1976

RETURN TO THE NAKED NAGAS

An Anthropologist's View of Nagaland 1936-1970

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50 Albemarle Street, London

First published in 1939, by Methuen & Co. Ltd., London

New edition 1976 by John Murray, London

ISBN 0 7195 3417 8

Printed in India

Preface

In 1938, shortly after I had returned from a year's anthropological field research in the Naga Hills, I wrote an account of my experiences among the people whose lives I had shared and for whom I had developed a deep affection. A year later that account was published in London under the title *The Naked Nagas*, and in addition to German and Spanish versions, a slightly enlarged Indian edition was published in Calcutta in 1946. Though written by an anthropologist this book was not in the nature of an academic study of one particular Naga tribe, but reflected the impression of a western observer exposed for the first time to close contact with an Indian tribal people persisting in an archaic way of life. My original plan to return to the Naga Hills and complete my study of the Konyak Nagas had to be abandoned because of the outbreak of the second World War, and it was not until 1970 that I was able to revisit the villages where I had stayed in 1936 and 1937.

The decision to republish *The Naked Nagas* is prompted by the present interest in the fortunes of Nagaland and in the developments which have led to the rapid transformation of the cultural and social conditions of its inhabitants. The magnitude of the changes now occurring can be fully appreciated only by those who knew the Nagas' traditional style of life, and many Nagas who in recent years have become literate in English may be interested to see their fathers and grandfathers through the eyes of a sympathetic foreign observer, even though much of my original description may appear to them naive and excessively romantic.

Some minor adjustments have been made throughout the book and two new chapters have been added. Chapter 26 deals with my experiences during a visit to the Tirap district where, in 1962, I spent some time among the Wanchus, a tribal group adjoining the Konyak Nagas and hardly distinguishable from some of the communities I had studied in 1936-1937. Chapter 27 describes my return to the Konyak Nagas in 1970 and the developments which have taken place in the thirty-four years intervening between

my first and my second visit to the village of Wakching. In this chapter I also discuss the present conditions of villages lying in an area which had never been under British rule, and where powerful chiefs have retained some of the trappings of their former eminence.

I have refrained from including in this account of personal experiences and anthropological observations any comment on the political events which in recent years have disturbed the peace of Nagaland and attracted a good deal of attention both inside and outside India. In the absence of first hand knowledge of the course of events, no useful purpose could be served by expressing an opinion on the causes and the history of a movement which aimed at the establishment of an independent Naga state and resulted in a long drawn out struggle not only between insurgent Nagas and the Government of India but also among the Nagas themselves. Readers of the last chapter may be able to form their own opinion on the state of affairs prevailing in 1970 in an area where I was able to move about unhindered and talk freely to men and women, many of whom remembered and welcomed me as an old friend.

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The Naga Hills

My interest in the Nagas and their country began long before I had an opportunity of visiting India. As a student of anthropology in the University of Vienna I had attended the lectures of Professor Robert von Heine-Geldern, one of whose specialities was the comparative study of the megalithic cultures of Southeast Asia. The highly developed megalithic ritual of some of the Naga tribes seemed to be of crucial importance in the elucidation of the ideology which led men to commemorate meritorious feats by the erection of crude stone monuments, and my concern with this aspect of Naga culture led me to a general appreciation of the archaic patterns of life persisting in the remote hill tracts along the Indo-Burman border.

The Naga Hills, as the part of Nagaland then under British administration used to be called, were for long one of the least accessible regions of India, and beyond the Naga Hills district lay a tribal area over which the Government of India did not exercise any effective control. Survey parties had penetrated some parts of that unadministered tribal area, but their work had remained fragmentary and large-scale maps of the Survey of India still showed several white patches.

The lure of such *terra incognita* and the prospect of encountering tribal populations relatively untouched by modern civilization attracted me then to the Naga Hills. In my youthful enthusiasm for observing primitive societies uncorrupted by contact with the West, I felt that within my general sphere of interest I could find no better subject of study than one of the lesser known Naga tribes. Among such a tribal society, persisting in an ancient type of culture virtually uninfluenced by the Hindu civilization of the plains of Assam and the Buddhism of Burma, one could reasonably expect an economic order, social customs, and religious beliefs such as had once prevailed over large areas of Southeast Asia, but which elsewhere has long been replaced by the civilization of more dynamic races.

Yet even before the establishment of British rule the seclusion of the Naga Hills had not been as complete as that of a Pacific island. Foreign goods, such as cowrie shells and metal implements, must have been bartered from village to village for hundreds of years, but their impact on Naga culture was not revolutionary. Migrations and the subsequent blending of populations, languages, and customs may from time to time have brought about changes in the cultural scene, but such changes seem to have occurred within the framework of one and the same cultural sphere, namely the sphere of pre-literate civilizations which throughout Southeast Asia antedated the great literate high civilizations of historic times.

In preparing myself for field research among the Nagas I could lean on a considerable body of ethnographic material gathered by British district officers who had been stationed in the Naga Hills over long periods. Several of these district officers had taken a keen interest in the cultural life of the tribes in their charge, and their findings had been published in a series of monographs containing a wealth of information. As early as 1911 T.C. Hodson had published a book on the Naga Tribes of Manipur, and J.H. Hutton, for many years Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills district and subsequently Professor of Social Anthropology in Cambridge, followed with detailed accounts of the Angami and Sema Nagas.

Equally productive and scholarly was J.P. Mills, who continued the series of monographs with three excellent books on the Lhota, Ao, and Rengma Nagas. It was my good fortune that I could spend several weeks in the company of that humane and dedicated man who combined all the best qualities of the British members of the Indian Civil Service. His liking for the Nagas was infectious and from the moment I met him in London, some months before my departure for India, I felt that he would make every effort to smoothen my path in the Naga Hills district, of which he was then the administrative head. He encouraged me to concentrate on the study of the Konyak Nagas, a tribe differing in appearance, culture, and language from all the other Nagas under British administration.

Hutton's and Mills' studies had covered most of the southern and western part of the district, but information on the tribes to the east and northeast, many of whom lived in territory beyond

the borders of British India, was extremely scanty, and even the Konyaks, the northern neighbours of the Aos, though partly administered since 1911, had never been studied. Other tribes to the east, such as Sangtams and Changs, had been visited only occasionally by punitive expeditions and survey parties, and beyond them, where white patches stood out from the map, lived Nagas never seen by the eye of an outsider.

In 1936 the Naga Hills were as much a restricted area as Nagaland is in 1975, and when after several visits to the India Office in Whitehall I received permission to spend a year in the Naga Hills district, it was given on the condition that I would not cross into unadministered tribal territory. Yet I was not discouraged. I hoped that once I was in the Naga Hills an unexpected opportunity of entering the unexplored region might arise, and in fact such an opportunity did come my way thanks to the good offices of J.P. Mills.

My voyage to India on board the *Victoria*, a luxurious Lloyd Triestino liner, provided all the pleasures of gradual introduction to the eastern scene and climate which the modern traveller by air never experiences. Brief stays in Bombay, Simla, Delhi and Calcutta gave me a first taste of India, and little did I then know that a large part of my active life would be spent on the subcontinent. Neither did I realize that during my stay at the Viceregal Lodge as a guest of Lord Linlithgow I was sharing a style of life which was soon to pass into history.

In 1936 there was no alternative to travelling by train, and I am still glad that on that first journey through India I gained a vivid impression of the scorching heat and dry parched landscape of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, and of the contrast offered by the luscious green of the young paddy on the fertile fields of Bengal. At that time I looked only for the picturesque in the Indian landscape and rejoiced in the brilliant light and the dark shade, in the graceful naked children waving to the train, and in the buffaloes lazily wallowing in the mud surrounded by elegant, snow-white egrettes.

After a night and day in a train rolling northwards through the plains of undivided Bengal, I crossed the Brahmaputra by ferry at Gauhati and slept on yet another train. Next morning the scenery had entirely changed. Dense jungle dripping with last night's rain hedged in both sides of the railway running through the length of

Assam nearly as far as India's northeast frontier. My destination, the station of Manipur Road, could not be far off.

Would Mills, knowing of my coming, have arranged for some sort of conveyance to bring me to Kohima? Without a useful knowledge of any Indian language I felt strange and rather uncertain. I deeply mistrusted the little Assamese I had learnt from a Bengali student in London. That I could negotiate the purchase of chickens, eggs, and bananas and was conversant with the ways of addressing superiors, equals, and inferiors, seemed to me of little use in arranging for the transport of my sixteen pieces of luggage. In 1936 Manipur Road was a rather insignificant wayside station and an unknown European alighting was not an everyday occurrence. My feet had hardly touched the ground when a small policeman in an immaculate brown uniform ran up to me. Saluting, he handed me a letter, and promised in quite understandable English to look after my luggage. At first I was astounded by the Mongolian features of this man. Later I discovered that he, like most members of the Assam military police, was a Gurkha from Nepal. The letter was from Mills, who apologized for not coming to meet me, but told me that a lorry would bring me and my luggage that very same morning to Kohima. Enclosed with this letter was a pass, an indispensable document when entering the Naga Hills District.

It was a narrow but very good road which led for the next few miles through a friendly meadowland with patches of light wood and the thatched huts of Assamese peasants. The sky was cloudy and the air cool. Despite palm trees and bananas I felt almost like in some Alpine valley, so homely appeared the fresh green grass and the peacefully grazing cattle. It was not long before we came to the road barrier where all travellers must show their passes. Here ran the frontier dividing the plains of Assam from the country of the Naga tribes, which no stranger, European or Indian, could enter without special permission.

The road, following a swiftly flowing river, swollen during the rains, wound through a wooded valley, and then climbed zigzagging up the mountain in sickening hairpin bends. The gradient was considerable, for the forty-six miles from the station to Kohima led to a height of almost 4,800 feet. Dense tropical forest shut in the road with garlands and curtains of creepers hanging from the high trees.

A group of road-workers appeared in front of us. They were Angami Nagas—the first Nagas I was to see. Their dress was unmistakable. Black loin-cloths embroidered with cowrie shells scantily covered the brown bodies, their legs were encased in cane-rings, and hardly a man lacked a necklace of multicoloured stone beads. Bundles of white and black cotton-wool were stuffed into their pierced ears. My first impression of the people among whom I would have to spend the next year was definitely pleasant.

The tropical forest receded as we gained height, until at last we came to the region where the Angami Nagas grow rice on irrigated terraces. During the rains the road was often threatened by landslides and at one place numerous Nagas were busy clearing it.

About 4,800 feet above sea level, the houses of Kohima, seat of the Deputy Commissioner and administrative centre of the Naga Hills, lay scattered over a broad saddle. There were not many of these low, red-roofed bungalows, for the number of Government officers was small and only as many shop-keepers were permitted in the one-street bazaar as were required to cater to the needs of the few clerks and the small garrison of Assam Rifles.

The lorry stopped before the gate of a sloping garden where deep purple bougainvillias blossomed and bright red bells glowed on the branches of hibiscus bushes. It was the garden of the Deputy Commissioner, and the next moment I saw Mills coming down the steep path from his bungalow.

"I am sorry I couldn't come to meet you. I should have loved to show you the country myself, but I had a lot of work and couldn't get off."

Small wonder that a man responsible for the entire administration of a district of about 4,293 square miles with a population of more than 178,000 Nagas should not lack in work. Later I discovered that Mills, who combined the functions of nearly all the officers of an ordinary plains district, was personally accessible to every one of these 178,000 Nagas and that even quite trivial cases were brought before his court for settlement.

"The day after tomorrow I am going on tour through some Eastern Angami villages. Would you like to come with me? We shall be away about a fortnight."

Nothing could have pleased me more. A tour with Mills was an excellent initiation into life among the Nagas. All sorts of preparations had to be made. As soon as one leaves the motor road

one is dependent on coolie transport, and my suitcases and boxes were all too heavy or of the wrong shape. Nagas carry on their backs, the load supported by a headband, and everyone travelling in the hills uses high covered baskets plaited of cane and bamboo. Mills lent me a few of these slender and more or less water-tight *joppa* and in them I packed my kit and bedding.

Next I had to engage a servant and this seemed to be no easy matter. The Nagas, proud and independent as many hill races, scorn as a rule domestic service, and there were then only a handful of men who had ever worked as servants. However Mills knew how to find them and a few hours later a man who had previously worked as cook and bearer arrived at his bungalow. He was a Lhota Naga and was called Tsampio. Like many Nagas in touch with the American Baptist Mission, he wore shorts and a khaki shirt, and on tour he adorned his head with a thick, wine-red woollen cap. Even in the heat of midday he pulled it deep down over his ears.

The weather was fine as we started from Kohima—a piece of luck early in June when the monsoon is normally at its height. Mills had arranged for ponies for himself and for me, so that we could ride whenever we were tired. Otherwise we preferred to walk, talking to one or other of the Angamis who accompanied us. The most amusing figure in our company was Thevoni, an Angami with a merry full-moon face and a round belly, bloated with frequent bouts of rice-beer. As a sign of his office as Government interpreter, he wore a waist-coat of bright red over his black loin cloth. Thevoni was an irrepressible talker, and only too eager to tell us of all the customs and beliefs of his tribe. His stay in Kohima, where he had interpreted the complaints of his own people at the courts of the Deputy Commissioner, even helping in the decision of some of the quarrels, had in no way shaken his belief in the goodness of the old customs. Mills valued him highly, for it was men such as Thevoni through whom the Government could exert its influence without upsetting Naga customs and the traditional social order.

The well-kept bridle-path led along an open slope. Before our eyes extended an immense mountain country; mighty wooded ridges succeeded one another, grouping themselves into high ranges and long chains till they finally blended with the sky and the clouds in the haze of the blue distance. On many of the slopes there were

clearings and terrace fields, but the greater part of the mountains was covered with forest and secondary jungle. The Nagas do not live in the valleys; their settlements are situated on the central ridges between 2,000 and 6,000 feet above sea level.

After several hours' march, we climbed down into the valley and crossed a small river. On the opposite bank there were several women waiting for us. The prettiest among them was Thevoni's young wife, who had come one day's march to meet him. The women had brought huge gourds full of rice-beer in their carrying-baskets and though the beer did not have a very inspiring look, it tasted definitely good. But one can always have too much of a good thing : we had to taste the beer of each of the women in turn. Without rice-beer, the Angami considers life hardly worth living. He drinks water as seldom as he can. "Only when we go hunting do we sometimes drink water," Thevoni remarked, "then it is difficult to carry rice-beer with us. But when we go fishing, the women bring us rice-beer down to the river."

Lest our ponies should have been brought entirely in vain, we rode up the mountain to the Chakhabama rest-house. It was one of those two-roomed inspection bungalows which were distributed all over the district at distances of eight to twelve miles along the most important bridle-paths. Our servants had gone ahead and had already prepared a meal for us. I found travelling in the Naga Hills much more comfortable than I had imagined.

Chakhabama consisted only of a few small houses near the bungalow. But here there was great excitement. The keeper of the bungalow, an Angami from Kohima, had died that morning of dysentery after a short illness. His relations arrived one after the other, and a grave had already been dug on the slope near the path. Was it an evil omen that a funeral should be the first Naga ceremony I was to witness?

Loud wailing and crying came from the house of the dead, and the shrill, long-drawn-out screams of the widow filled the air and mingled with the dreary lamentations of the other relations. Some men cut up the flesh of a cow, while from time to time others fired off shots from old muzzle-loaders to scare away the evil spirits. Then a good friend of the dead man, with tears streaming down his face, ran out of the house; he jumped madly about, screaming challenges to the spirits who had caused the death to come and fight. Finally the corpse was carried out wrapped in a coloured

cloth. The widow, a slim young woman, wailed loudly and, beating the ground with a cloth, cursed it. Her hair was dishevelled and the cloth slipping from her shoulder left her breasts free. The other mourners, covered with grey and white cloths, moved in slow procession towards the grave. After the burial followed the distribution of the meat; tempers cooled down, and even the widow tidied her hair and quietly accepted her share. Again and again the mourners put the gourds of rice-beer to their lips, but as soon as they had all received their shares of meat, they returned to their villages.

The next day, arriving at one of those small rest-houses in the middle of the woods that the Nagas like to erect on their paths, we were greeted by a large and noisy crowd. Thenizumi, Thevoni's home village, lay a few miles off the path, and about thirty people had come to welcome Mills. They explained that since one of the dignitaries of the village had died the evening before, the village held a *genna*, and none of the inhabitants might work on the fields. Apparently this tour brought the people little luck. The village headmen or *gaonbura*, wrapped in the insignia of their office—the red cloths of the Government—came forward to welcome Mills. This was a wisely chosen "uniform," for it blended admirably with indigenous culture, responding to the Naga's preference for coloured cloths. The women wore the large brass earrings peculiar to the Eastern Angami Nagas, which are so heavy that the weight must be borne by a band run over the straight black hair. With their friendly mongoloid faces, cheerful expressions, and deep blue cloths the women are often very picturesque. Thevoni's divorced wife was among those who welcomed us with rice-beer. She behaved much more reasonably than many women of more civilized lands; in front of Thevoni and his new wife, she showed not the slightest embarrassment.

We arrived at the bungalow, lying slightly below the village of Cheswezumi, at the head of this strange procession. After a short rest, and while Mills listened to reports on several cases, I climbed up alone to the village. I wanted my first impression of a Naga village undisturbed. Only a beginner is so sentimental, but even today that first moment is unforgettable : when Naga culture, so familiar from books and ethnographical museums, appeared as a living entity.

The slippery path led through a narrow rocky passage, over-

grown with bushes and prickly creepers. The defence of such a tunnel must be easy, for there is only enough room for men to pass in single file. Emerging, I found myself on a large open space. On two sides stood houses, with facades of broad, upright planks decorated with conventionalized carvings. I recognized the representations of cattle, pigs' heads, women's breasts, dance ornaments, and human heads, those symbols of successful head-hunting which for the Angami already belonged to the past. Crossed barge-boards rose from the gables of one of the houses, like the enormous antlers of some proud stag. Proud, too, must have been the owner of these wooden horns, for they showed that he had given several of those expensive Feasts of Merits whereby the Naga rises in social prestige and in the esteem of his neighbours.

An old man sat in front of one of the houses mending a basket; without stopping his work he gave me a friendly smile. Nor did my appearance upset an old woman, spreading out rice to dry. A dog began to bark, and she chased it away. I went on down the broad street between the houses. The village seemed rather deserted; apparently most of the inhabitants were out in the fields. Only a few small boys sat on a high stone platform in the middle of the village. No sooner had they noticed me than the village seemed to wake up. In a few minutes they collected in a little group and began to follow me at a respectful distance.

Eventually an old man in the red cloth of a *gaonbura* appeared and invited me with signs and gestures to come into his house. It was so dark inside that at first I could see absolutely nothing. Naga houses have no windows and it takes some time to get used to the blackness, before the rows of huge store-baskets and various pieces of household furniture take shape. I sat down on a long bench, carved from a single piece of wood and furnished with holes for pounding the rice. My host cleaned a small gourd, in which he offered me rice-beer. Our conversation was definitely limited. We smiled at each other and murmured some words, which, however, remained equally unintelligible to us both. Even had I been fluent in Assamese it would have made little difference, for the Eastern Angamis come so seldom in touch with outsiders that very few of them know any language but their own. The beer was good, and according to custom, I accepted another gourdful. But I was not through with this one round. I had hardly taken leave of my old man, with many gestures of

thanks, when a neighbour of my host pulled me into his house. There the whole ceremony was repeated. On returning to the bungalow, the villagers brought me a cock as a present. It is a Naga custom to honour distinguished visitors with gifts of chickens and the refusal of such a gift would be a serious insult.

During the next few days Mills was mainly occupied in counting the houses of several villages for the assessment of taxes. The Angamis paid in place of land revenue an annual house tax of three rupees, old and sick people being granted exemption. It often happened that two families lived in one house, and in such cases the house was taxed on the number of its hearths, for every family must own its own hearth. But the Nagas, like everyone else, hated paying taxes. It was a favourite trick of theirs to cover one of the two fireplaces during the visit of the Deputy Commissioner, pretending that only one family lived in the house.

Whenever we arrived in a village the inhabitants held a holiday. It is difficult to say whether it was from joy at our visit or whether, according to the old Naga belief, it was for a *genna*, when the abstention from work averts the evil consequences of any such unusual event as an earthquake or the violent death of a member of the community. Crowds of men and boys followed Mills from house to house, and the women peeped shyly and curiously out of their doors. It is not an easy job to count the two or three hundred houses of a large village and at the same time to check all the statements of the *gaonbura* as to poverty and inability to pay on the part of the individual villagers. Even the purely physical exertion is considerable. Since most of the villages climb steplike up the mountain slopes, scarcely three houses stand on the same level, and strolling through the village you have incessantly to scramble up and down stone steps and slippery paths. In front of a house there is often a drop of more than thirty feet to a neighbour's roof.

Tall posts propped up against the edge of the steps carry the platforms that serve the Naga as lookouts. Like rows of swallows, the young men often perch on these airy scaffolds, each clutching his tall bamboo mug filled with the inevitable rice-beer. High above the yellow roofs and the fantastic gable carvings of the houses and the bamboos that tremble in the slightest breeze, you have a magnificent view of the country, over the bright green of the forests belts and the shining gold of the rice fields, which, if

the spirits are gracious, will fill the great store-baskets in the autumn, guaranteeing a carefree life for the whole village and unlimited quantities of rice-beer until the next harvest.

But there still remained many months before the reaping. Now, in June, the rice had to be transplanted, and a great deal of hard work was to come. The Angami is expert in constructing terraced fields and irrigation systems. For thousands of feet the mountain slopes are divided into terraces, many as wide as fifteen or twenty feet, others merely narrow strips. Reinforced by walls of pebbles and plastered with mud, these terraces are well able to withstand the torrential rains of Assam. Every rivulet on the mountain side is captured, and the water led through long channels to flood the terraces, for during the whole of its cultivation the rice must be kept under water.

The water flows down from one terrace to the one below, and a complicated system of water rights governs the distribution of the precious liquid. The share in a spring can be bought in exactly the same way as a field. Nocturnal theft of water, by illegitimate tapping of the channels, often caused quarrels that ultimately came before the Deputy Commissioner's court in Kohima. The maintenance of the terraces is an endless work, for each one must be levelled with the greatest care, so that the water may lie at a uniform depth. Water that is not needed for one terrace is conveyed through channels to the next, but across the face of the rocks, or wherever the ground is uneven, it is carried in aqueducts of bamboo.

One day we climbed up to a village and as we made our way through the labyrinth of terraces, the rhythmic working songs of the groups of boys and girls fell upon our ears. They stood in rows, ankle deep in water, planting out the rice seedlings in the soft, flooded ground while one of the lads walked ahead, throwing down the green bundles of seedlings at short intervals. The sun blazed on bent brown backs and the water reflected a thousand dazzling rays. Many hours later, returning on the same path, we found the people still standing in the water and still singing the same rhythmic song. They had probably rested at noon in the field-house and quenched their thirst with rice-beer, and then they had taken up their work once more.

We spent that evening at the Sathazumi inspection bungalow nearly 6,000 feet above sea level. The sunlight lay golden on the

dark wooded ridges, and white fluffy clouds whipped by a stiff breeze, lapped against the steep slopes of the mountains. The valleys were wrapped in deep violet.

But we were not to be allowed to give ourselves up to the peaceful atmosphere of this beautiful evening. Scarcely had we arrived in the bungalow when a tremendous noise arose. There were several cases to be brought before Mills, and the quarrelling parties had each brought hordes of clansmen and friends to support them. This support the clansmen and the friends thought best to render in loud altercations and expressions of opinion. The cork was out of the bottle, and all the anger that had been suppressed for months seemed to explode at the long expected visit of the "Great Sahib".

Thevoni and another interpreter, acting as examining magistrates, had the cases explained to them beforehand, but it was as much as they could do to keep the quarrelling parties in hand and to claim their shouts and those of their followers. Most of the quarrels were about land or the succession to property or the claims of a betrayed husband, suing the seducer of his wife, or the damage that one man's cattle had done to another man's crops. Very patiently Mills worked through the tangle of accusations and defence, and finally passed judgement. But even then the excited harangues still continued outside the bungalow, and every moment I expected the different sides would come to blows.

Why is it that the Angamis of those remote villages, whose economy had then not been disrupted by any outside force, were unable to settle their disputes among themselves and brought the most trivial quarrels before the Deputy Commissioner? Unlike primitive populations who have suddenly been confronted with the full impact of an alien civilization, this tribe had then no problem of the detribalized wage earners, who refuse to submit to the authority of the elders, nor had the imposition of a foreign system of land tenure upset the social balance. I do not know the Angamis well enough to venture an explanation for their failure to maintain their own tribal jurisdiction, a failure all the more remarkable since other Naga tribes such as Aos and Konyaks very rarely appealed to the officers of Government for the settlement of internal disputes. But it may be that the peculiar organization of Angami villages was partly responsible for this breakdown of the traditional jurisdiction.

The Angamis were never ruled by chiefs, and no one individual seems ever to have had authority over an entire village community. Wealth and prowess in war certainly gave a man a good deal of influence, but the villages were run on strictly democratic lines and no one could command his neighbours. Nearly all villages are, moreover, divided into *khel*, local units which in the old times had often independent foreign policies and who settled their own disputes by bloody fights. The fortified walls of the *khel*, separating one section of the villagers from their neighbours, were still to be seen. When with the coming of British rule head-hunting and feuds were suppressed, and the fear of enemies no longer reenforced the cohesion of the *khel*, while on the other hand inter-*khel* quarrels could not be decided by the right of the stronger, individualist tendencies gained the upper hand, and disputing parties no longer content with the rough and ready justice of village elders began to carry their claims to the court of the Deputy Commissioner.

Today it is difficult to see how in the old days an Angami village was run. With independent *khel* and rivalling clans one would almost suppose that except for the common village site there is hardly any bond uniting all the inhabitants of a settlement. Yet, enquiry into their ritual organization reveals that there is an institution which for certain purposes does link the whole village. To understand it you must go back to the time when the Angamis invaded the country, took possession of the land, and founded their villages. The formal founder of a village was always a man of note, whose wealth and prowess in war revealed his "virtue." It was his duty to perform the sacred rites necessary for the prosperity of the village and its protection against supernatural dangers. The office of the founder was inherited by his descendants. Even today the Tevo, a direct descendant of the village founder, is the mediator between the community as a whole and the supernatural world, the personification of the village in its relations with the magical forces pervading nature and human life, and, more concretely, the vessel of the "virtue" of the village.

The privileges of a Tevo are neither numerous nor important. He works in his fields as any ordinary villager and in the council his voice has no more weight than that of any other man of equal wealth and moral influence. His office, in fact, is in no way an enviable one. It is true that he receives special shares of all animals

sacrificed in the village, but many burdensome obligations more than outweigh this privilege. During the first three and a half years of his office he may not visit any other village, and even later on he may never partake of a meal in a strange village but must always carry his food with him. Still more irksome is the regulation that forbids him to indulge in sexual intercourse during those first years.

You would think that the man envisaged as the successor of the Tevo must cut but a poor figure on the marriage market. Nevertheless there are always girls to be found who are willing to marry a Tevo, though a Tevo's wife may not seek consolation with any other men, and even in the case of divorce, must refrain from all love-making until the end of the period under taboo. Should the wife of a Tevo break this law, she is threatened with exile, for she is thought to be so closely linked with the Tevo, and therefore with the well-being of the whole village, that she must observe the same taboos as the Tevo himself. That the breaking of the taboo may have been accidental or involuntary makes no difference, and Thevoni told us that such a case had occurred in his village not so long ago.

A woman from a neighbouring village came to see the Tevo's wife, and during a friendly chat obliged her by picking a few lice out of her hair. Later it became known that the treacherous friend had abstracted one hair from the head of the Tevo's wife and taken it back to her own village. The Tevo and his wife were immediately deprived of their dignity and exiled, for a part of one of them, and therefore a part of the "virtue" of the whole community, had been carried off to a foreign village.

With such beliefs it is not easy to hold the office of Tevo. Yet it had one material advantage: an understanding administration, recognizing the value of the traditions of Naga culture, exempted the Tevo from paying a house-tax. For would not the realization of a tax decrease the wealth of the Tevo, and thus lessen the "virtue" of the whole community?

Passing through an Eastern Angami village one soon notices that the youngest—and naturally often the prettiest—girls, wear their hair quite closely cropped. This is a sign that they are virgins, or at least are taken for such. But the average Naga girl soon grows weary of her premarital state, her short hair, and her virginity. And since a suitable husband is not always easily found

she is inclined to dispense with the burdens of maidenhood by entering into one of those trial marriages which seldom last long and are usually dissolved in the most peaceful way and on the most trivial of pretexts. The young wife, now freed of all her chains, returns to her parents' house to grow her hair, and to look for a more desirable marriage partner.

It would seem that hardly one per cent of these first marriages lead to permanent unions. Perhaps it is the fear that the girl may die without sexual experience which is responsible for this strange custom. For nothing appears more deplorable to the Angami than the fate of a luckless, unloved girl in the next world. Virginity wins no halo in the Naga heaven, but is regarded rather as a sin, for has not the deceased failed to fulfil the duties of her earthly life? Just as a girl advertises her new status by growing her hair, the young man boasts of his first love affair by decorating his black loin cloth with three rows of pure white cowrie shells. And whoever succeeds either in seducing a married woman or in carrying on a simultaneous love affair with two sisters, proudly adds a fourth string of cowrie shells to his loin cloth. You cannot help wondering at the consequences of such customs—what must happen to the marital harmony of Angami couples when the *beau* of the village struts about with a new and fourth row of cowries on his kilt?

two

Feasts of Merit

Imperceptibly the first grey of dawn crept over the sleeping village as the pale, tired moon sank below the heights of the mountains. Peace lay on the houses, herded together on the crest of the ridge like frightened sheep. A door opened silently, and the figure of a man separated itself from the shadow of one of the houses. Shivering, he threw the end of his large cloth over his shoulder and clutched it tightly until it completely enveloped his naked body. The light grew, and shapes of roof and posts began to stand out. On one of the neighbouring houses boldly curved "house-horns" rose against a dawn sky. Today Netsoho saw them without anger in his heart. The sight of them no longer wounded his pride, but only excited his impatience. A few days more and his own gable would carry these same treasured ornaments. How fervently he had longed for them! For his stately house with the rich carvings of buffalo heads and women's breasts seemed quite valueless to him if these—the wooden house-horns—the highest symbol of glory and prestige, were still lacking.

But now everything was prepared for the sacrificial feast; and the dreams of last night supplied the necessary good omen. Two strangers, a man and a woman, had come to his house and drunk rice-beer. Should this not forbode good luck and wealth? The first pink rays of sun broke through the dawn as Netsoho stood at his house door, turning the events of the last few months over in his mind. An abundant rice harvest, filling his granaries, had encouraged him to plan a stone-dragging feast. For a long time he had sought for two suitable boulders, but now he had found them, and soon they would stand near the village path—eternal monuments to his glory. During many days he had abstained from the required dishes and separated his bed from the bed of his wife. The women of his clan had brewed enormous quantities of rice-beer, and a fortune in animals stood ready for slaughter.

Thick mists still hid the valley and the rice-fields, but already

the morning sun had kissed the yellow straw of the roofs so much higher up on the hills and life began to stir in the village. The women hurried down the rough stone steps to the spring, throwing their long shadows in front of them. They had to fill their long bamboo vessels with water and carry them up to the village before the day's work could begin. And then it was not long before a delicate blue cloud hovered above the houses fed by the smoke from hundreds of hearths.

The day was a feast day, and no one went to the fields. The men and women sat in front of their houses putting the last touches to their ceremonial costume. The young men's headdresses cost them much trouble. Roll upon roll of white cotton must be bound with scarlet ribbons so firmly on to bearskin frames that, forming semicircular structures, they will support the huge fans of hornbill feathers with each feather adjusted individually and so loose that it revolves in the slightest breeze. There were ear ornaments of the glittering wings of the emerald beetle, innumerable necklaces of carneol beads and Tridacna shells, an occasional breast-plate of Job's tears and red goat's hair, and many red and white tassels that would dangle from the belts. It was the men's day, and the women were content with their plain cloths dyed blue with indigo, with sticking bundles of red goat's hair into their large brass earrings, and squeezing their arms into as many arm-rings as they could lay hands on.

Late in the morning, when all the preparations were complete, small groups streamed towards Netsoho's house. Two choice bulls were tied to the posts of the protruding roof. A man of Netsoho's clan went up to them. He scratched them gently on the forehead, as though to distract their attention from the business in hand. Then, pointing his spear behind the shoulder of one of them, he suddenly drove it home. Stabbed to the heart, the bull plunged forward, moaning horribly. Almost at once the second bull was speared. The meat was quickly and skilfully cut up and distributed, not, as one would suppose, in a haphazard manner, but in strict order of precedence, to the dignitaries of the village. Netsoho received one of the hind legs; it was to be his only meat dish during the next fourteen days, for as long as the ceremonies lasted all other flesh was denied him.

The grey-haired Tevo was politely invited into Netsoho's house. There, in solemn silence, Netsoho sat with his wife on the huge

rice-pounding table. The Tevo was offered a little rice-beer in a banana-leaf cup. He swallowed it and blessed the couple : "May your crops be plentiful, may your rice-beer be inexhaustible, and may your health be preserved from all dangers."

The feast was now formally opened, and all the guests revelled in food and drink. Neither was lacking. Two more bulls, three buffaloes, and one mithan (*Bos frontalis*, a kind of domesticated bison) stood tethered to two strong crossed posts on the open space in front of Netsoho's house. Swiftly their lives ended under the axes of his clansmen. Again and again the *dao* flashed—crashing down on the neck, often severing the head with a single blow.

But it was not yet time for the men to lose themselves in the enjoyments of the feast; there was still work to be done. When the sun stood high in the sky, Netsoho and his wife, leading the rest of the villagers, followed the steep path down to the forest, through the heavily carved gate, under the branches of the high bamboos, over the ridge to the place where two enormous stone boulders, two slumbering monsters, lay in the jungle. Strong cane ropes were slipped over the stones, which, with tremendous efforts, were hoisted on to the two wooden sledges. Thirty or forty young men strained at the cane ropes, their half-naked bodies glistening with sweat under the midday sun. Muscles tightened and slackened under taut burnished skin as the awkward sledges bumped, stuck, and were dragged yet farther over the rough ground. With their feather crowns, their long white cords fluttering, and those queer swinging "tails" of floating human hair that are the only remains of a one-time quiver, the men resembled huge grotesque birds of prey hovering about their victim, settling and dispersing again, as the sledges stuck on some root, were freed, and moved on.

It was an excited, riotous crowd that wound its way through the sunlit forest. Rhythmical shouts encouraged the sledge-draggers at the steepest parts of the path and mingled with the chirping of the cicadas and the voices of scared parrots. Netsoho alone did not wear the ceremonial dress, but the black, richly embroidered stone-dragging cloth. Very proudly he headed the procession with his wife.

Near the path to the fields, and close to the stone monuments of other men, two holes had already been dug, and as the sun touched the horizon, Netsoho's stones were allowed to slide into the holes. Netsoho poured rice-beer over the larger stone and

smeared its face with the blood of the pure sacrificial animal; his wife poured rice-beer over the smaller stone, and also smeared its face with blood.

"May my meat increase, may my crops increase, may my food last long, may my food not be finished quickly," they murmured in turn.

This duality is one of the essential features of the whole ceremony. No bachelor may perform the stone-dragging feast. For, just as the larger stone represents Netsoho, the smaller stone represents his wife.

The ceremony was over. Netsoho uttered a long drawn out shout of joy, and the whole crowd took it up. Spears were tossed in the air, *dao* whirled as with singing and dancing they returned to the village.

There were few in the village who slept that night. Rice-beer flowed freely, and until early morning the fires threw great pools of light into the darkness.

It was not many days before a pair of newly carved house-horns adorned Netsoho's house, revealing to all the world that he had performed the stone-dragging rite, the first of the major Feasts of Merit. He had climbed a large step on the social ladder, and the two grey stones on the path to the fields would perpetuate his glory for many generations to come.

Hundreds and thousands of megalithic monuments such as those Netsoho erected are scattered over the Angami country, most of them lining the approaches to villages or the paths past abandoned village-sites. Unlike the dolmens and menhirs of Stonehenge they are not dumb mysterious remnants of a dim past, but are a living and vital part of Naga culture.

Most menhirs stand in pairs or in long double rows. Wealthy men have set them up to commemorate their fame and generosity, and to enhance in a magical way the fertility of their fields. Only for the first of the long series of Feasts of Merit is the Naga content to erect two stones. To attain the higher degrees of prestige four, eight, and even ten menhirs are set up. Great is the cost of the sacrificial animals and of the food required even for the first feasts, expenses increase with every stage, and only very few men ever complete the full series.

There is a subtle connection between a man and a stone erected either by himself or after his death by his heirs. While he is still

alive the stone becomes the seat and vessel of the magical "virtue" which has lent him success and empowered him to accumulate wealth, and after his death this same virtue or soul-substance adheres to the menhir. I have heard Angamis, pointing to a pair of menhirs, say: "This is the dead man and this is his wife." Do they imagine that the soul of the deceased takes its seat in the stone? This would seem to conflict with their idea of the Departed travelling to some distant land or, according to another belief, of being ultimately transformed into butterflies. But it is not the spirit of the dead, but only a part of the soul-substance which is thought to remain attached to the stone, benefiting the entire community. The menhirs stand near the paths so that they may shed their virtue on the passing villagers and increase their wealth and the fertility of the crops.

For the some reason the dead are buried within the village or by the side of the village paths. The graves are often built in the shape of low stone platforms, and these serve men and women coming from the fields as seats and resting-places. On many of these graves there are tallies of the deeds of the departed: large stones to indicate the number of captured heads and smaller stones to represent the women whose favours he enjoyed in this life. On one grave, evidently that of a great favourite of the fair sex, I counted sixty-two small stones, and I could not help wondering how his relatives or indeed he himself remembered the exact number of his loves.

We returned to Kohima after a fortnight's tour. Mills had counted the houses of several villages and settled numerous quarrels, and I had learnt a good deal about the practical side of anthropological field work. But I was still hopelessly dependent on Mills for translating the peculiar Assamese which is used as the *lingua franca* of the Naga Hills. As I found it difficult to understand a single word I felt rather dejected at the prospect of being left to myself in a Naga village.

Once again Mills came to the rescue. He found Nlamo, a young Lhota Naga, to teach me Assamese. Nlamo was about twenty years old and had attained the dream of all mission-trained boys—he had been sent to the high school in Shillong. But to his great grief his talents were forced to lie fallow, for there was as yet little scope for educated Nagas. Some had found employment as clerks or village schoolmasters, and there were even some Naga doctors

and compounders, but the number of available posts was small compared to that of applicants, all eager to find jobs in Government service. Nlamo spoke besides his mother-tongue Assamese, Hindustani, Bengali, Ao, and a passable English, and so it was perhaps understandable that he did not relish the idea of going back to his village and growing rice for the rest of his life. Giving Assamese lessons seemed to him an admirable occupation and curiously enough he proved far more efficient than my learned Assamese teacher in London.

Nlamo stayed with me until I left the Naga Hills and accompanied me on all my tours as interpreter and factotum. His faithful service found its reward when Mills got him a clerk's job in the office of the Governor's Secretary in Shillong. There I met him in 1944. He had turned into a most respectable civil servant and was happily married to a Khasi girl. When the Japanese threat was at its gravest he went with an Allied column as guide and interpreter through parts of the Lhota country, and he was full of the changes that the war had brought to the Naga Hills.

With Nlamo's help I began questioning old Angami men about their customs, and together we went to some of the neighbouring villages. Perhaps the most picturesque was Khonoma, a village famous for its power and war-like exploits. At one time it dominated a large area and collected tribute from villages within a radius of twenty five miles. But when British rule put an end to raiding, and the weaker villages, no longer needing protection, ceased to pay tribute, the men of Khonoma took to trade and to the manufacture of many articles of Angami dress. The plaited cane-armlets and gauntlets of Khonoma were unrivalled and fetched high prices throughout the Angami country.

Khonoma stands on the crest of a ridge, a natural fortress; on all sides the slopes fall away steeply. Stone steps lead up the hill to the gateway in the strong stone wall. The solid wooden door, painted in red, white and black with symbols of wealth and fertility—mithan heads, drinking-horns, hornbill feathers and suns—is an effective defence against any Naga weapon, for no *dao* could split the thick wood.

The high stone structures built between the houses in the form of truncated pyramids distinguish Khonoma from all other villages. Like mighty towers they rise above the village, glorifying the clans who built them, with what must have been an infinite amount of

labour. The Nagas, unlike many other primitive peoples, expend much trouble on things of little practical use, merely to enhance the social prestige of the individual or the community. Many generations ago stone circles, enclosed by squared stone blocks, were built for such reasons in Khonoma. They were erected by men of fabulous wealth, as the highest stage in the series of the Feasts of Merit; today they serve as dancing places and the village elders sit on the stone blocks watching the performance. "The elders, however, sat on smoothed stones in the sacred circle," runs a line in Homer's *Iliad.* In the Naga Hills Homeric times remained alive and a megalithic culture which in Europe belonged to the late Stone Age continued to flourish among the Angamis.

The headmen of Khonoma gave me the most friendly reception and I spent hours photographing stone circles, discussing the complicated series of Feasts of Merit—which in Khonoma are different from those of other villages—and drinking a good many mugs of white, milky rice-beer. But strangers have not always been welcome in Khonoma, and a simple memorial still stands to tell of the death of a British officer at the hands of the men of Khonoma.

In 1879 a rebllion started by Khonoma swept over the whole Angami country and the Europeans in Kohima soon found themselves besieged by thousands of determined Naga warriors. Kohima seemed to have been then as peaceful as I knew it nearly eighty years later. No one suspected danger and there were two European women and several children in the station. The garrison consisting of 118 men of the 43rd Assam Light Infantry and Frontier Police had only one day's warning that trouble was brewing and the defences of the post were largely delapidated. The only defensible place was a stockade surrounded by weak pallisades of wood and bamboo, which offered practically no protection from fire. Thatched buildings crowded the enclosure and the only water supply was a spring outside the stockade. Food was short from the beginning, the three hundred and seventy non-combatants having practically no supplies.

From the outset communications with the plains were cut, and all runners with letters intercepted by hostile Nagas. Only the outpost at Woka could be informed and its garrison joined the defenders of Kohima. Soon afterwards the attack began. Some six thousand Nagas, including contingents from nearly every Angami village, beset the post. About five hundred of them had fire-arms.

Favoured by the ground they could fire into the stockade, and throwing up earth works and barricades, they pressed closer and closer. Soon they were near enough to throw spears wrapped with burning rags into the enclosures, and only the continuous vigilance of the defenders prevented the outbreak of fires.

The position of the garrison appeared desperate, but some of the *khel* of Kohima village maintained a friendly neutrality and ultimately a message concealed in the hair knot of a Naga woman got through the ring of enemies. On the eighth day of the siege the Nagas with deafening war cries attacked in force and the already weakened garrison lost heavily in holding out against the onrush. But three days later, when food and ammunition were nearly exhausted, relief came from Manipur. The Angamis dispersed without a fight as Lieutenant Colonel Johnstone with two thousand Manipuri levies, some Cachar police and his personal escort raised the first siege of Kohima, and saved the five hundred and fifty survivors from almost certain death.

How different was the siege of 1944. Both sides were then armed with modern weapons. Once again the defenders of Kohima were hard pressed, the attack was sudden and the scarcity of water was one of the main difficulties. But this time the Nagas fought staunchly on the side of the defenders and in innumerable ways helped the cause of the Allies both inside and outside Kohima. To simple and illiterate hillmen, who for two generations had looked upon the Government as supreme and all-powerful, the temporary British weakness must have been a trying puzzle, but even when the Japanese swept over the hills with apparently irresistible force, and C.R. Pawsey, the Deputy Commissioner, was besieged and impotent in Kohima, the Nagas never faltered in their loyalty. They slipt through the Japanese lines with valuable intelligence, rescued Allied wounded, and misled the Japanese giving them false information. Villages that were for three months in enemy hands, still maintained contact with the Allies, and the news received from them by runners travelling secretly and at night, often guided the Allied air-arm.

This co-operation was only part of the Nagas' share in the common fight. After seventy years of peace the blood of warriors stirred again amongst the Angamis. Poorly armed, they ambushed and killed many a Japanese straggler and brought in a large number of prisoners. It would seem that fewer Japanese heads were

taken than one might have expected. Nagas anxious to win the status and fame of head-hunters would not have bothered to take prisoners, and we may thus assume that as an institution head-hunting was dead among the Angamis. Konyak Nagas would no doubt have made better use of the chance to perform once more the head-hunting rites and not many dead Japanese would have been found with their heads still on their bodies.

three

An Orgy in Stone

Swarms of shrieking parrots flew off low boughs as Mills and I approached the clearing. Their jerking flight aimed at the highest branches of a tall tree, jutting out, dry and fantastic, from the entanglement of exuberant creepers. Thousands of clamouring arms clawed the gnarled trunk in deadly embrace and, climbing higher and higher, had gradually suffocated the giant tree. And now the tree was dead; the next storm would probably fell it, and with it those living fetters would themselves be cast upon the ground to lie in tangled heaps, thickening the thicket and making the jungle even more impenetrable.

A little way off rose the red brick ruins of a powerful gateway. The reliefs on the withered facades still spared by time showed the influence of late Hindu art. It was the gate of the old Kachari capital, which flourished here until the fifteenth century. The Kacharis spoke a Tibeto-Burman language, and their rule had once extended over the plains of Assam, from the foothills of the Himalayas almost to the frontier of Burma. Here, on the edge of the immense Nambur forest, had stood their capital, Dimapur, "City of the River People". Lying close to the banks of the Dhansiri River, and containing numerous large water-tanks, it well deserved its name.

We passed through the arch of the gateway and found ourselves once more under high trees. No ruined wall bears testimony to the palace of the King who once received tribute from the whole of the Brahmaputra valley. For his capital was a bamboo city. Bamboo poles carried the wooden buildings, light and perishable, but singularly suitable for this damp ground, flooded again and again by the waters of the Dhansiri. My eyes fell on a tank overgrown with tangled masses of that peculiar vivid green that marsh-plants take when they creep along the surface of open water. What could have induced a people, living almost on the banks of the Dhansiri River, to construct artificial tanks within the precincts of their

capital? Mills offered a simple explanation. To build houses out of the reach of flood-water, earth must be heaped in great mounds and in the rainy season the resulting pits fill automatically with water. Not altogether unwelcome, perhaps, in the heat of the Assam summer.

As the jungle thinned, the path opened out on to a large space, where well over fifty gigantic stone monuments stood against an orange evening sky. Some were cracked and some were chipped, but others remained in almost unharmed splendour. An orgy of fertility symbols in stone had long outlived the fall of a mighty empire. More than half of the monoliths represented phalli surpassing in realism any of the stone *lingam* of the Hindu god Shiva, and between them stood colossal forked stones in the shape of the letter V—the symbol of the female complement. The tallest stone phallus is well over twenty feet high, and five men with arms outstretched could scarcely encircle it. Most of the monoliths are decorated with reliefs: peacocks, the royal heraldic animal of Kachar, parrots, buffaloes, and various kinds of plants. On one of the stones the image of a human head on a pole is clearly distinguishable. It would seem that the Kacharis of those days practised a custom prevalent among some of the Naga tribes—that of hoisting the heads of their enemies on tall poles of bamboo.

It is difficult to understand the full implication of so many enormous symbols of human fertility. What can have given birth to the idea of adorning a city with colossal representations of the male and female generative organs? In the whole of India there is no parallel to the monuments of Dimapur, and their meaning would probably remain obscure for ever, had we no knowledge of the megalithic rites of the Nagas, the immediate neighbours of the Kacharis. For they not only set up rough unworked menhirs during their feasts of merit, but also wooden forked posts and carved wooden phalli. It is this conformity of shape which excludes any doubt as to the relationship between the wooden monuments of the Nagas and the stone monoliths of the Kacharis.

The phalli and forked stone monuments of the kings of Kachar are evidently the memorials of great sacrificial feasts, when the blood of hecatombs of bulls and buffaloes flooded the sacred place. The character of these feasts as fertility rites is more clearly pronounced among the Kacharis than in the megalithic ceremonial of the Nagas. But the perpetuation of the rite stands in both very much

to the fore. Houses, and even palaces, may be built of wood or bamboo, but stone must immortalize the monuments of the sacrificial feasts through the changing face of time and with them the fertilizing power of the rite. The Kachari religion at the time of Dimapur's greatness appears to have resembled in many respects the religions found today among the Tibeto-Burman hill tribes. Hinduism had not yet conquered the valley of Assam, though its influence is noticeable in the art of Dimapur.

During the sixteenth century the power of the Kachari kings was shattered by the attacks of the Ahoms invading Assam. After a prolonged struggle the Ahoms captured and looted the capital, Dimapur, and the Kacharis retreated to the south-west. There they lived under their own rulers until the occupation of the country by the British in 1830.

We know little or nothing of the relations between the Kacharis and the neighbouring Naga tribes. But the chronicles of the Ahom kings, the heirs to their might, record fierce fights as well as peaceful dealings with the inhabitants of numerous Naga villages. These chronicles, or, as they are called, the Ahom Buranjis, reflect events much the same as took place in other parts of the world when warlike conquerors of higher civilization and superior organization came into contact with an aboriginal and primitive population.

The oldest of the reports date from the thirteenth century, when Shukapha, the Ahom King, came with his army over the mountains from Burma. Passing through the land of the Nagas, he conquered many villages with the greatest cruelty. "A great number of the Nagas were killed and many were made captives," reports the chronicle. "Some Nagas were cut to pieces and their flesh cooked. Then the King made a younger brother eat the cooked flesh of his elder brother and a father of his sons. Thus Shukapha destroyed the Naga villages".

The Nagas did not lack the taste for a thrilling raid or the cutting off of enemy heads, but they certainly did not appreciate such refinements of Ahom civilization; in the years to come they often stood out in open rebellion. About the year 1400, the Ahom kings, deciding to change their tactics, invited a great number of Nagas to a feast. During the meal the unsuspecting guests were set upon and murdered. "Their heads were placed on a big stone in the form of a garland."

This, however, did not contribute in any way to pacification and during the fifteenth century the wars with the Nagas, and particularly with the restless tribes of the Konyaks, became more and more frequent. Yet there seem to have been times when the relations between the Ahoms and Nagas were quite friendly. For, of the visit of several Nagas to King Suchaupha, the chronicle contains the following idyllic report: "They came to take their presents from our King at Itanagar. The heavenly King spread two gorgeous cloths and having seated himself thereon taught them rules. On that day they drank with fear. The great King drank with them with drooping head and placing one leg upon the other."

Traditions of the Konyak Nagas tell of an Ahom King who, fleeing from his enemies into the hills, found refuge in the village of Tanhai. He married the daughter of the chief, and even today the people of Tanhai point to the stone which served the exiled King as a seat. Apparently the cultural differences between the Ahoms and the Nagas were not insurmountable, and the Nagas proved more human than the proud rulers of the Ahom kingdom.

But in the hot, fertile plains of Assam, the Ahoms, like the Kacharis before them, lapsed gradually into decadence. Fiery warriors turned to peaceful peasants, and their small settlements often fell victims to the raiding Nagas from the nearby mountains. The taking of a head from the villages of the plains became a convenient habit, and one that was hard to extirpate even after the country was taken over by the British.

The ruins of Dimapur lie quite near the railway station of Manipur Road, and from there Mills and I took a train to Simaluguri, about 200 miles away. The railway runs in a north-easterly direction along the foothills of the Naga country, and from Simaluguri it is two days' march to the land of the Konyaks, where I planned to start work. We could have reached it without leaving the hills by taking the direct bridle-path from Kohima, but such a trek would have taken at least twelve days.

A narrow-gauge railway connected Simaluguri with Naginimara, and from there it was only four miles to the colliery of Borjan on the fringe of the Konyak country. At Borjan we were welcomed by G. Castles, the hospitable manager of the colliery, and in the following twelve months Castles' bungalow appeared to me the very essence of civilization. Here—only a few days' march from

the villages where I slept in Naga houses or a stuffy tent, drank coffee-coloured water, ate red sticky rice, and was devoured by hosts of mosquitoes—was a mosquito-proof bungalow with electric fans, bathrooms, wireless, and good food. It required not a little self-restraint to stay away, often for months at a time, but I shall never forget Castles' hospitality which I enjoyed on more than one occasion.

four

Above the Clouds

Thin mist filled the forest, and the trunks of huge creeper-clad trees rose steep and straight to their first spreading branches, and then they faded and were lost with the leaves in the gray haze. Heavy drops dripped from the damp foliage, sinking soundlessly into a ground covered with rotting leaves. For hours we had climbed through the silent forest, that seemed to grow denser and denser, and even more luxuriant, with every step. No human axe could have disturbed this forest for hundreds of years. Were the mountain slopes too steep for cultivation, or did the Konyaks, owning so much land, think it scarcely worth their while to clear away these age-old trees? We did not pass a single field on the whole day's climb.

We were already high up—certainly well over 4,000 feet—and there was still no trace of the village, when at last some men emerged from the mist. Halting near a spring, they had waited for us, and passed the time by boiling tea over a small fire. They were Konyaks from Wakching—Konyaks from the very village where I wanted to work. I looked them over anxiously, wondering whether I could succeed in making friends with them. At first sight they seemed anything but prepossessing. Those horrible mouths! Smiles showed double rows of coal-black teeth, lips red from chewing betel, with pinkish saliva dripping from the corners. But the magnificent orchid one young man wore in the lobe of his ear shone as a bright star in the dark night. Can those who wear flowers in their ears be absolutely charmless? I did know that this young man—it was Shankok—would become my best friend. I never found a better either among the Nagas or in Europe.

The men from Wakching offered us tea; it tasted dreadfully bitter. But this was not really surprising, for the leaves had been boiling in water for a long time and the beverage was now a deep brown colour. Why did these Nagas offer us tea? I began to long for the good Angami rice-beer. Mills chatted with the men. He

knew some of them well, for he had been to Wakching before. They talked fluent Assamese. This was a great advantage, for I would have found it quite hopeless to try to learn the language of Wakching, as well as Assamese, within a few months.

The Konyaks reached up to somewhere near Mills' shoulder, but their slim bodies were so beautifully proportioned that, living alone among them, I quite forgot my first impression, and thought of them as quite normal-sized people. The *gaonbura* had donned their red Government cloths to welcome us. They wore them with great dignity, one end tossed carelessly over the shoulder. Under their Government cloths they wore their everyday dress—that is, they wore tight cane belts, or belts of the bark of the *agar* tree (*Aquilaria appallocha*), with a small apron hanging down in front. The small apron had developed among the Konyaks only as trade with the inhabitants of the plains increased. But the old men of Wakching did not hold with such new fangled fashions, and stick to the good old custom of belt without apron. Farther in the hills, young and old alike went about completely naked, for they still lived in the good old times. There the Konyaks were still the "Naked Nagas."

When we arrived at Wakching a teasing fog blotted out all vision. We were in the clouds, those clouds which lay only too often like a blanket over the ridge of Wakching. Whenever there was anything exciting to photograph, the clouds would rise from the valleys and hang about our mountain, until my subject was no longer exciting or there was absolutely no light left.

But on the first day of my arrival the fog showed some consideration, and as we reached the inspection bungalow, standing on open ground a little outside the village, the clouds broke, and the most magnificent view lay before us in the light of the evening sun.

East and south, slopes green with young rice curved into a deep wooded valley. It was the valley of the Sinyang River, and, standing there, Mills made me promise never, under any circumstance, to cross it. For the Sinyang formed the boundary between British India and the unadministered and partly unexplored territory, where war and head-hunting still run rife, and across it lay the promised land, that I was to look on, but not to enter for many long months. On the crests of the mountains, sweeping up from that valley, I could see with my naked eye brown patches that were neighbouring villages. Beyond rose the

peaks of a still higher range, lying not in Assam, but in Burma. The frontier running along the Patkoi Range was of little practical importance, for on both sides extended a more or less unknown area, and it was here that the maps showed white patches.

From the other side of the bungalow I looked over the broad valley of the Brahmaputra to the foothills of the Himalayas. On clear mornings their snow caps shone white against the horizon, but it was in the evenings, after a particularly lovely day, that this view was most beautiful. Then the setting sun would fill the whole valley with yellow light, and the winding ribbon of the Brahmaputra would stand out like shining gold. Long after I had left Wakching, I longed for that wide untrammelled view stretching to all points of the compass.

When I woke up on the morning after our arrival, it seemed as though we were on an island, or rather on one of the many islands of an archipelago; for a white sea of fog filled the valleys and surged round the mountain-tops, which rose sheer from the curling waves, like the faces of huge dark cliffs. But the sun soon dissolved the mist, as it disperses the frost on winter window-panes.

The *gaonbura* came to the bungalow after breakfast, and went with us up to the village. A steep path led through a narrow belt of trees, where green pigeons and bulbuls and the scarlet Burman minivet nest in the high branches. If you raise your eyes from the large smooth stones, put there to benefit the naked soles of the Wakching people, you see on both sides little groups of curious figures, dwarfs, they seem, with pointed caps, who almost creep about the damp earth : conical baskets wrapped in palm leaves stand on top of strange sandstone urns, and from large cavities bleached human skulls grin at the passers-by. So the dead watch in their quiet way over the life of the village, guarding the daily comings and goings of their relatives, and receiving their own share of food and drink during the great festivals. A few steps farther, and we came to where the sun and the rain help to prepare the body to complete nature's cycle. Surrounded by swarms of flies, the open coffins rested here on bamboo platforms, mercifully covered with a few coloured cloths such as are worn on feast days.

Leaving the corpse-platforms, we passed through the narrow street of the village granaries, guardians, in more than one way, of the village productivity. Their strong doors, with carvings of

buffalo horns, were tightly bolted, and round stones, used to beat open the bolts, hung in baskets near the doors. Without locks and keys, the Nagas have hit upon this simple and ingenious device against grain-thieves, for stealth is impossible where bolts must be hammered open. The small veranda in front of the door is partly protected by plaited bamboo mats, and here young lovers come at night and spend many happy hours completely undisturbed. The owners of the granaries welcome such guests; for are they not ample protection—surer than any bolt—against prowling grain-thieves? And then there is a belief that the magical current emanating from human fertility benefits the seed-rice heaped in the store baskets inside the granaries.

At the entrance of the village proper a mighty banyan tree stretched in a wide bow over the path, its aerial roots grown anew into the ground, forming countless pillars about the mother stem. Connected with the men's house by a gangway on high bamboos, this giant tree served in former times as a village lookout. From here sentries watched over the paths leading deep down through the fields. No movement stirring in the country round escaped their notice, and their warning shouts alarmed the villagers on distant fields.

The men's house or *morung* appeared, with its open front, like the wide-open mouth of some gigantic whale; numerous carved sticks and boards, dangling from the eaves, sounded softly as the wind hit them one against the other. Powerful posts carried the palm-thatched roof, and gable carvings, painted a faint red and forming the happiest contrast against a delicate blue sky, stretched their arms heavenwards. High up on these carved gables three hornbills perched, as though taking the whole house under the protection of their wings. These sacred birds, with their enormous beaks, formed, with tigers, elephants, snakes, and humans, the main motifs of the manifold carvings on the coloured frieze. Differences of sex were emphasized clearly and not always with great delicacy.

Fantastic carvings adorned the open porch of the *morung*—the head and tusks of an elephant, a life-sized leopard running head downwards, and two warriors, holding captured heads in their hands, flanked the open doorways leading to the central hall. Crudely painted in red, white, and black, these doorways reminded one of an ultra-modern theatre *decor*. There were also

couples of lovers, and if these representations were to be believed, love among the Konyaks would appear a rather uncomfortable and hurried affair.

A few men sat about on the open porch, plaiting baskets and mending their fishing-nets. I suppose you would get used to rubbing shoulders with the tusks of an elephant, to finding yourself slipping into the open jaws of a python after a doze in the midday sun, or coming home late at night, perhaps a little the worse for too much rice-beer, to discovering a prowling leopard before your door. Our arrival caused them to drop their work. An European in Wakching was still a sensational event, and even Mills had not visited the village for more than six years.

One of the men had a pretty box, carved in the shape of a human head, and Mills bought it for one rupee. The happy owner of such unexpected wealth looked with incredulous eyes at the silver coin that seemed to him quite out of proportion to the value of his little box. I decided to take advantage of this *naivete*, but hardly had I started a systematic collection than the people adjusted their mentality and began to ask boom-prices. The Konyaks learnt very quickly to understand the value of money and to think in terms of rupees instead of in terms of rice. Money was now gradually taking the place of barter, even in trade with the villages in the interior. Of the three articles that found their way most swiftly into Naga culture, taking their places as though they had always existed—money, matches, and umbrellas—the Konyaks had acquired only two—money and matches. But no self-respecting Angami will ever leave his village in summer without an umbrella, and in a country with an annual rainfall of about 250 inches, you can hardly blame him.

The Konyaks, however, are not so particular. They do not in the least mind getting wet, for unlike the Angami, they seldom wear clothes that are in any way damageable, and they are philosophical enough to know that they are only really safe from the rain and cold in their well-built houses. With their thick roofs of palm-leaf bundles, these Konyak houses give you at once a comfortable impression; and there must be many a family in Europe, crowded together in some diminutive city apartment, who would be happy to have such a spacious dwelling. True, the insides of the houses are dark, but probably for this reason, most of the daily life goes on upon the open platforms at the back. From

here you can watch the neighbours at their work and you have a nice view over the little kitchen-gardens, with their flaming red and yellow flowers, which the boys and men, but never the girls, like to wear in their earlobes.

These carefully fenced in little gardens are almost the only places where one is quite safe from the innumerable black pigs. With their squeaking offspring they roam about in and between the houses, and walking through the village on a hot summer afternoon, you might suppose that it is exclusively inhabited by black pigs. They are ugly but useful animals, and do their best to keep the village free of rubbish and refuse. At feasts they are indispensable, and it is hard to think of a Naga ceremony without the savoury smell of roast pork.

Narrow paths thread the thicket growing rank on all ground not cleared for building; an abandoned house does not stand empty long, for the jungle soon takes possession. It was a long time before I learnt to know my way about the village, the steep and stony paths, and the damp and overgrown ones. For two hundred and fifty houses seemed to have been almost inconsequently dotted over the hill-side, with five mighty *morung* protecting the entrances. Wakching was a strong village, and not so long ago it stretched a war-like arm right into the Assam plains, extorting various tributes from the helpless peasants. Fourteen Konyak villages, some lying as much as two days' march distant, still paid tribute to Wakching.

When we returned to the bungalow after a whole morning's visit in the village, we found it surrounded by a strange crowd, squatting on the ground and chewing betel. Their faces—they struck me first—were covered with intertwined lines of rich blue tattoo, like pictures I had seen of old Maori chiefs. The lines wound in curves and twists round the eyes, nose, and mouth. Tight cane belts pulled in waists to astonishingly small proportions. The wasp-like waists of the early years of the century came to my mind, and those caricatures of what seem to us ridiculous fashions. But there was nothing ridiculous about these men. Their slim bodies, more elegant and supple than those of the Wakching men, were really beautiful, and even their fantastic head-dresses did not weaken this impression. Boars' tusks, goats' hair dyed red, monkey and bear fur, and great hornbill feathers were all in some way or

other attached to the small cane hats perched on the top of their heads. Straight black hair was tied in a firm knot at the back, and flat pieces of wood, flying tails of goats' hair, stuck horizontally through the knot. Sometimes the ends of these flat pieces of wood bore the carvings of miniature heads, and these, we were told, tallied with the enemy heads the wearer had helped to capture.

One man, with a head-dress of a monkey skull framed in boar's tusks, seemed to stand out from all this motley crowd. White conch-shells covered his ears, and antelope horns were stuck through the lobes; he wore heavy ivory-armlets and red-cane rings on his arms, and his legs were encased in rings of cowrie shells and more of the red-cane rings.

But it was his self-possession and his composure, even more than his head-dress and fine ornaments, that distinguished him from those surrounding him. You do not expect to find such composure among primitive tribesmen and I was rather surprised at his obviously princely bearing. This was the chief of Sheangha, a village lying outside British territory, who, hearing of Mills' arrival, had come to pay him a visit. The relations between the independent chiefs beyond the border and the officials of the neighbouring Naga Hills district were of a rather curious kind, depending more or less on the personality of the Deputy Commissioner himself. Without in any way giving up their sovereignty in their own territory, the autocratic village chiefs sometimes invite the "Great Sahib," as they call the Deputy Commissioner, to act as mediator in settling their long drawn out tribal feuds. Mills, who for years had been Sub-divisional Officer at Mokochung, from where the Konyak area is administered, knew most of the chiefs beyond the frontier personally, and he possessed considerable influence and authority among them. But when Nagas from across the frontier raided villages in British territory, the Deputy Commissioner no longer acted merely as mediator. He usually called the offender quickly to account, and even undertook punitive expeditions against unruly villages when he considered it necessary. However such actions were extremely rare, for the chiefs usually knew just how far they could go.

The appearance of the chief of Sheangha, and the deference with which his followers and even the Wakching men treated him, were quite different from anything I had hitherto experienced in the Naga Hills. The autocratic chiefs or Angs of the Konyaks

hold a unique position in these hills. They are the undisputed rulers in their own villages and all the villages under their overlordship. Their person is sacred, and no commoner ever approaches them upright. The servants of the Ang of Sheangha crouched every time they had to pass him and literally crept to their master when they offered him betel.

The Ang of Sheangha brought Mills a goat as a gift of welcome, and Mills entertained him and his suite with a few cups of rum. I gave them several packets of cigarettes, and then they went happily home. Curiously enough, even those Konyaks who are only used to chewing their own rough, home-grown tobacco, greatly value cigarettes when they are offered to them.

Many other people from across the frontier had come to welcome Mills, but the powerful Ang of the nearby village of Chui sent his excuses. He could not spend the night in Wakching, he said, as there was dysentery in the village, and to sleep in the huts near the bungalow where our servants put up was beneath his dignity. But the youths bringing this message proudly wore the fresh tattoo of head-hunters on the forehead and cheeks. Was it entirely on account of the dysentery that the Ang of Chui would not come to greet Mills? No. Chui had recently taken a head from Totok. Both Chui and Totok are clearly visible from Wakching. Lying a short distance from one another on two neighbouring mountains, they had been at war for many years. This feud taking place just outside British territory, but involving on more than one occasion people from administered villages, had long been a cause of anxiety to the Sub-divisional Officer at Mokokchung.

The next day we visited the small village of Shiong. Though lying with its fifty houses hardly one hour's march away, it is astonishingly different from Wakching. Even the languages of the two villages have little resemblance; most of the men comprehend their neighbour's speech quite well, but the women, who do not go about very much, cannot understand each other at all. A very intelligent Wakching boy, whose mother came from Shiong, told me that, whereas he could speak a little Assamese, he could not say a single word to his mother's relations. This difference in language was not, as I ascertained later, restricted only to the vocabulary, but applied also to the phonetic system. If you go a few miles farther, you come to Tanhai, where the people speak yet another language, and on a two days' march you can easily pass through four distinct language-

areas. It was well that we took three Konyak *dobashi* with us, for they had to translate the language in question into the usual Naga Assamese. Talking among themselves, each of the three spoke his own language, the others understanding, but not being able to speak it without difficulty.

Yes, Shiong is very different from Wakching. The men tattoo their faces and wear the same coiffure that we had so much admired on the Sheangha men. Long, luxuriant hair is their pride, but the Wakching men, far from envying long hair, cut their own short, and are not impressed with their neighbour's hairdress. Nor are they impressed with the dress of their neighbour's womenfolk. Quite on the contrary, the fashion of the fair sex of Shiong is a source of continual hilarity to the men of Wakching. For the skirt of a Shiong belle is little more than a hand's width, while a respectable Wakching woman wears this only piece of clothing at least two or three hands wide. Can you wonder that the Wakching boys make fun of the "naked" girls of Shiong? But their scorn is due not to moral indignation but to the feeling that these girls, through their nakedness, are deprived of all erotic attraction. To run about in a skirt that excites no curiosity, so "that no man wants to look at them" —isn't that a shame?

I must admit that I could never share the opinion of my Wakching friends. For me the missing width of skirt did not lessen the charm of the Shiong girls. Climbing up the steep mountain with their high loads of fire-wood, their lithe, elastic bodies seemed immensely more beautiful than the figures on many a fashionable bathing-beach. I never saw a fat Konyak woman; even after innumerable pregnancies they preserve the slimness of youth in some miraculous way, and you are spared the sight of those pendulous breasts which are so frequent among other races.

In Shiong we were first entertained in the house of Ahon. He was an old friend of Mills and only too pleased to see him again, his whole household assembled to welcome us, and the hostess never allowed our rice-beer mugs to stand empty. I am afraid, however, that, fresh from the over-anxious atmosphere of Europe, I could not help feeling that it was just the hostess that presented one of the drawbacks to that otherwise well-assorted household—for the hostess was a leper. Ahon, too, must have come to the conclusion that in the long run a wife with leprosy is not very pleasant, for he had married a second wife, his first wife's cousin, and they had

seven children. But the first wife—the leper—continued to live in the house, attending to her duties as best she could. And as she had not so far infected any of the members of the family, my prejudice against leprosy was somewhat appeased. Even in Wakching, where there were only four lepers, the people could not make up their minds either to isolate or to settle them outside the village. The kind-hearted Konyaks refused to exile poor, sick members of the community. "After all, they are our brothers," I often heard them say. "How should we chase them out of the village ?" Yet they were fully aware that this "evil illness," as they call leprosy, was contagious.

But leper-wife or no leper-wife, I had to make friends with Ahon. He had once served the Government as a *dobashi*, and knew the country beyond the frontier as well as his own home. He was an excellent informant not only on the customs of Shiong, but also on those of Chui. For Chui was his home village, and and he had only been forced to leave it when he came into conflict with the autocratic chief. By serving the Government, and through his numerous connexions with the neighbouring villages, he had gradually made his fortune and his influence surpassed that of many smaller Angs. But in his heart he still hated all chiefs, and even in Shiong, where he lived quite peacefully, he was on very strained terms with the Ang, a cousin and vassal of the great Ang of Chui.

Ahon loved to tell stories of the less glorious deeds and fates of the Great Angs. He would spend hours relating how the Ang of such and such a village committed such and such dastardly deeds—all typical of Angs in general. One day, walking along the path to Tanhai, he recounted with great relish the story of the quarrels for the throne of Hangnyu, a village about sixteen miles north-east of Wakching.

It appears that twenty years ago the old Ang of Hangnyu died, and his two sons and his brother quarrelled over the succession. By right, his eldest son Auwang should have become Ang, but he was so young that his uncle hoped to supersede him. Time is not very important in Konyak villages, and the quarrel dragged on for some time, until the old men of Hangnyu, growing restless, sent a message to the powerful Ang of Chui, asking him to send one of his brothers as Ang to Hangnyu. In itself this would have been nothing unusual, for just as the Balkan countries received their

dynasties from the other royal houses of Europe, so the Konyaks often "called" their Angs from other villages. But the Ang of Chui, realizing that he could only aggravate the situation, refused the offer: the ruling house of Hangnyu was not yet extinct, he said, and there still remained two pretenders to the throne. But the people Hangnyu, anxious to set their affairs in order, sent a message to the Ang of Pomau, who, not so wise as the Ang of Chui, sent his ambitious brother Kiwang to accept the throne of Hangnyu.

At first all went well with the village of Hangnyu and its Ang Kiwang; he succeeded in defeating the hostile village of Tang, and quite a number of heads were captured. But not many years had passed before misfortune followed misfortune. Kiwang's wife, of the chiefly house of Mon, died, and soon her only son followed her. And though Kiwang had numerous other children in the dark rooms of his long house, none of those sons could ever succeed him on the throne of Hangnyu, for their mothers were commoners, and the pure blood of the chiefs did not flow in their veins. Then several bad harvests shrunk the wealth of the village so much that Kiwang often found difficulty in providing the necessary number of buffaloes and pigs for the Spring Festival, and Tang, reversing the fortunes of war, attacked a party of Hangnyu people out fishing and captured no less than nine heads on a single day.

The villagers—rather unjustly, I thought—held Kiwang responsible for all these misfortunes, and the now grown-up sons of the old chief only further embarrassed his position. Day by day the resistance to his power grew; his orders were ignored, only scanty tribute was paid, and his fields were neglected by his unwilling subjects. Finally the chief's sons, confirming his disgrace, publicly and ostentatiously ate the right hind leg of a buffalo sacrificed at the rebuilding of a *morung*—by right the share of the Ang.

Kiwang knew that his days in Hangnyu were numbered and he secretly sent messengers to his brother, the Ang of Pomau. But how could Ato, the mighty lord of Pomau, appreciate the prospect of Kiwang's resignation? Would it not mean a loss of prestige for his whole house? His advice was not to precipitate matters. For though he could not openly interfere, he would invite the arrogant young Angs to a feast in Pomau and murder them. The plot was betrayed, however, and only one of the young Angs, Lowang, accepted the invitation. He arrived with an enormous escort of

warriors, and they took great care never to let their weapons out of their hands. With icy politeness Lowang thanked Ato for his lavish feast and returned to Hangnyu, where he and his brother immediately dethroned and banished Kiwang.

But the story did not end here, for many followers and servants had come to Hangnyu with Kiwang. They had built houses and acquired fields in Hangnyu, and their sons and daughters had grown up and found mates in Hangnyu. Were they now to return landless to Pomau? No, they had become Hangnyu people, and Hangnyu people they wanted to remain. "Well, if you are Hangnyu men, why don't you fetch us a few heads from Pomau?" Mockingly the words had been said, but four of Kiwang's one-time followers took them all too seriously.

They crept into Pomau on a moonless night and cut off the heads of an unsuspecting sleeping couple. Unfortunately the deed was immediately discovered, and the Pomau warriors took up the pursuit of the raiders. Only one escaped, two were overtaken and put to death, and the fourth man, fleeing into the forest, climbed a tree, hoping to put his pursuers off the scent. In the morning the warriors found him. They surrounded the tree and held council. But the case was a difficult one. Under cover of darkness, and ignorant of their identity, they had killed two murderers; but now the light of day revealed with whom they had to deal, and though the crime, violating the most sacred bonds of the village community, had to be punished, their hands were tied, tied by the strictest of all taboos, which forbids the shedding of a relative's blood. There was only one way to end the ghastly unprecedented situation: the Ang himself must intervene, for he stood above all taboos, and was so filled with magical power that nothing, not even the killing of a man of his own village, could harm him. So the old Ang Ato climbed a neighbouring tree, and, taking his muzzle-loader shot the offender. Auwang ascended the throne of his father, and still ruled in Hangnyu.

Mills was to try a case while he was in the Konyak country. It concerned the taking of heads, and since Konyak villages inside British territory, as well as villages across the border, were involved, Mills had decided to save the people the long march to Wakching and to hold the court at Tanhai. We started early in the morning. The path, soaked by the night's rain, led first through a belt of forest, and then down over slippery steps cut into the ground,

and finally through high grass and bush. On the boundary of the Wakching land, we found two crossed reeds blocking the path. The men of Sheangha had set them up. Returning from Wakching two days before, they had thought to foil the following spirits of disease, when they left the land of the infected village, by crawling through the arch.

The house of the Ang stood in the centre of the village of Tanhai. It was a long, low building, divided into numerous small rooms. At the back, and partly covered by the roof, a platform was built out over the slope. Generally, the women used to spin and weave, clean taro, and spread the drying rice on this platform; but now it was transformed, for the "Great Sahib," lord over 178,000 Nagas, was to hold his court here, question his witnesses, and pass his judgement. It was a very important day for Tanhai.

The case Mills had to try was a difficult one. A woman of Chen, a village lying in unadministered country, had lost her head. So far it was simple and the men of Sheangha, a colony of the great Sheangha, admitted the capture of the head. They said that they wished to send it as a present to the Ang of Mon, for the Ang of Mon had recently had much misfortune. He had lost his house and the whole of his collection of more than a hundred heads by fire. But the hostile village of Tang lay on the path between Sheangha and Mon. Sheangha gave this reason for employing two youths of Hungphoi to convey their gift. Hungphoi was friendly with Mon and it was friendly with Tang; and besides, Hungphoi lay in administered country, which more or less guaranteed a safe conduct to the youths in the neighbouring independent villages. According to the boys' story, they had done nothing but carry the head from Sheangha to Mon, this undertaking alone entitling them to the face-tattoo in whose new splendour they obviously gloried.

The trial proceeded in the most friendly fashion. It was rather like an informal gathering on the side of the fields, when you stop to discuss the state of the rice-harvest. Defendants, witnesses, *dobashi*, and spectators all squatted in front of us, arms resting on drawn-up knees and mouths casually chewing betel. Some of them had dressed up for the occasion, and had wrapped themselves in embroidered cloths, but the majority of the men wore only cane belts, with the little apron hanging down in front. Women and

children assembled in the background, only too eager to enjoy the unique sensation of the Great Sahib's visit.

The accused Hungphoi youths came in leisurely—they were not led in by force; indeed, they had come quite voluntarily, and even Sheangha, lying outside the proper jurisdiction of the Deputy Commissioner, had sent representatives. The *dobashi*, Ahon of Shiong and Chingai of Oting, translated the evidence from the various tongues into Assamese—inevitably adding their own opinion to every testimony. Of course two *dobashi* mean the possibility of two different opinions, and this is just what happened. The two *dobashi* disagreed on the most crucial point. There was a suspicion that the two heroes of Hungphoi were not so blameless as they made out; that they had not only conveyed the strange present to the Ang of Mon, but had had a hand—perhaps more than a hand—in the capture of the head. This was Ahon's opinion. He explained that the fresh tattoo, covering not only the face but extending in a lace-work pattern down the neck, was clear proof of their active participation in the deed.

Chingai, apparently trying to exonerate the Hungphoi men, pretended that the mere touching of a newly captured head entitled the wearer to this extensive tattoo.

The intricacies of the case seemed hopeless, for with the experts disagreeing there was no way of ascertaining the exact meaning of the disputed tattoo. In the end Mills, adopting Chingai's view, condemned the Hungphoi boys for the admitted transfer of a head-hunting trophy. Hungphoi was fined two mithans, for the village as a whole and not the individual has to pay such fines. Mills also fined Sheangha one mithan for involving British subjects in their own head-hunting raids.

The mithan or gayal which plays so important a role among the Nagas is a species of cattle, black-brown in colour with white stockings and sometimes a white mark on the forehead. In the Dafla and Abor country you find piebald and even entirely white mithan, but I have never seen such an animal in the Naga Hills. Like the Nagas' buffaloes, the mithan wander about the jungle in a half-wild condition, their owners feeding them only occasionally with salt. Neither mithan nor buffaloes were milked or in any way used for work, and however well-stocked a Naga village was with cattle, you could not get a drop of milk. Indeed when I brought a cow and her calf from the plains, the Konyaks expressed the greatest

horror at the idea of drinking an animal's milk.

The trial ended with Hungphoi and Sheangha both promising to pay the imposed fine of mithan, and the youthful offenders went back to their villages unscathed. We returned to Wakching, climbing up the 1,500 feet in a most oppressive heat. Mills had now finished his work, and he decided to return by way of Mokokchung to Kohima. I wanted to accompany him as far as Mokokchung, for the path from Wakching passes through the country of the Aos, and I thought it would be a good opportunity to get to know these southern neighbours of the Konyaks.

It was drizzling with rain when, early next morning, we walked over the ridge to the neighbouring village of Wanching, and then climbed down innumerable stone steps on the southern side of the mountain. Here, on a stone by the path, we found the claws of a Chinese pangolin, and the *dobashi* told us that, according to a Konyak belief the scratching of the skin with such ant-eater claws soothes the inflammation caused by the touch of hairy centipedes. Some Konyak must have killed a pangolin, and altruistically left two of the claws in this conspicuous place.

In the forest, only a little below the fields of Wanching, we came upon mounds of giant droppings sprawling over the path. Wild elephants! The Konyaks do not like it when the elephants come up so high, for they are apt to do much damage to the crops.

Deep down in the stuffy, jungle-filled valley we crossed the Dikhu River. Its flooded, coffee-brown waters, carrying broken branches and whole uprooted trees, surged and gurgled between its banks. High above, a delicate cane bridge spanned the turbulent waters. Suspended by numerous cane ropes from the branches of the high trees on either bank, it seemed as fragile as any fluttering spider's web spun overnight between two bushes. Three or four rows of bamboos formed a floor, and a fairly high, plaited railing provided a certain security, once you had embarked on this swaying journey. How thankful I was to reach the other side, and after what seemed an interminable time, to climb down the ladder on to firm ground! Yet our heavily burdened porters seemed unconcerned and quite at ease.

That evening we reached Tamlu, a Konyak village lying about 3,000 feet above sea level on a ridge that rises from the Dikhu valley. Two different languages are spoken in this village; two of the three *morung* speak a language particular to Tamlu, while the

people of the third *morung*, whose ancestors immigrated from Tanhai only a few generations ago, speak quite a different language. There was difficulty at first, the people told us, but now the villagers have learnt to understand each other. Recently the linguistic divergency was complicated by a religious controversy. Tamlu and the neighbouring Kanching are the only Konyak villages where the American Baptist Mission had gained a footing. I was to see and hear more of its activity in the land of the Aos.

five

Heathens and Baptists

The bachelors' hall overlooking the Ao village of Chantongia was a depressing sight. Rain dripped through holes in the roof, and the rooms once used as dormitories by the youths of the village now stood empty and deserted. Like some huge antediluvian monster, the gigantic log-drum lay in the centre, filling more than half of the building. Would its powerful voice ever resound again over the hills? The radiant crowd that dragged it into the village with solemn songs and joyous cheering belongs to the past! Gone are the merry feasts, when young and old alike assembled in the *morung* round the great pots of sweet rice-beer. Gone are those days, perhaps never to return.

A bell rang, feebly and tinnily, and the sound of singing rose in our ears. Were these Naga voices? It sounded like a hymn or a chapel-chant—or perhaps not quite like either. This singing was entirely different from Naga music, the melodies were not in harmony with Naga expression—as discordant as the ugly tin-roofed chapel amidst the palm thatches of the village houses.

People with serious faces came out of the chapel. There was the "pastor", a skinny young man in khaki shorts, and a mauve coat. Some of his flock had also adopted shorts, but the rest of the community were content to emphasize their allegiance to the new doctrine by wearing plain dark-blue cloths, while the women wore white blouses, imported from the plains, with their Naga skirts. The Aos' most cherished and valued possessions, the pride of generations, lay unheeded and scattered in the jungle—ivory armlets, necklaces of boars' tusks, cowrie shells, head-dresses and baldrics, and artistically woven coloured cloths, all discarded because they belong to the old times.

I asked the "pastor" why the bachelors' halls were no longer used.

"How could a Christian boy sleep in these houses of the heathen?" was his answer. "To use them would be against our rules."

In the past the older boys and girls were not allowed to sleep in the houses of their parents, lest it led to incest, but the missionaries encouraged their converts to disregard tribal laws and customs even in spheres not directly connected with religion. The bachelors' hall is an institution much like the English public school. One may agree or disagree with the principle of giving boys a training in community spirit outside the individual family, but there can be no question that the *morung* was one of the main pillars of the Aos' social order. The bachelors' hall was the social centre of the village, the age groups of the *morung* were the natural labour teams for every public work, and the rights and obligations of every member of the community were regulated by his place in the age-group system.

Similarly, the Feasts of Merit, forbidden by the missionaries, fulfilled an extremely important social and economic function. To rise in the social scale an Ao had to give a series of feasts, defined by custom in every detail and necessitating the expenditure of large quantities of food stuff. For among the Aos a man did not gain social prestige by merely possessing wealth, but only by spending it for the benefit of the community. The ambition to out do their neighbours in the giving of Feasts of Merit stimulated the rich to produce rice beyond the requirements of their household and to rear mithan, buffaloes and pigs for slaughter.

Social prestige was not their only reward. With every feast they acquired the right to increased shares of meat whenever another villager gave a Feast of Merit. This system of reciprocal gifts made for the smooth distribution of perishable food. In a country where effective preservation of meat is unknown, any individual household slaughtering a mithan or a pig would suffer considerable loss unless there existed an organization of exchanging surplus meat for shares in animals to be slaughtered in the future by other villagers. The Feasts of Merit with their slaughter and distribution of animals provided such an organization and were thus the very opposite of a thoughtless squandering of wealth. But they did more than this. The wealth of the ambitious was employed to provide food and enjoyment for the less prosperous members of the community, for at a Feast of Merit there was meat, rice and rice-beer for every man, woman and child in the village.

In Christian villages the rich, free of traditional obligations towards their neighbours and forbidden to perform Feasts of

Merit, tend to hoard their rice or to sell it to the highest bidder. With the community spirit broken, individualism begins to assert itself, and the Western idea of pride in the possession of goods, fostered probably quite unconsciously by the missionaries, replaces the Ao's traditional pride in the lavish expenditure of his wealth. The mission objects to the Feasts of Merit presumably because the animals consumed in their course are not just slaughtered but sacrificed with appropriate invocations of the spirits. Yet one would think that with a little trouble an institution of an essentially social and economic character could have been remodelled so as to be compatible with Christian tenets. Were such adjustments impossible, Europe would have long lost all its folk festivals and the Christmas tree would long ago have been condemned as a pagan symbol.

One of the main obstacles to any participation of Christians in village feasts is the American Baptist Misssion's rigid enforcement of teetotalism. To the Ao a feast without rice-beer is unthinkable, for what wine is to the Italian and whisky to the Scotsman, rice-beer is to the Naga. It refreshes him on hot days, encourages him to carry the heavy harvest baskets many hundreds of feet up the steep mountains to the village, loosens his tongue, and makes him merry when, on feast days, he sits with his friends round the fire. But he has to forswear it directly he is baptized. Drinkers of rice-beer, the Baptists teach, will burn in hell fire for ever, and the Naga not knowing that since the oldest times wine and beer have been drunk throughout Christendom, eschews his cherished national drink. But although the spirit is willing, the flesh is often weak, and not all converts find it easy to remain true to their resolution; many drink secretly and with a bad conscience.

As a substitute for rice-beer the Mission has introduced tea, which drunk without milk is greatly inferior in nutritive value. Its other disadvantage is that it has to be bought for hard cash, whereas rice-beer is brewed at home from surplus rice. Since there is no market for the coarse rice grown on the Aos' *jhum* fields, this change-over lessens the Nagas economic self sufficiency. I have often wondered how Christian Nagas are supposed to obtain the many foreign goods for which the Mission has given them a taste. Shorts and shirts, the blouses of women, tea, sugar and many novel household goods have all to be imported and while the Mission was certainly pouring a good deal of money into the

country and the pay of pastors and teachers as well as many gifts to converts accounted for most foreign articles, the economy of the Christian Nagas could not very well be permanently based on such outside support. But it does not seem that the Mission had any clear plan of how to restore the disturbed balance of the Aos' economy. I never heard of any new industries started in Christian villages, or indeed of the introduction of improved agricultural methods which would enable the Nagas to produce for sale and thus obtain the money necessary to satisfy their new wants. In these villages the hard toil on the fields remained, while much of the bright side of village-life, the great annual feasts, the dancing and singing, the happy community life in the *morung* and last but not least the gay parties round pots of sparkling rice-beer had disappeared. No longer did the ambition to entertain friends and neighbours at elaborate feasts to gain the right to the wearing of magnificent ornaments and to rise to prominence in the council of elders, lend zest to the growing of rice. Village life, shorn of its colour and entertainments had become monotonous, and all the teaching the Mission provided pointed to a wider, and in the eyes of the young convert, a more desirable world. Seeing his own customs condemned by the missionaries, he learnt to despise his own tribe and cultural inheritance. Christianity and Naga culture seemed to him opposite poles, and on the side of the missionaries there had indeed been few attempts to bring the two into harmony and build on that which was valuable in tribal life.

Nothing shows this disparity more clearly than the churches you find in Ao villages. Most of them are low, square, tinroofed buildings, the interior resembling an empty school room and the walls hung with crude colour prints of scenes from the Old Testament. Scenes which can mean singularly little to the average Naga. There may be some window panes of green and red glass, but next to nothing in such a church is made by Nagas. Yet there seems to be no reason why the churches of Aos should not be decorated with their own traditional wood carvings. Just as mediaeval craftsmen decorated Gothic cathedrals with fabulous animals, gargoyles and demons, so the expert wood-carvers among the Aos might be employed with advantage in building their houses of worship. In time new motifs could take the place of hornbills, monkeys and tigers, and a church containing the works of local artists would undoubtedly lie closer to the hearts of the

community than one adorned with foreign colour prints.

As it is, the Aos' highly developed art of wood carving is in danger of extinction. The high reliefs and carved figures in the bachelors' halls and on the houses of the donors of Feasts of Merit were the main works of the craftsmen, but with the disappearance of *morung* and the ban on Feasts of Merit, there is neither incentive nor scope for the Naga sculptor.

In the villages I visited with Mills, the mission had then not won a complete victory, and many Aos persevered in their traditional faith. Curiously enough they showed on the whole far more tolerance than some of their Christian neighbours. I never heard that "heathens" had damaged a church or disturbed a service. But unfortunately the Baptists were less tactful, and only too often hurt the feelings of their fellow-villagers by cutting down their sacred trees and desecrating the spirit-stones. And under the pretext that they had nothing to do with the old customs, they sometimes even refused to collaborate in the purely worldly affairs of the village.

Undoubtedly there must have been Nagas who embraced the Christian faith because they were impressed by its lofty ideals and seriously convinced of its truth. But for many the adoption of Christianity, of which they had only a vague comprehension, was little more than the transition from one system of taboos and rites to another.

Government officials and missionaries took unfortunately exactly opposite views on what was good for the Nagas, and a great deal of confusion must have been caused in the minds of the tribesmen if one Sahib praised their *morung* as the most excellent institution and the other decried it as an invention of evil spirits. Government's policy had been to avoid any sudden disruption of Naga culture, respect tribal custom wherever it did not prejudice the maintenance of law and order, and tamper as little as possible with the old village-organization. The ousting of the products of village crafts by foreign imports was discouraged, and Government interpreters were indeed forbidden to wear western dress. With their land closed to traders, money-lenders and land-hungry settlers from the plains, the Nagas had been saved from the exploitation which has caused the ruin of so many aboriginal tribes in other parts of India. Respect for the old order, however, did not mean a policy of *laissez faire*. The Naga had been given security, cheap and

effective justice within the spirit of the tribal law, hospitals and dispensaries, a good many schools and improved communications—not, it is true, motor roads but good bridle paths with bridges crossing all major streams.

It is a pity that the American Baptist Mission had little sympathy with the aims of the Government and even less appreciation for the valuable elements of Naga culture. Many of its aspects conflict in no way with the principles of Christianity, and I believe that even some of the old feasts and ceremonies—certainly the agricultural festivals—could have been adapted to the new faith, given a new meaning and retained by the Christian communities. Where the Ao prays to a supreme deity who sends him happiness and misfortune and watches over the doings of men, an appropriate Christian prayer might have been substituted and there seems to be no reason why at the first sowing or at harvest the Ao Christian should not pray for the prosperity of his crops. No one will question the good faith and admirable enthusiasm of the missionaries. They were doing great work in the medical field and made thousands of Naga children literate. But it may be that with a little more understanding and sympathy for Naga culture they might have brought more happiness to their flock and avoided many of the more unfortunate results of a sudden clash of cultures.

At Mokokchung, a large Ao village and headquarters of a Subdivision, came the parting of the ways. Mills went on to Kohima, while I returned to the Konyak country. It was a strange moment half of regret at leaving Mills and half of excitement at being on my own in a new field, when in pouring rain I left Mokokchung with Nlamo, Tsampio and a few porters. Before me lay my life with the Nagas.

Several days later we made our way from Chantongia to Merangkong. The sun blazed down from a deep blue sky and the air was filled with the shrill buzzing of the cicadas and the yelling of gibbons from the jungle in the valley—sounding sometimes like the barking of dogs and sometimes almost like human voices. Birds twittered and rioted in the branches. The Burman minivet was the most beautiful. The cock scarlet with black wings, the female lemon-yellow and black. They did not seem to mind our coming, and let us approach within a few steps before fluttering unconcernedly to a higher branch.

The village of Merangkong, with its three rows of houses, one on top of the other, presented on entirely regular front; seen at a distance it seemed like an enormous hotel looking over the valley. When still a mile or two from the village, we met a group of young men hurrying down the hills, with long bamboos over their shoulders. They told us excitedly that the whole village was out to ring a tiger, that the bamboos were to build the fence against which the tiger was to be driven. In a valley far below the path we could see crowds of men surrounding a patch of steep, sloping jungle; they were building a stockade on the lowest edge. There was so much noise and clamour that I doubted whether the tiger could really be in this piece of jungle, but the Merangkong boys allayed my doubts, and assured us that the tracks clearly led to it, but not out of it.

The spectacle of ringing a tiger was not to be missed. I hurried towards the village. I swallowed a few mouthfuls of food and hastily searched my luggage for my small revolver, the only firearm I had with me, since I had left my gun at Wakching. I had no illusions as to how much harm my revolver could do to a tiger, but perhaps I had a naive idea, and not a very altruistic one, that, if the worst came to the worst, I could with a few shots divert the tiger from myself to the men alongside, who would be armed at any rate with shields and spears. After all, it was their tiger.

On my way to the jungle I passed groups of boys cutting bamboos and carrying them down to the fence. The piece of jungle to be ringed was surrounded by much activity, and at the lower end, where a small brook trickled through a ravine, a high bamboo stockade had been erected. Funnel-shaped, its wings ran up the slope into the jungle. Young men climbed about on this stockade, strengthening, stiffening, and tying together the individual bamboos, while the warriors of the village, armed with spears and shields, had ranged themselves behind the two wings. The old men and the boys ringed in the upper part of the jungle. Tigers apparently always attack downhill. None of the men had firearms; spears, *dao*, and high, plaited shields were their only weapons. Some of the older men had given themselves a most terror-inspiring look by wearing head-dresses of bear's skin and various other hunting trophies. Cheek-straps set with tiger claws showed that they had already bagged many a tiger.

When the stockade was ready, I climbed the swaying structure and found myself about eighteen feet above the ground; under my weight the bamboos bent towards the centre of the ring in a most frightening way. The tiger was to be driven against the stockade and speared, or at least I hoped so, practically beneath me, by the men ranged up behind the fence. With one hand I grasped an unsteady bamboo, with the other I gripped my camera, fitted with a telescopic lense. I wanted a close-up of the tiger actually being killed by the Aos.

The ringing of the tiger began, and with every minute the tension grew, as the boys and old men came yelling down the slope. Ferociously they cut down the jungle, and we expected any moment to see the tiger fleeing before the noise and the breaking branches towards the stockade. The warriors stiffened and waited, spears poised. Endless minutes passed—but no tiger came. My perch on the bamboo stockade was not exactly comfortable. Gradually it became evident that there was no tiger in this thicket. He must have saved himself long before that empty piece of jungle had been ringed. All that trouble ! And all those precious bamboos wasted !

In every civilized country the cheated hunters would have vented their disappointment with loud words of anger, and each would have reproached the other for the failure. It must have been some one's idea, after all, that the tiger, having killed a cow, was licking his chops in that particular piece of jungle, and that some one was therefore responsible for a whole day's lost labour. But it did not occur to the Nagas to reproach each other. They did the only possible thing under such circumstances: they laughed heartily over their own misfortune.

"Isn't it funny, Sahib? We all went out with spears and shields, and now there is no tiger ! Well, today he was more clever than we, but another time we will get him, all the same !"

The rice-beer held in readiness to celebrate the killing of a tiger tasted just as good as consolation for an unsuccessful hunt, and after hours on that bamboo stockade in the blazing sun it was pleasant to rest in one of the airy Ao houses. Several men invited me to have a drink with them, and, anxious not to offend, I made at first a sober, and later a slightly tottering, round of the village. Nowhere will you find better rice-beer than in Merangkong; it is clear and sweet and frothy, like champagne.

Eventually I visited the house of a famous old man called Sak-

chimtuba. In his youth he had taken part in many a head-hunting raid, and once he had even crossed the Dikhu and raided Wakching. But when he began to take heads from the neighbouring village of Tamlu, nine Konyak villages formed an alliance against the truculent Merangkong and took a dreadful revenge.

Dusk had come, and the women of the house returned from the fields. They sat down among the men without the slightest shyness. Young Ao girls are pretty creatures, with soft, happy faces, and such light skins that you often see the red blood showing on their cheeks. Tastes differ, however, and when, many months later, I pointed out a particularly lovely Ao girl to the Konyak *dobashi* Chingai, he showed little enthusiasm and remarked that her lips were too pale. Compared to the lips of Konyak women, scarlet from betel, her mouth did indeed appear pale, and I am afraid that as long as lipsticks do not find their way into the Naga Hills, the Aos will have to forego the favours of their Konyak neighbours. I don't suppose they really mind, for the blackened teeth of the Konyaks must be anything but attractive to girls used to the magnificent white teeth of their own men folk.

I thanked my hosts for the delicious rice-beer by offering them cigarettes, which were much appreciated even by the ladies; and as it so often happens when alcohol inspires the mind, our conversation turned to supernatural things. I welcomed this turn, for I wanted to clarify a doubt about the deities of the Aos. The old men were delighted to find a white man who took an interest in their beliefs instead of decrying all their old gods as evil spirits.

"Why should we not pray to Lunkizungba?" wondered Sakchimtuba. "Is not he lord over all? Even our life belongs to him."

"But when you invoke him, does he really help?" I asked carefully.

"Certainly, Sahib; he sees all and helps everybody. If we ask something of him, we receive it. Of course," he added with a smile, "we cannot become rich when we want."

"You say that Lunkizungba is the lord over all, but in Chantongia the people told me that they prayed to Lichaba at their sacrifices."

"Oh yes, Lichaba ! We, too, give him offerings. He made the earth. But first we always call Lunkizungba, for he was there first. He is like the wind, and he made the sky. Also the sun and the moon he made—only afterwards Lichaba made the earth. But it

was Lunkizungba who made men, therefore we belong to him."

"Well, then Lunkizungba is certainly greater than Lichaba. But do you know how he made man?"

"No, Sahib, how shall we know that? It was a long time ago, and the people have always said only that it was Lunkizungba who made man."

"And when a man dies, what do you believe happens to him?"

"The dead—they go to a distant land. At its entrance Moyotsung keep guards. He leads the men who have lived a good life into a good village, but thieves and murderers he sends to a bad place. Men are afraid of him, and therefore they try to be good."

Sakchimtuba became pensive and was silent for a while; then, as with a sudden resolution, he turned again to me and asked almost timidly :

"Sahib, I should like to ask you something. The white men say that Lunkizungba is an evil spirit to whom we should not pray, they say that all who do not believe what they believe are cast into a great fire. I had a wife—she was a good woman and gave me many children, never did she stop working. Then she died—it must have been five years ago. Do you think, Sahib, that she, too, was thrown into a fire? Our fathers, who all sacrificed to Lunkizungba, have they all been thrown into the fire?"

"No, Sakchimtuba, you must not worry about your wife. I am sure that she went to the same place where all honest people go. Lunkizungba is the same as the God of the Christians; only the names are different. But Lunkizungba, who knows everything, does not care about the name we give him. He looks after you, and he is looking after your wife in the land of the dead, where you will meet her again."

six

Death in the Rains

I returned to Wakching and settled down to my work among the Konyaks and to the incessant boredom of rain, rain, rain. For days and days it would pour down in dreary sheets, and then, without any warning, the wind would rush up the valley and the rain would rattle down on the tinroof of my bungalow. To live in a tent in this weather would have been hell, and I fully understood why Mills had warned me against touring before the end of September. As long as there is an average rainfall of one inch a day, when you often do not see the sun for three or four days at a time, there is little to be done but stay where you have a solid roof over your head.

There I sat in the rain, not making nearly as much progress with my work as I had hoped. At the beginning everything had been promising, for then I was still a novelty to the people, and the *gaonbura* sacrificed many an hour to answer my first questions. But my Assamese was still meagre, and most conversations had to be carried on with Nlamo as interpreter. This tired the people, and took away much of the pleasure of telling stories, for even talkative Konyaks are naturally bored if every sentence must be translated. And then it was weeding time, and they were all extremely busy on their fields. It was not always easy to attract enough informants.

Yet in those first weeks I was able to learn quite a lot about the people of Wakching, and though much of what I wrote down was incorrect or incomplete, it led me later to more successful questions and to a gradual understanding of their economy and social order.

There were two men who, more than any others, helped me in my work—the *gaonbura* Chinyang and Yongang. Chinyang had a bony, expressive face and a head of dishevelled grey hair, and in spite of his sixty years his extremely slim body showed hardly a trace of old age. When he climbed a hill in front of me, the muscles playing under the brown skin at every step might have been those of a young man, so beautiful was this well-trained body. His

chest was covered with a blue tattoo. Punctuated lines ran from the centre of the stomach over the shoulders and half way down the upper arms, while a necklace was tattooed over the collar bones. But Chinyang's special pride was the two small human figures between these lines. These "decorations" showed that he had cut off heads with his own hands. He hardly ever wore any ornaments, and only a small apron hung down from his belt. Chinyang had a very happy and well-balanced temperament, and was always friendly and helpful. As one of the most influential men of the village, he considered it his vocation to initiate me into the customs and the beliefs of the Wakching people. Exactly as in any other society, knowledge concerning the laws and customs differs among the Nagas according to the individual. Chinyang was an expert on all questions of tradition, and often, when I talked to several people and could not get a point clear, he would cut into the discussion with "*Ami kobo*, I will say it . . ." and then would follow an intelligent explanation of the point.

Chingyang was proud to belong to the Oukheang *morung*, the oldest men's house of Wakching, built in the old times by the founder of the village. As the first *morung*, it still retains a certain ceremonial precedence over the other four *morung*—Thepong, Balang, Bala, and Angban, each forming with the surrounding houses, a social and political entity with a strongly developed "patriotism." I heard many stories, some amusing, some tragic, of how, regardless of the rest of the village, the individual *morung* formed alliances with other villages, declaring war and receiving tribute from their own vassals. Yet the *morung* are in a certain manner dependent on each other, for they provide each other with wives. No man of the Oukheang, for instance, may flirt with a girl of his own *morung* or the "related" Thepong *morung*, but he must look for his girl-friends, and finally for his wife, among the daughters of the three remaining *morung*.

Nevertheless, there exists between the *morung*, in spite of the many kinship ties, a certain rivalry. Some forty years ago such a rivalry led to the expulsion of the Bala people and the burning of their houses; it was only after many years of exile that they were permitted to return. Under the *Pax Britannica*, there was peace and friendship among the *morung*, but, for all that, every man was convinced that his own *morung* was superior to all the others.

It was this strong *morung*-feeling which led Chinyang to comp-

lain to me one morning about the declining birthrate in the Oukheang. So few boys had been born lately, that he foresaw a considerable shrinkage of its population. Chinyang, and many other Nagas, held the prohibition of head-hunting responsible for this and other evils.

"In the old times we were men, now we are only a crowd of women," I often heard him say. "When we captured heads, then we had good harvests, then we had many children, and the people were healthy and strong. But now we are no longer allowed to go to war, and many die of illness."

This view contained no doubt an element of truth. Since headhunting has been forbidden, the intercourse between villages has become safer and more frequent, and disease, so easily carried from one village to another, takes greater toll of Konyak lives than any wars did in olden times.

Chinyang himself had had much misfortune. Three wives had died one after the other, and three of his children. Now he was married for the fourth time, and had a grown-up son and a daughter by the fourth wife. Yet he was fondest of the seven-year old son of one of his dead daughters. And the boy, although living in the house of his father and belonging to the Balang morung, was always to be seen with his grandfather. And Chinyang, as so often happens with grandparents, spoilt the boy more than any father would spoil his own child. I would offer Chinyang a cigarette, and he, after puffing at it for a few minutes, would hand it to his grandson, sitting silently beside us, and the little boy would smoke it to the end with obvious enjoyment. Whereupon I felt bound to offer the generous old grandfather another cigarette.

Chinyang, though an opium-smoker, was the soul of honesty, and I would not have hesitated to entrust hundreds of rupees to his care. How little harm his opium did him, I learnt to my discomfiture on many an arduous march. Yongang, his friend and my other most important informant in those first weeks, was also an addict of this vice. But for men such as Chinyang and Yongang, the smoking of opium can hardly be called a vice, for the effects never hindered their work or upset their moral balance. No one drinking his nightly two whisky and sodas has the right to object to Chinyang's or Yongang's opium.

Yongang was slightly younger than Chinyang. He had a great

sense of humour, and his peculiarly high laugh would often ring out while we were talking. He plumed himself as any cock-sparrow, and probably with reason, over his success with women. I gathered that in his youth he had led rather a gay life. He was thrice married and thrice divorced before he married his present wife, a pretty, fairly young woman, who seemed to hold her own quite well, despite the definite disadvantage of so many predecessors.

These two *gaonbura* explained to me how Wakching was divided into clans and *morung*-groups, how the marriage customs and the laws of inheritance worked, the occasions for the feasts and ceremonies, and hundreds of other smaller but equally important things. I had first to learn the outlines of Wakching culture, so that later I could fit my own observations into the pattern.

In these first weeks, when it poured with rain, there was little going on in Wakching besides the weeding of the rice-fields and endless funeral ceremonies. The violent epidemic of dysentery had not yet come to an end, and every day there was at least one death in the village.

I was often wakened during the night by the sinister sound of the great log-drums, as the young men announced each death to the neighbours. When I heard the hollow thudding for the first time, I rushed out into the open, regardless of the rain, which soaked me in a few seconds. I could not imagine where the noise came from, nor had I the slightest idea what it could mean. The strange death-rhythm begins with several powerful strokes, and, gradually quickening, dies away in a low rumble.

It was not only the drums of Wakching which boomed through these August nights, but the drums of the neighbouring villages of Chingtang and Wanching. The epidemic had spread like wild-fire through the hills, and in Wanching alone fifty adults and thirty children died during the summer months.

On my way to the village one morning, I found a group of boys and girls by the path. They were setting up a monument to the soul of Chinyak, a young man of the Oukheang who had died during the night, not from dysentery, but from some other illness that had lasted several months. Countless times he had sacrificed to the sky-god and to the spirits of the earth, and at last he had even moved from his house, which he felt must be cursed, and settled in the house of one of his clansmen. But all had been in vain for that night he had died, and now the youths were erecting

a bamboo scaffold and putting up a roughly hewn wooden figure for his soul, and the girls were fashioning two caps from large fresh leaves, and painting them with white chalk. One for the wooden figure and the other for the head of the dead body.

These were the *morung* friends of Chinyak and young girls of the Balang *morung*. They did not seem at all shattered by the death, as they talked in their usual light way to each other—these youths, who had lost a companion, and these girls, who had so often sung and joked with Chinyak. Perhaps so many are stricken in their midst that Nagas are more used to death than we, and therefore take it more lightly. I followed the girls up to the village, careful not to tread on the trail of leaves they had strewn on the path, so that the soul of Chinyak, on leaving his body, might find the way to his monument. Chinyang told me that this last act of piety is always performed by the girls of those *morung* with which the deceased could have intermarried.

There was much movement in the village as gifts of betel, rice, and vegetables were being carried to the dead body by clansmen and friends. They came to the house either singly or in small groups, and before leaving they dipped a finger into a bamboo mug of water at the door to dispel all infection.

It was ten o'clock then, and the wailing continued the whole morning. So we sat about and waited for the funeral to begin. Owing to the death of their clansman, none of the Oukheang men was allowed to go to the fields—an infuriating taboo when the weeding was pressing, but one which I welcomed, for at last I found plenty of informants in the *morung*. They were pleased to pass the time in answering my questions and smoking my cigarettes, and many pages of my notebook were filled in the hours of waiting.

Early in the afternoon some old men carried an open bamboo bier into the house, and it was not long before I heard a solemn and curiously urgent voice addressing the dead: "Enter the land of the dead. Do not be afraid, and if you are asked whose son you are, say: 'I am Chinyak, son of Yongmek'."

Time after time these same words were repeated; time after time the dead was enjoined to be of good courage and to remember whose son he was. Suddenly an old man, wearing Chinyak's ceremonial dress and armed with all his weapons, came out of the house. Behind him came four old men, all completely naked,

carrying the bier with the corpse. Funerals are not the time to depart from ancient customs, and so they had discarded their new fashioned aprons. Hardly had the procession formed than it stopped again behind a house—the cursed house of the dead, Chinyang whispered to me. Hoisting the bier to a platform, the old men covered the corpse with a cloth and a few palm leaves, and then they tied the bundles of food to the platform for the soul of the dead to feed on. It is usual for a chicken to be sacrificed before the platform, but Chinyak had offered so many chickens for his recovery that there were no more in the house, and since neither of his sisters, both married in Tanhai, had foreseen such a dilemma, they had not brought a chicken with them. The gods had to be content with what they had already, so ungraciously, received.

After several minutes of lingering round the platform, during which they did little more than look at the corpse, the mourners dispersed. But the relatives were left with the duty of feeding the corpse at meal-times as long as the head was attached to the body.

In the heat of the summer a corpse decomposes very quickly, and already on the day after the funeral swarms of buzzing flies surrounded the platform. The putrescent liquid of decomposing flesh oozed through the slits in the bier and dripped on to the ground. No words are necessary to describe the suffocating stench round every corpse-platform. To make matters worse, Chinyak's corpse had been disposed of in the middle of the village. One gets accustomed to most things, but not to that revolting smell of disintegrating flesh. Even the Konyaks are by no means insensible to the evil smell of rotting corpses. They hold their noses when passing anywhere near a platform, and a small boy once complained to me that the smell of the corpses in his parents' back garden was so sickening that at meals he could hardly swallow a mouthful of rice.

When I went to the village on the sixth day after the funeral, I was told that the head was to be wrenched from the body. However, I decided that I could dispense with this bit of the ceremony, and was satisfied with hearing a description of how the old women of the dead man's family cleaned the skull and removed the rotting parts of the brain. Chinyak's beautiful white skull, housed in a sandstone urn, was placed by a path on the outskirts of the village, to be fed for three years with food and rice-beer on all feast

days. The fate of the corpse, or rather the bones, is not of great importance. They gradually fall to the ground, and are either forgotten among the undergrowth that soon covers them, or are dragged out and gnawed by one of the vllage pigs. The inevitable destructibility of all flesh could scarcely be better demonstrated! It is only small babies who are disposed of in another way. They find airy resting places among the birds' nests high up in the branches of strong trees.

My two Lhota companions, Nlamo and Tsampio, were horrified that the pigs should be allowed to gnaw the human bones, and they vowed never again to touch pork in Wakching, "because the Wakching pigs eat human flesh." Neither would they eat dog's meat, otherwise highly prized by the Nagas, for they pretended that the missionaries had told them that devils live in dogs.

I must admit that I was rather surprised that, after the care with which the skull had been treated, the body should be liable to such disrespect. Chinyang explained that Konyaks do not pay much attention to the bones of the dead, for they are "empty things." One part of the soul adheres to the skull, while the other part goes to the land of the dead.

Late that evening we sat on the veranda of my bungalow and looked over where the valley should have been. It was still raining! Would it ever stop? I thought. We had just assisted at the placing of the skull in its sandstone urn in the forest, and we were sitting, four of us, discussing the events of the funeral. I asked Yongang, about the world of the dead—and for once his reply was rather incoherent. But patching my notes together, and later adding things I heard from other people, I gathered that the road of the dead runs from Wakching over the village of Chintang, across the Dikhu River, touching Chinglong, Chongwe, and Choha, and leads at last under the ground to Yimbu, the land of the dead. There the Departed lead a life similar to that of this world. They grow rice, work and celebrate feasts, and even marry and have children.

But a part of the soul, or rather a part of the magical virtue of a man, adheres to the skull after his death. It took me a long time to understand exactly what this meant, but months later I witnessed a peculiar magical rite which helped me to clear up the question.

The men of the Thepong had been unable to spear the necessary

game for the rebuilding ceremony of their *morung*. Many days had they set out hunting, only to return in the evenings without any luck. The people reflected, and it came to their mind that perhaps the soul of Shouba, the father of Shankok, and once the richest and most important man of the whole village, might not sufficiently support the men of his old *morung*. So they sacrificed a cock at the skull-urn of Shouba. They brought a fish-net with them, and threw it over the urn, to catch the soul attracted by the offering. Contentedly they carried the net into the *morung*, certain that the captured soul of the famous Shouba would now communicate its 'virtue' to all the men of the *morung*. As a matter of fact, they killed an antelope next day. Shankok himself took part in the capture of the soul, and he seemed to have no misgivings that he might inconvenience his father.

Those weeks in August, when dysentery ravaged Wakching and the rain poured down in streams, were not particularly pleasant. Everything was wet to the touch; clothes, bedding, and books were wet, or, if not wet, damp and covered with mould. If I did not wear a pair of boots for two days, squashy mushrooms began to grow inside. The continued rain and the epidemic weighed not only on my mind, but also on the minds of the Konyaks, for they knew that only with the coming of the dry season would the epidemic stop.

One morning I found Ngamang and Dzeamang on the veranda —two curious and at first rather shy boys of eleven and thirteen. A Naga hardly ever knows exactly how old he is, and the parents lose count of the years as soon as the children pass six or seven summers. Indeed, the number of years is of little importance. Important only is the age-group to which the boy belongs—that is, with which set of boys he entered the *morung*; for during the whole of his life they form a close unit. I tried to make friends with Ngamang and Dzeamang, for they were merry youngsters, and, surprisingly enough, we got on very well. Both of them had a smattering of Assamese—in fact we all three had a smattering of Assamese. That simplified matters, for I found it much easier to understand these boys than the men who spoke so fluently.

To the two boys the friendship with the "new Sahib" was the greatest fun. They thought themselves immensely important, explaining all the things in the village and teaching me the Konyak expression for this and for that. They came to my bungalow when-

ever they managed to sneak away from the work in the fields, and they would go with me on my daily walks through the village, until finally their interest faded and the "new Sahib" was not "new" any more, but a usual figure in the village. Before this happened, however, I had picked up a great deal from Ngamang and Dzeamang.

What a lot of things they knew! The whole genealogical tables of their families—the ways of addressing various relatives. To find out all those kinship terms alone was difficult enough, but when I checked the boys' work with older men, it was only to discover that they had hardly made a mistake.

It is surprising what reasonable and independent creatures Naga children are. You can talk with them as you would talk to any grown-up, and though their knowledge is, of course, limited, they do not live in a world of their own, but take an intelligent interest in the events of the village—perhaps because they share the life of their elders, or perhaps because from their earliest youth they are treated as reasonable and responsible persons. There are few opportunities for coercion or punishments of naughty children. During the whole year I stayed among the Nagas I only once saw a child beaten; and that beating was nothing more than a few smacks an angry grandmother gave to a screaming little boy who refused to leave the fascinating spectacle of house-building and go to have his dinner. Parents generally speak to their children in the same quiet and friendly tone they would use to any grown-up—a grumbling father, shouting at and terrorizing his children, would rouse public disapproval at once and lose much of his social prestige. And if it happens that the boys do not want to do exactly as their father wishes, the father only laughs and says: "What shall I do with them? Children are like that, after all !"

That is what happened when Mills sent a Tamlu man to Wakching to teach the boys reading and writing. At first the *gaonbura* and the older men were most enthusiastic over the plan. It was explained that, with a knowledge of these new arts, they would not be so easily cheated by the traders of the plains. A house was built, the schoolmaster installed, and the pupils assembled for the teaching to begin. At first the boys thought scribbling on their little blackboards fun, and far more amusing than the tedious work on the fields. But soon the scribbling lost its charm, and they found it still more amusing to play truant, running about in the forest and

shooting birds while their parents thought them in "school." The despairing schoolmaster asked my help and complained that he could not hold school without any pupils. This was understandable, and I promised him to do what I could. I talked to the parents of the runaways. They promised that they would send their sons to school. And so they did, but the boys did not come. Once more I tried to assist the poor schoolmaster, and once more I talked seriously to the fathers, lauding the advantages of learning in the most glowing terms.

"Well, we have told the boys they should go to school," was the answer, "but if they don't go, what can we do?"

The schoolmaster—incidentally not a mission disciple, but a convinced adherent of the old faith—went back to Tamlu. And the Wakching people were quite happy without a knowledge of reading and writing.

seven

Fishing with Tactful 'Savages'

"Sahib, Sahib," I heard a soft voice say in my sleep.

Angrily I sat up.

"Sahib, we are going fishing, would you like to come with us?"

Achin, the young brother of my friend Shankok, stood at the door of the bungalow. Had any one else torn me from sleep at such an early hour with that remarkable information, I would probably have given him a very irritated welcome. But only an inhuman barbarian could have said an unfriendly word to Achin. I never saw a more charming child, with his soft dark eyes in a gentle oval face, his melodious voice, and the graceful movements of his slender brown body. Perfectly unconscious of his charm, he retained even towards me the full simplicity of his fourteen years.

I crept out from under my mosquito net and went to the door to see what was happening. At last a clear morning. The first rays of the sun bathed the land in a sea of light and colour, and clouds of damp mist lay over the valley. I decided at once to join the fishing-party.

There were four of us when we started—Achin, Nlamo, Yongem, and myself. I have not yet introduced Yongem to my readers; he was the newest member of my household. He had the very important task of fetching water, chopping wood, and sparing my other two boys any work that they found irksome. For this he received the princely pay of ten rupees a month—quite enough to make it worth his while to leave the work on his fields to the rest of his family. Yongem was a man in his early thirties, and I believe his fellow-villagers, though too tactful to mention it, looked upon him as a ne'er-do-well. He was still unmarried, and owned only few of this world's goods; but somehow I rather liked him, and found that he performed the task of fetching water with masterly skill. Besides, he learnt to speak Assamese tolerably well in the course of a few months, while even in the end I could not speak more than a few phrases of Konyak. That fact could actually prove that

his intelligence. . . but I think that that question had better not be gone into, for the Wakching people really did not have any too high an opinion of Yongem's mental capacity.

I once sent him to Borjan on an errand, telling him to fetch my post at the same time, but quite forgetting to give him a note for the post-master. He told the post-master that "he was the Wakching Sahib's son and wanted the Sahib's letters." The post-master babu, a Bengali unfamiliar with Naga expressions, thought that he was dealing with a lunatic, and was careful not to hand over my post. Of course he could not know that Yongem used the word "son" in the sense of a member of my household, in the same way as the Konyaks describe their tributary villages as their "sons."

On a fishing expedition Yongem was to carry my gun—a job perfectly suited to his mental capacity. Since the whole of Wakching was streaming in the same direction, we soon found ourselves marching in single file along the narrow path leading to Shiong.

Everyone was in excellent spirits, and happy to leave the monotonous work on the fields for one day. The sun ahead of us glittered and sparkled on the million drops covering the grasses and reeds; it was as though a silver rain had fallen over the thicket. So must the world have shone on the first day of Creation in the rays of the new morning sun. It will always remain the mystery of the tropics that hell can change into paradise with hardly any transition. Unfortunately paradise can just as quickly change into hell ! I wanted to burst out in song, but I knew that the Konyaks would only roar with laughter at my song—a reaction so completely in accord with that of my friends in Europe that it would have appealed to every advocate of the fundamental similarity of the human mind.

When we arrived at Shiong, the village seemed completely deserted. Nearly every one had already hurried down to the river, and only a few stragglers joined our party. The path now led along a steep slope, and we could see the winding river deep down in the valley beneath us. I had already realized that we would have to drop more than 3,000 feet to the river, but at the sight of that steep precipice I shuddered at the thought of the way home. We continued our way on a narrow path through the ripening rice fields of Shiong. But the rice fields soon receded, and a high thicket of reed swallowed the long serpent of our column. Every time I

was surprised anew at the height of those reeds and grasses. They did not look so very tall from a distance, but when you came up to them they towered above you. Even an elephant would have been lost among them, for prickly creepers, mixed with the reeds, formed two impenetrable walls on either side of the path. This path was rarely used, but is was tolerably well cleared, and the people before us had trampled down grass and undergrowth. Now each of the men would casually improve it as he passed, here and there cutting off an overhanging bough or an obstinate creeper.

Gradually trees mixed with the thicket, and soon we crept through green tunnels and struggled over trees fallen across our path. I was relieved to notice that I was not the only one to stumble over the smooth bamboos hiding maliciously in the grass. Suddenly the path descended so sharply that we were forced to hold on to climbers and bushes to prevent ourselves from slipping, and where the path was particularly difficult to negotiate, the people would queue up patiently and wait their turn.

At last we entered the dusk of the high forest. Here walking was easier, for the undergrowth, cut off from the light, was not so exuberantly developed. Delicate mauve orchids grew high up from the bark of old trees.

We emerged from the forest into the full sunshine, and knew by the denseness of the reeds that we must be close to the river. Quite abruptly the narrow path led into the river, and, without any hesitation, my Naga friends waded into the brown water up to their hips. With my heavy shoes and more extensive dress, I could hardly afford to follow their example. Quickly I constructed, with the help of my belt and a handkerchief, a costume which was perfectly correct in the Konyak country. For the Naga boys, too, had only small pieces of cloth hanging down from their belts, while the older men did not even bother with a belt when fishing.

It was a gay and boisterous crowd that was scattered over the narrow sandbank near the opposite shore; some put their nets and fishing-baskets in order, others splashed about in the water. In some places, where the river was narrow, it was fairly deep, and there the boys showed off their skill in swimming. My disguise as a Naga caused obvious astonishment and tactfully controlled hilarity. But the hilarity turned to utter surprise when I began swimming on my back against the current. Swimming on the back was an art unknown to the Konyak, and it evoked general applause. Even

the pretty girls, their velvet skins burnished like old bronze, no longer found a stranger swimming with their boy friends so very awe-inspiring, and that day they posed to my camera for the first time, instead of hiding with embarrassed giggles. Weeks later Shankok confided to me that the girls had had a good look at my anatomy, just to make sure whether creatures with a peculiar white skin were made like other men. And when in 1970 I returned to Wakching a man who remembered that fishing expedition told me that ever since Konyak men had emulated my example of back-stroke swimming,—an amusing case of diffusion!

A little way up-stream a weir had been built of bamboo and branches, and nearby on the bank the young men, their foreheads beaded with sweat, pounded the poisonous bark of a creeper. Six or eight together, they stood round holes in the ground, lifting their sinewy arms to rhythmical shouts, and the next moment letting the long pounders fall heavily. From time to time the smaller boys, scrambling between their legs, collected the earth, now mixed with the poison, and strewed it over the weir. At last, when a thick layer of poisoned earth covered the weir, the men and boys lined up behind it, and, with much screaming and laughing, splashed so much water over it that the poisoned earth was washed out and mingled with the water of the river. In the end the whole weir was entirely demolished, and the fish, stupefied by the poison, drifted an easy prey into the nets and traps of the people farther down-stream. But the catch was meagre, and though the men threw out large round nets again and again, they did not have much luck. Only here and there a silvery fish flashed in the hand of one more favoured by fortune.

Gradually the whole crowd moved down-stream. There, they told me, a less steep path branched off to Wakching, and I had no other choice but to follow them. If you have ever tried to wade at midday in a river under a cloudless tropical sky, you are unlikely to repeat the experience. Every step in the muddy water was hazardous. Now I slipped on a slimy stone and fell, with ridiculous and ineffective arm movements, full length into the water. Now I would sink suddenly into a hole, hitting my toes on all sorts of hard things that I could not see. On the bank I could put my feet down just four times on the hot pebbles, before once again having to save myself by plunging my burning soles into the river. I did not even realize that the left bank was outside British India

and that unconsciously I had entered unadministered territory. The current was so strong that it was difficult to stand upright, and yet there were only few places where you could swim. Yongem carried my clothes and my shoes in a basket, and the merciless sun, reflected off the water in a dazzling glare, burnt my skin. Soon I was the colour of a well-boiled lobster. My Wakching friends assured me that it was only a mile and a half to the last weir, but that last mile and a half seemed to me more like five. Eventually, when we reached the weir, everybody left the water to eat rice and have a short rest.

But I was more dead than alive, and I began to comprehend all those numerous warnings against the tropical sun that are given to every green-horn. Soon—much too soon for me—we had to start again, if we were to reach the village before dark. The path led through the jungle in that eternal uphill and down dale that drives every European to distraction. The Nagas do not mind climbing, and rather than make the smallest detour they will climb the steepest hill. After an hour of most exhausting going we were still near the river. Not a leaf moved in the damp heat of the forest, and I had to stop more often to regain my breath while black spots danced before my eyes. The path ascended now with greater steadiness, and I soon found the uphill climb harder than the greatest fatigue alone would have justified. Light sunstroke was an easy diagnosis. Some Wakching people coming up behind us realized at once what was the matter with me, and without many words they fell in with our pace. I have never met more perfect tact. None of them had had any luck that day, and now they were hurrying home, hoping at least to reach their village before dusk, but without a shadow of impatience they halted with me every quarter of an hour or so. In vain I tried to persuade them to go ahead—for, after all, I had Yongem to show me the way—but they would not hear of it.

"No," Chinyang assured me, "we won't leave our Sahib alone. When an Ang goes with his men, do they leave him alone? No, may tigers come, may bears come, they remain with him. And you are now our Ang."

All agreed with him, and I was not a little flattered, even in my exhausted condition, to be awarded the rank of a chief.

If a similar misfortune had befallen me on a tour in Europe, I tremble to think of the impatient faces of my companions, or

those few nice words about slacking and lack of stamina, which would have been slung at me. But these men behaved as if a leisurely walk was exactly to their taste and did their best to save me the embarrassment of my miserable condition. "Of course, a Sahib cannot walk on our paths," Yona comforted me. "We Nagas, we are like monkeys, we climb the mountains—straight up." Little Achin, though all his friends had gone ahead, only looked at me with serious, anxious eyes. He did not show the faintest trace of a superiority that most European boys of his age would have felt in a similar situation.

At Chingtang people waited for us by the path with water and bananas. One of my companions had gone ahead to get me these refreshments, and Chinyang suggested I should hire some young men in Chingtang to carry me up to Wakching on a stretcher. But I did not want to stake my prestige on such an issue, for I felt that if I once allowed myself to be carried the atmosphere of comradeship would somehow be spoilt.

Chingtang lay on top of a hill, and I really thought we must be well on our way up to Wakching, but we had no sooner left it than we dropped again, and soon most of the height so hardly gained was lost. Now dark storm clouds precipitated the short dusk. The first lightning flashed, and the thought of the terrible downpours of the last weeks was anything but cheering. But my friends paid little attention to the weather. Nothing was to make me believe that we were in a hurry. Now they proposed we should rest again, and brought small green tangerines from the forest which were dreadfully sour but refreshing.

Night fell and every moment flashes of lightning illuminated the country for whole seconds at a time. Slowly, very slowly, we moved up a steep, open slope. I had fever, and I knew I would not be able to manage the remaining two thousand feet without a good rest. But before I could mention the fact, Chinyang suggested that we should make tea in one of the nearby field huts, and the others accepted the idea without debate. We went down to a hut through the fields, where large taro-leaves stood between the rice-plants. And there I lay down on a mat, while my friends fetched water from a brook and made a fire. Nagas usually carry small bags of tea with them, and they took out a handful and let the leaves boil in the water for some minutes. After a few mouthfuls of the bitter beverage my spirits were somewhat revived. Again

they found excuses for me, and Yona told me that exactly the same thing had happened to him one day when, coming home from the plains, he got fever and "felt like dead"—nobody could help such a thing!

At last we could start again. The thunderstorm had luckily passed, and two torches, made during the rest from split bamboos, brightly lit the path. From the height of the ridge glowing points moved downwards. They were the torches of men coming to meet us, for our absence had already caused anxiety in the village.

After yet another hour we arrived at the bungalow. I stumbled into bed with tired and aching limbs, but even in my exhaustion I felt that the experience had been worth while. The Wakching people appeared to me in a new light. Nowhere could I have found more consideration and helpfulness, and, above all, more tact.

eight

The Harvest

"No eggs, Sahib," were the sombre words Tsampio chose for greeting as he brought me my breakfast one morning. I think he rather enjoyed informing me, with furrowed forehead and sorrowful voice, of the various deficiencies of our larder. The lack of vegetables was certainly unpleasant, but no eggs—that was a much more serious obstacle in the way of Tsampio's culinary efforts.

Yet I could not feel completely innocent of the sudden dearth of chickens, and consequently of eggs. Day after day we had bought and eaten two or three chickens, and the village was unaccustomed to such demands. Not that I had such an enormous appetite, but a Wakching chicken is thinner and bonier than a patridge in spring, and is scarcely enough even for one meal. Indeed, the Wakching chickens are famous all over the hills for their smallness, and even the Aos describe a miserably thin person as a "Wakching chicken."

However this may be, the birth rate among the chickens of Wakching was not high enough to sustain the heavy toll that my incessant demands imposed on them—and the many sacrifices for the souls of the innumerable victims of the recent dysentery epidemic had accelerated the decimation of their ranks. Later on, in the winter, my Wakching friends sent for chickens and eggs to all the neighbouring villages, and even across the border into the tribal area. It was only unfortunate that the Konyak idea as to the freshness of eggs did not quite coincide with mine. And very understandably so, for they use them only as offerings to the gods, who are certainly not particular as to the flavour, while my last resort was scrambled eggs—*kuni rumble tumble* as Tsampio called them—with the largest possible dose of pepper. But during these days of September my friends in Wakching had no time to provide me with eggs, for the harvest had begun, and all their thoughts were entirely wrapped up in this most important of tasks.

Popular opinion was inclined to imagine the Nagas as a fierce

and warlike people, continuously occupied with head-hunting, human sacrifice, and other exciting customs. But this picture drawn by journalists who spent perhaps a week in the Naga Hills had very little in common with reality. The Naga is first and foremost an agriculturist. Nine-tenths of his thoughts and his life are devoted to his fields, and the things that mean most to him are the state of the crops, the weather at harvest time, and the number of rice-baskets in his granaries. Those who see him only in his village can neither really know him, nor understand the complicated social organization that attains its full expression in the daily work of the fields. And they will find it hard to realize the enormous amount of work accomplished by men, women, and children, at certain times of the year.

The Konyak's system of agriculture, with the continual shifting of fields, is undoubtedly of very great age. It is much more primitive than that of the Angamis, for the Konyaks know nothing of complicated terraces or artificial irrigation, and therefore expend much more time and energy in raising a smaller crop than the tribes to the south.

From early autumn, when the elders of the Wakching council decide on a particular block of land for the next year's cultivation, the entire population devotes all energies to the work on the fields. This decision is generally only a matter of form, since a definite cycle has long been established, whereby each section of the land is brought under cultivation once in every fourteen years.

Unlike the land of many other farmers, the property of a Konyak is not grouped together in one place, but is scattered irregularly over the whole of the village land. Thus it happens that whether the land to be cultivated that year lies to the east of Wakching or to the west, north, or south, a man is sure to own, or to be able to hire enough for his own needs. Among many tribes practising shifting cultivation most of the land is owned collectively by the village-community, and every man is free to clear any piece of jungle he chooses. Not so in Wakching; there each piece of land, each tree, and each clump of bamboos has a jealous owner, and trespassing is energetically prosecuted.

The clearing of the land is the work of the individual families, the old men and women cutting down the undergrowth with their *dao*, and the young men felling the trees. Only a few are left standing, so that the jungle may regenerate quickly, once the period of

cultivation is over. Then, after the felled jungle has been left to dry for several weeks, it is burnt, and in January and February you can see smoke and lines of fire on all the slopes, slowly eating their way up through the thicket. Often on windless days the smoke lies idly over the land in long wreaths, and the sun is tinted dull red in a leaden sky. The Konyak uses no animal manure, but the ashes from the burning jungle provide a valuable fertilizer.

Before the sowing can begin, the charred pieces of wood must be collected and the ground smoothed and cleaned. Huts spring up in the fields, and here the workers go to seek protection against the burning sun and the heaviest of the summer showers. Digging over the soil is dull work, and one which the Konyak does not dream of undertaking alone. The idea of the solitary plougher would not appeal to the Naga, for he knows how much easier and how much more amusing it is to work together. The young people, at any rate, join in gangs and cultivate each other's fields in rotation. Even the small boys and girls are organized in groups, and all over the fields you can hear the songs and shouts with which they accompany the work.

The Konyak performs no rites or ceremonies till the sowing begins. He realizes that the cutting of the jungle and the proper clearing of the fields depend only on the efficiency of man. Why should he trouble the gods? But when the seed is entrusted to the earth, where hundreds of dangers may threaten the crops, the Konyak turns to the gods, and solicits protection with offerings and prayers.

The first sowing is a ceremonial sowing, a solemn act performed by a descendant of the village-founder on behalf of the whole village. He sacrifices a chicken on one of his fields and addresses the sky-god Gawang: "Let there be many blossoms this year; be gracious, O Gawang. Give us rice, give us millet, O Gawang." Then he throws out the rice, murmuring, "May my rice sprout first. Shut the beaks of the birds, bind the mouths of the rats and mice. May the crops prosper."

From now on you can see men and women hurrying to the fields, their baskets full of seed-rice, and the first blossoming branches of a peach-like tree sticking in the grain. Men sowing rice and millet make a lovely picture, and I shall never forget the first time I saw the young sower, a red woven bag slung over his shoulder, striding up and down a sloping field with long free steps, and scattering

the rice with large sweeps of the arm; behind him a row of stooping women covered the seed almost before it rested on the earth.

Taro, on the other hand, a tubercular fruit found as far away as the islands of the Pacific, but little cultivated in India, is planted by the women. They dig small holes in the ground with their *dao* in which to lay the tubers, and then cover them over with earth. It is the women's task also to carry home the taro harvest, for to carry taro is considered shameful for a man. Yet it occupies an important place in the diet of the Konyaks, and this prominence points to the primitiveness of their culture. There are even several villages to the east of Wakching—for instance Chen—where no rice, but taro and millet are grown. It may be that rice is of comparatively recent introduction, and that taro was the original staple crop of the Konyaks. It is possible, too, that the cultivation of taro was primarily the responsibility of the women, who thus did the bulk of the work in the fields.

When the luscious green of the young rice covers the undulating slopes, there begins a time when the Konyak knows little leisure. Side by side with the sprouting rice, weeds grow, and unless they are frequently removed, only a scanty harvest can be expected. Shankok was always complaining of the difficulties of keeping pace with the weeds on his ten fields, and even though he often hired one or two gangs, feeding them during the day and paying them a little cash, the obstinate weeds always seemed to get the better of him. Once or twice, driven to desperation, he even hired boys from a *morung* of Chingtang.

This keeping pace with the weeds means weeks and months of endless work in the rice-fields. The women wear large rain-shields made from palm-leaves, but the men work unconcernedly with either rain or sun on their bare bent backs. Yet who would find even weeding boring, when he is working side by side with his love? A wise Konyak custom allows the most tedious work to be performed by girls and boys together. The boys of a gang invite their girl friends to go with them to the fields, and the next day they help in return on the fields of the girls' fathers. These working-gangs are always composed of the inter-marrying *morung*—the girls are the potential wives of the boys, and more often than not their actual mistresses. Small wonder that much laughing and joking banishes boredom, and many of the Wakching romances begin in the rice-fields.

At the end of the weeding there are feasts in the field-houses, and these are the greatest fun. The boys of each gang invite the girls who have worked with them, and take a pride in making their beautiful companions so drunk that they must carry them home to the village.

One evening, as I was coming home with Shankok through the ripening fields, we heard peals of laughter coming from one of the field-houses. Shankok whispered to me, it must be an "end-of-the-weeding feast." Sure enough, the next moment out tottered a girl, who subsided almost at once on the ground. Boys tumbled screaming out of the hut, and with roars of laughter tried to drag the fallen girl to her feet. The six other girls, who one after the other appeared in the door-way, did not seem to me any more sober than the first—the pretty Meniu of Shankok's clan, by now hanging helplessly round the neck of a Bala boy. He made short work of it, and taking the half-unconscious girl on his back, walked triumphantly ahead, while the other tottering girls followed, very much with the support of their friends. The light of the deep yellow moon creeping over the mountains shone full on this rollicking bacchanal, and the evening stillness was rent by shrill, drunken laughter.

"Look, Sahib," whispered Shankok, "the boy there with Meniu on his back is Henyong. Until a few weeks ago he went with Liphung, the daughter of Yona, every night. But she got married, and now he runs after Meniu. The poor girl, she has had too much rice-beer tonight. Only look! Now she is sick—oh! look, all that beer on Henyon's shoulder. He will be proud of that!"

Funnily enough, the boys actually consider it an honour if finally they succeed in making their girl-friends sick from too much rice-beer. It proves that the hosts have not been stingy with their entertainment.

I followed at a distance up the hill, curious to see the reactions of the parents of these beauties. What would they think of this lavish hospitality? But there were none of those floods of reproaches with which many European mothers would have received their daughters, or those who brought them home dead drunk. They seemed only too pleased that the girls had had an enjoyable evening!

"You should see, Sahib," remarked Shankok, smiling, "when the girls entertain the boys. Then it is even more fun. They, too,

must often carry their boy-friends home. Oh yes, they are strong enough—a girl can quite well carry a boy a short distance. Of course, when it is far, then two girls must lend a hand to bring a drunken boy to the top of the hill." I still regret that I never saw such a spectacle, but Shankok's word is reliable, and I have confidence in the Wakching girls and their capacity sometimes to reverse the roles.

The end of the weeding is a joyous time, and is celebrated all over the village. Wealthy men give small parties for their daughters, the girls who worked with them in the fields, and their boy-friends of the other *morung* group. Although I had not done any work, I was also invited to one of these parties.

All morning the household of the host was busy with preparations, the girls indefatigably pounding rice and the men mixing the meat of a newly-slaughtered pig with millet and wrapping it firmly in strong leaves, so that it could be boiled in earthen pots and served in little packets. It was eight o'clock in the evening when I arrived at the party. I was apparently the first guest, for only the people of the house sat round the hearth in the living-room. A thick brown liquid steamed in a large pot over the fire. It was a kind of warm "beer" that the Konyaks prepare from the fermented rice left over from the brewing of the clear rice-beer. I never succeeded in swallowing more than a few gulps.

One after the other the girls, friends of the daughter of the house, trickled in. I asked one of the sons of the house their names. Four were called Meniu, he said, two Shuidzing, and two Mendzing. What an incredible lack of imagination! and one that makes it almost impossible ever to disentangle the complicated kinship system. With this uniformity of names, how are you to know whether a man talks of his sister Meniu, or his uncle's wife Meniu, or the daughter of his mother's sister?

The girls chatted eagerly to each other, and after a considerable time had elapsed we heard the voices of the young men outside. Quite indifferent to the rain pattering on their large rain-shields, they stood almost half an hour before the door, singing a song of almost unbelievable monotony, while the girls sat rather shyly on the long pounding-table in the great hall.

When at last the boys finished their song, they came into the house, and without paying much attention to their pretty friends, ensconced themselves round the fire. The girls and the people of

the house emptied the earthen pots, heaping meat and rice on large wooden dishes. Four boys sat round each dish, and without many words began swallowing huge quantities of food. When they had finished, they made no attempt to entertain their companions with brilliant after-dinner conversation, but devoted their whole attention to chewing the *pan* leaves and betel nuts that the girls offered them in neat parcels.

They seemed quite content sitting before the fire, and it was a long time before they decided to take a little air on the veranda. Here they squatted down on mats with the girls, who mostly sat with their backs against the wall. Conversation did not seem to be one of the girls' strong points either; they were very silent, laughing only now and then when the boys made some isolated joke. But they chewed betel all the more energetically, lifting the mat every few moments to spit on the floor. Soon the boys resumed their monotonous chant, but this time each in turn started a sort of recitative, all the other voices joining in after a few notes. Feeling that perhaps it was my presence that weighed on the atmosphere, I left the party at about eleven. It had stopped raining, and even at that late hour a few night-revellers sat on the small platforms before their houses.

I heard next day that the party had lasted the whole night, and the young people had not gone to bed at all; because—as Shankok told me—the girls were so very young! At other parties of this kind the couples slip away to the privacy of the granaries quite early in the evening, but these girls, being little more than fifteen, hesitated over their first steps in the court of love.

These small private parties for the weeders are crowned by the great village feast at the beginning of the harvest, the Ouniebu. The Konyaks deem it far safer to propitiate the gods, collecting new strength by a few days of thorough eating and drinking, before they begin to reap, than to wait for the feasting until after the harvest.

On the first day after full moon the *gaonbura* surprised me with the information that the Ouniebu had already begun.

"We made a mistake in counting the days," they explained, "for how could we see the moon while it was raining night and day? But yesterday we caught a glimpse, and saw that the moon was full. Quickly we called together the old men and decided to start the Ouniebu today."

Had I known of their trouble I could have helped them with my calendar, and told them that the moon would be full on the 2nd of September. As it was, I had not realized on which day the Ouniebu should begin. Now, however, the situation was saved, for that morning Yongmek, of the founder's clan, had cut a few ears of each of the seven kinds of rice and hung them up in his house, and so the harvest could begin.

When I went to the village the calm of the morning was broken by the squeaking and grunting of pigs tied up to be slaughtered. The men of the Thepong *morung* alone killed eighteen pigs and one mithan bought for thirty rupees by Shankok and some of his friends from Chui. The killing of pigs is not a pleasant sight. It is performed, not by the owner, but by the oldest man of his clan, who receives the heart and the kidneys as a reward. Two men hold the miserable squealing animal, as a pointed bamboo spike is driven into its breast. Small comfort to the luckless pig that the killer calms its last moments with the words : "We do not send you on a bad path, we send you on a good path; do not be angry with us."

The use of any metal instrument for slaughtering pigs is strictly taboo. The bamboo spike is an ancient instrument that survives for ritual use, although iron is used for all other purposes. The custom of slaughtering pigs during the harvest festival undoubtedly dates from a time when the Nagas made all their instruments of bamboo and stone. Mithan, buffalo, and cattle may be killed with any weapon—spear or dao, for they are comparatively recent additions to Konyak culture, and therefore are not subject to the old ritual. Some Konyaks are even afraid to eat the meat of mithan or cattle, and Shankok, though feeling he owed it to his prestige to present a mithan to his relatives and friends, refrained from eating the meat himself.

An exchange of gifts between the families related through marriage is a main feature of the Ouniebu, as indeed of many Konyak feasts. A complicated system determines the beneficiaries and the donors, and every man tries to surpass his partner in generosity. But the unmarried girls prepare millet-breads to give to their lovers, friends, and working companions of the opposite *morung* group.

It was the night of the second feast-day, when the boys went to receive these breads, and the palm roofs shimmered like silver in the bright moonlight that flooded the village. The girls had assem-

bled in their dormitories, and groups of boys moved singing from one to another. Everywhere they were given millet-bread, and everywhere they rewarded the girls with their monotonous song.

In the old days the feast of the Ouniebu was brightened by dancing, for the young warriors did their best to procure a head for the harvest, and its capture was celebrated with dancing and singing in full ceremonial dress. But now head-hunting is forbidden, and the harvest festival takes a simpler form.

The reaping was in full swing as I went one morning with Dzeamang, a pleasant, talkative young man of the Bala morung, to his fields. They lay an hour's walk from Wakching, not far from the village of Shiong. In the field-house we found Dzeamang's brother and his wife just boiling tea—nine out of the ten times you see Konyaks resting they are boiling tea ! It is strictly taboo to enter another man's field-house during the harvest. Apparently, however, I was above such taboos, for they invited me in and offered me tea. We sat talking a while, and then Dzeamang's brother asked me whether I would not like to help cut rice. He handed me a toothed reaping-knife, and I felt I could hardly refuse. Soon I stood between the two brothers, cutting one bundle of rice after the other, and piling them in small heaps.

It was tiring work, for it needed a lot of care to raise the rain-bent stalks before cutting, and at the same time to avoid the fleshy leaves of the taro growing in the same field, and a great deal of physical energy to stoop continually and to work the knife with the unaccustomed movement. It was not long before my back ached and my hands were sore from little blisters. How I admired these people, standing from morning to evening with bent backs on the fields, diligently and unceasingly reaping rice! But I admired them even more on the steep path home—after a long day's work. Here they were carrying baskets heavy with grain, not once, but sometimes twice up to the village.

The majority of the fields are cultivated by individual families, though sometimes with the help of hired labour. Yet some fields are cultivated by groups, for, otherwise, from where would the *morung* get the rice for its feasts? Every man must contribute to the work on his *morung's* field, and on certain days you can see all the members of the *morung* leaving the village together instead of in the usual twos and threes; the boys and the girls to work and the old men to sit and look on.

One day, the boys of the Balang *morung* called to me as they passed on the path below my bungalow: they were going to reap their *morung* field, they shouted. The Sahib should come and watch the work. I finished writing some notes, and then made my way to the Balang *morung* field. Long before I reached the field I heard the cries of the boys; both sides of the path leading to the field-house were literally covered, on the one side with girls' rain-hats and on the other with long rows of boys' spears stuck shaft foremost into the earth—a glance at this "cloakroom", and it was easy to enumerate the workers that day. Long lines of girls worked on the lower slope, reaping their sheafs and throwing them behind. When a whole patch had been cut they would gather the sheafs together and carry them up to the field-house. There the boys threshed out the rice with their feet, throwing the empty straw through the opening at the back of the house, where two boys stood on top of the stack, continually pitching it on to make room for the next bundle. Higher and higher grew the stack of straw, and the dust-clouds blowing round the held-house thickened. Now and then the threshers would give a peculiar quick, swelling laugh, ending almost in a shout, and this would be taken up and echoed by the groups working on the fields. How different were these fierce cascades of cries from the rhythmical work-songs of the Angamis!

Once more the shyness of the girls defeated me; they would run away with shrieks and squeaks at the sight of my camera or duck deeper among the ears, and long before I could outwit them huge mountains of cloud towered up in the sky and covered the sun for the rest of the day.

A hearth had been built in front of the field-house, and here the old men sat comfortably under an awning, taking pleasure in mugs of tea or rice-beer. They had worked and fought for their *morung* in their youth, and now they sat and watched the exertions of the younger generation. All these strong boys and girls filling the air with laughter assured them that they need have no anxiety for the future of their *morung*.

nine

The Girls' Club of Punkhung

All through the rains I had comforted myself with the thought that towards the end of September the weather would improve and in October I could begin touring through the villages lying north-east of Wakching. So when at last we had several clear days I decided to start, and sent messengers to the nearest villages announcing my visit. Chingai, the *dobashi* of Oting, was also informed that he should meet me in Punkhung four days after full moon. We spent a whole day in dividing up the tent, the camp-bed, cooking utensils, clothes, and provisions into nine coolie-loads, and then, just as the baskets stood packed and ready, thc heavens opened as though the whole world must once more be soaked before the respite of the dry season. However, rain or no rain, I could not postpone my tour. The Wakching, boys who were to carry my luggage to Tanhai already squatted on the veranda of my bungalow and would not have appreciated being sent home on account of a little rain. When you hire Konyaks as porters, they come in twos, or even in threes for each load, carrying it alternately. Of course they must also share the wages, but they do not mind that. The Angami prefers carrying a full load and receiving the whole wage for himself.

Thus it was that, for the nine loads, eighteen boys had appeared and squatted near their baskets since early morning. Though the Konyak dislikes early rising, there is one thing that drives him to leave his bed at dawn: the hope of picking the lightest load. For it is a case of first come, first served; the first comer tying his carrying-band to the load he has selected, secures his claim.

It was pouring with rain when we started from Wakching. Our porters went ahead, next came Tsampio with his umbrella and wine-red wool cap, while Nlamo and I followed at a distance. The path to Tanhai had not been cleared since July, and we had to wade shoulder high in wet grass, often hardly able to discern the track. Even the greatest enthusiast, delighting to praise the pleasures of walk-

ing in rain through autumn woods or summer fields, could have found little charm in such a march through the dripping jungle and wet grass, on a path full of small rivulets. Nlamo was my only comfort, for he thought it horrible too, and was not one of those unbearably optimistic companions who go on assuring you with forced gaiety that "it could be worse." For my part, I did not think it could be much worse.

Not a stitch of my clothing was dry when eventually we reached Tanhai, and I asked the people of one of the *morung* to light a fire so that we could warm and dry ourselves a little. I took this opportunity to talk to the *gaonbura*, filling several pages of my notebook with information on the social organization and various customs of Tanhai. What strange fatality followed me? Wherever and whenever I arrived there was bound to be a funeral. No sooner had we reached Tanhai than we heard the now familiar wailing and a procession with the corpse of a boy passed in front of the *morung*. Here in Tanhai, as in Wakching, the people of one of the *morung* are disposed of on bamboo biers, while those of the other *morung*, as well as the people of Ang Clan, are placed in open wooden coffins.

Slightly drier, we continued our march on a much better path, running straight along the ridge. The loads had been taken over by the Tanhai people and the Wakching boys had gone home. Quite near Punkhung, the Ang and a *gaonbura* waited for me on the path. They had erected a shelter of palm leaves, and entertained us with rice-beer and bananas. Together we climbed the steps, cut in the rock leading up to the village, and entered it near the upper *morung* that stands in a splendid strategical position, isolated on a little hill. More stone steps led down to the houses of the village.

It was a pleasant surprise to find that the good people of Punkhung had built me a hut of bamboo and palm leaves on an open space near the chief's house. To pitch my tent on the sodden ground would have been most uncomfortable, but this excellent hut had a floor of plaited bamboo raised several inches, and I could rely on the roof of palm leaves.

The chief sent me a goat, two chickens, and some bananas as gifts of welcome, thus solving the food-problem for the moment. The Punkhung people were friendly, but full of curiosity, and half of the village congregated round my hut to see the unpacking,

watching every movement with burning interest. My electric torch caused gaping surprise, and every cigarette was received with enthusiasm. A lover of solitude would long for the peace of a big city after a few days in such a jungle village, for to be surrounded by spectators from morning to night gets on the nerves of the most phelgmatic of people. I could hardly throw the boys out of the hut they had built me, and apart from that, I felt that my curiosity must be even more infuriating to them than their curiosity was to me. What would we think if a foreign visitor were to take out his notebook after drinking a cup of tea and begin writing down the names of our parents and the descent of our grandmothers, and finally inquire into our customary behaviour when our wives committed adultery? Sometimes I admired the Konyaks for their patience in answering all my questions, which must often have seemed quite senseless to them, and for the endless trouble they took in dictating texts in their complicated tonal language, which—to their great amusement—I never succeeded in pronouncing correctly.

That evening the *dobashi* Chingai arrived in Punkhung, and I was glad to see him, for here, where none of the men understood much Assamese, his services were indispensable. I heard the rain dripping on my palm roof the whole night, and the next morning there was little improvement in the weather. I would have liked to take many photographs in Punkhung, for it varies in many ways from Wakching. The style of the men's houses is entirely different. They lack the great open porches, and the communal room lies at the back. Even in their importance as social centres they are overshadowed by the chief's house, where all the councils of the village take place.

Though the chief of Punkhung is not a "great Ang," but only belongs to the "small Ang clan", his house is a stately building about 100 feet long, and his wealth appears to be considerable. In one of the many dark rooms there is a great wooden bench carved with hornbills' heads. It is his throne, which only he and his son may use, and in the failing light of the afternoon I found him there covered with his cloth, peacefully sleeping.

It was difficult to write in his dark room, and we went to the open hall at the back, where the light was better and where most of the life of the chief's family went on. The old wife of the Ang was busily spinning a peculiar material from the bark of a low shrub (*Urticacea Debregeasia velutina*). This bark is first shredded and

then spun, and after many boilings the thread is eventually so soft that it can be used for weaving cloth. This bark textile belongs no doubt to an older cultural stratum than the material woven from home-grown cotton which is found in the villages of the Wakching group.

Towards evening the girls with their baskets full of vegetables returned from the fields, and came and sat down near the fire. Among them was the chief's daughter, covered with jewels, and wearing only a narrow skirt. By chance we spoke of the marriage customs, and I unwarily inquired the bride price of a chief's daughter. Hardly had Chingai translated my question, than the whole circle burst into unrestrained laughter, and the giggling girls cast glances at the daughter of the Ang, who covered her face with her hands in embarrassment. Someone remarked that the white Sahib might want to marry the daughter of the house and was inquiring after the price. I knew that the Konyaks love to spin out such a joke, shaking with laughter for a long time, so I described at great length the spears, *dao*, bronze gongs, cloths, and other valuables that I had already collected: a great treasure, that I would willingly hand over to the chief for his daughter. She was actually a very pretty girl, though the custom of blackening the teeth gives rather a grim expression to the smile of all these beauties. Chingai confided to me later that the girl had a liaison with a married man and that, much to the anger of her father, she was expecting a child. Now all the hopes of the old Ang of marrying his daughter to a chief's son from another village were shattered, and it was difficult to find a fairly honourable way out of this embarrassing situation, for the girl's lover, not being of chiefly rank, could have only one wife. However, when I came back to Punkhung five months later, I heard that the lover, in compliance with the chief's wishes, had divorced his wife and was going to marry the chief's daughter. Not a very distinguished fate, certainly, for the daughter of an Ang, even though he is only of "small Ang class."

If I had unconsciously touched on a sore point, my joke had so amused the other girls that they invited me to their club, or so I should like to call the separate room in the chief's house where the girls of the Ang *morung* spend their nights. Here they receive the visits of the boys from other *morung*, and no objection is raised if these visits last far into the early hours of the morning.

When I turned up that evening with Chingai, the girls were still

alone. In the light of the flickering fire they sat on their broad sleeping-benches round the room, and passed the time with their beloved singing. There was no cause to doubt their good spirits, but their songs sounded sad and monotonous, rather like dirges at the grave of a dearest friend, and even when the boys came in one by one, and sat down, each next to his girl, the songs did not become any merrier. There was much silvery, high-pitched laughter in the pauses between the songs, and the jokes flying to and fro were no longer ambiguous. Nevertheless the behaviour of the young people was unimpeachable, and the couples did not dream of flirting openly. They would have plenty of time for that when the red embers of the fire burnt out and the shadows on the walls had faded into the darkness. There was a great romp, with much laughing and screaming when one of the boys left his place for a moment and another girl jokingly slipped in beside his sweetheart.

My cigarettes once more found great favour and one of the boys sold me a plaited ribbon, the kind that the girls give their boy friends to tie together their *pan* leaves. Probably the girl was not present, or perhaps she no longer enjoyed his favours. For another boy, more gallant, refused to part with a similar band for double the price.

It was midnight when I got up to go, but the girls begged me to stay. Apparently they were not burning to be left alone with their boy-friends. I assured them I would gladly stay the whole night, but which of them would spend it with me? Obviously I was joking, but I had apparently found the right tone of conversation for the Punkhung Ladies' Club, and we parted with great hilarity. The young people certainly laughed a long time, and no doubt commented on the white man who went to sleep quite alone in his hut. How could they know that far into the night, and much longer than I liked, I sat at my table recording my comments on them in my diary?

But the Konyaks are born night birds, and they only begin really to wake up at midnight. This quality can be very annoying when you would like a little peace in the camp after a tiring march. I remember nights when the people immediately next to my hut or tent debated in the liveliest tones until three or four in the morning. The following day, of course, it was often difficult to find the necessary carriers in time, and to shake my *dobashi* awake. Before nine o'clock in the morning, Konyaks are as good as incapable

of any mental effort, and the few times I got up early and wanted to make some notes I soon gave it up, in face of the continual yawning and stretching of my informants. But they would often come and want to tell me endless stories until late into the night, and then it was I who had the greatest difficulty in keeping my eyes open. The Konyaks even go to work on the fields quite late. Between nine and ten in the morning is *tai-dzim*—"Assembling together time"—the hour when the men and the boys come to the *morung* and sit about on the open platforms, chewing betel and discussing the events of the day. Only about ten o'clock—at the time of 'all go', as it is called—do they start off, and the sun often stands high in the sky before the men begin their day's work.

Why exert yourself when it isn't necessary? the Konyak thinks, and apparently he is right not to sour his life with too much work. To him the hours in the girls' club are not wasted time, and enjoyment is worth more than any material gain.

ten

Paradise in the Jungle

Dense virgin forest covered the low saddle between Punkhung and Oting, the home village of Chingai, where I had decided to spend the next few days. After months in the higher hills, I revelled in the hot, crowded forest, with its hundreds of voices, which remained ever invisible and ever mysterious. I was conscious of life teaming round me, and yet, when I stayed my step and peered among the branches, no leaf moved, and only the isolated shafts of sunlight slanting through the foliage painted an emerald mosaic on the green of the forest floor.

The village of Oting, in the shade of palms and high clumps of bamboos, was like some dream from the childhood of man. The crest of the long ridge, only 2,200 feet high, was covered with a tangle of vegetation far more luxuriant than the forest round Wakching. It grew close up to the houses that stood singly and seemed almost crushed by the riot of untamed jungle. The branches of the orange trees bent under the weight of fruit, and yellow pomelos, as on some pictured tree of knowledge, shone from among dark leaves. The pulp inside the thick skin of these fruits is pink and reminds you of grape-fruit, but they are rather bitter, and I never learnt to like them. I preferred the tangerines, which the people brought me in great baskets. They did not look so good, for the skin was still bright green, but the fruit inside was deliciously golden. After the unvarying monotony of bananas they were a welcome change. It was fresh fruit that I missed most in Wakching.

The people of Oting, acting on Chingai's suggestion, had also built me a comfortable hut on piles and it would be good to stay in this friendly village. I do not think that any other Naga village can boast of so lovely a position as Oting, and the people seemed to have the easy amiability of most sun-kissed lands. To my great surprise, even the girls were not afraid of my camera, and smiled gaily with black mouths whenever I wanted to take their

photographs. The great difference between the individual villages in their attitude to my Contax was always a puzzle. While there were villages where the photographing of women was either altogether impossible or a matter for diplomacy when *dobashi* and *gaonbura* must intervene, there were others where the girls seemed to think it fun to be taken, and would continue with their normal activities as though nothing unusual occurred. Perhaps the women were shyest in the villages lying closest to Borjan or to the plains; evidently on their frequent visits to the markets of Assam they had unpleasant encounters with strangers.

But the girls of Oting were an unembarrassed and gay crowd, and if you had tried to explain that it would be more decent if they permanently covered their brown bodies with a cloth, they would have laughed incredulously. Until their fifteenth or sixteenth year they go about as God has made them. Only later on do they adopt a small skirt, hardly a hand's-breadth wide, a symbol that they now belong to the adults. *Naturalia non sunt turpia* is the Konyak's motto and nobody minds if a little blood reddens a girl's thighs. This refreshing naturalness finds expression in a most useful custom, which no doubt saves many quarrels and hard words. I noticed that some girls wore leaden, and some brass rings in their ears. That, explained Chingai, shows whether the parents consider their daughter old enough to take a lover, for only then may she change the leaden rings of her childhood for brass. So the boys always know were they stand, and there is no playing at hide and seek—no risk of the reproaches of infuriated parents. The provident father even builds a bamboo bed for his daughter in a separate room of his house, where from the day of changing of the earrings she may receive her lover.

The girls are not sparing with their favours, nor do they reserve them only for the boys of their own village. They often make friends with boys from the neighbourhood and the days of their youth are full of amorous adventures. But to sell her body would be unimaginable to a Konyak girl. Prostitution is unknown and I shall never forget the half horrified and half amused face of Shankok, when he told me what he had heard from Kongan men about the ways of some Assamese women. He simply shook with laughter at the idea that among the plains people you should pay four or eight annas for an hour of love.

The Oting girls, on the other hand, seem to be impervious even

to magic. One day I suggested to Chingai that since the fertility of crops, luck in the chase and even success on the war path could be secured by offerings and magical formulae, surely there must exist some magic to win the hearts of women. But Chingai considered this ridiculous.

"No, Sahib," he retorted, "there is no such magic; in love everything depends on the girl's whim. Even if a man sacrificed three hundred or four hundred buffaloes, it would be useless if the girl did not like him." And he laughed loudly at the thought of trying to beguile a girl with magic.

I believe that among the Konyaks the relations between men and women are perhaps not quite as often the cause of unhappiness as in western societies. Not that every young man can possess the girl he desires, or that marriages are invariably happy. But where attraction is mutual custom erects few bars to fulfilment, and most young people choose their own marriage-partners. True, early marriages arranged by the parents are not infrequent, but they have only the character of engagements and are dissolved without difficulty; often before they are consummated. Except for those chief's daughters burdened by the obligations of high rank, there is no Konyak girl who may not enjoy the first passionate raptures of love with a youth of her choice, even should she later have to live with a husband to whom she is less attracted. Tragedy in love seems to be a rare exception, but it is not unknown. I heard of a girl who hanged herself because she could not marry the man she loved.

As a rule the domestic life of the Konyaks is certainly happy. And this is no wonder. Most marriages are concluded by people who have known each other long and intimately and are not greatly swayed by economic considerations. The spirit of *camaraderie* and equality which prevails between the young girls and boys colours also the relations between husband and wife. A girl who enjoyed for years almost complete independence and was used to be courted by a number of youths, is not likely to turn into a meek wife, and whoever watches the Konyaks at work, in their houses and at feasts realizes that there is an essential equality of men and women.

Life in Oting seems not only singularly happy but also easier than in the higher hills. There is great deal of land at the disposal of the village, and even in times of bad harvests bananas ripening

throughout the year never allow the feeling of hunger to arise among the villagers. There is no wracking of brains over economic problems; clothes and food are always at hand, and in a land where bamboos and palms grow abundantly, there is no difficulty in finding the other necessaries of life. In the course of a few hours a house is durably thatched with a roof of palm leaves that offers equal protection against the cloud-bursts of the rains and the strongest rays of the summer sun. Bamboos are excellent building material; they can be cut from the jungle in any required strength, all ready for use. Thick, strong stems provide the posts, split and plaited into strong mats, they are admirably suited for house walls and floor coverings, while narrow cane strips form ligatures that, taking the place of nails and clamping-irons, bind the posts together. A great house can be built in two or three days, for all clansmen and friends lend a hand, and are paid on completion by a lavish entertainment of much food and rice-beer.

It is certainly the freedom from all those daily worries, so overshadowing the life of the more civilized world, that is responsible for the gay, carefree temperament of the Konyak. Perhaps it is also responsible for the absence in their villages of any serious crime. Talking to the old men sitting in front of the *morung* one evening, I turned the conversation in the direction of punishment and crime, for, after all, I thought, there must be black sheep even in Oting. The old men admitted that cases of theft did occasionally occur, but they said it hardly ever happened that a man stole rice from his neighbour's granary. He can so easily borrow what he requires, they explained; the next year he has only to repay the same amount. If he borrows two baskets, he returns two baskets. It seems that the Oting people are more generous than my friends of Wakching, who make a profit of fifty per cent on such a transaction by demanding three baskets in return for the two.

"But tell me," I continued, "what would you do if two men of your village quarrelled and one killed the other?"

There was a thoughtful silence for a moment. None of the old men knew what to answer.

"Sahib, I have seen many harvests fill my granaries; these palm trees did not yet stand when I was young, but never have my eyes seen such madness. I do not know what would happen, for our fathers' words do not tell of such things."

"All right; but may it not happen that some one sets fire to his

neighbour's house? What is done with him?"

"What should we do with him if he has bad luck and the fire escapes his hand? We just help to build a new house."

The others nodded in agreement; yes, all would help, that was clear to them; that needed no long deliberation. It never occurred to their minds that the fire might have been intentional. Yes, they would just help to build a new house!

"Of course," remarked the old man after several minutes, "it does happen that two men come to blows. After all, we have women in the village. Do you see Dhakai over there, plaiting a basket on his platform? Well, once he went to Wangla, but on the way down to the bridge he noticed that he had forgotten his pouch with betel nuts. So he quickly puffed up the hill again and entered his house, and there he found the rascal Photun with his wife. Sahib, you should have heard the noise when he chased Photun through the village. Two fat pigs the boy had to pay the infuriated husband. "However," he added with a sly smile, "few women are so stupid; is the jungle not large enough?" And he pointed with a vague gesture to the palm forest encircling the village, and then added with pretended indignation: "Why must the boys play with the wives of other men? Are there not enough girls with brass earrings?"

Happy Oting people, whose only quarrels concern the faithlessness of women, who cannot imagine a murder or a thirst for revenge disturbing the peace of their village. Are they angels forgotten in this far off paradise? They are certainly nothing of the kind, for their blood boils quickly, and they show a certain naive indifference to the value of human life which manifests itself in the custom of head hunting. But side by side with this you find an amazing tactfulness. Rarely is anything mentioned before a man that he might find embarrassing. "His mind would hurt" is the literal translation of the stereotyped explanation for such consideration. All Nagas are careful not to hurt the feelings of others, and often, when I worked with several informants, one of them would come to me afterwards and tell me that one of his friends had made a mistake, but he had not wanted to contradict him in his presence, for "his mind would have hurt."

eleven

Sacred Chiefs

Watching the people of Oting at work in the village and on the fields, listening to their talks in the *morung* and on the verandas of the houses, you would scarcely think that there existed among them a difference of class, a difference between the high and the low, between aristocrats or Angs and commoners or Ben people.

Their daily life does not seem in any way different, the aristocrats do not possess better houses or richer furniture, and except for the village chief himself, the people of Ang clan are in no way outwardly conspicuous. The running of the village, however, lies mainly in their hands, the adult men of Ang class forming the council of the chief, which decides all quarrels and settles disputes over field-boundaries and the like. Yet there is no animosity or opposition between the two classes of Oting—at least I did not discover any. The aristocrats and commoners are in no way secluded, but mingle freely together, and are natural marriage partners. Those aristocrats who do not marry Ang girls from other villages must seek wives among the daughters of the commoners in Oting; likewise a man of Ben clan may not marry a girl of his own class, but must woo a girl of Ang class. The children, though naturally of mixed blood, belong to the father's class.

The position of the so-called "Great Angs" is quite different. These powerful village chiefs, such as the great Ang of Mon and the great Ang of Chui, have the sacred blood of the chiefs, pure and undiluted, in their veins. There can be no more exclusive community than that of the great Ang class, for as the kings of Egypt kept the royal blood pure by marrying their own sisters, so the great Angs take their wives from their own great Ang class, and it is only the children of such a union that acquire the father's rank.

Few of the small vassal chiefs can boast of a spotless genealogy, and even Dzaknang, the proud Ang of Oting, is not of the highest rank, though his family is nevertheless considered equal to most

of the chiefly houses of the smaller neighbouring villages. His mother was the sister of the old Ang of Punkhung, and he married that uncle's eldest daughter, who bore him two daughters and a son.

Dzaknang invited me to his house, a long building in a prominent position. His two daughters were covered in jewels and seemed rather plumper than the other girls of the village, perhaps because they worked less than the daughters of ordinary men. Though they were not particularly young, both girls wore lead rings in their ears. They were a warning to the boys, for the rings clearly said, "all trespassers will be prosecuted." But it was not enough for the Ang to forbid his daughters to flirt with the commoners of the village; now he was faced with the necessity of finding them husbands, if possible of corresponding rank, from the chiefs' houses of the neighbouring villages. This was a pressing and not a very simple task, for at the moment there seemed to be a dearth of possible husbands for such girls. The houses of Wangla and Lunglam were out of the question; they were too nearly related to the Ang of Oting. It was a pity, the Ang said, that the houses of Punkhung and Hungphoi had no sons of a suitable age, for many of the Angs of Oting had taken their wives from these villages in the past. When Tanhai was mentioned, the old Ang only shook his head; he looked down on the Ang of Tanhai. He was not his social equal, he said. The Oting girls, on the other hand, were not of high enough rank for the sons of the great Angs of Chui, Sheangha, Hangnyu, and other powerful villages. To my question why they could not marry half-brothers of the great Angs, belonging also to the small Ang class, Chingai remarked that it is better to be the wife of a chief in a small village than the less respected member of a great chief's house.

The situation was further complicated by the refusal of the girls to marry into villages more than one day's journey from Oting. How could they visit their parents and their old friends at the annual feasts? "We would never hear in time of the illness or the death of our parents," the girls complained. No, all by themselves into a far-off village they would not go.

Indeed, when high birth restricts the cirle of possible mates, it is difficult even for Konyak girls to get married in time. Their rank obliges them to refrain from the amorous adventures with which their less noble friends fill the years before marriage, and amidst

the frivolity of the Oting girls such enforced chastity is certainly not enviable. Perhaps discontent born of boredom was the reason why both the Ang's daughters seemed to me serious and a little morose, or perhaps it was only natural shyness before a stranger of whose rank they were uncertain.

Chingai, himself of Ang class, confided to me that not only the father but all the men of Oting's Ang clan worried over the fate of the chief's daughters. However, after months of discussion, a compromise was found, and when I came back to Oting in the spring, I heard that the Ang had decided to allow his younger daughter to marry a Ben boy of Oting, and had arranged to marry off the elder girl to the son of the chief of Hungphoi. From the point of view of rank and family the fiance was no doubt eminently suitable, but he had the drawback of being only ten years old. I am afraid I do not know whether the unfortunate Ang's daughter is supposed to remain chaste until her husband is grown-up, or whether she may seek consolation with other boys. Perhaps one of the cousins of the young husband acts as proxy until he is old enough to take up his marital duties.

It is a remarkably close tie that unites the Ang families of the Konyaks even across the frontiers of their own villages, and one which was concretely demonstrated to me while I was still in Oting. One evening, I sat with Chingai and the old men before one of the *morung*. As it was growing dark, the sun had set behind the dark violet mountains, and the high palms and the broad, massive banana leaves stood outlined against a sky flooded with orange, when suddenly a band of richly decorated warriors emerged out of the dusk. They were an embassy from the great Ang of Mon, the overlord of Oting, and they came to pay his respects to the recently deceased Ang of the Dingdon *morung*. The leader was a very young boy of the great Ang class, with a magnificent head-dress of hornbill feathers, and all the other warriors were rather young and apparently deeply convinced of the importance of their mission.

They rested for a short while, and then proceeded to the open space in front of the house of the late Morung Ang. Here, in the failing light of dusk, they enacted a dramatic representation of all the phases of a head-hunting raid. With cat-like movements, one of the warriors crept over the open place, peering to left and to right, and then, seeming to sight his quarry in the distance, cau-

tiously retreated, fetched another warrior, and pointed out the discovered enemy. Now, signing to their companions to remain in the background, both the warriors crept forward. After breathless moments, considering themselves near enough to the enemy, they raised their *dao* and fell on their victim with furious yells. A short fight with the imaginary enemy ensued ending with one triumphant warrior's cutting off the head off his victim. Now, all the other warriors rushed on to what must have been innumerable enemies, suggesting by the frantic movements of their *dao* a wholesale massacre. This slaughter continued for a few minutes, and when not a single enemy could conceivably remain, they raised their spears to the sky, shouting battle-cries that rang out in wild, ghastly shrieks. Then they paced in a circle round the open place, and one man recited over and over again: "The small Ang of the Dingdon *morung* is dead, the great Ang of Mon feels therefore great sorrow."

They were hardly human roars that rang through the night, and for the first time in the Naga Hills a cold hand gripped my spine. Would these young warriors from the unadministered territory remember the mockery of the fight, or, overcome by the enthusiasm of the dance, might they not seek a real victim? I was a stranger in a foreign land—no doubt a most suitable victim!

But the warriors hardly noticed me sitting with Chingai on the porch. They streamed past me into the *morung* with the Oting men, and soon two fires flared up, and the great hall, so often empty, seethed with people. The guests lined up on either side of the great wooden body of the log drum, bringing the heavy wooden drum-sticks down thuddingly on the thick wood, taking the time from an expert drum-beater, and not, as I would have thought, from the Ang. The rhythm changed several times. At first it was not very marked, all the warriors hitting with their full force. The resultant booming was terrific, and almost hurt my ears. But soon the leader, a heavy drum-stick in either hand, while the rest of the players held sticks only in the right hand, began drumming two strong consecutive beats, the others following with quick little strokes. Then once again the rhythm changed. This time it was interspersed with short complete pauses followed by a small whoop of the leader and the crashing of all the sticks on the drum.

I noticed that the Oting men, busily hurrying to and fro, bringing wood for the fires, crouched when they passed the drum-playing

Ang. Even though he was quite a young boy, the respect for the sacred Ang blood forced them to this submissive attitude. After a time, when the players, their sweat-covered backs glistening in the light of the fire, put down their drum-sticks, the young Ang played the death rhythm alone for several minutes, thus once more announcing the death of the *morung* Ang.

The next morning the guests exercised their right to spear one pig within the area of the Dingdon *morung*. The animal was not held and slaughtered in the ordinary sacrificial manner, but was chased, as on a hunt, and killed by hurling spears. The men of Mon fastened the pig to a bamboo, singed it over an open fire, cut it up, and, boiling the meat, ate it on the spot. The honour shown to a deceased *morung* Ang on such visits has thus to be paid for, and I think that the young men consider the eating of the pigs of the mourners the main part of these ceremonial visits of condolence.

Late one night, sitting writing in my hut, I heard voices outside, and I stepped out into the darkness to see what was the matter. The small light of my oil lamp shone upon two figures, prostrating themselves full length at my feet. Unused to such oriental homage, I was rather bewildered at first, and at a loss what I should do with the men who were brushing the ground with their huge feather plumes face down in the dark. However, a little persuasion finally induced them to stand up and tell me what they wanted; they were from Joboka, a village beyond the frontier, and had come to welcome me, bringing with them two chickens as "salaams." As soon as I heard they were from Joboka, I began to understand. The day before, Chingai had told me of the ambush the Joboka men had laid for a group of Yannyu people returning from a trading expedition in the plains, when they captured the large number of nineteen heads. The Nagas themselves do not consider the ambushing of trading expeditions as legitimate game, and such exploits are not looked on with favour by the officials of the adjoining districts. So the Joboka men, hearing that a white Sahib was in Oting, had no doubt seized the opportunity to find out how the land lay, and whether they would be called to account for their recent exploit.

Since I had neither any desire nor authority to interfere in this affair, but only displayed a great interest in their newly acquired neck tattoo and other head-hunting insignia, they left me greatly satisfied. Since it was too late at night to call on one of their friends in the village, they asked whether they could spend the night in

my camp and I told them that if they liked, they could sleep in the small shelter standing beside my hut. I must admit that the inadvisability of establishing two such recent head-hunters in my camp outside the village never occurred to me. But they justified my unconcern and proved camp-companions with excellent manners. Next morning, as we sat all together before my hut, chewing betel, one of them suddenly jumped up and with desperate gestures seemed to ask me something. At first I could not understand; but later I discovered he only wanted to know where he might spit out his betel!

One of the Joboka men wore a neatly plaited gauntlet of red cane, instead of the usual loose cane rings. I wanted to buy it, but he explained that he could not sell the gauntlet, for his pregnant wife had plaited it and in case of a difficult delivery the gauntlet would have to be cut into pieces. It is a general belief among the Nagas that during a difficult delivery all baskets in the house must be cut open and all knots loosened. The idea seems to be that their loosening facilitates in some magical way the loosening of the child from the mother's womb.

Our start from Oting was beset with difficulties. Tsampio had been suffering for several days from troubles of only too obvious a character. He had gone on leave some time before we had begun touring, and perhaps it was in Kohima that he had picked up his malady from a bazaar beauty. Now he was suffering acutely, and I seemed to have no other choice but to hire several porters and have him carried on a bier to Wakching. Ultimately he reached Kohima, where he found medical attention. Tsampio's departure left me without a cook and though Nlamo succeeded quite well in preparing the few things we got in these villages, he found it difficult to do Tsampio's work as well as his own and still find time to assist me as interpreter. Perhaps this produced the necessary stimulus, for I quickly overcame the final difficulties in talking and understanding Assamese, and it was not long before I became quite accustomed to working without an interpreter.

The way to Wangla, the village on the opposite hill, passed through a broad valley, probably cleared for cultivation that year for the first time for generations. Gigantic trees had defied the clearing-fires, and now they provided a most pleasant shade as we walked through the reaped rice fields. In the bottom of the valley there was a cool, fresh stream, and here we rested at midday and enjoyed

a delicious swim in the dark green water.

Wangla and Hungphoi both received us well, and I stayed in each of these villages several days. They were full of interest, for even though they lay so close together—scarcely a few hours' march apart—there were many differences in the traditions and the customs of the villagers. Nearly every village still has its collection of captured heads stored away on the many shelves of its *morung*, and once a year, at the Spring Festival, they are fed with rice-beer. In front of one of the *morung* in Hungphoi I noticed a tall, slender stone. On inquiry, it turned out to be the stone erected by those Hungphoi youths who had "carried" the head of Chen woman to Mon. Such stones can only be set up at the bringing in of a head. The two youthful heroes had evidently played a different role from the one they had admitted in Tanhai, and there can be little doubt that they brought at least a small piece of the head back to Hungphoi.

While I was eating my breakfast, on the morning after our arrival in Hungphoi, Chingai came running into my hut. There was a young wife in the village being tattooed; would the Sahib like to watch? The girls are generally tattooed on their legs and arms at the age of eight or nine, but the full tattoo, consisting of two broad bands above the knees, is only completed when a girl becomes pregnant and wants to move into her husband's house. The completion of the tattoo marks the wife's entrance into the man's clan. When I arrived, I found the girl stretched out on the floor of the veranda of her parents' house, amidst a crowd of laughing and chatting friends. Five women held her down as she writhed with pain, while a woman of Ang clan, alone expert in this art, drew two broad rings with geometric ornamentations in dark blue dye round the knees, and then punctured the design into the skin with an adze-like instrument made from the thorns of a small palm. For hours the artist hammered mercilessly and the thorns picked into the sensitive skin round the hollows of the knees. Curiously enough, even the whimpering of the victim followed a prescribed pattern swelling up and down in little cascades. The other girls did not show much sympathy with their moaning friend, but considered the whole affair more or less amusing, and continually broke into peals of laughter. What woman would not think it natural to suffer in order to be beautiful? Returning after some time I found the operation completed, and the patient sitting in the shadow

enjoying a meal of rice and taro with the other women.

It is proof of the enviable health of the Nagas that the tattooing wounds, though they often bleed profusely, hardly ever become septic. Even the best constitution, however, is no protection against diseases such as malaria, and while Wakching lies above the danger zone, the villages on the lower ridges often suffer severely. Wherever I went, numerous Nagas crowded round my camp, hoping to be cured of something or other. As long as it was only a question of malaria, quinine brought at least temporary relief, and I even attained some measure of success when treating acute indigestion or open wounds. But I learnt to curse my reputation, which used to fly before me into the villages, so that I would arrive to find crowds waiting to be treated. After all, what was I to do with people, like one old woman in Oting, who complained of a pain in her stomach, which, she told me, had begun when she was a young girl?

Hungphoi was the noisiest village I have ever been in. Large crowds of children surrounded my hut the whole day but as soon as I approached, hoping to make friends with them, they would disperse with shrieks of laughter. Children of seven and eight carried their small brothers and sisters on their back and I cannot imagine how these infants slept solidly through all the noise. I would not have minded if the children had only screamed and shouted. I should have got used to that, but unfortunately their incredible curiosity drove them to creep up to the walls of my hut and peep through the plaited walls at all hours of the day or night. Whether I ate, washed, or wrote my diary, each movement of mine would result in a torrent of whispered comments, until I was so infuriated that I would either leave the hut or extinguish my oil lamp. If only I could have turned their interest to some purpose; but their boldness behind the protecting wall changed to the most unbelievable shyness whenever I pointed my camera in their direction.

After a few days I decided to leave Hungphoi, and so we started for Longkhai through the reaped rice fields under a radiant sky. The chief himself waited for us on the top of the hill before his village with one of the *gaonbura*. Mauwang, the Ang of Longkhai, was the only great Ang in administered territory, and I was very interested to meet him. He was comparatively tall, middle-aged, with the strongest and most impressive personality I have ever met

among the Nagas. But he had none of the august dignity of the great Angs of Mon, Chui, and Sheangha. His Assamese was poor, but the expressiveness of his face, worthy of any actor, lent such emphasis to every word, that there was hardly ever any doubt as to what he meant. And he had a wonderful sense of humour—that quality which so many times delighted me among the Nagas. He could talk with a deadly serious expression, and, suddenly changing his tone, would pull such grimaces that I could not help bursting into laughter. Perhaps it was the consciousness of his rank that encouraged him to make light of everything or perhaps it was the artist in him that induced that particular versatility.

The only things he was really serious over were his works of art, and in these he took an almost childish pride. Yes, Mauwang was an artist; there was no one to equal him in the blackmith's art in the whole district, and only his deaf-and-dumb half-brother carved more beautifully in wood. To understand his creative genius you would have to see him before a rough block of wood with his chisel in his hand. He would look at the wood lovingly for a little, and then suddenly the strong blows of the hammer would make the chips fly. Unhesitatingly the chisel sank into the wood. Faster and faster fell the blows of the hammer; and soon a human body seemed to grow out of wood. Perhaps it would be an arm that came first, then a head. Quicker and quicker he worked, without even a pause, and now you could see that the figure was not to remain alone. Already there was an arm of a second figure lying round the shoulder of the first. Gradually, as Mauwang hammered on, a pair of lovers took shape, with entwined arms. The extraordinary thing was that once he had begun his work he never paused to think how it was the arm should lie, or what position the feet might take. The sculpture must have stood before his spiritual eyes before the first stroke of the chisel. Only when the figures had been worked out in rough, Mauwang would begin the finer retouching with a small knife.

Most wood-carvings of the Konyaks serve to decorate their men's houses. In Longkhai the *morung* were full of carvings, most of them works of the Ang, his deaf-and-dumb half-brother or a deceased third brother. This third brother was the greatest genius of the three and his work was the most mature. On one of the main posts of the Ang *morung* a particular carving of a man and a woman surpassed in force and expression and real artistic feeling

all the other carvings in Longkhai.

Other posts of the men's house bore carvings of animals, and Mauwang showed me proudly one of his latest works: the high relief of a snake in the act of devouring a frog. Here too sexual motifs were numerous and there can be no doubt that they aimed at enhancing in a magical way the fertility of the inhabitants.

On the open space before the house of the Ang there were two stone seats: great round slabs on a support of rough boulders. The larger seat was used by the Ang of Mon when he visited Longkhai and the smaller by Mauwang himself. No commoner and none of the men of Small Ang clan would ever sit on these thrones. The Ang of Mon was the overlord of a whole group of villages which included Longkhai; indeed Mauwang belonged to the chiefly house of Mon.

Mauwang's life history is unusual and shows that even a "sacred" chief may have to build up prestige by his own efforts. When Mauwang was still a boy his father violated the then newly promulgated law forbidding head-hunting and was sent for three years to the jail at Kohima. After his release he decided that life under the *Pax Britannica* would be a dull affair and emigrated across the border to Mon, where his powerful kinsman gave him shelter. His eldest son went with him, and only the boy Mauwang remained in Longkhai and was brought up by a relative. The long years of his growing up saw the great house of the old Ang fall gradually into ruins, and the prestige of the Ang family of Longkhai was at its lowest. Little attention was paid to the houseless boy Mauwang for he was unable to fulfil the duties of a chief. Since he could not entertain his subjects, they would not work on his fields or rebuild his house.

Mauwang's face had a strained, sad look as he told of those first hard years; they were full of shame for the son of a great Ang, those sad years before he found a way of winning back his father's throne. But his face lightened with one of those miraculous changes—it was as though he had found anew the solution of his lost heritage. He told me how he has apprenticed himself to the blackmith in the village, how he had learnt to forge knives, *dao*, spear-heads, and hoes; how then he began to make ceremonial spears for the Ang women, inventing little figures of iron to put between the points of the two pronged spears. And eventually, after working for a few years, he sold so many of his creations that

he was able to collect enough money to buy a buffalo and several baskets of rice. Triumphantly his eyes burned. At last he had been able to give the people a feast, and so they rebuilt his house for him. It was a noble house that he pointed to on the other side of the open place. There the building stood, more than 100 feet long, where he lived with his wife, daughter of the great Ang of Chui. He had wooed her with twenty *dao*, sixty spears, two big pigs, seven chickens, one goat, a great quantity of salt, and two baskets of *pan* leaves.

It was growing chilly outside, and the Ang got up from the porch of the *morung*, and together we went over to his house. His wife sat in the main hall. You could see at a glance that she was a great lady, and with her calm and graceful dignity she stood out clearly from Mauwang's Ben wives and all the other women living in his huge house. Self possessed and spirited she joined at once in the conversation. That she did not know a word of Assamese did not deter her in the least from making jokes which Mauwang had to translate.

In no other Naga house was I welcomed with more obvious pleasure on the part of my hosts. Yet the personal charm of this aristocratic couple and the happy atmosphere in Longkhai did not blind me to the fact that life in the village of a sacred Ang can have its serious drawbacks. Most of the great Angs in the still unadministered territory were at the best rather autocratic, and at the worst definitely tyrannical, commandeering the labour, property and—last but not least—many a pretty daughter of their subjects. Compared to conditions in villages such as Mon or Chui there is a good deal to be said for the social system of Wakching and Wanching where differences of rank are of little practical account. Indeed quite a number of voluntary exiles from the domains of sacred Angs lived in democratic villages. While they themselves were still recognizable by their different tattoo, their children became completely assimilated and grew up in the language and customs of their new home. But I never heard of a Konyak who had exchanged the free air of a community organized on the principle of general equality for the authoritarian regime in an Ang village. Thus history repeats itself and fundamental human impulses seem curiously similar in a society of head-hunters and in the mechanized civilizations of modern times.

twelve

Towards Unknown Country

One evening while I was sitting with Mauwang on the large stone seat, his "throne," outside the chief's house, we saw runners coming up the hill. They brought me a letter from Mills which he had sent to Wakching and the *gaonbura* had forwarded by two young men. I tore open the envelope. It held marvellous news. I had known for some time that Mills was planning an expedition into unadministered territory, and now he wrote that the Government of Assam would permit me to accompany him. It was already late and I had to content myself with another night in Longkhai, but next morning I left almost at dawn.

It is not very far from Longkhai to Wakching, and yet the way back that day seemed long. Ordinarily it would have been a pleasant march in the sunny weather, but now I hardly noticed the country as I passed. I was turning over in my mind all those events which Mills had told me would probably lead to an expedition. Serious news had come from the tribal area, that the Kalyo Kengyus on the western slopes of the Patkoi Range were terrorizing their neighbours, and had developed the hunting of heads into systematic man-hunts. A few months ago they had treacherously raided and burnt two villages lying several days' journey from British territory. Only a few of the inhabitants escaped to tell the tale; the rest had been slaughtered or carried off as slaves. It was believed that the raiders were men of a Kalyo Kengyu village known as Pangsha, but Pangsha was not on the map, and the two destroyed villages, Saochu and Kejok, lay near the eastern limit of the land surveyed in 1923 and 1924. The area further to the east was still unmapped, and the country of these Kalyo Kengyus had never been entered by any European.

As long as the feuds in the tribal area were restricted to the usual head-hunting raids, a more or less casual affair leading to little loss of life, the British authorities did not usually interfere. But now whole villages had been wiped out and the survivors

carried off into slavery. That the Governments of Assam and Burma did not tolerate. They had fought a long time against slavery, for the most part successfully, but in the most remote mountains on the frontier of both countries such customs were not easy to control, and on rare occasions it still sometimes happened that slave-trading was carried on. The captives were destined to become victims of human sacrifice.

It is difficult to distinguish clearly between head-hunting and human sacrifice, for the main purpose of taking a head is not the glory of war, but the gain of the magical forces inherent in the skull. Why, therefore, should these forces not be acquired in a less dangerous way than by raiding? Then there is always the risk of losing your own head, or so the Konyak argues. And to lose your head on a raid is a disgraceful death for the Naga. No honour is accorded slain heroes, and their whole families suffer from the disgrace, for custom compels them to abandon their houses and throw away their property and ornaments.

My friends in Wakching were full of excitement when I told them that I was to go on the tour and full of appreciation of the circumstances. They remembered previous expeditions into the tribal area and they were sure there would be a fight with the Kalyo Kengyus. If only they could all come too; but as I was going, I would bring back a head and that would be nearly as good. Yes, I should bring them back a head. Again and again they implored me to shoot an enemy and cut off the head. The men of Thepong, who were just building their *morung*, explained that is was imperative that they should have just such a trophy for the inauguration of their *morung*, and during the remaining days in Wakching the young men harassed me continually. But where should I take a head from? I could not exactly see myself stalking over the battlefield and decapitating the fallen foes and yet I felt that my prestige in Wakching would be lost if I returned without a trophy !

The prospect of this adventure seemed to liven the minds of the old men. Like a torch, it lit the dark, forgotten corners of their own memories. The slave-raids of the Kalyo Kengyus brought to them other tales of their youth, when even here in the Wakching country the people had sometimes bought slaves and cut off their heads, thus gaining the magical virtue without running any risk. Such a deed was certainly considered less glorious than the slaying of an enemy in a raid, yet it conferred the right to the ornaments of a

head-hunter.

"One day, when I was a young man," related Chinyang, "the Chongwe people asked us whether we should like to buy a slave. "Where did you get him from?" we inquired at first. He was a boy they had captured from Mongnyu—that is a Phom village behind that mountain, and he pointed to one of the mountains to the south. "So, he is a Phom; well, if he is a Phom, we'll take him. We paid for the boy twenty *laya* (brass discs, now worth between two and six rupees), one pig, and a lump of salt. All the men had to contribute. Then a few old men went to Chongwe to fetch the slave; it was a small boy, and he had no idea what was going to happen. They put a feather headdress on his head and led him away with friendly words, for they felt sorry for the boy. There below, near the river, our young men lay in hiding. When they saw the boy, they rushed up to him and cut him into pieces. But I only looked on," added Chinyang, "for I had captured heads in a real raid; after all, it is rather a shame to kill such a young boy."

Yongang had behaved with less reserve. He told me he had carried off a leg of the victim, and that after a few moments, when nothing had been left of the boy, the Wakching men hurried home singing and dancing.

Although this had not been an isolated case, the buying and selling of slaves was not considered quite right by my Wakching friends. Perhaps it was that they had already unconsciously adopted a few of the standards of the plains, to which they lived so near; for they told me indignantly that the people of several villages to the south used to sell even their own brothers and clansmen. But this raises the wrath of Gawang, the god of heaven, who punishes the offenders even during their life-time. Whoever sells a human being into slavery will never have a son, and will die early.

But the Kalyo Kengyus were apparently not bound by any such scruples. I never discovered what their gods thought of the matter but they themselves certainly considered the capture and selling of slaves as an extremely profitable business, and one that they would not easily renounce. Armed force alone would impress them, and Mills was to depend on an escort of Assam Rifles to lend weight to his mission.

The 10th of November was the day fixed for assembling in Mokokchung. Mills said we would probably start on one of the following days, and that meant leaving Wakching four days

earlier. Hardly had I begun my preparations when I suddenly went down with fever. Living so long out of the danger-zone in Wakching, I had been careless enough not to take any prophylactics in the malaria-infested villages of Oting and Longkhai. Could there have been a more inconvenient time for such an attack? At first I thought it would only be a light bout, and brushed the whole thing aside, but the fever mounted steadily and my head became muzzy. In the intervals when I could think clearly, I worried that I would not be able to arrive at Mokokchung in time, and that the long-hoped-for expedition into unexplored territory would start without me. It was a miserable situation, and I cursed my negligence—and the malaria-infested Longkhai and Oting. Luckily I had atebrin with me, which is far more effective than quinine. I dosed myself heavily, and the results were excellent. I was free of fever on the fifth day.

As soon as I stood firmly on my legs, I started with Nlamo and a few porters; there was only just enough time to get to Mokokchung. Again we crossed the Dikhu valley, but the atmosphere was not so damp and oppressive as it had been four months ago, and the flooded, mud-coloured river of the rains had changed to a clear stream, quietly running over white sandbanks.

I spent only one night in Tamlu and in each of the Ao villages of Chantongia and Mongsenyimti; my pace seemed quick even to the Konyaks, but I arrived in Mokokchung punctually on the 10th. The small settlement resembled a beehive. It had been so calm, so empty, the last time I had been there with Mills, and now Nagas streamed together from all directions, surging between the houses. Every open space was occupied by camps, and groups of Aos, Lhotas, Sangtams, and Rengmas crowded together under improvised shelters. *Dobashi* in red cloths hurried through the swarms of people, and men of different tribes shouted at the top of their voices—some kind of compensation for the lack of a common tongue.

I caught sight of G.W.J. Smith, a young police officer, in the middle of this confusion. He was then Subdivisional Officer at Mokokchung, and had the not very enviable task of hiring the porters, dividing them into groups, and seeing that the loads were equally distributed. We had to carry considerable provisions with us, for even in friendly Naga villages there would hardly be enough to feed the whole column, and to live on the land in hos-

tile country would be impossible. A porter who has to carry his own food for even a fortnight cannot carry more than half a load in addition, and although rice-dumps had been established in friendly villages beyond the border, we needed every one of our 360 porters to carry kit and provisions for the four of us, for our escort of 150 Assam Rifles, and for the staff of *dobashi*.

The Naga porters were all volunteers, and only a few had joined the expedition for the sake of their wages. Most of them hoped to participate in the fighting, which they were convinced we would meet, and so gain the right to the dress and ornaments of a head-hunter, which they were unable to acquire in administered territory. It seemed a little ironic that they should accompany a British expedition to recapture the glories of the head-hunting days, but I am sure they did not think of such things. They were eager and ready for any kind of scrap, armed with spears, *dao*, and shields: curious looking warriors, slightly stooping under the weight of their conical carrying-baskets.

Mills was already in Mokokchung, and Major Williams, the commander of the escort, arrived that same evening. We all dined together in Smith's bungalow, and discussed the prospects of the tour. Rumours of the attitude of the hostile tribes, spreading from village to village, had reached Mokokchung and created great excitement among the *dobashi* and porters. There was not a man among them who doubted that there would be a fight—in fact, they did not hope for anything else. Mills, Major Williams, Smith, and myself did not quite share the enthusiasm of the Nagas and we discussed the best method of defence against a sudden attack. The narrow jungle-paths lend themselves admirably to the Nagas' special form of ambush; an enemy can come within a few yards of you completely unseen, and then even the strongest escort is not much protection.

We spent two more days in preparations before all the porters were ready and all the loads packed. My own luggage consisted of my tent and three carrying-baskets containing mainly clothes and warm bedding. When we left Mokokchung on Friday, the 13th November, the whole of the village was on foot to watch the departure of this strange crusade against the slave-raiders. The women and children crowded on the bamboo platforms staring at the long file of sepoys, and at the last minute the *gaonbura* held up the whole of the column in the middle of the village by offering

us farewell drinks of rice-beer, the usual way of giving a raiding party a send-off.

Twelve men marched ahead forming a kind of advance guard. Mills, Williams, and I followed with the main body; then came Smith in front of the porters, interspersed with a few of the sepoys, and a small rear-guard concluded the column, which drew out over a mile. The sepoys of the Assam Rifles, most of them Gurkhas, wore light-blue flannel shirts, shorts, and hats with broad brims, and they carried bayonets, and large curved bush-knives indispensable for camp-building and clearing the way through thick jungle.

Travelling first east and then south-east, the long column wound along the cultivated slopes into the valley of the Upper Dikhu, where we crossed the river on a bridge of high piles, the porters wading through the shallow water. This first day was very quiet; we were still in administered country, and apart from one of the Nagas, who managed to spike his leg on the spear of the man behind, there were no casualties. As on many days to come, there was a fairly stiff climb in the afternoon, for, going east, we had to travel almost at right angles to innumerable, long drawn out ridges. Nagas always settle on the tops of the mountains, and since we usually camped near a village, the daily routine entailed starting in the cool of dawn downhill, arriving in the hot, stuffy valley about midday, when the sun was hottest, and then climbing up the mountain as the sun sank, to spend the night on some windy height. That first day we climbed to Chare, lying 2,400 feet above the valley. The people had built us a camp on a slope before the village gate—two huts and numerous shelters of bamboo and banana leaves, with just enough space between for our tents.

Getting into camp was astonishingly easy, for the first apparent confusion dissolved in a very short time. The sepoys, their rifles always on their backs, improved the shelters, and the porters had soon lit fires and fetched water to boil their rice. Mills and I went to the village to gossip with the *gaonbura* over mugs of rice-beer and hear something of Sangtam customs.

Cows and goats were killed for our porters, and soon after they had been divided up a most savoury smell of roasting meat enveloped the camp. The dignitaries of Chare sat with the *dobashi* and *gaonbura* of our party round a large open fire at the gate of the village quite near our tent. It was not long before the thirst of

the visitors was quenched and tongues loosened, for, as we ate our dinner of chicken curry, we could hear them laughing almost as clearly as if we had been amongst them. This was apparently the "club" of Chare, and the conversation was so noisy that we sincerely hoped it was not extension night.

Next morning it rained, and it was still raining when we broke camp At midday we crossed the Chimei River, which forms the frontier of the administered territory, leaving British India behind and entering the land of the independent Naga tribes. If only the crossing of all frontiers were so simple, so inconspicuous as that exit from British India! After a long and tiring march we camped for the night at Phire-ahire. We were now in the middle of the Sangtam country, inhabited by a tribe in dress and custom akin to the Aos, which has been gradually driven northwards by its more warlike Sema neighbours.

These first days were so easy and comfortable, and we were always received with such friendliness, that it was hardly believable that we were on anything but a rather large inspection tour. However, here in Chare we tasted a little of what might come, for a *gaonbura* showed us a poisoned arrow and proudly held up the magnificent tusks of a boar. "The animal ran only thirty yards after it was hit," he explained. We were not very enthusiastic over this hunting exploit. The arrow was too like those arrows we had heard that the Kalyo Kengyus used in such a deadly way. They are short crossbow arrows of bamboo with iron barbed heads. The poison is applied in thick layers just behind the head, and the shaft nicked so that it breaks off easily, leaving the poisoned head in the wound. Sometime ago Mills had obtained a small quantity of this substance and sent it to Calcutta to be analyzed. It had not been identified, but experiments proved that it was a powerful poison, causing death by paralysing the respiratory organs. The victim, the report continued, could be saved by the administration of oxygen through artificial respiration. Not exactly a comforting thought many days' march from medical aid. However, watching several of the youths of the village who shot with crossbows at the gable-figures of the house, we noted that every one missed his mark, and our anxiety was somewhat allayed. If the Pangsha warriors were no better shots, there was no need to worry.

The next evening we were to camp at Chongtore, and Mills and

I decided to make a detour over the hills to visit some of the more remote villages, while the column took the direct path. There was no need for an escort, and leaving the column we climbed steeply for a short way to the village of Holongba, lying with its rather miserable grass-thatched houses irregularly scattered over the ridge. None of the Survey Parties of former years had touched Holongba, and we were therefore the first Europeans to cross the threshold of the village. The villagers were not at all shy, and even the women, entertaining their unusual guests with gourds of rice-beer, seemed quite at ease and unaffected. The houses were smaller than Konyak houses, and by the light of smouldering fires the furniture seemed poorer and people's faces thinner. On these wind swept mountains of the higher ranges the country has none of the affluent look of the lower regions and the life of the people seems to be much harder. Holongba, and many of the other villages across the frontier welcomed Mills with obvious pleasure.

But all strangers are not given such a friendly reception; rows of bleached skulls hung in the drum-houses, telling grim tales of less fortunate visitors from other tribes. Yes, all these victims were men of other tribes, for the Sangtams do not hang up in the *morung* the heads of their own tribesmen with whom they have had a slight misunderstanding. Such heads are thrown into the jungle. Walking through the village you recognize the houses of renowned heroes. Whoever takes part in a successful head-hunting raid fastens a string with a plaited cane ball to the gable of his house, and on one string, I counted no less than thirty trophies. These strings, with their head-tallies, are put on a man's grave together with the skulls of all animals slaughtered during his life. Impaled on posts, they speak more clearly than any tombstone inscription of the dead man's deeds. There are little fences round every grave, and drinking-gourds turned upside down on the head of the spikes tell of the last mug of beer the mourners have drunk with the dead.

Most of that day Mills and I walked over the open ridge looking over the country of the Sema Nagas. The weather had cleared during the day, but as we reached the village of Anangba, it started raining again, and a wet, cold wind sweeping over the hills made life appear anything but rosy at a height of 6,600 ft.

Mills found his old friend Chirongchi waiting to greet him. He was a man with an eventful past, for during the First World War

he had enlisted in the Naga Labour Corps recruited in administered territory. The chance of great deeds of war induced him to join the "raid" and he soon found himself with many other Nagas on the way to Europe. It speaks for their cold-bloodedness that although they had never seen a great water before, they did not panic when they were shipwrecked in the Mediterranean. To their bitter disappointment they were not allowed to fight, but put to the more peaceful task of building roads. It was incomprehensible to them that they were even forbidden to cut off the heads of fallen foes. The only trophy that ever found its way into the Naga Hills was the spiked helmet of a Prussian grenadier—not a bad substitute for a head! Chirongchi himself succeeded in smuggling an army rifle in his uniform trousers, but a rifle without cartridges was of little use in Anangba, and he finally gave it up to the subdivisional officer at Mokokchung. I wonder whether the experience of his journey to Europe had widened his horizon. He appeared very dignified in a magnificent plaited hat with floating red goat's hair, but in no way different from his less travelled fellow villagers.

He showed us with pride the skull of Pukovi, a notorious Sema Naga who had raided even into the administered territory and often annoyed Mills by his daring misdeeds. Chirongchi told us of the treacherous feat for which Pukovi ultimately paid with his life. Once he had suggested to some neighbouring Semas that they should raid his own village, and he marked roofs with bundles of straw so that the right people should be murdered. It was unfortunate that a girl from Anangba happened to be staying in the village at the time, and was murdered with her hosts. Chirongchi did not forget, and many years later decoyed Pukovi to Anangba and cut off his head with his own hands. Now Pukovi's skull dangled in the drum-house, to the general satisfaction of the villagers of Anangba.

We came into Chongtore in time for tea. The rest of the column had arrived an hour or so earlier, and the sepoys had already built a spacious camp. The wind got up as the light failed, and it was bitingly cold in the one-sided bamboo pavilion where we ate our supper, wrapped in coats. We shivered with cold, while the gale blew mercilessly all night, billowing in the sides of my tent until I thought that any moment it would be carried away.

thirteen

The Camp on a Peak

A huge tree had fallen across the stream or perhaps the Nagas had pushed it there to act as a bridge. It was still wet from the night's rain, but the long file of our porters unconcernedly balanced their loads over the slippery trunk. For my part I hated such tree-bridges as my nailed boots found no grip on the slimy bark. But rather than wade through the cold water, I tried my hand as a tight-rope dancer, contributing at least to the amusement of the party. Mills shared my prejudice against such tree-bridges, and usually preferred the wet but secure way through the river.

Our path rose almost perpendicularly ahead, sheer from the narrow valley filled with abundant jungle. The steep slope, only sparsely covered with low bushes, meant many hours' climb in a broiling sun, which had at last dispersed the clouds. Endlessly we climbed, and the wooded peak of Mount Helipong stood always above us—high above—and never any nearer.

"Hokshe, how far may it be to Helipong?" asked Smith for the third time, as he took off his *topee* and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"Perhaps an hour and a half, Sahib. We are not far any more."

Silently we climbed on. It seemed hardly believable that at breakfast we had been shivering despite pullovers and coats. It was now incredibly hot. After another hour Smith stopped again.

"Listen, Hokshe. The ridge up there looks just as far as it did before. When in the hell are we getting to Helipong?"

"Perhaps in two hours, Sahib, if we go quickly."

"Damn you! An hour ago you told me that it was only an hour and a half to Helipong, and now you say it should be still two hours?"

"Certainly, Sahib, but if I had told you then that we had still three hours to climb, your mind would have hurt. And we would not have got on quicker, anyhow. Why should I have told you

something unpleasant?" His logic was convincing, and resignedly we climbed on.

At last the secondary jungle gave way to tall forest, quite different from the woods in the lower regions. Wild bananas and ordinary bamboos do not grow at these heights, but only a certain thin, thorny bamboo that stands the intense cold. Enormous trees stretched their gnarled branches against the sky, and from the rich, dark earth, formed by centuries of fallen and rotten leaves, sprang an impenetrable undergrowth. Almost the whole year round clouds hang round these mountains, and now a white mist filled the forest. When we stepped into the open, leaving the protection of the trees, a strong summit wind dispersed the mist, and the village of Helipong lay before us.

Not more than twenty houses clung to the bare rocks, 7,280 feet above sea-level, while a little way away several granaries stood in a small hollow, seeming to seek even the smallest protection on these storm-ridden peaks. We were told that the harvest had only just been brought in and the granaries were full of millet and hardy Job's tears cultivated on the slopes below the forest belt. Rice does not grow well in these regions, and the people of Helipong consider it a rare luxury.

When leaving the protection of the forest we had pulled out some warm things from the baskets, yet in spite of all our clothes we shivered in the icy wind. But the men and women of Helipong walked about apparently quite comfortable with little more than loin cloths. Strangely enough, they have not adapted their dress to the climate, and the mere look of their bare backs made me shiver. Their lot seemed less deplorable only when we sat in one of their astonishingly warm huts.

Why should these few people choose to settle here? It seemed strange that they had selected these uninviting heights. The reason was a political one; this was the much-contested frontier district between the Sangtams and the Chang Nagas; and the small village of Helipong, built as an outpost by the Changs, secured their right to the whole ridge. Outside the village we found concrete proof of the support lent to the small community by their more powerful tribesmen: a human hand suspended from a bamboo pole. Rather wizened it looked, but quite recognizable. It was a complimentary present, the people of Helipong told us, that had been sent by the Changs of Chentang, and obviously they were proud of

their unusual gift. The men of Helipong, though rendered immune from attack by their splendid strategical position, are too few in number to sally forth on raids of their own, and they are grateful when their tribesmen from the lower and more fertile ridges send them a share in their spoils of war. No doubt they feel they are participating in the exciting world below them, for the people of Helipong must spend their whole lives looking down on mountains and valleys, which except for the hills to the east of their friends the Changs, are more effectively closed to them than by the stoutest iron bars. Certain death awaits the wanderer in a country where to be a stranger is tantamount to a death sentence.

The view from Mount Helipong over the immense mountain country was magnificent. We overlooked the land of the Lhotas and Aos and beyond the distant hills of the Konyaks. The country of the Changs and Sangtams lay at our feet and in the east the unexplored mountains of the Kalyo Kengyus and the Patkoi Range, with the 12,622 feet peak of Mount Saramati, were clearly visible. Here in Helipong we were on the watershed between the Brahmaputra and the Irrawaddy. The rivers to the east belong to the basin of the Chindwin; following them, if you were lucky enough not to lose your head en route, you would arrive in Burma. All these high ridges, running almost at right angles to our proposed route, were not a very encouraging sight, and yet the glimpse we had caught of the distant Patkoi Range only sharpened the wish to set foot in that distant, unknown land.

Even as we watched, the view that had lain so clearly before our eyes began to veil itself. Shreds of tinted clouds stormed across the sky and caught on the peaks till a burst of wind, jerking them upwards, swept them on. Now it was as though the mountains spat white steam, for the sun suddenly withdrew, and the clouds thickened, rose, were driven over several ridges, and dissolved again. It was a wild, grand scene that played over the open theatre of the sky, and then suddenly the clouds were white no longer, but tinged with scarlet in the light of the setting sun.

That evening Major Williams thought it would be a good idea to hold a trial alarm to train the porters in case of an attack on our camp. At a given signal they rushed with spears, shields, and *dao* to the stockade, forming a second and a living wall. In spite of the fatigue of the most exhausting day's march, their tense fierce faces showed clearly that they were ready to throw them-

selves on any enemy.

Again that night storm raged round our tents and even covered as we were with every available blanket we spent another cold night. In the morning a thin, penetrating rain fell noiselessly, and nothing was to be seen of yesterday's view. We dropped down on the other side of Mount Helipong; perhaps this side was not as steep as the one we had come up, but the roughness of the path made walking difficult. We soon left the country of the Changs, although we were to cross back into their territory later, and our march that day and our subsequent camp were in Yimsungr country, the land of a scarcely-known tribe which in some respects resembles the Changs. A little uncertain of our reception, we marched the whole day on our guard, and the suspicious attitude of the villagers of Kuthurr where we arrived that evening, left no doubt that we were no longer in friendly country. They were, it is true, not altogether unpleasant, and even sent us the customary gifts of pigs and chickens, but we felt that this courtesy was dictated rather by the size of our column than by any spirit of generosity or welcome. Had we arrived singly, or even in a small number, there can be no doubt that their joy at such unusual guests would have taken other forms, and our chances of ever leaving Kuthurr would have been slight, for our skulls would have certainly occupied places of honour in the men's house. In fact we mistrusted the Yimsungr as much as they seemed to mistrust us, and when building our camp we took particular care, reinforcing it with a strong palisade of spiked bamboos.

Next morning, when I wanted to take photographs in the village while the sepoys broke camp, Major Williams insisted that I should take an escort of five men. I felt like a convict, as, surrounded by sepoys with levelled bayonets, I walked through the narrow streets, while the inhabitants of Kuthurr watched my odd behaviour with the camera with profound suspicion. It was characteristic of the atmosphere that there was not a woman and not a child to be seen. Uncertain of our intentions, the men had apparently sent them into the safety of the mountains long before we arrived.

That day, keeping on the border of Yimsungr country, we turned north-east, and camped at the Chang village of Chentang. As long as we marched through the country without incident, our days were much the same, for, starting at about eight in the

morning, we would march until midday, when we would rest for a short while, and munch our sandwiches, and perhaps one of the *dobashi* would produce rice-beer, which in some miraculous way they always seemed to carry with them. Indeed, we had a joke that Nakhu, our head *dobashi*, would be able to produce rice-beer even in the middle of the Sahara. And then we would go on through the afternoon, and finally come into camp about three o'clock, thus leaving enough time to build a palisade before dark.

On the path to Chentang, one of the *dobashi* pointed to where a couple of months ago an old man of Chentang had been ambushed by three men from the Yimsungr village of Sangpurr. Lying in the bushes at the side of the path, he said, they had waited till the old man had passed, then they had speared him in the back as he tried to escape, and cut off his head. I was used to this kind of tale, yet the idea of the poor old man, running for his life with a spear in his back, shattered me for a moment. Perhaps, it was that those other stories had all been told to me in friendly, peaceful country, where they appeared more or less as fairy tales of some bygone day, but here in Yimsungr country the proximity of hostile tribes provided reality enough for the gruesome account.

"I like you anthropologists," remarked Mills. "You come to the Naga Hills in order to study the head-hunters, and when we show you a nice little practical example, you are horrified. I am sure that more than one man has been slaughtered on this path."

He was right, for outside Chentang we passed under a pipeline that, we were told, the men of Chentang had been forced to build because so many of their women had been killed in the last years on the way to the spring to fetch water. It was a clever idea, for the water now flowed unaided from the spring through the narrow bamboo pipes supported on poles, high above the ground, to within the defences of the village.

But the Yimsungr are war-like people, and since apparently they no longer found an opportunity of ambushing the women of Chentang when they fetched water, they entered the village while the men worked on the fields, and set fire to the houses. One man of Sangpurr lost his head in the adventure, and it was his hand we had seen hung up in Helipong. But even the head dangling from a high bamboo pole in Chentang was small comfort to the people for the loss of their houses. More than half of the village

had been burnt, and now only a few small miserable huts stood among the charred posts. In this part of the country trees are scarce in the vicinity of the villages, and at short notice it is often difficult to replace the houses with their strong posts and gable boards.

Outside the village our attention was attracted by a small hut on high bamboo poles. It contained the corpse of a favourite hunting-dog, and there were a monkey-skull and several cane rings, tallying his hunting successes in the same manner as on the graves of men symbols tally the feats of the deceased.

We chose a site for the camp in a small dip in the ground, overgrown with grass, and set two pickets on the surrounding hills. For though Pangsha was still far away, we were in the middle of the much troubled area, near the borders of the three tribes, Chang, Yimsungr, and Kalyo Kengyu.

fourteen

The Rescued Slaves

Feathers fluttered on the top of the hill as we climbed slowly up the saddle of the mountain between Chengtang and Chingmei. Chingmak, the chief of Chingmei, had sent his warriors in full ceremonial dress to welcome us, and it was their high hornbill feathers we had seen quivering on red, plaited cane hats. They had rolls of indigo-blue cloths, embroidered with cowrie shells, tied over the breast and back, protecting the most vulnerable parts of the body against blows; their sword-like *dao* were stuck in sheaths at the back, which formed part of the broad belt. With a single movement these *dao* can be drawn over the shoulder and crashed down on the head of an enemy. Besides this weapon, the men carried long spears, tufted with red goat's hair, and heavy shields of buffalo hide.

The warriors led us through the forest and over open clearings to the village. Many years ago the chief, Chingmak, had undertaken the long journey to Mokokchung to make friends with Mills, and he welcomed us now with overflowing joy. It had been agreed that we should use his village as a base, pushing on from here into the land of the Kalyo Kengyus, and Chingmak was to serve as mediator in the negotiations with neighbouring villages. This meant a great deal of prestige for his village, and he was only too happy to render every possible support to our expedition, for Chingmei had a long-standing feud with the Kalyo Kengyu villages to the east.

The Chingmei people had built us a large camp on the flat top of a hill not far from their village. Several spacious, strawcovered huts served as welcome shelters for the sepoys, and though we pitched our own tents, we were pleased to eat our meals within four walls once more. The posts of our "dining room" were decorated with the most surprising wood carvings. Naturalistic symbols of masculine power were probably the greatest form of compliment, and meant to show that the Chingmei men took us for "he-

men," to whose houses the same carvings should be accorded as to their own *morung*.

Chingmei, the last Chang bulwark against the Kalyo Kengyus, was a large, strongly fortified village, encircled by a double stockade set with sharp bamboo spikes. Sentry-boxes high up in the trees dominated the narrow entrances and the doors bristling with spikes.

The houses within the stockade had steeply-sloping roofs, rising from just above the ground at the back to about thirty feet in front. Thus the gables, protruding over the front wall, were so close together that the roofs often dove-tailed, and the streets, running in between the houses, were completely overshadowed. This had an advantage in the rains, for protected by the jutting gables, you could pass from one house to the other with dry feet. Even steeper and more sloping, the roofs of the *morung* towered high above the other houses, and gave the village the bizarre and characteristic silhouette of all Chang settlements.

The first call we paid in the village was at the house of the chief, or rather I should say the houses of the chief, for Chingmak, not content with his first wife, the mother of two already grown-up and famous sons, had married a second time, and, wisely recognizing that two wives under one roof are not conducive to domestic happiness, had built a new house opposite his old one. Chingmak's second wife had given him two daughters. They were still quite small, and one of them, a girl of about ten, immediately found a place in Mills' heart. It was amazing how confidently the little girl approached the strange white man, and how she would sit quite near him on the ground while he talked with her father. When Chingmak brought her to our camp next day, she was thrilled with all the unusual things, and especially with our waterglasses. Again and again she put her little fist into the glass, and could hardly believe that anything transparent could be so solid.

Strangely enough, though Chang and Kalyo Kengyus were almost continually at war, Chingmak's first wife came from the Kalyo Kengyu village of Panso. Such marriages were said to be quite common, and the Chingmei men seemed to entertain no scruples if they had to fight against the brothers and the fathers of their wives, even if they eventually brought their heads home in triumph—a rather drastic way of venting a feeling common enough among "in-laws" all the world over.

When Chingmak had visited Mokokchung, Mills had treated him with great consideration and now he showed us proudly over every inch of Chingmei. He took us first to the *morung*, where he pointed out the skull of a famous Panso warrior, the captor of fifty heads. There were many other skulls, some bleached and old and some apparently new, hanging in the *morung*. In fact, it was quite a remarkable collection, for on many of them buffalo and mithan horns were fastened, thus increasing their magical power and furthering the "virtue" of the whole village. Chingmak showed us a peculiar funeral monument that had been erected in the village. It was a huge crescent of plaited bamboo, representing a rainbow, raised several feet off the ground, and staked with wooden forked posts, which Chingmak explained were tallies for the buffalo and mithan sacrifices performed by the deceased.

But our appreciation waxed loudest when we discovered that the slaves we had set out to rescue were already waiting for us in Chingmei. Since we had received the threatening message from Pangsha in Chentang, we had given up all hope of a peaceful understanding. The messages had declared that Pangsha had no intention whatsoever of giving up their captives. That they were not afraid of a crowd of women, as they called us, and that they would not even honour us by fighting with spears and *dao* but would beat us off with the wooden rice-pounding pestles of their wives.

We had not taken these menaces literally, but now we were astonished that the bare news of our persistent advance had driven the Pangsha men to part with their victims. Chingmak told us that they had delegated their allies of Yimpang, a village in sight of our camp, to mediate with him, and had sent him the three slaves without demanding ransom; and Yimpang, impressed by the behaviour of the more powerful village, and at the same time afraid of the punishment that might be meted out to them for their participation in the raid on Saochu and Kejok, had bought two of the other slaves back from Pangsha, delivering them up with the other three to Chingmei.

I have never seen more miserable creatures than these five "slaves": a young woman, a youth of about twenty, two small boys, and a small girl. After the massacre of their relatives they had been dragged off to hostile villages, conscious always of the terrible death awaiting them. All through the hills the tales of

human sacrifices among those tribes in the east were well known, and the two adults, at least, could have had little doubt as to their ultimate fate.

Few of the captives of those tribes ever lived long, for just as mithan and buffaloes were sacrificed by the Angamis, the tribes on the Patkoi mountains beheaded a slave at their Feasts of Merit. The only humane trait in these cruel ceremonies was perhaps the custom of making the victim so drunk before slaughter that he went to his death only half conscious. At the erecting of a man's house the sacrifice of a human being strengthened the new building; the trussed slave was thrown into the hole, and crushed as the main post came smashing down.

The Chingmei men did not understand the language of the captives, and so it had been impossible to explain to them the change in their fate. Perhaps they thought that these curiously pale people, with the bewildering behaviour, were those notorious adepts in human sacrifice to whom they had been sold. Our Konyak *dobashi* Pongwei ta k[illegible] the language of Saochu, but their minds were so dimmed by fear that at first they could not grasp what was said. Patiently and slowly Pongwei continued, and only when he asked the two older slaves about their experiences did they seem to understand. Then they explained haltingly that after the burning of Saochu, they had been hurried to Pangsha by the raiders. No, they had not been too badly treated, and had always had enough to eat, but the Pangsha men, although not afraid of the young women and children running away, had thought the man might try to escape, and had hammered his knees till he was quite lame; even now he could not walk very well.

Far worse than the physical hardships of captivity had been the fear of their future fate. The terror of the last months had so eaten into their minds that the two grown-up slaves, even when they did understand they were free, could only continue to stare apathetically ahead, and showed no relief at being rescued. It was easier to make the children smile and with good food and friendly treatment they soon climbed happily on Mills' knees and played with his pipe.

The release of these five "slaves" did not end our mission. Pangsha still held another girl, the sister of the woman from Saochu, and as long as she remained in their hands, we could not think of returning. Besides, Pangsha had apparently experienced

a change of heart, or perhaps they thought we could not bother any more now that we had five of the slaves. They sent us new messages: if we dared to approach their territory they would kill us man by man, and, once we had left the country, they would wipe out all the villages befriending us. However, these new menaces did not deter Mills. To return would have been taken for weakness, and would only have increased the arrogance of Pangsha. Consequently there would certainly have been new slave-raids.

Here in Chingmei, where we rested the porters a few days, I often wondered how the people of these villages can live, and even enjoy life, under the constant threat of war and destruction. You would think that the fear of raids would never allow them a quiet sleep, and that every step outside the village would be haunted by the thought of an ambush. But instead of fear, the people had only a certain caution that had become their second nature. They did not dream of going to a distant field alone, and no woman left the village to fetch water after dusk. The men went well-armed and in groups to the work on the fields, and sentries of young warriors saw that the women were not attacked by enemies. There was no room for a free-lance in the world of the head-hunters; only a community could provide the necessary security and protection. Once within the large and well-protected village, danger was comparatively small, and life not very different from life in more peaceful country. Only when a village was hard pressed and the people could no longer cultivate their fields properly, food became scarce. But this was exceptional, for even villages at war for many generations still led quite normal lives within a few miles of each other.

To slip is possible in this, as in every system of safeguards, and now and again a man paid for his carelessness with the loss of his head. But such misfortune created no more terror among his fellow-villagers than the news of a traffic accident does among us. We realize the dangers of the road, and calculate how best to avoid them; so the Naga knew the danger threatening, yet did not lose his *joie de vivre*. In administered country he even wished back the "good old days" of head-hunting before his country was pacified.

fifteen

Yimpang's Black Day

Some weeks ago Matche, a Yimpang man, had fled to Chingmei before the wrath of Pangsha and the threats of his own fellow villagers. For it was he who first listened to Chingmak's pleadings for an understanding with us. Once on our side, he proved very useful, informing us as to the enemy's plans, and acting as a much needed guide in Kalyo Kengyu country.

Although the men of Yimpang had nominally redeemed themselves for their part in the raid on Saochu and Kejok by handing over the slaves, Mills thought it would be just as well to convince them of our strength before marching against Pangsha, and so remove any desire they might harbour to attack our camp and the porters staying behind in our absence.

It was not far to Yimpang, and we could clearly see the village on one of the slopes to the north-east of Chingmei as we stood looking up the valley. The path led gently upwards through fields of Job's tears, interspersed with a particular species of high red millet, beans, oil-seeds, and tobacco. Rice grew only in small patches, and was considered such a delicacy that the successful harvester shared his crop among his friends in much the same way as he shared his much prized meat.

The village was strongly fortified, with an inner and an outer wall. A removable bridge between the walls, led, not over an impassable water-moat as did the bridges of mediaeval castles, but over an equally impassable ditch bristling with thorns and bamboo spikes.

Normally Yimpang had a mixed population of Kalyo Kengyus, Changs, and Yimsungr, but Chingmak must have painted our fierceness and the punishments we would mete out pretty black, for when we arrived the whole village was almost deserted. Here and there a man sat with a sullen face watching us intently from the cover of his house as we walked through the village. There was not a woman or a child to be seen. They had all been evacuated

the day before, taking with them the livestock. Perhaps it was this total lack of the usual straying pigs, goats, and cows that gave the village such a particularly desolate look. Later we were told that the villagers had devoured those animals that could not be taken away, rather than let them fall into our hands. It was scorched earth policy on a small scale.

We were obviously not a social success in Yimpang; even the air seemed to hang heavily round us. and Major Williams determined to try to brighten up the atmosphere with a little music. He made one of his Gurkha bagpipers play Scottish airs on the open space in front of one of the *morung* and the strange sounds did actually draw some of the intimidated inhabitants from the shelter of their houses. It is improbable that they enjoyed this artistic performance very much but the music seemed to allay their suspicions and they may have felt that intending looters and murderers would hardly waste time in producing these ludicrous sounds.

On the Saochu raid they had not hesitated, for they had come to take heads and had set about their business, carrying off the trophies to their village as swiftly as possible. I shall never forget that first impression, when we suddenly came upon a tree with innumerable human heads dangling from the branches. Looking closer we discovered that they did not hang from the branches, but leered at us from the tops of bamboo poles, leaning against the Erythrina tree.

The heads were garlanded in true Kalyo Kengyu fashion with tresses of long grass, and decorated with huge wooden horns, and in some cases with wooden models of hornbill feathers; bamboo spikes had been stuck in the eye-sockets, for so the Nagas think to blind their victims even in death, and prevent their souls seeking out and avenging their murderers. Wind and sun had shrivelled the skin and distorted the features, and where teeth still remained they gave the gaping mouths a gruesome expression. Some of the skulls were scalped; these belonged to men, Chingmak explained, for the long hair of the southern Konyaks is much prized by Kalyo Kengyus as decoration for dance hats, ear ornaments, and other insignia of war, but the women with their closely clipped hair are more fortunate in death and their heads retain the valueless scalps.

As soon as I had recovered from my first astonishment, I began coveting those heads. I wanted to take them home as museum

specimens, and Mills, deciding to show his disapproval of the extermination of Saochu and Kejok by confiscating the fresh heads, furthered my idea. The heads were ordered to be cut down and taken to Chingmei.

Although Yimpang had come off very lightly, all the old heads remaining on the tree, we felt we were anything but popular; we were very conscious of the relief on the faces of our "hosts" as we left the village with our booty.

Instead of returning directly to our camp, we followed the ridge of the mountain for a couple of hours, and then climbed up to Waoshu. This small Chang village received us with an overwhelming friendliness, tinged no doubt with relief; for they stood in deadly fear of Pangsha. They had heard of the recent raids, and had consequently strengthened their fortifications till they were almost impregnable to Naga weapons. We easily convinced them of our peaceful intentions for they still remembered how once before other white men had come to Waoshu. Thirteen years before J.H. Hutton had crossed the ridge believing it to be the main range of the Patkoi, but he was bitterly disappointed on climbing the 7000 feet only to discover that the main range lay yet further to the east.

When we returned to Chingmei, the camp was bubbling with news. Matche and the men with the heads had brought back word that a strong armed force to Kalyo Kengyu warriors from Noklak had stalked us that morning up to Yimpang. They had moved parallel with us on the hillside, and had walked into Yimpang as soon as we had left, explaining to the inhabitants that they had been ready to help if we had dared to do them any harm.

Will Noklak resist us? Will they oppose our march through their land? These are the questions that run in all our minds and form the main topic of our dinner conversation. The path over Noklak is the only way to Pangsha, and now that Chingmak's men have returned from clearing the path for tomorrow's march, bringing with them only messages of defiance from Noklak, there is not much chance of a peaceful passage.

Mills fold up the map he has been studying. Neither Noklak nor Pangsha are marked; the map reaches only as far as Chingmei, and tomorrow we shall enter virgin country, virgin country not only for us, but also for Chingmak and his warriors, who have never dared to cross the eastern boundary of their village land.

sixteen

Into the Blue

It is still pitch dark as Nlamo slips into my tent and puts the small hurricane lamp down by my bed. Here it stands, more urging and accusing for every extra minute I spend under the blankets. It is not a question of sleep, for the intense cold has kept me awake for the last few hours. But to get out of bed into the icy air needs an effort, and I find it difficult to muster the necessary resolution.

Day has not yet broken but the camp is alive. The porters pack their loads and squat chatting round the fires, warming themselves and boiling their rice. Nagas will discuss the most negligible thing for hours and now that the excitement of the tour grips the whole camp conversation is rife; looking at their eager, determined faces you would think that they were making important decisions. They are asking each other over and over again: will there be a fight? This is the question on all lips. However much I hope there will be no bloodshed, I feel deeply for the porters. They are filled with the hope of glory, and dream of attaining the rank of head-hunters. They are desperately afraid that at the last moment we will come to terms with Pangsha, and that all the trouble and privation of the last weeks will have been in vain, for to the Naga money is no compensation for heroic exploits missed.

The porters grasp their shields and spears; they are already prepared. It is only a matter of seconds to throw off their heavy loads and transform themselves from carriers into fully armed warriors. Those who go with us are fervently envied by their less fortunate friends remaining behind in the camp, and yesterday a mutiny had almost broken out when Mills proposed to leave one particularly eager band behind. But now there is peace again, for the would-be heroes have had their way by solemnly promising not to harm a hair of the enemy's head without express orders. "We will even step over the fallen Pangsha men," they swore, "without so much as a touch of the *dao*"

In the dark hut we shiver over our breakfast, waiting for the first rays of the sun to grope slowly down the hillside—in several minutes they reach Chingmei, and then, as the palisade of our camp casts its first bizarre shadows, our column begins to move.

The six Chingmei men, acting as scouts, go ahead. They are pleased to accompany us, rather for the love of adventure than for the promised reward. The picked warriors of a warlike village—and their rich tattoo and ornaments tell of many victories—they seem dangerous men indeed. But today they have a strange appearance, for we have tied white bandages round their heads and chests, and they look as if they had come from, rather than were hopefully advancing to battle. The bandages are marks of identification, lest our Chang scouts be taken for enemies in the confusion of the fight. Their leader is Chingmak's son. He is not yet twenty-five, but is already a famous warrior and has captured eight heads.

The scouts are to help us find the way to Pangsha and to circumvent the obstacles awaiting us in hostile country. Nagas are expert in all sorts of tricks that complicate the passage of an unwelcome guest. They run strings through the dense grass of the paths, and a touch of the foot releases a poisoned arrow that pierces you in the ribs. They dig pits harbouring large spiked poles, and cover them with a thin grating and dry leaves, so that an unwary step precipitates the victim and he is impaled on the spikes at the bottom. A dangerous but favourite device consists of small bamboo spikes—*panji* they call them—with which the Nagas sow the ground, to spike the feet of the approaching enemy.

For the first hours of the way, however, we are in friendly country, and there is no need for caution. Steeply we descend from the camp into the valley. It is still bitterly cold, and we grudge the loss of so much height. Now, early in the morning, we would gladly climb uphill, but, as it is, we shall probably have to climb the treeless slope opposite under a midday sun.

Deep down in the valley a brook rushes over huge blocks of stone. The water is clear, and looks horribly cold. Across it the path leads up from the valley over a precipitous slope, and soon loses itself in jungle. For many years Noklak has been at war with Chingmei, and the path is completely overgrown. The scouts at the head of the column cut their way through the thicket with strong *dao* blows. This kind of travelling is a slow business, and

you require patience as the column moves forward step by step.

Here and there huge patches of blue flowers cover the shadowy floor of the forest. It is wild indigo that grows where the sun hardly ever penetrates, and it is from these leaves that the Nagas make the dye for their blue cloths. As the forest recedes, a stony slope unrolls before us. It is torn by deep ravines, and even the light steps of our scouts crumble the surface and send rubble clattering into the depths. What will happen to our heavily loaded porters? But my anxiety for the Nagas, as so often before, proves unnecessary. In half an hour all the loads are across.

Now once more the path leads through the forest. As we pass under the first trees there are excited shouts from the head of the column. "Beware *panji*" the warning comes back. Now there is no doubt; we are in hostile country, for the bamboo spikes set in the path are freshly pointed, and obviously intended for our feet. The column moves yet more slowly, feeling its way through the thick undergrowth, but all this caution is not enough, and soon there is an angry cry. One of the Chang scouts stands on one leg, with a *panji* sticking through his other foot, the bloody point protruding some way above the toes.

"Silly of me, to step on a *panji*," is all the man says as they draw the spike out of his foot, and as soon as the wound is dressed with one of the hitherto decorative bandages, he insists on rejoining his friends at the head of the column. A Gurkha is the next victim. A *panji* pierces the muscles of his calf, but he too makes light of his misfortune.

The sun burns down on the hillside, and the air stagnates between the dense bushes. We would like to rest and eat, but we dare not waste precious time. We are not certain how long it will take us to get to Noklak, nor how we shall be received, and two clear hours must be left before dusk in which to build a fortified camp.

Round every bend we expect the village to come in sight, but time after time we are disappointed, until at last we see Noklak lying about two miles away on a broad spur. It is in a splendid position on our right, dominating the head of the valley, where the mountains, widening out, give way to an unhampered view of the main range of the Patkoi.

But the ground that lies between us and the village is difficult to negotiate. High bushes cover the slopes, and once among them our vision will be blocked. Carefully we search the country with

our glasses, and eventually pick out a group of men in the long grass near the village. They are coming slowly towards us. Noklak has certainly been warned of our approach, and their sentries have probably been watching us for a long time as we made our way along the hills. According to old Naga tactics, other warriors should lie already in an ambush above the path.

The sepoys level their rifles ready to fire. I feel in the pocket for my revolver and load both barrels of my gun. Step by step we move through the thicket. You cannot see more than six yards ahead—the back of the man in front and a few heads of the men farther ahead—and to the left and to the right nothing but grass, reed, and bushes. A wall impenetrable to the eye, but not so impenetrable, I think, for those famous poisoned arrows.

Involuntarily the fate of that other punitive expedition against the Konyak village of Chinglong creeps into my mind, when the Chinglong warriors broke through the thicket along the whole length of the column, cutting off the heads of the porters and sepoys before they had time to defend themselves, and then disappeared into the jungle on the other side. The tension grows with every slowly passing minute. Still I can see nothing but the brown, crackling bush and the deep blue of the sky overhead. Any moment a spear may whistle out of the thicket. Action would be a relief—even a clash. But no, this is against all better judgement. Noklak had no hand in the slave raids of the last months, and it would be awkward to leave a hostile village in our rear while we marched against Pangsha.

Quite suddenly the path opens out into a clearing and our presumed enemies stand before us, still far away, but clearly visible as they brandish their spears and *dao*. Shall we fire? The *panji* that blocked our way leave us in no doubt as to their hostile intentions. We might have to pay dearly for a hand-to-hand fight in the jungle. On the other hand, their obviously troubled behaviour seems to point to uncertainty. We halt. Surely they see that there are many of us. Yes, there is a movement in the crowd, and three men separate themselves from the others. What are they calling to us? Only Chingmak can understand. Where is Chingmak? He is in the centre of the column with the porters, but now he comes forward, as once more the faint call comes up to us.

"They ask if we want peace or war," translates Chingmak "and

look now, they are breaking branches—they wave them over their heads. That means peace."

The opinion of the old men seem to have triumphed over the young hotspurs, and Chingmak makes haste to answer, "Ho-o, ho-o, peace, peace ! Come here," and his powerful voice carries far through the breathless stillness.

Soon the three old men approach, mistrustfully, eyeing the bayonets of the sepoys, pointed so obviously in their direction. These men are the first real Kalyo Kengyus I have seen, and even at a glance one can see a great difference between them and the Changs of Chingmei. Their heads are rounder, their features more mongoloid, and a small dark blue cloth, tied in some peculiar way round the body, leaves the breast nearly bare. They are richly tattooed, with a large ostrich feather ornament and groupings of suns and small human figures, all doubtless symbols of captured heads. Their small aprons are embroidered with cowries. Through how many hands must these shells have passed while making the long journey from the sea to these mountains?

The negotiators are obviously nervous, and their astonished gaze wanders from one to the other of these four white men, but their faces lighten as they recognize Chingmak, and the time-long adversaries greet each other as old friends, and soon squat chatting cheerfully on the ground before us. As a rule there exists little personal hate between the individuals of two hostile Naga villages. War is a sport, and no one is blamed if now and then a head is brought home. The opponents are quite unembarrassed when they meet on neutral ground, and are often to be seen drinking a mug of rice-beer together in the most friendly fashion.

Not so long ago the young warriors of Noklak plotted to take a head from Chingmei, but the inglorious results only caused much laughter in Chingmak's house, and the warriors returned sorrowfully home. It appears that three Noklak warriors, seeing a solitary Chingmei man enter his field-house, decided it was too good a chance to miss. The unsuspecting man lit a fire to warm his food, but hearing a frog croak in the nearby brook, and eager to secure such an unexpected dainty, slipped out of the back door unseen. Meanwhile the Noklak warriors crept cautiously through the millet. Reaching the field-house, and thinking the victim still inside, they divided. Two guarded the back door with raised spears, the third entering by the front door found the house empty.

Imagining his prey escaping he rushed through the back door, only to receive a spear in his stomach. Too late did his friends realize their mistake, and they had to carry his body instead of an enemy's head back to Noklak. No wonder the people of Chingmei laughed over their mishap, and the Chingmei man blessed the little frog that had croaked in the brook.

Today Chingmak and the men from Noklak do not think of such old stories, for there are more important things to talk of. It soon transpires that Noklak wants to fight as little as we, and that they placed obstacles in our path only from fear of Pangsha's wrath. Now they beg us not to enter the village, for Pangsha would be bound to deduce a friendly welcome and would take dreadful revenge.

Since it does not really matter whether we visit Noklak now or on our way back, we instruct Chingmak to agree, but to demand a fine in the shape of pigs and goats as compensation for the damage done by their *panjis*. With two hundred porters and sepoys to feed, such fines are extremely useful. We find quite a good place for our camp, near a stream and the ever-important bamboos. With them close at hand the sepoys and porters can build a fence and rows of small huts in just about two hours.

Space in camp is always limited, but today we are particularly cramped, and with the increasing darkness it becomes more and more difficult to move between the tents, the huts, and the open fires. It is still worse when the porters begin to slaughter pigs, and after cutting them open, to singe them over the fires. The whole air reeks of the pungent smell of burnt pigs' bristles, and the whole of the ground is strewn with intestines that in the darkness get entangled in your feet as you pad through the camp.

Next to the shelter that we euphemistically call the "mess," our scouts have settled down round a fire. Somehow or other they have contrived to procure a whole pig as their ration, and now with refreshing thoroughness, they begin to devour it. Even the man with the pierced foot refuses to allow his small misfortune to spoil his meal. While we eat our own dinner, we cannot agree among ourselves whether they will or will not be able completely to consume that tasty animal. But when at ten o'clock I notice that the good fellows, after a short sleep, have begun to eat again, my doubts vanish. I am certain of the eventual disappearance of that pig and I am certain, too, that on this night at least our

scouts will not suffer from "night starvation." In the morning, as they swallow the pieces of meat they have saved for their breakfast rice, the whole pig is finished, and only the picked bones bear witness to the feast.

The sun rises radiantly over the high ranges of the Patkoi. Ahead stretches a mysterious blue wall, the jagged line of the peaks separating the delicate blue of the sky from the deeper blue of the hills. The western slopes lie still in deep shade and the sun shines through the fine morning mist which hangs over the valley like gossamer silk.

It is getting late, and we cannot wait to watch the lifting of the veil—to see the woods on the far slopes take shape as the morning advances—for we must follow the path to Noklak. It is well-trodden, and when it reaches the village it runs between the two *khel* into which so many Naga villages are divided, and then it leads on eastwards towards Pangsha. There is a sentry-box in the top of a large tree that stands strangely outside the palisade overlooking the entrance to the village, the sentry evidently gaining access by a long bamboo ladder that hangs down on the inner side of the palisade.

Looking at the houses of Noklak, there is little doubt that we have left the land of the Changs and are now in the country of a very different people. Dark grey slates cover the roofs of the small houses, standing close together and side by side. We are among the Kalyo Kengyus, the legendary "stone-house dwellers." By this name the other Nagas call the tribes living on the western slopes of the Patkoi. How far their land extends to the east it is still impossible to say. Are they a homogeneous people like the Changs? Do they consist of many different tribes with different languages and different cultures? The answer to all these questions can only be found in the future, when the country is finally surveyed and its people become the subject of further observation.

To the south the land of the Kalyo Kengyus borders on the hills of the Southern Sangtams, and it was here that J. H. Hutton visited several of their villages when he went with a Survey Party towards the 12,622 feet high Saramati, the highest peak of the Patkoi Range, which was first climbed in 1935 by Po Nyu, a young Karen. But a large area extends between Noklak and these Southern Sangtam villages, and it is here that the map shows the white of unknown country.

Leaving Noklak we follow a good and apparently much-used path, leading along open slopes towards the north-east. Noklak and Pangsha are close friends, and Chingmak tells us that yesterday the Pangsha men were in Noklak to find out "how the thing smelt." There are fresh tracks in the damp places on the path, of men coming and going—no doubt the tracks of the Pangsha men. Nagas are always full of gossip, and this morning the elders of Noklak have confided to Chingmak that the slave-girl we seek is still in Pangsha, but that without adequate compensation her owner refuses to part with her.

Small herds of mithan, belonging partly to Noklak and partly to Pangsha, graze on the grass covered slopes. They are magnificent animals that take no notice of our approach. Not so much as a head is lifted as we pass; they are much more interested in the grass, moist from the night's dew.

It is not long before we leave this open slope and find ourselves in low bush-land. Visibility is bad, and as it grows worse, Major Williams sends flank patrols to protect the long line of our porters. Soon the path is running between walls of thick bushes, prickly creepers, and strong, dry reeds. The pace is infuriatingly slow, for once more we have to cut our way step by step. Just here, where the thicket is densest, we hear calls coming from the hill tops. They come from somewhere directly above us, but we cannot see anything. Perhaps Pangsha's sentries have sighted us, and are calling warnings to each other. It is not pleasant to have our coming announced while we have no idea where our opponents hide. Mills decides that the rear-guard shall burn the jungle behind us on both sides of the path, so that we shall have no difficulties on the way back. But hardly do we hear the crackle and catch a glimpse of the flames drawing out along the slope, before a light wind springs up and drives the flames close on our heels. This forces us to abandon the manoeuvre, for to be caught between burning jungle and hostile forces might be unpleasant.

It is five hours since we left Noklak, and the sun stands high in the sky, when suddenly we come out into the open and see before us the unknown and much-dreaded land. Beyond the Langnyu valley at our feet, steep slopes sweep up to wooded ranges, and behind these peaks towers yet another rocky ridge—the main range of the Patkoi. We have no way of measuring their height, but we are already more than 6,000 feet above sea level, and they

must be close to 11,000 feet. When eventually this area is surveyed, the border between Assam and Burma will probably run along these mountains.

On the gentle slopes on the opposite side of the valley the sun shines on gold roofs. Is this Pangsha that lies so peacefully above ripening rice fields? Matche, whom we have persuaded to act as our guide, is the only man of our whole column who has ever seen this country. Yes, he says, this settlement belongs to Pangsha, but the main part of the village lies hidden in a hollow, and the hundred or so houses on the shoulder opposite us are only Pangsha's colony.

With Pangsha in sight, we feel that it will not be long before we learn with which particular strategy we are to be opposed. Matche has told us of Pangsha's intentions, for apparently they had boasted of their plans in Yimpang. Either to meet us on the path with many gifts and, putting us off our guard, trap us in an ambush, or to allow us to enter their village, overwhelming us with every sign of friendship, and then, as we leave, and least expect it, to fall on us, counting on our confusion and their superior numbers.

So Pangsha is counting on catching us unawares, and when we hear far-away calls and make out the figures of three men with a conspicuously white goat, we are very much on our guard. They are coming towards us over the open hillside, but we do not in the least trust the peace that the goat appears to offer. Carefully we sweep the valley with our field glasses.

"Do you see there, down by the river? Something moves! Yes—there are men down there—many men!"

Something glints in the sun, and then is lost to the naked eye, but it is enough to rouse our attention and we rake every inch of that valley until, triumphantly, we pick out hundreds of fully-armed warriors streaming over the river. It must have been their spearpoints that caught the sun.

Swiftly they disappear in the wood close to the ford, where the path runs on to the village. Will they appear again? If they mean to meet us in the open, it should not take long for them to make their way up to the large clearing on the slope. We wait a long time, but nothing stirs, only the peace envoys come nearer on the hillside. Our doubts vanish. The Pangsha warriors have certainly taken up their places for an ambush!

The calls of the envoys again ring to and fro. It is a riddle to me how they can make out the shouting at this distance, but Chingmak has understood, and explains that the Pangsha men want to talk to us. Mills tells him to assure them a safe conduct and ask them to meet us half-way. They seem to understand his answer, for almost immediately they begin to move upwards, and we plunge into the jungle once more. It is not long before our advance guard meets the Pangsha men, and escorts them to Mills. It is a peculiar feeling to have the enemy before us at last, or rather the envoys of the enemy. They are not imposing figures, though they are probably the most important members of the village, these three middle-aged and one old man. Rather short and insignificantly dressed in faded clothes, they compare unfavourably with our magnificently turned out Chang scouts. Yet their features betray a little of that energy and cold-bloodedness that have made them the dreaded overlords of the whole district. One of them leads a goat on a string, and another carries a chicken in a small basket.

Where is Matche? We need him now as interpreter, but he is not to be found. Afraid of the revenge of Pangsha, he is hiding himself at the farthest end of the column, but Chingmak speaks Kalyo Kengyu tolerably well, and the conversation is carried on through him and our Chang *dobashi.*

Mistrustingly the Pangsha men glance at the bayonets of the sepoys, but Mills reassures them, saying they are *lambu*, sacrosanct negotiators, and need have no fear. The message they bring seems astonishingly friendly. The goat is a present of welcome from Pangsha, who are greatly pleased at our visit. They will treat us as elder brothers—no, as their own fathers. Never have they thought of fighting against us, for peace and friendship have always been their wish.

It sounds all very gratifying—all too gratifying perhaps—and Mills replies that we, too, are anxious for peace, and only seek the captured gir lfrom Saochu.

At this the envoys pull long faces, for it is just this slave girl that they cannot give us—she has been sold a long time ago far over the mountains to the East.

Can it be true? Did no t the Noklak people tell Chingmak that yesterday the girl was still in Pangsha? But they deny this; they say they did not visit Noklak yesterday. The raids on Saochu and

Kejok—yes, they raided the two villages—but there is no need to quarrel over a few captured heads. To our questions why they have so far sent us insulting challenges and threatened all the villages who befriended us with destruction, they only produce all sorts of completely inadequate excuses.

They are most surprised when Mills sends them back with their goat, the small squawking chicken, and the message that without the slave-girl no understanding is possible and that their stubbornness and all their threats will be punished by the burning of their village.

This is a declaration of war.

If Matche had not betrayed Pangsha's plan, we might have been deceived for a while by their apparent friendliness, and would probably have fallen into the ambush. But now we avoid the obvious path, and climb straight down the steep slope to the river, thus foiling Pangsha's first plan. In the broad basin of the valley we are safe from surprise attacks and we make our way without further obstacles to where, just below the main village, we find a natural island in the middle of the river, which presents a most favourable camping ground.

Soon the porters are hard at work bringing in bamboos to build the palisade and the huts, while a group of Pangsha men sit above on a little hill watching our every movement. Suddenly one springs up. What can he have seen? To our horror, we notice that some of our porters have ventured too far, and are unsuspectingly cutting bamboos just beneath the outlook of the enemy. We cannot warn them in time, for the rushing of the mountain stream deadens our voices. If the Pangsha men run down the hill it is only a moment's work for them to hold a porter's head in their hands. Quickly Major Williams orders the slope to be covered. Already several men, whirling their spears, run down the narrow path. A command, a salvo—two men fall, but they pick themselves up and disappear into the thicket.

No other Naga leaves the safety of the camp that evening.

Night falls, and with the dwindling of daylight dwindles the advantage of our rifles. Luckily Nagas will seldom attack in the dark, but usually wait until the grey light of dawn increases visibility, for it would be an easy matter to ply our camp with their famous poisoned arrows from the safety of the river bank. During dinner we discuss the possibility of an arrow piercing the

canvas of our tents, and Mills thinks that to be quite safe I would have to sleep under my camp bed. Even the promise of safety does not lure me into such discomfort; we had an exhausting day behind us, and a few minutes after my head touches the pillow I know nothing more of poisoned arrows or head-hunters for seven hours.

seventeen

Pangsha Burns

Pangsha has allowed us a peaceful night's sleep, and we are grateful for such consideration as once more we break camp before the sun rises. A few of the sepoys are to remain with the luggage, while the rest, with the coolies, fully armed, climb with us up to the village. The Pangsha men shout challenges from the top of the hill, but they are always careful to stay out of range of our rifles. Once again we are grateful to them, as once more they miss their chance of attack. On the narrow path leading steeply up to the village through scrubland, the result of a fight would be dubious. But the danger passes as we reach the open heights of the hills.

Climbing we speculate—will Pangsha try to defend their village? A few figures move among the bamboo bushes before the houses, but as we come nearer they disappear, to the intense disappointment of our porters, who really think their hour has come and are burning for the glory of a fight.

While all other Naga villages are strongly fortified, Pangsha, resting on the laurels of her invincibility, lies comparatively unprotected. There is no one in the whole country round who would dare to wage war against Pangsha.

The village is divided into three *khel*, one of which stands apart separated from the rest of the village by a deep ravine filled with jungle. Well over five hundred houses lie between gardens and huge banana trees. The inhabitants have succeeded in removing most of their goods into safety. Only the obstinate and immovable pigs, and an occasional goat or cow, stray about the village in the light of the morning sun. Until yesterday, the Pangsha men must have trusted entirely their strategy, never thinking we would reach their village, or they would certainly have hidden their animals somewhere in the woods.

Mills and Williams, taking up a position between the three *khel*, direct all further operations, and since the village is doomed, our

porters and scouts beg for permission to loot. Jubilantly they throw themselves on the deserted streets, on the empty, fated houses. As a spear flies through the air and hits a squeaking pig; the head of a cow falls under the mighty stroke of a *dao*; the last pieces of furniture are brought out of the houses, and one or two forgotten ornaments. Even Chingmak, generally so dignified and calm, I see venting his furious rage on a perfectly innocent rice-basket, slashing it from end to end. In his boldest dreams he had probably never dared to hope that he would one day plunder the almighty Pangsha.

I cannot stand calmly by Mills and Williams and see all this wonderful ethnographical material passing before my eyes. And despite Nlamo's anxiety, for he is certain that there are still enemies lurking somewhere, I join the porters in their search of the houses and the remains of the village possessions.

The houses are built of bamboo. They are rather small, and now that the fires have gone out, quite dark and difficult to search. Here the roofs are not slate-covered but thatched with palm leaves, like the houses of the Konyaks. At the end of one of the *khel* stands a house, larger than the others, which must certainly be a *morung*. It has a high pointed gable and a carved main-post and a little distance away a huge wooden drum lies in the open. But the drum is not like the drums of the Konyaks. It has a peculiar form, tubular and open on both sides, and is overshadowed by a low tree, hung with whole bundles of heads, many of which are still partly covered with skin and hair and are apparently trophies of the latest raid.

All these heads convince me that we do no wrong to Pangsha in plundering the village, for what, after all, is the plundering of an evacuated village compared to the massacre of Saochu and Kejok? For every pig our porters spear today, five human heads at least were cut off on that raid.

Hurriedly I take a few photographs of the village. A section of the sepoys and several porters are setting fire to the third *khel*, and already I can see the flames licking the roofs and springing from house to house. In a few minutes a great fire blazes and a broad column of smoke climbs into the sky.

In the upper *khel* Smith and some of the porters round up a few Pangsha men hiding among the farthest houses, but they flee into the jungle, and then he too sets a light to the dry palm-leaf roofs.

From every side come sounds of explosions—the detonations of burning bamboo poles. The crackling and rattling grow into a wild roar, and the ash, carried high into the sky by the clouds of smoke, falls again as the fumes disperse, covering us with little grey flecks like flake in a snowstorm. Clouds of smoke darken the sun, and the light round the village changes to a ghastly reddish violet. It is an unreal and theatrical play of light that, in the midst of the friendly, sunny day, pours out fantastic colours in eccentric patches over the landscape. Our primitive instincts sometimes take pleasure in works of destruction, and these hours of Pangsha's ruin are not without fascination. What we do not realize is that the clouds of smoke are seen far over the land and that in distant villages the people are singing and dancing from joy at Pangsha's defeat.

Since it is impossible to follow the inhabitants into the woods and hunt for the slave-girl, there is little we can do for the moment in Pangsha, and Mills and Williams decide to withdraw to the camp. But first the lower *khel* must be set alight, and a few of the porters are detailed off for the job, before joining us in the camp. Waiting until we see the flames take hold of the houses in this *khel* too, we climb slowly down the hill to our camp and our lunch.

We are incredibly hungry and we throw ourselves on the contents of several tins, and then—I suddenly miss Nlamo. I sent him with the porters to the lower *khel*, thinking that it would be a good opportunity to add to my collection of trophies, and told him to cut a few heads off the tree. He should have rejoined the column with the porters, but he is nowhere to be seen. Now Nakhu, our Chang *dobashi,* comes to us in great excitement. Nlamo and two Lhota porters were last seen in the burning village.

"They are lost!" gasps Nakhu. Chingmak was at the end of the column, he heard the voices of the Pangsha men crying from the hill to their own people, "Cut them off, cut them off." But Chingmak did not know that Nlamo was still behind him, and did not take any notice."

"My God! Then the Pangsha men have got Nlamo!"

"If he really was seen with the two other Lhota boys staying behind in the village, I am afraid there is very little hope."

"But this is ghastly—can't we do anything?"

"I'm afraid not. We have been a quarter of an hour in the

camp already, and it would be at least another half an hour before we reached the village again; by that time the three will have long lost their heads. Perhaps, though, they are only lingering on the way, and will soon turn up."

I feel quite sick, as though the blood had left my body; never have I seen Mills so pale. Now Nlamo is lost, and all for those stupid heads. And it is all my fault. But for me, he would still be in Kohima. I seem to see his body already without its head. How dreadful that moment must have been when he suddenly found himself alone amongst enemies! Why in the devil's name did he stay so long in the village? Didn't he hear the order to withdraw? It is true, he carried my gun, and he is not a bad shot; strange that we did not hear anything.

Anxious moments go by as we stand about, perplexed and helpless, at the t hought that Nlamo's head and those of the two Lhota boys may have long been in the hands of Pangsha. Suddenly we see men running down the path through the burning grass we had set alight behind us. They are the missing boys, who finally reach the camp completely exhausted and covered in sweat.

Little by little we drag from Nlamo the story of how, after he and the two Lhota boys had cut the heads from the tree, they had not followed the porters, but thinking that we would still be at our position between the two *khels* had returned there through the burning village. In the distance he had seen some men, whom he took for our porters, but as he saw no signs of us, he had started with the two Lhotas on his own way back to the camp. Hardly had he left the village, however, when again men appeared in the smoke, but this time quite close, and in terror he recognized Pangsha men. He seized the gun and fired. The men coming towards him suddenly turned and fled. Luckily the smoke made it impossible to see that Nlamo was alone, and naturally they did not realize that the three Lhota boys were separated from the column. They probably thought we were all still in the village and were just as terrified as Nlamo, who dropped the heads, and incidentally my electric exposure meter, which he always carried, and ran for his life.

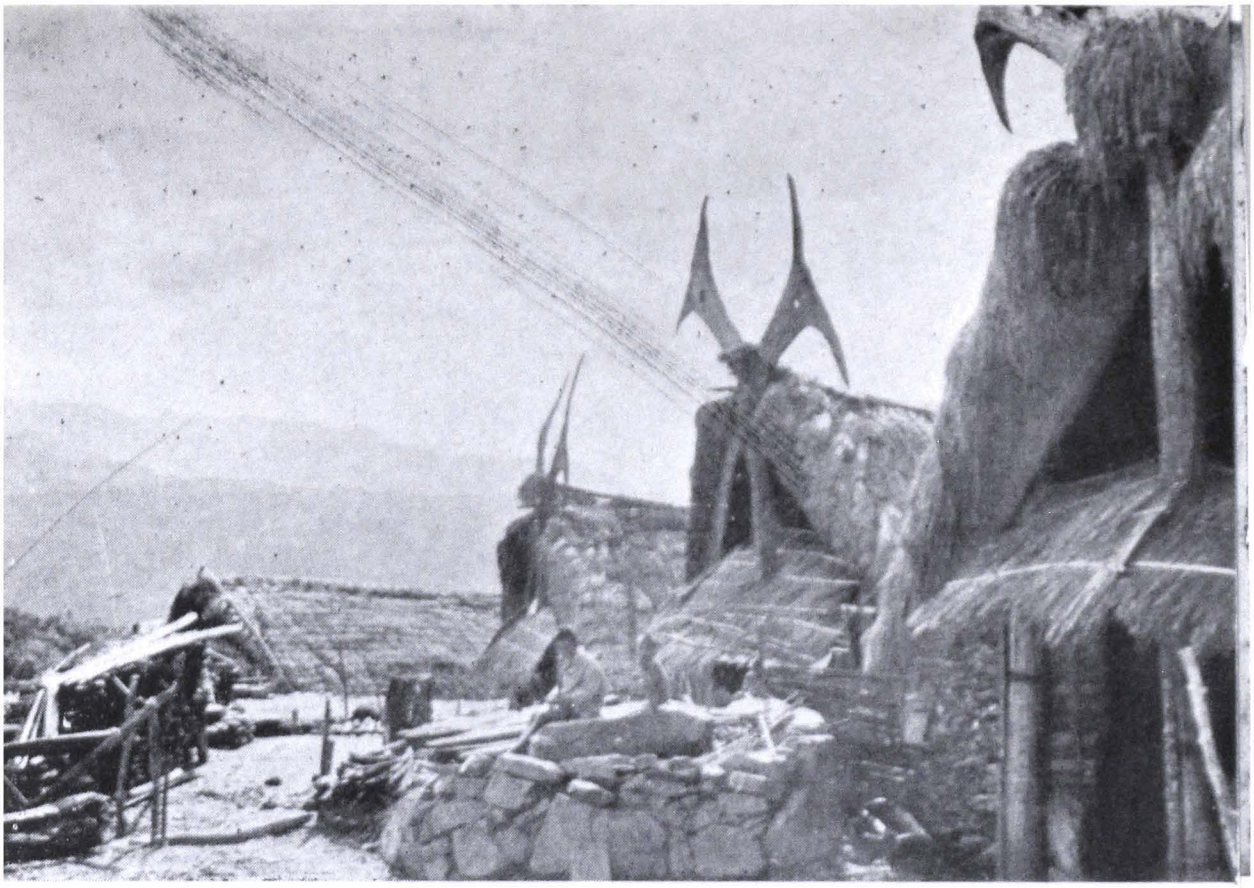
We sit down again to our interrupted meal with light hearts, and enjoy the so far disdained tins with relish. But we cannot rest long, for Pangsha's colony on the shoulder of the mountain is four miles away, and it must also be burnt to the ground. Mills

thinks that it will be an easy march along the bed of the valley, and that we will be able to climb up to the colony before evening, returning to Noklak by the light of the full moon.

Quite frankly, I am horrified by this programme; I feel we have already had quite enough trouble and excitement for one day. However, Mills is determined, and we start at about three o'clock down the valley, though not for long on the comfortable march Mills has promised us. Soon the broad valley narrows and, to our great disappointment, the river changes from a gentle stream to a swift-running torrent. In some places it rushes between steep cliffs, and to make any progress we must wade downstream in the icy water or scramble over the precipitous banks through a tangle of jungle.

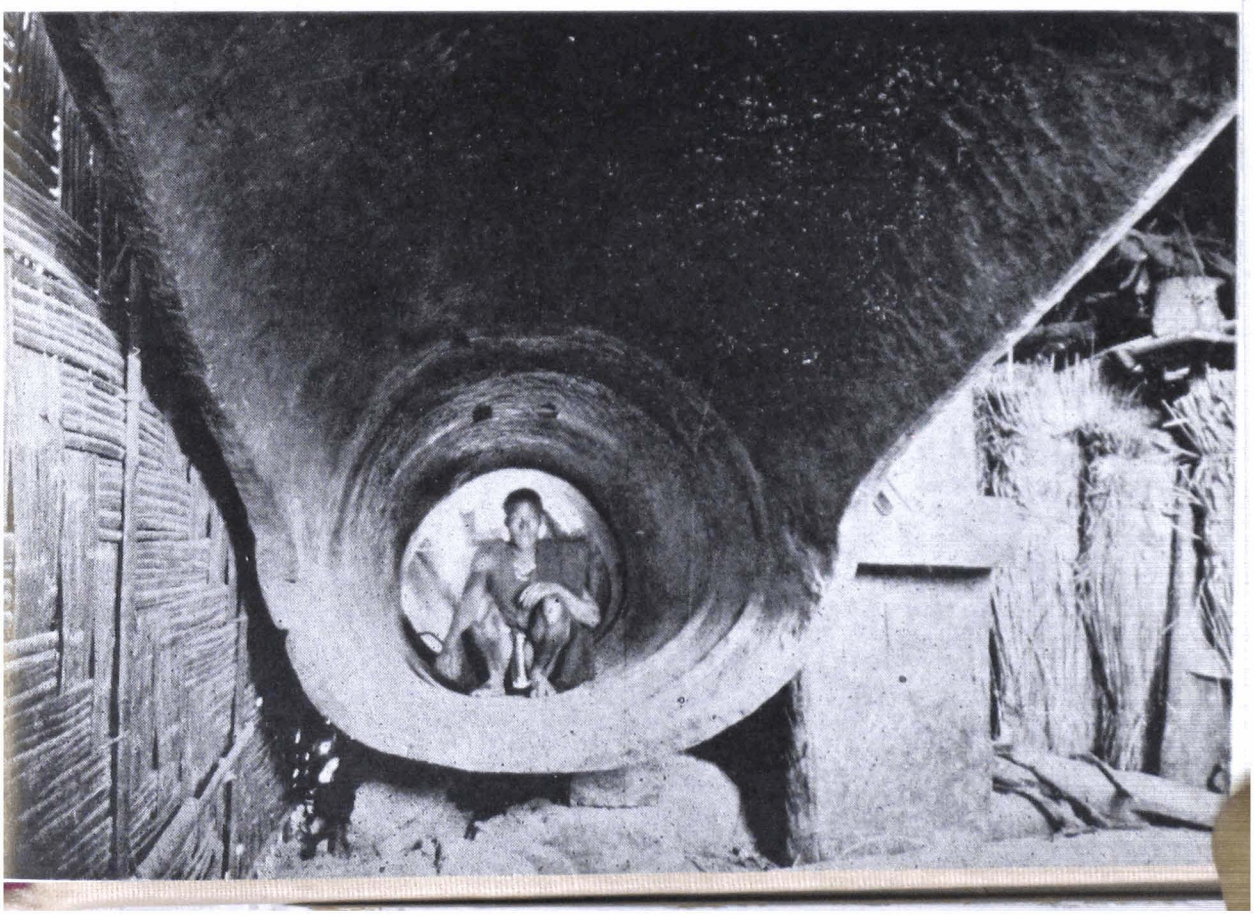
It is the worst march of the whole tour, and we soon give up the thought of reaching Pangsha's colony that evening. The sun is already sinking before we find a flat place in the bend of the river for our camp. Water flows on two sides, and towards the mountains the sepoys erect a palisade of quickly-felled bamboos. The mist gathers over the river intensifying the cold, and the camp fires provide only a very inadequate warmth. There is a full moon tonight, which, shedding a cold, clear light, silvers the earth and heightens the bewitching unattainability of the high mountains behind Pangsha.

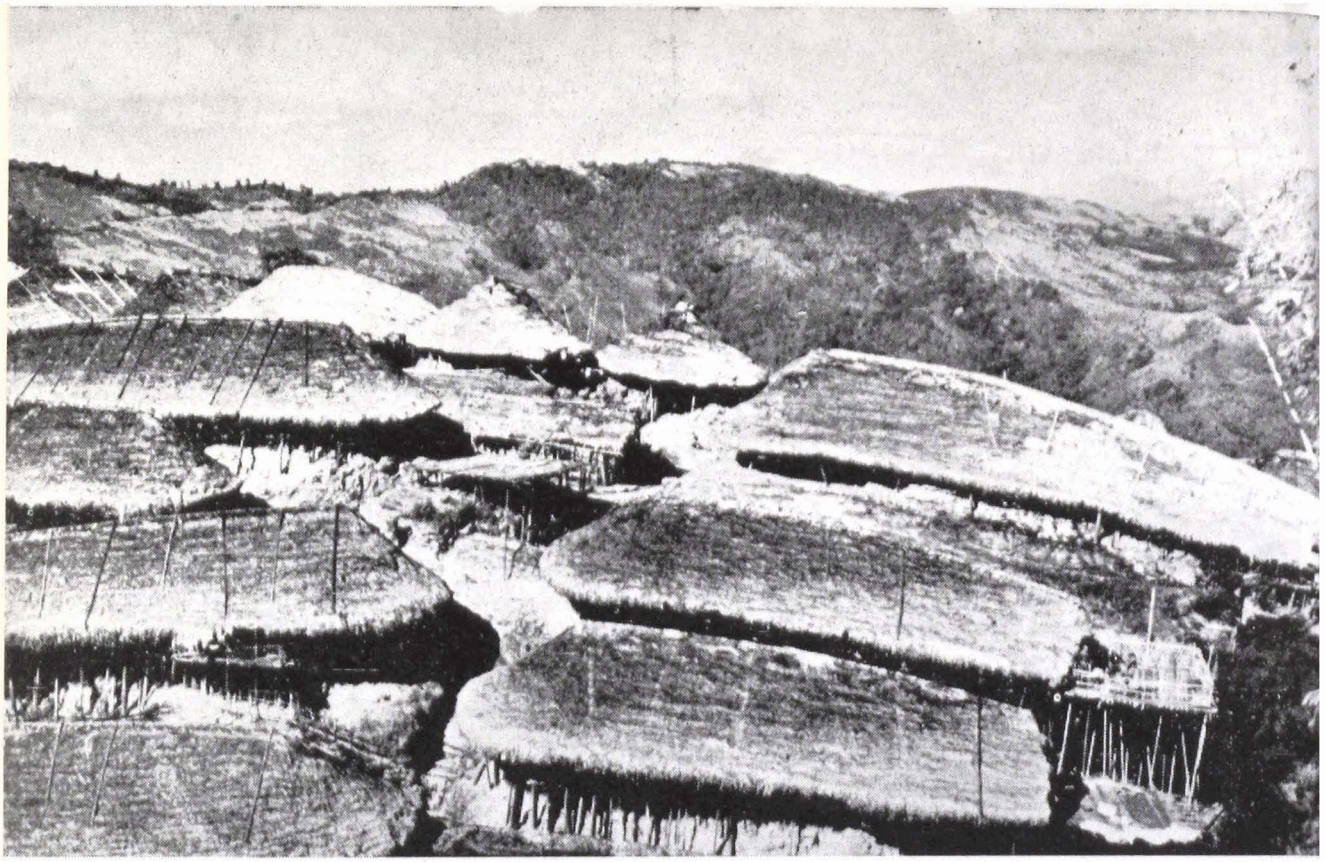
It seems senseless to carry our luggage up the hill, when a small force is enough to burn the village, and Mills decides to send the porters, protected by half our escort, back to Noklak early in the morning. The long line of the porters will move as ostentatiously as possible along the open clearings on the opposite hills, while we attack Pangsha's colony with forty rifles.



Houses with carved "house-horns" in an Eastern Angami village

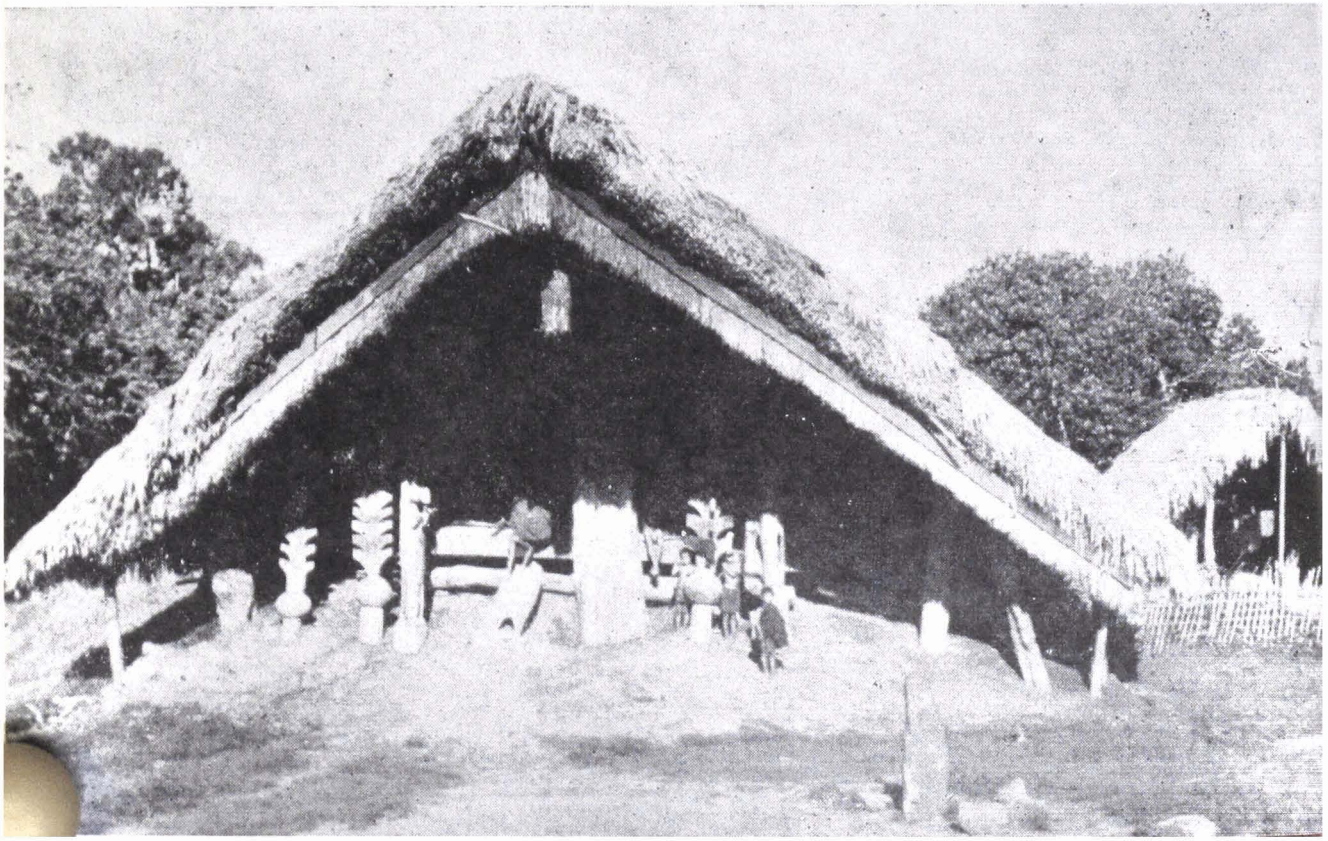
A drum in Panso large enough for a man to sit comfortably inside





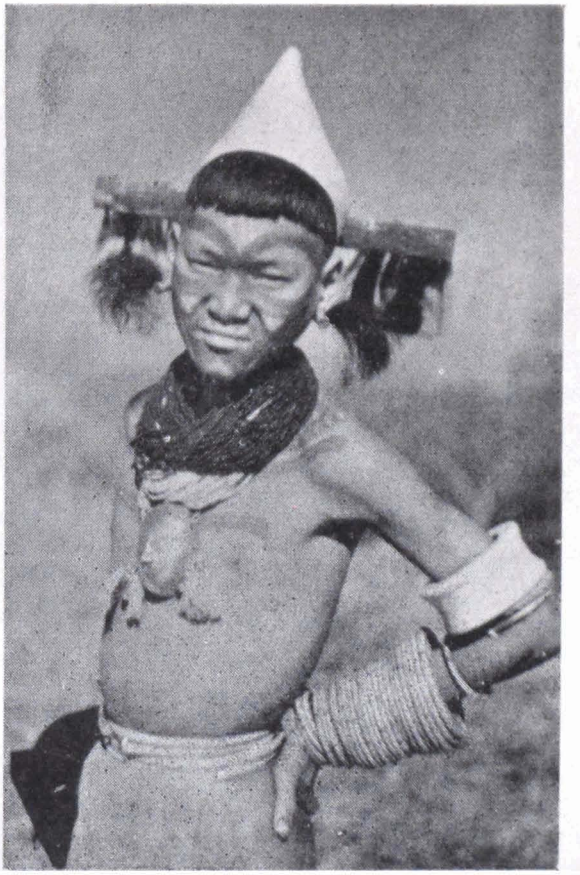
The Konyak village of Wanching with the ridge of Wakching in the background

Men's house in the Konyak village of Tamlu



(*Above*) Ngapnun of Longkhai giving a friend a drink on the way from the spring

(*Right*) Konyak youth with the face tattoo of a head-hunter

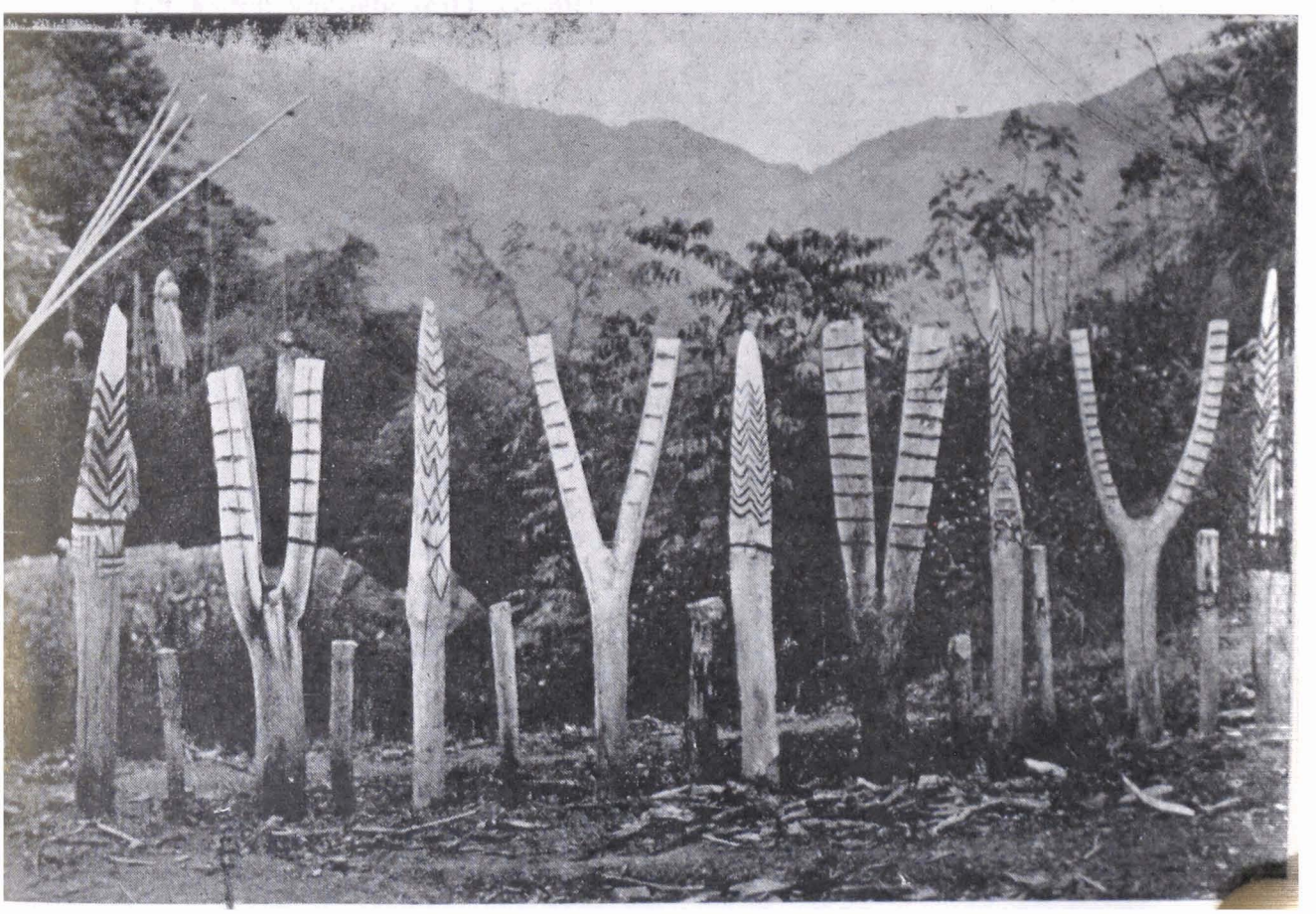


Konyak girls with rain-shields at weeding time

Houses in the Wanchu village of Niaunu

(*Right*) Carved posts of a Konyak man's house

Below) Memorial posts on a Chang grave

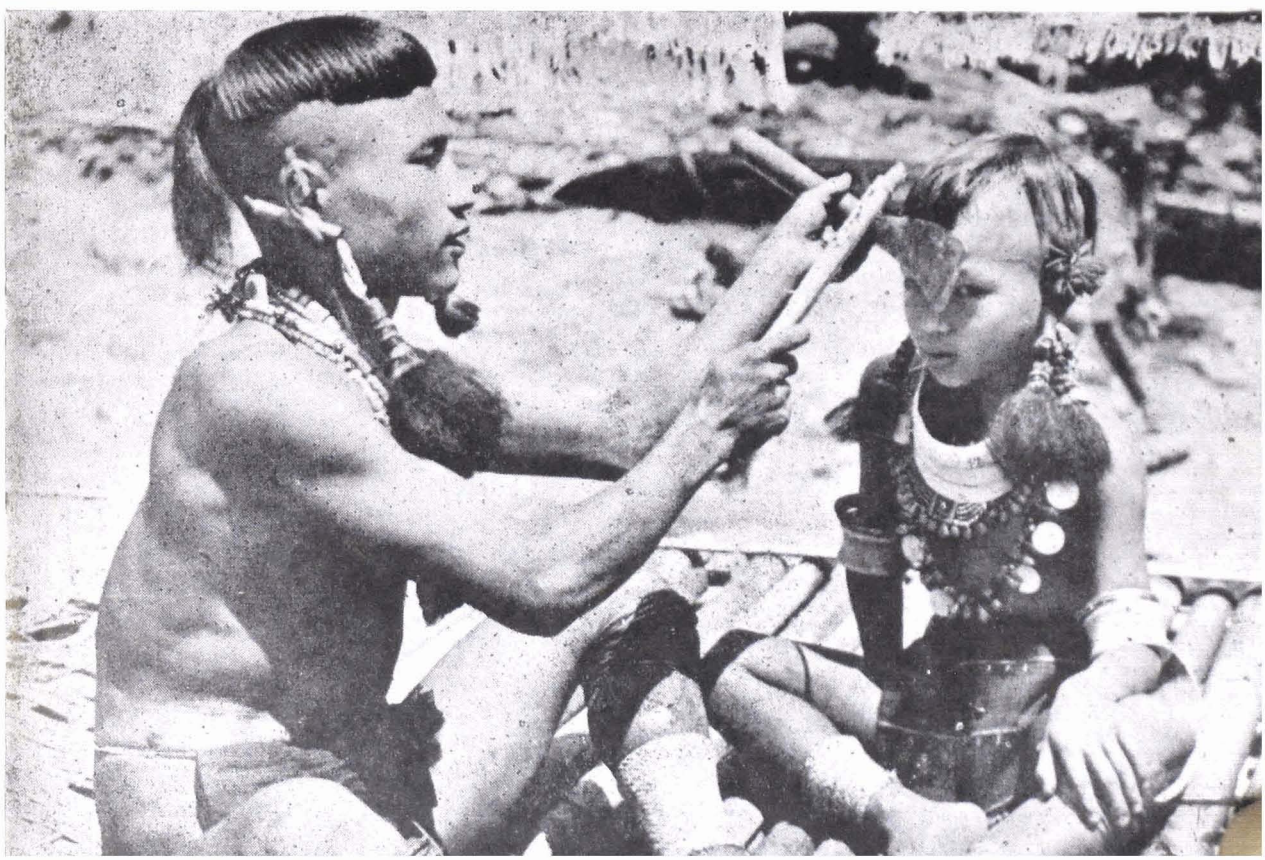


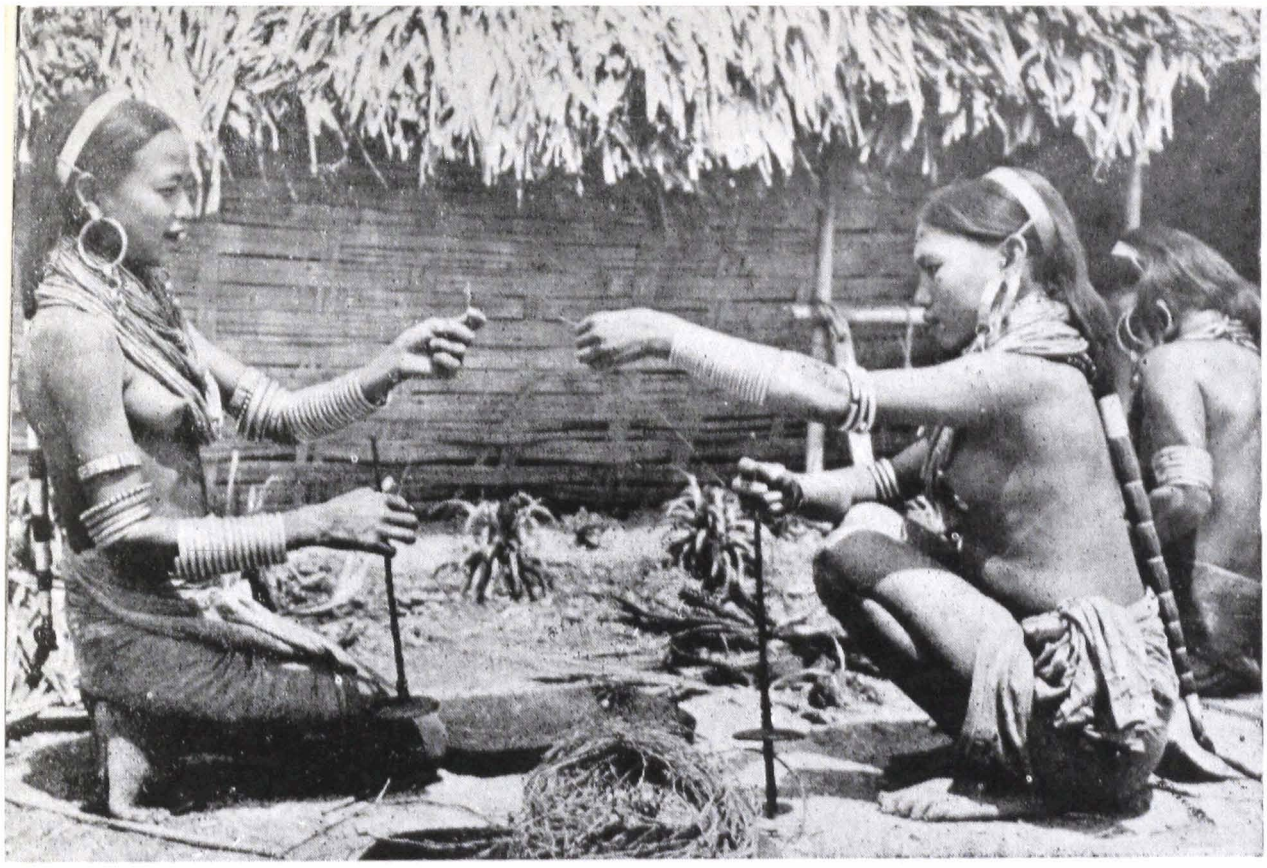
(*Above*) Girls dancing during the spring festival

(*Left*) Carving on the central post of the Ang morung of Longkhai

Stone-circle and houses in the Angami village of Khonoma

Shankok cutting his brother's hair against the sharp edge of a *dao*



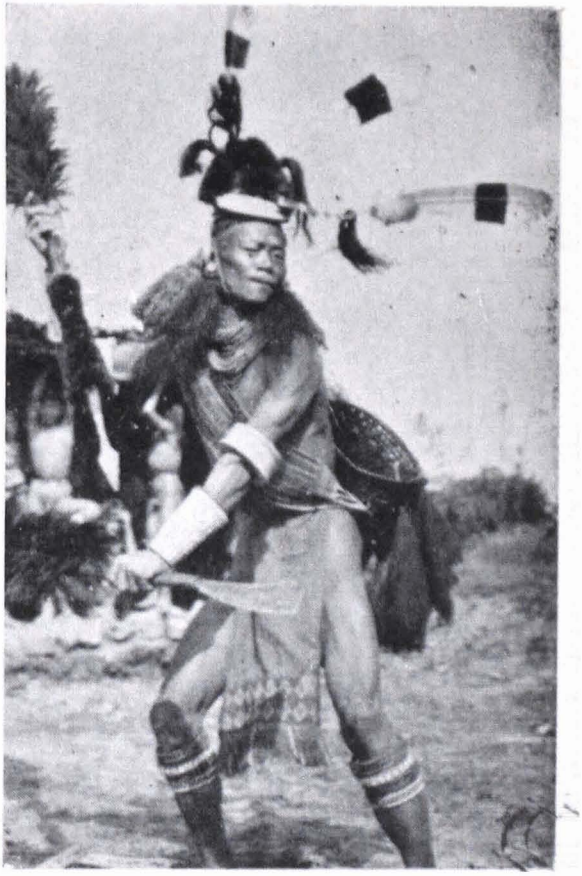


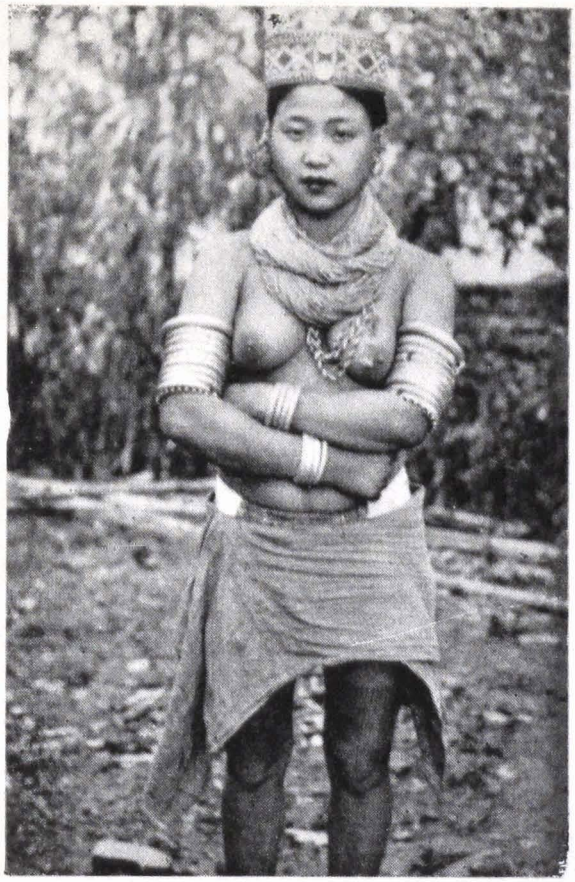
Ngapnun and another Longkhai girl spinning bark fibre

Manwang and his brother with the grave figures they have carved

Head trophies in a men's house at Chingmei

Manwang, the chief of Longkhai, in ceremonial dress





Daughter of the chief of Niaunu

Men of Chingmei in full war dress

Ngapnun, dressed for the spring festival, having her hair brushed

The painted door of a village gate at Khonoma

A classroom in the high school at Wakching in 1970

The great head-hunting dance at Wakching

eighteen

A Skirmish with Head-Hunters

Once more, as the first grey of dawn lightens the sky, we break camp. The porters with the luggage set off for Noklak under a strong escort of sepoys, and we, with forty sepoys, several *dobashi*, and our Chang scouts, climb the hill to Pangsha's colony. We intend to surprise the inhabitants, and if possible to take a few prisoners to use as a pawn in future negotiations for the release of the slave-girl. The burning of the main village was not enough, for as Nakhu said last night: "The houses are burnt, but Pangsha has still all her teeth." He meant, of course, that the warriors had suffered no losses and that their pride and courage were yet unbent.

The path leads through fields already reaped of rice, but the giant millet growing in between the cut stalks stands yet in ear. It is amazingly high, this reddish millet, standing well over ten feet, and affords us excellent cover. As long as the slope lies in the shadow we approach unnoticed. Quite close to the village we have to cross an open clearing, and this is the moment the sun chooses to rise over the ridge of the mountains, shining full in our faces. This morning the sun befriends the Pangsha people, for in the first dazzling blaze, their sentries suddenly catch sight of the enemy so near the gates, and immediately a long-drawn cry comes from the villages. A cry that is echoed all over the valley and relayed along the ridge in the direction of the main village. There must be Pangsha scouts spread over every yard of the mountain.

A stone wall blocks the pathway where it leads over a narrow shoulder, but it is not defended, and the small holes that should be filled with cross-bow arrows are unmanned. It is a matter of moments and a few pushes, and the stones give way under our weight. The inner side is reinforced with banana stalks, for it is an old Naga belief that banana stalks "cool" bullets and render them harmless.

We enter the village, and one glance tells us that it has been

abandoned. The people must have taken to their heels without so much as a thought for anything but their personal safety. Before the village stands a huge log drum and, near by, an erythrina tree, where the trophies of Pangsha's victories hang. I am quite accustomed by now to the sight of human heads with skin and hair, more or less decomposed, but the sight of the not quite disintegrated leg of a child about three years old that hangs among the other trophies, fills me with disgust and fierce indignation. When we found the decorated trophies in Yimpang, and even the bundles of recently captured heads in the main village of Pangsha, I was filled with curiosity and a certain detached excitement, but this small child's foot is somehow another matter. Each one of us sees the foot, but no word passes; we may revenge this child, but the hope of liberating that other small girl still in Pangsha's grip is very remote.

Smoke still rises from the hearth of the houses, and the inhabitants must have dropped everything and run for their lives, for everything is as if they had just left the village to work on the fields. Not so much as a piece of household furniture have they taken with them. Incidentally we notice how poor are the material possessions of the much vaunted Pangsha, the few textiles we find are pieces of a rough stuff woven from bark fibre. Here and there under the bamboo beds ashes still glow, almost dead after their long night's task of keeping the sleeper warm. Matche tells us that according to a peculiar custom girls put glowing ash under their bed as a sign that their lovers may share it with them.

It is a pity that the beautiful carved posts of the men's house must be sacrificed but today the regret of the ethnologist at the destruction of such works of art must once more give way; our *dobashi* are already running from house to house with burning torches and soon the flames seize the dry roofs. It is not long before Pangsha's colony is nothing more than a smoking ruin.

Since Nlamo, now on his way to Noklak with the porters, failed yesterday to bring the heads into camp, I determine to try my luck with the trophies of Pangsha's colony. Quickly I cut four heads from the head-tree and pack them into a carrying-basket that I manage to save from destructions but to have the heads all ready packed and to have them conveyed to Noklak are two quite different things. Not one of the sepoys, the *dobashi* or the Chang

scouts will so much as touch the basket. So, if I am not to fail again in securing my specimens, there is little else to do but to take it on my own shoulders. With great difficulty I hoist the gruesome booty on my back, much to the amusement of the Nagas and the sightly shocked surprise of the sepoys.

Feeling that for the time being the chapter of Pangsha's punishment is closed, we follow the path running along the edge of the ridge that falls steeply away into the valley. The main village is down there in the hollow on our right. Good God! Unbroken chains of fully-armed warriors stream along the path leading from the village, and our eye, following the path up the hill side, discovers that it runs along the mountain half-way up, and eventually crosses our path at right angles. In spite of their spears and their heavy shields, the warriors run with astonishing swiftness, and although they are still a great distance away, and appear only as tiny figures, yet there is something extremely expressive in their movements. Is it their firm determination this time to fight to the death? Their hoarse war cries resound through the air; there is nothing tentative about them, and we are left in little doubt as to the business in hand.

It seems that at last we shall come to blows with Pangsha. Today they will learn that a real fight does not in any way resemble the massacre of women and children they perpetrated in Saochu. But Williams and Mills take a much more serious view of the situation.

"Of course Pangsha will try to cut us off from the river. If they attack in the jungle, the result might be nasty for us. Look there! More and more men are pouring out of the wood—there must be at least six hundred of them."

Six hundred of them! We take stock of our fifty-odd men.

"If we continue on this path, we can't reach the river before them. We must go down this precipice—and as quickly as possible."

Every man turns where he stands and leaves the path to run down the slope, which falling steeply away is almost completely covered with fields. There is no path, but we run at random through the fields of giant millet as fast as our legs will carry us. The unrelenting and elastic stalks break back and hit me in the face, and every few minutes they seem, in some exasperating way, to get entangled in the basket on my back.

We reach the crossing of the path to the village half-way up the hill. There is no time to find out where the enemies are, but we hear them coming up the path, and any moment they will turn the bend of the hill. The way to the river is open. We have only to run straight, almost perpendicularly down. But for that free passage we have paid a high price; the Pangsha men have now an enormous advantage, they are above us, and we hear their war cries coming nearer.

We run on through the millet fields, with the soft earth giving way under our feet. More than once I slip and fall, for it is not easy to run through that forest of millet with a camera and a gun and the uncomfortable basket on my back. This encounter with Pangsha is not exactly as I had imagined it; there is no denying that we are running away.

But who wanted to deny it? If only I could run quicker! The others were surely running faster? There is Smith in front, and there a sepoy. If only we could stick together! This damned millet! You can see nothing at all: hardly more than ten yards ahead. A Chingmei scout passes me. He has dropped every piece of his precious loot from Pangsha and is running for his life. He probably thinks that we have not the slightest chance against this ten-fold superiority in numbers.

Behind us the war cries swell to a roar that I am never likely to forget. They sound hardly human, these passionate, terrifying cries that rise from hundreds of throats. What use are the guns in your hands when you cannot even sight your target in this confounded millet? We hear the enemy, but we will only see him when bullets can no longer prevent a hand-to-hand fight, when the howling hordes surge over us! If only we could reach the hillock that somewhere here ought to interrupt the steep slope of the hill. Two Changs pass me—their faces are alive with terror; the enemy must be close on their heels.

A salvo—bullets whistle over my head. I almost pull up, as I feel the air disturbed in the giant millet above me. Shots in front and the cries of the enemy behind. Who can be firing there in front? Surely the sepoys can't be firing blind? No, they are running much too fast for that. But all is well. The advance-guard have reached the small hillock on the slope, and are firing over our heads at the enemy behind and above us. Thank goodness! But don't shoot too low!

Breathlessly we reach the hillock. The sepoys have stopped firing for the moment, and the enemy seem to have withdrawn. The fire of our vanguard must have broken the wave of the attack only a few seconds before the launching of the first shower of spears. They must have been near! Now the fall of several leaders has stayed the rush, for Nagas depend almost entirely on the leadership of a few champions, and if these fall, the courage of the other warriors evaporates, as the courage of the Philistines at the death of Goliath. If the Pangsha warriors had run blindly on they would have certainly overpowered us.

Now there is not an enemy to be seen, and if I had a word to say regarding our policy, I would stay here on this very convenient hill, in this splendid strategical position, and wait for a second attack. However, Major Williams has good reason to think that the Pangsha warriors will change their tactics and attack us again in the jungle by the crossing of the river. Their numbers are so superior that to surround us would be an easy matter. A quick withdrawal is the only way to avoid any such manoeuvre.

Already we can see the groups of warriors collecting again on the slopes above us, and their battle cry rises once more; but not with the same relentless urgency. It is no doubt tempered by the effect of our bullets, for in the face of our continuous firing they keep at a respectful distance, though always at our heels, as we make for the valley.

Luckily there is only a narrow strip of jungle lining the river bank, and by some special act of providence we hit upon the narrow path that brings us to the bridge. How thankful we are for the open, treeless slope on the other side, where no enemy can approach unseen.

The Pangsha warriors follow us up to the river, and their shouts are anything but flattering. The Chingmei scouts catch some of the remarks and, as we go, they tell of the calls of our pursuers—rather monotonous, since they all harp on the same theme: "First you come to fight with us and now you run away." Well, yes, it is more or less true, but yesterday it was the Pangsha people who had run away, and they had only dared to attack when they found our numbers greatly diminished.

The danger has passed, but in face of the long march to Noklak, we find ourselves rather exhausted. There is still a long climb in the full blaze of the midday sun, and the basket on my shoulders,

which in the excitement of the flight has been only infuriatingly clumsy, becomes suddenly very heavy. It may appear strange that none of the Nagas will carry my heads, but they argue that such a thing is taboo until they really understand how the heads are to be treated. If they are to be considered as captured heads, then it means that each man who touches them may hold the head-hunting ceremony, but he is subject to the strongest taboos until he returns to his own village. If, however, they do not fall under the category of trophies, and their magical forces are already dissipated in the hands of Pangsha, then it is better that they should not touch them in any way. Until the question is seriously discussed and satisfactorily solved, no one will have anything to do with my heads.

Today we are received with great friendliness in Noklak. The people have seen the flames of Pangsha mounting high into the sky, and they have no desire to share the same fate, or perhaps they are secretly relieved that their powerful neighbours have received a blow to their pride. They wait for us at the gate of the village with great mugs of rice-beer, and very grateful we are for a refreshing drink; yet, despite all this outward show, our hosts do not quite trust us, for again there is not a woman or a child to be seen in the whole village.

While Williams and Smith rest in the shadow, drink rice-beer and try to get cool, Mills and I, forgetting our tiredness for the moment, embark on an ethnological tour of the village. Noklak considers the shortest possible line of defence a strategic necessity, and the houses are built closely crowded together. There is hardly a banana bush in the whole village, for in the narrow spaces between the walls there is no room for such luxuries. The houses are all slate-roofed, but the *morung* are thatched with palm leaves, and stand at the entrances to the village. The strongest fortifications lie towards Panso. Between two fences built from the outer ribs of a thorny palm there extend some three or four yards of dense impenetrable thicket, and the only way through is a covered passage with strong wooden walls, so narrow that only men in single file can pass through t o the strong wooden gate.

Now that the excitement is over and our curiosity to see the strange village is somewhat appeased, we notice how exhausted we are. The short way to the camp, which our porters have already made quite comfortable, seems endless, and I can hardly put one

foot in front of the other.

As dusk falls, we hear that men from Ponyo have arrived in Noklak, and we are surprised, for Ponyo lies on the Burman side of the Patkoi mountains, and is a close friend and ally of Pangsha. They have apparently heard of the burning, and have come to pay their friends a visit of condolence. Why they have also come to Noklak is not quite clear but perhaps they want to boast at home about their encounter with white men. Mills invites them to our camp, but it is late in the evening before they appear with a few of the Noklak people. We soon set them at ease, and when they have drunk a little rum they tell us that five Pangsha men were killed in today's fight and many more were wounded. Mills takes this opportunity of using the Ponyo men as ambassadors to Pangsha. He sends them messages, still offering them peace, but demanding the slave-girl. The envoys accompanying her will be assured of a safe conduct, and are to meet us in Chingmei the day after tomorrow. But should Pangsha continue their policy of raiding and slave-hunting, then there were still more bullets in our rifles.

nineteen

Making the Peace

Our spacious camp in Chingmei is untold luxury. After the cramped quarters of the last days we throughly appreciate its comforts, sufficient sleep, and freshly cooked meals. To add to the plenty Noklak has paid up a further fine of one mithan for the blocking of the path on the way to Pangsha; the porters are already roasting the meat over the fires and preparing for a feast, while we indulge in that supreme delicacy, boiled mithan-tail. It is one of Mills' favourite dishes, and after twenty years in the Naga Hills he certainly knows what is good to eat. The succulent meat on the tail vertebrae of one of these huge animals is surprisingly tender, and much more tasty than any ox-tail.

The unusual stillness of the camp, where the porters are also obviously enjoying a rest, is suddenly broken by excited voices, and a *dobashi* rushes into our hut.

"Sah'b, Pangsha men are at the gate!"

We all jump up. No, these Pangsha warriors are not storming the camp. They are the negotiators whom Mills invited to come to Chingmei, and with them are the men from Ponyo. Mills had always been convinced that, in spite of our rapid retreat, Pangsha would take the loss of five of her best warriors and the burning of the village as a bad defeat, and would try to come to terms with us.

The door is opened and the *dobashi* let in the men, one by one, taking away their *dao* as a precaution. Nakhu and Matche are called to serve as interpreters.

Mills' reception of the negotiators in the "mess" is a strange scene. I feel my pulses hammering. There is something solemn and tense in this meeting with men who only two days ago attacked us without the least intention of giving quarter.

Eight men squat in a semi-circle in front of us. Only three are from Pangsha, the others come from Ponyo and Tsawlaw, two villages lying across the Patkoi; and it speaks for their courage that they have once more delivered themselves unnecessarily into

the hands of their allies' enemy, or perhaps they have already discovered that we are not so fearsome as we were painted. However, they seem quite at ease, but the envoys of Pangsha stare gloomily before themselves. One of them is Mongsen, the most famous warrior of Pangsha, and leader of one of the *khel*. The Noklak people have told us how he and Sangting led the raid against Saochu, rivalling each other in the taking of heads, and how Mongsen won, with the proud number of fourteen. But Sangting fell in yesterday's attack, and Mongsen now holds the undisputed place of "first warrior."

His speech is open and dignified. He attempts neither defence nor accusation. What has happened, has happened; we have burnt their village and killed some of their best men—they, too, have tried to kill us. But now they wish to make peace, and so they have come to Chingmei in answer to Mills' message.

Mills replies that peace is also his wish. He bears them no grudge, but Pangsha must swear not to take revenge on any of the villages who have befriended us. It would be futile to exact from Pangsha a promise to desist for ever from all head-hunting, and Mills demands only that in future they shall not raid "this" side, leaving it open what is to happen "that" side, i.e. in the unexplored area to the east. But above all they must return the slave-girl. All the other terms are agreed to, but in this last demand there lies a difficulty, for the Pangsha men assure us that the child has really been sold across the Patkoi through the mediation of Tsawlaw, but they know which village bought her. The transaction must have been carried through shortly before our coming, and in a great hurry, for Mongsen complains that the price is still owing. Well, so much the better; it should be easy to recover the child from a defaulter, and Mongsen promises to bring the slave-child as soon as possible.

The terms of the peace are concluded. Solemnly Mills asks Mongsen once more if he agrees that there should be no more blood between them, and, according to custom drinks a mug of rum touching Mongsen's hand. He passes the mug to Mongsen, who, dipping a small piece of ginger into the rum and throwing it away, empties the mug of the last dregs. The ceremony is repeated with the two other negotiators.

Soon the Pangsha men lose their shyness, and they chatter freely about all the details of the fight. Mongsen tells us that he was

in the front line during the attack, and though four bullets whistled a hair's breadth past him, he remained unharmed because Miils, at their first meeting, when he had acted as Pangsha's envoy, had called him a *lambu*, a sacrosanct ambassador, one who will not be killed. The gods had heard the word, and he had escaped death. His companions smile during this tale in quite a friendly way. They seem to feel quite comfortable talking to their enemies of yesterday. They recount their losses during the fight, which they apparently consider an honest affair, and no cause for recriminations among straightforward men.

Involuntarily I think that we could learn something from men with such magnanimous minds. What a pity it would have been if a man of Mongsen's candidness had fallen victim to a bullet! Until this moment I have seen Pangsha in only the blackest light, but now even the remembrance of that three-year-old child's foot on the head tree is dimmed, and I feel that you could surely make friends with these people just as well as with my Konyaks. They are Nagas, after all, and all Nagas have an amiable side to their character!

Noticing that Mongsen has a burnt foot, Mills has the wound dressed. The foot was burnt, Pangsha's first warrior tells us, when he rushed into the blazing village as soon as we had left, in the attempt to save a pig he had trussed up and hidden in one of the houses. The wound is a bad one. But he led the attack and then limped all the long way to Chingmei with a wound that would have laid any of us up for weeks.

In the course of the conversation we learn the Pangsha people themselves call their village Wailam. They know nothing of the expression "Kalyo Kengyu," and apparently have no tribal name for themselves. They speak a language which, though related to that of Noklak, is different from the Ponyo language. I have the impression that the Ponyo men are not pure Kalyo Kengyus, but probably belong to the southern Konyaks, and in some way have become isolated from the main tribe.

When many mugs of rum have passed between us, we part from the men of Pangsha, Ponyo, and Tsawlaw as friends, and looking at the cordial faces, you would think that the friendship was of much longer standing. The guests are to spend the night in Chingmei, partly in the camp and partly in Chingmak's house in the village; it will probably be late in the night before the groups

round the pots of rice-beer (or rather, here in Chingmei, of millet-beer) will think of going to bed.

We too are stimulated by the conference, and in no little way triumphant; we celebrate the peace with an extra gin-and-bitters. Mills has every reason to be proud of his policy. A great area has been freed from the spectre of slave-raiding, and we can reasonably hope that gradually it will become more and more difficult for the devoteees of human sacrifice in Burma to procure victims so that eventfully the custom will die a perfectly natural death.

In the full light of day we have a better opportunity of observing the men of Ponyo and Tsawlaw. They wear their hair tied up in a knot in exactly the same way as the eastern Konyaks, and their faces, arms, chests, and backs are covered with the most elaborate tattoos. We are astonished to notice that not only on paper but also culturally, the main range of the Patkoi marks the boundary between Assam and Burma. For these men from villages lying on the other side of the mountains, but nevertheless only a short distance from Pangsha, wear the Burmese kerchief on their heads and carry *dao* of a pattern never found in Assam.

When Chingmak had first met the Ponyo men in Noklak, sheltered behind his white friends and bolstered by the defeat of their allies, he had demanded the release of a Chingmei man said to live as a slave in Ponyo, and now the young man is brought to Chingmei. Years ago, he had been sold as a small boy by Panso to Ponyo, but in some miraculous way escaping death he had been adopted by a kind-hearted couple and had grown up as a Ponyo man. He is tattooed and dressed like the other men from Ponyo; he does not show the slightest desire to be "liberated," he speaks only Ponyo, is married to a girl of Ponyo, and apparently lives there as a free and respected citizen, who does not appreciate in the least the idea of being liberated.

As farewell gifts Mills presents the envoys and the other guests with considerable quantities of salt, a highly-valued commodity in these hills and invests the leaders of Pangsha with the red cloths which mark them as the representatives of a village at peace with Government. Greatly satisfied with the result of their mission and their experiences, which will provide enough food for gossip round the hearth fires for many a long day, they all leave the camp.

The main object of our expedition is achieved, but before retur-

ning to Mokokchung, we want to take the opportunity of visiting the famous Panso, a village said to lie beyond Mount Yakko. We are sorry to leave Chingmei and our camp there, for in these last weeks it has stood as a kind of home for us, and I realize that the chances of ever returning are small. All the last days in Chingmei it has been bitterly cold, and as we start early in the morning the ground is covered with hoar-frost. It is the first frost I have seen in these hills, and it dissolves quickly under the first rays of the morning sun.

Chingmak and his sons accompany us, but we must bid farewell to all the other friendly Chingmei people.

twenty

With Pangsha's Enemies

As the crow flies, it is only eight miles from Chingmei to Panso, but in between rises the broad bulk of Mount Yakko, and it takes us three days to skirt the base and make our way up the other side of the hill.

We are not afraid of any resistance, yet the enthusiastic welcome of the inhabitants of Panso takes us completely by surprise. They have seen the smoke of the burning Pangsha in the distance, and are beside themselves with joy at the defeat of their enemies. There is a certain maliciousness in their remarks on Pangsha's ruin when they meet us before the village; and we soon realize that it is not altogether without reason, for early this year a troop of Pangsha men, appearing before the gates of Panso and challenging them to fight, had taken without any losses to themselves no less than twelve heads. The Panso men were inside the strong fortifications of their village; why, then, we asked, had they ventured outside? But Panso prided themselves; they were famous warriors, they said, and could not allow such a challenge to go unanswered. Well, Pangsha had taken twelve heads, but the white men have burnt her to the ground, and she has paid for those last insulting remarks her warriors had thrown over their shoulder as they left: "We only wanted to show you what sort of men we are; you have nothing more to fear, only be careful! Don't follow us." Sadly the men of Panso tell us they had not had the courage to follow and take revenge.

Now we have destroyed their enemies, and the people of Panso joyfully acclaim the victors. They build us a good camp on a nearby hill, and come in a long train bringing pigs, rice-beer, and water, singing all the while a strange work-song that resembles nothing so much as the desperate baaing of lost sheep—so strange a song that even our porters find it funny, and spend a long time trying to imitate it.

When I begin taking a few photographs among the crowd

collected outside the camp, my camera attracts the interest of the Panso men. It is hopeless to try to explain to them exactly what I am doing, but I seize on my green filter as something they might understand, and satisfy their curiosity by letting them look through. The tinted landscape creates great hilarity, and each warrior wants to try, until one man—turning my hand impatiently, the better to see—feels my wrist between his fingers. He finds its thinness much more interesting than the distorted view, and hastens to tell the other bystanders of the curious phenomenon, whereupon they all chatter excitedly and each wants to touch me, and feel my bones for himself. This interest is becoming altogether too personal. And I feel that at any moment these brown hands, clasping heavy *dao*, will itch to test the comparative frailty of my bones. Hastily I make for the camp.

Mills and Williams are horrified when they hear I mingled with the crowd outside the camp and that I aroused such interest among the warriors. More than one man has lost his head in this way; you should not lead Nagas into temptation, they say.

In Panso I have at last an opportunity of collecting some information on the social life of the Kalyo Kengyus. The main settlement is divided into two *khel* or quarters, separated by a narrow corridor. Each of the two *khel* is fortified against the other by a strong palisade forming two sides of a long corridor, and from sentry boxes in high trees guards can watch the movements of their neighbours. It seems that civil war is not an uncommon occurrence, but in contrast with more civilized nations, the men of Panso have wisely invented special weapons for these internal disputes. They are in the habit of using, on such occasions, wooden swords instead of their iron *dao* and protect the head with huge plaited helmets lined with pieces of old cloth. So armed, even the fiercest rivals do each other no serious harm, and superfluous energies find an innocuous outlet.

But these Panso men are not always as unsuccessful as in their recent encounter with Pangsha, nor so harmless as in their internal quarrels. Outside the house of the village dignitary, who functions at all rites connected with head-hunting, more than sixty heads are lined up against the wall. All the trophies of the village, when they have hung sufficiently long on bamboo poles in the open, are brought to his house and kept there. At his death they are ranged on his grave, and his successor begins a new collection.

Apparently this particular dignitary had been in office a long time; sixty heads are not taken in a day.

The great log drum, almost filling the *morung*, is very similar to those we have seen in Pangsha and Noklak. It is a mighty wooden tube, with two small holes instead of a slit in the upper side. Neither Mills nor I have ever seen such an immense drum, for it has a diameter of about four feet, and a man can sit quite comfortably in the mouth.

The great dance in honour of the victors is soon to begin, and a wonderfully colourful crowd gathers on the open space outside the village. The men stand in a long row, stretching from our camp down the slope, and start the dance with slow, measured movements. They wear full ceremonial dress—you might be tempted to describe it as full war-dress, but the Nagas never risk their costly feathers and ornaments in a raid. They treasure them for the glory of the dance. They have conical hats of red and yellow plaited cane, tufted with flaming red goat's hair, and surmounted with two white hornbill feathers striped with black. Warriors who have themselves captured heads are permitted to load their hats with shining mithan horns and hold their hats in place with chin-straps set with tiger claws. Cowrie shells are embroidered on most of the dark blue cloths and the small aprons reaching from the belt to the knee. The broad belt is set with white seeds, and supports a wooden sheath at the back, which takes the long *dao* when it is not in use. In fact, their ceremonial dress is very like that of the Changs, except that, in addition, they wear leggings of bearskin which not only protect the legs against *panji* but complete the harmony of the costume.

In one straight line they move together, slip-step right and slip-step left, and the song they sing, now and during the whole dance, is always the same, and consists of a monotonous rhythmical baaing with a little bark on a high shrill note, only slightly different from the work-song that we had heard in the morning. Sometimes they jump into the air, with both feet together and closed knees, managing this with a precision that would honour a troup of chorus girls, and then once more they relapse into the tediousness of the slip-steps and the bending of the knees. There are none of those temperamental outbursts that characterize the dances of the Konyaks.

Now and again, without leaving the line, the dancers will stop,

and several spectators, hurrying up with bamboo jugs full of rice-beer, will quench their thirst in a most original fashion. A tube stands in each vessel, and the dancers in turn suck up rice-beer without even touching the vessel. Often the dance begins before all have received their full share, and the men bearing the rice-beer will go a little way with them so that the dance is not interrupted.

Long after we have returned to our camp the dance continues, finishing finally with a feast in which Chingmak takes part. It is not until late in the evening that he comes home with a glowing nose and tottering steps. In the morning we hear that he excelled himself the night before, making great plans with his drinking companions. Full of pride at his successful negotiations with Pangsha and Noklak, and stimulated with quantities of rice-beer, unusual even for a Naga chief, he manifested himself as the great diplomat, establishing peace and concluding agreements with other villages, forging alliances and negotiating Panso's relations with their neighbours. But this morning he says he can remember nothing, and when Nakhu calls him to account for his altogether too far-reaching political conceptions he is most astonished by the stories of all these peace plans.

On the way back from Panso, we pass through the village of Sangpurr, once more coming across the forked posts set up at mithan sacrifices by the Changs, Aos, and Semas. Strange that as far as we can ascertain, they are lacking among the Kalyo Kengyus, although they too hold Feasts of Merit. While our way leads through Yimsungr country, first two, and then the next day yet another of our porters pierce their legs on *panji*, those devilish bamboo spikes that here are hidden everywhere in the grass. This time the wounds are serious, and the men have to be carried.

At Chentang we find more than one surprise, and, as after the climax of a drama, all our problems seem to solve themselves at once. The parents of the young slave from Saochu, whom we had long given up as dead, suddenly appear to fetch their daughter. They also bring the news of his wife's escape to the liberated youth, and even the father of the small boy from Kejok has come to fetch his son. All's well that ends well, and the only shadow on the horizon is the uncertainty about the fate of the little girl sold over the mountains. However, Pangsha prove worthy of their new scarlet cloths, and soon Chingmak's men bring the child to Chengtang, where Mills can hand her back to her rejoicing mother.

The Chingmei warriors bring too Pangsha's fine of four mithan and a gift of six eggs—incidentally, not fresh eggs, for they are the same ones that Pangsha had prepared for our first visit. Pangsha sends a message with the fine. They are very proud to be considered "sons" of the Government, but beg us not to return, for as it is, they have a difficult enough time with their wives, who refuse to allow them to rebuild their houses as long as we remain in the neighbourhood. We send them all the necessary assurances, for we understand that even bold Pangsha men may have difficulties with their own wives.

The last stretch of the journey home leads through the land of the Changs, and we camp for two consecutive nights at their great mother-village Tuensang, from which all the other Chang villages are said to have sprung. It has already been visited by several other expeditions, and we find an ancient man sitting outside one of the houses and peacefully smoking his pipe, who can boast of having captured a sepoy's head many years ago. The sepoy had incautiously left the camp alone to fetch water, and this had been too great a temptation for that peaceful old man.

There are bundles of human hair waving from the hats of many of the Tuensang men. It is the hair of the women they have murdered—or seduced. Failing the hair from a captured head, a man may wear the hair of his mistress, but never of his own wife, as an ornament to his head-dress: successes in war and in love seem to be displayed with equal pride.

After several long marches, crossing more than one 5,000 feet ridge, we reach the borders of administered territory and build our last camp by the Dikhu river under the cover of high trees. It is the first time for several weeks that we do not suffer from cold during the night. Our tour is almost at an end, and now we must think of dividing the spoils. We have been presented with more than fifty *dao* in the different villages and we distribute them among the *dobashi* and the leaders of the porters.

But the other part of our booty is much more important and there is a strained tension about the camp until it is known exactly what will be done with the trophies. To their great disappointment, our porters have not taken part in any fight when they could have used their spears and *dao* and thus won a warrior's laurels. The sepoys on the other hand have indisputably killed several Pangsha men, and resourceful jurists among the porters hit upon the

ingenious idea of substituting the heads I robbed from the Pangsha head-tree for those of the killed enemies left lying on the field. It is argued that since they were fairly fresh and had hung only on the head-tree, and not been stored in the *morung*, it is plausible to assume that their inherent "virtue" has not yet been finally absorbed in Pangsha's store of magical power. By this interpretation the value of my heads suddenly mounts, and it is soon apparent that they will never reach any European museum.

By no means all the porters take this point of view. The Lhotas and Rengmas recognize the heads as valuable trophies, and are burning with impatience to receive their share, but the Semas and the Sangtams stand on their dignity. A head that has not been severed from an enemy's body is to them useless for ceremonial purposes.

These discussions naturally make me think of my Wakching friends, and my promise to bring them back a trophy. I wonder which attitude they will take, but since they even substitute wooden models for the heads of fallen foes, I think they will accept the looted Pangsha heads as welcome trophies.

I hand over one of the heads to the Lhotas and Rengmas, telling them to divide it, so that each village should receive a small piece. It is not only the men who have been with us on the Pangsha tour who will thus gain the right to the dress of the head-hunter, but all those who touch the small piece of head with their *dao*. Excitement runs high among the porters; their fellow-villagers will acclaim them as heroes, and the bringing in of the head will be followed by days of feasting.

As we cross the Dikhu next morning, a fine mist lies over the valley, giving the river, with the overhanging trees and boughs and the line of the porters mirrored in the hardly moving water, an ethereal look, almost like a Chinese picture. Long rows of rice-beer pots stand ready in the Ao village of Longmisa to quench the thirst of our porters; in addition, the village has set aside a pig, which Nakhu, as the oldest and most esteemed Naga of our column, kills with the lower end of his spear. Such is the old Ao custom of greeting the home-coming warriors.

We welcome the small corner of civilization in Mokokchung offered by Smith's bungalow. His cook has prepared a marvellous meal, and after so long a time on short rations we eat gluttonously. Here we hear of the abdication of King Edward VIII. The world

and its troubles have caught us again.

Only Smith is to remain in Mokokchung. Mills and Williams must return to Kohima, while before me lies a long march into Konyak country. Once again the evening finds us united over gin-and-bitters. We congratulate each other on our safe return and a tour full of unusual experiences.

twenty-one

Head-Hunting Rites

The news of my coming, and more particularly of the spoils I bring with me, has flown like wildfire through the countryside and it is not long before I realize that it is easier to carry a basket of bread untouched through a hungry crowd than a head trophy through the Naga Hills.

Hardly have I entered the Konyak country, before I am waylaid by young men from Tamlu begging for a piece of head. Exultantly they carry the small piece I hand them over back to their village, singing of the glorious deeds of war, which incidentally they have never performed.

"We are like tigers, terrible to our enemies; like hawks we pursue our enemies. Our enemies tremble and shake. We have captured a head from the village of the enemy . . . ."

Here one breaks off the song and asks me in a whisper: "What was the name of the village, Sahib?"

"Pangsha!"

And then, raising his voice, he sings: ". . . we have captured a head from Pangsha; conquered are the men of Pangsha!"

It is no less grotesque when, shortly after, they ask me whether it is the head of a man or a woman, and close on my answer, follows the pompous announcement that they have captured the head of a man from Pangsha.

Tamlu holds a feast in the evening, but in spite of all the singing and dancing, I feel that here the head-hunting ceremonies, after forty years under British administration, are little more than the enactment of a drama. There are not enough men from the good old days, not enough warriors who possess the rank of head-hunter. The ritual of the ceremony is definitely lacking in the right emotion.

I know there will be dancing and feasting tomorrow too, and since I should like to take some photographs, I ask the *gaonbura* if the boys could start the dance before midday. Of course, they would

be only too happy to dance for me—they would do nothing else the whole day. In the morning they tell me that as soon as the sun rises higher in the sky and the mist withdraws the dance will begin. Two hours pass, and the dancers are said to be prepared and fully dressed, and only hurriedly strengthening themselves with a little refreshment. Apparently they are still indulging in this pleasurable occupation when the sun reaches the apex of his climb and begins his downward journey. Somewhat annoyed, I go to the house of a *gaonbura*, where I interrupt a drinking party with my expostulations. Oh, yes, they say, the dancers are burning to show off their art, and would soon be called together. After yet another hour I meet the same *gaonbura* in the village. He asks me politely and innocently whether he should not hasten to call the dancers, and before which houses would the Sahib like to see the dance? Those who know the Konyaks will not be astonished that much time still elapses before the dance actually begins, and by this time the sun is rapidly sinking.

In my sleep I hear voices in front of my door and, dragging myself out of bed and stepping into the open, I find myself in the midst of my Wakching friends. Shankok is the first to greet me, and there is Dzeamang and many others whose faces I know, but whose names I cannot for the moment remember.

"We have spent the whole night on the way, Sahib; we heard yesterday evening that you were coming, and we set out immediately with torches. We were not even afraid of the tigers in the Dikhu valley."

"But in any case I would have brought you the heads. . . ."

"No, Sahib, that is not the same thing; we ourselves must bring in the heads, as if we were coming from a real raid."

"I see; but shall we divide up the heads here?"

"Yes, yes, Sahib. . . I want a bit. . . and I—you promised me a piece. . . and me too!"

"Sahib, don't give everything to the Wakching people; we are from Namsang and we also want a piece."

"We are from Wanching—Sahib, Sahib—a piece for Wanching."

There is a turmoil of voices, shouting against each other, for boys have come from all the neighbouring villages.

"Now peace! Don't shout all together, and let's sit down and divide up the heads."

I take the heavy *dao* Chingmak gave me in Chingmei, and set

to work. Never had I thought it could be so difficult to hack up a skull.

First I satisfy the boys from each of the villages of Namsang, Kongan, and Wanching, and they go off with the small but precious pieces of bone, beaming with joy. But now I must be more careful with the Wakching people, for I don't want to hurt the feelings of any of my friends.

"Listen a moment, I can't give each of you a separate piece, but each *morung* will receive a piece, and then you can hold separate ceremonies."

The solution is accepted.

"Shankok, your *morung* has just been rebuilt, you are most in need of a head; which piece would you like?"

"The part round the eyes, and there should also be a part of the jaw."

This wish I gratify, but when I propose to give the Balang people a piece from the back of the head, they cry at once: "Not from the back of the head! Not from the back of the head! We too want a piece of the jaw."

Whereupon the people of the Angban and Bala come with the same demands, and I have finally to break into the head I have set aside for the villages north of Wakching, before everyone is satisfied. For the Konyaks believe that the magical powers furthering fertility are not distributed equally over the whole human head, but adhere especially to the parts round the eyes and to the lower jaw.

Immediately after breakfast we start. We are a long procession, for besides the Tamlu porters carrying my luggage, there are all the boys from Wakching and Wanching.

No sooner have we left the village behind than the boys scramble into the nearby palm trees, cutting the young yellow and still unfurled leaves. They fringe them and fasten them to their carrying-baskets in long bundles that wave and flutter as they move, like great gigantic tails, sweeping the ground behind the very small boys. It is a decoration that can be worn only after a successful head-hunt, Shankok explains, and the high, shrill shouts of the boys as they run down the path to the Dikhu river also belong to the ritual of the bringing in of a head.

The hanging bridge has fallen into bad repair since last I was here, and my porters cross over with some anxiety, and careful

not to overburden the frayed cane, leave great distances between each other. But the newly fledged head-hunters find this too slow and too boring; they rush into the river and wade through the water, squatting on the other side while they strengthen themselves with a little boiled rice before the long climb.

Dzeamang and I go together up the hill. He is more talkative than ever. He tells me that he has just married again, his *morung* has just been rebuilt and now he is in possession of a head. Yes, now he can "really jump to the sky." His new wife comes from the neighbouring village of Chingtang, but it would seem that his marital pleasures are as yet of a somewhat speculative nature, for she still lives with her parents, and it is uncertain when she will move to Wakching. As the other boys laughingly tell me later, she probably uses the time very well, and thoroughly enjoys herself with her young friends in Chingtang.

Gradually the bold head-hunters catch up with us, and soon I find myself climbing through high jungle grass at the head of a long procession. Again and again shrill shouts ring out, seeming rather to increase than die down as we climb the innumerable stone steps up to the rest-house of Wanching. Here, we find the smaller boys of Wanching are awaiting their brothers and friends with feather hats and shields. Soon the young heroes are dressed and run with small, dancing steps into the village, where the women and children are gathered together, awaiting tensely the arrival of the procession. The warriors stop under a large tree and form a circle, uttering hoarse cries that swell to a mighty song, full of vigour and strength in its long drawn out notes. An old and completely naked man begins a wild dance. Neither advancing nor retreating, he jumps frantically from left to right, shouting shrilly and swinging his *dao* with movements that appear to challenge a crowd of enemies to fight for life or death.

Then the warriors all go dancing to the house of the chief, but my Wakching friends are anxious to leave. The people in their village wait eagerly for us, and we have still a good two hours to go.

Long before we reach the village we meet the *gaonbura* and the other old men. They give us an overwhelming greeting, and ply me with innumerable questions about the tour against Pangsha and the winning of the heads. I am glad to be in Wakching again, and to exchange the nomadic life of the last weeks for steady work among my Konyaks.

Excitement stirs in the procession as we climb the stone steps. There are large crowds on the resting-place before the village where the warriors have collected, they have put on their dance-hats and the old men wear the head-hunting ornaments of their youth; once more they can be proud of them, for has not the white Sahib kept his word and brought a head to Wakching?

So great is the throng crowding the place, and so loud the whirring of voices, that I almost miss a most important ceremony. The head trophies have been laid down on a particular spot, and the eldest men of each clan solemnly smash a raw egg over the head. The egg is supposed, by sympathetic magic, to blind the relatives of the dead and render them innocuous. Then the clan elders sprinkle a little rice-beer on the heads, murmuring: "May your mother, may your father, may your elder and younger brothers, may they all come and drink our rice-beer, eat our rice; may they all come and eat our meat. May they all come!" Chinyang translates these hardly distinguishable words and adds his explanation: "When we captured heads in my youth, we poured rice-beer into the mouth; today, we have only pieces of bone, so we must pour the rice-beer over them."

These words are believed to compel the souls of the dead to call their relatives, and thus give the Wakching people the chance of capturing still more heads. Let us hope the magic will not succeed this time, for if the Pangsha men come here, I would be sorry for my Wakching friends; I do not want to cast any aspersions on their courage, but I feel they do not realize whom they conjure!

I no longer regret having given up my museum specimens, for the recording of an ancient head-hunting ceremony, so obviously doomed to extinction, is certainly of greater scientific value than a few skulls. The magic formula at the time of feeding the heads has already excited my surprise, for it is with exactly these words that the head-hunters on Taiwan feed the heads of their victims with rice-beer, and thus this Konyak ceremony adds yet another element to the many parallels between the Nagas and the hill-tribes of that distant island.

However, this is hardly the time to dig up ethnological culture-links; the men and boys of each *morung* are already forming processions and heading for the village with solemn chants. An old man with a piece of the head walks ahead, the men beating bronze

gongs and the long train of the young warriors and boys follow. I allow the five processions to pass me on the open space of the Balang morung. How different from the villagers of Tamlu! Here, not a man or a boy is missing, and the expression on their faces is deadly earnest. This is no show for the Wakching men, but a religious ceremony that will bring prosperity to the village and fertility to the fields.

The men of each *morung* dance for a while on the great place outside the chief's house, and then they go to their own men's house, where women wait with bamboos full of water and the young warriors start to wash away the "blood" of their enemies. The older men bind the baskets with the heads to the great log drum, and soon the new warriors begin beating on the huge wooden trunk with such enthusiasm that the mighty rhythm, announcing the bringing in of a head, resounds over the whole country. Each *morung* takes up the same rhythm, and it is late in the night before the thudding of the drums is silenced. When the boys eventually lay down the drum-sticks and go to dance in their *morung*, their places are taken by the young women and girls, and the drum resounds just as loudly for they beat as arduously as the warriors. Their naked breasts tremble and sway with the movements, ever repeated, of striking the drum; milk streams from the full breasts of one young mother, but she does not pay much attention to it or to the sleeping infant on her back.

Night has fallen, and the elders of the Thepong *morung* hang the head in the central hall of the newly built men's house. There can be no better inauguration of a *morung* than this, for although the head of an antelope took the place of a human head at the rebuilding ceremony, the Thepong men are overjoyed at being able to make up the much-regretted deficiency, and the boys dance endlessly in front of the captured head. Over the fires rice-beer is boiling in huge pots, and even the women stroll about in the *morung* which today are open to them, so that they too may join in the singing and dancing. The spirit of the feast takes hold of the whole village, and no one thinks of going to sleep. Who would miss such an event? Years have gone by, and small boys have grown to manhood, without a head being brought to Wakching, and now the drum-houses resound with the full force of the head-hunting rhythm and the good old days seem to have returned.

Wherever I go I am acclaimed the hero of the day, and even

the old women smile at me happily, for have I not brought a head to the village? But happiest of all is my old friend Chinyang; memories of his youth stir in him, and with tears brimming in his eyes he repeats again and again: "Today Wakching is as it was in my young days, and in the days of my fathers."

I would like to stay longer with my friends, for there is much to do at the feast, telling of my adventures, drinking rice-beer, and watching the dancing, but I am tired after the long march, and soon it is only dimly, and in my sleep, that I hear the distant beat of the drum.

After so many nights in different camps, it is good to be back in my comfortable bungalow. I revel in the thought that I will not be woken at the crack of dawn by the sound of bugles and that I will not have to shave and eat a scanty breakfast in a windy shelter before the rising of the sun. Here I breakfast at my leisure, waiting till the sun has graciously warmed the veranda of my bungalow. The Konyaks themselves rise late, and so breakfast is the only meal when I am seldom disturbed by visitors; and to it generally belongs the comfort of reading, for which otherwise I find little time.

But the enjoyment of my first peaceful breakfast is disturbed. Yongem, my faithful water-carrier, appears with something apparently lying heavily on his heart. He comes with a woe begone face and explains that unfortunately there has been some mistake in the distribution of the heads, and it is just his *morung* that has come to grief. When I divided up the heads yesterday morning in Tamlu among the boys of the other *morung*. I did not notice that there was no representative of the Oukheang *morung*, and, packing the heads in a basket, had sent them ahead of me to Wakching. Thus it was that meeting Yongem on the path, I had no piece of the heads with me, and it had been impossible to hand over the Oukheang *morung's* share before we came into the village. The piece Yongem then received was not nearly so valuable as if he had received it on the path and brought it in triumphantly himself, because it does not lend sufficient support to the fiction that he himself is the hero. And there were further complications, for since he had received it in the village, it is difficult to decide whether he might wear the full dress of a head-hunter, and in particular if he might decorate his basket with a monkey's skull.

As consolation he wanted a second piece that he could use at the rebuilding of his *morung* next year, and since he thinks nothing of my objection that the head will be too old by then, I cut him off a small section more—anything to have a little peace.

Life begins to stir in the village. It is taboo to work on the fields today, and after dancing through most of the night, the young people have slept well into the morning. Now they can be seen sitting on the platforms in front of their houses arranging their ornaments for today's feast.

In front of the Bala *morung* the young boys are helping each other to put on their war-paint. Carefully they mark the two or three parallel lines on the breast and back with chalk. There are many different designs for the face. Here you see a boy with huge, spectacle-like paintings, there a boy with small spots on the cheeks and two lines running over the forehead. Even the huge shields of buffalo hide are today covered with chalk designs.

The men shave each other's heads, first wetting the hair with a little cold water to soften it for the razor; they leave a small tuft in the middle, and allow the straight hair to fall forward over the forehead. In front of another *morung* the young people are busy grinding indigo leaves and painting their belts of white, pliable bark with the green juice. It is only when it is cooked that indigo turns blue. The cold crushed leaves produce a green colouring. Strangely enough, there is no word for green in the Konyak language. Red and blue are the only colours used in weaving, and in painting the men's houses, only red, black, and white. You always mention whether a flower is red or blue or yellow, but the greenness of the rest of Nature is taken for granted, and there is no word to describe it. The Naga would never think it necessary to mention that he went through the "green" forest.

The joyous spirit has also taken hold of the women, and although they will only be spectators of the day's dance, they do their best to make themselves beautiful. Most of the shyness of the girls has vanished, and they laugh at me, and make the gestures of cutting off a head. Several of the boys have already completed their toilette, and now they begin to dance in groups of four or five through the village, showing off their beautiful attire. They run through the narrow streets in single file, spreading out on the open spaces to dance with small jumps and rocking movements on the spot, with the rhythmical swinging of shields from the side

over the chest and the simultaneous raising of *dao*.

The sun stands high in the sky, when the men of the Thepong form a procession and walk solemnly to the former house of the chief. This house has long fallen into decay, for the Ang Chinkak, the feckless descendant of a more powerful father, is without any influence and lives in another house; but this is where the ceremonies at the bringing in of the head used to be held, and the men of Wakching will always consider this the ceremonial place. Yesterday they have cleared it of all the overgrowing jungle, and today its prestige is once more established.

Shankok, the so-called captor of the head, walks in front of the procession of young warriors, carrying fully-leaved bamboos. It is as though a whole grove is moving. Behind come the old men and the eldest man of Shankok's clan carrying the head.

A small monolith stands on the ceremonial place; the young warriors quickly and securely bind their bamboos to this stone, and the head is laid in the centre, while Yonglong, a descendant of the village-founder, but otherwise an inconspicuous man, begins the ritual of the ceremony. According to ancient custom, the tongue and ears should be cut from the head and buried under the stone. There are neither tongue nor ears on the heads I have brought to Wakching, but Yonglong generously covers over this deficiency, and continues the ritual with the requisites in hand. Once more the soul of the dead man is bidden to call the souls of all his relations so that they too may fall victims to the Wakching men. Now Yonglong is killing a small chicken and sprinkling the head and the stone with its blood. The intestines show whether the omens are favourable to the future of the Thepong *morung*. The young people end the ceremony with a slow round dance, as the procession of another *morung* arrives, and Yonglong must once more repeat his part of the ceremony.

It is not until late in the afternoon that the great head-hunting dance begins, when every member of the *morung*, from the oldest men to the six-year-old boys, takes part. The men between forty and fifty, who have known the old days, and have captured heads in their youth, proudly put on their head-dresses with the curved horns, carved from the horns of buffaloes. Tassels of long human hair wave from the tips, and in between are fastened masses of different ornaments. Here is plenty of scope for individuality; one

man has fixed two huge hornbill beaks between his horns; another wears a white painted monkey skull.

Shankok stands out from all the other young men of the village. There is none who can compare with the richness of the ornaments he has inherited from the old Shouba. Since the death of his father they have lain useless in the great store-baskets, for until now Shankok had been without the right to the head-hunter's dress. But today he revels in all his long-cherished glory. Six boars' tusks hang round his neck, shell discs cover his ears, and a fortune of yellow stone necklaces, the so-called "spirit money," hangs on his chest. His hat is covered with boars' tusks and with the most beautiful of hornbill feathers.

Even the smallest boys, as yet too young to live in the *morung*, are all dressed up in hats and feathers, and most of them enthusiastically swing *dao* much too large for them. Slowly the dancers pace round the stone circle in front of their *morung*, but they are so many that the younger boys form two concentric circles within that of the older men. The song consists of two parts: the gruff voices of the older men sing a phrase in measured tones, and the shrill voices of the boys join in with hearty shouts. Though these alternate chants follow definite formulae the words are more or less improvised. Side by side with hymns of glory to Wakching and her warriors occur such phrases as "Before we captured many heads, now we may not cut them off ourselves."

The Thepong people leave their own *morung*, and move in turn to the Bala, Balang, Angban and Oukheang, dancing before admiring crowds of girls and women. Each of the other *morung* forms its own procession, dancing independently through the village. It is a gay, colourful, and fantastic mixture of quivering, dazzling white feathers, swaying red goat's hair, and flashing *dao*.

In the old days, after a successful fight, things must have been much like this, and Chinyang's happiness at seeing once more the Wakching of his youth is echoed in me. It is a joy to see the eagerness and enthusiasm with which he instructs the youngsters and the care with which he prompts them with the words of the songs, or shows the right dance steps to a small boy. It has long been a source of worry to the old men, that the younger generation was growing up without the right to the old ceremonial dress of their fathers. Now the danger is banished for some time, for today even the six-year-old boys taking part in the head-hunting dance

acquire the right to wear the head-hunting dress. There are tears in many eyes as the old men watch the roaring and dancing crowds, reviving the happy memories of their own youth; the days of head-hunting seem to have returned, be it only for one glorious month. I am happy too, for helping the younger generation to acquire the dress of their fathers is but small return for all the helpfulness of my Wakching friends.

Today's ceremonies by no means end the head-hunting feast. The trophies must be hung in carrying-baskets adorned with palm-leaves on the ficus tree outside each *morung*, "there to dry and rot," and the final ceremonies will not be held until the fifteenth day of the coming lunar month, when the skull will be once more fed, and finally stored in the ancestral houses.

The weeks before this final feast are full of preparations. In threes and fours the young men visit the neighbouring villages. They must barter pigs for the forthcoming feast, and those who have not inherited their ceremonial dress from their fathers must make haste either to buy or to prepare the necessary ornaments. Much that belongs to the dress of a man of head-hunting rank is not manufactured in Wakching, and the villages in the east, who sell plaited dance-hats with goat's hair plumes, ceremonial spears and *dao* handles, and a special kind of dance-basket experience a period of roaring trade. But money must be found for these transactions, and the Wakching people carry their *pan* leaves and plaited mats to the markets of the plains.

Thus the bringing in of a head not only furthers in a magical way the fertility of the village, but also in a more concrete manner acts as an incentive to trade and production. In fact, the prohibition of head-hunting deprives the Nagas, not only of an exciting sport, but also of a stimulant to economic effort. In the life of primitive tribes every institution is linked so closely with the whole social structure that any enforced infringement has more far-reaching consequences than it is possible to foresee without intimate knowledge of the whole social and economic organism.

The feasts in Wakching are not the only head-hunting ceremonies I witness. Messengers from the other Konyak villages in administered territory have besieged my bungalow for days with petitions for pieces of the precious heads, but I do not want to hand over their shares at once, for I know that they will all hurry home to their villages and all hold their ceremonies at the same time.

A tour of the villages in the east appeals to me much more. Then I can bring the trophies personally, and learn to know the differences between the various celebrations. This is not at all to the taste of the heroes, and they sulk on the veranda of my bungalow. In their own minds they see themselves already running home with the heads, when the whole village would welcome them as heroes, and now no amount of persuasion or explanations as to why they must have the head at once can change the Sahib's mind.

That I want to keep one of the trophies is incomprehensible to Shankok. He has always heard that white men don't hunt heads.

"Why don't you give us this head too? It would be so useful to us here in Wakching, and you don't need it."

"Look Shankok, I want to take this head home myself; I have divided all the others up, but this one I want."

"What will you do with the head at home? You don't celebrate any feasts with heads."

"For ceremonies such as yours, of course I don't need it. But think, what would the girls of my village say if I returned after a whole year in a foreign land without a head? They would not believe I had ever marched against Pangsha, and they would not consider me a real man."

This explanation Shankok understands. "Well, if you need the head for that reason, then I won't take it away from you." And laughingly he added, "Perhaps you will even find a wife—when you go home with a Pangsha head." He never understood why I was not married.

Once more I am in Longkhai. The light of the flickering fire plays on brown figures, crowded round the hearth, but does not illuminate the whole of the huge hall. Only the contours of the great wooden throne are recognizable in the gloom. But the throne is empty, the night is cool, and Mauwang sits with us near the fire, where a pot of red rice steams on three stones. Mauwang's half-brother lifts the pot off the fire, and with a long bamboo ladle heaps the rice on to the banana leaves, one set between every two men; and then distributes the thick taro mash. Conversation ceases. Squatting back on their heels, the men shove huge balls of rice dipped in taro into their mouths. Only Mauwang has a leaf to himself, for he belongs to the great Ang class and must not stain the purity of his rank by eating with other men—no, not

even with his half-brother. In a few minutes the huge heaps have disappeared and the men pour water over their hands and begin to prepare *pan* leaves with chalk and aromatic bark, ready for chewing.

Now is the time to speak, and with serious faces the men listen to my account of the march against Pangsha, the fight, and the capture of the head trophies. None of them has ever seen that country, but wild rumours of slave-raids and human sacrifice have sometimes reached their ears, and now, when they hear of the children abducted from their parents, they do not spare expressions of indignation at the inhumanity of the evil men beyond the mountains. However far you wander, even if it be to the ends of the earth, people will always consider themselves the personification of all virtue, and attribute to their neighbours all that they consider bad or despicable. The slave-raider horrifies the head-hunter just as much as the head-hunter horrifies his more peaceful neighbours.

Suddenly comes the sound of music. What is that song out there in the night? Stepping into the open, I see the young men of the village approaching with measured steps. The rising moon glitters on the broad blades of the *dao*, and the hornbill feathers on the hats shine white in her light. The boys are forming a circle on the place in front of the chief's house; already the song is rising, knees bend in rhythm, and the ceremonial dance begins. I am no longer alone watching, for the chief and the men of his house stand near me, and in a moment a crowd of women and girls emerge from the darkness. Why are they all looking so expectantly at me? A young man leaves the circle of dancers—he is coming towards me.

"Friend, you must dance too," he urges me. "You have brought us the head. We are singing of the defeat of your enemies. We all want you to dance with us!" It is quite a natural thought, for I am considered the real head-hunter, and if I refuse to dance I will shake the people's confidence in me, the confidence I need so much. Already an old woman is plucking at my sleeve and showing me with gestures that I should join the dance.

In the hall of the chief's house I remember having seen a great *dao*, tufted with red and black goat's hair. I fetch it from the wall, for if I am to dance, I must swing the weapon due to my assumed rank as head-hunter, and so armed I slip into the rank of the

dancers. Not one of the boys shows that there is anything unusual about this new performer, and they continue the dance without a pause. Only through the crowd of women passes an astonished murmur.

The dance is not difficult. A simple sequence of steps, endlessly repeated, but the dancers bend their knees on every beat and raise their heavy *dao* in their right hands. After a short time my knees and arms ache, but the strong rhythm of the song irresistibly compels me to continue.

The girls have prepared small parcels of *pan* leaves to chew, and they press them into the hands of their friends as they dance. I too find a parcel being pressed into my hand, and looking round I find that the principal wife of Mauwang has shown me a sign of favour by offering me betel. Whether for good or evil, I must put it into my mouth. It has a sharp, aromatic taste, not altogether unpleasant, reminding me faintly of pine needles, but the astonishing thing is how strongly it stimulates the flow of saliva. In a few minutes I must follow the example of the other dancers, spitting again and again.

Is it the betel which holds in abeyance the tiredness and aching of arms and knees, or is it the suggested strength and endurance of the rhythm? Although the words are strange, I do my best to join in the melody of the song that swings the dance and conjures up visions of fights and heroes. Voices carry far into the night, and the rhythm that they bear resounds in the darkness, gripping the singers and blending them one and all, till they finally merge in the unity of the dance. This rhythm is more than art, it is the voice of man's primeval instinct, the revelation of the all-embracing rhythm of growth and decay, of love, battle, and death. The pallid skulls watching the dance from the front of the *morung* are also symbols of this harmonious alternation of death and life, life and death; brought home in triumph from countless raids, they are in death magically linked with the happiness and prosperity of the village.

Is it only man who seems suddenly possessed by this all-overpowering rhythm? Are not the white clouds, sweeping over the moon's face before a mighty wind, is not this play of light and shade in the heavens, a part of this same rhythm? Song and dance have become one, and they are one, too, with the rustle of the dark tops of the palms, the wild flaming fire, and the distant

outlines of the mountain peaks.

The ranks of the dancers break at last; brandishing their *dao* and uttering shrill war-cries, they rush round the place, ending with a long-drawn howl. I am exhausted and suddenly so dizzy that I have to lean against a house-post. Now that the tension is past, I look at my watch. We have danced more than two hours without stopping. I am suddenly glad that my bed is not so very far away.

From Longkhai I go to Hungphoi, Wangla, and Oting, and wherever I arrive with the pieces of the Pangsha heads, there is occasion for elaborate ceremonies.

During the feasts it is not always easy to distinguish between the traditional songs from ancestral times and the many improvisations. My notebooks are full of fragments, many almost impossible to understand. Often even the Konyaks themselves do not know the exact meaning of the individual words, for the ancient language of songs is very different from the language in everyday use. Yet it is no dead idiom preserved only in traditional formulas, for today the young men and women still compose new songs in the same stereotyped phrases, though they are unable to give a word-for-word translation. In Hungphoi I manage laboriously to write down one complete song, thinking that I have captured on paper another part of the old head-hunting ritual. However, with the help of Chingai's word-for-word translation into Assamese, I learn that it is only a song about myself and runs: "The Sahib came as the wind, as the storm is he over our land; he brings heads to us all, all men give him thanks. Here stay the heads; from Pangsha are the slaughtered enemies."

twenty-two

Love and Poetry

To record ceremonies and ritual, to discover the basic elements of a tribe's social structure, and to learn of myths and religious beliefs, is easy compared to the task of gaining an insight into the psychological and emotional relations between individuals and of understanding a people's attitude to fundamental human problems. At first a stranger among a primitive tribe is so much the centre of interest and colours by the very attention he attracts every situation to such an extent, that he has little chance of observing the people's normal reactions to events belonging to their own sphere of life. Unless he is particularly unlucky or the village where he stays has had bad experiences with outsiders, he will soon find men prepared to tell him a good deal about their work and their possessions, about customs, rites and festivals and perhaps also about the traditions and history of their village or tribe. But the subjects touching the individual man and woman most intimately, those joys, hopes and disappointments which affect the most primitive no less than the most civilized man, they are not likely to discuss with a stranger.

This was exactly what happened in Wakching. The *gaonbura* were only too pleased to tell me of their customs—all rather better than in other villages—the glorious history of Wakching, and the exploits of her warriors in former days, the system of alliances by which even today they receive substantial tributes from smaller villages, and above all their agricultural work, a subject of always engrossing interest. But several months passed, before the one or other man began to speak of the things that lay nearest his heart. But now I have brought the Pangsha heads the ice is broken, and I feel that I am gradually getting to know the Konyaks.

Of all the men of Wakching, I am fondest of Shankok, the son of the late Shouba. Often I go with him to the fields or to hunt for green pigeons in the palm groves, and many an evening he will sit for hours on my veranda talking of the events of the day and

our own personal experiences and reactions. I could not hope to find a more ideal companion! Shankok is never sulky or morose, he is always eager to tell me of anything I want to know, or to show me how things are done and why, and I am quite at home in his house, walking in and out at any hour of the day, almost as though it were my own.

Last year, Shouba, Shankok's father, died. He was the richest man in the village, and left a huge fortune, which Shankok, as his eldest son, inherited. His two hundred and fifty fields lie strewn over the Wakching land, and this year, he tells me, his wealth of rice and millet fills four granaries. Shankok is popular for there is always a place at his hearth for the hungry, and during the great feasts his house is full from morning to night.

However, even among the Konyaks wealth carries its burden, and in these first days of spring, Shankok, despite all his riches, is not happy. His heart aches for his love Shikna, and his spirit revolts against a fate, which would be considered cruel in any society.

When Shankok was still a boy, his father had married him to Shonga, the daughter of a rich man of the Bala *morung*. The girl was already full-grown at the time, and her father had hesitated to give her in marriage to so young a boy. But the old Shouba had overridden his objection, promising that if the marriage broke up, Shonga should receive heavy compensation.

The boy Shankok was not greatly interested in this marriage, for according to Konyak custom Shonga stayed in the house of her parents as long as she had no child. She was a pretty girl, and had no lack of lovers. No doubt it mattered little to her that so many years must elapse before the consummation of her marriage. In time she bore a son, and should have moved to her husband's house, but the child died, and she remained with her parents, continuing her love affair with one of the boys of the Thepong *morung*. About eight years ago she bore yet another child, this time a girl, and then went to live in Shouba's house, under the same roof as Shankok.

By this time Shankok had grown to manhood, and thus nothing stood in the way of his married life, except that he just was not interested in his wife. He could not help it if she lived in the same house, for there his father was master, but to lie with her was different; no one could force him to do that. He simply ignored

her, looking straight through her as though she had no more substance than the air around her, and never addressed her with so much as a word.

The passing of the years saw no slackening in Shankok's resolve. He did not love Shonga, he could not bring himself to be her husband, and therefore he continued to lead the gay and charming life of a bachelor in Wakching. This suited him exactly, for Shankok himself is gay and charming, and why should he spoil the best years of his youth? He did not foreswear love because he had a wife ten years older than himself. There were plenty of pretty girls in Wakching, only too happy to yield to his persuasions, and the years that have passed since his growing up have been full of light-hearted frivolity and light-hearted affection.

When the old Shouba died last year, the position changed but little. Shankok is now head of the house, and he could divorce Shonga if he wished, but his mother still creates difficulties. She is a dignified and highly energetic lady, and opposes such a drastic measure; and Shankok himself shuns the scandal and the payment of the colossal fine.

Even now he takes no notice of Shonga. He does not sleep in his own house, but as night falls he meets his love and together they go to the granaries on the outskirts of the village. His love is called Shikna, and ever since I came to Wakching their love has blossomed like the rice in the fields, and the nights have been full of joy and happiness. Their love is an open secret, but during the day they are never seen together, and if by chance they meet, hardly a word passes between them. But every evening Shankok goes to the house of the Balang girls, where Shikna sings and makes merry with her friends, and together they slip away disappearing among the shadows of a granary. In former years, Shankok would take his loves to his own granaries but now he has given that up, and goes where he is less likely to be recognized, for it once happened that his wife Shonga followed him, and tore him from his sweet dreams with a flood of insults; on that occasion he had not been lazy in retaliating and had continued the night with his love, but he is careful that no such unwelcome disturbance should recur.

Alas! the weeks of love for Shankok and Shikna are numbered, for Shikna is expecting a child, and as soon as it is born she will have to move into the house of her husband, and will be lost to

Shankok. "It is always so," complains Shankok sadly. "Whenever I love a girl she immediately becomes pregnant. There are already two of my children growing up in the houses of other men, but the child in my house, the small daughter of my wife, is not mine." Every man in the village knows who the real father is, but it is Shankok who is considered her lawful father; she belongs to his clan and he must look after her.

But much more tormenting that the thought of his children growing up as those of other men—after all, quite a common occurrence among the Konyaks—is the loss of his beloved Shikna. He assures me that he will never love another girl as he loves Shikna. For her sake he gave up an affair with Henlong, whom I think the most beautiful girl in the whole village; true, he had tried to carry on both affairs at once, but before long Henlong noticed his unfaithfulness, and bade him choose between her and Shikna. He chose Shikna; and with her he has been happy—happier than he could have imagined; but now she was going to have a child and would be lost to him.

There was only one way out of the situation. He would have to divorce his wife, richly compensating her family for the insult. He would have to pay Shikna's husband a large enough fine to compensate him for the bride-price he had paid and for the expenses incurred at the wedding. In addition, he would have to pull down his house and build it anew, for it is considered wrong to bring a second wife to the house where the first has lived.

But these are not the only obstacles. His mother tells him she will not live under the same roof as a new wife and his relations will certainly reproach him for squandering the family fortune on his love. Yet, there are many other Wakching men separated from their wives, and even his own father Shouba only married his mother after divorcing his first wife. But Shankok is bound by the fetters of his own riches; the relatives of his wife demand an an unheard of fine, and the men of the village council, whose task it is to pass judgement in all such cases, are trying to line their pockets at his expense.

"I myself don't know what to do—sometimes I think so, and then I think so. It tears me in both directions! To go to war—to fight, even to die, that does not frighten me. But all these negotiations! Today discussions, tomorrow discussions, day after day shouting and quarrelling in my own house—that I am afraid of."

Shankok's is not a fighting nature, at heart he is too sensitive; and the Wakching people feel this too, for when I talk to the old men of the possibility of Shankok's divorce, they remark, and perhaps not unjustly: "Shankok is no 'he-man' or he would have divorced his wife long ago, and paid the fine to her relations."

Neither is it avarice that makes Shankok shun the cost of the proceedings—no one can be more generous—but he thinks of his four younger brothers, all dependent on him, and hesitates to encroach on their inheritance. He is the first-born, and the sole heir to old Shouba's land, but when his brothers marry and build their own house he must give them enough land for their needs.

In spite of all these troubles, Shankok retains his good humour, and I am often astounded how quickly a mood of deep depression can change and how he will once more laugh heartily over some joke. His love for Shikna and his sorrow at losing her do not in any way dim Shankok's appreciation of the charms of other pretty girls, and when we go together to Chingtang for the celebrations of the Ou-ling-bu, when the leafless branches of the high trees are covered with white blossoms, I notice that it is not long before he picks one from the circle of dancers. I find her very pretty too, with a narrow, unusual face, and Shankok praises her smallness, which is considered beautiful among Konyaks.

He shows me the room in the chief's house where the girls sleep, each in her own tiny compartment, each on her own small bench, which looks narrow even for one, but which, Shankok assures me, is wide enough for two. Completely enclosed, these small compartments give on to a corridor, but the entrance is so narrow that the girls can easily shut it to unwanted visitors. Yet it does sometimes happen that under the cloak of night strange boys slip in and dally a while with by no means reluctant partners. If no word passes and the dark throws no betraying shadow, they leave unrecognized, and a girl of Chingtang may thus find herself with child, unaware of the father's identity. In such a case, Shankok tells me, a clever girl will entice a rich youth into her chamber, but instead of letting go in secrecy, will hold him tightly, screaming at the top of her voice, so that all the members of the Ang family come to see what is happening. The sly maid then accuses the unfortunate lover, caught like Ares in the net of Hephaestos, to be the father of her unborn child. Circumstances speak all too plainly, and there is nothing left for him to do but marry the girl

or pay a fat fine.

The next morning, Shankok tells me with great pride how he has really conquered the little one with the merry eyes, and how he has exercised his right as member of a great and strong village to throw out a Chingtang boy, also courting the favours of the girl. The Chingtang people, who in former times enjoyed the protection of Wakching, even today recognize the overlordship of the Thepong *morung*, and pay a considerable tribute. To enjoy the favours of the girls of Chingtang is one of the privileges accorded to Thepong men, and though the girls are not compelled to comply, they are seldom hard-hearted enough to allow the boys, who have come all the long way from Wakching, to go home uncomforted. Shankok, does not consider his adventure in Chingtang in any way unfaithfulness to Shikna. To sleep with a pretty girl of a neighbouring village at the Spring Festival is the most natural thing in the world, and has little to do with his love for Shikna.

Several weeks latter Shankok appears in the evening, his face full of despair. I understand at once what has happened: Shikna has borne her child, and is already in the house of her legitimate husband. They met under the moon, the night before last, but yesterday when he went to the Balang girls' dormitory he heard the other girls talking among themselves of the birth of Shikna's child; sad and ashamed, he turned away, without even asking whether it was a boy or a girl.

"Then I went to the *morung*, but no sleep came the whole night. It hurts, if we have to separate so suddenly. We were so long together. Like brothers, we helped each other. Like father and child we were together. This morning I went with my *morung* friends to the fields. They did not yet know of the coming of Shikna's child, but they all asked me what was the matter. 'What is the matter with Shankok?' they said. 'He doesn't talk, no word comes out of his mouth. Are you ill, Shankok?' So they all asked me, but I was ashamed to tell them. The whole day I can think of nothing else. Alone, how shall I go to sleep in the *morung*?

When I ask him if he and Shikna might ever meet again, he replies apathetically that even if they meet by day, they will be too shy to speak to each other, and now they can no longer go together at night. Of course, he says, it is possible to meet even a

"woman in her husband's house," in some far away granary, but such fleeting moments are not the real thing, and there is always the danger of being pounced on by the husband or his friends.

I try to cheer Shankok, and a few days later I suggest that he should seek among the girls in Wakching for another love, but he shows very little interest. "A new girl cannot be as Shikna; with no other girl could I get on so well. What I said entered her head, and her words easily entered my head; what shall I talk of with a new girl? It can never be as with Shikna."

Some time ago I happened to take a photograph of Shikna, and I gave a copy to Shankok. He fixes it to a kind of wooden back, so that he can always carry it with him and keep it in his bag. Gradually, however, the solitary life begins to pall, and in spite of his first scruples Shankok sets about looking for a new girl. But it is not so easy, for all his old acquaintances have married long ago, and the younger girls, who have not grown up with him, or who have only known him as their elder sisters' friend, are afraid to trust a married man. So he spends long, boring nights alone in the *morung*, and he laughingly remarks that this is turning his face quite "brown and ugly." Only when you sleep with a girl, Shankok says, does it remain beautiful and reddish.

Considering the sexual freedom among the unmarried and even the young married couples, you would think that no Konyak should ever be sex- starved or suffer from repressions resulting from enforced continence. Yet erotic dreams—so often ascribed to sexual frustration—seem to be fairly frequent, and Shankok tells me that he often dreams of making love not only to the girls of the other *morung* (who are his legitimate partners for flirtations and marriage), but also to girls of his own *morung*, and clan, and even his own sisters. He thought it himself rather odd that sometimes he dreamt of sleeping with elderly women and as he added with a wry smile, even with his much despised own wife, whom in reality he has never touched. A psychoanalyst would find an interesting field among the Konyaks, and I would not be surprised if research in a society so different from those of Europe would lead to unexpected results.

We would of course, be quite wrong to assume that because the Konyaks set no value on virginity and are indifferent to the amorous adventures of childless married women, their society lacks restrictions in the sexual sphere. Far from being promiscuous, the

Konyak has his own etiquette in regard to matters of sex. I often noticed that within the domestic circle even the faintest allusion to sex causes a man embarrassment, and my most intimate friends shut up whenever I forget this prejudice and broach the tabooed subject in their houses. But alone or in other company they will without the slightest hesitation speak and joke about the most intimate matters. Soon I realized that a man avoids references to anything connected with sex only in front of women of his own exogamous unit, and particularly before his own mother or sisters. It is also considered tactless to talk to a man about the love affairs of girls of his own clan, but this taboo is less strict and when there is a scandal or a break of the rules of exogamy the elders may in the deliberations of the village tribunal have to discuss the misconduct of girls of their own group.

Between men and women of intermarrying clans or *morung*, there prevails on the other hand the fullest freedom to "talk sex" and jokes with which the young people amuse each other at the nightly gatherings in the girls' clubs are often exceedingly risque and crude. Thus we find that the Konyak—like many a man of more civilized lands—adjusts his conversation to his company, at times indulging in the most ribald talk and at times covering sex with prudish silence.

For a young Konyak the girls of his village fall within two classes: potential mates with whom he may flirt and joke, and the girls of his own *morung* or *morung* group, whom he has to treat like sisters and in whose presence he is not to mention any sexual matters. You would think that daily contact with a large number of attractive young girls, ever present in the village and yet placed out of reach by the strongest of taboos, would give rise to many a secret and hopeless romance. Shankok's dreams of adventures with such 'forbidden' girls are perhaps the unconscious reaction to this system, and there can be no doubt that incest, although one of the most serious social crimes, is not without romantic associations. The incestuous love of a brother and sister—standing here perhaps for any couple thwarted in love by the rules of exogamy—is the subject of a short, terse song:

Yinglong and Liwang
Dearly loved each other.
Loving they lay together,

Red as the leaf of the *ou-bou* tree,
Flamed love and desire.
On the paths to the village,
The two lit fires,
Skywards, upwards curling,
The smoke of the fires united,
And mingled, never to part.

In this poem the love of Yinglong and her brother Liwang is not condemned but idealized. Happy fulfilment of so unorthodox a passion was impossible and the lovers were doomed. But before they died, they lit fires on two paths leading in opposite directions from Wakching, and the smoke rising in two columns met and mingled over the village, and in it the lovers were forever united.

Poems and song give us often a clearer insight into a people's soul than the most lengthy discussions, and in the poetry of the Konyaks lie certain important clues to their philosophy of life. But the recording and translation of their innumerable songs meets with peculiar difficulties. Konyak, as other languages of the Tibeto-Burman group, has a complicated tonal system. Nagas of neighbouring tribes comment on the great difference between the Konyak dialects and their own languages: indeed I have rarely met a non-Konyak Naga who could converse in Konyak, and after a year's stay in a Konyak village my Lhota servants had picked up hardly a dozen Konyak phrases.

Though I recorded the outline of a grammar and a vocabulary of the dialect spoken in Wakching as well as a great number of texts, my knowledge of the language remained very superficial and throughout my work I conversed in Naga-Assamese, the *lingua franca* of the Naga Hills. It was also in this language that the texts of songs were translated to me, and I have little doubt that the translations are no more satisfactory than would be, say, a translation of Li-ta-po's poems through the medium of pidgin English. In many cases it was impossible to ascertain the exact meaning of a word or a phrase, and this was not only due to the limitations of Naga-Assamese, but also to the fact that the poetical language of the Konyaks is very different from the idiom in daily use. And just as the spoken language varies from village to village so greatly that within a radius of ten miles one may find three distinct dialects, so too differ the poetical idioms not only of villages,

but even of individual *morung*. Thus many songs are fully understandable only to a limited circle and even the singers can often not explain the meaning of each word. "This is the way we sing," they say, "but in speaking we never use these words, and we cannot tell exactly what they mean."

Yet songs are the principle and recognized medium through which the individual as well as the group express their most intense emotions. At an early age Konyak boys and girls receive their first training in singing; they are taught not so much by their parents, but by the older members of their *morung*. All the great feasts are occasions for singing, and every night the boys visit the girls in their dormitories, and there they spend hours in singing and friendly talk. Small boys of eight or ten already join in these visits, but they return later in the evening to their own *morung*, while the older boys stay on in the girls' dormitory or seek the secrecy of a granary on the outskirts of the village where they can be alone with their loves. And when at dusk the young people return from work on the fields they assemble on the raised platforms specially built for this purpose at all the entrances to the village: boys and girls, leaning affectionately against each other, sing alternative songs, which though following traditional lines and couched in archaic poetical language, are often spontaneous compositions. Boys and girls sing in turn, each vying with the other in appropriate responses, and their verses, sometimes sentimental, sometimes taunting, always play on the inexhaustible theme of love. Many songs are straightforward descriptions of the usual occurrences in the Konyak's daily life, and make to us, who are denied the full appreciation of their poetical language, no very great appeal. Such a song is the following:

To the village, to the girl's house
To our girl friends, we go.
Of food we don't think,
Of drink we don't think;
For love alone we have come;
Walking we come,
Walking we go.

This song needs no explanation; the boys of the *morung* which lies usually near one of the village gates, go through the village to

a dormitory of girls belonging to another *morung*-group. Usually they are welcome, but sometimes they find the hospitable girls entertaining young men of another village. Such is the situation depicted in the following song:

Our girl friends
The red berries of the *ben* tree
Many berries on the branches.
Porcupine and hedgehog
Come to eat the berries.
From the Dikhu valley, from the far-off land,
Small hornbills come.
Great hornbills come,
High in the tree-tops they eat the berries.
We, boys of our *morung*
We, like the *yuki* birds,
When we come all fruits are eaten,
Stripped are the branches,
On the naked branches
We cry and weep.

Here the red berries are a symbol for the girls, and porcupine and hedgehog, animals difficult to tackle, as well as the hornbills who come from across the Dikhu, a river near Wakching, represent the visitors who have monopolized all the girls of the dormitory; the boys compare themselves to *yuki* birds, small birds of about the size of a minah, which cannot stand up to the more powerful hornbills.

Once the boys are in the dormitory and sit in the bamboo benches by a pleasant fire, their arms round the waists of their girl friends, the songs become more direct. Here they address themselves to the girls whom they court:

Girls of the other *morung*,
O, our friends,
In your mother's hand
Money and jewels;
In your husband's hand
Little or nothing.
Once you have borne

Two or three children
Gone is the beauty of your body.
Love your friends,
Love the friends of your youth.

And a girl may answer:

When you are with me,
Your tears flow;
When you are with your wife,
You smile and laugh.
Why, leaving your wife,
Have you come to me?
Her you love more
Than the friends of your youth.

In the first of these songs the boys urge their girl friends to be faithful to the lovers of their youth. The "money and jewels in the mother's hand" signify the happy life under the parental roof and this is contrasted with the drudgery in the husband's house. Konyak girls are proud of their beautiful bodies, and the illusion to the fading of their beauty after the birth of two or three children is designed to make married life appear even less desirable. The evident fact that just the "love of their friends" is likely to bring on pregnancy and the dreaded parting from the youth's company is conveniently overlooked.

But many of the boys who paint so dull a picture of married life are themselves married, though they may still go their own way, and in the second of the songs a girl teases her love for his alleged attachment to his wife. The first four lines may be interpreted in two ways. The "tears" and the "laughter" may simply be ironical over-statements of the greater happiness the boy is supposed to find in his wife's company, or they may mean, "when you are with me you cry for my love, but when you are with your wife you make fun of me."

Another type of song hummed by the boys as they sit round the fires in their *morung* and play on their single-stringed bamboo fiddles, or return with the girls from the fields, are those which comment on everyday life. Here a boy contrasts his own accustomed bed in the *morung* with the unfamiliar sleeping place for

which he has to search when visiting another village:

At night time,
At sleeping time,
From the *morung* calls my bed.
Searching, searching.
A sleeping place,
For a bed I have to search.

A curious gap in the range of Konyak songs is the absence of working chants. Nagas of most other tribes sing at work on the fields or when carrying loads, and in the Angami country at planting time the work songs of boys and girls resound from all rice-terraces and fill the valleys from morning to evening. The Konyaks, on the other hand, do not sing at work: when they drag in a huge house-pole it is to rhythmic yells and shouts, and young people weeding the hill-crops will break into cascades of laughter and shrieks but never into song.

Very different from songs sung by individuals or small groups of boys or girls in the intimate atmosphere of a peaceful evening in a mens' house or girls' dormitory, are the dance-songs chanted by the full complement of a *morung* from the youngest boy to the oldest warrior who can still swing a *dao* and bend his knees in the rhythm of the festive round dance. Pride in one's own *morung* is expressed in numerous songs praising the might and prowess of its mythical or historical founders.

Thus the men of the Oukheang *morung* of Wakching, whose claim that their *morung* is the oldest in the village seems not without foundation, sing the praise of the sons of Yana and Shayong, their legendary ancestors:

O, since earth, water rocks existed,
We are the sons of Yong-wem-ou-niu.
O, may the boys be healthy and strong
May they live together united.

O, man and tiger, the sons of brothers
They ate of the jungle pig's flesh.

O, as so many stars,

As the sun rises,
The sun in the sky,
O, Yana and Shayong's sons
So high are they in the sky.

O. like the high trees
Like the virgin forest,
O, Yana and Shayong's sons,
Great are they on the earth.

O, like the lightning
Flashing through the darkness
O, where the waters meet,
At Dzei-lao stream
Like the roll of thunder.
O, like a gong resounding
So walked Yana and Shayong's sons.

O, Yana and Shayong's sons,
Such is their greatness and might;
O, all their off-spring
Filled the whole village.

In this song we find a trait typical of most Konyak poetry: tales are not described but only alluded to. The song is not designed to inform the listeners, but to recall certain facts, well known to all, and thus to create a particular atmosphere, here one of pride in the greatness of the ancestors and *morung*-founders. To those unfamiliar with the ancient traditions such a song is necessarily ununderstandable, while to the Konyak it is pregnant with meaning. The first two lines refer to the mythical origin of the Konyak tribe, whose ancestors were born of the giant bird Yong-wem-ou-niu, while the next two lines are an invocation for the prosperity of the *morung* boys and the harmony of their community life. The fifth and sixth lines again lead us into the realm of legend and recall in a minimum of words the following story:

In the old times man and tiger were friends and kinsmen. The man had one field and the tiger another. Once wild pigs

damaged the tiger's crops and so the two chased and killed one of the marauders. When they had cut up the pig, the man began cooking the meat, but while he cooked the pork for himself, he prepared a dish of bitter roots for the tiger. The tiger wondered at the taste and when the man turned to blow his nose he took a piece of the man's food and found it very tasty. In anger he turned on the man: 'Why do you eat good meat when you give me only horrible bitter food!' he said. At his friend's anger, the man ran away and when the tiger chased him he sought refuge in a hole in the ground. Only the end of his cane-belt remained sticking out. So the tiger pulled at the belt; but the belt was very long and unwound as the tiger pulled; at last the tiger got tired and went away.

In a Pardhan song of Middle India this story might easily be elaborated into a hundred verses, but the Konyaks, bent on arousing emotional associations rather than on amusing an audience, are content to indicate the mythical background in exactly six words.

The second part of the song is devoted to the praise of the descendants of Yana and Shayong, the ancestors of the two most important clans of the Oukheang *morung*, which still bear the names Yana-hu and Shayong-hu. They are likened to stars and sun, and to the high trees of the virgin forest, and their coming from a certain place near the confluence of two rivers, which lies on the traditional migration route of the Wakching people—a route along which also the path of the Dead is believed to run—is described as accompanied by lightning and thunder, while their steps resounded like the ringing of gongs. The last lines emphasize the greatness of the clans which filled the whole village.

Just as the Konyaks sing the praise of their own *morung* during the communal dances, so do they delight in heaping scorn on the members of rival *morung*. The following taunt song is sung by the men of the Balang morung, which belongs to the *morung*-groups opposite to the exogamous groups formed by the Oukheang and Thepong morung; it is the men of the latter two *morung* who come in for ridicule:

Wakching, greatest of all villages,
With the shells of the ears

With the drums of the ears
Hear, O hear our song.
O villagers, O commoners,
O chieftains, hear our song.

Prick your ears like the ears of dogs,
Like the long, long ears of dogs.

Those commoners plotting
The destruction of villages
What work have they done?

On the crossroad,
At the rubber tree,
In the morning they swore an oath;
Alone they found the Kongan men,
And yet they took to flight,
Where the Phei-wang river flows.

Search for your mother's carrying bands
Hold on to the shelves above your hearths
Hanging there, weep and cry for your mothers.

Those destroyers of villages
What work have they done?

This song refers to an abortive raid undertaken by the men of the Oukheang and Thepong *morung* on the village of Kongan. The unsuccessful raiders are referred to as "commoners", because all the members of these two *morung* belong to Ben clans, while the leaders and several clans of the opposite *morung*-group are of chiefly rank and blood. The men of Oukheang and Thepong had apparently gathered at a certain crossroad below their *morung* and sworn to raid and burn Kongan. But when they arrived at the village their courage faltered and when the Kongan men, who were alone and unsupported by any allies, put up a stout opposition, they fled across the Phei-wang stream between Kongan and Wakching. In the last part of the song it is suggested that the disgraced raiders should hang themselves by the carrying bands of their mothers or hold on to the bamboo shelves that hang sus-

pended from the rafters over all hearth fires and cry for their mothers like terrified children.

While in this taunting song the event singled out for ridicule is described in broad outline, there are other songs which allude to the event in a minimum of words and are consequently understandable only to the initiated:

O Dzu-hu, O Dzek-ben
Their brothers' temples
To cut with *dao*
Thus we taught them.

O Keangding,
Great chief's brother,
Squashed by the drum,
He lay dying.

Both these songs are sung by Wakching men in derision of the alleged—and in Wakching proverbial—stupidity of the people of Wanching, a neighbouring village. Although Wanching was founded by kinsmen of the founders of Wakching, the people of Wakching claim that they have frequently made fun of their simple-minded neighbours and the stories alluded to in the above songs are typical of the many tricks played on the Wanching men:

Once upon a time the Wanching men inquired from the Wakching people how they should set about cutting their hair. Now the Konyak custom is to hold a *dao* with its back to the forehead, arrange the hair over the sharp edge and then tap along the edge with a piece of wood, thus evenly clipping off the tips. But the malicious men of Wakching told their neighbours to place the *dao* with its sharp edge against the forehead and hit against the back of the axe with a heavy mallet. The unfortunate Wanching men followed the instructions literally: the *dao* cut the hair, but also the heads of all those who submitted to this method of hair-cutting, and many died at the hands of their well-meaning friends and brothers.

Another time the Wanching men wanted to make a logdrum and they asked their neighbours' advice. The Wakching men told them that they should choose a big tree, and while three or four men felled it, all the others should support the trunk.

Again the evil advice was followed and the tree in falling squashed the chief's brother Keangdzing and many of the others who had in vain tried to hold it up.

Dance poems in praise of the founders of a *morung* or of a warrior's exploits are sung only by the members of that particular *morung*. But apart from such compositions there exist songs which, though of a more general character, are regarded as the property of individual *morung* and any infringement of "copyright" is fiercely resisted. I have mentioned already that even within one linguistic area there are certain differences in the poetic language of the various *morung*, and once a dance-song has been composed by the men of the *morung* they watch jealously lest the young men of any other *morung* appropriate the composition. Innumerable quarrels have arisen over the proprietary rights on songs and the only time I saw the Wakching men come to blows was when during the great Spring Festival the young men of the Angban *morung* danced to a song and rhythm belonging to the Oukheang. The provocation was all the greater since they danced to the disputed song in front of the Oukheang under the eyes of its lawful owners. The Oukheang men were not slow to interrupt the dance and the ensuing fight completely wrecked the ceremonies of that evening. Some years previously a dispute that began over the rights in a particular song led to man-slaughter and resulted finally in the temporary expulsion of the entire Bala *morung* from Wakching.

The violence of emotions aroused by the unlawful appropriation of a dance song is proof of the enormous importance which the Konyak attaches to his songs, both those that are traditional and those newly composed. As in the lyric poems sung in the intimacy of the girls' dormitory or on the sitting platforms on a moonlight night when the Konyak pours forth all the joys and longings of his heart, so his pride in his *morung* and the heroic feats of his ancestors, and the vital feeling of solidarity between all the members of his *morung*—the only "patriotic" sentiment the Konyak knows—find expression in the dance songs which are claimed as the property of individual groups. Love songs and lyric poems, though sometimes also composed and favoured in one particular *morung*, are the common property of all Konyak youth, and it is these songs which fill the happiest hours of every boy and girl through the years of gay comradeship and romantic love affairs.

twenty-three

The Spring Festival

The platform of the chief's house is filled with a merrily chattering crowd of women and girls, and in the middle the whole family treasure of the house of Longkhai lies spread out on two large mats. Early this morning the girls of Ang clan have pulled down the great store-baskets hanging in the roof and cleaned all the glass beads, shells, and brass bells with water and sand. Now they lie, sparkling, gay, and tempting, in the sun, and the girls are longing to try them on, for it is only once a year, at the great Spring Festival, that they may be worn.

Mauwang's wife is already dressed, many precious necklaces hang round her neck, and now she is dressing her four-year-old daughter. She would like to hang all the valuable ornaments and trinkets on this much-loved chi d, but already the little one can hardly move, and blinks wonderingly at all the shimmering things she is so unaccustomed to see on her chest. Now the mother begins to shave her head, but the child protests with hands and feet. She does not find the procedure at all pleasant and lets out furious shrieks, which even uncle Wankau cannot calm as he hurries up and takes her on his knees. Suddenly the small girl stops; one look at the stranger approaching to take her photograph has done more than all the kindness of her relations, and her mother begs me to go on playing the bogey until the operation is finished. The child is shorn bald, except for a small tuft on top of the head, and her mother adorns her with a fan-like feather-crown.

Now the Ang's wife turns her attention to the toilette of the young girls. She is an artist at dressing hair, and all the Ang girls beg her help. They sit back happily on their heels, one behind the other, each dressing the tresses of the girl in front. First the hair must be thoroughly cleansed and combed and brushed down over the back and shoulder. Then it must be rolled tightly into a tail, and bound round with a long ribbon of bark. If any girl's

hair is on the short side, then the end is tucked into a bamboo tube and the bark ribbon so bound that not even the most curious eyes can detect where the hair fails.

Among the girls is Ngapnun. I recognize her at once, for the last time I was in Longkhai I was struck by her graceful movements and perfect figure. Perhaps, for the first time among the Nagas, I almost regret the necessary reserve and detachment of the anthropologist. She has all the graciousness and self-assurance that you find in a great lady, and her gracefulness is an expression of her strong personality and a consciousness of her rank. I have never suffered such a defeat as in my attempts to make Ngapnun smile. Even when I give her some skeins of red wool, so valued by all other Naga women, the proud beauty does not deign to look at me, but takes the gift as some tribute she has a right to expect. Much as this behaviour hurts my self-respect, it has one great advantage: unhindered, I can photograph Ngapnun wherever she goes and at whatever she is doing, without her paying the least attention.

At last the long brown hair is ready, the parting made, and the hair plastered down with water, and now Ngapnun can begin dressing. She throws aside the coarse cloth of the ordinary working day and replaces it with a gaily embroidered skirt scarcely the width of her hand, more of an ornament than a garment. While her skirt is scarlet, the girls of the common people may only wear skirts of dark colours. Round her slim waist Ngapnun fastens a girdle of many rows of coloured beads. Innumerable necklaces, many of golden-yellow stones, others of shells and discs of bronze, make any other bodice superfluous the wealth of ornament nearly conceals her small, firm breasts, and her long, delicate arms, that have almost a childish look, are covered from wrist to shoulder with rings and bracelets. Now she puts on her little anklets of bells that tinkle at every step. They are quite new acquisitions brought from a bazaar in the plains, and Ngapnun is very proud of them. But however much they please her heart, they are not nearly so valuable as her bronze armlets, heirlooms whose provenance is shrouded in mystery. A broad band, made that morning from a fresh leaf, binds her forehead like a diadem, and heavy earrings hanging to the shoulders put the final touch to her ceremonial dress.

No part of her is now unadorned except her narrow hands with

their long, slim fingers, whose only ornaments are the fine blue lines tattooed at the cost of so much pain. Does Ngapnun suspect that despite the traces of hard field-work these hands of hers are beautiful? You have only to see her regal carriage, her confident smile, and the slightly mocking twinkle in her brown eyes, to know that she is fully conscious of her charms.

No prima donna could take longer over her toilette than these girls, and it is already past midday when they begin to dance on the bamboo platform. For hours they pace about hand in hand, tripping round and round in time to a monotonous chant. There is little variation in the steps of the dance and in the eternally repeated songs. But the old women, crowding round the platform and proudly watching their daughters, find nothing boring in the performance. Every other minute they adjust their daughters' hair-dress or pieces of jewellery; here is a straying tress, and here a necklace is out of place. No one else would notice these faults, and the way they worry continually over the looks of the dancers is rather laughable, and yet somehow touching.

You might well imagine that the youths of the village would be here, forming an enthusiastic audience round the dance platform, but there is as yet no sign of them. The boys are far too busy dressing up themselves. They are sitting in front of the men's house combing out each other's long hair and arranging the white hornbill feathers in the bushy crests of red goat's hair on their hats. This morning they searched the forest for the choicest of ear ornaments—gold and mauve orchids—only the most beautiful are fitting for the Spring Festival.

At last comes the moment when the men, whirling their spears and *dao* as though setting out on the war-path, rush through the village with wild cries. With their tossing feathers, and the gaily dyed goat's hair waving from weapons and head-dress, they look like fantastic birds, and, like birds in the mating season, they rejoice in the glory of their brilliant spring dress, that reduces the weaker sex to comparative insignificance.

Singing and dancing, the crowd of men leave the *morung* at the farthest end of the village and pass along the narrow streets till they reach the chief's house, and soon the open place is thronged with singing crowds. *Dao* flash high in the air, voices are raised, and the song swells forth, breaking at the climax into harsh, uncanny yells.

Suddenly all is quiet. The individual groups break up, the girls stop their dance, and the men and the boys form a great circle. And now there is a space with an old man in the middle. By descent and office he is the intermediary between man and the immortals. He is taking a handful of cooked rice—now he throws it towards the sky, and his solemn voice sounds through the breathless stillness: "Oh, Gawang, Lord of Heaven. Give that our fields may be fruitful; give us rice in plenty; give us millet in plenty; give us taro in plenty. The people of the village, let them be strong. Our children, let them be strong."

After each phrase the crowd of men raise their *dao* to the sky and shout in unison, "So let it be!" The hearts of the whole assembly tremble with awe before the deity, for in his hand lie happiness and misfortune, good and bad harvests. However bold and self-willed they may be, they know only too well that their efforts alone do not safeguard the growth and ripening of the crops, so they call on Gawang, god of the sky, who grants fertility to the fields and children to men. They trust in him alone, and trouble little over the lesser spirits, who have no power over the sun and the rain.

Dark clouds have gathered over the mountains, and as though the god deigns to answer, lightning rends the sky and thunder rolls in the distance. Heavy drops begin to fall, and the people have hardly time to run for the shelter of the chief's protecting roof before the rain pours from the sky. A spring storm in all its sudden might breaks over the hills, and the thirsty earth drinks greedily of the welcome rain.

No sooner has the rain passed over than the old men press round a bamboo pole, which has been erected in front of Mauwang's house. For about half an hour they murmur secret formulae, while the young men dance round, swinging their *dao* and shouting loud songs, lest any woman or any of the younger people should hear the words of the elders. Almost half an hour these secret prayers last, and the whole time howling crowds race round the pole.

It was months before I could induce a man to confide the secret of this rite. Its theme is also the fertility of the fields, and the central formula runs: "As a woman embraces her lover, so may the earth take the seed of the rice into her womb." The fertility of field and man are closely linked in the mind of the Naga: they

are different expressions of the same force, and the prosperity of the village depends on its abundance.

The solemn ritual of the feast is now over, and the girls entertain the boys in the chief's house. For days they have pounded rice and brewed beer, pigs have been killed, and the food is steaming in the huge pots on the hearth. Afterwards the dance is continued in the large hall, the girls and the boys dancing separately. It is almost dark, and the gleam of the flickering fire picks here and there on glistening naked backs or blades of swinging *dao*. Gradually the dancing throng thins; the youngest boys and girls dance on, but the older ones slip away and celebrate the birth of spring in their own way.

I go out into the night, glad of the cool air after the stuffiness of crowded chief's house. A full moon sails in the cloudless sky. Light and shade alternate in a fantastic mosaic; the silvered, palm-thatched roofs gleam like glittering stones. From time to time belated groups of revellers sing and dance through the village, where only a few sleep that night. But for such outbursts, stillness reigns and only from the chief's house can you still hear the occasional verse of some indefatigable singer.

As I open my eyes after a short sleep, I can see the girls through the slits of my bamboo hut still dancing in the light of the breaking dawn. Only when the sun emerges in all his red glory from behind the mountains does their song cease.

Piece by piece the girls divest themselves of their ornaments, and bid a reluctant farewell to the time of leisure and feasting. Today is still a day of rest but tomorrow the work on the fields must begin again. With the new year starts the eternal round of sowing, weeding, and harvest, and for long months to come every day will see the people busy on the hill slopes, now still barren and brown after the burning of the jungle, but soon to be covered with a delicate carpet of luscious green.

twenty-four

The World Beyond

Rice is sprouting in the fields, and each day the Wakching people look anxiously at the deep blue sky and a sun mercilessly burning down on the young crops. Although it is May, the heavy rains of summer have not yet started and only now and then a short thunderstorm breaks the long drought. Once more I am on tour and camping in Wanching. The sky is still cloudless and starry, mist lies on the distant mountains, and a half-moon rises from the veil wreathing the peaks, dark yellow like old gold. She does not climb the path of the heavens upright, but sails out into the sky like a rocking ship, her curved keel to the earth. On the horizon threatening lightning blinks spasmodically, miraculously outlining the rim of the sky where it touches the earth.

Hardly have I gone to sleep when there is a terrible clap of thunder and I am awake again. The calm of the evening has given way to turmoil. Violent squalls throw themselves on my tent, and soon the rain pelts down on the canvas. My small tent window is lit by almost incessant flashes of lightning, and rolls of thunder drown the howling of wind in the trees. I try to persuade myself that the storm will soon pass, but instead of passing, its fury grows with every minute. The tent trembles and sways. Still lying in bed, I grasp one of the two posts and try to counteract the worst blows. The surrounding ditch no longer traps the water; it is full to overflowing, and the floor of the tent is soon flooded.

Suddenly there is a frightful crash as of splintering wood. If only the huge tree spreading its branches over my tent stands firm! From the noise on all sides it sounds as though all the trees in the neighbourhood are breaking up. Just as I jump from my bed, Nlamo rushes in, shouting that I should seek refuge in the *morung*. Quickly I collect my precious camera and some of my notebooks, and run through the rain and the torrents of water streaming over the hillside towards the *morung*. There I find Yongem and several Wanching boys disturbed from sleep. Suddenly I remember that

the carrying-basket with my diaries stands probably open in the tent. So I run once more through the downpour, slipping continually with my bare soles on the slimy clay and struggling against the masses of water rushing downhill. The tent still stands. I manage to throw all my most valuable things into waterproof baskets and tie them up firmly. Now nothing very serious can happen.

By morning the storm abates, and, to my surprise, we find my tent has resisted its force. But the village presents a scene of destruction. Roofs have been blown away, and big trees broken or uprooted. I would never have thought that such giants could break under a storm like matches. On the path to Wakching a whole patch of forest has been battered down. Most of the field-houses are destroyed and the fragments dispersed untidily over the ground. Just as the Konyaks did some weeks ago after an earthquake, the whole village holds a holiday to avert further misfortune. For whenever anything unusual or disastrous occurs, a a day of abstention from work is supposed to re-establish the disturbed balance and protect the community from latent dangers.

What is the Konyak's idea of the natural phenomena that sometimes threaten his life and his property? Is he the 'primitive man" who lives in constant and vague fear of unknown and hostile forces, so often depicted by some philosophers? He certainly is not. His conception of the world is clear and simple, and his ideas on Nature are mainly the result of logical deduction. Mysticism and speculation do not appeal to the Konyak. When lightning flashes over the sky and thunder resounds behind the mountains, he knows they are produced by Gawang, the lord of the sky. How this happens, he cares little, but whoever digs near a tree struck by lightning finds one of Gawang's thunderbolts—is this not proof enough? For much money I have acquired some of these magic stones, but there would be little point in trying to explain to my friends that they are the polished stone celts of an older population or perhaps even of their own ancestors.

Gawang is thought of as a definitely personal being, but no Konyak can say exactly how he looks. "Like a tall Naga with spear and *dao*," some men suppose, but so that my feelings shall not be hurt, they admit that he might look like a Sahib. "But who can tell?"

Yet they all agree that he lives somewhere in the sky and that long ago he made the firmament. "Gawang made also the earth and man," Chinyang remarks one day, "but how he made man, we do not know. But we say that we are his children. When we become rich or poor, it comes frow Gawang; when we have plenty to eat, it comes from Gawang; when we have fever, it too comes from Gawang."

"But tell me, does Gawang ive quite alone in the sky? Has he no wife and no children?"

"We do not know anything of a wife of Gawang," explains Yongang with a smile "and his children, these are we ourselves!"

The Konyaks are firmly convinced that Gawang can see and hear everything. If a man exaggerates or boasts too much, someone may say: "Don't tell such lies, Gawang hears, and will tear your mouth." Generally, this is only a jest, but in cases of serious crime Gawang's punishments are called down on the head of the offender.

It is in keeping with the Konyaks' realistic philosophy of life that Gawang does not wait to judge earthly offenders till after death, but his rewards and punishments are mainly for this, and not for the next world. He gives no male heir to a man who pursues adventures with "women living in their husbands houses", and whosoever steals from his neighbour or incites quarrels in the village is punished by an untimely death.

Gawang watches over the numerous taboos and sees that they are observed. When once I ask Dzeamang, a young man of Ang clan, whether during the meals in the field-houses he too may eat from the same dish as the girls of Ben clan, he answers quite spontaneously: "Of course, I should like to eat with them, but Gawang sees it." Therefore he does not dare eat with commoners.

It is not only during feasts and ceremonies that the Konyak invokes Gawang. Often in the course of his daily life he will murmur a prayer to the sky-god. When he begins to eat, he will throw a bit of rice or taro to one side saying: "Gawang, eat you first." When he is lucky out hunting, he cuts off a small piece of flesh and throws it into the forest for Gawang with the words: "In the future, give me again such luck."

Compared to Gawang, the spirits of the earth, the wood, and the rivers are not very important. They may be malignant towards man, and they must therefore be placated during illness

with offerings of chickens and pigs, but it is only Gawang who holds the power of life in his hands, and it is only Gawang's wrath that can send a man to his death.

Sometimes ordinary mortals see the spirits of the wood or the water as they slip by, but only men particularly endowed can see Gawang in their dreams. There are not many Konyaks with this faculty, and I know of only three in the country round Wakching: Lemang of Kongan, Shopong of Tanhai, and the Wakching woman Limnia. They are not only seers and prophets, but were-tigers, for at night they roam the country in the shape of their familiars.

Among the Nagas this is a well-known phenomenon, and Shopong himself tells me how his soul leaves his sleeping body and enters the body of a tiger; how he joins the other tigers at night in some far-distant place; and how at any hour of the day he knows exactly the whereabouts of his tiger. Lemang pretends his tiger is no ordinary tiger, for he says he does not kill man. In his youth he hunted animals, but now he has grown too old, and so the other tigers bring him food in the evening, but he never shows himself to men, for he is afraid of being shot.

There are many people who from personal experience can tell of Lemang's adventures in the shape of a tiger. One night two Aos in Government service were frightened by a tiger moving noiselessly through the jungle near Namsang, but they missed when they fired, and the tiger immediately disappeared. Arriving at Kongan next day, Lemang greeted them at the village gate with the question: "Why did you shoot at me last night? You only missed me by a hair's breadth!"

According to Konyak belief, the death of the tiger would have caused Lemang himself to die within a few days. If one of these animals is even wounded, a similar wound is believed to appear on the corresponding spot on the man's body. Mills told me of many were-tigers among the Aos who actually did die suddenly a few days after their tigers had been killed.

An incident which greatly strengthened Lemang's reputation occurred while I was in Wakching. Thirty silver rupees, brass-discs and an embroidered apron were stolen from the house of Apong, the *dobashi* of Wanching. All investigations proved fruitless and so at last he went to Kongan to consult Lemang. The old man told him at once that he knew of the thief. In the shape of a tiger, roam-

ing about in the valley of the Dikhu, he had seen two Yungya boys coming from the direction of Wanching. They had wrapped up a stone in an apron and thrown it into the Dikhu with the words: "As this apron shall never again come to the surface, so shall our deed remain forever hidden." Apong had only to go to Yungya and ask the boys whether they had seen a tiger by the Dikhu.

And then Apong remembered that there had been three Yungya people in Wanching the day of the theft, and he set out at once for their village. There he met the boys, and confronted them with Lemang's accusation. Shattered by such supernatural knowledge, they confessed to the crime and all its details. They had actually seen a tiger by the Dikhu that day.

However, there are sceptics even among the Nagas, and one of the *gaonbura* of Namsang-Sumniching, when I spoke of Lemang and other seers, only remarked depreciatingly: "How is it that a man can sleep here and his soul can wander about? That is a swindle. These seers see nothing more in their dreams than other people, but of course it is pleasant to pocket rupees. Lemang earns two rupees here, and three rupees there. Naturally he likes to tell the people all sorts of lies."

When I asked whether the seers really wander about as tigers at night, he answered excitedly: "How can a man become a tiger? Man is of man's clan, tiger of tiger's clan, and pig of pig's clan. Can a pig change itself into a man? No. Then how shall a man change himself into a tiger? That is all lies!" Once, he says, a woman soothsayer warned him to beware of her tiger roaming near the village, and so he took his gun and went to look for the beast. Not so much as a track did he see in the jungle.

A few months before I am to leave Wakching, I decide to employ the services of the soothsayer Limnia to learn more of the nature of her prophecies. So that she shall not be upset by an unaccustomed task, I take Shankok with me to help formulate the questions. He tells me I should take, as is the custom, a little rice for Limnia, and on entering the house, I must scatter a few grains, unnoticed, on the floor.

Towards evening we climb down through the labyrinth of narrow streets to Limnia's house. She lives with her second husband and five children, the youngest scarcely a year old, and seems just like any other middle-aged Wakching woman. Shankok tells her that I have heard of her fame, and now I have come to

her because I want her to prophesy for me. I want to know if fate will grant me a safe and peaceful return journey to my own country, if all my relations are living and in good health, and lastly—which to Shankok is the most important of all—whether I shall soon find a wife. Limnia listens calmly and without saying much. She only remarks that she will have great difficulty in reaching a land so far distant as mine.

I ask her about her experiences in her dream-life, and she answers me with clear and short sentences; her manner of speaking is more self-assured than that of other women. No mystic veil envelops this seer, and nothing suggests an unbalanced mind. Her description of the next world coincides with the traditional conceptions of the Konyaks, except that she enters the Land of the Dead in her dreams, and herself speaks to the dead. If a man has reason to believe that a lately deceased relative is angry, he asks Limnia to find out the reason and to discover a way to propitiate the dead.

Before Limnia falls into her trance she strews rice on the floor and speaks to Gawang. "Gawang grant that I may see all beings, that I know clearly all things, that I see you in my dream. Give me good dreams."

Then she falls into a deep sleep and her soul goes to Yimbu, the Land of the Dead. If she meets a man yet living on the way, then she knows he will soon die. However, she can save his life by an offering to Gawang—that is if the threatened man is prepared to give her a cloth, a *dao,* and a spear, and to sacrifice a pig, which Limnia kills saying: "Gawang, give that this man remains alive, that he will become old, that he lives until his hair becomes white."

The following night Limnia goes to the Land of the Dead, to bring back the soul of the man. Presumably Limnia is clever enough not to try to persuade men in good health that their souls are already on the way to Yimbu, but looks for ready believers among those that are ill and in the grip of high fever, whose consciousness is already dimmed.

Small children who die when not yet able to walk lie crying on the path to Yimbu until Limnia carries them to the Land of the Dead and hands them over to those of their relations already there. For this service too she receives payment from the parents.

The life in Yimbu resembles the life on this earth. The Dead

work on their fields, celebrate the Spring Festival, marry, have children, and eventually die once more. Then they go to another Yimbu, where Limnia cannot follow. Good and bad alike live in one village, but those who die an unnatural death arrive by a different path.

Often I am surprised by the equanimity with which the Konyak views his own entrance into the Land of the Dead. As Chinyang put on his head-dress with buffalo horns and human hair at the Spring Festival, he told me quite calmly that this ornament would eventually adorn his death-monument: "I would not give it up for any price, for when I die it shall hang on my death monument, so that all shall say 'That is the death-monument of Chinyang, who himself captured heads'. And in Yimbu I need all my ornaments and all my weapons, for the men I have slain in this life wait for me on the way to Yimbu, and I must fight them all once more."

He said all this in a casual tone, as though he talked of the work on the fields, or of a feast shortly to be celebrated. The Konyaks speak with sorrow or sentimentality only of their deceased relatives and friends, but never of their own death. They consider it unavoidable, and do not fear it in the same way as other peoples.

Limnia promises to dream for me tonight, but now she says we should leave her alone. Tomorrow morning she will answer my questions. Early next morning Shankok arrives, and tells me with great excitement all he has heard from the neighbours. That Limnia has had a bad night, and is now quite exhausted from the efforts of the long journey to my land. For this reason, we do not go to her house until late in the day; even then she still lies on her bed. A neighbour tells us that soon after our departure Limnia fell into a trance and behaved in such a frightening way that her husband called him to stand by. They had stayed up till the first cockcrow, for they had been afraid that she might die.

While we are talking, Limnia gets up; she is indeed a picture of misery, and complains of a violent headache and pain in the legs from the long journey. Then she begins her tale, rather haltingly in a low voice.

In the shape of her tiger, she searched for the path to my land, and roamed about in the jungle for a long time before finding the right way. Then she ran and ran, a very, very long distance through a large plain, and when at last she arrived in my village,

it was so late that all people were in their houses, and she had to remain outside my house, without seeing my family. But she knows that all my relations are alive and in the best of health. I shall come back to my country without meeting any danger, and I will not encounter any enemies on my path. I shall have plenty to eat and plenty of money. Soon I will find a wife. She sees my wife quite clearly: she is white as I, and pretty to look at—neither very tall nor very small, but of middle height.

Shankok is highly satisfied with the session, and I pay for Limnia's trouble with a few rupees. I do not doubt her good faith, but I realize that a careful and intentional swindler could have given the same answers to my questions.

twenty-five

Farewell

The veranda of my bungalow is covered with the specimens of my collection: spears and *dao* from Wakching, Longkhai, Chingmei, and various villages beyond the frontier; valuable bronze gongs; cloths of different colours; red plaited hats with buffalo horns; ornaments for men and women; baskets; wooden dishes and agricultural implements; a long row of carvings, and hundreds of other things, many of which I have acquired only after long negotiation and at a high price.

I cannot help my eyes falling also on those objects which I feel now I would rather never have possessed—a small log-drum, a pair of grave-statues, and the model of a chief's coffin—for their making has brought much sorrow to their creators.

It was in the first month of my stay in Wakching that I told the *gaonbura* of my wish to purchase a small log-drum. They advised me to talk to Chinkak, the Ang of Wakching—he, said the *gaonbura*, was a good wood-carver, and since he did no work he had plenty of time to carve me whatever I wanted. Chinkak, though nominally Ang of Wakching, has not achieved much in this life, and is one of the few Nagas I would describe as a social misfit. His father, a scion of the powerful Ang family of Chui, had been offered the chieftainship of Wakching, at a time when the peace of the village had been disturbed by internal quarrels. However, his strict autocratic rule had not been to the liking of the Wakching people, and when he died, leaving no heir of pure Ang blood, they were careful not to repeat the experiment with a "great Ang," preferring rather to recognize Chinkak, the son of a concubine. But Chinkak never succeeded in gaining any influence, and, an addict of opium, he soon wasted the rich heritage of his father. He still receives tribute from the vassal villages of Wakching, but more often than not he mortgages it long before it falls due.

Chinkak was therefore only too pleased to raise some extra

cash by carving me a log-drum. Yet he had his doubts about the task. To carve a drum, otherwise made and dragged into the village with numerous ceremonies, was not so harmless as it appeared, for just then his wife was pregnant, and he feared the child might be harmed if he carved that drum. I considered this only a pretext for raising the price, and my willingness to pay a larger and a comparatively high price for the drum eventually conquered Chinkak's doubts.

He carved the drum, and I paid the price. A few months later his child was born—with a hare lip.

"Of course," said the Wakching people, "the slit in the drum and the slit in the child's lip are one and the same. Chinkak should not have carved that drum while his wife was pregnant."

The two grave-figures, dressed and armed like real warriors with small spears and *dao*, are like so many of the other carvings of my collection, the work of my friend Mauwang, the Ang of Longkhai. He, too, had hesitated for a long time before promising to carve them.

"When an Ang dies, we carve grave figures," he argued. "If I now carve such figures for you, might it not happen that someone will die?"

But at last I persuaded him, and so he sacrificed a pig before starting, as though he were working for a real funeral. Hardly were the figures completed, when Mauwang fell ill, and though he sacrificed many chickens, he did not recover. Returning from Pangsha, I found him emaciated and worn out by recurrent attacks of malaria. Atebrin soon put him on his feet again, but instead of reproaching me for exposing him to the danger of illness by asking for the two figures, he thanked me again and again for the miraculous cure.

These two experiences should have put me wise, and warned me against persuading a man to carve objects linked with magical dangers. But my collection lacked a model of a coffin, and Chinkak, once more in need of money for opium, offered to carve me one. Angs' coffins are laid out on platforms like those of ordinary men, but they are carved at both ends with hornbill heads. Soon after Chinkak had brought me the finished coffin and received his reward, his five-year-old daughter fell ill, and died within a few days. Now it was necessary to make a child's coffin similar to the model Chinkak had carved for me, and there was

not a soul in Wakching who doubted the fateful connection between the making of the model coffin and the child's sudden death.

Men from three villages have gathered to carry my luggage and the objects of my collection down to Borjan, for it is only there that I shall be able to pack them into boxes. All the *gaonbura* are here to distribute the loads and to say goodbye. Mauwang, too, has come with his brothers from Longkhai and Ahon from Shiong. They all have only one question: "When will you come back, Sahib?"

For the last time I look over the valleys and mountains I have seen so often in the morning mist and the gold of the setting sun, and I, too, ask myself: when shall I come back?

No way has ever seemed so hard as that way down the hill past Wakching, past the rest-house, where we have sat so often, and past the little path to the fields, where now a few girls wait and smile at me as I pass.

"Goodbye Chinyang, keep well and thank you for everything. Yes, I too should like to stay longer with you—and you too, Yongang. May Gawang give you a good harvest. Metlou—Dzeamang—goodbye to you all. Let's hope we may soon meet again."

Shankok goes with me through the high forest where so often we shot green pigeons. We both have only one thought: goodbye for a long time, perhaps forever. To talk of something, we talk of Shankok's fields and the chances of a good harvest now that the spring is past; once more we count how many fields he possesses, it is about two hundred and fifty—anything to avoid remembering all those evenings we have spent together, all the friendly talks and all the fun we have had. Such a happy time it has been. Does Shankok know that I have never spent a happier year?

But now it must be: "Thank you, Shankok. I know it is hard. But I will come again—certainly I shall come again."

Neither of us can speak. I hold his hand. Tears trickle down his cheeks. He turns round. Only when I have gone a short way does he turn back and wave to me. Quite small he stands there on the slope, a brown spot against the green of the jungle. The sun is setting, and deep below me the golden ribbon of the Brahmaputra winds through the immense plains of Assam.

twenty-six

Tribesmen of Tirap

The disruption of all my plans by the outbreak of the second World War prevented me for a long time from carrying out my intention to return to Wakching. Even when during the years of 1944-1945 I worked at no great distance in the Subansiri division of the Balipara Frontier Tract, a visit to the Naga Hills, then acutely threatened by the Japanese invasion, was not a practicable proposition. However, in March 1962 I had the unexpected opportunity of paying a short visit to an area lying immediately to the east of the Konyak country, though outside the borders of what by then was known as Nagaland. The area in question belonged to the Tirap district of the North East Frontier Agency recently renamed Arunachal Pradesh, but for many years generally referred to as N.E.F.A.

Though officially described as Wanchu, one of the tribes of that area is closely allied to the Konyak Nagas, and its inclusion in a different administrative unit was a matter of historic accident. It was accidental too that throughout the entire British period no serious attempt had been made to extend the writ of the Government of Assam to the villages of the Wanchus. After some early brushes with British expeditions the Wanchus has been left to their own devices, and not until after 1947 did the Government of India take effective steps to bring them under its administrative control. The middle-aged and older people I met in 1962 had thus spent the greater part of their lives under a political system organized on traditional lines.

When the Government of India incorporated the region henceforth named Tirap district into the North East Frontier Agency, a district headquarters was established at Khonsa, a village in the outer ranges accessible by a jeep-road from Jorhat in the Brahmaputra plains. In Khonsa my wife and I enjoyed the hospitality of Sonu Lovraj, the political officer in charge of Tirap, and it was due to his enthusiastic assistance that in a relatively

short time I gained a fairly clear picture of the tribes under his jurisdiction. In addition, L.R.N. Srivastava, one of the team of research officers trained by Verrier Elwin, gave me the benefit of his familiarity with the Wanchus and introduced me to some of the leading men.

Khonsa lies within a territory inhabited by Noktes, a tribe some 20,000 strong. Both the settlements and the appearance of the Noktes reminded me vividly of the Konyak Nagas, and there can be little doubt that racially and culturally the Noktes belong to the Naga group. One of their peculiarities is the production of salt from salt springs, and the barter trade based on this salt production. They used to exchange it in the plains of Assam for cloth and also bartered it to the Rangpan Nagas of Burma, from whom they obtained fowls and agricultural produce. Before the establishment of Indian administrative control the local tribesmen were hardly aware of the fact that notionally an international frontier lay between them and their friends and trade partners living on the far side of the mountain range which separates India from Burma.

Even my fleeting visits to some of the Nokte villages convinced me that the tribe merits a detailed study complementary to the work I had done among the Konyaks. Like the society of the Thendu group of villages Nokte society is rigidly stratified, and the men of a chiefly clan seek their principal wives from among the daughters of the chiefs of other villages, but may take secondary wives from the commoner clans of their own villages. Though in close geographic proximity to several Wanchu villages, Noktes never intermarry with Wanchus, and the two tribes look upon each other as distinct but not necessarily hostile communities. According to the current census figures there were then some 25,000 Wanchus in Tirap district.

In 1962 the country had already been opened up by the construction of motorable roads, and thanks to this improvement of communications there was no difficulty in getting without any loss of time straight into the heart of Wanchu country. The age of great expeditions such as our tour to Pangsha in 1936 was clearly over and on reflection I believe that that expedition into unexplored Kalyo-Kengyu country was probably the last of its kind.

From Khonsa we set out in a jeep and drove largely through

tropical forest as far as the Tisa River. The track continues on the far side of the river, but the connecting bridge had not yet been built, and we had to unload our luggage and get it carried across on a cane suspension bridge. Lovraj, who accompanied us as far as the river, had sent word to the Wanchus of nearby villages and as we arrived we were greeted by a colourful crowd of men dressed and tattooed exactly like the Konyaks of such villages as Oting or Longkhai. The friendly and easy way in which they chatted to Lovraj demonstrated beyond doubt that the officers of N.E.F.A., inspired perhaps by Verrier Elwin who acted as anthropological adviser to government, had won the confidence of the tribesmen by their sympathy towards local customs and traditions. While in Nagaland a secessionist movement was then disturbing the peace, in Tirap district the relations between the administration and such tribes as Noktes and Wanchus appeared to be excellent. Sonu Lovraj entertained the assembled Wanchu men by giving them short rides in the two jeeps in which we had come and the experience clearly delighted men who had probably never been on a wheeled vehicle.

Yet, we soon learnt that modern technology made even more surprising contributions to the development of the Wanchu country. At a small government station near the village of Niaunu towards which we were heading, we watched a few days later an air-drop of supplies of rice, salt and other food-stuffs by a Dakota plane. Rather than commandeering large gangs of porters the administration of N.E.F.A. was resorting to this method of provisioning their officials stationed in isolated places. The local Wanchus, who were employed to gather the dropped bags, seemed to take it for granted that periodically bags containing various useful commodities would drop from the sky.

A fairly long climb brought us to Niaunu, where we were welcomed by the small community of officials living in provisional quarters constructed of timber and bamboo. A school and a dispensary were already in operation and it seemed that at least some Wanchus had realized the advantages of letting their children be taught reading and writing.

After a night spent in a bamboo hut at this station we moved up to the village of Niaunu, which in true Naga style occupied the crest of a high hill. There we pitched our tent next to the chief's house, but nearly came to grief when a tremendous thunder-

storm, reminding me of my experience in Wanching twenty-five years earlier, threatened to tear our light tent to pieces.

The inconvenience of a seemingly early beginning of the monsoon only slightly damped the pleasure of being once more among people indistinguishable from the Konyaks in whose villages I had spent such happy times. While I rejoiced in finding familiar scenes, my wife, who knew the Konyaks only from pictures and the accounts of my youthful exploits, was equally delighted to see what seemed to her the objects of my writings having come to life.

There was indeed very little difference between the Konyaks of the Thendu group and the people here known as Wanchus. But whereas in 1936 I had moved only along the fringes of the domains of the great Angs, and even men such as Mauwang of Longkhai were small fry compared to the autocratic rulers of villages such as Mon, Chui, and Tang, whose territories had been out of bounds for me, here in Niaunu I came face to face with a chief of as powerful a lineage as any of the great Konyak dynasties. Everything in Niaunu was on a much larger scale than in the Thendu villages within the former Naga Hills district. The house of the chief, above all, was enormous, containing great halls comparable to those of the largest *morung*, as well as a whole labyrinth of small dark rooms inhabited by the chief's numerous wives and children. In the large room in which the chief received guests stood a carved bench decorated with representations of hornbill heads, and on this "throne" none but the chief was allowed to sit.

Nyekpong, the chief of Niaunu, was a handsome, slender middle-aged man of great dignity and charm, who received us very courteously and was quite willing to spend hours telling us of the history of Niaunu and his family. He wore a cane hat richly decorated with boars' tusks and his ears were covered by large discs of gleaming white tridacna shell. Strings of valuable beads covered his chest, but together with these traditional ornaments he wore a waistcoat-like garment of black cotton cloth. He had married two wives of aristocratic birth and, in addition, he had acquired twenty-four wives of commoner status, twelve who were daughters of Niaunu men, and twelve from the tributary village of Niausa. But only seven of these commoner wives were alive, a fact which would suggest a surprisingly high female mortality rate.

Nyekpong explained that twelve generations ago Niaunu was

founded by his ancestor Maipupa, a chief of the highest class. I learnt that in Niaunu this class was described as Wangham, and that it corresponded to the great Angs of my earlier experience. Maipupa had originally come from Tsangnu, and the names of eleven chiefs intervening between him and Nyekpong were still remembered. Whether this genealogy of the chiefly house is accurate or whether it represents a telescoped selection of the most notable names must remain doubtful, but the very existence of a long genealogical tradition emphasizes the importance attributed to succession within a line of hereditary chiefs.

The rulers of Niaunu had founded four other villages, all of which were still being ruled by scions of the same chiefly house. Being all kinsmen in the male line the chiefs of these villages could not intermarry and beyond this group of Niaunu colonies there were several other villages ruled by members of the same lineage. Hence their chiefs were excluded from marriage alliances with the house of the paramount chief of Niaunu. Members of the Niaunu dynasty had therefore to seek wives among the daughters of chiefs of other lineages of great Ang status.

There were different ways in which the domain of a powerful chiefly house could be extended. If the ruling family of a village became extinct, an occurrence by no means rare among a population with a very high mortality rate, the villagers had to search for a chief among the aristocratic families of friendly villages. So strong was the tradition that only a chief of Wangham blood could discharge the ceremonial, ritual, and political tasks of ruler, that there was no question of a commoner being raised to the position of chief, though in default of any suitable man of great Ang clan, a chief's son from one of his commoner wives might act as chief.

Such a solution, however, was acceptable only to small village communities of little importance, whereas large villages of great political power made every effort to find a chief of pure Wangham blood. Thus in 1952, Longsom, a colony of Chanu, but politically allied to Niaunu, could not obtain a chief from Chanu when their chiefly lineage died out. The villagers requested the chief of Niaunu to send them one of his kinsmen, and he obligingly seconded his father's younger brother's son to the chiefdom of Longsom.

The domain of a chiefly house could also be enlarged by conquest. Thus seven generations ago a force of warriors from

Niaunu raided and defeated the neighbouring village of Zonlong. The chief's entire family and about half of the commoners were wiped out and the surviving commoners chose to remain in the village under a new chief, who belonged to a junior branch of the chiefly family of Niaunu. The village was renamed Mintong, and as such it now forms part of the Niaunu group of villages.

In more recent times Mintong was involved in a feud arising from a marital quarrel. A generation ago a daughter of the chief of Mintong was married to a man of great Ang class of Ninu village. In the course of a quarrel her husband sent her back to her parents. Although her father was able to arrange a second marriage with a kinsman of the powerful Ang of Pomau, the men of the chiefly clan of Mintong felt insulted by their kinswoman's repudiation at the hands of her first husband and they prepared a raid on Ninu. However, the Ninu men, warned of the plan, forestalled the raid and, ambushing a group of Mintong men, captured six heads. Therefore all the villages belonging to the Niaunu block, to which Mintong still belongs, joined in a raid on Ninu and captured three heads. Had the whole area not been brought under the control of the N.E.F.A. administration, this feud would probably have smouldered on with the occasional capture of heads. Even in 1962, some thirty-five years after the original clash, those Mintong and Ninu villagers who had lost kinsmen in the fighting remembered the unresolved feud and refused to accept food in the houses of the killers of their relatives.

The days of head-hunting were still vividly in the minds of the Wanchus, and in Mintong I watched a dance which dramatized an ambush and the cutting off of the head of a slain enemy. The dancers were young and middle-aged men and they wore as phantastic and varied an array of ornaments and head-dresses as twenty-five years earlier the Wakching men had worn when they celebrated the arrival of the Pangsha heads. To hornbill feathers and caps of monkey and leopard fur they had added such outlandish acquisitions as a red military beret. Their faces were painted white and black, and in addition to *dao* and spears, many brandished guns. Singing and shouting groups of men danced through the village, and converged finally on the open space in front of a *morung*. There they staged a head-hunting raid. Several men cautiously crept forward as if shadowing an enemy and from time to time signalled those hiding behind them in the bushes.

At last they were within striking distance of the notional quarry, and now the whole gang, still crouching low and keeping complete silence, tensed up for the assault. Suddenly they lept forward; one man firing a gun and others swinging *dao*, they threw themselves on the imaginary victim. With wild shouts they pretended to cut off his head, and then danced with the trophy, all the time chanting and yelling. The performance was realistic enough and I felt that with a little encouragement the men of Mintong and presumably also those of other Wanchu villages would gladly return to the real thing. In some of the *morung* there were small collections of enemies' heads and the administration of N.E.F.A. wisely allowed the Wanchus to keep these mementos of their fathers' exploits.

The curbs on the powers of chiefs inevitably exerted by the political officers responsible for the maintenance of peace, had not yet affected the social structure and class composition of such villages of Niaunu and Mintong. I spent much of my time trying to improve my comprehension of the class system in villages ruled by autocratic chiefs, for I had always felt that this had been one of the weak spots in my knowledge of the Konyak Nagas.

The class composition of Niaunu seemed typical of many villages of the Thendu group. There were four classes, known as Wangham (great Ang), Wangsa (small Ang), Wangsu (intermediate), and Wangpeng (commoner). The Wangham class consisted exclusively of those members of the ruling chief's lineage who were the issue of marriages between men of Wangham class and women of similar status from other villages whose chiefs were unrelated. As marriage within the Wangham lineage of the same village was inadmissible, all alliances in which both spouses were of Wangham rank had to be contracted with chiefly houses of other domains. Men of Wangham class could marry secondary wives of Wangpeng class, and the issue from such chief-commoner unions constituted the Wangsa or small Ang class. Girls of Wangham class were never married to commoners of their own village. Ideally they had to marry men of Wangham class of other, unrelated villages, but if no husband of equal status could be found, they were given in marriage to men of Wangsa status. These too had to be unrelated and hence of another village, for different lineages of chiefly class never co-existed in the same villages.

Men of Wangsa or small Ang rank could either marry wives

of similar status from other villages or conclude unions with commoner girls of their own village. The children from both types of union were of Wangsa status, for no further lowering of status by repeated admixture of commoner blood detracted from the rank of descendants of a great Ang.

The sons of a chief from wives of commoner status did not inherit any part of their father's property, even though as Wangsa they were considered part of the nobility. The ruling chief allocated them land which they could cultivate during their lifetime, but this they could not pass on to their children, the assumption being that in the course of their life, they should be able to acquire property of their own. As long as the population was stationary and there was no pressure on land, this assumption was no doubt correct, but it is to be seen how the system of land tenure would work if there were to be a substantial increase in the Wanchu population.

The most problematic of the four classes of Wanchus is the one known as Wangsu. The members of this class do not claim descent from chiefs, but in their dress and the hair style of their women they follow the pattern of the chiefly clans. In Niaunu there were three named clans of Wangsu status. Within the village these three clans did not intermarry; their members either married Wangsu girls from other villages, or commoners of Niaunu.

There were numerous Wangpeng clans in the village. Such commoner clans, which correspond to the Ben people whom I had met among the Konyaks, could not intermarry within Niaunu, and they married either commoners of neighbouring villages or people of Wangsu class, who could be either from Niaunu or from other places.

In many villages there were fewer commoners than members of the three higher classes, and it would therefore be misleading to think of Wanchu society in terms of the domination of a small privileged class over a large toiling population of commoner status. Only the Wangham or great Ang class was numerically limited, and this was due to the fact that the offspring of great Ang males and women of any of the other classes were not recognized as of great Ang status, but were incorporated into the numerically much larger small Ang class.

The most striking difference between the three upper classes and the commoners lay in the appearance of their women. Those

of the two chiefly classes as well as women of intermediate class wore their hair long, whereas all commoner women, even those married to a paramount chief, had their heads shaved or closely cropped. There were also certain differences in the dietary taboos which the various classes had to observe. The members of the great Ang class did not eat the flesh of cow, goat, bear, and tiger, while people of small Ang class ate beef, and commoners were allowed to eat any animal except tiger and leopard.

Though persons of different status did not eat from the same platter or dish, chiefs were allowed to eat food cooked by commoners. In the household of a polygamous great Ang there was usually one wife of commoner status who cooked for the chief and his wife or wives of aristocratic status. This woman not only served her husband and his consorts as cook but acted also as caretaker in the sense that she was in charge of the store of provisions and distributed grain to all the other wives of the chief.

The economic power of a chief was derived from his ability to command the free labour of all the inhabitants of his village and in the case of a paramount chief, such as the Ang of Niaunu, also that of the people of tributary villages. His subjects helped to clear fields to be newly taken under cultivation, and to prepare the soil for the rice seed, which the chief then ceremoniously started to sow. He also called the villagers to work on his fields at the time of weeding and harvesting, and with so large a labour force he could produce vast quantities of grain. In return for their labour he provided the workers with food and drink, but there was no question of paying them a wage. Similarly a chief's subjects were expected to give him help in building his enormous house and even in the annual repair of the roof, which was a major operation.

Though within his domain a chief wielded great power, he was not an autocrat who administered justice entirely on his own. In a village such as Niaunu there was an informal council of old men, and if there occurred a breach of law the chief presided over this council and consulted with the other members. A first offender would be fined, but if a man continued in criminal conduct after having been warned and fined several times, the chief and council could sentence him to death by drowning. To kill a co-villager with weapons was taboo even in the case of a criminal and hence there arose the custom of killing offenders by drowning them in a river.

The chief of Niaunu told me of three cases of execution by drowning which were still well remembered. One of the victims was a habitual thief, one was sentenced to death because he had killed other people's mithan calves and sold their meat surreptitiously. The third case was that of a man who had tortured his own daughter because of the girl's affair with a man of whom he did not approve. His cruelty to the girl was considered so abhorrent that the council ordered him to be drowned. I found this latter case of particular interest, for among many other primitive populations, as for instance the Ifugaos of the Philippines, violence between kinsmen as closely related as brothers, or father and sons, tends to go unpunished because any potential avenger is bound by identical kinship ties to the offender and to the victim, and is hence not in a position to take punitive action. Among the Wanchus, on the other hand, the chief and his council represent impersonal justice and feel entitled to intervene even in disputes between members of a family.

A chief is considered justified in inflicting draconian punishments on members of his own household. Thus I was told that Sanwang, the father of the present chief of Niaunu, had sentenced two of his commoner wives and their Wangsu lovers to death, and had all four drowned in the Tisa river. Even a wife from a ruling house caught in adultery might be killed by drowning, though such drastic action involved the risk of war with her natal village, whose chief would try to avenge his daughter's death.

The marriage alliance of two chiefly houses did not altogether exclude future raids and head-taking between the two village communities. In a war between the villages A and B, warriors of A might even have taken the heads of A women married in B. Thus it was pointed out to me that in a recent feud between Ninu and Niaunu, the son of a Ninu woman married in Niaunu was killed by Ninu men, i.e. his mother's previous co-villagers.

Talking about war and killings, I took the opportunity to steer the conversation towards the Wanchus' ideas regarding the after life. Their beliefs seemed to be rather more precise than those of the Konyaks of Wakching. The land of the dead is known as Lumpu, and the spirits of the deceased are referred to as *dzaban.* Lumpu is thought of as a real underworld and as a replica of this world. Everything on earth is supposed to be duplicated in Lumpu. Thus, below Niaunu is supposed to be a corresponding

village, and below the chief's house there is a comparable chief's house.

The composition of the society of the dead is similar to that of Wanchu society on earth. There are thieves, liars and adulterers in Lumpu just as there are such people in the land of the living, and they are not gathered in special places set aside for the wicked, but mix with the other departed. The route to the land of the dead leads across a bridge and on this stand Tsailopa and Tsailonu, an old childless couple, who act as guardians of the underworld. At the time of a funeral the deceased are given food and drink by their surviving kinsmen, and these offerings they pass on to Tsailopa and Tsailonu, who ask their names and where they came from. Tsailopa is believed to keep an account of all the people who cross the bridge. On the far side of the bridge the path forks, and the Wanchus believe that those who died an unnatural death have to go by the left road while others take the right fork. The left road is the more difficult one, but in the end all the departed reach the same place.

The Wanchus' knowledge of the land of the dead is derived from the experience of shamans, men and women who in their dreams can enter Lumpu. Shamans are known as *a-sepa*, and one of these gave me a detailed account of the way in which he became a shaman. His name was Akhwan, and he told me that as a young boy he became a shaman without having had any intention of doing so. It started by his falling ill, and then he began having visions of a goddess and behaving like a mad man. The goddess instructed him to perform a rite with rice beer and the leaves of a special plant. Then the goddess gave him three small stones, one after the other, and afterwards some herbal medicine. Then he went to Lumpu, and at the entrance met Tsailopa, who let him in. The inhabitants of Lumpu were not quite like men, but appeared more like shadows. Yet, Akhwan recognized some of the people whom he knew in Niaunu before they had died. He did not enter any houses but talked to the people outside their dwellings. The houses in Lumpu are not as large as those on earth and not as solidly built. The goddess whom he first saw looks like a woman but has only one leg. At one time she was like a girl, but she had now become old.

When someone fell ill, Akhwan was consulted and asked to discover the cause of the illness. In his dreams he would then

speak to his tutelary goddess, and then set out to find the soul of the sick person. He might find it wandering about in the jungle or it may have strayed to Lumpu. He would then try to bring it back to the world of the living, but if a spirit had captured the soul, the shaman would negotiate with the spirit and offer him sacrifices to effect the soul's release. A shaman could see the spirits of Lumpu, and Akhwan told me that, though somewhat similar to men, they had certain distinctive features, such as much bigger eyes. He also talked of spirits, called *ma-zang*, who had a special association with men.

"As we keep pigs," he said, "and they consider us as their masters, so the *ma-zang* keep men, and we have to recognize them as our masters." There were good and evil spirits, and while the good spirits looked after men, the evil spirits claimed the right to afflict men with suffering and even to kill them.

Like the Konyaks of Wakching, the Wanchus also believe in a supreme deity, whom they call Zang-Bau. Regrettably my stay in Niaunu was not long enough to arrive at an understanding of the precise nature of this mythological figure. It would seem that the designation Zang-Bau suggests a divine pair, for some of my informants said that Zang lived in the sky, while Bau was located on the earth. This reminded me of the complex divine figures of the Apa Tanis and Daflas, who are also referred to by a double name, and consist of a male as well as a female entity. Whatever the nature of Zang-Bau, the Wanchus ascribe to this deity much the same attitude to men as the Konyaks attribute to Gawang. Lies, deceit and other evil deeds are supposed to arouse the wrath of Zang-Bau, who may punish offenders by bringing their life to a sudden end.

The more I saw of the Wanchus of Niaunu and such neighbouring villages as Niausa and Mintong, the stronger grew my conviction that they were a branch of the Thendu Konyaks, differing only in details of custom and dialect from such villages as Mon and Longkhai. Not only the social structure and many basic beliefs were virtually identical, but the whole atmosphere prevailing among the Wanchus reminded me constantly of my experiences in the Konyak villages some twenty miles to the west where I had lived twenty-five years ago.

Nothing illustrated this basic similarity more vividly than a scene in the large hall of the Ang of Niaunu where late one evening

a band of young men gathered to sing with the girls of the chief's family and the surrounding houses. The young men emerged from the dark, carrying torches, and even before they entered they halted and began to chant. Gradually they moved into the large hall, dimly lit by the flames of some fires, and there the girls joined in the chanting. This time I had a tape recorder, a piece of equipment that had not even existed in 1936, and hence I could record music and words, and obtain on the following day an approximate translation of the chants.

Alternating, boys and girls chanted, replying in verse to each other. The tenor of the chant which seemed to combine traditional features with skilful improvisation, reflected very clearly the young people's attitude to premarital romance as well as the obligations resulting from kinship ties and a pattern of preferential marital unions between cross-cousins. In an abbreviated form, leaving out repetitions and phrases which do not add to the progress of the enacted dialogue between a group of boys and the girls they have come to court, the song runs as follows:

Boys: We have come to your house to sing,
Tell us frankly whether you want us as your lovers;
Do not tease us, by saying one thing,
And doing another.
Girls: Alas, we can only love you for a few months,
For we are betrothed to our cousins,
And it would be wicked to break the engagement.
Boys: We do not want to be your lovers
For a short time only;
We want to have you for all time
As our wives.
Girls: We cannot be your wives,
Our parents would be cross with us
If we did so.
Boys: We have offered to become your husbands,
But you want only temporary lovers;
So we shall go to other girls' houses.
Girls: Well, go ahead and make love to them
If you can get other girls,
We too can get other lovers.
Boys: At first you talked very sweetly,

But now you have turned us down
And we feel very bitter.
We will not waste our time with you,
But go in search of other girls.

Girls: We did not know that you wanted to marry us,
We thought you only wanted to love us.
You never told us what was in your mind.
We were quite willing to make love to you
For a few months, but we cannot be your wives.
For we are already betrothed to our cousins
And they would feel bad if we broke the engagement.
Our mother's brother would beat us,
And we are afraid of him.

Boys: Be it so. We love you all too much
And if you do not want to marry us,
Let us be your lovers for some time.

This song illustrates very clearly the free and easy relations between the unmarried of both sexes, and shows that it is often the young men who plead for permanent unions while the girls are content to enjoy brief romances with a number of lovers while ultimately complying with the custom to marry the son of one of their maternal uncles.

Looking from Niaunu towards the west I could see distinctly the ranges of the Konyak country where I had left so many friends. But I had to wait eight years more before I could return to the scene of my first anthropological fieldwork.

twenty-seven

Return to Nagaland

My short stay among the Wanchus had wetted my appetite to visit once again the Konyak villages where many years ago I had spent such a happy time. I longed to see how my old friends and the new generation of Nagas were adjusting themselves to the changes brought about by the extensive development programme which the Government of India initiated throughout Nagaland. But the obstacles in the way of being permitted to enter Nagaland were formidable. Ever since, in 1956, a section of Nagas had launched a movement of insurgency with the avowed aim of establishing a sovereign Naga state independent of the Republic of India, there had been violence, escalating at times to guerilla warfare affecting many parts of Nagaland.

The predictable reaction of the Government of India was to close the whole of Nagaland to foreigners, whatever their credentials. While in 1962 I had been allowed to visit the Tirap District, several years passed before there seemed to be any chance of gaining access to any of the Konyak villages within the borders of Nagaland. However, by 1970 the political climate had considerably improved, and so I flew to Delhi and approached the Ministry of External Affairs with the request for a permit to enter Nagaland. Previous correspondence had yielded no concrete result, and at first it seemed that a personal approach would be equally futile.

Eventually, however, I received the assurance that a permit allowing me to visit the Konyak area for a short time would be issued and communicated to Shillong, the seat of the Governor of Assam who was also Governor of Nagaland. Fortunately this double charge was held by B.K. Nehru, who had known me for twenty-five years, and was of the greatest help in making the arrangements for my tour. There were still several hitches but thanks to the hospitality of B.K. Nehru and his wife as whose guest I stayed in Raj Bhavan, the period of waiting in Shillong

was both pleasant and informative.

Before being able to set out for the Konyak country I also had the opportunity of broadening my knowledge of the Nagas in general by a visit to the Zemi Nagas who inhabit the hills of North Cachar District, an area which lies outside Nagaland. Useful and interesting as this visit into an area studied earlier by Ursula Graham-Bower and described in her book *Naga Path* may have been, at that particular moment it served mainly the purpose of filling in time. I was impatient to return to the Konyaks and as soon as the necessary orders had arrived from Delhi I broke off my stay among the Zemis, and hurried back to Shillong.

On 25 August 1970 I travelled by air to Jorhat in the plains of Upper Assam, and there I was met by R.S. Bedi, Extra Assistant Commissioner Tuensang, and M. Alemchiba, senior research officer of Nagaland. Bedi, a Sikh, and Alemchiba, an Ao Naga, had both a leaning towards anthropology, and were enthusiastic about traditional Naga culture. We understood each other at once, and I greatly profited from their companionship during my stay in Nagaland. They had come in jeeps, and soon we were speeding through rice fields and small villages, noticing on the way some Ahom buildings in red stone in a relatively good state of preservation.

Passing Simaluguri and Naginimara, familiar places though hardly recognizable after thirty-four years of development, we came to a pool where a group of men were fishing. They did not look like plains people, and when we stopped I recognized them as Konyaks. They had blackened their teeth and cut their hair in the style of men of the Thenkoh group, but surprisingly they no longer spoke any of the Konyak dialects but only the Assamese of their neighbours. They told me that they had been settled in the plains for a long time.

Ultimately we came to a road barrier with a notice saying that there the Tuensang district began and entry was dependent on a permit. This checkpost was manned by military police. There was some delay because, on account of an outbreak of cholera in Assam, certificates of inoculation were required and I was the only one of our party who carried a valid certificate. Yet, ultimately we were all permitted to proceed, and a short drive brought us to Tijit, a forest settlement consisting of office buildings and houses. The people working there did not seem to be tribals, but on the

road we met several groups of men who were unmistakably Konyaks. They looked exactly as they had looked thirty-four years previously, having tattooed faces, chewing betel, wearing tight cane belts, and carrying baskets and palm leaves used as umbrellas.

Leading first through high forest and then rising steadily, the road brought us soon into country where some of the hill slopes had been cleared for cultivation. The scene was very familiar, and I realized that we must be close to the ranges of Oting and Wangla. Higher and higher the road climbed, and larger areas of slash-and-burn cultivation became visible. At last we came to a village. It looked exactly as Oting and Longkhai had looked, and the inhabitants seemed also largely unchanged. Both men and women were as scantily clothed as they had been a generation ago.

The road wound along hill slopes and we looked over wide open country lit up by the setting sun. The ripening rice fields covering the hill slopes were turning from green to gold. As we turned a corner, the district headquarters of Mon, spread out over a broad saddle, came suddenly into view, and it was in this moment that I became aware of the transformation that had taken place. Here I was in the domain of the once so powerful Ang of Mon, tribal territory which I had never been able to enter, but now the site of a town comparable to the Kohima of 1936. The old village of Mon, perched on a high hill behind us, was invisible, and the new Mon occupied land belonging partly to Mon and partly to its equally famous neighbour Chui, a village which the Wakching people used to call Chi. In Wakching I had several times encountered the chiefs of Mon and Chui, and I was thrilled by the prospect of seeing now their villages and perhaps meeting even the men I had known.

For the moment, however, my attention was drawn to the modern town of Mon. The jeep in which we were travelling had reached the outskirts, and I realized that as so many Indian hill stations, Mon consisted of a conglomeration of barracks, office buildings, shops, and bungalows irregularly dispersed over hillocks and slopes. All the modern buildings were of the style common throughout Assam—single-storeyed with whitewashed walls on a framework of timber and roofs of iron sheets painted red. In between these modern buildings stood a few Naga houses, built com-

pletely in traditional style including the roofs thatched with palm leaves. Motorable roads led up and down to hillocks to all the different buildings and living quarters. To my amazement I noticed even electrical street lighting.

We drove to the bungalow of the Additional Deputy Commissioner which occupied the top of one of the highest hillocks. T.C. Kikon Lhota, the administrative head of Mon division, and his attractive and well-educated wife received me with great cordiality, and I realized that my various publications on the Nagas were sufficient introduction to assure me of a warm welcome by all the local officials. Kikon Lhota was a member of the Indian Administrative Service, and although a Naga he had been allocated to the cadre of Uttar Pradesh and was at the time on loan to Nagaland.

I was accommodated in a pleasant well-furnished guest annexe with electricity and modern plumbing. As I unpacked my bags, I wondered what further surprises were in store for me. Casting my mind back to the bamboo huts the people of Longkhai and Oting had built for me, I could hardly believe that little more than three decades had sufficed to bring so many of the trappings of modern civilization to this remote corner of India. Like most educated Nagas, my charming hosts were devout Christians and before every meal there were impromptu prayers in the Baptist style. The furnishing of their house was modern, and only in the ample meal was there some concession to Naga taste.

Kikon Lhota was anxious to let me see as much as possible in the limited time laid down by my permit. His original plan was to take me on the first day of my stay to Old Mon, but this visit had to be postponed because the highest-ranking wife of the chief of Mon had given birth to a child, and his house was therefore taboo to any stranger.

Instead of visiting Mon we went to Chui, accompanied by an English-speaking young man of that village, who was vice-chairman of the local council. A jeep track led from the town of Mon through hill-fields, commonly known as *jhum*, towards Chui. As we were overtaking a colourful group of men, I asked the driver to stop and got out to talk to the men. They were from Totok, and many had still the face tattoos of successful headhunters. I told them that many years ago I had spent some time in Wakching, and knew that Totok used to be at war with Chui, on whose land we were now standing. A loquacious old man confirmed this and

laughingly said that because of the fighting he had been sent to jail in Kohima, and that he remembered me as being the man who had arrested him. He must have taken me for Mills or perhaps Pawsey, the last British Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, but was very good-tempered about that long past incident and gladly accepted a cigarette.

On the steep ascent to Chui our jeep broke down and we continued on foot. In front of the village-gate, an elaborate bamboo structure, there was a cemetery, which exemplified the incipient admixture of new elements to the Naga cultural pattern. Next to corpse-platforms of the old type there was the funeral-cist of a daughter of the chief. The corpse had been placed into a large round stone-cist which bore the English inscription: "In memory of Miss Meniu." Gongs and brass dishes had been deposited close by, and the cist was encircled by a string of small bells such as are worn by Ang girls. The two-pronged ceremonial spear of the girl, a symbol of chiefly rank, stood behind the cist.

The village-gate was dominated by one of the *morung* where the young warriors used to keep watch. A large menhir had been erected in front of the *morung*, and the houses flanking narrow lanes were exactly of the type I remembered from Wakching, and not of the shape typical of Longkhai and other Thendu villages. I felt myself transported back to the old times, for nothing seemed to have changed except perhaps for a few bits of clothing worn by small children.

At the far end of the village we came to the house of the Ang, an enormous building, bigger than any I had seen in this area but comparable to the largest of the houses of Wanchu chiefs. A few stone steps brought us to a large platform, and on this stood a massive stone seat flanked by two menhirs. In 1936 I had heard of this seat, and had imagined it to be something like the ceremonial "throne" of the Ang of Longkhai. But apparently it was used to exhibit the bodies of killed animals such as tigers and other prestigious game.

Under the eaves of the chief's house, tied to the wall or resting on shelves were innumerable trophies. To the left there were several rows of enemies' heads, a hundred and thirty-seven altogether, reputedly the largest collection in this area, not perhaps because the men of Chui had been more successful warriors, but rather because they had been preserved from fires such as had ravaged

other collections. The origin of most of the heads was still known and an old man took great pride to point out the heads acquired on more recent raids. He even took one head from the shelf, and demonstrated how in his youth he used to dance with a newly captured head.

We were courteously greeted by the Ang, a slim dignified man wearing a tight brass belt over a pair of black shorts, and a chest ornament of four brass heads. The Ang of Chui I had known was no longer alive, and we were in the presence of his son. A younger brother of the Ang wore similar ornaments but no shorts. The Ang invited us into the huge front-hall of his house. At the back where he used to hold court and receive his guests there was a corner hung with Burmese gongs, wild boar's tusks and other indigenous ornaments, and recently decorated also with colour prints of Nehru, Radhakrishnan and other Indian celebrities. We were offered tea, and when for old times' sake I asked for rice-beer, some beer of rather poor quality was produced.

The Ang did not know much Assamese, but in his own tongue he was voluble and, as it seemed, highly articulate. Speaking with the assurance of a man used to being listened to, he talked about the role of chiefs and the need to preserve their authority. When there had been unrest and chaos, he had persuaded the people of all the villages under his jurisdiction not to co-operate with the guerilla forces of the Underground movement, but to stand loyally by the government. People listened to him because his authority stemmed from his inherited position and rank and if government wanted stability, the Angs should be supported. He claimed that he favoured the establishment of schools and did not mind the work of the mission, although he himself was too old to change his ways. If others wanted to wear trousers and shirts, let them do it, but he himself was uncomfortable in foreign clothes. He did not even like to wear shorts, but put them on as a concession to modern taste.

Finally the Ang asked me whether the Queen of England and the Maharaja of Manipur had authority because they were educated or because they were of royal descent. When I admitted that they owed their position to their royal blood, he retorted that exactly the same applied to Konyak chiefs. In his own village his subjects continued to give him free labour, and nearby dependent villages continued to pay him the traditional tribute. Only distant villages

had become slack in paying their dues.

The next day I went to the village of Shangnyu, also known as Hangnyu, and as such figuring in the succession dispute described in Chapter IV. Even this village could be reached by jeep, and for several miles we drove through ripening rice fields. On the way we ran into a group of young girls wearing little except coloured necklaces and tiny skirts such as the girls of Oting and Hungphoi had worn.

The approach to Shangnyu is through groves of palm trees, grown mainly for the sake of their leaves needed for thatching houses. The village is large and the houses are scattered over a wide area. They stand in between trees and kitchen gardens, and there is no vantage point from which one can see the whole village.

We went first to the chief's house, which was even more impressive than the house of the Ang of Chui. I paced its length and found it about 360 feet long. The house consists of an enormous undivided hall running along its entire length, and the living quarters of the chief's wives and the families of his dependents. The front hall of the living quarters is an imposing hall used by the Ang as his reception and living room.

The most outstanding feature of this large building was an enormous carving cut out of a panel which formed the division between living quarters and open hall. The people of Shangnyu believe this carving to be as old as the village, and it is certainly the biggest carving I have seen in any Naga house, and the tree from which the panel was cut must have been gigantic. The carving consists of several groups of figures all cut out of the solid wood in high relief. Most prominent were two male figures in full ceremonial dress each with an oversized penis sticking out horizontally. Above and beside these were figures of monkeys and snakes, and of a copulating couple. The fertility symbolism of the carving was unmistakable, but the circumstances of its creation were no longer remembered.

The owner of this colossal building was Lupok, the grandson of Auwang, the chief who had come out successfully in his contest with a usurper belonging to the chiefly house of Pomau. Lupok, a youngish man decorated with the full face-tattoo of a head-hunter, lacked the forceful personality of the Ang of Chui and clearly did not share his distaste of foreign clothes. His fantastic

attire consisted of a pair of bright green shorts and a dark plastic jacket, a head-dress of monkey-fur and feathers, and heaps of valuable beads enclosing his neck. His attractive young wife wore traditional dress plus a blue blouse, and among the chief's numerous attendants there was an old man wearing a long dressing gown with stripes in two shades of brown.

Apart from these items of foreign clothing and the existence of a jeep track linking the village with the district headquarters, Shangnyu contained little that could not have been there thirty years earlier. In front of the Ang's house there were two funeral-huts, each containing carved statues representing the departed and his attendants. The former chief had died some months earlier and on his funeral hut two enemy skulls were displayed in addition to numerous skulls of sacrificed buffaloes and cattle. In one of the *morung* there was also a small collection of head-trophies lying on a shelf behind the log-drum.

The social structure of Shangnyu resembles closely that of the Wanchu villages which I had visited in 1962. As in Niaunu there are three aristocratic classes of varying rank and a number of commoner clans. The women of all but two of the commoner clans shave their heads as do the lower class women of Niaunu. There can hardly be any doubt that the Konyaks of Shangnyu are identical with the people known as Wanchu in Tirap district. Shangnyu is almost half-way between Mon and Niaunu and these three villages seem to belong socially and culturally to the same unit.

The old village of Mon occupies the top of one of the highest hills in the vicinity, and though this position involves long climbs for those bringing in grain or firewood, in the days of raids and head-hunting it must have had great strategic advantages. Mon has for long been the seat of a famous chiefly house which dominated a large number of villages. Fourteen of these are reckoned as colonies of Mon and one such colony was founded only twenty-five years ago. Some other villages enjoyed the protection of Mon without claiming a common origin. Mon has always been at peace with Sheangha and Longwa, villages with whose chiefly houses the Angs of Mon used to intermarry. In past generations there have also been marriage alliances with the chiefs of Chui and Shangnyu, but with these villages there have also been feuds resulting in the capture of heads.

The Ang of Mon, whom I visited when the *genna* caused by the birth of his son had come to an end, can trace his ancestors through eight generations, and for the past six generations even the natal villages of the principal wives of the various chiefs are known. The Ang has still great prestige, but his power has diminished and he seems to have little to do. Some years ago his house was destroyed by fire and hence there are few trophies of any sort. But in front of the Ang's house I noticed a large mound of stones put up on the occasion of head-hunting rites. One of these stones bears a tally of engraved lines, each representing one head. I was told that it has been set up by one particular man who had captured twenty heads.

Like other chiefs the Angs of Mon were autocratic rulers who had power over life and death of their subjects. A precipice with a drop of several hundred feet was used for executions. Any villager who had dared to make love to any of the chief's numerous wives was hurled down from this cliff. Such drastic retribution would now be unacceptable and the new pattern of authority is personified by a kinsman of the Ang, who was elected to the regional council and was also one of the representatives of Tuensang district in the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland.

The aristocratic class of Mon is divided into three sections, Known as Wangyem (corresponding to Wangham in other Thendu villages), Wangsa and Wangsu. The former consists of the offspring of great Angs and their wives of equal rank, while Wangsa are the issue of unions of men of Wangyem status and women of lower rank. Wangsu form the lowest stratum of the nobility, but are superior to the commoner clans. Among the latter there are two clans whose women wear their hair long like Ang women, and three whose women shave their heads, a sign of low status throughout the villages of Thendu Konyaks and Wanchus.

After I had visited Chui, Shangnyu and Mon, I went to see Totok, traditionally hostile to the neighbouring Chui, and distinguished by several features not found in any of the other villages. It occupies a rocky mountain top, and the houses are built right onto the rock. Indeed one wonders how the wooden posts could be driven into such ground. The village is very large, and the houses stand close together, often separated only by narrow gullies. A peculiarity of the village are the many clusters of forked posts which stand in front of the houses. They are put up on the occasion of

sacrifices of mithan and buffaloes, but never of bulls or cows. Not only men of chiefly class, but also rich commoners may give feasts of merit involving the erection of a forked post. In 1970 there were no more mithan in Totok, but they were still being bought from villages lying in the direction of the Chang country. Totok seemed hardly touched by the modern world, the dress of men and women was traditional and the well-kept *morung* clearly lived-in. In one of these *morung* there was a peculiar sitting-board. Not only did it end in hornbill heads, but near the end there were excretions carved in the shape of double-faced heads.

One of the most heart-warming experiences of my stay in Mon was the visit to Chingai of Oting, the veteran *dobashi* who thirty four years earlier had been my constant companion on my visits to Oting, Longkhai, and other villages of the Thendu group. He had clearly prospered and now occupied a modern bungalow in the district headquarters. Chingai had put on weight and his hair was grey, but he had lost none of his cheerfulness, and his rise to a respected position in the new administration had not made him pompous. Though he wore some modern clothes, he still sported a brass pendant consisting of four heads such as used to be worn by head-hunters.

There was no sign of his Konyak wife whom I knew from Oting, and I did not dare to ask about her, for Chingai had a new and attractive Ao wife, and three sons and two daughters from that marriage. His new wife was a teacher, and she and the children all spoke English. Chingai was delighted to see me, and his wife said how often he had spoken about me. Chingai acted not only as a valuable middleman between the administration and the villages where he had influence, but seemed to engage also in various profitable business enterprises. His house was well furnished in western style; and his sons and daughters had received a modern education.

During my stay at the district headquarters I also had an opportunity to take part in a celebration in the local high school. There happened to be "Teachers' Day," and this occasion was marked by speeches, songs, dances, and various games. The high school is a modern and well equipped building, and the teachers were nearly all outsiders from other parts of India. Kikon Lhota asked me to give an address to the assembled teachers and children, and it would have been rude to decline this request. So

I spoke of my admiration for Naga culture and the desirability of retaining its valuable features side by side with the technological innovations of modern times. Yet, in the life of the school there seemed to be little room for any expression of local traditions. The girls were dressed in spotless white frocks, such as might be seen in any convent school in the world, and the boys wore blue shorts and white shirts. Most surprisingly, the tune of a song sung by primary school children was that of "God Save the Queen." The only concession to Naga taste was a pseudo head-hunting dance performed as part of the games by a small group of boys, but the costumes and hats, partly made of paper, were far from authentic.

So far I had seen only villages which could be reached by jeep, and as there was no objection to my going to stay in one of the remoter villages, I decided on a brief excursion to Tang, a village I knew only by reputation. The deputy commissioner arranged for porters, two of whom, strangely enough, were Chetris from Nepal.

From Mon the path descended steeply through rice fields. On some the crop was still standing, and as long as we passed through the fields the path was well-trodden. Later we entered secondary jungle, and there the path had not been cleared and we were struggling through high grass. I was vividly reminded of my trips in 1936 when I had walked in similar terrain. At last we reached the Tapti river, a brown, sluggish water course, which I crossed on a suspension bridge consisting of two steel ropes and a few connecting canes and bamboos. The porters preferred to ford the river by wading at a place where the water was only knee-deep.

At the far bank we were faced by a steep and very hot climb. After about an hour we reached the ridge of Yoting and saw the village on a nearby spur. From there the climb continued, though less steeply, and in a hollow we passed a shallow pool, where some buffaloes were wallowing in the mud. There were many signs of large numbers of cattle, suggesting that Tang was richer in livestock than the other villages. At last we came to a rest-house built on a raised stone platform, and soon afterwards entered high forest surrounding the village. There we found some grave-huts with carved images of warriors inside, and in front a wooden post fashioned in the likeness of a human figure.

After crossing a ditch which used to be part of the fortifications

of Tang, we came to a *morung* built high above the path. Stone steps flanked by upright stones led up to a platform. From this platform we looked over part of the village and as far as the enormous Ang's house. Most of the houses were very large, and the roofs looked like the humps of gigantic animals. Instead of straight ridge-poles, there were combinations of posts constituting a kind of bent ridge-pole.

A *gaonbura*, wearing a red cloth, and the teacher of the new village school came to meet us, and the latter offered to let us stay in his house, which stood near the rear end of the chief's house. At the time of our arrival one of the seasonal rituals was taking place in the great hall of that house. There a number of old men were busy preparing pairs of bamboo sticks. In front of the door a small fire was lit, and the old men held the specially prepared bamboos over the fire. Each pair of bamboos represented a piece of cultivable land, and the way in which the bamboos split in the heat of the fire indicated whether it was suitable for cultivation. If the split was thought to be unsatisfactory, the plot of land would be left to lie fallow that year. The old men holding these bamboos over the fire represented sections of the village; each man being the member of a separate clan.

After the omens of the bamboo-sticks had been taken the food brought by the men and that provided by the Ang's household was served. There was rice, pork, smoked rats, bamboo shoots and rice-beer. The food was eaten from large leave-platters spread on wicker-stools; four to five men sat round each platter. The men did not object to my presence nor to being photographed. Yet, this was the first time that a European had entered Tang, which apparently had never been visited by British officials although an expedition had once passed through neighbouring villages.

The Tang people have the tradition that the founders of the village were people from the village of Chinlong, and that these settled on vacant land claimed by no-one else. Under an Ang of the chiefly house of Chinlong they developed into a powerful community, equal in size and military strength to Shangnyu. They used to take heads from Sheangha, Mon, Chui, Chen, and Shiong, and the collections of heads kept in the *morung* are evidence of their successes in raids. In one *morung* alone I counted a hundred and eighty head trophies. The men of Tang believe that in

their whole history they lost about a hundred heads and captured about three hundred.

Feuds, however, were only episodes in their relations with neighbouring villages, and the Angs of Tang have intermarried with the chiefly houses of Sheangha, Mon, Chui, Longwa, Longyang, Longkhai, Pomau, Niaunu, and Joboka. In 1970, the Ang of Tang received tribute only from four villages, but there was a time when Sheangha and Longwa also paid tribute. They stopped these payments when their numerical strength outstripped that of Tang.

Within his own village the Ang used to occupy an extremely powerful position. He could command free labour from all villagers, and some months before my visit the villagers had given three days of free labour to repair the Ang's huge house. All the land of families becoming extinct in the male line fell to the Ang, and he could distribute it among his sons. In theory he could even expel people from their land, and this suggests that the Ang had some residual right on all the land within the boundaries of his village. Until recently he had supreme judicial powers. He could fine people, taking their fields and cattle, and all such fines were his rightful share. Villagers who had committed serious crimes, such as murders within the village, could be expelled and their property confiscated.

The Ang I met was an oldish man, apparently much addicted to smoking opium, and looking rather ill. Though his household with twenty wives and a number of children and grandchildren was still large and his recently rebuilt house impressive, his influence seemed to be on the decline. His eldest son had died, and the widow with two small daughters was given the choice of staying on in the Ang's house, or returning to her home village. She opted for Tang and was to marry her late husband's younger brother, the Ang's heir, a young man about eighteen to twenty years old. No formal wedding was to be held for the young man would automatically take his brother's place, and the young woman would become the wife of the ruling chief, and the head of the women's side of the large household. Most of the old Ang's wives were women of commoner status, and hardly distinguishable from domestic servants. One whole side of the long building is taken up by women's quarters, and individual wives have their own hearths where they cook for themselves and their children. The Ang himself lives mainly in the front hall which struck me as

extremely orderly with a large collection of *dao* of various shapes and other weapons and utensils neatly pinned to the walls.

That evening we went to talk to the Ang, and to lighten the atmosphere I brought two bottles of rum which I had purchased in Mon. We found the Ang sitting at his hearth with his half-brother and a few retainers. He was smoking opium, and complained about all sorts of pains including headache. A tablet of Saridon which I offered was gratefully accepted, and the Ang soon felt better. The rum too found favour with the company, and some of the retainers and other villagers became much more talkative than the Ang.

Among them was a curious man in the remnant of a green uniform and an upturned moustache which gave him a quite un-Nagalike appearance incongruous with his old-style face-tattoo. He had been a member of the so-called Underground, but had surrendered and was now working as a contractor. He told me that recently he had taken a road contract for Rs 20,000 and hoped to make a profit of Rs 13,000. This was possible because the unsophisticated men of relatively remote villages such as Tang could still be persuaded to give their labour for no other reward than their rations and at the end a feast with the slaughter of a buffalo and some pigs.

After some time it was suggested that we should also offer some rum to the ladies of the house, and fortunately we were able to produce a third bottle. Rather shyly several women appeared soon followed by the remaining female members of the household. Though normally they never joined the Ang in his personal hall, they drank the rum and were even willing to sing for us. The singing, they insisted however, was to be done in one of the women's rooms.

The next day we went to the house of a man who seemed to rival the Ang in influence. He was a commoner who had been elected as Area Council Member, and appears to be a protagonist of modernization. He told me that he was one of the first to embrace Christianity. Some five years earlier an Ao preacher had come to Tang, and persuaded him and some other villagers that it would be to their advantage to become Christians. As Christians they would enjoy various benefits including that of education and would join in the progress made by other villages and tribes.

Our host admitted that he had two wives, but excused himself by saying that he had married them before becoming a Christian. It seems strange that one Ao could persuade quite a number of the Tang people to abandon their old faith and accept numerous innovations, particularly as they understood little of Christian ideology. The Ang and his family were opposing the change-over to a new religion and way of life, but it seemed that they were fighting a losing battle. Already eighty-seven out of the two hundred and sixtyfour households of Tang had become Christian, and as the teacher was a Christian and undoubtedly indoctrinated those children who went to school, the strength of the Christians was bound to increase. The majority of the villagers were still performing the old rituals, but judging from developments in other villages one could reasonably predict that the old tribal religion had little future among the people of Tang.

Though the puritanism preached by the Baptists may ultimately affect the freedom which the young of both sexes traditionally enjoy among Konyaks, in Tang there were still enough young boys and girls who gathered in the evenings for flirtation and singing. When after the day's work they returned from the fields, they dressed up in their colourful ornaments, and then repaired to the large side-hall of the Ang's house. There they sat down in small groups, lit fires and then spent hours with singing and joking. Couples who wished for more privacy had ample opportunity for more intimate encounters, for all along the long hall there were small semi-circular cubicles fitted with a bamboo bed, and they were used by lovers in the same way as the granaries of Wakching. The Ang's house thus fulfils the function of a youth-club and dormitory open to boys and girls of all classes.

On our way back I wanted to spend a few hours in Yotin, a village of some eighty houses, founded by a member of the Ang family of Tang five generations ago. As we approached the village we saw preparations for a funeral. An elderly woman had died and some men were digging a grave while others made a palm-leaf roof. In the village, where the Ang entertained us in his house, we met the Ao pastor and he told us that the deceased was a Christian and would be buried shortly. Accommodatingly he even offered to speed up the funeral if I wanted to film it.

In the house of death there was wailing and chanting, and the beating of gongs. Finally, some girls carrying vases with flowers

came out of the house, and they were followed by four old men dressed only in belt and apron and carrying the bier with the corpse covered with a red cloth. Another man carried a dead dog, and another three dead chickens. These animals were to be buried with the dead woman presumably to accompany her to the land of the dead, in which both adherents of the old faith and Konyak Christians believe. The pastor, carried a prayer book, and the other mourners followed the bier. When the procession arrived at the grave there was further beating of gongs and chanting, and then the corpse was placed into a wooden coffin, which was immediately nailed up. Then the coffin was slid into the open grave, and the dog and chickens were thrown in too. The pastor read a prayer from his book, and then the grave was closed and the flowers were put up on a bamboo stand.

This funeral was a good example of the intermeshing of two different traditions and practices, and the way in which Konyaks combine Christian elements with their old funeral customs. The burying of the corpse is a concession to new ideas, but the erection of a palm-leaf shelter recalls the time when the dead were exposed on bamboo platforms. Similarly the sacrifice of dog and chickens, and the reading of prayers from a book are two ways of aiding the progress of the deceased in the next world.

The visit to Tang concluded my tour of the villages ruled by autocratic chiefs. What I have learned in these villages taken together with my experiences among the Wanchus convinced me that in so far as social structure and the system of political controls are concerned, a pattern of remarkable uniformity extends over most of the Thendu villages of the Mon division of Nagaland and the Wanchu villages of the Tirap district. The most characteristic feature of the system is the links of chiefly lineages across village-boundaries and in some cases over considerable distances. In the "democratic" villages such as Wakching, the majority of affinal ties are within the narrow confine of the village community, and very few men marry girls from other villages. There the exogamy of wards and the reciprocal relationships between *morung* largely determine the choice of marriage partners.

In the villages of the Thendu group, on the other hand, neither members of chiefly lineages nor commoners may marry within their own class and village. Men of great Ang class (e.g. Wangham, Wangyem etc.) take their principal wives from chiefly

lineages of other villages, and as the principle of lineage-exogamy precludes any marriage between persons of common descent however remotely related, wives have often to be sought in distant villages and never in villages founded by men of the same dynasty. Men of Ang class are free, however, to take secondary wives from the commoner clans of their own village, and while chiefs of pure aristocratic blood consider such wives only as concubines and domestic helps, men of the lower divisions of the Ang class (i.e. Wangsa and Wangsu) often marry girls of local commoner clans as their only wives. If they want to find wives of their own class, they must seek them among families of different lineage and village.

Commoners are bound by similar rules. The commoner clans of the same village do not intermarry, possibly because their position as subjects of the same chiefly house implies fictional agnatic ties. They marry commoners from other villages or members of the "small" Ang lineages of their own village. During my earlier field-work I had been struck by the fact that in Oting, a minor village of the Thendu group and a colony of Mon, men of Ang class married girls of commoner class and commoners found their wives among the daughters of the Ang families of the village, excluding, however, the daughters of the village-chief who had to be married to men of another Ang lineage and village. I had then been puzzled about this apparent example of class-exogamy, but it becomes understandable in the light of the situation in the major villages ruled by chiefs of Wangham class, where the people of each class must marry either outside their villages or outside their class.

The great Angs of such villages as Mon, Chui, or Tang are autocratic rulers of a type virtually absent among the tribal populations of the rest of India. The insistence on the purity of the royal blood as the indispensable condition for the recognition of high status reminds one of the sacred chiefs of Polynesia rather than of tribal rulers in any part of Southern Asia. The supreme position of the Konyak chiefs, which they maintained for countless generations by the careful arrangements of political marriage-alliances between the lineages of the highest rank, is no longer secure, however.

The beginnings of an erosion of their authority are noticeable in all the villages I visited. Even though the officials of the administration treat such chiefs as the Angs of Mon and Chui with great

courtesy and consideration, they often find it convenient to work in practical matters with men of more progressive ideas who are intent on building up their position in the system of elected village representatives. The present generation of villagers still pays respect to the great Angs in recognition of their inherited status as men of the purest aristocratic blood, but the young boys who are now attending middle and high schools outside their own villages are not likely to accept the supremacy of chiefs whose only claim to their position rests on the hereditary principle. Whereas many other features of traditional Konyak society may well persist even under the changed political conditions, the institution of autocratic chieftainship is almost certain to undergo a drastic transformation, even though some of the chiefs may retain part of their wealth and privileges.

As anthropologists, we must hope that this remarkable institution, almost unique in character among Indian tribal populations, will be studied in detail as long as it is still in effective operation and there are men who remember the days when the great Angs were absolute rulers of their villages. The time for such studies is running out, but future generations of Nagas will regret it if an institution so important during long periods of their history will remain inadequately recorded.

The highlight of my visit to Nagaland was still to come. To see Wakching again had been my ambition for over thirty years, and now this wish was to be satisfied. There is a good road between Mon and Wakching, and as my jeep sped towards Longkhai I thought of all the long and hot marches which had taken me through the same region. In 1936 the construction of motor roads on those hills would have appeared a fantastic extravagance, but now there was quite a bit of traffic on the road to Wakching.

Near Tanhai we stopped to look at the stone believed to have been the seat of the Ahom king who had sought refuge in the Naga Hills. The stone had been carried to the road in order that a previous Governor of Nagaland might see it without effort—a rather misguided action in my opinion, as in Tanhai it had lain at a place connected with the exiled king.

Passing Shiong land we finally approached Wakching, and my heart was beating with anticipation. The first impression, however, was something of an anticlimax. A large cluster of government buildings and huts had grown up round the former inspection

bungalow. Thus the aspect of this site had radically changed. The bungalow itself, on the other hand, was basically the same, though an extended closed veranda had been added, and a modern lavatory installed in the former bathroom. Moreover, there was electricity, and I later realized even street lighting on the path to the village. The view, of course, was as lovely as ever, and it was with some emotion that I looked across the cultivated slopes to the village of Chingtang, and beyond to the higher ranges in the east.

We had not been expected, but the bungalow was soon opened, and the brother of the late *chowkidar*, an old wizened man who had succeeded to his brother's post, could hardly believe that it was really I who had returned after all those years. I was too impatient to stay long at the bungalow, and soon I set out for the village. The path down to the saddle was now lined with government buildings and huts, and there were masts for electric lines. But the skyline of the village with the Thepong *morung* prominently standing out seemed little changed. I took the path to that *morung* and soon I found myself climbing the same stone steps over which I had gone up and down so often.

When I reached the top the village seemed to look somewhat different. Houses had crept closer to the *morung* and the dancing place in front appeared reduced. The *morung* itself still contained some of the old carvings, but the general condition had deteriorated and the roof was leaking badly. I was told that the *morung* was due for repair and the work would start after the end of the monsoon. As I walked through the lane towards the home of Shankok, the scene became more and more familiar. The houses were exactly the same as they had always been and so were the children peering down from the high verandas. An old woman looked at me with curiosity turning soon to utter amazement. When I asked whether she remembered me her expression changed to a broad smile; had she not seen me walking about the village day after day, often accompanied by Shankok?

I had heard already that Shankok had died less than two years ago, and his death cast a cloud over the otherwise so joyous occasion of my return to Wakching. As we came to his old house his eldest son, Shoupa, came out and greeted my companion Bedi as an old friend. He was dressed in white trousers and a shirt, and yet resembled Shankok—so much indeed that I frequently made the mistake of addressing him as Shankok. Speaking in fluent

English, he welcomed me very warmly and told me how delighted he was to see me as his father had often spoken about me.

As we entered his house, several older men joined us and I gradually recognized some of my old friends. They could hardly believe their eyes and kept saying that it was like a dream to see me again and recalled many of the events during my earlier stay. Laughingly they spoke about the fishing expedition and the reaction of the girls to see me practically in the nude. They reminded me how I had shown them how to swim on the back. They had tried it too and found it quite easy. During the next few days I was to hear severa remarks about this incident, which seemed to have found a place in Wakching folklore.

Shoupa's house was much the same as it had been in Shankok's time and the only visible innovation were some low cane stools, on which we sat round the fire. We were offered rice-beer and as we drank the house filled with more villagers anxious to see me. After a short while we went for a stroll round the village, by now followed by a large crowd. My first call was at the house of Shankok's sister, Lipung. She seemed very little changed, being now about fifty and still a handsome and well-built woman. She evinced such pleasure and wonder at seeing me that I felt quite moved. Though Lipung still knew no Assamese, we both understood each other's feelings. Lipung and many others said that they thought I must long have died, a very understandable thought considering that Shankok and nearly all my contemporaries and close associates were dead. Lipung had eight sons, six of whom were alive, and two girls, the youngest only six years old. The survival of so many children speaks by itself for an improvement of sanitary conditions. Both Lipung and her sister Meniu, whom I also visited, seemed to be well off with large houses and successful husbands.

Finally I went to the house of Henlong, the beautiful girl, whose photograph had appeared as the frontispiece in the first edition of *The Naked Nagas*. I found her sifting millet, a tiny rather frail old lady clad only in a small skirt. She recognized me immediately and spoke with great vivacity and undiminished charm of the old days when I photographed her and went about with Shankok. She was obviously pleased by my visit and the prominence her photograph had given her. I told her how many people in Europe had admired her beauty.

The next day we accompanied Shoupa to one of his fields where the rice harvest was in progress. Earlier that year the Bala *morung* had got burnt accidentally, and as this is the *morung* with which the Thepong *morung* has marrige ties and ceremonial relations, Shoupa had assisted the Bala men by donating the entire contents of one of his granaries to feed the workers engaged in the re-building. Now the Bala *morung* repaid their debt of gratitude by providing for one day a labour force of some eighty men and boys to help Shoupa with the harvest of one of his large fields.

The path to the field led first through high forest and there it was almost entirely paved and consisted of long flights of stone steps. At a roadside washing place the water was flowing out of three iron pipes, a feature unknown thirty years ago. As we descended further we found the path lined with flimsy bamboo fencing, and this indicated that the forest and the bamboo plantations to both sides were private property, from which no one except the owners was permitted to take wood or bamboo.

From a rest-platform at the end of the forest we looked down on the golden fields covering the slopes below us. Large numbers of men, women, and children were streaming to the fields with empty carrying baskets, and returning carrying loads of rice to the village. This two-way traffic continued the whole day, and some women did the 1,000 foot climb four times a day carrying on each ascent a heavy basket full of rice.

At Shoupa's field a large crowd of workers were already busy. The centre of the activities was the threshing hut with its accompanying shelters. On the slopes above and below groups of men and boys, and a few girls of Shoupa's family were cutting the rice with small sickles. The reapers worked in lines of semi-circles shouting as they procceded with surprising speed. The effect was almost that of a machine, and plots of waving rice-plants were suddenly reduced to bare ground where only the large leaves of taro-plants emerged from heaps of cut rice-stalks.

The small boys picked up the sheaves and rushed with them to the threshing hut. There they threw them down and a gang of youths hanging on to ropes dangling from the rafter trod out the ears with rhythmic movements supported by a chant, and then threw out the empty sheaves at the other end of the hut.

There was an atmosphere of excitement, and though the workers were covered in sweat they seemed to have unbounded

energy and to enjoy the common activity. Shoupa devoted himself mainly to me, but now and then gave some orders. However, any direction seemed superfluous, for everyone appeared to know exactly what to do and there was perfect co-operation between the groups. Most of the older men were virtually naked, but the younger men wore black shorts, and a few of the small boys wore, in addition, white vests—certainly superfluous in the fierce heat.

At about 3 p.m. nearly the whole field was reaped, and the first loads of rice were carried to the village. I left when most of the reaping was nearly completed and on the way back we were all caught in a thunderstorm with heavy rain. But the Konyaks who had covered their baskets with palm leaves ignored the rain, and in the midst of the downpour we met people going once more to the fields to bring up new loads.

Shoupa had expected a yield of over hundred baskets from this one field, but in the end a hundred and thirty-seven baskets were filled. As one basket lasts his household for two days, two similar fields could meet his domestic wants. In fact, he was likely to reap about twelve hundred baskets from his seven fields and this meant that he had an annual surplus of about eight hundred baskets. But like his father Shankok he did not sell rice but stored it and used it for ceremonial payments. Occasionally he also gave rice on loan, and the current rate of interest for such loans was 50 per cent, i.e. three baskets of rice were the usual repayment of two baskets received on oan the previous year. Rich people such as Shoupa also generously contributed to village needs and a large store of rice enables a man to play an important position not only in village affairs but also in the politics of the region.

The fine weather I had so far enjoyed did not last, and the day after I had watched the reaping of Shoupa's field Wakching was shrouded in mist and rain. The time there was not lost, however. Both Shoupa and his father's younger brother, Chinyang, entertained me in their houses, and with the help of my house-by-house census of 1936/37, which I had brought with me, I was able to trace the fortunes of various families belonging to the Thepong *morung*. In doing so, it became apparent that there has been a considerable increase in the population of Wakching. There was no longer sufficient room for all houses on the crest of the ridge on which the village was built, and new houses had been constructed

on ground sloping down towards the clusters of granaries.

In the houses of the wealthier people I noticed the appearance of some new items of furniture and equipment. Shoupa produced a table and chairs, electric torches were widespread, and enamel mugs had almost completely replaced the lovely bell-metal cups. In some houses I also found rice-huskers similar to a hand-mill, but even though these novel implements eased the work of husking rice, the traditional pounding tables were by no means out of use.

A more fundamental change is likely to be brought about by the educational institutions established in Wakching. The village had not only a primary school, but also a high school intended for a group of villages including Wanching and Kongan. This school had been built on a flat ledge below the villlage and consisted mainly of one large wooden building of modern type containing a long hall with school desks and benches. About a hundred and forty boys and girls of various ages, recruited from several villages, were boarders in this high school, and the surprisingly large staff consisted of seventeen teachers drawn from parts of India as distant as Kerala. The students all wore modern dress and looked very different from the young people I had seen in the village and the rice-fields.

The medium of instruction was English, but the pupils' level of comprehension of the language was low, and this accounted presumably for their relatively poor performance. For several years none of the pupils had passed in the matriculation examination, and I wondered whether there were in Nagaland sufficient outlets for young people with a type of education which gave them ambitions beyond those of ordinary cultivators without equipping them for the harsh competition in the outside world. Yet the children at this boarding school took little part in the agricultural work of their parents, and there was the implicit expectation that they would ultimately find jobs not involving manual labour. The only people who were more or less idle even during the rush-time of the rice harvest were semi-educated young men who considered it below their dignity to work on their family's land, but had not succeeded in obtaining suitable employment.

On the following day we drove to the neighbouring village of Wanching, which was now also accessible by jeep. Wanching seemed

even less touched by modern influences than Wakching. Only a minority of the inhabitants were Christians and the majority continued to perform the old rituals. The *morung* were in excellent shape, the numerous carvings were painted brightly in red, white, and black. In addition there was a large church built on a prominent site overlooking the whole village. I was told that the pagan villagers had helped the Christians to build it, an act of neighbourly assistance apparently not reciprocated by the Christians when one of the *morung* was being rebuilt.

In Wakching too the *morung* had all been maintained, and two which had been destroyed in a recent fire had been rebuilt according to the old pattern. But there the carvings of men, animals, and various symbols on posts and cross-beams were inferior to those which had perished. As it can hardly be assumed that the incidence of artistic talent had suddenly diminished, one can only conclude that less effort is being spent on the decoration of houses than a generation ago. This reflects the decrease in the social importance of the Konyak *morung*. Previously the village was the most important political unit, and within the village the men's houses were the focal points of social and ritual activities. In 1970 the *morung* were still the principal exogamous units and their members co-operated in some economic activities, but the political structure of a village based on the close interaction of the *morung* had largely been replaced by different and wider alignments.

In accordance with the administrative system common to all parts of Nagaland, each village has a village council which consists of the nominees of the *morung*, the headmen (*gaonbura*) who are now, as they were in British days, appointed by the district officer (here the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Mon division) and as ex-officio member the chief (Ang) of the village. Villages are grouped together into areas and in the case of Wakching the area of which it forms a part comprises ten villages. Each village council elects one representative to an Area Council, and area council members receive a small salary from the government. The Area Council in turn elects from among its members the members of a District Regional Council on the basis of one representative for a population of about five thousand.

The whole idea of elections and indirect representation on bodies representing relatively large areas is novel to Konyak Nagas, and it is surprising that the system seems to work reasonably smooth.

It is inevitable, however, that competition for seats on the Area Council and District Regional Council tends to bring about the rise of factions within a village. Moreover, men ambitious for political advancement look beyond the confines of their village, and if they cannot command the support of their own co-villagers they may woo other villages represented on the same Area Council. Such a case arose in Wakching. A wealthy man whose own *morung* failed to nominate him for the village council, engineered his election as their representative by the people of a neighbouring village with which he had kinship ties, and from the position of member of the Area Council he advanced by skilful diplomacy to the position of member of the District Regional Council.

The change of attitudes involved in all these new alignments is profound. Only those who have experienced traditional Naga society can appreciate the magnitude of the transformation of the political outlook. To a Naga of the older generation mankind appeared as divided between a small inner circle of co-villagers, clansmen, and allied villages, on whose support he could depend and to whom he owed assistance in emergencies, and the entire outside world consisting of the inhabitants of other Konyak villages as well as the people of neighbouring tribes, who were potential enemies and legitimate victims of head-hunting. A category of neutral communities or individuals and the idea of gaining political allies from among communities outside the narrow circle of the in-group had no place in the Naga's picture of the world. Today all this has changed, and the Nagas have got used to constructive co-operation be ween formerly hostile villages and even across tribal boundaries.

With the possibility of advancement in the world beyond the confines of his village a man's interest in and loyalty to the *morung*-community necessarily diminishes, and though still maintained as dormitories for the unmarried and convenient places for casual gatherings, the men's houses of Wakching have lost some of their most important functions. With the introduction of schools attended by many boys of the village, the *morung*'s role as an educational institution has declined, and the formal adoption of Christianity by a majority of the people of Wakching has deprived the *morung* of their role as centres of ritual activities.

Yet, unlike some of the smaller Konyak villages, Wakching has retained the basic framework of its social structure, and there is

as yet no question of any disregard of the rule of clan and *morung* exogamy. Moreover, Wakching still receives tribute payments from some of the villages which used to be dependent on its protection. During the disturbances of t he secessionist movement, these payments were discontinued by some of the villages, but since the re-establishment of order the tribute payments have been resumed.

Some of the dependent villages have begun to make the payments in cash, but the Wakching men are not happy with this innovation because they fear that such a replacement of the traditional presentation of rice might ultimately lead to the discontinuation of the system. Although protection in war is no longer required, the tribute continues as a kind of rent for land occupied by the vassal villages but claimed by individual Wakching *morung* as their territory. Moreover, the men of *morung* receiving tribute from a dependent village sti l act as patrons and protectors, if people of that village are involved in disputes with members of another *morung* of Wakching or with a third village.

While in smaller villages the introduction of Christianity has led to the abandonment of many social customs and even such secular activities as dancing and singing, Wakching has shown considerable tenacity in maintaining the traditional pattern of social life. Among the Konyaks, Christianity was introduced after the end of British rule, and the agents of proselytization were not American Baptist missionaries, who had converted the greater part of the neighbouring Ao tribe, but Christian pastors and teachers of Ao and Lhota stock. Christian influence on Wakching has remained superficial, and some of the most articulate men told me that they had given up their old religion without becoming proper Christians.

Despite the changes in political outlook and religious belief and practice, the daily routine of a Konyak village such as Wakching has remained very similar to what it was a generation ago. The women's household chores of fetching water and firewood and of pounding rice are unchanged, and the men engage as of old in the making of baskets and mats, the repairing of implements, and the periodic rethatching and rebuilding of houses. Agriculture remains the basis of Konyak economy, and there is no significant improvement in the techniques of tillage. Slash-and-burn cultivation on hill slopes is the sole method of growing rice, millet,

taro, and vegetables, and nowhere in the Konyak country does one find any attempt at terracing or irrigation. For the time being the Konyaks still reap sufficient grain to meet their requirements and hence there is no urge to depart from the traditional method.

It would be misleading, however, to generalize from this one example. Villages such as Wakching are certainly still self-sufficient in grain, but pressure on land is increasing. Thanks to the introduction of medical facilities and the suppression of head-hunting the population is steadily increasing and a shortage of cultivable land has become an inevitable prospect. In 1936-37 the cycle of rotation was fifteen years, and the long period of fallow allowed the land to recuperate and secondary jungle to grow up on the abandoned fields. Nowadays fields remain fallow only for eight years and this is not sufficient to prevent erosion and a general deterioration of the land. Anthropologists are not cast in the role of prophets, but anyone familiar with the problems of shifting cultivators in a variety of environmental situations must realize that the balance between population size and land resources which existed in the Konyak region one generation ago has already been upset, and that changes in the economy of the Konyaks are unavoidable if the growth of the population is not to lead to a drop in living standards.

Agriculture as it is practised at present does not yield a surplus which could be used to pay for the many manufactured goods Konyaks have become used to, such as kerosene, hurricane lamps, electric torches, textiles of various kinds, matches, soap, and cigarettes. At present all these goods are bought with the money disbursed by government agencies in the form of salaries to Konyak employees, wages for road-building and other projects, or gained by the sale of vegetables, chickens, and other local produce to the security forces stationed on Konyak land.

In the future, however, the inflow of funds provided by the central government may decrease, and the Nagas, who have got accustomed to numerous imported commodities, may be in urgent need of industries producing goods marketable outside Nagaland in order to pay for these imports. Forestry, horticulture, tea gardens, and—in the years to come—tourism are obvious possibilities, and some hopeful beginnings have already been made.

Closely linked with the prospects for economic development is the problem of education. In this field enormous progress has been

made, an d Nagaland, with a literacy rate of 27 per cent. has nearly reached the all-India average of 29 per cent. While at the end of British rule there was only one high school in the Naga Hills there are now 3 colleges, 31 high schools, 144 middle schools, and 800 primary schools in Nagaland. In the Konyak region there were in the 1930s no schools, and the percentage of literates was hence nil. Today most children have the possibility of attending primary schools and nearly everywhere there are some young people who can read and write, even though the linguistic versity poses great problems. Konyaks speak a Tibeto-Burman tonal language, but dialects vary from vllage to village and there exists as yet no written standard Konyak. In primary schools Naga-Assamese, the *lingua franca* of Nagaland, is used, but English, the official language of the new State, is the medium of instruction in all higher education.

In the minds of most Konyaks, education is associated with Christianity, and indeed there are few educated Nagas who have not been brought up as Christians. The reason for this situation is historical. Until India attained independence, most of the educational institutions in the Naga Hills were run by American Baptist missionaries, and even when the American personnel departed, the local staff of teachers and pastors remained. In 1937 there were no Christian Konyaks, but the improvement of communications, and the suppression of inter-village feuds opened the way to proselytizing activities by Christians of neighbouring tribes.

Today there are many Konyak communities which have totally abandoned their old tribal religion, and have embraced Christianity not so much as a result of individual conversions but in the belief that by accepting the new religion they would obtain the fruits of modernization.

It is mainly in the villages traditionally ruled by autocratic chiefs that there is still some resistance to the changeover to an entirely new ideology, and the chiefs and other members of the old aristocracy are the staunchest protagonists of the traditional religion. But power and prestige has passed to those Nagas who are holding positions in government service, and these men are without exception Christians. Yet it is precisely among the most highly educated Naga Christians that one meets a realization of the threat to their traditional values and cultural heritage implicit

in the wholesale acceptance of a novel pattern of life. They are conscious of the fact that converts have been persuaded to abandon many aspects of Naga culture not inherently connected with religion—dress, ornaments, institutions such as the mens' house and girls' dormitory, feasts of merit, seasonal festivals, the consumption of rice beer, the Nagas' national drink, and even such artistic expressions as wood-carving, dancing, and traditional music. The ban on some of the purely secular activities in no way inconsistent with Christian doctrine is a reflection of the excessively puritanical ideas of the early American missionaries, ideas which have become part and parcel of the beliefs of Christian Nagas.

In the course of my stay in Wakching I asked many of my old friends whether they thought that during the past thirty years or so their condition had changed for the better or for the worse. When I had asked the same question in the previously unadministered villages, such as Shangnyu or Tang, most people had welcomed the greater security they enjoyed since the suppression of feuds and head-hunting, but in Wakching, where people had been safe from raids even in 1936, there had been little change in the degree of security, and opinions on the desirability of change were by no means unanimous. Many villagers thought there had been improvements, such as better medical facilities and the easy accessibility to many useful material goods, but others maintained that life had been easier in the old days because there were fewer rules and people could do what they liked. One middle-aged man, in particular, was outspoken in the assertion that the Konyaks wanted to be left alone and would not mind if all officials, and with them schools, hospitals, roads, and electricity disappeared and the whole modern development came to a standstill.

Most surprising, perhaps, was the reaction of one Wakching man who had blatantly profited from modern developments. He lived in a modern house situated below the village, and earned a good income by operating as a contractor. While discussing the changed conditions, he remarked that the Konyaks were being corrupted by contact with outsiders: "They used to be honest and reliable and are now dishonest. They had had discipline and now have none—nobody obeys the village leaders any more. Many men are now drinking heavily, not only rice-beer, but distilled liquor brought from Assam. For work on the road they had

to be paid Rs 15 or even Rs 20 a day, otherwise they were not prepared to work at all." These figures were indeed surprising, for in 1970 even in Delhi or Calcutta the daily wage of an unskilled labourer was not more than Rs 5.

Objectively, however, the standard of living had clearly risen, and I only wondered whether this rise brought about by the massive injection of public funds by the Central Government could be maintained once Nagaland had to rely to a greater extent on its own resources. There seems to be a danger that educational progress and the newly stimulated demand for goods brought from outside Nagaland might outstrip economic advance, and that in the long run the local economy might not be able to carry the administrative and educational superstructure built up with central funds.

My last day in Wakching was devoted to several sentimental visits. Henlong and her husband entertained me with rice-beer, and I met her pretty daughters. Her husband was her second spouse, her first marriage having ended in divorce, and Shoupa remarked that he was not worthy of her. Clearly she was considered as outstanding not only by me, but also by the villagers. Shoupa also insisted that I should visit Shikna, the woman with whom Shankok had been in love in my time. Her and Shankok's son had grown up in her husband's house and was still alive, but it was obvious that Shoupa did not consider him as a brother in any sense. To me it came as a surprise that after I had left Shankok's unsatisfactory marriage had mended, for Shoupa and his younger brother were the children of Shankok's wife Shongna and nothing in Shoupa's remarks about his parents suggested that later in life they continued to be on bad terms.

The most emotional farewell was that from Shankok's sister Lipung. She sang for me a solo song, such as girls sing to improvised words, and the words were about me and Shankok and the old days. Holding my hand she said that although now she was old, she still felt like in the girls' dormitory, in those distant times, my return having revived the past and brought back to her mind all those who had died.

I too was sad as I walked down the long flight of stone steps on the Thepong path, and wondered whether I would ever return to Wakching.

Another emotional experience, however, was still in store for

me. On the drive to Mon I made a detour to Longkhai, the village where I had spent such exhilarating days in the company of its chief Mauwang. A branch road negotiable for jeeps went right up to the village, and this saved me the long climb which I remembered well from earlier visits. But the village was a sad disappointment, and at first I could hardly orientate myself. Only the Ang's house was—or appeared to be—the same, and in front of it there was still the stone-seat reserved for the chief. But close by was a modern tin-roofed school-building, and in place of the *morung* which had contained the best Konyak carvings I had ever seen, there stood the skeleton of a ruined building now used as a shelter for cows.

In the porch of the Ang's house we found a shrivelled grey-haired old lady wearing only the traditional narrow skirt. As I spoke to her, she suddenly recognized me and became electrified and excited. She clapped her hands and patted me affectionately, gesticulating wildly and talking and laughing. She was one of the secondary wives of Mauwang, the late chief who by his personality as much as by his position as great Ang had dominated Longkhai in my time. When I produced photographs of Mauwang and of Likau, his principal wife of royal blood, the first reaction was also excitement and wonderment. But then the old woman became sad, and tears filled her eyes as she thought of her husband and the glorious old days. As Likau had had no male issue her son had succeeded as Ang of Longkhai, but owing to his mother's lowly status he was only of Wangsa or "small" Ang clan. He was not in the village, but his younger brother and a *gaonbura* came to talk to me, and a crowd of old women gathered and marvelled at the pictures of Mauwang and many of his contemporaries. I asked about Ngapnun, the attractive and high spirited Ang girl, and was told that she had died. While we revived memories of the old days, a bevy of school boys and girls surrounded us. As soon as they had seen us arrive in a jeep they had rushed to their houses, and changed into immaculate white shirts and blouses worn with blue shorts and skirts. Their modern dress contrasted sharply with that of the older people, and I noticed that even young adults wore many items of imported clothing. Somehow I sensed also a lack of vitality though that impression may have been subjective.

There are various reasons for the change of atmosphere in Longkhai, a change much more noticeable than in Wakching.

Some eight or nine years earlier the whole village had been converted to Christianity, and this accounted probably for the collapse of the *morung*. Only one of the traditional three *morung* was being maintained and this served now as a Christian assembly hall. I was told that this and similar mass conversions were effected by an Ao or Lhota preacher persuading the Ang and the *gaonbura* to embrace Christianity. The rest of the community considered the change of religion virtually an order from the village authorities.

Another reason for the transformation of Longkhai was the fact that at the height of the struggle between the secessionary underground movement and the forces of government, the whole community got involved in hostilities and that resulted in the burning of much of the village, including the Ang *morung*. The beautiful carvings, which had impressed me so much in 1936, must have gone up in flames, and my photographs are now the only document of these fine specimens of Naga sculpture. Though after the fire the *morung* were rebuilt, the spirit had gone out of *morung*-life, and two of the reconstructed buildings were soon allowed to fall into disrepair.

The *gaonboura* who had welcomed me had still a head-hunter's face tattoo, and he said that only after the ritual bringing-in of the Pangsha heads did he get his face tattooed. As we left he produced a small *dao* and gave it to me as a memento. With Mauwang, his wife Likau, and the beautiful Ngapnun dead, and the *morung* sculptures destroyed, I departed from Longkhai with the feeling that a cherished dream had been cruelly shattered.

Another familiar village where modernization had made further progress than in Wakching was Shiong. During my earlier stay I had spent many hours in the house of Ahon, the knowledgeable *dobashi* to whom I owed much of my information on the Ang families of Chui and Mon. His house stood still in the same place, and in front of it a memorial slab with an English inscription had been erected. His son, an emaciated man of about fifty, and his grandson Henphong welcomed me warmly. The latter was dressed in shirt and trousers and wore spectacles. He told me that he was in business as a contractor, and from his appearance it did not seem that he ever did any manual work. But his young and attractive wife was carrying water like other Naga women, and presumably worked on the family's fields. She and the other younger women were dressed in cotton skirts and blouses, while the old

women had retained their traditional scanty dress. The tattooing of men's faces is a thing of the past, but several middle-aged men still have the full head-hunter's face tattoo and one of them told me that he too gained the right to such a tattoo by his participation in the rites which had followed my arrival with some of the Pangsha heads.

The entire village had embraced Christianity, and I was told that although such seasonal feasts as the Oulingbu were still celebrated, all sacrifices and indigenous rituals were omitted. Rice beer was no longer openly drunk but in their own houses people continued to drink. Henphong offered us rice beer as well as tea, and he showed us a photograph album with pictures of the wedding of his brother, Chingwang, who had lately become a minister. Dress and setting in these photograhs were entirely western, and the bride was a very sophisticated looking Ao girl.

The population of Shiong was then 637, and of the children and young people 46 went to the local village school while 29 attended schools in Wakching, Mon, Mokokchung, and Naginimara. Altogether 35 men of Shiong were in government service. Apart from Henphong's brother Chingwang, who was Minister of State for Veterinary, Animal Husbandry and Jails in the Government of Nagaland, 34 men of Shiong were in government service. Ten of these were teachers, one a clerk, one a *naik* in the armed police, and twenty-two were Class 4 employees, i.e. police constables and office peons. Thus the flow of cash into the household budgets of Shiong must have been considerable, and this explained the villagers' ability to buy a good many of the manufactured articles imported into Nagaland.

On my return to the district headquarters I heard the good news that Chingwang, the minister with whom I had been in correspondence before I left London, had just arrived in Mon. At a buffet dinner given in his honour by Kikon Lhota, I had an opportunity of a long talk with this attractive young man. He was a graduate and had served on the Council of the Wakching area which includes Wakching, Wanching, Shiong, and seven other villages. When the Area Council had to elect by secret ballot their representatives to the District Regional Council of Tuensang, he stood against Shoupa of Wakching, and two other members of the Area Council, and polled the highest number of votes. As the various tribal interests have to be represented in the Govern-

ment of Nagaland, Chingwang as one of the few Konyaks with a university education was given a ministerial appointment even though he was only in his late twenties. He very kindly had timed his visit to Mon so as to coincide with my stay in the Konyak area, and he was visibly pleased to meet an old friend of his grandfather, Ahon. My writings on his community were familiar to him and we also found much in common in our views on the problems of economic and particularly agricultural development.

The next morning a team from All-India Radio recorded a discussion between the minister and myself, and I could not help marvelling at the speed of changes which enabled me to appear on the air with a grandson of Ahon, a man who had always seemed to me an embodiment of traditional Naga culture.

Nothing could have illustrated the change in Nagaland better than the scene when Chingwang took the salute of a guard of honour drawn up in front of the Additional Deputy Commissioner's residence. The slim and graceful figure of the youthful Naga minister walking past the line of stalwart Punjabi soldiers towering above him, seemed symbolic of a development which was integrating the Nagas as fully privileged citizens into the body politic of the Republic of India.

Shortly afterwards I regretfully left Nagaland to spend a few days among the Apa Tanis[1] of the North East Frontier Agency, now known as Arunachal Pradesh. A detailed account of my experiences in that area, also familiar to me for more than thirty years, would be out of place in a book on the Nagas, but a brief comparison of the recent developments in the two regions may not be without relevance to our understanding of the problems of Nagaland.

In both areas the massive injection of public funds had led to a rapid development of communications and education, and the prevention of raiding and other forms of violence facilitates inter-village and inter-tribal contacts. The standard of living measured by the ability of the population to purchase consumer goods manufactured outside the region has been raised among Nagas as well as Apa Tanis, but it would seem that the Apa Tanis, who had always been adventurous and imaginative traders, have shown more initiative in developing their economy than those Nagas I

[1]See my book, *The Apa Tanis and their Neighbours*, London 1962.

encountered during my brief stay.

There is a further difference between the two populations. Among the Konyak Nagas most of the traditional leaders, and particularly the hereditary chiefs of aristocratic blood, have remained bulwarks of conservatism, and are likely to be soon overtaken by men of less noble families who have availed themselves of such facilities as school education. The leading Apa Tani families of the old upper class, on the other hand, are in the forefront of progress, and members of that class have become the entrepreneurs of modern days. For this season I believe that the social system of the Apa Tanis is more likely to remain stable than that of the Konyaks, whose social order may well undergo considerable changes if and when the chiefs lose the remnants of their power.

Another factor furthering fundamental changes in the social pattern of Nagaland is the spread of Christianity which has undermined many old institutions. In Arunachal Pradesh there has so far been no introduction of any new religion or ideology, and for this reason, more than any other, an organic development of the traditional religion and way of thinking is more likely to take place. Obviously not all old customs will remain to be practised, but there will certainly be no sudden break and abandonment of inherited values.

In my opinion the stability and smooth development of what used to be the North East Frontier Agency is largely attributable to the pursuance of the principles advocated by Verrier Elwin,[1] in his capacity as Adviser for Tribal Affairs, and consistently supported by Jawaharlal Nehru. By limiting the impact of both economic and ideological influences on the tribal population, the administration of Arunachal Pradesh made possible a development in which indigenous forces and initiatives could unfold without causing revolutionary changes in the general pattern of life.

Both in Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh there may, however, be the danger that educational progress and with it the unbridled growth of ambitions will outstrip economic advance, and that in the long run the local economy will be unable to carry the administrative and educational superstructure which is now being built up with outside funds provided by the Central Government. This

[1]These principles were outlined in Elwin's book *A Philosophy for N.E.F.A., Shillong*, 1957.

danger may be greater in Nagaland than in the Apa Tani valley, where a system of intensive soil utilization has been in existence for many generations, and the psychological climate for further improvements is probably better than in Nagaland.

In both areas it would be wise to direct education mainly to fields relevant to the development of local resources. However desirable a high standard of education may be, it should be commensurate to the scope for the suitable employment of young men and women who have received higher education. Both in Nagaland and in Arunachal Pradesh this scope continues to be limited. Members of the government of Nagaland are not unaware of this situation, but as elected representatives of their people they cannot easily resist the clamour of their constituents for ever increasing educational facilities, and it is clearly easier to establish schools and even hospitals than to transform the economy of Nagaland to such an extent that in the years to come the local population can create enough wealth to sustain the new developments initiated by a government able to draw on financial resources originating outside Nagaland.

The sympathetic observer captivated by the charm, good humour and resilience of the Nagas in a changing world, can only hope that they and their elected leaders will be able to strike a balance between the urge to preserve at least some parts of their tradional culture and the ambition to compete on equal terms with other communities inhabiting the Indian subcontinent.

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