Introduction

Socio-political institutions existed in all societies representing as the force of authority and legitimacy. These institutions largely remain a conservative force to the aspirations of the people. Nevertheless, they did play a unifying role in the society by providing leadership and ensuring group solidarity. The study of socio-political institutions have attracted the attention of policy makers, researchers and social scientists due to increasing interests in and support for decentralization. In different parts of Northeast India, there has been unexpected return to prominence due to the re-invention and resurgence of traditional socio-political institutions. Additionally, many communities in Northeast India have been demanding for constitutional recognition of their traditional institutions.

Predominantly settled in Kohima district, the Angami tribe is one of the major tribes of Nagaland constituting approximately 7.2 percent of the total population of the state according to 2001 census. The Angamis had well established socio-political institutions to run the affairs of their society. Indeed, the socio-political institutions of the Angamis often linked to religious, political, judicial and economic functions were the principal component of their society. In less than a century, the Angami society has changed from head-hunting to soul saving, from barter system to monetized economy and from traditional tribal political ethos to representative democracy. Nevertheless, their traditional socio-political institutions continue to operate along with modern democratic institutions even after more than forty years of Nagaland’s statehood. The existence of different authorities competing for control over resources and power
resulting into confusion and confrontation at different levels is a reflection of the crisis of governance. While some sees the traditional socio-political institutions as backward instruments of social oppression, exclusion, domination and a historic burden on the road to modernity, others see them as representing the indigenous system of governance with local legitimacy. Therefore, it is important to examine not only the changes that have taken place but also to analyse what has not changed in the socio-political institutions of the Angamis of Nagaland. The present study examines the working, continuity and change of the traditional socio-political institutions Angami Nagas.

Survey of literature

The initial studies of the Angamis were undertaken mainly by the British administrators, Surveyors, Defence Personnel, Christian missionaries and travelers based on their personal visit to the area, their notes on specific points, dairy and acquaintance with the people. However, some scholarly studies were carried out before and after India’s independence. J. H. Hutton’s *The Angami Nagas* (1969) Reprint, considered by many as the most comprehensive work on the Angamis mainly dealt with the Western Angami, neglecting other three groups of the Angamis. In addition, his description of Angami administration as a pure form of democracy was far from truth as the traditional Angami administration excluded women from meetings and other forms of political participation. *The Angami Nagas and the British: 1832-1947* (1999) by Atola Changkiri, gives an account of the geographical, ethnological and historical background of the Angami Nagas and their relations with the British. *The Angami Nagas* by Renu Suri (2006) is perhaps the first in-depth study on the Angami Nagas from the physical anthropological point of view. However, the book deals with more on the ethnic position of the Angamis by comparing their physical traits with those of the other Naga tribes of
Nagaland and other major tribes of Northeast India namely, Khasis, Mishings, Kacharis, Adi Mishings, and others.

Thus, most of the existing works on Angamis have been based on British official sources and writings of ethnographers. Whatever has been written on the socio-political institutions of the Angamis have been descriptive. The existing works have not examined the changes brought about by the British rule with the emergence of Christianity, education, Angami elites, Village Council, Village Development Boards and the values of democratic politics on socio-political institutions of the Angamis of Nagaland. A study of this kind is expected to provide us with a clearer picture of the nature, continuity and change of the Angami traditional socio-political institutions.

Objectives

The objectives are:

1) To study the working of the socio-political institutions of the Angamis
2) To examine the changes brought about by Colonial rule, Village Council and Village Development Boards on socio-political institutions of the Angamis.
3) To analyse and examine the changes brought about by socio-economic factors on socio-political institutions of the Angamis
4) To study the relationship between the values of democratic politics and the socio-political institutions.

Universe

The Angamis are divided into four groups namely Western Angami region, Northern Angami region, Southern Angami region and Chakhro Angami region. Since it is impractical to take up for study all the villages of the four groups, one of the biggest
villages from each of the four Angami regions had been chosen as the universe of the study. Thus, four villages namely Jotsoma from Western Angami region, Chiechama from Northern Angami region, Viswema from Southern Angami region and Medziphema from Chakhro Angami region had been selected to see the working, continuity and change of the socio-political institutions of the Angami Nagas. Jotsoma village, one of the biggest village in the Western Angami region, 8 kms away from Kohima has 794 households. Chiechama village consists of 882 households, 29 kms away from the state capital of Nagaland. Viswema village, which is one of the biggest villages in the Southern area of Kohima district, consists of 1150 households. The distance from the capital to Viswema village is about 22 kms. Medziphema village with 270 households situated under Chakhroma area of the Angamis is 44 kms away from the state capital. All the population figures are according to 2001 census of Nagaland.

**Data and Methodology**

This research work has made use of primary and secondary sources. The primary data includes data generated through interview, government documents and publications, relevant records of Village Councils and Churches, Youth and Women organizations. Secondary sources has been drawn from dissertations, theses, seminar papers, relevant articles appearing in newspapers, journals, memoirs, books and commentaries on the socio-political institutions of the Angamis.

An attempt was made to identify and examine the working of Angami traditional socio-political institutions and values associated with them through an analysis of information available in the existing literatures. To supplement this, unstructured interviews were conducted with 40 persons consisting of *Krūna* (non-Christians).
Phichu-u, (Head Priest) Kemevo (Religious Priest), Tsiakru-u (First Sower), Phichu kehou (Informal Council of Elders), Themumia (Shaman) and Women. Out of the 40 persons identified for each village, 10 persons, which includes 3 women for each village had been selected based on the maximum preferences provided by the villagers. The main reason for including women was to get their views on specific issues concerning women’s position in the traditional Angami society. Despite disparity in the number of households in the selected villages, uniform number of interviewees was maintained, as the main objective for conducting unstructured interviews was to obtain information relating to the working of the traditional Angami socio-political institutions and values associated with them.

An attempt was also made to find out the continuity and change of the Angami socio-political institutions and persistence or otherwise of the values associated with these institutions from the existing literatures. In order to verify information collected from the secondary sources, the relevant records of Village Councils, Churches, Youth and Women organisations of the four selected villages and relevant Government documents and publications were examined. This was further supplemented by information elicited from the available leaders of Village Councils, Churches, Youth, Students and Women organizations of the selected villages through indepth interviews. No predetermined questions have been prepared but an interview guide was prepared where issues concerning continuity and change, gender, authority of age, group solidarity and persistence or otherwise of the traditional values etc. were asked. The two value structures of democratic politics and the Angami socio-political institutions are then compared to see their compatibility or variance.
Chapterisation

The study is divided into six chapters.

Chapter: I
Introduction

Chapter: II
Socio-political institutions of the Angami Nagas

Chapter: III
Changes brought about by Colonial rule, Village Council and Village Development Boards on socio-political institutions of the Angami Nagas.

Chapter: IV
Changes brought about by socio-economic factors on socio-political institutions of the Angami Nagas.

Chapter: V
Values of democratic politics and socio-political institutions of the Angami Nagas.

Chapter: VI
Conclusion

The First Chapter deals with a brief account of the Angamis of Nagaland, review of literature, objectives, methodology and chapterisation. The major concepts such as continuity and change, democratic politics, traditional institutions or institutions that have often been used in the present study have been defined in this chapter.
The term Angamis, for the purpose of our study would mean the Angamis who are at present divided into four groups namely Chakhroma, Northern, Southern and Western Angami. As modern society is a society oriented towards change and having to deal with continuous change, change in the present study means the changes brought about by Colonial rule, Village Councils, Village Development Boards, Christianity, education, changing economic activities, emergence of Angami elites and the values of democratic politics on socio-political institutions of the Angamis. Similarly, continuity is inherent in a tribal society involving beliefs and values. Therefore, continuity for the purpose of our study would mean the socio-political institutions of the Angamis that have survived to the present in spite of the introduction of Colonial rule, Village Councils, Christianity, education, changing economic activities, emergence of Angami elites and the values of democratic politics.

The meanings and uses of tradition as a passive analytic construct and as an active indigenous force have been examined. Scholars associated with tradition as a passive analytic construct saw tradition as a force in preventing change, growth, creativity, irrational, emotional response and the agent of promoting internal solidarity. The conservative Burkean perception of society views tradition as the accumulated wisdom of the past, and Andrew Heywood maintains that tradition stands for absence of change. The underlying fears in all these tendencies is the assumption that traditions or traditional institutions are static, frozen in time, and cannot be modified. On the other hand, Malinowski (1922), Tardits (1958), Dube (1958), Savage (1964), Gulliver (1969), Brode (1970), Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger (1995), among others have challenged tradition as a passive and argued that tradition can be both dynamic as well as static. To them, the adherents of traditions often questioned and modified it over time.
to make it dynamic. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger argued that traditions could be constructed and that what sometimes has been considered being very ancient traditions are in fact of quite recent origin. Thus, traditions or traditional institutions need not be very old and exist from time immemorial but handed down from father to son and require only two generations to become traditions. What is implicit within these directions is the assumption that tradition has a storage function with respect to selected traits only and not to a plethora of antique behaviors.

Institutions are structures and mechanisms of social order and enforcing of rules governing cooperative human behavior. Mac Iver and Page used the term ‘Institution’ as an established form or conditions of procedure characteristic of group activity. According to them, whenever associations are created in the society, certain rules and procedures also must be created for the regulation of members to one another and such forms can be called institutions. Institutions provide structure, guidelines for behavior and shape human interaction. Political Institutions can be defined as systems of formal rules or informal understandings that coordinate the actions of individuals in the society. A social institution is a custom that for a long time has been an important feature of some group or society. It refers to a group of social positions, connected by social relations, performing a social role. It is a major sphere of social life organized to meet some human needs. Thus, socio-political institutions for the purpose of this study are defined as customs and traditions invented or created at any historical time and modified, accepted and preserved by successive generations.

Since many writers claim the traditional institutions of the Angamis as democratic and as the relationship between the values of democratic politics and socio-political institutions is examined in fifth chapter, discussing values of democratic
politics becomes important. Democratic politics is a means by which all people are included in determining how a society makes choices. In other words, it is about how people live together, how competing interests are accommodated and how available resources are allocated. The values of democratic politics aim at the widest distribution of power among the citizenry. Elected representatives, free and fair elections, freedom of expression, free media and freedom of association and inclusive citizenship where no one is discriminated nor excluded, characterize democratic politics. Thus, the values of democratic politics for the purpose of this study is defined as much more than just having a vote but characterized by a set of principles such as the rule of law, accountability, fair representation and effective participation and voice, and a set of values that recognize individual and collective human rights and freedom.

The Second Chapter examines the working of the socio-political institutions of the Angami Nagas through the existing literature and interviews. The traditional socio-political institutions of the Angamis that have been identified and examined in this chapter are Phichū kehou (Informal Council of Elders), Kikru (Family), Chienuo, (Clan) Thepfū (Khel), Rūna (Village), Thethsū (Age-set system), Kekinyi (Diplomatic feast or Friendship feast), Kichūki (Dormitory), Kiya (Marriage), Zatho (Feast of Merit), Terhamiavi (Warriors), Kemevo (Religious priest), Thehoubā (Sitting place), Tsiakrū-u (First Sower), Tekhusekhrū (First Planter) and Liedepfū (First Reaper of the village). The institution of Liedepfū was the only institution exclusively reserved for women. Phichū-u/Zievo (Head Priest) was the oldest man of the village and the oldest man in the thepfūs.

The study reveals that the socio-political institutions of the Angamis, which often linked to spiritual, religious, political, judicial, and economic functions in the past, covered almost all the conceivable needs of a person from birth to death. The study also
reveals that these socio-political institutions, which had a long history, determined the daily lives of the Angamis representing the force of authority and legitimacy. These institutions lay anchored primarily in customs, traditions, and the incumbents acted as the legitimate upholders and interpreters of the scope and contents of the tradition. The study also reveals that unlike other Nagas, 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. However, it would be incorrect to call it as democratic in that the traditional Angami society never experienced an established government in 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 members of other clans. Additionally, access by women to traditional leadership was limited because they could not inherit titles. The legitimacy for 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. The study also reveals that values of the traditional socio-political institutions of the Angamis were characterized by rule of the male elders, respect for seniority of age, physical strength, group solidarity, patriarchy and gender inequality in terms of division of labour, property ownership and decision-making.

The Third Chapter examines the changes brought about by the Colonial rule through the institutions of Gaonburas, Dobashis and District level administration on traditional socio-political institutions of the Angamis. This chapter also examines the
changes brought about by Village Council and Village Development Boards on traditional socio-political institutions of the Angamis. The study reveals that the office of *Gaonbura* introduced by the British virtually acted as village headmen. 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 cult of chiefship, which was unknown in the Angami society. Similarly, the office of *Dobashis* introduced in 1869-70 began to settle heinous cases like murder, while the *Phichũ Kehou* or informal council of elders settled only the petty disputes. Thus, the powers of the *Phichũ Kehou*, which covered executive, legislative and judicial before the advent of the British were affected. 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. This was a new development historically as 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 Angamis, as the village elders who enjoyed supreme authority without any interference was demolished. The traditional Angami institution of *Phichũ Kehou* largely lost their customary meaning as the officials of the British government gained direct control over the people in several aspects.

A study of the evolution of Village Councils (VCs) in Nagaland have shown that, the Nagaland Village and Area Council (Second amendment) Act, 1990 abolished the Area Councils and introduced a single tier local system known as the VC on the pattern of traditional village administration. The VC is the highest statutory decision-making body in village administration. Significantly, the method of choosing the members of the
VCs 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 elected for a five-year term. The study of Village Development Boards (VDBs) has shown that one-third of the total members of VDBs are reserved for women. Further, there is a provision for reservation of 25% of the total grant to the village for women’s welfare programmes. This 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 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. However, the VDBs revived the colonial pattern of administration as it involves the Deputy Commissioner (DC) or Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) of the District as the ex-officio Chairman. The study reveals that the establishments of VCs and VDBs have not only replaced the limited functions of the traditional village hierarchy but also shifted to wider and modern trend of ‘development administration.’ In contrast with the traditional socio-political institutions of the Angamis, the VCs and the VDBs has enlarged the scope of community participation in development and welfare 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 while the VC is part of the traditional milieu of Angami society, the VDB is an effort at dovetailing the former into a development framework. VC and VDBs are structurally strong, although functionally there is a dichotomy between them. The VC 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 VDB structure to take control over developmental resources and activities. Thus, there is a dichotomy at the village level itself 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 VC 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 concept of Communitisation of which the Secretary of the VDB is also a member has enlarged the scope of community participation in development and welfare programmes. It has affected the role of the traditional leaders, as it did not even co-opt them and instead make the Secretary of the VDB, the head teacher of the Government Primary schools, a representative from women, a representative each from all the churches and few educationists as its members.

In the Fourth Chapter, the changes brought by Christianity, education, Angami elites and changing economic activities on the socio-political institutions of the Angamis has been examined. 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 Kichuki, which was an important youth organisation, began to decline as the Christian missionaries forbade boys to attend Kichuki since they regarded everything done in connection with the tribal ceremonies and festivals as an act against Christianity. Since Christianity put an end to the practice of head-hunting, role of Themumias lost their importance, as there was no question of consulting them in matters of head-hunting. The
authority of the Phichű-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 of 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 elites 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 chienuo and runa level. 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 Phichū kehou (informal 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, Age-system that were the backbone of social and economic development in their traditional society. The role of Tsiakrū-u, Tekhusekhru and Liedepfü 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 because of their education and monetary power are brain behind many of its socio-economic-political activities, although the elites in many cases became exploiters of the masses. The formation of the Angami Gazette Officers’ Union is one such example of elites replacing the physically brave men. Since the elites are economically powerful, they are more respected than the traditional leaders.

The Fifth Chapter examines 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 rule of the male elders, respect for seniority of age, 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 of the Indian constitution. 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, although the relationship between the values of democratic politics and traditional socio-political institutions have not led to political problem, the traditional values that profess group assertion, kin-protection, gender inequality 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 *Last Chapter* discusses the summary and conclusions based on the study. The 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 the institutions neither of a formal council nor of a chief but had an informal council locally called *Phichu Kehou*, as the supreme authority of the village administration. The introduction of *Dobashis* and *Gaonburas* affected the powers of the Angami *Phichü Kehou* as the former began to settle heinous crimes including murders, although the latter continued to settled land disputes, religious or social matters at *khel* levels. The government of Nagaland has retained the offices of *Dobashis* and *Gaonburas*. The customary law of inheritance by the youngest son still exists in Angami society. Marriage within *putsa* and between two closely related kindred on the females’ side, which was forbidden in the past, is now practiced. Other socio-political institutions of the Angamis have also undergone changes.

The VC established on the pattern of traditional village administration is the highest authority in the village. Unlike in the past, its members including chairperson are elected for a five-year term. Many have considered the VDBs as the beginning of women participation in the decision-making body for the first time as one-third of the total members of VDBs is women. Further, there is a provision for reservation of 25% of the total grant to the village for women’s programs. This 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 study reveals that the establishments of VCs and VDBs have not only replaced the limited functions of the traditional village hierarchy but also shifted to wider and modern trend of development administration and enlarged the scope of community participation in development and welfare 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 modern democratic principles have penetrated to the Angami society to a certain extent, as they are interested in sustaining democratic system of choosing representatives and democratic method of taking decisions through majority votes. However, participation alone does not ensure a democratic society. For the smooth functioning of the democratic institutions, the democratic values have to be deeply entrenched in the society. The developing trends in Angami society seems to be far from such ideals, although many scholars described their traditional society as practicing a pure form of democratic government. There has also been a great imbalance in the representation in terms of gender. The traditional value of gender inequality as a political norm in the present society seems to have adversely affected the participation of women in politics and in important bodies of decision-making in the society.

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. On the contrary, it is found that people still cling to their traditional ideas and values. This inclination often renders the rule of law meaningless and group interest often stand in the way of individual freedom and rights. The community has precedence over the individuals in the Angami society as the Angami traditional political values such as group assertion, kin-protection and collective effort contradict the principles of democratic politics, which include among others, the rule of law, individual liberty and competitive politics.

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