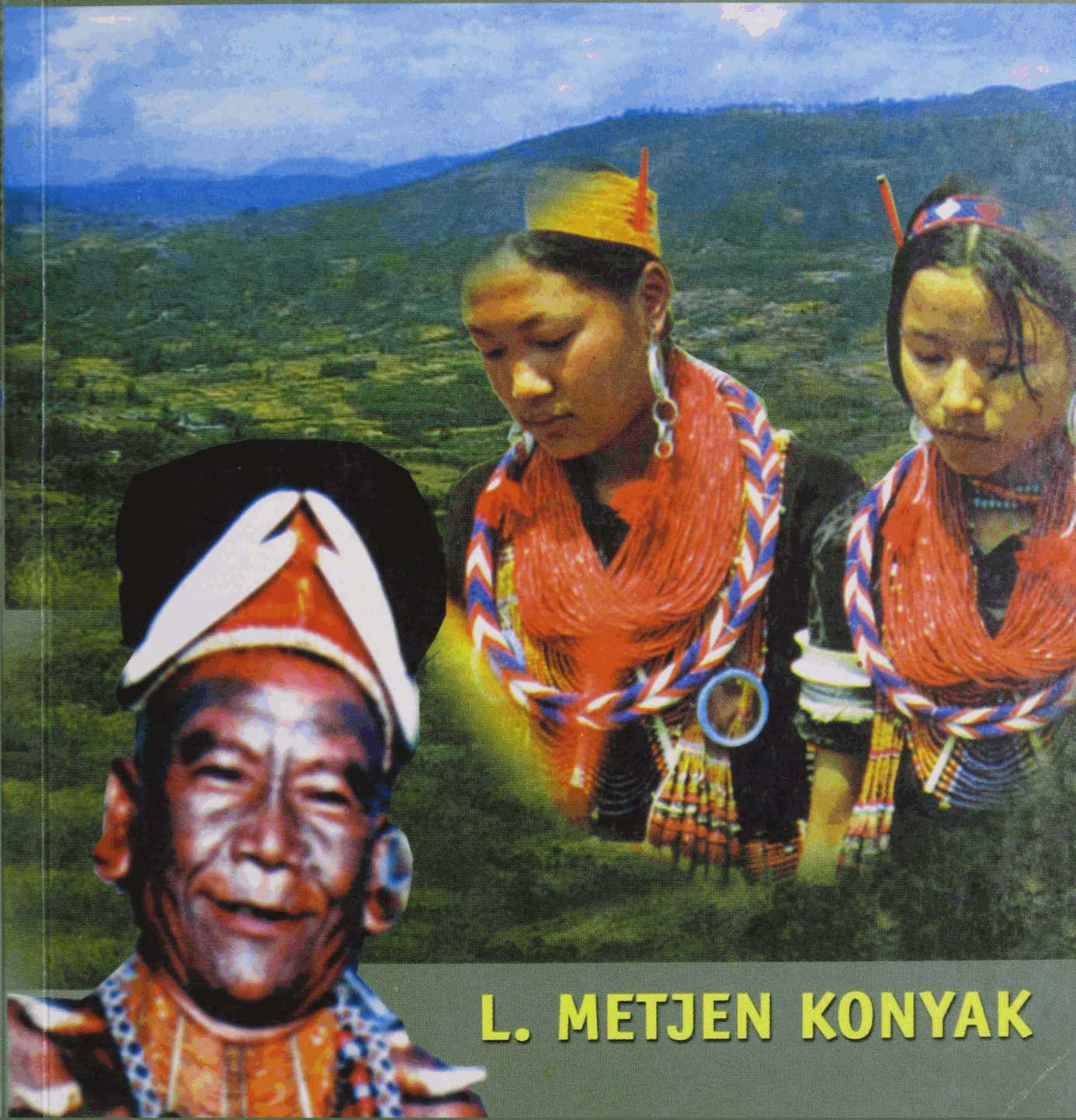


THE SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MONARCHICAL SYSTEM OF THE KONYAK NAGAS



L. METJEN KONYAK

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ISPCK

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This Book is Dedicated to

My Beloved Illiterate Parents :

Mr. N. Longna Konyak &

Mrs. K. Munkai Konyak

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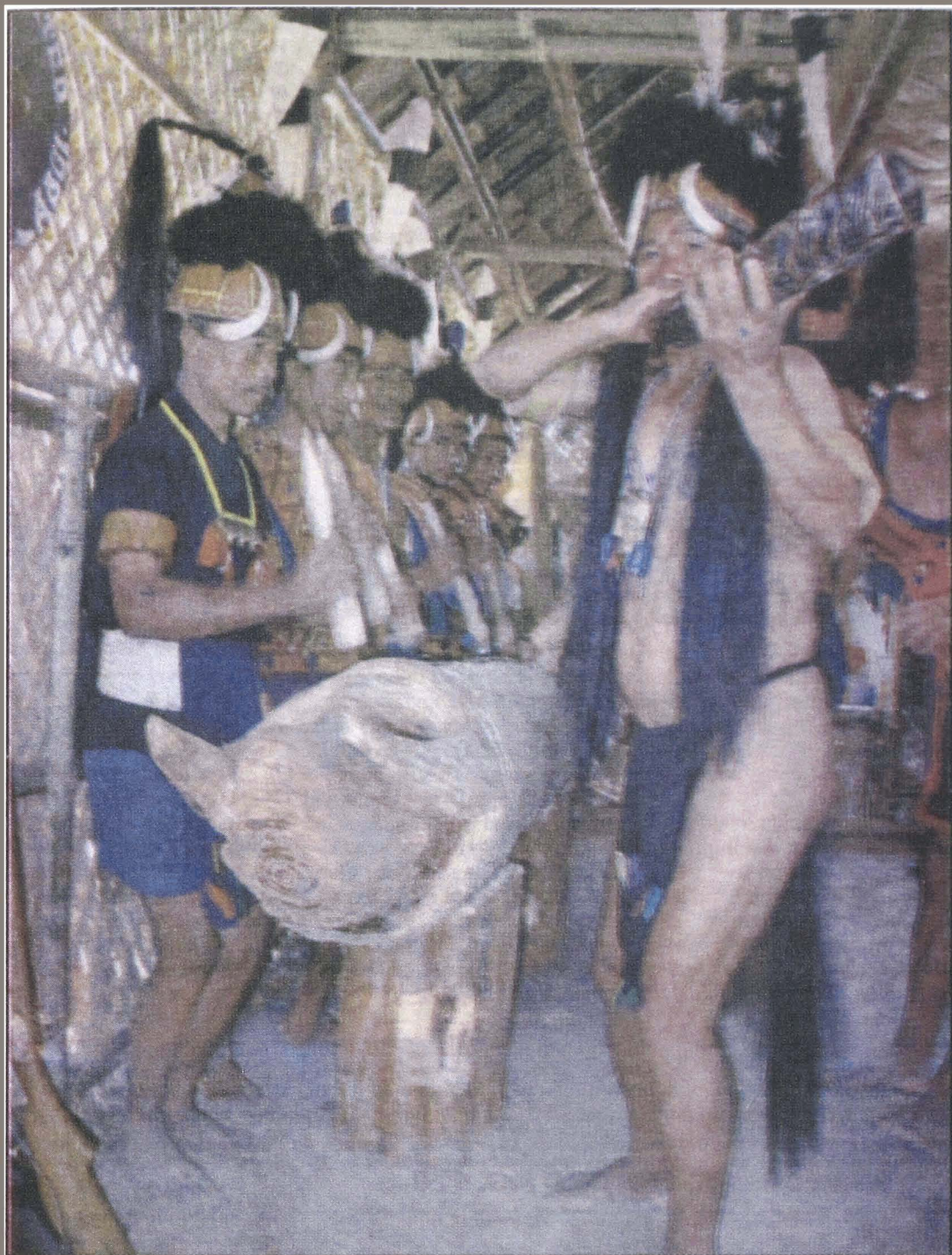


Three Warriors



Young Konyak girls and boys performing cultural dance





The Konyak young men beating the log drum at the baan (Morung)



Wangkhao, the chief Wang, Chui



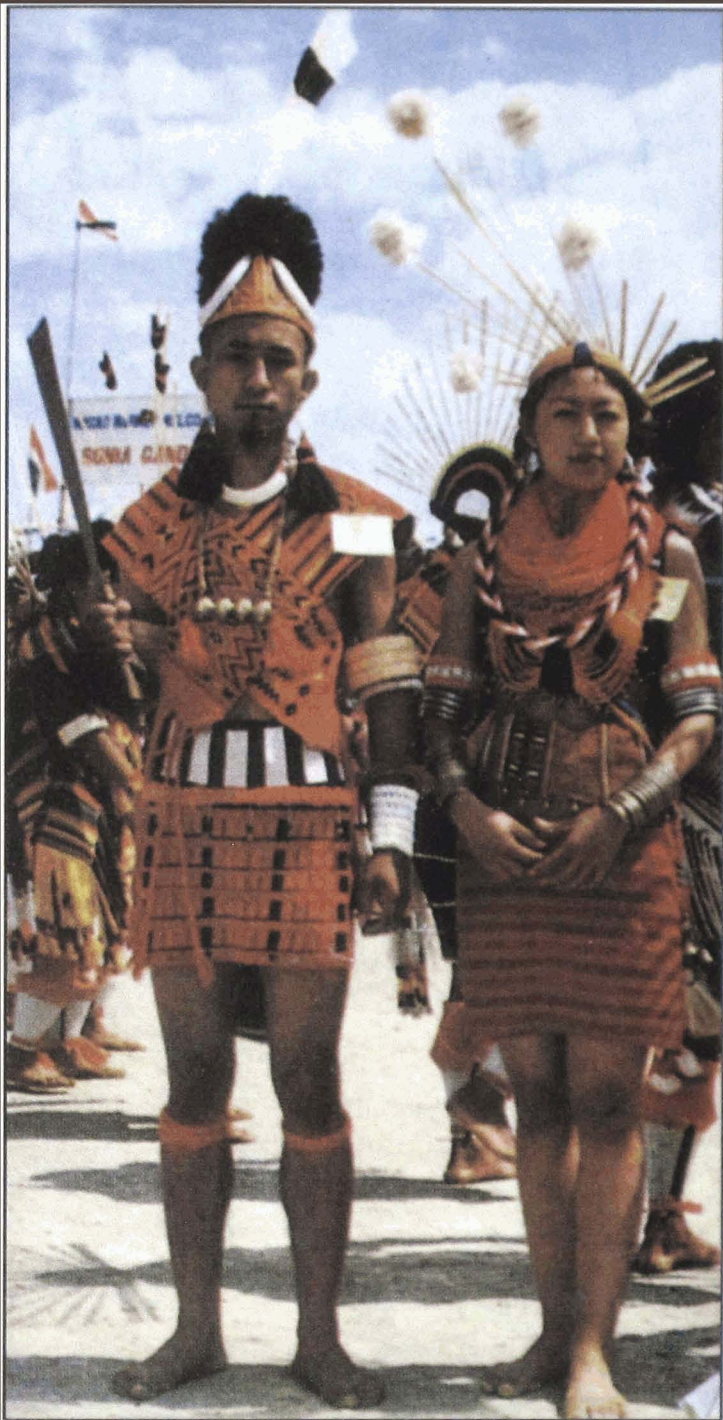
Wang's (King's) palace, Chui



Wang's (King's) palace, Longwa. The international boundary (India & Myanmar) runs from the middle of the Wang's house

NAGINIMORA
MEMORY STONE
OF
MRS WATLONG ANGYA KONYAK NAGA (DALIME)
WIFE OF
RAJA GODADHOR SINGHA (HINGHA)
SIBSAGAR ASSAM
THIS STONE WAS LAID DOWN
BY LAI AND LESAI SONS OF
RAJA GODADHOR IN THE
14TH CENTURY

Wangya Watlong's (Queen) memorial stone, Naginimora



Konyak couple in traditional attire



The rock where Raja Godadhor and Wangya Watlong sat,
Tanhai village

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I express my heartfelt gratitude to God who has given me the opportunity, courage and capability to undertake the work on the socio-cultural and political significance of the monarchical system of the Konyak Nagas. After God it is my parents and our whole family, whose love and concern makes me what I am.

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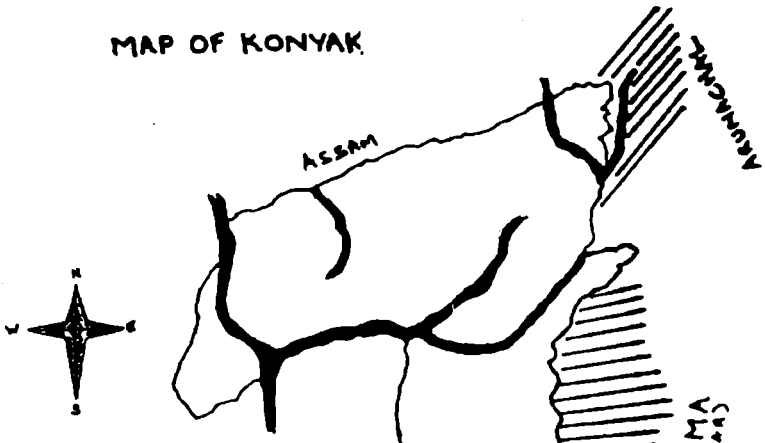
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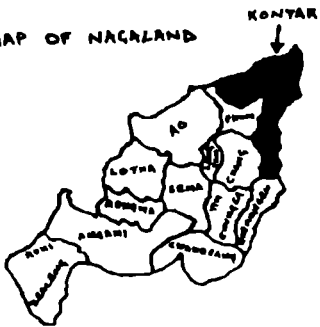
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MAP OF KONYAK



MAP OF NAGALAND



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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Wangship among the Konyak Nagas is a virgin research. So our problem is to identify accurately the socio-cultural and political significance of the monarchical system of the Konyak Nagas. So far no one has attempted to systematically study this topic. Tradition has it that the Konyak Wang (King) even ruled over and exercised power over the Wancho tribe of Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar (Burma), but how far this is true has to be investigated.

Among all the Naga-Tribes no one had Wangship (Kingship) like the Konyak Nagas. But the Sema tribe of Nagaland has a structure which is a little similar, called chieftainship and so also the Maos and Tangkhul of Manipur Nagas. However, whenever people talk about Wangship, they usually refer only to Konyak Nagas.

In the past, the Wang was extremely powerful. Whatever he said, became a law for his people and the respect given, made him next to God. However, some of the Pongyin Wang villages (Coronation King village) feel that the system of Wangship today is losing its power and authority. Perhaps the next generation will not know what the monarchical system is. Hence, our research work aims at recording matters related to the monarchical system of Konyak Nagas. We should ask this question for our studies in the past the Wangs enjoyed great power and glory, but do they enjoy the same today ? If they do not, then what changes have taken place in their socio-cultural and political roles ? Do the younger generation respect the system of Wangship ? Do the people want to

persons because they are better aware of the existing monarchical system of the Konyak Nagas, and so are ready to give comments on the questionnaire. To examine the variation of thought, we divided the respondents into three age groups, as well as according to educational qualification and marital status; and to balance the opinions, we grouped them into seven categories, namely sex, age group, marital status, education, present residence, religio-denominational, and income group. The chart below gives general information about the respondents.

The chart on the previous page gives information of the eighty respondents, including 62 men and 18 women, 19 of them belong to the age group of 20-30, 33 are between 31-45, and 28 are above 45. As regards their qualification, 52 are under matric, 23 are graduates and 5 are post-graduates. 53 are married and 27 are unmarried. 43 are from urban areas, 37 are from rural; their religio-denomination affiliation shows they are all Baptist.

4. The Structure

The thesis is divided into six chapters including the introduction as chapter 1 and the conclusion as chapter 6. The second chapter deals with the types of Wang (King) system; origin and development. The third chapter is mostly about the power and duties of the Wang (King). The fourth chapter deals with the socio-cultural significance of Wangship and the last chapter deals with the political significance of Wangship.

CHAPTER 2

Types of Wangship (Kingship) System : Origin and Development

To study the origin and development of the types of Wangship system is not easy because at present no one has attempted a detailed study. First we are going to study a little bit about the background of Konyak Nagas and its link with the other states and countries where the Konyak Nagas live. Then the origin of Wang and the types of Wang system and briefly about the birth of Wangpa and Wangya till their wedding day.

The Konyak tribe also did not have a script or written form, like all other tribals. The record of their history was passed on from generation to generation orally and this system exists even today. So the Konyak Nagas have unwritten customary laws and conventions.

The Konyaks inhabit the hills occupied by the Phom, Chang and Khamniungan tribes of Nagaland in the south-east, the plains of Sibsagar district of Assam to the west, Tirap frontier of Arunachal Pradesh to the north and Myanmar (Burma) in the east. The Konyaks of Nagaland are placed under two administration units of Mon and Tuensang districts. The Mon district has only Konyak inhabitants in its area but several Konyak villages are found in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Myanmar even more than in Nagaland.¹ Some of them

¹A. Yanang Konyak, *From Darkness to Light*, Guwahati: Christian Literature Centre, Panbazar, 1986. p.1, also R.R.Shimray, *Origin and Culture of Nagas*, New Delhi: Brahma Printing Press, 1985, p.10.

will be included in the present study. One elder of the Konyak tribe pointed out that the Konyak of Arunachal Pradesh, Myanmar, Assam and the Konyak of Nagaland are above eight lakhs in number.² The Konyak Nagas of Nagaland with a population of 150,067 (1991 census), thus become the largest tribe of the Nagas.³ The practice of hereditary Wangship and head-hunting is unique to the Konyak Nagas.

1. The Origin of Konyak Naga Tribe

Recently an unpublished work entitled *The Konyak Nagas Yesterday and Today* mentioned that the Konyak Naga originated from a place called "Longphang Veenyu." A section of the Konyak Nagas, while uttering words of blessing say, "Longphang Veenyu, Shamnyu Hamnyu mepu moiman yahkei" meaning, give us blessings from Shem and Ham, of Noah, (they were his sons). The mention of Shem and Ham by our forefathers, who were animists and who had not even heard of the Bible, leads us to believe that they were one of the groups of Noah's descendants.⁴ Thus the origin of the Konyaks, which seems to have some connection with the biblical story is very interesting. Besides this, some biblical names are found, such as Jonah, Kaisa, Mosa and Aaron and so on. These names existed even before Christianity advanced to the Konyak Naga region. Traditionally, it is believed that the tribe crossed a historic gate known as Alemkaphan, before entering into a permanent settlement at Chinglong Wangdonghong. The historic gate Alemkaphan is interpreted in Konyak as "the gate of the sun." *Alem* means sun and *kaphan* means gate. So, it is believed that the Konyaks have come from the East.⁵

²Mr. Benjei Nyeimlem, *Interview* at Tizit on 13th May, 2000.

³Kiranshankar Maitra, *Nagaland : Darling of the North East*, New Delhi: Mittal Publication, 1991, pp. 32-33.

⁴Rev. Y. Chingang, *The Konyak Nagas Yesterday and Today*, p.1. (unpublished work).

⁵Konyak, *op.cit.*, p.2.

2 The Origin of Wang (King)

The term 'Ahng' for King is found in Wakching and two or three villages; but the rest of the Konyak Naga villages use the term Wang (King).⁶ All the Wang clans use the word Wang, somewhere *M* at the beginning or at the end of their names. The word 'Wang' means beginning; 'Wangpa' means the beginner or the one who began everything, like decision making, eating and so on before the others. The word 'Ahng' means something like keeping in one place and 'Ahngpa' means the keeper of things. So no sense seems to emerge with the use of the word Ahng. Therefore we also use the more meaningful term 'Wang' in this dissertation.

There are three oral traditions as to how Wang originated. The first theory holds that the Long-phangveenyu had led a nomadic life for a very long-time because they could not find a suitable place to settle down. They also had to go for a long period of time without any water to drink. When the thirst became unbearable, they began to suck their own blood to quench their thirst. But among them, some did not follow such an act. After a long period of time, they offered sacrifices to God (Kahwang) and sought help from him. Soon it happened that they found a stream, and rested there for their meal. But the later group who did not associate with the blood sucking ones, were considered superior to the former ones. As time passed, they were called the Wang clans, people of highest class. Since then, they do not share with common people from the same plate or cup.

The second theory holds that during the period of their nomadic life, they cultivated large tracts of land. They prospered in agriculture, hunting and other activities—each family cultivated crops, just sufficient for their home. But among their group, one such person was extraordinarily blessed and gifted in farming, hunting, fishing, etc. His crops, animals, and whatever

⁶R.R. Shimray, *op.cit.*, pp.156-166.

he hunted etc. were always exceptional. So, all enquired about his popularity and his extraordinary gifts. So he demanded that if anyone wished to know about his gift, they should bring a portion of their crops during harvest and a portion of the animal's meat which they hunted. His demand was agreed upon by others and homage was paid to him in return. Subsequently, he became Wang (King), for he claimed power over the common people.⁷

The third theory is that in the beginning God created the universe, and all living things, the trees, the plants and so on. Finally, God created a human being, but creation laughed at the human. But hearing the insulting sound, the creator God came to them and warned that one day he will rule over them. So that is how the Wang clan originated and they exist from the beginning when the universe was created.⁸ (Claimed by the Wangs).

3. Two Types of Wangs — System and Origin of Tattooing

Typically, the Konyak Nagas had two types of Wangs, namely tattoo wangs and non-tattoo wangs. It has its origin long ago when the common people first settled within the restful and beautiful Yinnyuhong range. They flourished through cultivation of crops, fishing, hunting and implementing other domestic activities. But on one of their annual hunting occasions, a strange four-legged animal was being killed and the hunters were terrified of even getting close to it. During that very moment, an elderly man declared that God had provided them this animal to be used as meat. After hearing this, the animal was cut into pieces and while distributing, they unintentionally left out a widow's house, which was behind the village. Later on, it was believed that those who consumed the meat were cursed with sickness and poverty, but the widow's household

⁷Chingang, *op.cit.*, p.12.

⁸Mr. Wangkao, Chief Wang of Chui village, *Interview* at Chui on 10 May, 2000.

was spared the curse. It was also believed that the spirit of prosperity had left them and their life was very much disturbed with violent wars.

For all this, they blamed God instead of searching his will. They abandoned the range and moved to a safer place along with the royal family, towards the north-east reaching Eangchanghong, for God demolished the whole Yinnyahors with an earthquake, because of their disobedience.

The larger group of people occupying the eastern side were filled with terror when they heard about the disaster. So, in order to exclude themselves from those who disobeyed God, they distinguished themselves by a permanent marking on their faces, i.e., 'tattoo' when the 'cursed' group acknowledged their experiences, precisely drawing a line from the forehead to the nose. However, some small groups from Menhin junction, who went up to Wangyonghong through Puanglam, did not follow such traits⁹, except for a few markings on the chest as a sign of bravery. Hence, even now, there are tattoo as well as non-tattoo (thendu and thenko) in the same family. Women of both tendu and thenko have tattos on their legs, except that women of tendu have further division of marks.

Tattoo was and still is a mode of dressing which also confers dignity. Furthermore, tattoo can be done on a person only when he has killed the enemy and takes the victim's head. However, if he cannot find a head after all his search (even though he has killed one), the man attains his tattoo after a pretended killing of wooden figures or effigies of the enemies. If a man collects it is marked on the back of his body. Otherwise, a necklace with brass head-design was worn to show his achievement as a warrior.¹⁰

In the Wang system of the Konyak Nagas, the tattoo Wangs have rigid rules whereas non-tattoo village Wang's power is

⁹Chingang, *op.cit.*, pp.8-9.

¹⁰Konyak, *From Darkness to Light*, *op.cit.*, p.7.

more flexible in their functions. Men of the thendu group decorate their face by tattooing, while members of the thenko group tattoo only their chests and arms; men of both groups keep their hair long, but only the thendu men tie it into a neat knot at the back of their head held firmly in place with a piece of wooden board or a stick.¹¹

There are, however, further and deeper differences between the two groups. The villages of the thendu group are governed by the Wang members of the ruling Wang clan, while the thenko villages are administered by a council of the elders and a Wang.

4. The Birth of the Permanent Wang

In the life of Konyak Nagas one can find both autocratic and democratic forms of government. The autocratic one is called "Pongyin" and the Wang (coronated king), is known as Pongyin Wang. The Pongyin Wang is so powerful that he is regarded as next to God. A powerful ruler, his policy includes foreign relationship. Foreign here means other areas or tribes, other states and even other nations. The house of a Pongyin Wang is so big that it can accommodate even more than 300 men. His house is the biggest of all the houses in the village.

4.1. The Birth of the Prince

When the Pongyin Wang's son is born, performance of some traditional rites, take place. The day the Pongyin Wang is born, all the priests and learned men gather, then they play the log drum (khum) from the Wang's court, informing that the village has a new prince. After that to commemorate his birth they will plant a panyant tree¹² (in Jaboka called Zukai, Nyeipe-shom). The priest and Wangshupa then go fishing in

¹¹Malada Guanguli, *A Pilgrimage to the Nagas*, New Delhi; Mohan Primlani for Oxford & Co. 1984. p.130.

¹²Mr. Shomwang Wangpa, Mr. Ayong Wumpa and Mr. Taolong Wangshu, *Interview*, held at Jaboka village on 4 December, 1997.

the name of the new baby and when they bring a fish, the priest and the seer perform religious rites. Then they name the baby. This fishing ceremony is called "PHATHAM". To welcome the new baby, the villagers also go hunting and fishing and return with fish and meat to bless the prince. Not only the villagers, but the Pongyin Wang territory villagers will also do the same. When they bring the fish, first, it is given to the mother to eat and only after this the others may eat. Right from birth itself, the prince is given much respect by the people of the territory and all the villages.

4.2. *Prince at the Age of 15*

Every Konyak Naga village has 'baans' or 'khel' meaning bachelor dormitories. The baan is administered by the organisation of the baan itself. The village consist of a number of clans or nokphong; and there will be many baans according to the baannong. It is the most important institution found in the village, specially for young men. Therefore according to the Konyak Naga rule, even the Wang has to pass through this institution.

So when the prince is 15 years old, the priest, the council and the elders will gather at the Wang's court at the fixed time when the ceremony is to take place. They also select some of the rich family (hakpa and lwngpa) clans to be together with the prince to enter the baan. During that particular day, each and every young man's family along with the Wang family, will have a great feast. If some young man is too young, then his father will bring him to the baan. All the young men including the prince will come and the priest will lead the team from the back of the baan to the front singing folk songs. Again, in front of the baan every clan of the young men's families will have a great feast.¹³

Two or three years later, another ceremony is performed for taking 'phah' or 'tuophah yahpu', that is, small pieces of

¹³*Ibid.*, on 4 December, 1997.

loin cloth. This is called 'Nyakyupu'. More or less the ceremony is similar to when he was 15 years old. The Nyakyupu feast is also celebrated in a grand manner and after that they gather at Wangs' palace and they are sent out to the gate of the village to wear the phah or tuophah. The Nyakyupu young men would not visit their respective houses for three days up to the performing of these rites and ceremonies. The young men would be in a state of nature, and this includes even during and after the baan ceremony. On the final day, all the members will go to the river for taking bath and that will be the end of the Nyakyupu ceremony. This is an announcement to the public and all the villages of the territory that he has entered into manhood.¹⁴

4.3. *Engagement of Wangya (Queen)*

The engagement of the Wang with his bride is not an individual affair, but involves the whole Kingdom. A Wang will marry only a princess of another royal family. Therefore a Konyak Naga princess will never settle down in her own village when she becomes the Wangya (Queen).¹⁵ Setting up the new royal household is an elaborate affair, and tradition is followed strictly. One of the first steps in the process, is the choice of the personal cook.

4.3.1. The Choosing of Phongjonnyu or Shahtonnyu

The Wang will marry a phongjonnyu¹⁶ or Shahtonnyu from his own village. But there are only some two or three selected clans for this purpose. He will take only one phongjonnyu and she is placed next in importance to the Wangya (Queen). She will only cook for the Wang and Wangya and she is overall in charge of the kitchen and all other matters concerning

¹⁴*Ibid.*, on 4 December, 1997.

¹⁵Wangya means the eldest daughter of King, who is going to become a Queen.

¹⁶Phongjonnyu or shahtonnyu means woman who cooks for the Wangpa and Wangya.

the Wangpa and Wangya. The phongjonnyu will shave her hair because, while she is cooking her hair may fall into the food being cooked.

Wherever the wangya goes she will accompany her always. After the cook is searched for the princess' house the elaborate process of choosing the queen starts.

4.3.2. The Choosing of Wangya (Queen)

Most marriages take place between the prince and princess as per their village status. Moreover, the princess should be chosen from another village, that is from where the grandmother was married. The purpose was to recover or to take back the properties which were given to the princess when she got married.

Here is another way of choosing the Wangya. The common practice of the Wang's marriage is an arranged marriage, and depends on the public. Therefore all the learned, elders and the priest will gather and have a meeting with regard to the marriage. The religious rites performed is called 'OZOK PHONGYINGPU OR OZOK VANTAK', which simply means breaking of egg and then burning by fire. If it's clear, and no mark is shown, then they will prefer to get the princess of that particular village. Usually the priest will perform this ceremony at the altar. They will perform this ceremony at various Pongyin Wang villages which are supposed to have a potential Wangya. If the Ozok Phongyingpu is found good, some of his village elders will go and inform the princess's father or to the village and later they will get together and discuss the matter. For the first meeting with the princess, the prince's village young men will go to her village and along with the princess they will come to the border of the prince's area. They will bring many gifts to the princess and a person known as Wangshupa will hold the princess's hand. Thereafter the gifts which are brought by them will be given away. And the next day the princess's villagers will come and give a great feast to the public of the prince's village.

When the engagement is over, and before the marriage, there would be 20-30 girls along with the princess who would come to the Wang's house, while they are doing field work. Every night they will dance and sing folk songs with the young boys of the Wang's village. They would stay for one to two months and every girl will receive a gift from the Wang before being sent back.

Again, a second time they will come and stay the same way. On the wedding day, all the necessary things for the marriage feast will be brought by the princess's family and distributed to the public. At the marriage they will dance the whole day and sing folk songs, during which time the princess's family will distribute meat to everyone, and even to the guests and neighbouring villagers who attend the marriage ceremony. However, the Wang's family will take care of the people, or the princess's friends, as long as they stay back at the prince's village.¹⁷ The princess is only for the sake of heritage for the Wang has many concubines for helping in the domestic work. And, the concubines are as many as he wishes.

4.3.3. The Choosing of Concubines

There are several methods for choosing the concubines. Most of the Konyak Wangs like, Wangtak Wangyong¹⁸ or Pongyin Wang have more than 40-60 concubines. The Wang of Longwa village Mr. Phawang keeps 60 concubines and the old Mon village Wang Khaoba whom Milada Guanguli met had forty-eight wives (concubines).¹⁹ The Konyak Nagas were an exception among the Nagas. Their village Wang could marry as many as 50 wives. It may be surprising but it remains a fact. The village in those days used to be very powerful and once he selected a young girl to be his concubine, she could not refuse. Her parents would only be too happy to

¹⁷Mr. A. Jamjai Wang, *Interview*, held at Mon on 1 June, 2000.

¹⁸Wangtak Wangyong is called to coronation King.

¹⁹Milada Guanguli, *op.cit.*, p.171.

have relations with the Wang. The Wang also usually tried to have concubines from different villages so as to have better relationship with the subjects of those villages. Sometimes a Wang may take a concubine from those who failed to clear their debts on time. Beside this, if any family or clan used the same name of the Wang, the Wang would take a girl from among them as a concubine. Also if unknowingly they touched the Wang's legs, or mistakenly called out his name, or would spit in his presence or when the Wang is coming from the field or any other place and the family or clan walked ahead of him, all these reasons were good enough for the Wang to take concubines for himself from those families. Sometimes these mistakes would be told by the Wang to his son and the priest, so that if a girl is not found in the family which has made the mistake, in the next generation if a girl is born, she may be taken in as a concubine. Due to such cases the Konyak Wang has many concubine wives.

5. The Birth of Wang's Daughter

The day when a princess is born, none of the villagers will go out from the village, not even to the fields. They will all stay back at home. It is more or less similar when a prince is born. All the performances of ceremonies are the same.²⁰ The village young men will go out (as during the birth of the prince) for fishing and hunting in the name of the princess and will bring the catch and hunt to the Wang's house.

5.1. At the Age of 15

When the princess reaches the age of 15 years, there is another ceremony that takes place. This is the time when the princess is tattooed. As they are doing the tattooing the village men will go hunting and fishing in the name of the princess's tattooing ceremony. On that day again whatever they kill, will be brought to the Wang's house.

²⁰See, the birth of the prince's ceremony.

5.2. Engagement

The practice is, while the princess's family or village accept her engagement proposal, young men and young women of the village including the princess should go to the village of the prince, who would be her future husband. They will take with them all necessary items, including food upto the border of the princess's village. Then a person from her husband's (prince) side will take her along with the items from the border. There she will stay for three days. Then she will come back to her own village.

5.3. Shamhuhtupu

The shamhuhtupu is another tattooing day. The tattoo is done on the princess's legs and knees. At the time of tattooing, an animal will be killed and the village priest will conduct a ceremony and a feast will be given.

5.4. Marriage Day

On the princess's marriage day, all the villagers will help in giving rice and meat. The villagers will also be involved in helping in many other works. Then they will carry rice and meat and all the princess's goods up to her husband's village. Then the Wang will send one of his concubines along with his daughter (princess) as a mother, to stay as long as she wishes or more than five to ten years. In the meantime if she passes away, her body would be brought back to her husband's house.

The Wang system which we see in this chapter, concentrates on how Wangship came into being; the difference between tattoo Wangs and non-tattoo Wangs; the nature of respect his public accords him, the processes during the birth of prince and princess and right up to their marriage. The next chapter will focus on the power and duties of the Wang.

CHAPTER 3

The Power and Duties of the Wang

In the preceding chapter, we learnt how Wangship originates, and we followed from his initiation till his marriage. In this chapter, we are going to study the power and duties of the Wang. It mainly deals with how the Wang is involved in the choosing of the village location and his functions and duties and relationship with the other Konyak Naga Wangs and the nature of the relationship they still have with each other.

1. The Choosing of the Village Location

The Konyaks, like any other Naga tribe, choose their habitations on the mountain tops for reasons of security and health.¹ The Konyak Nagas originated from a place called 'Long-phangveenyu'. As people wish to choose their own location, some of the clans were late in occupying the land, but more or less the village usually chooses its location together when they establish the place, and the priests were then responsible for performing rites and rituals in their worship and sacrifices for the villagers who wished to settle down. If they went in search of a new village, they would all come together and discuss and make rules and regulations. This is how they would occupy their new location. The Konyak village is divided into baan or khels² meaning bachelor's dormitory. The baan is administered by the organisation of the baan itself. The village consists of

¹A. Yanang Konyak, *From Darkness to Light*, Guwahati; Christian Literature Centre, Panbazar, 1986, p.5.

²Baan has two meanings men's dormitory and wide colony . According to context we can understand which meaning is implied.

nokphong or clans. The villagers are united under the authority of their Wang, and members of a baan are closely united in their social and economic life.

2. The Status of Wang

The Wang is the supreme head of the community. He has political power to rule the people. It is the responsibility of a Wang to keep his territory powerful, with peace and progress. The coronation feast is called 'Pongyin' in Konyak. It takes place at least two times in a Wang's lifetime. The first one is to declare his Wangship in his territory and to invite neighbouring kingdoms so as to inform them. The second one is to declare the success and prosperity of the present kingdom³. The Wang lineage of succession is strictly a hereditary one. The succession rules state that only the elder son of Wang born of a Wangya⁴, can inherit the Wangship. No princess can succeed to the throne. Sometimes, if there is no male issue to succeed to the throne, then the priest shall determine who will ascend the royal throne from among the nearest kin of the deceased Wang. Thus succession is scrupulously adhered and is according to their customary norms⁵. Once a Wang comes into power, all are subjected to him. He is considered next to God. The Sema Nagas, Konyak Nagas and Mao Nagas have hereditary monarchy, but among them the Konyak Naga Wangs have greater power and their words are obeyed by the people as law⁶. Thus, the Wang's status comes through inheritance and not by means of election. People used to address the Pongyin Wang and Jong-wang by the names of Tiger, Taitah, Ajong Jatnyu and Apa Tatei.

³A. Peihwang Wangsa, *Christianity and Social Change: A case study of Konyak Nagas*, Jorhat; Barkataki & Company Pvt. Ltd., 2000, p.7.

⁴In Konyak Wangya means Queen.

⁵Mr. Thanglong, ex-MLA *Interview*, held on Mon 9 Jun, 2000.

⁶Asoso Yunuo, *The Rising Nagas*, New Delhi; Manas Publication, second print, October, 1984, p.15.

3. Functions and Duties

In the Konyak Naga villages, each and every village has their own Wang. Some of the villages even have a deputy Wang. The Wang palace is the largest in the village and the palace is constructed by the people of the village. The Wang's palace is situated on a higher ground in the middle of the village. The Wang's house is bigger in size than any other house of the village and the baan. On 28th February 1951, Mr. Duncan visited Mon village and he gave a description of the house of the Wang: the house is a gigantic structure. It is not less than 100 yards in length. The rooms are built only on one side of the house, the other side is open with low enclosures not reaching up to the roof. The front room is the living room of the Wang and all other rooms behind are for wives and their children. Except for the front room, all others are pitch dark. The Wang's house is built not only by his own villagers but also the other villages under him.⁷ The Wang's house measurement is not the same, so it can be 450-500 feet in length and 100-150 feet in breadth. The first chamber from the entrance is called court chamber. The seat of the Wang is kept separate, around which his deputy Wangs sit in a semicircle. The court of the Wang is known as Wang-gho. This Wang-gho is the supreme court or council of a territory in the Konyak society. The chief Wang is the head of the court and his assistants are the deputy Wangs. The members of the court are the representatives from different clans and different baans (sectors or colony). The members are known as 'Niengba'. The Wang's court is regarded as a council. This council has the responsibility for social, political, religious and economic affairs of the entire territory. The Wang's court covers both internal and external affairs of its community. If a dispute occurring in a territory village could not be resolved by the local chief and council, the paramount

⁷Tajenyuba Ao, *British Occupation of Nagas' Country*, Dimapur: Western Printing Press, 1993, p.176.

chief of the domain is invited to give judgement and his verdict is final.⁸ The Wang's court would take all the decisions for any disputes in this room. The second chamber is the Wang's special chamber where all his important properties are kept. The third chamber is the Wang's bedroom. The fourth chamber is for the Queen. The fifth is the royal kitchen, and the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth chambers belong to the concubines. The eleventh chamber is where the concubines do their handiwork; and the last chamber is a place where 'shum' is kept.⁹

All of the territories' property such as 50-60 human skulls, together with skulls of elephants, buffaloes, bulls, bears, tigers, pigs and monkeys etc. are kept on the porch of this house which looks like golgotha.¹⁰ The Wang's palace is also regarded as a museum of the Kingdom because all the important elements of the entire territory are kept at the Wang's palace. It is a palace where all the princes, noblemen, and all the leaders of the various clans assemble. So the Wang's functions begin at the palace itself. But the Konyaks seem to have a different social and democratic system.

Among the Konyak Nagas land dispute is very rare. But if any agricultural land dispute occurs, the Wang sends his disciples for making peace among them. Should this process fail, the case will be brought to the Wang's court. The Wang, priest and the members of the Wang's court would then settle the case. Sometimes, if the neighbouring villages have border disputes and if the case is not settled through dialogue, then the final decisions are made with the 'kahtok hahpu ngohnang', meaning both the disputing parties would have to eat the soil

⁸Christoph Von Furer-Haimendorf, *The Konyak Nagas : An Indian Frontier Tribe*, New York: Hoff Rincchart and Winson, 1969, pp.41-42 & 61.

⁹Chingang, *op.cit.*, p.15. Shum is a log made for grinding rice, it is about 20-25 feet long in length. It consists of 6-8 holes.

¹⁰Tajenyuba Ao, *op.cit.*, p.50

of the earth in the presence of the priest and the Wang. The belief is that the guilty side in the dispute will automatically die. Therefore even the Indian government courts do not take up any land disputes. The government courts will leave or direct the matter to the Wang's court or the village council for the traditional customary settlement. In case of a dispute between two villages the 'Chingtenpuhu'¹¹ and Wang are the persons responsible for eating the soil on behalf of their villages for settlement of the dispute in this traditional manner.

Even during the head-hunting with another Kingdom or the neighbouring villages, the Wang always tries to make peace, but if this fails then in such a case war will be declared by the Wang's court. In the village, if someone steals from another or there are people who do not abide by the village laws and also for the prostitutes, Wangpa will send his disciples to settle such problems; if they flout the law he/she will be given severe punishment such as capital punishment. The accused or the guilty persons are tied up with hands on their back, and thrown into a river or from a cliff. Usually Pongyin Kingdoms like Mon, Chui, Shangnyu etc. have "suicide deep valley". It would be more than a thousand feet deep.¹²

Once a year the Wang and the Wang's court members tour their territory. Throughout their tours, if any disputes or problems are found, they will solve the problem and make peace.¹³

The Konyak Nagas face such difficult situation, like unknowingly killing while they go out hunting or in competition over a lover. If they go straight to the Wang for their safety, they would not be killed. The Wang is the refuge for the poor and needy people in a community. So the Wang is believed to have an extraordinary gift of wisdom compared to the common people.

¹¹Chingtenpuhu is the owner of the land.

¹²Wangkhaio Wang, *Interview*, held at Chui on 10 May, 2000.

¹³*Ibid.*

A village is ruled by its own Wang. However a group of eighteen, twenty, thirty or more villages come under a sacred Pongyin Wang. There are six to eight such Pongyin Wang. In case of disputes, attempts are first made for settlement by the local village Wang. If he is unable to do so only then is the matter taken to the respective Pongyin Wang.¹⁴

The Chui Kingdom is one of the historic kingdoms. When I had a discussion with the Chui Wang, he told me that even during floods the waters never reach the Chui village. Because of this reason they believe that the vegetable grown by the village are very tasty. According to the Chui Wang, when the Longwa village and Jaboka village were finding land for their village, the Chui village helped them. Now both these villages are Pongyin kingdoms. Still Longwa village has a baan named Chi-yapo. The Shangnyu village had another crisis because of the killing of the Wang twice. In such a situation Chui Wang made peace and he shared the Wang with the Shangnyu village. Along with the Wang, he sent sixty families. There is another village called Zangkham, which had more political problems. Because of this Mr. Phaowang and Mr. Lohwang fled to the Chui village for safety, and lived in exile there. So the Chui Wang has played an important role in making peace between them.¹⁵ It was during the time of Mr. Honhei D.B. that he and Mr. Yato Vangha and Mr. Hoita Pen took the Wang of Zangkham which was in Chui village and brought him back to their village. The Chui Wang had good friendship with all the Konyak Naga Wangs. So the following villages are under the Chui Wang territory and some of the villages and towns even fall under the Tuensang and Mokokchung districts.¹⁶ There are thirty-three villages under him. The following are the administrative centres in Chui Wang's land : 1. Mon district headquarters 2. Wakching

¹⁴Yangpong Wang, *Interview*, held at Mon village on 11 May 2000.

¹⁵Wangkhaio Wang, *op.cit.*

¹⁶This record was written by Thanglong Yanlem and kept at Chui Wang's house.

subdivision 3. Naganimora sub-division 4. Aboi sub-division 5. Tamlu sub-division 6. Longleng sub-division.¹⁷

In Mon, another Pongyin Wang told me that even at the time of floods the water would not come to their village, so that green firewood can be burnt as soon as it's taken out from the tree.¹⁸

The Mon Wang is also important in his territory. Many outside visitors used to meet the present Wang. Not only Indians but even people from abroad. There are a total of eighteen villages under his territory. But historically they were not occupied by them. But by some or the other ways they were saved from the hands of the enemies and thus the village came under the Mon territory. There are five villages like Longkai, Leangnyu, Hongphoi, Phoktong and Tuimei to which the Mon Wang has directly sent and appointed a Wang.¹⁹

The present Wang of Mon, Mr. T. Yangpong has seen that earlier even Assam had paid tax tribute to the Mon Wang by giving betel-nut and duck, but in his time there was no such practice. Even though Chaoha, T. Chingha, Chinglong and Leangha Bonghong baan villages are not his territory though they paid tribute to the Mon Wang. Specially Chaoha used to give dao (Yanglao) and head (cap) but the rest pay tribute to Mon Wang.²⁰

The Shang Wang migrated from Chui village. When they came from Chui via Shangzikao mountain and reached Tangzi, Shri. Shannei and Shri. Wakhao Wang (Khanna Wang) led them and they stayed there. They had decided coronation for those two Wangs and chose buffaloes which were found on the roadside. But the two Wangs were killed by these buffaloes. So instead of coronation it was death of these Wangs (Yimpong

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Yangpong Wang, *op.cit.*

¹⁹Yangpong, *op.cit.*

²⁰Yangpong, *op.cit.*

hahe yinyangki). After that the village was shifted to the Longphaohhao. From there again it shifted to the Shangbongtanghao and Shri. Longtong and Taimao Jongvang Wang's heritage continued. Again from Shangbongtanghao they shifted the village to the Tingshan Rahting. At that time the Wang was Shri. Lohlong and a Wangya Mrs. Sheangying was head of the village.²¹

There is a huge and unique piece of wood-carving in Shangnyu village at the entrance of the Wang's house. The wood-carving which measures approximately 18 feet in length and breadth varies from 14 feet at the highest point to 3 feet at the lowest, is a gigantic sculpture carved from one single block of wood. This unique piece of carving on wood is the finest example of the dexterity and ingenuity of ancient man inhabiting this area of Nagaland. In an age where no sophisticated tools were in use, it is indeed marvellous that on a solid piece of wood, so many figures of different sizes and shapes have been carved on both sides, so effectively.²²

From the cut marks on the carving it appears to have been made during the metallic age because the etchings are sharp and prominent as though carved by finer metallic tools than by the blunt stone ones. It may, therefore, be presumed that this carving belongs to the metallic age and will be between 500-600 years old. Again knowledgeable people of Shangnyu including the present Wang Lopung, say that the wood carving is as old as the big mandir at Sibsagar in Assam. However the exact age of this piece can be determined through the process of radiocarbon dating by experts. This wooden handiwork was done by a person called Honnu (Nonopa), one of the sons of Shangnyu Chowang Wang's concubine by the name of Puahoi or Paho's son²³.

²¹Benjei Nyeanelm & Nokzing, *Interview*, held at Tizit village on 25 May, 2000.

²²Shangnyu Sculpture, *The Konyak Students' Union Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1948-1998*, pp.48-49.

²³*Ibid.*

While they were at Rahting Shri. Lohlong Wang had four sons. His sons were sent to the various villages for becoming the Wangs of those villages. The first son became a Wang of their village and the second son Mr. Tingpong to Yannyu. The third son Mr. Thangyu to Zu and the last Mr. Zangmao to the Zangkham village. So Shangnyu kingdom has vast territories upto Tizit area and Wancho, Arunachal Pradesh.²⁴

Tradition has it that Longwa, the other Pongyin kingdom, had come from Pongchao village of Arunachal Pradesh around 16-17 century A.D. The Wang's palace of Longwa is the international boundary (India & Myanmar) and runs through the middle of the Wang's house. This village serves both Myanmar and Indian governments. Even though Longwa village is seen as an international border they have land upto Khanmoi village of Myanmar. Usually Konyak people called them Eastern Konyak Nagas.

Longwa is on the mountain top between India and Myanmar, and there are four rivers flowing from their village, two rivers run to the Indian side called Tegi and Tapi and the other two to Myanmar called Tegak and Shumnyu. The Longwa village gets wind from Myanmar from October to March and from the Indian side from April to September. Even in the daytime, morning breeze comes from the Myanmar side and the evening breeze from the Indian side.²⁵

Till today Longwa has observed the Wang system very strongly. There is a chief Wang and seven deputy Wangs. But all of them are under the chief Wang. There are six villages under Longwa. These are : Nyahnyu, Longwawamsa, Khanmoi, Longkhu, Longshong and Longwa.²⁶ Some of these villages are in Myanmar and the rest in India. They pay tribute to Longwa village. The Pongchao village of Arunachal

²⁴Banjei & Nokzing, *op.cit.*

²⁵*Longwa Students' Union Silver Jubilee Magazine, 1971-1996*, pp.1-3.

²⁶R.R. Shimray, *op.cit.*, p.10.

Pradesh is a big village and a Pongyin Wang and Longwa have come from that village. Though both of them fall in different states of India, they are of the same blood family and they have good relationship with each other.

4. Tributes and Tax Contributions

We have read about the origin of the Wang and how tributes were being paid. He told the people that if they want to be like him, they should bring little portions of their harvest as well as animals that are slaughtered. So people started doing this and that is how the tribute started being paid.²⁷

Thus paying of tribute started from the early period. The tribute given to the Pongyin Wang was only in kind. But all tributes were not the same or common in all the villages. Different territory villages used to pay tribute in different ways. In 1936 the Great Wang of Mon received tribute from several neighbouring villages ; but elsewhere the Wang had to become accustomed to receiving token tribute from villages which they were no longer powerful enough to dominate.²⁸

In Konyak tribute means “poon”, this usually was brought to the Wang, but some Wangs would send their villagers to the territories and the tributes were collected by them. There is another method of giving tribute — when two villages fight against each other the defeated village had to give tribute to the winner to stop further killing. Thus there is a peace tribute paid to them.²⁹ The Ahom King was about to attack Pongkong village, and the intention of the Ahom King was made known to the people of Tanhai. In order to help the Pongkong village, the people of Tanhai went to Mon village Wang and asked for an ivory to be given to the Ahom King for the safety of Pongkong village. The Mon Wang accordingly

²⁷As we have already read in this chapter when tribute was started.

²⁸Julian Jacobs, *The Nagas Society Culture & The Colonial Encounter*, London : Staibt Mayr Stuttgart, 1990. p.69

²⁹Chingang *op.cit.*, p.67.

gave ivory to the people of Tanhai who later offered it to the Ahom King and asked to withdraw his plan to attack Pongkong. The Tanhai village began to pay tribute to the Mon Wang as a sign of gratitude. Otherwise earlier the people of Tanhai did not pay there tribute to the Mon village Wang. And the tribute offered to Chui Wang was due to this reason. The Tanhai village had nine baans (morung). But Totok, Leangha and some of the upper Konyaks gathered and destroyed Tanhai village and even killed them. Being afraid of the enemies, Tanhai people went to Pongkong and stayed there for six years. Then Ponwan, Yona and Shaopong had a meeting and they returned to the present village 'Tanhai'. After the settlement of Tanhai village, the leaders of Tanhai and leaders from Aokeang Baan of Wakching village met Chui Wang at "Nyeidongshai" (a bridge on Jenyang river) to discuss about the future safety of Tanhai. Again a meeting was held at the Chui Wang's residence and matters relating to safety of Tanhai from further attack by their enemies was discussed. The Chui Wang was requested to watch the approach of the enemies of Tanhai from his side. As a token of their gratitude people of Tanhai offered a paddy field at "Vonlengpang" (on Tanhai land) to the Wang of Chui. But the Wang of Chui refused to receive it, because that field lay beyond the Jenyang river, on Tanhai's side. It will be difficult for his workers to cross Jenyang river daily to cultivate the field. The Chui Wang was also of the view that his Princess may be washed away by the river while trying to cross it. So instead of a paddy field at "Vonlengpang", the Chui Wang asked from the people of Tanhai to offer him the sum amount of tribute, which they offer to the Mon Wang.

On that very day, the Chui Wang had announced that Tanhai should not kill one animal, but three. Because they have to offer three heads to the three villages. But the Tanhai people strongly opposed and said that every time they should not kill three. The tigers and boars coming to their forest are their enemies, then should they not kill it? So it was decided

that Tanhai village will not give any animal head to other villages. Till today the Tanhai village never give any animal's head to others and keep it for themselves.

In regard to the Aokeang baan of Wakching village, there was no such tribute offered by Tanhai. Once in a year Aokeang's young men went to collect tribute from Pongkong, Oting, Longlam and Lapa, and the elders of Aokeang wait there at Tanhai village for their coming. And the elders of Aokeang would prepare lunch for these young men. For that, the Tanhai would give a small pig for the day's curry. Otherwise, there was no tribute offered by Tanhai to the Aokeang baan of the Wakching village and to any Wangs of the Konyak village.³⁰

The Wang has certain subjects on his territory and these give tribute to him. Whenever the villager goes for hunting the bigger hunt which is their kill will be given to Wang. The same applies in fishing too. There are certain practices like some of the particular village will bring at the time of festivals, animals killed by them to the Wang. Also another practice was that of uncooked rice (one bamboo vessel) of rice collected.³¹ The powerful Wang could have as many villages as he could conquer for his tributes. The Wangs of the conquered villages became subordinates and subjects of the great Wangs. If any village or individual fails to pay the tribute it means there is a challenge to fight. But as long as tribute is paid, there is peace between them.

5. Social

The organization of the village is based on two main principles. Firstly, the whole village is divided into age-groups of boys, young and unmarried men and to each age-group certain community duties are assigned. Secondly, the control of affairs lies with a council, since there is no hereditary chieftainship except

³⁰Katwang Wang, Kometh & Kaipong of Tanhai record.

³¹Mr. Yeiwang Deputy Ranger, *Interview*, held at Mon on 5th May, 2002.

among the Konyaks.³² The senior of the Konyak Nagas gave various justifications for the institutions of baan. The main objective of establishing the dormitories (baan) might have been to train the children in the various arts of life and to discipline them for future responsibilities. To quote "The Konyaks could be seen working for hours patiently on wood carving with the crudest of implements, the dao, something like a hatchet was the multipurpose tool in war and peace. They have spears with ornamental handles. The Konyak used to forge simple muzzle loaders for generations."³³ "There are blacksmiths in every Naga village. The Konyaks are well known for their black-smithy work."³⁴

5.1. *The Baan*

The baan is the male dormitory, and women and children are not permitted inside the baan. They might go only on important occasions like Aoleang festival. At the age of 15 years men become the members of the baan. The unmarried young men will not sleep in their house at night, rather they sleep in the baan. They spend most of their time at the baan, because this is an institution where Konyak Naga young men learn education. During the daytime those who cannot go to the field or go out from the village, will gather at the baan, spend their day at the baan, discussing the affairs of the village. Also every day some four or five young men will stay at the baan as guards for the village.³⁵

During the time spent at the baan young men learn love songs, folk songs, war dance, poetry and even sports. In case of any accidents or deaths they used to be the first to go to

³²P.D. Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmare*, Bombay; Allied Publishers, 1968, p.30.

³³Murrok Rumuny, *The World of Nagas*, New Delhi; Northern Book Centre, 1988, p.8.

³⁴Majib Hussain, *Nagaland Habitual Society and Shifting Cultivation*, New Delhi; S.S.S.Rima Publishing House, 1988, p.53.

³⁵Chingang, *op.cit.*, pp.29-31.

the village to help. Their baan life made them brave to do anything. The baan was also a decision place for them. They will decide whether to go out head-hunting or fishing or hunting and this will be discussed at the baan. Thus a baan is for the Konyak Nagas, a place where they learnt the ways of life.

5.2. *The Ywo*

The Ywo³⁶ is a dormitory for the unmarried girl or young girls. The girls sleep there until she gets married. So the grown-up girl never slept at her parents' home during morning or daytime. While the girls were strictly prohibited from visiting a baan, the boys were free to visit the girls dormitory at night.³⁷ The Ywo is the training place for the girls. From here the girls learn weaving, folk songs, dance etc. Ywo seemed to be meant exclusively for a get-together of boys and girls leading to matchmaking among them. Ywo atmosphere was one that reflected the free social life of the Konyak Naga boys and girls. Singing of love songs and friendly conversation between lovers kept the Ywos busy even upto midnight or beyond as lovers were free to mingle openly. But one should not think of the Ywo as a place for prostitution. For prostitution was and is unknown to the Konyaks, for that matter, to all the tribals of North-east India.³⁸ So the girls learned their responsibilities and how to carry them out in the future. She remains a member of the Ywo until she gets married and goes to her husband's house.

6. Relationship with other wangs

Many Konyak Nagas are in Myanmar (Burma), Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. So the Konyak Wangs have a good relationship with the Wangs of the neighbouring countries and states, because they are of the same race.

³⁶Some of the Konyak villages don't have the Ywo system.

³⁷Konyak, *op.cit.*, p.13.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p.13.

6.1. *Ahom – Konyak Relations*

In the early thirteenth century A.D. (1212 A.D), a group of people from the Thai Kingdom called the Ahoms, followed the route which earlier some others had taken somewhere during the eighth century (700-800 A.D.). The Konyak Nagas had climbed and crossed the mountains from northern Burma. By that time, the Konyak Nagas had already settled in the present land.³⁹ History says that once a Thai prince called Chao Sukapha, with his army, crossed the mountains from Burma (Myanmar). Passing through the land of Konyak Nagas, he fought fiercely with the Nagas, particularly with the restless tribes of Konyak.⁴⁰

To know better how the Ahoms had good relationship with Konyak Nagas, I am describing the Ahom bride village of Tanhai and their background. Tanhai village is situated at the lower Konyak, Wakching area. Tanhai is also called Longkonhong. No one can tell exactly when Tanhai people occupied their land. But history tells that Tanhai is also among the oldest villages in Konyak land. There is another village Tamlu which emigrated from Tanhai village. This tradition undoubtedly has a historical basis ; for the people of one Tamlu baan (morung) still speak the Tanhai language ⁴¹. Tamlu used to call it Tanhai Puching meaning grand-parents' village.

Tanhai village was founded first by Metjen Longnyei, after which many clans settled there. There was some crisis between Longnyeishum and the other clan Momongshum. So there was competition for leadership of the village. They concluded with the decision that whoever would kill the enemy first would be the leader. Also every festival they should exchange “Akyong” meaning the one side of a pig’s leg. But Momongpa has not given this to Longnyeipa. When Nyangpong

³⁹Chingang, *op.cit.*, p.83.

⁴⁰Konyak, *op.cit.*, p.3 and R.R. Shimray, *op.cit.*, p.266.

⁴¹C.V.F-Haimendorf, *op.cit.*, p.45.

asked him why this happened Momongpa replied why should he do so. Therefore Longnyeipa Nyangpong told him that he will bring the greater Wangtak Wangyoung. Meanwhile he told another clan Nyaivum to guard the village as he went to bring the Wang. He went to Chinglongwangtong (it may be present Chinglong or other Chinglong too) and brought a royal blood by the name of Ngengwang. Momongpa was waiting for him at the gate and he told him to go under his legs. So Nyangpong, who was carrying Wang went under Momongpa's legs and told him that hence forth his name would be Luvum meaning the one under whom one went.⁴² As the Tanhais grew in number they had nine baan (morung or khel). They were good warriors, and won many other villages. Even if they made peace with them, they would not bring these defeated villages under them. Therefore the rest of the villages slowly gathered together and destroyed the Tanhai, and now there are only two baan.⁴³

There is another village Pongkong which got its Wang from Tanhai village. The Pongkong village does not have Wang so Tanhai shares Wang with them. Pongkong people call Tanhai as Tinghak, meaning Tanhai village had saved their village from the enemies.⁴⁴

6.2 Ahom and Tanhai Relations

History of Ahom states that the Kingdom of Ahom had no unity, going for war among themselves. The King of Ahom made a rule that everyone who will come to the throne of Ahom Kingdom to be king should not have any spot whether it is of black or white and any scar on his face. It was during the reigns of Lora Raja and Godapani. The wife of Godapani was Joymoti. One day she knew that the enemies of her

⁴²N. Kometh ex-pastor, *Record book*.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴N. Kometh and late Katwang Wang, *Record & Interview*, held at Tanhai on 8 June, 1996.

husband are coming to her husband the King of Ahom. She directed him to flee the land and so the King fled and there he found the Konyak village of Tanhai. While he was in the Konyak land his first wife was tortured and killed by his enemies.⁴⁵ During his exile in Konyak many problems arose in Assam. All the vegetables and harvest dried out under the scorching sun. There were no educated people and no one was wealthy. So they started to inquire about their fate through astronomers and the prophets. They found that the ruler of Ahom Kingdom is in the Konyak land of Palang morung at Waking. So the Ahom people brought Godapani from Palang morung. But Godapani, the Ahom King was unhappy. So the Ahoms asked what made him unhappy. He told them that at Tanhai village there is a beautiful princess named Watlong (Wangya) like pomegranate fruit and that he wanted to get her. So the Ahoms promised him to bring anything he liked.⁴⁶

King Godapani fell in love with Watlong, the daughter of the chief Wang of Tanhai while he was at Konyak land particularly Palang morung. The King and his men agreed to the marriage. One day while Watlong and her sister Theanglih were grinding rice the King of Ahom and his soldiers came towards them and sent a bird (Aosheang in Tanhai language) to them and seeing it the princess Watlong and her sister Theanglih ran after the bird and tried to catch it. At that moment the King and his men came and caught the princess Watlong. So the two sisters left their grinding sticks and threw themselves into the well (near by the roadside). In recent years these sticks were found by the Tanhai people.

A lore of the Konyak Nagas tell of an Ahom who, fleeing from his enemies into the hills, found refuge in the village of Tanhai. He married the daughter of the chief, and even today the people of Tanhai point to the stone which served

⁴⁵Mr. Thanglong Tinglong and late K. Weangna ex. chairman, *Record Book*.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

the exiled King as a seat.⁴⁷ J.H. Hutton has written, that later on an Ahom King of Sibsagar took refuge in Tanhai when dethroned, and married Watlong, the daughter of the chief. Later he was restored to his Kingdom, and went down to Choraido with his Naga bride, preceded by dancing and singing. As part of her brideprice, he built a tank, a paved road and a stone bridge, the remains of which may still be seen at Tanhai, where the footprints of the King and of his horse are also shown. The word used for tank in Tanhai is a Shan word, and other words are in use in the language.⁴⁸

The Tanhai elders say⁴⁹ that the Ahom married the daughter of the chief Wang of Tanhai and went with his people along with his bride's sister Theanglih to Charideo (Assam) and reached there with his bride Watlong preceded by dancing and singing at Longburi (Sibsagar). In the meantime the King took his bride princess Watlong and got into the highest building and left Theanglih alone. Theanglih called out to her sister princess Watlong and cried a lot. By that time Theanglih and Watlong could not meet each other. Watlong shouted and told her sister from the top of the building that she (her sister) should send a flower to her during the Konyak Aoleang festival. That flower bloomed at that time of the festival. History tells us that Theanglih obeyed her sister and she always used to send her flower (Jutwangpeang) at the time of Konyak's Aoleang festival. Theanglih came back very tearful to her own native land, Tanhai village. The Ahom changed his bride's name from Watlong to Dalimi.

After a few years, the King of Ahom and his men dug a well at Tanhai village for his wife Watlong's old lovers for

⁴⁷Christoph Von Furer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1976. Also Konyak *op.cit.*, p.3.

⁴⁸J.H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, IBR, 1969, pp.384-385.

⁴⁹Lt. Leiwang Wang, Lt. Katwang Wang, Mr. Tolei and Mr. Wangkai of Tanhai village record.

taking bath. This pond is 100 ft. in length and 60 ft in breadth. After many years the Tanhai people repaired the pond and found the grinding sticks of Watlong and Theanglih which were thrown by them. Today you can see these grinding sticks at Tanhai. Again the King made a stone as a memorial of Watlong for her old lovers at Tanhai village, which people called Aokhahnung. Tanhai people were unhappy with that memorial stone and crushed the stone. So the stone fell down but you can see today the remaining stone to about 6 ft height on the spot. Some of them were kept for the steps and also used for the bridge.⁵⁰

In about A.D. 1679-1681,⁵¹ in the vicinity of Tanhai, the King of Ahom took rest on the stone. This stone is called Longtemlongnyu. Today we see the sign of his seating, the footprints of his horse, a hen and a mark of a bottle and a staff. The measurement of the stone is 9 1/2 ft and 21 ft high. The grandparents of Tanhai village used to prophesy through this stone of the future happenings. So the villagers in future were afraid even to touch the stone. Today it is seen by everyone who travels through Longtemlongnyu main road between Mon and Wakching. When you visit Tanhai village you can see these memorials made by the King during those days.

History clearly says that when the King defeated his enemies his name was changed to Godathur Hingo. After that the King made a road for his wife Watlong's parents from Konyak land to Assam, which was called Longmoi Ali, which is still existing and is used today by the Konyak and Assam.

The last wish of the princess Watlong to her husband was that when she died her dead body should be taken

⁵⁰We can see these memorial kept in Tanhai village of Mon district: Nagaland.

⁵¹Rana R. Raj Konwar, *Interview*, held at Dibrugarh, Assam on October 18th, 2002.

back to the land of Konyak Nagas and buried there. When she died, as she had requested her husband, her dead body was taken back to her homeland and buried there at Naganimora. Nagani-mora means place where the Naga princess died or was buried. Whenever you visit Naganimora you can see her grave-stone which is still well preserved there.⁵²

Many villages claimed that princess Watlong is their princess. But in those days there was no such name found in other villages as the Tanhai village had before and even today. Watlong and Theanglih are common names, found at Tanhai village, and other villages does not have proper evidence such as Tanhai has.

Tanhai grandparents usually taught many songs to their children regarding Watlong Wangya. And the women of those days exalted her. These words are taught to every woman by grandmothers of Tanhai today. The words are: (Naoya ja-hukie nyiknang-Wangya jonghei. Janpu, O—she eipu me, Mungnyu pen ung). So the Ahom King did whatever princess Watlong had demanded of her husband. To this day we can see the things made by the Ahom King in Konyak land. Tanhai and Ahom have a good relationship. Elderly Ahoms of Assam used to say to the new generation not to argue with the Konyak people, if they do that they will not be blessed and life will be short. This is how Konyaks have good relationship with the Ahoms.⁵³

7. Relationship with Myanmar

The Konyaks unlike other tribes entered their present area from the north-east of the Naga Hills. They are still firmly settled in the extreme north-east of Nagaland—their kinsmen

⁵²Late Katwang, Weangna & Mr. N.Kometh, *op.cit.*

⁵³Naganimora is one of the sub-division under Mon district where the Watlong Wangya (princess) was buried.

have settled in the adjoining hill tracts of Burma (Myanmar) and Arunachal Pradesh or NEFA.⁵⁴

The beautiful evergreen region owned and inhabited by the Konyaks have been divided into two, by the demarcation of international boundary between India and Myanmar (Burma). Therefore, Konyaks are inhabitants of two countries. Many Konyak Nagas are in Myanmar. They have, therefore, a peculiar administration system. For instance, under the Wang of Longwa, an outpost just on the border of India and Myanmar, there are villages in Myanmar paying tribute to the Wang of Longwa who, with some of his subjects, is living in India but controlling the subjects of Myanmar.⁵⁵

A very interesting thing is that the international boundary (India & Myanmar) runs in the middle of the Wang's palace of Longwa. The people in general say that the internal boundary has been setup according to the Patkai range watershed. This is the largest range between India and Myanmar. It starts from Manipur and ends in Bhutan. To the Konyaks the very boundary is like a foreign body in their eyes.⁵⁶ The evergreen Patkai range lies through the middle of Konyak traditional land. Therefore, every Konyak be it male or female in the east or west, says that there was no boundary between them. There are Longkho, Thulo and Nyangching etc. in Myanmar; they are same blood family and same clans of Chen-yin of Nagaland of India. The people, even the children know each other. For the boundary cannot stop matrimonial, fraternal, clanish and social relations between them. They share the problems and extend help if same clansmen or clanswomen from either side are in trouble. They speak same dialect, follow same tradition and customs.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Rev. V. Sheipa Education Secretary, Konyak Baptist Church Association, *Interview*, held at Mon on 1 June, 2000.

⁵⁵R.R.Shimray, *op.cit.*, p.10.

⁵⁶Moben, Eastern Missionary, *record*.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

The Wang system is hereditary in Konyak of Myanmar; Konyak festivals and folk songs are also the same. And the cultivation methods are also the same that is, the same hereditary way is preserved till today.⁵⁸ The Konyaks from Mon district go to Myanmar Konyaks and stay in the house of their clansmen. Therefore, no one from either side is guest or stranger to them, but relatives, brothers and sisters. Therefore, relation with Myanmar Konyaks and Arunachal Konyaks are all the same. Here we are citing examples for the readers' sake. Yongkhao village of Konyak in India and Taknyu Khamniungan in Myanmar and the Pessao village of Konyak in India, Hoyat village of Konyak in Myanmar, Wangti village of Konyak (India), Throilao village of Konyak (Myanmar), Chenmoho village of Konyak (India). Nyanching village of Konyak (Myanmar), Longwa village of Konyak (India) and Khanmoi of Konyak (Myanmar) cultivate on the same land passing through the so-called international border. Konnyu village in upper Wancho of Arunachal Pradesh has migrated from Tangnyu village of Mon district of Nagaland. Some villages in Myanmar–Khanmoi, Longkho, Kamkah, Mamkho, and Wushoi have migrated from Konnyu village, and their chief Wang also migrated from Konnyu village.⁵⁹ Hokishe Sema ex-Governor of Himachal Pradesh and also ex-Chief Minister of Nagaland write, that the Eastern boundary is for the present left undefined.⁶⁰

So people, who usually live on the Myanmar side, are called Eastern Konyak Nagas. There are 28 villages bearing tattoo marks. From Tangnyu village of Mon district about 100 villages in Myanmar of the Bangme tribe, and some of the village from Shangnyu village of Mon district are in Myanmar. The settlement between the East India Company and its counterpart, the Burmese King on the 24 Feb. 1826 was called Yandaboo Treaty; the

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Mr. C.Moben, S.I.S. retired also Eastern Missionary, *Interview*, held at Mon on 9 June, 2000.

⁶⁰Hokishe Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland*, Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1986, p.260.

watershed was decided as the imaginary mark of boundary. It became the historical landmark for the Britishers and was followed by the Indians for administrative territorial expansion. However, one cannot simply conclude by advocating the claim that it has its positive effect which actually creates a wall of division within the people of the same family.⁶¹ As an elderly person said, "Water is meant for drinking purpose alone and not to be used as a means to create division between the brothers"⁶² (6th Sept. 1995 Nyuhpuh Revival at Mon) It is a tragedy for the people of the region to feel the experience in spite of their being one and from the same family.⁶³

8. Relationship with Arunachal Pradesh

Obviously, the Konyaks of Nagaland, the Konyaks of Arunachal Pradesh and the Eastern Konyaks (Myanmar) are the children of a single mother of Mongoloid stock which gradually migrated from far-flung places of north and southeast Asia. A great number of Konyaks are in Tirap frontier now Arunachal and in Myanmar. The Konyaks in Tirap frontier having Wangships, are divided into three clans, viz., Wancho, Noktei and Tangsa. Wanchos are tattooed like the Konyaks in Mon district, but the other two tribes are without it. The bond of their being related is the common system of Wangship and to say the least, the canebelts too.⁶⁴

There are three distinct Naga tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. They are Wanchos, Nokte and the Tangsa. These are Nagas in general and Konyaks in particular. These three tribes have migrated from Shangnyu village and Tangnyu village in Mon district of Nagaland. The area inhabited by the people of these three tribes falls in Khonsa district and Changlang district

⁶¹M.Tonlong, "Tragedy at a Glance" *Konyak Students' Union the Golden Year 1948-1998*.

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴R.R. Shimray, *op.cit.*, p.10.

of Arunachal Pradesh near the Brahmaputra river.⁶⁵ Wancho people make tattoos on their faces exactly like Konyaks. And they speak a fair Konyak dialect. Many nouns in Noktei and Tangsa dialect are same as those Konyak nouns; only verbs and adjectives are different from those of Konyaks because of many centuries' gap after migration from their original homes of Shangnyu and the Tangnyu villages. The Wancho tribe comprises some 54 villages and the entire area of Wancho is bordered with Konyaks (Mon district) from east to west. Following the emergence of Naga state on 01.12.1963, villages under Tuensang frontier division fall under Nagaland state boundary and villages under Tirap frontier division remained as usual under NEFA.⁶⁶ Wanchos and Konyaks are of the same community. Specially all the villages in Wancho area are under Shangnyu empire. In particular Bohnyak of Wancho used to bring a live eagle (without killing) to every Wang coronation of Shangnyu village. And every Wancho village pays tribute to the Shangnyu village.⁶⁷

Though officially described as Wancho, the people of that area are closely allied to the Konyak Nagas of the present Nagaland, and their inclusion within a different administrative unit is a matter of historic accident. It was accidental too that during the British period their village had remained outside the administered region then known as the Naga Hills district.⁶⁸

We can find more detail in the church history that the Namsang village of the present Tirap Division of Arunachal Pradesh was made by Miles Bronson. He made the first tours among the Nagas of the foothills during 1838. He translated some books into the Namsang dialect and opened a school for them. So Hube Konyak Naga, the first Naga convert was baptised on 12 Sept. 1847, but he died on 10 October 1847.

⁶⁵Moben, *op.cit.*

⁶⁶M. Tonlong, *op.cit.*, p.38.

⁶⁷Benjei Nyiemlen & Nokzing, *op.cit.*

⁶⁸C.V.F - Haimendorf, *op.cit.*, p.2.

In 1855, two Konyak men named Aklong Konyak and Ambi Konyak of Namsang village were baptised at Sibsagar by Dr. Brown. They returned to their village but their attempts to convert their own people failed.⁶⁹

The tragedy is the creation of state demarcation between the states of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh (NEFA), when Nagaland obtained her statehood on 1 December 1963. Certain parts were included to the newly formed state and the removal of other parts was not any other for reason other than administrative purpose alone, which created division within the people of the same family. Now, in spite of not having the concrete demarcation line, with the exception of the Tri-Junction Pillar at Kanubari, people feel the difference of not being able to share their joys and sorrows equally together.⁷⁰

The Konyak Nagas occupy the largest area in the North East as seen in this chapter. Even the Wang of Konyak ruled outside the Nagaland state. The Konyak Nagas have this history, law and justice carried down from generation to generation orally. The only thing is because of the lack of written document, their own people continue in different places. Even though the Wang (King) of both sides have good relationship with each other till today.

⁶⁹Milton S.Sangma, *History of American Baptist Mission in NEI*, Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1987, p.268.

⁷⁰M. Tonlong, *op.cit.*, p.38.

CHAPTER 4

The Socio-Cultural Significance

A number of advantages in society can be witnessed as a result of the Wang system. These may be referred to as widening of their political world-view, from their previous socio-cultural beliefs and practices. This concerns better living conditions, providing education and other developmental aspects in society. This study will mainly be dealing with the socio-cultural significance because it is the right time to analyse people's situation. Therefore this study will address a few of the major socio-cultural changes in society.

The Wang has a very important role to play in the socio-cultural life of the Konyak Nagas. In the earlier days, before the coming of Christianity, the area was dominated by the Wang. The upper Konyak had the Wang system, but he did not rule rather the rule of the village elders was visible. Though the Wang is the head of the society it was divided according to their own territory. A territory had more than twenty to thirty villages. For administrative convenience, freedom was given to their own Wang of the village, because Jongwang¹ rules, but does not govern the villages that are under him.² The Konyaks have more than eight to nine Jongwang Kingdoms which are not powerful any more. We can identify the prominent Wangs among the Konyak Nagas at present as indicated by the respondents.

¹Jongwang means coronation King.

²Veprari Epao, *From Naga Animism to Christianity*, Dimapur: Hindustan Private-0-Print, p.9.

Table No. 1
Number of prominent Wangs among the Konyak Nagas

		NUMBER OF WANGS					
No. of Wangs		5	6	7	8	Total	Number
Age	20-30	15.78%	42.10%	26.3%	15.78%	100	19
		(3)	(8)	(5)	(3)		
Age	31-45	12.2%	9%	51.5%	18.1%	100	33
		(7)	(3)	(17)	(6)	100	
Age	45+	28.5%	10.7%	46.4%	14.2%	100	28
		(8)	(3)	(13)	(4)		
Number		18	14	35	13	100	80

The table shows that a maximum number of respondents opine that there are 7 prominent Wangs. 26.3% of the age group 20-30, 51.5% of the 31-45 and 46.4% of the 45+ age groups are of this opinion. The 20-30 age group are unsure of the answer, since large numbers also indicate 6 Wangs (42.10%) or 8 Wangs (15.78%), from this age-group. The 45+ have a significant number, (28.5%) mentioning 5 prominent Wangs. However, the number 7 being mentioned by the majority shows that the Konyak Nagas have 7 prominent Wangs.

1. Social Change in the Konyak Society

Generally, the Konyak region is the land of Wang where monarchical heads are ruling in a hereditary system. The people belonging to the chief class in the Konyak region enjoyed few privileges, whereas the powerful Wangs of Thendu or tattoo King villages were autocratic rulers whose kinsmen dominated the social and political life of the community. His

functions and duties were manifold. For instance, the Wang provides defence at the time of danger such as war or attacks from enemies. He can mobilize forces from the villages that are under him. His role is for defence, to initiate war or conclude peace-treaty with enemies and maintain inter-relationship of the villages. His word is final for anything, i.e., to declare or to end war.

2. Head Hunting

As the Konyaks live in the hilly region, they have learnt to use force for taking everything. So use of force is natural for them. Looking at the whole Naga society head-hunting ended among the Lotha and Rengma tribes in 1880, among the Angamis and Aos in 1905, among the Sangtam in 1947,³ among the Konyak in 1962 and the Khiamnigans in 1963. After head-hunting ended in 1962 among the Konyaks a major change occurred in society. Minor incidents, however, of head-hunting continued till 1990. This was particularly visible in 1982 at Pukha village, and Pongchao village of Arunachal, and Tobu village issued in 1990. Head-hunting was the most important factor in the social life of Konyak Nagas. They considered it as their highest profession. The man who collected many heads was regarded as a great *Naomei* or warrior and he was called a mighty man.⁴

In the days of head-hunting Konyaks feared to visit each others' villages and there was no peace between them. The best thing however was that when a Konyak promised something to another (friends) they never failed to do it. And this motivated them to be the best hunters and conquerors. In those days, Konyak villages were very isolated, and as there was little traffic, epidemics seldom affected large areas. With the ban on feuding, however, travel between villages became safer,

³Prakash Singh, *Nagaland*, New Delhi; National Book Trust, 1977, pp.42-43.

⁴A. Yanang Konyak, *From Darkness to Light*, Guwahati; Christian Literature Centre, 1986, pp.8-9.

epidemics spread more widely, and the toll of death from smallpox, dysentery, and cholera was much heavier than the losses sustained in the past as a result of sporadic head-hunting raids.⁵ With the ceasing of head-hunting the Konyaks became one and worked for the Konyak region. This resulted in a better in standard of living and after being involved with the outside world the Konyak is much better than before. Head-hunting has changed into different competitions like sports and other activities. This prime engagement today is in trying to build their own lives, their homes and above all earning for their needs. There is significant change in the Konyak society today.

3. The Baan And Ywo

In the previous chapter, the meaning of Baan and the Ywo, has been pointed out. The baan still exists in the Konyak village. In town it is called council hall but in the villages they are called baan. So, the baan is where important matters are discussed. In those days unmarried young men slept at the baan, however, today this practice is no more. Yet, with much regard for the institution, the young men continue to take care of the baan house. When important meetings are to be held in the village young men are the first to burn the fire and make the seating arrangements. The practice of selecting a young man as a sentry during the day for the village, when the others go out for their own business, continues today. For every Konyak festival, occasions like *Aoleang Monyu*, the baan house is decorated for the traditional folk dances and some other traditional rites. So baan is still very important for the Konyak Nagas.

The ywo or unmarried girls' dormitory is defunct today. The young girl or unmarried girls sleep in their own houses. Nowadays, for them there are many training places. They undertake the training while being with their families. The

⁵Christoph Von F-Haimendorf, *The Konyak Nagas: An Indian Frontier Tribe*, New York; Hoff Rincchart and Winston, 1969, pp.99.

mother gives all round domestic training, preparing the daughter for all the responsibilities of a woman. Apart from their parents, sisters and brothers, they themselves learn from school education and the religious activities. Today the ywo system has been totally banned as a result of the influence of Christianity. The ywo houses are being used for Christian women's meetings and other moral education activities. The unmarried girls are allowed to sleep there under the care of the church⁶.

4. The Konyak Naga's Social Life

There are four distinct classes of people who form a clear-cut social hierarchy among the Konyaks. At the top level are the Wangs who form an aristocratic class and Chingtenpuhu who founded the villages and so are called Chingtenpuhu. A Wang is to marry in the same clan from another village, for maintaining purity of royal blood, but Chingtenpuhu can get life partners from any other clans. In the second position come the descendents of Wangs. The third class is formed by the commoners, who have attained higher social status by virtue of meritorious acts, such as 'feasts of merit' and success in the 'heading operation' in the past. At the lowest social stratum are the common village people who lead a simple life. Besides the above classes, they are further divided into two other groups, called Thandu, who used to tattoo their faces, and the Thanko, who generally do not tattoo the face. There are many clans among the village⁷.

The Konyak Naga community contributes towards compulsory work fixed by the customary law. These works are road cleaning service and community fishing and hunting. They hunt and fish for themselves and for the Wang. The biggest fish will be given to the Wang and the rest are divided among the members present. When the Wangpa⁸ wants to eat meat, then

⁶Konyak, *op.cit.*, p.4.

⁷K.S. Singh, *People of India, Nagaland*, Calcutta : Naveen Kishore, 1994, p.105.

⁸Here Wangpa means King.

the whole community will hunt for him. The biggest kill will be brought to the Wang and the remaining will be divided and given to each and every house in the village. For any social work if someone is absent without proper reason, according to the law of the community, he/she will be fined. When the social work is done every Konyak is expected to join in, thus expressing the unity of the people. The types of functions Konyak Nagas perform for the Wang are : construction of the Wang's house, and working in the paddy fields. Such work is different in each territory. Some work more and some less for the Wang. Here are some of the opinions given by the people of Konyak region, showing how many times they have worked for the Wangs.

Table No. 2

Attitude towards yearly compulsory labour for Wang by the urban and rural residents

No. of times laboured	4	5	6	Total	Number
Urban	28.75 (23)	12.5 (10)	11.25 (9)	100	42
Rural	28.75 (23)	5 (4)	13.25 (11)	100	38
Number	46	14	20	100	80

The table shown above shows that both urban and rural residents express their opinion on the number of times they have offered services for the Wang. The number 1-10 were offered as options to the respondents, and they were asked to indicate the exact number of times they had worked for him. Thus it is very clear that people work for the Wang four times in a year.

Table No. 3

Attitude towards compulsory labour for the Wang by people of different education and age group

	Under matric			Degree			Post-Graduate			T	N
	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age			
	20-30	31-45	45+	20-30	31-45	45+	20-30	31-45	45+		
Because he is a Wang.	9% (7)	11.25% (9)	17.5% (14)	6.25% (5)	11.25% (9)	3.75% (3)	1.25% (1)	X	X	100	48
Because they are afraid of him.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Because he serves the public all the time.	6.25% (5)	11.25% (9)	10% (8)	X	5% (4)	2.5% (2)	1.25% (1)	3.75% (3)	X	100	32
Number	12	18	22	5	13	5	2	3	X	100	80

According to the table shown above, 17.5% of the under matric, of the age group 45+, are of the opinion that, 'because he is a Wang the Konyak works for him'. The second opinion is that of the under-matric of the age group 31-45. 11.25% indicated they worked for the Wang 'because he served the public all the time'. The third major group of 11.25% indicated they worked for the Wang 'because he served the public all the time'. The third major group of 11.25% of graduates of the age group 31-45 say 'the Konyak worked for the Wang because he is a Wang'. Thus majority of the respondents' opinions 17.5% and 11.25% show positive attitude towards compulsory labour for the Wang because he is a Wang.

5. The Konyak Naga's Cultural Life

All the Konyak Naga's cultural life could not be surveyed here. But some parts of the cultural life can be seen, because it is too vast to cover. The Konyak Nagas have a unique cultural life compared to other Naga tribals. They respect the Wang, their parents and the elders very highly. The younger

ones never refer to the elders by name. They call the elders 'brother' or 'elder sister' (in Konyak 'ojei' and 'onya'). When the Wang visits a particular house everyone in that house stands while the Wang sits, and they do the same when elders come.

The other beautiful thing is that before the same clan, sister and brother would not talk or speak unnecessary words. They respect each other. Only the important matters are to be discussed.

6. Dress And Ornaments

The Wang's dress is quite different from the common people. His shawl, hat and the shoulder bag are distinct with other men. The Wangya too has distinct dress in comparison with other women folk. The shawl that she wears and the *Mekhela*⁹ that she uses to cover her private parts is different from others. Usually Wangya's shoulder bag also cannot be used by common people. A necklace of beads worn by her is also different from others. The beads may be made of some kind of stone or shells. The ears are decorated with a tuft of cotton wool or red paper or anything else depending upon the individual's fancy. The armlets are of ivory or brass. On the legs rings can be worn by Angamis and the Konyaks; these leggings are not merely ornamental and it is said that they are useful for climbing purposes as well.¹⁰

The Konyak is famous in producing spears, dao and muzzling gun etc. There are many kinds of spears and dao with handles beautifully decorated. The important handicrafts of the Konyak are wood-carving, bamboo-work, pottery and blacksmith. The best wood-carvings are to be seen on the village gate in the baan, and in front of the house of a wealthy person or warrior.

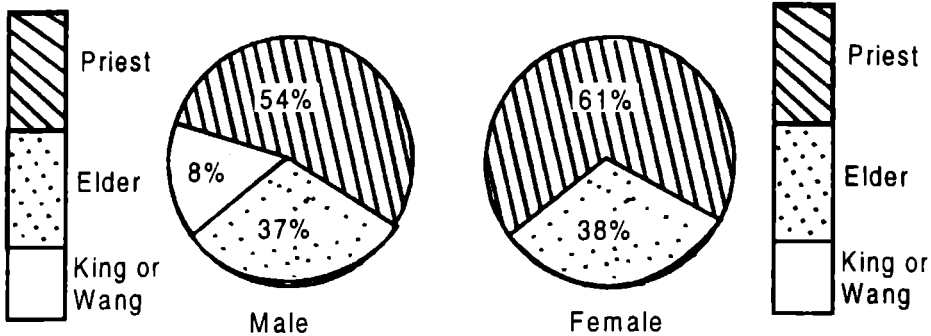
The Konyaks are very fond of music and dance, and at every festival music and dance are performed.

⁹*Mekhela* simply means like skirt or what usually women cover their private parts with.

¹⁰Prakash Singh, *op.cit.*, p.56.

Table No 4.

**Pie. chart to show the opinions of different sexes regarding
“who is the head of the ceremony?”**



The above given pie charts indicate the responses of the males and females, regarding who actually is the head of the ceremony at Konyak festivals. According to the pie. chart, of the males 54% are of the opinion that in the Konyak festival the priest is the head of the ceremony, 37% indicate that this role is performed by elders, finally, only 8% indicate that the Wang performs the function. The opinions of females show that 61% believe that the priest is important for the Konyak Naga festivals and 38% are of the opinion that the elders are important. Thus it is very much clear that the priest is the head of the ceremony.

But nowadays, some traditional culture changes have taken place. Modernity has brought a new form of culture which includes the culture of comic books, of pop music and transistor radio, of television and magazines with pictures; people no longer sing traditional songs or dance, since these are considered to be primitive and belonging to an uncultured way of life, and have been replaced now by western music and dances. Indeed, many young people today are of the opinion that anything from the West is the best and the norm. To speak honestly, they have become the victims of pseudo westernization.¹¹ In the early days the priest was the head of the ceremony but

¹¹A.Wati Longchar. *The Traditional Tribal Worldview and Modernity*, Jorhat; Barkataki & Company Ltd., 1995, p.150.

today the church pastor and church elders are the heads at every Konyak festival or ceremony.

7. Marriage

The Konyak Nagas practise polygamy. The common male can also have more than one wife if he can afford to do so. The Konyak Wangs follow a double standard in this regard. The Wang may have several wives and even the exogamous restrictions do not apply to him. Marriage is often arranged by parents when the girl is still a child and very often when the girl grows up, she is compelled to accept her husband against her will. Still some parts of upper Konyak side practise child marriage.¹² The bride-price consists, at the time of engagement, a basket, dao or a spear or any of the young man's handicrafts which can be presented. In return the girl may present her own handiwork like hanshai 'handmade comb', Nyiekhok 'handloom bag', Tuophat 'sash' etc. to her fiancé.¹³

Polygamy was in vogue among some Naga tribes such as Konyaks, Semas, Tangkhuls and Lothas, until the coming of Christianity. The Konyak Naga Wangs could marry more than 50-60 times. If a Wang once selected the girl, she could not refuse, any other man also could not marry her.¹⁴ The Wang has only one Wangya (queen) and the rest are concubines. Even though the Konyak Wang had more than 50-60 wives it was not considered polyandry. There is no such practice in Konyak Naga. If his brother died then he may take his brother's wife in marriage. But this should be agreed upon by all members of the house. These practices of the Wang are however, the same for the common people.

¹²Y.S.Kaipong Phohton, teacher of Baptist English School, *Interview*, held at Tanhai on 24, December, 2000.

¹³Konyak, *op.cit.*, p.22.

¹⁴R.R. Shimray, *op.cit.*, pp. 178-179.

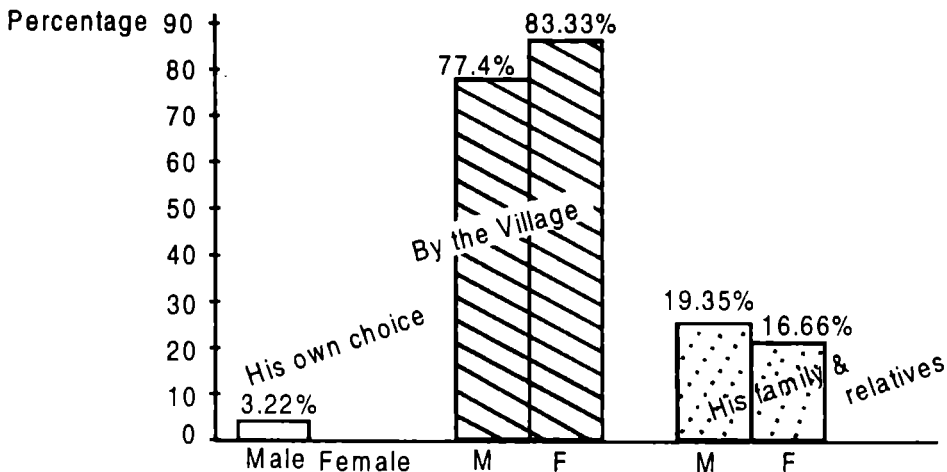
Table No. 5
Opinion on selection of Wang's life partner

	Urban	Rural	T	N
By his own choice	5% (2)	X	100	2
By the village	77.5% (31)	77.5% (31)	100	62
By his parents and relatives	17.5% (7)	30% (9)	100	16
Number	40	40	100	80

From the table above, it is clear that a majority of both the urban and rural respondents are of the opinion that Wang's marital partner is selected by the villagers. 30% of ruralites say that Wang's life partner is selected by his parents and relatives. Only 5% urbanites felt that it is of his own choice. So it shows that Wang's marriage partner is not his own but all the community is involved in selecting his wife.

Table No. 6

Bar graph/histogram on the opinion of the two sexes indicating relative importance of Wang's marital partner

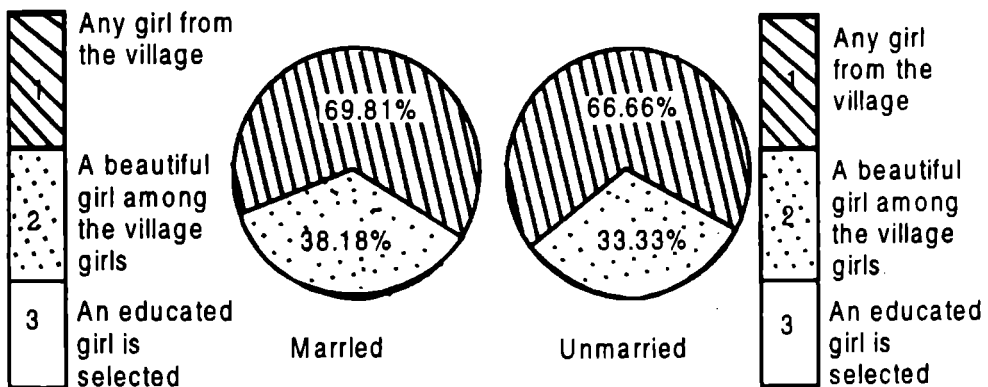


The same opinion is presented through the above given histogram/ bar graph. This time the opinions of the two sexes is assessed. 77.4% of the males feel the village plays a dominating role and 83.33% of females feel the village plays a dominating role in selecting the marital partner for the Wang. A negligible few of both sexes felt he exercises his own choice. However, 19.35% of males and 16.66% of females find that the family and relatives also have a role to play.

Apart from the Wangya (Queen) there are many concubines the Wang usually gets. How does he usually choose the concubines? Presently many Wangs like Longwa, Mon, Shangnyu, Jaboka and Longzang and so on have more than 10–20 wives. But the Wangya is only one, she gives birth to the heir of the kingdom.

Table No. 7

Pie chart to show the opinion of choosing the concubines



The pie charts show the opinion of the respondents according to marital status, indicating the factor governing the choice of concubines for the Wang. 69.81% which is the majority of the married respondents feel that any girl from the village is chosen to be the concubine, however, not of Wang's clan; 38.18% of the same group felt any beautiful girl among the village girls can be chosen. However 66.66% of the unmarried respondents feel that any girl from the village may be chosen

and 33.33% are of the opinion that a beautiful girl from among the village girls is chosen. Both married and unmarried respondents are not in favour of educated girls being selected. Thus it is very clear that the Wang could take any girl from the village for his concubine.

Table No. 8

Opinion on continuance of concubine system by people of different education and age group

	Under Matric			Degree			Post-Graduate			N	T
	Age		Age	Age		Age	Age				
	20-30	31-45	45+	20-30	31-45	45+	20-30	31-45	45+		
Yes, should continue	33.33% (4)	8.3% (1)	16.16% (2)	8.3% (1)	25% (3)	X	8.31% (1)	X	X	100	12
Should not continue	11.79% (8)	19.11% (13)	38.82% (23)	5.88% (4)	17.64% (12)	5.88% (4)	1.47% (1)	4.41% (3)	X	100	68
Number	12	14	25	5	15	4	2	3		100	80

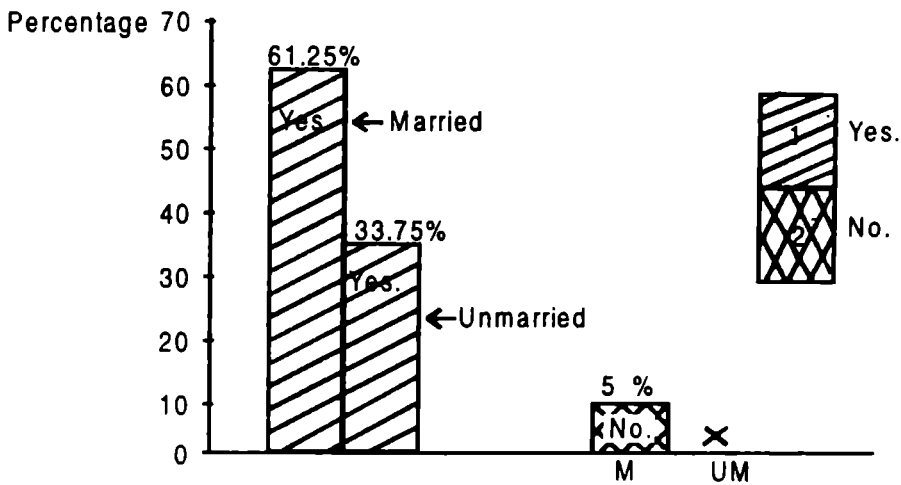
We thought it necessary to assess the opinion of the respondents, as to whether they thought the system of concubines should continue or not. The opinion of different educational and age categories was taken. The table above shows that 38.82% of the under matrices of the age group 45+ are of the opinion that the system of keeping concubines should not continue, and 17.64% of degree holders of the age group 31-45 also felt that the keeping of concubines should not continue. In the same way 4.41% of post graduates of the age group 31-45 hold the opinion that concubine system should not continue. These days there are many ways through which domestic work can be done, rather than through concubines. The Wangya's (Queen) sister, and from time to time the villagers help in the domestic work of the Wang. So all different educational categories and age groups are of the opinion that keeping of concubines should not continue.

Having so many wives some may feel that the Konyak Nagas practice polyandry. But as I belong to the particular tribe I haven't heard that the Konyak Nagas practice polyandry. Instead of polyandry, if after getting married the elder brother dies then if their family or clan agrees, the wife of the elder brother can be re-married to her brother-in-law. This was the practice in the Konyak Naga families.

In this connection the related question had to be investigated, does the Wangya (Queen) re-marry after the Wang dies ?

Table No. 9

Bar graph/histogram showing opinion on the Wang's widow



The majority of the respondents, of both the married and un-married groups, hold the opinion that the Wang's widow can re-marry. The married group constitutes 61.25% and unmarried 33.75%. 5% of the married group say that the Wang's widow should not re-marry. Thus the Wang's widow can be re-married is the general opinion but she can only re-marry her husband's brother if he has not yet married. Otherwise, she should remain a widow, because being a Wangya (queen) she should not go to any common person. The Konyak Nagas regard even the Wangya as similar in status to the Wangpa (King).

8. Other Social Changes

Unique to the Konyaks they practised hereditary Wangship as

well as head-hunting common to other Naga tribes. In such a situation the British came to the Konyak Naga land in 1890 at Tamlu and they opened another second post with 25 rifles at Wakching on March 1913. They found the Konyaks advanced in all aspects, particularly in the use of arms.¹⁵ The British found them difficult to subdue. They opened *Opium Mohols* (shop) and issued opium licence to *W. Shaopa Konyak of Wakching*.¹⁶ Normal cultivation of crops and spread of education was not encouraged. This is considered one reason why Konyaks have become economically and educationally backward.

In 1836 the gospel was brought to Namsang of Konyak village (now in Arunachal Pradesh) by Mr. & Mrs. Miles Bronson. However, the gospel did not spread as the Bronsons had to leave due to illness, and the subsequent death of their sister Rodha Bronson. After nearly a century, on 11 December, 1932, Longna Konyak from Tamlu village was converted and baptised at Impur. Under the ministry of Ao Baptist Arogo Mongdong (ABAM), more Konyaks became Christians. Gradually, with the Wang's (King's) permission Christianity spread to all over Konyak region, resulting in conversions.¹⁷

The Christian missionaries also brought education to the people, and they could see a wider world. Because of that, some evil practices are no longer practised. But there are still some unfortunate things, i.e., the Wang's family members are educationally very backward till today. Because they still dwell in the past and may emphasize only on the Kingdom of the Wang. But most of the Wang's younger family members realised that they should mingle with the outer world, and most of them put emphasis on education. Today some prominent changes have occurred and almost all the Wangs want to get

¹⁵Chingang, *op.cit.*, p.69.

¹⁶R.R. Shimray, *op.cit.*, p.264 and Mr. Yongyu S.I.S. retired, *Interview*, held at Wakching on May 6, 2003.

¹⁷Nagaland Baptist Church Council, *From Darkness to Light*, Kohima, 1997, pp.72-73.

married only once and serve the Lord, because most of them are committed towards Christianity.

Rev. Longri, the first Nagaland Baptist Church Council General Secretary and the first Konyak Baptist Church Association Executive Secretary from Ao tribes, just two days before his death, in his last letter to Mankup, expressed his belief about Konyak leadership in the days to come; “continue to pray even though we may not be able to do all the things we wish to do right now. One day all Nagas will look up to the Konyaks that is my prayer and belief”¹⁸ (Rev. Longri’s letter to L. Mankup, 4 Aug., 1981).

The Konyak Naga socio-cultural life has undergone dramatic changes compared to the past, and this chapter has sought to highlight those changes.

¹⁸O.M. Rao, *Longri Ao : A Biography*, Christian Literature Centre, Panbazar; Guwahati, 1986, p.53.

CHAPTER 5

Political Significance

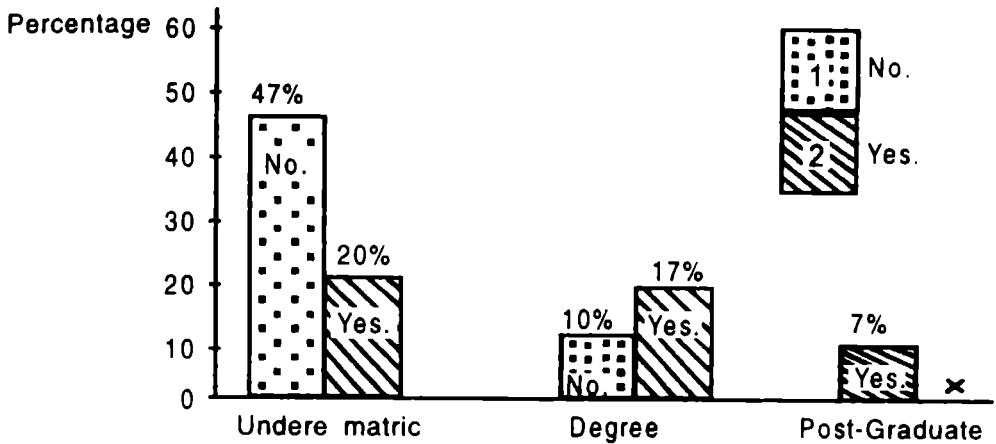
Generally, the Konyak Naga region is held to have a monarchical system. However in this chapter we deal with the political changes of the Wang's power and authority, referring to the past and the present conditions. The main issue investigated here is how far the younger generation feels the Wang should continue in Konyak society.

Before the coming of Christianity, the Konyak Nagas had their own political system. The Wangpa and his disciples or assistants decided on matters of the village. With regard to judicial matters, the Wang had deputies who assisted him in the trial of cases. Disputes and customary laws were framed and enforced by the deputies in consultation with the village. Even today, Wangship is hereditary but the deputies are his younger brother or chosen from the Wang clan. The Konyak Naga land or region is not ruled by a single Wang but every village has their own Wang, that is why the system of Jongwang exists. The Jongwang however, rules but does not govern the villages that are under him. The Jongwang continues to collect tributes from the village Wang. We wished to find the attitude of the respondents towards this system of paying tribute to the Wang.

The bar graph on the next page shows that 47% of the under-matrices are of the opinion that paying taxes and tribute to Wang should not continue, whereas 20% feel that it should continue. However 17% of the degree holding respondents are of the view that it should be continued and 10% of the degree holders are of the opinion that it should not continue. 7% post graduates responded that paying the tribute should continue.

Table No. 10

Histogram/bar graph shows attitude towards continuing paying taxes and tribute to Wang by people of different education



Assessing the same question in terms of areas of residence, it was found that 18% of rural respondents say that paying tributes and taxes to the Wang should not be continued. There is a strong resistance against the paying of taxes and tribute to the Wang from the urban areas .33% urban respondents indicate their opinion against it.

1. Political Change

Many political changes have taken place in the Konyak Nagas' land or region. In those days, the Konyak Nagas feared to go for education and to work in the government services, because they had never experienced it before. They feared the evil spirit and they even feared mingling with the people of other states. They were happy with the village customs. They were honest and sincere in their dealings with each other. The Konyak Nagas were courageous and the best warrior group. Though Konyaks have no written code of law as such but they depended on the laws of nature. So far on all important matters Wangpa had to play an important role for the betterment of his people. But when Konyaks became educated and saw the other cultures, mostly Western, through the spread of Christianity their eyes were opened towards wider possibilities and the role of the Wang became less significant. Development

of democracy may bring changes to the Konyak region, and though the Wang system may lessen in significance, the theory of Wangship will not be lost. There is a Konyak saying “without Wang, if any Konyak village is established then it may not be for long”.

But what does the present generation feel about the importance of Wangship, let us find out from the table below.

Table No. 11

Opinion on the importance of the Wang by urban and rural residents

Residence	Yes	No	T	N
Urban	33% (14)	68% (29)	100	43
Rural	16% (6)	33% (31)	100	37
Number	20	60	100	80

The table above shows that 33% of rural and 68% of urban dwellers are of the opinion that the importance of the Wang is not losing out. 33% of urbanites and 16% of ruralites are of the opinion that the importance of the Wang is losing out. Therefore it is clear from the table that the importance of Wang is not lessening. Through this opinion we recognize that the Konyaks still emphasise on the existence of the Wang system. Because the Wang is not selected but is of royal blood and the heritage is still acknowledged. The Konyaks believe that Wang is given by God for the people, so the importance of his role is to be retained in the Konyak region.

2. Solving the Problem

The Konyaks captured large areas and some of them still live in Myanmar (Burma), Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. However, the national boundary and international boundaries created much problems for these people. Not only that, there are at

times cases between villages across these boundaries. In the earlier days Wangpa provided defence in times of danger or emergencies such as war, attacks and so on. Wangpa can mobilise forces from the villages that are under him. His role is for defence, to initiate war or conclude peace-treaty with enemies and maintain inter-relationship between the villages. His word is final in case of dispute of any nature between two or more villages.¹ But in recent days Wangpa is not the only important person to solve such cases and if such cases arise who should be the important person to take up the cases?

We wished to find the opinion of the respondents in terms of the different educational categories.

Table No. 12
**Opinion on "who will solve the problem?" by people of
different education**

	Under matric	Degree	Post-Graduate	T	N
Through the govt.	X	X	X		
Through the govt. with the Wang's help	X	X	X		
Through the Wang with the govt.	5% (4)	4% (3)	2% (1)	100	8
Through the govt. with the help of Wang and the elders	62% (48)	24% (19)	5% (4)	100	72
Number	52	23	5	100	80

Almost all the educational categories are of the opinion that nowadays the problems should be solved through the government with the help of the Wang and the elders. 62% of under

¹Veprari Epao, *From Naga Animism to Christianity*, Dimapur: Hindustan Print-0-Print, pp.9-10.

matric, 24% of the degree holders and 5% of post-graduate hold this opinion.

Table No. 13
Opinion on "who will solve the problem?" by urban
and rural residents

Residence	Urban	Rural	T	N
Through the govt.	X	X	X	X
Through the govt. with the Wang's help	X	X	X	X
Through the Wang with the govt.	4% (3)	7% (5)	100	8
Through the govt. with the help of elders and Wang	50% (40)	40% (32)	100	72
Number	43	37	100	80

The majority of the urban and rural dwellers are of the opinion that the problems should be solved by the government with the help of the Wang and the elders. 50% of urban and 40% of rural dwellers are of this opinion.

Thus it is clear that nowadays any problem cannot be solved by the Wang alone but the government and the village elders should also be involved.

But actually the government judiciary refers the cases to the village council courts to solve the dispute. In deciding disputes, question of customs would be and still are referred naturally to the old men of the clan.²

Their village councils have only a council court but the village acts as the supreme court. Cases like boundary demarcation,

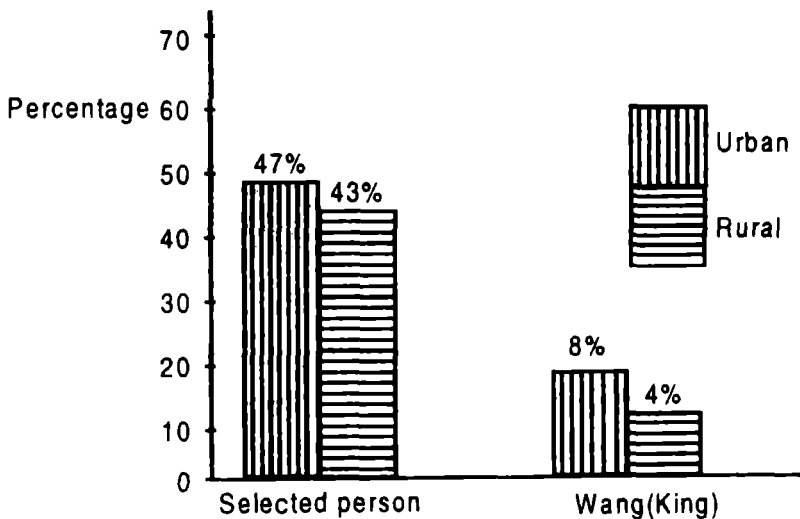
²H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, Bombay : Oxford University Press, IBR, 1969 (2nd ed), p.376.

people found burning forest land which is not in the area of cultivation, clan exogamy, rape, adultery, divorce, murder, theft and the damage of others' property, are brought to village courts. The council has the power to sentence a person to a lifetime expulsion or periodical expulsion from the village, if one commits a big crime and kills a person without knowledge of the public. So the cases that cannot be settled by the government courts are referred to the village court. The village council is also called a Wang-gho or King's court.

We wished to know the opinion of the respondents as to who should be the chairman of the village council?

Table No 14

Bar graph to show the opinion on the selection of the village council chairman by the urban and rural residents.



According to the bar graph shown above, 47% of the respondents of urban areas expressed their opinion on the selection of the village council chairman. He should be a person selected by the villagers. From rural areas 43% are of the same opinion. Taking the majority into consideration, it is clear that the village council chairman should be a selected person, not the elders in the village or the Wang.

The whole council is divided into an elaborate system of

grades; each clan in a village has the right to send accredited representative to them. All matters relating to the village disputes are thoroughly enquired into, and finally brought to the village council where the Wang is also present. Every baan has an informal sub-court for cases including disputes or misunderstandings and quarrels that arise among themselves.

3. The power and Authority of a Wang

Among the Konyak Nagas, the Wang is the supreme head because he is of royal blood. But the whole royal family will not be the Wang. Only the eldest son of the Wang (King), who is conceived by the Wangya (Queen) will become a Wang. The Wang's property is inherited by his elder son. If the elder son dies than the younger brother will take his position (The common people of Konyak also inherit in the same way as the Wang). When he comes to the throne, all are subject to him. The Konyaks consider the Wang as being next to God. Therefore, sometimes he is extremely powerful. Because he has the law in his hands, whatever he speaks becomes the law of the region, which his subjects and people are to follow. Is this authority still functioning in Konyak land or not let us assess from the respondents.

Table No. 15

Opinion on whether the Wang continues to have supreme authority by different age groups

	Age groups			T	N
	20-30	31-45	45+		
True	17% (13)	35% (28)	34% (27)	100	68
False	8% (6)	7% (5)	2% (1)	100	12
Number	24	42	35	100	80

68 people feel that the Wang had supreme authority in the past but no more today. The opinion represents all the age groups. However, 12 among all the age groups hold that they still have supreme authority.

Strictly speaking, the changes have come about due to democratization of the political process. This has resulted in the increasing role of the elected central and state government. Yet, even though this has happened, the government has never ignored the Wang. Because the Wang always is involved in the decision making processes. However, it is important to know the opinion of the respondents on whether they support the continuance of Wangship today.

Table No. 16

**Opinion on continuance of Wangship by people of
different education**

	Education qualification				
	Under matric	Degree	Post Graduate	T	N
Should continue	9% (7)	2% (1)	X	100	8
Should change	57% (45)	25% (20)	5% (4)	100	69
Remain with alternative	2% (1)	2% (1)	2% (1)	100	3
Number	53	22	5	100	80

The table shows that 69 people are of the opinion that it was dictatorial, so it should change. This opinion is upheld by 57% under matric, 25% degree holders and 5% post-graduates. So the majority feel Wangship should continue with changes.

Table No. 17

Opinion on continuance of Wangship by different marital status

	Male	Female	T	N
Should continue	8% (6)	3% (2)	100	8
Should change	67% (53)	20% (16)	100	69
Remain with alternative	4%	X	100	3
Number	62	18	100	80

According to the marital status of the respondents, 69 people are of the opinion that it was dictatorial, so it should change. 67% of these are male and 20% are female. The opinions are definitely against the evil practices existing among the Konyak Wangs. The people wish for changes in marital custom and other practices, which gave the Wang immense powers.

Next, we wished to know whether the respondents wanted the Wang to regain his past powers.

Table No. 18

Opinion on should Wang regain his past power & function by people of different education & age group**EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

	Under matric Age			Degree Age			Post Graduate Age			T	N
	20-30	31-45	45+	20-30	31-45	45+	20-30	31-45	45+		
Yes	8% (6)	9% (7)	4% (3)	X	8% (6)	X	2% (1)	3% (2)	X	100	25
No	7% (5)	14% (11)	25% (20)	4% (3)	12% (9)	7% (5)	2% (1)	2% (1)	X	100	55
N	11	18	23	3	15	5	2	3		100	80

The table shows that 25% of under matric of the age group 45+ responds that the Wang should not regain his past power and functions. 9% of under matric of the age group 31–45 say that the Wang should regain his past power and functions. But this is not a conclusive opinion. Let us assess this matter from the urban and rural respondents.

Table No. 19

**Opinion on should Wang regain his past power & function
by urban and rural residents**

Residence	Yes	No	T	N
Urban	18% (14)	34% (27)	100	41
Rural	14% (11)	35% (28)	100	39
Number	25	55	100	80

The majority of the urban and rural residents are of the opinion that the Wang should not regain his past power and functions. These are 35% from the rural areas, and 34% are urban dwellers.

Therefore, we have seen from the respondents that this old system should not always be the same, but it must change for the better. Sometimes their rule simply became oppressive. Not only that, this generation is not like earlier days, because times are changing. All the Konyak Nagas have wider vision for their own future. The people are under multi-layered rules of the different elected authorities, therefore they no longer wish to be under the monopoly rule of the Wang.

The Konyak Naga society is today undergoing a tremendous transformation. The spread of Christianity, the growth of education and the development programmes undertaken by the government have all unleashed forces which are churning up the Konyak society and rapidly changing its complexion as well as character.

The old structure is falling, brick by brick. So I put a question on this *M* since the changes in the political system are taking place, how would you assess the Wang's authority and all of them answered that he still has some authority.

4. The Developments

Nagaland has basically an agricultural economy. Over ninety per cent of the population lives in the rural areas. Many rural people think that cities and towns are the most likely places for economic, social and political opportunities. People believe that they will definitely be able to find opportunities to earn a livelihood. But it is often the other way round.³ Another concept is that those who live in certain areas are considered more civilized, while the agricultural communities are seen as being backward and uncivilized and in the net of India. This wrong notion creates an inferiority complex among the rural masses which urges them to migrate to the cities and towns leading them to be involved in all sorts of anti-social activities.⁴

In a tribal area like Nagaland, the obstacles of economic development generally arise out of the prevailing physical, social and economic conditions. The physical conditions are related to the hilly terrain, dense forest, and difficulty of communication. The social obstacles are the people's initial apathy to any kind of innovation, lack of education, and primitive methods of production. The economic difficulties are the dearth of capital, absence of marketing centres, and similar other factors. But nowadays social and educational development go hand-in-hand with economic development. Yet it is very sad to see that economic changes have not been much. Even though we have enough natural resources around us, we remain poor and suffer. But these days our towns and

³Philip Viegas & Deeta Menon, *The Impact of Environment Degradation on People*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1988, p.52.

⁴A. Wati Longchar, *The Traditional Tribal Worldview and Modernity*, Jorhat; Barkataki & Company(P) Ltd., 1995, p. 155.

villages have local shops which reflect a good step taken by our people and such attempts should be encouraged. More and more local handmade products are sold in the different markets around the state and country.

In the light of the many political, social and economic changes, the respondents were questioned, for village development purpose, who should the public approach. The Wang, the rich in the village or the government ? But all the respondents responded that for development purposes, the public should approach the government. So we see that changes are taking place in a democratic way in our region. The Wang is however involved in the decision-making of the village, and the village leaders and the Wang together approach the state government for development purposes.

The development of rural areas constitutes a very important component of the government's development programmes both at the central and the state levels. The realisation that India remains largely a rural country was re-enforced by the fact that over the years increasing outlay of funds has been made for rural sectors. The following are some of the details regarding the major development programmes implemented in the rural areas, under the aegis of the governmental authorities.

- (1) Grant-in-Aid – This is a major development programme sponsored by the state government under which funds to the Village Development Boards are provided on the basis of the number of households in a village. It forms the main bulwark of rural programmes beginning from 1980.
- (2) E.A.S. & J.R.Y– Employment Assurance Scheme and Jawahar Rozgar Yojna are employment oriented schemes jointly founded by the Centre and the State on 8:20 basis. Employment facilities go to the poor unemployed persons.
- (3) IRDP– Integrated Rural Development Programme aims at poverty alleviation among the people below the poverty line by providing self-employment facilities in the form of extending credit-linkage subsidy.

- (4) I.A.Y- Indra Awaas Yojna is a rural housing programme under which housing material namely, C.G.I sheet is provided to the families who cannot afford it themselves.
- (5) M.W.S.G.K.Y– Million Wells Scheme and Ganga Kalyan Yojna, are minor programmes to provide irrigation facilities by tube well, bore-well and water harvesting tank-system to small and marginal farmers.
- (6) DWCRA– Development of Women and Children of Rural Areas is a programme meant exclusively for the development of women and children. Funds for other convergent services like child care, information, education and communication attached to such group activities are available. Funding is on 50:50 basis by the Centre and the State.
- (7) TRYSEM– Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment as the name implies is a programme to provide training to youth between the age group of 18-35 years coming from families below the poverty line, in selected trades and vocations by giving monthly stipend for a period of 6 months.
- (8) TOOL KITS– Under this programme of improved tool kits, rural artisans are given carpentry, blacksmithy, wood carving and lumber kits on 90% subsidised rates of the cost of such tools, which is funded by the central Government.

On all the above programmes carried out or implemented in the rural areas by the VDBs funds sanctioned by the Centre, and the State are made available to VDBs by the DRDA through the Blocks, for actual payment.⁵ Those are the different rural development programmes which have been implemented by the Centre and the State governments on a 50:50 basis.

⁵B.Thawang Konyak, Project Director District Rural Development Agency Mon, "The Development of Rural Areas", Konyak Students' Union Golden Year, 1988-1998, pp. 19-22.

Today, it is no more a question, because it is very much clear from the responses given and the subsequent analysis, that for development purposes, we are to approach the State government and the Centre.

Traditional Wangship has lost its influence and the modern democratic administrative system has given new direction to the relationships among the families. But it is very sure that in theory Wangship will not be lost. Because 'the Wang' is a heritage institution. There is a Konyak Naga saying "you will get a leader but not the Wangship". That means the Wangs come from a different clan, and to be the Wang, one must be born in such a clan.

5. Wang's Stand for Today

The system of monarchy has always remained in the Konyak Naga society. The Wangship is related to socio, political, religious and territorial functions and without it all the problems of the village will not be solved. The Wang system existed in the North-East part of India. Besides the Konyaks of Nagaland, there are the Konyak tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, and the Eastern Konyak at Myanmar (Burma), also the Konyak of Assam. But when people talk about the Wang system everyone usually refers to the Wang system existing among the Konyak Nagas alone.

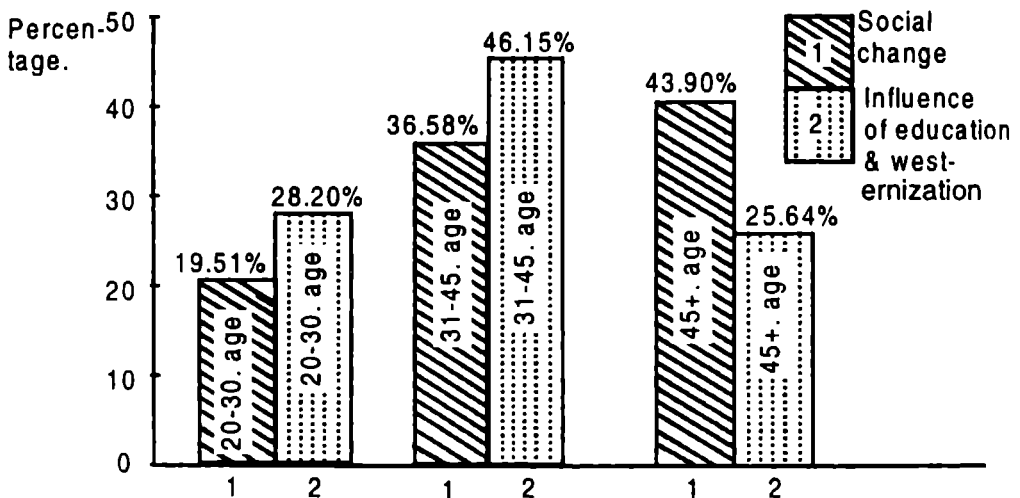
The Konyak Naga Wangs have good relationship with the Konyak Kingdom which is outside Nagaland. They are of the same blood, share their Wangs, have inter-marriage, trade, do business, have social and cultural ties and thus uphold the tradition. In the earlier days, they were always making alliances for war with their enemies. But looking at the Wang system of this generation everything reflects the influence of the modern style. He still talks about peace between the different Kingdoms and emphasizes that the Konyak identity should not be lost whatever may happen. As common people observe, the Wang does not rule like before but he comes down to his people and mingles with them. There are many things to be written down which existed in

the past. The Wangs had their own cup, plate and bench in each house, but not any more. The Wang's palace is the largest house in the village and it was made with the local materials. Today most Wang's palaces have changed to the modern style. Some of the Wang's palaces are constructed with C.G.I sheets with brick-walls.

Great changes have taken place in the Wang's family also. The family members are being sent to school for education and some of the Wangs (Kings) have already started contesting in the election. Some of the princesses get married to the educated common people if they are in love. Now there are not many barrier between the Wang and the common people.

Table No. 20

Bar graph/histogram showing the opinion on the Wang's distinct dresses of the past by different age group



In the past the Wang had distinct dresses, but we wished to find out if they should continue using these dresses today.

43.90% of the age group 45+ were of the opinion that because of social change the Wang can discard his distinctive traditional dress. 46.15% of the age group 31-45 said that influence of education and westernization has brought changes in the Wang's traditional style of dressing.

The opinions reflected that modern dress habits are used by the Wang, and they seem to be unable to manage the traditional costume today.

We further wished to know the opinion of the younger people on the Wang system.

Table No. 21
The opinion on the system of Wangship by people
of different education.

	EDUCATION QUALIFICATION			T	N
	Under matric	Degree	Post Graduate		
Yes	46.15% (6)	38.45% (5)	15.38% (2)	100	13
No, they are not aware	69.64% (39)	26.78% (15)	3.57% (2)	100	56
They are not interested	63.63% (7)	23.27% (3)	9.09% (1)	100	11
Number	52	23	5	100	80

Majority of the respondents, cutting across the levels of education say that no they are not aware of the Wang system. Only 13 are aware of the system of Wangship. 11 are of the opinion that they're not interested in the system of Wangship. Out of 52 under matric 69.64% and 63.63% are not aware of Wangship system or are not interested respectively, whereas 46.15% had said yes they are aware of the Wang system. And this table shows very clearly that the respondents feel that the younger generation is not aware of the system of Wangship. May be it does not like the past and this is more in the case of those who stay in urban areas. If it is so, do they still respect the Wang? Their responses are clear from the next table.

Table No. 22

Attitude of the Konyak youth and respect for the Wang by different age group and education qualification

R e s p e c t f o r W a n g		EDUCATION QUALIFICATION										
		Under matric			Degree			Post Graduate			T	N
Age	20-30	31-45	45+	20-30	31-45	45+	20-30	31-45	45+			
Yes	4.76%	23.80%	28.57%	4.76%	19%	14.28%	4.76%	X	X	100	21	
	(1)	(5)	(6)	(1)	(4)	(3)	(1)					
No	12.24%	20.40%	34.69%	6.12%	14.28%	2.04%	4.08%	4.08%	X	100	47	
	(6)	(10)	(17)	(3)	(7)	(1)	(2)	(2)				
Not Interested	40%	20%	20%	X	20%	10%	X	10%	X	100	12	
	(4)	(2)	(2)		(2)	(1)		(1)				
Number	11	17	25	4	13	5	3	3	X	100	80	

According to the table above, 47 people hold the opinion that the younger generation do not respect the Wang's authority. 21 people hold the opinion that they still respect the Wang's authority. And 12 people hold that they are not interested. So the majority of the respondents indicate that the youth do not respect the Wang's authority. This statement must be true because the youth does not know properly the system of Wangship. They are under the influence of westernization which is visible in all aspects of life. Not only respect for the Wang is losing but even their own parents and the elders too do not get the same respect. Therefore, the younger generation has no idea about the customs and cultural life of the Konyaks.

The role of Wangs is not totally wrong but there are many good things that we should learn from the Wang. In this respect a question was asked, *M*, would they like to reintroduce some of the Wang's functions again? Most of them answered that the Wang should have nominal, but final authority. He should be neutral in party politics, i.e., in government affairs. He should be the final decision maker in the development for the common good. He should be strong in moral character based on biblical doctrine. If his public agreed then he should also be with them. The Wangs are a refuge for the poor and needy people in a community. They have the gift of wisdom by nature. In the midst of war, they made relationships with the other communities through inter-marriage and other means.⁶

The Wangs of Konyak had good relationship with those who stayed outside of Mon district Nagaland. There are some staying in Arunachal Pradesh, Myanmar and Assam. There is blood relationship among them and they belong to the same family.⁷ Even the Naga underground National Socialist Council

⁶A. Peihwang Wangsa, *Christianity and Social Change: A Case Study of Konyak Nagas*, Jorhat; Barkataki & Company Pvt. Ltd., 2000.

⁷Mr. C. Moben Eastern Missionary, *Interview*, held at Mon on 6.6.2000.

of Nagalim (Isal-Muivah) pointed out in the Telegraph, doubting Koli's intentions, the NSCN (IM) said, "Why should he offer a ceasefire only inside Nagaland" when his own people (the Konyak) are living also in Myanmar, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.⁸ So no one could deny that Konyak people are spread in different states and countries. The problem was created by the Britishers who without knowing much about the area, made boundaries and states which the Konyak Nagas still do not accept. Mr. Hokishe Sema, ex-governor and chief minister wrote in his 'Emergence of Nagaland'—"The Eastern boundary is for the present left undefined"⁹ The Konyak Nagas argue that without knowing properly about the boundary, no outsider can just come and place some people here and there by making boundary lines. Thus their problem is created. The younger generation have great aims and object to re-discover all the Konyak Naga inhabited areas of the day and of another time.

The Wangs had played various important roles, because though they did not convert at first to Christianity they encouraged their people. Today all the Konyak Wangs are baptized and have become Christian. We can say that it is because of Christianity the Konyaks could open their eyes and see other nations and people.

Before the British came, the Konyaks were advanced in all aspects. They had their own local guns, dao and spear, even though they did not know reading or writing. Seeing this the British opened opium Mohols to tame and pacify them, and in no time the Konyak Nagas became opium addicts. The Konyak Naga's advanced mind and talents were destroyed by opium and the very sad thing is that even today there are very good numbers of opium addicts in Konyak land and the number is increasing day by day. We can also say our Central

⁸*The Telegraph*, 5 September, 2000.

⁹Hokishe Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland*, Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt.Ltd., 1986.

Government does not take interest in the Konyak Naga region either. But by accepting Christianity and no restriction from the Wang (King) the Konyaks saw development recently. Even Konyak Christian Centre land was given by late Aluh chief King of Mon village. So today the Wang stands for helping the people, not like before when he simply exercised his power. Today, he is involved in doing good for the Konyak Nagas.

CHAPTER 6

Concluding Observations

In the conclusion of our study, we would like to present the findings of our research. In order to obtain a thorough knowledge of the Konyak Naga Wang system, extensive research is needed. The basic intention of our study was to investigate whether Wangship exists today — Do the Wangs enjoy like in the past, power and glory even today? If they do not, then what changes have taken place in their socio-cultural and political roles? Do the younger generation respect the system of Wangship. Do the people want to revise the system of Wangship?

The conclusion derived from the study shows : yes, there is a system of Wangship prevalent among the Konyak Nagas but the main characteristics are much more modified compared to the modern monarchical system of England, Japan and Spain. The ruling power is invested with great importance, but its effectiveness on implementation is found to be much less. The source of power being embedded in customary law, remains significant, but in actual usage, the intervention of modern administrative system and demands from society create pressures upon the system.

Oral tradition points to the existence of the Wangs since the beginning of creation. However, the very fact of its continuance today, shows oral tradition has been a reflection of reality and also indicates the continuing significance of the Wang's reality and also indicates the continuing significance of the Wang today. This fact has been seen in chapter 2. The history narrating the origin of Wangs and the difference in power between tattoo Wang and non-tattoo Wang has also been seen.

The Wang is not selected, but has hereditary continuity. This was so because when the prince and princess were born, the public in his territories honoured the children from birth itself, that they got their own prince and princess and this continues till their marriage. But the difference between prince and princess is, the prince may get many concubines as his second wives, whereas the princess may take her father's concubine as a mother to be with her, for a certain period at her husband's place.

The Wang is extremely powerful and whatever he says becomes a law for his people. And the Wangpa is also a refuge for the poor and needy people in the community. It may be for this reason that his public consider him to be fair and have regard for him.

Konyak people serve the Wang throughout the year on different occasions, like working in the paddy fields and helping in house construction. Not only that, but tributes and taxes are given to him. Therefore without acknowledging the Wang, nothing can be done in the matters of village or territory. In everything he is the supreme authority over all matters. But, the same issues can be brought to the Wang-gho or King's court, where there are various members of the clans present for resolution of the problems.

The Konyak Wang also keeps good relationship with the scattered Konyak people like those in Arunachal Pradesh, Myanmar and Assam. The Wangs of both sides have inter-marriage and the sharing of Wangs between them if there is a crisis of Wangs in one area. The Konyak Nagas' socio-cultural life has undergone dramatic changes as compared with the past. The traditional head-hunting has turned into a competitive sport, education has spread and they are trying to build their own lives. During the head-hunting times, it was difficult to visit each others' villages, but nowadays, from the east to west and north to south the Konyak inhabitants feel like they belong to one family.

When we see the role of the Wangs in the past, the Konyak people were scared of him, but today the Wang himself realises the changes in the world-view and the necessity of intermingling with the common people. Most of the Wangs eat and drink with the common people whereas it was not so in the past. The Wangs of the Konyak gave permission to spread Christianity, resulting in mass conversion. And the Wang himself accepted Christianity which resulted in great changes in the socio-cultural life of the Konyaks. Because of such changes the Wangs who once had many concubines and wives, now get for themselves one wife only. Not only that, but some of his sons (princes) and daughters (princesses) have already finished theological studies. The Wang himself encouraged the Konyak youth to try and make a better life for themselves and for the Konyak region.

In regard to the judicial matters, the Wang had along with his disciples or members of the Wang's court, all powers to make decisions. But today solving of problems is done through the government with the help of the Wang and elders of the village. But land disputes are referred to the village council court to be solved through the interpretations of customary law. So not only the Wang but many others are important in solving and building the Konyak society today.

The best thing today we can learn about the Wang is, the Konyak Christian Centre land was given by Mon village Wang, late Aluh. This action is of great significance for the Konyak Nagas today. It helps to relocate the necessity of the Wang in today's circumstances. So nowadays people feel that Wang should be strong in moral character, based on biblical doctrine for the betterment of his people in general and in particular for the upliftment of the society within his territory.

The Konyak Nagas are very much appreciative of the continuance of the Wang system even in the modern democratic era. Since the impact of the Wang bears great significance in society today. However, the continuing significance can only be understood in terms of the changes which occurred, changes

necessary for adjusting the old monarchical system within the new democratic fold. The Konyaks retain their firm belief on the Wang system. However, confusion arises today, in the Konyak mind, about whom they should serve *M* an unknown government or their very own Wang? Thus, while the Konyaks reaffirm their faith in the Wang system, they have not been able to clearly distinguish which areas of authority should the emerging government and the Wang have respectively.

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THE SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MONARCHICAL SYSTEM OF THE KONYAK NAGAS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ABOUT THE BOOK

The research work on the practice of Kingship among the Konyak Nagas is a maiden venture. This makes the book informative about various issues pertaining to the Konyak Nagas which may interest the readers.

In the past, the Wang (the King) was extremely powerful. Whatever he said was a law for his people and he was greatly respected. In this context, the book tries to find out whether the Wangs still enjoy the same power today. If they do not, then what changes have taken place in their socio-cultural and political roles? Do the younger generation respect the system of Wangship? And do the people want to revive the system of Wangship? Through these pertinent questions the reader gets well acquainted with the system of Wangship in Konyak Nagas.

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