

Dynamics of Tribal Villages in Arunachal Pradesh

Emerging Realities



**Tamo Mibang
M C Behera**

A MITTAL PUBLICATION

Papers selected in the volume were presented in a seminar entitled *Dynamics of Tribal Villages in Arunachal Pradesh: Emerging Realities*. These papers have focused on one or the other aspect of village life in tribal villages of Arunachal Pradesh and obviously have made a departure from earlier studies on Indian villages as peasant communities in which villages were studied with a view to understand the 'nature' of the villages and dimensions of Indian civilization. Such studies were comprehensive explorations for an understanding of village communities as 'isolates' or 'part societies'. But the essence of the present volume lies in focusing attention on the nature of various aspects of village life, which independently reflects upon an integrative appreciation. Whether any aspect of life in tribal villages has intra- or inter-village functional significance, the characteristic feature that it displays is 'embeddedness'. A phenomenon like labour exchange, for example, does not exist in economic sphere of the activities; it rather embodies characteristics of cultural and social realities. Broadly, the strength of this volume emanates from the study of 20 villages of 12 tribes in the state mostly by scholars belonging to the village and the tribe itself. Undoubtedly, emphasising on emic perceptions of the transition realities, it has made a radical departure. Therefore, the volume will add a new dimension to village studies.

Rs. 595

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ISBN 81-7099-944-8

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Edited by
Tamo Mibang
&
M.C. Behera



MITTAL PUBLICATIONS

NEW DELHI-110059 [INDIA]

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Cover Photo: Personal Album of Dr. Tomo Riba. The cluster of houses in Disi village of the Galo in 1982. Roadside houses of Bam village, another Galo village, in 1998. Though villages are different and though photos are taken in different time periods, the differences mark a changing reality in villages of Arunachal Pradesh.

First Edition 2004

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ISBN 81-7099-944-8

Editorial Office:

H-13, Bali Nagar,
New Delhi - 110015

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4594/9, Daryaganj,
New Delhi - 110002
Phone: 23250398

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Published and printed by Krishan Mittal for Mittal Publications,
A-110, Mohan Garden, New Delhi-110059, India.

Tel.: 25351493, 25351976 Telefax: 91-11-25351521

E-Mail: mittalp@ndf.vsnl.net.in Gram: Mittalbox

website: www.mittalpublications.com

PREFACE

Villages in Arunachal Pradesh are undergoing changes in a quicker space in response to external forces of change. The state, which was entirely rural, as recorded in 1961 census, has 17 urban centers in 2001 census in addition to many administrative headquarters at district, sub-division and circle levels. Associated with it is the practice of conversion to non-traditional faiths. Precisely, the people and their culture is in a transitional phase, and considering the rapidity at which new forces enter into the life of the people it would not be too long for many aspects of the diverse culture to disappear or to take a new form altogether.

The apprehension is not baseless. Arunachalee children in urban centres are found not knowing their own language, least to speak of their cultural heritage. The mode of transition of traditional knowledge to young generations by elders has almost disappeared in elite families. Traditionally, education was imparted in the fields, learning while doing, and around the fire place at home in the evening. The situation does not exist when girls and boys stay in hostels, or with working parents in government quarters, away from the traditional setting of the village life. Their dependence on market products has alienated them from their interaction with nature for material means of existence. No doubt, this is inevitable in the process of social transformation, but the process is so rapid that in most cases the change is without continuity. Apart from modern education, it is found that conversion to non-traditional faiths in villages has further added to such a change.

The onus of at least recording the cultural heritage of the people therefore lies on present generation who are a balancing factor between tradition and modernity and on

the students of cultural studies. Keeping in this line of thinking, a seminar on village studies was visualized by the first editor (Prof. Tamo Mibang) of the volume which was put to action by the second editor (Dr. M.C. Behera) drawing upon the financial assistance from UGC Unassigned Grants head of Arunachal University and upon the support of the faculty members and students of the Department of Tribal Studies.

Why village studies? In fact village is the bedrock of cultural heritage. The impact of urbanization, and other modern forces of change are percolating down to villages. Present day electoral politics and forces of change in terms of conversion to the new faiths have been influencing the traditional village community to a greater extent. Educated and other elites are migrating to administrative centers and through them, due to the continuity of their links with the villages, the urban culture is influencing many aspects of village life. Moreover, tribal villages in many ways resemble to village life in non-tribal villages in India in terms of their worldview and subsistence nature of production. In both the cases, the worldview is shaped on the fact that they lay emphasis on nature worship and mutual nature of cooperation. There are studies on such non-tribal villages focusing attention on the understanding of Indian civilization. No doubt, the study of tribal villages will complement in the comprehensive understanding of Indian civilization and at the same time will highlight the cultural heritage of the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh at large.

The work of this nature accumulates obligation to many. We would like to thank all of them, especially to Prof. Baidyanath Saraswati for his encouragement and for the outline of the concept paper which we have included in this volume. We are sincerely grateful to him. We would like to thank Dr. J.L. Dawar, Dr. Pura Tado, Ms. Junyir Basar, Mr. Honluk Lukham and Mr. Pranjal Baruah who helped us in the process of preparing the manuscripts. We are greatly thankful to Dr. Tomo Riba for the cover photographs which he provided from his personal album, and to Shri Bomchack Riba for Cartographic work.

We are thankful to the University Authority for making the fund available for the seminar; otherwise, this volume would not have been possible.

We also take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all colleagues and students in the Department of Tribal Studies for their cooperation in conducting the seminar successfully.

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to Dr. Anil Dutta Mishra, Assistant Director, National Gandhi Museum, Rajghat, New Delhi, who advised us to get the book published from Mittal Publications.

Lastly, we are thankful to Mr.K.M.Mittal of Mittal Publications, New Delhi for undertaking the publication of this volume.

Tamo Mibang
M.C. Behera

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	v
<i>List of Tables</i>	xiii
<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xv
<i>Contributors</i>	xvii
1. Introduction	1
— <i>Tamo Mibang, M.C.Behera</i>	
2. It is the Village that Radiates Energy	25
— <i>B.N. Saraswati</i>	
SECTION-I : SOCIETY, SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND CHANGING REALITIES	
3. India Vision 2020 for Sherdukpen Membachur	31
— <i>Making Folk-Text Reality Bargain Transformation</i>	
— <i>K.C.Mishra</i>	
4. Class Structure in a Tribal Village	44
— <i>Aspects of Change and Continuity with Reference to the Impact of Modern Education</i>	
— <i>K. Dey</i>	
5. Reflection on Changes in Parang Village from Experience	57
— <i>Gollo Jabang</i>	
6. Clans and Clan Organisations in Damro Village	73
— <i>Otem Pertin</i>	
SECTION-II: VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS	
7. Reciprocity during House Construction : A Bond of Solidarity Among Galo Society	87
— <i>A Study in Disi Village of West Siang District, Arunchal Pradesh</i>	
— <i>Tomo Riba</i>	

8. The Re-Thinking of Context 103
—(Youth Dormitories in Wancho Villages)
—*Moji Riba*

9. Riglap (Reciprocal Cooperation) in Bilat-An 115
Adi Village
—*Tabang Mibang*

**SECTION-III: RESOURCE, RESOURCE
OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT,
AND VILLAGE ECONOMY: EMBEDDEDNESS**

10. Resources, Resource Management and 125
Resource Based Economy in Nyigam Village
—*Jumyir Basar*

11. Resource Use and Aspects of Conservation 153
Practice in Rumgong Village
—*Talut Tatak*

12. Economic Life of the People of Tatamori Village 163
—*Mary Gibi*

13. Tcharen (Rent for Grassland) Practice 191
in Domkho - A Monpa Village
—*Leki Norbo*

14. Chilli Cultivation in Dari Village in 197
West Siang District
—*Bomchak Riba*

**SECTION-IV: SACRED GEOGRAPHY AND
PERFORMANCES**

15. Sacred Geography and Performances 209
—With Special Reference to Wanchos of Rusa
Village of Tirap District
—*Manlong Ralongham*

16. Sacred Places, Beliefs, Festivals and Rituals 219
of the Aka of Palizi Village
—*Gibji Nimachow*

17. Social Significance of Pig Sacrifice in Myoko 227
Festival of the Apa Taniis
—*Pura Tado*

18. Reflections on Village Solidarity in Family Rituals—A Study of Rangtuan in Kaimai Village of the Nocte
—*Chowang Wangsa* 239

SECTION-V: LIFE IN VILLAGE—LOOKING THROUGH HISTORY AND LEGENDS

19. Life in Nakhu Village 251
— Manifestations of Miji Culture
—*P. Rijju*
20. Aspects of Life in Dongko Village of the Sulung 259
—*Bopai Puroik*
21. Life Around Gonpa in Sangti Village 267
—*Pema Deki*
22. Kombo Village— Looking through History and Legends 279
—*Tunge Lollen*
- Index* 291

LIST OF TABLES

4.1 Class wise Distribution of Clans, Families and Population	53
4.2 Class wise Literacy Rate in Jigaon	53
4.3 Number of High Ranking Officers in Jigaon	53
7.1 Clan, Sector & Religion wise distribution of households in Disi Village	88
7.2 Population of Disi village, August 2003	88
10.1 Time of Sowing and Harvesting of different Varieties of Paddy in Jhum Plot	133
10.2 Classifications of Raw Materials on the Basis of Utilization	137
10.3 Food Stuff Collected From Forest	138
10.4 Types of Mushroom which are Edible	139
10.5 Varieties of Insects used as Food Item	140
10.6 Plants used in Different Rituals	140
10.7 Weapons used for Hunting	142
10.8 Different types of Traps used	142
10.9 Implements Used for Fishing	145
10.10 Different Types of Plants used to Poison Fish	146
10.11 Types of Fishes	150
12.1 Economic Activities and Participation	167
12.2 Statement showing Occupation Distributions	169
12.3 Statement showing Work Force in the Study Village	169
12.4 Calendar of Jhum Activities	171
12.5 Crops Grown on Jhum Field	174
12.6 Changing trend of Population over a Period of 30 years	185
12.7 Variations in Residential Households over a period of 30 years	185
12.8 Growth and Literacy	186
12.9 Changing Trend in Occupation Variation	186

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PHOTOS

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. House under construction- looking for community cooperation | 104 |
| 2. A view of Nyigam village: changing facet | 127 |

MAPS

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Arunachal Pradesh | 2 |
| 2. Drainage basin of Kidi Nala, Basar | 87 |
| 3. Administrative Divisions, West Siang District | 124 |
| 4. Basar Circle. West Siang | 128 |
| 5. Dari Circle, West Siang | 196 |
| 6. Chilli Concentration, Dari Village, West Siang | 200 |

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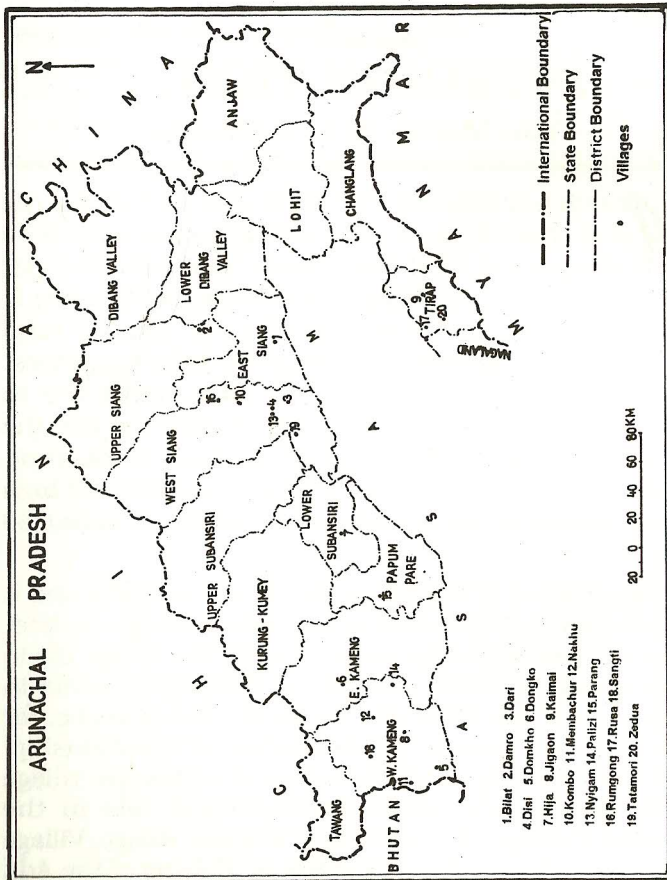
INTRODUCTION

—TAMO MIBANG & M.C. BEHERA

Arunachal Pradesh (26°-29°N and 91°-97°E), the erstwhile NEFA, is predominantly rural with 3649 villages and 17 urban centers, and with 79.6 per cent rural population according to 2001 census. The state is also predominantly tribal with 63.66 per cent of total population (1991 census) belonging to different tribes. Understandably, tribal people in the state mostly live in villages. Of the total land area of about 84,000 sq. km. the foothills and plain areas of the state cover about 20 per cent, the middle-hills and valleys about 60 per cent and the high Himalayas including snow clad peaks constitute about 20 per cent.

The organisation of the village life is not uniform and it varies from tribe to tribe depending on political organisation, social institutions and religious practices. The village life in a Monpa society centers around the monastery while in chiefdom namely, the Khampti, the Nocte, the Wancho, for example, it moves around the institution of chieftainship. Added to it, monastery exerts influence in a Khampti village while Paa (dormitory) plays an important role in the organisation of village life in a Nocte or Wancho village. Village councils like *Buliyang* of the Apatanii or *Kebang* of the Adi, or such fluid institutions/organisations as *riglap* of the Adi play an important role in the organisation of village life.

Before independence, the villages in Arunachal Pradesh did not have access to modern amenities like schools, hospitals, electricity, provision for drinking water supply and road communication. As recorded in Techno Economic Survey of Arunachal Pradesh (NCAER, 1967), there were only two



Map 1: Arunachal Pradesh

lower primary schools, 13 health units and only two jeepable roads in the territory covering 168 km. at the time of independence. Womenfolk had to go about 3 to 5 km to fetch water in bamboo containers carried on their backs. After independence, the situation has changed with the introduction of plan programmes and allocation of plan outlays under different sectoral activities. There are 1887 educational institutions, both general and technical, 437 hospitals/health units (allopathic) and 14539 km of road in the state by March 2001. About 60 per cent of the villages (total 2206 number) have been electrified (Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 2001). Besides, rural development programmes are being implemented for the all round development of the villagers. Associated with these above development interventions, there are also other interventions in the traditional social system in the way of introduction of Panchayati raj in 1967 and electoral politics in 1977 when people exercised their franchise for the first time in the Parliamentary election to Lok Sabha held on March 1977 for two representatives from the state.)

Over these years of development intervention, since 1951 to be precise, the villages have been interacting with external forces of change. What is the nature of change in the village life? What direction does the social process follow consequent upon induced changes? What does the concept village connote after the interaction of the traditional village community with external forces of change all these years? These are some of the questions which need to be answered for an understanding of the social process in tribal villages of Arunachal Pradesh.

The tradition of village studies in the state is not very old and organised. Literature available on such studies is not many either. In fact the beginning of village study can be traced to the study of Jara, a Nyishi village, during 1961 census. It is to be noted that the population census was taken for the first time in the state in 1961. In 1970s, studies were conducted in four villages of the state namely, Bamin (Phukan, *et al.*, 1978), Pakam (Barkataky and Dutta, 1972), Khonsa (Barkataky and Dutta, 1970) and Hatiduba (Goswami and Buragohain, *nd.*) by Agro-Economic Research Center for North-East India, Jorhat. A second village, namely, Rupa, was also studied in 1981 census. All these studies are socio-economic surveys aimed at understanding the manner and

direction in which the Indian villages are changing and the impact of development programmes implemented during five year plans.

In addition to these studies, two ethnographic studies on origin, migration and settlement of the Lisu (Dutta, 1982) and land tenure system of the Nocte (Dutta, 1981) were conducted by the Department of Research, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar. Apart from the two ethnographic studies mentioned, there are also two other anthropological studies conducted in Pobdi Gune Bane village (Behera, 1999) of the Galo and Riga village (Behera, 2000) of the Minyong group of the Adi in West Siang and East Siang districts of the state respectively. In Pobdi Gune Bane, Behera studied the changing status of Galo women in response to the introduction of orange cultivation in the village by applying PRA techniques. He also studied Riga village as the sample village of the project 'Village Studies' in India sponsored by UNESCO-IGNCA collaboration. Various field techniques like observation, PRA techniques, interview were applied to in the study to focus on the identification and enhancement of cultural heritage of the village following the guidelines provided by IGNCA, New Delhi.

There are also some villages studied by M.Phil. students of the Department of Tribal Studies, while working on their dissertations for partial fulfillment of M.Phil. degree of Arunachal University. The villages are Rayang (Phukan, 2000), Emchi and Model Village of Naharlagun (Das 1997), Panya and Hijum Rime in West Siang district, (Eshi, 1998), Ganga near Itanagar (Bezbaruah, 1999), Midpu, Mani, Chiputa and Chopo in Papum Pare district (Lahon, 1999), Watte, Lellong Champing, Neking and Neping in East Kameng district (Rangmo, 2000), Restaring in Kurung Kumey district (Taring, 2003) and Ngopok in East Siang district (Lego, 2003). Except a few villages, others are studied to discuss single research issue identified by the scholar. Phukan had studied income and employment structure in the Raying village under Ruksin circle of East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh. Das, Eshi and Bezbaruah had studied the transitional nature of the village economy in general and the agriculture in particular. Lahon had studied the impact of external forces of change in disintegrating the long house, Namda tradition of the Nyishi. Rangmo, on the other hand, had made a study of marriage system with reference to five Nyishi villages in

West Kameng district along with the changes in recent years. Taring has made a departure from the above studies by focusing on the lineage system of the Nyishi of his own village. Similarly, Lego has also studied his own village to discuss the production, exchange and distribution system of the Adi in the changing context. Broadly, these studies have focused on the changing aspects of village economy and cultural life of the village. There is also another study which discusses educational scenario in three villages of the Tagin namely, Uli, Bui and Nguki, in Upper Subansiri district (Uli, 2000).

Naturally, it is necessary for a series of studies of village communities of different tribes from different areas covering the divergent patterns of organization and ethos with a view that requirements of applied and fundamental researches along with ethnographic studies are taken care of. Ethnographic studies by themselves are not applied researches, but are essential to understand the impact of plan programmes. Similarly, they are not pure researches to add to the theoretical growth of the subject. Applied researches may help planners or may help the researcher to understand and sympathise with the difficulties of his peasant or tribesmen (cf. Srinivas, 1955:5,13). But by itself, the research may not be a fundamental research in the area of village studies.

Therefore, the vast and rapid changes, which are taking place at present in villages of Arunachal Pradesh, lend a note of urgency to village studies and this effort is just the beginning with this volume.

Keeping the above perspectives in view, the seminar on '*Dynamics of tribal villages in Arunachal Pradesh: Emerging Realities*' was conducted in the Department of Tribal Studies, Arunachal University. Each scholar was asked to write one aspect of village life which he either found most interesting or considered important. Thirty-six papers were submitted, out of which 20 papers have been selected for the present volume. The papers were selected considering the representativeness of the villages in terms of remoteness, religion and clan structure. Villages selected differ in many respects and these differences could not be reduced to a uniform look through external interventions in terms of planned development. Each village has a pattern and mode of life, which is to some extent is unique. Villages next door to each other differ considerably and this fact is recognised

by villagers (cf. Srinivas, 1955:2). Villages studied cover a wide range. Geographically speaking, the twenty villages belonging to 12 major tribes are from 9 districts out of total 15 districts in the state. Still there are conspicuous gaps. Villages include single clan, bi-clan and multi-clan villages. Religion wise the villages represent Buddhists, Christians, followers of Donyi Polo, other traditional and mixed faiths. There are villages like Nyigam and Kombo nearer to administrative centres and villages like remote Dongko.

The papers included in the volume may be read with reference to such analytical concepts as 'unity and extensions' (Opler, 1956), embeddedness and insiders' perspectives.

Reversals in 'the other'-Emic Perspectives

The tradition of village studies in India has two distinct features. First, all the studies have been conducted by the outsider to the villages studied, and second, anthropological studies have been based on participant observation. In the former case, the outsiders were entirely outsiders to the 'great tradition' which 'little communities' namely, the village communities, belonged to, or outsiders to the sample villages (i.e. having limited insider status to the village culture) but belonged to the 'great tradition' of which 'little communities' are a constituent part. Precisely, the reference is to both foreign and Indian scholars, who had studied Indian villages.

Associated with village studies is the debate on emic and etic views in the study of a culture. In spite of the debate, etic view has been regarded sound as the studies are seen being conducted by outsiders. Broadly, it is the 'outsiders', whether Malinowski or Redcliffe-Brown or M.N. Srinivas or Leach, who have generated the debate and naturally the strength of the argument remained in their favour. Had there been insiders (in contrast to insiders with limited status) among the sample tribes and in peasant villages to study 'the self', meaning the own culture, perhaps the debate would have been logically more significant. Presently, there is no dearth of 'insiders', indigenous scholars, to study their own culture. Therefore, in this section, a discussion on the debate has been included keeping in view that 17 papers are by 'insiders' to the sample villages. The analysis mostly draws on the writings of M.N. Srinivas, though reference to the other viewpoints has been made for a better comprehension.

In studying primitive cultures, the term 'the others' has

been used in anthropological parlance to refer to the culture other than the one the anthropologist belongs to. Opposite to 'the others', there is 'the self' in a bipolar classification of the cultures to mean the study of own versus the other (others') culture.

It may be mentioned that it is the 'outsiders' who have generated the debate on etic versus emic views in the study of a culture. This statement needs further qualifications. During colonial period, anthropologists studied the culture of the people whom they considered inferiors. The sense of racial superiority (Srinivas, 2002:570-571) of the western anthropologists, who, while comparing artifacts, social institutions, religions and culture of 'the others' have 'invariably reinforced the western assumption that the westerner stood at the apex while the other races occupied lower rungs of the ladder' (*ibid.*, 572). With the sense of racial superiority, they considered emic views having been influenced by 'preconceptions' and private prejudices' of 'the insiders'. But when trained anthropologists came out from conquered countries they questioned the authenticity and bias-free presentation of etic views on culture of 'the others'. Consequently, the debate on etic and emic views emerged.

It is obvious that the debate on emic and etic views emanated in response to western anthropologists while studying non-western cultures. However this also equally holds within non-western countries. In a country with sterling cultural diversities like India, a member in a particular culture is alien to other cultures in many ways.

Naturally, the scholars from the non-western countries like India enjoyed limited insider status with the sterling diversities in culture when they studied a different culture. In their studies of tribal cultures and even of their own culture in a different place and community they are no less than the outsiders. This point is discussed in following paragraphs. But the point which we make is that they are outsiders in view of the existing cultural diversities when they studied villages other than their own and in view of their training in foreign universities. In the process of their training they might have acquired an outlook quite different from the one required to perceive the culture as an insider and in this sense, they are also outsiders. This problem would have been at least minimized had they studied their own village culture (cf. Srinivas, 2002:532-541). Such a study could have been also

a better syncretism of a balanced understanding between acquired outlook from their training and ascribed outlook from living in the culture as compared to the studies they have undertaken. This is because an insider through his training achieves some distance from his own culture. Keeping in this line of thinking the argument in this section is organized in the context of studying tribal villages.

In 'the self' which is expected to include every member of the tribe to which the scholar (including the anthropologist) belongs, there is 'the others', may be, in the next door if domestic cultural and religious traditions vary consequent upon liberal and orthodox attitude between the neighbours. 'The others' may be at a few yards if they differ in terms of religion, as is the case in some Arunachal villages where the neighbours have converted to Christianity (for a better understanding of the explanation see the discussion of Srinivas, *ibid.*, 579-580).

"In the study of one's own society, it often happens that, either at a level which is easily perceived, or at a deeper level which is not easily perceived, the native anthropologist shares some elements of culture with the people he is studying. Further, the quantum of culture he shares may vary from group to group subsumed in his society" (ibid., 580-581).

By studying a village community of one clan or multi clans in a tribal village, the insider shares the culture as he lives in it whereas the outsider tries to either understand or live in it through participant observation. The process of understanding the rationality of another culture results in distancing him from his own natal culture. In anthropological understanding, the entire psychic of the outsider anthropologist is involved and not only his cognitive faculties. The outsider anthropologist has to collect information on various aspects of the culture and life of the people. Then to 'grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world' (Redcliffe-Brown, 1992:25) he has to take a leap from information about a culture to understanding its ideas and values. He needs to sensitise himself mentally and emotionally with the cultural ethos of 'the other'. In the process the outsider anthropologist transforms from *the living in his culture* to the *empathy* for other culture, which Srinivas calls twice-bornness. But such an involvement, which is expected from an outsider in the ideal sense, is a natural characteristic of insiders than outsiders (Srinivas, 1984). It

is to be noted that the quality, which is expected from the outsider anthropologist, is not free from limitations. As Leach (1982) points out, an outsider suffers from 'initial pre-conceptions'. Moreover, moral and intellectual qualities required of outsider anthropologists (Evans-Pritchard, 1951:84) to make a study using the method of participant observation do not exist with an equal intensity with all the anthropologists. As a matter of fact, they have their own temperament and personality, which very often influence their training and the degree of success in understanding 'the other culture'. It would not be exaggerated to state that the nature of research conducted by academics and other professionals in third world countries, given the time and recourses at their disposal, and number of research papers they are to produce for career promotion, enables them at best to get information, but the ideas which they conceive is in the line of their own perception, may be acquired, or ascribed, or may be the result of both. They do not get time to transform them to understand the rationality of 'the other' culture.

Apart from this, the success through participant observation depends on the extent by which the outsider commands over the language, establishes rapport and displays empathy, the ability to 'see the world from the point of view of the people he is studying' (*ibid.*, 583; also see Malinowski, 1922:125). All the requirements like imagination and empathy and rapport building necessitates 'anthropologist's mastering the language of the field community (Srinivas, *op.cit.*, 586). In that respect an 'insider' has advantage over the 'outsider' in village studies especially when he belongs to the village he studies, because he possesses 'some knowledge as distinct from a sense of familiarity' (*ibid.*). This knowledge may be superficial to one who has his training in another cultural tradition, as are Arunachalees in modern education for example, but it would be initially adequate for an ethnographic account of one or the other aspects of life in the village.

His empathy shall be his own and the imagination may emanate from a syncretic understanding of his own tradition and his training in 'the other' tradition. The analysis and interpretation to follow will be free from the bias of both 'insider' and 'outsider' to a great extent. The outlook he derives from the training he undergoes in the 'other' tradition will

counterbalance the bias of his being insider. Conversely, his 'insider' bias will be evaluated and compared in the light of his understanding of 'the other' culture through his training in a non-traditional system, i.e. in formal educational institutions of the nation. His private prejudices of being insider will melt in the cauldron of 'public experience' in the process of his training, because he will be critical to his prejudices in the light of 'learned outlook'(acquired) and his position of an intellectual in the village community. Fei Hsiao Tung's successful study (see Leach:1982) of his own culture substantiates to the argument . Moreover like the outsider anthropologist who sees 'the other' culture through the prism of his own culture (*ibid.*,127) the insider will do the same thing. The only difference is the reversal in position. What an outsider anthropologist considers 'the other', understandably, forms 'own' to the insider and vice versa. In the process of social transformation, when the tribal communities interact with complex communities and systems, it is important for the members of the tribal communities to understand the nature, extent and direction of the transformation. The onus therefore lies on the 'insider' anthropologist/social scientists or the native scholars. An insider's study of his own village life will focus on changing perspectives, both at mental and physical plane, of the village in response to the process of social transformation in a better way and will eliminate, what we shall call, the 'doctors' differ syndrome' of outsider anthropologist's /scholar's in the study of 'the other' culture to a greater extent. The 'doctors' differ syndrome' operates because an outsider anthropologist " carries his own personality and temperament, his socialization and his life experience, the kind of intellectual training which he received during his years of study at the university, and the kind of interests he has into the field. It is likely that even two anthropologists trained in the same department of anthropology and going to the same community at the same time would write up somewhat different accounts of people. The differences would be much greater when the anthropologists hailing from different cultures study the same people" (Srinivas, *op.cit.* , 587, also see Sriniva, 1955:4). Insiders, however, may or may not be free from personal bias and temperament, but the personal bias and temperament if they have, would not be as diverse as an outsider from a complex system would display. The range of insider's bias and temperament would display more

of his own cultural traits. When the society is in transition, the bewilderment gets caught in 'public experiences', which he captures even if he is not a trained anthropologist. What anthropologist could have searched for is what an insider experiences and shares along with the fellow villagers. He is not 'familiar' like the one who studies his own society as he experiences unfamiliarity in response to change and in relation to tradition within a short span of time.

When both outsider and insider jointly study a cultural change, for example, the emic and etic debate loses its strength and the study logically becomes free from the bias of both outsider and insider. The rationality of the both helps in the objective analysis. On this count, the volume scores over the emic (insider) and etic (outsider) controversy.

So it is not necessary to study an alien culture to understand one's own, as Srinivas (1995:5) puts, because for a tribal intellectual 'the other' culture is too complex to explain the simplicity and nuances in his own culture. The situation is just reversal. The outsider studies a simple culture to understand his own complex one as the complex culture has been assumed to have evolved out of simple ones. In case of the insider he has to stretch the horizon of his imagination beyond his comprehension, as he faces a very complex reality which he wants to see through the prism of his own culture. Yet when he studies his own, he gets exposure to forces of complex culture which effect the transition in his own society.

Since interventions are from outside, an effort to understand the change by an outsider is likely to doubly influence outsider perception. Hence, an insider perspective assumes greater significance in the context. The papers may be read as an attempt to understand all these issues. In a way or the other, they show the awareness and interest of 'insiders' in understanding the process of change of their culture and in relation to that of 'the other' in their perception.

It invariably seems to be a practice to identify others in the light of own perception. This holds true for tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. A tribe has its own identity and also an acquired (because of its behaviour the outsider identifies as such) identity which is given by others. In many cases, the identity mark is from outside also. For example, Dafla identity of the Nyishi or Abor identity of the Adi does not have any meaning in their language. these happen to be identity marks

from outside. But now there is an assertion for one's own identity. The Nyishi do not identify with Dafla identity nor the Adi with the Abor. The identity they have is their own. What is important is the reversal trend in establishing one's own identity. Earlier a tribe/community identified by others asserts its own identity. To keep space with the changing situation it is imperative for an insider to study his own society and culture to know the self in one's own eyes.

The papers included in this volume attempts to answer the question: what forms of thought for understanding emerging realities in tribal villages are relevant when the village experiences external interventions in the process of change? Interventions in terms of forces of changes, namely, the school, the radio, the ballot politics and rural development schemes have reached even remote villages. In many villages such amenities as hospitals, electricity, etc. are available. The changes they have introduced are in both kind and degree, but these changes have not entirely replaced the tradition. Moreover, all the aspects of a culture do not change in equal proportions either. There are cultural continuity in the change that displays a relation across the tribe to the state and nation.

Thematic Focus

The papers included in the volume are thematically arranged under five general themes namely,

- Society, Social Structure and Changing Realities
- Village Institutions
- Resource, Resource Ownership and Management, and Village Economy: Embeddedness
- Sacred Geography and Performances
- Life in Village: Looking through history and legends.

Though the themes are different, the papers presented exhibit the following pictures:

- *Culturally and geographically the villages manifest a territorial identity and a cultural space.*
- *Villages have also manifested both independent as well as interdependent characteristics*
- *No activity or phenomenon could be perceived in isolation from other aspects of life. Every aspect of the village life by itself is an integrated whole.*

- *Village life is changing in response to outside forces. But the change also reflects continuity at various levels.*

In section -I, papers of K.C. Mishra, K. Dey, Gollo Jabang and Otem Pertin are included. In section-II Tomo Riba, Moji Riba and Tabang Mibang have contributed on the themes relating to village institutions. Five papers by Jumyir Basar, Talut Tapak, Mary Gibi, Leki Norbu and Bomchack Riba have been included in Section-III, which discusses on Resource, Resource Ownership and Management, and Village Economy in cultural context. The Section-IV deals with the theme on sacred geography and performances to which Manlong Ralongham, Gibji Nimachow, Pura Tado and Chowong Wangsa have made their contributions. The last section, that is Section-V, highlights the history and legends associated with the village life through the papers of P. Rijiju, Bopai Puroik. Pema Deki and of Tunge Lollen.

K.C.Mishra's paper entitled *India Vision 2020 for Sherdukpen Membachur: Making Folk-Text Reality Bargain Transformation* is a bold attempt to visualize a link of the village reality with the development imperatives reflected in the President Dr. A.P.J. Kalam's *India Vision 2020*. The vision that Dr. Kalam has nourished draws on Gandhian ontology of *Gram Swaraj*. The potential of the village that could form the bedrock of Gandhian understanding of development is very much reflected in the folk-text reality of the Sherdukpen. The Gandhian understanding not only has captured the vision of Dr. Kalam, but it has influenced Elwin's philosophy for tribal development. Sherdukpen folk-text is impregnated with their characteristic virtues, which could provide the base for the realisation of *India Vision 2020*. Mishra, therefore argues that with such characteristic virtues the Sherdukpen village of Membachur, for example, could be an entry point for realizing this vision.

In his paper entitled *Class Structure in a Tribal Village: Aspects of Change and Continuity with reference to the Impact of Modern Education*, K. Dey has made a diachronic study of a social reality in terms of change and continuity consequent upon the impact of education on social personality of the Sherdukpen in Jigaon village. The hierarchical division of the Sherdukpen into *Thong* and *Chhao* continues to exist not in terms of the traditional notion of unequal social status of a dominant-subordination type,

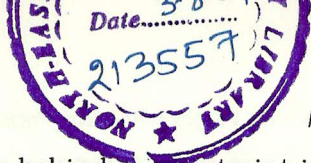
but in terms of an interdependence based on voluntary cooperation between the two distinct social classes.

Forces of change affect village life in many ways. When these forces operate within the cultural tradition of the people the changes in village life manifest a continuity in a way different from the one brought about by the change like conversion. In latter type of change many aspects of the culture are deliberately discarded. Gollo Jabang's paper entitled *Reflection on Changes in Parang Village from Experience* highlights the issue in addition to many other aspects like role of the youngsters, social and cultural institutions, the relevance of Nele, the belief in diseases and their cure, food and dress habit, village property, ownership and inheritance, etc. in the changing situation.

Otem Pertin in his paper, *Clans and Clan organizations in Damro village* has systematically described clan relations and clan territories of the Padam in Damro village. His discussion of clans and sub-clans has questioned clan divisions of earlier writers. In addition, he has also focused briefly on the social relations with reference to joint ownership of property, exchange of labour and matrimonial relations.

Jumyir Basar in her paper entitled *Resource, Resource Management and Resource based Economy in Nyigam village* has discussed the economic pursuit of the villagers in Nyigam village in relation to village resources and resource management. Her paper has clearly depicted how people have maintained harmonious relationship with such natural resources as land, forest and water bodies in the process of obtaining their material means of existence. Whether it is *modirike* (shifting cultivation) or fishing or hunting, people maintain restraints in resource use through a process of management, which is highly embedded, in their socio-cultural practices, since every economic activity is accompanied by performance of one or more rituals. Even though there are changes for example, use of blasting for fishing or timber extraction for commercial purposes, traditional practices and belief system are still followed at large in resource management in the village.

Talut Tatak in his paper *Resource use and aspects of conservation practice in Rumgong Village* describes the territoriality of village Rumgong and practices of resource use which by itself are conservation strategies. Whether it is jhum cultivation or collection of resources for the purpose of



domestic use, the motive behind is a restraint in resource use. The ownership of resources and the practice the villagers follow in the resource use do not permit indiscriminate use of any resource by the villagers or anybody from other villages so as to push it to the point of crisis. Resource use practice has been interwoven into village identity in such a way that it is well preserved by village institution such as Kebang. While emphasizing on the identity of Rungong village in the process of its resource conservation Tatak does not present the identity of a village in isolation, rather he presents it as the microcosm of a greater identity, that is Adi identity. However, he has cautioned about the commercial motive of resource use in the recent years that poses threat to resource conservation.

Mary Gibi's paper entitled *Economic life of the people of Tatamori village* has studied such economic pursuits as agriculture, fishing, hunting, forest activities, exchange and horticulture of the people as embedded in the culture, even though changes are noticed in these aspects of economic life. Her study finds that economic activities do not exist in isolation. Belief and faith are interwoven into the domain of economic activities. She also finds that the villagers are self sufficient in terms of their food requirements. However, this self sufficiency does not deny to the practice of sale and exchange of items sometimes outside the village.

Leki Norbu in his paper, *Tcharen (Rent for Grassland) practice in Domkho - A Monpa village* has reflected an aspect of the economic life of the Monpa with Domkho village as a case study. Associated with the livestock rearing is the practice of *Tcharen* which highlights not only the practice as it is prevailing but also a type of social relation between the livestock owner and the owner of the 'Brok' (Grassland). The possibility of the Brok owner belonging to a village different from that of the livestock owner agrees with the concept of village extensions at economic and social level.

Bomchack Riba in his paper entitled *Chilli Cultivation in Dari Village in West Siang District* discusses how best the production system is adopted to the peculiar geo-climatic conditions of Dari village that has given a distinct place to it as chilli grower among the Galo villages. Contrast to the technology associated with production system in those villages not growing chilli, Riba clearly distinguishes an appropriate technology in Dari village suitable for chilli

cultivation and marketing. Interestingly, he describes how the production of this commercial crop has been integrated into the belief system thereby displaying an integrative characteristic of their cultural life. At the same time he also warns us about the associated problems in chilli cultivation and marketing in the changing situation and pleads for intervention as remedial measure.

Tomo Riba's paper entitled *Reciprocity During House Construction: A Bond Of Solidarity Among Galo Society (A Case Study of Disi Village of West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh)* highlights the nature of mutual reciprocity with reference to house construction. He has emphasized on the sharing ethics as reflected during the time of house construction between families who belong to different faiths or who have even difference between them. The sharing ethics operates in a larger context in that it teaches the responsibility of different age group in maintaining the village solidarity by participating in works of communal nature. What Riba feels to be the hardship of the village life is in reality the sharing ethics that has strong base in village. That is why the converts, initially disassociating from the community work, reverted to it later.

Moji Riba's paper, *The Rethinking of Context* discusses the relevance of the institution 'Pa' and 'Zipsam' (Youth Dormitories in Wancho villages), in the traditional society of the Wancho drawing on the data from Zedua village. To Moji Riba, the dormitory had contextual significance in that they were centre of the village community where discipline, leadership qualities, wholesome sexual orientation and knowledge of tradition and legends were imparted to the village youths to lead better social life in future. But with the advent of Christianity and developmental measures in the village, the dormitory has lost its context. And that is why Moji Riba argues for a drastic rethinking of the context with a view to make the dormitories functionally suitable in the changing situation of the village.

Tabang Mibang discusses how *Riglap*, a system of reciprocal mutual group relation, operates in labour and material exchange in village Bilat and thereby reinforcing inter and intra clân solidarity across the gender and maintaining the village unity. In the paper entitled, *Riglap (Reciprocative Mutual Cooperation) in Bilat An Adi village* he

has vividly depicted the operational mechanism with reference to different types of *Riglap* groups

Manlong Ralongham's paper is entitled *Sacred Geography and Performances (With Special reference to Wanchos of Rusa village of Tirap District)*. In his paper he describes the sacred geography within the village space. According to him, the sacred geography consists of such places as the ones where festival and various rituals are performed. In discussing the sacred geography and associated festivals and rituals he throws light on important aspects of the culture of the Wancho with reference to Russa village.

Gibji Nimachow in his paper entitled *Sacred Places, Beliefs, Festivals and Rituals of the Akas of Palizi village* has defined the cultural space of the village through ritual performances. Though he has defined the territoriality of the village in terms of geographical expression, his cultural space in terms of 'sacred places and ritual circle' is limited to comparatively smaller space. In addition to this he has emphasized on village solidarity through participation in annual cycle of festivals and rituals. However, he has been also cautious about the changes in such festivals as Nyechidow, which is no more celebrated as an annual village festival, and about the changes of outlook of the youth towards traditional rituals.

Pura Tado in his paper entitled *Social Significance of Pig Sacrifice in Myoko Festival of the Apa Taniis* emphasises on 'extension' nature of the village with reference to distribution of various parts of sacrificed pig among the relatives. The thrust of the paper lies on the fact that the sharing ethics forms the bedrock of reinforcing social relations across the village. In this sense a village displays more often integrative characteristic in a wider cultural and territorial reality than a village as a unity could display. He describes a reality beyond the village drawing upon the information collected from his own village Hiija.

Chowang Wangsa in his paper, *Reflection on village solidarity in family rituals: A study of Rangtuan in Kaimai village of the Nocte* has clearly depicted the village solidarity through participation in the ritual, Rangtuan and observing taboos thereafter. Through this ritual which is performed when 'Rangpha (lighting) strikes any property of any Nocte household, he has also described the belief system of the Nocte. The property on which Rangpha strikes is believed to have been claimed by God, Joban. So they offer the property

to Joban by performing the ritual, lest misfortune may befall on the family members which own the property. By all means Rangtuan is a family ritual. But the whole village participates in it thereby showing a sense of solidarity. But this solidarity is, as Wangsa writes has been diluted due to advent of Christianity in the village.

P. Rijiju in his paper titled *Life in Nakhu village: Manifestations of Miji Cultural Reality* has thrown light on some aspects of Miji culture with reference to house construction, inter-relation between different clans, customary laws while settling disputes and involvement of the Monpa Lama in *jumphung phiu* ritual in Nakhu village. What he has emphasized on is the character of 'unity and extension' of Nakhu village through ritual performances.

Bopai Puroik in his paper titled *Aspects of Life in Dopngko village of the Sulung* has discussed the fluid village life of the Sulungs (now Puroiks). In definite terms he has described Nyishi -Sulung relations, though Sulungs' life in a village give them an independent identity as a tribe in that they as a tribe have their own ancestor in '*Khrongkhiya*' and a festival called *redam*. They also have a different name, say *bay* for the Nyishi word *rangbang*. However, the dominant -subordination relationship between Nyishi and Sulung is quite explicit in Puroik's paper.

Pema Deki, in her paper *Life around Gonpa in Sangti village* describes the role of Gonpa in the life of the people of Sangti village. The Gonpa and its priest, the Komier Lama is inevitable in socio-economic, political and cultural life of the people. Be it efforts for good harvest or quest for a good social conduct by identifying and punishing a culprit, all move around the village Gonpa. She finds that every one born in the village owes his/her existence from birth to death and his/her salvation thereafter to the 'Sangti Gonpa Risung Gonpa through various rituals.

A village exists in space and time. The time attaches its experience to the space in forms of legends and history and thereby gives a distinct identity to the village as a person. This is what Tunge Lollen's paper entitled *Kombo Village: Looking through History and Legend* is all about. *Kombo* has its distinct identity in its history and legend in relation to its intra-and inter -tribe interaction, be it the legend of migration or the battle with Riga. What is most striking is not the legend of the battle between Kombo and Riga, but

the history of a social interaction across the tribe. Notably, the village is an 'extension' that transcends the boundary of its own tribe in terms of its social relation.

Analytical Perspectives

After independence, no village in Arunachal Pradesh is completely independent and autonomous. All the villages have come under the political and administrative system of the Indian Union and Arunachal Pradesh as one of its constituent states. *Kebang*, the traditional village council of the Adi, sometimes settles disputes along with the state administrative and judiciary system (Gao, 1999). Every village has a *gaonburah* (village head), sometimes more than one depending on the size of the population, who represents the administration in the village. Even in development front, villages are linked to the national set up through development programmes and schemes and through development functionaries like VLW, teachers, etc. in the village. Even before independence an individual was not only a member of the village community alone, he also belonged to a clan, faiths and beliefs and to a tribe which have had a wider territorial spread comprising many villages. (cf. Dube, 1955:5). A village therefore is not absolutely independent and autonomous. It may be noted that a single clan village has matrimonial relations with other villages. Multi-clan villages in Arunachal Pradesh are not completely endogamous either.

In spite of 'extensions' to use Opler's concept (*op.cit.*), a village is unique with regard to its territory, village organizations and perception of the people of a sense of belonging to the village. People are often identified in terms of the name of their villages. The village unity transcends clan consideration in inter-village disputes (see Tatak in this volume). Members of the same clan often face one another in village disputes. So the villagers recognize their corporate identity which is recognized by others also. All people are bound by a sentimental attachment to the village. Added to it is the tradition of legend and history of every village (see Lollen, Deki in this volume) which makes it distinct in itself. Its distinctive character is often manifested in many interacting factors such as the constitution of individuals, the nature of physical environment, the cultural structure of the village and the unique experience or history of the members of the village (cf. Saraswati, 1999:9; also in this volume).

Clearly, at one level, a village has its unity in relation to other villages, at another, it is a unit in a sphere of 'extensions' in terms of social, economic and religious ties, precisely from a top-down look at villages of a tribe where 'tribe' is at the top. Of course there are inter-tribe and presently, tribal-non-tribal extensions.

The village solidarity and unity is a continuum between such opposite forces as conflict and cooperation, unity and differences. It gives the picture of a differentiated unity, which can be better appreciated, with the characteristic features of Indian civilization that stands for unity in diversity. The 'extensions' is also a continuum of autonomy and dependency. But whether it is at the level of 'unity' or at 'extensions' the operating forces are not 'isolates', they display embeddedness. No activity or incident occurs in isolation, it rather displays various aspects of culture, may be in different degrees, in a holistic perspective, i.e. the idea that the various aspects of a culture are interrelated, and that knowledge of the nature of this relationship is crucial to the understanding of how even a single institution or a set of institutions work. This holistic hypothesis in the understanding of a culture underlies much of the field work done after the publication of Malinowski's (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* and Redcliffe-Brown's (1922) *The Andaman Islanders*.

There are differences between the households and clans but they maintain a sense of unity in that all of them share a village identity. Each household is independent in its management as is the village in its domestic affairs. But the household forms a component of village community through rituals and mutual reciprocity. The village in the similar manner forms a part of a wider territorial unity, like a Bango of the Adi. The village is not coterminous with the tribe and hence is a microcosm of the culture of the tribe. (cf Saraswati, in this volume) Nevertheless, it is a self-contained isolate in many respects. Villagers of Nyigam (Basar, in this volume) do not adopt all the fishing techniques, for example, which are practised in the Galo villages.

Consciousness of common cause cut across faiths and beliefs and both Christians and non Christians join together to work for village development in general Even mutual cooperation in labour management, initially withdrawn by converts, has been reverted to practice. Not competition (cf. Srinivas, 1955), but the sense of cooperation characterizes

the village identity and probably could be the reason for which specialized occupations have not developed in the villages of Arunachal Pradesh. Occupational diversity has emerged in response to development interventions but the diversity has not introduced specialization because of social ethos of sharing (Tado, in this volume) and mutual cooperation of reciprocal nature (Mibang, Riba¹, in this volume. Implicitly, the apparent diversity in occupation is not endogenous (Gibi, in this volume), it is rather an outer layer of economic pursuits whose overall impact depends on the extent of depth it makes into the village economy.

Riba² and Tado do not look upon the village alone in their discussion, but they focus on a wider rurality that includes villages in a cultural space. The village is looked upon in terms of centrifugal bonds especially in Tado's paper. This centrifugal bond may transcend the boundary of tribe to influence the national culture. "As the cells of our bodies bear smaller versions of the universal cyclic activity, so are the villages self-organized. Within the village are castes, kin-groups, families, and individuals, each in ceaseless interaction, with increasingly smaller level of organization. Spreading and contracting an interaction between the villages...influence cultural cycles of the nation"(Saraswati, 1999:23).

'Obligations' characterize relation structure but the obligations are not at all hereditary in the villages of Arunachal Pradesh as is the case with some obligations in other Indian villages (cf. Srinivas, 1955a). Obligation exists in reciprocity (Mibang, Riba¹, *op.cit.*) and largely in the nature of mutual cooperation as contrast to the ones, which exist, between master and servant, land owner and tenant, creditor and debtor. Working of villagers in the fields of Komier Lama (Deki, in this volume) in exchange of the service they receive from him is also in the nature of obligation. As the Lama does not have time to attend to his fields, the villagers for whom he works attend instead.

Through the papers included in this volume there is analysis of the maintaining interaction within the social structure of the village to an analysis of factors external to the village which account for the change. There is also analysis of the tradition in different manifestations, which existed before the change (Wangsa, in this volume). We also see a social organization, *Riglap* for instance, that

counterbalances the village unity in the face of a seemingly difference through the existence of multi-clans.

Twenty villages from twelve tribes, which are included in this volume, could not be claimed to be representatives in focusing on emerging realities in the villages of the state. A cursory look can differentiate life in villages of a tribe in two different environmental settings say hills and plains. Even in the same setting villages have different degrees of exposure to external forces of change. Out of, say three adjacent villages, one could be traditional in its religious faiths and beliefs, another entirely non-traditional in being converted to Christianity while the other could be a combination of two traditions. The economic life of the Galo in Tatamori village is not the same as that of in Dari village (Riba, in this volume). Moreover, the villages are studied by scholars from different aspects of life as is evident in various papers included in this volume. What these studies do communicate are the concerns dominant in various villages as 'public experience' in the face of the changing situation. At least their concerns are indicative of an emerging trend of realities in the village life in the state in general. In a way the papers could be more representative of grassroots view in the emerging realities in the state as a whole than those of in villages in general. Apparently it looks contradictory, but the fact remains.

A macro understanding of change in the state with a study of 20 different sample villages does not look logically weak like the understanding it could provide of nuances in 3649 villages, all peculiar in one way or the other. In the former case the sampling is random and unrestricted to focus on the general trend. In the later case, it is required to be restricted to random sampling with conditions that the heterogeneity at all levels get due consideration while focusing on trends in general. Conclusively, the papers convey a general impression of great variety within prevailing similarity rather than an understanding of varieties emerging in a changing situation in general.

Notes: Riba¹ refers to Dr.Tomo Riba and Riba² to Mr. Moji Riba. Mr.Bomchack Riba is mentioned as Riba without any superscript.

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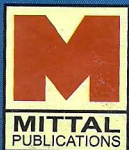
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