

They recognised no Rajas.³³ The village council called 'Devan' or 'Roirelna', was equivalent to village court or committee. Any dispute occurred in the community like adultery case, murder case, fighting, etc. should be brought to the Devan which takes action according to their laws.³⁴ There is no caste distinction.

3. Marriage and divorce:

In early tradition, child marriage called 'irchong moibiak'³⁵ was allowed, but not very common.³⁶ Traditionally, the system of marriage custom from its inception was "marriage by service," what we called 'Samak Chang'. A man had to serve in his father-in-law's house for 7 (seven) years as a bride-price. Its system was very similar to Jacob's service (see Gen.29:20). As the years passed by, the period of service at girl's parent house was reduced from 7(seven) to 5(five) and from 5(five) to 3(three) years. After completing the fixed period, he is free to establish a separate family.³⁷ B.N. Bordoloi & G.C. Sharmah Thakur wrote: "Polygamy is forbidden among the Rangkhols".³⁸ Endogemy was enforced. The most peculiar custom in Hrangkhoh society is 'Vaiirser'. It is a taboo in the family for a makpa (bridégroom) either to touch or address by name his vainu (wife's elder sister) and vice versa.³⁹

Traditionally, levirate marriage is practised. A divorce is not permissible when once married. Committing adultery is punishable by imposing, heavy fine on the male offender. This fine is called 'Pabi' at amount of Rs.300/- with

³³ C.A. Soppitt, *op.cit.*, p.18

³⁴ *Ibid.* Cf. Dangliana, *Hrangkhawl Hnam*, pp.24f

³⁵ The term 'irchong' means rich, 'moibiak' means equivalent to betrothal. Thus, the word 'irchong moibiak' is mainly confined to rich family.

³⁶ C.A. Soppitt, *op.cit.*, p.14.

³⁷ Interview with Hakhangthoi of Zion, on 21st May, 1997.

³⁸ B.N. Bordoloi and G.C. Sharmah Thakur (eds.), *op.cit.*, p.49.

³⁹ Interview with Hakhangthoi of Zion.