CHAPTER II

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS
SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

The Naga villages are mostly located on the top of the hills since time immemorial and the same practice continues till today. However, with the changing circumstances, some villages are now located in the plain areas or near the main road with a view to avail themselves of the means of communication easily. Mr. Viyalie of Nehema village stated that the exact reasons behind such site selections although not known, is believed to have chosen the hill tops as part of the security so that they could see their surrounding areas thus enabling proper vigil against the enemies. The practice of head-hunting was the concern of almost all the Naga tribes in the early days. R.R. Shimray says,

As time went on, different tribes and clans emerged on the scene and expansion followed pushing each other. The Nagas then quickly became defence conscious and it explains their choice of hill tops as sites for their villages. Each village fiercely maintained its entity. As the population increased, every village

1. Mr. Viyalie, Aged 60 years of Nerhema village, interviewed on 13-9-1993.
grew in strength and the people's feeling and love for their village also increased. They became more and more village and defence conscious. It compelled each village to become self independent and especially to adopt a perfect defence system. 2

The Angami Nagas like other Nagas lived on the hill tops. It is found that at the stage of head-hunting, the villagers mostly selected a site with better view and better approach roads as effective defence measures. In every Angami Naga village it has a wooded door gateway leading to the village from the fields, Mr. Kruvituo of Kiruphema village 3 also stated that a wooden gateway in the approach to village was considered very important in all the Angami villages during the head-hunting period. It is said by most of the elders in the villages that they used to close their wooden door gate at night and guard their villages when they declared war against their enemies. These wooden gateways are still preserved in all the Angami villages even today. Some of the gateway doors were made of wood but these have been replaced recently by the stone plates in some villages. Proper fencings were maintained in the villages to protect the inhabitants, few thorns were planted surrounding the

3. Mr. Kruvituo, Aged 70 years of Kiruphema village, interviewed on 5-6-1994.
areas of wooden gateway, in order to prevent their enemies from entering the village. There were three to four wooden gateways in one village.

**Clan**

In every Angami village, there were three to seven different clans (Thino = Khel), each village having independent units and having its own defence system. A.W. Davis has correctly stated, "The unit of Naga society is not the village, but the 'Khel' called by the Angamis themselves as 'Tepfu or Tino'." Thepfu or Thino were considered as clan in Tenyidie dialect. Khonoma, one of the biggest villages of the Angamis has three different Thino (Khel = Clan), such as Thevo, Merhu and Semo as stated by Mr. Dokievo of Khonoma village. Mr. Selhoulie of Kohima village also stated that Kohima village has four 'Thino' (Khel = Clan), namely, Dapfetsu, Lhise, Pfuchatsu and Tsutuonuo.

Again in each 'Thino', or clan, it has four or five or more distinct sub-clans called 'Chieno' or

---

5. Mr. Dokievo, Aged 80 years of Khonoma village, interviewed on 26-5-1994.
6. Mr. Selhoulie, Aged 77 years of Kohima village, interviewed on 10-5-1994.
'Thepfu'. These 'Chienos' or *Thepfus* consist of closely related families having certain specific and strictly social relations. As for example, matrimonial relations between families of the sub-clan is strictly forbidden, but marriages can be considered between two sub-clans as stated by Mr. Kuovilie of Chiedema village and similar practices are also followed in other villages in Angami regions. Y.L. Roland Shimmi says:

The social organization of the Nagas is based on exogamous system. The law of exogamy prevails throughout this area in respect of the clans inhabiting the villages, and rests ultimately on the same kind of sanction as giving validity to the various prohibitions which are classed together as genna. It may, therefore, be regarded as a fundamental law, and the essence of their social fabric.

**Unit of Family**

The Naga tribes have evolved in course of centuries, their own distinctive social institutions and ethos,

R.R. Shimray stated:

Naga society represented a true socialistic pattern of society. There was no difference between the rich and the poor. There was freedom for all and equal opportunities to all in the real sense.

7. Mr. Kuovilie, Aged 56 years of Chiedema village, interviewed on 9-10-1993.

Indeed Naga community life provided the socialistic pattern of society to its individuals. It is a tribute to Naga polity, for this popular social objective of today was prevalent with them all throughout their history.  

The Angami Nagas are no exception to these practices. The social activities of the Angami Nagas are believed to have begun from a conglomeration of various family members.

In the process of social developments of the Angami Nagas, the children learnt the sense of responsibility from their parents. Mrs. Setsou of Gariphema village\textsuperscript{10} said that the parents used to teach their children all about their past history and values what they have learnt from their grandfather. It has been observed that the oral tradition among the Angami Nagas played a very important role in educating the children. Besides, discussions on the various aspects of social life in some places like community hall or in village headman's house, by the village elders, the individual family heads too, had been passing on information about various cultural and social background of the Angami Nagas. The practice of helping fellow villagers in the agricultural


\textsuperscript{10} Mrs. Setsou, Aged 54 years of Gariphema village, interviewed on 12-5-1994.
field was also taken as an important subject for imparting education to the young ones so that they would know and develop the concept of fellow-feeling and democratic processes.

The family of the Angami Nagas consists of the father, mother and children. The husband is the head of the family but in the absence of the father, the mother or the eldest son of the family takes responsibilities in looking after the family. Though the husband is the head of the family, most of the domestic works were taught by the mother to their children. Thus the children learnt all kinds of domestic works and affairs from their mother. Mrs. Khrietsiu of Kohima village\(^{11}\) while sharing her views stated that her parents taught how to respect their parents, relatives, friends and elders or how to work with their group or in their sub-clan, village when such works, like social work in the village are required to be undertaken. The father educated the children with their traditional stories and demarcation of land in their own areas. He also shared the stories with children about their grand-fathers' or forefathers' warfare with other village and this was passed on through oral tradition.

\(^{11}\) Mrs. Khrietsiu, Aged 56 years of Kohima village, interviewed on 23-5-1994.
only. J.H. Hutton says:

As far as Angami traditions go this tendency has always been manifest. This will be seen most clearly from the history, if it can be called such, of the clan and exogamy since the settlement of the Angamis in their present villages, such 'history' of course, being oral tradition only. 12

The family of the Angamis is patrimony. The eldest son of the family takes the lion's share of the property after his marriage. The father distributes his property to his sons equally as far as practicable, if one is having three or four sons. The youngest will inherit the house after the death of the father. In case there is no son in a family the whole properties would go to the close male blood relations of the sub-clan, the females being deprived of the property from their parents. But in some cases if the parents are rich enough they will give terrace or jhuming field and goods to the girl. This fact was confirmed by the statement of Mrs.Pfulhouzhu of Merma village, 13 during my interview. The report as appeared in the Gazetteer of India is noteworthy:

Women do not get property, but widows are entitled to a portion of moveable property for being the custodian of the household until the legitimate successor has become matureable enough to take a responsibility. If there was no male heir, a daughter may have become fit to be care-taker being entitled to its portion, but the property reverts back to the male line subsequently. If the parents were childless, the property goes back to the father's own lineage group in the event an adopted heir has not been found. 14

In the Angami society, women have household and even social responsibilities but the position of woman is lower than her husband. J.H. Hutton says:

However low the legal status of the Angami woman may seem, her position in the household makes it true that in the Naga Hills as elsewhere, 'women are very strong folk'. The husband expects absolute fidelity from his wife; but, at any rate in the case of the ordinary villager, he renders a fair measure of it himself in return, and while in all domestic matters the wife is equal partner, consulted by and consulting with her man, a woman is in, Tenyima villages, usually the holder of the village office First Reaper (Liedepfu). 15

**Marriage**

In the Angami society, marriages are negotiated by the parents in general. In practice, the parents will


ask the son to suggest a girl whom he wants to be his life-partner. On being aware of the desire of their son, the parents consulted other relations about the background of the girl's family and discuss if the proposal could be agreed to. If all the members of the family agreed to the proposal, the boy's parents will send a woman or a relative to convey the proposal to the girl's family. He or she may visit the girl's parents or family more than once till the matter is finally settled. When the proposal is agreed upon from the girl's side, then both the parties will settle the terms and conditions by fixing the date and price of the marriage. Mrs. Kieviu of Nerhema village\textsuperscript{16} and Mr. Neihoutso of Mima village\textsuperscript{17} shared the same views that the price of the bride depends on the family. If she belongs to a rich family, her parents will demand more from the boy's family. However, the nature of demands and the conditions varied from village to village. V.K. Anand stated:

\begin{quote}
The bride price, it must be noted that it is subject to extreme variations', depending on the social status and the economic condition of the bridegroom.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16} Mrs. Kieviu, Aged 67 years of Nerhema village, interviewed on 10-7-1994.

\textsuperscript{17} Mr. Neihoutso, Aged 60 years of Mima village, interviewed on 3-7-1994.
The nature of marriage would also directly affect the nature of gifts. Other factors like the tribal customs, proficiency of the girl in the arts and crafts, her reputation, previous records regarding love affairs, marriages and divorces, number of children, her own state of health and as also her charms, all these and many others affect the contributions. 18

Among the Angami tribe the dowry system was not practised. But after the final settlement of the marriage of both the sides, the parents will demand fowls, pigs and mithun if the boy's family asks through the messenger. There were two different kinds of marriage feasts – one was only with the fowls and the other was with pigs and mithun. Usually all their relatives are invited to the wedding ceremony, but this is followed only by the rich family. In case only the fowls are demanded by the girl's family, these are distributed to the closely related families as stated by Mrs. Noulouou of Kohima village19 and similar practices were found in other Angami villages as well.

The newly married couple will stay with the boy's parents till they construct a new house. They will be

allowed to maintain their own kitchen and way of cooking separately from the parents.

**Divorce**

Divorce and remarriage are common in the Angami society and it is quite common in every village. In case of divorce in a family, the property is divided between the couple, if they lived together for many years. But normally, the woman will get only one-third of the property if there is an understanding between husband and wife before separation. This may happen when they have become childless after their marriage. Sharing the properties is also different from village to village while some will divide equally. For example, Mr. Abau Kratsutsu of Kohima village stated that about a few years ago when her own brother and wife divorced they divided their properties equally.

In case, the new couple has divorced before or after a year or more the girl has to pay a fine of some amount to the husband's family. In some cases, when the girl's parents sent fine to the boy's family they refused to take it as a sign of showing their sympathy and love.

---

to the girl's parents as stated by Mrs. Vilhumeu of Khonoma village.  

Remarriage

The Angami practised remarriage in case of both man and woman in their life. A man can arrange remarriage if he divorces the first wife and he can still divorce the second wife and further remarry too as the social rule does not put any restriction in this matter, as was stated by Mr. Yaselie of Nerhema village. Woman can also go for remarriage after she divorced her husband. However, in case of death of her husband, woman cannot go for remarriage as long as she stays in her husband's house. But after the death of her husband, if she leaves her husband's family she can remarry if she desires to do so. The remarriage is more practised among the non-Christians, although this is also practised by the Christian society.

Adoption

The Angami Nagas have the custom of adopting a son if one does not have a male child or childless


22. Mr. Yaselie, Aged 70 years of Nerhema village, interviewed on 12-12-1994.
in his life. But this practice was not very common in Angami society. Mr. Ruulesie of Khonoma village\textsuperscript{23} said that the practice of adoption was from among the close relations or family members only. In such cases, the adopted should also get a share of the property of the adoptee.

The practice of adoption of a girl child although not common, but is not uncommon too. However, such a girl cannot claim the share of the property of the adoptee.

**Morung or Kichuki**

To maintain continuity in preservation and regeneration, the Angamis have developed varied patterns of social life which were institutionalized. There was no specific education system in the villages in those days, as we have today. Although educational institutions did not exist in Angarai or among other Naga tribes, the Angami traditional history tells us about the institution called 'Kichuki' or 'Morung' or Dormitory. This institution eventually functioned to develop the Angami identity and character both for the girls and boys. Thus it has emerged as the most significant feature of the social institutions of the Angamis.

\textsuperscript{23} Mr. Ruulesie, Aged 65 years of Khonoma village, interviewed on 18-5-1994.
There are two types of Kichuki or Morung or Dormitory — one for the girls and the other for the boys. The boys' and girls' dormitories in Angami society were different in their functions from village to village.

**Boys' Kichuki or Morung (Dormitory)**

In every village in Angami areas, there were boys' Kichuki or Dormitories which were preserved since time immemorial, but in case of the girls, some villages did not have it, as for example, Merema village does not have girls' dormitory as stated by Mrs. Neilakuou 24, 25 of Merema village. Mr. Neisalhou of Kigwema village stated that the boys' Kichuki (Dormitory) is considered as one of the most important social institutions for moulding youth to become responsible citizens in their community and village. The boys' Kichuki or Dormitory is a place where all the male members can meet in the evening and morning. The Kichuki or Dormitory varies from village to village. In some villages they may have one or two but in some villages it may have more than ten. In Khonoma village there are sixteen Dormitories.


25. Mr. Neisalhou, Aged 57 years of Kigwema village, interviewed on 3-7-1994.
(Kichuki) based on the information of Mr. Nilesa of Khonoma village.\textsuperscript{26} The boys on attaining the age of ten years or more, can sleep in the *Kichuki or Dormitory at night till their marriage is settled. There were no restrictions even after their marriage if one likes to go there. During the day, they can go anywhere, but usually they will help their parents for household work and domestic affairs. In practice the elders will ask the young boys to collect the firewood from the forest in order to make fire in the morning and evening in the Kichuki or Dormitory. All the male members used to sit and drink rice beers in the Kichuki or Dormitory. Mr Zapuvisie of Mezoma village\textsuperscript{27} said that the institution of Kichuki (Thehu) makes no differentiation between the rich and the poor families. It forms one of the classless societies in the community. Sitting around the fire with the elder people the youth will listen to their elders on matters relating to their life. V.K. Anand correctly stated:

\textsuperscript{26} Mr. Nilesa, Aged 53 years of Khonoma village, interviewed on 4-10-1994.

* Kichuki is a place where the boy used to spend their time together and sleep together. It is a Morung or boys' dormitory.

\textsuperscript{27} Mr. Zapuvisie, Aged 65 years of Mezoma village, interviewed on 24-5-1994.
The Morung (Kichuki) plays a vital role in preparing the younger generation for the posts in the council. The morung is the club, the public school, the military training centre, the hostel for boys and a meeting place of the village elders. It is as well the centre for the social, religious and political activities. In short, it is the fulcrum of the village democracies. 28

It is a place of training the youth in all activities in their communities and villages. J.H. Hutton has stated that the "Morung" or young men's house (Kichuki), which is such an important feature of most Naga tribes, is insignificant in the Angami village. 29 On the contrary, most of the Angami villages consider the institution of 'Kichuki' or 'Morung' (Dormitory) as an important social institution for the male members. Mr. Dietho-u of Khonoma village 30 said that in boys' Kichuki or dormitory the youths were taught the social, political, religious, economic, customs, traditions and military life etc., of the past to train them as future responsible citizens and leaders. Thus the institution of 'Kichuki' or 'Morung' served as a useful institution in controlling and directing the growth of the boys in the society.

30. Mr. Dietho-u, Ageed 73 years of Khonoma village, interviewed on 12-4-1994.
The Kichuki (Thehu) is also the centre of learning of all the social activities for the preservation and perpetuation of Angami culture. Here the youth learns various arts, handicrafts, music, folksongs, ceremonies etc. from the elders, as stated by Mr. Neizovi of Kigwema village. Generally, the elders control the 'Kichuki' (Thehu). In practice the youths in the Kichuki (Thehu), obey their elders. Every night and morning during the festival days the 'Kichuki' (Thehu) members listen to the lecture of their elders on war, discipline, love, manner, brave warriors and songs etc.

The grown-up 'Kichuki' (Thehu) male members, depending on their physical abilities were asked to participate in different socio-cultural activities too. They were required to go to either individual or clan or village agricultural fields to help in preparation of agricultural fields, planting seedlings or reaping and carrying products of the field. The youths were required to take up responsibilities or organizing and presenting songs etc. The youth also had to join their village or clan members in the event of a war against some villages. Their role was to take part in actual war and also to

31. Mr. Neizovi, Aged 63 years of Kigwema village, interviewed on 23-8-1993.
act as supporting groups for the warriors as stated by
Mr. Golatuo Zinyu of Khonoma village.32

**Girls' Kichuki or Dormitory**

Among the Angami Nagas, the girls' Kichuki or Dormitory is also another important institution though it is not like the boys' 'Kichuki' (Thehu) or Dormitory. Here all the grown-up unmarried girls will stay at night. The girls' Kichuki (dormitory) did not exist in the Angami villages. As for example, Kohima village is one of the biggest Angami villages but it did not have the girls' Kichuki or Dormitory as stated by Mrs. Nouluou of Kohima village,33 whereas in other villages in Angami region it played an important role for the girls. The girls work with their parents in the day time and at night they spend their time together in Kichuki or Dormitory by singing or sharing their daily activities and sleep there. This institution is run under the supervision of some elders. The close relatives, cousins, (sub-clan) of the girls will organise the girls' Kichuki or dormitory. The Kichuki (dormitory) normally consists of four to

32. Mr. Zinyu Golatuo, Aged 66 years of Khonoma village, interviewed on 16-7-1994.

six members which was stated by Mrs. Ruunguu of Nerhema village.\textsuperscript{34}

The girls will obey the advice of their supervisor, as they used to take full responsibility for running this \textit{Kichuki} or \textit{Dormitory} in the village. Mrs. Tsieleno of Khonoma village\textsuperscript{35} said that the Angami girls learnt the household activities like preparation of rice beers, cooking, weaving and other essential domestic works at home through their parents. But they are trained how to sing, the art of weaving, the discipline, good manners, in the \textit{dormitory} or \textit{Kichuki}. Girls will usually bring the firewood from their home or will collect firewood from the jungle and will make fire and spend their time together during the night by doing some of the household works like weaving cloth or making cotton thread etc. Village boys will pay visit to the girls' \textit{Kichuki} or \textit{Dormitory} at night and they will teach about their daily work or activities and share some of the village current news etc. and tell story too. Sometimes boys and girls will crack jokes with one another. They will sing together their folksongs. In this way they learn many things from

\textsuperscript{34} Mrs. Ruunguu, Aged 48 years of Nerhema village, interviewed on 10-7-1994.

\textsuperscript{35} Mrs. Tsieleno, Aged 65 years of Khonoma village, interviewed on 20-7-1994.
each other about the way of life and other activities as stated by Mrs. Kieviu of Nerhema village and Mr. Vipusa Zachuno of Phesama village.

In the beginning when the girls join the Kichuki or Dormitory they normally feel shy as they are completely innocent about the love episodes and other activities of Kichuki or Dormitory, but slowly girls learn the new way of life in their institution. Boys pay visit to girls' Kichuki or Dormitory frequently if one is having love with one another. On many occasions young people get to know each other through this institution and later get married. As it is permitted among the Angami Naga tribe they are free to choose their partner. It is stated earlier that the Angami girls learned many domestic affairs or household works through their parents at home while they learnt many other useful things, social etiquette etc., in the girls' dormitory.

In some Angami villages when the boys and girls sit together and warm themselves in the fire of the girls Kichuki or Dormitory, they decide to go to collect

vegetables or catch fish in the fields or rivers when the day dawns. Mrs. Khono of Khonoma village said that after the collection of the vegetables, the girls distribute to their neighbours or relatives or if they catch fish in the rivers or fields, they will also have a party in the girls' dormitory or Kichuki, but all these depend on the seasons, especially during the festivals or taboo. In this way, the boys and the girls come to know each other better and more intimately. As a matter of fact, the members of the Kichuki or Dormitory in this way, learn the social life and imbibe the spirit of corporate life. The help of the Kichuki or Dormitory members to the cause of the village as a whole or to the need of any family in the village, is immense and noteworthy. Thus the educational value of these institutions cannot be exaggerated.

But with the coming of western education and spread of Christian religion to Nagaland and to the Angami Naga villages, the girls' Kichuki or Dormitory has become insignificant almost in all the Angami villages. We cannot say that it has completely vanished at the present time as there are still some villages in the far-flung areas

where the impact of Christianity is not felt which still retained the girls' dormitory.

The Bachelors' Kichuki or Dormitory is known to the Nagas in different names like 'Kichuki', Arichu (Ao) etc. but it is commonly known as Morung. It is not exactly known how this type of institution was called Morung since a very long time. However, it is believed that the name was used by some people other than the Naga tribes.

Morung as a social institution served as an institution of importance towards educating the young ones for their future life which includes training in self village defence, a noble idea of social life. The idea of community life was perhaps known to most of the Nagas through the course of Morung education. However, with the impact of modernisation and changing needs of the days, Morung system of education was found to be inadequate and hence Morungs do not receive importance these days as it received in days of yore.