Chapter VI

Conclusion

This chapter discusses the summary and major conclusions based on the study. The Angamis had well established socio-political institutions often linked to religious, political, judicial and economic functions to run the affairs of their society. Indeed, the socio-political institutions were the principal component of the Angami society. The study of the working of Angami socio-political institutions reveals that they covered almost all the conceivable needs of a person from birth to death, representing the force of authority and legitimacy. These institutions lay anchored primarily in customs and traditions, and the incumbents acted as the legitimate upholders and interpreters of the scope and contents of the tradition. The *Phichii Kehou* (Informal Council of Elders) carried out the administration of the village according to customs and practices. The concept of rule of law was thus a concept alien to the people, although free and formal discussions formed the very backbone of the Angami society. This has led many writers to consider the traditional Angami system of administration as democratic or very close to the modern concept of democracy. However, it would be incorrect to call it as democratic in that the traditional Angami society never experienced an
established government in the modern sense, nor was inclusive in that the titles and functions of traditional leaders were by inheritance passed on to male successors of one clan thereby excluding the other members of the clans. The Angami socio-political institutions was marked by strong patriarchal values where there was gender inequality not only in decision-making but also with regard to the division of labour, ownership of property and even with regard to religion. Additionally, access by women to traditional leadership was limited because they could not inherit titles. The legitimacy of the traditional authorities of the community under study was rooted in customs, traditions history and culture, often combined with religious/divine reference. Traditional leaders claimed special legitimacy in the eyes of their people because these institutions were seen as embodying their people’s history, culture, laws, values and religion. Since many of the traditional leaders held their positions inherently for life, the possibilities of sanctions were restricted. Authority of age was also greatly respected. Moreover, the brave warriors and hunters were also held in high esteem in the village. The Angami society was a close knit one with strong bond of kinship. Clan was an important unit of the village in the traditional society. There was a strong emphasis on cooperation and harmony. Their identity as a group was always more important than their identity as an individual. The traditional values continue to persist under the new democratic setting.
The Colonial rule brought about a number of changes on the socio-political institutions of the Angamis through the institutions of Gaonburas, Dobashis and District level administration. The office of Gaonbura introduced by the British to assist the Colonial administration virtually acted as the village headman. The customary hold of the Angami elders over the village began to decline as the appointment of Gaonburas for life not only brought in an element of extra village authority but also infused the concept of chiefship, which was unknown in the Angami society. Similarly, the office of the Dobashis, which was introduced as a native team of intermediaries between the government and local people in 1869-70 were at the same time employed as judge in the village to settle heinous crimes including murder. They also advised the British officers in the settlement of cases according to the customary laws of the local people. This had affected the powers of the Phichü Kehou or Informal Council of Elders, which covered executive, legislative and judicial before the advent of the British. The British government determined the powers and functions of the Dobashis. The Dobashis served both as an instrument of pacification on the Angamis and as a native team of intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled. The third office adopted by the colonial administration was the District level administration. The study reveals that the Europeans exclusively held these offices and as a result, a non-Naga began to involve in their village administration for the first time. In addition, this
was a new development in that historically there had been no district level council in the traditional Angami society. The introduction of district level administration restructured the traditional political institutions of the Angami in that the village elders who enjoyed supreme authority without any interference was demolished. The traditional Angami institution of *Phichü Kehou* largely lost their customary meaning as the officials of the British government gained direct control over the people in several aspects.

The Nagaland Village and Area Council (Second amendment) Act, 1990 established a single tier local system known as the Village Council on the pattern of traditional village administration. Significantly, the method of choosing the members of the Village Councils continues to be in accordance with the prevailing customary practices and usages. However, one significant change has been that unlike the Council of Elders in the traditional Angami society, the members of the Village Councils are chosen for a five-year term. The reservation of one-third of the total members of VDBs for women and the provision for utilisation of twenty-five percent of the total grant to the village for women’s programmes is a major change in that the traditional institutions had shunted women to domestic arena rather than involving them in the decision-making process. In addition, the functioning of Village Development Boards is more transparent than the traditional village administration because it is mandatory for all Village
Development Boards to hold monthly public meetings for review and monitoring of ongoing projects. However, the Village Development Boards revived the colonial pattern of administration in that it makes the Deputy Commissioner (DC) or Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) of the district as the Ex-officio Chairman.

The study reveals that the establishments of Village Councils and Village Development Boards have not only replaced the limited functions of the traditional village hierarchy but also shifted to wider and modern trend of ‘development administration.’ While the Village Council is part of the traditional milieu of the Angami society, the Village Development Board is an effort at dovetailing the former into a development framework. In contrast with the traditional socio-political institutions of the Angamis, the Village Councils and the Village Development Boards has enlarged the scope of community participation in development and welfare programmes. The Secretary of the Village Development Board is also made the members of the Communitisation programmes. The main qualifications for a member in both the bodies are no longer based on age, gender and lineage as it was in the traditional society but on having knowledge of the administration of the village and government offices.

The study reveals that The Village Council and Village Development Board are structurally strong, although functionally, there is a dichotomy between them.
The Village Council has strong recognition rooted in tradition and is able to exercise influence on traditional spheres of land and family disputes, social and cultural sanctions, etc, but it has not been so successful in appropriating the Village Development Board structure to take control over development resources and activities. Thus, there is a dichotomy at the village level wherein the strong traditional structure is unable to benefit from its advantage when it comes to the development processes offered by the state. In case of transgression in the social sphere, the Village Council was able to pass strong sanctions, but in the development arena, they have not demonstrated any such sway to bring to book the offenders.

The changes brought by Christianity, education, Angami elites and changing economic activities on the socio-political institutions of the Angamis is another important aspect of the present study. The study reveals that the effects of Christianity were more on social and religious institutions rather than political institutions as it aimed at transforming the socio-cultural and religious lives of the people. The institution of *Kichüki*, which was an important youth organisation, began to decline as the Christian missionaries forbade boys to attend *Kichüki* since they regarded everything done in connection with the tribal ceremonies and festivals as an act against Christianity. The most significant contribution of Christianity was putting an end to the practice of head hunting. As a result, the
role of Themumias lost their importance, as the question of consulting them in matters of head hunting does not arise. The authority of the Phichui-u/Zievo and Kemevo lost its importance with the coming of Christianity as the convert Christians began to defy their orders since they gave primary importance to membership of the Church. The disappearance of certain institutions and festivals because of Christianity also undermined their position largely, as many Christian youth organizations are operating with the village pastors as their leader. Unlike in the past, the present day Christian leaders are not in favour of discarding the customs and traditions of the tribe. To such leaders, Christianity being above all cultures should have a place in every culture.

Education has led to the growth of educated persons who were responsible for forming both secular and religious organizations beyond village levels. This was in contrast with the socio-political institutions of the Angamis, which were limited to clan and village. Although the traditional leaders are sometimes consulted on issues relating to customary laws and practices, they are no longer the sole authority to decide the affairs of the village but are dominated by other members who are more educated (modern education) and enlightened than the traditional council of elders. The pre-colonial trade, which was mainly based on barter system gradually changed to cash medium during the colonial period. Today, Naga men and women work in large number as government employees
and in other professions. A large number of Angamis run business, importing huge quantities of foreign articles from neighbouring states and countries. Thus, changing economic activities in many ways affected the traditional youth institutions such as Peli and Age-system that were the backbone of social and economic development in their traditional society. The role of Tsiakrū-u, Tekhusekhrū and Liedepfū in performing ceremonies in agricultural fields also ceased.

The emergence and growth of elites in the Angami society have been attributed to Christianity, changing economy and education. The Angami elites primarily constituted of the salaried bureaucracy, businessperson ranging from affluent government contractors to big shopkeepers and persons belonging to the various professions such as medicine and teaching. Among these sections, the bureaucracy is the most important. The Angami elites became instrumental in bringing political consciousness beyond the village levels as they along with other Naga elites spearheaded the formation of Naga Club, Tribal Council and the Naga National Council. The traditional elders had very little mobility and each village had to fend for itself. They were conscious of family, clan, kinship and attached great significance to traditional rituals. Today, almost every family has an educated person who influences their parents, villagers and the members of statutory bodies and the traditional leaders. The elites are the driving force of the
socio-economic-political activities because of their education and monetary power. However, the elites in many cases become exploiters of the masses. The formation of the Angami Gazetted Officers Union is one such example of elites replacing the physically brave men. Since the elites are economically powerful, they are respected than the traditional leaders.

The last aspect of the study relates to the relationships between the values of democratic politics and values of socio-political institutions of the Angamis. The study reveals that elected representatives, free and fair elections, freedom of expression, free media and freedom of association and inclusive citizenship, among others characterize the values of democratic politics. On the other hand, the values of the traditional socio-political institutions of the Angami was characterized by the rule of male elders, respect for seniority of age, group solidarity, physical strength, patriarchy and gender inequality in terms of division of labour, property ownership and decision-making. Thus, the study has shown that the values upheld by the traditional institutions are not compatible with the values of democratic politics. In spite of all these variances, the study reveals that the conflict between traditional leaders adopting a revivalist stand, and those deviating from it does not arise. The issues concerning decentralization and devolution of power and responsibilities to traditional institutions have not generated debates and controversies. The study reveals that the relationship
between the two values has not generated any political problem because the Angami elites are able to generate economic, political and social capital and have access to positions of authority in democratic governance. Yet, a sense of ownership of modern system is still missing in many parts of the state, including the areas of our study. This is evident from the study that some clans still accept the traditional authority for settling land disputes, religious or social matters at *khel* levels in spite of the existence of statutory bodies at the village levels. The study also reveals that the traditional values that profess group assertion, kin-protection and collective efforts continue to influence the working of constitutional and community-based bodies as community in many cases acquires precedence over individuals. Thus, while the statutory bodies and community-based organisations are modern and constitutional in form, their behavioural content is traditional.

The major findings of the study are;

1. As shown in chapter II, the traditional socio-political institutions of the Angamis were structurally patriarchal in that politics was based on two principles: only the male elders referred to as the ‘wise men’ should rule and other male elders of *Putsano* within the *chienuo* should participate in ruling. The Angamis had neither a formal council nor a chief but had an informal council locally called *Phichu Kehou*, as the supreme authority of the village administration. The Angami system
of administration was more democratic than any other Nagas as all the male elders of the village had the right to participate and express freely on any matter relating to the village.

2. As shown in chapter III, the powers of the Angami Phichu Kehou declined with the introduction of Dobashis and Gaonburas, as the latter began to settle heinous crimes including murders, although the former continued to settle land disputes, religious or social matters at khel levels. The introduction of district administration was a new development in that, historically, there had been no district level council in the traditional Angami society. The district administration restructured the traditional Angami polity, as the village elders who enjoyed supreme authority without any interference had been demolished. The offices of Gaonburas, Dobashis and district administration introduced by the Colonial rule for consolidating their position continue to the present.

3. As shown in chapter III, the Village Council revives the traditional pattern of village administration. However, unlike in the past, its members including the chairperson are chosen for a five-year term, subject to dissolution by the state government. Further, the method of choosing the members of the Village Councils continues to be in accordance with the prevailing customary practices and usages. The traditional leaders are recognised only as the Ex-officio members of the Village Council. The Village Development Boards, which provides for one-third
of members to women, is a major change in that the traditional institutions had shunted women to domestic arena rather than involving them in the decision-making process. The functioning of VDBs is more transparent than the traditional village administration because it is mandatory for all VDBs to hold monthly public meetings for review and monitoring of ongoing projects. The concept of Communitisation programme has excluded the traditional leaders, although it has representatives from various Churches, Women, VDBs, educationists and head of Primary schools as its compulsory members. The main qualifications for a member in VC, VDBs and Communitisation Programme is based on having knowledge of the administration of the village and government offices and not on seniority of age, gender and lineage as it was in the traditional society.

4. As shown in chapter 1V, the customary laws and practices that are considered in consonant with Christian ethos still exist. The customary law of inheritance by the youngest son still exists. *Peli,* (Community labour) though still practiced has declined because of the changing economic activities. *Kekinyi/Diplomatic Feast or Feast of Friendship,* which was an important social institution for renewing and sustaining strong and better relations and unity within the *chienuo* or between different *rūnas* continue to the present. However, contrary to the earlier practice of exchanging spears, Bibles are exchanged now. *Themumia’s* advice and *leadership* in matters of waging wars, head hunting, hunting, journeys etc. ceased to exist
with the advent of Christianity. The socio-religious role of Phichü-u or Zievo and Kemevo has now been taken over by the Pastors and other Church leaders. Marriage (Kiya) within pfutsano and between two closely related kindred on the females’ side, which was forbidden, is now found in the Angami society. The Theme (marriage price) ceased to continue, although Thesa, (a gift in cash and kind) to the girl’s Thethsu (age-set system), still exists. Seniority of age is still considered an important factor in the village affairs.

5. As shown in chapter V, the modern democratic system of choosing representatives through majority votes is adopted by Angami Students Unions, Angami Public Organisation and Angami Women Organisation. This has shown that the Angamis are largely supportive of the modern democratic practice of choosing representatives through voting as against the traditional way of gaining positions of authority through might or through heredity. However, the traditional values of socio-political institutions that profess group assertion, kin-protection and collective efforts continue to influence the working of constitutional and community-based bodies as community in many cases acquires precedence over individuals. Thus, although the statutory bodies and community-based organisations are modern and constitutional in form, their behavioural content is traditional.
6. There has also been a great imbalance in the representation in terms of gender. The traditional values of gender inequality in terms of division of labour, property ownership and decision-making undermine the equality of sexes, which the values of democratic politics seek to promote. The persistence of the traditional value of respect for elders also seems to have prevented the young educated and vibrant people from taking active part in important decision-making bodies. The establishment of the new democratic institutions has not brought about a corresponding change in the attitude and values of the people. The people do not seem to have internalized the values of democratic politics. The Angamis still cling to their traditional ideas and values, which often render the rule of law meaningless as group interests often stand in the way of individual freedom and rights.