CHAPTER 1

I

ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE STUDY OF THE PRIMITIVE PEOPLE IN TRANSITION

Anthropology embraces wide fields of extreme diversities, united only by a central focus on man and his deeds in a dynamic perspective and keeps in view cultures of people not only of the prehistoric but also of the modern times, ranging from the Andaman aborigines to the urban Americans. It had set the trend of studying man as both social and biological beings. Since the later part of the last century, this convergence of interest of the biological and social sciences blossomed into several specialised disciplines along with the growth of interdisciplinary studies in the world of the academics. By the thirties of the present century, these further specialisations in Anthropology grew up in an assertive frame.

Practitioners of these specialisations turned to other cognate disciplines the mode of analysis of which was generally found to be more appropriate to their special problems of studies than to those of their earlier colleagues. Thus, physical anthropologists came to depend more on the biological sciences, Psychological anthropologists on psychology and Social anthropologists on such allied disciplines as history, law, political science, economics and others (Gluckman and Eggan: 1966, XI; Penniman: 1970: Chapter I). But all these specialisations have, however, a common score of allegiance and affiliation to anthropology in their concentration of studies only of the early societies, often termed as primitive, tribal or aboriginal, and spread
all over the world. A cross-cultural content and look appear to be a special feature of all these studies, and a stress on roles, relationships, customs and traditions also continued to distinguish all the inner specialisations of anthropology from other subjects with which the former came to be associated.

Association of Economics with Anthropology is not even one century old. Such an association was brought to a treadable ground only during the last thirties, started as it had been practically with Branislov Malinowski. Initially, Anthropology tended to equate economy with technology and did not seem to accept the latter as a mere aspect of an economic system. Franz Boas (1897), Branislov Malinowski (1921), W.E. Armstrong (1924, 1928) and Richard Thurnwald (1932) were among those who described the economic activities of the primitive people. Boas outlined the socio-cultural ramifications of certain economic activities among the Kwakiutl Indians, and Armstrong applied the usual concept of 'interest' in describing the Rossel Island money. But it was Malinowskki who, while studying the Trobriand Islanders of the western Pacific, made a more systematic attempt at examining economic activities of that society as a social phenomenon. Like a 'common sense descriptive economist', he outlined Kula as a system of ritual exchange not motivated by self interest nor based on values in relation to price-making demand and supply forces. Thurnwald, on the basis of his ethnographical studies on some East African communities, also placed a great stress on the role of reciprocity and gift giving as the pervasive elements of a primitive economic life, and held that 'social stratification emerges out of contacts between occupationally specialised communities'. Later on, Ruth Benedict (1934) and Margaret Mead (1937) treaded the same path of their predecessors to plead for
the view that ceremonial or ritual exchange of goods and gifts are always conditioned by the peculiar institutions of the primitive societies, and so-called economic aspects are but a part of the total web of primitive life.

It was not until the emergence of Raymond Firth (1939), D.M. Goodfellow (1939) and Melville Herskovits (1940) that the recognition of Micro-Economics as a tool of analysis of the primitive economic system could be promoted. In the context of an economic system of a particular group, Firth on the basis of the studies of the Tikopia, and Goodfellow on that of the Bantus, asserted that the conventional economic theories are also valid and the basic economic approach applicable in the primitive settings of a community. Herskovits went a little further, assorted materials from a large wealth of ethnological literatures, and classified them like a classical economist in his 'Economic Anthropology' under categories of production, exchange and distribution, property and the economic surplus, and he admirably cast 'anthropological data' into an economic framework. This 'trio' commandably asserted that the basic premises of the formal economic thoughts are valid everywhere. "Practically every economic mechanism and institution known to us is found somewhere in the nonliterate world" (Herskovits: 1952: 488). As a reaction to this growing trend, Malinowskian negativism towards formal economics got a resurrection in the collaboration of an economic historian and two anthropologists — Karl Polanyi, and Arensberg and Pearson (1957) respectively. In their 'Trade and Market in the Early Empires' they propounded the irrelevance of economic theory to any community of antiquity or primitive economy. In 1961, George Dalton widened the Polanyian impact on the anthropologists
with his theoretically surcharged paper that gave rise to a set of critiques in quick succession. Robbins Burling (1962), LeClair (1962), Scott Cook (1966), Frank Cancian (1966) and others vouchsafed the validity of economic theories in the study of primitive communities.

Polanyi's model of primitive society runs in terms of two principles of human behaviour in that society -- reciprocity and redistribution in an institutional framework of symmetry and centricity. Production of goods and services and also their distribution or exchange in a series of culturally set equivalences are motivated not by a sense of self interest or individual gain but by a sense of altruistic relationship that obviates the likely undercurrent of any hostility in that society. In a modern market or exchange economy, human behaviour centres round haggling and bargaining as motivated by a sense of self gain that leads to mutual hostility. Personalised relations in the process of reciprocity and redistribution underwrite a sense of solidarity, whereas impersonalised or anonymous relations ignite a kind of mutual antagonism in a modern market economy.

Polanyi also discovered two meanings of the word, 'economic' — substantive and formal — which he thought could be applied fruitfully to 'real world structures', primitive and modern. Former refers to provisioning of material goods that satisfy bio-social wants and is, in general, applicable to all societies irrespective of their differences in production techniques, cultural traits, and physical and natural environments. It is in this sense that an anthropologist usually visualizes the economic aspect of primitive society. Formal meaning of 'economic' runs in terms of 'economical' or 'economising' and refers to a 'definite situation of choice' between alternative uses of insufficient
means (Polanyi: 1957: 243). He observes, "the two root meanings of 'economic' — the substantive and the formal — have nothing in common, and that the latter derives from logic and the former from fact" (Polanyi: 1957: 243). The substantive concept is based on empirical economy and defined as 'an instituted process' of interaction between man and his environment that results in a continuous flow of want-satisfying material means. To the traditionalists like Polanyi and Dalton, market is a site-bound locus of exchange, and in the primitive society of their concept, exchange and market are 'co-extensive but not coterminous' as exchange at culturally set rates occurs under reciprocative or redistributive forms of integration, whereas exchange at bargained rates in modern economies is limited to price-making markets which are deemed by them to be always site-free. Since livelihood does not depend on [site-free] market transactions, money is used as a 'special purpose money' wherever it is found, unlike the 'all purpose money' as a common medium of exchange, measure and store of value found in the modern economies. The economising calculations, consequent on scarcity generally act as the predominating motive force behind exchange in modern societies. Dalton observes that the postulates of all these are not of universal relevance. Marshall Sahlins argues that 'the modes of production and relations of exchange in primitive communities are unknown to capitalist enterprise and thus unimagined by orthodox economics which is an intellectual mode of existence of business.' To him, "economy' becomes a category of culture rather than behaviour, in a class with politics or religion rather than rationality or prudence: not the need serving activities of individuals, but the material life process of society" (Sahlins: 1974: XII). Thus, in treating tribal economies, he abandons the entrepreneurial and individualistic conception of economy as a means-ends relationship.
It is to be seen now how far the formal economic thoughts are relevant to human societies at different stages of economic development. In a historical perspective, wealth, welfare and scarcity approaches stand out as the three predominant viewpoints towards defining an economic phenomenon. Nineteenth century came to be roughly associated with the continuous fostering of the concept of wealth and its acquisition as the subject matter of Economics. Its main concern was 'the nature and causes of the wealth of nations'. The mercantilist writings, rise of the natural-law philosophers (Myrdal: 1954: 69) and the eighteenth century intellectual interest in private property, all in the background of developing commercial economies of the western world, precipitated this idea of the acquisition and use of [material] wealth as the domain of economic studies. There arose also a 'view that saw Economics as essentially concerned with the goods necessary to ensure the physical subsistence of mankind' (Kirzner: 1960: 33).

A few early nineteenth century economists considered the interaction between man and his physical environment as an area of economic activity. 'Three primary facts lie at the basis of all economic phenomena, namely, man, man's environment — the outside world, nature — and the dependence of man upon nature. Man has .... an economic relation to his material environment .... a relation which may very properly be called the weal-relation. This weal-relation .... is the fundamental and universal economic principle' (C.A. Tuttle: 1901: 218). It was in this sense that Polanyi and his successors had developed the substantive meaning of the word 'economic' and applied it to the study of primitive societies. By the early years of the present century, there had been a shift of stress from the wealth-centred concern to a concern...
with material welfare. Economics was to be 'on the one side a study of wealth, and on the other, and more important side, a part of the study of man' (Marshall: 1920: i). It was expected then 'to examine that part of individual and social action which is most closely connected with the attainment and with the use of the material requisites of well-being' (Marshall: 1920: i). Propounders of this approach, called welfare economists, subordinated wealth as a unique economic category to the heterogeneity of individual and social actions in search of material welfare, but underrated the non-material requisites of well-being like services of teachers, tailors, artists and the like in the orbit of economic studies. Both the formulations concerning wealth and welfare saw Economics as studying something that is produced, whether wealth or well-being, grouping together a certain type of activities rather than explaining the economic aspect of human activities (Robbins: 1935: 16). The formal economic thoughts that were brought to use by the Social Anthropologists till the emergence of the celebrated Trio, had been primarily derived from these 'wealth' and 'welfare' approaches. Anthropologists' preoccupation with the 'primitive' and the economists' preoccupation with the 'modern' formed the only academic division of labour. The development of 'any specific economic point of view' in explaining the human activities, however, did not occur with any of these scholarly bands. It awaited the emergence of personalities like Lionel Robbins, Raymond Firth and Talcott Parsons. It was Robbins who brought to a sharp relief the economic sector of human affairs by enunciating the economic aspect of human behaviour. To him, 'Economics is the Science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses (Robbins: 1935: 16). "From the point of view of the economist, the
conditions of human existence exhibit four fundamental characteristics. The ends are various. The time and the means for achieving these ends are limited and capable of alternative application.... At the same time the ends have different importance. When time and the means for achieving ends are limited and capable of alternative application and the ends are capable of being distinguished in order of importance, then behaviour necessarily assumes the form of choice. Every act which involves time and scarce means for the achievement of one end involves the relinquishment of their use for the achievement of another. It has an economic aspect" (Robbins: 1935: 12-14).

Several highlights are, therefore, found in the Robbinsian conception of the nature of economic affairs — scarcity of means capable of alternative applications in relation to multiple ends of varying importance, and the consequent problem of choice. An economic problem would not arise unless all these conditions were fulfilled simultaneously.

"Neither the multiplicity of ends, nor the scarcity of means nor even the alternative applicability of scarce means taken alone can create an economic problem" (Seth: 1958: 23). At the core of the whole idea lies the concept of scarcity and its relevant problem of choice-making. Robbins does not identify Economics with certain kinds of behaviour as in the attainment and enjoyment of wealth and welfare, but pinpoints to a particular aspect of human behaviour as economic when conditioned by scarcity. He focussed interest not on the actual ends of action and their valuations, but on the bare relationship that scarce resources have to these already valued ends (Robbins: 1935: 25).
At this point, several extensions and elaborations have been suggested by certain sociologists and economists in their search for an operationally meaningful view of the essence of Robbins' concept in a dynamic perspective of societies.

Robbins defined ends as correlates of 'tendencies to conduct which can be defined and understood' (Robbins: 1935: 24), and used ends as data in an abstract static position (as in Souter: 1933: 284). His failure to distinguish true ends from their tendencies leads to the elimination of time element from the conception of economic action. Because, in reality ends appear as an anticipation of a future hoped-for state of affairs at the time of contemplating an action. A course of rational action is by its very essence something spread over time (T. Parsons: 1934: 514). Ends are also conceived as means to further ends, and means as the ends of earlier action (work for wage, wage for food). An act of 'economising' lacks in operational meaning unless the categories like 'ultimate ends', 'ultimate means' and 'the intermediate means-ends relationship' are reflected in the analysis of economic behaviour. Moreover, the concept of purpose which is fundamental to any normal human action seems to be eliminated from Robbins' 'formal' approach towards Economics; whereas, objectively perceived, a conscious aiming always pervades economic activity (Kirzner: 1967: 125). At the level of both individual and social ends, it is found operative, as 'a rational process of allocation involves not merely given ends, but a coherent system of ends, a scale of relative valuations. It is not mere plurality, but plurality within a larger unity, an organic whole in which each of the particular ends or wants has its place' (Parsons: 1934: 517). The 'constraint' that purposefulness imposes on human action as perceived by Benedette Croce is unique in human action which is 'necessarily always rational' (Mises: 1949: 8). Men's faculty of
reasoning is powerful enough to reach an end once chosen or to alter it in a new situation for achieving a new end or set of ends within the bounds of that 'larger unity'. Any occasional lapse under a psychological aberration does not contradict the postulate of rationality. This idea of rationality as inalienably featured in 'purpose' adds an operationally useful dimension to the act of 'choice-making' and 'economising'. It may not be always universally acceptable, but it can be agreed to as an operationally plausible characteristic of 'economising'.

While classifying behaviour into 'traditional' and 'rational', Oskar Lange observed that "both in traditional activity and rational activity, there is a consciousness of aim and means; the difference between these two kinds of activity consists in the fact that in one case aim and the means adopted are traditional and in the second case they are arrived at by reasoning" (1963: 158). Traditional activities are also rational, but only within the framework of tradition in so far as it affects choice-making.

In every society, primitive or modern, is discernible a politically centralised mechanism to hold the social units together, and it expresses itself in the symbol of chief, feudal lords, kings or popular governments. An ideological shift from Laissez faire to increasing social control, however, coincided with the emergence of welfare states and planning as mechanisms of social welfare. Significant also for the anthropologists and the economists is the successive births of 'modern' states on the old societies in the late twentieth century. Laissez faire under the cloak of equilibrium analysis led Robbins and his classical colleagues to formulate Economics as a pure and positive
science that had reigned supreme until Keynes and the crisis of the thirties questioned the validity of their 'settled conclusions', urging states to be assertive and welfare-oriented. In the above context, the centralising political forces or power is also found to underwrite the acquisition and allocation of scarce means and resources for the satisfaction of socially motivated ends. Individual ordering of ends and adjustments of means may be at variance with those of the state or the centralising agency. But the concept of rational action in a problem of choice would not be at stake; rather it would be guided by the force of the built-in traditionality of that social power. Given the social dictates of economic activity, the principles of 'economising' would operate therein on the basis of rational action most appropriate to the ends. Use of strategic position of the centralising agency does not obviate economising; rather it faces conditions relevant to choice-making and to the effects of choice once made by it as objects of 'economising'. As a study of accommodating scarcity to wants through a rational choice, Economics has a concrete relevance to individuals of any society, primitive or modern, and to their centralising agencies.

An expanding group of economic anthropologists led by Raymond Firth have formulated their idea of Economics on the operative basis of Robbins' concept predilecting 'scarcity and choice' as universal elements of personal and social relations. For them, 'economic organisation is set in a social frame work' in which 'economising' distinguishes the economic aspect of those relations. Firth feels that a modern economic anthropologist examines the ways in which the people he studies conceive of and express their wants and dispose of their available resources in a given social milieu (Firth: 1959: 25).
Human wants are capable of a degree of expansion in terms of varieties and elasticities which were thought of by the traditional anthropologists to have been set by the cultural settings of a society. [Other things remaining the same, an increase in production in the society may lead to a greater volume and velocity of exchange in search of people's greater satisfaction of wants]. There may be least of disparity between ends and means in the primitive economy, but the sustenance of reciprocity process inevitably suggests the existence of scarcity and an all pervading attempt at accommodating it to wants at household levels. Likewise, a redistribution process also underlines an urge for a centralising mechanism to hold the households together in a community on a territorial base. Authority and status of a chief depend not to a mean degree on the extent and regularity of the redistribution process. The series of asymmetrical exchanges motivated into this process donot keep at bay any presumption of a problem of choice. It appears at least between two social alternatives — social cohesion or a decomposition of society. In all seasonal activities, preparation of fields, sowing, weeding, harvesting and the like, working together is a socially devised way of the households' response to scarcity conditions. Viewed other way, a failure to reciprocate within an anticipated or stipulated period is certainly 'dysfunctional for an embryonic reciprocity relationship' (Cook: 1966). Reciprocity is a double way traffic of receipts and returns; quality and quantity of goods and services do enter into calculations and are equally involved in a primitive society. Both taken together, reciprocity assumes a process of economic equilibrium on the basis of which an important strategy of social cohesion is built up among the primitive people.
The usual mode of production among them does not generally underwrite ever lasting socio-economic relations. In a household-centric consumption-production pattern, division of labour by sex serves only the creation of so many autonomous entities, and in certain societies, the household rights to natural resources add in due course an element of inconsistency in the scheme of social existence. The unilateral forces are, however, counterpoised by a larger, though not always necessarily stronger, forces of kinship obligation and reciprocity relations. The expansion of society on the limited ecological givens permits continuation of reciprocity to the extent the ingroup sentiments are not overshadowed by necessities of households' subsistence from out of those givens. The degree and the forms of reciprocative behaviour, therefore, vary with kinship rank, kinship distance and the political intensities of economic behaviour (Sahlins: 1974: 130-31, 196 and 205).

Following the traditional anthropologists, Polanyi idealised the integrative role of the altruistic propensities of the primitives in their reciprocative relations, and accepted as granted the absence of a motive of material gain as not being natural to man, much less among the primitives, except in market-governed economies. He underestimated the role of conflict between kinship obligations and wants of multi-centric household economies. In an apparently cohesive structure lies a weak link in the relative absence and/or weakness of social imperatives in the production relations. Range of interactions between land and people as the earliest factors of production is governed by an interplay of bio-social and ecological determinants in areas of household subsistence and social living. Either a changing land-man ratio or a penetration of external variables or a combination
of both induce a kind of 'economic disconformity' to emerge in the society and to resolve itself into consolidating those multicentric household entities.

"The primitive society is founded on an economic disconformity, a segmentary fragility that lends itself to and reverberates particular local causes of dispute, and in the absence of 'mechanisms for holding a growing community together' realises and resolves the crisis by fission" (Sahlins: 1974: 98). The household economies develop elements of increasing autonomy which expresses itself in effecting a control over resources hitherto recognised as community wealth, and in diversifying the means of livelihood wherever opportunities are available in external variables like trade and culture-contacts with the relatively complex outside centres. Consequently, land's ownership and use-pattern do change, social variables based on kinship relations undergo transformations, and at times, segmentary solidarities are built up with the non-kins to bring about new socio-economic objectives. Frankenberg referred to Godelier to point out that the redistribution of goods by a minority can lead to class formations within a tribal society (1970: 80). It is in this dynamic perspective that a concern with transitional and peasant economies can achieve greater relevance in the studies of Economic Anthropology.

Early anthropologists dichotomised all cultures or societies into two broad categories, and the whole gamut of their approaches hinges on the operation of market principles in the 'marketless' and 'market' economies in utter disregard to the state of transitional societies. 'Economising' and choice-making are the universal features that inhere in all the societies even though they may be placed somewhere on a developmental scale. These universal features lead to various
exchange operations. All enduring social relations have an exchange aspect (Belshaw: 1965: 4). This is not to say that Economics as the study of 'economising' can claim to be 'a general social science concerned with the totality of social life'. Rather, there exists in every society an economic sphere in the web of life.

Following Belshaw, it may be said that economy is a system that attains a reality through the social phenomenon of exchange. [Without 'confounding the whole economic system with the mode and media of exchange', else other important aspects of primitive societies are suppressed]. Action is always goal-oriented and the ends of economists are goals of sociologists. Any selection of goals always involves choice which is influenced by value system of culture. Economic inter-relations based on value system as produced by the cultural processes may be deemed as an anthropological theme in action. A system of roles or a social structure provides a major frame-work which circumscribes actions and describes forms of inter-relations between them. Thus economic inter-relations based upon the premise of a social structure may be deemed as a sociological theme in action (Belshaw: 1965: 4-10).

Resultant of economising, the exchange activity permeats through the whole fabric of society and can be carried on in 'marketless' primitive, 'market-oriented' transitional and 'market-dominated' modern societies. To an economist, market as a term is an abstraction of exchange activities without any physical essence. Transformation of the primitive through to the modern economy consists, besides others, in an increase in the range and forms of exchange activities for meeting the scarcity situations. This increase leads to the gradual formation of markets, and its expansion brings in its trail a solution of quantification and measurement problems with the aid of money and money-
-equivalents. Money is understood well only through its functions that assume complexities only along a scale of society's developments. But once the curtain of money is lifted, goods and services appear as being exchanged for each other. Barter is found to coincide generally with the statics of primitive societies, whereas money allies with the transitional and the modern ones. Credit supposed to be of recent development, representing trust and value, was no less operative among the primitive. Pospisil observes that "exchange of credit is another very important means of redistributing money among the Kapauku. It has greater importance in this society than in western capitalism" (Pospisil: 1965: 26). Again, Mary Douglas notes that "the inconvenience of barter and the difficulty of arranging credit lead to the adoption of a medium of exchange. The only objection to this supposed historical sequence is that credit is never difficult in a primitive economy; credit exists before market" (Mary Douglas: 1970: 121). However, this credit generally attains complex ramifications in modern economies. Barter, market, money and credit are the different forms of exchange liquidities, roughly coinciding with different stages of development.

The custom of gift-giving has hardly been subject to any close scrutiny. A gift may be initiated for an economic gain, a political advantage, a gain of social status or out of a religious belief. All these motives are universal in every society, be it a primitive or twentieth century urban society. It may be more frequent and pervasive among the homogeneous kins, and less significant among the heterogeneous people of a society, but 'the basic types of behaviour would seem to have much in common' (Firth: 1970: 17). Expectation of a return of gifts of a set/expected standard is inherent in any society (Belshaw: 1965: 35-36; Colson: 1951). We are to make worthwhile comparisons
'by looking for similar functions and not by looking for similar formal characteristics' (Mary Douglas: 1970: 120). A dynamic perspective can be conceived only by such an approach. In gift giving, failure to make adequate return, if not of equivalent value, is punished by loss of prestige and also by an automatic exclusion from future exchanges with consequent deprivation, ego-satisfaction and insurance against future needs.

Money and credit have given rise to a set of institutions hardly obtaining among the primitives. But their absence does not always obviate applicability of micro-economics. Barth notes that the central purpose of economic activities in Darfur is to maximise increase in personal assets and to obtain a balanced distribution of value on various consumption items, the balance being determined by each person's consumption profile (1970: 162). Criterion of time, labour-time and leisure operates behind the primitives' economic pursuits (Belshaw: 1949, 1954; Salisbury: 1962). They are also subject to usually heavy influence of the law of 'supply and demand' besides the force of ideal customary prices. A papuan can be a keen trader while being a cannibal (Pospisil: 1965: 19). Ideal demand functions may be restricted in many of those societies, but even in our own, there are sharp discontinuities in demand/supply functions as are expressed in rationing and other control devices (Douglas: 1970: 112). In the absence of a 'free-style' exchange with modern money, commodities like shell strings, cowries, cloth and the like are used with hierarchy of denominations and value-ranking in Melanesia, Africa and elsewhere. "Where commodities are not regularly exchanged for one another they still are commonly found to be arranged in a hierarchy or on a scale of estimations" (Firth: 1965: 336-44; 1970: 18). The principles of
valuations in terms of substitution give us no less an insight because a rupee can express a relative price but not the exact benefits to a household even in developed economies. When a smaller work-party is invited for constructing a family's house, idea of relative cost and benefit certainly operates behind invitation. Otherwise a poor family might always invite a bigger work-party for constructing its smaller house-unit. Studies in non-market economies, such as those by Firth (1939), Salisbury (1962) and Pospisil (1963), have documented the propositions that economic relations among 'primitive' people do involve motivational patterns and rational calculations not unlike those characterising actors in market economies (Cook: 1966). Functions are similar though the formal structure differs over the whole range of societies' economic activities, and basic principle of choice and decision makings is not different between societies. Relative inapplicability of Micro-Economics diminishes with the changes of the structural and institutional fields towards the industrial-society pole. Hence, the differences are a matter of degree and not of kind.

In the transitional societies, however, money makes for easy quantification of variables and the formal Economics gets an enlarged mirror for its reflection.

In partial recognition of these facts, Bohannan and Dalton improved upon Polanyi's dichotomisation of societies, admitting varying degrees of the operation of market principles. On the basis of studies of the African markets, they classified the economic systems into 'marketless economies', 'economies with peripheral markets' and 'market economies'. The former two are deemed to be multi-centric, having several distinct transactional spheres, and mutually distinguished by different material items and services as well as by different principles
of exchange and moral values (Bohannan and Dalton: 1962: 3). An all-purpose money destroys the distinction of moral values, and helps a uni-centric impersonal market mechanism emerge and dominate in the third. These two systems get modified in order to cope with the dynamics of societies in which 'the economic activities organised on market principles are expanding, with a concomitant attenuation of redistribution and reciprocity'. Bohannan and Dalton also realised that 'the African economies are becoming like our own in the sense that the sectors dominated by the market principles are being enlarged', and 'the multi-centric economies are in the process of becoming uni-centric' (1962: 24-25). Such a kind of continuum is also discernible in Sahlins' typology of reciprocity. As the society grows complex, 'generalised reciprocity' yields place to 'balanced reciprocity', and the latter in turn is overshadowed by the 'negative reciprocity'. Sahlins' first category corresponds to Malinowski's pure gift and includes free gift, help, generosity and the like, while the second is more economic and 'the parties to it confront each other as distinct economic and social interests'. Negative reciprocity as the most impersonal sort of exchange covers different forms of appropriation, and 'the participants confront each other as opposed interests, each looking to maximise utility at the other's expense' (Sahlins: 1974: 193-196). The first two types are available in all societies, and the latest, exclusively in the western societies in which alone, human conduct can be deemed to be a subject of formal economic analysis. He is also aware of the imperfect correlation between the type of reciprocity and the degree of impersonification in the human relations or social distance, and introduces a few diverse variables like kinship rank and distance, in building up several
sub-types of reciprocity. Sahlins conceived of a frame-work of evolution of cultures rather than of societies and wanted to remain polemic on the point of economic analysis of the early primitive societies, attending western economies as a reference point (Ibid: XI-XIV). Frankenberg explicated out of the writings of Raymond Firth the concepts of primitive, peasant and industrial societies (1970: 51-55). But Firth differs from his contemporaries in that he could demonstrate the use of the usual economic categories like scarcity, choice, savings, investment, interest, credit, capital, incentives, entrepreneurship and others in the studies of those societies. All these are shown to operate within individual societies as well as within various types of societies (Ibid: 55).

All these typologies suggest changes in and transformation of the society which are, however, not to be taken as the result of an evolutionary process occurring on all fronts of the social system. Studies of Pospisil (1963), Sol Tax (1953) and others seem to refute such a pure presumption as this. Sol Tax's Guatemala has developed 'Penny Capitalism' in a money economy with a strong market tending to be perfectly competitive; but sale of land, labour and lending operations are still restricted by traditional attitudes. Pospisil's Kapauku Papuan society is characterised by a form of primitive capitalism in well developed trade, market, money and legal system, all covered by fiercely individualistic values. Extensions of credit or accumulations of wealth there brings prestige and power, and a head-hunter can become also a keen trader. Social changes may, therefore, develop different expressions in different societies through the interacting of the different economic and non-economic variables. Hence,
a mutually exclusive categorisation of societies would scarcely reflect realities of situations. Rather all real societies can be placed on a developmental scale between two idealised poles, the primitive and the industrial societies, that will represent 'the degrees of disengagement of economy from the social structure. At one extreme economic analysis will have least applicability and at the other extreme most' (Cohen: 1970: 113-114). In such a model, every known society or a group of societies can be placed somewhere along the line of development in disregard to the above sets of mutually exclusive categorisations.

Until the recent decades, anthropologists were preoccupied with people whom they christened as primitive, tribal, non-literate and the like. But the term 'primitive' suffers from the burden of so many definitions. Lois Mednick's memorandum on the use of 'primitive' (1960: 441-445) provides us with many examples of its ambiguous and inconsistent uses. The use of the term, 'non-literate' for 'primitive' as proposed by Herskovits (1940) would also not be enlightening always. Absence of literacy cannot be a predominating characteristic of the groups christened as tribe.

Opinions also differ, at times confuse each other, in respect of an ideal definition of the term, tribe. I.M. Lewis applied the criterion of 'scale', earlier introduced by Godfrey and Wilson (1945), and defined the tribal societies as ideally small in scale, restricted in the spatial and temporal range of their social, legal and political relations, and possessing a morality, religion and world view of corresponding dimensions (1968: 147). Marshall Sahlins, on the other hand, viewed these societies as a kind of segmentary systems (1968).
These systems reflect a certain structural type largely different from their more complex social counterpart in which caste, peasantry, gentry or the urbanite may exist or co-exist. Fried viewed 'tribe as a way station between land and state in the evolution/political organisation', while Lehman considered a tribe (the Chin of Burma) as sub-nuclear, in the sense of culture and society abutting on a civilisation while being distinct from the nuclear culture and its society'. Tribes are neither civilised nor are they primitive (1963: 225). Each of the authorities thus defined 'tribe' on the exigencies of their angle of studies.

In India, the convention to categorise certain groups of Indian people as tribal is a British administrative legacy. Even the Indian Constitution did not define the content of the concept while enlisting those groups as 'scheduled tribe' (Andre Beteille: 1974: 62-63; Naik: 1968:84-97; Stephen Fuchs: 1969). In other parts of Asia, Africa and elsewhere, labelling a particular group as tribal had been initially a political categorisation by a colonial rule that was also incidentally responsible, at least partially, for the perpetuation of the former's comparative isolation.

Truely isolated societies are now-a-days rare, practically non-existent, and the post-world war developments have brought all the societies, 'primitive' and 'modern', closer to each other. Earlier, traders as middlemen played an important role in the inter-tribal circulation of commodities [in Melanesia, East Africa and in two Americas (Belshaw: 1965)]. Marketless substantive economics are rapidly disappearing as ethnographic entities, being displaced by market-influenced or dominated transitional and peasant economies (Cook:1966).
In India, a regular course of trade and contact rearing concomitant changes existed between the tribes and the 'mainstream' since the distant past (Mackenzie: 1884; Ghurye: 1943; Goswami: 1971; Andre Beteille: 1974). All these tribal groups, more than 400 in India alone, are at different stages of transition. Two of the generally accepted features of these groups, the relative isolation and the cohesive ingroup sentiments that make them illiberal of naturalising the alien ideas and actions have been broken down. New productive enterprises have come up with the change of technology, and the horizontal extension of economic relations have thinned out the kinship obligations, and both finally contributed to the changes in the socio-economic structure of the tribes.

Anthropologists have generally viewed these changes in terms of mutually exclusive cultural categories and kinship structures like 'tribe', 'proto peasant', 'peasant' (Fernandez: 1965; Eric Wolf: 1955: 454; 1966). But an economic historian would in all probability delineate these changes not in terms of caste, kinship or lineage structures but in terms of economic developments and other strata formations in a complex society, and both the approaches provide us with a picture which is unfortunately short of realities. In course of all these academic exercises, however, a vital focus of study in respect of all these changing societies has emerged, and this focus seems to veer round the problem of 'not what is a primitive' but how does a primitive cease to be primitive in the context of changing contacts and situations.

Economic developments of those backward areas in which anthropologists traditionally centred their interests now strain the brain of the statesmen, economists, anthropologists and other social scientists. Lewis (1955), Myrdal (1957), Bauer and Yamey (1957), Rao (1971), and a
host of 'development-economists' of the underdeveloped areas now recognise the role that non-economic variables play along with the economic ones for a change of the concerned societies. On the other hand, Firth (1946), Tax (1953), Nash (1958), Dewey (1962), Epstein (1962), Salisbury (1962), Belshaw (1965) and a host of anthropologists recognised and studied the interrelations of economic and social forces in changing the societies, and brought to a sharp relief the role of Economics in explaining the changes of those societies. LeClair (1962) and Scott Cook (1966) had also a share therein. In the new states of the old societies, politics has also entered the arena of developmental efforts to turn the economy into a 'social economy'. Gradually it is realised that an economic man is as much a social man as he is a political man in a society. Since human brain is not barren, and a mix of cooperation and competition always propels an action in society, a society faces a change. A social structure is made up of men, man-made institutions, organisations and groups of various kinds and purposes on the bases of a certain territory and its resources. A society has to respond itself to their changes whenever they occur out of any exogenous or endogenous forces or out of the both.

There are, therefore, strains of adjustment which constitute social problems of change. A study of social structure and its change thus involves an inter-disciplinary thinking which is becoming a fast-growing norm of the social scientists. It is now perceived that this strategy of studies may not always fertilise theory, but lack of it certainly sterilises practice (Bailey: 1969: 104). Inter-disciplinary study is not a prelude to merger of all social sciences into a general science. It is a frontier activity that cross and recross the boundary of sciences in allied interests without jumping a fence or climbing a
stile. So Economics cannot purely economise Anthropology, and Anthropology cannot perfectly anthropolise Economics. But Economics may lead itself into a fruitless alley of speculation if exchange with other disciplines is kept at bay. Likewise, Anthropology would be divested of practicality if only left engrossed with the 'pristine glory' of the primitives. Rather, a modest mutual trade will render better comprehension to economic variables and greater insights into the social ones, and a holistic view really attains holism in a relevant case.
CHAPTER 1

II

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

Aspects other than exchange and markets of the primitive societies have so far received a relatively less attention in the treatises of Economic Anthropology. Even this kind of attention is much less in India where that specialisation is a nascent one.

The tradition of monographic studies on the tribal societies had continued among the Indian authors till the mid-fifties when a diversion in the form of village-based studies of different groups and ecologies appeared (Dube: 1955, 1958; Marriott: 1955; Bailey: 1959; Srinivas: 1960; Chauhan: 1967; Mukherjee: 1971). These village studies in contrast with the earlier tribal studies are to a great extent influenced by a popular view of a trichotomous Indian society (tribal, non-tribal ruralites, urbanites). This view has been formed in the light of Redfield's concept of folk-urban continuum.

Gradually, the idea of the tribes being in the process of transition (Majumdar: 1937) gained momentum. Sinha (1965) spoke of tribe-caste and tribe-peasant continua through a progression towards ethnic heterogeneity in social interaction and stratification, role specialisation and diversification in the relation-networks with the advanced centres. Bailey believes that both caste and tribe are becoming rapidly transformed and 'merged into a different system which is neither one nor the other' (1961: 18), and Beteille asserts a tribe-in-transition to be 'an agrarian system whose base consists of a heterogeneous body of peasants cut up into various ethno-linguistic categories' (1974: 74).
In India, many of the tribes have been settled agriculturists for several generations under less irregular external contacts (e.g. Santal, Munda, Bhil, Gond, Banari, Baiga, Rabha, Hajong, and others). They have developed various tenurial rights on land, increasing degrees of ethnic heterogeneity and social stratification in village community and sophisticating involvement in money economy which are the common characteristics of peasant communities (Roy: 1915; Majumdar: 1937; Haimendorf: 1948; Bose: 1949; Sinha: 1965; Beteille: 1974).

During the last two decades a good many socio-economic studies of Indian villages or of communities have been carried out (village monographs of the Census of India and of different Agro-Economic Research Centres and other Institutes). Majority of these studies have a reference either to the traditional confines of Social Anthropology and ethnography in respect of Indian tribes or to the measuring of certain economic categories concerning castes and communities of Indian plains. Relevant authors have been conscious more of the types rather than [economic] aspects of the society. These studies have, however, come to be gradually associated with concepts like 'peasants', 'peasant cultures', and the use of economic variables has also been on the increase. Consequently, a shift of focus from social correlates of economic institutions to economic correlates of social forces has been visible (Nag: 1958; Hozelitz: 1964; Sinha: 1965; Ganguly: 1969; Patel: 1969; Bose: 1971; Beteille: 1974; Misra: 1976). A happy blend of these two trends for studying the socio-economic changes of these communities might have reflected the realities of situations better.

No comprehensive study of any of the hill tribes of North-East India in the light of the above has so far been made. The Garos of
Meghalaya are not an exception. Besides Major Playfair's monograph (1909), Robbins Burling (1963) and Chie Nakani (1958, 1968) dealt with marriage, family and kinship of the Garos and with the institutionalised pattern of continued relationship between two lineage groups for sustenance of the societal organisation. Goswami and Majumdar (1972) carried out in-depth studies of the different social institutions of the Garos. The present author dealt with the Garo-British relations of a selected period. No systematic study has, however, been made of the socio-economic changes of the Garos till today.

It has, therefore, been an humble endeavour of this dissertation to delineate the trends of change with particular emphasis on how the combined effects of certain exogenous and endogenous forces have brought the Garos to a stage where attention towards cash crops and occupational diversification in relation to urban market centres has come to be linked with the shortage of land which had been their traditional source of subsistence, and led the Garos to develop atomistic tendencies in the society. A number of economic factors coupled with the non-economic ones have led to the break up of the traditional socio-cultural and economic set up of the Garo Society.

Methodologically, this study has been an unorthodox one. A diachronic study is supposed to bring to a sharp relief the features of a societal change within a fixed period. But change is a continuous process though at times imperceptible as a reaction of earlier complex of forces. Study of the resultant modification and/or negation of earlier socio-political and economic institutions thus defies the fixity of two time references.
On the other hand, asynchronic study which is to deal with functional inter-relationships between various institutions can hardly express the dynamics of changing variables unless placed in historical perspective [not necessarily diachronic].

This approach apart, one has to think also of a model of study. But no uniform model can be followed indiscriminately in the study of all the rural communities of our country. A village of the Indian plains is caste-ridden and ethnically heterogeneous, follows settled agriculture and private and/or absentee ownerships and is well drawn into country's money economy, while a village of a 'tribal' community of the North-Eastern Hills is casteless and ethnically homogenous, follows shifting cultivation and community ownership and faces a gradual dilution of its isolation into country's economy. This brings us to a question whether a micro study of socio-economic changes (at village level) can reflect the macro level features of societal change. This question could be answered by referring to a Garo village of Garo Hills.

In the hill areas of Garo Hills, it is observed that the inhabitants of all the villages belong to the same Garo matrilineal tribe, share common traditions, dialect, family and kinship structure, and have developed similar household mode of production by practising shifting cultivation on lands under community ownership and within similar ecology and environment. Robbins Burling (1963), and Goswami and Majumdar (1972) asserted this overall uniformity of Garo culture. A Garo village is thus typical of the whole Garo area of the Hills. In such a situation-frame there seems to be hardly any compelling necessity for studying a cluster of villages or making a comparative study of different villages of a homogeneous culture-zone for discerning the
general features of societal change. Constructions of the gross aggregates of socio-political and economic microcosms may not always provide an analytical frame of such situation unless the heterogeneous reality of these microcosms are studied in depth, and their changing structural-functional relationships are brought to sharp relief.

This could be realised if a representative village upholding an objectively suitable sample-coverage of that cultural zone is studied after ascertaining its suitability for the study of the defined problem by a pilot enquiry.

The next stage to be considered relates to the methods of collecting the data and arranging them in a historical perspective. Study of a small society like that of the Garos can attain a reasonable degree of perfection through holistic approach. This has been ensured by the coordinating methods like participant-observation, structured interviews and unstructured group gossips in local tongue preceded by pilot enquiries in several villages and supplemented by library works.

The undivided district of Garo Hills with a total area of 8084 Sq. Km. occupies the western part of the state of Meghalaya between the latitudes 25°9' and 26°1' North and the longitudes between 89°49' and 91°2' East, having a total population of 406615 souls (Census of 1971). It has two distinct physical divisions — irregular mass of Hills of the interior and the narrow strips of bordering plains. Hill areas are almost exclusively occupied by the Garo animists and Christians, whereas the plains are inhabited by the Rabha, Koch, Hajong, Dalu, Banai of Hindu faith besides the Bengali and Assamese hindus and muslims. Each of the areas practises shifting and settled cultivations under community and individual ownership of land respectively.
The villages in the hill areas are very small, many of them comprising less than 10 households. 72.24% of the total villages of the district have less than 200 souls, whereas 23.83% of the villages have souls between 200 and 499, and the rest have more than 500 souls (Census of 1971). In 1961, corresponding figures for the villages under above population-size categories had been 84.89%, 13.50% and 1.61%. Majority of the villages under the second category and all the villages of the last category have been in the plains, whereas the villages under the first category are within the Hills. On an average, each of such hill-villages has about 29 households (District Statistical Abstract, Garo Hills: 1973).

Tura happens to be the only recognised urban area of the district since the Census of 1961, and is the seat of the autonomous District Council administration. Earlier, it served for about 80 years (1866-1947) as the centre of British administration, and till 1976 as the Headquarters of Garo Hills. This district was then divided into East and West Garo Hills district (hereafter referred to as Garo Hills) with Tura and Williamnagar as their respective headquarters. Even though a number of urbanised areas have developed in course of time throughout these two districts, Tura still holds a premier position in Garo Hills as the predominating centre of political and socio-economic activities of the people of Garo Hills.

Following a pilot survey for a large representative village from amongst those in the Hills, the village of Darengri was selected by the author for an intensive study. It is located in the Hills, and compared to rest of the villages, it has 53 households with 332 souls drawn from as many as 20 exogamous matri-clans. It possesses all the features of the
traditional Garo society and economy, but differs from other Garo
villages in respect of its proximity to Tura as the ever expanding
cultural and commercial centre of Garo Hills, and in respect of the
extensions of christianity and western education into that village.

The author has been associated with Garo society since 1958 when
he joined the Government College at Tura, and learnt the local tongue
in course of his intimate association with the Garos. He stayed in that
sample village during different working seasons of 1975 and 1976
observing the seasonal activities and often participating in jhumming,
plantation and other economic and socio-cultural activities along with
the villagers. Besides this participant-observant method, the interview
method on the basis of prepared questionnaire was employed for collecting
data covering the households of the entire village. Group discussions were
undertaken after church services and prayer meetings and also on Sundays
when villagers would gather in any household for gossips. Unstructured
but purposive interviews and group discussions were also conducted by
the author in a few other villages around Tura and elsewhere in Garo
Hills for ensuring cross-verification of his Darengri-based data. On all
these occasions the author used the native tongue. Library works have
lent him further insight into various features of changing Garo society.

In the field of socio-economic researches, an investigator fails
to achieve his objective if he does not make his tools effective by
promoting his informants' confidence in him. This gaining of confidence
of the people lies at the very root of success of all sociological
investigations, more particularly in dealing with the hill people. With
some initial difficulties gradually overcome, the author could get
himself well received by the villagers even to the extent of being taken
in as a member of their Bolwari clan, and his wife as a member of the
Agitok Koksep. It was only after such a psychological involvement of the author in their 'central social institution' of clan organisation, called a'kim, that he could get a free sail in his investigations. Gradually it has been realised that this central institution so precious to the traditionalist has become an object of onslaught by a host of socio-economic forces.
The Garos constitute a matrilineal society and had been divided into two ideally exogamous moieties (chatchi) viz., Sangma and Marak, each of which is again subdivided into many strictly exogamous clans (machong). Of later origin are Momin, Shira and Areng as independent phratries that consist of the people of Gabil, Cheran, Mrinda, Dalbot and Nonfbak machongs respectively of the Sangma moiety. It was also found that like those under Shira and Areng, the machongs affiliated to the Momin chatchi were also alternatively affiliated to the Sangma chatchi. Consequently all these three chatchis, Momin, Shira and Areng, are now considered as forming a "sub-clan constellations" of the Sangma chatchi (Goswami & Majumdar : 1972:52).

Chatchi is indicative of a larger exogamous group of the Garos descending from one of the founding Garo mothers, and machong attributes an immediacy of matri-relations to the membership of relatively separate group centering round a common mother born of the earliest (Ma = mother, Chong= a group and chonga = to lay by heaps). In course of time Garos' strict adherence to the rules of chatchi exogamy lost its efficacy. The chatchi ties slackened gradually and it gave rise to smaller exogamous divisions. This tendency for fission is operative in all the chatchi groups.

In Garo society, marriage establishes a perpetuating relation and customary contract between the respective machongs of the husband of the inheritress daughter (Nokna donjipa mechik or nokna) is to be
ideally chosen from any of the sons of her father's machong, who becomes the only resident son-in-law of the household \((\text{Nokrom} = \text{pillar of the household})\). He then takes the place of his father-in-law after the latter's death and thus the process is repeated. Other non-inheriting daughters of the household \((\text{Agate})\) marry males of any machong other than their own and establish separate households away from the parents'. Each of these households then becomes the point of contact between the two machongs, one of the wife and the other of her husband, and this reciprocal contact repeats itself with every occasion of marriage of the respective households' nokna. Machongs thus act as marriage regulating matrilineal descent groups.

Garo settlements over the district were divided into popularly known areas called Akhings, each under the ownership and control of a machong and is held in custody by an Akhing chief \((\text{Nokma})\) as the husband of the inheritress-female of the founder-household of the akhing. The nokrom of that house becomes the nokma on the death of his father-in-law and his selection as a nokrom from among the nokma's nephews is generally a function of mutual responsibility of the two machongs involved in the initial establishment of the household.

A machong is too big a body to carry out all of its functions for the maintenance and protection of the nokma-household as well as those of other members, male or female, who might have spread over different distant areas. Its responsibilities are, therefore, carried out by a smaller group of closely related kins within the machong called Mahari. In a broad sense it is understood to mean the entire blood relations belonging to a machong and is also sometimes designated by the same name, yet not all of its members are to take special care of other members.
The concept of mahari has two fold expressions: as a consanguineous unit in relation to a member of a household and as a functional unit in respect of that household. Mahari as a consanguineous unit refers to a smaller body of the closer matri-relations, male and female, of a member (madrang) in which the male matri-relations (chra) predominate with the maternal uncle (mama) being held in the highest esteem. Caros loosely refer to the latter group as chrapante or chratangrang i.e. the elder and younger brothers, maternal uncles and the great maternal uncles if alive (Costa:1954, reprint 1972:17). Consanguineous mahari of a principal male or female of a household thus refers to their respective matri-relations.

On the other hand, a functional mahari refers to a small effective group of the above consanguinals and an affinal i.e. the principal male and his nokrom in the household. These two males hail from the same machong and get domiciled in the same household identifying its interests and obligations with those of that household (except their obligations towards own mahari) and participate in the decision making process of the consanguineous mahari in respect of that household's affairs. The extent to which they can contribute to the decisions depends on their ability and success in controlling and effecting prosperity of the household.

The husbands of the non-inheriting daughters (chavari) of the younger and elder sisters (boningtang, gumitang), and of the aunts (aeang, pajontang) of the principal female of a household, if resident in the village and in regular contact with that household, sometimes join the deliberations of a mahari meeting (mahari mela) in respect of that household. These husbands (paa-pacti) may
contribute to the deliberations but he decisions are taken by the consanguineous unit of the mahari, and the household head and the nokrom always join that unit in arriving at those decisions.

For all practical purposes, the consanguineous unit in relation to the principal female of the household and its male head and nokrom form the composite character of the functional mahari. In this is found the representation of two machongs, that of principal female and of the principal male. This functional unit of the mahari relates primarily to a household and is to consider all problems, rights and obligations of that household in the society, and has to act as a bridge between the principal male's and his wife's machongs. The focal point of power and formation in both the concepts of mahari, however, has always been the chra i.e. the male matrilineal-relations of the principal female of the household. They can displace a female from the inheritance line of the household, and dislodge a nokma or a nokrom from his privileged position.

For such an overriding power of the chra, one should not underestimate the role of the household head and his nokrom in the functional mahari. In case of nokma households, it was found that during the pre-British days nokmas used to lead the forays in inter-akhing feuds or the raids against the plains people (Ayerst:1880; Kar: 1970:2-3). In respect of properties of other general households, the male heads and nokroms are found to predominate in their acquisition and maintenance. In fact the ability, tact and intelligence of a male head could help him in maintaining his indispensable position in the functional mahari in respect of his household.

Functional mahari as an institution was born out of mutual responsibility of two machongs in continuing a household. It has
assumed a 'bridge and buffer' role between the concerned machongs of a household in uniting their interests and absorbing their stocks in respect of that household. This role has another dimension in the traditional custom of 'replacement' (onsonga or onrika). It is the custom of providing for a second or subsequent husband/wife to the widow/widower from among the members of the deceased's machong (onsenga or onrika). This custom has been developed "to maintain the household as a continuing point of contact between two lineages which it had always contacted" (Burling: 1963:141). The mutual rights and duties which accompany marriage and which bind together two lineages are known to the Garos as a'kim (Burling: 1963:140). Functional mahari is the unit through which this inter-relationship or a'kim could be sustained and risks of stability absorbed.

The principle of onsonga led to the rise of two institutions peculiar to the traditional society. When the household head dies leaving behind his widow, nokna and nokrom, his widow retains the rights, responsibilities and privileges of the principal female of the household and assumes the position of the principal wife (Jik mongma or Jik maming) of the nokrom. Several authors considered this custom of getting married to the widowed mother-in-law with its consumation as the extra-ordinary feature of Garo society (Mukherjee: 1955:299-302). A close scrutiny discloses sporadic occurrences of such a custom, and the socio-economic relations usual to married couple are also found maintained by them. But consumption is neither enforceable by law nor rejectable according to Garo custom, but acceptable only to an extent that the logic of rules does not go beyond psychological possibilities.
Another feature not yet discussed but no less remarkable than the aforesaid custom, has been what may be termed as 'step-daughter-marriage' among the Garo. If the household head dies leaving behind his widow and unmarried daughters, his mahari would provide for replacement, and the replacing member would accept the old widow as his principal wife (Jik Mongma/Jik Maming), and her inheritress' daughter as a co-wife (Jik gite). On the death of her mother, she assumes the role of the principal wife.

Likewise, on the death, divorce or desertion of a wife on acceptable grounds, the woman's mahari would provide the husband with another wife from among her nearest kins (onsonga/onrika). If sterility or disease occasions an absence of female child in the household, adoption (deragata) from the principal female's nearest possible blood kins fills in the void to ensure continuity of the household. The principles of onsonga and deragata are thus motivated to provide security not only to the old widow or widower but also to the person filling up the missing link, and allow the household to adapt itself again to the continuous socio-economic relations in the society undisturbed by occasional gaps. They also provide for continuity of inheritance line in the same lineage. Functions and composition of a functional mahari have thus a direct bearing on all these features of a traditional society.

The residence pattern in a Garo village provides a panorama of inter-mahari relationship. Any marriage excepting that of a nokna creates a new household in the village as the agates are to start their own with husbands hailing from different maharies and/or villages. (In case of residence pattern, mahari is taken as consanguinal kins as part of a machong). Sons of a household (dedrang)
may settle in the mother's village even after their marriage bringing in wives from a different mahari/machong and village. Though most of the sons of the household leave their native village for staying with respective wife's household elsewhere, a few of them would always settle in their own village. Garos do not differentiate between own children and the adopted ones. Hence an adopted male or female may start a new household after marriage in the same village. Replacement males or females may bail from any of the related mahari/machong of the deceased husband/wife of a household and continue therein. Besides all these, any outsider Garo not belonging to any of the two maharis of the nokma household may settle and use the akming land on payment of a quite rent (a'wil) to the nokma.

Rules of exogamy permitting, husbands of the agate and wives of the dedrang may hail from the same mahari/machong as that of the household head. Both the males may be from the same village though hailing from two exogamous ma'aris. Older households are found to be gradually inter-connected by inter-marriage within the village, while new households may not have any kinship relation. In course of time, however, majority of the households are ideally expected to be inter-connected on the basis of consanguinal and affinal relationships. All the above categories of residence patterns do not strictly fit into a standard anthropological classification, yet explaining the situation, Burling asserts that "all residence patterns have their essential part in Garo social structure" (1963:216).

A Garo village is thus composed of several households, at times many in number, each of which continues in its own house built
around or on the flank of a common courtyard on a hillock with perennial sources of water nearby. Houses are built nearly on the same plan and similar accommodation arrangements, and look like a long but narrow, double roofed rectangular structure on the piles set on the inclines of the hillocks. Each of the homestead areas has only one house of a size suited to the needs of the family and their entrance is always from the common courtyard. The open space in front of each house (balim) is used for husking grains and casual gossips of the womenfolk. The first of three rooms (nokra) is not on the platform with the rest of the house and has a packed down earth floor with a staircase leading into the mainroom (dongrama). Nokra is used for keeping household miscellany, a stock of fuelwood, pestle, mortar and the cattle, if any. Dongrama is the central room, biggest of all, and used as a public room of the family. Areas within it are implicitly earmarked for specific uses. Nearest to the door is an area called maljri at the foot of a central post, used for making any sacrifice, if necessary, on an appropriate occasion. Beyond this is the place, chusimra, where the liquor jar is kept and fresh ricebeer is made. At the centre of the building is the hearth (sudap/dudap) made of a raised layer of earth within a quadrangular wooden frame. Above it is the ngal, a bamboo made platform supported by four corner posts of the hearth on which the cooking pots, utensils and other provisions are kept. The area between the hearth and the last room is utilised for taking meals and by the unmarried girls and younger boys for sleeping purpose. Honoured guests are also welcomed into this area for their seats and served food or drinks. A part of it may be partitioned to allow younger couples to sleep in. The last room, the nokdring or din, is reserved
for the principal couple or for the old widower or widow. The family heirlooms and other valuables are also kept therein. Beyond this is a passage that leads to a urinal at one corner of the building (chidikima). A traditional house has no window. Playfair reports that a Garo has to give his fellow villagers a feast for the privilege of having window in his house (1909:37). Generally, on the side of the main room (nokpanchi), a small platform is built to be used as an open verandah which is accessible through a door from inside the room or by a ladder from the outside ground. Traditional accommodation arrangements are not uniform everywhere. In some villages, additional fireplaces are arranged, and areas earmarked for storage of food, within the dongrama. Below the floor of the house there may be pigsties, and in one corner of the homestead area, there may be a granary and a fuel-wood-shed. In some villages, granaries of all the households may be found in one corner of a common square, away from all residential huts. At the centre or at one side of the common courtyard, is constructed the bachelor's dormitory a Nokpante which is usually of a greater size and on a much higher platform that connects the ground with notched log used by all for stepping up into the hall. All adolescent unmarried boys of the village sleep therein.

There are a few other elements of a village landscape that may not escape the eyes of a casual visitor. Under the front eaves of a residential house, a few wooden posts carved into crude images of a person would stand planted, each in memory of a dead member of that house. These memorial posts called kima abound in every village. A visitor may also witness a spirit house (delang) in the
TRADITIONAL ACCOMMODATION ARRANGEMENT

form of rectangular bamboo made enclosures for offering food and essentials to the spirit of the dead. There are also sacrificial alters found here and there in the village.

Besides all these, each of the households has one or more field houses (nokadal/jamatal) in their respective areas of shifting cultivation (jhum) within the akhing. In order to guard the field and the standing crops from the onslaught of animals, Garos also construct rest houses on the top of a tree (borang) high above the ground to be away from the scares of ferocious animals. These tree-huts look like a human nest in the midst of jhum fields.

These traditional Garo houses are built with locally available wood, bamboo, thatch and cane, and can come up without the use of a single iron nail.

In a traditional village "homestead plats are not individually owned, nor has the akhing owning mahari any effective right over them" (Coswami & Majumdar : 1972:72). Ideally, ownership of akhing land stands dispersed among the members of the akhing owning mahari (Akhing mahari). This community ownership is, however, carried by the principal female of the oldest household of the akhing. Inheritance of akhing in this sense descends from mother to the chosen daughter residing with the parents.

Sale, mortgage or transfer of a part of the akhing is the exclusive right of the akhing mahari and can be effected by the nokma on behalf of his wife only on the approval of her mahari. Else, in practice every household once established or allowed to settle in the akhing automatically acquires equal privilege in respect of the uses of akhing land. An ordinary household has no right to own a part of the akhing unless it has purchased it or received it as a gift.
from the nokma household.

As regards household properties, generally termed Gam that includes all kinds of movable goods and objects of 'use and exchange value', ownership expresses itself a little differently. Any member can add to the inventory of household possessions, but cannot dispose of the same without the common consent of the head and his wife. Rev. Costa reports that even the nokrom and nokna of the household are to be consulted for the purpose (1975:32). It works within the broad principle that "the property once in a motherhood cannot pass out of it" (Playfair : 1909:71). Even if a male cannot inherit property he has or his mahari assumes a right to control what his wife/inherited for him. This hold over wife's property does not cease to be with his death. It continues through the nokrom, his own or related nephew brought into the household to succeed him as the representative of his mahari.

Each of the grownup sons and daughters get a small plot of land (A'tot) out of the household's own or elsewhere in the akhing, which they can use for/personal purposes without neglecting work on the family land. They are also sometimes given a hen, a duck, a goat or any fruit tree or trees to be maintained by them for their personal income and expenses. They are thus assured of a latitude of independence and training in self-help and a scope of possessory rights.

Acquisitions and debts of an unmarried son rest within the mother's right of disposal and hence of her mahari. His wife steps into this position in respect of his post-marriage contracts relating to her household.
Whenever a household shifts its residence to a different area within the akhing or to a different akhing, the homestead plots revert to the village community.

If any household plants a tree or whoever plants it, the planter acquires a special claim, a heritable privilege, over the fruits, though nobody denies to fellow-villagers a privilege of plucking one or two for immediate consumption. But over the fruits of wild tree even on a homestead area, everybody has rights of use. All are free to collect wild jungle, roots, tubers and vegetables from a jhum land during its fallow period.

In the same way, houses belong to individual families, but the courtyard, the common paths and fruit-trees between houses belong to all.

One might believe that the shifting nature of cultivation is partially responsible for preventing the private rights in land from emerging in Garo areas for the reason that the households are to shift their use-privilege on to different plots in successive years. But there exists implicit a right of preferential use of a plot by the same family which had jhumed it earlier. This preferential possessory right could not, however, assume any cognisable problem because households could get enough of lands for its subsistence.

A few varieties of rights have come up within the akhing in course of certain dealings of the nokma household and the akhing mahari. An akhing belongs to a mahari since the time it was founded over a particular area. But the purchase of a part of that akhing or parting of its part as a gift in recognition of special services towards the nokma household / akhing mahari or in repayment of their debt generally gave rise to a kind of 'assigned land' (Amathe) within
that akhing. Recipient may be one of the same kindred or a cognate machong or of a separate mahari and is popularly designated as amathe-nokma to distinguish him from the original akhing nokma even though rights and privileges usual to all nokmas are enjoyed by the former. His wife is the customary inheritress of the amathe and her mahari assumes all the traditional roles with the differences that the amathe nokma's authority in relation to amathe is more assertive as the pioneer earner of that landed property. Whenever it is purchased by joint contributions of his wife's mahari, psychologically it acquires a better hold over the affairs of amathe (Records of akhings: Nos. IV/50/(I); IV/50(3); IV/50(7); IV/50(17).

An akhing may be built by the joint efforts of two households belonging to a brother and his sister respectively out of no man's land in the olden days. Part of an akhing may also be purchased jointly by them. These akhings are popularly known as 'Ajikse' (land belonging to wife/husband). The principal female of one household and the principal male of the other are consanguinal kins, having two separate female descent lines of their own as we find in the following akhings.

**Rongbengri akhing -- ajikse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal female</th>
<th>Nokma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Mrs. Reve Naphak Marak</td>
<td>Mr. Boru Mangsang Sangma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Mrs. Khuse Mangsang Sangma</td>
<td>Mr. Mingjan Tereti Sangma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chibragri akhing -- ajikse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal female</th>
<th>Nokma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Mrs. Megan Rangsa Marak</td>
<td>Mr. Jirang Agitok koksep Sangma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| B. Mrs. Simiring Agitok koksep| Mr. Jingman Chambugong dinajek Sangma | Marak
Two lineage groups (mahari) of the principal females of the concerned households hold the ownership of the akhing, but all constituent households have common rights of land-uses.

At times, part of an akhing may be purchased by a nokma, or by a member of an adjacent akhing. If the concerned area is not yet amalgamated with it for any reason, it is popularly known as 'Aginap' (a piece of land over other's). Aginap is a landed property under the specific ownership of the purchaser-household and is used by it for individual benefits.

The seller/donor nokma and the akhing mahari lose all their rights in amathe and aginap though these are within their akhing. On the other hand, the present holder of amathe and aginap enjoys all the rights of an owner if these are purchased or acquired out of his own resources. If acquired with the help of wife's mahari, these are held as an akhing for all practical purposes. In the former case, however, it is deemed to have been brought ideally within that mahari's control, but the right of disposal is predominantly held by the purchaser.

Sometimes a desolate land is cleared and possessed by an enterprising family and if fairly large, it assumes the character of an akhing with the increase of households, and its original owner could become its nokma. Sometimes in the olden days, a lonely part of an akhing was occupied by the nokma of another akhing with his people in course of forays and later on developed it as an akhing. This is considered to be the result of the might of millam (Garo-sword; Garo-strength) and designated as A'millam or land acquired by millam (Rangthiagri, Manguagri akhings in Hill mouza-II).
An akhing may consist of one village or of one with satellite villages grown out of the growth of population with consequent multiplication of households with female line having branched out of the oldest family extending akhing areas in desolate lands as in the olden days (Natthakolgori - Danekgori - Rangkhongori formations). Formations of akhings may, therefore, be viewed as a function of bio-social wants of machong members in a stagnant technological state that needs ever extensive uses of land for shifting cultivation. Within given cultural values, economic forces acting behind 'living on land uses' consolidated households of the formative villages into separate akhings. It is for this reason that several adjacent akhings are found to be held by maharis bearing similar machong names (In Nauza-III, three akhings within Laskar eleka-32, were held by Chambugong Dinajek mahari). These have grown out of the old akhings or out of purchase of adjacent akhings, or out of a'millan lands acquired by a nokma. Titles to akhing would, however, be carried again by the senior most household of the newly grown up akhings and passed down the female line of that household.

In order to distinguish akhing nokma from that of a satellite village the Garos use the term, 'Son-ni Nokma' or nokma of a village within an akhing. He remains so till the area under him is recognised by the state authority (now the District Council) as a full-fledged akhing. So his rights and privileges in the context of the whole akhing is ideally inferior to those of the akhing nokma.

All these varieties a Garo can remember well and proudly narrate to visitors citing examples from far and near. A'mathe/asinap within the akhing provide distinct entity of rights to their respective owner in contrast to those of akhing nokmas. In ajikse, two maharis jointly
own an akhing. All of them ultimately succumb to the same rules of inheritance and usufruct as are usual to an akhing.

In every akhing, certain groves and patches of land are considered as the abode of certain spirits (kosiasong) and some other parts of land near the village are reserved for common village ceremony (Asongtata). All materials for erecting altars, ceremonial fences, etc. can be drawn from those areas only for purposes of sacrifice. None is allowed to desecrate the place. A small piece of ground is also set apart for sunburning ceremony against excessive rain (salskso'a) and nobody could cultivates or clears it for individual purpose. (Playfair 1909:89). All these plots within every akhing belong to 'mote, mite and memang'.

The Garos have a supernatural world of their own, that consists of those mites and memangs (Spirits and divinities, and spirit of the dead respectively). Memang does not possess supernatural power but may excite fears in the mind of man. A Garo believes in the rebirth of the spirit (janggi) or its temporary transformation into animal form (matchapila). In mortuary ceremony it arranges for the return of the spirit of the dead into mother's household (Playfair: 1909:106).

Mite are numerous and ubiquitous and, when displeased, become malevolent causing disease, death and damage to houses and properties. Mite that are beneficial are equally ubiquitous embodying natural forces, and when invoked into action they arrange benefits for the human beings. Garos always try to maintain a peaceful co-existance with them so that they may not 'bite' (mite chika). So the mite are to be kept pleased if these are not to cast any evil glance at an individual or the village. Hence a host of rituals are associated with the Garo life from 'mother's back to the memorial posts (Cradle or Grave, they have none). These may
relate to an individual and his household or to all households of the village. Ritual for curing a disease concerns a household, that for a marriage two households and their maharis, whereas rituals like Asongtata, (for safeguarding the village from any danger during a year) involve all the households of the village. Each of these types has an impact on the labour contributions of households. A ritual generally involves erection of altars, ceremonial fences, and sacrifice of something ranging from hens' egg to a cow or bull, and ends with a feast of food and drinks.

On being informed of the ritual occasion at a house, close neighbours and relatives attend on it and participate in all stages of the ceremonial. Receiving house reciprocates the services on a similar occasion, and over a long term, balances the transaction.

In ceremonies involving the village, perfect mutuality of labour exchange cannot be ideally attained. A big family would contribute large share than its smaller counterpart does even though the objective is common and utility or disutility of service is similar. Since all rituals invariably extend into ceremonies, big or small, people hardly think of relative ratios of contribution in a common concern. But inter-household exchange of services on family centric occasions always approximate to a balance (Burling: 1963).

Certain formal acts of exchange are, however, found in a few cultural practices of the Garos. Mortuary ceremonies are ideally the occasions for closer co-operation of the kins. These are also the occasions in which the affinal kins reciprocate the earlier receipt of stores and livestock in similar situations. On the death of a male, his lineage members attend the funeral ceremony bringing
in food, drink and sundries to help out funeral expenditures. Household of the deceased on the other hand distributes brass gongs (ranges) and other heirlooms to those kins who would bring a cow / bull / goat / pig for killing in honour of the dead. One leg of the sacrificed animal would be given to the donor. The gongs thus distributed and known as kokams will be returned to the household of the deceased when any of its members will pay the same honour on the death of the person who took the gong. The receiver of the kokam returns to his village, again kills a cow or bull, and raises a kima in honour of the dead. A close friend or an affinal relation of the dead can also be involved in the movement of kokams. But the gong with which water is given (in case of nokma or a rich man, even chubitchi (undiluted liquor) is used) to wash the corpse is presented to the mother or to the nearest of the deceased's consanguinal female kin. Such a gong is known as magual or a gong for the forgotten mother (ma = mother; gual = to forget) as a compensation for the dead son. Maguals are not returnable and hence, get concentrated in a household whereas kokams keep on moving between two households. Kokams are even kept earmarked so that each of them can be returned on relevant occasion to its earlier giver. For a single movement of a kokam two cows or bulls are at times killed and a kima raised. In the long run, however, the reciprocative deal balances the transfer of values between the households.

No author has yet reported on the custom of any bride or groom price in Garo society. The parents of the deceased male might have given him a few items as a token of love or to help him in starting a new household. These remain on the level of debts to his mother or her continuing household, as it had parted with not only these
properties (*kimgisin*) but also the son for the prosperity and perpetuity of the present widow's household. Parents had used a piece of cloth (*debra*) for carrying the child on their back, given miniature bows (toys) to play with (*chriana*), and a piece of cloth to cover the corpse now (*Asimpina*) and also a bull to be killed at his funeral (*matchudena*). So, in addition to *kimgisin*, "a widow must give to the parents of her deceased husband a small present which is fixed by custom at two gongs, two cloths and a sword" (Playfair: 1909:69-70).

In respect of another area of Garo Hills, Mukherjee reports that "a widow has to present 1 gong, 1 cloth, 1 sword, 1 shield to the mother of her deceased husband on the day of cremation. Similarly she has to make presents to her second husband's mother if she remarries. If her deceased husband had not acquired these things, the widow has to pay Rs.5/- and if she has no money, it is her mahari who must contribute this sum. This is known as *kokam orim*" (1955-56: 116).

Unless these debts are cleared, so a Garo imagines, how could a replacement of the deceased be made from his mahari? Presentation of the gift to the household of the dead man's mother signifies formal information about death, releases the widow and her mahari from the assumed debt, creates an occasion for arranging replacement of the deceased from his lineage and allows it to be made. Hence a Garo terms the deal as *pro chotani* or a case of release from debt (Costa: 1975:23).

All the above items of gift are sometimes commuted to money payment (Rs.30/- for *kimgisin*), and if necessary, the chra of the widow contributes towards the payment and arranges for her second husband. The Garos refer to this practice as buying a husband for the sister (*Nona se brea*) or as *kote kawa* (Costa: 1975:23-24). In some areas of
the hills these are known as Got kawa or orim (Playfair: 1909:69-70; Mukherjee: 1955-56:116).

In the event of the death of a female who had established a nuclear household on her marriage, a magual is presented to the household of her mother too. But it is not presented in case of death of the inheritress of a household as she was not separated from the mother's household. In certain areas, a widower has to present 1 gong and 1 cloth to the mother of his deceased wife (Burling: 1963:156; Mukherjee: 1955-56:116).

Burling observes magual as 'the nearest Garo parallel to bride price' (1963:155). No other studies of Garo society ever thought of this aspect of magual or of the presentation of gift or its money equivalent after the death of a married/possibly because of the prevailing practice of cross-cousin marriage among the Garos. A maternal uncle cannot accept bride-price from his sister for her son. Nor can an aunt accept it from her brother.

But 'gro chotani' is generally used to cover all varieties of deals in respect of the return for a dead son or daughter and their replacement. It signifies the willingness of the widow's or the widower's mahari to accept replacement of the deceased, and the mahari to replace the same will feel inclined only when magual is arranged and a transfer of stores or of its money equivalent is executed. It has virtually become a pre-requisite for obtaining the next husband or wife from the concerned mahari. Since this institution of 'gro chotani' is found in relation to both widows and widowers it can be viewed as a reflex of groom-price or a bride-price of Garo variety in respect only of a replacing husband or wife. This exchange of
gifts for person is a remarkable structural feature of the inter-
mahari relationships and of the Garo kinship organisation.

A network of exchange of goods and services also permeated into
the fabric of their cultural practices. Whenever a village priest
(Kamal) attends a ritual in a household he receives certain quantity
of food and drink for his home in recognition of his skilled service.
In case a goat or a cow or bull is sacrificed in a ritual, one leg
of the sacrificed animal is given to the kamal by the concerned
household. In the event of sacrificing a cock, the household arranges
a feast for the kamal. Such transfers are known as kamaldela
(Choudhury: 1969:20). Likewise, "the man who carves a memorial post
to be erected before the house of a dead man receives the leg of a
cow in return for his labours" (Burling: 1963:201). The midwife
attending on the birth of a child and the priest on the related
ritual may also each be given the leg of a sacrificed cow or goat.
In certain areas, a midwife gets a meal on special invitation at a
later date in recognition of her skilled services. These are not,
however, strictly viewed as wages for labours, but certainly they
arise out of the household's keen sense of obligation for the
services rendered to it and assume a character of socio-economic
transactions. Transactions between the households other than these
take the forms of a barter with a social tinge. In pure barter there
is a clear transfer of goods and services of the value deemed by
the parties as approximately equivalent; whereas in Garo society
exchange may accompany (but not always and everywhere) an additional
gift from anyone expressing a sense of solidarity. Needs and neces-
sity of individual families give rise to majority of transactions,
while the rest of them follow the common needs of the society.
Transactions range from the informal exchange of help and gossip to the most formal exchange of service for goods with interests. The usual scene at balim of a house is a pair or group of women husking rice or any food crop with mutual help and gossip. A group of men may go out for fishing and equally divide the catches. Villagers may organise a trap for hunting animals (wasala) and divide the prey among the participants. Large work parties are organised for clearing the village paths, construction and repair of noktantes. Each of the households has to contribute labour on these occasions that recur in the village and bring benefit to them equally. Exceptions to 'labour contribution by all households' is hardly found and punishment to shirkers comes in the form of social disapproval.

This custom of working together for an occasional purpose generally goes by the name, 'kamkagrima' (Kam=work; Kagrime=together). But in certain areas it is used in special reference to labour contributions for agricultural purposes. Activities of shifting cultivation correspond to climatic variations. Each of the types of work—clearance of plots (aba o'a), burning of dried jungle (aba so'a), sowing (migea), different types of seasonal weeding (bamil, diri, nara rata) and harvesting (mi aka)—has to be completed within set stages. Initial demarcation of the plots for first year of jhum (adal) for the whole village and setting fire to the dried jungle need not only a contribution of labour power from each of the households but also an organised effort for the sake of controlling fire to be set to the adal. Seeds are to be sown after first shower; weeds are to be cleared before they can hinder the growth of saplings. Harvesting is to be completed before a storm or torrential
rain can damage the crop. All these compulsions of technological reasons bring the households together to serve identity of livelihood interests.

Within each of the short fleeting periods, a few households pool their labour together and work by rotation in their respective fields to achieve the end. Idea of economy of time and labour for meeting seasonally restrictive ends works with full force. Amount of labour exchanged between households are at times uneven as "no accurate accounting is kept of the labour in this arrangement (Kamkagrima), though the exchange is felt to be roughly equal" (Burling:1963:188-189). Impending needs override accurate calculations as starvation is the only alternative to absence of labour pool. Since close relatives and neighbours cooperate with each other in solving the seasonal scarcities or meeting increased demand by kamkagrima, slackness in accurate accounting is partially influenced by a social factor.

Another system of labour exchange is Baragrika (Baraa) in which households exchange labour at equal rates. Contribution of one man-day is realised by receipt of same labour unit on the succeeding day. Man's labour is repaid by man's labour, woman's by woman's labour, and child labour is repaid by reciprocal child labour. Each occasion of exchange is arranged separately and none of the workers expects to depend on the other for his/her mid-day meal. Baraa is a barter par excellence that predominates labour investment pattern in a traditional village.

During the sowing season, a household may not have enough of seeds or those of required variety. Members of that household earn certain quantity of seeds by sowing seeds in another household's field (Genapa). Likewise, in apprehension of poor harvest in its
field a poor household may of its own offer its services for harvesting paddy or other crops in others' field in exchange of certain quantity of the related crop (Aknapa). Generally, one manday earns three gachekful of seeds under genapa and one kokful of paddy under Aknapa. (A gachek is a small bamboo-basket that contains about 1Kg of paddy seeds whereas a kok is a bigger basket that may hold about 5Kg of paddy). The latter system is not favoured by the richer household for obvious reasons.

Certain systems of loan transactions are also found developed among the Garos. Ajakraa is one of such variety. It is a system of credit in which a needy householder borrows certain quantity of rice or paddy in exchange of his promise for a prearranged quantum of his service in the lender's field as and when demanded by the lender. Borrower gets no additional payment except a mid-day meal (me'sal) from the lender during the former's work in the latter's fields. With the prospect of the use of this promised labour at his convenience, besides his own, a lender can now command a bigger plot for greater harvest. He may ask for the payment of promised labour at a time when the borrower himself needs his labour most in his own field. Since a Garo here hardly falls back in his promise in respect of ajakraa, a borrower invariably stands to suffer from poor production in his field for the benefit of larger production in that of his creditor. This system turns to be a veritable source of profit to him and adds to the inequality of wealth in the society.

Another variant of credit, Dadon, emerged among them perhaps as the means of lessening the lender's pressure on debtor's labour in the peak periods of agriculture. Here one borrows certain quantity
of grain, seeds and the like on condition of returning an increased quantity of same kind after harvest, and the increased part of repayment is interest. In a few areas interest rate is 100 percent (Duna), whereas in other areas, it is 50% for the stipulated period. Compound interest, however, was not reported anywhere. (Burkling:1963:203; Costa:1975:14). It also adds to the material advantage of the rich and accentuates inequality of wealth.

Construction of houses also provides recurring occasions for pooling in of labour resources from different households. Average Garo houses are fairly large and certain aspects of their construction need considerable skill and co-ordination of large labour force much beyond the capacity of a single household. On receipt of information village households send out labour to an extent spareable at the moment; a few may not send at all. A number of them, particularly their close relations, bring in stores and ricebeer to help the house-owner in meeting expenses of construction because he is to arrange for a regular supply of ricebeer and tobacco to the participants. On any day during construction, he may provide a mid-day meal to them too. Construction completes with thatching of roof that attracts largest number of participants. House is set for use after a sacrifice to make it free of any evil spirit, followed by an evening feast for all of them.

Construction of field houses is an annual affair and has to be undertaken in the midst of agricultural operations. As fields are far away from the village and need to be guarded against animal depredations, and a component of agricultural labour is contributed by females, these temporary houses provide shelter to the whole
working force. The consequent pressure on labour again makes use of baragrika for the construction of field houses.

Sometimes, members of a household work for other households on condition that the labour units now spent would be returned by the latter as and when the former would ask for it. While doing preliminaries for house construction, a household may bank on such a deposit of saved labour done on principles of baragrika. It is prevalent more among those who suffer from labour shortage in the household.

Baragrika is essentially a short term arrangement for balancing exchange of labour, whereas kamkagrima in respect of either agriculture or house construction is an arrangement that balances the exchange in the long run. Every household remembers the contribution of other households in kamkagrima and reciprocates with its own labour to the required extent during similar occasions of the contributing households. Sometimes it may not be feasible to make an accurate return, but none of the households tries to make a profit at each other's cost in this long term deal. This inter-household relationship is found in every aspect of Garo life whenever it faces a problem of economising, whether for eking out a living or helping a kin or a neighbour in socio-cultural practices. Kinship has an inherent tendency to restrict social relations and loyalties and to divide the people into groups (Bolshaw: 1965). But in Garo society, besides the interconnectedness afforded by the residence of consanguinals and affinals within the akhing, the fact of their exclusive dependence on land as a common property to support their living adds substance to the identity of interests. Transactions are carried on such a way that the economic
needs of living are coordinated with claims of living with their kins. That is why economising of labour is at times associated with attitude of mutual responsibility towards a kinsman or villager, and an economic problem is sought to be solved by means bordering on social factors.

On the other hand, socio-political problems of living are sought to be solved by a kind of exchange relations, among other means, that border on monetary compensations. To a Garo, majority of the wrongs come under the category of torts (Goswami and Majumdar: 1972:87). In a few cases, however, they believe that the transgression of certain social and religious tabus bring super-natural punishment to the people. Otherwise, unlawful acts are felt to be wrong not because they violate an abstract moral precept but because these hurt or damage an individual's reputation and feelings.

In course of time Garos got traditionally prepared a schedule of tariff for payment of compensation, either to soothe those feelings or to compensate for the loss, if any occurring in a dispute, thereby bringing both the parties to a normal relation without hatred against any. It is the payment of compensation (dai), and not always its amount which is important. That is why a Garo regards payment of dai on the level of debt and not of fine, and expresses it as 'Gro' which literally means debt. Gro nangata (incurring a debt) stands for making an offence while Gro Chaa (eating a debt) for receipt of compensation. A transactional motivation or a materialistic exchange relation inheres in their juridical system, because "in the Garo polity, almost every form of wrong can be atoned for by the payment of pecuniary compensation" (Imperial Gazetteer: Vol.XII:1908:181).
A Garo household acts as a basic economic unit. Each of the households is independent in pursuing its own production, consumption and distribution activities which are, however, similar among them. Each receives an allotment of communal Jhum lands annually and invests its own labour-force therein. Transactions though carried on between individuals have an obvious reference to households. In the midst of this household enterprise, members have a stretch of individual economic pursuits. Unmarried sons and daughters are allowed to clear a part of their household jhum-lands for personal use and benefit. Each of them may raise poultry of his/her own, plant a tree for fruits, collect wild products before market-days and sell them for personal income and disposal. A mother or a daughter may prepare liquor out of personally acquired rice and sell it in the village or in the market. But all that these they can do to the extent these ventures do not affect the common duties in respect of their household. These are commonly known as a'tot practice. The position of the principal male in respect of economic activities of the household is, however, unique. He directs and supervises these activities but has no separate economic entity apart from his household. Hence he does not make any separate venture to satisfy his exclusively personal needs (Goswami and Majumdar: 1972: 15-16).

The institution of machong, mahari, family and their ownership and exchange move like satellites of the central institution of a'kim, and individualism has hardly been an articulate feature of Garo social framework.

The principle of reciprocity is held in highest esteem. Every action good or bad, has to be reciprocated by a similar action and the mahari will have a distant or immediate relation to all of
them. Retaliation of a murder or an insult or a help to a needy member is ultimately a mahari responsibility (Godwin Austen:1873:394). Any fine (dai) imposed on a member is generally subscribed to by the mahari; any sum received as such by a member is also distributed among all the mahari members. A mahari thus stands as a unit in defence of a member in any dispute. An orphan or a needy is always protected and maintained by the matri-relations of the concerned member.

Whenever the parties to a dispute belong to the same mahari, the mahari elders only have the privilege of settling the dispute. Whenever it involves members of two or more maharis, an inter-mahari meeting led by their elders settles the same, whereas inter-akhing disputes are to be settled in the meeting of akhing elders led by their respective nokmas. In each of these situations, members are brought within the care and protection of a mahari, and this traditional practice persists even after the British-made institutions for settling the disputes were imposed on the Garo.

A household might consist of members of two exogamous maharis but both the groups (head and nokrom on the one hand, the principal female and her children on the other) have a reserve of their respective mahari's support behind them. One mahari might be occasionally discrepant with the other, but it is the urge of the a'kim for continuing a household that keep the conflicts at bay.

A'kim initiates manpower of the household for production and management of its properties. It restricts polygamy in the society in a particular way for upholding the inheritance line in a set channel. Accordingly a widower/widow cannot marry into a lineage
other than that of his/her deceased partner. One may have several wives but they must belong to the same lineage group. Else household as a socio-economic unit would break.

Individual personality is affiliated to a household personality on the one hand, and subsumed in a group personality (mahari personality) on the other. A household personality has been empanelled into mahari personality, whereas the mahari personalities are accommodated ultimately in the institution of akim.

A question may now be posed as to how an individual can acquire a prestige-status in the society if 'akim' is to regulate all inter-relationships and the mahari personality is to dominate the society?

While a scheme inheres in the akim to provide a nokma (head in case of other households) a privileged position in the society, others are to acquire a status through specialisation and exchange.

Any individual can not become a chief or nokma. Office of Nokma is hereditary and can be acquired within the bounds of akim in respect of the nokma household of every akhing. Present nokma's mahari has the privilege of providing the husband of his inheriting daughter as the succeeding nokma. Other individuals within the akhing care merely be nokma like, and they can earn a title, 'Gana Nokma' (also called Medini Nokma) by organising a ritual (Jaksilgana) with a lavish feast to the akhing people. He does not enjoy the powers of a nokma but only an honour that accompanies the status of a nokma and in entitled to using an armlet (Jaksil) as a symbol of Gana Nokma. This exchange of feast for an honour from the society continues unabated so long a Gana nokma can arrange for feasts periodically; else the glamour depreciates. Hunter, however, reports that persons
of rank among the Garos "wear an iron or brass ring above the elbow (tar) as a token of respectability but no slave can wear it without having purchased the privilege from the nokma of his village. Neither can a 'free man' who has not inherited the privilege wear the token without payment to the head of the village" (1879:143).

Head hunting has been an act of shivalry for very many reasons. One can acquire a shivalrous status by collecting as many human heads as are possible and preserving the skulls as a status symbol. An ornament like a crown prepared of brass plates connected together by a string to be passed round the head and tied behind, could be worn only by a man who had slain a foe in the battle.

Various rituals need specialised service of a priest. Any body can learn the same out of participations in them and can specialise in the knowledge of different formalities and obscure incantations (people can not translate them into intelligible language in majority of the cases). A kamal as he would be called does not form any class; any male individual can perform a ritual if he knows the technique of a relevant one. But a kamal is supposed to know all of the varieties and able to perform the same. This acquisition of a skill gives him an extra honour in the society. He has the singular privilege of receiving the first service of rice-beer in Wangala rituals.

Erection of altars, raising ceremonial fences in a ritual-place (Kimal) or helping in a sacrifice also need specialised service. Many are perhaps not lacking in it but a few would always excel others, and they are adored for their expertise in ritual. This kind of honour is also claimed by a woman who can specialise in the service of a mid-wife. At times, she is also referred to as kamal.
Possession of certain wealth gives the owner an extra status in the society. Garos attach a prestige-value to the gongs (rang) that are made of brass with flat bottoms and narrow rims. Social standing of a person is measured by the number of rangs possessed by him (Playfair: 1909:44). A dead man is laid on a row of gongs which displays an aura of honour that he could command during his lifetime, and the gongs are also distributed as kokams to the relatives and friends killing cows in his honour during mortuary ceremonies. It brings honour not only to the deceased but also to his household. Market value of a gong may be around Rs. 10/- but an old gong could fetch even Rs. 100/- from a Garo (Playfair: Ibid).

Likewise, certain varieties of drums – kram and nagra – were not found to have been possessed by all the households. They were associated with certain norms and beliefs. These may not be taken out of the owners’ house except on certain ceremonies. These drums were made also with rituals and sacrifices, and believed to be not going well with every household. Possessors of these drums pass them over to inheritors as household heirloom and earn for them a covetable prestige in the society. Kram of the largest size can be held by the nokma-household alone and can be used on a few solemn ceremonies like wangala or a funeral with the approval of a nokma. It is believed to have a supernatural power which could be held only by the nokma-household and has been a symbol of that household.

Drums are used while observing social festivals or individual household ceremonies of which feasts always form a part. Possessors of these are, therefore, to contribute or arrange for a feast on those occasions. Hence they could acquire or retain an enhanced
prestige on the exchange of food and drink in the society. It is essentially an act of exchange, a transfer of material goods for non-material objects, that helps them attain or sustain a prestigious status.

At pan-community level the Garos were spatially divided into different sub-tribes like Atong, Awe, Abeng, Rupa, Chibok, Chisak, Matchi, Dual, Gara (Gara Canchin) Kochu, Matjanchi and Atiagaro (Playfair: 1909: 59-62; Majumdar: 1966: 3-4). Though they have between themselves certain differences with regard to dialects and socio-cultural practices, basic tenets of kinship organisation and other remarkable socio-cultural institutions are similar. Boundaries of areas occupied by each of these sub-tribes are only approximate and always overlap to a considerable extent. Garos refer to these divisions only on the unusual occasions when they need to distinguish themselves from their neighbours (Burling: 1963: 25). In certain areas, settlements are grown out of the mix of these divisions. People of villages around Rengsangri refer to themselves as 'Matabeng' which they describe as 'not quite' Matchi' and not quite 'Abeng' (Burling: 1963: 24). Similar are the cases with Matjanchi and Matjanchidal (Playfair: 1909: 60).

Every organised society has certain centralising forces to bind the component units together on a territorial base and to take care of the common objectives of their polity. But there is hardly any written evidence to account for the earlier pattern of the Garo political system before the British era. The Garos were not known to have any organised government of their own in the modern sense. Several popular folktales that tell of the itinerary of the Garos...
from Tibet to the Garo Hills along the banks of the Brahmaputra and through the tracts of Bhutan, Coochbehar and Dhubri, refer to the leaders of the wandering Garos as Rajas. These tales also suggest that matriliney was adopted by the people after their entry into the districts of Goalpara and Garo Hills. On their itinerary, they had to purchase peace and a privilege of crossing through the areas of hostile kings and chiefs by sacrificing a few of their daughters as the brides of the former. Hence, the tales narrate, that the girls were given the right to own and the men to manage properties in the society in their acquired land of peace. (Jobang Marak: 1952; Karnes Marak: 1964).

Folktales, traditional customs and practices and the early British reports when considered together may give a workable idea of the then political institutions of the Garos. The early British writers like Elliot (1792), Hamilton (1814), Capt Reynolds (1849), Moffat Mills (1854) and others reported the existence of the Garo Rajas in the Hills of Assam and Bengal (of India and Bangladesh respectively). But they did not make any dependable assessment of the measure of authority exercised by those Rajas over their subjects. Many of them, however, developed certain traits of feudal lords during the Mughal and the Ahom rule. There were a number of predominantly Garo settlements headed by Garo chiefs, then called Rajas, around Garo Hills and in ancient Kamrup. They "seemed to remain nearly on the same footing under the Ahoms as during the Mughal rule. They were the petty chiefs of the country, each of whom possessed a certain territory, which was assessed to furnish a certain number of paiks (serviceman). These Rajas either used to send the men to
work on the king’s account or remit the commutation money instead” (Hamilton 1807-1814: 30-33). Capt Reynolds on the other hand reported the existence of a raja, the Raja of Bissondar, who reigned along the western side of Garo Hills and "flourished long before the occupation of the Garo country by the Mughals, and was a man of great wealth and power, who held the Garos in complete subjection" (1849: 50). All such accounts related to the Garos of the outer hills. In the interior, however, they maintained complete independence, ruling their areas in their own system (Nath: 1948: 111).

All British officials from Elliot (1789) to Williamson were in search of the men of authority among the Garos for establishing peace in their areas and variously referred to them as "Lushkor", "Sardar", "Bonneah", "Lakma" and "Nokma". The head people of the villagers are called Bonneahs (Elliot: 1792: 18), and "among the Bengalese of Howrah-ghat these chiefs are called laskur, but the national appellation for a chief is Nokma" (Hamilton 1807-14: 91). Mills referred to the chiefs of Rungtoghiri and Dolonghiri as acknowledged lords paramount in the hills (Moffat Mills: 1854: CXIX).

A correct estimate of nokma’s authority can hardly be made out of these early reports as these do not state what would happen when his authority is denied. But his position and importance in the society could be easily perceived from various accounts and the system persisting over time. Capt Reynolds on being deputed to subjugate the Garos, failed to accomplish the task without reference to their "Lokma" or the chief of the concerned villages (1849: 52-57). During the period 1866-1873, Williamson had to face occasionally similar situations. Even after arsoning of a village under his order people of Mandalgiri area did not submit to him without the consent...
of their chief, then absconding (Kar:1970:47-50). The British could accomplish their tasks of collecting tax, obtaining labour, punishing a head-hunter, or an instigator of anti-British sentiments only when these important men used to cooperate with the authority (Burling: 1963:291).

Whatever might be the nomenclature of a Garo chief, it has an obvious reference to a lineage group and a territorial jurisdiction in all British reports. Hamilton thus observes that Garos of the mountains of Howraghat are subdivided into clans called chatsibak (division into chatchi). In each of these chatsibaks, there would appear to be three chiefs (perhaps sangma, Marak and Momin, three of the earlier chatchis), whose rank is hereditary. ... Each clan consists of one or more villages, called sung which are usually at a distance of two or three coses (two miles make a cose) from each other, and contain from forty to three hundred families”. Obviously all these refer to akhings under the ownership of maharis which are variously described by the different writers as 'chatsibak', clan, 'machong' and 'motherhood' (Hamilton: 1807-14:91; Reynolds: 1849:63-64; Playfair: 1909:71-73). All these relate to the interior hills whereas Martin observes the "Garo chiefs with large possessions in the plains" as "tributary to the Zemindars" (Martin: vol. III:1838:685). In the plain areas around the hills, however, akhings were not found to be in existence.

But these were noticed as mutually independent territorial entities within the hills. "In their political relations ...... each chief is entirely independent and governs his own dependents with the assistance of the panchayat of the heads of households (Reynolds: 1849:57). There are instances to prove the mutually separable
political entities of these akhings. Different clans were in a state of inter-clan feuds and internecine warfare (Codwin Austen: 1873:394-96). Taking revenge of an old murder, adultery or insult was a clan responsibility and an inheriting trait of clan-character, so much so that "In case of any murder, the relatives of the slain are bound to demand blood for blood, and ought, ... according to Garo custom, to put to death either the murderer or one of his kindred, or at least one of his slaves, unless the council, i.e., the elders of the clans, succeed in bringing about a reconciliation (Hamilton: 1807-14:91; Ayerst:1880:106; Esme:1887:11-15; B.P.C. 1831, No.39/25 February).

It was also a necessary part of a ritual to burn at the funeral of the chief or any influential Garo as many heads as could be procured for the purpose, and if possible to put to death on the occasion, living captives (Assam Administration Report, 1896:82; Playfair: 1909:77-78). As observed earlier, headhunting used to bring lasting honour to a hunter and was, therefore, practised as a symbol of Garo shivalry so much so that the skull thus possessed had much marketable value, varying with the social position of the owners so beheaded (Ayerst:1880:106; Esme:1887:11-15; Eliot:1792:33).

Since personal entity and identity are the close preserve of a mahari, none can go for the head of a fellow member of one's mahari. This headhunting would be organised or such an action defended only with the support of the mahari of an akhing.

Garos used to organise raids and forays into neighbouring areas in the plains and hills under the leadership of their nokmas.
in the olden days, as is evident from the following table (Mackenzie: 1884: 246-47).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Villages burnt</th>
<th>Persons killed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the last operation against the Garos, Lieut. Williamson caused the surrender of as many as 200 skulls at Ronprenggri camp as the remains of the victim killed in former Garo raids.

Inter-akhing disputes and the consequential arsoning and murder continued intermittently till the annexation of Garo Hills to the British India. Besides their surprise attacks and ambuscades, several accounts were also left of the ways the Garos did organise defence and blockades of their respective villages (B.P.C.1831, No.39/25 February; Reynolds: 1849: 45-60). All these led to the political consolidation of akhing based entity of their society.

Several questions may now be posed as to how they used to maintain inter-akhing relations or carry out visiting of hats in the areas far away from their respective akhings and how the question of uxurilocal residence, particularly that of the nokmas, could be harmonised with the exercise of violence among them. Ideally members of at least two maharis live within an akhing, and any of them may contribute the nokma to the other and to few of the neighbouring akhings.
reducing the chances of conflicts between them. In the event of a nokma coming from a different akhing, functional mahari would keep both the akhings in friendship until the akim is broken. Secondly, all the akhings can not remain simultaneously in perpetual feuds. In case there is any, there are mechanisms also of settling the disputes. Hamilton provides us with an example. "The chiefs known as nokmas and the headmen of the families assemble in a council called 'Jingma Changga' (which a Garo now means 'to assemble in a crowd') and endeavour to reconcile all those of the clans who have disputes .... the feud would continue endless unless the council interfered and brought about a mutual reconciliation, which it is usually able to effectuate by inducing the parties to accept a price for the blood that has been spilt. Although every head of a family has an equal right to sit in their assemblies, the influence of the chiefs, or of one or two wise men usually decides everything" (Hamilton: 1807-14: 96). This would prevent the akhings being simultaneously and perpetually in disputes. Examples were also not rare of the nokmas bringing about reconciliation between disputants as a common friend. Thirdly, the Garos move to the markets in a group as a defence-measure. Esme noticed them carrying spears and shields on way to markets. Even now a Garo is always found carrying an all-purpose-cutter (Dao) whenever he moves from one place to another, not only to protect himself from likely attack of a foe but also to ward off fear from animals while passing through the jungles.

The akhing based political entity was given an extra legal sanction by the British authority on their entry into Garo areas. David Scott, earliest of the officers to establish British administration in the Garo areas initially tried to exclude the
Garos of the outer hills from the domination of the neighbouring estate holders, and made as many as 1:1 Garo chiefs tributary to the British authority in respect of their respective jurisdictions. 'Rengtha Garo' of the south-western hills was even made a Zamindar under the Government for a time (Mackenzie: 1884). Along with the gradual extension of British occupation into the interior hills, each of the chiefs was contacted, subdued, and allowed to retain their own akhing based customary administration simply on payment of a periodic tax as a mark of submission to British Authority (Kar: 1970). This external political force thus sanctioned a legal status to the akhing jurisdiction under the indigenous authority of the nokmas. It continued till the subsequent modifications of the British administration in Garo Hills (Kar: 1970).

From the socio-economic and cultural institutions so tenaciously maintained over centuries within the akhing, we may derive a system of democracy which is unique in many respects. Garo political system scrupulously obviates any concentration of ownership and power in any particular institution and holds the both in balance. Ownership of an akhing is held by a mahari, but its use is allowed to be socialised because every household once settled in an akhing, can acquire a use-right irrespective of its mahari affiliation. Division of akhing is restrained because of its unilineal descent through chosen female of the nokma-household. Particular female carries the inheritance line whereas a male is entrusted with the privilege of administration and management. Right of ownership of the inheritress in respect of an akhing is also not absolute. She carries the inheritance line on behalf of her mahari in which her chra holds the locus of power.
But the cbra do not come to manage or administer the akhing affairs unless any 'situation' arises to call for their guide and action. Managerial authority is entrusted with the nokma as the husband of the inheritress daughter/female of the akhing owning lineage. So nokma holds a derived position of delegated trust and responsibility reposed in him by his wife's mahari. Nor is this position subsidiary or subordinating in practice. He represents a mahari which holds the right of providing the successive husband-administrators into the mahari of the akhing inheritress. Within the akhing, there thus exists a public authority which combines within itself the proprietary rights and managerial or administrative privileges respectively of two maharis (that of the inheritress and her husband). This joint responsibility of two maharis in respect of one akhing prevents any of these maharis or an ambitious member of a mahari from wielding any absolute or exploitive power.

In their political system, institution of nokmaship is a novel innovation. It is a symbol of Garo unity in an akhing, and as such, a nokma has a privilege and precedence over others in inaugurating rituals, village ceremonies in his household or jhum field and in deciding or initiating objects of common interests and uses. When he adds a territory to his akhing (šmillam) or purchases any, occasionally by his skill and dexterity and usually with the support of wife's mahari, all households can also use it for their livelihood.

A Garo hailing from outside the akhing can acquire a usufruct right to akhing land only on payments or an a small present to the nokma. This quit-rent known as hawil, skimil or gwil may be paid in cash varying from 4 annas to a Rupee or in kind in terms of rice,
liquor, fowls, pigs etc. But originally it used to be raid in kind (Assam Archives : Rev. & Agri. File No.507 of 1907). Playfair observes that this quit rent may be levied in two ways, either as a payment in money when individuals take up residence within the akhing or as an annual rent when a whole hamlet migrates to a new site on the land of another akhing; and it is feared that its inhabitants would set up a claim to be an independent akhing in the absence of such impositions (Ibid:73-74). It is in this respect of traditional land tenure system that a nokma appears to be a lord of the akhing. While administering peace he leads the akhing elders in settling inter-akhing disputes and arranges for settlements of internecine quarrels within the akhing. Mahari meetings are held many a time under his auspices.

A nokma did not have any band of regular combatants, nor did the society have any of that kind to contest away occasional incidences of internakhing disputes. Early British reports on the Garos are replete with instances of loot, arsoning, headhunting and raids into the plains and the hills (B.P.C. 25th February, 1831: No.39). In all these forays nokma was to lead the fellow members of the akhing. The political entity of the akhing and of the nokma had partially been built up through these recurring raids and forays.

A readily available group of combatants was not raised in an akhing and its necessity was also not keenly felt by the society because of the traditional observance of mahari responsibilities. Members are to rise up as a group whenever an occasion arises for the same, and akhing members stand behind the nokma as occasional combatants for defending the akhing's interest and honour. Under such a strategy, a nokma could not become an 'overlord' or a 'royal-chief.' Rather, nokmaship has been developed as a paragon of derived nobility. Garo system of social organisation has made it so.
Although the substance of nokmaship derives much from the heredity of the nokma household, yet its glamour and supremacy depend no less on the tact, intelligence and efficiency of a nokma in organizing a 'command' of his own. Socially he is committed to kin relationships like any other akhing member and morally to generosity as the leader of the akhing. But in order to acquire an imposing command, an aspiring nokma has to be purposively committed to distribution of benefits among the akhing people, and is, therefore, found to spend for feast and drink on any cause that occasions an assembly of villagers in his house. His contribution is in most cases larger than that of a fellow member of the village in all their common ceremonies. No doubt, they come to his aid on all occasions but their number is always larger than is necessary, and he has to entertain them all. So his generosity has to be glamorous and chiefly. Unless he does so he can not remain a chief of any consequence, and people will brand him as a Ke'gri nokma (nokma without rice).

A nokma habitually receives the support of the kinsmen. Besides, his benevolent interest in distribution puts people in responsive relations and thereby he accumulates a political energy in the process. His position is embedded in kinship order, yet it moves beyond that for making him the only superior kinsman among the equal. He can not generally wield any coercive power because of such embeddedness.

The economic relation of giver-receiver between the nokma and his akhing members is more than generous on the part of nokma, and hence, less than reciprocal between them (even ideally, reciprocity and generosity can not go together). His economic method for a
socio-political objective leads to larger production beyond the stale of household consumption.

This brings us to the nokma's problem of exploiting land with larger manpower. This is probably the primary reason for the general prevalence of polygyny among the nokmas, and also of an institution of 'worker-members' as the means of enlarging the domestic working force. These worker-members are known as *chaparikripa* or *mepalcharipa* and are persons of any sex and age who would work in a household (other than their own) for their livelihood. Ideally, they are treated as accredited members of a household during the period of their stay and can participate in all socio-economic and cultural life of the akhing. These two institutions gave the nokmas enough of manpower for creating a surplus over production for domestic livelihood.

Incidentally, we come across the institution of *slavery* among the Garos from a few early reports. The slaves are called *nokal* and the freemen, *nokoba*, and the distinction between them is jealously preserved, though otherwise the slaves are not ill treated, being well fed and well cared for, while they in return are devoted to their masters.' Garo chiefs are also described as 'still staunch slave holders on a large scale'. Slaves were also found to have been attached to the chief and to fight for him but they used to be set free whenever they could show their courage and valour (Rawney: 1382:192; Martin: Vol.IIIi 691-92).

Many Garo chiefs of the outer hills had plain lands for permanent cultivations and extensive influences into the interior. The necessity of extensive cultivations on the one hand, and of defence against recurring raids of the interior Garos as well as of the counter offence on them might have compelled those bordering chiefs to keep
a ready reserve of combatant-cultivators whom the early reporters designated as slaves. Martin observes that several chiefs can bring 60 able bodied slaves into the field, which in such small clans gives them a vast authority” (Vol. III. 1838:693). While narrating the grandeur of the ancient Garo rajas or of the old nokmas, the aged Garos never forget referring to the former’s slaves and servants (nokol, chakol). Martin observes again that "the slaves are procured from Nuniyas who bring them from Asam" (1838: Vol. III:693). Garos who had been converted but lost caste by impure feeding used to be sold away as a measure of punishment (Ibid:693).

The institutions of slave and the slave trade are no longer observed among the Garos. Their treatment to a chaparikgipa or to a labour paid in kind never admits of difference between those workers and fellow kinsmen. In majority of the cases they hail from the cognate maharis of the household members. It is, therefore, just possible that along with the stopping of head hunting practices and the suppression of inter-clan warfaires (Dakrikani, Bobildakani), the combatant-aspect of so called slaves and workers withered and they turned into agricultural task force par excellence. Production of surplus over the needed could be achieved therefor and the household economy mobilised for a socio-political cause.

This is largely true also in case of other wealthy Garos within the village. They also amass extra wealth for distribution for a prestigious status by arranging for chaparikgipas or by manipulating labour exchange. But the nokma has certain traditional reserve. A stranger or an akhing member can not construct the kram (drum) of the size and form that is to be used only by the nokma household;
nor can they perform a pana ceremony on his land and without his permission. Nobody else than the nokma can lead the offering of sacrifice on the 'Kosi asong' (place for common worship) of the village. No household can precede nokma household in inaugurating Wanjal ritual or a few other ceremonies either in the village or in the jhum land.

It has been observed earlier that in all rituals and festivals, big or small, individual or common, every household plays a host to a visitor and share its food and drink with him. All these exchanges, many a time carried by the richer to the border of purposive wastage, incidentally serve to diminish the inequality of material standing among the villagers. Personal dash and initiative may make out extra wealth but the same is invested in ensuing feasts and festivals. Earlier, it was also a custom for the victorious party in any litigation or in any contest to celebrate the success by arranging feasts to which the opposite party replied by arranging another, and the process continued till the folly of their ruinous contest was realised (Playfair:1909:74). All these of the redistributive process reduces inequality of wealth and intermittently brings them to the level of psychological equality.

The principle of reciprocity (as visualised by Polanyi and his followers) restrains these exchanges from becoming perfectly transactional (transfer of monetary/material equivalents). Whenever the norms of kinship are dominant, they govern the social relations of reciprocity, of mutual aid. A chief or an aspiring wealthy member has to be more generous for sustaining his acquired status. This achievement motivation would be the complimentary side of his generosity.
It then acts as a stimulus to increasing production for continual distribution in exchange of honour, and consequently a material imbalance in fact follows in the society.

Inspite of redistributive process of social integration, households in an akhing do remain on an unequal economic footing. An overt expression of this feature is found in the unequal sizes of the residential houses owned by families of equal size in the same akhing. It is partly because of a family's relative inability to entertain larger participants workers during the days of house construction. A poor family would inform his relatives and close neighbours for help, and they assist in the construction works bringing in their own food and drink. Pressure on the house-owner is thus reduced. Caros are also conscious of the difference between the rich and the poor among them. During the village festivals, invariably lesser number of villagers would visit a poor family lest it is embarrassed for its inability to entertain the guests. It is also seen on different occasions of village levy on labour for works of common benefit, that larger households have always an advantage over smaller ones since a smaller percentage of their work force must be spared (Burling: 1963:191). Again, fertile lands or lands otherwise more suitable and fallen on the lot of a family generally render differential advantage over other fellow members. These and many other ways/ rise to economic status differentials even though all the households are to depend on similar socio-economic resources (viz. land and kinship relations etc.) for their livelihood. There thus exists a constituted imbalance under their apparently cohesive socio-economic structure.

Ideally a Caro household is a vertically joint family of two generations (predominantly, not always); but the locus of decision-
making authority in respect of household economy lies with the head. Others may assist him in the process. Principal couple act as the primary unit of management while allowing for the development of complementary units of management in other members through the latter's pursuit of a'tot practices. Each household has its own farm-plot, grain-stores and a separate budget. Division of labour follows the traditional works of male and female, and is confined to kinds of production and not to their split-up processes as are found in modern days. It has been the result of a simple technology and finite objectives of production for subsistence and not for surplus except in case of the ambitious. Male labour predominates in most of the construction activities in respect of residential houses (nok), field houses (jamadal), lookout huts on tree-tops (borang), sacrificial alters (kiminda), ceremonial bamboo-structures and the like. While the aged people go for cutting of bamboos, thinning out strips and preparing mats, younger ones do handling of piles, poles and fixtures. Female labour predominates in the preparation of rice beer, while the males do so in fishing, hunting and butchering. Male labour is engaged in manufacturing bark-cloth or bark-blanket (Walker 1927: 15-16), whereas only women maintain handloom for weaving since the days it was introduced in the hills. A kamal's is the service of a male while that of a midwife is the service of a female. A woman can not have a judgment seat; dispensation of justice and peace is a man's monopoly (of chratang and paagachi). Predominantly women are found collecting roots, tubers and vegetables for food from jungles and forefaken fields. In larger number, they are also found collecting and carrying fuel-wood from the jhum fields for household uses.
though men also occasionally contribute to this task along with them. Female labour predominates in most of the agricultural operations except when the males come forward to contribute more in felling the trees for jhum operations. There is no tabu against women's participation. They also sparingly do it. While burning the field, male's service predominates and the females assist them. Men settle and encircle the borders of their household plots along the natural features or by placing burnt logs and bamboos along the borders. Men and youths broadcast the first mixture of seeds after performance of rites in honour of the God, and women begin to plant maize and others. Subsequent plantations are done more by women than by men. Predominance of women over the agricultural operations continues thereafter till the clearance of the new plots for the next season.

In the absence of any dependable alternative in the isolated ecology, land is obviously the only source of his subsistence. With a Garo, "cultivating the soil is the beginning and end of his life's work and the occupation to which he devotes all the energy he possesses" (Playfair: 1909:33). In the midst of risky rainfall predictions, a Garo does not desire to depend on a single crop and food is not the only need to be satisfied. He has the need for iron tools and implements, clothings and conventional necessaries (like tobacco) and the ceremonial and social necessaries for fowls, cows and bulls, all of which his hills do not yield. Besides, he has to minimise his risk of likely loss in production from land. These could be met only by producing a host of food and cash crops and vegetables that need varying quantum of rain, temperature and soil conditions. A Garo, therefore, raises about 15 to 20 varieties of crops like rice and millet, cotton, ginger and chilli and a host of vegetables.
A mixture of crops are raised in the current year's plot to reap the benefit of higher fertility of a newly opened area. Failure of one crop is thus compensated by a successful harvest of another. Individually the great variety of vegetables are not very important excepting a few, but they add variety to a diet and promise it a continuous supply of one or the other items as and when they mature in the field in a year. Some of the plants are allowed to continue in the current plot till it is cleared for the second year so that the plants can provide fruits for subsistence and sale (tapioca, eggplants, etc.). List of few vegetables/eatables available in and from different months of the year is given below:

1. June: Karek (a variety of bean), Te'e (melon)
2. July: Mesarang, Me'se (millet), Akharu (bottle gourd), Cominda (pumpkin), Meraku (maize), Garu (a variety of sour plant used in curry), Sosra (sponge gourd).
3. August: Me (paddy), Jallik (chilli), Mikop (maize), Jinka
4. September: Jinka (late variety), Gurugron (Lady's finger), Baring (brinjal), Galda (a variety of plants used in curry), Me (paddy).
5. November: Ta'a (arum), Genasi (a variety of bean), Karek (a variety of bean), Tamilang (sweet potato).
6. December: Baring (brinjal), Baring Bilati (Tomato), Bellik (a variety of bean), Genasi (bean).
7. January to April: roots, tubers, vegetables from fellow areas and jungles. Lemon (tematchu) of different varieties, papaya (modipol) are available in different seasons of the year. Jack fruits are found in the rainy season.

Jhuming has also been associated with a less pronounced occupational complex. Collection of forest produce (honey, lac, etc.), preparation of bamboo baskets, fishing and hunting, manufacture of bark cloth and blankets engage a part of labour power of every household. Cash crops and all these are bartered or sold for money in different markets (hats) for obtaining salt, kerosene, dried fish, tobacco, cows
and bulls (Sawney: 1882; Robinson: 1841).

Since dhumin is labour oriented and degree of monetisation of economic activities was the least even as late as the fifties (Burling: 1963), the Garos responded to these objective deficiencies by developing institutional forms of labour exchange as discussed earlier. In Garo Hills an average household with two able bodied members can cultivate about 2 acres of land (Banerjee: 1972:113). Dao (bush knife), hoe, spade, sickle, axe and swords used to be purchased from outside, whereas dibble stick, gachek (a small bamboo basket for carrying in seeds, while tied to the front of waist), Koks (big and medium sized bamboo-made baskets) are prepared by the Garos themselves. At current price, a sum of Rs. 25/- may be necessary for meeting requirements for iron-tools of an average size family for a period of about 5 years or more. Aged Garos report that these could be satisfied by selling cotton of 'one kok quantity'. Seeds, the only form of capital besides the above, could be procured from the household plots. Seeds are sown in the field either by dibbling or broadcasting. Tools like pointed bamboo sticks and the gachek are aided by an all purpose dao. Ideas of weights and measures or of quantity are expressed by contents of kok or counting of pieces in relevant cases.

Each akhing has several blocks earmarked for jhuming by the villagers (a'dok). Parts of the a'dok are opened every year and land is allotted to every household for shifting cultivation in such a way that all cultivable plots are adjacent to each other. Certain technological reasons like burning of felled and dried up jungles together, guarding of plots against depredation by wild animals, observing rites and rituals collectively on the fields, and keeping
other parts of a'dok in tact for recouping of fertility through area wise forest growth prompted the people to accept agricultural plots together.

Cultivation of two plots in the same year is the general practice of the Garos. Plots allotted for current year's cultivation (a'da:l; a'a=land; gitdal=new) is also used for the second year (a'breng; a'a=land, breng=to stuff). In the third year, however, it is abandoned to growth of bushes and jungles for a period (a'jri; a'a=land, jri(a)=heavy). A part of the a'dok may remain unused even after allotment of land to all households (a'chang; a'a=land; chang='vacant'). This generally happens in bigger akhings.

Every plot once allotted is used consecutively for two years and then left fallow. Each year, a household cultivates one plot as a'da:l and another as a'breng. Always the section of the a'dok that has been fallow for the longest period is apportioned into household plots. A household generally returns to the plot which it had jhumed earlier. This jhum cycle ranges from 20 years to about 6 years in larger akhings of the interior and has reduced to less than 6 years in others depending on population growth, carrying capacity of land and its availability in an akhing (Hunter: 1885; Playfair: 1909; Burling: 1963; Majumdard: 1967; Saha: 1970; Banerjee: 1972).

With the increase in the number of households, and the consequent pressure of population on land, a'chang of the a'dok are brought under shifting cultivation and bigger plots are readjusted into smaller ones for accommodating the demands of increasing households.

Concerning investment of labour, jhuming has several successive stages of agricultural operations between the allotment of land among the households and leaving it over to the jungle. These are as follows:
USE OF A'DOK/A'DAL/A'BRENG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of use or leaving the field</th>
<th>A'dok of an Akhing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reopened as a'dal in the year</td>
<td>1975 1976 1977 1978 -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Distribution of plots among households in 1970

Distribution of plots among households in 1975

Note: 1. Households are indicated by Nos 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, ............
2. A'dal and A'breng of the same households indicated by mark 
3. A 5 year jhum cycle is assumed only to show the process.
4. An increase of 3 households over 5 years also assumed.
5. A'chang (vacant area) indicated by 

1. Clearing of plots (*Aba o'a*): Individual households cut down and clear the jungles and leave them to dry in the months of December and January.

2. Burning of plots (*Aba so'a*): Manpower from each household collect together in the current year's *a'dok* on a fixed day and burn their fields together under common management in the months of March-April before the likely onset of the rain.

3. Sowing of seeds (*bechil sâta/gea*): Individual households sow seeds in their respective plots in April, rice, maize and millet being most important.

4. Construction of field houses (*nokadal rika*): Small houses in every field are constructed by households in the *a'dal* for their stay during weeding and harvesting operations and for supervising and protecting fields from animal depredations. In the rains, workers take shelter in those houses in the midst of operations too. Between the paddy plantations and harvest there are a few weeding operations to keep the plants free from growing weeds.

5. First weeding (*a'jakra danga/gama*: *a'a* = field, *jakra* = right hand first, *danga/gama* = cultivation): After the sprouting of seeds, infant plants are to be kept free of the weeds of various kinds. The Garos get acquainted with every sort of weeds and crop-plants from their early youth and can pull out the unwanted weeds by hand while loosening the lands for a speedy growth of young plants. This happens in late May and early June.

6. Second weeding (*bamil-rika*): By the time maize is harvested in June, households have to be ready for the second major weeding...
in July-August. Around early August, millet is also ready for the harvest.

7. Third weeding (*diri rata*): The fields may need weeding operation for third time as they get frequent rains causing speedy growth of weeds. Even though plants are firmly rooted, they should be saved from the host of weeds for better growth and productivity. This happens in August. By now many of the vegetables are matured and collected from the field.

8. Rice harvest (*mi aka*): Rice is harvested in October by individual households and if necessary, it is preceded by another weeding operation.

9. Throwing away of weeds (*sampeng gala*; *sampeng* = weeds; *gala* = throw away): After rice harvest, long weeds are uprooted by hands as far as practicable after cessation of rains to allow other existing plants like that of chilly, cotton, brinjal and others to grow well. It is done in October.

10. Cutting the rice stalks and unwanted plants (*murad rata*; to cut stalk): Since harvest of many important crops is over by October and stalks of harvested plants are left over, these are cut down with sickle.

11. Harvesting of cotton (*kil oka*): This is done in December.

12. Collecting dried plants and debris into heaps (*a'uita abakila*). If the a'dal is to be continued for the second year, this operation is carried on, and after burning of those heaps of debris etc., plot becomes an a'breng. This is to occur around February of the next year.

In case of a'breng, cultivation starts in late March and only food crops, mainly rice are produced. While planting rice by one
worker, another follows him by clearing unwanted weeds, if any. It is known as 'saming danga'. Ajakra danga is to be arranged in late April-early May, whereas the second and the third weeding operations (a'brong danga and a'brenge rata respectively) have to be arranged during late June - early August before harvesting of paddy in the latter month or in early September, and thereafter, fields are abandoned to jungle. These fields are then known as Ajri.

There are different varieties of rice produced in Garo Hills, each needing different duration of growth. Whereas the period, late March to October, appears to be the busy agricultural season of the Garos, the pressure of works mounts on them more heavily during the period from March to August. Both the dal and breng need their attention in quick succession. Consequently, their demand for labour is the highest within the period from late June to later part of August.

All the successive stages of cultivation coincide with climatic variations, and associate certain rites and ceremonies, individual and collective. Since subsistence of the Garos depends almost exclusively on land, other natural resources and forces, the Garos feel the necessity of propitiating the spirits which rule over the seasons or whose pleasure provokes fertility of land. Higher levels of economic gains are sought to be attained by invoking supernatural forces, in addition to their own labour power.

After clearance of a'dal and felling of jungles left to be dried, Penbilsia ceremony (den = to cut; bils = year) inaugurates
their agricultural season. Nokma on behalf of his people sacrifices a goat on a village altar and a feast for all follows at his expenses.

A'breng had already been prepared earlier. Now, on common expenses and efforts, a cow or a pig is killed for a common feast following a sacrifice of fowl by the nokma in the village. After a day of rest, each of the households sacrifices before the Saljang (God of creation) in their respective a'breng an egg as a symbol of productivity, and start planting paddy therein.

Similarly an egg is sacrificed in every household’s a'dal after burning of the fields (basoa: a'a=land, soa = to burn) before the onset of rains, and a mixture of seeds are broadcast over the field. Nokma has the privilege of sacrificing first, and not an egg but a chicken in his a'dal. All return home after sowing, and rotational visits of villagers for a drinking spree start from nokma’s house to other households. This ceremony, called Agalmaka, continues for few days till regular planting starts.

Rice is a staple food of the Caros and on its successful harvest depends their year-long contentment. Before paddy starts ripening, nokma sacrifices a pig in his field on behalf of all and invokes the blessings of the deity of the field for a good harvest of robust paddy in a ceremony called Miamua (mi = rice, amua=sacrifice). Again the villagers help in organising a feast of food, drink and music (not dance) at nokma’s house.

Before any of the crops can be harvested, the Caros think it necessary to offer the first fruits to the spirits. Ears of rice
and mature millets are pounded and offered on a plainain leaf in Hongchurala ceremony (Hongchu=preparation of rice boiled until dry, gala=to throw). Such are also associated with other crops (Gindugala etc.). This sacrifice is followed by rotational visits of villagers to different households in drinking, eating and singing, but not dancing.

It is Jemegana Ahaua that permits dancing after reaping of the Jhum-paddy, as the beating of drums that has to accompany an occasional dancing is considered improper by a Garo during the ripening stage of the paddy. Moreover, either an extreme temperature or heavy rains on earlier stages occasions an absence of dancing. In Ahaua, a fish is offered in the field before the last bunch of paddy is collected. Wealthy villagers offer something bigger. Young and old people visit all houses and enjoy drinking and dancing as they have come to the end of agricultural cycle.

The greatest of all Garo festivals, bangala, follows Ahaua about a month later. Entire village wears a new look after clearance of village paths and repairs of houses. Nokma and wealthier villagers prepare pitchers of rice-beer and all purchase new cloths, ornaments and other necessaries. Ceremonies of first two days of bangala, Burela and Sasat, are characterised by excessive feastings. Cows and pigs are killed and distributed among the neighbours and kins. Sometimes, villagers raise subscriptions for purchasing them. Rituals start from nokma's house and dancing follows. This is the occasion, when spirit Saljong receives offerings of food etc. made of crops raised from new fields of every household. Bangala acts as a great equaliser of wealth and base of psychological equality among
the rich and the poor. Surplus wealth of the rich is distributed among the people in feast of food and drink continuously for several days. Vangala combines within itself not only the features of a profound festival but also a social instrument of economic equality.

In all the ceremonies, wealthier persons are found distributing their wealth on feasts and drinks on the one hand, and on the other, bringing economic prosperity through a peaceful communion with the spirits of the field. Sacrifices of eggs and fish are also the symbol of productivity as among the neighbouring Hindus. Any sacrifice in the field is followed by common feast and joys because all are equally involved in exploiting a common property or resources.

The Garos have also developed a level of technology within the phenomenon of similar ecological adaptation. Land is cultivated by slash and burn method as, otherwise, no settled plough cultivation is feasible on the rugged undulating hills. Terracing was not conceived as necessary when low population density in the midst of vast forest land could allow them to go for an easier method where little fire, a dibble stick, a small basket (rachek) and seeds as the indigenous capital gave them a tolerable subsistence. The Garos developed in certain sense a forest based material culture. Their houses are made of wood, bamboos, thatch, canes and creepers without the use of an iron nail. Wherever possible they used the forest product as raw material of houses as in the case of borang, they are found to use a tree as a living post or pillar. Various forms of basketry bamboo made benches and desks as well as water pipes (for drawing water into village borders from a distance) are a common scene in a traditional village. Most of their musical instruments, pipers,
flutes, horns and drums are made of forest products. Colourful feathers of birds feature as indispensable ornaments in dance performance. Banana leaves are used till today as platters and bamboo pieces are used as substitutes of pitchers. Blankets are made of bark, their pestle and mortar are made of wood. They are proud also of using a broadleaf as an umbrella. Fishing traps of various kinds are made of split bamboos and a few plants and creepers are used for poisoning the water for fishing too. Since his childhood, a Garo gets used to all purpose bush knife with him, because he has to be versatile at using bamboos and wood for preparing the objects for his material culture.

We have built up the above outlines of the traditional society and economy on the basis of early reports and present personal investigations. Synchronic investigations reveal that the traditional socio-cultural norms have undergone some visible changes and still others are in the process of change under the impact of factors—internal and external. The inherent vitality of Garo culture and society supported by the dynamics of modern socio-cultural development processes initiated by the central and provincial governments have accelerated the process.