CHAPTER-III

IDENTIFICATION AND TYPOLOGY OF ELITES
The method of identification of elites has posed serious practical problems to the field researchers, precisely due to the socio-cultural peculiarities associated with each society and hence, differential criteria fixed in the process of perception of elite status by the masses. Nevertheless, some commonly used approaches have been devised for the identification of elites. Although these approaches were planned and developed in the study of community power structure in the United States and other Western communities—mostly urban—they are also felt to be employed in the present field situation in Arunachal Pradesh equally effectively for the identification of the elite. The most commonly used approaches for this purpose are—(a) Positional, (b) Reputational, and (c) Issue-Participational.

POSITIONAL APPROACH

The basic assumption behind this approach for the identification of elites is that, "......those holding positions of authority actually make key decisions while those who do not occupy such positions do not make key decisions". In this case, implies the formal posts held by the individuals in either the public or the private institutions, and in that capacity they are in a position to make key decisions relating to their respective communities. There are, however, various

interpretations of this assumption, and particularly, there
is no unanimity as to who actually held the position of
authority in a society. While Lynds and Mills, following
the Marxian paradigm, maintained that those who owned the
means of production and were at the apex of 'economic concerns'
were the positional elite, Stouffer strongly believed that the
positional elites were those with civil and political authority. 2
Schulze and Blumberg while combined economic dominance and
other criteria for determining the positional elite, 3 Jennings
put together government officials, civic staff and economic
dominants under the positional elite. 4

The basic assumption behind the qualification of a
positional elite and the existence of a direct relationship
between authority and decision-making at the community level
have been challenged by many, pioneered by Counts. 5 The
argument against the assumption is that those who hold
positions, all of them are not necessarily always the decision-
makers, and sometimes, some of them are found to be passive
acceptors as well. Nevertheless, the matter is still debated,

2. S.A. Stouffer (1955): Communism, Conformity and Civil
Liberties, Garden City: Doubleday.

3. R.O. Schulze and L.J. Blumberg (1957): "The Determination of
Local Power Elites", American Journal of Sociology, LXIII(3),
290-96.

Free Press, 24-25.

5. G. S. Counts (1928): School and Society in Chicago,
New York.
as some studies reveal that there exists an intense relationship between position-holding and decision-making, and some others have negated any such relationship in the context of the study of community power structure.

**REPUTATIONAL APPROACH**

This approach for the identification of elites was initially used by Floyd Hunter in his famous but controversial study of community power structure in Atlanta and also by R. C. Angell, although Warner, Hollingshed and several others had applied this approach successfully for the study of social stratification earlier. Notwithstanding several variants of this approach, the respondents are required to name the reputed and influential individuals, who can get the things done for the community. The respondents for this approach are selected either through panels of 'knowledgeables' or through random selection. Again, the panel of knowledgeables may be from either the heads of organizations, or drawn from different walks of life, such as journalism, religion, business, politics, profession etc., or with the help of snow-ball technique. At the time

6. The representative studies include, C. Freeman and S. G. Maro (1957); "Decision Makers in Rural Community Action", Social Forces, 35, 315-22; J. E. White (1950); "Theory and Method for Research in Community Leadership", American Sociological Review, XV(1), 50-60; and others.

7. The important studies being, C. M. Bonjean (1963); "Community Leadership-A Case study and Conceptual Refinement", American Journal of Sociology, LXVIII (6), 672-81; R. O. Schulze (1958); "The Role of Economic Dominants in Community Power Structure", American Sociological Review, XXIII(1), 3-9 and others.


9. Robert C. Angell (1951); "The Moral Integration of American Cities", American Journal of Sociology, LXI, Pt. II.


11. Ibid: 14-27 for the details of these approaches.
of securing nominations from the respondents, a cut-off point is decided, and the nominations above the cut-off point are regarded as elites. "The basic assumption of this approach is that the respondents understand the question well and they are able to perceive the power structure accurately." The normal allegations against the reputational approach include that it exposes an apparent monolithic power structure, which may not be real. The cut-off point used in drawing the final list may exclude some leaders also, and the concept of 'power' may not be uniformly perceived by the interviewer and the respondents. Inspite of all these, reputational approach has been established by many as more practically viable approach for the identification of elites.

ISSUE-PARTICIPATION APPROACH

Each community faces some issues of significance at some point or the other, and the issues are resolved, most of the times, by the active and intensive participation of some members. Therefore, if some major issues are studied, the


participating or decision-making members are grouped under elites. In this approach, of course, great caution is to be taken while selecting the issues of significance and normally, the opinion of knowledgeable, educationists, politicians and local media are taken into consideration. After identification of the issues, the participants in the issues are to be selected with the help of documents, public opinion and other fellow participants in the issues. From the empirical findings, it is established that there is a great deal of fallacy even in this approach. Lal has observed in his Jodhpur study that as the issue-participants sometimes only performed their official duties, their roles were not very important.  

Most of the earlier studies on the elite have already provided the insight that none of the above mentioned approaches was complete in itself for the purpose of identification of elites, but each one of them very well supplemented and complemented the other. Therefore, it is stressed to adopt a simultaneous use of all the approaches for preparing a consensus list of elites. But for the present work, the issue-participation approach could not be used due to the fact that official or documented information on the issues of public interest or the participation of the Khamti influencers in bringing them to fruition were well nigh impossible to find out. Moreover, the participant in almost all the cases do not keep any record with

themselves which may reflect their involvement in some issues or the other. Therefore, for this work, positional, reputational approaches and securing nominations from randomly selected respondents were used in drawing three separate lists of elites, and then a final consensus list was prepared with taking those, who found a place in all the three lists. In the consensus list, the total Khamti elites numbered only 22.

**KHAMTI POSITIONAL ELITES**

Inspite of having several variants of this approach in determining the positions and position-holders, it was thought to be proper to consider those as elites, who held formal official positions, because to a large extent they influenced the decision-making process. As the Khamti society, at the present, is in a stage of transition from tradition to modernity, and some traditional institutions still perpetuate and being respected in the community, the official positions of traditional as well as modern types are distinguished here to maintain clarity. While the traditional position-holders included the Khamti Chief (*Chowfa*), kings of individual villages where they still exist and rule, village head-man (*chowman*), village priest-cum-astrologer (*Chowchale*) etc., the modern position-holders included the sitting member of the Legislative Assembly representing the Namsai constituency, the Zilla Parishad Members, Anchal Samiti Members, Gram Panchayat Members, Office-bearers of Khamti-Singpho Council, Presidents and Secretaries of the Political parties, Presidents and Secretaries of various Youth Clubs, Secretaries of School Students' Unions etc. A total of 38 individuals were identified as positional elites in this process, and the list was circulated among the knowledgeable
REPUTATIONAL ELITES

As the first step of the identification of elites through reputational approach, a panel of knowledgeables was prepared with the help of key informants and insight gained through prolonged stay in the area by the researcher himself. Since the panel constitution by Heads of Organisations or by snow-balling was not practically possible in the area of research, the suggestion of Professor Foskett and application by Lal in drawing knowledgeables from different walks of life was adopted in this work, of course with suitable modifications to fit into the field-situation. Initially, a panel was constituted by the following five members:
1) The Principal, Government Higher Secondary School, Namsai;
2) The Extra Assistant Commissioner, Namsai;
3) The Labour Officer, Arunachal Plywood Ltd., Namsai;
4) An ex-M.P., Chowkhamoon Gohain; and
5) An eminent businessman, Chow Tewa Mein.

Each member of the panel, constituted by an academician, an administrator, a bureaucrat, a politician and a businessman, was requested to furnish a list of 10 Khamti persons, who could best perceive the reputed persons in their society. A list of 50 persons was thus obtained and the median was calculated. 10 of them, who secured nominations above the median value, were again requested to name 10 Khamti individuals, whom they

17. ibid: p. 16.
thought to be influential and reputed. This ended up with a list of 100 persons, of course with a high degree of repetitions, out of which only 32 were listed as elites, who secured nominations above the median.

**NOMINATION BY RANDOMLY SELECTED RESPONDENTS**

For securing nominations of the highly influential persons in the Khamti society, as perceived by the common citizens, 46 male respondents were selected at random in three base-villages of Empong, Kherem and Manmow, out of the 1985 voter lists of the concerned villagers. Every fourth male person in the voter list was selected for the purpose, and out of 46 selected, only 32 could respond to name 10 influential persons each of their area who could work for public welfare and could take decisions relating to that. After the list was prepared, the median was calculated and 36 persons securing nominations above the median were put under the list of elites. This approach is also strongly criticised by many with the view that the respondents do not most of the times understand the power structure and hence, their nominations also are improper. Under such situation, however, they suggest to depend on the nominations of the knowledgeable, who are having some exposure at least to the community affairs. Inspite of the objections raised, the nominations rendered by the randomly selected respondents do not go stray, and more or less confirm to the other lists of elites, prepared by taking into account other approaches as well.

**CONSENSUS LIST OF ELITES**

While through the positional approach 38 elites were
identified, the reputational approach identified 32 elites and the randomly selected respondents nominated 36 elites. 22 nominations were found in all the three lists, and those 22 elites were regarded as the core or key elites. They were interviewed intensively and separately with structured interview schedules, and each interview lasted for minimum two hours. The interview although primarily focussed on their perception of and role in social transformation, other information like their socio-economic background, means of maintaining elite status, their values, power linkages, conflicts and cooperation also came within the purview of discussion.

### Table 3-1: List of Elites Selected and Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chow Chandrit Gohain</td>
<td>Ex-M.P. (1971-76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chow Manahan Mantaw</td>
<td>Proprietor, Mantaw Saw Mill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chow Khanchiang Namchoom</td>
<td>Dy. Conservator of Forests, Government of Arunachal Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chow Khamoon Gohain</td>
<td>Ex-M.P. (1952-61).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chow Mehu Namsoom</td>
<td>Zilla Parishad Member since 1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chow Kamini Langkhun</td>
<td>Ex-President, District Congress Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chow Suliksha Namsoom</td>
<td>Village Headman since 1984.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chow Mikou chowpoo</td>
<td>G.P.M. since 1983.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chow Thanin Mansai</td>
<td>Ex-Anchal Samity Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chow Tewa Mein</td>
<td>Ex-M.L.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>C. B. Gohain</td>
<td>Agriculture Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>C. S. Mansai</td>
<td>Junior Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FUNCTIONAL TYPOLOGY OF ELITES

When the elite is defined as a group of organized minority, taking major decisions in the community, it is not unusual that this minority of 'power pool' may be constituted by the influential, reputed members of the society, drawn from various professions. To be bestowed with an elite status and to take decisions, one should not necessarily be a politician, but a businessman, a bureaucrat or a civil servant can also be equally effective as an elite. Therefore, elite group is not a closed one, and in fact, is a group of superior individuals belonging to different professions, but organized to form a cohesive group to be distinguished from the masses. However, the functional typology of the elite has been attempted by many, including Bottomore, taking into consideration the area in which an individual elite operates. Aron has presented a

five-fold classification of the elites in the following manner:\(^\text{19}\)

(i) Political leaders,
(ii) Government administrators,
(iii) Economic Directors comprising of businessmen and managers,
(iv) Leaders of the masses - trade union leaders, and
(v) Military chiefs.

Beteille has divided the Indian elite again into five groups,\(^\text{20}\) which seems to be more practical and down-to-earth classification. His typology includes:

(i) The Political elite (those occupying top positions in concrete political structures like cabinets, parties and legislatures etc.,),
(ii) The Bureaucratic elite (comprising of the administrative, the managerial and the military elites),
(iii) The Professional elite or the intellectuals,
(iv) The Business elite, and
(v) The Landed aristocracy.

In the present work, the Khamti elites are divided into four principal categories, such as, the political elite, bureaucratic elite, professional elite, the business elite, and Table No. 3-2 explains the qualification and number of elites in each category:


TABLE 3-2: TYPOLOGY OF KHAMTI ELITES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. no.</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Position/Profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Political elite</td>
<td>M.Ps., M.L.As., Zilla Parishad, Anchal Samity and Gram Panchayat Member, Councilors, Village Headmen, President of Political Parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bureaucratic elite</td>
<td>Dy. Conservator of Forest, Archivist, Agricultural Inspector &amp; Project Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Professional elite</td>
<td>The educationists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Business elite</td>
<td>Businessmen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preceding typology with respect to the Khamti elites or for that matter, as classified by Bottomore, Beteille and others, does not bring out mutually exclusive elite groups. In reality, there is a great deal of overlapping among these categories, as individuals with elite status simultaneously are engaged in more than one occupations. On the strength of empirical investigations it can be stated that cent per cent of the Khamti political elites have their own business, and some of them are highly flourishing entrepreneurs and can be put under the category of business elites.

From the Table 3-2, it is clear that notwithstanding the presence of other types of elites among the Khamti, the political elites dominate the scene, in the sense that they outnumber others. This group alone constitutes about 68 per cent
of the total elites.

As in all the transitional societies, among the Khambti also, at least a considerable proportion of modern elites could have enjoyed the elite status in the traditional setup. The existence of kingship both at the community as well as the village level, and kingship being confined to a group of three clans only, facilitate ascribed elite status, determined by one's birth in a clan. Out of the total 22 elites identified and interviewed, 10 of them belonging to the Namsoom (Gohain) clan, would have enjoyed the traditional elite status, thus maintaining about 50 per cent strength among the elites today. The rest 50 per cent are drawn from the traditional 'subject' clans (pak-lung), which is only possible due to the modern democracy, followed by spread of education and extension of communication facilities.

The preceding categorization of elites among the Khambti only aims at presenting the conceptual clarity, but for analytical purposes, they are lumped together as one group, and no difference is sought for among them, except in cases, where inter-group conflict or cohesion are dealt with.