CHAPTER 7
ECONOMIC LIFE

Life of the hill people in the past was full of drudgery and strenuous. In order to make their life sustainable they had to devise and exert their genius and physical power to manufacture and procure their daily necessities. They wear their indigenously spanned cloths, harnessed their tools and implements, knitted their basketry items, feed on the vegetable and cereals which they grew from their agricultural fields. In a word, they were self managed and self sustaining. But with the advancement of civilization, improvement in communication system, spread of modern education, availability of industrially manufactured goods, new avenues for employment in government services and other non governmental organizations, new indulgence in trade and business, etc. life in the hills has no more been so hard and tedious as it was in the past. Their economy and way of life has been considerably changed. The broad features of the economy of the hill people in general and of the Ngaihtes in particular can be studied under the following outlines.

7.1 Agriculture

Agriculture continued to be main source of livelihood. The sloping hilly ranges of the Chin Hills in Myanmar and that of Mizoram and Churachandpur district in Manipur are the lands which are cultivated for procuring food and vegetable by the ethnologically related Chin, Kuki and Mizo people. Due to lack of new tools and implements which can be employed in the hilly terrains, and inability to introduce alternative method of cultivation, the old aged shifting method of cultivation is still
followed. Small pieces of plain areas on the bank of the Tuisa river - Boundary river between India and Myanmar and the narrow strip of fertile land along the Tuitha river in the Khuga valley of Churachandpur district are the only places where terrace method of cultivation can be employed.¹

(i) **Shifting Cultivation**

Shifting cultivation for a particular year begin after harvesting the previous year’s crops. Usually, crops are harvested every year from the last part of October till late November and the procedure for the next year’s cultivation initiated from December onward. A farmer has to follow the following processes for accomplishing his shifting method of cultivation.

**Selection of site**

The village chief called a meeting of his council of elders and heads of every family to select a new site for the upcoming cultivating season. After thorough discussion selection of a large tract of land to the east, or west, or north, or south of the village is finalized. The site is divided among the villagers according to the desire and capacity of the family members to work. Usually, large families received large tract of land and small families receiving small area. The procedure for distribution of land is not always the same. Sometimes, following the earlier distribution system every family might cultivate the same site which was cultivated by them in the earlier years. Sometimes lottery system is employed. Whatever might be the case, members of the council of elders first selected the site of their choice for them and then the procedure

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¹ Interview with Mr. Liankhogin, 58 years at Canchipur on 23.3.2011.
for distribution among the village people followed. After distribution of the site, a date is fixed on which day every householder would go to the selected site and marked the portion of their share by erecting a small stem with two short pieces of bamboo strips inserted at the top ‘crossing each other’ as a sign of reservation. This is called Lou en

**Clearing of jungle**

According to their convenience and capacity every family will go to the field and started cutting down the forest. All the trees, bamboos and other natural growth would be cut down during the month of January and February and kept them dry in the sun. Nevertheless, the large trees which are too big to be hewed down with sword or an axe are left standing. However, the branches of such trees are also cut off leaving the trunk maimed. A spot covered with the growth of bamboo is considered the best site because the ash of bamboo is a good fertilizer and the ground where bamboos are grown thickly could be easily weeded out during weeding season. During the drying season of the field rainfall was mostly unwanted. The dried up foliage, tree trunks, bamboos and all other hewed down forest growth would be burned in the month of March. This is called Lou hall. In order to prevent spreading of the fire from the field to the surrounding forest, some open track is prepared around the field by cutting down all the standing trees and removing them from the ground. This is called Meilam. On the day, the field is burned the villagers standing along the Meilam, holding bamboo sticks in their hands will try to beat and extinguish the fire in case the fire spread to the neighboring forest. But if high wind comes, their efforts are occasionally in vain and then is to be seen that grandest and most awful of all spectacles – a forest fire. Sometimes, large pieces of logs, branches of trees, tendrils etc. which were not
completely dried up during the drying season are left behind after the scourge of fire. Later on, they are collected, piled up together and then burned again. This is called Mang tom. When the ground is fully cleared the field is ready for sowing of different kinds of seed. The soil is not ploughed with animal, or no manure, or no chemical fertilizer is used.²

**Sowing of seeds and weeding of field**

The villagers including young and old, men and women will go to the fields; the male members carrying indigenously made cotton bag hanging down from their shoulder and their women carrying a small bamboo/cane basket each slinging at the hip containing mixtures of seeds of rice, water melon, maize, cucumber, sesamum etc., and several numbers of hoes for their use and also for the use of the male members. Therefore, different kinds of seeds are sawn in the same field. As rice is the staple food of the hill people, rice is grown in the largest quantity. The growing season for various kinds of crops is April and May³.

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² Interview with Mr. Liakhopau, 74 years at Bungmual village on 15.4.2011.
³ Interview with Mrs. Haokhoniang 52 years at Canchipur on 12.4.2011.
Rice sowing played a very important part and assumes a very significant even in the cultivating activities. The work is simple but done manually. During the seed sowing season, both men and women, normally used a small bag of cane called Kongvom for carrying the rice seeds. With its sling the kongvom is tied at the back above the loin having rice seeds inside it. With the help of a little hoe a small hole is dig in the earth by the right hand and a few grains of rice taken out from the cane basket by the left hand and dropped into the hole and the earth thrown over. For executing this seed sowing activities different working groups are formed. The usual practice is that the family members will go to their own fields and sown the seeds by themselves. But under certain circumstances, such as due to illness or because of other reasons the family members become unable to complete the work in time. They resorted to inviting near relatives, friends and villagers to help them in their work. This is called Thachial. On such thachial day the thachial family has to prepare curry for the mid-day meal, while the guest workers would bring their own tiffin- rice

Kongvom for carrying rice seeds  Little hoe

Another method of working used to be that, many of the villagers joined together forming a group of workers known as buhtuh lawmpi. In Hmar language, it is called
butu khuonglawm. According to Ruoivel Pangamte, a senior citizen, who belongs to the Hmar community: “this occasion is marked by great felicity because it is the time for collective participation of the community in the sowing of seed”. Pudaite, a distinguish missionary from Churachandpur, now staying in USA as an US citizen gave the detail explanation:-

There are times when as many as five hundred persons would group together (for Butu khuonglawm). They would start from the furthest field and move gradually toward the village. They sing as they sow and make a festival out of it. The work of such a mingling multitude could not be done with due care and the farmer feel fortunate if the rain comes at night. In fact, in such a crowd often the weak one cannot keep pace with the strong and drop seed without digging holes. They justify the action as they sing:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Thing ka tuk thinga ka thlak,} \\
\text{Lung ka tuk lunga ka thlak;} \\
\text{Ka Chung khuongruo a sur pha leh,} \\
\text{Ama'n khurbi zawng de.}
\end{align*}
\]

{As I hit a stump (of a tree), I sow on the stump, 
As I hit a rock; I sow on the rock; 
When the rain falls from above, 
It will seek a hole for itself.} \(^4\)

Lalthamuong Keivom, a retired Indian ambassador noted that there were two reasons why butu khuonglawm was practiced: First, in the even of their enemy suddenly came and attacked them they would act and join together easily; secondly, they preferred to work and entertain together in group. The different kinds of vegetable grown in the field along with rice includes cabbage, cauliflower, mustard, pea, bean, soya bean, yams, gourd, potato, tomato, bringer, cucumber, ladies finger, pumpkin, snake gourd, bitter gourd, water melon, chili, sweet potato, etc. Few kinds of spices are

\(^4\) Rev. Dr. Lalmuoklien: *Gospel through Darkness*, published by the author at Smart Offset Printers, Rengkai, Churachandpur, p.31.
also grown. They are onion, turmeric, garlic, cinnamon, coriander leave, black piper etc.\(^5\)

**Loubuuk**

A small house or hut is constructed in the field after the fields are burnt - the materials for which, like wood, bamboo and thatch are collected from the surrounding forest. This house is called *loubuuk*. During the Mangtom season the Loubuuk provided a suitable place for rest and shelter from the heat of the sun and rain, storms etc. During weeding season also those families which found it difficult to go to their field and come back to their house every day use to stay in the Loubuuk - weeding the young crops by day and defending them by night from the beasts that would come to feed on the fresh-springing green tops. On Sunday, or on any other day when they felt tired of the drudgery and toiling work, they will come out of the field to take fresh lift in the village. Weeding of the field is done thrice or four times in a year. After laborious working and sweating profusely because of the intense heat of the sun in the field; and resting on the logs of fallen trees amides the sprouting paddy seedling, eating of succulent cucumber and sweet water melon which were plucked from from their plants growing in the field is highly soothing, refreshing, and recuperating the dwindled energy.\(^6\)

**Harvesting**

Harvesting season started from later half of October onward till late November every year. The rice sheaves are cut with scythe and collected inside their

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\(^5\) Rev. Dr. Lalthmuoklien:op.cit.n.4  
\(^6\) Mr. Liankhopau : Op. cit. n.2
bamboo/cane basket which slung from the shoulder and hanging at the back of the farmer. The sheaves are piled together at a place, specially prepared for it called *phual*. At this *phual* the rice sheaf are threshed to separate the grain from the straw.

The field, a farmer cultivated in an average varies from one acre to two acres or may be three or more. The annual output of paddy varies from one hundred to three hundred kerosene tin full. After harvesting, all the products from the field are carried to the granary of the farmer in the village. But in some cases the field became very far from the village, say 7-8 miles and it became too difficult to carry the loads to the village instantly. In such cases, temporary barns are constructed at about half way of the distance between the village and the field. All the field products, in the first instance are transferred from the field to the temporary barn and then to the granary in the village. The rice products in the field can be divided into two kinds – one is called *buhman* and another called *buhpi*. *Buhman* is harvested in the month of October and *buhpi* in the month of November. *Buhpi* is the commonly eaten rice, while *Buhman* is a very sticky rice and commonly used in the preparation of a bread called *tanghou*. *Buhman* also constituted an essential item in the preparation of wine or rice bear.
Ngaihtes are in general fond of sweet rice, especially for tiffin at mid-day meals. *Buhpi* again, according to the time of their harvesting can be divided into three varieties. Those harvested in the month of September are called *buhpal* (early ripening), those harvested in the month of October are called *buhpi* (main rice) and those harvested in the month of November are called *buhgei* (late ripening). Harvesting of different items of cereals and vegetable grown in the field is carried out during the month October to November. After harvesting, such as yam, sweet potato and pumpkin etc. are dried up in the sun in the field and are preserved as much as possible so that they can be used in future. These preserved vegetable provided to some families sufficient item of curry till the next growing season. By selling chili, rice, yam, pumpkin and cucumber many farmers can earn hefty amount of money. 

(ii) **Advantages and disadvantages of mixed cultivation and of shifting cultivation**

The advantages of growing rice along with other vegetable in the same field is that no separate field and no extra labor for weeding for each and every item of crop and vegetable grown in the field is required, all the items grown can be harvested from the same field. But there is the disadvantage side also. Except rice, all other items cultivated in the field are sawn in small quantity. There is overgrowth of one kind of vegetable by another. The crop that is stronger and faster in growth became dominant while the crop that is weaker and slower in growth became recessive. As such some people prepare separate fields for yam, chili, zinger and sesame etc. Yields from such separate fields are to a certain extend larger.

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7 Interview with Mrs. Thiamnu 53 years of Santing village at Canchipur on 25.5.2011
Another advantage of shifting cultivation is that every time a new field is prepared fresh fertile soil is obtained which favored proper growth of crops and bush their production. But the disadvantage is that, after cultivating a place the farmer has to go to another fresh place for the next year’s cultivation leaving behind the old field for growth of new vegetation and recuperation of the soil because all the manure and fertility of the soil is exhausted in that year. Every time a new site is cultivated, the farmer has to spend the same amount of labor as he exerted in the previous year’s cultivation. Cultivation goes on every year; shifting from one place to another till the entire village land is covered. After completing one round of cultivation, the next round begins starting from the first cultivation site. Those villages having fewer houses with large village land areas had longer period for soil recuperation as such their soil become more fertile with greater output per area; those villages with more houses but not with comparatively larger land area for cultivation has shorter period for soil recuperation, which mean lesser fertile soil, and with lesser output. The desirable period for soil recuperation is ten to twelve years. But due to increase in population, now-a-day, the same land has been cultivated after six or seven years, and even in some villages after three or four years which is too short for soil recuperation and large scale production.

(iii) Crops separately cultivated

The following are the common crops which are cultivated in separate fields for getting larger output and for selling them to get better income.

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8 Interview with T.Thongkhanthang, 62 years of Tuithapi village at Canchipur on 9.5.2011.
Potato

Special attention is given to Potato cultivation. Cultivation of Potato along with rice and other vegetable in the same field is not productive. Suitable place on the hill side with loose soil, enriched by undergrowth of vegetation is usually selected. The procedure for preparation of potato field is same as that of rice field preparation and the area of the field and quantity of seedling to be sown depend upon the capacity and aspiration of the farmer. Potato is a good source of income for many families.9

Granary at Behiang Tuinuam village
Shri Ginkhanlian of Mimbung village
Mizoram

Cotton

In the past, because of the absence of the manufactured cotton and woolen goods, cotton played a very important role in the economy of the Ngaihtes. In order to make their cloths, it was therefore, inevitable for every farmer to grow cotton in their fields. Cotton might be cultivated along with rice in the same field or it might be cultivated in a field separately prepared for cotton only. In the even of cotton growing together with rice in the same field the cotton seeds are sown by just throwing the seeds among the growing rice seedling, or by throwing the cotton seeds on the ground even

9 Interview with Mr. Ginkhanlian 65 years of Mimbung village of Mizoram on his visit to Canchipur on 17th January 2010.
before the rice seeds are sown. Burying of cotton seeds inside the soil is not absolutely necessary. Seedling might just sprout out among loose soil, grow up together with the rice seedlings and mature together. But cotton seeds ripen a little earlier than rice seeds. On maturity cotton seeds brooke open giving out the cotton wool. The cotton wool are collected by the farmers and processed for manufacturing into cloths\textsuperscript{10}.

\textbf{Ginger}

Ginger is a cash crop and its Cultivation in large scale became a promising aspect to boost the economy of the farmers. Like other vegetables ginger can not be cultivated in large scale along with rice in the same field. A separate field is usually prepared. Forest is cut down, burned and cleared the field in the same way as it is done for rice cultivation. The wide of the field for ginger cultivation depended upon the quantity of the seed which the farmer intends to sow. Usually, three or four acres of land are prepared by an ordinary farmer; and ten to twenty mounts of ginger seeds are sown. Seeds are sawn in the month of March/April every year. A small piece of seedling spring up above the soil followed by gradual growth of the stem inside the soil and forked out into many branches. By March – April, the next year, the stems attains maturity. The advantages of ginger cultivation is that harvesting can be delayed, and can be diged out at any time after it attained maturity or can even be postponed for one year. During this posponet-protracted unearthed period the stems did not suffer any major damage, except attacked by some malignant organism. Rather, all the newly developed branches became the new seedling for the next years growing season and multiply into several folds. One family can even reape ginger up to two hundred or

\textsuperscript{10} Interview with Mrs. Vungsiam 60 years at Canchipur on 17.4.2011
three hundred mounts annually. During a favorable marketing period a farmer can earn three lakhs of rupees or even more by selling ginger.\footnote{11}{Interview with Mr. Hauhnun 58 years of Bungmual village on 27.3.2011}

7.2 Famine

Under different circumstances and because of different reasons shortage of food and famine can occur in the hills. The common dangers to crops are blight, ravages done by animals, birds, pests during the growing season, and also natural factors like heavy downpour during the drying season of the field and during harvesting season. In the event of such exceptional heavy downpour during the drying season the field can not be burned properly and the unburned hewn down materials hindered clearing of the field to the extend which the farmer desired to cultivate. Moreover, the soil which is not properly charred by the fire at the time of burning of the field permitted unprecedented mass growth of weeds during the crops growing season which the farmer has to remove them with huge labor, sometimes resulting in the inability of the farmer to weed out the desired area of the field and as such the cultivated area has to be consequently reduced. When the cultivated area is small the output naturally became few and far between causing food shortage. Another serious cause of food shortage which often led to wide spread famine is mautam. Mautaam is discussed in detail as below.\footnote{12}{Interview with Mr. N.Dongsuanthang 36 years of Thanlon village at Canchipur on 25th May 2011}

(i) Mautaam

Mautaam is a natural calamity occurring periodically, approximately after every fifty years. “Mau” means bamboo and "taam" means death, therefore, “Mautaam”
means death of bamboo. The augury of mautaam is that bamboos in the jungle start flowering and producing large number of fruits and after sometimes the plan dried up. The fruits when eaten by rats it become a strong stimulant for their reproduction. This resulted in the explosion of rat population. The myriad number of rats attacked the standing crops in the fields, devoured and destroyed them beyond redemption.

J.Meition Lloyd explains the phenomena of the so called Mautaam of 1911-1912 in the following way:

“When the flower produce seeds, and when the seeds appear the jungle rats begin to feed upon them and it seems that some element in the bamboo seeds make the rats unusually fertile. They multiply at remarkable rate. Soon the bamboo seeds are all consumed. The rats than became a plague and devour everything they can find. They destroy the standing crops and infest the houses and all buildings where the rice bins are stored. Slender bamboo walls offer no protection against their teeth.”

Pakhuongte, an elderly man of the Hmar community mentions that “the rats liked the bamboo fruit and it acted as a fertility pill for female rats. The rats thus quickly multiplied into millions, and they ate up all the crops in the field”. Shri Lengkhaia, also an elderly man from the Hmar community observed the mautaam of 1911 and said, “Though the people had their jhum fields, just at the time of harvesting, rats suddenly multiplied and destroy all the crops in the fields”. Thus it caused an acute food shortage and havoc to the people, crippling their economy. It was in 1959-60 the much spoken mautaam occurred in the hills, covering Thanlon, Henglep sub divisions in Churachandpur district and Vangai range in Jiribam sub-divisions which was within the state of Assam during that time. Thank to the government for its timely and appropriate action, people were saved from the jaws of mautaam. After a gap of

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13 Rev. Dr. Lalhmuoklien, n.5, p.12.
fifty years, it was in 2008-09 the monster repeated its appearance with its alarming entity. It wreaked terror into the minds of men. People waited with deep anguish in their mind to bear the brunt of the *mautaam*. But this time too, the government left no stone unturned to check the menace of *mautaam*. Because of the anti *mautaam* measures and many other developmental programmes undertaken by the government the effect of *mautaam* was felt very mildly.\(^\text{14}\)

**Action taken up by the government to combat the 1959-60 Mautaam.**

With the onset of the *mautaam* the Manipur state government made arrangement to procure 500 mounts of paddy from Silchar and another 500 mounts from Hozai, Assam, by deputing S.Thangkhopau Ngaihte, the then Sub Deputy Collector of Jiribam. The paddy was brought by vehicle on road from Silchar to Lakhipur and then by boat through the Barak river to the two distributing centers of Piaulian and Tipaimukh. But these arrangements were too insignificant to meet the huge demand. The state government then embarked upon the herculean task of air dropping of rice grains so that the rice grains could reach the suffering people residing in remote hill areas where transportation by road was not a possibility. From Silchar rice grains were air lifted and dropped at centers like Thanlon, Hanship, Lungthul(L) villages in Thanlon sub-divisions, and also at Henglep and Pangen villages in Henglep sub-divisions in Churachandpur district.\(^\text{15}\) Each centre was manned by one Sub Deputy Collector and rice was sold @ Rs.16/- per mount. Each and every *mautaam* ravaged

\(^{14}\) Interview with Shri S.Thangkhopau, 78 years, IAS retired, Bungmual, Churachandpur on 14.6.2011,

\(^{15}\) Interview with Pastor Vumkhojam, 68 years at Chengkonpang, Churachandpur on 28.6.2011.
person could approach these rice distributing centers and buy as much rice as he required. Due to such remedial measures death due to mautaam was unknown.\textsuperscript{16}

**Action taken up by the government to combat 2008-09 mautaam manace.**

The State Level Calamity Relief Fund Committee, Government of Manipur has sanctioned a sum of Rs. 16,67,00,120/- for providing relief assistance to 33,248 families affected by bamboo flowering and its consequent rodent menace and harvest failure in the three districts of Manipur, i.e. Churachandpur, Tamenglong and Chandel districts during the year 2008-09. Another relief money amounting to Rs.42,59,042/- was also sanctioned as agriculture inputs subsidy for the 2129.521 hectares of land affected by rodents due to bamboo flowering in Henglep sub-division, Churachandpur district. The total fund utilized for the mautaam related famine for Churachandpur district was (7,22,83,578+42,59,042)=7,65,42,620/- Out of this fund a sum of Rs. 4,42,62,360/- was spent for purchase of rice from Food Corporation of India. The rice as well as the remaining money was distributed to the affected person through the concerned Sub Divisional Officers. \textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{(ii) Thangnang}

*Thangnang* is a kind of insect with small body, having legs and wings and in appearance somewhat like that of small leaf eating beetles called *Thangdar* in the local dialect. Swamps of *Thangnang* are often seen roost on the leaves and small branches of trees in a particular place in the forest. There is no specific tree to be mentioned upon which the *Thangnang* could lived. Irrespective of any kind of plant or tree, they

\textsuperscript{16} Interview with Mr. Lianzahau, 61 years of Sumtuh village at Churachandpur on 29.6.2011.

\textsuperscript{17} Interview with Mrs. Zamngaihliun, Office Assistant, DC’s office Churachandpur on 12.6.2011.
are found on the leaves and branches of all the trees and plants standing in a particular area. Even though they can fly, they do not usually move from place to place like hoards of locus moving from one place to another place. If their perching is disturbed they fly out taking shelter at a nearby place for some time and then come back to their original place. Often their number becomes too large and the branches of the trees on which they lived bend down and sometimes broken. They do not corrode the leaves of the trees upon which they roost. It is not known what constitute their food, where from they came and what makes their disappearance. Our older forefathers considered the appearance of *Thangnang* as a sign of famine because after their

### Details of Relief Assistance for Bamboo Flowering affected families

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appearance *Mautaam* often comes. They could be collected in basket, fried in the vessel and eaten”  

**(iii) Food supplements during the time of famine**

When there is an acute shortage of food and, famine prevailed, and when there is no other source to procure food the famine ravaged people resorted to taking the following items as food supplement to ameliorate their woe.

**Hakai**

*Hakai* is the local name of a climbing plant with tuberous root. The tendril stem of *hakai* creeps above the ground and climbs on any object or tree that stands on its way. The roots go underground as long as five to six feet deep and develop the fleshy tuber which constitutes an item of food. There are two kinds of *hakai*. One is called *gam hakai* and another is called *inn hakai*. *Gam hakai* is wild and found in the forest. They grow, multiply and propagate by themselves. *Inn hakai* are grown and cultivated in the garden or in the field by men. It is the head piece which is sown as seed. People will go to the forest to exhume any available *hakai*. After the *mautam* famine of 1958-59 many pits as deep as five to six feet or even more were found at many places in the jungles of Churachandpur district which were dug up by the famine starved people in their search for *hakai* during the *mautam*.

**Segah**

*Segah* is the seed of a tree locally known as *sesing*. The seed is bean shaped and slightly smaller than the tip of the smallest finger. Every year the *sesing* tree

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18 Interview with Mr. Minthang, 27 years of Thanlon village at Canchipur on 26.5.2011
19 Interview with Mr. Lianzahau: Op. cit. n.16
flowers and forms seeds. But every year all the flowers do not form fruitful. There are certain years during which the flowers produced seeds in an extraordinarily large number. The wonder is that normally, the year of enormous production of seeds coincides with the occurrence of food shortage or famine. It is the two whitish fleshy cotyledons inside the hard covering of the seed which is eaten. On maturity the seeds fall on the ground, they are collected, grinded, and sieved out the grain from the husk. The grains are cooked together with rice grains or with any other food item which is then eaten as a simple and plain food.\textsuperscript{20}

**Gova gah**

*Gova* is a kind of bamboo abundantly available in the hill slopes, and “*Gah*” means fruit. Therefore, “*gova gah*” means fruit of *gova* bamboo. *Gova* flowers and bear fruits within the sheaf in the month of November and December in the same way as gehu produces seeds in the sheaf. The sheaf is collected, threshed out the grains, pounded to separate the rind from its contents, cook the content and eat.\textsuperscript{21}

### 7.3 Cottage and small scale Industries

Cottage and small scale industries play a very vital role in the economy of the Ngaihtes. Because, God’s given ingenuity enables them to manufacture some of their daily needed articles, like their domestic tools, implements and basketry items from the locally available materials. Because of the presence of these locally fabricated materials life in the past was made sustainable. The kind of tools and implements produced by the local craftsman can be grouped under the following categories.

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\textsuperscript{20} Interview with Mr. Minthang, op. cit. n. 18.

\textsuperscript{21} Interview with Mr. Ginkhanlian, op. cit. n. 9.
(i) Blacksmithy

Every village had its officially recognized blacksmith called Siikseek Pu who performs all the necessary works pertaining to repairing, reshaping, sharpening and manufacturing of domestic tools and instruments. Apart from the officially recognized blacksmith, there might also be another person who is skillful in the work of blacksmithy and performs the same work as it is done by the village blacksmith and earn handsome amount of money. The number of blacksmith in the village might be very few, at the most two or three persons. They work with their indigenously devised instrument called *pum*. *Pum* consists of two wooden cylinders of about two and half feet long and about half feet in diameter. They are fitted together side by side vertically with exhaust pipes attached at the lower end of both leading to a common nozzle. The nozzle was made of iron sheets so that it can withstand the intense heat of the fire located at the tip of the nozzle. The fire is prepared with heaps of charcoal. Two pistons were inserted one each within the two wooden cylinders. About one feet at the upper end of the piston extending beyond the top of the cylinder which is used as handle of the piston while bunches of feathers were fixed at the lower end so that the piston with the feather can be moved up and down inside the cylinders. The working principle is that one piston inside one of the wooden cylinders is pushed down forcing the air inside the wooden cylinder out through the exhaust pipe attached at the lower end and then to the common nozzle. Then another piston inside another cylinder is pushed down resulting wind blow as in the case of the first cylinder and in the meantime lifting up the first piston which is pushed down earlier. By repeating this same process the continuous flow of wind through the common nozzle and blowing of
the fire or furnace at the end of the common nozzle is ensued. The metal to be harnessed is put inside the furnace. When it becomes red hot the blacksmith hits the red hot metal with hammer on a hard rigid anvil shaping it into various forms according to his desire.

The blacksmith is not instantly paid for his services. But at the end of the year he received one basket full of paddy from each household for whom he had rendered his services as it is mentioned in the chapter village administration. This paddy is called *pum an*. “*Pum an*” means food of the bellow. In order to collect the *pum an*, the village crier will make an announcement about the date for collection of *pum an* and the household council members of the blacksmith will collect the *pum an* for the *siikseek-pu*. The services of the un-officially recognized blacksmith can be utilized by the villagers provided the villagers pay remuneration for his work. *Pum an* is not collected for such un-officially recognized blacksmith. Few of the important tools fabricated by the village blacksmith were the following:

**Tu**

*Tu* is a small hoe used by the Ngaihtes to weed out their gardens and fields. The metal blade is locally designed which is attached with a bamboo or wooden handle. It is a very convenient and suitable tool for use in the hilly areas.

**Heipi**

*Hei* is an axe used for chopping, cutting, splitting bamboo and wood. The sharp iron blade is fixed with locally made rigid bamboo shoot or wooden stamp.

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22 Interview with Mr. Kaithon, 62 years of Langol on 26.4.2011.
23 Interview with Dr. Luaichinthang 62 years at Bungmual on 23.5.2011.
24 Interview with Mr. Mangsuanlal Guite, 26 years at Canchipur on 24.5.2011.
Temta

*Temta* is a small knife made by village blacksmith with skillful design to meet the requirements of different house hold purposes with its specific use in the kitchen by the house wife.26

![Heipi](image)

**Tempong**

*Tempong* is a big knife, larger in size than that of *temta*. It is mainly used by men folk in the forest for cutting wood, bamboo etc. A butcher’s suitable tool for killing and cutting animal’s flesh is *Tempong*.

(ii) **Domestic tools**

The different kinds of tools locally fabricated by local black smiths and used for domestic purposes are the following:

**Sum and Suk**

Grinding of rice by rice mills was unknown to the hill people till recent times. Locally made tools called *sum* and *suk* were used by them since time immemorium. Although the fruits of rice mills have been reaped in many villagers, there are still

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25 Interview with Mr. Lianchinmang 29 years at Canchipur on 25.5.2011
26 Ibid.
villages in the remote hill areas where such fruit is beyond their reach. In such places the old traditional indigenous tools are still in used. “Sum” is the mortar, while “suk” is the pestle. To make sum a huge block of wood is cut out from a large tree trunk. The middle portion from the upper surface is curved out so as to make a cavity called sumkuak inside which the paddy to be grinded is put. For suk, stems of trees about three and half feet in length are molded in such way that it can be handled properly at the middle and the two sides ended bluntly. Manouvered by hand, the paddy put inside the sumkuak is pounded with the suk. A single person or two or even three persons can pound together. Sounds of pounding grains are heard in the early morning in every village. The work is done mainly by women, but in the absence of women, men may also do the work.27

![Indigenous rice mill run by river water
Lunthul(E) village, Singngat sub-division
Churachandpur district](image1)

![A lady pounding paddy](image2)

**Buhtei**

*Buhtei* is a very simple tool made with wood or bamboo and use for removing cooked rice from vessel.

27 Interview with Mrs. Nunhoih of Pearsonmun on 25.5.2011.
Kuangpi

*Kuangpi* is wooden plate prepared from huge block of wood with varying sizes. The large sized might accommodate four or five persons to ate together.\(^{28}\)

Sukduk

*Sukduk* is also a wooden tool used for smashing chilly, ginger, garlic, spices etc. It has two parts, i.e. the container is called *sukduk kuang* and the crusher is called *a sukna*.

Tuithei

*Tuithei* is the main traditional water tub made of bamboo pole for carrying water from the streams and also keeping the water inside the house when the present day’s aluminum vessel or iron containers were not available in the past. Poles of large bamboos are cut into pieces with about two and half feet in length, having a node at the lower end while the upper end is open. The outer part of the bamboo husk is removed to make it thin and lighten its weight. The inner nodes at the middle portion except at the lowest end are pierced open from the upper end with the help of rodses so that water can be poured into the entire length of the hole inside. Five or six numbers of Tuithei are carried together by a woman inside a carrier called *tuiseng* and fetched water from the streams.\(^{29}\)

\(^{28}\) Interview with Mr. Nengkhanmang, 58 years of Lamphel, Imphal on 3.3.2011

Keu

Keu is the indigenously made mug for drawing water. There are two kinds of keu. One kind is made with a fully grown and dried gourd. One side of the gourd is peel off, remove the inner contents, washed it with water and then dried in the sun after which it became a good tool for drawing water. The stalk is used as the handle. Another kind of keu is made with bamboo stem. A big, smooth and straight part of bamboo stem is selected. Cut out a portion between two nodes in such way that one end of it is without the node while at the other end the node is preserved. Then cut out greater part of the husk and made a triangular shaped body at the end with the node and a narrow and longer portion was kept for its handle. This work requires the knowledge of an expertise handicraft. This type of keu is used, especially during cooking, for squashing and loosening cooked rice, and also for drawing out hot water, soup etc.from cooking vessel.  

Sathu buuk

“Sathu” meant brewed meat, and “buuk” means bottle. Therefore, “Sathu buuk” meant bottle containing the brewed meat. Sathu buuk is made with matured and dried gourd. The tip of the stalk is cut off and removed the inside contents, and to close the tip made a suitable lid. In order that it can be carried about or hanged at a place, strips of cane are tied around it and made a ring from it. Flesh of pig or beef is cut into small pieces, cook and put inside the sathu buuk. The sathu buuk filled with beef or pork is keep constantly warm by hanging it beside a fire place. After four or five days the meat inside the sathu buuk became fully mellowed with specific smell, but not decomposed. It became a favorite condiment for making carry extremely testy which is the favourite curry for many people.31

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Sathau buuk

*Sathau buuk* is also a container made of gourd which is used for preserving fatty oil. It is prepared in the same way as *sathu buuk* is prepared. After the oil is extracted from the fats of animals like cow, pig etc. by frying in a vessel, the oil is cooled and poured into the *sathau buuk*. Oil can be kept in this *sathau buuk* for a long time.

(iii) Basketry Work

The important basketry items which the village artisans fabricated for their use and also for sale are the following.

**Lohpi**

*Lohpi* is a sieving basket made with strips of bamboo or cane knitted together to make the meshed, flat and rounded body with rigid protection along the circumference. It is used mainly for straining and separating the coarser particles from the finer ones.\(^\text{32}\)

**Loh**

*Loh* is a container basket, round bodied, circular at the brim with rectangular base. Size varied from small one to larger ones, and approximately half feet in high. Long staff of cane are cut into suitable lengths and are divided to make pliable strips which are knitted together to make the mesh basket container. It is also used as a measuring instrument counted as one loh full of paddy, one loh full of chilly, etc. It is an indispensable basketry item for every household where four to five Lohs are found in every house.\(^\text{33}\)

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\(^{32}\) Dr. Luaichinthang : Op. cit. n. 23

\(^{33}\) Interview with Mr. Kaithon : Op. cit. n.22
**Buptuah**

*Buptuah* is a small repository basket which had two parts fitted together against each other. The lower part having rectangular base with circular brim is covered from above by its cover having slightly bigger in size. Bamboo or cane strips are use for this preparation. Thread balls, needles, necklace etc. are repose inside it.\(^{34}\)

**Tuiseng and Nam**

*Tuiseng* is a basket about two feet high in average. It is made with strips of bamboo sparsely knitted together with four rigid bamboo strips to form the rigid four corner structure. The shape is like inverted pyramid. It is also sometimes, simply called *seng*. Some *tuiseng* has a short projection of the rigid bamboo strip at the bottom which is called its feet. On both inside and outside along the circumference at the top, strips of cane are knitted together to make the brim rigid. *Tuiseng* is the main basket used by women folk to carry their load. The load is put inside the basket and is carried with the help of its sling called *nam*. The sling consisted of a broader flexible middle part made of trips of pliable cane with cords of thread of certain length extending from the two ends. The middle flexible part of the sling is put on the head and the cords extending from it is tight around the *tuiseng*. The *tuiseng* slung at the

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\(^{34}\) Ibid.
back of the carrier above the hip. Fetching of fire wood from forest, carrying water from streams, carrying of any other article like jam, maize, cucumber, pumpkin etc. from paddy fields to the houses in the villages are the main uses.\(^{35}\)

Ms. Niangpi of Sinzawl village  
Carrying Seng by Nam on 14.2.2011  

Seng having feet

**Sengpi and Hakkol**

*Sengpi* is another basketry item used by men folk for carrying articles. The body of the *sengpi* is also bigger in size above with round circumference at the top and tapering towards below, ending in square base. Strips of bamboo are knitted together to form the *sengpi*’s body with more rigid bamboo strips at the four corners as the frame. The *sengpi* is carried with a sling which consists of two parts - one part is the crescent shaped wooden frame called *Hakkol* - and another part is the thread cord. At the two corners of the *hakkol* is bored one hole each. The sling has a wider middle part made with cane trips with the cords of threads extending from both sides, and passed through the holes of the wooden frame which is then tight around the *sengpi* body. The *sengpi* is carried by men putting the broad middle part of the sling above the head, and the wooden frame rest on the shoulder while the body of the *sengpi* with its load inside hangs at the back of the carrier. The advantage of carrying load with *sengpi* is that the

\(^{35}\) Interview with Mrs Niangpi Ngaihte, 26 years at Sinzawl village on 17.2.2011
weigh can be shared together by the head and the shoulder simultaneously, or it can be carried singly by the head or by the shoulder alternately as desired by the carrier.³⁶

Lelpi

*Lelpi* is a very distinct, unique and unparallel handicraft product with a special design. The upper end of the body is round, closed with a cap and the lower part is tapering and ending in square. Narrow pieces of strips of canes are used for making the cap and the body. The shape of *lelpı* is similar to that of the shape of a fruit in the hills, locally known as *theilelsin*. Probably, the name of *theilelsin* *might* have been derived from the name of *lelpı*, or vice versa. *Lelpi* is used as a repository for cloth, like shirts, long pants, skirts, or any other domestic and personal belongings. *Lelpı* is also known by a section of the people as *thuul*.³⁷

Chiang

*Chiang* is also a flat and squared basket made with strips of bamboo, sparsely knitted. There are different shapes and sizes. Some chiangs have stand while others are without stand. It is mainly use as a temporary storing of materials like vegetable,
fruits etc. and also for separating cocked and hot solid materials from liquid just after cocking.\textsuperscript{38}

Buhhak

“Buh” means paddy and “hak” meant to dry. Therefore, buhhak means drying of paddy. It is a basketry item used to parch any kind of cereals or any other wet objects. It is made with strips of bamboo, knitting together by cane to form the flat squared body. The material to be dried like paddy, chilly, pumpkin, etc. are put on it and dried in the sun, or hang the buhhak above the fire place inside the house where specific arrangement is made with bamboo pole structure which is suspended from the roof of the house by cords. Heat from the fire and smoke spewing from the fire place hastened the drying process.\textsuperscript{39}

Pheek

Pheek is the local name of mat. It is made with strips of cane and is rectangular in shape with different sizes. Its different uses are for drying cereals and vegetables during day time and used as bed spread during night time. From the middle of one of

\textsuperscript{38} Interview with Ms. Sangi 27 years of Churachandpur at Canchipur on 27.5.2011
\textsuperscript{39} Miss Sangi. Op.cit. n. 38
its edge a small ring is prepared. A thread of short length is tight to it. The *pheek* is rolled into small roled body and tied with the thread when un-used.\(^{40}\)

**Kok**

*Kok* is a circular basket container made of strips of bamboo with open mouth but closed at the bottom. Size might vary from two feet high, with one and half feet in circumference, to large ones with five feet high and four to five feet in circumstances. Small *koks* are called *kokta* and large sized *koks* are called *kokpi*. Food staffs like rice, yam, maize, sweet potato, cucumber, etc. are stored in it. \(^{41}\)

![Kokta with Yam around it](image1)
![Seng of Ladies with white pumpkin](image2)

**Hakvang**

*Hakvang* is simply a flat, squared bodied and sparsely knitted bamboo. It is used as a drier or a repository with rigid edges. This basket is also used as a tool for temporary storing of cereals, vegetable etc. and drying them in the sunlight.\(^{42}\)

**(iv) Smoking instruments**

\(^{40}\) Ibid.
\(^{42}\) Interview with Mrs. Pamkhanvung 56 years at Canchipur on 25.6.2011.
Smoking is also practised among the Ngaihtes. *Dumbeel* and *buuk* are the common smoking instruments for older men and older women respectively. *Laizial* is the common name used for the locally produced cigarette.

**Dumbel**

*Dumbeel* is a stump of bamboo about two inches high with one inch in circumference, and a small pipe attached to it at the lower part. It is the smoking instrument used especially by elder men. Tobacco is put inside the bamboo stump and is burned. The smoke is sucked from the tip of the small pipe attached at the base. The smoke from the bamboo stamp came through the small pipe and reached the smoker to quench his thirst for smoking.  

**Buuk**

*Buuk* is a smoking instrument used by women. It consisted of a bowl containing water with a smoking pipe attached to it at its side. The bowl is connected with a hollow wooden frame at the upper end. A small bamboo pipe is inserted within the hole of the wooden frame from above till its end deeps inside the water of the bowl. At the upper end of the small bamboo pipe is fixed an earthen pot called *dumbel*. *Dumbeel* is made with a type of clay called *Vahai buan*. The tobacco is put inside the *dumbel* and burned. When the air inside the *dumbel* is sucked from the smoking pipe, the smoke of the burning tobacco from the *dumbel* is forced down to pass through the wooden frame and then through the water of the bowl and the water gets impregnated with the fumes. This impregnated water is called *ttuibuuk*. *Tuibuuk* formed a very favourite entertainer for both men and women. *Tuibuuk* is filled into little bamboo

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43 Interview with Shri. Lianzamang 82 years, chief of Suangsang village at Suangsang on 10.2.11
tubes or other container like small sized gourd called *umta*. *Tuibuuk* is carried about within *umta* by men who occasionally sip it, retaining it in the mouth for some time before spiting it out again, and on meeting a friend handed it over to him as an offer which is a mark of courtesy. In the present modern time there are mechanized *buuk* run by flowing water. *Tuibuuk* produced by such mechanized *buuk* are use for sale to get paltry income.\(^{44}\)

**Umta**

*Umta* is a *tuibuuk* carrier. A small sized matured gourd is plucked, its tip cut off, the seeds insides are removed, washed it with water and prepared a lit. It became a good carrier for *tuibuuk*. *Umta* is carried about by older men and women for the purpose of sipping as and when they desired.\(^{45}\)

**Laizial**

*Laizial* is the local made cigarette with locally grown tobacco leaves. The green tobacco leaves are plucked from the trees, trampled with foot, dried in the sun, cut the dried leaves into very small pieces with knife and rolled the cut dried pieces with paper to make the cigarette. A commonly practice courtesy was that a young girl

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\(^{44}\) Interview with Ms Dimkhoching 35 years at Leizangphai village on 9.2.2011

\(^{45}\) Interview with Shri Lianzamang : Op. cit. n. 43
offered a cigarette to her young male visitors who came to court her at her house. By selling *laizial* little income could be earned by lasses.\(^\text{46}\)

\[(v) \quad \textbf{Weaving and spinning}\]

It is a long established practice that womenfolk weaved cloth in order to make with it their body cloths, skirts, shirts for men and women, long pants, vanity bag, shoulder bags, waist coats, etc. In the past it was necessary for every family to grow cotton plants in their fields. After the fruits ripens, it breaks open and the cotton sheets coalesce with the seeds are collected. A simple grinding machine called *helhhot* is used to separate the seeds from the cotton wool. The cotton wool is spanned out with the help of a very simple tool called *pat kapna*. By using a spinning wheel called *mui*, the wool is rolled into threads balls. The threads balls are then turned into yarn by using another tool called *khaukawn banna*. The yarn then, is soaked with water which is taken out of cooked rice? This process is called *But*. The yarn after it is but, dried in the sun and rolled into round thread balls with the help of another tool called *sutlam*. The thread balls are then weaved with the traditional loin loom called *siambu*.\(^\text{47}\) To quote T.C.Hodson “the loom is of the horizon type, the spindle consist of a pair of twisted canes working together just like cogs, a very rough bobbin and a stout cresent piece of wood”. Different kinds of cloth, varying from very simple and plain to complicate with varying colors and designs are now weaved.\(^\text{48}\)

\(^{46}\) Interview with Mrs. Dimkhoching : Op. cit. n. 44  
\(^{48}\) R.Luiklham : *Tangkhul Traditional Land use system and related Customs* published by the Ukhrul District Community Resource management Society(UDCRMS) 2009.p.139.
Puanpi

Puanpi is the pride warm cloth which the Ngaihte as well as its related Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribe women ever produced. It is one of the indispensable items of dowry. Using their loin loom spanned cotton threat is weaved at the back and the un-spanned cotton wool of about one inch long is planted at the front side to make the cloth warm. When a woman is engaged for marriage she started preparing puanpi which she should take it with her to her husband’s house.49

7.4 Hunting

Hunting is an interesting and adventurous game. Hunting is resorted to not as a profession but as a time past engagement and also an execution of one’s hobby. In addition to getting meat, hunting also provided to a hunter the chance to gain social status. Those who killed a tiger or bear are regarded as heroes; they occupied respectable position in the society. A hunter, during his leisure time carried his gun, holding at the butt by his hand with the barrel lying on his shoulder, or the gun slinging at his back with the sling spreading across his chest go to the forest for hunting animals. A bag containing a tempong (big knife), extra cartridges and bullets, a short

49 Interview with Mrs. Haukhoniang: Op. cit. n. 31
horn of mithun containing gun powder inside it are the indispensable concomitants for a hunter. When a hunter killed a wild animal, like deer, tiger, bear etc. and unable to bring the animal, he left the dead animal in the forest and came to the village to inform the villagers about the animal. Several older men from the village goes to the forest with the hunter to bring the dead animal. When the bagged animal is tiger or bear, the entire village people including men, women, young and old would come out to welcome the hunters at the village outskirt (khawmual). When the hunter party is about to reach the khawmual they raised their voices by chanting heroic songs called ladou. On hearing their ladou, the people who are waiting them at the khawmual also responded them by chanting their responding ladou. The animal tied with a wooden pole is brought by several men together on their shoulders. When they reached the khawmual they are received with applause by the people and offered to them rice beer. It is at the khawmual the hunter chanted a song of self acclamation, proclaiming his heroic deeds and citing at the top of his voice the names of his heroic ancestors amid the crowd and blank fired his gun in the air. This is called hanla sa. Not only the hunter but any other person who is well versed in the art also shouted and proclaimed the hanla in praise of the heroic hunter.

In the past the flesh of the animal was cooked to prepare a grand feast for the family, relatives and close friends of the hunter. Parts of the animal, according to the Ngaihte tradition were also distributed among the house hold council members. But the treatment of the flesh when the animal was killed by the hunter alone and when the

50 Interview with Mr. V. Hauhnun: op. cit. n.11
animal was killed while hunting together by a group of hunters is different. There were some parts which were obligatory to give to different persons. These parts were the head which was the prerogative share of the killer, one side of the shoulder was given to the owner of the gun by which the animal was shoot as rent, the rib portion was given to the tanu in the household council of the killer, the ear cut out with some part of the flesh from the ear base was given to the maternal grandfather, and a slender part of the flesh located on the inner side of the back bone, called achiiing was given to the zawl of the hunter. The remaining parts of the flesh were equally distributed among the hunters including the killer. But during the present materialistic and changing style of life, people think not for the moral and social fabric of the society, but they think for the economic and materialistic gain of life. Therefore, when a hunter bagged an animal the past practice is not properly followed and the flesh is hardly use for preparation of feast, or distributed among the household council members. The flesh is cut unilaterally, dried up and the dried flesh is sold in the market to get some amount of money. A hunter shot, not only animals, like tiger, bear, deer etc. but also shot birds like grouse, hornbill, etc.  

(i) Sataang

Animals like deer, bear, wild boar, etc. use to visit the fruit bearing trees like gel sing, zuatmuat, sesing, gooseberry, etc in the forest at the time of their fruit ripening in order to feed upon them. The ripening time of the fruit, i.e. gooseberry is december to january. Taking this advantage to meet the animals while they are feeding, the hunters go to the forest in the afternoon. Prior to the coming of the animal

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52 Interview with Mr. Thanga Tonsing, 63 years at New Lamka, Churachandpur on 25.3.2011
they made spot enquiry about the possible way of the animal’s entry into the location of the fruit and the possible way of exit. The hunters climbed up a tree standing nearby to make his position and carefully watch the coming of the animal. The animals slowly and silently come to the spot to eat the fruits fallen on the ground. On seeing the animal coming and eating the fruits the hunter carefully aimed at the animal and fired. In this way many animals like deer, bear, etc are killed by many hunters. But every day is not sunday, every time the hunter go for such sataang he is not rewarded.53

(ii) Sahawl

Sahawl is another method employed by hunters to hunt forest animals. A group of several hunters go together to the forest in search of animals called sabeng. Their first duty when they reached the forest is to find out the habitation site of the animals. After confirming that animal(s) are actually present at a place, whether among the shrubs, bushes, thatch or any other vegetation whatever might be, they divided themselves into two groups. One group is called taangpang pawl and

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53 Interview with Mr. Hauhnun: op.cit.n.50.
another group is called ahawl pawl. The tangpang pawl is the gun bearer and shooting group while the sahawl pawl is without gun, they are the animal driving out party. The first strategy is to examine the direction through which the animals will break out from the spot in the even of their game being disturbed. They selected the side from where the driving out group will start their work and the firing group will take their position. Every member of the shooting group carried one gun each. After selecting the side for the shooting group, the next strategy is to select a place for each and every shooting member. Each and every member will select their own places and also looked for a tree standing by that place upon which they can climb up and took their position on the tree. The members of the sahawl pawl carried one dao, or one stick each, or without anything. Their duty is to turn out the animals from their game. After the taangpang pawl are believed to take their positions and get ready, the sahawl pawl entered into the spot opposite to the side of the tangpang pawl where they took their position and try to drive out the animals. With shouting and somtimes clapping their hands, they marched through the forest towards the tangpang pawl. While doing so the animals get frightened and run helter scalter for their life. The tangpang pawl watched carfully to see if any animal is coming nearby them. Animal appearing at their sight are aimed with utmost care and shoot with their gun which is the most auspices moment for the hunter. All the shoots are not successful. Many a shoot failed while a few succeeded.  

(iii) Trap

Without human physical intervention birds and animals can be bagged by lying traps in the forest. Depending upon the animals and birds aimed at to catch different

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54 Mr. Liankhogin : Op. cit. 1
kinds of traps and snares are designed and are laid in the forest. The following are the
different kinds of traps usually employed.\textsuperscript{55}

\textbf{Mankhawng}

\textit{Mankhawng} is the name of the trap designed to catch rodents, birds and small
animal’s etc. Crops in the hills are often subjected to attack and damages by the
marauding animals living in the surrounding forest. To protect the standing crops from
such vulnerability the farmers made fencing around their jhum fields by erecting
bamboo strip with wooden posts supporters. The fencing might be around the whole
field or it might cover only some side of it. Holes are made at the fencing at suitable
places, i.e. about 20 feet distance lying between one hole and another hole. Traps are
laid at these holes. The trap consisted of its weight consisting of heavy logs of tree
hanging above and below on the ground were laid small floor of bamboo trip connected
with the trigger by wire. When the food searching animal entered into the hole and
walked on the bamboo floor, the devise triggered and the heavy log of tree fell on the
prey. Due to the heavy weight the prey unable to escape succumbed. The farmer
would come to visit the \textit{mankhong} every day, or on alternate days, removed. the
entrapped animal and reset the \textit{mankhong}. By this devise many animals like squirrel;
rates, dove, etc, are caught.\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{Pial}

\textit{Pial} is a trap prepared in the forest for catching wild animals like tiger, bear etc.

For this purpose heavy logs of trees of certain length are knitted together to form a flat

\textsuperscript{55} Mr. Liankhogin; Op. cit. n.54

\textsuperscript{56} Mr. Thongkhanthang Tonsing : Op. cit. n. 8.
and heavy block of wood which is used as weight. This block of heavy logs is prepared at the places in the forest where the wild animals are naturally habituated. A tough wooden pole, longer than the length of the wooden block is tight with the wooden block at the centre on the upper side and part of it extending beyond the block. With the help of this pole one side of the block can be lifted up while the other side of the block rest on the ground. The side which can be lifted up is called the anterior side and the other side which rest on the ground is called the posterior side. In front of the anterior side two posts are erected. With these two posts and the long and tough wooden pole extending from the wooden block the triggering device is prepared. The anterior side of the wooden block is lifted up and the bait is placed on the ground below the wooden block which is connected with the trigger fitted with the posts. The bait consists of pieces of meat or death body of a fowl. When the wild animal comes to eat the bait, the wire connecting the bait and the trigger is moved. This movement ensued triggering of the trap and the heavy block of wood fell on the prey and the animal unable to escape died due to the heavy load above.

**Sou**

*Sou* is a kind of trap devised for catching, especially the monkeys. Hard, rigid and very sharp pointed bamboos strips are prepared and several of them are planted together on the ground in group with the pointed tips turning upward near the paddy fields or any other suitable place in the forest where the monkeys usually frequented. This group of pointed bamboo strips is called *sou*. Near the *sou* two or more wooden posts are erected and arrangement is made with these posts and with the help of another

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57 Interview with Mr. Thanglur. 58 years of Central Lamka, Churachandpur on 3.4.2011
bamboo poles in such way that bamboo poles became trigger and are extended horizontally from the posts to that above the *Sou*. The bait of the trap to attract the prey is placed on the bamboo poles above the *sou*. Ladder is also prepared so that by following which the prey can climb up the posts, followed the horizontally extended bamboo poles and reached the bait. The monkey attracted by the bait climbed up the posts through the ladder, following the horizontally placed poles and tried to snatch the bait. The trap triggered and the animal fell down below among the pointed bamboo tips. The pointed bamboo tips pierced the falling monkey from below and the monkey suffered injuries unable to escape died.  

**Thaangthen**

Fruits and flowers formed the food items upon which the birds and animals feed in the forest. By laying a kind of snares among the fruits and flowers the birds feeding upon them can be caught. This type of snare employed is called *thangthen*. It consisted of a cord, a lug and a noose of triangular shape prepared by bending pliable strip of bamboo, or another tendril locally known as *diil naang*. The arm between the two acute angles of the triangle’s frame is tied with a rigid wooden rode to form the base. The bait of the snare is the flower or fruit of the tree which are bound together to form a bundle among the tree branches. Arrangement is made in such way that a small short tree branch is connected with the bait and extended from it in a horizontal position. The noose of the snare is fixed above the small tree branch near the bait. One end of the cord is tied to the obtuse angle of the noose and another cord end connected with the lug from above. The trigger tied at about the middle of the loop is stuck at the

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58 Interview with Mr Zamzachin 55 years at Lamphel, Imphal on 12.3.2011
obtuse angle of the noose and it is held up from below by the lever. The lever extended horizontally between the noose and the bait. A ring made with the cord spreaded over the lever between the noose and the bait. The bird trying to eat the bait by perching on the lever, the lever fell down, the snare triggered and the bird is caught at the leg by the tightening ring of the loop. Birds like parrot, pigeon, lover bird, etc. can be caught by this type of snare. 59

Betang thaang

“Betang” meant bean seed, and “thang” meant trap. Therefore, betang thang means trap of bean seed. This is the trap employed to catch wild fowls in the forest. The trap consisted of a small bamboo strip folded into short length of about five inches to form the noose. The noose had an inner fold within which is inserted a bean seed which served as the bait. A short tree limb with a spike is implanted on the ground with a cord tied to it extending from the tip of a slender stem which serve as the plug planted nearby. At about the middle of the cord is tied a small short stem about one and half inch in length called the trigger. The trigger is stuck with the spike of the tree limb and the trigger’s lower end is held up by one of the ends of the bamboo fold, while the other end of the bamboo fold is again held up by a small stick implanted on the ground nearby it. The lever is thus held up horizontally a little above the ground. A loop is prepared from the cord and spreaded over the lever in round with the help of the five small sticks planted in circle. The entire setting is exercised in the forest where the fowls are suspected to be striving in search for their food. The fowls being

59 Interview with Mr. Nengkhanmang, 58 years of Lamphel, Imphal on 3.3.2011
attracted by the bean seed, tried to pick up the seed with their beaks. While doing so the noose fell down on the ground, the trigger is freed, the lug pulled up the cord and the fowl is caught at the neck by the tightening loop. Fowls of the forest like partridge, grouse, goose etc are caught.  

Lei Thaang

*Leithang* consisted of the different parts such as a noose of small rode of metal or cane bend to form a triangular frame, a lug of bamboo stick, and a cord with a trigger tied to it at about its middle part. *Leithang* is set in the forest for the purpose of catching rodents like squirrels, beaver, chipmunk, rat, etc. The trap is set firmly on the ground near the way the rodents used to crawl. The triangular noose lies across the way the rodents use to come. The trigger and the loop were prepared within the noose in such way that when the animal came within the noose, the system triggered and the rodent is entangled within the loop of the cord.  

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61 Interview with Mr. Chinthang, 61 year at National Games village on 30.3.2011.
**Vaithaang**

*Vaithang* consisted of a shaft of bamboo which acted as the lug, a triangular shaped noose of bamboo tied at the base of the shaft, and a cord with the trigger of small and short stick tied to it at about its middle portion. Some persons, particularly farmers in the hill are fond of catching rodents like rats, hare, rabbit, squirrel etc. for their flesh and also as part of an interesting game. *Vaithang* is a very suitable and convenient trap as it is very light and can be carried and lay at any desired place; even on the branches of the trees and over the logs on the ground. To set the trap in the forest, the way the rodents usually trod is first find out and especially of the recent way is selected. With the help of the pointed foot of the shaft the trap is implanted on the ground in such a position that the triangular noose is set across the ways of the rodents. One end of the cord is tied with the upper end of the shaft and another end is tied at one of the corners of the noose. The trigger, the loop and the shaft are set in such way that when the prey entered into the noose and touches the stick which held up the trigger; then the stick fall down releasing the trigger. The shaft pull up the cord and the prey is entangled between the arms of the noose and the cord.\(^\text{62}\)

**Sakhi Thaang**

*Sakhi Thaang* is a trap for catching deer. A small pit is dug on the ground across the way the deer or wild animals used to walk in the forest. Two posts of wood are erected near the pit close to each other. The lug consisted of slender tree; strong enough to lift up the deer when it is caught is implanted nearby the pit. The cord consisted of a wire - durable and strong enough to withstand the great force to be

exerted by the animal is used. At about the middle of the cord is tied the trigger of small length of rod. Another is fixed extending between the two posts a little above the ground. These posts and rod served as the noose. By bending the lug the trigger of the cord is stuck at the rod which extended between the posts while a stick is used to held up the trigger’s lower end. A loop prepared from the cord is spread on the ground around the pit. Some sticks extending from and over the stick which held up the trigger are extended over the pit. The sticks and the loop were concealed by spreading several sticks across the pit and dry leaves over it. The prey tread on the way without knowing the trap hidden below; due to the weight of the animal the sticks spreading across the pit pressed down the stick which held up the trigger; thus resulting in the triggering of the trap. The lug pulled up the code and the animal is caught at its leg by the tightening loop.63

Sakuh Thaang

*Sakuh thang* is the trap mean for catching porcupine. It is very simple. A wooden post is erected near the way where the porcupine uses to frequent in the forest. A lug of slender stem is implanted nearby it. One end of the cord is tied at the upper end of the lug while with another end a knob with a ring is made. A small cavity is curbed out from the edge of the post. The cord from the lug is made to passed through the cavity of the post and it is held up at its knob with the ring spreading across the porcupine’s way vertically. When the porcupine walked and inserted its head within the ring of the cord and exerted a little pressure on it, the knob slipped out of the cavity of

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63 Interview with Mr. Thongkhanthang : Op. cit. n. 56
the post and the lug pulled up the cord, then the animal is caught at the neck by the loop.64

**Gophel**

*Gophel* is a bow used to shoot birds and small animals. Arrow is used in the case of bow while pellet is used in the case of *gophel*. It consisted of a shaft made of bamboo with the string made of slender strip of what is locally known as *diil khau*. The middle part of the string is divided where small strip of cane knitted together to form a small sized curbed mesh. To shoot the prey, the shaft is held up with the left hand and pulled the string with the right hand having the pelled inside the mesh and released. This is a very common instrument used by bird hunters.65

### 7.5 **Fishing**

Fishing contributed not much income to the Ngaihtes but it is an important past time; the most enjoyable recreation and a pleasurable diversion from the strenuous drudgery work in the field. Those people living by the side of the river and who are interested in fishing use to go to rivers like Tuipi, Tuivai, Ngazam, Tuzang rivers in the Manipur South District, and also the Tuisa river and its tributaries in the Chin Hills of Burma in joyous mode to cook and eat fish on the river banks. There is no professional fisherman in the true sense of the term and trading in large scale is not possible because of the absence of sea water from where large quantity of fish can be caught. Small rivers are the only sources of little fishes. The fish caught by the fisherman are use mainly for domestic consumption, except for those who caught 20-30 kilograms of fish and sold them in exchange of money. The hilly topographic condition does not permit

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64 Interview with Mr. Lianchinmang; Op. cit. n.26  
65 Mr. Thongkhanthang; Op. cit. n. 63.
construction of big and extensive ponds for fish rearing. Only few families keep fish pond in their private firms for pisciculture. Different methods are employed by the fishermen to catch fish from the rivers. The following are the different fishing methods.

(i) Fishing with net

A fisherman carries his net inside his shoulder bag and goes to the rivers for fishing. The fishing net commonly use is locally known as *ngen leen*. On reaching the river the fisherman casted his net into the water, especially in the shallow water between two deep pools when small fishes basked in the sun. He casted his net going along the course of the streams, even late at night till his desired quantity of fish is caught. This fishing is usually done in the month of March/April and September/October, i.e. during off rainy season and when the rivers are free from flood and the

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66 Interview with Mr. Tunta Ngaihte 56 years at Simveng, Churachandpur on 23.11.2011
water became clear. Sometimes also during the rainy season when the river water became dirty and mudded during which run helter scatter in search of clear water. 67

Alluring fish by bait and netting them is another modus operandi. For this three/four sheaves of millet are bound together and placed at the bottom of the river water. In order that the millets are not swept away by the cuirrent of the running water, stone weights are placed on them and to recognize the places at night sticks are planted, the upper portion of which being extended above the water with white banana stem pieces attached to it at the tip. After waiting for a considerable time, say just after sun set, before dark the fisherman casted his net over the millet bait and a good number of fishes eating the bait are caught. The season for this kind of fishing is June and July. Small grains of rice are also used as fish attracting bait. They are first dried in fire inside a vessel, when they produced a pungent smell attractive to fish they are dried in the sun and pounded to crash them to powder. The powder is mixed with sand and the mixture is placed at the bottom of the river water body where fishes are expected to frequent. The bait is laid at different places starting from the up stream towards the lower down stream. To mark the places, signs are also put up. Smelling the aroma of the rice grains fishes will come and delved to get the rice grains. Taking this chance of fish appearance, the fisherman would come and casted his net so that the fish trying to eat the bait and swimming around it are caught. Netting start from the downstream side towards the upstream because if the netting starts from the upstream fishes in the lower

67 Mr. Zamzaching, op. cit. n. 58.
stream will come to know the sign of the fisherman and run away. May and June are the most suitable time for this kind of fishing.\(^{68}\)

(ii) **Fishing by Ngoi Doh**

*Ngoi doh* is a village community fishing. The entire adult male population of the village would go to the river or stream to construct a bamboo barrier or barricade across the river which is known as *Ngoi doh*. Strong and rigid bamboos strips are knitted together crossing each other to form a wall vertical erected across the river with small holes in between them. The purpose of leaving holes on the wall is that the river water is not totally blocked but water and very small fishes are allowed to pass through the holes while the passage of bigger fishes through it was blocked. The wall is supported by posts called *kaikuang kengkhett*. *Kaikuang keng khet* posts are made in such way that a pair of two wooden or bamboo poles of about four to five feet in length were planted on the ground amidst the river water, the base of which are three or four feet apart; the upper ends slanting towards each other and crossed each other at the top which are tight together at the crossing point with ropes. Such posts are erected at several places in line across the river and they are tight up together with three or four common poles spreaded across them. This structure supported the wall so that the wall did not fall when strong current of water hits it.

The height of this wall is as high as the water level which it reaches when there is flood in the river. At the back of the wall is spreaded a mat of bamboo horizontally spreading along the river starting from the top of the barrierl extending about thirty feet in length with supporters from below. This mat is again surrounded on all sides by

\(^{68}\) Interview with Mr. Tunta : Op. cit. n.66
vertically erected mesh wall of bamboo. This entire establishment is called *ngoi doh*. This *ngoi doh* is made in the second half of the month of June and first half of July. When fishes lay their eggs among the rocks and weeds at the corner of the water body of deep pools, they are often eaten up by larger fishes; so in order to save their eggs, the fishes climbed up the streams in search of shallow and clear water and layed their eggs. This group of fishes which climbed up the stream is called *ngapah*. After laying their eggs, the *ngapah* would come down following the river water which was flooded due to heavy rainfall in the month of June and July. They come across the bamboo barrier but can not pass through it. They tried to go beyond the bamboo barrier by following the water flowing over the mat, but they are detained over the mat by the vertical wall entrenched around it. The village chief detailed the villagers to visit the *ngoi doh* every day or on alternate days depending upon the climatic conditions. When the fish caught by the *ngoi doh* is few the visitors will cook and eat the fishes on the river bank. But when the fish caught is in huge quantity the visitors will sent messenger to the village, make announcement by the village crier and the entire village will go to the river to fetch the fish. The fish is distributed equally among the villagers. The village chief will get two shares - one share as the share of the village chief and another share as his share because of his being one of the members of the *ngoi doh* party.\(^69\)

(iii) **Fishing of Ngaphuul**

From the second half of January till the end of February there are some fishes which lay their eggs in the shallow river water between two deep pools. As they come to lay their eggs, they played first in the shallow river water emitting flash of light.

\(^69\) Interview with Mr. Nengkhanmang. Op. cit. n. 62
which is a mingling of reflected sunlight from the water and the white color of the fish. This shallow water is locally called *ataal*, and the flashing spree is referred to as *te sel sel*. During the disappearance of the moon in the month, or sometimes during the full moon, especially in December, they layed their eggs in group and they are called *ngaphuul*. In order that a flat, suitable place is prepared in the river for them to lay their egg, big stones were removed from the *ataal* and to block the strong current of water big stones were put in line across the river above the *ataal*. In a comparatively large rivers like Tuivai river, Tuipi river, etc. the *ngaphuul* are seen in january and february, while in small river or brook they are seen in december. A hut is prepared nearby the *ataal* of the river where the fishermen take their shelter and watched the *ngaphuul* throughout the night and casted their nets when the *ngaphul* appeared on the river.\(^70\)

(iv) **Fishing by Gusuk**

“*Gusuk*” meant poisoning. The streams are poisoned by using different kinds of toxic substances. Several persons who are interested in fishing prepared the poisoning substances together in advance. There are four main kinds of toxic substances which are commonly used. They are: i) *Makha gah leh ateh* – the fruits and leaves of a tree locally known as *Makha Sing*, ii) *Guteng*– It is a beautiful flowering creeper whose root is a very potent toxic substance, and iii) *Sialtal ling gah* – The fruit of a tree having spines called *Sialtalling kung*, iv) *Phok gu*– It is the bark of a tree called *Phok gu*. Any of these toxic substances are collected, put them inside a basket of cane or of a bag of fiber. Take them to the river side and in order to crush them, pounded them with bat or stick over flat stones with water pouring over them; the

\(^{70}\) Mr. Thanga Tonsing. Op. cit. n. 52
juice of which is allowed to flow into the river water. At about a quarter of mile down the stream a temporary embankment is also built with the help of hay and leafy branches of trees with one or two openings. At these openings are positioned elongated basketry trap called *ngoï*. *Ngoï* has a round body with spikes fixed at the mouth which turned inward and the *ngoï* body tapering downward with pointed end at the bottom. After sometime the fishes being intoxicated by the poison became insensible and some of them died which rose belly upward and were collected, while another halfly intoxicated fishes tried to escape following the running water downward. The *ngoï* allowed water and fishes to flow inside it through its mouth but the fishes are trapped inside as they can not came out because of the spikes. Fish so poisoned are not deleterious or harmful to human being.\(^{71}\)

(v) **Fishing with dynamite and pesticides**

Highly explosive dynamite or gelatin is also use to kill fishes in the river water. Within a bamboo stump, one end of which is closed by the node while the other end is open; the gelatin is inserted, tightened and sealed it with mud. A small ignition wire is also inserted through the mud. Burned the ignition wire with match stick and as soon as it catches fire throw the gelatin into the water. The gelatin exploded with thunderous sound killing all the fishes present in the pool water which are then collected. But this device is very risky and dangerous for the fisherman. There are many cases when the explosion of the gelatin took place before the gelatin was thrown out of the hand, making the fisherman maimed. Sometimes germicides and pesticides are also used. The germicides killed not only the fishes but also the entire organism living in the river

\(^{71}\) S.Carey and H.N.Tuck : Op. cit. n. 51
water like snails, tortoise etc. This poisoning is very much unwanted because reappearance and multiplication of the fishes in the river to become abundantly available took a very long period.  

(vi) **Fishing with hook and by constructing channel**

Fish can also be caught with the help of hooks. Earth warm, locust, small piece of meat, etc. can be used as its bait. At the corner of the river pool, dropped down the hook with its bait from a sling supported by a lug. Only the curved part of the hook is deep inside the water while the bait attached at the tip of the hook lies just at the water level. Fish attracted by the bait came and swallowed the bait with the hook. Then the fish unable to escape from the clutches of the hook is caught. Another method adopted is to construct a new channel to divert the flow of the river water from entering into the pool. Drow out the water from the pool with the help of bucket or by any other suitable means so that the fish inside the pool can be caught without any hitch.  

7.6 **Animal Husbandry**

Among the animals cow, horse, chicken, dog, pig, goat, lamb, buffalo, horse, cat, and duck are domesticated by the Ngaihtes. Mithun is also another domesticated animal, but as they are set free in the forest, they are hardly seen in the village. Cow is kept for its milk and flesh, buffalo is used for ploughing the fields while horse carried effects. Even though, in the past almost every house domesticated an animal of one kind or the other, today domestication of animal is given up by many families.

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72 S.Thanglur. op. cit. n. 52.  
73 Ibid
Animals are used for domestic purposes only. Large scale rearing of animals and carrying of trade and business on large scale with animal is not a practise. \(^{74}\)

7.7 Horticulture

Different kinds of fruits like mango, orange, papaya, apple, banana, pomegranate, etc. are grown at different villages. The climate and soil of the hilly terrains in Manipur, Mizoram and the Chin Hills of Burma are suitable for all kinds of fruits. But cultivation of fruits on large scale is rarely undertaken, except those who were in Nahlan areas of Mizoram South district where cultivation of grape on large scale is done. There, each and every family had its vineyard. By selling the fruit and the grape juice, a family can earn two to three lakhs of rupees annually. The Tuipi river valley around the Leizangphai village in Thanlon sub-division, Churachandpur district is fertile and suitable, particularly for pineapple, banana, potato, jackfruit, lemon and orange cultivation. Considerable amount of bananas, potato and pine apple are produced from this area every year and marketed at different nearby villages and they are brought to Churachandpur headquarters also for sale. \(^{75}\)

\(^{74}\) Thanga Tonsing : Op. cit. n.70

\(^{75}\) Interview with Pastor Zammeng 78 years at Leizangphai on 16.2.2011
 Despite of the fact that agriculture is the main occupation of the Ngaihtes and also small scale and cottage industries, horticulture and animal husbandry provided some income to the Ngaihtes, employment in government offices and other regular income generating activities in non governmental organizations (NGO), mission institutions etc. are considered much more attractive and suitable than agriculture and its related activities. The annual income of those employed in government, NGOs and mission institutions are much more than the annual income a cultivator earned out of the sweat of his labour. Therefore, stress is laid on educating the youth so that they could get the highest education in technical, professional, and other academic pursuits, and got suitable jobs in government offices, and other private institutions with salaries commensurate to their works. According to the survey conducted by the Ngaihte Inkuan Committee (NIC) in 2011 there are about 100 Ngaihtes who had retired from government services, over 300 Ngaihtes are now working in different government departments as administrators, engineers, doctors, assistants, LDCs’, peons and in
different banking and insurance organisations as executives, managers, assistants, etc. About 80 Ngaihtes are working in active services - like military organisations from constable to commandants. There were 12 persons from Ngaihte community who went to Europ and took part in the Second World War and fought with the British soldier against their enemy (list enclosed at appendix-VI). A good number of Ngaihtes are also working in NGO’s, mission and church institutions, private schools, firms and other enterprises; while the rest are agriculturists, businessmen and engaged in different private activities.\footnote{Information collected from Mr. Kamzathang, 64 years of Tangnuam village on 20.3.2012.}