ECOLOGY

Location of the Village

Manipur lies to the south of Nagaland, north-east of Union Territory of Mizoram and south and south-east of Assam. The Chin State of Burma is bounded on the north-west by Manipur and on the west by Mizoram of India (see map No. 2). Iungchin village lies at the Indo-Burma border at the meeting place of Manipur, Mizoram and Chin State of Burma (see map No. 3). It is within the Subdivision of Singnagat of the South District of Manipur. This region lies within 93° 15' E. to 93° 45' E. longitude and 23° 45' N. to 24° 15' N. latitude.

To the north of the village lies Suangdoh village. To the east is Behiang, to the south Ngolzang and to the west a cluster of Lungthul villages, each identified by the name of its chieftain. Each village has its own village territory demarcated by natural features like rivulets, streams, hills and ranges. Where there is no prominent natural feature the village boundaries are marked by piles of stones at some places as in between Iungchin and Suangdoh. A villager cannot have a jhum field in the village territory other than where he is a bonafide resident.

Iungchin and its neighbouring villages

Iungchin village is surrounded by other Paise villages. It has a direct road communication only with Suangdoh to the north and Ngolzang in the south. Other surrounding villages are separated from it by natural barriers. One Zou village
of Behiang, to the east, depends on Lungchin for paddy in the lean period of the year. The villagers of Lungchin feel with a sense of pride that they are a cut above the Zou and particularly the people of Behiang. The relation of these villagers with those of Lungchin is casual and one-sided. Cognate tribes, other than the Zou, are remote spatially and socially for the non-mobile villagers of Lungchin.

Lungchin is situated at an inconvenient corner through which travellers from Manipur to Mizoram and Chin State and vice-versa do not directly and usually pass. A little surplus of paddy, the village dispensary and a prospect of getting mithun and some odd materials occasionally bring people of other villages into it. They come even beyond national and international boundaries. Peddlers of allopathic medicines often trek through and stay in the village. At the same time facilities for education, selling and buying of goods and affiliation of the villagers to a Christian organisation bring them out of the village. The village community has the closest social contact with the people of Ngalzang which was a Zou village during the so called Kuki rebellion or Zougaal of 1917-1919. Some of the youths of the village had joined Burmese armed forces during the mass enrollment of the Chins about 20 years ago. This was the only means of employment they could get by then. One man came back home with pension during my stay in the village after he had lost contact with his family for long fifteen years. He was received back as if he were resurrected from death. The youths now join in the Indian armed forces. Some of them are in civil services. Boys also go out for studies. The Village has a branch Post Office and a Junior Basic School. Parents can contact their children away from home by post. The nature of isolation of the past is now broken altogether. Literacy is also greatly increased. More people come into the village as more of the villagers go out frequently and in greater numbers.
Means of Communication

Tedim Road runs from Imphal to the south passing through the inhabited plain area of Manipur. It reaches Churachandpur township locally known as Lamka, at a distance of about 60 kilometers from Imphal. This road winds further south into the hills beyond the Indo-Burma boundary after passing through Singnagat, a sub-divisional headquarters, till it reaches Tedim in the Chin State. At Singnagat another jeepable road known as Gwite Road bifurcates from Tedim Road. It leads to Thanlon, a sub-divisional headquarters. At a point between Mauuchen and Chiangpi villages, a narrow road branches off from the Gwite Road. This road takes a sharp curve towards the south passing through Suangdoh and leads to Lunghin. It continues in a permissible gradient into the last village (Ngalsang) at a distance of about four miles from Lunghin.

Climate

This region has enough monsoon rainfall. Climate is pleasant owing to the altitude. In Manipur there is no meteorological observatory for the hill areas. The only observatory, at Imphal at an elevation of about 2,600 feet records only for the plain area. There is no record of rainfall even for the south district as a whole. But rainfall varies from different elevations. The average annual rainfall in Manipur valley is 1413 mm. (55' 63''). There is no precise record of annual rainfall for the hills of various altitudes occupying the greater part of Manipur. The east district has higher annual average rainfall of 4017 mm. (158' 15'') than the west district at an elevation of 6,000 feet which records 1799 mm. (63' 16'', see Census of Manipur 1961). Lehman (1963) recorded a maximum upper nineties (°F) at different altitudes ranging from 3,500 ft. to 7,000 ft. during the
hottest month in the Chin State adjoining the area of study. In winter temperature seldom goes below much 30° F. There is no reliable record of temperature and rainfall for the area of study. But it can roughly be estimated that the temperature of the area of study will be more or less the same with that of the hilly Chin State to the south and of Manipur South District to the north.

Flora and fauna

This area lacks bamboo of different types. Bamboo forests gradually give to tree jungles as deforestation goes on. Forest is thick in areas unsuitable for jhuming due to bad topography. Cane is also scarce. People fetch cane for matting and strapping from the forest of Hausapi cliffs in Burma. Pine trees are now on the verge of diminution due to deforestation and particular demand for light and torch. Game animals are also very much reduced now. A few species1 of flora and fauna are given below:

Fauna

Sangak*, the wild cat (Felis marmorata L), barking deer (Cervulus vaginalis L); wild goat (Nemor doedus babulina L); sambar deer (Rusa aristotelia L), wild hog (Sus scrofa L); Hornbill (Buceros bicarnis H); monkey, gibbon, tiger, bear, wolf, jungle fowl (Gallus gallus H); Parakeet (Psittacula eunetra of Agapornis roseicollis H); wild pigeon (Colombia liva); dove (Streptopelia senegalensis H) etc.

Flora

*Sesin*², the megaswar tree (*Iesus fara*L); *toseu*
(mercu serrata L); *suaklu*², the emblic myrobalam (*Phyllanthus emblica*L); silk cotton tree (*Bombax malabarica*); *vau*
(Bauhinia variegata L & C.); *suangkua*², the coral tree
(*Erythrina indica*L & C.); *twiteeng*², the hog plum (*Spondia magnifora*L); *sawngtah*², (Parkia roxburgii); *kaunval*², (Smilax);
*mawng*², peepul tree (*Ficus religiosus*C); *khautan*², (Hibiscus macrophyllus); jack fruit (*Artocarpus incognita*) and species
of citrus etc.

Landscape

The hilly terrain of the Chin people (Zoumi) is a land
of scenic beauty. The cold water from the hills flowing under
the rustled - leaf bearing trees quenches the thirst most. Songs
are composed to allude to the hilly land as 'zougan' where
they are born and die; and to the cold water of the hills as
goutui. The land where they live in is zougan and the water of
the land is goutui flowing down the hill sides. In the hills
the winds hardly know the summer. Even in summer a man gets
consolation and relief under the shade of trees by drinking
the cold water protected from the direct heat of the sun by
the trees in the midst of gentle mountain breezes. The
landscape is green as one can see hills after hills and ranges
after ranges under the blue skies during the rains. The high
peaks of mountains attract clouds to encircle them. With
the start of summer and with the disappearance of winter, vegetati-
ons begin to bud and give rise to flowers of their respec-
tive kinds. Flowers and green foliages carpet even the horny
jungles and undergrowth. Scintillating flowers of coral tree
and mountain ebony add to the scenic background of the land
before and first part of the rain. The landscape is hazy in
winter. The atmosphere is dim, hazy and choking for some
days after burning the jhum fields in April and before the first showers of rain. It is because of the fumes and smokes of the burnt jhum fields. In a hazy atmosphere one cannot see distant hills. This condition is often compared to the lonely conditions of persons in love etc. The sun and the moon look blood-red.

But the first showers of the rain wash the haze. Then one can see the landscape clearly as far as one's eye sight can reach.

The concept of ecological system has a great deal to do with the people. There is concurrent regularity of men and nature. A man adjusts his activities according to the changes in the ecological system. Redfield (1969:30) says that ecology affects social groupings but declines to say that complex social arrangements such as families, lineages and clans depend upon ecology. Under social system a man should live in a village or in a group to get the cooperation of his fellow villagers and members of his group to fight against ecological enemies. Evans Pritchard (1940:84 f.) attributes the latitude and generosity of the donor to the hardship of life and narrow margin of sufficiency throughout the year. Again Redfield sees for every community, primitive or civilized, what most importantly surrounds and influences the people are the tradition, sentiment, norms and aspirations that make up the common mental life. In Paite society meat and drink always go along the lines of kinship through the institutionalized system of inyadonta. As a social norm people invite neighbours and villagers to a feast and drinking bout. The norm and practices of the people also directly or indirectly depend upon the locality and ecological conditions. Event of social function will be perfunctory if the soil and rain are not sufficient to produce abundant harvest. Khudou festival cannot be done without harvest in the rainy season while supply is depletive and pressure of jhuming works is still heavy.
Lungchin village was established in 1910 by Mr. Mang Za Kham of Gwite clan from Selbung village of Burma. By reading omens, the selected site in the vicinity of good water supply was occupied (see Goswami and Kakhenthang 1974:21). The houses are oriented across the slope of a hill in rows one upon another like the houses of Haka Chins (Lehman 1963:117). A man can see the underside of the floor of his immediate neighbour living on the upslope side of the village topography. In other words, a man can see from his own house the roof of his immediate neighbour residing on the downslope side of the village (See map No.1). The village perches near the apex of the slope of a hillside facing the east. It receives the first rays of the sun in the morning. Fog permeates the low laying dales in between the ranges and hills in winter. The fog occupies the same level in different dales as it were a stretch of plains in the foot hills. It looks like a big plain connecting Manipur and Burma along the Tuivai river. The level of fog comes higher and higher till it vanishes in the sun and in the gush of wind. So the village is free from chilly fog in winter mornings. The upslope of the hillside, on which the village stands, ends abruptly into high cliffs on the west. The cliffs overcast the setting sun and the sun sets early at 3.30 p.m. in the village. This gives a chilly sensation and people are forced to sit near the fire-place in winter while the sun shines in the ranges east of the village. At the top of the village precipice one can have bird's eye view of parts of Manipur, Burma and Mizoram studded with mountain ranges. The immediate vicinity of the village is marked by a network of trails of hog. The village is surrounded by reserved forest to keep off combustible grasses in the dry season. Felling of trees and pruning of their branches for fire-wood and for any purpose are illegal. This is to protect the village from wild fires in dry season particularly from burning the jhum fields.
Out-over land grows more grasses and can catch fire easily in the dry season. This is a feature of ordinary villages of the cognate Chin tribes (cf. Lehman 1963:53).

The village wakes up early in the morning. Rising up earlier than men at the 'first crow of cock', women set fire and husk paddy. The physical distance of the jhuming sites necessitates a household to get early meals in order to get longer working hours in the jhum. The first sounds of human activities to be heard in the morning are the bubbling sounds of baling water out of bamboo tubes and husking of paddy. Water is scarce in most Paite villages. But nature is not niggardly with water at Lungchin in dry season also. Fetching water and husking of paddy are feminine duties. Even a stranger-woman is not free from feminine works in the course of her journey. As such a woman is remarked as if she were travelling with a wooden pestle. Women of a household start the matutinal work of husking paddy before dawn by lighting a lamp during harvest period. The early atmosphere of a village is full of thudding sounds of pounding paddy by the women throughout the year. Early meals are taken between 5 and 6 O'clock in the morning. Man seldom has any work till he has his meals and before the womenfolk finish their morning chores. Any person lagging behind the time in the morning as to taking meals and getting ready for a work, is poked fun of by saying, "Did not your cocks crow this morning?" Every household keeps domestic fowls. The cocks are to crow and wake up the inmates of the household. The most laggard household has finished its eating and tidied away things at six in the morning during harvest season. After all the able-bodied persons stroll off on their pursuits only the young and the old who cannot work in the jhum are left behind. The whole village reels back into silence. Children are seen with their grandparents in the day time. Small boys loiter here and there in and around the village. At noon when the sun is over the head children come home from school or a
bush and adults also retreat to their jhum hovel to have their midday meals prepared in the morning. Children run out of the house again munching their food. The day is calm with less human noise except the crows of cocks and cackles of hens disturbing the sleep of a baby on a bed or in a cradle. Ferial Sundays are lively. Christians and non-Christians do not go to their jhum fields on Sundays. There are more break social and ritual functions on Sundays.

Towards sundown at about 3 to 4 p.m. the cocks crow and the flower of four O'clock plant (Jalapa mirabilis) opens in rainy season. These indicate the time for cooking evening meals. Grandmothers of joint families and small daughters or boys of nuclear families start cooking the evening meals. Smokes can be seen escaping through the thatching of the roofs. Unmindful child can realise that it is time to cook for the family meals by seeing smoke emitting from the roofs of neighbouring houses and by noting the flowers of four O'clock plant. This flower is called *maisam paak*, it means a flower of setting fire. It is a good indicator to know the time for cooking when the position of the sun in the skies is not clear on rainy and cloudy days. At dusk people start pouring into the village. The village revives its normal liveliness. It wakes not late at night. Only households having unmarried girls keep wake later than others. A traveller in a village can easily know that a household with laughters, banters and sounds of murmuring at night is having unmarried girl. The visitors of girls leave the house at the usual *lengla paihun* (a time to return from social visit) otherwise their social intercourse will be a mere banality.
The terrain of the country is slope, hilly, uneven and rugged. These characteristic features influence the nature of inter-village communications and transport. The bridlepaths and roads take zig-zag course. They are steep and gradient. As dictated by nature of topography people carry goods in basket on their back by strapping over the frontal. This mode of carrying goods is unavoidable due to the centrifugal force of nature. The weight of the body or the goods presses directly to the centre of the earth. Unevenness of the hill sides coupled with scarcity of water on the hill sides, unlike that of Nagaland, seriously hampers the introduction of terraced cultivation on the hillsides. There is a small irrigable flat surface of land at the bank of Tuivai river. It is about three miles down the village. Some families are contemplating to make a permanent wet cultivation there with the permission of the village chief after having jhumed it first. There are inherent difficulties to shift over from jhuming to permanent wet cultivation. As there is no water on the hill sides so there is no flat surface at the banks of rivulets. Jhuming does not require tilling the soil. After the slashes are burnt down the soil is soft and ready for seeds. Stooping on the plain for turning up the soil gives more lumbar pain than stooping over steepy surface for a milder work of weeding. So people say that they are not accustomed to the work of turning the soil and wallowing in the mud of wet cultivation. The immediate hindrance from successful reclaiming of any available flat surface for wet cultivation is lack of surplus food for immediate subsistence. By human labour alone a household cannot reclaim at a time a new area big enough to maintain a family. It is required that one should combine jhuming and reclamation of his wet cultivation. He cannot have his jhum site in an area away from the area of the village jhum. The usual secondary crops of jhuming are not possible to intercrop with
rice in wet cultivation. This will mean no vegetables etc. for the family. It will be more ameliorative if he has a good quantity of surplus paddy in the last jhuming so that he can devote more time to the extension of wet cultivation without having any fear of starvation. While he attends to the shifting cultivation, wet cultivation is badly in need of care and vice-versa. Another indirect but very important and basic factor that impedes introduction of wet cultivation takes deep roots in the social structure. There is no irrigable land to accommodate even a small group of households. To practise wet cultivation means to live alone in isolation in the jungles inhabited by evil spirits, away from relatives, members of inadoukta and former villagers. The social organisation of the Paite makes them gregarious. One cannot avoid membership of inadoukta in the households of one's relatives. He needs the services of members of his inadoukta and the households to which he is a member of inadoukta need his services for all ritual and social functions. Such a person living in isolation, if there be any, will be socially almost dead loss to the community. No one in the sample village is yet successful in reclaiming a wet cultivation. This fact lies in the gregarious nature of the Paite to which the Thadou remarked. "The Paite are like an epiphytic ficus tree. Wherever they come their number goes on increasing by additions of newcomers till they push us away." In Lungshan village only Mr. Awn Za Thang's household having more workable members of joint family tried hard to achieve this end with a little financial aid from Block Development. The Thadou and Zou tribes who do not live in bigger communities are more successful in reclaiming arable pockets of land in forest. The social organisation of the Paite binds the households in various knots. As for example, Mr. Awn Za Thang has a full-fledged inadoukta organisation besides having thirty eight memberships of inadoukta in different households in the village. It will be a great loss for his household and his villagers if his household shifts
To the site of the proposed wet cultivation. Members of his family will feel socially lonesome. The children of the household will not be able to continue their schooling and church-going. Unlike jhuming fields in compact areas, one or two patches of wet cultivation in a jungle will be nakedly exposed to the raids of monkeys, birds, insects, rodents etc. So long as shifting cultivation can give mere means of livelihood, Paites villagers are not yet interested in reclaiming any piece of arable land in isolation from near and dear ones.

Shifting cultivation

Shifting cultivation is the way of life in the hilly terrains where there is no other alternative means of agriculture. It is closely linked with the social custom and mythology as among the people of Arunachal (Ering 1972:55-56). Collective jhuming in the same area of forest gives a chance for the people to meet and associate one another throughout the year. It is the chief source of security. It is said that in the days gone by people went to their jhum at the same time and walked in a body for fear of an attack of enemies. Apart from cooperation of the villagers, success of jhuming cultivation depends upon the monsoon rains. If rain comes too early the felled vegetations on the jhum site cannot burn well. If it does not burn well, volume of work increases and it is difficult to keep the weeds under control. So jhum sites must be fired before the first showers of rain in April. If the weather is cloudy and rain comes early it is a common concern and headache of the whole community who suffer in the same degree. If rain comes at all the unburnt wreckage of the new jhum requires some good sunny days to let it dry. The jhuming cycle is now six to seven years.
A land that lies fallow for more years having bigger trees on loamy soil without grasses is a good jhum site. To get such a piece of land is a matter of luck also. No one has peaceful mind till one has settled a jhum site for the next year. It is said, "Lou mit kikhat, sawl mit kikhat lou". This means to say that every body has similar desire to possess a good and fertile jhum site while people do not attribute similar admiration to the same lover. A beautiful person in one's eyes is not equally beautiful and attractive in the eyes of other people. But a good site for jhum is equally good for every body. It is often a bone of contention between and among villagers. They occasionally quarrel openly over a piece of jhuming site and sue the matter in a village court.

A jhum site is used only for one year. Continuous use of the same land for two or more years is prohibited in Lungchin and elsewhere in Manipur South District. After harvest the jhum is abandoned to facilitate the natural recuperation of soil fertility. The village authority does not permit the villagers to re-weed even a small patch of land in abandoned jhum field the next year for cotton cultivation. Continuous clearing hampers the regrowth of the coppice and recuperation of the soil. Cotton cultivation in the abandoned jhum land is done now only casually when the villagers find it difficult to obtain cotton from neighbouring villages. Nowadays the land is exhausted and forest is young. This condition also changes some aspects of the labour organisation of the villagers. Formerly the womenfolk did not join the men in clearing forest sites as there were big trees without grasses. It is said that land is more grassy and less productive now. It is difficult to clear and weed grassy land. The yield in such land is proportionately low. So the womenfolk in Lungchin and Hoichin villages join hands with the men in clearing forest sites. The women clear off the grasses and
smaller trees and shrubs while the males pollard and fell bigger trees. A household finds it difficult to clear enough forest land without the help of its women. Formerly clearing forest site was the sole duty of males and women were the regular weeder. Hunters could rely on their wives and children for weeding the jhum field while they roamed about hunting. It is further said about the Siyin (Sihzang) people that "A man should spend his life in fighting, hunting and drinking, whilst labour (weeding the jhum) is intended for women and slaves only" (Grierson 1967:73). This was possible and tenable while the land was fertile and teemed in game animals formerly.

The work of clearing forest site is hazardous and arduous one. People bring their rice-beer or fermented rice (zu-ha) at the work site to quench their thirst and satisfy hunger that the zoutui (cold water of the hill) alone cannot do so. This manly work of clearing forest site is compared with the risky condition of a pregnant woman: "Pasal lou sing phuuk gaaltuam dou, numei nauvei gaaltuam dou. It means that a man felling trees for jhum site is waging war against an enemy while a woman in travail is facing a particular enemy. A man is helpless in the travail of his wife. He cannot relieve the pains, sufferings and the risk. A woman also cannot prevent her husband from accident in the process of clearing forest site. They are in different 'no man's land' and they cannot protect each other. A man fell from a tree while pollarding the branches in the course of clearing a jhum site with his father. Later he was attacked by a bear while hunting with his elder brother. Hence this song.

Zua toh tulta paal ka aam leh,
Tulta'n ka leidou chi e:
Chhun toh sangdeih paal ka aam leh,
Sangin ka thamna chi e. — Damtual.
Translation:

As I was engaged in felling trees with my father, the tree said, "You are my enemy".
As I hunted animals with my elder brother, the animal said, "You are my victim".

In consideration of the perilousness of the work of clearing forest site a wife is not supposed to leave her husband and undertake a journey to visit relatives in other villages during this period of uncertainty. His fate is hanging on the balance. In normal case members of the same family take their meals together at a time. During the peak of this work, small children are fed and given meals first before their parents come home, as Mr. Phung Nok did to his grandchildren. All these are precautionary measures to avoid further troubles and inconveniences in case a man meets some accident in the course of his work in clearing a forest site. In a similar way a pregnant woman tries to finish her weaving before her delivery.

Nowadays it is felt that it is good to clear forest site for the next year's jhum as soon as possible within the current jhuming season. The talk of male household heads is the possible range of forest area and a time for individual allotment of lands to them while they are still at the last stage of weeding the jhum in August. The period between harvest and the last stage of weeding when paddy is full grown is phavang. It is a slack period of the year. Sites cleared during this phavang period (Sept. - Oct.) burn well. Stubs and roots of creepers, trees, shrubs and grasses and new shoots cannot resist fire. They do not produce luxuriant shoots if the jhum site is cleared during this phavang period. The lashes have long period of exposure to the sun. The result is perfect burning and easy weeding of the jhum with less weeds.
Formerly new site for jhum was cleared only after harvest in January and February. The people of Lungchin are noted for their industriousness in jhum works, as evident from yearly sufficiency and surplus of paddy. They finish clearing a new site before harvest period of the current year's jhum.

Game animals

The area is no longer teemed with animals and fish. With the increase of human population, animal population also proportionately diminishes. Hunting was the main competition of men in the past. It is now a game of enjoyment though success has a great deal of social credit. Seasonal and hydrological fluctuations determine fishing and hunting. Fish and meat form occasional ingredients in the food. Traps for birds are not set in the rain to rot the noose. Setting of communal weir is done in rainy season after fish moved upstream in flood. This is done by a group of households in July/August. Elephants and wild gayals are now not found. They formed stories of the past. Population of tigers has been reduced very much since Japanese war. It is said that they ran away as scared by the sound of airplanes. Tiger was the animal most feared and people swore in the name of tigers. No one cares to trace the trail and foot prints unless it kills a man. Bears are more rampant in rainy season in search of fruits. Bears, monkeys and wild hogs often spoil the crops in the jhum fields. Bears attacked even innocent women while at work. Barking deers are abundant. The villagers hunt them year in and year out. Sambhar deers and wild boars are not common. If their foot prints are found it is a rule to track the course by group hunting. People hunt animals by sight as well as by spoor. Deer traps are set near the jhum where trails are found. Smaller traps called *mankhawng* are set at jhum by fencing down the hill side at a suitable place so that the
jhumer can visit it every day during the jhuming season. Another device of trap called pial is also used to entrap bears and wild swines. By pulling the bait the trigger dislodges and the animal is caught under the heavy trap. This type of trap is not to be inspected physically. It can be watched and observed from a distance at home by a mechanism. A white structure is fixed at the top of a tree visibly from home. It is connected with the trap by a cord. The cord pulls down the mark as the trap drops. Almost every day thirteen guns of the village are taken out in the jungles. But animals are not always killed.

Forest

Forest ranges away from human habitations are supposed to be full of evil spirits (Goswami and Kamkhenthang 1974: 19 - 20). They interfere with men in their health, fate and reward or punish people according to their merit or demerit. Superstitious beliefs and practices have some influences and impressions in the mind of the people. Children roam about in a forest. They do not allow the smallest and youngest of them to walk behind them lest a 'lizard will spit on him'. Evil spirit is epitomized as lizard whose foam is supposed to cause barrenness if one touches it. Chrysanthemum is sown at the four corners of the jhum hut. On casual observation the flowering chrysanthemums look like a decoration of a jhum hut. The four corners of the jhum hut where the flowers are sown represent the four cardinal directions. To the sight of evil spirits the red flowers appear as glaring light. The light dazzles the sight of evil spirits and they cannot see human beings in the jhum hut surrounded by chrysanthemum as the Lekher and Lushai believed (Parry 1932; McCall 1949: 35 - 36). The boundary of a jhum field flanked by a neighbour's jhum is made very straight by keeping logs of trees one after another. The corners of jhum boundary are also made not to have any angle. The corner is made rather round. Evil spirits
chase the spirits of the jhumers along the boundary line. It can make a good shortcut if the line is crooked or zig-zag and kidnap the spirit of a man. This causes illness and even death of the person concerned. Children are not allowed to sleep in the jhum hovel even in the daytime while their parents are working in the field. Evil spirits are said to be fond of carrying away sleeping children in a jhum hut. At the later part of lunar month called zingkha (March-April) forest is seriously endangered by evil spirits. It is most dangerous at night. During this time wicked spirits move here and there. They upturn all the stones in the streams and rivulets. They displace everything they can lay their hands on. They put the upturned stones in position again in the next month of gamkha (April-May). An episode of one Mr. Khup Zen of Khodam village, Burma, was striking and typical to the non-Christian Paita point of view. He said that he would not be seen by the evil spirits if he stayed only a night in his jhum hut during this unsafe period. He did so as the works in the jhum pressed him heavily. He came home after a night’s stay. But he got ill suddenly and died within three days. This is the nature of spiritual pollution of forest. Elders advise the younger ones not to respond to anonymous calls in the jungle lest they are the calls of wicked spirits.

Seasons

One ecological year is one agricultural cycle. A cyclical year consists of 12 lunar months. A year is divided into four seasons: they are: Tuuk (rainy season), khaal (dry season), nipi (summer) and phalbi (winter). Tuuk and nipi overlap each other. Part of the nipi is tuuk so long as there is rain. Similarly khaal (dry season) overlaps winter (phalbi). Khaal period continues till rains in April through phalbi (winter). These divisions are not concrete fragments of time but depend upon the whim of the seasons.
Hydrological condition and dry season determine the agricultural activities which again in turn influence and determine many of the social activities. Within the cyclical period of the year, the talks, activities and occupations change in consonance with the seasonal and agricultural stages. The same activities of social and economic nature take place more or less at the same time in the same order within the cycle. People know what and when such and such activities and ceremonies are to come with reference to the environment and the stages of jhuming activities. Jhuming stages are often important points of reference. Jhuming sites one after another and year after year are the points of reference in counting personal age and passage of time. Within the ecology, plants and creatures herald the changes in the season and people act in appropriate way suitable to a particular stage of season. The change of summer into a chilly winter is overlapping as other stages of the seasons. The wag-tail (a genus of Motacilla) is a true harbinger of the coming winter. The appearance of this bird is an indication that a never failing winter is to come. This bird is not found in summer and migrates somewhere for brooding. It is said that the wag-tail ascends to the heaven where it is as big as a hen. It precedes the winter on earth. Then the size of this bird is reduced to a small bird due to the long distance and height it covers. It comes down 'to pour out cold wave of winter on earth'. The heralding of the cold winter by the wag-tail is sung in this song:

Thanh khokhal kikhenna ding in,
Tuna ililen hong tualkum e, tawn denden.

(To change the season of the earth,
The wag-tail of above descends;
It hops and hops on the ground).
On seeing the wag-tail before harvest in October people get mentally ready for the coming season. Jhuming activities are also regulated and controlled by the changes of the season. Creatures like birds and insects are more sensible and susceptible to the changes in the season. Men learn from the habits of creatures the changes of season and the right time for a particular work in the jhum. It is a high time to sow seeds in the jhum field when a bird called phengphelep and a cicada called buh-tuh-the (the cicada of sowing paddy seed) start chirping. Even a cutting of yam kept on the third trellis over the fire-place responds to the change of season by sprouting a shoot. It is said that even a maniac named Thang Son, who was in fetters, responded to the seasonal change with reference to his jhum works. He was so sorry to be in fetters when he heard the song of this bird. He exclaimed, "Oh God! Who will sow my paddy seeds in my jhum field? It is now a high time for sowing seeds as the phengphelep is coming again". Children also know that Christmas is approaching near on seeing the flowering buds of Opptorium odoratum (taangsaam).

Fire is a great source of domestic warmth on rainy days and winter nights. During haam dormitory was in vogue a buck is said to have had only one piece of bed-cloth. People cultivate cotton but the process of turning it into cloth is a tortuous exercise. The desire to have sufficient cloths was so great that a story was fabricated as a result of frustration. The story states that in the days gone by thread-balls of cotton were borne by big cotton trees. The trees had sharp spikes and thorns. The long spikes and thorns were highly poisonous. The wounds inflicted by them were positively fatal. As a result of this no one could pluck the thread-ball and had enough cloths. This story is also found in a form of a song like this:
Sanggah kei silhpuan ding aw,
Lentu kurn ah saibang saat le'ng;
Aling khauai bang haang veh e.

For the cloth of me, the poor,
I cut the tree of thread-ball;
But the thorns were so fatal as a sting of bee.

In a similar way the difficult natures of procuring food and drink, arduousness of getting and conveying fire-wood are reflected in this story. Once upon a time people did not carry goods and fire-woods on their persons. They neither needed not carry goods nor weed out jhum fields. Baskets automatically carried goods. Wooden hoes weeded the jhum fields. One day a new bride saw wooden hoes weeding the jhum field. She outcried them in appreciation and wonderment. Then the wooden hoes disappeared in shyness. She put her billets in her basket. The loaded basket went home but slowly. The bride followed it with impatience. She liked to reach home early so as to taste of the soup of dog's meat in her father's house. She took the basket and carried it herself. Since these incidences goods were required to be carried and the jhum fields to be weeded out by human beings.

Slack period

The period between the last weeding and harvest is phavaang (Sept. - Oct.). The work of clearing a new forest site is not yet immediately and heavily pressing. It is a period of different odd jobs and engagements. Social activities and other pursuits increases in a fat year to a great extent during this phavaang period. But it is often a period of lean months of the year. So every one cannot afford to fulfil his socio-ritual obligations like puu zukholh (offering of rice-beer to one's mother's brother),
During the phavang period women stack as much fire-woods as they can for use during harvest period. Those who can afford to buy skeins of thread also weave cloths. It is a time for making cloths for members of family. Home-made cloths are preferable for their durability to factory-made cloths for working dress. During this time men have time for roving about in the jungles for various odd jobs and hunting. They collect materials for building a house. They can visit relatives or receive visiting relatives from other villages. Partial famine takes place during this time. Families use their rice sparingly by this time. They supplement millet, Job's tear, maize, corn and yam to rice. None of these are produced in large quantities. Cultivation of millet and Job's tear is almost given up now in Lungchin village though they were the first staple crops of the Chin people*. Porridge is made from rice with pumpkin and its leaves for some days for evening meals by those who run short of rice. The common suplementary tuberous food stuff are the corn, yam (dioscoria) and sweet potato (Ipomea batata). They are boiled awhile.

*J.H. Hutton (Shaw 1912:29) remarked in the footnote: "The cultivation of millet and sorghum seems to have preceded that of rice in the Naga Hills and there are many villages across the frontier which still cultivate millet as their staple crop and grow little or no rice. . . . In Formosa . . . millet preceded rice, which is still regarded as unclean food (McCoveto, Hunters of Formosa p. 183)."
It is eaten as midday meals and sometimes as evening meals also. They are regarded as poor food. But visitors are generously offered with such cooked tubers. Sulphur bean (Canavalis ensiformis) is a poisonous bean. After diluting the poison by steeping the cooked beans in water for some days the beans are cooked with rice and dried slices of boiled sweet potato. The most inferior but effective food for the annual lean period is calocasia*. It is also shown in this song:

Kumchin tuchin tan-kial douns,
Bisam lensawl bang phanou aw:
Bisam lensawl bang phanou aw,
Deih kawilouva von tam tawi aw e.

As supplementary food of annual lean period,
Has bushy hairs like bushy leaves;
It has bushy leaves like a bunch of leaves,
And has multiple youngs (daughter corms) without a consort.

In phavang period there is another wave of heat called phavang nisa. Under this heat of the sun the forest is full of sounds of chirping cicadas locally called leng-the in the midst of motionless hills and ravines. The cicada is one great source of making people more yearning for their loved ones. This reminds one of the association with friends and lovers in the previous weeding season.

Ngaih aw heina samkuan ah,
Mual tumtai bang na gim nam den e;
Mual tumtai bang na gim nam den e,
Sun khosawt leng-the khuan in na tongdam za'ng e.

Hutton remarked (Shaw 1929:87) that the Lhouvum and Lhongem (Thadou) were particularly very fond of taro and relied on it a good deal. "... rice has supplemented taro as the staple crop of the Thadou, and taro (calocasia) is still largely cultivated".
Oh beloved! In the ranges where I roam about,
I perceive your smell all the time as tumtai flower of the hills; I always feel your smell as the tumtai flower of the hills, I hear thy sweet voice in the chirping of cicada on the lonesome days.

A period after harvest is pawltek (December to January). Most of the social activities reach its culmination during this period. This is the most suitable period in a year for social activities and various engagements when there is no rain at the end of jhuming season. A household is to rejoice even though it has to undergo a period of scarcity in the later part of the year. Those who did not finish clearing for the new jhum site do it now side by side with conveying paddy home. Khuadou and Christmas festivals are the most conspicuous events of the season. In Lungchin village khuadou festival (see photo No. 1 & 2) is performed by the non-Christians to coincide with Christmas celebration done by the village Christians. Non-Christians on the other side of the border perform khuadou festival in this pawltek period, but not necessarily on Christmas day. At dead of night during this winter fall in Lungchin village one can hear the sounds of gongs in the cold and silent nights from some villages such as Tualkhiang and Kawnuaci of Chin State. These are nothing but the happy revelry of holding the khuadou festival to mark the end of an agricultural year and with it people relieve themselves from the humdrum works of jhuming. It is during this winter fall that people can make themselves available for some other works as in phavang period. Houses are built or repaired by inviting relatives, members of inndongta and neighbours (see photo Nos. 3, 4 & 5). There is enough paddy for rice beer and feast at least during this period. It is the fatest period of a year against the lean period of phavang. No one ever has more at other time than this period.
They sell some surplus paddy and other by-products of the jhum such as chilly, smoking tobacco, sesame etc. for cash income.

It has been observed that a household is an economic and social unit. A household is a universal unit. So is the inndongta in Paite society. The household and its inndongta always associate each other as an object has its shadow. Under the ecological environments given above, a Burmese type of *squana* cultivation is the sole means of livelihood in the hilly terrains. A household is treated individually as an economic unit. It is such a unit of a household to which a right to exploit a forest area for jhuming is given (Cf. Goswami and Kamkhenthang 1974 : 3). Different families living in the same household, under the same roof and sharing the same hearth and a barn are not given different and individual rights of jhuming area. All members of the same household farm on the same plot of jhuming land. A household is primarily responsible for managing its affairs and agricultural pursuit. The mode of livelihood is an exercise between the ecological environment on the one hand and the human beings on the other. Households having better equipment have better adaptation to the environmental pressure. This process in quest of food is an arduous one. Procurement of sufficient food and sound health are not always assured in this uncertain world. Difficulties and uncertainties loom large for a household. The inndongta is multi-faceted. It is the projections of social, economic and cultural aspects of the people in response to the needs of the community. The environment, if not exploited, will not by itself come to the relief of the needy people. On the other hand, Lungchin, and for that matter, all Paite villages are marked by the absence of wage labour. It is the members of
the kin group or the village who alone can come to the rescue of the needy households in respect of supplying the extra labour that is demanded during the peak period of jhuming cycle and during various civil and ritual occasions. To get necessary assistance from different sets of relatives each household arranges to tag in several households and get them affiliated to it in a corporate inndongta organisation. Households assume certain responsibilities towards one another to back up one another. So each household has this inndongta organisation consisting of several households at its back. The same household may be affiliated to several households or different capacities to exchange help, meat and drink. The position, a household shall hold in the inndongta, is structurally determined by kinship position. Now we shall pass on to the formation of the inndongta and other complicacies in order to see the structural arrangement of persons in the kinship universe.