CHAPTER TWO

CHANGES IN AGRICULTURE DURING THE COLONIAL RULE (1891-1947)

One of the fundamental changes that the British introduced in agriculture during the first half of the 20th century was in the traditional land holding and revenue systems of the valley. As pointed out earlier, traditionally land revenue was paid in kind fixed at 12 pots or 15 mounds of paddy. But under the colonial system, the tax was paid in cash at the uniform rate of Rs.5/- per pari (2-1/2 acres) by abolishing the lallup system.\(^1\) Besides, a house tax of Rs.2/- per homestead in the valley and Rs.3/- per house annually in the hill areas were also introduced.\(^2\) It may be pointed out here that the main objective behind introduction of this cash revenue system was to create a source of regular income for the state. The work of survey and assessment of the land particularly the cultivable land in

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1. Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1891-92, pp. 4-5.

2. Ibid.
the valley was subsequently taken up. All the available records of land maintained by the village officials prior to the war of 1891 were collected and in the examination of these records, it was found that the total area under cultivation was 28,845 paries, of which in 1893-94, 1,514 paries were rent free land possessed by the Raja, Judicial officers and the police. The greater part of these lands, about 25% were cultivated by the raiyats who paid rents to the officer holding the land and of the remaining, Maxwell reported that till the year 1893-94, about 29,887 occupancy pattas had been issued for 27,331 paries of land. Of the later category, only 2,242 paries had not actually been delivered to the patta holders. By then the average size of a holding was about 2½ acres per family. During the earlier days of colonial rule no boundaries of each holding were fixed and moreover, as the patta was merely an occupancy right, there often occurred boundary disputes among the villagers which resulted to loss of much revenue to the govt. Therefore, Maxwell put up a proposal for immediate resettlement of all the land holdings by adopting a regular Cadastre survey. Accordingly, an arrangement

4. Ibid.
was made by engaging the clerks under the charge of Superintendent of the state office to take up the management of land revenue affairs. But soon the system was found to be ineffective, because the office was entirely devoid of experience in revenue matters, particularly boundary disputes and non payment of revenue. In this regard, Political Agent, Maxwell wrote, ".....the system revealed the disinclination of the Manipuris to pay taxes unless personally visited, and the result was to leave very large arrears at the end of the year". Therefore, to avoid increasing arrears and to facilitate collection of revenue, the whole valley area was divided into four pannahs as Ahalup, Naharup, Laifam and Khabam and to look after each of them one Lakpa each was appointed. The Lakpa was entrusted the work of collection of revenue from his own respective pannah for which each of them was paid a commission of 10% on their collections. The state fixed the cost of establishment at Rs.142/- each for Ahalup and Naharup pannahs per month and for the smaller Laifam and Khabam pannahs, it was fixed at Rs.109/- each per month. With the

appointment of the Lakpas, collection of the revenue was seriously taken up and initially, their works yielded much revenue to the state. During 1894-95 alone, out of the total land revenue demand Rs.1,44,539/- an amount of Rs.1,04,637/- was collected from the four pannahs. But the Lakpa system was found to be extremely expensive because a huge amount of expenditure was incurred in their establishment. Initially, only a sum of Rs.1,234/- was spent but the amount of expenditure rose to Rs.17,623/- in 1894-95. Moreover, an accumulation of arrears had also taken place. As the new system was thus proved to be unprofitable, Maxwell proposed to establish a separate revenue department, mainly to curb the amount of expenditure, to survey the total cultivated area and to settle on the spot the numerous boundary disputes, which resulted from the absence of any kind of survey. Accordingly, an 'Amin establishment' was appointed in 1896 and it began its operations in right earnest during the year itself in all the four pannahs. The establishment consisting of 8 Amins was placed under the charge of an official called 'Amin Lakpa' who, together with

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid, pp. 4-5.
his staff received fixed salaries. A sum of Rs.2,530/- was annually spent in maintaining the establishment. The main work of the establishment was to survey the area under rice cultivation, and as a result of its strong endeavour, a total of 3,506 paries were measured and brought under patta. Of this area, 2,704 paries were discovered as area of concealed cultivation which escaped assessment. The net increase in lands under patta during the year amounted to 3,204 paries producing an additional revenue of Rs. 16,020/-. The total area under patta was now 33,985 paries or 84,962½ acres.8 To strengthen the machinery of survey and collection work, the service of a Sub-Deputy Collector was required and in 1897 Babu Raj Kumar Rai was first appointed to the post who immediately joined his duty and began his work by investigating into the functioning of the Lakpas. It was discovered that there were serious irregularities in the accounts of Naharup Lakpa Shri Golab Singh involving a large sum of money amounting to Rs.2,700/-. At once, the Lakpa was suspended. He was also subsequently "tried and convicted of criminal breach of trust, and

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sentenced to Rs. 500/- fine and six months simple imprisonment". It was reported that such a step had an excellent effect in convincing other Lakpas to correct their ways. As a result of such development a sum of Rs. 2,08,720/- was collected as land revenue which was 91.4 percent of the total land revenue demand.\(^9\) The Sub-Deputy Collector further proposed for improvement over the system and on the line of his suggestions, the existing four pannahs were rearranged into five by creating another pannah called 'Imphal Pannah'. All the activities of the Lakpas with regard to settlement and registration was also put to an end, thereby entrusting the entire management of the state land revenue affairs upon the Sub-Deputy Collectors. The existing Amin establishment was also abolished, and in place of it a "temporary staff of four Konungos and 40 Amins" on pay varying from Rs.20/- to Rs.10/- was set up, and finally a 'survey school' was also established in which Amins were trained under the direct supervision of the Sub-Deputy Collector himself. Along with all these changes the Nal survey method was introduced. The survey of the entire valley was subsequently taken up by adopting 'Bighas'

\(^9\) Ibid.
as govt. standard of measurement in place of 'Pari', the traditional Manipuri standard of measurement which was about 2\(\frac{3}{4}\) acres.\(^{10}\) With the engagement of a huge field staff of 20 Amins, 2 Konungos, 1 Survey Master and some peons and under the close supervision of the Sub-Deputy Collector, an area of 2,16,717 bighas was surveyed in 1898-99 and this added to 1,93,724 bighas already surveyed upto 31st March, the total area surveyed comes to 4,10,441 bighas (1,35,683 acres or 212 square miles) approximately. Still about 65,439 bighas or 8,725 paries or 21,632 acres had been found to have escaped assessment and the revenue collected for the year was only Rs. 1,80,560/-,\(^{11}\) Since then, the Amins were, in addition to their survey works, begun to be engaged in the work of revenue collection. With the creation of another Pannah called "Sadar Pannah", the revenue works increased considerably requiring the services of more Amins. Accordingly, 34 students were admitted to the survey school out of which, 19 students had passed the examination. Two successful students were appointed as

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10. Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1897-98, pp. 4-5.
Amins. By recruiting some more staff the revenue department could collect an amount of revenue Rs. 2,62,142/-.

But the amount of revenue collected fell to Rs. 2,46,201/- in 1890-1901 and further decreased to Rs. 2,45,906/- in 1901-02. The new development was because of relinquishment of large areas of land by the peasantry.

In 1902-03, Wood, the Political Agent, introduced a new system of revenue collection according to which 'Lakpas' were not sent out to collect the revenue, instead the raiyats were asked raiyats to directly submit the same to the headquarters. This change of policy was, however, not so effective in raising the revenue, rather it had brought down the amount to Rs. 2,16,723/- during the year. Subsequently, under an order of the Chief Commissioner, an enquiry was conducted and it was found that apart from the negligence of the Lakpas payment of revenue at a differential rate by people living at far off places and cultivating inferior land (a little less than the rest of the raiyats residing in

the areas having good road and river communication etc.) were the cause for the decline.\textsuperscript{15} Maxwell, therefore, returned to the old system of sending out the Lakpas to collect the revenues after which, of the total demand of Rs. 2,63,523/- a sum of Rs. 2,44,539/- i.e. 92.79 per cent could again be collected by the 31st of March, 1904.\textsuperscript{16} J. Shakespeare, the Political Agent also geared up the work of land revenue collection during 1905-06 by urging the village officials, panchayat members, etc. to be exemplary in clearing their dues in time. The Sub-deputy Collector with the help of the Amins and Konungos also hunted up the defaulters and tardy debtors and drove them to pay their dues. This helped the state to realise a sum of Rs. 2,81,291/- i.e., 96.39 per cent.\textsuperscript{17} Again, the system of paying commission to the Lakpas was found to be expensive and so a change of policy in this regard was introduced.

Accordingly, from 1st April, 1905 the Lakpas were paid fixed salaries instead of being allowed a commission on

\textsuperscript{15} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1902-03, pp. 2-3.
\textsuperscript{16} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1903-04 P. 2.
\textsuperscript{17} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1904-05, P. 2.
their collections. The cost of their office and field establishments were also paid by the state. It was reported that next to the ordinary Darbar Members, the Lakpas were the best paid servants of the state, but this system had resulted in a saving of Rs. 4,371/- . Meanwhile, because of the poor out-turn of crops and irregularities in the collection as no map was prepared, the state was able to realise a lesser amount of revenue i.e., Rs. 2,68,507/- only in the subsequent year. In order to improve this, a resurvey of the valley through 'Chain Survey' was taken up and by 31st March, 1907 an area of 1,53,602 bighas had been measured and this had added Rs. 17,118/- to the land revenue demand without changing the rate of assessment. ¹⁸ With this arrangement, the amount of revenue collected was increased to Rs. 2,90,609/-, and survey of all the four pannahs except Imphal pannah had also been completed during the year, 1907-08. ¹⁹ The resurvey of Imphal pannah was also taken up in 1908-09 and that had resulted in an increase of Rs. 1,342/- in the revenue demand, and 2,013 bighas in the area under

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rice cultivation. In order to provide greater accuracy in the survey, instructors from the Directorate of Land Records of Assam were engaged in the plane-table survey of the principal roads and rivers (which formed the natural boundaries of the 'Leikais' or cluster of houses) of Imphal and also the entire British reserve, the process of which was completed at the end of the same year. Collection of revenue amounting to Rs. 3,01,424/- was made by sending out the Lakpas to some of the distant villages to collect revenue while the Sub-Deputy Collector was engaged in his duties in the headquarters.\textsuperscript{20} The collection was increased to Rs. 3,09,025/- in 1909-10, and the increase was mainly because of the utilisation of the services of more Amins and the field staff in the collection process.\textsuperscript{21} In fact with their employment, the revenue further rose to Rs. 3,13,561/- in 1910-11.\textsuperscript{22}

Again, another change was introduced in the system of revenue collection in 1911-12 according to which the Lakpas

\textsuperscript{20} Administration Report of Manipur State 1908-09, pp. 2-3.
\textsuperscript{21} Administration Report of Manipur State 1909-10 pp. 2-3.
\textsuperscript{22} Administration Report of Manipur State 1910-11, P. 35.
and their subordinates now remained at the headquarters, while the Konungos and Amins (whose normal duties takes them to the villages) were employed in hunting up defaulters and sending them back to Imphal to pay their revenue. These alterations have had a salutary effect, as SDC could provide a close supervision over the work of the collecting staff. Besides this, the system of imposing punitive fines to the defaulting pattadars was also introduced during the year which proved quiet beneficial to the state. One Lakpa was also dismissed for misappropriation of Rs. 1,492/- and put under the trial of the Darbar. Another Lakpa also resigned. With these measures, a huge sum of revenue amounting to Rs. 3,19,095/- could be collected. 23 To make the revenue department more efficient, Mr. F.B. Blackie, who was appointed Private Secretary to His Highness the Raja in July in 1911, was provided a training course on land revenue matters under the Sub-Deputy Collector and he was later on appointed head of the Revenue Department in 1912. 24 The department was further enlarged in 1913-14 by recruiting 8 more Amins to the existing strength of 20 Amins and raising

the number of Konungos, from 3 to 4. In 1913, a change in the rate of assessments was introduced i.e. an extra tax of 3 annas per rupee was levied on all cultivated land in the main valley of Manipur, increasing the rate of assessment from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 5.15/- per pari.25 The increase was due to the abolition of Pothang or force labour as it was now necessary to make up the extra expenditure to be incurred in the maintenance of roads, embankment of rivers and school buildings which was formerly done by Pothang labour.

But, the rates of assessment on wet rice land cultivated by hillmen in some valleys bordering the central area and that of Jiribam remained the same. Although the common people complained against the new rates, the Political Agent defended the revised rates by stating that by then the value of land, and the price of crops, especially rice, had increased since the time when the rates of land revenue was first fixed. It was further argued that the abolition of forced labour of every kind would enable the raiyats to earn sufficiently to pay the slight increase

in the land revenue. Along with the introduction of the revised rates, in 1915-16, three probationers were sent to the Guwahati Survey School to improve their efficiency and the Political Agent hoped that their employment would help in replacing the old eye-sketch survey of the valley villages by a more accurate ones. The three probationers passed their final examinations but unfortunately, only two were appointed because the other one had expired. The new staff was entrusted the work of a Cadastre survey of the valley to replace the old eye-sketch survey, which was very inaccurate. In 1919-20, cadastre survey was newly started in the valley in which the rest of the field staff was engaged. Under the survey, 3,695/- bighas (1,221.49 acres) of cultivated land as against 4,744 bighas (1,568.26 acres) in the previous year were measured.

From 1921-22 onwards, Amins were locally trained and they undertook the cadastre survey of the remaining three

26. Ibid.
pannahs. During the same year itself 3,859 bighas were measured.\textsuperscript{30} Then after almost a decade, in 1931-32, 5,023 bighas of land were measured and a sum of Rs. 1,86,302/- was collected as land revenue. During this year, the Darbar extended the period of collection from 31st March to the last day of June.\textsuperscript{31} In this way, the colonial authorities not only tried to encourage the extension of agriculture but also strictly carried out the work of revenue collection till the last part of their rule.

Thus, the above discussion reveals that the main objective behind the introduction of patta system, and the associated process of survey of valley areas etc., was to create a permanent source of income for the state. As early as 1894, Maxwell had reported that "..... the main source of income of the state is from the cultivated land in the valley held chiefly by Manipuris".\textsuperscript{32} The colonial authorities spared no stone unturned in their attempts to realise as much as possible. Throughout the whole period of

\textsuperscript{30} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1921-22, pp. 3-4.
\textsuperscript{31} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1931-32, pp. 7-9
\textsuperscript{32} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1894-95, P. 3.
their administration revenue collection was carried out irrespective of the paying capacities of the peasants, resulting to an absolute dependence of the peasants to the money lenders.

It may further be pointed out that when peasants borrowed money from the money lenders, they were given loan on the condition that the peasants were to repay either in terms of money or paddy or rice after the harvest. In many of the cases, due to poor crops, either as a result of failure of rains or destruction of standing crops by rats, the peasants often failed to repay the goods in time as agreed upon. Under the circumstances, they became the victims of money lenders who charged exorbitant rate of interest.\textsuperscript{33} Finding no alternative, they used to sell off their cultivable lands. such hard economic realities brought about a process of land transfer from the peasant to money lenders. In this connection, as early as 1900s, Maxwell pointed out that, "transfer of land are freely made in the

valley and are mostly connected with sale". The following table gives a picture of changing agrarian structure during the first half of 20th century.

**TABLE A**

**Break up Figure of Population in Agriculture**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rent Receiver</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14,217</td>
<td>2,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ordinary Cultivators</td>
<td>2,68,678</td>
<td>2,98,493</td>
<td>56,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tenant Cultivators</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Field Owners</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>3,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table shows that because of the introduction of the land laws, the traditional agrarian structure was completely transformed. In pre-colonial Manipur society, there were only two broad social groups, the king and the feudal nobles who controlled most of the lands and peasants who either

worked for the feudal lords or cultivated their own lands. In colonial Manipur, however, a number of agrarian social groups like land receivers, tenant cultivators, ordinary cultivators and field labourers emerged.

The table clearly shows that initially, in 1911 only two landlords (rent receiver) were found recorded in 1911 census, but the number increased to 14,217 in 1921. This became quite possible because of the increasing number of government employees who were able to purchase land with their salary. The employees were like Lakpas, Amins, Mohorris, School Teachers, Panchayat Members, Police etc. The traditional village officials and title holders (famnaibas) and other cultural personalities like singers, dancers etc. also bought the land. In this regard, Mr. Cole, the President of Manipur State Darbar, wrote in 1915 as "Manipuris of positions are getting possessions of land and becoming small jamindars. They sub-let at 12 pots, about 16 mounds of paddy per pari of 2½ to 3 acres. This tendency requires checking." The number of sale cases was

also increased from 1,305 in 1908-09 to 28,751 in 1923-24.\textsuperscript{37}

Although, the Manipur State Darbar passed a resolution debarring individuals to acquire more than 10 parcels of new land, apart from the old ones,\textsuperscript{38} sale cases continued to increase unabated. There were 13,577 sale cases in 1931-32\textsuperscript{39} and it rose to 49,619 cases in 1938-39.\textsuperscript{40} The Manipur State Darbar also permitted people to own land ranging from 20-100 acres.\textsuperscript{41} On the other hand the ordinary cultivators decreased from 2,68,678 in 1911 to 56,368 in 1931. The number of field labourers also increased from 527 in 1921 to 3,750 in 1931 whereas in the same year the category 'tenant cultivator' had increased to 6,950. By this time the rate of revenue was also increased to Rs.9/- per pari.\textsuperscript{42} This process continued up to the 2nd World war. As a result, there emerged a sharpening agrarian class polarisation in Manipur.\textsuperscript{43} Peasants were becoming poorer and the native

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1923-24, P. 5.
\item Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1931-32, P. 9.
\item Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1938-39, P. 5.
\item Proceedings of Manipur State Darbar, 1939.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
elites who were engaged in contract works during the war
times became richer and could invest money in land. S.K.
Chaobe has also rightly pointed out "..... the rich
were inclined more on the acquisition of a landed property
than taking business. Even now, the native class are shy of
business".

II A

Unlike the valley, in the hills there are multiple land
ownership systems ranging from the exclusive ownership of
land vested to the chief to clan or community ownership.
B.K. Roy Burman writes, "the Naga ideology focuses on
communal system of control and management of resources;
whereas the Kuki ideology accepts the prerogative of the
chief to a greater extent". These different ownership
systems may, therefore, be discussed under two categories:
the land ownership system of the Nagas and that of the Kuki-
Chin tribes as under :

44. S.K. Chaobe, Hill Politics in North EAsl India, (New
Delhi, 1973), P. 42.
45. B.K. Roy Burman, Community Land and Institutional Finance
(with reference to Tribal areas of Manipur and Tripura),
(Council for Social Development, New Delhi), P. 24.
Land Ownership System of the Nagas:

When the Britishers occupied the state after the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891, the colonial rulers decided to retain the traditional system of land ownership as had been in use among the different tribes. In the Naga community, the village land is managed by a council with the chief or Khullakpa as its head. The council is composed of village elders, and it is the highest decision-making body of the village. It is also the custodian of the entire village land. The Nagas, though live in different parts of the state and speak different languages of their own, have more or less common pattern of land use and ownership system which may be broadly classified as given below:

A. Community Land:

The community land is that land which is commonly or collectively owned by the village community as a whole. All the Naga tribes have community land in their own respective village. It includes cultivable as well as forest land for agriculture, grazing, fields, water sides, play fields etc. W.A. Cosgrave wrote "... the land (community land) belonged to the village as a whole and land cannot be
alienated without the consent of the chief. The fact that chief was not very powerful (and) ... the tribal council check the power of the chief meant that the chief does not have strong-hold over the means of production". The community land may further be classified into eight categories.

i) Village Settlement Site: This site is the common property of the villagers. Therefore, each and every family has a right to possess a house plot of its own choice and construct a house without disturbing the neighbours. Such plot is under the permanent possession of the family as long as the family continues to reside in the village.

ii) Village Reserve Forest: Every Naga village keeps some reserve forests around the village which was to be protected from indiscriminate cutting or from fire devastation. While the villagers are allowed to use minor forest products, felling or cutting of matured and big trees from such forests is strictly prohibited. The one who violates this restriction is heavily fined. According to Naga'customary

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laws, a pig or mithun is usually the fine paid by the person concerned.\textsuperscript{47} It may, however, be pointed out that the value of fine varies from village to village and so also among the different Naga tribes. The Nungba\textsuperscript{48} village inhabited by Zelianrong also keeps Longkham forest as a reserve forest. It is from this forest that the villagers get forest resources such as wood, cane, etc. Any man of the village is at liberty to hunt or trap any animal and also fell any kind of trees for construction of houses and other household use. However, indiscriminate felling of trees is discouraged. The Tangkhuls too maintain such forest reserve. In this connection, P.R. Peter informed us that a Tangkhul village called Phungcham in Ukhrul District of Manipur had been maintaining a big area of forest reserve since the time of its establishment and even today about 40 sq.km. area of the forest is kept as forest reserve of the village.\textsuperscript{49} The Maos too maintain such forest reserve. It is looked after by the village community on behalf of the village chief. While any one has the right to exploit the resources of such forest,

\textsuperscript{47} P.R. Peter, \textit{The Land Use System of the Tangkhuls}, - A Paper presented in the State Level Seminar on Tribal Land Use System in Manipur organised by MUTSU in 1993, P.4.
\textsuperscript{48} Nungba is a village in Tamenglong District, Manipur.
indiscriminate destruction is discouraged. Among the Maos, however the chief is given special privilege to use the best resources available in that forest.\textsuperscript{50} In the Maram village also the forests and grasslands far off from the village are classified as reserve forest. The Maram village forest reserve, however sometimes could be either community reserve or individual reserve. According to their custom, the chest and leg of animal killed by trap in the individual reserved forests are given to the owner as tax but such tax is not levied on those animals killed by an individual by weapons like spear or gun.\textsuperscript{51}

iv) Village Water Site: The Nagas traditionally select hill top as their village site mainly with the objective of security and defense. Naturally, on a hill top water is

\textsuperscript{50} P. Binodini Devi, A Monograph on \textit{Tribal Land System of Manipur}, Centre for Manipur Studies & Tribal Research, Manipur University, 1994. P. 38.

\textsuperscript{51} Francis Ngajokpa, \textit{Land Use System of the Marams}, - a paper presented in the State Level Seminar on \textit{Tribal Land Use System in Manipur}, Manipur University, 1993, P. 3.
scarce. Therefore, the available water source is properly taken care of and the forest surrounding such water site is well reserved so that water does not get dried up. Villagers are allowed to collect minor forest produces from these forests but felling or cutting of trees is prohibited. As for instance, there are 4/5 water sites at Nungba village such as Khundai, Ngoupang, Marumpang, Khaupang etc. Forests nearby these sites are well reserved and prohibited from being felled.

v) Village Grazing Site: The Naga villages spare some specific areas of forest land where cattle like Mithun, Cow, Buffaloes, etc. are let loose specially during the cultivating season so that they do not damage the standing crops. The villagers do not utilize this land either for jhum or wet rice cultivation as such practices were baned by the village council.  

vi) Places of Worship: Some places are earmarked both in the centre of the village and at the village gates to perform various ritual sacrifices. Banyan or Mulberry trees are planted at such places. No villager is allowed to cut

the trees and none can claim the ownership of the lands earmarked for such purposes.

vii) Village Play Fields: An open field is normally reserved for games and sports and also for other community gatherings in the village. These lands belong to the village community as a whole.

viii) Village Cultivable Lands: There are also cultivable lands which are under the direct control of the village council. The village chief on behalf of the village council looks after such lands. All the villagers have a right to utilize the lands either for jhum or terrace cultivation. It is also given to those immigrant families who do not have lands. To cite an example, some families of Sempat village who lost their land and property during the recent Kuki-Naga ethnic conflict but settled in Nungba village (1993-96) were allowed to cultivate the community land of the village. They do not pay tax to the village council or the chief for cultivating the lands. It may however be pointed out that each and every Naga family first insists for clan land* but

* It will be discussed in the succeeding pages.
when they failed to get suitable piece of clan land, they normally apply for a piece of community land. In the community lands, some private individuals were allowed to make terrace fields. In such case, the individual family assumes a semi-permanent ownership of the land and is allowed to cultivate the land as long as the family continues to live in the village, but the moment the family shifts to another village, the field is either donated or to be sold to his relatives or the clan member. If the members concerned are not interested, then the land will be taken over by the village council (PEI) for community purpose. Normally, the cultivable land of the community thus acquired is not sold or transferred to any other outsiders. However, on request such cultivable lands of the community are leased out for an agricultural year to neighbouring villages. Agreement or decision for such a lease is usually taken in the village council meeting. The neighbouring village requesting for the lease of such land offers a jar of rice-beer or a pig to the council. After sharing the offer, the land is then finally leased out for one agricultural year. After the harvest, the land is returned to the host village
with the tax either in terms of cash or in kind which is normally used by the council in the ritual or developmental activities of the village.

In a deeper examination of the land use and ownership systems of this group the Nagas in Chandel district are found to have a system slightly different from those of the other Naga tribes. Among the Aimols there are altogether 10 villages. Of the 10, nine have common ownership of land and is looked after by two village committees each consisting of 4 (in the north) and 5 (in the south) villages. The members of each of the village has the right to utilize this land and its forest resources. According to Dr. Gina Shangkham out of 174 villages belonging to the Anals, the Chothes, the Marings, the Monsangs, the Lamkangs, and the Koms, only 45 villages have community ownership where as 129 have both the categories of community and individual lands.23

B. Clan Land:

All the Naga tribes have clans of their own. Some of the major clans of the Tangkhul tribe are Keishing, Shimray, Ruivah, Sheiza, Angkang, etc.\textsuperscript{54} The Moyons have two exogamous groups - Simphuwti and Ziingven. These two groups are again sub-divided into different clans - Nguwruw, Laanglam, Charii, Serbum, Bungjir, etc.; Chinir, Nungchim, Ruwen, Wanglaar, Khartu, etc. respectively.\textsuperscript{55} There are four major clans in the Mao society. There are Paomei, Yunai, Doomai and Pomai, etc. The Zeliangrongs have a number of Clans. Some of the major clans are Kamei, Gonmei, Gangmei, Ruangmei, Pamei, Newmei, Cheranamei, etc. The nature of land control among these different clans slightly differs from tribe to tribe, and it may briefly be discussed as follows:

Among the Tangkhuls each of the clan land is looked after by the head of the respective clan. The head distributes the land to all the families of the clan. As a sort of acknowledgement for rendering his services towards

\textsuperscript{54} Information collected from Selim Keishing, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Life Sciences Department, Manipur University on 28.6.97.
them, each of the clan families pays him some rent.\textsuperscript{56} However when members of the clan failed to get clan land they could request the village community for a piece of community cultivable land. Likewise, the Maos and the Paomeis too have heads of the clan in each of their villages. Each of the clans has a separate land. As for instance, in Seranamei village of Senapati district, there are Paomai, Yunai, Doomai and Pomai clans. Each of this clan is given a land for cultivation by the head of the respective clan and in recognition of his service, individual families of the clan pay some rent to him. Their clan lands are usually in the far off area beyond the individual lands.\textsuperscript{57} In this regard, it may be pointed out that the Koirengs do not have clan lands.\textsuperscript{58}

In the Zeliangrong community, traditionally a village is first founded by a particular single clan or sometimes by a group of two or more clans. The senior most man of the clan becomes the NAMPOU i.e. head as well as owner of the

\textsuperscript{56} Khasim Ruivah, \textit{Social Change among the Nagas (Tangkhul)}, (Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1993), P. 35.
\textsuperscript{58} Gangmumei Kabui, \textit{The Koirengs of Manipur}, (Koireng Historical Research Committee, Imphal 1987). pp. 87-89.
village. In a uniclan village, the headman on behalf of the village council is the custodian of the entire village land. The other clan who came later are also accommodated, and they are given lands for cultivation. For example, Gonmei clan is the original settler at Dailong village in Tamenglong district. Later on, many other clans joined the settlement as cooperate group on terms of co-ownership of the village territory with specific areas assigned to each clan.  

By custom, clan land is also given to women who are divorced or whose husbands are dead or on their own decide to live with them and remain faithful, but the clan retains the ownership of the land. It can not be transferred to any man of other clan either within the village or outside the village. Though a particular clan may have enough or even excess land available at their disposal, the land cannot be sold to any outsider without the permission of the village council which means, the clan enjoys only the limited ownership right within the village. When an individual family of a clan leaves the village due to some reasons or

the other, the land for paddy field or residential plots have to be given to the relatives or if relatives are not there, the land may be sold to members of the other clan of the village. If the land is not transferred in either way, then the land becomes a clan land. And in case of the whole clan migrating to another village or establishing a new village, then the land of the clan concerned becomes the common property of the former village community.

C. Individual Lands:

The lands, other than those of community and clans, belong to the individual families of the village. The individual lands include jhum areas, terrace fields and residential plots. The permanent ownership right of these lands are recognised by the customary laws and therefore the land are inherited and became the permanent property of a particular individual of the village. It may however be pointed out that the individual land among most of the Naga tribes could not be sold outside the village concerned. Hence one tends to question if it was the real ownership right. Though all the Naga tribes have individual lands, the ownership pattern differs from tribe to tribe and from
village to village. As for instance, the Anals have individual lands which are operated with two types of tenancies - one type is called 'Tangkhai Chabi', i.e. half sharing and the other type is annual 'lousan' (rent) system and the rate of rent depended on an agreement between the land owner and the cultivator. If one would like to cultivate the fields of another man of the same village, he has to offer a jar of ju (rice-beer) to the owner of the land and then the field is given out for an agricultural year. In the Koireng community individual lands in the villages are even leased out to other communities. If a particular individual family leaves the village for good the land of such family is taken over by the village council. It may also be granted to other family of the village. In the Zeliangrong inhabited areas there are Laopous (owner cultivator of the land) although in some areas like Tamenglong district there are Rampous (owner of big areas of cultivable lands). The Laopous often cultivate land of the Rampous on payment of annual rent in kind. The Rampou can even sell his land even to the outsiders although the village council often intervenes in his move to sell land.

Among the Tangkhuls, there is a land ownership system called LAMTUP under which system, even when the individual family shifts to another village he continues to possess the land of his former village. His clan or the village council does not have the right to sell or use it without his permission. However, if he wants to sell his land, first it will have to be sold to any one of his relatives or to anyone of the former village and not to any other of the village he presently resides.\textsuperscript{62} Khasim Ruivah informed us that some families of Somdal village have got their terrace fields inside the territory of Ngaimu village and vice-versa. However, all field owners of Somdal village has to cultivate his fields in the other village according to the ceremony followed in the territory of the latter village.\textsuperscript{63}

Land Use and Ownership System of the Kuki-Chins:

Unlike that of the Nagas, in the Kuki-Chin community, Chief is not only the socio-political head of the village but also the sole owner of the entire village land.


\textsuperscript{63} Personal interview with Mr. Khasim Ruivah, Deputy Registrar, Manipur University on 24.10.1997.
Chiefship and ownership of the village and its entire area of land go to one person i.e. the founder of the village. By custom, a village is usually established by the genealogical head by conquering a village of another tribe. The genealogical head who establishes a new village automatically becomes the Chief and sole owner of the village and its entire village land. He then invites his near and dear ones to settle down in the newly set up village. They are given lands for cultivation. In case the chief's land is insufficient, the chief in consultation with his Council of Ministers called 'Semang Pachang' (in Thadou) and 'Haosa-upa' (in Zoumi), distribute the land according to the size of the family for an agricultural year. The members of the council are nominated by the Chief himself from different clans.\(^6^4\) Therefore, the opinion of the Councilor is not binding upon the Chief. However, a member of the council enjoys privileges of selecting a good site for cultivation before any one of the village could do, and also an exemption of the payment of tax to the Chief.

The giving of land by the Chief to his villagers is, in fact, an act of official recognition of the particular

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villager that he or she is a bonafide member or resident of
the village. It may, however, be pointed out that he does
not enjoy the permanent ownership right of the land, and has
to be given back to the Chief soon after the jhum course is
over. This process of giving and taking of land between the
Chief and the villager is done through oral lease system.65
As the villager does not enjoy a permanent ownership right
over the land, he cannot sell or give it to others. If a
particularly villager is not pleased with the Chief, a request
or a complaint may be lodged but in case of disagreement or
tussle between them, the villager on his own volition or
under the instruction of the chief may leave the village for
good leaving behind all his house and other properties
because there cannot be any dispute over the land against
the decision of the Chief. P. Hungyo wrote that there were
occasions when the Chief becomes too autocratic, too selfish
or unconcerned towards the villagers and in such case,
majority of the villagers leave the village and seek
settlement in another village or establish a new village for

65. Chingjakham Ngaite, *Land Use System of Churachandpur
District*, A paper presented in the State Level Seminar
on *Tribal Land Use System of Manipur* at Manipur
themselves under a leader of the group. In such situation, the chief finding himself helpless to continue his chiefdom approaches the chief of another village by offering himself as one of the subjects.\textsuperscript{66} In such case, he loses his chiefship of the previous village.

The Chief, in real sense of the term, is the absolute landlord and the villagers are 'Tenants-at-Will'. Every family in the village has to pay 'Bung-Sadar' in Hmar and 'Buhsun or Tangseu' in Thadou i.e. rent to the Chief for cultivating his land. The rate of Buhsun paid to the Chief is about 5/6 tins or baskets of paddy per annum. The Chief fixes a particular day for collection of this rent from the villagers. Collection is done by boys and girls by going from house to house and on this day and the Chief throws a big feast for the villagers with plenty of meat and drinks. Besides the above tax the chief by virtue of being the owner of the land enjoys many other customary privileges and levies from the villagers. They are i) fore leg of the animal killed in the village; ii) \textsuperscript{1} four days labour of the

\textsuperscript{66} P.Hungyo, \textit{Origin and Culture of the Nagas}, (1987), P.69.
villagers during a year; iii) sale levy; iv) death levy; v) levy on the wild honey in the forest; vi) one-tenth of salt collected from the spring and vii) a share of fish caught in the fishing expedition.\textsuperscript{67}

\textbf{II B}

Although the colonial rulers did not bring any fundamental change in the land use and ownership system in the hills, in order to increase the revenue of the state, they imposed an annual tax of Rs. 3/- per house\textsuperscript{68} and this policy struck the root of the traditional economy of the hill tribes. The amount of house tax collected increased from Rs. 34,147/- in 1893-94\textsuperscript{69} to Rs. 55,569/- in 1904-05\textsuperscript{70} and the amount further went up to Rs. 77,015/- in 1918-19.\textsuperscript{71} Since the people found it difficult to pay the tax they always tried to evade the tax collectors by saying that many

\textsuperscript{68} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1891-92, P. 4.
\textsuperscript{69} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1893-94, P. 5.
\textsuperscript{70} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1904-05, P. 25.
\textsuperscript{71} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1918-19, P. 32.
of the houses were either unused or vacant. In order to improve the collection, several strategies were adopted and some of the more important measures were i) prohibition on the setting up of a village with less than 20 houses; ii) threat of withdrawing Gun license; iii) burning down of the villages for not clearing the arrears of house tax; iv) imprisonment of Guan Buras and v) engagement of villagers as coolies in the construction of bridle paths.

It may be interesting to point out that a Kuki village called Bungmul was instructed to increase the number of houses and in case of failure to reach 20 houses by 15.1.23, a warning was issued to them that a Lambu would be sent to burn down the village.⁷² In another instance a Monsang village had only 9 or 10 houses. The village had been paying house tax through a bigger village called Chingsang Tengnoupal but the village was burnt down for not willing to join with the latter. The authorities also forced all the villages with less than 20 houses to pay Rs. 6/- per house instead of Rs. 3/- a house. It was a solitary rule to discourage the formation of a new village.⁷³ This step was

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⁷² Tour Diary of the President of Manipur State Darbar, Dated 15.12.1922.
⁷³ Ibid., dated, 20.1.1924.
taken up in order to reduce inconvenience for the rulers themselves in the collection of house tax.

In some other instances when villagers found it difficult to pay the house tax, the authorities encouraged them to work as coolies so that they could earn and pay house tax. In this regard, the President of Manipur State Darbar wrote that he "... advised them to earn as much money as possible by working as coolies". The steps were so effective that the amount of house tax collected went up from Rs. 61,899 in 1919-20 75 to Rs. 65,095 in 1921-22. 76 In 1938, G.P. Stewart, Political Agent of Manipur reported that Willong village with 132 tax paying houses had a due of house tax amounting to Rs. 587/8/- for the year 1936-37 and 1937-38 and further reported that the President had even contemplated to burn down the village for not clearing the arrears. But after due considerations of the pros and cons in lieu of the arrears, the colonial authorities forced many of the villagers to work as coolies. The recruitment of the

74. Ibid., Dated 12.12.1918.
coolies was done through Goan Buras of the village.\textsuperscript{77} The same policy was applied in the case of Thangjing village also. Although the above village had been regularly paying house tax, two consecutive years, the villagers had failed to pay the tax due to their economic hardship. They even went to Naga Hills to earn money for payments of tax but it was reported that they were not allowed to work there for they were not Naga Hill people. Therefore, the colonial authorities had indented a large number of coolies and their wages were adjusted against the house tax in arrear. Still as they failed to pay the entire amount of tax, their guns which had already been collected during the rebellion of Gaidinliu, were not returned. After a lot of trouble however, the guns were given to the Goan Bura of the village.\textsuperscript{78} Gun was thus used by the authorities as an effective means for realisation of house tax from the village. C.Gimson wrote, "It is easier to realise revenue from a village which has gun, as mere threat of confiscation gradually produces their revenue".\textsuperscript{79} Topfema village with 30 houses also did not pay a house tax for 3½ years for which

\textsuperscript{77} Tour Diary of G.P. Stewart, Dated 5.7.1938.  
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., Dated 7.7.1938.  
\textsuperscript{79} Tour Diary of C.Gimson, Dated 11.11.1937
the Goan Bura was put in prison. But regarding the non payment of house tax Mr. Stewart said, "... they need to be forced to pay either by engaging them a heavy cattle coolie work or by attaching their cattle. If this method failed, their village had to be broken up". Over and above this, the British administrators began to exploit the land and forest resources to serve their own imperial interest without the least consideration for the welfare of the local inhabitants.

Another grave problem that the hill people faced during the colonial rule was the frequent occurrence of the non availability of food grains and this was closely related with the repeated harvest failures, British policy of extracting higher rate of tax and also frequent and forcible extraction of community labour. In fact, scarcity of food crop had become so acute that even a child died of starvation at Tipaimukh village while the mother went to search for Yam. It happened because the colonial authorities had not acted timely to save the life of the

80. Ibid., Dated 8.7.1938.
81. Tour Diary of the Vice-President of Manipur State Darbar, Dated 13th April to 16th May, 1912.
villagers even though in the same year, they had exported as many as 1,08,220 mounds of rice from the state.\textsuperscript{82} Moreover, the colonial rulers demanded labour from them for construction of bridle paths and coolies for transportation of the luggage of the touring officials for which they were not paid properly. Due to all these reasons in one instance the people of Tipaimukh village informed the Government that unless rice was given to them in advance, they would not be able to work on the road. Mr. J.C. Higgins, hearing the complain, paid a visit to the village and distributed 400 mounds of rice to those really in distress.\textsuperscript{83} The villagers also went to Jiri to meet the President of Manipur State Darbar who was halting there, and submitted a petition for supply of more rice but when the President was reluctant to supply the food grains, they straight away went to Cachar and telegraphed to the Chief Commissioner of Assam complaining about the negligence of the authorities in the state. As a response to the demand of the people, the

\textsuperscript{82} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1911-12, pp. 4-8.
\textsuperscript{83} Tour Diary of the Vice-President Manipur State Darbar, Dated, May 1912.
President of the Darbar reported that as many as 1,672 mounds of rice had been given to Ngullion village alone.⁸⁴

The problem of food scarcity was confined not only to Tipaimukh area but it was also the problem of almost all the villages of the hill tribes during the period. This may be substantiated by the fact that in 1919 the people of Akhui, Mongjarong Khunou, Thingou, Kaikao, Taobam and Awangkhul villages also reported to the President of Manipur State Darbar who was on tour that they had been facing serious problems due to scarcity of rice. He was informed that they were living on leaves and roots gathered from the jungle. The pan leaves which they grew on the banks of Irang and Barak rivers had also been completely sold off for buying rice. The colonial authorities, in order to meet the situation, arranged some relief works by engaging the villagers in the construction of a bridle path leading from Cachar to Taobam and Tamenglong village in return for a seer of rice for an able male member and little less to women and

⁸⁴. Tour Diary of the President of Manipur State Darbar, Dated 1st December, 1912 to 5th January, 1913.
children. In 1919, the Government made an arrangement for distribution of rice for villagers from Kongchupkhul to Taobam or Khebuching.  

That was not the end of the story. In 1935 i.e. after about 16 years, the President of Manipur State Darbar paid a visit to Oinamlong and Nungba villages. The villagers reported to him that scarcity of rice had hit them hard and requested the Darbar President for help. C. Gimson asked them to carry rice from Bishnupur where Government would provide them free of cost but the villagers were reluctant to travel for a few kgs of rice because the journey usually took them 4 or 5 days during which also they had nothing to eat.  

Though the Government had exported as many as 2,54,619 mounds of rice, no effort was made to find relief to these starving hill masses. Again in 1937, C. Gimson visited Nungba. Elders from Nungnang, Bolongdai, Khoupum, Nungadeng, Lubanglong Khunou came to meet him. However, though the

85. Tour Diary of the President of Manipur State Darbar, Dated, 1919.
86. Memo No.1929,P.A. of 30.8.35. copy to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, Shillong.
88. Tour Diary of C. Gimson, Dated 20.7.1937.
state had a huge amount of rice i.e. 2,40,625 mounds for export\textsuperscript{89} no rice was supplied to the hills, and therefore the hill tribes continued to suffer from scarcity of food grains. Even those people who had sufficient wet-rice land suffered from scarcity of rice as a result of heavy house tax and export in huge amount to Assam and Naga hills. They, therefore, strongly urged the government to stop the export to Naga hills stating that the Naga hill tribes were wealthier than themselves.\textsuperscript{90}

\textbf{III C}

Despite all these problems one notices certain qualitative change in the agricultural practices of the hill and the valley areas of Manipur during the colonial period. One of the significant changes that had taken place in the hill areas was the increasing popularisation of terrace cultivation, though the system had also been in practice for quite some time in the past. The Maos and the Tangkhuls in particular had already been practising this method of

\textsuperscript{89} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1936-37, P. 12.
\textsuperscript{90} Tour Diary of C. Gimson, Dated 6.1.1939.
cultivation even before the introduction of colonial administration in the state. Mr. James Johnstone had, during his tour in the hills, came across many terrace fields and recorded in his tour diary as early as 1873. 91 In this regard Johnstone writes "... they terrace their hill sides and cultivate the same tract for generations". 92 By the early part of 1900s, however, this method of cultivation had become more popular among the different hill tribes. This may be stated by the fact that the President of Manipur State Darbar when paying a visit to a village called Lalpani, a Kuki Christian village about 2 and a half miles away from the bank of the Barak river in 1918 found the people of the village practising wet rice cultivation. He reported that the village was one of the best model villages he had ever seen in the hills with excellent wet rice cultivation, houses built on clay tiles and with varieties of crops like pineapple, plantains, jack fruit trees etc. 93 He visited Bongbal Khullen, a large Kuki village where the villagers cultivated wet rice fields in

92. Ibid,
93. Tour Diary of the President of Manipur State Darbar, Dated 26.12.1918.
the valley of Thoubal river. The people of this village and its surrounding villages paid Rs. 3/- per pari as land revenue in addition to Rs. 3/- for their house tax.\(^\text{94}\)

Seeing the prospect of this cultivation, some of the colonial rulers particularly as G.Gimson and C.G.Crawford took up necessary steps to extend wet-rice cultivation in the hills. As for instance, C. Gimson, the Political Agent sent two intelligent Nagas who had been to France as Labour corps during the First World War, to the Kuki areas of South-West of Manipur to find and see any prospect for successful terrace cultivation. They accordingly went but reported that terrace cultivation was not practicable due to steepness of the hills and shortage of water.\(^\text{95}\) In 1923-24, Crawford employed some men for a demonstration of wet-rice cultivation in the North-west sub-division to experiment on the kind of seed best suited in the terrace cultivation.\(^\text{96}\) But inspite of such attempts terrace cultivation could not be popularised to the expectation of the colonial

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94. Tour diary of the President of Manipur State Darbar, Dated 28.11.1919.
administrators. One reason why wet-rice cultivation could not be taken up extensively in the hills was the prohibition of export of cattle or buffaloes to the Hills by the colonial government. In 1924, when the President of Manipur State Darbar visited Khoupum valley, the villagers of Lubanglong and Khoupum villages requested for permission to bring up the buffaloes from the valley. On the request of the villagers, the President agreed to give "permission for a limited number to be brought up" and also suggested to the Sub-Divisional officer of North-west of the state to allow them to use the Manipuri cattle. But the people in reality could not obtain the permission till 1925 though the authorities exported as many as 801 cattle to Assam and Naga hills during the year 1924-25. The Lubanglong villagers also requested the colonial authorities for permission to supply Manipur cattle from the valley but nothing was reported about it in the years that followed.

97. Tour Diary of the President of Manipur State Darbar, Dated, 12.2.24.
99. Tour Diary of the President of Manipur State Darbar, Dated 10.10.25.
In 1927-28, the Darbar with a view to encourage terrace agriculture sanctioned a sum of Ra.500/- for the purpose of experimental terrace cultivation in the North-west subdivision. At that time, the Kukis had already started wet-rice cultivation in the Liwapokpi valley in North west area where there was ample field for such cultivation.\textsuperscript{100} Tamphung was another village which practised wet-rice cultivation.\textsuperscript{101} In fact, wet-rice cultivation was becoming quite popular among the hillmen. It may be proved by the fact that even Vihegok village which has only with 10 houses also started wet-rice cultivation in the valley of Tentha and wanted to bring bullocks from the Manipur Valley for ploughing. But due to the ban on the export of cattle no cattle could be supplied.\textsuperscript{102} By 1930s, even in the Khuga valley with wet-rice cultivation had been started by the Kukis. The Vice-President of Manipur State Darbar reported that a large number of Kukis and Lushais had come to the valley for cultivation of more fields. In fact competition for land had already begun among themselves. However,

\textsuperscript{100} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1927-28, P. 11.
\textsuperscript{101} Tour Diary of the President of Manipur State Darbar, Dated 27.4.37.
\textsuperscript{102} Tour Diary of C. Gimson, Dated, 2.8.1937.
C. Gimson reported that there was enough room for expansion of cultivation and even some Manipuris from Moirang had been brought to the Khuga valley.\textsuperscript{103}

In the valley areas also, the colonial masters tried to improve the method of cultivation. In 1910, J. Shakespeare, requested the help of the Director of Agriculture of Eastern Bengal and Assam to give training to some people of the state in this direction. Even two Manipuris were sent for the same purpose\textsuperscript{104} though nothing important was reported thereafter. However, a number of new crops were introduced by the British Officers. Available sources indicated that wheat was first introduced in Manipur in the early 1870s. In 1873, 25 mounds of wheat was produced, and well-to-do inhabitants began to take 'atta'.\textsuperscript{105} It was also sold in the bazar at about Rs. 4/- per mound. The Political Agent reported that though the atta was quite fresh, it was not as good as those brought from Calcutta and Guwahati\textsuperscript{106} and therefore its cultivation was given up. But C.G. Crawford,

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., dated., 30.10.1937.  
\textsuperscript{104} Proceedings of Manipur State Darbar, dtd. 6-7-1910.  
\textsuperscript{105} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1873-74, P. 13.  
\textsuperscript{106} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1902-03, P. 2.
\end{footnotesize}
President of the Darbar, again re-introduced its cultivation along with barley, and oats, on experimental basis in the north east area of Imphal. However, these crops were handicapped by the bad weather experienced in February.\textsuperscript{107} Besides wheat, cultivation of potato was also introduced in the state during the early part of the colonial rule and the products was of good quality.\textsuperscript{108} Initially, it was mostly cultivated in the hills and supply of it came from there.\textsuperscript{109} In 1915-16, Shillong potatoes were also cultivated in an experimental garden at Kangla Tongbi in the northern part of the valley. Arhar dal was also experimented there.\textsuperscript{110} It may be observed that the Colonial rulers were to some extent interested in imparting to the peasants the knowledge of cultivating commercial crops like sugarcane so that it might also become a source of revenue to the state. In fact, the peasants of the state slowly diverted their attention towards cultivation of commercial crops too.

\textsuperscript{107} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1926-27, P. 10.
\textsuperscript{108} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1902-03, P. 2.
\textsuperscript{109} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1913-14, P. 7.
\textsuperscript{110} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1915-16, P. 8.
Fruits such as apple, pear, plum, peach, apricot, Himalayan apricot, cherry current, quince, vine, raspberry, Spanish chestnut, deodores, three kinds of Himalayan pine, etc. were also introduced as early as 1875-76, and these crops were experimented in two gardens one in the valley at a height of 2,573 feet above the sea, and another in the hills at 5,250 feet above the sea with a view to acclimatising them in Manipur.\textsuperscript{111} Besides, crops such as cotton, mulberry, sugarcane, jute, tobacco, etc. were also initiated for large scale cultivation. As far as cultivation of local cotton is concerned, it may be pointed out that it could not become a popular commercial commodity mainly due to large scale import of cotton yarn. As for instance, initially the value of its imports was only Rs.2,148/- in 1893-94 \textsuperscript{112} but it rose to Rs.25,551/- in 1899-1900.\textsuperscript{113} The increasing trend of export continued till the last part of the colonial rule. In the meantime, an attempt was made by the authorities to introduce a new variety of cotton at the

\textsuperscript{111} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1877-78, P. 18.  
\textsuperscript{112} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1893-94, P. 3.  
\textsuperscript{113} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1899-1900, P. 3.
experimental Kangla Tongbi garden in 1915-16. But the venture was left as it was found unprofitable even though the soil was found quite suitable.\textsuperscript{114}

Sugarcane was one of the important crops cultivated for making gur and kabok (sweetened puffed rice). About 3,943 bighas were cultivated with sugarcane in the valley in 1912-13.\textsuperscript{115} Some new varieties were also introduced in later years. J.C. Higgins reported that sugarcane was cultivated at Kangla Tongbi experimental Garden and the result was good and encouraging.\textsuperscript{116} The Britishers encouraged cultivation of jute also but because of the heavy transportation charge from Imphal to Assam large cultivation could not be taken up. In 1906-07, Shakespeare had correspondence with a Calcutta farms, regarding the possibility of the state developing jute and shellac industry. However, as pointed out above transportation of such crop had left a very small margin of profit \textsuperscript{117} and therefore no further step was taken

\textsuperscript{114} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1915-16, P. 8.
\textsuperscript{115} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1912-13, P. 7.
\textsuperscript{116} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1916-17, P. 9.
\textsuperscript{117} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1906-07, P. 6.
up in future in this regard. Tobacco was cultivated both in the valley and in the hills. Assessment of the tobacco cultivation was taken up in 1912-13, and it was found that as many as 2,488 bighas was cultivated in the valley.118 But it could not become a major commercial crop of the state because of imports of cigarettes from other parts of British India which found a ready market in the valley.119 In the hills, tobacco was cultivated largely in jhum fields for domestic use.

Tea or Camellia Sinensis was not planted but grown wildly in the Naga Hills and Manipur.120 As early as 1788, Sir Joseph Banks, Director of the Royal Botanical Garden, suggested to the Director of the East India Company that efforts should be made to cultivate tea in India. After some years, Col. Kyd, Superintendent of the Royal Botanical Garden, Calcutta obtained seed from China and grew the plant in Calcutta. In 1834, Lord William Bentinck appointed a


120. T.C. Hudson, Naga Tribes of Manipur (Niraj Publishing House, Delhi, 1983), P. 56.
Committee to investigate the possibility of establishing a tea industry. But prior to that, Robert Bruce (1821) and Mr. Scott (1824) had discovered the tea plant in Assam, and Capt. Charlton and Jenkins too subsequently rediscovered the wild plant in Assam. In 1854, indigenous tea was discovered in the Cachar district, and in the following year it was again located at Sylhet. European capital was subsequently directed towards the ventures,\textsuperscript{121} but the effort to cultivate tea in Manipur was negligible. Though the Colonial rulers were interested in tea cultivation, the kings of Manipur were not in favour of such project. James Johnstone once asked permission from the Raja to allow him to plant tea in his residential garden, but he was asked not to do so and instead assured him that the amount of tea that he required would be provided free of cost. The King of Manipur behaved in such a manner because he was scared of his country’s possible annexation to the British empire.\textsuperscript{122} Some individual private traders particularly Saroda Charan Das of Lakhipur Bazar requested the Government of Manipur to allow him to open a tea garden in the state but his

\textsuperscript{121} Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol-II, P. 56.
\textsuperscript{122} Lal Dena, \textit{British Policy towards Manipur 1891-1919}, (Imphal 1984), P. 44.
application was rejected by the Manipur State Darbar in 1909. Of course, he was granted monopoly right in the trade of tea seed for one year. Bihari Lal Mukherjee of Jirighat also applied for tea estate in Jiribam but was rejected by the Darbar.\textsuperscript{123} The Sub-Deputy Collector of Tamenglong also planted indigenous tea seed in Tamenglong in 1933, and it was quite successful but as no encouragement from the state government was forthcoming,\textsuperscript{124} tea cultivation could not be carried out in large scale during the period under study.

From the above discussion it can now be deduced that introduction of patta system in land and payment of taxes in cash generated a qualitative change in the agrarian structure of Manipur. While the valley peasants had to relinquish their land or government auction their land because of their inability to pay land revenue, there began a process of alienation of peasants’ land. Conversely, a new group of rich and affluent people had started land speculation due to the increase in the value of land. Commercialisation of rice crop in fact expanded the land

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
market in Manipur. In the hills too, house tax was collected from the villagers and in the event of failure to pay off the same, coercive measures such as withdrawal of gun licence, imprisonment of village chiefs or Khullakpa, breaking up of the villages, recruitment of labours etc. were enforced on the village concerned. Thus, though there was not much of qualitative change in the land use and ownership system in Manipur hills, the traditional isolated and self-sufficient social order of the hill tribes had been eroded.