Chapter II

Socio-political institutions of the Angami Nagas

The study of traditional socio-political institutions has attracted the attention of social scientists. In the global context, many scholars have studied the socio-political institutions among various groups of people in the pre-colonial period. Indeed, the socio-political institutions had been a common traditional feature in all societies in different parts of the world, representing the force of authority and legitimacy. Mostly, these institutions remained a conservative force in all tribal societies, jealously guarding powers and privileges of the communities. The emergence of socio-political institutions had been generally attributed to the collective needs of group life, which characterized tribal living in India as well as in other parts of the world. In different settings, these institutions lay anchored primarily in customs, traditions, and the incumbents acted as the legitimate upholders and interpreters of the scope, contents of the tradition and it will be inappropriate to assume that institutions had always been responsive to the aspirations of the people at different settings. The Angamis like many other tribal societies had traditional socio-political institutions out of dire necessity and
compulsion by their environment and political forces. The present chapter examines some of the traditional socio-political institutions of the Angamis.

**Kikru (family)**

*Kikru*, the institution of Angami family was the smallest social unit\(^{35}\), consisting of husband, wife, and their children. The Angami *kikru* was characterized by both nuclear and extended type of family. The nuclear type consisted of a father, mother and their unmarried children. The extended type occupied a part of the house, a separate space being fenced off and a separate hearth provided. This usually happened when a newly married son was unable to build his house.\(^{36}\) The custom to have a separate *miphu*\(^{37}\) was to make the newly married couple become responsible and know the hardships faced in having a family. It was only then that they began to learn, appreciate and experience the intricacies as well as the beauty of a *kikru* life. The Angami society being patriarchal, the father was the head of the *kikru* and had certain powers and duties. It was his responsibility to look after and maintain his family and represented his family at clan meetings, acted as the family priest, and performed the customary rites during festivals and ceremonies. It was the duty of the father to educate his

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\(^{37}\) *Miphu* refers to hearth.

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children about the demarcation of land or boundaries and handed down the oral tradition to his children. He also distributed his properties to the sons equally as far as possible.\textsuperscript{38} In some cases, the father also portioned out his lands between his children and kept provisions for his wife in the event of his death. In contrast with sons, daughters were given moveable properties as gifts to them. In some cases, when there was no male heir, the daughters used to act as caretaker of the family property and reverted to the male line subsequently.\textsuperscript{39} If the parents were childless, the property used to go back to the father’s own lineage. In the absence of the father, it was the mother or the eldest son of the family who shouldered the responsibilities of looking after the family, although the youngest son inherited parental house. Though the father was the head of the family, the mothers performed most of the domestic works, taught these works to their children, and influence the father on major decisions.\textsuperscript{40} Women in the traditional Angami society were denied family property, although they played important roles in family affairs.\textsuperscript{41} The joint family system was rare except in cases of infirmity and poverty. In normal situations, the sons used to set up houses of their own after marriage. Thus, with every marriage a new family came into existence in that part of the village, which his ancestors occupied.

\textsuperscript{39} Gazetteer of India \textit{Nagaland, Kohima District, Kohima}. 1970, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{40} Interview with Mr. Krozel Kikhi, age 100, Head Gaonhura, Viswema village on 2 January 2009.
Chienuo (clan)

Next to family was the chienuo, consisting of several groups of agnatic kin. The family being a small unit was considered ineffective in case of wars, raids, and head-hunting. As a result, several families united to organize a chienuo to present an effective front to all external aggressions. The meaning of ‘clan’ in Oxford dictionary is, “group of families with common ancestor.” The origin of the Angami chienuo was traced back to a single family in the past from which numerous families emerged but managed to stay connected. The chienuo or thino was a continuation of the family unit on the paternal side, which maintained a separate entity of their own under the leadership of a member of elders known as Phichümia. The chienuo comprised of a group of consanguineous families descended from common ancestor occupying a definite and permanent area. The multiplication of a family into a number of family units, in course of time led to the formation of putsano (first cousins). The emergence of a more closely knitted kinship among various putsano led to the formation of chienuo/thino /clan. Thus, the chienuo in its earliest stage was the combination of the families of the sons

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of one household joined by the families of the male cousins from the father’s side.\textsuperscript{45}

Clans belonging to the same tribe used to spread over several villages occupying a definite area in the villages.\textsuperscript{46} Unlike the Aos and Tangkhuls, who had clan heads, the Angamis did not have any clan head. On the contrary, the head of the clan was the same as the head of the original family whose sons and paternal cousins joined to form the clan. Thus, the head of the clan, which settled first in a village automatically, become the first head of the village.\textsuperscript{47} No clan enjoyed a special position in the Angami social structure. Commenting on the paramount importance of a \textit{chienuo} in Angami society, J. H. Hutton says, “The real unit of the social side is the clan. So distinct is the clan from the village that it forms almost a village in itself”.\textsuperscript{48} However, clan loyalty and unit was so strong that there was frequent interference of one’s clan by another unfriendly clan among the Angamis. Indeed, the antagonism and rivalry within the clan in the village sometimes led to jealousy and suspicion.\textsuperscript{49}

\textbf{Thepfū (Khel)}

\textit{Thepfū} was an administrative unit within the village in which various

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, p. 256.
chienuo lived. Each village was divided into different thepfū, which marked the division of chienuo. The number of thepfū differed from village to village. Venkata Rao has suggested that khels in Naga villages are administrative units with a definite area of their own. In most of the Angami villages, one still finds the village divided into several thepfū, each thepfū occupying a particular territory. Inter thepfū and inter village formed a part of the Angami life in olden days. The history of thepfū and village had been depicted in the stone tablets erected in every village. Every stone tablet covered the first settlers and their descendants till the foundation of clans. Each thepfū maintained a distinct social unit with its own boundary well fortified within the village. However, due to increase in population, a strict division could not be maintained anymore. The people living in other thepfū, however, come back to their respective thepfū for active participation in decision-making and welfare of the thepfū.

Rūna (Village)

Rūna was organized along thepfū with each thepfū consisting of a number of chienuo. The inter thepfū feuds and head hunting raids posed serious problem of security and the thepfūs were not strong enough to defend themselves against any external aggressions. This quest for security ultimately prompted them to live

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50 V.V. Rao., *Hundreds years of local government in Assam*. S. Chand and Company, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 24-25.
51 Interview with Mr. Lhouzelie Metha, age 90, *Phichima* Chicchama village on 20 February 2009.
52 Interview with Mr. Kidese Kikhi, age 35, *Viswema* Village on 13 February 2009.
in large villages. This was the reason why the Angamis had the largest villages among all the Nagas.\textsuperscript{53} Kohima village (Bara basti) inhabited by the Angamis is one of the biggest and most populous villages in Asia.\textsuperscript{54} The inter-village feuds being frequent, the villages were built on the top of the hills and were well fortified for defense against enemy attack. Thus, a village was primarily formed for security reasons, although eventually it emerged, as the largest political organization. Citizenship within the \textit{rüna} (village) was determined by patriarchal consanguinity. The Angami \textit{rüna} was an independent political entity with elaborate administrative structure and effective defense machinery.\textsuperscript{55} For the Angami Nagas, the ancestral \textit{rüna} was something to be preserved, hence shifting from one \textit{rüna} to \textit{rüna} was very rare case, and their attachment to their native village is still considerable. In fact, for the Angamis their village means everything- their country, their tribe, indeed their whole world. The Angami villages had internal cohesion, and in case of disputes, the whole village gathered and arrived at conclusion.\textsuperscript{56}

**Kiya (Marriage)**

The Angamis were exogamous and monogamous. They considered \textit{kiya} as a

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid. p. 104.
\textsuperscript{56} B. B. Kumar., \textit{Indigenous Political institutions of the tribal communities of North Eastern India}, Highlander IV, no.1, 2, p. 8.
sacred institution and marriage within the same clan was forbidden. The blood relationship was not recognized through the female line, and no inter-marriage was allowed between two closely related kindred. Marriage between the children of two sisters was a kenyū (taboo). One could marry his wife’s sister or husband’s brother in the event of the death of the wife or the husband. Prolonged celibacy or unmarried person was considered incomplete in the society. It was a kenyū for a woman to keep her hair long until she was married. As a result, when all her other batch mates were married, an unmarried woman went to the extent of marrying the kharu in order to grow her hair long. This was done by placing a shawl on the kharu to signify that she married to that kharu. Women preferred a man who had proved to be brave, courageous, and skillful in warfare, as well as in handicraft as their partners. Similarly, men preferred good moral, healthy, hard working women as their wives.

There were two forms of marriages, namely, a ceremonial marriage, which was very formal, and an informal marriage. Nevertheless, both forms of marriage were equally binding and the informal marriage meant no social stigma or disability to the wife or her children. Angami marriage normally lasted for five days. A widower or divorcee could remarry, but the ceremony on such cases was very simple. Thema and

58 Kharu refers to village or khel gates.
59 Interview with Mr. Neinguto Naprantsu, age 74, Jotsoma village on 13 April 2009.
60 Interview with Mr. Vinitha Nakhro, age 68, Assistant Pastor Christian Revival Church, on 3 January 2006.
Thesa were two different terms for marriage price. Thema used to denote bride price which was not a dowry but a gesture of uniting the two families. The groom gave this in the form of animals to the bride’s family. Thema generally consisted of a spear, two pigs and fifteen or sixteen fowls\textsuperscript{63}, which may or may not be demanded by the bride’s family. Thesa on the other hand was a kind of gift in cash and kind (a cock) usually given to the girl’s Thethsü, who in return, blessed the newly wedded couple and entertained the crowd through songs, jokes and variety shows. Thesa was not expected much if the groom was from the same community. In contrast, Thesa was expected more, in case, the groom was from other community,\textsuperscript{64} Thema and Thesa existed in all the villages of the study area, except Viswema village. Thema and Thesa differed from village to village.

Hutton has elaborately narrated an Angami kiya in the following, “Young men of the girl’s family and of her own age go on the day fixed to the bridegrooms house and carry off, as though by force the spear and the pigs and the chickens, which they kill and eat at the bride’s house, and all the girl’s kindred go and eat and drink then and take their places in a procession. One basket is filled with small pieces of flesh one leg of pork is set aside. At dusk two men took this meat and drink and take their places in a procession, which goes to the bridegroom’s house. This procession is thu:

\textsuperscript{64} Interview with Mr. Thinokholie Nakhro, age 40, Ex Chairman, Kenei Krou, Medziphema village on 7 January 2009.
composed: First, the bride, next one boy and three girls from among her companions then the two men carrying meat and drink and finally a number of the bride’s kindred and clan singing.”

However, the datas collected from the fieldwork has an interesting story to say:

When the time for the bride to leave her parents house came, she carried zu\textsuperscript{66} in a \textit{mekho},\textsuperscript{67} and took a walking stick, which was given to her by her male admirer along to clear her path if anything obstructed it. The walking stick signified that nothing should block the path of the bride in her journey of life.\textsuperscript{68} The bride would gift the groom a shawl. A young girl would accompany her to the house of the groom. The next day, the bride and the groom would go to the field of the groom and work just for a short time. This was called \textit{tsukhrū}. On the fifth day, they would again go out of the village (to denote a journey) which was called \textit{rüvekhrū}. When people asked them where they going or where are they coming from, they would say the name of a good village. Example, the Jotsoma people would say, they were going or had gone to \textit{Viswema} village, meaning good people.\textsuperscript{69} After the couple settled in the house for few days, the Phichū-u was

\begin{footnotes}
\item[66] Zu refers to rice beer.
\item[67] Mekho refers to a Naga basket.
\item[68] Interview with Mrs. Zhaziekhono, age 68, Jotsoma village on 18 May 2006.
\item[69] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
invited to give them theja\textsuperscript{70} by the Ukepenuopfii\textsuperscript{71} to have good health, prosperity, long life and to procreate.

**Kichüki/Morung (Bachelor’s dormitory)**

The *Kichüki* had been an important socio-cultural institution of the Angamis, although similar institutions with different nomenclatures were found all over the world. In India, we find this institution among a large number of tribes such as Ghotul\textsuperscript{72} of Murias, Dhumkuria of Oroan, Nodrong\textsuperscript{73} of Dimasa Kacharis, Mare or Terang of Mikirs etc. *Kichüki* functioned as a formal school. Once the boys and girls reached the stage of Darhe/Tsürhe and Rü-ü respectively, they were inducted in their respective *kichüki* until they get married.\textsuperscript{74} While a separate house was given for the boys, there was no such separate house for the girls but somebody who had a bigger house and could act as the supervisor of the girls’ *kichüki* accommodated them. In the *Kichüki*, regardless of the family background, no favoritism or partiality was permitted,\textsuperscript{75} except that the boys were allowed to visit the girls’ *kichüki*, but the girls were not allowed to visit the boys’ *kichuki*. This was where the courting of marriage was done. The number of *kichüki* varied

\textsuperscript{70} Theja refers to blessing.
\textsuperscript{71} Ukepenuopfii refers to their supreme being.
\textsuperscript{73} C. Dipali Danda., *Among the Dimasa of Assam: An Ethnographic study*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1978, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{74} Interview with Mr. Neinguto Naprantsu, age 74, Jotsoma village on 13 April 2009.
\textsuperscript{75} V. Leno Peseyie Maase., *From head hunting to soul winner*, Kandid Litho Co, Covina CA, USA, 2005, p. 17
from one village to the other. In every thepfü, there was a kichüki where the bachelors of the village sleep during night and lounge during the day.

The members of kichüki were taught traditional values to shape their character and make them responsible citizens in the society. The primary aim of kichüki was to bring unity and goodwill, which was considered essential for a community. It was in the kichüki that the boys get all the useful lessons. In the Kichüki, the boys were taught several things like traditional arts, songs, oral tradition, and handicrafts, trained them in various activities like hunting, war tactics, and were made to participate in religious activities. As village raids and war were frequent, the members in the kichüki acted as village guards keeping alert round the clock especially when they sense eminent danger of attack from the foes. The kichüki served as a community centre and played an important role in the socialization of the young boys. It prepared the younger generation for the post of Phichü Kehou. In the girls’ kichüki, they were also given training ranging from moral codes, handicrafts, art of singing and their role for the welfare of the village.

The kichüki not only acted as a hostel, club, public school, and military training centre but the focal point of all social, cultural, political, and military deliberations. Therefore, it became an indispensable feature in the Angami villages. The well-being and security of the village revolved entirely around this

unique fulcrum. The *kichüki* served as the community centre and every member had certain duties towards the clan, including defense, depending on his age group and fitness. The young men of the village shared the responsibility of defending the village in a democratic manner and with the unique spirit of loyalty and patriotism.\(^\text{78}\) All the four villages except Medziphma village under study were found to have *kichüki* in the olden days. The *kichüki* was not a rival or parallel administrative unit of the village administration. A *kichüki* may very aptly be called a microsm of the village. It had its own council on the pattern of the village administrative machinery.\(^\text{79}\)

**Thethsü (Age-set system)**

The institution of *Thethsü* in the traditional Angami society was the organization of the various *thekhrie*\(^\text{80}\) in the village. *Thethsü* membership forms the basis of a man's identity and social standing. In addition to this, to be recognized as a bonafide citizen of the village with civil rights and duties, one must enter *Thethsü*. This was the traditional base of societal bonding and leadership training. Similarly, the traditional village council among the Choctes based on the age-set system has been reasonably smooth and harmonious\(^\text{81}\) N. K. Das has rightly said that, the whole population of the village is organized


\(^{80}\) *Thekhrie* refers to a batch or a generation.

predominantly on an age set basis.\textsuperscript{82} According to Lonyü Medoze and Neinguto Naprantsu, the population of the village was divided into the following categories.\textsuperscript{83} Nocienoma-Infants (from birth to 6 months), Thepa Thedźuno-Children from 6 months to 1 year, Thekhono-Children between 1-3 years, Kibanoma-Children from 4-6 years, (who can stay at home when the parents are out of the house), Tsüdzie- (referring to male), from 10-15 years of age whose hair was cut short, Darhe/Tsürhe (referring to male), from 15-20 years of age, (who had to keep their hair in front and shaved off the back of the head, Rü-ü (referring to female) - at a marriageable age (No hair style for female because they had to shave off their head until they are married), Dashie-Young fathers from 20-40 years of age, who were permitted to push their hair up, Phichümia-usually who were above 60 years of age considered as elders of the village, and Ketsamia-old aged. The dynamism of community life and activities were frequently manifested through the age-set system, which is seen mostly as a youth group. A function of the Thethsü is to accompany and help the bride and the groom during their marriage. When a girl member from the same Thethsü got married, the Thethsü used to accompany her by singing songs and cracking jokes. In return, the groom used to give a gift to the Thethsü called Thesa. Every girl anticipated more member of the Thethsü to be present on her wedding day. It was because of this


\textsuperscript{83} Interview with Mr. Lonyü Medoze, age 78, Jotsoma Village on 27 February 2009; Interview with Mr. Neinguto Naprantsu, age 74, Jotsoma village on 14 April 2009.
reason that it was almost mandatory for a girl to take active role in Thethsü activities. In Medziphema village, there is a huge competition among the Thethsü, which they called Kikra Peli. They even take up big issues like hosting of Christmas for the whole village, gift all the mothers in the village, to the sick and needy etc.\(^{84}\) A Kikra Peli in Medziphema village has even constructed a marketing shed in the town for which, revenue is collected. This is one example, which shows the spirit of the Thethsü even today. This is how Thethsü served to weave the social fabric of the community.

**Peli (communal labour)**

The traditional system of communal labour was called Peli where a group of people works in each other’s field in rotation. This was an example of self-help and community spirit in Angami society. Voluntary labour without any force or outside pressure was a matter of pride for the Angamis. In the olden days, most of the people were engaged in agricultural activities and each Thethsü organized themselves in Peli. The young people learnt different skills and teamwork. The guiding principle of peli was that it was a kenyū to eat without working.\(^{85}\) While working in the field, the boys and girls sang in the form of kehu\(^{86}\), which

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\(^{84}\) Interview with Mr. Kecalhuto, age 45, Medziphema village on 26 February 2006.

\(^{85}\) Interview with Mr. Pfuiricha Rüpreo, age 61, Chiechama Village on 6 February 2009.

\(^{86}\) Kehu is a form of singing.
encouraged them to work in rhythm with the kehu. When they returned from the field, the boys repaired their tools such as spades, daos etc, for the next day. This was how every boy in the village learns smithy for self-use. The Peli was an example of self-help and community spirit in Angami society. This helped young people to socialize and learn the skills revolving around agriculture, political, social, religious and customary practices.

Zatho (Feast of merit)

People who had the capacity to feed the whole village performed Zatho. It fulfilled an extremely important socio-economic and religious function. It was concerned with the redistribution of wealth with the people. The enhancement of social prestige also depended upon hosting a series of feast defined by custom in every detail and spending huge quantities of zu, rice and meat. It was also performed to be blessed by Ukepenuopfu because they believed that Ukepenuopfu was a liberator, merciful and loving God and that he would bless those who cared for the poor, but withheld his blessings from those who neglected them. Only a married man could hold a Zatho because the wife plays an important and honourable role throughout the ceremonies. The actual ceremonies lasted for six

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87 Interview with Mr. Krurovi Peseyie, age 73, Jotsoma village on 3 August 2006.
88 Interview with Mr. Vipi Rhetso, age 82, Phichumia, Viswema village on 2 January 2009.
days. A large quantity of rice was pounded for making zu. Therefore, all the adult
males and females of the feast giver’s clan come together and prepare the drinks.

A person who was able to perform Zatho and feed his villagers for another
consecutive three years was given the permission to erect a stone and decorated
his house with planks in the form of crossed horns in the front of his house.

Kekinyi (Diplomatic feast)

Kekinyi was a diplomatic or friendship feast performed between the same
chienuo as well as between feuding or warring villages in order to sheath the
sword and maintain friendly relations. Kekinyi was generally performed during
the Sekrenyi festival. It played a significant role among the rüna of the Angami
Nagas during war, peace or difficult times. Any chienuo of a rüna could initiate
for a kekinyi with the same chienuo of another village. In order to help each other
and to show solidarity within the same chienuo of different villages, friendships
were renewed. Kekinyi was also performed by a chienuo to strengthen its clan ties
and re-assert its relation with relatives of another village and to give opportunity
to the new generations to acquaint themselves with their relatives and to know
about their ancestors living in other rüna. The village elders also maintained
friendship through kekinyi with many villages for protection. Before performing

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91 Interview with Mr. Sanyu Nakhro, age 92, Jotsoma village on 27 February 2009.
and celebrating the *kekinyi* between warring *rünas*, the elders of the warring *rünas* come to an agreement to reconcile their differences. When the agreement was made, the male elders along with male members of a *rüna* (who were able to walk to the other village) went to the host *rüna* for *kekinyi*. When the male members of a *chienuo* reached the host *rüna*, the male adults of the host *rüna* invited a man from the guest *rüna* to his house and served him the best *Zu*, the best meat and food, he was able to offer. Each host treated his guest with great hospitality and honor. In the course of *kekinyi*, they also discussed the importance of maintaining peace and good relationship with one another and agree to assist one another in times of need. The two warring *rüna* then exchange spears as a sign of a peace treaty.  

On the day of departure, every household prepared the best meat for their departing guests. In addition, meat was also wrapped in banana leaf for the members of the guests’ family. The guests were given shawls to be kept as remembrance of their acquaintance and friendship. The departing guests leave the village in a procession, in one or two lines amidst chanting and singing. No man or animals were allowed to cross their path once the procession started. The last *Kekinyi*, which was performed among the four selected villages, was Chiechama village with Nerhema village in the year 1998 over a long-standing dispute between them. The oath taken between them reads; “As long as the sun and moon

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93 Interview with Mr. Lhouzelie Metha, age 90, Chiechama Village on 20 February 2009.
lives, our friendship will continue. If there is any bloodshed, let your streams flow with more blood than water." 95

**Kemevo (Religious priest)**

*Kemevo* was the most important figure among the Angamis before the evolution of the institution of Angami *Phichū kehou* (informal council of elders) at the village level. *Kemevo* acted as the mediator between his people and *Ukepenuopfū*. Thus, his role was mostly pleasing deities through sacrifices and announced *penie* and *kenyū*. The animistic superstition strengthened this institution. He did not enjoy any privileges but cultivated his land like any other villagers. He was however entitled to a larger share of meat and *zu* during festivals and feast of merit. 96 The declaration of *Penie* and *kenyū* implied avoidance of communication with outsiders and strangers.

The office of *Kemevo* post was hereditary and for life. The succeeding *Kemevo* was usually his son but if he had no son, his clan used to decide the next *Kemevo*. In Viswema village, the *Kemevo* was always from the *Pavoma Khel*. Similarly, in Jotsoma village the *Kemevo* was always from the Medoze clan of Tsieyama Khel. In contrast, in Chiechama village the office of *Kemevo* was combined to the office *Phichū-u* and *Kemevo* called *Phichū-mevo* and were

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95 Interview with Mr. Lhouzelie Metha, age 90, Chiechama Village on 20 February 2009.
96 Interview with Mr. Thukhu Valeo, age 63, *Kemevo*, Viswema village on 14 February 2009.
always from Rüpreo or Zumvü khel who were the original settlers of the village. The role of Kemevo differed from village to village. In Jotsoma village, the role of the Kemevo was to clean the Kemevo tsie (Kemevo stone), performed ritual once in a year and declares one-day penie. The significance of the Kemevo tsie was that, when a villager killed an enemy or a person, certain parts of the body such as fingers, ear, head etc, were brought back to the village as proof and kept on the Kemevo tsie. The role of the Kemevo in Viswema and Phichü-mevo in Chiechama village were similar. His role was to ask for prosperity of the village and good health of the people. The ritual for these issues was taken up on the twelfth day of the third month of each year and penie was announced. He was also the initiator to please the God of rain and storm, please the God of epidemics and natural calamities. The Kemevo tsie in Viswema village functioned as an altar where the Kemevo and his assistant (the second eldest in their clan) performed a ritual that says: “we are worshipping Ukepenuopfu, we are doing errand for the ones who have gone before us.” This ritual was performed for the village to receive blessings from Ukepenuopfu. The course of the ritual was as follows:

“Thirty leaves of the right side of the banana leaves are cut and layered together and the Zu was kept on the layered leaves. They then keep the

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97 Interview with Mr. Lonyü Medoze, age 78, Jotsoma Village on 27 February 2009.
layered leaves and the Zu upon the Kemevo tsie. This was a sign of offering to their God.”

Thehouba/Badze

Thehouba and Badze were interchangeably used, although they had slightly different meanings. Thehouba was usually stone structures constructed within the village in a circular shape where people gathered to sit and discuss village affairs. It was bigger than the size of a Badze. Badze was usually made out of a graveyard of a famous personality where people used to sit and discuss too. Thehouba was used as a ‘look out place’ for the approaching enemies. Each thepfu had a thehouba and in case of any dispute between two individual, chienuo, thepfu or riina, the two parties were summoned at the thehouba or badze for disposal of cases. It was also found that the traditional village customs and practices were continuously discussed in such gatherings. For an Angami, the current affairs of the village and the knowledge of the history were very important to them. Thus, the need for such knowledge had enabled them to come together to a particular place known as Thehouba. Khrishnakali Majumdar narrates the activities of Thehouba in Jotsoma village in the following words:

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98 Interview with Mr. Thukhu Valeo, age 63, Kemevo, Viswema village on 14 February 2009.
“Towards evening, villagers return home from work. Then one sees group of men chat and drink around fire on Tehuba [sic] while women and children enter the kitchen to prepare the evening meal. After an early meal, young and old men gather again and sit around the fire, chatting, joking or listening to one another’s story. Women, however never join them, as it was unethical for them to sit on Tehuba [sic] when men are engrossed in one discussion or the other. These gossip sessions, involving a constant intermingling of the villagers give them a sense of unity and solidarity. The young and old men mingle freely. This friendly and co-operative spirit reinforces the idea of Angami Democracy.”

Thehoub was also the place, where the Peyumia\textsuperscript{101} and Krütamia\textsuperscript{102} used to influence the whole community and trained them the war tactics.\textsuperscript{103} The implications and applications of all the traditions were discussed for preserving the cultural heritage of the community.\textsuperscript{104} The Thehoub was a political arena where decisions were taken, and where community activities and feasts were held. It acted as the village court where all disputes were settled and the sacred place for the community religious rites.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{100} Khrishnakali Majumdar., Op. cit, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{101} Peyumia are wise men.
\textsuperscript{102} Krütamia are leaders.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid. 1995, pp.79-80.
\textsuperscript{105} K. Linyü., The Angami Church since 1950, Khedi Printing Press, Kohima. 1983. p.4
The institution of *Thehouba* in Viswema, Jotsoma and Chiechama village are still in existence. Its functions have diminished but it still plays an important role in that, it is still used for settlement of disputes between two individuals, theft, robbery, and issues pertaining to the welfare of the respective *thepfu*. *Thehoubas* in these villages have been renovated and used for the above purposes. Ever since Medziphema village shifted from the original site to the present site, *Thehouba* has not been built. Therefore, *Thehouba* was not found Medziphema village.

**Themumia (Shaman)**

*Themumia* occupied a central place in the traditional medical system as they were presumed to be well versed with herbal medicines and received calling from a divine power. *Themumia* earned respect because of their healing powers and the power to advice the people. Both male and female could become a *Themumia*. Female *themumia* were called *themumiapfu*. There were three categories of *Themumia* namely; one who could directly communicated with the spirit, second category acted as intermediary between the individual and the spirit and the third category was, one who did not have any connection with the spirits at all. The first category was found in Jotsoma village. Mrs. Sorhino (*Themumiapfu*) had the power to communicate with the soul of dead people and acted as a messenger.

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106 Interview with Mr. Pelhusievi Nakhro, age 87, Medziphema Village on 30 December 2006.
between the deceased and his family. The second category was also found in Jotsoma village. Mr. Pezau Seyietsu (Themumia) had the power to communicate with the spirits. 107 Both of them had the healing power.108 The Terhomia109 selected them. Sicknesses were largely considered to be caused by the spirits. Hence, the power to appease the spirits and heal the person was given to Themumia. The third category was found in Medziphema village. Mr. Megoyazo (Themumia) could give advice to the people through Thophi. When a person performed Thophi, a piece of stick was toppled on the ground and the position of the stick was taken into account. Accordingly, advice to perform certain ritual was given to appease the spirit causing illness. In case of theft or a robbery, he was consulted.110

The role of Themumia differed from one another. Some had the power to stay without food for days; others could communicate with the soul of the dead and acted as messenger between the deceased and his family. Some also could cure diseases as well as disorders through massaging. These powers descended on a person because of supernatural grace. The Terhomia used to select Themumia. The anxiety of an unusual dream also directed the Angamis to consult the Themumia in search of its interpretation and measures of averting a forth-coming

107 Interview with Mr. Pezau Seyietsu (who was a Themumia), age 70, Jotsoma village on 17 April 2008.
108 Ibid.
109 Terhomia refers to a supernatural being, a ghost.
110 Interview with Mr. Megoyazo (who was a Themumia), age 72, Medziphema village on 23 February 2009.
eventuality. The Themumias were also consulted before waging a war with another village or before going out on a journey. The same process of Thophi was performed and according to the advice of the Themumia, the people performed ritual, move ahead with their plans, or cancel their plans. This was how they gained political power in decision making especially in times of war.

Tsiakrü-u (First Sower)

The life of the Angamis revolved around agriculture, which was dependent on the forces of nature and belief that spirits influenced the forces of nature. Therefore, Tsiakrü-u was assigned the duty of the first sower to ask theja from Ukepenuopfi. The office of Tsiakrü-u was not hereditary nor for life but should be old enough to take up the responsibility. The villagers unanimously selected him. Many people did not want to become Tsiakrü-u because he had to refrain himself from taking certain food such as, chicken, beef, meat of wild animals, dry leaves or anything dried.\footnote{Interview with Mr. Lhouzelie Metha, age 90, Chiechama Village on 20 February 2009.} During the Ngonyi (seed festival), the Tsiakrü-u performed the Ngonyi rituals for the whole village to mark the commencement of the sowing season. The date for the nanyü\footnote{Nanyü refers to religion and the practices of rituals associated with it.} was decided by the Tsiakrü-u along with the Phichü-u(s).\footnote{Interview with Mr. Vikhwel Rhetso, age 93, Phichü-u. Viswema village on 4 March 2006.} To perform the nanyü, he would observe penie for thirty days and would confined himself in his house for five days, forbidden to mix with
his family and pray to Ukepenuopfi to bless them abundantly. To mark the sowing season, he collects all types of crop seeds including rice and went to his field along with a boy who was pure and innocent. He would then clear a small part of his field and began the nanyũ by asking theja from Ukepenuopfi in the form of many kehu asking that, neither pesticides nor natural calamities spoil the crops. Then he would keep Zu in a banana leaf in the field for Ukepenuopfi. He carried out the nanyũ very carefully because the credit of a good crop or the blame of a failed crop would be put on him. He then observed penie for five days and went to his field to water the seeds sown. It was only after he performed the nanyũ and observed the penie, that the villagers began the sowing of their crops. During harvest, the villagers gave him certain amount of paddy.

Tekhusekhru (First planter)

A functionary called Tekhusekhru performed the ceremonial transplanting of rice seedlings during the festival of Thekranyi (transplanting festival). He would also observe penie for thirty days before the performance of the nanyũ. In Jotsoma and Chiechama villages, Tekhusekhru performed nanyũ to bless the villagers for success in the process of transplantation. He wears a coat of leaves and grass known as khrunyho for the following five days. He observes a kenyũ on

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114 Kehu is a form of singing.
115 Interview with Mr. Kesovito Taphino, age 85, Tsiakru-u, Jotsoma village on 12 March 2009.
eating meat of wild animals. In Jotsoma village, Tekhusekhrū can only be from Khwümä Khel. In Viswema village, Tekhusekhrū consisted of village Phichū-u, Tsiakrū-u, Liedepfi, Kemevo and all the Khel Phichū-u(s). The village Phichū-u would announce the date for transplanting the seedlings and penie for one day would be observed. All the members would go to their respective fields and perform a nanyü. The nanyü was as follows: Pairs of Tsamho zu, pairs of sapa papu, which no one had cut or destroyed and pairs of rice seedlings would be taken to the field, and plant it in their own field. Then the villagers can begin their transplanting of seedlings.

**Liedepfi (First reaper)**

The institution of Liedepfi was the only institution exclusively reserved for women. She was the first reaper of the village. Khupfhungyi (a festival for harvest) and a festival for female, which was observed, accompanied harvesting. During this festival, for each animal killed, a piece of meat was given to her, who, in return cooked the meat without chilly and offered it to her household.

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116 Interview with Mr. Keyielhuzo, age 66. Krūna, Jotsoma village on 2 February 2006.
117 Interview with Mr. Thekruvizo, age 70. Zievo, Jotsoma village on 27 February, 2006
118 Tsamho refers to a tree.
119 Zu refers to the top part of the tree.
120 A plant.
121 Liedeh
was the day of ceremonial harvest, which was performed by the Liedepfii in her own field. On reaching her field, she kept the Zu and rice in a banana leaf and placed it under the paddy. She would then choose a part of her paddy field and cut a few heads of paddy, marking the commencement of harvesting season. After the manyū was performed, she refrained herself from all activities including weaving\textsuperscript{122} for five days. Nobody was allowed to harvest unless the Liedepfii performed the ceremony to mark the harvest season. When the villagers went to their field for harvesting, they would select and bind together a small part of paddy and placed the Zu and rice in a banana leaf under the paddy, which was bounded. Then they began to harvest.\textsuperscript{123} After harvest, the villagers gave certain amount of paddy to her.

**Phichü-u/Zievo (Head Priest)**

The words *Phichü-u/Zievo* were interchangeably used in the Angami villages. Every thepfii also has a thepfii *Phichü-u*. While the term Zievo was used with reference to *Phichü-u* in Jotsoma village, the term *Phichü-mevo* was used in Chiechama village. Their functions were the same except that in Chiechama village, the institution of *Phichü-u* and *Kemevo* were combined into the institution


\textsuperscript{123} Interview with Mrs. Zhaziekhono, age 65, Jotsoma village on 18 May 2006.
of Phichū-mevo. The oldest man among the followers of Krūna, by virtue of his maturity is accepted as the village Phichū-u in Viswema village. In Jotsoma village, the village Phichū-u was always the eldest from Thevo. In Chiechama village, the Phichū-mevo was the eldest from the Rūpreo or Zumvu clan (the original settlers of the village). The office of the village Phichū-u was for lifetime or till his health permits. In case the village Phichū-u chooses to convert to another religion or faith or for health reasons, he gives up his responsibility to the people who are fit to hold the office. To take up the responsibility of the Phichu-u, he has to perform a ritual. For this, a chicken was brought and strangulated. If the chicken dies with its legs crossed and passed urine, the ritual was considered successful. However, if the chicken dies with its legs open or does not pass urine, the ritual was considered unsuccessful. Therefore, he has to perform again until the ritual was successful. He would then pull out an intestine of the chicken and hang it in front of his house. After performing the nanyü, the first work that was assigned to him was to bless the people, which were called Phichū ja. Penie was announced for three days during which he would cook a cock (which can crow)

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124 Krūna refers to the religion and practices of Animism predominantly practiced by the non-Christians of the Angami Nagas.
125 Interview with Mr. Kidese Kikhi, age 37, Viswema village on 14 February 2009.
126 Thevo the elder brother of Thepa refered to as two kelhu of the Angamis by Hutton.
127 Interview with Mr. Lhouzelie Metha, age 90, Chiechama village on 20 February 2009.
and eat. He would get up early in the morning in the belief that the villagers would do the same every morning.

The Angami animistic faith emphasized upon a number of *penie* and *kenyũ*, during which the *Phichũ-u* played the most prominent role in asking *theja* to *Ukepenuopfũ*. The *Phichũ-u* played the most prominent parts in all ceremonies connected with birth, sickness, death, marriage, war etc. He used to declare *penie* and *kenyũ* for the village on the following issues: when there is rain and storm that could spoil the crop, he would declare one day *Penie* to appease the God of rain and storm; when accidental burning of a house occurred in the village, he would declare one day *penie* to appease the God of fire; when there is hailstorm, he would declare one day *penie* to appease the God of hailstorm; when there is an earthquake, he would declare one day *penie* to appease the God of earthquake; when a person who has been able to perform the *Zatho* dies, he would declare two days *penie*; when there is an un-natural death of a villager, he would declare *kenyũ* until the dead body was brought back to the village; when anybody changes a graveyard(collect the skeletons) in the village, one day *penie* was observed.

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128 There were many taboos characterized by two words *Penie and Kenyu*. *Penie* refers to taboo days where nobody was allowed to work in the field; *Kenyũ* simply means a prohibition to do certain things.

129 Interview with Mr. Vikhwel Rhetso. age 99, *thephũ Phichũ-u*, Viswema village on 29 January 2006; Mr. Lhouzelie Metha. age 90, Cheichama village on 20 February 2009.
As the first man in the village, villagers consulted the Phichū-u on important public activities. He, along with the Phichū kehou, had the power to conclude peace treaties by performing kekinyi with the feuding or warring villages. The Phichū-u/Zievo symbolizes unity when social and political life was threatened by feuds. When a theft is committed by someone and remained undetected, he would perform certain rituals. He, in consultation with the Phichū kehou fixed the date of the festivals.¹³⁰

Phichū kehou (Informal Council of Elders)

*Phichū kehou* was the informal council of elders consisting of Phichūmia, Peyumia and Pehūmia. The term Phichūmia, Peyumia and Pehūmia were interchangeably used, although they had different meanings. The skill in diplomacy, power of oratory, knowledge of oral history of the village and knowing the art of dealing with people¹³¹, honesty, wisdom, and leadership quality were referred to as Peyu. People having these qualities were known as Peyumia. Phichūmia were those who attained the age of above 60 years having grandchildren.¹³² Those Phichūmia having the qualities of a Peyu and were older in age among the Phichūmia were referred to as Pehūmia. To the Angamis, advanced in

¹³⁰ Interview with Mr. Tsalhu, age 71, Phichū-u, Jotsoma village on 27 February 2006.

¹³¹ Interview with Mr. Khezhū Vitsu, age 96, Phichū-u, Viswema village on 2 February 2009.

¹³² Interview with Mr. V. Sale Chüsi, age 74, Gaonhura Medziphema village on 23 February 2009.
age was a sign of maturity. Phichū kehou neither were from a hereditary lineage nor were they the result of a search for the election of a leader. They were those who emerged naturally as respected and recognized leaders based on their qualities of Peyu, honesty, maturity etc. There was no specific quorum for the Phichū kehou or a fixed tenure of office. The number of its members varied from generation to generation depending on the number of elders at a given generation. It functions as and when the need arises. Disputes were settled by the informal council of elders through discussion with one another, the parties and the public at great length, until some sort of agreement was arrived at. Any issue or dispute like theft, robbery, murder, adultery etc pertaining to individuals were tried by the Phichū kehou. Punishments were given according to the customary law and no partial treatment was ever given to any of the disputing parties. For example, theft was punished by recovering seven times worth the price of the thing stolen. In case of murder, one has to be exiled for seven years. For settlement of disputes between chienuo, thepfū and issues relating to the village, the Phichū kehou met and an eloquent person was selected to lead them. On such occasions, his role was that of a presiding officer for that meeting. Everybody had the right to participate in the discussion and express their opinion, and suggestions given by individuals in the meetings were always taken into account. No voting system existed but

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133 Interview with Mr. K. N. Pusha, age 78, Gaonhura, Viswema village on 1 February, 2009
decisions were taken according to the unwritten customary laws of the Angamis, which was final and binding. The Phichû kehou was also instrumental in solving long-standing disputes between villages. An example in Viswema village is given here. Many years ago, a Sopfûma (a neighbouring village) killed a Viswema warrior for which Viswema village continued to take revenge by killing Sopfûma on different occasions. With the initiation of the Phichûmia (Phichû kehou) in Viswema village, the issue was solved and peace was maintained. As a sign of peace, the Viswema and Sopfûma arranged a feast in the year 2001 in which a Dao and a Spear was exchanged between them.¹³⁵

The Phichû kehou also assist the warriors in matters of defense of the village. They guide and instruct the young boys of the village to defend the village. Military training was given to them and was put to test not only in physical strength but also in their intelligence by sounding mock alarm or peculiar noise, which would indicate the direction from where the enemies were coming.¹³⁶ Whenever war broke out with other villages, it was their duty to inform the whole village to prepare themselves for the war.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Interview with Mr. Kidese, age 37, Ex-President, Youth Organization, Viswema village on 14 February 2009.
¹³⁷ Interview with Mr. Neikho Dolie, age 85, Phichûmia Medziphema village on 5 March 2006.
Terhümiavi (Warriors)

The title of Terhümiavi was given to a person only if he killed a number of persons in a war, face to face with people. He was highly respected for his bravery. However, there was no guarantee that he would be chosen as the leader in a war again. He did not have any decision making power in the village except in matters pertaining to war. The number of people he had been able to kill in a war was his pride in festivals because he was able to wear a necklace in the form of skulls representing the number of people he had killed. This form of necklace was worn in front of the chest. In contrast, a person who killed others through secret plot was not called a Terhümiavi and they were not allowed to wear the necklace in the form of skulls in the front but had to wear at the back.\textsuperscript{138} As war and village raids were frequent, every male who were able to go to the war would be tested with different methods.\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{138} Interview with Mr. Vinitha Nakhro, age 74, Assistant Pastor, Christian Revival Church, Jotsoma village on 3 January 2006.

\textsuperscript{139} Interview with Mr. Lonyü Medoze, age 78, Jotsoma village on 27 February 2009.
The study reveals that, the socio-political institutions of the Angami Nagas 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 including J. P. Mills 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 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.
Fig 1: Viswema village.

Fig 2: Jotsoma village.
Fig 3: Way to Medziphema village.

Fig 4: Chiechama village.
Fig 5: Kemevo Tsie (Kemevo stone), Jotsoma.

Fig 6: Stone Gate (Ketsie kharu), Jotsoma
Fig 7: Thehouba (Jotsoma).

Fig 8: Thehouba (Jotsoma).
Fig 9: An Angami man with traditional attire.

Fig 10: Naga House.