CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In India, more than 87 per cent of the total population live in rural area and 60.36 per cent of the total working forces are engaged in agriculture (Sonam, 1996: 73). The tribal population in particular are dependent on agriculture which is more extensive combining of both shifting as well as settled cultivations. Thus, it is obvious from the fact that agriculture is the main stay of tribal population.

Anthropologists across the world have studied economics of tribes in endeavours to ethnographic researches. This became much focused since the development of economic anthropology which has generated contested theoretical domains for understanding so-called “Primitive” or “Peasant” economies. But this tradition is loosing its importance or fallen into disuse in this country to some extent, now-a-days due to more inclination towards other emerging socio-cultural dimensions with the changing socio-economic system in the country and the world as a whole.

In India, plethora of works has been done largely by the anthropologists and also marginally by other scholars on the economies of the tribes as a whole and these have initiated debates on the very concept of “Tribal Economy” itself. For instance, work on the tribal economy has reflected by various scholars like Mukherjee (1982), Mathew (1980), Chaudhuri (1990), Singh (1998), Roy and Kuri (2001), Rymbai (1980), Roy Burman (1987), etc. who largely focused on the land reform system among the tribal communities in India. The changing economic conditions and the nature of transformation are discussed by Bag (2001), Ganguly (1994), Haimendorf (1982), Sarkar (2000), in a holistic perspective. So, today the concept “tribal economy” is neither perceived as a monolithic category nor substantiates the so-called notion of “egalitarianism” among the tribes. However, this does not detour us to
accept that agriculture is the backbone of tribal economies of our country.

However, Betaille (1972: 155) says that anthropological studies will continue to be one-sided unless we adopt a broader concept of social organization - one which will accommodate economic organization as a vital dimension of it. Agriculture is determined by the various factors, such as, ecological settings, socio-cultural systems, technological availabilities, etc. Accordingly, the socio-cultural factors influence the formulation of different typologies and patterns, such as, shifting or jhum cultivation, wet rice cultivation, terrace cultivation, etc. For example, many scholars have also discussed the socio-cultural factors as the guiding principles in the sphere of economic development, especially in the field of agricultural production in India. Bose, Nair, Srinivas, Dube, Epstein, Bailey etc. are some of the pioneers lead in this field as cited by Chakrabarti (1986: 172). Henceforth, study of only socio-cultural situation neglecting the agrarian system is incomplete to know any tribal community and their economy as well.

However, ways of cultivation may differs from community to community and region to region in terms of typology, implements used, seasonal variations, operational organization, variety of crops grown, land-use, land rights, etc. Thus, it is an urgent need to build up a comprehensive understanding of various agrarian modes of subsistence of a region of communities for the formulation of any meaningful plan for economic development. Anthropologically, it demands not only to understand the above mentioned factors including its production, consumption and distribution norms but also to understand various non-economic aspects of agrarian institution as well. Further, it also tries to understand the urgent needs of the native people in this transitional stage from rudimentary form of cultivation to sedentary. In this regard, Rao (2006: 7) has advocated, “In olden times, shifting or jhum cultivation was one of the major agricultural practices among the tribes of Changlang district. However, these days the acreage under wet rice cultivation is increasing”.

There are holistic observations that most of the induce agricultural development planning and schemes are unable to bear its fruits to the garden because of the fact that we have no microscopic studies yet in terms of community or tribe-
base in relation to agriculture in Changlang District in particular and Arunachal Pradesh as a whole.

Now, in the context of Arunachal Pradesh, it can be said that it is the largest state of north-east India in terms of area (i.e. 83743 sq. km.) though it contains smallest size of population (1,097,968) as per 2001 Census of India. According to the Human Development Report (2005: 4), Arunachal has a highly precipitous and varied terrain (Fleming, 1995) and its elevation range from 300 meters on the edge of Assam to above 7000 meters on its northern borders. The land is unparalleled in the world, for the concentration, isolation and diversity of tribal cultures it contains. No where else can one find such a patch work of discrete types of pre-industrial political economies in such a small area, including, semi-nomadic Sweden agriculture, high mountain pastoralism and traditional trade and barter (Taylor, 1998). Economy of Arunachal Pradesh is mainly based on agriculture; for instance, above 90 per cent of the total population depends on cultivation. Where, the jhum and shifting cultivation alone occupy 75 per cent of the above mentioned area though some tribes like Apatanis (Haimendorf, 1982: 37) are still known for their unique traditionally settled cultivation. Socio-cultural and economic activities of the tribal people of Arunachal are intimately associated with the agricultural operation throughout the year.

Mathur in his book, *Anthropology and Development in Traditional Societies* (1995), has extensively dealt with various issues, such as, the role of Anthropology in poverty alleviation programmed, Anthropology and public administration, role of Anthropology in modernizing traditional agriculture, controlling population growth, rehabilitating displaced persons and implementing programmes of human development as also putting Anthropology to practical use (Sahay & Singh, 1998, p: 196).

Of all the Social Sciences, Anthropology has the distinction of having field work tradition. Rigorous training in the field enables an anthropologist to be more familiar with the tribal and rural environment than others (ibid, p: 194). Thus, it is clear from the above fact that there is utmost necessity of an anthropological study in the proposed area in order to understand various dimension of agrarian system and
nature of agrarian change from the contemporary perspective.

**Literature review**

Plethora of works are available relating to the nature of agrarian economy and its transformations; some of which are reviewed below:

In the context of a village in Burdwan district of West Bengal, Chakrabarti (1986) did a seminal work describing agricultural operations and organizations of labours, land-use, technological notions of cultivators, and rural dimensions of agriculture. In addition, he also analyzed and highlighted the socio-economic condition of the people.

Srinivas (1997) has focused on agricultural operations, land-use system, importance of animals and environmental relationships at Rampura village. There are the other scholars who have also dealt with the same dimension, such as, Nayak (1997), Tripathy (1988), Ramakrishnan (1993), Das (1984), De and Bandyopadhyay (1982), etc. Besides, Mishra (2008) and Bhattacharjee (2006) have also worked on the same domains in the context of North-East India.

Beteille (1994) tried to analyze the critical structure of agrarian society in India. In this regard, he has emphasized his focus basically on different caste and class groups of agrarian society. In relation to the above theme there are other valuable works attempted by the following scholars such as, Dhanagare (2001), Dasgupta et al. (2000), Dasgupta and Hennesey et al. (2000).

Thorner (1956) in his book focused on the agricultural land reforms around the states of India. He further tried to focus on the abolition of intermediaries Act. Vaidyanathan (1996) gave emphasis on the urgent needs of institutional reform of agriculture. Apart from this, he also mentioned the role of NGOs, government and private agencies in the field of agriculture.

Dasgupta (1989) deals with the adoption of agricultural innovation in India,
which resulted into good productivity in terms of commercialization. For the better understanding of agricultural diffusion he has made an attempt to deal with the entire processes and stages of agriculture in India.

With the fast progressing and changing society, new institution known as “share cropping” is making its root in India which is more dominant in case of the settled cultivation areas. It has been studied by Kuri (1999), Sharma (1996), Dreze (1996) etc. in different spatial contexts.

Ramakrishnan (1993) and Sachchidananda (1989) have dealt with the comparative studies on shifting cultivations among the tribal communities of north-east region and of India as a whole. In this respect, they basically gave emphasis on the different strategies and pointed out some suggestions and policies related to the same. There are numerous other scholars who gave critical observations on such views, such as, Ganguly (2005), Dutta (1980), Danda (1994), Wadia (1980), etc.

Ganguly (1994, 2004) analyzed the changing economic condition among the north-eastern tribal communities in an account of the shift in agricultural mode of production, as a result of which the people are moving towards “market dependent economy”. Alauddin (1999), Das and Duary (2005), Chaudhuri (1998). Sharma (2004) etc. also studied on the issues related to similar contexts in India in general and north-east India in specific.

West (2009), while studying Mossi communities of the Central Plateau of Burkina Faso (West Africa) tried to examine how agricultural intensification and livelihood diversification leads to dynamics household transformations and how domestic group fission and fuse between extended and nuclear forms of families.

In regard to agricultural system and its nature of constraints to the productivity, development, etc. owing to uneven topographical location of the most of the tribal regions of north-east India in particular and India in general, plenty of works has been done from interdisciplinary perspectives, such as, Borah (1993), Beteille (1972), Mohanty (1996), Hussain (1993), Goswami (1993), Borthakur et al. (1986).
Patton (1980), etc.

In order to collect the household data and other data especially for socio-economic research in agriculture under conditions prevalent in developing countries was described by Nyariki (2009) in his paper by giving the examples of Kenya, the sources and types of data, the procedure adopted in surveys and other forms of data collection, including focus group discussions and questionnaire use, are discussed which was supported by Yotsumoto, Y. et al. (2009). In support they mentioned that the research methodologies like, informal dialogues and observations with different age and sex groups irrespectively, should be carried out.

However, in the context of Arunachal Pradesh there is hardly any tribe specific work published in connection to agrarian economy despite of enormous possibilities and urgent needs. Some of the published works are reviewed below:

Gopalakrishnan (1994) deals on some aspects of agriculture mainly on the land-use and its related activities in general. Jha (1988) made an attempt to highlight some aspects of land tenure system, practice of jhum cultivation, consumption patterns of Arunachalees, etc. Sonam (1996) deals with the shifting cultivations only. Thakur (2002) and Nayak (2002) tried to highlight on some important aspects of agricultural practice including positive impacts of introducing improved agricultural inputs in producing agricultural products of Arunachal Pradesh. They also tried to find out the nature of technology and perception behind the technologies in an area. Choudhury (1994) tried to describe briefly most of the agricultural aspects with reference to two Siang districts (east and west) of Arunachal Pradesh, such as, soil fertility, irrigation, varieties of crops grown, modes of production, tools and implements use and not excluded land-use and agricultural activities (livestock, etc.) also. Moreover, Dutta (1990) also tried to discuss briefly the land-use patterns, tools and implements used, cycle of jhuming and economy as a whole among Wanchos of Tirap district.

Kuri (1996) and Mishra (2002), deal with agricultural labours in terms of labour-use patterns, relationship with landowners, forms of tenancy and its working
behaviours. Kuri (ibid) attempted to show behavioural model of both tenants and owners. Growth, development and changing or transformation of economy in Arunachal Pradesh is studied by Bhattacharjee (2002) and Tyagi (1980) from a macro perspective. Gibi (2004) also attempted the same with special reference to Arunachal Pradesh. Recently, Harriss-White et al. (2009) also studied the above aspects from the perspective of economics.

Celebration of festival-cum-rituals and agriculture are the two sides of a coin among the tribes of Arunachal including the Tongsas of Changlang district. Besides, such practices are generally observed among the tribes of the entire globe. In this regard Rao (2008) and Habung (2008) tried to focus on existing agricultural festivals and rituals among Mossang Tongsas and Apatanis communities respectively. Thus festivals and rituals are complimentary to agriculture, as evident among most of the tribes dependent on various forms of agriculture.

Recently published Human Development Report (2005) on Arunachal Pradesh categorically emphasized the urgent needs of such tribes or region specific studies which has tremendous policy implication in a state like Arunachal where still no cadastral survey has been done and people of this state are yet to have any records of their cultivable lands.

Under the new Agricultural Policy Government (2005:77) would encourage formation of “Self–Help Group” and “Village Committees” is encouraged which are in the charge of maintaining, and managing the assets created so far like irrigation channels, terraces, market sheds, etc. It also says about the building of price support system, agro-processing units, food and drought management, supply of inputs and facilitating private investment in agriculture. Tribal as well as area specific studies will reveal possibilities and constraints of such a new version in order to boost agrarian economic base of this state.

Moreover, in the new policy, State Government also categorically mentioned that agricultural research, based on identified agro-climatic zones, will be accorded foremost importance. Efforts will be made to build a well organized, efficient and
result oriented agricultural research and education system for introducing
technological change in the agricultural sector. In order to address various agrarian
issues Government mentioned that the data base for the agricultural sector will be
strengthened to ensure the greatest reliability of estimates and forecasting, which will
help in the process of planning and policy making.

Thus, from the above reality, it is obvious that the present study is the first
attempt to understand "changing agrarian scenario and its impacts on the socio-
economic conditions" of the Longchangs in particular and the Tangsas in general
which will definitely provide critical inputs for strengthening empirical tribe-specific
knowledge base which is needed at this crucial juncture for meaningful
implementation of new agricultural policy of this frontier state.

Study Area

Historically, by and large, Tangsas in general and the Longchang in particular
(cited) are shifting hill cultivators. Some scholars like Dutta, Chaudhury, etc. have
also supported and supplemented this statement in clear terms. For example,
Choudhury (2008: 101) advocated the people (Tangsa and others), in general, follow
a system of shifting cultivation called jhum. It is an old traditional method of
cultivation devised by the hill people to adopt themselves to the ecological conditions.

It needs to be mentioned here why the universe of the present study is centring
on Longchangs rather than Tangsas in general. This is aptly clarified by Bhagabati
(2004: 179-180) by saying, Tangsa over the years do not in any manner represent one
traditional societal or structural unit. The traditional social situation in the hills was
never one which offered any scope for the Tangsa to act as a sort of corporate
functional unit. The smaller units or the so called sub-tribes were on the other hand,
meaningful social universe, each possessing most of the characteristics of the tribe,
such as, cultural and linguistic homogeneity, territorial contiguity, common pattern of
social organization though not organized as single political units under any sort of
centralized leadership or chiefs, as he added (ibid). Out of more than 18 (eighteen)
constellations of allied tribes Longchang, Muklom, Tikhak, Jugli, Mossang, Kimsing, Yongkuk, Ronraang, Mungrey, Laangching, Ponthai, Hawai Hari, Longphi, Longrei, Sakeng, Sangwal, Thamphang, Ngaimung, etc. are the prime units which constitute larger Tangsa (Hill People) identity.

In Longchangs, jhum or shifting field is called Kharang Pok or Kang Pok and the settled or wet field is called Nah Pok respectively. Traditionally they are shifting hill cultivators but since 1960’s onwards with the intervention of Government agents they gradually inclined towards settled cultivation which is obviously much more effective mode of productive strategy and within last four to five decades this became part of their tradition itself. This has lead to the new forms of agrarian relationships' new land tenure arrangements along with alien institution of share cropping within the heterogeneous contractual frame. Thus, these types of operational frames are contrary to what is the popular notion of "Tribal Economy". In addition to these, they are gradually building up linkages with the local markets by expanding their consumption norms and distribution patterns.

It may be added that Changlang is one of the major districts of Arunachal Pradesh and situated in the eastern most part of Arunachal and India as a whole. District headquarters of Changlang is Changlang itself. It is bounded by Lohit district in the north, Myanmar (Burma) in the east and south-east, Assam in the west and Tirap district in the south-west. The Changlang district covers total geographical area of 4,622 sq. km. with 125,422 persons (2001 census) among which 65,821 are males and 59,601 are females.

In general, Changlang district is inhabited by the tribes of Tangsas, Singphos, Tutsas and Lisus or Yobins. It consists of 13 circles, namely, Changlang (headquarter), Miao, Nampong, Jairampur, Bordumsa, Namtok, Khimiyang, Kharsang, Yatdam, Diyun, Manmao, Rima-Putok and Vijoynagar with distinct altitudinal variations. The Longchangs, on whom the present study is focused mainly inhabit in the four major circles of the Changlang district which are drained through three major rivers i.e. Noa-Dihing, Tirap and Namechik. They presently inhabit in 16 (sixteen) villages of Changlang District of Arunachal Pradesh.
Map 1.1: Political Maps of (a) Arunachal Pradesh & (b) Study Area
It is evident that no work has been done among the Longchanghs or the Tangsas or any other tribes under Changlang district as a whole in relation to the above discussed issues. Thus, this is the first work done by the researcher in his own community in relation to the said research problem.

Objectives

The present study focuses on the following objectives:

(i) To identify the fundamental factors of changing agrarian institution which lead to concomitant changes in socio-economic condition.

(ii) To understand various intricate aspects of agrarian system, structure and their interrelationships.

(iii) About the customary laws for the management of land and labour and how people are negotiating with the emerging wider socio-political realities.

(iv) To understand the local knowledge base in relation to production as well as protection of crops, crops diversity, preservation of seeds etc.

(v) How far people are aware of different developmental initiatives of the state and other agencies and what about people’s attitude towards the new agricultural policy and inputs.

(vi) To throw light on the factors and impacts of changes in the institution of land ownerships and agrarian modes of production.

(vii) To understand implications of the non-economic aspects of agricultural economy among the Longchanghs.

Methodology

In Anthropology, there are various field methods through which the field data are collected empirically. The present study also involves certain anthropological methods and techniques through which the field data has been collected.

For the present study the primary data has been collected by undertaking
extensive field studies in the studied villages. An attempt has been made to cover all the selected villages rigorously. The researcher selected six (6) sample villages out of total sixteen (16) Longchang villages and of four (4) Circles of the Changlang District, such as, New Changlang, Rangkatu and Jungmeisung villages of proper Changlang Circle (headquarter itself), New Kuthung village of Namtok Circle, Taipong village of Jairampur Circle and New Yumchum village of Miao Circle respectively. The above studied villages are selected by taking an account of some criteria, such as, Circle wise, geographical locations and its distances from respective circles and headquarter, socio-agricultural conditions, their relative access to different indicators of development, religious practices, etc.

In order to collect primary data conventional anthropological field methods, such as, interviews (with both structured and unstructured schedules), observations (both participant and non-participant), and case studies, biographies. Digital camera and tape recorders have been used. Hence, the qualitative study methods like Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews along with participant observation are also incorporated in the study which is said to be more flexible and much appropriate study method for traditional tribal societies. Nowadays, most of the social scientists believe in this kind of qualitative study, e.g. Scholar like Shimray (2007) also had incorporated this to study the Naga traditional societies and so on. Researcher has done extensive household enumeration with structured and unstructured schedules to collect basic demographic information and various aspects of agrarian institutions. Official records related to different agricultural and non-agricultural programmes are collected from relevant circles offices as well as district offices. Therefore, the present study is primarily synchronic in nature though diachronic dimensions are taken into consideration wherever possible.

Here, the researcher being a Longchang by birth has an advantage in collecting authentic and in-centric data from the study areas which are anthropologically specialized in the research fields. But, however here, the researcher observed and experienced personally (during field studied in New Changlang village at proper Changlang District in 2008) that to some extents the insider researcher may
have some limitations in collecting the valid and reliable data from the proposed villages' study areas. Because in certain cases the researcher is being well known and respected by the informants since he is an insider researcher or so-called brother, son-in-law, cousin, nephew etc. in terms of social relation for informants. In such juncture the informants may hesitate to tell the truth and give authentic information. Here, the same case was experienced and came over by the researcher himself during his field study (cited).

Besides, the researcher has used genealogical method in the present study in order to understand intricate aspects of change in individual occupation within the clan and society as a whole, which has taken place through successive generations. This anthropological method of field data collection was developed by W.H.R. Rivers while on the Torres Straits Expedition around the turn of the century (Roy, 2003, p: 692). Here Morgan also used genealogical technique to study kinship organization. Since then genealogical technique became an important tool to study kinship system of society and associated behaviour patterns like duties, privileges, status, roles, etc. (Upadhyay & Pandey, 2002, p: 463). Moreover, in fact, genealogical method has been used in this study is also to depict inheritance patterns of landed property, occupational mobility, etc.

The researcher has also incorporated measuring units i.e. “Traditional Measuring Unit” (TMU) in order to find out actual land holdings and productivity in terms of paddy crop in both settled and jhum fields. This incorporation of measuring units is very significant because in the study areas there are no earlier records present regarding the size of field owned by each individual except in some cases of tea gardens which are already applied for LPC (Land Possession Certificate)\(^1\) or owned LPC which are recorded in the respective government offices. Whereas, in case of

\(^1\)It can be obtained from the Village Office concerned. For obtaining this certificate, an application on white paper affixing the required court fee stamp addressed to the Village Officer concerned. There will be no fee obtaining for it. The Possession Certificate will prove the present possession of the property concerned, as on data on verifying the relevant documents and site inspection of the applicant by the Village Officer, he will certified with his signature and office seal. Further, the most important is that the same application must be enclosed with Approval or Clearance Certificate of the concerned Village Authority (Available: http://soti.org/images/general/article_law_gns_slub.PDF. Accessed on 8th October, 2010).
settled and *jhum* cultivated areas or fields there are no official records of individual land holding yet, in the rural areas to measure the shape, size and production of fields. Thus, it is the only way to know their actual land holdings and production by using their own distinct measuring unit.

Being an anthropological study it is necessary to represent phonetically correct pronunciation of dialects and words that the tribes speak. So, in order to express correct pronunciation of the studied people and tribe as well, the researcher has adopted “additional vowels”\(^1\) in the present writing.

The Researcher, being an insider is also aware of the existing debates related to ethics of field work as well as “emic” and “etic” perspectives in anthropology (Srinivas 2004, Obeyesekere 2004, Narayanan 1998). Researcher supplements strongly what Lambek (2002:3) has said, “The best anthropology is also self critical; here our concern with overcoming the various and multiple forms of ethnocentrism and intellectual narrowness remains a characteristic feature of any contribution that wishes seriously to be taken as anthropological”.

The researcher started his field journey to New Yumchum village (Miao Circle) on 6\(^{th}\) May 2007 and conducted a field study between 7\(^{th}\) to 11\(^{th}\) May 2007, 26\(^{th}\) May to 8th June 2007, 18\(^{th}\) to 22\(^{nd}\) October 2007 and on 6\(^{th}\) to 12\(^{th}\) April 2009. Study was conducted in Taipong village (Jairampur Circle) from 8\(^{th}\) to 23\(^{nd}\) August 2008, from 12\(^{th}\) to 13\(^{th}\) November 2008 for 2 (two) days along with some official data collection. Field survey to New Kuthung village (Namtok Circle) was done from 12\(^{th}\) to 28\(^{th}\) April 2008, 21\(^{st}\) June to 8\(^{th}\) July 2008, two days programme from 21\(^{st}\) and 22\(^{nd}\) October 2008 in new Kuthung and including Lajum and Sagunbari villages at

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\(^1\) In Arunachal, majority of the tribes like Tani group: Adis, Galos, Minyongs, Padams, Nishis, Tagin, Apatani etc., Tangsas, Noctes etc. speak their own dialects (mother tongue). Their dialects are distinct from one another and unique. Despite of far differences in their dialects and tunes there exists of two common extra vowels sounds like ‘iu’ (i) and ‘eu’ (ə) in relation to Roman vowels. So, to express or to write correct pronunciation of their dialects or languages in roman script one should incorporate the above mentioned vowels which are represented by the symbols ‘i’ for iu and ‘ə’ for eu respectively (Abraham, 2005). For example, the word “Pək” (meaning field) can be pronounced as Peuk and another word, “Him” (meaning house) can be pronounced as Hium. But, simply pronouncing Peuk and Hium instead of Pək and Him does not make correct sense of meaning what the Longchangs call for. So, to express correct pronunciation and meaning the researcher has incorporated the above mentioned vowels (i and ə) in this writing.
Margherita, Assam. At Jungmeisung village, the researcher conducted field works from 24th to 30th July 2007, 28th August to 30th September 2007, 23rd to 29th October 2007, and 11th to 21st December 2007. For the next study village i.e. New Changlang village/ Salom, the researcher has done field work in the month of January in 2009 and from 2nd to 9th April 2009. Regarding, Rangkatu village research has been conducted during 2006-07 and 1st to 27th August 2007 and so on for the rest. Here, sometimes the researcher had to cover more than one study areas at a time because there was a question of capturing agricultural stages and activities existing in a single time and space. However, it was not be possible in all studied villages due to distance factor.