CHAPTER III
TRADITIONAL CHANG CHIEF AND COUNCIL OF ELDERS

A study on traditional Chang polity necessarily leads to an investigation into the organisation of government in the traditional Chang society. It, therefore, involves an examination of the Chang traditional political institutions, the Sangbushou (Village Chief) and the Pangsa (Council of Elders).

It may be mentioned that Sangbushou literally meaning the founder of the village\(^1\) or the first citizen of the village.\(^2\) Again, different Chang elders gave different titles to the Chang Chief. Some of the titles were Sangkhukimbou,\(^3\) Khuleibou,\(^4\) Khuchem Thükabou,\(^5\) and Sangbushou.\(^6\) Similarly, different titles were given to the Council of Elders. Some used the term Pangsa;\(^7\) while others, Kokkhümbu.\(^8\) In this study, based on majority opinion, we shall use the titles Sangbushou and Pangsa.

The Chang were democratic, but there was no uniformity in their village administration.\(^9\) Though every Chang village had a Sangbushou and a Pangsa, yet the role of these political institutions depended upon the types of government, Tuensang or Noksen patterns, which prevailed in the village.

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1. T. Yimba Chang, *op. cit.*
2. I.L. Chingmak, *op. cit.*
5. Moba Chongma Chollen, *op. cit.*
8. T. Ongbou Chang, *op. cit.*
The Tuensang and Noksen patterns had both common and distinct characteristics. These characteristics pertained to the emergence of the institutions of the Sangbushou and the Pangsa, their bases for legitimacy, appointment, tenure, qualifications, sources of power, role, position, and privileges. We shall begin with the evolution of these institutions.

The Chang tradition, like the traditions of the other Naga tribes, gave no clue as to when and how the institution of the Sangbushou initially emerged or evolved. The Chang legends were silent about it. Hence, it is not possible to state clearly when and how the institution took concrete shape. However, as pointed out by Y. Ben Lotha and H. John Sema, the common opinion was that it grew out of the collective needs of the people. Y. Ben Lotha postulated that a sort of leadership emerged during the migratory period of the people. T. Yimpongsoted Chang was of the view that it evolved out of the sharing of duties and responsibilities; a leader was needed during the time of migration, war (head-hunting), agricultural activities, feasts, and festivals. In this context, the brave and talented person led the masses. Later, when the Chang started leading a settled life, there was the need for law and order in the village, so that community life could run smoothly. Again, in order to earn their daily food, a leader was needed for cultivation of the jhum fields. Similarly, a leader was required for the upliftment of the community. Besides, the practice of head-hunting

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11 Y. Ben Lotha, *op. cit.*
12 T. Yimpongsoted Chang, *op. cit.*
demanded that the village and its citizens had to be protected from external threat. In the words of I.L. Chingmak, the Sangbushou took all the responsibility for safeguarding the village and its citizens. In the event of any invasion from the neighbouring villages or other tribes, the Sangbushou, along with his clan members, came to the war-front first, even to the extent of sacrificing their lives at the first instance. This falls in line with David Hume’s opinion, which stated that the most likely reason why governments came into existence was external threats and conflicts. The sudden dangers to which societies were vulnerable necessitated retaliatory and immediate authoritative responses and a single individual assumed charge. Accordingly, whoever possessed a commanding personality and was braver than the others became the Sangbushou.

The general observation was that, after the legendary Changsang, the office of the Sangbushou related to the founding of the village. Like the Lotha and the Sumi, the person, who headed the group to establish a new village, became the Sangbushou. According to I.L. Chingmak, the Chang started migrating from Changsang, and whoever headed the group to establish a new village was the Sangbushou. In other words, the founder of the village was the Sangbushou.

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13 Ibid.
14 I.L. Chingmak, op. cit.
16 T. Ongbou Chang, op. cit.
18 I.L. Chingmak, op. cit.
19 T. Yimba Chang, op. cit.
There was an indication in the Changsang legends about village administration by the representatives of the various clans.\textsuperscript{20} This practice, however, was more appropriate for the Noksen pattern rather than the Tuensang pattern, because administration by clan representatives was practised in Noksen area and not in Tuensang area, which had an authoritarian type of government.

Unlike the institution of the Sangbūshou, the Changsang legends alluded to the evolution of the Pangsa. The Chongnyu version narrated that the ancestors of the Chang clans assembled together and allocated functions to the various clans. It is said that the ancestor of the Hinshoushi clan was not present in the meeting; he was busy catching crabs and came after the function.\textsuperscript{21} Similarly, J.H. Hutton’s version stated that the founders of the various clans of the Chang assembled together, when the founder of the Hongang or Chongpho clan felled the Chongnyu and took their share of it.\textsuperscript{22} The assembly of the founders of the clans was the forerunner of the Pangsa.

Like the institution of the Sangbūshou, after the legendary Changsang, generally the leader of the clan, when the village was founded, i.e., the founder or co-founder of the village, was the first Khuchem Shoubou (clan chief), unless he lacked some required qualities to be so. In other words, if the oldest member (leader) of the clan qualified, he became the Khuchem Shoubou, and the representative of the clan in the Pangsa.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20} Nungsanglemba Chang, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{21} C. Mongko Yanchu, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{22} J.H. Hutton, \textit{The Angami Nagas, op. cit.,} pp. 381-382.
\textsuperscript{23} Moba Chongma Chollen, \textit{op. cit.}
The right to rule and legitimacy of the Sangbūshou and the Khuchem Shoubou rested on two grounds, viz., tradition and personal qualities or charisma. They were based on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the status of those who exercised authority. According to MacIver, the headman of a primitive tribe might securely depend on the support of the custom of the community of which he was the custodian. For the Chang, as mentioned above, the leader in community activities, defender of the citizens and village, and initiator of a new village generally became, and was accepted and recognised as the Sangbūshou. Again, clan or village chiefship had a charismatic basis, resting on the character of the person. A person with leadership qualities, above all bravery, was accepted as the Sangbūshou or Khuchem Shoubou. The aforesaid falls in line with two of the three grounds of legitimacy given by Max Weber, viz., traditional and charismatic bases. In short, a person became the Sangbūshou or Khuchem Shoubou because the people accepted and recognised him so, and his authority flowed from the genuine respect for him.

The Tuensang and Noksen patterns differed on the appointment of the Sangbūshou and the Khuchem Shoubou. In the Tuensang pattern, like the Sumi, the founder of the village was the Sangbushou, unless he voluntarily refused the prestigious position, which was quite unlikely. He generally was a hero, a warrior or

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24 Max Weber used the Greek word charisma, meaning a special gift of power restricted to a select few (R.M. MacIver and Charles H. Page, Society: An Introductory Analysis, MacMillan India Limited, Madras, Reprinted 1992, p. 149).
28 Ken Morrison, op. cit., pp. 369-370. Max Weber’s third basis is rational-legal basis (Ibid.).
29 According to H. John Sema, the Sumi have the instinct to be leaders. This motivated them to establish new villages and automatically the leader emerges as chief of the village. (H. John Sema, op. cit., p. 16).
a wealthy person. Like the Lotha, the most suitable man became the Sangbushou by force of character. Similar to the Shans of Myanmar and Zulu of South Africa, chiefship was on the basis of natural capacity. For example, the Zulu Chief, Shaka, by his personal character and military strategy, made himself master of Zululand and Natal. T. Ongbou Chang observed that a brave and talented person, with a commanding personality, became the Sangbushou.

The Pangsa, on the other hand, composed of the Khuchem Shoubous and other representatives, like the lakbou, or warrior, and two or three other members from each clan. In other words, the Khuchem Shoubou and one or more members of the clan were officially appointed, rather accepted, by the Sangbushou as members of the Pangsa. The strength of the Pangsa depended upon the number of the founding clans in the village.

In the Tuensang pattern, chiefship was generally hereditary and in accordance with the principle of primogeniture, unless the Sangbushou or Khuchem Shoubou had no sons or was without issue. Verrier Elwin remarked: "There is a system of hereditary chieftainship among the Semas and Changs." In the Chang tradition, the Sangbushou or Khuchem Shoubou was succeeded by one of the family members, and

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30 T. Among Chang, op. cit.
31 J.P. Mills, cited in H. John Sema, op. cit., p. 34.
33 Max Gluckman, op. cit.
34 T. Ongbou Chang, op. cit.
35 Moba Chongma Chollen, op. cit.; and T. Ongbou Chang, op. cit.
36 Moba Chongma Chollen, op. cit.; I.L. Chingmak, op. cit.; T. Among Chang, op. cit.; and T. Yimba Chang, op. cit.
37 Verrier Elwin, Nagaland, op. cit., p. 6.
the first preference was given to his eldest son.\textsuperscript{38} Like the Ngwato of Bechuanaland Protectorate in Africa, chiefship was hereditary in the male line, passing generally from father to son.\textsuperscript{39} The Tuensang tradition, however, was different. In Tuensang village, there was continuity of chiefship from a particular clan, the \textit{Ung}h clan, which took the lead in establishing the village. When the Sangbûshou or Khuchem Shoubou died, the eldest son, unless mentally or physically incapacitated, succeeded him. If the eldest son predeceased the father or was incapacitated, the second son succeeded the father, and the choice of the successor went on and on till an heir was found.\textsuperscript{40} Besides, an heir succeeded to chiefship by dint of his character. This agrees with M. Horam’s remark about succession to chiefship: “But it must not be forgotten that the son became the Chief, in any case, by virtue of his personal qualifications.”\textsuperscript{41}

There was no provision for a female successor. If the Sangbûshou or Khuchem Shoubou died heirless, he was succeeded by the next of kin, the oldest surviving Elder of the clan.\textsuperscript{42} In the words of T. Ongbou Chang, the founder or co-founder of the village automatically became the Sangbûshou or Khuchem Shoubou and, when he died, his kinsman succeeded him.\textsuperscript{43} Consequently, chiefship might pass from one family to another, but within the phratry.\textsuperscript{44} In this case, the Sangbûshou or Khuchem Shoubou was elected, rather selected, by the clan from its most respected, experienced and enlightened members.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{38} I.L. Chingrnak, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{39} I. Schapera, “The Political Organization of the Ngwato of Bechuanaland Protectorate”, in M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard (Eds.), \textit{op. cit.}, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{40} C. Mongko Yanchu, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{41} M. Horam, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{42} T. Yimponsoted Chang, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{43} T. Ongbou Chang, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{44} C. Mongko Yanchu, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{45} Nungsanglemba Chang, \textit{op. cit.}
The above practice was akin to that of the Sangtam, Sumi, and Rengma of Nagaland, Shans of Myanmar, Bantu of Kivirondo in Africa and Zulu of South Africa. Among the Sangtam, chiefship was hereditary; but if the chief had no son, a member of the clan, which first founded the village, succeeded him.\(^{46}\) For the Sumi, succession by uncles was possible, but temporarily;\(^{47}\) unlike the Sumi, for the Chang, it could be permanent. According to the Rengma custom, chiefship was hereditary in the clan, not in the family. It did not necessarily pass from father to son, but to the most suitable man in the leading families in the clan.\(^{48}\) Similarly, among the Shans of Myanmar, chiefship passed from father to son; but this was not necessary.\(^{49}\) For the Bantu of Kivirondo, after the death of the chief, his authority was not immediately transmitted to the eldest son, but first to the next eldest brother who was still alive.\(^{50}\) The chief of the Zulu of South Africa was succeeded by his son, unless the son was hopelessly incompetent in which case a close relative acted as agent. If possible, the position returned to the mainline.\(^{51}\) This indicated that the Chang chiefship, like the Khasi Syiem (Chief) who was elected from the Syiem’s family or its legitimate branch,\(^{52}\) could be hereditary either in the family or in the clan.

For the Chang, chiefship was not the prerogative of a particular clan, but of the clan that initiated the founding of the village. Though the Kangshou clan was the clan of rulers, it did not mean that the Sangbushou had to be from this clan only. Clan was

\(^{46}\) H. John Sema, _op. cit._, p. 36.
\(^{47}\) J.H. Hutton, _op. cit._, pp. 148-149.
\(^{49}\) E.R. Leach, _op. cit._, p. 214.
\(^{50}\) Günter Wagner, “The Political Organization of the Bantu of Kivirondo”, in M. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, _op. cit._, p. 234.
\(^{51}\) Max Gluckman, _op. cit._, p. 27.
\(^{52}\) Hamlet Bareh, “Ancient Khasi Polity”, in Jayanta Sarkar & B. Datta Ray (Editors), _op. cit._, p. 70.
neither a qualifying nor a disqualifying factor for being the Sangbūshou. The founder of a village, irrespective of the clan, became the Sangbūshou. For example, Chungshen Alen and Chingmak, his son, of the Ungh clan, were the Sangbūshous of Tuensang village and Chingmei village respectively.53 This was unlike the system of the Yimchungrū, Ao, Lotha, Mizos and Bemba of north-eastern Rhodesia. Among the Yimchungrū, chiefship was hereditary in the clan. Only a person belonging to the Khiungur clan could be the chief.54 In the Ao villages, only a man of the Imsong-Pongen clan was entitled to occupy the position of the Onger or Tsüngba.55 Similarly, among the Mizos, chiefship largely belonged to the Sailo lineage of the Thangur clan.56 Among the Lotha, succession was not among a particular clan or along a particular family line; the successor was nominated on the basis of his character.57 Among the Bemba tribes, it was limited to one clan, the royal crocodile clan (Bena ḷandu).58

The election, rather selection, of the Sangbūshou or Khuchem Shoubou was a simple affair. He was the unanimous choice of the village or clan. It was a consensus rather than an election. The Sangbūshou or Khuchem Shoubou was not elected, but selected or nominated. Speaking about the Sangbūshou, T. Yimpongsoted Chang noted that, on the sudden demise or removal of the Sangbūshou from office, his successor was selected either from the family line, if available, or from the village

53 Milada Ganguli, op. cit., p. 183.
54 H. John Sema, op. cit., p. 35.
55 N.K. Das, “Naga: Ao”, in K.S. Singh (General Editor), op. cit., p. 81.
57 Y. Ben Lotha, op. cit., p. 48.
co-founders. I.L. Chingmak supported this view. He asserted that there was no election of the Sangbushou. Besides, the candidate did not canvass for his election; his personality did it for him. His election was almost certain even before the election took place. According to M. Horam, before the election, the candidature of the person for the exalted office became a hot topic of discussion at the hearths, in the village sitting-out places, and in the fields. On the day of the election, his name was proposed, there was a hubble-bubble and a general assent, which was given by voice vote or raising of hands. There might be dissent, but it was lost in the din. The election of the Sangbushou was over. It was the same with the Khuchem Shoubou.

In the Noksen pattern, like in the Tuensang pattern, usually the first Sangbushou was the person who initiated the establishment of the village and the first Khuchem Shoubou, the co-founder of the village, unless either decided otherwise. In Noksen area, there was no system of hereditary chiefship. On the death of the Sangbushou, chiefship passed to the oldest surviving co-founder of the village and, then, to the next. In other words, it was rotary or by rotation among the co-founders of the village. All the founding clans had their turn of chiefship. In case of a pre-arranged agreement, the clans joining the village at a later stage might also be given the right to it. Succession to the office of the Khuchem Shoubou, however, was hereditary and not rotary. The Noksen pattern had one unique characteristic, viz., interruption in the hereditary line. During the head-hunting days, most of the

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59 T. Yimpongsoted Chang, op. cit.
60 I.L. Chingmak, op. cit.
61 M. Horam, op. cit., p. 75.
62 T. Yimpongsoted Chang, op. cit.
63 Moba Chongma Chollen, op. cit.
64 Ibid.; I.L. Chingmak, op. cit.; and T. Among Chang, op. cit.
65 Moba Chongma Chollen, op. cit.
villages sought the protection of the most powerful chief. If this was the case, the Sangbushou of the village might offer chiefship to the protector of the village, thereby one of the members of the family of the protector might be appointed as Sangbushou in his place. 66

The tenure of the Sangbushou or the term of the Pangsa differed from pattern to pattern. In the Tuensang pattern, since chiefship was hereditary, there was no limit for the term of office. Chiefship was life-long, unless the Sangbushou or Khuchem Shoubou abdicated, was removed from office, became incapacitated, or was too ill or too old to exercise his powers or perform his functions. The Khuchem Shoubou continued to be a member of the Pangsa so long as he officiated as Khuchem Shoubou. 67 In the Noksen pattern, the tenure of the Sangbushou was eleven years, the same as the term of the Mutien. 68 This feature was similar to the Ao model, according to which chiefship was for a fixed period of time, thirty years for the Chungli group and six years for the Mongsen group. 69

In both the Tuensang and Noksen patterns, the Sangbushou could be removed from office. 70 He could be deposed by the village on a decision of the Pangsa or of all the male members of the village. The grounds for his removal were practice of unfairness, violation of customary law and practices, and inefficiency. Y. Ben Lotha stated that the chief could not go against established customs. 71 The move for removal

66 I.L. Chingmak, op. cit.
67 C. Mongko Yanchu, op. cit. and Nungsanglemba Chang, op. cit.
68 B.B. Kumar, op. cit., p. 24.
69 N. Talitemjen Jamir and A. Lamunungsang, op. cit., p. 42.
70 T. Yimponsoted Chang, op. cit.
71 Y. Ben Lotha, op. cit., p. 55.
was made only on continued persistence of such violation, in spite of warning by the *Pangsa*. The popular belief was that if the *Sangbushou* or his wife committed such violation, the people of the village would suffer not only calamities and tribulations but also disease, famine and death. Besides, negligence of his duties might cause him the chiefship; indifference to them and inability to discharge them satisfactorily might forfeit him his office.\(^{72}\)

The first prerequisite for chiefship was being the founder or co-founder of the village, or being a member of the family of the founder or co-founder.\(^{73}\) In addition to this, T. Yimpongsoeted Chang included knowledge of the tradition and customs of the tribe, and good character.\(^{74}\) T. Among Chang regarded strong determination, good principles, sound tactics and great patience as prerequisites.\(^{75}\) This implied the possession of skills in fighting a war or taking heads. For Nungsanglemba Chang, a *Sangbushou* or *Khuchem Shoubou* should be of sound mind, physically and mentally fit, capable of controlling the society, and economically sound.\(^{76}\) T. Ongbou Chang added seniority and knowledge of decision-making.\(^{77}\) I.L. Chingmak said that, in Noksen area, being one of the family members of the protector entitled a person to chiefship.\(^{78}\) In summary, the qualifications for being a *Sangbushou* or *Khuchem Shoubou* were maturity, good physique, capability, bravery, wealth, oratory, responsibility, experience, intelligence, enlightenment, patience, kindness, tactfulness, skilful diplomacy, efficiency,

\(^{72}\) T. Yimpongsoeted Chang, *op. cit.*  
\(^{73}\) T. Yimpongsoeted Chang, *op. cit.*, and T. Yimba Chang, *op. cit.*  
\(^{74}\) T. Yimpongsoeted Chang, *op. cit.*  
\(^{75}\) T. Among Chang, *op. cit.*  
\(^{76}\) Nungsanglemba Chang, *op. cit.*  
\(^{77}\) T. Ongbou Chang, *op. cit.*  
\(^{78}\) I.L. Chingmak, *op. cit.*
persuasiveness, discretion, respectability, integrity, knowledge of tradition and customs, and social and economic status. Of the above, age or maturity was regarded as a very important pre-requisite, if not the most essential element, for eligibility as Sangbūshou or Khuchem Shoubou. Among the Chang, grey hair was the sign of maturity, but was not the only sign. Generally, grey hair was noticeable after the age of fifty. However, there might be cases when grey hair appeared at a much later age than the age mentioned above. In such cases, not grey hair but contemporaneity was the criterion for eligibility.

The Sangbūshou played a very important role in the village. He was chief administrator and chief executive of the village. The organization, administration and welfare of the village were in his hands. Unlike the Syiems (Chiefs) of the Sohra and Khyrim States of the Khasi Hills, the Zulu Chief of South Africa and the Ngwato Chief of Bechuanaland in Africa, he did not perform a dual role, i.e., the secular head and the religious head. The Sangbūshou was the secular head.

Though the Sangbūshou played a very important role in the village, yet the degree of his control over the citizens of the village differed from village to village. Chingmei, Tuensang and Khudei could be cited as examples. At Chingmei the Sangbūshou was absolute. He had great control over the citizens of the village. The Sangbūshou of Tuensang had a lesser degree of control over the citizens than that of Chingmei, as Tuensang was like a confederation. This was manifested in its

79 C. Mongko Yanchu, op. cit., and T. Yimponsoted Chang, op. cit.
80 C. Mongko Yanchu, op. cit.
82 Max Gluckman, op. cit., p. 30; and I. Schapera, op. cit., p. 64.
opposition to the British punitive expeditions in the beginning of the twentieth century. Khudei was different from Chingmei and Tuensang. Every citizen appeared to be his own master. Hutton remarked: "The village is small and utterly without discipline or any sense of coordination, ... and no one was really able to get himself obeyed at all."  

As the chief executive of the village, the Sangbūshou possessed and performed several powers and functions. The nature of these powers and functions was the same in both the Tuensang and Noksen patterns. However, their exercise differed. The Sangbūshou in the Tuensang pattern was very powerful. He wielded an almost unlimited authority. In the Noksen pattern, he acted in the name of the Pangsa. He was practically the ‘first among equals’, the spokesman of the Pangsa.  

The powers and functions of the Sangbūshou could be studied under two broad categories, viz., in times of peace and in times of war. In times of peace, he exercised executive, administrative, legislative, judicial, and ceremonial powers and functions.

In his executive and administrative capacity, the Sangbūshou controlled and administered the village. He was responsible for the smooth running of the village administration. He appointed the members of the Pangsa. He convened the meetings of the Pangsa and acted as its chairman. He recognised a member and allocated him time to speak. He also appointed the members of the various committees and

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83 M. Alemchiba, op. cit., p. 115.
84 J. Hutton, op. cit., p. 46.
85 I.L. Chingmak, op. cit.
convened their meetings. Whenever it was required, he convened the assembly or meeting of the entire village. The meeting generally was held in the *pughshon* (a huge bamboo platform for village assembly and functions). If the number of the members for the meeting was small, the meeting might be held in his house or in the *pughshon*, according to his decision. He held periodical consultation with the *heienbūs* or councillors in order to get information about the problems of the clans or the *sangmangs*. He made decisions and issued orders only after consulting them.

The *Sangbūshou* was responsible for the defence of the village, its peace and prosperity, and the general welfare of the citizens. It was his duty to protect the village from the enemy, safeguard its citizens and bring about development in the village. He was responsible for the security of the village and its defence system. He made sure that the *labas* (fences), *phaseibūs* (ditches) and *sangbakhans* (gates) were properly maintained and made impenetrable. He placed guards and spies. On being informed of the approach of the enemy, he ordered the immediate closure of the village gates. Besides, he exhorted the village warriors to remain vigilant. He could summon them to get ready and, if necessary, to assemble without delay to meet any danger.

The *Sangbūshou* conducted foreign relations. He was responsible for both friendly and inimical relations with the neighbouring tribes and villages. He sent

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86 Selichem Chang, 55 years, Government Teacher, Yimrup village, Noksen area, in *Questionnaire*, dated the 24th April, 2005.
88 T. Ongbou Chang, *op. cit.*
89 C. Mongko Yanchu, *op. cit.*
90 Nungsanglemba Chang, *op. cit.*; and T. Ongbou Chang, *op. cit.*
gifts and messages to and received the same from them, and disclosed their nature to the *heienbüs* and the village. He also sent emissaries to and received the same from other villages or tribes for the purpose of war, peace, friendship, and invitation for festivals. He declared war or accepted to fight a war, which involved the entire village.\(^{91}\)

The *Sangbūshou* dealt with a foreigner directly. Any stranger or visitor to the village notified the *Sangbūshou* and paid him respect. The *Sangbūshou* enquired about the nature and purpose of his visit. If the purpose was of great importance, like the bearer of a message, the stranger was kept in the village and was given great hospitality, until the message required to be delivered to his native village was ready. Whatever might be the purpose of the visit, the *Sangbūshou* welcomed the guest, guaranteed his safety, arranged for his food and lodging, and even entertained him. The visitor was hosted by the *Sangbūshou* or as the latter so decided. Even if a visitor visited a friend of his in the village, he was first introduced to the *Sangbūshou* and, only after that, he would go to the house of his friend.\(^{92}\)

The *Sangbūshou* controlled and directed the agricultural activities of the village. He, in collaboration with the *Hongang* or *Chongpho* clan, fixed and announced the dates for agricultural activities. He took the final decision regarding the area to be used for cultivation in a particular year. He parcelled out cultivatable

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91 I.L. Chingmak, *op. cit.*
92 C. Mongko Yanchu, *op. cit.*
land to the villagers. This was very true of the Tuensang pattern, since the village and the land surrounding it belonged to him. 93

Customary law prevailed among the Chang. Consequently, the Sangbūshou did not exercise any legislative powers and functions in the strict sense of the term. However, he made decisions, gave directions, and issued orders, which were held in high esteem and respected by the citizens of the village. 94 Strictly speaking, the legislative powers and functions of the Sangbūshou were related to his judicial powers and functions. Land and boundary conflicts were important issues. 95 Whatever the case might be, he acted as judge and dispensed justice. He received petitions, heard cases and complaints, and gave decisions. He passed judgement, acquitted the innocent, punished the guilty, and imposed fines. All this was done in accordance with customary law and practices. According to T. Among Chang, one of his most important functions was strengthening the functioning of traditional laws and values. 96 In short, it could be said that the Sangbūshou explained and interpreted customary law. However, if there were cases that were new in nature, he used his discretion. In deciding cases of conflict, like inter-clan conflicts and conflicts between the citizens, he always acted as an impartial judge. 97

The Sangbūshou played a very important role in the village activities, functions, festivals, sacrifices and worship. He took prominent part in the proceedings of these village events. Celebrations of ceremonies and festivals were one of his main

93 T. Ongbou Chang, op. cit.
94 T. Yimba Chang, op. cit.
95 Nungsanglemba Chang, op. cit.
96 T. Among Chang, op. cit.
97 I.L. Chingmak, op. cit.
functions. He carried out these functions with the support of his colleagues. Though he did not perform religious functions, his presence was necessary for the performance of sacrifice and worship. As M. Horam commented, the ceremonies might well be void without his participation. He inaugurated and presided over all the village festivals, functions and entertainments. He was the chief guest and chairman of all village gatherings for sports, dances, songs, and festivities. Besides, he had all authority over the development of the village. The maintenance of the village belonged to him. He maintained the water sources, village paths and bridges. In short, the administration and welfare of the village were in his hands.

The Sangbushou had military powers. He exercised emergency powers in times of war. He organised the village for raids, and got it ready for attacks, counter-raids and defence. All challenges for proposed attacks were sent by him and to him alone. He gave suitable replies for the same, and confirmed the date for the actual combat. He declared war. For T. Ongbou Chang, he had the sovereign power to command the village; he could command it to attack a neighbouring village whenever the situation arose. He was the commander-in-chief of the village army, and led the attack. He was the first person to die and the last to flee. This was unlike the Kachins of Myanmar, where the chief did not take part in actual combat; in fact, he was not expected to fight in battle. He gave orders for attack or retreat. Though he

98 Nungsanglemba Chang, op. cit.
100 M. Horam, op. cit., p. 81.
101 T. Among Chang, op. cit.
102 T. Ongbou Chang, op. cit.
103 T. Yimba Chang, op. cit.
might not be autocratic, any disobedience to the general plans and tactics or any breach thereon was disastrous for the individual and the village. Besides, he was the owner of all the spoils, which were brought home from raids. However, unlike the Konyak, the heads were not kept in his house but on the happung (head-tree) and, later, in the hakū (morung).

Though every village was self-governing, there were cases in which one village exercised some political influence on or supremacy over other villages. This was the result of political alliances made for war, to fight or obtain protection against an enemy. But this arrangement might or might not be permanent. It was unlike the Konyak model of permanent overlordship. Some of the villages, which exercised some political supremacy over other villages, were the villages of Tuensang and Chingmei. Probably, it was for this reason that the British considered Tuensang village as the leader of the Chang villages, and even non-Chang villages, when these villages raided the Ao villages that were under the British administration. That was why the villages in the former Tuensang District (the present Tuensang, Mon, Kiphire and Longleng districts) were referred to as the Tuensang group of villages.105 I.L. Chingmak remarked that Tuensang village was the most powerful village among the Chang. It protected several villages. Its Sangbūshou had absolute power to dictate terms and conditions over his protectorate.106 Similarly, Chingmei village had influence on both Chang and non-Chang villages. The Sangbūshou of the village that protected any village or villages, always received gifts in return for his assistance or protection. These gifts were of various kinds. The Sangbūshou of the village that received

105 B.B. Ghosh, op. cit. p. 29.
106 I.L. Chingmak, op. cit.
protection might even present his daughter in marriage to the protector. That was how Chingmak, the Sangbüşhou of Chingmei, came to have seven wives.\footnote{Milada Ganguli, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 185.} Besides, the parent village usually protected a newly founded village from any enemy.

After a discussion on the role of the Sangbüşhou, we shall examine the role of the Pangsa, whether it functioned as an advisory body of the Sangbüşhou or as the chief executive body of the village. In the Tuensang pattern, the Pangsa functioned as an advisory body. It offered advice to the Sangbüşhou in whatever and whenever he sought for it. The Sangbüşhou always took its advice or opinion into account. He made decisions in consultation with it. Besides, it was the duty of the members of the Pangsa to bring the complaints of the clans to the Sangbüşhou.\footnote{T. Yimba Chang, \textit{op. cit.}}

Here it may be relevant to present briefly the role of the Khuchem Shoubou, who was the executive head of the clan. His prime duty was to look after the clan welfare. For this, he convened, hosted and presided over the clan meetings. He solved the clan issues before they were brought to the village court. Inter-clan disputes, however, were first settled by the clans, which were parties to the conflict. But, if no solutions were arrived at, they were taken to the village court.\footnote{I. Elem Chang, 57 years, Lecturer Selection Grade, Sao Chang College, Tuensang, Noksen area, in \textit{Questionnaire} received on 2\textsuperscript{nd} August, 2008.}

In the Noksen pattern, the Pangsa was the executive body, the collective leadership. It handled the village administration.\footnote{Nungsanglemba Chang, \textit{op. cit.}} The Sangbüşhou was the
figure-head. However, unlike the Lotha,\textsuperscript{111} he was not a tool at the hands of the Pangsa. The Pangsa exercised the powers and functions performed by the Sangbushou in the Tuensang pattern. It was the real executive, administrative, legislative, and judicial body. It was responsible for the defence of the village, its peace and prosperity, and the general welfare of the citizens. It made sure that the village defence system like the labas, phaseibus and sangbakhans were properly maintained and made impenetrable. It directed the agricultural activities of the village, parcelled out cultivatable land to the villagers, and maintained the water sources, village paths and bridges. It conducted foreign relations with the neighbouring tribes and villages, declared war and made peace. It made decisions and gave directions, which were held in high esteem and respected by the citizens of the village. It explained and interpreted customary law. Besides, it could take a resolution to depose the Sangbushou.\textsuperscript{112}

Irrespective of the pattern of government, the system of a particular clan performing specific functions, which the other clans did not perform, enhanced the role of the Khuchem Shoubou and, indirectly, of the Pangsa.

After discussing the role of the Sangbushou and the Pangsa, we shall consider their position and privileges. The Sangbushou was the head of the village. Like the Tangkhul Awunga (Chief), he did not acquire his position by chance, but usually

\textsuperscript{111} Y. Ben Lotha, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 62.  
\textsuperscript{112} T. Yimponsoted Chang, \textit{op. cit.}
The practice of head-hunting required centralisation of power and authority in the hands of a single person for the administration of the village.

The position of the Sangbishou and the Pangsa had to be studied in reference to the polity of the self-governing village system. In the Tuensang pattern, the position of the Sangbishou was unquestionable. He was the indisputable head and all powerful; the Pangsa played a secondary role. He was the chief executive, judge, and leader. The Pangsa and other assistants were subordinate to him. However, his power rested very much on his personal character. He could rule arbitrarily or be under the undue influence of the Pangsa. Though his powers were unlimited, he was not an autocrat. I.L. Chingmak was of the opinion that no Sangbishou had absolute authority over his citizens, except in Tuensang village and Chingmei village. In the Noksen pattern, his powers were curtailed by the Pangsa, which was more powerful than he. All decisions were made by it; he was merely its spokesman. B.B. Kumar remarked: “In reality the status of a Chang Chief was more symbolic than functionary in nature.” Nevertheless, he had modest executive powers in the execution and interpretation of customary law and gennas (things forbidden or taboo). Besides, he was the unanimous choice of the Khuchem Shoubous of the clans. Unlike the Konyak, and like the Sumi, there was no overlordship among the Chang.

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113 M. Horam, op. cit., p. 74.
114 H. John Sema, op. cit., p. 32.
115 C. Mongko Yanchu, op. cit.
116 I.L. Chingmak, op. cit.
117 B.B. Kumar, op. cit., p. 23.
119 I.L. Chingmak, op. cit.
The Sangbushou and the Khuchem Shoubous did not receive any remuneration, but had special status and privileges. As a token of respect for his high position, like the Tangkhuls, the Sangbushou had a reserved cultivatable land. The villagers helped him in cultivating his fields. They, especially the youth, helped in the construction and maintenance of his house.\textsuperscript{120} The practice of giving him a certain quantity of paddy or any other crops, as practiced by some Naga tribes like the Sumi,\textsuperscript{121} did not prevail among the Chang. Besides, he did not collect any revenue. But, a powerful Sangbushou received gifts and tributes from the villages that were protected by him.\textsuperscript{122}

As the first citizen of the village, he was entitled to a portion of the meat of every animal that was killed, the head of the animal killed in the village and the chest of the game killed in hunting, even if he did not participate in it.\textsuperscript{123} This was unlike the practice of the other Naga tribes like the Sumi and Tangkhuls, among whom the head of the animal killed in the village and the hind legs of the animal killed in hunting were given to the chief.\textsuperscript{124} During community fishing, the biggest fish was given to him. When a case was heard in the village, he was entitled to a share, the head of the animal imposed as fine, unless the animal was killed and its meat eaten. If the animal was killed and distributed among the Elders, the killing of the animal was done at his house. Besides, as practised by the Sumi, many villages were named after their Sangbushous, e.g. Sibongsang village.\textsuperscript{125}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[120] M. Horam, \textit{op. cit.}, p 76; and T. Yimba Chang, \textit{op. cit.}.
\item[121] H. John Sema, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 43.
\item[122] I. Elem Chang, \textit{op. cit.}.
\item[123] I.L. Chingmak, \textit{op. cit.;}\ and T. Yimba Chang, \textit{op. cit.}.
\item[124] H. John Sema, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 43; and M. Horam, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 76.
\end{footnotes}
The Sangbūshou played a very prominent part in all the ceremonies conducted in the village. He was given the most prominent seat at all social and religious gatherings, and festivals. Though he had no special emblem, he was easily distinguishable from his apparel, especially from his house. He was loved, respected, revered, and obeyed. Like the Zulu Chief of South Africa, he was regarded as the father of his people or the father of the village. Consequently, like the Ngwato Chief of Bechuanaland in Africa, he was honoured and respected, and the people looked to him as their ruler and guide. But, he was expected to use sweet and pleasant words, even if provoked; righteousness and maturity were his chief qualities.

Like the Sangbūshou, the position and powers of the Pangsa varied from a subordinate body in the Tuensang pattern to a full-fledged supreme authority in the Noksen pattern. The Pangsa had all the powers and functions that were exercised by the Sangbūshou. Though the Sangbūshou was quite powerful in the Tuensang pattern, the Pangsa was not a mere tool in his hands. It exercised a variety of functions, while giving due respect to the authority of the Sangbūshou. In the Pangsa, there was free and cordial debate and deliberation. No decision was forcibly thrust upon an individual. The aggrieved was always given a patient hearing. Like the Ngwato Chief of Bechuanaland, in order to get things done, the Sangbūshou must gain the support of the Pangsa. In the Noksen pattern, the Pangsa was the supreme law-making and governing body of the village. The power of village administration

126 Max Gluckman, op. cit., p. 44.
127 I. Schapera, op. cit., p. 81.
128 C. Mongko Yanchu, op. cit.
129 Ibid.
130 I. Schapera, op. cit., p. 79.
was vested in it. In both the patterns, it was the apex court of the self-governing village. It tried cases and gave verdict in accordance with customary law. In case a fine was imposed, the judges and the aggrieved shared it equally. Like the Sangbūshou, there was no remuneration for being a member of the Pangsa. But, the conventional honour and respect given to the post, made it covetable. Besides, the Khuchem Shoubou was entitled to a share of the animal imposed as fine, unless the animal was killed and eaten.

A discussion on the position and privileges of the Sangbūshou and the Pangsa would be incomplete if their relationship was not mentioned. Both the Sangbūshou and the Pangsa led the people in building the village, earning their daily needs, such as food, and providing security to a person or the village. Though the Sangbūshou took the lead, yet he did not act in a dictatorial manner. The Chang, even though they had the Sangbūshou, ran the village administration in a very democratic way. For all important matters, the Sangbūshou was consulted first, and his opinion was taken into consideration. The people or his helpers looked upon him as their guide. To carry out or perform any function without his involvement was considered as illegal. According to T. Yimba Chang, when necessity arose, he could summon the Pangsa at any time. On the other hand, he took into account the opinion of the members of the Pangsa before making his decision, and, in turn, gave them advice and direction, as well as entertained their complaints. He finalised any matters relating to

131 B.B. Kumar, op. cit., p. 23.
132 T. Yimpongsoted Chang, op. cit.
133 I.L. Chingmak, op. cit.; and T. Yimba Chang, op. cit.
134 T. Ongbou Chang, op. cit.
135 I.L. Chingmak, op. cit.
136 T. Yimba Chang, op. cit.
administration, peace alliances, relations with the neighbouring villages and festivals, with the consent of the Pangsa.\textsuperscript{137}

Besides the Pangsa, the Sangbüshou had several wakoubüs (assistants) and committees to assist him in the exercise of his functions. A wakoubü was chosen because he was clever and active. He carried the word of the Sangbüshou, whatever the latter ordered, to the particular place or person, as a messenger and interpreter.\textsuperscript{138} Similarly, the members of the various committees were appointed by the Sangbüshou, most often for life, unless incapacitated by illness, accident or old age. There were single-member and multi-member committees. Some of the wakoubüs and committees were the Ongshetbou (priest), Nguhjumbou (judge), Youkoubou (advocate), Khusabou (in-charge of information), Kokhumbou (fine collector), Khuseibou (doctor), Khongngakbou (announcer), Khukimbou (in-charge of hakü, or morung, and tongsen), Lambubou (messenger and negotiator), and the members of the other three major clans - Kangshou, Chongpho-Hongang and Lomou – who performed the specific functions of the respective clans.\textsuperscript{139}

The Nguhjumbou (literally judge or lawyer) was a judicial body. It functioned as a court. Its members were in charge of judging cases. They also acted as advisers to the Sangbüshou. They assisted in giving judgement in the village court. At the same time, they were responsible for controlling their respective clans and for the needs of the clans. The Youkoubou was created for settlement of disputes. The two parties in a dispute should not employ the same Youkoubou. The Khusabou was the information

\textsuperscript{137} T. Yimponsoted Chang, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{138} T. Ongbou Chang, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{139} Moba Chongma Chollen, \textit{op. cit.}
and broadcasting committee. Its members were appointed by the Sangbūshou with the help of the judges. They did not have much work. Their chief function was to make announcements or inform the villagers of the decisions made by the Sangbūshou or the Pangsa. They were also sent as emissaries to the other villages in times of need.

The Kokhumbou was the revenue committee. It functioned as per need. There was no taxation. Its principal function was to collect fines imposed by the village court, in connection with any conviction in court. Fines were paid in kind like land, animals, and personal property. Besides, when there was a meeting, the members of the Kokhumbou did the cooking and served the participants.¹⁴⁰ The Khuseibou was the head in rituals. The Khongngakbou made announcements for the festivals and cultivation. The Khukimbou was in charge of the hakū and tongsen, and, eventually, became the Ongshetbou. The Lambūbou was the messenger or negotiator in the village, between individuals or groups, and to other villages.¹⁴¹

In summary, it may be said that in the Chang political system the Sangbūshou was at the head, and the Pangsa, wakobūs and committees were to assist him. Any matter, which concerned all the citizens of the village, was discussed in public, but the opinion of the majority prevailed. Like the Ngwato Chief of Bechuanaland, tribal laws limited the power of the Sangbūshou.¹⁴² Women were not entitled to any office and had no share in the administration of the village. In short, the Sangbūshou and the Pangsa were responsible for the administration of the village. In the next Chapter, we shall evaluate the factors that contributed to bringing about change in the traditional Chang polity.

¹⁴⁰ C. Mongko Yanchu, op. cit.; and T. Yimponsoted Chang, op. cit.
¹⁴¹ Moba Chongma Chollen, op. cit.; C.M. Chang, op. cit.; and C. Mongko Yanchu, op. cit.
¹⁴² I. Schapera, op. cit., p. 80.