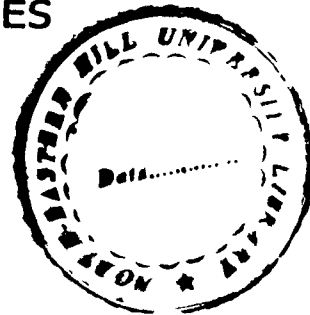


**“TRADITIONAL AND MODERN POLITICAL
INSTITUTIONS OF SUMI NAGA”**

ABSTRACT

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**THESIS
SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF
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TRADITIONAL AND MODERN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE SUMI NAGAS

There is a constellation of fifteen different tribes in Nagaland. Among these, the Sumi¹ Naga constitutes one of the major tribes of the State. According to the Census of 1991, the population of Sumi in Zunheboto District is 96,218 out of the State total population of 12,09,546. Though the Sumis are concentrated in Zunheboto district, but like other tribes, they are also found in different areas of the State as well. The area is bounded by the Aos in the north, the Changs and the Sangtams in the east, the Chakhesangs and the Angamis in the south and the Lothas and the Rengmas in the west.

Like the other tribes in Nagaland, the Sumis also have their own distinct culture, customs and traditional political institutions which still play a vital role in their life.

The present study focuses on the polity of the Sumi Naga society which is striving continuously to adjust with the changes of time. It is a general perception that the tribal society is subjected to endogenic influences though the exogenic forces

¹ The word *Sumi* is now used for the *Sema* which was the earlier name of this community. By a resolution of the Sumi Hoho, the apex body of the Sumis this change was introduced which was subsequently approved officially by the Government of Nagaland vide its Notification No HOME SCTA-16/94 dated 13th September 1994.

sometimes become very important in changing the primordial character of the society. The Naga society is no exception to this. An understanding of the Sumi institution is only possible if due attention is given to the process of change and transformation.

In the past, the Sumis lived in isolation. There was the practice of head-hunting between the villages and between the tribes. The village administrative organisation did not expand beyond the village boundaries. However, the identity of the Sumi tribe was recognised after their contact with the outside world. Socio-economic and political changes gradually took place due to the influences of Christianity, education, British administration and the emergence of the middle class from the Sumi community.

Traditionally, it is believed that the Sumis come out from the bowels of the earth and lived among the thatch grasses. That is why they are called Sumi. *Su* means hard grass and *mi* means people. The Sumis are called hard people.

Objective of the Study

The study intends to examine the traditional hierarchical political organisations of the Sumi Nagas. It also tries to analyse the power structure and functions of these institutions in the backdrop of the modernisation process and the functioning of electoral democracy in the recent past upto 1998. It also tries to analyse the level of political participation under the changed historical situation and its effects on the

political life of the Sumis. Besides, an attempt has also been made to study the changes brought about by Christianity and education.

Methodology

The data for the study have been collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included Government Acts, Rules, Regulations, Documents, Assembly proceedings, handouts and interviews conducted with persons well versed on the subject. It was conducted orally to elicit informations and questionnaires were also used to elicit opinion.

The secondary sources were drawn from published and unpublished books, seminar proceedings and other printed materials, journals, newspapers, etc.

Review of Literature

The literature on traditional institutions of Sumi Nagas is scanty. References about the traditional polity of the Nagas find mention in the ethnographic texts prepared by British anthropologists and administrative officials. These references can be found in the books and monographs of E.R. Leach on the *Highlanders of Burma*.² J.H. Hutton on the *Angami Naga*,³ and J.P. Mills on the *Ao Naga, Lotha Naga and Rengma Naga*.⁴ Besides, stray references only were made in these volumes. Only the

² Leach, E.R.: *Highlanders of Burma*, London School of Economics and Political Science, 1954.

³ Hutton, J.H.: *Angami Nagas*, Oxford University Press, 1968.

⁴ Mills, J.P.: *Ao Nagas, Lotha Nagas and Rengma Nagas*, Oxford University Press, 1968.

monograph on *Sema Naga* by J.H. Hutton⁵ and the information contained in *Zunheboto District Gazetteer* by B.B. Ghosh⁶ provide some detailed discussion on Sumi Nagas. These books are mainly ethnographic in nature detailing the life, culture and tradition of Sumi Nagas without any critical analysis of their institutions and traditions. Therefore, they do not provide a comprehensive understanding about the Sumi Nagas. These studies mainly dealt with the generalities of the life and culture of the people of the area. Apart from these, we also have other literature on the Sumi like Hokishe Sema, On the Emergence of Nagaland, Piketo Sema, On British Policy and Administration in Nagaland and Najekhu Yeptho, On Sumi *Gennas*, but they do not make any detailed discussion particularly on the Sumi Nagas.

Chapterisation

The study has been divided into six chapters.

Chapter I: The Conceptual Framework and Brief Introduction about the Sumi Naga. It deals with the conceptual framework and the traditional Sumi Society.

⁵ Hutton, J.H.: *Sema Nagas*, Oxford University Press, 1968.

⁶ Ghosh, B.B.: *Zunheboto District Gazetteer*, Government of Nagaland, 1979.

Chapter II: Traditional Sumi Naga Chief – Powers, Functions, Privileges and Responsibility. An attempt here has been made to study the evolution of chiefship including his powers, functions, privileges, responsibility and positions.

Chapter III: Traditional Village Council. It deals with the traditional village organisation, its composition, power, functions and responsibilities and the present trends and changes.

Chapter IV: Changing Dimension-I: Religion, Education and Traditional Political Institutions. It examines the impact of Christianity, education and British Rule on the traditional political institutions.

Chapter V: Changing Dimension-II: Electoral Politics and Traditional Institutions in Zunheboto District till 1998. It discusses the present democratic electoral process and the nature of people's participation.

Chapter VI: Conclusion. It includes the findings of the study.

Chapter I: Conceptual Framework and a Brief Introduction about the Sumi Naga

In this chapter an attempt has been made to define the three important concepts used in the study. These are traditions, institutions and modernisation.

In the study the key term used is tradition. Tradition is understood as the total heritage, beliefs, customs, styles and opinions transmitted from generation to generation. Political tradition may be defined as a set of conventions and beliefs concerning the political community. It includes the behaviour of man as a political entity. Political tradition explains how rules are conducted and how the ruled behave towards their ruler including their election and the nature of control exercised by them. In other words, a tradition is embodied in habits, customs and norms which express the prevalent values and beliefs. The entire socio-political life may be said to be guided by the workings of tradition.⁷

Maclver and Page used the term 'institution' as an established form or conditions of procedure characteristic of group activity. According to them, whenever associations are created in a society certain rules and procedures also follow for the dispatch of common business and for the regulation of the members in their relationship with each other.⁸ As reflected in the above definition, these scholars consider institutions as formally agreed upon bodies articulated and enforced through numerous traditional values, which have been universally accepted by the groups. Institutions according to these writers, are functional bodies which regulate the socio-political communication of the group.

⁷ Dube, S.C.: *Tradition and Development*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994, p. 24.

⁸ Macleaver and Page: *Society – An Introductory Analysis*, Macmillan, Madras, 1992, p. 15.

Besides Page and Meclver other authors also have discussed the relationship between tradition and institution. For Kingsley Davis, institution is “a set of interwoven folkways, mores and laws built around one or more functions.”⁹ Hertzler defines institutions as great clusters established, accepted and implemented ways of behaving socially.¹⁰ According to these scholars as reflected in the above definitions, tradition gives stability and essential rationality to many institutions. In other words, traditional political institutions include all forms of institutions which have moral sanctions behind them and are recognised by society.

For the purpose of this study, modernisation is defined as the process of human development and change.¹¹ Modernisation consists modifying the existing tradition and creating room for new ones. The political aspects of modernisation refer to the ensemble of structural and cultural changes in the political system of modernising societies.¹² Thus political structure consists of patterning and interrelationships of political roles and processes. Political culture on the other hand, is the complex of prevailing attitude. As reflected in the above,¹³ the overall process of modernisation refers to changes in all institutional spheres of society resulting from man’s expanding knowledge and control over his environment.

⁹ Quoted in Ganguly, S.N.: *Tradition, Modernity and Development*, Macmillan Company, New Delhi, 1977.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹³ David and Sills: *International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, Macmillan Free Press, London, 1968, p. 409.

Another concept examined here is modernity. Modernity does not only create room for new traditions but also helps to enrich the existing value orientation in terms of new values that ensures a smooth progress towards image fulfilment. Modernity is not the cancellation of something that is old but a continuous process. Modernity is the realisation of a future only in terms of the past. Therefore, it can only be understood in terms of tradition, though not vice-versa.¹⁴ It is seen that continuity and overlapping of the new and the old values and ideas is inevitable in any society.

In the light of the above, we see that though there is an adherence to tradition, yet the process of modernisation works side by side. The traditional institutions and practices continue to exist while changes also take place. This is found especially in the changing powers and functions of the chief and his relationship with the members of the village council.

Chapter II: Traditional Sumi Naga Chief

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to study about the factors responsible for the evolution of the Sumi chiefship including his powers, functions, privileges, responsibility and status. The emergence of chiefship is specially attributed to the collective needs of the community and the setting up of new villages particularly due to two factors: search for better cultivable land and settlement and protection from external attack. The study reveals that the Sumi chiefship is by and large hereditary

¹⁴ Gangully, S.N.: *op cit.*, p. 48.

unless the heir is incompetent to succeed. The law of primogeniture is also prevalent. However, the younger sons of the chief can also become chief in the adjoining areas subject to the availability of land and having a good group of royal followers. The basic strength of the Sumi chiefship lies in the ownership and control of land and resources. Generally, the concentration of land-ownership lies with the chief who is believed to be conducive to tribal solidarity.

The chief was all in all and the village administration was conducted according to customary laws and usages. The Sumi chiefs have been by and large very autocratic.

The institution of Sumi chiefship is being honoured even today. His powers and influences continue to be very important in the Sumi society. However, with modernisation they felt the need to protect themselves, the Sumi Chiefship Association or Sumi Kukami Hoho was formed in 1990.¹⁵

Chapter III: Traditional Village Council

In this chapter an attempt has been made to study about the administration of the village organisation.

¹⁵ Nagaland Village and Area Council Act 1970, Published by Department of Home Affairs, Government of Nagaland, Kohima.

In a tribal society, especially in the case of the Sumi village, the governance is basically autocratic. The chief was very powerful though he sometimes depended on others for advice. The chief is assisted by the *Chochomi* (councillors) and *Asa Papu* clan fathers who were well versed in customary laws and usages. These people who were chosen by the chief were usually wealthy and influential. The included persons from the different clans sometimes even close friends were inducted. This is a privileged group in the traditional Sumi society. The main reason for forming the council of elders and the *Chochomi* was to obtain information about the happening in and around the village and to help in various administrative activities. However, the decision and advice of the *Chochomi* and the council of elders was not binding on the chief.

Besides, the *Chochomi* and *asa papu*, there were two kinds of dormitories, one for unmarried boys known as *Apuki* and another for the unmarried girls called *Iliki*. These were important traditions around which the village social life revolved. The function of these bachelor dormitories were: to protect the village in case of surprise attacks, to control accidental fire, to hunt dangerous animals, to help the villagers at the times of death or sickness, to help the poor and cook in the chief's house during the feasts. In spite of social values and relevance, the institutions of *apuki* and *iliki* has disappeared today as a result of socio-economic transformation.

It is important to mention here that the passing of the Nagaland Village and Area Council Act 1971 by the Government of Nagaland is the juxtaposition of traditional and modern Village Council. Because even though structurally it appears modern, for example, the democratic method of election of its members, their tenure, funding of the Village Council and the setting up of the Development Board set up by the Government. But the functioning of most of the activities of the Village Council are governed by the traditional pattern. For example, decision on settlement of land disputes, theft, marriage and divorce, debt, adoption, etc are taken on the pattern of traditional customs and usages. This is found to be more effective than the modern method of deciding the cases in the court.

In the decision making process of the Village Council also, the chief's opinions and views are still revered and accorded precedence over the elected members. Some of the chiefs are still the chairman of the Village Council since the enactment of Village Council Act of Nagaland in 1971. This Act has provided that the villages inhabited by the Sumis and Konyaks are to have hereditary chiefs as the chairman of their village court.¹⁶

¹⁶ Nagaland Code, Vol. IV, Published by Department of Law and Justice, Government of Nagaland, 1998, Kohima.

Chapter IV: Changing Dimension-I: Religion, Education and Traditional Political Institutions

In this chapter an attempt has been made to examine the impact of Christianity and education on the traditional Sumi society. It is found that the animistic society like the Sumi Naga was controlled by fear and superstitions. There were too many *gennas* (*Achine*) which hampers their economic and social life. They realised that they can liberate themselves from these bondages of superstitions by following Christianity. The Sumis were easily converted to Christianity because of the vague concept that they had of God and his relationship with men. This concept was not clear in their animistic belief. There was no deep and viable philosophy in Naga religion. Moreover, the Nagas belief of a supernatural power and *Alhou* the Creator of everything in the universe was similar to the teaching of Christianity.

It was also found that the spread of Christianity in the Sumi area was more difficult than in the case of the Ao area. Therefore, the missionaries visualised that the only way to spread Christianity in the Sumi area was to befriend the chiefs and convert them to Christianity. Rev. Bailly, commented that the Sumi have got the system of hereditary chiefship who was autocratic and powerful. If the chief was first converted then the whole village could be easily converted.¹⁷ Thus with the conversion of the important leaders in the Sumi area, Christianity spread faster.

¹⁷ Yeptho Najekhu (History of Christianity among the Sumi Nagas), Sumi Baptist Church Council, 1997, Zunheboto.

With the spreading of Christianity, many of the traditional customary practices were subdued though not completely ignored. Many Sumis have partially abandoned their traditional way of life and dress and what was more crucial was the change in their mental make-up. Though the motive of the missionaries from the beginning was to educate the Nagas yet this was only a one sided function. Their main target was to Christianise them and not to develop their all round personality. They did not try to educate and then convert them to Christianity but the opposite took place.

The converted Christians who got educated in the Mission schools were taught of Christian Doctrines without references to culture. This brought in a lot of confusions in the Naga society. Many were unaware of their traditional values, culture and ethics.

With the spreading of Christianity and education, there emerged a middle class that controlled education, government jobs, commerce and trade, technical and medical education. In fact, this middle class has been the agent of social change in the Sumi society.

Chapter V: Changing Dimension-II: Electoral Politics and Traditional Institutions in Zunheboto District till 1998

In this chapter an attempt has been made to study the Assembly Elections in the Sumi area of Nagaland. Traditionally in the Sumi society, there were no elections

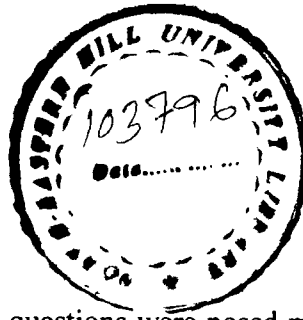
in the modern sense of the term for appointment to political office in the society. Moreover, participation in decision making in the Sumi community was absent.

The first Election was held for the Nagaland Legislative Assembly in 1964. The people of Zunheboto participated in this election. Since then election had been held in the Sumi area eight times.

Zunheboto is one of the eight district in Nagaland. It has seven constituencies. The total population of the district was 96218 as per 1991 Census. The total number of electorates in the district according to the 1993 electoral role was 59717. It increased to 71784 electorate in 1998.

Out of the seven, three constituencies were selected for the study. Out of these three constituencies three polling stations were chosen. The three constituencies selected are Atoizu, Akuluto and Zunheboto. The first two constituencies happens to be very important because the candidates elected in these constituencies played a very important role in the formation of any government.

The study tried to examine various electoral activities like voting, attending election meetings, contributing money to the party or to the candidate involvement in canvassing and working in the campaigns. It was found that those who made contributions to party funds, canvassing and working for the party was more active in



the elections. Therefore, in this connection, several questions were posed mostly face to face interaction was done to ascertain the nature and degree of participation.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

This chapter sums up the findings of the study. It has been found that

1. Modernity is not only creating rooms for new traditions but also the realisation of the future in terms of the past. In all societies, there is an overlapping of the new and old traditions. This is true to the Sumi society too. Thus it can be said that the Sumi society is moving towards modernisation and maintaining continuity.
2. The Sumi chiefship is hereditary and inheritance takes place according to the law of patrilineal primogeniture. Traditionally, each Sumi village was independent in matters of village administration and there was no pyramidal organisational structure with a centralised power structure of Sumi chiefship.
3. The Sumi society was a chief-centred one and the paternalistic control of the chief was obvious in the traditional context. Since there were many small Sumi villages, the number of chiefs too increases and their powers territorially limited.
4. The chiefs are owners of all village lands and resources. The concentration of ownership of land and forests on his hands was considered to be the sign of his strength and position.
5. The British recognised and strengthened the chief's status and made them agents of the British governing system in order to consolidate their position.

6. The *Chochomi* or councillors and *asa-papu* or clan fathers and elders who assisted the chief in his day-to-day affairs of administration were all wealthy and influential persons in their respective clans. They shared in the glory of the chief.
7. The Sumi chiefs are still the chairmen in most of the village councils after the Village Council Act was passed in 1971.
8. The decision of the chiefs takes precedence over the other elected members in the Village Council.
9. The British in order to facilitate their control and pacify the Nagas, introduced the institution of *dobashis* (people who were literate and equipped with knowledge). They acted as intermediaries between the rulers and ruled. Later, they were employed as native judges having police powers. This led to the reduction of the chiefs judicial power.
10. In the Sumi area, the chiefs were first converted to Christianity in order to facilitate the others to follow suit.
11. For the first time, the Naga dialect was put into writings in 1878. The missionaries opened schools to educate the Nagas. The then educated become the new elite in the Sumi society. They became administrators, officers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, etc. and they played an important role in the Sumi political and social life.
12. The Christian doctrine of peace and love for one another brought all the tribes closer. Head-hunting between the villages and between different tribes of Nagas came to a halt.

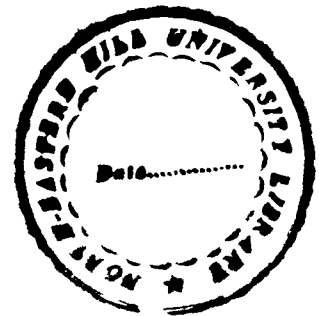
13. It is because of Christianity that chiefs today have practiced monogamy. Earlier it was a prevalent concept that having more wives brought in more honour and respect specially from economic aspect.
14. The education imparted by the Missionaries and the British were utility oriented. The motive was to make these literate people/agents to work with them to convert others and to assist them in their offices as clerks and recorders.
15. The percentage of the voting at the poll was very high but those who actively participated in the electoral process like campaigning, etc. was very low. Personality factor of the candidate was of prime consideration.
16. The voters were mostly interested in local issues and problems, which are daily confronting them, and people look for short-term gains.
17. The undergrounds and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) did not try to mobilise the public support from grass-root level for boycotting the election held in 1998.

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I, H. John Sema, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the North-Eastern Hill University for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

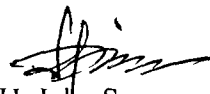


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In all your ways acknowledge Him (God) and He will make your path straight.

Proverb 3:6

At the outset, I would like to thank Almighty God for giving me great opportunities, good health and sound mind to complete my work.

I am immensely indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Pascal Malngiang, who has ably guided me with keen interest and dedication in my work, in all stages, without whose help, this thesis would never have been completed. I express my profound gratitude to him. I also express my thanks to all the teachers and staff in the Department of Political Science, NEHU, for their advice and suggestions.

I wish to record my gratefulness and appreciation for the scholarly advice, suggestions, encouragement and motivation received from Prof. M.N. Karna, Department of Sociology, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong and Prof. R.C. Sharma, Visiting Professor, Department of Geography and Resource Management, Nagaland University, Lumami. My words may be inadequate to express my gratitude to them.

)

I also express my appreciation to my brother-in-law, Temjenmeren Jamir, my father-in-law, Yenito and my uncle Col. R.S. Ahluwalia who were helping me in collecting the relevant materials and lend their moral support and encouragement to complete my work.

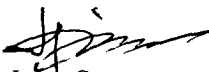
I wish to express my gratitude to the faculty and staff of Nagaland University especially Prof. B.S. Chauhan, Vice-Chancellor, Mr. K.K. Zhimomi, Registrar, Prof. Lanunungsang, Dean, School of Social Sciences and Professor-in-charge, my colleagues in the Department of Political Science, the staff and colleagues at Lumami for their co-operation and encouragement that I received from them. I express deep regret to all my friends since I will not be able to thank all of them personally. They have helped me in many ways in the course of my research work. I also extend my gratitude to my respondents especially Ihoshe, Chief of Lumami Village, Hokishe Sema, Ex-Chief Minister and Ihezhe Zhimomi, Ex-Minister.

I express my thanks to ICSSR-NE Region and especially Dr. Joshua Thomas, Deputy Director and staff for allowing me to stay in the guest house throughout my work and also in assisting me by providing a study grant.

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I also express my deep sense of gratitude to my parents, my sisters and relatives for their constant prayer and encouragement. Hence I dedicate this humble work to my parents, Mr. Hotoi and (L) Mrs. Vitoli.

Lastly, I express my sincere thanks to my wife, Khekali and my baby daughter, Loinoli for their love and co-operation. They were understanding enough to bear with my long absence from home causing inconveniences to both of them. I reciprocate their love and dedication with affection.

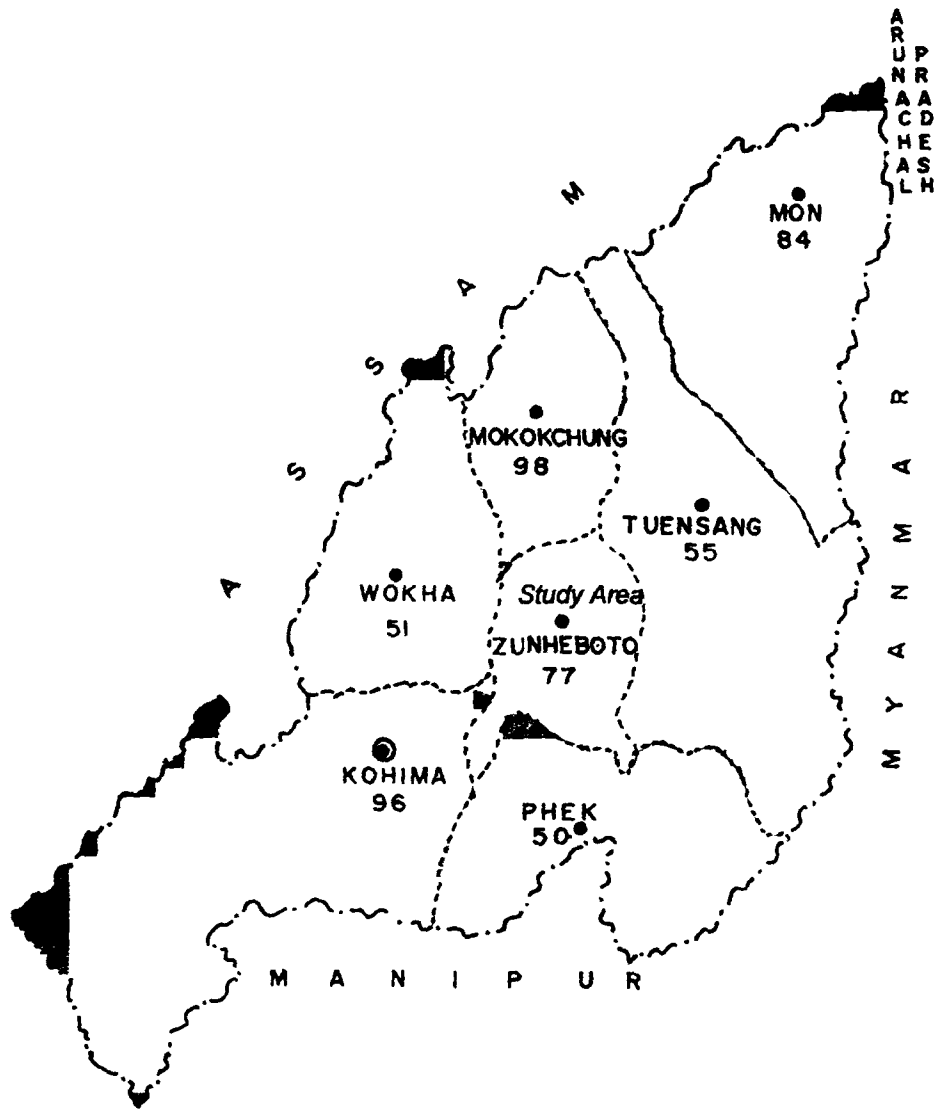


H. John Sema

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NAGALAND
SKETCH MAP



CHAPTER – I

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A society is the product of norms, practices and customs of the people and it has territorial confines for its validity and significance. It survives on the compactness of its tradition and continuity. Tradition is to be understood as the total heritage, beliefs, customs, styles and opinions-transmitted from one generation to another generation.¹ The word tradition is derived from the Latin word *Tradire* which means to transfer or to deliver.² Tradition has also been explained as ideas, principles, knowledge and usages transmitted from generation to generation over a long period of time. A political tradition may be understood as a set of convictions and beliefs concerning the political community including the behaviour of men as a political entity. Political tradition defines how rules ought to be conducted and how the ruled behaved towards their rulers.³ In other words, a tradition is embodied in habits, customs and norms which express the prevalent values and beliefs. The entire socio-political life may be said to be governed by the working of traditions. Traditions condition man's life and his day-to-day affairs.

¹ Dube, S C , *Tradition and Development*, Vikas Publishing House. New Delhi. 1994, p 24

² Friedrich. Carl J , *Tradition & Authority* Macmillan Publishing 1972, p 14

³ *Ibid*

Man has built his culture not merely by his tools and toil, but also largely by his indomitable desire to transcend by building a world of values over and above the world of facts. Each new born baby is received into a community or a style of life prepared and held together by tradition. At the same time, the process of disintegration sometimes took place on account of the very nature of the traditions or in the absence of the cementing factors.

Man is as much an adventurer as a preserver. The entire human effort would have been totally abortive, had he not learnt to preserve his past heritage. He, not only looks forward but also uses his past. This continued dialectics in human life makes him to be dependent on tradition which can roughly be defined as collective memory transmitted through the ages. He also craves for progress which is nothing but his bold imagination to break through new grounds. Thus, conflict emerges between tradition and modernity but in essence, these two are complementary.⁴

In the widest sense of the term, tradition should mean all that one inherits from the past. All the elements of social life should be regarded as traditional, except, those few actions which are absolutely novel, which people of a particular generation performs to give a new direction to social progress. As a matter of fact, only a few of the inheritance are regarded as traditional. Therefore, there is a distinct process of selection and much would depend on the orientation, outlook and intent of those

⁴ Ganguly, S.N , *Traduion Modernity & Development*, Macmillan Company, New Delhi, 1977, pp 45-46.

making the choice. The demands of the social contract will also be an important influence. Regularity, is another essential condition of a minimum social living one actually learns to adjust to different types of regularities, which result in a continuum that shapes lives. Such regularities in behaviour are largely guided by traditions. Tradition thus provides a common platform for different individuals of a certain group so that these individuals may significantly regulate their activities in an orderly manner. Naturally therefore, we select only those that we think are essential or perhaps that we think are good enough. Such a selection presupposes a value judgement. What turns an inheritance, therefore, into tradition is a faith in its value. In Eliot's language, a tradition is not only the pastness of the past, but of its presence. Tradition, thus, is not merely a custom passively received, but something which is actively entertained with admiration.⁵

One important characteristic of tradition is that, it is durable and stereotyped. It is inflexible and unchanging.⁶ A strong case illustrating the powerful impact of traditions and its durability is that of the Japanese culture. Technology has modernised the Japanese but they have jealously maintained their tradition of tea-ceremony and rice-culture.⁷

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47

⁶ Dube, S.C , *op cit.*, pp 39-40

⁷ Friedrich, Carl J , *op cit* , p. 15

With regard to Institution, Maclver and Page used the term 'institution' as an established form or condition of procedure characteristic of group activity. According to them, whenever associations are created in a society, certain rules and procedures also must be enacted for the despatch of common business and for the regulation of the members in their intercourse with each other. Such forms can be called as institutions.⁸ Institutions are carefully planned framework for a balanced government.

According to Malinowski, for achieving any purpose or to reach any ends, human beings have to organise themselves. Organisation thus implies a very definite scheme or structure. The main features of any organisation are universal and are applicable to all groups in their typical form. For a unit of such an organisation, Malinowski uses the term 'institution' which implies an agreement on a set of traditional values for which human beings come together. As reflected in the above definition, these scholars unanimously consider institutions as formal bodies articulated and enforced through numerous traditional values, which have been universally accepted by the groups. Institutions according to these writers are functional bodies which regulate the socio-political communication among the group for an ideal state of affairs.

⁸ Maclver and Page, *Society An Introductory Analysis*, Macmillan, Madras, 1992, p 15

Social institutions are usually conceived of as the basic forces of social organisation, common to all societies and deals with some of the basic universal problems of ordered social life.

These are some basic aspects of institutions they are as follow: Firstly the pattern of behaviour which are regulated by 'institutions' deal with some perennial basic problems of a society. Secondly institutions involve the regulation of behaviour of the individuals in society according to some definite continuous and organised patterns. Finally, these pattern involve a definite normative order and regulation; that is, regulation is upheld by norms and by sanctions which are legitimised by norms. These elements of institutions have been emphasised and defined on a varied fashion by different writers. Therefore, institutions or institutionalisation can be defined here as the regulative principles which organise most of the activities of individuals in a society into a definite organisational pattern from the point of view of some of the perennial, basic problems of any society or ordered social life.⁹

At this point, we would like to discuss the functions of institutions which have close resemblance to those of traditions. For Kingsly Davis, institution is "a set of interwoven folkways, mores and laws built around one or more functions."¹⁰ Hertzler defines institutions as "great clusters established, accepted and implemented ways of

⁹ Sills, L. David, *International Encyclopaedia of Social Science*, Macmillan Co of the Free Press. 1968, p 409

¹⁰ Ganguly, S N , *op cit*, p 48

behaving socially.” According to *W.H. Hamilton*, an institution, connotes a way of thought or action of some relevance and permanence which is embedded in the habits of a group or the customs of a people. Institutions fix the confines of an impose form upon the activities of human beings. According to these scholars, as reflected in the above definitions, traditions give stability and essential rationality to many institutions. This coherence comes from the value permeated character of traditions.¹¹ Moreover, institutions may change without affecting the tradition of a set of people. In short, traditions reflect a definite value – orientation of a set of people whereas institutions are merely functional in character. In other words, traditional political institutions include all forms of human institutions which have moral sanctions behind them and are recognised by society.

Another major concept that is attempted to be defined here is modernisation. Modernisation can be defined as the process of human development. Modernisation consists in modifying the existing tradition and creating room for new and better ones. According to the *International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences* the political aspects of modernisation refer to the ensemble of structural and cultural changes in the political system of modernising societies. However, it should be but a part of the continuum. Thus political structure consists of the patterning and the interrelationship of political roles and processes and the political culture is the complex of prevailing

¹¹ Quoted in Ganguly, S N , *op cit* , p 49

attitudes.¹² According to the *Dictionary of Political Science*, Political modernisation involves the development of key institutions such as political parties, parliament franchise and secret ballots, which support participatory decision-making.¹³ Political modernisation is also referred to as the adequate participation on the part of the people in a country's day to day affairs. As reflected in the above, the overall process of modernisation refers to the changes in the institutional spheres of society resulting from man's expanding knowledge and control over his environment.

Political modernisation can be viewed from a historical, typological and evolutionary perspective. Historical political modernisation refers to the Locality of changes in the Political structure which have or have not been affected by the major transformation processes of modernisation, such as secularisation, commercialisation, industrialisation, accelerated social mobility, stratification, increased material standards of living, diffusion of literacy, education and mass media, national unification and the expansion of popular involvement and participation which are specifically relevant through out the world.¹⁴

According to David L. Sills, typological political modernisation refers to the process of transmutation of a pre-modern 'traditional' polity into a post-traditional modern polity.¹⁵

¹² Sill, E. Edgard, *International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, *op cit.*, p 948.

¹³ Anmol, T.R., *Dictionary of Political Science*, *op cit.* , p 120.

¹⁴ Sills, L. David, *op cit.* , p. 395

¹⁵ *Ibid* , p 395.

Evolutionary political modernisation refers to that open-ended increase in the capacity of the political man to develop structures to cope with or resolve problems to absorb and adapt to the continuous change and to strive purposively for the attainment of new societal goals. In the light of the above, it can be said that the historical and typological perspectives of political modernisation is a process of development towards some image of a modern polity. From the evolutionary perspective, the growth process is interminable and the end state of affairs indeterminate. After examining the above concepts, it may be concluded that the Naga political institution could be placed in the historical, typological or evolutionary categories, which has got the capability to adapt itself with the change of time.¹⁶

After examining about modernisation, modernity is another concept for study. As we see, modernity is not only creating rooms for new and better traditions but also helps to enrich the existing value orientation in terms of new values that assure of a smooth progress towards image fulfilment. Modernity is not the cancellation of anything that is old. It is a continuous process. If modernity snaps one's contact with tradition, then modernity would be only chaos where no significant behaviour is possible. Modernity is the realisation of a future only in terms of the past. Any change cannot be considered to be modernity. Only that change which affects the traditions in the sense of a richer modification can be regarded as a sign of modernity. Modernity,

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p 395.

therefore, can only be understood in terms of tradition, though not vice-versa. A modern man is not one without traditions, but on the contrary with richer traditions. A discontinuous change cannot be imagined. There must be continuity and overlapping of the new and the old.¹⁷ For instance, the powerful impact of traditions is that of the Jews. After their dispersion in the 70 AD the Jewish culture has persisted nearly two thousand years without any governmental structure and support. It has been preserved within the framework of a priestly and communal order. In spite of their conservatism and orthodoxy, the Jewish people are very progressive when they came together to their native land in 1948 from different parts of the world. The Jewish people and their societal structure sustained and even drastic revolutionary process of change could not affect them. They are very receptive to new ideas and knowledge. This made them technologically more advanced and powerful. They are a force to be reckoned with in the midst of the Arab countries in the Middle East. Another example is of the English people who were traditionally conservative. Still they are the most modernised people. Therefore, tradition and modernity infiltrate and transform each other.

In relation to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks discussed above, it is important and appropriate to have a short background on the Sumi tradition and the question and authority of their chiefship.

¹⁷ Gangully S N . *op cit* , p 52

There are 34 Naga tribes spreading in India and Myanmar. Of these 16 (sixteen) tribes are inhabited within the present state of Nagaland and the Sumi tribe is one of them. The rest are in Myanmar, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.

The Sumis, and all the tribal people living in hills have an obscure history, low level of techno-economic development, cultural ethos, beliefs, customs, etc.

The history of the Nagas is shrouded in obscurity and so also the history of the Sumi. Till today, the places of origin of the various tribes remains an unsolved mystery. The fact that many of these tribes have been wandering races has not helped them in tracing out their origin. Different scholars basing their judgement on the Naga art, material culture, language etc. have theorised that the Nagas have had some links with Indonesia and Malayasia and belong to the Tibeto Burman family. They might have migrated from North-West China. However, these theories in the absence of substantive evidence remained inconclusive.¹⁸ However, most of the Naga tribes have more or less the same story. They believe that they came from a 'hole' in the earth. History traces that the early people were living in the caves in the remote past so also the Nagas in the remote part might have lived in big 'holes' or 'caves'.¹⁹ According to the mythology of the Sumi Nagas, the Nagas were living in the underground cavern where actual cultivation of rice was practised. The fact that they came out of a hole

¹⁸ Sema, Hokishe, *The Emergence of Nagaland*. Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1986, p 4

¹⁹ Shimray, R R, *The Origin and Culture of the Nagas*. Sterling Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1985, p 26

support the theory that at one time they had crossed incredibly deep gorges of the high mountains, stalled and ambushed by the wild animals.²⁰

As to their origin and dispersal, the various tribes of the Nagas have now accepted Makhel as the original place from where they dispersed. The importance of Makhel village in the Mao area is the hub of the history of origin of the Nagas. There are many indications about the early life of the Sumis. There is the *menhir* called *Tamaratu* or stone of dispersal of the Nagas (*Tomara* - departure; *Tu* -stone). On this were engraved the picture of a man dragging a bull, a cock, a tiger's head, a shield and a spear. There were some writings, but nothing is now visible since it was washed away by nature. Besides that, there is a wild pear tree called *chutebu* at upper Sajouba. It was planted at the time of their dispersal. They took oath under this *chutebu* that they will be united again. Mention may be made of a very old oak tree, which indicated the length of time of the Naga settlement at Makhel. A peepal tree or *Murabu* which is a sacred tree was said to have sprouted from the tomb of the first woman who died at Makhel. They called it "the life foundation tree". Importantly, there are three (3) monoliths called *Linotu* or stones of dispersal. It is situated at Chizelophi, a few miles away from Makhel. It represents the Tiger, Man and God. The monoliths were erected at the time of their parting. It was believed that before the

²⁰ Khumtsa, 81 years, Mishilimi Village interviewed on 22.12.1997.

stone representing man has fallen all the Nagas will be united again and when the last stone representing God falls, the end of the world will come.²¹

All these indicate that the group of Nagas which went to the left (North-West) settled down at Makhel for some period of time and from there, they dispersed to various directions and places till today.

It may also be mentioned here that according to the legend, the Ao's went first and were followed by the Lothas and then Sumis. After them the Rengmas, Angamis and Chakhesangs. Even the present locations of these tribes are in that order. Here it may be interesting to note that the Sumis called the Ao's *Cholimi* which means "those who preceded". The Lothas as *Chuwomi* or those who followed and the Angamis are called *Tsungumi* which means those who came after. The Sumi nomenclature for other tribes corroborates with their specific order of migration.²²

The Sumis, like most of the tribals in the world do not have their own scripts. As a result they do not have written records of their past and this has led to many scholars and writers to question whether the Sumis have any history at all. In due course of time many educated Sumis encountered a crisis of identity. They were faced with the question of who they were and where they came from. In other words, who are the Sumis? Where do they live and how do they live? Reconstructing the history of

²¹ *Ibid* , pp. 16-17.

²² Sema Hokishe, *op cit.*, p 5.

societies like that of the Sumis, dispossessed of any written record, is a very difficult task. From times immemorial, the Sumis have presumed and handed down their history, culture and customs from one generation to the other by word of mouth in the form of folktales, songs and genealogy. It is encouraging to note that generally, oral traditions have been recognised as a keystone in the reconstruction of the history of any tribal society. According to Jan Vansina,

“whether memory changes or not, culture is reproduced by remembrance put into words and deed. The mind through memory carries culture from generation to generation. The oral traditions should be central to students of culture, ideology of society, of psychology, of art and finally of history”.²³

The Sumis believed that a flat stone at Khezhakenoma village is the place of their migration. It is said that a particular stone possessed the magical power of doubling the paddy place on it by nightfall. It was believed that the miraculous stone might have belonged to a particular family only. The legend goes on that there were three brothers. They were the Chakhesang, the eldest, the Angami, the second and Sumi the youngest. When their father was about to die, he called all his three sons to sit nearby him.²⁴

²³ Vansina Jan, *Oral Tradition as History*, Published by Wisconsin, 1985, p 11

²⁴ Diamond Jubilee Souvenir of Hebolimi Village, 1999

The last word he spoke to them was that, for the two elder sons, he had already set-up their families but for the youngest son he could not do so as yet. Therefore, he told them that the youngest son shall inherit the miraculous stone after his death. However, after their father's death, the two elder brothers one after the other spread rice on this stone without giving chance to the youngest one. The mother foresaw that misunderstanding would crop up among the brothers on this issue. She started collecting the dried leafs and made fire on this stone till it broke into pieces. There she saw a cock coming out from the fire and flying down to the Doyang river or *tabu ghoki*. Then she told her youngest son that the blessing for him has gone down towards the river, so he should follow in the direction where the cock flew. When the youngest son was to migrate, his mother put a piece of fortune stone in his basket to be carried wherever he went. Another version of the legend said that in the course of their migration from one place to another. The Sumi might have had three sons: they were Hebo, Chisho and Chishi. That shows that they have not come straight from Khezhakenoma to the present Sumi territory but have settled temporarily on the way at many places. It was believed that they stopped at following places like Kikruma, Vethisa, Thinizumi, Cheszu, Ghathisa. because in these villages many Sumis are still to be found.²⁵

According to another legend, there were two parties who went into two directions. The group that proceeded to the east were the Sumis of Tuensang and

²⁵ Savito, et al (ed) Diamond Jubilee Souvenir of Hebolimi Baptist Church, 1999



Kiphire area and those who proceeded towards the north are the present Sumis under the Zunheboto district.²⁶

In the course of their wandering to find a suitable place for settlement they reached a place called the *Aghungu Tuqu*, or the Ghost Cliff when the cock crew. It signified that they should settle there. However, when they surveyed the area the location was not conducive for settlement, therefore they further proceeded down and halted at one plain area, on the river bank. They surveyed the area for the permanent settlement.²⁷

Though in the course of migration they temporarily settled at many places, they did not perform any ritual and observe any *gennas*. Later they divided their functions among the three brothers who were leading the groups. Since *Hebo* was the eldest, he became the chief priest. The second brother, *Chisho* was entrusted with the task of protecting and defending the people and the boundaries of their village from the attack of enemies and Chishi was given the charge of making ponds for drawing water for varied use.²⁸ Till today in the Hebolimi village, there is the Chishi's well wherein it is believed that there is the sound of Chishi's spirit. After performing all the necessary rituals they constructed the priest's house *Awou* and then the others constructed their houses. Thereafter, the *awou* first tested the water followed by the

²⁶ *Pikuto, Lazami, interviewed on 10 8 1998, at Kohima.*

²⁷ *Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, 1999*

²⁸ *Ibid*

rest of the villagers. That is how the Sumis settled at the present territory and further dispersed to many other places in the present Sumi territory.

There is another belief that the fore-father of the Sumis came out of the bowels of the earth where the thatched grass grew. That is why it has been said that the Sumis has got the enduring capacity. This belief may be based on certain facts that they migrated to places covered by thick jungle braving different hurdles and difficulties. Many of the elderly Sumis contended that the instinct of the spirit of adventure was in their blood which prompted them to migrate from one place to another.²⁹ Another reason may be that the Sumi has got the instinct to be the leader. That motivated them to establish new villages and automatically emerged as the chief of the village.³⁰ It was also found that everywhere, where there is a group of Sumis they established their village and named after their leader or after the name of the place. For example, the name of Aghakito village meaning thick jungle is the name of the place near Naginimora in Mon District. Akuhayiqqa means the place of elephants. It is under Wokha District.

Before the advent of the British in the Naga Hills, the Dimapur area was covered by thick jungles. When the Sumis wanted to migrate to the Dimapur area, the British Government gave them permission to establish their village. The first village

²⁹ Zhemomi, Ihezhe, 68 years, interviewed on 2.2 1999 at Dimapur in his residence. He was the Former Minister of State in 1964-69.

³⁰ Sema, Hokishe, 78 years, interviewed on 3 2 1999 at his residence. He was the Former Chief Minister of Nagaland and Governor of Himachal Pradesh

established was Shotomi in 1915. At present there are many Sumi villages and they are called the Northern Sumis. The second village is Kiyezu village which is named after the founder of the village who established it in 1929. At present there are many new villages which have been established and they are called the Western Sumi.³¹

The Sumis has got the hereditary chiefship, which they believe in blood relationship that those who were born from the chieftain family would be better rulers. It was not exactly known when hereditary chiefship was introduced in the Sumi society. According to Ihoshe Kinimi, the Chief of Lumami Village, a man by the name of Tukukha was the chief of Michimi village and perhaps he might be the first chief of the village. It was believed that in this village, there was a mixture of different tribes and clans. In order to rule over the people and maintain continuity, before he died, he openly declared to the villagers that his eldest son would succeed him after his death. It was designed to pre-empt any possible claim of chiefship by others. Moreover, almost the entire land and properties in the village belonged to the chief. Therefore, perhaps, it might be necessitated that the chiefship should be hereditary.³²

The institution of chiefship has grown out of the collective need of the group life. however, it will be inappropriate to assume that the institution of chiefship had always been responsive to the aspirations of the people. Changes were inevitable. The Sumi chiefship too had undergone changes at different periods of time, but continued

³¹ Sema, Nkheto, 42 years, *Social Worker*. interviewed at Zunheboto on 3 2 2000

³² Ihoshe, Kinimi, 86 years, Chief of Lumami Village, interviewed on 4 3 1998

to play an important role in the village administration despite the emergence of an elected representative institution known as the Village Council. An interesting feature of the Sumi chiefship is that, there has not emerged anyone from within to stand against this institution. Some of the chiefs have also tried to adjust themselves with the changes taking place in the Sumi villages in Nagaland.

While the form of government among the other Naga tribes was mostly democratic in nature, the Sumi had an authoritarian form. Though the Sumis had been under the control of the authoritarian type of ruler, they did not find anything strange in the changes brought about by the dawn of independence. In fact, the institution of chiefship was strengthened by the new Acts of Parliament to maintain status-quo. Notwithstanding some inherent defects of the chiefship system which the tribal people are not yet ready to do away with the Sumi chiefship system has come to stay as a perennial source of custom and tradition. In spite of the onslaught of modernism and development in all walks of life, they are able to inherit a rich cultural and traditional heritage.

The chiefship system which is linked closely to the economic, political, religious and judiciary has its basis on the proper interpretation of the customary laws and traditions. The institution of the Sumi chiefship has been considered to be the fountainhead of all customs and the retainer of tradition. This is the main reason why the system of chiefship could not be ignored, despite varied changes all around.

The Sumi society continues to be a chief-centred society wherein he is highly esteemed. The chiefs who were usually called, *Akukau* are the acknowledged leaders in their respective jurisdiction.

The Sumi chiefship emerged primarily for imaginative and useful purposes. The chiefs exercised functional power in the beginning. The British interventions has enhanced and strengthened the position of the Sumi chiefship. Even after the Nagaland statehood, the Village Council Act 1970 has protected the interest of the chiefship and empowered them to hold the post of Village Council Chairman in addition to the post of the chief of the village. Thus chiefship continues to carry its weight not only in the village administration but also in the state politics of Nagaland. In the next chapter, we shall discuss in detail about the powers, functions and role of the chiefs in the Sumi society.

Review of Literature Survey

The study of chiefship among the tribal group has attracted the attention of a number of social scientists. The study conducted in Africa observed the existence of a hereditary type of chiefship like in the Sumi community. The succession to chiefship is on the basis of primogeniture. Gluckman³³ in his book says that in the Zulu tribe, the eldest son, succeeded his father, unless he is hopelessly incompetent. This is very

³³ Gluckman, "Essay on Zulu Tribe" in Fates Meyer and Evans Pritchard E E (eds), *African Political Systems*, Oxford University Press London, 1961

similar to the Sumi community. Again like the Sumis, all the lands in the village belongs to the chief. Gluckman observed that all those who came to live in the Zulu land had to acknowledge his sovereignty.

Another study conducted in Africa suggested the existence of two types of chiefship. The Multi and Single chiefship system. In the multi-chiefship there is a pyramid like structure with a powerful chiefdom at the apex. This type of chiefship is found in Tanzania. The single chiefship, which is more common, may be divided into segmentary and non-segmentary groups. In the non-segmentary chiefship, the rule is supported by religious sanctions based on the theory of divine origin. In the Segmentary chiefship there is nothing like a central authority or any hierarchical structure. In the Segmentary system, the chief remains all-powerful and is completely independent from outside interference. On the basis of this typological classification, the Sumi chiefship may be considered as a Segmentary unitary type. There was no divinity attached to the Sumi chiefship. Within the village administration, the chief is all-powerful and he allocated the jhum land and is the dispenser of justice.

Hutton³⁴ in his book *The Sema Nagas* wrote about the origin and migration of the Sumis. He also discussed about the culture, customary laws, religion, their belief, way of worship, the chiefship system and the village organizations. While

³⁴ Hutton J.H , *The Sema Nagas* Published by Direction of the Government of Nagaland, Oxford University Press. and Ed 1968

commenting on the social organizations, he observed that in the Sumi society there was no dormitory system, which was not true. The bachelor's dormitory or *Apuki* was very much a part of the chief's village administrative system. He also pointed out that the oath of the Sumis were done for namesake only which is again incorrect. Since it has got serious consequences if it was false. He also did not examine the hierarchical order of the chief's administration. He ignored the clan fathers (*asa-papu*) and the rich people (*Mishilitha*) who played an important role in the village administration. His writing was mostly narrative and descriptive. He did not analysed the importance of these institutions.

Another study carried out by E.R. Leach³⁵ an Anthropologist in Burma now Myanmar, in his book, *The Political System of Highland Burma* studied about the Kachin society/community Gumsa and Gumlao. In Gumsa, the chiefs who have hereditary class difference lead the organisation. The Gumlao organisation, on the other hand, repudiates all notions of hereditary class difference and represented the republican form of organisation. In the Gumsa organization, there is specific aristocratic lineage. In theory, there can be only one chief who can command many domains. The Gumsa regarded the Gumlao as the common serfs. The Gumlao regarded the Gumsa as tyrants and snobs. Again in the Gumlao theory, "there are no chiefs. all lineages are of the same rank". No tribute is payable from the villages to the village headman

³⁵ Leach E R , *Highlanders of Burma A Study of Kachin Society*, London School of Economics & Political Science, 1954

Here, Leach also made a comparison with the Sema chiefship who was autocratic like the Gumsa chief. He went on to say that like the Gumsa Sumi chiefship was also hereditary but unlike the Semas, in the Gumsa, the heir to the chiefship was the youngest son. He also observed that there was the resemblance between the Gumsa chief and Sema chief. Both have slaves who were ultimately the property of the chief. He also made a contrast between the Angamis and the Semas who lived geographically adjacent to each another. However, in institutional spheres they were opposite like the Gumsa and Gumlao organizations, like the Gumsa, the Semas has an autocratic type of institution whereas the Angamis has a democratic institution like the Gumlao organisation.

Though he has been referred to the Semas in his writings but he has not explained the reason that led to the emergence of the autocratic type of chief system in Sumi society. He mainly relies on Hutton's writings on the Sumi community.

Another writer, B.B. Ghosh,³⁶ who wrote about the Sumi Naga in his book, *The Zunheboto District Gazetteer*, merely described about the topography, climatic conditions and domestic life of the Sumi Nagas. Besides that, most of his informations about the Sumi Nagas were drawn from J.H. Hutton's book on *The Sema Nagas*.

³⁶ Ghosh B B , (Ed), *Nagaland District Gazetteers, Zunheboto District* Government of Nagaland, Kohima, 1979

N.K. Das³⁷, in his article, *The Naga Political Systems* commented on the Semas. He was of the view that unlike other tribes of the Nagas the chief owns all the lands in the village but he did not explain the reason why the chief owns the village land.

Another writer Konwar Randip Singh³⁸ in his book *The Nagas of Nagaland Desperados and Heroes of Peace* merely describes the Sumis as being great warriors. He wrote that though the Semas were short in stature, yet they were more courageous and in the act of fighting they were the best. No other tribes can match them. R.S. Mann in his book *Tribal Culture and Change* wrote a short essay on the Sumi Naga. He observed that the Sumi are very simple and innocent, they are ruled by the chief who was autocratic but at the same time benevolent. Their economy was very primitive. Mann, however, did not initiate any elaborate discussion on them. Most of his information were drawn from the monograph on the Sumi Naga by J.H. Hutton.

J.P. Mills³⁹ on *Ao Naga, Lotha Naga and Rengma Naga* has made just stray references to Sumi Naga in respect of village organization and its administration. He attempted to make a comparison of the Lotha and Rengma system on one hand and the

³⁷ Das, N K , "Naga Political System in Social and Political Institutions of the Hill People of North-East India", Sarkar Jayanta, etal , *Social and Political Institutions of the Hill People of the North East India*, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1990, p 98

³⁸ Singh, K R , *Nagas of Nagaland, Despondents and Heroes of Peace*, Deep and Deep Publishers, Delhi, 1987

³⁹ Mills J P , *The Ao Nagas*, Oxford University Press, London, 1973, 2nd Edition Also see Mills J P , *The Lothas Nagas*, Directorate of the Arts & Culture, Government of Nagaland, Kohima, 1980, 2nd Edition and Mills J P , *The Rengma Nagas*, Directorate of Arts & Culture, Government of Nagaland Kohima, 1980, 2nd Edition

Sumis on the other. The comparison was not comprehensive. He also made a few references with regard succession of chiefship. He also said that unlike Lotha and Rengmas, the Sumis had the hereditary chiefship system but he did not elaborate. He also made a comparison with the Sumis regarding the punishment and fine impose on murder and theft without making any comment. Ghosh⁴⁰ in an article “Sema Marriage” in *The Tribes of North East India* wrote about the Sumi society, their habitat, domestic life, economy, topography, culture, religion and their way of belief and worship and their day to day’s life. It dealt man with marriage only and did not touch about the traditional institution.

Another anthropologist K.S. Singh,⁴¹ in his book *The People of Nagaland*, he explained about the domestic and social life of the Sumi Nagas, but most of the information in his book were quoted from J.H. Hutton’s book *Sumi Naga*. He did not write anything more than what Hutton had done.

Furer Haimendorf⁴² in his book *Naked Nagas and Return of Naked Nagas* made a comparison between the Konyaks and the Semas. He said that like the Konyaks, the Semas also have the hereditary chifship system. Both were autocratic

⁴⁰ Karotemprel , S., *The Tribes of North-East India*, Vendrame Missiological Institute, Shillong, 1984, pp. 347-348.

⁴¹ Singh, K.S. (ed.), *People of India-Nagaland*, Vol. XXXIV, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1994.

⁴² Furer Heimendorf and Christopher Von. *Naked Nagas*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1962. Also see Furer Heimendorf and Christopher Von, *Return of the Naked Nagas (An Anthropologist View of Nagaland 1936-1970)*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd., New Delhi, 1976.

rulers. The chief owned all the lands in the village. But unlike the Konyaks, there was no ranking system in the Sumi society.

There are few Sema writers like Hokishe Sema⁴³ who wrote on *The Emergence of Nagaland*. In this book we find only stray references to the Sumi Nagas regarding their origin, migration, religion, belief and worship. It was merely attempt note and he has not given any reasons and comments. Another Sema writer Piketo Sema⁴⁴ in his book on *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, has made few references to the Sumi chiefs and the dobashis. He pointed out their powers, functions and their role during the British administration in Nagaland but he did not made any detailed discussion particularly on the Sumi Nagas. Another scholar, Vihuli Sema,⁴⁵ in her Ph.D. thesis wrote about the *History of Christianity in Nagaland – Their Mission Work and Their Impact on the Naga Society*. Here in, she mentioned that because of Christianity there was cessation of head hunting among the Nagas particularly among the Semas. She also wrote that because of Christianity the chief could no longer marry more than one wife. The women's status also was improved because of Christianity and education. She said that though women were respected at home they were denied an equal footing in society. She has not explained about the role of Christianity and education, which played an important role in the Sumi society.

⁴³ Sema, Hokishe, *Emergence of Nagaland*, New Delhi, 1986.

⁴⁴ Sema Piketo, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, Scholar Publication House, New Delhi, 1991

⁴⁵ Sema Vihuli, "The Work of American Missionaries in Nagaland", *Ph D Thesis*, Department of History, NEHU, 1984

Recently some studies have been carried out by some scholars in the North-East on the institutions of the tribal chiefship system and its relations with other institutions. T.T. Haokip⁴⁶ has undertaken a comprehensive study on Kuki chiefship in his thesis *Kuki Polity with Special Reference to Village Administration*. He made an attempt to study the origin of the Kuki chiefship along with his powers, functions, privileges and the limitation facing the institution. In the course of his discussion, he made some references to the Sumi institution, which had some resemblances to the Kuki chiefship system. It may be thus mentioned that both the Kuki and Sumis have got an autocratic type of chiefship. Succession to the chiefship was on hereditary bases of primogeniture. The chief was also the owner of the village land. However, he did not discuss the Sumi institution in detail but only as a reference.

In Nagaland also some studies have been carried out by some scholars on similar institutions. Ben Lotha⁴⁷ has written a thesis on *Lotha traditional Political institutions*. He made an attempt to study about the origin and evolution of Lotha society, the emergence of the Lotha chiefship along with his powers, functions, privileges and their limitations. He made some references to the Sumi institution with comparison to the Lotha political institutions. In his study he observed that the Sumis has got an autocratic chiefship. The succession to chiefship was hereditary. He also made a mention that in Sumi society there were no village council of elders. Unlike

⁴⁶ Haokip T T . "The Kuki Chiefship and Its Changing Dimensions", *Ph D Thesis* Submitted to NEHU, 1995

⁴⁷ Lotha Y Ben. "Traditional Polity and Society of Lotha Naga and the Impact of British Rule," *Ph D Thesis*, 1996

the Sumis, he wrote that the Lotha chiefship was not hereditary. He wrote that the most suitable man became the chief by dint of his character. It was based on the basis of nomination from amongst the most eligible elderly man of the village. He also made a few references on the Sumi society and did not analytically discuss about the Sumi society.

There were other writers from amongst the Sumi community who wrote on the Sumis but they did not comprehensively deal with the Sumi society. Rev. Najekhu Yeptho⁴⁸ wrote about the ancient religion, *gennas* and taboos in the Sumi community. He also wrote about the advent of Christianity in the Sumi area. The Sumi HoHo published another book on the Sumi customary laws. However, they did not undertake an exhaustive study on the Sumi.

Therefore, the present study is a modest attempt to critically analyse the political and social organization of the Sumis and the changing trends in the present Sumi society.

⁴⁸ Sema Najekhu Yeptho, *Gennas and Festivals of the Sema Nagas* (in Sema), Publishing at Aizuto, 1991

CHAPTER – II

TRADITIONAL SUMI NAGA CHIEF

The institution of chiefship by and large seems to have grown out of the collective needs of the people¹. which characterised the tribal societies in India and elsewhere. According to Hamlet Bareh the Sumis were the second batch of migrants next to the Lothas who have come and occupied the territory where they are presently found.² During their migratory period, they came in batches and had their own leaders, who played the role, both as rulers and religious leader. In the course of migration, more capable persons were engaged to provide the leadership role. However, it is not possible to state clearly when and how this institution of the chief came into being among the Sumis.

Before the advent of the British in the Naga territory in 1876, the Nagas were considered as savages³ and head-hunters. Reports and Accounts of the British

¹ Ihoshe, Kinimi, 84 years, Chief of Lumami village interviewed on 4.3 1998.

² Bareh, H., *Nagaland District gazetteer Kohima*, Saraswaty Press Ltd , calcutta, 1970, p 15

³ Ao. Bendangyabang, *History of Christianity in Nagaland A Source Material*. Shalom Ministry, Mokokchung, 1998, p 243

administration sufficiently support that such an activity took place among the various Naga tribes.⁴ No village is secured from the other neighbouring villages – because of the inter-tribal and inter-village warfares. According to Kinimi Ihoshe who is the chief of Lumami, lawlessness was supreme and no authority existed to maintain law and order over the population of the Sumis. Furthermore, at that time, every Naga tribe aspired for strength to dominate the others. Therefore, it was imperative for them to have a leader or a chief.⁵

In the traditional political system like the Sumis, the chief occupied the unique position in the village. He was the guardian of law and the owner of the village. Many villages are named after the chief who founded them like Chishilimi, Hebolimi, Sukhalu and Vihokhu.⁶ According to Zuheshe Sumi, the chief or *Akukau* has the power or authority to rule over the people in his village.⁷

The evolution of chiefship is connected with the setting-up of new villages. In the past, when head-hunting was prevalent, it was necessary to have a capable leader who could conquer new territories and establish new villages by dint of his effort, valour and determination. It was a matter of valour and heroism to participate in head-hunting expedition. After bringing the hunted heads into the village, the hunter used to

⁴ Sema, Hokishe, *The Emergence of Nagaland*, Vikas Publishing house, New Delhi, 1992, p 5

⁵ Ihoshe, Kinimi *op cit*

⁶ *Ibid* The name of the village Chishilimi, Hebolimi, Sukhalu and Vihokhu are after the Chief's name

⁷ Zuheshe Sumi, 89 years Interviewed on 15 5 1999 at Mokokchung

be honoured as a hero. According to Ihezhe Zhimomi a 68 year old Sumi elder, in the past, new villages were founded due to the following reasons:

Firstly, migration takes place due to over population in the village, water-scarcity, insufficient land and the search for new agricultural lands to meet the requirements of the increasing population. Secondly, some time due to disputes or misunderstanding among the villagers or quarrels between the brothers of the chief or between the chief's son or the desire of the chief's son to be a chief himself independent of his father.⁸

Like the Konyaks, the Sumis also while founding new village, the leaders were mostly from the chiefs' brothers or sons who wanted to be the chief and independent from his brother or father. Unlike the Konyaks there is no ranking of the chiefs. Anybody who has become a chief of a new village is not inferior to the old chief irrespective of his clan.⁹ According to Leach in the Kachin community the eldest son of the chief was discontented with his position, the best option for him was to collect a group of followers and then go out to an uninhabited country and carve out for himself a new territory.¹⁰

⁸ Ihezhe Zhimomi 68 years Former Minister of Nagaland Interviewed on 22 3 98 at his residence at Dimapur

⁹ Haimendorf, Furerh, *The Naked Nagas*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976, p 94

¹⁰ Leach, E R , *Political System of Highland Burma*, Pub By London School of Economics, London, 1954, p 170

According to Ihoshe Kinimi the chief or *Akukau* of Lumafni village, the origin and evolution of Sumi chiefship was associated with the founding of new villages. Generally, the colonisation of a new village was done by the brother or the son of the *Akukau* accompanied by those who were the followers of his father. He further explained this as follows:¹¹

1. The person should be rich enough to feed his followers while they spend many days in clearing the jungles, arranging the sites, levelling and digging forts for defence. These need many days of labour for which only a rich person can afford to spare his resources and wealth for his followers.
2. The son or brother of the *Akukau* who does not want to be under his father's or brother's control may prompt him to find a new village for himself. This practice has been found to be very common among the Sumis.
3. An ordinary person or a poor person cannot migrate to a new village without the approval of the chief or *Akukau* otherwise he will suffer serious consequences. He has to pay back to the *Akukau* all the debt including that of his dependants. Unless he did so, the *Akukau* will not permit him to leave. In this kind of situation only the son of the chief can repay his debt and request his father to allow the dependant to follow him.

¹¹ Ihoshe, Kinimi, *op cit.*

After setting up the village and demarcating its boundaries then he will reserve for himself the greater part of all the fertile land. He will allocate a certain amount of land to prominent persons and warriors. He may assign some lands to poor people or *Kumlhomi* on the basis of complete dependence upon himself. Any remaining land will normally be assigned to the person who first cleared the jungle.¹²

The migratory movement of the Sumis was solely motivated by two factors. One was economic and geographical and the other political. The economic forces prompted them to search for better cultivable land and suitable place for settlement. This led to the constant war with other tribes – for possessing more land for their survival.¹³

Another important factor is to protect themselves from external threats and attacks and to maintain the cohesiveness of the community. In this way they can command the loyalty of the subject. Thus, any person who has the capacity to lead the people in their struggle for existence and the ability to command obedience from others could automatically emerge as the *Akukau* of the group. It required centralisation of power and authority in the hands of a single person for the administration of the village. Unless this is done administration would be in a mess. All this necessitated the existence of the chief or *Akukau* in the Sumi community¹⁴

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ Ihezhe, Zhemomi, 68 years, former Minister of Nagaland in 1964-69. Interviewed on 22-23, 1998 at his residence at Dimapur

¹⁴ *Ibid*

To become the chief or *Akukau* of the village there are no prescribed specific qualifications. However, it was expected that the chief should be a normal, capable, rich and intelligent person. He should be an orator, a warrior and courageous to command respect and obedience from his followers. Over and above that, he should be conversant with the customary laws and practices of the tribe. He should also be generous and ready to help the villagers in times of need and difficulties. He should be a married person so that his wife also will share in the responsibility to look after the welfare of the villagers.¹⁵

Unlike the Lothas¹⁶ there is no prescribed age and selection procedure for the Sumi to become the chief or *Akukau* of the village. A minor can also become a chief. In this case, the regent will be responsible to carry out the day to day administration till he attains maturity. The regent may be the mother of the heir or any relative from his clan. It was desirable that anybody who become the chief should be acceptable to the people otherwise the villagers may desert him and migrate to other villages. If he is unpopular, his candidature may be vetoed out in favour of other heirs to be the chief or *Akukau*.¹⁷ But this situation is exceptionally rare.

¹⁵ Ihoshe Kinimi, *op cit*.

¹⁶ Lotha, Ben, "Traditional Lotha Polity and Society and the Impact of British Rule, *Ph D Thesis*, Department of History, NEHU, 1996.

¹⁷ Ihoshe Kinimi, *op cit*

Succession of Chiefship

The process of succession to the chiefship is hereditary. This is similar to many of the tribal societies in the different parts of the world. The post of chiefship among the Sumi Naga is hereditary which passes from father to the eldest son, however, the succession by uncles is possible temporarily. As Hutton says that,

“the generally accepted rule, however, is that the eldest of the original chief’s sons who remains in the village ultimately succeeded his father and is again ultimately succeeded by his own son, the interludes of brothers and uncles being temporary, and not affecting the general succession”¹⁸

The succession of chiefship among the Sumis is not through nomination based on the required qualification like age, marital status, etc. but voice vote or raising of their right hand was followed in order to manifest their support as in the case of Lothas.¹⁹ As Mill says, “for the Lothas, the most suitable man became the chief by force of character”.²⁰

¹⁸ Hutton, J H , *The Sema Nagas*, Oxford University Press, London, 2nd Edition, 1969, pp 148-149

¹⁹ Lotha, Ben, *op cit*

²⁰ Mills, J P , *The Lotha Nagas* Directorate of Arts and Culture, Government of Nagaland, Kohima, 2nd Edition, 1980

For the Rengma Nagas the law of succession is different from the rest. As Mill put it “the office of the chief was hereditary in the clan but not in the family. It did not necessarily pass from father to the son, but to the most suitable man in the leading families in the clan”. He further says that, “in case of gross misrule public opinion could even deprive the whole clan of the right”. It clearly pointed out that the Rengma chief did not have the dictatorial power but should rule according to the wishes of the people.²¹ In the case of the Kachin society like the Rengmas, the leadership in a Shan village appears to depend mainly on natural capacity. The leadership may pass from father to son but not necessarily since, it is not confined to any single lineage.²² For Sumis the different clans like Chishi, Zhimomi, Yephthomi, etc. can become the chiefs unlike the Mizos wherein the Sailos only can become the chiefs.²³

The system prevalent among the Sumis is also unlike the Khasi system which is based on the clan system. The clan decides the status of the individuals. Further the clan system is also the basic factor in the organisation of the state as the *Syiem* or chief is appointed only from the *Syiem's* clan and only certain clans are able to choose representatives to the *dorbar* or council of the *Syiems*.²⁴ Like the Khasi system in the Yimchunger Naga Tribe, chiefship is based on hereditary as well as on clan system

²¹ Mills, J P , *The Rengma Nagas*, Directorate of Arts and Culture, Government of Nagaland, Kohima, 1980, p 138

²² Leach, E R , *Political System of Highland Burma*, Oxford University Press, London, 1964, p 68

²³ Pakem, B , “The Changing Power Structure of the Political Institution of Chieftainship in Mizoram”, *The Journal of NEICSSR* Vol V, No II, Shillong, 1981 p 1

²⁴ Bhattacharya. Umasaday, “Syiemship” in *Institutions of Meghalaya*, S K Chattopadhyay (ed), Spectrum Pub , Guwahati, 1985, p 57

where no other clan can become a chief other than a person from the Khiungur clan. This is practised in the whole of the Yimchunger Tribe. No village can be founded without the Khiungur clan. It provides both secular and religious leadership. He acts both as a ruler and as a priest.²⁵ In the case of the Sumis there is no such dominant clan without which the village cannot be founded. Among the Sangtam Naga tribe also there is a system of chiefship, which is based on, heredity. His eldest son succeeds the chief or if the chief does not have any son, a member of his clan will succeed him. In any case succession to chiefship will only be from the clan that first founded the village.²⁶

Like the Konyaks²⁷ the Sumi also believe that it was a sacred case to select the successor who should be of noble or royal blood.

It has similarity with Zulu king where Gluckman says that

Zulu chief had been succeeded by their sons and under the kings this rule continued to be recognised. Zulu still say that an *induna* or chief had his position because he was given it by the king, but if he died his heir, unless

²⁵ Makory, Shenlithong, "Yimchunger Tribe", M A Student, Department of Political Science, Nagaland University, interviewed on 3 2 2000 at Lumami

²⁶ Sangtam, Lisepi, M A student, Department of Political Science, Nagaland University, interviewed on 3 3 2000 at Lumami

²⁷ Haimendorf, C V F, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, Vikas Pub House Pvt Ltd, Delhi, 1976

his son is hopelessly incompetent, should succeed him.

And failing the heir, the king or chief should appoint a close relative to act as regent and the position return to the mainline if possible".²⁸

Thus like the Zulu king, if the Sumi chief's son is not hopelessly incompetent he can still hold the post of the chief and if the heir is a minor then the mother of the heir can also act as a regent in the place of the chief. Thus the hereditary chiefship is still practiced among the Sumi Nagas.

Powers and Functions of the Chief

The Sumi society has a centralised system of administration centred around the authority of the chief or *akukau*. It has been followed much before the advent of the British into the Sumi area. The Sumis were well organised and were ruled by the chiefs. Like the Konyaks, the position of the chief in the village was autocratic as well as benevolent.²⁹ It is autocratic in the sense that the chief ruled by himself arbitrarily and his assistants were subordinated to him. Hutton confirmed this view when he wrote that the extent to which he would consult his elders depend almost entirely on the personal character of the *akukau* himself.³⁰ The *akukau* is also benevolent, generous and hospitable. Any time that anybody wanted his help he has to extend all

²⁸ Gluckman, Max, "The Kingdom of Zulu" *The African Political System*, M Fortis (ed), International African Institute and published by Oxford University Press, London, 1961, p 27

²⁹ Haimendorf, C V F, *op cit*, p 161

³⁰ Hutton, J H, *op cit*, p 150

possible help. He has been considered as a “fatherly patron” to his villagers. He has to help them in their adversities and encourage and reward them in their achievements. At the same time, he has to punish them when they were found guilty of misdeeds or violation of established norms and customs.³¹

Aylward Shorter wrote about the powerful chief in the African society, thus,

“if the man in the street knows nothing else about the traditional political institutions of Africa he is nevertheless sure of one thing – Africans are, or were governed by chieftains or chiefs. The idea of chief was very important in the minds of the Britishers who colonised East-Africa”.³²

He further said that the English words “Chief” or “Chieftain” suggest the political rule of a single man, or the supreme commander of a military ruler.³³ Like the African chiefship, the Sumi chief could rule single handedly. His word was the law of the land. The village chief is the chief judge, the chief administrator and also the chief commander during the time of war and head-hunting.³⁴

³¹ Ihoshe, Kınımi, *op cit*

³² Shorter, Aylward, *East African Societies*, Oxford University Press, London and Boston, 1974, p 39

³³ *Ibid*

³⁴ Ihoshe, Kınımi, *op cit*

The Features of Sumi *Akukau*'s or chiefs administrations

(a) The Chief or Ruler

The *Akukau* is the chief Administrator of the village. All important decisions have to be taken by him relating to day today administration. In case of disputes or conflicts between two parties and if no agreement could be reached to settle their disputes, the matter was brought to the notice of the *akukau*. Once the *akukau* gave his verdict, it was final and binding on both the parties. In case of defiance by one or both the parties, the punishment may be awarded in the form of fine and in extreme cases it may result in his expulsion from the village.³⁵

(b) Kukami Kivimi (Honourable and Respectable Chief)

A chief who is a great warrior, an orator, a wealthy, generous and honest man is regarded as the *Kukami Kivimi* or honourable chief. He is highly respected and obeyed by his subjects. Since all the chiefs may not possess all these good qualities and may neither be warriors nor do they possess wealth as mentioned above,³⁶ therefore they are less respected unlike the former.

(c) Mishilitha (well to do person)

Under the administration of the chief there are some people who are neither chief nor assistants to the chief but they are rich and such an honourable person in the

³⁵ Sumi, Khupu, Chief of Mishilimi village, interviewed on 2 1 2000 at Mishilimi village

³⁶ Heqhevi, Achumi, 58 years, convenor, Naga Council, Dimapur, interviewed on 3 2 1999 at Dimapur

village is called a *Mishilitha*. This rich man will render valuable services to the villagers in times of need especially when there was shortage of food, epidemics, plagues as well as in times of war. Since chiefship is hereditary and it cannot be sold to others, therefore an economically poor chief prefer to work and earn his wages from the respectable rich man's field rather than abdicate his chiefship. The concept of chiefship is sacred and it is their moral duty to protect and preserve it. Any chief who fails to protect the lineage right is condemned by the clan and is looked down by other clans.³⁷

(d) Chochou (Assistant of Chief)

The *Chochou* is the assistant of the chief of the village. He is chosen by the chief on the basis of his knowledge of traditional customs and practices. He assists the chief in taking important decisions about the village. The *Chochomi* should be a capable person to run the day to day administration. He will make important announcements in the village early in the morning for social work or observing any *gennas* or festivals for the day after next. Till date, the chief keeps the *Chochou's* post to assist him in the day to day administration.³⁸

(e) Alojitou (commander)

In every village there is a group of men and women whose purpose was to clean their respective fields. These groups or parties choose a person who is capable

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

and influential to be made as their commander or *atou*. This commander or *atou* is the spokesperson who acts on behalf of his party. He will decide the work calendar for his personal and other's fields. Work is being taken up in other fields to earn extra income for the purchase of cows and pigs to celebrate the festivals like *Tuluni* and *Ahuna*. *Tuluni* is a festival which is observed when the crops are bearing fruits and prayers are offered for abundant harvest. *Ahuna* festival is observed just after the harvest. It is a kind of joy and thanksgiving to God for the abundant harvest. The *atou* will apportion the meat according to the hierarchy and importance of the persons.

(f) Lapu-u (Mediator)

Whenever there arises disunity, hatred, rivalry and disputes between two or more parties within the village, there is a person who will negotiate and try to bring peace between them. He is called the mediator or the *lapu-u*. He is appointed by the chief.³⁹

(g) Kichel apu-u (mediator of outside the village)

Whenever there is imminent danger of war between two villages over some issues of homicide or boundary disputes, the chief will depute the *kichelapu-u* as an emissary to the concerned party to settle the disputes through dialogue and if both the parties are willing to avert the danger of war, they will send the messages through their respective mediator or *kichelapu-u*. With this, both the parties will meet each

³⁹ *Ibid.*

other half way from their villages to make agreement, or if necessary, they will make special arrangement for feasts for both the parties as a token of friendship and peace. The *kichelapu-u's* function was earlier very important because, then, head-hunting was a daily affair. It was not safe unless the village is having a good relationship with their neighbouring villages.⁴⁰

(h) *Amushou (The Burier of dead Body)*

The *Amushou* comes from poor families. They are the smallest clan in the village. He is appointed by the chief to bury all the dead bodies in the village.⁴¹

(i) *Amthau (The first reaper)*

When the harvest time has come the first reaper or *Amthau* will perform certain *gennas* and rituals called *achine* in order to have a rich and plentiful harvest.⁴²

(j) *Police System*

Before the advent of the British in the Naga territory there was no police system in the Sumi village government. All executive and judicial functions were vested in the hands of the chief and his councillors. The *Akukau* being the head of the administration used the villagers as his constables. Any villager who committed any crime or an offence was arrested under the chief's court. Criminal customary laws

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

⁴¹ Heqhevi, Achumi, *op cit*

⁴² Zuheshe, Ang, 92 years, Governor, Federal Government of Nagaland during 1950 to 1961
 • Interviewed on 5 5 1999 at authors residence

were strictly observed and the chiefs order was always obediently carried out by the people.

The police force was introduced when Naga Hills District was placed under Assam. It was in 1888 when the first Police Station was established in Kohima.⁴³ While the traditional system is being continued and strengthened, the police force which has been organised on modern lines to cope with the new challenges do assist the villages. Today the village authority is at liberty to hand over the criminal or offenders to the police.

Privileges of Chiefs

As a ruler, protector and guardian of the village, the *akukau* enjoys certain privileges. He was highly respected by all. He was the all powerful head of the village. As a gesture of respect and goodwill, the villagers used to give him grains from their fields during the harvests, vegetables, meat and fish caught from the rivers. While slaying domestic animals like cows or pigs, the head was given to the chief. This is to recognise him as the head of the village. Whereas, when any wild animals like sambhar, deer, bear, etc were killed, the hind legs were given to the chief which signifies that the wild animals ran in the chief's territory, they belonged to the chief and had to give his share.⁴⁴ According to Kinimi, "Any wild animal's head is not

⁴³ Sema. Hokushe, *Emergence of Nagaland*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1986, p 75

⁴⁴ Ihoshe, Kinimi, *op cit*

given to the chief but the person who killed the animal took the head because it was he who has killed the wild animal. It was also believed that *Shikhepu* or the Game allotter allotted the animal to be killed by the hunter. That is why the head of the animal is given to the hunter". This practice was confirmed by Horam when he wrote:

"..... Villagers were eager to display their gratitude and affection by deeds and would till his fields, do other jobs for him, give him the heads of all animals killed in the village etc. This practice took root among the Semas, Konyak, Lothas as well as Tangkhuls and in time became an almost compulsory practice. But it must be borne in mind that these privileges were giving to the deserving chiefs voluntarily by grateful subject and nothing more".⁴⁵

Like in the case of the Zulu chief wherein Gluckmann pointed out, "that the king was entitled to certain royal game though he had to reward the hunters. In addition, it was customary to give him gifts of grain, bear, cattle and some say girls. In return he was expected to feed and help his people generously. He had care for the regiments and give them their shields, in famine he was expected to help all his people and also at all times those in difficulties". The Sumi chief also was expected in return

⁴⁵ Horam, M. *The Naga Polity*. Low Price Publication, Delhi, 1972, p 76

to feed and help his people generously. He had to reward the hunter in the form of food or clothing or anything which the hunter did not have. He had to provide food if any of his subjects were starving and assist them at all times.⁴⁶ The prerogatives of the chief may be discussed as under:

(a) *Ayeghi mpeu (Feudal Lord)*

Almost the entire land of the village belonged to the chief and it was he who distributed the jhum land for cultivation to the villagers. He parcelled out his land yearly to his slave or *mighemi*. The chief as lord of manor is to decide what land is to be cultivated in each successive year. The reason for the practice of shifting of jhum cultivation together was mainly to protect themselves from head-hunting practices which was prevalent all over Nagaland.⁴⁷

(b) *Mighimi mpue: The master of the slave*

These *Mighimi* are the slaves of the chief. They are bound to the chief for his generosity. Leach⁴⁸ observed that where a man was too poor to afford the bride price for a wife, it was formerly possible for him to become a voluntary slave of his own chief. His master would provide the capital to complete the bride transactions. In return the master would have a claim on the labour of the slave and his children and

⁴⁶ Gluckmann, Max, "Kingdom of Zulu", in *African Political System*, M. Fortes, et al (eds.), Oxford University Press, London, 1961, p. 34

⁴⁷ Ihoshe, Kinimi, *op cit.*

⁴⁸ Leach, E R, *Highlander of Burma*, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, 1954, p. 169

would be entitled to a share of the produce of his livestock and of the bride price of his daughter. The chief provided them land as well as wives whenever they were unable to buy by themselves. These slaves as a sort of homage to their chief, call him 'father' and owe him a regular amount of work in his fields. Thus the *mighimi* has to remain with the chief or *akukau* whether he likes it or not. If the *mighimi* runs away with his family, the *akukau* can confiscate both movable and immovable properties of the deserter.⁴⁹ For the Sumis the groom has to pay the price to the bride parents. It was a costly affair for any poor young man to get married. If the chief pays the price on his behalf for this purpose then he automatically becomes his slave.

(c) *Ambassador*

The chief also entertains distinguished guests and takes the lead in all matters. He made diplomatic relations with other villages. He acts and speaks on behalf of his villagers.⁵⁰

Military Power

The Sumi chief enjoys a great deal of military power. At the time when head-hunting was very prevalent his primary concern was for the defence of the *village*.⁵¹ Mills, while commenting on the Lotha chief, wrote "His main function was that of leader in war, and his perquisite all the spoils brought home from raids".⁵² Similarly in

⁴⁹ Hutton, J.H., *op cit.*

⁵⁰ Heqhevi, Achumi, 58 years, *op cit*

⁵¹ Shimray, R.R., *origin and Culture of Nagas*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 53.

⁵² Mills, J P., *The Lotha Nagas*, Directorate of Arts and Culture, Govt. of Nagaland, Kohima, 1980 p. 96

the case of the Angamis though the chief was generally considered a nominal figure yet his power was recognised only in times of war. Hutton wrote

“at best the chief’s position probably gave him no power except on the war path Their orders are obeyed so far only as they accord with the wishes and convenience of the community.”⁵³

In the case of the Kachin society, the chief did not take part in the actual combat. Leach writes, “in all these military and para-military activities, the chief even when they initiated a quarrel, did not participate themselves”.⁵⁴ In the case of the Sumi chief it was mixture of both. The Sumi chief was both the commander as well as the warrior. However, it was not necessary that the chief should take part directly in the actual combat. As Hutton wrote,

“he has to direct the village in war, nominally at any rate, and to decide, either by himself or in consultation with his elders (*Chochomi*), all questions of the relations between his own and neighbouring villages.”⁵⁵

⁵³ Hutton, J.H., *The Angami Nagas*, Government of Nagaland, London, 1969, pp. 142-143.

⁵⁴ Leach, A.R., *Highland of Burma*. The London School of Economics and Political Science, London, 1954, p. 96.

⁵⁵ Hutton, J.H., *The Sema Nagas*. Oxford University Press, London, 1968, p. 150.

Matters concerning war and peace with neighbouring villages were to be decided by him. In military expedition, if the chief was diplomatically clever he could win over the other villages under his control without resorting to war. Hutton has brought out this clearly when he wrote of an event where a Sumi of Maghromi made a diplomatic move to incite the Ao's of Nankam village and the Lothas of Lungtang village to fight against each another. While these two villages were fighting in one specified place selected by the Sumis, the Sumis went to burn down the Lungtang village. Thus they could resist the other village successfully.⁵⁶ Again Kanwar Randip Singh also wrote that the Sumis were the best fighters among the Nagas

“Physically they are no match to the Angamis but in the art of fighting they beat all tribes. Fighting is in their blood and army is a great attraction to them”.⁵⁷

He went on to say that, “it is the Sema ex-servicemen from Indian army who now form the backbone of the hostile”.⁵⁸ Hutton has rightly mentioned the evidence that the Sumis on many occasions have shown themselves superior as warriors to their neighbouring tribes.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Singh, Kanwar Randip, *The Nagas of Nagaland Desperados and Heroes of Peace*, Deep & Deep, New Delhi, 1987

⁵⁸ *Ibid*

⁵⁹ Hutton, J H., *The Sema Nagas*, *op cit*

With the cessation of tribal feuds and hostilities, the military power of the Sumi chief also declined. However, the Sumi chief still continues to play his political role.

Legislative Powers

All matters relating to issue of orders, rules and other instructions were made by the chief or *akukau* with the assistance of his elders or the *chochomi*. Such orders have to be strictly observed and carried out by the villagers. Since he is acting for the welfare of the villagers as a whole, those who disobeyed his orders could be severely punished. If they repeatedly disobeyed the *akukau's* order, they are expelled from the village. Clearing of inter-village path, path leading to jhum lands, construction and maintenance of village water tanks were done on the order of the *Akukau*. He was to arrange the time and date for observing the traditional social festivals such as *Tuluni* and *Ahuna*. As Hutton says, "A man who cannot give warning of *gennas* in the proper manner never takes the position of the chief".⁶⁰ He goes on to say that the chief assumed the general direction of the ceremony while the *awou* or priest performs ceremonial acts that may be necessary.⁶¹ All orders of the chief were proclaimed by the *chochomi* early in the morning before the villagers go to their field. However, in

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151

the case of war, the *chochomi* would go from door to door to inform only those who were able to take part in the combat.

Judicial Power

Prior to the advent of the British in the Naga territory, the *akukau* was the supreme judge and tried all cases, civil and criminal. This was done in consultation with the elders of the village. As Hutton correctly pointed out that

“in the settlement of disputes within the village the elders comes into greater prominence, as the opinion of the old men is often necessary to decide points of both fact and customs”.⁶²

The traditional Sumi village court of justice was composed of the chief and the village elders. The court usually held its meeting in the *akukau's* house and was presided over by him. The proceeding of the cases tried by the court were never put down in writing because they were illiterate. The *akukau* and the *chochomi* were guided entirely by the Sumi customs. As for the civil justice the *akukau* was also given a great discretionary power to be exercised within his jurisdiction. The trial of cases

⁶² Hutton, J H , *The Sema Naga*, Oxford University Press, London, 1968, p 150
Leach, E R , *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, London School of Economics and Political Science, 1954, p 184 Where he says the judicial body of a village cluster or domain is thus a body of arbitrators rather than a branch of magistrates its function is to give a ruling as to what would be a fit and proper settlement of the issue in disputes

arising out of land disputes, theft, adultery, divorce and even murder comes under the chief's court. Since money was scarce those days, in most cases fines were generally paid in the form of live pork.⁶³

The British occupation of the Naga Hills did not bring much changes in the judicial system of the village. They found that the traditional customary laws, which were effectively binding on the people were respected. The customary practices of settling disputes are simple and there was no instance where they failed to render justice to the deprived person.⁶⁴ But later the criminal cases were taken over by the British system of administration.⁶⁵

Construction of *Akukau's* House

The chief or *Akukau* also enjoyed the privilege of free labour from his villagers during the construction of his house. All the building materials for the construction of his house have to be arranged by his *mighemi*. For the construction of his house all the able bodied adult from the village would work and the chief, as a token of appreciation to the villagers would provide feasts to them. Normally the chief's house is quite different⁶⁶ It is more prominent This shows not only the status and position but also the power and influence of the chief over his subject. The construction of the *akukau's*

⁶³ Honito Assumi, 82 years, Retired Dobashi, interviewed on 12 6 1999

⁶⁴ Ao, Takuyaba, Senior Advocate and Former M L A , interviewed in his residence on 3 2 1999

⁶⁵ Government of Nagaland, Nagaland Code, Vol 1, Kohima, 1970, p 161

⁶⁶ Hutton, J H , *The Sema Naga*, Oxford University Press, London, 1968, p 37 Where he says "that the chief's house serves all purposes of a *morung* both as a centre for *gennas* and as a bachelor's sleeping place

house is the moral responsibility of all the villagers since all the important functions of the village are conducted in his house only.⁶⁷

Having discussed about the power, functions, positions and privileges of the chief, in the next chapter an attempt shall be made to study about the village council which functions closely with the institution of chiefship.

⁶⁷ According to Leach, the house of the chief normally serves as a public guest house at which -- many casual travelers is entitled to hospitality The maintenance of the chief's house is public responsibility ”

CHAPTER III

TRADITIONAL VILLAGE COUNCIL

In the Naga society, particularly among the Sumis, the *Akukau* or Chief is the head of the village and its administration. He is assisted by his councillors called the *chochomi*. In some villages where there were two or more chiefs, they keep their *chochomi*¹ who automatically become the informal members of the village elders. This is due to the fact that when the village was founded there were two or three persons who were equally capable leaders and by their joint effort the village was established. In some other wherein cases the village was founded by the effort of only one person, he becomes the undisputed leader and the rest were his followers. In such villages, the authority of the chief was more powerful than the others where there were more than one chief.²

The Sumi region can broadly be divided into the cold region comprising of the hill areas and the warm regions bordering the plains of the Ao areas. In the cold

¹ The *Chochomi* represent their clans and khell in the chief's council. It is up to the discretion of the chief to keep the *Chochomi* from one clan only or from as many clans as possible so as to keep them contented.

² Tsukhalu, Suhoi, 60 years, Rtd. Lt. Colonel, Secretary Rajya Sainik Board, Kohima, interviewed on 10.3.2000 at Mokokchung.

region, there are more than two chiefs in a village but in the warm region especially in the Akuluto area where the village was founded by the effort of one capable and courageous person, there is only one chief. Thus, in the former there is the plural executive like in Switzerland, while in the case of the later there is a singular executive like in the USA.³

The house of the chief or *Akukau* was the court of law and the office of administration. The *Akukau* is all in all in matters concerning policy making, administration, law making, war etc. As each village was an independent state the court of the chief was the final court of justice.⁴ He was the fountain of administration and justice. Before the advent of the British in the Naga hills, he also had the power to dissolve the council of elders if they were found to be not useful.⁵ Even after Nagaland attained full statehood, till the passing of the Nagaland Village and Area council Act of 1970 by the Government of Nagaland, the term "Village Council" was unknown to the Sumi community. But due to the nature and style of functioning of the village affairs, right from the inception and the beginning of social life of the people, this institution began to take shape in the form of an apex body of the village to assist the chief in the effective functioning and development of village administration.

³ Johari, J C , *Comparative Government and Politics*. Sterling Publishing Co Ltd , New Delhi, 1982, pp 92-93

⁴ Shimray R R , *Origin and Culture of Nagas*. New Delhi, 1985, p 57

⁵ Ihoshe, 86 years He is the Chief of Lumami village interviewed on 28 10 1998 at his residence

Like other Naga tribes, before the occupation of the territory by the British and their subsequent administration over the Naga hills, the Sumis were living in independent village states without interference from any external powers. The village was under the effective control and administration of the chiefs and his *chochomies*. It has been noticed that when the clans were too small and negligible, the *chochomi* represented two or more clans at a time. Ihoshe Kinimi substantiated this. When he said that though the Sumi chief was an autocratic ruler, he administered the village as per the long standing customs and practices of the community.⁶ Hutton observed:

“The most important reason for forming the village elders was to learn the opinion of the community on any matter which affects the whole community...”⁷

In some villages, where the chief was very powerful the *chochomi* and elders were often neglected or even non-existent. Contrary to this in some other villages they were powerful enough to effectively control the chief. However, this rarely happens. Whatever be the case, the chief’s power was not absolute as affirmed by Hutton, who wrote that,

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ Hutton, J H , *The Sema Nagas*. Oxford University Press, London, 1968, p 152

“In the settlement of disputes within the village the elders come into prominence as the opinion of the old man is often necessary to decide points both facts and customs.”⁸

It is evident from Hutton’s writing that the elders could be older than the chief himself and they may have wider experience and better knowledge of the customs and practices of the community. They could help the chief to solve important issues and problems.⁹ At the larger scale, according to Butler,

“The Naga chiefs were leaders of ‘Public opinion’... The government of every Naga tribe is purely democratic one, and whenever anything of public importance has to be undertaken all the chiefs meet together in solemn conclave, and then discuss and decide upon the action to be taken and even then it often happens that the minority will not be bound by either the wish or act of the majority”¹⁰

This fact is further strengthened by Shimrany when he wrote that,

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ Assumi, Honito, 82 years Interviewed on 26 6 2000 at Mokokchung

¹⁰ Mackenzie, Alexander, *The North East Frontier of India*, Macmillan Co , New Delhi, 1981, p 86

“What was important and unique was the participation of the general public in the deliberations on any public issue, giving a chance to every one to have a say. This was direct democracy, the true and pure democracy in reality and in practice. This system of direct democracy was prevalent among the Lothas and Rengma Nagas also although with some slight variations. As in the case of Angamis where there is no village council at all but every villager joined in the discussion and has the right to speak.”¹¹

The same is in the case of the Sumis wherein the chief was powerful but even then the opinion of his council was accepted if it was for the interest of the village as a whole.

Holroyed, Political assistant of Sibsagar in his observation also supported the fact that,

“Each clan is ruled by its council and no important measure concerning the welfare of the clan undertaken

¹¹ Shimray, R.R., *op cit.*, p 58.

without the consent of the elders and no operation undertaken till it has been carried out by the council.”¹²

It is clear from Holroyed’s observation and other scholars that the democratic system of functioning has been practised in the administration of the village even before the advent of the British in Naga territory. This practice is further responsible for the strong sense of unity and solidarity among the various clans.

Procedure of Selection

The procedure of selection and method of nomination of a Sumi chief was almost similar to that of the other Naga tribes, although some minor variations may occur among the different tribes. Every Naga village has a body of council members, wherein every clan’s head or a member from the *khell* or villages were represented. In the case of the Sumis, when the time for the selection of a new incumbent to be inducted as the *chochomi* came, the chief fixes the time and place for the purpose. The chief usually selects the most influential person from each clan. It was not very necessary that only the oldest members of the clan were chosen

¹² Barpujari, H K in *Problem of the Hill Tribes of North-East Frontier, 1822-42*, Vol 1. Spectrum Publishers, Guwahati, 1970, pp 7-8

The nomination of a candidate to the council is known by the people much in advance because usually the leading man of the clan, who is well versed in the customary laws of the Sumi and respected by his clan members as well as other clans are inducted as the *chochomis* of the chief. Obviously, there is complete openness in this system, and the nomination is being respected and all do adhere to the decision.¹³

There was no strict prescribed qualification for a person to become a member of the chief's council among the Sumis. In the case of the Khasis the members of the *darbar* should be more than 50 (fifty) years of age

“because the persons below the age of fifty years were considered to be too young and therefore they were not considered to be the members of the council”.¹⁴

In the case of the Lothas, the person should attain the age of 40 before he is nominated to the council. He should be permanently residing in the village and be a wealthy person to entertain guests and to throw community feasts from time to time. Moreover, he should be a married person.¹⁵ Among the Sumi Nagas age is not an important factor but he should be matured enough to carry out the responsibility

¹³ Kinimi, Ihoshe, 84 years. *Op cit.*, on 28 10 1998.

¹⁴ Malngiang, Pascal, “The Traditional Durbar System in the Khasi Hills”, in M N Karna. et al (Eds.), *Power to the People in Meghalaya*. Regency Publication, New Delhi. 1998

¹⁵ Lotha, Ben, “Traditional Lotha Polity and Society and the Impact of British Rule, *Ph D Thesis*, Department of History, NEHU. 1996 p 75

entrusted to him for the management of the day to day affairs. However, it was desirable that the members of the chief's council or *Kichimi* should be a person who was well versed in the customary laws, usages and procedures of the tribes. Like in the case of the Lothas, among the Sumis too the person should be wealthy person. He should be able to entertain the guests in his house on behalf of the chief. He also should be an orator and a capable person.¹⁶

Similarly among the Aos, in the *putu-menden* or village council, the senior-most member from each clan formed the core group called the *Tatar* or Cabinet Ministers. All important matters relating to the affairs of the villagers are decided by them. Usually a person who is able to speak-up boldly for his clan and who was thought to be the fittest was nominated by its clan members to represent in the village body.¹⁷ Among the Tangkhuls, the head of each clan is an ex-officio member of the village council and the head of the clan is invariably the oldest male member of the clan and he holds that position till death.¹⁸ In the case of the Angamis, they do not have a formal council as such but have wider participation at meetings. Any matter under dispute was taken before a meeting specially convened for the issue. An eloquent elder of the village known as the *kemevo* usually opens the proceedings and the discussion is joined by other elders. Every villager has the right to speak.¹⁹ Among

¹⁶ Assumi, Honito 82 years. Interviewed on 26.6.2000 at his residence at Mokokchung

¹⁷ Noklensama 70 years, Rtd Engineer, Mokokchung. Interviewed on 28.6.2000 at Mokokchung

¹⁸ Horam, M. *Vaga Polity*. Low Pub, Delhi, 1992, p. 85

¹⁹ *Ibid*

the Lothas too, the same exists.²⁰ Thus the procedure of selection of members to the village council among the Nagas is a well-structured and transparent one. It enjoys the confidence of all the members and the people of the various clans in the Sumi community.

The council was intended to be a small and compact body where decisions can be taken quickly. There was no hard and fast rule as to the composition of the council in the chief's court. The appointment of the elders rested solely on the chief's discretion. It varied according to the population and size of the area.

Earlier, the people were illiterate and had no knowledge of the tenure system. In the case of the Ao Nagas, the members of *Putu-menden* are selected for 30 years and in some villages it was only for fifteen years. There are instances of quarrels and reluctance to vacate the post of elders as expressed by Mills when he wrote.

“When the time comes to vacate office there was almost always a violent quarrel. The office holders, reluctant to relinquish their power and shares of meat, argued that time was not yet up, while the younger generation were eager to take their place”.²¹

²⁰ Lotha, Ben. “Traditional Lotha Polity and Society and the Impact of British Rule, *Ph D Thesis*, Department of History, NEHU, 1996.

²¹ Mills, J.P.. *The Ao Nagas*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1973.

In the case of the Sumis there is no fixed tenure for the members of the chief's council. All the members are appointed by the chief and hold office as long as they are capable, loyal to the chief and having a good reputation among the people. Thus, the members of the village council hold office for a long period of time but the office was by no means hereditary. It was only when the Nagaland village Council Act was passed in 1970 that the tenure of five years was fixed for the members.²²

The chief himself regulated the conduct of business of the council from time to time as the situation demanded. The chief convened almost all the meetings of the elders and his house served as the venue for the meetings.²³

There was no remuneration to be paid to the members of village elders but they were highly respected by the villagers by virtue of the post that they occupy. They have the privilege to feast with the chief as Hutton wrote:

“they eat a share of animals given him (chief) as present or tribute or by way of a fine for a transgression of civil or religious customs”.²⁴

²² The Nagaland Village and Area Council Act 1970 by the State Legislative Assembly, Published by Nagaland Legislative Assembly Secretariat, Kohima, 1971.

²³ Kinimi, Ihoshe. 84 years *Op cit*

²⁴ Hutton, J.H., *op cit*.

There are other elders who are called *asa-papu* or clan father. He is a wealthy person but he may not be the oldest person from the clan. Whenever anyone from his clan or *khell* or sector suffered hardship or are in need of help he was bound to assist and rescue them from starvation. Therefore he was entitled to have the free labour of his clansmen and *khell*. The free labour may be taken with the prior approval of the chief or *akukau*. It may be noted that whenever hunters killed wild animals the head was given to the oldest member of the clan as a privilege on account of age and not to the *asa-papu*.²⁵ Usually wealthy persons were nominated or selected by the chief to be the members of his council of elders. It was considered to be prestigious and a great privilege to share the glory of the chief.²⁶

The powers and functions of the village elders may be divided into the following categories:

1) *Executive Functions*

Like other tribal chiefs, the Sumi chief too had a council to advise him. They believed that the tackling of crucial issues required many cool and experienced heads. The dispensation of justice to all was the primary concern of the village administration. The council of elders from time to time decides disputes which were of two kinds: private and public. Private disputes takes place between two or more

²⁵ Assumi. Honito, *op cit*

²⁶ Kinimi. Ihoshe, *op cit*

persons. For instance, the payment of compensation to the injured or the settlement of boundary disputes between two or more persons. Public disputes include the areas wherein the whole village was involved, for instance, breach of customs and taboos or *gennas* which affect the whole community, damaging of trees in public places or houses or encroachment on the village boundaries by other villages. In theory, the chief has the authority to settle the disputes but in actual practice it was the elders who settled all the complicated cases. In case a person or a party did not obey the decision of the council it can take necessary actions against him. Anyone guilty of breaking the long time honoured law of the land was punished and in extreme cases the guilty was banished from the village once and for all.²⁷

Like any other tribes, every Sumis is also conversant with the traditional laws, customs and usages. They had many taboos or *gennas* involving Do's and Don'ts. Any unconscious or deliberate breaking of the same will bring down the wrath of the evil powers not only on the law-breaker but on the entire community. In such a superstitious community, it was peremptory that the observance of the law was strictly enforced and the taboo breakers were punished in the form of asking them to make sacrifices of animals and perform other ceremonies to placate the angry supernatural powers.²⁸

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ Hutton, J H , *op cit* , p 151

The executive function also includes the maintenance of village drinking water and footpaths, construction of bridges across streams and rivers, sanitary systems and cleaning of jungles surrounding the village.²⁹

Another important function of the council was fixing the dates of all the village festivals in consultation with the village priest under the direction of the chief of the village. The council then announced to the public through the *chochomi* by oral proclamation early in the morning before the villagers go to the field. It was usually announced three days ahead of what shall be done.³⁰ In the case of the Lothas, the announcement was made the day before the villagers went to bed in the evening. They also took the decision for the year on jhuming cultivation as there has been head-hunting practices between the villages and nobody was safe in case some crossed the limit.³¹

The role of elders in inter-village politics was also significant. The Sumi chief never singly accepted or rejected the proposal brought to him by messengers from other villages without consulting the council of elders or *kichimi mqo*. Sometimes, the chief's proposal could be overruled by the better suggestions of the *kichimi mqo*. However, if there was a strong chief in a village, he had the *kichimi mqo*'s consent to

²⁹ Kinimi, Ihoshe, *op cit.*

³⁰ Lotha, Ben, *op cit.*

³¹ Kinimi, Ihoshe, *op cit.*

his decision, while the weak ones would abide by the decisions of the *kichimi mqo* even if he himself felt differently.³²

When the conflict or dispute arose between two villages belonging to different tribes the messengers were sent to fix a day. On the date agreed upon the elders of the respective villages would meet by the riverside to settle the matter. Exchanging of drinks of local rice beer or aji and sharing meals together followed this. Like the Lothas, if the quarrel began between the two sides due to the misdeed of one person, the guilty was fined and the fine realised from him was either divided among the elders of both villages or given to the village against whom the wrong was done.³³ But if the dispute was between the Sumi villages, the chief and his elders would go to the village concerned. The host village would cut a pig and prepare a feast for them and they would dine together. In return the host village chief and elders would go to their guest village and the same thing was done. Thus permanent peace was bestowed on the two villages.³⁴

On 6th April 1994, K.C. Pant, the then Chairman of the Tenth Finance Commission on his visit to Kohima, while appreciating the beauty and the effective functioning of the age old traditional village administration, emphasised the role of the

³² Kinimi, lhoshe, *op cit.*

³³ Assumi, Honito, *op cit.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

present village council which has inherited from the old system of village administration. He commented that,

“You have the advantage of a very well developed structure of administration at the village level. This is partly an inherited legacy, but the state certainly deserve credit for marrying tradition with sound administrative practices in the shape of village councils and village development boards. This has been acclaimed as success story These are in addition to the traditional functions of the village council relating to the administration of justice.”³⁵

The council of *Kichimi mgo* or elders in almost all the Naga tribal communities has unique features and could function well over a long period of time and adopt itself to the changing situation. Although it is difficult to say whether the present village council is functioning purely on modern democratic system of government or a mixture of both traditional and modern. In appearance, the structure of the council seems to be modern but in actual practice there is some kind of traditional practices involved in it. For instance. all the cases are tried on the basis of customs and usages.

³⁵ Pant, K.C., Chairman, Tenth Finance Commission, in his address to the people of Nagaland at public playground at Kohima on 6th April 1994.

While discussing about the functioning of administration, it is important to compare with some other Naga tribes too. Among the Lotha Nagas, Ben Lotha observed,

“the village council was formed to have an effective check on the power of an unscrupulous or tyrannical chief. He went on to say that in the olden days when a chief by sheer superior physical strength could assume the role of a king. In this case the councillors being a group could and did control the powers of the mightily dangerous chief. Otherwise they were useful for the chief as they believe that more heads are better than one.”³⁶

Among the Angamis, the body of elders comprising of the adult members, at present called council *assumed* the entire issues of administration relating to adoption of social service programmes, defence or warfare and settlement of festival dates.³⁷ The Angamis have direct democratic system like the ancient Greek city states of democracy.³⁸ In the case of the Chakhesang, a special emphasis may be laid on the way of the council setting. In the event that the council was convened, it was

³⁶ Lotha, Ben, *op cit*, p 82

³⁷ *Ibid*

³⁸ *Ibid*

compulsory that every male adult attends it. Elaborate arrangement was chalked out in advance. Village informers enters every household in the village announcing about the place and date of the meeting including the nature of business.³⁹ In the case of the Rengmas, the chief may summon the council by sending a grass-knot as a token of message, one knot indicating one days' notice. The token is circulated in turn to other persons or parties concerned.⁴⁰ Similarly, the Zeliangrong system was also democratic in form. All the important issues were discussed and settled by the village elders.⁴¹ In all these cases, whether Angami, Rengma, Zeliang or Chakhesang, attendance in the council was a must for every adult male and great sanctity was attached to it. A person may not attend only in case of illness. Those who refused or failed to attend were severely punished.⁴² All expressed details and procedures show the existence of a democratic system in the Naga society and this is significant, as it has preceded the introduction of Panchayat Raj system in India.

Judicial

Another important function of the elders or *Kichimi mgo* was judicial. The *Akukau* and his *Kichimi* constituted the village court. It was the highest court of appeal among the Sumi and all the Naga villages. All the cases which could not be settled amicably within the family, clan or between the disputing parties were brought before

³⁹ *Ibid*

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² Bareth, H (ed), *Nagaland District Gazetteers Kohima District*, Government of Nagaland, Kohima, 1970, p 186

the *Akukau's* court and the *Kichimi*. The *akukau* and his *elders*, the *kichimi* summoned both the parties to explain their case before the court. After hearing from both the parties, the *akukau* and his *kichimi* would arrive at a decision and give their judgement accordingly. Once the court passed the judgement it was binding on the parties. The disputes including theft, murder, defiance of customs and traditions etc. were settled according to the customary laws of the Sumis. All kinds of cases whether civil or criminal in nature were brought to the court of the *akukau* and his *kichimi* for final verdict and there was no case which could not be settled by the court.⁴³ This fact was similar to that of the traditional Garo system of village administration as Milton S. Sangma wrote,

“All quarrels and complaints were settled by convening the meeting of the elders of the village. Whenever necessary, local inquiries and examination of witnesses were conducted by them. The decision were arrived at by majority opinion of the members present as well as the long established customs. These decisions were final and binding. There was no question of appeal to the higher court as there was none.”⁴⁴

Similarly, Hutton also pointed out that specially among the Sumis that,

⁴³ Kinimi, Ihoshe, *op cit*

⁴⁴ Sangma, M S , *History and Cultures of the Garos*. Sterling Publishing Co, New Delhi, 1981, p. 51.

“On the difficult point of the disputed fact, the chief and his elders would be usually in a position to know and determine, for even if they had no knowledge of the matter under dispute, their general knowledge of the circumstances or character of the disputants would probably enable them to form a pretty shrewd notion of the real facts.”⁴⁵

He went on to say that

“when the culprit was detected a fine was imposed on the accused, such a fine might be in kind or in cash but would usually in the form of live pork.”⁴⁶

It was compulsory for the guilty to pay the prescribed fine. In case of failure he would be held for contempt of court and be expelled from the village. In the case of the Lothas when the date of hearing was fixed by the court and the individual or the party involved failed to turn up, the court will impose fine on him for showing disrespect to the court. In the proceeding of the court, the statement should be given only by the person or party concerned. No one was allowed to help them including the family members or the relatives. After this, all the points would be examined by the

⁴⁵ Hutton, J.H., *op cit*, p 163

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

court and then the guilty would be fined or punished according to the gravity of the crime.⁴⁷ Thus we have seen that almost all the tribal societies have an organised and systematic system of trial which was just and fair and there was no discontentment among the people.

The Sumis were considered to be a warrior tribe. Killing of people of other villages was considered to be a brave and courageous act. In fact, most of the village and inter-village feuds originated in this manner and continued for succeeding generations with revenge as the motive. Different punishments were awarded for different kinds of murders. In the case of non-culpable homicide the gravity of the case was less. In the case of culpable homicide, the guilty would be heavily punished and expelled from the village.⁴⁸ In the case of the Kukis, if the murderer was found and was killed on the spot by the murdered man's next of kin, the case could be treated as closed. But once the case was brought to the notice of the *Semang Pachong* or Village Council the murderer was fined according to the gravity of the murder.⁴⁹ Among the Angamis, murder by accident, while fighting or treachery was grave and the murderer was expelled or banished from the village.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Lotha, Ben. *op cit* , p 86

⁴⁸ Assumi. Honito, *op cit*

⁴⁹ Haokip, T , *op cit*

⁵⁰ Hutton, J H , *op cit*

In matters of stealing among the Sumis, the thief had to return the goods in full or their equivalent to the owner. A fine was also imposed on his property.⁵¹ Among the Lothas, a thief had to return the goods in full or their equivalent to the owner and pay a large pig or cow or both to his clan for bringing bad name to them.⁵² In the case of the Aos, according to Mills,

“For theft the value of the property stolen had to be restored and a pig paid to the elders. The payment of this pig stamped a man of a theft and his descendants forever could be reminded of the incident with impunity.”⁵³

Among the Angamis, according to Hutton,

“theft was always punished by exacting from the thief seven times the value of the property stolen, the fine being paid to the victim of the theft, whose property was also returned to him if recovered.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ Swu, Kihoto, 64 years old, Rtd Under Secretary, Government of Nagaland, interviewed at Kohima on 5 6 1998

⁵² Lotha, Ben, *op cit*

⁵³ Mills, J P , *The Ao Nagas*, Oxford University Press, London, year, 1973, p 120

⁵⁴ Hutton, J H , *The Angami Nagas*, Oxford University Press, London, 1969, p 148 Also see the Garo's practices in Marak Julius L R , *Garo Customary Practices-Sociological Study*, Shillong. 1985, p 87

From the above comparison of different tribes in matters of punishment for murder and theft, the Sumis' form of awarding punishment was more lenient and perhaps more civilised and simple. However, this does not reduce the seriousness of the crime.

Land disputes usually occur between the villagers due to shortage of land or greed on the part of the encroacher. The dispute was usually settled by the chief with the help of the elders who know the boundary of the land between the two disputants. All the plots of land were demarcated by erected stones and other natural boundaries including rivulets. The shifting of demarcation of boundaries and claims on other plots of land mostly caused the disputes over land forcibly by some greedy persons. If one party insisted that the land belonged to him, the claimant had to take an oath on a little soil from the land in dispute. He had to chew and swallow it. For the Sumis, like any other tribes, false oath will result in death after sometime. So they rarely resort to take oath which is false. Honito, a Rtd. Dobashi, said that "I have witnessed six oaths, all those oaths happened to be false and the result was death after a few months."⁵⁵ Different kinds of oaths have been practised like biting of the tigers' tooth, drinking of the river water, chewing and swallowing of soil or the bones of a death man. All these oaths, if false, had serious consequences not only on the person who was a party to the oath but the whole of his generation. This is contrary to Hutton's remarks that "the Sema oath does have not the value of the Angami oath. He felt that there was no

⁵⁵ Assumi, Honito 82 years. *Op cit*

seriousness on the oath taken by the Semas since it did not result in any serious consequences. However, this is proved to be wrong as stated by Honito".⁵⁶

In the olden days any decision taken in the meeting presided by the chief did not require quorum or the casting of votes because all the members were expected to be present compulsorily. The decisions of the chief and his elders were passed in accordance with the customary laws and practices. Moreover, they were ignorant of the modern system of quorum and voting for deciding the crucial issue of the day to day affairs.

Thus the judicial system of the Sumi has been very fair and effective and could settle all the complicated cases without any fear and bias. The decision was respected and binding on all the parties concerned.

Appraisal, Present Trends and Assessment of Recent Changes

Before the advent of the British and their subsequent introduction of the new system of administration enforced upon the Nagas, the Sumis like other Naga tribes has well organised system of administration under the chief or the *Akukau*. When the British encountered the Nagas, they were amazed to find the effective functioning of the Village administration which they considered to be primitive, traditional and backward. Knowing fully well of the commanding position enjoyed by the village

⁵⁶ Hutton, J H , *The Sema Nagas*, *op cit* , p 165

chiefs in the tribal community. the political agents of the colonial administration were advised to befriend and communicate directly with the chiefs in matters connected with the tribes and make them loyal agents of the colonial administration.⁵⁷ In order to facilitate their control and pacify the Nagas, they introduced the institution of *Dobashis*, that is, man with two language expertise, as an intermediary between the rulers and ruled. The original object of the *Dobashis*' appointment was ability to translate from one's tribal language to the British officers and vice-versa. In addition to their services as liasons between the government and their local people, the *Dobashis* were at the same time employed as native judges and had police power as well.⁵⁸

In the process of giving more powers to the *dobashis* the position of the chief or the *akukau* was considerably reduced. The *Akukau* and his elders become incompetent to try any civil and criminal cases. The latter was taken over by the first Class Magistrate. Therefore, the chiefs' power was only to maintain law and order and to collect house taxes from their respective villages. Even in civil cases, if the other party was not satisfied with the decision of the village chiefs and his elders, they took the case to the district court or to other higher courts. Thus the position of the chief was relegated below the position of the *dobashis* who were originally supposed to be only the language mediator between the administrator and the people. Today, the

⁵⁷ Takuyaba 62 years Senior Advocate and former Member of Nagaland Legislative Assembly
Interviewed on 24 10 1998 at Mokokchung

⁵⁸ Sema, Puketo, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, Scholar Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991, p 53

judicial powers especially those related to civil cases were tried by the Deputy Commissioners' court or the Extra Assistant Commissioner's Court with the *dobashis* playing an important role but the decisions were taken as per the long established customs and practices of the respective tribes.

The Nagaland Village Area and Regional Council Act of 1970 has empowered the village Chairman and the council members to exercise all the powers vested upon them in respect of execution, legislation and judiciary. This Act has made elaborate rules and regulations and the members were to abide by the law, made by the government in conformity with the traditional customary laws and usages of the respective tribes which are still prevalent and maintained.⁵⁹

In the traditional Sumi society, the administration of the village was carried out in the name of the *akukau*, who was the *defacto* ruler of the village. There were no written records nor constitutions or guidelines within which the administration of the village had to operate and regulate the activities of the citizens. As mentioned earlier, there was no tenure system for the village elders, anyone who was the eldest in the clan or who happens to be the most capable, rich and well versed in customs and usages of the community were chosen by the chief. They remained in the office as long as they enjoyed the confidence of the chief. But today with the passing of the Village Council Act, some members are elected by the people for a period of five

⁵⁹ *Nagaland Village Area and Area Council Act, 1970*, Nagaland Legislative Assembly, Kohima, 1971.

years, and many young literates, have been absorbed to the village council. Many of them are not well versed in customary laws and practices. They hardly stay in the village. They are selected with the backing of political parties and thus it has disturbed the sanctity and effective functioning of the village administration. The Act provided that the *Gaonbura/Chief/Ang* are included in the village council members. It also provided under clause (4) that,

“the Chairman of the village under the Nagaland Village Council Amendment Act of 1978, shall be the Chairman of the Court. The Secretary of the Village Court shall be selected and appointed by the village court from amongst the members of the village court. It also further stated that provided the village inhabited by person belonging to Sema, Konyak or any other tribes having hereditary chiefs/*Angs* by custom or inhabited by majority of any such tribes, the Chairman of such village court shall be the hereditary chief of such village”.⁶⁰

As mentioned earlier, the Sumis’ *Akukau* and Konyak’s *Ang* were the hereditary chiefs and they were the *defacto* rulers of their villages. Therefore, the Government of Nagaland felt the necessity of maintaining the continuity of tradition

⁶⁰ *The Nagaland Code, Vol IV, Government of Nagaland, Department of Justice and Law, Nagaland, Kohima, 1995, p 104*

and allowed the *akukau* and the *angs* to be the Chairman of new Village Councils. Apart from this, the position of the chief has been relegated to the background with the passing of the Village Council Act. The Act has given more powers to the Chairman and it was proper that the chief should hold the post of chairman as he was the chairman of the Village Courts and he presides and settle all disputes in the past. All matters of development activities are also to be approved and recommended by him since he owns most of the village lands.

In some villages where there were more than two or more chiefs, the post of chairman is on a rotation basis. But where there is only one chief, the chief himself acts both as the chief and the chairman of the village. Sometimes the brother or the son of the chairman became the chief of the Village Council than the chief himself since he may be too old to manage the affairs of the council.

Again, in some villages where there were more than two or three chiefs, the post of chairmanship of the Village Council is not given to any of the chiefs. When it was inquired and investigated why the council chairman was not from amongst the chief, it was found that the chiefs of these villages were ignorant about the provision of the Act which empowered them to hold the post of chairman too. It was also found that these chiefs were not powerful, capable or influential. Therefore, they could not administer the village effectively and pave the way for others to become the Council's chairman. It was also found from many of the respondents that the chiefs are the

agents of development of the village. However, a few of them have misuse the development funds and thus hamper the growth and progress of the village. It was also found that many of the Council members did not know the provisions of the Village Council Act and to carry out their duties, responsibilities and co-operate with the state administration for the all round development of their villages.

As per the Constitution, the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 on the Panchayati Raj under article 243 m(1) it excluded the state of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland from the purview of the Act. However, in the case of Nagaland a special provision was added under article 371 (A) of the Constitution wherein it said that no Acts of Parliament shall apply to the state of Nagaland in respect of

“Religious and social practices of the Nagas. Naga customary law and procedure, administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law etc. To the ownership and transfer of law and its resources”. However, under Article 243 M clause (1) the 73rd Amendment provided that “the Legislative Assembly of the state must pass a resolution to that effect by a majority of the total membership of the house and by a majority of not less than two thirds of the members of that house present and voting”.

The Act also provided under article 243 D(2) that 1/3rd of the seats in the Panchayats should be reserved for women.

The Rajiv Gandhi Foundation organised a workshop on 6th and 7th August'96 at Kohima on Panchayati Raj wherein public leaders from different villages, Government officials, social workers, non-governmental organisations and academicians participated. After a thorough deliberation some of the issues emanated from the discussions. The following points were recommended to the State Government for its consideration and necessary action.

Among the recommendation the most notable features for the effective functioning of the village council included;⁶¹

1. That the traditional custom of nominating members to the council should be followed and election should be avoided at the village council level.
2. That, one-third of seats be reserved for women in the Village Council and also in the Village Development Board should be provided.
3. That, for the effective implementation of village development policies and programmes, the Nagaland State Finance Commission should be constituted to determine the allocation of resources exclusively for self

⁶¹ Recommendations of Rajiv Gandhi Foundations Seminar on Panchayati Raj held at Kohima on 6th and 7th August, 1996.

governing institutions and to bring about accountability and decentralized financial powers.

4. That, Since no Village Council can function without proper funds and assistance from the Government, it was necessary to have the Village Development Board to implement various schemes and programmes.

In order to successfully implement the above recommendations it was found imperative to make the Village Council more responsible, accountable and transparent in their way of functioning, and to fix the responsibility on the members. Over and above, the mass awareness campaign programmes which could be launched to educate the people of their basic rights. It was felt that only then the Village Council and Village Development Board would be beneficial to the people.

The Village Council as we have seen is an age old traditional institution among the Sumis and the Village Council Act, 1970 has not really changed the essence of this institution. In fact, tradition, custom and usages are still being followed.

Having discussed in the preceding chapter about the Sumi traditional chiefship and presently the Village Council. an attempt will be made in the next to study about the impact of education and Christianity on these two traditional institutions.

CHAPTER – IV

CHANGING DIMENSION-I: RELIGION, EDUCATION AND TRADITIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Before the advent of Christianity in the North East, the tribal people in general and especially the Nagas were animists.¹ Their life was full of fear due to superstitions. According to sociologists, animism can be defined as a form of religion based on the belief that spirits inhabit both living and non-living objects such as trees, rocks, clouds, winds or animals.² People were engrossed, may be beyond their liking, in worshipping these malevolent and benevolent spirits in order to avert pain, danger and also to placate them to get blessings for abundant crops and harvests. They had to sacrifice animals to appease the spirits. The animists desired to get rid of demons and they became responsive to the new religion. There were too many *gennas* or *achine* which hindered their economic life. This made them backward. To get rid of poverty and underdevelopment, they were ready to embrace Christianity.³ The Missionaries

¹ Epao, Veprari; *From Animism to Christianity*. Hindustan Ltd., Dimapur, 1996, p 93

² Johnson, G. Allen; *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology*, Maya Publishers, New Delhi, 2000, pp 10-11

³ Epao, Veprari, *op cit.*, p 93

also found that there was positive response to the Christian doctrine among the tribal people as compared to the plain's people of the region.⁴

The Nagas, particularly the Sumis believed that there is the *Alhou*, the *Creator* who has supernatural powers. He is the creator of everything and he governs the whole universe. But they did not know exactly who was that *Alhou*.⁵ They found that their vague concept of God and his relationship with men was fully revealed in the new religion. The need to fully understand the *Alhou* thus fostered them to embrace Christianity.⁶ Moreover there was no deep philosophy in the Naga religion or in the animist belief to explain facts satisfactorily to them.

Though the Nagas lived in isolation for centuries and hardly had any contact with others yet they were approachable and easy yielding. This paved way to enhance Christianity. Thus, it was the Christian Missionaries who exposed the Nagas to the outside world. In the case of Nagaland, it was the Christian Missionaries who were the forerunners of the British administration. They were the first to penetrate into the Naga territory. Generally, the missionaries are remembered with sincerity and affection. Their readiness to work in difficult conditions and terrains and their dedication to serve is beyond question. Those days the Nagas were head-hunters and nobody was safe while going from one village to another. When Rev. Clark wanted to

⁴ Ao, Bendangyabang, *History of Christianity in Nagaland – A Source Material*, Shalom Ministry, Mokokchung, 1998

⁵ Epao, Veprari, *op cit*, p 94

⁶ Swu, Kihoto, 64 years interviewed at Kohima on 6 7 98

go to the Naga Hills, the Assamese Christians shook their heads doubtfully saying that, "Nagas are savages, Sahib; village warring with village constantly cutting off heads to get skulls".⁷ But Clark replied,

"the voice of my departed Lord, so teach all nations,
comes on the night air and awakes my ears, And I will
go Col. Campbell asked Mrs. Clark, Do you expect
to see your husband back with his head on his shoulder?
Clark after his return from Naga Hills, the first word he
spoke to his wife was I believe I have found my life
work".⁸

Each village was fighting against another village. Such was the condition of the Naga Hills those days that even the powerful British Government did not dare to undertake such risky adventures.

At that time the greatest hindrance to missionary work in Naga Hills came from the British Government. The missions from Home Board in America also were not keen to send persons to evangelise in those difficult areas. So Clark wrote to the Home Board, that,

⁷ Epao, Veprari, *op cit*, p 95

⁸ Clark, Mary Mead, *A Corner in India*. American Baptist Publication Society, New York, 1907, p 14

“if anything serious should befall me, occasion might be taken to forbid all missionaries going into the Hills above the Upper Assam”.⁹

Fortunately, the Viceroy of India gave permission to Clark on the condition that he must do it at his own risk with no expectations whatsoever from the British army”.¹⁰ Rev. W.E. Witter commented that Clark was determined to go to the Hills with the Gospel in spite of bitter opposition from the Government officials and the reluctance of the Home Board to grant him permission. Clark’s decision was strong.

Clark knew in order that,

“the Gospel be rooted in the soil of the people, he must live with the people, speak their language, share their day to day chores, sorrows and joys, aspirations and hopes and yet without sacrificing the unique message of Jesus Christ”.

Thus he spent much of his time in fostering into good friendship with the elders of the village.¹¹ It was Clark who not only evangelised the Nagas but also

⁹ Alem, Rev O, “From Darkness to Light”, in *The Quasqua Centennial Souvenir*, Published by Nagaland Baptist Church Council, Kohima, 1997, p 45

¹⁰ Ao, Bendangyabang, *op cit*, p 96

¹¹ Mar, Atsongchar, *Christian Education and Social Change, op cit*, p 31

reduced the Naga dialect into a written form by adopting the Roman Script. He knew that if the Gospel should take root in the Naga soil they needed the Word of God in their own dialect. Mrs. Clark was also the first to introduce education in 1878.¹² The Roman Script, which was easier for the Nagas, was used in the school. Like other tribal societies, the Nagas too had no formal education,¹³ though there were dormitories like *Apuki* for boys and *Iliki* for girls among the Sumis. It was informal kind of education that was imparted. Therefore, Mr Clark introduced formal education to the Naga boys and girls.

Christian Missionaries began their work first in the Ao Naga area. On 18th December 1872, Rev. E.W. Clark reached Molung village.¹⁴ He was the first American Missionary to reach out to the Nagas. The first *Baptist Church in Naga Hills* was established on 22nd December 1872.¹⁵ Though the number of missionaries stationed in the Naga Hills was very few, even then they were astonishingly successful in their mission. As per 1991 Census of Nagaland, the percentage of Christianity had grown over 80 percent and literacy to 61.30 percent. Thus we see that in a period of one hundred and twenty-five years, the Naga population has overwhelmingly adopted Christianity and literacy has also increased rapidly.¹⁶

¹² Clark, Marry Mead, *op cit*, p. 74.

¹³ Mar, Atsongchar, *op cit*, p. 32.

¹⁴ Ao, Bendangyabang, *History of Christianity in Nagaland*, *op cit*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Government of Nagaland, *Basic Facts of Nagaland 1991*, Published by Directorate of Information and Publicity, Kohima, 1991.

It is interesting to know that in spite of many difficulties, Rev. Clark's primary target was to establish a school in each village wherever a Church was founded so that he could gather children from different villages and impart education to them. Clark's ideas were not widely appreciated by his fellow missionaries. Rev. R.B. Longwell, for instance, in one of his letters to Rev. W.E. Clark expressed his disagreement on the issue of opening schools. He said,

“Christianise a nation and they will educate themselves. Let a Hindu be educated and there are two chances open to him, one is that he may become more entrenched in his own religion and the balance of probability in this country seems to be towards the latter”.¹⁷

Consequently, education substantially played a vital role in moulding the attitudes and outlook of the people and as a result, fundamental changes took place within a short span of time. The introduction of formal education by the missionaries was also responsible for western culture and way of life to creep in. The work of missionaries in the Naga Hills, especially in the Ao area need to be appreciated as it brought in modernisation and development.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ao, Bendangyabang, *op cit*, p. 216.

¹⁸ Yeptho, Najekhu, *Hisotry of Christianity in Nagaland (in Sema)*, Published by Sema Baptist Convention, SBAK, WSBK and SABAK, 1995

Although there was a general appreciation for the value of the work performed by missionaries who brought elementary education, literacy and western medicine, yet some were critical of their activities. According to J.P. Mills:

“the mistake made by the mission, the gravest in my opinion, and the most fraught with danger for the future is their policy of strenuously imposing an alien culture on their converts. As per my opinion, it is right to add that no member of the mission has ever studied Ao custom deeply, but nearly all have been eager to uproot what they can neither understand nor sympathise with and to substitute for it a superficial civilisation”.¹⁹

It is also true that the Nagas were labelled as wild, savage and head-hunters first by the Christian Missionaries then by the British administration and anthropologists.²⁰ It was the American Baptist Missionaries who first looked down upon the Naga culture. They considered all the Naga culture and heritage as evil and anti-Christian like the feasts of merit, singing of folk songs and folk dances, etc. Another anthropologist Haimendorf said that,

¹⁹ Mills, J.P., *Ao Nagas*, Oxford University Press, London, 1926.

²⁰ Ao, Bendangyabang, *op cit.*

“with the community spirit broken, individualism begins to assert itself and the western ideas of pride in the possession of goods replaced the traditional pride in the lavish expenditure of his wealth for the community”.²¹

These views were not totally accepted, for instance, P.T. Philip wrote that many anthropologists were shedding ‘crocodile tears’ over disrupting the age old tribal way of life and its foundations. He went on to say that probably they wanted to keep the Nagas as an anthropological museum.²² Although the Anthropologists may fully understand the mysteries of the Naga faith, but it was seen that in the process of Christianisation and in the name of development and civilisation much of the valuable tribal traditions have been destroyed like village gates which had the picture of the warriors.

The missionaries too shared with the colonial administration the notions of their cultural superiority. They recruited native associations to play a major role in undermining their own tribal traditions,²³ and discouraged traditional dances, folk songs, etc. Many of the Nagas, even today could not differentiate the difference

²¹ Haimendorf, C V F , *The Return of the Naked Nagas*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd , New Delhi, 1976

²² Philip, P T , *The growth of Baptist Church in Nagaland*, Published by NBCC, Kohima, 1983

²³ The respondents from the questionnaires

between culture and what is religion, or between what was heathen worship and what is Christian worship.²⁴

Most of the festivals are related to agricultural practices and the advent of the monsoons. Protestant Missionaries discarded the brewing and consumption of *Zu* (rice-beer), animal sacrifices, the feasts of merits, tribal dance and music. Christian sexual mores were enforced and tribal dresses were discouraged.²⁵ Apart from this conflict, there were differences between the missionaries and the British government. The latter also blamed them for detribalising the Nagas. However the problem arose since the native converts were not educated and they could not differentiate what was culture and what was religion. They could not understand what parts of culture were to be preserved and which to be discarded.

Moreover, the missionaries were ignorant about the Naga culture and they considered everything to be against the Christian principles. In brief, they undermined the Naga culture. Therefore, J.P. Mills may be correct when he pointed out that,

“Missionaries have not studied Ao customs deeply.

Therefore, they neither understand nor sympathise their culture”.²⁶

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ Mar, Atsochchanger, *Christian Education and Social Change, op cit*

²⁶ Mills, J P, *op cit*.

However, the Christian Missionary had their arguments. Harding for instance said that,

“the coming of Christian Missionary was not meant to destroy Naga culture, social life and customs but made it fuller and comprehensive. The Christian can choose those which are acceptable to God and those that are heathen, and if one has to live in truth for Christ, Christianity should be the salt and light of life”.²⁷

Thus, according to Visier Sanyu, the first native Christians began to look down with disgust at their traditional values through the influence of the missionaries. While discarding their traditional ethos, they imitated the western culture.²⁸ Thus the impact of Christianity is evident on the erosion of Sumi customs, culture and traditions.

After the occupation of the Naga Hills by the British, the system of education was taken over by the British Government. The system of education that they imparted was utilitarian in philosophy. It was aimed only at producing clerks and assistants for their offices. They did not want modernisation for the Nagas and therefore they did not want any changes in their style of life.²⁹ This was substantiated by Holuvi who

²⁷ Ao, Bendangyabang, “History of Christianity in Nagaland”, *op cit.*

²⁸ Sanyu. Visier, *op cit*

²⁹ Mar. Atsongchanger, *op cit.*, p 37.

observed that he was not allowed to study more than class II. He was demoted to class I (one) on the excuse that he was too small though he was already 14 years of age. The Nagas were not allowed to cut their hair like the western people. They were also not allowed to wear long pants, but only half pants".³⁰ They also did not want any Nagas to go for higher studies after primary school. The good students from mission schools were sent to Jorhat for higher studies. They wanted to keep the Nagas as they were before. May be they intended not to civilise the Nagas but to keep them as their subject. Therefore, they did not opened high school for the Nagas.³¹

The Spread of Christianity and Impact on the Sumi Areas

The spread of Christianity in the Sumi area is more difficult than in the Ao areas those days. There was stiff opposition to Christianity and those who were converted were persecuted by the village chiefs and elders. This is due to the fact that the Christians did not worship and perform the rituals and observe the *gennas* where the chief himself was the priest. Seeing the difficulties and problems, the missionaries visualised that the only way to spread the Gospel of Christ in the Sumi area was first and foremost to befriend the chief and convert him to Christianity. Thus Rev. Dr. Bailey said that,

³⁰ Holuvi, Sumi, 78 yeears, interviewed on 5 7 98 at Mokokchung

³¹ *Ibid*

“unlike Aos, the Sumi villagers were founded by the chief. Thus he is the ruler of the village and the people obey the chief without any question. They have got hereditary chief who is autocratic and powerful. Therefore, to convert Sumis, the chief should be first converted, then only the whole village can be converted because all the villagers are his subjects and so they will obey him to the accept new religion”.³²

At that time, the chiefs and *dobashis* obtained the order from the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) at Mokokchung that if anyone was converted to Christianity, they shall be expelled from the village. This order frightened the villagers. They refrained from embracing Christianity for a long time. However, when Inaho, one of the most powerful *dobashi*, was converted to Christianity and become an evangelist, the persecution of Christians began to change. His conversion to Christianity led Rev. B.I. Anderson to say that “Inaho is a Sumi Paul”, because Paul was also the dreaded persecutor of the Christians during the infancy of Christianity.³³

Before Inaho became a Christian he made an order through the Sub-Divisional Officer of Mokokchung and circulated to all the Sumi area that anyone who got

³² Yeptho, Najekhu, *op cit*, p. 120

³³ See Acts of the Apostles 9:1-31

converted to Christianity shall be imposed the following fines and some privileges shall be removed from them. They are-

1. That, the chief who became a Christian shall be stripped off his red shawl and cannot take free labour from the villagers. The British as a sign of authority and power gave the red shawl to the chief. Free labour is one-day wage in the chief's field.
2. That, the Christians shall pay an extra rupee as house tax, i.e., Rs. 2+1 = Rs. 3.00 per annum
3. That, the Christians shall not wear their original Sumi shawl and if they wanted to do so they have to make different shawls.
4. That, any kind of *gemma* and taboo observed by the non-Christians shall be observed by the Christians.
5. That, the Christians shall not have windows when they constructed their houses.³⁴

However, when Inaho was converted to Christianity, these orders were either modified or invalidated. He initiated some new ideas for the upliftment of the Sumi community. Accordingly, the Sumi Baptist Church Council passed two new resolutions:

³⁴ Yeptho, Najekhu, *op cit*, p 120

1. That, the Sumi Christians should not take bride-price for the marriage of their daughters, since the groom had to pay the price to the bride's parents in terms of cash or kind before taking her hand.
2. That, since the Sumi do not have any educated person, therefore, any Sumis who wanted to go for higher education, should be sponsored by the Sumi. It was decided that a contribution of 4 (four) paise per household should be made for their education. Thus the significant and dramatic change took place after the conversion of the important chiefs and *dobashis* into Christianity. The villagers started accepting Christianity without any obstacle.³⁵

The influence of Christianity and education is intensely felt in the villages and penetrate the very Sumi Naga life and philosophy. The village polity and system began to undergo great changes.³⁶ This resulted in the growth of both individual and community consciousness, for example, identifying their own clans and tribes within and outside the community. Apart from this, the old village system of administration was no longer respected. In the case of the villages where the chief was an educated and wealthy Christian, his power and prestige was enhanced considerably. This has motivated many people to embrace Christianity. Christianity also brought a qualitative change in their relationship towards other tribals and non-tribals.³⁷ Earlier, the different tribes did not have any contact with each other, it was the Christian

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ Respondents from the questionnaire

³⁷ Sema, Piketo, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, Sterling Pub, New Delhi, 1991, p 51

Missionaries who brought them together in fraternity. With this, the village-based administration of the chief was reduced to a subordinated position. For example, the Christians refused to pay the customary contribution of meat to the chief who was not a Christian, but the Government intervened and on its order they had to pay as usual. The educated Christians also refused to go to the chief's field for free labour.³⁸ Thus Christianity and education combined together eroded the position of the Sumi Chiefship. All this led to the emergence of an educated middle class with consciousness and aspirations for political participation in the decision making process. They have taken over many of the roles which was earlier played by the traditional chiefs. In the course of time, the educated Christians became responsible for forming secular³⁹ as well as religious organisations which affected the position of the chiefs. The religious organisations like the Sumi Theological Association was formed with the main objective was to develop the spiritual well being of the Sumis.⁴⁰ We may also mention the Sumi Gazetted Officers' Union whose main objective was to uplift the living standard of the people of socio-economic and politically.

It may be mentioned here that the Christian missionaries interfered with the social and cultural practices of the Nagas to a far greater extent than the British Government. The most notable examples included the missionaries' insistence on the chief, who were converted to Christianity to have one wife only. The Christian

³⁸ Office Records in 1961, Mokokchung Deputy Commissioner's Office.

³⁹ Questionnaire

⁴⁰ *Constitution of Sumi Gazetted Officer*, 1986.

missionaries also introduced education for the Nagas which was initially opposed by the ignorant tribal community.⁴¹ The spread of Christianity also influenced the cessation of head-hunting warfare and the cutting of enemy heads during the inter village feuds.⁴² However, it adversely affected the authority of the village chief. The chief could no more wage war for annexation of further areas. This led to intrigues and family feuds among the brothers on the consequent dissolution of authority.

Not only that, the disappearances of certain institutions and festivals such as feasts of merit, the *Apuki* or bachelors' dormitory, the *Iliki* or girls' dormitory, the *Tuluni* or crops bearing fruits ceremony, the *Ghughuni* or crop sowing festivals, the *Ahuna* or harvest festivals and other ceremonies had undermined the position of the chief to a great extent. Today, these roles were taken over by the Christian pastors and priests who prayed for good crops and abundant harvest for the whole year. Therefore, the need of traditional priests who had to perform rituals and fastings has become irrelevant.⁴³

Many of the privileges enjoyed by the chief and his elders because of Christianity, education and awareness. All this has led to a change in the position of the hereditary chief system among the Sumis. He is now no longer the sole authority to decide on the affairs of the village. There were some chiefs who were not educated

⁴¹ Sema, Piketo, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, Sterling Pub, New Delhi, 1992

⁴² *Ibid*

⁴³ Questionnaire form the respondents

and they found a lot of difficult to adjust or cope with the change of time. According to Sukhato Rotokha, the influence of Christianity has curtailed the dictatorial powers of the chief to some extent.⁴⁴ In the pre-Christian society, the chief's word was law and defiance to his orders resulted in a number of consequences or expulsion from the village. Today it is not so. His orders would be debated and tested publicly at different fora.

It is of great interest and importance to know that the missionaries' attitude to culture varied from *denomination to denomination* and from one period to another. The Catholics were in favour of preserving traditional culture and customs. The Catholic missions started in Nagaland in the year 1950 only.⁴⁵ According to Father K. Sebastian they encourage the traditional culture and respect for the indigenous heritage.⁴⁶ In fact, when Pope John Paul II visited Shillong on 4th February 1986, addressing the people of the North Eastern States, he said "learn to love and respect your own culture, language and the history of your own people"⁴⁷ The Protestants on the other hand were against the traditional customs and considered all traditional practices as evil and anti-Christian. Thus commenting on the early Protestant attitude to traditional culture, B P Misra viewed that,

⁴⁴ Sanyu, Visier, "Christian Impact and Conflict Resolution", Abstract from J P Kar (ed), *Impact of Christianity in North-East India*, V I Pub , Shillong, 1996

⁴⁵ The role of Catholic Mission in Naga society by Father Sebastian in the Seminar organized by History Department, Nagaland University, Kohima, 1998

⁴⁶ Syiemlieh, David, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong. 1990

⁴⁷ Cited from Malngiang, P , "The Constitution of the Catholic Church to the Progress of the Khasi People" in St Francis Xavier's Church, *Silver Jubilee Souvenir*, Mawsynram Parish, 2001, p 51

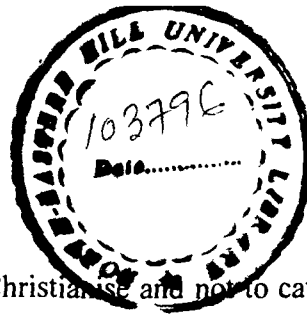
“in many places of the North-East, where Christianity has numerically considerable progress the early missionaries were not usually sympathetic towards traditional cultural patterns-even those that in no way interfered with Christian practice. It was only gradually that they learnt the advantage of compromises made in favour of traditional dress, liquor consumption, dances and festivals.”⁴⁸

The early Christian missionaries had a tendency to reject certain cultural expressions as immoral and meaningless superstitions. In fact, the education imparted by the early Christian missionaries was to train the students to spread and preach the Word of God and to evangelise others. Thus, in one of their communications, while Rev. and Mrs Clark were stationed at Molung, it was stated that:

“The main objective of these schools is the proclamation of the Gospel to the people of a village where the teacher is located. Higher and academic education was not their aim at this stage, literacy or reading and preaching was a graduation for them.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Misra, B.P., “Society and Politics in the Hill Areas of North-East India”, in B. Dutta Ray (ed), *The Emergence and Role of Middle Class in North East India*, New Delhi, 1983

⁴⁹ Ao Bendangyabang, *op cit.*, pp. 108-109.



Thus, the system of education was only to Christianise and not to cater to the all round development of the students.⁵⁰ The youth who were educated in Mission schools did not know the difference between religion and culture, and looked down upon their own culture and tended to dissociate themselves from their cultural values and norms. With the advent of Christian education, many of the customary practices have been forsaken and only those customs, which were found to have been in conformity with Christianised principles, were followed. For example, Betrothal and Marriage.⁵¹

Recently, there has been a realisation from both the Christian Theologians and educated Christians about the needs of preservation and strengthening of Sumi customs and traditions. They understood that most of the Sumi cultural practices did not in anyway come into conflict with the tenets and principles of Christianity.⁵² The Sumi Christian organisations are in favour of the continuity of the institution of chiefship. They are in favour of a benevolent chief rather an autocratic and arbitrary one. They are in favour of preserving and protecting the Sumi culture and tradition. The issue of abolition of the Sumi chiefship does not arise as the Sumi customs and traditions revolved round the chiefship.⁵³ He is the symbol of culture.

⁵⁰ Mar Atsochanger, *op.cit*

⁵¹ Respondent from the questionnaire.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid*

Despite that, the role of the *achinetou* or priest is no more in existence because the Sumi Naga has become less superstitious. They believed that the acts of appeasing and pleasing of gods was a contradiction to the tenets of Christianity. In the case of criminal and cruel cases many changes have taken place especially in the form of punishment. The Government has taken over the criminal cases and the chiefs were not allowed to handle the complicated and serious cases. In the same way, the chief does not take the price for their daughter's marriage.⁵⁴

Though Christianity has been embraced by the Nagas more than one hundred and twenty five years back yet many of the Nagas do not really understand what Christianity meant. Though 95 percent of the total population has opted for Christianity but exemplary life was not made manifest.⁵⁵ It was said that the Nagas embraced Christianity when they were ignorant and were fed up of worshipping the malevolent and benevolent gods. To get rid of that, they have embraced Christianity without knowing what Christianity was and how Christians are supposed to act and live. Moreover, they do not want to remain backward but looked forward to improve their living condition. Though many Naga Theologians studied in America and in the West yet they could not understand the religious and cultural pluralism that existed in the society. That is why inter-religious dialogue has not taken roots.⁵⁶ As M.M.

⁵⁴ Ihoshe. *op cit*

⁵⁵ The statistics records of Nagaland Baptist Church Council

⁵⁶ Respondents from the questionnaire

Thomas, former Governor of Nagaland while referring to the crisis in the Naga society in one of his speeches pointed out that,

“Naga Christianity has yet to become truly indigenous by adopting the Naga arts and festivals and cultural artefacts into its life. It has yet to know the other religion and culture in depth”.⁵⁷

Visier Sanyu while supporting the above comments, said that Christianity has not taken root in the social life of the Nagas. It seemed that most of the Nagas are Christians at superficial level only.⁵⁸ There is no Christian ethics among the Nagas. Besides that in Nagaland can be seen one of the highest per capita assassination rates in the world.⁵⁹ In support of this view, one can say that though in the western societies many have disclaim themselves to be Christians, but in spite of that, Christian values have over the centuries, become so engraved in their culture that they actually practice only Christian ethics. These ethics and values have become the foundation of their government in their general work culture. They have acquired the tone of being ‘secular’ values.⁶⁰ In the case of the Nagas, the situation is quite the reverse. For them to become Christians is to gain acceptance and recognition and to climb up to the

⁵⁷ Thomas, M M , “Christianity and Change” Seminar Paper presented at Kohima on 29th June 1991

⁵⁸ Sanyu, Visier, *op cit* , p 402 For example, killing between the underground factions

⁵⁹ Respondents from the questionnaire

⁶⁰ *Ibid*

social hierarchy of power structure.⁶¹ Since the majority of the Nagas have become Christians, naturally they do not want to isolate themselves from their fellow brethren. No change is an unmixed blessing. Every social transition brings with it positive values and negative results. It is also said that Christianity played a significant role in giving the Nagas a strong sense of identity. The Nagas understood that racially they are different from other plain's people. From the religious point of view also they are neither Hindu nor Muslims. However, the society is ridden with a lot of strifes and tensions. Again, M.M. Thomas comments may be correct when he referred to the Naga society that,

“Nagaland is going through a moral ethical and spiritual
crisis more than ever before in its history”.⁶²

This can be illustrated by the fact of the prevailing corruption, the gun culture and violence which has become a cult in Nagaland in the name of self determination. As a result, the people are in distress. They have lost confidence and sympathy on the freedom fighters. They are also disillusioned at the present state of affairs. This fact can be proved from the Lottery Scam where Rupees thirty eight thousand crores were misused,⁶³ and the underground factions fighting against one another.⁶⁴ A. Lanu Aier, in his essay on “Christianity and work ethics” adds that the Nagas in spite of

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Thomas, M.M., *op.cit.*

⁶³ *Nagaland Post*, 13th May 2000

⁶⁴ *Fifty Years of Struggle for Freedom*, pub By Naga Council, Dimapur, 1998

sustaining Christian identity, holding religious crusades, revivals, evangelism and mission activities which are regular features of Naga Christianity, could not transform work ethics into a better economy at large. The Naga society still remains an agricultural economy with 85 percent of the rural population.⁶⁵ There is no trace of modern industrial and economic development.

Work culture is lacking among the Nagas and among the Sumis in particular. In Nagaland 31.72 percent of the population are engaged in agriculture with an area of 77,700 hectare under rice cultivation.⁶⁶ But because of the traditional method of cultivation and also lack of assistance from the Government, the food security is acute. On the basis of its economy and high consumption pattern, the Naga society aptly finds description as a dependent entity. As Dr. Aier observed that in spite of being agricultural, the food security is a distant dream. He also pointed out that how the so-called Christians who hold high position as the key functionaries amassed so much of wealth, disproportionate to their known source of income, giving no answers to the real spirit of work and sustenance.⁶⁷ Thus, he says, that if one has to maintain Christian principles and practice as the Bible says that, “if one does not work neither shall he eat, you shall not steal”.⁶⁸ The society would have been different.

⁶⁵ Lanu, Aier, “Christianity Work Ethics in Nagaland”, J. Puthenpural Kar (ed), *Impact of Christianity in North-East India*, SDB, Vendrame Institute Pub , Shillong, 1996.

⁶⁶ *Statistical Handbook of Nagaland*, 1997, Pub By Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Nagaland. Kohima. and Nagaland Census, 1991.

⁶⁷ Aier Lanu, “Christian Impact and Conflict Resolution in Nagaland”, J Puthenpural Kar (ed), *Impact of Christianity on North-East India op cit*

⁶⁸ II Thessalonians, 3 10

Therefore, in the light of the above comments, the present Naga society is torn between the pre and present Christian phases. In the former, the Nagas were innocent, honest and lived in a classless society. Later the society was transformed into a society of haves and have-nots and the gulf between the neo-rich and the poor had become wider. These sad states of affairs may have taken place because Christian principles have not taken roots.

This has also affected the rural life of the Nagas where dignity of labour was maintained before the advent of Christianity and the chiefs were recognised because of their wealth, which they acquired through their hard labour and by fair means. But the present trend of economic scenario of amassing wealth by unfair means has affected the position of the chiefs at the village levels. If the chief was to remain powerful and popular with his people he had to adopt certain unfair means to acquire wealth. This has led him to indulge in corruption resulting in the village being undeveloped and the society engulfed in poverty-syndromes.⁶⁹

The spread of Christianity among the Nagas have brought in welcomed changes. It has given freedom and confidence against the prevailing superstition. However, together with this it has played an important role on the erosion of Naga society's prevailing norms and practices. It has greatly affected the primordial character of the Naga community. Perhaps, it has dominantly been superimposed on

⁶⁹ Respondents from the questionnaire.

the primordial ethical and cultural bedrock of the Naga society. In reality, it is contradictory because the pre-Christian ethical traits have been overlaid by the present modernised wilderness, where the Naga society has come to believe in market in-built consumption ethics, which ironically triggered unethical values, corruption, power madness, disordered civil life and violence.

Having discussed about the changing trends in the Sumi traditional society and institutions brought about by education and Christianity. In the next chapter, an attempt will be made to examine another important aspect of modernisation, i.e., the electoral system and its effects on the traditional institution.

CHAPTER – V

CHANGING DIMENSIONS-II: ELECTORAL POLITICS AND TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN ZUNHEBOTO DISTRICT TILL 1998

In a Parliamentary Democracy, the study of election is very important. Election study in a broader context provides an opportunity to observe the behaviour of political actors and the functioning of party organisations and to examine their influence on ordinary citizens. At one level, politicians are engaged in continuous struggle for electoral support while at the extreme end each citizen possesses a vote to give or withhold as one chooses.¹ The elections satisfy the desire of the masses for a share in political power although the masses get an opportunity of participation in the political processes and become the “uncrowned sovereigns”.²

Elections and voting therein has helped in the development of the intermediate political structure to articulate issues, mobilise public opinion and institutionalise political participation. Elections in a way satisfy the people’s aspirations for social mobility and also meet the demands for political participation. It also furthers their

¹ David, Butler, et al., *India Decides Election 1952-95*, Books and Things Publication, New Delhi, 1995, p. 5.

² Sachchidananda, *The Tribal Voter in Bihar*, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976, p. 2.

urge for modernisation. The social tensions they feel in the day-to-day life are likewise felt in the political processes.³

The election studies are essentially a post second world war development in Political Science and were born out of the presence of different ideological factors. The spread of fascism in Europe had severely challenged the assumptions of the inherent merits of democracy and elections and questioned the very faith in it, contrary to the west, which viewed it to be the rationality of human behaviour. Democratic forms of elections ironically became the very vehicle on which authoritarianism rode to power and held its sway. Mass voting by the people is usually associated with the concept of participatory democracy. This led to the emergence of fascism and demagogic rule rather than to a healthy democracy. This can be seen from the rise of Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany. Why and how such parties and leaders manipulated the electoral process and the voters who were otherwise politically ignorant and inactive became interesting posers before the political scientists.⁴

Elections have been identified with democracy and the voting pattern with the strength and viability of the western forms of democracy. Ultimately, it acquired a vital role as a means of legitimisation of the democratic system and of a particular authority or ruling group. Equally, it became a verdict on the efficacy of the election

³ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁴ Kaushik, Susheela, *Elections in India Its Social Basis*, K.P. Bagchi and Co, New Delhi, 1982, pp. 1-2

itself. As a system, its role and *raison detre* is very much dependent on the outcome of the elections, its capacity to change the government and its efficacy in rectifying and redeeming the broader political system.⁵ The electoral outcome, it is believed, could also bring about a complete change in the composition of the ruling elite, which in turn would have implications for future governmental policies and programmes. Following the behavioural studies in the west, many scholars, Indian and foreign involved themselves with similar studies of voting behaviour of the Indian masses.⁶

Election is one of the important aspect in the dynamics of the political system and hence yields a meaningful insight into the nation's political culture. Another view was that the study of elections rather than merely dealing with the behaviour of the people, has a much broader scope and would look into the nature of the society, the stage of its economic growth, the working of the organised groups, the role of money power, the reaction of the various classes and the role of corruption etc among others. Such a study in turn has to be undertaken in the background of the analysis of the working democracy in the nation.⁷ It would analyse elections like any other political institutions and as a part of the state, governed by the laws operating within its particular framework and norms. Elections are, hence, expected to serve certain other basic requisites of the system.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2

The voting behaviour, is the behaviour of a voter which is influenced by several factors such as religion, caste, community, language, money, policy or ideology, purpose of polls, extent of franchise and the like.⁸ It is assumed that political parties and groups make use of these variables for the sake of winning the battle of the ballot box. The behavioural approach studied elections from the point of view of stability of the system.⁹ It should bring in a government that 'works' for law and order and for providing a strong administration. All this in turn would require the possibility of a smooth transition of power between two strong parties on the basis of an agreed minimum programme. For this, ideology, programmes and policies should be acceptable to all the concerned parties. In other words, it means that there is the need for a stable bi-party system each acting as a democratic alternative to the others, both representing the same political culture based on the consensus model following a broad alliance pattern.

Any break in the pattern of the party system, any expansion in its number, any emergence of a challenging and effective third alternative would pose dangers to the system as it would lead to instability chaos and insecurity. For instance, instability of the government may lead to military regime taking over. At the same time, any such two party systems should not really mean a popularisation of the social forces. The elections were worked out, as it was believed will provide occasions and tools to put

⁸ Ganguly, B and Ganguly, Mira, *Voting Behaviour in Changing Society, West Bengal A Case Study*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1975, p 1

⁹ *Ibid*

back the derailed system on the groove.¹⁰ “The Constitution of India has been called the vehicle of a nations’ life”.¹¹ The election is the process by which the people choose the instrument of government and to conduct the nations life.¹²

Election is an attribute as well as the safeguard of democracy. It is an attribute because it is inseparable from such other attributes of democracy such as majority rule, equality and popular sovereignty. As the safeguard of democracy it enables the citizens to determine who will come to power and carry on the *government* and have an effective control over the state machinery. It makes the *rulers* feel that unless they do not evolve and implement the policies as demanded by public opinion, the chance of their being re-elected is doomed. Political leaders of the opposition who keep a constant watch on the works of the government, make the people aware of its shortcomings. They also evolve policies and programmes to attract the citizens in their favour.¹³ Thus, election in a democracy keeps the ruling and the opposition leaders in a constant struggle to establish a favourable public image.

The social sanctity of voting may be maintained if the electorate is aware of the policies of the parties to which the candidates avow their attachment during the elections, of the social character of the candidate himself who vituperates against the other to bag votes in his favour and of the rationale of their right to participate in

¹⁰ Roy, Rameshwar, *op cit.*, p. 2

¹¹ *Ibid*, p 3

¹² Bhalla, R P , *Elections in India*, S.Chand and Co . New Delhi, 1973, pp 1-2

¹³ Sachchidananda, *op cit* , p 24

election.¹⁴ Therefore, the inviolability of election is upheld if the citizens know the social sanctity of voting. If the voters are not aware of the political implications and activities there is a possibility of it being swayed by the dictates of the local elite. Therefore, it is essential to know if the voters really understand the importance of voting.

In India, Kogekar and Park carried out the first election study in 1952.¹⁵ Studies were also done in Punjab, Bombay city, Poona, Kerala, Gujarat, Goa etc.¹⁶ However, the first major step in voting behaviour studies was made at the time of the fourth general elections in 1967 by Rajni Kothari.¹⁷ Meanwhile, other studies were also carried out in Rajasthan to study the voting behaviour in a changing society by S.P. Verma and Iqbal Narain.¹⁸ Subsequently, the studies were also taken in West Bengal by Bagendu and Mira Gangully in 1972,¹⁹ followed by Sachchidananda in 1976 on *the study of tribal voters in Bihar*. The studies in electoral politics in North-East India was carried out under the sponsorship of the North-East Regional Centre of Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) edited by P.S. Dutta. S.K. Chaube also wrote on *The electoral Politics in the North East India*. R.P. Singh studied the

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 25.

¹⁵ Quoted from Sachchidananda

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁷ Kothari, R. et al., *Party System and Election Studies*, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1967.

¹⁸ Verma, Narain et al. (eds.), *Voting Behaviour in a Changing Society*, National Pub. House, New Delhi, 1973.

¹⁹ Gangully, B. and Mira (eds.), *Voting Behaviour in a Developing Society*, Sterling Pub., New Delhi, 1975.

electoral politics in Manipur. However, none of them dealt with the voting behaviour of the voters in Nagaland in the recent elections and especially in the Sumi area.

The present study is an attempt to note the importance of studying voting behaviour in the Sumi area of Nagaland. In most of the Sumi areas the people were not aware of elections in the modern sense of the term for appointment to political offices in the traditional society. Nor was there any tradition of political participation in decision making in the Sumi community. The traditional Sumi polity provides for a village chief to exercise authority within his own village. These are largely hereditary offices. In case of vacancy, it is filled up by choice from one of the members of the family of the deceased or from within the clan. It does not extend to the other members of the village. No choice is involved to become a member of the traditional Sumi Council.

The other important theoretical question in this context is whether high polling is an index of high political participation which is one of the important indices of modernisation. It has been found, in some of the elections conducted in Bihar and Nagaland, that participation in the elections is extremely high.²⁰ In this chapter an attempt will be made to examine the voting behaviour of the electorate in the Zunheboto districts of Nagaland, i.e., with the objectives of finding out the:

²⁰ Sachchidananda, *The Tribal Votes in Bihar*, national Pub House, New Delhi, 1976, p 5

- a) political awareness of the voters.
- b) the voter's political attitude and preferences, party identification, the pattern orientation towards the candidates and parties, the importance attached to local issues and their influence in electoral decision-making.
- c) the process of electioneering of the different political parties and their candidates.
- d) To find out the factors that affect decision making with regard to the choice of a party or a candidate,
- e) the various campaign techniques, and their efficiency.
- f) the importance attached to local issues and the awareness of broad national issues and their influence on the voter's decision,
- g) the preference of the electorates whether they participated or not during the 1998 election to the State Legislative Assembly which was boycotted by the Naga under-grounds and the Naga Hoho and lastly,
- h) the voting behaviour in the elections conducted in 1993 and the opinions about the boycott of 1998 election.

In this chapter, informations were obtained from the respondents. Political information, which means the factual information about some aspects of political process and institutions, is considered important.²¹ This has helped in finding out the extent to which the level of political information is a factor in voting or non-voting.

²¹ Rogers, E.M. and Shoemaker F.F., *Communication of Information and Innovations A Cross Cultural Approach*, Free Press, New York, 1971.

This information is to be distinguished from attitudes and opinions of the respondents in regard to political issues. Out of the seven constituencies under Zunheboto district, three constituencies have been selected for seeking primary information by random sampling. Out of the selected three constituencies, three polling stations Atoizu, Akuluto and Zunheboto were chosen randomly. The political information sought from the respondents were many. It began with the knowledge of the voters.

With regard to the voter's knowledge of the date of election, almost 95 percent of the respondents knew the date of election after the Election Commission of India officially announced it and all of them were aware that the election has come to elect new representative to the State Assembly.

With regard to their knowledge of being a voter, almost 100 percent of the adults whether educated or not, knew that they were the voters. This is due to the fact that the population in the villages was small.

On the question of the knowledge of the last general election, almost 100 percent of the respondents knew about the last elections and were aware that they participated in that election and could remember whom they did cast their votes and also whether their candidate won or lost. However, they could not remember the exact date and month.

On the knowledge of the name of the sitting MLA, almost 100 percent of the respondents knew the name of their sitting MLA and his party though they did not know them personally.

Information was also sought from the respondents about their index of political consciousness and articulation. 55 percent of the respondents knew the party symbols of the candidates and the rest did not know the party symbols which the candidate fought in the elections. They also did not know about the party manifestos and claimed that those were promises to win over the emotions of the voters and nothing else.

An attempt was also made to study about their knowledge of the local and national problems. About 80 percent of the voters pointed out that local issues like poor economic conditions, the pace of slow economic development, the alarming rate of unemployment problems of the educated youths and price hike has affected their economic condition. They were pained to point out that a bleak future awaited them. Many of the respondents did not bother to know about the national problems and are not aware of the latest development in the country. Their attention was drawn only to issues that directly related to their areas.

These responses has helped to know about the level of political information of the respondents. Since, if a person is aware of these problems one tends to think both in terms of the causes and remedies of the problems. This ultimately reflects on the

efficiency of the political system. The knowledge of the voters can be summarised in the following table (Table-1)

Table - 1: Knowledge of Voters

	Knowledge of date of election (%)		Knowledge of being a voter (%)		Knowledge of last general election (%)		Knowledge of sitting MLA (%)		Identification of Party Symbols and candidates (%)		Knowledge of National and Local problems (%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Local	National
Atoizu	97	3	98	2	100	0	100	0	57	43	80	20
Akuluto	93	7	97	3	100	0	100	0	58	42	77	23
Zunheboto	95	5	100	0	98	2	98	2	48	52	78	22

Beginning of Electoral Politics

Before examining the voting behaviour of the respondents, it is necessary to provide a brief historical account of the political development before Nagaland attained full statehood. In Nagaland regular Assembly elections were held since 1964 after it was made the 13th state within Indian Union. The first three general elections to Parliament in 1952, 1957 and 1962 could not be held in the state due to insurgency and violence. But, once the people participated in the elections in 1964, an era of electoral participation dawned on the people.²²

²² Singh, R.P., "Electoral Politics in Nagaland". in Dutta P.S., *Electoral Politics in North East India*, Omsons Pub., New Delhi, 1986, p. 27.

Prior to this, it may be mentioned that the Naga political aspirations found a solid shape in 1918 with the formation of the Naga Club at Kohima.²³ The members were concerned about the political future of the Nagas in the wake of the British departure from India. In 1929, the Club members submitted a memorandum to the Simon's Commission requesting it to save the Naga people from the more advanced people of the plains, as the Nagas were backward compared to others. Accordingly the Government of India Act 1935²⁴ provided that the Naga Hills district be declared an 'Excluded Area' and be administered at the Governor's discretion.²⁵

On April 1945, the Naga Club transformed itself into the Naga Hills District Tribal Council with the aim of unifying the Nagas and organising the tribal council on democratic lines. The following year, on February 1946, at a meeting held at Wokha it was renamed as the Naga National Council (NNC).²⁶ It primarily aimed at giving an active support to the British but later on, it switched over to political activity, trying to achieve the unification and solidarity of all the Nagas under one government so as to fulfil their aspirations and interests.²⁷

In the beginning, the Naga National Council wanted the Naga Hills to remain part of the State Assam in free India with local autonomy and due safeguards to be

²³ Yunou, Asoso, *The Rising Nagas*, Vivek Publishing House, New Delhi, 1974, p. 161.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

provided for the interest of the Nagas, and they should be given a separate electorate.²⁸ But later on, when they came to know about the '*Coupland Plan*' for the formation of a "Crown Colony" or a trust territory comprising of the tribal belt in the Indo-Burmese hill tracts including the Naga Hills, they declared that when the British quit India, the latter will have to quit Naga Hills too.²⁹

The Naga National Council concluded an agreement with Governor Akbar Hydari on June 1947, demanding greater autonomy within India. Accordingly, the Government of India agreed and the Naga Hills district be placed in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India in 1950 and was accorded the status of an autonomous district, more or less under the similar terms agreed upon in the Hydari agreements. Therefore, to ascertain the views of the people with regard to the status of Naga independence, the Naga National Council conducted a plebiscite throughout the Naga Hills in 1951.³⁰ The Naga National Council volunteers visited the Naga villages collecting signatures or thumb impressions from all adult Nagas besides administering them the oath to remain loyal to the cause of independence.³¹

The result of the plebiscite was claimed that 99 percent of the people were in favour of freedom.³² A civil disobedience movement was launched by the Naga

²⁸ The NNC Resolutions of 19th June 1946 quoted by Yonuo Asoso, *op cit*, p 161.

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ *Ibid*

³¹ *Ibid*

³² *Ibid*

National Council to show defiance to the Government of India. The call for the boycott of the General elections in 1952 was so successful that no Naga sought election to the District Council, State Assembly or Lok Sabha.³³ But in the general Assembly election to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1957, three Nagas filed their nomination papers. They were elected unopposed and one of them became the first Deputy Minister among the Nagas in the Assam Legislative Assembly.³⁴

Till 1957, the Naga National Council remained the sole representative body of the entire Naga society. The first Naga People's convention was held at Kohima on August 1957, it advocated a negotiated settlement of the Naga problem and proposed to constitute a new administrative unit called the North-East Frontier Area (NEFA) into the Naga Hills Tuensang Area which was accepted by the Government of India on 1st December 1957.³⁵

At the second Naga People's convention held on May 1958 at Ungma near Mokokchung, a liaison committee was appointed to contact the underground Nagas for a political settlement to their problem. It also constituted a drafting committee to formulate their constitutional demands. It prepared a 16 point memorandum for the formation of a separate state to be known as Nagaland within the Indian Union.³⁶

³³ *Ibid*

³⁴ Roy Burman, B.K., *Demographic and Socio-Economic Profiles of the Hill Areas of North-East India*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 140.

³⁵ Dutta, P.S., *op cit*, p. 182.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

The third Naga People's convention, held on October 1959 at Mokokchung accepted the 16-point memorandum drafted by the Second convention. It sought among other things creation of a separate state to be called Nagaland and also asked for general amnesty to the rebels.³⁷ The Government of India agreed with the proposals, and on 1st August 1959, the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru announced in Parliament the decision to convert the Naga Hills Tuensang Area into the State of Nagaland. It was formally inaugurated by President S. Radhakrishnan on December 1, 1963 at Kohima.³⁸

Since 1964, when the first Election was held to the Nagaland Legislative Assembly, the Naga politics has revolved round two dominant parties, i.e , Naga People's Council (NPC) and Naga National Council (NNC). After the creation of the state, the first election was held in January 1964 for electing 40 members to fill up 46 seats in the Nagaland Legislative Assembly. Six seats were allotted to the Tuensang district and members were nominated by the Tuensang Regional Council from amongst its members under the provisions of section 11 of the State of Nagaland Act, 1962. The election was held in a disturbed atmosphere as the outlawed Naga National Council tried to disrupt it. Nevertheless, it was a remarkable successful as revealed by the extent of votes polled which registered as high as 76.57 percent of the total electorate of 1,24,231.³⁹

³⁷ *Ibid* , pp 182-183

³⁸ *Ibid* , p 183

³⁹ Report on the 1st General Election to the Nagaland Legislative Assembly in 1964, Published by Chief Electoral Office, Nagaland, Kohima

The second election held on February 1969 was keenly contested between the ruling Naga National Council (NNC) and the United Front National (UFN) besides numerous independent candidates. In this election, the total electorate rose to 1,76,931 registering a rise of 42.42 percent and the proportion of votes cast rose to 78.75 percent. Two women candidates also contested but could not succeed.⁴⁰

The third election was held on February 1974, just after the re-organisation of the administrative set-up on 23rd December 1973. The existing three districts namely, Kohima, Mokokchung and Tuensang were further divided into seven districts. Phek was carved out from Kohima district, Wokha and Zunheboto from Mokokchung and Mon from Tuensang district.⁴¹

For the Tuensang District, the first direct election to choose their representative was held in 1969. The seats were increased to 20 from 12 seats. The total electorate during in this election increased to 4,06,374 an impressive rise of 124 percent.⁴²

The UDF ministry, which was consequently formed collapsed after one year with defection taking place. This paved the way for the imposition of President's rule on 22nd March 1975. Subsequently the State Assembly was also dissolved.⁴³

⁴⁰ Singh, R P , *op cit*

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² *Ibid*

⁴³ *Ibid*

The fourth election was held on 18th November 1977 after a 32 months long spell of President's rule. In this election the number of electorate was 4,03,454, a little less than the 1974 election. But the percentage of votes polled increased to 83.27. In this election also there was the boycott call from the hardcore undergrounds but people's enthusiasm to participate in the elections demonstrated that they preferred the democratic process of government and peace rather than violence.⁴⁴

The fifth Assembly election was held on 10th November 1982. In this election, the Naga National Democratic Party's (NNDP) manifesto was centred on peace, prosperity and Naga identity.⁴⁵ The Congress thrust was to bring the people of this disturbed State into the national mainstream. Both the NNDP and Congress party secured 24 seats each and 12 independents were elected. But the Congress managed to get the support of 10 independent members to form the Government.⁴⁶

The sixth election to the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland was held on 18th November 1987. During this election the Congress got an absolute majority of 34 seats, the NNDP secured 17 independents 7 while the Naga People's Party (NPP) and the Naga Regional Democratic Front (NRDF) got 1 seat each. Both the major parties fought elections on the issue of economic development and creation of employment opportunities for the youth. The polling percentage was 99.37.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ 1987 Election Manifestos of NNDP and Congress

The seventh election to the Nagaland Legislative Assembly was held on 21st January 1989. During this election, the people voted the Congress party back to power. It secured 36 seats. Two more than the previous election and the Nagaland People's Council (NPC) secured 24 seats. No independent candidates were elected. The percentage of votes cast was 85.64 percent.⁴⁸

The eighth election to the State Legislative Assembly was held on 15th February 1993. The votes polled in this election were 94.28 percent.⁴⁹ Again in this election the Congress party was voted to power. It secured 36 seats while the NPC went down to 17 seats. Independents obtained 7 seats and the Democratic Labour Party only one seat.⁵⁰

The ninth election was held on 23rd February 1998. In this election there was a boycott call by the Naga underground who had signed the cease-fire agreement with the Government of India. The Naga *Hoho*, which is the apex body of the Tribal Nagas, supported the boycott call and requested all the political parties not to participate or file their nominations. The regional political parties of the State after a thorough debate among themselves arrived at the decision not to participate in the elections and supported the issue of Naga sovereignty. The Congress party members, however, filed their nominations in all the sixty constituencies. Only in 17 constituency elections

⁴⁸ Report of 7th General Assembly Elections

⁴⁹ Report of 8th General Assembly Elections

⁵⁰ Report of 8th General Assembly Elections

were held with the independent candidates who contested against them. Compared to the previous elections, the voting turn-out was very low. The voting in this election was only 47.38 percent. Till today the apex traditional Naga *Hoho* has not officially recognised the present government.⁵¹

In this boycott call, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac-Muivah) or (NSCN-IM) gave a stern warning to the Naga politicians that if anyone disobeyed the call given by it, capital punishment would be awarded. They requested all the politicians and public leaders to extend their co-operation to boycott the Indian imposed elections on the Naga public for the lasting solutions to the Naga problems, which had been pending for more than four decades or so. Under these circumstances, the Naga *Hoho* conceived the idea of deferring the Parliamentary and State Assembly election in the Naga areas in order to pave the way for a congenial atmosphere and to facilitate the talks and thereby bear meaningful results. The Naga *Hoho* and Non-governmental Organisation (NGO's) were of the view that all efforts must be given to end the decades of armed conflicts and physical elimination of a Naga by his fellow Naga once and for all. The reason why the Naga *Hoho* and the NGO's did not want to hold election in Nagaland could be considered from various angles about the attitudes and character of the politicians and the masses. The Naga *Hoho* and the NGO's had the apprehension:

⁵¹ *Fifty Years of Struggle Naga Wants Solution*, Published by Naga *Hoho* and NGO's, Dimapur, 1998

- a) That, various groups/factions will get involve in booth capturing, muscle exercise and recourse to all forms of extreme manipulations.
- b) That, polling booths will become a battle ground for the candidates to win over each other as the Nagas had experienced in the past.
- c) That, whichever political party came to power it will sabotage the peace process because power and money was their ultimate goal.
- d) That, the post election scenario will witness bloodshed, sharp division among people and deceit, which will be detrimental to the ongoing peace process.
- e) That, it wanted in to show to the outside world and that the Nagas was a distinct race having the rights for self-determination.⁵²

Taking into accounts all the circumstances stated above, the Naga *Hoho* and the NGO's resolved on 18th December' 97 at Kohima to urge upon the Government of India not to hold elections in the Naga areas. It further resolved to refrain from participation even if elections were called for. To this effect, a 12-member delegation submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India on 5th January 1998 for the deferment of the election. This was followed by the launching of protest rallies in various Naga areas as well as in Delhi. The Naga Students Federation (NSF) even staged hunger strikes at Kohima.⁵³ Finally, the Naga Students Federation submitted

⁵² The Public Statement given by Naga Hoho and NGO's on 10th January. 1998 The 50 years of struggle, *op cit*, pp 4-5

⁵³ *Ibid*, p 5

once again a memorandum to the President of India on 14th February'98 and apprised him of the situation and the desire of the Naga people.⁵⁴

In order to impress about the seriousness of the movement, the Naga Hoho and the NGO's had earlier resolved on 20th January 1998 at Kohima that in the event of any political party or independent candidate filing their nomination for the election. They will be considered and declared to be anti-Naga. They will be entirely responsible for any consequences. The Naga *Hoho* and NGO's also asked all sitting Naga MPs and MLAs' to resign on or before the 7th February'1998 as a gesture of support to the Naga movement. In response to this call, some Naga MLAs' resigned, namely, the members of the Naga People's Council and the Naga Democratic Movement. The Naga dominated Tadubi constituency under Senapati district of Manipur was also *sacrificed* and deterred from contesting and a Kuki candidate was declared elected unopposed.⁵⁵ The regional political parties did not file their nominations and did not take part in the ninth election to the State legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha in compliance with the call given by Naga *Hoho* and the NGO's.

The Congress party, which wanted to participate in the election claimed that it would work for the interest of the Nagas. In its election manifesto it stated that:

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

“The Congress party’s ultimate political goal is to help achieve a final and lasting solution to the Naga political problem. It has been our avowed policy that we are prepared to lay down our offices as and when permanent solution of the Naga problem between government of India and Naga underground is arrived at. For this no sacrifices would be considered too great by the party and its government.”⁵⁶

In the above-mentioned manifesto, the Congress Party promised that when a permanent solution was arrived at between the Government of India and the Naga undergrounds they would willingly vacate office. Hence, the question of deferment or non-participation in the election did not arise.

On the basis of the above discussion a cross section of the electorate was interviewed to elicit their opinions regarding the issue of the Naga *sovereignty* and the boycott call. For the purpose of this, the study selected the Zunheboto district since it is predominantly inhabited.

Zunheboto is one of the eight districts of Nagaland. It included Dimapur which was recently upgraded to a Sub-Division in 1999. Zunheboto was earlier under the

⁵⁶ Congress Manifesto of 1998 Election

Mokokchung district.⁵⁷ Later on it was bifurcated from Mokokchung district in 1972 as a separate district. It has seven constituencies. The total number of electorate in the district, according to the 1993 electoral roll was 59,717. It increased to 71,784 in 1998. The total population of the district was 96,218 as per 1991 census.⁵⁸

Out of seven, three constituencies were selected for the sample collection and out of the three constituencies, three polling stations were chosen randomly. The three constituencies selected are Atoizu, Akuluto and Zunheboto. The first two constituencies happens to be very important because the candidates elected in these constituencies played a very important role in the formation of any government.

Zunheboto is one of the constituencies and the District Headquarters of the Sumi tribe in Nagaland. Though it is the Sumi headquarter, so far it has not produced any prominent politician in Nagaland.

The number of electorate in these constituencies according to the 1993 electoral roll were as follows:

⁵⁷ *Zunheboto District Gazetteer*, published by Government of Nagaland, 1976.

⁵⁸ *Statistical Handbook of Nagaland, 1997*, Published by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Nagaland, Kohima.

Atoizu-7603, Akuluto-6134 and Zunheboto-10,767 and in 1998 Atoizu-9551, Akuluto-6881 and Zunheboto-13,546. The polling parentage in 1993 was 93.54, 92.72 and 82.89 percent in Atoizu, Akuluto and Zunheboto respectively.⁵⁹

Political participation denotes such activities by which the citizens share in choosing the government and directly or indirectly in the formation or public policy.⁶⁰ These activities include voting, seeking information about the policy of the political parties and of the government, attending election meetings, contributing money to the party or election funds of its candidates, enrolment in the party, canvassing for a party and working in campaigns.⁶¹ Among these, making contributions to the party fund, enrolment in a party, canvassing and working for campaigning are considered to be more active forms of participation. Political participation is associated with political awareness, that is, actual knowledge of political affairs. In most of the rural areas politically unaware voters participate in elections.⁶² The number of “aware” voters is extremely small because education and the use of mass-media are not widely spread in the villages.⁶³ Several questions were posed mostly by face-to-face interaction in order to ascertain the nature and degree of participation.

⁵⁹ Report of the Elections in 1993 and 1998, *op cit*

⁶⁰ McClosky, H “Political participation”, in David E Sills (ed), *International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, Vol 12, Macmillan Co and Free Press, 1968

⁶¹ Sachchidananda, *op cit* , p 37

⁶² *Ibid* , p 38

⁶³ *Ibid* , p 38

96 percent of the electorates cast their votes in the election held in 1993. Of these, 95 percent were from Atoizu, 93 percent from Akuluto and 100 percent from Zuneheboto constituency. Only 5 percent of the respondents did not vote. They were sick. The respondents also expressed their reasons for voting. Many of them indicated more than one reason for voting. The following table illustrates this.

Table - 2: Casting of Vote

Constituency	Polling Station	No. of Respondents	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Atoizu	Lokobomi	50	95	5	100
Akuluto	Shitsumi	50	93	7	100
Zunheboto	Lizumi	50	100	Nil	100

1. About 15 percent stated that they wanted to exercise their democratic right,
2. 30 percent to elect their party candidate,
3. 20 percent to win the confidence of the local elite, and
4. 35 percent to achieve some personal gain.

Some of them voted at the behest of the village chief and relatives. They are mostly poor illiterate and female voters. Those who voted for personal gains were

mostly job seekers and money swindlers.⁶⁴ Those who voted for the success of the party candidates were the committed voters and village level party workers. Above all, those who considered voting as a democratic right where those who did not gain anything but were willing to actively response to the norms of the citizen's duty.⁶⁵ They are only 15 percent.

Of those who participated in the election campaign, processions and meetings organised by different political parties in the village. It was found that 76 percent of the menfolk attended the meeting to listen to the speeches of the various candidates and their agents. The table below explains this.

Table - 3: Attended the Election Meeting

Constituen cy	Polling Station	No. of Respondents	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Atoizu	Lokobomi	50	84	16	100
Akuluto	Shitsumi	50	73	27	100
Zunheboto	Lizumi	50	71	29	100

Though the participation of the electors in attending the meeting and procession was very high but those who actively participated in the meetings and

⁶⁴ Respondents from the questionnaire.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

made speeches, acting as election workers or agents and contributing money to the election fund of the party or to the candidate were very few. They are 12 percent, 8 percent and 37 percent respectively as shown in the Table below:

Table - 4: Whether they were actively participated in the election campaign and paying donations or not?

Constituency	Polling Station	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Atoizu	Lokobomi	12	88	100
Akuluto	Shitsumi	8	92	100
Zunheboto	Lizumi	37	63	100

Those who contributed money or other related needs for the party candidates are mostly the village chiefs and the agents of the candidates in the villages. It is also found that the candidate who could not secure the support of those rich or influential chiefs in a particular village hardly manage to get any votes or sometime they drew a blank because the rich and influential chiefs wielded enormous power, influence and respect from the villagers.⁶⁶ They help the public from their own resources and at all times without the help of the candidates. But in the villages where the chiefs were not well to do and honest, they do not enjoy the same power, influence and respect as their

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

other counterparts. In the process they could not draw the support of their subjects for their party candidate.⁶⁷

Among the three constituencies, under Zunheboto constituency, the chiefs always shifted their loyalties to the new candidate. That is why whenever the wealthy and influential chiefs shift loyalty to the new candidate the balance of votes also went in favour of the new candidate to whom he has supported. This is evident from the fact that the candidate in this constituency has been dislodged in every election with the change of loyalty of the chiefs to their new candidate. But in the case of Atoizu and Akuluto the candidates have been elected since 1977 till 1993. This shows that they have got the committed loyalty and support of the influential chiefs in their areas. Thus the chiefs play a crucial role even in the present electoral politics.⁶⁸

Decision making also involves the search for both problems and alternatives. But voting is an exception with regard to decision making because the electorate has very little control over the timing of election and the selection of candidates. They simply choose one of the given alternative and vote for it.⁶⁹

Decision making in voting has recently been studied in voting studies. It is not only important to know as to who makes decisions but also how decisions are made.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Synder, R.C. et al., *Decision Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics*, Free Press, New York, 1962.

Recent studies emphasise economic, social and psychological variables as important factor to produce the voter's decision. Downs presented the quasi-mathematical models for explaining electoral decision and deduced twenty-five propositions about party and government decision-making.⁷⁰ Campbell et al. in the **American Voters**⁷¹ mentioned that there is no explicit means of assessing the relative importance of the several influences in the context of decision making in an election.⁷² Some writers, however, were of the view that party affiliation, orientation towards candidates and issues produced the decision to vote and the direction of the vote. They postulate that the voters will rely on the party affiliation, if they are relatively little informed about issues and candidates.

Party affiliation seems to be little useful in the making of decision by the voters. A majority of the voters are floating in the sense that they are not committed to any party but to the candidates.⁷³ Sometimes the issue raised by the candidates may affect the voters' decision. Such issues as eradication of poverty, opportunity for greater employment etc. may draw the attention of the electorate in general.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Robinson, J A , "Decision Making: Political Aspect", in David L Sills (ed), *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol 4, Macmillan Camp And Free Press

⁷¹ Campbell, A et al , *The American Voters*, Wiley, New York, 1960

⁷² Downs, A , *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Harper, New York, 1957

⁷³ Respondents from the Questionnaire

⁷⁴ *Congress Manifesto of 1993 Election*

Leaders and local influential persons mould the voters' decision.⁷⁵ This is particularly true for the voters in tribal constituencies like in the Sumi area where "in group" solidarity is strictly maintained. Hence a significant proportion of voters are expected to be swayed by their leaders. This often leads to take group or community decision.⁷⁶

Now let us attempt to unravel the mysteries of the decision making process of the voters. The voters took into consideration the qualities of various candidates or the claims of different parties or some other factors, which might have effect on their decision, are given below:

Table - 5: Decision for whom to Vote

Constituency	Polling Station	Decided on the day the names of the candidates were announced (%)	Within one or two days (%)	Decided during peak campaign (%)	Do not know/forget (%)	Total
Atoizu	Lokobomi	55	17	21	7	100
Akuluto	Shitsumi	51	21	22	6	100
Zunheboto	Lizumi	49	23	24	4	100

⁷⁵ Respondents from the Questionnaire.

⁷⁶ Kelly, H.H. and Thibaut J.W, "Experimental Studies of Group Problem Solving and Process", in Gardner, Lindzey (ed), *Handbook of Social Psychology*, Vol. 11, Addison-Wesley, Cambridge

It is important to know how soon the voters decide on candidates. This will point out whether the quality or intensity of campaign has anything to do with the decision making.

51 percent of the voters decided on their candidate as soon as their names were made public. But among these some of the electors gave their hints that they shall vote for a particular candidate on the condition that the candidate or the agent should personally approach them for their support. For that they did not specify the reasons or the motives. The rest took a longer time. 21 percent of them decided either one or two days before the polling date. 22 percent made the decision during the peak of the campaign. 6 percent could not remember when did they take the decision.

The voters who took their decision as soon as they knew the names of the candidates or parties may be called committed voters. These voters usually do not shift their loyalty from one party to another or for one candidate to another. The rest of the voters who decided later or during the peak of the campaign comprised of "floating voters". These respondents have considered the candidate's qualities, his winning chances, the prospects of the party to come to power and his personal rapport with the public. They are not committed to any political party nor any of the candidates. They can shift their loyalty. It is on them that the campaigners concentrate their attention.

Some of the voters avoided to mention the factors that influenced their decision. They might have bargain with the candidate for money or for employment in exchange for the vote or are under the pressure of the chiefs in the village.⁷⁷

Of the voters, 58 percent responded that the candidates and agents do ask for their vote as shown in the Table below. 32 percent responded that no body asked for their votes, while 10 percent of the voters did not want to respond.

Table - 6: Approached by the Candidates or Agents

Constituency	Polling Station	No. of Respondents	Yes (%)	No (%)	No Response (%)	Total (%)
Atoizu	Lokobomi	50	58	33	9	100
Akuluto	Shitsumi	50	57	31	12	100
Zunheboto	Lizumi	50	59	32	9	100

The respondents who said yes, were further asked by the candidates and the agents to ascertain their support for them. These voters actually do not belong to any candidate nor to any political party. They are neutrals. Those who say no are the

⁷⁷ Respondents from the questionnaire.

loyalists of a particular candidate or the workers of any party. Other rival candidates or party cannot convince them.⁷⁸

With regard to the care that the elected representative took on the people, the majority of the respondents in Atoizu and Akuluto as shown in the Table - 7, replied that the MLA never took care of their needs whereas in Zunheboto constituency only 40 percent said that their MLA does not look after their problems. 56 percent of the voters say that their MLA do look after their welfare to some extent.

Table - 7: Care of the MLA to the People

Constituency	Polling Station	Total	Yes (%)	No (%)	No Response (%)	Total (%)
Atoizu	Lokobomi	50	30	62	8	100
Akuluto	Shitsumi	50	22	67	11	100
Zunheboto	Lizumi	50	56	40	4	100

The analysis of the survey shows that those who said that their MLA do take care of their needs are those voters who actively participated in election as agents, donors or financiers and honest voters who vote for their candidate without expecting any profit. The candidate has helped them.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

With regard to the political parties, only 20 percent, 23 percent and 10 percent of the voters in Atoizu, Akuluto and Zunheboto constituencies respectively give the credit to the Congress Party and 21 percent, 47 percent and 61 percent respectively to the regional parties. The majority of the respondents gave credit to the candidate and not the party. Some of them even expressed that no party gave attention to the public needs whereas some of them said that they do not know.

It was found that during the last two regimes of the Congress party government there was no development and there was rampant corruption. The money, which was meant for the development of the rural areas never reached the public. This made the people to have a poor opinion about the credibility of the Congress Government.⁷⁹ Many of them gave credit to the Regional party since though its tenure was short lived yet it could perform commendable development projects and schemes in the state.⁸⁰ During its regime it enunciated the new schemes which was meant for the development of the rural areas like the Compact Area Development, Rural Development Agency which worked under the Directorate of Rural Development. This has immensely helped the people.⁸¹ Moreover, sufficient fund has been provided to the public for development work during their government.⁸² But when the Congress party was in power no new development projects have been successful. Unemployment became an alarming problem, the salary of the Government servants

⁷⁹ The Assembly debate on the issue of corruption in the state in 1992.

⁸⁰ Compact Area Development Project enunciated during Naga People's Council Regime in 1991.

⁸¹ *Nagaland at a Glance*, Pub. by Directorate of Rural Development, 1992.

⁸² *Ibid.*

was not paid in time and no bills were released to the people. It made them indignant towards Congress government.

Majority of the respondents elected the candidate and not the Party because when elected he might be more helpful and dynamic in doing well to the people. Majority of the voters gave priority in voting to those candidates who had the qualities of a good leadership. Good candidates, even if they belonged to a small party, might be more helpful in doing good to the people. They could re-organise the party and raise its status and can undertake the development programme for the people in a better way because the best persons would form the government and guide its policies.

The voters of all the three constituencies gave preferences for good candidates in voting. In Atoizu more than 50 percent of the respondents gave their preference to such candidate. It may be mentioned that their MLA has defected to several political parties but in spite of that, his personality and leadership capability far out weight the party image. He could do a lot of work for his people. It is also not uncommon that a candidate without affiliation to any political party wins an election by virtue of his popularity. They also expressed their desire that the candidates should be a person from the same community, he should hail from the same constituency, he should have a good social standing, educationally qualified and be from a good family background. These qualities can provide an effective leadership.

Despite their preference for a good candidate rather than the party, the poor voters often could not overcome the temptation of taking money from the candidate during election and thus enslave themselves under the whims and caprices of the politicians.⁸³

With regard to the elections held in 1998 which was boycotted by the Naga underground faction of the NSCN (I.M) and supported by the Naga Hoho and NGO's like the Naga Students Federation and the Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) etc. seeking a permanent solution of the Nagas long standing demand for self determination. Yet many candidates filed their nominations. The question was asked to the voters whether they preferred to participate in the election or not and also about their awareness regarding the ceasefire and peace talk between the Government of India and the NSCN (I.M) faction. The Naga Hoho and NGO's demanded to the Government of India to defer the election in Nagaland while the process of peace talk was going on. They also sought the co-operation of the Naga public to boycott the imposed election on the Naga people by the 'Indian authority' on the pretext that participating in election means accepting and surrendering to the dictates of the Indian Government over the Nagas. They also said that those who contested and participated in the election were anti-Nagas.

⁸³ Respondents from the questionnaire

Of the respondents, 64 percent from Atoizu, 73 percent from Akuluto and 40 percent from Zunheboto constituency's preferred to participate in the elections in Nagaland. Those who did not want elections were 31 percent from Atoizu, 20 percent from Akuluto and 51 percent from Zunheboto. The third category consisted of those who did not know. This is indicated in the table below:

Table – 8: Participation in the 1998 Election

Constituency	Polling Station	Total	Yes (%)	No (%)	No Response (%)
Atoizu	Lokobomi	50	64	31	5
Akuluto	Shitsumi	50	73	20	7
Zunheboto	Lizumi	50	40	51	9

The group of respondents who preferred to participate in the election are larger in number. They comprised mostly of party agents and workers of both regional and national political parties. For party agents and workers, election time is an opportunity to take advantage to be the brokers between the candidate and the electorates. They can swing the electorates from one party candidate to another for future benefits. There is another category of voters who preferred to have elections. These are ordinary voters who wanted to get money from the candidates in exchange for their votes.⁸⁴ Some of them even wanted to get employment or other material benefits in

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

exchange for their votes. Some others felt that the elected representatives from any party who formed the government should enjoy the mandate of the people. So they should be accountable to the people for all their acts of omissions or commissions. They should be transparent in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities.

The group of respondents who did not want elections were mostly honest committed voters and freedom lovers. These voters felt that for the cause of the Naga sovereignty they should not participate in the election. They opined that the Nagas should have their own sovereignty and should be recognised as a separate nation in the international society.

The third category of respondents were mostly the illiterates who are unaware of the situation and the election scenario. They do not bother whether there is election or not.

On the question of Naga independence, many of the respondents have high expectations if the Nagas got independence. 90 percent of the voters felt that many factories and industries will be set-up in Nagaland. Employing many people in these factories and industries would solve the unemployment problems. The living condition and standard of the people shall significantly improve for the betterment of their lives. There would be all round development in the state towards progress and prosperity. Above all, peace and unity can be restored among all the Naga tribes.

Some of the respondents were of the view that the Naga traditional customary laws and usages should replace the Indian laws. And they can be codified as Naga laws.

Four percent of the voters were having sceptical view about the changes that will develop if Nagas got independence. The taxes had to be realised from all the citizens for the upkeep and development of the state. The people were not ready to pay because the Government of India has exempted them the payment of all taxes.

The respondents who did not know constitute about 6 percent. They did not know what changes should take place if the Nagas got independence.

90 percent of the respondents were of the opinion that the Nagas should become an independent country. They felt that Nagas had been fighting for a separate independent state for nearly fifty years. They said that they should have their own government so as to preserve and promote their traditions and customs. These respondents had blind faith on the sovereign state of Nagaland. They think that the sovereign state can solve all their problems without any difficulties. Only 7 percent of the respondents indicated their reservation that whether Nagas should become an independent state or not. These are the few educated and enlightened respondents who are aware about the condition of Nagaland and opined that the Nagas are still lacking

behind in many ways in terms of development and sustainable growth in economy, technology and technical know-how.

Table - 9: Preference for Independence

Constituency	Polling Station	Total	Yes (%)	No (%)	No Response (%)	Total (%)
Atoizu	Lokobomi	50	87	9	4	100
Akuluto	Shitsumi	50	90	4	6	100
Zunheboto	Lizumi	50	91	3	6	100
	Average		89.33	5.33	5.33	

The boycott call of 1998 election by NSCN (I.M) faction failed because in some of the constituencies in Nagaland the elections were held and candidate were elected to the Legislative Assembly. They could not stop some of the candidates from filing their nominations. They were elected unopposed. They formed the government without enjoying the full mandate of the people. When it was investigated, it was found that the Naga underground, the Naga Hoho and NGO's did not try to mobilise public support from the grass roots level and win the support of the village level party workers.

Moreover, the threat of capital punishment by the NSCN (I.M) was also withdrawn to those who filed their nominations. This emboldened the morale of the candidates who wanted to contest in the election. The threat of capital punishment might have been withdrawn against the candidates on the pressure of the Government of India that if they executed their threat it will affect the ceasefire agreement, which may be withdrawn forthwith.⁸⁵ Over and above that, the undergrounds may not also be very sure and cannot fully guarantee to the Nagas whether they can bring lasting solution. If they failed in their mission they would be blame.

To conclude, It is important to summarise the analysis of the data gathered from the voters, observations and the election results. The following conclusions were arrived at. That the percentage of voting at the poll was very high but those who actively participated in the election was very low. Further, almost all the respondents were aware that they were the voters. Many of them were not committed to any political parties but preferred to see which candidate would win and which party shall form the government. Most of the voters attended the meetings, campaigns and processions but only a few of them actively participated in the meetings by making speeches, acting as election workers and contributing money to the party candidate. Together with this, most of the voters judged the contestants from their personal merits and image. Personality factor was the dominant consideration. They preferred to remain outside the orbit of the party politics. It may be mentioned that the voters

⁸⁵ *Ibid*

were not well aware of the ideologies and programmes of the political parties and are not much ideologically oriented but have sufficient information about the candidate. They are mostly interested in the daily local issues and problems, which confronted them, and they looked for short-term gain. For these voters their source of information was mostly from the radio in the Sumi dialect, interaction with friends, neighbours and party workers. Interestingly, the majority of the voters preferred that the Nagas should become a separate independent state from the Indian Union. They felt that the Nagas deserved to get independence because they had been fighting for the cause of Naga independence for nearly 50 years.

Political participation in Nagaland especially among the Sumis is of a high degree and mostly revolved around local issues and local factors. Perhaps this is due to the fact that primordialism still matters in spite of development and modernisation. Tribal ethos still prevails and immediate gains matters. Tribal norms, practices and experiences still count to prevail on ones political participation and action.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In the past, the Sumis were involved in head hunting in different villages and from amongst the different tribes. There were no organisations beyond their village borders. The identification of the Sumi tribe to outside world came about as a result of the socio-economic and political changes which accrued after their contact with the British and the concomitant influences of Christianity, western education and market economy among others.

The Sumi Nagas is one of the major tribes in Nagaland. Geographically, it is located at the heart of Nagaland, but administratively it is on the periphery of the State on account of the socio-political factors and the subsequent development of the tribal consciousness vis-à-vis the change in the political scenario which led to a societal evolution. It is characterised by their identification to their tribe or community to which they belong. The emergence of a new class or rulers among the Sumi society based on their political system as well as the transformation of Sumi community encountering modernisation. Therefore, to understand the present Sumi society, it is imperative to study the traditional Sumi community.

The history of the Nagas is shrouded in obscurity so also the history of the Sumi. Ethnologically, the Sumi Nagas are of the Mongoloid stock of the Tibeto-Burman group. The various tribes of the Nagas have accepted Makhel village as the original place from where they dispersed to the different parts of the present Nagaland.

It is believed that the Sumis came out from the bowels of the earth and lived among the thatch grasses. That is why they are called Sumi. *Su* means hard grass and *mi* means people, and thus the Sumis are called hard people. The Sumis frequently migrated to other places and established new villages because of their instinct for adventure and the inherent nature of dispersal. The Sumi villages are small in terms of population. The Sumi has got the hereditary chiefship system because they believed that only the same blood group ensures quality and capacities in a person. Thus, a person born to a chieftain family would be a better ruler.

However, any society cannot be static. It has to adopt to the changing trends brought about by modernisation. Modernity is not only creating rooms for new traditions but also the realisation of the future in terms of the past. In all societies, there is an overlapping of the new and the old traditions. This is true of the Sumi society. Thus it can be said that the Sumi society is moving towards modernisation which maintaining continuity with tradition. The institutional set-up of any society, tribal or non-tribal is of paramount importance in the conduct of the day to day affairs as well as for its credibility. It has some permanency as well as it creates some degree

of confidence and sustainability to the system. In the case of a tribal society especially of the Sumi, the institution of chiefship is important. It represents the force of authority and legitimacy. The emergence of chiefship is generally attributed to the collective needs of the group specially of the tribal societies. By and large chiefship has remained traditional in character in all societies and the powers and privileges relating to the office are jealously guarded. The chiefship, however, did play a unifying role in the society by providing leadership and ensuring tribal solidarity. As per traditions, the Sumis attached great sanctity to the office of chiefship.

The Sumi chiefship is hereditary. He is succeeded by his eldest son unless he was hopelessly incompetent. Therefore, it upholds the law of primogeniture in matters of succession and ruled out the possibility of others infiltrating into the power structure or threatening the fidelity of it. The Sumis' customs recognised hereditary chiefship. This system has, however, also permitted the sons of the chief to set-up new villages in the adjoining areas of their father's village subject to the availability of land and a band of loyal followers. This is motivated by two factors: one is economic and geographical and the other political.

Sometimes dissatisfaction and personality differences among the sons or brothers of the chief who wanted to usurp power led them to try to set up new villages. The strength of the Sumi chiefship lies on its economic hold through ownership and

control of land and resources. The concentration of land ownership in the chief's hand was believed to be conducive to tribal solidarity.

Besides the chief's authority, no other central or co-ordinating authority ever existed to regulate the common interest. The authority of the chief was confined to the concerned village only wherein he exercises his powers without any interference from other chiefs. The village administration was conducted by complying to the customary laws and usages. All the chiefs are of equal standing. Unlike the Konyak chief, there is no pyramidal structure like the *Ang*, *Deputy Ang* and *Commoners*. The Sumi chief has been autocratic in nature and function.

Another feature of the Sumi chief is that, though many are critical about his powers and functions yet no powerful force has emerged from within the group to challenge the chiefship system. The majority of the chiefs on their part, have also tended to adjust themselves to the changing scenario. The critics of the prevalent system do not see any justification in the chief's socio-economic dominance in the present democratic polity. Today, many of the scholars, political and Church leaders of the Sumi society opine that chiefship should be preserved. According to them, abolition of chiefship at this stage would amount to the loss of their identity, tradition and culture. It will create new problems and will result in the emergence of a fragmented community. The institution of Sumi chiefship has been the fountain of power and honour. Therefore, the power and influence of the chief continues to be

very important in the Sumi society. In order to strengthen their position and role, the Sumi Chiefs Association was formed in 1990 to protect their interests and also to maintain continuity. However, the general opinion that emerged was to limit his autocratic and arbitrary power and functions, primarily for safeguarding and preserving the cultural values of the society.

The traditional political institutions have served the society for quite sometime but it has been found that some of them are no more effective in serving the social and economic needs of the people specially with the introduction of modern system of government. However, one would place a special focus on the following characteristics of the society and its chiefship.

The Sumi society was a chief centred one and the paternalistic control of the chief was very obvious in the traditional context. Since there are many small Sumi villages, the number of chiefs too is many and their power is therefore territorially limited.

With the advent of the British the institution of chiefship was recognised and strengthened. The chiefs' were agents of the British governing system in order to consolidate their position.

However, under the changing socio-economic ethos and the emerging political system of democracy, there is the fear of it becoming ineffective. Over and above that, the dynamic transformation that is taking place may cast alien shadow on the system. Under the condition of equality in political and economic participation, the subservient ethos may not last forever.

In a tribal system, especially in the case of the Sumi village, the issue of governance needs special attention for the systematic delivery of justice and the distribution of resources and creation of infrastructures since these are made available only through the village organisations. The governance is basically autocratic, depending upon the chief but he sought the help and advice from his elders. The *Chochomi* and a few elders assist the Sumi chief. The chief himself chose these. They were normally wealthy and influential, kinsmen and close friends of the chief. They constitute the privileged group in the traditional Sumi society. The main reason for forming the council of elders and the *Chochomi* was to inform the chief of all that was happening in and around the village and to assist him in various administrative duties and functions of the village.

The selection of the *Chochomi* and elders is done by the chief. Usually they were influential persons from each clan and well versed in the customary laws of the Sumi. Obviously, there has been complete openness in this system and therefore, it is being respected by all and its full adherence is maintained.

It is important to mention here that the Nagaland Village and Area Council Act, 1971 enacted by the Government of Nagaland is the juxtaposition of the traditional and modern Village Council system. Structurally it appears modern since the democratic methods of election of its members and their tenure is fixed. Further, funding of the Village Council and the Development Board set up by the Government has been seen to be important. But on the other hand, most of the activities of the Village Councils are governed in the traditional pattern of functioning. For example, settlement of land disputes, theft, marriage and divorce, debt, adoption, observing of feasts, distribution of meat, all these decisions are taken on the pattern of the traditional customs and usages. It has been found that the traditional institutions are more effective than the modern method of deciding cases in the court.

In the decision making process of the Village Council, the chiefs' opinion and views take precedence over the other elected members. Some of the chiefs are still the Chairmen of the Village Council. Since the Village Council Act of Nagaland has provided that the villages inhabited by the Sumis and Konyak which are having the hereditary chiefship, will have them as Chairmen of the Village Court.

The *Chochomi* or elders have a lot of duties to perform in the life of the village. They settle all disputes, quarrels, murders or misunderstandings along with the chief who presides the meetings as Chairman. They form the highest court in the

village. The dispensation of justice to all is the primary duty and concern of the elders. They also settle boundary disputes with the neighbouring villages and tribes.

In the Sumi society too there used to be two Dormitories for the unmarried: one for boys called *Apuki* and the other for girls called *Iliki*. They were important institutions around which the village social life revolved. The functions of these dormitories were to protect the village in case of surprise attacks, to control accidental fire, hunting of any dangerous animals and rescue people from any emergencies and accidents.

The functions of the *Iliki*, i.e., girls' dormitories were to help the villagers at the time of death, sickness, the poor and also cook in the chief's house during the feasts. In spite of their social values and relevance, the institutions of *Apuki* and *Iliki* have completely disappeared today as a result of modernisation.

The British, in order to facilitate their control and develop the instruments for pacification of the Nagas, introduced the institution of *dobashis*, i.e., men with two language expertise. They acted as intermediaries between the rulers and ruled. Later, they were employed as native judges and were given police powers as well. In the process of giving more powers to the *dobashis*, the position of the chief was considerably reduced.

The chiefs in collaboration with the selected few in the Sumi villages have been responsible for governance and there has been tacit obedience by the villagers. In real terms, it is the pro-chief elements which enjoy full command over the village affairs and they have been the overall beneficiaries.

The societal change and development is essential to balance the corresponding change in the environment. Sometimes the changing scenario has offered a response to the endogenic forces, the exogenic imposition or both. A balance needs to be maintained between these two sets of influences. In case the balance is not there, then one may expect distorted outcomes in terms of new challenges.

The animistic stage of the Sumi society was controlled by the belief in some supernatural powers. There were too many gennas which hampered their economic life and they wanted to liberate themselves from the bondages of a superstitious life. Thus the easy conversion of the Nagas into Christianity was because of the vague concept that they had of God and his relationship with men. This was not clear in the animistic beliefs and also due to the absence of a deep and viable philosophy in such faiths. Moreover, the Nagas' belief in supernatural power and *Alhou*, the *Creator* of everything in the universe seems similar to that of the new religion of Christianity.

The spread of Christianity in the Sumi area was more difficult than in the case of the Ao areas. The missionaries visualised that the only way to spread Christianity in

the Sumi area was to befriend the chiefs and convert them to Christianity. They commented that the Sumis have got the hereditary chief who was autocratic and powerful. They found that if the chief was first converted only then the whole village can be easily converted. Thus with the conversion of the important leaders in the Sumi area the spread of Christianity became faster.

With the spread of Christianity, many of the traditional customary practices have been subdued though not completely forgotten. Many Sumis have abandoned their traditional way of life and dress and brought changes in their mental make-up. Though the motive of the missionaries from the beginning was to civilise and educate the Nagas yet it was only one sided. Their main target was to Christianise them and not to develop the all round personality of an individual.

As a result, the converted Christians who got educated in the mission schools thought only in terms of Christian doctrines and did not understand the other aspects of life. They did not understand the difference between religion and culture and this brought in a lot of confusions. However, with the spread of Christianity and education, a middle class has emerged that controls education, Government jobs, commerce and trade including technical and medical education. In fact, this middle class has been the agents of social change in the Sumi society. However, the absence of industrialisation and urbanisation and the rampant corruption in the higher echelons coupled with subsistence economy and poverty have prevented any progressive changes.

Many had no sense of responsibility and concern towards society. They became individualistic. In this context, the traditional society was community oriented and education has made them individualistic and selfish. The best example can be seen in the area of economic development in the State where people of different status who claimed themselves to be Christians are not dedicated and devoted to their work. It is interesting to note that so far no project undertaken by the Government has been successful in Nagaland. One of the significant aspect of Christianity and education vis-à-vis the traditional institutions, is the decline in the sanctity of the latter. Christianity and education has played down the role of the chief.

Despite all these shortcomings, Christianity has made far greater impact than the British on the Naga society. For the first time, the Naga dialect was put into writings and schools were opened to educate the people. The Christians doctrine of peace and love towards one another brought all the tribes closer. There was cessation of head hunting between the villages and between the different tribes of the Nagas. It was due to Christianity that the chiefs could not marry more than one wife. It was a prevalent traditional concept that having more wives brought in more honours and respects especially from the economic point of view.

The education imparted by the missionaries to the Nagas was utilitarian in purposes, in the sense that they wanted these literates to convert these Nagas into

Christianity. On the other hand, the British wanted these people only to assist them in their offices as clerks and recorders. Higher education was provided to the Nagas only after the Second World War. Today, there is a rethinking among the educated Nagas, both secular as well as religious, that the rich cultural heritage which has been neglected by the early Christians because of their ignorance should be revived.

As mentioned above, for the first time, the Naga dialect was put into writings in 1878. The missionaries opened schools to educate the Nagas. The then educated become the new leaders in the Sumi society. They became administrators, officers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, etc. and they played an important role in the Sumi political and social life.

Coming to parliamentary democracy, the study of election was found to be very important. The election study includes both the rulers and ruled. It also provided an opportunity to observe the spatio-political behaviour of the people and their expressions about the politicians and their activities. Elections are crucial in a democracy to determine the ultimate fate of the people and the country. This is an exercise which eventually affects the quality of the polity as well as the future of the democratic institutions. At one level, politicians are engaged in continuous struggle for electoral support, while at the other extreme end each citizen possesses a vote to give or withhold as one opted. The elections satisfy the desire of the masses for a share in

political power although the opportunity of participation in the political process has made them just uncrowned sovereigns.

The present study attempted to study the voting behaviour in the Sumi area of Nagaland. Most of the Sumi areas have had no tradition of election in the modern sense for appointment to political offices in the traditional society. Nor were there any tradition of political participation in decision making in the traditional Sumi community. It has been found that the introduction of election has greatly affected the chiefship. Some of them actively participate in electoral politics and depending on their economic status they could sway the voters.

Coming to the election held in 1998 though it was boycotted by the Naga underground on the issue of Naga sovereignty, with warnings of stern capital punishment to those who defied yet the process went on uninterrupted. The regional party which supported the Naga underground and the Naga Hoho on the issue of Naga sovereignty did not control the election. The Congress party defying the threats filed nominations in all the 60 constituencies.

The boycott call made by the NSCN (I.M.) faction failed as they could not prevent candidates from filing their nominations. These were elected unopposed. It was found that the Undergrounds and the NGO's did not try to mobilise public support

from the grassroots level and win the support of the village level party workers. Moreover, the success of the 1998 election was due to the fact that capital punishment was withdrawn those who filed their nominations. This emboldened the morale of the candidates who contested. Over and above that, the undergrounds were not sure and could not guarantee the Nagas whether they could bring a lasting solution to their problem. They feared that if they failed in their mission they shall be blamed and they have no answer to explain why the talk could not succeed.

Political participation in Nagaland, specially among the Sumi revolved round local issue, and factors. Images do matter but there is a definite factor of distance decay. Tribal ethos still prevailed and immediate gains matter rather than their philosophical and political ideology. Tribal norms, practices and experiences still count to prevail over political participation and actions.

It can be concluded, that the concept of the Traditional Political Institutions among the Sumi Nagas, have by and large, remained intact, though changes have also taken place especially with the advent of Christianity, education and the introduction of electoral politics. However, despite such factors, the institutions of chiefship and the village council have been a cementing force for the Sumi people. The institution of chiefship in particular has been jealously guarded since it signifies the traditional culture, though great erosions too have taken place with regards to its functions and importance.

APPENDIX-I**GOVERNMENT OF NAGALAND
HOME DEPARTMENT: HOME BRANCH****NOTIFICATION**

No. HOME/SCTA-16/94

Dated Kohima, the 30th Sept'95.

The Governor of Nagaland is pleased to decide that the name 'SUMI' shall replace 'SEMA' with immediate effect. Henceforth, the name 'SUMI' shall be used in all official and non-official correspondences.

Sd/- L. Colney
Additional Chief Secretary
Home Department

No. HOME/SCTA-16/94

::

dated Kohima, the 30th Sept'95.

Copy to:

1. The Special Secretary to the Governor of Nagaland, Raj Bhavan, Kohima.
2. The Special Secretary to the Chief Minister, Nagaland, Raj Bhavan, Kohima.
3. The PS to all Minister/Minister of State.
4. The PS to the Chief Secretary, Nagaland, Kohima.
5. The Commissioner, Nagaland, Kohima.
6. All Commissioners and Secretaries/Addl. Secretaries to the Govt. of Nagaland.
7. All DCs/ADCs/SDs (C) in Nagaland.
8. All Heads of Departments.
9. The Publisher, Nagaland Gazette, for publication in the next issue.
10. The Director, Information and Public Relation for wide publicity.
11. Guard File.

Sd/-
(Metongmeren)
Secretary to the Govt. of Nagaland

APPENDIX-II

EXCERPTS FROM THE NAGALAND AND THE SPECIAL CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION (Article 371-A)

The text of the Thirteen Amendment Act, 1962 to the Constitution of India is appended here for a first hand information

Article 371-A

- 1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution:
 - a) No Act of Parliament in respect of:
 - i) religious or social practices of the Nagas,
 - ii) Naga customary law and procedure,
 - iii) administration of civil and criminal justice involving decision according to Naga customary law,
 - iv) ownership and transfer of land and its resources, shall apply to the State of Nagaland unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides;
 - b) The Government of Nagaland shall have special responsibility with respect to law and order in the State of Nagaland for so long as in his opinion internal disturbance occurring in the Naga Hills Tuensang Area

immediately before the formation of that state continue therein or in any part thereof and in the discharge of their functions in relation thereto the Governor shall, after consulting the Council of Ministers, exercise his individual judgment as to the action to be taken; Provided that if any question arises whether any matter is or is not a matter as respects which the Governor is, under this sub-clause required to act in the exercise of his individual judgment, the decision of the Governor in his discretion shall be final, and the validity of anything done by the Governor shall not be called in question on the ground that he ought or ought not to have acted in the exercise of his individual judgment: Provided further that if the President on receipt of a report from the Governor or otherwise is satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the Governor to have special responsibility with respect to law and order in the State of Nagaland, he may by order that the Governor shall cease to have such responsibility with effect from such date as may be specified in the order;

- c) In making his recommendation with respect to any demand for a grant, the Governor of Nagaland shall ensure that any money provided by the Government of India out of the Consolidated Fund of India for any specific service or purposes included in the demand for a grant relating to that service or purpose and not in any other demand;
- d) As from such date as the Governor of Nagaland may by public notification in this behalf specify, there shall be established a regional council for the

Tuensang District consisting of thirty-five members and the Governor shall in his discretion make rules providing:

- i) the composition of the regional council and the number in which the members of the regional council, shall be chosen: Provided that the Deputy Commissioner of the Tuensang District shall be the chairman of the regional council elected by the members thereof from amongst themselves;
 - ii) the qualifications for being chosen as, and for being, members of the regional council;
 - iii) the term of office and the salary and allowances, if any, to be paid to members of the regional council;
 - iv) the procedure and conduct of business of the regional council;
 - v) the appointment of officers and staff of the regional council and their conditions of service; and
 - vi) any other matter in respect of which it is necessary to make rules for the constitution and proper functioning of the regional council.
- 2) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, for a period of ten years from the date of the formation of State of for such further period as the Governor may, on the recommendation of the regional council, by public notification specify in this behalf,

- a) the administration of the Tuensang District shall be carried on by the Governor;
- b) where any money is provided by the Government of India to the Government of Nagaland to meet the requirements of the State of Nagaland as a whole, the Governor shall in his discretion arrange for an equitable allocation of that money between the Tuensang district and the rest of the State;
- c) no Act of the Legislature of Nagaland shall apply to the Tuensang district unless the Governor, on the recommendation of the regional council, by the public notification so directs and the Governor in giving such direction with respect to any such Act may direct that the Act shall in its application to the Tuensang district or any part thereof have effect subject to such exceptions or modifications as the Governor may specify on the recommendation of the regional council: Provided that any direction given under this sub-clause may be given so as to have retrospective effect;
- d) the Governor may make regulations for peace, progress and government of the Tuensang district and any regulation so made by repeal or amend with retrospective effect, if necessary, any Act of Parliament or any other law which is for the time being applicable to that district;
- e) i) one of the members representing the Tuensang district in the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland shall be appointed Minister for Tuensang affairs by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister and the Chief

Minister in tendering his advice shall act on the recommendation of the majority of the members as aforesaid;

- ii) the Minister of Tuensang affairs shall deal with, and have direct access to the Governor on all matters relating to the Tuensang district but he shall keep the Chief Minister informed about he same;
 - f) in Article 54 and 55 and Clause (4) of Article 80, references to the elected members of the Legislative Assembly of a State or to each such member shall include references to the members or member of the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland election by the regional council established under this Article;
 - g) i) Clause (i) shall, in relation to the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland, have effect as if the word 'sixty' the word 'forty-six' had been substituted;
 - ii) in the said clause, the reference to direct election from territorial constituencies in the State shall include election by the members of the regional council established under this article;
 - iii) in clause (2) and (3), reference to territorial constituencies shall mean references to territorial constituencies in the Kohima and Mokokchung districts.
- 3) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to any of the foregoing provisions of this article, the President may be order do (anything, including any adaptation

or modification of any other article) which appears to him to be necessary for the purpose of removing that difficulty; Provided that no such order shall be made after the expiration of three years from the date of the formation of the State of Nagaland.

APPENDIX-III**QUESTIONNAIRE SCHEDULE**

1. Name :
2. Position/Designation held :
3. Educational Qualification :
4. Locality or Area :
5. Age :
6. Membership of Political Parties, Association, if any:
7. Are you in favour of continuing the Sumi Chiefship? If so, why? If not, what modifications, do you advocate?
8. Do you see any erosion of loyalty on the part of the people towards the chiefship? If so, what are the possible causes?
9. Do you support the election of chiefs and his council members by the village people? If so, why?
10. What are the areas of conflict between the chiefs and the Government?
11. In what ways the chiefs has played a meaningful role in the politics of Nagaland.
12. Do you thing that the institution of Chiefship acts as hindrance to the village development? If so, in what way?

13. Are the provisions of the village authority fully implemented in Nagaland? If not, what measures do you suggest for its implementation?
14. What do you consider to be the most important impact of Christianity on the Sumi Chiefship?
15. Do you view the passing of the various reform legislations and the move to have a uniform and procedure code all over Nagaland a threat and detrimental to the tribal interest?
16. Are you in favour of having a hereditary Chief? If yes, why? If not, what modification?
17. Is it necessary that the chief of the village should be a married man? If the Chief's wife died and if he did not marry again, can he continue to be a Chief. If not, what is the reason behind this.
18. Do you support the argument that an educated man who does not stay or live in the village can be a Chief? If so, why? Please give reasons.
19. At present many of the village Chiefs have been appointed by the Government from outside the Chief's clan and without the consultation of the village people. Do you support the view that the village Chief should be appointed by the government. Is it detrimental to the interest of the Villager people?

APPENDIX IV**QUESTIONNAIRE SCHEDULE FOR ELECTORAL POLITICS
IN SUMI AREA**

1. While discussing with people about the last Assembly Election. It was found that some people voted and some others could not cast their votes. Please tell about yourself. Could you cast your vote or you could not.

1. Yes 2. No

(a) If Yes, whom did you vote for?

(b) If voted, when did you finally decide whom to vote for?

(1) On the day of the election.

(2) A few days before the day of polling.

(3) At the time when the names of the candidates were announced.

(4) Before the campaign began.

If you did not voted, what was the main reason for your not being able to vote in this election?

(1) Did not know I was a voter.

(2) Out of station

(3) Not well

(4) Have no interest/did not feel like voting

(5) Somebody had already voted before I went to vote.

(6) Fear of violence

(7) Any other specify

2. According to you who should be the next Chief Minister?

3. During the election campaign, parties and candidates organized meetings, get together, etc. How many of those you attended?

(a) None (b) Some (one-two) (c) Many (more than two) (d) Don't know.

4. During the campaign did any candidate, party functionary or campaigner come to your house to ask for your vote?

1. Yes (2) No (3) Don't know.

5. During election, people work for parties or their candidates by organizing meetings, joining processions, campaigning, paying donations etc. During the election campaign did you take part in any such activity?

(1) Yes (2) No (3) Don't know

6. People whom you elected as MLA's, how much do they care about your needs.

(1) Very much (2) Somewhat (3) Not at all (4) Don't know

7. We will ask you the same question about the party. The parties you elected how much attention did it give to your needs.

(1) Very much (2) Somewhat (3) Not at all (4) Don't know.

8. When we asked people who they are, we get various responses, some say they are only Nagas, others say they are Nagas and also name their tribe like the Ao, Angami, Sema, Lotha, Chakhesang, Konyak. What do you think you are?

(1) Nagas (2) Naga and Tribe identity (3) Only Naga identity (4) Don't know / can't say.

9. Did you prefer to participate in the 1998 election?

APPENDIX - V

Ihoshe Kinimi, 84 years, Chief of Lumami Village.

Honito Assumi, 84 years, Retired Dobashi.

Holuvi Sema, 78 years, Retired Dobashi.

H. Zuheshe *Ang* (Governor), Federal Government, Nagaland, 90 years.

Hokishe Sema, 78 years, Former Chief Minister, Nagaland and Governor of Himachal Pradesh.

Ihezhe Sema, 69 years, Ex. Minister of Nagaland.

Sukhato Rotakha, 66 years, Chairman, Sumi Literature Board.

Sukhato Swu, 78 years, Ex. M.P., Rajya Sabha.

Kishoto Swu, 68 years, Retire Under Secretary, Government of Nagaland.

Khupu Sema, 58 years, Chief of Mishilimi Village.

Zukiye Sema, 70 years, Retired Dy. Superintendent of Police, Nagaland.

Khumtsa Sema, 80 years, Mishilimi Village.

Khuishe Sema, 70 Years, Natsumi Village.

Pikuto Sema, 52 years, Pastor Lozami Village.

Kukhezhe Sema, 62 Years, Retired Head Master, Government High School, Pughobito.

Heghevi Achumi, 60 Years, Chairman, Naga Council, Dimapur.

Kuhoi Zhimomi, 54 Years, Registrar, Nagaland University, Kohima.

Suhoi Tsukhalu, 62 years, Rtd. Colonel.

Rev. Nitoi Achumi, 64 Years, Director Bible Society of India.

Rev. Yevito Sema, Pastor, Zunheboto Church.

Kihoto Sema, 64 Years, Chief of Alaphumi Vilage.

Zhetovi Sema, 78 Years, Chief of Shitsumi.

Mr. Takuyaba Ao, 62 Years, Former MLA and Presently Advocate.

Mr. Noklensama Jamir, 70 Years, Rtd. Engineer.

Mr. Aomere, 67 Years, Major in Naga Underground.

Mr. Apong Ponger, 58 Years, General Secretary, Naga People's Council Party.

Lisepi Sengtam, 24 Years, M.A. Final year Student.

Makory Yimchunger, 24 Years, M.A. Final year Student.

Thrilongse Yimchunger, 25 Years, M.A. Previous year Student.

Thungo Imlong Chang, 62 Years, Mokokchung Town Committee Member.

Shitozu Sumi, 78 Years, President Sumi Chiefs Association.

Huska Yephthomi, 60 Years, President Sumi Hoho (Conference).

Yetovi Zhemomi, 62 Years, Chief of Lizumi Village.

Yapang Konyak, M.A. Political Science Student.

Nishena Nekha, 33 Years, M.A., Lecturer, Wangkhao College, Mon.

Savito Swu, 38 Years, M.A., Lecturer, Kohima.

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Dr. Hotokhu Chishi, 44 Years, Dentist.

Nihoto Chishi, Public Prosecutor, Kohima.

Qhukiye Swu, 58 Years, District Education Officer, Mon.

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