Chapter 2

The Angami Nagas: An Overview

In this Chapter, we shall deal with the Angami tribe in a general way. This will serve as the background to locate the Jakhama village, the area of our field investigation.

1. The Angami Nagas: General Features

The Nagas are a group of tribes living in the present State of Nagaland and in the contiguous areas of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. There are Naga tribes living also in the contiguous areas of Myanmar. The exact number of Naga tribes cannot be ascertained because of the processes of fusion and fission taking place among them (D’Souza 2001: 7-8). Like most of the population of this region, the Nagas belong to the Mongoloid racial stock. But they differ from other Mongoloid racial groups of the region on account of their social and cultural features. At the same time, the various Naga tribes differ from one another in language and other cultural and political features. (Jamir and Lanunungsang 2005:16-23).
The Angami are one of the major Naga tribes living in Nagaland. Information available from the Census of India shows that the Angami is the fourth largest Naga tribe. In 1991, as many as 97,433 persons in Nagaland stated that Angami language was their mother tongue (Census of India, 1991:66). Thus, in 1991 the Angami constituted 8.06% of the total population of Nagaland. The traditional habitat of the Angami corresponds more or less to central and southern parts of the present Kohima district and part of the Dimapur district of Nagaland. The area is mountainous, with very high peaks and elevated ridges, irregular spurs and deep valleys. In fact, Japfü, the second highest peak in Nagaland, is situated almost at the centre of Angami country. The Gazetteer of Kohima describes the Angami country in the following words: "Summits of the lofty peaks are thickly wooded, clad with evergreen vegetation; they abound in varied flora and fauna. The lower hills have become deforested owing to the practice of both slash and burn and terrace system of cultivation" (Gazetteer 1970:2).

The name Angami, like most names of tribes in North-East India, was given to them by their neighbouring tribes or people. "Their original name is Tengima. The word Angami is a
distortion of the Manipuri word Gnamei. Angami were called Tsungumi by the Sema, Tsungung by the Lotha, and Mour by the Ao” (Das 1994: 63). In any case, the name Angami has been in use for a long time, and now the Angami themselves use it to describe themselves.

According to legends, the origin of the Angami tribe goes back to a place called Khezhakenoma, a village of the present area of the Chakesang tribe. Visier Sanyu (1996: 17-33) has examined various legends about the origin of the Nagas in general and the Angami in particular. Underlying these legends is the fact that the Nagas came into the region from outside. They came in different waves. Some of them stayed at Khezhakenoma for some time and then divided into smaller groups. The ancestors of the Angami moved away from Khezhakenoma into their present habitat. In any case, in the legends of origin and the history of the migration of the Angami, the Khezhakenoma village has an important place (Adino 2003: 23-24).

The Angami tribe is made up of different groups. Hutton (1921:15) identifies four distinct groups among them. They are: 1) the Khonoma group, 2) Kohima group, 2) Viswema group,
and 4) the Chakroma group. At present, it is common to identify these groups based on their geographic distribution. Those living in Kohima and the surrounding villages are known as the Northern Angami, those living to its west are the Western Angami, and those to the south of Kohima are the Southern Angami, while those living on the slopes along the National Highway from Kohima to Dimapur are the Chakroma Angami. This study deals with the Southern Angami group, who now prefer to call themselves the *Japfüphiki*, that is, people living close to the *Japfü* peak. We shall deal with the Southern Angami in detail in Chapter 3.

The main traditional economic activity of the Angami Nagas is subsistence agriculture with rice as the main crop. Unlike other Naga tribes, who depend almost entirely on shifting cultivation, the Angami practice settled terrace cultivation as the principal method. For the Angami, shifting cultivation plays only a minor role. Angami economy has been changing ever since the British colonial administration was established in the area (Sema 1992: 93-138). In recent times, cultivation of cash crops consisting chiefly of potatoes, cabbages and other vegetables has become widespread. As in all other parts of the country,
including Nagaland, the Angami area is now experiencing the consequences of advancing globalisation.

Animism was the traditional religion of the Angami. When Christianity was introduced, the Angami received it rather slowly, and even at present, there is a sizeable number of Angami who practise traditional religion (Downs 1983:135-136). Christian Angami belongs to different denominations. Majorities of the Angami are Baptist Christians, but a sizeable belongs to the Roman Catholic Church. Among the other Christian denominations, the Revivalist Church is the most important. However, the acceptance of Christianity has not completely wiped out traditional animist beliefs and practices (Mathur 1992: 144). Angeline Lotsüro, a Naga scholar, is of the opinion that Christianity among the Nagas is "nominal and external" (Lotsüro 2000:177). This view can be applied to the Angami as well.

The Angami tribe was one of the first Naga tribes that came under the expansionist policies of the British colonial power (Ao Tajenyuba 1993: 4). It was also one among the first to raise the banner of revolt in the hills against colonial occupation. One can say that the Angami area has seen some form or other of violent confrontation continuously ever since the
British came into the area at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Sanyu 1996: 88-99). The Angami have played an important and leading role in the Naga ethnic movement and conflict, especially under the leadership of Z. A. Phizo, himself an Angami. In this conflict, a large number of Angami men fell in the battles with the Indian army in the 1950s and 1960s (Iralu 2000: 242-245). Thus, the Angami have been and continue to be an important part of the Naga ethnic movement (Bhaumik 1996: 40-50). Today, the Angami are more circumspect in their participation in the struggle probably due to the high level of militarization in the area and partly due to the effort of development agencies (Misra 2000:11-17). In fact, at present the Angami participate in the electoral politics that were introduced into the area after the formation of the State of Nagaland on 1 December 1963.

A basic feature of the traditional Angami tribal organisation is its segmentary nature (Das 1993:10). There is no centralised authority exercised by hereditary chiefs. There is not even a permanent council at any level. Instead, tribal organisation in all its dimensions is the result of an arrangement of interlocking segments consisting of patrilineal descent
groups. Though there are different types of tribal leaders, they are not hereditary but chosen by the people through an informal process of consensus. Such leaders are chosen for their experience, wisdom and concern for common welfare. Thus, the Angami can be described as an acephalous tribe. We shall deal with the nature of Angami social organisation in a later section. Here we shall deal with the character and organisation of an Angami village.

2. The Angami Village and Its Organisation

A typical Angami village (*runa*) is generally large in terms of both population and area. The core of the village is the residential site. A distinctive feature of an Angami village is that the residential site is situated on the spur of a mountain range or on the top of a hill, obviously for security reasons. In fact, a person cannot approach the residential site of a village without being sighted already at some distance. Concern for security is also seen in the internal arrangement of the village with platforms for lookouts. However, most of the former fortifications are now in ruins or are used as viewpoints in the
village. While the residential site is on the summit, terrace fields are in all directions around it. Fields used for shifting cultivation come next, and the forest farther away from the residential site. Boundaries between villages are well established by tradition. Consequently, an Angami village has a well-defined territory and a distinct identity. In former times, when head hunting and inter village feuds were common, the village was the largest area of social relations, and the residents of a village rarely ventured outside its territory. However, the situation has changed in recent times because some residents have settled outside the traditional residential site. But they continue to consider themselves as residents of the village and return to the village for important events like agricultural festivals and funerals. They retain their membership of the village by paying house tax and membership fees to the churches.

The village has been an important unit in Angami history because each village had a distinct identity and was self sufficient in most things. Therefore, an Angami village has been described as a “village state” (Yonuo 1974:76-76). As already noted, geographically a village has a distinct identity. This has a bearing on economic organization because the area of the
village, and hence land for cultivation, is clearly demarcated. In pre-British times, an Angami village was a distinct political unit, and was a sort of sovereign state, though there was no institution of village chief or a permanent village council. Thus, an Angami village can be described as a "closed peasant community". As defined by Eric Wolf (1955), a closed peasant community is characterised by subsistence economy and a social organisation in which a person has ascribed economic and social status.

Though an Angami village had a distinct identity and was characterised by homogeneity, the unity of an Angami village was always tenuous and weak in the past. It was only in recent times that the village as a political and economic unit received recognition and importance. As a result, at present an Angami village has a Village Council, a Village Development Board and similar other structures introduced by the Government chiefly through legislative measures. The most important of such measures is the Nagaland Village, Area and Regional Council Act of 1970. As development funds are channeled through these bodies, the unity of the village has become stronger.
The fundamental reason for the weak sense of village unity in the past was the segmentary nature of organisation. As already noted, there are no village chiefs in the strict sense, wielding authority over the entire village. Instead, at least two segments or moieties constitute an Angami village. Moieties are mutually exclusive descent groups made up of clans or phratries. Traditionally, an Angami village must have two moieties called tepo and teva, which, according to legends, descend from two brothers (Sanyu 1996: 68-69).

The presence of the members of both the moieties in a village is essential because each moiety has to perform different rituals in religious and social ceremonies for the well-being of the village (Sanyu 1996: 68). But much more important than the existence of the moieties, is the division of a village into thenu (clans), each with its own definite and permanent territory within the residential site, and holding clearly demarcated fields and other forms of land. As we shall see, the clan territory is of great significance in the organisation of the village.

The term thenu has a double meaning because it refers to the clan as a grouping, as also to the territory occupied by it. The British used the term khel to signify the clan territory, and at
present, the word *khel* is commonly used in this sense. Thus, a typical Angami village has at least two *khels*, each with its own clearly defined territory within the residential site, and each of them holds its own fields and forests in the village.

A *khel* or clan territory is an autonomous unit within the village named after the apical or founding ancestor. In former times, each *khel* was surrounded by a wall to protect it from outsiders, including members of other *khels* in the village. Entry into a *khel* was only through the gates, which were guarded at all times and closed at night. In fact, the so called “village gates” of the Angami are really *khel* gates (Marwah 1992: 81).

Within the *khel* there are smaller social units based on patrilineal descent. We shall deal with them in a later section of this Chapter. Here we shall note some of the important physical features of the *khel*. Houses are built on portions of land with no particular regard to direction or position. In fact, houses are built to make the maximum use of the available land. Traditional houses have more or less the same structure. Entry into the house is through a heavy wooden door, often carved with *mithun* heads, human heads and other conventional designs. The *mithun* is a semi domesticated animal, and a
person who owns mithuns has a higher status. Carving of human heads indicates the practice of head hunting in former days. The house of a 'rich man' who has given a feast of merit has the additional decoration of *kika* (house horns) consisting of two broad wooden planks arranged in the form of horns above the roof on the front facade of the house.

Within a *khel*, two structures were prominent in the past. The first was the *kichuki* (bachelor's dormitory), and the second was the *tehuba* (sitting place). The *kichuki* performed an important role in the socialisation and training of the younger generations. In former times bachelors used to sleep at night in the *kichuki*. It was also the place, where the young men learnt traditional lore and the art of warfare. Arms like spears and shields were stored there. At present, the *kichuki* has lost its significance in the process of socialisation. But the buildings exist in the *khels* and are used for meetings. A *tehuba* is a raised platform, more or less circular in shape, and built with stone. It is situated on a higher point in the *khel*. In former times, it might have been a place for lookouts watching for the approach of enemies or strangers. Now a *tehuba* serves as a
sitting place where elderly men sit together to chat, or hold a meeting.

Every *khel* in the village has its own water springs from where drinking water is collected. In former times, a collection tank was built around, or on the side of the spring. It was a sacred spot ritually cleaned at the time of the harvest festival. Now water is piped into the village from nearby rivers or large springs.

In the organization of the *khel*, elders play an important role. They are not hereditary chiefs, but men chosen by the people for their age, wisdom and concern for common welfare or for merit gained by feeding the clansmen through the so-called “feasts of merit”. These are collectively known as elders.

As there was no village chief or council exercising authority over the entire village in the past, inter-*khel* relations were based on the principle of cooperation and mutual assistance. Such a situation could arise when a village was attacked, or when a village planned a raid. The elders of both the khels usually settled inter-*khel* disputes. This tradition of equitable division and cooperation is continuing in the present
practice of distributing the funds received by the Village Development Board to the different *khels*.

An important feature of Angami village organisation is the existence of age-sets or peer groups (Das 2004:203-204). An age-set (*thechu*) is an informally organised group of persons of the same sex and of about the same age. Usually there are four or five such groups. The whole population of the village is organised into age-set groups. However, it is at the level of the *khel* that an age-set group is most active, and reach age set-has special roles to play on ceremonial occasions. Most of the elders belong to the older of the age-sets.

From what has been said so far, it can be seen that the Angami organisation is acephalous, that is, without a permanent head at the village or even in the *khel* level. In such an organisation, the clan elders have decisive voice in all matters of public life. They play a leading role in ritual activities. They also constitute the council of elders and function as arbitrators in settling disputes. Usually disputes are settled by means of peaceful compromise and oaths. The British introduced the offices of *Dobashi* (interpreter) and *Gaon-bura* (village headman) and gave them authority to settle disputes and to
punish crimes. These offices continue with their traditional functions. Usually every *khel* has a *Gaon-bura* at present. He is elected by the members of the *khel* through consensus. Even then, as Hutton (1969: 142-144) has noted, the authority of the clan chief is nominal.

As already noted a *khel* has a distinct territory of its own and is an autonomous unit. It is also the effective social and political unit. It is within the *khel* that the segmentary system of social organization is operative. In fact, a khel is an organization of well-defined smaller social groups.

3. Social Organisation

The fundamental principle of Angami social organisation is patriliny and patriarchal structure, with descent and inheritance passing along the male line, and authority exercised by the male. We shall deal with inheritance in a later section. Here we shall examine the nature of patriliny and authority structure.

As already noted, a *khel* is the effective social unit. A *khel* is the territory of a particular *thenu* (clan). A clan claims descent from an apical or founder ancestor based on patrilineal
descent. A clan, as also its territory, is fixed so that the clan and its territory are inextricably linked, and as already mentioned, the same term, thenu is applied to both.

According to N. K. Das (1993: 123), a thenu is divided into segments called sena, each of which is actually a cluster of patrilineages. Much more important is the division of the thenu into smaller segments, the most important of which is the serra (patrilineage).

A serra is the widest known descent group in the village. All its members have the same title or surname and trace their descent from one known founding ancestor. A serra is also the basic unit of exogamy. On the basis of the classificatory system of kinship terms, a person calls all men of his father's generation in a serra 'father', all women of the generation 'father's sister', and all men and women of his or her generation 'brother' or 'sister'. Similarly, all the women of his mother's serra are his 'mothers', and the men are his 'mother's brothers'.

A serra usually has a depth of seven or eight generations in the sense that it is possible to trace it for so many generations in the past. Beyond that depth, it is common that the serra has
segmented from a prior one. Thus, a *serra* develops through the process of segmentation. *Putsanu* (sub-lineage) is one such segment, with a depth of about four or five generations. *Punumi* (inner-lineage) is a segment of the *Putsanu*. A *punumi* consists of not more than three generations. It is, therefore, the smallest unit for collective action and cooperation. Hence, it is the most significant unit in the segmentary structure. All the males and unmarried females are members of the *punumi*, and a married female retains her right to return to her natal *punumi* if she is widowed or divorced, and her children may be incorporated into it.

It is important to note that each *serra*, as also each of its component segment, is anchored to a subdivision of the territory within the *khel* or clan territory. Hence, all the members of a *serra* live in a particular territory. Within this specified territory of the *serra*, each of its component lineages and sub-lineages has its own area or compound. The smallest of such territory is the *punumi* compound. It is within this compound that the various component households live in close proximity to one another.

The basic domestic group among the Angami is the *misokeswe* (household) identified on the basis of a hearth.

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A dwelling unit may accommodate two households if there are two hearths within the structure, a situation that comes into existence when a son marries and continues to stay within the parental dwelling unit before constructing his own separate dwelling. A misokswe is a distinct economic unit. It is a distinct property owning unit, and a unit of both economic production and consumption.

Normally a misokeswe or household consists of a man, his wife and unmarried children. Membership of the household is acquired through birth, adoption and marriage. At birth, a child acquires various rights and obligations and finds itself in a network of pre-established relationships. Such relationships bind the individual not only to other members of the household, the lineage and the clan, but also to the ancestors. This link with the ancestors is an essential dimension in the intra-household relationships, especially between the parents and children. The child is linked to the ancestors because it inherits the property and the tradition that is passed on to it from the ancestors.

Because of the patrilineal structure, the birth of a male child is an occasion for rejoicing. A son ensures continuity and
stability to the household and lineage. Therefore, any number of sons is welcome. At the same time, a daughter is not despised though there is a feeling that she will one day, through marriage, become a member of another household. However, even a daughter at birth acquires definite rights to be brought up in a suitable manner. Even after marriage, she retains her right for economic support from her natal household. Consequently, in case of divorce or widowhood, she can easily return to her natal household. She can also inherit certain types of property, as we shall see in a later section.

Adoption is usually resorted to when a couple does not have a child, particularly a male child, to ensure the continuation of the patrilineage. An adopted child has the same rights and obligations as a natural child. It is preferable that the adopted child comes from the same lineage or clan, though there are instances of adopting a daughter's son or a boy from another clan.

The household is invariably patrilocal. The man exercises authority over his wife and children. There is a clear division of labour among the members of the household. While the man is expected to work for the maintenance and
improvement of the economic status of his household, the wife must contribute her share in giving birth to children and in looking after them to continue to household and the lineage. She must also contribute to the maintenance and improvement of the economic status of the household. A wife who works hard and increases the economic status of the household enjoys great respect among the people, while a wife who is wasteful, is criticised. As a rule, the relationship between a husband and his wife is one of cooperation and mutual support, though the structure of the household is patriarchal and man has the final word. Parent-child relationship in an Angami household is very close because of the belief that a child owes everything to its parents as they beget it, and on their part, parents lavish a great amount of affection on it. In general, parents are expected to do their best for the well-being of their children and to settle them in marriage. On the other hand, children have the obligation to look after their parents especially in their old age and to perform the death rituals. The mother-child relationship is particularly close because of its emotional content. However, the father-child relationship is the very core of the patrilineal and patriarchal Angami social structure. It is
from the father that the child receives its social personality and membership of the patrilineage, clan, village and the tribe. The principle of patrilineage is so strong that even a child born out of wedlock belongs to the father if its paternity is known.

From the above description of the social organisation of the Angami it is possible to conclude that their organization is segmentary in nature and consists of interlocking segments of patrilineal descent groups. In this segmentary structure, the village is at the apex of the pyramid and the household is the basic unit. The principle of patrilineage is so strong and it is only through the father that a person receives his or her identity, and a female does not lose it through her marriage into another patrilineage.

4. Land and Other Types of Property

In order to understand the nature of land relations among the Angami, it is important to consider the nature of land as a form of property. In this section, we shall first consider the meaning of land and other types of property among the Angami
and then examine various questions relating to ownership, use, transfer and inheritance of property.

1. The concept of property among the Angami

In order to define the concept of property and its implications, we shall summarise what Carruthers and Ariovich (2004) have said in their essay entitled *The Sociology of Property Rights*. According to them, the concept of property concerns the relationship between people and things. This relationship implies rights on the part of the people over things. It involves a bundle of rights, including the exclusive right to use and alienate things. The one who holds these rights is the owner, and the object owned is the property. Property rights vary over time and between societies with regard to the following dimensions: 1) who can be an owner, 2) what may be owned, 3) what constitutes a legitimate use, 4) how it is transferred or alienated, and 5) the nature of exclusiveness (Carruthers and Ariovich 2004: 24). Keeping these points in mind, we shall now examine the concept of property among the Angami.
Among the Angami, an owner can be an individual, a household, a clan, a khel and the village as a whole. In other words, among the Angami an owner can be an individual person or a collectivity of corporate body. Thus, Angami traditional law recognizes both individual and communal ownership.

With regard to what can be owned, the Angami accept different types of property, namely, immovable and movable. The chief forms of immovable property are the house, the residential site, and all types of lands. Chief items of movable property includes agriculture implements and tools, weapons, personal objects like clothing, ornaments, livestock, stores of food grains, and any other items that is considered valuable. As we are more interested in land and other immovable forms of property, we shall examine their nature in some detail a little later.

With regard to the use of property, the Angami recognise the right of the individual to use his personal property as he or she pleases. But in the case of communal property and resources like forests, there are restrictions on the use of such resources. For instance, an individual may cut as many trees
as he needs for his personal use or for his household. Any form of wasteful use of common resources is forbidden.

Among the Angami there are clear norms regarding the transfer and alienation of property. All forms of property, including land, may be sold or exchanged. However, in the case of communal property, all those who have a right to its use must agree to the sale or transfer.

There are also definite norms regarding the transfer of property from one generation to the next through inheritance. In general, only males can inherit ancestral immovable property like the house and land. However, personally females can inherit acquired immovable property, including the house and land. Only males can inherit items that are used exclusively by males like weapons. They can inherit all items that are considered proper to the use of females.

With regard to exclusiveness, the Angami tradition recognises absolute ownership in the case of individual property, both ancestral and acquired by the individual. It is thus “private property” in the strict sense. But there is no such absolute exclusiveness in the case of communal property. For
instance, all the member households have access to a patch of forest that is owned by a clan. What is more interesting is that any member of the village has access to such communal property for certain purposes. For instance, any member of the village can collect from forests such items as dry branches of trees, edible fruits and roots, medicinal plants and similar things.

We have outlined here some of the basic features of the Angami concept of property and the norms governing its use, exchange and transmission. We shall refer to these norms and elaborate them in later Chapters. Here, given the importance of land as a form of property for our study, we shall deal with it in some detail.

2. Land as Property

As already noted, land is the most valued form of property in an agrarian society. This is true also in the case of the Angami. Further, in the Angami society land has a
fundamental significance because it confers membership of the village to an individual. This is because, as already mentioned above, every patrilineage (serra) and each of its component segment is anchored to a subdivision of the territory within the khel or clan territory. For this reason, an Angami without land is an anomaly. Hence, the oft-repeated saying that there is “no Naga without land” is true in the case of the Angami. It must be noted immediately that it is not the individual as such who owns land but the misokeswe (household). Hence, there can be no Angami household without owning land.

We have already noted that the term “land” is broad because it includes not merely all types of land but also forests and water sources like streams and rivulets. It is common to distinguish between agricultural and non-agricultural land.

Among the Angami, the only strictly non-agricultural land is the residential site called pheba. It is reserved for the purpose of constructions like residential houses, kichüki (bachelors’ dormitory), mechüki (community hall, churches and other structures meant for common use within the residential site of the village.
The house or the dwelling unit is also an important form of property. There are different types of houses due to differences in size, material used and the type of decorations. In former times, houses were built with wood and thatched with grass. Tin sheets replaced the grass for roofing quite some time ago. At present modern cement and concrete houses are becoming popular.

Agricultural land can be of two basic types: one that is actually used for cultivation and the other that is potentially available for cultivation. Actually cultivated land is in the form of fields. Potentially cultivable land includes forests. The forests themselves can be of different types. We shall now look at different types of fields.

The predominant mode of agriculture among the Angami is terrace cultivation. Therefore, terrace fields are the most valuable type of land. There are three types of terrace fields. They are: 1) Dzutse, 2) Vakhra, and 3) Khutso (Das 1984: 90). Dzutse are terrace fields located near a natural stream and have a completely assured supply of water. Maintenance of these fields is easy as it does not require much labour. Vakhra fields are a little away from the stream and are irrigated through
water channels, which carry water from the stream. If the stream does not have enough water due to scanty rains, the vakhra fields cannot be irrigated. Therefore, they do not have an assured supply of water. Khutso are terrace fields that cannot be irrigated by means of water channels from a stream because they are on higher levels. Therefore, they depend entirely on rain.

In the Angami economy, shifting cultivation plays on a secondary role. The Angami practices shifting cultivation mainly to raise vegetables and various cash crops. Fields used for shifting cultivation are called melu. These fields are located on higher levels, between the terrace fields and the forests.

Forests are important forms of property. There are different types of forests. Sokha is the forest that is close to the terrace fields. It can also be a grove of trees. It is carefully preserved and dry branches are regularly trimmed. This type of forest is of critical importance for maintaining a desirable level of moisture in the terrace fields during the dry season. Another type of forest is kestalie. It is close to the fields used for shifting cultivation. In fact, it is often used for the cultivation of vegetables and other cash crops that grow in the shade of trees.
Beyond kestalie forest and at higher slopes of the mountains is the ketsa forest. It is forest in the strict sense and is the source of timber, firewood and other forest produce. In general, the Angami have preserved their forests with great care. The reason for this is the close link between Angami practice of terrace cultivation and forests. A system of religious beliefs and traditional norms are used for an effective conservation of the forests. (D'Souza 2001). It is well known that religious ideas reinforce people's sense of veneration towards the forest and this plays a significant role in the preservation of forest". (Qinghua 2001: 2848).

At present two opposing forces are operative with regard to forests. The first is the tendency towards commercial exploitation of forests for timber and firewood. The second is the growing awareness that forests must be preserved and used as a community resource base for timber, firewood, medicinal plants, various edible fruits, green fodder for the cattle, and so on.

Rivulets and streams are also important forms of property because they are the primary source of water for the fields. Similarly, water channels that carry water to the fields are also
important forms of property. Water channels or dzüyie are carefully constructed and maintained.

Two aspects of immovable property, particularly of land, must be noted. The first is that every field, plot of land, or at least an area of the village, has a name. Usually the name indicates the type of field or plot and its use. But much more importantly, the name of a field or plot indicates that it has an owner because the very fact of naming implies the establishment of ownership. The Angami used this argument in 2003 to establish their traditional ownership of Dzukuo valley. When some persons from Manipur advanced a claim to the valley, the Angami Public Organisation, the apex body of the Angami, declared that the valley belonged to them by virtue of the fact that the name of the valley was derived from an Angami word.

The second aspect is that every field or plot or area, and even the village itself, has a clearly demarcated boundary. The traditional demarcation of boundary is very simple and convenient and it is still followed. Rivulets, streams, stones, trees, ridges and any other identifiable features are used for boundary demarcation. These objects may be movable or
stationary but it is an offence to remove them. The owner of a field or patch forest regularly visits his property to see that boundary markers are intact. Whenever possible, on these visits he takes his young sons and points out the boundary markers to them. Hence, a tampering with boundary markers is a serious offence and open invitation for penalty.

3. Ownership and Related Rights

It has been mentioned above that there is no Naga without land. But it is also true that in Nagaland there is no land without an owner. The meaning of the expression “no land without an owner” implies that ownership of land is private and is vested with individuals, households, clans, khels and the village as a whole. There is no concept of the Government being the ultimate owner of the land. In fact, if the Government needs land, it must acquire it through purchase from the private owner. All ownership rights are recognised customary law, which in turn, is protected by Article 371A of the Constitution of India.

We have already seen that Angami customary law recognises both individual and communal property. Hence, the
ownership of land also can be individual or communal. We shall examine the nature of individual and communal ownership of land among the Angami. We shall keep in mind that an individual owner actually means the head of the household so that in practice it is the household that owns the land. Thus, every household must own some land, and definitely some terrace fields. Thus, in an Angami village, there can be no household without land, particularly without some terrace fields.

Land owned by an individual can be of two types, namely, ancestral land and personally acquired land. Ancestral land is inherited from one's ancestors, while personally acquired land is acquired through purchase or exchange or received as a gift. Such individually owned land, whether ancestral or acquired, can be of any type. It can consist of terrace fields, jhum fields and even a patch of forest. In practice, individuals own all the terrace fields, while fields used for shifting cultivation and forests are mostly communally owned.

Angami traditional law gives absolute rights to the individual owner of land so that he or she can do with it as he or she wishes. He or she lost the ownership by sale or gift. He or she may mortgage or rent it to others. He or she may bequeath
it to his or her children in the manner he or she wishes. However, there are some restrictions on bequeathing ancestral land to daughters. According to customary law only sons can inherit the ancestral house and ancestral land, though such restrictions are now sometimes overlooked. On the other hand, there are no restrictions on gifting or bequeathing to daughters any personally acquired land. If a daughter receives land as a gift from the parents, she may deal with it as she wishes. In most cases, however, she gifts that land to her daughters giving rise to a situation in which some land is passed on along the female line.

Traditional Angami law permitted all types of transactions in land. Almost all property is alienable in some measure, and so shifts between different owners. As for land, already in 1892, Davis noted: “Amongst the Angami land, particularly terraced permanent cultivation, is freely sold and bought, there being no more difficulty in selling a terraced field than in selling a pig or cow” (Davis 1892: 250). This does not mean that an individual could sell his or her land to anyone. In former times, there were various restrictions as to whom land could be sold or transferred. Members of the same lineage or clan had the first
right to buy. If there was no buyer within this unit, the owner could sell it to someone within the *khel*. Only when there was no buyer within the *khel*, the owner could sell it to someone within the village. In former times, selling land to someone belonging to another village was practically out of the question because of rivalry and even enmity between villages. However, one could sell it to a buyer from a friendly village. But, land was never sold to a non-Angami and certainly not to a non-Naga. At present, the law forbids the sale of land to non-tribals (D’Souza 2001:44-46).

Communal ownership of land is vested with the lineage, clan or village. Such land can be fields used for shifting cultivation, forests, water channels, streams and rivulets. Such land is known as *kayie* (inherited) land. In order to have ownership rights to *kayie* land, an individual must be a member of the unit or group, which owns it. Outsiders can be granted such rights only if they are adopted or assimilated into a patrilineage or clan through a recognized process. However, such communal ownership is not absolute because even those who do not have ownership rights have some access to it provided they are members of the village. We have already
noted that any member of the village can collect dead branches, edible fruits and medicinal plants from anywhere in the village land. Such general rights imply that in former times communal ownership was the norm and that individual ownership or the institution of private property evolved later on.

It is not known when the institution of private property came into existence among the Angami. E.R. Grange, one of the British officers who toured the Naga Hills in 1840, noted that landed property among the Angami was hereditary (quoted in Elwin 1969: 224). This indicates that the institution of private property was not merely a usufructuary right found in most tribal societies as noted by Pathy (1988: 84-85). It is possible that the institution of private property came into existence among the Angami due to their practice of terrace cultivation. Unlike shifting cultivation, terrace cultivation is labor intensive and requires constant care of the field throughout the year. Probably, this nature of terrace cultivation favoured the emergence of private property among the Angami.

As already mentioned, the concept of private property, whether individually or communally owned, implies a certain amount of exclusiveness. Private property excludes others from

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access and use of that property. It has also been mentioned above that there are clear demarcation of boundaries between fields. Nevertheless, disputes over land occur among the Angami as in any other tribal society.

Among the Angami, there are different types of land disputes. There may be a dispute about a boundary between two fields or plots of land or patch of forest. There may also be a dispute about ownership and usufructuary rights over a field or piece of land or forest. When there is a dispute between two individuals, clans, *khels*, the khel or village council settles the dispute. After hearing both the parties and after spot verification if necessary, the council pronounces the judgment. There may be instances when the council thinks that one of the parties is at fault, but the party continues to press its claim. In such a case, the council asks the claimant to take an oath. On failure to do so, the disputed land goes to the aggrieved person. On the other hand, if the council of elders is satisfied through the statement of facts that both the parties have equal rights, then the disputed land may be divided among the contending parties. Disputes between two villages are settled through negotiations.
and arbitration, and now through an intervention of a higher organisation like the Angami Public Organisation.

In this Chapter, we have seen how the Angami are a distinct Naga tribe. We have also looked at the structure of their villages and their social organisation. Finally, we have examined the concept of property in general and of land in particular. With this background, we shall now study Jakhama village.