CHAPTER IV

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION
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4.1. CHIEFTAINSHIP AMONG THE NAGAS

Political organization is the most intangible aspect of a culture, as evidence for it can never be found in the shape of objects and has always to be inferred from archaeological data, because the present is the key to understand the past.

Many traditional communities lack centralized authority. The adult members (often only the males) share in decision-making and all have roughly equal status. Here the political organization is often based on kinship networks and alliances between extended family or clan groupings. Even where there are marked differences in status, such as between males and females or between adults and juveniles, there tends to be a clear sense of equality within age or gender groups. Every mature male adult is expected to play a role in the administration of the community, and power and authority are devolved through kinship lineages and groupings based on age. Chiefdoms, by contrast, have more clearly centralized authority. The term "Chief" is a common designation of a political leader of an indigenous social group. Among many native peoples chiefs have very little coercive authority and depend on community consensus for implementing recommendations; also, often among such peoples there may be a single paramount tribal chief with coercive authority (NEB 1980, Vol. II, p.832). All these elements of political set-up are present among the Nagas, though acephalous societies are lesser in number.

Except for a few communities, like the Aos, the Lothas, the Sangtams, etc., chieftainship is hereditary in most of the Naga communities. The Nagas west of the Doyang river
acknowledge no chiefs. They appoint as spokesman of the village, some elder who has the reputation of superior wisdom, or, perhaps, more frequently, the influence of wealth, but they give him no real power, and are not bound by anything he says. The office is not always held for life.

4.1.1. Angami Naga Chieftainship

On the other hand, every Angami village has a polity of its own; their government is decidedly democratical although each village community has a nominal head or chief. The authority or title of the chief of a village is hereditary, the eldest son on the death of his father or even before his death, if very infirm, succeeds to the dignity. These Angami chiefs, however, have no absolute power over the people; they do not collect any revenue, neither can they issue any orders with any chance of being obeyed if the measure or act is not popular. In all transactions of importance such as the setting out on a predatory inroad, or to take revenge upon any village, the aged and warriors of the village assemble together, and decide on what is to be done, but the counsel of the warriors is more frequently adopted than the sober advice of the elders; every man is his own master and avenges his own quarrel.

4.1.2. Sema Naga Chieftainship

The very antithesis of the egalitarian Aos, Lothas, Angamis, etc., are represented by the Konyaks (Thendu group), the Maos, and the Semas vis-a-vis the headship of village. The chief point in which the Semas differ from the other Naga communities is the possession of powerful hereditary village chiefs. These chiefs have many privileges, i.e. their subjects prepare their jhum fields, cultivate and even harvest the crop, offering free labour; they get a portion of every animal killed in the chase, and generally are in a position far superior to that of an ordinary Naga headman. These chiefs
invariably have three or four wives who dwell in excellent harmony together, and usually large families. It is the custom for the sons as they grow up to start new villages on their own account. We thus find that, as a rule, Sema villages are small as compared with the villages of other Naga communities.

4.1.3. Konyak Naga Chieftainship

The Great Angs or monarchs of the Thendu Konyaks (in contrast to the egalitarian Thenkoh Konyaks) exercise great influence over their people, and the post is hereditary. These Great Angs are not only political leaders; their persons are also sacred, and so they are dominant in secular and ritual senses. They marry strictly within other Great Ang clans, and children of their secondary commoner wives were not members of their chiefly lineage, but had the rank only of Small Ang. The well constructed houses of these chiefs are of great size (about 75 m to 90 m in length) and occupy the center and highest position in the villages. In front of the chief's house, as well as inside it, are numerous trophies of the chase and memorials of feasts, and in a separate house, dedicated to the memories of ferocity and vengeance are shelves filled with human skulls, and baskets full of fragments of human skulls, the memorials of the great deeds of their forefathers. They are entitled to the first share of meat, typically the leg, at feasts. These autocratic Angs can have as many wives as they please from the commoners.

4.1.3.1. Chieftainship among the Southern Nagas

Almost similar types of chieftainship are also found among the Southern Nagas.

4.1.3.1.1. Zeliangrong Naga Chieftainship
Every Zeliangrong village, like that of the Angamis (Hutton 1921), has its nominal hereditary chief, who is powerless, inasmuch as each village is a sort of miniature republic, the safety of which all acknowledge to depend upon the strict observance of the natural laws of personal rights and property. Without clearly written laws or lawgivers, without even an elective governing body, the Zeliangrongs live in peace and happiness. The headman sits in a clan-wise-represented council only when a crime has been committed. The highest punishment that such a council can inflict is expulsion from the village, for blood feuds are left to be avenged by those who are implicated in them.

4.1.3.1.2. Maram Naga Chieftainship

The Marams are contained within one large village of more than 1,000 houses. They have two hereditary chiefs, the greater and the lesser chief. Neither of them has any fixed revenue. The village, when it is necessary, makes the great chief's house and they give him the hind leg of all game caught, the little chief has no right to anything; the houses in his vicinity, however, do at times give him a leg of game. The whole of Mao community, on the other hand, is under one chief who receives tribute in the form of one basket of rice a year from each family. His death is observed for a day by all the sixteen Mao villages on the day he dies and for another four days after an interval. A messenger is also employed in his service to carry his orders and instructions to the villages within his jurisdiction. Besides, he is also entitled to the following privileges:

(i) His house should be constructed by the villagers in two days according to their religious belief;
(ii) A terraced field is granted to him which can be transferred if the kingship is transferred. This land, however, belongs to the village as a whole;

(iii) In every feast of merit he is presented with one hind limb of a buffalo (Bubalus bubalis);

(iv) In every social function he should taste the rice-beer, and the meat before anyone touches it.

4.1.3.1.3. Mao Naga Chieftainship

Mao monarch performs the following duties:

(i) On the day of taboo (except on the days of sowing and harvest, when he goes to perform religious rites), he should not go to the field or other village even if he is required for an emergency involving even the death of his relatives. He should not sleep with his wife and take bath on such tabooed days;

(ii) He should not climb the roof of any house;

(iii) He should not use as firewood those trees that died a natural death;

(iv) He should not take pork and any thing foreign to him.

4.1.3.1.4. Tangkhul Chieftainship

The chieftainship of the Tangkhul community shows an amalgamation of the autocratic rule of the Thendu Konyaks, the Semas, etc. on the one hand, and the egalitarian principles of
the Aos, the Lothas, etc. on the other hand and, thereby, ought to be studied in depth.

The chieftainship is an age old institution which has been in existence since time immemorial among the Tangkhuls. The chief is called Awunga in Tangkhul dialect which is an equivalent to English word "king". As distinguished marks of his eminent social status, he is entitled to particular ornaments and cloths. In every village there is a hereditary chief.

The Tangkhuls strictly follow a patriarchal and patrilineal system and, therefore, the chieftainship passes on from father to the eldest son. If the chief has no male issue, the nearest male kin succeeds him. Under normal conditions, it can never be transferred to any other person despite the influence and wealth a man may possess. It may so occur that the chief dies without male issue, and that the next in succession is mentally retarded or cannot perform the burial ceremony and other similar functions of the dead chief owing to poverty or irresponsibility, in such a situation a person (usually from the same clan) who performs these rites and, at the same time, demonstrates the capability of shouldering the responsibilities of governing the village becomes the chief. Under no condition women are allowed to inherit chieftainship.

This Awunga is the head of the village administration and other social and religious activities. The religious functions, though mostly performed by the village priests, require the presence of the chief.

In bygone days when the defence of the village was a matter of great importance due to the practice of head hunting and almost constant animosity among the various villages, it was the duty of the chief to keep the village safe from the attacks of enemies. The village wall and gates were built properly and continuous vigil by the village braves were maintained under the instructions of the chief.
The village chief is responsible for the general well being of his subjects, and it is in his interest to keep them safe and contented. In doing so, he must hold meetings of the hanga, the village council consisting of elders and clan representatives, from time to time. In times of crop failure owing to natural calamities such as insufficient rainfall, hailstorms, etc., he looks after the poor villagers whose stocks of grain get exhausted much before the harvest time of the given year. He gives cultivable land to a landless villager. In return, the villagers as a token of gratitude and respect for his benevolence and status, help him build and repair his house, and cultivate his paddy field. He also gives drink and food to them in plenty on such occasions. Pork and beef are abundantly served. He is given the best drink and food during festivals, and a portion of meat whenever a hunting party brings home any wild animal. It is he, in consultation with the hanga, village council, who decides the particular block of land to be used for jhoom cultivation, and gives the green signal for all agricultural activities. No one can bypass the decision of the chief whenever he fixes the place and time of cultivation.

Some of these Tangkhul chiefs become powerful and wield considerable power and authority. They command love and respect owing to their abilities, benevolent attitudes, and bravery shown during inter-village feuds. These chiefs, however, do not exercise unlimited power such as that of the Angs of the Thendu Konyaks. The Tangkhuls, like the Angamis, Lothas, Aos, etc., possess highly individualistic characters; and the chief is guided and advised by the hanga in most of the aspects of the village life. Though there is no possibility of removing these chiefs, the weak ones among them often become mere titular heads in the face of strong hangas.
As an administrative head of the village, the chief looks after the maintenance of the water supply, footpath, and construction of shai (bridges) across the rivers which are difficult to cross. The timing of festivals, religious ceremonies, taboo observations, and various activities of cultivation are fixed and announced by the chief in consultation with the hangvas (members of the village council). The Tangkhuls have a custom of organizing mass hunting and fishing on certain days of the year which are determined by the village chief through discourse with the hangva.

Every Tangkhul village maintains a common grazing ground for cattle and khama ahang (kha = village; ma = relatives; ahang = land. In other words "a communal forest for supply of construction materials for houses, firewood, and farming."). and it is the duty of the chief to see that equal rights are enjoyed by all the villagers. It is also the responsibility of the chief that there should be no beggar in the village. In the event of crop failure, he comes to the rescue affected families by sharing with them his grains to the extent viable and requests well-off fellow villagers to do the same. Grains taken in such situation are usually returned after a new harvest.

The executive power of the chief includes punishing the guilty who break the time-honored laws of the land; every individual is expected to be conversant with the unwritten by-laws and social mores and, therefore, no one is excused on pleading ignorance. There are several kashars (taboos) in their socio-economic and religious activities which have to be followed strictly, and breach of them is usually punished in accordance with the existing laws. They believe that the wrath of the kameo (deity) will be upon the whole village in the form of crop failure, diseases, etc. if these law-breakers are not penalized. The chief, on the advice of the hanga, decides
all kinds of disputes in the village. In some cases, the disputes may implicate the whole village, but in most of the cases only two or three persons are involved. Fines are usually imposed in the form of either kind or cash, or the hanga may exact a pig from the guilty individual or party.

The chief and the hanga constitute the village court, and all the disputes pertaining to land, theft, divorce, inheritance, fornication, adultery, incest, assault, disobedience to the decisions of the chief, murder, etc. are heard and tried in it. The cases are conducted according to the customary laws and the judgments are pronounced by the chief.

4.1.4. Concluding Remarks

From the above discussion it is thus clear that among the central Naga communities (Nagaland State) some of the societies are organized very strongly around the principle of the village as a socio-political and economic unit, ruled over by a nominated chief, whereas in others, especially the Semas and the Thendu Konyaks, the villages are more or less treated as the personal properties of the rulers, who are considered both omnipotent and sacred.

Secondly, there is no uniformity among the various Naga communities as far as the functioning of the village chiefs is concerned, inasmuch as some groups, like the Angamis, Aos, Lothas, Sangtams, etc., are extremely democratical, while some, such as the Thendu Konyaks, Semas, etc., are highly aristocratic, whereas communities like the Tangkhuls, Zeliangrongs, etc. occupy the intermediate position between the two ideologies. Four things are, however, shared by most of them. They are:

(i) The first person to discover the village settlement becomes the chief of the village.
(ii) The chieftainship can neither be bought nor sold.

(iii) The first son of the chief's first wife, though he may be younger in age to his half-brothers, inherits the chieftainship.

(iv) A woman, however qualified she may be, cannot become the village chief in the highly patriarchal society of the Nagas.

4.2. THE VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

The Naga village-states, like the ancient Greek city-states, survived for a long period of time because of their stable system of governance. Some institutions that made these village-states and the community as a whole survive so well in the midst of so many dangers and uncertainties are discussed below:

4.2.1. The Hanga (The Village Council)

Whatever may be the form of government, whether in autocratic (such as that of the Konyak and Sema Nagas), or in democratic (such as that of the Maring, Tangkhul, and Zeliangrong Nagas), or in republican (like those of the Ao, Lotha, and Sangtam Nagas) systems, the village council occupies an important position. The village council everywhere consists of representatives from each clan of the village, normally the heads of the eldest families of the clans are debuted. This august body handles the overall affairs of the village, and its functions may be classified into administrative, executive, and judiciary. The hanga formulates village policies. Momentous issues pertaining to war and peace are decided by the hanga. The councillors derive their power from
the social customs which are based on age old traditions. It is their duty to see that these customs are strictly adhered to.

Since the laws were customary and divine in nature, there is no necessity for the separation of powers. The hangva (councillors) not only administer and execute laws, they also act as judges. In Naga society, therefore, the court and its judges are within easy reach of the common people. Since the people compulsorily belong to one clan or the other, they are well represented by the ablest of their clans who look after the interests of their respective clans. Thus no one is ignored in any court case.

4.2.2. The Riyan (by-laws Or Constitution)

We can get a rough idea of the administrative system of the Naga society by studying the Riyan (unwritten by-laws) of the Tangkhuls.

The Riyan advocates equality of all and, therefore, has the inbuilt strength to protect the weak from the strong, the poor from the rich, the less intelligent from the more talented, the weaker villages from the stronger ones, and to prevent unnecessary loss of heads, theft, murder, etc. The exhaustive administrative and judiciary laws envisaged by the Riyan of the Tangkhuls can be summarised under the following three heads known as Riyanret (Riyan = by-laws; ret = jurisdiction):

I. Shaiyan
II. Khuyan
III. Shiyan Chikan and Shongran

4.2.2.1. Shaiyan

Six varieties of payment are covered under Shaiyan(shai = tribute/tax; yan = observance). They are:-
(a) *Raishai* (*rai* = war; *shai* = tribute): It is given by one village to another, either as tribute or as war indemnity. Small villages, which are unable to protect themselves against surrounding bigger and coercive villages, seek the protection of a powerful village which does so in return for tribute. Depending on the agreement or treaty, this "something" may consists of a buffalo, cloth, paddy, salt cakes and baskets of chilly, piles of cotton, etc. Some of these things are given annually or at an interval of two or three years. Villages giving buffaloes do so every alternate year. The village enjoying such privileges makes sure that these vassal villages are not attacked by other villages. In the event of such an attack, it is their duty to avenge the defeat or death. Some villages pay these taxes when they have been defeated by stronger villages.

(b) *Chinaoshai* (*chino* = brotherhood): This is given to elder brothers by younger brothers who have settled in other villages. This tribute is less severe than *raishai*, and it is given basically in memory of their kinship.

(c) *Wungnaoshai* (*wungnao* = royalty): It is given to the village chief by his subjects, and is in the form of paddy, firewood, or labour, and all the heads of animal slaughtered in the village (including the wild ones procured through hunting). Taxes are also given to the heads of clans by respective clan members in the form of cloth or certain portions of meat (usually hind-limbs) of every animal killed.

(d) *Lamshai* (*lam* = forest-land): It is given to the owner of the land, which is used by other members of the village for slash-and-burn cultivation. This tax is given either in the form of labour for a certain number of days or as a small portion out of the products of the land, namely, maize, millet, job's tears, yam, rice, etc. This tax is given in the
first year when the jungle is cleared for jhuming, at the time when the owner of the lam carry out the customary egg omen.

(e) Shimkham (shim = house; kham is the short form of khangakham, meaning 'reservation'): In this form of tax, a portion of meat is collected by the chief of a big village or by his relatives inhabiting small villages formed as a result of migration, or by those whose villages were reserved for them by him or by his ancestors. In the event of the chief’s relatives collecting the meat tribute from these villages, a small portion of the collection known as sakuiphit is allocated to the chief.

(f) Ringshan (ringshan literally means 'replantation', here it means 'repeated collection'): It is a tax collected by a powerful village from weaker villages. The tax collecting village not only ensures the existence, right and safety of these villages, but it also administers justice.

4.2.2.2. Khuyan

Several areas of village polity are dealt by khuyan (khu = village), and the strict implementation of these observances ensures the smooth functioning of Naga society. It may be studied under the following eighteen sub-headings:

(a) Hangashim (hanga = village council; shim = house): The residence of the village chief also serves as the village council hall. All the important affairs of the village are discussed and decisions taken in this hangashim. Every individual or party that brings a case here for justice must come accompanied with jars of rice-beer; it is a traditional practice for the hangva (village councillors) to carry out their court businesses while drinking.
(b) **Hanga** (village council): All the Tangkhul villages have one *Awunga* (chief) each. Under him there are ten to twenty *hangvas* who are neither selected by the chief or the public; but are heads of their respective clans. Small clans are represented by single individuals whereas big clans by two elders. The chief and these heads of clans are vested with enough power to decide and execute their decisions. As most of their decisions are taken after a thorough review of the customary laws, their verdicts are usually fair; and because of that, they are highly respected in the village.

(c) **Zungphun** (unity): Whenever a decision is made as regards war, or the selection of a particular area of the village for slash-and-burn cultivation, it is mandatory for every adult male to participate. An individual may avoid social interactions with others as he wishes, but is compelled to participate in group activities such as war or jhuming.

(d) **Raikan** (vigilance against raids): Sentries are kept in the village on rotational basis to prevent fire and to avoid being surprised by raiding parties from enemy villages. The sentries announce the time for quenching and starting the fire in the village households. When an enemy group is sighted, they alert. Large villages have ward-wise vigilant groups to do these jobs.

(e) **Mawun** (routine works): There are numerous routine works carried out year in and year out, viz., *mamachi khamashar* (sowing of cereal seeds), *pai kharin* (planting of tuber seeds), *lui kapha* (selection of land for jhum cultivation), *hara khayang* (divination through breaking of eggs), *meiyan khayang* (prevention of fire), *phanit kharet* (fixing days for festivals), *rai khava* (waging of war), *shimsak* (construction of houses), *shongchan khamathai* (clearing the village streets of weeds), *ngavei kakhaning* (fencing the village with pales), *rakhong kakhon* (cleaning and digging of wells), *ransak*
(performance of feasts of merit), kashong kahao (an agricultural rite conducted in July), and makho khayang (divination through observance of a ritual jar to know the fate of the year, and which is conducted by the village priest in January).

(f) Mawun-phun (shouldering of responsibility for certain routine assignments): In a big village the chief alone cannot lead in all the village activities. Thus selected individuals or groups are assigned fixed responsibilities. For example, while going to war, all the decisions are made by the warrior who carries out the divination with bamboo thongs.

(g) Shimlui khayor (selling of house and/or paddy field): A person can sell his property to anyone he likes, but when it comes to inherited land assets the first chance should be given to his nearest relative and fellow clan members. In case they are unable to buy or are not interested, the offer is made to others. In case of someone who has no male issues, his whole property is likely to be inherited by a shimluikat (the nearest relative from another family who inherits property of a kin who is heirless).

(h) Seihomphung (sei = cattle; hom is the short form of kahom, meaning 'tending'; phung = plot. In other words "areas for cattle grazing"): Certain areas located at four main cardinal directions of the village are marked for cattle grazing. Though most of these areas belong to the whole village, some areas are purchased by individuals. These later owners, however, cannot disallow cattle from grazing at these acquired seihomphung. If paddy fields or farms are created on these plots and the cattle eats or destroys them, no injury to the cattle can be inflicted and the owner of the cattle cannot be fined.
(i) **Meiyan** (prevention of fire): Every village takes maximum precaution to prevent wild fires from destroying their forest lands. The prevention of fire makes the trees grow more; the forest reclaims fallow jhums and, thereby, making them accumulate humus and become fit for quick reuse. It is a crime to burn forests indiscriminately, and there is a heavy penalty for such wanton acts.

(j) **Shimsak** (construction of houses): Construction of houses is a social responsibility. The owner of the house to be constructed, after readying all the required materials, kills a buffalo or cow, and distributes the meat to the villagers. Whoever has eaten the meat but does not participate in the construction of house, is penalised. Small villages do this work by making the participation of all adult males mandatory, whereas big villages do so ward-wise (though relatives from other wards come forward for the work).

(k) **Ransak** (erection of forked posts for feasts of merit): This is the most important work of any given Naga village. A rich man may be desirous of performing a feast of merit, but his wish will come to naught if his fellow villagers do not co-operate with him, inasmuch as he cannot fetch these forked posts from the forest and erect them at his compound alone. It is, therefore, a social responsibility, and the whole village necessarily participates in it. After performing a series of rites and divination, and they being proved propitious, the person wishing to perform the feast of merit presents a pig and makes his intention known to the hanga (village council). They, in turn, announce that "there shall be a feast of merit in the village and, therefore, no adult males should leave the village till the forked posts are erected". The success of the feast is now the obligation of the whole village, and if any mishap takes place while bringing these posts to the performer's compound, no blame can go to the feast-giver.
(1) Ngavei kakhaning (fencing the village): Most of the Naga villages are located on hill tops, and this is precisely so because of their head-hunting culture. These hill tops are chosen so that they can see their enemies' approach from a distance and, accordingly, prepare themselves in time to resist attacks on their hamlets. To make the attack more difficult it is compulsory on the part of every Naga village to put up fences of piles around their village. At night they close their gates tight and, thus, they can sleep peacefully.

(m) Veishunsa (gate meat): The fencing of a village is honoured. Thus whenever a marriage party or dancing troupe from another villages wishes to enter, they have to pay gate fees in the form of meat. Without giving this customary meat they are not permitted to cross the gate. Meat from such sources is usually taken by those households located near the village gate, inasmuch as they are ones who mend the gate and, in the event of attack, they are likely to be the first victims or challengers.

(n) Shongchan khamathai (clearing the village paths of weeds): The footpaths passing through the village and those connecting the paddy fields are hoed once every year; the chanreis (village streets) and those paths joining adjacent villages are cleared by all the villagers jointly, whereas the luishongfa (lui = paddy field; shongfa = road) are cleared by the owners of particular luikhong (a group of paddy fields in a particular area). This clearing of footpaths demonstrates the unity and strength of a village and, therefore, keeping them neat and clean is viewed seriously. It is done in the month of September every year.

(o) Kha khangakham (village taboo): There are days when a village observes taboo. During these particular days visitors are prohibited to enter the village, so also the members of the village are not allowed to leave the village.
(p) Kha khangaleng (ostracism): Every villager has to follow the social mores of the village; if anyone fails to live according to these social norms, he is given warnings and, if he does not pay attention to them, he is ostracised. In such event, he is not permitted to visit girls, nobody trims his hair, he is not given fire, and all his fellow villagers avoid him completely. Such severe punishments discourage individuals to do whatever they like against the established practices of the society.

(q) Shungashai (subscription): Clearing and digging wells, performing certain religious rites, and other civic activities benefit the whole village, and for such purposes subscriptions are periodically collected. It is the duty of every villager to contribute to such endeavours.

(r) Phanitret (fixtures of festivals): Certain days are fixed for village festivals such as Luira (sowing festival for twelve days), Yara (four-day festival for youth), Longra (seven-day festival for youth dormitories), Thisham (twelve-day farewell ceremony to fellow villagers who died in the preceding year), and other festivals of the village, either by the village chief in consultation with the hanga (council) or the concerned groups in accordance with the customary practices.

4.2.2.3. Shiyanchikan (public regulations) and Shongran (penalty)

Each Tangkhul village maintained rules and regulations, and breaking any of them is penalised and/or fined. The following are some of them:-
(1) **Shimyan** (burglary): Stealing is not allowed, and a person committing this act, in addition to restoration of the stolen goods, is punished heavily.

(2) **Shimkai** (breaking of houses etc.): In addition to houses, this also encompasses the destruction of retaining walls, boundary markers, utensils, etc. The guilty person must either repair or replace them with new ones. Besides, he is also punished. Further, the labelling of a man as **Khariya** (thief), inflicts great shame on the culprit.

(3) **Luizan** (stealing things from the field): Lifting of fruits, vegetables, fish, cloth, paddy, etc. is a crime and, thus, there is heavy penalty for such acts.

(4) **Luikai** (destruction of the paddy field): Demolition of boundary demarcations, canals, field terraces, alteration of rivulet courses, etc. which belong to somebody else are serious crimes. In addition to giving fines, the guilty person must repair them.

(5) **Phophat** (adultery): A husband has a right to divorce his wife if she is found having a sexual relationship with another person. The male adulterer, if seized, is killed, and his goods and property seized, or else he has to pay a fine to the aggrieved husband, and he has to marry the woman with whom he has had sex.

(6) **Latuk** (rape): It is considered as one of the most serious crimes, and the victim and her clan members take it as a very great insult. The rapist, if not beheaded, in addition to other severe punishments, is made to pay at once a very heavy fine.

(7) **Pareigahar kapang** (divorce): Three types of divorce recognised by the Tangkhuls are:-
(i) **Lahom:** This type of divorce takes place when a husband gets tired of his wife's habit of stealing others' properties, and chase her away. He presents a jarful of rice-beer and a pig or dog to the village council, and announces his decision. If there are children, the husband keeps them with him.

(ii) **Laphit:** In this type of divorce the initiative can come either from a husband or a wife. If it is from the husband, he has to return all the gifts brought by his wife, he must pay a double amount of the dowry price he paid while marrying her, and one-third of his paddy must be given to her. But if their union happened through elopement, he does not have to part with anything. In case of the wife being the one wishing to leave her husband, she has to pay him a double amount of the dowry price which her parents received from her husband during the time of their marriage, and she returns to her parents' home only with those cloths that just cover her body.

(iii) **Lapan:** This form of divorce takes place when the husband and the wife realise that they are incompatible, and the decision to separate is taken jointly. Here the wife takes back one-third of the paddy and those things she brought with her during their marriage. If there are children, the wife takes the girls, and the husband keeps the boys with him.

(8) **Phamashao** (dacoity): The acts of dacoity committed to fellow villagers are decided by the **hanga** (the village council), and a heavy fine is imposed on the dacoit. If the dacoit is from another village, the matter is taken up to the **Longphang** (Range Council). If the cases could not be solved by it, then they are referred to the **Long** (General Council).

(9) **Miyum** (murder): It is the most grave case, and the penalty for it is very severe. All the belongings of the killer are confiscated, and he is banished from the village for a
specified number of years. Besides, he can be exterminated by
the relatives of the murdered person as an act of reprisal.

(10) Pangkat/Miyan (punishment to a person who strikes first
in a quarrel): Fighting sometimes leads to murder. In order to
prevent it, a duel is discouraged by exacting a fine upon the
person who first started the fist-i-cuffs.

(11) Pangkan (disobedience to the village council’s
decisions): Everyone is bound by the verdicts decreed by the
village council, and anyone who disproves of them is fined.

(12) Maiyom (defamation): If anyone maligns the good office of
the village council, or utters things to humiliate someone, he
is fined.

(13) Yomhan (insult): A fine is imposed on an
intelligent/powerful/rich person if he disparages someone who
is either weaker than him, or is a poor man.

(14) Tuihat (betrayal): A fine is imposed on a person if he
double crosses someone.

(15) Masat/Letphen (false allegations): If a person wrongly
accuses someone of theft, cheating, etc. with the intention to
discredit his reputation, he is fined.

(16) Phahao (intimidation): If a person threatens to kill
someone with a spear, or dao, he is fined.

(17) Phumhan (calling names): If a person calls someone
unclean, cannibal, etc., he is fined.

(18) Khamangphor (calling someone a vagabond): This is imposed
on a person who insults a newcomer who takes up residence and
performs all required duties in the village.
(19) Pareizai (beating someone’s wife): However deserving, except the rightful husband, no one has the right to beat a married woman. A person guilty of thrashing a married woman other than his wife is fined.

(20) Sarhom (divorcing an old wife): A person has to pay very heavy fines if he chooses to sever his wife who has crossed the child-bearing age.

(21) Shukeiyan (care for domestic animals): If anyone wantonly harms domestic animals, in addition to replacing the injured animals, he is also fined.

(22) Seiyan (killing someone’s cattle): If anyone kills someone’s cow or buffalo, in addition to replacement of the same, he is fined and given a punishment. In the case of the thief belonging to another village, the person whose cattle has been killed has every right to confiscate cows and buffaloes of the thief’s village. In such an event, the owners of the cows or buffaloes confiscate all the belongings of the thief of their village, auction them, and the amount raised from it is used to deliver the cattle.

(23) Thizei (abusing a dead man): A fine is imposed if anyone abuses a dead man.

(24) Sharkai (non-observance of a leader’s superstition): A village chief, or a public leader, i.e., a councillor, a clan head, etc. may entertain certain personal superstitions which ought to be respected. If anyone flagrantly undermines them, a fine is imposed on him.

(25) Khusui (by-passing the village council’s authority): If someone approaches other village council for justice for a
case which is pending with his village council, it is treated as an act of impropriety and, thus, a fine is imposed on him.

(26) Mathir phungui (anomalous action during burial ceremony): Well-established rites are conducted while burying a dead. If someone performs an act which is against the burial rules, it is viewed as a great insult both to the living and to the dead and, hence, a very heavy penalty is imposed on the desecrator.

(27) Shimsut (burning a house): The crime of intentionally setting a house on fire is treated equally as that of a murder. If a person is caught for premeditated burning of someone's house, all his belongings are confiscated and auctioned. But if the villagers fortunately manage to extinguish the fire before it does much harm, in addition to punishment, he is fined in accordance with the loss suffered. (If the fire is caused accidentally then the owner of the house summons the village priest and presents him with a pig and a jarful of rice-beer. The priest kills the pig, performs a rite known as meishimi, and prays to a deity not to let such disaster happen again. The whole village observes one day taboo, genna.)

(28) Shokhala (incest): Sexual intercourse between persons too closely related to marry legally, especially between brothers and sisters, or parents and children, is taboo, and persons found engaged in such abominable acts are not tolerated. They are taken beyond a river, a rite is performed in which a pig is halved and thrown away, and perpetrators of the disagreeable act are banished from the village forever.

(29) Wungnaoyan (rules for the chief): As the chief represents the village, it is generally understood that he should be given proper respect. In case of a fellow villager beating him, in addition to an exemplary punishment meted out to the disrespectful ruffians, a fine is exacted from him.
(30) *Ngala ngasham* (illegal sexual relationship): After an illegal sexual relationship, if the male refuses to marry his sexual partner, he is either made to pay a fine, or to part with a portion of his belongings. In case of the girl refusing to marry the boy, the matter ends there -- nobody has to pay anything to anyone.

(31) *Nao singkata* (abortion): Though a fine is not imposed, a woman who has carried out an abortion is despised throughout her life.

(32) *Pamkasang* (acknowledgement of fault): After taking a case to the village council, if a person admits to his mistakes he has to pay the price of *zamsham* (a jar of rice-beer) which was brought by the plaintiff as a court fee. Even after the acknowledgement of a fault, if the plaintiff is adamant on imposing a fine, the *hanga* (village council) can impose half of the usual customary fine assigned for such offences.

(33) *Khangamii* (compromise): There can be compromise if the individuals, or the parties, involved in disputes agree to do so.

(34) *Thingyum* (stealing of preserved trees) and *Thinglet* (stealing of firewood): A person found stealing preserved trees or firewood, in addition to the paying of a fine, is made to return them.

(35) *Sashaiphit* (unauthorised eating of meat meant for the clan elders) and *Sakuiphit* (unauthorised eating of animal heads meant for the chief): A person guilty of consuming the meat meant for the clan elders is fined, and if an animal head meant for the chief is eaten in this way, he has to pay a fine four times more than the fine paid for the *Sashaiphit*. 
(36) **Mingapai** (false claim of inheritance): If a person falsely claims the inheritance right of someone else, this attempt to cheat the public is fined.

(37) **Shuikhangashai** (promiscuity): The penalty of being found living promiscuously entails the woman having her hair cut off, and the male offender beaten up.

(38) **Shakhi kasa** (swearing): If cases of two persons, or parties, elude normal judgement, they are made to swear. The following methods are used for determining the cases:-

(i) The contestants are made to pull a sharp-edged bamboo thong, and the person whose hand bleeds first is pronounced guilty.

(ii) After equipping them with a spear or stick each, the contestants are made to stand in a fixed position with a straight line drawn in between, and made to pierce or beat each other. The person who bleeds first is proclaimed blameworthy.

(iii) In case of the contestants being women, they are made to bite each other's little finger. The woman whose finger bleeds first is considered guilty.

(iv) The contestants are either made to eat half each of a chicken intestine, or liver, or made to bite the earth of the disputed land, or **raihai** (charmstone for war), and the person who dies first is considered guilty.

In big cases like clauses (ii) and (iv), proper rites and propitiation to **kameo** (deity) are made before the oath taking start, and the whole village abstains from going to the paddy field, husking paddy, drawing water from the wells, etc. on the appointed day.
By presenting a jar each of rice-beer, important agreements, decisions, etc. reached between individuals, or parties, are formally made known to the village council. This is done so that the council shall bear testimony in the event of attempt by the individual, or party, to cheat. Such cases are brought to the notice of the *hanga* (village council):

(a) Mutually agreed divorce between a husband and a wife.

(b) Debts of a dead person made known by the creditors over the corpse so that no other claimants will be accepted later.

(c) A decision by a woman from another village married to a local villager to summon her brothers and cousins from her parents' village to come and help her redress insults heaped on her (such as calling her unclean, spirit-possessed, etc.).

(d) If an individual, or a party, is not satisfied with the judgement pronounced by it (the village council) and, therefore, he intends to take the case to the Tangkhul Long (General Assembly of the Tangkhuls).

(e) Agreements and promises reached between individuals and parties.

4.2.3. Concluding Remarks

It is clear from the preceding paragraphs that the authority of the Chief is not absolute. "Though the power to govern is vested in him, he (the Chief) rules with the aid of elected Councillors. The election of Councillors is popular and it is customary to give representation to all the clans residing in the village. A large clan, because of its larger population, may send two representatives, whereas a smaller clan may send
one. Care is however taken to ensure representation from each clan. Clan heads usually become Councillors and it may be noted here that the headmanship of the clan is hereditary among the Tangkhuls...” (Horam 1975: 79). The village council, thus, plays an important role in governing the administration of a Naga village.

4.3. REGIONAL ORGANIZATION

The jurisdiction of the Tangkhul Long encompasses the whole of Ukhrul district. Chingai, Kamjong, Kasom, Phungyar, and Ukhrul are the five Tangkhul administrative sub-divisions. All together 218 Tangkhul villages are affiliated to the Tangkhul Long. The total population of the Tangkhul community is 1,14,000 (1991 census), and the total area of the Ukhrul district is 4544 sq.km.

The Tangkhul Long is the highest organization of the Tangkhul community. Each one of the 231 Tangkhul village-states sends its representative(s) to this august assembly, which frames rules and regulations from time to time and, in accordance with these guidelines, all the disputes are dealt with. The rules and regulations that have been evolving since time immemorial is known as Longyan (long = assembly; yan = rules and regulations). It can be studied under the following sub-headings:

4.3.1. Raiyan (observances during war)

It recognizes three kinds of warfare, namely, Pharva, Ngathirai, and Shimenrai. The warfare of the Nagas as practiced by the Tangkhul community has been described in detail elsewhere in this chapter (cf. 4.4.2.).

(iii) Ngathirai (guerrilla warfare)
This is the most prevalent form of war in the Naga Hills and, consequently, claims the maximum number of lives. In this deadly war, along with the perpetrators of crimes, thousands of innocent men, women and children lose their lives for reasons they are quite oblivious of. Most of the time the Nagas do not place their glory in attacking their enemies with open force; to surprise and destroy is the greatest merit of a leader, and the highest pride of his followers. Varieties of tricks and techniques are employed to acquire as many heads as possible from the enemy village and, in case of failure to obtain heads from the targeted village owing to the later preparedness for such eventuality (every village employ guards to protect itself), the parameter of the striking-zone extends to the surrounding villages who, for no fault of their own, have to suffer from such unprovoked raids.

Once an existence of a state of war between villages is declared, warriors from both these villages try to acquire as many heads as possible from the opponent village either through ambushes on the roadside or attack the enemy village stealthily at an opportune time. The wee hours are usually chosen for the purpose when the enemies will be in deep slumber and, therefore, quite unprepared to defend themselves.

In another form of ambush war or ngathirai (ngathi = hiding), the Tangkhuls in particular serve intimation to the enemy village that its members from a certain time will be killed, whenever an opportunity is found.

4.3.2. Raikanyan (laws and regulations in war time)

Stiff stockades and ditches bristling with panjies (sharp-pointed bamboo skewers or stakes varying from 15 cm to 1.22 m in length, some of them as thin as a pencil) are the usual defences of every Naga village. In war-time, the hillsides and approaches are escarped and thickly studded over
with panjies. Deep pitfalls and small holes covered over with a light layer of earth and leaves, concealing the panjies within, are also skillfully placed along the paths by which an enemy is expected to approach. The approaches of the villages are often up through narrow, covered ways, with high banks on either side, admitting of the passage of only one man at a time. These paths lead up to gates, closed by the strong, thick and heavy wooden doors, hewn out of one piece of solid wood. The doors are fastened from the inside. These doors again are often overlooked and protected by raised look-outs, on which sentries are kept up night and day. Dug-outs, surrounded by panjies, are also made at zingsho (east), zingtun (west), zingtung (north), and zingzing (south) of every village. In these ways, maximum precautions are taken to prevent a surprise attack by an enemy village. In case of a village wishing to attack another village via other village, a special permission to cross the village has to be procured from that village by giving meat as fees; anyone entering these protected war zones without proper permission is liable to be killed and, in such case, the blame goes to the encroacher.

4.3.3. Shimyan (house observances)

However genuine a case may be, yet a person has no right whatsoever to go and raid a house in another village. The only way for him to get justice is to inform the village of the defaulter, and that village will take the necessary actions against the guilty person on his behalf. Women married to other villages, and cases of divorce also come within the purview of shimyan:

(a) Pukreila (a woman married to another village)

Even during the time of war between her parents' village and her husband's village, nobody can kill her; it is against the
rule of the Tangkhul community as a whole. In fact, by virtue of having a relationship to both the belligerent villages, it is her duty to negotiate with the warring parties and bring amicable solution.

(b) *Lahom* (divorce)

Divorces among the fellow villagers are settled according to the usual practices of the village, but if a woman is married to another village, and the question of divorce arises between her and her husband, the case has to be referred and settled by the two concerned villages. In case of the husband divorcing her unilaterally without any notice to these two villages, it is taken as a great insult by the woman’s village, and it often leads to bitter war between the two villages. In most cases, however, the woman’s brothers, by one means or other, take hostages from their sister’s (ex-) husband’s village and keep them prisoners until a satisfactory settlement is brought about.

4.3.4. *Luiyan* (regional council)

There are about 250 Tangkhul villages, and these villages have their area-wise council known as Longphang (*long* = assembly; *phang* = branch). The Tangkhuls have eight regional divisions (Horam 1983) that have been in existence since time immemorial. They are:-

(i) Raphei - North
(ii) Somra (Myanmar) - North-east
(iii) Ram - East
(iv) Kaikhang - South-east
(v) Kamo - South
(vi) Kharao - West
(vii) Khaorei - South-west
(viii) Kharao-Raora - North-west
These eight regions of the Tangkhul country are placed under three Range Councils, namely, Kasomkong Longphang, Shongva Longphang, and Vara Longphang. In matter of jurisprudence these Longphangs act like the Regional Courts, where inter-village-state disputes arising out of boundary disagreement, murder, arson, and so on that take place within their jurisdictions are tried by them. Only those cases they are unable to solve are brought to the Long (General Assembly), which acts like the International Court of Justice. In other words, the Tangkhul Long is the miniature UNO of the Tangkhuls.

4.4. DISPUTES AND WARFARE

4.4.1. Head-Hunting of the Nagas: An ethno-historical account

Head-hunting was a part and parcel of the socio-cultural landscape of the Nagas since time immemorial. A few examples are quoted here after Tajenyuba (1993: 170-175): (a) Between 1902 and 1905 an average of 90 heads a year were taken in a stretch of border country about 48 kilometres long. (b) On 9 June 1936, a combined forces of Ukha, Pangsha and Yangkao villages took 96 heads from Agching village; this tally was itself undone in 1939 when one village was wiped out with the loss of 400 lives. (c) In 1948, Choknyu village was wiped out with the loss of 400 lives. (d) The last one officially recorded took place on 22 June 1979, when two Wancho Naga women of Jagan village were killed and their heads taken away by the Nyasa Naga village men of the Burmese side.

4.4.2. Naga Concept of Warfare

War is distinguished from other kinds of human violence by being a collective activity, designed to further the ends of groups. A common theory is that men fight because of their common biological heritage with the animal and that
aggression is a basic animal reaction when males are competing for females, to defend a nesting site or territory, or to maintain their status in a dominance hierarchy. But while fighting is a form of behaviour found common to both human beings and animals, there are certain very significant differences, especially where groups are involved; though both men and animals fight in response to some tangible threat to their survival in the form of food, or reproduction, men, in addition, attack for reasons not much related to survival, inasmuch as human groups are creations of the mind where symbols and ideas sometimes provide the basic motives. In the Naga context, human reaction to people is based on the tangible socio-economic and political pressure, as well as on conceptual classifications, that is, Tangkhul or Chakhesang, Ao or Sema, this or that locality or village. The group to which a Naga belongs gives him his social identity, and men are killed because they have the wrong social identity, not necessarily because they are feared as individuals. A Naga village or community gains its characteristic distinctiveness through contrasts with other groups, and having an "enemy" is one of the easiest ways of reinforcing the social ties which bind a society of people together; in order to maintain village or communal solidarity, tensions and frustrations needed to be channelled towards "out-groups" in order to reduce the risk of conflicts within the group. Of course, the Nagas take delight in beheading specific individuals for reason of personal vendetta. The blood feud of the Naga is a thing to be handed down from generation to generation, an everlasting and baneful heirloom involving in its relentless course the brutal murders of helpless old men and women, innocent young girls and children, until, as often happens, mere family quarrels, generally about land or water, being taken up by their respective clansmen, break out into bitter civil wars which devastate whole villages.

Head-hunting, however, is not all-pervading a term to encompass all kinds of Naga war; for example, in a pitch
battle chopping off of human heads and carrying them home as trophies is against the unwritten customary laws for conduct of war. A violation of this general understanding is viewed seriously, and the village or locality guilty of it is jointly attacked by surrounding villages. The Nagas in general, and the Tangkhul community in particular, have clear-cut rules of war. In accordance with the nature of disputes and causes, war in Naga society is classified into three forms, namely, Pharva or Open Confrontation, Shimenrai or hostage-taking war, and Ngathirai or guerrilla warfare.

4.4.2.1. **Pharva** (open confrontation)

This war is fought either individually known as ngashungrai (ngashung is the short form of khangashung, meaning 'challenge'; rai = war), where a warrior gives out an open challenge to another warrior, ward-wise war or tangrai (tang = one of the wards of a village), prevalent among some communities like the Angami, the Ao, the Chang, the Tangkhul, etc., or village-wise war or kharai (kha = village). Very often it is the boundary disputes that lead to such war. Territoriality is such a deeply ingrained aspect of Naga life that one is tempted to assume that it is something they have acquired during their evolution; the biological urge to defend their home territories have led to many pharva. In the case of kharai, when the Tangkhul villagers are desirous of fighting, notice on the one side is invariably given; and, as amongst the Angamis, the date may be given, and a stand-up fight in an agreed upon open place, and all the grown up male members of the village at war, well-equipped with spears and shields, go to the battlefield on the appointed date. On reaching the rendezvous, they first consume food, meat and rice bear. After the heavy meal, they propitiate the kameo (deity) for the purpose of gaining easy victory over the opponent, and enter the field and take up position. The warriors of the two belligerent villages, standing in line some ninety metres
apart from each other, then start demonstrating their ingenuity in fighting skill before the spectators consisting of women and children and judges from the Range Council or wisemen from the neighbouring villages. When the fight is in full swing, the spectators other than the judges pelt stones at the opponent group, though the endeavour is of little consequence, inasmuch as all the warriors protect their heads with headgears well-decorated with human hair, feathers of the Great Hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*) and brass platelets, their bodies with *changvei* (shields made of animal skin), etc. This fact brings to our memory what one soldier said about it: "I need hardly remark that all Nagas' personal decorations have a defensive purpose in view, like our old military stocks and epaulets, and are planned to ward off the spear or axe, while the long hair which is so profusely used, waving about with every movement of the wearer, distracts the eye of the foe levelling his spear at him, and disturbs the aim" (Woodthorpe 1881). The battle rages on noisily with full throated war-whooping for some hours before they go for a brief break to wet their now rapidly drying up throats with rice bear that is in store for them at their respective camps. After some time they resume the fight and continue the same till one of the parties, on losing many warriors and realising the futility of continuing the war, start running away from the battlefield. The judges from neutral villages, who have been watching the battle, then come in between the pursuing and the retreating groups to persuade the former to give up the chase. This action prevents unnecessary butchering of women and children, and save the property of the vanquished party from severe damage.

4.4.2.2. *Shimenrai* (hostage-taking war)
Shimenrai (shimen is the short form of kashimen, meaning 'pulling') takes place when cases like mistreatment meted out to fellow village women who have been married to another village, robbery, failure to pay fine, and so on take place. Here the aggrieved party or village capture as many males as can be caught from the guilty village, and bring them to their village and put them in the wooden stocks until the time an apology is tendered or an indemnity is paid. When such captives are taken, the reason for doing so is intimated to the captives' families who, in turn, appeal to the hanga (village council) to find out means to secure the release of their family members who are in captivity. The hanga then takes necessary action against the perpetrators of the crime, and if a fine is decided upon, the same is exacted from them and pay to the aggrieved village and brings back the hostages. In this way, justice is brought about. In many cases, the captives are bailed out by relatives or friends they are fortunate enough to have in the village who is presently detaining them.

4.4.2.3. Ngathirai (guerrilla warfare)

This is the most prevalent form of war in the Naga Hills and, consequently, claims the maximum number of lives. In this deadly war, along with the perpetrators of crimes, thousands of innocent men, women and children loss their lives for reasons they are quite oblivious of. Most of the time the Nagas do not place their glory in attacking their enemies with open force; to surprise and destroy is the greatest merit of a leader, and the highest pride of his followers. Varieties of tricks and techniques are employed to acquire as many heads as possible from the enemy village and, in case of failure to obtain heads from the targeted village owing to the later preparedness for such eventuality (every village employ guards to protect itself), the parameter of the striking-zone extends
to the surrounding villages who, for no fault of their own, have to suffer from such unprovoked raids.

Once an existence of a state of war between villages is declared, warriors from both these villages try to acquire as many heads as possible from the opponent village either through ambushes on the roadside or attack the enemy village stealthily at an opportune time. The wee hours are usually chosen for the purpose when the enemies will be in deep slumber and, therefore, quite unprepared to defend themselves.

In another form of ambush war or ngathirai (ngathi = hiding), the Tangkhuls in particular serve intimation to the enemy village that its members from a certain time will be killed, whenever an opportunity is found.

Among the Tangkhuls, a successful raiding group celebrates its victory in the house of the commander. An individual who brought a head can also throw a party in his house. In case he is too poor to offer a buffalo, the venue is shifted to the house of one of his clan’s members who can offer the buffalo on his behalf, but here the feast giver takes and keeps the head brought by his kinsman in his makho (place for displaying human heads). The tongue, liver, spleen, lungs, heart, and diaphragm of the killed animal are cooked separately with water which the commander or the head-taker (or the one who gives the feast on his behalf) personally fetches from the village well, for it is prohibited to use anything related with women, namely, their cloths, water brought by them, etc. on such days. He then offers these cooked viscera to the kameo, deity, and prays for more heads. These sacrificial meat can be consumed later by those household elders whose parents have already died.

4.4.3. Why Do They Go For Heads?
The Nagas, like the Ibans of Sarawak (Haddon 1932), though essentially an agricultural people, are warlike and passionately devoted to head-hunting. Their lust for heads and other warlike propensities is remarkable vis-a-vis their usually peaceful habits of being the tillers of the soil. Among the Tangkhuls, the desire to turn out their children into repute head-hunters is so high that they are not allowed to eat chicken heads, lest they behave like chickens and raise their heads often while going for raids and, thereby, the enemies will detect their presence and behead them. To answer the question as to why head-hunting is so prominent and essential in the Naga society, various reasons may be attributed to its large-scale practice.

A desire for reprisal for injuries, the vendetta or blood feud is a very common reason for going on the war-path and bringing home the appropriate trophies. This vindictive spirit prevails to such an extent that a Naga, eventhough the original causes of the enmity have frequently been completely forgotten, waits even up to two or three generations devising plans for decapitating members of a village who murdered has one or more members of their clan; and when opportunity offers, they are sure to take advantage of it, regardless of the personal innocence of the men whom they select as victims of their fury. While killing, the spear is thrust by the killer who uses both the hands for the purpose. When an enemy is killed, the head is immediately cut off by the edge of the spear or dao. The death of the victims is hailed with dances and songs, and the liveliest demonstrations of joy. Even the old men, women, and children seem in ruptures at the announcement of the joyful tidings that their village has succeeded in taking the sweet revenge. A huge crowd with firebrands, and weapons of war then gathered at the village gate to receive the victorious party and the trophies. All the villagers become joyful at the thought of getting more paddy and crops that year, and the aggrieved families, whose members had fallen
victims to the enemies earlier, now that the revenge has been taken.

As it is unthinkable for a Naga not to avenge the death of relatives, in the case of families with the absence of male issues who can take reprisal heads, or a widow, the act of vengeance is handed either to renown warriors or the village council. In such case, the aggrieved individual or party offers *raisa* (*rai* = war; *sa* = meat) consisting of a pig or a fowl, and a pot of rice-beer. Once this *raisa* is consumed, the *hanga* (the village council) is convened where the elders of the village assemble. In accordance with the established customs, a chicken is strangled to death and the omen proving propitious (the right leg being placed over the left while dying), a plan to kill their enemies by surprise is decided on. Each man provides himself with a spear and a machete and, the party being formed, sets out in the day towards the frontier of the enemy which is to be attacked. At night the members of the party cross over and occupy a favourable position in ambush, surrounding the enemy's village. There they sleep, and when the cock first crows at dawn, they rush into the village with great shouting, and kill every body they meet with, sparing no one. They then take with them the heads, hands and feet of those they have massacred to their own village where, accompanied with drums and gongs, they parade about from house to house, throwing rice beer and rice on the acquired heads, and utter all manner of incantations like "Call your father, mother, and relations to come here and join you in eating rice and beer, when we will kill them with the same dao."

They then sing, dance, and perform all sorts of things; pierce and mangle the heads of their dead enemies, and again with curses enjoin them to summon their whole race to suffer the same ignominious treatment. The same scene is enacted for about four days: when the heads being hacked and sufficiently danced about to satiate Naga revenge, the eyes were pierced with bamboo skewers to render the avenging
spirits blind (for they believe that the spirits of the slain follow the heads), they are placed on heaps of sacred stones for five days, and finally suspended from the branches of head-tree or, as in the case of the Tangkhuls, the skulls are affixed in rows on the wall for exhibition.

In a society where migukharangas (migui = human head; kharanga = chopper) are highly respected, warriors often go for heads for the sake of fame. Whatever may be the cause, warriors enter into the enemy village stealthily, usually at night, or lay in ambush at the enemy's paddy field foot-path, and come home with a number of heads. Such heroes are given the right to adorn themselves with a series of ornaments and decorations on their bodies, namely, belts, boar tusks, cowries, earrings, feathers of the Great Hornbill, ivory bracelets, necklaces, pendants, shawls and tattoos, which make their bravery visible to everyone. Tangkhul raikapingas (warriors of distinction who have taken many heads) wear the hair of their victims, suspended from the side of ornaments of the helmet in the first instance and, as they accumulate, made into a kind of fringe worn round the face, like the mane of a lion. Women's hairs are preferred, as being longer. Another reason why women's heads are held in greater estimation is that they are harder to get, as a village in time of trouble sends the men to work where there is danger, while the women work only near the village, so that to get one of their heads entails venturing right up to the hostile village at great risk of being cut off on the return journey. Even if the female members go to far off fields, they do so under male guards. Another reason for desiring women's heads is to cause a permanent reduction of the enemy population; the killing of a man will not affect the birth-rate much, but the killing of a woman will. The desire of the young men, untried as yet, to prove their manhood and gain the right of wearing the warrior's gauntlets culminates in an overwhelming enthusiasm to get somebody's head, which frequently outweighs
all riper considerations of policy and prudence. Villages in this mood too will deliberately provoke hostilities by refusing some act of customary courtesy, and right to the targeted villages.

Another important reason for going into surprise attack against particular villages is because of the protectorate system. Depending on the terms of treaties, the vassal villages give annual raishai (war-tax) in the form of salt cakes, baskets of dried chilly and corn, piles of cotton, buffaloes, etc. to the protecting village who, in the event of attack on these vassals, avenge their defeat and loss.

Success in head-hunting is also believed by the Nagas to bestow many children and good hunting to the village. Heads are also required after renewing the door of the village gate, after making log-drum, and after rebuilding a Longshim (youth dormitory).

There can be little doubt that one of the chief incentives to procure heads is to please women. (It is a taboo to take women while going for war or head-hunting expedition.) Among most of the Naga communities it is indispensable for a young man to procure a skull before he could marry, and the possession of a head decapitated by himself seems to be a fairly general method employed by a young man to ingratiate himself with the maiden of his choice. It is by no means essential that the skulls should be trophies of honourable warfare, or that they should even be taken from the bodies of declared enemies. A skull may be acquired by the blackest treachery, but so long as the victim is not a member of the same village, it is accepted as a chivalrous offering of a true knight to his lady. The fact of a young man being sufficiently brave and energetic to go head-hunting would promise well for his ability to protect a wife. This is, at all events, one sufficiently rational reason for the existence of such a curious custom as head-taking. To succeed on a head-hunting
raid would fairly serve as a mark of manhood and as qualifying for promotion from one stage in Naga life to the higher stage of married man. One British administrator (Davis 1891) observed that "the desire for head-hunting was more the fault of the women than of the men, who were laughed at if they turned out at the village festivals without the decorations assigned to the successful warrior." Success in head-taking is regarded as a token of having passed from adolescence to maturity and, in extension, to marriageable status.

A raid for obtaining head is also a religious affair. The Nagas prepare themselves for the occasion with solemn rites. For example, the warriors seclude themselves from intercourse or speech with women and must live apart for certain period before, as well as after, a raid. The head-takers are not allowed to take anything without cleansing themselves of the defilement supposedly caused by the enemies' blood. After the cleansing is over, they join their fellow villagers for a great feast in which cows, pigs, seijang (Bos frontalis), etc. are sacrificed. Qf the minute rites performed in this connection, the most important one is the prayer led by a khanong (a priest), wishing for capture of more heads like the present ones so that the prosperity of the slayers’ clans and the village continue unabated. The Nagas take omens by dreams, by observing the feet position of a fowl being strangled to death (Mao, Maram, Tangkhul, and Zeliangrong), and by taking a bundle of sticks which they throw on the ground (Angami, Mao, Maram, and so on), and if the sticks fall head over head, and the right foot of the fowl lies over the left, they are being considered as indirect messages from gods that their raids will be definitely successful.

Head-hunting is intimately connected with agrarian rites too. The Nagas believe that heads are essential ingredients in agricultural fertility rites. The heads belonging to villages other than their own is believed to add fertility to the soil; enemy heads and hairs captured by the warriors are offered to
luikameos (lui = paddy field; kameo = deity. In other words "the paddy field spirits") for better harvest. If a work in a new spot for slash-and-burn cultivation is carried out without head sacrifice, besides lives, the luikameo will destroy the crops by either causing drought, sending hailstorms, wild animals or birds. On fertility of human head, Hodson (Hodson 1911) writes: "It must also be borne in mind that the successful issue of a raid at the beginning of the cultivating season brings prosperity to the crops". The Lothas pin a lock of the victim's hair to a post outside the village gate to warm the earth with an enemy's head and, in consequence, increase the harvest. For the same purpose, the Rengmas display the heads along one of the paths leading to the fields under cultivation.

Head-hunting is also closely associated with funerary and eschatological rites. Some Naga communities, like the Kayan and Kenyah societies of Papua New Guinea (Haddon 1932), believe that the persons whose heads they take will become their slaves in the next world. In this case head-collecting would mean for them a wise precaution for the future. The Tangkhul community for one believes that after death those they kill will carry their bag and baggage to the land of the dead or kazeiram. The warriors want to be happy and famous while alive and also after death. This is the reason why there stood several stone monuments over the tombs of warriors representing the number of heads they took while alive.

4.4.4. Origin of Head-Hunting

Most of the Naga communities have long forgotten the genesis of head-hunting practice. When asked, they simply say that 'it is been going on since the day Kasa Akhava (Kasa = creation; Akhava = owner) made the world'. The Aos have a story behind it. They say that at first men did not know how to make war. But one day a bird dropped a berry from a tree, and a lizard
and a red ant fought for it. A man who was watching saw the ant kill the lizard and cut off its head. So men learnt to take heads. The Angamis and Seams say warfare was learnt from the ant, but do not mention head-hunting as learnt from the ant. A Kenyah version of the origin of the custom (op cit) is as follows:

One village chief, Tokong by name, determined to retaliate on a neighbouring community that had killed some of his people, and having made all the customary preparation, he set out with his followers. They started, as is usually the case when going on the war-path, just after the paddy had been planted, as this is the slack season, and paddled down the river and entered the jungle. On the third or fourth day, whilst they were cooking their rice on the band of a small brook, they heard a frog croaking, "Wang kok kok tatak batok, Wang kok kok tatak batok" (tatak batok signifies "cut the neck", in other words, "cut off the head"). Tokong listened to the frog and said, "What do you mean?". The frog replied, "You Kenyahs are dreadful fools; you go on the war-path and kill people, and only take their hair, which is of very little use, whilst if you were to take away the whole skull you would have everything that you required - a good harvest and no sickness, and very little trouble of any kind." When one of Tokong's right-hand man brought home three heads, to their surprise, they found whatever the frog said happened: their retreat was without much fatigue, their paddy had grown knee-deep, and whilst walking through the fields it continued to grow rapidly, and ultimately burst into ear, the lame commenced dancing, and those who had been sick for years were sufficiently energetic to go and fetch water, and everybody appeared to be in perfect health. Seeing all this, Tokong remarked, "The frog was certainly right, and in future we must bring back the heads". And, thus, head-hunting, they say, became vogue among the Indonesians with whom the Naga have a very intimate cultural and anthropometrical affinity.
4.4.5. Treatment Given to the acquired Heads

Different ways are employed by different communities in treating the acquired heads. Among the Semas, after obtaining the heads, a chicken is killed by each man who has actually taken a head himself and the most pre-eminent warrior in the village is called and presented with the head of the chicken in virtue of his office. The human head is then given to this pre-eminent war hero, who now makes a hole through the head from the top of the forehead to the bottom of the skull at the back. After that the lapu (the village burier and who ordinarily conduct personal ceremonies) strings it on a cane and the head is strung up to the top of the planted bamboo at aghu-kutsu-kogha-bo, meaning 'the place of enemy heads', outside the village fence. After that it is a taboo to touch it. The Lothas and Rengmas follow almost similar practice. Among the Aos, any heads taken were brought back to the village and laid on the head of the log-drum, which is vigorously beaten. The heads are then taken to the Tir’s (a war leader’s) house and divided up. If a man had taken a head single-handed he gets the whole of it. If two persons were in at the death, the head is cut in two, the warrior who first speared the victim getting the face half and the second warrior the back half. If a third man had assisted he is given the lower jaw. The heads having been thus divided, each warrior takes his portion to his house and hangs by cane strings to the ends of long bamboo which are planted in rows along the pathway just outside the village or placed against the branches of the head-tree. On the sixth day after the heads were hung up, each man takes down his piece and cleans it and, if married, hangs it up on the outside of the front wall of his house; if he is unmarried he hangs his trophy up in the morung. A man who wounded an enemy but could not succeed in taking his head shows his blood-stained weapon as a proof of his valour, and hangs up a gourd on the head-tree
instead of a head. The Konyaks do almost the same thing. The Angamis take the skulls to each house in the village, and throw rice and spirits over them, and tell the skulls to call their relatives, and he who has cut off the head, keeps it under his bedstead for five days, during that time the warriors eat no food cooked by women and do not cook in their usual cooking pots, and neither do the warriors have any communication with their wives. On the sixth day the heads are buried with face downwards, and a great feast is given of pigs and cows, afterwards the warriors bathe and return to their normal avocations. The Tangkhuls, on bringing heads to the village, carry out the necessary rites, wash them in a pond (specifically meant for the purpose), and place them atop an altar known as raihai (meaning 'a charmstone of war'. Raihai is a quartz pebble kept within the village chief’s compound. It resemble a human skull, and is kept well-covered with pebbles and boulders. When the village intends to go for a war, or a raid, these boulders are removed after proper invocation to a deity by offering rice-beer and meat, and the raihai is observed minutely. If a blood stain is found on it, it is a sure sign that heads of enemy will be acquired ) for five days, during which time the head-takers undergo a process of taboo. On the sixth day the heads are removed from this altar and deposit them at the village chief’s head-shelves (as this house often serves as the youth dormitory). The power, strength, and richness of the chief is known by the number of heads he possesses. The Koireng keep the acquired enemy heads at their village for five days and, on the sixth day, return them to the village to which they belong.

4.4.6. Concluding Remarks

It is, therefore, clear from the above discussion that the head-hunting activities of the Nagas, even if they appear appalling at the face value, have tremendous significance in the traditional Naga society as a determinant of status in the
social hierarchy as well as a means of legitimating their authority within their society. This highly institutionalised violence has also religious sanction, economic and political considerations, and most of all social value and justice.

4.5. DORMITORY SYSTEM

Youth dormitory plays a dominating role in the tribal social organization. This institution is found among various tribal peoples of Africa, Asia and Australia. In India, the Abor, the Bhuiya, the Birhor, the Garo, the Gond, the Ho, the Juang, the Kuki, the Mikir, the Mishmi, the Mizo, the Munda, the Naga, the Oraon, the Singpho, etc., all have this institution under various nomenclatures. Even its function, significance, and organizational structure vary from community to community.

The present work provides the careful documentation of the dormitory system that existed among the Nagas till the early part of the 20th century. This work highlights the various dimensions of Naga socio-cultural norms that centred around the youth dormitory.

4.5.1. Typology

The more than forty Naga communities found in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland in India, and the north-western part of Myanmar have youth dormitories. The socio-cultural, and religious life of the Nagas revolves round it. In the villages governed democratically by a council of elders, the dormitories are the most important and the most architecturally elaborate buildings. Woodthorpe (1876) has given a good description of the Morungs (the general term used in describing the dormitory system of the North-East India) found in the Naga Hills: "The morungs of all the villages in this part of the hills are very much more elaborately carved and ornamented than any others, figures of elephants, deer,
tigers, etc., being carved on all the principle uprights, and in some, life-sized figures of men and women; the weather-boards are carved with figures of birds and fish, and painted in great detail, with red, black, and white stripes, circles and dots. The morungs are divided into three partitions - first, the front verandah, enclosed at the sides; second, the body of the house, containing the sleeping apartments and store-rooms on either side of a central passage: each sleeping-room contains four planked beds, arranged in twos like the berths of a ship, on either side of a small fireplace; third, a large room, open to the small back verandah; this contains a fireplace, with a few planks as seats round it; this room is floored with immense hollowed beams. In the back verandah, which has a low circular roof, are hung all the trophies of war and the chase. The big drum is also kept here."

4.5.2. Social significance

Each Naga village is sub-divided into wards; the number varies according to the size of the village. In each ward there is at least one dormitory. This institution is able to transform the members' spirit of cohesion into military strength. A morung usually possesses a huge war drum of about 9 m to 18 m long carved out of a gigantic single log. This log-gong is beaten with varying rhythm and sound to signify an attack by enemies or a victory at war or a successful mission of head-hunting party, etc. This fact would seem to point to a state of constant preparedness against the approach of an enemy. It is however inconclusive to consider the morung as a guard post only, inasmuch as it serves as a meeting place for the boys and girls, a place in which these young people come together prior to bedtime every night before their marriage, where guests are received, and certain community affairs are discussed and decided upon. Oral tradition, too, is kept alive from one generation to the next through teaching of songs,
dances, and folk tales, and the example of the elders shape the personality of the young people in harmony with the village way of life, developing their sense of love, loyalty, disciplines, social responsibility and duty towards the village. It also forms the caravanserai or inn. On the Naga morung, Horam (1975: 67), a renowned Tangkhul anthropologist, writes thus: "It is in the morung that the boys get all the useful lessons of community living. The morung gymnasium turns out skillful sportsmen, wrestlers and warriors. Here the youth receive invaluable lessons in leadership. They also get acquainted with the history, culture, folklore, songs and dances of their village. The curriculum of the morung is not all work. Playing, singing and dancing are regular if not daily feature of this institution. The morung is, therefore, both a training school in the arts of life and war, and a club for entertainment and fun."

Here one observes that, in the individual as well as community life in the morung, the young men can move between the customs and habits on the one hand and that of their personal experience on the other and, thus, becoming both new guardians of tradition and active participants in the cultural dynamics.

4.5.3. Dormitory System Of The Tangkhul Naga Community

The Tangkhul community calls this institution Longshim (Long = assembly; shim = house). There are two types of dormitories, namely, Mayarlong (gents' dormitory), and Ngalalong (ladies' dormitory). In every society age is used as an indicator of the roles which a person is expected to play. The effect of the age-set system is quite profound among the Nagas vis-a-vis the Longshim (the common name for both dormitories). It creates a distinct set of loyalties which are almost independent of family ties. It provides a way of distributing both authority and labour, and gives both young and old clearly defined roles which are suited to the capabilities of
their age level. It causes young men to act together in important ways, such as in the defence of their village, while leaving most of the decision-making to their elders, whose physical capabilities no longer allow them to take such an active part in the society. Most importantly, it provides for the development of distinct communities of people at all stages in their lives.

Among the Tangkhuls, there is a special youth festival called Yarra which is celebrated group-wise on the basis age-set. Inside the Longshim, as is the case with the general practice of all the Tangkhuls, it is a taboo to sleep with the head facing the sun, i.e. the east.

4.5.3.1. Mayarlong (men’s dormitory)

A person becomes a member of the Mayarlong as soon as he is matured enough to take cattle to the fields for grazing. He sleeps there with one of the bed-groups, and spends his time with fellow members whenever he is not working for his parents’ house and others. He sleeps there till his marriage. Sometimes members, who either want to demonstrate their sexual self-control or to test the chastity of their newly wedded wives or out of sheer shyness to sleep with spouses, prefer to sleep in the Mayarlong. Many of them retain their membership of this dormitory even after years of married life. Such senior members, who possess a clear perception of ways of life, contribute in a big way in imparting lessons that shape the juniors in their endeavours to learn and lead a worthy life. Besides, these torch-bearers of the Mayarlong, by making themselves available for consultation and advice, go a long way in moulding the spiritual and moral characters of the newly initiated youngsters. They also teach them basketry, woodcraft and other handicraft works.
In general, a Longshim contains dozens of big wooden beds known as bedkhoks, each accommodating five to six persons. They are usually arranged in rows with an aisle in between for easy mobility. They use wooden posts, about 62.5 cm in diameter and 2 m in length, to serve as head-rests. These wooden billows acquire the smoothness of horns over the years. Mats, placed over these bedkhoks, act as mattresses and, owing to scarcity of cloths, only thin shawls are used to cover their bodies at night. The fierce coldness of the winter season is battled with bonfires that keep burning throughout the night.

The Mayarlong has its romantic side too; young members learn the language of heart from their experienced seniors. They usually spend the younger part of the night with the village belles in the Ngalalong.

4.5.3.2. Ngalalong (ladies’ dormitory)

A Tangkhul girl joins this ladies’ dormitory on attaining the stage of puberty, and sleeps in it till she gets betrothed, or is expelled from it owing to immoral conduct. Widows and divorced women return to this place and they, by virtue of age and experience, usually handle the affairs of the Ngalalong. There are two or more dormitories for girls in each village, and they are housed by rich families who also act as patrons. Like their male counterparts, they also sleep in groups of five to six in bedkhoks, huge beds made out of single woods.

The Ngalalong serves as a training centre for the girls; weaving, handicrafts, embroidery, etc. are taught and practiced here at night. Besides, the new members also learn about discipline, obedience, social etiquette and other behavioral nuances from the seniors. It, thus, prepares the village girls for their future married life and motherhood.
As dancing and singing play vital role in making life more colourful, emphasis is given to teaching these arts to the girls. Competitions are conducted among the dormitories on various festivals. The use of musical instruments are, however, prohibited for all the womenfolk.

The Ngalalong serves as a meeting place too. It is here that the boys go and enjoy most of their evenings; they often go with their violins and flutes, and sing with the girls, engage them in trifle chitchat, and laughter accompanied with stolen looks every now and then and, thus, discreetly reveal their hearts to their sweethearts. In a society where arranged matrimony is almost unknown, such social sanction for free but clean mixing of males and females in the Ngalalong enables true lovers to come together as husbands and wives.

4.5.3.3. Festival Of The Dormitory

Among the Tangkhuls, a special festival, known as Longra Kashak, is celebrated for a week in the month of November every year in all the Longshims, and it is compulsory for every member to participate in its festivity; a person who fails to take part in the festival is penalized in the form of denial of a dance performed for every deceased member of the Longshim who expired in the preceding months of the year. This unique "farewell-presentation dance", known as Long Mahon (Long = dormitory; Mahon = dance), is performed on the eve of the Longra Kashak. Those persons who died in the current year and who, at one time or the other, participated in the Longra Kashak of a particular Longshim, even though they were not its bona fide members, are also presented with this dance by the members of that dormitory.

Various activities pertaining to the society as a whole and the Longshim in particular are carried out by the longnaobing (members of the dormitory). Helping the poor without exacting
any price, working for the rich for material help, making arrangements for its own needs, and deciding the day of observing the Thisham Phanit (a twelve-day farewell festival for the dead celebrated in December every year) are some of the important works taken up by the Longshim. It is clear from the above discussion, that the Longshim plays a very vital role in the social life of the Nagas. Besides being a guard house, it also serves as a centre of learning, recreation, religious ceremonial activities, and other social activities.

4.5.4. Dormitories of Other Southern Naga Communities

Among some southern Naga communities, separate seats for boys and girls are provided, whereas in others boys and girls sit face to face. At Maram villages, when the boys visit the girls' dormitory at night before bedtime, it is customary for girls to carry these boys on their laps, changing partners from time to time in the midst of chatting and singing (the girls habitually putting their hands criss-cross over their bosoms). The Maos call their boys' dormitory "Ikhuicli", and the girls' dormitory Iloichi. In some Mao villages both the boys and girls sleep under the same roof, the men sleeping on an upper shelf and the girls below them, and the fact that the cases of illegal affairs are rare entails great propriety of behaviour. Amongst both, the Maos and Marams the young men never sleep in their parents' houses but live in a club or watch house, and in this house in the case of the Maram, the younger married men are also to be found. This fact would seem to point to a state of constant preparedness against the approach of an enemy. The young unmarried girls however are never (as amongst the Angamis) found living promiscuously with the young men. Marriage is preserved with the utmost rigidity, adultery being punished by the death of the male offender, and by the woman having her hair cut off, her nose slit open, and deprived of her jewellery and personal property by being returned to her parents.
The Maring Nagas call their boys' dormitory Kathangkhang, and that of the girls Ngakakhang. The leader of the boys' dormitory is headed by its most experienced member called Kathangupa, and the head of the girls' dormitory is called Ngakupa. The boys are free to visit the Ngakakhang, but the girls are strictly prohibited to enter Kathangkhang. If a boy and a girl are found involved in an illicit relation, they have to give a jarful of rice-beer and a pig each to the village council as fines, and if found red-handed while engaging in sexual act inside the dormitory, their parents too are made to pay a pig and a jarful of rice-beer each. In case of illegal pregnancy, in addition to the usual fines, the girl is ex-communicated from her dormitory and made to marry the father of her unborn child. This strict rule is precisely the reason behind the practice of Maring girls in carrying a cloth band each on their persons which they tie to their thighs while going to bed, so that they are protected from men’s sexual encroachment while they are sleeping, inasmuch as lovers are allowed to sleep together in girls’ dormitory.

The Chiru Nagas call their dormitory Chhirbuk. No woman is allowed to enter these buildings which, besides being the dormitories of the unmarried men, are used for drinking bouts. These dormitories have several fireplaces used for cooking and to get heat. In the absence of Chhirbuk, the young men sleep in the houses of well-to-do villagers. These houses have long sleeping bunks in which half a dozen or more young men pass the night. The young fellows help their host in his house-building and cultivation, and once a year he gives them a feast by sacrificing a pig. This custom prevails also among the Zeliangrongs.