforces and ensures that it maintains the status quo.

It is interesting to note that customary law intrinsically binds up the Ao villages. The value system of the people revolves around the customary law, which has been handed down the ages through the oral tradition. Each village follows its own system of governance and social organisation based on such law and this makes the Ao village autonomous. The Ao villages are composed of multiple clans, which ensure that clan exogamy is enforced.

An Ao village may be defined as having a distinct and well demarcated territory made up of khels, jhum lands, reserve forests, cultivable lands, and rivers and so on characterised by a simple agrarian technology. The Ao village is single-tribe and has its own indigenous political and social systems. The village administration and organisation is based on customary laws independent of outside influences or forces and the population is composed of various exogamous clans.

In the Ao society, the village is considered as the most important entity in the lives of the Ao people. If membership of a clan provides an Ao his identity, the village provides him another source of identity particularly vis-à-vis members of other villages. The customary laws and usages as well as the oral tradition are the repository of Ao history.

Objectives of the study

Keeping the above discussion in mind an empirical study of Changki village in the Ao Naga territory was carried out in order to understand its structure. Changki was chosen for the simple reason that as such no studies have been carried out in this village although Changki is well known for its high literacy rate and its people have been pioneers in various fields such as in the administrative and academic fields as well as in sports and politics in Nagaland. Another motivation was that the traditions and cultural traits of Changki village are fast being forgotten and as no records are available of

such, it was felt that whatever has been preserved and is being practised, need to be recorded and hence this study is a humble endeavor in that direction. This study attempts to highlight the village as the most important entity in the lives of the people and to show the continuity of traditions through various institutions as found in the village despite the forces of changes.

The present study was designed as an exploratory and descriptive one. The focus of the study was on the structure of the village in terms of the various institutions: kinship and marriage, political, economic and religious.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study was primarily empirical and it was based on primary as well as secondary sources of data. As there are practically no records or documents on Changki, the interview guide technique was used to collect information as the people's sense of history, perception and understanding are of great value for such a study. The primary data were collected from the village elders from whom information regarding kinship and marriage was gathered. The Village Council Chairman and council members, Gaon Buras as well as ex-Gaon Buras provided the information on the political aspects of the village. The Pastor, associate Pastor (women), Youth Director, Child Director and other Church workers supplied the information on religion and the functions and activities of the Church. The findings on the economy of the village as well as on kinship and marriage were collected from village elders and residents of the village. The demographic and general information on the village were collected from the VDB (Village Development Board) list, school enrolment lists, Church registers, clan registers and informal interviews with a cross section of the village people. The non-participant observation method supplemented by interviews with a cross section of the village people were utilised to collect the data.

Field Work

The study was conducted intermittently over a course of almost three years from 2001 - 2004. The researcher found that the knowledge and information with regard to the tradition and culture of Changki village is confined to a handful of old people. With the advent of Christianity and education many Changki people abandoned the traditional aspects of life such as celebrations of traditional festivals, observances of '*genna*' (taboos), the giving of feasts of merit, the art of story telling through the oral tradition and of songs; in fact since Christianity first took root in 1901, in the hundred intervening years, so much has been lost that is traditional and essentially the cultural fabric of the village. On the other hand the traditional aspect of village governance and the acceptance and application of customary laws as also the importance of clan and kinship makes an interesting contrast. This will be further illustrated in body of the thesis.

As I grew up in Shillong I did not have much contact with my own people and being a casual visitor to my own village, I had the advantage of having a degree of objectivity while studying my own people. It did help though that I knew the language and both my parents being Changki I was accepted and did not have to establish my credentials.

The oral tradition has been the only source of knowledge handed down from generation to generation but this has often led to disputes, the outcome being heavy fines imposed when such disputes arises. This is particularly true with regard to the foundation of the village and the history of the clans. One of the respondents who had written the story of the village foundation and had given me the documents that he had painstakingly written was summoned by his clan and roundly chastised. This came about because being mindful of how sensitive the people are with regard to such matters, I sought clarification on the authenticity of the story and also since it was written in the Chungli Ao dialect, I had to get someone to translate it for me as I am not proficient in Ao. It was found that some of the stories with regard to other clans were not accurate and so a formal complaint was lodged with his clan.

He was summoned by his clan elders and asked for an explanation as to how he could touch upon the stories of other clans without their consent and since the other clans viewed the case seriously, his clansmen not wanting to make it into an inter-clan issue gave him a stern warning and confiscated the documents. The major problem I faced in the field was that the people with whom I interacted were wary about giving information particularly about the origin of the clans and so on, the reason given for this was that such stories are handed down to the males only. However it was also found in the course of the field work, the people themselves were rather vague about the origin of the clans. The Oral tradition was the only source of information but when the people embraced Christianity such practises were rejected and so much of the information died out with the old people who were the repositories of history, information and traditional knowledge.

In the course of the fieldwork I was fortunate to get the cooperation, help and hospitality of the villagers. The villagers were at first puzzled by my frequent visits; in fact some thought I was a photographer while others thought I was part of the census team, but when it was explained as to the nature of my work, I was given all the encouragement and assistance and accepted into their fold.

However there were certain areas that I could not gain access to such as the Village Council meetings and the clan meetings. Changki society is patriarchal and women have no right to be represented or even to be present in such meetings. However, on my visit to the field in January, 2004, after almost three years of frequent visits to the village, I was granted permission to take photographs of the *Samen Menchen* of one of their informal discussions at Alingtemen, which is the community hall for small gatherings.

Chapter Scheme

Chapter I - Introduction: This chapter deals with the review of literature on Indian village studies. A select number of authors and their works were reviewed so as to understand the concept and definition of

village. Apart from the works on Indian villages, the works on the Ao Naga tribe were reviewed.

Chapter II – Land and People: The second chapter is on the land and people of Nagaland and on the Ao tribe in general; and on the study area which is Changki village in particular. The village formation, habitat, demography and general aspects of Changki village are dealt with in this chapter.

Chapter III – Kinship and Marriage: The kinship structure and interrelationships of Changki village and marriage is given in this chapter. The various categories of relatives, their functions and so on are analysed. In this chapter divorce and inheritance rules are also discussed.

Chapter IV – Political Institution: The village polity, administrative functions and modes of social control are discussed. The Village Council, its structure, functions and power, the age-set grades and the *khel* political organisation are studied. The changes brought about and introduced into the traditional political structure by the British such as the *Gaon Bura* and *Dobashi* institutions as well as the modern electoral processes of party politics are examined.

Chapter V – Economy of Changki Village: This chapter is devoted principally to a discussion of the economic organisation of Changki village and the nature, methods, techniques and the process of production. The land holding system and management of resources and the manner in which the members of the village organize themselves for the purpose of production; as well as occupational changes are examined.

Chapter VI – Religious Organisation in Changki: In this chapter a brief analysis of the traditional Ao religious beliefs is discussed. The advent of Christianity in Nagaland and establishment of Christianity in Changki village are also discussed. The organisation, role and impact of the Church are examined. A discussion of the incorporation of certain traditional values

into the Christian rites such as in the marriage ceremonies, funeral services and divorce are also given.

Chapter VII – Summary and Conclusions: A brief summary of all the chapters is dealt with in this chapter after which the conclusions of the study undertaken have been given.

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CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has been concerned very broadly with the Changki society and village life. In this work a sociological study of Changki located in Mokokchung district under the sub-division of Mangkolemba circle in Nagaland has been undertaken. The preceding five chapters discuss the various aspects of the village. The first chapter introduces the concept of 'village' as found in various literatures as well as in the census of India. The village as understood in the Naga context has also been dealt with. The second chapter describes the people and the setting of Nagaland in general, with particular reference to the Ao tribe and finally a detailed description of Changki village as well as the demographic characteristics of its population. The other four chapters discuss the various institutions – kinship and marriage; political institution; the economic institution and religious institution of Changki village.

The review of social anthropological literature on village studies shows the studies based on empirical method investigates the characteristics of the village and the human population living there. These studies show that the village in general has been analysed in terms of unity of the village, that is, the territorial boundaries of a village are clearly demarcated and the people of the village act in unity against other villages, different types of solidarity, (horizontal and vertical solidarity), extension of the village into the outside world and the inter- penetration of the wider world into the village (e.g., through the market forces); kinship networks, the changes that have been brought about in the village due to external forces and hence the changes in traditional inter- relationships in the community, religion and other socio-economic dimensions.

The villages were broadly classified into dispersed villages where the villages were comprised of individual homesteads surrounded by their agricultural land; and nucleated villages where all the homesteads were clustered together and the agricultural lands located away from this residential cluster.

In the present study of Changki we find that all the households are perched on the ridge of a hill and the agricultural lands are located far away in the surrounding hills and in the valley below the village. Changki village could be termed a nucleated village. The location of the houses in the village does not indicate any hierarchical order or social distance between different households or clans. Changki is a single tribe, multi clan village consisting of 422 households with a population of 1673, with almost an equal number of males and females. Although the people are engaged in various occupations, agriculture is the main occupation. Most of the people are literate and the village has four Primary schools and two High schools. However those who can afford, send their children out of the village for education in the towns within Nagaland or even outside of the state.

In Changki we find that the village is divided into two khels, *Süngdakba* commonly referred to as *luko* (upper) and *Ayim Anet* commonly known as *lulang* (lower) khel. Each khel is a separate entity with its own social and political organisation. Each khel has a *Samen Menchen* (village government) with its own rules and regulations and the people themselves clearly distinguish themselves as either belonging to the upper or lower khel. It is interesting to note that there is no hierarchical order or social distance between the households but there is differentiation on the basis of khel. The clans are also distinguished between the Mongsen and Chungli group. The founding clans and others who settled in the village later on belong to the Mongsen group while the last major group of settlers made up of five clans belongs to the Chungli group. This last group had come with a recognised village government (*Yimten*) and as such was allowed to settle in an area which came to be known as the Tsungli kiong in the lower khel.

Changki people are part of the Ao Naga society which follow the unilineal principle of patrilineal descent and are divided into large exogamous units which in Changki dialect is called kin (clans). In Chapter 3 we have discussed that there are three founding clans who enjoy certain rights and privileges and despite the assertions that all people in the village are equal the hierarchical ranking of the founding clans from the rest belie this. Land ownership is the main factor that differentiates the founding clan from the others. The people themselves call the founding clans *Kin Asem*, literally meaning 'the three clans' and the others *Kin Tebencha*, meaning 'the rest of the clans'. Altogether there are thirteen clans in the village. Changki people follow the neolocal pattern of residence for when a couple gets married they have to set up their own independent household. It is considered a shame for a man to bring his wife and live with the parents after marriage.

The notion of clan as a corporate and solidarity group plays an important role in the lives of the people. The family is regarded as the smallest unit of the clan and in the social and political spheres the clan is considered to be the principal unit. The clans are patrilineal exogamous groups that are made up of lineages called '*kidong*' which it is said goes as far as the first settlers in the village, called '*Tenik*'. '*Tenik*' refers to the first settler in the village and while most people could give the names of the clan '*Tenik*', they could not trace their genealogical lineage to more than 2-3 generations. (Clan membership is by birth and the relationships based on clan affiliations play an important part in the lives of the people.)

When a person refers to his own clan the possessive term used is *Pacha* (male) and *Pachalari* (female). The number of *Tenik* (which is a combination of two words: *Teni*, meaning 'of a group' and *Sanik*, meaning of 'same blood') or branches of lineages of a clan grouped together is referred to as *Kidong* (which literally means 'of one tree'). The function of the clan is the enforcement of social and moral order among the members. Conflicts between individuals or families are normally arbitrated by the committee. As

a close-knit group, the clan performs the functions of protecting kinsmen against injustice from outsiders.

As a political unit, the clan is headed by the oldest clan male who is assisted by elders of the clan to take collective decisions on various urgent and important issues concerning the clan. The clan as a corporate group has landed property and the use of this land is supervised by the elders of the clan. The clan we find is the most important unit in the society and in all aspects of life, clan membership plays the most decisive and influential role.

Traditionally the clan can adopt individuals or groups and take them into their fold, but the origin of the adopted clan is never allowed to be forgotten even if they are given lands and protection by the clan that adopted them. However one such clan which was adopted by the founding clan Changkiri of the lower khel is claiming to be the original founding clan and this dispute which has been going on for about eighty years now has led to inter and intra clan rivalries that has affected the social, political and religious aspects of village life to a great and grave extent. This dispute also brings to the fore that being the founding clan has certain prestige and honour attached. The ensuing clashes arising out of this dispute has also reinforced clan consciousness to such an extent that the three founding clans have formed a united front and call themselves the *Emkumri Kin Asem* (literally The Three Founding Clans) and in doing so are articulating the hierarchical order of Changki society.

Chapter 4 discusses the traditional political institutions in the village society and also discussed the way it has been brought and linked to the wider modern political institutions of the state and the country. The village is organised along two principles: firstly the village is divided into age-set grades which is mandatory for all males from the age of sixteen and secondly the control of the village affairs lies with the Village Council. The customary laws are the basis upon which the village is administered and the means of social control and maintaining law and order is by imposing 'fines'. All

decision-making processes are carried out in the traditional manner which entail discussions and debates through which consensus is arrived at and matters settled amicably.

The village as has been mentioned is made up of two khels each with its own '*Samen Menchen*' (village government) which oversees matters of public life related to its jurisdiction, that is, the khel. The '*Samen Menchen*' is based on the traditional age-set system. In the age-set system, as the grades move up progressively every three years or so, the councilors are drawn from the age-set system directly, when they reach the traditionally prescribed age-set grade that automatically ensures entry into the village government. All male members who have entered the age-set system are eligible to be a part of the '*Samen Menchen*' as they progressively move up the grades and reaches the stage to be in the village government.

However when it comes to the village as a unit both the '*Samen Menchen*' (village government) of the upper and lower khels come together and forms the Changki '*Samen Menchen*'. The traditional political institution of '*Samen Menchen*' has been incorporated into the modern political institution of Village Council that was introduced in 1971 through the Nagaland Village Council and Area Council Act. This article included in Article 371 A (1) under the Constitution of India, deals with the special provisions with respect to the state of Nagaland. This Act states that the processes of dispensing justice, administration of the villages and land ownership and transfer will be according to the Naga customary laws. In effect the customary laws are recognised as legal and binding. Only the State Legislative Assembly can amend the Act.

In the Village Council we find that the traditional and modern political machination is at work where the traditional political institution has been adapted and incorporated into the Village Council serving as a direct link to and facilitating the smooth functioning of the sub-divisional, district and state administration without losing its traditional structure. In

Changki we find that that the institution of Gaon Bura plays an important role as a functionary in the village government. This institution was introduced by the British colonial rulers in 1882 so as to make their administrative work easier and conducive to maintaining law and order in the Naga Hills. The *Gaon Buras* are representatives of the clans selected on the basis of oratory skills, good lineage and personal integrity. We find that the institution of clan is directly linked to the *Gaon Bura* institution and in this way clan membership indirectly plays a role in the polity of the village.

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In the traditional political institution of the village based on the age-set system namely, the '*Samen Menchen*' the members have a very short tenure while the *Gaon Bura* institution based on sending representatives selected by the clans to the '*Samen Menchen*' is for life. Thus we find that the *Gaon Bura* institution began to wield more power due to the fact that while the members of the traditional '*Samen Menchen*' drawn from the age-set system stayed in the village government for six years only (three years as junior councilors and three years as senior councilors), the *Gaon Bura* representatives were selected for life. The experience and knowledge of the *Gaon Bura* became indispensable and soon the institution of *Gaon Bura* gained prominence and power in Changki. The Village Council composed of both the traditional '*Samen Menchen*' and the *Gaon Bura* look after the law and order, administration of justice, settlement of disputes, general welfare of the villagers, developmental schemes of the village and so on. The village as well as the various Changki unions outside the village affiliated to the *Senso Mungdang* or Changki general body comprising of all Changki males, wherever they may be residing, have been severely affected by claims of the Emrem Changki as the original clan over the Changkiri clan. The Mokokchung Changki Union Vs Changki *Yimten* case highlighted in chapter 4, shows how this rivalry has affected not only the village but also all other Changki unions found in other parts of Nagaland. The modern electoral process that was introduced with the formation of the state of Nagaland in 1963 has also brought about a new dimension to the polity of the village.

Changki is part of the 29 Jangpetkong Constituency of Mokokchung district. This constituency comprises the villages of Changki, Chungliyimsen, Khar, Mongchen, Dibuai, Waromong and includes Alongkima, which is the area's administrative sub centre, Mangkolemba, the district sub-divisional centre and Longnak and Merakiong polling stations. In the electoral processes of party politics we find that divisions have been formed along party lines in the village with the founding clans deciding to support the regional party Nagaland People's Front (NPF) in the last election in 2001 and closing ranks against the Congress party. The village is divided into the regional party and the Congress party and this division is heightened during elections.

In chapter 5 we have discussed the economic institution of the village. The economy is based on the agricultural practice of wet rice cultivation and although there are many new occupations being practiced by the people, agriculture continue to be the mainstay of the village. Thus the village economy could be classified as agrarian as almost all the households were engaged in agricultural activities.

The agricultural activity of rice cultivation is of two types, jhumming and wet rice cultivation. As Changki territory is vast, jhumming was carried out extensively in the earlier days. It was only in the late 1920's that the British colonial rulers found the Changki valley, which is 16 km away from the village site, to be fertile and conducive for wet rice cultivation. In the beginning the villagers were reluctant to go down to the valley for fear of wild animals but under duress the British administrators made the villagers learn the skills of wet rice cultivation by bringing labourers from neighbouring Assam who worked alongside the Changki people. In this way, the people began wet rice cultivation and this agricultural practice soon brought about a new prosperity to the village which has been a boon economically for the people.

In the earlier days the economic activity involved the '*Yangtep*' system which was the formation of small working groups comprising of good friends and neighbours based on age who worked on each other's fields on rotation basis. For example the father of a family would form a working group with his age-set grade mates, the mother with her friends of the same age and the children with their own set of friends of the same age. In this way a system of labour force was formulated and people worked in cooperation. However nowadays the '*Yangtep*' system is practiced by only a very few people as most of the people prefer to hire daily wage workers or employ other non-local workers to work their fields. Presently we find that the people have also taken to horticultural activities such as pineapple and orange cultivation as well as tea plantations. Arecanut plantation is also another economic activity taken up by the people. We find that the market forces and competition is making the people more individualistic where self interest and economic gains takes precedence over community life and participation. We find that a class structure is emerging in the village and conspicuous consumption is becoming the norm.

Chapter 6 is on religion and we find that all the people of Changki are Christians belonging to the Baptist denomination. Christianity was introduced in the village in 1901 and with Christianity, education was also initiated. The introduction of education brought about immense changes for the villagers because through education new opportunities were opened and many of the Changki people went on to become pioneers in various fields. Although Christianity brought about positive changes; it also led to the loss of many cultural traits for with the advent of Christianity, Changki people gave up many of their festivals, rites, oral traditions and even songs and dances. The ancient religious beliefs and rituals have long been forgotten as the people rejected the traditional belief system as heathen practises. However certain traditional values have been adapted and incorporated into the Christian rites especially during weddings and funeral services.

The Changki Baptist Church which was established in 1901 also suffered a setback in 1947 when there was a split due to the inter-clan dispute in the lower khel. In Changki there are two churches of the same denomination which has split the village into two congregations thus affecting the unity of the village. However, the efforts to unite the two churches have been met with stiff opposition by the elders, particularly of the break away church.

From the summary of the chapters discussed we find that clan membership play a very important role in the lives of the Changki people. The family is considered as the smallest unit of the clan and the clan influences to a large extent the working of the various institutions especially that of the political institution where Gaon Buras are selected on the basis of clan. However one predominant theme of discord and dissension affecting all spheres of village life in Changki is the claim of the Emrem Changki clan as the original founding clan. Kinship ties and the network of relationships are established through marriage alliances and the web of social relations within the village is such that it is said that invariably each and every Changki person is related to each other in one way or the other. In this set-up we find that due to the clan rivalry, there are deep divisions within the village along clan lines that has affected the network of relationships.

The on-going rivalry is one that began almost eighty years ago, and through the decades the social, political and religious realms in the village has been affected to such an extent that this has pervaded the mind-set of the people and influences all aspects of the people's lives, especially in the lower khel.

The inter-clan dispute has divided the people and the solidarity of the village has been polarized along three aspects:

Clan

Church

Party politics.

The divisions along these three aspects have created conflicts primarily between the two warring affecting their relationships with other clans. It has indirectly led to the split of the church and the congregation, further aggravating the situation and lastly it has entered the state electoral process of party politics contributing to the feud not only along clan lines but also party lines.

Although village life has been disrupted several times over the inter-clan rivalry, we also find that it has reinforced clan consciousness. The three founding clans, Longchari, Amri and Changkiri, have united and formed a front called the *Emkümri Kin Asem* thus asserting their hierarchical position in the village and the privilege that being the founding clan accords to them. Despite the inter and intra-clan rivalry we find that the clans do not become disorganised or break up easily because of the highly integrative character of the kinship system, which help to restrain and resolve conflicts between members of the same clan; as well as the importance that the people attach to the value of clan solidarity and the traditionally accepted authority of the clan elders. The founding clans of Changki village do not have the obvious trappings of power nor are they treated any differently by the others. But in subtle ways they are accorded deference and respect by the rest of the clans. This is most evident in the manner in which land is used in the village. Most of the land holdings belong to the founding clans; therefore if anyone wants to use the land or take out its produce, it is mandatory that they seek permission from the land owners. In matters of village affairs the founding clans are consulted and their decision sought. With regard to the village history and migration patterns, the founding clans have recorded the stories handed down through the oral tradition and it is only with their express permission that the same can be used. Even in the Village Council we find that it is the founding clans who dominate for the Village Council chairman has always been from one of these clans. The others who have occupied this seat belong to the Alingri clan and from the historical accounts of the village we find that this clan arrived at the village just a few days after the founding

clans, therefore by virtue of their early arrival they are accorded the position as being next to the founding clans in the hierarchical order. We find that this traditional aspect of the village is very much adhered to and the concept of 'founding clan' is clearly ingrained in the psyche of the people.

Economically the people are still agriculturists and rice is the main crop but we also find that other agro-based activities are simultaneously being carried out. '*Yangtep*' which can be considered as communal labour based on age and sex was the form of division of labour through which the people helped and supported each other in their agricultural activity of jhum cultivation. But from the late 1920's, wet rice cultivation has become the major agricultural activity. The economic viability of wet rice cultivation resulted in better economic conditions for the people and through the years as this agricultural practice proved more viable, jhum cultivation began to be discarded and in a number of ways communal participation and sharing lost its moorings. The songs, exchange of witty repartees and jokes among the people that was a part of this activity as it entailed long treks to the jungles have been forgotten. Wet rice cultivation has led increasing use of wage labourers and in this way a patron-client relationship is emerging between the owner of the rice field and the workers. Wet rice cultivation also sustained the people, not only for consumption but also contributed to better living standards and most importantly through the surplus and sale of the rice, it has given the people the monetary support to send their children out of the village for education.

Education has played a key role in ushering in changes and opportunities in the village. The importance that the Changki people attach to education can be observed in the number of schools that is found in the village (four government primary schools, one government high school and one private high school) and the strict vigilance that the Village Council keeps in monitoring the teachers and functioning of the schools. As education opened up new opportunities for employment and so on, the educated Changki people left the village to settle in other urban places. The rising

aspirations and expectations of the people in the village were fuelled by the obvious trappings of 'modernity' that employment especially in the public sector could bring about. Thus the people in the village began sending their children to study outside in various towns of Nagaland and for those who could afford, outside the state. On one hand this has resulted in the placement of some of the educated youths in prestigious and respectable positions in government offices. But on the other hand it has led to rising frustration among the majority of the youth who cannot find employment and since they have been out of the village since childhood find the village too restricted and uninteresting. They also do not have the inclination to become cultivators, nor can they settle outside and it is this section of the educated, unskilled and unemployed youth who are causing concern for they are increasingly resorting to alcohol and drug abuse, petty theft to support the habit and creating trouble for the family, relatives and villagers in general.

Some of the educated unemployed youths have also joined the underground groups of Nagaland such as NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K) and so on. Although the Village Council exercises authority over the affairs of the village and acts on behalf of the people, the traditional authority mechanism is seemingly helpless with regard to the activities of the underground groups. The extortion of 25 percent of pay from all government employees annually and house taxes levied on all by the underground groups continue to burden the people. In such ways we find that the power of the traditional authority is being undermined. The electoral process of party politics is another factor that has changed the equation of power and influence. The party politics has brought about disorganization of the traditional forms and brought about new re-alignments. This is most evident in the rivalry of the two clans in the lower khel spilling over into the modern political arena of party politics. The kinship networks and relationships has been decidedly influenced and disturbed by this rivalry and the ensuing conflict.

Changes in the material aspects of village life are evident and the outlook, aspirations and expectations of the villagers especially that of the younger generation is vastly different from that of their parents. However inspite of the changes in the lifestyle and entrepreneurial spirit of individualism overtaking the community sense of participation and living, we find that the institutional and organizational structure of the village is still based on tradition and customary usage. The clan system, age-set grades, the *Samen Menchen* (village government), *Senso* (Changki general assembly) and the linkages of the people living outside the village through the various Changki Unions established in urban areas are some aspects that still continue to be important and relevant for the people for it figure as the major focus of their collective identity. These traditional institutions are accepted and viewed as the cultural symbols that give a distinct identity to Changki people. All these indicate that the village as an entity is held as sacrosanct for it is only through the membership to the village that people get an identity and from this point of reference the cultural roots of an individual is derived.

In conclusion we may say that Changki village is a traditional village where the continuity of traditions is found in its institutions and social organisations. However the forces of change being brought in through the mass media, economic opportunities, government intervention in agro-based activities and by the people themselves who are educated, mobile and exposed to outside influences are gradually changing the lifestyle. The accelerated rate of development and the processes of change may be transforming the village but the pattern of change is adaptive in nature where most of the traditional institutions are retained. This is most evident in the general characteristics of concrete social relations and patterns of behaviour as well as in the customs practiced by the people of Changki village.