

**PROBLEMS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT**  
**OF TRIPURA JHUMIAS**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
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**BY  
BANI PRASANNA MISRA**

**GOKHALE INSTITUTE OF POLITICS AND ECONOMICS,  
POONA 4**

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## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	(i)
LIST OF TABLES	(v)
LIST OF MAPS	(viii)
 Chapter	
I INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Sources of Data	9
1.3 Layout of the Subsequent Chapters	13
II TRIBAL TRIPURA	15
2.1 Tribals of Tripura	15
2.2 Spatial Distribution of Various Tribes	17
2.3 Growth of Tribal Population	26
2.4 Non-tribals of Tripura	29
III TRIBAL ADMINISTRATION	43
3.1 Origin of the Tripura Royal Family	43
3.2 Relation of the Tripura Maharajas with Their Tribal Subjects	58
Appendix III-A: Order of the Maharaja Appointing Chiefs for a Section of the Lushai Tribe	69
Appendix III-B: Order of the Maharaja Conferring Titles on the Newly Appointed Chiefs	71
Appendix III-C: Proclamation of the Maharaja Defining Rules of Procedure to be Adopted in a Meeting between the High Officials of the State and the Hill Chiefs	72



	<u>Page</u>
IV THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION IN THE HILLS	77
4.1 Social Condition of Different Tribes	77
4.2 Administrative and Legislative Reforms	84
4.3 Restrictions on Jhuming and the Jhumia Settlement Scheme	87
4.4 Place of Jhum in the Economy of Tripura State	99
4.5 The Myth of Economic Self-sufficiency	107
Appendix IV-A: The First Scheme of Jhumia Settlement Year 1888-89	111
V PRINCIPLES OF LAND DISTRIBUTION IN JHUM ECONOMY	114
VI HOUSE TAX	126
6.1 The Nature of House Tax	126
6.2 The Origin and Administration of House Tax	128
VII THE TRIBAL RESERVE AREA	143
7.1 Provisions of the Tribal Reserve Area	143
7.2 Background of Creating Tribal Reserve Area	145
7.3 Present Position	149
7.4 Controversy over Application of Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India	155
VIII THE JHUMIA SETTLEMENT SCHEME	160
8.1 Scheme in Operation	160
8.2 Proposed Schemes	172
Appendix VIII-A: Tribal Welfare Form No.1	178
IX A REVIEW OF THE WORKING OF THE JHUMIA SETTLEMENT SCHEME	180
X SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	209
BIBLIOGRAPHY	214

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
1.1	Relative Importance of Tribals and Non-Tribals in Tripura's Total Population, 1961	4
1.2	Composition of the Tribal Population of Tripura, 1961	5
2.1	Zonewise Distribution of Jhumia Tribals in 1901, 1931 and 1961 Censuses	21
2.2	Growth of Jhumia Tribals between 1901 and 1961	26
2.3	Bengali Families Settled by King Ratnamanikya I in Tripura in the 14th Century	31
2.4	Composition of Persons Not Classified as Hill Tribes in 1874-75	35
2.5	Extent of Muslim Population in the Total Population of Tripura, 1901-1961	37
2.6	Immigrants in Tripura in 1901, 1911 and 1921 Censuses	38
2.7	Tribal and Non-tribal Population of Tripura in Selected Years	41
4.1	Name and Area of Reserve Forests Created Between 1935-36 and 1939-40	92
4.2	The Extent of the Practice of Shifting Cultivation among Various Tribes in 1931	98
4.3	Gross Revenue of the Tripura Maharaja from the Independent State and the Zamindaries for Selected Years	100
4.4	State Revenue of Tripura - Sourcewise for Selected Years	102
4.5	Percentage Earning under Different Heads of Revenue for the State of Tripura	103
4.6	Total Area and Production, and the Per Acre Yield of Jhum Crops in Tripura	106

<u>Table No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
6.1	Rate of House Tax for Jhumia Tribes: Year 1874-75	130
6.2	The Mode of Tax Payment for Some of the Tribes in 1876	131
6.3	Mode of Tax Payment for Some of the Tribes in 1876	133
6.4	Old and New Rates of House Tax in 1903-04	138
6.5	The Police Force of Tripura at the Beginning and End of the Year 1904-05	141
7.1	Area Reserved and Dereserved as Tribal Reserve Area Sub-divisionwise	144
7.2	Tribal and Non-tribal Population in the Tribal Reserve Area, and Cases of Land Transfer from Tribal to Non-tribal on 2-11-1965	151
7.3	Land Transferred to Non-tribals Within the Tribal Reserve Area, as on 14th December, 1966	152
7.4	Concentration of Five Classes of Tribals (Tripura, Jamatia, Noatia, Riang and Halam) in Different Sub-divisions of Tripura in 1931 and 1961	154
7.5	The Area and Population of Scheduled Areas in Various States	158
8.1	The Number of Families Allotted Land under the Jhumia Settlement Scheme	163
8.2	Number of Families Paying House Tax between 1959-60 and 1963-64	164
8.3	Allotment of Land and Expenditure Incurred in the Jhumia Settlement Scheme	171
9.1	Position of the Colonies under Salema Development Block in March 1970	181

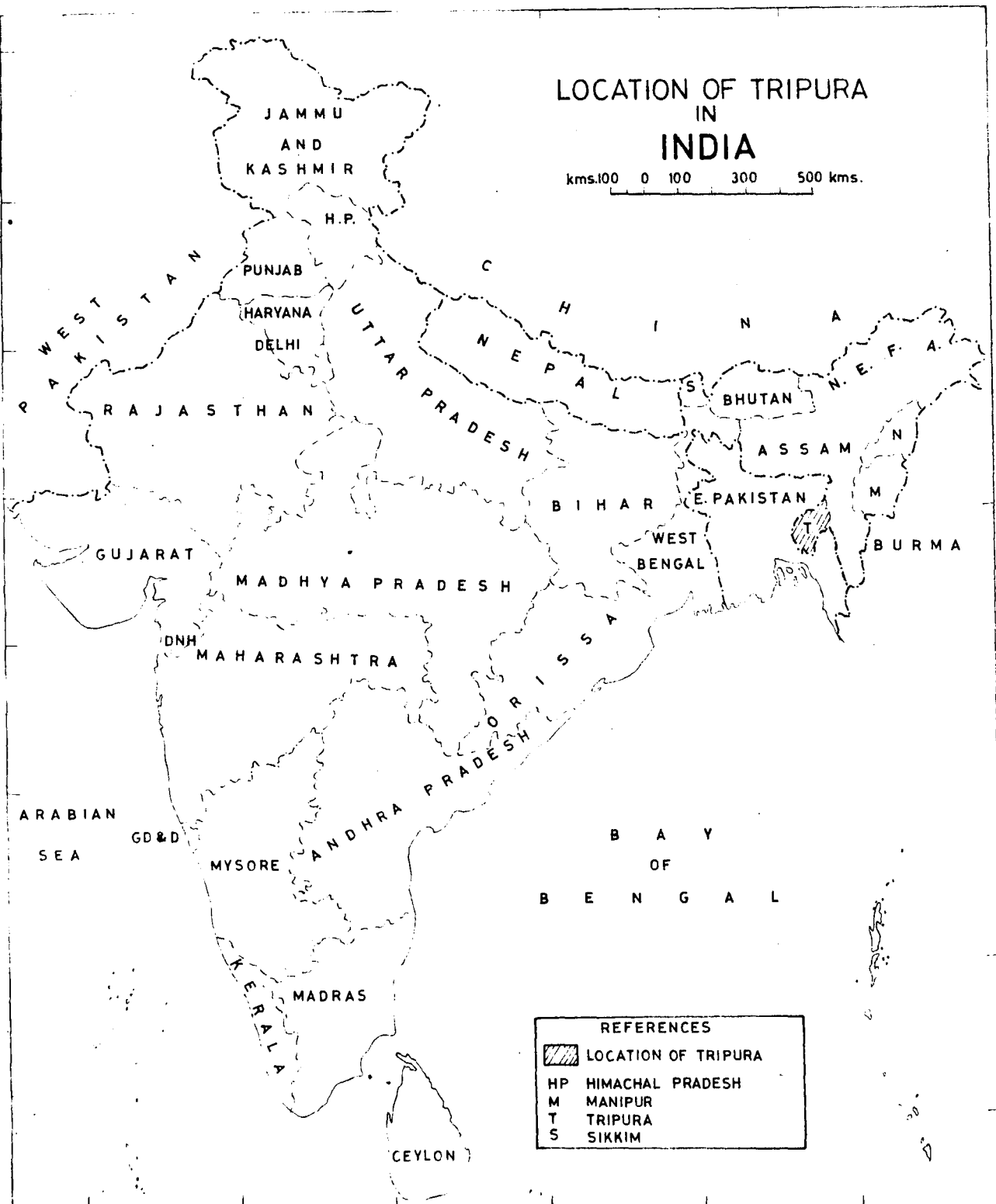
<u>Table No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
9.2	Number of Colonized Tribals Doing Shifting Cultivation in 1969-70	182
9.3	Tribewise Classification of Colony Inmates and Deserters at the end of 1969-70	184
9.4	Desertion Rate for Different Tribes in the Colonies under the Salema Development Block at the end of 1969-70	185
9.5	Number of Families Obtaining Cash Grant, Possessing Bullocks and the Number of Deserter Families in Various Colonies under the Salema Development Block at the end of 1969-70	187
9.6	Average Per Family Availability of Plough Cultivated Land in the Colonies in March 1970	189
9.7	Extent of Land Transfer in the Colonies under the Salema Development Block upto March 1970	191
9.8	Number of Families Possessing Plough Cattle in Gandacherra Colony in 1957-58, 1965-66 and 1969-70	198
9.9	Source of Livelihood of Gandacherra Colony Inmates, March 1970	199
9.10	The Source of Livelihood of Families, Who Possess or Do Not Possess Bullocks in Gandacherra Colony, as Reported in March 1970	200
9.11	Number of Families Owning Land and Bullocks in Gandacherra Colony in March 1970	203

LIST OF MAPS

<u>Map No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>After Page</u>
1	Location of Tripura in India	(viii)
2	Zonal Arrangement of Tripura State	20
3	Tribal Reserve Area of Tripura	143
4	The Jhumia Settlement Colonies under Salema Development Block	180

# LOCATION OF TRIPURA IN INDIA

kms. 100 0 100 300 500 kms.



REFERENCES	
	LOCATION OF TRIPURA
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH
M	MANIPUR
T	TRIPURA
S	SIKKIM

MAP NO. 1

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

Tripura is a Union Territory in the eastern frontier of India and has a total area of 4116 square miles. Along with Assam, NEFA, Nagaland and Manipur, Tripura has less physical link with the mainland of India than with foreign countries. After the partition of the country in 1947, it lies almost isolated - surrounded on three sides by East Pakistan with which it has an international boundary of 528 miles. Agartala, the capital of Tripura, is situated to the east of Calcutta at a distance of 197 miles by Air and 1050 miles by land route via the Assam rail link.

Before 1920, the Territory was known as "Hill Tippera", and thus it was distinguished from the neighbouring "Tipperah" which constituted one of the districts of British India in the lower plains of East Bengal. But since that year, on the representation of the Durbar, the Government of India agreed that the State should be known as "Tripura", instead of "Hill Tippera".<sup>1</sup> Tripura, which was a Princely State until 1949, was integrated with the Indian Union on

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<sup>1</sup> Government of India, Memoranda on the Indian States, 1932, Calcutta, 1933, p. 218.

15th October of that year. After this, it was a Part C State and with the reorganization of States in the Indian Union on November 1, 1956, it was transformed into one of the Centrally administered territories. The Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, came into force from 1st July, 1963. With the enforcement of that Act, a Legislative Assembly has been set up and a Council of Ministers has been formed, with the Chief Minister at the head to aid and advise the Chief Commissioner in the exercise of his functions in relation to matters with respect to which the Legislative Assembly of a Union Territory has power to make laws.

The name "Hill Tippera" given to it by the British Government of India has been literally true. The country is described as broken ground, consisting of hills alternating with marshy valleys. No visitor to Tripura will fail to observe this undulating characters of its surface. The proportional distribution of hill and plain land is said to be 2:1.<sup>2</sup> There are, in the main, five ranges of hills which run north and south, increasing in height towards the east. The average distance between two principal hill ranges is 12 miles. The principal hill ranges, beginning from the east, are the Jampui (highest point Betling Sib 3200 feet), Sakhanthlang (highest point Sakhan 2578 feet), Langthorai



(highest point Phengpui 1581 feet), Atharamura (highest point Jarimura 1500 feet) and Baramura.<sup>3</sup> Being in a high rainfall area, the hills are green with forests, which contain valuable timbers like sal, tun, jarul etc.; but mostly they are covered with bamboos and canes.

The State of Tripura is the permanent abode of a number of scheduled tribes besides a large population of non-tribals. According to the 1961 census, the following scheduled tribes live there:

- |            |            |             |
|------------|------------|-------------|
| 1. Bhil    | 7. Jamatia | 13. Munda   |
| 2. Bhutia  | 8. Khasia  | 14. Noatia  |
| 3. Chaimal | 9. Kuki    | 15. Orang   |
| 4. Chakma  | 10. Lepcha | 16. Riang   |
| 5. Garoo   | 11. Lushai | 17. Santal  |
| 6. Halam   | 12. Mag    | 18. Tripura |
|            |            | 19. Uchai   |

In Table 1.1, the importance of the tribes in the composition of the population of Tripura can be seen.

The break-up of the tribal population into individual tribes is given in Table 1.2.

Out of these 19 different scheduled tribes, Bhil, Munda, Orang and Santal come from Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal

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<sup>3</sup> Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XIII (New Edition), Oxford, 1908, p. 117.

Table 1.1 : Relative Importance of Tribals and Non-tribals in Tripura's Total Population, 1961

Description	Population	Percentage to total population
Tribals	360,070	31.53
Non-tribals	781,935	68.47
Total	1,142,005	100.00

Source : Census of India, 1961, Vol. XXVI, Tripura, Part V-A, Special Tables for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

and Orissa. There are others like Bhutia and Lepcha who hail from Northern frontier of India - from Bhutan, Sikkim or North Bengal. Garoo, Khasia and Lushai are Assam tribes. Chakma and Mag come from Chittagong Hill Tracts and Arakan. The rest, viz., Chaimal, Halam, Jamatia, Kuki, Noatia, Riang, Tripura and Uchai are local Tripura tribes.

The Group 1 tribals form 2.48 per cent of the total tribal population of Tripura. They came to Tripura to work as coolies in the tea gardens, which had been set up there since 1916-17. They are even now mostly tea garden labourers, although some of them have taken up land to become agriculturists.

**Table I.2 : Composition of the Tribal Population of Tripura, 1961**

Tribes	Population	Percentage to total tribal population
<u>Group 1</u> :		
1. Bhil	69	
2. Munda	4,409	
3. Orang	2,875	
4. Santal	1,562	
Central Indian Tribes	8,915	2.48
<u>Group 2</u> :		
5. Bhutia	7	
6. Lepcha	7	
Northern Frontier Tribes	14	Negligible
<u>Group 3</u> :		
7. Garoo	5,484	
8. Khasia	349	
9. Jushai	2,988	
Assam Tribes	8,821	2.45
<u>Group 4</u> :		
10. Chakma	22,386	
11. Mag	10,524	
Chittagong Hill Tribes	32,910	9.14
<u>Group 5</u> :		
12. Chaimal	50	
13. Halam	16,298	
14. Jamatia	24,359	
15. Kuki	5,531	
16. Noatia	16,010	
17. Riang	56,597	
18. Tripura	189,799	
19. Uchai	766	
Tripura Tribes	309,410	85.93
Total of All Tribes	360,070	100.00

Source : Census of India, 1961, Vol. XXVI, Tripura, Part V-A, Special Tables for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The reasons for the migration of Group 2 and Group 3 tribals excepting the Lushais are not known. The Lushais who are inhabitants of Mizo hills district of Assam are neighbours to Tripura and as such they may not be outsiders.

Among the Chittagong hill tribes, the Mags must have known Tripura even before the 16th century. Ralph Fitch, an English traveller, mentioned about continuous warfare between the Tripura and Mags prevailing in that period.<sup>4</sup> Some Assamese envoys who visited Tripura during 1709 to 1715 noticed villages being inhabited by Mags and opined that probably they were originally captives of war.<sup>5</sup> As far as Chakmas are concerned, most of them had migrated to Tripura from East Pakistan after 1947. At present, they are the fourth largest tribe after Tripura, Riang and Jamatias.

The Group 5 tribals are not known to have migrated from outside into Tripura in the historical period; and as such, they may be called the original settlers of Tripura.

Some among the above-mentioned tribes are known as jhumias. Jhum means shifting cultivation, and so the term jhumia applies to those tribals who practise shifting

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<sup>4</sup> Early Travels in India, 1583-1619 (Ed.) William Foster, London, 1921, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Ratnakandali and Arjundas, Tripura Buranji, (Ed.) Dr. S. K. Bhuyan, Gauhati, 1962, p. 30.

cultivation as a means of their livelihood. The tribes who are known to be traditionally jhumias are the following.

- |           |            |             |
|-----------|------------|-------------|
| 1. Garoo  | 5. Chaimal | 9. Noatia   |
| 2. Lushai | 6. Halam   | 10. Riang   |
| 3. Chakma | 7. Jamatia | 11. Tripura |
| 4. Mag    | 8. Kuki    | 12. Uchai   |

Thus, it is seen that all the local tribes (Table 1.2, Group 5 tribes) practise shifting cultivation in Tripura; similar is the case with Chittagong Hill tribes viz. Chakma and Mag. Among Assam tribes, Garoo and Lushais do shifting cultivation. The rest i.e., the Central Indian tribes, Northern Frontier tribes, and Khasia among Assam tribes are not jhumias.

Here, a further explanation of the term jhumia is necessary. When we talk of jhumia tribes, the above-mentioned twelve tribes are jhumias. But a particular individual belonging to any of these tribes may not be in actuality a jhumia, i.e., shifting cultivator. For example, Riang is traditionally a jhumia tribe, but many Riangs have given up doing shifting cultivation in favour of other occupations. For them, we will say that they belong to jhumia tribes but are not jhumias. In fact, in the local parlance of Tripura, this is the way in which the word is used.

The exact number of jhumias is not known and it varies from year to year. According to the 1961 census, the total

population of the said twelve tribes is 350,792, which cover almost the whole of the tribal population of Tripura. But in the same year, only 46,133 families are known to have practised jhum or shifting cultivation.<sup>6</sup> If a jhumia family has five members on an average, then, in 1961, the number of actual jhumia population should be 230,665, which means that one out of every five persons living in Tripura practises shifting cultivation to earn his livelihood.

Shifting cultivation is done by the tribals for the purposes of producing agricultural crops. In contrast to the settled cultivation which is usually done in the plains with the aid of plough and bullocks, shifting cultivation is practised in the hill-slopes and does not need any ploughing. The hills are covered mostly with bamboo forests. To make such forested hill-slopes fit for cultivation, the jhumias cut down the trees. Such cut-down trees, when exposed to sun for some time, dry up. Then, they are burnt to ashes. These operations are done well in advance of the monsoon. After the monsoon sets in, the jhumias make little holes in the hill-slope with the help of a knife and sow seeds of various crops in these holes. Seeds of paddy, cotton, chillies, pumpkins and other vegetables are mixed and sown together. During harvest, the paddy is reaped first,

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<sup>6</sup> The number about actual jhumia families is collected from the District Magistrate's Office, Agartala.

generally in September. A jhum field is never worked two years in succession. A fresh jungle is selected every time. When, after five or six years, the original hill is again covered with forest, it may be considered fit for re-cultivation.

The above gives a very brief idea of what shifting cultivation is. This mode of agricultural production, which was once universal in Tripura,<sup>7</sup> is being gradually substituted by settled cultivation. The emphasis on replacing the age-old jhum system has been particularly prominent during the post-independence period, although efforts were made for the same cause in the past also.

For a proper appreciation of the problem of the Tripura jhumias today, it is necessary to know the situation in earlier periods. Our knowledge of this frontier territory of India is too limited because of the dearth of written materials. Although there are a few publications, they do not give us any insight into Tripura's socio-economic history because their writers had no historical perspective in their mind.

#### 1.2 Sources of Data

In the following are the principal sources of information:

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<sup>7</sup> W. W. Hunter. A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. VI. London, 1876, p. 501.

Rajamala, Tripura Buranji, Tripurar Itivritta, A Statistical Account of Bengal (Vol. VI), Census Bibarani, the Annual Administration Reports of Tripura and the Tripura State Gazettes.

The Tripura king Dharmamanikya is said to have patronized the writing of a history of the Tripura Royal House. The first part of Rajamala was thus written in C.1458. At subsequent epochs (C.1600 and C.1830) the history was brought up-to-date, and in this way, we get the Bengali Rajamala, as a chronicle in verse. "The historical value of the chronicle," says Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, "is worthless for the period prior to the 15th century."<sup>8</sup> Many historians cast more serious doubts upon the authenticity of the Rajamala. According to D. C. Sircar, "Even the first part of the Rajamala, usually ascribed to the 15th century appears to be later than the middle of the 18th century. The composition of the second part of the chronicle, which deals with the reign of King Vijayamanikya has been ascribed to the end of the 16th or the beginning of the 17th century. It however seems to us that both the first and second parts of the present Rajamala were compiled early in the 19th century."<sup>9</sup> But, "there is no doubt," says Dr. Sircar, "that

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<sup>8</sup> S.K. Chatterjee, "Kirata-Jana-Kriti", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol.XVI(2), 1950, p. 216.

<sup>9</sup> D.C. Sircar, "Copper-plate Inscription of the Time of King Vijayamanikya of Tripura", The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. XVII(2), 1951, p. 76.



the accounts of the Rajamala have a historical basis and are fairly reliable in regard to the period witnessed by the compilers". Whatever the reliability of Rajamala as a chronicle of the kings might be, it contains much information on the political and socio-economic conditions of the tribals of Tripura, and to that extent, it is valuable.

"Tripura Buranji", or a chronicle of Tripura was written in 1724 by Ratnakandali Sarma Katakai and Arjun Das Bairagi Katakai who had visited Tripura as agents of King Rudra Singha of Assam on three different occasions between the years 1709 and 1715. "The value of this work being a contemporary account of Tripura, is immense."<sup>10</sup> According to Dr. S. K. Bhuyan, who edited and published the chronicle, it presents a lot of information about the history, topography, resources and customs of Tripura.<sup>11</sup>

"Tripurar Itivritta" was written by Kailash Chandra Singha and was published in 1876. The author was in the services of the Tripura Maharaja and was a native of Tripura also.

W. W. Hunter's A Statistical Account of Bengal, published in 1876, contains useful information about 'Hill Tippera',

10 S. K. Chatterjee, op.cit.

11 Tripura Buranji, op.cit., pp. iii-iv.

in one of the chapters of volume six. Liberal use has been made of the same.

"Census Bibarani", or Census Reports of Tripura, was compiled and written by Thakur Somendrachandra Debbarma in Bengali. It contains information about the censuses conducted in Tripura between the period 1872 and 1931. Thakur Somendrachandra, a member of the Royal family, who had just finished his studies at Harvard, was urged upon by the Maharaja to undertake this work. Besides being a compilation of previous census reports, the book contains much valuable information about the tribals of Tripura. Census Bibarani was published in the year 1933.

The Administration Reports of Tripura were published annually during Maharaja's rule. They contain useful information though unfortunately all the reports are not readily available. The earliest volume which we could make use of relates to the year 1904-05. The Tripura State Gazettes were written in Bengali and were published every fortnight. Due to want of a State Archive in Tripura, the preservation of neither the Administration Reports nor that of the Gazettes has been systematic.

Apart from the above-mentioned materials, many other sources have been tapped. Some unpublished official papers became accidentally available for the purpose of the present study. Those were lying in heaps in the godown of the

Printing and Stationery Department of the Government of Tripura. Due to sheer chance, they were discovered and hence could be utilized.

To supplement the documentary evidence, some information was collected from jhumias in four villages. They were Haldicherra in Dharmanagar sub-division, and Shikaribari, Harincherra and Roypasha of Kamalpur sub-division. To understand the working of the Jhumia Settlement Scheme, data were collected from the tribals in colonies under the Salema Development Block. A house to house investigation was conducted in the Gandacherra Model Tribal Colony.

### 1.3 Layout of the Subsequent Chapters

The data, collected from these various sources, have been synthesized and analysed within the framework of the following chapters - a brief outline of which is given in the next few lines.

In the following chapter, we have tried to examine how far Tripura had been tribal in the historical past and also what the present situation is. As there are various tribes, their distribution over the geographical territory of Tripura has been taken note of. The causes and stages of non-tribal migration to Tripura have also been described in detail.

In the third chapter, we have proposed a hypothesis about the origin of the Tripura Royal House. The possible relation between the Maharaja of Tripura with his tribal

subjects has also been indicated. These are considered essential for the purposes of this work, for, to appreciate the tribal problem today, it is important to know where the tribals stood in the pre-integration period.

In the fourth chapter, we have made a study of the material condition of the tribals in the historical past.

In the fifth chapter, the land tenure of the Jhumias is discussed. This is followed by a chapter on "House-Tax". House-Tax is realized by the Administration from the jhumias in lieu of 'land revenue'.

Among the various schemes of jhumia settlement, the creation of extensive Tribal Reserve Area was the most important step taken during the rule of the erstwhile Maharaja. The factors responsible for the creation of Tribal Reserve Area and the present condition of the same are examined in the seventh chapter.

In the post-Independence period, the Government of Tripura has taken up comprehensive Jhumia Settlement Schemes. They are described in chapter eight. In the ninth chapter, a review of the working of the said schemes is presented.

Finally, the chapter tenth concludes the study by summarizing the salient features of socio-economic changes indicated in the earlier chapters. A broad view of the problem of adjustment faced by the jhumias is suggested.

CHAPTER II  
TRIBAL TRIPURA

2.1 Tribals of Tripura

Rajamala furnishes us evidence of the existence of various tribes in Tripura. It mentions among others of Kaipeng, Khulong, Saimer, Sairem, Sakachep, Thangchep, Rangkhoh, Chakma, Rieng etc. These tribes were subjugated by the Tripura Kings by waging war against them. It may be noted that the writers of Rajamala did not regard the 'Tripura' people as a tribe. As they would say - Tripuras are Kshatriyas of the Lunar race. This differentiation is understandable if we remember that the Tripuras were the ruling people in that hill territory. Many of the tribes mentioned in the Rajamala do not possess any separate identity today. For instance, the tribes such as Kaipeng, Khulong, Saimer, Sairem, Sakachep, Thangchep, Rangkhoh etc., are denoted by the name 'Halam'. Others like Chakma and Rieng are, however, even now distinguished as separate tribes.

But although Rajamala refers to many individual tribes, distinction between them was not clear in popular parlance. To outsider Bengalees of East Bengal, all hill-people, barring the Tripuras, were known as Kukis.<sup>1</sup> Ratnakandali and Arjundas,

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<sup>1</sup> Census Bibarani, (Ed.) Thakur Somendrachandra Debbarma, Agartala, 1933, p. 87.

who visited Tripura at the beginning of the 18th century, had also similar ideas. These writers of Tripura Buranji came to Udaipur (capital of Tripura) through the eastern frontier of the territory. During their journey, they passed through the following villages: Rangrung, Rupinipara, Toijal, Kumjang, Sairangchuk, Kerpa, Chotamarichrai and Baramarichrai. According to the Assamese envoys, the villagers of Rangrung, Rupinipara, Toijal, Kumjang and Sairangchuk were Kukis, whereas those of the other three places were known as Tripura.<sup>2</sup>

Even, as late as in 1808, it was described<sup>3</sup> that the inhabitants of Tripura were of two very distinct classes: one, "which doubtless originally came from China, but was now of the Hindoo persuasion; the other, a people called Kookies or Cocis." "The person composing the Government or possessing the chief management of the country are Hindoos. Among the Kookie vassals, however, as well as amongst the Hindoo inhabitants, a distinction of rank prevails. The chief man among the Kookies are called Roys, Ghalims, Chuppiahs and Gaboors." In the above passages, it may be

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2 Tripura Buranji, op.cit., p. 23.

3 Report of the Special Commissioner as quoted in Sir Alexander Mackenzie, History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal, Calcutta, 1884, p. 275.

seen that the distinction between the ruling Tripura tribe and other tribals has been maintained. It may also be pointed out that while Roy is the designation of a Riang chief, Ghalim is that of the Halam tribals. Thus, it is evident that the term Kuki which denotes only a small fraction of tribals today included all non-Tripura tribes in the past. Gradually, however, perhaps by the successive census operations since 1872, the individual identity of many tribes became established. This is not to say that earlier there were not many tribes in Tripura. What many of them did not possess was a recognition by their own name.

## 2.2 Spatial Distribution of Various Tribes

Under the circumstances, very little information is available about the regional distribution of various tribes. This is especially so for the period of 19th century and for still earlier periods. The jhumia tribes are supposed to be migratory; and, as such, had information been available, their movement could be an interesting study.

Rajamala does not contain enough information about the distribution of various tribes over the geographical domain of Tripura. About Kukis it says that they live in the eastern part of the kingdom, while Riangs live, according to it, in the south near the upwaters of the Gumti river. That Kukis live in the east can also be inferred from the materials furnished by the Tripura Buranji. From the same source,

people belonging to the tribe Tripura are found to be concentrated in the Udaipur sub-division. Udaipur had been the capital of Tripura since Ratnamanikya I became the king in the 14th century.<sup>4</sup> It is not known if the preponderance of the Tripura tribe in and around Udaipur was a determining factor behind the location of the capital at that place. Else, it might be that the Tripura tribe assembled there after the capital was established. They, being of the ruling tribe, found it convenient to stay near the capital. At a later date, in 1876, more knowledge about tribal concentration is available from Kailash Singha's Tripurar Itivritta. Tripura State was divided at that time into three fiscal divisions. The northern, central and south divisions of Tripura were known as Lakhipati Hakar, Dhulna Hakar and Sarbang Hakar respectively. And, according to Kailash Singha, Kukis were numerous in the Northern, the Halam and Jamatias in the Central, while Noatia and Riangs were mostly found in the Southern part of Tripura.<sup>5</sup>

Information about tribal concentration is available from the census sources also. But there are certain difficulties in analysing them.

First is the confusion caused by differing coverages

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4 Tripura Buranji, op.cit., p. 35.

5 Kailash Chandra Singha, Tripurar Itivritta, Agartala, 1876, Appendix Statement.



given to the Kuki population. The census distinction between Kuki, Lashai and Halam population is not always clear. The reason for this might be that the people who were known as Kukis to the Bengalees were the same as those who were called Lushais by the neighbouring Cachar people. Similarly Halam tribals were reported as Mela Kukis in the local jargon.<sup>6</sup> One way of avoiding the confusion and making the data comparable over years is to group these three categories under one head.

The earliest quantitative information about the composition of the population of Tripura is available for the year 1872. But the figures obtained in the first census were not reliable. The number of tribals, who lived mostly in the interior of the hills, was under-estimated. "The Census of 1872 was very inaccurate and in 1881 also it is doubtful if a complete count was obtained. In 1891, the arrangements were less elaborate than in British territory, and less information was asked for; but it is probable that so far as the bare numbers are concerned, the enumeration was very fairly accurate."<sup>7</sup> The full census schedule was, however, used for the first time in 1901 and the procedure differed

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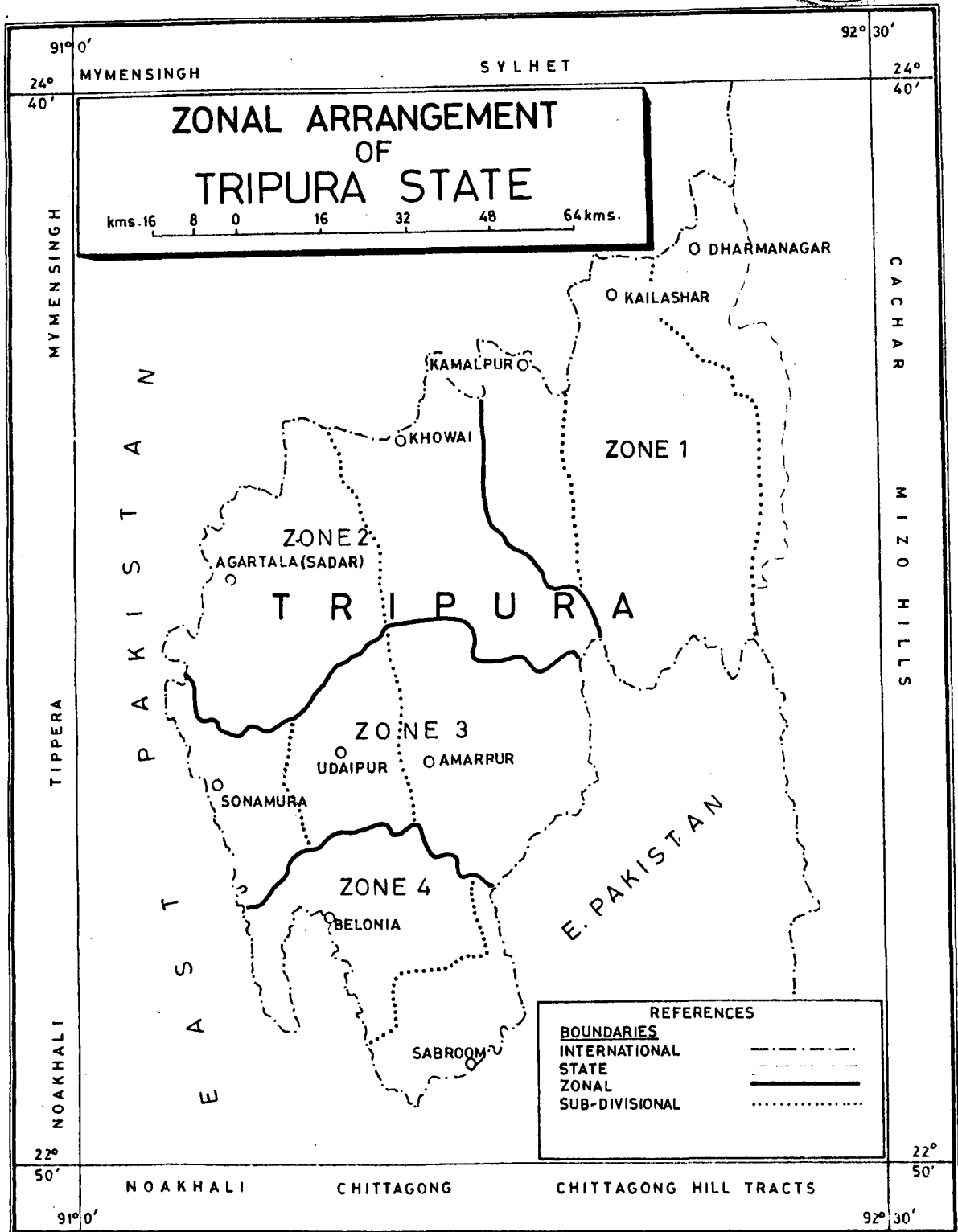
6 Census Biharani, op.cit., pp. 80-87.

7 Census of Bengal, 1901, Part I, Report, p. 82.

but little from that laid down in the Census Code for Bengal. As such, the data of population since 1901 may be used.

Another difficulty is that the number of sub-divisions has varied during census period. In 1901, there were only six divisions in Tripura, viz., Sadar, Khowai, Kailasahar, Dharmanagar, Sonamura and Belonia. At the time of the 1931 census, the number increased to nine. Sonamura was subdivided into three viz., Sonamura, Udaipur and Amarpur. Also Belonia was bifurcated into Belonia and Sabroom. In 1961, the number stood at ten, Kamalpur being created out of the Kailasahar sub-division. Consequently, to make the data comparable (which are available for the years 1901, 1931 and 1961), some adjustment is necessary. This may be done by breaking the total territory of Tripura into the following four zones. First zone would comprise of the three north-eastern sub-divisions of Dharmanagar, Kailasahar and Kamalpur. The two north-western sub-divisions of Khowai and Agartala when put together would make the second zone. The third zone would consist of Sonamura, Udaipur and Amarpur sub-divisions. The fourth zone would consist of the two southern sub-divisions of Belonia and Sabroom (see the following map). In Table 2.1, the population of Jhumia tribes is presented according to these zones in the years 1901, 1931 and 1961.

It will be noticed that the Lushai, Kuki and Halam group of tribals has been always concentrated in the two



MAP NQ.2

**Table 2.1 : Zonewise Distribution of Jhumia Tribals in 1901, 1931 and 1961 Censuses**

Tribe	Zone I			Zone II			Zone III			Zone IV		
	1901	1931	1961	1901	1931	1961	1901	1931	1961	1901	1931	1961
1. Lushai, Kuki and Halam	5048	6876	10971	2208	3548	6331	2566	5722	7562	75	-	3
2. Chakma	-	3080	14321	2	56	52	4217	5029	5925	291	448	2088
3. Mag	1	-	1016	4	-	106	33	149	516	1453	5538	8886
4. Noatia	1980	3480	2952	34628	682	1495	20098	6154	8963	18675	17308	2600
5. Jamatia		28	237		2066	5462		8996	17948		-	12
6. Riang		11953	27785		5015	6513		14053	14912		4860	7387
7. Tripura		9012	25858		64484	127690		4594	10868		984	25383
<b>Total</b>	<b>7029</b>	<b>34429</b>	<b>83140</b>	<b>36842</b>	<b>75851</b>	<b>147649</b>	<b>26914</b>	<b>44697</b>	<b>66694</b>	<b>20494</b>	<b>29138</b>	<b>47059</b>

**Notes:** Chaimal population of 1961 is included in the Lushai-Kuki-Halam group because in previous censuses, Chaimal was regarded as a sub-tribe of Halam. Murasing which was regarded as a sub-tribe of Halam in 1931 is treated as a sub-tribe of Noatia in 1961. So adjustments have been made for it by adding Murasing part of Halam population with Noatia in the 1931 figure of the same. There will still remain some shortcomings of the above table. First, adjustments could not be made for Hajango which has been added in the list of sub-tribes for Halam in 1961. Secondly, the population of Garoo and Uchai tribes could not be traced in pre-1961 censuses, and so they had to be left out of consideration.

**Sources :** Census Biharani.

Census of India, 1961, Vol. XXVI, Tripura, Part V-A.

northern zones. They are more numerous in Zone I, i.e., in the Dharmanagar, Kailasahar and Kamalpur sub-divisions. It is also seen that they do not live in the south. For the Chakmas, who migrated from the Chittagong Hills, Zone III was an attractive place of abode upto the year 1931. But, at present, they have shifted to the north-eastern part of Tripura. In the year 1901, there were no Chakmas in Zone I. In 1931, 3080 of them were found there. This figure has swelled to 14,321 in the year 1961. On the other hand, the Chakma population increased from 5029 to only 5925 between 1931 and 1961 in Zone III. Another group of immigrant tribals - the Mag, who also entered Tripura from the south, have preferred to stay in Zone IV instead of penetrating deeper into the territory. Noatias were concentrated in Belonia and Sabroom upto 1931 where their numerical superiority has fast diminished in recent years. As far as Jamatias are concerned, few of them are there in the extreme northern and southern sub-divisions of Tripura. Most of them have been staying in Zone III. The Riang tribals preferred Zone III to any other zones upto 1931. But in 1961, they gravitated towards the North-East corners of the territory. Maximum number of Tripuras are found in Zone II, i.e., in Sadar and Khowai sub-divisions, although their growth in other zones has been no less spectacular.

Summing up, it can be said that the area under Zone I (Dharmanagar, Kailasahar and Kamalpur sub-divisions) is mainly

inhabited by Lushai-Kuki-Halam group, Chakma and Rieng tribals. The Zone II (i.e., Khowai and Sadar sub-divisions) principally accommodates the Tripura tribe. Jamatia, Noatia and Rieng share among them most of the area under Zone III (Sonamura, Udaipur and Amarpur sub-divisions). But, at the same time, it cannot be ignored that there are sizeable numbers of each tribe in Zone III, and as such, it may veritably be called the museum of tribal culture in Tripura. Finally, in Zone IV (Belonia and Sabroom sub-divisions), it is seen that the Mag and Tripuras are the predominant groups.

If the above observations from census data, and also the knowledge derived from Rajamala, Tripura Buranji and Tripurar Itivritta are viewed in the right perspective, then it will be seen that while some of the tribes had been highly mobile in the past, others were not so. The Chakma and Mags entered Tripura in large numbers from Chittagong Hill Tracts and Arakan, and perhaps forced the earlier settlers like Rieng and Noatia to move further north to make space for them. The Rieng rebellion of 1940s might also have helped to cause Riengs' flight to the north. During 1940-45, the Riengs were hostile to the Tripura Maharaja. To avoid his retaliation, they possibly moved to Kailasahar and Dharma-nagar sub-divisions, because the control exercised by the Government of Tripura over the eastern frontier of the State adjacent to the Lushai territory has always been loose.

In the 19th century and before that, the north-eastern portion of the territory was definitely occupied by the Lushai-Kuki-Halam group of tribals. Both Rajamala and Tripura Buranji bear testimony to this. It was corroborated in later years also. In a report submitted in 1824, it was said that the Peitoo Kukis, numbering 50 to 60 thousand were occupying the whole of the eastern and the northern hills, and they were the most formidable of all the tribes.<sup>8</sup> During 1870, when the Lushai expedition was undertaken by the British Government of India, many Lushais migrated in all possibilities deep in the interior of the Lushai Hills to avoid British subjugation. May be due to the Lushai (Kuki) migration to the east into the Lushai Hills, more hilly lands were released for other tribes, especially for the Riangs and Chakmas who migrated to Zone I at a later date.

The Noatias who were living in the southern subdivisions did not leave their early settlements at first. But when the Mag and other immigrants arrived in large numbers, they had to make room for them, and consequently, they perhaps moved up to Amarapur and Udaipur.

The Tripura tribe was concentrated around Udaipur for as long as Udaipur remained the centre of political activity in Tripura. In around 1728, Udaipur was subjugated by the

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<sup>8</sup> Sir Alexander Mackenzie, op.cit., p. 277.

Murshidabad Nawabs. The king of Tripura, with his relatives and noblemen, retired to the jungles. In 1765, when the kingdom was restored with the aid of the British Government of India, the capital of the country was established at Agartala in the Sadar sub-division. It is possible that the ruling Tripura tribe resettled itself around the new capital. From that time onwards, the concentration of Tripura tribe has been in Zone I rather than in Zone III. The Tripura population must also have moved in large numbers to Khowai to take advantage of the Tribal Reserve Area created in that sub-division by the Maharaja in the year 1931. Thus, the supremacy of the Tripura tribe in the north-west part of the State (Zone II) came to be established.

About Jamatias, it may be noted that they constituted the military force of the Tripura Maharajas in the past.<sup>9</sup> But after the capital was shifted from Udaipur to Agartala and the administrative pattern of the country followed closely the British system of administration in the neighbouring areas, the Jamatias were gradually forgotten as a warrior tribe. In the 19th century, large number of non-tribal population found their way in the military force of Tripura.<sup>10</sup>

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9 Census Biharani, op.cit., p. 69.

10 In 1874-75, the Tripura Maharaja's regular army consisted of 277 men. The total force was thus classified:

Bengali Hindus	15
Muhammadans	96
Gurkhas	66
Deshwali or Upcountry men	82
Assamese	10
Tipperah and Manipuris	8
Total	277

See W. W. Hunter, op.cit., p. 515.



The Jamatias were no longer asked to render military assistance and so it was not necessary for them to migrate to Sadar sub-division. They stayed back in Udaipur, became less warlike in subsequent years and turned slowly to Vaishnavite religion.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.3 Growth of Tribal Population

After looking into the spatial distribution of the jhumia tribes, it is necessary to see also the pattern of their temporal growth. Due to non-availability of data for the earlier years, the analysis is limited to the period between 1901 and 1961 only. In Table 2.2 is presented the population figures for 1901, 1931 and 1961.

Table 2.2 : Growth of Jhumia Tribals between 1901 and 1961

Tribe	Population in			Simple growth rate per year between	
	1901	1931	1961	1901 and 1931	1931 and 1961
1. Lushai-Kuki-Halam	9,897	16,146	24,867	+ 2.10	+ 1.80
2. Chakma	4,510	8,613	22,386	+ 3.03	+ 5.33
3. Mag	1,491	5,697	10,524	+ 9.40	+ 2.82
4. Noatia	-	27,624	16,010	-	- 1.40
5. Jamatia	-	11,090	24,359	-	+ 3.99
6. Riang	-	35,881	56,597	-	+ 1.92
7. Tripura	-	79,074	189,799	-	+ 4.67

Source : Census Biharani.

Census of India, 1961, Vol.XXVI, Tripura, Part V-A.

11 Census Biharani, op.cit., p. 69.

From Table 2.2, it will be seen that between 1901 and 1931, Mag population increased very fast. But between 1931 and 1961, the highest rate of growth has been that of the Chakmas. It may be noted that both are immigrant tribes, and they might have increased their number only by considerable migration.

The Noatia population has gone down annually by about 1.40 per cent. No large Noatia exodus from Tripura has been known, and so the fall of Noatia population must be due to other reasons. One possible reason for this may be that Noatias are gradually being assimilated into Tripura and Jamatia tribes. In 1933, it was remarked that Noatias are similar to Jamatias in many respects.<sup>12</sup> Again, in 1946, by an Order of the Maharaja, the progressive among the Noatias were allowed admission into the 'Tripur Kshatriya Samaj' - an organization which was intended for the betterment of so-called Kshatriya people of Tripura.<sup>13</sup> Originally it encompassed the people belonging to the Tripura tribe only, but in later years its scope gradually expanded. Under the circumstances, it is possible that many Noatias identify themselves with either Jamatia or Tripura. The high growth rate of Jamatia and Tripura tribes is another pointer to that possibility.

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12 Ibid., p. 79.

13 Order No. 350, 1356 T.E. See Tripura State Gazette (Extra-Ordinary), 20th Aswin, 1356 T.E.

Before concluding this section, a few words may be said about the approach of Tripura Administration to the immigration of tribals into Tripura. Chakma, Mag, Khasia, Munda, Bhil, Santal and many other tribes migrated to Tripura in the historical period. In the year 1872, about 400 persons of the Chakma tribe emigrated from the Chittagong Hill Tracts and selected Amarpur sub-division for the purposes of jhum cultivation. They "were considered at the time as a great gain to Hill Tipperah. That part of the country, consisting of land admirably adapted for juming, had for years been deserted, owing to the occurrence of Lushai raids and the fear of their repetition."<sup>14</sup> In 1894, a Circular was issued to the Divisional Officers of Tripura to look into the inconveniences faced by the Chakma immigrants. The Administration was eager to know what measures might encourage the Chakma people to stay permanently within the State.<sup>15</sup> When the gardens were set up for the first time in 1916-17, coolies had to be recruited from outside. The Administration encouraged the recruit of Bhil, Santal and other tribals for this purpose. In the Administration Report for 1934-35, it was mentioned that many Mags had also come to Tripura. Some

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14 W. W. Hunter, op.cit., p. 492.

15 Circular No. 8, dated 25th Ashada, 1304 T.E. (obtained by courtesy of the Superintendent, Printing and Stationery Department, Government of Tripura).

of them were allotted lands in Bhatkhawri and in Abhanga moujas. "The reclamation by the Mags was very satisfactory, as a result of which the major portion of Bhatkhawri ... has now turned into a small decent village."<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the Khasias, who went to the Kulaihaor area with a view to cultivating Pan (betel leaf), were given a warm welcome. It was reported in 1943 that the cultivation of Pan (betel leaf) by the Khasias in Dalucherra block had made very good progress. "The commodity was sold in Kamalpur, Halhali and Chhallengma bazar and it is gratifying to note," said the Report, "that the production was more than sufficient to meet the local requirement, the surplus being exported to the adjoining British districts."<sup>17</sup>

#### 2.4 Non-tribals of Tripura

But the most significant in-migration to Tripura in the historical period has been that of the non-tribals. Non-tribals of Tripura are mostly Bengalees. According to Rajamala, it is King Ratnamanikya I, who was responsible for the first settlement of non-tribals within the territory. From numismatic sources, it has been established that Ratnamanikya I was the king of Tripura in 1364-67 A.D.<sup>18</sup> He took

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<sup>16</sup> Administration Report of the Tripura State for 1344 T.E., p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> Consolidated Administration Report of the Tripura State for 1347, 1348 and 1349 T.E., p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> Bangla Desher Itihas, Vol. II (Ed.) Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mazumdar, Calcutta, 1966, p. 499.

the assistance of the king of Gaur (Bengal) to capture the royal seat of Tripura.<sup>19</sup> The king of Gaur helped Ratnamanikya I with the army, in which Bengalee people of various castes were enlisted. According to Rajamala, navashayaka or people of nine castes accompanied the king of Tripura and settled there;<sup>20</sup> but Tripura Buranji asserts that Ratnamanikya brought people of thirty-six castes from Bengal with him.<sup>21</sup> After the successful consolidation of his power in Tripura, Maharaja Ratnamanikya settled the Bengalees, who helped him in the campaign, within his country. Table 2.3 illustrates the distribution of these people in various places.

Rangamati was the name of Udaipur, the capital of Tripura during that period. Hirapur is on the south bank of Gomati at a distance of two miles from the ancient Rangamati. Jashpur is a village in the Nalua tehsil area of Belonia subdivision and, Ratnapur has been identified to be the present Mahadevbari in Udaipur.<sup>22</sup>

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19 Which king of Gaur helped Ratnamanikya I is disputed among historians.

20 According to Parashar Samhita, navashayaka includes people of the following nine professions: (a) Gopa i.e. milkmen, (b) Mali i.e. gardener, (c) Taili i.e. oil-presser, (d) Tanti i.e. weaver, (e) Modak i.e. sweetmeat-maker, (f) Baraji i.e. betel-leaf-grower, (g) Kulal i.e. potter, (h) Kanmakar i.e. blacksmith and (i) Napit i.e. barber. See Kaliprasanna Sen (Ed.) Rajamala, Vol. I, Agartala, 1926, p.68.

21 Tripura Buranji, op.cit., p. 35.

22 Rajamala, Vol. I, op.cit., pp. 266-73.

**Table 2.3 : Bengali Families Settled by King Ratnamanikya I in Tripura in the 14th Century**

Place Name	No. of families settled
Rangamati	2,000
Ratnapur	1,000
Jashpur	500
Hirapur	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,000</b>

**Note** :- Dr. R. C. Majumdar says that 10,000 families were settled in Tripura on that occasion. (See, R. C. Majumdar (Ed.), Bangla Desher Itihas, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1967, p. 488.) But, the text of Rajamala does not support this contention. According to Rajamala, the King of Gaur permitted Ratnamanikya to utilize the services of 10,000 people in his campaign, but ultimately, only 4,000 of them were available. These 4,000 Bengalees were settled in four places of Tripura, as is shown in the Table.

**Source** : Kaliprasanna Sen (Ed.), Rajamala, Vol. I, Agartala, 1926, p. 69.

Thus, the immigration of non-tribals into Tripura can be established right from the 14th century. As the non-tribal Bengalees were settled by the Maharaja, it is presumed that plough cultivation was introduced in Tripura by them in the same period.

But, even if plough cultivation was introduced by the non-tribal Bengalee settlers, it was neither systematic nor

on a large scale for many centuries to come. The Bengalees remained concentrated in Udaipur and practised the professions prescribed by their respective castes. The writers of Tripura Buranji, who had visited Tripura at the beginning of the 18th century, noticed Bengalee settlements only in and around the capital town, Udaipur. Some of the Bengalees were Brahmins - priests and astrologers. Many were traders, or else professionals such as weaver, betel-leaf-grower, goldsmith, blacksmith, potter, gardener, tanner, washerman, barber, etc.<sup>23</sup> Possibly most of them were descents of the original settlers whom Ratnamanikya I patronized.

Another important migration into Tripura was that of the Muslims. During Mughal period Tripura was invaded many times. But 'Hill Tipperah' or Tripura proper retained its independence for a long time.<sup>24</sup> In 1728 (or, according to some 1732) Tripura passed into the hands of the Nawab of Murshidabad. Udaipur was captured and the king of Tripura along with other noblemen fled into the jungles.<sup>25</sup> Although the Muslims did not succeed in keeping the country subjugated for many years, some of them, nevertheless, got the opportunity of settling there permanently.

23 Tripura Buranji, op.cit., pp. 25-34.

24 C. U. Aitchison (Comp.), A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1892, p. 107.

25 Rev. James Long, "Analysis of the Bengali Poem Rajamala, or chronicles of Tripura", Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. XIX, 1850, p. 555.

The next important group of non-tribals in Tripura is the Manipuri. After the First Burmese Invasion of 1755 and since then, many Manipuris were forced to leave Manipur and settle elsewhere. They migrated to Cachar, Sylhet and Tripura in large numbers. The marital relation between the Royal Houses of Tripura and Manipur had given further impetus to Manipuri migration to Tripura.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, we see that out of the various groups of immigrant non-tribals, some had come here to assist the Tripura King in his administration of the land, some entered as invaders, and some others as fugitives. But, although the waves of migration started a long time back, plough cultivation did not extend until in the middle of the 19th century. Till about 1830, there was "little or no plough cultivation in the State."<sup>27</sup> Gradually, however, the land was taken up under jangal-abadi leases, the usual conditions of which were as follows: "The land was to be rent-free for a period of from four to ten years, according to the nature of the jungle; then to be subject to rent at the rate of 2 or 3 annas per bigha, gradually increasing till it reached a moderate amount, which was less than the rate paid for adjoining lands in British Indian Territory."<sup>28</sup>

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26 Census Bibarani, op.cit., p. 94.

27 Report of Political Agent quoted in Hunter, op.cit., p.505.

28 Ibid.



It is most likely that the plain lands of Tripura State, which were contiguous to the British districts of Bengal, were first taken up for reclamation and settled cultivation. The persons obtaining land on leases were British Indian subjects. Ziratia was the name used to denote those tenants, who were subjects of British India, but owned land within the independent State of Hill Tipperah. Most of them were Bengalee Muslims of neighbouring districts. After the partition of India, the number of Ziratia tenants has diminished; but even now, there are a number of such tenants in Tripura, who are, in fact, citizens of Pakistan.<sup>29</sup>

A steady colonization of Tripura by non-tribals started during the early years of the 19th century. There is evidence to suggest that the plough cultivation movement initiated by the non-tribals had very little impact upon the hill people. Hunter wrote in 1876 that "Plough cultivation is limited to a narrow strip of land lying along the boundary - which divides the State from the adjoining British districts, and to patches of land in the interior. The people who practise this form of cultivation are, with few exceptions, Bengalis and Manipuri, the majority of the Bengalis being Mohammadans."<sup>30</sup> In his eagerness to extend cultivation in

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29 Information collected from interview with A. D. M. (Revenue), Agartala.

30 Hunter, op.cit., p. 505.

the eastern frontier of Tripura, the Minister of Hill Tippera expressed in 1891 that it "will be arranged to be carried on both by means of plough and by jhuming. For the former will be employed Bengalis, Cacharis and Manipuris, and for the latter Tipperahs, Hallams and Kukis."<sup>31</sup> From the above, it is understood that the composition of the total population of Tripura had a direct bearing on the extent of plough cultivation there. As the proportion of non-tribals in the total population of Tripura was increasing, more and more lands were being gradually taken up for settled cultivation.

About the composition of the non-tribal population in 1874-75, Hunter provides some information which is presented in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 : Composition of Persons Not Classified as Hill Tribes in 1874-75

Name	Population
Hindu	4,339
Manipuri	7,045
Muhammadian	14,228
Christian	112
Unclassified	6,173
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,897</b>

Source : W. W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. VI, London, 1876, p. 282.

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<sup>31</sup> Dewan Bejoy Kumar Sen, The Eastern Boundary of the Tipperah State, Calcutta, 1917, Appendix XX, p. 33.

In the Table 2.4, the preponderance of Muhammadans among the non-tribals may be noted. This indicates that in the initial phase of colonization, they were more enthusiastic than any other group of people. The number of Bengalee Hindus was less than even Manipuris. In Table 2.3 it was seen that according to Rajamala 4,000 families of Bengalee Hindus had been settled in Tripura in the 14th century. Had it been actually so, the negative growth of Hindu population is astonishing. Either, the figure given in Rajamala is wrong, or, there must have been a large exodus of Hindus out of Tripura during the interregnum.

The Muslims retained their leading position as colonists in the subsequent years as well. It was commented upon in the "Census Biharani" of 1931 that, "Attracted by the vast fertile land which is available in Tripura, from neighbouring British districts, Muslims have entered into the State every year in large numbers to cultivate the same, and also to settle permanently in Tripura. Compared to the Hindus, the Muslims are more industrious and energetic. Gradually they are settling even in the interior of the State."<sup>32</sup>

In the Table 2.5 is presented the importance of Muslim population in the total population of Tripura during 1901-1961. Since 1947, there has been some exodus of Muslims to East.

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32 Census Biharani, op.cit., p. 29.

Pakistan. But, mainly because of the heavy influx of Bengalee Hindus from East Pakistan, their relative importance in the population of Tripura has gone down.

**Table 2.5 :** Extent of Muslim Population in the Total Population of Tripura, 1901-1961

Year	Total Population	Muslim Population	Percentage of Muslim to Total Population
1901	1,73,325	45,323	26.1
1911	2,29,613	64,953	28.3
1921	3,04,437	82,288	27.0
1931	3,82,450	1,03,720	27.1
1961	11,42,005	2,30,002	20.1

**Note :-** Census of 1951 was not satisfactory due to politically disturbed condition of Tripura (see Census of India, 1961, Vol. XXVI, Tripura, Part II(i), p. 67.

**Source :** Thakur Somendrachandra Debbarma (Ed.), Census Biharani, Agartala, 1933.

Census of India, 1961, Vol. XXVI, Tripura, Part II-C, Cultural and Migration Tables.

The immigrants of the 19th and the first few decades of the 20th century are distinguished from their predecessors by their zeal for colonizing the land. In 1901, it was observed that Tripura "is now attracting numerous settlers from Sylhet, Tipperah, Chittagong and Noakhali. These do not

at once give up their old homes, but gradually do so as their new cultivation extends and the country becomes more settled."<sup>33</sup> The waste land was being brought under cultivation by the immigrants from British Territory including, it was said, absconding coolies from the tea gardens of Sylhet.<sup>34</sup> The migration into Tripura was taking place mostly from the neighbouring areas, viz., from the Sylhet district of Assam and from Tipperah, Noakhali and Chittagong districts of Bengal. Out of these again, Sylhet and Tipperah were the largest sources of migration, which may be noted from Table 2.6.

Table 2.6 : Immigrants in Tripura in 1901, 1911 and 1921  
Censuses

Source of migration	1901	1911	1921
Tipperah	12,055	35,302	25,689
Noakhali	4,146	4,759	4,583
Chittagong	6,272	5,577	9,891
Chittagong Hill Tracts	1,228	105	1,469
Sylhet	16,106	25,549	33,929
Total No. of immigrants from five contiguous districts	39,807	71,292	75,561
Immigrants from other places	4,087	10,371	20,825
Total immigrant population	43,894	81,663	96,386

Source : Thakur Somendrachandra Debbarma (Ed.), Census Biharani, 1933, p. 23.  
Census of Bengal, 1901, Part I, Report, Appendix I, p. vi.

33 Census of Bengal, 1901, Part I, Report, p. 136.

34 Ibid, p. 82.

The reason for migration was, as has been pointed out, the search for cultivable land. According to the Sylhet District Gazetteer of 1905, "There is plenty of waste land still available" in Tripura. The Tripura Administration was willing to lease it out on easy terms and so the people of the densely populated sub-divisions of Sylhet were attracted to go there.<sup>35</sup> Similar was the case with others, e.g., the Noakhali people, who would go to Tripura "where land can be had cheap".<sup>36</sup>

The immediate impact of this heavy migration was the increase in the land revenue earnings of the State. From an absolute figure of 38,650 rupees in 1873-74, the land revenue income of Tripura State rose to 2,32,000 rupees in 1903-04. In another 30 years, the figure stood at 4,50,707 rupees in 1933-34.<sup>37</sup> The Administration of Tripura was presumably happy at this development. An example of how the non-tribal people were invited and being received by the Administration of Tripura during the early part of this century is to be found in the following advertisement which appeared in the Tripura State Gazette in 1916-17.<sup>38</sup>

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35 Assam District Gazetteers, District Sylhet, B.C. Allen, Calcutta, 1905, p. 69.

36 J.E. Webster, Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers, District Noakhali, Allahabad, 1911, p. 33.

37 Hunter, op.cit., pp. 512-13. Administration Report of Tripura State for the year 1904-05 and 1933-34.

38 Tripura State Gazette, 30th Agrahayana, 1326 T.E.

Notice

All are hereby informed that, recently, in a place, named Kalyanpur, within the jurisdiction of the Independent State of Tripura, a new Sub-division has been started by the Government. For the development of this Sub-division, it is essential that people of various castes like washermen (Dhopa), barber (Napit), blacksmith (Kamar), potter (Kumbhakar) etc. should settle there. If any person, belonging to any of these professions, intends to go and settle there permanently along with his family, he will be given land with a minimum of premium and also with appropriate rent-remission. Further, all other amenities necessary for his settling there may also be provided. The local market at Kalyanpur offers good business opportunities. As the various Government Offices and Judicial Courts will be there, none need fear of being harassed. A charitable dispensary has also been opened for the benefit of all concerned. No businessmen should miss this opportunity.

To sum up, we can discern three stages of non-tribal migration into Tripura. First is the period before C.1830. During that period, Hindus were asked by the Ruler of Tripura to settle there, the Muslims entered as invaders, while the Manipuris were seeking political asylum. Between 1830 and

1947, the non-tribals arrived in Tripura to find cultivable land and colonize the same. Most of the migration during this period was that of the Bengalee Muslims. Finally, in the post-1947 period, Bengalee Hindus have penetrated into Tripura in large numbers as refugees from East Pakistan. How the non-tribals have outnumbered the tribal population can be observed from the Table 2.7.

Table 2.7 : Tribal and Non-tribal Population of Tripura in Selected Years

Category	1874-75	1901	1931	1961
Tribal	42,345	91,544	190,032	360,070
Non-tribal	31,897	81,781	192,418	781,935
Total Population	74,242	173,325	382,450	1,142,005

Note :- The tribal population of 1874-75 was possibly under-estimated; that of 1901 we obtained by adding Chakma, Kuki, Halam, Mag and Tripura; similarly, tribal population of 1931 is obtained by adding together the Tripura, Jamatia, Rieng, Noatia, Halam, Kuki, Mag, Chakma, Garoo, Munda, Oraon and Santal population of that year.

Sources : Figures for 1874-75 are taken from W. W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. VI, London, 1876; figures for 1901 and 1931 are obtained from Thakur Somendrachandra Debbarma (Ed.), Census Biharani, Agartala, 1933; and that of 1961 from Census of India, 1961, Vol. XXVI, Tripura, Part V-A.



It can be seen from above that due to the systematic migration of colonizers, which started at the beginning of the 19th century, the tribals lost their majority in Tripura in less than a hundred years. They must have been outnumbered before 1931.<sup>39</sup> But, the presence of a majority of non-tribals did not create any serious problem in the beginning, because while the non-tribals were interested in bringing more of plain land under cultivation, the tribals remained concentrated in the hills. Also, in the absence of a comprehensive tribal rehabilitation scheme, there was little chance of a clash between the two groups. The tribals continued to occupy the hills for the purposes of jhuming while the non-tribals settled in the plains for doing plough cultivation. But once the scheme of jhumia settlement was taken up by the Administration, the problem has been to settle both the tribals and non-tribals on plain land.

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39 The Techno-Economic Survey of Tripura conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research wrongly asserts that tribals of Tripura were in a majority upto 1941. See, Techno-Economic Survey of Tripura, NCAER, New Delhi, 1961, p. 3.

## CHAPTER III

### TRIBAL ADMINISTRATION

#### 3.1 Origin of the Tripura Royal Family

Tripura Buranji gives us the following account of the origin of the royal house of Tripura. According to it, before the advent of Ratnamanikya I, "These people did not assume the designation of a king".<sup>1</sup> Like the khunbao of Naga tribals, there was chieftainship among the Tripura tribe. Such chiefs had names ending with the suffix pha, which literally means father. The transition from Khunbaoship to kingship occurred in the hands of Ratnamanikya I. Tripura Buranji writers take special care to mention that Ratnamanikya I belonged to the 'Tripura' tribe. This is done to ensure that he is not confused with Kukis, who are also residents of Tripura. "In his youth, Ratnamanikya became very powerful and formidable. Consequently, the authority of Tripura tribe was established."

Two things will be noticed from the above account. First, there was a distinct tribe known by the name 'Tripura', before Ratnamanikya became the king of the country. Whereupon the name Tripura is taken is not known. According to

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1 Tripura Buranji, op.cit., pp. 34-35.

Kailashchandra Singha, the word Tripura has come from 'Tuipra'. 'Tui' in the local language means water while 'pra' means bank. Hence, 'Tuipra' probably meant a country by the bank of water or the people living therein.<sup>2</sup> But it is also possible that the name Tripura, as it applies for a tribe, has come from a word like 'Tuipruha'. Tuipruha could be the name of a chief. Individual names, such as, Tuikuha, Tuibruha, Oaiaha, Kaiblaha, etc. are not uncommon among those of Tripura tribals who have not as yet adopted Sanskritized names. This seems plausible in the light of the account given in Rajamala. According to Rajamala, in the lunar line, there was a king, named 'Tripura', after whom the whole country was known as 'Tripura'; his descendants also were called 'Tripura'. Now, in the background in which Rajamala was written, the tribal tradition of having a powerful man 'Tuipruha' as the ancestor of the people was possibly rationalized and Sanskritized by the Brahmins. The Brahmin composers of Rajamala equated, it seems, Tuipruha with the king Tripura of Puranic and legendary fame. Here it may be pointed out that the names of many tribes of Tripura are derived very much in accordance with the above pattern. For instance, among the tribals, commonly known as Halam, there are different groups such as Kalai, Karbong, Rupini, Thangchep etc. About these names,

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2 Kailash Singha, op.cit., p. 2.

Kaliprasanna Sen, who was the editor of Rajamala, remarked, "All these names are meaningful. Generally a tribe has been so named because of its profession; else they indicate the place of their residence, or the chief ancestor of the group."<sup>3</sup> Among Riangs also, the custom is similar. One of the sub-tribe of Riang is called 'Tuimui'. This means tortoise. There is another known as 'Masa', which means tiger. There are stories prevalent among them to show how their respective ancestors had been a tortoise or a tiger. 'Sagaray' is another sub-tribe of Riang, which includes those persons who trace their origin from an individual bearing that name. Then there is the name 'Roy Kachak'; this holds for those who regard themselves to be descendants of one Roy Kachak.

The next point of interest may now be looked into. Tripura Buranji narrates that before the making of a king from among the Tripura tribe, there were Khunbaos. Khunbao means a chief or the principal man of a tribe. So, it follows that when the Khunbao of Tripura tribe assumed overlordship over Kukis (i.e. all other tribes), and also established his supremacy over the whole region, he came to be regarded as the king. This happened in the mid-14th century when an ambitious young man of the Tripura tribe

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3 Census Bibarani, op.cit., p. 82.

sought military help from the King of Gaur (Bengal), and thus fought out successfully his rivals. Both Rajamala and Tripura Buranji narrate that the king of Gaur assisted Ratnamanikya with the Bengalee army. Both of them tell us that the title of Manikya, which all successive rulers of Tripura had been using, was originally conferred upon Ratnamanikya I by the King of Gaur. The difficulty with Rajamala is that it furnishes a long list of kings even before Ratnamanikya. Tripura Buranji cuts the story short by proclaiming that those were mere Khunbaos. The composers of Rajamala were courtiers of the Tripura king; at the same time they were Brahmins. So, it is understandable why they linked up the kings of Tripura with the Lunar dynasty. A noble Kshatriya status for the Tripura king was not essential because he was merely a ruler of tribal subjects. The tribals, not being sufficiently Hinduized, would not agitate against their king for his being a non-Kshatriya. But the Brahmins had to confer Kshatriya status upon their patron, as otherwise they would be held in low esteem in their own society. So, in the process of linking up the Royal family with the venerable Lunar dynasty, a long geneology had to be constructed.

Rajamala narrates the story of many kings, who had ruled over Tripura before the time of Ratnamanikya I, and also how they had tried to extend their supremacy over other

tribes, viz., Kaipeng, Chakma, Langai, Rieng, Kuki etc. In all probability, these stories refer to the tradition of inter-tribal warfare of the past. There are indications that the tribal subjects of the Tripura royal family secured comparative independence from time to time. Hence in Rajamala, places once conquered appear to have been reconquered in later period, and tribes once defeated appear to be defeated over and over again. According to Rajamala, Udaipur was captured from the Lika tribals first by Trilochan and then after many centuries by king Jujharpha. Dhanyamanikya, the king of Tripura around 1500 A.D. defeated and subjugated the same tribes whom his remote ancestor Trilochan had fought against during Yudhisthira's time.

Out of the primitive warfare of the obscure past, Tripura does not seem to have emerged as a separate kingdom until the 14th century. There is no evidence to contradict this conclusion. The outposts of Aryan India lay at the fringes of Tripura until that period. In the neighbourhood of hill Tripura were the kingdoms about which there are literary and epigraphic evidence. Hwen Thsang, the Chinese traveller of the 7th century A.D. mentions of Shi-li-cha-ta-lo and Kia-mo-lang-kia, which have been identified respectively with Sylhet and Comillah (now in East Pakistan). Beyond these two countries, were the kingdoms of Pegu, Laos, Cochin-China and Java.<sup>4</sup> Had Tripura been a country as strong as it

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander Cunningham, The Ancient Geography of India, Reprint, Varanasi, 1963, pp. 424-25.

is supposed by Rajamala, it should not have escaped the attention of the Chinese traveller. From various other sources, the name of nearby kingdoms such as Harikela and Pattikera, or the name of capitals like Gour and Devaparvata is heard. But none of these was located in Hill Tripura, although it is possible that very often the kings of Sylhet and Comillah region held their sway over the bordering areas of the present Tripura State.<sup>5</sup>

The court-pundits of Tripura State had tried to prove the antiquity of the royal family by referring to the name Tripura as it occurs in the Epics and the Puranas. But Dr. D. C. Sircar says that "the attempt to prove the antiquity of the Tripura State from epic and Puranic reference to a locality called Tripura or Tripuri is absolutely unwarranted. This ancient Tripuri is the modern Tewar near Jubbulpur in the Madhya Pradesh."<sup>6</sup> The other Sanskrit works which are adduced as proofs for the same purpose are not themselves old enough to justify the conclusion. For instance, the Yogini Tantra, to which Kaliprasanna Sen, the editor of Rajamala referred, is itself a post-16th century creation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Copper-plates of Sylhet, (ed.) Kamalakanta Gupta, Sylhet, 1967, p. 80.

<sup>6</sup> D. C. Sircar, op.cit., pp. 80-81.

<sup>7</sup> S. K. Chatterji, Kirata-Jana-Krti, Calcutta, 1951, p. 22.

It is possible, nonetheless, that the early settlers of Sylhet-Comillah region came into contact with Tripura tribes, who are a section of the Mongoloid Bodos. In a map, showing the Bodo tract a thousand years ago, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji conjectures that the Sylhet-Comillah-Noakhali areas were predominantly Bodo-inhabited till that time. If that is so, the hill tribes of Tripura must have been familiar with Bengalee plainsmen since a period when the former were still under the rule of their Khunbaos.

From not later than the 5th century A.D., lands were being freely granted to the Brahmins by the kings of neighbouring plain areas of the present Tripura State. Samanta Lokanatha (c. 650 A.D.) gifted land in the forest region (Atavibhukhande) to more than one hundred Brahmins.<sup>8</sup> The boundaries of the land so granted were not defined, apparently because they had not been settled. The forest area containing the endowed land is described as "having no distinction of natural and artificial, having a thick network of bush and creepers, where deer, buffaloes, bears, tigers, serpents, etc., enjoy, according to their will, all pleasures of home-life."<sup>9</sup> Dr. R. S. Sharma thinks that the jhum type of cultivation prevailed "in the forest region of Tippera, a part

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. R. G. Basak, "Tippera Copper-Plate of Lokanatha", Epigraphia India, Vol. XV, No. 19, pp. 301-15.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, pp. 310-12.



of which was settled with more than one hundred Brahmanas. The settlers must have introduced there the new mode of cultivation superseding the one followed by the primitive peoples."<sup>10</sup> The area where these brahmins were settled was, as has been pointed out, originally inhabited by Tripura Bodos. So, it is most likely that the tribals of Tripura came to know the plainsmen from an early date. "It appears that as early as the 7th or the 9th century A.D., the Brahmins played the role of pioneers in establishing an outpost of Brahmanic culture in a remote and inaccessible part of Bengal which was covered with dense forests."<sup>11</sup>

Due to this contact trade must have developed between the hills and the plains. The rivers which rise in the Tripura hills flow through the neighbouring plains of Bengal before they merge into the Brahmaputra or directly flow into the Bay of Bengal. There is definite epigraphic evidence that the early settlers of the region were aware of the existence of Tripura rivers. In the Paschimbhag copper-plate inscription of Maharaja Srichandra (10th century A.D.),<sup>12</sup> the river Manu had been mentioned as the southern boundary

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10 Dr. Ram Sharan Sharma, Indian Feudalism: C. 300-1200, Calcutta, 1965, p. 42.

11 Dr. Puspa Niyogi, Brahmanic Settlements in Different Subdivisions of Ancient Bengal. Calcutta, 1967, p. 41.

12 Kamalakanta Gupta, op.cit., pp. 136-37.

of Chandrapura Visaya which lay in the Srihatta-mandala of Pundravardhana bhukti. The river Manu rises in the hills of Tripura. In the same land grant, western boundary of the said Visaya was named as Kastha-panya-Khataka. Kastha-panya-Khataka means a canal or a stream (Khataka) which carries merchandise of timber (Kastha-Panya). It is most likely that it was one of those innumerable hill-streams through which timber was carried down from the hills of Tripura. It may also be pointed out that even today, many of the hill streams serve this purpose.

"In Sylhet, there are a number of place-names ending in the element canga or cam (can, pronounced tsong or song); this seems to be the Bodo word for country, found in Garo as sang."<sup>13</sup> In the Chittagong Copper-plate of king Damodaradeva (A.D. 1243),<sup>14</sup> one of the boundaries of the gift-land, donated to the Brahmin Prithvidhara-Sarman, is given as Mritachhada. Mritachhada literally means a dry (Mrita) streamlet (chada). Now Chada in the sense of a streamlet is used by the tribes of Tripura. The word Chada which never occurs in Sanskrit or even in Bengali occurs in the land grant obviously because the original Bodo inhabitants of the place knew it by that name.

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13 Dr. S. K. Chatterji, op.cit., p. 69.

14 N. G. Mazumdar. Inscriptions of Bengal, Vol. III, Rajshahi, 1929, pp. 158-63.

The Bengalees of neighbouring Sylhet region developed peculiar customs which cannot be explained if early contact between the hill and plain is not assumed. For instance, in the Savitri Vrata performed by the wives for the welfare of their husbands, paddy produced by ploughing cannot be used; instead, the jhum paddy is procured. During the Uttarayana Samkranti festival, the plainsmen enjoy rice specially cooked in bamboo hollows. For many tribals of Tripura, bamboo serves even today not only as the firewood but also as cooking utensil. It is possible that before the introduction of earthenware or metal products, cooking was done in bamboo alone. It could not have been a one-way traffic between the hills and plains. Through the mutual contact, the tribals as also the non-tribals learnt to appreciate each other's way of life.

The above-written long digression was necessary to bring home the point that the association of tribals of Tripura with the non-tribals of Sylhet-Comillah-Noakhali-Chittagong region is very old, even though (as has been pointed out in Chapter II) the Bengalees moved physically to the present Tripura State only in the time of King Ratnamanikya I. (14th century A.D.). If it is so, it is all the more reasonable to believe that Tripura did not emerge as a separate kingdom prior to the 14th century. Had it been otherwise, the absence of mention of Tripura in any of the historical

documents is surprising. It is surprising because this had happened when there was so close a connection between the hill areas and the plains. The inscription of Lokanatha "itself tells us that the gift land was situated in the easternmost region",<sup>15</sup> which implies that there were no kingdom beyond that.

But even though Tripura did not make a kingdom before Ratnamanikya I was installed as king, the association with the Hindus of the plains, from long back, had its civilizing influence upon the Tripura tribes. There are different tribes in Tripura. So, the particular tribe or tribes which established that contact first, benefited the most. In the last chapter, it was shown that people belonging to the Tripura tribe live mostly in the western part of the State. Now the western part of the Tripura State is contiguous with the plains of Sylhet-Comillah region. So, in the march for Hinduisation, the Tripura tribe had an advantage over others. Looked at from this angle, the emergence of a royal family from among the Tripura tribe was possibly a historical necessity.

The factors which helped the Tripura tribe to win the struggle for power must have been many, but two of them appear to be the following.

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15 Dr. Puspa Niyogi, op.cit., p. 41.

The Tripuras came in contact with the neighbouring Bengalee people first among all the tribes. This contact had two effects. First, the rulers of the plains became interested in extending their control over the hill territory which was very rich in elephants. Instead of keeping it under direct subjugation, they found it suitable to set up feudatory kings for Tripura. The very first king of Tripura, Ratnamanikya I, is said to have presented elephants and jewels to the ruler of Gour to get recognition from him.<sup>16</sup> In later periods, the Mughals and other Muslim rulers of Bengal had shown interest in the affairs of Tripura presumably because the country was rich in elephants; and elephants were indispensable in medieval warfare.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes the rebellious members of the Tripura royal family approached the Muslims for assistance and in return promised elephants as tribute.<sup>18</sup>

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16 According to Rajamala, elephants were presented to the king of Gour, but according to Tripura Buranji, it was toad-jewel. See Rajamala, op.cit., p. 67 and Tripura Buranji, op.cit., p. 35.

17 In the Ain-i-Akbari of Abul Fazl, the numerous elephants of Tripura are specially mentioned. The Baharistan-i-Ghaybi which narrates the war between the armies of Jehangir and Tripura king Yashomanikya also notes the abundance of elephants there.

18 Tripura Buranji mentions of at least three such occasions, viz., that of Chatramanikya against Govindamanikya, Narendramanikya against Champakrai and Ghanashyam Barthakur against Ratnamanikya II.

The second impact of this contact with non-tribals was that the Hinduisation of the Tripura tribe started much earlier when compared to that of other tribes. The Sylhet Brahmins took the lead in Hinduising them and conferred on their rulers the status of Kshatriyas of the mythical Lunar dynasty.<sup>19</sup> The court-poets of Tripura king - Shukresvar and Vanesvar Chakraborty - who were responsible for the composition of the first part of Rajamala, hailed from Dhakadakhin of Sylhet.<sup>20</sup> The connection between the Tripura kings and the Sylhet Brahmins led to the growth of a distinct Brahmin community in Sylhet, who called themselves to be Vaidics or, Sampradayiks. They claimed to be superior to everybody on the supposed ground that their ancestors were invited to come here from Mithila by the then king of Tripura, for whose welfare they performed a sacrifice.<sup>21</sup> The Sampradayik Brahmin of Sylhet had always been the favourite of Tripura kings, as a result of which the Brahmins of other areas, notably of Nurnagar, Kotalipara and Bikrampur, were often jealous of the former.<sup>22</sup> The Brahmins acted as court poets,

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19 It may be noted that the Sylhet Brahmins were responsible for Hinduising many Mongoloids. They Vaishnavised the Manipuris (see, Jyotirmoy Roy, The History of Manipur, Calcutta, 1958, pp.57-58) and converted the Cacharis (see E.A. Gait, The History of Assam, Calcutta, 1926, p.257) and also the Tripuras to Hinduism.

20 Rajamala, op.cit., pp. 79-81.

21 Achyut Charan Choudhury Tattvanidhi, Srihatter Itivritta, 1904, Part II, Section I, pp. 51-73.

22 Mahendra Chandra Bhattacharjee, Srihatter Vaidic Samasya, Silchar, 1907, pp. 36-37.

priests and ministers (Sabhapundit, Purohit and Dewan) to the king. With their shrewd and wise counsel, the king of Tripura tribe was able to consolidate his authority over other tribes.<sup>23</sup> The Hinduisation of the royal family and the progressive association of Brahmins with the same helped to make kingship the privilege of one tribe only, namely Tripura.

Another contributory factor was the following: The numerical superiority of the Tripura tribe must have given them an edge over their rivals. What Rev. M. Barbe, writing about the Chittagong Hill tribes noted in 1845, possibly holds good for Tripura also. Rev. Barbe wrote, "The chain of hills which separates Chittagong and the Tripura district from the Burman empire is inhabited by a number of tribes differing little in appearance, but partly in habits and language; ... the Kookies appear to be the most numerous of

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23 During the reign of Vijayamanikya (first part of the 16th century) a possible Halam revolt was averted with the advice of Brahmins. The king presented the Halam chief a metal plate, in which was inscribed the following verse in Sanskrit.

Purvapaurya Kramadbhavanta Atmiya  
Idaning Yadi Vaiparityamacharanti  
Tadoparidharmah Sasyanasho Bhavi-  
Shyanti Paschadgaja Shardulau.

(You have turned gradually to be our friends. Now if you go against us, it will be an act of injustice; and as a result of which your crops will be destroyed; also, elephants and tigers will chase you.)

See Census Bibarani, op.cit., pp. 84-85.

all tribes; to the N.E. of Chittagong, not far from the Casalon which is a branch of the Chittagong river, is one of their kings, who rules over six or seven thousand houses. ... How far he takes advantage of his authority, I have not been able to ascertain. The Bunzoo tribe is chiefly centered towards the S.E.; having no annals of their own, it is impossible to trace their origin, and to warrant an opinion on the subject, requires more information than I could get. According to them, formerly they were more powerful and numerous than they are now. The Kookies taking advantage of their number, subjected them to their yoke."<sup>24</sup> What the Kookies did for Bunzooes in the outskirts of Tripura State was repeated by the Tripura tribe against the Kookies themselves within Tripura. There is a tradition in Tripura that before the Tripura tribe established its supremacy, the Halam tribe had ruled the country.<sup>25</sup> Riangs also claim that they had been the rulers before they were subjugated by the Tripuras.<sup>26</sup> It seems possible therefore that while all the tribes had their own self-governing institutions and were governed by their respective Khunbaos, each fought against and tried to subjugate the other.

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<sup>24</sup> Rev. M. Barbe, "Some Account of the Hill Tribes in the Interior of the District of Chittagong", Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. XIV, Part I, 1845, p. 385.

<sup>25</sup> Census Biharani, op.cit., pp. 61 and 86-87.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Shri Rajprasad Choudhury, an erstwhile chief of the Riang tribe and now the Minister for Tribal Welfare, Tripura Government.



But through the continuous confrontation, the Tripura tribe emerged victorious because of the above-mentioned advantages. Had the histories of other tribes been written, it would have come to light how they resisted the encroachment upon their independence. The other tribes, e.g., the Kukis, who were highly warlike in nature could not succeed because of the absence of the above factors. Numerically, they were a minority in Tripura. Again, they did not have any patron either among kings of the Bengal plains or among the Brahmins. Because they lived in the eastern part of the State, their physical distance acted as an impediment towards their gradual absorption in Hindu society. Writing about the Kookies, Rev. James Long observed, "The Kookies have long been noted for their fierce, barbarous manners; ... their history is almost a repetition of that of the North American Indians, - The quarrels of rival clans and occasional forays on the more civilised inhabitants of the plains. They were the Mahrattas of the Eastern districts of Bengal, but had not the energy of perseverance of the Bargi Lok."<sup>27</sup>

### 3.2 Relation of the Tripura Maharajas with Their Tribal Subjects

Ratnamanikya I became the king of Tripura sometime during the first half of the 14th century. The old Khunbao-based civic organization yielded to a more sophisticated

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27 Rev. James Long, op.cit., p.

monarchy. But the consolidation of the authority of Tripura tribe over other tribes was in no way complete in the 14th century. The subsequent historical facts point out that even in this century the process was on. From the account given in the different parts of Rajamala, it is learnt that tribal rebellion took place during the reign of Dhanyamanikya (1490-1514 A.D.), Vijayamanikya (1529-1560 A.D.), Kalyanmanikya (1625-1659 A.D.), Govindamanikya (1659-1660 A.D.), Krishnamanikya (c. 1750 A.D.) and Ramganga Manikya (c.1812-1826 A.D.). In February 1868, a party of armed men, passing through the Sylhet guard-posts of the British India, were stopped and questioned. "They turned out to be the Raja's sepoys going to reinforce one of his guard-posts in Koilashar which had been attacked by the Kookies. At the same time, a number of Tipperah cultivators came pouring from the hills in panic, having deserted their jooms, 'as the Kookies were out and raiding in the hills'."<sup>28</sup> "It is very clear", wrote Mackenzie in 1884, "that the authority exercised over the Kookies was more nominal than real, for in every case we find the roads from post to post take long detours so as to pass through the plains, and not across the hills, the reason given being always 'for fear of the Kookies'."<sup>29</sup> According to Mackenzie, the power or influence of the chiefs of different

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28 Mackenzie, op.cit., p. 65.

29 Ibid, p. 277.

tribes over the vassals within their respective jurisdiction was of the strongest kind. "A person who has influence to bring over all these Sirdars to his party has actual possession of the country."<sup>30</sup> It is therefore important to examine the nature of relationship of the Tripura kings with their tribal subjects.

Each tribe in Tripura continued to have its own elaborate self-governing institution by which it was administered. The only departure was that now they recognized the overlordship of the Tripura king, as a mark of which they paid him regularly the tributes and taxes. The writers of Tripura Buranji described<sup>31</sup> the pattern of tribal administration thus:

In the Kuki village of Rangrung, which was inhabited by about 300 people, stayed a representative of the Maharaja, known as Halamcha. The post of Halamcha had been compared with the post of a Khunbao, meaning thereby that Halamcha was the chief person of the village. Under him, there was one Galim, one Gabor, one Chapia and one Doloi. They were presumably the representatives of Rangrung villagers. Thus while the Galim, Gabor, Chapia and Doloi stood for the self-governing institution of the tribals, the Halamcha signified the overlordship of the Tripura king. There was a Lashkar

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30 Ibid, p. 275.

31 Tripura Buranji, op.cit., pp. 21-22.

(Police) also in that village. He was sent from Udaipur (capital) and his post was transferable. The Halamcha collected the taxes from the village, and sent the same to the king.

In 1808, the administration of the country was described in the following terms: "The chief men among the Kookies are called Roys, Ghalims, Chuppiahs and Gaboors. ... The persons holding the rank now mentioned are called Sirdars or petty chiefs and they, in all classes, are the intermediate authority and sole connection between the Government and the inferior vassals."<sup>32</sup>

In 1917, while giving a reply to the British allegation of loose administration in certain parts of Tripura, Dewan Bejoy Kumar Sen, the Chief Secretary of Tipperah State said, "It is an extensive and wild territory, full of deep forests, intersected with lofty ranges of hills, and interspersed with vast swamps. Necessarily its administration presented difficulties, and had to be carried on mainly through the agency of clan chiefs, but it is hardly correct to say that the Durbar exercised no authority over it."<sup>33</sup>

At a later period, in 1930, some details of tribal administration are available in a book by Babu Brajendra Datta,

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32 Mackenzie, op.cit., p. 275.

33 Dewan Bejoy Kumar Sen, op.cit., p. 14.

who had a long experience of 29 years in the services of the Tripura Government. This, added to the information given in the Census Biharani, makes the following account.

Every tribal village in Tripura has its own Sardar (chief). The Sardar of a Halam village is known as Galim, that of a Riang village as Choudhury, that of a Noatia as Roaja, that of the Chakmas as Dewan or Karbari. The villages are generally inhabited by members of a single tribe.

Over and above the sardars of each village, there is the chief person for the whole tribe, who in turn owes allegiance to the Maharaja of Tripura. For instance, the Jamatias, as a tribe, had two Sardars at the top, who were known as 'Mulker Sardar' i.e., Sardar of the whole territory. The Mursums similarly had their own officials, who were ranked in the following order: (1) Roy, (2) Galim, (3) Gabur, (4) Bara Chapia, (5) Chota Chapia, (6) Doloi, (7) Kanchan, (8) Yakchung, (9) Khakchung, (10) Hazra, (11) Karma, (12) Dasa, (13) Sengkanga, and (14) Joan Sardar. Various duties attached to these officials.

Similar is the case for Riangs, about whom further information is available. There were first of all 14 dafas or sections among the Riang tribe. Each dafa had its own administrative head. These heads were also the ex-officio members of the Government for the whole tribe. The following list gives the designation of the heads of different dafas.

Sr. No.	Dafa or section of Riangan tribe	Designation of the heads of the Dafa
1.	Tuimui	Roy and Karma
2.	Mursui	Chapia Khan and Yakchung
3.	Mechka	Chapia and Yakchung
4.	Apet	Kachkau and Darkalim
5.	Charki	Kachkau and Daiya-Hajra
6.	Masa	Hajra and Kanda
7.	Rai Kachak	Doloi and Khaskalim
8.	Taqma Yakcha	Muria and Khaskalim
9.	Oaring	Daoa and Kangreng
10.	Nak-qam	Karma and Dukaria
11.	Chameprong	Sengakrak and Khandal
12.	Sagaray	Bhandari and Hajra
13.	Riang	Kachkau
14.	Darbang	Karma and Kangreng

In all there were 27 administrative heads for the 14 dafas; they had 19 different designations. These heads together formed the central administrative machinery for the Riangs. The Roy was the king for the whole tribe, while the Kachkau acted as the minister to him. The Roy and the Kachkau had separate groups of people to serve under their direct supervision, the details of which are given below:

The Office of Roy

- |          |                            |                                    |
|----------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1.       | Roy                        | The king of Riangs                 |
| 2.       | Chapia Khan                | Prince; acts as Roy in his absence |
| 3.       | Chapia                     | The would-be Chapia Khan           |
| 4.       | Darkalim                   | Priest                             |
| 5.       | Doloi                      | Prosecutor                         |
| 6.       | Bhandari                   | Storekeeper                        |
| 7.       | Kanda                      | Attendant of Roy                   |
| 8 &<br>9 | Daiya Hajra<br>and Dukaria | Drummer                            |
| 10.      | Muria                      | Shehnai-player                     |
| 11.      | Daao                       | Assistant to Darkalim              |
| 12.      | Sengakrak                  | Royal umbrella-bearer              |

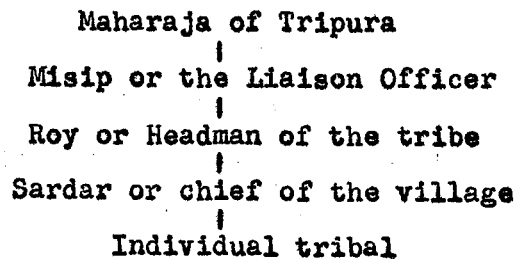
The Office of Kachkau

- |    |            |                              |
|----|------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | Kachkau    | Minister                     |
| 2. | Yakchung   | Treasurer                    |
| 3. | Hajra      | Attendant of Kachkau         |
| 4. | Kangreng   | Umbrella-bearer for Kachkau  |
| 5. | Karma      | Attendant of Yakchung        |
| 6. | Khas Kalim | Umbrella-bearer for Yakchung |
| 7. | Khandal    | In-charge of food supply     |

The above description, although incomplete in certain respects, will give an idea as to how elaborate the self-governing institution of a tribe could be. Other tribes also had similar organizations.

"All tribes had been living their community lives in their respective territories under the overall control of the Tripura king," this was what Datta observed in 1930. Datta was an employee of the Tripura Government from 1897 to 1926; as such he was the witness of the non-tribal colonization of Tripura which had been described in the previous chapter. According to Datta, "it was easier to govern the tribes than the new-comer Bengalees—particularly the Muslims—because the tribals followed their customary laws and were loyal to their own tribal chiefs; as a result, the Tripura Government had little to bother about them."<sup>34</sup>

In later years,<sup>35</sup> the post of Misip was created. A Misip acted as a liaison officer between the Maharaja and the headmen of a tribe. He was generally a trusted man of the Maharaja and was one of his kith and kin. In the following diagram is shown the structure of tribal administration in the pre-integration period.




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34 Brajendra Datta, Udaypur Bibaran, Udaypur, 1930, pp.50-52.

35 The exact year could not be ascertained.



The individual tribal was the subject of the Maharaja of Tripura and not of the Sardar or Roy of his tribe; but the tribe as a whole enjoyed much of freedom. This was so because the Roy or Headman of a tribe was treated as a subordinate king (Samanta Raja) by the Maharaja.

The position of the Maharaja of Tripura vis-a-vis the Government of British India may be compared with the relation between him and his tribal chiefs. Tripura was regarded as an Independent State by the British Government.<sup>36</sup> There was no treaty between the Maharaja and the British Government and the former paid no regular tribute to the latter.

When the administration of Bengal passed into British hands, the East India Company contented itself with receiving tribute (nazarana) on the succession of every new prince, sending him a deed (sanad) of acknowledgement and a robe of honour (Khelat) in return. Titles like knighthood were also awarded to the new king. The Yubaraja Kasi Chandra Manikya, who was nominated by the British Government as the successor of Ramganga Manikya in 1826, was sent a Khelat of honour consisting of the following articles - a short sleeved jacket, a large dress, turban, a cloth band to encircle the head, gold band for the head etc.<sup>37</sup> Disputes to succession were

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<sup>36</sup> Report of the Butler Commission on Indian States, 1930,  
p. 557.

<sup>37</sup> Rev. James Long, op.cit., p. 557.

resolved by the British Government. The claims of Ramganga Manikya (c. 1812-1826) and also of Birchandra Manikya (1870-1896) to the throne of Tripura was decided in their favour by the British Government as against their rivals. Formerly, a nazarana of 125 gold-mohars was paid by the Maharaja to the Government of India at the ceremony of installation. But in 1870, the nazar was fixed at half a year's revenue of the State in the case of direct succession, and a whole year's revenue in the case of indirect succession.<sup>38</sup>

Similar to this procedure, the Roys or Rajas of various tribes of Tripura needed the investiture from the Maharaja of Tripura. In the event of any uncertainty regarding the election of a Roy, the Maharaja would intervene and appoint those who assuredly were loyal to him (see Appendix III-A). When in 1902-03, there were some troubles regarding the election of a new Roy for the Rieng tribe, Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya appointed one Pumpaicha as the Roy of the Riengs.<sup>39</sup> It was customary that every newly appointed Roy should present a nazarana of 100 rupees and 2 gold-mohars to the Maharaja, after which the Maharaja would offer him the Synod and Khelats consisting of dresses and ornaments.<sup>40</sup>

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38 Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1872-73, p. 176.

39 Brajendra Datta, op.cit., p. 46.

40 Ibid.

APPENDIX III-AORDER OF THE MAHARAJA APPOINTING CHIEFS FOR A SECTION  
OF THE LUSHAI TRIBE\*Order No. 310

Durbar Major His Highness Bishama-Samara-Bijayee  
Mahamahodaya Pancha-Sirjukta Maharaja Manikya Sir Bir  
Bikram Kishore Dev Varma Bahadur, K.C.S.I., Maharaja and  
Ruler of Tripura.

Dated Agartala, the 16th Jaistha, 1353 T.E.

WHEREAS it is my desire that no people of the Lushai  
clan inhabiting in the Dharmanagar and Kailashahar Divisions  
of the State should be allowed to live except under some  
chief and whereas it has come to my knowledge that the Lushai  
families living in the villages of Chhimluang Cherra,  
Khawdungsee, Damcherra and Bungalow Tilla have at present  
got no Chief.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the Lushai families of Chhim-  
luang Cherra, Khawdungsee and Damcherra are placed under  
Kumar K.T. Chawma Sailo, son of Raja Hrang Vunga as their Chief,

AND

THAT the Lushai families of Bungalow Tilla are placed

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\* Reproduced from the Tripura State Gazette (Special  
Number), 19th Jaistha, 1353 T.E. (1943-44 A.D.).

under Kumar L. Hupliana Sailo, son of late Raja Dokhuma Bahadur as their Chief;

PROVIDED THAT this Order will be in force so long as the above named chiefs, viz., Kumar K. T. Chawma and Kumar L. Hupliana remain loyal to me and the Throne of Tripura and respect and abide by the laws and customs of the State and behave properly with the people placed under their Chiefship and do in no manner whatsoever interfere with the affairs of the other clans and Tribes inhabiting the State.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED

THAT this Order does not in any way affect the status quo of the aforesaid Chiefs as also of Raja Hrang Vunga in respect of Lushai people who are already living under their control, acknowledging them as their respective Chiefs.

APPENDIX III-BORDER OF THE MAHARAJA CONFERRING TITLES ON THE NEWLY APPOINTED  
CHIEFS \*Order No. 311

Year 1353 T.E., 21st Jaistha

Kumar K. T. Chawma Saino, son of Raja Hrang Vunga is hereby conferred the Hony. Second Lieutenant Rank in the Tripur Rajya Rakshi Vahini.

Order No. 312

Kumar L. Hupliana Saino, son of Late Raja Dokhuma Bahadur is hereby conferred the Hony. Second Lieutenant Rank in the Tripur Rajya Rakshi Vahini.

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\* Reproduced from the Tripura State Gazette, 32nd Jaistha, 1353 T.E. (1943-44 A.D.).

APPENDIX III-CPROCLAMATION OF THE MAHARAJA DEFINING RULES OF PROCEDURE TO BE  
ADOPTED IN A MEETING BETWEEN THE HIGH OFFICIALS OF THE STATE  
AND THE HILL CHIEFS \*

ROBAKAREE DURBAR SHRI SHRIJUT MAHARAJA BIRENDRA KISHORE  
MANIKYA BAHADUR, INDEPENDENT STATE OF TRIPURA, CAPITAL  
AGARTALA. Year 1329 T.E., Dated 3rd Chaitra.

WHEREAS there are no rules at present to specify the duties of the Samanta Rajas (subordinate kings) and the hill subjects of this State regarding what they should do when the Minister or the Chief Secretary of the State visits their places of residence or a place nearby, as the representative of This Side, and it is desired that such rules should be framed, so

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT

1. Henceforth it will be the duty of the Samanta Rajas and the hill people to show appropriate honour to the Chief Officers of the State when they visit the interior. Also, they should make necessary arrangements for their travel and stay there.
2. When the above mentioned officers visit the place

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\* Translation of the Proclamation (Robakaree) from Bengali, appearing in the Tripura State Gazette, 15th Chaitra, 1329 T.E. (1919-20 A.D.)

of residence of the Samanta Raja or arrives at a place nearby or in the Division within the jurisdiction of which they stay, the meeting between them and the minister and officers of the Samanta Raja will take place according to the following rules.

(sd) B. K. Manikya

3-12-29

The Rules of Procedure of a meeting between the minister or, the Chief Secretary of the Tripura State with the Samanta Rajas of the State -

(a) First Reception

1. When the chief officer of the State visits the village of the Samanta Raja, the Samanta Raja along with His people will receive them at the entrance of the village.

2. Not less than 20 hill people, in their national dress and arms, will give a guard of honour to the chief officer.

(b) Meeting

1. When the chief officer visits the village or a place nearby, the Samanta Raja will call on him at the residence of the former.

2. When the Chief Officer of the State visits the divisional headquarter of the Division in which the Samanta Raja resides, then the latter may meet him there, if He so desires.

3. The time and venue of the meeting will be decided by the Chief Officer of the State and the Samanta Raja will be intimated of the same.

4. The Samanta Raja, His subordinate officers and other attendants will come in befitting dress (dress and other insignias of honour given to them by the State). The number of attendants should not exceed 10 (ten). If they so desire, the attendants may come with their national arms and weapons.

5. When the Samanta Raja and His attendants arrive at the door of the house wherein the Chief Officer is residing, one or more of Government Officials will receive them.

6. A party consisting of a minimum of 4 sepoy or constables and 1 officer will give a guard-of-honour to the Samanta Raja.

7. The people in charge of the reception will take the Samanta Raja and His main attendants within the house.

8. When the Samanta Raja enters the room, everybody will stand up. The Samanta Raja will give the Nazar (tribute) to His Highness. The Chief Officer will then shake hands with Him and offer Him a seat at his right side. The other attendants will also take their respective seats.

9. The Officers of the State will take their respective seats in the left side of the meeting hall.

10. After the Chief Officer of the State has talked with the Samanta Raja for a while, the Divisional Officer will introduce the attendants of the Samanta Raja to him.



11. At the end of the meeting, the Chief Officer will give perfumed essence (Attar) and betel leaves (Pan) to the Samanta Raja. Some other Government Official will do the same for the attendants of the Samanta Raja.

12. The Royal Reception party will give a guard of honour and see off the Samanta Raja when He leaves the place.

(c) Return Visit

If the following Samanta Rajas come to the Chief Officer of the State, the Chief Officer in his turn will pay a return visit to Them. They are:

(1) Srijukta Raja Lalchuk Khama Bahadur

(ii) Srijukta Raja Dokhuma

During the return visit, the following procedure will be observed,

1. Before half an hour of the scheduled meeting time, any high official of the Samanta Raja, accompanied by his attendants will come to the residence of the Chief Officer to escort him to the meeting place.

2. As per the direction of the Chief Officer of the State, the Government officials, Sepoys and Constables, in their appropriate dresses and weapons, will follow him.

3. When the party reaches the entrance gate of the village, the relatives and officers of the Samanta Raja will receive them. At least 10 people of the Samanta Raja will give guard of honour to the Chief Officer in their national dress and weapon.

4. When the party reaches the door of the Samanta Raja's house, the Samanta Raja himself will come out to receive the Chief Officer of the State and escort him inside the house. The other Government officials will follow them.

5. There will be two seats in the middle of the room. The Chief Officer and the Samanta Raja will sit at the right and left of each other.

6. The attendants of the Chief Officer will sit at the right side in their respective seats and that of the Samanta Raja at the left.

7. After they have talked for a while, the minister (Ujir) of the Samanta Raja will introduce the Government party to Him.

8. After this, the Samanta Raja will offer essence and betel leaves to the Chief Officer. The minister of the Samanta Raja will give the same to the other Government officials.

9. The rules of procedure during see-off will be the same as given for that during Reception.

## 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 heirarchy.<sup>1</sup> 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) Koatia, (3) Daitya Sing, (4) Bachal, (5) Huzuria, (6) Silatia, (7) Apaiya, (8) Chhatra Tuiya, (9) Deorai or Ghalim, (10) Sube Naran,

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1 Census Bibarani, op.cit., p. 60.

(11) Sena and (12) Julai. 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 Koa 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 Binindia or Police also.
4. Bachal Originally, they assisted in the elephant trapping operations (Kheda). Later on, they were entrusted with many minor duties in the palace.
- 5 & 6. Huzuria and Silatia They were attendants of the king and served at his errands.
7. Apaiya First, they were entrusted to procure fish for the Royal kitchen; later, they gathered firewoods also.

8. Chhatra Tuiya The people belonging to this Hada were bearers of Royal umbrella, and also other insignias of the king.
9. Deorai Deorai or Ghalims, 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

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.<sup>3</sup> By His Order No. 349 of 1356 T.E. (1946-47 A.D.), the Maharaja asked the Halams to use 'Singha' as their surname.<sup>4</sup> 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 tribals 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.<sup>5</sup>

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 Brahmins as priests for worshipping Durga.<sup>6</sup> 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.

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5 See Appendix III-C at the end of Chapter III.

6 Census Biharani, op.cit., pp. 69-70.

Riang 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 Jamatias are the warrior class; the Nawutteas and Reeangs have no speciality; when there is any business to be done in the hills, the Coolie work falls chiefly on them."<sup>7</sup> 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'.<sup>8</sup> 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<sup>9</sup> 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.

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7 Quoted in Census of Bengal, 1872, H. Beverley, p. 181.

8 Tripura State Gazette (Extraordinary), 20th Aswin 1356 T.E.

9 Tripur Kshatriya Samaj Samkranta Bibaran Samgraha, 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 tribals 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 tribals of Tripura were put to Hinduization. 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.<sup>10</sup> 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 plainsmen 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 sepoys were sent to collect the tax from the hill-men, if necessary, at the point of the bayonet.<sup>11</sup>

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, Riang as also the Jamatias revolted at the ruthless behaviour of the Raja's officers.<sup>12</sup> "We cannot," wrote Mackenzie, "longer allow the Tipperah Raja to remain uncontrolled. The absolute

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10 The Report of Political Agent quoted in Hunter, op.cit., p. 461.

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 Zemindar. He may hale the recusant Kookies from their village and hack them to pieces with daos, as the Tipperahs, truly or falsely say he does, but no one interferes."<sup>13</sup>

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.<sup>14</sup>

In the year 1873-74, the modern practice of legislation was introduced.<sup>15</sup> 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

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13 Ibid, p. 66.

14 Hunter, op.cit., p. 461.

15 Ibid, p. 462.

another instance of the extent to which the State is being influenced by the example of our Government."<sup>16</sup>

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.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup>

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. Birchandra Manikya, 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

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16 Ibid.

17 C. U. Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1892, pp. 107-10.

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 was 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.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4.3 Restrictions on Jhuming and the Jhumia Settlement Scheme

One of the early impact of this modernization of administration was the regularization 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,"<sup>20</sup> 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."<sup>21</sup> The State reserved for itself the right over forests in general.<sup>22</sup>

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19 Imperial Gazetteer of India, op.cit., p. 121.

20 See the Preamble to the Landlord and Tenant Act (Act 1 of 1296 T.E.), 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.<sup>23</sup>

"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 Falguna.

1. None can do jhum within an area of half drona (1 drone = 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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<sup>23</sup> 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 Jangalabadi Jotedari Bandobasta (Waste Land Settlement) were framed.<sup>24</sup> 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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<sup>24</sup> 1302 Tripurabder Memo Circularadi Samgraha (ed.) Thakur Hriday Ranjan Debbarma, Agartala, 1340 T.E., pp. 11-14.

requisitioned to carry on the work of propaganda among the tribals. 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 plainsmen from neighbouring Bengal districts must have utilized the opportunity; but it is doubtful how far the tribals availed of the same. For, the Imperial Gazetteer reported in 1908 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 ..."<sup>25</sup>

As years rolled on, many more limitations, either directly or indirectly, were put upon jhuming practices. By the Act II of 1297 T.E. (1887-88 A.D.), the Order of the Maharaja of 25th Shrawana, 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.

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<sup>25</sup> Imperial Gazetteer of India, op.cit., p. 120.

<sup>26</sup> See the Brikadi Kartan O Raptani Bishayak Niyamabali 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 1908, an area of 15 square miles of forest alone stood as reserved, in which teak, mahogany, sissu, rubber and mulberry were cultivated.<sup>27</sup> Until 1934-35, the figure increased at a snail's pace upto 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 upto 1939-40 was 530.05 square miles.<sup>28</sup> In the Consolidated Administration Report for 1943-46, it was reported that "the total area of Reserve Forests was 1160.05 square miles upto 1352 T.E."<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup>

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27 Imperial Gazetteer of India, op.cit., p. 121.

28 Consolidated Administration Report for 1347, 1348 and 1349 T.E. (1937-1940 A.D.), Tripura State, p. 41.

29 Ibid for 1353, 1354 and 1355 T.E. (1943-46 A.D.), Tripura State, p. 50.

30 Tripura State Gazette, 15th Kartik, 1353 T.E.

Table 4.1 : Name and Area of Reserve Forests Created Between 1935-36 and 1939-40

Year	Name of the Forest Reserve	Sub-division	Area in sq.miles
1935-36	1. Gulicherra and Teliamura	Khowai	2.71
	2. Muhuripur (1st)	Belonia	1.50
1936-37	1. Kulai Headwater	Kailashahar	26.25
	2. Garjicherra	Udaipur	39.66
1937-38	1. Muhuripur (2nd)	Belonia	11.00
	2. Betaga Ludhua	Sabroom	44.50
1938-39	1. South Sonamura	Sonamura	21.50
	2. Tulatalibari	Sonamura	21.50
	3. Karcha-Khola	Sonamura	29.00
	4. Pathalia	Sadar	18.00
1939-40	1. Kasari	Belonia	52.00
	2. Jagannath-dighi	Belonia	41.00
	3. Trishna Parbat	Belonia	25.00
	4. Radhakishorepur	Udaipur	20.00
	5. Kachigang	Udaipur	20.00
	6. Chandrapur	Udaipur	65.00
	7. Charilam	Sadar	11.00
	8. North Sonamura	Sonamura	42.00
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."<sup>31</sup>

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

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31 Seha No. 3567-B/3-88 dt. 3/8/52 T.E. of the Forest and Customs Department, Government of Tripura, see ibid, 15th Agraheyana, 1353 T.E.

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31 Seha No. 3567-B/3-88 dt. 3/8/52 T.E. of the Forest and Customs Department, Government of Tripura, see ibid, 15th Agrahayana, 1353 T.E.

Kailashahar 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.<sup>32</sup>

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,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid; also the Consolidated Administration Report for 1353, 1354 and 1355 T.E. (1943- 46 A.D.), Tripura State, p. 50.

which befalls upon these simple and improvident sons of the soil, might be considerably dispelled."<sup>33</sup>

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 popularize its cultivation, seeds were distributed to the jhumias.<sup>34</sup>

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 Banga Laksmi 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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33 Memorandum No. 2, dt. 29th Ashada 1323 T. E. of the Department of Agriculture. See Tripura State Gazette, 31st Bhadra, 1323 T.E. (1913-14 A.D.).

34 Administration Report of the Tripura State for the year 1328 T.E. (1918-19 A.D.), p. 14.

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.<sup>35</sup> 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 jhums and higher altitudes ranging from 15 to 600 feet. The State had at this time about 19,000 acres under cotton with the jhumias.<sup>36</sup>

In the following years, the Agriculture Department of the State undertook the following works among others.<sup>37</sup>

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;

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35 Ibid, 1333 T.E. (1923-24 A.D.), p. 17.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid, 1334 T.E. (1924-25 A.D.), p. 17; 1336 T.E. (1926-27 A.D.), pp. 18-19; 1338 T.E. (1928-29 A.D.), pp. 21-22.

6. Introduction of 'Tana' sugarcane and extension of sugarcane cultivation in the jhums; 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 realized 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 utilized. 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 1876, Hunter wrote: "The hill tribes



Table 4.2 : The Extent of the Practice of Shifting Cultivation among Various Tribes in 1931

Tribe	Main profession of the head of the household		
	Shifting cultivation	Settled cultivation	Other activities
Tripura	6,228	84	1,312
Jamatia	410	1,892	121
Noatia	2,207	1,227	626
Riang	4,758	302	101
Lushai-Kuki	694	-	20
Mag	885	523	194
Chakma	1,407	57	35

Source : Census Biharani.

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."<sup>38</sup> In 1908, the Imperial Gazetteer reported that the jhum system was universal.<sup>39</sup> Considering these reports of the past, the progress achieved

<sup>38</sup> Hunter, op.cit., p. 501.

<sup>39</sup> 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 Comillah and Sylhet. This estate has been variously described by some as comprising 589 sq.miles, and 650 sq. miles by others.<sup>40</sup> 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."<sup>41</sup>

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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)**

Year	Revenue of Tripura State	Revenue of Zamindaries
1873-74	1,63,350	n.a.
1874-75	1,86,930	5,14,070
1903-04	8,16,958	8,58,581
1904-05	7,68,206	9,03,906
1913-14	10,36,123	10,21,429
1923-24	15,82,035	11,00,400
1933-34	13,39,810	9,82,889
1943-44	32,60,208	17,63,959

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 Tippera was as valuable as the Raja's any other possessions.

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 realized 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 4.4 : State Revenue of Tripura - Sourcewise for Selected Years (in Thousand Rupees)**

Year	Land Revenue	Tolls on Forest Produce Exported	Export Duties on Cotton & Oilseeds	Royalties on Elephants Caught	House Tax from Jhumias	All Other Sources	Total
1873-74	38.65	27.33	45.69	18.02	24.67	8.99	163.35
1874-75	38.78	40.40	47.18	24.00	24.22	12.35	186.93
1893-94	78.10	151.65	79.18	42.23	40.35	75.50	467.01
1894-95	88.75	157.22	114.36	23.47	37.13	80.20	501.13
1913-14	359.73	307.74	94.88	2.32	45.50	225.95	1036.12
1914-15	342.19	340.98	89.25	-	40.47	222.57	1035.46
1933-34	450.71	347.93	106.84	2.62	46.96	384.75	1339.81
1934-35	644.45	330.06	135.22	2.32	52.59	414.97	1579.61

**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 Tippera 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

Year	Land Revenue	Tolls on Forest Produce Exported	Export Duties on Cotton & Oilseeds	Royalties on Elephants Caught	House Tax from Jhumias	All Other Sources	Total
1873-74	23.66	16.73	27.97	11.03	15.10	5.50	100.00
1874-75	20.75	21.61	25.24	12.84	12.96	6.61	100.00
1893-94	16.72	32.47	16.95	9.04	8.64	16.17	100.00
1894-95	17.71	31.38	22.82	4.68	7.41	16.00	100.00
1913-14	34.72	29.70	9.16	-	4.39	21.89	100.00
1914-15	33.05	32.93	8.62	-	3.31	21.49	100.00
1933-34	33.64	25.97	7.97	-	3.50	28.72	100.00
1934-35	40.80	20.90	8.56	-	3.33	26.27	100.00

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 modernized.

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,<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> But sometimes, the reverse was true; while the jhum crops flourished, the plain was waterlogged by flood.<sup>44</sup> 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 Bibarani, 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.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup> About one-sixth of total paddy production was done by jhumias in the hills. Cotton and oilseeds were solely produced in the jhums, and so no comparison is possible. The average figure

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45 J. M. Sen, Memorandum and Statistics Relating to Agriculture, Forests, Exports and Imports, Tripura State, 1937-38, Agartala, 1940, pp. 11-12.

46 Ibid, Ch. II, Appendix Table V.



Table 4.6 : Total Area and Production, and the Per Acre Yield of Jhum Crops in Tripura

Crop	1930-31			Average of 1934-35 to 1936-37			1937-38		
	Area (acres)	Production (mds.)	Yield (mds.)	Area (acres)	Production (mds.)	Yield (mds.)	Area (acres)	Production (mds.)	Yield (mds.)
Paddy	36,485	10,00,000	27.41	37,500	9,90,000	26.40	37,760	10,19,520	27.00
Cotton (cleaned)	21,888	17,583	0.81	22,500	25,610	1.14	22,656	23,340	1.03
Oilseeds (sesamum)	10,944	23,210	2.12	11,250	45,000	4.00	11,328	25,620	2.30
Vegetables	3,648	-	-	3,750	Rs.93,750	-	3,776	Rs.94,000	-

Source : The data of 1930-31 from Census Biharani. Other data from Memorandum and Statistics Relating to Agriculture, Forests, Exports and Imports, Tripura State, 1937-38.

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.<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup>

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.<sup>49</sup> Thus, assuming a jhum cycle of six year, 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

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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 sesamum were commercially important crops. These attracted the businessmen, who induced the jhumias to produce surplus of cotton and sesamum to exchange for salt, tools, metal-wares and other necessities."<sup>50</sup>

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.<sup>51</sup> Govindamanikya, 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 utilized 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.<sup>52</sup> Tavernier noticed Tripura

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50 J. B. Ganguly, Economic Problems of the Jhumias of Tripura. Calcutta, 1969, pp. 37-38.

51 Rajamala, Education Directorate, Tripura, 1967, pp.80-81.

52 Travels in India by Jean Baptiste Tavernier, (ed.) V. Ball. London, 1889, pp. 157 and 273-76.

traders in far-off places like Dacca and Patna. He travelled to those places more than once between 1640 and 1<sup>6</sup>66. According to him, the Tripura traders used to go to Dacca 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.<sup>53</sup> The tribal village of Rangrung, 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 following - goats, ducks, hens, dried fish, rice, salt, oil, molasses, tobacco leaves, betel-nuts etc. The Manipuris come with gold,

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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 Tripuras 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."<sup>54</sup>

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, potatoe - these were the other commodities brought by the tribals to the market for sale.<sup>55</sup>

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.

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54 Ibid, p. 22.

55 Ibid, pp. 29-33.

APPENDIX IV-ATHE FIRST SCHEME OF JHUMIA SETTLEMENT YEAR 1888-89\*MINISTER'S OFFICE, AGARTALAMEMORANDUM

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.

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\* 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 tribals.

8. 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. 1298 T. E.  
Dated 1st Ashada.. Camp Comillah.

Sd/- Mohini Mohan Bardhan

Dewan



## CHAPTER V

### PRINCIPLES OF LAND DISTRIBUTION IN JHUM ECONOMY

After enquiring into the socio-economic condition of the hill-people in the historical past, it is proposed to describe the principles by which land was, and still is, distributed among the shifting cultivators of Tripura. Incidentally, it will also throw light on the actual operation of jhum cultivation. The pertinent questions are: Who owns the land? How the land is allotted to individual jhumias? Whether the right of a jhumia on jhum land is permanent, heritable and transferable?

"In the hills", wrote Hunter in the year 1876, "there are no tenures at all, the system of agriculture adopted by the hill tribes preventing them from cultivating the same plot of land for two years in succession".<sup>1</sup> "Land Tenure, according to the accurate meaning of the word are ... inconsistent with the hill mode of cultivation, and only exist among the hill people in those cases where the ... authorities have succeeded in inducing them to abandon the indigeneous system of cultivation."<sup>2</sup>

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1 Hunter, op. cit., p. 506.

2 Ibid, p. 77.

Recently, in 1968, the Census authorities have brought out a book on the Land Tenures in India. It notes:<sup>3</sup>

"The jhumias do not come within the purview of the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960, as their possession does not come within the meaning of a 'holding' under the Act. For such jhum areas there is no land tenure system and the tribals taking to jhuming pay a family-wise house-tax known as 'Gharchukti'. This assessment is made on a 'Khanasumari' basis, considering only the house and not the land under jhum cultivation. From shifting cultivation, the Government is trying to bring them to plough cultivation in areas down-hill. In such cases, they carry on agriculture permanently instead of carrying on shifting cultivation, and for such settlement of lands to tribals, there is no difference in land tenure system between tribal people and non-tribal people."

The gist of the above remarks is this - there is no land-tenure for jhum cultivation. On second thought, the situation seems to be anomalous. This is because land tenure literally means the conditions under which land is held by the cultivators, and the jhumias being cultivators must have some principles by which land is allowed to be used by them.

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<sup>3</sup> Census of India, 1961, Vol. I, Part XI-A(i) Land Tenures in India, p. LXIV.

"The word 'tenure' (Latin tenere, to hold) probably derives from the feudal system of land administration, the basis of which was that all land was 'held' by one individual from another, and none was absolutely owned. After the Norman conquest in 1066, all land in England was held by tenants from feudal Lords upon various forms of feudal tenure, with the king as the Lord Paramount, and the 'manor' as the most important unit of ownership."<sup>4</sup> To the legalist, the State has since been regarded as the Supreme Landlord. The lesser citizens hold land from the State under the condition of paying rent to it.

But, in Tripura, the King, did not assume the role of 'the Landlord' until the last quarter of the 19th century. This was possibly because the Administration of Tripura was of the type of a loose confederation, in which every different tribe enjoyed considerable freedom in its internal affairs. But when land laws came to be framed for the first time, and that on the model of British laws, the king came to be regarded as the "only Zemindar or superior landlord in the whole State".<sup>5</sup> Under the circumstances, one would expect that the king henceforward might have had some say on the distribution of land among the jhumias. But in fact,

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4 Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 13, p. 677.

5 Hunter, op.cit., p. 505.

it was left to the custom of the tribals to decide such issues. The following account of principles of land distribution in jhum economy has been arrived at after discussions with the jhumias themselves in the villages of Haldicherra in Dharma-nagar sub-division, and Shikaribari and Roypasha in Kamalpur sub-division.

The area of each jhumia village is demarcated by natural boundary marks like trees, hill-stream etc. To an outsider, it may be difficult to make out where the frontier of one village ends and that of another begins. But the tribal people themselves can tell us with certainty about the border between two villages. Of course, if one travels to a jhumia village along the regular foot-track, he will notice a gate constructed of bamboos at the entrance of every village. This indicates that the area of the particular village starts from there.

In the event of a dispute regarding the boundary between two villages, the Sardars and other elders of both villages sit together and agree on a common border. Usually the distance of the two villages from the disputed area is taken into consideration first. The jhumias who stay nearer to the disputed area have a greater claim upon it.

The land-carrying capacity under jhuming being comparatively small,<sup>6</sup> the area under the occupation of a village

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<sup>6</sup> Dr. J.B. Ganguly, *op.cit.*, pp. 55-57. Land-carrying capacity denotes the maximum number of adult units of population who can earn their living in a given area given a particular mode of production. Dr. Ganguly has calculated that the net area required per consumption unit under jhuming will be 9.24 hectares in Tripura, assuming that land should be left fallow for about 10 years for regeneration of forests.

of 10-15 jhumia families may be large enough, so that the inhabitants may have to walk 2-3 miles to go to the jhum field. This explains why a jhumia village consists of so few families. When it becomes inconvenient to walk a long distance for going to the jhum field from the residence, a new village is set up near the fields. Else, it may lead to inter-village migration by the jhumias. A few jhumias of one village may shift to another village so that the availability of jhum land matches with the needs of the villagers.

But the application of the above principle is not rigid. Had it been so, each and every jhumia village of Tripura would have been (roughly) equal in size and consisting of the same number of families. This uniformity is affected by different factors.

First, all hills are not equally suitable for shifting cultivation. The hills covered with bamboos and other trees are the only places where jhuming can be done. If there are more of degenerated forests in a village, its capacity to provide jhumable land to many is limited. Degenerated forests may consist of grasses such as *Imperata cylindrica*, *Saccharum narenga*, *Saccharum spontaneum*, *Eupatorium edortum* etc., which are quite unsuitable for jhum.<sup>7</sup> When most of the nearby hills of a village are composed of this type of forest,

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7 Ibid, p. 54.

the village should comprise fewer families so that enough jhum land can be had by everyone. If the village consists of many families, the area of the village has to be large and many villagers have to undertake the trouble of travelling long distance to the fields. Sometimes because of the nearness of relation between the families of a village, an individual jhumia may be reluctant to migrate to another village. He may instead prefer to stay in the same village and walk a longer distance to the jhum field.

When the season for forest clearance draws near - usually in the months of November and December - the Sardar of the village convenes a meeting of the headmen of all families of the village. In that meeting, they decide upon the date when Ker-worship is to be done. With the worship of Ker, the jhum season starts.

The Ker puja is also one of the State festivals of Tripura and is usually done in the month of July every year. In Kaliprasanna Sen's Rajamala, a complete description of Ker puja (as it is observed in the State capital, Agartala) is given. According to Sen,<sup>8</sup> an area is notified for the purposes of the puja. The occurrence of birth or death within this area during the hours of worship is regarded as a bad omen. For this reason, all expecting women and ailing aged are taken out of the boundaries of Ker as a precautionary

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8 Rajamala, Vol. I, op.cit., pp. 143-45.

measure. Neither men nor domestic animals can go out of the boundary during the Puja; also no outsider can enter it.<sup>9</sup> Wearing of shoes and turbans, using umbrellas, or making noise of any kind are strictly prohibited. Puja continues for one day and two nights. It is believed by people that the prosperity of the following year depends on a successful performance of the Ker puja.

Sen had written that the hill people used to worship Ker in their villages only after the main puja in Agartala was over. But the jhumias of above-named villages gave a different version. They reported that Ker puja is done by them before shifting cultivation starts. But in other essentials the story is the same. The whole area of the village is closed to all outsiders. If anybody intrudes, he is subjected to heavy fine.<sup>10</sup>

In explaining the significance of Ker puja, Sen was influenced by his knowledge of Hindu philosophy. To him, it appeared to be a ritual for the worship of the Earth and Creation.<sup>11</sup> To repeat his own words, "This reminds us of

9 I was present during Ker puja in Agartala in 1968. The area of the Ker was announced over the loudspeaker throughout the town. The city buses and other vehicles were directed to follow alternative routes. Large posters, in English, Bengali and Tripuri languages, were pasted outside the area, which read - KER PUJA, NO ENTRY.

10 Many old Bengalee gentlemen believe that in times past, the intruders were murdered as sacrifice to Ker.

11 Kaliprasanna Sen, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 143.

the time when there was neither light - nor sound - nor being - nor the matters of life and death, only a dark silence pervaded the whole atmosphere".<sup>12</sup> Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji also believes that it is not unlikely of Ker having some significance connected with the Earth.<sup>13</sup>

But, instead of providing a metaphysical explanation to this tribal ritual, it is possible to explain it within a functional framework. Ker worship might have originated from the practical need of the jhumias to assert their authority over a fixed area to be jhumed in a particular year. This would explain why Ker-worship should be a sine qua non of forest clearance, why the whole of the village should be demarcated for this purpose, and also why all outsiders are debarred from participating in it. It is possible that in times past, there occurred inter-tribal and inter-village disputes on the issue of demarcation of a Ker area. In this context, it is significant to note that the people believe that a successful Ker worship brings prosperity for the new year. Through the institution of Ker worship, a group of villagers possibly assert their joint right over a specific area which they would jhum in a particular year. It should also be noted that a structure made of bamboo signifies Ker, and this bamboo-structure is

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12 Ibid, p. 145.

13 Dr. S. K. Chatterji, op.cit., p. 70.



worshipped by the tribals in the name of Ker-worship. By clearing bamboo forests only, the bed for shifting cultivation is prepared in the slopes of hills.

After the Ker worship is successfully completed, the villagers select the jhum plots on the following principle: Within the village area, the individual is free to choose any hillock he likes. The jhumia carefully notices the vegetational condition of the hills and selects one which is densely covered with bamboo forests. He takes into consideration his actual requirement, and also how much land he and his family can cultivate. For some work, as that during clearing of forest or weeding of the jhum crops, the jhumia gets assistance from others outside of his family. But this is done on the basis of 'Halahali' or exchange labour. The jhumia has to pay back in work-days as much as he has taken from others. Thus the ultimate constraint is his own family capacity.

Having selected the area for jhuming, the jhumia approaches the forest with the 'takkual' (knife) in his hand, and strikes the first cut against one of the bamboos. The calm of the forest is disturbed. If the crows crow impatiently and the animals of the forest start yelling because of this, the jhumia takes this as a bad omen. He leaves that particular forest and tries elsewhere.

But if the animal world keeps quiet to his forest

clearance work, he believes that the particular hill is meant for his use. He next makes a prayer to the God of jhum-land.<sup>14</sup> Taking two pieces of bamboo in his hands, he prays to the God to give him good harvests. After the prayer, he tosses the bamboo pieces three times. If every time, both the pieces of bamboo exhibit only the concave or the convex sides, he believes that doing jhum in this plot is not good for him. But if the two pieces show different sides, he concludes that the plot is favourable.

He next fixes a bamboo pole in the ground as a sign of his possession of that land. The height of the pole from the ground is upto his chest. The jhumias believe that the height indicates the heart's choice of a particular jhumia for a particular plot. From a practical point of view, it seems that a chest-high bamboo pole is less likely to be overlooked by others, although a lower pole would also serve the same purpose. In earlier days, a boomerang, locally called 'Juit', was sometimes placed in the field to prevent the trespassers. But by the Robakaree of 22nd Poush, 1283 T.E. (1873-74 A.D.), Maharaja Birchandra Manikya banned the careless use of 'Juit' in the jhum-field.<sup>15</sup>

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14 The Riangs call him Burasa.

15 Obtained by courtesy of the Superintendent, Printing and Stationery Department, Government of Tripura.

The use of different shapes of bamboos as symbolic signs was very common in Tripura at one time. Even the Tripura Government made use of some of them. When the Government intended to reserve some land or prohibit people from entering a certain place, it was difficult to communicate it to the ignorant tribals by means of publicity or written notices. But the same purpose could be easily achieved with the aid of a bamboo structure known as 'Kadba'.

After posting the bamboo pole in the ground, the jhumia picks up some earth from the field and returns home. That day he avoids going into contact of impure things; even living with one's own wife is prohibited. When he goes to bed, he puts the earth below his pillow. If in his dreams, muddy and marshy places or wild animals appear, it is taken as a warning against an uncertain harvest. If no such evil sight appears in his dreams, the jhumia feels happy.

The jungle is cut down with the assistance of other villagers. Before February, this operation is over. The cut-down trees are left to wither dry in the summer sun. Sometime during the end of March, or at the beginning of April, fire is set to the dry debris and the whole hill-slope is covered with ashes.

The jhumia never visits his jhum field on the next day of the firing operations. They regard it as the day of 'Sradha' (funeral rites) of birds and other animals who

might die in the fire. But the fact is that the burnt woods take time to cool down; also the air around the jhum field stinks with foul smell of burnt animals.

After the first few showers of the rainy season, the jhumia again visits his field - this time to sow a turmeric. This marks the beginning of sowing operations. Henceforward, the women and the children also participate in the cultivation.

The field in which jhuming has been done once is kept fallow for not less than five years until it is overgrown with forest. When it is ready for another cultivation, the same jhumia does not necessarily select it again because the principle of land allotment, which has been described above, does not ensure any permanent right of any individual jhumia over the field. He cannot alienate the land also, neither he can inherit from anybody. But so long the whole group of villagers do not migrate en masse to a different site, the villagers as a collective force keep the land under their joint occupation, and this right is recognized by other villagers, who also follow the same practice. The particular right of individuals over a particular area in a given year is superimposed on the communal right of a village over the whole village area.

## CHAPTER VI

### HOUSE TAX

#### 6.1 The Nature of House Tax

House Tax is collected from the jhumias of Tripura for doing shifting cultivation. Every jhumia household pays a fixed amount per annum irrespective of how many members it might contain and how much land it cultivates under jhum. In the 'Tripura Tribal Inhabitants (House Tax) Act', 1965, House Tax has been defined as "the tax commonly known as 'Gharchuti kar' payable by the tribal inhabitants for practising jhum", and has been fixed at three rupees per family per year.

Before the passing of this Act, House Tax was realized under the provisions of the 'Parbatya Prajaganer Gharchukti Kar Sambandhiya Ain' of 1329 T.E. (1919-20 A.D.). The nature of House Tax was then somewhat different. In Section 5 of that Act, Gharchukti Kar was defined to be "the Kar (tax) which is paid by the tribal jhumias of this State irrespective of caste and creed and has been fixed for each sect as an allegiance to the Ruler of Tripura and also as a token of respect towards the Ruler. ..." Thus the loyalty to the king was the cardinal principle behind the operation of House Tax. In a still earlier period, in 1910-11 A.D.

(by the Revenue Circular No. 8 of the 8th Agrahayana 1320 T.E.), it was made clear that the "Gharchukti Kar of the State is unlike Adda Kar,<sup>1</sup> and is not a tax realized for doing jhum or for the land so occupied. From very ancient times, Gharchukti Kar is being realized from the tribal subjects living in independent zones, as a token of the relation in which they stand with the Maharaja of Tripura and also as a mark of honour to His Highness. ..." In the nature of things, none but the Maharaja was competent to realize the House Tax from the tribals. Anomalous situation was bound to occur if sometimes the habitation of jhumias fell within a zamindari or taluka of an inferior landlord. But in those cases, the jhumias were not regarded as tenants to the zamindar or the talukdar. Before farming out the collections, the right of House Tax was reserved by the State.

This was perhaps in keeping with the nature of political evolution of Tripura. The tribe 'Tripura' extended its overlordship over other tribes and the tax levied upon the latter had more similarity to a tribute than to a tithe. The hill subjects of the State were all shifting cultivators and as such 'jhumia' and 'tribal' had equivalent connotations. But in course of time, some among the tribals gave up shifting cultivation and joined in settled cultivation or in other

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<sup>1</sup> Adda Kar is Chowkidari tax realizable from the settled villagers only.

professions. 'Jhumia' and 'tribal' did no longer remain ceterminus. In 1903, the Revenue Inspector of Sonamura subdivision observed in a Note prepared by him<sup>2</sup> that the non-jhumia tribals were not paying Gharchukti Kar or any other tax. He expressed the fear that if such people did not pay tax, then at some future date it might become difficult to produce any documentary evidence of their being subjects of the State. According to him, in the changed situation, the Gharchukti Kar should be renamed as Jhumchukti Kar and the tribals who actually did jhum should pay it. Others should pay land revenue if they were settled cultivators or any other appropriate tax befitting their trade. But, as has been noticed, the Act of 1919-20 A.D. prescribed the continuance of House Tax not for doing shifting cultivation but as a mark of loyalty to the king, although for all practical purposes it was levied only on jhumia tribals. The remnants of the past were retained in the letters of law and the administrators took care of the changed situation by not demanding the House Tax from one who was not really a shifting cultivator.

## 6.2 The Origin and Administration of House Tax

In c. 1650, Tavernier wrote that the king of Tripura "levies no revenue from his subjects, save those below the

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<sup>2</sup> Obtained by courtesy of the Superintendent, Printing and Stationery Department, Government of Tripura, Agartala.

rank, corresponding to that of the nobility of Europe, have to work for him for six days every year either in the gold mine or at the silk."<sup>3</sup> Because no gold mines are known in Tripura, the account given by Tavernier is of doubtful authenticity. Again, his being from Feudal France also might have affected his judgement.

But from about the 18th century onwards, the payment of House Tax was slowly becoming universal. The writers of Tripura Buranji tell us that the villagers of Rangrung, Toijal, Kumjang and Sairangchuk paid their joint tributes annually to the king. The tribute consisted of elephant tusks, mithan, cotton, horses, gold, home-spun cloth etc. But the jhumias belonging to the Tripura tribe, who lived in areas not far off from the capital, paid a House Tax annually of four rupees per family.

Regarding the fiscal administration at the end of the 19th century, information is available from Kailash Singha and W. W. Hunter. In an Appendix Table of his book - Tripurar Itivritta - Kailash Singha said that tax was realized from the tribals in cash, kind and military services as well. At about the same time, Hunter wrote that House Tax was realized from the tribal families through their Sardars. The Headmen of the various tribes and the Sardar Choudhuries of villages

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3 Travels in India by Jean Baptiste Tavernier, op.cit., p. 275.



were invited by the king to the capital during the Durga Puja Festival. The assessment for each tribe was settled by negotiating with the Sardars. "Each family", wrote Hunter, "is assessed at so much per family, and each family pays the same, no matter what number of members it may contain."<sup>4</sup> The following Table shows the rates of assessment of the different tribes in the year 1874-75.

Table 6.1 : Rate of House Tax for Jhumia Tribes: Year 1874-75

Tribe	Rate of House Tax
Tripura	Rs. 3- 8 annas
Jamatia	Rs. 3- 8 annas
Halam	From Rs. 2/- to annas -/10/- or even less
Kuki	Rs. 5- 4 annas
Noatia	Rs.10- 0 annas
Riang	Rs.10- 0 annas

Source : W. W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal,  
Vol. VI, p. 510.

But the above does not give the complete picture because many among the tribals, notably the Kukis, Halams and Jamatias, did not pay much in cash. They were allowed to pay in terms of military assistance or sometimes in elephant

<sup>4</sup> Hunter, op.cit., pp. 509-11.

tusks, which was a valuable asset of that time for the State Exchequer. The following Table taken from Kailash Singha shows how and in what units in the year 1876, many of the tribal Sardars paid their tributes to the king.

**Table 6.2 : The Mode of Tax Payment for Some of the Tribes in 1876**

The Tribe/Chief responsible for the payment	Number of soldiers, the tribe/chief should supply in war-time	Any other kind of Tax
1. Raja Rang Bung Kuki	2,500	Elephant tusks
2. Raja Singrai Kuki	2,000	- do -
3. Raja Thang Bung Kuki	1,500	- do -
4. Raja Tama Kuki	1,200	- do -
5. Raja Thama Kuki	1,000	- do -
6. Raja Chintaham Kuki	1,200	- do -
7. Raja Mursuilal Kuki	700	- do -
8. Sardar Kaipeng Kuki	-	Elephant tusks and Coins
9. Sardar Mursum Kuki	-	- do -
10. Sardar Ranghol Kuki	-	- do -
11. Sardar Khaklu Kuki	-	- do -
12. Sardar Husumfai Kuki	-	- do -
13. Jamatia Tribals	3,000	Coins
14. Raja Duthang Kuki	4,000	Elephant tusks
15. Poang Krishnakali Choudhury	-	7,000 rupees

(continued)

Table 6.2 : (continued)

The Tribe/Chief responsible for the payment	Number of soldiers, the tribe/chief should supply in war-time	Any other kind of Tax
16. Poang Jagatram Choudhury	-	4,000 rupees
17. Jubaraj Dabarcha Chapia Khan	-	No tax
18. Sardar Rambabu Rieng	-	2,500 rupees
19. Sardar Gelasa Choudhury	-	500 rupees
20. Sardar Kashi Choudhury	-	300 rupees
21. Sardar Krishna Choudhury	-	350 rupees
22. Sardar Troyasha Choudhury	-	300 rupees
23. Sardar Debaram Choudhury	-	200 rupees
24. Sardar Dhuramfai Choudhury	-	150 rupees
25. Sardar Husamphai Choudhury	-	180 rupees

Note :- The number of soldiers is approximate. The amount of tax given in the last column varied from year to year. The list was not exhaustive either.

Source : Kailash Singha, Tripurar Itivritta, Appendix Table.

From the information furnished in Table 6.2, the following condensed description (Table 6.3) is made for the different tribes.

Table 6.3 : Mode of Tax Payment for Some of the Tribes in 1876

Tribe	Kind of Tax
Kuki	Military assistance and elephant tusks
Halam	Elephant tusks and cash
Jamatia	Military assistance and cash
Noatia	Cash
Riang	Cash

Source : Worked out from Table 6.2.

According to Hunter, the Kukis seldom paid cash to the Government. In the year 1874-75, only 26 Kuki families were assessed, all the rest being exempted.<sup>5</sup> Large number of families were every year exempted from payment of the House Tax on the ground of poverty, or for other reasons. "Thus during the years 1871 and 1872, hardly any taxes were levied, - first on account of the Lushai raids; and secondly, on the ground that the men serving as coolies during the Lushai expedition and with the survey party could not cultivate their jhums, and had therefore no means of paying taxes."<sup>6</sup> In 1874-75, while 5,388 families were assessed, 1,914 families were exempted from taxes.<sup>7</sup>

5 Hunter, op.cit., p. 510.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

There were many factors for which the realization of House Tax was very irregular. First was the difficulty in knowing the exact number of hill families living in the interior of the State. It all depended upon the Sardars of the tribals. During the Durga Puja time, they were supposed to tell the exact number of families under their jurisdiction. But it was difficult to ensure the accuracy of the figure. Secondly, pressing them hard for the payment of House Tax was of little use, because, "as soon as any obligation, legal or otherwise, became too irksome to be borne, they would merely take the opportunity of one of their periodical migration to cross the border, change their allegiance and cancel their debts."<sup>8</sup>

In subsequent years, attempts were made to regularize the system of payment of House Tax by the tribal jhumias. In 1903-04, fiscal reforms were undertaken. By an Order of the Maharaja, rates of Gharchukti Kar were revised for different tribes. (The same rates remained in force for a long time until they were changed in 1965 by the Tripura Tribal Inhabitants House Tax Act.) The Minister of Tripura, Roy Umakanta Das Bahadur, presented a Resolution to the Maharaja on 25-3-1313 T.E., to which the Maharaja gave his consent on 27-3-1313 T.E. (1903-04 A.D.). The manuscript of the original Resolution was fortunately discovered by us.<sup>9</sup> Considering

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 492.

<sup>9</sup> By Courtesy of the Superintendent, Printing and Stationery Department, Government of Tripura, Agartala.

the importance of the information contained in it, the Resolution is translated below:

"The House Tax of the hill subjects of the State ranges from Rupee one to eight rupees per family at present. All the hill people have got equal opportunities to stay in this State. As such, it is immoral to entertain gross discrimination in taxing the hill people. It is particularly unjustified to apply different rates of tax to different people, who belong but to the same tribe. Of course, special reasons had been there for this discrimination, but now nobody knows what they were. If by offering services to the king, a subject earns his special favour, it is necessary to give him the benefit of it; but there cannot be any justification for charging him less taxes. It is very much desirable that the tax rate should be uniform among people having equal means to pay and also pursuing the same professions. But there are practical difficulties to go ahead with a uniform tax scheme for all tribes at once; it may hit some of the classes hard.

It is desirable to pay salary to the Ghalim and other tribals who perform various duties in the Palace. At present, they are given tax remission for this; but it is proposed that henceforward they should pay House Tax according to the rate prevailing for their tribe. House Tax should be levied on everyone, if sufficient reasons cannot be assigned

for their remaining tax-free. The Julais should also pay House Tax at the rate valid for their tribe. A separate Note has already been presented to His Highness in this regard.

The Noatia and Riang are the most heavily taxed subjects of the State. Most of them pay House Tax at the rate of Rupees six per family. Earlier the rate had been eight rupees, and still before that, they had paid at the rate of rupees twelve per family. From 1298 T.E. (1888-89 A.D.) onward the Riangs, and from 1305 T.E. (1895-96 A.D.) the Noatias have been paying at the present rate of rupees six per family.

The Riangs have repeatedly prayed during the past two years for the lowering of the tax rate. The Noatia people have also followed their example. Their prayer should be given a hearing. These hill people, most of whom live by the side of Gumti and Muhari rivers, are already overburdened with other taxes, say, the export duty - which they pay for carrying trade in cane and bamboo. At the same time, the House Tax for these tribes is also very high. It is our duty to lower the rate to some extent. After discussing the problem in great detail, it is decided that in lieu of 7 different rates, viz., Re. 1/-, Rs. 2/12/-, Rs. 3/8/-, Rs. 4/-, Rs. 5/-, Rs. 6/-, and Rs. 8/-, which exist today, there should be only 3 rates. In place of Re.1/-, Rs. 2/12/-, and

Rs. 3/8/- House Tax will be charged at the rate of Rs. 3/8/- only per family. The tax rate of Rs. 4/- will continue, and the rates of Rs. 5/-, Rs. 6/- and Rs. 8/- will all be substituted by a uniform rate of Rs. 5/- only. If the rates are fixed accordingly, then the number of disgruntled subjects will be very few. For instance, if tribals, who pay Rs. 1/- and Rs. 2/12/- are charged at the rate of Rs. 3/8/-, only 75 families will be affected. On the other hand, by lowering the rate from Rs. 8/-, which applies for 30 families; and also by reducing the rate of Rs. 6/-, which is the rate now for 2,865 families to Rs. 5/-, in all 2,895 families will benefit. Thus, many subjects of the State will get a relief from heavy exactions. Over and above, by narrowing the range of House Tax, the whole tax system will be rationalized.

The Darpula Kukis do not pay any House Tax per family. They jointly pay Rs. 60/- annually to the State. This custom is not good. Their nearest neighbours - the Rupini tribe pay House Tax at the rate of Rs. 3/8/- per family. So, the same rate may apply for these people also."

In Table 6.4 the rates of House Tax in 1903-04 are given. The rates which prevailed at that time are given by the side of the new rates which were applied since 1903-04.



**Table 6.4 : Old and New Rates of House Tax in 1903-04  
(in Rupees and Annas)**

Sr. No.	Name of the Tribe	No. of families	Current rate	Proposed rate
1.	Tripura	18	2/12/-	3/8/-
		4,458	3/8/-	3/8/-
		298	4/-/-	4/-/-
2.	Bongshel	9	3/8/-	3/8/-
3.	Chaimal	7	3/8/-	3/8/-
4.	Kariphang	10	1/-/-	3/8/-
5.	Kaipeng	68	3/8/-	3/8/-
6.	Koloi	21	3/8/-	3/8/-
7.	Darpula Kuki	13	-	3/8/-
8.	Rupini	27	3/8/-	3/8/-
9.	Rangkhoh	54	3/8/-	3/8/-
10.	Karbong	6	3/8/-	3/8/-
11.	Mursum	188	3/8/-	3/8/-
12.	Dungru	37	3/8/-	3/8/-
13.	Jamatia	670	3/8/-	3/8/-
		3	4/-/-	4/-/-
14.	Majarang	12	3/8/-	3/8/-
15.	Halam	47	1/12/-	3/8/-
		357	4/-/-	4/-/-
16.	Kuki	51	3/8/-	3/8/-
		35	4/-/-	4/-/-

(continued)

Table 6.4 : (continued)

Sr. No.	Name of the Tribe	No. of families	Current rate	Proposed rate
17.	Noatia	40	3/8/-	5/-/-
		41	4/-/-	5/-/-
		1,497	6/-/-	5/-/-
18.	Riang	25	3/8/-	5/-/-
		29	4/-/-	5/-/-
		1,319	6/-/-	5/-/-
19.	Mag	139	5/-/-	5/-/-
		47	6/-/-	5/-/-
		27	8/-/-	5/-/-
20.	Chakma	448	5/-/-	5/-/-
		2	6/-/-	5/-/-
		3	8/-/-	5/-/-

Source : The Resolution presented by the Minister of Tripura State to the Maharaja on 25-3-1313 T.E.

In all 10,006 families were in the House Tax Roll in the year 1903. With the passing of the Order of the Maharaja on 27-3-1313 T.E. (1903-04 A.D.), the payment of House Tax became universal for all jhumia tribes. The Darpula Kukis, who till then had presented a lump sum yearly tribute, were required to pay the House Tax on a family basis. The Tripura, Halam and Jamatia tribals were favourably treated

as against the Noatias, Riang, Mag and Chakma tribes. But the extent of discrimination was much reduced.

The next year, i.e., in 1904-05, another reform was accomplished. The Police had hitherto the charge of revenue collection from the hills. Not only in the early years of the eighteenth century the tribute was collected by the Lashkar (Police) from the tribal village of Rangrung,<sup>10</sup> but in the late nineteenth century also it was reported that the persons sent out by the Tripura Raja to collect rents were armed like regular Sepoys, wearing the muskets and bayonets.<sup>11</sup> The scheme of separating Police and collection of taxes was given a trial in 1903-04. The result was satisfactory, and hence since the beginning of 1904-05, complete effect was given to the scheme of separation throughout the State.<sup>12</sup> Table 6.5 shows the distribution of police force before and after the separation of police from collection of taxes.

Even with these reforms, the task of collection of House Tax was not easy, particularly from the Kuki tribals. On 20th February, 1917, the Kuki and Lushai people were reminded by the Maharaja to pay their taxes regularly. The

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10 Tripura Buranji, op.cit., p. 22.

11 Mackenzie, op.cit., p. 67.

12 The Administration Report of Tripura State for the Year 1314 T.E., p. 10.

Table 6.5 : The Police Force of Tripura at the Beginning and End of the Year 1904-05

Sr. No.	Description of Police	Number at the beginning of 1904-05	Number at the end of 1904-05
1.	Inspector	8	4
2.	Daroga	26	19
3.	Naib Daroga	33	25
4.	Head Constable	40	22
5.	Writer Constable	49	30
6.	Constable	308	188

Source : The Administration Report of Tripura State for the Year 1314 T.E., p. 10.

Raja and Sardars of the Kuki and Lushai group of tribals were asked to collect House Tax from the people under their supervision at the rate of Rs. 4/- per family. Out of this, they must deposit three rupees to the Government, while one-fourth of the tax they could retain for themselves.<sup>13</sup> This was possibly an incentive intended to make the work of collection lucrative.

But the task of collecting House Tax was comparatively easier than the collection of any other tax from the tribals. Near the upwaters of the Gumti river lived the Riangs. They

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<sup>13</sup> The Tripura State Gazette, 15th Magha, 1327 T.E.

used to carry sesamum and cotton downhill to the neighbouring British district of Noakhali and Chittagong and sell the same. The collection of export duty from them was difficult because it was impossible to maintain a toll-post in the interior. By an Order of 16-12-1347 T.E. (1937-38 A.D.), the Maharaja allowed them free trade but on condition that they would pay an extra sum of four rupees as House Tax annually.<sup>14</sup> Thus it is clear that the collection of a lump sum House Tax facilitated the Administration from the day-to-day difficulties of supervision over the tribals' activities. An annual House Tax had definite advantages over any other tax because the administrative cost was less for the former. Notwithstanding the irregularities, the hill-men also possibly preferred the House Tax to a light but unbending system of taxation, because sometimes several seasons passed without any call being made for the payment.<sup>15</sup>

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14 The Tripura State Gazette, 15th Baishakha, 1348 T.E.

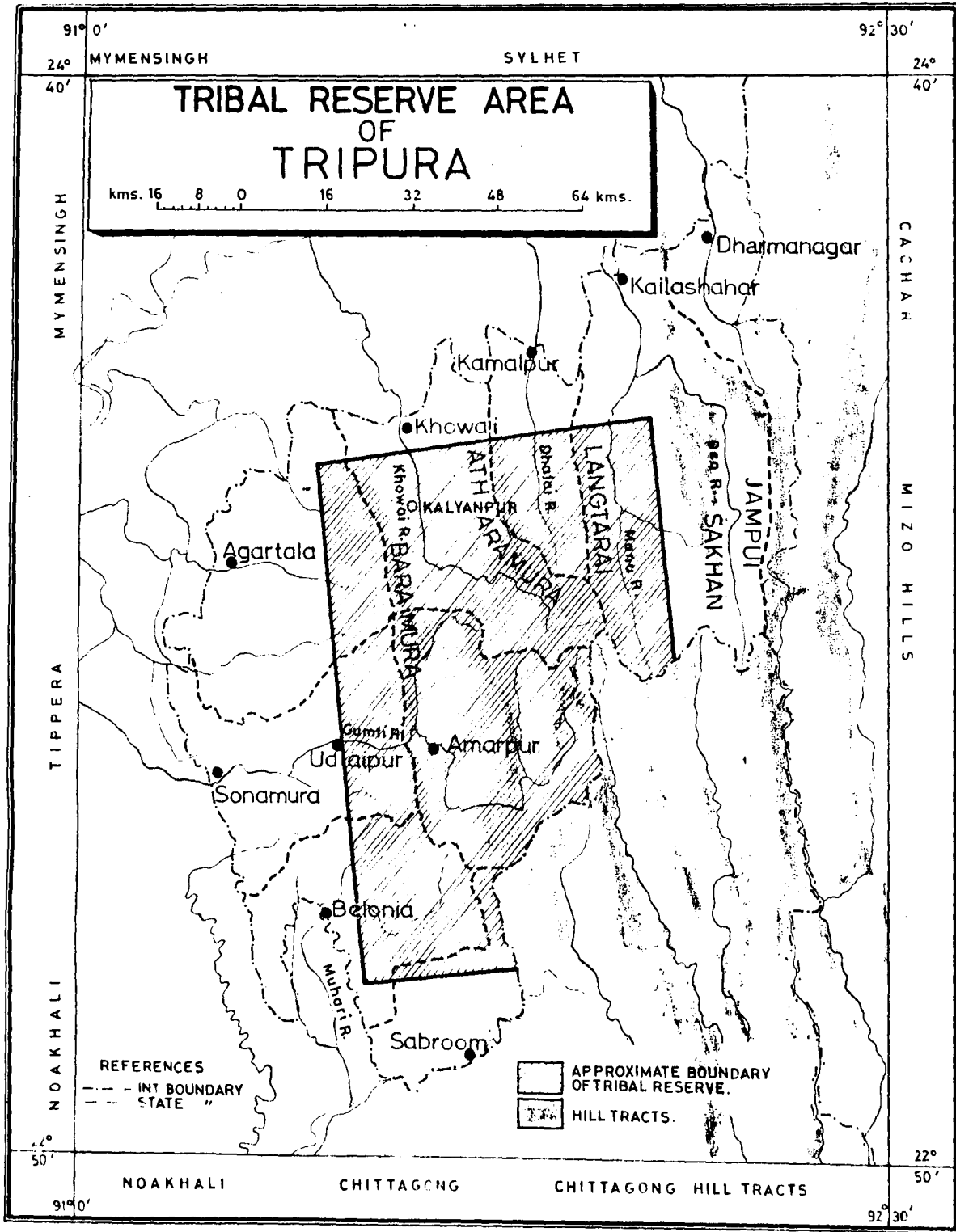
15 Hunter, op.cit., p. 510.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE TRIBAL RESERVE AREA

#### 7.1 Provisions of the Tribal Reserve Area

The Tribal Reserve Area was made during the rule of the Maharaja as a part of his scheme to wean the tribals away from the practices of shifting cultivation and to settle them permanently on land. The first declaration about the creation of Tribal Reserve Area was made on 20-5-1341 T.E. (1931-32 A.D.) by Memo No. 49 of that year. The area measured 110 square miles and was situated in the northern sub-division of Khowai. Later, as this area of 110 square miles was considered inadequate to meet the purpose, more lands measuring 1,950 square miles were reserved. The new reserve was spread over the following seven sub-divisions viz., Sadar, Khowai, Kailashahar (including present Kamalpur sub-division), Udaipur, Amarpur, Belonia and Sabroom; only the sub-divisions of Dharmanagar and Sonamura were left out of its purview. The second Reserve was created under Order No. 325 of 1st Aswin, 1353 T.E. (1943-44 A.D.). The Tribal Reserve Area thus comprised a total of 2,060 square miles i.e., 50 per cent of the total area of the Territory (see Map No. 3). But on 14-8-1948 A.D., the then Regent Mata Maharani of the State dereserved an area of 300 square miles



MAP NO.3

from the Tribal Reserve for the rehabilitation of the Hindu refugees from East Pakistan. After this, the area under Tribal Reserve stood at 1,760 square miles in all. The sub-divisionwise details of the Tribal Reserve Area are shown in Table 7.1.

**Table 7.1 : Area Reserved and Dereserved as Tribal Reserve Area Sub-divisionwise (in sq. miles)**

Sr. No.	Name of the Sub-division	Area reserved		Total Area dere-served in 1948	Total area after Dereser- vation
		in 1931	in 1943		
1.	Sadar	-	195	30	165
2.	Khowai	110	412	75	447
3.	Kailashahar (including present Kamalpur)	-	308	70	238
4.	Udaipur	-	150	30	120
5.	Amarpur	-	527	40	487
6.	Belonia	-	198	45	153
7.	Sabroom	-	160	10	150
8.	Dharmanagar	-	-	-	-
9.	Sonamura	-	-	-	-
Total Tribal Reserve Area of Tripura		110	1,950	300	1,760

Source : Settlement Office, Agartala.



The main provisions of the Maharaja's Order creating the Tribal Reserve Area are as under :

1. The area was, subject to certain conditions, reserved for the dwelling of, and cultivation by five classes of tribals - Tripura, Noatia, Jamatia, Riang and Halam.

2. In the Reserved Area, existing rent-free taluks and also the jotes settled with different people other than the above-mentioned five classes of tribals were to be treated as if outside the Reserve; but after the Order was issued, none but the five classes of tribals could be allotted land there; also no already existing settler was allowed to transfer any land to anyone who was not a member of the five classes of tribals without the prior permission of the Government. If no purchaser was available from among the five classes of tribals, the Government itself would be the purchaser.

3. No member of the five classes of tribals was entitled to transfer any land under his possession to any person belonging to any class other than the five classes of tribals. All kinds of transfer including gift, sale, lease etc. would be legally invalid if they were between the five classes of tribals and others.

## 7.2 Background of Creating Tribal Reserve Area

In an earlier chapter, it was seen that at one time the Tripura Administration had extended unreserved welcome to all

immigrants to the State. The tribal immigrants like the Chakma and Mags, and the non-tribal influx of Bengalees was looked upon highly favourably because it was thought that by speedy reclamation of waste lands, the prosperity of the State will be enhanced. In the initial years of this influx, the pressure was not felt by the indigenous tribal population. This was so because the non-tribal colonizers were not attracted by the hills. They were rather interested in occupying the plain land, reclaiming it and then putting it to plough cultivation. The tribal jhumia was left undisturbed in the hill area to continue his primitive shifting cultivation. Secondly, much of forest was also not classed as reserved by the Government. The jhumia had therefore presumably no competitor against him.

But the Administration had cherished for a long time the idea that "the only permanent cure for distress among these simple and improvident children of the soil lies in winning them over to a more settled life, and in persuading them to take to plough cultivation in the place of the primitive system of Jooming they follow."<sup>1</sup> In the year 1923, Maharaja Bir Bikram was installed as the King of Tripura on his father's death. A youth aged only 16 at the time of installation, Bir Bikram had a flair for the social

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<sup>1</sup> The Administration Report of Tipperah State for the Year 1323 T.E. (1913-14 A.D.), p. 1.

uplift of Tripura. No king before him had ever visited the interior of the State with the motive of knowing the condition of hill-people first-hand. Within a year of his assuming the throne, Bir Bikram went for a tour in the interior of the State which lasted for 10 days. He went to Sonamura and Udaipur sub-divisions, and "met and mixed freely with all sections of the people, including hill clans under their head-men."<sup>2</sup> Next year, the king proceeded through the hill tracts of the Kailashahar Division and went as far as "upto Dhumacherra in the interior and met a number of Hill Chiefs, conspicuous among whom was a Riang Sardar, and received from all a most hearty welcome. The journey through the Manipuri and Reang settlements of the locality proved very pleasant and gave an idea of the state of things in the hill section."<sup>3</sup>

During 1927-28, the jhum crops failed in the hills and a scarcity arose among the hill people of Khowai, Sadar, Kailasahar, Belonia and other places.<sup>4</sup> In Khowai, much of the jhum paddy was destroyed by rat-pest, and whatever little the jhumias were able to preserve was purchased by the traders. The situation worsened so much in Khowai and

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2 Ibid, 1334 T.E. (1924-25 A.D.), p. 2.

3 Ibid, 1335 T.E. (1925-26 A.D.), p. 2.

4 The Tripura State Gazette of 31st Ashada, 31st Bhadra and 29th Falguna of 1337 T.E. (1927-28 A.D.).

Kalyanpur so that the Administration banned the export of foodgrains out of those areas. In 1928-29 and 1929-30 also, the hill people were not able to raise a good harvest because of bad weather conditions. The next year, in 1930, the world-wide Depression took place. It was reported that "with bumper crops of jute, cotton and other commodities, against prices dwindling below the cost of production, the agricultural population found themselves in a more or less hopeless position. ... Abundant harvests of rice and other food crops no doubt proved a relieving factor, but the low prices everything fetched generally, created a very distressing atmosphere, the pinch of which was felt by all most keenly. Scarcity of money was the order of things, and a disquieting unrest manifested itself all round, which led occasionally to organised propaganda against the moneylender and the landowner."<sup>5</sup> It is in this background of events that "on the 14th February, 1931, His Highness visited Kalyanpur in the Khowai Division where he camped for a week, moving about freely in different places, meeting a number of hill tribes and ascertaining first hand the local economic situation. His Highness was pleased to select on the occasion, a large tract in the locality for the exclusive use of the hill-people with the object of inducing them to take to plough cultivation and a more stable life."<sup>6</sup> It may be

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<sup>5</sup> The Report on the Administration of the Tripura State for 1340 T.E. (1930-31 A.D.), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

recalled that the Reserve Area was created in the Kalyanpur Tehsil of the Khowai Sub-division. In this very place, a few years ago, the non-tribals were invited to go and settle down by the Administration (see Chapter II).

### 7.3 Present Position

In the post-Independence period, the Tripura Administration had a strong feeling that the Order of the Maharaja needed to be repealed. Some of the reasons for which the repeal was advocated were the following:

First, the Maharaja's Order discriminated between five classes of tribals and the rest. Secondly, it is not practicable and desirable to extradit the non-tribal population, particularly the Refugees from East Pakistan, who have settled in the Tribal Reserve Area and have acquired a proprietary interest by the efflux of time. Even during the rule of the Maharaja, these were not real tribal areas as non-tribal population was residing there in large numbers. Thirdly, the tribals themselves have accepted Bargadars and those Bargadars have acquired the right of a raiyat or under-raiyat under the provisions of the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960. If the provisions of the said Act are to be enforced, it will not be possible to maintain any Tribal Reserve Area. Also, many tribesmen have transferred their land to non-tribals without the permission and knowledge of the Government and have themselves deserted

the area. Fourthly, when there are other schemes for Jhumia Settlement and also the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960 has made special provisions for the Scheduled Tribes, there is no need of any Tribal Reserve Area. Finally, keeping five classes of tribals in isolation is not desirable in their own larger interest. They should have cultural contact with the rest of the people - tribal and non-tribal alike.

But there are a number of arguments in favour of the Tribal Reserve Area. In fact, one might ask - when there existed a Tribal Reserve Area, what was the necessity for a separate Jhumia Settlement Scheme? It is incorrect to say that because of the Jhumia Settlement Scheme and the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960, the Tribal Reserve Area is unnecessary. The Tribal Reserve Area was ordered earlier than the above-mentioned Scheme or Act. The Order of the Maharaja discriminated between five classes of tribals and others; but these five classes of tribals are the original inhabitants of Tripura. If their existence is endangered by the continuous inflow of other tribes and also non-tribals, then the making of a Reserve Area for them may be justified. If the creation of a Tribal Reserve Area discriminates in favour of the five classes of tribals, the abolition of it will discriminate against their interest. Also, a fruitful cultural contact between two groups of

**Table 7.2 : Tribal and Non-tribal Population in the Tribal Reserve Area, and Cases of Land Transfer from Tribal to Non-tribal (as reported on 2-11-1965)**

Sr. No.	Sub-division where Tribal Reserve Area is there	Tribal Population	Non-tribal Population	No. of tribals having Non-tribal Under-tenants	Area in acres held by such under-tenants	No. of transfers by Regd. Deed	Area transferred by Regd. Deeds	No. of transfers by un-registered Deeds	Area transferred by un-registered Deeds
1.	Sadar	10,710	1,516	-	-	43	66.83	11	10.39
2.	Khowai	35,924	29,296	316	734.87	1,692	1558.83	62	156.04
3.	Kailashahar (including Kamalpur)	7,744	869	8	23.93	57	140.25	2	7.00
4.	Udaipur	6,008	6,276	1	0.65	33	51.18	55	103.50
5.	Amarpur	35,997	12,838	28	397.04	35	201.40	323	505.56
6.	Belonia	11,939	14,154	74	464.90	-	-	134	179.99
7.	Sabroom	13,804	7,596	32	146.49	36	195.23	169	235.23
<b>Total</b>		<b>122,126</b>	<b>72,545</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>1767.88</b>	<b>1,896</b>	<b>2213.72</b>	<b>756</b>	<b>1197.71</b>

**Source : Settlement Office, Agartala.**

people is possible only when both of them stand in a free relation to each other. But if one dominates or subverts the other group when they come into the contact of each other, then cultural exchange is a far cry.

The Government of India did not agree to a repeal of the Order of the Maharaja.<sup>7</sup> In the words of the Tripura Administration, "in Tribal Reserve Areas, the settlement of land to a non-tribal is of course irregular and without any legal effect".<sup>8</sup> But as can be seen in Table 7.2, in-roads have been made into the Area by the non-tribals in flagrant violation of the existing Order. The area acquired by the non-tribals in the Tribal Reserve Area, at the end of 1966, is presented in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3 : Land Transferred to Non-tribals Within the Tribal Reserve Area, as on 14th December, 1966

The mode of transfer	Area transferred in acres	Percentage to total land transferred
1. Registered Deed	2213.72	41.54
2. Un-registered Deed	1215.68	22.81
3. Non-tribal under-raiyat holding land under tribal raiyats	1632.98	30.65
4. Allotment made by the Settlement Department	266.13	5.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>5328.51</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source : Settlement Office, Agartala.

<sup>7</sup> D.O. No. 6/7/65-UTL, New Delhi, 14th September, 1965, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

<sup>8</sup> Letter No. Fuu(4)-TRB/55 of 24th August, 1956, Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tripura.



**Table 7.4 : Concentration of Five Classes of Tribals (Tripura, Jamatia, Noatia, Riang and Halam) in Different Sub-divisions of Tripura in 1931 and 1961**

Sr. Sub-division No.	1931			1961		
	Population of Five classes of Tribals	Total Population	Population of five classes as percentage to total	Population of five classes of Tribals	Total Population	Population of five classes as percentage to total
1. Sadar	46,771	117,033	40.0	90,772	366,076	24.8
2. Khowai	27,669	40,050	69.1	54,791	129,948	42.2
3. Kailashahar (including Kamalpur)	24,355	68,999	35.3	39,702	165,801	23.9
4. Udaipur	11,438	34,390	33.4	19,285	90,074	21.4
5. Amarpur	20,774	27,238	76.3	31,426	56,365	55.8
6. Belonia	13,277	25,272	52.5	21,570	84,827	25.4
7. Sabroom	9,867	14,474	68.2	14,514	43,397	33.4
8. Dharmanagar	3,603	37,534	9.7	22,746	127,548	17.8
9. Sonamura	6,981	27,042	25.4	8,217	77,969	10.5
<b>Total Tripura</b>	<b>164,785</b>	<b>392,032</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>303,023</b>	<b>1,142,005</b>	<b>26.5</b>

**Note :** Kamalpur Sub-division was created in 1951 by bifurcating the Kailashahar Division. The data for these two areas have been added for 1961 to make them comparable. No correction has been done for the transfer of Kanchanpur Tehsil from Kailashahar to Dharmanagar. The Chaimal population of 1961 has been added to the population of five classes of Tribals because Chaimal was a branch of Halam in 1931.

**Sources:** (1) Census Bibarani.

(2) Census of India, 1961, Vol. XXVI, Tripura, Part II(1), Parts III & V-A.

#### 7.4 Controversy over Application of Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India

There has been a persistent and growing demand among some section of the tribals to apply the provisions of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India in the case of the Tribal Reserve Area created by the Order of the erstwhile Ruler and some other areas. The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution gives certain powers and lays certain duties on the Governor of every State that has Scheduled Areas. Part B, para 5 of the Fifth Schedule is stated below:

"(1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, the Governor may by public notification direct that any particular Act of Parliament or of the Legislature of the State shall not apply to a Scheduled Area or any part thereof in the State or shall apply to a Scheduled Area or any part thereof in the State subject to such exceptions and modifications as he may specify in the notification and any direction given under this sub-paragraph may be given so as to have retrospective effect.

"(2) The Governor may make regulations for the peace and good government of any area in a State which is for the time being a Scheduled Area.

"In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such regulations may -

(a) prohibit or restrict the transfer of land by or among members of the Scheduled Tribes in such area;

(b) regulate the allotment of land to members of the Scheduled Tribes in such area;

(c) regulate the carrying on of business as money-lender by persons who lend money to members of the Scheduled Tribes in such area.

"(3) In making any such regulation as is referred to in sub-paragraph (2) of this paragraph, the Governor may repeal or amend any Act of Parliament or of the Legislature of the State or any existing law which is for the time being applicable to the area in question.

"(4) All regulations made under this paragraph shall be submitted forthwith to the President and, until assented to by him, shall have no effect.

"(5) No regulation shall be made under this paragraph unless the Governor making the regulation has, in the case where there is a Tribes Advisory Council for the State, consulted such Council."

Part A, para 3 of the Fifth Schedule further lays down that "The Governor of each State having Scheduled Areas therein shall annually, or whenever so required by the President, make a report to the President regarding the administration of the Scheduled Areas in that State and the executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of directions to the State as to the administration of the said areas."

It may be noted that there is no provision in the Fifth Schedule to declare any tribal area as Scheduled if such area lies in any Union Territory. Tripura, being a Union Territory, is directly under the President of India. Also the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960 has made special provisions for the Scheduled Tribes by which land transfer is banned among tribals and non-tribals. So, the need of creating a Scheduled Area in Tripura is doubted. The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission of 1960 discussed the problem at some length and came to the conclusion that "No distinction should be drawn between the States and the Union Territories in regard to the declaration of Scheduled Areas."<sup>9</sup> According to the Commission, the following four factors should determine the eligibility of a Scheduled Area.

First is the preponderance of tribal population. Secondly, the area should be compact and reasonable in size. Thirdly, it should be under-developed compared to the other parts of the State. Finally, there must be marked disparity in the economic standard of the tribals living in the areas compared to the people in the surrounding areas.

As far as the first criterion is concerned, there cannot be any objective test for it. That this is so can

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<sup>9</sup> Report of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, Vol. I, 1960-61, p. 69.

be seen from the figure for tribal preponderance in the already existing Scheduled Areas. The Table 7.5 shows the area, total population, Scheduled Tribes population and percentage of the latter to the total population of the Scheduled Areas.

**Table 7.5 : The Area and Population of Scheduled Areas in Various States**

State (1)	Area in square miles (2)	Total Population (3)	Scheduled Tribe Population (4)	Percentage of Col. 4 to Col. 3 (5)
Andhra Pradesh	11,342	820,384	767,000	93.0
Gujarat	6,917	1,576,086	993,653	63.0
Rajasthan	4,077	731,986	445,394	60.0
Madhya Pradesh	25,652	2,812,168	1,686,464	59.9
Maharashtra	9,380	1,346,113	733,948	54.5
Orissa	22,014	3,229,049	1,522,527	47.0
Bihar	15,611	5,865,675	2,457,993	41.9
Punjab	4,700	11,423	2,661	23.2

**Source : Report of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, Part I, 1960-61.**

In Andhra Pradesh, the Scheduled Area is having 93.0 per cent of total population as tribal whereas in Punjab, the corresponding figure is 23.2 per cent. According to

the 1961 census, 31.5 per cent of Tripura's total population is tribal. Thus if other conditions are satisfied, the Scheduled Area can be created in Tripura also. But it is doubtful if the interest of jhumias would be served properly by the creation of Reserve Area alone. The disparity in economic standard within tribals is as serious as that prevailing between tribals and non-tribals. The inroads which the non-tribals have made into the Tribal Reserve Area have been possible for the co-operation extended by a section of the tribals only. From the discussions made above and also in the subsequent chapters, it will be noticed that the development of jhumias cannot be effected by legal sanction alone.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE JHUMIA SETTLEMENT SCHEME

#### 8.1 Scheme in Operation

The foremost scheme for the welfare of the jhumias of Tripura has been to wean them away from practising shifting cultivation and settling them on land to do plough cultivation. In an earlier chapter, we have seen that the idea of settling jhumias is quite old. In fact, the Maharaja initiated such a scheme long back in 1888. The progress was slow initially, but by 1931, most of the Jamatia tribals and many among other jhumia tribes had adopted settled cultivation. In 1931 and then again in 1943, the Maharaja of Tripura had reserved vast tracts of land for the purpose of settling some of the jhumia tribes.

The period between 1940-50 has been very trying for Tripura. During the War years, there was a tribal rebellion in the Hills. Some people in Tripura believe that the root cause of the rebellion was the miserable plight of the Riangs. They were not treated equally with the 'Tripura' tribe; also they paid a higher rate of House Tax than others. There was near famine condition in the hill areas of Tripura. Bazars were looted and businessmen were robbed of their merchandise. In 1355 T.E. (1945-46 A.D.), the Maharaja appointed a Special Committee, with Thakur Jitendrachandra

Debbarma as the convenor, to inquire into "the undesirable situation among the Riangs and to suggest means for the establishment of peace and discipline amongst them, which alone can bring moral, social and economic prosperity in a community".<sup>1</sup> Since 1946 - the time of the Great Noakhali Riot - the Hindu refugees had started pouring in Tripura. Also, after the Partition, all road communications to Tripura were lost to Pakistan. In 1949, Tripura was integrated with the Indian Union. Almost simultaneously, there erupted an active Communist movement in the hill areas of the State. The law and order was in jeopardy and the life and security of non-tribals was threatened. Under the circumstances, the Administration had to face a very difficult task of pacifying the tribals. In fact, the situation deteriorated so much that the Census of 1951 had to keep some of the troubled areas outside its consideration. However, the Movement was brought under control by 1951. It was well realized by everybody concerned that the hill people needed an immediate solution to their problems.

It was in this background that the new scheme for Jhumia settlement started in the year 1953-54. The Administration approached the Jhumias with the promise of giving cultivable land in the plains and also giving money-grant

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1 The Tripura State Gazette, 31st Bhadra, 1355 T.E.



for the purchase of bullocks and other equipment for plough cultivation. All cultivable waste land under the ownership of the Government was earmarked for distribution mainly among the Jhumias and the Refugees. In the year 1956-57, it was further decided that instead of giving stray settlement to the jhumias here and there, wherever possible, a group of shifting cultivators could be settled together in a colony. The possibility of setting up a colony was therefore obviously limited by the availability of obtaining enough of plain land in one place. But there were advantages of making a colony in that the Jhumias could be provided with medical, educational and water facilities. A supervisor could also be posted to look into the practical day-to-day difficulties of the Jhumias. Table 8.1 shows the yearwise progress of Jhumia settlement in Tripura under the new Jhumia Settlement Scheme undertaken by the Government since 1953-54.

It will be seen from Table 8.1 that 5,613 out of 18,231 families settled upto the Third Plan period are settled in colonies. This means that 30.79 per cent of those settled are in the colonies and the rest 69.21 per cent of the jhumias have been given stray allotments. Out of the persons given settlement in the Second Plan period, 2,850 are in the colonies and 8,037 are outside. But in the Third Plan period, the colonies have accommodated more of the jhumias - while 2,239 families are living outside,

**Table 8.1 : The Number of Families Allotted Land under the Jhumia Settlement Scheme**

Year	No. of colonies established	No. of families settled in the colonies	No. of families settled otherwise	Total No. of families settled
1953-54	-	-	47	47
1954-55	-	-	313	313
1955-56	-	-	1,982	1,982
<b>Total First Plan</b>	-	-	<b>2,342</b>	<b>2,342</b>
1956-57	1	62	2,160	2,222
1957-58	8	835	2,015	2,850
1958-59	3	248	1,892	2,140
1959-60	4	290	1,696	1,986
1960-61	11	1,415	274	1,689
<b>Total Second Plan</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>2,850</b>	<b>8,037</b>	<b>10,887</b>
1961-62	6	901	233	1,134
1962-63	5	708	357	1,065
1963-64	2	315	589	904
1964-65	3	330	678	1,008
1965-66	4	509	382	891
<b>Total Third Plan</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2,763</b>	<b>2,239</b>	<b>5,002</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>5,613</b>	<b>12,618</b>	<b>18,231</b>

Source : Tribal Welfare Office, Agartala.

2,763 families are living within the colonies. According to the Government, at the end of Third Plan, more than 18,000 families out of 27,000 jhumias are settled, which means that only about 9,000 people still remain to be settled.<sup>2</sup>

The figure of actual number of Jhumia families paying House Tax is given in Table 8.2. It can be seen that at the end of 1963-64, there were more than 42,000 families in the House Tax Register. This means that in the year 1963-64, more than 42,000 families participated in jhum cultivation. Hence it seems that the estimated figure of the Government, which puts the number of jhumia families at 27,000, needs to be revised.

Table 8.2 : Number of Families Paying House Tax between 1959-60 and 1963-64

Year	Number of families paying House Tax
1959-60	43,909
1960-61	46,133
1961-62	46,530
1962-63	42,848
1963-64	42,034

Source : Office of the A.D.M. (Revenue), Agartala.

<sup>2</sup> Ref. No. 621-53/TW/15-25/65 of 19th January 1966, D.M.'s Office, Agartala.

One reason why the estimated figure of jhumia families may not tally with the number of payees of House Tax is that the definition of jhumia in the two cases is not the same. For the purposes of House Tax, any tribal doing shifting cultivation is liable to tax. But the mere act of shifting cultivation does not make a tribal eligible for land and grant. Another reason may be that many jhumias, who were allotted land by the Government, still practise shifting cultivation. Thus their names enter both the lists and it cannot be taken for granted that a person paying House Tax is not an allottee jhumia. Again, some of the jhumias settled by the Government have deserted their settlements and have reverted to shifting cultivation.

For the purposes of the administration of the scheme, the jhumia was defined in the year 1956 as one who depends entirely on jhuming and does not own any land whatsoever.<sup>3</sup> Later the rigour of this definition was modified. In 1959 it was said that a tribal whose main source of livelihood is shifting cultivation may be regarded as a jhumia, provided he can produce the House Tax cheque.<sup>4</sup> With the passing of the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Allotment of Land) Rules in 1962, the definition of a Jhumia is given as follows.

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<sup>3</sup> Letter No. 7756-56/DM/EST/XII-3/56 of 28th May, 1956, D.M.'s Office, Agartala.

<sup>4</sup> Letter No. 404-13/DM/TW/IV-57/59 of 5th May, 1959, Minutes of Discussion on Tribal Welfare Scheme, D.M.'s Office, Agartala.

✓ The Jhumia means a person (i) whose parents were at any time engaged in jhum cultivation, and (ii) who has been personally doing jhum cultivation for a period of not less than one year immediately before he applies for allotment of land, (iii) derives his livelihood mainly from jhum cultivation, and (iv) does not hold as raiyat land exceeding one standard acre in area.<sup>5</sup> At present, the above definition is followed.

After the selection of the jhumia is done, he is offered land and money grants. There has been some changes from time to time in the quantum of land made available to the jhumia. Before 1962, each jhumia used to get three to five acres of land.<sup>6</sup> But under the Provisions of the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Allotment of Land) Rules, 1962 the total area held by any allottee should not exceed two standard acres i.e., either two acres of plain land or six acres of hill land.<sup>7</sup>

The allotted land is generally of the culturable-waste type. The jhumia is expected to reclaim the land properly

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<sup>5</sup> Section 2(e) of the T.L.R. & L.R. (Allotment of Land) Rules, 1962.

<sup>6</sup> See (i) Letter No. 2379-88/DM/EST/XII-3/56 of 17th February 1956, (ii) The Proforma 1, Statement A of the Survey for Jhumia Settlement Programme, Tripura Administration, 1959, and (iii) Annual Administration Report of Tripura, 1960-61, p. 65.

<sup>7</sup> The T.L.R. & L.R. (Allotment of Land) Rules, 1962, Sec. 5(a)(1).

and start plough cultivation within a year of the receipt of money grant (see the Application Form for Settlement in the Appendix). Each jhumia gets an amount of five hundred rupees. In the initial years of operation of the Jhumia Settlement Scheme, Rs. 300/- was paid at the time of allotting land and the balance after partial reclamation was done.<sup>8</sup> Over years the disbursements were tightened because it was found that many of the jhumias did not spend money on agricultural equipment and bullocks, but used the amount for consumption. In 1959, it was decided that the first instalment of Rs. 300/- should be paid only when part of the land was reclaimed. The second instalment was to be paid (i) after the full reclamation of all land was done, (ii) at least half of the area was put to cultivation and (iii) the jhumia owned himself a pair of bullocks or a buffalo for agricultural uses.<sup>9</sup>

Until the year 1956, the Settlement Scheme was administered under the supervision of the District Magistrate. During those years, the work of allotment of land and the settlement of revenue went hand in hand. Individual Khatians (record of right) were opened in the name of the allottee jhumias and they received occupancy right in the allotted

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<sup>8</sup> Letter No. 2379-88/DM/EST/XII-3/56 of 17th February 1956, D.M.'s Office, Agartala.

<sup>9</sup> (i) Letter No. 1295/DM/TW/IV-57/59 of 27th June 1959, and (ii) Letter No. 4735-45/XIX-6/TW/KLS/61 of 29th July 1961.

land at once. Rent was fixed at about Rs. 1.56 per acre per year and no nazarana was charged for land upto four acres.<sup>10</sup> But this policy had some undesired effects. Many jhumias were prompt in applying for allotment, but no sooner they had obtained jote right in the allotted land, they sold it to others. The continuous stream of refugees from East Pakistan provided them with a good market for land. In 1958, a new condition was imposed to prevent the occurrence of such events. While settling land with the jhumias, a new clause in the contract was to be agreed upon to ensure that the land of the allottee was not sold without the prior permission of the Government. "This restriction is being imposed to ensure that people once settled do not claim settlement second time, and permanent cultivation in fact takes place."<sup>11</sup> In another year, further improvements were made in the scheme. It was said that the allottee should receive jote right only after the complete area was reclaimed and the cultivation actually begun by the jhumia. "He may be charged no rent during the first year and a quit rent during the second year of his possession. From the third year onwards, he shall have to pay full rent."<sup>12</sup> A specific

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10 Letter No. 2379-88/DM/EST/XII-3/56 of 17th February 1956, D.M.'s Office, Agartala.

11 Letter No. 3679-89/DM/DV/XIII-1/58 of 18th March 1958, D.M.'s Office, Agartala.

12 Minutes of Discussion on Tribal Welfare Scheme, No. 404-13/DM/TW/IV-57/59 of 5th May, 1959.

condition of settlement would be ineligibility of transfer within 10 years of possession. Penalty for transfer might be (a) the recovery of grant from the jhumia, and (b) the resumption of allotted land.

The problem of land transfer was assuming such a dimension that the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960 made special provisions for the Scheduled Tribes.

According to the Act, no transfer of land by a person who is a member of the Scheduled Tribes shall be valid unless -

(a) the transfer is to another member of the Scheduled Tribes; or

(b) where the transfer is to a person who is not a member of any such tribe, it is made with the previous permission, in writing, of the Collector; or

(c) the transfer is by way of mortgage to a Co-operative Society.<sup>13</sup>

In consonance with the above-mentioned Act and Rules, the Settlement Department decided not to give jote right to the allottee jhumia within ten years from the date of allotment. It started opening Departmental Khatian in the name of the Tribal Welfare Department itself instead of opening individual Khatians in the name of the allottee jhumia. In 1962, the payment of nazarana by a Jhumia was stopped.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The T.L.R. & L.R. Act, 1960, Section 187, Special Provision regarding Scheduled Tribes.

<sup>14</sup> The T.L.R. & L.R. (Allotment of Land) Rules, 1962, Section 12.



But even with all the above-mentioned steps to curb (it) the menace of land transfer has been haunting the Administration. In 1964, it was noted once again that the "non-tribals are making unauthorized entry into the Tribal Colonies and taking over possession of the vacant Government land as well as the land settled with the tribal families by the Government on the pretext of their hypothecation or sale," although, "every inch of land of a tribal colony is under the direct possession of the Government through the Tribal Welfare Wing of the Sub-Divisional Administration and as such any unauthorized entry into any part of the colony eventually amounts to nothing short of a criminal trespass and the intruder is liable to be criminally prosecuted u/s 447 I.P.C. The Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act has also very clearly barred the transfer of any land through sale or hypothecation by a tribal to a non-tribal without the prior permission of the Collector."<sup>15</sup>

Against the above-mentioned odds, the Government is pursuing the Scheme for Jhumia Settlement. The extent of land allotment and expenditure incurred is shown in Table 8.3

It can be seen from Table 8.3 that during the whole course of operation of the Jhumia Settlement Scheme (upto 1967-68), 20,842 families have been settled. On an average

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<sup>15</sup> Memo No. 10132-72/X-(2)/TW/SDO/KLS/64 of 22nd December, 1964.

**Table 8.3 : Allotment of Land and Expenditure Incurred in the Jhumia Settlement Scheme**

Period	No. of families settled	Total land allotted (acres)	Expenditure involved (Rs.)	Average per family allotment of land (acres)	Average per family money expended (Rs.)
First Plan	2,342	8,356	9,45,000	3.57	403.50
Second Plan	10,887	47,141	40,25,400	4.33	369.74
Third Plan	5,002	16,751	26,73,100	3.35	534.41
Annual Plans (1966-67 and 1967-68)	2,611	5,322	11,43,800	2.04	438.07
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,842</b>	<b>77,570</b>	<b>87,87,300</b>	<b>3.72</b>	<b>421.62</b>

Source : Tribal Welfare Office, Agartala.

each family has received 3.72 acres including homestead land and the total money expended on an average is 421.62 rupees per family, including the administrative expenditure. The average per family land allotment has gone down over the years, but the money expenditure has been more in later years than what it used to be in the initial years of the scheme. In fact, each family is supposed to get a money grant of Rs. 500. But because many among the allottee jhumias did not reclaim the allotted land, neither did they adopt settled cultivation wholeheartedly, they were ineligible to get the second instalment of the grant.

## 8.2 Proposed Schemes

At the end of the Third Plan, 9,000 jhumia families (according to the Government estimate) remain to be settled. But, while formulating an approach to the Jhumia problem for the purposes of the Fourth Plan, it has been observed that not much of plough-cultivable waste land is left in Tripura. Consequently, it will not be possible to settle the remaining Jhumia families on plain land. It has, therefore, been decided to revise the pattern of Jhumia Settlement,<sup>16</sup> under the following two schemes.

### (a) Jhumia Rehabilitation Colonies on Flat Hill-land:-

These colonies will be about 30 in number and each of them will consist of at least 200 families. Each family will be allotted 10 acres of flat hill land for cultivation and 0.10 acre for homestead. They are supposed to reclaim the allotted land within about three months. The reclamation work will include not only forest clearance, but also earth work such as ramming, dressing and bunding etc. During the period of reclamation work, each family will be paid a grant of Rs. 450.00 in instalments. This amount will enable the settlers not only to maintain themselves during the period but also to engage a few labourers for expediting the reclamation work. After reclamation work is completed, each family

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<sup>16</sup> Ref. No. 621-53/TW/15-25/65 of 19th January, 1966, D.M.'s Office, Agartala.

will be given the following grants for starting the cultivation work:

(i) Purchase of bullocks	Rs. 250.00
(ii) Purchase of paddy/jute seeds	Rs. 60.00
(iii) Purchase of agricultural implements	Rs. 50.00
(iv) Purchase of fertilizers	Rs. 30.00
(v) Horticulture plants and grafts etc.	<u>Rs. 60.00</u>
Total	<u>Rs. 450.00</u>

It may happen that an allottee does not complete the reclamation work of the entire land before the first cultivation season starts. In that case, the grant for purchase of bullocks will be given only when he completes the reclamation work of at least half of the allotted land. The grant for seeds, fertilizers, grafts and plants will also be made on the basis of the land to be brought under cultivation. The whole idea is that the grant should be released keeping in view the progress made by the allottee. It is also proposed to pay a subsistence allowance of Rs. 50.00 per month to each family for six months before the first crop is harvested. Besides, each family will be given a grant of Rs. 200.00 for the construction of a dwelling house. The total expenditure per family will then be :

(i) Reclamation	Rs. 450.00
(ii) Drought animal and other agricultural inputs	Rs. 450.00
(iii) Subsistence allowance for six months	Rs. 300.00
(iv) Housing grant	Rs. 200.00
Total	<u>Rs. 1400.00</u>

as is shown in the above, Rs. 1,400 per family.

(b) Controlled Jhum Colonies :- If 6,000 families are provided for under the above scheme, there will remain about 3,000 families to be settled. Most of these families live in the deep interior on steep hills where the degree of slope is about 45 and therefore the scope for permanent cultivation even by terracing and contour-bunding is very limited. Such tracts may be seen in areas south of Ananda-bazar in Kanchanpur Police Station, south of Chowmanu in Manu Police Station, the entire Ganganagar area in Teliamura Police Station, eastern sector of Gandacherra Police Station and many other parts of the territory. The hillocks available in such tracts are generally suitable for horticulture and such crops as Lichi, Jackfruit, Guava, Pineapple, Papaya, Banana, etc. As it takes a long time for horticulture to develop, jhuming is likely to continue in these areas. It is, therefore, proposed to establish Controlled Jhum Colonies in these areas, where tribals will be allowed to do jhum on scientific lines so as to cause minimum soil

erosion, loss of soil fertility and destruction of forest wealth.

A Controlled Jhum Colony will consist of about 50 families and it is proposed to have about 20 such colonies to accommodate 1,000 jhumias in all. At present, the tribals in the aforesaid areas are living in small hamlets consisting of 10 to 12 houses. Three or four of such hamlets will be brought together to form a colony. An area of about 2,500 acres will be demarcated around the colony within which the tribals will be permitted to carry on Jhuming under strict supervision of a colony supervisor. The Supervisor will divide the area into about 250 Jhum plots measuring four acres each. Each inmate of the colony will be allotted one plot for Jhuming every year by the Supervisor in consultation with the Village Committee. The allotment of plots will be strictly in rotation so that each plot once put under jhuming will be left fallow for a period of five years. The individual family will clear the plots allotted to them in the months of February and March. While felling the forests, they will mark out the fire-lines, so that when it is set to fire, the neighbouring forest areas are not affected. Fire will be set to the forest clearings in the month of April. Then, after the first showers of rain, seeds of paddy, cotton, sesamum, maize and vegetables will be sown as is done under usual shifting cultivation practices. Weeding operations will be carried once in every

month. Paddy will be harvested in August and September, and cotton and sesamum in the months of November and December.

At the time of sowing paddy etc., the inmates will also sow suitable leguminous crops such as Arahar, Cow-pea or Black gram in the Jhum plots. These crops will soon form a green cover over the soil and thereby prevent soil erosion. It will also add to soil fertility and provide additional food to the tribals. As stated above, a plot once jhumed will not be put under jhuming for a period of five years. During this period, however, the inmates will be encouraged to sow ordinary species of roots and tubers in these plots, which will be of use in the scarcity period.

Simultaneously, horticulture will be introduced in the area according to a phased programme. Each family will be allotted about six acres of land near their homestead to be put under such crops as Lichi, Guava, Jackfruit, with interculture of Pineapple, Papaya, Banana, Ginger and Turmeric. Each family will be given grant of Rs. 62.50 per acre for reclamation. Cash grant will also be provided for purchase of fruit plant and grafts. In all, Rs. 700 will be granted to each family for horticulture.

The Controlled Jhum Colonies, as described above, will accommodate 1,000 families. The remaining 2,000 Jhumias will be absorbed in industries etc., or in the Pig/Sheep rearing farms and in other schemes.

To sum up, the Jhumia Settlement Scheme of Tripura originated with a view to stopping the practice of shifting cultivation among the tribals, and to convert them into settled agriculturists. Upto the end of the Third Plan, by and large, plain land was allotted to the Jhumia. But due to the excessive pressure on land brought about by the Refugee Rehabilitation and the Jhumia Settlement Schemes, the available plain land has all been allotted by the end of the Third Plan. So, now it is proposed to settle the Jhumias on flat hill land and encourage them to try plough cultivation there. The other scheme is to allow jhuming on a restricted scale for the time being and then trying to slowly convert the Jhumias into horticulturists. The rest among the Jhumias will be employed in different small-scale and household industries. By the end of the Fourth Plan period, the change-over from jhuming is expected to be completed.



## APPENDIX VIII-A

TRIBAL WELFARE FORM NO. 1

To His Excellency the President of India

1. Written by Shri \_\_\_\_\_

Father \_\_\_\_\_ Village \_\_\_\_\_  
 Police Station \_\_\_\_\_ Sub-Division \_\_\_\_\_  
 Division \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_

This bond is being furnished by me. I had been maintaining my family for a long time by doing jhum cultivation. But I cannot earn a decent livelihood by this. Over and above, I have to roam like a nomad from one place to another. At present, the Government is allotting land and distributing grants for the purchase of drought animals, plough, seeds, and other agricultural implements and also for the reclamation of land. Hearing of this, I prayed to the Government for land and money grants, and I have been given the same as per description below. I promise hereby that I shall cultivate the land myself, settle there permanently, and shall spend the amount granted to me to meet the exact needs within a year of the receipt of the same. I shall not sell or mortgage the allotted land to anybody, and shall not give up the possession of it for any reason whatsoever. If anything is ever done by me contrary to this, then it will be legally invalid and I shall be bound to return the amount of the

grant to the Government with 6 p.c. interest rate per year, and the land shall be seized by the Government.

2. The money grant will be realizable as Government dues under the provisions of the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960. Shri \_\_\_\_\_

Father \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

will act as my surety for this. Accordingly, I make this bond on my own will and with full knowledge; dated \_\_\_\_\_

The Description of the land

Boundary -

North \_\_\_\_\_

South \_\_\_\_\_

East \_\_\_\_\_

West \_\_\_\_\_

The amount of cash grant paid

The signature of the surety

The signature/Thumb impression of the person receiving the land allotment and the money grant -

Witness

Shri \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER IX

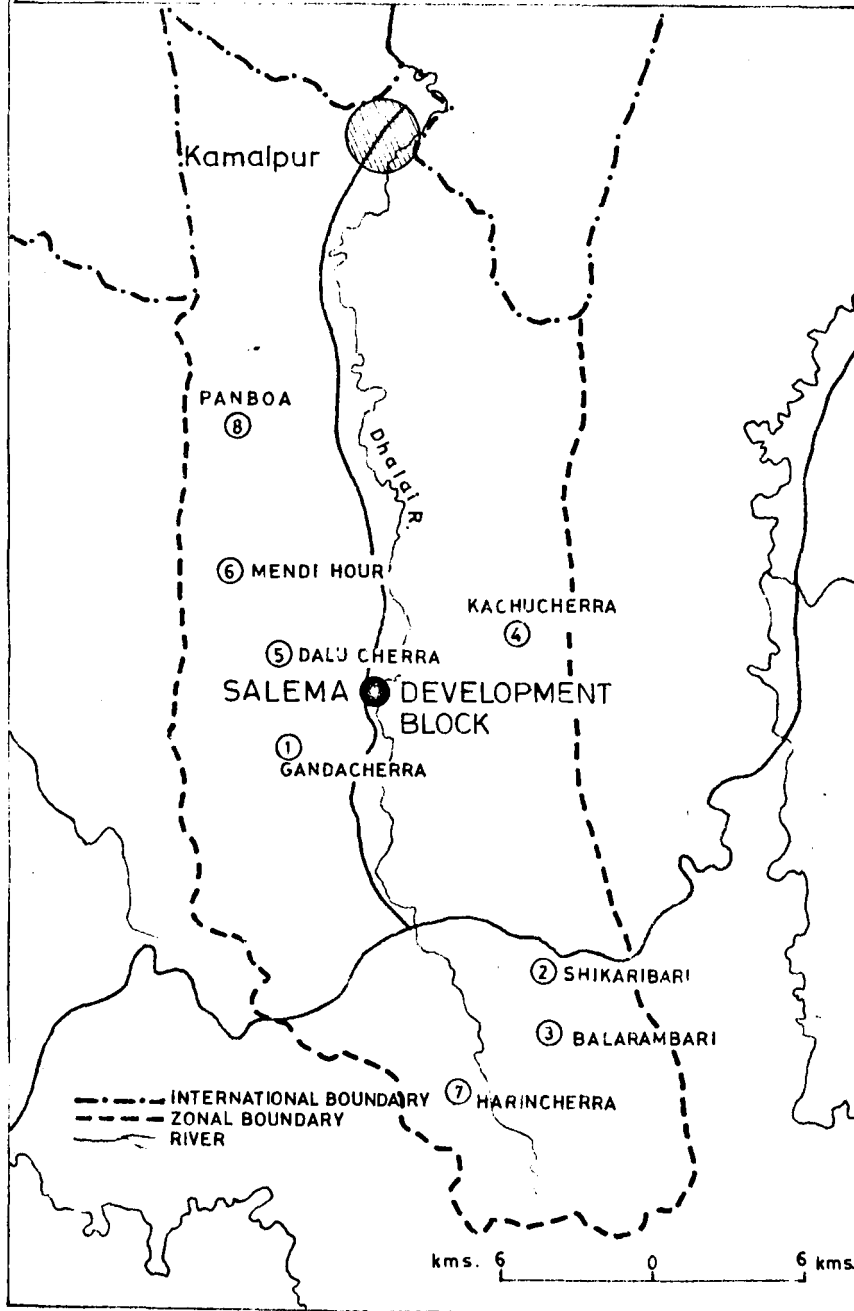
### A REVIEW OF THE WORKING OF THE JHUMIA SETTLEMENT SCHEME

It is now proposed to look into the actual functioning of the Jhumia Settlement Scheme. In the last chapter, the scheme has mainly been discussed with the aid of Government papers. Now we shall offer our own observations on the effects of the operation of the settlement scheme on the life of jhumias.

For our purpose, the Salema Development Block of Kamalpur sub-division of Tripura was selected in consultation with the Tribal Welfare Officer. The main reason why the Tribal Welfare Officer suggested the Salema Block was that there are both 'good' and 'bad' colonies within the jurisdiction of it. There are at present eight colonies there. (The colonies are shown in Map No. 4.) The Table 9.1 illustrates certain basic facts about these colonies.

From Table 9.1, we can observe that all colonies are not of equal size. The number of families settled ranges from 40 in Shikaribari to 134 in Panboa. The rate of desertion also varies from colony to colony; in Shikaribari, the desertion rate is very high - 15 out of 40 families have left the colony. Similarly, in Harincherra, 24 out of 62 families deserted. But in the two colonies of Mendihour and

TRIPURA  
THE JHUMIA SETTLEMENT COLONIES  
UNDER  
SALEMA DEVELOPMENT BLOCK



MAP NO. 4

**Table 9.1 : Position of the Colonies under Salema Development Block in March 1970**

Sr. No.	Name of the colony	Year of establishment	No. of existing families	No. of deserter families	Total No. of families settled	Percentage of families deserted to total No. of families
1.	Gandachera	1956-57	41	24	65	36.92
2.	Shikaribari	1957-58	25	15	40	37.50
3.	Balarambari	1958-59	96	31	127	24.41
4.	Kachucherra	1958-59	58	7	66*	10.61
5.	Dalucherra	1959-60	106	11	117	9.40
6.	Mendihour	1961-62	91	-	91	-
7.	Harincherra	1961-62	35	24	62*	38.71
8.	Panboa	1966-67	131	3	134	2.24
Total of Salema Block			583	115	702	16.38

\* In Kachucherra and Harincherra, one and three families died respectively without leaving any heir.

Panboa, the desertion rate is either nil or negligible. Another feature may be observed from the Table 9.1. The rate of desertion appears to be higher for the older colonies, although Harincherra, a comparatively new colony has no different desertion rate than Gandacherra, which was set up five years earlier.

One crucial factor affecting the desertion rate seems to be the topography and land character of the colonies. Both Shikaribari and Harincherra colonies are hilly and situated in dense jungles. The slope of the hills is also considerable, as a result of which plough cultivation is either difficult or impossible. From enquiries made, it came to light that in both the colonies, people depend heavily on jhum cultivation even though the purpose behind setting up of colonies was to wean the tribals away from it. To the extent the tribals continue to do shifting cultivation, they cannot help being nomads. The following Table sums up the number of families depending either fully or in part on shifting cultivation.

**Table 9.2 : Number of Colonized Tribals Doing Shifting Cultivation in 1969-70**

Sr. No.	Name of the Colony	Number of existing families	Number of families doing shifting cultivation	Proportion of families doing shifting cultivation
1.	Gandacherra	41	9	21.95
2.	Shikaribari	25	25	100.00
3.	Balarambari	96	52	54.17
4.	Kachucherra	58	34	58.62
5.	Dalucherra	106	97	91.51
6.	Mendihour	91	30	32.97
7.	Harincherra	35	35	100.00
8.	Panboa	131	123	93.89
Total		583	405	69.47

**Note :** The number of families practising shifting cultivation varies from year to year.

From the above, it may be noticed that in Shikaribari and Harincherra, 100 per cent families practise jhuming. There are other colonies like Gandacherra and Mendihour, where proportion of families doing jhum cultivation is small. It may also be noted that the proportion of families doing jhum cultivation does not appear to depend on the age of the colony. Shikaribari, an old colony, has as high proportion of shifting cultivators among its inhabitants as that of Harincherra - a colony started four years after the former. There is thus no evidence that the jhumias would settle down to settled cultivation in due course.

It is sometimes suggested that all tribes are not equally receptive to the settlement scheme. In Table 9.3 is presented the tribewise classification of the inmates of the colonies and that of the deserters also.

From Table 9.3, it is seen that some of the colonies house people of various tribes together, whereas others are settled by people belonging to only one tribe. It cannot be that the cosmopolitan character of the colony is responsible for desertion, because even when the colony is predominantly inhabited by members of a single tribe - for instance, Shikaribari, Dalucherra and Harincherra - there occurred cases of desertion. Again, when diverse tribes are accommodated in one colony, the rates of desertion differ for different tribes, e.g., in Kachucherra, none of the

**Table 9.3 : Tribewise Classification of Colony Inmates and Deserters at the End of 1969-70**

Sr. No. of the Colony	Tribewise composition of					
	Existing families		Deserters		Total families settled	
1. Gandacherra	Halam	35	Halam	20	Halam	55
	Noatia	4	Noatia	2	Noatia	6
	Mag	2	Mag	2	Mag	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>
2. Shikaribari	Riang	25	Riang	15	Riang	40
3. Balarambari	Tripura	4	Riang	13	Tripura	4
	Riang	19	Halam	12	Riang	32
	Halam	68	Noatia	1	Halam	80
	Garo	5	Garo	5	Noatia	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>
4. Kachucherra	Tripura	18	Halam	2	Tripura	18
	Halam	38	Noatia	5	Halam	40
	Garo	2			Noatia	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>
5. Dalucherra	Tripura	104	Tripura	11	Tripura	115
	Noatia	2			Noatia	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>
6. Mendihour	Tripura	91	-		Tripura	91
7. Harincherra	Riang	35	Riang	24	Riang	62
8. Panboa	Tripura	131	Tripura	3	Tripura	134

Tripura tribe deserted the colony although people of other tribes are there and a section of them left the colony.



In the following condensed Table, the desertion rate for different tribes is shown.

**Table 9.4 : Desertion Rate for Different Tribes in the Colonies under the Salema Development Block at the End of 1969-70**

Tribe	Total number of families settled	Number of Deserter families	Proportion of Desertion per cent per Tribe
Tripura	362	14	3.87
Riang	134	52	38.81
Halam	175	34	19.43
Noatia	15	8	53.33
Mag	4	2	50.00
Garó	12	5	41.67

The population of Noatia, Mag and Garó being very small in the colonies under consideration, it is not possible to pass any firm judgement about them. But, it seems that ✓ the Noatias are very prone to desertion. Among others, the Riangs have the highest desertion rate. The performance of the Tripura Tribe vis-a-vis the settlement scheme appears satisfactory. Only 3.87 per cent of Tripura tribes have deserted the colonies. But from the above, it cannot be said that the Riang people are not responding properly to the settlement scheme. As has been noted in Table 9.3, the areas selected for Riang settlement are mostly hill areas of

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considerable degree of slopes. Thus there is little prospect of plough cultivation in those places. Consequently, the Riangs depend on shifting cultivation, although nominally they stay within the colonies. Again, within the colony area, there does not exist enough of hill-land for doing shifting cultivation throughout the jhum cycle, as a result of which they leave the colony in search of better jhum land.

One important aspect of the colonization scheme is to grant cash to the jhumias. As has been described in the preceding chapter, the jhumias are given Rs. 500 per family in two instalments for the purchase of bullocks and other agricultural implements. Sometimes, it is suggested that the cash grant is insufficient and that a large section of jhumias are forced to leave the colony because of this. Also, the delayed payment of cash grant is responsible for poor response of the jhumias towards the settlement scheme. In Table 9.5 is presented the number of families obtaining cash grant in various colonies alongside that of number of families possessing bullocks and the number of deserter families.

From Table 9.5 a few contrasts will be pointed out. It may be seen that in Shikaribari and Mendihour colonies, all families have received both the instalments of cash grant. But in Shikaribari, there is no family possessing bullocks whereas in Mendihour 60 out of 91 families possess their own plough cattle. This has happened because in Shikaribari,

**Table 9.5 : Number of Families Obtaining Cash Grant, Possessing Bullocks and the Number of Deserter Families in Various Colonies under the Salema Development Block at the End of 1969-70**

Sr. No. of Colony	No. of families obtaining			No. of families possessing bullocks	No. of Deserter families
	Both instalments	One instalment	No instalment		
1. Gandacherra	63	1	1	24	24
2. Shikaribari	40	-	-	-	15
3. Balarambari	117	3	7	88	31
4. Kachucherra	64	2	-	45	7
5. Dalucherra	92	19	6	13	11
6. Mendihour	91	-	-	60	-
7. Harincherra	36	26	-	7	24
8. Panboa	104	29	1	93	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>115</b>

which is completely hilly, there is no scope for plough cultivation, and as such, there is no need for bullocks. But the Mendihour colony is situated in a valley and has plough-cultivable plain land within its area. Hence, the need of bullocks by its inmates. Out of a total of 702 jhumia families settled in colonies within the jurisdiction of Salema Development Block, 330 families possess bullocks even though both the instalments of cash grant have been

offered to 607 families. It may be recalled from our discussion in the preceding chapter that in the initial years of operation of the Jhumia Settlement Scheme, Rs. 300 was paid at the time of allotting land and the balance after partial reclamation was done. Over the years, the Administration tightened the disbursements because it found that many of the Jhumias did not spend money on agricultural equipment and bullocks, but used the amount for consumption. In 1959, it was decided that the first instalment of Rs. 300 should be paid only when part of the land was reclaimed. The second instalment was to be paid (i) after the full reclamation of all land was done, (ii) at least half the area was put to cultivation, and (iii) the jhumia owned himself a pair of bullocks or a buffalo for agricultural use. It may be noted from Table 9.5 that even in colonies which were set up in or after the year 1959 - like Dalucherra, Mendihour, Harincherra and Panboa - the performance of jhumias in this regard is no better than others who had been settled earlier. It may also be observed that the grant of money instalments is very loosely correlated with the number of deserter families. In Gandacherra and Kachucherra colonies, 63 and 64 families respectively received both the instalments. But the number of deserter families is 24 for the former and 7 for the latter. It is obvious that desertion takes place even after the receipt of money grants. It is not that the jhumias leave the colony because they are not given money for the

purchase of bullocks and other agricultural equipment.

Subsequent to the departure of a section of jhumias from some of the colonies, more land was released for utilization by others. In certain cases, outsiders occupied the land left behind by the deserters, but in others, the remaining colony inmates took possession of the same. How the average per family availability of plough cultivated area within the colony has been affected due to desertion, is shown in the following Table.

Table 9.6 : Average Per Family Availability of Plough Cultivated Land in the Colonies in March 1970  
(in Acres)

Sr. No.	Total Area	Plough Cultivated Area	Number of existing families	Average per family availability of plough cultivated land
1. Gandacherra	374	146	41	3.56
2. Shikaribari	219	-	25	-
3. Balarambari	503	293	96	3.05
4. Kachucherra	500	206	58	3.55
5. Dalucherra	615	400	106	3.77
6. Mendihour	501	295	91	3.24
7. Harincherra	264	60	35	1.71
8. Panboa	666	430	131	3.28

In Shikaribari, none of the inmates practise settled cultivation. Plough area is scarce in Harincherra also. In

these two colonies, people depend mostly on jhuming. Excepting Shikaribari and Harincherra, all other colonies have enough of plough cultivated area in such a way that the present inmates utilize on an average 3.05 to 3.77 acres of plough cultivated area. It does not mean that all inmates have equally taken advantage of desertion by their fellow-inmates. In fact, many among the present colony inmates do not possess even plough cattle. The above Table simply means that the quantum of land originally allotted to the jhumias has no perceptible impact upon subsequent development of their society. By overt or by covert means, the land of many among them is transferred so that disparity in land holding soon arises.

To collect information about the extent of land transfer which is taking place in the Jhumia Settlement colonies is one of the most difficult tasks. The tribals are fully aware of the fact that to transfer land to non-tribals is illegal (vide Section 187 of the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960). But the land is not necessarily transferred to the non-tribal people. A section of tribals, most of whom are colony inmates, try to take advantage of such a transfer. Under the circumstances, the vested interest among the tribals and non-tribals want to conceal all information about it. But the supervisors of various colonies are required to submit a periodic note on all land transfers to the Sub-Divisional Officer so that the

recovery of land is possible. In Table 9.7 is presented the data on land transfer as furnished by the supervisors of respective colonies.

Table 9.7 : Extent of Land Transfer in the Colonies under the Salema Development Block upto March 1970

Sr. No.	Name of the colony	Total number of families transferred land	Number of families transferred land to			
			Non-tribals	of the colony	Tribals of out-side the colony	Total
1.	Gandacherra	13	5	8	-	8
2.	Shikaribari	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Balarambari	10	-	3	7	10
4.	Kachucherra	5	-	5	-	5
5.	Dalucherra	4	1	1	2	3
6.	Mendihour	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Harincherra	1	-	1	-	1
8.	Panboa	-	-	-	-	-
Total		33	6	18	9	27

That the above data are not, strictly speaking, accurate was known during the investigations conducted in the Gandacherra colony. In this colony, house to house investigation was conducted and it was found that the land of all the deserter families has been taken over by either



the remaining colony inmates or by outsiders. Even some of those who are staying currently in the colony have transferred a part of their land to others. Of course, in these latter instance, the transfer is in the nature of mortgage. Hence it is not likely to be permanent and the owner of the land is supposed to regain possession after a few years. The above Table includes only those cases where the transfer has taken place by the mutual consent of the two parties on a supposedly permanent basis. None of the transfer took place by a registered deed. It was reported by the supervisors that they transfer land on mutual understanding by contracting a private deed i.e., by signing on a revenue stamp affixed to a paper stating the facts of the case. Even though such a land transfer is legally invalid, it was learnt that the number of cases in which the recovery of land could be done is nil. From Table 9.7 it may be noted that the supervisors of Shikaribari, Mendihour and Panboa have reported no instance of land transfer. Only in 6 out of 33 cases, the beneficiary of land transfer are the non-tribals; in 18 out of 33 cases, land transfer took place between the colony inmates only.

During the field survey, it was observed that land transfer takes place with respect to those strips of land which are in the plains and are plough-cultivated. After a jhumia tribal gives up shifting cultivation in the hills

and takes to plough cultivation in the plains, he attains a proprietary right over the land so cultivated. He is also cut off from the nuclear village structure of which he was originally a resident. Consequently, he is free to make an independent decision about the land held under his occupation. Again the vegetational and magical specifications which regulate the possession and use of land under shifting cultivation (described in Chapter V : Principles of Land Distribution in Jhum Economy), become outmoded in settled cultivation. As a result, land transfers can be effected by a conscious and calculated attempt made by the colonized tribals. Only difficulty lies in the way of obtaining legal sanction to it. But this is not necessary if the two parties have mutual understanding between them. On the demand side, it may be pointed out that plough land is always highly rated - the tribals as well as non-tribals being always in the search of it.

On the contrary, within the traditional village set-up of jhumia tribals, not only the transfer of land to a non-tribal is impossible but also to a tribal who belongs to a tribe other than that which inhabits the particular village. There are several reasons why such land transfer does not take place in a jhum society. First, each village is inhabited by members of a single tribe. If any inmate of the village wants to migrate to other places or if an

immigrant to the village expresses his desire to settle here, they have to satisfy the Sardar (chief) of the village and other village elders about the reasons of the same. It is open to the existing villagers to deny the entry or exit of anybody. Thus, although land within the village is not any individual's property, the villagers communally keep the village under their occupation, and since no outsider is given entry to the village without the consent of all, land cannot be transferred to a non-resident.

But if an immigrant jhumia is accommodated in the village, land transfer takes place only in a very limited sense. In fact, it attains a different connotation altogether. A newcomer is permitted to stay only when there is surplus jhum land available within the village area. What he obtains is a right to stay in the village and share the available forest for shifting cultivation with other villagers. It is not that somebody transfers his land to the newcomer which is impossible because nobody owns it. The newcomer does not attain a proprietary right either and hence, cannot dispose the land to anyone he likes. The possession of a particular jhum-hill also is not permanent. The area within the village may change hands among the resident villagers in successive 'jhum-cycles'. The decision of an individual jhumia cannot cause such land transfer between jhum cycles.

Finally, as long as the tribals occupy hills which are fit for shifting cultivation alone, the non-tribal plainsmen are not very much attracted by it. Thus the restrictions put by the would-be transferer on the one hand and the disinterestedness of the would-be transferee on the other, prevent the occurrence of land transfer in a jhumia village.

In the colony of Shikaribari, no land is held under settled cultivation. The colony is situated in the steep ranges of Langthorai Hills, and as such, the prospect of reclaiming any plough land is very bleak. Shikaribari is inhabited by Riangs only and surrounded by jhumia villages on all sides. No instance of land transfer has, therefore, been recorded in Shikaribari even though 15 out of 40 families have deserted it.

Harincherra is another such colony, the inhabitants of which are primarily shifting cultivators. The solitary instance of land transfer recorded in this colony took place with respect to a small strip of land which is used permanently for plough cultivation.

All other colonies are mainly situated on plain land. The colonies of Dalucherra, Mendihour and Panboa are inhabited by Tripura tribe only. So, the nuclear form of village organization which prevailed in jhum economy has been retained in these places. Moreover, the Tripura tribe appears to be more receptive in their attitude towards settled life. Possibly

for these reasons, few cases of land transfer have been reported in Dalucherra while no such cases occurred in either Mendihour or Panboa. Of course, another reason for less incidence of land transfer might be that these colonies are comparatively younger in age. Given sufficient time for the free interaction of social forces, land will be transferred from one section of inmates to others. In fact, in the colony of Dalucherra, which is oldest among the three, 4 out of 117 families originally settled, have transferred their land to others.

The remaining colonies viz., Gandacherra, Balarambari and Kachucherra house people of various tribes together. This has no doubt helped to corrode the spirit of cohesion among them. Moreover, they are sufficiently old colonies - all of them being started between 1956-57 and 1958-59. Thus we notice the maximum number of land transfer among the inhabitants of these colonies.

From a house to house enquiry conducted in the Gandacherra colony, it was learnt that land is transferred mainly in three different situations. First, if the headman of the household dies an untimely death within a few years of his coming to the colony and if he leaves behind him minor children, the wife may think of remarrying in which case she leaves the colony with her children. In Gandacherra the headmen of 11 out of 65 families settled have died after

coming to the colony. The successors of six of the deceased inmates have deserted the colony. Secondly, due to prolonged illness of any member of the household, particularly the male members, land may not be put to proper cultivation. Borrowing money by keeping the land as a mortgage may be necessary. In the event of non-repayment of debt, land is transferred to the moneylender. Lastly, if the pair of plough cattle dies, the jhumia is not able to replace it by purchasing new bullocks, because he lacks savings. He is forced to borrow bullocks from others who possess it, but the rate of bullock-labour is very high. He has to pay the bullock-owner 3 to 4 rupees a day for the services of the bullocks. Alternatively he is required to pay a portion of the produce after harvesting is done. In this latter case, he may be required to pay the bullock-owner 5 to 8 maunds of paddy. Because paying in cash is difficult for a jhumia, he accepts to pay in kind after harvesting. But after paying 5 to 8 maunds of paddy to the bullock-owner, he is left with less amount of grains than what he and his family members require for a year's consumption. Within a few years, he is impoverished. If he has borrowed money in the meantime, he may pay back by transferring the land. Else, he may think of giving the land on share-cropping basis to somebody and himself revert back to shifting cultivation in the hills.

In the colony of Gandacherra, the number of families with bullocks is shown in the following Table 9.8.

**Table 9.8 : Number of Families Possessing Plough Cattle in Gandacherra Colony in 1957-58, 1965-66 and 1969-70**

Year	Total No. of families settled	No. of deserter families	No. of existing families	No. of families doing shifting cultivation	No. of families transferred land	No. of families possessing plough cattle
1957-58	60	-	60	N.A.	-	56
1965-66	65	12	53	22	5	40
1969-70	65	24	41	9	13	24

Note : The data of 1957-58 and 1965-66 are collected from the Gandacherra Colony Inmates' Register which was originally filled in by the then Supervisors of the colony under directions from the Tribal Welfare Department of the Government of Tripura.

From Table 9.8, it may be seen that the number of inmates has gone down more rapidly between 1965-66 and 1969-70 than in the period between 1957-58 and 1965-66. The number of families who have transferred land during this period has also increased. This only substantiates the presumption that given sufficient time for the free interaction of social forces, land will be transferred from one section of inmates to others. At the end of the first year of the colony's existence, only 4 families are found to be without plough cattle. In 1969-70, 24 out of 41 families i.e., 58.5 per cent of families staying in the colony possessed

plough cattle. The number of families depending on jhum cultivation either wholly or in part has fallen. In 1965-66, 22 out of 53 families practised shifting cultivation either inside or outside the colony. Today, there are 41 families in Gandacherra; out of them, only 9 families practise shifting cultivation. But this does not mean that more people have successfully switched over to plough cultivation. In fact, some of those who did jhum in 1965-66 have deserted the colony in subsequent years.

During our field survey, the inmates were asked to report about their main source of livelihood. The following Table summarizes the position as regards source of living of the Gandacherra colony inmates.

Table 9.9 : Source of Livelihood of Gandacherra Colony Inmates, March 1970

Source	No. of families
Settled cultivation	24
Settled and shifting cultivation	9
Settled cultivation and wage labour	7
Wage Labour	1
Total	41

It may be noted from Table 9.9 that out of 41 families staying in Gandacherra, only 24 families stated categorically



that they derive their livelihood basically from settled cultivation. The remaining 17 families depend on either wage labour or a combination of settled cultivation, jhum cultivation, and wage labour.

In Table 9.8, it was seen that 24 families possess plough cattle in Gandacherra. It should not be surmised that those who are engaged in settled cultivation only possess their own bullocks. In fact, some among the persons depending only partly on settled cultivation own bullocks. The position in this regard is illustrated in the following two-way Table.

Table 9.10 : The Source of Livelihood of Families, Who Possess or Do Not Possess Bullocks in Gandacherra Colony, as Reported in March 1970

Number of families possessing	Number of families depending on		Total
	Settled cultivation	Settled cultivation and/or shifting cultivation and/or wage labour	
Bullocks	19	5	24
No bullocks	5	12	17
Total	24	17	41

From the Table 9.10, it may be noted that 19 out of 24 families possessing their own bullocks depend mainly on settled cultivation, while 12 out of 17 families not owning

any bullocks, depend on settled cultivation and/or shifting cultivation and/or wage labour.

Among the 19 settled cultivators who possess bullocks, three have already transferred either completely or in part their own land to others, three have mortgaged a part of their land to the moneylenders, and one has leased out his land on 50:50 share-cropping basis to his brother - a colony inmate who transferred his own land in times of distress. Five of these seven families have taken possession of the land left behind by the deserters. The remaining two families have leased-in land on 50:50 share-cropping basis from moneylenders who have expropriated the tribals' land within the colony and get it cultivated by colony inmates themselves. Excepting these seven families, the rest in this group appear to be the solvent inmates of the colony. They reported neither leasing-in nor leasing-out of any land. They have not transferred any land to anyone else. It was learnt from the supervisor of the colony that four among them are known to have purchased land on mutual understanding from deserters.

There are five families who do not possess any bullocks but still reported earning their living from settled cultivation. Two among these five families hire bullocks and do plough cultivation in the strips allotted to them. The remaining three have transferred their land - one transferred

his land to a tribal inmate of the colony and others to non-tribals from outside. These three families have been reduced to the status of share-croppers, and as such they reported earning their livelihood from settled cultivation.

There are five families who possess bullocks but still reported mixed economic activity as their occupation. One of them has mortgaged a part of his land to another tribal of the colony. The little bit of land which is retained by him is not sufficient for his family needs. Hence he does jhuming also in the nearby hills outside the colony. The remaining four families have surplus labour power and they engage some of their family members in either jhuming or labour work.

There are twelve families who reported possessing no cattle and practising a combination of settled cultivation, shifting cultivation and/or wage labour. Three of these families have leased out land on share-cropping basis because they do not possess any plough cattle. They engage themselves in shifting cultivation and derive a part of their income from the portion of the produce paid by the share-croppers. Eight families in this group have kept their land as mortgage with the moneylenders. They live on a combination of share-cropping, shifting cultivation and/or wage labour. The remaining one family has sold all his land to an outsider and has taken land on lease from his brother, who is also a colony inmate.

The position of the Gandacherra colony inmates as regards ownership of land and bullocks is summarized in the following Table.

**Table 9.11 : Number of Families Owning Land and Bullocks in Gandacherra Colony in March 1970**

Number of families owning	Number of families possessing			Total
	All allotted land	Part of allotted land	No land	
Bullocks	16	6	2	24
No bullocks	5	5	7	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>41</b>

From the discussions above, it may be noted that moneylending is the instrument by which land is gradually alienated from the colony inmates. The immediate causes of borrowing might be death or prolonged illness of a family member or death of a bullock. In 1957-58, when the colony was inaugurated, all jhumias were, roughly speaking, accorded the same treatment. But those among them, who suffered setbacks due to the above-mentioned causes had to suffer at the hand of moneylenders. Slowly, as a result of this, a class of share-croppers and wage earners is being created from among the colony inmates. The jhumias who could not reconcile with their new status left the colony

for doing shifting cultivation in the hills. (There is one exceptional case, which is that of a jhumia who prayed for allotment of land and grant of money, but after he had obtained them, he left the colony by selling the land to an outsider.)

But, it needs to be pointed out that in Gandacherra, the non-tribals have not physically moved into the colony. The non-tribals seem to be conscious about the legal limitation of such a step on their part. In the absence of legal sanction, they cultivate the land transferred to them (sometimes with the assistance of colony inmates only) for as many years as they like. They may sell away the land on mutual understanding to another person of their choice. It was reported that sometimes they put colony inmates as dummies to validate such land transfer. With a section of colony inmates emerging as the elite, it is not difficult to discover such dummies. Because recovery of land is difficult - which is exemplified by the fact that legal recovery has not been done even once - such a practice can continue for a long time till the objective of the scheme is frustrated. Although there are legal limitations to land transfer by a tribal, Section 187 of the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act permits such transfer if it is to another member of the Scheduled Tribes. It should also be noted that the colonized jhumias are prohibited from transferring the

allotted land for until 10 years after allocation. The colony of Gandacherra, being started in 1957-58, is, therefore, old enough to permit legal land transfer between tribals.

The lending of money to tribals is not anything new in Tripura. About 40 years back, the various sources of exploitation of the tribals of the interior areas of the State by the moneylenders of the plains was noted in the Census Biharani.<sup>1</sup> It was remarked therein that moneylenders who belong mostly to the Bengalee Saha community, lend money to the tribals at an interest rate of 100 to 300 per cent per year. They make it a condition that the harvested crops be sold to them at less than market prices. The moneylender cheats the tribal by weighing his products on wrong scales and measures. It is a common saying in Tripura that the jhumias were forced to sell cotton and sesamum to the moneylender in return to which they obtained salt of equal weight. But apart from such malpractices, it has not been mentioned anywhere that land transfer is manipulated by the moneylender. It is only after the jhumias were settled on plain plough land that the moneylenders discovered the potentiality of asking for the land as mortgage. But, even now, land is mortgaged only in those cases where the jhumia

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1 Op.cit., p. 107.

possesses some plain land. In the hilly Shikaribari colony, for instance, no moneylender demands land mortgage. This does not mean that they do not lend money to the inmates of Shikaribari colony. In fact, they give it as crop-loan. The same moneylender, who asks for land mortgage in one place, may extend loan in others just in good faith, not because the tribals of one place are honest and that of others are dishonest, but precisely for the reason that asking for land mortgage is possible in one place and not possible in another.

In Gandacherra, 30 out of existing 41 families are indebted. They are indebted mainly to the private moneylenders, although 19 of the 30 indebted families reported that they had taken loan from the Co-operative Credit Society of Gandacherra as well. The colony inmates were urged upon to disclose the source of borrowing in case it was a private agency. They stated 14 names in all, out of which one is a Marowari businessman of a nearby market centres, five are tribals and the remaining eight are outsider Bengalees. Out of the five tribal mahajans, four are colony inmates and one is a jotedar of long standing. On enquiry from the Supervisor of Gandacherra colony, it was learnt that 11 of these 14 moneylenders are known to have expropriated the jhumias of their allotted land in the colony at sometime or the other. Some among them lend bullocks on hire to the

colony inmates at the rate of 5 to 8 maunds of paddy per pair for cultivating 2 to 3 acres of land.

Thus it may be noted that settling the jhumias on plain plough land is not easy. The allotted land is fast passing out of their hands. Some of them have lost their bullocks as well. Devoid of the ownership of the means of production, some of the colonized jhumias are deserting the colony for doing shifting cultivation outside; while those who continue to remain in the colony are being transformed into share-croppers and landless labourers. In the work of shifting cultivation, share-cropping or wage labour, the possession of labour power is necessary. The colonization scheme envisaged offering land and cattle to the jhumias and thus converting them into settled cultivator. But once the jhumia loses ownership over land and cattle, he is left with labour power alone. There is no option before him other than going back to jhuming which can be done in the unreserved forest areas. Alternatively, if he insists on staying in the colony, he is reduced to the status of share-cropper or wage labour. The jhumias cannot do business or trade in the absence of capital. In Gandacherra colony, none of the tribals reported business or shopkeeping as his occupation. The inmates of Gandacherra colony walk about two miles and go to the nearest market Kulai for purchasing small things. They cannot get salaried jobs either because they are mostly illiterate. In the whole of Gandacherra



colony, there are four families only who have high school going children. They belong to that class of families who lend bullocks or money to the fellow-inmates in distress, or have purchased land sold by deserters. Thus, to the extent the colonization scheme has created a group of vested interest (or, elite), it has succeeded in weaning the tribals away from shifting cultivation. But for a large section of the population, it has not been possible to keep the allotted land. They have been dispossessed and have either been reduced to wage-earners or share-croppers in the settled colonies or have reverted to jhuming.

## CHAPTER X

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

At the end of our study on problems of socio-economic adjustment of Tripura jhumias, it is proposed to summarize the salient features of socio-economic changes which were indicated in the earlier chapters. May it be noted at the outset that the problem of adjustment arises only in a dynamic context. Our study has shown, first of all, that the world of Tripura tribals has continually been changing in the past. Out of the primitive inter-tribal warfare of the obscure past, Tripura does not seem to have emerged as a separate kingdom until the fourteenth century. But the contact with non-tribals is older than this. The tribe 'Tripura' took advantage of this contact and established a monarchical form of Government with the aid of non-tribal Bengalee plainsmen. The Bengalees remained concentrated in the capital town Udaipur and helped the king in his administration of the land. They, with their caste-based social organization, enlarged the base of economic activity in that region instead of competing with the tribals in the narrow sphere of shifting cultivation. Consequently, trade and commerce developed - the benefit of which accrued to the

tribals as well. The Muslims of the lower plains of East Bengal entered Tripura in large numbers from early nineteenth century in search of easily available plough land. The reclamation of waste land and the extension of settled cultivation conducted by the Muslims increased revenue earnings of the State, which gave further prosperity to everyone concerned.

The contact with non-tribals is sometimes held responsible for the distress of hill-men. It is found that such generalization is not valid unless the economic interests of the two groups clash. With failure of jhum crops in every successive year since 1927-28 and the world-wide Depression in 1930, the disquieting unrest manifested itself all around, leading occasionally to organized propaganda against money-lenders and land-owners. The tribals became restive because the economy of non-tribals did no longer remain complementary to their economic pursuits but conflicted with it in the sense that traders and moneylenders wanted to make money out of their misfortune. A Tribal Reserve Area had to be created in the year 1931 to protect the interest of Tripura's indigenous tribes. The irony was that the Tribal Reserve Area was situated in Kalyanpur of Khowai subdivision where non-tribals were accorded warm welcome only a few years ago, namely, in the year 1916-17.

To change the traditional mode of shifting cultivation,

the inducement had to come externally. To protect the valuable Sal forests of the State, restrictions were put to jhuming in the year 1887. In 1888, the then Maharaja placed a scheme of settling jhumias permanently on land at the hands of Tripura Administration. With the creation of extensive forest reserve between 1935-36 and 1942-43, the area available for shifting cultivation was narrowed. The export duty on jhum products like cotton and oilseeds was at one time a valuable source of State revenue of Tripura. In 1873-74, export duties on cotton and oilseeds amounted to about Rs. 46,000, which was much higher than what Tripura State earned from exporting forest produce. In 1873-74, the tolls on forest produce was only Rs. 27,000. But with the passage of time, forest produce became more valuable than jhum products. In 1933-34, tolls on forest produce exported amounted to Rs. 3,48,000 while export duties on cotton and oilseeds amounted to only Rs. 1,07,000. Under the circumstances, the jhumias had to lose the game and make room for forests by abandoning the age-old practices of shifting cultivation. The creation of Tribal Reserve Area in 1931 and then again in 1943 amply demonstrated the Administration's intention to stop shifting cultivation in Tripura for all time to come.

The ruling Tripuras had built up over years a social heirarchy in which other tribals were accorded a status

inferior to its own. The Lushai-Kukis were very much looked down upon for their ferocious behaviour, while the Riang and Noatias were asked to carry the coolie work in the hills. In matters of taxation, discrimination was done in favour of the ruling tribe, Tripura, and the warrior tribe, the Jamatias. The Riang and the Noatias had to rise in revolts; else, they would merely take the opportunity of one of their periodical migration to cross the border, change their allegiance and cancel their debts.

The impact of this long discrimination has left a trail behind which is significant even today. Jamatias, the military force of Tripura Kings, had never been as migratory as others. This was in keeping with their profession only. Thus we find that even before 1931, most of the Jamatia tribes had successfully switched over to settled cultivation. After the creation of Tribal Reserve Area in Khowai sub-division, the Tripura tribe also moved into it in large numbers, obviously for taking advantage of the new offer made by the Government. But the plight of the remaining tribes did not improve much. The neglected tribes like Riang and Noatia constitute much of Tripura's problem today. It has been seen that they are not able to keep pace with others. They are less receptive to the settlement scheme and even when land and money are abundantly spent by the Tripura Administration for their benefit, they

despise settled life and desert the colonies constructed for their habitat.

Brushing aside the inter-tribe differences, it may be said that the intra-tribe difference had never assumed serious dimensions in Tripura. In a society where none owns much of assets excepting personal belongings, and where everyone has to work to earn his living out of a primitive production process - the surplus produced by shifting cultivation being not sufficient to sustain a large and permanent leisured class - this was but the natural outcome. But the Jhumia Settlement Scheme, which is being pursued with all sincerity since 1953-54, has introduced a new dimension in the problem of socio-economic adjustment of Tripura jhumias. It is creating class differences within members of a single tribe. Due to accidents like death of headman of the household or that of bullocks, which they had purchased with Government grant, the jhumia is forced to borrow from moneylenders by mortgaging the land with them. When one section of the colonized jhumia is thus losing its grip over the means of production, another group of vested interest is slowly emerging from among them to make capital out of it. This is the latest phase of socio-economic changes of Tripura Jhumias, the impact of which will be unavoidably felt in the future years to come.

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