CHAPTER 4: Traditional Administrative System and Customary Laws of the Poumals

4.1. Introduction

Every Naga traditional village was an independent political entity. Though the village may be very small in its size and population, it has the basic ingredients of a state. It has territory, population, sovereignty and the government headed by the hereditary Vhe (Chief).\(^1\) The system of governance and administration was to a great extend democratic. According to N. Venuh, “The Naga village enjoys the characteristics of sovereignty equated with Greek “city state” which was a dominion of its own in complete form of parliamentary democracy”.\(^2\)

Like any other Naga tribe, the Poumai traditional village was a well-organized political and administrative institution. Each village was a self-governing and self-administering unit, strictly maintaining its own independent existence. By and large the Poumai village government of the past was a democratic one. It was a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Every village was a small republic having its own Council and Assembly established from time immemorial and is dynamically alive.\(^3\)

A Poumai traditional village was governed and administered by the village Vhe and with his Chiime (Elders Council) comprising representatives from all the lineages. However, for effective governance and administration, a village was segmented into khels or clans, which is composed of a few lineages. A lineage, for the Poumals, is the smallest administrative unit followed by khel. The elders of the lineages and khels have certain powers and functions to govern and administer their respective lineages and khels. There

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\(^1\) The Shepoumaranth in the Naga National Movement, Published by Shepoumaranth Region, GPRN, P. 38.
\(^3\) The Shepoumaranth, op. cit., P. 40.
were also inter-lineages and inter-khels councils formed from time to time as per the need of the time and situation. All the matters relating to lineages, inter-lineages, khels or inter-khels were tackled and taken care of by the respective Elders Councils. However, any matter which was serious in nature and beyond the capacity of the concerned Elders Council was referred to their respective higher councils. Above all, the village Chiime (Elders Council) which was the highest governance and administrative body of the village deals with all the cases which were out of the capacity and jurisdiction of the lower councils. Therefore, the good governance and effective administration of the village solely depended on the wisdom of the Vhe and his Chiime to whom all the powers of the village affairs were vested.

4.2. The Village Vhe (Chief) and its selection

Every traditional Poumai village whether big or small has its own Vhe or King in the Poumai context. Generally, the Vheship was either given to the leader who established the village or was selected among the first settlers. However, one just cannot become a Vhe in spite of possessing very powerful or influential characteristics. The Vheship should be sanctioned by God. To be a Vhe one must be free from any crime and immoral activity and possess good character and manner. According to P. D. Shelly, a man who had eloped with a woman or is physically challenged cannot become a Vhe even though he is the real son or brother of the Vhe. He must be a man who is mentally as well as physically sound to run and protect the village. To select the person who will be the first Vhe of a village, one has to go through a very lengthy and rigorous selection process that continues for years. In the process, the contestants were allowed to sow seeds and rear cock in turn on the basis of one year one contestant. The selection was mainly based on the well growth of the seeds that were sown and the cock reared by each contestant and the overall prosperity of

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4 Interview with Khaie Raoping, (Headman), 07/02/2006.
5 Interview with P. D. Shelly, 20/09/2006.
the village crops, vegetations as well as the fertility of population of both human and animal in that particular year. They believe that only the one favored by God will excel in the competition. After completion of the selection process, the person who was chosen by God was publicly declared as the village Vhe. On that day a village genna was observed as the ascending day of the village Vhe. Since then, the newly ascended Vhe shall remain inside the house and fast until the completion of the fifth day. In the early morning of the sixth day the newly ascended Vhe proclaimed his first order of a village genna and on the same day he will perform a sacrificial ritual known as Tungdangmula by sacrificing a purely black and unblemished ox. This ritual was performed as a supplication to God for successful discharging of all his duties and responsibilities so as to enable him to safeguard his people and bring forth prosperity in the village.⁶

Since the starting of the selection process of Vhe till the completion of the year, the village women folks were put to certain restrictions. During the whole year they were not to stay overnight in other village for being feared of dishonouring their dignity by other villagers. In case any woman is physically dishonoured while holding in other village it is believed that her village will face heavenly wrath and curse. Spinning and weaving inside the village were strictly prohibited lest the village men folks face the problem of inability to run while going for war or hunting and would easily be overtaken by their enemies and wild beasts.⁷ Instead they were to do the same out of the village gate. Further, according to Dasou Ba, the newly selected Vhe remained chaste for three complete years.⁸ Once a Vhe was selected, it is inherited by his descendants. This hereditary right of Vheship can never be sold nor transferred

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⁶ Interview with Shanglong Ngzoni, 11/09/05.
⁷ Interview with Ngao Wakhaao, 12/09/2005.
⁸ Interview with Dasou Ba, 07/07/206.
to any one else except to his heir. In absence of his male descendant, it is
inherited by the closest male relative.\(^9\)

4.2.1. Powers and Functions of the \textit{Vhe}  

The \textit{Vhe} of a Poumai traditional village was the Chief of overall village
affairs and he occupied the highest official position in the village. All the
important village activities were ordered and carried out in his name. The \textit{Vhe}
was bestowed with vast powers most of which were carried out through the
\textit{Chiime}. However, he could not be a dictator as his powers were restricted and
bound by their customs and unwritten laws which were very rigid. He has no
power to overrule those customs and laws and they were to be strictly
followed.\(^{10}\) On the other hand, as the \textit{Vhe} was the hereditary Chief he was not
always the best and the wisest person in the village. As such, he can hardly
refuse to endorse the decisions of the Elders' Council which represents all the
village population. In the very strict sense, like the President of India and the
King of England his powers were more nominal and ceremonial in nature
rather than real.

The powers and functions of the \textit{Vhe} can be broadly categorized under
the following heads:

- Executive functions
- Legislative functions
- Judicial functions
- Religious functions

a) Executive Functions

The \textit{Vhe} (Chief) was the executive head of the village and the Chief of
the \textit{Chiime} (Elders Council). He was assisted by the \textit{Chiime} in carrying out his
executive functions. As one of the foremost and primary duties, the \textit{Vhe} was to

\(^{10}\) Interview with P. D. Shelly, 20/09/2006.
Interview with B. Sone, 16/12/2005.
see and take care of the well being of his subjects and always to listen to their voices and grievances. He was to maintain peace and harmony among the villagers.\textsuperscript{11} He was also empowered to enroll any immigrant to his village as well as to expel any one on account of his disobedience or if they fail to obey the customs and laws of the land.\textsuperscript{12}

In the olden days, when village animosity, feuds and head hunting war were in high pitch among the villages, it was the primary duty of the \textit{Vhe} to pay special attention to the village defense and maintain territorial integrity. He was the Supreme Commander of the village defense. He can declare war against any village. Before the warriors set off their feet for battlefield he blessed them and worshipped God for success in their war mission. He can also conclude peace by sending the members of \textit{Chiime} as his diplomats to warring villages for negotiation and peace treaty.\textsuperscript{13}

Moreover, he was the adviser to the \textit{Chiime} and rendered his advises in carrying out their functions. All the executive powers of the \textit{Chiime} were exercised in the name of the \textit{Vhe}. From time to time, he seeks information relating to the administration of the village affairs from the \textit{Chiime}. He was also responsible to keep himself well versed about their calendar and he fixed the dates of public holidays, festivals, etc.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{b) Legislative Functions}

The \textit{Vhe} was the legislative head of the village. However, the real legislative powers were vested in the \textit{Chiime}. The \textit{Vhe} neither had the power to formulate or amend or alter any law nor to directly involve in the process of discussion of the \textit{Chiime}. As per their tradition, it was taboo for the \textit{Vhe} to attend the assembly of the \textit{Chiime} and deliberate his opinions among them. However, in important matters he can tender his opinions and advices to the

\\textsuperscript{11} Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 10/02/2005.
\textsuperscript{12} Interview with P. D. Shelly, 20/09/2006.
\textsuperscript{13} Interview with Shanglong Ngaoni, 11/09/05.
\textsuperscript{14} Interview with Woba Khazi, 08/08/2006.
Chiime through one of his close members in the Chiime. He can also direct the
Chiime to convene assembly for any urgent purpose and also for amending or
altering any law, which was found inadequate or too rigid or no more
applicable as per the time and situation. Though he was restricted to directly
take part in the discussion among the Chiime, as the legislative head he gave
his consent to all the decisions taken by the Chiime. Without his consent no
decision can become law or be implemented. In case, any decision taken by the
Chiime happened to be overriding any of their customary law, he can redirect
the Chiime for review but such cases rarely happened. As stated earlier, the
customary laws of the Poumais were very rigid, the Vhe was very careful in
giving his consent to the decision of the Chiime. Negating or overriding any of
their customary law will amount to committing sin and they feared for
heavenly wrath and punishment for it.\footnote{Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 08/09/06.}

c) Judicial Functions of the Vhe

The Vhe was the Chief of judiciary and the final appellate authority.
However, all the real judicial powers were vested in the court of Chiime. The
Vhe, as the Chief of the judiciary acts as the principal adviser to the court of the
Chiime and guides the Chiime as per the prevailing customs of their
community. He gave his consent to all the decisions taken in the court of
Chiime. However, unlike the modern court he neither took up any case directly
nor directly involved in any discussion. When a case was indecisive in the
court of Chiime, it was referred to the general body of the village. If the general
body also failed to settle the case, as the last resort and final appellate it was
brought to the court of Vhe for his judgment. In such situation the Vhe appeared
before the general body. However, he was not to be seated among the villagers.
Holding a pair of Lou (scented herb) plants he stood at a corner. After hearing
all the pros and cons from the members and carefully examining them he
declared his verdict. Once he gave his verdict it was final and binding. None can reject or alter his verdict. Beyond him there was no other higher court of appeal. Further, cases relating to village boundary lines and other inter-village disputes were settled in the name of the concerned Vhes of the villages in dispute and with their consent.

d) Privileges of the Vhe

The Privileges enjoyed by the Vhe of a Poumai village were numerous. He was highly honoured, respected and accorded the highest position in all their social and religious gatherings and village festivals. His words were respectfully and promptly obeyed. No criminal or civil proceedings can be instituted against him in any court nor can he be punished for any act done by him in his personal capacity. He was not answerable to any court for exercising his power and performing his duties. He has the right to keep a runner as his messenger. Even though a Vhe did not perform feast of merit he enjoyed the right to wear Hasha, a white prestigious shawl mainly meant for the people who had performed feast of merit. During Zosou, Mouzii, Kiveisou, etc. he received a limb each of the sacrificed animal as tribute. He also received a limb of every wild animal killed by the villagers. During the feast of merit and Sittaopo ritual the Vhe was presented special gourd of rice wine known as Vhe Yaolah (king’s wine gourd) by the performers of the feast and the ritual. He was also the first person to taste the ceremonial wine of feast of merit by saying “God eat first and man next”.

In the construction of the Vhe’s house, all the works from collection of building materials to construction of the house were freely done by the

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16 Interview with Shanglong Ngaoni, 11/09/05.
17 Interview with Woba Khazi, 08/08/2006.
18 Interview with P. D. Shelly 20/09/2006.
19 Interview with Shanglong Ngaoni, 11/09/05.
21 Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 08/09/06.
villagers. On the death of a Vhe a day of village genna was observed. Above all, the most important and the highest privilege enjoyed by the Vhe was the inheritance of his Veship by his descendants or by the nearest kin in the absence of his male descendant.

e) Restriction on the Vhe

The Vhe of the Poumai village performs duties which were more religious in nature rather than secular. He observed a number of dos and don’ts throughout his Veship. Some of the restrictions laid upon the Vhe are as under.

- The Vhe was not to join any public gathering nor deliver speech in any meeting;
- He was not to hold in other village except on unavoidable circumstances;
- He usually did not sit in others’ house. Even if he enters someone’s house, he has to remain standing;
- Clothes bought from market were not worn by him. Instead his clothes were weaved at home;
- He should not go without a shawl and no shawl should be worn inside out lest he would face poverty;
- He was not to take any food or drink prepared by others. In unavoidable circumstances if he holds in other village he has to prepare his own food on a new hearth and with separate utensils;
- He did not use the trees which died a natural death as firewood.
- Any utensil which was used by others was taboo for him to use. His plate was weaved with bamboo or made of gourd and his cup was usually made of plantain leave. Whenever he takes wine a small torn

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23 Interview with Ng. Longkhiya, 12/02/2005.
25 Interview with Shanglong Ngaomi, 16/08/2005.
26 Interview with Woba Khazi, 08/08/2006.
pair of plantain leave was usually put in between the two plantain leaves with which his cup was made. In the similar way his food was usually served on a small pair of plantain leaves that were kept lying inside his plate.\textsuperscript{28}

- The \textit{Vhe} was particular about his diet. He did not eat pork, chicken, meat of deer, stag, boar, bear, monkey, animal killed by wild beast, animal slaughtered on the death of a person or on performing ‘\textit{Ko’} rite. Eating pea, maize, etc. were also restricted to him. Any green leave that was plucked at the tip side by passing the leaves of the base was forbidden to eat.

- On all the genna and other important occasions it was taboo for him to take bath and had physical relation with his wife.

- Besides, unlike other villagers the \textit{Vhe} was forbidden to go to other village for war as well as for peace treaty. Hunting, conducting business, cutting jokes, wrestling, etc. was also taboo for the \textit{Vhe}.\textsuperscript{29}

- The \textit{Vhe} must speak boldly at any time, treat all the villagers as his brethren and children and pay equal treatment to all the subjects without any discrimination. He was expected to use pleasant and sweet words rather than harsh words. As quoted by R. R. Shimray about the Nagas saying: “No cock hurts the chicken and no king speaks roughly”.\textsuperscript{30}

A good Chief successfully performs his duties and properly observes all those dos and don’ts. His good reign is proved by the fertility of human as well as animal population of the year and the abundant growth of vegetations as well as good yield of crops. It is said that during the good reign of a \textit{Vhe}, mushrooms grow flourishingly even on garden fences.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{28} Interview with Woba Khazi, 08/08/2006.
\textsuperscript{29} Interview with P. D. Shelly, 20/09/2006.
\textsuperscript{31} Interview with Shanglong Ngaoni, 09/02/2006.
4.3. The Village Chiime (Elders Council)

The Village Chiime was the next highest governing body next to the Vhe in the administrative and political hierarchy of the Poumai traditional village. It was composed of the representatives of all the lineages of the village in a democratic form. Generally, the head of each lineage is a member of the Chiime and they were known as Yaochimai (original members of the Chiime). To every Yaochimai a Thaipa (accompaniment) was appointed from among the members of the lineage to assist the Yaochimai. Besides, in few cases there were also some other members who became Yaochimai by purchasing the membership from the village. As such, the number of Chiime varies from village to village. Among them the original Yaochimais were the most powerful members. In them all the powers of Chiime were vested and their memberships were permanent as well as inheritable to their descendants. No specific power, however, was vested in the Thaipa except that they were to assist their original Yaochimais and take their place in temporary absence of the latter. They usually did not take part in the assembly of the Chiime unless they were convened or asked to do so. The other members who became Yaochimais by purchasing membership were placed in the lower rank than the original Yaochimais. Though they can participate in the discussions of the Chiime, no Thaipa was appointed to assist them nor did they not enjoy all the privileges enjoyed by the original members. Nevertheless, their memberships were permanent and inheritable.32

4.3.1. Power and Functions of the Chiime

The power and functions of the Chiime may broadly be divided into Administrative, Legislative and Judicial. They are briefly described as under:

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32 Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 10/02/2003.
a) Administrative Functions

The Chiime was the lone and the real administrative organ of the Poumai village-state which enjoys vast powers of the village administration. It was headed by the village Vhe but in most cases the Vhe normally did not interfere in the execution of their functions. As such, it was the prerogative of the Chiime to exercise and execute all the normal administrative functions under the framework of their custom, laws and usages. However, while dealing with important matters, the opinion and advice of the Vhe was sought. They also assisted the Vhe in executing his functions and acted as his agent and spokesmen.\(^{33}\)

The functions of the Chiime were numerous as they covered the overall administrative affairs of the village. In performing their functions, maintenance of administrative justice without discrimination was their basic principle. The Chiime was responsible for building and upholding of peace, harmony and unity among the villagers. It also maintained good inter-village relations. Encroachment of village land by the neighbouring villages were properly checked and controlled by the Chiime. In matter of village defense and security the Chiime was responsible to raise proper village fortifications with proper gates and took up other necessary steps. It also arranged reikho (war sentry) who guard the village from enemies and fire. For the purpose of reikho, a Poumai village was generally segmented on the basis of khel. Each day the concerned Chiime members appointed one or two adult males from each khel for reikho. It was done on roster basis and all the village adult males were bound to perform the duty of reikho.\(^{34}\)

From time to time, the works of public utilities like construction and repairing of public paths, bridges, fortified village walls, fences and gates, water ponds, etc. were conducted by the Chiime. During religious ceremonies, feast and festivals they fast and worshipped God for the welfare and prosperity.

\(^{33}\) Interview with Thang Phupleing Tao, 10/02/2005.
\(^{34}\) Interview with Saothe Sone Tao, 16/08/2005.
of the village as a whole. They also assisted the Vhe and Napao in performing rites, rituals and other religious activities. In times of epidemics, they took initiative to prevent it from further spreading by performing sacrificial rites and restricting the free movement of the villagers. They also acted as the saviours to the poor and hungry and those affected in natural calamities by organizing free will donations from the villagers.\footnote{Interview with Railang Thio, 12/09/2005.} Besides, they were responsible for maintaining and controlling the socio-cultural and other village developmental activities.

b) \textbf{Legislative Functions}

The Chiime was the real and the only legislative body of a Pounmai village-state. It was headed by the Vhe. However, all the powers of formulating new laws, amending and altering of the old ones were fully vested in the Chiime. The assembly of the Chiime was conducted from time to time to discuss about any of the village affairs. Normally, the Vhe did not participate in the assembly of the Chiime. Therefore, any member of the Chiime can initiate the discussion and the decisions were jointly declared on the basis of majority. Like the modern system of cabinet Council the members of the Chiime were jointly responsible for any act or commitment made by the Chiime.\footnote{Interview with Relang Khya, 15/12/2005.}

As the real legislative body the members enjoyed the powers to formulate policies and programmes of the village both in times of war and peace. However, it was obligatory for the Chiime to consult the Vhe in all the important matters and inform him all the decisions taken by it for his consent. Though the Chiime was the lone and the real legislative body, it cannot take any decision that goes against any of the customary law/laws or usages of their village. Therefore, while amending or altering any of their customary law they sought the consent as well as the blessing of the Vhe for the effect. Such
amended or altered law however was usually consented with the performance of a rite by the Vhe along with his Chiime members.  

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c) Judicial Functions

The Chiime was the highest Poumai village judicial court next to the court of Vhe. Unlike the modern judicial courts the Chiime court was a democratic court equally represented by all the lineages of the village. R. R. Shimray wrote, “…in Naga Society the court and its judges were within easy reach of the poor people. Since the poor people compulsorily belong to one clan or the other, they were well represented by the ablest of their clan who looks after the interest of his clan. Thus, no one was ignored in any court case”.

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The Chiime was the real guard and the upholder of their customs, laws and usages. It was solely responsible for proper regulation and strict enforcement of the above. It deals with all the civil as well as criminal cases that arose within the village. Generally, all the minor cases were settled within the lineage and clan or inter-lineages’ and inter-clans’ courts in the most amicable way, which were equally honoured as the judgments of the Chiime. From time to time the concerned elders voluntarily instituted such courts as per their requirement. However, the major and serious cases, which were beyond the capacity of these courts, were tried in the court of the Chiime. While trying any case justice was strictly maintained and judgments were solely made as per their customary laws and usages. They were not only responsible to judge a case and declared their verdict but also to take the course of actions against the wrong doers.

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37 Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 16/08/05.
Apart from being the village court, the Chiime also represents the village and participated in inter-village as well as regional courts while dealing with any inter-village or regional cases.\textsuperscript{39}

4.4. Customary Laws and Practices

Like any other tribal society, The Poumai have their own customary laws that were purely conventional in form. The laws were the common laws and the guiding principles for all the people of the village. They often coincide with ethical norms which direct individual and societal behavior in relation to their society. The well being of the society was measured on the basis of well maintenance of their laws and ethical standards.

According to R. S. Mangang, tribal customs are essentially religious customs in the strict modern sense and they regarded them as the strongest of laws.\textsuperscript{40} Similarly, the Poumai customs were more religious in nature rather than secular. To them, the breach of any law or custom amounted to sin and sins were feared to bring down supernatural punishment upon the heads of one and all. Therefore, it is clear that, every individual was subjected to the customs and laws of the community. As per their belief none of the evil doers can escape punishment either directly meted out from the people's court or indirectly from the Supernatural Being.

Maintenance of their customs, laws and ethical norms was the responsibility of everyone. However, the sole responsibility for the overall maintenance, enforcement and controlling customs, laws and norms of the people were laid upon the shoulder of the Chiime headed by the Vhe.

4.4.1. Laws on Land Management

Traditionally, all the matters relating to land were governed by their customary laws which were enforced by the Vhe and his Chiime of elders.

\textsuperscript{39} Interview with P. D. Shelly, 20/09/2006.
\textsuperscript{40} R. S. Mangang, Meitei Law and Usage, 1988, P.2.
However, unlike the Kuki village Chief who owns and controls all the village land, the *Vhe* of the Poumai village was not the sole owner as well as the sole controller of the village land nor his council of elders. The village land is the common land of all the villagers on which everyone has equal right. The *Vhe* and his *Chiime* were entrusted with the responsibilities of managing and controlling the land from encroachment by the outside villages.\(^{41}\)

A Poumai village land can be differentiated into five zones, namely 1) the homestead zone, 2) the terrace zone, 3) the zhum cultivating zone, 4) the wasteland zone and 5) the forest zone. The homestead and terrace zones are solely owned by the individuals and lineages. The ownership of the jhuming zone is partly with the individuals and lineage and partly with the village community. The wasteland and forest zones, on the other hand, totally belong to the village community. The homestead zone is situated around or nearby the village, which is used for gardening and rearing of fire woods. The terrace zone mainly consists of the gorges and slopes where water are irrigated and terrace cultivation both wet and dry are done. Their lands are well demarcated by rivers, hills and mountain ranges as their natural boundaries with the lands of neighbouring villages. In the absence of these, the boundaries are usually marked by trees and piled up or erected stones at the boundary lines. It is taboo to move or remove the boundary stones. They believed that breach of the taboo usually leads to land dispute between the two land holders and at the same time invites the wrath of the Supreme God.\(^{42}\)

Retrospection of the past reveals that the Poumais followed a very simple system of possessing and owning land. There was no hard and fast rule of law. Whoever established a new village acquired their required sizes of plots, homestead as well as cultivable land. Thus, the land once acquired by an individual and lineage became permanent and inheritable to their descendants.

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\(^{42}\) Interview with Longni Dowang, 22/12/2005.
Transferring of such original or inherited land to outside the village was subject to customary restrictions. In unavoidable circumstances if the land has to be transferred or sold, it has to be informed to the members of its lineage and it was obligatory on the part of the lineage members to procure the land by any means. In case, the lineage failed to procure, the land can be sold to any villager but transferring to outside villagers was strictly prohibited.

The Poumais sometimes lend land specially terrace paddy fields to tenants. In such cases, the tenant has to pay a half or one third of the crops produced from the land as rent. However, the landowner is not a non-cultivating master like the Zamindars of the plains. He himself is a cultivator who leased out only his surplus land, which his family could not manage. So also the tenant is not a landless labourer. He cultivated extra land in order to multiply his granary. In fact, among the Poumais, there is no family or lineage without land or landless labourer nor landlord system like it is in the plains of Bihar, Assam, etc.

Even today, their traditional laws continue to rule over their land. The well known Act, “The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960” is not applied in the hill areas. Section 1(2) of the Act provides that “it extends to the whole of the state except the Hill areas thereof”. Considering the various conditions of the hill areas, which are vastly different from those of the plains and developed areas, the matters of their land are left to be governed by their own traditional laws.43

4.4.2. Laws of Inheritance

The Poumais are purely patrilineal and patrimonial society. In this system, father is the absolute owner of all the properties whether ancestral or acquired and the male children enjoy the full legal rights to inherit all the

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immoveable properties of their parents. The properties are shared among all the male children whereas the best and lion's share generally goes to the eldest son and the original home and plot are usually retained by the youngest.  

Regarding the women's right of inheritance of family's properties, there is no uniformity among the Poumai villages. In most of the villages, daughters have no say and no legal right to inherit immovable and landed properties. Even when there is no male issue in the family, the immovable and landed properties are usually inherited by the nearest male kins. The only properties a daughter may inherit are the moveable properties such as cattle, paddy, household goods, etc. In case she belongs to a rich family, she may be allowed to freely cultivate one or more paddy fields for a period of years or as long as she needs. Any daughter, if remained unmarried, can stay and enjoy the parent's properties and a paddy field or two shall be spared at her disposal where she can cultivate until she dies. In some of the Poumai villages, daughters are conferred the right to inherit certain landed properties of the family, specifically the properties earned by the parents and that do not fall under the khel range. But under no circumstances, the heritage properties of the family are given to the daughters.

4.4.3. Laws of Divorce

Traditionally, marriage of the Poumais was solely arranged by parents with or without the consent of their children. No elopement was known whereas divorce was a frequent case among them. One of the main reasons for this was the fact that many arranged marriages were without the consent of the children which sometimes may lead to mental incompatibilities between the couple. It may also be mentioned that, according to their custom, till the fifth

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44 Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 12/02/2005.
46 Ibid., P. 7.
day of the marriage was over, it was taboo for a newly married couple to have physical relations. It was also taboo for the bride to leave her husband before the end of the fifth day. Within this period of five days of marriage, if the couple found in-adjustable, the woman usually deserted her husband just after the completion of the fifth day and before they shared the real bliss of family life.48

Besides, there were various reasons that usually led to divorce among the Poumai families. Some of the common reasons were poverty due to laziness, barrenness, lack of male child to propagate further descendants, adultery on either side, excessive indulgence in alcohol, ill-treatment, unsoundness of mind, infection with incurable disease, etc. Whatever the reason may be in any divorce, the relatives of both the husband and wife usually intervened to reconcile and compromise the matter. However, if no amicable solution could be arrived at between the couple, they were allowed to separate but with certain conditions and penalties as per the reasons supported while seeking for divorce. When a demand for divorce was made with good reasons in support like having adultery liaison, infliction of inhuman physical torture, etc. all the moveable properties they have accumulated were usually bequeathed to the plaintiff. Conversely, the person who initiated divorce without proper reason in support has to lose all the available moveable properties, which would be taken by the defender. In case of divorce due to barrenness, lack of male child to propagate further descendants, unsoundness of mind, infected with incurable disease, or if both the parties favoured for divorce the moveable properties were usually shared between them. Nonetheless, all the immovable properties always belong to husband and can never be claimed by the wife in any case.49

When divorce took place between a family having children, as per their customary laws, the minor or suckling baby would be with the mother until

48 Interview with P. D. Shelly, 20/09/2006.
49 Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 16/08/05.
she/he attained 3 or 4 years of age. In such cases enough extra properties mostly paddy were bequeathed to the wife for maintenance and rearing of their child or children who would be with her.

4.4.4. Sexual Custom

In the Poumai community, sexual custom is maintained in the very strictest manner. There is no place for illegal sex in the community. Fornication, incest and adultery were serious offences and strictly forbidden. It is believed that persons who had committed incest will easily fall in the hands of enemy and will be mowed down by tiger while going for war or hunting in jungle. It is also believed that the person who had committed incest will be seen as white as a white chicken and can be easily distinguished by tiger even in the midst of thousands of people.

Persons who had committed premarital liaison are usually forced to get married. In case of refusal by the boy he would be severely beaten up and heavy fine mostly paddy or cows are imposed against him. On the contrary, if the girl refused or her parents are not willing to accept the boy as their son-in-law the matter ends there without any fine or penalty.

Pregnancy out of wedlock was considered as a social offence and it was kept strictly checked. Because, such pregnancy was believed to bring ill luck to the village and usually leads to defeat in war, inter-village wrestling and other competitions so also obstructs successful hunting. Therefore, whenever such pregnancy was reported a thorough investigation was conducted to the unmarried women of the village. If any woman is found pregnant she would be

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51 Interview with Thang Phuing Tao, 10/02/2005.
52 Interview with Lakhrei Hriipumi, 05/08/06.
forced to marry with the man who fathered the pregnant child and necessary fine in the form of cows would be imposed against both the man and woman.\footnote{Interview with Khazi Nasi, 05/08/2006.}

Traditionally, the Poumais maintained different calendar for having sexual relation between male and female or husband and wife. To them it was taboo to have physical relations during ceremonial occasions, rites and rituals days, before going for war, hunting expedition and during menstrual period. For the village Chief, it was taboo to have sexual relation on all the days of village gennas, festivals, rites, rituals, ceremonies, etc. Sexual taboo was also observed by the feast of merit performer throughout the whole process of performing the feast which continues for months.\footnote{Interview with Longkhyo Longpam, 08/12/2005.}

4.4.5. Adultery

Adultery was very rare among the Poumais and it was strictly forbidden as it brought great shame and dishonour to the family on the one hand and violates the custom of the people on the other. Adulterers were looked down upon as they had committed great and unforgivable sin by violating their custom. Therefore, whosoever committed adultery was punished with certain penalties.

In case a woman seduced a man the wrath of her husband and in-laws would be showered upon her and she would be thrown out of the family. Then, her rights of ownership over the family properties would be forfeited and she would be left empty handed. In such case the male adulterer usually got free from any trial or penalty. On the contrary, if the action happened to be against the will of the woman or if the man was the seducer he would be either bashed up and crippled by the woman’s kiths and kins or pay a heavy fine of cattle or paddy or both.\footnote{Raoping Ngupani Tao, Customary Laws of the Poumai, (A Seminar paper submitted to the League of the Fourth World People, Kangleipak, in October, 2005).}
4.4.6. Theft

In early days, theft was not known to the Poumais. As such, they were very carefree, their doors were usually unlocked, and paddy barns were stored in un-walled roofed huts built mostly on the slopes beneath the village or outskirts. However, as time passed theft became well known to them in the last century.

According to their custom, if a thief was caught red-handed punishment comprising a fine of a bull or a cow was usually imposed with the refund of the properties he had stolen. In case of failing to catch the thief red-handed or there is no one to be accused of, village ‘cha’ (curse) was usually administered against the unknown thief. On the other hand, if a habitual thief was caught red-handed, as a corrective measure he was bashed up or severely punished by the villagers. In some cases, the hands and legs of the thief were trussed up like a pig or he was trussed against a big pole and was left naked in open field for the whole night without any relief. Over the night, mosquitoes and insects fed on all over his body. Reacting to the bites of the mosquitoes and insects the thief screamed and cried like anything but none cared for him. This punishment was considered as one of the heaviest and the most unbearable of punishments. Even after the punishment he was not to be released unless his parents and relatives or village elders, if he was from outside village, came and rescued him with necessary compensation or fine whatsoever it may be.

4.4.7. Homicide

Homicide was not unknown though not frequently happened among the Poumais. It was considered as one of the most serious cases. However, murder for murder was not the usual resort to settle the case. Instead a very severe and stringent punishment was usually meted out against the criminal. When a person committed homicide, dismantling his house, slaughtering his cattle and

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56 Interview with Kavei Thaipci, 08/08/2006.
57 Interview with Saothe Sone Tao, 16/08/2005.
confiscating his granaries by the victim’s kiths and kins were the usual action. Besides, his family would be banished from the village for a period of years as fixed by the village court. If the family comes back before the end of the period as set by the court, they were liable to be killed without any question or trial.58

4.5. Oath and Ordeals

4.5.1. Chachou (Oath)

Chachou (oath) was one of the Poumai's traditional ways of settling both the civil as well as criminal cases such as land dispute, theft, murder, etc. N. K. Das wrote, “Oath is the act of calling upon a deity to bear witness to the truth of what one says”.59 While dealing with a case, if no amicable solution could be brought due to certain complicacies like when both the parties stood for righteousness or due to lack of evidences or non-availability of proof and the accusation strongly denied, Cachou was administered to settle the case. Generally, it was administered as the last resort to settle a case in human society and invite the heavenly punishment against the wrong doer or the false claimer.

As per the Poumai tradition, Chachou was usually done before the Sun sets by one of the two parties as directed by the court. The person who was asked to take oath came forward with a spear and a pair of lou (a scented herb) plants in his hand and swore the words of Chachou, which were dictated by the opponent party as per the direction of the court. The words used in Chachou in respect of land dispute were usually put as “Deihai adei deimo tazii, ne dei deletzii, akikha khada”. Meaning, “This land truly belongs to me, never to you, if not let the wrath of God be fallen upon my family members”. This statement of Chachou was sworn in front of his opponent and in the presence of the court members. As per the degree of dispute, the range of the members covered

58 Interview with P. D. Shelly, 20/09/2006.
59 N. K. Das, Ethnic Identity, Ethnicity and Social Stratification in North East India, Inter Publications, Delhi, 1987, P. 137.
under the *Chachou* may be augmented so as to cover all the members of the swearer’s lineage or clan or village. As M. Horam said, land disputes are mostly settled by oaths. “The oaths are taken at the scene of dispute usually by biting or eating a small piece of land under dispute. The person swearing falsely runs the risk of either dying before reaping a harvest from the land or of swelling up and dying”.

4.5.2. Cha (Curse)

Cha (curse) is a traditional way of seeking punishment from the Supernatural Being against the unknown thief and other evildoers. Traditionally, *cha* was performed once in a year for all the breach of village customs, norms, taboos, stolen properties, destroyed goods and other criminal activities that took place in that particular year. *Cha* was performed exclusively by the village male elders at an appointed day and time. In performing *Cha*, *Napao* played a very important role. He initiated the process by pronouncing the words of *Cha*. To cite an example, the words of *Cha* usually follow as “Oh… ‘A’ vei hou vaotou puizii khaipotei maipasou-o, houti rahsou-a thai-o, nghimai pheihea sou-o” which means, “Oh… let the person who had stolen A’s chicken not live this whole year; let him cry shriekenly with pain like this chicken and die; let the villagers walk over him”. Then, the *Napao* will pierce the chicken which he holds in his hand with a stick through its anus. In response, the village elders simultaneously pronounced “Oh… *tuwi*” by spiting out their saliva. In the similar way, *Cha* after *Cha* were administered against all the unknown evildoers of the year.

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60 Interview with Kadu Daithrii, 01/10/2006.
62 Interview with Khaie Raoping, (Headman) 07/02/2006.
4.5.3. Hou-pheayu (Spearing)

As per the tradition of Onaeme (Oinam) and its surrounding villages of the Poumai community, Hou-pheayu was practiced as a sort of curse against thieves, criminals, etc. who was not caught red-handed. However, when the footprints of the evil doer were clearly identified, they were kept well covered with a basket and the village elders speared at the footprints in order to bring the life of the criminal or evildoer to end. In fact, spearing at footprint would never inflict him physically. However, according to their tradition and belief, it would inflict his soul directly and at the same time it was also believed that it will invite heavenly punishment against the evil doer so as to shorten his life. This act of hou-pheayu was also initiated by the Napao who pronounced, “Oh... ‘A’ vei thou vaoloupuzii haihure” which means, “Oh... the person who had stolen A’s paddy is here”. Then, the village elders responded “Oh... hun” and simultaneously speared at the foot print of the thief. According to another tradition, they also made effigy of the unknown criminal and speared it in case neither the criminal nor the footprints were traceable.

4.5.4. Dziileiyu (Immersing in water)

Dziileiyu (Immerging in water) is an important ordeal they usually administered to deal with very serious cases. When both the parties stood for rightful claim and do not want to compromise, their right was decided with this ordeal. In this act, a representative each from the two parties simultaneously dived in water and the right was declared in favour of the party who remained immersed in water for a longer period of time. In this ordeal God is assumed as the Chief Judge and as per their belief the righteous will be empowered by God to remain inside the water for a longer period of time whereas the liar or the false claimer will be prevented by God from doing so.

63 Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 19/07/2006.
64 Interview with Woba Khazi, 08/08/2006.
65 Interview with Shanglong Ngaoni, 09/02/2006.
4.5.5. *Seipeipeyu* (Sacrificing of dog)

It is a sort of compromising act or peace treaty. When there is a quarrel or a fight, *Seipeipeyu* (sacrificing of dog) is administered as an act of compromising and a means to prevent revenge or repeat fighting between the two parties. In this, with the eating of the sacrificed meat the two parties will swear oath in the name of God that they will not fight any more on the issue in future. Once *Seipeipeyu* is performed neither of the party dares to take revenge nor repeat fighting. Breach of the treaty is feared for heavenly punishment and early death.

4.6. Laws Related to War and Peace

Once, the Poumai were great head hunters and war like people. There was not even a single Poumai village that did not wage war against a village or more. The warriors who had won more head trophies occupied the higher position of respect in the society. They were adorned with certain warrior dresses and ornaments, which varied from warrior to warrior as per the number of heads taken by each warrior.

However, there are certain rules and laws related to war and peace, which were enforced as per the need of the situation. During the inter-village or inter-tribal war, the women who married to the rival village played very important roles. They were considered as the neutral force and the lifesavers. According to R. R. Shimray, such women acted “like an ambassador and also a mediator if talented. She enjoyed full diplomatic immunity. No one can lay hands on her. She was called the peace maker, the bearer of torch of peace and the Red Cross bearer of Naga inter-village war”.

When two warring groups were heavily engaged in fierce fighting, the women bravely jumped in between, stretched out their arms and stopped the fighting saying “It is enough, too much blood has been shed, and too many lives have been lost. You on my

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brother’s side and you on my husband’s side, stop fighting and let peace prevail from now on for my sake". 67 Thereafter, the control team of women loosen their waistbands and warned the warriors as ‘may the group who initiate fight be fallen as the loosen bands and receive the wrath of God’. 68 After their intervention neither side has the courage to raise the weapons against the other. “If any one of the warriors disobeyed the command … and raise weapon, even if he did not harm anybody, he is considered as an outcast, a disobedient black sheep, a social evil and he received the wrath of all the members of both the warring groups who attacked him. Even if he is killed in this attack, nobody is to be blamed but him”. 69

There were also other persons who worked as the mediators and peace missionaries between the warring groups. They were entitled ‘Chichiyumai’. The title Chichiyumai was given only to the warriors who obtained high social status through their achievement as the real warriors and their successful performance of all the steps of feast of merit. The Chichiyumai enjoyed diplomatic immunity. They can freely move from village to village and “has the discretionary power to declare truce between two warring groups for a maximum period of six months so as to open life line communication for survival”. 70

When a war between two villages can not be stopped by neighbouring villages, the Chichiyumais including those of the neighbouring tribes intervene as mediators and with their discretionary power they declare truce between the two warring parties. A truce normally lasts for six months. In declaring truce the Chichiyumais would pronounce ‘if any one starts war and take life before the collapse of six months from now, may his village be burnt off like the burning of an oily pine wood and the burning of charcoal, may the village be swept away as clean as swept of floor and by breaking a human’s bone he

67 Valley Rose Hungyo, Pukreila, Published in Raisungrian, 2001, P. 19.
68 Interview with S. P. Henry, 04/04/2006.
69 Valley Rose Hungyo, op. cit., P. 19.
70 Raini Pao, Souvenir, Pounai Thonii Celebration, publication, 2002, P. 14.
would say, may the truce breaker be torn apart as the broken of this bone’.\textsuperscript{71} Once, a truce was declared, no one dares to start war until the completion of the truce period for fear of impending wrath against the breaking of the truce.

4.6.1. **Soutouyu (Reconciliation and Peace Treaty)**

When the warring parties wanted to stop waging war against each other forever and build good relationship between them, a peace treaty was usually negotiated. The treaty was normally performed in the month of Khontikhou (March/April) with a grand celebration. It is to be hosted by both the villages one after another.\textsuperscript{72}

As the preparation for the treaty, the *Vhe* and the *Chiime* performed certain rites before the two villages came into contact with. The contact was normally initiated by the *Vhe* and the elders of the larger village who met their counterparts at the gate of the smaller village. Since then, both the elders’ groups would go on fasting until the rite of reconciliation was performed. It was followed by performing of a rite in which a member each from the two groups came forward and simultaneously stepped over an iron rod. While keeping their feet lying over the iron, they offered drops of wine and pray to God for keeping their promises steadfast and at the same time they declare their acceptance of the peace treaty.\textsuperscript{73} During the occasion, no immoral practice was allowed; even the bed lock between the husband and wife was also strictly prohibited. This was followed by grand feasts hosted by the villages one after another.

The feast of Peace Treaty continues for three days. The first day was marked as *Phaohainai*. In the early morning of *Phaohainai* the village male folks took ritual bath from their public pond as a sign of cleansing themselves

\textsuperscript{71} Interview with Kadu Dahrri, 01/10/2006.
\textsuperscript{72} Interview with K. K. Khova, 10/04/2006.
\textsuperscript{73} H. Gideon, The Pumai Nagi Feasts and Festivals and their Relevance for Christian Life today, Thesis for the Degree of B.D., Eastern Theological College, Serampore College (University), Jorhat, Assam, 1994, P. 44.
from all their past immoral activities, evil thoughts and practices they had committed against their warring villagers. Then, they offered rice-wine to God. A cock was also sacrificed by those who would lead the villagers to their counterpart village for peace treaty and its celebration. Once, the feast of treaty was started the villagers observed strict genna by abstaining from all the field works, including collection of fire wood, fishing, spinning, weaving, etc. until the celebration is over.

The second day is the main feast day in which morning all the adult men folks went to the host village for celebration. While taking their journey for the feast neither any person nor any animal was allowed to interrupt their journey by crossing their way lest the village faced misfortune or death of villagers. If any body happened to cross their way intentionally he would be either beaten up to death or lock of his hair was plucked and a rite known as ‘Kishu’ was performed on it. It was believed that the person on whose hair kishu was performed did not live for the whole year. Similarly, if any animal happened to cross their way it was also chased and killed by any means. The restrictions were equally applied while returning home from the feast.

When the feast goers reached the host village the elders of both the villages were served cool and clear water in plantain leaf cups. As the elders were holding the water cups they once again declared the acceptance of the peace treaty by saying “From today, we shall live together and remain as cool as this water and shall not fight against each other anymore”. This declaration was the most important part of the treaty and it opened a good opportunity for them to remove the enmities and develop good friendship. Just after the declaration of this Peace Treaty, spears were exchanged between the two villages’ elders and the eldest of every khel was gifted with a spear each. This exchange of spears was a sign of giving up their weapons, which were used

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74 Ibid., P. 44.
76 Interview with Saothe Sone, 16/08/2005.
77 Interview with K. K. Khova, 10/04/2006.
against each other on the one hand and to develop good friendship and build co-operation in times of need on the other. After that, every adult male of the host village came forward and picked up a guest each as their friend for life. In case, the guests over numbered the host villagers, the village Councilors would pick two or three each and no guest was allowed to be left alone without partner or friend. The guests were then taken to their respective friend’s house and warmly treated with special drinks and dishes of various items such as chicken, pork, fishes, etc. The celebration continues by visiting various houses and in some cases the whole village along with the guests feast together with rice-wine and special dishes at an open village ground. This was a very lavish and grand celebration, which continues until the guests were sent off.  

The third day was known as Shepaoyu. On this day guests were sent off with special food packs and gourds of the best rice-wine. As the guests started their journey from their host village until they reached home utmost care was taken so that no one or no animal interrupted their journey or crossed their way in front or in between them.  

After declaration of peace treaty and holding the feast, none of them was expected to repeat waging war. Anyone who broke the solemn treaty would face the curse of God in the form of epidemic and natural calamity that would depopulate and impoverish them. Hence, with reverence and sincerity they keep their promises.  

On the day immediately after the celebration, a genna is observed in order to keep them clean and holy. On the day all the village men folks go for hunting. Killing of any game on such occasion was considered good and blessed and the whole clan of the killer will be free from diseases of any kind.

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78 Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 19/07/2006.
79 Interview with Shanglong Ngaoni, 09/02/2006.
for the whole year.\textsuperscript{81} In case no game was hunted on the day, the whole villagers observed more day or days of strict genna and hunting continued until they procure a game. A few days later, the villagers who went to the other village and had enjoyed the feast celebration shall organize a similar feast for the men of the village where they had enjoyed the feast earlier.\textsuperscript{82}

4.7. The village Dormitory

A number of prominent writers have given various accounts of dormitory system that existed among the different communities in different countries as well as among the tribal community of India. This dormitory system also prevailed among the Poumai Naga community in the past. It is commonly known as \textit{Khechouziibu} and \textit{Loucohziibu} for boys' and girls' dormitory respectively. Unlike other communities, the Poumai neither used the \textit{Vhe's} house nor constructed a separate house for the dormitory. Any big house which can accommodate a group of boys or girls was generally used for the purpose, provided the landlord is willing to spare room for the same. The middle room was generally used as dormitory and the landlord occupied the last room of the house. The head of the house was the natural head of the dormitory who watches and controls all the movements of the inmates. Below him the senior inmates supervise, control, and discipline their juniors.\textsuperscript{83}

Every young boy and girl joined their respective dormitories when they reached the age of puberty or earlier if so desired. Unlike the Tangkhuls, there was no compulsion for any one to join the dormitory. However, it was a shame for the grown up boys and girls who did not join their respective dormitories. They were mocked and looked down by their community members for still being living under their parents care. They were also considered weak and

\textsuperscript{81} H. Gideon, op. cit., P. 46.
\textsuperscript{82} Interview with Shanglong Ngaoni, 09/02/2006.
\textsuperscript{83} Interview with Khaie Railang, 06/02/2006.
timid who could not mix up with the people belonging to their respective age groups.\textsuperscript{84}

In the dormitory, strict decorum and decency was always maintained. For them, dormitory was the center of youth for educating them with folklores, legendary tales, songs, culture, social behaviour, discipline, etc. It was also a training center where boys were trained in cane, bamboo and wood works and girls learnt the art of spinning, weaving, knitting and stitching. For the Nagas, a morung (male’s dormitory) was the pivot around which the social, religious, educational and cultural activities of the young people revolve. The morung and the ladies’ dormitory are therefore rightly called the Naga schools. It is in the morung that the boys get all the useful lessons of community living. The morung gymnasium turns out skilful sportsmen, wrestlers and warriors. Here the youth receive invaluable lessons in leadership.\textsuperscript{85} He further said, morung was a training ground for all lessons where they were taught the important and invaluable lessons of discipline, hard work and the spirit of services. Milanda Ganguli termed Morung as an asylum where even the most notorious criminals find refuge.\textsuperscript{86}

For the Poumai, dormitory was also a place for recreation and entertainment where boys and girls spend their leisure singing, dancing, playing, relating stories, exchange pleasantries and cutting jokes. According to R. S. Dowang, it was indeed the happiest period for the Poumai youth. To them, dormitory was the paradise in the world; one cannot even sleep at night if he missed the chance of attending the girls’ dormitory even for a single night. It is the place where they chose their lovers. But pre-marital sex was strictly prohibited and also not found among the Poumais as they can marry when they wish to.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{84} Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 19/07/2006.
\textsuperscript{85} R. R. Shimray, op. cit., P. 196.
\textsuperscript{86} Milanda Ganguli, A Pilgrimage to the Nagas, Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1984, P. 72.
\textsuperscript{87} R. S. Dowang, The Poumai Nagas, (an unpublished manuscript).
4.8. The Poumai Calendar

The Poumai’s calendar is a lunar calendar. Like Gregorian, it has four seasons but the number of months differs from twelve to thirteen and they do not generally coincide with the Gregorian calendar.

The counting of the month days is totally based on the waxing and waning of the lunar moon. Their counting starts from one and rises till it reaches twenty. From there downward counting follows starts with nine, eight, seven, ... till one or zero alternately as per the decreasing faces of the moon. Normally, the fifteen day of every month falls on the full moon day and the zero day falls on the day when the moon face is totally invisible. As such, the total days of a month generally comprise twenty nine to thirty days and the twelve months of the Poumai’s calendar do not generally coincide with the Gregorian calendar. Therefore, as a rule, the month of Laokhou (June) in which heavy cultivation works are taken up is usually doubled after every second year in order to reset the months in proper seasons. However, some of the Poumais of northern region do not follow the downward counting of month days. Instead their counting end at thirty of every month.

Week and weekdays were not known to the Poumais of the past. It was introduced among them with the advent of Christianity and modern education. The seasons, months and weekdays according to the Poumais are listed as under:

4.8.1. The Seasons:

1. *Kaa* - Spring
2. *Hou* - Summer
3. *Teisai* - Autumn
4. *Sai* - Winter
4.8.2. The months:

1. Thoniikhou - December/January
2. Siipakhou - January/February
3. Roupakhou - February/March
4. Khoniikhou - March/April
5. Khaniikhou - April/May
6. Ziiikhou - May/June
7. Laokhou - June/July
8. Laikhou - July/August
9. Nghekkhou - August/September
10. Zalepokhou - September/October
11. Doropokhou - October/November
12. Doniikhou - November/December

4.8.3. The weekdays:

1. Ratho - Sunday
2. Tapa - Monday
3. Fiikha - Tuesday
4. Thaoso - Wednesday
5. Vekou - Thursday
6. Kizii - Friday
7. Hapha - Saturday

*Source: Poula Bvi Araipu (Premier in Poula) Published by Poumai Literature Committee, 2004.*

4.9. Conclusion

The traditional village administrative system of the Poumais headed by the *Vhe* and his *Chiime* was to a great extent democratic. This traditional system continued till the introduction of the modern
democratic system in the administration of the tribal villages. With the introduction of the Village Authority Act, 1956 and the Manipur Hills Areas (Acquisition of Chief Rights) Act, 1967, great changes have taken place in the administrative system of the Poumai villages. The traditional village administrative body consisting of village Vhe and his Chiime was replaced by the institution of the Village Authority which was established under the Village Authority Act, 1956. So also, all the powers and functions of the traditional village Vhe and his Chiime were taken away by the elected Chairman and members of the Village Authority. Further, the traditional practices of the people such as war and head hunting, dormitory system, oaths and ordeals, etc. have become the story of the past. The disappearances of the past things are due to various factors which are being discussed in the later chapters of the thesis.