

Contradiction and Relation between Traditional Institutions (TIs) and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Kamporijo Circle of Kamle District of Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract: The interface of Traditional Institutions (TIs) and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India, particularly in the context of tribal areas like Arunachal Pradesh is characterized by complexities entailing conflict as well as complementary. While TIs usage customary law derive legitimacy from collective conformity among the community, ancestry, and are typically engaged as village councils (e.g., Kembang, Builang or Nyele of different tribes), clan heads, and customary practices; the institutionalization of Panchayati Raj Institutions based on the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution in 1992 imposed a formal layer of democratic governance in rural India, including Scheduled Areas and tribal areas also in a modified fashion based on Article 243 M of the constitution and PESA under the Panchayati Raj Act of 1996. **Objective:** The study aims to examine the contradiction, cooperation, conflicts, and overlaps between these twin governance forms that exist in tribal dominated areas of north-east India like Arunachal Pradesh especially in Kamporijo Circle of Kamle District. **Research Methodology:** This research takes a qualitative exploratory comparative case study design to critically analyse the contradictions and evolving relationships between Traditional Institutions (TIs) and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Kamporijo Circle of Kamle District, Arunachal Pradesh of India. Conflicts between TIs and PRIs in Kamle become clear on their founding principles and the legitimacy of institutions. TIs of Nyishi tribe actively perform procedures based on oral tradition, clan power, and consensus. These institutions receive higher degree of respect and willingness to submit to them, and are often the first resource for conflict, land disputes, and behavioral regulations. **Conclusion:** The relationship between Traditional Institutions and PRIs in Kamporijo Circle is both co-dependent and antagonistic. While PRIs presented the formal structure of decentralized governance, Traditional Institutions held cultural authority and moral legitimacy.

Keywords: Ancestry, Customary Practices, Conflicts, Oral Tradition, Clan Power, Land Disputes.

INTRODUCTION

The interface of Traditional Institutions (TIs) and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India, particularly in the context of tribal areas like Arunachal Pradesh, is characterized by complexities entailing conflict as well as complementary. TIs have significantly facilitated local governance, dispute resolution, and cultural continuity based on customary laws and indigenous practices that have survived for centuries (NEREGA, 2008; Elwin, 1959). While TIs usage customary law derive legitimacy from collective conformity among the community, ancestry, and are typically engaged as village councils (e.g., locally Kembang, Builang, or Nyele of different tribes), clan heads, and customary practices; the institutionalization of Panchayati Raj Institutions based on the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution in 1992 imposed a formal layer of democratic governance in rural India, including Scheduled Areas and tribal areas also in a modified fashion based on Article 243 M of the Constitution and PESA under the Panchayati Raj Act of 1996. With formal governance of the rural sector established, it spawned a contradictory dual governance structure departing from TIs—on the one hand tradition and custom and on the

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other statutory governance based on laws—frequently inventing confusion with respect to jurisdiction, administrative overlap, and decision-making tensions (Bordoloi, 2011; Baviskar & Mathew, 2009). Evident contrasts would appear when the stated values and procedures of TIs—most TIs are informal and based on people, shown by the close ties of action and interpretation from oral tradition and collective wisdom—conflict with the norms of procedure, compulsory gender participation, and formal democratic accountability of PRIs. For instance, representation of women, Dalits, or minority tribal are usually either scanty or tokenistic in TIs in ways where PRIs create compulsory designation to reserved persons to gain representation of these groups (NIRDPR, 2018). The conflict of values can sap the effective operational capacity of PRIs in tribal areas in which the authority of traditional elders has far greater legitimacy than elected panchayat leaders. However, TIs and PRIs should not be understood simply as adversaries. In many places, they have developed a persistently symbiotic relationship, acting in concert in an informal way to support the PRI, by mobilising consensus in the community, resolving conflicts, and ensuring grassroots engagement in development programs (Chaudhuri, 2004). In some tribal areas, PRIs have facilitated and better adapted to local realities by elaborating traditional norms of governance or by including traditional leaders in PRI decision-making processes, thus creating a hybrid governance arrangement (Upadhyay, 2005). So, the relationship of TI and PRI is both coexistence and contention on the basis of a variety of contextual circumstances, with the specificities of the region of India, the form of state intervention, and the political agency of the various tribal communities. It is crucial to think through this dualism to develop inclusive, culturally-attuned governance systems in tribal India. The emergent experience of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Kamporijo recognises the complexity of balancing formal decentralisation with tribal traditions, whilst advancing gender equity, digitisation, and a more visible and tangible community agency, but also a series of notable aspects and settings of governance. TIs and PRIs co-existing in Kamporijo Circle (Kamle District), Arunachal Pradesh have inherent functional complementarities as well as contradictions. Given their evolved association with self-determined customary tribal norms, TIs represent a significant dimension of the formal, constitutional/state-ascribed quality of democracy offered through the PRIs, but at least for Kamporijo, the intersection has created a layer of administrative tension within a conflicting cultural field and dual authority system, especially so for tribal society of Nyishis dominate in the regions of Kamporijo administrative circle.

OBJECTIVE

The study aims to examine the contradiction, cooperation, conflicts, and overlaps between these twin governance forms that exist in tribal dominated areas of north-east India like Arunachal Pradesh especially in Kamporijo Circle of Kamle District.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research takes a qualitative exploratory comparative case study design to critically analyse the contradictions and evolving relationships between Traditional Institutions (TIs) and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Kamporijo Circle of Kamle District, Arunachal Pradesh, of India.

1. Research Design:

This study has used a qualitative descriptive and analytic research design. The research is situated in a constructivism paradigm which accepts plural legal and administrative systems co-existing and believes indigenous knowledge and customary law are essential to tribal governance and society. Using a qualitative approach, a more complex picture of lived realities and the relationships of TIs and PRIs in rural Arunachal Pradesh can be developed.

2. Study Area:

The study area is Kamporijo Circle of Kamle District, which is mainly inhabited by Nyishi and well-known for traditional governance structures such as Gindu system- a local arbitration system and Mel/Nyel which was traditional institution of the area. Again, later Bango system was imposed externally without meaningful participation or informed consent, by Daying Ering Committee in the post Chinese war. These co-exist with constitutionally mandated PRIs under the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1997.

3. Data Collection Methods:

The study used both primary and secondary data to collect data for triangulation.

a. Primary Data Collection:

In-depth interviews were done with PRI representatives, (Gram Panchayat members, Gaonburas), Traditional leaders, (clan heads, village council elders), Women PRI representatives and SHG leaders, Local government and NGO's staff involved in rural development, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in selected villages that included, Perceptions of TIs and PRIs roles, authority and legitimacy by the community.

Participant observations:

The researcher attended the Gram Sabha (local governance), customary dispute resolution and SHGs (Self Help Groups) mobilization meetings to see the interplay between formal and customary governance in practice.

b. Secondary Data Sources:

It includes Documented laws and policies (e.g., Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act (1997) and PESA (Panchayati Raj Extension to Scheduled Areas Act)) policy, Community Empowerment Act provisions, Project reports from governmental institutions – NEREGA (2008), IDEA (2008), Academic writing, articles and texts/accredited (Elwin, 1959; Bordoloi, 2011; Upadhyay, 2005), Media publications (e.g. Arunachal Times, 2008), Academic doctoral theses & evaluation research reports (Tamo, 2007; and Yakar, 2024).

4. Sampling Method: The researcher used a purposive method of sampling to find key informants who were engaged formally in PRIs, or who had traditional authority in the community. Villages were identified by activity of PRIs and TIs, to document inter-institutional relations.

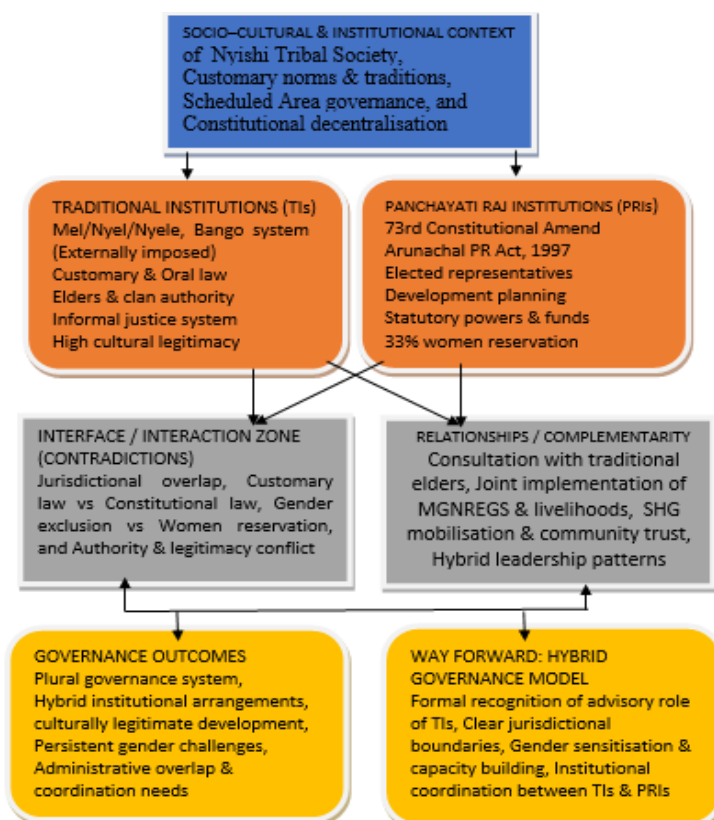
5. Data Collection Tools: Semi-structured interview guides this method, which was less prescriptive and open-ended, and was helpfully experience-rich interactions with respondents. There were observation checklists to record institutional processes, gender relations, and conflict and disputes processes.

6. Data Analysis: The researcher employed thematic analysis and applied qualitative content analysis steps: Interview transcripts, observation notes and FGDs were hand coded. Patterns identified were in relations to conflicts (jurisdiction and legitimacy inclusion or exclusion of women), cooperation (livelihood implementation and shared participation), and hybridity (overlapping roles and advising potential). Coding schemes to cross reference with secondary literature to confirm themes identified.

7. Ethical Considerations: Ethical clearance was obtained prior to commencing fieldwork. All participants were briefed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained. Anonymity of respondents was ensured. Sensitive information provided relating to customary justice, gender norms and local disputes were treated with appropriate cultural respect and confidentiality.

8. Study Limitations: Certain customary practices were not fully witnessed or documented a level of cultural sensitivity and also informality of TIs (Traditional Institutions) of governance. Language and dialectical limitations require the engagement of local interpreters, which has the potential to inject bias into interpretations. The findings are context dependent in Kamporijo Circle and may not transferable across tribal areas within India.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS



EXPLANATION OF THE DIAGRAM

The Conceptual Framework Diagram illustrates and defines the relationship or a contradiction between both a Traditional Institution (TI) and a Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) within the socio-political context of the Kamle District of Arunachal Pradesh. The Conceptual Framework captures the larger Socio-Cultural and Institutional setting of Tribal Societies where customary law, kinship-based authority, and oral traditions are coexisting with Decentralised Governance that is mandated by the Constitution. Governed typically in Tribal areas like present Kamle District, the nature of governance is inherently plural and reflects two sources of legitimacy - Custom and the Law (Elwin, 1959; Bordoloi, 2011).

The TI's framed in the Conceptual Framework, (locally called Nyele/Nyel/Mel) in Kamporijo Circle, is example of Village Council, which is the Indigenous system of Governance built before the establishment of the modern state. The TIs derive their legitimacy from Customary Law, Collective Consensus, and the Moral Authority of the Elders who help make decisions for the village and provide for dispute resolution, regulating social behaviour and helping to maintain the Tribal Identity (Bordoloi *et al.*, 1980; Chaudhuri, 2004). In addition to TIs, the Conceptual Framework highlights the limitations outlined above; in particular the TI, because of its patriarchal and gerontocratic structure, tends to exclude women from formal decision-making roles, thus perpetuating traditional gender hierarchies (Bordoloi, 2011).

In addition to Traditional Institutions (TIs) and the Panchayati Raj system of governance in India, there are also other types of governance structures that support democratic decentralisation. These include local self-government councils (Panchayati Raj Institutions) from the third tier of government under the Constitution of India and through the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act passed in 1997. Effectively the third tier of government while at the same time supporting democratic decentralisation, Panchayati Raj Institutions emphasise statutory accountability for elected representatives; provide for financial resources to be shared with the local population; and provide for planned development (Baviskar & Mathew 2009; NIRDPR 2018) There are also criteria for how to implement social inclusion within the system through reservations (quotas) for women, with the intention of breaking down the barriers of patriarchy and promoting greater involvement of women in decision-making and governance at the village level (Upadhyay 2005).

The schematic representation of the interface or relationship between Traditional Institutions and Panchayati Raj Institutions illustrates how dynamic these two governance structures are as they both coexist, and there is often a contradiction, but also complementary relationships exist between them. Jurisdictional disputes are often common in areas where the two governance structures overlap; such as for dispute resolution, land use, management and regulation of the community whereby there are claims of authority from both Traditional Institutions and elected representatives from a Panchayat (Elwin, 1959; Das & Tamo 2011). The fact that custom and constitutional law coexist, brings tension, particularly next to the constitutional principle of equality, rights of individuals, and gender justice, with respect to how it might conflict with the traditional norms (Baviskar & Mathew 2009). Because of the gender dynamics involved, the contradictions also become more pronounced in how women are represented statistically in Panchayat Raj Institutions, whereby statutory representation of women does not always translate into women's empowerment, due to the influences of patriarchal customs and traditions (Yakar, 2024).

In addition, the framework illustrates key areas of cooperation and institutional synergy between the Traditional Institutions (TIs) and the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). In practice, Traditional Elders often provide informal advice to the Panchayati Raj Institutions, lending cultural legitimacy to the initiatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions and providing support for consensus-building in the community (Chaudhuri 2004; IDEA 2008). In addition to this relationship, collaborative engagement is evident in the manner in which development programmes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), livelihood programmes and the Mobilisation of Self-Help Groups, are implemented in collaboration with Traditional Institutions, as the trust networks of Traditional Institutions complement the administrative and financial capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions (NEREGA 2008; Upadhyay 2005). In addition, the emergence of Hybrid Leadership models, where individuals are both members of traditional councils and Panchayati Raj Institutions, adds further legitimacy to the negotiated approach to governance that the Panchayati Raj Institutions have taken (Bordoloi 2011).

The outcomes outlined in the framework are a cumulative result of these relationships and interactions and have resulted in a pluralistic and hybridised system of governance within Kamle District. While a pluralistic system of governance lends Cultural Legitimacy, and Community Acceptance to the legitimacy of Development Interventions, it also creates continuing Administrative Overlaps, Ambiguities in Authority and Persistent Gender Inequalities (Tamo 2007; Das & Tamo 2011). Consequently, the framework illustrates that, in order to understand the effectiveness of Governance in a Tribal Area, one must consider Governance in terms of the cultural embeddedness of Tribal Life and Social Legitimacy, as well as by assessing the effectiveness of Governance through a lens based on the performance of the formal institutions.

The framework clearly suggests that a hybrid model for governance is the best way forward, as this will include traditional institutions (TI) formally recognised in an advisory capacity, defined boundaries of jurisdiction between customary institutions and statutory institutions, and further enhance efforts that are gender sensitive and capacity building. To achieve an inclusive, democratic, culturally based form of governance within Kamle District and throughout all of Arunachal Pradesh's tribal areas, TI and PRIs must work together in tandem more effectively.

DISCUSSION IN DETAIL

In Kampoijio Circle of Arunachal Pradesh, where tribal culture is a distinct system, TIs and PRIs coexist in a governance constellation that is both collaborative and contradictory. TIs are informal, indigenous, and customary or self-governance forms whilst PRIs are formalized decentralised governance forms that were constitutionally sanctioned via the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992. It embodies a highly entrenched tribal culture and customary community existence, both TIs and PRIs engender participatory development alongside the contradictory governance dilemmas produced by overlapping jurisdiction and cultural variations (Bordoloi, 2011; Baviskar & Mathew, 2009).

CONFLICT BETWEEN TIs AND PRIs

1. Conflicts between TIs and PRIs in Kampoijio Circle: Conflicts between TIs and PRIs in Kamle become clear on their founding principles and the legitimacy of institutions. TIs—such as the Nyele and Kebang, traditional village councils of the Nyishi and Adi tribes—actively perform procedures based on oral tradition, clan power, and consensus. These institutions receive higher degree of respect and willingness to submit to them, and are often the first resource for conflict, land disputes, and behavioral regulations (Elwin, 1959; Chaudhuri, 2004). PRIs are legal entities sitting within a constitutionally derived statute that relate to periodic elections, financial devolution, and statutory compulsions to include 'everyone,' including women alongside primitives and tribes (other than prescribed allowances for Scheduled Tribes and women). In the context of Kampoijio, PRIs are often viewed as exogenous impositions with weak connections to the local cultural systems (Upadhyay, 2005). In practice, conflicts arise among jurisdictional levels, as it relates to reporting, for example, a dispute village in respect of traditions is reported to the traditional council committee and simultaneously also to the PRI representative. In practice, this jurisdictional confusion on respect of authority decision-making creates higher administrative overlaps (NEREGA, 2008).

2. Gendered Dynamics and Women's Roles: One of the most glaring contradictions is in the participation of women. In most Traditional Institutions in Kampoijio, women are not participants in councils and as traditional institutions are patriarchal and gerontocratic, women held no formal decision-making powers, and their agency is often mediated by male relatives and other community elders, (Bordoloi, 2011). On the other hand, PRIs - with 33% reservation for women - created formal spaces for women in leadership positions. This has led to the gradual emergence of women as PRI members, Gaonburas and SHG leaders in Kampoijio in rural livelihoods situations such as MGNREGS work planning, SHG mobilization and rural banking with SHGs (Arunachal Times, 2008). Even the women who are elected do not cut all ties with traditional institutions, and commonly faced sociocultural barriers such as prohibited public speaking or soliciting or colluding with male induced power of TIs. This leads to what scholars have called 'tokenistic representation' whereby women have a seat but no substantive power (Baviskar and Mathew, 2009).

3. Livelihood Dynamic: A Hybrid Governance Reality: In addition to the glaring differences, TIs and PRIs in Kampoijio have been able to forge functional relationships where they cooperate especially around planning and implementing livelihood activities. For example, traditional institutions have tightly knit networks of trust among community members that have helped build the success of self-help groups (SHGs) as they legitimate the assignment of intra-group rules and disseminate authority (NEREGA, 2008). Institutionally, elders often support MGNREGS-related development programs that are led by PRIs, such as rural infrastructure works, as they are able to convene labour and ensure participation. Moreover, some PRI representatives from Kampoijio are respected members of Traditional Councils, which means, the community has a hybrid system or authority mechanism of negotiated understanding that has enabled both the formal and non-formal systems and their respective parts to work together. This arrangement, while it may not be formally institutionalized, provides a degree of context-sensitive governance that respects cultural legitimacy and provides access to statutorily financed development programs (Chaudhuri, 2004; Upadhyay, 2005).

4. Toward Institutional Synergy and Inclusive Governance: The bet in Kampoijio must be to bridge the gap between TIs and PRIs. The process of policy making must include avenues for formal recognition of the advisory role of TIs and an equally robust democratic capacity for PRIs. Furthermore, any model must emphasize gender empowerment through meaningful participation for women in both TIs and PRIs via legislative gender quota structures but also adequate capacity building, social sensitization and leadership preparation. If the model is successful, an integrative governance system will secure culturally legitimate mechanisms that also maximize potential effectiveness for development in tribal contexts, like Kampoijio, where improved livelihoods and social equity depend on local legitimacy, gender equity and institutional coherence.

5. Indirect Governance and Jurisdictional Conflict: One of the essential contradictions comes from jurisdictional overlap between customary governance arrangements and constitutional governance systems:

1. Traditional village councils Mel/Nyel derive their authority from ancient customs and oral tradition. They arbitrate disputes between villagers, they define norms of tribal behaviour and manage property in common (e.g., forest

resources). Later Gaon Buras and elder members of the villages falling under Kamporijo where Bango system were set up for administrative convenience by government on the recommendation of Daying Ering committee after Chinese war 1962.

2. PRIs are constitutional and were formed by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment to the Constitution and at the state-level through The Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act 1997, by which their role is to attendance to official governance, development planning, and service provision. In Kamporijo, the local custom of village members relating to customary affiliations to elders often privileges these customary decisions over elected Panchayati representatives.

6. Erosion of Women's Roles in PRIs: While PRIs are supposed to have 33% of the positions held by women, to some extent, the Nyishi tribal norms may overlook women in decision-making roles:

1. Elected women PRIs may be viewed as “proxy leaders,” whose decisions are made by male relatives/elders, as incorporated/counselled for consensus, based on established customs concerning gender hierarchy (Yakar, 2024).
2. In Kamporijo, this sometimes puts the statutory mandates and patriarchic customs, that obstruct social empowerment: “the customary forms of customary customs limit the fulfilled social capital of women's statutory representation under the PRI system” (Yakar, 2024, p. 1815).

7. Customary Justice vs. Constitutional Values: Sometimes traditional councils may sanction or hold norms that contradict with the constitutional values regarding:

1. Individual rights such as freedom of (free) speech, and inter-tribal marriage.
2. Various harmful punishments (including shunning, or penalized decisions) which breach the norms of penalized decisions. This means that there is a systemic clash between those norms (states which are in-line with, but not limited to, nomadic customary based reputation and community consensus) and those protected by the Constitution (statutory rights based on an individual basis). “Customary practice such as consensus-based justice, is good in that regard, but sometimes contravenes individual rights enumerated in the Constitution” (Das & Tamo, 2011).

8. Opposition to New Development Initiatives: Traditional leaders in Kamporijo could still resist external development programmes, as they are delivered - via PRIs or NGOs (since they may pose a challenge to their cultural authority):

1. Including opposition to new infrastructures, new farming styles or educational requirements.
2. Elder may oppose giving consent, or will defer to the moment of decision-making if the plans are not formalised, or, they are part of the process of decision-making. “Development initiatives tend to stall at the local level, if they do not engage with formal traditional authority traditions” (IDEA, 2008).

9. Legitimacy Crisis for PRIs: In many villages, PRIs are researched as being illegitimate in comparison to TIs, who are seen as generally trusted, more transparent, and more culturally relevant.

1. Attendance for Gram Sabhas is typically low, while traditional institutions Mel/Nyel/ Nyele meetings have a high level of participation as it generally covers village level issues.
2. Panchayat members may lean on informal endorsement from traditional elders to affirm their authority. “In the case of the tribal population in Arunachal, for instance, the actual locus, or exercise of power resides in customary councils or village councils rather than in constitutionally elected Panchayat members” (Tamo, 2007).

This analysis illustrates that while both TIs and PRIs have the aim of enabling power to local communities in Kamporijo, the place they occupy in the power structure, their divergence in their respective value systems, and the tension regarding their operational relationship create contradictions that require harmonization through inclusive and culturally relevant modes of governance. The relationship between Traditional Institutions (TIs) and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the Kamporijo Circle of Kamle District, Arunachal Pradesh is complex, and it involves the dynamics of coexistence and contradiction. These two systems, one reflecting customary tribal governance, and the other reflecting India's constitutional state framework, are fluid and have emerged both with conflict, and complementarity to comprise the rural governance landscape of the district.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIs AND PRIs

1. Coexistence and Parallel Governance:

In Kamporijo and neighbouring tribal dominated areas, the traditional institution of village council continues to influence the means by which disputes are resolved, customary law is enacted, and culture is reproduced in people's lives even after the statutory initiation of PRIs through the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1997. PRIs are enabled by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and act in the statutory framework which include development planning, infrastructure, and public service delivery capability. Both systems operate in parallel in many villages: TIs have moral authority and PRIs have the administrative and financial designation. While Panchayati Raj has become an institutional and legally grounded governance system in India, the status of traditional councils remains legally intangible in tribal societies such as Kamporijo (Elwin, 1959; Bordoloi *et al.*, 1980).

2. Collaborative Governance in Local Development:

In many villages of Kamporijo, collaboration between PRIs and TIs is evident, particularly in regard to planning and implementing schemes of development such as MGNREGA, PMAY, livelihood schemes and such things. Typically, traditional leaders act in a consultative manner, helping to contextualize local variables and pathways to ensure local ownership over PRI backed initiatives in development.

The involvement of elders provides cultural legitimacy for any initiative involving sensitive topics, such as land or community assets. "Development projects that were planned and initiated under the auspice of the Panchayat were always legitimized by customary institutions, especially as involving educated individuals, served to strengthen collective ownership in a way that community members would trust" (IDEA, 2008).

3. Tension Over Jurisdiction and Legitimacy:

Although instances of cooperation appear there are nevertheless tensions between the two formal institutions over:

The common overlap is in jurisdiction, particularly around dispute settlement and land issues.

Legitimacy, as villagers sometimes privilege customary and traditional decisions over decisions made by elected representatives of the PRI; and Uncertainty in role, meaning sometimes elected Panchayat leaders have authority with respect to traditional leadership circles and let traditional elders determine issues to be made public to the community. PRIs in Kamporijo live with the inevitable collision that they are stuck in the shadows of customary councils or traditional leaders that are perceived to be legitimate, credible, culturally available (Das & Tamo, 2011).

4. Gender Relations and Diverging Norms: The relationship is also impacted by differences in attitudes towards gender roles:

PRIs are committed to gender inclusion through a 33% reservation for women. Traditional institutions tend to operate on patriarchal frameworks that often exclude women's participation. This leads to inconsistencies because when gender inclusive Panchayat leaders are questioned by traditional elders, they are denied the authority they deserve, and they can have consequences on the ability for effective governance.

5. Attempts towards integration and finding a way ahead:

To date, there has been some informal and institutional level efforts to establish connections between PRIs and TIs in Arunachal Pradesh: NGOs and district administration have occasionally engaged traditional elders in Gram Sabhas or consulted with elders during the planning phase (more on the TIs role in planning).

In Kamporijo, community-led governance institutions have emerged as possible platforms for mediation between the traditional trust and modern administration. There are possible examples such as the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) that established community trust in the community. "The integration of traditional authority in the Panchayati governance structure can be a viable for sustainable rural governance in tribal areas" (Bordoloi *et al.*, 1980; IDEA, 2008).

CONCLUSION

The relationship between Traditional Institutions and PRIs in Kamporijo is both co-dependent and antagonistic. While PRIs presented the formal structure of decentralized governance, Traditional Institutions held cultural authority and moral legitimacy. A practical step towards an inclusionary and structured governance model would require a highly respectful hybrid model that prioritizes both the traditional legitimacy of TIs and constitutional authority of PRIs in the regions like Kamporijo, and across the state.

The presence of Traditional Institutions (TIs) in conjunction with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in tribal areas like Arunachal Pradesh exemplifies the complexities and possibilities of plural governance in India. On the one hand, these two sectors of governance are at odds with one another, as they are based on different foundations: TIs reflect customary law, kinship networks, and a writing-free system of informal consensual decision-making (Elwin, 1959; Bordoloi, 2011) whereas PRIs are formal, constitutional bodies subject to democratic norms, constitutional accountability, and framing principles that invite inclusivity by virtue of gender and caste (NIRDPR, 2018; Baviskar & Mathew, 2009). The contradictions between these two governance systems can at times result in episodes of contention over authority, legitimacy, and jurisdiction, especially in regard to the ongoing issues with elected panchayats that are also under the influence of traditional village councils that may not share the constitutional view of equality and transparency, as it has been noted (Upadhyay, 2005; Chaudhuri, 2004). On the other hand, these relations between TIs and PRIs tend not to be zero-sum. To the contrary, both TIs and PRIs have found situations where they have been able to cooperate, and perhaps reinforce each other's actions and effectiveness. It's been documented that traditional leaders have often served in advisory roles regarding the decisions of panchayats, have mediated potential conflicts with the panchayat system, and have mobilized collective action to generate effective rural governance (NEREGA, 2008; Bordoloi, 2011). Likewise, the PRIs

have occasioned the recognition and strength of a legitimacy based on the cultural standing in their opinion of the traditional structures in very limited contexts. The possibility for a hybrid style of governance that simultaneously recognizes tribal identities while also achieving the constitutional mandate of participatory democracy and inclusive development (Upadhyay, 2005; Baviskar & Mathew, 2009) is supported through this realm of functional overlap and mutual accommodation.

In the end, any meaningful reform to governance systems within tribal regions will have to deal with the resilience of traditional institutions and the transformative potential of democratic decentralization. The key challenge is to create dialogue, legal clarity, and institutional complementarity between TIs and PRIs, so that governance will be not only more representative and efficient, but more culturally rooted and socially just.

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