

AN  
ASSESSMENT OF  
COLONISATION SCHEME OF  
SHIFTING CULTIVATORS IN TRIPURA



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Ad-hoc Study No.16.

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S T U D Y   T E A M

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A S S A M

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## PREFACE

1. The Agro-Economic Research Centre for N.E. India became interested in the problems of shifting cultivation or jhuming since its very inception in 1960-61. The bold experiment undertaken by the Tripura Administration for the solution of the problems of jhumias attracted our immediate attention. A Jhumia colony (Kathaliacherra) was taken up for socio-economic survey under the "Continuous Village Survey Programme" in 1961. The second point survey of the colony was undertaken in 1966 and a Resurvey Report is under preparation. Shifting cultivation being a common problem for the States like Assam, Orissa, Manipur, Nagaland and NEFA, the results of the experiment in colonisation of the semi-nomadic jhumias (shifting cultivators) are expected to be of interest to all the above States.

2. Instead of making it a statistical survey, the present report is based on case studies of 52 jhumias settled in 10 colonies selected at random. The case studies are both factual and observational. An investigating party consisting of Sarbashri N.Saha, D.K. Buragohain and L.M. Paul made the field survey in November, 1967.

3. This study, like similar other studies of this Centre, is a joint product under my general guidance. The following members of the staff, however, deserve special mention for the respective contributions. The descriptive background of the colonies (Appendix I) and case studies of jhumia households (Appendix II) are written jointly by Shri N.Saha and Shri D.K. Buragohain. The main body of the report containing the analysis of data contained in case studies is contributed by Shri Saha. Shri Buragohain

has done almost all the tabulation work. The manuscript and the stencils are typed by Sarbashri B.Dev Burman and P.C. Borah, while the duplicating was done by N.N.Deka.

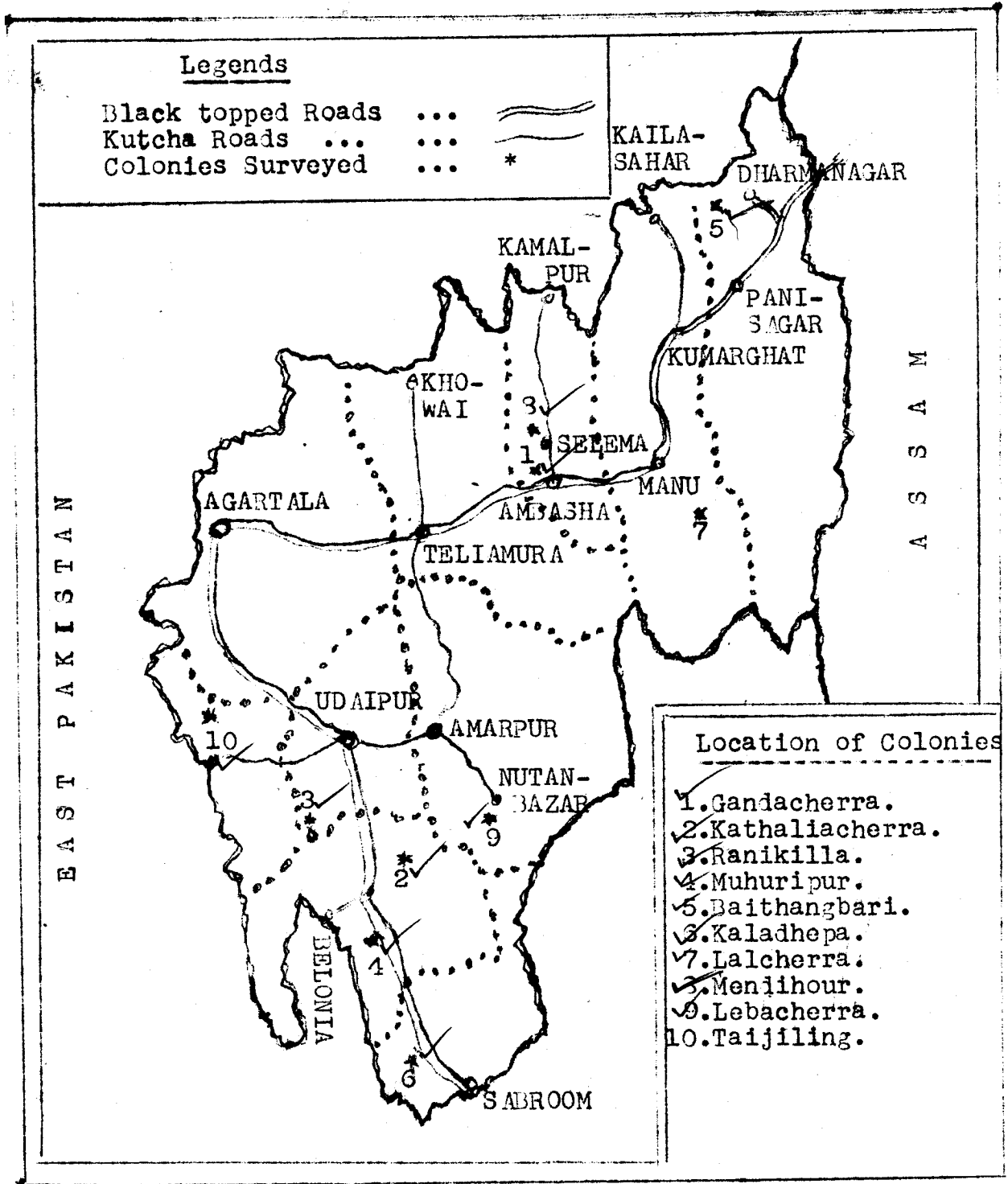
4. Without the help and cooperation of the Office of the A.D.M.(Development) and the Agricultural Department of Tripura the present investigation would not have been possible. We are thankful to the Director of Agriculture, Tripura for deputing Shri L.M.Paul, Research Assistant to work with the party and providing a vehicle for field investigation. We also like to place on record our appreciation of the services rendered by the B.D.O.s, Extension Officers, Colony Supervisors and the informant settlers in the respective Blocks and Colonies for their cooperation and hospitality accorded to the investigating party.

Agro-Economic Research Centre,  
for North East India,  
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P.C.GOSWAMI.  
DIRECTOR.

1st July, 1969.

SKETCH MAP  
OF  
TRIPURA



## The Territory.

1.1. Tripura, a Union Territory in the North East India is surrounded almost on three sides by East Pakistan and connected with the main-land by a small strip through the Cachar District of Assam. This landlocked situation of the Territory has placed some insurmountable difficulties in developing the Territory. Tripura was a princely State before it was integrated with the Indian Union in October, 1949. It was administered as a part 'C' State for some time and made a Union Territory in November, 1956 under a Chief Commissioner. The Territory is divided into 10 sub-divisions which are placed into three broad zones - north, central and south - for administrative convenience. The physiography of the Territory is undulating with several ranges running in the north-south direction. Three-fifth of the area of the Territory is hilly.

1.2. Tripura has an area of 4116 Sq. miles with a population of 11,42,005 in 1961, with a sex ratio of 932 females per 1000 males. The population increased in the decade, 1951-61 by 78.6%. This abnormally high population growth is mainly due to the influx of refugees from East Pakistan. The percentage of literacy is only 20. About 42% of the total population belongs to backward communities.

### 2. Tribal Population :

2.1. Tripura has a total tribal population of 3,60,070 accounting for 31.53% of the total population. The percentage declined to the present level from 36.35% in 1951 due to the influx of non-tribal population from outside, particularly, displaced persons from the East Pakistan. But taking the absolute increase of tribal population during 1951-61, it is found that the tribal

population has increased by 51.32 p.c. which is quite higher than the national average. This high increase of tribal population may be probably due to under-enumeration in 1951 Census when political conditions was unfavourable for Census operations in the hills. Moreover, some tribal groups, particularly the Chakmas and the Moghs might have entered into the Territory from East Pakistan. In Table 1.1. is given the distribution of Scheduled tribe population in 1961 in Tripura by Sub-division. Certain sub-divisions, particularly Amarapur, Sabroom and Khowai have large percentage of tribal population (70.12%; 46.85% and 45.19% respectively).

Table 1.1.

Distribution of Scheduled Tribe population by Sub-Division in Tripura. 1961.

Sub-Division	Total Population		Sch. Tribes		
	No.	P.C.	No.	P.C. of total population	P.C. of total general population
1. Amarapur	56,365	4.94	39,525	10.98	70.12
2. Belonia	84,827	7.43	27,163	7.54	32.02
3. Dharmanagar	1,27,548	11.17	33,700	9.34	26.42
4. Kailashahar	1,04,126	9.12	34,068	9.46	32.72
5. Kamalpur	61,675	5.40	19,932	5.53	32.32
6. Khowai	1,29,948	11.38	58,726	16.31	45.19
7. Sabroom	43,397	3.80	20,333	5.65	46.85
8. Sadar	3,66,076	32.05	97,218	27.00	26.56
9. Sonamura	77,969	6.83	8,251	2.30	10.58
10. Udaipur	90,074	7.89	21,154	5.89	23.49
<b>Total :-</b>	<b>11,42,005</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>360,070</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

Source : Statistical Abstract, Tripura, 1963.

2.2. In Table 1.2 is given the distribution of the Tribal population by recognised tribal groups as in 1961

found that the Tripuras (or Tripuri) constitutes about half the total tribal population, with 45.7%. The Reangs, Noatias, Halams, and Jamatias who are akin to the Tripuras in language and culture are the next important groups. The Chakmas and the Moghs form about 10% of the total tribal population. The Lushais (the Mizo) are only an insignificant minor group. The Santal, Munda and Oraons are mostly tea-garden labourers brought from outside. They constitute only about 2% of the total tribal population. The problem of jhuming (shifting cultivation) is very much related to the local groups, particularly the Tripuras, Reangs, Noatias, Jamatias, and Halams. In course of our investigation in the colonies we have come across certain new groups e.g. the Mura-singh (akin to the Manipuris), Uchais, Morsums and Darlungs (Kuki).

2.3. The tribal people of Tripura, in contrast to those in the hills of Assam, Nagaland and Manipur, have their own traditional religious customs and beliefs. Most of them call themselves as "Kshatriyas" (warrior-caste) and declare themselves as Hindus. The Moghs and Chakmas are, of course, Buddhists. A few groups in the Jampoi Hills adjoining Mizo District are being influenced by the Missioneries for embracing Christianity.

### 3. Land and shifting Cultivation :

3.1. The Traditional occupation of all the tribal groups is jhuming, a form of shifting cultivation in the hill slopes. Some of the tribes are very expert in bamboo and cane works, some are expert in weaving. A few are good gardeners. They have subsidiary sources of income from poultry and animal husbandry, particularly



rearing of pigs, goats, buffaloes and cows. Milk is not used as food by the majority of the tribal people and as such production and consumption of milk are very meagre. All the tribal groups enjoy free supply of house building materials and wild tubers and fruits from the forests. Hunting and fishing also give them supplementary sources of food.

Table 1.3.

Distribution of Tribal Population by Tribes

Tribe	Population	Percentage
1. Tripura	108,757	45.7
2. Reang	38,556	16.2
3. Noatia	24,992	10.5
4. Halam	14,842	6.2
5. Jamatia	14,756	6.2
6. Chakma	14,353	6.0
7. Magh	8,035	3.4
8. Garoo	3,451	1.5
9. Lushai	2,369	
10. Kuki	1,836	2.2
11. Santal	981	
12. Munda	2,731	
13. Oraon	1,855	
14. Chaimal	220	
15. Khasea	154	2.1
16. Bhela	41	
17. Bhutia	19	
18. Lepcha	5	
Total :	2,37,953	100.0

Source: Census - 1951.

3.2. The jhum economy of the State has been passing through a very critical phase due to physical and human factors. In the process of jhum operations, the nature of soil and vegetation undergoes changes and certain areas in the hill become completely barren being denuded of forest cover. While the supply of land for jhumming gets shrunk, the population pressure and dwindling yield-rate help to bring more land under cultivation. The cumulative results of the operation of these two forces are the acute scarcity of land suitable for jhumming. In such

a situation, without the intervention of external agencies, natural forces would have brought about famine, under-nourishment and epidemic to bring about a balance between population and land-supply, given the technique of production remaining the same. In this respect, the schemes on settlement and colonisation are steps in the right direction.

Jhumia Settlement and Colony Schemes:

1. The Background :

1.1. Shifting cultivation is an extensive system of land use and under certain conditions where population pressure is low and rest period can be kept higher than ten years, it does not harm the soil. But shifting cultivation in Tripura has passed that stage. With the deterioration of soil the economic conditions of the jhumias became precarious. Compared to the hill peoples of Assam, the Tripura tribal groups became less vigorous, may be, due to undernourishment through economic backwardness. They have also remained backward in education. The literacy is quite low compared to the tribal people of Assam. The situation demands special treatment for their uplift and economic betterment.

1.2. The Jhumia settlement and colonisation schemes are to be viewed in the above background. Moreover, the schemes form part of the overall strategy of 'shifting cultivation control scheme' initiated in first Plan in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Manipur and Tripura<sup>1</sup>. Under the settlement scheme, each jhumia family was given settlement of cultivable land suitable for settled agriculture and a grant of Rs.500.00. The Colony Scheme made provisions for allotting a dwelling house in a colony established by the Government. Each such colony was designed to provide facilities of drinking water primary education, medical and veterinary help and a co-operative society for credit and marketing.

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, Vol.No. 1, 1960-61. P. - 149

## 2. Number of Jhumias :

2.1. Though jhuming is an important problem in Tripura, there is no data on the total area affected by jhuming and total population practicing it. According to one estimate<sup>1</sup> there were 103,000 jhumias out of 237,953 total tribal population of Tripura in 1951. This means that about 43% of the total tribal population was dependent on jhuming. Taking 5 heads per family, there were 20,600 jhumia families in Tripura in 1951. It is indicated in the draft Fourth Five-year Plan of Tripura that 18,390 Jhumia families were settled under the two schemes by the end of Third Plan (1965-66).

2.2. In course of this investigation the Sub-division wise data on the number of jhumia families yet to be settled could not be gathered. There were reports that some jhumias settled in colonies have left for unknown destinations. Such families cannot be identified in a different area and naturally they would swell the ranks of unsettled jhumias. Without strict vigilance this type of desertion and enrolment as fresh jhumias cannot be controlled.

## 3. Organisation of Colonies :

3.1. Table 2.1 gives year-wise organisation of Tribal colonies in Tripura upto 1966-67 from the inception of the scheme. It will be seen that 27 colonies were set up in the Second Plan period and 20 colonies in the Third Plan. On an average, more than 100 families were settled in a colony.

3.2. The most crucial aspect of the settlement and colony schemes is the question of land allotment. From Table 2.1 it is apparent that each family on an average got less than 4 acres of land. The scheme provided that

<sup>1</sup> Techno Economic Survey of Tripura, 1961. P. 31.

out of 4 acres of land, 2 acres tilla (upland) land should terraced at the cost of the administration. In course of the investigation, it was found that land settlement could not be kept at uniform level. Different colonies have different pattern of land distribution.

Table 2.1.

Year-wise organisation of Colonies in Tripura from 1956-57 to 1966-67.

Year	No. of colonies established.	No. of families settled	Total of land allotted (acre).
1956-57	1	62	240
1957-58	8	835	3,176
1958-59	3	298	788
1959-60	4	350	1,280
1960-61	11	1,401	8,965
Sub Total	27	2,946	14,449
1961-62	6	911	3,491
1962-63	5	708	1,528*
1963-64	2	315	1,250
1964-65	3	330	n.a.
1965-66	4	506	1,809
Sub Total	20	2,770	8,078
1966-67	4	413	1,297\$

\* two colonies not included:      \$ One colony not included.

SOURCE: Tribal Welfare Office, Tripura.

4. Expenditure under the Scheme :

4.1. Table 2.2 provides provision made and actual expenditure incurred for the First three Plans for the schemes of jhumia settlement and colonisation.

Table 2.2.

Plan Provisions and Actual Expenditure under  
Jhumia Settlement & Colonisation  
Scheme, Tripura.

(Rupees in Lakhs).			
Plan/Year.	Plan Provision	Actual Expenditure	Surplus(+) or Deficit(-)
1st Plan	24,900	21,040	+ 3.860
2nd Plan	54,560	51,333	+ 3.227
3rd Plan	60,000	39,932	+ 20.068
1966-67	8,000	10,000	- 2,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,47,460</b>	<b>1,23,105</b>	<b>+ 24.355</b>

SOURCE : Tribal Welfare Office, Tripura.

The total provisions for the Fourth Plan are not available. But the performance in the first three plans does not look encouraging. Considering the urgency of the problems posed by the Jhumias, it is surprising that lakhs of rupees could not be spent though provisions were made in the plans. The fourth Plan scheme has made certain upward revision in the amount of grants and loans per family to be settled.

4.2. The Fourth Plan Scheme provides for grant to the extent of Rs. 1,245.00 and for loan to the extent of Rs. - 665.00. The total financial implication for each settled family will come to Rs. 1,910.00. The break up of the amount is given below :-

	Grants. (Rs).	<u>Loans.</u> (Rs).
1) Reclamation cost of Rs.300/-per family per acre for 2.20 acres.	405.00	165.00
2) House Building :	...	500.00
3) Agril. Purpose:		
(a) Bullocks & Implements	Rs. 370.00	
(b) Purchase of Seeds	...Rs. 40.00	
(c) Purchase of fruits, plants, suckers and grafts	...Rs. 20.00	
(d) Purchase of manure and fertilisers	... Rs. 20.00	

Contd/-

(e) Subsidy for 6 months  
@ Rs. 50.00 per family  
per month ... .. Rs. 300.00

Total Rs. 1,245.00      Rs. 665.00.

5. Present Administrative arrangement :

5.1. For the administration of the Jhumia Colonisation and Settlement Scheme, the Tripura Administration does not have any special department. The Scheme is now under the administrative control of the Development Commissioner and Ex-officio Secretary, Development. The A.D.M.(Development) is given powers to implement the Scheme. He is assisted in his works by a Tribal Welfare Officer (previously known as Cultural Research Officer). Under the T.W.O., there are three Assistant Tribal Welfare Officers stationed in the three Zonal S.D.O.'s Offices. There are one Tribal Welfare Inspector and one Amin in each of the ten sub-divisions. In each of the colonies there is a Tribal Supervisor (Senior V.L.W. rank) who is under the immediate administrative control of the B.D.O..It has been gathered that <sup>in</sup> the absence of direct line administration from the T.W. Officer at the apex and the Tribal Supervisors in the Colonies, there are several administrative difficulties. It is gathered that the administration is well aware of these lacunae and it is proposed that a single line administration will be set up with the reorganisation of the Tribal Welfare Department.

## CHAPTER - III.

### Assessment of the Colonisation Scheme

#### 1. Scope and Method :

1.1. The tiny territory of Tripura is beset with many baffling problems. One of them relates to the control of jhuming and rehabilitation of the jhumias who are no longer in a position to make two ends meet with jhum cultivation. In 1961, the Agro-Economic Research Centre undertook a survey in the Kathaliacherra Model Tribal Colony under its 'Continuous village survey programme' and a report was prepared.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, the colony was resurveyed in 1966 and a resurvey report is under preparation. The Kathaliacherra survey pinpointed the importance of the colonisation scheme in the rehabilitation and welfare of the erstwhile jhumias. The result of the 1961 survey was as under :

"It has been found that the colonisation scheme has achieved a partial success with settled farming having a mixed reception. It was seen that 41% of the families left for unknown destination after receiving the benefits under the scheme. Of the remaining 59%, the occupational pattern in relation to settled farming is as follows :

<u>Occupational Class.</u>	<u>No. of Families.</u>	<u>P.C. of Total.</u>
1. Solely Settled Farmers ...	6 ...	16.7
2. Mainly Settled Farmers ...	11 ...	30.5
3. Mainly Jhumias ...	10 ...	27.8
4. Solely Jhumias & others ...	9 ...	25.0
Total ...	36 ...	100.0

1 Saha, N. et al. Kathaliacherra : Agro-Economic Research Centre for N.E.India, Jorhat, 1962.



It may be pointed out that 16.7% of the existing families are converted into settled farmers, 58.4% are in the transitional stage undertaking settled farming and jhuming together and 25% are still following their traditional occupation, viz., jhuming."

1.2. In course of further investigation, it was gathered that the situation as found in Kathaliacherra colony cannot be generalised. There are instances of both ideal and absurd colonies. The case for an absurd colony is provided by Bishramganj colony in the Sadar Sub-Division which was found completely deserted. It was also heard that there are some colonies where there is little desertion.

1.3. This prompted the Agro-Economic Research Centre to take up a survey like the one undertaken here. It was decided that atleast 10 (ten) colonies should be visited and atleast 50 settlers interviewed to know about their socio-economic conditions in the colonies. It was thought that a mere statistical survey would not serve the purpose. The approach should, as far as possible, be observational. This is why the method of case studies was followed in the present survey.

The descriptive backgrounds of the 10 colonies surveyed are given in Appendix I. The case studies of 52 settlers are given in Appendix II.

## 2. Characteristics of Colonies Surveyed :

2.1. The colonies selected for investigation are located in different parts of the Territory. Sub-Division-wise, there is no colony in Sadar Sub-Division as the only colony at Bishramganj is completely deserted. No colony is selected from Khowai Sub-Division as they are

recent colonies. Two colonies each from Kamalpur and Belonia Sub-Divisions are selected. One colony each from six other Sub-Divisions is included in the study. According to the year of establishment the distribution is as follows :

<u>Year.</u>	<u>Name of Colonies.</u>	<u>Sub-Divisions.</u>
1957-58	1. Gandacherra 2. Kathaliacherra 3. Ranikilla	... Kamalpur ... Belonia ... Udaipur
1958-59	4. Muhuripur 5. Baithangbari	... Belonia ... Dharmanagar
1959-60	6. Kaladhepa	... Subroom
1960-61	7. Lalcherra	... Kailasahar
1961-62	8. Mendihour	... Kamalpur
1962-63	9. Lebacherra	... Amarpur
1964-65	10. Taijiling	... Sonamura

More weight is given to the colonies established in the first 5 years of the scheme under Second Plan (1957-58 to 1960-61) as seven colonies of this period are studied.

2.2. Of the selected colonies, Kaladhepa, Lebacherra and Lalcherra are fairly large, while Baithangbari, Gandacherra and Taijiling are of moderate size. Considering availability of land, the problems of a colony should not be too big but in consideration of provision of facilities for education, public health etc. they should not be too small. But no set pattern is possible in this respect. In respect of communication, certain colonies could not be approached with jeep. Ranikilla suffers from difficult communication facilities. Lebacherra and Gandacherra also suffers from

<sup>2</sup>  
A list of colonies is given in Appendix III.

Acc No  
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difficulty of communication, though roads are in the way of construction.

### 3. Problem of desertions :

3.1. It is noted earlier that desertion of colonies by families settled is a problem. The causes of desertion may be many and varied. Some are economic others are psychological and social. The jhumias were semi-nomadic and as such greatest psychological preparation is necessary for them to settle permanently, particularly when families are given settlement in a new area away from their area of operation. Secondly, the lure of jhuming may attract a certain families to the interior of the hills after getting the cash grants under the settlement scheme. This cause is directly connected with job preference. Settled agriculture is fundamentally different from jhuming, slash-and-burn method of agriculture. Because settled farming requires superior skill. Thirdly, a few families have left colonies due to unfavourable economic circumstances. They might not have got adequate land and scope for employment in or around the colony.

3.2. In Table 3.1. are given data on the number of families settled and number and percentage of families deserted. Higher desertion is mostly due to following important reasons :

#### (1). Inadequate Land Settlement :

There is no uniform policy on land settlement in different colonies. A certain areas allotted to the settlers fell into forest reservation and could not be brought under cultivation.

Table 3.1

<u>Colonies.</u>	<u>No. of families settled.</u>		<u>No. of families deserted.</u>		<u>P.C. of deserted families.</u>
1. Gandacherra	65	...	6	...	9.23
2. Kathaliacherra	61	...	29	...	47.54
3. Ranikilla	107	...	45	...	42.06
4. Muhuripur	135	...	17	...	12.59
5. Baithangbari	43	...	2	...	4.65
6. Kaladhepa	191	...	2	...	1.05
7. Lalcherra	110	...	29	...	26.36
8. Mendihour	91	...	Nil	...	Nil
9. Lebacherra	156	...	2	...	1.28
10. Taijiling	68	...	3	...	4.41
Total	1,027	...	135	...	13.15

A certain area is waterlogged and there is no irrigation facility in certain areas. The disadvantaged families had to see their own way.

(2). Some colonies do not have adequate medical and educational facilities.

(3). In some colonies there is dearth of drinking water.

The colony background in Appendix I will show that Kathaliacherra, Ranikilla and Lalcherra suffer from above disadvantages. About Lalcherra colony, it is gathered that the scheme for reclamation of a big swamp did not materialise. The families who left could not be given enough lunga (low) land for wet paddy cultivation.

3.3. It is found that in certain colonies, the settlers are original people in the locality. They were previously.

undertaking jhuming, but due to paucity of jhum land, they were trying to get more wet paddy land. When under the colony scheme, such jhumias got lunga land, there is least desertion. The Kaladhepa and Mendihour colonies are instances of such colonies. These colonies are not "new settlement" which a colony actually means. As a matter of policy, the jhumias should not be removed from their area of operation. They should be kept, as far as possible, in their own surroundings, in their own location.

#### 4. Land Settlement :

4.1. The success of the colonisation scheme hinges on availability of land for wet paddy cultivation and tilla land amenable for terracing. It was gathered that the administration decided to allot a minimum holding of four acres - two acres lunga (low land) and two acres tilla (upland) land per family. From the information gathered in the case studies, it was found that this norm could not be maintained. Moreover, in certain colonies more land was allotted to certain settlers against others getting less. It appears that there was no uniformity of approach. Desertion in many cases, was due to allotment of unsuitable and inadequate land for permanent cultivation.

4.2. As the jhumias have realised the value of lunga land for wet paddy cultivation, there is a rising demand for such land. But tilla land allotted to them had remained unreclaimed in many cases. Even certain terraced tilla lands were found fallow, as there was no scope for irrigation. Even rainfed crops were not grown as these