

The Dynamics of Emerging Land Relations in Nagaland: Contemporary Transformations in Angami Community

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Abstract

The phenomenon of land privatization and commoditization has surfaced as a prominent concern within the present-day Angami society. While historical shifts in land relations have been evident during various periods, the current transformations hold unprecedented significance due to their distinct impact on the social structure. These evolving patterns of land relations are not solely influenced by state-driven developmental programs and policies, but also by the pervasive forces of globalization, privatization, urbanization, commercialization, and intricate market dynamics. In pursuit of a comprehensive understanding, this research seeks to conduct an in-depth analysis of the emerging paradigms of land relations within the contemporary Angami community. The study is structure into two sections. Firstly, we analyse the role of the Indian state in reshaping village-level political institutions and explores the subsequent repercussions on established land relations. Secondly, the study delves into the evolving patterns of land ownership within the present-day landscape. Through this dual analytical framework, the paper offers a nuanced comprehension of the intricate dynamics encompassing contemporary land relations within the Angami community.

Introduction

Land is central in understanding the evolution and dynamics of any agrarian society, particularly in the case of a tribal society, where socio-economic and political lives are centred on land. Land relations, i.e., land-control and land-use patterns of the society in question, elucidate the complexities of the social structure of agrarian and tribal societies. In this study, an attempt has been made to examine the dynamics of emerging land relations of Angami community of Nagaland.

Like the other tribal Naga communities of Nagaland, the Angami community possesses a distinctive historical backdrop of land relationships. Land relationships

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in the traditional Angami society were primarily governed by their community life, centred on a village and the clans. As a result, clan and community ownership of land has been the distinctive hallmark of land relations among the Angami in particular, and the tribal societies in general.

The British annexation of the Naga Hills precipitated noteworthy alterations in the established land relations of diverse Naga communities. Initially, the British adhered to a policy of 'non-interference' in land revenue matters concerning the Naga Hills, classifying certain areas as 'excluded' or 'partially excluded'. This stance led to significant shifts in the traditional land relations of these societies during the British colonial period.

The transformations set in motion during colonial rule intensified further during the post-colonial era, particularly in the aftermath of liberalisation. The infiltration of market dynamics, the adoption of settled cultivation practices, the proliferation of urbanisation, and integration into the global market economy exerted profound influence on land tenure systems within hilly regions. The emergence of individual land ownership alongside market-oriented agricultural practices and land transactions has been particularly noteworthy. Post-independence developmental policies pursued by India also impacted the political institutions and land relations within villages.

This paper aims to offer a comprehensive overview of the contemporary evolution of land ownership and land use systems in Angami villages. To achieve this, the paper firstly examines the role of the state and its implications in the ongoing transition. Subsequently, an analysis of the role of village councils is conducted to discern their influence on community land use and ownership systems. Lastly, the paper delves into the emerging patterns of land use and ownership among different levels of social organisation, including clans, sub-clans, lineages, and individual households.

Methodology

Introduction to the Field

The research was conducted within the jurisdiction of Kohima district in the state of Nagaland. Specifically, the study was undertaken in the Chiephobozou administrative block. This block encompasses eighteen Angami villages and one administrative town known as Chiephobozou town. Among these eighteen villages, a deliberate selection was made to focus on five villages for the purpose of this study. These villages are Thizama, Meriema, Tsiesema, Nerhema, and Chiechama. These five villages have been identified due to their notable and rapid transformations in terms of land ownership, land use, and agricultural cropping patterns. They stand as significant examples within the northern group of Angami villages, and their dynamics have been notably influenced by factors such as urban expansion, government establishments, and administrative developments.

Techniques of Data Collection

The research methodology employed a combination of primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data encompassed a wide array of materials, including books, scholarly journals, periodicals, newspapers, governmental records, archival documents, and electronic resources. Primary data, on the other hand, were acquired through direct personal interviews. The method of interviewing individual respondent households was executed using a random stratified approach. This technique, as outlined by C.R. Kothari (Kothari, 2004)involved the selection of households as the primary unit of analysis. The sample size was determined as 25% of the total households, with proportional allocation based on both the overall number of households in the respective village and the aggregate households within each *khel*³ and clan. Interviews were also conducted with individuals deemed pertinent to the research investigation.

In addition to interviews, participant observation was incorporated as a means of collecting primary data. This technique allowed researchers to gain deeper insights into the perspectives and viewpoints indigenous to the studied community.

Issues of Studying One's Own Society

The researcher, being an insider⁴, recognizes both the advantages and drawbacks of examining one's own society. The advantage of insider status is rooted in the researcher's personal life experiences, which provide an in-depth understanding of the society. This familiarity facilitates access to the community and establishes trust, particularly when addressing sensitive topics such as land ownership patterns. However, inherent disadvantages arise when studying one's society, particularly concerning issues related to land. As the researcher's identity is known to respondents, there is potential reluctance to disclose certain information regarding land ownership and related matters.

In the light of the above, some significant theoretical issues related to study of one's own society have been taken into consideration. Land issues are sensitive among the Angami community, as it is directly related to their identity. In the study, therefore, there is a necessity to grasp the nuances, and the complications, involved in dealing with land relationships. There are issues of conducting field work as an insider or 'emic' view and as an outsider or 'etic' view. A researcher requires understanding of both 'emic' (insider) and 'etic' (outsider) views to capture the complex reality. As Marvin Harris noted, there is an internal logic of reality in human culture which are represented distinctly from 'emic' and 'etic' views, and for this reason both 'emic' and 'etic' view are required to captured the intricate cultural reality (Harris, 1990). As

³ Khel is an administrative term which refers to a combination of several clan groups. The Angamis use this term to refer to a clan territory in the village.

⁴ The researcher (thepfusalie Theunuo) of the work under study is an Angami and lives in Thizama village.

Kenneth Pike (1990), also suggested that scientific objectivity is attainable when taking an outsider or an insider stance, and an insider learning to analyse like an outsider (Harris, 1990). Bruce L. Berg and Howard Lune emphasize that the 'emic view' and 'etic view' stem from interpretations of meanings, theoretical and analytic explanations, and understanding the symbols, as mediated through the researcher (Berg & Lune, 2012).

Despite being an insider, the study acknowledges potential conflicts over land ownership within the Angami society, often arising between villages, clans, and individuals. These conflicts could potentially influence the objectivity of the study. For example, individuals may narrate land ownership to serve their personal interests, potentially conflicting with the broader interests of the village community. Informants might also seek to redefine their identity through land ownership or justify ancestral land claims. The researcher's positionality within the kin, clan, and village in relation to land ownership is a complex issue.

In fact, as an insider there is also an issue in the context of relationship of researcher with the members of the kin, clan and village with reference to land ownership. Despite these potential challenges, the researcher maintains a position of objective neutrality in terms of collecting empirical data and articulation of the data. Reflexivity, as defined by Charlotte Aull Davies, involves introspection and self-examination of both the individual and the collective. Davies further noted that it is crucial for ethnographers to understand their relationship with informants and explore how their personal dynamics influence data collection and interpretation (Davies, 1999). Similarly, Soyini Medson has also noted that positionality is a vital part of reflexive ethnography. It entails acknowledging and being accountable for one's research paradigms, positions of authority, and moral responsibilities in representation and interpretation (Madison, 2005). Renato Rosaldo further underscores how an ethnographer's position or life experiences both enable and limit insights (Rosaldo, 1993).

Adhering to ethnographic tradition, the study maintains objectivity by consciously situating the ethnographer in a position of impartiality, neutrality, and objectivity. The awareness of these theoretical underpinnings, along with reflexivity and positionality, guides the researcher in navigating the complexities of studying their own community while ensuring rigorous objectivity.

Post-Independence and Land Relations

India's independence from colonial rule in 1947 marked the inception of a new era in Indian economic reforms (Jodhka, 2012). This transition necessitated a focus on revitalising the stagnant rural agrarian economy and the state assumed responsibility for overseeing this transformation and ensuring its benefits to flow across society. This laid the foundation for development as both a strategic economic approach and an ideological tenet in the newly independent Indian state. (Jodhka, 2012).

To effect a change in the rural socio-economic landscape five-year plans were introduced. Within this framework, all the constituent states of India were brought within the development intervention, Nagaland was no exception. Nagaland was made a state on December 1, 1963, amidst political turmoil between the Nagas and the Government of India and this unfolded under challenging circumstances (Jamir A. , 2002).. The creation of Nagaland as a state was accompanied by the formation of a comprehensive agriculture department in 1963. This move elevated the significance of economic surveys to facilitate the implementation of developmental policies. One noteworthy initiative was the Techno-Economic Survey of Nagaland (1968), which aimed to delineate the state's socio-economic potential, crucial for aligning with the national development policy. This survey emphasised the need for novel economic activities to transform the state's economy. Investment in agriculture emerged as a focal point, urging new agricultural cropping patterns. As a result, the traditional practice of *jhum* cultivation faced scrutiny and criticism from various quarters, it was seen as a hindrance to sustainable growth in the Northeast (Das, 2006). To supplant *jhum* cultivation, alternative strategies were explored, such as permanent cultivation involving commercial tree planting with government subsidies, and also the introduction of cash crop plantations. Initiatives in irrigation, floriculture, and horticulture were undertaken to enhance agricultural production by the tribal communities of the state. Subsidies were provided for constructing irrigation infrastructure, water channels, and tractors. Recent endeavours have aimed to shift from subsistence to sustainable commercial agriculture through demand-driven farmer services, agricultural mechanisation, and information and communication technology adoption (Department of Agriculture, 2023).

The series of interventions ushered in a new era characterised by altered cropping patterns and the commercialization of agricultural produce, driven by state policies. This transformation constitutes a significant shift in post-colonial agrarian scenario of Nagaland.

It is important to note that despite its critical role, state's development process encountered challenges. Some critics argue that the externally-driven development impeded the organic momentum of the economy, failing to establish a robust domestic economic foundation (Jamir B. K., 2002). B.K. Roy Burman argues that the postcolonial development in the Northeast, might have facilitated the diversion of resources from the region and, some development programs bypassed community involvement (Burman, 1989). The National Committee for Development of Backward Areas has recommended individualisation of communal ownership in the north-east for the sake of progress. These development efforts have managed to integrate the tribal economy into the broader market economy, leading to a process akin to what James C. Scott terms "Sedentarization" (Scott, 1998). This shift reflects a broad shift towards settled and market-oriented production systems, that brought the state of Nagaland into the fold of modern economic structures.

Community Land and the Role of the Village Council

Nagaland, sixteenth state of the Indian Union, enjoys protection under Constitutional Article 371(A) granting it autonomy over matters of customary laws and land ownership. Previously known as the Naga Hills District, Nagaland was exempt from the Indian Government Act of 1935' Excluded Areas and was not included under the fifth schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Governor holds plenary powers to enact laws tailored to the state's populace, exempting it from the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, which pertains to local self-governance. In this context, the Village Council's role becomes pivotal for village governance and development, functioning through the framework of traditional village administration, replacing erstwhile rituals tied to Angami village formation.

In 1964, Nagaland Village Council legislation was introduced to oversee village affairs, with council members elected for three-year terms. Subsequently, the 1970 Area and Regional Council Act established Village Councils in villages with populations of at least one hundred. In 1978, the Nagaland Village and Area Council Acts replaced regional councils, elaborately defining the duties and powers of the Village Council while instituting the Village Development Board (VDB). The 1990 Nagaland Council Act abrogated the 1978 Area Council Act, mandating the establishment of village councils in all recognized villages in Nagaland, adhering to customary practices, with five-year tenure. The Act stipulated that hereditary Village Chiefs or *Angs* and Gaonburas hold *ex-officio* positions on the council with voting rights. Under the Village Council Act, the Village Council is fully authorised to administer the village, functioning in alignment with traditional practices, and exercising control over internal village affairs (Nakhro, 2009). This formalisation of the Village Council facilitated the implementation of state development policies aimed at transforming the rural economy. According to the Nagaland Village Council Act of 1990, Village Councils possess complete jurisdiction over internal village administration in accordance with customary laws and practices, including full incorporation of community land into the purview of the authority of the Village Council.. In respect of ownership and usage of community land, the Village Council holds legitimate ownership rights. Based on empirical data gathered from sampled villages, the following sections delve into the dynamics of the relationship between the Village Council and the community land in the village.

Thizama Village

The regulation and control of village community land fall within the jurisdiction of the Village Council. While each household possesses the right to access this communal land, specific regulations and laws govern individual land use. The land laws, as stipulated by the Village Council over community land- are outlined below:

- a. Housing: Individual households are allocated plots of land for housing. Prior to constructing any house, the Village Council's consent is obligatory.

Construction without consent is deemed a violation of community land law and may be regarded as unauthorised encroachment.

- b. Terrace land: Each household can own one or more terraced lands. Conversion of community forest land into terrace cultivation necessitates approval of the Village Council.. Non-utilization of terraced fields for a minimum of three years may lead to termination of ownership rights, and incorporation into the community land.
- c. *Jhum land*: Each household is entitled to cultivate a single *jhum* plot per agricultural season.
- d. Forest: Extraction of firewood or timber from the community preserved forest necessitates approval of the Village Council I, and hunting and fishing are allowed⁵.
- e. Timber: Domestic timber extraction from designated community land is limited. A cord of firewood, measuring six feet in height and breadth, is allocated for each household's domestic use.
- f. Adoption: Adopted individuals can become village citizens but are not entitled t to community land. Property usage and inheritance are restricted to parental or clan possessions.
- g. Garden farm: Ownership of one garden per individual is permitted. Village council land regulations curtail extensive cultivation by individual.
- h. Cattle Grazing: Grazing in community forests is allowed without demarcated fields.
- i. Plantation: Individuals are not restricted from engaging in cash crop plantations beyond their home garden.
- j. Bamboo: Bamboo ownership is confined to designated community land areas.
- k. Tree: Exclusive individual tree ownership on community land is prohibited.
- l. Other resources: No individual has the right to extract natural resources like rocks or other mineral resources.

These land laws underscore an agreement between the Village Council and the community, emphasizing that community land cannot be utilised solely for individual gain. These regulations were deemed necessary due to population growth, ensuring equitable land distribution and usage. However, these iregulations have clashed with the traditional land relations. Historically, individual's claimed ownership not only of terrace land but also of trees and bamboo, which held inheritable value. Oak trees,

⁵ Hunting and fishing have no longer remained the major source of food for the people like the traditional society, however hunting and fishing is still observed in Angami villages. Today, both hunting and fishing are regulated by the local youth organizations, which annually ban such activities in all the sample villages.

or *Phrie*, and bamboo trees are particularly esteemed and have served as markers of landed property. J. H. Hutton noted that trees were a kind of property ownership, which were recognized through special trees, though they may grow on the land of another person or community land (Hutton, 1921). Today, traditional ownership rights over these resources have been subsumed under communal property through the village community land laws.

Meriema Village

Based on the traditional method of land use, the Village Council has classified village community land into two distinct categories: agricultural and forest lands. Differentiating from the setup in Thizama village, the Meriema community land is further divided into two agricultural zones, namely *Nadilizhu*⁶ and *Souruzu*. Notably, *Nadilizhu* encompassing approximately thirty *jhum* fields, underwent a transformation in 2014. This change was accomplished through collaboration between the Village Council, the State Forest Department, and the Global Fire Monitoring Centre (GFMC) project, resulting in the conversion of *Nadilizhu's jhum* fields into a community reserved forest. Conversely, the community land at *Souruzu* comprises around one hundred thirty *jhum* fields and continues to be cultivated individually in the forms of terrace farming, *jhum* cultivation, and plantation farming. The delineation of regulations for different community land use system is as follows:

- a. Terrace: Individual households may cultivate without restrictions, provided they pay an annual land tax of two hundred rupees to the Village Council.
- b. *Jhum*: Similar to terrace farming, individual households are allowed unrestricted cultivation upon payment of an annual land tax of one hundred rupees to the Village Council.
- c. Plantation: Individuals can engage in commercial crop plantation farming upon payment of an annual tax of three hundred rupees to the Village Council.
- d. Forest: Reserved Forest access for timber or cultivation is prohibited for individuals; however, hunting and fishing are permitted.
- e. Timber: Extraction of firewood from cord⁷ dimensions within village community land is not allowed.
- f. Bamboo: Individuals are permitted to use bamboo from community land solely for domestic purposes.
- g. Tree: Ownership rights over trees or bamboo on community land are absent; however, individuals can plant and use trees for domestic needs.
- h. Other resources: Utilisation of any natural resources found in community land for personal gain is prohibited.

⁶ In Angami society, land and forest have different nomenclatures and had been passed on through age-long interpretations and beliefs. *Nadilizhu* here literally refers to large *jhum* fields.

⁷ Fresh firewood cut and arranged into six feet in height and breadth.

Nevertheless, a contemporary trend has emerged, wherein efforts are directed towards converting community land into individual ownership for agricultural practices. This began in the early 1990s, sparked by the Village Council leasing community land to individual households in *Souruzu* for the purpose of cultivation without stringent land regulations. This prompted households to rapidly occupy community land for cash crop plantations, terrace farming, and *jhum* cultivation. Subsequently, a substantial portion of the community land was brought under individual possession for cultivation, predominantly for commercial plantations. Presently, an estimated ninety percent of the village community land has passed into individual hands for cultivation⁸.

Tsiesema Village

Individuals use the village community land for terrace cultivation, *jhum* cultivation, and various domestic needs. The Village Council has established specific regulations governing the use of community land as per the new rules and guidelines:

- a. Terrace: Individuals engaged in cultivating community land are required to remit ten percent of their total harvest to the Village Council, or alternatively, pay an annual cash fee of one hundred fifty rupees. Terraced land within the community can be inherited or transferred within the lineage. If such terraced land is left unused for three consecutive years, a terraced field may be cultivated by any village member with the Village Council's consent.
- b. *Jhum*: No taxes are levied on individual *jhum* cultivation. Farmers have the flexibility to cultivate according to their requirements.
- c. Plantation: Community land is not permitted to be used for home gardens or commercial crop plantations, nor is it leased to individuals.
- d. Forest: Extraction of firewood from the community forest land is prohibited for individuals. However, foraging for edible wild roots, tubers, plants, and hunting for sustenance is allowed. Between 1990 and 2001, the Village Council, in collaboration with the state government, executed a teak plantation project on community land under the Nagaland Empowerment of People through Energy Development (NEPED) scheme.
- e. Timber, bamboo and trees: Ownership rights and land use for timber, bamboo, and trees within the village community land are not granted to individuals.
- f. Others: The extraction of any natural resources from the village community land remains restricted⁹.

⁸ Personal interview has been conducted with village elders', village chairman, goanburas across clans in the village.

⁹ Personal interview has been conducted with village elders', village chairman, goanburas across clans in the village.

Nerhema Village

Nerhema village's community land, known as *Thebve Kitsa*, comprises a limited number of *jhum* fields. Presently, the village community land is designated as a preserved forest, subject to direct control and regulation by the Village Council. Stringent restrictions are imposed on the use of this land, prohibiting any form of cultivation, extraction of firewood, timber, bamboo, as well as hunting and foraging. Non-compliance with these restrictions results in cash penalties enforced by the village council. While in the past, terrace and *jhum* cultivation were practised on this land, this form of cultivation in community land has ceased today¹⁰.

Chiechama Village

In Chiechama village, the community land is divided into two sections: *Mezhalieku* and *Tsiathu*. The Village Council holds authority over this land, permitting its cultivation only with their consent. In *Mezhalieku*, approximately sixteen *jhum* fields have been designated as a community reserved forest and bamboo plantation. Conversely, *Tsiathu's* community land is used for the construction of fishery ponds by individuals, including Christian denominations such as Baptist, Catholics, Revival, and Pentecost, each owning a pond of around 700 square feet, notably, a portion of *Tsiathu's* community land has been handed over to the central government for airport construction against compensation for such land acquisition by the government. Community lands are also surveyed once in a year; this is to check encroachment if any by an individual through cultivation or timber extraction. According to local sources, this annual land survey has enabled the younger generation to keep track of their traditional village community land boundaries.

Distinct regulations are imposed on various land uses within the community land

- a. Terrace: Individuals can cultivate terraced fields for an annual fee of rupees five hundred per field.
- b. *Jhum*: *Jhum* cultivation is permitted for individual households upon payment of fifty rupees rent to the Village Council.
- c. Plantation: Cultivating commercial crops or maintaining plantation farms in community land is prohibited; however, activities like fishery ponds are allowed without community land tax.
- d. Forest: An individual can access the community forest for timber, for cultivation as well as hunting and fishing.
- e. Timber: An individual can also extract one cord of firewood by paying fifty rupees as a tax to the Village Council.
- f. Bamboo: An individual can use bamboo from village community land for domestic purposes.

¹⁰ Interview was conducted in Nerhema village on with Deizolie Virie, age 71 years 1st June, 2017 and Chairman, Nerhema Village Council and RünyüKengurüsie, Gaonbura on 4th June, 2017.

- g. Tree: An individual does not have ownership right over tree and bamboo in village community land.
- h. Other resources: Any types of natural resources found in village community land cannot be used for individual gain, except for hunting, fishing, and foraging, which have no year-round restrictions.

The findings from the field study reveals that the Village Council has emerged as the principal guardian and authority governing the use of community land. The institutionalisation of the Village Council has profoundly influenced land relations, reshaping the community land use system. Revenue generated from leasing community land contributes to developmental activities of the village. Nevertheless, this transition has led to significant repercussions within the Angami community. Traditional land relations and the egalitarian structure of village community land, akin to Marx's concept of 'tribal property ownership,' (Marx & Engels, 1998) has dissolved, giving rise to new dynamics in land ownership and use patterns .

Changing Pattern of Land Ownership and Land Use

Apart from the state interventions, changes in land use systems in the Angami villages have been emerging over the years,. the market economy has played a major role in integrating the communal agrarian structure into a single commodity market. Livelihood in villages, therefore no longer remain static, with the increased expansion of the commodity market. There has been a shift in economic production towards profitable enterprise, with monetary transactions and benefits thereof. This transition has had a direct impact on land relations, necessitating new structural arrangements to negotiate the evolving forces.

In the Angami society, community ownership right over land is a common feature. However, as discussed in preceding sections, a clear transformation has taken place in the pattern of community ownership rights. Village community land or *Mechū lie* are those village lands, which are communally owned by all members of the village community¹¹. Traditionally, community land was accessible to all members of the community for diverse uses, without restrictions, but in recent times transformation in these traditional land rights is visible under the new framework of the land use by the Village Councils. Presently, community land in an Angami village can only be utilised with the explicit consent of the Village Council. In villages with limited community land, regulations have become more stringent. Conversely, in villages with abundant community land, traditional land use practices are fading, replaced by trends of privatisation. Even clan land, once a symbol of clan identity and wealth, is undergoing a process of privatisation. At the same time, the increased commodification of individual land is emerging. This shift indicates a complex reality in which market relations are unfolding in the Angami society. This emerging

¹¹ This includes both agricultural land and non- agricultural lands such as village house sites, jhum, terraces, garden, forest, timber-woodland, as well as uncultivable areas

land relations in fact has no classic notion of primitive accumulation of the kind as Marx described, “written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire”, nor dispossession by land-grabbing corporates or state agencies. The situation is more akin to what Tanya Murray Li (2014) described in her ethnographic studies of indigenous highlanders, of central Sulawesi in Indonesia, where capitalist relations evolved internally through the process of individualization of land rights (Li, 2014). This transition has been discussed in detail in the following sections.

Thizama Village

In Thizama, community land covers approximately seventy percent of the entire village land; clan land consists of fifteen percent, sub-clan five percent as well as five percent of lineage and individual land respectively¹². The percentage wise distribution of land in the village is given in Chart 1. Unlike other villages, Thizama community village land covers larger percentage of land area in the village. This unique distribution pattern, particularly the extensive coverage of community land, is rooted in the village’s historical formation roughly a century ago. It is said that Thizama, historically known as Chüziema village¹³ was formed by seventy warriors from seven clans of Kohima village, leading to the predominant presence of community land due to their settlement history.

This emphasis on community land highlights its critical role in providing sustenance and resources for individual households. Notably, the privatisation of clan land is becoming apparent in Thizama particularly in non-agricultural areas situated near commercial sites. An example of this trend is the *Zatsuc* land, which has been subdivided among individual families, each receiving a parcel measuring 120x120 square feet.

In the case of community village land, it can be observed that there is a rush amongst individual households to bring community land under cultivation. Apart from clan land, sub-clan, lineage land and individual land, community land is used largely by individual households for *jhum* cultivation, terrace cultivation, garden farms, and housing. In respect of community land, terraced land and garden farm, these can be inherited or passed down from generation to generation, by the individual families. Every garden farm cultivated, and the majority of terraced fields in the

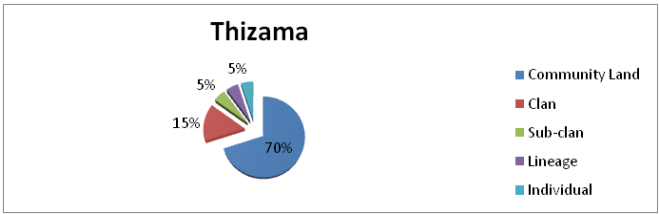
¹² The distribution of land in percentage wise was given by the village elders, village chairman and *gaonburras* across clans and sub-clans. It is observed that the village boundary and land areas of the village are not static; this is because land is often mortgage between villages, clan and individuals which makes its problematic for the villages to have an official geographical area of the village. However, the villagers have developed an approximate estimation of land areas in the village. Thus, based on the local villagers of land estimation, the approximate percentage wise distribution of land is shown through the pie chart for all the sample villages.

¹³ Originally the village is known as Chüziema. Thizama is a name given by the outsiders due to the difficulty in pronouncing the tonal language of the Angami. Today, Thizama is used in all the official matters. Some parts of the history in the village formation are produced from Chüziema Baptist Church Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 11-13th February, 2005.

village, are part of the community land. Thus, an individual household may abandon the terraced field due to drying or inappropriate water streams, landslides, decrease in labour supply, etc.; but none can cultivate it, without the consent of the owner, or as per the tenure rights given by the Village Council. In most of the cases, such terraced land in community land is either converted into tree plantations or used for other domestic and commercial purposes like fishery ponds. It is also a customary practice in the village that every male and married members born in the village, have the customary rights to construct a house in community land, own terraced land, garden farms, pursue *jhum* cultivation and access forest resources like timber and wood in community land. Nevertheless, adopted sons do not possess rights over community land, their inheritance is confined to parental, clan, or lineage property. These land regulations were formalised during the annual Village Council meeting in the year 2019, and local residents have accepted the same due to concerns over accommodating the growing population of the village in the future.

The study reveals a significant pattern where individual households effectively possess substantial portions of community land, utilising it in the form of terraced plots, home gardens, cash crop plantations, and fishery ponds. This phenomenon underscores how community land has become a vital aspect of customary land rights for individual households in Thizama village

Chart 1 Thizama Land Distributions



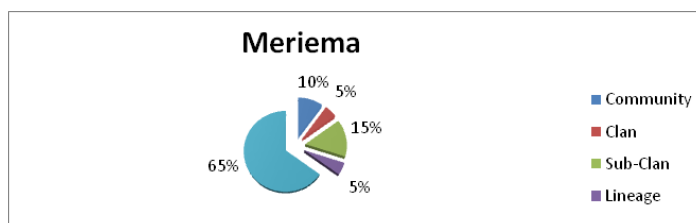
Meriema Village

In Meriema village, the distribution of land is characterised by distinct categories, with community land accounting for ten percent, clan land for five percent, sub-clan land for fifteen percent, lineage land for five percent, and individual land for a significant sixty-five percent of the total village land. This distribution pattern, as depicted in Chart 2, reveals a higher proportion of individual land, primarily attributed to the process of land redistribution among clan, sub-clan, and lineage groups. Notably, the privatisation of clan land has contributed to this growth in individual land ownership. An observable trend in this village is the widespread privatisation of clan land, with certain clans like *Kesienuo* and *Houzha* completely distributing their clan land. This privatisation process has led to increase in land mortgages within the village community as well as to neighbouring communities

such as Ao, Sema, Lotha, Chakesang, Sangtam and others¹⁴. Additionally, clan lands have been mortgaged to government institutions, both state and central government. For instance, in the year 2000, approximately four hundred acres of land from clans including Kesio, Keditsu, Cheilie, Chiesotsu, and Mechio-o were mortgaged to government entities¹⁵.

The village is also experiencing a shift towards commodification and commercialization of land, which has eclipsed traditional agricultural practices. Many terraced fields on privately-owned individual lands have been abandoned or converted into timber plantations. Consequently, the demand for land has increased, resulting in increase in land mortgage. Land prices have escalated and individual lands are being sold at rates as high as rupees five hundred or more per square foot. This transformation in land market is reshaping the village's overall identity and attracting various Naga communities to settle in Meriema village. A village elder narrated his concerns over these evolving land ownership patterns and the prevalence of land mortgage. He highlighted the impact of privatisation on land holdings, noting that once land becomes private property individuals have the freedom to sell or mortgage it. This shift from communal to individual ownership has raised apprehensions about losing control over valuable lands and the potential consequences of such changes in the identity and character of the village and communal life¹⁶.

Chart 2 Meriema Land Distributions



Tsiesema Village

In Tsiesema village, the distribution of land encompasses different categories, with community village land spanning forty percent of the total land area, while clan and sub-clan land comprise twenty percent, lineage land constitutes five percent, and individual land accounts for fifteen percent. This distribution pattern is visually represented in Chart 3. Notably, the Village Council exercises stringent control over community land, resulting in clan, sub-clan, lineage, and individual lands

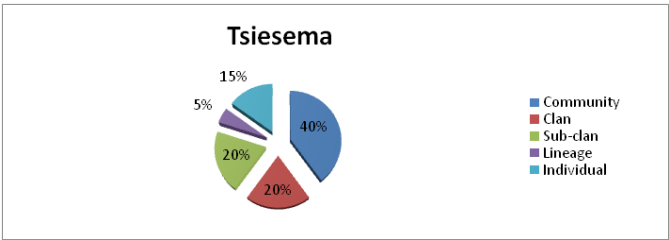
¹⁴ Interview with KhriehieKeditsu of Meriema village, age 65 years, 24th June 2017,

¹⁵ Currently all this land has been utilized by the state and central government in establishing Nagaland University, Kohima campus, State High Court, National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELET), Department of Women Resource Development, Government of Nagaland.

¹⁶ Interview with Neiyalie Mechio of Meriema village, aged 66 years, and Head Goanbura of the village on 4th June 2018

being predominantly used for agricultural, domestic, and commercial purposes. As such, clan land privatisations are also emerging to be a common phenomenon in this village. For instance, *Khro* clan land is on the verge of becoming individual land. Individual land is used for various agricultural practices such as *jhum*, terrace, garden, and cash crop plantation. In spite of fifteen percent of individual land, it covers more than a hundred *jhum* plots on which individuals engage in agriculture and other commercial activities such as stone quarrying, timber plantation and cash crops plantation as well as mortgaging.

Chart 3 Tsiesema Land Distributions



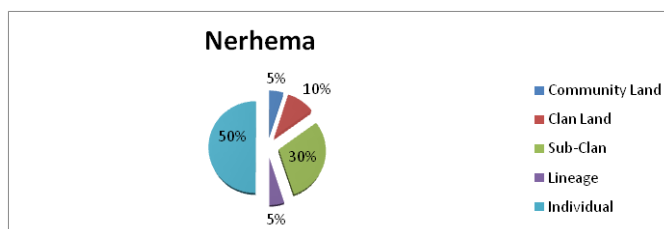
Nerhema Village

Nerhema village community land consists of around thirty *jhum* fields which amount to only five percent of total land area in the village. Clan land is approximately ten percent, sub-clan has thirty percent, lineage land five percent and individual land with a maximum amount of fifty percent. The percentage wise distribution of land in the village is given in Chart 4. The higher percentage of individual land indicates that the privatisation of clan and sub-clan land is increasing. Earlier, most land in the village was either in the form clan, sub-clan, and individual however, a larger percentage of land was a clan and sub-clan land. One of the major changes that have led to decrease in the size of clan land is land distribution among the clan group. Clan and sub-clan land distribution into lineage and individual household ownership was also made necessary, to avoid land dispute over the nature of the land use system. Since clan land would be actively used by a few individual members of a clan in cultivation as well as used for domestic purposes; while some other members would not be able to use it due to several reasons, such as migrating to town for employment or either abandoning the traditional practice of *jhum* cultivation. Another significant reason for the distribution of a clan, sub-clan and lineage land is due to the increase in the price of land and also commercialisation of agricultural. Thus, when land is distributed into individual ownership, one can use it as per one’s own requirements. Hence, privatisation of clan land is observed amongst several clan groups in the village.

Privatisation of clan land is observed amongst *Khrama* clan group and sub-clan such as *Kengurüsie* and *Rülho*. It is observed that the entire *Khrama* clan land has been distributed between the sub-clan *Kengurüsie* and *Rülho*. The *Kengurüsie* has

divided their share of land into the lineage group, which was further distributed to individual households. Although there are still few *jhum* lands belonging to *Kengurüsie* sub-clan group but ninety percent of the sub-clan land has been privatised. While *Rülho* sub-clan have distributed their land and is fully privatised into individual ownership. Today *Rülho* group has no sub-clan community land, except individual land which has also witnessed a number of land mortgages and land disputes among the *Rülho* sub-clan groups¹⁷.

Chart 4: Nerhema Land Distributions



Chiechama Village

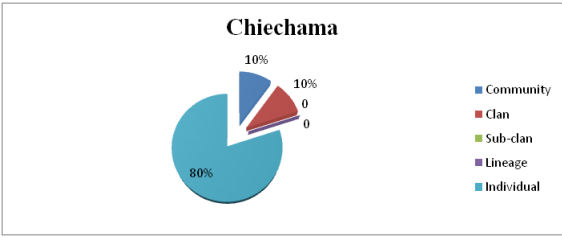
Chiechama village community land and clan covers approximately ten percent of the total village land area, while individual land covers approximately eighty percent of total land area in the village. Sub-clan and lineage groups do not own any land in the village. The percentage wise distribution of land in the village is given in Chart 5. The absence of a sub-clan and lineage land in the village had developed only in the recent years, due to distributions of clan land, sub-clan land, and lineage land into individual ownership. This includes terraced land, *jhum* fields, timber woodland, and village residential sites. Thus, the land ownership pattern in the village is classified into three categories: village community land, clan land, and individual land. It is also observed that distribution of clan land among individual households is an ongoing process and is most likely to be privatised in the near future. A prime example of this transition can be seen within the *Rüpreo* clan. The clan land was distributed to three sub-clan groups namely *Kechüye*, *Kesoseye* and *Kepayie*. However, each of these sub-clan lands was subsequently allocated to individual families within their respective sub-clan groups¹⁸. Most of the clan land is under forest reservation or timber preserved forest, while individual land has been used for terrace cultivation, *jhum* cultivation, cash crops, plantation farm, timber plantation, etc.

This evolving land distribution reflects a shift towards individual land ownership, impacting the traditional communal ownership of land. The process of privatisation is shaping the landscape of land use and ownership patterns in the sample villages, as community and clan lands gradually give way to individual ownership and diverse land use practices.

¹⁷ Interview were conducted on 7th June 2018 with Rünyü Kengurusie, Head Gaonbura of Nerhema village

¹⁸ Telephonic interview with Thepfukhrietuo Rüpreo of Chiechama village was conducted on 16th October 2018.

Chart 5 Chiechama Land Distributions



The findings from the field highlight a clear transformation in the Angami land tenure system. New pattern of land ownership and land use system has emerged over the years, as a result, land privatisation in community land, clan land, sub-clan land and lineage land are taking place. In fact, the process of land privatisation has also resulted in land mortgaging within their community as well as outside their community. The changes in the agrarian economy of the Angami are therefore observed in the context of their changing land relations, which are not only dominating their traditional mode of life but also creating a new mode of life. As Marx noted, the change in the mode of production does not entirely depend on the internal dynamic of the productive forces, pressing upon the existing relations of production, but also the external intercourse (Zeitlin, 1987).

Conclusion

The development policies of the state impacted land relations, as commodification and intervention of market forces became active agents of development. . The engagement and networks of communication between the local villagers with various government departments such as agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and wasteland are leading to the process of restructuring land and agrarian relations. The process of reforestation and permanent cultivation through commercial crops plantation has also brought land at the centre of this transformation.

Although the Village Council is said to govern and administer the village based on customary laws, it has in fact brought radical transformations in the traditional land relations by controlling and regulating the community land use system.

As examined in the study, land privatisation is an emerging issue due to distribution of land among the clan, sub-clan and lineage group into individual ownership. Some important forces contributing to this process of change are the market forces, commercialisation, urbanisation, and land commodification. It is also observed that land market in terms of land mortgage belonging to clan, sub-clan, lineage and individual are emerging. This commodification of land has also created space for new narratives among the villagers in reclaiming their land rights over certain disputed land, at times such narrative become important historical texts (Klapproth, 2004).

However, in this emerging land relations it is also observed that land rights from a gender perspective remains at the periphery and there is lack of engagement with women's rights of ownership over any type of land. In this context, Bina Agarwal (1988) rightly pointed out that the rights of control and ownership tend to define the boundaries of access such as who controls, who distributes, who inherits and to whom it is transferred and what rights it confer to the individuals (Agarwal, 1988), women's ownership rights on land in the emerging land relation in the study area remains unattended without any communal or social concerns.

Thus, the transformation of the rural economy through various agricultural programmes, as well as legitimising the Village Council as the sole guardians of the customary law, has created serious repercussions on Angami society. As a result, there is gradual disappearance of traditional land relations of community land, clan land and lineage land and all these have paved the way for privatisation and commodification of land.

Using insights from the field, the paper has tried to show the transition in land relations in terms of ownership that is merging in the Angami society. This implies that a new mode of production has already developed in the Angami villages today. Although, the feature of traditional land relations has not yet fully disappeared they exist in diluted and subordinate form in the face of emerging land market and privatization of clan and sub-clan lands.

Note

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