

CHAPTER VII.

LAND TENURE.

In this analysis of local land tenure I follow humbly the excellent lead given by Malinowski in "Coral Gardens and their Magic." In his book Professor Malinowski has uncovered what must be regarded as the fundamental factor in any land tenure enquiry, that is, the fallacy of attempting to assess tenure from its legal aspect alone. He writes (Vol. 1, page 31) "We would lay down at once the rule that any attempt to study land tenure from a legal aspect alone must lead to unsatisfactory results. Land tenure cannot be defined or described without an exhaustive knowledge of the economic life of the natives." Again (Vol. 1, page 319) "The complications of land tenure go further than this. As we know, the purely economic uses of land cannot be separated from rights of settlement, political claims, freedom of communication and transport; from territorial privilege connected with ceremonial, magical and religious life. No doubt the economic utilisation of land forms the solid core of all these privileges and claims. But land tenure must be conceived in a more comprehensive manner: it is the relationship of man to soil in the widest sense; that is, in so far as it is laid down in native law and custom and in the measure in which it controls political life, affects the performance of public ceremonies and gives access to opportunities for recreation and sport. Man's appointed and culturally defined place on his soil, his territorial citizenship, his type of residence, and those rights which underlie the various uses of his soil form an organic whole of which the economic exploitation is but a part, albeit the most important part."

It is with this concept of land tenure in mind that I outline the effect on the tenure system of the various aspects of Chin life. Malinowski's warning is not without practical application here. Previous enquiries into land tenure in the Chin Hills have been confined largely to the question of right of alienation. In all cases one finds the two terms "communal ownership" and "private peasant ownership" in juxtaposition as if by them alone one could give an accurate definition of the existing state of tenure. In the first place, it is difficult to understand what is meant by "private peasant ownership," for even in individualist England absolute right of ownership does not exist. For instance, if the public weal demands it, Government can force a person to vacate his land on payment of an arbitrary scale of compensation. Conversely, land belonging to a primitive society in which no individual rights of any kind exist has yet, I believe, to be discovered.

The trouble of course arises out of the official necessity of finding portmanteau terms which will describe two opposite groups of systems in one of which individual rights are predominant and in the other

community rights have priority. But while these portmanteau terms facilitate the writing of reports, they also facilitate errors of misconception, and can only be employed satisfactorily after the multitudinous details of all types of tenure included in each category have been recorded and classified.

In the Falam subdivision the two Chin expressions *Bul ram* and *Klang ram* have been translated respectively as "privately owned land" and "communal land." The wider meanings which the Chin himself attaches to these terms have passed unnoticed, and thus rights of alienation have been recorded as valid where in fact no such right exists, simply because of a misconception of the local meaning of the term "*bul ram*." I would never have been able to understand the intricacies of Chin tenure had I oriented my enquiries on these terms as popularly translated because *klang ram* is governed by many rights of individuals, while all *bul ram* is subject to certain rights of the community and the members thereof.

But if this problem is approached by investigation of the relation of Man to Soil in the broadest sense, rights to alienate, to cultivate and inherit land, rights to the collection of wild fruit and thatch, beeswax and timber, firewood, etc. rights of hunting without restraint, of making paths and aqueducts, of digging for potting clay, etc. come to light through the study of the relation to the land of man in all his functions. Thus the right varies when the individual is considered as son or daughter, husband or wife, mother or father, member of a wider group based on kinship, residential, political, economic or religious ties, as chief or priest or sorcerer, as agriculturist, hunter, potter, blacksmith or basket-weaver, and so on.

Even the most rabid anti-theorist among "practical men" must admit that enquiry on such lines must yield more accurate results than mere investigation into legal rights of ownership based on the assumption that distinction between communal and individual ownership is all that is necessary for an understanding of land tenure. The problem of whether or not so comprehensive an examination must result in a mass of information impossible to disentangle will be solved in course of this chapter.

The subject is dealt with as follows:—first come detailed lists of the traditional rights of the chief, headman, priest, *khawnbawl* (senior elder, Zahau), the blacksmith, the village council, the village community, and the individual in his capacity as cultivator: this list is followed by an examination of the various principles controlling the rights above named and finally there is an account of land tenure as it worked in 1936, of modern innovations and the type of problem which is likely to face the administration, and of the way in which an analysis on these lines in itself discovers the means by which such problems can be overcome.

It is necessary first to refer back to the distinctions made in my first article on Chin tenure ("MAN" Vol. II, No. 56) between the autocratic and democratic tribes. While minor variations in tenure exist in each tribe, it will simplify the whole problem to contrast the ancient forms of tenure in these two groups before describing the changes that have occurred and the variations which exist.

In this respect I do not want to give the impression that I am trying to reconstruct a hypothetical zero point in land tenure. The two types of tenure to which I refer as the ancient systems still exist in certain parts of the Falam subdivision, and can be studied at the present time. I do not believe in the reconstruction of cultural zero points, partly because really valuable historical evidence, that is evidence based on observation by experts, is almost impossible to obtain, and partly because I would never know when to stop in my march back through history. Even where tenure has changed almost out of all knowledge within the past century, sufficient traces of the older systems remain alive to make it possible, by a comparative study of these scraps of living history, to formulate a fairly clear idea of what change has occurred.

At the same time I have not neglected the evidence of history where such could be checked with a reasonable hope of accuracy. In general I have adopted the principle of comparison between tenures which have changed to varying degrees from an acknowledged common source of which living people have actual knowledge. For instance, villages within the Khuangli Tribal Area, though of the same sub-tribe, show considerable variations in tenure, changes having occurred within the memory of living men. Again the tenure in the mother village of Khuangli itself now differs from that in the Zahau Tribal Area in certain respects, though the original tenures, as exemplified in some outlying villages of the Khuangli sub-tribe, was identical to that of the Zahau.

Differences between autocratic and democratic group tenures.—Broadly speaking, the differences between the old tenure systems in these two groups are as follows :—

In the autocratic group the chief and headmen have certain definite rights in the land over and above their rights as resident householders and cultivators, and in addition certain restrictions exist regarding the inheritance of cultivation titles. The first difference is readily understandable and no further reference to it will be necessary here. The inheritance difference lies in the rule in the autocratic group that hereditary land titles may only be possessed over one plot in each rotational field by each head of an individual family, whereas in the democratic group cultivation titles are heritable in any number.

For the purpose of detailed comparison of tenure in the two groups I examine the systems of the Zahau and the Zanniat. I do so because in the Zahau tribal area, which has been least in contact with modernising influences, and which suffered least in the tribal wars that occurred in the

half century preceding annexation, there exists a form of tenure which is admitted by the other Shimhrin sub-tribes to be the prototype of their own; and because it is among the Zanniat villages that one finds most evidence of the oldest systems of tenure of the democrats.

List of rights and claims. Zahau. Autocratic Group.

1. *The Chief of the Tribal Area.*—In describing what he calls his own lands, that is to say the lands under his political jurisdiction, the Zahau Chief will say “*Keima ih ram*”, meaning “My land.” In Government documents this right of referring to the land as his own has been noted by the expression “the Chief is Lord of the Soil.” This distinction from the descriptive term “owner” was made in order to prevent the chief or his successors from ever laying claim to absolute ownership of the land with rights of alienation by sale, and the traditional rights of the chief have been fixed in perpetuity at their proper valuation in this respect.

In pre-annexation days, as well as in the period immediately following annexation, any person wishing to found a village in the land over which the Zahau Chief claimed political jurisdiction or “protective rights”, had to pay to the Chief a due called *Khua man* (Lit., the price of the village) consisting of a full grown mithan. This payment resulted in a *transference of the Chief's rights as a headman* to the person founding the village, subject of course to territorial restriction to the area allotted for cultivation purposes to the new village. In other words, having paid his mithan, the newly created headman could exercise rights and claim dues in the village under his control which were precisely similar to the rights and dues claimed by the Chief *as headman of his own village of Klauhmun*. That, at least, was the theory of the transaction; actual practice varied somewhat from this ideal. While headmen of newly formed villages to this day assume for themselves the rights and dues of old, the Chief is no longer permitted to collect *Khua man*, and the right of permitting foundation of new villages is now vested in the Deputy Commissioner of the Chin Hills District. This official gives permission, or withholds it, subject in principle to the desires of the Chief, to certain rules regarding the minimum number of houses which will occupy the new village, and to the allocation of land.

In addition to this fundamental payment for transference of rights based on his “Lordship of the Soil,” the Chief exacted from certain villages a tribute of grain from each household, the quantity varying from village to village.

Originally some villages of Hualngo escaped payment of this grain due to the Zahau Chief because they had paid *Khua man* to the then paramount Tashon Council and established villages in Zahau-claimed lands under Tashon protection. But when in later years Government broke up the Falam subdivision into the tribal areas now existing, the Zahau Chief claimed and was given the right to collect a tribute in grain.

at the rate of one *rel* (about 7 lbs.) per house per annum from all villages in his jurisdiction which had previously paid tribute to Tashon. This right has since been confirmed as applicable also to new villages founded in his jurisdiction.

Inherent in the Zahau Chief's claim to Lordship of the Soil is the potential right of extraction of timber and other produce of the jungle such as thatch, etc., from lands of any village in his jurisdiction, and it is this right which is the basis of the custom of the whole tribal area combining to build the Chief's house when required, each village bringing its quota of house building materials from its own lands.

Such other rights as the Chief possesses are held in his capacity, not as tribal chief, but as headman of his own village of Klauhmun, and I will therefore go on to describe the rights of the headman in Zahau villages.

2. *The village headman.*—Theoretically speaking, the Zahau Headmen have an absolute right of division and disposal, sequestration and re-distribution of land within their village boundaries. Actually other rights and principles which are noted hereinafter interact with this absolute right and restrict it within easily definable bounds.

The right of disposal of land by the headman does not in any sense mean that he is entitled to sell it or rent it, or even to loan it to persons not resident in his village. His first duty as a headman is to see that every resident of the village has a sufficiency of land to cultivate, and thus his disposal right is in effect nothing more than a charter for his interference in the disposal of land according to individual rights. This will be seen more clearly when examining the claims of the individual member of the village community.

Disposal rights of land can be subdivided into (a) the right of distribution of unoccupied* plots, (b) the right to split up large occupied plots into smaller units if and when increase of population or shortage of land requires such action, (c) the right of partitioning rotational fields (*lopi'l*) into plots (*lo*), (d) the right of delineation and alteration of the boundaries of rotational fields, (e) the right of granting permission to cultivate specially reserved areas such as *tuklaw* lands where *sagat* trees are common.

Other rights exercised by the headman on behalf of the village community include the right to direct construction of village communal works such as aqueducts, roads and bridges, the building of houses for new immigrants, etc., all of which have their bearing on land tenure because, though an individual may have cultivation titles over certain areas, such titles will be inoperative if public welfare demands that a road or aqueduct or school shall be constructed across or on the plots concerned.

* These are called *Lo lawng*.

Perquisites of the headman which accrue out of the devolution to him of the Chief's Lordship of the Soil include the right to have his house built free by the village, the right to the flesh due called *ramsa* consisting of either the saddle or a hind leg or in some cases, both, of any wild animals killed in the chase, the right to collect a due on all salt boiled at springs in his tract; and the right to take the third boiling of wax from the hives of wild bees found in his jurisdiction, the rule being that wax from such hives is boiled and strained off three times, the first two boilings (which are the largest) going to the village council for utilisation as communal wealth.

Other rights* less directly attributable to the headman's claims to the land and its products, but nevertheless bound up with the economic uses of land and the forest and agricultural products thereof, consist of the customary dues at feasts (*sa siah*); in some villages a measure of grain per household (*rawl rel siah*); and two days per household per annum of free labour in the headman's fields (*lo hlawh*). They compensate the headman for absence (on village affairs) from his own agricultural duties.

Finally there is the *Lohual*, consisting of one pot of rice or maize beer, which must be paid by every cultivator at the beginning of each cultivation cycle, as a "talking price" when plots are being claimed before a rotational field is opened for cultivation.

3. *The Khuatelal, or headman of a quarter (veng)*.—In certain large villages there are divisions or quarters known as *veng*. The headman of the village may transfer some or all of his rights to any person whom he may appoint as headman of such a quarter, the nature of the rights so handed over depending entirely on the amount of assistance which this petty official renders to the headman. It has become a habit in many villages not large enough to be subdivided into quarters to appoint *khuatelal* or *khuing* to assist the headman, and to try and squeeze out of the village a few extra dues to compensate these men for their trouble. This indeed is a recognised way of sharing the perquisites of headmanship with patrilineal relatives out of the main line of succession. According to Zahau custom a *khuatelal* is entitled to the concession of a free house as well as the headman if the latter chooses to bestow this favour upon him, but this matter has never been threshed out, and it seems doubtful if many villages could be persuaded to accept this addition to the totality of dues and duties rendered by them to their ruling hierarchy.

4. *The Sadawt or Village Priest*.—As already noted, in many cases the headman and the *sadawt* are one and the same person. According to ancient custom, where the two offices are combined only one set of rights to dues, that of the headman, is operative, but in isolated cases headmen have tried to get away with both. The Zahau Chief is strongly in favour of combining the duties whenever possible, to reduce the dues paid by

* These rights have been considerably reduced in recent years.

his people, but in some cases physical deformity debars a headman from communing with the spirits and another man must be appointed to the priesthood. Elsewhere I have described the duties of the *sadawt* and the reasons for rendering him services and payment in kind. Like the flesh dues to the headman, these dues are but indirectly connected to claims to the land, but in view of the fact that ritual has an important bearing on agriculture, payment to the master of ceremonies must be regarded as an essential item in the sum total of expenditure on labour and kind which controls land exploitation in this area.

The perquisites of the *sadawt* among the Zahau include two days free labour (*lo hlawh*) in his fields every year from each house, the flesh dues of animals sacrificed by him, and in some cases a contribution of grain from each household in the village or quarter on whose behalf he performs sacrifices.

5. *Blacksmith*.—In the Zahau Tribal area the blacksmith is, as it were, a village official. That is to say he works for all alike on a basis of equality, and is paid (by all households) a rate of dues which is fixed by the village headman and his council. These dues consist of two days *lo hlawh* in his fields from every house, and flesh dues from animals killed at the Feasts of Merit and of Celebration. The last are differential payments based on quantitative investments in kind at feasts—thus rich men with better and larger plots requiring more agricultural implements pay more than the poor man who gives no feasts, and the hunting clique pay more than non-hunters, to compensate for repairs to guns, etc.

6. *The Khawnbawl*.—This individual approximates to a private secretary to the headman. He is usually the most influential elder in the village council, and his main duties are to assist the headman in the distribution of land and the apportionment of village duties. His sole perquisite over and above that of other elders of the council is a claim to preferential treatment in the allotment of plots reverting to the headman for disposal, or in the distribution of plots in specially reserved areas of *tuklaw ram*.

7. *The Klangpi or Village Council*.—In practice certain traditional duties and rights of the headman devolve upon the village council, such as the right to demand timber and other materials required for communal works. In addition the council, as the organising body for communal work, as the consuming personnel in communal sacrifice, and as the participant group in communal entertainment, has the right to collect grain and liquor from each household for the furtherance of these activities, as well as to demand payment for extraction of thatch from areas close to the village. All these collections and payments vary from village to village according to local conditions, but are rarely enough to create disaffection because every young man aspires some day to enjoying them himself. Of course exceptions exist. At the Chief's village of Klauhmun, where membership of the council has risen to over eighty

men in a total of about 197 households (including 32 widows), the heavy drain on non-council members is the subject of much adverse comment, particularly by the Chief himself, who realises the dangers inherent in so lopsided a situation but is disinclined to take action which would make him extremely unpopular with many of his most influential co-villagers.

All agricultural products are subject to occasional taxation for the support of indigent persons at the instance of the council, and it is interesting to note that needy people even of neighbouring villages sometimes get succour through this custom.

I have mentioned the payment of *lohual zu* under the headman's rights. In practice many headmen allow their councils to collect this liquor and use it for entertainment of village guests, thereby reducing the incidence of village rates in kind. This is but one of the many examples one can find to prove that all primitive overlords are not greedy autocrats whose only pleasure in life is to squeeze the last atom of profit they can out of their subjects.

8. *The village community as a whole.*—It will have been noticed that up to this point rights to land have taken the form of sanctions to collect taxes or dues in kind, and to organise utilisation of the soil. I have found it necessary to include mention of these dues here to demonstrate the essential difference between the claims of the commoner and those of the ruling hierarchy—in the first case claims are manifested in a direct way, in the right to cultivate a particular plot of ground, etc., while in the second case rank adds to the direct claims of a cultivator the indirect rights of an organiser. All the chiefs and headmen in this area possess cultivation titles like any other villager, and according to custom these titles are subject to roughly the same restrictions as those of the commoner. Much of what follows in describing the claims of the community and the individual villager applies therefore with equal force to the persons whose extraordinary claims have already been noted.

As a resident member of the village community the villager enjoys a great many rights which are of fundamental importance to the true understanding of land tenure. He has the right to collect fallen dried timber at all times and in all places; to cut housebuilding materials such as posts and planks in cultivated areas; to pick wild fruit and cut standing dead timber and banana trees in cultivated areas which are lying fallow; free right of way through any part of the village lands for any purpose, including fishing and hunting; the right to use paths and water-holes, to graze his herds (subject to the restriction of *Siapil nam*) over any area not actually under cultivation; and the right to cut thatch. I have left thatch to the last because special rights apply which vary slightly from one area to another. Generally speaking, in all uncultivated and fallow areas thatch is the property of the man who cuts it, subject to the following provisos:—(a) that if anybody weeds and tends

a patch of thatch grass so as to encourage growth of a strong crop, he acquires priority even over the extraction rights of the headman and the community and (b) that in any thatch areas so close to the village as to be in great demand, the village council has the right to demand a small payment in beer. The special claims outlined in (a) and (b) seem to involve an element of conflict, but in practice any person unwilling to pay in *zu* for the right to extract thatch in (b) areas would not weed them, and so no trouble arises.

It need not be stressed that these varied rights greatly facilitate housebuilding, collection of fuel, tending of live-stock, and the other innumerable duties which make up the daily life of the people. Without them life would soon become intolerable—yet they are rarely if ever noted.

9. *The individual member of the community.*—In this section I outline the rights which all villagers possess, not so much as members of the community, but as individuals. First and foremost there is the right to sufficient land to cultivate to satisfy bodily needs. This is applicable even to those least considered members of the community—childless widows and orphan girls. The headman must provide land for all or his people will migrate elsewhere. Secondly there is the right of the male to inherit cultivation titles. Land over which such hereditary cultivation titles exist is known among the Shimhrin and Hualngo as *saihrem nam* and *sumhmui lu* land. The first term applies to plots of which the cultivation titles are based on the “squatter’s rights” of the original founders of the village, and the second term to land over which “first-clearing” rights were established by the cutting of virgin jungle by later immigrants to the village. The distinction emphasises descent from the oldest families in the village and implies no difference in tenure. Among the Khualshim both varieties are called *Pu ro lo*, meaning “ancestor’s heritage plots.”

Although through the principle of patrilineal inheritance hereditary cultivation titles may, theoretically, come in any numbers to lucky individuals, it is the practice in the Shimhrin tracts (except where the *bul ram* tenure, which will be described later, exists) to restrict acquisition of these rights to one plot in each field, the excess balance accruing through inheritance going to the headman for redistribution to the needy. This transaction is subject to the important proviso that the inheritor has the right to pick the best plot out of all to which he may have claims in each of the village fields, and that after he has taken his pick, patrilineal relatives living in the same village who happen to be dissatisfied with the plots they have already got can exchange these for others which they prefer out of the ones discarded by the inheritor, those finally rejected going to the headman.

A point of importance in connection with these cultivation titles is that in pre-annexation days it was the custom for holders of titles to the best land to pay the major share of any untoward expenditure which

tell upon the village community. This will be mentioned later when describing the causes of change in tenure.

10. *The actual cultivator.*—Before the cultivator can enter his land he must pay to the headman the “talking price” of *lohual zu*. This price is payable once for each cultivation cycle, that is for the whole period of three, six or nine years during which any particular field is cultivated. It can in no sense be considered as a rent, since it only amounts to about 1/100th of the total value of the yield per annum. It is essentially a lubricant of the discussion of partitioning of vacant lands, “remembering” of cultivation titles, and periodical public recognition of rights in land.

During the period of cultivation of a plot the cultivator has the right to the crops grown on it, subject to the tribute and rates in kind already enumerated. He also has prior claim to any thatch grass growing on the plot during the years he cultivates it, and during the first season that it lies fallow. He has the sole right to pick wild fruit growing on the plot during the years of the cultivation cycle, and to cut plantain trees for pig-food during the same period, these rights being based on the fact that clearing of the plot induces a strong growth.

This concludes the list of the rights to land, *but it must be realised that it is not possible by a study of these alone to reach full appreciation of local land tenure.* For there are a number of principles which interact with and in some cases modify these rights, which give the social sanction to all land titles, which have caused changes in tenure, and which therefore must be considered at the same time.

Principles affecting rights to land. Zahau. Autocratic Group.

A. The principle that “Lordship of the Soil” can be acquired by conquest. It is on this principle that the Zahau Chief bases his rights to land and to the exaction of *khua man* from founders of new villages. It is the sanction for Government’s interference in problems of land tenure if and when desirable.

B. The principle that public welfare takes precedence over private rights. This is the sanction for exercise by the headman of his right of redistribution of land, and it comes into operation when he is required to find land for newly married couples, for immigrants to his village, or for people who have shouldered a debt for the benefit of the community. As will be seen, however, other and less commendable principles sometimes overrule principle B.

C. The principle that clearing of virgin jungle establishes a perpetual right of cultivation. This is perhaps the main conviction in Zahau tenure, since it is the sanction for the hereditary cultivation titles which in themselves form the only inducement to the villager to improve his land holdings by permanent works such as terraces.

D. The principles of patrilocal marriage and patrilineal descent, succession and inheritance. These determine the lines of devolution of land titles which are heritable. It is through the principles C and D that the individual member of the village community establishes his particular claims.

E. The principle of communal sacrifice to the spirits of the land. The way in which religious ideology organises agricultural activities among the Zahau has a very important bearing on land rights. The belief in "Spirits of the Fields" restricts cultivation to such fields as have been formally opened by propitiation of the guardian spirits. The necessity of an inaugural ceremony to ensure good crops prevents individuals from working isolated plots which are outside the area specifically covered by the protection of the ceremony. There are a great many practical advantages in this organisation of work within a given area. It renders fencing of cultivation infinitely easier where only one communal fence is required for a considerable area; it means that one field path is sufficient to serve a large group of plots; it simplifies rotational cultivation of the village lands, and ensures that large areas will always be open to grazing. One other factor which in these days of peace is no longer worthy of serious consideration is that of protection from enemy attack. There is little doubt but that this system of working plots in one block made for far greater safety in the pre-annexation days of head-hunting and slave-raiding. The effect of principle E on land rights is best shown by the following example:—A certain man whom I shall call X lived in a village with lands divided into five fields, each of which was worked in rotation by the whole village for three years at a time. Now although there were five fields, X, whose family had but recently come to the village, only held cultivation titles over three plots, one each in fields 1, 2, and 4. When therefore the village was working fields 3 and 5, X had to take his chance with whatever vacant plot in these fields the headman made available for him, and however bad they were he could not grow crops in any of his own plots in fields 1, 2, and 4, though these were all lying fallow, because these fields had not been opened for cultivation by appeasement of the guardian spirits.

F. The principle that Rank can outweigh other claims to land. Generally speaking the only cases where the operation of this interferes with existing rights is when the son of a chief or headman migrates to another community and is by reason of his birth appointed a quarter headman. In such a case some wretched villager would be relieved of the best fields in the village lands, and a general post in cultivation titles would result so that the most influential men would retain the best fields left after the patrician newcomer had got his lion's share. In the apportionment of specially reserved lands in the rare cases where these are cultivated, rank by birth as well as social rank acquired through feast-giving etc. would entitle the holders to preferential treatment. In all cases where it was possible, principle F would be invoked to protect men of rank from the operation of principle B, and only the danger of

malcontents emigrating would restrain a headman from pandering to the wishes of his most influential subjects.

G. The principle that title-holders to the best plots must bear a correspondingly large share of the burden of village debts. Of all the factors connected with land tenure, this principle has been the most conducive of change, as will be seen when I come to discuss the causes of modern variations in tenure. It is sad to reflect that one of the first manifestations of contact with western cultures in primitive tribes is a weakening of the bonds of mutual assistance by which these small groups fortified their social structure and thus ensured their continued independent existence.

This concludes the statement of rights and principles governing tenure in the autocratic tribes, and I shall now deal with the democratic group.

Lists of rights and claims. Zanniat. Democratic group.

1. *Claims of Chief.*—The Chieftainships of Lumbang and Tashon, in which territories the Zanniat villages lie, were both created by Government after the annexation, and there is therefore no such thing as the Chief's claim to land. Though at the present time both these chiefs receive dues of grain and other natural commodities from their villages, these dues are in no sense based on a right to the land and therefore to the produce of it. In the case of the Lumbang Chief, the dues were granted by Government as a recompense for the work involved in administering the tract. The case of the Tashon Chief is more complicated. The dues paid to him, and now recognised as part of the perquisites of chieftainship, were at one time paid to the defunct Tashon Council. When for administrative convenience that democratic institution was broken up and Tsawn Bik, father of the present Chief and most influential member of the Council, was appointed as Chief of the Tashon Tribal Area, these dues were diverted to his personal use.

Most of these Tashon dues arose out of the Tashon-Zanniat war, when the Tashon rallied their more warlike neighbours and put most of the Zanniat villages to fire and sword in revenge for the murder of over 80 Tashon elders in cold blood at the village of Lotsawm. When in later years the survivors made peace and returned to the sites of their old homes, their position was virtually slavery and they had to perform numerous unpaid duties for, and pay enormous dues to the still smarting Tashon Council. Some of these dues Government permitted the Zanniat to commute for a cash payment when the Lumbang Tribal Area was formed and a Zanniat Chief appointed at Lumbang. Others form the present Tashon Chief's dues.

It can therefore be seen that neither of the two chiefs of the democratic group has any claim to "Lordship of the Soil" like the autocratic chiefs.

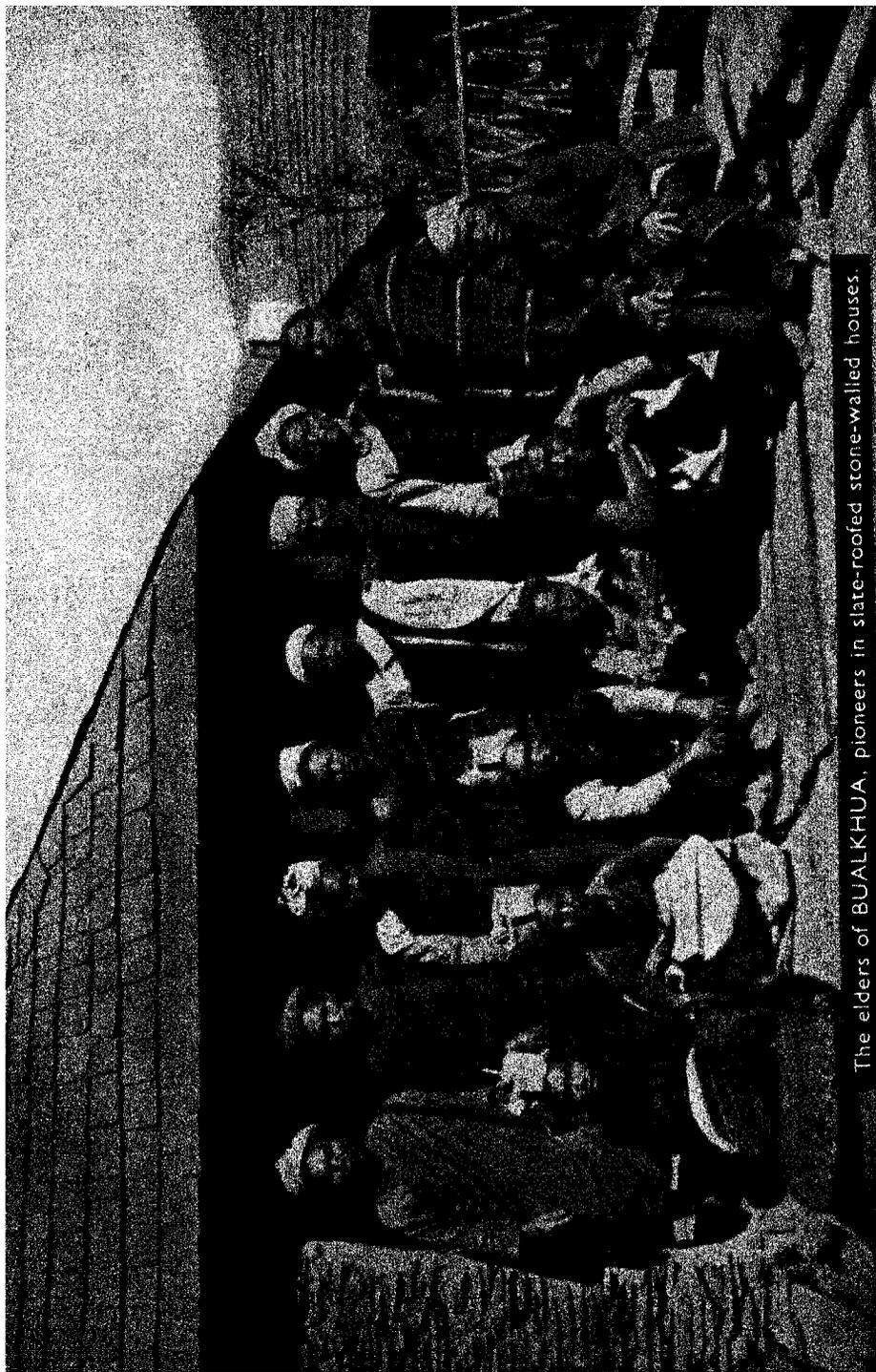
2. *Claims of headman of village.*—Here again changes have occurred through administrative action. In pre-annexation days the democratic villages were governed, like Tashon, by councils of elders (*Nam Kap*) selected for their wisdom and social prestige to represent either village quarters or patrilineal extended families. On government taking over the hills it was held too unwieldy a system to cope with the increased administrative responsibilities, and so the prominent individuals of the day were appointed headman, succession going to their legal heirs. Dues in the form of free labour were granted to them as a reward for their extra duties, but these dues are not based on claims to the land.

However, in actual practice the duties connected with land which the headman has to perform closely resemble those of a headman in the autocratic group, since the allocation of vacant lands, once the responsibility of the council, now tends to devolve upon him.

3. *Claims of the village council.*—The rights of the council in the sphere of land utilisation can be traced in its claims to rates in kind consisting of stipulated measures of grain and pots of *zu* payable by all households, including those of members of the council themselves. While in no case could the council claim the right to sequester and redistribute plots in the manner possible in autocratic villages, on certain occasions, acting with the consent of the whole village, councils such as that of Tsawngkhua organised the sale of a large portion of the village lands to a neighbouring village, utilising the sale proceeds for communal purposes. The councils could and did organise distribution of land over which no cultivation titles were held.

4. *The village community as a whole.*—With the exception of minor variations in the rules regarding the cutting of thatch, and the restriction imposed by a single order of the Lumbang village council forbidding the cutting of pine trees in their jurisdiction without permission of and payment to the council, the rights of the village community are precisely as described for the autocratic group.

5. *The individual member of the community.*—Here again there is an almost exact identity with the claim under this head in the autocratic group. There is, however, an interesting difference in the method in which provision is made for the needy to have access to cultivable land. In the autocratic group hereditary cultivation titles are restricted to one per field, the balance going to the headman for redistribution, but in the democratic group no such restriction exists, and hereditary titles (on *ngawtawn ram* or *saihnem ram*) can be accumulated over any number of plots. But, and this is a very important point, the title-holder is not permitted to refuse access for purposes of cultivation to any person wanting to use fields which the title-holder himself is not using. The parallel effect of these two systems will become more apparent when the practice of land tenure is examined.



The elders of BUALKHUA, pioneers in slate-roofed stone-walled houses.

6. *The individual cultivator.*—Under this heading also claims are identical with those in the autocratic group, though the dues paid on agricultural produce are considerably less.

Such are the claims of the democratic group. It will have been noticed that no mention is made of the priests, who in this group number nine to each village. This is because they get no dues except a share of the animals which they kill on behalf of the village community, as a reward for the duties connected with ritual. In this connection it should not be noted that almost the entire Zanniat tribe has been converted to the Pau Chin Hau cult, and in a few years, perhaps even by now, village priests will have disappeared for ever.

The principles effecting rights to land.—In this respect there are fundamental differences between the autocratic and democratic groups. Principles A, B and F, which loom so large in the Zahau tenure, do not exist among the democrats, except in so far as the headmen have assumed the old council function of arranging distribution of unclaimed plots. Principles C, D and E operate in exactly the same way as they do in the autocratic group.

So much for the rights and principles of land tenure in the democratic group. This concludes the outline of the old systems from which all existing tenures in the Falam subdivision have sprung, and brings me to the final assessment of the working of these conflicting claims and principles in the present day, curbed as they are by administrative action, and modified by educational propaganda and the effect of Mission proselytism.

Land tenure in practice.—So far no mention whatsoever has been made of the areas called *bul ram*, in which individual rights of alienation of land by sale have come into being. This term must be carefully used, for while in the autocratic group it connotes individual right of sale of land, in the Tapawng and Sipawng villages it describes fields over which only a right of cultivation is held, having superseded for conversational purposes the traditional term *ngawtawn ram*. Perhaps the very use of the word indicates a tendency to conversion of the old rights to the new—certainly some villagers in this area have instituted a sort of private due of *lohual zu* from persons cultivating plots which they cannot use, a due which would be only too easy to convert into an ever-increasing rent.

At any rate nowhere does *bul ram* mean more than that title holders have the right to sell or rent their land. Though it represents the furthest point of advance towards “civilised” conceptions of the right way to own land, I am thankful to say that none of the other dreadful concomitants of civilised tenure have encroached upon the freedom of Chin village life—as yet there are no trespass laws, no closed shooting and fishing rights, no stoppages of rights of way with landowners and land-workers belabouring each other from either side of a barricade.

The villages where individual right of sale and renting of land is recognised are :—Tashon tribal area : the Tashon group, the Lente group and Hmunli. Lumbang tribal area : the Lumbang-Parte-Lati-Kulzam group, the Vazang Ngawn group, Bualkhua and Phaizawl. Laizo tribal area : the Laizo seven villages, Sunkhla and Ramkhlo. The Khuangli tribal area : Khuangli and Khuangli Dihai. The Zahau tribal area : Zakhliir.

All these villages are grouped across the centre of the subdivision, around the once paramount village of Tashon. My enquiries into the origin of *bul ram* convinced me that it is of comparatively modern growth, and that even in Tashon, where it is supposed to have originated, there are distinct traces of an older and less individualised system analogous to those described in the foregoing pages of this chapter. For instance in Tashon rent for plots is payable, not to the individual claiming ownership and who works the plot when he so desires, but to the eldest surviving male of his clan resident in the village. In the Lumbang, Khuangli, and Laizo tracts it has appeared within the memory of living ancients. In the Laizo seven villages it is only at this moment in process of evolution.

Although not the Chief of the Laizo Tribal Area, the Headman of Hmunpi is in the eyes of his fellows the senior member of the ruling clan in Laizo, and as such he exercised a right of distribution over all the land in which the seven villages are situated, and the *lohual zu* was in all cases delivered to him. Now he claims that this right of distribution is in fact absolute ownership, carrying with it a right to collect rent.

Right of sale has already brought with it the evil of absentee ownership, as in the Tashon, Lumbang, and Vazang Ngawn groups sales of land are recognised even when purchasers live in other villages of the same group, which may be several miles away and which in all other respects are autonomous units. Elsewhere right of sale is restricted to transactions between people living in the same village.

Apart from the vital right under the old systems of all persons to have sufficient land to cultivate for their needs, the existence of this right of sale has not made any fundamental change in most of the claims and principles of traditional usage. It is still permissible everywhere except at Lente for villagers to collect dry timber for firewood without hindrance, and to cut thatch in fallow fields : people can still hunt and fish where they want and graze their cattle where they like. In Lente and Tashon, both famous for pottery, potters have to pay an annual due for the right to extract clay, but it is questionable whether the blame for this payment can be laid at the door of the *bul ram* tenure, as destruction of a good plot by digging for clay would probably give rise to claims for compensation in any village.

But in its effect on the average level of poverty of the poorer people, and the contentment of the community as a whole, *bul ram* is the most pernicious influence in Chin life.

In my outline of the old systems of tenure among the autocratic and democratic tribes I have stressed the fact that both these systems still exist today in many villages, and that in effect both have produced similar results. Principles C and D in both cases enable the villagers to retain their rights over plots which their ancestors cleared of virgin jungle. There being no right of alienation by sale an individual is prevented from making a profit out of his land titles, while at the same time claims 9 (autocratic) and 6 (democratic) *ensure that every resident in the village has a sufficiency of land for his needs.*

But where the right of sale exists there is nothing to prevent a wastrel from losing his entire patrimony of lands, to the detriment of his successors, as well as his other material wealth. Claims 9 and 6 noted above cannot operate in conjunction with an individual right of sale and renting, and thus there are many villagers who have no land and a few who have much, which results either in migration or in a large and discontented body of landless rent-payers such as exists in Tashon. At present *Bul ram* encroaches where the land is poorest—in an area where the fertility of the soil is such that it is only by the hardest of work that a man can gain for himself sufficient food to last himself and his family throughout the year. Obviously therefore the reduction of the production-work equation by addition of a rent, which will probably be levied in kind, is an extremely serious matter. The whole problem of changes in tenure towards individualism is fraught with the gravest danger, not only to the people themselves, but to the security of the province of Burma as a whole, which cannot afford to be enclosed in a horseshoe of inaccessible hills inhabited by a dissatisfied peasantry.

But before discussing modern problems in detail, I propose to examine such changes of the past as are susceptible of accurate analysis, in order to show if possible something of the mechanism of these transitions, and thus facilitate the task of forecasting future developments. In so doing I shall be repeating much of what I have already written in the article already referred to in "Man", but as that excellent publication may not find its way into the hands of the administrators for whom this monograph is primarily intended, this course is unavoidable.

For my first example I take the Khuangli tract, in which the tenure varies from *bul ram* with a right of sale to the oldest known form, that existing in the Zahau tract and already described in full in the first part of this chapter. It clearly illustrates the operation of principle G, through which the title-holders of the best plots, in a much greater degree than the ordinary villager, had to bear their share of payment of indemnities necessitated by a serious tribal defeat or other calamity.

Some thirty years before the annexation the Khuangli sub-tribe, together with its vassal villages of Ngawn, was called upon by the then paramount Tashon to pay a very heavy indemnity for an abortive attack on the Zahau village of Rallang. The fine was exacted as was customary at the time, in mithan, gongs, guns, and other valuable articles.

The mutual obligation system demanded that the holders of cultivation titles on the best plots should put up the major portion of this untoward payment, and, it being held that possession of the best plots was synonymous with material plenty, these men were ordered to pay their share. Material riches, however, were not always co-existent with rights over the best land; the wealth normal to a person having productive plots might have been dispersed temporarily by the holding of one of the great ceremonial feasts, or by supplying wives for several sons, or by sacrifice for illness. In such cases of inability to pay, others who volunteered to shoulder the burden were rewarded by the headman with an exchange of plots, the men who paid up taking the plots of the men who could not do so, and *vice versa*.

While outlying villages escaped further disasters, thereby preserving their tenure, Khuangli itself went from bad to worse. Exaction of still more fines so impoverished them that the villagers actually found themselves without sufficient material wealth to pay bride-price for their wives, and so cultivation titles became transferable in this connection. The continued use of land titles as bride-price units loosened the old strict rules governing tenure and a new conception of land was evolved. It was no longer solely a means to the end of satisfaction of hunger: it was negotiable property.

This conception brought with it a realisation that it was against the personal interests of individuals to allow others freedom to cultivate land over which they held cultivation titles. Such plots, swelled in numbers by unorthodox additions through bride-price for which there was no special ruling under customary law, exceeded in many cases the traditional quota of one plot per field. The practice of renting these plots became general, first for pots of liquor (on the analogy of *lohual*) and then for greater prices, and now the only remnant of the old regime is the prohibition of sale by an emigrant, whose plots revert to the headman for disposal with the poor lands on the high ridges. Right of cultivation has been metamorphosed into right of alienation. This is an interesting example of the way in which the old order has to give place to the new when unforeseen liabilities make continuance of it impossible. The necessity of settling huge public debts creates a disequilibrium in tribal economics, and hitherto unknown uses of various rights are created to make up the balance.

Other changes have been caused as a result of direct administrative action, among which the most outstanding examples are those resulting from the delineation of village boundaries soon after annexation. At that time our knowledge of the people and their dialects and customs was at its minimum, the country was still in a state of ferment, rebellions and rumours of rebellion being the order of the day. A number of the real headman and elders were in hiding for fear of arrest by Government, and most of the interpreters were plainsmen of doubtful character whose chequered careers had led them into the hills as a refuge. It was felt

that village boundaries had to be demarcated with the utmost despatch to simplify administration and facilitate the construction of roads, etc. In the circumstances then prevailing the most accomplished liars often came off best in the negotiations and enquiries that preceded demarcation.

A good example is to be found in the village of Lotsawm, in the Tashon Tribal Area. It was at this village that the murder of the 80 Tashon elders already noted took place, and though the village had been burned and the inhabitants compelled to spend many years in exile in the Kale valley, the hatred felt by the Tashon had not yet died down at the time demarcation took place. When consulted by the administrative officers about the Lotsawm boundaries, the Tashon elders misrepresented the facts and a large part of the Lotsawm lands were maliciously included in the boundaries of Tsawngkhua, a neighbouring village of Zanniat who had remained friendly to the Tashon during the time of their trouble.

Subsequent growth of the population having caused an acute land shortage, the unfortunate villagers of Lotsawm had to buy back from Tsawngkhua some of their own ancestral lands. This area, purchased by the community as a whole through its council, with money raised by a house to house collection, was reserved as communal. The right to permit cultivation of it was vested in the council, cultivators having to pay one pot of beer as "talking price." At a still later date further expansion of population necessitated another hunt for land, and as no more was obtainable from Tsawngkhua, Lotsawm had to turn to Hmunli, where the *bul ram* tenure exists, with the right of sale vested in the individual. The purchases in this case were very different from the first, as individual families bought for their own private use isolated plots within the Hmunli jurisdiction.

Thus at the time I made my enquiries there were three forms of tenure co-existent in Lotsawm, that is, one in which absolute right of disposal was vested in the individual (*Bul ram*), one in which sale was prohibited but restricted rights of gift and inheritance were vested in the individual (*Ngawlawm ram*), and one in which all disposal rights were held by the community through its council (*Klang ram*).

I discussed the matter of the plots of *bul ram* bought from Hmunli with the Lotsawm elders, pointing out to them the danger of having in their lands a few plots for which the title-holders could demand rent, a situation which would inevitably create dissatisfaction among those who had titles over more *ngawlawm ram* (see democratic right No. 6), than they could use themselves. Living as they do cheek-by-jowl with Tashon, the people of Lotsawm are fully aware of the methods by which the Tashon Chief has increased his land holdings in his own village to over a hundred plots, and it was easy to convince them that it was better that those having individual disposal rights by sale should relinquish them rather than risk the gradual degeneration of village conditions to the level reached in Tashon. Subsequently a conference of all

householders in the village decided that the plots of *bul ram* bought from Hmunli should be regarded as the *ngawtawem ram* of the purchasers, thus protecting both the individual and community.

Incidentally these sales of land were made without reference to Government, and are typical of the apparently innocuous transactions often occurring among primitive people which, if they pass undetected, can have dangerous repercussions in the economic life of the tribes.

As a final example of changes in tenure I shall take an instance which resulted not from ancient tribal wars or modern administrative interference, but simply from the introduction of the *Pax Britannica*.

It being no longer necessary after the annexation to live for purposes of self-protection in large villages and to cultivate only those fields which admitted of easy defence, pacification of the country started a rush for the hitherto untenable lands on the borders of the Lushai Hills, the Tiddim subdivision, and the plains of Burma. While the majority of the migrants who went to this empty territory were actuated by motives arising out of land shortage or high rents (where *bul ram* existed) in the mother village, a large minority had other and less creditable intentions.

The Ngawn of the northern half of the Khuangli Tribal Area were the first to move in large numbers. It will be remembered that these villages had shared with Khuangli the burden of a huge fine just before the annexation and three or four of the emigrants, seeing an opportunity of capitalising their land titles in the parent village, claimed that the gongs, guns, mithan, etc., which their fathers had subscribed towards the communal indemnity were in fact purchase prices paid to the headman for the land they received, and not shares payable under a traditional system of reciprocal obligations. They brought the matter up before the Government officials and urged that these payments had gained them the right of disposal of their land by sale on migration.

Being few in number, and unable to give any precedent for sale by migrants, they lost their case, but in the meantime the headman had in revenge counterclaimed the right to seize the land of emigrants and dispose of it as his own private property instead of adding it to the public lands available for cultivation by any who needed a plot. This resulted in all holders of cultivation titles in the village (who had hitherto remained neutral) becoming so nervous of their own vested interests that they joined the migrant *bloc* in any attempt to get the tenure classified and recorded as "private peasant ownership." This case clearly illustrates the impossibility of settling disputes regarding tenure as a unit divorced from the other multiple institutions of society, and it emphasises the necessity of a complete knowledge of institutionalised obligations within the society as a prerequisite to the evaluation of land rights.

To revert to the story of the migrations. The immigrants into empty territory were not restricted as to tribe, and so Ngawn have migrated into the jurisdiction of the Lumbang Zanniat Chief, Hualngo

into Zahau lands, Khualshim into Tashon lands, and so on. In the single case of the migrations into the Zahau area, largely due to the political acumen of the present Chief and his father, adherence to the Zahau system of tenure has been made a condition of settlement, and uniformity exists. But in other tribal areas where the chiefs are "creations" of Government with no land rights outside the boundaries of their own villages, considerable confusion has arisen through each migrant tribal group trying either to transplant its own ancestral tenure, or to invent some other more suited to what it considers its needs of the moment.

These experimental tenures tend to be extremely individualistic, the squatters aiming at establishing a right to disposal of the lands they have cleared, so that if ever they wish to move again, they can sell out. Even in the village of Duhmang, which was founded long after the annexation, the villagers now lay claim to a right of sale of the land they cleared of virgin jungle.

To realise the full implications of these claims, one must first consider the *raison d'être* of the new villages. Government rightly demanded a say in the disposal of lands which were uninhabited at the time of the annexation, and it has been the generally accepted intention that these vacant lands should be utilised to counteract overcrowding wherever this should occur. Such lands were therefore opened to migrants crowded out of their own villages without any payment as purchase or rent. But if immigrants are to have the right to introduce whatever form of tenure they desire without restriction, there will be nothing to prevent them from clearing large areas every year (though they would get good crops if newly cleared fields were cultivated for two or three years) for no other purpose than to establish a right of alienation by sale on the largest possible area in the shortest possible time. Later immigrants would then have to pay for land given free to the original squatters, and the whole intention of Government would be thwarted. As a matter of fact this is precisely what has happened up to the present time.

The existing situation as regards change in this area can be summarised on the following lines:—

The *bul ram* tenure sanctioning a right of sale by the title-holders has become established over an area roughly one sixth of the whole subdivision, and there is danger of it spreading to newly occupied areas if no check is applied; that while the origin of *bul ram* cannot be attributed solely to any cause, the unbalancing of tribal economics must be watched in this respect: that where *bul ram* exists unequal distribution of plots, absentee ownership and high rents follow: that collection of such rents whether in cash or kind tends to lower the labour-produce ratio below safe economic limits, thus creating dissatisfaction: that the schools, in which efforts are made to encourage interest in permanent

cultivation, tend to disparage the traditional systems of tenure and aim at complete protection of the small landowner (presumably Providence will look after the rest) by advocating adoption of the *bul ram* tenure: finally that the Mission and their vigorous though unwanted offspring, the Pau Chin Hau group, by aiming at the destruction of the existing religious beliefs, may undermine the rotational organisation of agriculture by communal sacrifice and cause incalculable disturbances in the life of the people.

All the lesser variations in tenure in the Falam subdivision lie between the "old" systems described and the *bul ram* system.

So far throughout my description of tenures I have omitted, for the sake of simplicity, any mention of the term *klang ram*, so often used in contra-distinction to *bul ram*. Like many other Chin terms, *klang ram* has a specific as well as a general meaning.

While only a few villages with small populations and extensive lands have large fertile areas over which no cultivation titles are held, every village has a certain percentage of poor land for which no one troubles to claim titles. Such "unclaimed" areas are *klang ram* in its *specific* sense and they are the nearest approach to communal land that exists in the Chin Hills. Here the newly-weds and the newly arrived, the widows and the orphans scrape a poor but independent living from the soil until inheritance brings them better plots or incapacity forces them to enter some other person's household as unpaid helps, where they get a roof and the run of their teeth in exchange for their labour.

In its *general* sense the term *klang ram* is applied to all areas in which *bul ram* giving a right of private disposal does not exist. For instance the Zahau Chief will say "*Keima ih ram klang ram asi*" meaning "My land is communal land;" in other words it cannot be bought or sold, but is utilised in the best interests of the community as a whole. When so used "*klang ram*" includes land over which cultivation titles are held, such as the *saihrem nam*, *sumhmuilu*, and *pu ro lo* of the autocratic group, and the *ngawtawn ram* and *saihnem ram* of the democratic group.

Discussion of land tenure with Chins is always apt to be complicated by indiscriminate use of the term in both its senses, and half the misconceptions common about local variations in tenure can be traced to this cause.

I have now given enough detail to make it possible to examine the extent to which an analysis of tenure on the lines laid down by an eminent anthropologist can be utilised to solve the practical problems of the administrator. In the central Chin Hills the first issue is—what should be done about individualistic tendencies; is *bul ram* and private right of sale to be encouraged or checked? A decision on this point automatically answers the questions as to what type of tenure should be fixed for new villages founded in lands vacant at the time of the annexation.

The protagonists of the *bul ram* tenure argue that it is an essential pre-requisite of successful exploitation of the land, and that no person can reasonably be expected to make permanent improvements to his land when there is an ever-present danger of eviction. Superficially this would appear to be true. It can be said with justification that the autocratic group tenure I have outlined gives too much freedom to the headman to abuse his powers by nepotism and favouritism in the granting of plots, but it must be remembered that the occasions on which a headman can justify interference with cultivation titles without causing immediate litigation are very few and far between. At the same time the individualistic tenures are not free from abuse; Lower Burma is a standing example. Here* during lean years when cash for the payment of taxes has been almost impossible to come by owing to the failure of the staple crops, unscrupulous headmen and elders in the *bul ram* areas have been known to force their people to surrender to them plots worth many times the value of the tax, under threat of action on behalf of Government for default. Such transactions, bearing as they do the outward semblance of legal purchases at an opportune moment, often go undiscovered.

My analysis of the tenure of the autocratic group shows that the only right which renders cultivation titles insecure is No. 2, the headman's right of re-distribution of plots. But this right is beneficial to the community as a whole when exercised through principle B, and it is only when principle F operates that trouble is caused. I have never come across a case of villagers violently objecting to subdivision of their plots when such action was necessitated by an increase in population. Again in the democratic group tenure described there is perfect security for the title-holder, while the community is protected by the rule that title-holders cannot prevent others from cultivating plots which they are not using, if all unclaimed lands of the village are already distributed and some cultivators still remain without plots. But the Zahau tenure described is a major source of the power and prestige of the Chief and headmen, and as such it plays its part in consolidating the political structure of the tribe. As the right of disposal emphasises the existence of the headman, so the right of inheritance emphasises the family bond and carries the process of stabilisation a step further into the kinship system. While the prohibition of sale precludes also the squandering of the sources of food, the prevention of rental welds the social structure by accentuating the obligations of the *haves* toward the *have-nots*. Must so satisfactory a tenure be disapproved simply because all headmen are not saints and some have hungry relatives?

Personally I do not think that this need be so, for consideration of the facts shows that there is a middle course which will not only put an end to the evils attendant upon the introduction of *bul ram*, but will protect the interests of the cultivation title-holder while at the same time preserving the best elements of the old tenures.

* In the central Chin Hills.

Tribal wars now being a thing of the past, major communal crises involving the payment of heavy indemnities are no longer likely to disturb by their occurrence the existing distributions of land, and in addition an established monetary system renders it possible nowadays to spread the payment of small fines in easy gradation throughout the community. Except therefore, in the rare cases where increasing population means that everyone must use less land, the right of the headman in the autocratic group to redistribute *occupied* lands has become redundant, and remains only as a possible source of abuse. Restriction of the headman's right solely to such cases as mentioned above would remove the last danger to the holder of cultivation titles without robbing the "Lord of the Soil" of any of his prestige, or preventing him from extending occasional favours to his relatives and helpers through preferential treatment in the allotment of *unclaimed* plots. The human but troublesome principle F would thus be put out of harm's way. At the same time inclusion of a payment similar to the Kachin "*n'gun japhu*" (lit: strength price) to compensate those who lose land improved by terracing etc., would remove the last valid objection to subdivision of plots for the public weal.

Organisation of tenure in the new polyglot villages along such lines would diffuse the authority of the somewhat artificial political hierarchy through this important aspect of the life of the people, and do something to prevent the headman's office from degenerating, as it appears likely to do there, into a mere echo of the voice of higher authority. It would also preserve wide areas for future expansion by curbing the activities of budding real-estate speculators, while retaining in Chin life that arch-enemy of the greedy, unscrupulous, and bullying headman—freedom for the villager to find "a better 'ole."