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Negotiating Modernity: The Impacts of Globalization on the Doopam System of the Tagins

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Abstract: Globalization, by its very nature, entails intensified global interaction and interdependence among societies, cultures, and institutional systems. More often, this interaction manifests as the influence of dominant cultures and governance systems over smaller or indigenous ones, giving rise to processes of cultural change and continuity. In this context, the present study examines the impact of globalization on the traditional tribal village council of the Tagin community, known as *Doopam/Dungpam*. The study seeks to analyze the extent to which global forces have reshaped, transformed, or sustained the functioning, authority, and relevance of this indigenous institution. For the purpose of analysis and discussion, the study primarily adopts an empirical and analytical approach, drawing upon observed practices and community experiences. Accordingly, the paper discusses how far and in what ways globalization has influenced *Doopam/Dungpam*, while also highlighting elements of continuity that persist despite external pressures.

Keywords: Globalization, Indigenous Governance, Doopam/Dungpam, Tagin Community, Change and Continuity, Empirical Study.

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METHODOLOGY

The present study primarily employed empirical and analytical methods to interpret and critically examine qualitative data. The empirical approach facilitated the collection of data grounded in observed social realities, experiences, and practices related to the subject of study. These observations were systematically analyzed using analytical methods in order to identify patterns, meanings, and underlying principles within the qualitative material.

In addition to primary empirical inputs, the study also relied on secondary sources to develop conceptual clarity and theoretical grounding. Secondary data were used not merely as factual support but as an ideational and interpretative framework, enabling the researcher to contextualize empirical findings within existing literature, scholarly debates, and documented records. This integrative use of empirical evidence and secondary sources strengthened the analytical depth and ensured a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

INTRODUCTION

Before the introduction of modern state institutions and formal administrative frameworks, tribal societies were not without systems of governance; rather, they were regulated through well-structured, deeply rooted indigenous political institutions. These systems functioned as comprehensive mechanisms of governance, law, conflict resolution, and social

regulation, grounded in customary law, ritual authority, and collective decision-making. In Arunachal Pradesh, each tribe developed its own distinct indigenous governing institution suited to its socio-cultural environment and ecological setting. For instance, the *Nyele* among the Nyishi, *Kebang* among the Adi, *Bulyang* (*Buliang*) among the Apatani, *Ngongthun* among the Nocte, *Mangmazomba* among the Monpa, *Wangsa* among the Wancho, *Mokchup* among the Khampti, *Abbala* among the Idu Mishmi, *Jung* among the Sherdukpen, and *Doopam* among the Tagin served as organized political bodies that exercised authority over community affairs.

DOOPAM/DUNG PAM

The *Doopam* represents the traditional and indigenous governing institution of the Tagin community and stands as one of the oldest and most enduring political structures within Tagin society. Long before the emergence of modern administrative systems, the *Doopam* functioned as the central authority regulating social order, customary law, dispute resolution, and collective decision-making across generations. Its continuity over time reflects not only institutional resilience but also its deep legitimacy within the socio-cultural fabric of the Tagin people.

As an indigenous political institution, the *Doopam* served as the earliest organized platform for representation, deliberation, and leadership formation. It provided a structured space where elders, customary experts, and community representatives exercised

authority based on wisdom, moral standing, and customary knowledge rather than formal office or coercive power. Through this participatory and consensus-oriented framework, leadership was identified, nurtured, and validated by the community itself.

Moreover, the *Doopam* was fundamentally welfare-oriented in character. Its guiding principle centered on collective well-being, social harmony, and equitable justice. Decisions were directed toward preserving communal balance, protecting customary rights, and ensuring mutual obligations among clans and households. In this sense, the *Doopam* did not merely govern, it institutionally bound the Tagin people under a shared moral and social order, reinforcing unity, responsibility, and community-centered governance.

IMPACTS OF GLOBALIZATION ASSAM FRONTIER (ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE), REGULATION, 1945

The impact of globalization on the *Doopam* institution may be analytically traced back to the colonial period, particularly to the promulgation of the *Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice), Regulation, 1945*. This regulatory intervention marked one of the earliest formal encounters between indigenous Tagin governance structures and an externally imposed legal-administrative framework. In this sense, it represents an initial phase of globalization, understood not merely as economic integration, but as the extension of modern state law, bureaucratic norms, and judicial procedures into indigenous socio-political systems.

The Regulation introduced elements of modern civil and criminal jurisprudence while simultaneously acknowledging the existence and functional relevance of tribal customary institutions. This dual recognition did not eliminate the *Doopam* but instead initiated a process of institutional restructuring and functional recalibration. Matters that were once entirely adjudicated within the *Doopam*, including serious civil and criminal disputes, gradually began to fall under the jurisdiction of formal legal authorities, particularly in cases categorized as grave or heinous offenses. As a result, the scope of the *Doopam*'s judicial authority was partially redefined rather than completely displaced.

Importantly, this transition did not abolish the legitimacy or operational relevance of the *Doopam*. The institution continues to exercise recognized authority in customary, social, and community-centered matters where parties voluntarily submit to its jurisdiction. Its decisions still carry moral and social enforceability within the community framework. What emerged, therefore, was not institutional extinction but a layered governance arrangement, a coexistence of customary and modern legal systems operating in parallel spheres.

Most significantly, this development produced a dual-mode governance structure, especially visible in

the cultural and community domains: one grounded in indigenous customary law and consensus-based adjudication, and the other based on codified statutory law and formal judicial processes. This coexistence illustrates not a simple replacement of tradition by modernity, but a negotiated transformation in which the *Doopam* adapts, survives, and continues to function within an expanded and globalizing legal-political order.

Subsequently, this Regulation introduced the institutional concept of the "Village Authority," under which the office of the *Gaon Bura/Gaon Buri* was formally recognized and appointed as a representative of the state within the village jurisdiction. In functional terms, the *Gaon Bura/Buri* operates as an intermediary between the government and the local community, performing quasi-administrative and quasi-judicial roles, particularly in matters of dispute reporting, preliminary mediation, and maintenance of village order. The office thus represents the formalization of localized governance through state recognition and administrative integration.

The introduction of this state-backed village authority inevitably intersected with the pre-existing customary governance structure of the *Doopam*. Traditional mediatory roles such as those performed by the *Gingdung*, *Pengko*, and *Nyitam*, who historically exercised legitimacy through customary norms, ritual authority, and communal consensus, experienced a degree of functional overlap with the responsibilities assigned to the *Gaon Bura/Buri*. In particular, the role of the *Gingdung*, who traditionally functioned as an arbitrator and principal mediator in dispute resolution, was partially affected, as similar conciliatory and adjudicatory responsibilities began to be exercised under the framework of the Village Authority.

However, this development should not be viewed solely as a displacement or erosion of indigenous institutions. A closer analytical reading suggests the emergence of a negotiated and collaborative governance space rather than a purely substitutive one. In practice, the Village Authority and customary functionaries such as the *Gingdung* often operate in complementary roles during conflicts and disputes. While the *Gaon Bura/Buri* provides formal linkage to statutory procedures and administrative recognition, the customary mediators contribute culturally embedded knowledge, moral legitimacy, and community trust. This dual engagement tends to strengthen dispute resolution processes by combining procedural formality with customary legitimacy.

Therefore, rather than suppressing traditional authority, the Village Authority framework may be understood as producing a hybrid mediatory structure, where state-recognized and customary actors negotiate roles, share responsibilities, and co-participate in conflict management. This negotiated coexistence reflects an adaptive transformation of indigenous governance,

demonstrating continuity through institutional accommodation rather than outright replacement.

EMERGENCE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM

The introduction of the Panchayati Raj system may be regarded as the first formal democratic institution through which the Tagin people were systematically exposed to structured political participation within a constitutionally recognized framework. As a grassroots democratic institution, Panchayati Raj is specifically mandated to administer and develop rural areas, including predominantly tribal regions, and therefore carries formal legal authority and administrative responsibility over local governance. This institutional presence represents a significant shift from purely customary and community-based governance toward a codified and state-recognized political structure.

With the establishment of Panchayati Raj institutions, several functional domains that were traditionally exercised by the *Doopam*, particularly its quasi-executive and quasi-legislative roles, have gradually come to be shared with, or partially assumed by, the formal democratic apparatus. Functions such as dispute facilitation, developmental decision-making, resource allocation, and community-level regulation are no longer the exclusive sphere of customary institutions. Instead, they are increasingly negotiated between traditional and statutory bodies.

However, this transition should not be interpreted as a simple displacement of the *Doopam* by Panchayati Raj. In practice, both systems continue to operate independently yet concurrently, often engaging in cooperative and collaborative modes of governance. The *Doopam* retains strong normative authority, cultural legitimacy, and social enforcement capacity within the Tagin community, while Panchayati Raj provides legal recognition, procedural structure, and access to state resources. This has produced a negotiated governance space where customary legitimacy and constitutional authority interact rather than fully supplement.

Moreover, Panchayati Raj institutions provide an expanded and legally supported platform for leadership formation, backed by statutory powers and financial assistance mechanisms. In the context of modernization and administrative integration, this formal backing makes Panchayati Raj increasingly attractive to emerging leaders who seek recognized authority, developmental funding channels, and political visibility. Consequently, there might be a growing tendency among sections of the population to prefer Panchayati Raj forums over *Doopam* structures for leadership assertion and public decision-making.

Nevertheless, the continuing relevance of the *Doopam* demonstrates that democratic deepening in tribal areas is not merely a process of institutional substitution but one of negotiation, adaptation, and coexistence. The evolving relationship between

Panchayati Raj and *Doopam* reflects a hybrid governance model in which tradition and modern democracy are continuously renegotiated to suit local realities.

DISCONTINUATION OF LAW: ADAPTIVE REFORM WITHIN THE DOOPAM SYSTEM

With the advancement of civilization and the expanding influence of modernization, every society, culture, and institution inevitably undergoes processes of transformation in order to remain socially relevant and normatively acceptable. Change is not merely external pressure but also an internal adaptive response to evolving moral standards, human rights consciousness, and contemporary legal frameworks. In this context, the *Doopam*, as the indigenous governing institution of the Tagin community, demonstrates a significant capacity for normative self-correction and institutional adaptation. Contrary to the assumption that customary systems are static, the *Doopam* possesses an inherent mechanism for the deliberate discontinuation and withdrawal of laws and practices that are considered obsolete, unjust, or incompatible with present-day values.

Over time, several earlier customary practices have been consciously abolished or rendered inoperative within the contemporary functioning of *Doopam*. These include practices such as *Nyepv Nyida Menam* (child marriage), *Leenam Taknam* (punitive tying or restraint on a tree), *Nyimv Senam* (forced marriage or marriage by capture), *Pakbu-Paknv Menam* (forms of servitude or slave-like dependency), *Nyimak Paanam* (revenge warfare between clans or villages), *Laapiya Taaknam* (punitive confinement by locking legs in wooden stocks), and *Laakchak Chiknam / Nyeelak Panaam* (the cutting of an enemy's hand as an act of revenge), among others. These practices, once embedded in a specific historical and socio-cultural context, are no longer recognized as legitimate or enforceable within the present customary order.

The discontinuation of such laws reflects not the erosion of customary governance but its ethical and structural evolution. The *Doopam* has engaged in a continuous process of normative negotiation with modern legal principles, constitutional values, and broader human rights standards. This reformative tendency illustrates that indigenous governance systems are not rigid relics but living institutions capable of reinterpretation and selective retention. The abandonment of archaic punitive and coercive norms demonstrates an internal modernization process grounded in community consensus rather than imposed uniformity.

Thus, the present character of *Doopam* may be understood as a negotiated modernity, where continuity of identity coexists with normative reform. Instead of resisting change, the institution has filtered and

integrated modern values while preserving its core principles of community-based justice, restorative settlement, and collective responsibility. This adaptive discontinuation of outdated laws stands as strong evidence that customary institutions can modernize from within, ensuring both cultural continuity and ethical progression.

GROWING PREFERENCE AMONG YOUTHS: NEGOTIATING CUSTOMARY JUSTICE AND MODERN LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS

It has increasingly been observed that many educated Tagin youths show a growing preference for the modern legal system, particularly the formal judicial framework, over the traditional customary justice mechanism administered through the *Doopam*. This shift is neither accidental nor purely imitative; rather, it reflects a broader transformation in legal consciousness shaped by education, exposure to constitutional values, procedural safeguards, and rights-based discourse.

One major factor influencing this preference is the perceived risk and uncertainty associated with certain traditional modes of dispute resolution, especially those historically linked with oaths and ordeals, ritual trials, and revenge-oriented justice norms. Although many of these practices have already been discontinued or symbolically retained, their historical association contributes to a perception among youths that the customary system may lack procedural predictability and standardized safeguards. In contrast, the modern judicial system is viewed as rule-bound, evidence-based, and institutionally accountable, thereby appearing more aligned with contemporary notions of fairness, due process, and individual rights.

The shift also corresponds with the emergence of a modern sense of justice grounded in legality, documentation, appeal mechanisms, and enforceable judgments. Younger generations, shaped by formal education and administrative exposure, tend to evaluate justice through the lens of legal rationality rather than purely communal consensus. This represents a cognitive and normative transition from relational justice to procedural justice.

At the same time, another important contributing factor is the gradual decline in deep customary knowledge among younger members of the community. The effective functioning of the *Doopam* system depends heavily on familiarity with its norms, principles, ritual procedures, and interpretive parameters. Without adequate transmission of this knowledge, youths may feel less confident in participating in or trusting customary adjudication processes. The knowledge threshold required to interpret and apply customary rules becomes a barrier where inter-generational transmission weakens.

However, this development should not be framed as a simple rejection of *Doopam* in favor of modern courts. Rather, it represents an ongoing negotiation between customary legitimacy and modern legality. Many youths do not necessarily deny the cultural and social value of *Doopam*; instead, they seek greater procedural clarity, rights protection, and legal security. This creates a transformative opportunity: customary institutions can respond by codifying procedures, increasing transparency, encouraging youth participation, and aligning their practices with constitutional and human rights norms.

Therefore, the growing preference among youths for the modern legal system should be understood not as the decline of customary justice, but as a call for its reform, rationalization, and contextual modernization. The future sustainability of *Doopam* lies in its ability to negotiate with modern legal consciousness, retaining its restorative, community-centered strengths while incorporating procedural safeguards that resonate with the expectations of the younger generation.

STARING DOCUMENTATION OF DOOPAM: FROM ORAL TRADITION TO WRITTEN LEGITIMACY THROUGH NEGOTIATED MODERNITY

Traditionally, the functioning of the *Doopam*, covering executive, legislative, and adjudicatory roles, was primarily grounded in oral transmission. Decisions, precedents, customary rules, and dispute settlements were preserved through collective memory, ritual narration, and inter-generational knowledge transfer. Oral tradition functioned not merely as a communicative method but as a legitimate epistemic foundation of authority and evidence within the customary framework. It ensured continuity, flexibility, and contextual interpretation, allowing the institution to respond dynamically to social realities.

However, with the expansion of modernization and formal education, the concept and practice of written documentation have increasingly entered the operational sphere of *Doopam*. Literacy, administrative exposure, and interaction with formal legal institutions have encouraged the recording of judgments, resolutions, and customary norms in written form. This shift marks a significant procedural transformation, from memory-based legitimacy to record-based legitimacy.

The growing practice of documenting judgments and decisions serves multiple contemporary needs. First, written records enhance procedural clarity and consistency by preserving the reasoning and outcomes of earlier decisions, thereby creating a reference base for future adjudication. Second, documentation strengthens institutional transparency and accountability, especially in contexts where customary decisions may intersect with formal administrative or judicial systems. Third, it supports inter-generational

continuity by reducing the risk of knowledge erosion that often accompanies purely oral systems when transmission chains weaken. In this sense, documentation functions as both preservation and institutional strengthening.

Importantly, this development should not be interpreted as a replacement of oral tradition by written authority, but rather as a negotiated integration of the two. Oral deliberation, consensus-building, and customary reasoning continue to remain central to **Doopam** proceedings, while written documentation operates as a complementary tool of preservation and validation. The transition reflects adaptive modernization rather than cultural displacement.

Thus, the documentation of judgments within the **Doopam** system represents a form of negotiated modernity, where indigenous governance absorbs useful procedural elements of the modern world without surrendering its foundational character. By combining oral wisdom with written record, the institution enhances its durability, credibility, and functional relevance in the contemporary era. Written documentation, therefore, is not merely a technical upgrade; it is a strategic institutional response to changing legal, educational, and administrative environments, ensuring that customary justice remains both culturally rooted and contemporarily viable.

ALIEN CULTURAL INFLUENCE AND THE NEGOTIATION OF TRADITION IN DOOPAM

The increasing adoption of alien cultural influences in the procedures of **Doopam** has become a significant concern in contemporary times. One of the most visible manifestations of this influence is the growing tendency, particularly among the younger generation, to use Hindi or English while presenting arguments, narrating events, or articulating their perspectives during **Doopam** proceedings. This linguistic shift directly contradicts the foundational principles of **Doopam**, which is intrinsically rooted in the use of the indigenous language. Language in **Doopam** is not merely a medium of communication; it is the primary vehicle through which customary values, collective memory, moral reasoning, and cultural legitimacy are expressed and preserved.

Speaking in one's own language enables participants to remain connected to the core philosophy and ethical framework of **Doopam**. Indigenous terms, expressions, and metaphors often carry meanings that cannot be adequately translated into external languages without losing their cultural depth and normative significance. Consequently, the increasing reliance on alien languages risks weakening the authenticity of deliberation and distancing the institution from its customary foundations. At the current stage, this erosion appears subtle yet consequential, as it gradually reshapes

both the procedural character and the cultural spirit of **Doopam**.

However, the presence of alien cultural elements should not be understood solely in terms of cultural erosion or loss. Rather, it represents a critical moment of negotiation between tradition and modernity. **Doopam**, as a living institution, has historically demonstrated adaptability and resilience. The challenge, therefore, lies not in the outright rejection of external influences but in regulating and contextualizing them in a manner that safeguards indigenous principles. The use of Hindi or English may be functionally inevitable in certain interactions with state institutions or formal legal frameworks, yet within the customary space of **Doopam**, the primacy of the indigenous language must be consciously reaffirmed.

Encouragingly, there is a growing realization within the community about the cultural implications of such alien practices. Many elders, intellectuals, and community members have begun initiating efforts to restore and prioritize indigenous linguistic and cultural norms within **Doopam** proceedings. These initiatives reflect a collective attempt to re-negotiate modern influences without surrendering cultural sovereignty. Thus, the future of **Doopam** depends on a balanced negotiation, one that allows selective engagement with external systems while firmly anchoring the institution in its indigenous linguistic and cultural roots.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion clearly demonstrates that **Doopam** possesses an inherent capacity for adaptation and adjustment in response to the changing socio-historical context. This adaptive quality constitutes one of the primary reasons for the continued relevance and significance of **Doopam** as an indigenous governance institution. While **Doopam** has undergone certain structural and procedural transformations over time, particularly under the influence of modern legal frameworks and socio-cultural change, these modifications have not eroded its foundational ethos. Rather, within the broader framework of change and continuity, the core values, principles, and essential elements of **Doopam**, such as consensus-building, collective responsibility, customary norms, and community participation, remain largely intact. This dynamic balance between transformation and preservation has enabled **Doopam** to sustain its legitimacy and functional relevance in contemporary society, thereby reinforcing its role as a resilient and living institution within the Tagin community.

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