The ecological background of Arunachal naturally bears on its agriculture and economy. Depending on the terrain and climate (supra, Ch.II) three types of agriculture prevail in this territory. The most common, though primitive, method is the jhum or shifting cultivation which is suitable on the slopes of hillsides in areas where heavy rainfall renders the valley floors swampy. The trees and under-growths are cut down and left on the fields to dry and then burnt. The charred remains are removed and ashes used to level the ground. The entire work till this stage is done by the community. Sowing is the responsibility of individual families except among the Padam-Miñongs among whom it is also done by the community. Harvest is taken up by individual family who store the grain in family granaries. Among the Khaatis, however, the entire agricultural work is looked after by the community and the product is stored in community granaries from where it is measured out to each family. After cultivation for two or three years the land is left fallow to regain its productivity and cultivation is shifted to some other site.

Large tracts of land in the valleys and hillsides with natural demarcation as well as streams and mountains are meant for utilisation by particular tribal groups, clans, sub-clans and villages. Violation of these rights led to tribal feuds in the
past. Agricultural plots, forests and settlement sites are owned jointly by the community. Individual right of cultivation is, however, recognised during the period of agriculture but suspended with its cessation. Then the land is used as common pasture. The type of individual possession is not uniform among all the tribes. Among the Gallongs a family can always claim a plot once it cultivated. The Padam-Miñongs can even sell, transfer, lease or exchange lands although only within the clan and village. The Nisi and Idu families jointly cultivate lands. The Hrusso individuals are allowed ownership of forest plots reclaimed. The Khanti chiefs possess private plots cultivated by their slaves.

Forest lands reserved for future utilisation is used for hunting and collection of forest products like cane, wood and edible roots on community basis. Clans or sub-clans, however, could be assigned separate zones. Such rights are not uniform among all the tribes.

Settlement sites in the areas of shifting cultivation are clan property. But individual families are allotted lands for construction of house, kitchen etc. Communities like the Adis also have clan houses for dormitories.

The other and permanent method of cultivation is practised on gentle slopes of the lower hills and valleys with moderate rainfall and the Apa Tanis are the only tribe of Arunachal who follow this method. They are very careful agriculturists, who
earlier depended solely on manual labour. Animals and mechanical traction have been introduced only in recent times. But their techniques of irrigation, soil preparation, classification of fields and attention to crops mark them out from the other tribes. They follow division of labour in their agricultural activities.

The agricultural holding, house sites and granaries are private property among the Apatanis. This leads to social inequality between individuals. Social status and prestige are determined by the amount of land holding. Private holding is, however, limited by their law of inheritance requiring equal distribution of land among all sons. Pastures and hunting grounds are owned by the clans and villages.

Both these methods are practiced together in the regions where sheltered valleys have less amount of rainfall with exposed parts above experiencing heavy rainfall. In these areas the plots under permanent cultivation are private property, while the land under shifting cultivation is owned by the community. The Monpas and Sherdukpen follow both these methods in accordance with the nature of terrain. Private lands are tended with care and manure is used to enhance and preserve fertility. Terracing on hillsides are done with all seriousness by the tribes like the Monpas. They along with the Khamtis, the Singphos and the Sherdukpen are the only tribes to use wooden plough drawn by cattle. Wheat, barley and maize are the main crops here. Millet is a jhum crop of the Monpas.
After independence permanent cultivation is gradually being introduced among all the tribes through the efforts of the government.

Depending on the nature of terrain and method of agriculture variety of crops are produced in different parts of the territory. In the main, however, the tribes in general are rice-eaters. Principal crops of the Monpas are barley, maize, chilli, wheat, oat, bean, pea, millet, onion, garlic, radish, pumpkin etc. Rice is also grown on terraced fields with the help of irrigation. Compared to them the Sherdukpons are deficient in agriculture. The Hrussos produce Indian corn, millet, matikalai, sweet potatoes, tobacco, chilli, rice and mustard. The Buguns who do the agriculture for the Hrussos, themselves produce millet, maize, wheat, potato, sweet potato and other vegetables. The Miji crops are wheat, wheat, barley, maize, millet, paddy, chilli, buck-wheat, potato, a sweet potato, some varieties of yam and tiber. The Nisis are not good in agriculture, but they grow cotton which they supply to the Apa Tanis in exchange for rice and cloth. The Hill Miris produce rice, millet, Indian corn, yam, sweet potato, small amount of tobacco, red pepper and meagre amount of rice. The Sulunga are more inclined to food gathering and nomadic habits. But they also produce rice, maize, millet and vegetables common to the neighbouring tribes. The Apa Tanis grow rice, millet and other dry crops. The Tagins live in unfertile lands and chiefly subsist on roots and games. Still they do some jhum cultivation and produce.
paddy, maize, beans, onion, brinjal, pumpkin-gourd, chilli, ginger, tobacco and a kind of leafy vegetable called gejang which is very popular among them. The Membas and Khembas resemble the Monpas of West Kameng. The Membas also produce millet. Among the Adis, the Boris produce millet, maize, paddy, pumpkin, brinjal, mustard, chilli and ginger. The Digarus, Mijus, Noctes etc. produce opium poppy. The Khamtis are expert cultivators and grow very good variety of rice as well as potato, other vegetables etc. The Singphos, Noctes, Tangsas, Wanchos also grow rice and practice jhum cultivation.

Agricultural products of the hills hardly fulfil the requirements of the hillmen. They were wont from long past to supplement their economy by hunting, fishing, rubber-tapping, trapping and rearing the animals and trade. Fishing, hunting, rubber-tapping and elephant-catching in the plains near the foothills often led to clashes with the plains people of Assam. To stop such conflicts the Ahom king Pratapasimha devised the posa system which was continued by the British rulers after their take-over of power from the Ahoms. But extension of tea plantation and creation of reserve forests in this region during the British rule curbed tribal rights of access. This was the reason behind frequent raids by the tribes.

The tribes also are known for different kinds of industry and crafts. Most of them are good weavers. The Monpas, Sherdukpons, Adis, Idus, Digarus, Tangsas, Khamtis, Singphos etc. are noted for characteristic designs and items of dress while some amount of cloth is also produced by other tribes like Apa Tanis, Hrussos etc. Monpa
carpets, felt caps, indigenous boots and skull caps of yak's hair produced by both the Monpas and Sherdukpens indicate their specialised skill. Bags, loin cloth, hair hands, coats and jackets are produced by different tribes.

The Sherdukpens are good carpenters, while the Monpas, Khamtis, Noctes, Wanchos etc. are expert in wood carving. Different types of masks of the Monpas and Khamtis represent the excellence of the artists and craftsmen. Basketry and cane work are seriously attended to by almost all the tribes. Helmets and hats are prepared out of these materials. Cane and bamboo bridges of the Hrusos, Adis and Mishmis deserve to be noted in this context.

Melting of iron, silver and other previous metals and forging of weapons, ornaments, images and amulets are practised by different tribes like the Monpas, Sherdukpens, Adis, Khamtis, Singphos and Tangsas. Ornaments of beads and previous stones like agate, cornelian etc. fashioned by them be speak their artistic sensibility. While the Adis practise the art of pottery, the Khamtis and Singphos prepare shields of rhinoceros and buffalo hides. Among other industries salt extraction by the Noctes may be noted.

Trade played an important role in the economy of the tribes. The tribal people traded with Tibet and the plains of Assam since
fairly early times. The tribes living near the northern borders traded with Tibet and those near the foothills with Assam. Other tribes living in the central part acted as intermediaries between these two groups. Salt, iron, blankets, beads, silver ornaments and cloth were imported in the hills from Tibet and Assam. The tribes also exchange some commodities between themselves. The tribes of north and south thus formed two zones having contact with Tibet and Assam respectively, while the people of the central part of the territory represented the middle zone or layer having no such outlet and consequently depended on the tribes of the other two sectors for articles imported from Tibet and Assam. They could also participate in the trade between Tibet and Assam only in a limited scale when it passed through their own habitats. The three layer stratification was jealously maintained by the tribes of the out zones to retain their monopoly. This created trade blocks and often forced trade through unnatural round about routes.

Many a trade route of ancient and medieval period passed through this territory as noted before (supra, Ch.II). The more important trade routes to Tibet passed through Tawang and Tsona Dzong. Another route in the Lohit district ran from Assam to the Zayul region of Tibet. The British government established trade posts and constructed new roads to obviate the trade blocks for economic development. Annual fairs were organised at Udalguri and Daimara in the Darrang district and another at Sadiya in Assam. The Monpas, Sherdukpen, Hrussos and Misis visited the Udalguri and Daimara fairs.
The Nisis, Adis and Mishmis (Idus, Digarus and Mijus) attended the Sadiya fair. Poppies, cattle, salt, blankets, caoutchouc, and a febrifuge called the Mishmi tita, wax, and rubber were items of export from the hills to the plains. The hillmen imported from the plains iron, salt, rice, silk and cotton goods. In the trade with Tibet the tribal people are known to have imported blankets, beads, ornaments, horses etc. while textiles, minerals, forest produce and rice were exported since early times as known from the Ahom and British records.