CHAPTER IV

POLITICAL INSTITUTION

The norms and rules that govern each society differ in the way they are enforced and acknowledged. The political organization of a society is generally aimed at the maintenance of ordered relations between different categories and groups of people in a society within a particular territory. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown in the preface to African Political Systems wrote that the political organization is concerned with 'the maintenance or establishment of social order, within a territorial framework, by the organized exercise of coercive authority through the use, or the possibility of physical force'.

John Beattie in Other Cultures: Aims, Methods and Achievements in Social Anthropology states that 'when we are discussing political phenomena in many small-scale societies, there is much to be said for speaking of the political aspect of certain social institutions rather than of specifically political institutions. For often institutions which have political importance are socially significant in a number of other contexts as well.'

The political systems vary from those 'approximating to a centralized government and executive, of which western-states are extreme cases, while others possess no such institutions at any level, and so may be fairly described as segmentary or acephalous.'

The age-set system falls within the latter type of politically decentralized system. The age-set organization is combined with the allocation of authority on the basis of seniority. Citing the examples of the Masai and Nandi tribes in East Africa, Beattie says that 'in most societies in which age-sets are important, every man is not only a member of a particular set, but also at any given time he occupies, with his age-mates, a particular grade. These grades are clearly distinguished from one another, so that a
man can only occupy one grade at a time. A typical series of grades (after childhood) is junior warriorhood, senior warriorhood, junior elderhood, and senior elderhood. Specific rules are associated with each grade: thus warriors fight and defend from attack, elders settle disputes, make important decisions and intercede with the ancestral ghosts. The essential thing about this system is that the sets move through the various grades as complete units.  

Lucy Mair writes that in the age-set system 'it is important to note that what is significant is not chronological but social age. A man is recognised as an adult when he is formally admitted to adult status, not when he reaches a certain birthday; he is eligible for admission at puberty, but his admission may be delayed for one reason or another'. 5 She goes on to say that 'it should not be supposed that kinship ceases to have any political importance whenever political functions are allocated on some other basis. If we contrast political systems based on age-sets with those based on descent groups alone, we see that in the former more aspects of public life are organized outside the descent groups, but it does not follow that the descent groups lose all their political functions. 6

E. E. Evans-Pritchard in his study of the Nuer of Southern Sudan in Africa, says that the age-set system is not a military organisation and that 'it is in more general social relations, chiefly of a domestic and kinship order, and not in political relations that behaviour is specifically determined by the positions in age-set structure'. 7 He further states that the age-set system among the Nuer differs from the territorial and lineage systems in one important aspect. 'Whereas the people of a territorial segment remain, in the same structural relation to other territorial segments for their whole lives, and whereas the members of a lineage have a fixed relationship to other lineages, an age-set group changes its position in relation to the whole system, passing through points of juniority and seniority. This mobility of age-set groups is peculiar to the system and is a necessary characteristic of it, for it is an institution based on the succession of generation'. 8
Evans-Pritchard notes that the relations between the sets are defined in the idiom of family relationships. The members of a man's father's age-set are his 'fathers' and the members of his father's brother's age-set are also his 'fathers'. The sons of a man's set are his 'sons', while the wives of his father's age-set are his 'mothers' and the wives of his sons' set are his 'daughters'. All members of a man's own set are likewise his 'brothers'. The age-set system thus influences persons through a kinship idiom and on the pattern of kinship. The sets never acts corporately, but they function locally between individuals and in ceremonial situations, between small aggregates of persons who live near to one another, for a man only has frequent contacts with those members of his set and of other sets who live in his district. The age-set patterns of behaviour are, except in specific rites, of so general a nature that they cannot be isolated in a community where everyone is related in a number of different ways to everybody else.

J. P. Mills in *The Ao Nagas* says that 'as with all Nagas the real political unit of the tribe is the village.' He then describes the organisation of the Ao villages as being based on two principles. 'First the whole village is divided into age grades, which the various communal duties are assigned. Secondly the control of affairs lies with a council, whose method of election and tenure of office vary in the different language groups.' The Ao Naga villages even today are organised on these two principles. Every three years a group of boys born within the same three years enter the Zunga (Chungli) or Yanga (Mongsen) age-set system and remains in the original age-set grade till he dies although every three years they will move on to the next senior age-set grade progressively. But his age mates will remain the same. The duties and roles of each age-set grade are well defined and articulated. Mills writing about the Ao stated that 'from the cradle to the grave, a man is part of a machine. Only on these lines could a village of perhaps two thousand souls, without king or chief, be run.'
The age-set system among the Ao have clearly demarcated duties and roles assigned to each grade whereby each grade carry out the responsibilities given as a group. In the social, economic and political set-up of the village, the age-set system plays an important role. The community work like repairing of village gates, clearing of village paths, community fishing and other developmental works in the village are divided among the age-set grades. In economic activities too such as agriculture, the age-set grades work in cooperation. In the village administrative work the age-set grades are allotted various duties. Thus the smooth functioning of the village depends on the work force supplied by the age-set system.

The Ao traditional village governments

The Ao tribe have three different types of traditional political institutions such as the Putu Menden (generation rule) among the Chungli group, the Samen Menchen (meat share rule) among the Mongsen group and the Yanga Samen (age-set system rule) which is also called the Samen Menchen. The village polity and distribution of power is determined by the type of traditional institution that is followed. The Mongsen group has the Samen Menchen system of government whereby the founding clans of the village occupy the top most positions and are in power for ten to fifteen years after which the younger people take over. Among the Chungli group the Putu Menden system of governance is prevalent and in this system a number of age-set grades are clubbed together into one 'generation'. A father and son cannot be of the same 'generation'. There are five such 'generations' and each 'generation' rules for twenty to twenty-five years (the span of years differs from village to village). In this system too the founding clans occupy the top positions. There is another system of governance based purely on the age-set system found in Changki and Khar villages in the Changkikong range. In this system the age-set grades move up progressively every three to five years and when they reach the traditionally prescribed grade to be in the village government, the members are automatically inducted into the village government regardless of whether they belong to the founding clan or not.
In the *Pitu Menden* (Chungli) and the *Samen Menchen* (Mongsen) there is a clear distinction between the founding clans and the clans that settled later who are also known as 'latecomers'. The founding clans hold all the powers while the later settlers are relegated to the lower ranks. However in the *Yanga* (age-set) system there are no such distinctions for each person gets to be in the village government regardless of whether he belongs to the founding clan or not. This type of village government is based on the age-set system and as the grades move up progressively every three years or so, the councillors 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.

**Yanga Samen (Age-set rule)**

*Yanga Samen* is a Village Government formed by members of an age-set grade. This form of traditional village government is found in only two villages among the Ao tribe. Each age-set moves up progressively and in due course of time when a certain age-set grade is reached, the members of that age-set grade automatically become village councillors, first as assistant councillors then as the senior councillors who will be responsible for the village administration in every sphere. The village councillors are assisted by the *Gaon Buras* who are elderly village statesmen drawn from the clans in the village.

This form of village government is found in Changki and Khar villages in the Changkikong range. In Changki the Council is of a single tier for when a particular age-set grade reaches the *Samenthi* (senior councillors) stage they assume power while the age-set group below them known as *Samen Nuzaba* (junior councillors) becomes assistants to them. For three years the *Samenthi* stay in office after which they have to retire from office and the *Samen Nuzaba* takes over.

The *Yanga* system that is practiced in *Khar* village is however different in that three age-set groups form a larger group known as 'Jubang'. 
There are altogether about ten 'Jubang' having different names. A 'Jubang' remains in power for ten years and the Councillors are appointed on clan-wise basis and the Council is composed of four tiers such as Samenza, Jenyim, Chametcha and Amajangr.\textsuperscript{13}

Changki Suegoshaba and Ayim Anet Political organisation

Before we discuss the age-set system of Changki, it may be pertinent to give an explanation of the political organisation of the village so that a better understanding may be arrived at as to the role that the age-set system plays in the Changki polity.

At the village level the people are organised at the khel levels, that is Suegoshaba (upper) and Ayim Anet (lower), khels. The division of the village into khels came about through the formation of the village. The term khel is derived from Assamese, which roughly translated, means geographical division.

In the beginning, the village was established at Suegoshaba which is now the upper khel. The lower khel was established at a later stage as has been explained in the preceding chapter. The lower khel is known as Ayim Anet (two villages) due to the fact that the last group (comprising of five clans) which migrated and settled in the lower khel, came with a recognised 'Emli' or system of village governance. This group belonged to the Chungli linguistic group and had their own system of customary laws and governance, as well as their own dialect and in effect the lower khel came to be regarded as being composed of two separate villages, hence the name Ayim Anet (two villages). At present although the lower khel is still referred to as Ayim Anet (two villages), over the years the Chungli group were assimilated into the Changki fold and adopted Changki customs although in certain aspects such as in inheritance rules they differ from the other clans which has been explained in the preceding chapter on kinship.
Each khel is a distinct social and political organisation with its own Samen Menchen (village government), rules and regulations. Similarly each khel has its own age-set system and the functioning of the khel administration is separate and independent.

Changki Age-Set System

In Changki the age-set system or the Yanga is an important component of the political set-up for the Village Councillors are drawn directly from the age-set grades. In the earlier chapter on kinship we have stated that clan membership forms the basis of a man's identity and social standing. In addition to this, for a man to be recognised as a bonafide citizen of the village with civil rights and duties, he must enter the age-set system. Only then will he be considered a part of the Senso, which interchangeably means citizen or citizenship. Once a male is registered as a member of the Senso of the village he will have all rights to the village lands and rivers and will be able to participate in the village polity. Women are not organised into formal age-set grades and they have no rights as far as village governance and polity is concerned.

In the age-set system all the boys who have reached the age of sixteen or so, enter the Yanga or age-set system. For three years they will remain in the same age-set grade and the first age-set grade is regarded as the recruitment period. After three years the age-set grade will move up progressively to the next grade and this will continue till the last grade is reached. The members of each grade will remain the same throughout.

In Changki the Yanga Samen (age set rule) is commonly called Samen Menchen (general term in Mongsen dialect for village government). We have explained that the age-set grades move up progressively every three years. As each grade move up, their responsibilities and duties towards the village administration increase as well as their hierarchical power.
The lower grades are answerable and accountable to the higher grades while the higher grades wield authority over the lower grade by commanding obedience and respect. As each grade has well defined duties, responsibilities and roles, the powers are also well defined so we find that when the age-set grade of Samen Nuzaba is reached this automatically means the entry into the village government with all the duties and responsibilities as well as powers.

Once the stage of Samen Nuzaba (roughly in the chronological ages of 44-47) is reached this grade becomes the junior councillors of the Samen Menchen (Village Council). For three years they will remain as the assistants and this period is considered to be the training period before they assume power as the Samenthi (48-51 years). The Samenthi grade becomes the senior councillors and technically this grade becomes the overall power and authority in the village political affairs.

In the political sphere we find that the two age-set grades of the Samen Nuzaba and Samenthi remain in power for just six years. Three years are regarded as the training period while the next three years are considered to be the period of ruling. The two grades combined together are called the emchachari, which in Changki dialect means 'rulers'. The Samen Menchen comprises of the permanent male residents of the village.

The village age-set system as recorded by the researcher in the village in 2002 is given in the following (Table XXII). Certain age-set grades of both Súngdakba (Luko or upper khel) and Ayim Anet (Lulang or lower khel) are called by different names in the respective khels.

The age-set grading of Changki as shown in Table XXII gives the list of the fourteen age-set grades found in Changki as well as the chronological ages. We find that serial numbers 1, 3, 4 and 10 have different names for the grades while the rest are uniform.
Table XXII

Changki Ayim Asem Changri Yanga (Changki Age-set grades)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL No</th>
<th>Sungdakha (Upper Khel)</th>
<th>Ayim Anet (Lower Khel)</th>
<th>Chronological Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nuzabari Jungpori</td>
<td>Sungpori</td>
<td>16 - 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tekhupba ori</td>
<td>Tekhupba Ori</td>
<td>20 - 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Changcharoba</td>
<td>Pangkhang</td>
<td>24 - 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Aphakcharoba</td>
<td>Kitsung Nuzaba</td>
<td>28 - 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Azuakhang Nuzaba</td>
<td>Azu-Akhang Nuzaba</td>
<td>32 - 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Azu-Akang Tezenba</td>
<td>Azu-Akang Tezenba</td>
<td>36 - 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Alikhun</td>
<td>Alikhun</td>
<td>40 - 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Samen Nuzaba</td>
<td>Samen Nuzaba</td>
<td>44 - 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Samenthi</td>
<td>Samenthi</td>
<td>48 - 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Risuden</td>
<td>Risuttemba</td>
<td>52 - 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Empiba Ho</td>
<td>Empiba Ho</td>
<td>56 - 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Maaosenba Nuzaba</td>
<td>Maaosenba Nuzaba</td>
<td>60 - 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Maaosenba Tezenba</td>
<td>Maaosenba Tezenba</td>
<td>64 - 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nokimungba</td>
<td>Nokimungba</td>
<td>68 and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following, the functions and duties of the different age-set grades are given:

1. **Nuzabari Jongpori/Sungpori**: From the age of 16 -19 years all boys enter this age grade. The duty of this age grade is to do manual jobs such as fetching water, cutting firewood and run errands for the elders. Whenever there are meetings or communal works to be done in the village, this age grade is responsible for passing on information or messages in the village. For example, on the eve of an important village meeting, this grade will be responsible to find out who is in residence in their respective khels and to give the list to the older grades. They will also collect three pieces of firewood from all the households to be used for the cooking and so on in such meetings.

2. **Tekhupba Ori**: This age grade from the age of 20-23 is responsible for night duty. Whenever there are emergencies and messages are required to be taken to other places outside the village, this age-set grade is called on to do this job. This grade is also responsible to call people residing in Changki *lusa*
(territory) such as Longnak and Longtho for the meetings. In the event of deaths, should the death occur in other places, this age-set grade would accompany the dead to the final resting place. This is their akülü, which translated mean that this is the exclusive duty of this grade.

3. Achangcharoba /Pangkhang - This group of 24-27 years of age has the specific task of collecting rice from each household when guests are to be entertained by the village. They are responsible for the hospitality to be accorded to village guests and on such occasions supervise the younger grades to carry such tasks.

4. Aphakcharoba /Kitsung - 28-31 years of age. This grade is considered the marriageable age grade and when one marries a new household is set up but he continues to be a member of the group. The job of this grade is to collect bamboo mats from the household whenever the village needs to erect temporary shelters as when medical teams visit and need separate cubicles for male and female patients. They also do other jobs assigned to them and at certain times they are responsible for distribution of work to the lower ranks. The age-set grades of Achangcharoba/Pangkhang and Aphakcharoba/Kitsung are the back-up support for the lower grades under them, which often work under their supervision.

5. Azü-Akang Nuzaba - 32-35 years of age. The Azü-Akang Nuzaba and Azü-Akang Tezenba are the junior and senior grades whose duties are the same. The Azü-Akang Nuzaba or junior grade is like the apprentice who learns on the job. The importance of these two grades lies in the fact that they are the grades whose duty it is to know the village boundaries, demarcate the jhum sites every year, collect the taxes for the Village Council and maintain the accounts and audit registers of the village. In effect through these age-set grades every male member of the village learns about the village boundaries and territory of Changki, for the male members move up progressively every three years. These two grades are responsible for the Kisü-Lusü duties. Kisü-Lusü means the jobs related to the household (kisü) and territory (lusü). For example, they will set a time for house, granary, kilangmi (open bamboo
platform) repairs as well as for clearing of community paths, demarcation and allocation of jhum lands. The younger Azü-Akang Nuzabari age-set grade will do the errands at the bidding of the older Azü-Akang Tezenba and are in effect undergoing a training period. But both the grades will work in tandem related to the same specific jobs. Once the date and time for repair work, to collect materials from the jungle and so on, has been selected the younger grade will give the information to the villagers through the village crier (Yimpiuri).

6. Azü-Akang Tezenba: 36-39 years of age. This age-set grade is considered to be experienced and mature enough to speak and act on behalf of the village. This group carries all the important messages. They survey and select each year’s ‘pok’ (the year’s demarcated area for jhum cultivation), they collect fines imposed by the Council, they allocate collective labour and it is this group that maintains the accounts of the village. The village registers such as audit reports, Senso register and so on are also in their safe keeping, although technically the Samenthi (senior councillors) age grade is in charge of such registers.

7. Alikhun: 40-43 years of age. This age grade is the official load carrier of the village who accompanies the Council members on tours. The upper two age grades immediately above this age grade are the “Emchachari” or the village leaders. So in their capacity as village leaders they have to go from place to place on official duties. Therefore when they travel, the duty of Alikhun age-set grade is to carry the luggage of the older age grade, (this was more applicable in the olden days when traveling was on foot and therefore the necessity for porters to carry loads was needed). This is an important training period for the Alikhun who follow their seniors on official duties and thus learn the dealings of various official works. This age-set grade is the envoy to other villages in cases related to inter-village affairs. This age-set grade also takes care of all emergency work in the village. Under the supervision of this age-set grade, the rest of lower grades do all the community works.
8. Samen Nuzaba: 44-47 years of age. The “Samen Nuzaba” are the junior executive body members and are required to do the bidding of the “Samenthi”, which is the grade immediately preceding the Samen Nuzaba grade. The Samen Nuzaba or the junior councillors whose tenure is for three years in effect undergo training in the intricacies of village/khel governance. The Samenthi age-set grade will always be accompanied by this grade so that all menial works such as errands and so on will be done by them. This age-set grade is also called ‘Jenliba’ which translated mean those who run errands, for basically that is their duty and they have to undertake all tasks assigned to them by the Samenthi (senior councillors) grade. However government employees are exempted from the duty of the Samen Nuzaba.

9. Samenthi: 48-51 years of age. The Samenthi age-set grade is the traditional leaders of the village under whom the village administrative, executive and judicial work is carried out. The revenue/tax collections as well as policies relating to village development work are decided by this grade. All judgments and decisions are pronounced by this grade. In effect this grade is the decision making body in the village.

The Samen Nuzaba and Samenthi age grades are called the “Emchachari” (rulers/administrators) and traditionally they are the village leaders who form the executive body of the village. However government employees are also exempted from the duty of the Samenthi. The reason why the government employees are exempted from the duties of these two age-grades is that as Councillors their job is full time and they have to be in the village at all times.

10. Risüden/Risütemba: 52-55 years of age. This age grade is responsible for mobilizing search parties or rescue teams in case of accidents such as drowning and so on.

11. Maozenba Telakba: 56-59 years of age. To oversee the guarding of the village, that is, they will mobilize, organise and supervise the lower grades
for guard duties. This is more so during the wet rice cultivation season when most of the villagers leave the village to work in the fields 16-18 km away from the village. At this time of year only the old, infirm and very young are left in the village. Therefore guards called *Nokhimongri* are organised to guard the village. This age-set grade is responsible for organising the *Nokhimongri* guards.

12. Maozenba Temenba: 60-63 years of age. This age grade is responsible for organizing and directing the different lower age grades for community works such as clearing of the village path, repair of village gates and so on.

13. Empiba Ho: 64-67 years of age. This age-grade set is responsible for organising the *Mesetri* (guard) of the village during *Ingkho Mapang* when the males are exempted from village duties as per the traditional age-set system. *Ingkho Mapang* literally means 'time to earn' which is explained in detail in the next chapter on economy. During this time the males can go away from the village for their own individual works and as the village is deserted, this age-set grade is given the task of organising the guard duty of the various age-set grades in the village and to look after minor official duties of the Village Council which also remain suspended during this period.

14. Nokimongba: 68 and above. They are considered the retired citizens and are relegated the status of village elders and are treated with deference.

The systematic grading of the age-sets with specific roles and duties ensures that each male in the village learn leadership skills and responsibilities by experiencing the manual jobs from a young age and gradually progressing through various stages where every aspect of village life is learned - be it the village boundary, relationship with other villages, the maintenance of village law and order, administration and being at the helm of power and so on. This is a highly institutionalized form of division of
labour where from boyhood to maturity the males learn to work for and protect the village community.

Once a boy enters the age-set system in the village he is also known as 'Emjangkhet, 'eni meaning village, 'jang meaning legs and 'khet meaning hands, thus it means that once the males enter the age-set system they become the legs and hands of the village, meaning the work force. In each age-set grade, the oldest member is chosen as the leader. Sometimes when the services of all the members of an age-set grade are not required, the leader of that particular grade will select a few of his age mates and will then direct them to carry out the necessary duties.

As we have explained earlier the progressive change of grades in the age-set system occur regularly. Every three years there is an event called "Ho Tsungtepba". This is the time when new entrants to the age-set system or the Yanga are inducted. With the new inductions each grade moves up progressively to the senior grade. This is a solemn and important occasion for in this event, the "Emchachari" or the village leaders give way to the next generation of leaders while the new entrants to the Ho or Orirachet (another term for the age-set system) is inducted. The occasion is marked by a simple ceremony where meat is distributed to every household in the village.

The outgoing Samenth (senior Village Council members) age-set grade collects the funds from among themselves to purchase three pigs. The pigs are killed in the house of the eldest member of this age-set grade and the pig's head is given to him. The meat called "Jongpongza" is then distributed to each household in the village. In a piece of bamboo three token pieces of meat consisting of fat, lean meat and bone are skewered and this is hung on the front door of each household where the male members are to be inducted into the next age-set grade or will enter the age-set grade. If due to some unforeseen circumstances a household, where a male member is to be promoted or to be inducted into the age-set grade is not given this meat, then as a fine three more pigs will have to be killed and the distribution of meat
carried out again. The Samen Nuzaba (junior Village Council members) carry out the distribution of the meat. It is only after this ceremony that the Samen Nuzaba take the office of the Samenthi (senior Village Council members).

When the Samen Nuzaba takes over, the outgoing Samenthi shows them the village boundaries and all the village lands. The audit books and registers are handed over to them too. At the time of “Ho Tsungtepba” the other age-set grades are also allowed to kill pigs and have a feast among their age-set grade. This is not mandatory but if they so wish, they are allowed to have this feast. When the Samenthi step down and are promoted to the next age-set grade, the older age-set grades give them titles or “Naroküm” according to their performance when in office.

It is at this time that the different age-set grades get an opportunity to come together and renew their bond of friendship among themselves and for those who stay outside the village, this is the time when they get to meet their age mates and thus establish lifelong bonds. This is a celebration where a boy entering the age-set system is formally recognised as a man with attendant duties and responsibilities. The age-set system determines a man’s position in the village and sets the patterns of social behaviour, civic duties and political responsibilities.

The oldest member in each age-set grade is responsible for assigning various tasks as per their grade to the age-mates and he is the one who will be sought by the older age-set grades to delegate certain jobs to his grade. He will be held responsible for negligence of duties. In Tables XXIII and XXIV, the names of the oldest member of each age-set grade in Sängdakba (upper khel) and Ayim Anet (lower khel) is given.
### Table XXIII
Names of Oldest member in each age-set grade of Sōndakba (upper khel)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr No</th>
<th>Name of age-set grade</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Names of oldest member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nuzabari Jongpori</td>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>Tiatemsu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tekānpba ori</td>
<td>20-23</td>
<td>Talikūmshik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Achangcharuba</td>
<td>24-27</td>
<td>Temjenlemba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Apakhcharuba</td>
<td>28-31</td>
<td>Medemnochet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Azi Akhang Nuzaba</td>
<td>32-35</td>
<td>Menangkumba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Azi Akhang Tezenba</td>
<td>36-39</td>
<td>Assamwati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Alikhun</td>
<td>40-43</td>
<td>Makmulepden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Samen Nuzaba</td>
<td>40-43</td>
<td>Temjenzīnu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Samenthī</td>
<td>48-51</td>
<td>Immasenba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Risūden</td>
<td>52-56</td>
<td>Akanglemba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mozenba Telakba</td>
<td>56-59</td>
<td>Impoqūmbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mozenba Temenba</td>
<td>60-63</td>
<td>Penen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Empība Ho</td>
<td>64-67</td>
<td>Imtstūtangba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nokhimongba</td>
<td>68 &amp; above</td>
<td>Inlimeren</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table XXIV
Names of oldest member among the age-set grades in Ayim Anet (lower khel)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr No</th>
<th>Name of age-set grades</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Names of oldest member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sīngpori</td>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>Tongpangstūnep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tekānpba Ori</td>
<td>20-23</td>
<td>Inliren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pangkhang</td>
<td>24-27</td>
<td>Tiaochet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kitsūng</td>
<td>28-31</td>
<td>Karilong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Azi Akhang Nuzaba</td>
<td>32-35</td>
<td>Ningsangmetong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Azi Akhang Tezenba</td>
<td>36-39</td>
<td>Likūmaysang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Alikhun</td>
<td>40-43</td>
<td>Merentoshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Samen Nuzaba</td>
<td>40-43</td>
<td>Timuteka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Samenthī</td>
<td>48-51</td>
<td>Karīangba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Risūden</td>
<td>52-55</td>
<td>Sūpongiba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mozenba Telakba</td>
<td>56-59</td>
<td>Chensangba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mozenba Temenba</td>
<td>60-63</td>
<td>Tiaochet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Empība Ho</td>
<td>64-67</td>
<td>Tongpangmeren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nokhimongba</td>
<td>68 &amp; above</td>
<td>Tānlepden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Changki there is another system of grading based on Narokûm, which means title. Every title has a meaning and it is interesting to note
comparisons are made to birds, animals or flowers. The titles are conferred on the junior age-sets by the senior age-sets after assessing the activities of the group while running the village government and the qualities looked for are honesty, loyalty, courage, clarity in village government laws and bringing of trophies to the village (this was more pertinent during headhunting days) and so on.

The manner of the grades receiving the Narokūm or title differs vastly between the Sungdakba (upper khel) and Ayim Anet (lower khel). The names of the titles in the upper and lower khels are different and although the titles are still in usage most of the meanings of the titles are not known by the younger generations.

In Sungdakba (upper khel) there are different Narokūm or title that each age-set grade can 'buy' from the older grades. These Narokūm are assumed by a grade till such time that they remain active participants in the village administration. When they reach old age and are exempted from village duties and taxes, the Narokūm that they have assumed can be handed over to any of the lower grades, if they are approached. The elders holding such a title may be very few in number, as most of their peers may have died out. The lower grade can treat these elders by giving meat or even cash and thorough this process of lilaba ('buy') they get the titles. The title remain with a particular age-set grade until given away and these are not individual titles.

The Sungdakba (upper khel) Narokūm or titles are as follows:

1. Sakūb Ori: Sakūb means skin of buffalo and mithun. In the head hunting days shields were made of the treated skins of these animals besides those made of bamboo and cane. Shields made of animal skins were considered special for it was quite a rarity, due to the fact that the skins are considered a delicacy and most often
it was eaten. This title was conferred on the group that was considered tough, hard to defeat and feared by the enemies.

2. Milen Changri Ori: Milen is a kind of rare small bird known for its beauty, especially its colourful crown. It is known for being selective in its feeding and nesting, therefore rarely seen. In conferring this title, the group is acknowledged as being distinctive and distinguished.

3. Nametaki Ori: Nametaki is a fish which stings when carelessly touched. The fish is ferocious and cunning. Therefore this group is conferred the title attributing these qualities.

4. Jongmi Changri Ori: Jungmi is a rare and beautiful orchid usually found in the deep forest growing on high trees. The group scaling great heights is usually conferred this title.

5. Mepung Changri Ori: Mepung means wind. Mepung is always light and swift. This title is given to compare the group as light and fast as the wind in their duties and activities.

6. Otsungchangri Ori: Otsung is also a local bird, black in colour but with a red beak and with white-tipped feathers. It roams in couples usually inseparable. It is known for its intelligence. If trained properly it is said that it can produce human sounds - but it may be noted that this bird is not a parrot or a myna. The group conferred this title is considered to be loyal and intelligent.

7. Sangpang Changri Ori: Sangpang is a rare kind of berries which grow on shrubs and from a distance can be seen as red blossoms. These berries are a delicacy for birds and are used as bait to trap the birds. The group conferred this title is considered to be clever and tactful in executing their duties.

8. Onet Changri Ori: This is also a rare and beautifully coloured bird. This bird is characterized by being a follower of Miri bird, considered to be the king among birds. Thus the group given this title is considered to be loyal and the dutiful keepers of law and so on.
9. **Miri Changri Ori**: Miri is a local bird, black in colour and with a tail that has two decorative elongated feathers. It is a grand looking bird and it is supposed to be king among local birds. It is said that the other birds follow the Miri and is definitely the leader. Thus the group that showed great leadership qualities was given this title.

10. **Sati Changri Ori**: Sati means elephant and in comparison to it, the strongest and mightiest group was given this title.

11. **Medem Changri Ori**: ‘Medem’ means of same accord and also means of a good number. Therefore this title signifies a group comprising of a good number of members and working in cooperation and complete understanding among themselves.

12. **Tsüngi Changri Ori**: ‘Tsüngi’ is a carnivorous animal like wolf or hyena. It lives in packs of five or six in number and hunts as a group. Once they choose their prey they persist in following it even for days and weeks till they hunt it down. Thus this title means those who are persevering and hard working.

In *Ayim Anet* (lower khel) the names of the *Naroküm* or titles are bestowed upon the outgoing *Samenthi* (senior councillor) age-set grade by the older grades preceding them based on their performance as ‘*emchachari*’ or village rulers/administrators.

The *Ayim Anet* (lower khel) *Naroküm* or titles are as follows:

1. **Nanga Changri Ori**: ‘Nanga’ is a kind of bee, which makes its nest in large groups, and this bee is known for its ferociousness. Thus the group that is fierce in protecting the village and in carrying out its duties strictly is given this title.

2. **Medem Changri Ori**: ‘Medem’ means of same accord and also means of a good number. Therefore this title signifies a group comprising of a good number of members and working in cooperation and complete understanding among themselves.
3. Mepung Changri Ori: Mepung means wind. Mepung is always light and swift. This title is given to compare the group as light and fast as the wind in their duties and activities.

4. Longsa Changri Ori: In the ancient days of headhunting a warrior from Longsa village had taken the head of a Longkumer woman from Changki village who was noted for her beauty and especially her long hair which reached down to her ankles. In retaliation the Changki warriors captured alive the Longsa head hunter in the vicinity of Ungma village and killed him. This successful act of taking revenge was considered great and thus the title was given to those bringing such repute to the village by the group running the village government.

5. Tauenongdang Changri Ori: During the headhunting days Changki village fought a long protracted war with the Lotha tribe and Changki village although fighting alone never allowed the Lotha warriors to set foot on Changki soil and thus successfully defended the village. Thus this title is given to those who defend and protect the village.

6. Kucha Changri Ori: 'Ku' means belongings or luggages; 'Cha' means to check. During Ala Chela or Tsürang Tsūok (community fishing). During such fishing expedition, while returning there is a strict rule that one cannot carry more than one item of newly made articles such as bamboo baskets and plates and so on. This rule was made so as to ensure that everyone attended to the community fishing duties and did not neglect assigned responsibilities during such time by taking time out to collect raw materials from the jungle to make such articles. The checking was done by Azū Akhang age-set grade at a particular point and if anyone had more than one article it was destroyed on the spot. Thus this title means those who check meticulously and ensure that everyone carried out the village rulings.
7. **Moya Changri Ori**: Changki people call the Sema tribe 'Moya'. Moya people are notable in their warfare as ferocious, persistent and having great tactical prowess. Therefore the title is given to those showing such qualities.

8. **Miri Changri Ori**: Miri is a local bird, black in colour and with a tail that has two decorative elongated feathers. It is a grand looking bird and it is supposed to be king among local birds. It is said that the other birds follow the Miri and is definitely the leader. Thus the group that showed leadership qualities was given this title.

9. **Sangpi Changri Ori**: ‘Sangpi’ is the name of a small jet-black bird known for its lively and intelligent in the air. It is also known for its fighting prowess wherein it can defeat even bigger birds. This bird is also seen to be leading groups of other birds. Thus the group which shows intelligence and who are fierce fighters with good leadership qualities are given this title.

We find that there are two categories of age-set system in Changki. One is based on the compulsory traditional *Yanga* system, which moves up progressively every three years. The other is based on *Narakūm* or titles, which can be ‘bought’ as in the upper khel or be given by older grades as in the lower khel. However the age-set mates remain the same throughout. It is also interesting to note that in *Sungdakba* (upper khel) there are twelve *Narakūm* (titles) while in *Ayim Anet* (lower khel) there are only nine *Narakūm* (titles). We also find that although most of the titles are different in the upper and lower khels, three of the titles (*Mepung Changri Ori, Miri Changri Ori and Medem Changri Ori*) are commonly used in both khels. *Changri* in Changki dialect means members and *Ori* means of the same age group.

Apart from the traditional age-set grading system and the giving of titles the other traditional aspect of the village is the role of the *Yimpuiri* who is the village crier. Till date the *Yimpuiri* is the one who makes official
announcement. The traditional village government is also based on the customary laws and the mode of enforcing it is through fines. In this way social control is exercised and the smooth functioning of the village government ensured. The following passages give in detail these traditional aspects of village governance that is followed till date.

Yimpiuri – Village Crier

The *Yimpiuri* or the village crier is a very important functionary in Changki. He is the official mouth piece that gives necessary information to all the villagers. He is chosen from among the *Samen Nuzaba* or the junior councillors. The Village Council Chairman announces the time and date for meetings and will instruct the *Samen Nuzaba* (the junior village councillors) to make it known to the villagers. The *Samen Nuzaba* will select a *Yimpiuri* who has a good, loud and strong voice. He will then go from *kiong* (locality) to *kiong* and make the announcement verbally in a loud, clear voice. Such announcements are made from time to time, sometimes late in the night too. The *Yimten ozüng* (village government order) is also announced by the *Yimpiuri* or village crier. The job of the *Yimpiuri* is very important and is taken very seriously, for this is the only way through which the whole village will get information and necessary instructions. If any mistake is made by the *Yimpiuri* in the course of the announcement, he is liable to be fined heavily and chastised roundly by the Village Council. The office does not carry any monetary remuneration.

Customary Laws in Changki

The customary laws are unwritten which has been handed through the generations by way of the oral tradition. Earlier the customary laws were indisputable and an inalienable part in the lives of the people. However nowadays there is the choice of taking recourse in the law of the land from the lower courts such as the *Dobashi* courts, the ADC or DC courts in the district headquarters to the high courts and even the Supreme Court.
All citizens have the freedom to appeal to such courts if they so wish. But in the village we find that the customary laws are enforced and in general the people abide by the rulings based on customary laws. Some of the customary laws as we find is enumerated below:

1. Tenure of the Village Council is 6 years.
2. Non-Changkians are not eligible to be in the Village Council.
3. Fines imposed by the Village Council shall be 3 pigs and not less.
4. Fines for those caught stealing within the village will be Rs. 500/- while those caught stealing outside will be Rs. 1000/-
5. Rules of divorce: If a man wants to divorce his wife, he will walk out of the house with one dao, one spear and gun, if any. The rest of the household things will remain with the wife. If it is the woman who wants to divorce her husband, she will walk out with only what she is wearing. The sons will stay with the husband and the daughters with the wife.
6. 3 pigs will be fined on the spouse who commits adultery.
7. If a child is born out of wedlock and the boy refuses to marry the girl, he has to build a house for the child and the mother and pay all the village collections for 3 years.
8. If a boy and girl from the same clan have a child, they will be fined Rs.100/- If they decide to marry each other, they will be fined Rs.500/- and expelled from the village.
9. If a woman has a child from a non-Naga, 6 days after the birth of the child, she and the baby will be sent away from the village.
10. Hunting, fishing by using poison, taking stones, wood and so on by non-Changkians from Changki territory without permission will be fined Rs.500/-
11. If a person dies intestate, his nearest paternal relative will inherit his wealth or pay off his debts, if any.
12. Any non-Changkian who had settled in Changki but is desirous to leave the village for good forfeits all rights on the immovable properties he might have.

**Customary Fines**

The maintenance of law and order and the means through which social control is exercised is by imposing 'fines' on the wrong doers and defaulters. Fines were in the form of pigs, cows and paddy in earlier times. But nowadays in certain cases they are supplanted by money.

The fines imposed are for certain crimes are given below:

1) **Meraksa** (telling lies)
2) **Suokzüka** (cheating)
3) **Merokzüka** (setting wild fires)
4) **Kilamet** (adultery)
5) **Aki rongba** (house fire)
6) **Yimten raksaba** (violation of village rules)
7) **Yimten kakba** (violation of the general assembly or village *mungdang* decisions or collective decisions)

The fines for serial No. 1 to 7 are not fixed; they are realized according to the seriousness of the case and may vary from case to case. The Village Council will fix the amount of fine after the matter has been thoroughly investigated. However the fines for the following crimes are fixed by the Village Council:

8) **Ayim chencha** (village fine for minor cases) is Rs 30

9) **Aomet** (stealing) Rs 500 if the theft is within the village and if outside Rs 1000.

10) **Kilamet** (adultery) 3 pigs, which are over 50 kgs.

11) **Mibenlangba** (murder) Rs 5000

12) **Mungdang kakba** Rs 5000 for violation of the general body decisions or collective decisions.
The fines imposed for other violations vary according to the seriousness of the case. In the case of murder after the fine is meted out, the accused is then forwarded to the district courts for further trial and judgment.

Fines or 'tekang' (absent fee) of Rs. 30 are also imposed if any one does not carry out community works such as emphi waba (clearing of village paths) or tsulu endi phiro waba (clearing of paths to the rice fields) without valid reasons.

The imposition of fines served as a deterrent as well as punishment for in the olden times there was no recourse to incarceration or other ways of punishing the wrong doers. In the present too fines are still the method used as the means of social control for it has societal implications as the social standing of a person is tarnished. Even if the fine is just Re. 1/- the shame associated with it is great and the phrase "chenja jana" which roughly translated means 'the one who was fined' alludes to the questionable character of the person.

There is another way of exacting punishment when a person does not repay a loan or steals from another person. In such cases the Samen Nuzaba will carry out the act of seizing the spear, dao and noklubo (which roughly translated means dao holder) of the wrong doer. In the event that there are clansmen of the wrong doer among the Samen Nuzaba, it is the clansmen who will take away the things from the house of the wrong doer. These are associated with manliness as it were and taking them away means that he is symbolically stripped of his manhood. This is the ultimate insult that can be meted out to a man.

A wrong doer when caught will be summoned by the Village Council to appear in the village court which is in the community hall. Even if a person is rich or occupies high office if he is in the wrong he will be summoned by the Village Council. A person found guilty and is fined by the Village
Council. Being fined he will have to go out of the community hall whereby a *Samen Nuzaba* (junior councilor) will follow him so as to instruct him on how to speak to the Village Council members when he pays the fine. If the *Samen Nuzaba* member cannot instruct him to say the proper words, the *Samen Nuzaba* member is publicly chastised.

If any of the *Samen Nuzaba* members does not perform the duties assigned to them properly, then the whole grade is punished by fining each one of them Rs. 10/- for dereliction of duty. If any *Gaon Bura* or *Samen Menchen* member is charged with and fined *Aomet* (stealing) he is discharged with immediate effect from office and is also excommunicated from the Church.

When the fines are realized half of the money is divided between the Village Council members while the other half goes into the Village Council fund. If in case pigs are fined the head of the pig is distributed among the *Gaon Buras* turn wise according to seniority. The rest of the meat is equally shared among the other councillors.

**Traditional Samen Menchen (Village Government)**

Traditionally the Village Government was formed by the *Samenthi* and *Samen Nuzaba*, age-set grades called the *Samen Menchen* comprising of the permanent male residents of the village. Interestingly we find that although the non-Nagas, who were adopted and given clan and village membership, become part of the village age-set system and move up progressively along with he others, when they reach the grade of *Samen Nuzaba* and *Samenthi*, they are not allowed to take part in the *Samen Menchen*. They may perform some tasks allocated to them but they cannot take part as *Emchachari*, or rulers. The reasoning is that although non-Nagas have been given membership, they have not been given citizenship and thereby cannot take part in the village government. Another rule is that the children of these non-Nagas are not allowed to marry Changki people. However, the non-Nagas who settled in the village before 1961 and were
adopted by various Changki clans are allowed to take part in the village government and their children are allowed to marry Changki people. With regard to other Naga tribes, who were adopted by various clans and had settled in the village, they are allowed to be part of the Samen Menchen.

The *Samen Menchen* oversees the functioning of the village and for dispensing justice when offences and crimes are committed. But the *Samen Menchen* cannot arbitrarily make decisions, for following the traditionally democratic system of governance, the people's participation in the decision making process is also taken into account. The people participate in the Village Government through the *Ayim Asem Mungdang*, which translated means the Village General Assembly. It is compulsory for all Changki village male residents to attend the *Ayim Asem Mungdang*. In such meetings the agenda is read out and debated upon. The decisions taken are based on consensus among the people and the ruling is regarded as *Yimten Ozung*, which roughly translated mean 'people's verdict' or village government rule made on the basis of consensus.

Interestingly we find that the in the political institution of the village we find that women are not included in the decision making processes. In the proceedings of the Village Council women cannot sit in the meetings, in fact they are not even allowed into the Community Halls when such meetings take place. Even during the *Senso Mungdang* (general assembly of all Changki people) the women cannot take part. In the policy and decision making processes we find that women have no voice.

We find that the position of women in the political set up of the village is very low and their participation in the decision making processes negligible. We find that the women folk themselves regard the village political and administrative activities as the job of the men folk and although they can discuss such matters with their husbands and other male relatives within the confines of their homes, they do not participate in public life.
If we examine the age-set system we find that the allocation of specific duties and tasks assigned to each age-set grade involves all work starting with manual tasks such as fetching water and firewood, cooking, cleaning and so on. The self-sufficiency that the age-set system gives to the men provides for an exclusive and independent all male bastion that restricts the presence of women and segregates them totally, at least in the realm of the village polity.

On the other hand the men in the village find that their duties and responsibilities are heavy and often take up all their time. This is especially true for the younger generation of men who make up the main work force. The tasks allocated to each age-set grade are specific and the age-set grades are tradition bound to perform such tasks. Some of the younger men have left the village and settled in other towns because they found the village works interfered with their private lives and found such village works too hard. The men are kept occupied with village works concerning community works, economic activities and political responsibilities as well as Church activities throughout the year. The men are on call everyday, for should the Village Council Chairman or councillors summon them they will have to follow the orders and carry out the jobs assigned to them even if it interferes with their own private work. That is one reason why government job holders are exempt from where the two age-set grades of junior and senior councillors are drawn. From a very young age the men in the village are trained to carry out the responsibilities and duties for the traditional and customary functioning of the village government requires that each Changki man who is a permanent resident of the village contribute to the smooth functioning of the village administration.

The Gaon Bura Institution

Although the age-set system in Changki still forms an integral part of the polity, certain changes have been incorporated that has modified the traditional village government. The first change was the incorporation of the
institution of *Gaon Bura* introduced by the British in 1882 so as to make their administrative work easier and conducive to maintaining law and order.

The main functions of the *Gaon Buras* were to collect the annual house tax from their respective villages for the British government, settle cases of civil and criminal nature according to their respective tribal customs and established usages, and were responsible for the maintenance of law and order in their respective village jurisdiction.\(^{14}\) As the *Gaon Buras* were village chiefs or headmen they could carry out the orders of the British colonial rulers and make the administration of the villages easier for them. The *Gaon Buras* were appointed by the Government and they became the direct link between the British colonial administration and the villages. The powers and functions of the *Gaon Buras* as representatives of the colonial administration were determined by the Government. The *Gaon Buras* had no participation in the formulation of the policy regarding their own affairs. On the other hand, the *Gaon Buras* only received directions and supervision from the British district officers.\(^{15}\) The words *Gaon Bura* has been taken from the Assamese, *Gaon* meaning village and *Bura* meaning elder. It simply means village elders.

Another institution introduced by the British was the *Dobashi* institution. This institution served both as an instrument of pacification of the Nagas and as a native team of intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled. *Dobashi* literally means two languages. Thus the *Dobashi* was the interpreter. The British had instituted the *Dobashi* system as early as in the 1840's as part of an effort to create good relations with the Naga tribes, the object being to promote goodwill and understanding with the Nagas.

However this institution was discontinued in the 1850's only to be reintroduced and made permanent in 1881. The institution of *Dobashi* was an integral part of British administration. Its personnel were paid colonial
employees who were primarily used as a link between the native population and the colonial administrative officers.\textsuperscript{16}

In Changki the \textit{Gaon Bura} institution was established in the 1880's after the British introduced it in the Naga Hills. The exact date cannot be ascertained but the first Changki \textit{Gaon Bura} chosen was Rongseniken Changkiri of the lower khel.

In the beginning only one \textit{Gaon Bura} was chosen but in the intervening years the \textit{Gaon Buras} began to be selected on the basis of clan and soon became the representatives of the clans. The \textit{Gaon Buras} were the only links with the British administrators and it was through them that the official orders and information was passed on to the people.

As the traditional \textit{Samen Menchen} is based on the age-set system whose tenure is for six years only, (three years as junior councillors and three years as senior councillors), the \textit{Gaon Bura} whose tenure was more or less permanent and being the representative to the British administrators they were found to be necessary for the village administration and was therefore included in the \textit{Samen Menchen}, although they were not part of the grade that automatically ensured entry into the \textit{Samen Menchen}. In this way the \textit{Gaon Bura} institution became an important component of the traditional village government.

The \textit{Gaon Buras} are representatives of the clans to the \textit{Samen Menchen} and are therefore selected by the clans on individual merit. Men with leadership qualities and oratory skills were selected as \textit{Gaon Buras} to represent the clan. The \textit{Gaon Buras} are also usually retired army personnel, teachers and government employees. These men are experienced public speakers and leaders and as the traditional \textit{Samen Menchen} drawn from the age-set system stayed in power for a duration of only six years, the \textit{Gaon Bura} institution gained prominence for the \textit{Gaon Buras} are permanent members of the \textit{Samen Menchen}. Under the circumstances the \textit{Gaon Bura}
institution became a powerful and influential component of the Changki village government. When a Gaon Bura becomes too old or ill to function, he may be replaced by another representative who is selected by the respective clan members.

In the upper Khel there are six Gaon Buras: two are from the Longchari clan; two from the Amri clan; both of these are the founding clans while two are selected from the Alingri clan. In the lower Khel there are also six Gaon Buras; two are selected from the Tsungliri group comprising five clans, two from the Metsulosang group comprising two clans (Metsüri and Losangri), one from the founding clan Changkiri and one from the Emrem Changki clan.

The Dobashi selected is from the Longchari clan and is attached to the Dobashi Court in the Deputy Commissioner’ office in Mokokchung.

**GAONBURAS**

*Süngdakba (Upper Khel)*

1. Amri Clan :
   - a) Jendiraba
   - b) Limameri

2. Longchari Clan:
   - a) Sademtsüngba
   - b) Imchameren

3. Alingri Clan:
   - a) Imrongsüngba
   - b) Lanuteka

*Ayim Anet (Lower Khel)*

1. Changkiri Clan:
   - a) Tajenyuba

2. Emrem Changki:
   - a) Imdajemba
3. Metsülosang Clans :-  
   a) Metangkaba Aonok  
   b) Tekatiba Medemtsüngba  

4. Tsüngli Clans :-  
   a) Imnameren Ningdangri  
   b) Longriniken Molieri  

The Chairman of the Changki Village Council is Tajenyuba from the Changkiri clan of the lower Khel. As Longnak area is under the jurisdiction of the Changki village government, there is one Gaon Bura representing Merakiong (which is the common name used for the Longnak area), namely Tinumayang Alingri.

It is interesting to note that in the age-set system, the clan system does not have any part in the segmentation of the village into age-set grades. But in the Gaon Bura institution the clans play a major role for the Gaon Buras are representatives of the clans.

The traditional Samen Menchen is drawn from the age-set system and technically they are the ones who hold the reins of power in the village as per the tradition but in reality the powers and influence lie with the Gaon Buras.

The Gaon Buras in Changki village are the respected village elders, the representatives of all the clans. Each Gaon Bura is identified by the black and red waistcoat and red blanket that they wear. They act at the behest of the Government as quasi-officials and they are not paid any salary but the prestige and power that they enjoy at the village level is immense.

The traditional Samen Menchen is given its due respect and they take part in all the decision making processes but they are handicapped by the fact that they are in office for only six years, three of which are spent as assistants.
The institution of *Gaon Bura* and its powers and functions were further enhanced by the introduction of the Village Council and its incorporation into the traditional system of village governance. To understand how the *Gaon Buras* have superseded the traditional Samen Menchen as far as its powers and functions are concerned it might be useful to look into the details of the Village Council and Area Councils Act and the salient features of the Act.

**Changki Village Council**

Under the Constitution of India, provisions for safeguarding social and religious practices, customary justice and landed property of the Nagas are included in Article 371 A (1). This article deals with the special provisions with respect to the state of Nagaland.

"371A. (1) Notwithstanding anything in this constitution,
(a) No Act of Parliament in respect of—
(i) Religious or social parties of the Nagas,
(ii) Naga customary law and procedure,
(iii) Administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law.
(iv) Ownership and transfer of land and its resources,
shall apply to the state of Nagaland unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides." 17

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. As such no amendment of this Act has been promulgated so it may be taken to mean that this Act has been accepted by all sections of Naga society.

After Nagaland attained statehood in 1963, the Village Council was recognised by the State Government and promulgated through the Nagaland Village, Area and regional Councils Act 1970.
Nagaland Village, Area and Regional Councils Act 1970 was extended to the districts of Kohima and Mokokchung for at that time there were only these two districts and the then Naga Hills Tuensang Area (NHTA). It was only in 1973 that the three districts were divided into 7 districts. The Act was to consolidate the constitution of Village, Area and Regional Councils to regulate the functions and duties and for matters connected therewith. Some of the salient points of the Village Council as enumerated in *The Nagaland Code*, Volume II, (First Edition) 1971 are as follows:

Village Council:

1. Constitution: Every recognised village shall have a Village council

Explanation: Village means and includes an area recognised as a village as such by the Government of Nagaland. An area in order to be a Village under the Act shall fulfill the following conditions namely:

   a) The land in the area belong to the population of that area or given to them by the Government of Nagaland, if the land in question is a Government land or is given to them by the lawful owner of the land; and
   
   b) The Village is established according to the usage and customary practice of the population of the area.

2. A Village Council shall consists of members chosen by villagers in accordance with the prevailing customary practices and usages, the same being approved by the State Government, provided that hereditary Village Chiefs, Gaon Buras and Angs shall be ex-officio members of such Council and shall have voting rights.

The Constitution of the Nagaland Village and Area Councils Act states that it is mandatory for every recognised Naga village to have a Village Council. The specifications for constituting it are simple - that the land belongs to the village and that the village is established according to the usage and customary practice of the population of the area. The Village Councils as promulgated by the Government of Nagaland is a part of the decentralization process whereby the village administration are based on the traditional system of village government but will be additionally accountable to the civil administration.
The qualification for members is that they have to be bonafide citizens of India and above 25 years of age and the tenure of the Village Council is five years which is extendable to one year by the State Government by a notification in the Gazette. The members hold office for the stipulated tenure but should there be a vacancy another member may be appointed provided he remains in office for the remainder of the period till the Village Council is dissolved on completion of its tenure.

In the Act it is clearly stated that the established traditional institutions continue to function as Village Council according to respective custom and usages and the selection of the Chairman and Secretary are left to the discretion of the Village Council.

Wide ranging functions and powers are conferred upon the Village Council for developmental works as well as administration of justice which are backed with provisions for adequate resources with which to conduct their work:

The Village Council shall have the following powers and functions:

1) To formulate Village Development Schemes, to supervise proper maintenance of water supply, roads, forest, sanitation, education and other welfare activities;

2) To help various Government agencies in carrying out developmental works in the village;

3) To take development works on its own initiative or on request by the Government;

4) To borrow money from the Government, Banks or financial institutions for application in the development and welfare work of the village and to repay the same with or without interest as the case may be;

5) To apply for and receive grant-in-aid, donations, subsidies from the Government or any agencies;

6) To provide security for due repayment of loan received by any permanent resident of the village from the Government, Bank or financial institution;
7) To lend money from its funds to deserving permanent residents of the village and to obtain repayment thereof with or without interest;

8) To forfeit the security of any individual borrower on his default in repayment of loan advanced to him or on his commission of a breach of any terms of loan agreement entered into by him with the Council and to dispose of such security by public auction or by private sale;

9) To enter into any loan agreement with the Government, Bank and financial institutions or a permanent resident of the village;

10) To realise registration fees for each litigation within its jurisdiction;

11) To raise funds for utility service within the village by passing a resolution subject to the approval of the State Government: Provided that all monetary transactions shall be conducted through a scheduled Bank or the Nagaland State Co-Operative Bank;

12) To constitute Village Development Board;

13) Power to do certain Acts in the event of an epidemic.

On the outbreak of an epidemic or infectious disease Village Council shall initiate all preventive measures.

Administration of Justice

(1) The Village Council constituted under the Law in force from time to time shall administer justice within the village limits in accordance with the customary law and usages as accepted by the canons of justice established in Nagaland, and the law in this respect as enforced from time to time.

(2) In case of disputes between villages falling in different areas or districts two or more Village Councils may settle a dispute in a joint session or refer it to the appropriate authority.²⁰

From the above points enumerated we see that the functioning of the modern state machinery is incorporated into the administration of the village using the age-old traditional power structure and based on customary laws concerning civil and criminal justice as long as they are applicable and are deemed appropriate. The modern system has been adapted and interwoven
into the traditional village political framework without disturbing or doing away with the customary and traditional ways of village governance. The developmental programmes and allocation of funds, resources and implementation of such activities are through the Village Council and the Village Development Board.

The Village Council also facilitates the smooth functioning of the district and state administration in the rural areas and serves as a link between the state and the villagers through the block/sub-divisional and district headquarters. This is enumerated in the paragraph concerning village administration.

(1) The Village Council shall be auxiliary to the administration and shall have full powers to deal with internal administration of the village:

(a) Maintenance of law and order

(b) In serious case offender may be arrested but such person shall be handed over to the nearest Administrative Officer or Police Station without undue delay;

(c) To report to the nearest Administrative officer occurrence of any unnatural death or serious accident;

(d) To inform the presence of strangers, vagabonds or suspects to the nearest Administrative Officer or police Station;

(e) To enforce orders passed by the competent authority on the village as a whole;

(f) To report the of break of epidemics to the nearest Administrative Officer or medical Officer;

(g) No transfer of immovable property shall be affected without the consent of the Village Council. Written record of this shall be maintained by the Village Council.

The Village Council is under the supervision and control of the Deputy Commissioner/ the Additional Deputy Commissioner or Sub-Divisional
Officer (Civil) in-charge of the Sub-Division, Extra Commissioner or Circle Officer within his jurisdiction.

The following directives ensures that the Village Councils assist the district administration in maintaining law and order, facilitating health measures to contain diseases and to oversee the overall smooth functioning of the village.

In Changki following the directives as given in the Village and Area Council Act the people have constituted the Changki Village Council comprising of the traditional Samen Menchen drawn from the age-set system as well as the Gaon Buras. The Village Council is known as 'emchachari' which means rulers. Thus the Samen Menchen is synonymous with the Village Council.

The Village Council Chairman is selected from among the 'emchachari' but in Changki we find that the Council Chairman from the very inception of the Village Council continues to be selected from among the Gaon Buras.

We find that in Changki the Gaon Buras being educated leaders who had had exposure to the outside world and its workings, (most Gaon Buras are retired army personnel, retired teachers or government employees) were increasingly called upon to carry out the work of the Village Council in dealing with the district HQ offices in Mokokchung and thus they became an essential feature of the Village Council. The Samen Nuzaba and Samenth who had progressively moved up the age-set system in the village were mostly agriculturists who may have had some degree of education but were not too well versed in the ways of the bureaucracy and state machinery. Furthermore, the Samen Nuzaba and Samenth were in office for only six years, three of which were spent as junior councillors undergoing training. The Gaon Buras on the other hand had no such fixed tenure. Thus with the introduction of the Village Council Act, the institution of Gaon Bura became
a permanent fixture in the traditional village government and in many ways became more powerful.

In the Village and Area Councils Act the tenure of the Village Council Chairman has been stipulated as five years but in practical terms the tenure varies from village to village. In Changki we find that the tenure is not fixed and since 1972 when the Act came into being, there have been eight Village Council Chairmen in the village with the present Chairman holding office for a second term.

The exact dates of the terms held by the various Chairmen could not be given as no records as such were maintained in the village but the names are given below in the order of tenure held by them:

1. Imkongwati Longchari (upper khel)
2. Metongmeri Changkiri (lower khel)
3. Imchatsung Longchari (upper khel)
4. Tinumeri Amri (upper khel)
5. Imotiba Longchari (lower khel)
6. Tajenyuba Changkiri (lower khel)
7. Pongenliba Alingri (upper khel)
8. Lanuteka Alingri (upper khel)
9. Tajenyuba Changkiri (lower khel) (second term)

It is observed that the majority of the people who have held the office of Chairman belong to the three founding clans: Longchari Amri and Changkiri and apart from two persons the rest are from the upper khel. The others belonging to the Alingri clan are said to have arrived in the village just a few days after the three founding clans established the village and as such are accorded due respect and honour.

The tenure of the Changki Village Council Chairman is not fixed (though as per the Government Act, it is supposed to be for five years) but it is not permanent either. The tenure of the Chairman depends on how
effective he is as a leader and as long as he enjoys the confidence of the other Council members. The Village Council Chairman can be removed from office if he is ineffective or mismanages the office. The Chairman may also resign on personal grounds.

In the figure given below the Changki Village Council comprises of the Süngdakba (upper khel) and Ayim Anet (lower khel) Samen Menchen (village government). The Village Council Chairman Tajenyuba Changkiri, selected from among the Gaon Buras is assisted by two secretaries, one from each khel. They are Imnasangba from Süngdakba (upper khel) and Tekasünep from Ayim Anet (lower khel). There are twelve Gaon Buras: six from each khel. In the composition of the Village Council we find that there are representatives from each khel in the traditional political structure. The number of senior and junior councillors is unequal as only those who are not government employees and who have reached the respective age-set grade are inducted and given the responsible of holding the highest office in the village polity.

The composition and the structure of the Changki Village Council is given in the following figure:
Case Study

The present Changki Village Council Chairman is Tajenyuba Changkiri, aged 70 years and he is the first person in the village to hold the office of Council Chairman for the second term. His first term was from 1994 – 2001. He resigned from the chairmanship in 2001 as there were some people who worked against him and therefore to put an end to the ‘bad blood’ as he put it, he resigned. However in 2003 he was again nominated by the village council members and his nomination was sent to the Additional District Commissioner (ADC) which was forwarded to the District Commissioner (DC) in Mokokchung, the district headquarters, and he was appointed by the DC. The office of Village Council Chairman does not entail any pay from the state government.

Tajenyuba Changkiri did his schooling in Jorhat Christian High School, Rajabari as his father worked as a Supervisor (1940's) in the Jorhat Mission Compound run by the American Missionaries. Tajenyuba came to Changki village and taught in Mission School Changki from 1954, then moved on to Sangpangmen Government Primary School Changki where he taught from 1957 to 1991 when he retired as the Head Master. In 1990 he was awarded the National Teacher’s award for which he had to go to Delhi to collect the award from the President of India. As it was his first visit to Delhi he was accompanied by his Temnakja (sister’s son). In 1992 he was selected by his clan as a Gaon Bura and in 1994 he became the Village Council Chairman. He is proficient in English, Hindi, Assamese, Nepali and Bengali languages and was also an all round sportsman. He was married to Sentimenla Longkumer and they had five children. When his wife died he married her youngest unmarried sister Imdangtila and they have two children.

The official duties that Tajenyuba has to attend to are often related to various office matters. All necessary documents from character certificates to recommendations and verifications that the people require to send to the
district headquarters will have to be signed by him. Without the signature of the Chairman nothing official can be undertaken. Every village assembly is chaired by the Village Council Chairman and he conducts the meetings where decisions are made collectively after which the final decision is pronounced by the Chairman. Some minor matters can be disposed off by the Village Council Chairman but for all major matters the consensus of the ayim mungdang (village general body) is required. As most of the official work pertains to constant interaction with government officials the Chairman has to make frequent visits to the district headquarters as well as to the state capital, Kohima. In all these visits the Chairman is always accompanied by a few select council members such as Gaon Bura, Samen Nuzaba (junior councillor) and Samenthi (senior councillor). The expenditure for all these trips is realized from the Village Council fund.

The Village Council Chairman looks after the welfare of the villagers and whenever people visit, the hospitality extended in the form of refreshments are borne by the Chairman as no funds are given for it. Any visitor to the village will have to approach the Chairman first and as the Chairman does not have a separate office, he entertains all visitors in his house. The chairmanship is more along voluntary service and Tajenyuba says that very often he has to depend on his wife to look after the rice field and farm that they depend on for their livelihood. All his children are married and have their own families and fields to look after. However Tajenyuba said that he likes his job especially travelling and meeting new people. He said that the most interesting part of his job was in discharging the right judgment when cases come up to him.

With regard to inter-village conflicts he said that as the boundaries of each village is well demarcated and the people have genuine respect for land there have been no serious conflicts with other villages. However should such conflicts arise, neighbouring villages will stand as witness and take oath. Such cases may be referred to the Dobashi court under the district
administrative control. The inter-village relationship is based on friendship and respect for each other's boundaries of land and rivers. The work of the Village Council is never ending and the council members meet every Sunday at Alingtemen which is a small hall in the middle of the village demarcating the upper from the lower khel. Here the weekly reports are given and discussed and matters relating to cases within the village are taken up and the dates are fixed for holding the village court to try the cases.

From the case study of the incumbent Village Council Chairman we understand that the village government is run along the traditional system of village government but most of the work is now taking on the mechanisms of the bureaucratic system with much file work and officialdom. In this way changes are taking place in the working of the traditional village government. The development works for the village and access to resources depends on the Village Council Chairman and his ability to network with the various levels of government officials. In many ways the Village Council Chairman has to take on the roles of civil servant, judge, politician and humble cultivator.

Powers and Functions of Changki Village Council

The Changki Village Council comprising of Samenthi and Samen Nuzaba as well as the Gaon Buras headed by the Village Council Chairman have overall powers to conduct the affairs of the village according to the customary laws within the village.

It is the Samenthi (senior councillors) who only can issue summons, pass judgment and give directives based on the customary law. However the summons or the verdict is given in the name of the Samen Menchen or Village Council and announced by the Chairman.

The role of the Samen Nuzaba is that of junior councillors and as such they are confined to do whatever works as directed by the Gaon Buras and
Samethi. They are not authorized to speak in public although in special cases they may be allowed to do so but only after they seek the permission of the assembly. If they speak out of turn or unnecessarily they are fined immediately by a small amount of money.

The Gaon Buras enjoy full powers with regard to development works on the intervention of the State Government, as they are the direct link to it. However the Gaon Buras cannot sanction any financial matters as the financial authority rests solely with the Samethi. The village funds are collected through the village household collection, the Senso membership fees, land tax, Changki valley Mill tax, Tzurang valley tax and so on.

There are 2 types of household collection among the villagers. The senior citizens who are above 70 years of age, widows and spinsters pay only half the amount, while the rest pay the full amount as decided by the Ayim Asem Mungdang (general village assembly). The amount for the ayim charu may vary from Rs.300 to Rs.350 annually. A certain date and time is fixed by the Village Council and it is called ‘ayim charu’ which is announced through ‘yimpiuri’ or public announcement made by the village crier. The Samen Nuzaba with detailed lists of each household makes the collection. On the collection date old and invalid people who cannot afford to maintain themselves will come with 50 paisa and giving that 50 paisa will ask for exemption from “ayim charu”.

All those exempted from “ayim charu” will not have any voice in public meetings unless the Samen Menchen specifically requests him. They will also not cultivate or fetch firewood as not paying tax means complete exemption from all normal activities. On that day of the collection, the eldest Gaon Bura will host the day’s hospitality sanctioned by the Ayim Asem Mungdang, the killing of a pig being the normal fare. The household collections are deposited at his house too.
The yearly audit held in March end is audited by people selected from the public such as schoolteachers, government jobholders and retired army personnel. When the audit report is ready a general assembly meeting is called in the village and after verifying the proper usage of the funds, an amount for the current year’s collection is fixed. An annual house tax of Rs.20 is paid to the government. This amount is also collected by the Samen Menchen and deposited at the sub-district headquarter, Mangolemba.

In the Changki Village Council represented by the age-set grades of Samen Nuzaba and Samenth as well as the twelve Gaon Buras, the Village Council Chairman presides over public meetings, when such meetings are held. The agenda is read out and discussion in the house takes place where everyone is given a chance to voice his opinion. The way the speaker addresses the house is formal and respectful. Any breach of decorum here is viewed seriously and a fine imposed. When there is a Changki Senso Mungdang or general assembly, all the villagers regardless of where they reside, (except the women and children), attend the meeting and each person regardless of clan, age or status is allowed to speak provided he follows the strict norms of public speaking.

When cases are tried, the guilty party as well as the injured party is summoned by the Village Council and each party given a fair hearing. Witnesses are called in and the evidence given for or against. After deliberation if the guilty party is found to be at fault a fine is imposed depending on the gravity of the case. If the injured party cannot give enough evidence or reasonable explanations then they are also liable to be fined.

In cases when the aggrieved party does not accept the verdict of the Village Council and decides to file a case with the district administration or any other higher courts, it is mandatory that the aggrieved party should give proper information to the Village Council. If not the case will be blocked and the offenders fined. If the aggrieved party after giving proper information goes ahead with filing the case in other courts, the Village Council gives the
ruhng that should they lose the case, the Village Council will take action and compensation has to be paid by the aggrieved party to the Village Council. In case the aggrieved party goes to court of law willfully without informing the Village Council, they are fined heavily. If any cases go to the DC court and other courts of the land a file will be created by the people concerned.

We also find that when disputes arise it is the norm of the aggrieved parties to call well-wishers, except Village Council and Church members, who will try to negotiate so that a compromise is reached between the parties. In such cases there are no fines imposed. If any party should decide to go the Village Council with the case, the Village Council will first ask the verdict of the well wishers. They study the case thoroughly but usually the ruling follows the verdict of the well wishers. If a fine imposed on the guilty party by the Village Council is not paid and the party decides to go to other courts and loses the case, then the party has to pay the fine as well as the costs of the case for the Village Council too.

When disputes such as not paying of loans with interest, the parties are given a chance by the Village Council to settle the matter between the parties by fixing a date for repayment of the loan with interest. If the defaulter does not pay the amount by the time fixed, the case is tried by the Village Council and should the defaulter pay back the loan when the case is being taken by the Village Council, the case will not be withdrawn and the defaulter is fined, even if he has paid up the full amount. This is to deter the unnecessary wastage of the time of the Village Council as well as to uphold the sanctity of the Village Council.

The Samen Menchen (Village Council) is also subject to punishment by way of fines if they are found guilty of wrong doing. The Gaon Buras may be respected village elders but this does not mean that they are above the law. In the year 2003, a Gaon Bura was summarily dismissed from office for he was caught stealing log from the reserved forest. This meant that the
Church also took action by excommunicating him and his clan fined him heavily for bringing shame upon them.

Usually among the Ao the clans try adultery cases but in Changki, the Village Council tries the cases. In such cases, as soon as it comes to the notice of the Village Council, the parties are summoned and the case tried. Family and friends are allowed to stand as witnesses.

In the meetings called by the Samen Menchen, only the Samenthí members are allowed to speak. No one can speak in such meetings for such meetings take place when a final decision has been taken after calling the executive as well as the Senso Mungdang meetings.

The relationship between that of the Gaon Buras and the traditional Samen Menchen (traditional village councillors) is cordial and formal. The Gaon Buras being the elders have more authority by virtue of their age as well experience and as the Samen Menchen are in office for only six years, three of which are spent as assistants, they are guided and supervised by the Gaon Buras. The Village Council Chairman is also inevitably selected from among the Gaon Buras, so the Samen Menchen has little authority on its own. But as they work in cooperation and in tandem with each other, the combined forces of the Samen Menchen and Gaon Buras comprising the Village Council regulates the affairs of the village.

The Village Council dispenses its duties as per the customary laws, which have been the norm from time immemorial. The form of punishment is through fines, which usually involves pigs and payment of cash. We find that Changki village as in the rest of Nagaland has shown a high degree of adaptability and a readiness to incorporate new political and administrative reforms into the existing traditional village political structure to attain new goals without doing away with the old system. In this way by establishing relatively viable administrative units at the grassroots level like the Village Councils within the traditional local political framework, the possibilities for
obtaining resources for development and for gaining access to wider patterns of participation in the decision making processes has been opened while the continuity of cultural identity is retained.

People’s Participation in the Village polity

The traditional system of village administration is based on the active participation of the people where decisions are taken after open debates and discussions and a consensus is reached. Although the Village Council comprised of the traditional Samen Menchen and the Gaon Buras, the acknowledged leaders, it cannot pass any ruling without the consent of the people pertaining to the welfare of the people in general. With regard to maintenance of law and order, disputes over property, divorce and so on the Village Council acts according to customary laws which is indisputable. The people’s participation in the village polity is not confined to the permanent residents of the village alone. The Changki people living outside of the village are also expected to participate although the participation may be limited. To show how this takes place, it will be relevant to explain how the people have organised themselves at the village level and outside of the village.

At the village level the people are organised in the following manner:

a) at the clan level

b) at the khel level: Súngdakba (upper) and Ayim Anet (lower)

c) at the Ayim Asem Mungdang (Changki Village General Assembly) level.

At the clan level each clan has its own committee which oversees the clan property and settles disputes within its jurisdiction. The clan committees in the village have office bearers such as Convener, Secretary and Treasurer and executive members the number of which can be from five to more than twenty members depending on the numerical strength of the clan. The clan committee at the village level also maintains a register where
names of the male members living within as well as outside the village are entered.

At the khel level we find that both Sungdakba and Ayim Anet have their own traditional Samen Menchen (village government), Gaon Buras and age-set systems. Each khel has its own independent and separate set of rules and regulations pertaining to its jurisdiction. However when it comes to the village as a unit, both the khels will discuss the matter at hand and will formulate rules and regulations through consensus.

At the Ayim Asem Mungdang level all male residents of Changki village take part in the village polity; their participation is through the Ayim Mungdang or the village general meeting. It is compulsory for every male to attend the meeting. In these general meetings the people are free to speak and even air their grievances or complaints. The people can also question the Samen Menchen (Village Council) and if there are anomalies in the conduct of the Samen Menchen, the people can impose fines on them too.

The Changki people residing outside the village are organised in the following manner:

a) Changki Union level
b) Clan level
c) Changki Senso level

There is a Changki Union in every town wherever there are Changki people. The Changki Union caters to the welfare of the people and in times of need and trouble as well as for celebrations and other events it is the Changki Union that provides support through physical and material support. Each Changki male is registered with the Union and pays annual membership fees. Once a man is entered in the Union register, his family is also automatically registered. Each Changki Union has a President, General Secretary as well as a Treasurer. The meetings are held whenever the need
arises. The Changki Union also holds Changki Fellowship services every Sunday.

In this way the sense of community living and participation is kept alive even in the towns. Apart from this each clan has its own Union too and it is through the clan unions in the towns that the members are included in the age-set system. The clan committee in the towns maintain a register where each the names of the male members are entered. This is turn is sent to the village clan committee who will in turn make sure the names are registered in the village clan register thus ensuring that the members entry into the village age-set system is automatic. This is so for once the names are entered in the clan register; the village clan committee makes sure that the names are also entered in the village register. The members living outside of the village may be part of the age-set system but they are not assigned any duties or roles for practical reasons. It is only those living in the village who are actively involved in the village age-set system and the Samen Menchen.

We have stated that all males have to enter the age-set system to become Senso (citizen) and that to be counted as a member of the village all males require clan membership.

Clan membership is through birth while entry into the age-set system depends on the chronological age of the person. When the males enter the age-set system, they are considered to have become responsible citizen. As citizens their names are entered in the clan registers and a token membership fee is taken from them. It is the duty of the clan members responsible for maintaining the register to see that every member's name has been entered in the village Senso register too, which is maintained clan-wise. Each Changki male regardless of where they live pay a membership fee of Rs. 10 annually now. In this way all the Changki males become a part of the village Senso.

The participation of the Changki males who are non resident villagers in the affairs of the general village polity, no matter where they
reside, is through the Changki Senso Mungdang (Senso – citizens; Mungdang – general assembly). The meetings are always held in Changki village and all Changki males are expected to come to the village for the meetings.

The Changki Senso Mungdang is the general public meeting. All males who have entered the age-set system are eligible to attend this meeting. Whenever a Senso Mungdang is called all the Changki Unions are notified and each Union is responsible for intimating the same to each member.

It is mandatory that every Changki male, wherever he may be residing, attend the meeting. In the event that a person has settled too far away in other states and finds it inconvenient to come for the meeting at short notice, he is exempted. The ties with the village are kept intact in such ways and every Changki male have a responsibility and duty towards the village through participation in the Senso Mungdang.

The Changki Senso Mungdang (Changki general body assembly) also has a Senso Menchenphuri which roughly translated mean, General Body Office Bearers, comprising of all the Changki males, regardless of where they reside. The Senso Menchenphuri comprises of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, one Treasurer and one Finance Secretary selected from within the village itself. The Senso Menchenphuri officials hold office for a period two years.

Apart from these officials the Senso Menchenphuri is also comprised of the “Sanen Luden” or Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is made up of two representatives each from the Mokokchung, Dimapur and Kohima Changki Unions and one each from the other Changki Unions within Nagaland. As Changki village is also taken as a unit, representatives are sent to the Sanen Luden from the village itself. The representatives comprise
of two Gaon Bura, two Samenthi (senior councillors), two Samen Nuzaba (junior councillors) and four members from the general public, that is, two each from the two khels. The Sanen Luden holds office for two years.

The Senso Menchenphuri has overall power to take decisions on matters pertaining to matters discussed by the Changki Senso Mungdang, which is final and binding. Among the Sanen Luden, the representatives from the Samen Menchen (Village Council) have the power to impose fines as per the customary law and to mete out punishments.

The President selected from among the office bearers of the Senso Menchenphuri who are permanent residents of the village has the power to call the Senso meeting whenever the need arises. When such meetings are called, it is the duty of the Samen Nuzaba (junior councillors) to personally go to each Changki Union and give the letter of intimation for the meeting.

In these meetings every member has a right to speak but certain protocols are observed so that decorum and decency are maintained. Proper permission is ought when anyone wants to speak from the President and the manner of speaking is formal and respectful. The person speaking in such meetings must keep to the point he has raised and cannot make long speeches and no one can interrupt someone who has been granted permission to speak.

The traditional political set up and the manner in which the people have organised themselves include every Changki male. Through the Senso Mungdang the Changki people residing outside the village maintain links with the village. Although people who do not attend the meetings are viewed in a poor light, not everyone takes active part in the Senso Mungdang and a few Changki people living outside the village do not maintain links with the village. However, anyone who does not attend the Senso meetings are fined Rs.100/- and it is mandatory for them to pay the membership fee of Rs.10 annually. It is through the Senso Mungdang that the people stay connected
to the village and especially for the males, this is an important factor as their participation will give them recognition, status and respect within the village.

Case Study

In the earlier chapter on kinship we have discussed the problems arising due to the claims made by one clan that they were the original founding clan in the lower khel. The political fall out of this claim is best illustrated by the events that took place from 2001 onward. In the ensuing discord the claimants tried to break up the Senso Telongjem (solidarity of the people) as well as the Senso Menchenphuri (General Body Office Bearers) as the following details will show.

In 2001 when the Senso Charu (citizen membership fee) was collected, the Emrem Changki clan sent their membership fees using the name of the Changkiri clan. In effect they were openly declaring themselves as the Changkiri clan. This issue was brought to the Senso Mungdang (general body assembly) on October 25th 2001. In this meeting, the question of how two clans having the same name could submit membership fees separately was raised. After much discussions and debates, the President, following the consensus/verdict of the general body, made the final decision and declared that the clan led by Tajenyuba G.B. (Gaon Bura) as Changkiri, and the clan led by Imtajenba G.B. (Gaon Bura) and Lanutemsu as Emrem Changki.

After the Senso Mungdang verdict, the Emrem Changki on their own will took the matter to the court of law, that is, the district judiciary Mokokchung under DC in the form of appeal against the Senso Mungdang judgment. It was only when the DC court summoned Tajenyuba as the respondent of the said appeal that the matter came to be known. As it was the verdict of the Senso Mungdang (general body) as a whole, and not the verdict of the respondent cited, Tajenyuba referred the matter to the Senso Menchenphuri (General Body Office Bearers), as it was in contravention to
the Senso verdict and decision. Therefore the Senso Mechenpuri had to call a 
Sanen Luden (executive committee) meeting whereupon it was decided to 
hold again a Senso Mungdang (Changki general body assembly), on 18th 

The Senso Mungdang in the meeting concluded that the Emrem 
Changki clan members had not honoured the customary law by going to the 
court of law without publicly declaring their intention of going to a court of 
law. This was a complete breach of Changki customary law, the act of which 
is a serious offence inviting the penalty of a fine Rs.5000/- the customary fine 
for Mungdang Kakba, which is a fine for violating the general assembly's 
decision. But when the members of Emrem Changki clan did not comply, the 
Senso Mungdang requested the Village Council action as is customary to 
seize from the possession of the Emrem Changki Gaon Bura, Imtajenba, a 
dao and spear as a token of imposing the given fine and kept in the custody 
of the Changki Village Council.

In the meantime, as the case was already in the District Magistrate's 
court the Senso (general assembly) decided to fight the case and as the case 
was initiated by the Emrem Changki clan, it became Senso Vs Emrem 
Changki. Further, to fight the case, the Senso also decided to collect funds 
from all the Changki Senso members, in all the centres, including the 
Emrem Changki clan, as they were part of the Senso. The Senso Mungdang 
also selected a committee and authorized it to handle the case on behalf of 
the Senso Mungdang.

Accordingly the Sanen Luden, as is the practice, in a subsequent 
meeting passed a resolution to collect a sum of Rs.300, inclusive of all Senso 
Mungdang related expenses, the court case expenses being one of them, per 
household and fixed May 31st 2002 as the deadline. Despite the deadline 
fixed, many centres having Changki Unions, corresponded with the Senso 
office, asking for more time to collect the funds. When the Mokokchung 
Changki Union as one of the centres sought clarification on the matter only
after the deadline expired, the *Senso Menchenphuri* (General Body Office Bearers) did not entertain their quest, reasoning that it would be out of the way to do so when the official deadline had already expired. However the *Sanen Luden* (Executive Committee) was called by the *Senso Menchenphuri* on 21st June 2002 and the matter was discussed wherein a resolution was made to extend the deadline to the 15th August 2002 and authorized the *Senso* office to hand over the list of names of those failing to pay to the Village Council. This was in keeping with the customary procedures wherein the Village Council is the only authorized body to impose any such penalty against offenders. In other words, the decision was taken by the *Senso Mungdang*, and the execution carried out by the *Samen Menchen*. Now the duty of the *Samen Menchen* was to ensure that all the members paid the *senso charu* (general body fund collection) but with a penalty for not conforming to the deadline.

*Samen Menchen* (Village Council) therefore had to summon the people who still did not pay the *senso charu*, centre-wise, and as Mangkolemba and Mokokchung were closest, the people from these centres were the first on the list. While members from Mangkolemba came on the date fixed, the people from Mokokchung did not come. Instead the Mokokchung Changki Union sent in a letter seeking clarification to the *Senso Menchenphuri* (General Body Office Bearers) with only a copy for information to the *Samen Menchen* (Village Council). This was an act of blatant defiance of the Village Council’s authority by the Mokokchung centre.

Therefore the *Samen Menchen* called for a *Ayim Asem Mungdang* (village general assembly) in the month of October 2002, as is generally done in such an event. The village general body unanimously decided that the Mokokchung Changki Union had defied the authority of the Changki Village Council and therefore the *Changki Yimten* (people's court) took the matter into their hands that is the matter was now in the hands of the people's court. The *Changki Yimten* fixed a date and time and summoned the Mokokchung Changki Union to present themselves at Changki.
However on the appointed day, the Mokokchung Changki Union did not come and the *Samen Nuzaba* (junior councillors) were sent from the village to Mokokchung to fetch them. The Mokokchung Changki Union did not comply and due to the insolence and the disrespect shown to the village government and the blatant and willful contravention of accepted customary laws, the *Changki Yimten* (people’s court) de-recognised the Mokokchung Changki Union.

In reply, the Mokokchung Changki Union took recourse to legal action and took recourse to the court of law. When the summons came to the *Changki Yimten* (people’s court) from the court, another *Ayim Asem Mungdang* (village general meeting) was called and it was then decided as the Mokokchung Changki Union was directly challenging the village government, the Mokokchung Changki people would be barred from entering Changki territory (*enki tsūba*) and from October 2002, the Mokokchung people were barred from entering Changki territory. The *Changki Yimten* passed a resolution that offenders would be fined the highest penalty of Rs.5000/- and that they would be ousted from the Changki *lusa* (territory) by the *Samen Menchen*. The *Changki Yimten* resolutely stood by their decision but knowing full well that penalty imposed on the offenders would lead to contempt of court as the matter was in court, the *Changki Yimten* recorded the names of those who violated its ruling so as to take action only when the court matter was settled.

In the meantime, the Church elders played the role as peace makers and in early 2004, the Mokokchung Changki Union, on their own volition, withdrew the case from Mokokchung ADC court as well as from the Kohima Bench. However in the withdrawal of the case from Kohima Bench, the reason cited by the Mokokchung Changki Union was that the union had amicably settled the matter with the *Changki Yimten*, which was untrue, for the union had withdrawn the case on the intervention of the Church workers.
When the withdrawal papers pertaining to the case reached the village, a *Ayim Asem Mungdang* (village general meeting) was called wherein it was resolved to remove the *enki tsūba* (barring entry into Changki territory) strictures on the Mokokchung Changki Union.

However as there were still other matters to be settled with the Mokokchung Changki Union, it was summoned by the *Changki Yimten* at a later date in May 2004. The issue in hand was to ascertain whether Mokokchung Changki Union did the right thing in defying the *Changki Yimten lenla* (Changki customary code of law). At the hearing in the customary court the Mokokchung Changki Union admitted their offence on the following grounds:

1. Not complying to the summons of the *Samen Menchen* by the union
2. Violations of *enki tsūba* (barring of entry into Changki territory) by individuals from Mokokchung
3. Citing false reasons when withdrawing the court case.

In case of offence number one, Mokokchung Changki Union was fined Rs.60 as customary penalty. The normal Changki customary penalty is Rs.30, if the matter is resolved at the *Samen Menchen* level, but as the case pertaining to the Mokokchung Changki Union had reached the *Changki Yimten* the fine was doubled.

In case of offence number two, the 44 individuals from Mokokchung who had violated the *enki tsūba* (barring entry into Changki territory) strictures were fined Rs.500 each (total Rs.22,000). It may be mentioned that the fine for *Yimten Kakba* (violations of village rule) fixed at Rs.5000, but showing *emli langba* (mercy/humane considerations) the *Changki Yimten* imposed only Rs.500.

In case of offence number three, the Mokokchung Changki Union was fined Rs.5000 for violating village rule (*Yimten kakba*). But this fine imposed was *Tepang Chenja* (oral fine), meaning that although the fine was imposed,
on their plea for mercy, the cash amount was returned to the union but the action was recorded as oral fine. This means that although no fine was taken in cash, it is still considered as having been fined.

Apart from the customary fines, when anyone goes to court of law against another but eventually withdraws the case or loses it, it is the customary practice that compensation be paid by the one who withdraws or loses the case to the other party. In the case of the Mokokchung Changki Union Vs Changki Yimten, as the Mokokchung Changki Union withdrew the case, they were automatically bound to pay compensation to the Changki Yimten for the expenditures incurred. But on the pleas and entreaties of the union, the Changki Yimten on their part decided to bear the burden of the case expenses by showing mercy (tsacho). After settlement of the issues cited above, the Changki Yimten on appeal from Mokokchung Changki Union revoked the earlier resolution wherein the union was de-recognised.

From the Mokokchung Changki Union case, we understand that the traditional customary law based on Yimten Emli, (people's verdict), Yimten Ozung (village rule), Samen Menchen (Village Council) and Senso (citizenship) still play a very important role in the lives of the people. The Samen Menchen (Village Council) is the apex body under which all units function and its influence crosses over the boundaries of the parent village to all the other places where Changki villagers may be settled.

The Samen Menchen (village government) does not govern arbitrarily; following the traditional democratic norms it takes into account, the people's will and verdict. The traditional decision making authority is the Ayim Mungdang (village general assembly), where direct participation of the people takes place in the decision making process. The Samen Menchen (Village Council) administers judicial discretion on consensus (obang utepha) and precedence as the case maybe. Here again the concept of 'emli' (system of governance) is deeply ingrained in the executive function of the Samen Menchen. In the traditional village administration the concept of emli langba
(humane considerations) also plays a major role. From the very beginning the *nikla* (objective) of the village government was for the welfare of the people as well as to keep the authority of the village government strong. Therefore in awarding penalty and punishments the underlying objective is to serve as a deterrent to others from committing such offences again.

**Village Development Board**

Another major change that was incorporated into the traditional village organisation was the introduction of the Village Development Board (VDB). The Village Development Board was the brainchild of the former Chief Secretary of Nagaland A.M. Gokhale, based on a theory that had been conceptualised by his father, Late Madhav Gokhale, in Phek district. The VDB rules were formulated and passed by the State Assembly in 1980 and amended in 1994. The salient features of the VDB are as follows:

It is formed under the aegis of the Village Council in every recognised village of Nagaland with tenure of five years, unless dissolved by the Village Council earlier. A VDB Secretary and other members are appointed, at least two of them women members. It is entrusted with assisting the village council in formulating and implementation of development schemes on an annual basis. Grant in aid is provided by the government yearly, the quantum of which is assessed by multiplying the number of the total households in the village into the allocation per household. There is a minimum and maximum ceiling to this grant in order to avoid discrimination, 25% of the total grant to the village is reserved for Women’s Programmes.

The yearly allocation, when received by the Village Council Chairman, is announced in a general public meeting of all denizens of the village. The infrastructure needs of the village are short listed. At least one scheme must compulsorily be income generating. It is mandatory for all VDBs to hold monthly public meetings for review and monitoring of ongoing projects. The
minutes of such meetings are submitted to the District Commissioner (DC) regularly. Unless absolutely unavoidable, all work under the VDB is executed by the community. The profits are either shared equally or kept in the village account. The DC is the Chairman of all VDBs in the district.

Every VDB has a bank account in which the DC and the VDB Secretary are joint signatories. Any drawal is to be authorised by the Village Council in the form of resolution signed by all the VCMs and VDB members. Besides this, each VDB is required to have Fixed Deposit (FD) account under the Matching Cash Grant (MCG) Scheme. The government matches all deposits in the FD with a like amount credited into the same account, up to a limit of Rupees two lakhs. This account functions as an effective contingency fund in times of emergency or shortfall.

More importantly, this entire procedure provides an ideal platform for unusual interfacing between the financial institutions, the government and the villagers. Although initially set up to execute work under the Department of Rural Development, today the VDBs have become the indirect instruments for most field level departments, covering the entire gamut from public health services to roads and bridges to essential public services like power, water supply and so on within the village.

Since its inception, the VDB has established itself within the firmament of the Naga village setup. One can discern the reason why. Its strength lies in its simplicity and logic, easily acceptable to the Naga ethos and psyche. This aided the transition to practical application of the theories of micro level planning and de-centralization. Moreover, the traditional Village Council hierarchy shifted responsibility from simple ‘legal administration’ to the wider and modern trend of ‘development administration’.

In Changki the VDB is composed of the Village Council Chairman who is also the Chairman of the VDB and a secretary and members selected from
among the villagers, the selection of whom is made by the Village Council. With consultation of the Village Council, the VDB will formulate projects for village development. After proper discussion and approval from the ‘Ayim Asem Mungdang’ or village general assembly meeting, the project will be submitted to the Block Development Officer (BDO) who will then take it up to higher authorities. When the sanctions come, the VDB or the Mass Management Committee as it is also called will look after the schemes in its execution and implementation. All committees in relation to village development works are controlled by the Samen Menchen or Village Council, both in terms of materials and finances.

The VDB in Changki has 3 sub-committees namely the Finance Committee, the Youth Development Committee and the Women Programme Committee, which are all separate cells with allocation of a certain amount of funds. The Village Council Chairman is the Chairman in all the sub-committees.

The first developmental work carried out in Changki through the VDB in 1980 – 1981 was the construction of the community hall followed by the construction of the village gate in 1981 – 1982. The other construction works through the years were the building of two more community halls cum dispensary, community granary, public toilets, repair of LP school etc. Other activities were purchase of paddy under food programme, development of pineapple plantation and banana farm and construction of community fisheries.

The programmes for the women included income generating schemes such as piggery where the women were given loan to buy a pigling each. The loan was repaid after a year when the pig was sold off at a profit. The piggery scheme has become very popular with the women in Changki. The weaving unit scheme was also introduced and funds were allocated for purchase of sewing and knitting machines for starting sewing and knitting units.
However this has not proved to be very profitable and this scheme has been stopped.

The pottery scheme which has been going on from the beginning of the VDB programmes (1980's) in the upper khel generates some income but more importantly through this scheme the art and skills involved in making the traditional Changki pots is being preserved. In the lower khel the pottery scheme was introduced from 2004 only.

Another income generating scheme run by the women is the money put up for loan with interest. The women had bought paddy from the money allocated to them in the earlier scheme. At first the paddy was loaned out on interest but as this involved too much labour, time and required a granary for storing the paddy, the paddy was sold off and the money is now being utilised for giving out on loan with interest.

For the youth the scheme included school agro-forestry VDB educational tours, construction of volley ball and basket ball courts and holding of village sports meet and so on.

The funds that come under the VDB programme are for Changki village as a unit. But internally, the money is shared in equal amounts between the upper and lower khels. From the funds allocated to each khel, 25% is allocated to the women of both the khels respectively.

The introduction of the Gaon Bura institution, the Village Council and the Village Development Board has brought about changes in the traditional political organisation of Changki. The Gaon Bura institution was incorporated into the traditional Samen Menchen and gradually gained prominence especially with the introduction of the Village Council. The Village Development Board being an auxiliary part of the Village Council brought about developmental progress in the infrastructural aspects of the village. All these have contributed towards bringing the village in closer
contact with the outside world through interactions with the administrative bodies and in a sense widened the political sphere of the village.

**Modern Electoral Process and Party Politics**

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.

Traditionally leaders like the *Gaon Buras* are selected on the basis of clans as well as through consensus. The *Samen Menchen* is directly recruited through the age-set system as per the customary practice. But with the introduction of adult franchise and party politics the system of election by ballot came into practice into the village, for the village is part of the 29 Jangpetkong Constituency of Mokokchung district. This constituency comprises the villages of Changki, Chungliyimsen, Khar, Mongchen, Dibua, Waromong and includes Alongkima, which is the area’s administrative sub centre, Mangkolemba, the district sub-divisional centre and Longnak and Merakiong polling stations.

The role of the women in the state election process and party politics is also quite different from that of the role and position of women in the traditional village polity. Each village has its own women’s wing where the women actively work for the party. However when it comes to actual decision-making and governance the women are still to get their due. Most times the women are relegated to cook and serve, although they can participate in public meetings and so on.

It is interesting to note how the people have adapted the modern electoral process and moulded it into the traditional way of selecting and now electing their leaders. For example, anyone who wants to stand for election from the Jangpetkong range will first apply at the constituency level that is at Mangolemba and with the recommendation from the constituency, his application will go to the district and then to the central headquarters. A
special committee for every political party will be constituted which will select candidates for the constituencies and will distribute the party tickets. The Indian Congress party and the regional Nagaland People’s Front (NPF) are the two main parties holding sway in the village.

Once the party tickets are distributed the candidate will declare his intention in his own village. That is if he is from Changki he will first inform the Changki Village Council of his plan, either on his own or through the party machinery of the constituency. The intending candidate(s) will then actively garner the support of his clansmen and villagers within the village and in the surrounding villages. The clan elders can also campaign for their candidate by trying to convince the other clans to support the candidate. The support base for the candidate in the villages is more often than not along clan lines. However it does not mean that all the clansmen will give support nor is it mandatory.

In the earlier chapter on kinship we have discussed the schism created due to the dispute between the Changkiri and Emrem Changki clans. We find that this schism is most evident in the electoral process of party politics in the village. The Congress MLA from this constituency is a member of the Emrem Changki clan who has been returned to power for the 4th consecutive term on the Congress party ticket and through political leverage the cleavage within the village has been further deepened.

In fact due to the deepening crisis within the village, the three founding clans of Changki, that is, the Longchari, Amri and Changkiri got together in 2001 and resolved not to help the Emrem Changki in politics anymore and en masse supported the regional Nagaland People’s Front (NPF) party. This decision of course had its ramifications with some members of the founding clans resenting the decision, as they were supporters of the Congress party.
The intra and inter-clan animosity arising out of political differences has brought about further breakdown in the relationships among the villagers and Changki has been reduced to two opposing parties along political party lines. Along with the antagonism created due to the clans’ dispute, the party politics has also heightened tensions arousing suspicion and distrust among the people.

We find that here is a deep-rooted politicization of the village more or less based along clan lines. Political affiliations to parties have played a divisive role in the village polity causing inter and intra clan rivalries. It was observed that such political affiliations went along the emotionally charged loyalties to family and clan and so on.

Summary

The polity of Changki village is based on the traditional age-set system and the Samen Menchen (village government) drawn from the age-set grades. Both the Sungdakba (upper) and Ayim Anet (lower) khels have their own age-set system and Samen Menchen but when it comes to matters concerning the village as a unit, the upper and lower khel Samen Menchen come together and form a united front. However certain changes have been incorporated into the traditional village system of governance. The introduction of Gaon Bura and Dobashi institutions by the British to facilitate their own administrative work has been effectively transposed into the traditional political set-up and the creation of the Village Councils by the state government has also meant that the traditional village political system has been drawn into a wider circle thus incorporating into the traditional village polity a larger role to play through such linkages. However the customary laws provide the basis for the civil and judicial powers vested in the village government. The continuity of the traditional village polity is reinforced by the customary laws which are binding and adhered to by the people.
Changes have also been incorporated through the Village Development Board which has decentralized the authority from the district and state headquarters for developmental works in the villages of Nagaland. The Village Development Board (VDB) is under the aegis of the Village Council and all infrastructural development work in the village is carried out under the supervision of the Village Council and with the grants-in-aid sanctioned through the Village Development Board. This has given more power to the Village Council but accountability and transparency is ensured through the Ayim Mungdang (village general body meeting) where the functioning of the Village Council and the VDB is scrutinized and objections raised by the people if they find anomalies. Thus the traditional village general body meetings and the will of the people continue to be important factors in the functioning of the village authority.

The introduction of electoral processes of party politics has created schisms within the village as it is especially compounded by the inter-clan rivalry caused by the claims of one clan as the original founding clan. The use of money, inducements and intimidation during elections has led to skirmishes and strained relationships in the village and in a number of ways have undermined the traditional village authority. However as stated earlier in chapter three, the founding clans have formed a united front and this has to a certain extent contained the other clans, in so far as election related activities are concerned. The declaration of the founding clans' decision to support the regional party, the Nagaland People's Front, in the last election had their clansmen and supporters close ranks against the supporters of the Congress Party. Within the village the founding clans' influence and mandate is accepted as their traditional right and privilege. The hierarchical order and privilege of the founding clans continue to hold sway over the village polity and this is most evident in the selection of the Village Council Chairman where we find that out of the nine Village Council Chairmen all are from the founding clans; apart from two who belong to the Alingri clan. This clan is considered to be next in position to the founding clans as this
clan reached the village only three days after the founding clans' established Changki village in the distant past.

The autonomy of the Village Council and the authority it exercises over all Changki people has been shown in the case study of the case of Mokokchung Changki Union Versus Changki Yimten. We find that the customary laws are obeyed and followed by the people even if they do not live in the village. This also brings to the fore the importance that the people attach to the village as the focal point of their cultural identity, for they could not sever links with the village by disobeying the mandate of the village authority. To do so would have entailed expulsion and exile which would mean an existence and fate worse than they would ever imagine. The self-identity is closely bound to the village and especially for the males, their duties and activities as well as participation within the existing socio-political frameworks ensures their standing in Changki society and thus recognition.

References:

2. ibid. p.142
3. ibid. p. 145
4. ibid. p. 146
6. ibid. pp. 120-121
8. ibid. p. 256
9. ibid. pp. 258-259
11. ibid. p. 177
12. ibid. p. 177
16. Sema, Piketo. *op. cit.* p. 34
20. *ibid.* p. 64