THE APA TANIS AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

A Primitive Civilization of the Eastern Himalayas

by

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To
Robert von Heine-Geldern

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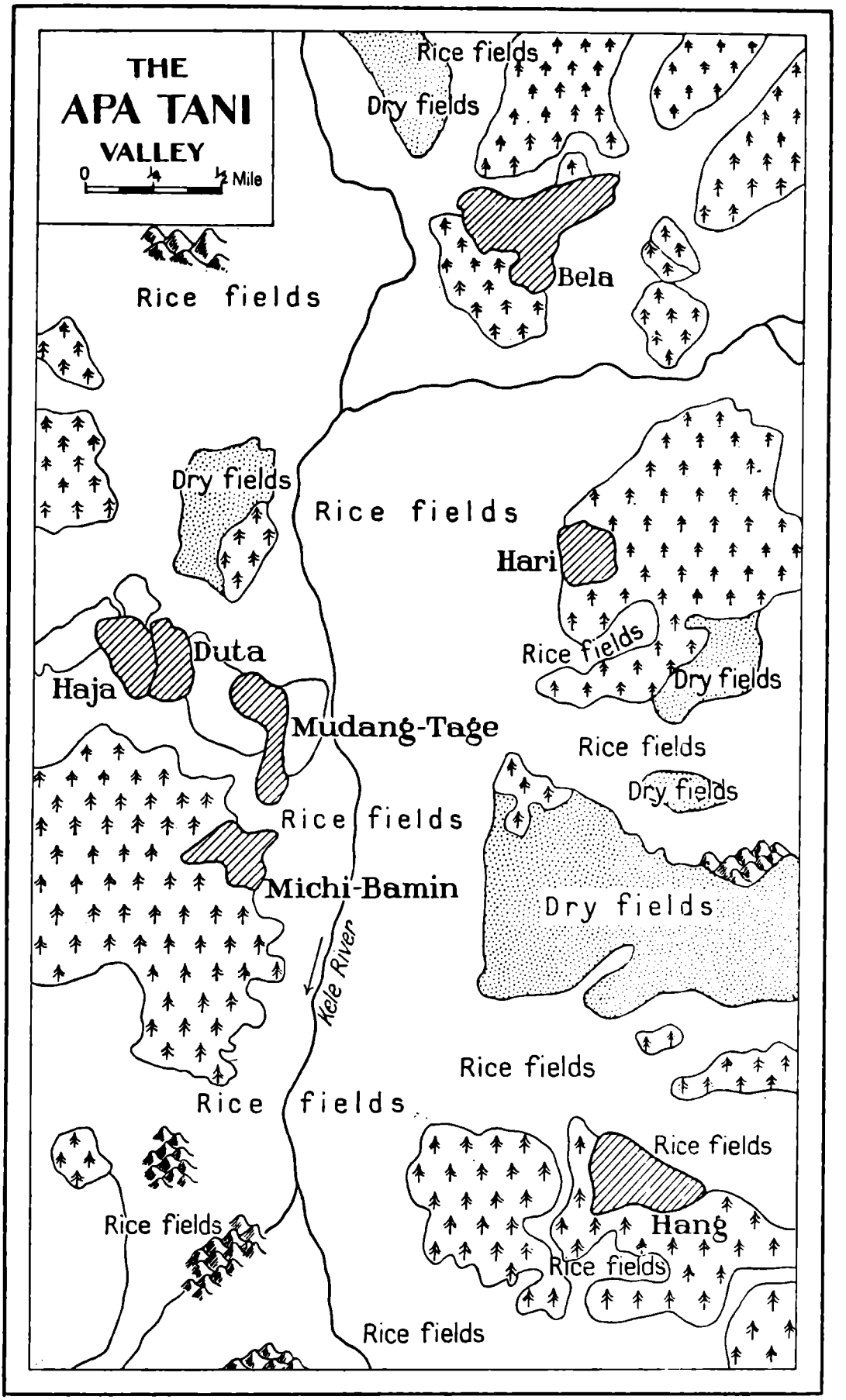
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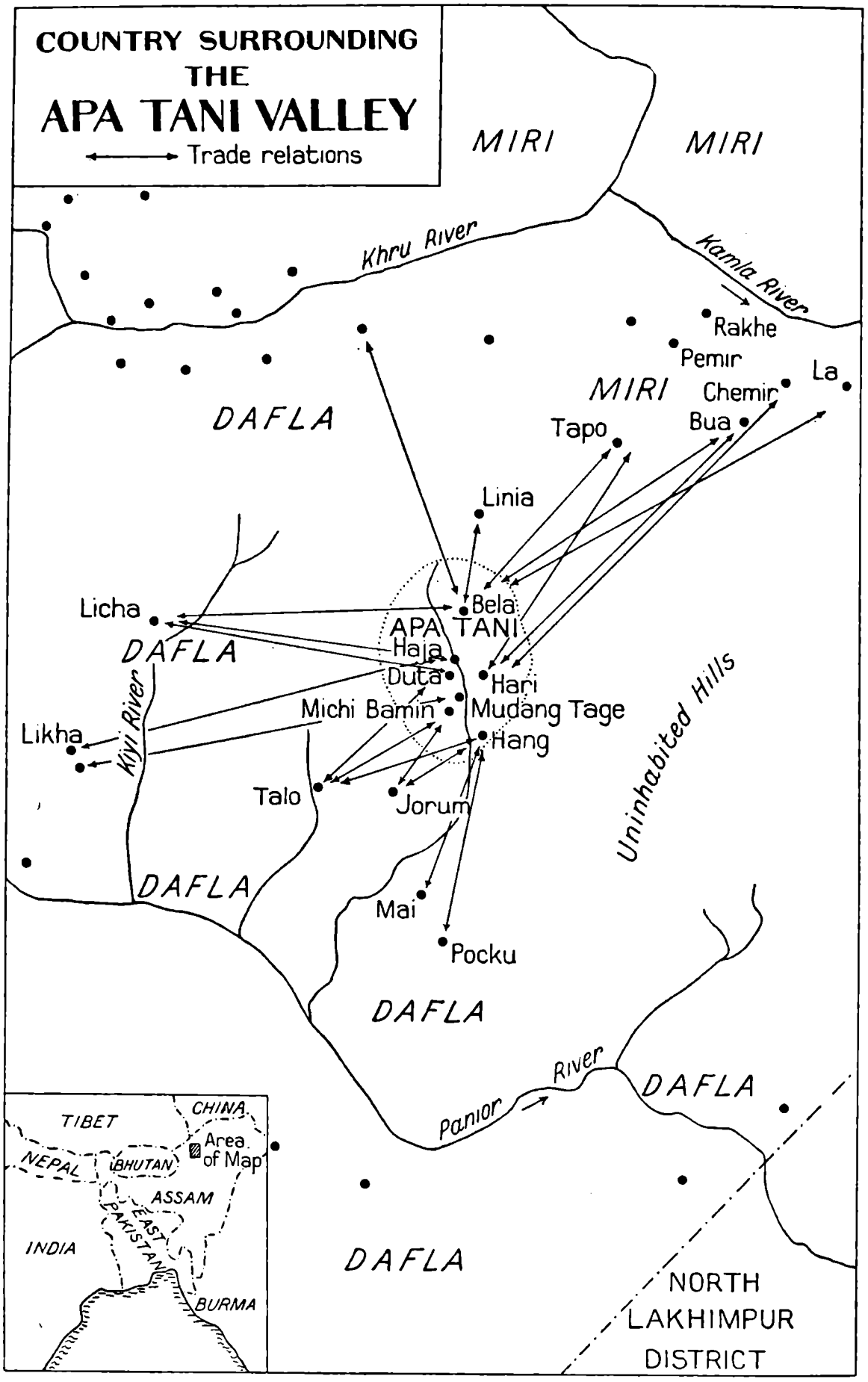
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INTRODUCTION

THE tangle of wooded hill-ranges which enclose, horse-shoe like, the fertile plains of Assam is the home of tribal populations distinct in language, race and culture from the Hindu and Muslim peasantry of the Brahmaputra valley. The Nagas of the mountainous country extending between Assam and Burma, the Mishmis of the Lohit valley, and the Abors of the hills to both sides of the Dihang River are all tribes that until recently had remained untouched by the historic civilizations dominating the cultural pattern of the rest of Assam. Unaffected by Hinduism and Islam no less than by the Buddhism of the neighbouring areas of Burma and Tibet, they persisted in archaic forms of economy, social organization, ritual and belief, and in the seclusion of hill-regions, separated one from the other by formidable natural barriers, they developed a great number of variations on a common cultural theme.

The wealth of social and cultural configurations found among the hill-tribes in the borderlands of Assam has not escaped the attention of anthropologists and ethnographically interested administrators. At a time when the anthropological studies of aboriginal tribes of Peninsular India could be counted on the fingers of one hand, a series of monographs published under the auspices of the Government of Assam provided full and accurate information on several of the Naga tribes, the Lushei-Kuki tribes, the Garos,

Khasis, Kacharis, Meitheis and Mikirs. Yet, there remained one area about whose inhabitants very little was known and even less available in print. This area, situated between the northern fringe of the Assam plains and the crest-line of the Great Himalayan Range, which forms traditionally the border between India and Tibet, remained outside the administrative control of the Government of Assam, and its inhabitants continued in their traditional style of life unobserved and unchecked by outsiders. From the border of Bhutan to the west as far as the Abor Hills to the east, there extended until 1944 tribal country unknown to the Assamese of the plains no less than to the Tibetans beyond the Himalayan passes; country inhabited by a number of distinct tribes of which barely the names were known to the outside world. Politically this country was included in the Balipara Frontier Tract of Assam, but only the southernmost regions were ever entered by government officials, and the greater part of the area remained unmapped and unexplored.

The first determined effort to survey the area south-west of the Subansiri River and particularly the valleys of the Kamla and Khru Rivers was made in 1911 and 1912 by a semi-military expedition known as the Miri Mission. The published Survey of India maps of the area now constituting the Subansiri Division of the North-East Frontier Agency are still based on the survey operations undertaken by the Miri Mission, the results of more recent surveys being not yet available in print.

From 1912 until 1944 no exploratory expedition entered the Subansiri region, but as part of an extensive programme for the exploration and development of the North-East Frontier regions the Government of India resumed in 1944 the plans suspended in 1912. It was then that an appointment as Special Officer Subansiri gave me the unique opportunity of touring the hill-country south-west of the Subansiri River and of getting to know populations which had little or no contact with the plains of Assam. Many of

the villages which I visited in 1944 and 1945 had never been entered by any outsider—neither European, nor Indian, nor Tibetan—and the conditions of life which I observed represented the traditional pattern undisturbed by the effects of an administration centred outside the tribal territory. The circumstances of my work in the Subansiri region, which was only partly anthropological, have been described in my book *Himalayan Barbary*,[1] and further developments in the area are referred to in Ursula Graham Bower's *The Hidden Land*[2] and more recently in Verrier Elwin's *A Philosophy for N.E.F.A.*[3] and B. K. Shukla's *The Daflas of the Subansiri Region.*[4] As will be apparent from the Epilogue, life in the Subansiri region is no longer what it was in 1944 and 1945, but the subsequent account of traditional Apa Tani civilization is largely written in the 'ethnographic present'.

The Subansiri region, like other parts of the hill-country on India's North-East Frontier, is a mountainous tract consisting of steep foothills, which skirt the edge of the Brahmaputra Valley, of a broad central zone rising to heights of about 9,000 feet but intersected by deep gorge-like valleys, and thirdly a zone of high altitude rising to the snow ranges of the Eastern Himalayas. While the foothills are clad in tropical rain-forests, the vegetation of the central zone is sub-tropical with rhododendron as the most characteristic tree-growth, and the flora of the high zone is of alpine type. Throughout the region there is hardly any level ground, and hill-slopes rise from narrow gorges in an unbroken sweep to the lofty crests of hill-ranges. The natural formation of the terrain determines the agricultural methods that prevail not only in the Subansiri region but throughout the greater part of the North-East Frontier Agency. Shifting cultivation of the slash-and-burn type is the only kind of tillage practised by such tribes as Mishmis, Abors, Miris and Daflas, and one can travel for weeks in the Eastern

[1] London, 1955.
[2] London, 1953.
[3] Shillong, 1959.
[4] Shillong, 1959.

Himalayas without ever encountering any other method of cultivation.

Yet, there is one area in the Subansiri region which differs fundamentally from this general pattern of environment. Embedded between wooded hills rising to heights of nearly 8,000 feet extends at an altitude of just below 5,000 feet a single broad valley whose oblong and almost entirely level centre has been transformed into an expanse of unbroken irrigated rice-fields. This valley, some twenty square miles in area, is the home of a civilization as distinct from those of the surrounding hill-tracts as its formation and vegetation differ from those of the rest of the Subansiri Division. The people inhabiting this valley are known as Apa Tanis, and though akin to their Dafla and Miri neighbours in basic racial type, they have developed a style of life of their own and speak a language unintelligible to anyone dwelling outside this single valley. In a country where settlements are impermanent, and tribal groups seem to be in a state of continuous flux, the Apa Tanis remained concentrated in that one valley, and their seven villages, all situated within an hour's walking distance one from the other, had the stability and size of small towns. Though sallying forth on trading trips and in more recent decades occasionally even visiting the plains of Assam, the Apa Tanis yet never thought of settling anywhere else and their attachment to their homeland set them apart from the restless tribes of the surrounding hills.

As it can hardly be assumed that the Apa Tanis stem from a population entirely unrelated to the ancestors of the other ethnic groups of the Subansiri region, it seems probable that their distinctiveness in temperament and cultural features is at least in parts the result of the different environment to which they have been exposed for countless generations. Apa Tani civilization has developed in response to the peculiar natural features of the Apa Tani valley and there can be no doubt that it could not have assumed its present form in any other part of the Subansiri region.

In certain respects there is a parallel between the position of the Apa Tani valley and the very much larger valley of Nepal. Both these valleys, each of them unique within a large section of the Himalayas, have fostered the development of civilizations more advanced than those of the surrounding hill-country. An intensification of agriculture, which yet dispenses with any source of energy other than human labour, has in both cases made possible the growth of populations of extraordinary density. But whereas the highly sophisticated inhabitants of the Nepal valley have for many centuries been in close touch with centres of civilizations in India and Tibet, the far simpler Apa Tanis have developed their pattern of life in isolation from any comparable societies. Seclusion and self-sufficiency are the key-notes of Apa Tani society, and in the subsequent account the Apa Tanis will be described as they used to see themselves, i.e. as a self-contained society politically and ideologically independent of any outside power, a law unto themselves, and an oasis of peaceful, ordered existence in a world of warring, unruly tribes.

In the absence of any archaeological data we have no means of determining how long the Apa Tanis may have been dwelling in their present habitat. But judging from the way in which they have transformed their environment, one can safely assume that many centuries must have passed since the forefathers of the present population first set foot in the valley. A tradition current among the Apa Tanis tells that their ancestors came from a country to the north or north-east situated near two rivers known as Supupad-Pudpumi. These names may refer to two tributaries of the Subansiri, but neither the Apa Tanis nor anyone else is likely to identify this legendary country of origin. All Apa Tanis agree, however, that at one stage in their migrations they crossed the Subansiri River from north to south and came to a place in the Sipi valley called Karr, which lies beyond the Pij Cholo, a peak of 8,417 feet rising from the north bank of the Kamla River and visible from the hills

surrounding the Apa Tani country. In this area the original Apa Tanis are believed to have split into three groups, each of which took a different route to the Apa Tani country. The stages on these routes refer to identifiable localities in the Dafla and Miri Hills north of the Apa Tani country, and it is likely that this part of the tradition reflects historical events imprinted on the tribal memory. Each of the three groups of immigrants is believed to be responsible for the foundation of different villages, and the present division of the Apa Tani tribe into three clusters of closely allied settlements is traced to the days when three waves of migrants occupied the valley.

Though local traditions speak of an immigration of the tribe's ancestors from a northern direction, these memories can only relate to the last stages of a population movement which may well have changed its course more than once. Any suggestion that the Apa Tanis might have been of Tibetan origin would be unrealistic, for all cultural indicatives point to affinities with such populations as the Abors and even more with the Nagas of the hills to the south of the Brahmaputra valley. A better knowledge of the tribal languages of the North-East Frontier Agency and a comparative study of anthropometric data may at some future date throw new light on the ethnic affinities of the Apa Tanis. At the present time it would be futile to speculate about the location of the region from which they set out on their migration to the valley that was to be their home for countless centuries.

In their racial make-up the majority of Apa Tanis seem to conform to the palaeo-Mongoloid type characteristic of most of the hill-tribes of the borderlands of Assam and the Eastern Himalayas. But besides many individuals who might pass for Abors, Daflas or even Nagas, there are Apa Tanis who show certain features not usually associated with the palaeo-Mongoloid races. Among these are prominent, occasionally even hooked noses, deep-set eyes and longish faces very different from the usual Mongoloid facial type.

A somewhat similar type can be found among Tibetans, and has been reported also from certain parts of South-west China, where individuals with features of Europoid cast are met with among such tribes as the Lolos. Connected with this type is in some cases a skin colour differing from the usual copper-brown by a slight rosy hue noticeable particularly in children and young people.

In view of our scanty knowledge of other populations of the Subansiri region it is not possible to offer any reasoned explanation for the occurrence of a physical type otherwise not found among the Assamese hillmen. But while living in the Apa Tani valley, I gained the definite impression that the lighter-skinned and less markedly Mongoloid type was more frequent among persons of superior class than among the slave class within which a good deal of Dafla blood has been absorbed. This impression is not supported by any quantitative or anthropometric data, and in their absence we must be content to note that the Apa Tanis differ from the populations of the surrounding hill-country, notably by the sporadic occurrence of a physical type distinct from the palaeo-Mongoloid type predominant among such tribes as Daflas and Miris.

The economic and political relations between these tribes will be referred to in several of the following chapters, and it therefore seems indicated to preface this study of the Apa Tanis with a brief ethnographic sketch of their Dafla and Miri neighbours.

The Daflas, who in their own language refer to themselves as Nisü or Ni—the latter word meaning simply 'human being'—constitute a population of an estimated strength of at least 40,000, scattered over a large, rugged hill-region bordering on the Aka country to the west and on the Miri country to the east. All Daflas trace their descent from one legendary ancestor, whose three sons are believed to have been the forefathers of three groups of clans respectively known as Dapum, Dodum and Dol. Each of these main groups is subdivided into phratries and exogamous clans,

and there are areas where clans of all three main groups live side by side, dwelling in the same valleys even if only occasionally in the same settlements.

Whereas the Apa Tanis have long achieved a high degree of stability, the Dafla clans inhabiting the country extending west and north of the Apa Tani valley have for generations been in a state of flux and unrest. This unrest has manifested itself by frequent migrations, which in turn led to a continuous change in the composition of the population of many areas. A steady north to south movement from the Khru region into the Panior-Kiyi region and from there to the Par valley down into the foothills is clearly discernible. In the area of the lower Panior valley few Daflas live in the villages where they were born, and the grandfathers of many men now settled in the foothills are known to have lived in villages on the upper course of the Panior. The country close to the Himalayan main range has seen a similar north–south drift, and it appears that this steady population movement has been continuing for a considerable time. The causes of all these migrations are still obscure. There may have been pressure of Tibetans or Tibetanized tribes on the Daflas of the higher regions, or exhaustion of the cultivable land and an increase in population may have forced the tribesmen to seek new land in the lower valleys where forests and virgin land were, and still are, more plentiful than in the middle ranges.

Dafla economy is based on agriculture and animal husbandry, and the principal method of tillage is slash-and-burn cultivation necessitating a periodic shifting of fields. Dry rice, millets (*Eleusine coracana* and *Setarica italica*), and maize are the main crops. The breeding of livestock is everywhere important: Mithan (*Bos frontalis*), pigs, goats and fowls are kept by all Daflas, but oxen are found only in areas that have connections with Assam.

The size of settlements ranges from three or four small homesteads to up to thirty substantial houses. Most dwellings are long-houses with as many as twelve hearths and

room for as many families. A Dafla settlement of ten houses may thus have a population of nearly three hundred. The houses are dispersed over the hill-sides, each house or group of two or three houses standing on a different level. The village is not a closely knit social and political unit. Families may join or leave at will, and in some areas there is a slow but continuous movement of people from one village to the other. Feuds are usually not between village and village, but between the head of one long-house and the leader of a comparable group of closely allied families. It is not unusual for one or two houses in a village to be raided and burnt, while the inhabitants of the other households remain unscathed and make no effort to rush to the succour of neighbours carried away as captives.

The primary social unit is the household comprising several elementary families and in some cases as many as sixty or seventy members. Such a long-house is virtually autonomous and self-contained: there is no system of village headmen or tribal elders exercising authority over their co-villagers. Even members of the same exogamous clan do not necessarily act in a spirit of solidarity, and internecine strife and feuds between clan-members dwelling in different settlements are common occurrences.

While Dafla society lacks hereditary classes there is a vital division between freemen and slaves. The latter are mainly persons captured in war and either kept by their captors or sold. Their children become members of their owner's clan, but their status is that of dependants rather than of slaves, and in time they can acquire wealth and become freemen of good social status. Thus there exists among the Daflas no slave class whose members are barred from rising in the social scale.

An economic and social pattern similar to that found among the Daflas dwelling to the west and north of the Apa Tanis prevails also among the tribesmen known to the Assamese as 'Hill Miris' and inhabiting the lower Kamla valley and the hill-country extending between the Apa

Tani valley and the Subansiri River. The distinction between 'Daflas' and 'Miris' is entirely arbitrary, the two names are used only by the Assamese plainsmen, and the term Nisü, which despite the plea expressed in my *Ethnographic Notes on the Tribes of the Subansiri Region* (Shillong, 1947) has not gained currency, applies to 'Miris' no less than to 'Daflas'. Nor are there any significant cultural differences between the regional groups known by these names. The inhabitants of the lower Kamla valley and the hills east of the Apa Tani valley call themselves Gungü, and claim descent from a mythical figure believed to be a brother of the first ancestor of the Dopum, Dodum and Dol groups. All these groups freely intermarry, and though there are regional linguistic distinctions, the dialects of all adjoining groups are similar enough to be mutually understandable, whereas only those Apa Tanis and Daflas can freely converse who are used to hearing each other's language.

The overall linguistic uniformity and the similarity of customs of all Daflas and Miris seem consistent with their traditions of a common origin, and it is significant that these traditions explicitly exclude the Apa Tanis, who, though surrounded by Daflas and Miris, represent an entirely different cultural pattern.

Racially, on the other hand, the Apa Tanis and their neighbours have much in common. Like the former, the Daflas and Miris do not present a racially homogeneous population. Though most individuals evince features commonly associated with the palaeo-Mongoloid races, there are at least two distinct types. The more frequent is characterized by a round face with a broad, depressed nose and prominent cheek-bones, eyes lying in flat sockets, and a small weak chin. Small stocky stature and a sallow brownish skin colour often seem to be associated with this type. Another and somewhat rarer type is characterized by an oblong face, a prominent, often hooked nose with a narrow bridge, deep-set eyes, a well-pronounced chin, ruddy

complexion, and comparatively high stature. The distinction between these two types corresponds to a similar cleavage noticeable in the racial make-up of the Apa Tani tribe. This may suggest the hypothesis that the same two contrasting racial elements, whose incomplete blending has resulted in the present physical character of the Daflas and Miris, have contributed also to the formation of the equally heterogeneous Apa Tani population.

The fundamental cultural distinctions between the Apa Tanis and their Dafla and Miri neighbours are all the more remarkable, and in the following chapters we shall frequently have occasion to point to the striking contrasts in the style of living and social philosophy of these tribes so close in space and so widely divergent in economic, social and political development.

I

THE UTILIZATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

THE economy of the Apa Tanis is without exact parallel among the tribes of India's borderlands. Secluded from the outside world by natural barriers and warlike neighbours, the Apa Tanis have developed the resources of their small homeland in a way which would be creditable to any advanced community and is truly astonishing in a tribe of archaic and in many ways primitive material equipment.

The Apa Tanis' habitat is a single broad valley lying at an altitude of 5,000 feet and ringed by mountains rising to heights of over 8,000 feet. There is much to suggest that at one time in the remote past this valley was a lake far above the gorges on either side and that the silt brought down by streams from the surrounding mountains has filled out this lake and built up a plain whose fertile soil has enabled the Apa Tanis to develop their peculiar type of agriculture and with it a settled form of life. This plain is drained by a small river, the Kele. Before the advent of the Apa Tanis the Kele may have been a meandering stream in a spacious valley of bogs and swamps, but today it is forced into a more or less straight course between high dams. There is a tradition according to which the Apa Tanis' ancestors found the swamps inhabited by large, amphibious reptiles, known

as *buru*, and that these apparently harmless creatures were exterminated when the Apa Tanis drained the swamps and made the valley arable.[1] Through the efforts of the Apa Tanis the wide flat valley was transformed into an enormous mosaic of carefully tended rice-fields, while on islands of higher ground lie groves of pines, bamboos and fruit trees, as well as seven large villages with labyrinths of densely crowded streets.

The length of the valley is about 6½ miles and the breadth at the widest point about 2 miles. According to the census of 1961 the seven villages comprised 2,520 houses—a figure considerably smaller than my estimate of 1945—and the population of these villages was returned as 10,745 persons, all of whom derived the bulk of their subsistence from the twenty-odd square miles of cultivable land, and used the surrounding wooded hills only as hunting grounds. There is neither in the North-East Frontier Agency nor elsewhere in India an aboriginal tribe of comparable size which dwells within the confines of so restricted a territory.

The agriculture of the Apa Tanis is thus not only of interest as the basis of an economy different from that of all surrounding populations, but it provides us also with an example of an elaborate and most efficient system of soil exploitation developed by a people cut off from the material development of Indian high civilization. The achievement of the Apa Tanis is all the more remarkable as the neighbouring Dafla and Miri tribes follow far more primitive agricultural methods. Indeed, to come from the land of these cultivators of frequently shifted hill-fields, carved as it would seem haphazardly from the jungle and abandoned again after one or two years, into the Apa Tani valley with its purposeful order and evidence of the loving care bestowed

[1] The possible survival until comparatively recent times of huge reptiles, which according to Apa Tani traditions seem to have been not unlike antediluvial saurians, has aroused considerable interest among zoologists, but an expedition which went to the Subansiri region in search of tangible traces of the *buru* failed to achieve any concrete results. Cf. Ralph Izzard, *The Hunt for the Buru*, London, 1951.

on virtually every square yard of ground is like jumping thousands of years of man's development and stepping from an age of barbarism into an era of a highly developed civilization.

There is a certain uniformity in the topographical relationship of an Apa Tani settlement to the various parts of the surrounding village-land, and by visualizing one village in its setting of fields, gardens and tree-groves one can gain a fairly accurate idea of the Apa Tani habitat as a whole.

An Apa Tani village is built on high ground that rises like an island from the sea above the level of the flooded rice-fields. The entire area of this raised ground is occupied by hundreds of dwelling-houses, built on wooden piles but constructed mainly of bamboo and thatched with rice-straw. Space is limited in an Apa Tani village, and the houses stand wall to wall in streets and narrow lanes. Here and there a street broadens to form a small piazza, in the centre of which stands an open assembly platform (*lapang*). The houses of the wealthy stand in the reasonably broad main streets and usually near the assembly platforms, whereas those of humble folk are crowded together in back lanes. But the construction of all houses follows the same pattern. A short ladder leads up to an open verandah, and from this one enters the only room, in which the family cooks, eats and sleeps, and where the utensils, agricultural implements and spare clothes are kept. The Apa Tanis' building technique does not permit a span of the gabled roof of more than about ten feet, and the size of a house can thus be only increased by adding to its length.

While the dwelling-houses are concentrated in the centre of the village site, clusters of granaries, also built on piles, stand on the outskirts where they are safe from the spread of village fires. Adjoining the houses and granaries there are groves of bamboo, carefully fenced-in kitchen-gardens, groups of high pines and fruit trees. Narrow paths lead from the village through the groves and gardens to the irri-

gated rice-fields. Additional granaries fringe the island, and nearby are small terrace-fields kept flooded throughout the year and used as nurseries for rice-seedlings. Beyond them and stretching across the central part of the valley and the Kele River as far as the outskirts of the opposite village are the rice-fields, terrace after terrace following each other in uninterrupted succession. Standing out from this expanse of terraces are isolated hummocks of elevated land, and these are occupied by gardens or groves, or serve as pastures and burial grounds.

Well-maintained paths connecting the villages run along the dams of rice-terraces, and short planks and bamboo structures serve to bridge the Kele River. The rice-fields extend right up to the foot of surrounding hills, and wherever a side valley offers opportunity for terracing and there is an oozing trickle of water tapering tongues of terrace-fields fill narrow ravines and skirt the base of hillocks and spurs. Elsewhere gardens, plots for vegetables, millet-seedlings and tobacco, each strongly fenced in, and more groves of bamboo and pines occupy the gentler slopes of the hills. At the fringes of the valley there are treeless, bracken-covered hills that are used as grazing grounds for cattle, and some fenced-in plots of luscious green which are kept for the cultivation of leafy plants from which a salty substance, the black 'Apa Tani salt', is extracted.

From the broken country on the edge of the valley broad paths, usually in excellent repair, rise steeply up hillsides covered with forest, plantations of pine and other useful trees in carefully nurtured plots, in each of which all trees are of the same size and kind. Only much higher up, at least 1,500 feet above the floor of the valley, is the untended forest, with its rank growth of many types of trees of the sub-tropical rain-forest, enormous rhododendrons, and a multitude of climbers, tree-ferns and orchids. Seen from any vantage point on these high ranges, the Apa Tani valley appears as an oasis of human order among the tangle of apparently uninhabited wooded ranges stretching into

the distance: the villages, like small mediaeval towns with winding streets and long rows of gabled thatched roofs, pressing round them the dark groves of *Pinus excelsa* and light-green bamboo gardens, which in the spring are broken by the pink blossoms of fruit trees, and in the centre the brilliant expanse of flooded rice-fields, an expanse one might mistake for a lake, were it not for the irregular lines of dissecting dams. From this luminous sea emerge islands clothed in groves and gardens, and irregular peninsulas of dry fields and pasture, but however far the eye reaches, there is no spot in this valley which does not show the traces of man's controlling hand.

LAND TENURE

Land so intensively and carefully tended, the object of so much ingenuity and labour, and transformed, no doubt, out of all recognition from its original state, must obviously be highly prized by those who reap the harvest of its manifold products. The influence and social prestige of an Apa Tani depend largely on the size of his holding, and in this respect the Apa Tanis differ fundamentally from their Dafla and Miri neighbours, who lack the concept of privately owned land. Among the Apa Tanis, on the other hand, land is the main source of individual wealth, and all other and less permanent possessions are mainly valued as means of acquiring more land.

Any study of Apa Tani agriculture must therefore begin with an inquiry into the system of land tenure, and we shall see that this is intimately linked with the social organization.

All land within the Apa Tanis' tribal territory can be divided into three categories: privately owned land, clan-land, and common village-land. The first category comprises practically all cultivated land, i.e. irrigated rice-fields, land suitable for dry crops, garden-plots, groves of

bamboos, pines, fruit trees and other useful trees, as well as house-sites and sites for granaries. Clan-land consists of the sites for public assembly platforms inside the village, meadow-land used as pasture and burial grounds, and tracts of forest, sometimes lying several hours' walk from the village, where the members of the owner-clan alone have the right to hunt and trap. Common village-land, on the other hand, is confined to a few rather insignificant stretches of pasture inside the valley, and to forest tracts on the periphery of the Apa Tani country. There is, as far as I could ascertain, no stretch of land claimed as common property by all seven villages of the Apa Tani tribe.

Land owned by individuals

Except for slaves and a few very poor men of better class, all Apa Tanis own land of various kinds. Inside his village, the average Apa Tani owns the site on which his house is built, and normally this site lies in the village-quarter inhabited by the other members of his clan. A good house-site in one of the main streets and preferably near an assembly platform (*lapang*) commands a very high price and is seldom to be had for less than ten mithan (*Bos frontalis*), the type of cattle which serves the Apa Tanis as the principal means of exchange for all transactions involving real estate.

When I knew the Apa Tanis the population appeared to be more or less static, and there was no pressing shortage of house-sites. I was told that most men inherited a house-site and did not have to purchase it, but that a man with several sons might have difficulty in securing for each a site in a good position. Poor men and slaves usually have houses on the outskirts of their clan-quarter, and a man of good family, fallen on bad times, is often tempted to sell his valuable house-site in a main street, and move to a back street. Many families, on the other hand, own spare house-sites, which, until they are required for a newly married

son, serve as vegetable gardens and maize plots, and the abundance of manure available in the village makes such garden plots all the more valuable.

Apart from his house-site a man requires a site for at least one granary. Such sites, which lie invariably on the outskirts of the village, are valued at one cow or half a mithan. An average family owns, moreover, at least one bamboo grove situated on the high ground adjoining the village or on a neighbouring 'island'. Bamboo groves are plots between one-quarter of an acre and two acres in size; they are protected by high fences and elaborately fastened doors, and contain not only bamboo, but usually also some pines and fruit trees. Those who do not own such groves must buy all building material as well as bamboo for making baskets and implements, for no wild bamboos grow within easy reach of the villages. Very poor men occasionally fetch bamboo from forests several hours' walk from their village, but it is virtually impossible to bring the bamboo for an entire house from so great a distance. The bamboo groves are therefore essential parts of an Apa Tani's holdings. A fairly large grove near a village may change hands for three mithan, but a very small grove on a hillside at some distance from the nearest village can be obtained for as little as one mithan.

Sometimes interspersed among the bamboo and pine groves, but more often in separate places, are the garden plots on which Apa Tanis grow vegetables, maize and tobacco. Though laid out on the same type of soil, gardens are cheaper than groves with standing bamboo or timber. Even poor men usually own such gardens, which can be bought for a pig, a Tibetan sword or three or four cloths.

The most valuable part of an Apa Tani's property is his irrigated rice-land. On this he grows the bulk of his food supply. So high is the price of wet land that unless a man inherits at least one or two irrigated terraces, he has very little chance of building up a holding sufficient for his needs. The most expensive land is that lying closest to the village.

Ten mithan and more may be paid for a single terrace of about half an acre, and smaller plots in the same area change hands for two to five mithan. Only in the outlying side-valleys, where fields do not hold water as long as those in the centre of the valley, a terrace of half an acre can be obtained for as little as two or three mithan, and smaller terraces even for one mithan or a cow. However, there are no fixed rates for land, and a plot may change hands at widely differing prices within a few years.

A concrete case of a land sale may give some idea of the value of good rice-fields. In 1944 a man of Hari village bought from a man of his own clan terraces of a total annual yield of approximately 100 small carrying baskets of unhusked rice (equalling about 1,300 lb.), a yield which corresponds roughly to the value of two small mithan bulls. For these two terraces he paid to the owner five large mithan cows, eleven oxen, as well as one Dafla cloth and an Apa Tani sword. To the five negotiators of the purchase he paid moreover fees amounting to the value of at least one mithan. Expressed in small mithan bulls—the standard for the valuation of land—the price plus commission amounted to sixteen mithan and the annual yield of the field is thus just over 12 per cent. of the invested capital without reckoning the expense of the cultivation.

An average family of five or six members can meet its consumption of rice from the yield of 1½ to 2 acres of well-irrigated wet land producing about 300 *yagi* baskets of unhusked rice. The value of such a holding is partly determined by the distance of the fields from the village, but the price for which it can be acquired depends on various incidental circumstances. It would be safe to say, however, that the value would not be lower than twenty and not higher than fifty small mithan. In 1945, this corresponded to a value between Rs.2,000 and Rs.5,000, and in addition to rice-fields of such a value, a man must possess dry fields, gardens and groves in order to be independent for his food supply.

The dry land, used mainly for the cultivation of millet, is much cheaper, and plots change hands for one or two mithan, while even a pig or an Assamese silk cloth may buy a small plot. Poor men with little or no wet land have thus a possibility of growing at least part of their requirements of food grains, but rice cannot be raised on dry land, and Apa Tanis are not used to subsist entirely on millet and maize.

In some places it is possible, however, to transform dry land into irrigable terrace-fields, and a poor man may thus acquire some plots of wet land at comparatively low cost. But such terrace-fields on high ground cannot be kept moist throughout the year, and hence they are less productive and less valuable than rice-fields in the low-lying centre of the valley.

Another way of obtaining land suitable for rice cultivation is to lay out new terraces on common clan-land. Many clans possess common pastures in the bracken-covered hillocks, and here and there a few narrow terraces can be fitted into a depression or ravine. Only members of the owner clan may build such terraces and these become their private property as soon as the land has been brought under permanent cultivation. When this has been done, such terraces may be sold even to persons of other clans. However the cattle-owners among the clan-members often resist attempts at converting pastures into fields, and they may even force a poor and landless man to relinquish a plot on which he has already begun to cultivate.

The high price of irrigated land, the fact that it can only be bought for cattle, and the restricted area of the Apa Tani country, have led to the concentration of wealth in the hands of a comparatively small number of rich men. While there are many poor men with holdings too small to feed them and their families and consequently dependent on wage-labour, there are landowners who regularly barter their surplus of grain to neighbouring Daflas or Miris for mithan, which whenever possible they use for purchasing more land.

Two examples may illustrate the manner in which large holdings have been built up. Nada Tomu, a member of the most prominent clan of Haja village, was given by his father twenty-five terraces lying in groups of five at five different points of the village-land, as well as two bamboo groves and one garden. Hence he began with far more land than the acreage necessary to support a family. Every year he sold rice to Daflas, and with the cattle obtained in exchange he bought altogether sixty-two terraces. He owned twelve slaves who worked on his land, and with his surplus grain he could buy an average of three mithan per year. Another man of the same village owed part of his wealth to his prowess as a warrior. He inherited from his father six terrace-fields and subsequently bought three large terraces for a total of twenty mithan, nine of which he had obtained as ransoms for captured Daflas.

But only the man of means and established social position can afford to engage in the risky game of raiding and man-catching. For the poor man lacking influential relatives who would effect his release if he were captured himself, the game is too dangerous. It was only when Apa Tanis began to go to the plains of Assam and engage in seasonal agricultural work or occasional plantation labour, that even poor men could acquire the means to purchase land. With their wages they bought calves in the plains, drove them up to the hills, grazed them on the communal pastures, and finally bartered the grown oxen for land.

It is a characteristic feature of Apa Tani economics that land can normally only be bought for cattle. Pigs, cloth and swords may go with the price, but the basic payment is always made in mithan or oxen. Only very small patches of dry land are occasionally sold for a pig or some valuable, but the proper currency for transactions in real property is unquestionably cattle.

The principle that all cultivated land is private property of which the owner can dispose as he wishes is so deeply ingrained in Apa Tani mentality that village boundaries

are of little consideration in the transfer of land. For the sake of convenience everyone likes to have his fields as close to his village as possible, but nothing prevents a man from purchasing fields lying on the land of a neighbouring village. In the centre of the valley the fields of the inhabitants of two adjacent villages frequently dovetail across the traditional frontiers, and it is only in the side-valleys that all the land is held by members of the nearest village.

At first sight it may appear that there is no check on the capitalistic trend in Apa Tani economics, and that more and more of the land must of necessity accumulate in the hands of a few rich men. Yet, there are various forces which counteract such a development. The rules of inheritance provide that a man's property is divided more or less equally among his sons, and many men divide up most of their land when their sons marry and set up their own households. Thus large holdings are seldom handed on undivided to the next generation. A wealthy man is moreover expected to provide some land for his married slaves, who are usually allowed to set up their own households, whether they are formally freed or not. Finally, there are many vicissitudes of fate which may force a rich man to dispose quickly, and hence at comparatively low rates, of some of his land. A long illness, which necessitates repeated sacrifices of mithan and oxen, may compel him to sell fields for cattle, or a member of his household may fall into the hands of Dafla raiders, and the mithan required for the ransom may have to be obtained by the sale of land.

While rich Apa Tanis will give their land to dependants and freed slaves, they never hire it out. There is no system of renting land or share-cropping. A poor man must either be content with the irregular income of daily wages, working alternatively for several rich men, or he must join a rich man's household as a permanent dependant and accept a position hardly different from that of a slave.

Clan-land

The land held jointly by all the members of a clan (which is invariably concentrated in one village) comprises undulating pasture land and bracken-covered hillocks, hunting grounds in the forests surrounding the valley and—usually close to the village—an open grassy stretch used as burial ground and as a place where mithan can be tethered before slaughter or sale.

Generally clan-land is not held by a single clan, but is the joint property of two or three clans that inhabit a separate quarter of a village. The most important parts of the common clan-land are not the pastures near the village, but the forest-tracts used for the extraction of wood and cane, for trapping and for hunting. The tracts owned by a group of clans are usually not concentrated in one block, but are dispersed over the hills enclosing the Apa Tani country.

The two principal clans of Duta village, for instance, possess jointly twenty-nine tracts of land in addition to their collective burial ground which forms an island surrounded by the irrigated rice-fields of the central valley. The twenty-nine tracts of clan-land, each of which has a separate name, comprise a cluster of bare hills used for grazing, a piece of jungle with a salt-lick for mithan, six tracts of forest near the village used for cutting firewood, grazing mithan and rat-hunting. The remaining twenty-one tracts lie in widely separated areas, some near the Dafla village of Licha, others south of Hang village, and yet others east of Hari village. Trapping in this tract is the prerogative of the owners, but any Apa Tani may hunt there with bow and arrow, and even cut wood.

Within a clan-forest certain areas are the trapping preserve of individual clan-members, and it is obvious that the setting of traps, and particularly spear-traps, dangerous to man and beast alike must somehow be regulated. Such an area has all the features of private property except that the owner's exclusive rights cover only trapping and the

extraction of cane. These rights may be sold to other members of the clan or group of clans owning the whole tract of forest, and the prices paid for such rights are small compared to the prices of cultivated land, trapping grounds changing hands for as little as a few swords or cloths.

Common village-land

Within the Apa Tani valley there are only a few and comparatively unimportant areas the ownership of which is vested in all the clans of a village. Theoretically, these areas are intended as a land reserve where men short of land may lay out new gardens and dry fields, but though such a transformation of common pasture into cultivated land needs the consent or at least the connivance of the other villagers, little common village land is left within the confines of the valley.

On the periphery of the Apa Tani country, on the other side, there are large forest tracts claimed by individual villages without being the property of specific clans. They lie at a distance of as much as two days' march from the valley and are thus useful only as hunting grounds, but too remote to serve as pasture for mithan or even for the regular setting of traps.

METHODS OF TILLAGE

Only by the most intensive and skilful working of the available land can the Apa Tanis maintain themselves in an area where one square mile of land, comprising fields, gardens, groves and pastures, must provide the subsistence for at least one thousand persons or, roughly speaking, two hundred families. Their methods of tillage are primitive, and indeed of a type proper to the Neolithic Age rather than to the world's great peasant civilizations of today, in so far as they depend entirely on human labour; but in other respects they are highly specialized and are proof of a far

greater capacity for planning and concerted effort than the wasteful methods of cultivation practised by many Indian populations, which for millennia have been familiar with the plough and the exploitation of animal labour.

The corner-stone of Apa Tani agriculture is the cultivation of rice on irrigated terraces. Rice is the staple food, and all other crops are grown mainly to provide variety of diet and to utilize those portions of the country not suitable for irrigation. Rice too is the principal item in the Apa Tanis' trade with tribal neighbours.

Every one of the larger streams rising on the wooded heights that ring the Apa Tani country is tapped soon after it emerges from the forest and reaches a gully wide enough to accommodate a series of narrow terraces. A short distance above the terraces occurs the first diversion from the stream but usually only a little water is here deflected; the stream continues on its course while the feeder channel, branching off at an angle, leads water alongside the series of terraces so that by blocking or opening the connecting ducts any field can be flooded or drained as required. At the head of the valley the terraces are partly dug out of the hill-side and partly built up, with a difference of one to three feet in level of the individual terraces or groups of terraces. As the valley broadens, the terraces grow in size and the differences in their level dwindle to one or even half a foot. But wherever the trickle of a spring has eaten a small ravine into the fold of the rounded hillocks that flank the valley, subsidiary series of small terraces are built up to meet the water practically at its source. It is in these subsidiary valleys where poor men short of land are using every irrigable corner for cultivation, that the individual terraces are narrowest and the dams highest, the difference between one terrace and the next being often as much as five or six feet. But unlike such terrace-builders as the Angami Nagas or the Ifugaos of North Luzon, the Apa Tanis do not construct terraces that climb the mountain slopes for a thousand feet and more. The genius of the Apa Tanis has manifested

itself rather in a meticulous and expert care lavished on every crop, than in impressive feats of engineering. Yet the lay-out of the terraces is no mean example of co-ordination of effort and perfection of technique.

The rainfall is so ample and the many streams and rivulets converging from the ring of high wooded ranges bring so much water into the shallow bowl of the Apa Tani country, that the flooding of all the low-lying terraces is on the whole no problem. Water rights are not sold or bought, and there are no fixed rules as to which terraces have the first claim on the water of any particular stream. Disputes over water are said to be rare, but when they occur a settlement can usually be reached by the division of a channel.

There is an essential difference between the terraces in the centre of the valley, which are served by streams and channels, and are for the most part kept under water during the greater part of the year, and terraces on high ground which, watered by monsoon rivulets, are largely rain-fed. We will see presently that they receive different treatment and are used for growing different varieties of rice.

The upkeep of the terrace fields, dams and channels absorbs a major part of the Apa Tanis' energy. The harvest is hardly garnered when repairs and alterations on dams are put in hand and throughout the winter, until the first days in May, men and women can be seen moving earth, levelling fields, constructing and rebuilding dams, often standing ankle deep in mud and water at a temperature only just above freezing point. They are not content merely to maintain an established system of terraces and channels which to the casual observer looks little short of perfect. If the yield of a field has not been up to standard an Apa Tani will carry out improvements before the next sowing season: divide a large field perhaps not perfectly watered into two terraces, or conversely turn two terraces into one, gaining thereby the space of the dividing dam. For all such earthworks as well as the repairing of embankments and the

levelling of fields the Apa Tani shifts the soil from one area to another on large flat wooden trays, that are easily dragged over the slimy surface of the partially flooded ground. When the work is done by parties of young men and girls, it is mainly the latter who dig up the soil and cut away the face of bunds and fields, while the young men and boys load the soil on to the trays and drag it off for redistribution. Both flat wooden batons and iron hoes are used in the remodelling and repairing of dams and fields. The wooden batons are long thin slivers of wood pointed at one end and the iron hoes are of the type in common use on tea gardens and are without exception imported from Assam: although today they appear indispensable to the Apa Tani, old men still remember the wooden hoe-like implement used in their fathers' time and there can be no doubt that then the work of building terraces took up an even greater part of the Apa Tani's time.

We have seen that there are two types of rice-fields: those permanently kept under water or at least in a very moist condition, and those that dry out and harden soon after harvest. The former, which are considered the more valuable, are not dug over and on these the stubble is left to rot and act as fertilizer. New shoots sprouting from some of the roots are allowed to grow even though they rarely bear fruit. In the planting season women go over the field planting seedlings in between the old stubble, but the entire field remains undisturbed for many years, and manure is only scattered over the surface. Such fields are used exclusively for a late ripening variety of rice (*emo*). Close to them lie terraces which could also be kept under water the whole year, but are allowed to drain off; these are cleaned and dug over with hoes before each period of cultivation and then flooded from channels; the water is allowed to filter slowly over the field and when the soil is thoroughly impregnated it is puddled by young men who, supporting themselves between two poles, treadle the mud underfoot so that to a depth of two or three feet the soil is churned to a

smooth thick paste. On these fields the three varieties of early ripening rice (*plare*, *plate* and *plaping*) are grown.

Distinct from low-lying, channel-fed terraces are those on higher ground, which depend almost entirely on monsoon streams. There the ground is dug over with hoes and the clods are broken by hand or moon-shaped hoes. On such terraces the channel water is scarcely enough to convert more than the surface soil into mud at the time of transplanting and during the period of growth the rice is largely dependent on the rainfall.

All rice is sown in nurseries. These are small terraces lying for the most part immediately below the villages adjoining the granaries or in narrow protected valleys shut in by bamboo and pine groves. Only a few nurseries lie at any distance from the village, in the middle of the terrace fields. Throughout the year the nurseries are kept deep under water and a good deal of manure is regularly thrown in. In the months before the sowing of the rice, the surface water is drained off, the soil thoroughly cleaned and puddled until it turns into a thick paste, in which the workers sink up to their knees.

By the second half of February the nurseries (*miding*) lie ready for the seed, the surface of the mud is levelled by hand and the small terraces ringed by half hoops of split bamboo or, wherever there is danger from straying cows, fenced in with fine bamboo lattice. The seed is not sprouted before sowing. The women scatter it dry, as it comes from the granary, over the surface of the mud. Each variety of rice is sown in a separate block, the larger part of the nursery being devoted to the late ripening kinds. After sowing the seed is not covered; within a few days it takes root and soon a thick film of green shoots covers the ground; then the water is allowed to filter into the field.

The transplanting of the rice begins in the middle of April. First the seedlings of the early ripening *plare* rice are planted out in those newly flooded terraces which have been dug over with hoes and then softened by treading. At the

time when men and boys are still busy in rebuilding and preparing other terraces, the transplanting is done by women and girls who lift the seedlings from the nurseries, tie them into bunches and carry them still wet from the water in openwork baskets to the fields. Starting at the edge of the field they move forward as they work, planting single seedlings at intervals of about eight inches.

Next the *plate* rice and then the *plaping* rice, both early ripening varieties, are transplanted on terraces prepared in a similar manner. The three early varieties of rice are also grown on outlying terraces with scanty water supply, but there transplanting awaits the first heavy rain and is indeed often deferred till the first half of May.

All through the spring months work on the dams continues and at the end of April begins the transplanting of the three late ripening varieties of rice (*empu*, *elang* and *rade*) which are known collectively as *emo* and form the bulk of the Apa Tanis' rice crop. The late ripening rice is planted out on terraces most of which have been cleaned by hand, but not dug over, and where the previous year's rice-plants are already sprouting. After a period of years such terraces are also dug over and then the seedlings are planted into the soft, newly turned soil before the field is actually flooded. Towards the end of the transplanting season, young men and boys, largely free from other work, join in finishing the transplanting, but the major part of this work is still done by women.

By the middle of May all the fields in the central valley are planted out and people are busy transplanting on distant, late-flooded fields of side-valleys and, as we will see presently, with the work on their dry land.

Lastly *emo* rice is planted even in some of the shallower waterways, and appears to thrive in spite of the current and of periodical submersion on days when heavy rain floods the channels.

The weeding of the rice-fields is done with great thoroughness; permanently flooded terraces are weeded two

or three times, and terraces less amply watered as much as five times. Certain outlying fields near the grazing grounds or forest land are fenced-in with strong wooden stakes either individually or in blocks to protect them against straying mithan. But in the area between the villages no fencing is necessary.

The harvest of the *plare* rice, the early ripening red rice, begins early in August. This rice is not cut, but the grains are stripped from the ears by hand. Most poorer people are by this time short of food, and the newly reaped rice is eaten almost at once.

Shortly afterwards the *plate* rice, a white variety, ripens and is reaped in similar manner.

The *plaping* rice, which is also white, ripens in the beginning of September on the fields where it was planted early, and at the end of the month on outlying fields, where planting was late.

The main rice-harvest, when all *emo* rice—the white *empu* and *rade*, and the red *elang*, all bearded varieties—is reaped at the same time, begins in the middle of October and lasts until early in November. It demands perhaps the greatest concerted effort of the year and men, women and children work without respite for two or three weeks. The women reap the rice with sickles, bought in the plains and used nowadays generally in place of the knives of Apa Tani blacksmiths, cutting the stalks about a foot from the ground. Tied into sheaves the ears are heaped together and the men thresh out the grain on the spot in a somewhat unusual fashion. The sheaves are beaten against a slanting wooden board and the grain slides down into a large carrying basket, which is immediately carried off to the granary; the straw which is the Apa Tanis' principal thatching material is stacked or just left lying about in low piles on the field.

Seed grain of all types of rice is separated from the food supply while still on the fields, the best yielders being allocated for this purpose, but the rest of the harvest is

poured on the floor of the granary for Apa Tanis do not use baskets for storing their grain. The granaries are built on wooden poles, and roofed, not with thatch but with ribs of split bamboos. There are no devices to keep away rats, which are a pest both in house and granary.

When the harvest is over, the cows are let loose on the fields and throughout the winter months they are free to graze on the stubble; but there are too few of these animals for their manure substantially to benefit land under such constant and intensive cultivation. The Apa Tanis, however, recognize the need for preserving the fertility of the soil, and they expend a great amount of energy on manuring. Throughout the winter and spring months, from the end of the harvest until the time for transplanting, women and men are to be seen daily carrying baskets of rice chaff, pig and chicken droppings, ashes and kitchen refuse to heap on their fields. When the dried-out terraces for the early rice are dug over and cleaned, the stubble and rubbish is collected in heaps and burnt. The ashes are then spread out and worked into the soil, and this process is also adopted in the case of the dry millet fields. Even cattle dung is collected from the pastures and whenever a house is rebuilt the thick layer of black soil below it, a medley of kitchen refuse, ashes, animal dung and human excrement, is excavated, filled into baskets and, as the most valuable of manures, spread over the nurseries and vegetable gardens.

Though dry crops do not rival rice in importance, the same meticulous care which the Apa Tani lavishes on his rice terraces characterizes his treatment of millet, maize and various vegetables. Many of these crops are grown in gardens and the methods employed in their cultivation are those of the horticulturist rather than of the farmer.

Dry fields lie on islands and peninsulas of slightly raised ground and on the rolling land that leads up to the broken country on the fringes of the valley. Besides the fenced-in gardens that often adjoin groves of bamboo and pine, there are the stretches of open fields, used almost exclusively for

the cultivation of millet. The soil of gardens and fields is identical, and indeed new garden plots are sometimes established in the middle of a stretch of millet fields. Most lands for dry crops are divided up into small raised oblong beds, about four by six feet large.

The principal dry crop is *Eleusine coracana* and of this two varieties are grown: an early millet (*mipa*) which is mainly planted along bunds of rice-fields and in garden plots, and a later ripening millet (*sarte*) cultivated on the open dry fields and also planted on rice-field bunds. Both varieties are, like rice, transplanted, and this seems to be a peculiarity of the Apa Tanis. Neither among the neighbouring Daflas nor anywhere else in India have I heard of *Eleusine coracana*, a crop equally suitable for shifting cultivation and peasant farming, being transplanted or sown in any way other than by broadcasting. The Apa Tanis grow the seedlings in gardens near the houses or in small fenced-in plots on islands surrounded by rice-fields. They scatter the seed densely over the moist soil, but do not cover it with earth. At the end of April, when the young plants of the *mipa* millet are about five inches high, they are planted out in gardens and on the dams of rice-fields.

A few weeks later, mainly in the first half of May, late ripening *sarte* millet is planted out on the remaining rice bunds, and on the many an odd bit of dry ground between paths, dams and channels. These plots are laid out in neat beds, a few feet square, separated by paths, and single seedlings are planted at intervals of about five inches. Immediately before planting the tops of the seedlings are clipped and this is said to lead to a quick, strong growth.

But the preparation of the dry fields has to wait until all the work on the irrigated terraces and most of the transplanting of rice is completed. It is only in the first half of May that the Apa Tanis find the time to dig over the dry fields, still covered with last year's stubble. This is mainly a man's job; it is done by groups of three to six young men, but occasionally one or two girls may work with them side by

side. Today large iron hoes are used for turning over the soil, but in the old times the work was done with wooden hoes and must then have been even more strenuous. Most of the dry fields are almost flat, but some run up the gentle slopes of the broken country and there rough terraces are built to prevent erosion and too rapid drainage. There is no attempt to flatten these terraces, a moderate gradient being considered no disadvantage for dry crops. After the men have turned over the soil, the women break up the clods and smooth the ground with the small hoe (*palü*) which is made of split bamboo looped so that the crossed ends forms a handle. Finally the *sarte* millet is taken from the nurseries and the seedlings are planted out one by one on the dry fields.

Millet is weeded twice, and this too is done by women with their bamboo hoes. The early *mipa* ripens at the same time as the *plare* rice in the first half of August. It is grown in small quantities, and the reaping is done almost entirely by the women who cut off the ears and take them home for immediate consumption. Only rarely is the early millet stored in granaries. *Mipa* millet is stored with the grain still in ear; it is never threshed until required for the pot, when threshing and husking is a combined operation conducted with heavy pounders in bowl-shaped troughs.

The harvest of the *sarte* millet follows the *emo* rice harvest, early in November, and millet is thus the latest ripening crop. The ears are cut with sickles and carried into the granaries, where they are heaped on the floor.

Millet is mainly used for brewing beer, but it is sometimes also crushed and made into a rough kind of bread. Apa Tanis do not sell millet to outsiders, and they sometimes even buy millet from neighbouring Daflas.

Although familiar with *Setarica italica* and *Sorghum vulgare*, both cultivated by Daflas and Miris, the Apa Tanis only grow *Eleusine coracana*.

The dry crop next in importance to millet is maize, and of this the Apa Tanis cultivate three varieties. They grow

maize both in the gardens inside the village, and in the more distant garden plots, but never on open dry fields. There is no tradition that maize is of recent introduction, and all three varieties are known by names which do not suggest a derivation from Indian or other foreign words.

The other garden crops of the Apa Tanis are beans, chillies, tobacco, marrow, cucumber, taro, ginger, potato, tomato, and a coarse type of spinach. All these plants are sown in the gardens both inside the villages and near bamboo groves early in March, and chillies, tobacco and tomato are transplanted a few weeks later. Potatoes and tomatoes are obviously of fairly recent introduction, and neither are extensively cultivated.

Cotton does not rank among the dry crops of the Apa Tanis, though their weaving industry is more highly developed than that of any tribe in the country. The cultivation of cotton is not considered an economic proposition, and the Apa Tanis purchase all the cotton required for their weaving from neighbouring Dafla villages. After ginning, they return the seeds to their Dafla trade-partners for the next season's sowing.

Groves

Covering less ground than the irrigated rice terraces, but rather more than the vegetable gardens, the groves of bamboo, pines and fruit trees form an integral part of Apa Tani economics. Villages of up to a thousand houses would have difficulty in finding sufficient building material in nearby forests, unless regeneration kept pace with fellings.

In the hills surrounding the Apa Tani country various kinds of bamboo occur, but that cultivated in carefully tended groves is a medium-sized straight-stemmed variety of male bamboo, which stands up well to the cold winters with seasonal snow. According to tradition the Apa Tanis brought this species with them when in the dim ages of the

past they arrived in the Apa Tani valley. Be this as it may, the Apa Tani bamboo is not found in the surrounding countryside except where it has been cultivated in the villages of nearby Daflas. Other Daflas do cultivate isolated clumps of bamboo, usually the giant spraying species also found in Assam. The Apa Tani lays out whole groves of bamboo, spacing the roots at two- or three-foot intervals, and rigorously prunes every shoot, allowing only one or two stems to grow from each root. Once established a grove will retain its regenerative power indefinitely and can be exploited over a period of years. Before laying out a new grove the Apa Tani cleans and levels the soil almost as carefully as on his dry fields, surrounding the whole plot with high fences. The roots for a new grove are lifted from an overcrowded grove and planted in shallow holes during the months of December, January or early February, for the roots set forth their first new shoots in April. Being male, the Apa Tani bamboos never flower or seed, and the planting of roots is the only way of propagation.

In good soil bamboos grow to a size usable for house-building in four years, but only bamboos of seven to ten years' growth are strong enough for house posts or main rafters.

Pinus excelsa is the most characteristic tree of the Apa Tani country. It does not occur in neighbouring valleys of similar altitude, and the Apa Tanis hold that they brought it with them when they immigrated from the country north of the Kamla and Subansiri River. At some points well over 6,000 feet high on their traditional route of migration there are small numbers of pine trees and the Apa Tanis claim that their ancestors planted these as they passed through the country. *Pinus excelsa* is a magnificent tree, which in the Apa Tani country grows to a height of over 170 feet; it is found both in the forest of the lower slopes and in groves near the villages. In the vicinity of villages groves of bamboo are generally interspersed with pines or part of the grove may be set aside for pine trees; but in groves where pines

have grown to a great height bamboos do not thrive in the shade of their spreading branches.

The time for planting young saplings, brought from the forest or more often taken from other groves, is February and the first half of March. For four or five young trees suitable for transplanting (about one to two feet high) one *dao* or a cloth or rice of similar value is paid. The wood of *Pinus excelsa* is used for building purposes, roughly cut house posts, or long slender rafters, as well as for firewood; the Apa Tanis tap the larger trees and concoct from the resin a medicament calculated to cure all inflammations, swellings, aches and pains. Owing to its resinous content this pine makes very fine torches and no Apa Tani will set off on a journey without one or two chips in his bag with which to kindle a fire.

Most groves contain besides bamboos and pines also a number of fruit trees and in the spring the fresh green of forest, garden and grove is splashed with the white, pink and deep rose of their blossoms. There are four distinct kinds of fruit trees cultivated by the Apa Tanis. *Semo* is a small cherry, the flower a dark rose, the fruit slightly oblong, reddish with white pulp. *Thakhum* is a pink-flowering peach, smaller but not essentially different from the peach grown in Europe either in flower or fruit. These peach trees are planted not only in groves, but also in gardens and close to houses. *Pita* is a very small pear and *picha* a greenish and rather bitter apple; both are found also along paths and lanes and on burial grounds where they are considered village or clan property. All fruit trees are planted in March or early April.

Whereas the groves on flat land close to the villages contain as a rule only bamboo, pines and fruit trees, in those running up the hill-slopes, pines are sometimes interspersed with a few other trees valuable as building material. For in re-afforesting a slope with young pines, Apa Tanis sometimes leave such existing timber as will prove useful. The well-stocked pine groves on the hill-sides surrounding

the valley are a remarkable tribute to the Apa Tanis' skill in forestry; the trees are usually of uniform age and the entire grove is fenced in to protect it against straying cattle.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

In Apa Tani economics the breeding of domestic animals plays a secondary role and a very considerable number of the mithan and pigs required for sacrifice and slaughter are annually bought from neighbouring Daflas and Miris. It is not that the Apa Tanis do not value mithan or pigs, but in their intensively cultivated country there is little scope for large herds of cattle, and in the congested villages no room for roaming pigs.

Though not the main source of wealth as among the Daflas, the mithan (*Bos frontalis*) is yet an important measure of wealth, and a man's economic status is judged by the number of his mithan almost as much as by the size of his holding. Indeed mithan are in a manner of speaking the recognized currency in all transactions to do with land: the value of a field can only be expressed in mithan. It thus appears that the mithan has, apart from its material value as a source of meat, a fictitious value as a medium of exchange. A man, for instance, who has a surplus of grain and wants to acquire additional land, will usually sell his surplus rice for mithan and then with these mithan purchase land. Bride-prices, ransoms and fines are usually paid in mithan, and while pigs are the sacrificial animals at most of the communal agricultural rites, mithan must be slaughtered at the rites and feasts performed by individuals who want to raise their prestige.

I have no statistics regarding the number of mithan owned by Apa Tanis in 1945, but estimate that it must have been between two and three thousand. Only a very few of these animals were, however, to be seen in the Apa Tani valley and Apa Tanis said that if they kept all their mithan

near their villages and cultivation 'there would not be a blade of rice or millet left'. Mithan prefer the shade of forests to the open pastures, and roam singly or in small groups rather than in large herds. The only times when a mithan comes anywhere near his owner's house is possibly on the day of purchase and invariably on the day of slaughter. Otherwise mithan live in the forest. It is only rarely and for specific reasons, such as for inspection by purchasers or for care in times of sickness, that they are brought to the communal grazing grounds near the village and kept tied up on long hide ropes.

Each village and in some villages each group of linked clans owns communal grazing grounds for mithan, usually a damp shady valley watered by a stream, with patches of bog where mithan can wallow up to their knees. In some of these valleys there are natural salt-licks and it seems that a mithan let loose in such a haunt will not stray far afield. Some of these forest pastures are many hours' walk from the Apa Tani villages and theft of unguarded mithan is the most frequent cause of trouble between the Apa Tanis and their Dafla and Miri neighbours.

But many mithan-owners do not keep their animals in the Apa Tani country at all; they give them into the care of Dafla and Miri friends. Not only are Daflas and Miris experienced in the keeping of cattle, but their country is also far better suited for mithan than the Apa Tani valley and they can keep the animals fairly close to their villages without risking great damage to the crops, their *jhum* fields being as a rule well fenced in. The reward for keeping another man's mithan is one calf out of three or four according to an agreement. By dispersing his mithan over several villages an Apa Tani insures himself moreover against the danger of losing his entire stock through disease. Epidemics of foot-and-mouth and rinderpest are fairly frequent and have been known to decimate the live-stock of whole areas.

Neither Apa Tanis, Daflas nor Miris control the breed-

ing of mithan, and as the animals are largely left to themselves and the bulls never castrated any selective mating would indeed be impossible.

Besides the mithan owned by individuals, there are a number of mithan which are the common property of village or clan, and these are used for sacrifices in the interest of the whole community.

Less valuable than mithan, but used in the same manner for sacrifices, as a source of meat and as currency, but never milked, are oxen of the small breed common in the plains of Assam. This cattle is almost certainly derived from imported stock and even today Apa Tanis buy calves in the plains and drive them up to the Apa Tani country. Those born in the hills have a thicker coat than plains cattle and they stand up well to the frost of winter. Unlike mithan, cattle rarely leave the open parts of the valley, usually remaining on the grasslands near the villages. In the spring and summer there is ample grazing, but in the winter, when the pastures are shrivelled and brown, the cattle live precariously on the rice and millet stubble of the previous harvest. Apa Tanis make no attempt to feed their cattle, and the cows are allowed to wander over the dried-out rice terraces and millet fields, any damage done to the brittle dams being outweighed by the value of the manure.

As soon as the rice and particularly the millet on the dry fields are planted out the cattle are banished to the grazing grounds at the ends of the valleys and the fields in the vicinity are carefully fenced in so that a cow would have to pass through a labyrinth of narrow passages and lanes before it could reach the centre of the valley where there are unprotected plots.

Very little care is given to this cattle, and there is nö system of herd boys. Summer and winter the animals are in the open day and night. Theft of cattle is therefore easy and it is more the drastic punishment meted out to offenders —death being the penalty for habitual thieves—than the

precautions of the owners that provides a safeguard. The neighbouring Daflas do not steal cows as frequently as mithan, for thieves would have to venture close to the villages and in driving off the cattle in the open country they would risk being intercepted.

Crosses of mithan and plains cattle are known, and hybrids count for ritual purposes as mithan. But the Apa Tanis certainly do not encourage cross-breeding, and cattle and mithan are kept apart by their own habits and preferences for different grazing grounds. The problem of cross-breeds is therefore of little practical importance.

No goats are kept in the Apa Tani valley. The goat is too destructive an animal to be let loose in such a carefully husbanded area. A few Apa Tanis do, however, own goats and keep them with friends in neighbouring Dafla villages; they are never milked but they can be used for certain private sacrifices, such as the propitiation of disease-bringing spirits, and the meat is, of course, readily eaten. On the whole, however, Apa Tanis are not interested in goats; they think of them only as meat and not as an investment. This attitude is borne out by a comparison of tribal values: a Dafla considers the price of a she-goat higher than that of a he-goat but an Apa Tani, indifferent to the possibilities of goat-breeding, pays more for a large male goat.

Pigs are in certain respects the favourite domestic animals, and here the word domestic applies in its narrowest sense. For Apa Tani pigs are housed below the pile-borne dwellings in boarded-up enclosures between the house-poles. Once a pig enters this enclosure it leaves it usually only on the day of slaughter. No pigs roam the village streets, for if let loose they would indeed be a serious danger to the rice nurseries, gardens and fields. This necessity of keeping pigs shut up sets a limit on their numbers, for unlike Dafla or Miri pigs, which find a good deal of food rummaging about the village, the pigs of the Apa Tanis must be fed, and no household can afford more than three or four full-grown pigs at a time. The food given to pigs

consists of the husks of grain, the dregs remaining from the brewing of millet and rice beer, kitchen refuse, the sago-like pith of a certain forest tree which the Apa Tanis collect specially for this purpose, and last, but not least, human excrement. Apa Tanis relieve themselves on narrow verandahs that run alongside their houses and the excrement, falling straight into the pigsty, is immediately devoured. In these huge villages the pig is a very necessary sanitary institution and the house of a poor man without any pigs has not a pleasant smell.

Yet, comparatively few pigs are bred. Apa Tanis find it on the whole more profitable to buy young pigs from Daflas and Miris, and hundreds of pigs are imported annually into the Apa Tani country. However, if a man decides to breed from his sow and has no boar of his own, he borrows a young boar and shuts it up for a day or two in his pigsty. For this service he either pays the boar's owner a small fee or promises him one of the piglets. But Apa Tanis say that breeding spoils the flavour of pork and that sows that have littered are never as fat as those that have not; they prefer therefore to fatten sows which have never given birth.

Boars are castrated when two or three months old, and as none are set aside for breeding purposes such sows as are allowed to breed are inseminated by very young boars. Castration is effected by the removal of the testicles and this is one of the few tasks which Apa Tanis consider defiling. A special person known as *kenna*, usually a woman, performs the operation; she has to live by herself in a house on the outskirts of the village and is subject to certain social and religious restrictions but never wants for food or clothing; indeed her job is considered a lucrative one.

The pig is the sacrificial animal indispensable for all communal rites connected with agriculture and there is a good case for the assumption that it is older in Apa Tani culture than the mithan. Pork and bacon are more highly prized than any other meat, and sides of bacon are not only the most acceptable gifts between friends and

kinsmen, but are a recognized currency for ceremonial payments.

Fowls are kept by all Apa Tanis for the sake of their eggs as well as for their flesh. For the taking of omens and for innumerable minor sacrifices and offerings chickens are needed and on a bamboo structure erected on the occasion of a single sacrificial rite one may sometimes count as many as a hundred shells of eggs, broken in the course of the ritual. Required for so many vital purposes, chickens are therefore expensive. Two eggs count as a day's wage, a hen costs as much as a knife and a big cock as much as a short *dao* or a simple cloth. At night chickens are shut into baskets or roost in the rafters, but during the daytime they run about the village, feeding mainly on refuse and the fallen grain from the winnowing fans and pounding blocks.

Dogs are of the ordinary pariah breed common all over the plains of Assam. If the Apa Tani ever had a distinct breed of dog (and it stands to reason that like the Nagas the tribes of the Eastern Himalayas did at one time possess dogs different from the mongrels of the Indian plains) the strain has been so diluted by interbreeding that the type is no longer recognizable. Many of the Apa Tanis going to the plains return with dogs, which they pick up for a nominal price, and this continuous influx of new blood must have ruined any indigenous race. Dogs are also bought from Daflas and Miris, but the canine population of the villages is kept down by the frequent use of dogs as sacrificial animals. Though Apa Tanis eat dog, few dogs are slaughtered only for the sake of their meat; they are the sacrificial animals proper to the rites performed by raiding parties and are accepted by the gods in times of sickness and personal disaster. The value of dogs in the Apa Tani country is therefore far higher than in the plains of Assam or among the neighbouring tribes.

DIVISION OF LABOUR

In families of average means most of the work in fields and gardens is done by husband and wife and their children as well as any relative or slave who may be a member of the household. On some days this working unit engages in one task, but on others the members go about their different occupations necessary for the maintenance of their holding, the husband being mainly responsible for the building and upkeep of dams, terraces, channels and fences, and for the digging over of fields and the planting of trees; and the wife being mainly occupied with the care of nurseries and gardens, the transplanting of rice and millet and the weeding of crops. But this division of labour is not complete, and on many occasions men and women work side by side, be it in building dams or even in transplanting rice. Though a couple are normally quite capable of cultivating their land without outside help, there are yet many times when help is either sought or given by other members of the community.

From childhood every Apa Tani boy or girl belongs to a labour gang (*patang*) and this association continues to some extent in later life. Thus a man who has to rebuild a rice terrace will ask some of his *patang* friends to help in the work, and in turn he will work on their fields whenever his assistance may be required. Similarly women often join forces in the tedious work of transplanting rice-seedlings, a group of four or five women working in turn on each other's fields. No payment is made for such mutual assistance, but the person on whose field the group works is expected to provide a midday meal or at least a fair amount of rice-beer for the labourers.

Whereas married men and women work only at times with the members of their old *patang*, boys and girls, from the age of seven or eight until they set up their own households, spend most of their working days with their own

patang. All members of a *patang* are approximately the same age and often of the same clan; there are girls and boys in a *patang* and if they are of the same clan they are debarred from marriage. But in some *patang* there are girls and boys of different clans and there it happens quite often that working companions become lovers and marry when they grow up.

As a rule *patang* work in turn on the fields of their members' parents, and a man whose son or daughter has joined a *patang* has thus a right on the services of the entire *patang* whenever his turn comes. These services are free, except that he has the obligation to provide the *patang* with a meal to be eaten on the fields. But rich men can sometimes hire a *patang* out of turn for wages and then the hire is divided equally among all its members.

The hiring of *patang* is, however, only one of the means by which rich men obtain the labour necessary for the cultivation of their large holdings. Many poor men and women subsist entirely or at least to a large extent on the grain received as wages for daily labour, and as a rule they have little difficulty in finding employment. For although rich men have usually a number of slaves or dependants who work for them throughout the year, they often need additional labour to keep abreast with the agricultural calendar and complete the building of dams, transplanting and harvesting in proper season. The average daily wage is just under two seers of husked rice, and this is enough to feed two persons for a day. Thus if a husband and wife both work for wages they can support themselves and two or three children, but unless they engage in trade and go to work in the plains of Assam, it is almost impossible for them to better their position by saving and then acquiring land of their own. True, there is the reserve of clan-land where new terraces can still be carved from the hill-sides, but the really poor who live from hand to mouth by daily labour can seldom spare the time for the strenuous task of building new terraces.

Apa Tani agriculture depends thus both on the mutual help of the owners of small-holdings and on the labour hired by the rich. Co-operative and capitalistic trends exist side by side and neither trend shows any sign of eliminating the other. The man of modest means who cultivates his fields with the help of his family and the *patang* of his children is not in danger of being ousted by the owner of a hundred fields nor have the poor very much chance of effecting a more equal distribution of the existing land.

II

TRADE AND BARTER

AT first sight the Apa Tani valley appears as a self-contained economic unit, distinct and largely isolated from the surrounding Dafla and Miri country. But this first impression is deceptive, and closer scrutiny reveals that even before 1944 the Apa Tanis were self-sufficient only in so far as their requirements of food-grain and vegetables were concerned. For the supply of animals for slaughter as well as for several raw materials needed by their craftsmen they depended on trade with neighbouring tribes and even with the populations of the plains of Assam. Their main export has always been rice, for a system of agriculture combining optimal exploitation of the limited land with indefinite preservation of soil fertility enables the Apa Tanis to produce sufficient food for themselves, as well as a surplus which constitutes not only a broad margin of safety but is normally available for barter. Despite the lack of animal traction and ploughs Apa Tani agriculture has advanced beyond the stage of subsistence farming. On an average every man working on the land produces more grain than he consumes; the balance can be spared for feeding craftsmen and a small class of wealthy men, engaged more in the tasks of social and political leadership than in manual work, as well as for sale or exchange for commodities not produced or in short supply in the Apa Tani country.

Trade and Barter

The relations between the complex and highly specialized Apa Tani economy and the more primitive economy of the neighbouring semi-barbaric Daflas and Miris are a remarkable example of the interdependence of basically different cultures. Trade appears today as a necessity for the Apa Tanis, but while they have for centuries inhabited the same territory and their economy has attained the stability resulting from long undisturbed growth, their less stable neighbours have frequently changed. Tribal tradition tells us that Dafla clans, which now stand in close trade relations with the Apa Tanis, lived only four or five generations ago in distant valleys to the north-west where they had probably little knowledge of even the existence of the Apa Tanis. Trade with a people able to supply large quantities of grain is for them undoubtedly a novelty, but experience shows that whatever may have been their previous economy, they were not slow in availing themselves of the new opportunities. The position of the Apa Tanis is different. They have often been the only firm rock in a sea of shifting and warring tribes, and must more than once have seen their neighbours of yesterday defeated and scattered by more powerful newcomers. But these newcomers conformed to the same economic pattern as the populations whom they had displaced and were usually willing enough to step into a barter system by which they could obtain grain and the wares of expert Apa Tani craftsmen. Apa Tani economy has thus for long been tuned to the exchange of goods with the outside world, and there can be no doubt that any break in this external marketing would seriously disrupt the structure of the delicately balanced economic system.

The trade between Apa Tanis and their Dafla and Miri neighbours is largely based on the complementary nature of their economies. The Apa Tanis are primarily agriculturists and their densely populated country offers little scope for the raising of large numbers of domestic animals. The Daflas on the other hand are indifferent cultivators

without the knowledge of irrigation and terracing,[1] but living loosely scattered over extensive areas of jungle-covered and grassy hill-slopes, they have ample opportunity and considerable aptitude for the breeding of mithan, oxen, goats and pigs.

The exchange of surplus Apa Tani rice against Dafla or Miri animals is therefore to the advantage of both sides. Apa Tanis require mithan and pigs for sacrifice and they value meat, and particularly pork and bacon, so highly that they will go to great trouble in order to obtain animals for their own consumption. At the time of the Mloko, the principal annual festival, the demand for pigs is as great as the demand for turkeys in England at Christmas, and an Apa Tani intent on strengthening his social prestige can do no better than to sacrifice a number of mithan during the Morom festival.

The need of the Daflas for the agricultural produce of their Apa Tani neighbours is less constant, and is not immediately connected with ritual observances. In years of a good harvest, they may be able to dispense with grain purchases altogether, while in times of scarcity, they will pay double the normal price for supplies. Rice is usually paid for in mithan, and the Apa Tanis are always willing to accept these animals which serve practically as a currency. The normal price of a full-grown female mithan expressed in rice is thirty carrying baskets of unhusked rice, but in years of food shortage among the neighbouring Daflas and Miris, it may drop to as little as fifteen carrying baskets with a capacity of sixty pounds of unhusked rice each. A Dafla or Miri in need of grain usually comes himself to the village of an Apa Tani friend, and if he succeeds in concluding a bargain he and the members of his household carry the rice back to his village, perhaps making several trips. Often the price is paid at once, and many a prospective buyer brings

[1] Exceptions are a few Dafla villages immediately adjoining the Apa Tani country, where irrigated cultivation on a small scale has been initiated with the help of hired Apa Tani labour.

a mithan with him when he comes to negotiate a deal. But sometimes Apa Tanis give rice on credit, and we shall see in the next chapter that most of the disputes and feuds between Apa Tanis and their Dafla and Miri neighbours resulted from trade deals involving the purchase of rice on credit. For the Apa Tanis use advances of grain as a means whereby they bring a debtor gradually under their control, and according to Apa Tani custom it is perfectly regular that a man unable to repay a loan should become the dependant of his debtor. But when applied to trade relationships between Apa Tanis and Daflas this principle usually leads to friction, and many are the occasions when Daflas reduced to the position of bond servants by their Apa Tani debtors not only escaped but led raids on Apa Tanis or their cattle in order to get their own back on their one-time masters.

Yet, despite such incidents, trade between Apa Tanis and Daflas rarely comes to a complete stand-still, and the degree of the economic dependence of the two tribes can be gauged from the range of the usual exchange goods. Besides buying mithan and pigs for rice the Apa Tanis obtain from Daflas almost all the cotton required for their highly developed weaving industry. Though Apa Tanis, no doubt, could grow cotton, they find it more economical to use their skill for irrigation to produce rice, and then barter it for cotton which their Dafla neighbours can grow on dry hill fields. The Apa Tanis buy the raw cotton, gin it, spin and dye it and then weave it into cloth, some of which is sold to the original suppliers of the cotton. Though some Dafla women also weave, Apa Tani women—and only women engage in weaving—produce cloths of particularly good quality and attractive patterns. Sometimes raw cotton is bartered for Apa Tani swords or knives, but there is also a system by which impecunious Apa Tani women can obtain supplies of raw cotton in exchange for their services as weavers. They go to Dafla villages and undertake to weave cloth of any desired type on the understanding that

during their stay they are fed and that finally they are given as wages a quantity of cotton equal to that which they utilized in weaving cloth for their clients.

Though not a cotton-growing people, the Apa Tanis possess more and better textiles than any of their neighbours, and they weave not only for home consumption but with the definite idea of using cloth for barter transactions. Through Apa Tani traders as well as through middle-men of other tribes Apa Tani cloth reaches areas as distant as the upper Panior valley, the Khru valley, and some of the Miri villages on the upper course of the Kamla River.

Swords (*dao*) and knives manufactured by Apa Tani smiths are also articles of trade and on their trading visits to villages of Daflas or Miris Apa Tanis usually carry with them *dao* and knives for small payments. *Dao*, knives and cloth are the main exchange goods with which they purchase pigs, dogs (which the Apa Tanis eat while the Daflas do not), fowls, tobacco, cotton, gourd vessels, dried bamboo shoots, and also such articles of dress as cane belts, cane hats, and fibre rain-cloaks. Sometimes they give in exchange also salt which they obtain from the plains of Assam. The salt extracted from the ash of certain herbaceous plants grown in the Apa Tani country is no longer an important article of trade, but it is probable that before Assamese salt became easily available this home-made 'salt' found ready buyers among the Apa Tanis' tribal neighbours.

A minor item of trade is earthen pots. Among the Apa Tanis pots are made only in one village—Michi Bamin—and even there only by certain clans. Many Apa Tanis purchase therefore pots from such Dafla villages as Jorum and Talo, paying usually in rice. But as shortage of fuel limits the production of finished pots in those villages, Apa Tanis sometimes buy unburnt pots, and carry them across the country denuded of forests by the Daflas' cultivation till they reach the forest-belt which divides the Apa Tani from the Dafla country; there they build fires and bake the pots before taking them home.

Trade and Barter

No currency is used in trade transactions between Apa Tanis and Daflas, but both tribes have their systems of values, which though similar do not completely coincide. The Apa Tani units of value, each of which is described by a separate term, can be listed as follows:

1 *pachu*—2 eggs
or 1 small chicken
or 1 day's wage

1 *paroe*—1 middle-sized chicken
or 1 small knife
or 7 lb. unhusked rice

1 *soe*—1 hen
or 1 knife

1 *pue*—1 short Apa Tani *dao*
or 1 cock
or 1 plain white Apa Tani cloth
or 13 lb. unhusked rice, such as contained in a *pue yagi* (basket)

1 *pili*—1 average-sized Apa Tani *dao*
or 1 white Apa Tani cloth with red and blue border
or 1 white bazaar cloth (worth in North Lakhimpur about Rs. 2½ in 1945)
or 1 piglet

1 *puhan*—1 long Apa Tani *dao*
or 1 white Apa Tani cloth with broad multi-coloured border
or 1 small pig
or 3 *pue yagi* of unhusked rice

1 *pupe*—1 small blue and red Apa Tani cloth
or 1 middle-sized pig
or 4 *pue yagi* of unhusked rice

1 *pungue*—1 normal-sized blue and red cloth
or 3 white bazaar cloths
or 5 *pue yagi* of unhusked rice

1 *pukhe* (or *apu*)—1 long Assamese *dao*
or 1 double cloth cloak
or 1 big male goat
or 1 pig of the size of a dog
or 6 *pue yagi* of unhusked rice

1 *kanue*—1 Assamese silk cloth
or 1 large pig
or 7 *pue yagi* of unhusked rice

1 *pine*—1 small Tibetan sword
or 8 *pue yagi* of unhusked rice
1 *kua*—1 large Tibetan sword
or 9 *pue yagi* of unhusked rice
1 *puliang*—1 new large Tibetan sword
or 10 *pue yagi* of unhusked rice.

In these standard values practically any price can be expressed; the value of irrigated land is, however, usually reckoned in mithan.

A few examples will give an idea of the prices of the more costly commodities. An embroidered cloth such as is worn by priests on ceremonial occasions is worth one *puliang* plus one *pukhe*; a cow is estimated at two *puliang* plus one *pukhe*, a small mithan at four to five *puliang*, and a full-grown mithan cow as eight *puliang* or eighty *pue yagi* baskets of rice.

The correlation of values ruling the barter transactions with Daflas and Miris corresponds in many respects to the above scale of values, but prices are never stable and depend to a great extent on the local relation between demand and supply as well as on the individual Apa Tani's skill in bargaining. Thus an Apa Tani trader venturing with some cloth and *dao* to Miri villages north of the Kamla River, may obtain much better prices than if he tried to dispose of them in such nearby villages as Jorum and Talo.

When trading in distant villages Apa Tanis barter their wares not only for such commodities as pigs, fowls or cotton, which they require for their immediate use, but accept payment also in the shape of valuables such as beads, small bell-metal bells (*maje*) and bell-metal discs, which have in many ways the character of a currency and are purchased with the definite idea of an ultimate advantageous resale.

Almost all barter transactions between Apa Tanis and neighbouring tribes are simple business deals devoid of ritual or institutional associations. While among Daflas the purchase of a valuable prayer-bell (*maje*) creates be-

tween seller and buyer ceremonial ties comparable to those between families linked by marriage,[1] and such ties add materially to a man's prestige and security, economic gain is practically the sole motive in trade transactions between Apa Tanis and Daflas; barter transactions between Apa Tani and Apa Tani are, however, wrapped up in a certain ceremonial formality which includes a meal at the expense of the buyer; even the exchange of a chicken for a *dao* is carried out through a negotiator who receives a recognized fee for his services.

TRADE WITH THE PLAINS OF ASSAM

Though most of the commodities in use among the Apa Tanis are produced in their villages or bartered from tribal neighbours, the import of a small number of articles from the plains of Assam has become a necessity. We do not know for how long the Apa Tanis have been in the habit of obtaining iron and salt from Assam, nor whether in olden times they obtained these goods from other sources. Today Apa Tanis purchase these articles not only for their own use but also for resale to tribesmen of villages farther from the plains.

For six months in the year, i.e. from April to September, no Apa Tani normally ventures on a journey to the plains; the rivers are then often in flood and unfordable, and a trek of four or five days through precipitous hill-country involves considerable harship.[2] But in the cold weather, when communications are easier, numerous Apa Tanis have for years been accustomed to visit the plains of North Lakhimpur. Their number varies from year to year, but even before 1945, when the government began employing Apa Tanis on a large scale as porters, several hundred of them used to

[1] Cf. my *Himalayan Barbary*, pp. 199, 200.

[2] It must be emphasized again that this book deals with conditions previous to 1945; since then communications have greatly improved, and the pattern of seasonal wage-labour in the plains may have changed.

come to North Lakhimpur and the surrounding villages. Most of them were men and young boys, but a few Apa Tani women occasionally accompanied their husbands. Men of wealth and high status never went to the plains, and when I first arrived in the Apa Tani country I found that none of the clan-headmen had ever left the hills. Only slaves, descendants of slaves or very poor men were in the habit of going to the plains.

The goods which such men took with them for sale were of little importance. They usually carried chillies (*capsicum* of a particularly large variety very much in demand among plains people), which they bartered for salt or for their daily requirements for the time of their stay in the plains. Most of them found employment as agricultural and forest labourers, and worked for periods ranging from ten days to three months. Before the war they earned daily wages of four to five annas but by 1945 they could earn Rs. 1 and sometimes as as much as Rs. 1½ a day.

Among the goods purchased in the plains, salt ranks first. To the present-day Apa Tanis it has become almost indispensable both for their own consumption and as an article of exchange in their trade with other tribes. Salty substances gained by filtering water through the ashes of bracken and certain other plants are used for cooking, but are not considered equal to proper salt. Every year many loads of salt are brought up from the plains and a good many Apa Tanis go there for the specific purpose of purchasing salt.

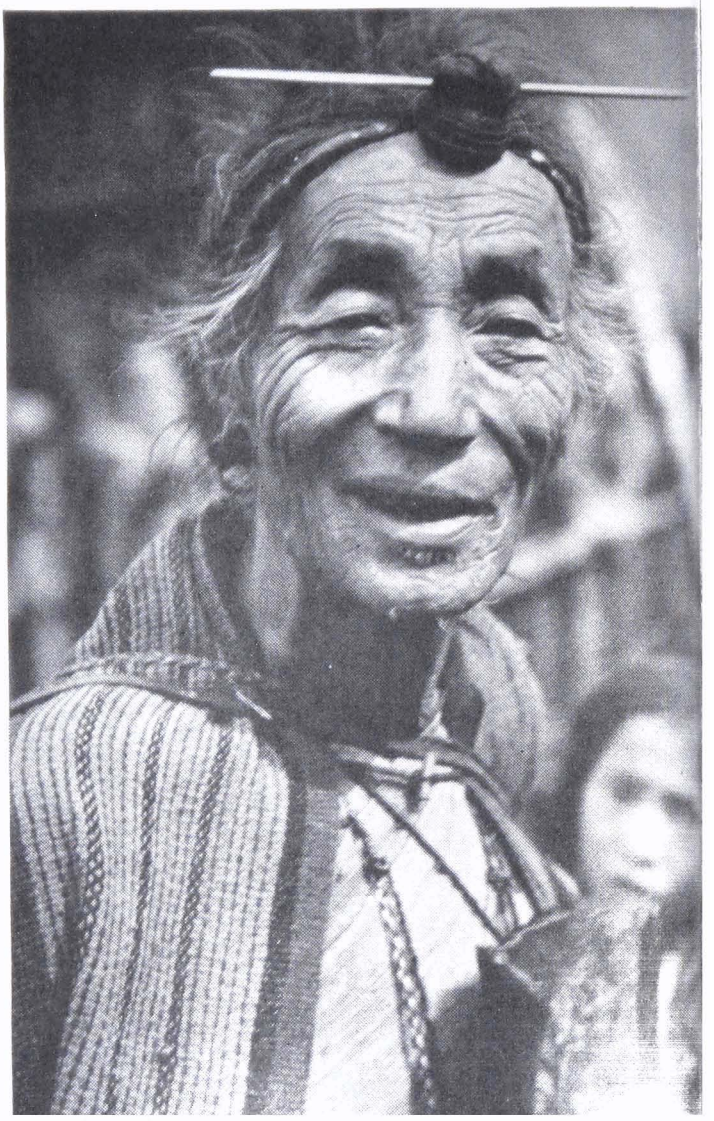
Other goods bought in the plain are iron hoes, axes, bowls of bell-metal and more rarely brass pots, Assamese silk cloth (*endi* cloth), occasionally ordinary cotton cloth, woollen Bhotia cloth, locally known as *tonga*, beads, bracelets, brass hair-pins and ear-rings, safety-pins, cows, pigs and dogs.

Iron hoes have become a definite necessity, for the large iron hoe of the type used in tea gardens has completely replaced the older wooden type. Hoes bought in the plains

1. View over the Apa Tani valley with irrigated rice-fields in the foreground and bamboo and pine-groves in the background.

2. A gang of Apa Tani boys and girls rebuilding the dam of a terraced field.

3. A young married woman of Hang village, wearing black wooden nose-plugs.



4. An old patrician of Haja village.

are also the main raw material of Apa Tani blacksmiths, who manufacture from the metal axes, *dao* and knives. During the war the Apa Tanis experienced difficulty in obtaining hoes. Previously most of the hoes purchased in the plains were either discarded or stolen from tea gardens, the thieves being tea-garden coolies who traded them at cheap rates to hill men thus avoiding detection. But when iron implements became expensive and scarce, the tea gardens tightened their control and used even worn hoes, which formerly had been disposed of locally at cheap rates.

Woollen Bhotia blankets are much prized, but they are rarely used in their original form; the Apa Tanis unravel the woollen yarn, dye it in various colours and use it for the manufacture of woollen ceremonial cloths and the embroidery of cotton cloth.

Endi cloths, usually of the mixed silk cotton type, are worn by all the wealthier Apa Tanis wrapped round the body and held in position by iron pins or modern safety-pins. They are softer and therefore warmer than cotton cloth, and worn under the stiff embroidered cloaks they are useful and aesthetically pleasing. The men who work in the plains of Assam for wages often buy *endi* cloths and sell them to rich men in their own country for rice, domestic animals and in rare instances even plots of land. Similarly white and more rarely black cotton cloth is bought in the plains; some is taken up by Apa Tani customers and some is traded on to Daflas of the interior. Plain, machine-made cotton-cloth is, however, not very popular among Apa Tanis, and rarely worn by men of good social status. It is indeed very inferior to home-spun Apa Tani cloth. Women, however, sometimes wear a length of light white bazaar cloth as a wrap when otherwise they would leave their breasts and shoulders bare.

Cups and bowls of bell-metal, such as made in the Kamrup district, are owned by most rich men and are very much valued. Ordinary brass-ware, on the other hand, is

not popular and does not fetch any appreciable price among either Apa Tanis or Daflas.

Silken *endi* cloth and bell-metal vessels are no doubt luxuries, but luxuries of a solid and useful type in keeping with the spirit of Apa Tani culture. Their introduction serves perhaps as a corrective to extreme differences between rich and poor. For trade in these commodities gives poor men a chance of bettering their position and even purchasing land, while the desire to possess such things as silk cloth and bell-metal bowls induces rich men to part with some of their accumulated rice store and in certain cases even with land.

While a poor man has otherwise little chance of acquiring cattle, work in the plains of Assam has enabled many a man to build up a small stock of cows. Apa Tanis often buy for part of their wages a calf or a cow and take the animals up into the hills. This is not without risk, for about one out of every five cows so driven up into the hills succumbs to the hardship of the journey. But in a country where cattle are practically currency and at the same time a symbol of wealth, the attraction of possessing cattle is very great. Besides cows, Apa Tanis purchase in the plains also large numbers of dogs and small pigs, both of which are eaten and used for sacrifice.

Most of the beads nowadays worn by Apa Tani women are small, blue glass beads bought in the bazaars of the plains. But many women possess also necklaces of much larger beads of transparent or dark blue glass which do not seem to have come from India, but are probably of Tibetan or Chinese origin.

In their hair-knots men wear bell-metal pins which are without exception manufactured in the plains. The brass ear-rings of the women, cut from thin brass sheets as well as the metal ear-rings of men, are also purchased in the bazaars.

Safety-pins are universally worn, and are used to pin together the ends of cloths, both imported and local when they are wrapped round the chest. Previously straight iron

pins were used for the same purpose, but safety-pins have almost entirely replaced them. The present importance of the safety-pin among the Apa Tanis is reminiscent of the rôle of the *fibula* in the Bronze Age. Most men wear, apart from those actually in use, several large safety-pins on a string round the neck.

Just as safety-pins have ousted the straight iron pin, so cheap bracelets of white metal, and occasionally more expensive ones of silver, have taken the place of the wrought-iron bracelets made by Apa Tani blacksmiths.

This list of articles bought in the plains is not necessarily exhaustive, but includes all those which have secured a definite place among the Apa Tanis' material possessions, and are purchased regularly and in appreciable numbers.

In the selection of the articles imported from the plains the Apa Tanis evince on the whole extraordinarily good taste. They have rejected everything gaudy and flimsy and prefer either such solid and plain articles of superior material as hand-woven silk cloth and substantial, beautifully shaped vessels of bell-metal, or raw materials such as woollen Bhotia blankets which enable them to develop their own crafts.

TRADE IN TIBETAN GOODS

Though the Apa Tanis have no direct contact with Tibetans, they use a good many articles of Tibetan origin which reach them by devious routes through their Dafla and Miri neighbours. The employ of such Tibetan articles for ceremonial and ritual purposes points to an old association with Apa Tani culture, and there are indeed indications that in the not too distant past most of the foreign commodities needed by the Apa Tanis came from or through Tibet rather than from Assam. Even today there is hardly a respectable Apa Tani who does not possess at least one Tibetan sword; at the time of feasts thousands of Tibetan beads are worn, and bronze plates of Tibetan make are

one of the standard valuables used for larger payments. Tibetan prayer bells (*maje*) are not of the same importance as among Daflas, and few Apa Tanis possess famous specimens of high value. But the more ordinary types, such as may cost two or three good cloths, serve also the Apa Tanis as useful barter objects, and Apa Tani traders purchase them sometimes from tribesmen of the Kamla and Khru valleys.

Large beads of conch-shell as well as sky-blue porcelain beads, though possibly of Chinese origin, seem to have reached the Subansiri area via Tibet. While Daflas and Miris wear them on many occasions, Apa Tanis don necklaces of such beads only at special rites, such as the Morom festival, and neither men nor women wear them simply as ornaments.

Most women, however, possess strings of crudely cut cylindrical glass beads of dark blue colour and it would seem that these have also come from Tibet. They are quite different from any beads manufactured or known in India today, and if they had ever been available in large numbers in the plains of Assam, other tribes, such as Nagas, would no doubt have also obtained some. Today, they are no longer popular, and have indeed very little market value. Their place has been taken by smaller and smoother glass beads of a similar dark blue colour which have for some years been available in the bazaars of North Lakhimpur. This change-over is one of the few instances of Apa Tanis preferring machine-made goods to Tibetan articles.

While the Tibetan origin of such objects as swords or prayer-bells is unmistakable, we cannot say for certain whether the wool which the Apa Tanis require for many of their embroidered ceremonial cloths came of old from the same source. Apa Tanis value greatly strips of coarse woollen cloth known as *tonga*, and all the wool used for multi-coloured embroidery is obtained by unravelling such cloth. Very similar strips of woollen cloth reach the tribesmen on the upper Kamla from villages standing in trade relations

with Tibet, and it is more than probable that in olden times some such cloth filtered down as far as the Apa Tani valley. But for many years before the war Bhutanese woollen cloth of identical type was available in the bazaars of Assam where Apa Tanis could obtain it much more easily than from their tribal trade partners. Most, if not all, of the wool now in use among the Apa Tanis has certainly come from North Lakhimpur, and when during the war years this supply was cut off the Apa Tanis experienced a very definite shortage of wool; that Tibetan wool was no longer obtainable is easily explained if the middle-men through whose hands it might have reached the Apa Tanis had for years ceased to trade wool beyond the Assam-Tibet trade divide.

But swords and valuables of Tibetan manufacture continue to reach the Apa Tanis, and the high esteem in which they are held guarantees that even should trade with Assam increase there will for many years be a market for such products of Tibet. Tradition surrounds them with an aura of high value and great antiquity; the bronze prayer-bell is to the Apa Tani (as indeed even more to the Dafla) a work of divine artificers, the Tibetan sword an indispensable requisite at every mithan sacrifice, Tibetan beads the prescribed ornaments for the priest during solemn acts of ritual. Yet no Apa Tani has other than the vaguest idea of Tibet. A few adventurous men have visited villages near the trade divide between Assam and Tibet, but within living memory no Apa Tani seems ever to have penetrated into areas visited by Tibetans. I have heard of a Dafla from the upper Khru valley who stayed for some time in Duta and told of his journeys to a country which to judge from his descriptions must have been a part of Tibet. But he was probably an exception and we are safe in assuming that very few of the tribesmen who trade directly with Tibetans have any knowledge of the Apa Tanis, or ever purchase Tibetan goods with the express purpose of serving the Apa Tani market. Most of the swords, beads or

bell-metal articles of Tibetan origin owned by Apa Tanis reached them through the channels of casual village to village barter, and only in rare cases did adventurous Apa Tani traders hasten this slow trickle by purchasing trips to the Khru and upper Kamla valleys.

Though occasionally the hostility of neighbours may deter even the intrepid Apa Tani from visiting trade partners in distant valleys, there is no other tribe in the Subansiri area which has developed barter and trade to so high a degree as the Apa Tanis. The exchange of goods is a necessity for the elaborate and complex Apa Tani economy, and the Apa Tani evinces as much ingeniousness and persistence in pursuing every possible opportunity for a profitable trade as he has employed in developing the resources of his own country.

III

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

THE inhabitants of the Apa Tani valley constitute a community distinct in language, dress and manner of living from the Dafla and Miri tribesmen of the adjoining hill-country. A strong tribal sentiment, a consciousness of their basic separateness, a pride in their institutions and customs, and a passionate attachment to their small homeland, turned by incessant labour into a veritable garden, unite all Apa Tanis and set them apart from the surrounding populations which represent to them the outside world. Whereas Dafla villages are ephemeral and the composition of the populations which inhabit the rugged country to the east, north and west of the Apa Tani valley is fluid and has been so for generations, Apa Tani society is characterized by a high degree of stability. Geographic mobility is as limited as social mobility. Unlike his Dafla and Miri neighbour, who at any moment may sever his connection with the settlement in which he was born and seek his fortune in new surroundings, the Apa Tani cannot migrate without completely abandoning the style of living in which he has grown up. He is tied to his valuable land and to the one valley where alone he can carry on the elaborate system of agriculture in which he is an expert. Though nothing would prevent a man from exchanging the village of his birth with any one of the remaining six villages in the Apa Tani valley, even such a change of residence is unusual and most Apa Tanis end their life as

members of the same village quarter into which they were born.

The feeling of tribal solidarity, based on community of language and habitat, finds expression in the unquestioning acceptance of certain forms of social conduct which distinguish the Apa Tanis from all their neighbours. All Apa Tanis agree, for instance, that however strained relations between individuals or villages may be, quarrels between Apa Tanis must be settled in a way altogether different from the course followed in disputes between Apa Tanis and members of other tribes, or even between Daflas and Daflas. The Apa Tanis realize that living in crowded villages of several hundred houses and concentrated in a small area with an extremely dense population, they require the restraints of an agreed system of social controls if their prosperity, based on an elaborately organized economy, is not to be jeopardized by the quarrels and feuds of individuals.

The cohesion of Apa Tani society is reinforced by a system of ritual exchanges embracing all the seven villages of the valley. In the celebration of the two great seasonal feasts of Morom and Mloko, for instance, the whole tribe acts as a single entity though different rôles are accorded to the individual villages. Any comparable concerted action among Daflas is unknown, for among them not even the households of a single settlement ever combine in ritual activities.

Tribal tradition supports the unity of the Apa Tani people. Though there is a legend of the immigration of three batches of people along three different routes, the immigrants at first all settled on a now deserted site known as Burü. It is believed that at that time the valley was occupied by large swamps. These contained so many huge reptiles that the new settlers hardly dared to go and collect firewood. Repeatedly the leaders of the tribe consulted omens whether they should remain in the valley or move to another locality. But the omens for any further move were

unfavourable, and thus the Apa Tanis decided to stay on in the valley.

There are various mythical accounts of the reptiles believed to have inhabited the swamps and the manner in which they were destroyed by magical metal objects in the possession of two of the Apa Tanis. The aquatic and now extinct reptiles, known as *buru*, are described as large creatures resembling lizards in shape but never leaving the water, and it seems that among other tribes of the Subansiri region there are similar stories of aquatic animals also called *buru*.[1]

According to Apa Tani tradition the destruction of the reptiles took considerable time, but when the swamps were drained the people left Burü and established the present seven villages: Hang, Hari, Bela, Haja, Duta, Mudang-Tage and Michi-Bamin. Apa Tani traditions are not any more consistent than those of other pre-literate people, and there is also a legend according to which three batches of immigrants were responsible for the foundation of these villages. Those who immigrated via a route which crossed the Khru River between the present settlements of Mintlat and Bua founded Haja, Duta, Mudang-Tage and Michi-Bamin; those who came by a route running farther east and crossing the Kamla River near Gocham founded Hang, and the third group which followed an intermediate route came somewhat later and founded Bela and Hari. All these groups are believed to have passed through the region dominated by the peak known as Pij Cholo and the different routes of approach to the Apa Tani valley do not suggest a difference of ultimate origin.

Ursula Graham Bower was told of a slightly different tradition according to which the ancestors of the people of Bela, Haja, Hari and Hang were the first settlers in the valley, while the ancestors of Duta, Mudang-Tage and Michi-Bamin reached the valley later, but succeeded in

[1] An account of these stories is contained in Ralph Izzard's *The Hunt for the Buru*, London, 1951.

gaining admission to the tribal community which subsequently split into two roughly equal groups, each of which contained descendants of both waves of migration.[1]

Present dialectical differences do not seem to reflect either of these traditions, for the people of Bela speak the same dialect as those of Haja, Duta, Mudang-Tage and Michi-Bamin, whereas Hari and Hang each speak a different dialect. All the dialects are mutually freely understandable and the linguistic differences between the villages are of no social consequence.

Topographically the seven villages are arranged in three groups, each of which acts in certain respects as a ritual unit. Hang, which in 1961 comprised 514 houses and lies on the southern end of the valley, stands alone. Hari (368 houses) and Bela (672 houses) lie at no great distance from each other on the eastern edge of the valley, and Haja (433 houses), Duta (160 houses), Mudang-Tage (180 houses) and Michi-Bamin (193 houses) form an almost continuous area of habitation along the north-western rim of the valley. These groupings are given expression in the celebration of the principal annual festival, the Mloko. The performance of this festival alternates in a three-year cycle between Hang, which celebrates the Mloko alone, Bela and Hari, which perform it simultaneously; and the group of the remaining four villages, all of which hold the Mloko in the same year.

From the account of Ursula Graham Bower it appears that in 1947 the traditional balance between these groups was disturbed,[2] and it is not unlikely that the presence of a new focus of power in the shape of a government outpost had weakened some of the controls inherent in the traditional system. In this context, however, I shall describe the system as it functioned before the Government of India had begun to exert administrative control over the Apa Tani valley.

An Apa Tani village (*lemba*) is not an amorphous collec-

[1] Op. cit., p. 219. [2] Op. cit., pp. 219–34.

tion of households, but each of the seven villages comprises a number of quarters inhabited by specific clans. In the large village of Bela there are, moreover, three subdivisions known by distinct names (Reru, Tajang and Kalung) and these are often referred to as 'villages' (*lemba*), and the village Michi-Bamin consists of the two named sections Michi and Bamin. Named sections such as Reru resemble in some respects the politically almost independent *khel* of Naga villages,[1] but in villages such as Hang or Haja there are no such formally separated *khel* and the quarters of the various groups of clans adjoin one another without any perceptible dividing line.

The focal point and ritual centre of such quarter is a small isolated hut known as *nago* which serves as a kind of shrine where important rites are performed and the trophies of war, such as the hands of slain foes, are kept until their disposal. The *nago* used by a group of clans lends these clans a certain unity, and the *nago* is usually named after the most prominent clan of the group. While two or more clans share one *nago*, most clans have yet another focal point of social activities in the shape of a large, open sitting-platform known as *lapang*. On this the men of the clan gather for gossip and work, as well as on ritual and other formal occasions. Occasionally two or three closely allied clans may jointly own one *lapang*, while very large clans may possess more than one such sitting-platform. As we shall see presently, many groups sharing one *nago* and possibly one *lapang* comprise both patrician (*mite*) and slave (*mura*) clans,[2] and the way in which *nago* and *lapang* are associated with specific clans may be demonstrated by the structure of the village of Haja as it was in 1945:

[1] Cf. my 'The Morung System of the Konyak Nagas of Assam', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 68, 1938, pp. 349–78. Throughout the literature on the hill-tribes of Assam the vernacular term *khel* is used to describe sections or quarters of a village which are distinct social and even political units. In the absence of a suitable English term the term *khel* is here applied to the comparable subdivisions of Apa Tani villages.

[2] For an explanation of the terms *mite* and *mura* see pp. 73, 75.

NAGO and LAPANG *CLANS (halu)*

Kimle *nago*
  Kimle *lapang*—Kimle (*mite*), Dusu and Dora (*mura* attached to Kimle)

Nada *nago*
  Nada *lapang*—Nada (*mite*) (sub-clan Dumpr)
    Miri (*mura* attached to Nada)
  Plagang *lapang*—Nada (*mite*) (sub-clan Plagang)
  Hidu *lapang*—Hidu (*mura* attached to Nada)

Taru *nago*
  Taru *lapang*—Taru (*mite*)
  Taro Taku *lapang*—Taro (*mite*), Taku (*mite*)
    Pemu (*mura* attached to Taku)
  Kago *lapang*—Kago (*mite*)

Puna *nago*
  Haj *lapang*—Haj (*mite*)
  Puna *lapang*—Puna (*mura* attached to Haj)
  Dani *lapang*—Dani (*mite*)

Nendin *nago*
  Nendin *lapang*—Nendin (*mite*) (sub-clan of Pura)
  Naran *lapang*—Pura (*mite*)
  Nemko *lapang*—Nemko (*mite*) (sub-clan of Pura)
  Nemp *lapang*—Nemp (*mite*) (extinct).

The names of *nago* and *lapang* do not always appear consistent with the existing distribution and status of clans. Thus the Puna *nago* used by two patrician and one slave clan takes its name from the latter, which is now ritually dependent on the Haj clan. But there may well have existed a patrician Puna clan which became extinct while some dependent slave-families known by their masters' clan-name and now ritually attached to another patrician clan survived in their former masters' quarter. Similarly there is still a *lapang* known as Nemp while the patrician clan of this name has become extinct, and the Nemp *lapang* is hence no longer used for ritual purposes but continues to serve the present inhabitants of the quarter as a sitting-platform. Both Nendin and Nenko are the names of sections of the Pura clan, but Naran is a locality name used for one of the *lapang* belonging to the Pura clan.

The configuration of clan quarters, *lapang* and *nago*, follows a similar pattern in the other villages, but a formal division into named sub-villages or *khel* is confined to Bela, Hari and Michi-Bamin.

In what respects does a village function as a social unit? We have seen already that there is no clearly defined village-land, and that the holdings of the members of adjoining villages dovetail, while the hunting-grounds of the individual clans of a village do not lie within one block, but are interspersed by tracts of forests belonging to clans of other villages. The village is thus not a territorial unit in a strict sense, but villages nevertheless claim certain territorial rights and defend them if necessary against the encroachments of other villages. Thus Hang and Michi-Bamin quarrelled some years ago over a piece of land on which thatching-grass grows, and Michi-Bamin received the support of other villages when it resisted the encroachment of the more powerful Hang village.

The most obvious expression of the unity of a village-community, however, is the simultaneous observance of the principal feasts, and days of ritual abstention from work (*anyodo*[1]) by all residents. Processions and ceremonial visits to the other settlements of the valley are organized on a village basis with members of all clans co-operating on equal terms.

Apa Tani villages lack a centralized authority, wielding power over all the inhabitants, but village affairs are managed in a somewhat informal manner by a council of clan representatives (*buliang*). These *buliang* are men of character and ability, drawn from among the members of a lineage which, owing to its wealth and status, always furnishes one or two *buliang*, or chosen on account of their personal standing in the community. There are three types of *buliang*: The *akha buliang* are the principal leaders of the villages, who even when too old to take a very active part in the life of the community must be consulted on all impor-

[1] The Apa Tani term *anyodo* corresponds roughly to the Assamese term *genna*.

tant matters. The *yapa buliang* are middle-aged men who carry on the day-to-day conduct of village affairs, settle disputes and keep the *akha buliang* informed of developments. The *ajang buliang*, finally, are young men who act as messengers and assistants of the *yapa buliang* and function in some respects as the leaders and spokesmen of the younger generation. In practice this division of duties is not always clear-cut, and some of the older *ajang buliang* assume gradually the functions of *yapa buliang*. The *akha buliang* appoint the *ajang buliang* from amongst the rank of eligible young men, and in making this selection an *akha buliang* does not necessarily give preference to members of his own clan, but sees to it that his clan-group (i.e. the clans using a common *nago*) is represented by men of talent and efficiency. A *yapa buliang* usually does not become an *akha buliang* until the death of the *akha buliang* representing his group of clans.

Though the *buliang* are collectively the upholders of tribal law, they act primarily as the spokesmen of their own clan or clan-group and not as village-headmen invested with absolute authority. Their duties are those of arbiters rather than of judges, and they usually do not take action unless a dispute has become a public issue which must be dealt with by the community as a whole, be it by mediation or the use of force.

For their services to the community the *buliang* are rewarded by ceremonial gifts of beer and meat on the occasion of village feasts. Moreover, during the Mloko, an annual festival celebrated by the three groups of villages in rotation, every *buliang* receives gifts from his opposite number in the village standing to his own village or quarter in a relationship of ceremonial reciprocity.

While the *buliang* guide and formulate public opinion there is no regular machinery to organize concerted action by all the inhabitants of a village. This is a source of weakness in the Apa Tanis' dealings with their war-like Dafla neighbours. It is not unusual for one quarter of a village to

be involved in a bitter feud with some of the inhabitants of a neighbouring Dafla village, while the people of the other quarters continue trade-relations with their next-door neighbours' enemies.

The clans using a common *nago*, on the other hand, usually support each other in dealings with outsiders, and the fact that all the 193 households of Duta village look upon one *nago* as their common ritual centre was mentioned to me as one of the reasons for the high degree of solidarity evinced by the men of Duta.

An Apa Tani clan (*halu*), whether of *mite* or *mura* status, is a very real social unit and its members are bound to each other by definite obligations of mutual help. It is the only unit in Apa Tani society which can be expected to act almost invariably in complete solidarity. Clan-members normally support each other in disputes and feuds, and only a very close relationship with the opposite party through the maternal line may determine a man to take sides against a member of his own clan. Apa Tani clans are patrilineal and exogamous, but there are ways of acquiring clan-membership other than by patrilineal descent. An unmarried girl's illegitimate child whose father is unknown is usually brought up by the mother's parents and adopted into his mother's natal clan. Similarly an orphan, even though of legitimate birth, may join the clan of one of his mother's kinsmen and be allowed to participate in the ritual meals and all other ceremonial activities of his adoptive clan. Slaves also adopt their master's clan-name without, however, becoming full members of a patrician clan. Any slave purchased by a patrician becomes a *mura* member of his owner's *mite* clan, and for purposes of exogamy only the acquired clan membership is taken into consideration. Thus children of two members of a *mura* clan who in later life become the slaves of two patricians of a different clan would be allowed to marry because the identity of their fathers' natal clan is overruled by the affiliation to two different *mite* clans.

There are *mite* as well as *mura* clans, but most *mite* clans have a number of *mura* members. Some *mura* clans possess their own *lapang* and are represented by a *buliang* who has a voice in village affairs. Each *mura* clan stands in a relationship of ritual dependence to a *mite* clan, and clans in this relationship usually share the same *nago*. There are instances, however, of one half of a *mura* clan being dependent on one *mite* clan and the other half on a different *mite* clan. Many *mura* clans have no pasture and forest land of their own, but are entitled to use the land of their *mite* patrons. In return the members of a *mura* clan give a share of every animal killed in the chase or slaughtered as a sacrifice to some member of the patron clan. But if a patrician clan becomes extinct the members of the associated *mura* clan inherit the clan-land and may even inherit some of the individually owned rice-fields of their patrons. In such a case the name of the patrician clan may be perpetuated by the members of the client clan describing themselves henceforth as so-and-so *mura*.

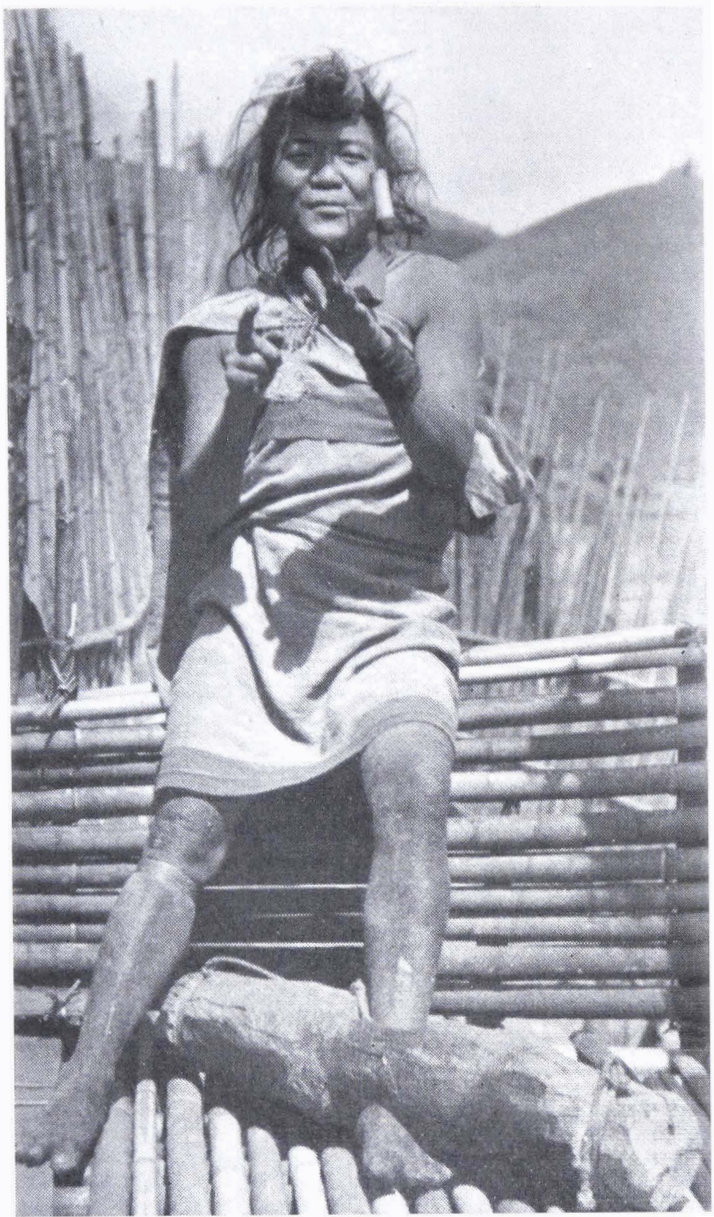
Breaches of the rule of clan-exogamy are rare, but if a man and woman of the same clan insist on living together as husband and wife, a mithan has to be sacrificed in expiation of the offence. A certain inconsistency is brought into the system of clan-exogamy by the fact that some clans known as 'brother-clans' are debarred from intermarriage, while there are cases of two sub-clans of the same clan (e.g. Akhang Koji and Aio Koji of Duta) practising intermarriage. The explanation is perhaps that each of these sub-clans has a *lapang* of its own, whereas 'brother-clans' forming a single exogamous unit usually share a single *lapang*.

The founding of a new *lapang*, stimulated by the growth of a clan or group of clans, may thus foreshadow the emergence of a new exogamous unit. In the lifetime of an old man, whom I met in 1944 and 1945, five new *lapang* had been founded in the village of Hang, and on each occasion fowls and dogs had been sacrificed to the spirit of the site and to the sun.

5. Rope-swinging in Hang village during the celebrations of the Mloko festival.

6. A main street with the houses of wealthy men in Haja village.

7. Woman and small boy wearing clothes of a heavy cotton material.



8. Dafla prisoner in an Apa Tani house with heavy log on his foot to prevent escape.

Ideally all patrician clans are of equal status and equally entitled to representation in the village council. But in practice there are in most villages large and powerful clans, whose members own a disproportionately large part of the irrigated land and have a greater say in village affairs than clans comprising only a few and comparatively insignificant families. The only village where I could discover any formal ranking of clans, however, was the village of Hang. There the two clans of Tenio and Tablin, each consisting of no more than ten households, are considered senior to all others. Their special position is attributed to their descent from the two eldest sons of the legendary forefather of all the Hang people, known as Ato Tiling. In assemblies and councils the members of these two clans speak first and their views are accorded special weight. Originally these two clans were brother-clans, but they later decided to intermarry and they also agreed that in the event of either clan becoming extinct the other should inherit the other clan's land.

I have not heard of any similar privileges of other individual clans, but there are a few cases of occupational specialization. Thus the only clans whose women manufacture earthen pots are four *mura* clans of the village of Michi-Bamin. Women of other villages who marry men of these potter clans may, if they like, learn pot-making, but if a girl of one of the potter clans marries a man of another village she may not continue to practise her craft, as this is a monopoly of Michi-Bamin. This does not mean, however, that all pots used by Apa Tanis are made by women of that village. Many people buy their pots from Daflas, who bring them for sale to the Apa Tani villages. The technique used by Apa Tani and Dafla potters is the same: the potter starts with a large lump of clay, hollows it out and then, holding an oval stone against the inner wall, hammers against the outside wall with a wooden baton.

Another occupational specialization is that of a few families of professional iron-workers. In 1945 there were

three blacksmiths in the Apa Tani valley, and all three belonged to Bela village. One was of a *mura* clan described to me as the 'proper' blacksmith clan, but the other two were of patrician birth and had learnt the craft from the same man, the father of one of the two patrician blacksmiths. It seems that anyone may learn and practise iron-working, but the occupation lowers a man's social status, even though he is not excluded from religious rites and other people may eat in his house. A blacksmith's workshop must be some distance from the village, for his craft is fraught with magical dangers and the gods would be offended if iron were to be worked close to the houses and the sites of religious performances.

While there is only a mild prejudice against blacksmiths there is one occupation which renders its practitioners ritually impure. This occupation is the castrating of pigs, and the persons performing the operation are known as *kenna*. Only women act as *kenna*, and until recently there was a *mura* clan in Haja whose women traditionally engaged in the profession of *kenna*. When this clan became extinct, the work was entrusted to a woman of Tage clan of Bela village. A *kenna* is debarred from participation in feasts and religious rites, and—like an untouchable in India—may not enter anyone's dwelling-house. The people of all the villages she serves supply her with food and other necessities, but although she may give away some of the surplus food grain to poor people, no one may eat food cooked in her house. It is not customary for a *kenna* to marry, but a poor man may go to live with a girl working as *kenna*, though by doing this he becomes subject to the same disabilities. The children from such a union belong to the mother's clan, and one of her daughters will succeed the mother as *kenna*. The others can be purified and count then as ordinary *mura* members of the mother's clan. A *kenna*'s husband too may be purified and regain his normal ritual status after his wife's death.

Besides the vertical division of Apa Tani society into

villages, *khel*, clan-groups centred in a *nago*, and clans (*halu*), there is the horizontal division into the two endogamous classes known as *mite* and *mura*. In order to avoid the terms aristocrats and commoners, I elsewhere translated *mite* as 'patrician' and *mura* as 'plebeian', though these terms too have certain undertones inapplicable to the situation. The division is unalterable and neither wealth, nor wisdom nor prowess in war enables a man to rise from the *mura* class to that of *mite*. According to Apa Tani tradition all *mura* were originally the slaves of *mite*, but today there is a large class of *mura* who have been free for generations. The distinction between patricians and plebeians is outwardly obscured, however, by the wealth and personal influence of individual *mura*, some of whom have gained prominence through the newly established trade with the plains of Assam. Yet, the innate superiority of the patricians is never questioned, and every *mura* stands in a relationship of dependence to a patrician family which involves certain obligations of a ceremonial nature.

IV

THE POSITION OF SLAVES

THE institution of slavery was prevalent among many of the hill-tribes of Assam, but the establishment of British administration control led in most cases to its early abolition, and there are comparatively few detailed studies of the rôle of slaves in tribal societies. In the case of the Apa Tanis anthropological inquiries preceded the imposition of administrative control, and this enabled me to observe the interrelations between freemen and slaves before the Apa Tanis had any notion of governmental disapproval of the institution of slavery. These unusual circumstances justify a somewhat fuller presentation of my material on the position of slaves than the framework of this monograph would otherwise indicate.

We have seen that in Apa Tani society the slaves and descendants of slaves constitute a class known as *mura* from which no one can rise whatever may be his economic resources and personal ability. Under no circumstances can a *mura* ever become a *mite*, and members of the two classes do not intermarry.[1] But to the outsider the division of the Apa Tani tribe into *mite* and *mura* is not at once obvious. *Mite* and *mura* dress similarly and do not markedly differ in their style of living. Unlike Indian castes the two classes

[1] A patrician girl bearing the child of a *mura* lover may go to live with the child's father; in that case she loses her *mite* status and the union is not regarded as a proper marriage. Though I was told of the principle, no concrete example of such an inter-class union came to my notice.

are free to interdine, but there are a few ceremonial occasions when *mite* and *mura* do not eat together. Though all the richest and most influential people are *mite*, there are a good many poor *mite*, while some *mura* own considerable wealth.

The origin of the tribe's division into two classes of unequal status is obscure, and conditions among the neighbouring Daflas and Miris do not help in its elucidation. There we find also a grouping of clans into two classes known as *gute* and *guchi*,[1] but freemen as well as slaves may belong to either class. We cannot exclude the possibility that the *mite* and *mura* of the Apa Tanis represent two different though largely assimilated ethnic elements, and it is certain that all foreign slaves acquired by Apa Tanis, and even those members of other tribes who voluntarily come to live among the Apa Tanis, have been absorbed only within the *mura* class. A certain difference in physical type between the Apa Tanis of *mite* class and the average *mura* is unmistakable. It is mainly among *mite* and particularly the leading patrician families that we find the high stature, light skin, long prominent nose, and deep-set eyes which distinguish many Apa Tanis from all the other tribesmen of the Subansiri region, whereas pronouncedly Mongoloid types resembling Daflas and Miris are much more frequent among *mura*.

There are a good many men and women, either of *mura* class or foreigners purchased or captured in war, who are the absolute property of their masters and are therefore accurately described as 'slaves'. A slave living in his master's house, and dependent on him for every necessity of life, has in theory no rights whatsoever. He must unquestioningly carry out his master's orders, he can be sold at any moment without being consulted, and if, owing to unruliness or criminal tendencies, he becomes a liability, his master may even kill him. But the average slave's daily life does not

[1] Speaking to outsiders Apa Tanis often use the term *gute* for *mite* and the term *guchi* for *mura*.

reflect this insecure status. A slave is assured of food and shelter, shares his owner's house and meals, and is provided with clothes only slightly inferior to those ordinarily worn by his master. There is nothing in his appearance that stamps him a slave. The work he does is essentially the same as that of free men, he joins in all public amusements and goes on trading trips to distant villages, and even to the plains of Assam.

To some extent the position of a slave depends on the manner in which he or she was acquired, and there are various ways in which a man, woman or child may become the property of another person. Many wealthy Apa Tanis of patrician class inherit from their fathers a number of slaves, some of whom may belong to families which have been associated with their masters for generations. Such slaves bear their master's clan-name and are likely to be unaware of any other clan-name by which their forefathers may have been known. They have either grown up in their master's house, or have started life in a separate house allotted to their parents close to the master's house.

A concrete example may demonstrate the position of such house-slaves. Let us assume that a patrician of some wealth inherits on his father's death a young boy and a girl, who may be the children of slaves belonging to the father's household or may have been bought in their childhood. The two young slaves will live in his house and work alongside his own sons and daughters on the fields and in the house. Like all young Apa Tanis they will at an early age join a working gang (*patang*) consisting of boys and girls of similar age, both *mite* and *mura*. The slave children's master has the same right to the *patang*'s labour as the parents of the other gang-members. On certain days the entire gang, free young people and slaves alike, will work on his fields and he will entertain them with rice, rice-beer and possibly meat. When the young slave-boy grows up he is at liberty to make love to the girls of his own *patang* as well as to other unmarried girls of the village. In doing so

he has to observe the rules of clan-exogamy, but no offence is caused if he wins the temporary favours of a patrician girl, even in the event of her becoming pregnant. But he may marry only the daughter of another *mura*, either a slave or a free woman of *mura* class. Any such girl willing to become his wife must live with him in his master's house and his master is likely to pay a bride-price. The amount paid for the bride determines the fate of her future children. If the girl is a slave's daughter and the young man's master pays to her owner her full market price, say one mithan, one cow and one *dao*, then all the couple's children will belong to him. If, on the other hand, he pays only a token price, say one calf and one *dao*, then the sons resulting from the union will belong to him, and the daughters to the girl's owner with the proviso that in the event of their being only sons these will be divided between the owners of the parents. However, there is also the possibility that a slave-owner permits a young slave to marry another patrician's female slave, but is not prepared or able to pay any part of her price. In such an event all the couple's children become the property of the woman's owner, just as any child born to an unmarried slave-girl in her master's house is his property and takes his clan-name. Even if the child's father is a patrician, he can make no claim to such offspring.

A free *mura* girl marrying a slave who lives in his master's house reverts to slave status and may, in theory, be subsequently sold either together with her husband or even separately. A slave girl marrying a free *mura*, on the other hand, gains her freedom provided the husbands pays to her master her full price. I was repeatedly assured that a master cannot prevent a slave-girl from going to live with the man of her choice, even though he may lose thereby her labour. He may demand a bride-price but cannot enforce its payment. His only compensation for the loss of a slave who may have cost him several mithan is the claim to her children.

Indeed it seems that masters allow their slaves a good

deal of freedom in arranging their marriages, and that once married, slave-couples enjoy reasonable privacy. As soon as a slave-couple has one or two children, and sometimes even before the birth of a child, the husband's master is likely to give him a house-site and help him to establish a household of his own. Slaves living in houses of their own are known as *penam mura* ('separated slaves') and there is a sliding scale in the degree of dependence between such slaves and their masters. Sometimes a 'separated' slave is given only a house-site and a piece of garden, and continues to work almost every day for his master, who, in turn, provides him with all his requirements of grain and cloth. But in other cases a 'separated' slave receives from his master several rice-fields as well as some dry land, and the crops grown on such land are his own and if he is industrious he can begin to acquire additional property. Such a slave no longer depends on his master for his day-to-day needs and unless he commits a grave offence or refuses persistently to work for his master when called upon to do so, public opinion would not allow the latter to take back the land given to the slave. Nor can the master's heirs contest the 'separate' slave's right to the land. The latter's sons inherit such land, and there can be little doubt that many free *mura* families are descended from 'separated' slaves.

Usually the children of a 'separated' slave-couple remain with the parents, but work—in accordance with the arrangement made at the time of their parents' marriage—occasionally for the father's or the mother's past master. As long as their parents are alive it is only in some cases and by mutual agreement that a half-grown boy or girl goes to live in the master's house. But if their father dies while they are small, such slave-children are taken into their master's house and cared for, automatically resuming the status of ordinary slaves who are subject to the possibility of being sold notwithstanding the fact that their parents were 'separated' slaves.

Not every slave, however, is necessarily separated and

provided with a house of his own. Men of little intelligence and initiative, who are not likely to make a success of an establishment of their own, often remain all their lives in their master's house. I was told that some slaves prefer the security of their master's household to the necessity of fending for themselves, and I met the sons of 'separated' slaves who of their own free will went to live in the house of their master or some member of his family, although they retained the ownership of the land given to their father.

Besides the slaves inherited by their present masters, there are many whom their owners bought either from Apa Tanis or Daflas, and many of these are not of Apa Tani stock. I have no adequate statistics, but judging from the composition of a limited number of households I am inclined to estimate that nearly half of the slaves who in 1945 lived in their owners' houses had been bought in their own lifetime. The fact that many a rich man owning a large number of rice-fields is anxious to increase the number of his slaves and dependants is easily understandable, but why should slave-owners be willing to dispose of their valuable human assets?

There are several motives for the sale of slaves. A slave-owner faced with the necessity of providing cattle for sacrifice, of paying a fine or ransoming a captured relative, may find the sale of a slave the quickest way of obtaining the necessary animals or valuables. Normally he will not sell a 'separated' slave or a man grown old in his service, but will dispose of any young boy or girl living in his house, or in rare cases even a married couple with or without children. A young slave of either sex fetches a price of three to five mithan, but a middle-aged slave may change hands for as little as one mithan and one cow.

Another reason for the disposal of a slave may be an incompatibility of tempers between master and slave. Relations between masters and slaves are usually cordial, but if a slave gives trouble or is slack in his work, the master may try to sell him or her. There are various ways in which

a slave can embarrass his master. Owners are held responsible for their slaves' conduct, and if a slave is repeatedly caught stealing his master will try to sell him. But no one will buy a slave of notoriously criminal character, and a man exasperated by a slave's misdeeds may cut his losses and expel him, or even initiate punitive action leading in extreme cases to the offender's execution. A young slave caught in a love-affair with his master's daughter may first be warned, but may ultimately be sold if repeated admonitions prove of no avail.

While the selling and buying of slaves within the Apa Tani community is a common practice, public opinion is strongly opposed to the sale of Apa Tanis to people of other tribes. As a member of the Apa Tani tribe even a *mura* has a certain dignity, and it is considered wrong to sell a fellow-tribesman to Daflas or Miris. I heard only of one concrete case of an Apa Tani being sold to a Dafla. The slave involved was an orphan boy who had caused his master a great deal of trouble by stealing and was finally sold to a Dafla of Mai, a village half a day's walk south of Hang.

The prejudice against selling slaves to persons outside the tribal community is not shared by Daflas and Miris, and the Apa Tanis are able to purchase a good many slaves from Daflas, many of them children who can be easily assimilated. It is difficult to estimate the number of Apa Tani slaves of Dafla origin, for those bought as children dress as Apa Tanis, speak only Apa Tani, and marry Apa Tanis; and as they bear their master's clan-name they do not appear as strangers even to the other villagers. The resultant absorption of Dafla blood within the *mura* population explains perhaps the difference in physical type between many *mura* and the members of the most prominent *mite* families. It seems that most Dafla slaves remain all their life in their master's house, and that it is as a rule only their children who are separated and given land. Some of the Dafla slaves owned by Apa Tanis come from distant villages on the upper course of the Khru River, and have

been traded down by Dafla villages nearer to the Apa Tani valley such as Licha. Apa Tanis prefer to buy Dafla slaves from distant villages, for such slaves are less likely to escape, and there is little probability of their being traced by their kinsmen. On the other hand there are many cases of Dafla slaves of less distant villages who run away and are helped on the journey by people of intervening Dafla villages.

Slaves already in the possession of a master who has acquired them by inheritance, purchase or capture, are not the only persons who may be offered for sale. Some Apa Tanis of *mura* class, although born free, have been sold into slavery by their own kinsmen. Thus I saw in Haja village a girl of Mudang-Tage whom her own brother sold for four mithan when he was short of grain. Another girl had been sold by her own parents for two mithan on account of a similar predicament. The status of persons sold in this way is equal to that of any other slave. They lose their clan-name and all rights to inherit from the free members of the family. It is one of the differences between *mura* and *mite* that persons of patrician birth will never be sold by their kinsmen.

Distinct from individuals born as slaves, captured in war, or sold by their relatives, are those who lose their freedom as a result of economic failure. An Apa Tani, no less than a Dafla trading with Apa Tanis, guarantees his business obligations with his own person. If a man borrows rice or any other commodity and fails to repay it within a reasonable time his creditor is entitled to attach his person and make him work as an unpaid servant until the debt is repaid. During this period the debtor, temporarily deprived of his freedom, is strictly speaking not a slave, for he can earn wages by extra work for other men and may even go to work in the plains of Assam and on his return clear his debt with valuables bought there. But if several years pass and the debt remains uncleared, his position turns gradually into that of a slave, and if he causes his creditor

any trouble he may even be sold. A debtor's service in his creditor's house is not necessarily the result of physical compulsion, but may be based on mutual agreement. Thus a poor man burdened by debts may be glad to gain a respite by serving in the household of a wealthy and influential co-villager.

Yet this system of 'bond service' has also given rise to a great deal of friction between Apa Tanis and Daflas. For Apa Tanis often sold rice on credit to poor Daflas in the expectation that sooner or later their Dafla customers would be unable to repay the loans, and could be forced or persuaded to become their bond-servants and eventually even their slaves. Two examples may demonstrate the nature of such transactions and the manner in which they may lead to disputes and grievances:

1. Lishi Tamo, a Dafla or Licha, came to Haja and stayed for one year in the house of an Apa Tani friend. During that time he bought rice on credit from Haj Kacho. When he failed to pay, Haj Kacho seized him and kept him tied up in his house. Haj Kojing mediated and released the Dafla by paying his creditor one bullock, one brass plate and one Tibetan sword on the understanding that Lishi Tamo would work for him as an unpaid servant until he had repaid the value of the ransom. But soon afterwards Lishi Tamo fled to Licha and Haj Kojing was left with an unenforceable claim against a Dafla beyond the reach of Apa Tani justice.

2. Padi Layang, a prominent Apa Tani of Bela, sold large quantities of rice on credit to a Dafla of Pemir. When the latter died, leaving one son but no property, Padi Layang took the boy in compensation for his claim. The boy, however, did not feel happy living among Apa Tanis and begged Padi Layang to sell him to a Dafla village and take the price in clearance of his father's debt. Complying with his wish Padi Layang sold him to a Dafla of Licha for one mithan cow with calf, one cloth and one pig. The buyer,

however, protracted the payment, and when within a year the slave-boy died he refused to honour his obligation.

Although an Apa Tani of patrician class, if defaulting in the payment of a debt, may also be seized by his creditor, in practice such a *mite* never serves his creditor in the capacity of a slave. For all his kinsmen and clansmen, rather than suffer the disgrace of a patrician being kept as a slave, will subscribe to his ransom.

Many of the Dafla slaves owned by Apa Tanis in 1945 had been captured in raids either by Apa Tanis or by Daflas who then sold them to Apa Tanis. When Apa Tanis raided a village and made prisoners they kept them as a rule for several months with one foot in a log and awaited their kinsmen's offers of ransom. If no such offers were forthcoming or the offered ransom was too small they sold the captives as slaves either among themselves or to neighbouring Daflas. Children were as a rule disposed of in the Apa Tani valley, but women were sold to more distant villages where the chances of escape were smaller.

When in 1943 Apa Tanis of Haja and Duta raided Linia they captured the two wives of a Dafla, and his son, who was about ten years old. The two women were subsequently released on the receipt of ransoms, but not the boy. The captor sold him for two mithan to another man of Haja.

When a group of Apa Tanis of Bela last raided Dodum, a Dafla village near the Khru River, they captured ten women and ten small boys. Only three of the boys were ransomed. All the remaining captives were sold, the boys to Apa Tanis and the women to Daflas of the villages of Mai and Leji.

As Apa Tanis never raided each other, they never had Apa Tani slaves captured in war. Nor were in the years 1944 and 1945 any Apa Tani captives living in the houses of Daflas or Miris as slaves. No doubt a good many Apa Tanis were in those days captured by Daflas, but they were either killed or ransomed, the ransoms paid by Apa Tanis

usually exceeding the market price of a slave. I heard only of one Apa Tani slave who was captured by men of Licha and made to work; his Apa Tani owner tried to effect his release, but the captor refused to accept the offered ransom. This slave, however, had died by the time I visited Licha in 1945.

In theory every slave counts as a member of his master's clan and is known by his clan-name. In practice, however, a newly acquired slave's clan-name is both remembered and used, and it is only the children who are generally known by the master's clan-name. An exception to the rule that every slave adopts his master's clan-name is provided by those debtors who agree to serve in their creditor's house in a capacity virtually similar to that of a slave. Such persons, being not technically slaves, retain their own clan-name.

That newly acquired slaves are not in every respect reckoned as *mura* members of their master's clan emerges from the fact that the male and female slaves of one owner are allowed and sometimes even encouraged to marry. Such a union is not considered a breach of the rules of clan-exogamy even though strictly speaking both partners count as members of their master's clan.

Premarital sex relations of a fairly promiscuous character prevail among boys and girls of all classes, and slaves and the children of slaves are not excluded from the general community of the village youth. Thus young slave girls have often casual love-affairs with patrician boys. As a rule, however, a man has no sex-relations with his own female slaves or the daughters of his slaves, and he cannot accord to a slave woman the position of a second wife or recognized concubine. Some of my informants stated emphatically that sexual intercourse between a patrician and his own slaves never occurred, and there is no doubt that public opinion does not favour such relations. But other informants conceded that if a man chose to keep a slave girl as his mistress, no one would interfere, and that any child result-

ing from such a union would inherit the father's clan-name though not his *mite* status. A son from a slave mother might become the founder of a new *mura* branch of his father's clan.

The reluctance of Apa Tanis to speak about such irregular relations between *mite* and *mura* makes it difficult to assess their frequency, but it is clear that female slaves are not normally the concubines of their owners, as they are, for instance, among the Konyak Naga chiefs. On the other hand there is no suggestion that a man's relations with his female slaves would constitute clan-incest.

A slave living in his master's house neither possesses property nor can he acquire any property of his own. He depends on his master for his food and clothes, and all he earns belongs to his master. When he goes to the plains of Assam all the goods purchased with the money he earned as wages belong to his master. Usually he is allowed to keep one cloth and a quantity of salt, but this is a concession and not a right. Being unable to acquire and possess property a house-slave cannot purchase his own freedom, nor can he inherit land or valuables from freed kinsmen. His children too are the property of his master and any bride-prices paid for his daughters go to his master.

The position of a slave changes radically, however, as soon as his master 'separates' him, gives him a house-site of his own and allots him some land to cultivate. Not only does such land become his personal property, but from then on he can begin to acquire other property. As long as he fulfils his obligations his land cannot be taken back by his master, nor can he or his wife be sold. While he manages his own land and reaps its entire crop, he still has to work on his master's land whenever his help is required. If he dies young his children return to his master's house and have the status of slaves until in time they themselves are 'separated'. Usually, however, such a 'separated' slave's sons are allowed to cultivate their late father's land and to succeed him in the enjoyment of his property. But if a

'separated' slave dies without direct male heirs his land reverts to his master, for daughters are not entitled to inherit such property.

The dependence of 'separated' slaves on their masters lessens with each generation until a stage is reached when a man's *mura* have no other obligation than to give him the heads of all animals slain in the chase or killed for sacrifice. This obligation remains even if the *mura* descended from slaves become richer than the descendants of their forefather's owner. A master-slave relationship has by that time turned into a relationship between patron and client, but should the *mura* family die out, all the property would revert to the *mite* whose clan-name they bore.

The patron-client link is by no means a relationship which one-sidedly benefits the patron. A patrician feels obliged to help his 'separated' slaves and dependent *mura* in times of need with loans of grain and to afford them, moreover, protection for their persons and property. Such protection is of vital importance in a society where the individual can expect little protection from an impersonal law, and particularly in the event of a free *mura* or slave falling into the hands of Dafla raiders.

In general slaves are less liable to being captured than wealthy men of *mite* class, but should they be kidnapped their patrons are in honour bound to effect their release. A few examples may demonstrate the effectiveness of this protection afforded to slaves and dependent *mura*:

1. Nani Dole, a 'separated' slave of Nani Habung of Bela village, was captured by Daflas of Licha when out hunting. His master ransomed him by paying two Tibetan bells (each worth one mithan) and one *dao*. This did not place Dole under any obligation to repay Nani Habung.

2. A slave-girl of Dafla birth brought up as an Apa Tani in the house of Padi Layang of Bela was captured by Daflas of Licha and kept in stock for three months. After protracted negotiations Padi Layang ransomed her by paying: 3 mithan

cows, 3 mithan calves, 4 Tibetan bells, 4 bronze plates, 4 Tibetan *dao*, 2 Assamese silk cloths and 16 lb. of salt. This was far more than the market price of any slave and the payment of so extravagant a ransom is clear proof that Apa Tanis feel a responsibility towards their slaves and do not regard them merely as material assets.

The owners of slaves have not only a responsibility *towards* their slaves, but they are also responsible for any offence committed by one of their slaves. If a slave either purposely or by accident damages another person's property his master is responsible for the payment of compensation. But the aggrieved person may at once take the law into his own hands, seize the offender and keep him tied up until his master or patron has paid the compensation.

Normally the masters of slaves have no need to resort to any drastic means to assert their authority and discipline unruly slaves, and I have never heard of corporal punishment inflicted on slaves for such reasons as laziness or inefficiency. It is only when a slave consistently refuses to obey his master's orders or commits an offence which would be criminal even if committed by a free man, that serious action is taken. The obvious way of getting rid of a troublesome slave is to sell him, but if a slave has a notoriously bad character no buyer may be forthcoming. In such a case a master may do one of two things: he may publicly disclaim all responsibility, expel the slave from his house and leave him to fend for himself, or he may consult with the *buliang* of his village and take a lead in executing the criminal. In another context (pp. 106–7) I have described the case of a slave executed for habitual stealing, but it must not be supposed that equally drastic action is taken against all thievish slaves. A slave woman of Haja who was caught in a petty theft during my stay in the village had previously been punished several times by being put into stocks and by having her hair clipped, but had remained incurable and was yet tolerated.

The Position of Slaves

Cases of Apa Tani slaves running away from their masters are rare, and this may be due to two reasons. The treatment of Apa Tani slaves is generally good and slaves are no less attached to their homeland than other Apa Tanis. But the valley is so small that an escaped slave cannot hide in another Apa Tani village and must flee to a Dafla or Miri village to be sure of avoiding recapture. But to most Apa Tanis life among Daflas or Miris is not an attractive prospect quite apart from the danger of being seized and sold to some remote village. I have heard of only one Apa Tani slave who escaped and successfully settled in a Dafla village, and this was a girl married to a Dafla slave who escaped together with her husband.

Even previous to the extension of Indian administrative control over the Apa Tani valley, dozens of slaves used to go year after year to the plains of Assam where they worked for wages and with the money earned bought trade-goods. Almost without exception they returned to their masters even though in Assam they could find ample employment and they no doubt realized that their masters would not have been able to recover them had they decided to remain in the plains.

When I first arrived in the Apa Tani country I found it difficult to distinguish between free men and slaves. While the dignity and noble bearing of certain members of prominent patrician families were apparent even to the newcomer, there seemed to be no striking distinctions in the behaviour of the rest of the population. After some time I realized, however, that some men with a smattering of Assamese and a particular pushing manner were slaves or the descendants of slaves. Some of them tried to impress me with their own importance and the wealth and position of their respective patrician master or patron. They appeared in no way oppressed or timid, and many of them were well-dressed.

For an outsider unfamiliar with the language it is, of course, difficult to judge the psychological position of an

under-privileged class, but on the whole Apa Tani slaves appeared to me no less cheerful than other tribesmen, and the Apa Tanis are a people whose cheerfulness borders on boisterousness. The freedom of slave boys to join the working gangs (*patang*) of the village youth and even to have love-affairs with girls of patrician class tends to blur class differences, and to establish a friendly intimacy between *mite* and *mura* of the same age, an intimacy which later distinctions in wealth and position cannot completely obliterate. A slave addresses his master as 'father' if the latter is considerably older and as 'younger brother' if he is younger, and the master addresses the slave by the corresponding terms.

Notwithstanding the amicable nature of day-to-day relations, every slave living in his master's house must be conscious of his dependence on the latter's good will and aware of the possibility of being sold. Yet, even such an event does not tear him from a familiar environment and his friends and kinsmen. For all seven Apa Tani villages are so close together that even after a change of masters a slave remains within easy reach, and often within sight, of his former home. Though in theory the members of a slave family may be sold separately, I have never heard of a case when husband and wife were forcibly separated by their master selling one without the other.

The difference in the material standards of living between the average slave and the poorer patricians is not great; both live in similar houses, eat similar food and do work of similar type. But slaves work on the whole harder than free men, and even middle-aged slaves have to undertake such tasks as wood-cutting, which among free men is left to boys and young men. The main disabilities of the slaves, however, lie in the social sphere. They are excluded from the competition for social prestige, which is an engrossing and extremely important part of Apa Tani life. Not for them are the thrills and the gain in self-esteem which a patrician derives from the performance of feasts of merit

or the conspicuous squandering of wealth in *lisudu* competitions. It is only when they are 'separated' that slaves can acquire wealth, though not all the prestige symbols within reach of a patrician. But those *mura* who are economically successful can gain a certain influence in their village, and some of the larger *mura* clans are represented by their own *buliang*. These are invariably men born free whose dependence on their *mite* patrons is only of a ceremonial nature.

A comparison of the position and prospects of slaves among Apa Tanis and Daflas reveals the basic differences in the nature of the two societies. Apa Tani society is static and the social mobility of slaves is limited. Even when 'separated' they can never attain patrician status however great the wealth which they have acquired. The dividing line between *mura* and *mite* can never be crossed. Among the Daflas, on the other hand, social mobility is much greater. A slave, or a man born as the son of a slave, may gradually improve his position and gain not only economic independence but a social status equal to that of the free-born. Conversely even the most prominent man may be captured by enemies and subsequently sold as a slave. Here slaves do not form a caste of their own, but being a slave is an incident of fate, and in no way an immutable condition. There is among the Daflas no class comparable to the *mura* class of the Apa Tanis, and the distinction between *gute* and *guchi* has—at least today—no connotation suggesting social inequality.

The Apa Tani class system, on the other hand, resembles in some of its aspects the hierarchy of castes of Hindu India. There too the members of inferior castes have no possibility of raising their social status and each caste is strictly endogamous. But concepts of purity and pollution, which play so great a rôle in maintaining the distance between Hindu castes, do not determine the relations between *mite* and *mura*. Members of both classes mix freely at meals, play and work, and sexual relations with *mura* do not jeopardize a patrician's social and ritual position. Paradoxically, even

house-slaves, who are the absolute property of their owners and have strictly speaking no legal rights, appear much less as a 'depressed' class than many of the untouchable castes of India. They participate in the social life of the upper stratum of tribal society to a far greater extent than the members of any inferior Hindu caste can take part in that of the higher castes. The attitude of patrician masters to their slaves, moreover, is far less overbearing than the usual behaviour of high-caste Hindus vis-à-vis their untouchable employees or dependants. Whereas the underprivileged in traditional Hindu society thus enjoy personal freedom without being ever allowed to forget that they are members of an out-group despised by, and polluting to, the rest of society, Apa Tani slaves lack freedom but are accorded recognition as fellow-tribesmen and as such feel part of Apa Tani society.

V

FAMILY LIFE

UNLIKE other tribes of the Subansiri region the Apa Tanis live in houses built to accommodate a single family with the possible addition of one or another house-slave. It is unusual for two married couples of equal status to share a house for more than a short time, and the nuclear family consisting of a couple and their unmarried children is the basic economic and social unit of Apa Tani society. While wealthy Daflas may marry up to seven or eight wives and extend their long-houses sufficiently to accommodate several married sons and their children, Apa Tanis have the ambition to find suitable house-sites for their adult sons and to establish them as soon as possible in separate houses and on an adequate land-holding of their own. The desire for security against raiders, which stimulates the Dafla to expand his household to an enormous size, is not a factor among Apa Tanis, for their houses stand in crowded streets perfectly safe from outside enemies.

The marriage of an Apa Tani is generally considered his personal affair, and parents and kinsmen do not interfere to any great extent with the young people's choice of partners. Whereas Daflas expect for their daughters large bride-prices and take a firm hand in negotiating suitable alliances, Apa Tanis do not consider the payment of a bride-price obligatory and most parents allow their daughters to choose their husbands themselves. There is no need for a formal engagement or even a wedding

ceremony. Once a man and a girl have agreed to live as husband and wife, the girl may then move without ceremony to the young man's parental house, or the young man may go and live for some time in her parents' house. In the case of wealthy families, however, marriages are often arranged by the parents. The conclusion of such alliances is connected with greater formalities involving the exchange of valuables, and the children may be married at an early age. Yet, a child-bride remains usually in her natal home, and visits her husband's family only during festivals. At this stage she has as much freedom as other young girls and her marital life begins only some time after the menarche.

If a young husband and wife after living for some time with the parents of either partner, do not get on, they may separate without any formality. The fate of a child born after its parents have separated depends on its sex; a son is given to the father and takes his clan-name, whereas a daughter remains with the mother and takes the maternal clan-name.

When a marriage has stood the test of the first few months, the man's parents usually provide him with a house-site and his friends and clansmen help him build a house. The newly married couple's entry into their own house is an occasion for a feast at which a mithan or a pig is slaughtered and the clansmen of both parties are entertained with beer and meat. But no religious rites are performed and no omens consulted.

Patricians of some means usually give their father-in-law a bride-price after they have lived with their wife for a year or two, and sometimes also just before the birth of a child. One of the richest men of Hang told me that for each of his ten daughters he received a bride-price of several mithan—usually five mithan—but that if his sons-in-law had not paid such prices he could not have insisted on payment. In that case, however, he would not have given his daughter a dowry of beads and cloths.

In the choice of their brides Apa Tanis have to observe

the rules of clan-exogamy and class-endogamy. Neither patrilateral nor matrilateral cross-cousins are eligible as marriage partners, but a man may marry a girl of his mother's clan provided no consanguinous link can be traced. Otherwise there are few restrictions on the choice of a partner, and a man is permitted to marry his wife's elder or younger sister, and even his younger brother's widow.

Polygamy is permitted, but very few men have more than one wife. In 1944 there were only three polygamous marriages among the 433 households of Haja, and although I have no exact figures for other villages, I do not think that there the percentage was very much higher. Wealthy men who have no sons from their first wife, or who have no brothers and are consequently eager to strengthen their lineage by having a number of sons, are considered justified in taking additional wives. Kago Bida, a *buliang* and virtual leader of the Kago clan of Haja village, told me that he contemplated marrying three girls in addition to the wife who had given him only two daughters. He had obtained the agreement of his wife and her relations and had himself approached the prospective brides. When they proved willing he also approached their parents. There was no talk about bride-prices, but should the parents demand them he would be prepared to pay. He intended to marry first one of the girls and in intervals of perhaps one year the others.

Men of less wealth and influence usually do not dare to take a second wife, for fear that the first wife's kinsmen would consider this an insult and take drastic revenge. In such a case they may go as far as seizing a man and cutting off his hair, which is considered a grievous disgrace. I knew a young man whose marriage was childless and who had a long-standing love-affair with a girl of good status, but did not dare to take her to his house for fear of the wrath of his wife's kinsmen.

In a different context (p. 108) we shall see that a husband

expelling a wife without grave provocation runs also the risk of a retaliatory action on the part of her kinsmen, but conversely a deceived husband may be supported by his affines against the lover of a faithless wife.

Whereas the break-up of a marriage is considered damaging to the prestige of the wife and her kinsmen, and a wife's adultery a disgrace to the husband, no very serious view is taken of casual sexual relations between married men and unmarried girls. Indeed many men freely admit that during the later stages of their wives' pregnancies and often also in the months after the birth of a child, they do not sleep with their wives but seek the company of unmarried girls. It seems that on the whole sexual relations do not give rise to a very deep emotional involvement, and this sober attitude to sex is probably the result of the very uninhibited sexual behaviour of Apa Tani youth.

Both boys and girls start sexual play extremely early, and I was told repeatedly that boys would attempt sexual intercourse at as early an age as eight or nine, which is the time when they first put on small aprons covering their private parts. There is no social disapproval of the love-affairs of unmarried boys and girls, and many girls prolong the period of more or less promiscuous relations until they are in their early or even middle twenties.

The men I spoke to were of the opinion that among the unmarried girls of a village not more than two or three would be without a lover. The young couples meet in the granaries, in empty houses, in field-huts, in the jungle and sometimes even in their parents' houses. Usually such affairs last only two or three months, and once a couple have been lovers for one or two years, they are likely to marry. Love-affairs between *mite* and *mura* are not unusual, but cases of premarital relations in violation of the rules of clan-exogamy are considered to be very rare and highly reprehensible.

Contraceptive practices are unknown, but it is nevertheless not very usual for unmarried girls to become

pregnant.[1] A girl who finds herself with child is considered rather unlucky, but is not reproached by parents and kinsmen, for pregnancy, they argue, is given by the gods, and not attributable to any fault on her part. She may or may not know who the child's father is, or she may know but be unwilling to name the man. If the father remains unknown the child is reared by the girl's parents, and takes the maternal clan-name. A patrician girl's illegitimate child of unknown paternity counts as a patrician, although there must be the obvious suspicion that the father may be of *mura* class. An illegitimate child is known as *hipa*, but never referred to by this term in his or her presence. Some *mite* clans permit *hipa* to participate in all ritual activities and ceremonial meals, while other clans exclude persons of this status from meals of ritual character. But if a patrician girl admits that her child's father is a *mura*, then she must join him in his house and become a *mura* herself. A patrician man, however, cannot under any circumstances take a *mura* mistress into his house; any child from such a union must remain with the mother and is regarded as *mura*. At the time of my inquiries there was, however, no known case of a *mura* child ascribed to a *mite* father, and considering the Apa Tani girls' promiscuous habits, it is doubtful whether the paternity of an illegitimate child can ever be established with certainty. The acceptance of an illegitimate child into the mother's clan is not the only exception to the normal rule of patrilineal descent. An orphan living with his maternal kinsmen can change his clan-affiliation, and I knew a man who was the legitimate son of a patrician of Hibu clan, but had adopted the clan-name of his mother's

[1] The Apa Tanis say that a girl may have love-affairs for many years without conceiving, but that as soon as she gets married pregnancy is likely to occur within a short time. They deny the knowledge of means to procure abortion and have no explanation for the low fertility of the unmarried. They are convinced, however, that isolated acts of sexual intercourse will never result in pregnancy. For a detailed discussion of the problem of adolescent infertility as encountered among many primitive populations see Chapter XVII of Verrier Elwin's *The Muria and their Ghotul*, Bombay, 1947.

brother, in whose house he had lived for some time after his father's death. He joined in the rituals of his adopted clan, and had severed all connection with his paternal clan. A change of clan-affiliation can occur also if a girl with an illegitimate child marries a man other than the child's father. In such a case it is usual for the husband to treat the illegitimate child as his own and the latter will henceforth be known by his clan-name and count as a member of the husband's clan.

The sober and on the whole rather unemotional attitude to sex is reflected also in the paucity of prohibitions and taboos relating to the reproductive process. The only time when there is a strict taboo on sexual intercourse is during the first thirteen days after a woman's confinement. For the first ten days both the woman and her husband are considered impure, and may neither cook nor draw water from a well or stream. After this period mother and child are bathed, and for the next three days husband and wife may sleep on one mat but must abstain from sexual intercourse. On the fourteenth day all restrictions come to an end, but many men desist from marital relations for a very much longer time, and it is then that young husbands are likely to consort with unattached girls. Women are not subject to any taboos during pregnancy or menstruation, and the Apa Tanis do not share the common Indian view on the polluting nature of women during their menses. Nor do they mark a girl's first menstruation by any observances or celebrations.

It seems that after some years of premarital sexual adventures, most Apa Tani women settle down to a stable and on the whole harmonious married life. The fact that each married couple soon acquires a house of its own precludes tensions arising from incompatibility between a young wife and her mother-in-law, and most Apa Tani wives work so hard that little energy is left for interests outside their home. Apa Tanis frequently quarrel over land, trade transactions or matters affecting their influence and prestige in the community, but unlike Daflas they seldom

seem to fall out as a result of rivalry over the favours of women. When marital disputes lead to quarrels between the respective families, the issue is usually not so much the competition for the possession of a woman as the loss of prestige suffered by the kinsmen of a woman neglected or discarded by her husband. For prestige is gauged by the protection a man or a kin-group can afford to relatives, dependants and guests, and the desertion of a wife by her husband reflects on her natal family even worse than a wife's casual unfaithfulness may reflect on her husband whose social status will suffer only if he is known to tolerate a prolonged adulterous association. A married woman caught in adultery will not necessarily be punished or divorced, but the aggrieved husband may seize her lover and redeem his prestige by extracting a substantial fine as ransom. Once this has been paid the matter is considered settled, and it does not seem that Apa Tani husbands of fickle wives greatly suffer from jealousy.

This is an attitude very different from that of Daflas who consider wives obtained by the payment of enormous bride-prices so much their property that any indiscretion on their parts is likely to rouse them to fits of uncontrolled rage.[1] Very much less secure than Apa Tanis in the possession of material wealth—all their property being movable and subject to raiding—the Daflas seem to lack the Apa Tanis' tolerance and detachment in the regulation of personal and sexual relations, and a higher standard of sexual morality is expected not only of married women but even of young girls who enjoy none of the Apa Tanis' pre-marital freedom and independence.

We have seen that Apa Tani parents do not consider it their responsibility to select their sons' and daughters' marriage-partners, and that even rich men of high social status do not interfere in their daughters' amatory affairs. Parents are responsible, however, to assist their sons in setting up a household and acquiring an economic holding.

[1] Cf. my *Himalayan Barbary*, p. 102.

It is usual for fathers to buy house-sites for their married sons, and much of the land is passed on to men of the younger generation long before their elders' death. Wealthy men with several sons usually divide their property as their sons get married, and retain only one share for themselves. This share finally passes to the youngest son, who continued to cultivate with his father, whereas the elder sons do not inherit anything in addition to the property which they received in their father's lifetime.

Daughters usually do not receive any share other than their dowry of cloths and ornaments, but a rich man may help a poor son-in-law in establishing himself, and may even give him land and cattle as presents. This, however, is exceptional and normally property is passed on in the male line only. No case of a man without male heirs taking a son-in-law into his house and designating him as his heir has come to my notice, and such a practice would indeed be incompatible with the concentration of clans in compact localities unless the son-in-law changed also his clan-affiliation.

On the basis of my admittedly very fragmentary material it appears that in descent and succession to property there is a strong emphasis on the male line, but that the transmission of status and privileges through the female line is not totally excluded. The integration of illegitimate children within the mother's clan is possible, orphans sometimes join their maternal kinsmen's clan, such special functions as that of the *kenna*[1] pass from mother to daughter, and wealthy men may divert some of their property to their daughters if the latter are not adequately provided for by their husbands. The prohibition of cross-cousin marriage also suggests that recognition of the female descent line is not altogether absent.

[1] See p. 72.

VI

THE MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER

THE Apa Tani valley with its highly developed agricultural economy and the general atmosphere of prosperity and security appeared to early observers as an island of peace in a turbulent world torn by tribal feuds and savage raids. Compared to the fortunes of neighbouring Dafla villages, most of which were the scene of fighting and arson more than once in the memory of the present generation, Apa Tani villages offered their inhabitants a high degree of personal security, provided, of course, they did not expose themselves to the attacks of Dafla raiders by venturing too far into the forest. But inside their house and during work on their fields Apa Tanis were on the whole safe from raids by outside foes.[1]

Internal disputes occasionally do disrupt the harmony of the Apa Tani community but the manner in which they are settled differs fundamentally from that prevalent among Daflas. While these rely entirely on the principle of retaliation and lack any machinery for the application of legal sanctions, Apa Tani society provides for the enforcement of laws through the *buliang* acting as the representatives of public opinion. The power of the *buliang*, no doubt, is

[1] The situation here described is that of 1944 and 1945, and conditions created since then by the establishment of the Indian administration are not taken into consideration in this analysis of the traditional system of tribal justice.

limited and they neither constitute a tribal government nor do they function in the manner of judges in a court of law. The limitations of the authority become obvious when large parts of the community are ranged against each other in support of conflicting claims, but even in such cases there is provision for a strict limitation of the use of force.

The Apa Tanis know very well that their complex economy and their whole pattern of living can be maintained only if peace reigns in the valley, and peace is assured by formal treaties of friendship between the individual villages. Such treaties are known as *dapo* and Daflas, too, often conclude *dapo* pacts when a feud has been settled or become too burdensome to the opponents. But whereas Dafla *dapo* pacts bind usually only individual households, and are—as it seems—only too frequently broken, the *dapo* pacts between all the villages of the Apa Tani valley are fundamental parts of the political system, and their conclusion lies in so distant a past that no one remembers the circumstances which led to their formulation. But all Apa Tanis assume that there is a permanent non-aggression pact between all villages, and those who told me that without these *dapo* treaties, the Apa Tanis 'could not live even for a month', were no doubt quite sincere in their belief in the absolute indispensability of the assurance of peace within the valley.

The *dapo* pacts designed to assure peace between the seven Apa Tani villages do not prevent all individual acts of violence, and allow even for organized armed demonstrations of a formal character of one village against the other. But the existence of the *dapo* treaties helps to keep such demonstrations within fairly narrow limits, and it is unusual for such a demonstration to result in a loss of lives.

While uncontrolled violence on a large scale would spell disaster to a community living in closely packed villages and concentrated on so narrow a space that those engaged in a feud could not draw away from each other, the controlled use of force against criminal and anti-social characters

is necessary if the society is to be saved from serious disorders. Yet, there is no formal administration of justice and no institution comparable to the *panchayat* of Indian villages. Unlike these bodies, which meet in public, cross-examine witnesses and defendants, and pronounce a verdict supposed to have validity throughout the tribal community, the councils of Apa Tani *buliang* meet informally and tend to take action without arranging for a formal hearing and trial. The punishments inflicted on those guilty of serious crimes is often drastic and while tribal *panchayat* in Middle India wield no more serious sanction than excommunication, Apa Tanis do not hesitate to inflict the death penalty if they see no other way of eliminating a disturbing element from their midst. A criminal's banishment from the tribal territory—which might well be considered an alternative solution—does not commend itself to Apa Tani *buliang* because an Apa Tani with a tendency to crime might involve his kinsmen and home-village in disputes with the Dafla village in which he finds refuge, or turning renegade he may put his knowledge of the Apa Tani territory at the service of hostile raiding parties.

The manner in which Apa Tani justice is being applied can best be demonstrated by quoting the case of a man of Duta, whose execution occurred during my presence in the valley in 1945. Chigi Duyu, a member of a patrician family of Duta, had been involved in various doubtful cattle deals, and was known as a thief for years. He had stolen cows and mithan from Apa Tanis, slaughtered them in the forest and sold the meat to Daflas, and conversely he stole Dafla mithan and sold the meat in Apa Tani villages. Thereby he became a menace to the peace between the two tribes, and a cause of dissension among the Apa Tanis themselves. When at last he was found selling a cow stolen from a man of Hang, the prominent men of Hang village held council and decided to enlist the support of the *buliang* of other villages in dealing with the offender. They went from village to village and the case was debated on the assembly

platforms of all villages barring Duta and the neighbouring Mudang-Tage. The majority of prominent Apa Tanis were thus familiar with the case, and they all agreed that Chigi Duyu should be apprehended and killed. Only the members of his own village were excluded from these discussions and it seems that no hint or rumour of the threatening danger reached the intended victim.

Shortly before the Morom festival, an annual rite when all the seven Apa Tani villages strengthen their ties of friendship by reciprocal gifts and the exchange of formal visits, several prominent men of Bela and Hang surprised Chigi Duyu on a *lapang* of Mudang-Tage and dragged him off to Hang in full view of the people of Mudang-Tage. No one intervened in his favour. The prisoner was taken to Hang and tied up at one of the public platforms. Two days later the men of his village, led by Chigi Nime, Duyu's clansman and an influential *akha buliang* and famous seer, went in solemn procession on their annual visit of goodwill to Hang. There they found, much to their embarrassment, Chigi Duyu, his leg fastened in a log, tied to a *lapang*. Chigi Nime offered a ransom of four mithan for Duyu's release, and the man whose cow Duyu had stolen was inclined to agree to the deal. But the other captors, and particularly the *buliang* of Bela village, did not consent to the acceptance of a ransom for Chigi Duyu. Although they were not involved in his last misdeeds, they were adamant in their insistence that a stop must be put to the nuisance of Chigi Duyu's depredations, and that he had to die.

Without waiting for further offers from Duyu's kinsmen, several prominent men of Bela and Hang assembled at the *lapang* where the prisoner was tied up, and told him that he had to pay with his life for his many misdeeds; it was his own fault and he should bear them no grudge for carrying out the punishment he had brought on himself by his thieving habits. Then they cut off his right hand 'with which he had stolen', slashed him over the eyes 'with which he had spied on other men's cattle', and over the mouth

'with which he had eaten stolen goods'. In a few moments he was dead. The men of Bela took one of his hands to their village and kept it in their *nago*, as it is customary in the case of captured enemy hands,[1] and the rest of the body was burnt in Hang close to one of the *nago* shrines.

The reaction of Chigi Duyu's kinsmen to his execution no less than the conduct of the executioners illustrates how far the Apa Tanis have travelled on the road from the Dafla practice of individual retaliation, which almost invariably can be bought off by an appropriate payment, to the enforcement of legal sanctions by representatives of the community. Had Chigi Duyu been captured by Daflas, his captors would almost certainly have shown interest in Chigi Nime's offer of a ransom and probably released their prisoner after bargaining for an even higher ransom. The fact that the Apa Tani *buliang* declined even to negotiate for a release, indicates that their wish to see justice done was greater than their desire to profit from a fat ransom. Chigi Duyu's clansmen evinced at first a good deal of indignation. Chigi Nime, the Duta *buliang*, insisted that Duyu's kinsmen would not rest content until they had revenged his death on one of the executioners; omens would decide whose life they would take. But no one took Chigi Nime's initial anger very seriously. No doubt he had lost face by the Bela men's refusal even to consider his offer of ransom, but he had to admit that Duyu had been guilty and that his capture and execution would not be considered a break of the *dapo* pact between Duta and Hang. After a few days the excitement of his kinsmen subsided and I heard of no move to take retaliatory action against the men who had killed Chigi Duyu, or even of tension between Duta and Hang. For no one could seriously deny that the executioners had acted as the representatives of public opinion and within the limits of tribal custom. The reaction of the kinsmen of a Dafla killed under similar circumstances would have been very different. Whatever his record may

[1] Cf. my *Himalayan Barbary*, p. 47; see also pp. 144–5.

have been, they would have been under an obligation to revenge his death and concern for their own prestige would not have allowed them quietly to drop the matter and to seek neither revenge nor compensation. For Daflas do not admit the overriding force of a rule of law, and the right of anyone to bring offenders to book without exposing himself to retaliatory action.

The Apa Tani *buliang*, supported by public opinion in all villages except the victim's village, were motivated as much by the wish to create an example which might deter other thieves as by the determination to end the annoyance of Duyu's inroads on other men's property. They did not aim at obtaining compensation for any particular loss or injury, but they systematically set about punishing a criminal whose elimination was in the interest of Apa Tani society as a whole.

The very different attitude to a theft committed by a visiting Dafla woman brings out this motivation very clearly. A few days after Chigi Duyu's execution an Apa Tani surprised a Dafla woman removing rice from a granary of Mudang-Tage village. Seeing herself observed she fled, but was later captured by the owner of the granary. She was one of the wives of Toko Höli, a rich and prominent Dafla of Talo village, and had got her husband so often into trouble that he no longer accorded her the full status of a wife but kept her in his house like a concubine of slave origin. But considerations of prestige demanded that he should effect her release, and after a few days' negotiations conducted in a most amicable atmosphere it was decided that the Apa Tanis would release the captive woman on receiving from Toko Höli valuables of the value of one mithan. The Apa Tanis were not interested in reforming or punishing a thieving Dafla woman, however bad her reputation, but the attempt to rob them of their rice entitled them to compensation, and so they held her captive in order to make sure that her husband would pay up. The problem of doing justice did not arise, for relations between

Apa Tanis and Daflas are not subject to a rule of law, but are determined by expediency and the mutual wishes to gain as much as possible by trade, and to obtain compensation for any losses suffered as the result of disputes and feuds. Attacks on persons or property on the part of Daflas are hence not thought of in the terms of crimes, but are considered as part of a game in which trade deals alternate with acts of war, and traditional trade partners are often also traditional enemies.

Within the Apa Tani community, on the other hand, a serious view is taken of crimes violating rights to property. A first offender may not be dealt with severely, but may be tied up for some days beside a *lapang*, being both uncomfortable with his leg fastened in a heavy log of wood, and exposed to ridicule. Subsequent offences may be expiated by the payment of compensation, but the punishment of habitual theft is death. The execution of a thief of patrician class, such as Chigi Duyu, is a rare occurrence, and most of the thieves who pay for their offences with their lives are of *mura* class. In the case of slaves it is often their own masters who act as their chief prosecutors, for as long as a master keeps a slave in his possession, he is responsible for the slave's doings.

One case may suffice to demonstrate the way in which Apa Tanis deal with slaves who cease to be an asset and become a liability to their masters: Ponyo Rali, an unmarried slave-girl of Hang, had the reputation of being completely irresponsible. She often strayed from her master's house and had casual sex relations with numerous young men. While her promiscuous habits were a matter of indifference to the other villagers, her habit of stealing rice, fowls and beads caused general annoyance, and frequently embarrassed her owner. When one day she was caught red-handed in an act of theft, her master made up his mind to inflict on her the customary punishment for habitual stealing. He had her seized and tied up at his own *lapang*. The leading men of the clan gathered and agreed

that she should die. Her master's other slaves dragged her to the execution place outside the village, and the *buliang* and clan-elders followed. Then she was killed, not by one man, but by all those present, who hacked her to pieces and threw the pieces of the body into the Kele River together with her clothes and ornaments. Subsequently a nominal *ropi* ceremony, such as performed with the trophies from a killed enemy, was held at the *nago*, the explanation being that this was done because like a captive enemy she had been tied up at a *lapang*.

Though executions are not frequent I heard of several similar cases of the killing of habitual thieves, and it would seem that the Apa Tanis, who esteem wealth more than any other achievement, take a far more serious view of offences against property than of almost any other breach of custom.

There is, however, a fundamental distinction in their attitude to what appears to them as common crimes and to acts of violence and high-handedness occurring in the course of a dispute which began as a quarrel between equals. The Apa Tani, for all his social sense, is a great individualist and if he is wronged by a fellow tribesman his first reaction is not to appeal to the *buliang* to mediate in the dispute, but to retrieve his loss or vindicate his honour by taking the law into his own hands. Astonishing as it may seem to the outsider, the Apa Tanis are in no way perturbed if two villagers fight out a quarrel over the unfaithfulness of a wife or husband by capturing each other's children or relatives. More than once have I seen houses fenced in with high bamboo palisades in which the owner held a co-villager imprisoned and it is no unusual thing to kidnap a defaulting debtor or a troublesome relative and guard against his escape by putting his foot into a heavy log. A few examples will demonstrate this system of private enforcement of the law, and make it obvious that the underlying idea is not the punishment of an offender but the realization of a claim or the extraction of compensation under pressure.

In Kach, a sub-settlement of Hang village, I once saw a house surrounded by a bamboo fence, higher than its roof, without any entrance in front. The only opening in the palisade was at the back of the house, so high up that to enter one had to climb up a ladder outside and down a ladder inside. A platform, a good deal higher than the house gable, was erected above the back verandah and seemed to serve as a kind of sentry box. When I asked for the reason of these fortifications I was told that a prisoner was kept in the house. The prisoner, as Ponyo Tamo the owner of the house explained, was his own son-in-law, Tapi Pusang, and he had seized him on account of his bad treatment of his wife, Ponyo Tamo's daughter. Many years ago Tapi Pusang had married a sister's daughter of Ponyo Tamo, but divorced her after a short time. Then he married Ponyo Tamo's daughter Sante, paying one mithan cow as bride-price. Though the marriage remained childless, Pusang and Sante lived together for about ten years. But finally Pusang had grown tired of his wife and had told her to leave his house. Several times he had driven her away, as it seems with the intention of marrying another wife. Sante, however, was not willing to leave him and returned to him again and again. Pusang then came to Tamo's house and told him to take his daughter back. Tamo refused and when he failed to persuade Pusang to agree to a reconcilation, he seized him and tied him up with a heavy log on his foot. To prevent his flight or rescue he surrounded the house with a palisade and erected a platform where he or another man of his household kept watch every night.

Tamo said that he would release Pusang if he either consented to take his wife back or paid a ransom of one hundred mithan-values[1] to atone for the insult to Tamo's family. For seven months Tamo, with his whole family including his daughter Sante and her imprisoned husband Pusang, had been living in the fenced-in house, and Pusang was at

[1] Mithan-value is the unit in which prices are expressed; one full-grown mithan cow counts as about five mithan-values.

that time still determined neither to take back his wife nor to pay the ransom.

But when I revisited Kach a year later the fence had been removed from Tamo's house, and I was told that Pusang's clansmen had ransomed him by paying to Tamo forty mithan-values as compensation. The parties were reconciled, but Pusang and Sante had finally separated. In the negotiations leading to the release the *buliang* of Hang village played no doubt an important part, but it is significant that for many months they took no action to prevent the imprisonment of one fellow-villager by the other. Their attitude had been that the quarrel concerned only the two families, and since it did not disturb the general peace of the village, their intervention was not called for until the parties approached them with the request to effect a settlement.

Rather different were the circumstances which led another Apa Tani to transform his house into a fortress. In the main street of Reru, a *khel* of Bela village, I found a house surrounded by a firm bamboo palisade and was told that the owner Nani Jile was there living in what amounted to self-inflicted confinement. He had quarrelled with his father's brother's son over the possession of certain fields, and in the course of the dispute had captured his cousin's wife and kept her for a month with a log on her foot in his house. To effect her release her husband paid a ransom of five mithan-cows and five mithan-calves, but Nani Jile still did not set her free and in the end the husband with some friends forced their way into Jile's house and rescued the woman. Nani Jile was sure that his cousin would take the next opportunity of revenge and capture him or a member of his family. To provide against such a fate he fortified his house, and for five months neither he nor his wife nor his children had left the narrow space enclosed by the palisade. From their verandah they could see out through the fence onto the village street and chat with passers-by, and their friends and relatives were, of course,

free to climb over the carefully guarded palisade and keep them company inside the house. But only Jile's two slaves ever went out, and it was they who fetched water and brought in foodstuff provided by Jile's relations-in-law. The latter helped the slaves also in the cultivation of Jile's fields, but Jile and his wife and children were debarred from any productive work.

After some months, however, Jile relaxed his precautions, and when about half a year later I came again to Reru, the fence round Jile's house had been removed and another house across the street was fenced in. It was his cousin's house and Jile himself was kept in it as a prisoner. Soon after he had dropped his vigilance and ventured out of his house, his cousin, still smarting under the insult heaped on him and his wife, had captured Jile and refused to set him free until Jile's relatives had paid him full compensation for the loss of mithan and prestige which he had suffered through Jile's capture of his wife. When I finally left the Apa Tani valley the dispute, which had lasted for nearly two years, had not come to an end, but I have little doubt that Jile was ultimately ransomed and the cousins reached some kind of agreement which freed them from the fear of being captured and imprisoned.

In this case too the *buliang* took no action and the general attitude of the villagers was indeed that the quarrel of the two cousins did not concern anybody but themselves and their nearest relatives.

While the capture of one's opponent is a favourite and usually fairly effective means of pressing a claim, it is employed mainly in what we might call 'civil' disputes. If an Apa Tani of wealth and good social status thinks his honour at stake, he resorts to a very different procedure to vindicate himself and humiliate his enemy. This procedure, known as *lisudu*, involves the ritual destruction of wealth and recalls in that respect the *potlatch* rites of the North-West Americans. A man who challenges a co-villager to a *lisudu* competition starts by killing one or several of his mithan in front of his

opponent's house and leaving the meat for the other villagers to eat. Sometimes he adds to the holocaust valuables, such as Tibetan bells, bronze plates and swords. If his opponent accepts the challenge he must slaughter at least the same number of mithan and destroy property of equal value in front of the challenger's house. The next move is that the latter kills an even greater number of mithan and this number must again be matched by his rival. The competition may go on until both parties are nearly ruined, but in theory the man who can continue longer with this destruction of wealth wins thereby his opponent's entire property in land and movable possessions. But I have heard of no concrete examples of a *lisudu* which was carried as far as the utter defeat of one of the competitors; usually the *buliang* intervene and negotiate a settlement which spares both parties the humiliation of defeat. The following incident in Hang village is a fairly typical example of a *lisudu.*

A Dafla, Licha Seke, had come to live in Hang and stayed in the house of Taj Toko, a freed slave of Ponyo Tamar, the richest and one of the most influential men of Hang. Now Licha Seke had some years previously taken part in the capture of a mithan belonging to Belo Lampung, another prominent man of Hang. But the matter seemed forgotten and for a full year Licha Seke lived in Hang without being molested. Then one day when he was going to cut firewood Belo Lampung captured him and kept him for one night in his house. Ponyo Tamar considered the capture of a man who was living in his slave's house an insult to himself and offered Belo Lampung five mithan as ransom for Licha Seke. But Lampung said that nothing but Seke's death would satisfy him. Next morning he and his clansmen took Licha Seke to the public execution place on the bank of a stream, beheaded him and then cut the body into pieces and threw them into the water.

Ponyo Tamar, enraged by the killing of his slave's guest, seized two cows belonging to Belo Lampung and slaughtered both cows close to his house. Lampung was apparently not

keen on continuing the quarrel with the rich and influential Ponyo Tamar, and ignored the killing of his cattle. But Ponyo Tamar, deeply wounded by the insult to his house and anxious to preserve his prestige, was out for a fight and forestalled any action on Lampung's part by challenging him to a *lisudu*. He began the competition by slaughtering in front of Lampung's house three mithan-cows and smashing one Tibetan bell, one bronze plate and one sword. Lampung retaliated by killing in front of Tamar's house four large mithan, but he did not destroy any other property. Next Tamar killed ten mithan and Lampung answered by killing twenty. The following day Tamar slaughtered thirty mithan, and Lampung, far from admitting defeat, collected sixty mithan and killed them in a single day. Thereupon Tamar called upon all his kinsmen and gathered eighty mithan. He was prepared to slaughter them, but the *buliang* intervened and persuaded him to kill only sixty, thereby matching Lampung's last bid without outstripping him. A settlement was achieved on the basis that the *lisudu* ended undecided, and Lampung agreed to pay to Tamar a fine of one mithan-cow for killing a man who had stayed in the house of one of Tamar's dependants.

We note that in this case Tamar had no material claim against Lampung, and had suffered no loss in property. But his honour as one of the leading men of the village had been attacked, and he resorted to the *lisudu* to re-establish his prestige.

When personal honour is at stake Apa Tanis are extremely sensitive and even among near relations questions of prestige may lead to serious and long-drawn-out disputes. In Haja village two brothers, Kimle Tara and Kimle Dübo, quarrelled over the possession of the house-site of one of their deceased dependants who had died without heirs. In the normal course of events the property of a dependant without heirs reverts to the master or masters, and in so far as the cultivated land was concerned the two brothers had agreed on its disposal. But as the house-site was near Tara's

house, he claimed it for himself. Dübo, however, felt that by ignoring his legitimate claim to a fair share his brother had slighted his honour and he started a *lisudu* by slaughtering four mithan at the Kimle *lapang*; next day Tara killed five mithan, which was followed by Dübo, killing ten, Tara twelve, and Dübo twelve; here negotiations might have settled the matter, but Dübo insistent on vindicating his honour slaughtered ten more mithan on the day after he had slaughtered twelve and Tara replied by killing another ten. Here the clansmen intervened and the *buliang* negotiated a settlement whereby the house-site as well as the lands of the deceased dependant were to be divided between the brothers.

The animals slaughtered at a *lisudu* are not always those of the competitors. It is customary for the kinsmen, both maternal and paternal, to show their group solidarity by lending the animals required, even when there is little chance of early repayment. It is therefore understandable that sooner or later the competitors' kinsmen persuade the *buliang* to intervene and prevent too great a destruction of property. Yet, there remains the idea that the more wealth a man can destroy the higher his social prestige rises. The very fact of the support given by numerous kinsmen is proof of his importance and influence in a large social group. But since the pursuance of a *lisudu* to its logical conclusion might spell the economic ruin of a whole group of families, the *buliang* usually intervene in favour of a compromise.

Whereas it would seem that the *lisudu* is the recognized means by which a man can vindicate his personal honour slighted by a fellow villager, disputes between members of different villages may ultimately result in a ceremonial and prearranged fight, a *gambu sodu*. The partisans of an aggrieved man challenge, in such a case, the supporters of his opponent to an open fight, and on the day and time fixed for the combat the men of both parties line up and fight armed with spears, bows and arrows and sometimes

even with *dao*. The men whose dispute is the immediate cause of the *gambu* do not generally take part, but they are frequently responsible for marshalling their partisans, and they must pay compensation for those falling in the fray. It is argued that they are not permitted to risk their lives in the fight, because if they were killed there would remain nobody to pay compensation to men wounded or to the relatives of men who fell in the fray. The actual combat is governed by various rules and conventions, and there is no intention to inflict heavy losses on either side. As soon as there is a fatal casualty or two on either side the *gambu* is usually called off; it seems that no permanent emnity results from these prearranged fights and it may be argued that they serve as a kind of safety valve through which pent-up ill-feeling between groups may be discharged with a minimum of harm to the tribal community as a whole. In the heat of the fight some damage may be done to gardens and bamboo groves, but there is never any large-scale destruction of houses and granaries, such as in the raids of Daflas; the fight is more or less ordered and confined to long-distance arrow shooting and spear throwing, with perhaps an occasional thrust into the opposing line with drawn swords. I have never heard of a *gambu* which ended in a general mêlée where men fought with swords and knives for their lives.

A few examples will demonstrate the type of quarrels that can lead to such prearranged fights. Some five years previous to my visit Haja raided the Dafla village of Linia, and a Hari warrior who had joined the raiding party was killed in the fighting by a Dafla of the attacked village. A year later Linia men came to buy rice in Bela, the Apa Tani village nearest to Hari, and the killed man's brother, Hage Sa, hearing of their arrival ambushed them as they were returning and killed one man and one woman. The people of Bela were infuriated by the attack on their trade partners, particularly because it was committed on Bela territory, and they demanded that Hage Sa should pay compensa-

tion to Linia. When Hage Sa refused, two *khel* of Bela declared a *gambu* against Hage Sa, who took up the challenge and was supported by his village. On the day arranged the men of Bela and Hari lined up on an open field midway between the two villages. Numbers were fairly equal and the parties attacked each other with arrows and spears, sometimes sallying forth to thrust at an opponent with swords, while the women brought up reinforcements in the shape of new bamboo spears. Many were wounded, but after two on each side had been killed the *gambu* was broken off; there was no formal peace-making, but the dispute was considered settled and both villages resumed friendly relations.

Another *gambu* in which Hari was involved resulted also from the interference of one Apa Tani village with the Dafla friends and traditional trade partners of another. The events leading up to the fight are rather involved. Two Apa Tani friends, Takhe Tagang of Hang and Tasso Sili of Hari, went to Bua, a Dafla-Miri village two days' journey from Hari, to purchase cotton. On their return journey they were captured by Daflas of the Hidjat-Lupukher area. Takhe Tagang was kept in stocks at Hidjat and Tasso Sili was sent across the Khru River to another village. From there he escaped and made his way home, but Takhe Tagang had to be ransomed by his friends of Hang, who employed an influential Dafla of Licha village as go-between and negotiator.

After his return, Takhe Tagang blamed his friends and trade partners of Bua for having made no efforts to effect his release, although he had been captured on the way from their village to Hang. So when he heard that two women of Bua were coming on a visit to Hari to attend the Mloko festival, he and some other Hang men ambushed the two women and took them to Hang.

Both women were kept in stocks and when the Hari men demanded their release Hang refused. At that Hari challenged Hang to a *gambu* and the Hang men replied that

they would fight, shoot arrow for arrow, hurl spear for spear and draw sword for sword. Hari gained the support of the villages of Bela, Mudang-Tage and Michi-Bamin, whose hunting and grazing grounds adjoin Bua and who at that time all had pacts of friendship with Bua.

On the day fixed for the *gambu*, the warriors of these four villages marched to Hang, and formed a long line on the fields in front of the village. The men of Hang were furious about this challenge and in anger took one of the captive women to a *nago*, killed her and burned the body. Then they came out to fight.

The battle raged for some time inconclusively, watched by crowds of warriors from the neutral villages of Haja and Duta. Just when the men of Hari and their allies were on the point of pushing the Hang men back into their own village, and of entering the labyrinth of streets, the rumour spread that the son of Hang's richest and most influential man, Ponyo Tamar, had been mortally wounded. The news sobered the Hari men, who realized the seriousness of such an incident, and they withdrew from the fight. The rumour was actually exaggerated and the boy, though hit in the chest by an arrow, escaped with his life. On Hari's side two men had been wounded, but there were no fatal casualties.

Two months after the *gambu* the surviving Bua woman was ransomed by her husband, but there were no formal peace negotiations between Hari and Hang; normal relations were resumed gradually, the *gambu* being considered sufficient revenge for the insult suffered by the Hari men through the capture and subsequent murder of their guests.

Another *gambu* was fought by Hang on account of a boundary dispute with the small village of Michi-Bamin. The latter was supported by Mudang-Tage village and the two parties lined up on opposite banks of the Kele River, and shot at each other with arrows. One man on each side was killed and as a result Michi-Bamin, though hardly one-

fifth as populous as Hang, retained its right to the disputed land.

Whereas a *lisudu* is as a rule the ultimate outcome of a dispute between two equals of the same village, the *gambu* is the last resort for resolving tension between two village communities, which for one reason or another could not be removed by the ordinary ways of arbitration. Neither of them can be regarded as judiciary processes whereby offenders against the accepted moral standards and the common interests of the community are subjected to sanctions by public action. But neither do they fall into the category of captures and raids usual between Dafla opponents or indeed in the relations between Apa Tanis and their Dafla and Miri neighbours. In a *lisudu* there is coercion, but it is of a moral and not of a physical kind. The challenger does not destroy his opponent's property but forces him to undertake the destruction himself under the threat of a loss of prestige. One may well argue that the *lisudu* serves a positive social purpose by curbing the pride and influence of two prominent men competing for a dominant position in their *khel* or village, and by effecting at the same time the expenditure of some of their wealth for the benefit of the poorer members of the community. Mithan, which are neither used for dairy purposes nor for traction, are meant to be eaten, and as the flesh of the animals slaughtered during a *lisudu* is distributed first to all inhabitants of the village, and if there is a surplus to all-comers from the other villages of the valley, even a holocaust of fifty or sixty mithan does not involve an absolute waste of a valuable commodity. Thus the *lisudu* acts as a device to check too great an accumulation of capital in the hands of a few prominent men. For if we may judge from the few examples in my notes, it is the wealthiest men of a village who, being most sensitive to any slight to their honour and prestige, are most inclined to indulge in these expensive competitions. That in doing so they divert some of their wealth to the poorer members of the community

rather than use it to build up their economic power even further would seem to benefit Apa Tani society as a whole. In another context (p. 139) we shall see that Apa Tanis perform sacrificial rites very similar to the feasts of merit of Nagas and Chins, but in the conspicuous squandering of wealth connected with a *lisudu* there is perhaps also an element reminiscent of feasts of merit.

Significantly, Dafla society knows no competition comparable to the *lisudu*. There, rivalry and jealousy between co-villagers and even clansmen find expression in a much cruder and more direct manner. A man who feels aggrieved and yet strong enough to stand up to his opponent is likely to organize an attack on him or one of his dependants, but will never try to exert moral pressure by challenging his rival to a competition in the conspicuous disposal of wealth. Daflas too know how to use wealth for the acquisition of prestige, but their method is the ceremonial exchange of valuables in the forging of an alliance.

The motives underlying the staging of a *gambu* are perhaps not different from those which have resulted in many a Dafla raid. Tension may have reached a point where negotiations seem futile, and violent, direct action the only way of easing pent-up hostile feelings. But whereas Daflas might try to destroy an adversary or capture so many of his dependants that the ransoms will spell his economic ruin, and even Apa Tanis may attack Dafla villages with very much the same intentions, they know only too well that they cannot wipe out another Apa Tani village, and that ultimately they have to live with their neighbours in peace. So they do not organize an attack as they would organize a raid on a Dafla village, and aim neither at effecting a surprise nor at inflicting heavy losses. But they challenge the opposing village to a kind of mass duel to be fought on a prearranged day and in full view of spectators from other villages. The procedure is fundamentally that of a demonstration rather than of a serious fight, and if there are casualties they are usually more or less incidental. At the

outset there is never the intention to kill any individual on the opposing side, and should anyone be fatally wounded, his death does not impose on his kinsmen an obligation to take individual revenge on his slayer. Remarkably enough no formal peace negotiations or reconstitution of the *dapo* pact between the villages engaged in the *gambu* are considered necessary. Its performance has cleared the air, and relations between the two sides gradually return to normal. The restraint practised both during a *gambu* and afterwards is remarkable considering that Apa Tanis have shown themselves capable of wiping out Dafla settlements with the greatest ruthlessness, and it is surprising indeed that hundreds of excited Apa Tani warriors armed with bows and arrows, swords and pikes can advance on each other and go through the motions of a most spirited fight without inflicting on each other very serious losses. But even in the *gambu* and its atypical sequence watched and described by Ursula Graham Bower,[1] the only fatal casualty occurred almost incidentally, and the *buliang* tried up to the end to prevent a general conflagration.

My data on the settlement of disputes and the punishment of criminals tend to show that the preservation of social harmony and equilibrium is considered the supreme aim of all efforts on the part of the tribal elders. There is no doubt a utilitarian strain in a system which provides for the elimination by public action of the man or woman of low social status or little wealth who through the habit of petty theft has become a nuisance and a source of irritation, but which allows a rich man to pick a quarrel with an equal, in its course capture men and mithan, and finally resolve the dispute by a *lisudu* competition. In the minds of the Apa Tanis there is obviously a subtle difference between common crime and certain acts of violence which are not altogether disreputable and do not discredit the perpetrator in the eyes of his co-villagers. But wherever the dividing line between crime and forceful self-help may

[1] Cf. her *The Hidden Hand*, pp. 120–26; 232–34.

lie, there can be no doubt that the Apa Tanis have evolved an effective system of preserving tribal harmony and of dealing with anti-social elements in a way which not only eliminates the source of disturbance but also acts as a deterrent to potential law-breakers.

VII

RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBOURS IN PEACE AND WAR

THE Apa Tanis' relations with their Dafla and Miri neighbours fluctuate between intensive trade contacts involving frequent reciprocal visits with much animated conviviality and periods of hostility punctuated by kidnappings, raids and killings. To the newcomer to the Apa Tani valley it is at first confusing that traditional trade partners are usually also hereditary enemies, and that the Dafla and Miri villages figuring in stories of raids and feuds are always those with which the tellers have the closest economic relations. But on reflection it is understandable that friction arises more frequently between tribesmen pitching their brains against each other in deals of buying, selling and lending than between strangers or casual acquaintances whose interests are seldom in conflict. The pattern of tribal trade necessitates moreover concentration on a limited number of trade partners. As there are neither open markets nor anything comparable to a shop, the trader, anxious to sell his wares in villages two or three days' walk from his home, must have friends in whose houses he is sure of a welcome and who may either buy themselves or help him find purchasers for his goods. Such friends must also be prepared to guarantee their visitor's security to the extent that they will regard any attack on him as equal to an attack on a member of their own household.

We have seen in Chapter VI (pp. 114–15, 115–16) that several major conflicts between Apa Tani villages arose from the outraged sense of responsibility an Apa Tani host feels for the security of his Dafla or Miri friends as long as they are on the territory of his village.

The Daflas have developed the forging of ceremonial friendships to a fine art and as those sharing a village site without forming a real community are under no obligation to afford each other mutual protection, it is only the web of specific alliances which gives a Dafla any sense of security. Individual trade relations between Daflas (or Miris) and Apa Tanis are less formal, and it is only very occasionally that an Apa Tani enters into a friendship pact with a Dafla by an exchange of mithan known as *gotu-rauko-sudu*. The two friends (*gotu-arang*) are under an obligation to assist each other as far as possible and to avenge each other if one gets killed. Apa Tani villages, moreover, conclude treaties (*dapo*) with the leading men of neighbouring Dafla villages in order to safeguard as far as possible the safety of the men and women visiting such villages in the pursuance of trade.

The choice of trade partners is by no means haphazard, however, but follows the course laid down by tradition. Each of the seven Apa Tani villages has traditional trade ties with certain Dafla or Miri villages, and with few exceptions these are the villages whose land borders on the hunting ground of the Apa Tani village in question. Thus Hang, which lies at the southern end of the valley, entertains trade relations mainly with the Dafla villages of Leji, Pochu, Mai and Jorum, which are situated to the south and south-west of Hang. Michi-Bamin and Mudang-Tage, which lie at the western ring of the valley, trade mainly with Mai, Jorum and Talo, but as Mudang-Tage has also some hunting grounds to the east of the valley and adjoining the land of the Miris of Bua and Chemir, traders of Mudang-Tage operate occasionally also in the Bua-Chemir region. Duta and Haja are both orientated towards the west and trade with Jorum, Talo, Nielom, Likha, Licha and Linia.

The area of influence of the Apa Tani village of Bela coincides with that of Haja and Duta only to the extent of trade with Linia, a village lying due north of the Apa Tani valley. All of Bela's other trade partners live to the north-east of the valley in the Miri villages of Dodum, Taplo, Pemir, Murga, Rakhe, Bua and Chemir.

An Apa Tani may trade with Daflas of a village not included in the group of traditional trade partners only if he has matrilateral or affinal ties to one of the Apa Tani villages habitually trading with the Dafla or Miri village in question. An Apa Tani without the rights derived from such kinship ties risks upsetting and antagonizing those of his neighbours on whose sphere of commercial interests he encroaches. In the event of a conflict with his legitimate trade partners he is, therefore, not free to switch over to a village traditionally trading with other Apa Tanis. A complete suspension of trade between an Apa Tani village and all its Dafla or Miri trade partners, such as periodically occurs when feuds reach a degree of particular seriousness, results for the Apa Tanis concerned in real hardship. Hostile feeling must run very high before they will abandon all individual trade contacts. There are innumerable instances of Apa Tanis continuing to trade with Daflas who to all extent and purposes are at war with other clans of the Apa Tanis' own village. At least a small measure of trade may be kept up by slaves who can go backwards and forwards without any great risk of capture.

It is only when a feud has unleashed particularly violent sentiments of anger and revenge that an area dominated by a Dafla clan may become dangerous for any Apa Tani and the flow of trade ceases. Both sides are then forced to market their goods or obtain supplies by using other and often circuitous trade channels.

There are many ways in which the mutually beneficial relations between trade partners can be disturbed, but while trying first to analyse and later to settle some long-standing feuds between Apa Tanis and some of their

numbers I found that unpaid trade debts, the shelter given to escaped slaves and the violent self-help of those feeling cheated in trade deals are among the most frequent root-causes of disputes which subsequently give rise to kidnappings, raids and counter-raids.

In 1944, for instance, the Apa Tanis of Duta and Haja complained that the Dafla settlement known under the clan-name Licha served as a refuge to all runaway Dafla slaves and such Daflas who had debts to Apa Tanis. It was then quite a normal thing for Daflas who had run into some difficulties in their own villages to come to the Apa Tani valley, begin by buying rice on credit, and when they saw no possibility of an early repayment, settle down as the dependants and farm servants of their creditors. When such a Dafla bond-servant absconded without settling his debt, the Apa Tani creditor felt aggrieved and would try to recoup his losses whenever chance gave him an opportunity. Such an opportunity might be the visit of an unsuspecting kinsman of the defaulter to the Apa Tani valley, where he could easily be captured and kept prisoner, until a ransom possibly exceeding the original debt would be paid by his kinsmen.

Actions of this type would set up a series of cattle-raids and captures of men out hunting, but in the early stages of such feuds there would usually be no losses of life, and prisoners would be ransomed without too much difficulty. The negotiations for their release would be conducted by a man skilled in the art of go-between. Such intermediaries are considered sacrosanct, but when entering a village in a state of hostility to their own village they are usually accompanied by friends from a neutral village who are on good terms with both sides. An intermediary as well as those accompanying him on his mission have to be rewarded for their trouble, and their fees add not inconsiderably to the expense of ransoming a captured kinsman.

When I arrived in the Apa Tani country in 1944, several clans of the village of Duta and Haja had fallen out with

their traditional trade partners of Licha, and a large number of cattle-thefts and captures of persons committed by the warriors of Licha had raised the Apa Tanis' temper to white heat. They claimed that within the previous three years their losses to Licha amounted to 92 mithan, 15 cows and bullocks, 58 prayer-bells, and 38 swords, most of which they had paid in the form of ransoms for clan members captured by Daflas of Licha. When it came to surprise attacks in the forest, Apa Tanis were no match for Daflas, and the latter did not venture into the open fields of the Apa Tani valley where numbers would have told against them. But they did ambush Apa Tani men out woodcutting or hunting, and what may have begun with isolated cases of forceful self-help to retrieve losses in trade deals ended in this particular case as repeated cattle-raids and kidnappings which enabled a band of determined Dafla toughs to extort periodically large ransoms from their more prosperous but less martial Apa Tani neighbours.

The persistence of such a situation illustrates not only the curiously ambivalent relations between traditional trade partners, but also the political structure of Apa Tani villages which does not provide a machinery for the effective deploy of the very large man-power in effectively curbing the inroads of a troublesome neighbour. Alone, Haja village could easily have put five times as many men into the field as all settlements of Licha together, but there was no one to marshal all able-bodied men and organize such a force in a decisive action against Licha. For not all clans and certainly not more than a minority of households had suffered under the Licha men's depredations, and men who had no personal grievance were indifferent to the losses of those wealthy enough to attract the attention of Dafla raiders. Indeed, the *buliang* most concerned with the feud were unable to enforce even a general boycott of Licha, and thus cut it off from supplies of Apa Tani rice. Thus one man of Haja village might be held captive in a house of Licha, whereas other Haja people—and particularly poor men

unattractive to Daflas interested in the large ransoms paid by the kinsmen of richer Apa Tanis—might continue to visit other Licha households for the sake of petty trade.

Haja and Duta were at that time not the only villages at cross-purposes with their traditional trade partners, but Hari was involved in a feud with the Miri village of Chemir, and there was tension between Bela and the Miri village of Pemir. In the latter case it was the Apa Tanis who had first resorted to force, and the dispute is a good example of the chain of violence which may result from quite a trivial quarrel. A man of the Reru *khel* of Bela had sold to Pemir Ekhin a prayer-bell on credit, and when the latter did not pay, the vendor captured one of Pemir Ekhin's mithan in order to make up for his loss.

Some time after this Talyan Nipa, a man of another *khel* of Bela, unsuspectingly went to Pemir to buy pigs. While he was in the house of a cousin of Pemir Ekhin the latter captured him with the connivance of his host and kept him prisoner. Talyan Nipa managed to escape even before negotiations about his ransom had been set in motion, but in his anger at the treachery of his host and Pemir Ekhin he secretly returned and killed a woman of Pemir Ekhin's household who happened to come his way. In traditional Apa Tani fashion he cut off her right hand, and brought it in triumph to his village, Bela, where subsequently a rite known as *ropi* was performed in celebration of the capture of a hand from a hostile village.[1] It is significant for the nature of such feuds that even though the disposal and ritual burning of the Pemir woman's hand was celebrated by the whole Kalung *khel* of Bela village, less than a fortnight later a man of the Reru *khel* of the same village could go to Pemir to buy pigs for *dao*, cloth and salt without being molested or made responsible for the recent killing of an innocent woman by an Apa Tani of his own village.

In most of these feuds the loss of life is small and captured persons have a very good chance of regaining their freedom

[1] For a description of this rite see *Himalayan Barbary*, p. 47.

within a comparatively short time. Custom demands that captives held to ransom must be fed well, and though a heavy log of wood attached to one of their legs impedes their freedom of movement, they are usually well treated and share the house and meals of their captors.

The procedure followed in the negotiations for the release of a captive runs usually according to the same pattern. If the capture occurred in an ambush of a group of Apa Tanis, some of whom could escape, the identity of the captors is likely to be known, but if a solitary woodcutter does not return from the forest and search-parties fail to find him, it is generally assumed that he has fallen victim to raiders. His kinsmen then make inquiries through Daflas of friendly villages, and have usually not much difficulty in ascertaining the village and house where he is kept prisoner. The captors themselves have no interest in concealing their deed, for as the extraction of a ransom is their main aim, they want the victim's kinsmen to initiate negotiations. But if they fear attempts at a forcible release, they may send the prisoner to a more distant village and give him into the safe-keeping of reliable friends.

As soon as the missing man's kinsmen have discovered his whereabouts, they secure the services of an experienced go-between (*ghondu*[1]) of their own or another Apa Tani village. This go-between is to conduct the negotiations and ultimately hand over the ransom, but before he ventures into the village of the raiders, he assures himself of the support of one or several men of a neutral village, whose task it is to accompany him on his mission, and create a favourable atmosphere for starting the negotiations. In the long-drawn-out feud between the Apa Tanis of Haja and Duta and the Daflas of Licha, men of the neutral Dafla village of Linia often acted as companions of the Apa Tani negotiators, and occasionally took messages from Licha to the Apa Tani valley.

[1] *Ghondu* is the Apa Tani term for go-between, the corresponding Dafla term is *bhut*.

The principal negotiator (*ghondu*) usually takes some valuables with him and his status as envoy assures that he will not be attacked and no one will rob him of the articles intended as ransom. The captors tend to hold out for as high a ransom as they think their prisoner's kinsmen are likely to be able to pay, and the go-between's skill lies in beating down these demands without allowing the talks to break down. The negotiations may drag on and necessitate several trips of the *ghondu* and his helpers. In many cases the ransoms demanded and paid are high, and may amount to as much as two or three full-grown mithan and numerous articles of value. The expense to the captive's kinsmen depends also on the number of the chief go-between's helpers and companions, for all these have to be compensated for their trouble and loss of time.

In the case of the capture of two Apa Tani men of Haja by men of Licha, the chief negotiator, Chigi Nime of Duta, a famous priest, seer and go-between, was assisted by three other Apa Tanis and eight Daflas of Licha, with whom he was on friendly terms. The ransom for both captives agreed in the course of lengthy negotiations consisted of 2 mithan, 3 long swords, 5 ordinary *dao*, 4 Apa Tani cloths, 4 hoes, 4 axes, 3 brass plates, 3 Assamese silk cloths and 1 white cloth. In addition to this ransom, substantial payments, including 1 prayer-bell, 4 Assamese silk cloths, 6 local cloths, 4 *dao*, 4 axes, and some 28 lb. of salt, were made to the eight Dafla mediators. Compared to these the fees for the Apa Tani negotiators were moderate and even Chigi Nime, the chief negotiator, received only two *dao* and four pounds of salt.

To the Apa Tani it is not only a matter of sentiment, but also of prestige, to ransom any kinsmen or dependants who have fallen into captivity, but the feeling of injury on the part of the man who had to yield to the extortions of a one-time trade partner perpetuates the chain of acts of violence. For as soon as his kinsman has been released he will contemplate how to redress his grievance, and if possible

secure the person of a kinsman or dependant of his rapacious opponent.

Considerations of prestige induce Apa Tanis even to ransom captured cattle, and there are many instances of men paying for a mithan a ransom far in excess of the animal's market value.

Relations between traditional trade partners may remain in an uneasy state of mutual distrust for years, with isolated cases of violence and subsequent negotiation, and only a reduced volume of trade maintained by poor men and slaves rather than those normally prominent in trade deals. Thus the tension between several leading clans of Haja and Duta and the Daflas of Licha, which in 1945 came to a climax by the intervention of a government mission, had been building up for years, and might well have continued very much longer had it not been for the interference of an outside power.

Yet past history shows that Apa Tanis, though on the whole more peaceful and restrained than their Dafla neighbours, are not incapable of organizing large-scale raids and pursuing the destruction of their enemy with savage ruthlessness. Thus one of the *buliang* of Bela, whom I knew as a balanced and reasonable person in so far as the conduct of affairs inside the Apa Tani valley was concerned, once led a raid on the Dafla village of Dodum which resulted in the killing of thirteen men and the sale into slavery of seventeen captive women and children. When thoroughly roused, Apa Tanis seem to be less mercenary than Daflas, and may prefer to kill or enslave captive enemies rather than haggle over ransoms.

The preparations for a raid are always accompanied by a rite aimed at obtaining the protection of the spirits of heaven, earth, water and forest. On the eve of the expedition a sacrificial structure of bamboos and leaves is erected, and a priest spends several hours in incantations in front of this monument. Arrows are stuck into the structure and small live chickens suspended from the bamboo scaffold. Finally

the chickens are killed and a dog sacrificed by being beheaded and then cut into bits. After the sacrifice of dog and chickens, the warriors dance round the ritual structure, yelling shrilly and brandishing their swords. One of the warriors takes the head of the sacrificial dog with him on the raid, and when creeping up to the enemy settlement tries to throw it into one of the houses before an alarm is given.

Apa Tanis, as well as Daflas, never attack unless they are confident of taking the enemy by surprise, and a raid is usually a rapid action at dawn when those taken unaware have little chance of successfully fighting back. Whoever cannot get away and disappear in the jungle is likely to be cut down or taken prisoner, and casualties on the part of the attackers are usually not heavy. I have never heard of a pitched battle in daylight between Apa Tanis and Daflas, and the arranged mass duels (*gambu*) between Apa Tani villages are obviously not modelled on any full-scale fighting of which Apa Tanis have first-hand experience.

Though the mounting irritation of a drawn-out feud between Apa Tanis and any particular Dafla settlement within their trade sphere may culminate in a raid where no quarter is given, normally Apa Tanis and Daflas do not think of their disputes in the terms of a warw hich must end by the total defeat of either side. Neither Daflas nor Apa Tanis have any intention of occupying their neighbours' territory, and the survival of their temporary opponents is essential for the eventual continuation of trade vital to their complementary economies. It lies thus in the nature of the relations between the Apa Tanis and their Dafla and Miri neighbours that periods of hostility must sooner or later be followed by the conclusion of a new peace-treaty, and that in the meantime there may prevail a state of undefined relations when individuals not personally involved in a feud can visit each others' villages and barter their goods even in the absence of the protection afforded by a formal *dapo* pact.

VIII

RELIGION AND THE MORAL ORDER

WHILE the Apa Tanis' economy and political system are without parallel among the tribal populations of the North-East Frontier Agency their religious practices and ideas conform in general to an overall pattern common to such tribes as Abors, Miris and Daflas. This similarity between the world-view of as stable a community as the Apa Tani tribe and the insecure and turbulent society of the Daflas must appear as a challenge to the theory that religion is basically a reflection of social situations and suggests the possibility that an ideology rooted in a specific cultural background can persist with little modification in societies of very different structure and character. Yet, before the theoretical implication of this situation can profitably be elaborated, both Apa Tani and Dafla religion needs to be investigated much more intensively than it has so far been done. My own inquiries among the Apa Tanis, often overshadowed by political and administrative preoccupations, were least intensive in the sphere of religion, a sphere in which mere observation yields few results, and nothing can replace the insight gained by long and undisturbed work with selected informants. Such work was seldom possible, and the following observations are offered as a preliminary sketch of an apparently very complex system of ideas and ritual practices.

The Nature of Deities and Spirits

The Apa Tani feels himself surrounded by invisible beings capable of affecting his welfare and health, beings who are accessible to the approaches of men. He thinks of these beings as similar to humans in some of their reactions to requests, offerings, promises and threats, but as different in substance and infinitely superior to all men in the power to influence natural events. The number of these beings is believed to be very large and though Apa Tanis attach to some of them special attributes, it is doubtful whether the tribesmen think of deities and spirits as divided into definite categories. If for want of a better term we refer to such beings as 'gods' or 'spirits' we must do so without implying that the Apa Tanis necessarily look upon such 'gods' with feelings of reverence or piety. The word *ui* which precedes the name of some of such superhuman beings indicates their divine character, but the same syllable *ui* is used in connection with natural features such as rivers and regions to signify that they are not of the world of the Apa Tanis' experience but belong to a sphere of divine and mythical beings.

While I have little concrete information as to how ordinary Apa Tanis imagine the majority of deities and whether they associate indeed any visual pictures with the beings whom they invoke in prayers and invocation, there is some evidence that seers and priests have in their own minds a fairly clear and entirely anthropomorphic picture of certain deities. All the priests of my acquaintance asserted that they could see these deities in their dreams, and they described them as male and female resembling human beings.

The Apa Tani gods are not arranged in the order of an accepted hierarchy, and a society lacking any agreed system of precedence except the basic division into *mite* and *mura* provides indeed no model for a pantheon presided over by any particular deity. Various deities are described as 'the

greatest' in different contexts, and it would seem that in doing so priests think of their importance for the world of men, rather than of any absolute pre-eminence.

Two deities known as Kilo and Kiru were described to me as the most powerful, and the fact that the greatest annual festival, the Mloko, is devoted to their worship bears out the importance which Apa Tanis attribute to this divine couple. Kilo and Kiru are husband and wife, and Apa Tanis envisage indeed most deities and spirits as pairs and never invoke them singly. The dual character of supernatural beings is so firmly established that I doubt whether Apa Tanis pronouncing the two linked names are always conscious of appealing to a duality of deities, or whether it is taken for granted that every supernatural being has a female counterpart.

Kilo and Kiru live now in the earth and have been there from its beginning. They had no part in the creation of the earth, but when Chandun, a male god, made the earth, Kilo and Kiru had already been in existence. It is not very clear in what manner the power of Kilo and Kiru manifests itself, for though living in the earth they do not seem specifically associated with the fertility of the soil; they are believed, however, to influence the general welfare of men.

The male god, Chandun, to whom the creation of the earth is ascribed, has a female counterpart known as Didun, and this goddess is believed to have made the sky. This reversal of the far more usual association of a male god with the sky and a female deity with the earth remains for the time without satisfactory explanation, particularly since it does not seem to occur among other tribes of the region, most of whom associate the sky with a male deity.[1]

Another creation myth current among the Apa Tanis does not mention Chandun and Didun but tells how at the beginning of time there was only water. Next a rock and finally the soft earth appeared, and this was created by

[1] Cf. my article 'Religious Beliefs and Ritual Practices of the Minyong Abors of Assam, India.' *Anthropos*. Vol. 49, 1954, p. 593.

three female deities known as Ui-Tango, Ui-Ngurre and Nguntre, and three male deities known as Ei Karte, Rup Karte and Ain Karte. These six deities created all trees, plants, animals and birds, and even the sun, the moon and the stars. The priests now recite on certain occasions long lists of heavenly bodies created in the sky, objects and plants created on earth, and animals of all kinds created to live on the earth.

The origin of man, however, is associated with a deity of another category known as Hilo. In one myth the term Hilo is applied to a specific deity credited with the making of the first ancestor of the Apa Tanis, Abo Tani,[1] whereas usually Hilo is a generic term referring to a number of separate gods. A short list of some of these Hilo deities may serve as an illustration of the variety of supernatural beings peopling the world of the Apa Tanis:

Ploti Hilo—a couple living in the forests and hills; concerned with the welfare of men, cattle and crops; worshipped once a year—but not at a fixed time—with offerings of cattle, pigs or fowls, which are sacrificed close to the homestead of the worshipper.

Niro Hilo—a couple living in the vicinity of villages; appealed to with requests to make people wise and restrained; every house gives a monthly offering to Niro Hilo, and the day is observed as a day of abstention from work. Cattle, pigs, dogs and fowls are acceptable offerings.

Dadu Hilo—a couple living close to the village; bringers of disease and worshipped only in case of illness.

Lel Hilo—similar in nature and function to Dadu Hilo.

Yadu Hilo—a couple living under the earth; bringers of illness and propitiated only in case of sickness.

[1] According to another myth Abo Tani was not 'made' by a Hilo deity, but was the son of Rika and Ritu. This couple existed from the very beginning of the earth, in which they dwelt. They were not gods but the ancestors of all mankind. Rika and Ritu came out onto the surface and lived there. They neither cultivated nor did they need to eat. They had one son Abo Tani, and ultimately they died.

Nili Hilo—similar in nature and function to Dadu Hilo.
Dani Hilo—a couple living in the sky; bringers of eye-ache, headache, chest-ache; propitiated in case of such sickness.
Rosa Buyu Hilo—couple living near the sun; cause vomiting and headache; propitiated in case of such afflictions.
Mloro Hilo—couple living in the forest; cause headache, dizziness and fever; propitiated in case of such sickness.

From this list, only part of which is here produced, it appears that Apa Tanis imagine the world peopled with Hilo deities, and that according to the nature of a disease or affliction the one or other Hilo deity is thought responsible and duly propitiated.

Different from these gods are the deities specifically associated with certain natural phenomena. Prominent among these are three deities collectively known as Korlang, and worshipped annually at a rite performed by a priest representing his village or in some cases two allied villages. Niri Korlang is a deity who resides in the sky and provides protection against hailstorms. Tagung Korlang, who also dwells in the sky, is propitiated to ward off thunderstorms and excessive rain, and Anguro Korlang, who dwells in the plains of Assam, is believed to protect Apa Tanis visiting the plains against disease. A rite known as Korlang-ui is performed before the work of transplanting the rice begins, i.e. at the end of March. Each village maintains a place for such rites on one of the communal grounds outside the settlement, and there a priest sacrifices a chicken and calls upon the spirits of lightning, water and earth, and certain local deities to ward off dangers from the young crop. This, as many other rites, is followed by a two days' period of abstention from work outside the village.

In 1944 the Korlang-ui rite for the villages of Haja and Duta was performed by a priest of Duta. This performance covered both villages and the inhabitants of both abstained from work for two days. Not all Apa Tani villages perform

the rite on the same day, nor do the priests of Duta and Haja undertake the task of worshipping the Korlang deities strictly in turn. One priest who claimed the ability to see these gods in his dreams told me that they looked not like Apa Tanis but like Daflas.

Within a few days of the Korlang-ui a rite in honour of Mokum, a female deity dwelling in the earth, is performed by one of the priests of each Apa Tani village, and it seems that this rite must be done separately for each village, a joint performance being not considered adequate even in the case of such closely allied villages as Haja and Duta.

Apart from the deities associated with the forces of nature there are others who stand in a special relation to certain human activities. Thus the gods Ui-Kasang and Nia-Kasang are associated with war, and before going on a raid Apa Tanis pray to these deities to give them strength and courage, and afford them protection in the fighting. On that occasion a dog, pig or mithan may be sacrificed at the *lapang* of the raiders, and a further offering is promised in case the raid is successful. The animal sacrificed at the *ropi*-rite which follows a successful raid (cf. p. 126) is intended for Ui-Kasang and Nia-Kasang. The former is believed to live inside the earth, and the latter above the earth. A seer, who claimed to have seen them in his dreams, told me that Ui-Kasang looked alternatively like a Dafla and like a man from the plains,[1] while Nia-Kasang, though a female deity, looked like an Apa Tani man.

Also connected with the vicissitudes of war are two other deities known as Pila and Yachu. They are believed to live under the earth, and to assist captured persons to escape from the bonds of their enemies. When a family learns of the capture of one of its members, a fowl is sacrificed inside the house and a priest, or any other man knowing the appropriate prayers, addresses himself to Pila and Yachu, begging them to help the captive in finding a way to escape.

[1] The seer had never been to the plains, but had seen Gurkha soldiers.

And again when go-betweens are sent out to negotiate the prisoner's ransom, the same two deities are begged to make the captors listen to the negotiators' words. Further offerings are promised in the event of the captive's escape or release, and when he returns he himself offers the promised sacrificial fowls. Even if a mithan is stolen, the same deities are asked to enable the animal to break its ropes and return to its owner's grazing grounds.

Besides the gods known by specific names or associated with special activities or needs, there is according to Apa Tani belief a host of spirits inhabiting the surface of the earth, and most of them are worshipped only in connection with activities taking place in the locality where they are supposed to dwell. Thus at the construction of a new sitting-platform (*lapang*) the spirit of the site is invoked and fowls and dogs are sacrificed to gain the spirit's favour for all those who will use the *lapang*.

Outstanding natural features, such as unusual outcrops of rocks, are often thought to be seats of particularly important spirits, and the people of the village on whose land they are situated offer sacrifices to such spirits at the time of the Mokum or other seasonal rites.

Multitudes of spirits (*ui*) inhabit Neli, the Land of the Dead, and it is not unusual for such spirits to entice the straying soul (*yalo*) of a sick person to their houses. We shall see that priests journeying in their dreams to Neli may bargain with the spirits for the *yalo's* release, and whatever animals they promise as ransom must be sacrificed by the patient's family. This idea that the Land of the Dead is peopled not only by the departed but also by a large number of spirits is shared by many of the hill-tribes of Assam and also by such middle Indian tribes as the Saoras of Orissa.[1] The assumption is that whereas on this earth the gods and spirits, even when dwelling close to the habitations of men, remain invisible to all except those endowed with the gift of visionary dreams, in the Land of the Dead spirits

[1] Cf. Verrier Elwin, *The Religion of an Indian Tribe* (Bombay, 1955).

and departed humans meet face to face without any bar to full communication.

The deities and spirits of the Apa Tanis appear thus as invested with human qualities and a likeness to men which make a meeting on common ground possible. The very belief that the supernatural beings known as *ui* covet the same things which men consider desirable is the basis of all sacrificial rites, and all the efforts of priests and seers.

Seasonal Rites

There passes no day in the Apa Tani valley without one or another priest (*niubu*) approaching gods and spirits on behalf of individuals who seek their help in a personal crisis. Indeed it is common to find priests in ceremonial dress reciting incantations on a public *lapang* or to hear their monotonous chants resounding in the interior of a dwelling-house. The occasions, however, when all the inhabitants of a whole village, or even of one of the three groups of villages, combine for the worship of gods are confined to certain times of year, and it is only then that sacrificial rites are accompanied by public festivities.

The two main public festivals are the Morom and the Mloko, and both seem to be associated with the beginning of the agricultural season. The celebration of the Morom is begun by the villages of Bela, Hari and Hang, where the rites start at the end of Kume (December/January), but the villages of the Haja-Duta group do not commence the rites until the first day of the month of Kuye (February/March). The principal public functions at this festival are processions of young men and boys dressed up in their best clothes which, headed by a priest in ceremonial dress, move in single file from village to village. The priest waves a fan of feathers and scatters husked rice-grains as he walks across the fields, and the boys and young men brandish swords and beat brass plates in the manner of gongs. As they lift the flashing blades of their Tibetan swords, they utter

rhythmic shouts, but the priest keeps on chanting prayers until the procession reaches a village. An older man accompanies the procession carrying a basket of rice-flour, small quantities of which he distributes in the villages visited by the procession.

Each procession spends a whole day visiting all the villages of the valley. In each village the young men and boys are entertained with rice-beer, which they drink while standing in line, and here and there they are also offered small snacks of food. In the open squares of the visited villages, they dance and chant, but seldom leave the formation of their file.

The Morom's character as a fertility rite can be deduced not only from the scattering of rice-grains on the fields to be soon taken under cultivation but also from phallic dances performed by young boys now and then leaving the procession and prancing about with huge bamboo phalli.[1]

Apart from the procession jointly undertaken by all the young men and boys of a village, there are at the time of the Morom also individual ritual performances held by wealthy men, intent on increasing their prestige. These performances, which fall into the general category of feasts of merit so highly developed among Nagas and other tribes of the Assam–Burma border area, culminate in the slaughter of mithan, the meat of which is widely distributed. There are two rites of this type. The greater and more expensive one is known as *un-pedo*, and this necessitates the slaughter of at least five to six mithan. In this case the meat must be distributed throughout the Apa Tani valley. When such a rite has been performed representatives of all villages and *khel* in the valley come to the house of the donor of the feast and tell the exact number of households in their village or *khel*. The next day men of the donor's clan carry the shares of meat to all the villages. They are accompanied by the messengers, who indicate the number of households

[1] For a more detailed description of the procession and dance see my *Himalayan Barbary*, p. 167.

and help in the distribution of the meat. No favouritism is supposed to influence this distribution; important men and men of lower status receive similar shares, and it is only large households with many mouths to feed that get extra shares.

Men who cannot afford the performance of an *un-pedo* rite may give a feast known as *padu-latu*, and for this only two to three mithan are required. Their meat is distributed only among the inhabitants of one or two villages belonging to the donor's own group.

The performance of these feasts lends the donor social prestige, but does not invest him with any tangible privileges or the right to specific ornaments or other prestige symbols. Neither selection to the office of *buliang* nor recognition as priest is in any way dependent on the conspicuous expenditure of wealth connected with the rites of *un-pedo* and *padu-latu*. But as these are regarded as a regular feature of the Morom celebrations, there must be considerable speculation every year as to who would devote a portion of his cattle wealth to the common good, and wealthy men who have never performed either rite may well be subjected to some pressure of public opinion. Particularly a wealthy clan-head could hardly maintain his status without devoting some of his resources to such a feast of merit. The subsequent distribution of shares of meat serves no doubt to reaffirm the sense of corporateness pervading the whole Apa Tani tribe.

It is significant that the Daflas, who rely for their security much more on individual alliances than on a general tribal solidarity, have no ritual performances which involve a comparable wide and even distribution of material resources. Among them prestige is gained by the ceremonial exchange of valuables, but the meat, rice and beer given away in connection with the many visits entailed in such an exchange benefit only the two families concerned, and there is no conscious attempt to spread benefits as widely as in the course of the Apa Tanis' feasts of merit at the time of the Morom.

While the Morom is performed every year by all Apa Tani villages, the second great public festival, the Mloko, is held by each village only once in three years. But a system of rotation assures that in the Mloko month, which corresponds to March/April, there is a celebration every year of the Mloko festival in the valley. According to this system Hang performs the Mloko one year, Bela and Hari the following year, and the group consisting of the villages of Haja, Duta, Mudang-Tage and Michi-Bamin in the third year, after which Hang begins a new cycle. Preparations for the festivities extend over many weeks and include the purchase of sacrificial animals, the collection and storing-up of firewood, and above all the erection of tall poles, which at the time of the Mloko are used for a game of acrobatics performed on strong cane ropes attached to these poles. By pulling on one of the ropes and causing the poles to swing, people get themselves propelled high up into the air and the sport is popular among the young people of both sexes, though even older men and women sometimes show their skill. The poles for this sport, known as *bobo*, are dragged to the village by the common effort of the men of the individual wards, and are then erected close to the *lapang*.

The religious side of the Mloko consists mainly of sacrificial rites celebrated separately by the different clans, but intended for the general welfare of the people. The priest representing his clan or sub-clan performs these rites at a clan-sanctuary in a garden inside the village; pigs, chicken and a dog are sacrificed. The deities invoked are the divine pair, Kilo and Kiru, as well as Kiriliyari, a deity associated with the earth. The timing of the Mloko at the beginning of the cultivating season, the performance of the sacrificial rites in a village garden, and the worship of an earth-deity are obvious pointers to its character as a spring festival aimed at the enhancement of the fertility of the land. My informants, however, did not specifically emphasize the fertility aspect of the Mloko, and until the texts of the

prayers recited at the sacrificial rites become available, little more can be said about the deeper religious meaning of the celebrations.

The social implications of the Mloko, however, are more easily observed. As only one group of villages performs the Mloko every year, the celebration is an occasion for inter-village visiting and the entertainment of guests from other villages. There is, moreover, a regular exchange of gifts. Shares of the sacrificial animals killed during the Mloko are given to the *buliang* of villages or village-quarters linked by traditional ties to the village of those performing the rite. The system regulating this exchange is complicated, and provided for a number of contacts across the limits of the three groups of allied villages. Every ward of a village has certain ceremonial ties with corresponding wards of villages outside its own group, and the exchange of Mloko gifts occurs between such wards. Thus in a year when the Mloko is performed by the two villages of Bela and Hari, the distribution of shares is roughly as follows: The shares of meat of half of the Reru *khel* and half of the Tajang *khel* of Bela go to the *buliang* of Haja, and the shares of meat from the other halves of these two *khel* as well as some of those of Kalung *khel* go to the *buliang* of Duta. Some shares of meat of Hari village go to the *buliang* of Mudang-Tage and Michi-Bamin, while certain wards of Bela as well as of Hari send shares of meat to the *buliang* of Hang. These gifts of meat are fairly substantial. A *buliang* of Hang, for instance, told me that he received seven pieces of pork from a man of Haja when the latter village celebrated the Mloko, and when it was the turn of Bela and Hari, he received seven pieces of pork from a man of Tajang *khel* of Bela.

This system of mutual obligations does not extend equally over all villages, however, and when Hang celebrates the Mloko no shares of meat are given to the *buliang* of Duta.

It would seem that the ceremonial links of the *buliang* of one village with specific wards of another village serve as channels for inter-village contacts, and that negotiations

for the settlement of disputes, for instance, run often along the lines of these permanent channels. The comparative peace and orderliness in the Apa Tani valley, which contrasts so significantly with the turbulence among Daflas, may well be partly due to the strength and durability of these ceremonial inter-village contacts which would seem to make up for the lack of any institutionalized tribal authority.

At the Mloko the unity of the tribe is being given ritual expression, and the way in which men and women of all villages join as visitors and guests in the celebrations of one village-group serves to cement friendly relations across village boundaries and to counteract tensions and jealousies between the inhabitants of different villages.

There are no other seasonal rites comparable in complexity and social impact to either the Morom or the Mloko, but in certain months prescribed rituals are performed by priests acting on behalf of individual villages. Thus, in the month of Pume (June/July) a small pig, a dog and some chickens are sacrificed in the name of Potor, Met and Tamu, three deities believed to dwell in the earth, and in Puje (July/August) a chicken and eggs are offered to Yapun, the god of thunder, Mloru-Sü, Punglo and Korlang, in order to protect the crops against hail. For ten days after this rite no villager may go outside the cultivated area or even visit other villages in the valley and it is feared that any breach of this injunction would lead to the crops being damaged by hail.

The harvest of the rice is neither preceded nor followed by any public celebrations, but when people first eat of the variety of rice known as *emo*, individual families sacrifice pigs in their houses.

In a society so passionately devoted to the cultivation of the soil and the growing of crops, one might well expect a great number of communal rites specifically associated with such agricultural operations as sowing, transplanting, or harvesting, but among the Apa Tanis only a few of these

activities are occasions for significant ritual intervention. In this respect the Apa Tanis differ greatly from such tribes as the Nagas, who accompany every phase in their agricultural work with elaborate ritual, and have even such religious village dignitaries as a First Sower and a First Reaper.[1]

The Ritual Disposal of the Slain

Though the Apa Tani valley is an oasis of peace in the war-torn world of Daflas and Miris, the Apa Tanis do not always live in peace with their neighbours of different ethnic stock, and we have seen that feuds with tribesmen of settlements beyond the confines of their own country are by no means unusual. The ritual preparations of a raid have already been described (p. 129), and here I am concerned only with the rites that follow the killing of an enemy in battle or in ambush, or even the execution of a prisoner of war or criminal.

The rite accompanying the disposal of human trophies, such as an enemy's hand, eyes or tongue, is known as *ropi*, and I have elsewhere[2] described a *ropi* ceremony performed in my presence in Bela village. Unlike Nagas, the Apa Tanis do not make ritual use of the heads of slain enemies. If possible, they sever a hand from the victim's body, and secure the eyes and tongue for burial in their village. All these trophies are kept in a *nago* shrine until the performance of the *ropi*-rite, when the hand is burnt, and eyes and tongue are buried close to the slayer's *nago*. The idea underlying this practice is the belief that the burial of these vital organs will prevent the dead man from seeing his slayer and persuing him with his wrath. The incantation, of which I recorded the basic text, reflects this idea, and may here be quoted in a free translation:

[1] Cf. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf and J. P. Mills, 'The Sacred Founder's Kin among the Eastern Angami Nagas', *Anthropos.*, Vol. 31, 1936, pp. 932–33.

[2] *Himalayan Barbary*, pp. 46–8.

'Go to your own place; we are sending you under the earth; go there, we are closing the gate of the earth. It was your fate to be killed by swords and arrows; the rain from the sky has washed you. For ten generations to come you shall be powerless to harm our descendants. Do not be angry with us; do not turn on us in wrath; you have been buried in the earth, and we have sent you off; do not come to us, but move on to other places.'

After the burial of eyes and tongue in the section of a bamboo, the slayer takes rice-beer in his mouth and spits it on to the stone covering the interred trophies. What remains of the hand after its ritual cremation is disposed of in the same way as eyes and tongue, and similar words are spoken over the burial place.

The *ropi*-rite is performed not only in the case of slain enemies, but also in conclusion of the execution of a criminal member of the Apa Tani tribe. Thus when Chigi Duyu, a patrician of Duta, was executed at a *lapang* in Hang, his body was burnt in front of one of the Hang *nago* shrines, and the spears and shields of the executioners piled up on the *lapang* where he had been killed and left there for nine days until the *ropi*-rite could be performed. A mithan, the price of which was raised by public subscription, was sacrificed during the *ropi*, and the men of Hang danced and chanted as if they were celebrating the victory over an enemy slain in battle.

The similarities between the Apa Tanis' *ropi*-rite and the head-hunting ceremonies of the Nagas are unmistakable, but there are also significant differences in the respective attitudes to slain enemies. Whereas the *ropi*-rite seems to aim mainly at warding off the wrath of the victims, the Nagas preserve their enemies' heads in order to gain for their community the magical powers inherent in the skull. Their rites and the annual libations offered to the skulls are intended to integrate these forces into the accumulated store of their captors' magical virtue.

The Apa Tanis, on the other hand, do not expect benefits

from attaching the soul-power of slain enemies to their villages, nor are they particularly concerned with any influence which the souls of their own departed might have on the fortunes of the living.

Eschatological Beliefs

In general outline the Apa Tanis' beliefs in the life after death coincide with the eschatological concepts of other Tibeto-Burman speaking hill-tribes on the borders of Assam. Nagas, Lusheis, Garos, Abors, Daflas and Apa Tanis appear to have basically similar ideas about the fate of the departed in the Land of the Dead,[1] and their beliefs are clearly set off from the ideas current among the Hindu populations of the plains. The most characteristic feature of the eschatological beliefs of most of these tribes is a very detailed picture of the Land of the Dead, including the often tortuous path by which it is reached and the figure of a guardian of the underworld. This picture is provided by shamans or seers who visit the world beyond, either in their dreams or while in a state of trance.

The Apa Tanis believe that the souls (*yalo*) of all those who died a natural death go to Neli, the region of the dead, which looks exactly like an Apa Tani village with long rows of houses. At the entrance to Neli, they are met by Nelkiri, the guardian spirit, who questions all newcomers about their exploits in the life on this earth. He inquires how many enemies and wild animals a man has slain, how many slaves he has bought, and how much land he owned. As an Apa Tani lived on earth so will he live in Neli: a rich man will be rich and a slave will serve his old master; in Neli a man finds the cattle he has sacrificed during his lifetime, but those animals which have passed to his heirs are forever lost to him. Every woman returns to her first husband, but

[1] Cf. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, 'Zur Religion einiger hinterindischer Bergvölker', in *Custom is King*. Essays presented to R. R. Marett, L. H. Dudley Buxton, ed., London, 1936.

those who died unmarried may marry in Neli, and beget children. Life in Neli is similar to life on this earth; people cultivate and work, and ultimately they die once more and go to another Land of the Dead.[1]

When a man is ill and loses consciousness his soul or *yalo* may leave his body and stray to Neli. A shaman priest (*niubu*), called to minister to the sick man, may succeed in tracing the soul to the dwelling of one of the many spirits (*ui*) who together with the *yalo* inhabit Neli, and who are ever avid to draw straying souls into their sphere. Once the shaman has located the *yalo* and identified the spirit that detains it, he offers to ransom the *yalo* with the sacrifice of an animal. If the spirit accepts the ransom, the *yalo* is set free and returns to its earthly body, and as soon as this happens the patient regains consciousness.

Neli is believed to be under the earth. It is a real underworld, but without any gloomy associations. Another Land of the Dead is situated somewhere in the sky, and to this abode, known as Talimoko, repair all those who died an unnatural or inauspicious death. Men who were killed by enemies and women who died in childbirth go to this Land in the Sky, and they are referred to not as *yalo* but as *igi*. There is no suggestion that the fate of *igi* is one of suffering or unhappiness, but it would seem that life in Talimoko is not considered to the same extent a continuation of life on earth as is the existence of the departed in Neli. Both those in Neli and in Talimoko are believed to return at times to the dwellings of the living but their visitations are not welcome and the Apa Tanis do not think they could result in any benefits to the surviving kinsmen.

[1] In my Frazer Lecture, I have suggested that the idea of an interminable series of 'Lands of the Dead', and the inevitable death of a person after a span of life in any such 'Land of the Dead' may have contributed to the development of the Hindu concept which was foreign to Rig-Vedic Aryans. Cf. 'The After-Life in Indian Tribal Belief', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 83, 1953, p. 45.

Moral Concepts

The Apa Tani idea of life in the Land of the Dead as a more or less automatic repetition of life on this earth does not provide any motivation for conduct aiming at anything except gratification in terms of immediate self-interest. The belief that the rich are going to be rich again and the powerful have the prospect of enjoying the services of their slaves' dependants in the world beyond places a premium on worldly success, and the idea of a transcendental reward for morally positive acts has no place in Apa Tani thinking. I can recall no other allusion to morality in connection with their beliefs in the after-life than a priest's brief statement that in the Land of the Dead good people will be good again and bad people bad.

This does not mean that Apa Tanis lack any sense of moral values. They do not admire the strong and ruthless man to the same extent as the Daflas, but value industry and business sense, skill in negotiations and the power of leadership in influencing the deliberations of a council of *buliang* or clansmen. To attain one's aims by peaceful means is considered preferable and more laudable than to resort to violence, and we have seen that in situations when a dispute between equals has defied a negotiated solution, the adversaries may try to shame each other into submission by a competition of *potlatch* type, rather than use physical force. The very fact that such moral pressure is thought effective is indicative of a sensitivity to public opinion, and it is the support of public opinion in the moral judgment on criminals which enables the *buliang* to take punitive action against habitual offenders. In this respect the Apa Tanis have gone far beyond the Daflas' attitude to inter-personal relations. Among Daflas there is no provision for preventing or even limiting the encroachment of the powerful on the rights of weaker fellow tribesmen, either by legal sanctions or by the pressure of public opinion. As long as a man can get away with violence and the disregard of the interests of

others, he retains his position in society and there is even admiration for the strong man and successful organizer of raids. The Apa Tanis, on the other hand, have developed a collective sense of right and wrong, which finds expression in the enforcement of customary law through the chosen representatives of public opinion. Their ideas on the desired and socially approved conduct in inter-personal relations are not embodied in set rules or commandments, but there is nevertheless broad agreement on the moral evaluation of behaviour. Unprovoked infliction of an injury to a fellow tribesman, murder, theft, cheating in trade deals, adultery, clan-incest and the failure to repay a debt are all considered morally wrong, though the general reaction to any of these offences depends largely on the nuisance or harm it causes to the community as a whole. An isolated case of theft, for instance, arouses little comment, whereas a habitual thief may be executed. A couple guilty of clan-incest are expelled from their village, but no objection to their union is raised by the inhabitants of any other village where they may find shelter. There is no idea that clan-incest may produce supernatural sanctions or place the guilty couple into a state of pollution dangerous to those with whom they consort. Sexual relations between persons not tied by the bonds of marriage are regarded as morally neutral, and this toleration of premarital sexual attachments includes even relations between girls of patrician status and men of slave class. Otherwise a distinction is made between the actions of a free man and that of a slave. Whereas a free man can be subjected to serious punishment only with the agreement of a majority of the village dignitaries, a slave whose criminal habits have made him an embarrassment to his owner may be put to death without much ado on the latter's initiative. In this case conduct is determined not only by the status of the actors, but also by that of the person who is the object of the action.

The Apa Tanis are sensitive to social approval and disapproval, and the fear of being 'shamed' is a powerful

incentive to conformity. There is, however, no sense of 'sin' and no corresponding desire to acquire 'merit' in a system of supernatural rewards. The approval of fellow tribesmen and a favourable place within the social and economic system of this world is the ultimate aim of Apa Tani conduct, and there is—unlike in more sophisticated societies—no distinction between actions which are meritorious within a system of supernatural values, and actions approved because they are in conformity with tribal custom. All relations with members of other societies stand outside the sphere of morally prescribed action. The Apa Tani cannot conceive of right or wrong conduct other than as a response to the requirements of his own society and relations with outsiders are hence considered as morally neutral. The idea that an individual is responsible for his actions not only to his immediate social environment but primarily to a universal moral order has no place in Apa Tani thinking. Hence there is a complete lack of any sense of 'guilt' or 'sin', such as might be felt by those acting contrary to the values of such a higher order. In their moral thinking and sentiments Apa Tanis remain always close to the earth, and if they think of the fate that awaits them after death, they think of it as a reflection of life on this earth. A happy fate in the world beyond is not gained by austerities and acts of charity or self-sacrifice, but by success and prosperity in this life—achievements which perpetuate themselves automatically in the Land of the Dead. Immediate gratification and the gratification hoped for in another life are thus not antithetical, and any thought of making sacrifices for the sake of living up to moral ideals is foreign to Apa Tanis. In short, the aim of all conduct is purely 'this-worldly' and tribal morality lacks the 'other-worldly' incentives of the ideologies associated with such religions as Hinduism and Buddhism.

In conclusion we may consider a problem which eludes any satisfactory solution. Throughout this book we have encountered basic differences in the economy, pattern of

settlement, social structure and general way of life of the Apa Tanis and their Dafla and Miri neighbours. While Apa Tani economy is characterized by stability and wealth, mainly derived from the ownership of land, which is handed from generation to generation, a general instability is typical of the Dafla social order. Settlements are frequently shifted, there is no private property in land, and a man's wealth in cattle and ornaments is subject to many perils. Whereas an Apa Tani has security of life and property as a member of a closely knit society, the Dafla depends entirely on his own strength and his ability to support it by forging a net of alliances. Similarly there is a high degree of rigidity in the Apa Tani class structure; a patrician can never sink to the position of a slave, and no device can raise a person of slave class to patrician status. Compared to this, Dafla society is of extreme flexibility. A rich man of high status may lose all his wealth and his freedom as a result of a raid, and a man born as a slave may rise to affluence and a respected position in society. There is thus a high degree of social mobility which stands in sharp contrast to the static nature of Apa Tani society. Equally great is the contrast between the elaborately organized system of village dignitaries (*buliang*) among the Apa Tanis and the absence of any institutionalized authority in Dafla society.

Even a brief enumeration of some of the characteristic features of the two societies reveals that each conforms to a way of life which is consistent within itself, and we have seen above (p. 148) that the different social reactions to certain aspects of human conduct are in accordance with these contrasting trends of Apa Tani and Dafla society. How can it then be explained that both tribes hold virtually identical views on man's fate in the world beyond, that they do not differ in the moral evaluation of the deeds which will determine this fate, and that their approach to the deities and spirits capable of influencing human fortunes is basically the same? While it is consistent with Dafla ideals that the guardian of the Land of the Dead approves of deeds of

valour, and honours not the meek and peaceful, but the strong man who has killed many enemies, married many wives, and acquired many slaves, one might well expect that the Apa Tani, whose social and economic system depends for its smooth functioning on peaceful co-operation, would consider acts of charity and social responsibility earning a reward in the world beyond. In fact there is, however, no discernible difference between the ideologies of the two tribes. Both among Daflas and Apa Tanis we find a moral system which is basically utilitarian and prudential, directed towards 'this-worldly' goals, and devoid of both supernatural sanctions and any link between moral and eschatological concepts.

Must we then assume that an ideology can exist more or less independently of a social order, in the same way perhaps as such culturally conditioned phenomena as a language or an art style are not directly linked with a particular social or political system? The data here assembled hardly permit so broad a generalization, but they suggest to my mind the hypothesis that while an economic development such as that which enabled the Apa Tanis to progress materially far beyond the level of all neighbouring tribes will of necessity be accompanied by changes in the social system, change in the sphere of ideology and ritual may be so slow that an ideology congruous with an earlier social order may persist in the face of dramatic economic and social changes. Thus the ideology and world-view of the Apa Tanis may have remained basically unchanged since the days of the migrations which brought them to their present habitat, a time when their economy and general style of living were presumably similar to that of Daflas and Miris. The growth of population and economic development which followed upon their settlement in the uniquely favourable environment of the Apa Tani valley, produced far-reaching changes in the social structure, without as yet engendering a comparable development in moral concepts and world-view. These remain in line with the ideology of

all the other tribes of the Subansiri region, and hence they are to some extent inconsistent with the complex and stable community life the growth of which has given birth to the Apa Tani civilization as we know it today.

EPILOGUE

A VISIT to India's North-East Frontier Agency during March and April 1962 gave me the unexpected opportunity of returning to the Apa Tani valley and gaining a first-hand experience of the developments which have resulted from the extension of administrative control over the whole of the Subansiri Frontier Division.[1] At the time of this visit the text of the foregoing chapters had already been set up and only minor changes, such as the insertion of recent census figures, could still be effected. The description of Apa Tani life contained in the pages of this book relates thus to the days before the tribe was subject to any outside authority and increased contacts with the plains of Assam had modified the economic pattern.

Dramatic changes have been brought about by the determination of the Government of India to develop as speedily as possible the mountain regions along its north-eastern border, a border which is known as the McMahon Line and has recently been disputed by the People's Republic of China. The necessity to open up the country by the construction of roads and air-strips has given an added impetus to the policy of gradual social and economic development, which has been pursued ever since the establishment of the North-East Frontier Agency.

[1] For permission to visit N.E.F.A., which normally is closed to all outsiders including Indian citizens unconnected with the administration, and for numerous facilities generously provided by the local officials, I am greatly indebted to the Government of India.

Epilogue

Returning to the Apa Tani valley after an absence of seventeen years I was struck first by the numerous material changes, and then by the Apa Tanis' success in retaining the basic pattern of their social and cultural life in the face of these changes. The latter are easily recognizable. An air-strip extending between the villages of Haja and Bela, the construction of which involved the sacrifice of many of Duta's bamboo- and pine-groves, links the Apa Tani valley with the airfield of Jorhat and serves the transport of civil and military personnel as well as that of stores and provisions. In addition sixty miles of a motor-road, recently widened and improved, provide an all-weather connection with North Lakhimpur. Whereas in 1945 goods had to be carried for six days across difficult, densely wooded terrain, trucks and jeeps, sometimes driven by Apa Tani drivers, ply nowadays regularly and complete the journey in a few hours.

In the south-western corner of the Apa Tani valley, on a site known as Hapoli, the administrative headquarters of the Subansiri Frontier Division have been established,[1] and office-buildings and residential bungalows have rapidly sprung up amidst the bracken-covered hillocks and irrigated terrace-fields. The electric street lighting of the civil station is visible from most parts of the valley, and the Apa Tanis have become accustomed to these lights as rapidly as they got used to aeroplanes and motor vehicles. They have also learnt that these achievements of a foreign civilization are not solely for the use of government officials. Apa Tani traders use motor transport to import goods from the plains, and many of the more prominent men have enjoyed the experience of flying at little cost in planes chartered by the administration.

Yet familiarity with some of the material aspects of twentieth-century civilization has not led to revolutionary

[1] The official name of the administrative centre is Ziro, though this is the name of a site near the air-strip where the headquarters had been until 1960.

changes in the pattern of Apa Tani life. While the road-building programme and the construction work at Hapoli have enabled hundreds of Apa Tanis to earn cash-wages and have resulted thus in a sudden injection of large sums of money into an economy previously geared to barter transactions, the use made of these earnings has been determined by traditional values. Possession of land and cattle still carries supreme prestige and most of the poor men and former slaves who have engaged in wage-labour have saved up their earnings for the purchase of cattle and land. The price of mithan has been greatly inflated and as much as Rs. 1,000 is now being paid for a fully grown animal.

The improved condition of the poorer section of the community is observable in higher standards of dress. Rarely does one see today people in tattered clothes, and good, hand-woven Apa Tani cloaks are worn by men and women of all classes. A few young men who are or have been in government employment wear shorts, shirts and shoes, but otherwise few articles of foreign dress are seen and no woman has as yet departed from the traditional style of clothing. Umbrellas, however, are in common use among both men and women.

Whereas the wide opportunities for cash-earnings have benefited the poorer classes and enabled the emancipated slaves to become economically independent of their former masters, most rich men have succeeded in retaining or even increasing their wealth by pursuing the many new outlets for trade. The cultivation of their land is now undoubtedly less profitable than it used to be, for instead of employing poor men of *mura*-class for a daily wage of a small quantity of rice, they have to compete with the various government agencies offering employment and in consequence they now pay their labourers and former slaves a cash-wage of Rs. 2 per day. But this is balanced by the greater opportunities for trade, in which those owning capital have an obvious initial advantage. The pacification of the whole of the Subansiri region has resulted in a freedom of communica-

tions unimaginable eighteen years ago. Apa Tani traders can now move far afield without fear of capture, and Daflas from the valleys of Palin and Khru are frequent visitors to the Apa Tani valley. The Apa Tanis continue to have a surplus of rice and many of their Dafla customers can now pay for it in cash, as they too find employment in the construction of roads, bridle-paths and bridges. A new line of business is the trade in Indian cattle which the Apa Tanis buy cheaply in the plains of Assam, drive up along the motor-road from North Lakhimpur to Hapoli, and then sell to Daflas. Previously Apa Tanis used only to purchase livestock from Daflas, but their outstanding talent for trade has enabled them to use closer contact with the plains for the development of this profitable enterprise.

Lastly Apa Tanis have opened shops and tea-stalls in Hapoli, and supply the numerous employees of government with provisions and articles of daily use, which they import by truck from North Lakhimpur. One such trader is said to have made a profit of Rs. 30,000 within the past three years, and as the administration does not permit merchants from the plains to establish shops in the hills, the Apa Tani shopkeepers are free of any competition on the part of outsiders. Their only rival is a co-operative store managed under government supervision, most of the share capital of which is held by wealthy Apa Tanis.

In the Apa Tani villages too several small shops have been opened. The more ambitious of the shopkeepers stock such articles as hurricane-lamps, electric torches, soap, biscuits and textiles, but others confine themselves to the selling of tobacco, betel, salt, torch-batteries and matches.

While the Apa Tanis seem to be destined to develop as the principal trading community of the Subansiri Division, there are as yet no signs of a growth of new methods of production. Agriculture continues to be pursued with skill and vigour, and Apa Tani women are as busy as ever in weaving cloths for home consumption as well as for sale. But the attempt to introduce ploughs and the principle of animal

traction has met with no success, and few of the young men trained as carpenters and blacksmiths in a craft-centre established by government have taken up these crafts as a professional occupation. There is perhaps as yet too little demand for the services of such craftsmen, for the style of housing has remained unchanged and the blacksmiths working in the traditional manner can supply the few iron implements required by the Apa Tani householder, while factory-produced iron hoes are easily obtainable from the plains.

The restraint of the Apa Tanis in acquiring novel consumer goods is remarkable. Even in the houses of men who through trade or wage-labour have earned considerable sums of money, one sees few articles of foreign manufacture. There are usually some iron cooking-pots in place of the old earthen pots, metal buckets are gradually replacing gourd vessels, and tin boxes with padlocks are used instead of store-baskets. But otherwise the Apa Tanis have been slow in developing a taste for foreign goods, and their living habits and diet have remained almost unchanged. The conservatism of Apa Tani women in the matter of dress differs noticeably from the attitude of Dafla women, many of whom wear machine-made textiles including sometimes even ready-made dresses in western style.

Walking through the streets of an Apa Tani village or sitting round the open fire of one of the dark, cosy houses one notices hardly any change compared to the days when the valley had only the most tenuous contacts with the outside world. And this lack of change is not confined to the material aspects of the Apa Tanis' life. Their discipline and sense of social responsibility has enabled them to maintain the autonomy of villages almost unimpaired, and a sympathetic administration, anxious to interfere as little as possible in the tribe's internal affairs, has welcomed this self-sufficiency of the Apa Tanis. Unlike Daflas, who often appeal to the officers of government for support in a dispute, they rarely approach the administration with requests to inter-

vene in quarrels between Apa Tanis, and the *buliang* continue to provide the effective village government. Their authority has recently been formally confirmed by the administration, and the only problem is the extent of sanctions which the *buliang* can impose. While they are authorized to fine offenders, they are not supposed to place them in stocks, and the execution of an incorrigible criminal on the initiative of the *buliang* is, of course, out of the question. Some *buliang* complain that the enforcement of customary law is now more difficult, because when they deliver a thief to the Political Officer and the latter sends him to jail, a sentence of a few months in jail, 'where people are well fed and have no hard work to do', is not as effective a deterrent as the more severe punishments meted out by tribal justice used to be. A lessened effectiveness of traditional sanctions is noticeable also in regard to inter-class marriages. In the old days a marriage between a *mite* and a *mura* was unheard of, and a couple determined to defy tribal custom would have had to leave the valley and seek refuge in a Dafla village. Even today inter-class marriages are strongly condemned by both *mite* and *mura*, but in recent years there have been two cases of lovers of different status living openly as husband and wife without having to accept exile from the valley. While these couples could not settle in the natal village of either husband or wife, they were tolerated in other Apa Tani villages, and the kinsmen of the spouse of *mura*-status gradually relented in their opposition against the union.

The settlement of disputes by *lisudu* continues even today, and such a competition in the conspicuous squandering of wealth does not conflict with any rule laid down by the administration. But prearranged fights (*gambu*) are incompatible with the maintenance of peace which, in an area overlooked by a strong outpost of Assam Rifles, government has ample means to enforce. It is not quite clear in which manner serious tensions between two villages can now be resolved, but it is not unlikely that in such a case the arbitration of the Political Officer would be accepted, and it may

well be that long verbal contests before a third party would have the same cathartic effect as a brief armed demonstration has had in the past.

The security of life and property which the Apa Tanis now enjoy has led to some incipient changes in the settlement pattern. No longer threatened by the attacks of hostile Daflas, the Apa Tanis can dispense with the protection provided by closely packed settlements, and a few families have built houses at some distance from any of the main villages. Thus several men of Mudang Tage have settled on the ancient and long-abandoned site of Burü, but instead of constructing their houses in traditional style in a compact cluster they have built them apart from each other, thus minimizing the danger of fires.

Several of the main villages have in recent years been totally gutted by fires, and some of the older Apa Tanis believe that these disasters were due to the wrath of the spirits angered by the large-scale felling of forests necessitated by the construction of roads and the building programme of government. There is no obvious explanation for the increased frequency of village-fires, but one of their results is a slight modification in architectural style. Shortage of timber and bamboos has compelled the inhabitants of villages destroyed by fire to reduce the height of the posts supporting the houses. Instead of being six to ten feet high the verandas of the new houses are raised only three or four feet above street level, with the effect that one has no longer to climb a ladder when entering a house. Encouraged by the officers of the administration the people of one of the recently destroyed villages have widened the main streets in order to lessen the likelihood of a fire engulfing all quarters of a village. A radical change in the settlement pattern is improbable, however, not only on account of the close social cohesion of village communities, but also because land is scarce in the valley, and a spreading out of villages would involve the sacrifice of urgently required agricultural land.

With medical facilities placed within easy reach of all Apa

Tanis the population is likely to increase. After some initial hesitation the tribesmen have been quick to avail themselves of the facilities of the hospital at Hapoli, and among the 21,047 patients treated there in 1961 there were more Apa Tanis than members of any other community.

Another factor of change which is certain to make itself felt in the near future is the education provided for Apa Tanis both through primary schools in all villages and a middle school with boarding facilities at Hapoli. Some Apa Tani boys, and among them the sons of several leading men, are attending boarding schools in the plains. The ambition of most schoolboys is to enter government service, but trade too is likely to provide an attractive career to those able to deal with merchants of the plains on equal terms.

While the days of wars and raids, when the Apa Tanis had to stand up to the attacks of hostile Daflas and themselves glorified success in battle, belong to a past which soon will be only a faint memory, there is every expectation that for a long time to come this vigorous and resourceful people will retain much of its traditional culture. The celebration of the Mloko in the village of Hang, which I observed in March 1962, united as of old the whole tribe in a series of festivities, and the crowds of animated visitors, heavily laden with gifts of pork and beer, that streamed along all the paths linking Hang with the other villages of the valley, were visible proof of the spirit of cohesion and solidarity which has always been fundamental to the character of Apa Tani society.

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