
To H. T. Prinsep, Esq.
Secretary to Government of India.

Fort William.

Sir,—With reference to my letters of the 13th and 20th ultimo, I have the honor to forward a few Notes on the Mechis, with a small vocabulary of their language, for the information of his Honor in Council.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
A. Campbell.

Darjeeling, September 5th, 1839.

The Mech people inhabit the forest portion of the Turai stretching along the base of the mountains from the Burrumpootur to the Konki river, which leaves the Nipal mountains about 20 miles to the west of the Mechi River. In this tract they are respectively the subjects of the Nipalese, Sikim, and Bootan governments, occupying along with the Dimals—an allied tribe—and a few Garrows, a country of about 250 miles in length, having an average breadth of from 12 to 15 miles. In the eastern portion of the Nipal Turai they are but recent settlers;
at Nagol Bundi, on the right bank of the Mechi river, there are about 20 families; at Kalikajhar about the same number; and, west from these places, in the thickest parts of the forest, there are several small colonies, amounting in all to about 150 or 200 families. In the Sikim Turai, between the Mechi river and the Mahanudi, there are about 400 families; to the east of the Teestah river, and in the Dooars of Bootan they are still more numerous, and to this latter portion of their habitat they point as the original seat of the tribe, although its name would indicate its derivation from the Mechi river. I believe that Mechs are also to be found on the northern confines of Lower Assam.

The tribes immediately in contact and mixed with the Mechs, are the Koochias or Rajbungsi Bengalese, (whose original country is Kooch Behar,) the Dimals, Thawas, and Garrows. These neighbours of the hills are the Limboos, Kerantis, Lepchas, Murmis, and Bhotias; of these several tribes, I hope to furnish some particulars anon. As they associate much with the former, and frequently meet the latter at the frontier marts, their habits and manners are naturally a good deal modified by the contact; still their peculiar usages, form of religion, language, and appearance, entitle them to the acknowledgment of their claim as a distinct people. They are fairer than the Koochias, and have little of the regular features of the Hindoo, which characterize that tribe. The cast of the Mech countenance is strongly Mongolian, but accompanied by a softness of outline which distinguishes them readily from the more marked features of the same order—of the Lepchas, Limboos, and Bhotias. They resemble the Newars of the valley of Nipal, in complexion and feature, more than any other people I have seen in or near these mountains; they are taller, however, and the fairness of complexion is entirely of a yellow tinge, whereas the Newars are frequently almost ruddy. Many of the Mechs strongly resemble the Mugs and Burmese in face and figure, and like them are much addicted to drinking spirits, smoking, and eating pawn. In common with the Assamese, they are fond of opium eating.

They never live on the hills at a higher elevation than 800 or 1,000 feet, and scarcely ever settle in the cleared and inhabited parts of the Turai, but, keep entirely to the forest in which they make clearances, cultivating crops of rice and cotton with the hoe, and grazing buffaloes. The malaria of the forest so deadly to strangers, does not at all affect them; on the contrary, they are a remarkably healthy race, and dread visiting the plains, where they are subject to severe fevers. They have no towns, and rarely even live in permanent villages, generally quitting a clearance after having had two or three successive crops from the land, to take up their abodes in a fresh portion of the forest. In the
above respects the erratic habits of the Mechis resemble those of the Thawas especially ere that race commenced, as lately, to form permanent villages in the open Turai; and are identical with those of the Dimals.

The religion of the Mechis, in so far as they have any, is the Shivaite form of Hindooism, but it goes no further than to the occasional sacrifice—when they can afford a merry-making—of goats, buffaloes, pigs, and fowls at a clay image of Kali, when they drink spirits and a fermented liquor made from Murwa to excess, and indulge in much licentiousness. The influence of the Brahmins is not recognised; they have no gurus, nor priests, nor temples; do not perform the shrādh; and bury the dead in any convenient part of the jungle, confining the obsequies to a feast among the relations of the deceased, and placing spirits and prepared food over the grave; tombs are never raised over the graves, nor have the small communities any common burying ground.

There is no distinction of castes among them. In the Nipal Turai—the population of which is composed of the most varied assemblage of would-be Hindoos, and almost destitute of real ones, the Mechis are admitted within the pale, and water is taken from their hands by persons of caste, although they eat fowls, buffaloes, the cow—when beyond the Nipalese limits—and the carrion of all animals except that of the elephant, which animal is held in high respect by them, although not venerated, so far as I can learn. The carrion eating and other impure but cherished practices of the Mechis are not followed to the fullest extent in Nipal, where Hindooism is at a high premium, and breaches of the Hindoo law by all pretenders to that faith are punished with much severity. In Sikim and Bootan, however, the Mechis indulge their natural habits, and are as omnivorous a race of human beings as any in the world.

Marriages are contracted in youth or adolescence at convenience, the men purchasing their wives at prices varying from 10 to 60 Rupees, according to the beauty of the female and the means of the male. When an accepted husband has not the means of paying for his wife in money he joins her family party, working for the parents until he has fairly earned his bride according to previous contract; like the poorer classes elsewhere in India, a man can seldom afford to have more than one wife at a time, there is no restriction however on this head.

The women share equally with the men in all the labors of the field, and manage household affairs exclusively; they likewise attend at the periodical fairs (Hauths) selling, buying, and bartering the various
articles of home and imported produce. They are generally comely and disposed to fleshiness; the usual dress is a sari (robe) of red silk made of the "Indi" or thread of the silk worm which feeds on the castor-oil plants, and their ornaments are confined to bangles and necklaces of white shell. The Indi silk is entirely a domestic manufacture, and wove by the women, who also color it with the lac dye. The Mech language has no written character, nor is it, I believe, allied to the Sanscrit; whether it is of Tibetan or Burmese extraction, or akin to the aboriginal Indian dialects known among the Coles, Goonds, Beels, and other wild tribes, I am unable to say; but perhaps, the accompanying small vocabulary may enable competent persons to decide its root and original country. The Mechis are necessarily uneducated, except with a very few exceptions, in the Bengali language, from which they have derived all the terms in use for articles common to a state of life removed from the savage. I regret, that I have not as yet had an opportunity of meeting a person intelligent enough to give me some idea of the construction of the language; this must remain for further inquiry. In the vocabulary I have omitted entering words for which the language has no equivalents of its own, except in a few instances, to prove the rule above noticed. All the words with B affixed are evidently corruptions of Bengali or Hindi; none of the metals except "silver" and "iron" have names. There is no word for "money." Gender is designated by the affix of "Jilla" or male, and "Jeu" or female, for all animals but man.*

In the arts the Mechis have made but small progress, they excel in the care of their cotton agriculture, but as they grow only the common annual plant, the produce is not of a superior kind. Weaving is confined to the women as a domestic art. They are not addicted to trade, are averse to military service, have no artizans among them, are truly in a very primitive state of society. They are however very cheerful, have no jealousy or prejudice towards strangers, are industrious, and honest, and crimes of violence, so far as I can learn, are of rare occurrence among them.

A. CAMPBELL.

* The names of the months and days of the week are Bengali, and the Mechis who furnished me with the vocabulary are unable to give more than nine of the cardinal numbers in their own language.
VOCABULARY OF THE MECH LANGUAGE.

fire, wad
tiger, meesâh
water, dîee
bird, tausen
air, bar
the sun, kranondoong
the earth, ha
the moon, nokabur
stone, yoontie
guroo, mōōsho
God, modiè
hog, yoma
father, appa
rice, myrang
mother, aiè
paddy, mye
brother, koî
blood, tye
elder ditto, ada koî
flesh, mōōdun
younger ditto, âki koî
teeth, hattye
son, bêësha
eye, mōōkun
daughter, bêësha hindon
nose, kōōntōōng
uncle (paternal), adhii
ear, kumma
ditto (maternal), amaî
head, koroh
cousin (paternal uncle's son), phōōmbōi
uncle (maternal), amaî
wife, bihi
neck, kortunna
house, nau
mouth, koogha
raining, noka haioo
tongue, chulai
tree, bun phang
thorax, cherupa
bamboo, wah
belly, udhi
rattan, rydung
thigh, phenda
iron, shor
leg, yadii
wood, bon
foot, yappa
sword, choongri
stars, hatoorki
knife, dhaba
clouds, jumai
bed, kutt
knee, hantoo
dog, chēëma
finger, nāshima
elephant, megadett
nail of ditto, nashi kōr
rhinoceros, gandha
palm of hand, nakatulka
goat, borma
loins, janji
elephant, megadett
child, kataû
rhinoceros, gandha
old man, briebâ
road, lama
young ditto, kōōkringindong
mountain, hajoo
ditto female, shikala
jungle, hakea
handsome, mōōjang
river, dihi
oil, taû
pool, bîtûô
salt, shōōnkri
fish, nah
Vocabulary of the Mech Language.

pepper, banjóólóó
maize, toomba
to die, thibaï
to sleep, móódóóbáï
sit down, jhopiï
stand up, jhickat do
go thither, oojhung tang
come here, puki
go quickly, kōōkri tang
lie down, moodox no.
shut the door, doowar phang
go to the field, hooa tung
build a house, no lao
cut some wood, bon san
fetch some water, dïee labo
feed the child, koto jani ho
kill a fowl, tâoo shituk
boil some rice, meekum chong
light a fire, wad châô
milk the cow, doodo laboo
go to market, hattia tung
shoe, jötah (B)
horse, ghorye (B)
cow, mashujuh
buffalo, maishuo
door, doowar (B)
ghee, ghu (B)
milk, doodu (B)
sugar, chinee (B)
turmerick, huldi (B)
thunder, jumai homdung
lightning, nophlambo
cloth, (cotton) lie
ditto of castor-oil insect, indi
ivory, megadet hatye
horn, kong
hide, âboo
hoof, yakong
tail, lanjye
wool, komun
a young elephant, megadet oodai
a grave, phokma

a man, manchi
a woman, hinjan
plough, wayo
cart, hoo
a bow, jeeleet
an arrow, bulla
language, bhagia
a gun, shelaï
table, phalla
chair, kumpulai
paper, lëka
pen, kullum (H)
lock, [no word]
key, [ditto]
taut (coarse hempen cloth), phasala
hemp, phâtoo
til (sesamum orientale), shibeem
mustard, bishwar
dal (pease), shobai
pawn, phâtye
betel-nut, gwëye
lime, chûnye (H)
brass, peetulye (H)
silver, tais
a temple, modie ne no (literally
house of God)
a flower, booobar
mangoe, tickjo
plantain, tali
ditto tree, lie phang
lime tree, narengi phang
fruit, betû
root of tree, rudda be phang
branch of ditto, dalye
leaf of tree, belye
a bridge, chye kong
build a bridge, chye kong ka
make a road, lama yâw
a plain country, ha gëbang
the plains of Bengal, haien
Bootan, aga phar
snow, hem
snow falls, hem gooklindung  
it rains, noka hidung  
warm water, goodung dîye  
cold ditto, gooshu dîye  
drink water, dye ling ni  
good, gahum  
bad, hûmma

[No other Colors distinguished by names.]

leather, bigoor  
mattress, gondo  
a Bootanee, kongar  
a Bengalli, hâshâ  
a Mahomedan, tôoôôôp  
a Priest or pujari, modie hûûis  
a Nipalese, muggur  
a boat, nan  
a jungle fowl, hangrûni dûûsru  
a male, jilla  
a female, jeu  
spirits, chaoo  
large, ghidett  
small, udyê  
tall, gujau  
short, gahye  
broad, goo-ar  
a great man, grah manichi  
to laugh, meniyao  
to cry, dagup  
to beat, shîtuknuh  
to be angry, brapmo  
to swim, chanturri  
cotton seed, koon tye  
ditto plant, koon phang  
sugar-cane, kooshiar (B)  
a bear, moofur  
wild dog, sheekoo  
vulture, sheegoon  
crow, taûka  
a well, dire kor  
blacksmith, kamar  
weaver, he dâio  
huntsman, mye kankea  
a spotted deer, kotia menbeang  
distiller, shoondi  
fine cloth, he goba  
coarse ditto, he rujja  
new ditto, he guddan  
the sky, no krang  
above, chá  
below, ching  
to one side, chapin

Cardinal Numbers.

one, munche  
two, munye  
three, muntum  
four, munbre  
five, munbha  
six, mundho  
seven, munchini  
eight, munjo kunnû  

[No numeral beyond this]

night, hor  
day, chán  
month, más (B)  
year, buruk (B)  
soft, oofra  

hard, guzia  
cheap, gair  
dear, kom  
heavy, eeliching  
light, rujenchung
Vocabulary of the Mech Language.

wet, ghichi
dry, kran,
beard, konkup
moustaches, [no word]
lip, kooshuti
eyelash, mooshu kor
good rice, mujang myrong
sweet, kolan
sour, kokye
bitter, goká
light, monabai
darkness, komshibai
raw, kotung
boiled, komun,
hunger, meenka honkia
grass, jheekeb
lame, nating kora
defaf, kumma kanai
dumb, ryeinga
pain, sadung
pleasure, moongu sagyi
sickness, chobea jodung
small pox, bontijaia

fever and ague, loomgaia
rheumatism, beeshtong
belly ache, yudichaia
head ache, koro chaio
purging, kábai
to-day, dinisanchi
yesterday, kapunsanche
day before ditto, sombursanche
the day before that, tamnepursanche
to-morrow, miasanchi
outside, shetula
inside, noh
before, shekang
behind, yeun
quickly, kookei
slowly, larhay
a wall, jujoor
a post, tongphang
a beam, mandali
a roof, mookoom
a cooking pot, kanta
a large ditto, mikamduh
a water ewer, di heu
a plate, torsi

Example of forming feminine and masculine.

bull, moshu jilla,
cow, mashu jeu
dog, cheema jilla,
bitch, chema jeu
buck, borma jilla,
she-goat, borma jeu
tiger, meesháb jilla,
tigress, meesah jeu
nephew, adye,
niece, anai

Sentences.

What is your name? nunni mooa mamoo
Where are you going? noo bujuntanguh
Whence come you? noo bujing prapaio
Where do you live? noo nüa mongwhye
What is your father's name? noong noorkpa mammo
Shew me the road to Pankabari? Pankabari lama buriye
What is the name of that hill? be hajoo mâmoo
What is the price of rice at Dorjeling? myrong sirifehe Dorgeling maelai
Names of Men.
Chakla,
Sunka,
Balasache,
Deringa sache,
Poojoon,
Esula,
Puharoo,
Oonti,
Jenti tokla,
Mhedla,
Secuta.

Names of Women.
Phagooni,
Bisaje,
Bisahawa,
Furgunnic.

A. CAMPBELL.

ART. II.—Researches on the Gale and Hurricane in the Bay of Bengal on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th of June, 1839; with reference to the Theory of the Law of Storms in India. By HENRY PIDDINGTON.

PART II.

That the hurricane part of the tempest which we are considering was blowing in tolerably well defined circles, has been, I think, clearly shewn in the foregoing part of this memoir. The object of this second part, is to adduce evidence, which shews that it was at the same time both a gale, i.e. a strong wind blowing in with tolerable steadiness from one quarter of the compass; and a hurricane, namely, a violent wind blowing in a circle or vortex of greater or less diameter. At present too it seems probable, from the dates, that the gale produced the hurricane. We may consider that this storm was one of those which usually occur at the change of the moonsoon from NE. to SW., which in various parts of the Bay may be said to take place between the 15th May and 15th June. It is from the 1st to the 15th June that we look for the rains in Calcutta, though sometimes, as in this year, they may be said to have begun in April. It will be borne in mind then, that whatever follows, whether facts or hypotheses, relates only to the beginning of the SW. monsoon. Future observations will inform us, whether the October Gales as they are called,—though they sometimes occur in November,—are subject to the same or different laws. (The European reader will recollect, that October is the epoch at which the NE. monsoon takes the place of the SW. one.)

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