CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has been concerned very broadly with the Changki society and village life. In this work a sociological study of Changki located in Mokokchung district under the sub-division of Mangkolemba circle in Nagaland has been undertaken. The preceding five chapters discuss the various aspects of the village. The first chapter introduces the concept of 'village' as found in various literatures as well as in the census of India. The village as understood in the Naga context has also been dealt with. The second chapter describes the people and the setting of Nagaland in general, with particular reference to the Ao tribe and finally a detailed description of Changki village as well as the demographic characteristics of its population. The other four chapters discuss the various institutions—kinship and marriage; political institution; the economic institution and religious institution of Changki village.

The review of social anthropological literature on village studies shows the studies based on empirical method investigates the characteristics of the village and the human population living there. These studies show that the village in general has been analysed in terms of unity of the village, that is, the territorial boundaries of a village are clearly demarcated and the people of the village act in unity against other villages, different types of solidarity, (horizontal and vertical solidarity), extension of the village into the outside world and the inter-penetration of the wider world into the village (e.g., through the market forces); kinship networks, the changes that have been brought about in the village due to external forces and hence the changes in traditional inter-relationships in the community, religion and other socio-economic dimensions.
The villages were broadly classified into dispersed villages where the villages were comprised of individual homesteads surrounded by their agricultural land; and nucleated villages where all the homesteads were clustered together and the agricultural lands located away from this residential cluster.

In the present study of Changki we find that all the households are perched on the ridge of a hill and the agricultural lands are located far away in the surrounding hills and in the valley below the village. Changki village could be termed a nucleated village. The location of the houses in the village does not indicate any hierarchical order or social distance between different households or clans. Changki is a single tribe, multi clan village consisting of 422 households with a population of 1673, with almost an equal number of males and females. Although the people are engaged in various occupations, agriculture is the main occupation. Most of the people are literate and the village has four Primary schools and two High schools. However those who can afford, send their children out of the village for education in the towns within Nagaland or even outside of the state.

In Changki we find that the village is divided into two khels, Sünngdakba commonly referred to as luko (upper) and Ayim Anet commonly known as lulang (lower) khel. Each khel is a separate entity with its own social and political organisation. Each khel has a Samen Menchen (village government) with its own rules and regulations and the people themselves clearly distinguish themselves as either belonging to the upper or lower khel. It is interesting to note that there is no hierarchical order or social distance between the households but there is differentiation on the basis of khel. The clans are also distinguished between the Mongsen and Chungli group. The founding clans and others who settled in the village later on belong to the Mongsen group while the last major group of settlers made up of five clans belongs to the Chungli group. This last group had come with a recognised village government (Yimten) and as such was allowed to settle in an area which came to be known as the Tsungli kiong in the lower khel.
Changki people are part of the Ao Naga society which follow the unilineal principle of patrilineal descent and are divided into large exogamous units which in Changki dialect is called kin (clans). In Chapter 3 we have discussed that there are three founding clans who enjoy certain rights and privileges and despite the assertions that all people in the village are equal the hierarchical ranking of the founding clans from the rest belie this. **Land ownership is the main factor that differentiates the founding clan from the others.** The people themselves call the founding clans *Kin Asem*, literally meaning 'the three clans' and the others *Kin Tebencha*, meaning 'the rest of the clans'. Altogether there are thirteen clans in the village. Changki people follow the neolocal pattern of residence for when a couple gets married they have to set up their own independent household. It is considered a shame for a man to bring his wife and live with the parents after marriage.

The notion of clan as a corporate and solidarity group plays an important role in the lives of the people. The family is regarded as the smallest unit of the clan and in the social and political spheres the clan is considered to be the principal unit. The clans are patrilineal exogamous groups that are made up of lineages called *kidong* which it is said goes as far as the first settlers in the village, called *Tenik*. *Tenik* refers to the first settler in the village and while most people could give the names of the clan *Tenik*, they could not trace their genealogical lineage to more than 2–3 generations. (Clan membership is by birth and the relationships based on clan affiliations play an important part in the lives of the people.)

When a person refers to his own clan the possessive term used is *Pacha* (male) and *Pachalari* (female). The number of *Tenik* (which is a combination of two words: *Teni*, meaning 'of a group' and *Sanik*, meaning of 'same blood') or branches of lineages of a clan grouped together is referred to as *Kidong* (which literally means 'of one tree'). The function of the clan is the enforcement of social and moral order among the members. Conflicts between individuals or families are normally arbitrated by the committee. As
a close-knit group, the clan performs the functions of protecting kinsmen against injustice from outsiders.

As a political unit, the clan is headed by the oldest clan male who is assisted by elders of the clan to take collective decisions on various urgent and important issues concerning the clan. The clan as a corporate group has landed property and the use of this land is supervised by the elders of the clan. The clan we find is the most important unit in the society and in all aspects of life, clan membership plays the most decisive and influential role.

Traditionally the clan can adopt individuals or groups and take them into their fold, but the origin of the adopted clan is never allowed to be forgotten even if they are given lands and protection by the clan that adopted them. However one such clan which was adopted by the founding clan Changkiri of the lower khel is claiming to be the original founding clan and this dispute which has been going on for about eighty years now has led to inter and intra clan rivalries that has affected the social, political and religious aspects of village life to a great and grave extent. This dispute also brings to the fore that being the founding clan has certain prestige and honour attached. The ensuing clashes arising out of this dispute has also reinforced clan consciousness to such an extent that the three founding clans have formed a united front and call themselves the Emkumri Kin Asem (literally: The Three Founding Clans) and in doing so are articulating the hierarchical order of Changki society.

Chapter 4 discusses the traditional political institutions in the village society and also discussed the way it has been brought and linked to the wider modern political institutions of the state and the country. The village is organised along two principles: firstly the village is divided into age-set grades which is mandatory for all males from the age of sixteen and secondly the control of the village affairs lies with the Village Council. The customary laws are the basis upon which the village is administered and the means of social control and maintaining law and order is by imposing ‘fines’. All
decision-making processes are carried out in the traditional manner which entail discussions and debates through which consensus is arrived at and matters settled amicably.

The village as has been mentioned is made up of two khels each with its own 'Samen Menchen' (village government) which oversees matters of public life related to its jurisdiction, that is, the khel. The 'Samen Menchen' is based on the traditional age-set system. In the age-set system, as the grades move up progressively every three years or so, the councilors are drawn from the age-set system directly, when they reach the traditionally prescribed age-set grade that automatically ensures entry into the village government. All male members who have entered the age-set system are eligible to be a part of the 'Samen Menchen' as they progressively move up the grades and reaches the stage to be in the village government.

However when it comes to the village as a unit both the 'Samen Menchen' (village government) of the upper and lower khels come together and forms the Changki 'Samen Menchen'. The traditional political institution of 'Samen Menchen' has been incorporated into the modern political institution of Village Council that was introduced in 1971 through the Nagaland Village Council and Area Council Act. This article included in Article 371 A (1) under the Constitution of India, deals with the special provisions with respect to the state of Nagaland. This Act states that the processes of dispensing justice, administration of the villages and land ownership and transfer will be according to the Naga customary laws. In effect the customary laws are recognised as legal and binding. Only the State Legislative Assembly can amend the Act.

In the Village Council we find that the traditional and modern political machination is at work where the traditional political institution has been adapted and incorporated into the Village Council serving as a direct link to and facilitating the smooth functioning of the sub-divisional, district and state administration without losing its traditional structure. In
Changki we find that that the institution of *Gaon Bura* plays an important role as a functionary in the village government. This institution was introduced by the British colonial rulers in 1882 so as to make their administrative work easier and conducive to maintaining law and order in the Naga Hills. The *Gaon Buras* are representatives of the clans selected on the basis of oratory skills, good lineage and personal integrity. We find that the institution of clan is directly linked to the *Gaon Bura* institution and in this way clan membership indirectly plays a role in the polity of the village.

In the traditional political institution of the village based on the age-set system namely, the ‘*Samen Menchen*’ the members have a very short tenure while the *Gaon Bura* institution based on sending representatives selected by the clans to the ‘*Samen Menchen*’ is for life. Thus we find that the *Gaon Bura* institution began to wield more power due to the fact that while the members of the traditional ‘*Samen Menchen*’ drawn from the age-set system stayed in the village government for six years only (three years as junior councilors and three years as senior councilors), the *Gaon Bura* representatives were selected for life. The experience and knowledge of the *Gaon Bura* became indispensable and soon the institution of *Gaon Bura* gained prominence and power in Changki. The Village Council composed of both the traditional ‘*Samen Menchen*’ and the *Gaon Bura* look after the law and order, administration of justice, settlement of disputes, general welfare of the villagers, developmental schemes of the village and so on. The village as well as the various Changki unions outside the village affiliated to the *Senso Mungdang* or Changki general body comprising of all Changki males, wherever they may be residing, have been severely affected by claims of the Emrem Changki as the original clan over the Changkiri clan. The Mokokchung Changki Union Vs Changki *Yimten* case highlighted in chapter 4, shows how this rivalry has affected not only the village but also all other Changki unions found in other parts of Nagaland. The modern electoral process that was introduced with the formation of the state of Nagaland in 1963 has also brought about a new dimension to the polity of the village.
Changki is part of the 29 Jangpetkong Constituency of Mokokchung district. This constituency comprises the villages of Changki, Chungliyimsen, Khar, Mongchen, Dibuai, Waromong and includes Alongkima, which is the area's administrative sub centre, Mangkolemba, the district sub-divisional centre and Longnak and Merakiong polling stations. In the electoral processes of party politics we find that divisions have been formed along party lines in the village with the founding clans deciding to support the regional party Nagaland People's Front (NPF) in the last election in 2001 and closing ranks against the Congress party. The village is divided into the regional party and the Congress party and this division is heightened during elections.

In chapter 5 we have discussed the economic institution of the village. The economy is based on the agricultural practice of wet rice cultivation and although there are many new occupations being practiced by the people, agriculture continue to be the mainstay of the village. Thus the village economy could be classified as agrarian as almost all the households were engaged in agricultural activities.

The agricultural activity of rice cultivation is of two types, jhumming and wet rice cultivation. As Changki territory is vast, jhumming was carried out extensively in the earlier days. It was only in the late 1920's that the British colonial rulers found the Changki valley, which is 16 km away from the village site, to be fertile and conducive for wet rice cultivation. In the beginning the villagers were reluctant to go down to the valley for fear of wild animals but under duress the British administrators made the villagers learn the skills of wet rice cultivation by bringing labourers from neighbouring Assam who worked alongside the Changki people. In this way, the people began wet rice cultivation and this agricultural practice soon brought about a new prosperity to the village which has been a boon economically for the people.
In the earlier days the economic activity involved the 'Yangtep' system which was the formation of small working groups comprising of good friends and neighbours based on age who worked on each other's fields on rotation basis. For example the father of a family would form a working group with his age-set grade mates, the mother with her friends of the same age and the children with their own set of friends of the same age. In this way a system of labour force was formulated and people worked in cooperation. However nowadays the 'Yangtep' system is practiced by only a very few people as most of the people prefer to hire daily wage workers or employ other non-local workers to work their fields. Presently we find that the people have also taken to horticultural activities such as pineapple and orange cultivation as well as tea plantations. Areca nut plantation is also another economic activity taken up by the people. We find that the market forces and competition is making the people more individualistic where self interest and economic gains takes precedence over community life and participation. We find that a class structure is emerging in the village and conspicuous consumption is becoming the norm.

Chapter 6 is on religion and we find that all the people of Changki are Christians belonging to the Baptist denomination. Christianity was introduced in the village in 1901 and with Christianity, education was also initiated. The introduction of education brought about immense changes for the villagers because through education new opportunities were opened and many of the Changki people went on to become pioneers in various fields. Although Christianity brought about positive changes; it also led to the loss of many cultural traits for with the advent of Christianity, Changki people gave up many of their festivals, rites, oral traditions and even songs and dances. The ancient religious beliefs and rituals have long been forgotten as the people rejected the traditional belief system as heathen practises. However certain traditional values have been adapted and incorporated into the Christian rites especially during weddings and funeral services.
The Changki Baptist Church which was established in 1901 also suffered a setback in 1947 when there was a split due to the inter-clan dispute in the lower khel. In Changki there are two churches of the same denomination which has split the village into two congregations thus affecting the unity of the village. However, the efforts to unite the two churches have been met with stiff opposition by the elders, particularly of the break away church.

From the summary of the chapters discussed we find that clan membership play a very important role in the lives of the Changki people. The family is considered as the smallest unit of the clan and the clan influences to a large extent the working of the various institutions especially that of the political institution where Gaon Buras are selected on the basis of clan. However one predominant theme of discord and dissension affecting all spheres of village life in Changki is the claim of the Emrem Changki clan as the original founding clan. Kinship ties and the network of relationships are established through marriage alliances and the web of social relations within the village is such that it is said that invariably each and every Changki person is related to each other in one way or the other. In this set-up we find that due to the clan rivalry, there are deep divisions within the village along clan lines that has affected the network of relationships.

The on-going rivalry is one that began almost eighty years ago, and through the decades the social, political and religious realms in the village has been affected to such an extent that this has pervaded the mind-set of the people and influences all aspects of the people’s lives, especially in the lower khel.

The inter-clan dispute has divided the people and the solidarity of the village has been polarized along three aspects:

Clan
Church
Party politics.
The divisions along these three aspects have created conflicts primarily between the two warring affecting their relationships with other clans. It has indirectly led to the split of the church and the congregation, further aggravating the situation and lastly it has entered the state electoral process of party politics contributing to the feud not only along clan lines but also party lines.

Although village life has been disrupted several times over the inter-clan rivalry, we also find that it has reinforced clan consciousness. The three founding clans, Longchari, Amri and Changkiri, have united and formed a front called the *Emkümri Kin Asem* thus asserting their hierarchical position in the village and the privilege that being the founding clan accords to them. Despite the inter and intra-clan rivalry we find that the clans do not become disorganised or break up easily because of the highly integrative character of the kinship system, which help to restrain and resolve conflicts between members of the same clan; as well as the importance that the people attach to the value of clan solidarity and the traditionally accepted authority of the clan elders. The founding clans of Changki village do not have the obvious trappings of power nor are they treated any differently by the others. But in subtle ways they are accorded deference and respect by the rest of the clans. This is most evident in the manner in which land is used in the village. Most of the land holdings belong to the founding clans; therefore if anyone wants to use the land or take out its produce, it is mandatory that they seek permission from the land owners. In matters of village affairs the founding clans are consulted and their decision sought. With regard to the village history and migration patterns, the founding clans have recorded the stories handed down through the oral tradition and it is only with their express permission that the same can be used. Even in the Village Council we find that it is the founding clans who dominate for the Village Council chairman has always been from one of these clans. The others who have occupied this seat belong to the Alingri clan and from the historical accounts of the village we find that this clan arrived at the village just a few days after the founding
clans, therefore by virtue of their early arrival they are accorded the position as being next to the founding clans in the hierarchical order. We find that this traditional aspect of the village is very much adhered to and the concept of ‘founding clan’ is clearly ingrained in the psyche of the people.

Economically the people are still agriculturists and rice is the main crop but we also find that other agro-based activities are simultaneously being carried out. ‘Yangtep’ which can be considered as communal labour based on age and sex was the form of division of labour through which the people helped and supported each other in their agricultural activity of jhum cultivation. But from the late 1920’s, wet rice cultivation has become the major agricultural activity. The economic viability of wet rice cultivation resulted in better economic conditions for the people and through the years as this agricultural practice proved more viable, jhum cultivation began to be discarded and in a number of ways communal participation and sharing lost its moorings. The songs, exchange of witty repartees and jokes among the people that was a part of this activity as it entailed long treks to the jungles have been forgotten. Wet rice cultivation has led increasing use of wage labourers and in this way a patron-client relationship is emerging between the owner of the rice field and the workers. Wet rice cultivation also sustained the people, not only for consumption but also contributed to better living standards and most importantly through the surplus and sale of the rice, it has given the people the monetary support to send their children out of the village for education.

Education has played a key role in ushering in changes and opportunities in the village. The importance that the Changki people attach to education can be observed in the number of schools that is found in the village (four government primary schools, one government high school and one private high school) and the strict vigilance that the Village Council keeps in monitoring the teachers and functioning of the schools. As education opened up new opportunities for employment and so on, the educated Changki people left the village to settle in other urban places. The rising
aspirations and expectations of the people in the village were fuelled by the obvious trappings of 'modernity' that employment especially in the public sector could bring about. Thus the people in the village began sending their children to study outside in various towns of Nagaland and for those who could afford, outside the state. On one hand this has resulted in the placement of some of the educated youths in prestigious and respectable positions in government offices. But on the other hand it has led to rising frustration among the majority of the youth who cannot find employment and since they have been out of the village since childhood find the village too restricted and uninteresting. They also do not have the inclination to become cultivators, nor can they settle outside and it is this section of the educated, unskilled and unemployed youth who are causing concern for they are increasingly resorting to alcohol and drug abuse, petty theft to support the habit and creating trouble for the family, relatives and villagers in general.

Some of the educated unemployed youths have also joined the underground groups of Nagaland such as NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K) and so on. Although the Village Council exercises authority over the affairs of the village and acts on behalf of the people, the traditional authority mechanism is seemingly helpless with regard to the activities of the underground groups. The extortion of 25 percent of pay from all government employees annually and house taxes levied on all by the underground groups continue to burden the people. In such ways we find that the power of the traditional authority is being undermined. The electoral process of party politics is another factor that has changed the equation of power and influence. The party politics has brought about disorganization of the traditional forms and brought about new realignments. This is most evident in the rivalry of the two clans in the lower khel spilling over into the modern political arena of party politics. The kinship networks and relationships has been decidedly influenced and disturbed by this rivalry and the ensuing conflict.
Changes in the material aspects of village life are evident and the outlook, aspirations and expectations of the villagers especially that of the younger generation is vastly different from that of their parents. However inspite of the changes in the lifestyle and entrepreneurial spirit of individualism overtaking the community sense of participation and living, we find that the institutional and organizational structure of the village is still based on tradition and customary usage. The clan system, age-set grades, the Samen Menchen (village government), Senso (Changki general assembly) and the linkages of the people living outside the village through the various Changki Unions established in urban areas are some aspects that still continue to be important and relevant for the people for it figure as the major focus of their collective identity. These traditional institutions are accepted and viewed as the cultural symbols that give a distinct identity to Changki people. All these indicate that the village as an entity is held as sacrosanct for it is only through the membership to the village that people get an identity and from this point of reference the cultural roots of an individual is derived.

In conclusion we may say that Changki village is a traditional village where the continuity of traditions is found in its institutions and social organisations. However the forces of change being brought in through the mass media, economic opportunities, government intervention in agro-based activities and by the people themselves who are educated, mobile and exposed to outside influences are gradually changing the lifestyle. The accelerated rate of development and the processes of change may be transforming the village but the pattern of change is adaptive in nature where most of the traditional institutions are retained. This is most evident in the general characteristics of concrete social relations and patterns of behaviour as well as in the customs practiced by the people of Changki village.