



# THE CHUNGDI AND MEYOR OF ANJAW DISTRICT: A STUDY OF TRADITIONAL VILLAGE COUNCIL OF MEYOR TRIBE.

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**Abstract:** Arunachal Pradesh, situated in the Eastern Himalayas, is home to approximately 25 major tribes and numerous sub-tribes, each with its own distinct culture and traditions. Over time, these communities have developed unique ways of life, belief systems, folklore, and festivals. Some of the prominent tribes and sub-tribes include the Adi, Aka, Apatani, Khowa (Bugun), Galo, Hill Miri, Khamba, Khamiyong, Khampti, Lisu (Yobin), Memba, Miji (Sajolang), Mishmi, Monpa, Nah, Nocte, Nyishi, Sherdukpen, Singpho, Sulung (Puroik), Tagin, Tangsa, Tutsa, Wancho, and Zakhing. In addition to these well-known groups, smaller tribal communities also inhabit the state. However, some of these smaller groups are not officially recognized as tribes, while others have yet to receive tribal status. This diversity makes Arunachal Pradesh a vibrant mosaic of cultures and traditions. With the advent of globalization, many of these tribes have rapidly adapted, leading to significant changes in their cultural practices and traditional ways of life.

The present study attempt to highlight a Traditional village council of Meyor Tribes of AP, which is one of the most the lesser known and mentioned lost tribe of the Arunachal pradesh.

**Keywords:** Arunachal Pradesh, Anjaw, Walong, Kibitho, Chungdi, Politics, lost.

## INTRODUCTION

Politics is the social institution through which power is acquired and exercised by some individuals and groups. A political institution is an institutionalized system through which a society is governed, or it is an organization that creates, enforces, and applies laws. Traditional political institutions are institutions whose legitimacy is based on the customary mode of governing a society. These institutions are political in the sense that they make decisions, create laws, and regulate society, but they are traditional in another sense.

Every society, at different stages of its existence, faces challenges related to the governance system. To overcome these challenges and resolve issues, societies develop their own mechanisms and institutions. It is said that society creates, restructures, and modifies various political, social, and economic institutions in accordance

with its changing requirements, growing demands, and constraints. It seems that there is no society where political activities do not occur.

At specific stages in their existence, every society or community creates its own form of government and provides its own system of administration, based on its socio-religious customs, traditions, culture, and mode of behavior. Hence, in every community, there has been a well-organized and established system of administration where laws are made and implemented, public order is maintained, and inter-tribal and inter-communal conflicts are settled.

Though the nature of these political systems may differ from community to community or village to village, it is difficult to determine when, how, and at what point in history these forms of government evolved. As sociologist Robert Morrison MacIver said, "origins are always obscure."

The development of this form of government was driven by the basic need of people to maintain order in society for peaceful living and to effectively manage conflicts that arise among members of the community. They made laws, implemented them, interpreted them, and applied them according to the traditions and customs of the people for the smooth functioning of their communities.

These traditional political institutions managed and resolved conflicts and crimes based on customs and traditions. As a result, they served as custodians of the people's norms, cultures, traditions, and practices. Their main functions were to maintain social harmony, settle disputes among individuals, families, and villages, administer justice, and promote social welfare.

Regarding the political life of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, various literature and oral histories indicate that until 1969, there were no representative institutions in the region, except for the village councils of the respective tribes, which evolved based on their customs and traditions. Scholars have used different theoretical frameworks to classify these tribal village councils. Dr. Pratap Chandra Swain, in his book *Local Self Government in India with Reference to Arunachal Pradesh*, broadly classified the traditional tribal village councils of Arunachal Pradesh into three categories:

Varrier Elwin, in his book *A Philosophy for NEFA*, highlighted that each tribe in Arunachal Pradesh has a distinct system of village government. For instance, the Noctes and Wanchos are led by powerful chiefs, while the Sherdukpens and Akas of Kameng are dominated by aristocratic families. In contrast, the Dafla society is highly individualistic, where the family or household, rather than the village, is regarded as the fundamental unit of society. The Apa Tanis, with their closely knit cooperative social system and villages located near each other, have developed a much more organized system of governance. Elwin also noted that the Adi Kebang is the most highly developed and effective of all tribal councils, which could potentially serve as a model

for the entire NEFA region. It is important to recognize that the political systems and perspectives of each tribe or village were largely confined to their own jurisdiction.

Every tribe or community has its own traditional tribal village council, referred to by different names. For example, it is called *Kebang* among the Adi, *Keba* among the Galo, *Buliang* in the Apatani community, *Mele* among the Aka, *Nyele* among the Nyishi, *Gindung* in the Tagin tribe, *Thap Nimiyang* among the Bugun, *Tsorgan* in the Monpa community, *Ngonthung* in the Nocte tribe, *Jung-Me* among the Sherdukpen, *Ngojawa* in the Wancho community, *Mokchup* among the Khampti, and *Abbela*, *Pharai*, and *Kabaya* in the Mishmi community. These councils play a significant role in all aspects of life within their respective tribal communities, influencing political, legal, economic, and social spheres.

## METHODOLOGY

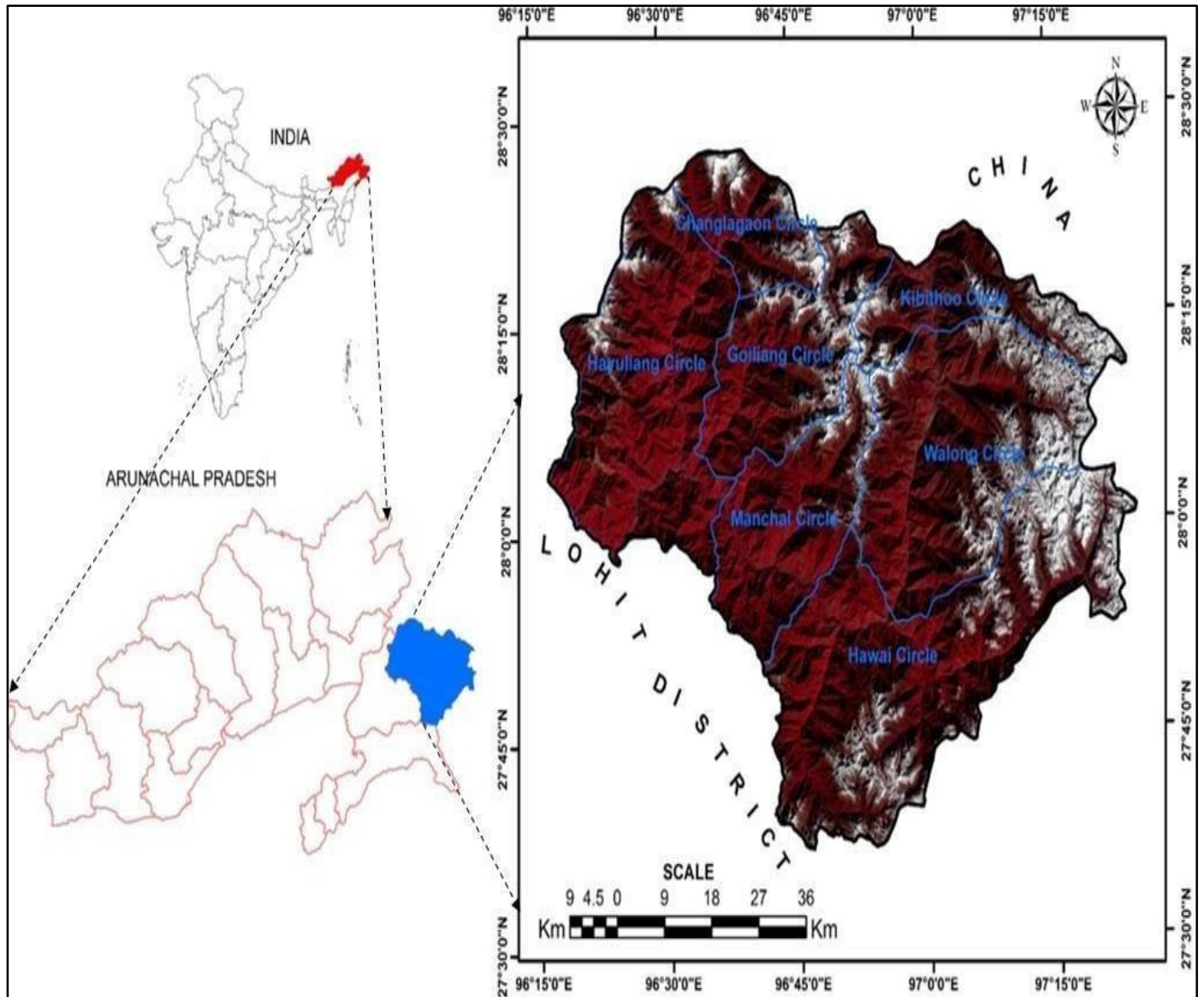
The study is based on experiences and information collected from different primary and secondary sources. Various books were consulted for obtaining secondary data.

## STUDY AREA

The district is situated between 95° 45' E to 97° 24' E longitude and 27° 33' N latitude. It shares its northern and eastern borders with China, while Upper Dibang Valley district lies to the north, Myanmar to the south, and Lohit district to the west. According to the 2011 Census, Anjaw had a total population of 21,167, comprising 11,507 males and 9,660 females. The population density is a sparse 3 persons per km<sup>2</sup>, and the district experienced a population growth rate of 13.77% between 2001 and 2011. The sex ratio stands at 805 females for every 1,000 males, and the literacy rate is 59.4%.

The district is primarily inhabited by the Mishmi and Meyor tribes. Despite significant geographical challenges, Anjaw has made considerable progress in education, agriculture, horticulture, and infrastructure, including developments in hydro power projects. The district holds great potential for tourism, organic farming, and further expansion of hydro power. Anjaw is enriched by numerous large and small perennial rivers such as the Lohit (locally known as Telu by the Mishmi), Lam, Tidding, Dalai, Krowti, Dichu, Lati, Klung, Dav, Telua, Ampani, and Sarti, among others. These rivers contribute to the natural beauty and resources of the region.

### Locational map of study area



## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the heart of Meyor, the political life is intricately woven into the fabric of community values, largely centered on the traditional village council known as the Chungdi. This council is a cornerstone of local governance, presided over by the Genpo, the village headman. His selection is a revered process that reflects the villagers' collective trust and respect. The Genpo is not merely an authority figure; he embodies the wisdom of generations, drawing upon a rich tapestry of traditions and customs that guide decision-making. Alongside him are wise individuals who have earned their status through years of experience and a profound understanding of community dynamics, and knowledgeable persons who possess an in-depth grasp of the local customs that shape daily life.

The Meyors are a peace-loving people, and crime is rarely encountered in their sparsely populated community. Their political life is quite simple, with their religious beliefs and practices significantly influencing

their way of life. While they possess a form of self-governing body, they do not have well-organized traditional village councils like those found in other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, such as the *Keba* of Galo, *Kebang* of Adi, *Buliang* of Apatani, and *Tsorgan* of Monpa. Earlier writers, including *Victor Landi* in his book *The Meyor and Their Language*, referred to the *Genpo* as their village council, which is presided over by a chairman known as *Parbo*. Similarly, *S. Chowdhury* mentioned *Tsongo* as their village council responsible for the internal administration of the village. *Daniel Jamoh*, in his unpublished MPhil dissertation, referred to *Chungdi* as their traditional village council.

According to the Meyors, there exists a village council known as *Chungdi*, which translates to "gathering, meeting, or get-together of the villagers." This council is headed by the *Genpo* or *Gujongtai*, who is the senior-most member of the *Chungdi* and a well-versed individual in village matters. The *Chungdi* serves as a temporary village council that addresses disputes and conflicts within the village, being constituted whenever deemed necessary. Initially, its jurisdiction was limited to judicial matters; however, it has since expanded to include welfare and development activities. The position of *Genpo* is also temporary and is specifically selected for each particular *Chungdi*. When disputes arise that need resolution, capable and experienced elders who are well-versed in customary law convene as part of the *Chungdi*. Interestingly, while the Meyors acknowledge the existence of their village council, they have no clear understanding of its origins, nor do they possess any myths or legends regarding how and when it came into being.

In the early days of the Meyor community, the *Chungdi* was led by the *Genpo*, the eldest and most respected member of the village, who was recognized for his wisdom and understanding of the community's customs and traditions. The *Genpo* held a position of authority, supported by other senior members of the *Chungdi*, who were typically wealthy and possessed considerable experience and expertise in customary law. This collective leadership ensured that decisions were made based on a wealth of knowledge and communal values.

Although the *Genpo* did not receive a regular salary or remuneration for his role, he was compensated with a small share of the fines imposed on individuals found guilty during the council's deliberations. This practice served as a token of appreciation for the responsibilities he undertook in mediating disputes and ensuring justice within the village. The authority of the *Genpo* was significant; his decisions were binding and final, fostering a sense of order and trust among the villagers.

The *Kambring*, who were traditionally involved in judicial activities, played a crucial role in the *Chungdi* as well. They assisted in the performance of oaths and ordeals, which were integral to the resolution of disputes. Their involvement added a layer of legitimacy and solemnity to the proceedings, as these rituals were deeply rooted in the community's beliefs and practices.

The dynamics of the *Chungdi* evolved significantly with the introduction of the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation of 1945, which formalized local governance structures. This regulation led to the appointment of *Gaon Buras*, or village headmen, who became active members of the *Chungdi*. Their presence provided additional administrative support and strengthened the council's role in maintaining law and order within the village.

In contemporary times, the *Chungdi* has seen further changes as local governance structures have become more inclusive. Panchayati leaders, including Gram members, Anchal Samiti representatives, and Zilla Parishad members, actively participate in the *Chungdi*. This integration of local governance representatives reflects a blend of traditional practices with modern administrative frameworks, allowing for a more holistic approach to village governance and community development. By incorporating these diverse voices, the *Chungdi* is better equipped to address the needs and concerns of the entire community, thus maintaining its relevance in a changing socio-political landscape.

In the Meyor community, the *Chungdi* serves as the primary adjudicative body for addressing various disputes and conflicts that arise within the village. Cases involving ownership of land, theft, adultery, interpersonal conflicts, family disagreements, and boundary disputes are all brought before this council. Each case reflects the community's social fabric, highlighting the need for resolution mechanisms that align with their customs and values.

The process begins with the *Genpo*, the respected elder leading the *Chungdi*, who plays a pivotal role in orchestrating the proceedings. Alongside the *Genpo*, other council members—often distinguished elders known for their wisdom and understanding of customary law—contribute to the discussions. Each case is examined meticulously, with members engaging in long and sometimes arduous deliberations. These discussions involve a thorough examination of the facts presented, the relationships between the parties involved, and the broader implications for community harmony.

Evidence is a critical component of this decision-making process. Both the victim and the accused are required to present their sides of the story, ensuring that all relevant information is considered. The council members, guided by the *Genpo*, listen attentively to the testimonies and any evidence submitted. This could include witness statements, physical evidence, or even traditional methods of verification, such as oaths or ordeals, which are integral to the Meyor's customs.

Once all the evidence has been presented and deliberations are concluded, the *Chungdi* reaches a consensus. The final decision is then announced to all council members in a public setting, emphasizing transparency and collective accountability. This public announcement serves not only to inform the parties involved but also to reinforce the communal nature of justice within the village.

In cases where the offender is found guilty, the *Chungdi* imposes penalties, typically in the form of fines. These fines are not merely punitive; they serve as a mechanism for restoring balance within the community. The funds collected from these fines may be used for community welfare, reinforcing the idea that justice contributes to the overall well-being of the village.

Furthermore, the decisions made by the *Chungdi* are binding, which highlights the authority and respect accorded to this traditional institution. The rulings are accepted by the community as legitimate, reinforcing social order and cohesion. The involvement of the *Chungdi* in resolving disputes reflects the Meyors' commitment to maintaining harmony within their society, showcasing their preference for restorative justice rather than punitive measures.

Overall, the workings of the *Chungdi* illustrate a sophisticated and culturally embedded system of governance, where justice is administered in a manner that is consistent with the community's values and traditions. This system not only addresses individual grievances but also reinforces communal ties, ensuring that the fabric of Meyor society remains intact and harmonious.

In the Meyor community, traditional conflict resolution practices played a significant role in maintaining social harmony and addressing disputes. Historically, most cases were managed in a conventional manner, reflecting the community's values and customs. For less contentious issues, disputes often resulted in mutual settlements between the accused and the complainant. These settlements typically involved the assistance of a mediator, an elder or respected member of the community who facilitated negotiations. Compensation was usually paid to the aggrieved party, enabling both sides to reach a satisfactory resolution without escalating the matter to the *Chungdi*. This approach underscored the importance of maintaining relationships and harmony within the community, prioritizing reconciliation over punishment.

However, not all disputes could be resolved through such amicable means. For more complex cases—especially those involving deeply rooted grievances or accusations that could not be easily substantiated—the matter would be referred to the local administration for further consideration. This step was crucial for cases that involved significant community interests or potential breaches of social order.

In situations where the *Chungdi* found itself at an impasse, particularly in cases that could not be resolved through ordinary deliberations, the intervention of a *kambring* was sought. A *kambring* is traditionally regarded as a person endowed with magical abilities or supernatural insight. Their involvement added a layer of complexity to the resolution process. Initially, statements would be collected from both the victim and the accused to ensure that all perspectives were considered. If the accused denied the allegations, the *Chungdi* would guide the situation towards more dramatic measures, including the performance of ordeals—ritualistic tests designed to reveal the truth through divine intervention or physical evidence.

These ordeals were not merely punitive; they were steeped in the cultural belief that supernatural forces would protect the innocent and expose the guilty. A priest often presided over these rituals, invoking spiritual authority to lend credence to the proceedings. If the accused person opted for an ordeal, they would typically take an oath in the names of gods, goddesses, and ancestral spirits, who were thought to be witnesses to the alleged crime. This act was taken very seriously, as the community believed that a false oath would incur dire consequences for the oath-taker.

The ordeals themselves were designed to test the physical resilience and moral integrity of the accused. Common practices included retrieving a heated stone from boiling water, holding burning charcoal in the palm, or enduring the touch of a heated iron. The underlying belief was that if the accused was innocent, they would emerge from these trials unscathed; conversely, if they were guilty, they would sustain burns or injuries as a form of divine retribution. This system relied heavily on the community's collective belief in the efficacy of supernatural judgment, intertwining spiritual beliefs with the administration of justice.

The outcomes of these ordeals were pivotal. If the accused sustained injuries, it was taken as a sign of guilt, while a lack of harm would exonerate them. The community placed great faith in these traditional practices as a means of identifying the true culprit, reflecting a deep-seated belief in the interconnectedness of morality, spirituality, and justice. These rituals not only served as a mechanism for conflict resolution but also reinforced communal bonds and shared cultural values.

Through this elaborate process, the Meyor community maintained a sense of order and justice rooted in their unique traditions and belief systems. The combination of mediation, community deliberation, and supernatural intervention exemplified their holistic approach to governance, illustrating how traditional practices could effectively address disputes while fostering social cohesion and mutual respect. The reliance on customary law, alongside these dramatic displays of faith in the supernatural, underscores the profound cultural significance of justice within the Meyor community, shaping their social dynamics for generations.

In the Meyor society, the administration of penalties lacks a formal legal framework, which leads to a more flexible approach to justice. Offenses such as theft, violent crimes, and even murder are not common, but when they do occur, the penalties vary significantly based on the nature of the offense. For instance, if an individual is found responsible for killing a domestic animal—be it a cow, pig, goat, or dog—whether intentionally or accidentally, they are typically required to compensate the owner. This compensation can take the form of a monetary payment or the restitution of an equivalent animal, ensuring a swift resolution to the matter.

In cases where the accused is financially disadvantaged and unable to pay fines or compensation, the community often steps in to assist. Family members usually provide support to help cover the fines imposed on



their kin. This system of indemnity reflects the tribe's emphasis on communal responsibility and solidarity, highlighting the interconnectedness of family and community in the enforcement of social norms. The Meyor people maintain these practices as part of their traditional approach to justice, which prioritizes restoration and harmony over punitive measures.

The Chungdi does not have a designated building for conducting its proceedings; rather, meetings are typically held in an open space or at the residence of one of the disputing parties. There is no formal mechanism within the community dedicated to resolving every dispute, reflecting a more organic approach to conflict resolution. All members of the community have the right to voice their opinions and express their views freely during the deliberations, although this freedom is limited for women. Women are permitted to speak only if they are directly involved in the case, either as an accused individual or as a victim.

When a fine or compensation is imposed on the guilty party, the payment goes directly to the plaintiff, reinforcing the principle of restitution in the community's approach to justice. This arrangement emphasizes the importance of community involvement and dialogue in resolving conflicts while maintaining a focus on restoring balance and harmony within the society.

The members of the Chungdi consisted primarily of senior members and the Kambring, individuals recognized for their extensive expertise and experience in customary law. Selection of members occurred within the village itself, with each chosen individual possessing deep knowledge and understanding of the council's practices and traditions. To become a Chungdi member, candidates needed to demonstrate age-old wisdom and familiarity with the intricacies of the council's functions. Wealthier individuals often exerted more influence over the proceedings due to their social standing and resources.

There was no fixed number of Chungdi members, but each member was expected to meet several qualifications. These included a strong capacity for judgment, rationality, impartiality, and honesty, as well as qualities such as a commanding personality, effective communication skills, and a thorough understanding of the village's culture and traditions. Moreover, potential members needed to exhibit a high general aptitude, an interest in serving the community, and unwavering loyalty to the village. Additionally, age, gender, and experience were critical factors in the selection process, reflecting the importance of both seniority and wisdom in these decision-making bodies.

In the traditional structure of the Chungdi, women were excluded from membership and participation in the proceedings. Their involvement was limited strictly to instances when they were directly involved in a case, either as the accused or the victim. Outside of these circumstances, women were not permitted to speak during Chungdi meetings. This exclusion was rooted in the belief that women's participation in administrative matters was detrimental to society, often viewed as a sign of weak governance and a lack of authority.

Moreover, there was a prevailing concern that allowing women to partake in Chungdi proceedings could disrupt family life and social dynamics. Despite this exclusion, women were permitted to serve food and drink to the council members during meetings, highlighting their role in supporting the communal functions without engaging in the decision-making process itself. This practice underscores the gender dynamics within the Meyor community, where traditional norms significantly shaped the roles and expectations of women.

A member of the Chungdi from one village is not permitted to intervene in or settle disputes occurring in another village. In instances of inter-village disputes, members from the Chungdi of both involved villages convene together at a mutually agreeable location to address and resolve the conflicts. If the members are unable to reach a settlement, the matter is referred to the local administration for further consideration and discussion.

In these proceedings, the head of every household is encouraged to participate actively. This collective involvement emphasizes the importance of community engagement in the decision-making process, ensuring that diverse perspectives and interests are represented during deliberations. The collaborative nature of the Chungdi in handling inter-village disputes reflects a deep-rooted commitment to maintaining harmony and order within the broader community.

Within the Chungdi, there was no formal differentiation in status among its members, as all were considered equal in their roles. However, the Kambring of the village enjoyed a slightly higher status due to their unique privileges and responsibilities within the community. While all members contributed to the council's deliberations, individuals who were wealthy, influential, and well-versed in customary laws tended to receive more recognition and importance compared to the average member.

Despite this informal hierarchy, it is noteworthy that Chungdi members did not receive any remuneration for their participation in council activities. Their involvement was driven by a sense of duty and commitment to their community, reflecting the traditional values of service and collective welfare that underpin the functioning of the Chungdi.

In contemporary times, the Chungdi is composed of the Gaon Bura, selected senior members of the village, and the Kambring (priest). The Head Gaon Bura typically presides over the meetings of the Chungdi, guiding the discussions and facilitating the resolution of disputes. While the Head Gaon Bura holds the authority to make the final decision, it is important to note that this decision is usually made with great consideration for the consensus of public opinion.

Furthermore, there are no restrictions preventing members of the Gram Panchayat and Anchal Samiti from participating in the Chungdi. They are allowed to engage actively in the council's proceedings, although they do not possess the authority to render a final verdict. This inclusion reflects a more integrated approach to

governance within the community, blending traditional structures with more formalized local government participation.

The Chungdi wields significant powers and functions within the community, primarily focused on settling disputes, addressing social issues, and facilitating developmental activities. One of their crucial roles is to maintain peace and security within the village by holding accountable those who misbehave or disrupt communal harmony. They actively engage in resolving various disputes, ensuring that all matters are handled appropriately and fairly.

There are no strict limitations on the scope of the Chungdi's powers and functions, allowing them to address a wide range of issues that affect the village. The Genpo, supported by other members of the Chungdi, carries out the essential task of dispensing justice. They receive complaints from villagers, which can range from civil to criminal matters. After careful deliberation involving both the complainants and the accused, the Chungdi seeks to resolve these issues according to customary law.

Typically, judgments are based on the traditions and practices of the community, although it is important to note that there is no formal written code of laws governing these proceedings. This reliance on customary law underscores the significance of cultural practices in the justice system of the Meyor community.

In the past, the Chungdi had the authority to settle both civil and criminal cases, but in contemporary times, its focus has shifted primarily to addressing specific issues that commonly arise within the community. These include cases related to theft, adultery, elopement, land disputes, boundary conflicts, and property disagreements. Notably, the Chungdi has never encountered any murder cases, and they are generally not inclined to take on such serious matters. For cases involving murder or more severe criminal activities, the concerned parties are encouraged to seek a fair judgment from the civil courts.

The assembly of the Chungdi is not conducted regularly, and there is no set schedule for their meetings. Traditionally, they would gather upon receiving a complaint from the plaintiff. However, the current process involves the Gaon Bura of the village, who plays a crucial role in managing disputes. When a complaint is raised, the Gaon Bura summons the accused through their representative, requiring them to appear before the Chungdi.

Once the accused is present, the trial proceedings commence. All members of the Chungdi attentively listen to the deliberations from both sides to ensure a fair and comprehensive assessment of the situation. If the Chungdi is unable to reach a resolution, they may resort to oaths or ordeals as part of the decision-making process. Should these methods also prove ineffective, the aggrieved party has the option to appeal to a local administrative officer or take the matter to the local court for further adjudication. This structured approach highlights the evolving role of the Chungdi within the broader legal framework of the Meyor community.

The Chungdi plays a significant role in the administrative and developmental activities of the Meyor villages. Each tribal council is responsible for the governance of its respective village. To maintain law and order, combat social evils, and protect the community from both external interference and internal disturbances, the Chungdi establishes rules and regulations aimed at fostering peace and tranquility within society.

While the Chungdi's direct involvement in developmental activities may be limited, its members are integral to various socio-religious and cultural events in the village. Their participation in celebrations, the disposal of deceased members, and the construction of homes is crucial for the community's cohesion. Not only the Chungdi members but all villagers typically engage in these activities, underscoring the collective spirit of the Meyor society.

In addition to their social roles, the Chungdi undertakes various welfare duties that include:

1. **Health and Sanitation:** The Chungdi is responsible for ensuring health and sanitation within the village, promoting cleanliness and hygiene practices among villagers.
2. **Infrastructure Development:** They are involved in building basic infrastructure, such as dirt link roads, temporary bridges over streams, and fencing around cultivated lands to protect crops from animals.
3. **Support for Economically Distressed Villagers:** The Chungdi provides assistance to economically disadvantaged community members by helping them construct necessary shelters.
4. **Water Supply Management:** They oversee the village's water supply system. In the past, bamboo pipes were used to channel water from nearby streams to the village, but this has evolved to include metal pipes for better efficiency.
5. **Cultural Integration:** To maintain integrity and cooperation among villagers, the Chungdi organizes and celebrates local festivals with great enthusiasm, fostering a sense of community.
6. **Disaster Relief Operations:** They play an active role in relief efforts during natural calamities and emergencies, mobilizing resources and support for affected villagers.
7. **Maintenance of Religious Structures:** The council is also tasked with the upkeep of religious establishments, including gompas, chortens, and manes, ensuring they remain functional and respected spaces within the community.
8. **Law and Order Enforcement:** The Chungdi is responsible for maintaining security and law and order in the village, addressing conflicts and disputes as they arise.

Through these multifaceted roles, the Chungdi not only addresses immediate concerns but also contributes to the overall welfare and development of the Meyor community, reflecting their deep-rooted commitment to the collective well-being of their village.

## Conclusion

Each society exhibits both continuity and change. Continuity refers to preserving the cultural traditions and legacies passed down from one generation to the next. Social control is maintained through child-rearing and education, ensuring that social inheritance is passed on to future generations. Over time, every society must evolve, as change is a constant and natural law of life. However, the intensity and scope of change vary across cultures, with different conditions bringing about these transformations.

In Arunachal Pradesh, tradition and modernity coexist harmoniously as the state progresses toward development, peace, and prosperity. Unlike other tribal regions of the nation, Arunachal Pradesh demonstrates a unique blend of cultural preservation and adaptation to modernity. The introduction of new systems and modern influences has, in certain cases, resulted in alterations to the functioning of traditional institutions. Nonetheless, the balance between tradition and progress remains integral to the social fabric of the state.

The ancient institutions of the region have undergone significant changes over time, especially since the decolonization process began and political control shifted. The impact of new values has gradually diminished the prominence of traditional ones. Many outdated laws that were once in place have been repealed. This transformation includes the introduction of free citizenship rights and the establishment of democratic institutions such as the Gaon Bura and Kotoki, who are selected by the administration to serve on the village council.

These changes also led to the restriction of the powers of the tribal chiefs or village heads, who once acted as the informal leaders of the community. In recent years, the political landscape of Meyor society has also evolved. The appointment of Gam and Political Interpreters to assist the political officer, followed by the introduction of Panchayati Raj institutions, has brought considerable changes to the political structure of Meyor society. These developments have reshaped the traditional governance system, reflecting the broader changes taking place within the community.

The institution of Gaon Bura dates back to the colonial era when the British government enacted the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation of 1945. During this time, the British appointed the oldest and most knowledgeable person in a village, one who had good relations with everyone, to serve as the head of the village. The Gaon Bura was entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining law and order and overseeing all developmental activities within the village.

After India gained independence, the government retained the institution of Gaon Bura, making them representatives of the government at the village level. Although the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation of 1945 was implemented, traditional village councils were still permitted to exercise their customary powers and make decisions based on traditional practices. However, in matters related to police and criminal cases, they were required to operate within the framework of the 1945 regulation.

The term 'Gaon Bura' literally translates to "village elder," with 'Gaon' meaning village and 'Bura' meaning elder. This term is widely used in the northeastern part of India and denotes the highest authority within a village, tasked with resolving disputes and maintaining law and order. Gaon Buras can be either selected or elected, and once appointed, their role is often passed down through generations.

On the recommendation of the Dying Ering Committee, the current Panchayati Raj system was first introduced in Arunachal Pradesh, officially coming into effect on October 2, 1968. This initiative aimed to decentralize power and promote local self-governance, allowing villagers to have a say in their own administrative and developmental matters.

The establishment of this system was a significant milestone in empowering local communities, as it sought to provide a structured framework for grassroots governance. Under this system, local councils were formed, enabling the people to participate in decision-making processes that directly affected their lives and livelihoods.

In 1997, the state legislative assembly took a further step by passing the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, which was based on the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. This amendment aimed to enhance the democratic process at the village level by providing constitutional recognition to the Panchayati Raj institutions, thereby ensuring their functionality and autonomy.

The 1997 Act deepened the foundations of self-government, giving the local bodies the authority to formulate and implement plans for economic development and social justice. It emphasized the importance of local participation and accountability, fostering political consciousness among the people of Arunachal Pradesh. This increased awareness led to greater community engagement in governance and development initiatives, enabling residents to voice their concerns and needs effectively.

Overall, the introduction and subsequent strengthening of the Panchayati Raj system in Arunachal Pradesh represent a crucial shift towards participatory governance, encouraging a sense of ownership and responsibility among the local population while also enhancing the region's overall democratic fabric.

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