

# Introduction

This study was undertaken in pursuance of a scheme sanctioned by the North Eastern Council vide No. NEPF/74/81-82/16 dated 5-5-81. There is no written law on the land systems of Arunachal Pradesh except three Jhumland Regulations of 1947, and the entire system is based on customary laws of the tribes. The customs differ from tribe to tribe and from locality to locality. There are about 110 tribes in Arunachal Pradesh and it is not possible to study the customs in respect of all of them. There are about 19 major tribes whose customs about rights over land are considered to be representative of the major part of Arunachal Pradesh territories. Out of these major tribes we selected 11 in order of their population and importance after consultation with high officials and public men of Arunachal Pradesh. These eleven tribes are (1) the Nishis, (2) the Apa Tanis, (3) the Hill Miris, (4) the Idu Mishmis, (8) the Miju Mishmis, (9) the Digaru Mishmis, (10) the Khamtis and (11) the Noctes. The villages inhabited by them were listed from the census reports of 1971 and at least one cluster of villages was selected for each tribe.\* A list of the selected tribes, their population and the respective village clusters is given in Appendix I.

Of the eleven tribes selected for field studies, some were found, in the course of our studies, to have almost identical customs on land system with minor variations on unimportant items. Such tribes were grouped together for the purpose of our studies. There were two such groups—(1) the Adi group—consisting of Gallongs, Minyongs and Padams, and (2) the Mishmi group—consisting of Idu, Miju and Digaru Mishmis. The remaining tribes were taken individually.

The chapters are arranged in the following order in conformity with the geographical sequence from west to east. (1) The Nishis, (2) The Apa Tanis, (3) The Hill Miris, (4) The Adis, (5) The Mishmis, (6) The Khamtis and (7) The Noctes.

We regret that, in spite of our earnest desire to visit the Monpa areas, we could not do so due to limitation of time and other constraints.

The actual methods followed in collecting primary data were (1) plot-to-plot visit in selected fields, (2) interviews with key-persons and (3) group-discussions with different categories of persons including officials.

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\* Method of study of cluster of villages was adopted in Arunachal Pradesh in the Credit Plan Study of State Bank of India. Prof. Lionel Caplan adopted the cluster-study method when he was investigating the land-system of East Nepal. (Vide his "Land and Social Change in East Nepal").

Plot to lot visits in selected fields were carried on by Director and Research Officers. Standing on a plot of land, along with the villagers, we traced its genesis and history which helped to throw light on the mode of acquisition of initial right, its transmission by inheritance or transfer, restrictions on alienation, and so on. We recorded : (a) the name of the occupant and the area occupied as far as possible, (b) how he came to occupy it (i.e. whether by jungle clearing, inheritance or transfer), (c) if by jungle clearing then, whether permission from anybody was taken, (d) if by right of inheritance, then from whom, and what was the customary law of inheritance, and if there was any deviation from that law, then what was the justification, (e) if by transfer, then from whom, and at what price, whether any transfer document was executed, and whether there was any restriction on transfer, (f) if it was jhum plot, then what was the period of consecutive cultivation and period of rest, and whether the jhumia returned exactly to the same plot after the jhum cycle, (g) whether the plots were demarcated and identifiable, and if so whether they could be surveyed and mapped, and so on.

In addition to the direct plot-study as mentioned above, key-persons of the village, such as village headmen, members of Anchal Samitis and Gaon Panchayats, were interviewed. Then, further group-discussions were held with the leaders of the village and officials wherever available.

Land dispute case records, wherever available were examined with a view to ascertaining the rights over land, in confirmation of the findings of the plot-studies. Loan documents in banks were also looked into to determine the nature of right or of property mortgaged. Other documents consulted include various government reports, proceedings, regulations, circulars, statements, etc.

We hope that the results of the study presented in the following chapters will give a correct and fairly representative picture of the land-system prevailing in the Union Territory. They cover findings on "ownership tenure, alienation, succession, use, survey and settlement, and preparation of land records" which were mentioned as the object of this study in the N.E.C's note attached to the letter sanctioning the scheme. In the two concluding chapters, we have pointed out the general uniformities of the various features of the land systems prevailing among the different tribes studied.

We take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all those who helped us in collecting the various data. We are particularly grateful to the officers of all ranks belonging to the Government of Arunachal Pradesh, without whose collaboration and assistance in all forms (transport, accommodation and interpretation, to mention only a few) it would have been absolutely impossible for us to carry on this study. We also convey our respect to Chief Minister Sri Gegong Apong, and Ex-Chief Secretary, Sri R.K. Patir whose guidance at the very beginning of the field-study was of invaluable help. We find no adequate words to express

our gratitude also to the local leaders at each place who not only clarified numerous knotty points faced during the investigations but helped us solidly in establishing an easy rapport with the villagers. For want of space it is not possible to name them all, but certain names such as those of Sarvashri Gora Parten, Ite, Pulu, Tomo Riba, Tumpak Ete, Doken Ete, Kuru Hasang, Padi Yube, Lod Koji, C.K. Gohain, C.K. Manpung, Nokma Nemati, Rajkumar Wangmai, Wankop Lowang, late Oken Lego and host of others cannot be disassociated from this report. Lastly, but not the least, our thanks go to the countless villagers who replied to our queries ungrudgingly and arranged for our comforts in difficult journeys, and whose open hearted hospitality cannot be described in words.

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