CHAPTER IV

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION IN THE HILLS

4.1 Social Condition of Different Tribes

Among the various tribes, the tribe 'Tripura' had the highest social status. This was presumably because it belonged to the ruling tribe of the territory.

A special group within the Tripura tribe was known as 'Thakur'. These Thakurs had direct relation, either by blood or by marriage, with the Ruling Family. Consequently, they topped the list in the social hierarchy. The Thakurs were the nobles of the country, and usually they stayed in the capital to assist the Maharaja in the matters of administration. They were required to act as 'Misip' or liaison officer between the Maharaja of Tripura and the inferior chieftains of various tribes. As has been noted earlier, the 'Samanta Rajas' had to go through the Misip before communicating anything to the Maharaja.

The remaining people belonging to the Tripura tribe were sub-divided into twelve sections, viz., (1) Siuk, (2) Kostia, (3) Daitya Sing, (4) Bachal, (5) Husuria, (6) Silatia, (7) Apaiya, (8) Chhatra Tuiya, (9) Deorai or Ghalim, (10) Sube Naran.

1 Census Bibarani, op.cit., p. 60.
These twelve sections were known as twelve 'Hadas'. The above classification was made on the basis of duties assigned to them by the Maharaja. It is possible that this stratification within the Tripura tribe was a degenerated version of self-governing institution prevailing among them at earlier time periods. The respective duties of various Hadas are enumerated below:

1. **Siuk**
   Siuk means hunter. Their main duty was to supply meat to the royal kitchen.

2. **Koatia**
   Koatia means betel-nut. So they were in charge of serving betel leaves and nuts to the members of the Royal family.

3. **Daitya Singh**
   They were bearers of the Royal Flag during any King's march. Maximum number of people belonged to this 'Hada'. In times past they acted as Bininda or Police also.

4. **Bachul**
   Originally, they assisted in the elephant trapping operations (Kheda). Later on, they were entrusted with many minor duties in the palace.

5 & 6. **Husuria and Bilatia**
   They were attendants of the king and served at his errands.

7. **Apsiya**
   First, they were entrusted to procure fish for the Royal kitchen; later, they gathered firewoods also.
6. Chhata
Tuiva

The people belonging to this Hada were
bearers of royal umbrella, and also other
insignias of the king.

9. Deorai

Deorai or Ghalima, as they were sometimes
called, acted as the Priests.

10. Sube Naran

The dressing of fish and other eatables
was their duty.

11. Sena

If any person belonging to any of the above
ten Hadas was ex-communicated from his
particular society due to his indulgence
in incests or such other immoral activities,
then he was usually incorporated in 'Sena'.
The Senas were required to wash the cooking
utensils and to clean the dining table of
the 'Thakurs'.

12. Julai

Julais were the lowliest of all. According
to Kaliprasanna Sen, they were like the
slaves; they had no right to wear ornaments.  
They worked as servants in the royal
'harem'. Those Tripuras who succumbed to
extreme poverty due to any reasons usually
accepted to be enlisted in the 'Julai
Hada'.

All people belonging to the above-mentioned various
Hadas were not required to serve at one and the same time.

2 Ibid., p. 69.
The services of a few from each Hada were requisitioned at a time. The rest remained in their villages as ordinary jhumias only. Those who were called for actual duties were exempted from payment of taxes usual for a jhumia. However, in 1903, the Minister of the State observed that many Tripuras, simply by virtue of their belonging to the Hadas, evaded the payment of tax. He proposed the payment of wages to people for their actual services and requested the Maharaja to levy tax upon each and all. By Act 4 of 1329 T.E. (1919-20 A.D.), the suggestion was accepted.

Next to the Tripura tribe, the Halams, it seems, had also a high position in the social stratum of the State. There was a tradition that the Halams ruled the country before the advent of the Tripura tribe. In the last day of the Durga Puja festival, the Maharaja usually gave a feast to all the tribal Sardars and other people, who assembled in the State capital on this occasion. The attendance of Halams in that feast was regarded to be essential. Without specifying what it might be, Kaliprasanna Sen remarked that the feast had diplomatic significance. By His Order No. 349 of 1356 T.E. (1946-47 A.D.), the Maharaja asked the Halams to use 'Singha' as their surname. This too reflects the superior status of the Halams.

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3 Ibid, p. 86.
4 Tripura State Gazette (Extraordinary), 20th Aswin, 1356 T.E.
The Kuki and Lushai tribal were much feared. Lushai, literally means 'chopping off the head'. Their violent nature earned them this reputation. The Maharajas used to interfere least in their affairs. The title 'Raja' (King) was awarded upon at least two of the Kuki chiefs. They were Raja Dokhuma Bahadur and Raja Lalchuk Khama Bahadur. The Maharaja made it obligatory for his officials to pay a return visit to these two Rajas in case they called on the Government officers first. 5

As far as the Jamatias are concerned, in the eighteenth century and before that, they served as soldiers in the Tripura army. 'Jamat' means an army; as such the people who joined the army came to be known as Jamatia. Their financial condition was better than that of other tribes. Also, as will be seen later, they adopted settled cultivation early. They accepted the Gods of the Hindu pantheon, went for pilgrimage to the holy centres of Varanasi and Vrindaban, sang 'Kirtana', and appointed Bengalee Brahmans as priests for worshipping Durga. 6 Evidently because of this acceptance, the Maharaja treated them as Kshatriyas. The fact of his being in the army at one time also earned the Jamatia a certain respect from his fellow tribals.

5 See Appendix III-C at the end of Chapter III.
6 Census Shibarani, op.cit., pp. 69-70.
Hisaig and Noatias had the lowest status. Unlike the Jamatias, they were economically weaker and educationally very backward. In a note prepared on the subject in 1870s, one Mr. Power commented: "The pure Tipperahs are supposed to belong to the same race as the reigning family; the Jamatiyas are the warrior class; the Hauutteas and Reangs have no speciality; when there is any business to be done in the hills, the Coolie work falls chiefly on them." In later years, the Noatias must have improved their condition, so that in 1946-47, by an Order of the Maharaja, 'the prosperous section among the Noatias' were admitted into the 'Tripur Kshatriya Samaj'. The remaining Noatias were assured that they would be absorbed in the Samaj once they exhibited signs of progress.

From the Work Report of the Tripur Kshatriya Samaj for the period 1929-30 to 1932-33, it is learnt that the Maharaja had ordered all the members of the Samaj to wear sacred threads according to the provisions of the 'Sastras'. The Tripur Kshatriyas were asked to give up excessive drinking habits, because drinking is costly as also dangerous.

7 Quoted in Census of Bengal, 1672, H. Beverley, p. 181.
8 Tripura State Gazette (Extraordinary), 20th Aswin 1356 T.E.
9 Tripur Kshatriya Samaj Samkranta Bibaran Samagraha, Agartala, 1343 T.E., pp. 67-68.
Many members of the Samaj were being initiated into Vaishnavism. They were warned of fake Vaishnavas who demoralise the society by keeping women.

Among the tribes of Tripura, marriage custom has certain peculiarities. The bridegroom is supposed to work in the house of his father-in-law for two to three years. If he completes this probationary period to the satisfaction of his father-in-law, he is regarded eligible for marriage. On payment of a bride-price, the condition of probation could be relaxed. The Maharaja fixed Rs. 125/- as the upper limit for such bride-price.

He also directed the 'Kshatriyas' to observe twelve days of 'asoucha' (penance) in the event of birth and death among their near relatives. People other than the Brahmins were debarred from being 'Guru' to the tribals. The Maharaja had also appointed some Brahmins to act as priests for the 'Kshatriyas'. In the interior hills of the State, these official priests could do their work through assistants (Gomasta).

The above activities of the 'Tripur Kshatriya Samaj' indicate the process by which the tribes of Tripura were put to Hinduisation. They also indicate that imitation of Bengalee customs earned prestige for the tribals in their own society.
4.2 Administrative and Legislative Reforms

Upto the third quarter of the 19th century, there was no well-established administrative procedure followed by the Government of Tripura. In the year 1873, the form of Government was described as despotic and patriarchal. The Raja's word was law. His permission was required for numberless contingencies, e.g., for building a brick house, for digging a tank, for the use of palanquins at a wedding, etc. This was for the plainmen and for those who lived near around the capital. In the hills, the self-governing institutions of the tribals took care of them. Only once a year, or occasionally, the Raja's sappers were sent to collect the tax from the hill-men, if necessary, at the point of the bayonet.

But during the period 1840-70, there occurred many instances of unrest in the hills, about which the British Government of India became concerned. The Kuki, Kiang as also the Jamatias revolted at the ruthless behaviour of the Raja's officers. "We cannot," wrote Mackenzie, "longer allow the Tipperah Raja to remain uncontrolled. The absolute

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11 Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 67.
12 For the description of them, see ibid., pp. 53-67 and 279-80.
powers of life and death, of war and peace, which this petty chieftain wields, are more absolute than those of the Great Feudatories of our Indian Empire. A gross outrage committed in the dominions of Holkar or Scindia would be reported by the Resident to Government, and the grave remonstrance or effectual intervention of the Paramount Power would probably follow. But no control is exercised over the Tipperah chief although on the plains he is a British subject and a Zamindar. He may hale the recusant Kookees from their village and hack them to pieces with daos, as the Tipperahs, truly or falsely say he does, but no one interferes. 13

However, in keeping with the Queen's Proclamation of 1858, the British Government did not take any drastic action against Tripura. Nevertheless, in 1871, an English Officer was appointed as Political Agent to protect the British interests and to advise the Raja in administrative matters. 14

In the year 1873-74, the modern practice of legislation was introduced. 15 In the model of the Acts of the Indian Legislative Council, nine enactments were done by the Maharaja, including besides others, a Criminal Procedure Code, a Civil Procedure Code, a Police Guide and a Limitation Act. "The introduction of the Budget system," wrote Hunter in 1876, "is

13 Ibid, p. 66.
14 Hunter, op.cit., p. 461.
another instance of the extent to which the State is being influenced by the example of our Government."16

Special steps were taken in 1889 to introduce further administrative reforms. After lengthy negotiations with the British Government of India, it was decided that the Maharaja should appoint for five years a minister with full powers of administration.17 The selection of the Minister was to be made by the Maharaja in consultation with the Political Agent. Accordingly, the Maharaja appointed in March 1890, Rai Umakanta Das Bahadur, the then Assistant Political Agent, to be the Minister of the State.16

The newly appointed minister and other officers were mostly the retired officials of British India. With their past experiences as their guide, they set upon themselves the task of giving Tripura a stable administration. Birendra Kanikya, the then King of Tripura was initially highly sceptic of the new arrangements. But he soon reconciled himself with the new wave and looked forward to making the best out of it. When the 20th century dawned, the Western system of administration was well established. In 1908, it was reported that the

16 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
Administration was being conducted by the Minister at Agartala, assisted by the Dewan and other subordinates. The laws were framed by a Legislative Council and were modelled after the laws of British India. The chief judicial authority was vested on the Khas Appellate Court, which was presided over by three judges.19

4.3 Restrictions on Jhusing and the Jhumie Settlement Scheme

One of the early impacts of this modernisation of administration was the regularisation of the relation between the State, Landlord and Tenants. The Landlord and Tenant Act was enacted in 1886. "... on account of the Independent State of Tripura having become at present the permanent abode of many agricultural tenants and of the influx of many cultivating tenants from foreign territories who have already permanently settled, or are settling in the State,"20 the Act was long overdue. By this Act, no class of tenant was given the right "in any mine, any elephant trapping operations, Sal, Garjan, Mouri, Agar, Saral, Dhuna or any other valuable trees, over which the State shall have full rights."21 The State reserved for itself the right over forests in general.22

19 Imperial Gazetteer of India, op. cit., p. 121.
20 See the Preamble to the Landlord and Tenant Act (Act 1 of 1295 T.S.), Tripura Code, Part II, Judicial Department, Tripura Administration, 1962, p. 11.
21 Section 82 of the Act, ibid, p. 21.
22 Section 84 of the Act, ibid, p. 21.
Because by the Act of 1886, the right of the State over valuable trees and forests was announced, it soon became the duty of the Administration to implement the same. In the year 1887, a Memorandum was issued restricting the right of jhuming within near vicinity of Sal forests. This was probably the beginning of restrictions on jhuming in Tripura. The Memorandum is reproduced below.

"Whereas it has come to the notice of the Administration that jhuming near the Sal forests causes great harm to the trees, the following rules are hereby framed. 1297 T.E. Dated 9th Falgun.

1. None can do jhum within an area of half drona (1 drona = 5 acres approx.) distance around the Sal forests.

2. The Divisional Officers and the Sal forest-guards will duly inform the content of Clause 1 to the hill people, and particularly to those who live nearby Sal forests.

3. If, after the notice has been circulated, anybody practises jhum in the Prohibited Area, then, he may be criminally prosecuted under the Penal Code and be punished with rigorous imprisonment not exceeding 6 six months and also be fined upto 100 one hundred rupees.

4. The officials responsible for the protection of Sal

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23 Obtained by courtesy of the Superintendent, Printing and Stationery Department, Government of Tripura. A copy of it is available among the collections of the M. B. B. College Library, Agartala.
forests shall take special care to this effect, and if any fault is found with them, they may also be prosecuted criminally.

This is for being executed into action and circulated accordingly."

After a few months of issuing of the above Memorandum came the first scheme of Jhumia Settlement in Tripura in the year 1888 (see Appendix IV-A to this chapter). The administration was inspired in this by its experience in this regard in the neighbouring British district of Chittagong Hills. The reclamation and settlement of waste land in the interior was a sure source of increasing land revenue of the State. This could save forests in the hill areas. Again, the jhumias would also benefit from living a settled life. In a scheme of Jhumia Settlement, therefore, the interest of everyone was served.

In the following years, Circulars were issued repeatedly instructing the officials to bring more and more of waste land under cultivation. By the Revenue Memorandum No. 73, dated 8th Magha, 1302 T.E. (1892-93 A.D.), the Rules for Jangelabadi Jotedari Bandobasta (Waste Land Settlement) were framed.\(^{24}\) The officials were reminded that the task of bringing in more waste lands under cultivation was one of their primary duties. The services of interpreters could be

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requisitioned to carry on the work of propaganda among the tribes. According to the Rules, not more than 15 days were allowed to elapse between the date of application for land allotment and the date of the decision on it. A reclamer of land was entitled to get rent remission for upto five years. The plaintiffs from neighbouring Bengal districts must have utilised the opportunity; but it is doubtful how far the tribals availed of the same. For, the Imperial Gazetteer reported in 1906 that "the nomadic tillage known as jhum cultivation is almost universal," even though "attempts have been made of late years to induce the Tipperahs to resort to plough cultivation ..."25

As years rolled on, many more limitations, either directly or indirectly, were put upon jhuming practices. By the Act II of 1297 T.E. (1867-68 A.D.), the Order of the Maharaja of 25th Shravana, 1319 T.E. (1909-10 A.D.), and also that of the 6th Chaitra, 1323 T.E. (1913-14 A.D.), various other trees were reserved or protected. In 1913, 31 various types of trees are found to have been classed as Reserved by the State.26 The felling of sal trees of less than 3 1/2 feet in girth and of other trees of less than 4 1/2 feet in girth was also prohibited.

25 Imperial Gazetteer of India, op.cit., p. 120.
26 See the Brikadi Kartan O Raptani Bishavak Shivamabali of 1323 T.E., published by the Minister's Office, Agartala, 1324 T.E.
But so long as it was reservation of trees in contrast to the reservation of a forest area, the situation did not turn out to be critical for the jhumia. In the year 1905, an area of 15 square miles of forest alone stood as reserved, in which teak, mahogany, sissoo, rubber and mulberry were cultivated. Until 1934-35, the figure increased at a snail's pace up to 38.43 square miles. But, between 1935-36 and 1939-40, in a span of five years, the Forest Reserves were made as shown in Table 4.1. The total forest area reserved up to 1939-40 was 530.05 square miles. In the Consolidated Administration Report for 1943-46, it was reported that "the total area of Reserve Forests was 1,160.05 square miles up to 1952 T.B." This means that a fresh area of 630 square miles must have been reserved between 1940-41 and 1942-43 i.e., within a period of three years, so that at the end of 1943, more than one-fourth of the State's total territory was classed as Reserve Forest.

The area under the following three Reserves, which were created between 1940 and 1943, viz., (1) Langai-Machmera, (2) Langthorai and (3) Unakoti totalled to 564 square miles.

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27 Imperial Gazetteer of India, op. cit., p. 121.
30 Tripura State Gazette, 15th Kartik, 1353 T.B.
Table 4.1: Name and Area of Reserve Forests Created Between 1935-36 and 1939-40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name of the Forest Reserve</th>
<th>Subdivision</th>
<th>Area in sq.miles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1935-36</td>
<td>1. Gulicherra and Teliamura</td>
<td>Khowai</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Muhuripur (1st)</td>
<td>Belonia</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>1. Kulai Headwater</td>
<td>Kailashahar</td>
<td>26.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Galjicherra</td>
<td>Udaipur</td>
<td>39.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>1. Muhuripur (2nd)</td>
<td>Belonia</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Betaga Ludhua</td>
<td>Sabroom</td>
<td>44.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>1. South Sonamura</td>
<td>Sonamura</td>
<td>21.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Tulatalihari</td>
<td>Sonamura</td>
<td>21.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Karcha-Khola</td>
<td>Sonamura</td>
<td>29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Pathalia</td>
<td>Sadar</td>
<td>18.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>1. Kasari</td>
<td>Belonia</td>
<td>52.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Jagannath-dighi</td>
<td>Belonia</td>
<td>41.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Trihna Parbat</td>
<td>Belonia</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Radhakishorespur</td>
<td>Udaipur</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Kachigang</td>
<td>Udaipur</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Chandrapur</td>
<td>Udaipur</td>
<td>65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Charilam</td>
<td>Sadar</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. North Sonamura</td>
<td>Sonamura</td>
<td>42.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total area of Reserves between 1935-36 and 1939-40: Tripura 491.62

Source: Administration Report of Tripura for 1345 T.E. and subsequent years.
All of them were situated in the two northern sub-divisions of Kailashahar and Dharmanagar, and were contiguous to each other. As a result, the jhumias living therein were under considerable strain to find jhum land near their hamlets. A large jhumia exodus from the area was, under the circumstances, inevitable. The Conservator of Forests reported that, "Many hill people, who earn their livelihood by jhuming alone, had been residing in that place. All the above-mentioned three Reserves are contiguous to each other, and the boundary of one coincides with the boundary of the other. So, a dearth of jhumable land has arisen due to which the jhumias would suffer. If, because of this, the jhumias make a shift to other places, then there will be a shortage of labour within the Forest Reserve. Thus, there will be difficulty in felling the timber and bamboos, and also in carrying the forest product downhill; the businessmen will suffer losses and the State earning on forest tolls will diminish. The duty levied on cotton and oilseeds - which are produced solely on jhum, will also not fetch in any money to the exchequer."

For the reasons enumerated above, the creation of extensive Reserve was not favoured by the Administration. In 1943, the boundaries of the Reserves of Dharmanagar and

31 Seha No. 3567-B/3-88 dt. 3/6/52 F.R. of the Forest and Customs Department, Government of Tripura, see Ibid, 15th Agraahayana, 1353 F.R.
Kailasahar were revised and an area measuring 251 square miles was released for the use of the jhumias. They were allowed to do jhum in all bamboo-forested hills within the dereserved area.32

The above episode implies that jhuming was allowed to the extent that it satisfied the interest of the State. The maintenance of a Forest Reserve was profitable provided there was abundant supply of labour. By forcing the jhumias to withdraw from the Reserve, the Government was not going to gain.

The information about the plight of jhumias was collected and published in the State Gazettes and in the Administration Reports. In the opinion of the Department of Agriculture, "There occurred different degrees of food scarcity in the hills for four or five times in a decade. To assist the distressed people, lot of money is spent from the Royal Treasury, while the Government officials also undergo much troubles. But soil is no less fertile in the hills and almost every year, enough of jhum crops are harvested by the jhumias. The main trouble is that the jhumias lack in foresight and are extravagant... If such arrangements could be made by which the tribals become thrifty, and exchange mutual help at each other's need, then, there is no doubt, the calamity,

which befalls upon these simple and improvident sons of the soil, might be considerably dispelled."

The soft note of the above Memorandum indicates that the replacement of jhuming by settled cultivation was not considered to be the only panacea. The Administration had considered the second best of improving jhumias' lot by other means also, and of making jhum economy more viable.

The Government began experiments for introducing better quality seeds in the jhum. In the year 1918-19, it was reported that the experiment to grow the Dharwar variety of cotton in the dry season had failed. But it grew well in the rainy season. To popularise its cultivation, seeds were distributed to the jhumias.

The result of the trial was reported to be good in 1923-24. "The jhoom products were sent to the Government Economic Botanist at Dacca, the Central Cotton Committee, Bombay, the Bengal Laxmí Cotton Mills, Messrs. Kettlewell Bullen and Co., and the Dhakeswari Mills. The reports received were encouraging. The Central Cotton Committee report stated that the jhoom products fetched Rs. 5 per maund less than the price obtained by the Bombay growers, the

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difference being due to unclean picking. The Economic Botanist remarked that with careful and clean picking and packing, the problem of long-staple cotton for Bengal would be satisfactorily solved, if it could be grown in the jhooms. Encouraged by the above remarks, the field of experiment was extended, and in 1924-25, seed of Dharwar long-stapled variety was distributed to 2,000 jhooms and higher altitudes ranging from 15 to 600 feet. The State had at this time about 19,000 acres under cotton with the jhumias.

In the following years, the Agriculture Department of the State undertook the following works among others:

1. Circuit lectures against nomadic jhuming and in favour of plough cultivation;
2. Complete abandonment of jhuming if cultivable land was available;
3. Propaganda work in general for the development of methods of agriculture and introduction of crops which could profitably be grown in the hills under the existing jhum system;
4. Introduction of better quality cotton in jhum;
5. Introduction of early superior quality paddy in jhums;

36 Ibid.
6. Introduction of 'Tana' sugarcane and extension of sugarcane cultivation in the jhumas; and

7. The change in the present method of jhuming by the introduction of single seed sowing system.

Thus the efforts for replacing shifting by settled cultivation went hand in hand with the efforts for improving the existing mode of production. Cotton and oilseeds were two principal export items of Tripura. The Government valued the export duty realised on them. At the same time, because there was enough waste land in the plains, to bring it under plough was necessary. If the jhumias would agree to take up settled cultivation in the plains, the forest resources in the hills could also be better utilised. Perhaps, the Government aimed at striking out a balance between these two conflicting goals.

Both efforts seem to have met with some success. It has already been shown that the attempt made to introduce better cotton seeds was received kindly by the jhumias. How far the steps towards settling them succeeded remains yet to be seen.

The census of 1931 collected some data about this, from which it is learnt that the practice of settled cultivation had spread among some hill people.

Although the result was not spectacular, it was not insignificant either. In 1976, Hunter wrote: "The hill tribes
Table 4.2: The Extent of the Practice of Shifting Cultivation among Various Tribes in 1931

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Shifting cultivation</th>
<th>Settled cultivation</th>
<th>Other activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>6,226</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1,312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamatia</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>1,892</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noatia</td>
<td>2,207</td>
<td>1,227</td>
<td>626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riang</td>
<td>4,758</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lushai-Kuki</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mag</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chakma</td>
<td>1,407</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Bibarani.

Object to cultivation by the plough, as being contrary to their traditions; and so strong is their prejudice against any change from their own system, that... a hill-man in easy circumstances had taken up some waste land in the plains near his village, and was cultivating it through Bengali Musalmans whom he employed as servant."38 In 1908, the Imperial Gazetteer reported that the jhum system was universal.39 Considering these reports of the past, the progress achieved

38 Hunter, op.cit., p. 501.
39 Imperial Gazetteer of India, op.cit., p. 120.
upto 1931 was considerable. The Jamatia tribe, it may be seen from Table 4.2, had taken up settled cultivation as their mainstay. The Noatia and Mags were also quite advanced in this respect. The Tripura tribe had not accepted settled cultivation en masse; but many of them were engaged in non-agricultural pursuits. The Riang, Chakma and Lushai-Kuki were lagging behind others, but they also were on the run.

4.4 Place of Jhum in the Economy of Tripura State

Both as regards its constitution and its relations to the British Government, the State of Tripura differed from other independent native States. The Raja was not only the king in his own State; he also held a large zamindari, called 'Chakla Roshanabad', in the neighbouring British districts of Comilla and Sylhet. This estate has been various described by some as comprising 589 sq.miles, and 650 sq. miles by others.  In any case the area under the zamindari was less than one-sixth of the size of the independent State. But upto as late as 1908, it was described as yielding a larger revenue than the whole of Hill Tippera - it was "the most valuable portion of the Raja's possessions."41

40 Hunter puts the area of Chakla Roshanabad as 589 sq. miles, see Hunter, op.cit., p. 460. According to the Administration Report of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905-06, the area was 650 sq.miles, see, p. 101. The area may have varied from time to time.

41 Imperial Gazetteer of India, op.cit., p. 119.
Table 4.3: Gross Revenue of Tripura Maharaja from the Independent State and the Zamindaries for Selected Years (in Rupees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Revenue of Tripura State</th>
<th>Revenue of Zamindaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1873-74</td>
<td>1,63,350</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874-75</td>
<td>1,86,930</td>
<td>5,14,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903-04</td>
<td>8,16,958</td>
<td>6,58,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-05</td>
<td>7,68,206</td>
<td>9,03,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913-14</td>
<td>10,36,123</td>
<td>10,21,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>15,82,035</td>
<td>11,00,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>13,39,810</td>
<td>9,82,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>32,60,206</td>
<td>17,63,959</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: For first two years, W. W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. VI. The rest are from the Administration Reports of Tripura State.

There was a time when jhuming was universally practised in Tripura. Little by little, plough cultivation had extended from about the middle of the last century. More land was reclaimed and brought under settled cultivation. Large influx of people into Tripura took place. Consequent upon all these, the total economic activity of the State increased and from about the second decade of the present century, the economy of Hill Tripura was as valuable as the Raja's any other possessions.

Th. 3172
In the following Tables (Tables 4.4 and 4.5), is presented the composition of the State revenue of Tripura over selected years. It will be observed that export of cotton, oilseeds and timber was the main source of earning for the hill State in the earlier years. Cotton and oilseeds were solely produced in the jhum. Timber came from the unreserved forests. The catching of elephants was also a big business. Compared to these, land revenue was small, which only proves that the transition from jungle economy to modern economy had not taken place.

But as years passed by, land revenue increased. In 1874-75, land revenue earned the State only 20.75 per cent of the total income. But in 1934-35 - after sixty years - it earned 40.80 per cent of the total revenue. Elephants had become scarce; so the contribution from elephant catching became negligible. The export duties on cotton and oilseeds, which contributed more than one-fourth of total revenue in 1874-75, declined in importance and contributed less than one-tenth of the total earning in 1934-35. The tax base had been enlarged; as a result other sources had become more paying than the traditional items. House tax, which was realised from the jhumias in lieu of land revenue, did not prove to be sufficiently elastic in the long run. This happened because neither the number of people engaged in jhum cultivation, nor the rates of House Tax increased. The Jhum
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1873-74</td>
<td>38.65</td>
<td>27.33</td>
<td>45.69</td>
<td>18.02</td>
<td>24.67</td>
<td>8.99</td>
<td>163.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874-75</td>
<td>38.78</td>
<td>40.40</td>
<td>47.18</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>24.22</td>
<td>12.35</td>
<td>186.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893-94</td>
<td>78.10</td>
<td>151.65</td>
<td>79.18</td>
<td>42.23</td>
<td>40.35</td>
<td>75.50</td>
<td>467.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-95</td>
<td>88.75</td>
<td>157.22</td>
<td>114.36</td>
<td>23.47</td>
<td>37.13</td>
<td>80.20</td>
<td>501.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913-14</td>
<td>359.73</td>
<td>307.74</td>
<td>94.88</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>45.50</td>
<td>225.95</td>
<td>1036.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914-15</td>
<td>342.19</td>
<td>340.98</td>
<td>89.25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40.47</td>
<td>222.57</td>
<td>1035.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>450.71</td>
<td>347.93</td>
<td>106.84</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>46.96</td>
<td>384.75</td>
<td>1339.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td>644.45</td>
<td>330.06</td>
<td>135.22</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>52.59</td>
<td>414.97</td>
<td>1579.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note and Sources: The data for first two years are taken from W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. VI. The Budget System in Tripura started in 1873-74; so they reflect the earliest data available.

The data for 1893-94 and 1894-95 are taken from *Hill Tripura State Gazetteer*, Statistics, 1901-02.

For other years, *The Administration Report of Tripura State* is the source.

The twenty year gap between the figures is arbitrary.
### Table 4.5: Percentage Earning under Different Heads of Revenue for the State of Tripura

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Land Revenue</th>
<th>Tolls on Forest Produce Exported</th>
<th>Export Duties on Cotton &amp; Oilseeds</th>
<th>Royalties on Elephants Caught</th>
<th>House Tax from Jhumias</th>
<th>All Other Sources</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>23.66</td>
<td>16.73</td>
<td>27.97</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td>15.10</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>20.75</td>
<td>21.61</td>
<td>25.24</td>
<td>12.84</td>
<td>12.96</td>
<td>6.61</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-94</td>
<td>16.72</td>
<td>32.47</td>
<td>16.95</td>
<td>9.04</td>
<td>8.64</td>
<td>16.17</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-95</td>
<td>17.71</td>
<td>31.38</td>
<td>22.82</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-14</td>
<td>34.72</td>
<td>29.70</td>
<td>9.16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>21.89</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-15</td>
<td>33.05</td>
<td>32.93</td>
<td>8.62</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>21.49</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-34</td>
<td>33.64</td>
<td>25.97</td>
<td>7.97</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>28.72</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-35</td>
<td>40.80</td>
<td>20.90</td>
<td>8.56</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>26.27</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Worked out from Table 4.4.
economy is dependent on forest, because it is only by burning the forest that the jhum crops are produced. How much of House Tax could be realized from the jhumias, or what the export of cotton and oilseeds would earn, depended upon how much of forest land the jhumias could make use of. Similar is the case with elephants. They breed more provided the forest is dedicated to them. The fact that land revenue and other sources were gradually gaining the upper hand was precisely because the economy of hill Tripura was getting modernised.

But this is not to belittle the useful role of the Jhumias. Due to the peculiar character of the hill-bed in which jhuming was done and also the economic calendar of jhuming, the success of cropping in the highland and the plains was not affected equally by weather conditions and pestilence. In some years, abundant crops were obtained from both jhum cultivation in the hills and plough cultivation in the plains. In others, the cultivator of the plains were more prosperous than the Jhumias. But sometimes, the reverse was true; while the jhum crops flourished, the plain was waterlogged by flood. Thus in times of distress the jhumias

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42 For a detailed description of economic organization in jhuming, see, J.B. Ganguly, Economic Problems of the Jhumias of Tripura, Calcutta, 1969, Ch. IV-VII.

43 See the Administration Report of Tripura State for the Year 1314 and 1323 T.E.

44 See, ibid, for the years 1319 and 1320 T.E.
and the farmers of the plains had much to give and take from each other.

Not much data about the condition of jhum economy is available. What little is available is from two outstanding publications of the then Government of Tripura - one is, the oft-repeated Census Biberani, the other being a "Memorandum & Statistics Relating to Agriculture, Forests, Exports and Imports", compiled by Mr. J. M. Sen, the first statistical officer of Tripura State and published by the Chief Minister's Office in the year 1940. From the above two sources, Table 4.6 has been constructed which gives the area and yield of jhum crops.

From Table 4.6, it is seen that per acre yield of jhum paddy was about 27 maunds which compared well with the per acre yield of a double-cropped plain land which was also 27 maunds between 1934-35 and 1937-38. Total production of paddy in Tripura was on an average 61,16,350 maunds between 1934-35 and 1936-37, and 63,83,130 maunds in the year 1937-38. About one-sixth of total paddy production was done by jhumias in the hills. Cotton and oilseeds were solely produced in the jhumas, and so no comparison is possible. The average figure


46 Ibid., Ch. II, Appendix Table V.
Table 4.6: Total Area and Production, and the Per Acre Yield of Jhum Crops in Tripura

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>1930-31</th>
<th>Average of 1934-35 to 1936-37</th>
<th>1937-38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Area (acres)</td>
<td>Production Yield (mgs.)</td>
<td>Area (acres)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td>36,485</td>
<td>10,00,000</td>
<td>27.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton (cleaned)</td>
<td>21,888</td>
<td>17,583</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oilseeds (sesamum)</td>
<td>10,944</td>
<td>23,210</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>3,648</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of export of cotton was 22,944 maunds between 1934-35 and 1936-37 and 16,440 maunds in 1937-38 which means that 89.59 per cent and 70.44 per cent of total production was exported.\(^47\)

As for oilseeds (sesamum), the export figures were 36,450 and 15,620 maunds in respective periods, which means 81.00 per cent between 1934-35 and 1936-37 and 60.97 per cent in 1937-38 of total production was exported.\(^48\)

During 1936-38, the area under forest was about 3,497 sq. miles. Nearly a lakh of jhumias occupied an area of about 130 sq. miles, including their homestead area, of virgin forests every year for jhum cultivation.\(^49\) Thus, assuming a jhum cycle of six years, they needed 780 square miles approximately, which was about 22.30 per cent of the total forest area.

4.5 The Myth of Economic Self-sufficiency

The reference to exports of Tripura in the above indicates that considerable part of the production in shifting cultivation was market-oriented. "In the past," writes Dr. J. B. Ganguly, "they produced everything they consumed. Production included cultivation of crops, collection of forest products, production of textiles, weaving of baskets, making

\(^47\) Ibid. Chapter III, Appendix Table I.
\(^48\) Ibid.
\(^49\) Ibid, Chapter II, p. 11.
of other crafts, fishing and hunting. They did not produce for exchange but for consumption only. But among the crops produced by them, cotton and sesame were commercially important crops. These attracted the businessmen, who induced the jhumias to produce surplus of cotton and sesame to exchange for salt, tools, metal-ware and other necessaries.50

But the question is - when was that past when they produced everything they consumed?

In the last chapter, it has been shown that epigraphic evidence speaks of timber trade between Tripura and Sylhet as early as in the 11th century. Rajamala furnishes instances of regular salt trade with Tripura in c. 1660 A.D.51 Govinda-manikya, the then King of Tripura purchased from a trader - who had gone to Tripura for selling salt - all the 2,000 maunds that he had brought. The sale proceeds of salt were utilised in the purchase of elephants from Tripura. The salt was consumed not by the people living in Udaipur alone but also by others living in the interior.

From the account written by the French traveller, Jean Baptiste Tavernier, more information on trade between Tripura and other regions is available.52 Tavernier noticed Tripura

traders in far-off places like Bacca and Patna. He travelled
to those places more than once between 1640 and 1666. According
to him, the Tripura traders used to go to Bacca and Patna
for purchasing coral, yellow-amber, tortoise-shell, and sea-
shell bracelets. Oxen and horses were used for internal
transportation of goods within Tripura. It may be pointed
out that the currency of Tripura was made of cowry shells at
that time (as was elsewhere in Bengal), and also the ornaments
of tribal men and women had mostly been made of sea shells
only. As such the necessity of importing corals, sea-shells
etc. to Tripura is understandable. From the description given
of the trader and his assistants, it may be guessed that at
least one in the party was a tribal. Tavernier writes that
only one of them knew the Indian language, all of them were
very much addict to drinks and one of them was suffering from
goitre.

In the early years of the eighteenth century, trade and
commerce flourished even in the interior of the State. The
tribal village of Hangruni, situated in the eastern frontier
of the State, was very near to the kingdom of Cachar and
Manipur. It was a big market centre, where people from Tripura,
Cachar and Manipur assembled. "The Cacharis bring the follow-
ing - goats, ducks, hens, dried fish, rice, salt, oil, molasses,
tobacco leaves, betel-nuts etc. The Manipuris come with gold,

53 See Tripura Buranji, op.cit., p. 22.
plates and jars made of bell-metal and brass, and warm clothes. They bring horses also for presenting to the King. The Tripurás bring the following articles to the market - copper, salt, oil, molasses, tobacco leaves, betel-nut and dried fish. These things are brought for exchange into this place.\(^{54}\)

Udaipur, the capital of Tripura, was also a very big market town. Bengalee traders maintained permanent shops there. The tribals, who lived in the hills not far from Udaipur, used to come regularly there for the purposes of buying and selling. Paddy and cotton were the main commodities sold by them. Arum plant and its root, gourd, water-melon, ginger, potatoes - these were the other commodities brought by the tribals to the market for sale.\(^{55}\)

Thus trade has been developing in Tripura since a long time. It is correct to say that the tribals of Tripura did not produce for the market alone; but it will be wrong to think that they produced solely for their own consumption. Hence, to equate tribal with isolation does not appear to be correct at least in the case of Tripura jhumias. Culturally and commercially, they have been linked with other Indians for many centuries.

\(^{54}\) Ibid, p. 22.

\(^{55}\) Ibid, pp. 29-33.
APPENDIX IV-A

THE FIRST SCHEME OF JHUMIA SETTLEMENT YEAR 1889-90

MINISTER'S OFFICE, AGARTALA

MEMORANDUM

Most of the hill people conform to their traditional habits and practise shifting cultivation instead of producing paddy by ploughing with the help of cows and buffaloes. From this cultivation, often times, they are not able to raise enough of paddy and other grains; at the same time, because these people are not accustomed to produce crops by the method of ploughing, the speedy reclamation of waste lands is not taking place; consequently there has not been much improvement of the State at large. Under the circumstances, to foster the development of the State and the welfare of the subjects, the following rules are hereby framed to introduce plough cultivation among the hill people.

1. The Magistrates, Deputy Magistrates and the Police Superintendents will call for the Sardars (Chiefs) of every tribal village. They will, then, properly explain to the Sardars the usefulness of plough cultivation and advise them to adopt that method for crop-raising.

* Obtained by courtesy of the Superintendent, Printing and Stationery Department, Government of Tripura. A copy of the Memorandum is preserved among the collections of the M. B. B. College Library, Agartala also.
2. If necessary, appropriate number of people from among the Bengalees or others may be appointed to train these unexperienced subjects in plough cultivation.

3. Depending upon the circumstances, wherever it is so needed, the Government will assist the hill people in purchasing cows, buffaloes and other equipment of ploughing.

4. In those cases, where it is deemed essential to give financial assistance to the subjects who intend to do plough cultivation, the Responsible Officers mentioned in clause 1, will send a Report to this office, wherein the names and addresses of the candidates will be given; also they should indicate the type and amount of assistance against the names of the applicants.

5. The officers mentioned in clause 1 will hold special enquiry to the condition of the subjects referred to in clause 4 in each and every village within their respective jurisdiction and give a detailed Report of it to this office, indicating clearly what minimum assistance they absolutely need.

6. The Police Superintendents will write those Reports as per provisions in clause 5, and send them to this office through their official superiors - the magistrates, and Deputy magistrates.

7. In those cases, where otherwise the chances of
success are very limited, the Government may set up model
demonstration farms to educate the tribes.

6. It will be the duty of the officers of clause 1 to
proceed with the proposed work after they receive this memo
without delay.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that a copy each of this memo be
sent to the Office of the Inspector General of Police and to
Srijut Babu Durgaprasad Gupta, Dewan-in-charge so that they
may keep an eye over whether the Police Superintendents
carefully attend the duties assigned to them. 1296 T. E.
Dated 1st Ashada. Camp Comillah.

Sd/- Mohini Mohan Bardhan
Dewan