CHAPTER FIVE

Traditional foundations of Social Work Practice among the Sümi Tribe

As mentioned in the previous chapters, Social work emphasises on the importance of understanding people in their own environment hence, in order to delve and understand the practice of social work, it is important to look into the social structure and traditional ways of life of Sümi tribe. During the sixties and seventies, a focus on the societal and a structural perspective became more important in social work, even though the ideas certainly have a longer history than that. In Sweden for instance, social workers were directly involved in city planning, and social work was conducted as community work in the suburbs close to people’s everyday lives (Sundh & Turunen, 1992). A similar development was seen during this period in, for instance, Great Britain (Popple, 1995).

The Sümi traditional life revolved around the village. It is the highest political unit and holds the members of the tribe together. Each village is republic in nature and because of this; the term ‘village-state’ is used often in contradistinction with the Greek ‘city-state’ (Nagaland State Human development report 2004). Before the coming of the British and American Christian missionaries, inter-village warfare was very common because the village would avenge any wrong committed against a member by a person from a different village. Kinship and family structures are still cohesive forces that bind people together and provide psychological and emotional support, reflecting cultural values, involving kinship responsibilities. Within the village, there were traditional institutions, which played an important role in governance and in keeping the village together in every aspect of Sümi life. The traditional institutions here refer to all those forms of social and political institutions, which have their historical origin in the pre-colonial states and societies. Over the period, there are shift in the structure and function of family, leadership and the institutions but their continuing importance and contribution in local justice, land, and community development is still prominent.
5.1. Family Structure (Akibo\textsuperscript{28}) and Community Life

Family structure refers to the basic organization and boundaries associated with the family domain. Family social organization consists of the way in which family members interacts with one another in their daily activities (Voydanoff, 2013). Voydanoff says that from the perspective of ecological system theory, family and community are micro systems consisting of networks of face-to-face relationship. The settings in which relationship occur are characterized by factors such as place, time, physical features, activities, participation and roles. Research on family and community as micro systems includes a wide range of such structural and psychological aspects of the family and the community domain.

Photo No-10. Ghuvishe village Akükau and his family

The Sümi tribe is patriarchal and patrilineal hence, the descendant is traced from the father’s side. His children address Father as ‘Ipu’ and mother is addressed as ‘Iza’. Father is the head of the family but both the parents are highly respected. Mother’s role is equally significant. In the traditional society, grown up children would sleep in Apu-ki and Ili-ki\textsuperscript{29} (bachelor and Spinster’s dormitory) but they all ate food with their respective

\textsuperscript{28} Family is known as ‘Akibo’ and family members as ‘Akibolomi’ among the Sümi tribe.

\textsuperscript{29} Apu-Ki and III-Ki- these two words are Sümi term used for Morung or boys and girl’s dormitory. In most of the literature, the word ‘Morung’ is used in common by the Naga and other scholars and writers.
families together in the morning and evening. In an interview with several elderly people both from rural and urban areas, the participants revealed that the relationships, respect, responsibilities between parents and children, and between siblings are same as it was in ancient families. While interviewing the families, it was revealed that some participants believed that family life is much better because of Christianity and Biblical teaching. Therefore it is important to see different kind of family system existing among the Sümi tribe because family life is not lived in isolation but in a community context.

5.1.1. Nuclear Family System

The Sümi tribe from the beginning practice nuclear family system. In an interview with kikheje yeptho of Asukhomi village, in traditional society, it was essential for the groom to be family to built a house before marriage. This practice clearly shows that the community preferred nuclear family. Among the Sümi tribe, a family- Akibo consists of father - *Apu*, mother- *Aza*, and children- *Ati-anuli* (both biological and adopted) and it is exogamous. It is however, not a strange sight to see children of relatives and grandchildren living with the family. In New colony, Ghokiye Achumi revealed that his 3 grand children lives with his family because the children’s mother, who was Ghokiye’s daughter divorced and later died. In this kind of circumstances, it is not unusual for grandparents or at times siblings to take care.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, at the time of data collection in both rural and urban society, the size of the family vary but the data revealed that most of the family consists of 6 to 10 or more members. It may also be mentioned that in traditional nuclear family, father was considered the bread earner and every decision was made by him but in modern society, in most of the family both parents work and earn and they are engaged as agriculturist, government employees or they are self-employed etc. It was also found that most of the family had at least a small kitchen garden for daily consumption such as green leafy vegetables. This kind of gardens are taken care mostly by homemaker.

It was observed that in both New colony and Ghuvishe village there were only nuclear families. On the other, in New colony and Ghuvishe village, there were few joint families existing.
5.1.2 Joint Family System

Joint family among the Sümi tribe is of recent development. It consists of grandfather-Asu\textsuperscript{30}, grandmother- Apuza\textsuperscript{31}, father- Apu, mother- Aza, uncle\textsuperscript{32} - Apu Akichiu, Apu Aitiu or from maternal side Angu Akichiu (Elder uncle), Angu Aitiu (younger uncle), aunty\textsuperscript{33} - Ani, Aza, children- Ati-anuli and grand children- Aitilimi. Joint family comprises of 7- 15 or more members. In this kind of family, grandfather is the head of the family. He along with his wife and sons take decision and decides every household matters. The concept of joint family was not there but over the years, there have been some changes and in urban areas, though less in number joint family system is emerging.

In an interview with Hokuto Kiba in New colony and Khuvishe Yeptho of Amiphoto colony, it was told that once their sons are able to sustain their own family they will have their own house. Thus, to the researcher’s observation and understanding, joint family seem to be temporary arrangement.

Strong, DeVault, and Sayad (1998) while writing about Native Americans also said that are nuclear family as “the family type consisting of mother, father, and children” (p. 14). In Native American families, aunts may be referred to as “mother,” uncles may be referred to as “father,” and an individual’s cousins may be considered brothers and sisters.

Reasons for adopting Joint family system

While interacting with different families practicing joint family system, it was revealed that the reasons behind these changes are school dropout, unemployment and other factors. The participants narrated the reason why they have joint family:

\textsuperscript{30} Asu is addressed to both paternal and maternal grandfather.
\textsuperscript{31} Apuza is for both paternal and maternal grandmother.
\textsuperscript{32} Among the Sumi tribe, elder uncle or elder brother of the father is addressed as Apu Akichiu (literal translation would be elder father) and the younger uncles as Apu Aitiu/ Apu Anipau. From the maternal side or mother’s brothers are addressed as Angu or Ingu
\textsuperscript{33} Aunty is from the paternal side or father’s sisters are addressed as Ani/Ini and from the maternal or mother’s sisters are addressed as Azal/ Iza Akichiu, Azal/ Iza Aitiu.
The provider

In an interview with the families, it was found that one of the reason for having a joint family system was lack of income to sustain the family. Luxeho zhimomi, 74 year old man, who reside in New colony with his family has 11 children. At the time of data collection, one of his married son and family was residing with him. The son had 3 children. Beside the son’s family, Luxeho was also taking care of two grandchildren of his eldest deceased son. On asking why his son’s family was with him, he responded,

‘(Smiles… and took a deep breath) what to do, as parents we wanted him to study but he was not keen and failed several times before he dropped out of the school. He did not have a job but since he was going around with a girl, we got him married and he now has children. Initially they stayed in a rented house but it become difficult to manage two household with my income and we cannot let his wife and child starve, so his mother and I, we decided to let him stay with us until he finds a job or at least find a way to provide food for his family.’

The above narrative shows the responsibility of the parents towards their children even after they get married and have family of their own. In all the four sites, the participants especially the parents expressed their role as provider and did not stop caring for the offsprings.

The caretaker

Other significant reason was the need for support and care taking. It is recognized that grandparents fill the gap when parents are unable to do so. They often do whatever is necessary to support and maintain the family. In communities where resources to support are scarce, human service efforts take on new meaning as mechanisms to thwart client emotional and physical fatigue. Here is what Atoito, a 27 years old and a father of 2 children who lives in New colony had to say,

‘Well, both of us have government job and we cannot be all the time at home to take care and be with them. Since my parents are retired, they wanted us to stay with them so that they can take care of their grand children’.
In both New colony and Amiphoto, there are many young couples holding government jobs. The modern day facilities such as crèches are not seen anywhere in town but even if it exist people would prefer to keep their children with close relatives.

As stated earlier in Sümi community, family and relatives have great responsibilities towards each other. It was told that in traditional agrarian society it was grandparents/older men and women in the community who baby sit while young parents had to go to agricultural land. Grandparents’ roles can include assuming guardianship and primary care giving functions. Intensive grandparent involvement with grand children can be prompted by diverse situations, including parental relocation for employment or long-distance commuting from job-starved reservation communities, parental economic or behavioral health crises, grandparents’ desire to pass on traditional cultural wisdom, and the desire among grandparents (Cross & Miller, 2005; Weibel Orlando, 2000).

5.1.3. Roles and Responsibilities in the Family
Traditionally, in Sümi society men and women were assigned different roles. While men were responsible for protecting their wives and children and to provide shelter, women were responsible for looking after the house and taking care of the children. The roles were clearly distinguished and they were happy doing their own duties.

Decision-making
In modern society, in both nuclear and joint family system, it was found that though the decision maker was the head of the family yet both the parents have their say in all family related issue. In joint family, it was the grandfather. In the absence of the male head, mother or the female head was the decision maker. However, there were many aspects where they discuss and decide. Both father and mother make household decisions and has equal role to play. In this regard, Ahoi, a 40 years old man from Ghuvishe village commented:

‘Earlier the man in the family was the ultimate decision maker but now I consult everything with my wife. Most of the time she is the one who manages our day to day household needs. ’
It was also told that among the agriculturist, both parents have a role to play in deciding which land to cultivate, either jhum or terrace cultivation. They also decide upon their children’s education, which school to go, whether in town or village and so forth.

- **Property related matters**

As mentioned earlier, in the patriarchal set up women had few decision-making powers and they are not entitled to a share in the ancestral property. Kiyaho a 38 years old man who lived at Asukhomi village but shifted to Zunheboto reflected on buying a property.

‘Last year when I had to purchase a piece of land in Zunheboto town, my wife and me we had a discussion, we went to see the plot, and with her consent, I bought the land. She has to feel comfortable as we will be living there with our children.’

The above narrative shows that woman in the family is not just a homemaker but she has a say in family and property matters. Earlier to buy property, the decision was solely left on the man of the family but things seem to be changing.

- **Hosting feast and other ceremonies**

Among the Sümi tribe, traditionally, a well to do families host a feast of merit and his status in the village was determined by livestock he killed. However, in modern society there are few festivals, which the family host on their own for the entire village or the particular community in town with an intention that they should give freely to people of what God had given to them. Hokishe, a 57 years old man commented on hosting Christmas feast for the whole village.

‘For a long period of time, I and my wife thought of giving thanks to God for his providence to our family but we could not do that. Finally, we felt that it was the right time to give Christmas feast to the whole village as our gratitude to God. We wanted to share what we had with others. We knew that it would be a costly affair, as we had to kill at least one Mithun, cow and many pigs. But what more can we do when we have been given so much’
• **Matter relating to donation and help**

In a community where there are no resources, various organization turn to public for donation for organizing different programmes. Kakheho, a 39 year old man said that on few occasion he consult with his wife but most of the time he leave it to his wife to decide.

‘Every now and then different groups come asking for donation for organizing church activities, and other social events. Sometimes I decide and inform my wife but matter relating to helping other families in need such as sick people, giving to old aged people or in death etc, it is up to my wife to decide. I do not interfere in her decision’.

From the above narrations, it is observed that in spite of patriarchal society, role and responsibilities in the family is well balanced. Voice of woman is heard and given equal right to make decision in all aspects of family life.

5.1.5. Adoption of Children (Ati- annuli Sakulu)

Adoption of children has been practiced since the beginning. The adoption was more or less of private and personal nature. Hutton (1968) while describing Sümi village chief mentioned about the relationship between ‘Akükau’ (chief) and ‘Mighemi’ (orphan)\(^{34}\). In traditional society, Mighemi were considered as ‘Anukishiu’ (one who has become a son) and become a quasi member of his clan and was subjected to perform achine (rituals) of the clan. In an interview with Kiqheshe yeputhomi an old man of 98 years from Asukhomi village, he revealed,

‘In traditional society, when they migrate to another place for establishing a village, the person who lead the group would become a village Akükau and as such, 80% of land would be his land. His followers did not have enough land to cultivate so they would request and cultivate his land. It was the duty of the cultivator to give the first crops, vegetable or whatever to the owner of the land. The cultivator had to give free service to land owner (Ayeghi ampeu)’

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\(^{34}\) Pronounced as Mighemi or müghemi according to different villages.
It was also told that the Akükau protected and fed them. It was the duty of the father to pay fine as and when his Anukishiu committed mistake, crime etc., within or outside the village. In return, the Anukishiu would work in Akükau’s field and help in war (Hutton, 1968; Sema 2013). This kind of adoption existed before and was evident even after embracing Christianity.

There was also evidence of being an Anukishiu within the clan itself. In one of the village, a family was considered as Anukishimi to a particular family for many decades. However, it was told that the family was set free when the village church celebrated 50 years of jubilee, because of Biblical teaching on liberating people from the bondage. Hence, it was observed that there is a difference in adoption of children in traditional society and modern society. In modern society, children are adopted for various reasons and it is not restricted to a particular village or community. In one of the urban family, it was observed that the family had two adopted children- a girl and a boy. It was told that both the children were adopted from different places. At the time of a visit to the family, both children were pursuing higher education and parents were happy. In an interview, the participant expressed her feeling and her concern.

‘For some health issue, we were not able to have our biological children but we believe that God has a purpose. We decided to adopt children and our baby girl was brought home but we felt the need to let her have a little brother too. It has been a wonderful journey of bringing them up. They somehow came to know about their identity, as our look does not match. Initially, we had some problem but now they have come to terms and we are happy. At times, it is difficult to handle societal norms and regulation but me and my husband we have decided to follow our heart. Whatever little property we have will be equally distributed among them. No matter what society feels, our children are our children and we cannot leave them just because we have... you know, community rules.’

Here it may be noted that patriarchal societies place women, structurally and socially, at a disadvantage. As per customary law, Sümi women cannot inherit ancestral property. If a woman is an only child, the ancestral property will be given to her father’s immediate male relative. There is also an issue of ‘Aji lo ki-ighi’ (by blood/ biological child).

Therefore, in the above narrative the woman was concerned as her adopted son was not a
Sümí by blood and that it would be a problem when it comes to inheriting of ancestral property.

In Modern society, there was another reason for adoption. One of the participants in Asukhomi village revealed, revealed why she adopted a son.

‘We adopted him as our son because he had no parents. His parents sold him off. They were woodcutters. The father was Nepali and mothers a Bengali. We tried our best to bring him up in a proper way but our son ran away and later on, we came to know that he had joined insurgent group. After 4 years, he came back and now he lives with us’.

Adopting children from outside the family, village, and Sümí community is practiced. As seen from the above narrative, it is purely based on humanitarian love. The researcher observed that it has spiritual blend and church teaching has major impact on this. This kind of adoption was also found in Amiphto colony and New colony. In Ghuvishe village, this type of adoption was not found.

5.1.5. Children and Parenting

Parenting practices around the world share three major goals: ensuring children’s health and safety, preparing children for life as productive adults and transmitting cultural values. In an interview with different families in rural and urban areas, parents kept telling about their responsibilities and their upbringing of their children. Here is what Qhuvuto Aye, father of 8 children revealed,

‘We are equally responsible for our children. It is our duty to take care of them, bring them up to fear God, and be a responsible person. We as parents wish to give the best to our children but it does not happen the way we feel like. Some of our children are responsible but some of them are irresponsible... you know how it is’.

Health and wellbeing of children

The parents feel that they are responsible for the health and well being of their children. However, some parents feel that it is responsible of children to take care of themselves
after a point of time. Substance abuse is common in rural areas, starting in the teenage years and continuing through adulthood. In Ghuvishe, the Akükau believed that as parents, he and his wife did their best for the health and well being of their children but he felt unhappy as one among his children got into a bad habit of taking drugs and as a result, his health deteriorated and his family was broken.

**Education of children**

Education is one of the most important aspect which every parents wants their children to get. They felt responsible for various reasons. One of the participant from Asukhomi, Khekali a mother of 5 children revealed how she and her husband felt:

‘(After a pause) Last year was a difficult year for us because we were not able to send our children to study in town. We have school in village but we want our children to gain something more. You see, we do not have relatives in town and unless we have money, we cannot afford to rent a house for them. May be next year we will be able to do so.’

Another participant Nakhuli, a mother of 9 children from Ghuvishe village also revealed,

‘My children could not study because their father was sick and died after a prolonged illness. I feel sad because they could not get education’.  

Morrison (1978) defined parenting as "the process of developing and utilizing the knowledge and skills appropriate to planning for, creating, giving birth to, rearing and/or providing care for offspring". This definition implies that parenting involves not just bringing up the children but also providing care for them.

The professional social work talks about social workers possessing special skills for dealing with family and children. However, among the Sümi tribe, the parents and relatives have been taking care of children with the inborn skills that require no training. Among the Sümi tribe, there is always a special bonding between children and parents. Parents take care of children until they grow up and have income sources of their own. In such a community, intervention of professional social worker will be an intrusion.
5.1.6. Akükula (Marriage)

It was told that in traditional society among the Sümi tribe, when a child grows up to a marriageable age, the parents arranged marriage but the girl was not forced into marriage and was given freedom to choose. If the girl did not like the man whom her parents chose, she had a choice not to marry. In modern society, both in rural and urban, it was found that most of the couple had love marriage. They would like each other, fall in love and inform their respective parents of their intention to marry. It is every parents wish to let their children get married to people belonging to their own village but at the time of data collection, in Ghuvishe village, there were many inter village married couples. In Asukhomi and two urban pockets also there were evidences of inter village marriage. Marriage ceremony among the Sümi tribe has always been a grand affair and there many procedures which are still practiced. Among the Sümi tribe, in marriage, the bride is paid ‘Ameh’ (bride’s price) both in cash and in kind by the groom. At times it was difficult for Mighemi (orphans) and Kumulhomi (poor people) to pay Ameh. In such situations, the chief bought brides for marriageable young man who would later on become or addressed as ‘Aqhūaxemi’. In some cases, this becomes an issue for generations. Here is one incident narrated by a participant:

‘My father became Aqhūaxemi to his maternal family because my father was an orphan and he could not pay the bride’s price when he wanted to marry. During those days, his maternal uncle paid his bride price out of love but gradually after his death, his sons whether out of hatred or jealousy started to count my father as their Aqhūaxemi. For a long period, my brother and I wanted to get back to our father’s family but it was not possible. We were not mistreated, we were counted as their brother but we were unhappy. Everybody felt that it was not right to keep a person in bondage but nobody was willing to free us. Finally, we approached the village court and the village council settled the matter in 1998.’

The researcher came to know that they were set free from that bondage to take their own clan name which otherwise they used quasi clan name.

35 Bride price is paid to girl’s parents in both cash and kind.
36 The one whose wife was bought. However, Aqhūaxemi are not considered to be Anukishimi.
37 Name of the person and village withheld for ethical reason
It was observed that in marriage, the whole village, especially clan members get involved in preparing for marriage such as building wedding shed which is constructed in a traditional Sümi house style, preparing food, decoration and so forth. It is also an occasion where the family built network and bonding with other people in the community and with relatives. Through the web of network the problems and burdens of a family is shared and taken care.

5.17. Clan (Ayeh) System and Community life

Clan and relationship are important to Sümi tribe. Each clan believes that they are a descendant from a common ancestor. Clan defines the roles, responsibilities and structure systems of moral and financial support within the community. Sümi tribe children learn at an early age the kinship ties that exist within their community and subsequently their place and responsibility towards each other in the community. As such, a child addresses father’s brothers and male cousins as Ipu as addressing his own father instead of Apu (to anyone belonging to father’s age), Ini to father’s sisters and female cousins, Ifo to sisters and older cousin sisters, Imu to brothers and older cousin brothers, Ithikuzuwu to younger brothers and cousins, Ichepu to younger sisters and cousins. The traditional custom of caring and sharing is a common practice even today. An individual finds it difficult to exist in isolation and he shares his joy and sorrow with his clan members. One of the participants from New colony narrated about the problem, which she and her family had faced, and how her clan and community voluntarily helped them.

‘My younger sister, brother, and I, we are forever grateful not only to my immediate family members and clan but the whole village community and neighbours who were always there for us. Our father died 10 years back then our brother also died. We were helpless because even to chop firewood became a problem for us, as we were very young at that time. As though life did not get enough of suffering from us, our mother was diagnosed with cancer on her neck. I being the eldest could not do anything because I am jobless and we live on our fathers’ pension, which could feed us food but not for cancer treatment. However, people came to my rescue. I am indebted to my relatives, villagers, and neighbours for financial, physical, and spiritual help. During our bad time, they
even renovated our house. Sadly, my mother never recovered and she died last year. I have received so much from people around me and I feel helpless as I do not have means to reciprocate but I always pray that God will bless each one of them.’ (Interview with Avini Yeputho, Tuesday 6 April 2010)

Indigenous tribes parenting duties are shared – not only between mother and father, but also the entire community. There is a collective responsibility amongst the tribe to rise, care, and nurture a child. Donelan (1999) noted that stronger extended family networks and more prevalent extended family and/or intergenerational living arrangements are norms in many tribal communities that create richer opportunities for extended family members to support youth.

- **Clan dominance**

Traditionally in villages, each clan has their Asah or a certain area within the village to reside but it was not restricted. In Ghuvishe village, Qheng o Sa/ Asah was dominated by Yeputhomi clan and Chili Sa/ Asah by Awomi Clan. Though Asukhomi village had two Asah, it was told that both the Asah have mixed clans and as such no clan dominates the other. The reason as told in focus group discussion with elderly people in the village was:

1. Because of grouping the whole village was scattered
2. Because of having only one village council inspite of two Asah
3. Because of only one church. It was however told that members of the clan could reside in other Asah but such persons too are bound to their own clan activities. In both the village there was clan head, and clan elders.

According to the village Council members and the elders, in Asukhomi village, the clan with high population was

1. Khujumi
2. Kibami
3. Yeputhomi
4. Ayemi
5. Chophimi
6. Chishilimi
7. Shohemi
8. Zhimomi. All together, there were 8 clans co-existing in one village. In Ghuvishe village there were five clans

1. Yeputhomi
2. Awomi
3. Tsuchem Lagha
4. Ayemi
5. Kiba

- **Clan relationship**

In the olden days, the clan as a basic social organization played an essential and effective role in defending his clansmen from head hunting raids. During the festivals, the clan served as the basis for all ceremonial purposes. Whenever a member of a clan kill an
animal for a ceremony or even for domestic consumption, he shares the meat with all the clan members and the head portion is given to the oldest man of the clan. The clan members have many duties towards each other at the time of marriage, death, poor harvest, house was burnt, and natural calamities strike them. Even in modern society, there is still clan organization in a form of ‘Aloji’ or Cultivators gang. In Asukhomi village, there was no trace of Clan cultivator’s gang but in Ghuvishe village, there were two gangs 1. Yeputhomi Clan 2. Awomi clan. During data collection, the researcher witnessed an *Aqo-kumla* in one of the elderly yeputhomi clan member’s terrace land. Families of Yeputhomi clan belonging to Qhengo sah were helping out in the field transplanting the paddy. The host family provided food for everyone. It was also told that the clan members feast together during the festivals.

Photo No.11- Yeputhomi clan, Ghuvishe village

Thus, it is seen that the family structure is linked with the clan and subsequently to the community and with this knowledge comes a complex system of roles and obligations within the community. From the above observation, it is evident that clan plays an important role among the Sümi community as it creates reciprocity and obligations between the members of the clan network. Mendenhall and Armstrong (1999) found that strong kinship ties with cousins contributed to gang formation and involvement among
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yet research on the potential positive influence of aunts, uncles, siblings, and cousins on tribal youth outcomes remains severely limited.

5.2. Neighbourhood and Support

According to Orr (2013), the smaller local space that people call their home, their community, their neighborhood, holds the promise of being an antidote to the institutional massive force around them. It is here that people make connections and can find in each other the resources to effect meaningful change in their day-to-day world. Being able to work with people where they live in ways, which honor them and make a real difference in their lives on a day-to-day basis.

Through personal observation and in an informal conversation with the families the researcher found that many people still prefers to be near to their family and relatives and see them frequently. They see relatives as their primary source of help. It was observed that in all four-field sites, neighbours were mostly close and distant relatives were found close to families. The interview with the families, offered an evidences that people migrate from one place to another based on the relationship with relatives and friendship. It was revealed that often relatives and friends persuade them to migrate. They were not entirely strangers because even if they belonged to different villages they would be related through matrimony at some point in time. It was observed that neighbours play an important role in day-to-day activities of each other. They are the ones who are sensitive to sufferings and provide a helping hand. In both rural and urban areas, the nature of helping was similar.

- **Help during sickness, death and natural crises**

One of the participants Hoyeto Aye, 40 years old from Asukhomi village narrated how relatives helped the family when his wife was taken ill and was hospitalized.

‘This year I and my family went through a very bad time. From the beginning of the year, we faced one or the other problem. We grow rice and vegetables for our livelihood in small plot of land. During sowing season, my wife fell sick and was hospitalized in town. I was very worried but relatives from both the sides were indeed very helpful. Without telling us, they sowed our paddy and the whole expenditure was borne by them. They also volunteered to take care of our three
children who were left behind in the village. I don’t know how to thank them but me and my family is grateful and will do the same when the time comes.’

It has been noticed that there are traditional healers who have skills to set broken and fractured bones without using any modern technology. There are also people who massage nerve and several other ailments in neighbourhood who are always ready to help people in pain and suffering.

In case of death in the family, neighbours are the first to help the family physically, emotionally, financially and spiritually. As an insider, the researcher had an opportunity to be with the families of deceased people. Different groups such as youth, parents, and relatives in the colony take turns to comfort the family before and after the burial. The youth groups are the ones to stays awake whole night singing and praying till the day breaks and this continues for at least two- three nights.

In case of disasters and crisis such as landslide, accident and if a house catches a fire, the whole community comes forward and help without any time restriction. In a district like Zunheboto, where there is no proper infrastructure to aid at times of natural calamities the neighbours and relatives are the ones who take care of family in crises.

- Help during child birth and naming ceremony of a child

As mentioned in chapter 3, where there are no health center, neighbours those who have traditional knowledge of delivery comes as great help. In Ghuvishe village there was a traditional midwife named Nakhuli Kiba a 50 years old, who revealed about her skill and her voluntary service to the villagers.

‘I believe God has given me this skill of identifying position of a baby in mother’s womb. I never had any training but I have been helping women in delivering children for 20-25 years. I do not charge any money, as I believe it is my duty to help women. Before I came to this village, I was told that many women died during child birth but after I came I have not seen any women dying during delivery of a child’.

The researcher had observed traditional midwife being preferred over the trained nurse both in urban and rural areas. Most of the traditional midwife has inherent skills in knowing the position of the baby in the womb. It was observed that the traditional
midwives does not charge any money nor do they ask for any favour but the family themselves gives gift in cash or in kind as a token of their gratitude. After the birth of a child, depending on their financial position and convenience, baby-naming ceremony is organized by inviting church leaders, relatives and neighbours. It was observed that neighbours extends their help in preparing and cooking food, arranging chairs and tables, plates and cups and even washing dishes once the feast gets over. At the time of naming, relatives, family friends and neighbours gives gift to the newborn both in cash and in kind.

- **Help during construction of house, granary, animal shed etc**

In a place where there is no raw materials to construct a cement house, people built their houses with wood and bamboo with tin roofs. In both Ghuvishe and Asukhomi village, it was observed that cement houses were very less pertaining to the amount paid for raw materials that are brought in from Assam and elsewhere and exorbitant amount paid for transportation. It was observed that while levelling the site to built a house, family, relatives and the neighbour does all the grounding works which may complete in a day or stretch for days working in morning and evening before and after they do their own duties at home and in office. Male relatives and neighbour construct house and women folks help in cooking, preparing and serving tea and food. In the same way, as seen in chapter 3, all most all the family had at least few chickens and pigs at home. In both rural and urban, it was observed that pigs were reared in pigsty and fed with corn, green leaves, rice husk, stump of banana tree etc, this is because village council and town council has rules and regulation for keeping the animals. In both Amiphto and New colony, If pigs are found loitering around than the owner has to pay fine or even after repeated warning if the owner does not give heed than it is killed. Granaries were not found in town but in both Ghuvishe and Asukhomi village, granaries were seen. In Asukhomi village, Traditionally, families would built their granaries in a row away from the inhabited area but over the period, people have started to built closer to home because of fear of theft (Interview with Yeshito Shohe on July, 2010). Thus, Sümi family hardly hire carpenters or construction workers to build their house unless it is cement house, granaries or animal shed.
• Monetary and other material help

Sümis’ are self reliant in terms of managing food for household because of agriculture, but to obtain other necessities such as salt, sugar, soap, cloths etc., people need money. Families who do not have source for getting money are helped occasionally by individuals and group. Occasionally money is given freely but sometimes the money is lent without taking any interest. In an interview with a participant, Akheho Aye of Asukhomi village, he remembered how he got monetary help while constructing his house.

‘I don’t have any job, I have small shop but it is difficult to manage the whole household but I wanted to construct a house at least to shelter me and my family from sun and rain. Half way through the construction, there was no money left to buy 1 kilo of nails and I was helpless. I went to one of my cousin house to ask for help and I was lucky enough to get not only the amount for purchasing nails but few other things which were required’.

Similarly, Kiqheshe a grand old man in Asukhomi village said that during Christmas and occasionally people living in village as well as at Zunheboto town gives him milk powder, sugar, tea leaves, soap, vegetables etc., out of love. Both in Asukhomi and Ghuvishe village, people mentioned of being given clothes by relatives and friends living in town.

From the above points, it is seen that the notion of social capital has had a significant impact on community life at the level of neighborhood or local community. Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) propose an analogy between individual self-efficacy and neighborhood efficacy. According to them at the neighborhood level, the shared willingness of local residents to intervene for the common good depends on conditions of mutual trust and cohesion among residents.

5.3. Institute of Chieftainship, Role and responsibilities

Chieftaincy is an institution that has existed since ancient times among the Sümí. It is an institution of enduring significance on the social and political landscapes of the Sümí
tribe. However, chieftaincy does not exist in town. In both Asukhomi and Ghuvishe village, it was observed that the roles of chiefs continue to feature prominently in both the private lives and the public affairs of the citizenry. Traditional authority encompasses as the heads of extended families and other political-religious offices. Both the village had a group of elders that represented the different lineages. The elders held ‘Akūka Laku’ or symbolic stool/ throne, a synonym for a chief’s position.

5.3.1. Who is the Akūkau (the King) and what is his role?

History of Sümi tribe reveals that Sūmis frequently migrate to other places and establish new villages. A person who first discovers and settles in a new place becomes the Akūkau of the village. In the Sümi system, founder of the village is regarded as the Village Chief (Akūkau) and the village mostly derive its name after the founder’s name (as mentioned in chapter 4). There is a system of hereditary chieftainship among the Sümi tribe and eldest son succeeds Akūkau in case of old age, prolong illness, and death. However, if the chief does not have sons, the eldest man among the Akūkau sibling automatically becomes the next Akūkau. The powers are confined to the village territory without interference from the other villages Akūkau and Kükami.

To become the Akūkau of the village, it was expected that he should be a normal, capable, intelligent, and rich person. He should be an orator, warrior and courageous person to command respect and obedience from his followers. He should know about the customary laws and practice of the tribe. The Sümi tribe people do not have any prescribe age and selection procedure to become Akūkau. Even a minor could become an Akūkau if the regent takes the responsibility to perform day-to-day administration of the village until he attains maturity. One of the important criteria was that he should be a generous man, ready to help the village in times of need and difficulties. He should be a married man so that his wife will also share in looking after the welfare of the villagers (Sema, 2013; Hutton, 1968).

Sümi chief has no subordinate chief under him but it is said that in traditional society the Chochomi (Assistant to the chief) who were influential individuals were chosen by the chief himself from each clan to assist him in the governance of the village. In Ghuvishe
village, for a long period of time there was only one chief but in order to shoulder the responsibilities and for better governance the village chief selected two people belonging to two major clans and conferred them the title of kükami. He also received free services in a form of Aqo-aho Kumla from the villagers in his jhum and terrace land. The role of the Kükami is to look after the spiritual, physical and emotional welfare of the people, maintain law and order, consult with elders and in traditional society Kükami lead village men into battle and act as mediator between the clans. However, after Christianity, warfare between villages have stopped but in case of some problems such as land dispute etc the Kükami still decides and solve the problem. The village chief still takes care of the poor, orphans and landless people according to his own capacity.

**Kükami/Chieftainship and modern society**

Even today, the opinions of the chief have precedence over the elected members of the village council. In some cases, the chief is made chairperson of the village council. In both Asukhomi and Ghuvishe village, the number of Kükami depended on the total population clan/Ayeh and Khel/ward or Asah. With the establishment of colonial rule, traditional authority was weakened. One of the controlling mechanisms of the British was to change the title of ‘Akükau’ or Ruler/King to ‘Gaon Burah’, which is an Assamese word for village elder. British subordinated these pre-colonial traditional custom, removed certain sovereign elements. The British appointed District Commissioners as colonial authorities for newly established districts. The colonial system introduced a new police force and prison system and a way for ordinary people to bypass the Akükau and Chochomi’s courts. Despite the difficult years, traditional authority has survived and is re-inventing itself growing recognition. Today they work with the government on national policies in order to bring democracy and development. Kükami or addressed as Gaon burahs are nowadays becoming more important in governance and administrative system of the villages.

**Land ownership system and Development**

Although not an institution, the Sümi people’s association with land and economy were and is still immense. Sümi village-society was traditionally and even in modern society
dependent on agriculture and community life, with festivals revolving around the agricultural cycle. Work and leisure were defined by the pace and progression of the tilling of the land. The criteria to judge whether a person is rich or poor was based on the land possession of the individual. As in other Naga tribes, the Sümí tribe does not have the concept of village community land but in most of the cases, it was told that Akükau owns 80% of land. In Ghuvishe village, the Akükau owns near about 70-80% and controls the land and its resources and he allots land to the landless for cultivation.

‘My grandfather migrated to this place and he procured some land from other village and tribes. Some of the land, which you can see from here (pointing towards the boundary), were given to him as gift and enticement for protecting them from raid. Thereafter my father bought some land and I have purchased so we have sufficient. It is my responsible to see that villagers get at least a small plot for cultivation’. (Interview with Hokheto Yeputhomi on Friday 11 June 2010)

In both Asukhomi and Ghuvishe village, individuals are not restricted from purchasing land and property if he has capacity to purchase. Thus, each family possesses land and property either through purchase or by inheritance. Every Sümí family owns at least a piece of land. Besides, there are common clan and ancestral lands available to members for cultivation and other uses. Despite of the right to individual land and inheritance, people in the villages and even in town allow others to live and cultivate their land. But as the society changed from traditional to modern, people began to become too materialistic especially among the town dwellers. The Town Council members find it difficult to negotiate with landlords and more often, they accuse each other. This prevents infrastructure development. For this reason, Sukhalu an IAS Officer from Zunheboto town believed and commented,

‘It is high time for citizens to do away with petty issues and make sacrifice to develop Zunheboto Town. Article 376 (A) has given certain protection to our customary rights. However, we need to introspect on its application if we really need to develop...It must be remembered that the degree of wealth and poverty in which we find ourselves is to a large extend related to the way we use the
resources we have. We must give up our parochial mindsets and start thinking in terms of the benefit to society at large’. (Zunheboto Silver Jubilee Celebration)

As stated earlier, as patriarchal society, male members are entitled to inherit ancestral or his father’s land. With the passing of time and societal change, this custom is changing and parents are ready to give some land, which they purchased, to their daughters except for the fact that ancestral land is retained for male members.

**Customary Law**

Traditionally, Sümi tribe did not have regular courts therefore customary law was used to govern society. The traditional village court of justice was composed of the Akükau and chochomi. The court usually held its meeting in the Akükau’s house and settled any disputes within the village. Criminal customary laws were strictly observed and the people always obediently carried out the Akükau’s order. Before the advent of the British in the Naga territory, there was no police system in the Sümi village government. Examples of civil action were inheritance, ownership of movable or immovable property, status of individuals, rules of behaviour and morality of which everyone is familiar since childhood. At the lower level of authority, the father/elder was the arbitrator in family disputes and this role was carried out in consultation with household members. Disputes could become public and move up the different levels of authority.

In both Asukhomi and Ghuvishe village, it was told that matters relating to private rights were settled by compromise but in case of the breach of custom that affect the community such as breaking ‘Akukhuaye’ or rules and regulation, the offender would be fined either to be paid in cash or in kind. The chief is the authority but in case of difficult and problematic case, a village elder who have authoritative knowledge is made to settle the case. The duty of the Kükami is to maintain peace and amity between groups of the community. In town, however colony council members who are elected by the people for certain tenures settle the matters. In case of severe dispute, the matter is taken to district customary law court.

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38 People selected by Akükau to assist him in governing village
Different Types of Oath Taking

According to Hutton (1968), there were different kinds of oath taking as a proof of swearer's innocence:

- Oath on the water of the Tapu or Doyang river- it was believed that false oath taken on water would cost the man to be drowned nor could he eat fish, as he would surely die.

- Oath on village spring- those who swear falsely would never drink water from the village spring again as it would cause his bowels and hands to swell and kill him.

- Oaths regarding land dispute and ownership were taken on the earth in dispute. It is bitten and swallowed. It was believed that the very earth would choke the person who swears by it falsely. Sometimes the person would bit his own finger to prove his innocence.

- Oaths are also taken on tiger’s tooth and this was told to be troublesome as it entailed the observances of pini- forbidden to work. It was believed that the tiger would punish the person who takes the name of the tiger in vain.

- Oaths by cutting iron- if a man does it falsely, members of his clan would die off without apparent cause.
• There were other oaths taken on plants, leaf of a particular tree, bamboo believing that the person who swears falsely would meet the same fate of that which he bites upon and swear by.

The customary law does not limit itself to settle land dispute, robbery, individual disputes, but various other problems. While narrating about the responsibilities of the Village council the village chief mentioned that until now the village council administer justice within the village limits in accordance with the customary law and usage. It was told that village council took stringent action when it comes to male- female relationship, sexual behavior that is not acceptable to the community. The village Akükau narrated:

‘It is our duty to look into the matter of male and female relationship as well. We come across cases when a girl get pregnant and the boy would not want to marry the girl. In this kind of cases if the girl or her parents approach, the council resolves the matter. Both the parties are asked to pay fine for bringing bad name to the village and so far in most of the cases they are asked to get married. Marriage between same clan is considered incest. Few years back, we excommunicated two couples from the village for 3 years because of their incestuous relationship.’ (Interview with Qhashito Jakha on Sunday 29 November 2009)

This shows that customary law has a great role in maintaining peace and harmony of individuals and family life in the community. The crime and adultery are still treated with maximum severity. The offenders are brought before the assembly of people to look into the gravity of offence and the punishment is laid down after full verification of the misdeed. It may be noted that disputes that cannot be resolved by the village council is referred to customary law court, which is in Zunheboto town, a district headquarter. With the advent of the British, regular courts were started. Tribal courts were set up and judges or Dobashi were appointed from among reputed persons within the tribal community to decide cases.
Dobashi and the customary court

In an interview with Sukhato Rotokha on 23 October 2010, it was told that British also created the posts of ‘Gaonburas’ (village elders) and ‘Dobashi’ (interpreters) to assist them in the administration. The Dobashi, in the course of interpreting for British administrators, were liaisons between the British Government and their local people. Being knowledgeable about customary laws, Dobashi advised the British officers in the settlement of cases. Subsequently, the Dobashi courts evolved to decide cases according to Sumi customary laws. Dobashi enjoyed the respect of the native people. The researcher can relate to this fact as the researchers grandfather was also Dobashi. It was told that he was selected after his retirement in Indian army but he would tell that it was not a rosy picture. It was during the time of grouping and though he had family, he had to risk his life between Army and Naga Insurgent group. However, the British administrator remained the Sessions Judge, thus combining the executive and judiciary responsibilities in one person. This system is followed until now with the Deputy Commissioner taking both executive and judicial responsibilities.

5.4. Other traditional Institutions

5.4.1. Youth Dormitory System (Apu-ki and Ili-ki)

Among the tribes, it served as social centers to the unmarried youths. These institutions play a vital role in coordinating the activities of all members of the community and gain particular importance in those warlike societies, which depend on the young men for the defense of the village. Among the Naga tribes, the men's house became the real home of the boys. A separate community dormitory, for young men and women, was the most important and primary traditional institution of the Naga tribes within the village community. There was a youth dormitory for every Asah (Hamlet). In some tribes like Angami, every clan would have its own dormitory. The primary educational institution nurtured and prepared the young of every clan for life and living. All the clan/khel/village history, folklores and legends, songs, traditional practices, including the laws governing community living, were taught here. In some tribes, it also served as the fortress of the village where the young unmarried men used to sleep and guard the village. In the
literatures, it is mentioned that in almost all the village, a dormitory was built especially in the tribal communities for youth. The dormitory was a similar type of modern clubhouse (Shimmi 1988) and it played an important role in educating the youth.

**Existence of Apu-ki and Ili-ki: traditional or modern?**

In some literature, it is mentioned that Naga tribes like the Angami, Sema/ Sümi, Maram and Tangkhul, the house of the headman and some rich men were used as quarter of the youth. However, it was found that among the Sümi tribe, dormitory or Apu-ki and Ili-ki was almost non-existent in some village and in some village, it existed. In an interview with one of the oldest man Kikheje Yuputhomi (Saturday 28 November, 2009) a former village Akükau of Asukhomi village revealed about the existence of Apu-ki.

‘It existed but it was just a pillar, which was erected in the village when they migrated to a new village. It was a place where ritual was performed. It was the village chief’s house where young boys and girls slept. In my village, dormitory system came into existence in 1930s and Apu-ki and Ili-ki was constructed around 1953-54. In Apu-ki, young men helped each other learn crafts; they helped each other to make scraper and rake made out of bamboo’.

On the other hand, in another village there seem to be an existence of Apu-ki even before Christianity. Group leaders were selected and the members were trained about the warfare, defending and protecting the village and the art of making agricultural equipments, basketry and so forth.

- **Membership and duties**

In an interview with one of the elders in the village, who was also a leader in Apu-ki, he mentioned that in his village, it was only after the coming of Christianity Apu-ki and Ili-ki was constructed:

‘Those days, both boys and girls were compulsorily sent to the Apu-ki (boys dormitory), Ili-ki as we reach puberty. The major function was the socialization of youth; the boys were taught mainly the arts and handicrafts, rendering voluntary service to the village as well as the individual families. It was also in this place
where marriage was decided. When a boy and a girl decide to get married, the church consulted with youths in dormitory and if anybody had any objection, the couple was not allowed to get marriage permission until the dorm mate gave a clear signal. As a leader, I had to keep track of register to check if everyone has come. By 7 Pm there was roll call and if a youth is absent for 5 times in a month, he or she had to pay fine.’ (Interview with Yehohozu Yeptho, December, 2009).

In the olden days, the Sümi community was a well-knit unit with solidarity, holding fast to the principles of their community and capable of united action for any community cause. An unrestricted spirit was a trait of the community life of the Sumi, which owed much to the youth dormitory itself where all members-rich and poor, old, young, strong, and weak- were treated equally. The dormitory taught the young people to value the importance of every individual in the community. The spirit of companionship and a sense of caring, sharing, fellowship and goodwill was learnt and practiced in the youth dormitory.

Photo No.13- Interview with Mr. Yehozu of Asukhomi village

Source: Fieldwork December 2010

- **End of Apu-ki and Ili-ki Era**

The study of Asukhomi and Ghuvishe villages also shows that in both the village the era of Apu-ki ended in 1960s due to two main reasons:
- Migration of youth from villages to town to get formal education
- It was in this place that young men were taken away forcefully to join the insurgent groups.

In an in-depth interview with one of the former and oldest Ili-ki member, she disclosed that it was after the coming of Christianity that it was made compulsory to sleep in Ili-ki. ‘Most of the unmarried girls slept in Ili-ki. We had to wake up at the sound of first cockcrow and we had to go to the field. After coming back from field, the selected leader took our attendance and thereafter, we were taught church hymns. We learned the art of spinning cotton, weaving and knitting cloths.’ (Interview with Jexuli Yeptho on Saturday 5 December 2009)

The data revealed that in both the villages, Ili-ki existed until the mid of 1980s. It ended because of change in life style and for migrating to towns for pursuing education. However, young women who were in village continued to sleep at the village chief’s house until late 1980s.

Photo No.14. Focus group discussion with elderly people at Asukhomi village

Some of the important functions and duties of Apu-ki and Ili-ki are as follows:
- It acted as an educational and training centre for young men and women.
- A place for disciplining and teaching of moral conduct
• Played an important role in marriages
• A place where youth were taught to be helpful and responsible towards village community.
• Members took initiative to take care of sick and aged people in the village. If a female fell sick, Ili-ki members took care and if male fell sick, Apu-ki members took care.
• They took turns to fetch water, collect firewood for aged people in the village.
• Young men helped in construction of houses in village free of cost.

In both Ghuvishe and Asukhomi village, participants who had an experience of living in Apu-ki and Ili-ki said that it was a place where they learned about various skills of crafts such as bamboo basketry, wooden and cane stools etc for male members and weaving, knitting for female. They also revealed that they learned Bible, prayer and Christian hymns.

Today in both Ghuvishe and Asukhomi village there is no trace of Apu-ki and Ili-ki. However, the participants told that in place of Apu-ki and Ili-ki, the church Youth department has taken over the responsibilities.

5.4.2. Cultivators group or gang (Aloji)

In the traditional Sümi society, every member of the village belongs to a specific working gang or Aloji. Sümi people are mostly agriculturist and it was important to form such groups for helping each other in field. According to Macfarlan, Remiker, and Quinlan (2012) even in Dominican community, this kind of practice is found among the Smallholder farmers rely on labor exchange to generate agricultural work. Ethnographers have noted the existence of labor exchange in small-scale societies since the 1930s. however, it was Erasmus (1955, 1956) and Moore (1975) who placed it in a cross-cultural perspective. They characterized labor exchange as an arrangement of rural community members who organize into small groups, usually of males, where laborers are all farmers with similar land holdings, live in close proximity, and are relatively poor (cited in Macfarlan, Remiker, and Quinlan 2012).
Formation and composition of Aloji

These groups comprise of both sexes who are contemporaries. People who become a member of the Aloji remain in the gang as long as the person wanted. The group consists of 10 to 20 members but not strictly confined. Once the group is formed, they would nominate their own ‘Atoü’ (leader or commander). Atoü was usually a male member who was considered active and could lead the group. It was Atoü who decides whose field was to be cultivated each day by his Aloji. This kind of leadership is again found in Dominican community where a single individual, known as a “chief-for-a-day” (hereafter CFAD), leads labor exchange groups. The CFAD decides how work is completed, directs those assisting, and provides food and alcohol to incentivize labor. This leadership role does not extend to other aspects of village life (Macfarlan, Remiker, and Quinlan, 2012).

In a group discussion with one of the Aloji in Asukhomí village, which had existed since long gave an account of what the gang did, and the group dynamics. One (Jexuli Yeputhomi) among the group reminiscent about the bygone days:

‘Ipami39 and I, we joined the Aloji when we were in our early teens. We were the youngest in the gang and the members treated us with love and care. We had to toil hard in both jhum and paddy field but it was fun to work in gang because we never felt tired or bored working. Early in the morning, all the Alojilimi (female members) would carry bamboo or cane basket of Alojipumi (male members) and they in turn carried extra loads, which were heavy for us to carry. Until we reach the location, we would sing, joke and pull each other’s legs. Most of the time we had to walk for long distance, climb down the hill or climb up to reach the jhum land but it never mattered.’

Another participant also added to what the first participant (Yetoyi Chish) said:

‘On reaching the field, any of the Aloji pumi would make fire for cooking, collect firewood if it was not already there. First, everyone would be served tea (black tea) and in the mean time, day’s work was planned. Thereafter one or two

39 Ipami= my friend. Addressed by one female to another female whom they consider to be their friend
Alojilimi stayed back in a shed or a hut, which is usually built for taking rest and shelter and to prepare mid-day food and tea. The rest of us would work challenging each other to complete the day’s work.

It is seen that this kind of agricultural groups still exists in both Ghuvishe and Asukhomi villages. Unlike other Nagas, the aloji does not necessarily confine to the same age group. Male and female had their own responsibilities and they helped each other but it was revealed that Atoü was always a man. The leader or the Aloji Atoü was chosen based on his capabilities. The Atoü is the spokesperson for the group and he decides the work calendar for the whole year - as to which date and day they would go to each member’s field (Sema, 2013). The group also go to other people’s field to earn extra money. However, the Aloji system in Asukhomi seems to be declining as told by the group members. On the other hand, in Ghuvishe village Aloji system is still very much active.

- **Exchange of labour and Income generating works**

They worked in group, taking turns to work in each other’s agricultural land and earn money on one-day basis for helping out in other people’s agricultural land that does not belong to the gang. There was another type Aloji in Ghuvishe village which was rare. The group was known as CYF (Christian Youth Fellowship Loji). The Aloji was formed in 2009 with an aim to earn money to contribute for Church Silver Jubilee celebration. Mupula, the mother of 24 year old girl told about her daughter being a member of this aloji:

‘This year we have church silver jubilee celebration. Every household have to contribute some amount but since we do not have any other income source, my daughter joined the group. Initially the members contributed 300 Rupess each and with that they have been managing the group and also generate income’.

(Interviewed on Friday 11 June, 2010)

- **Celebration of feasts**

While interviewing with a family, Pukhato Awomi of Ghuvishe village told that, there are different groups. Some are clan based, some are mixed group of different clans. He exclusively mentioned about his clan aloji (also used as loji):
'We have Awomi loji and it has been existing more then 10 years. We decided to form this aloji for not just helping each other in our agricultural land but also family integration. You see, we have this tradition of keeping aside money earned through our aloji and use it for celebrating Christmas, new year, tuluni and Ahuna festivals. Few years back the Awomi clan hosted Tuluni for the whole village'. (Interviewed on Saturday 12 June, 2010)

The Aloji would make budget for Anni/ Tuluni (Festival) which is celebrated in the month of July to purchase either pig or cow. The procured animal was butchered and meat would be shared among the members. The extra meat was used for group feast. In the middle of the feast, the Atoü or the group leader was offered extra meat by way of feeding by other members. It was told that if anybody wished to join the gang, it was during this festival that a new member was recruited.

Ethnographic accounts suggest that reciprocal altruism is responsible for labor exchange. Reciprocal altruism is proposed as the mechanism responsible for labor exchange (Macfarlan, Remiker, and Quinlan, 2012). Labor exchange is known by several terms – reciprocal labor, collective labor, traditional work groups, and exchange labor (Moore 1975) work sharing (Gilligan 2004).

Thus, though these types of groups are generally group centred and does not extend their service beyond the group, but in both Ghuvishe and Asukhomi village, it was found that the group extend their support to the villagers as and when needed. In case of sickness or any other problems among the group members, the other members in the group come together and help.

5.5. Ancient Religious Practice (Apu- Asu Chine) and its Influence on Social work practice

Most of the antecedent values of social work are found in religion. The traditional Naga religion is often called animism. Animism is the belief in the existence of spiritual beings inhabiting the natural world. It also carries the idea of soul or spirit. They believed that every object has a soul. Though this kind of religious practice is not followed anymore in Ghuvishe, Asukhomi, New colony and Amiphot colony, it can be said that animism
helped people not only to understand the environment and universe but also to shape their own social and cultural life.

In ancient Sümi society, people believed in both benevolent and malevolent spirits (Lotsüro, 2000). It was through animism that they expressed their basic patterns of beliefs affecting individual and collective behaviour. Sacrifices to gods or spirits were done to ask for their positive intervention in order to maximize fertility: good harvests, many and healthy children (Kiho, 2004). As animist, the Sümi Nagas recognized the presence of an unseen higher power, which exercised control over human destiny and was entitled to obedience, reverence, and worship. According to Sema, (1986) and Hutton (1968), the early Naga tribe especially the Sümi tribe believed in three distinct classes of spirits:

- **The creator:** The Sümis called it as ‘Alhou’ (or timilhou). This creator is supreme and beneficial to human being in their day-to-day activities. To the Sümi, this spirit represented the manifestation of the unseen divine power behind creation, activation, and final destination.

- **Spirits of the sky:** this spirits were known as ‘Kungumi’ (male sky spirit) and ‘Kungulimi’ (female sky spirit) among the Sümi. Like the sons of God in Hebrew tradition, it was believed that these spirits come down on earth to marry sons and daughters of men. The spirits had different attributes and functions. They worked as attendants as well as ambassador to the great creator.

- **Wild men:** the Sümi called them ‘Tughami’. The Sümi word ‘Tughami’ means ‘wild men’. This spirits loved to dwell in the atmosphere of wilderness. They are further categorized into three groups namely, House spirit or in ‘Akighaü’, Field spirit or ‘Alughaü’, and Forest spirit or ‘Müzamuza’ (literally means echo).

As very important part of their beliefs in the spirits, numbers of chine-pini or ceremonies were performed for propitiation of these spiritual beings. Among the Sümi tribe, chine-pini can be grouped into three categories (Hutton, 1968; Sema, 1986; Kiho, 2004):

- **Suphuwo:** comprises of two big ceremonies- agriculture genna and social genna. These were performed to appease the spirits of the fields and house to ensure prosperity in the field, peace, happiness, and harmony at home. The Awou or village priest in consultation with elders and wise men in village prepares a yearly agriculture calendar, thereafter the clearing of the jhum operation starts.
• **Luwupine:** this is associated with agriculture. On this day, the uncleared patches of land were cleared off and the rituals and offering of animals like chicken, pig, or dog were made in some suspected spots in the field.

• **Vesavela:** this took place after jhum had been burnt and the field was ready for sowing. On this day all kinds of household as well as field was forbidden. Special care was taken to see that no loud sound was produced least the sound invoke the storms which would damage the field and make them unfit for sowing.

Besides these ceremonies, there were several others such as, ‘**Nitsapa pine**’, ‘**Tsutsughu pine**’, ‘**Tuluni pine**’, ‘**Aphikimthe pine**’ etc. With all these complex beliefs, and varieties of chine- chini, life was exceptionally interesting, pleasant, and competitive.

It was observed that even today in both Asukhomi and Ghuvishe village, before engaging in social work activities, the leaders in the community discuss what has to be done and it is the duty of Chochomi (Chief’s assistant) to make announcement (Sema,2013) to the community about the time, place, and activity to be done the following days. It was also observed that from every family at least one member was present, failing which, fine was imposed. It is evident that Local leaders especially the village council members have a pivotal role in the direction of the programme to suit community needs. Deogaonkar (1994) pointed out that tribals still preserve their traditional social and political institutions and that panchayats still have legitimate and even credibility among the tribals. Thus, as seen above, all these rituals and ceremonies were built around the communal life of the people and the whole village participates in joy and merriment.

Every month there were series of feast and numbers of ceremonies, in connection with the fields, home, and the social set up.

To the Sümi their religion was inseparable from their community life. It was their belief in Supreme power, which moulded them towards a life of decency, discipline, and observes religious rituals and social functions.

### 5.6. Community/ Mass Social Work

Holland et.al (2010) mentioned that Social work practice in western nations has become increasingly individual, rather abandoning social work roots in settlements and community work in favour of individual assessments and packages of interventions. As
mentioned earlier, among the Sümi tribe, especially in Asukhomi and Ghuvishe village, New Colony and Amiphot colony of Zunheboto town, the term social work, and community work is interchangeably used. Most of the time when community work is carried out in neighborhood and colony, the term ‘Mass Social Work’ is also used.

After getting to know about various aspects of family, clan and groups and their involvement in community life, the question was raise as to what their understanding of social work is. Even the illiterate ones in the village were aware of the word ‘Social Work’. The researcher as an insider had often heard announcements being made for the community social work before the festivals and other programmes. To put in their own word as it gives a clear picture of what they meant,


(‘O! Villagers! As Council had decided in the meeting yesterday, tomorrow morning at six o’clock we will do Social Work at church premises. Therefore, men should bring machete/ dao and spud bars, female should bring spade and sack. It is an order by the council and if any family fails to participate, the family will be fined. Thank you!’)

As a participant observer, the researcher participated in the Social work which was organized before Christmas at the Asukhomi village in December 2009. The villagers, old and young, male and female alike, almost everyone came on time. The work began with a prayer offered by a pastor asking God to protect each and everyone from harm and injuries. It was followed by instruction and distribution of work. One group of young men and some old men constructed ‘Akhache’ with bamboo, which was cut and brought by

40 This was an announcement made by the village Chief/ Akükau at Asukhomi village on 22nd December 2009 before Christmas celebration.

41 Akhache- platform constructed with bamboo for keeping meat, rice or at times a platform for participants to use during Christmas programme. Several akahache is constructed for different purposes.
a group of volunteers the previous day. One group was involved in constructing gate, and the rest were involved in cleaning the premises.

**Community Participation and Co-operation towards Aqo- aho Kumla (Social work)**

Each member in both rural and urban community was at one point or the other involved in some or the other social and religious groups and activities. They shoulder community through different activities. During the fieldwork, the researcher was able to participate and interact with people engaged in social work.

It was in the month of January 2010, just before clearing the Jhum land. In the evening after sunset, the announcement was made by one of the prominent leader in the village. The announcement was made after sun set when everyone would be at home. He did not use any Microphone but stood on hilltop of the village and in a loud voice; he announced that in the morning there would be social work to put fencing around the area where they were to cultivate agricultural land. It was also informed that there would be a collection of rupees 30 per household for buying materials such as nails and other food stuffs. The next morning by sunrise, the whole village was awake as usual and it was observed that men folks were ready with dao or machete and womenfolk’s with bamboo baskets carrying utensils for preparing food. It was observed that there were representatives from each family. On reaching the spot, there was a mass prayer asking God to protect them from all harm and danger. Thereafter, work was assigned to different groups for cutting wood and bamboo, for digging the ground, for fixing fence (barbed wire). Women were asked to prepare food and tea. Throughout the process, there was several round of tea and the work was completed before sunset (An extract from researcher’s field dairy).

While interacting with the participants, It was also revealed that in several occasion, the whole village would come together and perform Social work, which according to them consists of following activities:
- **Cleaning of surrounding, ponds and water source**

Most of the participants responded that social work activities are mostly, *Aphu/ Asah-sukumxa shikimithe keu* (cleaning Village or hamlet surroundings), *Azu khikhi shikimtheve keu* (Cleaning of water source). It was told that these activities were done two- three times in a year especially during Tuluni festival, which falls on first week of July, Ahuna festival in November and Christmas. However, if the public or council finds it necessary to clean the surrounding than at any time of the years social work activity is done with community consent. On this day, over grown grass and trees are cut or pruned, any obstacles such as stone, woods etc., are cleared from surrounding of living areas and water sources.

- **Cleaning of public footpaths leading to highway, between rice field and the village and surroundings**

The participants also mentioned that social work to them is cleaning and construction of *alaghila* (road). This kind of social work takes place in the month of January, after celebration of New Year when people get ready to work in their jhum land. Besides this, public come forward and clean the roads whenever landslide happens. The activities includes, cutting of grasses and tree branches on byways within the village, road leading to highways.

- **Repairing of temporary and locally constructed bridges within the living area and connecting village/town land where a river/gully runs through.**

As mentioned earlier, one of the important infrastructures is having a proper road connection. In both the villages, road conditions were bad. One did not have any black toping and the other had potholes everywhere. Besides these, in Ghuvishe village, people go across the river to cultivate terrace field. Since government does not look into these aspects, people construct their own bridges with bamboo and rope. However, it was told that during monsoon, sometime these bridges collapse making the villagers to reconstruct by donating raw materials, money, and physical labour.
Reason for participating in social work/Aqo-aho Kumla

While participating in Aqo-aho Kumla, the researcher interviewed few participants regarding the reason behind to participate in Aqo-aho Kumla and this is how the participant responded:

‘It is important for me to participate and co-operate in social work because me and my family will be cultivating and unless we do this together, it is not possible for one family to do such kind of tedious work. This is for common good, you know, time, human resource and expenditure come less if we finish the work in a day.’

Another participant narrated experience and the need to work in-group:

‘Last year we decided to put fencing on our own but it was time consuming and the expenditure was more. Nevertheless, more than this, it is fun working in group with like-minded people. In some way, we feel united and when we share our workload, it is easy to bear. To me, this kind of work is like a big picnic’.

It can be seen that working in-group lightens the burden of a family. People get to work in solidarity. The team spirit seems to motivate them and enhance unity among them.

Aqo-aho Kumla voluntary or compulsory?

It was also told that at least one member has to represent the family for mass social work. Aqo-aho Kumla is a voluntary service because it is unpaid work done freely by the individual for the community. However in traditional society, villagers had to give free service for few days in a year in Akukau’s field (Shikhu, 2006; Sema, 2013). This is also considered as a kind of ‘Aqo-aho kumla’, it was compulsory; failure to fulfil these duties and activities is considered as an offence and therefore was liable for penalty according to village customary law.

5.7. Role of A women in traditional Sümi Society

Hutton (1968) mentioned that villages were once populated by women and have only been recorded in Burma and reported form Himalayas. He suggested that Sümi villages of the early foundations such as, Chishilimi, Mishilimi, etc., perhaps derived its name from Alimi- a girl or women. Xaxa (2008) mentioned that Hutton attributes a higher
social status to the Sümi women on the basis that the women occupy a high position in her father’s house as well as her husband’s house. Girls of Sümi tribe are never married against her will. Horam (1988) also mentioned that in Sümi Naga society women in their role as daughters, wives and, mothers are respected. Among the Sümi tribe, women are honoured for their role in the family. They have their own status and do not suffer discrimination based on gender. However, Sümi tribe as patriarchal society, women in the family cannot inherit ancestral land. They cannot become head of the family unless the husband dies.

Even in agricultural work, both men and women labored together. Other tribes of Nagas, particularly Angami, Yano & Khobu (2015) writes that women always the women get up early to start the work before men. This was observed as a tradition, where women work more hours than men do. The necessary equipments of the field were carried by women and not by men. All the things of men like, spade or dao or plate or cup to be used in the field should be carried by the women folk.

However, unlike Angamis, the Sümi men treat women with respect and would always run to help if they see women carrying heavy loads. As mentioned in the previous points, women have decision power to decide on purchasing properties- land, house etc. Both husband and wife always take major decisions jointly. Women and widows are never left destitute. They are taken care by her children or by her siblings and relatives.

In traditional practice of Social work, man and women always have different responsibilities while participating in community work. The Sümi women have the choice to work alongside male members or she can help in preparing snacks, tea, food etc. Generally, women are not encouraged to do heavy work that requires energy and strength e.g., to carry big logs while building bridges. In one of the field site, on the day of social work, there were around 10 female members. They did not carry the logs for fencing the cultivation area but they were assigned to prepare tea, snacks etc. During the clan work in one of the elder’s paddy field in Ghuvishe village, the researcher saw a man helping in taking down big pot of curry and rice from the fireplace while cooking and serving food. It is not unusual to see men helping women in preparing community meal during festivals and feast.
Even in political arena, though women could never become a village Akükau, but on the death of her husband, she could be the regent of her minor son— the hereditary chief. She had to take the responsible to carry day-to-day administration until he attains maturity (Sema, 2013; Hutton, 1968). As per the Constitution, the 73rd Amendment Act 1992 on Panchayat Raj, under Article 243D (2), 1/3rd of the seat should be reserved for women. In both the villages and town, women representatives in VDB and colony councils were present. However, among the Sümi tribe, daughters cannot become a hereditary chief.

Summary
A very basic and traditional definition of culture is that it is the shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, folklore, and institutions of a group of people. Lonner (1994) suggests that culture is “the mass of behavior that human beings in any society learn from their elders and pass on to the younger generation.” As seen above about the structure of Sümi society and traditional institutions, this definition can be linked to the concepts that culture and society as converging on or uniting with one another and adds the suggestion that culture is learned from others in the society. The transmission of culture can happen in two ways. It can occur through socialization, which is the teaching of culture by an elder generation to a younger one very explicitly through formal instruction and rules. It was told that in ancient society, life was simple and their activities where mostly performing rituals related to agriculture but in today’s world, members are expected to participate in community development activities.

The community development approach emphasizes self-help, the democratic process, and local leadership in community revitalization (Barker, 1991). Community participation is an important component of community development and reflects a grassroots or bottom-up approach to problem solving. In social work, community participation refers to the active voluntary engagement of individuals and groups to change problematic conditions and to influence policies and programs that affect the quality of their lives or the lives of others (Gamble and Weil, 1995).

Thus, the chapter highlights that traditional practice of Sümi tribe described above may not fit into conventional definition of Social work profession but it does paves the way towards modernization of social work through transmission process and enculturation by
‘implicitly or subtly’ teaching the culture to the younger generation in the course of everyday life.