

## EXPLORING OLLO GOVERNANCE: LOWANG AND LOSAVANG

**Ms. Jungam Loyi**

Ph.D Scholar

Himalayan University, Jollang,  
Itanagar Arunachal Pradesh, 791111

[Jungamloyi22@Gmail.Com](mailto:Jungamloyi22@Gmail.Com)

Dr . Sanjay Hiri

Supervisor

### ABSTRACT

This article provides an in-depth examination of the traditional governance system of the Ollo community, with focus on the integral roles of Lowang and Losavang. Lowang the chief leader, the Losavang, the chief council form the foundation of Ollo's decision-making. This article explores the selection process, roles, and responsibilities of Losavang members, highlighting their significance in maintaining social harmony and collective progress. This research is based on an analysis of Ollo customs, traditions, and community practices. There is intricate balance between Lowang's authority and the Losavang's advisory role, ensuring effective governance and community cohesion. The study also examines the cultural significance of the Lowang system and the Losavang council, shedding the light on their historical and symbolic importance. By exploring the Ollo governance system, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of traditional leadership models and their relevance in contemporary society. Furthermore, this study reveals the intricate dynamics between the Lowang and the Losavang, highlighting their collaborative approach to conflict resolution, and community development. Despite modernization, the Ollo community remains deeply rooted in tradition, with the Lowang and Losavang commanding utmost respect and authority. The institution of Lowang continue to thrive, with the chief serving as a unifying figure and guardian of cultural heritage.

**KEYWORDS** : Ollo Community, Lowang, and Losavang.

### INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh can roughly be divided into several semi distinct cultural areas on the basis of identity, language, religion and material culture—the Tibetanic area bordering Bhutan in the west, Tani area at the centre of the state, the Mishmi area to the east of that, the Tai/Singpho/ Tangsa area to the far west and the 'Naga'—like area to the immediate south. In between there are few transitions zones, such as the Aka/Hrusso/Sherdukpen area which provides a 'buffer' of sorts between the Tibetan Buddhist tribes and animist, hill tribal Tani. Within each of these cultural spheres one finds populations of related tribes speaking related languages and sharing similar traditions(Rajput,2011,p.14). The Nagas are one of the Mongolian racial groups found in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Burma, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Tibet, the fringes of the U.P, Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir of the Himalayan tracts. They have their distinctive tribal names with a number of sub-Names, about fifty,

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of which better known are Angami (Tengmai), Chakhsang (Chokroma), Ao, Sema, Rengma, Lotha, Kuki, Chang, Konyak, Khienmungam, Sangtam, Yimchunger, Phom, Damsa, Zemai, Liangmai, Rongmai (three combined Zelagrong), Mao(Shipoumai), Maram (Maharamai), Thangatankul, Maring, Kom, Chiru, Anal, Moyong, Mongsang, Lamgang (Pakan),

Nocte, Tangsa, Wancho, Singpho, Khampti, Haimi Htogram, Rangpan, Para, Kalyo kengyu. The population of Naga is over one million, the areawise break-up being; 5,15,561 in Nagaland, 2,50,000 in Manipur, 70,000 in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, and some lakhs in the North Cachar-Mikir hills, other contagious place of Assam and Burma(Asoso,p.6,7).

The Noctes, about 35000 live in 63 villages occupying half of the Tirap district, beyond the river Tissa is the home of Wanchos. There are many Nocte villages across the Myanmar border also. In the absence of any recorded history or authentic reference, it is difficult to ascertain the exact ethnic origin about the Noctes(Lowang,p.3).Deep within the verdant hills of Arunachal Pradesh, a state nestled in the northeastern corner of India, lies the Laju circle under the Tirap District. It is here ,amidst the picturesque landscape, the the Ollo community has made their home(Kholia,15-05-24).

This article is focus on the Ollo community's traditional governance system, led by the Lowang and the Losavang, has endured for generations. This article examines the roles, responsibilities, and cultural significance of these revered institutions, shedding light on their importance, roles and structure.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Despite the existence of traditional governance and unique social norms, there is no notable comprehensive research of the Ollo community. The objectives of the study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by exploring the traditional governance systems, specifically focusing on the roles and responsibilities of Lowang and Losavang. The objectives of the study iare :

1. To identify the traditional governance structures of the Ollo community
2. To examines the roles and responsibilities of Lowang and Losavang.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative date from firdl interviews with Lowang, Gaon bura and students and elders of the Ollo community and quantitative data from existing

literature, including books, article etc., to examine the traditional governance system of Ollo community with main focus on the Lowang and the Losavang.

**THE OLLO COMMUNITY: AN OVERVIEW**

Spread across 13 villages, this distinct subgroup of the Naga tribes has cultivated a unique cultural identity, shaped by their history, traditions, and the rugged terrain they inhabit. For generations, the Ollo people have lived in harmony with their surroundings, developing a profound connection with the land and its rhythms. The Ollo or the Ollo Laju people, as they themselves, shares a rich cultural heritage with the broader Naga and Nocte tribes, yet their unique experience, customs, and practices have woven a distinct narrative. Their language, social organization, and livelihoods have evolved in harmony with their surroundings, reflecting the intricate web of traditions that defined them. The Ollo or Ollo Laju community’s story is one of resilience , adaption, and cultural richness, waiting to be shared and celebrated (Kholia,15-07-24).Ollo people are not just found in the Laju circle and the Deomali in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, but there are many Ollo villages are found in the Myanmar(Burma) and they share a history together as a Ollo tribe(sapong,kongkang,kongkang,namet,12-06-24). According to the data collected from the research field, there 12 villages of Ollo community under the Laju circle and 1 village under Deomali town.

Table No. 1; 13 Ollo villages under Tirap District.

1	LAJU (LAJU)
2	LOWER CHINHAN (LAJU)
3	UPPER CHINHAN (LAJU)
4	NOGLO (LAJU)
5	LONYEN (LAJU)
6	SENNYU (LAJU)
7	RAHO (LAJU)
8	LIANGCHEN (LAJU)
9	LONGLIANG (LAJU)
10	PONGKONG (LAJU)
11	SENLIAM (LAJU)

12	LONGBO (LAJU)
13	LONGKHONG (DEOMALI)

Sources; Extracted from interview with Gaon Bura Sina Mophuk (interpreter, Nali Mangyut) ,Laju village,03-08-2023.

In the heart of Arunachal Pradesh, where the majestic Himalayas meet the lush valley, the Ollo community thrives, carrying the torch of their ancestor’s legacy. There is a story of resilience, courage, and the unbreakable bond with their heritage. The Voorang folksong, a cherished oral tradition, whisper tales of their forbears; journey from the mystical land of Tangneu.Tangneu a place of origin, where the Ollo people’s ancestors acquired the essence of their identity, ornament, culture and tradition.

### **TRADITIONAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM OF OLLO COMMUNITY**

The term ‘political institution’ may also refer to the recognized structure of rules and principles with in which the above organizations operates, including such concepts Arunachal Pradesh have highly ordered and organized system of functioning in their villages. Each tribe or clan or villages has its own head styled as Gam or Gaon Bura. All matters relating to the community as a whole are decided at the village level(Osik,1996,p.10). These councils are composed of village elders, and they traditionally enjoy a good deal of autonomy in judicial, administrative and developmental matters(Choudhury,p.162). The Ollo community’s traditional Governance system is a unique and intricate framework that has guided the community’s decision making and disputes resolution process for centuries. In the picturesque Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, nestled in the eastern Himalayas, the Ollo community as thrived for centuries. This indigenous tribe, with their cultural heritage and traditions, has maintained a unique identity shaped by their history, geography, and social practices. At the heart of the Ollo society lies the chieftain system, a time-honored institution that has guided the community through the ages. The Ollo chief or Lowang, is revered figure, embodying the wisdom, courage, and leadership that has defined the community since time immemorial. The chieftain system is a remarkable example of indigenous self-determination, a testament to the resilience and adaptability of the Ollo people. Despite external influence and modernization, the Lowang continues to wield significant influence, their authority rooted in the love and respect of their people. As we explore the world of the Ollo community, we find ourselves immersed in a realm ancient customs, intricate social hierarchies, and deep-seated traditions. The chieftain system is intricately woven into Ollo society, influencing every aspect of community life, from disputes resolution

to cultural practices. At the heart of the system lies the chief or Lowang, who plays a vital role in maintaining social harmony, resolving disputes, and preserving cultural heritage. But where did this chief system originate? Unlike other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, the Olo chief system has a unique history. The Olo people's traditional village where each village managed its own affairs, shaped their leadership structure. The autonomy allowed them to develop a distinct system, separate from external influences. In Olo society, clans and families play a significant role in governance and leadership. Leaders emerge from prominent families, and their authority is rooted in their ability to navigate complex social relationship. This is in contrast to other communities, where leadership may be based on military prowess or spiritual influence. The chief system also differs in its emphasis on consensus building and collective decision-making. While other communities may have more autocratic leadership style, the Olo Lowang or the King works to build consensus among community members. This approach has helped maintain social harmony and resolve disputes effectively (Nali Lowang,04-08-2024).

### **CHIEF COUNCIL ( LOSAVANG )**

In the Olo community, the Losavang is the traditional governance institution that has been the cornerstone of village life for centuries. Every Olo village has its own Losavang, comprising respected chief and the elders of the Olo villages, who make decision for the collective well-being of the community. The Losavang is not just a council, but a symbol of Olo unity and solidarity. The Losavang operates on the principles consensus-building and collective responsibility, ensuring that every decision benefits the community as a whole (Kholia,15-06-24). The Losavang is more than just an institution, it is a collective of respected individuals who embody the wisdom, experience, and values of the Olo community. The Losavang leadership is traditionally inherited by the son from his father, following a patriarchal system that has been practiced for generations, originating from the old Olo traditions. At the helm of the Losavang stands the Lowang, a revered title bestowed upon the chief of the Olo community. The Lowang is considered the kingpin of the community, shouldering immense responsibility as the leader and representative of the Olo people. This esteemed the position is not merely a title but a hereditary right, passed through generations. Every Olo villages has their own Lowang. The Lowang system is built on a hereditary framework, where the eldest son of the incumbent Lowang inherits the title upon his demise. This ensures continuity and stability in leadership, as the successor is groomed from a young age to assume the responsibilities of the revered position. The Lowang's role is not only a privilege but also a sacred

duty, requiring unwavering dedication to the community's well being. Being the Lowang is a formidable task, demanding exceptional leadership qualities, wisdom and vision. The Lowang must navigate complex community dynamics, mediate disputes, and make informed decisions for the collective good. The position requires a deep understanding of Ollo customs, traditions, and values, as well as the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. While the Lowang holds the highest position, the Losavang membership operates as a cohesive unit, providing support and counsel to the chief. The members work collaboratively to address community concerns, share knowledge, and contribute to decision making processes. The hierarchical structure ensures a clear chain of command while fostering a sense of unity and shared responsibility. The Lowang's role extends beyond leadership ; it symbolize the continuity of Ollo traditions and the community's rich cultural heritage. The chief's position serves as unifying force, bridging generational gaps and reinforcing social cohesion. As the embodiment of Ollo values and wisdom, the Lowang inspire respect, loyalty, and devotion from the community members. The Ollo community organized around a clan-based social structure and each member position's is determined by their clan affiliation and family lineage (Rumsu, Rukhet, Rangsong, Rangsong,13-06-24). Next to the Lowang stands Ngonpa, a position of immense importance and respect, equivalent to governor or the chief's right hand man. The Ngongpa assumes significant responsibilities, particularly in the absence of the Lowang, when he takes charge of decision making processes. As the second-in-command, the Ngonpa weilds considerable power, rivaled only by the Lowang. A notable aspect of the community's structure is the presence of two dormitories is called "pang" in Ollo dialect, in every cvillage, one reserved exclusively for the Lowang and the other for Ngongpa. This distinction underscore the Ngongpa's elevated status in the community, solidifying his position as a trusted advisor and leader. The Ngongpa demands exceptional leadership skillsm strategic thinking, and a deep understanding of Ollo customs and traditions(Rumsu, Rukhet, Rangsong, Rangsong,13-06-2024). Following Ngongpa, the second-in-command, are additional esteemed elders and members who contribute their wisdom an expertise to the community's governance. Among these respected individuals in Ngongba, who provides valuable advice and guidance to Losavang. The Losavang also encompasses various sub-heads, each addressing specific aspects of community governance. These sub-heads includes ; Nokpa, Rumsu, Kongkang, Menyak, Hoodiong etc. There are one head in each sub-clan of the Ollo community. This sub-heads work in harmony, addressing various aspect of community governance and ensuring a comprehensive approach to leadership. Through this collaborative structure, the Ollo community benefits from a rich tapestry of

wisdom, experience, and skills, empowering its members to build a brighter future together (Kholia,15-06-2024).

### **LAW AND A RITUAL JUSTICE**

The customary laws are the property of the people so interpretation by expert was natural and instinctive. They are not required to be enforced. Punishment was considered as natural consequences of violation of the customary law which are natural. The Ollo community does not have any written codified law, but they follow a set of unwritten rules that have been accepted and practiced by general consensus for generations. The Ollo community has perpetuated their customary law traditions for centuries, fostering a profound familiarity with the uncodified norms that govern their social interactions. Through oral tradition and cultural transmission, the rules and limitations of these unwritten laws have become an integral part of the community's collective knowledge, ensuring a shared understanding and compliance with established norms(Wangdong, Wangdong, Chatkhet,14-06-2024). In the Ollo community, Benshong day is sacred occasion when the Losavang convenes to settle disputes and offences. Through a ritualistic process, the Losavang fixes the fines for each case, taking into account the nature and severity of the offense. This ritual serves as a means of purging wrongdoing and restoring balance, reinforcing community values and norms, and demonstrating the Losavang's authority and wisdom. On Benshong day, the community comes together to witness the ritual, ensuring transparency and accountability. The fixed fine is then paid as a form of restitution, closing the case and reaffirming harmony within the community. The ritualistic process underscores the significance of Benshong as a day to reckoning, where justice is served and community cohesion is maintained. (Rumsu, Rukhet, Rangsong, Rangsong,13-06-2024).

### **CHANGES**

The Ollo, an indigenous community have witnessed significant changes in their traditional political institutions. External influences and internal dynamics have altered the fabric of their governance, leading to a blend of traditional and modern practices. Colonialism introduced foreign governance while dividing the power of chief with introduction of Gaon bura. Christianity brought a new values, leading to a decline in traditional practices day by day. Modernization and urbanization have drawn younger generations away from customary ways. Social and economic changes have transformed power structure, but it didn't create any tensions between traditional and modern governance. Despite these changes the Ollo people have

continue to navigate their governance with resilience and adaptability. Amidst the change, the Ollo have maintained significant continuity to their traditional political institutions. Their customs, language, and cultural heritage remain vital, with community efforts to preserve traditions. Traditional chiefs the Lowang continue to command respect and authority, adapting to changing circumstances. Community participation and consensus-based decision-making persist, however the Gaon bura is also considered very important in the Ollo society too, In Ollo community, before the introduction of Panchayat Raj system, the chief held significant authority in making key decision, no doubt the chief still has the power of key decision making, However, with government intervention and the signing of document like PRC certificate, S.T certificatee, Birth certificate or any other contract, permission and signature of both chief and the gaon bura is necessary. However chief's position is hereditary while gaon bura's position is not. Chief is born with pride and his permanent position while gaon bura is chosen by the Ollo community.Cultural revival efforts have strengthened community identity and pride, while traditional disputes resolution mechanism remain relevant integrating with modern legal frameworks. Social cohesion and stability are maintained through traditional institutions, which play a crucial role in times of crisis. The Ollo's ability to balance continuity with changes has ensured the enduring significance of their traditional governance system. The Ollo community, like many other indigenous groups in Arunachal Pradesh, India, experienced significant changes while respecting the traditional governance system of the indigenous tribes. (kholia,15-06-2024).

## **FINDING**

The Ollo community's is sub-group the Naga tribes and sub-tribes of the Noctes, has a rich oral tradition of their history, which has been passed down through generation. While maintain some continuity, their traditional governance system has undergone significant changes since India's independence. The Lowang's power has been divided in some area due to establishment of the Panchayat Raj system and introduction of Gaon bura,. Notably, the traditional village Losavang is now referred to as the chief council, reflecting a degree of continuity in traditional governance.

## **CONCLUSION**

As we conclude our in-depth exploration of the Ollo community's traditional governance system, we are struck by the remarkable resilience and adaptability of this ancient framework. Despite the profound influences of modernization, Christianity, and external governance structure, the community's patriarchal

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societal structure and traditional institutions remain vibrant and integral to their way life. The chief council, now a blend of traditional and modern elements, continues to play a vital role in governance, reflecting the community's capacity to evolve while preserving their cultural heritage. The story of the Ollo community's traditional governance system holds significant implications for our understanding of indigenous governance and its place within modern society. Firstly, it highlights the importance of recognizing and respecting traditional governance system, rather than dismissing them as outdated or irrelevant. This requires a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics between traditional and modern governance structure. Secondly, it underscores the need for cultural sensitivity in governance, acknowledging the unique cultural context and existing traditional institutions that shape community life. Finally, it emphasizes the value of community engagement, encouraging active participation and collaboration with community members to ensure that governance initiative resonate with their needs and aspirations.

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