

MANGMA AND BLU- A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE VILLAGE COUNCILS OF THE MONPA AND SHERDUKPEN TRIBES OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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All the indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh had developed self-governing village level institutions in their respective villages in order to regulate the village life as well as to generate a corporate life. It is therefore of some merit to examine the common features of the traditional village councils in Arunachal Pradesh before discussing a comparative analysis of the Monpa and Sherdukpen councils. As Elwin writes,

They (tribal councils) all derive their authority from ancient times and the fact that they are the expression of the will and power of the whole people. They are supported not only by social, but also by supernatural sanctions...All the councils are informal in character and except for the Monpa councils and the Adi bangos, which seems to be more highly organized, the conception of regular membership, committees, secretaries and so on has not come in. The people composing the councils are the accepted leaders of a village and always include the local priest, whose services are often required, and, of course, the officially appointed headmen who are issued with red coats... Decisions are not taken by a formal vote but discussion continues until general unanimity is achieved.

The functions of the village councils are threefold-judicial, administrative and developmental. On the judicial side the councils settle the disputes within the village boundaries and considerable powers have been given to them under the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation of 1945. Even serious crimes against tribal society (but not against Government) have been and are being settled, generally to the satisfaction of all concerned, by these councils. Probably, to the tribal mind, this is the most important of the council's functions.

On the administrative side, the council deals with the maintenance of paths and bridges; they see to the water supply and sanitation of a village; they fix the dates of communal hunting and fishing and decide when the main agricultural operations should take place and when festivals should be held. Some of them make it their business to care for the poor and disabled. There is no rule about this, and much depends upon the nature of the leading men of any particular council. Similarly, with regard to development, this depends largely on the extent to which the local officials have worked through the local councils...generally, when the council as such is approached by an official, the response is enthusiastic.

The 1945 Regulation has already limited the type of 'punishment' that can be inflicted, and in fact the heavy punishments of former days have already almost entirely disappeared. Girls may still have their hair cut for immorality, but they are no longer stripped naked and beaten. Offenders are no longer buried alive, rolled over cliffs, or pushed into rivers to drown; already, of their own accord, the people have adopted the system of compensation, which in practice is adjusted to the wealth and position of the accused.¹

Precisely, the village councils are the indigenous age old village institutions of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and hence, the Monpas and Sherdukpens, the two Buddhist communities is not an exception to it. The village councils of these two tribes are in fact, in built system of self-governance which helped them to manage their affairs. Though the village councils of the Monpa and Sherdukpen differ from each other considerably, still they exhibit certain common features and characters. In the backdrop of the above narratives, the point of similarities and differences in the village councils of the Monpas and Sherdukpens shall be discussed here under.

1. MANGMA AND BLU: POINT OF SIMILARITIES

The Monpa and Sherdukpen are basically mild, gentle and peace loving people and have a strong sense of justice. They evolved a self-governing institution based on their socio-religious customs, traditions and mode of behaviour in order to maintain law and order; and also to carry their socio-economic, political and cultural activities smoothly. However, in both the cases, it is not known with certainty that how and when these institutions came into existence, though it has been functioning effectively for several centuries. Nevertheless, they are of the belief that this institution of self-governance got manifestation only after the introduction of Buddhism in the region.

1.1 Structure and Composition

The village is termed as *dung* or *yui* among the Monpas and the headman is called *Tsorgan*, whereas in Sherdukpen village is termed as *thik* and its headman is *thik-akhao*. In both the society, the headman is empowered to run the village administration with administrative, judicial and socio-cultural functions guided by the prevailing customs and traditions. These headmen are assisted by other officials in its day to day activities. These functionaries are called *gomi*, *thumi*, *chupon* or *gomdungs* etc. among the Monpas. In Sherdukpen they are *obo-usu*, *donmiepo*, *jungme-barse* and *kachin* respectively. These functionaries are generally chosen from among the village elders and active members. Similarly, the Monpas's *Chupon* and Sherdukpen's *kachin* are appointed for a specific period of time on rotation system among the households.

1.2 Membership

In theory, all the adult male members of the village are the members of the council. As stated above, group of village constitute the general assembly and hence all the adult male members constitute the general assembly called *tsopa* or *nahatdi blu*.² At proper age, all males except those who join the Buddhist monastery as monk get married. Since the property right rests with the sons, the elder brother get separated from the parental house thereby establishing his own family, and is considered matured. With this maturity, he is supposed to have the capacity to deal with public affairs; so such members are inducted in the council as primary members. However, to become and to remain as a member of the council one has to pay *voluntary contributions*³ either in cash or kind towards the village funds as and when required. One who fails to pay such contributions can neither participate nor sit in the *mangma* or *blu jungba* until all the outstanding dues if any are paid. Moreover, such members can also be penalized for breach of customs by the council.

1.3 Qualifications and Election

A person who seeks to become the headman has to fulfill many criteria like knowledge and versatility of traditions and customary laws, oratory power, character, status, man of integrity, power of judgment and above leadership quality etc. Interestingly, these are the common criteria and qualifications which are generally preferred by every tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and hence the Monpa and Sherdukpen is not an exception to it.

Though the post of village headmen is not hereditary, but if the son has above mentioned qualities he has better chance to be elected or selected. However, status also plays a significant role. While among the Monpas it the *Khreimi*⁴ who get the first preference to become the *Tsorgan*. On the other hand the Sherdukpens being a hierarchic society, the *thongs*⁵ are more privileged than the *chaos*⁶ to become the *thik-akhao*. In other words, it was the *khreimi* and *thongs* who get the preference to become the village headmen. However, these days this distinction has been done away. Even the *surmi* or *naamtong*⁷ among the Monpas and the *chaos* among the Sherdukpens have also been appointed as *Gaonbura*.

Once selected or elected a person can remain as headman till he has become corrupt or inefficient; or until he has tendered his resignation. Owing to removal or resignation, the meeting of the *mangma* or *blu jungba* is convened for selection or election of new incumbent. Such meeting continues until all the members present reach a consensus. This is generally done both among the Monpas and Sherdukpens in order to avoid factionalism in the village. Moreover, there is rarely any competition for this office as it carries huge and onerous responsibility without much reward. However, these days the age old traditions of selecting or electing the village headman by consensus is no more followed and instead the administration has started appointing *Gaonbura* almost replacing the traditional *Tsorgan* and *Thik-akhao*. In fact, this system has been suffocated by the introduction of modern statutory Panchayati Raj system and party politics. Now a day, the number of *Gaonburas* is also increasing. Consequent upon these, there are more than one *Gaonbura* in each village re-designated as *GB-I*, *GB-II*, *GB-III* etc. Moreover, unlike the traditional *Tsorgan* and *Thik-akhao*, the modern *Gaonburas* are getting incentives in the form of honorarium from administration for their service.

1.4 Powers and Functions

Like the village councils of other tribes, the Monpa and Sherdukpen village councils are also competent to decide all petty civil and criminal cases under their respective customary laws. This is in addition to the powers conferred on them under the *Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation of 1945*. Until the introduction of the regular administration by the Government of India, the village councils were vested with judicial, administrative, developmental and socio-cultural functions.

Any civil and criminal case has to undergo a local trial in the village councils headed by the *Tsorgan* or *thik-akhao*. The inter-village disputes, though rare, were always resolved at *tsopa* or *nahatdi blu* level. The Monpa and Sherdukpen tribes being mild and gentle always prefer mediation for peaceful settlements of disputes before referring it to the council. Even now, they follow the same procedure. This is actually done by engaging mediator called *Barmin* or *Barse*.⁸ If the mediator fails to resolve the issue amicably then only the matter is placed before the council. However, if the mediator resolves the dispute to the satisfaction of both the parties, both the parties felicitate them for his endeavor accordingly and are termed as *Drothang* or *Lekso*.⁹

Before the advent of modern administration guided by the Indian legal system, the Monpa and Sherdukpen village councils headed by *Tsorgan* or *Thik-akhao* were empowered to settle petty civil and criminal cases, making arrangements for visiting officials, including other administrative and socio-cultural activities associated with the village. However, it would be worth to discuss the point of similarities between the village council of both the tribes in terms of their functions are as under-

- (1) Both the councils are competent to try all petty civil and criminal cases that arise in the village. The cases of severe crime and offence have always been referred to the administration for long.
- (2) Both communities are strong believers in private mediation. As a result, it is always endeavoured by both the parties either to strike a compromise through mediation or to resolve the issue mutually and amicably instead of going to the councils.
- (3) The village council realizes fines and compensations from the offender either in cash or kind. But this has now been replaced by *Indian Rupee* (INR).
- (4) The meetings or a session of the council is convened as and when required as there is no fixed date and time for the meeting. The date, time and place for such meetings are conveyed through the officials of village council called *gomi*, *thumi*, *gomdungs* or *kachin*.¹⁰ The other activities of the council like serving summons to the parties and witnesses including realization of fines and compensations are also the responsibility of this official.
- (5) When the case is placed before the village council, the plaintiff irrespective of their status has to pay the minimum customary appellate fee either in cash or kind. However, to take cognizance of the case is the prerogative of *tsorgan* or *thik-akhao*. Petty cases are generally referred back to the *gomi*, *thumi*, or *barse* for adjudication through mediation.
- (6) Breach of customs and traditions or any crime committed against the society are immediately resolved as soon as the matters comes to the notice of the *Tsorgan* or *thik-akhao*. Such cases are normally disposed of by imposing simple to heavy fines or penalty as fixed by the council. As per the Buddhist lunar calendar, the *5th*, *8th*, *10th*, *15th* and *30th* day of every month is called *duchin*.¹¹ No Fishing, hunting and agricultural operations are allowed on these days. So violating this established norm invites fines or penalty to be paid to the councils.
- (7) The village councils headed by *tsorgan* or *thik-akhao* performed all developmental and welfare activities pertaining to the village until the introduction of modern statutory Panchayat. These councils were responsible for mobilizing labour for community services like *construction and repair of inter-village paths, porter tracks, bridges, log bridges, suspension bridges, construction and renovation of village Gonpas* etc.
- (8) The arrangement of fooding, lodging and porters for visiting officials were also supervised by the council.
- (9) The *tsorgan* or *thik-akhao* with the approval of *mangma* or *blu* supervises the fixing and collection of tax on pasturage (*brok*), leasing out community land (*mang sa/blu so*), contribution towards the village funds (*dulang/dlang*) etc. The funds generated from these sources have been used for developmental purposes of the village.
- (10) The village council headed by *tsorgan* or *thik-akhao* also monitors the functioning of traditional system of labour cooperation among the villagers for larger works of agriculture and house construction for the poor and needy people.
- (11) The village council also supervises various socio-cultural activities like cleanliness drive within the village, arrangement of dances and pantomimes (*chaam*), community rites, rituals, feast and festivals, fishing, hunting etc. These activities are still control, supervise and regulated by the village councils headed by *tsorgan* or *thik-akhao*.

- (12) The village council headed by the *tsorgan* or *thik-akhao* organizes rescue and relief operations whenever the village or any household is affected by natural calamities or disaster.
- (13) Being Buddhist by religion, the Monpa and Sherdukpen societies are very much influenced by the Buddhist rite, rituals and festivals. So, all the community related rites, rituals and festivals associated with Buddhism are performed and organized under the supervision of *tsorgan* or *thik-akhao*. However, the Monpas and Sherdukpens still continue to observe some practices of indigenous faith and religion called *Bon* and *Lo*.¹² Hence; they also practice and perform numerous rituals to appease various gods and goddesses for good health and bumper harvest. The Buddhist and indigenous rite and rituals including festivals of the Monpas and Sherdukpens are *choekor* or *chekor*, *wang*, *nyungne*, *lha-soikhan*, *jukla*, *moitang*, *khiksaba* etc.¹³

The concept of crime and punishment was prevalent in the society since time immemorial. Any act omission and commission that led to the infringement or breach of customs is dealt with very seriously by the village councils. The punishments in both the societies are compensated by payment of fines either in cash or kind which is now replaced by Indian rupee. In the past, even serious physical punishments were also resorted to.¹⁴

The objective of awarding punishment in the society is to check breach of customs and traditions; to check criminal activities and to reform the law breakers and also to compensate the aggrieved party of his loss or damages. The customary laws of the Monpas and Sherdukpens, however, do not recognize any distinction between men and women.

As discussed above, in the past, the punishment in both the societies ranged from simple fines to severe punishments. However, these days, the traditional village councils can only impose nominal fine. It is because of the fact that most of the heinous offences like murder, grievous hurt and injury, robbery etc. are put to trial under different sections of the *Criminal Procedure Code* and *Indian Penal Code* by the administration. The village councils headed by *tsorgan* and *thik-akhao* now deals with petty civil cases only like *land disputes*, *boundary issues*, *property*, *inheritance*, *marriage*, *divorce* and *criminal cases like theft*, *burglary*, *house trespassing*, *adultery* etc.

2. MANGMA AND BLU: POINT OF DIFFERENCES

The first reliable evidence of the village self-governing institutions among the Monpas occurred in the eleventh century when *Terthun Pemalingpa*, a monk from the area now constituting the present *Bumtang* district of Bhutan converted Tawang valley into Buddhism. Before the advent of Buddhism, the Monpas were believed to be under the administration of aristocratic class called *khyes*.¹⁵

Pemalingpa organized a self-governing system for both religious and secular purposes. With the change over from *Bonism*¹⁶ to *Buddhism*; and establishment of new settlements all over the valley, the earliest socio-political organization of *khyes* was given up and a system of democratically elected village head came into being during the same century. Thus, each settlement was to elect a leader who was to be directly responsible to the people and to the *khyes*.¹⁷ The elected village head were called *tsobleh*.¹⁸ This institution continued until few centuries ago, when the task was taken over by the *Tsorgan*. In fact, with the end of the dominations of Tibetans over the *Mon region*¹⁹ in 1951, the institution of *Tsorgan* was not done away rather they were again vested with the responsibilities of running the village administration. Thereafter, the institution of *tsobleh* was relegated to the background and discontinued.²⁰

Contrary to the institution of *Tsorgan* among the Monpas, no such history could be traced among the Sherdukpens. Nevertheless, the Sherdukpen believed that the village council (*blu*) existed from the time of *Asu Japtang*. *Japtang* himself being from the noble blood and king (*thong*) was their undisputed head. A close study of the Sherdukpen society reveals certain facts which remain unanswered. If *Japtang* was their ruler (king), there arises no question of him becoming the village headman. So, there is a missing link whether the village council existed in those days. However, there is a general belief among the Sherdukpens that the *blu* came into existence only after the influence of Buddhism.²¹ Hence, right from the history of the origin of village councils to structure, composition, powers and functions there are also several points of differences among the village council of the Monpas and the Sherdukpens.

2.1 Structure and Composition

Unlike the Sherdukpen's *blu* which was sovereign for the village state, the Monpa's *mangma* was not independent at least from the mid-17th century when the *dzongpon system* was introduced from *Lhasa*²² Almost all the village councils including *Adi's Kebang* and *Mishmi's Abbala* were supreme over the village and no superior authority could interfere in its affair until the promulgation of the *Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation of 1945*. However, the Monpa's *Tsorgan* on the other hand had a superior authority over it to interfere into the state of affairs. Consequent upon these, it will not be wrong say that the Monpas were under four tier administrative systems with the *mangma* at the lowest rung headed by *Tsorgan*, *Tsopa* headed

by *Tso-Tsorgan*, *Dzong* headed by *Dzongpon* and the supreme *Tsona Dzong* at *Lhasa (Tibet)* headed by *Dalai Lama*.²³

However, after a thorough investigation, it could not be established whether there was any influence of the Lhasa administration on the Sherdukpen village life like that on the Monpas. This clearly indicates that there was no such political or administrative control over Sherdukpens.

The Monpa society is comparatively less stratified than that of the Sherdukpens. There is strong clan and class hierarchic setup in the Sherdukpen society in the presence of *thong-chao* dynamics. This could be reflected in the structure and composition of their village councils. In the traditional Sherdukpen society, the member of the village council including the *thik-akhao* (village headman) has generally been preferred from among the *thongs* only leaving little or no scope for the *chaos* to become *thik-akhao*.²⁴

On the other hand, though clan system also exists in the Monpa society, but traditionally preference was given only to the *Khreimi*.²⁵ Hence, economic status was a significant determinant in the election or selection of the village headman among the Monpas, whereas the social status formed an important determinant among the Sherdukpens to become the village headman. This is however done away these days and now even the eligible *chaos* is also being appointed as *thik-akhao* which is a healthy sign of egalitarian society.

In both the societies, village has been the primary unit of administration purely guided by the traditions and customs. In both the societies, there exist village councils from village to the regional level. However, in the Sherdukpen society, there exists a centralized council called *Tukpen Village Council* at par with the Monpa's *Tsopa*. But the term of reference here is that *Tukpen Village Council* is more centralized than the *Tsopa*. The sitting of the Monpa's *Tsopa* is occasional but the Sherdukpen's *Tukpen Village Council* is a regular body. Though it sits after every three years but it has become a regular feature in the Sherdukpen life. The villagers of Rupa and its adjoining fourteen villages meet after every three years to review the law and order and other customary laws during the *chhatpu nsey* at Rupa. Though, the villagers of Shergaon have established their own council with the passage of time but it has no glaring effects on the customary laws of the Sherdukpens. But, the Monpas *tsopa* have no such tendency to sit as a regular body.

With these structural differences, we can observe that the Sherdukpen corporate life is more structured than the Monpas.

2.2 Membership

In both the society, all the adult male members of the village are the members of the village council. Similarly, all the members of such village constitute the general assembly called *tsopa* or *nahatdi blu*. Though, there is no established customs or tradition which restricts the women from becoming a part of the Monpa's village council (*mangma*) or village headman (*Tsorgan*). In fact, women can also become the *Tsorgan*. On contrary to this, Sherdukpen women are totally segregated from membership of the *blu*. They are neither the member nor can participate in the proceedings of the *blu*. In other words, the male members are the automatic choice of the *blu*. The Sherdukpens believe that women participation in administration is not a healthy sign for society. It symbolizes the sign of weak administration and feeble authority. The only difference between the women and the *chao* is that the former are totally detached and debarred from the council with a sense of defiling the sanctity of *blu jungba* by their presence; the latter (*chaos*) may attend the meeting without the right to participation in the deliberation. However, these days these restrictions on the *chaos* have been lifted. The participation of the women is still a distant dream. From these narratives, it is evident that the Monpa's village council is more accommodative and democratic than that of the Sherdukpens.

2.3 Qualifications and Election

As mentioned earlier, both the Monpa and Sherdukpen followed similar criteria in the selection of the village headman. While in the Sherdukpen society, only *thongs* were given the preference to become the headman; whereas among the Monpa, it was the *Khreimi* who shouldered the responsibility to run the village administration. This clearly indicates that the *thong-chao* dynamics of the Sherdukpen society had also a deep impact while electing or selecting the *thi-akhao*. The *thongs* being from the ruling class, they were more privileged section of the society both in terms of social and economic status. Whereas the Monpa's *Khreimi* was only a economic status for those who owned taxable land.

The study also reveals that the element of election though rare was also present among the Monpas in case of multiple contenders. There are instances where election was conducted earlier. Besides, the system of draw of lot locally called as *gyan* or *jan* was also practiced for the selection or election of the *tsorgan*. However, neither the element of election nor draw of lot for the selection of *thik-akhao* could be established to have practiced by the Sherdukpens.

These days, the modern *Gaonbura* have totally replaced the traditional institution and nomenclature of the *Tsorgan* and *Thik-akhao*. The *Gaonburas* are not elected rather they are appointed by the *District Administration* as their representative in the villages. In the traditional society, in most of the case the village

head was the unanimous choice of the villagers. But, now a day, the villagers are never consulted while appointing the *Gaonburas*. Political consideration is the most preferred criteria for selecting the *Gaonburas*. The institution of *Tsorgan* and *Thik-akhao* is at stake because of the multiple appointments of *Gaonburas*. Since the people are more comfortable with the traditional nomenclature of their headman, they still preferred to call them *Tsorgan* or *Thik-akhao* instead of *Gaonbura*.

2.4 Powers and Functions

The Monpa's *mangma* and Sherdukpen's *blu* were vested with judicial, administrative, developmental and socio-cultural functions until the introduction of the regular administration by the Government of India. Though, both the councils resemble in many aspects but they have also some differences. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to discuss the point of differences between the village council of the two tribes in terms of their power and functions. The striking differences are as under-

1. The proceeding of the *blu* starts with the invocation of gods and goddesses by the *khikzizi*. This is generally done to have fruitful discussions keeping aside the differences for the greater interest of the society. This tradition is called *phokchot*. However, this is not practiced by the Monpas.
2. Among the Monpas, the meeting or the session of the council is generally convened either in headman's house or community hall (*mang-khyem/ Tso-brang*) but preference is always given to open space which can accommodate the local populace. But, the Sherdukpens always convened the *blu-jungba* in open space (*doksho*) and preferably in the vicinity of the Gonpa.
3. The whole Sherdukpen's *blu* especially *Thongji Blu* is centralized under a parent body called *Tukpen Village Council*. This body sits after an interval of three years at Rupa (*Tukpen*). This centralizing tendency of the *Tukpen Village Council* has generated a mixed reaction among the villagers of all the fourteen villages which constitute the *Tukpen Village Council*. The underlying fact is that one has to wait for three years for simple to serious matters of disputes if the matter is not resolved at the village level. Because, all the matters that fail to be settled at the respective *blu* are put to trial at *Tukpen Village Council*. On the contrary, though the Monpas have regional council called *tsopa* but it meets as when required. It clearly indicates that among the Sherdukpens 'Justice delayed is Justice denied' prevails. Many of the Sherdukpens agreed that even for petty issue they have to wait for three years and even more.
4. The village councils derive their authority from the age old oral customs and traditions and are common among all the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Such laws are generally not codified as is case in most of the tribes including the Monpas. Such laws are part of oral traditions which is respected and revered by all. However, the Sherdukpen customary laws are to some extent codified which are named as *Tukpen Penal Laws*. This initiative was taken by the *Tukpen Village Council*. Now a day, the whole Sherdukpen community except the people of Shergaon is controlled and regulated by the *Tukpen Village Council* through their written penal laws.
5. Among the Monpas when the complaint is lodged with the *Tsorgan*, the complainant is required to pay a customary court fee known as *Shosum khada/ Josum khada* in all major cases. This fee consisted of a ceremonial scarf known as *khada* and two silver coins called *betang*. In petty cases, the court fee consists of an ordinary scarf (*Khada*), two flasks (*Palang*) of beer, and provisions such as flour, rice, eggs etc. and is collectively known as *Sumten/ Sumtsan*.²⁶ It may be mentioned here that, now a day the customary court fees have been done away with except in few traditional villages. These days, the court fees deposited to the *Tsorgan* is called *Khrimjuk/ Thrimjuk* for both major and minor cases, and is charged from both the parties equally irrespective of any status. Furthermore, the whole system of paying the customary court fee has also been replaced by the *national currency (INR)* in place of silver coin (*Betang*). These days, the customary fee ranges from Rs. 100 to Rs. 500 along with a ceremonial scarf (*Khada*). However, it differs from village to village and *tso* to *tso* in the whole *Monyul*. On the other hand, the Sherdukpen's village council only accepts the customary arbitration fee in kind and not in cash even today.
6. Among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, the council's verdicts are oral; and the people's memory is so sharp that they even remember the verdict in a particular case even after decades. However, among the Monpas, it has been a tradition that the judgments given by the council is recorded in writing. Such records were in *Bhoti Scripts*²⁷ under the hand and seal of the *Tsorgan*, members of the council and both parties in the presence of the witnesses. The system of recording the judgment or verdict is called *gamja*.²⁸ Whenever any party to the disputes violates the terms and conditions of the judgment in the future, he/she is penalized by the *Tsorgan* in consultation with the members. For such violation, the council also fixes a surety bond called *Jir* as penalty. But, during the course of our study, we could not find such practices that were practiced by the Sherdukpens even in the past.

7. Among the Monpas, the normal term of the office of the *Tsorgan* has been three years. However, he may be allowed, rather requested by the *mangma* to continue in his office so long as the *mangma* is satisfied with his work. A good *Tsorgan* is never said to have been relieved from the office, even if, he approached the *mangma*. There were *Tsorgans* who had continued in office as long as 20 years. On the other hand, there has not been a fixed tenure of the Sherdukpen's *Thik-akhao*.
8. Unlike the Monpas, for the convenience and better coordination between the villagers, the *Tukpen (Rupa)* is divided into seven blocks or segments and assigned different responsibility for developmental and socio-cultural activities. This traditional segmentation of the village is termed as *Chhakak*. These *chhakaks* are *Thik chhakak*, *Thik-khong chhakak*, *Yusher chhakak*, *Thongon chhakak*, *Gonpa chhakak*, *Azilamu chhakak* and *Wangsher chhakak*. Though the segmentation of the village also used to be done among the Monpas, but it was only for administrative convenience and not for developmental and socio-cultural activities.

After a detailed discussion on the Monpa's *Mangma* and Sherdukpen's *blu* on comparative basis, it can be stated that they have evolved the traditional system and institutional arrangement of governance determined by their socio-economic and cultural fabric and nature of their habitat. Though, the relevance and sanctity of the *mangma* and *blu* is still high in the respective society, but at the same time we cannot ignore the trend of decreasing status of the traditional village authority. Despite all these changes in the role of the traditional village councils, people still revere and respect this institution. In critical situation, they need the advice, suggestions, and guidance of the members of the traditional village councils. They still possess considerable influence over the villagers.

REFERENCES

1. *Myth of NEFA* by Verrier Elwin, 1958, Introduction, p.xvi.
2. The general assembly of the Monpas and Sherdukpens are called *tsopa* and *nahatdi blu* respectively.
3. The system of making voluntary contributions is called as *dulang* in Monpa and *dlang* in Sherdukpen.
4. *Khreimi* refers to those who own taxable land in Monpa society.
5. *Thongs* are said to be the ruling class, in fact the descendants of *Asu Japtang*, the common forefather of Sherdukpens.
6. *Chaos* are considered to be the descendants of *Asu Japtang's* retainers who accompany him during his long sojourn from Tibet to the present Sherdukpen belt.
7. *Surmi* or *Naamtong* refers to those who do not own taxable land in Monpa society.
8. The mediator engaged for settlement of dispute is called as *Barmin* or *Barse* in Monpa and Sherdukpen respectively.
9. *Drothang* or *Lekso* is a thanksgiving ceremony prevalent among the Monpas and Sherdukpens.
10. These officials are called *gomi*, *thumi* or *gomdungs* in Monpas and *kachin* in Sherdukpen. They serve the council on turn wise rotation basis system among the entire household and their terms differs from 1 year to 3 years.
11. These days are called *duchin* which means sacred. Fishing, hunting and agricultural operations are socially prohibited during these days.
12. *Bonism* and *Lo* is the pre-Buddhist shamanist religion of the Monpas and Sherdukpens respectively. They still practice this religion along with the Lamaistic Buddhism.
13. *Choekor*, *chekor*, *wang* and *nyungne* are Buddhist rituals whereas *lha-soikhan*, *jukla*, *moitang* and *khiksaba* are *bon* or *lo* rituals.
14. Norbu, T., *Op.cit.*, pp.169-170.
15. *Khyes* refers to men of noble blood who stayed in *khars* (stone house).
16. Bonism is the pre-Buddhist religion based on indigenous faith and practices throughout the trans-Himalayan region.
17. Elwin, V., Democracy in NEFA, *Op.cit.*, p.57.
18. The institution of *tsobleh* could be found only in Tawang region while in other Monpa villages, the institution of *Tsorgan* could be traced
19. *Mon* is a blanket term used by the Tibetan to refer the area lying south of Tibet. In fact, the term *Monpa* also comes from *Mon* where *Mon* signify area lying south of Tibet and *Pa* means people. So, the people of the south of Tibet were called as Monpa.
20. Dhar, Bibhash., *The Monpas of Tawang in Transition*, Geophil Publishing House, Guwahati, 2005, p.75.
21. Megejee, R., *Op.Cit.*, p.16.
22. *Dzongpon* is combination of two terms *Dzong* and *Pon* where *Dzong* means Province and *Pon* means ruler. Therefore, literally *Dzongpon* was something like the head of the state which is equivalent to *Governor*. In fact, the whole Mon region was administered from *Lhasa* and each of the Monpa settlement was called as *Dzong*. All Monpa inhabited areas were included in *Gyangkhar Dzong*, *Dirang Dzong* and *Talung Dzong*.
23. Nath, Jogendra., *Op.cit.*, pp.98-100.
24. The *Thongs* are considered to be the direct descendants of *Asu Japtang Bura*, the common forefather of Sherdukpen, whereas the *chaos* is considered to be from the blood of retainers of *Asu Japtang*.

25. Khreimi refers to those people who own taxable land.
26. Due to dialectical differences, the Dirang and Kalaktang Monpas locally call the court fee for major cases *Josum Khada*, while the Tawang Monpas called it *Shosum Khada*. Similarly, the court fee for minor cases is called *Sumtsan* by the Dirang and Kalaktang Monpas and *Sumten* by the Tawang Monpas respectively.
27. *Bhoti* is a classical script developed by a Tibetan Scholar *Thongmi Sambhota* in the 8th century. Since then, it is used mainly as the scripts for recording the *Buddhist Cannons* and important records and documents all over the Himalayan regions.
28. *Gamja* refers to the agreement which was written on the traditionally manufactured local paper called *Boi-sugu*.