

PATTERN OF OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY IN RESPECT OF THE PLAIN
GAROS OF MANIKNAGAR VILLAGE OF KAMRUP DISTRICT : ASSAM

A Study Undertaken Under J S T F Programme

17

A Report Submitted to the Institute of
Social Change and Development : Guwahati :

1993-94

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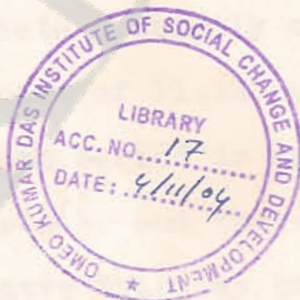
By—

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Junior short Term Fellow, ISCD
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Forwarded

Bhaleshin

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PREFACE

This report is the result of field research undertaken among the Garos of Maniknagar village of Kamrup District, Assam, for nearly two and half months from November 1993 to middle of January 1994.

This study was undertaken under the supervision of Dr. B. K. Medhi, Reader, Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University.

The village Maniknagar is situated 13 km. away from North Guwahati (Rajadhar) proper. It is inhabited by Plain Garos who were selected for my field study. I have collected data specially on pattern of occupational mobility in respect of Plain Garos of Maniknagar village. Two and half month period is not ~~much~~ ^{errors and omissions} sufficient to study the matter in detail, and there may be pitfalls in the report. But I have tried my best to collect and present the data as good as possible. This report is not meant for whole Garo tribe, but it is the material taken from plain Garos of Maniknagar village.

At the very outset, before attempting to give a description of the study, pattern of occupational mobility of Maniknagar village, I would like to offer my

sincere gratitude to the following persons, without whose help this report would have remained undone.

At first I offer thanks to my Supervisor, Dr. B. K. Medhi, Reader, Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, whose able guidance has been my individual inspiration and asset. He guided me during the collection of data and went on helping me and giving me advices in all other matters.

I offer my thanks to Mr. Sankar Mahanta, Mr. Pabitra Mahanta and Miss Rumi Mahanta of North Guwahati who have helped me in the field to get acquainted with the people of the village.

I also offer my thanks to Shri Dasarath G. Momin, headman of Maniknagar village, who was kind enough to help me during the field work.

Lastly, my sincere gratitude and utmost gratefulness go^{es} to all those who have directly or indirectly assisted me and contributed in completing this work.

Atrima Bhagabati
(Atrima Bhagabati)

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CHAPTER - I

THE GAROS

The principal abode of the Garos is the Garo Hills of Meghalaya. They are also distributed over the Districts of Kamrup, Goalpara, Nagaon of Assam. The Garos use the word 'Achik' or 'Mande' to refer themselves, the first word meaning 'ⁿhillman' and the second word meaning 'man'. The Garo society is matrilineal and descent, inheritance, succession authority and residence after marriage are traced in mother's line among them. The Garo society is divided into three larger kin-groups i.e. Chutchi, which is again divided into a number of class i.e. machong. These machongs are further divided into a number of lineages i.e. mahari. The roles of mahari, machong and chutchi are very prominent among them. Traditionally they were animistic, but now-a-days almost all the Garos are baptised in Christianity. The main-stay of the Garos is Jhuming. In the hill slopes they practised slash and burned type shifting cultivation.

Although the Garos ^{is} ~~is~~ a hill tribe, for various reasons a large section of them have abandoned their

original habitat and have migrated to adjacent plain areas.

Geographical Environment

The homeland of the Garos is the Garo Hills district of Assam, situated between $25^{\circ}9'$ and $26^{\circ}1'$ North latitudes and between $89^{\circ}49'$ and $91^{\circ}2'$ East longitudes. The major portion of the district is covered by hills and low plateaux interspersed with small patches of lowlying flat land, which constitute valleys of small rivers. The topography is quite different in areas adjoining the plain areas of the Goalpara district and East Pakistan. The plains of the Brahmaputra valley extend to about 6 to 8 miles in the northern areas of the district.

The climate of the district in general is temperate. But it is not uniform all over the district. The areas adjoining the plains are much ^{warmer} ~~hotter~~ in comparison to the areas in the interior. The coldest area of the district is the northeastern areas adjoining the Khasi hills district, where in the coldest months slight frosting occurs occasionally.

The district has mainly two seasons, hot rainy and cold dry. These are known to the Garos as wachikari (the rainy season) and arankari (the season when the soil

becomes dry). Usually the hot rainy season lasts from April to October followed by the cold dry season from November to March. However, the Garo ^{further divides} ~~distinguish~~ ^{into} ~~parts~~ of these two major seasons : ~~these are~~ : balwakari (the season of winds, corresponding roughly to April-May) which is regarded as a part of the wachikari ; su'urikari (the season of frosting, corresponding roughly to December-January) which is regarded as a part of the arankari. Further, the Garo divide the year according to their activities connected with shifting cultivation. The year begins with a'aokari (the season of clearing plots for shifting cultivation), followed by a'asokari (the season of firing the plots), migekari (the season of planting), a'jakra dangkari (the season of first weeding), sampang dangkari (the season of second weeding), murad ratkari (the season of third weeding), mirakari (the season of harvesting), dongrokari (the idle season). The best season of the district is the beginning of the cold dry season (dongrokari) when the climate becomes pleasantly cool. Towards the end of the cold season the climate becomes extremely dry, and the vegetation in the jungles dry up and very often catch fire. In the middle of the hot rainy season, the jungles become covered with dense vegetation and combined with an assortment of troublesome insects, the humid heat occasionally becomes unbearable.

A General Account of the Tribe

The Garo are the linguistic kindred of other speakers of the languages of the Bodo group of the Tibeto-Burman family spread all over Assam, such as the Chutiya, the Moran, the Dimasa, the Kachari, the Rabha, the Koch and the Hill Tippera. The languages of these people show a general similarity with the Garo language.

The Garo are divided into the following sub-tribes :

- (1) The Awe
- (2) The Chisak
- (3) The Matchi-Dual
- (4) The Matabeng
- (5) The Ambeng
- (6) The Ruga-Chibok
- (7) The Gara-Ganching
- (8) The Atong
- (9) The Megam

At the present time these sub-tribes can be spoken of as dialect groups, though the social divergencies point out the fact that at one time these dialect groups were sub-tribes par excellence. Among each sub-tribe we find predominance of certain clans while some particular clans are limited to certain sub-tribes only.

The sub-tribes which are distinct from all others are the Atong and the Megam. The dialect spoken by the Atong is not intelligible to speakers of other Garo dialects. It represents an archaic form of the language. Strikingly enough there is much phonological and semantic affinity between the language of the Atong on the one hand and those of the Koch and the Rabha on the other, though these tribes now inhabit areas widely apart. Intermarriages between the Atong and other sub-tribes of the neighbouring areas are frequent.

The Megams do not inhabit any area within the Garo Hills district. Their habitat is confined to the areas of the Khasi Hills bordering the district of Garo Hills. Megam is the name given to them by the Garo, and to the Khasi they are known as Lynggam. The Megams themselves prefer to call themselves as Lynggams. Their language is a dialect of the Khasi language, and as such it is distinctly different from any of the Garo dialects. However, most of the Megams can speak Garo dialects of their neighbours. On the other hand, their Garo neighbours cannot speak the Megam language. Though on some points the Megams show an affinity with the Garo, such as in areas adjoining the Chisak habitat they perform the jaksil gana ceremony, but in other aspects of their social organization they show much divergence from the Garo. The Megam have an entirely different set of clans.

which are not found among any of the Garo sub-tribes. However, a few of the clans are common to the Megam and other Garo sub-tribes and all Megam clans are equated to some or other Garo clans and as such all the Megam clans are affiliated to Garo chatchi groups. The Megams have been dealt with by Col. Gurdon in his monograph on the Khasi''. The Garos do not regard the Megam as Garo, though inter-marriages between the Garos and the Megams occur occasionally in the areas bordering their habitats.

The Life of a Garo from Birth to Death

A Garo is born in the house of his or her parents, or in the house of his mother's parents if his or her mother happens to be the heir apparent of the household, or if his or her parents upto that time have not been able to establish themselves as a separate household. Soon after birth the baby is named by the midwife conducting delivery. From the date of birth it becomes a member of the mother's clan (ma'chong) and gets affiliated to one of the five larger groups, known as chatchi, namely, Sangma, Marak, Momin, Sira, and Areng, to which its ma'chong is affiliated.

For the first few days of its life the baby is carried on the back by the mother who performs all her usual domestic duties while carrying it on the back. When the infant is supposed to be strong enough to be carried about without much care (say, six or seven months after

birth this stage is known as poramiting or dambolmiting; it is left to the care of an elder sister or brother or to some child who is specially brought to the household to take care of the child (such a child is known as barikgipa) while the mother remains busy with her household work or in the field.

In the second year the child usually begins to toddle, and it is encouraged by elders to walk without others' help. By this time it has passed three stages of infancy - poramiting (the stage of being strong enough to be carried about), Kadingmiting (the stage when the infant begins to laugh), asongmiting (the stage when the infant starts sitting up). The stage when the child starts running about is known as ra'magongrakmiting. This is the last stage^{of} infancy. After a child starts moving about on its own accord, it is no longer treated as an infant (bakgitchak). Now it becomes a bi'sa - the term generally used for a child. The child now starts its life apart from its parents and it starts to associate itself with other children of the village. In this stage it is given formal toilet training and is taught to dress. For a male child this stage is spoken of as gando ganjok, and for a female child gana ganjok. When the child is about six years old, it starts to imitate its parent of own sex in his or her domestic work. Towards the end of this stage the child is assigned lighter duties of household work.

A male child grows up to a pante (bachelor) at the age of about 12 years and a female child reaches the stage

of metra or nomil (spinster) at about the same age. A pante or a nomil enjoys considerable freedom. Bachelors usually sleep with other bachelors of the village, though maids continue to sleep in the house of their parents. A bachelor or a maid is supposed to help the parents in all domestic duties. They also clear their own plots for shifting cultivation - which are known as a'tot, from the income of which they purchase their personal necessities - a flash-light or a cheap fountain pen by a bachelor ; a cheap silken chaddar, a vial of hair oil, a piece of cheap ornament or some such trinket by a maid.

A girl attains puberty at about the age of 14. Puberty comes to a girl as a matter of course. There is no special ceremony to mark off this stage. A girl is considered marriageable after puberty. But occasionally an immature girl may also be sent as a cowife or to replace a dead kinswoman of hers. A bachelor is considered marriageable at the stage of 20 or so. A Garo is not allowed to marry from his or her own ma'chong, nor from any other ma'chong belonging to the chatchi to which his or her clan is affiliated. Marriage within the ma'chong is a matter of great shame, and the offenders are ridiculed by the term ma'dong (one who has married the mother). However, the rule prohibiting marriage within the chatchi has now-a-days been relaxed to a considerable extent. Couples belonging to the same chatchi

are rather common nowadays, and they are laughed at by referring to as bakdong, which literally means, 'one who has married a close kin'.

Among the Garos, property is inherited in the female line. One of the daughters (but not necessarily the youngest one) is selected by the parents to be the inheritress. If a couple has no female child then a girl belonging to the ma'chong of the wife (preferably the daughter of her sister, real or classification) is adopted to be the inheritress. The girl selected to be the inheritress is known as nokna dongipa me'chik (one who has been kept or meant for the household). The husband of the inheritress is known as nokrom. A nokrom should preferably be the real nephew of the father of the nokna dongipa me'chik. But a Garo youth only reluctantly consents to become a nokrom because of the responsibilities which he is to undertake to look after an established household. A nokrom naturally resides in the household of his parents-in-law and helps them in all work of the household, and when his parents-in-law are old he takes over as the head of the households.

After marriage a man continues his relations with his ma'chong of birth, and he is expected to take major part in settling the affairs of the ma'chong. In his relationship to his ma'chong of birth, even after marriage, he is designated as pante. He acquires a new relationship

with his wife's ma'chong, after his marriage. In relationship to his wife's ma'chong he is designated as a gachi. A gachi takes part in the discussions about affairs of his wife's ma'chong and his opinion is valued though it is not considered to be binding upon the members of that ma'chong. Further, a marriage establishes a permanent relationship between the two ma'chong of the husband and of the wife. This relationship is known as a'kim. Even after the death of a spouse the a'kim relationship is not broken, because the deceased spouse's ma'chong (or the closer kin group within the ma'chong known as mahari) is under the obligation to provide a replacement (preferably a sibling or a very near blood relation of the deceased) to the surviving partner.

In a Garo village very little difference of status is seen. A particular clan holds right of ownership of the village homestead and shifting cultivation lands, and the title of ownership is inherited by a particular household. The head of the land-owning household is known as the nokma, and the particular area under which he holds ownership right is known as a'king. He also acts as the religious head of the village, and he is to perform the ceremonies for the general well-being of the village. He is called upon to settle disputes between villagers. But in all his decisions he is guided by the elders of the village. He is not entitled to any tribute from the villagers, and he has no

special paraphernalia to indicate himself as the nokma. However, in the village a rich man gets respect, because in times of need people have to seek help from him. But in a Garo village it is usually very rare to find an extremely rich man..

Shifting cultivation was the only method of cultivation practised by the major portion of the Garo population until a few decades back. Playfair¹⁰ mentions this method as the method of cultivation practised by the Garos. Wet paddy cultivation was adopted by the Garos in the periphery of the district, and very rapidly it is spreading to the interiors. Now-a-days almost all land available for permanent agriculture in the valleys of small rivers has been brought under cultivation by the Garos. However, in the interior areas shifting cultivation is practised side by side with permanent cultivation for subsidiary crops, such as millets, manioc, etc. which are grown on those plots only. But in the outer fringes of the district most of them have almost abandoned the practice of shifting cultivation.

The usual method of disposal of the dead, among the Garos, is cremation. When a person is about to die or soon after the death, the news is communicated to all important kins. The dead body is kept inside the house

until the arrival of the kins. Closely related kins, affinal and consanguinous, bring rice beer and other provisions for the cremation feast ; they also bring cows or bulls to be sacrificed in honour of the dead. The household of the deceased also arrange a feast for all the assembled persons by slaughtering cattle and providing rice beer in larger quantities. At the time of cremation, which is usually held in the village quadrangle, brass gongs and drums are beaten and buffalo horn trumpets are blown. These musical instruments are used during festive occasions also. After the cremation gongs belonging to the deceased are given to those kins who brought cows or bulls for killing in honour of the dead. Such gongs are known as kokam and are returnable when some member of the deceased's family pays a similar visit at the time of the death in the family of a person who took the kokam gong. However, the gong exclusively used to keep water to wash the dead body is given to the deceased's nearest consanguinous kin, usually a female, who ceremonially bathes the dead body. Such a gong is known as ma'gual (the gong for the forgotten mother) and is thought to be a token compensation for the dead person (to his mother's household). Ma'gual gongs are not returnable. Some households do not possess gongs at all. At the time of death of a person in such a household kokam and ma'gual gongs are substituted by paying a fixed amount of money (usually five rupees). The uncalcinated bones

of the deceased are collected and buried in front of the dead man's house, and over the place a small bamboo altar is made. This altar is known as delnang. In the delnang food is regularly offered by members of the deceased's household, to the spirit of the dead. The delnang is burnt by the Matchi and the Chisak in a special ceremony known as mangona, which is usually held after the harvest, when the families possessing delnang are able to procure sufficient food and drinks for a liberal feast. Among the other sub-tribes the delnang is burnt in the annual harvest festival (wangala). The Megam keep the dead body in a raised platform at the back side of the house until a time when the household of the deceased can procure adequate food and drinks for the feast. The dead body is then brought down from the platform and the cremation rites are performed as among the other sub-tribes. Death entails the responsibility of the kin of the deceased to give a replacement spouse to the surviving partner. Hence death does not cause a dislocation of the household nor a division of property. Replacements are made as soon as a suit-able match can be decided upon by the kin. Persons dying of unnatural death are not cremated. They are buried without much of the ceremonies.

The Garo do not believe in an all powerful Supreme God. Their supernatural world consists of a number

of spirits which act and behave like human beings but have no shape.

A Garo priest is known as kamal. There may be more than one kamal in a village, but the major rites are performed by the oldest and the most experienced kamal. The office of kamal is not hereditary. Anybody who is able to master the rites can be engaged as a kamal. The word kamal implies the sense of a specialist - a midwife is also known as a kamal. Often rites of propitiation² for minor ailments in the household are performed by the head of the family himself. The kamal does not enjoy any privilege because of his services to the villagers. He has to cultivate his plot of shifting land just like any other villager. He also does not get any remuneration for performing the rites.

The Garos have a very vague belief about an existence after death. Human beings and animals turn into spirits known as me'mang. A me'mang occasionally haunts the living. After death the me'mang goes to the spirit world, which is believed to be a counterpart of the living world.

Christianity was introduced among the Garos by missionaries from Europe and America, about the beginning of the current century. Christian Garos belong to different

denominations. The majority of them are Baptists and there is a considerable number of Roman Catholics too. The number of other denominations such as Seventh Day Adventists is almost negligible. Garo Christians have deviated much from their traditional way of life. Christian converts are supposed neither to drink rice beer nor take part in non-Christian festivals. They are also supposed not to believe in spirits, though among the less enlightened section we come across their traditional belief about me'mang and janggi. Adoption of Christianity brings the converts nearer to a modern way of life such as the absence of the usual repulsion of non-Christian Garos towards education.

GAROS OF MANIKNAGAR VILLAGE :

The village Maniknagar is situated within the periphery of Kamrup district of Assam and situated at a distance of 10 kilometers from North Guwahati proper. There

are 36 households in the village. Total population of the village is 193, of which 98 are males and 95 are females. It is a homogeneous village and inhabited by the Garos only.

On the eastern side of the village there is Baka, another Garo village while in the Western side there is Sila Grant. The Western side is surrounded by Mandakata Tea Estate and ^{the} southern by Chandra village.

There is a ^{legend} ~~story~~ belief regarding the naming of the village. The village is named after a popular and prominent person, Manik who was once manager of the nearby Mandakata Tea Garden. He built a fort like structure in the village which was totally destructed by the great earthquake in 1950. As a mark of respect and love to the manager Manik, the village had been named as Manik Nagar.

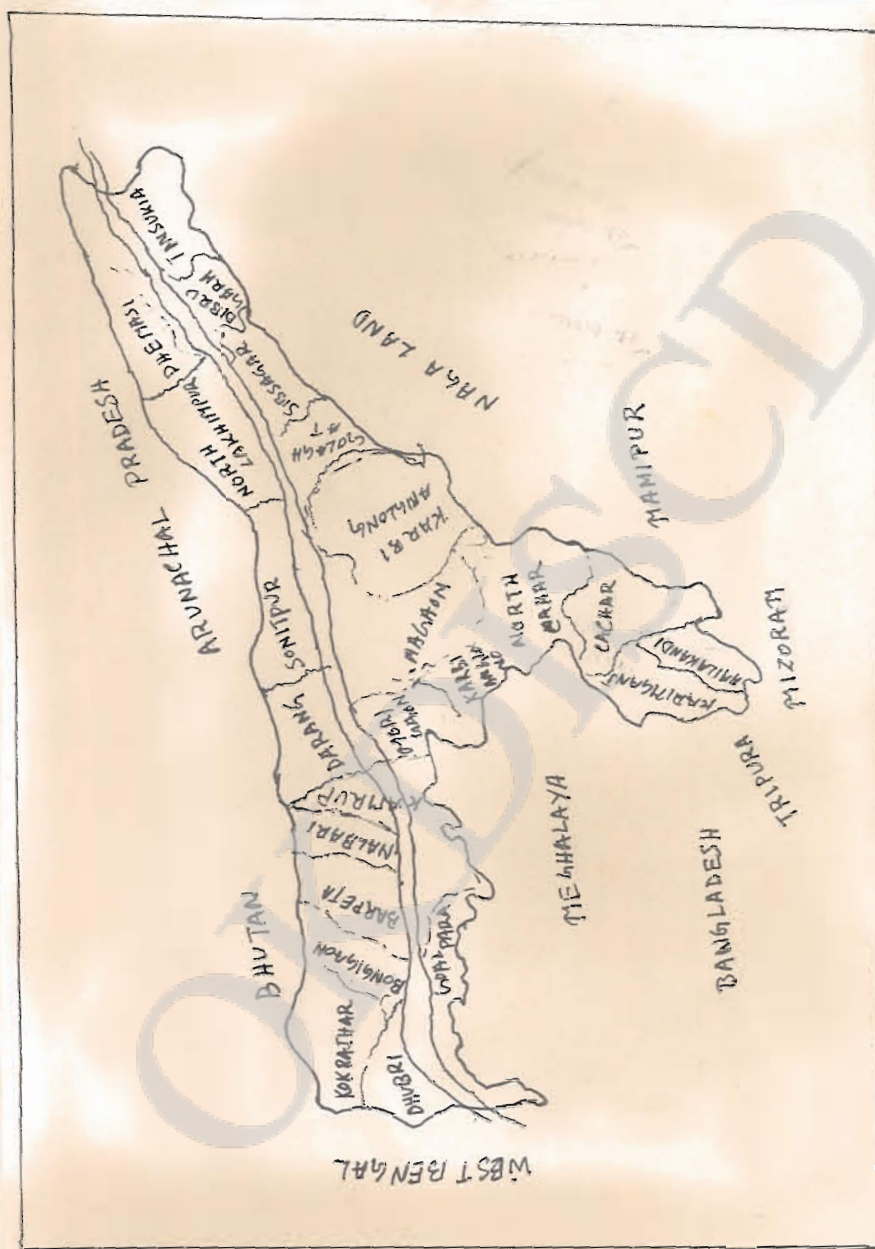
Though traditionally the Garos are pile dwellers, in Manik Nagar, generally they built their houses on rectangular earthen plinth. The posts of the houses are made from bamboo or wood, the walls are from flatten bamboo, plasted with a mixture of mud and cowdung, while the roofs are made of ^{thatch} ~~thach~~. The houses are arranged in a scattered way, each hillock having a cluster of houses.

There is one pitched road which passes through the village. From that main road ^a number of bye-lanes are bifurcated.

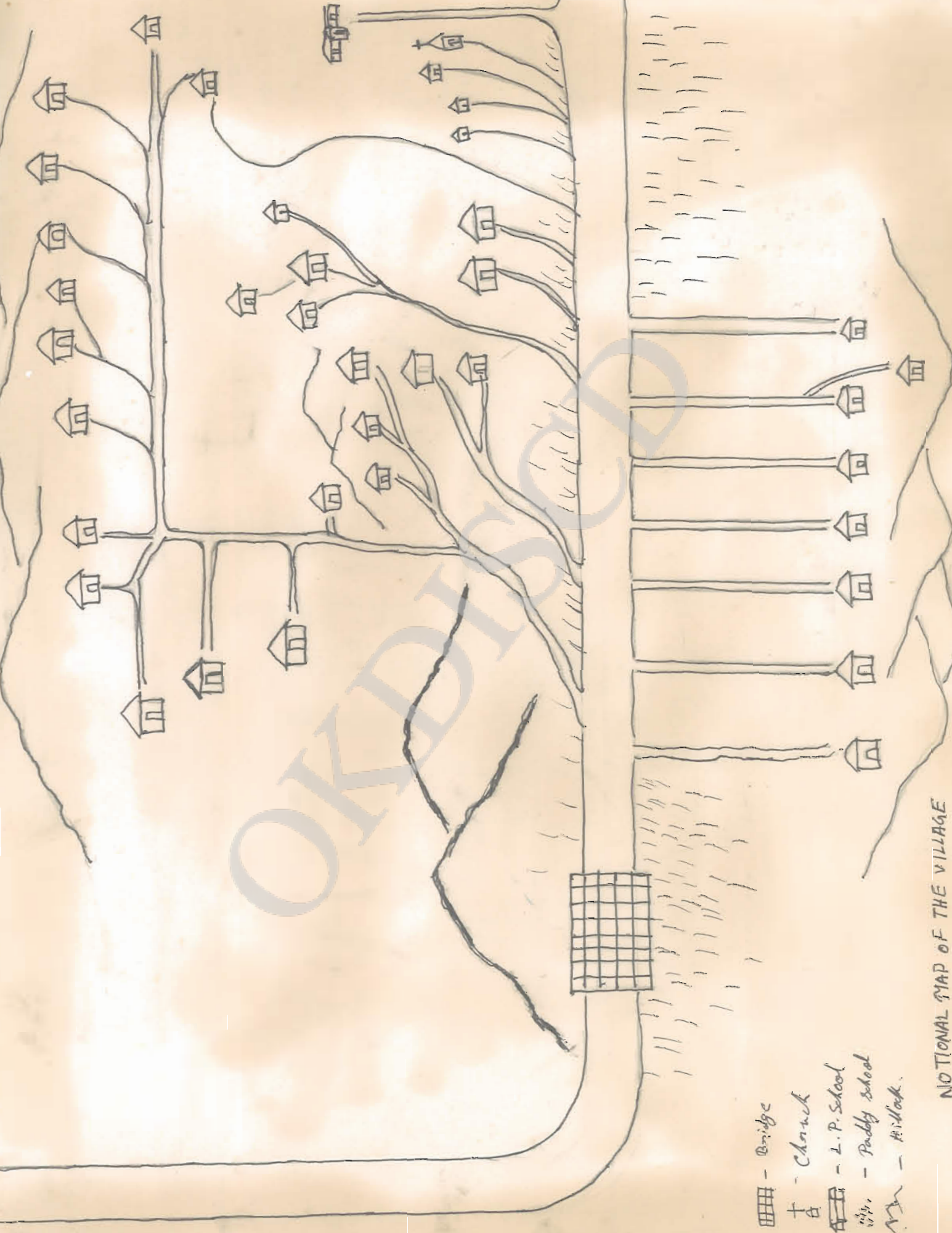
The village has one Church and one Lower Primary School. After the completion of study in the L. P. School, students generally have to go outside of the village for further study.

Inhabitants of Manik Nagar have their own dialect i.e. Garo. However, most of the villagers are well conversed ^{ant} in Assamese, and ^f From that point of view, the villagers of the Manik Nagar village are bilingual.

It is customary for ^{the} Garos of Manik Nagar to bury the dead body. The burial ground is situated at a distance of about 1/2 Km. away from the village. There is no daily market within the village. To buy the essential commodities they go to Phalung Bazar, which is situated at a distance of 3 kms. in the eastern side of the village.



MAP OF ASSAM



-  - Bridge
-  - Channel
-  - L.P. School
-  - Paddy field
-  - Hill

NOTIONAL MAP OF THE VILLAGE

CHAPTER - II

PATTERN OF OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

Occupation plays a vital role in the society. In the change and development of a particular society, it acts like a catalyst. Occupation is a cultural complex and, therefore, it is indispensably related to different cultural elements of the society. Occupation reflects . .

contd. next page

the culture of a society. It is through the occupation that the relationship between economy and environment can be traced out. Every society has its own occupational pattern which constituted^s a part of its culture. But due to the unavoidable circumstances many communities of the world have changed their age old traditional occupations. The people of Manik Nagar are one ~~of~~ such example who have shifted from their age old jhum cultivation to the other. In following pages ~~I shall discuss~~ the traditional and changed pattern of villagers' occupations *will be discussed.*

Agriculture is the main stay in most of the rural areas of Assam. It is the principal source of livelihood for the majority of ^{the} people ⁱⁿ of rural Assam. According to the Census of 1971, 76.68% of the total workers of the state are engaged in agriculture and allied activities such as cultivation, labour jobs in agriculture, livestock rearing, forestry, fishing, hunting, orchard raising, etc.

Assam is a land of heavy rainfall. Average 2000 mm rainfall results into the humid condition of soil which provides an ideal condition for growing a variety of crops.

A large number of crops such as rice, maize, potato, sesame, ginger etc. are grown in the state of which rice is the principal foodgrain crop. It is grown

extensively in all the districts of the state following mainly the traditional methods of cultivation. Though Assam is a rice growing area, yet the rate of production is much lower than many other areas of India.

Manik Nagar falls within Kamrup district of Assam and primary occupation of the villagers is agriculture. But due to the changing atmosphere and some unavoidable circumstances, ^{the} pattern of occupation had changed extensively in recent years. Even in agriculture, the methods and implements ^{have} had changed to great extent. ^a ~~I will discuss~~ ^{will be discussed} this changing pattern in succeeding pages.

(i) AGRICULTURE :

The year in Assam is divided into four agricultural seasons : (i) Pre-monsoon (March-April : second half of Phagun to first half of Bohag), (ii) monsoon (June-September : second half of Jeth to first half of Ahin) ; (iii) Retreating monsoon (September-November : second half of Bhada to first half of Aghon) ; and (iv) dry winter (November-December : second half of Kati to first half of Puh). This climatic seasons have a great bearing on the agricultural cycle of the state. The monsoon is the most important period for agricultural activities of peasants of Assam, since in this season summer paddy is cultivated.

(ii) AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS :

The implements used in agriculture by the Garos of Manik Nagar are ^{the} same ^{as the} with implements used by other indigenous Assamese peasants. The most indispensable agricultural implements are ^{the} wooden plough with iron share and bamboo yoke. The plough is harnessed by a pair of bullocks. The other agricultural implements are parrow for levelling the soil, rake for combing the weeds, weed-lock for separating the straw from the threshold grain, spade for cutting soil, sickle for reaping grain.

While the plough and the yoke are generally made by the villagers themselves, the share of ^{the} plough is bought from markets and fitted into the plough. In the same manner, blades of spade, sickle etc. are also bought from market. Such articles are generally purchased by the villagers in the weekly market held at Phooloong or Mandakata.

Some of the villagers have husking lever where paddy is husked. Rice, flat rice, soft rice etc. are also prepared in husking lever. The villagers who do not possess husking lever use other methods.

(iii) METHODS OF CULTIVATION :

The traditional method of cultivation in rural Assam is with plough and yoke and a pair of bullocks.

Garos of Maniknagar also undertake cultivation in traditional method.

The sali paddy is cultivated both by broadcasting and transplanting methods. Ploughing for sali paddy starts in the month of Ahar (June-July). The land is prepared by ploughing and cross-ploughing. The levelling of the land is done after the completion of the ploughing. The seeds are kept immersed in water for two days to germinate. After two days it is taken out of water and spread over the courtyards before broadcast. Fresh growth is taken place within 10-15 days. Then these are transplanted in the field. The harvesting of this paddy is undertaken in the month of Aghon (November-December).

The cultivation of ahu paddy is done only by broadcasting method. Ploughing for ahu paddy starts in the month of chat (March-April). The seeds of Ahu paddy are sown in the month of Bohag (April-May). By the month of Bhado (August-September) reaping of this paddy is undertaken. The time for ploughing, broadcasting and harvesting varies. The first step of harvesting is to cut paddy plant with about half stalk and to make them into bundles which are carried home by carrying poles.

According to the English calender, the people of Maniknagar have less agricultural activities from ^{the} latter part of December (before Christmas) to March. The less pressure on agricultural works and the favourable weather

provide the people with opportunities to relax and perform social activities. Repairing of thatched roof of house and other non-agricultural tasks are also usually attended during these months.

From the later part of March, the cultivators start their agricultural operation, which involved ploughing, levelling, weeding. April to May is a slack agricultural period.

The cultivators use cowdung as manure in the fields. All the villagers are more inclined to traditional methods of cultivation. There is very little or no impact of improved agricultural practices, such as use of chemical fertilizers, improved plough, pesticides and cultivation of high yielding varieties of paddy. Because of this unawareness the ~~result of~~ ^{per plot} production is very low in per plot.

(iv) PRODUCTION AND SALE OF CROPS :

Rice is the staple food of the villagers of Maniknagar, so it is also the principal foodgrain of the village. They cultivate 2 varieties of paddy - Ahu and sali. The production level of rice is not much satisfactory. In some cases the rate of production is not even sufficient to meet the requirement throughout the year. The villagers never use to have surplus grain. So, obviously there is no question of selling rice. But they sell other crops

and vegetable grown in jhum field to fulfil deficit.

The following table shows the average rate of rice production :-

Table -1 Average Rate of Yearly Rice Production
in Maunds (1 maund = 37.6 Kg.)

Rate of Production	No. of household	Percentage
1 - 3	2	6.45
4 - 6	11	35.48
7 - 9	1	3.22
10 - 12	3	9.67
13 - 15	1	3.22
16 - 18	2	6.45
19 - 21	3	9.67
22 - 24	1	3.22
25 - 27	1	3.22
28 - 30	3	9.67
30 - onwards	3	9.67

Total - 31

The table shows that rate of production is not upto the expectation. The highest rate of production falls between categories of 4 - 6 maunds (35.48%). In case of other categories equal rate varies between 1 - 3 maunds. It is very clear from the table that majority of the households' production is not enough to meet their yearly requirement.

In earlier days villagers of Maniknagar considered ^{the} that selling crops grown in jhum fields as shameful ~~deeds~~. Only very poor people used to sell jhum products. But due to drastic change in village economy villagers are compelled to sell jhum products.

People of Maniknagar utilized nearby hill slopes as jhum fields. They practised ^{the} slash and burn ^{method of} cultivation. But now-a-days they use ^{the} same plot of land year after year unlike previous days. ^{before.}

In their jhum field the Garos of Maniknagar cultivate potato (Alu), colokesia (Kachu), ^sesame (til), Runner Bean (lechera mah), ginger (Ada), Turmeric (Halodhi), Maze (Makai), Chilli (Jalakia) etc. The cultivation of such vegetables and cereals are undertaken by womenfolk of the village. After keeping a portion for household consumption the womenfolk generally carry these to North Guwahati and sell them ^{from} house to house. Sometimes menfolk also sell these in Phooloong or Mandakata weekly market.

Rulis G. Marak, a 50 year old lady told me that in her young days she could not even think of selling jhum product. She and her family considered this occupation as substandard occupation. But after the 2nd world war the price of essential commodities have been revised drastically. To meet the essential need Rulis G. Marak and her family have been selling jhum product since 7

years back.

(v) HORTICULTURE :

In majority of the households^{^ of} Maniknagar there are grooves of bamboo, betelnut (tamol) and betel leaf (Pan). Some households possess Coconut (Narikol), Bananas (Kol) which are generally grown adjacent to homestead.

The villagers sell betelnut and leaf and bamboo.

(vi) LAND OWNERSHIP :

Like many other rural areas of Assam, villagers of Maniknagar are also basically agriculturist. Traditionally Garos ^{are} ~~are~~ shifting cultivators. They practise shifting cultivation in foothill region. Garos of Maniknagar also practised shifting cultivation in the past. But due to some multifarious reasons such as excessive human pressure on agricultural land, ban on cutting down of land in hill slopes by forest department, low growth of production from shifting cultivation, villagers of Maniknagar adopted permanent cultivation. Now they grow rice in plains. But still they practise jhum on hill slopes in small scale. For that purpose they use same plot of land year after year.

Hiring G. Momin, a seventy years^d old man on asking told me that he previously practised jhum on hill slopes. But due to ^{the} above mentioned reasons he and his family had shifted to permanent cultivation. He also told me that land which villagers possess for permanent cultivation is their own but land they use for jhum belong to government.

At Maniknagar village people make distinction between two classes of land : (i) homestead land (ii) cultivable land. Cultivable land is again further divided into rice cultivated land and jhum land which they call as 'ara'

Garos constructed^d their house ^din top of the hillock and possess paddy field at foothill region.

The Garos of Maniknagar possess both homestead and cultivable land of varying sizes. There are also 4 households who do not possess even small plots of cultivable land. The members of these households earn their livelihood mainly by selling firewood which is collected from hills. They also earn cash by selling vegetables which is produced by jhum cultivation.

The agricultural fields of the villagers are to be found in all direction of the village except in

North. Majority of the fields are situated within the village. Some fields are situated adjacent to one another.

Table-2
Following table shows the agricultural land holding pattern of the Garos of Maniknagar.

Table-2

Agricultural Land holding pattern of the Garos of Maniknagar. Four households do not possess any agricultural land.

Area in Bighas (1 acre = 3.025 bighas)

Area of Land	No. of households	Percentage
1 - 3	16	51.61
4 - 6	9	29.03
7 - 9	2	6.45
10 - 12	2	6.45
13 - 15	1	3.22
15 - onwards	1	3.22
Total 31		

* [It is evident from the table ^{out} that of the total 36 households of Maniknagar, 31 households own agricultural land of varying sizes. All the villagers possess homestead land of varying sizes from 1 bighas

to 8 bighas. It is evident from the table that majority of the households (51.61%) own agricultural land varying between 1 - 3 bighas. Again a little above (29.0%) possess land varying between 4 - 6 bighas. Next to these households, there are 2 households each varying between 7 - 9 bighas and 10 - 12 bighas. There are only 2 households each varying between 13 - 15 bighas and 15 bighas onwards.)^x

Cultivable land belonging to the Plain Garos of Maniknagar previously consisted of Government land on the hill slopes where they practised jhum cultivation and also of cultivable plots of land in the plain portion where wet cultivation was invogue among them. As time passed on, restriction imposed by government forest department on cutting down of hill slopes as well as fragmentation of families resulted in shrinkage of individual land holding per family. In the meantime, quite a large number of Garo people migrated to Maniknagar from Bokk and Goalpara as a result of which ^{the} original population had to surrender a sizeable portion of agricultural land to the new migrant Garo people. Ultimately when the Government allotted agricultural plot of land to the people of Maniknagar, land holding per family shrunk further due to larger number of allottees.

In a typical case study my informant Dasarwth G. Momin, aged about 45 years, revealed that 15 years back

their family used to cultivate about 20 bighas of land. But at present the family has only 6 bighas of land left to them for cultivation. This ^{is} ~~due~~ to the reasons stated ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ earlier paragraph.

(vii) OCCUPATIONAL PATTERN OF THE VILLAGE :

Though most of the villagers of Maniknagar are cultivators, many among them have also taken up various non-agricultural based wage-earning occupations as primary or secondary occupation.

The majority of the people who have taken non-agricultural jobs join hands in agricultural works with other members of their respective households. The students of the households also help in agriculture and non-agricultural work such as firewood collection, selling jhum product, etc. in free time.

As many as 31 households of the village possess agricultural land and cultivation is ^{their} primary occupation ~~for~~ them. But at least one or more than one adult person of the family is preoccupied in firewood collection. Firewood coll-ection provides a stable income for almost all the villagers, although it is not regular. Villagers collect them from hilly forests, cut them into small pieces, dry them and then sell ~~out~~ ^{and the} them in market. These firewood finds a ready market in North Guwahati and

nearby villages. They sell them twice ^{in a} ~~in~~ week. They count them in terms of cycle. One cycle of firewood carry 30-60 pieces of firewood and is priced about Rs.50/- per cycle. There is a forest beat office on the way to ^{the} ~~the~~ market. As because cutting down of forest product is illegal, the villagers have to pay Rs.5/- per cycle to forest officials as bribe. So it is not a very gainful occupation. Still, persons who have no other means, fall back upon this source, because for making a cash income by selling these forest products, they require no capital. While investigating, I found many young boys who are engaged in this subsidiary occupation to satisfy their personal needs.

The following table summarises the occupational pattern of the Garos of Maniknagar above 15 years of age.

Table-3

Occupational Pattern of the Garos of Maniknagar above 15 years.

Occupation	Primary			Secondary		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. Cultivator	31	15	46	2	24	26
2. Wage-earning	2	5	7	6	—	6
3. Wood-Cutter	11		11	29	6	35
4. Service	3	1	4			
5. Domestication of animal	—			17	—	17
6. Trader	1		1			
7. Student	4	4	8			
Total	51	25	68	54	30	84
	52		77			

It is evident from ~~the~~ table-3 that there are as many as 46 cultivators whose primary occupation is cultivation. There are also 26 cultivators whose secondary occupation is cultivation.

There are altogether 13 wage earners in the village. They earn wage as agricultural labourers. Eight are male and 5 are female. All of them belong to separate households. These wage earners do not possess agricultural land. They work in other's land for wage and money. They get Rs.30/- and a meal per day.

All the 35 wood cutters belonging to the age group of 18 - 50 years. Eleven among them are primarily occupied in wood cutting and other 35 have taken up the job as ^{Firewood} Secondary occupation. It is a quite laborious job. ~~It~~ is to be procured from dense forest. So, a day is spent in procuring firewood and bringing them to the village. Then process of cutting those into pieces and drying up take another 2-3 days. So, a person can hardly sell firewood twice in a week.

There are 4 service holders in the village. Among them 3 are male and 1 female. The lady service holder is serving as L. P. Schoolteacher in the village L. P. School. Her qualification is Intermediate. She earns Rs.200/-

monthly as consolidated pay. Among three male service holders, two work in tea stalls in Guwahati. They earn Rs.300/- and Rs.500/- respectively. The last service holder is a guard in Meghalaya Battalion. He earns Rs.2,000/- monthly. He comes to the village once or twice in a year.

Domestication of animal is another source of income for the people of Maniknagar. There are altogether 17 households who have taken up animal husbandry as secondary source of income. Only fowl and pig are reared and sold by them. Of the total 17 households, 9 households have regular income from rearing fowls. These are sold in the nearby market. A matured fowl costs about Rs. 30/- to Rs.50/-. Piggery is another source of income for the people of Maniknagar. During my investigation, I found that there are 8 households who keep pig for business purposes. A matured pig is sold at the amount of Rs 700/-. Cows, ducks, Pegions and goats are also reared by the villagers of Maniknagar to some extent. But no regular income is reflected from rearing of these livestock although these occasionally give some monetary return to them.

There is only one trader in the village. This trader stays at Digaru, a place which is 30 kms. away from Maniknagar. There he has orange plantation. He earns

about Rs.3,000/- annually from this orange plantation.

Though I have taken into consideration, the occupation of Garos above 15 years of age, it needs to be stated here that children from 10 to 14 years, including those who are studying, undertake various household and agricultural works. While girls help their elders in households work and also in jhum field, the boys help the elders in agricultural work, firewood collection, etc.

It is also significant to note here that of the total female population only 15 (15.78%) females regularly go for the agricultural work.

From the table it can be summarised that the village is going through a process of occupational change. There are as many as 29 wood cutters in the village whose prime source of income is firewood collection, while the number of cultivators is 31. The difference between the wood-cutters and the cultivators is negligible. People have also taken up domestication of animal as a secondary source of income. So, it is evident from the table that trend of occupation is gradually changing and people are entering into the money based economy.

(viii) OCCUPATIONAL CHANGE THROUGH GENERATIONS :

From the discussion of patterns of

occupation, it is clear that the present day Garo society of Maniknagar exhibit a picture which is quite different from the ancestral occupational pattern. This change can also be seen in other parts of tribal India.

Among the Garos of Maniknagar, information was also collected on the occupation of the respondents, respondent's father's and his father's father's occupation. Such information was collected from 30 respondents. One adult male or female had been selected for this purpose.

In no case two siblings were chosen as respondents, since that would lead to the duplication of father's and father's father's occupation.

Table-4

Occupation of the Respondents(R) their Father's(F) and Father's Father(FF) of the Garos of Maniknagar

Occupation	R	F	FF
Permanent cultivator	15(50.0%)	18(60.0%)	
Shifting cultivator		8(26.66%)	30(100%)
Wood Cutter	10(33.3)	2(6.66%)	
Wage Earner	3(10.0)	2(6.66%)	
Trader	1(3.33)	-	
Service	1(3.33)	-	

Above table shows a pattern of occupational change from FF to R generation. Respondent's generation exhibits a totally different picture from FF generation. The table shows that changes in the traditional occupation have accrued even in the F generation. The table also shows that in FF generation 30(100%) people were cultivators(shifting), while in F generation only 8 households (26.66%) are retained in shifting cultivation, 60.00% population of F generation gave up cultivation and 8 switched over to the permanent cultivation, while in the R generation none had retained in shifting cultivation. Fifty per cent of the population are agriculturists in R generation and all of them practised permanent cultivation. From the table it can be indicated that the traditional methods of occupation have been given up by the respondents of the Garos of Maniknagar. The rate of change in agricultural practice is much higher from F to R generation as compared to FF to F generation.

The table also indicates the trend of occupational mobility. Due to the excessive pressure on agricultural land, fragmentation of joint family into nuclear family, immigration, etc. a significant change has taken place in occupation from F to R generation. In F generation altogether there were 86.66% cultivators, only 6.66% people took up the occupation of wood cutters and wage

labourer. In ^{number}Contrary to this, in R generation the rate of cultivators had reduced to 50.0% and wood cutters is raised upto 33.3%. Ten per cent of the total population also have taken up wage earning, 3.33% trading and another 3.33% are serving in other money earning jobs. So, the Garos of Maniknagar no longer exhibit ^{the}traditional ^{la} Garo society from occupational point of view.

(ix) INCOME FROM LIVESTOCK :

In the agricultural economy cattle occupies an important position. At Maniknagar also people rear up different types of livestock. Cow/bullock, hen, pig, goat, etc. are some of domestic ^{livestocks}livestocks. Bullocks are generally used in ploughing and thrashing foodgrains. A trend of animal husbandry has entered in village economy. There are as many as 17 households who earn money from livestock. Chicken and pig are main commodities for sale.

They do not sell pig directly to consumers. They sell it to professional butchers. So, the villagers have to satisfy themselves with very low prices. Likewise, they sell chicken.

^{The above}
Above table indicates that out of the total 36 households, 27 households possess cow and bullock, 4 households possess goat, 2 fowls, 32 households possess

chicken, 8 households possess pig and only one household keeps duck. Seventeen households have taken up selling of livestock as primary occupation. When there is crisis in the family, it is obvious that they have to compromise with the price to tide over the crisis. ^{They} Following table shows the number of households who possess livestock and also the number of households who earn from them.

Table-5

No. of household possessing livestock

Livestock	No. of household possess livestock	No. of household ^s earn ^{ing} from livestock.
Cow/bullock	27	-
Goat	4	
Fowls	2	
Chicken	32	9
Pig	8	8
Duck	1	

(x) HOUSEHOLD ASSETS :

From the previous chapter it is clear that income level of the villagers never go beyond the optimum requirement of daily necessities. Hence, that stage in which the question of accumulation of wealth

in any significant amount may arise has not yet come. That is why they can invest very little, if at all, on items having prestige value of making a show of wealth. None of the villagers can afford to have gold ornaments and mobike vehicles like scooter, etc. Some of them possess silver ornaments. But almost all the households of the village possess one or more than one **bicycle**. ^{as} Because it is indispensable in carrying firewood to the market. ^{the} Following table shows the list of households which possess different assets.

Table -6

Distribution of Household Assets

Assets	No. of households
T.V.	1
Radio	7
Tape Recorder	1
Bicycle	30
Wrist Watch	17
Wooden Furniture	26
Silver Ornaments	5
Bell Metal Utensils	16
Utensils from other materials	33

The household assets of the villagers of Maniknagar mostly consist of bicycle, furniture and daily needed utensils. As for electronic items only one family has a T.V. set which is run by battery as there is no electricity in the village. 7 families possess Radios while only one family has a tape recorder. 30 families have bicycles, often one household having more than one bicycle, which is used mostly for marketing firewood. 26 households have wooden furniture which generally consists of benches and in few cases one or two chairs. 5 families have ornaments made of silver. Bell metal utensils are possessed by only 16 families while 33 families use utensils made from other materials. 17 persons in the village possess wrist watches of various quality and price.

From the above, it is evident that with the changing pattern of occupation, there has been a palpable change in the possession of personal assets among the villagers of Maniknagar.

CHAPTER - III

CONCLUSION

The present Maniknagar village area in the outskirts of North Guwahati was without any habitation about 40-50 years back. It was a place full of jungles with hilly tracts utilized only perhaps to collect firewoods by the population surrounding the area. About 40 years back only three Garo households came to the present village Maniknagar from Baka, another Garo village situated about 7 km. away, in search of better livelihood. Their main stay then was jhum cultivation. Gradually more people from the districts of Goalpara, Darrang and mostly from Baka village came to Maniknagar and gradually a village came into existence. Due to the matrimonial alliance, the joint family system gave rise to nuclear family system resulting in multiplication in household numbers. At present total number of households are 36 composed of 193 persons, of this total population 98 (50.77%) are male and 95 (49.22%) are female.

In the remote past, the villagers of Maniknagar were animistic. Gradually influence of Christianity penetrated among the villagers due to occasional arrival of Christian Missionaries who came to educate the villagers for better

living. At present the entire village population of Maniknagar pursue Christian religion. There is a Church within the village where a Pastor looks after the affairs of the Church which is under management of Church Committee. For proper maintenance of the Church, each household contributes 10% of yearly income to the Church Committee.

The population of Maniknagar is a homogeneous one so far tradition, culture, religion and way of life are concerned. The proper influence of education has not yet come to the village. ~~all through~~. A Lower Primary School is there in the village with two teachers and around 20 students. One of the teachers is from the locality. For high school education, a few students who passed L.P. standard go to the nearby high schools away from the village.

So far as communication is concerned, there is only one road from North Guwahati to Bezera on the National Highway ~~on~~ which ~~a highway~~ passes through the village. Only two private buses ply to the village which also become irregular in rainy season. The road requires further improvement for better economic upliftment of the village. It is quite difficult to negotiate the distance of 13 km. from North Guwahati to the village in the absence of regular transport facility. I had to

go to the village hiring Auto Rickshaw at exorbitant fare
the auto drivers also agreed to go only
 and that too after great persuasion *a lot of* to the Auto drivers.

So far as occupational pattern of the villagers is concerned, this is to be mentioned that the original avocation of shifting cultivation has been to a great extent abandoned by the villagers due to the restriction imposed by the forest department and also for other unavoidable reasons.

The reasons :-

They are mainly engaged now in cultivating whatever small plot of lands available in plain portion and cutting firewood\$ from the forest and selling it to the nearby localities. In jhum cultivation the villagers used to fill the hilly slopes with digging stick and special kind of hold which can be used in sitting condition. Now, these implements have been abandoned and the agricultural implements required for wet cultivation are used in *the* plain portion of agricultural plots. The grains raised in jhum cultivation consisted of Maize, Seasm~~g~~, Potato, Colcactia etc. Consequently, the male and female labourers engaged in jhum cultivation are now engaged in wet cultivation in plain portion plots.

The shift that has taken place from agriculture to other means of livelihood mentioned above is due to the

fact that the households cannot entirely live upon agriculture as main avocation. Although occupational mobility has accrued from agriculture to other areas, this cannot be summarised that economic improvement has taken place due to this change. Because collection of firewood and selling the same cannot be taken as regular source of income, ^{as} Because firewoods ^{is} are becoming ^{scarce} rare due to the deforestation and ^{the} restrictions imposed by forest department. Also for lack of proper knowledge and guidance in rearing of livestock, the profession does not give much return. From what has been stated above, it has become clear that there is much scope to improve the condition of education and other areas of social awareness.

As for education, a sense of awareness is required to be imparted to the few schoolgoing students by making them aware of the practical values of pursuing higher education for a better living in future. In this regard, they may be motivated to pursue for higher education by bringing them in groups at least once a year to different institutions in Guwahati for proper exposure in this field.

Social awareness among the villagers is also required to be imbibed for a better living. For this purpose, there are different schemes under various departments of the Government and a joint visits by Adult Education Department, Social Welfare Department and Rural

Development official will yield required results.

For additional economic benefit, cottage based industries may be introduced in the village area by imparting required vocational training to the concerned villagers of the village.

As area of land under agricultural^e has shrunk per family, required training may be imparted by the Department of Agriculture for better cultivation by introducing modern methods and implements of agriculture. Likewise, modern system of animal husbandry may be also introduced in the village by Veterinary Department.

It will not be out of place to mention here that for all round development of an area, communication plays a vital role. For in the absence of easy communication, no help may reach the village. In this regard, the P.W.D. Department of the Govt. of Assam should step in to improve the existing road, making it easier for the vehicular traffic to ply regularly. In that case other agencies of the Govt. as well as voluntary organisations can come forward to the village to help the villagers in improving their present system of agriculture as well as other aspects of living. As an immediate need the Govt. may consider of introducing a regular State Transport service from Guwahati to Bezera through Maniknagar village which will greatly ameliorate the difficulties of the villagers.

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Table No. 1 - Male - Female Ratio.

Total No. of households.	No. of Male	Percentage of Male	No. of Female	Percentage of Female	Total Populatio
36	98	50.77	95	49.22	193

Table No. 2 : Age Group Analysis

Age Group	Male	Percentage of Male	Female	Percentage of Female	Total
0 - 4	24	23.76	21	20.79	45
5 - 9	19	18.81	15	14.85	34
10 - 14	8	7.92	9	8.91	17
15 - 19	6	5.94	16	15.84	22
20 - 24	3	2.97	8	7.92	11
25 - 29	10	9.90	9	8.91	19
30 - 34	11	10.89	2	1.98	13
35 - 39	8	7.92	1	0.99	9
40 - 44	2	1.98	2	1.98	4
45 - 49	1	0.99	3	2.97	4
50 - 54	3	2.97	2	1.98	5
55 - 59	3	2.97	-	-	3
60 - 64	-	-	1	0.99	1
65 - 69	1	0.99	1	0.99	2
70 - 74	1	0.99	2	1.98	3
75 onwards	1	0.99	-	-	1
Total	101	100	92	100	193

III

Table : Literary Condition

Age group	Literate				Illiterate			
	Male	Percentage of Male	Female	Percentage of Female	Male	Percentage of Male	Female	Percentage of Female
0 - 9	21	10.88	13	6.73	22	11.39	23	11.91
10 - 19	18	9.32	23	11.91	-	-	2	1.03
20 - 29	8	4.14	8	4.14	6	3.10	8	4.14
30 - 39	4	2.07	3	1.55	10	5.18	2	1.03
40 - 49	2	1.03	2	1.03	1	0.51	4	2.07
50 - 59	2	1.03	2	1.03	4	2.07	1	0.51
60 - 69	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
70 onwards	-	-	-	-	2	2.07	2	1.03
Total	55	28.47	51	26.39	45	24.32	42	21.72

Total Male Literate	-	55
Percentage	-	28.47
Total Male Illiterate	-	45
Percentage	-	24.32
Total Female Literate	-	51
Percentage	-	26.39
Total Female Illiterate	-	42
Percentage	=	21.72

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Village Woman in traditional dress.



Three typical village maids.



Village Church



Side view of village church.



Village L.P. School.



Homestead plantation of Banana



Village paddy field



Bringing home paddy.



Processing rice in husking lever .



Gnannary