

CHAPTER - IV

ECONOMY AND LIVELIHOOD

- 4.1 FOREST COLLECTION OR TUNGCHA-HWA
- 4.2 SHIFTING CULTIVATION OR LENGING-KONG-HWA
- 4.3 ORANGE TRADE AND HUI-HWA
- 4.4 SALE OF BAMBOOS
- 4.5 OTHER IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES
- 4.6 TYPES OF TRADE : PICH-HWA, PICHO-HWA AND ANGDA-HWA
- 4.7 ANIMAL HUSBANDRY
- 4.8 AGRICULTURE AND LAND OWNERSHIP

Before the annexation by the Government of British India the Totos were mainly dependent upon Hui-hwa or porterage under Bhutanese administration in their capacity as Zapos or slaves. But such trade activities continued for roughly six months in a year. During the other part of the year that is during the rainy season when movement across the difficult terrain was practically impossible the Totos were engaged in mainly forest collection with the purpose of food gathering and also some rudimentary shifting cultivation. Unlike the other similar communities located in whole of north-east India the Totos do not appear to have been specialised even in shifting cultivation. Obviously one reason for this apparent neglect of agriculture was due to their pre-occupation with forced porterage service and also the comparatively abundant supply of different types of food products available in the neighbouring forest areas.

After the annexation of the village into the British territory the Totos had become theoretically free from the bondage of the Bhutias. As the only inhabitants of the village there were none others to claim a share in their natural resources. But their livelihood pattern and economy must not have changed overnight. It has been seen in a previous chapter that for a long time almost upto the end of the nineteenth century the existence of the village was little known outside. Also for quite sometime the authority and jurisdiction over the village was disputed with both sides - Bhutan and British India - claiming possession of the territory. Therefore it is all the more likely that Hui-hwa must have continued for transaction of goods between Bhutan and India via Totopara under gradually diminishing forces of domination or compulsion attached to it. The British rule in its turn penetrated into the village but did not disturb the traditional internal administration.

At this stage the Totos themselves formed a part of the ecology along with other animal life belonging to the same habitat. Too much rain or drought, flood or land slide or any other natural calamity could cause a serious effect upon their livelihood. Such calamities in the absence of any control over them may easily be designated as due to the course of Gods or deities or due to the practice of black magic by the envious communities with whom one might come into contact. Most of the religious functions and ritual of the Totos have emerged out of such a man-nature relation

forming a major part of their culture. The major festivals of Omchu and Maiyu are related to trade tours and forest gathering including collection of oranges. They worship their benevolent God Itspa during these festivals. On the other hand, they have some other deities like Pidua directly related to forest and weather. They observed Sarde and Gai (the Doyas of Bhutan also worship Gaiyu) before they set out for hunting and fishing. They worship each of the rivers and streamlets in and around their habitat for the betterment of their village.

4.1 FOREST COLLECTION OR TUNGCHA-HWA

During the British period and, continuing with some variations, even now the Totos are heavily dependent upon forest. They use to collect fruits, leaves, roots and tubers, several types of mushrooms, insects etc. which supplement their cereal consumption. Besides hunting and fishing they also collect house building material, fodder, herbs and various medicinal plants from the forest. The forest collections may be classified according to periodicity as in Table - 4.1.

The daily collection is usually done by the female folks of the family. As far as the occasional forest collection by the Totos is concerned it may be divided into two categories : (a) hunting and fishing, and (b) collection of other material. The Totos generally formed small groups of friends in a similar

age-group comprising both sexes for the purpose of fishing. Sometimes such groups may be formed comprising kins at the lineage of clan level. These small groups set out for the interior along the bed of river Torsha or some other streamlets. Fishing is done by poisoning the water. Also they use small nets, and different other bamboo-made indigenous fishing and trapping implements for this purpose. Fishing operation is generally performed during the night and the catch is equally divided among the partners.

TABLE - 4.1

FOREST PRODUCE COLLECTED BY THE TOTOS

Periodicity of collection	Nature of forest products
Daily collection	Fuel, fodders, Yams, tubers, vegetables, mushrooms, insects, caterpillars, lemon, fruits, etc.
Occasional collection	Fuels, yams, medicinal plants, Soap-stone, pepper, thatch, fruits, timber, insects, mushrooms, broom-strings, Odal barks, etc.
Seasonal collection	Soap-nut (Gengtoshe), wild cinnamon (cincouri), long-pepper (Pipra), Gall-nut (Lengtoshe), Nagbeli (Nakaidi), Cassia-leaf, medicinal plants, honey, bamboo shoots, Laka (a kind of tuber), Loira (a kind of tuber), pepper, fruits, sweet gourds, bitter gourds, yams, house building materials, etc.

Note : Some of these commodities mentioned under seasonal collection are collected according to the demands made by traders from both far and near.

The Totos use to set out for hunting in big troops after

performing the Huikewa or worship of the forest God Gai. This is the only worship in which the Totos prepare an image of a man. For Gai worship an image of man is made out of clay and it is kept inside a bamboo basket (Topo) along with a bow and arrows. A fowl is sacrificed and the blood is sprinkled in the basket with the prayer - 'Oh, Sanja, we are going out in search of games. Be pleased to give us deer, jungle fowls or anything howsoever small it may be'. The basket is then carried to the outskirts of a jungle where the image is thrown away but the arrows steeped in blood are returned. With the performance of this magical rite commences the hunting expedition. This type of worship by offering of a man follows the logic of homoeopathic magic. This type of magical performance is common among the different tribal communities throughout the world. Among the elephant trappers of north Bengal and Assam there is a system of offering an animal (generally a goat or fowl) after the worship of the forest deities before entering into the forest for games. This system is called - 'offering a life in exchange of our lives'. After performance of this worship the stage is set for hunting.

On the other hand the Totos are used to gathering pumpkin, bitter gourds, different types of lemons and citrus fruits, tubers, mushrooms, caterpillar and other edible insects particularly during the post-monsoon season. During such seasonal movements the quest for varieties of forest produce leads the Totos from forest to forest throughout the day. Before sunset they often

take shelter in the abandoned Goaths (cattle sheds) left by the Nepalis or Bhutias in course of their pasturing with the herds of cattle. The gleaners spend the night and also preserve their collection in these improvised hutments inside the jungle before returning to their homes.

In course of their forest collection the Totos also procure house building material, medicinal plants and herbs, plants used for preparing/Bakro or yeast that is used in the preparation of liquor, and more than fifty kinds of leafy vegetables and fruits from the forest. They also collect large quantity of pipul fruits (long pepper) from the forest for which there is a ready market. Similarly different types of barks, creepers and roots having medicinal use are also collected and sold to the traders. Cultivation of Lac from the Siris trees of the forests has also been at one time fairly common among the Totos. Forest collection is mainly done in small groups of friends of both sexes for several days towards the Bhutan Himalayas. During such tours they carry the necessary utensils for the preparation of food and also take santhi (baskets) with them for carrying back the collected material. This type of seasonal tours are called Tungcha-hwa or Tungcha-huiwa by the Totos.

In the pre-monsoon season undergrowths of the forests die out for want of water. On the other hand, different types of yams and tubers, trees and creepers start sprouting new shoots. As

such it becomes very easy to locate the yams and tubers and young shoots for collection even in the deep forest.

4.2 SHIFTING CULTIVATION OR LENGING-KONG-HWA

The Totos have never been good agriculturists. A rudimentary type of shifting cultivation (Lenging-kong-hwa) was practiced by them when they were not busy in serving their masters, the Bhutanese. Before the introduction of settled cultivation in the Duars area there were two types of jhooming systems. The most primitive jhooming system, which was practised in the tract was shifting of plots by the migratory nomads. Under this type of shifting cultivation, the whole settlement used to shift from place to place after a certain period in search of virgin lands. This system may be called migratory shifting cultivation. On the contrary another type of shifting cultivation was there where the village site was rather permanent but agricultural plots were changed from one season to another. The first type is obviously possible in a very sparsely populated area. But when the pressure of population or other forces of circumstances build up then gradually the switch-over to the second type is inevitable. But in both the cases the man : land ratio has to be such that rotation of cultivated fields is possible and the carrying capacity of land is not stretched beyond a certain limit.

The Totos might have been poor jhoom cultivators of the first variety before their settlement at Totopara under the

Bhutanese surveillance. Under the circumstances they could no longer migrate any time anywhere for they had to be available for discharging their duties as porters of goods between Bhutan and India that passed through their village. One could have anticipated a switch-over to a second type of shifting cultivation once the village site was fixed. But this was not to be because of, leaving aside other reasons, their pre-occupation with the duties assigned to them by their masters.

It is found from the survey and settlement reports that at the close of nineteenth century the Totos were utilising only about 300 acres of land out of a total of about 2000 acres in any particular year. It is quite likely that land not suitable for cultivation would form a bulk of this territory. Leaving aside such land there was obviously enough land for everyone if the jhoom cycle is taken to be 3 to 4 years. During his discussion about the land of the Totos, Milligan states, "It is a heavily wooded tract, and out of total area of 2,003 acres, the Totos keep in use for dwelling sites and cultivation some 300 acres only at a time. The soil is poor and very stony except in the patches, where orange groves are planted". He also said that "... they change their plots every second year owing to the sterility of the soil" (Milligan:111-13). During the early part of the British rule the technology and the implements used by the Totos were very primitive. The only agricultural implement was Gusu (bill-hook), and Milligan identified them as 'poor agriculturists'.

He even did not consider the agricultural activities of the Totos as a part of their major livelihood, as according to him, "This occupation bears too close a resemblance to hard work to be altogether congenial to a distinctly lazy people as they are". On the contrary he mentioned, "They depend chiefly on their orchards and home-stead products, and on the money released from the sale of their oranges, betelnuts, panleaves, bamboo, fowls and pigs, they very comfortably and happy, if unwashed, lives". Grunning also narrated about the Totos in the same vein. Even as late as in 1951 Mitra identified the Totos as 'indifferent cultivators ...' and stated that "Very little rice is grown and almost all the rice is bartered or brought. A field cultivated this way naturally looks wild and weedy, and I could make out a cultivated patch only when I was shown one. The yield must be poor and a family's field is not more than two acres" (Mitra:ccxvi).

During the early part of the British rule in Totopara the population of the village was negligible as compared to the geographical area and natural resources under the disposal of the Totos themselves. The village was practically mono-ethnic in nature till 1930s with a meagre population of 200 to 300 persons and consisting of barely 30 to 60 households (Table - 4.2). During that period there were only two small neighbouring tribal hamlets in the area. One is Tapakhan or Doyagaon, the village of the Doyas situated about 15 kms. north-west of Totopara inside Bhutan. The other village is Ballalguri about 8 kms. from Totopara towards

TABLE - 4.2

LAND : MAN RATIO OF VILLAGE TOTOPARA 1901-1991

Year	No. of households	Population	Total area in acres (year of survey)	Man : Land ratio.
1	2	3	4	5
1901	36	171	1027.36 (1866)	1 : 6.00
1911	60	235	1116.74 (1889-94)	1 : 4.74
1931	63	334	2003.00 (1906-16)	1 : 5.99
1951	116	567	1996.76 (1931-35)	1 : 3.52
1961	140	1160	1996.76 (1931-35)	1 : 1.72
1971	222	1205	1991.59 (1969)	1 : 1.65
1981	271	1497	1991.59 (1969)	1 : 1.33
1991	423	2245	1991.59 (1969)	1 : 0.88

Source : Excepting 1991 figures which are obtained from the author's own field survey, the rest are from the different censuses and worked out by the author.

south inside India. The village Ballalguri was a multi-ethnic village populated by the Rabha and the Mech tribes. Apart from these two villages there is mention of another Rabha settlement which was according to Roy Burman located in Merem-tee area on the south-east corner of Totopara. But the Rabhas of Merem-tee (Kuapani) had deserted the area sometime during the early part of

this century. There after this area was used by the Totos for their cultivation till it was resumed by the Forest Department and converted into forest plantation. It may be remembered here that the whole settlement of Totopara was under the occupation of the Rabhas once upon a time according to the legend of the Totos. Be what it may it is revealed from the above discussion that the population of the tract right from Doyagaon to Ballal-guri (from north to south an area with a radius of about 15-20 kms.) was very thin. Therefore there was little compulsion for the Totos to go for either improved technology or settled cultivation. A rudimentary type of shifting cultivation and a vigorous type of forest collection for purposes of food and barter satisfied their needs.

4.3 ORANGE TRADE AND HUI-HWA

It appears from various historical records that orange was an important crop of Totopara once upon a time, and remained so till about the 1930s. Oranges must have been originally a natural product of Totopara and southern Bhutan. Whether and how far the Totos were an orange growing community is a difficult question to answer. Some are inclined to believe that after the area was annexed by the Britishers the Totos earned immediately their freedom from their erstwhile masters. The carriage of goods between Bhutan and India in which they were engaged ceased

its importance according to this opinion on the conclusion of the Duar war, and the Totos were compelled under changed circumstances to convert themselves from the status of a porter to that of a grower. In such schemata of understanding both political and economic periodisation coincide which however is rarely the situation in real life. Further from all available records it is found that the trade between Bhutan and India continued as in the past even after the Duar war. In the absence of any vehicular transportation facilities, Totopara continued to remain situated along an important trade route which it was difficult to avoid. Further we have seen in a previous chapter that there was considerable confusion and misunderstanding about the jurisdiction over Totopara for a long time. Therefore it would be unreasonable to assume that the Totos had severed all their links with their neighbours in the north immediately after their becoming free only in a technical sense of the term.

It sounds more plausible that during the Hui-hwa period they were engaged in trade at the behest of their masters. After 1865 and particularly so at the close of the last century they gradually assumed the status of a community of independent porters working contractually in lieu of remunerations either in cash or in kind. During this later period collection of articles from in and around Totopara running across the political borders provided them the bulk of their merchandise.

It is of course possible that the Totos had gathered some knowledge from their neighbours on orange plantation, because during their Hui-hwa period they used to come in contact with the Bhutia orange planters. In the past the Totos were engaged in the orange orchards as workers for clearing of weeds and groves, plucking the fruits and transportation of the same to the nearest orange marts. They therefore might have been inspired to grow some oranges in their own land at Totopara. But even then how much of their orange groves was natural and how much man-made will remain a difficult question to answer. It may however be noted that the quality of the virgin soil of Totopara comprising humus sandy with gravels in nature was quite suitable for orange plantation. The colour of the soil is grey, PH 4.8 to 5.3 per cent and oranges can definitely be grown in a large quantity in such soil without much difficulties. The use of fertilizer in any form was not known to the Totos and as such they had to depend on the mercy of nature. The climatic condition of Totopara was also congenial for orange cultivation. The area was covered with rain-fed forests that helped to protect the plants from heat and sun. The forest cover also protected the soil from erosion and landslides.

It is however interesting to observe that Sunder did not mention about the existence of any orange plantation in Totopara. In this regard he states, "There are at present no orange trees at Totopara; all have been dead ... The Bhutias have a village at

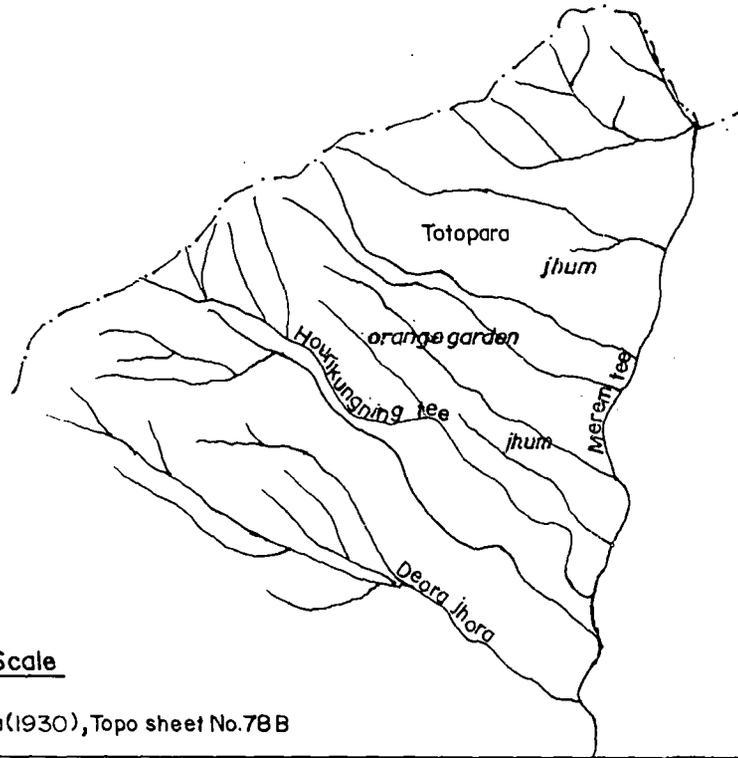
Doyapara in Bhutan, about 8 miles north of Totopara where they grow oranges. The Totos bring oranges from there into British territory. In lieu of payment in money for carrying the oranges from Doyapara to Totopara they got one third of the oranges as hire ..." (Sunder:Para 459-60).

It is possible that the orange groves had died out before the visit of Sunder in 1890s. It is also possible that the Totos did not disclose anything about the existence of orange groves in Totopara due to the fear of imposition of taxes. But the whole thing is sufficiently confusing because Sunder had mentioned elsewhere in his report that 'The Totos of Totopara pay Rs. 105 annually as revenue for their orange groves'.

In his Jalpaiguri district Gazetteer Gruning (1911) highly talked about the orange cultivation of the Totos. He states, "The village is very pretty with clusters of betel-nut palms and a few large orange trees. The main orange groves are a few hundred yards away from the village; the trees are healthy and the Totos make a large amount of money by selling the fruits" (Gruning:40-41).

Milligan (1919) and B. Mukherjee (1931) also mentioned about the orange cultivation of the Totos in their survey and settlement reports. In this regard Milligan states, "In Mr. Sunder's time apparently the orange groves had died out, but they were replaced and throughout my experience of the tribe, this source

TOTOPARA
SHOWING JHUM AND ORANGE GARDEN



Not to Scale

Source: Survey of India(1930), Topo sheet No.78B

MAP NO. 5

of wealth was their chief stand-by. These oranges are of a particularly good quality" (Milligan:111).

From the above mentioned reports and also the map prepared by the Surveyor General of India (Map no. 5), it is revealed that orange cultivation along with shifting cultivation (jhum) occupied a very important place in the Toto economy, During this period they used to earn substantial income by selling the oranges and other commodities to the villagers in the plains and to the traders from whom they obtained whatever foodgrains and other commodities that were necessary. But the golden crops did not last long due to lack of their knowledge of proper technique of orange cultivation. Whether grown or natural, the orange was treated by the Totos in either case like the other naturally given plant world. They did not know how to take care of the orange tree which was expected to grow wild even if planted by some one. Once the orange groves started withering out it was taken to be due to some black magic applied by some of their neighbouring communities particularly the Rabhas. Some elderly respondents remembered that several curative magic and worships were performed for the restoration of the groves but without any result. In the absence of a proper record for the same the date of destruction of oranges in Totopara is uncertain and has remained a subject for intelligent speculation. Every one including Sanyal and Roy Burman are inclined to believe that it happened around 1930-31. But the present author has reasons to believe that even if a slow process of

decay of orange plantation had started around that time the final blow must have been made not before the early 40s of the present century. This is so because in a fortnightly published from Jalpaiguri named Deshabandhu (21st Magh, 1345 B.S.) it was said in February 1939 that the Totos earn a lot from the cultivation of oranges. It is unlikely that an important public figure of the stature of the editor of Deshabandhu located in Jalpaiguri town was not aware of the destruction of oranges in Totopara in 1939 particularly so because the oranges obtained from Totopara had earned long back a name throughout the district.

Be what it may oranges could not be revived in Totopara in later years. Only the carrying trade in oranges obtained from further north inside Bhutan went on via Totopara. The Om-chu festival which is related to orange plucking also kept in continuing even though the economy of the Totos had suffered a big jolt in the meanwhile.

Similar to the trade in oranges but much smaller in scale of operation there was some trade in mango, jack-fruit and areca-nuts. Originally an ever green tropical plant the mango and the jack-fruit trees are indigenous to Totopara. The Totos themselves do not consume a jack-fruit when it is fully ripe, because they believe that a fully ripened jack-fruit causes stomach-ache. There were a large number of mango and jack-fruit trees in Totopara before the settlement of Totos there. The Totos themselves

did not plant the trees and believed that the trees were planted by the earlier settlers like the Rabhas. The Totos earned some money by selling or bartering the mango and jack-fruits to their neighbours - the Rabhas and the Meches of Ballalguri. During the past two decades most of the ancient trees have been felled by the greedy timber merchants. However felling of the trees have been checked to some extent in recent years after the intervention by the Toto youths under the banner of The Toto Kalyan Samity.

Like the other Mongoloid communities of the locality the Totos are also very much fond of areca-nut (Guai) and battle leaves (Prai), which form one of the prestigious items of Toto hospitality and culture. In the ancient days they used to collect the areca-nuts from the market in the plains or neighbouring tribal villages. The betel leaves were collected from the local forests. They also used to collect a better quality of betel leaves from the Doyas. It appears that through their association with others they became acquainted with the plantation of areca-nuts and planted a few around their homesteads for consumption purposes. But during the past few decades the situation has considerably changed. They have become sincerely interested in areca-nut plantation inspired by the effort taken up by the Government. Since the 50s the Government has been supplying a huge number of areca-nut plants to the Totos free of cost. An agricultural demonstration firm was installed by the Government at Totopara

near the present Tribal Welfare Bungalow and the Health Centre to acquaint the Totos with different types of plantation crops, vegetables and other cereals. Since then the Totos became interested in planting areca-nuts. At present there are a large number of them even though it is very difficult to save the plants when they are young from the depredations of the domestic cattles that are left free to graze around.

4.4 SALE OF BAMBOOS

It has been noted earlier that the mixed topical forest in an around Totopara was dominated by the bamboos. On the other hand there were a large number of bamboo groves planted by the Totos themselves. From the very beginning of their settlement each clan had a large number of bamboo groves. The bamboos play an important role in the cultural life of the community and later on became a vital item in their economy. During the ceremonial sacrifice of any big animal like pig or cattle the Totos prepare a special type of bamboo made spike. At the time of sacrificial killing an expert elderly person suddenly penetrate this spike deep into the heart of the poor animal. The umbilical cord of a newly born baby is cut with the help of a sharp strip of bamboo bark. They also require bamboos during their death ceremony. After the death of a person a man from the Budubei clan takes the measurement of the dead body with a strip of bamboo to prepare

the coffin and to dig out the grave. After the funeral is over the bamboo strip is placed on the head side of the grave. In the past they used to prepare the coffin with the gambhari timber. But after it has become difficult to procure such valuable wood during the past few decades, they have now started using bamboos for the manufacture of coffins. A bamboo-made bow and arrow are also placed inside the coffin as a mark of heroism of the deceased person according to their old customs. Further after the death of the husband or wife the Totos are required to keep a bamboo stick in his or her hand to ward off the evil spirits till the period of uncleanness is over.

As mentioned earlier the bamboos are extensively used as a house building material. The poles, platform, door panels, enclosure etc. are all made of bamboos. Even they prepare fine bamboo-made strings and use them for tying purposes instead of rope or cane. Most of their traditional utensils are also made of bamboo like Saithi (Basket) or Goja (tube) used for carrying the day to day necessities and water.

The Totos also consume bamboo shoots. They collect young bamboo shoots and prepare different types of curry which are considered as very delicious dishes. They also earn some money by selling the bamboo shoots to their neighbouring communities. During the early decades of this century Totopara was famous for its excellent quality of bamboos which often grew wild. In this

regard Milligan (1919) in his report stated that "On the occasion of my first visit I was struck by the unusually fine variety of bamboo which grow there and I found that all these superior bamboos had disappeared and in their place a very inferior variety were growing. Whether this was due to deterioration or through lack of care or to improvident selling of the good bamboos and their replacement by inferior variety imported from the plains I could never find out. It was a great pity anyhow for I never saw bamboos to equal those which I saw there on my first visit" (Milligan:111-12). However none among the government officials has mentioned the number of bamboo groves in Totopara. Roy Burman is perhaps the first to take stock of the bamboo groves possessed by the different clans of the Totos.

Though the Totos possessed a very good quality of bamboos there was no scope for earning any money by the sale of the same before the establishment of tea gardens and growth of population in Duars. With the depletion of forests down below the plains a demand arose, and some individual Totos began bertering the bamboos as a part of their Angda-hwa (marginal trade tours) to procure their necessities at the time of distress. This must have happened after the compulsions of Hui-hwa has ceased. In this regard Sunder (1895:462) stated, "... during the winter months the Toto man labour for the Maches by splitting bamboos and making their splits for the purpose of tying thatch and fence of houses.

These bamboo splits are made up in bundles and are exchanged for paddy. Four bundles of strips are given for a batua of paddy" (Sunder:462).

This condition must have continued with little variations for a long time till the arrival of the greedy contractors to the area who were interested in obtaining a bulk supply of bamboos to be carried away to far-off markets and tea gardens. Initially the Totos disposed off the bamboos at a nominal price and were not mindful of either profit or replantation. After the installation of the Totopara Tribal Welfare Centre in 1951, Jogendra Nath Sarkar was appointed as the Welfare Organiser. He for the first time took the initiative to protect the interest of the Totos in connection with the bamboo trade which was controlled by the Nepali contractors. With his intervention, the Totos for the first time earned some profit out of their sale of bamboos but within a few months Jogendra Nath Sarkar was murdered by some vested interests jeopardizing the interest of the Totos.

Later on the Totopara Co-operative Marketing Society was organised in 1958-59 with an initial fund of Rs. 11,900/- from the Government. This Co-operative was formed with a view to protect the economic interest of the Totos specially in connection with the marketing of bamboo, orange and betel-nuts. But within a short time this society became defunct without doing any good to the Totos. Once again the Totos became an easy prey of the traders

and contractors. At present the price of bamboo is ranging from Rs. 2,000/- to Rs. 2,500/- per hundred in Jalpaiguri town. But the Totos are not getting more than Rs. 400/- to Rs. 500/- per 100 bamboos. The number of bamboo groves has also dwindled because the Totos did not take any care for their replacement.

4.5 OTHER IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Some of the earlier scholars and Government officials have mentioned about the cultivation of Lac by the Totos. Sunder did not mention however anything about it. From his report it is found that the revenue against lac collected from throughout the district of Jalpaiguri in the year 1989-90 was a bare sum of Rs. 15/- only declining to nil in the year 1893-94 (Sunder:132). A few years later Milligan also made a similar comment, "Lac and cotton have in the past been cultivated, but I did not find either of these in any of my visit" (Milligan:111-113).

But years afterwards Sanyal wrote "They rear Lac insect on black sau trees (Albizzia stipulate) growing in the adjacent forest. There is no other trees where lac can be cultivated. Many years ago they had extensive cultivation of lac but of late it has dwindled down to practically nothing. The little lac they obtain is exchanged for rice, salt or clothing in the nearest market" (Sanyal:20). Corroborating Sanyal's statement, Roy Burman also stated that "Lac used to be produced in good quantity on

hundred siris trees found in Totopara. During recent years lac insects are reported to have almost disappeared from Totopara. But even now some amount of Lac is produced and sold at 8/- per ser" (Roy Burman b:5). The present author was informed by both the Toto and Rabha (of Paro Baste) elderly respondents that the Totos used to produce a good quantity of Lac in the past which they used to sell to the traders as well as bartered with the Rabhas in lieu of paddy, rice etc. The Rabhas mainly used the Lac for dyeing their traditional costumes along with manjistha. Sunder had also corroborated this fact in his report (Sunder:71). It is thus evident that the Totos had some knowledge of Lac cultivation from a long time past. One reason as to why they did not disclose the matter to Sunder or Milligan might be the fear of imposition of new taxes on them on this account.

The Totos used to weave their traditional costumes in the past with the yarn made of nettle fibre. This practice might have been inherited by them from their ancestors at their original place of migration. It may be remembered that cotton is not produced in the higher altitude. The people living on the lofty hills either procure the cotton from the plains or weave their traditional costumes with the yarn made of locally available material. One such material is nettle fibre from which a fairly fine thread for making textiles is obtained by boiling and beating the same on a board.

The nettle plants grow still now abundantly in the surrounding forests of Totopara and the Totos make use of them for weaving their cloths and blankets. But with their progressive contact with the plains tribes (Mech, Rabha, Jalda etc.) who practiced the cultivation of cotton extensively in their jhoom fields the Totos became acquainted with cotton possibly during their Hui-hwa days. Since then, they themselves started cultivation of some cotton in their jhoom fields for their domestic use along with Kauni (Sartaria Italica Beauy) in the same plots. The type of cotton cultivated by the Totos is called Foon by the Garos and Khun by the Meches. They themselves called the cotton Chhi or Banga. The cotton sown by the Totos in the month of April-May was reaped during January-February, when the cotton pods begin to burst. However the Totos must have given up any cultivation of cotton for quite some time now. At present they neither weave any cloth nor have any indigenous looms but procure their clothing requirements from the market. The author found the last piece of cloth in their own traditional design under the possession of late Shirong Kazi some 20 years back. And even this piece was taken away by some one from Calcutta who visited Totopara at a throw-away price. Most of the Totos nowadays put on mill made cloths imitating the general fashion of wearing shirts and pants while the women folk have adopted the Nepali or Bengalee fashion of clothing.

Lime production is also an obsolete trait among the Totos.

In the past they used to prepare lime from the snails which were available in the nearby rivers and water spots. The flesh of the snails was consumed as a food item and the empty shells were preserved for lime preparation. After burning and grinding the shells a good quality of lime was produced to be used while chewing the betel leaves and areca-nuts. However after the mineral lime has become easily available in the local markets they have given up the production of lime from snails.

4.6 TYPES OF TRADE : PICH-HWA, PICO-HWA AND ANGDA-HWA

Right from their Hui-hwa days the Totos were engaged in considerable amount of trading activities. The commodities which entered their trade list may be divided into three categories - (a) the commodities produced by them, (b) the commodities collected by them from the surrounding forests, and (c) the commodities procured by them either from the plains or from the hills of Bhutan. Looked at from another angle the whole trade and marketing system of the Totos may be divided into three different types as given below :

Pich-hwa : This means the sale of commodities at source.

Picho-hwa : This means long trade tours. How long such trade tour will be would vary depending on circumstances, but it is always implied that Picho-hwa would extend for more than a day involving a night halt outside

the village. Picho-hwa may be undertaken for either Pecho-hwa (purchase or collection of articles) or Pich-hwa (sale, barter or disposal of articles).

Angda-hwa : This means an inferior type of trade journey requiring not more than several hours. Such trade tours are exclusively undertaken for barter or sale of minor forest collection and a negligible amount of goods in close circles in the neighbourhood of Totopara.

It will thus be seen that the classification of trade is made on the basis of time taken and places visited in connection with trade. Such classification may be a natural corollary of Hui-hwa trade tours undertaken once upon a time at the behest of their erstwhile masters that is the Bhutias. Where the visit is being made and for how long becomes very crucial under such circumstances. Unlike the usual classifications that are made exclusively on the basis of the nature of commodities or on the basis of whether the transaction is whole sale or retail, the amount of exertion that is needed to fulfil the requirements of trade becomes the guiding principle of classification among the Totos.

Till the early part of the British rule in Totopara, the Totos had to set out for rendering their Hui-hwa duties (portage service) under Bhutia supervision through different routes of Duars and Bhutan. After the direct Bhutia control over the whole process of trade came to an end, some changes must have

been introduced with the changed political situation. The Totos along with the Doyas remained as the principal beast of burden who continued to carry the goods to and from Bhutan depending on the supply and demand situation at either end. During this period Totopara must have emerged as an important trading mart.

Their not allowing any outsider to stay in Totopara was a relic of the past when the area and the people were under the direct surveillance of Bhutan. But over time the Baldias stepped into the picture. The Baldias (people trading with pack-bullocks) frequenting the sub-Himalayan Bengal started visiting Totopara in connection with the orange trade. Of them, Upendra Nath Burman has noted that a caravan of Baldias was called Dafa, and the leader of the Dafa was called Dafadar. Each bullock (balad) used to carry about one maund of goods. Locally, this bullock-load was called one Daang, and it was packed in taats or jute bags hung on the back of the bullock. In earlier days, according to him, trade was conducted mainly in barter, or in exchange for cowries, which were a much prevalent currency.

The small Baladias were called Lālu-Baldia and the rich or big Baldias were called Kuljiwala. A small Baldia used to collect the commodities from the villages and remote areas of the country deploying only few bullocks, with a small amount of capital ranging from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 50/- only. On the other hand, the Kuljiwalas used to possess upto 500 to 600 bullocks and they

sometimes used to deploy their bullocks to others on the basis of the profit sharing (Burman:10-12).

Most of the Baldias, who used to participate in this trans-border trade, were the people from the princely state of Cooch Behar, Rangpur and from the present jurisdiction of Jalpaiguri district. The Totos began allowing some selected Baldias and later on even other traders to enter into their village during the orange season to dispose off the oranges produced in their own orchards and also collected by them from Bhutan across the newly made political boundary. The traders were allowed temporary stay at Totopara after the worship of Mankaiyu was held in November-December and till the Sarde festival was held to mark the close of the season in February-March. The Totos used to sometimes barter their marketable commodities like oranges with the Baldias in exchange of their necessities like rice, sugar, gur, dried fish etc. needed for their annual consumption. This system continued even after the destruction of their own orange groves when the Totos began depending upon exclusively the supply obtained from Doyagaon and other places of Bhutan.

During the early decades of this century a cart-track was laid by the Forest Department for the convenience of supervision over the forests and transportation of forest products. Since then the Baldia system was replaced by the bullock-carts in the remote areas. The traders from the plains went to Totopara

in the morning and used to return before sunset with cart load of oranges and other goods. Regarding their orange trade Sunder had noted in his report "The oranges are sold by the Totos to men who go to them with pack bullocks during the winter months at 320 for re. 1/-. The money is paid in cash. The oranges are counted in pans. One pan is equal to 80" (Sunder 1895:460). Besides him, Milligan and Gruning also highly spoke about the orange trade of the Totos and mentioned this as the main source of their livelihood.

From the foregoing discussion it is evident that the Totos began earning a good amount of money after Totopara had become an important trade centre. For a very long time the trade transactions of Bhutan were being conducted along certain routes across the Duars. With the passage of time important trade marts came into existence on the side of British India lying on such trade routes located laterally on the foot hills of the Bhutan Himalayas. From west to east these marts are - Bagrakot, Patharjhora, Dalimkot, Samshing, Changmari, Chamurchi, Lankapara, Totopara, Jaygaon, Santrabari, Bhutanghat, Jamduar etc.

Initially there was no other community in Totopara engaged in carrying of oranges. The Doyas from Bhutan usually stopped their journey at Totopara and returned to their own village after unloading the commodities there. Before the introduction of the pack bullocks even the Totos themselves carried

the oranges from Totopara to the nearest mart. At that time a good number of Toto individuals of both sex had started minor orange business which helped them to generate some additional income. These Toto porters sometimes sold their personal properties like fowls and pigs and accumulated a small capital for independent business. Thereafter in a small group they used to go to Bhutan and buy oranges according to their fund. The persons who had no capacity to buy out of his own fund used to collect money by portage service provided on behalf of the traders. After unloading their baskets at the godown of the traders they rushed back to their village to continue with their domestic duties. Before Totopara itself emerged as a marketing centre, the important trade marts visited by the Totos were Dalshingpara, Hashimara, Lankapara, Hantapara and Madarihat. From this type of trade transaction the Totos did earn a very small profit. But owing to the simplicity and ignorance they were often deceived by the traders. Even then they continued with these activities till they were displaced in a major way by the Nepali porter-cum-traders.

Their nexus with the outside traders gradually reduced most of the Totos to a subservient status. The traders extended them the necessary money capital to visit Bhutan and purchase on their behalf. Instead of remaining subject porters under Bhutanese administration the Totos turned out to be free wage labourers apparently doing some independent business but virtually

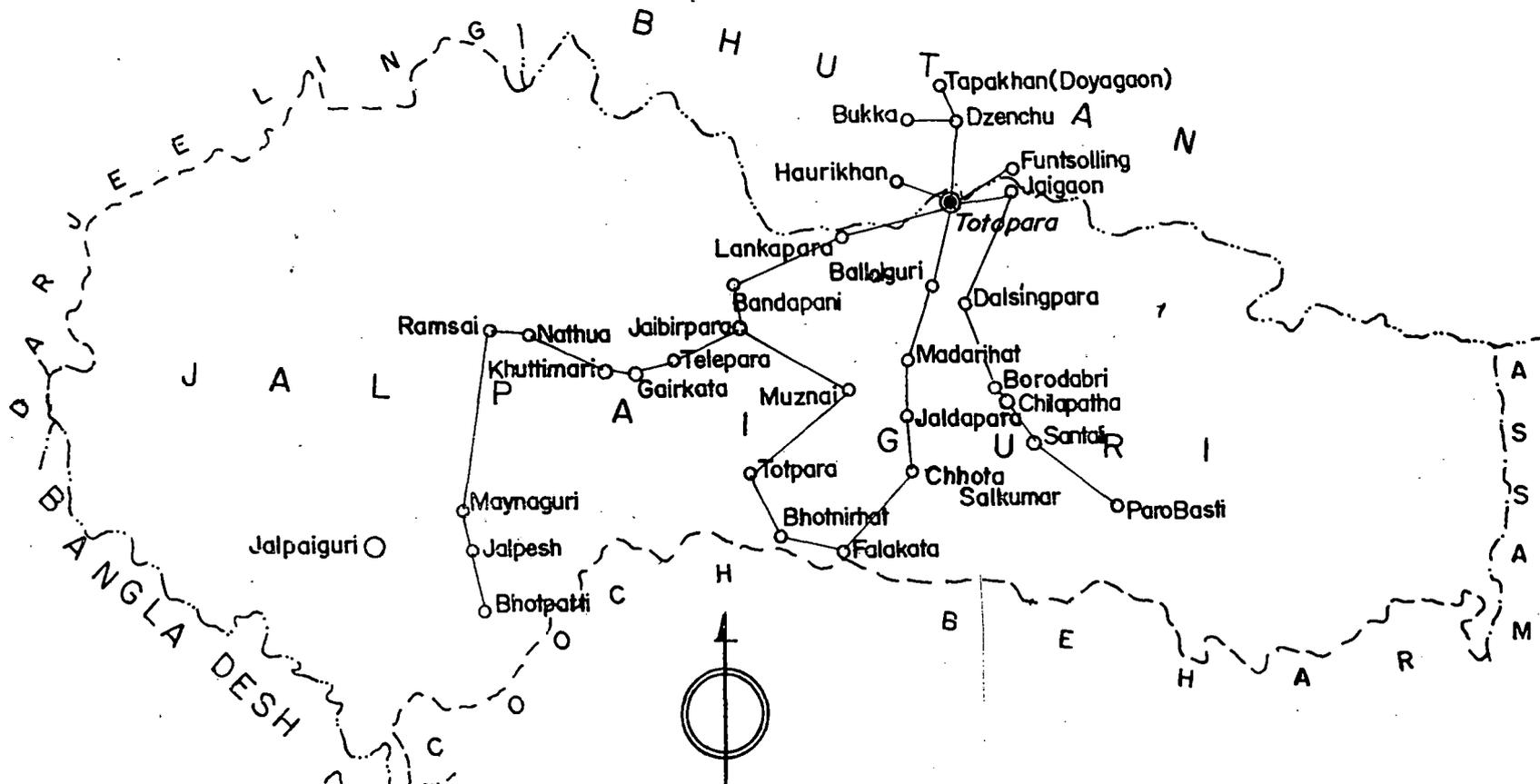
working under the dictates of the trading capital. Such a situation attained a fuller maturity after Totopara became an important mart frequented by the Baldias and subsequently by others. But the whole process helped to monetise the Toto economy beyond redemption.

A few of the Totos had tried their hand in wholesale business but failed miserably because they lacked in business skill and techniques required for the purpose. They had also no previous experience about the then prevalent marketing system in the Duars which required much bargaining among the unscrupulous businessmen. The Totos had little idea about the current market price of their merchandise because they rarely visited the markets in the plains areas. Their traditional trade routes were confined within a close circuit of their friendly tribal villages located within the forest fringes. The wholesale trade with which a few of them wanted to associate had little similarity with the Pichhwa system practice by them. Finally therefore they had to give up the wholesale orange business after incurring heavy losses. A number of Toto porters however continued to apparently carry on some business in oranges. But such oranges were obtained by them as their remuneration in kind for portering service rendered to other regular traders from outside. Therefore when they disposed off such accumulated personal share of oranges, they appeared to be porter-cum-traders to the onlookers.

Apart from orange cultivation and orange trade the Totos gave much emphasis on their trade system which included an assorted basket of various commodities the major part of which was obtained through forest collections. Such trade tours constituted an important item in their economic make-up and took mainly two different forms as mentioned earlier viz Picha-hwa (long trade tours) and Angda-hwa (short trade tours). These trade tours were carried on by utilizing the old Hui-hwa routes till the early part of sixties of this century (Map no. 6). In course of their Picha-hwa and Angda-hwa the Totos visited only those villages which were inhabited by the local tribal communities like Mech or Rabha. In course of time such forest villages were incorporated within the reserved forests recognised and demarcated by the Forest Department. The tribal communities living in those villages like Holong, Jaldapara, Chilapata, South and North Parobastee, Khuttimari etc. were themselves also living in a state of arrested condition within their traditional economic activities and mental set-up similar to that of the Totos. The taste and aspiration of these tribal communities were limited by their socio-economic environment and lack of awareness. As such they had psychological affinity with the Totos apart from trade links with them.

These types of trade tours were based on the traditional inter-tribal reciprocity. For the convenience of their trade transaction the Totos used to maintain regular inter-tribal relation by making ceremonial friendship forming a close circuit

TOTO TRADE ROUTES



Not to Scale

MAP NO. 6

among different tribal villages like the Kula system which was prevalent among the Trobriand Islanders. The ceremonial friendship had played an important role in ensuring their personal security and also in maintaining the economic flow by giving guarantee for the commodities offered in exchange.

The Hui-hwa routes which ran through the thick woods touching the remote tribal settlements were converted into the Picha-hwa routes by the Totos gradually after the inception of the British rule (Map no. 6). During their Picha-hwa the Totos generally avoided the big markets or large settlements for avoiding the market tolls and also unnecessary harassment by the local authorities. But it appears that they have been sufficiently familiar with Madarihat, Lankapara, Hantapara and Dalsingpara haats (market place) which were frequented by them very often right from their Hui-hwa days. Therefore even while the above statement of their generally avoiding the unknown places is correct it should not be misconstrued to apply on all occasions.

Generally it took two to five days to complete the whole up and down journey for Picha-hwa between Totopara and the place of termination. As a frontier tribe performing both the bridge and the buffer functions between the two sides of the political border the Totos had a relation with the people on either side and migrated for short duration towards both north and south

either for collection or exchange of commodities. Of course for various reasons as explained earlier the southern routes came to be more frequently traversed than the northern routes particularly after the annexation of the area in 1864-65. During the course of Picha-hwa the main commodities that were sold or exchanged by the Totos were as given in Table - 4.3.

TABLE - 4.3

THE PRINCIPAL COMMODITIES EXCHANGED DURING PICHA-HWA

From North to South (From Bhutan & Totopara)	From South to North (From the plains of Duars)
1. Orange	1. Rice
2. Lac	2. Paddy
3. Bee-wax	3. Chapped rice
4. Medicinal plants	4. Gur
5. Manjistha	5. Sugar
6. Betel leaves	6. Cotton & threads
7. Chhurpi	7. Tobacco
8. Dried meat	8. Dried fish
9. Lime lemons etc.	9. Cattle
	10. Salt etc.

Source : Dhanapati, Shirong and other Toto elders; also Balichand Karji (Mech) & Father-in-law of Tileswar Rabha of S. Paro Bustee, aged about 108 years, in 1981.

Besides Picha-hwa the Totos practiced an inferior type of barter trade which was reluctantly named by them as Angda-hwa

which literally means begging. Begging was however not prevalent according to the Toto social customs. On the other hand to refuse any needy person by one who had the ability was a punishable offence. Therefore borrowing took the shape of giving something in return by the borrower who might have produced the thing or collected the same from the forest as a token of courtesy. This system of mutual exchange was spread even outside the village but confined within the friendly groups of neighbouring communities forming a close circuit. In fact the Angda-hwa was not considered as a fulfilled trade transaction but as a kind of mutual exchange of gifts among the friendly people and accordingly it was considered much superior to begging. A beggar has the freedom to beg from any body any where. But Angda-hwa could not take place in a similar fashion. In the case of Angda-hwa the Totos went to the neighbouring tribal villages like Hallapara, Ballalguri or Joygaon and asked the people to give them rice, paddy, salt etc. whichever was needed by the. In exchange they offered anything like a jack-fruit, mango, betel leaves etc. Angda-hwa was thus an inferior type of barter trade conducted according to the need and capacity of the person who took initiative in the matter (Table - 4.4).

During the last three decades or so the trade tours by the Totos have virtually come to an end. Totopara itself turned out to be a trade centre of not so negligible importance thereby enhancing the possibilities for Pich-hwa or sale of commodities

TABLE - 4.4

THE PRINCIPAL COMMODITIES EXCHANGED DURING ANGDA-HWA

The commodities offered by the Totos	The commodities procured by them in exchange
1. Bamboo shoots	1. Paddy
2. Splitted bamboos	2. Rice
3. Orange	3. Chapped rice
4. Lime lemon	4. Dried fish
5. Tuber & Vegetables	5. Salt etc.
6. Betel-leaves etc.	

Source : Same as in Table - 4.3

at source. With some improvements being made in road condition leading upto Totopara and opening up the road for vehicular traffic during the fair weather trucks began plying upto the door-steps of the Totos making it unnecessary for them to undertake the trade tours. The need for making personal visits towards north to the hills of Bhutan for collection of various articles remained as ever. But even here the Totos were outmanouvered by the more industrious Nepali porter-cum-traders and the more intelligent Behari traders who have become permanent residents of Totopara since then. With easier modes of transport and communication, the outlook and awareness of the Totos are also changing fast causing a change in favour of demand for non-traditional commodities and machine-made goods. But the biggest blow against the continuation of their old custom was made with the installation of Military Cantonments during the 60s located on the

traditional trade routes of the Totos. In fact Dhanapati Toto, the late Gapu, told the present author on one occasion that their life has never been the same after the vast changes that have come all along the Duars in the wake of the spread of Military establishments after the Sino-Indian war.

In recent years the forest gathering and collection of oranges by the Totos from inside Bhutan has been seriously affected after the Bhutan government has sealed the Indo-Bhutan border following the movement launched by the Bhutanese-Nepalese since 1990. The Government of Bhutan has put a stop to the movement of men and material via Totopara. The owners of the orange groves in Bhutan has been asked by the government of Bhutan to divert their crops for marketing only through Funtsolling, the most important border check-post lying on the international highway. Further the Bhutan government has evicted the Nepali nationals settled on their side of the border for a long time. Efforts are being made to cover the entire area with forests under the Green Belt Scheme. During the early part of November 1991 Ujen Toto belonging to the Dankobei clan of the Totos and resident of Mondalgaon was engaged by some Nepalis for carrying oranges from Bhutan to Totopara without taking any prior permit. Ujen was arrested inside Bhutan and was taken to Samchi. The matter was communicated to the District Magistrate of Jalpaiguri who took up the matter with the Bhutan authorities and helped release Ujen within a few weeks. But since then the Totos have become

distrustful about the forest guards and police force posted by the Bhutan government all along the border. The Hui-hwa days have run their full circle; the Totos who were once forced to take up assignments by the Bhutanese administration are now forcibly debarred from entering Bhutan.

4.7 ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

After the trading activities have become insignificant it has become necessary for the Totos to find out alternative and stable means of livelihood. As has been mentioned earlier the plantation of areca-nut and bamboo groves are relevant in this connection. But how far these two alone can provide the subsistence is open to doubt. The educated youths under the banner of the Toto Kalyan Samity have been toying with the idea of setting up a tea plantation in Totopara. But no headway has been made in this regard despite the hill slopes being ideally suited for tea plantation because the youths do not know whom to approach and also because of non-availability of land due to indiscriminate encroachment made by the Nepalis during the last few decades.

The scope of animal husbandry for occupational mobility is also limited. Traditionally the Totos are not a community of cattle herders. They had little use of animal husbandry because of their pre-occupation with portage, forest collection and

shifting cultivation. In this connection it may be mentioned that the Doyas of Tapakhan (Doyagaon) under Bhutan are also not acquainted with the art of cattle rearing although they are fond of beefs like the Totos which they obtained mainly in the way of trade with the Duars areas of Bengal.

On the other hand the natural environment of the village and its surrounding areas were also not very favourable for animal husbandry particularly during the past. The forests in the neighbourhood were heavily infested with different types of animals dominated by elephants and tigers. As such it was difficult for the Totos to rear cattle and goats which required extensive grazing and constant vigilance to protect them. It has been the duty of the younger members of both sexes in the family to tend the few bovine animals that were a part of the household. It was a difficult task for the little children to scare away the tigers or any other wild animal. The Totos also do not have any liking for the meat of a goat because they believe that it has no enervating power. The Totos like many other Mongoloid groups also do not consume milk in any form nor are they habituated in milching a cow. Further in the traditional Toto household there is no separate provision for the cow or any other domestic animal except an enclosure for the pigs and a cage for the birds. Whenever they procured or happened to rear a cattle they used to keep it under the open air throughout the year or in their kitchen gardens for fertilizing the plots. As a result

the cows or the goats cannot survive for long being constantly exposed to rainfall, sun and other vagaries of weather. Even then they occasionally did rear some cows mainly for their religious and ceremonial sacrifices, for the purposes of meat and for exchange with the Doyas up in Bhutan. On the other hand the Totos were well acquainted with piggery and poultry owing to some favourable factors.

Both the pigs and the fowls can increase their number within a short period as compared to the cattle. Again the pigs and the fowls need little care and fodder, and require no supervision for grazing. The Totos offer the pigs and fowls in sacrifice to the various benevolent and evil deities in appeasement. There is a demand for the Toto pigs from the Doyas also. According to their custom the eggs of the fowls are offered to the evil spirits by the Totos during the performance of Sangai-lawmei (penance).

For the above reasons the Totos prefer to rear pigs and fowls rather than the cow. But at present the situation is slowly undergoing transformation because in their search of an alternative livelihood the Totos have been compelled to give more attention to agriculture and other allied activities. No record is available of the livestock possessed by the Totos prior to the study of Roy Burman (1957). So keeping the year of his study i.e., 1957 as the base year one may attempt having a comparative

picture about the animal husbandry as practised by the Totos (Table no. - 4.5).

TABLE - 4.5
SOME MAJOR LIVESTOCK POSSESSED BY THE TOTOS

Year (source of data)	Total No. of Toto families	No. of cattles	No. of goats & sheep	No. of pigs
1	2	3	4	5
1957 (Roy Burman)	75	113	165	175
1979 (D. Dhali)	123	423	228	71
1988 (Author's own survey)	160	480	184	144

From Table - 4.5 it is revealed that the number of pigs has gone down over time but the number of cows has increased considerably. The number of goats and sheep has however remained by and large stagnant despite the more than 100 per cent increase in the number of Toto families between 1957 to 1988. Upon enquiry it was found that the livestock population has increased not solely by the effort of the Totos. A considerable amount was spent by the Government from time to time to supply the Totos pigs, goats, milch cows, bullocks etc. especially from 1974 onwards. From the records it was found that till 1988 at least 278 cattle-heads (milch cow : 118 and bullock : 160) have been

supplied to the Totos by the Government under a subsidised price ranging from 50 to 100 per cent. As such it is found that of the total number of cattles about 58 per cent have come from the contribution of the Government grant and about 42 per cent are the result of animal husbandry practised by the Totos.

It is however curious to note that animal husbandry particularly of the bovine cattle was first taken up by the Totos not as a complementary activity carried together with settled cultivation but as a business proposition by itself. Milligan (1916) mentioned that "Various attempts have been made to encroach on the land of Totopara but these all have been defeated" (Milligan:113). Milligan did not mention who were the encroachers and who defeated them. It may be remembered that Milligan felt strongly against any outside influx into Totopara. He wrote "I think all Government Officers who know the place would agree that to admit outsiders to this isolated and peaceful retreat would mean their speedy dis-appearance, which would be a pity" (Milligan:113).

But Roy Burman (1957) has narrated that "about 40 years ago Dange Toto who was Gapu, gave permission to five Nepali families to settle at Yaw Yaw area of Totopara - just near the boundary of Bhutan. Dange had some interest in this. He had over 100 bovine cattle, and the Toto were not much good in looking after these. He wanted the Nepali settlers to take charge of his.

cattle. But Samsepa Toto - the Collecting Panchayat was rather jealous. He informed the Tahasildar of Falakata. After some time an European Sub-divisional Officer from Alipurduar came. He ordered that Gapu could not settle any non-Toto at Totopara. So the Nepali had to leave at once" (Roy Burman:128 Part II Ch. 4).

4.8 AGRICULTURE AND LAND OWNERSHIP

But the problem cropped up again as a result of the encroachment of land in Totopara in connivance with the Toto headman after some years. It has been stated by the earlier scholars and Government officials that the alienation of land in Totopara had started by arrangement made between the squatters and the Toto Headman. Gradually it had become a practice to appease the Toto Headman by offering a pitcher of Iew (country liquor) along with some hen and, occasionally some money as tribute, in exchange for which the latter allowed the squatters to live in Totopara permanently by clearing up a plot. To stop this practice, the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri made an announcement at Totopara in 1957 by beat of drum that the Gapu (Headman) has no authority over the fallow land and over collection of revenue. But the practice was continued in silence and undisturbed till the sixth decade of this century when late Dhanapoti Mondal was the Headman.

In 1969, the State Government decided to take steps

under Section 44(2a) of the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act (38) to stop the encroachment in Totopara by seizing the power of the Toto Headman, regarding the community land lying formally under his name. Accordingly a survey and settlement operation was carried on by the S.L.R.O., Falakata, and approximately 300 acres of land were settled with 89 Toto families individually restoring the balance land of more than 1600 acres to the collector's Khas possession (Dhali:14). During this settlement, the land under cultivation in that particular season was recorded as the individual holding of the respective Totos, defying their traditional land ownership system. The rest of the land was recorded as vested to the State. The plea was, as reported, that the tribals were not economically using the land restored out of their possession and, therefore, the remaining fallow land should be saved from encroachment by the outsiders. It may be of some interest to point out here that Milligan had mentioned way back in 1919 that "The Totos keep in use for dwelling sites and cultivation some 300 acres only at a time" (Milligan:112). Ironically enough, what happened to be true in any one particular year under different conditions was made forcibly a permanent feature for successive generation of Totos for all time to come.

As a result, the basic economy and the social organisation of the Toto tribe became destabilized. On the one hand, the creation of vested land dispossessed them of their customary rights and, on the other, the authorities were reluctant to

evict the squatters from the area due to political considerations. So the process continued unaverted creating an imbalance both in human and geographical ecology along with a sharp rise in population. Most of the squatters were Nepalis from Nepal and Bhutan. These squatters settled all along the foot hill areas of West Bengal on the Tea-lease resumed lands, Forest lands and on the vested lands supported by the political leaders who lent them the necessary support with an eye on their votes in general elections. But, no measures were taken up by any body for the planned rehabilitation of these migrants.

A final blow regarding the land owning system was made following the dispute over a plot of land measuring about 100 acres, between the Forest Department and the Toto tribe. This plot of land is situated at a place called Kuapani (Merem-tee) on the bank of river Meremtee, on the south-east of Totopara. The Totos used to cultivate this land for a long time under the belief that the area belonged to their village. But, the land is actually possessed as per Government records by the Forest Department. The dispute fabricated when in 1981 the Forest Department claimed the possession and evicted the Toto cultivators from there.

Following the incident in 1982 a survey was done and demarcation of the land was made with the help of J.L.R.O. Falakata, and the boundary pillars of the Forest Department were

relaid. As a result, a large portion of the plot was brought under the possession of the Forest Department depriving the Totos of any claim over the said area.

A similar plot of fertile land at Puorgaon (Nokidong) area, measuring more than 100 acres, which was actually a part of the recorded community land of the Totos, was left unutilised due to an erroneous belief that the land is possessed by the Forest Department. Taking advantage of the situation, the land had been encroached upon by the Nepali squatters over the past two decades.

Later on a representation was made by the Totos to the then Forest Minister of West Bengal, Late Parimal Mitra, who promised the Totos that an equal area of land would be provided to them by the Forest Department some where in the contiguous region of Totopara. But the Totos have not yet been compensated by providing an alternative plot of land by the Forest Department. The problem of encroachment on the land of Totopara has become endemic and, at present, available land for cultivation in the village is not adequate for the production of sufficient crops to meet up their seasonal demands even. A large number of Totos have now become landless in their own soil, causing poverty and resentment among them.

It has become a matter of great concern for the newly

emerged leadership of the Totos as the process of land alienation has not yet stopped. It is true that after land was distributed and recorded in the name of individual families in 1969 the power of the Gapu has ceased. He can no longer arbitrarily allow anybody to settle at Totopara. But the situation has become in a sense more serious than ever before, because at present any one is free to dispose off any portion of his land whenever he feels a need to do so. It is true that legally speaking such land transfer is invalid. But it is practically very difficult to enforce the law from a far off official headquarters unless an aggrieved party takes the initiative to lodge a complaint and pursue the matter to the last at his own expense. The situation could have been different if the traditional social organisations and regulations at the village, clan or lineage level were as effective as in the past.

From an on the spot survey conducted in 1986 by Sri Bhakta Toto and Sri Dhaniram Toto, the two Toto youths providing the leadership to the Toto Kalyan Samity it is found that altogether more than 217 bighas of land have been transferred to the Nepali squatters at a price of only Rs. 15,260.00 upto 1986. (Table - 4.6).

Under the circumstances in which the data were collected it is highly likely that there is some overestimation of quantity of land so transferred and also some underestimation of the money

TABLE - 4.6

LAND OF TOTOS TRANSFERED TO THE NEPALIS UPTO 1986

Sl. No.	Name of the Seller	Approx. area of sold land in Bighas	Total price of land in Rs.	Name of the buyer	Place of Migration	Approx. duration of stay at Totopara (in years)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Mote Toto	22	2500/-	Pahalman Gurung	Nepal	2
2.	Mote Toto	15	1000/-	Balang Paki	- do -	3
3.	Gabura Toto	12	800/-	Nima Sherpa	- do -	4
4.	Gabura Toto	20	1000/-	Krishna Bahadur Sanyashi	- do -	1
5.	Taje Toto	25	1800/-	Maila Kharke	- do -	6
6.	Taje Toto	10	400/-	Jetha Pande	Bhutan	-
7.	Barba Toto	5	160/-	Jetha Gurung	Assam	1
8.	Turku Toto	4	600/-	Krishna Bahadur Sanyashi	Nepal	1
9.	Pradip Toto	19	300/-	Hastaman Thapa	- do -	1
10.	Darje Toto	16	800/-	Bijaya Rai	- do -	6
11.	Jatna Toto	20	1700/-	Maila Kharke	- do -	6
12.	Apchima Toto	12	900/-	Jetha Rai	- do -	1
13.	Gopal Toto	13	1100/-	Mangal Rai	- do -	1
14.	Isirong Toto	18	1300/-	Jetha Rai	- do -	1
15.	Ekale Toto	6	900/-	Rambahadur Sharma	- do -	1
Total		217	15260/-			

value offered for the land. If the data could be cross-checked by obtaining information from the end of the Nepali purchasers, then a more balanced view would have been available. Further, looked at from another point of view the quantity of land transfer as shown in the survey is a gross underestimation because the Khas land vested with the Government as also the Forest land that have been already taken possession of by the Nepali squatters in the past is not included in the said figure. Initially and for a long time the Nepalis migrating to Totopara occupied only such land that were not under the physical possession and directly utilised by the Totos for agriculture during the time of encroachment. But gradually after 1969 when land has become scarce the newly migrating and more industrious Nepalis have began covetting the land under the possession of the Totos. With the growing pauperisation of a section of them, the Totos are also turning up as willing sellers of land recorded under their name or under their actual possession. The data as recorded in the survey conducted by the Toto youths in 1986 must be a reflection of the latter phenomena.

It is revealed from the Table that 15 transactions of privately held lands have taken place within a few years up to 1986. In these transactions 12 Toto sellers were involved and also 12 Nepali purchasers. It is curious to observe that 8 of the Nepali purchasers have migrated to Totopara only a year back, one migrated from Assam during the year in which the transaction took place, and one person purchasing the land continued to stay in Bhutan

even after the transfer of land has taken place. The purchasers pay on an average a land-price of Rs. 70.32 per bigha which indicates that the sale takes place under duress. Needless to say that this price is ridiculously below the comparable price prevailing in the neighbourhood.

Land was recorded in the name of only 89 families in 1969. Chakraborti and Chattopadhyay has given the number of Toto families in 1964 to be 85 which increased up to 123 during the time of Dhali (1979) and 180 when the author undertook his last survey in 1991. It can therefore be easily made out that over time the number of families has increased much leading to partitioning of the land originally settled in 1969. It may be remembered in this connection that according to the ancient Toto custom, the principle of equigeniture has been prevalent among them making the situation highly conducive to fragmentation over successive generations. In 1979, Dhali noted down the names of 34 Toto families who had turned landless in their own soil (Dhali:14).

In 1969 a total of 347.43 acres were settled in the name of 89 families then existing of the Totos in Totopara. The settlement was obviously made with respect to the amount of land under the possession and cultivation of individual families in that particular year. Since the exact amount of land settled for each of the individual families in that particular year is of considerable historical importance the detailed data regarding the same

is presented in an Annexure appended to this chapter. However for the purposes of analysis an attempt has been made below to present the data in a condensed way so that the emerging trend becomes easily discernible. The first most important classification has been made of the number of families according to the quantity of land (Table - 4.7).

TABLE - 4.7

DISTRIBUTION OF NUMBER OF TOTO FAMILIES ACCORDING TO LAND 1969

<u>Quantity of land in acres</u>	<u>No. of Toto families</u>
0 - 2	41
2 - 4	19
4 - 6	11
6 - 8	8
8 - 10	4
10 - 12	2
12 - 14	-
14 - 16	-
16 - 18	1
18 - 20	1
20 - 22	1
22 - 24	-
24 - 26	-
26 - 28	1
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>89</u>

It is found that 41 families were given less than 2 acres of land and in all 60 families had land less than 4 acres. Therefore it is clear that no consideration was made about the economic

viability of farming in a hilly area like Totopara. Also there was much variation in the amount of land passed on to different families. It is not at all clear on what basis the inequality among the Totos was institutionalized. In Table - 4.8 is presented the situation as regards clan-wise distribution of recorded land from where it will be found that taking the present number of families into account only the Dantrobei, Dankobei, Diringchangobei, Mantrobei and PISOCHANGOBEI clans enjoy the ownership of more than 2 acres per family.

TABLE - 4.8

CLAN-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF RECORDED LAND IN ACRES

Sl. No.	Clan	No. of families (1991)	Population (1991)	Total area recorded (1969)	Per head land	Per family land
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Dankobei	31	170	86.37	0.50	2.78
2.	Dantrobei	43	234	92.54	0.39	2.15
3.	Eadubei	16	70	18.47	0.26	1.15
4.	Eaudhbei	23	110	29.82	0.42	1.29
5.	Pongobei	17	96	26.94	0.28	1.58
6.	Nurenchangobei	15	77	19.50	0.25	1.30
7.	Linkaijibe	7	40	7.84	0.19	1.12
8.	Nubebei	8	42	7.30	0.17	0.57
9.	Diringchangobei	2	13	7.05	0.54	3.52
10.	Mankobei	9	41	10.45	0.25	1.16
11.	Mantrobei	7	27	22.90	0.84	3.27
12.	Manchingbei	1	3	0.70	0.23	0.70
13.	PISOCHANGOBEI	1	3	17.55	5.85	17.55

It is also found from Table - 4.8 that the Dantrobei and the Dankobei clans together possess 51.5 per cent of the total area owned by the Totos. Of course it is also true that these two clans have the largest number of families as also population. The highest holding size has been recorded against Pischangobei clan, and the lowest holding for the Manchingbei clan both of whom have only one family each.

TABLE - 4.9

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLDINGS ACCORDING TO SIZE AND NO. OF FRAGMENTS
1969

Size in acres	No. of Frangments						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
0 - 1	7	11	-	1	-	-	19
1 - 2	8	7	3	2	-	2	22
2 - 3	5	6	-	1	-	-	12
3 - 4	2	4	1	-	-	-	7
4 - 5	-	3	-	1	-	-	4
5 - 6	1	3	3	-	-	-	7
6 - 7	2	1	1	-	-	-	4
7 - 8	1	2	1	-	-	-	4
8 - 9	1	1	-	-	-	-	2
9 - 10	1	1	-	-	-	-	2
10 - 11	-	1	-	-	-	1	2
11 - 12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12 -	-	2	-	1	-	1	4
TOTAL	28	42	9	6	-	4	89

From Table - 4.9 it may be observed that the land so allotted is divided in unequal number of fragments. Holdings below one acre in size are also having more than one fragments. In one case the number of fragments of a less than one acre farm even extended to four. Two holdings of less than 2 acres are having six fragments each. Thus the economic viability is jeopardized further indicating a lack of seriousness on the part of planners in charge of development of the Toto tribals.

Again it was found by the author during investigation that many of the Toto land-holders are not in a position even to identify their own lands nor they are aware of the amount of land that has been officially allotted to them. They have also not correct idea about the unit of land measurement. When needed to do so, they measure the area approximately by the number of man-days that may be necessary for the cultivation of the same. With the large scale acculturation with the Nepalis at present taking place, they also have begun measuring the land according to the number of Behan (morning) required for cultivation. The Government officials also in their turn do not ask the Totos to identify their plots during survey or fixation of taxes.

ANNEXURE

DISTRIBUTION OF LAND AMONG THE TOTOS IN 1969

Name of Clan	Sl. No.	Head of the family	Quantity of land (acre)	No. of fragments as per khatian
1	2	3	4	5
DANKOBEI	1.	Tamshe	7.03	3
	2.	Dhandru	9.55	2
	3.	Waja	3.96	3
	4.	Majila	1.74	2
	5.	Dinesh	20.72	4
	6.	Gopal	1.68	1
	7.	Allo	10.73	6
	8.	Jhakra	0.33	2
	9.	Chandrake	8.02	1
	10.	Jurma	0.34	2
	11.	Gosta	1.36	2
	12.	Kartike	2.49	2
	13.	Lagangshe	2.88	2
	14.	Temba	0.14	2
	15.	Karne	9.75	1
	16.	Isaima	1.03	4
	17.	Mangaldas	1.82	2
	18.	Satuman	2.80	4
DAN TROBEI	19.	Lashe	18.62	2
	20.	Mohanlal	1.54	4
	21.	Samsingani	1.09	3
	22.	Chhabilal	1.76	6
	23.	Shibe	0.70	2
	24.	Chengra	3.54	2
	25.	Jangru	1.30	2
	26.	Dirpa	27.48	2

(contd.)

1	2	3	4	5
DANTROBEI	27.	Ramesh	5.78	2
	28.	Garbe	6.64	1
	29.	Mane	1.38	1
	30.	Longsema	8.28	2
	31.	Saona	4.06	2
	32.	Kaibura	3.83	2
	33.	Jite	1.60	1
	34.	Amasu	2.48	2
BADJBEI	35.	Ujen	2.46	2
	36.	Worga	1.03	1
	37.	Busing	0.13	2
	38.	Sampsari	2.68	1
	39.	Omje	0.50	1
	40.	Narsing	1.90	2
	41.	Agashe	0.29	1
	42.	Guja	5.33	3
BAUDHBEI	43.	Hose	6.61	1
	44.	Dadura	1.45	1
	45.	Labje	3.90	1
	46.	Dattasing	0.37	1
	47.	Harkasing	6.65	2
	48.	Goijoshe	1.17	3
	49.	Budhbare	0.21	1
	50.	Sukra	1.47	1
BCNGCBEI	51.	Laure	1.46	1
	52.	Dengra	7.64	1
	53.	Moina	5.43	1
	54.	Ambare	0.07	2
	55.	Lamsing	5.25	2
	56.	Datte	4.61	4
	57.	Choure	3.86	2

(contd.)

1	2	3	4	5
BONGOBEI	58.	Sarde	2.77	2
	59.	Bhale	3.10	2
	60.	Buke	1.75	2
	61.	Bire	1.58	2
	62.	Dhandri	4.02	2
NURENCHANGOBEI	63.	Tangsha	2.08	1
	64.	Mangarsing	10.71	2
	65.	Jatna	1.18	6
	66.	Mangra	2.23	1
	67.	Gudia	2.60	1
	68.	Toje	0.70	2
LINKAIJIBEI	69.	Harna	7.77	2
	70.	Budhe	0.07	1
NUEBEIBEI	71.	Lora	0.72	2
	72.	Kaitepa	5.14	2
	73.	Haba	1.44	3
DIRINCHANGOBEI	74.	Shirong	7.05	2
MANKOBEI	75.	Mardong	2.88	2
	76.	Aitao	0.52	2
	77.	Gointe	4.37	2
	78.	Mote	0.37	2
	79.	Wankini	0.21	2
	80.	Apchima	0.32	4
	81.	Turku	1.54	1
	82.	Biren	0.41	1
MANTROBEI	83.	Jiding	2.02	1
	84.	Laijishe	6.58	3
	85.	Laishengma	5.52	3
	86.	Debaru	3.26	1
	87.	Mankra	5.52	3
MANCHINGBEI	88.	Birman	0.70	1
PISOCHANGOBEI	89.	Kendra	17.55	6

Source : D. Dhali, Underdeveloped Tribes: A Project Report on the Totcs of Jalpaiguri, Nov. 1980.