Chapter 6

Land and Livelihood

6.1 Introduction

Land as a livelihood means land as a productive resource besides signifying 'identity' and 'territoriality'. As a principal means of production in agriculture, it is not reproducible (Banaji, 1976, p. 1). Gunnar Myrdal is of the opinion that the distribution of land, which is tied with leisure, enjoyment of status and authority is constitutes the most important basis for inequality (as cited in Singh, 2009, p. 112). In the pre-British period, the economy of the Thadou-Kukis was characterised by closely related bonds of kinship operative through families, clans and kindred governed production and distribution. Family was the unit of production without any division of labour except the one based on age and sex. Technology was at a very rudimentary level and production was mainly for consumption.

Colonialism brings with it land reforms, immigration and out-migration, superior agricultural technology, commodity production, and increase in markets in all the spaces that it trod upon. For Alavi, colonialism was capable of transforming the meaning of a social relationship without changing its form. Feudal relationships were changed when encapsulated within the capitalist world and they in the process became part of a system of expanded reproduction (as cited in Cleaver, 1976, p. A-8). Similarly, the politico-legal-economic measures of both colonialism and the modern state have altered the micro-level institutions leading to agrarian transition in the hills of Manipur. Today, there is both the co-existence of both pre-capitalist and capitalist social relations of production. Like most countries of the world, the Indian economists in its policy on agriculture have an orientation towards the following goals:--

(1) to overcome the misery, squalor and illiteracy of the peasantry by transforming traditional rural society (2) to influence the peasants to modernize
their agriculture technique and (3) to carry out this transformation and modernization in a manner that facilitate the development of the entire national economy (Thorner, 1987, p. xi). As early as the 1950s, McKim Marriot argued that India’s villages were not little republics (Marriot, 1955). The Indian village is changing, and the degree and nature of change varies from region to region.

Robert Redfield classifies those people who make a living and have a way of life through cultivation of the land as peasants. They are those groups of people for whom agriculture is a livelihood and a way of life and not a business for profit (Redfield, 1969, pp. 27-28). On the other hand, the type of agriculturists, who carry on agriculture for reinvestment and business, who looked on the land as capital and commodity, are not peasants but farmers (ibid). A peasant is, “a man who is in effective control of a piece of land to which he has long been attached by ties of tradition and sentiment (ibid).” Alexander Chayanov’s definition of pure family farm, which employs no hired wage labour, but is solely dependent on the work of the members of family is relevant to define the society in its pre-colonial state. This concept is however inadequate to define the postcolonial peasantry (as cited in Thorner et. al, 1987, p. xiii).

The chapter will study the decreasing dependence on land as a livelihood system for the people and the nature of penetration of capitalist relations into agriculture. The indicators of the capitalist character of modern agriculture according to Kautsky are—(1) the individual ownership of land and (2) the commodity character of its products (Banaji, 1976, p.11). Inability of the village landholdings structure to provide occupation has forced the youth to look for alternative means of livelihood. Therefore, the paper will position the tribal land tenure system in the context of India; study the agriculture practice, the concept and nature of labour, social differentiation of farming, occupational diversification, etc.
6. 2 Land Tenure Systems

By 'land tenure', the paper is concerned with the complex relationships that exist between categories of individuals and groups in reference to land and their respective products. The study of land tenure includes questions like the manner in which land is used by the community and its members (Malinowski, 1966, p. 318). This showed the customary or legal system of titles, which are “the rights, privileges and responsibilities attached to the soil” (ibid). However, this system grows out of the uses to which the soil is put, out of the economic values, which surrounds it. Therefore, land tenure is an economic fact as well as a legal system (ibid). Land is a factor of production in economic processes, comparable to labour and capital. The Indian society is characterised by different modes of productive organisation that in-turn gives raise to differing rights, duties and obligations, and leading to particular patterns of property rights (Singh, in Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 112-136). No doubt, the economic utilisation of land forms the solid core of all privileges and claims. In understanding the land and livelihood relationship amongst the hill tribes of Manipur, it is crucial to understand its differences with the land system under the caste system that dominates the Indian mainland.

6. 2. 1 Rights in the Soil under the Caste System

The land system or land tenure and settlement pattern in most Indian villages are influenced by the rules of hierarchy and the distribution of rights and privileges as governed by the Caste system. Prior to the British, the village headmen acted as the collector of revenue in the form of kind and passed on the same to the state. The village used to be an independent social and economic unit. There was equilibrium between the village agriculture and the share in agricultural produce. Contrary to the pre-British period, the village economic self-sufficiency was dissolved and economy became increasingly an integral part of the national and even world economy. The British government created private property in land in the form of Ryotwari and Zamindari systems. The Zamindari system made the landlords master of the village community, while the Ryotwari system cut
through the heart of the village communities by making separate arrangement between each peasant cultivator and the state. The new land system thus made mobile both the land and the peasant, and left the way open for growth in power of the moneylender and absentee Landlords (as cited in Mandavdhare, 1993 (ed.), p. 78).

In discussing about village institution, management of village affairs and local governance, Baden-Powell in his book, “The Origin and Growth of Village Communities in India” describes two great classes of villages. In one type of class, a hereditary headman (called patel and by other names) is an essential part of the constitution, constituting the core of the village authority system (Baden-Powell, 1908, p. 10). In former days, the villages relied greatly on the protection given by this official. The respect that is influenced by his ‘moral influence’ and ‘material power’ helped him in maintaining the balance of power (ibid, p. 11). In the second form of village, the land-owning body is composed of a dominant class, holding the whole jointly or in shares. “Village affairs are, or formerly were, controlled by a council of elders or heads of the co-sharing householders: all being equal in rank—and not official chiefs (ibid, p. 12).” A Panchayat or committee of elders for settling disputes is assembled in every village. This was the universal mode of settling caste, social and land cases, and especially boundary disputes (ibid (footnotes), p. 13).

Regarding rights in soil, Baden-Powell (1908, p. 19) summarises the salient features of difference between two kinds of village in a short table:--

I. Severalty (or Raiyatwari) Village / Hereditary headman

- Influential headmen (often still possessing certain privileges) is part of the natural constitution

- Holdings entirely separate, and not shares of a unit estate

- No joint liability for revenue: each holding separately assessed on its merits

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• No jointly owned area of waste or "common" land belongs to the village, or is available for partition

II. Joint Village

• No headman originally, but a Panchayat as in modern times an official headman, appointed to represent the community

• The holdings (sometimes joint) are shares of a unit estate

• Liability (joint and several) always, for the revenue assessed in a lump sum

• The village site, and usually an area of waste, owned in common, and is available for partition

However, the relationship between caste and land is also undergoing changes. Gail Omvedt in her edited work, "Land, Caste and Politics in Indian States," writes on the relationship between Indian feudalism and the caste system through the ages. By the time of the British conquest, the Indian feudalism was dominant and they controlled the most important means of production, the land (Omvedt, 1982, p. 15). The ruling states like the Mughals and the Hindus periodically laid claim to ownership of the land but were unable to enforce this, whereas the main producing classes of the peasants, artisans and labourers had certain types of 'rights to the land' and to 'the means of production' (ibid). "They were primarily subordinate tenants dependent on the village feudal for access to the land and the performance of their functions (ibid).” Nevertheless, the nature of these feudal classes and the very structuring of the relations of production they dominated were defined in terms of the caste system (ibid).

Jean Dreze in the essay, "Palanpur, 1957-93: Occupational Change, Landownership and Social Inequality" uses information on a village in Western Uttar Pradesh obtained from five intensive surveys conducted at different points of time to detail the socio-economic changes especially in terms of occupational change, landownership and social inequality. He points out that the occupational
structure has undergone change. Earlier, there was a close link between occupation and caste. There was a contrast in occupation according to the difference in caste. This he says is because of wage employment and decline in traditional occupation. Closeness of the village to a well-developed non-agricultural sector seems to have accelerated this process (Lal, et.al, 2001).

6.2.2 Communal System of Management and Control of Land in Manipur

The State of Manipur has two distinct physiographic divisions in which two different land systems and productive organization of economic activities existed. There is the valley region which is located in the middle of the state. This constitutes about ten percent of the state and is the habitat of the majority ethnic group known as ‘the Meiteis’ who are mostly Hindus by religion (Singh, in Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 113). The valley region has a rich tradition of wet rice cultivation had an agrarian economy that seldom experience food security problems (ibid, p. 114). Land as a means of production and livelihood is much more vital in the hill economy than in the valley region, that is, the hill population in Manipur was more dependent on land as a basis for sustenance (ibid, p. 115). “Land and land systems are therefore sought to be sacrosanct and inalienable, in fact traditional land rights and tenure systems are construed to be the very basis of tribal village polity and identities (ibid).”

In order to substantiate on the agricultural structure of the Hills of Manipur, we will take the case of three areas of Manipur that are dominated by the Thadou-Kuki group of people. The three areas—Motbung,1 Tujang Vaichong2 and

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1 Motbung village is located on the National Highway 39 in Manipur, which is about 26 kilometres from Imphal, the capital. Chieftainship system is still functional and the village council consists of 14 members, who are loosely elected by the community from the village itself. Women are not presented on this traditional council. As per 2001 census, the village has about 478 household, but as per the chief census of 2008, the household population is 609. The village is divided into ten small neighbourhoods. In order to get a proper representation of the population, 20 houses are selected out of each lane.

2 Tujang Vaichong is a village with a household population of 156 as per the government census of 2001. The number of household as per the chief’s record in 2008 is 194 out of which 78 are non-Kuki. A household survey was done in 65 houses. It still follows many of the traditional customary laws and practices. The chief still has a legitimate rule over the people.
Kangpokpi\textsuperscript{3} come under the Sadar Hills West Sub-division of Senapati District of Manipur. Since the three villages that constitute my field are under three different types of authority system, the land system also differs. The first two villages are typical traditional Thadou-Kuki villages which are under chieftainship. The members of the village council assist the chief. Kangpokpi is not under chieftainship system but exist under the autonomy of a town committee called the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee. In studying agrarian relation, I prefer the term, 'farmer' instead of the term, 'peasant'. A farmer here refers to a person who operates a farm or an agricultural field either directly or indirectly.

\textsuperscript{3} Kangpokpi represents altogether a different entity. It is not under chieftainship system but under the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee. It is under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration. The number of house as per the 2008 census is 1662. The town is divided into fifteen wards. A household survey is conducted in 40 houses of each of the 15 wards/ locality.
Table I

Demographic Profile of the Field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Village</th>
<th>Location of the area of study</th>
<th>Census of 2001 (No. of Household)</th>
<th>Census of 2001 (No. of Population)</th>
<th>Local Records (No. of Household) 2008</th>
<th>Local Records (No. of Population) 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tujang Vaichong</td>
<td>Sadar Hills Sub-Div of Senapati Dist.</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>194⁵</td>
<td>1015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTBUNG</td>
<td>Saitu-Gamphazol Sub-Div of Senapati Dist.</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>3169</td>
<td>528⁶</td>
<td>3591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangpokpi</td>
<td>Sadar Hills Sub-Div of Senapati Dist.</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>4584</td>
<td>1662⁷</td>
<td>9092</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the household survey conducted, if the respondents are found to be in possession of agricultural fields or work on others' field, then they are given another questionnaire meant for those who are farmers⁸ or involved in agricultural related activities. A survey of the farmers and those involved in agriculture related activities in Tujang Vaichong village reveals that nearly the

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⁵ Chief of Tujang Waichong Record, 2008

⁶ Motbung Village Hill House Counting, Population Census 2008

⁷ The Ward wise hill house counting for the year 2008 by SDC Kangpokpi, Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration, Kangpokpi
whole population, except a minimalist percentage are involved in agriculture. The survey result will be utilised to understand the mode of production and the nature of agrarian transition taking place at the micro level in the hills.

a) The Mode of Production or Agriculture

In traditional Thadou-Kuki society, Jhumming or shifting cultivation was practiced where the site for cultivation was never permanent. An interesting feature of their cultivation was the ritual of appeasement performed before the selection of the field. This was done as a mark of respect and acknowledgement of the spirits of the jungle as the prior owners of the forest. The Chief of the village and the village priest takes centre-stage in the project. During the month of March, the Hausa fixes a date for clearing the jungle in the Jhum fields by setting the jungle on fire. The date is fixed by the Hausa in consultation with his executive body known as the Semang Pachong. Helthang Kilong⁹ says that each villager chooses a site of his or her preference.

The Daiphu ritual is done in the agricultural fields to invoke blessings in terms of health and wealth. This is because throughout the whole year, life for the people would evolve around the field. They work as labourers tending to the field and spending the major part of the day on it. Therefore, it is crucial for them to perform 'daiphu' to protect themselves from various ailments, diseases or misfortunes and to procure good health and wealth mainly in the form of abundant harvest. Unless and until this ritual is performed, nobody is allowed to start working. The following day is observed as a rest day, which is called Dainit. On this day, no one works in the field. Most of the people remain within their homes.

Ploughing and sowing, which begin immediately after the inaugural ceremony will go on during March and April. When all traces of life persisting in the fields have been removed, the land is ready for ploughing, that is, after the unnecessary

⁹ One of my respondents of the aged group from Motbung Village in Sadar Hills district of Manipur.
weeds or plants are removed from the field (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 104). On first day, the wife of the Chief inaugurates the sowing of seeds by sowing various types of seeds in a small plot of land belonging to the Chief. Others, however, do not sow their seeds on this day. Besides paddy, various kinds of vegetables are sown on the jhum fields. The inauguration of sowing by the Hausa’s (Chief) wife is called Muchilahahi. The next day, all the other villagers start working in their respective fields. If a natural water-spring happens to exist in a particular plot of land, the owner of that plot of land is required to perform the twikhuh thoina ritual in addition to the daiplu on the same day. It is a ritual of requesting the spirits of waters to remain under ground and not come out on the surface.

The period after ploughing and sowing is followed by a short period of slackening. “In this time of waiting, when the fate of the seedlings depends on a female, ambiguous nature, and man cannot intervene without danger, the virtual cessation of activity reflects his limited control over the processes of germination and gestation; it falls to woman to play the part of a midwife and to offer nature a sort of ritual and technical assistance (hoeing, for example) in its labour (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 131).”

The traditional Kuki society was dominantly an agricultural society. Gautam Bhadra writes, “One of the chief characteristics of the new Kukis, more especially of the Thadoes (Thadous) was the essential habit of migration due to their mode of cultivation and due to organisation of chieftainship” (Bhadra, 1975, p. 25). Their migratory habit in the past was connected with the mode of production, which was Jhum cultivation. It was an ingenious method to raise the superior quality of produce. When the land is considered exhausted, jungle is allowed to recover it, the bamboo again springs up in its old locality, and in the course of between seven and ten years, the soil is once more fit to be brought under cultivation (Stewart, 1855, p. 604). Stewart writes about the superior quality of the rice

\[10\] Sowing of seeds

\[11\] As describe in Chapter 2

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produced by the Kukis as compared to the Kacharis and the Nagas. He attributed this to their technique of abandoning the site of cultivation after the first and second crops (ibid). Therefore, permanent cultivation must have started only around after the 19th century.

In theory, the entire land of the village belongs to the Chief, yet it is the village community members that share the land among themselves and do the actual cultivation. The general condition, which has prevailed among the Kukis from the earliest times, is that the land within the Chiefdom is distributed to the villagers for cultivation. A member of the village authority with the approval of the Chief superintend and transact all business matters in connection with the land cultivation, measurement, collection of tax, etc. There are also some restrictions regarding forest laws. The practice of seizure and sale of land for private debt was new to the native imagination (Chatterjee et al, 1989, p. 1171). It was unanimously agreed that ownership rights depended upon two factors: -- (1)" who first cleared the land and made it productive and (2) who conquered the area first (ibid)".

The chief opens some areas every year to the villagers for 'jhumming' or 'thinglhang lei' and for cutting woods in the mountains. The villagers have to seek the chief’s permission to lease out the land to them. They have to bring with them a rooster as a token or this is also done through the traditional 'cha-omna' (where tea is served to the chief before a request is put forward). The land is reverted back to the chief in the case when the occupant migrates to another village. The permission of the chief is essential for procuring land for cultivation, taking woods from the forests, cultivating in the mountain region. In Tujang Vaichong village, the permission granted is valid for a year and have to be renewed every year. For cutting of woods, the chief opens the forest for the public for about 2-3 months (mainly in the month of December, January and February). During that period, the villagers have to collect enough woods to last for their consumption throughout the year. In exceptional cases, a new settler can get access to the woods to build his house. However, the restriction is against using these woods for commercial purposes.
Plot sizes are not at the discretion of the villagers as the chief whose duty as the overseer has to see it to that everyone gets it equally. However, the chief and his ministers take into consideration the number of family members and their ability to obtain additional labour. "Newcomers to a village are at a disadvantage because the most desirable fields have already been taken. The relatives of the individual who had done the original clearing (forest) also inherit fields (Little, 1991, p. 378)." In the case of Tujang Vaichong, the permission to make small vegetable garden in the vacant mountainside requires the permission of the village chief. Special provisions is made for those refugees who had come to reside in the village due to the 1993 Kuki-Naga clashes because they are not in possession of paddy field for wet rice cultivation. The granted permission is valid for a year and has to be renewed every year. Due to continuing growth and pressure from the population, the chief does not always grant the site for cultivation to the same family every year. The gap may range from one year to five years. The name of the new locality is called "Lhanghoi Veng". This type of locality is prevalent in other Kuki villages also. In Motbung village, the locality marked out by the chief for displaced victims of ethnic conflict is called "Lhungjang Veng". This is an example of how in a village, members come together as a community to act as a redressal mechanism to social disorder.

In relation to land, there are three types of people to be found in villages. They are:--

1. Landlord/ Chief
2. Landless labourers
3. Those who cultivate their own land
4. Those who lease out their land
5. Absentee landowners

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12 Overseer of the whole land of the village
13 A question asked on the respondent relationship to the land on which he resides, owns or cultivates.
The two villages of Motbung and Tujang Vaichong do not have a commercial form of agriculture. Moreover, in a village, which is under the chieftainship system, villagers are allotted land according to the number of mouth to feed in the family. This lessens the scope for any enterprises of this sort to happen. The Motbung village has stricter rules against outsiders. In Tujang Vaichong, the Nepali migrants are actively involved in agricultural production of the village. In return for their labour, they usually procure about half of the rice production of the village annually.

Kangpokpi is interesting because it represents a different case altogether. Because of the presence of better amenities and infrastructures like schools, colleges, bigger market and offices, the town is over populated. There are many who have migrated from nearby villages. So, this compresses the land in such a way that there is little or no space for agricultural field. Most of my respondents in Kangpokpi who possess agricultural field/land own it in neighbouring villages, in their native villages or in a mountain named T.Khullien Moul. According to the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee Chairman Haokholien Guite, “Jhumming is mostly done on T.Khullien Moul,” a mountain owned by neighbouring Naga village. They lease out the land to the people of Kangpokpi who have to pay taxes according to the size of the land allotted to them. The prices ranging from Rupees 200 to above based on the area size of the land. The tax paid is called ‘gam-pan’ or ‘lam-pan’, which means land tax. Wet-Rice cultivation/phailei is very scarce. They are mostly done in neighbouring villages like Lungpho gam, Kaithelmanbi or the villages in Imphal-Tamenglong road like Tujang Vaichong, Gelnel, Bungmoul etc.

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14 Guite, Haokholien, Chairman of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Interviewed on 26th November, 2008

15 Imphal-Tamenglong Road is popularly known as ‘IT road’ by the local inhabitants of Kangpokpi and Tujang Vaichong village. IT road is a road in Kangpokpi town in Senapati district that leads to Tamenglong district. Tujang Vaichong is a village in the border of the two districts.
The types of farming practice in Motbung are jhumming and wet-rice cultivation, the local term being 'thinglhang lei' and 'phailei' respectively. A third type called 'joulei' exists in which they plant maize, arum, capsicum, cucumber, pumpkin etc. Rice is the staple food. Harvesting is earlier in the case of jhumming as compared to wet-rice cultivation. The land revenue paid to the chief is called 'Changseu' or an annual payment of a basket full of rice at the time of harvesting. They also have to pay rupees 15 annually to the government. Livestock in the homestead land, jhumming in the forest and wet-rice cultivation is done in the plain areas. The agricultural cycle or cropping pattern is different for wet-rice cultivation or phailei and jhumming or thinglhang lei. In the case of phailei, planting is done in June and harvesting between October to November. Jhumming is started in March and harvesting is done around the month of July. In this village, jhumming is done mainly for vegetable garden.\(^{17}\)

The open reserve area that is open by the chief is open mainly for any villager who wants to use it for vegetable cultivation. However, prior permission of the village chief is required. Scientific technology is not so popular, but tractors, fertilizers, herbicides, weed killers and pesticides are used in cautious quantity. Agricultural tools like axe and hoe are still popular. In the family land transmission, the eldest son is the potential or likely inheritor. The co-relation between changes from joint or extended families to nuclear and single unit families today to the changes in the structure of land and land rights is that there are smaller land holding but the eldest son usually inherit the biggest land.\(^{18}\)

In the case of Tujang Vaichong, the permission to make small vegetable garden in the vacant mountainside requires the permission of the village chief. Special provisions is made for those refugees who had come to reside in the village due to

\(^{17}\) Questions are asked on - types of farming, agricultural calendar, and land revenue paid to the chief and the Government and the types of vegetables grown.

\(^{18}\) Questions are asked on technology and agricultural implements used for farming, potential heir in family land transmission and co-relation between types of family and the structure of land.
the 1993 Kuki-Naga clashes as they do not possess paddy field for wet-rice cultivation. The permission granted is valid for a year and has to be renewed every year. Due to continuing growth and pressure from the population, the chief does not always grant the site for cultivation to the same family every year. The gap may range from one year to five years. Rice is the most distinctive crop grown by the Kukis and is cultivated intensively but largely on subsistence level. The types of vegetables grown are arum, beans, potatoes, ginger, maize, cucumber, etc.19

In the case of Tujang Vaichong, we have a new definition of the term ‘landless labourers’. The landless villagers in this context are refugees from the 1993 ethnic clashes, who had seek refuge in the village. Unlike other areas, they still have land for cultivation in the mountainside, which is allotted by the chief. They fend for an alternate means of livelihood if they find the produce inadequate for subsistence. The real question or challenge lies in acquiring the essentials of living in a competitive global society like education, transport, communication system and infrastructure for society’s development.20

There are two types of paddy cultivation. One is performed in the plains and is called ‘phailei’ or ‘wet-rice cultivation.’ The second type is called ‘thinglhang lei’ or jhumming. A third type also exist which is called ‘joulei’ and is meant for vegetable gardens. The chief with the assistance of village authority members would lease out one mountain for the use of the villagers. Fair allocation of land to all villagers who had sought permission for it is the duty of the village authority members. The villagers give the chief one basketful of the produce as a token of appreciation and not necessarily as a tribute. This is also like an appeasement policy or a means of securing land again for the next year.

19 Questionnaire on the farmers in Tujang Vaichong

20 ibid

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Under the chieftainship system, since the chief supposedly owns all lands, who owns it on behalf of the villagers, those who work on the allotted land are considered the landowner. Landowner refers to those who have the rights over the produce of their land. Some work on their own land as well as those of others as farm hands and agricultural labourers or take over other’s land on contract basis. The villagers pay an annual tax of rupees fifteen. However, the customary practice of paying tributes to the chief called ‘changseu’ or a basketful of rice has been stopped.

Most houses in Tujang Vaichong have piggery or poultry besides kitchen garden. The chief’s family has horticulture farms. Regarding the agricultural calendar or cropping pattern, slash and burn of Jhumming sites is done in January, sowing is done between March to April, weeding is done between May to June and harvesting is done in October. Under phailei or wet-rice cultivation, tilling the land is done in May, sowing of seeds in June, weeding in July and August and harvesting in November.21

b) Agrarian Structure and their Transformation

In the past, agricultural production was dominated by customs and traditions. Changes taking place today is due to the interplay of various factors such as response to technological change result of cultural contact, policy decisions in respect of forest and agricultural lands and new ideology. The expression ‘commercialization of agriculture’ is used to describe two related processes: “first, a shift in the agrarian economy from production for consumption to production for the market; and second, a process where land starts acquiring the features of a commodity and begins to be sold and purchased in the market, like other commodities” (Jodhka, in Veena Das (ed.), 2003, p. 1220).

21 Based on the questionnaires given to respondents in Tujang Vaichong who are farmers or involved in agriculture related activities
As the Ryotwari System of land, tenure was introduced in Manipur, private property in land and taxation in money started the process of monetization and marketization of the economy and commercialisation of agriculture (Singh, (in Singh ed.), 2009, p. 119). Area under rice increased from 26,500 hectares in 1891 to 75,370 hectares in 1941 due to the impact of private property on the land system (ibid, pp. 119-120). The Colonial Rule ushers in the practice of the collection of house tax causing the intrusion into village polity of modern state institutional norms the concepts like private property and accumulative consciousness. These factors change the very moral foundations of the tribal land systems (ibid, p. 116).

R. Brown writes in 1873 in the book, “Statistical Account of the Native State of Manipur, and Hill Territory under its Rule” that trading and bartering had already begun between the hill people and the valley people. He records, “A good deal of the cotton raised, which seems of excellent quality, finds its way into the bazaars of Manipur, there being no cotton grown in the valley. The hill men lying nearest to Kachar also convey cotton to the bazaars of Lakhipur, &c., oil seeds, pepper, vegetables of various kinds, potatoes, small, and of inferior quality, ginger, Indian corn, tobacco, pan leaves, &C. There are numbers of jungle roots and plants used also as food by the hill-men. The yam is plentiful” (Brown, 2001, p.18). He writes that the hill-men are not dependent on trade and manufactures for the sustenance of the people, and this custom is confined in Manipur almost entirely to the bartering of raw cotton and a few other articles in the bazaars. Salt is chiefly taken in return, that is, it is used in as a mode of transaction before the hill men were introduced to the currency system. The hill men were the main supplier of firewood required for the inhabitants of the valley (Brown, 2001, p. 19). Therefore, the economy of the valley areas has been dependent on the hill areas even during and prior to the colonial days.
**Table II**

*Details of Household Survey Conducted*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Village</th>
<th>Household Population</th>
<th>No. of respondent for Household survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tujang Vaichong</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motbung</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangpokpi</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>560</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tujang Vaichong Village**

Tujang Vaichong under Imphal-Tamenglong Road is under Kangpokpi Police Station. It is around 40 kilometres away from Kangpokpi, and Kangpokpi is around 50 kilometres north of Imphal. The National Highway 39 runs through Kangpokpi. It is in the borderline between Senapati and Tamenglong districts. There are many villages between Kangpokpi and Tujang Vaichong village. The roads are extremely bad and transportation is very unreliable and uncomfortable. There is no electricity supply in the village and people use solar lamps to light up their houses at night. There is one movie/video hall in the whole village. It runs with the help of a generator, which is recharged in the nearest town.

There is only one church, the Kuki Baptist Convention in the whole village. With the exception of a few households, the whole village is more or less involved in agricultural production in one way or the other. There are about 78 non-Kuki houses in the village as per the 2008 census. The significance of this village is that they still use traditional method of farming. They do not use fertilizers or tractors and till the land with cows, oxens, axe, hoe and spade. Those who do not lease out their land also rent the cows and oxens of the Nepalis for tilling their land. Of the 65 houses that are surveyed, only five houses have nothing to do with agriculture. The entire respondents have lived in the village for more than 10 years.

Next, the occupational diversification in the village is studied. The aim would be to find out whether the occupational profile of the household survey exhibits livelihood diversifications and movement away from agriculture. The total
illiteracy rate as per the 2001 census is 618 out of 810 population. There is only one school in the entire village by the name L.K. Junior High School.

There are two types of proprietors in the village; those who procure permanent ownership rights to their land through the chiefs and those who are temporarily allotted a site for Jhum lands or kitchen gardens in the mountainside. The former are given paper deeds, which is not the same as patta but comes with the same validity. The latter is valid only for an obscure period depending on the whims of the village chief and the council of ministers. In the allotment of jhum land, the landless labourers are given priority over the others. From our field findings, the chief allot most of the land in the village. Out of the 20 landlords (land owners) involved in wet-land cultivation, 14 lease out their land to the Nepalis. Even those who cultivate their own land rents cows and oxens from them for tilling the land.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Government Jobs</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Private Jobs (including NGOS, private teachers, carpenters and Business)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Primarily agricultural labourers or cultivators</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Landowners (permanent owners)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Landowners (Temporary owners/Jhum land allotted by chief for specific years)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Both primary and tertiary sector jobs</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Others (Landless Labourers)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the 65 household that are surveyed, the details of the family members show that there are 27 graduates, 3 Masters, 22 higher secondary passed and 24 who got through their matriculation. There is a large-scale migration to
neighbouring village or out of state in search of better education and jobs; in short to better one’s livelihood prospect. Use of technology or pesticides is nil in the village. The business in the village is limited to basic essentials like groceries, pharmacy and stationary shop. As far as commercialization is concerned, the villagers carry surplus rice and vegetables to Kangpokpi Urban town where intermediaries who sell it to the vendor in the town purchase them. Due to the absence of adequate marketing facilities, the villagers do not get adequate price for the commodities they sell. Most of the houses claim that they were granted their land by the chief, except for five houses who claim to have bought their lands and had paper deeds. Some homestead lands were also carved out of the process of inheritance and participation of the land gifted by the chief. None of the house visited were in a rented house. Commodification of land has started but the percentage is negligible.

**Motbung Village**

Motbung village is located on the National Highway 39 in Manipur, which is about 26 kilometres from Imphal, the capital. The name Motbung is derived from the abbreviation, “Mol ong tuo bu um na gam” which means a land that lies between two hills and is prosperous in food grains. Chieftainship system is still functional to this day. A body of elected village authority members consisting of 13 members assist the Chief. Motbung is a relatively developed village with all the amenities of modernity due to the close proximity with the National Highway 39. There are many churches in the village, but the main church with the largest number is the Motbung Baptist Church.

The village has ten lanes. Technology used for farming and agricultural implements like axe and hoe, tractors have been used since 2001. Fertilizers, herbicides and weed killers and pesticides are used. Even households that cannot afford tractors rent it during the tilling session. Though the dependency

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22 Kaikhosei, S.L., Chief of Motbung Village, Interviewed on 13th October 2008

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on agriculture is lesser than the first village, agriculture is highly popular in this village in a more developed form. Of the 200 houses that are surveyed, only about half are fully involved in agriculture. About 90 percent of the respondents have lived in the village for more than 10 years. The details of family members within the household show the following occupational diversification.

Table IV

Occupational Structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Government Jobs</td>
<td>71 (4 retd.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Private Jobs (including NGOS, private teachers, carpenters and Business)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Primarily agricultural labourers or cultivators</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Landowners (permanent owners)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Landowners (Temporary owners/Jhum land allotted by chief for specific years)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Both primary and tertiary sector jobs</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Others (Landless Labourers)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total literacy rate in Motbung as per the 2001 census is 2043 out of 3169; with 1122 male and 921 female.23 As per the household survey in which 200 households were covered out of 609, there are 8 post graduates, 68 graduates, 70 twelfth passed, 117 tenth passed respectively. Though not every household are involved in agriculture, only 20 of the occupants of the houses surveyed are tenants in rented houses.

Regarding commercialisation of agriculture, there is a 'Monday market' in the village in which there is trade exchange with neighbouring villages. There are

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shops of different kinds along the National highway 39 that nearly cuts the village in the middle. Moreover, the village is close to the state capital Imphal. This enables easy transportation and trade to a bigger market. Regarding the types of transfer of landholdings in the village, as against the customary ideals in which all lands belong to the chief who in turn give it to his subject, the chief of Motbung owns only 9 pari.\textsuperscript{24} However, this does not mean that the villagers are no longer subject to his legal rights of authority as the Chief of the village.

Table V

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land Sales and Purchase</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Process of inheritance and partition</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allotted by the Chief or Gift-deed</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Kangpokpi Urban Town}

Kangpokpi is around 50 kilometres North of Imphal. The National Highway 39 also runs through this town. It is not under chieftainship system but under the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee.\textsuperscript{25} The name Kangpokpi is modification of its earlier name 'Kanggui'. The authority system that exists earlier was called 'Bazar Board'. It is under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration. The District Council conducts its general election. The town is divided into fifteen wards. The appropriate term is hill-urban, which is purely under district council.

\textsuperscript{24} A pari is equivalent to a hectare.

\textsuperscript{25} The meeting of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee is done at least once every month. Besides the compulsory meeting, there is the emergency meeting that is conducted according to the requirement of the circumstances. The biggest assembly is held at the end of the year. The members do not have a salary. However, an honorary pay of rupees 1,000 is paid to the Chairperson, Vice-chairperson and Secretary. The others are paid rupees 500. Moreover, a sitting allowance of Rs. 100 is paid to all authority members on every meeting.
The apex governing body is the district council. In administration matters, the local customary laws are applied side by side with general administration system of the Indian government.26

Due to the presence of better amenities and infrastructures like schools, colleges, bigger market and offices, Kangpokpi as a town is slightly over populated. There are many who have migrated from nearby villages. This compresses the land and reduces the spaces for agricultural fields within the town.

Table VI
Occupational Structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Government Jobs</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Private Jobs (including NGOS, private teachers, carpenters and Business)</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Primarily agricultural labourers or cultivators</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Landowners (permanent owners)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Landowners (Temporary owners/jhum land in the neighbouring T.Khullien Mountain)</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Both primary and tertiary sector jobs</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Others (Landless Labourers)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the 2001 census, the literacy rate was 3,196 out of 4,584 with the male-female ratio at 1,750: 1,446. Since there are many migrants or seasonal settlers from the neighbouring villages, Kangpokpi has many of its occupants living in rented houses. Better educational facilities in the town result in higher rate of education. There is, therefore, a shift towards the tertiary sector in terms of

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26 Guite, Haokholien, Chairman of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Interviewed on 26th November, 2008
occupational choice. As per the household survey conducted in 560 households, there are 1 PhD, 4 MPhil, 21 M.A./MSc, 1 MBBS, 271 graduates, 208 twelfth passed and 197 matriculates. Besides the landowners in wet-rice cultivation and jhum land, 287 of the respondents reside in their own houses procured by purchase, 75 of them live in rented house, 27 in government quarters and the rest in relatives houses. Of the fifteen neighbourhoods in the villages, 38 houses each from a neighbourhood are surveyed as sample of the whole population.

Gupta pictures the rural villages in India as one in which the villagers are desperately seeking a way out of the contemporary agrarian situation (Gupta, 2005, p. 751). “The village landholding structure is such that there are few jobs available in the fields that can engage the rural population on a sustained, albeit, suboptimal, basis (ibid).” Besides fostering greater fluidity in occupational choices, agricultural stagnation has ensured the constant march, in increasing numbers, of employable people in the villages towards urban areas (ibid). The close proximity to national highway 39 is an important indicator to development and an important cause of differentiation of the three villages. Nearness to the highway means better roads connecting villages to town, more motorised vehicles, and better infrastructures like communication systems, electrification, and educational institutions, health and market sector. Better means of transport means greater dependence on the market (Banaji, 1976, p. 9). According to Oomen, the advent of transport and communication and the spread of science and technology have ushered in urban characteristics into rural areas (Oomen, 1984, p. 19), and thus lead to social change. He continues to argue that it is change in the centre and not the periphery that will alter the essential structure of the society (ibid).

6.3 Social Organisation of Labour

Labour, in a broad sociological sense, refers to human efforts in the production of some form of goods or services for the satisfaction of needs of people in society (Sheth, in Veena Das ed., 2003, p. 1243). Labour in its useful form is a condition of
human existence as it serves a specific material purpose which is to sustain life. Labour in its useful form is, therefore, independent of society and is thus a simple condition of human life (Morrison, 1995, p. 66). According to Karl Marx, the products produced by labour in tribal society did not assume the form of commodities because their labour was produced by cooperation rather than isolated acts of labour (ibid). It is only in capitalist societies that the products of labour assumes the form of commodities and thus becomes the subject to be exchange (ibid, pp. 66-67).

The economic system and the social system in a tribal area are interdependent. The former is really an extension of the latter (Devi, 2006, p. 91). “The community heavily depends on the forces of nature, which it propitiates by a variety of rites performed individually or in groups or by the community as a whole. Labour has only two functions namely, production for own consumption or for helping someone else in need. The property rights may not be recognized beyond the right to cultivate land and right to collect the fruit (ibid).” “Godelier identified land use in the hills as patterned after ‘kinship relations’ within the community in terms of its exchange and actual utility (as cited in Biswas, Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 50).” In this case, land becomes not just a material resource, but also constitutes a symbolic domain that regulates social exchange, livelihood and political power (ibid).

Lieut. R. Stewart writes in 1855 about the labour obligation of the villagers to the chief in a typical Thadou-Kuki village. The entire population was obliged to devote four days in each year, for cultivating his private fields. On the first day, they would cut down the jungle. On the second day, the dry cut down leaves acts as the fuel and is put on fire. The ground is then prepared and on the third they sow and harrow. On the fourth day, they cut and bring in the harvest (Stewart, 1855, p. 626). “Besides the labour of these four days, in which the entire effective population, men, women and children work for him, small parties are made to
assist the chief's domestic slaves; in tending the crop, repairing his house (which edifice is always built afresh by the subjects when a new site is repaired to) and in supplying wood and water for the family (ibid)." In the days of general labour, a great feast is given by the village chief to all his people. This also happens when a big animal like an elephant is killed in order to encourage successful hunters. This is the only form of remuneration ever received by the villagers. As citizens, they are required to supply labour, whenever the chief calls upon them. It says a great deal for the loyalty of the Kookies (Kukis) that they still submit to these exactions without grumbling, paying at the same time the full amount of their house-tax to the British government (ibid, p. 626).

A similar case is Malinowski's writing on the Melanesians' of New Guinea:

When a chief or headmen summons the members of a village community, and they agree to do their gardens communally, it is called Tamgogula. When this is decided upon, and the time grows near for cutting the shrub for new gardens, a festive eating is held on the central place, and there all men go, and takayva (cut down) the scrub on the chief's plot. After that, they cut in turn the garden plots of everyone, all men working on the one plot during a day, and getting on that day food from the owner. This procedure is reproduced at each successive stage of gardening; at the fencing, planting of yams, bringing in supports, and finally, at the weeding, which is done by women. At certain stages, the gardening is often done by each one working for himself, namely at the clearing of the gardens after they are burnt, at the cleaning of the roots of yams when they begin to produce tubers, and at harvesting (Malinowski, 1972, pp. 160-161).

It is a rule that the chief's plots, especially those of an influential chief of high rank, are always gardened by communal labour, and the garden magic is performed first, and with the greatest display (ibid).
6. 3. 1 Social Organisation of Farming

Durkheim makes a distinction between economic and sociological division of labour (Durkheim, 1984). In the economic sense, the division of labour refers to the process of dividing of labour into separate and special operations with the purpose of increasing the rate of production. Whereas, in the sociological sense, the division of labour refers to the principle of social cohesion, which develops in societies whose social links result from the way individuals relate when their occupational functions are separate and specialized (Morrison, 1995, p. 144).

In the Thadou-Kuki society, labour is divided by gender. Certain crops are the domain of women, others of men. Women predominate in seed selection and planting, weeding and other operations, while men do operations such as cutting of the jungle, clearing, burning of the cut undergrowth, etc. Both men and women participate in harvesting. “Gardens are owned and worked individually and may be made whenever suitable land is available (Turner, 1996, p. 22).” In the total agricultural system, from the clearing of gardens to the cooking of food, women play a more tedious role than men do. Men work in short spectacular bouts or energy; the regular patient labour of the women is hoeing up mounds, weeding, digging up roots, soaking, carrying, drying, pounding and sifting, and finally in cooking the rice as well as making rice beer for the labourers. The following three tables show the agricultural calendar common amongst the Thadou-Kukis of Manipur. The table is based on the analyses of fieldwork findings on the farmers.

Male activity, as we can see in the table, starts in a co-operative form: selection of land, slash and burn. The agricultural process is then maintained throughout the year by women; each working alone in her garden or fitfully assisted by her husband. Turner writes, “In agriculture, as in other aspects of Ndembu life, femininity may be equated with continuity, masculinity with discontinuity” (ibid, p. 25). This is applicable to the Thadou-Kuki society. An agricultural “calendar substitutes a linear, homogeneous, continuous time for practical time, which is
made up of incommensurable islands of duration, each with its own rhythm, the
time that flies by or drags, depending on what one is doing, i.e. on the functions
conferred on it by the activity in progress. By distributing guide-marks
(ceremonies and tasks) along a continuous line, one turns them into dividing
marks united in a relation of simple succession, thereby creating ex nihilo the
question of the intervals and correspondences between points which are no longer
topologically but metrically equivalent” (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 105).

Table: VII

Agricultural Calendar (Jhumming/Thinglhang Lei) and Cropping Pattern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month (English)</th>
<th>Corresponding Month in Thadou/Kuki</th>
<th>Type of activities performed/ operation</th>
<th>Work performed</th>
<th>Rituals performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Tolbol</td>
<td>Selection of land</td>
<td>Mostly men</td>
<td>Tolthen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Bulte</td>
<td>Clearance of the selected area and spreading out the cut down materials for drying (Chap-phou)</td>
<td>Mostly men</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Lhakao</td>
<td>Burning the dried forest growth into ashes</td>
<td>Mostly men</td>
<td>Vam nit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Lhatun</td>
<td>Ritual</td>
<td>Priest</td>
<td>Daiphu Ritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Lhaphul</td>
<td>Sowing of seeds</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mostly women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Waiting for the seeds to sprout</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Lhadou</td>
<td>Re-planting</td>
<td>Mostly women</td>
<td>Lom groupings based on gender, age and kinds of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Lhamul</td>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td>Mostly Women</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Lhajing</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Lhalam</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Ellha</td>
<td>Harvesting started and threshing is done</td>
<td>Harvesting done by both men and women</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Phallha</td>
<td>Harvesting end and celebrations started</td>
<td>Both men and women</td>
<td>Kut festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Ollha</td>
<td>Preservation of seeds for the next year</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Village Celebrations

Threshing and winnowing, making rice beer in olden days
### Table: VIII

**Agricultural Calendar (Wet Rice Cultivation/Phailei) and Cropping Pattern**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month (English)</th>
<th>Corresponding Month in Thadou/Kuki</th>
<th>Types of operation</th>
<th>Work performed</th>
<th>Types of crops grown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Tolbol</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>Rest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Bulte</td>
<td>Clearing the fields</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Today women also assist them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Lhakao</td>
<td>Tilling the land</td>
<td>Mostly men with the help of oxen or tractors (today)</td>
<td>Rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Lhatun</td>
<td>Sowing the seed</td>
<td>Women folk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Lhaphul</td>
<td>Period of waiting for the seed to sprout</td>
<td></td>
<td>Formation of lom groupings in villages based on gender, age and forms of activities/in towns there is the recruitment of labourers through the ‘theka’ and ‘nikhotha’ system. This is applicable both at the time of weeding and harvesting whenever there is a need for a bigger labour power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Lhadou</td>
<td>Replanting the paddy plant in the field</td>
<td>Both men and women</td>
<td>Mostly women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Lhamul</td>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mostly women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Lhajing</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Ellha</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Phallha</td>
<td>Harvesting and threshing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ollha</td>
<td>Celebrations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rest/ Preservation of seeds for the next year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both men and women get involved in harvesting Every members of the family Women

Threshing is only done by women
### Table: IX

**Agricultural Calendar (Joulei/Community Land) and Cropping Pattern**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month (English)</th>
<th>Corresponding Month in Thadou/Kuki</th>
<th>Types of crops Grown</th>
<th>Work performed</th>
<th>Rituals performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Tolbol</td>
<td>Allocation of land by the chief</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Bulte</td>
<td>Clearance of the selected area and spreading out the cut down materials for drying (Chap-phou)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Lhakao</td>
<td>Burning the dried forest growth into ashes</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Lhatun</td>
<td>Sowing of seeds</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Lhaphul</td>
<td>Waiting for the seeds to sprout</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Lhadou</td>
<td>Re-planting</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Lhamul</td>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ritual: Priest / Pastor

Daiphu / Prayer

Usually do not need lom groupings, as they are small kitchen gardens. Whereas, the villagers who are allotted bigger lands requires lom groups as helpers.
6.3.2 Traditional Lom Systems

Agricultural related activities like cutting and clearing of bush, and later the initial hoeing up of the cleared ground into mounds, may involve a collective work-party of kin and neighbours (Turner, 1996, p. 22). Lom is the organisational set-up for the purpose of agricultural activity. It is a form of social arrangement of labour. The functions of the lom are concerned mainly with the economic life of the village. When cultivation in the hills is about to start, the people in the village under the leadership of the village headmen will arrange themselves in groupings of many types usually based on the age group they belong to. In village life in the past, the only and central activity or occupation was agriculture, and the whole village evolved around it. Accordingly, each section of the society, whether it is the women, the youth, married folks, the children and the older populace, each section has a different set of alliance mainly based
on the commonality of agricultural related work that concerns them.\footnote{Kilong, Helthang, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, interviewed on 14\textsuperscript{th} October, 2008} The able-bodied men and women of the village are obliged to join this organisation irrespective of age and sex. Any household of the village can acquire the services of the *Lom*, that is, the collective group labour plays an important part in the village economy and contributed to agricultural productivity (Gangte, 1993, p. 132). The goal is to make the *lom* members reciprocate in helping each other to keep the village self-sufficient in the matter of physical labour (ibid). Any villager in the village has as much right to hire the *lom* as the Chief of the village.

Sowing of the seeds is finished in the month of April or \textit{'lhatun'}. The women folks working in the mountains will plant maize and cucumber at the centre of the field and pumpkin plant and beans at the corner. The Hausa or the chief who is a good judge of men summons a highly capable and faithful young person and entrusts him with the task of organising the \textit{'lom'}, that is, the youth corps of the village, which is the main and biggest form of \textit{'lom'} (ibid).

After April is over, everyone has finished sowing seeds, weather and a season change, the field is ready with the first sign of all vegetables' fruits. The rice plant also starts sprouting and it is time for the villagers to engage themselves in weeding the unwanted plants that grow in between the rice plants. It is at this point that the villagers would arrange themselves in sets or groups. This weeding is done for four months, starting from June until the month of September. The final phase of cultivation done during this phase is called \textit{'lousem'}. After lousem, the paddy field is ready to be harvested. The purpose of these groupings has been set up to assist in the agricultural life in the hills. Their main activity consist of—

i. \textit{Louvat} (burning dried forest woods into ashes)

ii. \textit{Changtu} (sowing of seeds)
iii. *Loulho* (weeding)

iv. *Chang-at* (harvesting)\(^{28}\)

A *lom hausa*\(^{29}\) is appointed to keep a check on the productivity and efficiency of the *Lom* members. The *lom hausa* is endowed the full power to adjudge and to impose punishment on the guilty members of the *lom* involved in criminal and sexual offences. They are bestowed the power to drive out a person from the *lom* (Goswami, 1985, p. 96).

The *Lom* system is a good example of how culture through a system of reciprocal labour and co-operative labour determines the method of cultivation. There are different types of cooperative labour which are formed according to the type of work demanded and who are going to do the work. Victor Turner describes a similar practice amongst the Ndembu society in Africa:

> When a man wishes to fell trees and clear bush for a finger-millet garden, he lets it be known that he brewed beer or killed game for those participating in a Chenda (work-party) to be held in a few days (Turner, 1996, p. 22).

However, in the Ndembu society, it is restricted to older men and boys (ibid). Amongst the Thadou-Kukis also, the field owner is obligated to provide rice beer and food to all the *lom* members who come to work. Nowadays, this has been replaced by tea and snacks.\(^{30}\)

In analysing the character of the *Lom* system among the Thadou-Kukis, it can be construed to be both organised and communal in form. For Malinowski, these two conceptions are not synonymous, and it is well to keep them apart. Organised labour implies the co-operation of several socially and economically

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\(^{28}\) Singson, Tongkholam, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, Interviewed on 13\(^{th}\) October, 2008

\(^{29}\) Lom Hausa here refers to the *Lom* leader. The word *Hausa* originally denotes a Chief. However, the term has come to be used to mean leader as well.

\(^{30}\) Mrs. Neikirn, Motbung Village, discussion on the changing nature of labour system, 16\(^{th}\) October, 2008
different elements, whereas communal labour is when a number of people are
generated side by side, performing the same work, and is free of any technical
division of labour, or social differentiation of function (Malinowski, 1972, p. 159).
Malinowski wrote about five different forms of communal labour: (1) the first
type is called Tamgogula. This takes place when the chief or headmen summons
the members of the village to work in his garden. He throws a feast for the
labourers after which the work begins. The men begin with the chief’s garden
and then cut in turn the garden plots of everyone in the village. This rotational
basis of working in different fields in the village is reproduced at each successive
stage of gardening; at the fencing, planting of yams, bringing in supports, and
finally at the weeding, which is done by women (Malinowski, 1972, pp. 160-161).
(2) Lubalabisa is characterised by a wider network of domain and is the case in
which several villages agree to work their gardens by communal labour (ibid, p.
161). (3) The third type Kabutu is when a chief or headman, or man of wealth and
influence summons his dependents or his relative-in-law to work for him. The
owner is obliged to give food to all those co-operating (ibid). (4) The fourth form
of communal labour is called Ta’ula. This takes place whenever a number of
villagers agree to do one stage of gardening in common, on the basis of
reciprocity (ibid). (5) The same sort of communal labour extending over all
stages of gardening is called Kari’ula (ibid).

6. 3. 3 An Agrarian Society in Transition

a) A Shift Towards Contractual Labour

According to Chayanov, “the essential characteristic of business firms or
capitalist enterprises was that they operated with hired workers in order to earn
profits. By contrast, peasant family farms, as Chayanov defines them, normally
employed no hired wage labor—none whatsoever (Thorner, 1987, p. xiii).” The
agriculture system that was a collective enterprise characterised by self-
sufficiency and communal and family labour has become more individualistic in
the Thadou-Kuki villages. So, the new ‘theka system’ has become more popular. This system is still functional to a marginal rich landowners who have more lands and agricultural fields than they can handle. Labour therefore gradually takes a more commodity form. *Lom kijoh* means selling of one’s lom or group of labourers. If the allotted work is completed before the contract time, the owner can sell off the lom to some other landowner. Labour has attained a monetary value in this instance. Karl Marx in his “*Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (vol.1)*” looks at how individual acts of useful labour are transformed into commodities (Marx, 1954). He writes, “...peasant who produces with his own means of production will either gradually be transformed into a small capitalist who also exploit the labor of others, or he will suffer the loss of his means of production...and be transformed into a wage worker” (Marx, 1951, pp. 193-194). Useful labour is therefore transformed into commodities only in a society in which the products of labour take the form of the commodity (Morrison, 1995, p. 66).

This practice was common among the Meiteis of the valley in Manipur. The fact that it is widely practiced today among the hill tribes of Manipur could be attributed to the result of cultural contact. Moreover, it can be attributed to an indicator of the monetization of the labour system in the hills. In Motbung village, the type of tenancy practice is ‘loushan’ and ‘tangkhai chabi’, the latter is a Manipuri term. In the case of ‘loushan’, the labourer takes whatever is left after the landowner has taken his share. The amount is at the disposition of the landowner. In tangkhai chabi, the landowner and the labourer shares the produce into equal halves. There is another mode of leasing out of land, viz., *theka* and *nikhotha*. Theka is the term used for the existing contract form of arrangement where the labourers are engaged for a period, for instance, during the harvesting season or the weeding season in wet-rice cultivation. Theka can be called a ‘contract system of labour’. The period of contract continues until the work allotment is finished. It is made between a landowner and a group of labourers, who share the payment among themselves. The payment whether in
cash or in kind is made only after the completion of the allotted job. *Nikhotha* on the other hand is on a daily basis and payment is ideally made at the end of the day. This practice is still continued today. In *nikhotha*, the landowner has to provide refreshment like tea and snacks to the labourer during lunchtime. In the case of the *theka* system, the cultivators are to provide refreshments for their own consumption.

In Tujang Vaichong, an almost negligible percentage of the population thrives mainly as agricultural labourers on other farms. An informant Jangsat narrates how he works in different lands based on ‘*nikhotha*’ in which payment ranges from person to person. The agreement for the amount is fixed by word of mouth and does not require paper work. The rate for the ‘*nikhotha*’ is rupees fifty per day for females and rupees sixty per day for males. Theka system of labour arrangement is also practiced by some people. Land is usually leased out to the Nepalis based on half-share of the produce also called the ‘*tangkhai chabi* system.’ Payment is made both in kind and cash according to the convenience of the remunerator. Another respondent Nengpi narrates her mother’s work experience as a labourer in other farms. Her mother works in a field owned by some big landowner. She works along with other fellow workers on contract basis called ‘*theka*’ system during harvest time. If the rain wets the rice before it is properly stacked in the barn, then this affects the quality of the rice. So, the idea is to finish it within the least possible time. The field owner pays them about a thousand rupees to be shared among themselves.

b) Migrants Spaces for Labour

Another change is on the basis for recruitment of labour in the hills. The question of who cultivates the land in tribal societies brings out another aspect unique to tribal societies. In the past, clanship and kinship network had played

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31 Where payment is made on a daily basis.

32 Nengpi, 21st November 2007 (interviewed inside the bus between kangpokpi and Imphal)
an important role in the space for labour, but this is slowly changing today. Bond of kinship operative through families, clans and kindred govern production and distribution. However, there have been remarkable changes in this area, where migrants are recruits in the case of shortage of farm hands in the family. Another reason is that there is lesser dependence on agriculture as the primary occupation. Another factor leading to labour shortages is created by highly educated younger generations who prefer tertiary sector employment opportunities (Singh, in Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 124).

Today when a landowner recruits labourers, selection is based mainly on availability. This is because of the lesser dependence on agriculture (and on land) as a means of livelihood and other alternative means of income like government jobs and business enterprises. Of the criteria for recruitment, the landowner considers the following--

- A person of one’s relations
- Availability
- Mostly non-tribals or Nepalis\(^{33}\) (because they charge cheaper rates)
- Character or accountability like hard worker, honesty, self-sufficiency

In the case where families do not lease out their land, the adult members usually go to work in farms.

Most of the villagers in Tujang Vaichong are cultivators; part time or full time and even those who are employed in government services are either directly or indirectly involved in it. Nevertheless, many of them have either partly or fully

\(^{33}\) The definition of migrants will differ according to the person defining it. For some like the insurgent group Revolutionary People’s Front, the migrant group are all the non-Manipuris especially the Biharis working as labourers or businesspersons in Manipur. The Motbung Chief opines that the migrants or non-tribals in his village are Deshwalis and Nepalis whose occupation are business and dairy farming and contribute to the village economy. The Nepalis or Gorkhas have lived in Manipur for decades.
leased out their lands to neighbouring non-tribals or Nepali migrants through the system of ‘tangkhai chabi’ (half share of the produce).

In Tujang Vaichong, the concept of ‘out-sider’, referring to the Nepalis, have lessened as they prove to be an indispensable part of the village economy. There is, however, lesser case of intermarriage amongst them as compared to the neighbouring Thadou-Kuki villages. In Motbung, the concept of the ‘other’ is clearly defined and the chief assisted by the village authority members has very strict rules against the transfer of land from a tribal to a non-tribal as per the constitution. The village council spearheaded by the Chief is very effective in Motbung and stringent rules are laid down by the council. Any person selling land to a non-tribal is severely dealt with. The Nepalis being more business minded has set up many thriving shops in the village centres. The majority of the migrants in Motbung are classified under two cultural communities—the Deshwalis and the Nepalis. The 2001 census records a separate Motbung for Nepali with 79 household and 384 populations.\(^\text{34}\)

Kangpokpi being an urban town, the concept of ‘out-sider’ and ‘in-sider’ is not very vivid. There are many cases of intermarriage. Business transactions and partnerships are done at a rapid rate. Since the laws of not transferring land to non-tribals also applies here, there has been many cases in which a Nepali male married to a Kuki woman has taken the title of the wife, going against the patriarchal societal norms for benefit. In most cases, the Nepalis being originally cattle herders live mainly by supplying milk to the population. Therefore, the occupation of milk supplying has been considered the sole occupation of this population.

Thus, there is a replacement of family labour by hired labour. Since the sale of agricultural products is not sufficient, the peasants also sell their labour power

\(^{34}\) Census of India, 2001, District Census Handbook, Record Structure: Village Directory
as subsidiary sources of income (Banaji, 1976, p. 5). Banaji writes on Kautsky’s Agrarian question:

The growth of capitalism in the towns is by itself sufficient to transform completely the peasantry’s established way of life, even before capital has itself entered agricultural production and independently of the antagonism between big and smallholdings. But capital does not confine itself to industry. When it is strong enough, it invades agriculture (Banaji, 1976, p. 5).

6. 4 The Civilising Process: Forest Use and Shifting Cultivation

6.4.1 ‘Jhumming’ or ‘Shifting Cultivation’ as a Heritage

Shifting cultivation is also known as slash-and-burn or swidden in the English language, whereas in India the process of shifting cultivation has a different name in all the tribal belts (Bhowmick, 1980, p. 135). According to Lehman, the Burmese call fields cultivated in this manner taun-ya whereas the Indians call them Jhum (Lehman, 1963, p. 47). “In North East India, it is known as Jhum or Jum; in Orissa as Podu, Dabi, Koman or Bringa; in Baster as Deppa; Kumari, in Western Ghats, Matra in S.E. Rajasthan; the Maria call it Penda; Bewar or Dahia in Madhya Pradesh (Bhowmick, 1980, p. 135).” The Task Force on Shifting Cultivation under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Government of India has estimated that approximately 9.95 million hectares in the tribal and hilly areas of the nation are under shifting cultivation (Mahalingam, in Gupta (ed.), 1992, p. 20).

According to G.A. Grierson (1903-1928), the Thados (Thadous) are a migratory race, and do not occupy their villages for more than two or three years at a time, when they move on to a new place, more fit for cultivation. The staple food is rice, and it is produced through the ordinary jhum cultivation. They prefer woody spots, on the tops of the hills, for their villages (Grierson, 1990, p. 60). Gautam Bhadra (1975) wrote that the migratory habit of the Thadou-Kukis in the past was connected with their mode of production. The form of jhum cultivation constitutes burning and slashing method (ibid). However, with this type of
cultivation, they accepted migration as a means to raise the superior quality of produce that was raised on ‘virgin soil’. He quoted that the agricultural produce of the Kookees (Kukis) is of superior quality to that of the Cacharries (Cacharis) and the Nagas, which may be owing to their habit of abandoning the soil after the first or second crop (Bhadra, 1975, p. 25-26).

Under this type of cultivation forest cover over a selected plot of land is first cut down and later burnt to ashes as the debris becomes dry. The ashes of the burnt wood serve as the fertilizer (Ganguly, 1993, p. 299). After the harvesting is done, the plot is abandoned and left fallow to allow regeneration of bamboo and other forests plants. If sufficient forestland is available, jhumming is done in the same area again only after ten years (ibid). The characteristics of jhum cultivation in Manipur are as follows:

(1) Cutting and clearing of forest areas and burning of the dried biomass by fire,
(2) Rotation of jhum land every four to seven years,
(3) Use of human labour as the chief input,
(4) Non-employment of animals, implements or machinery,
(5) Collective ownership of land,
(6) Reciprocal labour sharing and
(7) Mixed cropping system.35

The Chief (Haosa), who is the owner of the village land and responsible to the welfare of the villagers assisted by his council of ministers, earmarks the site for cultivation. He selects a fertile forested area within the demarcated area at the beginning of the agriculture season and distributes land to each individual family of the village. The size of area allotted to a family depends to a large extent on the number of working hands available in the family (Singsit, 2010, p.

73). The villagers go to the forest and locate a site and each family would mark by cutting portion of tree trunk or tie bunches of grasses in the border of his fields making 'Louchan' (Haokip, 2009). The individual households do not have absolute ownership over the land cultivated by them; their rights are of the nature of usufructs. They can hold the land so long as they make effective use of it and as soon as they stop cultivation, their rights cease (Singsit, 2010, p. 73). In the village of Tujang Vaichong, the villagers have to seek the chief’s permission to lease out the land to them. The permission granted is valid for a year and have to be renewed every year.\footnote{Kipgen, Konkhochong, Acting Chief (on behalf of her son) of Tujang Vaichong village, interviewed on 9th November, 2008}

6.4.2 Debates on Shifting Cultivation

Recent debates have posited shifting cultivation or Jhumming under two main perspectives: as the natural way of life of the tribal people and as detrimental to the forest economy. Shifting cultivation is defined by many as the natural way of life of some tribal people and the natural source of earning their livelihood (Bhowmick, 1980, p. 134). For others, it is detrimental to forest economy and therefore, to national economy as it leads to destruction of forest due to erosion of soil (ibid). The supporters of jhumming are of the view that it is more than sustenance; rather it reflects the reason for existence. Shifting cultivation is deeply rooted in the Kuki psyche, having evolved through generations, and being rooted in customs, belief and folklore. It influences the tribe’s mindset and cultural ethos of its agrarian society. This is evident from the various ceremonies observed by them, which is related to nature. They have given due respect and appreciation from the dwellers for it is the provider of their sustenance and livelihood. Their traditional way of living and the tribal mindset have given respect for environment (Haokip, 2009).\footnote{Haokip, George T. 'Kuki Tradition and Shifting Cultivation,' in http://kukiforum.wordpress.com/2009/05/16/kuki-tradition-and-shifting-cultivation, May 16, 2009 (Accessed on 3rd June, 2011).}
Jhum cultivation has special significance in the ethos of tribal society and their social relationships, cultural values and mythical beliefs are directly linked with it (Singsit, 2010, p. 158). The Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee chairman, who is also the president of Sadar Hills Sub Division of Senapati District of Manipur opined that, as Jhumming constitute an important lifeline for the people, an alternative need to be set-up if the government plans to do away with it. Even in Kangpokpi town, which is urban, and not under chieftainship system, jhumming is done in the neighbouring hill called T.Khullien. Those who want land for cultivation have to pay tax or 'gam-pan' or 'land tax' to the Town Committee, which is set up under the District Council of Manipur.

Similarly, the Baiga tribe of the Central Provinces of India has exalted the bewar cultivation into a 'regular cultus,' and have adopted it as the symbol of their tribe (Elwin, 1986, p. 106). The first serious attempt to put an end to bewar cultivation was made during the settlement operation of 1867-69. It was decided that 'according to all positive law, according to the Settlement Code, and according to the custom of the country', the Baiga had 'no title to proprietary right or to occupancy right in the tracts over which they roamed' (Elwin, 1986, p. 111). From 1867 to the end of the century, zealous forest officers determined to make them stop their axe-and-hoe cultivation and took to the plough pursued the unfortunate Baigas. At the same time, much of their hunting was stopped and some of them were even forced to make heaps of their precious bows and arrows and burnt them (Elwin, 1964, p. 148).

38 Guite, Haokholien, Chairmen of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, interviewed on 26th November, 2008

39 ibid

40 The word 'bewar' is used to describe both the practice of shifting cultivation and the patches of forest which is cultivated
According to Verrier Elwin, the tradition of shifting cultivation of the Baiga bought them into conflict with the colonial government in two ways (ibid, p. 146). The first was their beliefs that they were born from the womb of mother earth; therefore, it was a very wrong thing for them to lacerate her breast with the plough (also in Elwin, 1986, pp. 106-107). The second was their beliefs that they were the true Pashupati or lords of animals, so, they should have the freedom of movement in the forest for their hunting expedition (Elwin, 1964, pp. 147-148). "Nothing showed more clearly the evils of an administration's ignorance of tribal mythology and indifference to its custom than the way the old government dealt with the Baigas on these two points (ibid)."

When the Baigas were forced to use the plough, many of them were reduced to poverty, as the agricultural implement was tabooed for them and they suffered from psychological disturbance deep in their souls of the use of it (also in Elwin, 1986 (1939), p. 108). "Robbed of their bows and arrows, they are no longer lords of the forest, the great shikaris of former times (Elwin, 1964, p. 147)." Tribal value orientation and is one of the basic causes underlying the continuance of

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41 The Baigas believed that they were established in the practice of bewar by Bhagavan himself who, when he called all the tribes of the world together to make a king, at first chose the Baiga. But Nanga Baiga begged that the Gond, his brother, might be king in his place. Bhagavan was pleased at this request, and, as a mark of his favour took Nanga Baiga by the hand and placed him on his throne by his side. He granted his prayer to make the Gond king, but he gave the Baiga an even greater blessing. 'All the kingdoms of the world,' he said, 'may fall to pieces, but he who is made of earth and is Bhumiaraja, lord of the earth, shall never forsake it. You will make your living from the earth. You will dig roots and eat them. You will cut wood and carry it on your shoulders. Your wife will pick leaves and sell them. You must not tear the breasts of your Mother the earth with the plough like the Gond and Hindu. You will cut down trees, burn them, and sow your seeds in the ashes. But you will never become rich, for if you did you would forsake the earth, and then there would be no one to guard it and keep its nails in place.' Then Bhagavan showed Nanga Baiga how to cut bewar and sow seed in the ashes of burnt trees; and when he had taught him everything, he called him to receive gifts of seed. This legend is told, and believed, throughout the length and breadth of the Baiga country (Elwin, 1986, pp. 106-107).

42 It is commonly believed that the present poverty of the tribe is due to their disobedience of Bhagavan's command; Mother Earth is insulted when her children tear her breasts, and now refuses to supply their needs. For this reason, their magic has decayed, the crops fail, and they are subject to the vengeance of wild beasts (Elwin, 1986 (1939), p. 108).
shifting cultivation among most of the tribes (Singsit, 2010, p. 158). Elwin was of the opinion that the tribes must be assisted to come to terms with their own past so that their present and future will not be a denial of their past but a natural evolution from it (Elwin, 1964, p. 302). The ban on shifting cultivation is destructive to the mode of earning a livelihood as they fail to provide an alternative mode of livelihood to shifting cultivators (Savyasaachi, 1991). Though the dominant voice advocated the use of technology over traditional practices like shifting cultivation, the technical progress in agriculture is in essence, a method for improving the techniques of wringing the goodness out of the soil, and is therefore hazardous rather than beneficial (Kautsky, as cited in Moore, 2008, p.1-3).

At the other extreme end is the opinion that emphasised the evil effects of shifting cultivation as both devastating and far reaching in degrading the environment and deteriorating the ecosystem. The practice of Shifting Cultivation has been condemned as inefficient, inherently wasteful and a threat to the rapidly diminishing area under forest covers. This condemnation represents an almost unanimous consensus (Sharma, 1994, p. 143). “Modern technologists believe that the tribal mode of earning a livelihood makes them lazy workers. The current technological explanation of the environmental crises holds the mode of shifting cultivation responsible for destruction of the forest. The use of the forest materials, even when considered on its own terms, that is, not in terms of the market economy, is wasteful because it over-utilises them. In terms of market economy, shifting cultivation does not generate revenue and, therefore, it is inefficient and unprofitable. Study of man-nature relations of tribals and its impact on the natural environment questions the technological view which has labelled tribals as lazy workers (Savyasaachi, 1991, p. 25).”

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43 In 1954, Verrier Elwin was appointed advisor on Tribal Affairs to the North Eastern Frontier Agency. He became a citizen of India after Independence.
Panda and Barapanda wrote on the ecological impact of Jhumming. The large-scale deforestation have resulted in the destruction of valuable timbers and prevented the generation of forest. The clearing of forest exposed the barren rocks and this culminates in the loss of soil and plant nutrients (Panda et al, Gupta (ed.), 1992, p. 140). "Besides these factors, its adverse effects are also found in the decrease of wild life population and silting of reservoirs and river beds, lowering the subsoil water and drying up of the springs in the mountain slopes. This process not only affects the environment & ecosystem but also affects the economic life of the people of the state (ibid).”

In Manipur, soil conservation and land use programmes initiated to control or reverse the deleterious consequences of Jhum are carried out by two agencies, viz., the department of horticulture and the forest department. The voice from the educated section of the locals also resonate the ecological consequences of Jhumming and its irrelevances today since existing population density far exceeds the carrying capacity. In the framework of linear historical development and normative order of industrial production, "...social formation progresses from simple to complex, primitive to modern, savage to civilized, and irrational and rational. Thus, jhum cultivators are historically backward, and those who work with thermal projects are historically advanced (Savyasaachi, in Visvanathan (ed.), 2001, p. 80).” The tradition of shifting cultivation is thought to be in conflict with the tradition of modernization and development (ibid, p. 83).

6.4.3 Regulations on Forest Use and Practice of Shifting Cultivation

Colonial land revenue settlements and forests laws were intended to curb and in swift stages and finally eradicate shifting cultivation (Sharma, 1994, p. 143). In


45 Kipgen, Enoch, Asst. Head Master, L.K. Junior High School, Tujang Vaichong Village
general, before the advent of British rule in India, the regulation of people’s use of forest was mainly done through the local customs (Kulkarni, 1987, p. 2143). The beginning of a systematic forest policy begun in 1855 when the then Governor General Dalhousie issued a memorandum on forest conservation (ibid). The Forest Act of 1865 was made to regulate forest exploitation, management and preservation (ibid). “For the first time an attempt was made to regulate the collection of forest produce by the forest dwellers. Thus, the socially regulated practices of the local people were to be restrained by law (ibid).” The Forest Regulations sought to completely prohibit the practice of shifting cultivation in the Central Provinces (Sharma, 1994, p. 143).

The Indian Forest Act of 1878, “allowed the state to expand the commercial exploitation of the forest while putting curbs on local use for subsistence. This denial of village forest rights provoked countrywide protest. The history of colonial rule is punctuated by major rebellions against colonial forestry—in Chotanagpur in 1893, in Bastar in 1910, in Gudem-Rampa in 1879-80 and again in 1922-23, in Midnapur in 1920, and in Adilabad in 1940”46. Under the Forest Act of 1878, forests were divided into (1) reserved forests, (2) protected forests, and (3) village forests (ibid). These regulations were formally initiated in 1894 (Anderson, et al., 1988, p. 36).

Robert S. Anderson and Walter Huber explanation of the implication of the forests divisions is relevant to our field. They wrote, “Reserved forests were exclusively for the use of the Forest Department except for certain minor concessions, such as gathering of the fruit of the trees and cutting of the grass, on payment of small dues. In the reserved forests, the surrounding villagers had no rights other than the ones explicitly permitted by the state. The protected forests were also managed by the Forest Department, but the people of the surrounding villages had certain rights in them, such as gathering fruits and other produce of

the trees, and cutting timber and wood specifically for the use of the villagers (but not for sale). They also had freedom to graze their livestock and hunt wild game for domestic purposes. Over the protected forests, the villagers had all rights not specifically taken away by the state. The village forest were the communal property of the villagers” (Anderson, et. al., 1988, p. 37).

In 1988, the forest policy was changed to be more accommodative towards the local people (Saxena et al, 1999, p. 187). The new policy replaced the earlier focus on commercial exploitation of forests by the twin objectives of maintaining ecological stability and meeting the forest-based needs of forest dwellers and other rural poor living in or near forest areas (ibid). The emphasis of the new policy was to protect the legal rights, concessions and privileges of tribal and other local villagers. The new policy encouraged the involvement of local women and men in the protection, management and development of forests (ibid).

The Indian Forest Act of 1927 was an attempt to regulate the rights of the people over forestland and produce as the government gradually increased its control over the forests by strengthening the forest department (Kulkarni, 1987, p. 2143). Subsequently, there was a steady and considerable increase in revenue obtained from the forests (ibid). After Independence, there was some rethinking on the issue of forest policy in putting the national needs over the claims of the communities living in and around the forests (ibid, 2144). The National Forest Policy was issued in 1952 with this in mind. “Though the traditional rights of the tribals were no longer recognised as rights, in 1894 they were declared in the British Forest Policy as ‘rights and privileges.’ In 1952 in the National Forest Policy these were further diluted into ‘rights and concessions.’ Now the tendency is to treat them merely as ‘concessions’ (Burman, in Chaudhuri (ed.), 1992, p. 143).” The subject of forests was included in the State list in the VII Schedule in the Constitution of India (Kulkarni, 1987, p. 2144). There was a major change which took place in 1976 and the subject of forests was transferred
from the State list to the Concurrent list through the 42nd amendment to the Constitution (ibid). Power over forests was transferred from the control of the state to the centre and the Government of India in the Forest Conservation Ordinance promulgated this in October 1980, which later became a bill (ibid). The Indian Forest Bill, 1980 besides including a provision for curtailing the rights and benefits of the local people over the forests prescribe severe punishments for forest offences (ibid).

Therefore, the revenue generation of the colonial period (1865 onwards) continued in the post-colonial period. “Additional responsibilities were added when social forestry was introduced in 1976, giving forest departments roles in promoting forestry on private and revenue land. Joint Forest Management has (since 1988), been a further element in the expanding remit of the forest bureaucracies. The signposts in this history are provided by the forests acts of 1878 and 1927, the Forest Policy of 1952, the National Commission on Agriculture of 1976, which inaugurated social forestry, the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, the 1988 Forest Policy, and the GOI Joint Forest Management Resolution of 1990, followed by different state resolutions (Sundar, et al, 1999, p.27).”

**6.4.4 Impact of the Forest Policies**

The local inhabitants of Tujang Vaichong, Motbung and Kangpokpi also experience the implications of the various forest policies. Changes are evident in the land laws of villages especially in the case of forest laws in which the Chief and his Council of Ministers or Village Council incorporates the National laws of the country in their formulations of local law. Mrs. Konkhochong Kipgen, acting chief of the village says that the chieftainship system acts as a cultural retainer as well as the preserver and reservoir for various cultural practices and customs. There are differences between leaders who were elected and the hereditary Chief in terms of the sentiment they have towards the land and the people of the
village. Commercialisation in terms of forest produce is check to a certain extent in the jurisdiction of the chieftainship system.

The Land laws in Tujang Vaichong includes: Firstly, the villagers are not suppose to sell the land allotted to them as gift-deeds by the chief to an outsider who has no plans to permanently settle in the village. The lands allotted are therefore not transferable, but is attributable to the same ancestry. A particular villager is in possession of it as long as the person is in the village. However, it will directly go back to the chief in case he wants to migrate to another village. Therefore, the nature of proprietorship is equivalent to temporary ownership and they cannot use it as collateral.

Secondly, there are also certain restrictions regarding forest laws. There are three types of forest area: Open reserved area, protected area and Village area. This is classification of forest is according to the Forest Act of 1878, which is still effective today. According to results of the household survey, two types of tenants occupy the village homestead: (1) There are no individual lands with proper patta system but there are paper deeds. (2) The individual land are mostly allotted by the chief as gifts. The chief opened some areas every year to the villagers for jhumming or thinglhung lei and for cutting woods in the mountains. The villagers have to seek the chief’s permission to lease out the land to them. They have to bring with them a rooster as a token or this is also done through the traditional ‘cha-omna’ (where tea is served to the chief before a request is put forward). The permission granted is valid for a year and have to be renewed every year. For cutting of woods, the chief opened the forest for the public for about 2-3 months (mainly in the month of December, January and February). During that period, the villagers have to collect enough woods to last for their consumption throughout the year. In exceptional cases, a new settler can get access to the woods to build their house. However, the restriction is against using these woods for commercial purposes. These activities are done in
parts of the forest, which are not under the forest department of the Indian government.

Moreover, the settlement laws regarding those who are residing in the homestead area are—

a) to dutifully pay the 'changseo' or village fund traditionally in the form of a basket of paddy or in cash.47

b) to abide by laws laid down in the villages meant for citizens

c) neither to steal nor distort law and order in the village

The Chief and the Village Council give the new settlers an orientation on their arrival. New settlers are allowed to take enough woods in the village to build their house. Prior to that, they are required to seek the permission of the chief to get membership in the village. In the case of Tujang Vaichong, it is mandatory for the new settlers to take membership in the local church.48 The house tax for each house paid annually is Rupees 15, which is collected by the chief and submitted it in bulk to the government through the SDO in charge.49 The homestead area falls under the category of ‘village area.’

The main land laws50 in Motbung village were: Firstly, annual tax of rupees 50 per house or 1 basket of paddy (changseu). Secondly, the forest is divided into two areas: (1) There is the Protected Forest Area, where no woods are allowed to be cut. For violating the laws in the protected area, there was an instance where

47 In Tujang Vaichong village, the villagers protest against the giving of ‘Changseo’ or tributary gifts to the chief of the village. So, the practice was stop before my field visit.

48 The chief have made a strict rule that no other church besides the Kuki Baptist convention is allowed in the village. The church has a history of being the first Kuki Church in Manipur and was established and built in 1916.

49 ibid

50 Kaikhosei, S.L., Chief of Motbung, Interviewed on 13th October, 2008 and S.L. Vumkhopao Lhouvum, Joint Secretary of Members of Village Authority
a villager was fined 'voh-cha'\textsuperscript{51} or 'pig' for encroaching and violating the rules of the protected area. He had cut down some trees for his personal purpose. This area comes under the protection of the Chief of the village. (2) The second type is the Open Reserve Area, where activities like jhumming, grazing and firewood collection were allowed to be done. Villagers are allowed access to firewood, grazing, woods for new village settlers and jhuming (under the direction of the chief who specifies the site for the year cultivation). The non-tribals (mostly Nepali migrants) pay grazing tax whereas for other villagers, everything is covered under the annual tax or 'changseu'. An informant, pointing at a vast expanse of forest said they were the reserve of the Forest department of Motbung under the office name, 'Range Forest Officer, Motbung Range.' There was strict restriction by the office to the local population not to encroach those areas.

Thirdly, new settlers will have to get the permission of the chief. No villagers can buy or sell land to an outsider without the chief's permission. Settlers will have to take registration after which they can access some of the rights due to a villager. Fourthly, the leasing or selling out of land to non-tribal is by actual norm of customary laws not allowed but there are exceptional cases of intermarriage between the tribal and non-tribal where consideration has to be made. Fifthly, there can be no commercial transaction of land to people of other villages without the chief's permission but this is not necessary in the case of land transaction between two members of the village. Punishment for offence ranges from banishment from the village or an order to the seller to buy it back from his client. The village homestead in Motbung comprises of two types of land: (1) There are individual lands with proper patta system.\textsuperscript{52} They also call it

\textsuperscript{51} It is the custom of the Thadou-Kukis in particular and the Kukis in general to be penalized for a wrong act in terms of pigs.

\textsuperscript{52} This pattas are actually paper deeds and differ with the pattas of the GOI. As for Kangpokpi, which is not under chieftainship system, the Sub-Division Officers or District Magistrates, under whose jurisdiction the village landfall issues documents, which is considered to be equivalent to Patta in the valley (Gangte, 2010, p. 132).
‘dag-chitha’ or paper deeds. Patta is actually not legal as the whole land is in the name of the chief. Temporarily patta or patta for namesake is taken for security sake to avert land conflict. The term ‘gift-deed’ by the chief is applicable. (2) Individual land allotted by the chief without patta system.

Kangpokpi represents altogether a different entity. It is not under chieftainship system but under the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee.\textsuperscript{53} It is under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration. In administration matters, the local customary laws are applied side by side with general administration system of the Indian government.\textsuperscript{54} Land laws are still based on the customary laws. Jhumming is mostly done on T.Khullien Moul, a mountain owned by the neighbouring Naga village. They leased out the land to the people of Kangpokpi who have to pay taxes according to the size of the land allotted to them. The prices ranging from Rupees 200 to above based on the area size of the land. The tax paid is called ‘gam-pan’ or ‘lam-pan.’ Wet-Rice cultivation or \textit{phailei} is very scarce. They are mostly done in the neighbouring villages like Lungpho gam, kaithel manbi or the villages in Imphal-Tamenglong Road like Tujang Vaichong, Gelnel, Bungmoul etc. There is restriction against taking sand from the riverbeds as this might cause landslides. If there is a vacant plot, then an interested contender can approach the authority and register for membership. He still has to register if he wants to buy a plot of land that belongs to another. If a villager wants to sell his land to a person of another village, he has to inform the KUTC. A different form of patta land has entered into Kangpokpi and it is called \textit{jamma}

\textsuperscript{53} The meeting of the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee is done at least once every month. Besides the compulsory meeting, there is the emergency meeting that is conducted according to the requirement of the circumstances. The biggest assembly is held at the end of the year. The members do not have a salary. However, an honorary pay of rupees 1000 is paid to the Chairperson, Vice chairperson and Secretary. The others are paid Rs. 500. Moreover, a sitting allowance of Rs. 100 is paid to all authority members on every meeting.

\textsuperscript{54} Guite, Haokholien, Chairman of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Interviewed on 26\textsuperscript{th} November, 2008
*bandi* or *Dag Chitha*. Hill house tax paid annually is rupees 15. The KUTC collects them and pays them over to the ADC office.\(^{55}\)

6.5 Conclusions

As compared to the tribal land system, the land system under the caste system has evolved through many stages of reformation and is more affected by feudalism, and later on by capitalism. Earlier, in the pre-British period, the relation to land of a villager is strictly defined by his position in the caste hierarchy, which is ascribed by birth. However, there was self-sufficiency. When the British introduced private property in land, the village economic self-sufficiency was dissolved and economy became increasingly an integral part of wider global community.

Raymond Firth’s criteria for describing the Polynesian society in Tikopia as primitive in terms of culture and economy were lack of modern equipment and of the knowledge of the techniques for using it and non-monetary character (Firth, 1959, p. 31). Oomen (1984) has also agreed that transport and communication ushers in urban characters in a rural area. The nearness to the National Highway 39 to Motbung and Kangpokpi enables better means of transport and communication which means seeping in of the rubrics of globalisation like marketization, commercialisation and monetization. This is evident in the way Tujang Vaichong compared to the other two is more grounded in traditional values and has lesser access to facilities of development. The village is far away from the National Highway and is another 40 kilometres away from it. Kangpokpi, as an emerging town, is valued higher because of the presence of modern amenities like education system and government offices. Therefore, there is rural to urban migration towards the town, and as a result the town is over populated. Occupation is also highly diversified.

\(^{55}\) ibid
The greatest changes and impact of capitalism is witness in the labour system. The Chanyonavian model of classical model of peasant society of pure peasant family farms is no longer relevant today. The space for labour has changed. It becomes a buyable commodity and is 'commoditised' to use the Marxian term. It is no longer the bonds of kinship, operative through families of clans and kindred, which govern production and distribution. There is a replacement of family or communal labour for hired or waged labour. It is no longer an activity done through group cooperation, but more of an individualistic activity. 'Lom Kijoh', meaning the selling of one's labour is a case to prove the point. We see the gradual commodification of labour from being a co-operative enterprise to a contractual form.

The dependency on agriculture and the pressure on land are lessened by occupational diversification even in villages. There is a move towards the tertiary sector. Most household in contemporary rural societies live from a mixture of livelihood strategies. There is a shift towards non-farm enterprises in villages, including villagers moving out of the villages to urban town to seek for better employment prospects. There is a gradual shift from land as a livelihood to land as a commodity.

Jhumming is not only a means for sustenance, but also constitutes the cultural lore and habits of the people. Policy makers need to be sensitised in this area and should make a liable alternative to it, as it constitutes the lifeline of the people. The forest laws which are meant to protect the forest and its resources alienate the local people who have been caretakers of the forest for generations, and know the forest better than the state officials. It is laws made without consideration of the 'ways of life' and 'world-view' of the governed. Today, there the government laws existed side-by-side with the local customary laws of the villages and towns. So, there is a two-fold system of authority system for the local people's movement in the forest, which makes the forest and its resources' accessibility almost impossible.