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Institutional Arrangements and Agrarian Structure During Periods of Transition: Evidences from Rural Arunachal Pradesh

Deepak Kumar Mishra

The role of institutional structures and agricultural performance has been studied from diverse methodological standpoints. The increasing concern over environmental degradation has generated considerable awareness regarding the institutional arrangements for resource allocation in rural/agrarian contexts. The New Institutional Economies, alongwith other institutionalist perspectives, have been used to analyse the allocative and distributive implications of such institutional mechanisms (Harriss et al., 1995; Bardhan, 1989; Baland and Platteau, 1996). Investigations into alternative institutional arrangements have led to greater emphasis on self-managed, cooperative, local institutions and also on the 'common property resources' (Ostrom, 1990; Sengupta, 1995; Chambers, 1988; Jodha, 1986).

Discussions on alternative institutional mechanisms have generally paid less attention to the evolution, persistence, or change of such arrangements. The study of economies under transitional property right regimes, where institutional mechanisms are in a flux, may provide interesting insights into the interrelationships between institutional and economic changes. Contemporary Arunachal Pradesh provides an opportunity to study agrarian relations under changing, multiple property rights formations. The paper attempts to analyse the changing agrarian structure and labour arrangements in a transitional phase when the traditional forms of collective decision making, resource management and monitoring are gradually being replaced by the institutions of market and private property rights over production assets.

Property Rights

In the last five decades, the property rights formation in Arunachal Pradesh has undergone fundamental changes in many respects. Traditionally, most of the natural

resources like forest and cultivable land were collectively owned by clans or village communities, although animals, tools and implements were privately owned (Mishra, 1987). Most of the villages had some institutional mechanism like village councils to regulate the distribution and management of collectively owned resources. While in some areas the institution of chieftainship was well-developed and individuals derived their rights of ownership from village chief, in many areas the village council, consisting of all adult male members, was the basic institution of decision-making, governance and control (Das, 1995). Under the traditional shifting cultivation system, the land used to be cleared by the villagers collectively and land was distributed among the households on the basis of capacity to cultivate and "number of mouths to be fed". A great deal of variability in the organisation of production has been reported in the anthropological literature on this area, but both under the shifting cultivation and permanent wet rice cultivation systems the agricultural operations were characterised by elaborate networks of informal contracts, cooperation, risk-sharing, resource-pooling and collective insurance mechanisms (Furer Haimendrof, 1982). These traditional institutional arrangements have been changing under the exogenous influences of state intervention and increasing market penetration.

In contemporary Arunachal Pradesh, 'traditional' and 'modern' forms of governance coexist with considerable degree of overlapping and interdependence. The only legal framework concerning landownership in the states is the Jhum Land Regulation, 1947 which recognises the ownership of a piece of jhum land once an area is operated someone and such operation essentially happens to be by the community (Talukdar, 1997). Although it is generally recognised that around 70 percent of forests in the state, classified as 'unclassified state forests' are owned and managed by the communities, 'communal ownership' has different meanings in actual practice in different contexts and in some cases extractive activities for private profits have also been carried out in communally owned forests (Mishra, 1999). Formally, the ownership of agricultural land is vested in the village chief or community, and individual tenure rights are basically 'use' rights. However, the individuals right to sell, lease, mortgage, gift, etc., are also being recognised in some areas of permanent cultivation. The property right over land is informal and negotiable on case by case basis in many villages, although attempts to codify village community rules are going on at various levels. The land under shifting cultivation, which is generally described as collectively owned, consists of three different categories of ownerships, while some are owned by village community as a whole, others are owned by specific clans and also by individual families (Bordoloi, 1998). Similarly, in case of privately owned land, the rights of use, occupancy and inheritance are generally enjoyed by all individuals, but the right to transfer is not total and unconditional. Even without explicit recognition from any state institution, land lease and sales have been noticed in many areas of permanent cultivation (Talukdar, 1997). To sum up, under the mutually reinforcing effects of marketisation, state intervention and population growth private property rights

have already emerged over agricultural and forest land. The specificity of this changing situation lies not only in the weak institutional basis of the emerging private property regime but also in the changing dimensions of collective ownership (Mishra, 1999). The property rights formation in land and forest are in a flux, exhibiting a great deal of heterogeneity and adaptability.

Agrarian Structure

The following analysis is based on a primary survey of households in four villages of West Kameng district in Arunachal Pradesh. The sample villages were expected to represent the diverse ecological conditions and different degrees of isolation and development within the district. In terms of institutional arrangements, while village I has the strongest village council, the IV has the weakest and the II and III represent the intermediate cases. Likewise, while village I is characterised by relative isolation, land scarcity and effective exclusion of outsiders from using the village commons including forest, the II and III villages are characterised by relatively favourable land-man ratio, availability of plain land and a tradition of permanent wet rice cultivation. Village IV is just near an urban township and is characterised by a greater degree of infrastructural development, ineffective management of common property resources, deforestation, along with relative land scarcity. In a fluid situation like this, it is often difficult to specify the causal relationship among institutional and economic variables. A simple comparison of production relations in these villages shows interesting patterns and discontinuities.

While 72.54 percent of households in village I depend only upon permanent cultivation, 25 percent depend upon both jhum and permanent cultivation, and 25 percent depend upon jhum alone. All the households in village II are permanent cultivators. In village III, 76.76 percent are cultivating both jhum and permanent fields, while the rest are permanent cultivators. In village IV, 91.76 percent are permanent cultivators. Thus, contrary to the popular perception regarding this region, permanent cultivation was found to be the major form of cultivation (Table 1).

Since 'ownership' in such a fluid property rights regime is highly ambiguous we have attempted to collect information on the amount of land under the effective control of the households. It is interesting to note that in both villages I and IV it is the small and marginal holdings which have a dominating presence, while semi-medium and medium categories of holdings are greater in number in the other two villages (Table 2). This is also the pattern in average size of the holdings: it is lower in village I and IV, than in village II and III. Landlessness has been found in all the villages except village II. Without going into the details of the process that created landlessness, it is important to note that while in village I it is largely because of customary inheritance laws, in village III alongwith that indebtedness and rural-to-rural migration have played a role, while in village IV it is largely caused by migration from other states and countries. Similarly, while the landless labourers in villages I and III belong to the local communities, in village IV most of them are

Table 1 Extent of Jhum and Permanent Cultivation

Villages	Total Number of Operational Holdings	Households Operating on		
		Jhum Land Only	Permanent Land Only	Both Jhum and Permanent Lands
I	40	01 (2.5)	29 (72.5)	10 (25.0)
II	15	0 (0)	15 (100.0)	0 (0)
III	30	0 (0)	07 (23.33)	23 (76.67)
IV	24	0 (0)	22 (91.67)	02 (8.33)
All villages	109	01 (0.92)	73 (66.97)	35 (32.11)

Note: Figures within brackets indicate the percentage to total operational holdings surveyed in the respective villages.

Source: Field survey.

Table 2 Distribution of Households According to Size-classes of Land Owned/controlled

Size-class of operational holdings	(area in acres)									
	Village I		Village II		Village III		Village IV		All villages	
	No. of HH	Area owned	No. of HH	Area owned	No. of HH	Area owned	No. of HH	Area owned	No. of HH	Area owned
0.0 (Landless)	04 (9.52)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	02 (6.67)	0 (0)	05 (20.83)	0 (0)	11 (9.91)	0 (0)
0.01-2.5 (Marginal)	10 (23.81)	20.2 (15.52)	03 (20.0)	6.5 (9.22)	02 (6.67)	03 (1.27)	11 (45.83)	13.75 (27.92)	26 (23.42)	43.75 (8.96)
2.5-5.0 (Small)	25 (59.33)	91.5 (69.27)	07 (46.67)	30 (42.55)	06 (20.0)	21.65 (9.16)	07 (29.17)	25.5 (51.78)	45 (40.54)	168.65 (34.54)
5.0-7.5 (Semi-medium)	03 (7.14)	20.1 (15.21)	03 (20.0)	18 (25.53)	06 (20.0)	39.85 (16.86)	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (10.81)	77.95 (15.97)
7.5-12.5 (Medium)	0 (0)	0 (0)	02 (13.33)	16 (22.70)	09 (30.0)	96.90 (40.99)	01 (4.17)	10.0 (20.30)	12 (10.81)	122.90 (25.17)
12.5 and more (Large)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	05 (16.66)	75.0 (31.72)	0 (0)	0 (0)	05 (4.51)	75.0 (15.36)
All sizes	42 (100)	132.1 (100)	15 (100)	70.5 (100)	30 (100)	236.4 (100)	24 (100)	49.25 (100)	111 (100)	488.25 (100)

Notes: (i) Area owned includes are under jhum cultivation in which ownership rights are not well defined.
(ii) Figures within brackets refer to percentage to respective village totals.

Source: Field survey.

outsiders – a fact which has a clear implication for management of CPRS. The distribution of operational holdings also follows a similar pattern (Table 3). Villages I and IV the relatively land-scarce villages – are dominated by small and marginal farmers while semi-medium and medium-sized holdings are more in number in the other two villages. Thus, by and large, the agrarian structure represents the characteristics of small peasant agriculture.

Table 3 *Distribution of Operational Holdings*

Size-class of Operational Holdings	(area in acres)									
	Village I		Village II		Village III		Village IV		All Villages	
	No. of HH	Area	No. of HH	Area	No. of HH	Area	No. of HH	Area	No. of HH	Area
0.01-2.5 (Marginal)	11 (27.5)	20.5 (15.01)	01 (6.66)	2.5 (3.40)	01 (3.33)	2.0 (0.83)	14 (58.33)	20.25 (33.06)	27 (24.77)	45.25 (8.84)
2.5-5.0 (Small)	25 (62.5)	86.6 (63.40)	10 (66.67)	42 (57.14)	06 (20.0)	25.7 (10.69)	8 (33.33)	26.5 (43.27)	49 (44.95)	180.80 (35.33)
5.0-7.5 (Semi-medium)	03 (7.5)	21.0 (15.37)	03 (20.0)	19.5 (26.53)	05 (16.67)	31.4 (13.06)	01 (4.17)	5.5 (8.98)	12 (11.01)	77.48 (15.13)
7.5-12.5 (Medium)	01 (2.5)	8.5 (6.22)	01 (6.67)	9.5 (12.93)	17 (56.67)	166.3 (69.18)	01 (4.17)	9.0 (14.69)	20 (18.35)	193.30 (37.77)
12.5 and more (Large)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	01 (3.33)	15 (6.24)	0 (0)	0 (0)	01 (0.92)	15.00 (2.93)
All sizes	40 (100)	136.6 (100)	15 (100)	73.5 (100)	30 (100)	240.4 (100)	24 (100)	61.25 (100)	109 (100)	511.75 (100)

Note: Figures within brackets refer to percentage to respective village totals.

Source: Field survey.

Table 4 *Distribution of Households According to Tenurial Status*

Category of Households	Villages				Total
	I	II	III	IV	
Owner-cultivator	33 (75.87)	11 (73.33)	20 (66.67)	13 (54.17)	77 (69.37)
Part owner-part tenant	06 (14.29)	04 (26.67)	08 (26.67)	06 (25.0)	24 (21.62)
Pure tenant	01 (2.38)	0 (0)	02 (6.66)	05 (20.83)	08 (7.21)
Cultivator	02 (4.76)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	02 (1.81)

Note: Figures in brackets refer to percentage to total households.

Source: Field survey.

Tenancy was found to be present in all the studied villages, but the percentage of owner-cultivators to total cultivators was found to be the highest in village I and

lowest in village IV (Table 4). While in the first three villages majority of the households who are leasing-in belongs to the part-owner part-tenant category, in village IV most of them are pure tenants. So far as the leasing-in pattern by size-class of operational holdings is concerned, it is primarily the small and marginal categories of holdings that are leasing-in in all villages, except in village III, where medium and semi-medium categories are leasing-in predominantly. Combining the data from all villages, it is found that all categories of operational holdings are leasing-in land except the large size-class. While the smaller size-class of holdings has a higher percentage of entirely leased-in holdings, in the larger size-classes of medium and semi-medium categories it is the partly leased-in holdings that have a higher presence (Table 5). The results of the survey indicate that incidence of tenancy in the district may be higher than what the agricultural census data show. Although all size-classes were found to be leasing-out land, the percentage of households leasing-out and area leased-out increases with the size-classes from marginal to large ones.

Table 5 *Leasing-in Pattern by Size-classes of Operational Holdings*

Village	Size-class of operational holdings	Number of Operational Holdings			Area (area in acres)	
		Entirely owned	Entirely leased-in	Mixed	Owned	Leased-in
I	Marginal	10 (90.91)	01 (9.09)	0 (0)	19.5 (95.12)	01 (4.88)
	Small	21 (84.0)	0 (0)	04 (16.0)	82.30 (95.05)	4.3 (4.95)
	Semi-medium	02 (66.67)	0 (0)	01 (33.33)	17.5 (83.33)	3.5 (16.67)
	Medium	0 (0)	0 (0)	01 (100.0)	3.00 (35.29)	5.5 (64.71)
	Large	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	All	33 (82.5)	01 (2.5)	06 (15.0)	122.3 (89.53)	14.3 (10.47)
II	Marginal	0 (0)	0 (0)	01 (100.00)	02 (80.00)	0.5 (20.0)
	Small	08 (80.0)	0 (0)	02 (20.00)	39.5 (94.05)	2.5 (5.95)
	Semi-medium	03 (100.00)	0 (0)	0 (0)	19.5 (100.00)	0 (0)
	Medium	0 (0)	0 (0)	01 (100.00)	8.0 (84.21)	1.5 (15.79)
	Large	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	All	11 (73.33)	0 (0)	04 (26.67)	69.0 (93.88)	4.5 (6.12)

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III	Marginal	0	01	0	0	2.0
		(0)	(100.00)	(0)	(0)	(100.00)
	Small	03	01	02	16.2	9.5
		(50.0)	(16.67)	(33.33)	(63.04)	(36.96)
	Semi-medium	03	0	02	16.2	9.5
		(60.0)	(0)	(40.00)	(80.89)	(19.11)
	Medium	12	0	05	148.8	17.5
(70.59)		(0)	(29.41)	(89.48)	(10.52)	
Large	01	0	0	15.0	0	
	(100.00)	(0)	(0)	(100.00)	(0)	
All	20	02	08	205.4	35	
	(66.67)	(6.67)	(26.67)	(85.44)	(14.56)	
IV	Marginal	08	04	02	10.75	9.5
		(57.14)	(28.37)	(14.29)	(53.09)	(46.91)
	Small	04	01	03	20.0	6.5
		(50.0)	(12.5)	(37.50)	(75.47)	(24.53)
	Semi-medium	0	0	01	5.05	0.5
		(0)	(0)	(100.00)	(90.91)	(9.09)
	Medium	01	0	0	9.0	0
(100.00)		(0)	(0)	(100)	(0)	
Large	0	0	0	0	0	
	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	
All	13	05	06	44.75	16.5	
	(54.16)	(20.83)	(25.00)	(73.06)	(26.94)	
All villages	Marginal	18	06	03	32.25	13
		(66.67)	(22.22)	(11.11)	(71.27)	(28.73)
	Small	36	02	11	158.0	22.8
		(73.47)	(4.08)	(22.45)	(87.39)	(12.61)
	Semi-medium	08	0	04	67.4	10
		(66.67)	(0)	(33.33)	(87.08)	(12.92)
	Medium	13	0	07	168.08	24.5
(65.00)		(0)	(35.00)	(87.33)	(12.67)	
Large	01	0	0	15.0	0	
	(100.00)	(0)	(0)	(100.00)	(0)	
All	77	08	24	441.45	70.3	
	(70.64)	(7.34)	(22.02)	(86.26)	(13.74)	

Source: Filed survey.

Contrary to Agricultural Census (1990-91), which reports the sharecropping was the only form of tenurial contract in the district, we found that although it is the dominant form of tenancy, it is not the only form of tenancy (Table 6). In village I, of the total households leasing-in, 42.86 are leasing-in under sharecropping, 28.57 under fixed cash and 28.57 percent on other forms which include the cases where the share of the landlord is unspecified, irregular or symbolic only. In villages II and III, which are primarily rice-growing villages, the only form of tenancy observed was sharecropping. In village IV, 45.45 percent are sharecropping contracts, 3.03 are fixed

produce and 21.21 percent are 'other forms'. Cumulatively, it was found that around 80 percent of contracts are sharecropping contracts, and the share of lessee and lessor was found to be 50:50 in all villages except in village III, where it was found to be 75:25. Of the total sharecropping contracts reported 40.48 percent were with cost-sharing arrangements.

Table 6 *Forms of Tenancy*

Village	Percentage of HH Leasing-in	Percentage of Area Leased-in	Number of Households Leasing-in Under			
			Share-cropping	Fixed Crops	Fixed Cash	Other Forms
I	17.5	10.47	03 (42.86)	0 (0)	2 (28.57)	2 (28.57)
II	26.67	6.12	04 (100.00)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
III	45.33	14.56	11 (100.00)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
IV	45.83	26.94	05 (45.45)	01 (9.10)	0 (0)	05 (45.46)
All	30.28	13.74	23 (69.70)	01 (3.03)	02 (6.06)	07 (21.21)

Source: Field survey.

Note: Figures within brackets refer to percentages to respective village totals.

To sum up, private property rights over land are gradually emerging in the study region and this form of ownership has led to the emergence of a land-lease market as well, but it continues to remain informal and relatively ill-defined. It is important to note that similar trends were found both in the interior village having settled cultivation and also in the village nearer to an urban centre. The findings broadly support the formulation of Demsetz (1967) that as the value of common property resources increases, people are more likely to establish rights over it. However, while rise in the value of agricultural land in villages II and III might be linked with its better quality and productivity in this hilly region, the proximity to the urban centre might have caused the increased demand for land in village IV. To some extent this is reflected in the different tenurial arrangements that exist in the villages.

Changing Labour Relations

Important changes in the labour relations have also been observed in rural Arunachal Pradesh. The traditional institutional arrangements like cooperative labour sharing, collective work and reciprocity have been on the decline. Emergence of rural labour market and increasing occupational diversification have also altered the labour relations in diverse ways. Our field survey data suggest that agriculture is the predominant occupation which is followed by government service (Table 7). The percentage of workforce engaged in agriculture is higher in the villages having better quality of land and settled agriculture. As most of the households are multi-activity

households we have attempted to find out the distribution of working days among different occupations for male and female labourers belonging to households operating on different size-classes of holdings.

Table 7 *Percentage of Workforce in Different Activities*

Village	Total Work-force	Percentage of Workforce in				
		Agriculture	Trade and Business	Govt. Service	Students	Others
I	125	70.4	0.8	13.6	10.4	4.8
II	51	96.08	0.0	1.96	1.96	0.0
III	95	85.26	5.26	7.37	1.05	1.05
IV	86	70.93	2.33	11.63	10.46	4.65
All	387	78.15	2.24	9.8	6.72	3.09

Source: Field survey.

In village I, agriculture is the predominant economic activity in all size-classes of holdings, but female workers spend a higher proportion of their total working days in agriculture than male workers (Table 8). The trend is similar even in the case of forest-related labour in productive activities in traditional/tribal economies. What is

Table 8 *Percentage of Working Days Spent in Different Activities*

Village	Category	No. of workers	Percentage of working days spent in different activities							
			Agri-culture	Forest	Animal bus-bandry	Handi-craft & HH manu-fact-uring	Village religious institu-tion	Trade & comm-erce	Govt. service	Non-agri-cultural wage labour
I	M	71	32.94	6.72	33.66	0.91	4.97	2.9	15.21	2.68
	F	57	59.38	8.14	3.37	0.13	0.13	2.92	7.91	18.02
	T	128	43.26	7.27	21.85	0.61	3.09	2.91	12.36	8.67
II	M	24	84.62	6.03	0.80	0.49	0.0	1.29	6.57	0.2
	F	26	96.53	1.73	0.58	0.69	0.0	0.46	0.0	0.0
	T	50	90.10	4.04	0.70	0.59	0.0	0.91	3.53	0.11
III	M	58	81.03	7.36	0.0	0.0	1.81	5.2	4.60	0.0
	F	43	94.01	2.28	0.0	0.32	0.0	0.0	3.18	0.21
	T	101	86.54	5.12	0.0	0.13	1.06	3.04	4.01	0.09
IV	M	41	41.06	4.09	0.0	0.33	2.22	7.56	43.3	1.11
	F	32	88.40	7.01	0.0	2.49	0.0	0.38	0.0	0.58
	T	73	58.42	5.16	0.0	1.12	1.41	4.93	27.42	0.91
All	M	184	57.60	6.28	10.42	0.42	2.64	4.53	16.95	1.10
	F	158	83.31	4.81	1.07	0.75	0.03	0.99	3.41	5.39
	T	342	67.99	5.67	6.64	0.55	1.59	3.10	11.48	2.84

Note: Figures include main and marginal workers.

Source: Field survey.

important is that women also tend to spend a higher percentage of days in non-farm wage labour than male workers, although their presence in trade and commerce, government service, etc., is almost negligible.

In village II, there is also a greater dependence on traditional occupations, primarily agriculture. Female workers spend a higher proportion of their working days in agriculture than their male counterparts. They spend less time in all non-traditional occupations, including non-farm wage labour. In village III, the pattern is almost similar, with only one difference: female workers spend higher percentage of working days in non-farm wage labour than the males. In village IV, the percentage of man-days spent in non-agricultural activities is significantly higher than that in other villages. Female workers spend a higher percentage of working days in agriculture and forest-related activities. In this village, there seems to be a clear gender division of labour such that while male workers earn in the urban, non-farm sector female workers concentrate upon agricultural occupations, which is different than that of other villages. The proportion of working days spent for forest activities is highest in village I, followed by village IV, which suggests that forest activities might be acting as a kind of substitute for agricultural activities in villages having less fertile land. It is also possible that the proportion of working days in forest activities in village I might be higher because of higher forest dependency, but in village IV, where forests have been degraded to a great extent, it might be because of longer distance to be travelled to bring forest resource.

In the past, most of the agricultural works were being carried out using family and clan labour. Cooperation and labour-sharing among households were almost indispensable given the low population density and labour-intensive methods of cultivation. Labour-sharing practices were of two kinds: generalised and specific. Under the system of generalised cooperative labour sharing, the entire village worked as a single unit. In such cases reciprocity was generalised and monitoring was a collective responsibility, institutionalised through the traditional village-level decision-making and enforcing structures. Specific labour-sharing arrangements, on the other hand, were agreed upon by two or more individual households, independent of the other households in the village community. During the field survey it was observed that generalised reciprocity and cooperative work-sharing practices were found only in work relating to religious festivals or village commons. In other spheres of economic activities, it is specific reciprocity, which was found to be more widely prevalent. Under this system two types of sharing arrangements were noticed. In the first case two or more families combine their resources, primarily labour, but it may include resources like implements, draft animals and well to carry out the agricultural and forest-related activities. The second form of specific labour-sharing is in terms of mutually agreed numbers of days for which the family labour will be exchanged between the participating households. Here, the range of cooperation and mutual commitment was found to be narrower than in the first case. Both these forms of specific labour-sharing were noticed in all the villages, but in the second case it is increasingly becoming the standard practice. Under

conditions of ecological degradation, low productivity and prevalence of risks of various kinds, these labour-sharing arrangements can be viewed as general bilateral contracts that involve resource pooling, risk dispersion and mutual insurance.

The emergence of rural labour markets is clearly undermining the institutional foundations of traditional labour-sharing practices. In terms of percentage of total agricultural working days spent in labour sharing and wage labour, it is found that, while about 79 percent of total working days are spent in own fields, 13 percent are spent in labour sharing and 8 percent in wage labour in all villages combined together. The extent of wage labour in forest activities is 10.77 percent of the total working days in that sector which is higher than the share of labour-sharing practice. Male labours seemed to spend comparatively higher percentage of their total working days in respective activities as wage labour than female workers both in agricultural and forest-related activities, if we calculate the percentage of total working days spent as wage labour higher participation of women as off-farm wage labour.

Conclusions

To sum up, the foregoing discussion suggests that alongwith transition in the property right formations the agrarian structure and labour institutions are also being transformed in the underdeveloped Himalayan state of Arunachal Pradesh. While the process of transformation of economies is often described in terms of dichotomous categories like 'dissolution of traditional structures' or 'emergence of new ones', this paper attempts to look at the transitional, flexible and diverse patterns of property rights that characterise the rural economy in the state. The transitional property right regimes are essentially manifestations of the complexities in path of transition from pre-capitalist economic formations to market economics. During this transitional phase, however, the landownership structure, distribution of operational holdings and tenurial relations have also undergone changes. The traditional solidarity networks, cooperative and labour-sharing institutions were found to be on the decline. The findings suggest that alongwith greater economic integration with the larger economy, village commons are being privatised or are being used for private purpose. The occupational shift of labour forces to non-agricultural and urban occupations, alongwith other factors, has led to rural-to-rural migration as well as migration of outsiders to relatively well-communicated areas as agricultural labourers and tenants. The traditional labour-sharing arrangements are not only being replaced by wage labour, but their meanings and roles are also undergoing changes.

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